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ONTARIO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



A STUDY OF AN ONTARIO TOWN

1971

TORONTO TEACHERS COLLEGE

ALLISTON: A STUDY OF AN ONTARIO TOWN

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Mayor G. R. McCague

Police Chief Anderson
Mr. & Mrs. Allan Latimer
Reeve Oakla Gray
Mr. J. Hanna
Mr. Sid Holland
Mr. Hughson
Mrs. Kenney
Mr. J. Kleinikkink

Mr. Kropp
Mr. Ludlow
Mr. Jim Lunn
Mr. Reavely
Rev. James F. Shilton
Mr. Umpherson
Mr. Dave Willis

Alliston Arena
Alliston Herald
Alliston Memorial Library
Alliston Police Force
Alliston Recreation Committee

Alliston Times
Banting Memorial High School
Baxter Laboratories
Maple Leaf Pottery
Salada Foods

PREFACE

On April 16, 1971, twenty-six students of the Toronto Teachers' College visited Alliston to undertake a town study. Nine groups of students each investigated one aspect of the town's life to attempt to find out how a typical Ontario town functions. Alliston, with a population of 3,200, is located about sixty miles north-west of Toronto.

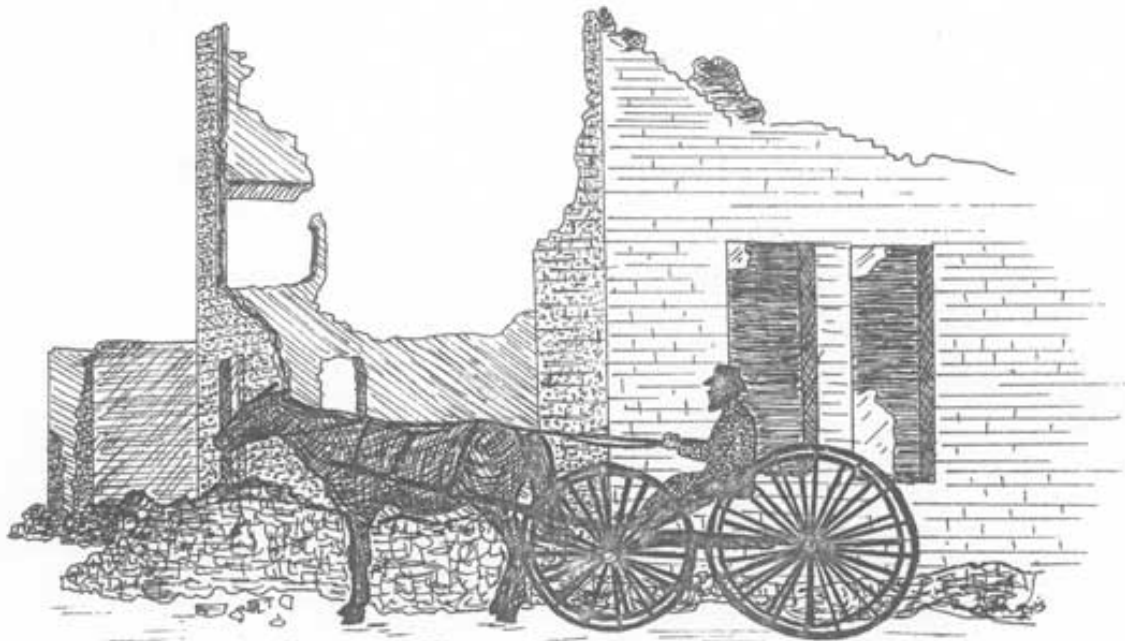
The study came as a result of an integrated programme initiated by the student teachers and planned by them. The following pages summarize the results of their investigations.

It is hoped that teachers might find this booklet useful in their efforts to bring their students to a fuller understanding of the dynamics of community life and in planning similar learning experiences for their classes.

The warmth and kindness shown to the student teachers by the residents of Alliston deserves special mention. The townspeople cooperated fully and made the student teachers feel at home. Their patience and openness during the visit ensured the success of this venture. We thank them and wish their town well in the future.

CONTENTS

I	HISTORY	1
II	LOCAL GOVERNMENT	4
III	LAW ENFORCEMENT	5
IV	BUSINESS	8
V	MEDICAL SERVICES	11
VI	TRANSPORTATION	12
VII	RECREATION	15
VIII	SOCIAL LIFE	18
IX	YOUTH	20



*L. W. Carson
Center of Victoria
after the fire, 1891*

HISTORY

HISTORY

The site of present-day Alliston was once a dense wilderness, very flat and swampy, with forests so thick men couldn't make their way through them. However, in time, drainage turned this area into one of the richest farm lands in the county.

The first settlers were Irish, who came up from York in 1826 by way of Holland Landing, making their oxen swim the Nottawasaga River, and made a clearing in the forest where Alliston now stands.

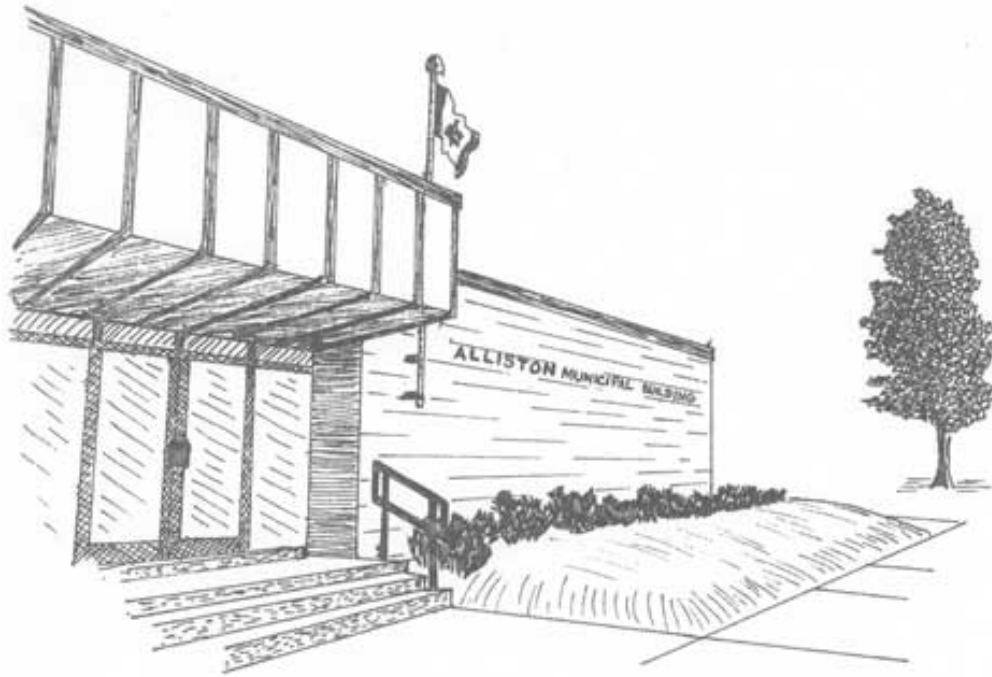
The founder of the town was William Fletcher who came to Canada in 1825 from a town named Alliston in Yorkshire, England and settled in Tecumseth. In 1847, he moved to the present site of Alliston and built the first human habitation within a three mile radius. He took up 400 acres of land along the Boyne River which drained the land, and this he later increased to 1,200 acres. In 1848 he built a saw-mill on the north side of the river, thus establishing the first industry of the town and showing his expectations for the growth of the settlement. In 1853 he built a grist mill which attracted a number of tradesmen to the locality.

The earliest religious services were held in Stevenson's barn, north of the town. The first church in Alliston was built in 1851. A mission was sent from Cookstown, the next village, to establish a Methodist Church. This first church was later converted to a farm implement store when a newer church, St. John's, was built in 1872. This church, now St. John's United Church, is still being used today. The land this church stands on was donated by William Fletcher. Next year (1972) is the 100th anniversary of this church. In 1862 the Presbyterian Church was established by the Scottish

immigrants.

SOME IMPORTANT DATES

- 1856 - William Turnbull opened a general store.
- 1857 - A Post Office was established in the Fletcher home and a son was appointed Postmaster.
- 1862 - The Alliston Star was first published. The first school was built, classes having been previously held in the Methodist Hall.
- 1874 - Alliston is incorporated as a village.
- 1875 - The first town council meets. Members were paid \$50.00 a year. A by-law was passed giving the treasury authority to pay each householder 50¢ for each shade tree planted. Alliston is now noted for its many shade trees. St. Andrew's Anglican Church is built.
- 1878 - The Hamilton & North Western Railroad (now the Canadian Pacific) was built through the town from Beeton.
- 1885 - A second school was built on land purchased from Fletcher. It had six classrooms.
- 1881 - By 1881 there were ten general stores and about thirty stores in special lines, three grist mills and flour mills, two saw mills, a foundry, woolen factory, tannery, blacksmith, shingle factory, pump factory, one chartered and one private bank, several hotels, and telegraph facilities.
- 1891 - Alliston becomes a town on the proclamation of the lieutenant Governor. The first mayor, who also served as reeve, was John Stewart.
On May 8th, a fire began in the stables behind the Windsor Hotel and, because of high winds, spread quickly through the town. Even the fire brigade from Collingwood was called in to help. Thirty-five acres were destroyed including fifty business houses, one hundred and twenty-six homes and almost all of the main street. Most of the town had to be rebuilt.
- 1892 - The first water works system is put in as a result of the disastrous fire. At first it was just for fires. It was converted to artesian wells in 1895.
- 1903 - The first sidewalks are laid.
- 1906 - The Canadian Pacific train enters the town and opens a new avenue for trade.
- 1911 - The town is flooded.
- 1916 - The Alliston Electric Company becomes part of Ontario Hydro.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT

IMPORTANT PEOPLE

Sir Fredrick Banting - He was a native of Essa Township but attended school in Alliston. He helped discover insulin for the treatment of diabetes. His mother, Mrs. Mary Grant Banting, was the first white girl born in Alliston (1854).

T. P. Loblaw - Owner of the Loblaw Stores and a native of Burns district, Mr. Loblaw equipped the Stevenson Memorial Hospital in Alliston and contributed to the paving of the streets in 1926.

Fredrick Morrow - One of Toronto's most successful financiers and a director of the Bank of Toronto.

Dr. J. W. S. McCullough - For many years the chief of the Provincial Department of Health of Ontario.

Dr. F. Hipwell - A specialist in diabetes in Toronto.

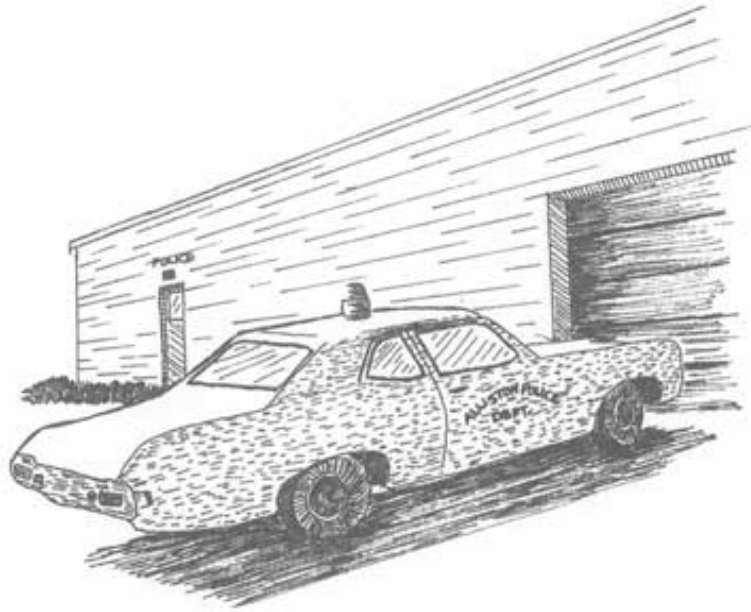
LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Like most small Ontario towns, Alliston appears to be conservative in nature. Alliston has always voted conservative at municipal, provincial and federal elections. Reverend Downer, the present Conservative Member of Provincial Parliament, has represented this area for more than thirty years. The population within the provincial district is basically rural and conservative in outlook. Most of the people are of Anglo-Saxon background.

The counties of Dufferin and Simcoe have an interesting method for choosing delegates to the local Progressive Conservative nomination meeting. Each town has a local association which can appoint delegates to this meeting. However, it is left to the executive of the local association to choose one delegate for every fifty voters. The choice is entirely up to them. The delegates then meet to choose the Progressive Conservative candidate for the riding.

We found Alliston generally well governed, except for a few planning errors. There is no town plan and the sewage system serves only half the population. These two matters are now being corrected.

The seven Alliston council members are Mayor G. R. McCague who is in the sod business, Reeve Rolf Hunter of Hunter Motors, Deputy Reeve Oakla Grey who operates a grocery store, Counsellors Peter Cameron (T.V. Repair), Jim Dickey (Farm Supplies), Jim McCullagh (Foreman) and Elmer Hawkins (Camp Borden employee).



LAW ENFORCEMENT

LAW ENFORCEMENT

To find out how well-suited Alliston's law enforcement is to its people and their community, we began by contacting Chief Anderson at his office in the Alliston Town Hall. At the time he was the only one on duty. The rest of the force consists of four regular officers, six auxiliaries who are on call for emergencies and one "special" who takes over when the need arises. Those officially capable of taking the Police Chief's post are his sergeant and the senior 1st Class constable.

The training of the men is carried out at the Ontario Police College in Aylmer. Recruit course A takes six weeks after which the graduates work for twelve weeks in their respective areas and then return for another six weeks in recruit course B. When asked if he felt the need for a woman on the force, Chief Anderson said that it would be advantageous to have a woman officer around when a female offender was brought in.

Alliston has 1800 high school students, 650 public school children and 400 separate school pupils and thus there are the usual youth problems. These include some teenage drinking, traffic violations, and drug problems involving hashish and speed which are currently typical of all North American communities. Friday nights are the busiest for the police force as the stores are open until 9:00 p.m. and there are often high school dances.

Shoplifting also occurs and many of the minor crimes such as the stealing of gas from automobiles and the theft of car batteries and hub caps are difficult to prevent. The town's trouble area is situated on the outskirts of the main street around a well-frequent-

ed restaurant where the rougher elements congregate.

Alliston, with its population of about 3,200, has no evident racial problems even though there are many divergent groups in the community. However there was an incident when a sizable group of young people of one ethnic background came from Toronto to Alliston to "rough up" some youths who were bothering some local youngsters who were their compatriots. The problem was dealt with when the police force received a "tip" about the group's second trip to town and put an end to the problem.

A troublesome number of break-ins between November 1970 and January 1971 were solved by the police using search warrants to round up the gang of seven aged 17 to 23 and recover the stolen property.

All members of the police force carry guns except Chief Anderson. They travel in white and black cruisers and use short wave radio for communication. A 90-foot radio tower is located in the town. The police cruisers are also equipped with radar to record the speed of passing cars. The Alliston police force is in contact with all Simcoe County forces and have phone contact with the Ontario Provincial Police. An emergency measures line in the police station is linked into Barrie and is on stand-by 24 hours a day. At the back of the police office is the town's one lock cell. Inside is a clean little room with a metal wall bed, a huge and colourful roll pillow and stainless steel toilet facilities.

An officer who receives a report of a crime takes action on his own initiative. Aid from the Ontario Provincial Police Investigation Detachment in Barrie is available. The 600 to 700 charges

laid each year by the Alliston police force include traffic violations as well as criminal code and liquor infractions. A monthly report of the charges is sent to the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. When compared to the national average, Alliston is in the average range. The last bank robbery in Alliston occurred eight years ago but recently two near-by towns have had bank robberies.

The Alliston Police Force seems very well-suited to the town. The police force visits the schools yearly for talks with the students on bicycle safety and other matters. Police Chief Anderson appeared quite proud of Alliston and said that the youngsters were reasonably well behaved and the town's people were not given to complaining about minor matters. When questioned about the police force, people showed none of the hostility so often displayed towards the police. The town's people were quite happy with their police force and were pleased that the local high school students seemed to have a friendly and healthy attitude towards the police. By the signs on the street showing the way to the police station, the friendliness and openness of Police Chief Anderson and the warm relations between the young people and the police, Alliston seems fortunate to have the police force it does.



BUSINESS

BUSINESS

Alliston is situated in a farming belt and we wanted to see how this town makes use of its natural resources and how industry developed in this farming community. By interviewing representatives of the three major industries and observing the business of the local store, we gained insight into the distribution of the labour force in Alliston. Although only 3,200 people live in Alliston proper, many of the workers, especially those in the factories, come from neighboring communities such as Angus, Barrie and Cookstown. More than 500 women come from Base Borden (Camp Borden) which is eight miles away and has 2,000 families living there.

Basically Alliston exists on the products from the family farms in the area. There are 75 tobacco farms, 11,000 acres of potatoes, 10,000 acres of sod and miscellaneous acres of asparagus, raspberries, strawberries, muck land as well as animals such as cattle and swine.

Because of the large acreage of potatoes, Salada Foods built one of its three Canadian potato products plants in Alliston in 1959. Using 200 tons of potatoes a day, this plant manufactures chips, mashed, scalloped, au gratin and french fried potatoes. Owned by Kellogg, it is a subsidiary of Salada-Sherriff-Horsey. This plant employs 180 people, mostly female, from within a 25-mile radius of Alliston. It distributes its products across Canada with the exception of the chips and mashed potato flakes which only go to Ontario and Quebec to maintain a higher quality and freshness. Because the processes of peeling and dehydrating extract a great deal of starch and the 80% of the potatoes' content which is water,

this residue is waste material which is discarded into the lagoon situated near the plant which empties into Nottawasaga Bay at the south of Georgian Bay. Because this causes water pollution and a distinct odour in Alliston, Salada Foods must spend \$500,000 annually for a pollution control plant and is now trying to extract the solid material from this waste to use as animal feed. A great amount of oxygen must be put into the lagoon to control the fermentation process of the starch and reduce odours.

Baxter Laboratories of Canada Limited is owned by Travenal, an American firm. They employ 217 people in Alliston, 70% of which are women coming from within an eight-mile radius of town.

Baxter Laboratories produces intravenous bags, bottles and the tubes, needles, viles and irrigating solutions. They distribute these products mainly throughout Canada, but recently exported some to the United States because Abbott Laboratories, their closest competitors, have had problems with their solutions. A recent count shows that they produce 41,000 bottles per day, not including overtime.

Baxter Laboratories moved to Alliston from Acton thirteen years ago because of Alliston's ideal geographical location which gives easy access to the major highways and railroads as well as to water. Pollution is not really a problem with this industry as its only waste is paper from shipping boxes and plastic scraps from their bag production.

The third main industry of Alliston is the Maple Leaf Pottery. This is privately owned by Mr. and Mrs. Saddler who employ three full-time employees and two part-time students. They make all their

pottery in Alliston with clay imported from Toronto and export their products across Canada to local stores. Thus they have salemen on the road at all times.

Besides these three factories, there are a variety of stores and businesses to serve the surrounding farming community. Some of the farms send their products to the major centres in the area. These include the tobacco farms which distribute their raw materials to other manufacturing areas such as Barrie and the sod farms which also export out of the area.

Through our general observations, we found that Alliston appeared to be self-sufficient for its basic day to day living requirements.

ALLISTON HERALD, 1884

*True to the best interests of our village,
Loyal to our Queen and country.*

advertisement

PEOPLE WHO HAVE USED IT

say that Dr. Chase's Syrup
of Linseed and Turpentine
affords wonderfully prompt
relief for coughs and colds

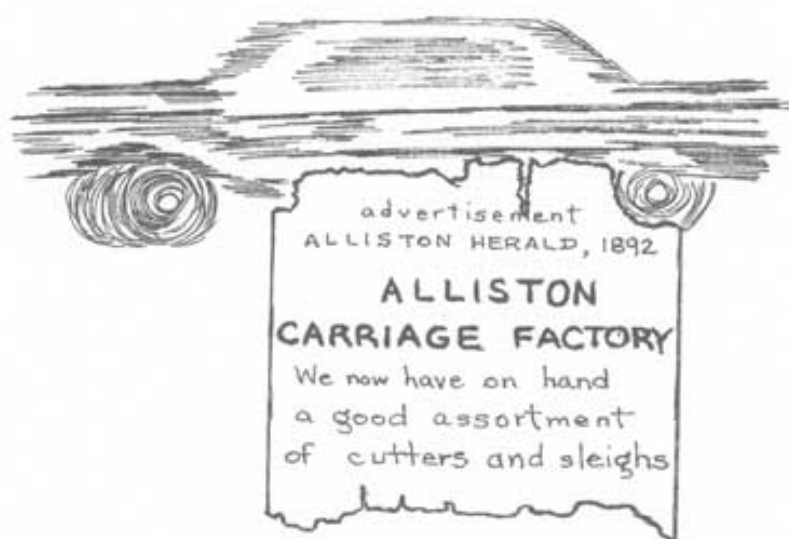
**MEDICAL
SERVICES**

MEDICAL SERVICES

Alliston's medical services consist of the Stevenson Memorial Hospital and the Stevenson Memorial Nursing Home. The original hospital which is now the Stevenson Memorial Nursing Home was built in 1928 with the donations given by Mr. Loblaw. The hospital was named in honour of Mr. and Mrs. Stevenson, Mr. Loblaw's grandparents. At present the Stevenson Memorial Nursing Home is administered by Miss Sawyer, the head nurse. The nursing home provides permanent living quarters for 27 elderly people and 26 retarded children. The staff totals two nurses, three people who supervise the retarded children and a small maintenance staff.

The Stevenson Memorial Hospital, built in 1964, is located next door to the Stevenson Memorial Nursing Home in quiet and pleasant surroundings. The hospital has 85 beds and a staff of thirteen doctors who also maintain private practices. Also, an associate staff from Toronto works with the Alliston doctors. All operations are performed in Alliston by the town doctors unless otherwise preferred. Very few people leave town to have operations performed elsewhere. Mrs. Carlton, Director of Nursing, is in charge of 150 staff which include registered nurses, graduate nurses, registered nursing assistants, orderlies and ward clerks.

Stevenson Memorial Hospital has two operating rooms, a recovery room, and emergency, surgical, medical, pediatric, and obstetric (new-born, nursery) wards. At present, the town is serviced by one ambulance.



TRANSPORTATION

TRANSPORTATION

The purpose of this study was to find out what types of transportation are available in the community of Alliston, the roles that they play, and whether or not they meet the needs of the community.

To answer the first part, we looked in the telephone directory for the addresses of the different types of transportation. Then we visited the railway station, two bus lines, a taxi cab operation, a transport company and interviewed some of the employees and owners of these. We also questioned several residents of the town.

The Canadian National railway station is open twelve months of the year and twenty-four hours a day. One passenger train arrives in Alliston from Toronto at 6:30 p.m. and one leaves for Toronto at 3:30 p.m. The duties of the three operators, one agent and one roadmaster employed here are limited. They do not sell tickets, send telegraphs and many other things. They do take freight orders, and make the necessary track inspections in their territory from Toronto to Mactier. Within two years, this station will be phased out of operation because the railway plans to make the trains run automatically. There is a single track with several sidings in Alliston for loading, unloading and passing. Transportation of products by rail does not appear to be as important as transportation by truck transport in Alliston. Military personnel who arrive at the railway station must call the Canadian Forces Base Borden for transportation to the base.

Gray Coach Bus Lines operates bus service between Toronto and Alliston but not between Alliston and Barrie. To get to Barrie,

one has to go to Camp Borden and board one of the buses operated by Greer Bus Lines. There isn't any local bus service in the Town of Alliston. However, there are two private bus companies.

Hughson Bus Lines operates school buses for the boards of education, both public and private, in the area. They have fifty-four school buses and one public highway bus. The highway bus may be chartered by any group of people for 65¢ per mile and the school buses for 50¢ per mile. The company's biggest business is with the school boards of the area. The buses cover a school area of approximately 404 square miles.

The Ludlow Bus Lines Limited is licensed for school buses and one highway bus. These school buses serve the Simcoe County Board of Education high schools. Mr. Ludlow feels that there is a need for local transportation and has applied to the Department of Transport for a charter license to operate buses within the town which would run on a fare basis.

There are several large transport companies in the town that serve such manufacturing companies as Baxter Laboratories and Salada Foods Limited and the farms of the surrounding district.

In Alliston, Jack's Taxi operates. He has one taxi cab which serves Alliston and the immediate surrounding area. There are no competitors. Business is much better in the winter than in summer. Part of his business comes from driving a few children to a school for retarded children in Cookstown.

We asked a few of the residents of the town if they would like to see some form of local transportation in the town. Most of the people answered yes to the question but also added that they did

not feel that the town was large enough yet to make such a venture self-supporting. We concluded the same thing on that particular point and also decided that the existing transportation facilities appeared to meet the needs of the community.



RECREATION

RECREATION

An attempt was made to determine what facilities exist for recreation and to what extent they are used by all age groups in the town.

Alliston is a pleasant rural town of 3200 people serving as the shopping and service centre for numerous smaller towns such as Beeton, Cookstown and Tottenham and might be expected to be highly organized and diversified in the field of sports and recreation. In many ways it is, but it also has its limitations.

Alliston Memorial Arena is the focal point for the most highly organized sport programme - hockey. The arena is community owned, seats 2000, has artificial ice and boasts a spacious banquet room which appears to be well used for activities from sports dinners to wedding receptions. The local service clubs such as the Royal Canadian Legion and the Lions' Club promote a heavy schedule of junior hockey up to the midget level. The latter team reached the area finals, only to lose out to Petrolia. The town seems to be heavily oriented towards hockey, and some citizens are of the opinion that too much parental pressure is applied to children to participate at too early an age, at the expense of a more broadened sports curriculum.

The summer months see a natural about-face in the nature of the events held in the arena, as dances, weddings and banquets take over. There are frequent bingo nights which draw many people from the surrounding countryside. However, there does seem to be a lack of community use during the summer months when such clubs as badminton and volleyball might be expected to use the facilities.

The Curling Rink, located next door and also community owned, houses a club established in 1901 and has active participation by all the post-school age groups. A recent bonspiel attracted many former Alliston residents and reestablished many acquaintances. Other recreational activities for adults are the local bowling alleys which has an over-seventy league, a men's baseball league and a theatre. Participants in a local drama group are drawn from the surrounding area while a town band provides enjoyment for the musically inclined.

This area should be justly proud of the Earl Rowe Provincial Park located at the western limits of the town on highway 89, encompassing several hundred acres of land, an 85 acre man-made lake stocked with trout yearly with large beaches created by trucking 50,000 tons of sand into the area. These fishing, camping and picnicing facilities attract some 400,000 visitors annually. Many of these, however, bring their own food and supplies as they are wary of small resort towns, and thus their potential spending power in the town is decreased.

Other camping grounds, plus two nearby ski resorts at Loretto and Mansfield, and the sumptuous facilities of the Nottawasaga Inn ensure the year-round flow of tourists into the area. The main drawing card of the inn is a snowmobiling centre which has been relatively successful only through extensive advertising. The creation of the proposed nine-hole golf course should make this a viable, year-round resort of high calibre. The area is obviously already popular in the winter as an estimated one thousand snowmobiles are located within a fifteen mile radius, and several large competitions were held last year with great turnouts.

This report is by no means complete and would be even less so if no mention were made of the school sports programme which accommodates many of the 1800 students attending Banting Memorial High School. This programme has produced several first place showings in recent gymnastic and wrestling competitions. Their varied activities help to fill the gap in the girls' recreation programme, but in the area of hockey, there is a certain amount of conflict for talent with the other leagues.

After the limited survey was completed, we were rather surprised to see just how diversified the local recreation facilities were. This is not so true of the organized sports. Where deficiencies occur, it is generally as a result of a lack of money, while, as the chairman of the Recreation Committee said, "If enough people are interested in a given activity, they will make their wishes known and will achieve their goal." We personally have one request, that the participation of the female population and those citizens over thirty be encouraged to ensure the maintenance of a healthy community.



SOCIAL LIFE

SOCIAL LIFE

To find out about the social life in Alliston, we consulted the telephone book, the Alliston Herald and the Alliston Times and had conversations with the people of Alliston. In the telephone book we found the names of seven restaurants. The entertainment sections of the local newspapers contained an advertisement for the Circle K Theatre. Although it is the only movie theatre in Alliston, it was up-to-date, showing the recent movie, Cromwell. The Circle K Theatre has one showing four nights a week.

Entertainment for the young people includes the dances held at Banting Memorial High School with music provided by such groups as Copper Penny. The social life of Alliston includes all age groups. Social gatherings convene at such places as churches, clubs and community halls. One prominent Alliston club is the Lions' Club, a service organization combining good works and fellowship in the community. For senior citizens as well as younger people, socializing takes place while attending bake sales, rummage sales, bazaars and teas. These activities are held in halls such as the Lyle Community Hall and church halls such as St. John's United.

There are a variety of clubs. Anyone interested in playing euchre or bridge can attend card parties held at such places as St. Paul's Auditorium or at the library. The cost is only fifty cents. Monthly, the Sunshine Club provides the audience with choir music accompanied by piano. The Single Parents' Club holds dances and activities for those single parents who wish to attend.

Some residents of Alliston visit places such as The Pub located outside Alliston where entertainment is provided as well as beer.

There are also the Barrie Country Club and the Nottawasaga Inn, three miles east of Alliston on Highway 89. The inn is fully licensed and provides a country club atmosphere with dancing, dining, entertainment, and a continental cuisine. In Alliston, the Lamplighter Room is similar to these. Another type of atmosphere is provided by the Loretto House, a pub with electric guitar and harpsicord music, shuffleboard and a snack bar.

For those who are more active and sports-minded, the Town of Alliston has a fine skating and curling arena and an outdoor swimming pool. Alliston has a simple but varied social life and appears to be sufficiently close to larger centres such as Barrie and Toronto to satisfy the social requirements of the community.



YOUTH

YOUTH

To try to discover the life-style of the youth of Alliston, we visited the local high school, Banting Memorial. Our first contact was the vice-principal who was very cooperative and spoke to us about the operation of the school and some of its problems. We were also introduced to the Student Council. Two main topics discussed were the local environment and the futures of the students.

Before beginning, however, the misconception that a great many people have that anyone who lives in a small town is a "hick" should be refuted. The people we met and saw cannot be characterized in such a fashion. They were no different from those encountered in the city and were the most cordial and kind people that we had ever met. They were not afraid to talk about things that people in Toronto or any other large city in Ontario would hesitate to discuss.

The youth in Alliston are the same as those in any other centre in Ontario. The students must be bused in from a radius of approximately twelve miles. The most striking aspect of the conversations that we had was that the students care about such things as morale in the school and have a commendable school spirit. The students themselves are responsible for such things as the student dances that are held approximately every three weeks. They have a system that is of high quality and demonstrates their maturity. They have taken responsibility to organize, police, and make the activities worthwhile. The system devised by the students has built in checks and balances.

Some of the students suggested that drinking is a greater problem than drugs, especially on weekends when other activities