

11 Dec 1868 – 8 Apr 1962

Barrie Examiner, 04 Apr 1946, p2c3-4: "Fred Grant And His Collection Of 250,000 Clippings Coming Here Gathered Over Period Of 65 Years

(From the Daily Times of Victoria, B.C., March 20, 1946 [20 Mar 1946])

Brushing the dust from what is possibly the biggest little private 'encyclopedia' in the world, Fred W. Grant, 1016 Princess Avenue, looked back over 65 years of newspaper clippings Wednesday afternoon, prior to shipping them east to his home in Barrie.

A unique collection begun by his mother Dec. 20, 1866 [20 Dec 1866], and carried on for 65 years by himself, Mr. Grant possesses 80 books with an estimated 200,000 to 250,000 clippings, covering every subject under the sun. They represent 75,000 columns of newspaper space, he said.

'I specialize in everything,' is Mr. Grant's motto where his scrapbooks are concerned. 'They are a regular encyclopedia, boiled down. Everything worthwhile that happened in the past 65 years is noted here.'

It is the biggest private collection of scraps in Canada. I have 15,000 pictures of Barrie and all my books are going into the archives at home,' said Mr. Grant who is thinking of writing a book on his native city, when he returns in April. . . "

Examiner, 16 Jul 1950, p1c6-8: photo: "Clippings Fred Grant Collected In Lifetime Travels Are Microfilmed" by Vince Parr; bio of Grant;

Examiner, 29 Aug 1956, p1c1-3: photo: Barrie to honour Fred Grant by renaming Post Office Square Fred Grant Square; Grant 89; tribute to Grant "in saving the history of the town from oblivion"

Examiner, 16 Nov 1956, p1c5: at Council: Monday 12 Nov 1956: street naming bylaw defeated, including Post Office Square to Fred Grant Square; Ald Coughlin wanted to use the names of former mayors as agreed by council; Grant name change caught up in the naming of other streets; will come back to council;

Examiner, 12 Dec 1956, p1c1-3: photo: Fred Grant birthday, 90, yesterday 11 Dec 1956: bylaw on naming of Fred Grant Square to come before council shortly

Examiner, 27 Nov 1957, p1c3: Post office square was named Fred Grant Square earlier in the year

20 Sep 1957: Post Office Square becomes Fred Grant Square;

Examiner, 07 May 1958, p1c6-8: "Citizens' Council To Petition Rezoning Fred Grant Square"

"The next stage in the controversy over the old post office building and Fred Grant Square opened today with an announcement from the recently formed Citizens' Council that a petition was being submitted to Town Council at their next meeting on May 12."

Petition requests Council rezone land owned by town in Fred Grant Square from commercial to municipal

Edwin Wilson, chairman, Citizens' Council

Gives text of petition;

Examiner, 11 Jun 1958, p1c1-3: photo: Fred Grant in front of Post Office; wreckers already in building – XXXXXXXXXX

Examiner, 28 Jul 1958, p9c1-5: photo: 3: Fred Grant on Old Post Office Square

"Though requested several times by many Barrieites to take part in the recent discussions regarding the future of what was called 'The Old Post Office Square,' this writer has considered it better policy to remain in the background, primarily on account of being more or less personally connected with the proposed changes.

However, now that the question has been thoroughly discussed by many more or less prominent present-day Barrieites, I should like to say something along the line that the old-time Barrieite, only a few of whom are now living – here or elsewhere – thinks about it, and they are the ones who originated the idea, and completed it, too."

Post office square mis-named; originally The Station Gore

"But after considerable experience in reading of local doings, I long ago decided that there is a very large section of the residents now here, both business men and merely citizens, who know very little regarding Barrie's earlier doings. And they were the people who 'made' Barrie."

"the very best homes still standing in the town were erected about 1870 or 1875"

75-90% of Dunlop Street business blocks date from the fires of 1873 and 1875

p9c4-5: "And if time and space permitted, there are many, many more important events which could be referred to in connection with the 'Old Post Office Square,' and which to myself and many other real old-timers brings a feeling of sadness akin to the loss of a dear old friend / who can never be forgotten (or replaced) by something that some 'Johnny Come Lately' thinks much better."

Examiner, 05 Sep 1958, p10c3-5: letters to editor: 3: including one that wonders why the square was named after Fred Grant and not Memorial or Veterans' Square; this led to an editor's note defending Fred Grant

P10c4: "...I feel sure that 99% of the Barrie citizens will agree with me. At least they know that Canadians fought in two great wars but know nothing of Fred Grant." – Sidney G. Smith

Examiner, 17 Sep 1958, p2c2: editorial: "Seems Logical That Barrie Should Be City":

"...Controversy over the more contentious matter of the future of Fred Grant Square has eclipsed discussion over this matter of city status. Suffice it to say that on this question Town Council was unanimous. Barrie should become a city."

Examiner, 23 Jul 1959, p4c1-2: editorial: "Again The City Council Is Tampering With A Park" – Chamber of Commerce wants to replace old Bayview Park pavilion with a new structure – recalls fight over Fred Grant Square; parks and open spaces valuable;

Examiner, 24 Nov 1959, p2c5: at Council: Monday 23 Nov 1959: streets renamed: Ferris Lane stays; Main becomes Anne; Cundles sideroad becomes Cundles Road; Marion Street becomes Marion Crescent; Ardagh Road and Little Avenue named; Lorena Street; "The confusion at what was once Fred Grant Square is finally settled. The actual park area is Memorial Square. The street to the south-east is named Simcoe Street, as a continuation of the present Simcoe Street. This leaves the strip in front of the Wilson Building, which is renamed Fred Grant Street."

Katherine Elphick, "Fred Grant had passion for preserving images of his home town," Barrie Advance, Weekend Edition, 5 December 1999, p19 c1-4

In downtown Barrie there is a street named after Fred Grant. Its runs between Dunlop and Simcoe Streets, and it's a lasting legacy to a man who was passionate about preserving the history of his home town.

Fred William Grant was born in Barrie on Dec.11, 1868 [11 Dec 1868], of English and Scottish ancestry.

His family home was on Mary Street, and he attended pubic and high school in here [sic]

As a youth, Grant was considered to be one of the town's best athletes. He enjoyed playing ice hockey, football, baseball and, especially lacrosse. In later years, Grant went on to play lacrosse as a professional in Toronto, New York and Pacific Coast cities.

But it was his remarkable collection of photos and stories about Barrie that he will best he remembered for. Not to mention, the hundreds of columns of his own vivid recollections of life in Barrie during the 1870s to 1880s that he published.

The scrapbook collection, which dates back to 1866 was originally started by his mother. When Grant inherited it, the hobby soon developed into a lifetime labour of love.

Local historian Brad Rudachyk describes Grant as: "a true Victorian collector." /

Over the years, the Barrie native literally assembled every bit of information he came across from newspapers and periodicals which concerned Barrie, Simcoe County, and the many people who originated from this area and went on to distinction. He even included clippings about ordinary citizens whose names just happened to show up in print. In short, nothing was considered inconsequential to Grant as long as it concerned his beloved home town.

Interestingly enough, Grant amassed most of the collection, which contains over 250,000 pieces, from thousands of miles away. In fact, there was a period of 60 years when he didn't live in Barrie.

His life of travelling began shortly after he joined the newspaper business in 1885. After working for six weeks as "a printer's devil" (or apprentice) for the Barrie Gazette, and then at the Barrie Examiner as a printer for four years, Grant decided it was time to see the world.

In 1889, at the age of 21, a young Grant left Barrie and headed to Toronto. During the next three years, he worked as travelling printer for The Globe, The World, The Empire News and The Telegram.

An avid sportsman, he was soon lured to Victoria, B.C. to play professional lacrosse. In addition to making \$100 per game, he also worked at the Daily Colonist and Times and spend [sic] a short stint in / Juneau, Alaska. The number of sports-related clippings in his collection illustrates his life-long interest in athletics.

After many years of travelling and working throughout the world, Grant finally returned to Victoria, B.C. There he settled with his wife, Annie. He stayed in Victoria for 35 years, and retired from the newspaper business in 1930. Prior to retiring he worked as a compositor, and later proofreader for the Daily Colonist and Times.

Records show that it was during his stay in Victoria that he gathered the majority of his clippings and original photos. It was also during this time period that he wrote hundreds of columns of his own recollections of early days in Barrie.

His wife Annie died in October, 1928. The couple never had children.

In 1946, he returned to his beloved home town after an absence of nearly 60 years.

Upon his arrival in Barrie, Grant was known to have said, "I left here with \$110 and I've come back with \$20,000. That's not bad for 60 years' savings." /

Over the next several years, Barrie's revered unofficial historian kept busy collecting new items and pasting up hundreds of loose clippings.

Fred Grant passed away on April 8, 1962 [08 Apr 1962], at the age of 94. Up until eight months before his death, Grant had maintained his own room in a private house on Worsley Street, and was a familiar figure in downtown Barrie.

In order for future generations to read and study his collection of photos and scrapbooks, Grant willed every last piece to the Barrie Public Library, together with a bequest of several thousands [of] dollars to ensure the collection's preservation.

Today, the "Fred Grant Collection," rests at the Simcoe County Archives.