

# Acton's old town hall is still being restored

Renovations to the old Acton Town Hall have come a long way, but they have a long way to go.

The committee restoring the building has finished work done with the help of the federal government's "make work" program grant.

The building has been gutted, wired for electricity, most of the plumbing has been installed, a basement has been constructed under half the building and a three foot high crawl space under the other half, insulation has been installed, a new sewer line has been installed, windows have been replaced, and a new chimney has been built.

The renovations have taken, "a lot of build-work," says Ted Tyler of the Acton Town Hall Restoration Committee. Everything is done with the idea in mind that the restored building should last for 100 years, he says.

A stone wall running down the middle of the original crawl space was taken out and replaced by concrete. It had to be done one small section at a time because it was all hand-excavated.

"We're not being cheap about the renovations either," says Tyler.

Copper piping was used for the plumbing, steel girders had to be placed at stress points and used to push the building back

into its original shape, and in many places 2 by 6s were used instead of the standard 2 by 4s used in most building construction.

The committee is now in limbo while their solicitor and the town solicitor discuss the deed to the building. The town might decide to keep the building, or they might sell the deed to the committee for \$1. Either way, heritage restrictions will be placed on the property. The steeple, belfry, and plaster molding are some of the original features that have to be kept.

Once the decision is made the committee will receive 2/3rd of a \$60,000 grant from

the Heritage Foundation for which they are eligible.

The 102-year-old building was designated an historic building in December, 1977. It was the centre of controversy in the late '70s and early '80s as proposals were made to either restore the building or tear it down and build a parking lot. A \$133,720 federal make work grant kicked off the renovations which began in February, 1983.

Renovations to the old council room is almost completed. The three stages the room saw over the years will be represented by different wall coverings. One wall will be just plaster, one will be covered with tin,

and one will be covered with plywood.

The door to one of the old jail cells was found and will be restored. The old tax assessor's office will be made into a kitchen to provide some catering service for meetings held in the building.

The crawl space and the basement, and a space left between the upstairs ceiling and the roof will allow regular inspections of wiring and the general state of the building in those places, something it did not have when it was first built.

"The building's got great potential," says Tyler. "The only problem was it was neglected for so long."

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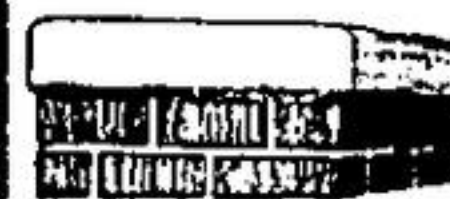
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