

# The Tavistock Mail<sup>©</sup>

VOLUME TWO  
NUMBER 1

Tavistock, Ontario, Thursday, September 4th, 1980

WM. J. GLADDING  
Publisher



PHOTO BY TAVISTOCK PHOTO STUDIO. J. C. SUTHERLAND

## THE TAVISTOCK MILLING COMPANY

**THE DOMINION MILLS** – These mills were erected in 1876, by Messrs. Klein, Kalbfleisch and Co. the present proprietors. The main building, which is of white brick, is 36 x 48 feet and four storeys high. The engine house, likewise of brick, is 22x44 feet. There is also a frame addition to the mill, 30 x 40 feet, 3-1/2 storeys high. It is one of the best looking and most substantial mills in the county of Oxford or any of the adjoining counties. There are five run of stones - four for wheat and one for coarse grains. The mill has a capacity of 125 barrels a day, and room for storing 30,000 bushels of grain. The machinery is driven by a 55-horse power Corlis engine - one of Mr. J. Beck's, of Baden. It is the best fitted and handsomest mill we have ever had the pleasure of seeing.

Mr. Thomas Poehlman. the "Co." in

the above firm, has full charge of the mill, and being a practical man, he turns out A No. 1 flour and gives the numerous patrons of the mill the best of satisfaction. His partners are Messrs. Klein, merchant, and Kalbfleisch, of the Sebastopol flax mill. The enterprising firm are deserving of the extensive patronage which they receive in all their special lines of business.

**The New Hamburg Independent  
August 22nd, 1878**

In 1886 was organized the Tavistock Milling Company, when a mill was erected with a capacity of 125 barrels. During 1893 the property was destroyed by fire. The company at once set to work to rebuild, and constructed, perhaps, the largest building (or milling purposes in this county, being five stories in height,

with a capacity of 200 barrels. This is a fine structure of brick and iron, and receives a large patronage. The business is conducted by Mr. A. E. Ratz and the machinery contained in this great building is a sight for visitors to Tavistock.

**History of Perth County (1825-1902)  
William Johnston**

An important industry of Tavistock is the Etna Roller Mills, which employs twenty hands all the time. It is the largest and one of the most modern mills in the West, and has a capacity of two hundred and fifty barrels daily, which finds a market throughout the Dominion and elsewhere; particular attention being paid to home trade. The mill is run day and night, and turns out what is supposed to be, the best brands in Ontario. It is also one of the largest

mills and was established twenty years ago, at which time it had only capacity of seventy-five barrels per day. This mill property is now valued at fifty thousand dollars.

Mr. A. E. Ratz has been manager and director for the past eighteen years, and during the past nine years has devoted his whole time to its management. He is a native of Gadshill in Perth county, and is one of the most prominent and valued citizens of Tavistock.

**The Canadian Graphic  
October 21st, 1905**

This photograph, taken circa 1894, shows the mill following its reconstruction due to the fire of 1893. Differences in the brick show the extent of the previous year's loss.

Standing in front of the office entrance, among the employees is Manager A. E. Ratz.



# Pioneer Remembers Mills' Beginnings

The late George Malcolm had a mill in Harmony and quite a few from near town patronized him, getting their gristing, etc. done there. The late Leonard Wilker, who, I believe held the reeveship of South Easthope for about twenty years, was a particular friend or Mr. Malcolm's and advised him to come to Tavistock and locate here, being on the railway. Mr. Malcolm agreed to do so if he was given \$500.00. Mr. Wilker handed the list to the late John Klein, for whom I was working at the time and who subscribed \$100.00.

This was in the winter of 1864-65. Mr. Klein then carried on business in a log building on the site now occupied by Messrs. Weitzel & Heinbuch and two or three others. The block, I believe is now owned by Mr. Henry N. Roth. (the Pletsch Block)

The mill was built in 1865. Soon after business began to improve and Tavistock began to expand. Malcolm was apparently doing a good trade and enjoyed the goodwill of the country.

Mr. Henry B. Kalbfleisch, who lived about two miles west of the town, had some difference with Mr. Malcolm. He was of the opinion that Malcolm was making too much money. He induced Mr. Klein and Mr. Thomas Poehlman, who was supposed to be the miller, to commence another mill. Mr. Klein and Mr. Kalbfleisch furnished the money. This was, I believe, in the year 1874. This, of course, boosted Tavistock as we had two mills running. If I remember correctly it was in 1878 that the opposition mill burnt which meant a heavy loss to Klein and Kalbfleisch, particularly to Klein. The ruins were allowed to lie for some years when a joint stock company was formed with the late

Mr. Daniel Larke as president and the late Richard Woon as vice-president. I do not remember all the names of the directors but Poehlman and myself were on the board. Malcolm had lost money while the two mills were in operation and had to quit. The village felt the loss of the two mills very much. The rebuilding of the burnt mill went on very slowly, some of the shareholders had to be sued for their calls and everything

## Malcolm's Mill

TAVISTOCK MILLS – These mills were built in 1866, by Mr. George



Malcolm, who has continued the business ever since. At that time the above establishment was the only one for many miles around, and the proprietor did an extensive trade. The mills are constructed of brick, 40 feet square, with an engine house 20x40. The main building is 3-1/2 storeys high, with four run of stones, operated by a sixty-horse power engine (manufactured by Goldie & McCulloch, Galt). The above mills are conveniently located, being on one of the main streets and only a few yards distant from the B.&L.H.R.

**The New Hamburg Independent**  
August 22nd, 1878

seemed to go wrong. Then arose a suit finding against the company by the Stratford Mill Building Company for equipment, etc., amounting to \$475.00 and some costs. The late James Corcoran was president of the mill building company.

Seeing and believing that the company as such was a complete failure I called some of the best men together including Dr. J. P. Rankin and laid my plan before them. I agreed to pay \$700.00 for the grounds and what was on it and enter into an agreement with these men that I would give the property to any person or company for \$1.00 who would agree to erect a 200-barrel mill in six months and that I would hold the property for that purpose for six months which at a shareholders' meeting was accepted although opposed very strongly by the president and vice-president.

I settled with Mr. Corcoran for the plant at \$200.00 and costs totalling \$120.00. I advertised the above proposition but could not get any valid reply. The late Mr. John Zimmerman and I drove to Plattsville, Goldies and Bridgeport trying to get someone to take over the property.

Being there was considerable opposition to our securing the lots for the siding Mr. Zimmerman and I bought all the lots from the late John Reid and paid him \$450.00 cash for them.

Getting rather discouraged at the long delay at last Mr. Ratz and his brother-in-law, Mr. Schmidt of Newton Brook, came to look at the property and in order to clinch the matter I told them I would throw in my share in the lots for the siding. There was a lot of filling in to be done for the siding so Mr. F. Seigner and myself drove out evenings to secure farmers to come and haul earth which they willingly did.

Mr. Zimmerman took a keen interest in the rebuilding of the mill. In those days all the flour, etc. was shipped in barrels.

Then in December, 1893 the mill was burnt. Mr. Ratz must have lost at least \$20.000.

## About this publication ...

The Tavistock Mail is a special publication of the Lemp Studio Collection to promote the advancement of historical knowledge of the Village of Tavistock and its people. All writings within this edition were taken as direct quotes from existing literature on the Village, principally from the Tavistock Gazette.

All published photos are sold exclusively by the Lemp Studio and prints may be obtained by writing:

c/o Wm. Gladding, Box 70, Tavistock,  
Ontario NOB 2R0 519-655-2341

Shortly after the fire a meeting was called and an offer was made to Mr. Ratz of \$3000.00 of which \$1000.00 was to be paid when the building was completed, \$1000.00 at the completion of the equipment and the third \$1000.00 after the mill had run three months. It did not take long to get the villagers to sign up but it was slow work in the country. The late John N. Roth and Dr. P. Herold did a lot of driving soliciting help in order to complete the amount. There was a second meeting held of those who had the management in hand and included Messrs. Zimmerman, Fleischauer, Roth, Herold and myself. I was appointed treasurer for the said \$3000.00.

At the second fire in 1922, Mr. Ratz must have lost at least \$40,000.00. I am sure had he kept an account of all his improvements, etc. that his loss would have amounted to \$100,000.00 of which amount, I believe, he held insurance amounting to \$60,000. This shows conclusively that Mr. Ratz made a success of his business.

I came to Tavistock in January, 1860; have passed the fourscore years and therefore cannot reasonably expect to encumber the grounds much longer yet I would like to see the milling business, which was begun here in 1865, continued.

Respectfully, F. Krug  
**The Tavistock Gazette, March 27th, 1924**



## THE TAVISTOCK MILLING COMPANY STAFF 1910

This photo was taken by Mr. John

Lemp to be used in an advertisement in the Christmas Number of the Tavistock Gazette, 1910. Employees at the time were (left to right) back row; Geo. Simms,

Elton Krantz, Arthur Ratz, Sam Ratz, John Pfeiffer, Bill Ratz and Charlie Mohr; middle row; Geo. Holmes, Hy. Wilker. Jake Lingner, John Keutsch, John Hahn,

Adam Davis and E. Bowman; front row: Jack Philips, Clarence Kercher, Christine Ratz, Adam E. Ratz, Mabel Ratz, Bert C. Ratz and J. Rawn.