

# YESTERDAY

News from the Tavistock and District Historical Society

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## **Merchants Softball Team Wins All-Ontario Championship - 1965**

BACK ROW: Lorne Yausie, mgr., Murray Hamilton, Harry Baechler, Jim Weicker, Keith "Monk" Wagler, Jim Yausie, Bill Lichti, Murray Junker, Fred Currah, coach  
FRONT ROW: Terry Schwartzentruber, Roy Seyler, Jim Kaufman, Bill Currah, Wayne Iutzi, Wayne Lichti, Bat-boy: Douglas McDermott.

# Take me out to the ball game!

It took awhile for baseball to catch on in Tavistock. Maplewood and Harrington had teams in 1898. Teams from Milverton, Braemar, Embro and New Hamburg were mentioned in the Tavistock Gazette in 1901 and 1902. The first report of a local game was in 1910 when the “Married Men” played the “Single Men” in Exhibition Park (now Queen’s Park). The game was a hot one with perhaps more fun than competition involved.

In 1911 a meeting was called in Russell’s Hall to organize a baseball club. “The Dutch Nine” was formed under the direction of President Rev. R.A. Eifert and Vice President Dr. F. Cawthorpe with encouragement supplied by Mascot Carl Loth.

One of the games in 1911 between Hickson and Tavistock was described in the Gazette as follows. “The game went four spasms. When Tavistock had successfully weathered their fourth convulsion they had four runs to their credit. There was no order of batting. Whoever was handy to the plate just stepped up and took a swat at the ball, with the result that some of them were up twice and some weren’t up at all. In this way they piled up seven runs and then the moon went behind a cloud and the umpire called the game on account of darkness.”

Soon there were two local clubs, “The Tavistock Tigers” who played as part of the North Oxford Baseball League and a juvenile team called “The Cubs”. The League adopted the National Rules for all games and awarded the Nesbitt Trophy to the championship team.

In what was described in a 1916 Gazette as “the most exciting game of baseball ever witnessed on the local diamond, the fast Hickson team was defeated by the local Tigers by a narrow margin of 3 runs. The game was a pitcher’s duel from start to finish with Tavistock’s Stilwell on the long end of the rope. Anderson for Hickson twirled the game of his life but the Tigers were right there with the willow when a hit meant a run. The game, which was witnessed by about 2,000 people, was enjoyed by everybody and judging by the rooting that took place for both teams it almost equalled a world series game. Bowman behind the bat for the locals played a whale of a game, not letting one ball get past him; Stilwell’s pitching was



**BASEBALL TEAM, HICKSON:** Postcard courtesy of the Henry Fullick estate

superb; Croft’s stabs at first drew great applause from the spectators; Loth was there all the time at second base but was a little weak at bat; Weber at third was not called upon to do much but what he did was done right with the exception of one error; Ferguson in left field starred for the locals by executing the fastest double-play ever witnessed on the local diamond; Ratz in the center garden got everything that came his way; Quehl in right field was there all the time, both in the field and at bat. It would be almost impossible to pick a winner from amongst the Hickson squad as they all played good ball and the only thing that hindered them from winning was the fact that they were up against a better team.”

That spirit of sportsmanship didn’t last long. In 1917, Hickson sent a formal letter of protest to Tavistock claiming that the Tiger Baseball Club had a player who was not eligible to play; that the Tavistock team unnecessarily and deliberately delayed the

game so that darkness interfered; and that the Umpire-In-Chief made a wrong call that allowed a Tavistock runner to score. The Tavistock Tigers considered the charges “absurd and beyond all comprehension of any fair-minded lover of sport”. While the dispute was eventually resolved with the charges annulled, the damage was done. In 1918 it was noted that “things seem to be very quiet in the North Oxford Baseball League this year, especially in the village”. The League continued with teams from Embro, Hickson, Innerkip, Kintore, Lakeside, Ontario Hospital, Plattsville and Thamesford but not Tavistock.

Baseball was still played in the village but with little press coverage. A 1924 report stated that “in all probability baseball will die a natural death here as it does not seem to take well with the majority of sport lovers”.

True at the time. Not true anymore.

Our Speaker Series continues:

## RECIPE FOR SCANDAL

1919 Black Sox World Series Fix

Wednesday, October 23, 2019 - 7:30 p.m.

Zion Hall, Grace United Church

with **ALLEN TAIT**: a member of the Society of American Baseball Research



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## ON THE COVER:

# 1965 Merchants Softball Team wins All-Ontario Championship

*From the Tavistock Gazette, Oct. 6, 1965*

The All-Ontario OASA "B" trophy was won during the weekend by the Tavistock Merchants softball team. Playing at Mactier, Saturday afternoon, and again Sunday afternoon, the local team took two of the best-of-three against the Northland champions. Mactier is about 25 miles south of Parry Sound. The Tavistock team had previously won the Southern Ontario title against Cobourg. This was the fourth year the local squad had competed for the honor.

That Tavistock and immediate community is proud of the team was indicated Sunday

night by the warm reception tendered the tired but happy lads, coach and manager on their arrival from the north. A large number had gathered at the north end of the village to greet the new champions. Headed by the Tavistock Band, and with the team members, coach and manager aboard the fire truck, a parade formed and after touring the main street, headed for the Memorial Hall where civic congratulations were extended the All-Ontario winners on behalf of the village by Councillor William Ducklow, who was master of ceremonies.

Speaking briefly Coach Fred Currah said he

was happy to have been the team coach. He said great team spirit had been shown by the team all season, and they well deserved winning the trophy. William Bannerman, a strong supporter of the team, told the crowd the team was a wonderful group of fine ambassadors for Tavistock, and Reuben Baechler pointed out it took four years to win the championship.

Through the co-operation of the Tavistock Rotary Club and the Men's Club and Board of Trade, Mrs. Ruby Quehl served refreshments to the team and a number of supporters who travelled to Mactier.

## A premier fastball pitcher

Well-known Tavistock area fastball pitcher, Keith "Monk" Wagler was one of twelve inductees into the Waterloo County Hall of Fame on Sunday, May 9th, 1999.

Abner Martin, president of the Board of Governors, acted as master of ceremonies and made the presentations during the

induction ceremony held at Doon Heritage Crossroads, home for the Hall of Fame.

Upon accepting the honour, Keith said receiving it was "a bonus" for playing a sport that was rewarding in itself. He said the award brought back "a flood of real good memories".

**Inducted into the Waterloo County Hall of Fame:**

Keith Wagler, a member of the 1965 OASA Champ Merchants.



*From the Tavistock Gazette, Wednesday, August 23, 2006*

The Tavistock Merchants capped off a great week with a thrilling 3-2, extra-inning win on Friday night, August 18 to capture the International Softball Congress (ISC) II crown. This is the first world title for the Merchants. The week-long tournament started with 35 teams looking to win the title and with a single elimination playoff format the Merchants came up with stellar pitching

and defense along with some timely hitting for the Merchants.

With his dominance all week long, Ryan Cummings earned the Top Pitcher Award, as he threw a total of 36 innings, allowing only 3 earned runs. Also making the All-World-all-star team were first baseman Jeff Roth, and designated hitter Jamie Boyd. This is the second straight All-World Award for Boyd. Jeff Roth also received the Most RBI's award. He led the tournament with 10 RBI's.

## TAVISTOCK MERCHANTS ISCII World Champions

Members of the Tavistock Merchants ISCII Championship team are, left to right: front row: Dan Murrell, Ross Herold, Brad Roth, Dave Kollman, Jamie Boyd, Coach Steve Kaufman; middle row: Reid Yantzi, Assistant Coach Bill Follings, Kevin Thompson; back row: Brent Lange, Steve Cook, Cam Struth, Jeff Roth, Jason Lange, Jamie Rader, Mark McKay, Ryan Cummings, and Todd Wilker. Absent when the photo was taken was Tyler Marshall.

Photo below: Jubilation after the win!



# Food that really schmecks!

Our community is known for many things. We rally around a good cause. We say hello to people we pass on the street whether we know them or not. Everyone is related to everyone else or so it seems. Perhaps best of all is our reputation for food that schmecks and lots of it served in the help-yourself family style.

While there are countless examples of food that schmecks (translated as "tastes very good" from our local Pennsylvania Dutch dialect), let's focus on just three.

## OYSTER SUPPERS

Be honest, you really weren't expecting oyster suppers to lead the list. As far back as 1897 D.A. Vance, owner of the City Meat Market, Woodstock Street North, advertised first-class meat of any kind and fresh oysters always on hand. Family Christmas dinners often featured oysters in the roast turkey stuffing with the "oyster liquor" used for basting the bird. Oyster stew was on the menu 3 days a week at Kruspe's, a local eatery. Women's groups at the local churches hosted oyster suppers as fundraisers.

Perhaps the most interesting oyster suppers were held in Hickson, sometimes served in the cheese factory. The supper that followed the sparrow hunt in 1903 saw the losing side (298 birds) treat the winning side (332 birds) to a delicious oyster supper that was enjoyed by the 12 participants and their sweethearts.

For reasons unknown, oyster suppers fell out of favour. Perhaps the price of 40 cents a quart at Gideon Lippert's grocery store proved prohibitive.

## FUNERAL LUNCHES

At a certain point in your life you start spending far more at time at funerals than at weddings. Some funerals are truly tragic. Others celebrate a long life well lived. In this community the one constant, not to be missed, is the funeral lunch.

For generations we have been a community that feeds people no matter the circumstances and funerals have always brought out the best cooks and bakers and kind hearts. Years ago it was commonplace to take food to the home of the deceased. From the moment word got out that someone had died cakes and casseroles, pies and pasta (we called it macaroni back then), squares and salads and so much more

started arriving in quantity, often unannounced and simply appearing on the kitchen table because the doors were never locked. It was well understood that family (the "freundschaft" in our local Pennsylvania Dutch dialogue) would be arriving from all manner of places and they would have to be fed. Neighbours and friends made certain that no one went hungry.

The day of the funeral service saw a new group in full swing ... the church women. No matter which denomination, the church women were (and still are) a force to be reckoned with, capable of feeding an often unpredictable number of people with little notice.

There's always been a bit of an undercurrent of debate over which style of funeral lunch is better. Is it the Lutherans with their pre-made sandwiches or the Mennonites with their make-your-own? While salmon, egg and ham are favourites all round, the United Church women are singularly noted for their special cheese mixture. Of course, there are relish trays galore holding the sweetest of nine-day pickles to the sourest of dills. The Mennonite churches have always had that "something extra special" on the table. Yes, it's funeral mustard. Homemade funeral mustard.

If you would like to try a perennial favourite, here's the recipe.

- 1 egg
- 1/2 tsp dry mustard
- 1/2 cup white vinegar
- 1 tsp turmeric - optional
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 2 tsp cornstarch
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup warm water
- Cook together until thickened.

*\* Recipe courtesy of "Mennonite Funeral and Burial Traditions" by Marion Roes, copyright 2019*

## SAUERKRAUT SUPPER

The second Wednesday in November is a red-letter day in Tavistock. It's Sauerkraut Supper Day. Preparation starts in September when Tavistock Men's Club members with help from a few wives and friends core, cut and shred 1,200 cabbages and pack them into 45-gallon barrels. With just the right brine, tended daily for the next 6 weeks, the best sauerkraut in the whole wide world slowly ferments until it's time to be the star attraction at the annual roast pork dinner with all the trimmings.

The Men's Club, their wives and friends and lots of community helpers have turned out a first-rate meal for 60 years. Did you know that our famous sauerkraut supper had its start with the Ladies Aid from Trinity Lutheran Church in Sebastopol? The year was 1946. Over 300 diners tucked into a tasty German meal in the beautifully decorated Library Hall. The cost was 60 cents for adults and 40 cents for children. In 1949 the venue changed to the Trinity Parish Hall, now the Men's Club building with over 400 people served. As you were waiting for a seat you could listen to Karl Wittig playing sacred and secular selections on the piano. Attendance figures rose with great regularity and in 1957 the event moved to the Memorial Hall.

Then a new minister arrived at Trinity with new ideas about what should and shouldn't be done. The Ladies Aid Sauerkraut Supper was stopped. It was a good fundraiser but suddenly seemingly not proper for a group of churchwomen.

The Tavistock Men's Club and Board of Trade stepped in and continued the tradition. In 1959 the group held their first Sauerkraut Supper attracting more than 600 diners. Most unfortunately, just as the meal got underway a fuse on the transformer pole on Adam Street blew and power to the Memorial Hall was cut off. Pots of potatoes and sauerkraut and roasting pans of steaming pork were hurriedly taken to nearby homes to keep warm. After a 30-minute wait in the dark, the meal resumed.

All these years later the Sauerkraut Supper is still going strong. This year's date is November 13. As always, it will be a tremendous community success story.

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