

# Life Gay in Owen Sound In the Winter of 1897; Balls, Concerts and Plays

No Scarcity of Entertainment 58 Years Ago in Owen Sound—Busy Social Life, Too, in the Pre-Movie Days—"Conversations" and Paterson House Ball.

Life was gay in Owen Sound back in the "Gay Nineties." The winter season was always busy with a round of social events that would perhaps surpass the present day. There was no scarcity of concerts, road shows, etc.

Outstanding events 58 years ago were a series of public dances or "balls" as they were then known or the Firemen's Ball, held every New Year's Eve by the town's old volunteer fire brigade. All citizens were expected to buy tickets to this one whether they had any idea of going or not. The Charity Ball, held by the Ladies of the Hospital, was also a "must" from a ticket buying standpoint. Then there was the Bachelor's Ball at the Citizens Own Band Hall, and many others. Usually they were held in the town hall and were well patronized.

**"Conversations" A Big Event**  
One of the chief entertainment events of the season was the "Conversations," an annual event at the Collegiate Institute Assembly Hall, and arranged by the students. They always secured some outstanding talent and the Owen Sound Times of March 23, 1897, tells of the appearance of Miss E. Pauline Johnson, the noted Indian poetess who gave some of her own selections. The soloist of the evening was Miss M. Trenegous Stevenson and the collegiate chorus was also a feature.

Other concerts in the winter of 1897 included one by Effie Flain Heav, elocutionist. Another was on the Marie Stuart Company which included the old favorite, James Fox, and the Misses Haun.

**Visits Of Theatrical Companies**  
The local amateur dramatic company put on a play "Nip and Tuck" which drew crowds.

The veteran actor Harry Lindley and his company played the town hall for a week with some fine old plays.

Then another travelling theatrical group, the Little Theatre Company put on a play "The Countryman" in the Town Hall.

The appearance of Turner's English Girls at the town hall was expected to be rather a shocking affair, but The Times says: "The presence of Chief of Police McAulley may have had something to do with the absence of flagrant breaches of morality."

These are just some of the attractions for a few weeks. The old town hall was busy every week. This was long before the movies made their appearance.

One feature of the 1897 winter was the Paterson House Ball, an annual event. The Owen Sound Times of Feb. 25th, 1897, carries quite an extensive account of the ball. The Paterson House was then only six years old, having been built in 1891, and the hotel must have presented a fine setting for the local social lights. The hotel was then under the management of William Matthews who with his wife were quite active socially in Owen Sound.

**"Paterson House Waltz"**  
Music for the ball was furnished by Miller's Orchestra, the leading musical organization of its kind in those years. It was headed by Charlie Miller and his brother, Harry Miller. The music included the "Paterson House Waltz," which was composed by Charlie Miller, who in addition to being a talented orchestra leader, was responsible for some excellent musical numbers of that period. It would be interesting to learn if anyone in the city still has the music for the "Paterson House Waltz."

**Guests Arrived in Carriages**  
The Owen Sound Times of Feb. 8, 1894 describes the Paterson House Ball as follows:

**The Paterson House Ball**  
"In this season's rounds of social events few were looked forward to with more pleasurable anticipation and none passed off with more brilliancy than the Paterson House ball on Friday evening. The magnificent big hotel was given over to the merry-makers and was thoroughly taken advantage of. Shortly after nine carriages drove up to the main entrance and for a time there was a constant stream of guests arriving. Inside, a section of the office was converted into a drawing room, while the spacious dining room had been cleared for the dancers. Upstairs in the parlors the whist players had their quiet nooks. Dancing commenced at 9.30 and continued until 3 a.m. It was on the ball room floor that the brilliancy of the gathering was most apparent. To describe the gowns of the maids and matrons would take a pen of a Clara Belle, or the brush of a fashionable artist. Some were enchanting visionary things, while others, though a little more commonplace, looked particularly charming and appropriate in color and style. The exceptionally excellent taste displayed would have done credit to the most fashionable assembly, while the gowns would certainly have done credit to any metropolitan modiste. The gentlemen were in the most attentive mood, and the number who did not miss a dance were not a few."

**Owen Sound "Who's Who"**  
The Times goes on to tell about the ball and gives a list of guests which may be a sort of "who's who" of Owen Sound in 1893. The Times says:

"Supper was served constantly during the evening in the spacious serving room off the dining room, which had been decorated for the occasion. A menu of delicious refreshments—a paragon of culinary art—was thoroughly enjoyed. The stewards, Messrs. G. Inglis, A. P. Northwood, R. W. Evans, J. C. Boyd, F. R. Parker and T. W. Barry, were most assiduous in assisting the host and hostess in their efforts to

make the evening all that could be desired. The following is a list of those who were present: Mr. and Mrs. Arnel, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Arns, Mr. and Mrs. A. P. Bowes, Mrs. J. J. Brown, Miss Bingham (Barrie), Miss Bosley (Mt. Forest), Messrs. T. W. Barry, J. Billings, J. C. Boyd, Reg. Barnhart, Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Creighton, Mrs. B. Creighton, Miss Craig, Miss Caton, Miss Conklin (Mt. Forest), Misses Cressor, Messrs. W. W. Coulter, J. C. Cameron, A. D. Cressor, W. N. Chisholm, A. J. Chisholm, John Chisholm, A. Cuthbert, A. Glegg, John Carson, C. H. Chapman (Toronto), C. Grant Chapman (Sherbrooke), Andrew Campbell (Cambridge), Will Craig, Alex. Campbell, Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Davis, Miss Dobbie, Misses Dick, Messrs. Dowling, Dumulin, Des, D. R. Dobie, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. C. Eaton, Mrs. Elliott (Chatsworth), Messrs. C. Kierle, R. W. Evans, Mr. and Miss Forhan, Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Forester, Mr. and Mrs. T. Grimes, Mrs. Geary, Mrs. G. L. Griffith, (Meaford), Messrs. Geary, G. H. Hair (Meaford), J. H. Holland, Geo. Inglis, Mrs. C. H. Kalland (Chatsworth), Mrs. Kenny, Messrs. P. H. Kilbourn, G. S. Kilbourn, Mr. and Mrs. F. N. LePan, Mr. and Mrs. John Lemon, Miss Lemon, Miss Law, Messrs. H. C. P. LePan, A. Luxton, Mayor McLaughlin, Dr. and Mrs. Macbell, Mr. and Mrs. George Munro, Mr. and Mrs. John McQueen, Miss McQueen, Miss Milbourn, Miss G. McDougal, Miss Matthews (London), Messrs. A. G. MacKay, John McCullough (Hamilton), J. K. McLaughlin, W. S. Middlebrock, George Miller, J. E. Murphy (Hepworth), Miss Nash, Miss Notter, Messrs. John H. Notter, A. P. Northwood, Dr. and Mrs. Oldham (Chatsworth), Mr. and Mrs. John Pringle, Miss L. Parker, Miss Jo Parker, Misses Paul (Meaford), Messrs. F. A. Parker, F. B. Plunkett, (Meaford), Mrs. /Robertson (Chicago), Misses Minnie and Howard Robinson, Messrs. O. P. Rowland (Collingwood), John Ramsay, J. P. Raven, Mr. and Mrs. Snel, Mrs. Shipman, Miss Spooner, Miss Sprague, Miss Scully, Messrs. T. Scott, C. T. Sutherland, W. B. Stephens, H. E. Smith, H. Stephens, F. D. Sherman, Mr. and Mrs. Jno. Taylor, Miss Taylor, Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Taylor, Miss Tidd (Toronto), Messrs. W. E. Todd, H. G. Tucker, Mrs. D. P. Urquhart, Mr. and Mrs. J. P. Vieg, Mrs. W. N. Wright, Misses Warrilow, Messrs. Walker, Wright, Wilson.

**Citizens' Own Band Ball**  
The same issue of the Times tells of the Citizens' Own Band Ball, held in the town hall. The Times says it was a gay event and that "bumbling" hung on the walls, the stage turned into a pretty drawing room made the old place look its best." The committee in charge were: Ben Green, T. Campbell, Charles Miller, S. Quinn, M. Kennedy, Harry Miller, Lincoln Fleming, J. Carson, Andrew Cuthbert, George Rankin, D. Young, J. Leslie, W. McCormick and J. Carry.

A few weeks later the Calico Ball was a big event in aid of the hospital. Costumes were supposed to be made of cotton but the Times says that "from the gallery there was a notion that sheet silk and velvet

Feb. 17-1967

100 Years Ago

Owen Sound "made" the Montreal Gazette 100 years ago. It wasn't a very complimentary item and it does indicate this was not exactly a nice quiet community in those early days when it was well known for its many saloons. The item reads: Owen Sound village is beset with rowdies who go about breaking down doors and fences and whose nocturnal yelling keeps the inhabitants in a fright. The item is included in a centennial reprint in the Gazette.

Another item showing the humor of the time tells how the mayor of Quebec was made the victim of a hoax. "It appears," the item says, "a large number of fictitious invitations to dine with his worship were forwarded through the post. It is calculated a couple of hundred were received in the Lower Town. A number of guests were made aware of the fact (of the hoax) only when they reached the Mayor's residence for the dinner."

## RECEIVE LETTERS FROM GREECE

1951  
In appreciation of a 20-pound parcel of used clothing mailed to Greece about two months ago by the W.A. of Sarawak United Church, Mrs. A. D. Huston of East Linton, secretary, has received two let.

## Owen Sound Market in Horse and Buggy Days



Here's the Owen Sound market, and the buyers went from one to the other to make purchases. The horse and buggy days. The market was as busy as today.