

# Still the smallest, still the oldest!

april 8<sup>th</sup> 2002

## RODNEY JAIL NEEDS A NEW USE

So who really has the oldest and smallest jail in North America?

The answer is Rodney, oh and also Tweed and well, we must also admit St. Catharines.

Former Township of Aldborough Mayor Harry Mezenberg spent time in both Tweed and St. Catharines in the mid-1990's and was glad to find out that Rodney had the smallest and oldest jail.

The fact that two other communities in Ontario are boasting the same credentials as Rodney's jail is no worry to Mezenberg.

"It doesn't matter as long as we are caring for these heritage buildings," says

Mezenberg.

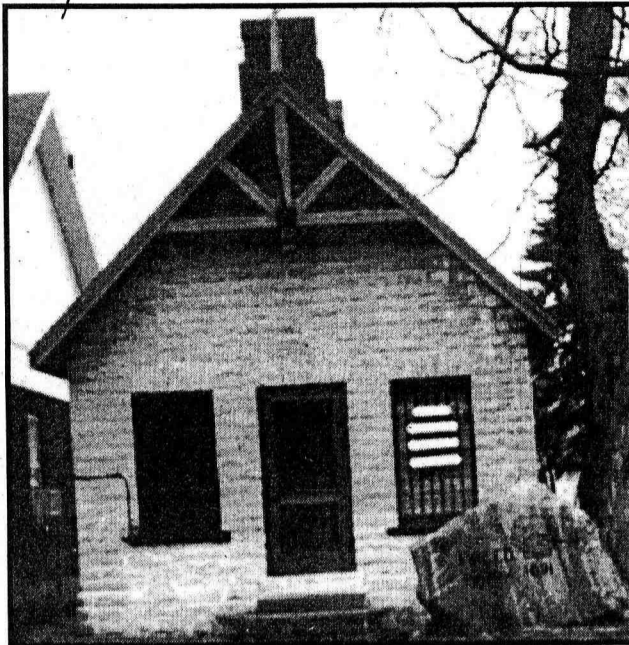
When you get down to the nitty gritty of the three or four Ontario slammers, Rodney still wins. Mezenberg says Rodney is the oldest and also St. Catharines' is not a true jail, but was a holding cell. There is also reported to be a small jail cell in Collingwood.

Mezenberg says Rodney gets the edge over Tweed because Rodney's jail still has the two jail cells placed in the building.

Two 6'x6' cells are still available for tourists to see and the jail still has its iron bars.

Tweed's jailhouse has been used for office space for Tweed's OPP Community Police Office.

Former Aldborough



The old Tweed Jailhouse in Tweed Ontario also known and broadcasted in the window as the smallest jailhouse in North America.

(Contributed photo)

councillor John Fisher did the research in the 1990's to compare the Ontario jails.

Fisher says Rodney's legacy is its wording. It is the only jail known as "smallest, oldest." Other jails are known as smallest or oldest, but not both.

Fisher recalls the donations the former municipality and donators did to help repaint the jail's roof and additional work done inside, like wallpapering.

Fisher said it might be time to take care of the jail again, as it is West Elgins few truly "heritage buildings" that is over 100 years old.

Today's latest question is not about clarifying Rodney's size and age, but what to do with the heritage building.

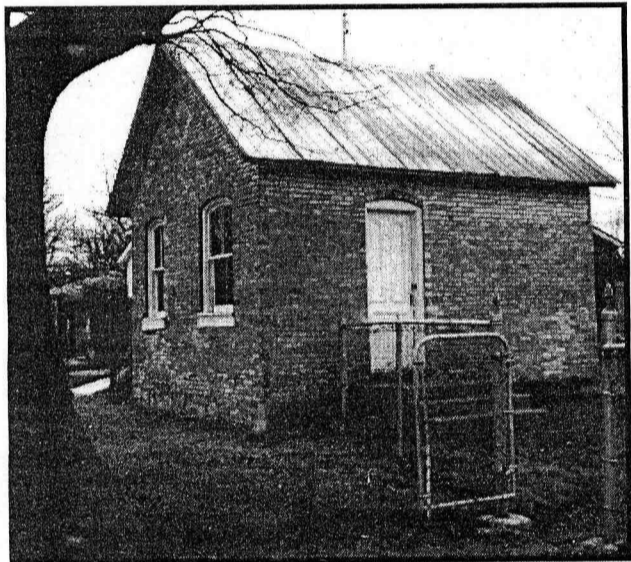
Mezenberg said ideally the Rodney jail should be used for tourism and could be set up as a spectacle of heritage.

The building was built in 1890 at a cost of \$200.

Over the years the old 'slammer' has been used as the office of the secretary of the Rodney Aldborough Fair and also a ticket booth for the fair.

More recently it has been used as a volunteer book exchange.

In its early years it was the only Rodney jail used for a few years before the town hall building was built. Later on it was known to hold any inebriated people who drank too much during the Tobacco Festivals of the 1920's and 1930's.



And in this corner... the old Rodney Jail, as locals call it, the real "oldest and smallest jailhouse in North America."

*Voices of the Farm*

## Rural life has always been busy - Marj 14/2002

Everybody seems so busy anymore. Rushing here and running there and never quite getting everything done that they wanted to. I'm reading a book right now that seems to put our hurried lifestyle into some type of perspective.

My brother bought me this book for Christmas and I'm just getting around to reading it now. That in itself says something about never having enough time for what we really want to do.

The book is called "Much to be done: Private life in Ontario from Victorian Diaries." The books attempts to define life as people, women in particular, from the Victorian era saw it. Many of the diaries were written by women living in rural settings.

Like us, they too were busy, but it was with very different things. I always hear people say that life just seems to be getting busier and busier - and it does indeed seem that way sometimes - but reading this book provides the realization that life has always been busy. It's just what we do to keep ourselves busy that has changed.

Nowadays, we complain that we never have enough time to go and visit our friends and family. And often times we don't.

In the Victorian era, there was an entire ritual built up around visiting, especially in the upper classes. In some of the diary entries in the book people had 60 or more visitors in a day. Apparently the visits only lasted about 10 or 15 minutes and it wasn't polite to stay past when the next visitor had arrived.

In more rural settings, it was not uncommon to decide to go to visit a friend or relative after supper, once all of the household chores had been

completed. Currently, this is often when we are able to find time to go go visiting as well. The difference is, in the Victorian era, there were no telephones and, therefore, no way of letting people know that you would be arriving. You never know whether they'd be home or not. As well, because of the distance involved, people often arrived to visit and stayed over night, returning home after breakfast the next morning.

Because life was so busy, visiting and work often went together. Sewing bees, quilting bees, and barn raisings all used a gathering of friends and family to help get some work done. It also created more work, as food for large groups of people had to be prepared. Women were kept especially busy when barn raisings and threshing occurred. In their diaries these women record preparing stupendous amounts of food for the men who were doing the work. Their lists of food included things like 17 cakes and 20 loaves of bread - just for one meal. Interestingly

enough, the book also made it quite clear that anyone who could possibly afford it hired someone to help out. Even if it was just paying someone to come in once a week to wash clothes, it made a big difference to the household work. As soon as possible, young girls and boys learned to do chores around the home and farm.

I always knew that people in the Victorian era had plenty to do. Hearing them tell their stories in their own voices though, places the work they had to do, and the hardship they often faced, into a very clear perspective. Sure everybody is busy nowadays, but perhaps we need to take a lesson from our Victorian ancestors and make time for family and friends, even in the midst of work.



### Country Chat

MARCY ARDIS, Reporter

# Ah, those high schools days at Dutton

## 300 join to mark closing of school in '52

BY TIMES-JOURNAL STAFF

DUTTON — Things come and go, but most of the guests attending the Dutton High School reunion Saturday recognized the gym as not having changed that much from the day they had their last phys-ed class.

Approximately 300 former students returned Saturday to mark the 50th anniversary of the high school closing.

Built as a high school, it became Dunwich-Dutton Public School after West Elgin Secondary School in West Lorne became the new regional high school.

Visitors found scores of things to jog their memories since the last time they had walked the halls or taken a seat in class.

Gym walls were lined with class photos, many of them as sharp and clear as the day they were taken.

Yvonne McCallum, one of the organizing committee members, said guests

came from as far away as Connecticut, Calgary and Sault Ste. Marie.

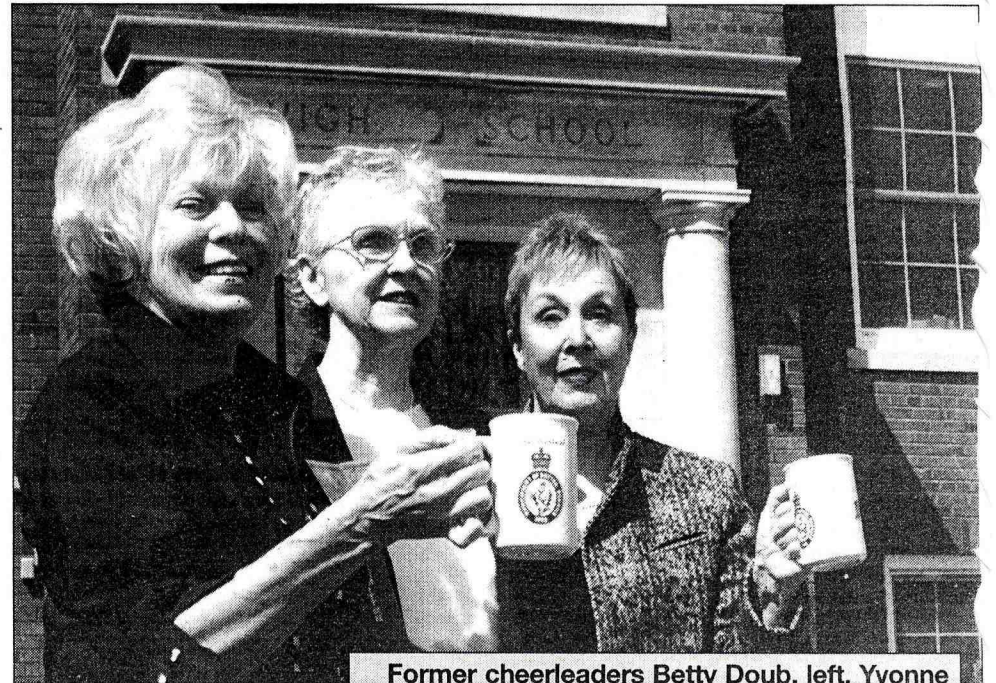
The committee planned a sampling of entertainment for the visitors. The class of 1946 put on a skit Friday and organizers found a 1938 film shot with many students of that era appearing in it. Converted to video, it stirred some memories, McCallum said.

She fulfilled her role on the organizing committee enthusiastically. She and Bill Patterson were among a handful of students who remained in the community after graduation. McCallum taught at a rural school and later in Mt. Brydges.

Some of the guests drew on their former talents for the reunion.

Betty Anne McNeill, now living in Nairn and a former registered nurse at St. Joseph's hospital, took to the floor Saturday night with five other classmates to relive her cheerleading days.

"I have wonderful memories of this place," she said. "I can't say enough."



Former cheerleaders Betty Doub, left, Yvonne Sloan and Frances Marcus toast the 50th anniversary of the closing of Dutton High School. They were members of the last cheerleading team at the school. (T-J photo)

May 6<sup>th</sup> 2002  
ST THOMAS PAPER

Don, left, and Marion Page, Betty Anne McNeill, Yvonne McCallum and Bill Patterson, members of the class of 1946, share memories Saturday at the 50th anniversary of the closing of Dutton High School. (T-J photo)



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# Reuniting friends from Dutton High

BY TIMES-JOURNAL STAFF

DUTTON — A reunion this weekend of former Dutton High School students will feature a real Kodak moment.

One of the highlights of two days of memories is to be the showing of a largely forgotten, 1948 film of the community and its students.

Reunion organizers who remembered the silent, 35-minute movie by Roy Massecar of Drumbo, Ont., used the Internet to track down the filmmaker in

retirement in upstate New York. They bought his only copy.

The eight-millimetre movie is one of a series of films of small-town Ontario that Massecar sold. It's to be shown today at a sold-out evening at what now is the Dutton Performing Arts Centre, where it received its premiere in early 1949. Videotape copies are being sold.

"It's just a hoot to see it," says Yvonne McCallum, Class of '46, who got the reunion ball rolling more than a year ago.

"We were really young back then."

Dutton High School opened in 1927 and closed in 1952, when classes were transferred to West Elgin Secondary School

But the building remains in service today as Dunwich-Dutton Public School, and it will be opened Saturday afternoon for come-and-go reminiscing.

Another sold-out evening Saturday night at the International Club will cap reunion activities.

There were 1,400 students who attended Dutton High

School during its 25 years and reunion organizers have located all but 60.

The task was assigned to two members of each class year and reunion co-chairman Bill Patterson, also Class of '46, says the sleuths did "an excellent job."

Because of the demands rural life placed on academic careers, class years at Dutton High School always denoted when a student entered the school for Grade 9, and not when he or she was to graduate.

Although high school class-

mates are far-flung, McCallum says closeness of the community made tracking down old friends much easier.

In fact, she and Patterson agreed the close-knit character of Dutton High School is what made their secondary years special.

"I think it was the fellowship," Patterson said.

"The education would be about equal anywhere but in a small town, you knew everybody."

# Dutton High grads turn back the clock

## ALUMNI CELEBRATE 50 YEARS SINCE CLOSURE

Former Dutton High School did their best to turn back the clock this month for the former school's 50th Anniversary celebration since the school closed in 1952.

Over 400 people participated in two days of events on May 3 and 4.

Built as a high school, it became Dunwich-Dutton Public School after West Elgin Secondary School in West Lorne became the local high school.

On Friday, former students toured the old school and saw the gym filled with old memories of old school photographs and an old film of Dutton from 1938 was shown to the crowd.

A skit was put on later in the day.

On Saturday, many of the graduates came back for the second day of events, which ended at West Elgin International Club with dinner and more festivities.

Some of the former grads were saddened to see the final day be spent in West Elgin, but a scheduling conflict prevented booking the Dutton/Dunwich Community Centre.

Although the school has been closed for fifty years, the school spirit is still strong as was shown on Saturday May 4. A bursary was created by the committee from donations and \$1500 cheques were given to both West Elgin Secondary School and Dunwich/Dutton Public School.

Yvonne McCallum, one of the Reunion committee organizers said graduates came from all over North America to take part in the event and could name off guests who had come from as far away as Connecticut, Calgary and Sault Ste. Marie.

McCallum said the committee was very pleased with the turn out

of alumni. Overall she said the events went over very well.

Bela Juna (Jelinek) flew in from Chicago and admitted she had prior thoughts about whether or not she should come on such a large trek, eventually she made the choice that she had to come.

Once she arrived she said she knew she made the right choice and said he had a "wonderful and happy time" throughout the weekend.

Many souvenirs were also picked up by alumni before heading back home on Sunday.

Students were not the only ones with a DHS experience that attended the reunion. The group was extremely moved to see two of their former teachers show up for the events.

Teacher Jean Bailey, who is 95 years old, showed up for the ceremony and also Dave Campbell who is in his late 80's.

Although the committee has now disbanded after the reunion, it does not mean the end to reunions.

Margaret Knapp (Hooley) attended the weekend and said she was very moved by the weekend and would like more.

"It was great. I couldn't have wished of anything better," said Knapp, who added, "I don't think anything was missed."

She graduated in 1949, and she suggested that graduating years of the past could still come together in Dutton for reunions every five or 10 years.



Many cheers went out to Jack and Don Page for their singing of songs that recalled fond moments at DHS. They had the crowd on their feet when they had finished.



The last cheerleaders team came back to bring the crowd into the right spirit with cheers and received an encore, one of the many on the night for people who brought back memories.



Specifically made souvenir wine bottles were served the Saturday night.

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