

# Royal reps on rural rails

## VINTAGE VIEWS

By Tim Mosher

*Tavistock and District Historical Society*

It's not every day the monarch's representative visits small towns in Ontario, whether a century ago or today, so when Governor General John Hamilton-Gordon and his wife, Lady Aberdeen, addressed the crowd in Tavistock, it was a moment to remember and record on paper and glass.

On paper, the Sept. 24, 1896, the *Tavistock Gazette* reported the royal representatives' visit. The article's title was "Five minutes with royalty." Here are a few excerpts:

It started with "The Tavistock Public School gave Lord and Lady Aberdeen a loyal reception as they passed through here. ... The station was beautifully decorated and a large assemblage of scholars and citizens gathered to do honor (*sic*) to the Governor-General of Canada. ... The children were standing each waving a flag. Then little Lizzy Ballantyne, on behalf of the school girls, presented Lady Aberdeen with a beautiful bouquet (*sic*), and received a kiss in return, and Willie Richardson, for the school boys, also presented Lord Aberdeen with a bouquet (*sic*). The Governor-General then gracefully acknowledged the reception ... and observed the fine farms as the train passed along and approved of the systems of mixed farming. Lord Aberdeen, a Scot, addressed his countrymen ... in his own language ... and Lady Aberdeen spoke directly to the German-descended people in the crowd ... in a few graceful words ... using the



(TOPLEY STUDIO, ARCHIVES OF CANADA)

**John Campbell Hamilton-Gordon, the Marquess of Aberdeen and Temair, Governor General of Canada from 1893-1898. This portrait was taken in 1895.**

purest German."

The reception ended with "three hearty cheers for Lord and Lady Aberdeen and the Queen and all joined in singing God Save the Queen." (Queen Victoria was the monarch at the time, 1837-1901)

Curiously, the article is not front-page news. It was on page three! It wasn't common to publish half-tone photos in newspapers yet, only high-contrast line images and type, so a photo could not accompany the article.

On glass, East Zorra-born photographer Adrian Murray's timing was impeccable. He set up his large camera with a sensitized glass negative across Woodstock Street on the west-facing upper balcony of the Bauer Hotel. He pre-focused his eight-by-10-inch view camera, inserted the huge new negative in its lightproof holder into the camera on its tripod, and waited for the train to arrive. Murray watched the scene unfold intently and tripped the mechanical shutter at the decisive moment as the Governor-General stepped off the last rail car.

This camera type didn't allow the photographer to look through it once the negative was in place, so he had to estimate where everything would occur before it happened and stand beside his apparatus keenly watching the event unfold. It's the only known photo of this day. Small, amateur, hand-held cameras were not popular for another 15 years, so no one in the crowd took a picture.

No doubt Murray hurried to his Woodstock Street, second-floor studio (where Quehl's Restaurant is today) to develop the negative in his darkroom. He started his business with a bang because this is one of the photos he took during his first year of operation! Murray was well known in the district as a banjo player, poet and hockey player, and was now making his way with his new photo business starting at age 18, the year he took this picture.

Murray captured many interesting details such as the turnstile to keep livestock out of the rail-yards, the bicycle, the sidewalk made of boards and the seeding machine beside the bandstand with advertising for footwear. Curiously, the Tavistock Band was active at the time but there's no sign of them in the picture, nor mention of them in the *Gazette* article. One would think they would have played something to welcome the vice-regal party.

The station master's residence and outhouse are above the crowd with a well-dressed woman on the porch shading her eyes looking towards the gathering. The freight yards and a cattle chute to move livestock in and out of the

rail cars are in the distance to the right of the station and a curious male onlooker observes from afar on the bottom right. Naturally, there are multiple Union Jacks and what seems like a large variation of the Canadian Red Ensign flag hanging from the station's characteristic deep eaves.

Anyone can see this picture and read the full *Gazette* account of the day on the Tavistock and District Historical Society's website. The site gives easy access to the Lemp Studio Collection, where you can see this picture. Importantly, the mounting of this photo was signed by Murray in his cursive handwriting using a quill pen dipped in a bottle of ink. Most photos in the collection are not signed, so it's especially difficult to know which of the eight early cameramen (no women) captured each scene.

John Lemp's photos are usually easy to identify because he was the only local person taking professional photos from 1905 to the late 1940s. Murray was active from 1896-1903. After he closed shop, Murray went into real estate in Fort Erie and later became the executive secretary of the Elizabeth, N.J., chamber of commerce, retiring from the position five decades later.

A brief moment in time that will outlive us all, thanks to the invention of photography and Adrian Osmond Murray, who passed away in 1980 at age 102.

**Last week's History Mystery:** The photo was of a 1920 group of lawn bowlers on the Tavistock green posing with their bowls and target ball. The question was "What do young lions, tigers and house cats have in common with lawn bowling in Tavistock?" In paragraph four, I noted that we used a variation of the word "jack" to refer to the small, white target ball, but I didn't say what the variation was. The first reader to answer this correctly was Connie Hitzeroth of Tavistock, noting that it's also called a "kitty."

**This week's History Mystery:** This question is open to all ages. The first electricity in Tavistock came from the J.G. Field Woolen Mill steam-powered generators in 1911, as noted in the 1967 local history book *Fact & Fantasy*. The Governor General's visit was reported by the *Tavistock Gazette* to have happened on Sept. 24, 1896, so why are there wires and poles in this photo? The first person to send the correct answer to me at [tim\\_mosher@hotmail.com](mailto:tim_mosher@hotmail.com) will have their name, their community's name or rural route number published in the next edition. The deadline for answers is next Tuesday at 9 a.m.



(PHOTO BY ADRIAN OSMOND MURRAY; LSC SCAN #0178)

Photographer Adrian Murray started his career with this striking photo at age 18. Good exposure, excellent contrast, sharp and packed with interesting details, but the focal length of this lens was a little short, so it created a distant view. He was Tavistock's resident photographer from 1896-1903, pre-dating John Lemp.



(PHOTO BY ADRIAN OSMOND MURRAY; LSC SCAN #0178)

This enlarged view of Murray's photo shows a man in a top hat, thought to be the governor general, as he alighted from the east-bound train with his wife, Lady Aberdeen. Dignitaries greeted them on the platform and local citizens crowded – some precariously – to have a look and hear their brief address.

## SUDOKU SOLUTION

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