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THE OLDEST HOUSE IN ALLISTON

Built in 1849 the Fletcher House on Fletcher Crescent stands as a symbol of the energy and initiative of the town's founder, William Fletcher, who settled in what is now Alliston in the fall of 1847. He and his son John built a log cabin where the Canadian Tire Store now stands. In 1848 he started a sawmill and in 1849 he built this charming house.

Alliston Herald Photo

ALLISTON IN THE 1800's

In 1881 it was decided to go ahead with a new school and the land on which the present public school stands was bought from George Fletcher for \$150 an acre in 1885. There were six classrooms and the project cost \$6,000.

Dusty roads have been a problem for a long time and they were in Alliston. So, in 1888 a street watering apparatus was bought for \$30. Also, in that year, a fire hall was built, at the cost of \$150, on land donated by Wm Fletcher. Mr. Johnson received \$1 a week for lighting the street lamps and Mr. Squares acted as constable for nothing.

Exemption from taxation for five years induced Mercer Brothers to locate their agricultural implement plant here in 1889. The big brick plant was at the south end of Paris Street. Unfortunately, Mercer Brothers changed the knottier on their binder and this proved so unsatisfactory that the company failed. The Co-op and Gibson Transport now occupy their old buildings.

Street lighting called for attention. In 1890 it was decided, after much deliberation, to have five electric lights on for 313 nights a year at a cost of 90 cents a night. The electricity was generated by water power, supplemented when necessary by steam power, in a plant built in 1888 by W. J. Fletcher.

The Village of Alliston became the Town of Alliston on January 1st, 1891, with John Stewart the first mayor. That was a great step forward. Sad to say it was followed by a bad setback. On Friday, May 8, at 12:45 p.m., fire broke out in the stables of the Queen's Hotel (now the Windsor House). By the

time it was out about 30 acres were burned and practically all the business section and many residences were smouldering ruins. The "Herald" report of the fire is on page 10.

Re-building began at once. A new Alliston rose from the ashes. The town has gone ahead steadily ever since.

Maybe it was the fire which sparked action to install water works. 13,779 feet of pipe, in 8", 6" and 4" diameter were laid and there were 20 hydrants.

The Market Hall, built after the fire, was purchased by the town as a town hall for \$7,600 in 1892. There was an opera hall upstairs which was rented to H. F. Kelly at \$200 a year.

At that time, sidewalks were made of lumber, hemlock costing \$8.50 and cedar \$8.75 a thousand.

There were juvenile problems in those days. Council was worried in 1893 about children being out at night and a by-law passed forbidding them to be out after dark. Another by-law prohibited throwing snowballs. And there was worry over speeding!

Extensive additions and improvements were made to the town's fire-fighting equipment at this period.

Increasing interest in the sanitary arrangements of the town is evidenced by the fact that the board of health limited the number of pigs in town to not more than one to each householder. (Early garbage disposal units?)

The constable was armed with a \$5 revolver and equipped with handcuffs and a staff.