

When Barley was King!



The two men most responsible for the creation and popularity of the Cream of Barley Cereal and Park: On the left, Alfred Shrubbs (1879-1964) and on the right "Colonel" James Lake Morden (1860-1945).

by Charles Taws

With assistance from Helen Lewis Schmid

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When you look at the Clarington Visual Arts Centre building on Simpson Avenue you know right away that it was originally something else. It wasn't always an Arts Centre and some will be able to tell you that it was once a mill. A few may even recall that it was known as the "Cream of Barley Mill" and it is somehow linked to the famed Bowmanville Zoo; however, few may realize its grand episodic history and what it did to make Bowmanville the town as we know it today.

It all started with the Soper Family. This early Clarington family is worthy of their own article, but they are only at the beginning of this story. They didn't have a hand in the later developments but it was they who built the first mills on the site of the Visual Arts Centre. The Sopers had emigrated from England to the United States by the 1760's. Leonard and Mary Soper of Vermont were looking west for more oppor-

tunity. Leonard had a chance to buy land at the bottom of Lake Michigan for a mere 4 1/2 cents an acre, but assessing the land as too marshy and worthless came to Canada in 1788. The land he had refused to buy eventually became the site of the city of Chicago, Illinois.

The Sopers first settled in Sidney Township near Belleville. In 1789 their son Timothy was born (the first pioneer child born in that area). In 1795 they came to Hope Township where their daughter Pamela was born (also the first pioneer child in that area). In 1805 they came to Bowmanville. Leonard built a saw mill first and then a grist mill in 1806. The land, by the way, was purchased from Augustus Barber. He was an early land owner in the area and the original name for Bowmanville Creek was Barber's Creek. Little is known about Augustus Barber except that he was obviously a man of some worth, appears in the Militia Roll Card for the year 1812 and then seems to disappear from the scene.

Under Leonard Soper and then his son Timothy the mills flourished. Other names became attached to the mill over the years. We find a Mr. Tait

working with Timothy in 1868 and the grist mill was now known as the "Ontario Mill". In 1874 it is called the "Soper Mill" but is being run by Messrs. Thompson and Burns. Timothy died in 1878 at the ripe old age of 90, but Mr. Burns may have been a Soper relation. Finally in 1882, under H. and J. Towns it is called the "Caledonia Mill". It is with this name that the mill now entered its busiest and most famous chapter.

John MacKay was a Scottish immigrant to Canada and his "rags to riches" life story would make Horatio Alger proud. He was born in the late 1830's and came to Canada after serving 7 years as an apprentice miller. He was inventive and industrious, some called him a tinkerer and he flourished in Canada: the land of opportunity. He started in Dundas, Ontario and seems to have been there for 20 years (1854-1874), then a decade in Chatham (1874-1884) and then finally coming to Bowmanville in 1884 and buying the Caledonia Mill.

He equipped the old mill with new machinery of his own design and patents which allowed him to mill barley products in a more cost effective way

than the competition. Under him the machinery worked day and night to fill orders. In fact, in 1894 it was reported that the mill had run continuously, Sundays excepted, for the last five years! Orders came not only from across Canada, but from England and the East and West Indies. Local farmers couldn't supply enough barley so he shipped it in from the west. The barley came in on the train and left as a packaged product by train. He won a gold medal for a pearl barley machine in the 1873 Industrial Exhibition at Buffalo, N.Y. For his barley products he won a silver medal in Jamaica in 1879 and later in 1902 he was awarded a diploma at the Wolverhampton Industrial Exhibition. Mr. MacKay died in 1902 and two years later the old wooden mill burnt down.

Despite the difficult times The John MacKay Milling Company Limited soon rebounded and a beautiful, modern new brick mill (the current VAC building) was constructed in 1905 (within 5 months of the old mill burning). The new mill was originally also called the "Caledonia Mill" but that was to change for in 1910 John Mack-

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ay's daughter Marjory married James Lake Morden and he took control of the company. A true showman and entrepreneur Mr. Morden made the mill famous throughout Canada. From 1918 on he aggressively promoted one product: Cream of Barley cereal. This hot cereal, similar to Cream of Wheat in colour and texture, was very nutritious and because it was made from barley very easy to digest. The mill became known as the "Cream of Barley Mill" and it now entered its second prosperous chapter.

To promote the cereal Mr. Morden sent two flatbed trucks across the country. One to Halifax and one to Vancouver. This was quite a feat in 1921 when the roads were not so good. On the backs they had gingerbread trimmed frame cottages and signs extolling the virtues of Cream of Barley cereal. They were known as MacKay's Travelling Barley Palaces and this is just one example of Morden's business acumen. While John MacKay may have been called the "Barley King of Canada", the local press gave his son-in-law the grand title of "Champion Breakfast Food Cereal King of America". Morden was shrewd

enough to secure the "Cream of Barley" trademark and had the exclusive rights of manufacture within the British Empire.

In 1919 Mr. Morden, who by the way looked just like Colonel Saunders of Kentucky Fried Chicken fame, began another project that brought more renown to the mill and Bowmanville. This was the Cream of Barley Park which was established east of town on Highway #2. It boasted a camping area, cabins you could rent, a swimming pool, a race track, a gas station, a restaurant, a few rides and a small petting zoo with a bird sanctuary. Eventually the zoo eclipsed all the other attractions and today it is the award winning Bowmanville Zoo - the oldest privately owned zoo in Canada. The park became a very popular place for locals and visitors alike. In fact as the park grew in popularity the mill began to slow down.

In 1937 a flood swept away the mill's dam and caused over \$10,000 damage. Mr. Morden, never one to despair, did admit "It's a bit hard for a 77 years old man to bear." In his later years he took on the title "Colonel" and became known as quite a character with a unique philosophy to life. He had a sign on the main park building that

read "You Live Let Others Live". When he noticed cars with United States license plates he'd go up to them and if the plate was from Ohio he say, "Why you're from Ohio my old home state" and begin a friendly conversation. If they came from Michigan he'd say, "Why you're from Michigan my old home state." This led to the belief that he was an American but in fact he originally hailed from Flamboro, Ontario. He died in 1945 and the company passed into the hands of his long time secretary and financial advisor Miss Beryl Percy and manager Mr. Alfred Shrubbs.

The mill had now entered its final phase as a business. Alfred Shrubbs was an English world famous long distance runner. In the first years of the 20th century he broke 14 world records for running at various distances from 2,000 yards to 11 miles. In one amazing day on November 5th 1904 in Glasgow he broke the one hour record as well as all amateur records from six to eleven miles and all professional records from eight to eleven miles! He covered 11 miles, 1, 137 yards in one hour. This last record was not broken until 1951. It was on a tour of Canada during the First World War that Shrubbs first

visited Bowmanville. He may even have worked at the mill for a short time. In 1928 he left his native England and moved to Bowmanville and began his long tenure with the Cream of Barley Mill and Park.

The park continued to prosper but the mill became quieter and quieter. The move to ready prepared cereals hurt the business as did competition from bigger companies. Former postmaster George Vice recalled that in the early 1950's Mr. Shrubbs would come in almost every day with both arms full of 1 pound packages of Cream of Barley cereal to be mailed to customers across the country. Obviously, the stores were not carrying it like they used to do; however some dedicated customers still wanted their cereal. Eventually, in 1949, Mr. Shrubbs and Miss Percy sold to a Mr. Bermann and Mr. Hervey who had recently come to Canada from Czechoslovakia. They bought the mill for an undisclosed sum said to be in the five figure bracket. While based in Toronto both had been involved with milling in Europe. They took the company and moved it to St. Boniface Manitoba. I have seen Cream of Barley boxes that have Bowmanville printed on

them and I've seen them with Toronto and St. Boniface printed on them. However, it is here we lose the story. I doubt that the business ever got going in St. Boniface. At least, the local archive has never heard of it. In 1950 the Cream of Barley Park was sold to the Connell family.

The old mill fell silent. The only excitement was that it narrowly escaped a nearby fire in 1958. It wasn't until 1964 that the Rotary Club of Bowmanville took over the site to establish a park. The mill was found to be in good shape but needed to be cleaned out. Old machinery had to be taken away and a raccoon on the top floor was destroyed after several attempts to move it peaceably failed. Al Strike remembers what a mess it was after over a decade of inactivity. They were dumping all kinds of garbage out the windows to be piled up and hauled away on trucks. Also present was Merle Slute who found an old empty Cream of Barley Box on the floor which he took home and wrote on it these words, "The Last Cream of Barley box from the Mill, Bowmanville". Many years later his wife Emily donated it to Clarington Museums. It is one of only two original boxes known to the author. The other, an older one, is

in a frame hanging in the Visual Arts Centre.

By 1971 thanks to the Rotarians the place had become an attractive park and the old mill a popular drop-in centre for teenagers. In 1973, local photographer Neil Newton started a local photography club which met in the building. By the fall of 1974 the newspapers reported that this group was promoting the idea of a Fine Arts Centre for the then Town of Newcastle (today's Clarington). From these humble beginnings, the Clarington Visual Arts Centre was born and a new lease on life was given to an old building. The mill is second only to the Dominion Organ and Piano Company in making "Bowmanville" a household name across the country and beyond. It stands today as a testament to the pioneers and its previous owners and as an excellent example of an old building repurposed to suit the present day. As of 2012, the mill has been home to the Visual Arts Centre for forty years. One wonders what the next hundred years will add to the story of the Cream of Barley Mill.

If you found this story interesting check out my blog at www.claringtonmuseums.com.

Christmas Is A Time For Giving



by Jim Abernethy, Editor

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staff and a multitude of volunteers do a great job of engaging the older adults of our community in various social functions and worthwhile programs. I encourage you to tell your friends and family members about this gem of service that is offered by our municipality.

Clarington is now out of the national political spotlight with the completion of the Federal By-election, so our community can get back to normal life in a small town. If you like reading about politics it appears that the spotlights will be on Toronto and Quebec for some time to come.

We should acknowledge any person who has the desire to enter public life and aspires to serve their community by putting their name on the election ballot.

Political life can be a thankless, disappointing and a rewarding experience..... all at the same time.

Organizing and running an election campaign requires a lot of effort from a lot of people and it is no easy task for the candidate to be under the spotlight 24/7 especially after they are elected.

The Press are not always kind and they are not always right. However this is our political system and it is healthy to see the Candidates and their supporters engaging in important issues.

Congratulations to Erin O'Toole, his family and members of his election team. Erin is our new Federal Member of Parliament and whom I believe he will serve us well in Ottawa.

Erin has pledged to stay connected with the people of Durham Riding which includes Uxbridge, Scugog and Clarington. The geo-

We have an interesting edition for you to read this month and I hope you find it enjoyable.

Please note the 8 page pull-out section for the Clarington Older Adult Association (COAA) highlighting all of the upcoming winter programs. COAA is a wonderful asset that we are so very fortunate to have in our community.

Angie Darlison, Executive Director of the COAA and her

graphical size of our Durham Riding presents its own challenges.

However it is one pledge that he should be able to fulfill, provided of course the Prime Minister does not offer to him a Ministerial portfolio such as the one that he gave to our former MP, Bev Oda.

The additional duties of being a Member of Caucus and holding a Minister's position adds to the pressures of serving the riding and fulfilling ministerial duties.

Recently, I had the opportunity to interview Bev Oda, our former MP for Durham Riding. My objective was to learn more about the role she played as the longest serving Minister for International Cooperation. Read the complete interview starting on page 16 of this edition.

I encourage you to read it – it is quite interesting. You may wish to visit claringtonpromoter.ca to make a copy & forward to friends and family.

Another acknowledgement is in order to all of the staff at Royal Service Real Estate in both the Newcastle and Bowmanville offices. The Royal Service Team, with support from local businesses and individuals, organized another successful fund raising event with all proceeds going to the Clarington Food Bank.

Sorry, I was away on a scheduled holiday. However I understand there was a sell-out crowd at the Newcastle Townhall. Thanks to everyone who attended to enjoy some music and see old friends but more important to support the cause which was helping the Clarington Food Bank stock their shelves with food inventory for the coming season.

The combined efforts generated a whopping 662 pounds of food and more than \$11,000 in cash which will be used by the Clarington Food Bank to purchase additional food supplies in the coming months.

Please consider making a donation of food or cash to one of our local Food Banks or volunteer your time stocking shelves and preparing Christmas orders.

To contact St. Vincent de Paul Food Bank, Bowmanville call 905-623-6371

To contact the Clarington East Food Bank, Newcastle call 905-987-1418

Christmas is a time for reflection and giving!
From all of us – Best Wishes to you and yours!

Planning for the Future



by Peter Hobb

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In a previous article I touched on the subject of transferring business wealth to your personal account while you are operating the business rather than waiting for a big pay day when the business is sold. A successful business needs financial capital. Accordingly, we have found, in helping business owners with business succession, that the bulk of their wealth is locked up in the fam-

ily business. This isn't the situation in every case but we have found enough examples that it should be a concern. Having the bulk of your wealth tied up in one asset, your business, is very risky. If the eventual transfer of the business doesn't achieve the desired financial result, you may not have many other options for meeting your financial retirement needs.

In this article I will discuss some of the strategies that can be implemented to accumulate wealth while you are operating the business. I have just provided an overview of these strategies. There are pros and cons to each and they don't apply in every situation. Proper professional advice is recommended if you think you may wish to explore one or more of these strategies.

One of the more familiar strategies is to contribute to a

registered retirement savings plan (RRSP). Most of us do this for the tax deduction each year but the biggest benefit is the tax free growth of the amount invested in an RRSP. With a disciplined approach to contributing annually to an RRSP and starting early in your career you can accumulate a sizeable nest egg by the time you are ready to sell the business.

A second similar strategy is to have your company establish an Individual Pension Plan (IPP) to provide pension benefits to specified individuals. The plan could provide pension benefits to the business owner, other members of the business owner's family who work in the business, and key employees. Advantages of these plans include a higher contribution limit than the contribution limit for an RRSP and using pre-tax income of your corporation

to enhance your retirement pension. There may also be opportunities to make lump sum contributions to the plan to further enhance the pension benefits. Also, the contributions made by your company are tax deductible. The amounts contributed by the company on your behalf to the IPP would reduce or eliminate the amount you can contribute to an RRSP.

For businesses fortunate enough to be accumulating cash not needed to fund operations, a second company could be established that would acquire the shares of your operating company. Cash not needed by the operating company could then be transferred to the new company. The new company would then invest the money. The cash would move tax free from the operating company to the new company. Once retired you could start to draw money

from the company to supplement your retirement income.

Life insurance is a very flexible product that can be used for many purposes. One of these purposes is to accumulate wealth. An individual, say at forty years of age, can purchase a whole life or participating policy. This policy would be funded by monthly premium payments. Over time this policy will build tax deferred equity and cash value. On retirement the individual can take out a loan secured by the cash value of the policy. The individual would not be required to make any payments against the loan over their remaining lifetime. The loan plus accrued interest would be repaid by the insurance benefit on death. This is a very tax effective strategy since the individual can access the tax deferred growth through the loan without paying in-

come tax. On death the life insurance benefit would also not attract income tax.

The point of this article is to highlight the importance of diversifying your pools of wealth to reduce the risk that you may not have adequate financial resources when you retire from your business. I have provided some strategies on how you may do this. There are others. What is suitable for you will depend on your personal situation.

