

THE TAVISTOCK MEN'S CLUB

1937-2024

Tavistock Men's Club Hall
Home of the Tavistock Men's Club
78 Woodstock Street North, Tavistock, ON N0B 2R0
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Our History

On December 3, 1937 a group of local gentlemen in the village got together at the Arlington Hotel to discuss forming a Service Club in the community, under the aegis of the Rev. J. W. Siebert, pastor of Zion Evangelical Church and Norman Small, principal of the Continuation School. These men entertained various scenarios in their quest to find an appropriate organization to suit the community's needs. Initially they had considered the International Lions Club with an annual fee of \$35.00, but after considerable discussion it was decided that the future members of the club couldn't afford the annual fee since the weekly salary of a worker at the largest manufacturing business in town was only \$12.00 per week. So what would they do? In their wisdom, they decided to form their own Tavistock club. The trouble was that no one had any experience in this type of venture. The decision was made that they would hold an organizational meeting at the Arlington Hotel on April 26, 1938.

Well, 26 men attended the meeting that was held in the beverage room of the Arlington Hotel and after discussing various scenarios, they elected a slate of officers. Norman Small was president, Jim Francis was vice president, Gordon L. Ratz was second vice-president, Robert Rudy was treasurer, Hart Brown was secretary, and three members were elected to the board, Rev. Wes Siebert, Wilfred Corp and Dr. H. M. Taylor.

These gentlemen were responsible for the setting up of the Club as well as writing up a constitution. It's aims were to foster Fellowship, Civic Enterprise, Community Service and Knowledge. Political and partisan activities were banned. Membership was open to all males of legal age. They decided to hold 10 meetings a year, omitting July and August, and the yearly membership fee was seven dollars, five dollars for the dinners and a two dollar administration fee. The dinner meetings were held on the third Thursday of the month, initially in the Arlington Hotel. The hotel supplied the full course meals including pie and a scoop of ice cream for fifty cents. Since there wasn't much beer consumed at the meetings, this arrangement only lasted a short time and the decision was made to hold the meetings in the library basement and have the meals catered to by various groups in the community.

Throughout the years the Club has been a positive influence in the community. Since 1938 they have sponsored Boy Scouts, Wolf Cubs, Brownies and Girl Guides. In the early years the Club held an annual Christmas Party for local children with "talky movies" at the Community Hall. From this format developed the annual Santa Claus Parade on the last Saturday of November with candy packs for all of Santa's young friends.

When Tavistock celebrated its Centennial in 1948 the Men's Club added to the celebration by installing the first flood lighting in Queen's Park. In the 1940's the Club sponsored the annual "Night of Stars" in the park and featured groups like the "Happy Gang" and up to 2,000 people would attend these functions.

In 1971 the Men's Club acquired a permanent home by purchasing what is now known as the "Men's Club Hall" from Trinity Lutheran Church.

In 1976 the Club purchased a tractor for cleaning the ice at the local arena.

Downtown Tavistock has also benefited from the Club's initiatives. We have refurbished the fountain at the main intersection, supplied benches for the convenience of our citizens, supplied trees in the business core to improve the streetscape, supplied and installed the 50-foot flag pole and proudly supply the flag that waves high above the intersection for all to see. During the Christmas season this pole also acts as the trunk of our annual Christmas tree.

The Club is also a proud sponsor of an All-Candidates Meeting prior to each municipal election since 1991.

Our largest contribution to the community occurred in 1996 when we donated \$55,000 to the building fund of the new arena.

The Club hosted the famous annual Roast Pork and Sauerkraut Supper with all the fixin's.

In 2004 we constructed our new "Kraut Haus" for the processing and storage of the sauerkraut. The Men's Club took over the Annual Sauerkraut Supper from the Ladies Group of Trinity Lutheran Church in 1959. Since that time the Supper has been the main fundraiser for the club and the number of satisfied customers has greatly increased.

The annual Sauerkraut Supper was held the second Wednesday of November. Men's Club Hall, 78 Woodstock St. N.

This was held at two venues, the Memorial Hall and Quehl's Restaurant. It was served at tables, country style. The 1,230 pounds of pork was roasted at Quehl's and on Wednesday morning it was sliced and stacked in roasting pans to be heated to perfection for the dinner. The juices obtained from the roasted pork were added to the containers of sauerkraut as they are heated to give it the unique flavour that everyone enjoys.

The coleslaw was processed from fresh Ontario Cabbage and smothered in a mouth-watering secret mixture of herbs and spices. The 32 pails of peeled Ontario potatoes were boiled by our members. Along with this we served two-tone bread which was locally baked. This was topped off with locally baked "schnitz" apple pie and cheese.

All this food was served by a large number of hard-working volunteers from the community. We had a large number of takeout orders and also delivered a large number locally to shut-ins.

Since the appearance of Covid we have been offering a drive through pork chop dinner with our famous sauerkraut and all the "fixin's" in place of the roast pork. This still takes place on the second Wednesday of November and uses the Tavistock Memorial Hall as the drive thru location.

We also sponsor an "All-you-can-eat Fish Fry" the first Wednesday of June.

Roadside cleanup is also one of our annual projects.

We end the year with a Ladies' Night and Christmas dinner for everyone to enjoy.