

Free Press Editorial Page

Why the undue haste?

Why the undue haste, councillors?

Why give Acton people a week to prepare a case against the razing of the town hall for a firefighters' parking lot?

The recommendation passed at works committee last week was only learned by Actonians via last week's Free Press.

Five days later, urged by councillors McKenzie and Miller, council was ready to approve the demolition. Councillor Duby said there were people who would like to be heard. There was little sympathy. Councillor Miller felt the razing should be approved at once.

Finally, a date was heard - one week hence.

Why are Acton's representatives railroading through this important decision?

To hear councillors McKenzie and Miller, it is because of the urgent needs of the firefighters. If they are so urgent, why have the people never heard of them until a week ago?

Many of us have been in the fire hall. They certainly need a second storey, to leave the downstairs for trucks and firefighting equipment.

Ironically, it is their addition of the treasured old fire truck in the hall that makes their meeting room so cramped lately.

Their need for parking would lose the town another treasure and we just don't believe the firefighters are unanimously in favor of losing the town hall.

They have problems - lack of space and parking. They've had them for years.

A second storey will solve the space problem as long as Acton does not grow beyond recommended figures of about 9 or 10,000.

As long as there is not a full-time staff with required sleeping quarters, or the addition of ambulance service. In that case, a new location would have to be found.

But an exclusive parking lot for firefighters only? Surely not at the expense of what the consulting engineer calls "a particularly fine example of architecture" of its period.

Why not a neighboring house, when it becomes available?

No doubt razing the hall is the cheapest solution.

How many parking spots will

there be? We can't imagine firefighters lining up to file into a lot while the siren sounds. They'll be out on the street as they are now. "They run for three blocks," said Mr. McKenzie. Ridiculous!

Considering their speed, they park well. Save seconds, fellas. We appreciate it. They don't hamper traffic.

Why no consideration to grants? The Ministry of Culture and Recreation and Wintario both funds town hall restorations regularly. Exeter, Simcoe, Port Perry and Uxbridge are examples.

Why no other price for restoration work? Some consider \$130,000 very high. This sum also includes total restoration of the upstairs. Why not keep the building... and wait until grants and other funding can be investigated? The building is structurally sound. "Not safe?" Nonsense. If there is no money this year, the work can be done later.

Why not figure out how much it will cost the police to be housed elsewhere? In a new building?

Why not determine where the Senior Citizen drop-in centre will be?

Why not pursue the suggestion of moving the town office, recreation office, and fire chiefs office into the town hall, leaving the room at the front of the Y for the police?

The planning department is in desperate need of more space. How about refurbishing the upstairs of the town hall for them?

Why not recall the post office, the railway station, the United Church. How many times have people said "We shouldn't have done it!"

In another few years must we say "We shouldn't have torn down the town hall."

Keep the town hall. Build the firefighters their addition around it and above most of their present building. Repair the town hall later, when funds are available.

By then perhaps Georgetown will have its recreation complex including a library and theatre, and the restoration of the hall will seem ideal to everyone.

Again, the building is safe and sound. It will wait.

Because the three Acton councillors approve the demolition does not mean they are right. Councillors have been wrong before.

Why the undue haste?



AUDITORIUM OF town hall is little change although it is only used now for storage - unclaimed bicycles and Christmas decorations are seen (above.) The first half of the split staircase was removed about 25

years ago and entry is gained from an outdoor stairway. To take these pictures, the photographer stood in the centre of the hall and pictured the east wall (above) and the west wall (below).



OUR READERS WRITE:

Objects to demolition

Dear Editor: I strongly object to the proposed demolition of the Town Hall.

All over this country, historical buildings are being preserved, except here in Acton i.e. the "late" railway station and Post Office.

Are we to allow the demolition of this sole remaining historical public building in order to save a few dollars on our collective tax bill? Once this decision is made, there are no other buildings to save or remnants of the past to pass on to our children.

This building, upon restoration, could be utilized for any or all of the following:

- office for the Fire Chief
- continuation of the drop-in centre for senior citizens

- town museum
- service club meeting rooms
- public meetings
- display of historical artifacts.

Before any decision is made, the council and residents of this town should have answers to these questions: 1. Could estimates be obtained from contractors to corroborate the engineers cost estimate? 2. Has the possibility of a Wintario grant for this restoration been considered? 3. Have the benefits from the full use of the renovated facilities been applied to the renovation cost?

4. Can the silent majority of Acton be stirred enough to stand up and be counted - and to tell our council members that we want this part of Acton's history preserved?

Douglas Fread

Town hall stands for something

Dear Sir, So, 'they' are going to tear down the Town Hall. Why must politicians always be 'doing something' about everything? Do they feel the devil finds mischief for idle hands and to be seen doing nothing visibly leads voters to suspect something is going on invisibly? Sometimes it is better to do nothing. Right now is there any evidence to show newcomers and youth that Acton was once a sturdy, and independent municipality on its own?

The Town Hall testifies to the fact but there are few such monuments left. Someone tore down the old Post Office and replaced it with a bank building just like a thousand banks in this country. For something we got nothing.

Is our only physical link with an independent past to become a part-time parking lot?

Why not put new shingles on its roof to keep the rain out, paint up the outside, replace the broken windows, and let it stand

as a memorial to years now gone but not forgotten. Perhaps in the future some benefactor will promote further restoration—a municipal museum perhaps. There is still room then to add to the Fire Hall facilities and parking is not really a severe problem.

Can you imagine a dozen cars trying to get into that new parking lot at the same time for a fire call? Right now the firemen park very efficiently head to tail along the street, which hurts no one.

The Cenotaph is a useless pile of granite; its space would park two cars. No one advocates tearing it down however, because it stands for something.

Acton's Town Hall stands for something too. Pull it down and Acton becomes only a name with no past (visible, that is); no present (sacrificed to provincial politicians' desire to "do something big"); and no future (except as a minority sub-unit of Georgetown, Halton Hills).

Yours truly, George Elliott

"Cheap" but structurally sound

Dear Editor:

Isn't it a sad state of affairs - "El Cheapos" are at it again.

Why not get another estimate on the repairs of the town hall? I have been told it is structurally sound. But at one time our town was the same - "cheap" but structurally sound.

Council seems to be accepting the figures that suit their purposes rather than those that oppose their views and may reflect the true condition.

Georgetown can have a new million dollar library but destruction of one of Acton's historic buildings just doesn't add up, does it?

Unite, Actonians, and fight to save our identity. We are an old town and old architecture means more than these modern characterless buildings.

A 53-year resident of Acton.

Preserve our heritage

Dear Editor:

Nostalgia is the key word for me, so far as demolishing the town hall is concerned.

It was in the town hall that we as children held our Victoria Day extravaganzas.

It was in the town hall that we observed our Remembrance Day services at the time when Thanksgiving and Remembrance Day were observed on the same date.

It was in the town hall that we held our high school "at homes" and Sunday School concerts.

Please, for posterity's sake, preserve us a bit of our heritage.

Oral Norton
80 Church Street East.

The Free Press Back Issues

10 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Wednesday, May 3, 1967.

"Thanks for the Memory" sang Acton Centennial Citizen of the Year George Muselle, as he accepted the award for outstanding community service at the annual Chamber of Commerce Citizens' Night dinner at the music centre Saturday night.

New constable with the Acton detachment of the OPP is Pat Thwaites, transferred here from Oakville after two years there. Constable Thwaites is a native of Simcoe and spent three years in the Canadian Navy before joining the OPP. He is single and replaced Corporal Merv Harness who has been moved to Kitchener after being in Acton since 1954.

Mr. and Mrs. Bob Marshall Sr., were hosts to over 40 members of the staff of the Acton and Milton newspapers last Thursday evening, when presentations were made to Henry Harbers and Nellie Van Arragon, who are being married soon, and to Brian McCristall who has left the staff to work for a group of weekly papers in British Columbia.

Amiable composer Herman Freuler's Hymn to Canada will be sung on the CBC television program Hymn Sing this Sunday afternoon. The program starts at 5.30 p.m. Copies of the hymn are sold out in both Acton outlets and Mr. Freuler is pleased at the reception it is getting all across Canada.

20 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, May 9, 1957.

Leno Braida, 24, son of Mr. and Mrs. Abele Braida, 173 Main Street South, has recently been awarded a Canadian Industries Limited Fellowship in Chemical Engineering and a National Research Council Studentship valued at \$1700 and \$2000 respectively.

Mr. and Mrs. Fred McCutcheon and Jack, and Mr. and Mrs. Gordon McCutcheon and family visited in London with Mr. and Mrs. Harvey McCutcheon over the weekend.

Mr. and Mrs. J. Krapek and baby Jimmie visited in Huntsville over the weekend and John enjoyed fishing. His brother-in-law landed a three and a half pound trout.

Mrs. Nelson Lambert and Mr. and Mrs. Earl Lambert spent Sunday at Fonthill with Mr. and Mrs. Richard Levens and family.

100 years ago

Taken from the issue of the Free Press, Thursday, May 3, 1877.

We are extremely sorry that our duty as a recorder of local events forces us to give publicity to the fact that one of our young merchants has seen fit to take sudden flight to parts unknown, rather than face a meeting of his creditors. We feel sorry for George and sincerely hope he will shortly see his way clear to come back again and frankly explain the difficulty to his creditors.

Two fine turkeys belonging to Mr. Laird, baggageman at the station, were mysteriously gobbled up by some unknown individual one day last week. They were in the vicinity of the station a short time before their disappearance but his eyes have not been gladdened by a sight of them since. They were probably "absorbed" by some Russian gourmand.

Mr. Zolman Hall, the genial and efficient manager of Beardmore's tannery, is about to remove to Bracebridge to superintend the construction of the new tannery, now being built for Mr. Beardmore at that place.

An immense stock of fans just arrived—Hynds, watchmaker, Post office store.

Misses Mann respectfully announce to the ladies of Acton they have commenced business as dressmakers.

Seasonable goods—100 doz. straw hats at 5c, 40 doz. sunshades 10c up, 1,000 yards English prints 10c, 2113 yards of American prints. Millinery room now complete with all the novelties of the season. Christie, Henderson and Company.

Of this and that

A personal note: when we visited in Scotland last October, a friend drove us through the village of Duns in Berwickshire. We hadn't been there for 26 years, and we craned to look for the quaint old 17th century town hall. It was gone. "We've got regional government now," said our friend. "And they tore it down." It was paved over.

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PHONE 853-2010

Business and Editorial Office



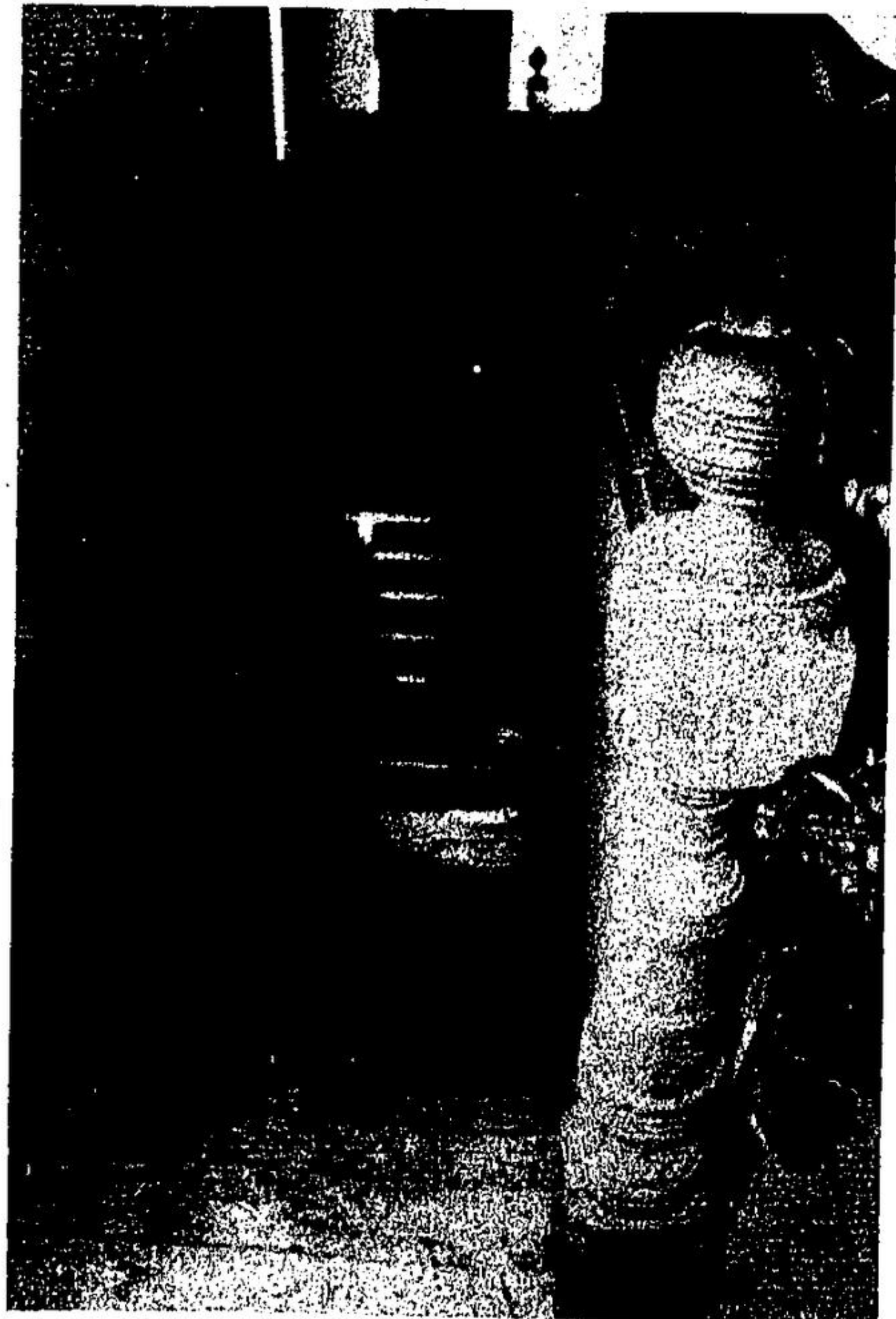
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SPLIT STAIRCASE of town hall was partially removed and only the two upper portions remain. Entry is gained from an outside door at the foot of this flight.