



What will be the end?

by George Elliott
Almost a century ago the people of Acton decided they wanted and needed a Town Hall as a focus of community activities. It cost them \$6000 and was paid for over a period of twenty years. Today in 1978 the cost of restoring that old building on Josiah Adams lot would be \$236,000. What a staggering difference! What a frightening example of the decline in a dollar's value!

Nevertheless in 1881 \$6000 was a lot of money; remember the squabble over whether the building should cost \$5000 or \$6000. Actonians then supported the building of a Town Hall, most of them did at any rate, in spite of the large sum of money its construction represented. Now we come to the question of whether we should spend another large sum of money to keep it, if not the center of community activity anymore, at least the center of community history.

Is it worth saving? That depends on your feeling for history, your sentiments, and your roots.

One Councillor made the statement that the building was after all only about 100 years old, if it had been 200 years old then its preservation would probably be worthwhile. To that Councillor I say here is a recipe for making a 200 year old building. You take a 100 year old building and look after it for a hundred years and lo and behold you end up with a 200 year old one. There are really no potential 200-year-old public buildings left in Acton; they have all fallen to "progress". If the Town Hall goes there will never be a 200 year old building in Acton and we will all be poorer for the fact.

Well, then, what has the Town Hall Restoration Committee done? First of all it completed a feasibility study to determine what had to be done to restore the Town Hall and what it would cost. It applied to the Heritage Foundation for a grant to help pay for restoration and was in effect refused because the municipality would not contribute to the restoration.

It applied to the Devonian Foundation in Calgary, but while they felt the restoration was worthwhile it did not fall within their guidelines so no grant.

At present a request is in the Wintario for a grant but this does not appear to be promising, again because the municipality is not putting any money in. They might move, however, if citizens put in money through private donations. The Committee has raised money through the sale of prints, plates, and other activities to pay the costs of the feasibility study but is still about \$700 in debt.

What has Council done? The present Halton Hills Council has said there will be no money for restoration but it has designated the Town Hall as a heritage building; this designation can be removed. It has given the Committee until the end of the year to find money somewhere for restoration. After that, if no money is found, it will probably be torn down. Demolition will probably cost about \$15,000, paving and preparing a parking lot on the site probably \$10,000, and brick up the exposed wall of the new Fire Hall maybe \$15,000. The final total cost of the Fire Hall then will be increased by about \$40,000 if the Town Hall goes.

What have the Citizens of Acton done? Many people in Acton signed a petition which deferred demolition. There have been expressions of support and interest to individual members of the Restoration Committee.

People did buy prints, not as many as the Committee hoped, but a fair number. Actonians and others are now buying plates, perhaps because they expect that an image on a plate will be all that is left of the Town Hall in a year or two. So far Actonians have not been asked to do much more.

What must be done then? Is our Town Hall to be replaced by a parking lot and a blank wall on the Fire Hall? Is that what the people of Acton want? The Restoration Committee hopes not. If the



A town hall or a parking lot?

people of Acton want to save the Town Hall it can be done in exactly the same way as the citizens of 1881 built it. If everyone who signed the petition gave \$100 that would be \$150,000 towards the restoration and with this sum in hand the rest could easily be obtained from granting agencies. One hundred dollars is a lot of money for an individual to give but if you want something worthwhile sacrifices must be made. Believe in something enough and any sacrifice is possible.

Already \$4500 has been pledged towards the restoration. This was without any specific campaign. Can we hope that more Actonians will be as community minded as the citizens of 1881? The Committee has not enough people to go and knock on every door in Acton. What we need is people in Acton who will pick up their telephones and dial 853-0365 or 853-0915 any day. I want to see the Town Hall restored and I believe in it enough to give you my pledge for \$100 right now. Count me in. Only you can make that decision to pick up the telephone. If enough people do it we just might end up with a 200-year-old building some day.

(This is the final column in the Town Hall Tales series. If others have reminiscences of the Town Hall the Editor of the Free Press will be happy to have you write them in for publications as letters. I would like to thank the Free Press for the support they have given us and Kara Rosenquist for doing some of the research for these articles. Service clubs, church groups etc. who would like to see and hear a short slide show and talk on the Town Hall restoration at one of their meetings are asked to contact me at 853-0365 to set up a date for a meeting during this Fall period.)

George Elliott
Chairman
Town Hall Restoration Committee



Rich south has jobs

The two municipalities with the highest standard of living in the country, Oakville and Burlington, plus one other not so distinguished, Milton, have more than 1,400 jobs available though there are more than 150 employable people on the Halton welfare rolls during July.

On the rolls were 150 employable people in July and 322 unemployed people who were collecting benefits.

During the same month the Canada Employment Centre at Oakville and at Milton received 700 requests from employers to fill vacant jobs. About the same number of requests were recorded at Burlington. Since January 30 people in Halton have been refused general social assistance or have had their benefits ended.

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GEORGETOWN MARKET

Today's recipe — autumn soup

From the synchro swim team cookbook:

- Autumn Soup**
1 lb. ground beef
1 c. chopped onion
4 c. water
1 c. cut up carrots
1 c. diced celery
1 c. cubed pared potatoes
2 tsp. salt
1 tsp. bottled brown Bouquet Sauce
1/2 tsp. pepper
1 bay leaf
1/8 tsp. basil
6 tomatoes

In large sauce pan, cook and stir meat until brown. Drain off fat. Cook and stir onions with meat until onions are tender (about 5 min.). Stir in remaining ingredients except tomatoes. Heat to boiling. Reduce heat, cover and simmer 20 min. Add tomatoes, cover and simmer 10 min. longer or until vegetables are tender. (6 servings)
-1-28 oz. can tomatoes (with liquid) can be substituted for fresh tomatoes. Reduce

water to 3 c. The canned tomatoes will break apart and give soup a rosy colour.
Elizabeth Cooper

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Lovely setting

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