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Photo by Lisa Tallyn

# Former brothel may get heritage status in Norval

By **LISA TALLYN**  
Staff Writer

A house in Norval— a former hotel also believed to have been a brothel— could soon be designated a heritage property.

At a recent meeting, Halton Hills Council members voted in favour of indicating their intention to designate the Forbes House property at 401 Draper St., formerly the British Hotel, under the Ontario Heritage Act.

At the council meeting Pat Farley of Heritage Halton Hills (HHH), which is recommending the designation, said the home was built circa 1840 and it was “remarkable” that a frame building used as a hotel (circa 1857 to 1888) is still standing.

When she mentioned it had also been a brothel, she reminded council that her last designation was a church. “I’ve covered the spectrum,” she said, which sparked laughter from those in the gallery.

Last April, Tom Pettingill, the current owner of the property, approached

HHH requesting the house be considered for designation.

Previous owners have included Major Dr. Armitage Forbes (owned it from 1948-1973) who served with the Royal Army Medical Corps in both World Wars, John Miller, who later became one of the directors of the Toronto-Guelph Plank Toll-Road and James Forster, the grandfather of renowned Canadian portraitist and Norval native, J.W.L. Forster. Robert Colgan, proprietor of The British Hotel and an innkeeper, also owned the property. It was during that time it was believed it was a “house of ill repute” as referred to in a diary entry of a young surveyor that was included in Joan Browne Carter’s book *Norval History 1820-1950*.

In a report on the property, Farley said the house “is an excellent example of an early village home that reflects a vernacular interpretation of Georgian-style architecture.”

The approval to move ahead with the intention to designate was approved by General Committee, Feb. 24, and was ratified by Town council, Monday.



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