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Keeler House designation preserves history and architectural heritage of Colborne area

By MANDY MARTIN
 STAFF WRITER

The Keeler House, one of Colborne's most important historic and

architectural buildings, will be preserved for future generations. Marian Carter, owner of the stately home at 9 Church Street West, has requested the home be designated as historically and architecturally significant.

"It's something we wanted to do before but never got around to it," owner

Marian Carter says of her request to preserve the building's significance. "Now, it's decided."

If a building can have soul, the Keeler House has it in spades. Believed to have been built in the early 1820s, the home was blessed with generations of family ownership. Until the turn of the century, it remained in the Keeler family when ownership passed to generations of another family. Remarkably, for over 100 years, the character and the design of home remained intact with only superficial decor additions.

In 1968, the home faced its closest brush with demise. The was purchased and slated for a multi-residential renovation. Enter Nick and Marian Carter.

"We planned to retire to Colborne," explains Mrs. Carter. "We had been looking for a home but couldn't find one that we liked, so we had an architect prepare draw-



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- Marian Carter

ings for a new home that captured the design and features of older homes we loved. Then, this suddenly came on the market."

Nick and Marian made an appointment to view 9 King Street East. Under the coats of paint, the shabby interior, the years of inattention, the Carter's knew a treasure when they saw it.

"It took a year of restoration and upgrading work," Mrs. Carter recalls.

"The plumbing, the electrical service, the heating all had to be replaced and upgraded. There was painting, window repairs, restoration of the original floors - but the structure itself was sound."

The Carter's had come "home". Marian Quinn Carter was a Castleton girl who met her future husband Nick Carter when she came home to the area to recover from scarlet fever.

The Carter family lived in what is now the United Church manse directly across the street from 9 Keeler House. Nick and Marian could look out their front windows and recall their earlier days before work and travel took them far and wide.

The Colborne retirement home exudes all that is good in history - a sense of warmth, lives lived, quiet elegance and dignity. It's that legacy Mrs. Carter wants to bequeath Colborne and future area generations, partially as a gift, partially as a tribute to her late husband Nick.

The Keeler House is believed to be one of the oldest homes in Colborne.

Joseph Abbott Keeler, merchant,

first postmaster and Justice of the Peace, lived at the home. He was the son of Joseph Keeler who arrived with 40 others from Vermont in 1793 to settle on grants of Crown land. Joseph Keeler senior died at Keeler House in 1839.

The Keeler House is a "twin" of Barnum House at Grafton, now a nationally-recognized heritage museum.

Designation is synonymous with protection of the building and its history. Any changes to the building will retain the historical and architectural significance of the building. An Ontario Heritage Foundation designation registers the historical and/or architectural significance of the building on the deed of the property. It becomes a provincially-recognized site of note and is catalogued as such. The designation is registered on the deed of the property.

"Designation is really the gift wrap on an historical piece of property," notes Colborne Local Architectural Conservancy Advisory Committee chair Greg McMahon. "It completes the package."

"We are thrilled," Mr. McMahon says of the move to designate the property.

"Mrs. Carter has always been ahead of her time. She is a catalyst. The home is the gem of our village and township."

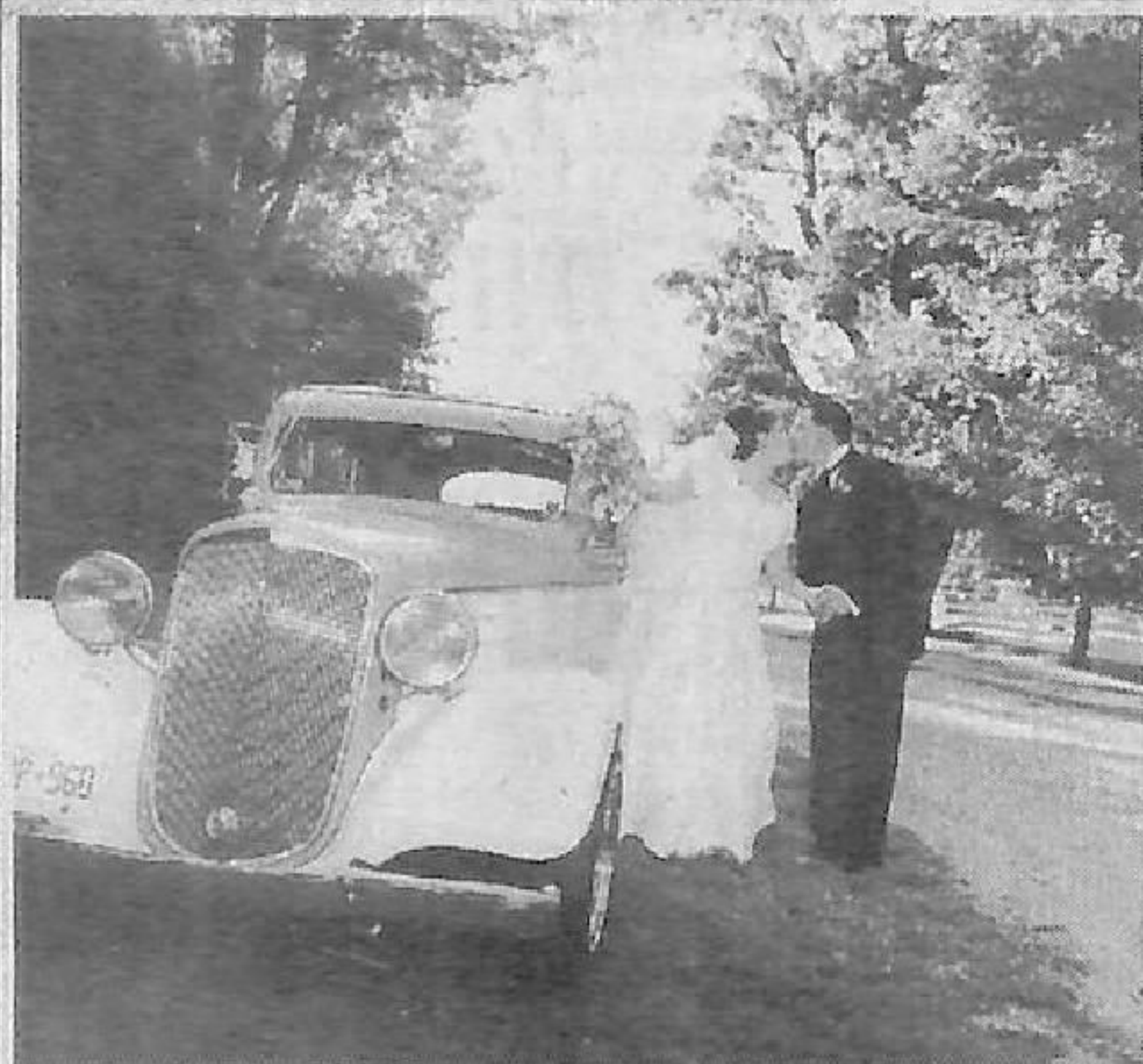
With the request for designation registered, the building's history and architectural significance will be researched. That done, Mrs. Carter retains the right to approve the designation description. If approved, the village passes a bylaw to have the designation recorded on the property deed. From there, the bylaw is forwarded to the provincial Architectural Conservancy of Ontario for registration.

The Keeler House, if approved, will be the fifth designated property in Colborne for the LACAC, added to Victoria Square Park, Seaton House, the Old Registry Office and 8 North Street (The Leclair Home).

The final touch will be the brass plaque to be mounted on the building signifying its importance - the jewel for the jewel.



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