

# Cobourg Heritage

Newsletter of the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario  
Cobourg Branch

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## Cobourg's Old Library Recognized

### Designated as historic building

The Council of the Corporation of the Town of Cobourg recently approved the designation, under the Ontario Heritage Act, of the Old Library at 18 Chapel Street. This was a long overdue acknowledgment of the rich history and quality of the building. The extensive reasons that the designation was recommended by the Local Architectural Conservation Committee were written by LACAC Chair, Bill Halewood, and are repeated in the box.

It is surprising that the Old Library was not among the first buildings designated in Cobourg, as it had landmark status long before designation came into being. It was designed to be one of several important ecclesiastical buildings that gave height to the nineteenth century Cobourg and kept the impression of Sunday lasting through the week. Its first function was as a Methodist Sunday School and assembly hall. Thus it belonged to a family of imposing Methodist buildings that included Victoria College and the present Trinity United Church and helped assert Cobourg's importance in the larger world of Ontario Methodism - a religious movement that reached powerfully into secular society, government and education. (Everyone knows the name of the Cobourg Methodist Egerton Ryerson, who devoted three decades to creating Ontario's system of public education.)

The building continued to play a central role in community life in later years when it became the Cobourg Public Library, and a claim for its historical importance cannot omit to notice its contribution to local literary life and literacy, its meaning to generations of Cobourg children who knew it as a place where kindly women read to them, and its function as a meeting place for community groups such as the "Social Planning Council", which met there to hear speakers and eat bag lunches.

Rick Lovekin's restorations, undertaken in recent years when the building has been superseded as a public library, has not diminished its claims to designation, but in fact enhanced them. Lovekin's work has rightly been celebrated as a model of elegant and sensitive restoration and an inspired reconceiving of function. Internally the old library spaces have been converted into five condominiums and a financial office. Externally, the facade has had a disfiguring addition removed and careful reconstruction of the original entrance. Period integrity has been restored to the appearance of the building and thus to its street, while its use has been thoroughly updated for the needs of modern Cobourg.

LACAC has already expressed its enthusiasm for the restored building in nominations for a Cobourg Heritage Award and a President's Award from the Ontario Historical Society. It is almost an anti-climax now to point out that is worthy of designation. But we do so.

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A sketch by Phil Carter showing how Whitehall would look in a restored condition (reproduced by permission of the artist)

## **Whitehall to remain**

### **Plan requires the support of ACO members**

Once (1821) she was the Belle of the County, the focal point of a 1780 acre prospering farm: she can once again occupy a special place in Northumberland.

The Province of Ontario, through its Heritage Challenge Fund, has given the Town of Cobourg an invitation to submit a worthy heritage restoration project: Whitehall's heritage significance on "Heritage Highway #2" is well documented, and makes it the pre-eminent candidate.

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Some of Whitehall's merits and significance are highlighted in a report by Phillip H. Carter (November 7, 1998), Chair, Advisory Board, Architectural Conservancy of Ontario:

- ◆ One of the oldest buildings in Northumberland County (1798), built by the most influential family (Zaccheus Burnham)
- ◆ A classic Georgian-era house plan in its most pure form
- ◆ Focus(1821) of a 1780 acres prospering farm
- ◆ Historic merit to both Northumberland and Cobourg
- ◆ The building bears witness to "Heritage Highway # 2
- ◆ Unusual box construction-only known 2 storey example in Ontario
- ◆ Fundamental structure of house is sound
- ◆ Excellent condition and exceptional quality of masonry work in fireplaces and corbelled arch supporting fireplace and hearth in the basement
- ◆ Zaccheus Burnham was a Member of Parliament, promoter of the harbour and railways, as well as the founder of the Cobourg and Port Hope Agricultural Fairs

The Town of Cobourg's role would be in "transfer of green space" resulting from the re-alignment of Elgin Street and the re-assignment of a public Jubilee Park to enhance the private properties of the Victoria Place Plaza: the Town is in the unique position to re-apply the park funds and establish a true Heritage Park, its own Heritage Calling Card on Highway # 2.

For the many people who will be employed in this area the park will be an oasis of tranquillity and beauty: our Horticultural Society, Parks and

Recreation Committee and the community in bloom volunteers are up to the challenge of creating a true heritage park.

The ACO will commit to the restoration: the Heritage Challenge Fund will make it possible with a generous grant.

The people of Cobourg can and should decide what the highest and best use for the building is: suggestions have ranged from a hospice, tourism office, multiple commercial uses, a venue for socials and weddings to a Municipal Branch Office: so rise to the challenge and send us your submissions

The Province generally looks kindly on projects that have enthusiastic community support: write the Cobourg Star or the Northumberland News, call your Town Councillors.

At this month's ACO wine and cheese party many Cobourg citizens talked about the excitement in the community when Victoria Hall was restored how Premier Davis and a large Queen's Park entourage came on the train to help celebrate this magnificent achievement of the citizens who supported and believed in the project!

This time the Province of Ontario can come to Cobourg to celebrate their Heritage Challenge Fund's investment in the restoration of the home of a remarkable citizen, Zaccheus Burnham: Member of Parliament, promoter of the harbour: let us begin the partnership that will make his home once again the Belle of the County

*This article on Whitehall was written by ACO Cobourg Board member Johanna ter Woort. Please send your comments or suggestions in support to:*

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Cobourg Public Library  
May 3, 2005

### Notice of AGM

The ACO, Cobourg Branch, will hold its Annual General Meeting on Tuesday May 16, 2000 at Barnum House commencing promptly at 7pm. Members are invited to volunteer to be additional board members, and for committees to help arrange branch activities.

*Further information contact Peter Smith*

### McIlwraith Lecture

**R**eading Ontario's Landscapes - The Need for Ruins is the title of a lecture to be given by Professor Thomas McIlwraith after the Annual General Meeting on Tuesday May 16th at Barnum House. The lecture will commence at 7.30pm.

Tickets for \$10 for the lecture will be available at Barnum House and also in advance at C W Hay Bookseller, 26 King St. W. Cobourg, and Furby House Books, 64 Walton St. Port Hope.. Copies of Professor McIlwraith's book Looking for Old Ontario ( which we highly recommend) are also available at these locations. Ticket proceeds will support the ACO, Cobourg Branch and Barnum House

### That Old House

Port Hope ACO branch is hosting a seminar entitled "That Old House" on Sunday May 7, 2000 from 9.30am to 2.30pm. The location of the seminar is Skeena Hall, 17 Mill Street South, Port Hope. Speakers are:

*Peter Rumgay* - restorer of Century Home Magazines 'Mystery' Houses

*Will Ryan* ARIDO IDC ASID interior designer- 'Victorian Wallpapers'

*Janette Higgins*, Gardens Past, Cobourg - 'Gardens for an Old House'

Come bring your sandwich questions and concerns and they will provide coffee, cookies and answers. Admission free for ACO members ( non-members \$5). For further information call *Heather McKinnon* at 885-9192

### Cobourg Heritage Fund

The Cobourg Heritage Fund, administered and funded by the Cobourg ACO branch has made 4 approvals of funding so far this year, for a total of \$3,220, with other projects pending. Details of the projects will be provided later in the year as they are implemented.

*Further information contact Greg Hancock*

### Cobourg Cards

Heritage notelets will be available for sale at the AGM. They will also be provided to various commercial outlets in Cobourg, as volunteer time permits.

*Further information contact Miriam Mutton*

### Memberships

If you support the goals of Heritage Preservation in Cobourg we would like to have you as a member.

Benefits of membership include a provincial newsletter, invitations to meetings and conferences, and the chance to influence events and meet fellow enthusiasts.

Memberships for 2000 are:

individual: \$30; family: \$35; institutions \$40  
Please send name, cheque, address, phone to  
ACO Cobourg

303 Henry Street, Cobourg, K9A 3Y7

*Further information contact Bill Halewood*

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