

# HISTORY OF ELMVALE SKATING RINKS



by JESSIE THOMPSON, 1973  
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## THE HISTORY OF ELMVALE

### Introductory Page

In 1973, an historical committee of four senior citizens, W. H. Archer, Mesdames Jessie Beardsall, Pearl Beardsall, and Jessie Thompson, was formed for the purpose of compiling a history of the Village of Elmvale.

The task was difficult because the pioneers of the village had passed away and also many of the next generation. Fortunately, copies of the local weekly papers had been preserved by the editors and much information was obtained from that source. Appreciation is due Mr. A. Markle of The Lance for making these papers available. Other items of information were procured from people whose families were interested in various topics included in the history. To those who contributed material by providing booklets or pictures, I wish to thank them.

No doubt some history has been omitted but we collected what we could and hope the readers will find it enlightening and interesting.

Jessie Thompson

me cometh a builder, tell him I too have known".

The writer is indebted to Mr. Harvie Ritchie and Mr. M. J. Lawson who have kindly dug into their memories to unearth some facts of our village which may be interesting to the members of the 1944 Board of Trade on this their fifth anniversary and may their organization continue to flourish for another five - nay - ninety-five years.

### Skating Rinks

The first rink, in Elmvale, belonged to Mr. Tweed and was burned in the fire of 1895. It was located at the rear of Tweed's Hotel, now the Palace Hotel.

In 1896, Alex Stewart erected a skating rink, 50 by 175 feet, on the west side of Maria Street between Peter Street and George Street. The building was a continuous arch from the ground up, and the whole building was shingled. The rink was lighted by 25 large windows. The grand opening was on Christmas Day, 1896. Admission - 10¢.

The door was in the east end, with dressing rooms on both sides. Several years after the opening, a "player organ" was installed in the balcony at the east end. It had large brass horns turned toward the ice, and when the volume was turned up, the music could be heard out on the street. There were a few benches for spectators at both ends but there were no walkways along the sides.

A temporary floor was placed in it for the summer, converting it into a large hall.

In either 1902 or 1903, gasoline lamps were suspended in the rink for night skating, at which time, a Mr. Mills was the manager. For the season of 1904-05, the Elmvale Curling Club rented the rink, and arranged for skating three nights a week, (one of which was Saturday night).

Skating commenced at 8 o'clock and the rink closed at 10:00 p.m. Hockey practice was held from 6:30 until 8:00 on skating nights. The Curling Club reserved the right to cancel skating or hockey practice whenever there were hockey matches, bonspiels, or carnivals.

In 1909, Mr. McQuay was manager and, in the late "teens" or early twenties, Mr. B. Greenbank was the caretaker.

This rink served the village and surrounding district, for about 35 years. The wood sills, on the wet ground, began to rot away and the walls became unstable. In the early thirties, Mr. Herb Ritchie, the owner, thought the building unsafe and had it torn down. In it there was much good building material which Mr. Ritchie sold.

For a number of years, Elmvale had no covered ice surface. A Community Rink, an outdoor one, was located to the west side of the Fire Hall in the parking lot.

For nearly two decades, the need for a rink in the village, was discussed by the township and village councils, and service clubs. In 1951, the Elmvale and District Lions' Club, working closely with Flos and Elmvale Councils, was responsible for having the Memorial Rink built, as a memorial to the soldiers, who had died fighting for King and Country in the two World Wars.

#### A Community Effort

The building of the Memorial Arena, in 1951, was an example of "community co-operation". A site, in the Agricultural Park, was donated by the Fair Board. Trees, which grew along Township Roads and, large enough for logs, were donated by the Township Council. Volunteer labourers spent many hours, with axes and crosscut saws, preparing the trees for the sawmill. In March, 1950, nineteen teams of horses hauled the logs to Copeland' Mill, where, at no charge, were sawn into lumber. The lumber was used for cement forms and back boards.

The Elmvale Planing Mill supplied a cement block making machine in the evenings. Some of the Planing Mill staff and volunteers made half of the required number of cement blocks.

Door to door canvasses were made and provided financial assistance. Others staged variety shows and raised further funds. Alex McAuley, editor of The Lance, published all the various building activities and listed the donations and names of volunteer helpers.

1951



*Memorial Arena and Curling Rink on left*

The Memorial Rink had an ice surface of 85 by 185 feet, slightly shorter than the Maple Leaf Gardens. In 1963, artificial ice was installed.

## Memories of the Rink

"Some years back, the old rink  
Which served generations well,  
Succumbing to ravages of time  
Under the caretaker's hammer fell.

Alas, a few years went by  
When we had no rink at all,  
Then came the open air type of thing  
Hard by the old fire hall.

This fulfilled its purpose  
For a few years or so  
But in order to have a skate  
You must first shovel snow.

The Lions Club was formed  
With the interest of youth at heart,  
And on a Community Arena  
Made a very noble start.

The idea soon caught on  
In village and country 'round  
And soon a suitable building  
Arose right from the ground.

Sure and it took hours of toil  
And many a money donation  
But is now a glowing symbol  
Of Community cooperation.

Thinking of these dear boys  
Whose youth was marred by war,  
The Arena was built in memory  
Of them ----- who went on before.

Though we have the building,  
Skating is uncertain as dice,  
Only when the temperature goes down  
Can we come up with ice.

Our boys enjoy their hockey,  
Play in the little N.H.L.,  
The Squirts, Pee-Wees, Bantams and all  
Try so hard to excel.

But this is hard with no ice  
Till late December  
When all the teams they face  
Are on skates in early November.

It's most discouraging  
For managers and coaches too  
To see their boys lose on this score  
As they so often do.

We need ice made by man  
As by now you must have a notion,  
But it requires work and money  
To put this thing in motion.

Delegations petitioned councils:  
But on this they did agree,  
This cost must not be raised by taxes  
But contributed directly.

Organizations and Service Clubs:  
Have done their very best  
Toward building an ice-fund  
To meet this dire request.

The "Two Hundred Club" itself  
Raised ten thousand for the cause,  
And those who won the weekly jack pot  
Found a real Santa Claus.

Men also worked by sweat of brow  
To get the ground work done,  
But then came that f-in-al push  
Before the battle's won.

A committee was selected,  
They were men without reproach  
Who sat down in consultation  
As to the methods of approach.

The area was divided,  
A week for campaign chosen,  
They advertised by every means  
Sent out canvassers by the dozen.

Twenty-eight thousand was the goal  
These canvassers must collect  
Before the workers could proceed  
With this worthy project.

The committee deserves credit  
Not one chance was missed  
To add a few coppers to the fund  
They even did the "twist".

On the campaign's closing day  
When they added up the tally,  
They found their success demanded  
A glorious grand finale.

A Box Social and dance . . .  
Was quickly arranged  
And Currie's garage into a ballroom  
Immediately was changed.

The boxes were most attractive,  
Showed careful engineering,  
Some men forsook their vocations  
To try some auctioneering.

Most tripped the light fantastic  
As well as they were able,  
Two men were even seen  
Dancing with a table.

All through the years you see  
"Progress" has been the motto,  
If you haven't helped it this time  
Don't you think you ought to?

If Grandma tints her hair  
Her vanity to suffice,  
What can be so wrong with boys  
Wanting Artificial Ice?"

By Beatrice McAuley

In the summer of 1972, the roof of the arena was examined by building engineers, who found the roof in a weakened condition, and, in case of a heavy snow fall, a serious disaster might occur. Immediately after the Elmvale Fair, the roof was reinforced, before hockey season began, at a cost of \$18,000.00 - \$20,000.00.

In 1972, the rink was opened during the summer to those interested in roller skating. The skates were purchased by funds raised in different ways and by donations.

The summer of 1974 was a busy one at the arena. The Elmvale and District Lions" Club financed the renovation of the upstairs room and installed an up-to-date kitchen. Much careful planning and hard work went into this project. The official opening was held on October 8, the World Community Day for Lions International. The keys to the kitchen, were handed to Earl Elliott, Reeve of Flos, by Howard Ritchie, chairman of the committee, which looked after the renovation work. Reeve Elliott, then, handed the keys to Percy Frankcom, chairman of the arena commission.



The ribbon to officially open the new kitchen facilities was cut by Mrs. Howard Ritchie, who cut the ribbon on behalf of all the women, who had over the years prepared meals with less than adequate facilities. She was assisted in cutting the ribbon by Reeve Elliott and Elmvale Reeve, Ken Knox.

Refreshments were served and, those who wished, sat down and had an enjoyable evening playing cards.

The work done for this project cost approximately \$8,000.00.

#### New Seating

In 1974, the Elmvale Minor Hockey Booth and the roller skating committee pledged \$3,000.00 each towards the installation of new seating in the arena. The new seating was purchased from the Barrie Arena for \$3,750.00. The complete cost of installation was estimated at \$10,000.00, including the \$3,750.00 paid for the 96 cement slabs, which were transported to the Elmvale Arena in September, 1974.

In addition to this new seating, the arena's board of governors had granted permission to the arena commission to purchase two used 30-horsepower compressor units from New Hamburg, for a total cost of \$2,000.00. These units sold for about \$5,500.00, brand new.

These compressor units were completely overhauled and one of them was installed following summer, as an auxiliary unit. The second 30-horsepower unit was kept as an emergency replacement, in case of a breakdown.

The present compressor building was enlarged to handle this new 30-horsepower compressor.

The 30-horsepower compressor was used during cold weather instead of the present 50 horsepower compressor. Early in the season and during warm spells, both units were in use.

To handle this enlarged compressor capacity, a new condenser unit was bought by the arena commission. This new condenser cost about \$6,500.00, brand new.

The Elmvale arena was a brighter place in the winter of 1974-75.

New mercury-vapour lighting units were ordered and installed for the coming winter.

The new bulbs were twice as bright as the previous lighting. In addition, the new lighting cut down the power consumption.

The new lighting cost \$2,800.00 but grants from the province were available to cut down the cost a bit.

Before the opening of the skating season, in 1973, some improvements were made at the arena. The project involved resurfacing the rink boards with plastic sheets, plus putting in plastic windows at the south end. The project also involved moving in the four corners of the rink about one foot and a half. The corner renovations meant building a two door set-up at the south end for getting on to the ice surface. The total cost was approximately \$6,135.00 and raised by local organizations.

Flos-Elmvale Arena      1973-74 Financial Statement

The operation of the Flos-Elmvale community arena is an expensive business.

The arena's financial statement for November 1, 1973, to September 30, 1974, shows that total receipts for the arena for this period were \$24,097.63.

Total expense over this same period of time were \$23,439.12.

The following is the financial statement for the Flos-Elmvale community arena for November 1, 1973, to September 30, 1974.

Receipts

Elmvale Minor Hockey	\$ 9,762.00
Figure Skating	1,998.00
Public Skating	562.62
Elmvale Intermediate Hockey Club	1,251.00
Elmvale 7/8 District Senior League	2,277.00
Misc. Ice Rental	5,342.75
Telephone Collected	2.26
Gas Sold	3.00
Kitchen Rent	86.00
Roller Skating	943.00
Roof Grant	1,250.00
Molson's Donation	200.00
Township of Tiny Grant	100.00
Sale of Tires	20.00
Minor Hockey Booth	300.00
Total Receipts	<u>\$ 24,097.63</u>

Expenses

Insurance	\$ 850.87
Sewers	2,572.00
Telephone rent and Long Distance	202.97
Jack Dixon, Gas	176.34
Consumer's Gas	1,163.08
Misc. Expenses:	
Lions Club	200.00
Ont. Recreation Serv.	30.00
Music Association	10.00
Express	5.25
Service Charge	2.60
Other	22.50
	<u>270.35</u>
Hydro	2,357.70
Water	52.50
Arena Manager Salary	5,587.92
Other Labour:	
Treasurer	150.00
Plant Care	444.00
Ice Care	374.84
	<u>968.84</u>
Tractor Repairs	440.03
Clock Repairs	324.15
Ice Machine and Ice Plant	4,923.49
Supplies, material repairs	1,529.06
Compressors and Transportation	2,015.00
Total Expenses	<u>23,437.30</u>

Bank Balance November 1, 1973	3,140.87
Plus Receipts	<u>24,097.63</u>
	27,238.50
Less Expenses	<u>23,439.12</u>
	3,799.38
Transferred to Premium	3,000.00
April 30 Interest	80.13
Total Premium Savings	4,222.14
Current Account	799.38
Balance on Hand	5,021.52

During the winter of 1974-75, some gas heaters were purchased from the proceeds of the Minor Hockey Booth. and installed to heat some of the seats on the west side. The installation was on a trial basis and proved so satisfactory that the project was continued until all the seats were heated which added much comfort to the spectators who patronized the hockey games and ice shows.

Early in 1975, a licence was granted by the Provincial Government to the Elmvale Arena Commission for the purpose of raising \$20,000.00 to install the concrete seats and dressing rooms. Four hundred and ten books, each contained twenty, five-dollar tickets, were quickly sold. The lottery ran for twenty months and gave ticket holders sixty chances of winning \$200.00, \$300.00 or \$500.00 per month.

Plans were made to start the seating project immediately after the hockey season. However, on April 13, 1975, a fire started in the tractor room where some gasoline ignited. The flames soon reached the roof and damaged about one-third of it. The ice-scraping equipment and tractor, tables owned by the Lions' Club and Agriculture Society stored above the tractor room were destroyed. Damage was done to the plastic boards along the north end, the time clock, and the inside roof of the curling rink. When the fire started, a hockey game was in progress; players and fans were evacuated without any injuries. Elmvale-Flos Fire Department, aided by Wasaga Beach fire truck, worked to prevent the fire from spreading.

The summer of 1975 was a busy time and, as a result of much work, the renovated rink was almost fireproof. The entire building was covered by steel roofing, fireproof doors, concrete seats, and an outside building for the tractor and Zambonie made the rink a much safer building.

A list of expenditures as a result of the fire were as follows:

New roof	\$ 144,547.00
seating	25,000.00
condenser	7,700.00
lighting	3,000.00
furnace	1,500.00
sound system	1,500.00
boards	1,200.00
assorted other costs	<u>2,253.00</u>
Total	\$ 186,700.00

Money made available to pay for renovations was as follows:

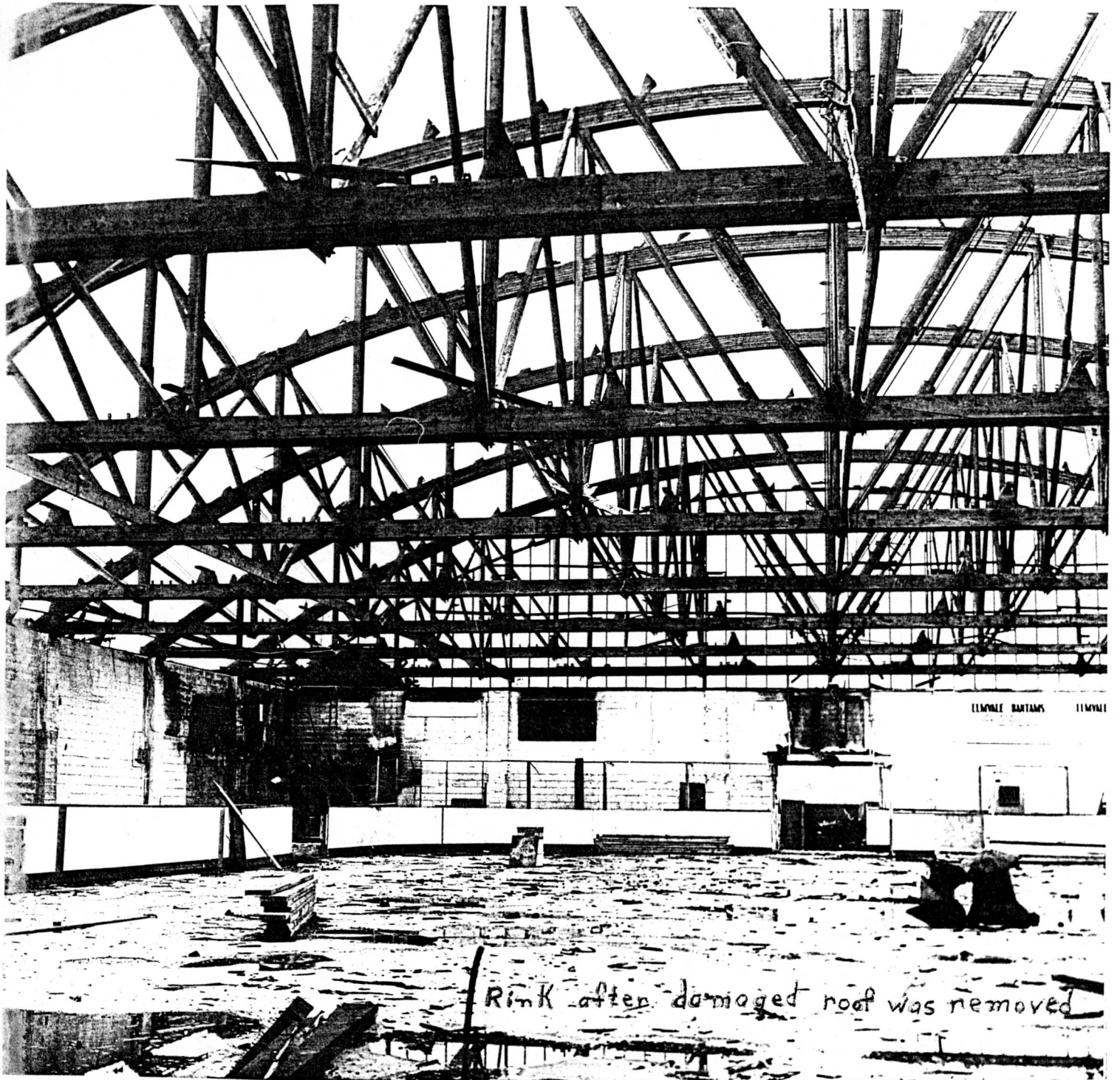
insurance claim	\$ 100,000.00
local lottery	20,000.00
minor hockey allotment	3,000.00
Elmvale Maple Syrup	1,500.00
Arena booth	1,200.00
Wintario grant from the Department of Culture and Recreation	54,911.00

The cheque for \$54,911.00 was received from Queen's Park on November 25, 1976.

The official opening of the refurbished rink was held on November 7, 1975, with a dance, bar, and bingo. M.P.P. Arthur Evans assisted Elmvale Reeve, K. Knox, who, together, cut the ribbon to officially re-open the rink.

A new entrance was erected in 1977 and was completed in time for the Elmvale Fall Fair.

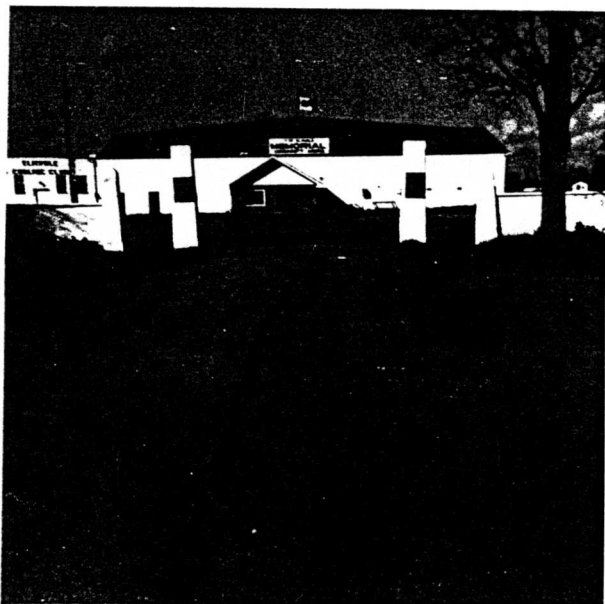
The arena became an important centre in the community and, as a result of the fire, there was no place to display fair exhibits in 1975 and, thus, for the first time in one hundred and sixteen years, Elmvale Fair was cancelled. In order to have the "automobile draw" previously held in the arena, the Lions' Club set up large tents in which to conduct the draw and other attractions in connection with the event.



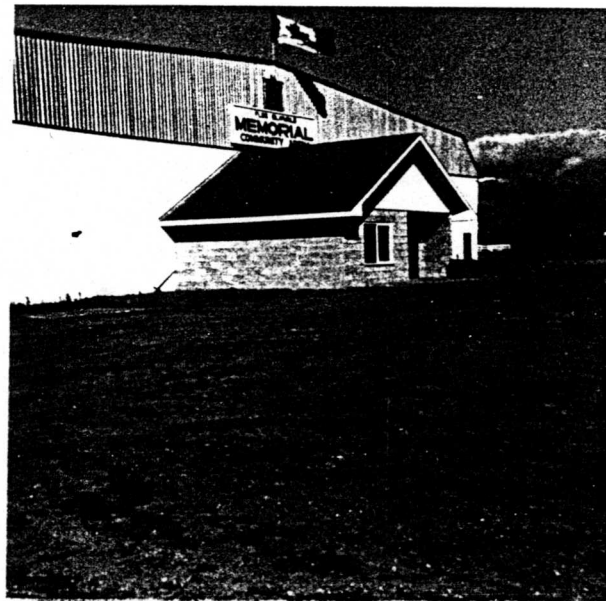
Rink after damaged roof was removed



Fire at Arena Built in 1951 Fire, April 13, 1975



Renovated Rink after Fire in 1975



New Entrance to Rink Erected in 1977