

# Victoria Hall can be restored <sup>172</sup>

B. Napier Simpson, one of Canada's best known architects in the field of restoration of old buildings, says that Cobourg's Victoria Hall can be saved.

Foundation walls "all appear sound and no evidence of failure or settling", he says, and he believes the building can be renovated "for a great number of years of future use and public enjoyment for a cost far less than a new structure offering similar facilities."

Mr. Simpson's report and views were made to J.H.C. Massie, Cobourg, who invited him, on behalf of the Cobourg Opera and Drama Guild to look over the building.

A few months ago a firm of consulting engineers warned town council that the 111-year old building might not be safe. Early this week, Wm. Silver, past president of the Chamber of Commerce, said he would ask Chamber directors to consider helping a "citizens' committee" to save the hall.

Mr. Simpson was ac-

Douglas Simpson, a professional engineer.

Their detailed report is given in today's Sentinel-Star on page 2).

Mr. Simpson wrote to Mr. Massie that "we are inclined to believe that the engineering report you received exaggerates the situation, and I can see this happening for two reasons. The firm engaged is unquestionably one of the

finest in Canada, but knowing their practice, I am inclined to think they are not engaged in the problems of restoring older structures too often, and this would cause some panic.

"It also follows, that when an engineer is asked to spell out and more or less guarantee his work, he is inclined to overload the requirements in order to protect his reputation. This protects his reputation, but at the same time the owner is paying dearly for this insurance."

Mr. Simpson warned that there may be an "element of risk" in refurbishing an old building as problems turn up in a renovation job, and "somewhere you have to draw the line between guaranteeing the structure's survival, and the logical amount of money that should be spent on the building."

Victoria Hall, he said, "is so large, and naturally a fair bit of construction is required to maintain it."

Mr. Simpson, who is associated with the work of the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario, told Mr. Massie that he would be glad to come to Cobourg to speak to "any interested parties to further the cause of preserving the building."

In his report, Mr. Simpson said there is some rot at the ends of floor joists, the roof trusses over the opera house appear to be basically sound but with some cracking which may have been caused by the drying through the heating system and by a failure to tighten the iron tension members as a matter of building maintenance. There should be some reinforcement.

The walls are good, and the cracking, he feels has been caused by moisture



## The Cobourg

SINCE 1831

COBOURG, ONTARIO



ed, says leading Canadian architect

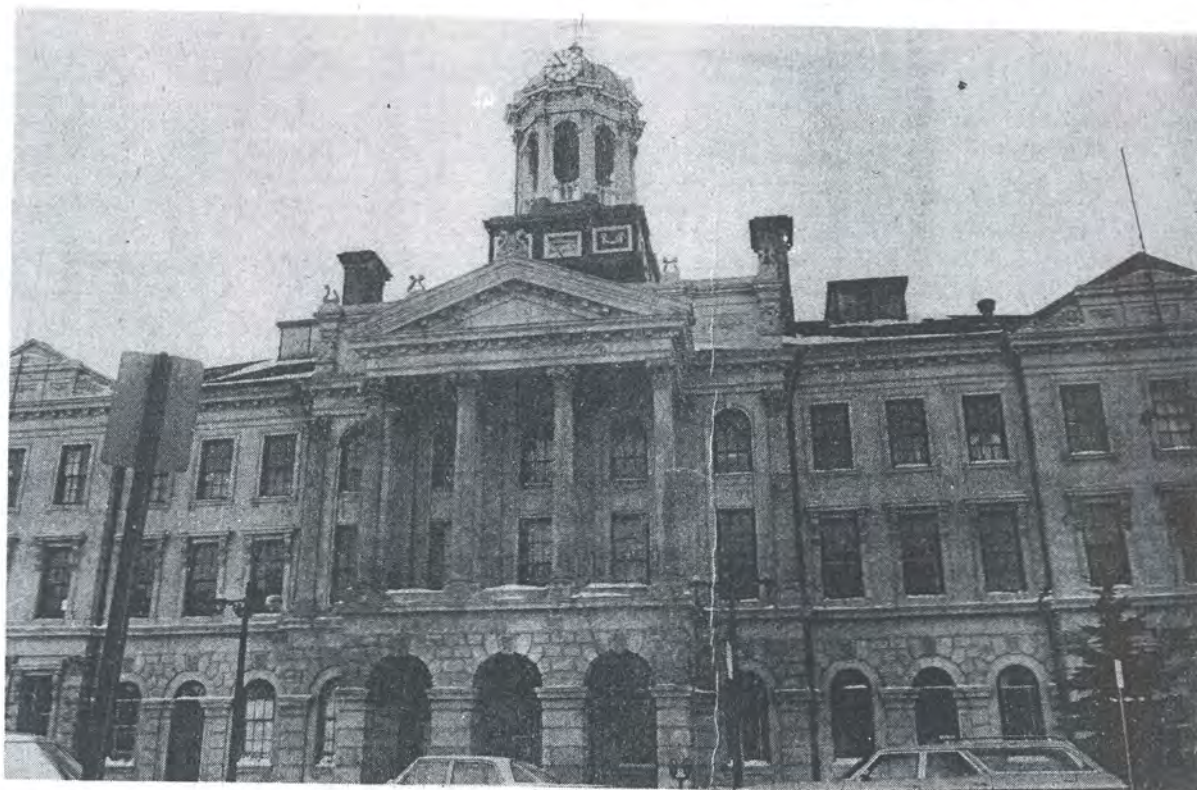
freezing. "The general appearance is not any worse than we have observed in many buildings of a similar age."

He said the main floor joists could be reinforced by an interior perimeter basement wall of concrete block.

The opera house floor, he believes, can be reinforced at the exterior walls. He also suggests removing the sloping floor built over the original structure, as this would eliminate "a great deal of the existing permanent dead load for which we feel the floor was not designed to carry."

(The opera house originally was a ballroom, the sloping floor was added later. It was in this ballroom that the Prince of Wales danced at a gala opening of the building in 1860).

Mr. Simpson suggested reinforcing the exterior walls with steel tension rods.



**Cobourg's 111-year Hall foundations "all appear sound"**

A-Victoria Hall



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