

CONSULTED BY MANY

He Is The Authority On Ingersoll History

By RAY DEXTRAS

Two students from Teachers' College in London came to Ingersoll recently to do research on the history of this town for their thesis. The first person they looked up for detailed information was Byron G. Jenvey.

Mr. Jenvey, a retired professor of economics who has lived in this area for more than 70 years, has been collecting data on history-making events of Ingersoll and district since he began teaching school at Salford in 1900.

His studio, or "den" as the historian calls it, is located at his home in Ingersoll at 23 Ann street. The walls of the den are occupied by bookshelves filled with reference books, albums and his own writings.

His albums contain every news story of importance to the district covering a period of the past 60 years. The historian has also written of events as they happened, from personal experience, and from information gathered from local old-timers.

When the London students asked for some important names of the latter 1800 period, Mr. Jenvey at once drew up a list which he wrote almost entirely from memory:

William Watterworth industrialist, who built the piano factory which still stands on Andrew street; Thomas Seldon, an exporter of the town's products, principally apples and dressed turkeys; Walter Mills, a contractor who built the town's banks, schools and armories; and ex-mayor James Stevens, a prominent real-estate man.

Asked about spectacular events in the history of the town Mr. Jenvey related the great fire of May 25, 1872, when a great part of the town—more than 80 buildings—were destroyed and two lives lost. He told of farmers from the surrounding countryside who rode in on horses, sent the horses back home, and pitched in to beat the disaster. Fire equipment had to be brought in by train from London and Woodstock. The entire Ingersoll equipment had consisted of little but two pumps at that time.

Mr. Jenvey said that another local writer, James Sinclair, has written a booklet on the fire.

As to prominence of the town, Mr. Jenvey showed a picture of the West Zorra champion tug-of-war team, which won the championship of America in 1893 at the world's fair games in Chicago. It was the first time the championship had been won by a Canadian team. The trophy had been lost for 12 years, but was found and is now on display at the Oxford County Museum in Woodstock.

THE BIRCHALL CASE

In an exciting vein, Mr. Jenvey narrated the case of the Benwell murder in 1890.

John Reginald Birchall was the son of a minister and an undergraduate of an English university. In England, the student reportedly took out insurance policies on men from Ingersoll, naming himself as beneficiary.

He made such an insurance policy on 22-year-old Fred Benwell. Under false pretenses Birchall took young Benwell into the marshlands near Eastwood, where he shot him to death.

The murder was apparently ill-planned and many clues were uncovered which eventually led to the arrest of Birchall and trial in Woodstock. He was hanged in Ingersoll.

Young Benwell's grave is sit-



BYRON G. JENVEY

uated near Princeton, marked by a horizontal stone.

Mr. Jenvey does not call himself an historian. "I merely like to keep the facts straight," he said. Asked if he planned to publish, he said it wouldn't be worthwhile.

"Young people today are not interested in history", Mr. Jenvey explained. "They're more preoccupied looking towards the future." Then, with a smile, he added, "It's only the old-timers like me who like to remember the past."

Nevertheless, Mr. Jenvey is frequently called upon by many people looking for information. His study could almost be called a legitimate reference library in itself.

At present, he said, a woman by the name of Ingersoll, living in Montreal, is using his notes to trace her family tree.

Byron Jenvey awarded life membership

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JENVEY, Byron

Ingersoll Historian, 96-year-old Byron G. Jenvey was awarded a life-time membership to the Holstein-Friesian Association of Canada at the annual meeting of the Oxford County Club last Friday night.

The Honorary Life Membership has only been granted three times to date. Mr. Jenvey is the fourth recipient.

When Mr. Jenvey joined the Holstein-Friesian Association of Canada in 1912, there were only 1,399 members. There are now in the vicinity of 13,000 members spread across Canada.

The award was presented by Fred Griffin, the National Director of the organization. There were 400 people in attendance for the sit down meal and award presentation.

Prior to his retirement from farming, Mr. Jenvey had 110 Holsteins on his 270 acre farm just outside of Ingersoll.

Mr. Jenvey now in his 65th year as a continuous member of the Holstein Association, also received a Certificate of Recognition in 1966 by the Oxford Holstein Breeder's Association as a master of annual breeding from 1912 to 1966.



Byron Jenvey, 96-year-old, adds his Honorary Life Membership to the Holstein-Friesian Association of Canada to an array of life-long memberships and certificates of merit that cover his

walls. Mr. Jenvey who has been a member of the association for 65 continuous years calls Oxford County "The Holland of North America."

Oxford man recalls past in scrapbooks

By Irene Stanionis
for The Free Press

INGERSOLL — Byron Jenvey is one historian who knows much of Oxford County's history firsthand — he was there.

The Ingersoll man, who celebrates his 97th birthday Thursday, has devoted more than 75 years to collecting material that spans several centuries. He has filled nine scrapbooks with local history and is still working on material tucked away in desks over the years.

"I realized early in life you couldn't trust your memory too long, so that's why I wrote everything down."

"People call me up often with different questions." A Michigan family seeking its roots was a recent example of the inquiries he handles. "I've never had much trouble with people believing me," he said, receiving guests in a study filled with records, photographs and assorted memorabilia.

Awards have become a prominent feature of his collection, particularly the Citizen of the Year honor bestowed by the town in 1976.

Jenvey is always willing to bring out his scrapbooks for anyone interested. But most of his best stories are still kept in his head.

The last survivor of a local farming family of seven, Jenvey has a neighboring sister-in-law, Mrs. James McKenzie, who celebrated her 101st birthday last December.

Oxford's dairy industry has had a major influence on Jenvey's life.

His first job was a \$350-a-year teaching position in Salford at the turn of the cen-

ture. Other jobs included farming, selling cattle for the Oxford Holstein Club, teaching agricultural economics at the former Guelph College, and lecturing Toronto schoolchildren on the importance of dairy products.

He introduced the first lifesize replica of Springbank Snow Countess, a record milk cow. Jenvey took the papier-mache model on a 1934 lecturing tour of schools, at the request of the Ontario Holstein Association, three years before the Holstein-Friesian Association of Canada erected a permanent statue in Woodstock.

Jenvey also drew the first load of milk to the Borden's condensing factory when it opened in Ingersoll in 1899, a task he re-enacted for the company's 75th anniversary.

At the age of 70, when most are happy to retire, he became a real estate appraiser. Jenvey estimates he valued about 900 estates throughout rural Oxford, Perth, Middlesex and Elgin counties by the time he retired in 1963.

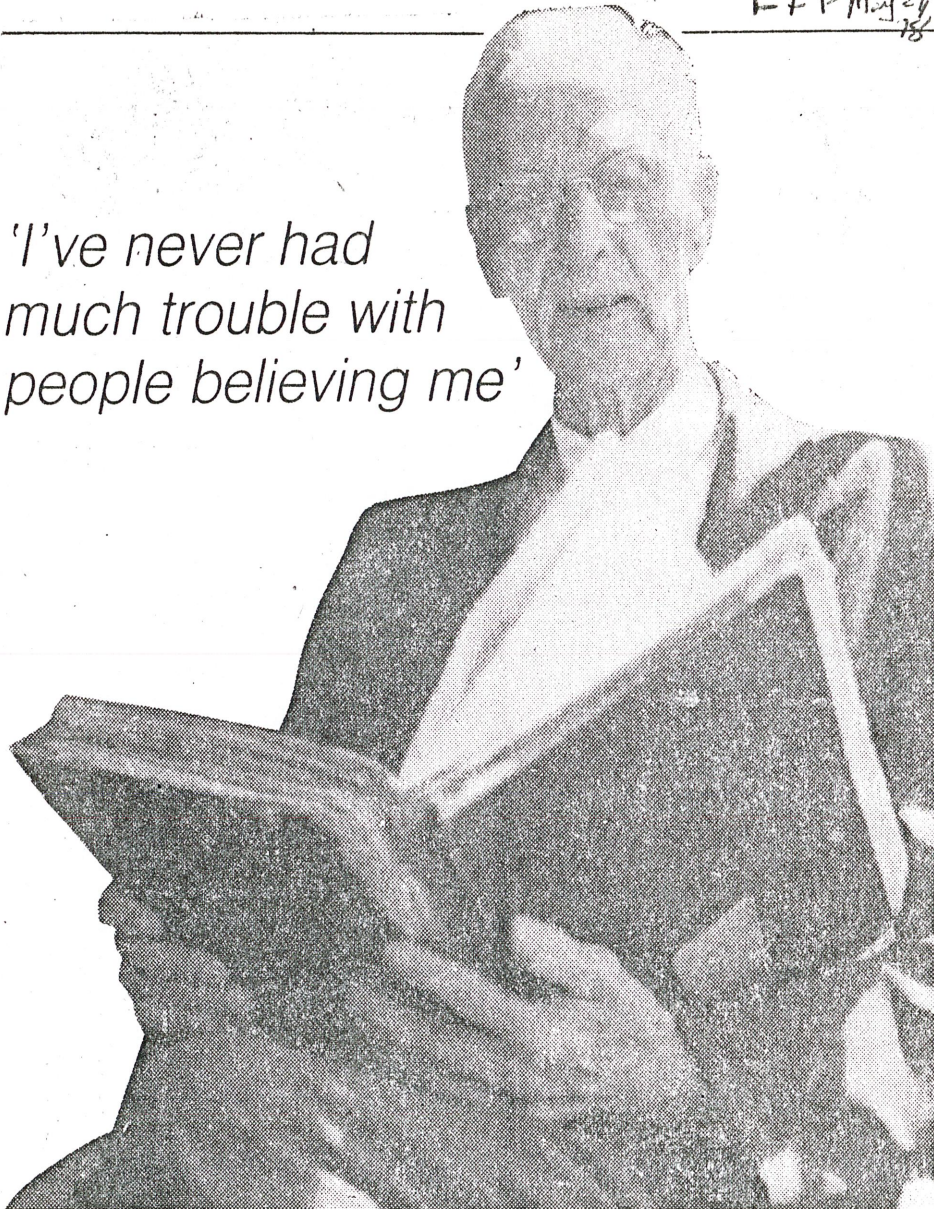
Now free to work on his collection, Jenvey's latest project is helping local artist Harry Whitwell, a comparative youngster in his mid-60s, complete a pictorial history of Ingersoll architecture.

He also has compiled a dozen books covering international events since 1923. His largest single project — 2,200 pages about the Holstein breed — has been on display for the past five years at the national Holstein-Friesian offices in Brantford.

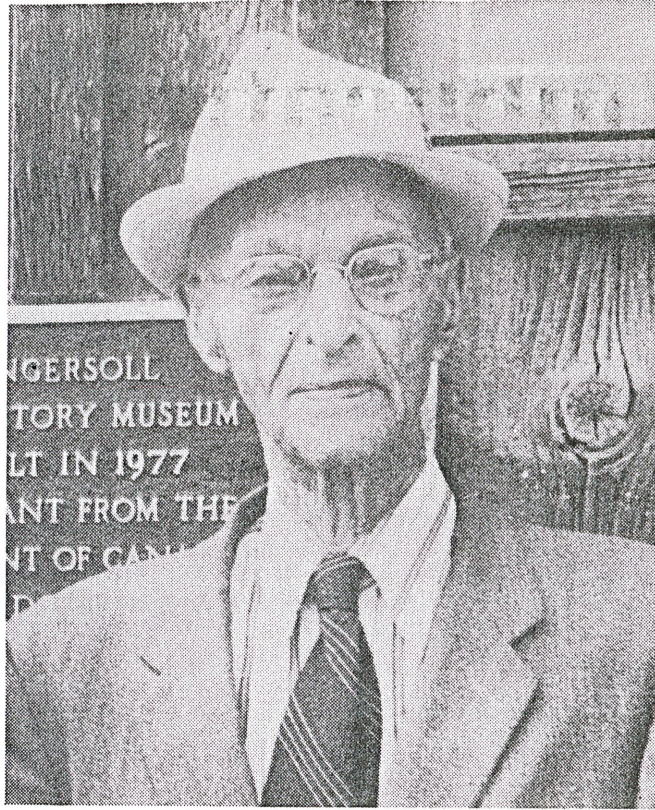
Despite his years of work, Jenvey isn't interested in having his collection published. "It's in pretty ragged shape," he said. "I didn't know I'd be working on it so long or I'd have set it up differently."

LFP May 24
78

*'I've never had
much trouble with
people believing me'*



Byron Jenvey doesn't just write about history — he lives it. Jenvey, who celebrates his 97th birthday Thursday, has become one of Oxford County's most famous historians.



This represents the last in the series. The Ingersoll Times would like to extend our personal thanks to Town Historian Byron G. Jenvey. For graciously opening his files of area history and allowing us to extend his special stories to our readership.

His books represent long hours and much work, and were years in the making. The Times has worked in conjunction with the 97-year-old gentleman for a year and two months providing the weekly column.

Letters received by our office indicate the printed stories are being used in area history classes; are the topic of many circles of conversation; and are being clipped and saved as personal historical and pioneer accounts. The column has built up a faithful readership over the 14 month period and we welcome your letters and requests for column article repeats. We again thank Byron G. Jenvey for the weekly gift of his valuable time, his researched writings, colorful stories, and our area education.

INGERSOLL Times

September 20, 1978

Byron G. Jenvey

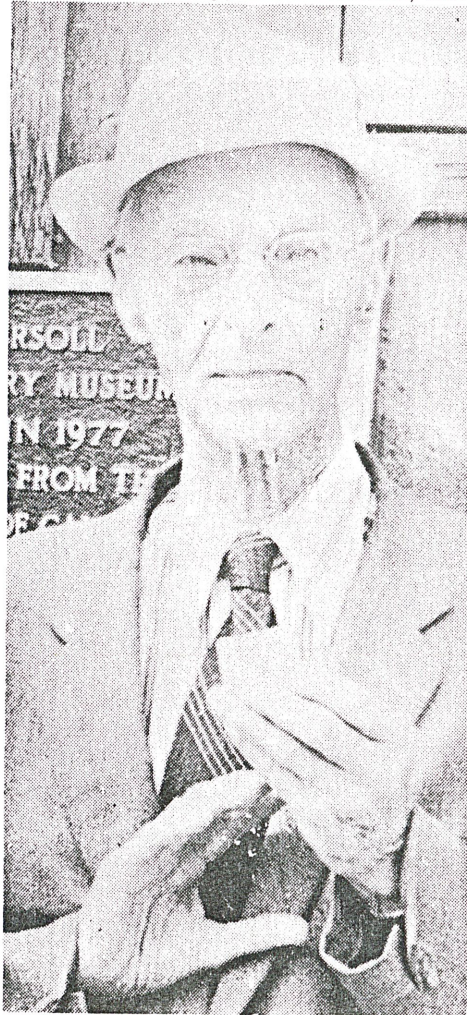
dies at age 98

JENVEY,
Byron

After almost a century of not only recording Oxford County history but actually playing an integral part of it, Byron Garfield Jenvey died last Friday, February 8, 1980, at Woodstock General Hospital. He was 98-years-old.

Noted throughout Ingersoll and Oxford County as a prominent citizen and historian, Mr. Jenvey's death came following a bout with pneumonia.

Born in Hawtrey, South Norwich, Mr.



BYRON G. JENVEY

Jenvey spent most of his life in the Ingersoll area, serving on over 60 boards, executives, councils and committees in the realms of agriculture, health, municipality and recreation.

The walls of his 23 Ann Street home proudly boasted plaques, life memberships, certificates of merit and awards for his numerous achievements, many gained through his years of teaching or farming.

His 65 years of membership to the Holstein Association of Canada earned him an honorary life membership in October 1977, a post he greatly treasured. Also in 1977 he was named Citizen of the Year by Branch 119 of the Royal Canadian Legion and in September of 1977 he served as grand marshall for the town's annual Cheese and Wine Festival parade. On August 27, 1977, he held a position of honor for the grand opening ceremonies of Ingersoll's Cheese Factory Museum.

He was best known, however, for the masses of news items he collected and filed in his home. Regarded by most Ingersoll residents at the town historian, Mr. Jenvey denied this title, once saying "I merely like to keep the facts straight."

Mr. Jenvey was predeceased by his wife, the former Annie Mayberry, in 1977. The Jenveys enjoyed a remarkable record of 73 years of marriage.

The last of his eight-member-family, Mr. Jenvey was predeceased by his parents, the late Mr. and Mrs. George Jenvey, his brothers Earl and Roy and his sisters Irene Nancekivell, Myrtle Haley and Winnifred Wilson.

Surviving are his sister-in-laws, Mrs. Alberta MacKenzie and Mrs. Mary Haley, both of Ingersoll, along with several nieces and nephews.

Rev. George Watt of Ingersoll First Baptist Church, officiated the February 11, 1980 funeral service, held at McBeath Funeral Home. Interment is at the Harris Street Cemetery.

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February 13, 1980

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Old in age but young at heart.

To gain wisdom with the years and pass it along, is to live. To merely gain years, is to grow old.

Despite his 98 years, the late Byron Garfield Jenvey was anything but old. His active work in so many vast areas, from teaching at the ripe age of 19 to serving as a member of the the Holstein Association of Canada for 65 years, did not allow time for this man to grow old. Only to gain knowledge and pass it along.

Born May 25, 1881, in Hawtrey, South Norwich, he was one of six children. As a young child his family moved to the Ostrander area after the general store operated by his father George Jenvey, and his mother, the former Catherine Moore, was destroyed by fire. The family later moved to a farm in the West Oxford area where he attended schools in Centreville and Ingersoll.

His thirst for knowledge led him to Model School (located where Victory Memorial School now stands), after graduating from high school. There he earned his teaching certificate and in 1900, at the age of 19, began his career as a teacher in Salford.

Teacher

After a three year stint with teaching, however, earning only \$350 annually, he found himself unable to support his new bride, the former Annie Mayberry of Salford. Married February 24, 1904, Mr. Jenvey left the teaching profession shortly before his marriage, to take-up a career in farming.

Relocating from Salford to the second concession of West Oxford, Mr. Jenvey began to gain an interest in purebred Holstein-Friesians. However, he continued to teach as a supply teacher, during the winter months.

In 1908 he earned the position of clerk and treasurer of West Oxford. For an annual salary of \$200, his responsibilities as clerk included performing the duties of secretary of the board of health, division registrar, and deputy fire marshall. He held this position for 10 years, until 1918, when he decided to pursue his teaching career once again.

This time he joined the faculty at the Ontario Agricultural College in Guelph, serving as a member of the Department of Economics. He maintained this position until 1923 when he again decided to return to farming.

His interest in purebred Holstein-Friesians remained firm and his farm boasted a herd of 110. In 1926, Mr. Jenvey was asked to join the Oxford Holstein Club as a sales representative and exporter. During this time he was instrumental in exporting \$40,000 of registered Holstein-Friesians from the country. He held this position until 1933.

Torn between a career in education or in farming, Mr. Jenvey combined the two in 1934 when he introduced the first life size replica of Springbank Snow

Countess, a record milk cow. He took the paper mache model on 1934 tour of schools at the request of the Ontario Holstein Association, three years before the Holstein-Friesians Association of Canada erected a permanent statue in Woodstock.

Mr. Jenvey was honored by the Oxford Holstein Club in 1966 when he received a certificate in recognition of his skills as a breeder. He served as a member of the club for 64 years.

At the age of 54, in 1935, he was appointed field secretary for the Holstein-Friesians Association of Canada. His field of

old in age ...

operation in this position included all of Western Ontario and involved 36,000 miles of travel yearly. He held this post for nine years.

It was also in 1926 that Mr. Jenvey retired from dairy farming, leaving a 270 acre farm to relocate at 23 Ann Street, Ingersoll.

Honored

In October 1977 Mr. Jenvey was honored by the Holstein-Friesians Association of Canada when after 65 years of membership, he was made an honorary life member. At that time recalled that when he had joined the association in 1912, membership stood at 1,399. Upon receiving his life membership, he noted that the association had over 13,000 members.

Mr. Jenvey was the fourth person in Canada to receive a life membership from the association.

In 1899, when Borden's Co. opened their Ingersoll plant, Byron Jenvey was the first person to draw milk to the plant. In April 1974 he was honored by the company when he reenacted the delivery as part of an official ceremony. In 1949, Mr. Jenvey and James G. Milne, were invited by Borden's to star in a special Canadian Cavalcade on a national network to mark their 50th anniversary.

Mr. Jenvey was active in various areas, including recreation. As a young man he participated in football, lacross and foot racing. In 1926 following his move to Ingersoll, he joined the local lawn bowling club and became quite good at the sport.

In 1954 he and partners Albert Worham, Byron McCarthy and Arthur Izard won the Ontario Provincial Lawn Bowling Championship, played in Kingston.

He served as secretary of the Lawn Bowling club for 30 years and in May 1977 he was honored with a life membership to the club.

Citizen of Year

In June of that same year he was named Citizen of the Year by Branch 119 of the Royal Canadian Legion. In September 1977 he was chosen grand marshall for the town's annual Cheese and Wine Festival parade. On August 27, 1977 he held a place of honor for the grand opening of the town's cheese factory museum.

In all, Mr. Jenvey served on over 60 boards, executives, councils and committees, in various capacities. As well as those mentioned, he also spent 25 years as director of the Ingersoll North and West Oxford Agricultural Society, 20 years as a member of the Ingersoll suburban roads

committee, 17 years as chairman of the Harris Street cemetery board, 11 years as chairman of Ingersoll's board of health, seven years as a member of the West Oxford Historical Society, six years as secretary treasurer of the

West Oxford School board and three years as treasurer of the Red Cross Society.

On top of his work in farm and teaching related jobs, he also spent seven years as auditor for the Durham and West Oxford Insurance Company and 11 years as a real estate evaluator.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Jenvey were faithful workers in the Salford Baptist Church and until Mr. Jenvey was no longer able to drive to and from the church, they were extremely active. In appreciation for their years of leadership as teachers and choir members, a window was dedicated in their memory, at the church.

Married

73 years

As recently as last summer, Mr. Jenvey was the oldest guest at the Alumni's Golden anniversary dinner for men who had graduated in 1928 or earlier.

Mr. and Mrs. Jenvey, married in 1904, attained the remarkable record of 73 years of marriage. Mrs. Jenvey died in 1977.



Byron Jenvey was there during the opening ceremonies of the Ingersoll Cheese Factory Museum August 27, 1977.



Here, 96-years-old and still lawn bowling, Jenvey receives an honorary membership into the Ingersoll Lawn Bowling Club. Presenting the membership, left to right, are Ralph Adam and Jack Herbert.

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A Jenvey
history
lesson...

"Young people today are not interested in history", once claimed the late Byron G. Jenvey. "They are more preoccupied looking towards the future. It's only the old-timers like me who like to remember the past".

In spite of such frequent statements as this, Byron Jenvey and much of the history collected in his treasured albums, were well known to many Ingersoll area school children. As recently as only two-years-ago Mr. Jenvey travelled to various schools to show his history collection and to pass along some of the knowledge he had gained.

The Jenvey Files which ran for 14 months on a regular weekly basis in The Ingersoll Times, were collected by many area residents, both young and old. Often the articles were glued into scrap books and used as school projects.

And despite Mr. Jenvey's protests when referred to as the town or county

historian, saying "I merely like to keep the facts straight," he will long be remembered for the history he compiles over the years.

His albums contain every news story of importance to the district, stretching over many years. As well, he wrote of events as they happened from his own personal experience. Although we do not have the space to run many of the articles compiles from his files and used in The Jenvey Files, here are a few excerpts from some of his files.

From one Jenvey file came this delightful tale.

In 1850 Dereham township had 15 school sections with 12 schools in operation. Children between five and 16 who went to school totalled 650. Those not taught numbered 218, about one third of the number taught. This accounts for the fact that many during the 1970's and 80's could neither read nor write. Some could not write

their own names and did not know their name if they saw it written.

This condition did not pertain to the time this article was first written in 1930. School Acts had been enacted to force children to attend school for a number of years and attendance officers saw that the act was enforced.

In 1850 schools in Dereham operated seven months of the year. Teachers were paid an average of \$106 per year.

Each operating school received a legislative grant of \$23 and about the same municipal grant. When applied to Dereham, it would be applicable to all the country.

In the pioneer days, the great majority of rural children left school as soon as they were able to do work around the home and farm. Some girls and a few boys remained for higher education in hopes of becoming teachers. These could take a course in teacher training in Hamilton or London.

The son of a pioneer in the Springford district, relates that gum chewing was strictly forbidden in the school he attended. If the teacher caught a pupil chewing gum, the pupil was made to deposit the gum on the teacher's table.

Each succeeding pupil caught chewing was ordered to pile his gum on the other. Then when the cud became large enough to fill a pupil's mouth, the gum chewers were made to roll the lump on the floor and each take a turn at chewing it.

Apparently no evil resulted as the gum chewers grew to healthy individuals.

Since then great changes have been made. In today's schools, consolidation and hauling pupils in buses and the methods of teaching, not to mention construction of the building itself, has altered greatly. Expulsion



Citizen of the Year in 1977, Byron Jenvey receives congratulations from Judy Hayes.

Jenvey's History of Ingersoll

of pupils has replaced teacher punishment.

Another story clipped from Mr. Jenvey's files was this one.

In the calamity of fire, Ingersoll has experienced the most disastrous destruction of property that has visited any of the western towns of this province in many years. Having been, in a measure, free from this scourge for many years,

the people and the authorities had in a measure, become reliant and fearless of the imminent danger under which they were living, and were totally unprepared to subdue the ravages of the devouring element if it was once allowed to get under headway.

Several reports of the fire have been given in the daily papers furnished to them by telegraph which of necessity have been very meagre, and in many

instances inaccuracies have occurred, which from the hurry from which they were prepared were impossible to avoid. Outside of the town, few persons have any adequate idea of the extent of the fire or of the destruction and the loss which has been sustained. We have taken the greatest pains to gather the minutest details and incidents connected with the destruction

and shall endeavor to give a correct report. While it is a matter which has been uppermost in the minds of all and the surviving friends of the unfortunate victims have the united sympathies of the whole people.

The fire broke out a few minutes before eight on the evening of Tuesday, May 7,

1872 in the part of the stables attached to the Royal Exchange Hotel on Oxford Street near the corner of Charles Street. It was owned by John Walsh Esq., who also owned a large amount of property in the vicinity and was last occupied as a hotel by W. Hayward, who vacated it about three weeks before the fire. Mr. Searles had leased the place a few days before and had moved part of this furniture into it, preparatory to opening out again in the same business.

The barn and hotel were old frame tenements which rapidly succumbed to the intense heat. From these buildings the fire spread rapidly in a south and easterly direction, taking as it went south the residences of Chas. P. Hall and the Prince of Wales Hotel, lately occupied by William Gallagher, but since his removal to the Atlantic House, by Mr. J. Bowman. The Market Square prevented a further spread of the fire in this direction.

The buildings on the west side of Oxford and on the north side of Charles Street also burned. These included the Daly Horse Stables, the Chamber's Hotel, the old Wesleyan Church building, R. MacDonald's barn, containing a large quantity of coal oil and Misters Badden and Delaney's carriage and wagon factory.

The McMurray Hotel and several other smaller buildings sustained a severe scorching and narrowly escaped taking fire, but were saved by the strenuous and untiring exertions of the inhabitants whose

only appliances were buckets of water, wet blankets and carpets. While this mass of frame buildings was burning, although the wind was very light coming from the north west, the heat was very intense. Flames rolled along like waves of the sea, one over the other, each succeeding those licking in and consuming another of the small buildings, at the rear of the three storey block on the west side of Thames Street, which seemed to catch and burn simultaneously the whole length, leaving it a heterogeneous mass of ruin.

Many of the buildings of this block were new or nearly so, and were occupied by Mr. Vance's bakery and confectionery store. The upper storey was the Masonic Hall, the store of the estate of George E. Perkins - both these stores had very handsome fronts.

Mr. Browett and Barker, Hardware; the Niagara District Bank, over which C.E. Chadwick the agent lived; Misters J. and H.

Little, grocers; Alexander Gordon, tailor; G.W. Walley grocery and glassware; Misters McCaughey and Walsh, barristers in the upper storey of the Odd-fellows Hall.

Jenvey's history of Ingersoll

The Chronicle Office, started the summer before and only just completed by J.S. Gurnett, editor and proprietor; north of this block on the one side were three frame buildings, demolished almost as soon as they took fire, occupied by J. F. Moorey, cabinet and show room, Bryne and McGolrich saddlers; Mrs. Curtis, milliner and dressmaker; Mrs. Miller grocer; Miss Webster, milliner and dressmaker; F. and G. Lewis, photographer; Mr. Curtis, boot and shoe maker.

The next building on this side of the street was M.B. Holcroft's grocery store, which being of brick and very high stayed the progress of the flames in this direction. His building and stock were very much damaged and will require good deal of repair before it presents the fine appearance it did before the fire.

The remaining stores in this block were occupied by Mr. J. O'Neil, grocer; Roger Agor, broker; N. Hayes, insurance agent; Warren Harris, boots and shoes; R.Y. Ellis and Bro. Hardware, all of whom had their stocks and furniture damaged by water and removal. The goods from many of the stores opposite, in the hope that they would be safe but so fierce

was the fury of the flames that before the west side of Thames Street was half burnt, the east side caught fire and the main street of the town was one channel of fire.

When the east side of the street caught, it was utterly impassable and the only means of saving the goods in the store and the furniture in the houses was to take them out the back doors down to the bank of the creek which runs at the rear.

This was a very difficult and tedious process and as a consequence, very little goods were saved. The parties who occupied this side of the street were H. Vogt, jeweler, frame building torn down; T.F. Fawkes, jeweler; G.J. Shrapnell, grocer; J. Hugill, photographer; T.H. Barraclough, boot and shoes; Holmes and Gillespie, dry goods; M. Tripp, druggist; Alex McKenzie, residence; Jas McNiven, dry goods; Jas McDonald, hats and caps; Alex Macaulley, dry goods; R.F. Hunter, residence and

John Gayfer shop and residence; Jas. F. McDonald, mayor. This building was riddled, it in a great measure prevented further spread of the flames.

While it was burning the London firemen arrived and having taken up a good position in the creek, threw two good streams upon it, getting the fire pretty well under control. Up to this time (11 o'clock), it was hard to conjecture where the fire would stop. The remaining stores on this side of the street were E. Robinson's Grocery; R. Kerr's dry goods; William Douglas's grocer; L. Noe fruiter; Robert Gaines, barber.

The last two occupied frame buildings were torn down to prevent the spread of the flames.

Hundreds of families in the vicinity packed up their

goods and moved them to places of safety. Mr. McIntyre's cabinet factory in the rear of MacDonald's block, was in imminent danger and most certainly have gone had it not been for the superhuman efforts of Mr. McIntyre and his men, who worked like trojans on the roof, thus saving not only their own buildings but both sides of King Street which most certainly would have gone had the fire once reached this large factory, as all the surrounding buildings are frame and if they had gone, the amount of suffering and destitution would have been incalculable.

When the fire was at its height and the efforts of our own firemen with their inefficient apparatus were nearly exhausted, the Mayor telegraphed to London and Woodstock for assistance.