

BUSINESS

Managing Editor: Rod Jerred Phone: 905-337-5559 Fax: 905-337-5567 e-mail: rjerred@haltonsearch.com

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Turner Chapel now brimming with high-end antiques

*Historic
Lakeshore Rd.
church gets new
lease on life*

By Wilma Blokhuis
OAKVILLE BEAVER STAFF

New life is breathing at historic Turner Chapel. The former African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, built in 1890 by descendants of escaped black slaves, who came here via the Underground Railroad, has a new life as Turner Chapel Antiques.

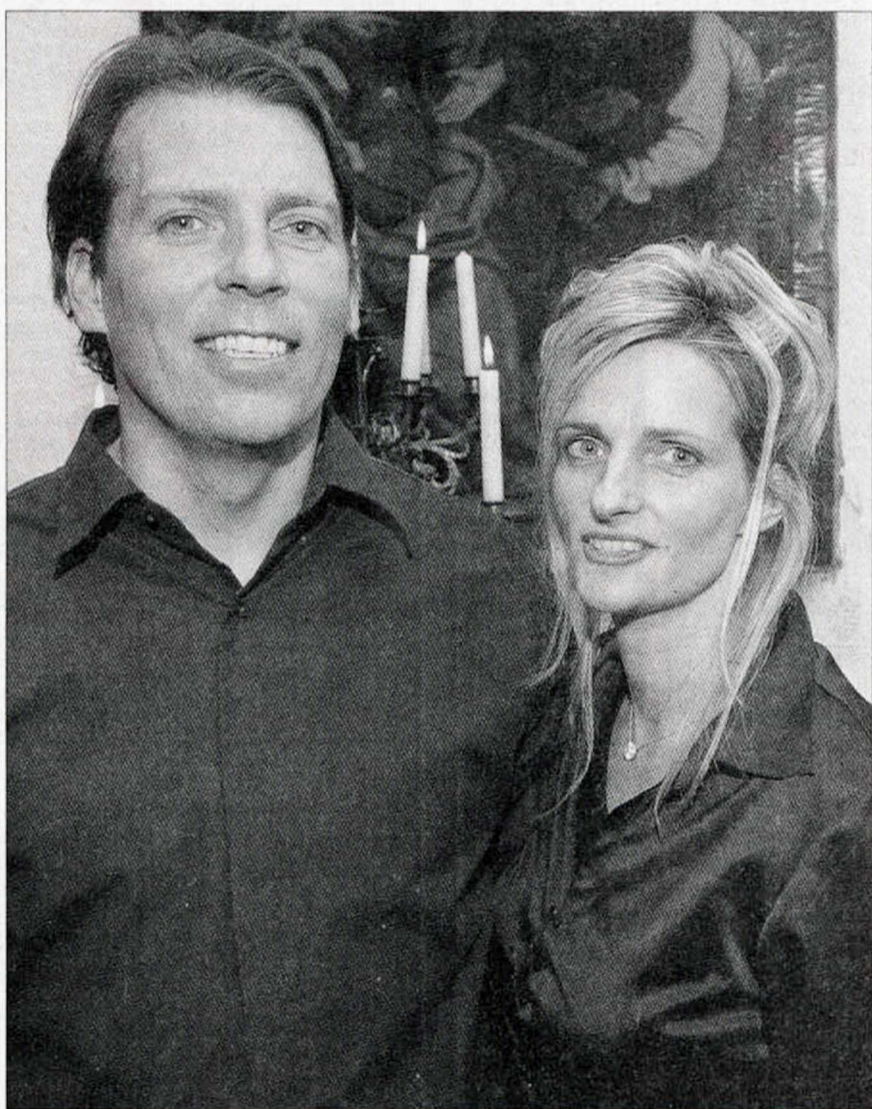
The building at 37 Lakeshore Rd. W., and the new business, is named after Bishop Henry McNeal Turner, first black chaplain of the United States army.

"From 1890 until late in the 20th century, Turner Chapel was the site of services, weddings, theatrical evenings, baptisms, and all the events that filled the lives of Afro Canadians within the Oakville community," said local antique dealer Jed Gardner, who bought the building last summer from the AME Church.

The building, at one time in danger of being demolished, was saved from the wrecker's ball when the Town of Oakville designated it historic in 1987. A large plaque in front of the building describes the history of the church.

Gardner, who operated an antique business in Bronte, purchased the building last summer as a location for his new high-end antique store dealing mostly in furniture and fine art. He has operated his antique business successfully for 10 years, and plans to keep that location open at 100 Bronte Rd., Unit 8.

Inside the chapel, Gardner has arranged the furniture and art, plus an assortment of antique dishes, into 'theme rooms' within an open concept environment. "The 'theme rooms' reflect the different eras and styles of the furniture," said Gardner. He buys his pieces from people who are down-



sizing and through word-of-mouth.

"The chapel, with its charming structure and history, would provide a perfect locale for an antique store," said Gardner, adding he retained the name Turner Chapel in respect for the building's history.

"I restored the building closer to how it may have originally appeared," said Gardner.

He explained the stucco walls and wainscoting are original, however the floor is new.

"My idea is to preserve this building and run a business while respectful of the fact this building was a church."

"It was more than a church," Gardner continued. "It was a theatre and community centre, a multi-func-

tional building for Oakville's Black community."

He also installed an antique iron railing for the steps leading into the building.

The by-invitation-only official opening at the end of February for Turner Chapel Antiques was attended by representatives of the Oakville Historical Society and Heritage Oakville, plus 87-year-old Alvin Duncan, a descendant of the founders of the AME Church in Oakville.

"We want to maintain an open dialogue with the historical society and heritage committee people," said Gardner.

Turner Chapel is the third building Gardner has restored. He has done two century homes in Bronte.



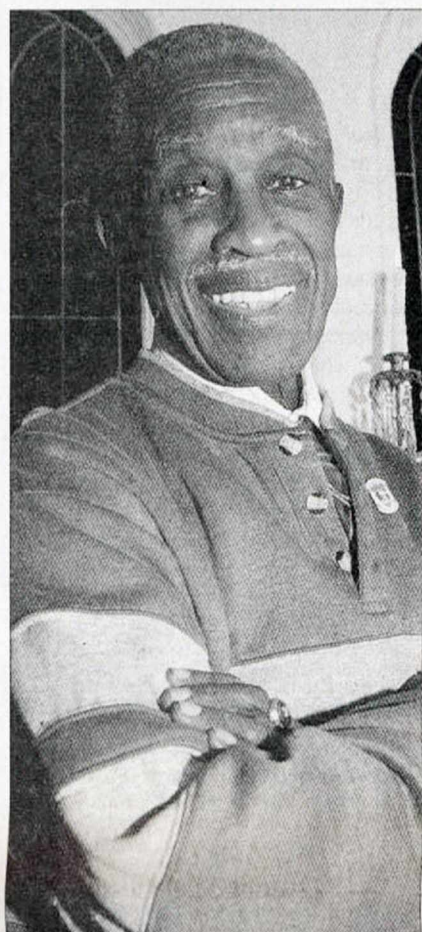
Jed and his sister Andrea Gardner celebrate the official opening of Turner Chapel Antiques, left. The historic chapel will also serve as a base for Andrea's interior decorating consultancy business. Above right, Edith Dunn looks at some of the antiques on display inside the chapel. Right, Alvin Duncan remembers when his father was an organist at the church and his grandfather was a minister.

The chapel will also serve as a base for his sister Andrea Gardner's interior decorating consultancy business. She has operated her business at her brother's Bronte location and from home.

The siblings decided to continue working together as "we operate complementary businesses."

With the purchase of Turner Chapel came the manse at 41 Lakeshore Rd. W., a house believed to be built in the 1930s and now used by the Academy of Healing Arts and Wellness Centre, a school and gift shop geared to improving one's health using natural products.

Photos by
Chantal Ayotte
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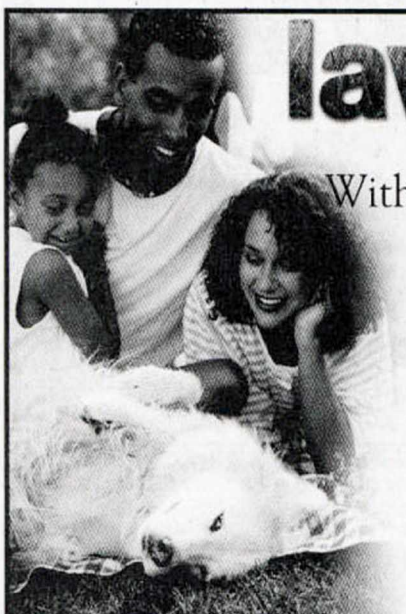
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Carrier of the Week



Eric Lesiuta

Hi my name is Eric Lesiuta

I have had my paper route with the Oakville Beaver for about 2 months and I enjoy delivering the papers very much. I'm 11 years old and in Grade 5 at St. Bernadette School. I like math, gym and computers. My Favourite teacher is Mr. Thomson.

The Toronto Maple Leafs is my favourite sports team and Mats Sundin is my favourite player. For fun I like going to my friend's house, playing hockey, basketball, soccer, swimming and going skiing. I really enjoy playing outside. My dog's name is Sparky. I have two sisters. My favourite foods are steak and chocolate.

With the points I collect, I hope to get an X-Box.

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**the OAKVILLE
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Film night to focus on FTAA

A number of Halton community groups are hosting a film night next week to shed light on FTAA — Free Trade Area of the Americas.

IDEA Burlington, KAIROS Community Burlington, Wellington Square United Church and the Council of Canadians are hosting *Say No to the FTAA* March 31.

The film session begins at 7:15 p.m. at Wellington Square United Church, 2121 Caroline St. in Burlington.

FTAA could create a new trading agreement between almost 40 states in North and South America.

For more information about the film night, phone IDEA at 905-637-3110.



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