

A ray of hope for

Downtown's future

By Richard Forster
Herald Staff Reporter

There still may be hope for downtown Georgetown's sagging commercial area if plans revealed last week by architect Paul Martel become a reality.

The owners of the buildings that make up the downtown core met together at North Halton Golf and Country Club Wednesday night for the first time in recent years to discuss the problems of Main Street. Each year the plazas of Brampton and Toronto draw more and more valuable clientele and even more valued dollars away from the town.

The group was determined to track down the cause of the poor response from town residents in their dealings with the Main Street.

Some six years ago Paul Martel predicted this type of fallings for the town core as the buildings and services did not keep step with the changing consumer. The problem is not, he noted, just restricted to Georgetown but many towns of the same size which find large plazas at their perimeters that serve to defocus the business impact of the central business district.

Rather than stores which will serve the needs of the people, the downtown core becomes a financial centre with banks and finance companies in much the way the south end of Main Street has begun to develop.

At last Wednesday's meeting

the owners agreed that shopping was an important function of the Main Street but any family that could do all their shopping and spend an enjoyable afternoon would be a returning customer of the downtown core.

importantly the piece of history each represents to the Georgetown people. Restoration of these buildings is the ultimate goal of the architect.

Another advantage not discussed at the meeting was

he toured the Main Street with the Herald following the meeting.

William McNally was present at the meeting to express his concern for his new residents that will be occupying the 10-storey apartment complex that was approved or construction to begin in January on Mill Street where Beaver Lumber once stood.

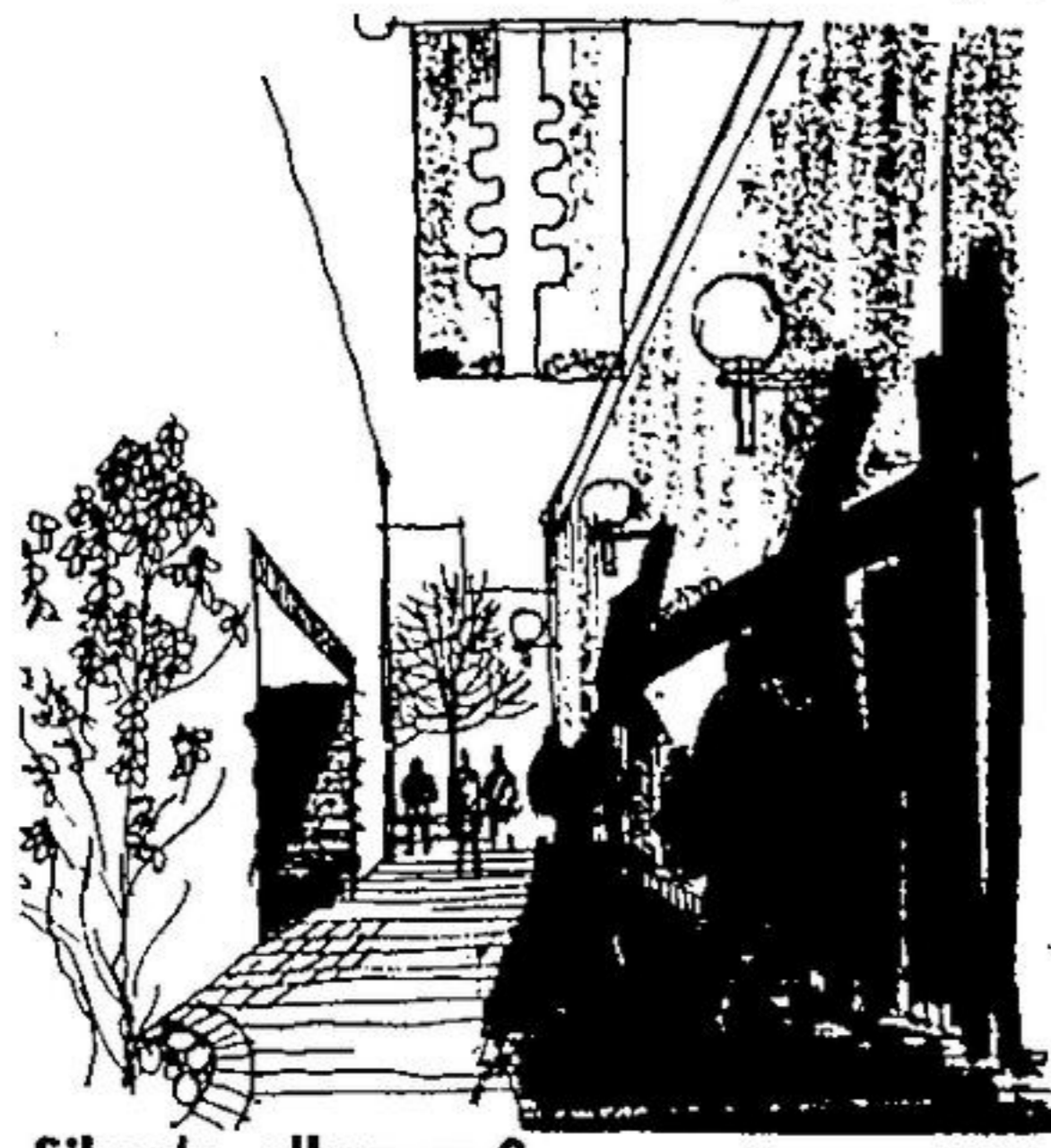
The 209 suites will add more people to the centre core and more potential customers for the merchants.

Slides showing how similar communities in North America and Great Britain have solved their problems successfully were presented to the 18 owners present by Mr. Martel. His suggestions included removing the overhead wiring from the Main Street, painting the stores and adding some sort of landscaping to the street.

The array of signs both plastic and neon are one of the worst drawbacks of the downtown core with each sign fighting for predominance resulting in total degradation of the area, he said.

"If we could eliminate the signs and put up similar low profile signs it would improve the Main Street," furthered Mr. Martel.

The Gladman brothers, owners of the McGibbon Hotel, the old Royal Bank building and the police station were receptive to Mr. Martel's ideas as were the rest of the group, but when asked what the Gladmans expected to do with



Silver's alleyway?

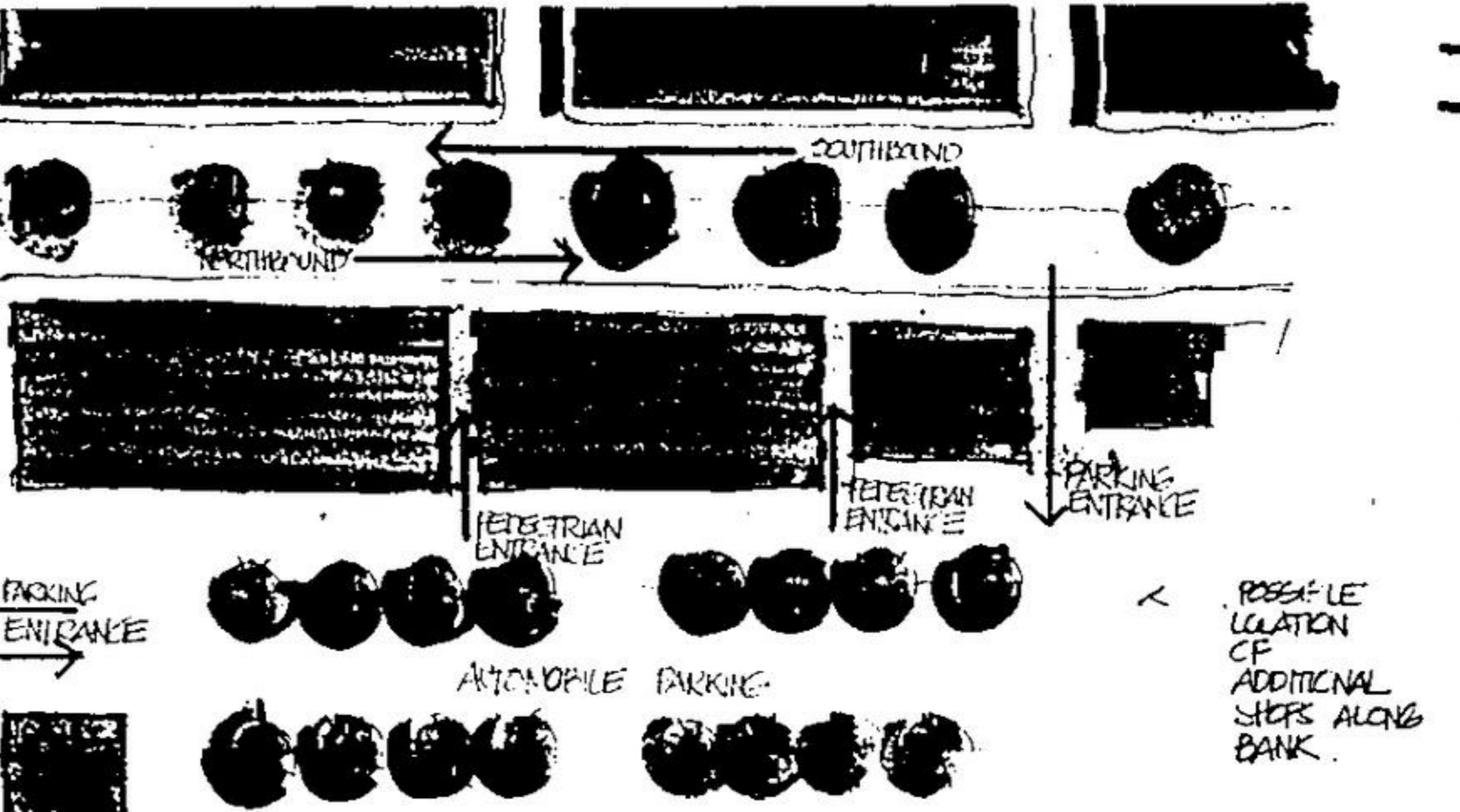
Many of the buildings downtown are in a state of disrepair with the physical unattractiveness of the buildings acting as a deterrent to the new town resident.

the fact that Georgetown is unique among towns of the area in the fact it's Main Street is not located on a highway as Acton's and Brampton's are.

their investments, no present concrete plans were revealed although there are plans in the works.

Plans for Main Street South

"We are considering putting in two or three stores in the bank with offices on the second floor that we will build," explained Mr. Gladman.



Mr. Martel's plans are simple, inexpensive ideas that, if properly implemented, could make the downtown area a "people place" and create the same comfortable atmosphere of the larger enclosed mall.

"Landscaping creates unity," furthered the architect. "Trees along the Main Street and in the parking lot would add much to the town."

"We must create a family atmosphere," added Mr. Martel. The alleyways leading to the parking lots when illuminated and decorated with guiding supergraphics would add to the total effect of the revitalized core.

convenient trip," explained one of the concerned owners. Further investigation into the downtown core is being done by a select committee formed at the meeting consisting of Sandy Mackenzie, Terry Baines, The Gladmans, Janet Manderson, town planner Mario Vendetti and chairman Monty Hyde.

Restoration and cleaning of the old buildings would in no way detract from the few modern buildings that serve as book-ends at each end of the street according to Mr. Martel.

One stop shopping could be encouraged if the stores had a better mix of services offered, but further customers would bring representatives from all ends of the retail trade, it was mentioned.

The section of land directly behind the King Wah Restaurant would make an ideal outdoor cafe for summer use by the downtown community, according to Mr. Martel, and his plans have included that unique feature.

Although the group did not officially accept Paul Martel as architect his plans seem to have caused quite a stir with the businessmen of the area and his concern of the area has resulted in an honest appraisal of the needs of the town without any large rebuilding project, as many merchants and owners had feared.

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Culture-complex

three years ago that would have renovated the existing Church Street building and added a completely new building to the west side of the historic structure.

"Costs were so high because many of the contractors were afraid to touch the old building when adding the new section." Costs, in the form of tenders, came in at double that of the budget which caused a temporary shelving and, later, a final cancellation of the needed expansion.

"I'm not sure that downtown is the right area for the main library," added Mrs. Cornwell. "The plaza and the new proposed development have focused the centre of the town to the east end where the high population density is."

"We have become a burden on other libraries," noted the librarian. "With no storage facilities we must order all our films and supplies from other centres who are better equipped. Of all the extra things we provide, film loan is the highest used service."

Mrs. Cornwell noted she would like to be able to build a proper reference section and study area for the students who have no place to work or study.

"For some reason the town's growth has become stunted," furthered Mrs. Cornwell. "The population has been increasing but the services that people require have not. This is not a financially poor town."

Residents of Georgetown are still confused about what did happen to the proposed theatre that was to have gone up with the Gordon Alcott Memorial Arena.

Opening day crowds at the arena searched for the ill-fated theatre to no avail.

The building committee of Georgetown Little Theatre has sent a proposal to the recreation committee as to the future of the burned out theatre on Mill Street. The former movie house was gutted by fire some 17 years ago and has remained vacant and in disrepair with the exception of the stores and apartments which were untouched by the fire.

The group, in a letter sent before word of the new cultural complex was leaked, suggested that the theatre, if rebuilt, would meet the needs of the theatrical groups of the town, plus many other similar endeavours.

A meeting has been scheduled with town planner, Mario Vendetti, to discuss the possibilities of renovating the building to restore it to some future use for the people of the town.

Adequate parking in the town lot is one of the factors that influenced the group into supporting the proposition made by Councillor Ernie Sykes two months ago when he suggested the town apply for a LIP grant for the restoration.

Research by the group has indicated that the building would have to be completely reconstructed before any work could be done. Intense heat of the fire weakened the walls to the point where no rebuilding would be

allowed by any inspector. Cost of the land is also a prohibitive factor.

President of Georgetown Little Theatre, Bob Lee, agrees that a theatre has been needed for quite some time.

"We have been forced to use Wrigglesworth school and to subject our patrons and members to discomfort due to the inadequate seating and lack of air conditioning. We are looking forward to any program that would get the town a proper theatre."

The group, along with other interested groups, made their needs known to the builders and planner of the arena theatre so that the building would not be obsolete for their needs before the first sod was turned.

Since the project is in the infancy stage no actual cost figures have been released or even remotely hinted at by the committee but the idea of incorporating the two structures, a library and a theatre will result in substantial savings for the Georgetown taxpayer in building and maintenance costs.

Costs of building a library that would serve the town adequately, based on the

current building prices, would indicate that \$35 to \$40 per square foot would be in order.

"I feel we need about 10,000 square feet of floor space to serve the town properly," added Mrs. Cornwell. "The old building would continue to serve the downtown people and also be an excellent lecture hall for many groups of the town."

The library presently has 23,000 books and, according to the population, the total should be closer to 40,000.

The adequate parking at the Gordon Alcott is just one of the many plusses that seem to favour that section of town as the complete recreation centre for both culture and sports.

Glen Gray, the town's recreation director, also indicated that several recreation programs would benefit from the use of a proper theatre.

Prior to building the indoor pool and the arena, a town-wide survey indicated the third item of priority was a theatre.

"The pool and arena have become a reality, now it is time to consider a theatre," concluded Mr. Gray.

No go in snow?

The members of the work's committee attempted to work out a solution to the problem that will exist when the first snow fall lands on the town. How do you clear snow with parked cars on the roadway?

With the cancellation of the three-hour limit restricting parking on the street within the town during the early morning hours, the town has no legal method of removing cars from snow clearance routes where parking is regularly permitted.

The former ruling accepted within the town of Georgetown did not permit parking on the street between midnight and 7 a.m. Any car found to be parked could be towed away at the discretion of the works' crew and police.

The only problem with the previous bylaw was the fact that no one in town was cruel enough to uphold it, resulting in its cancellation and the state of confusion that now exists.

There are three alternatives open to the committee who are hurrying to prepare a bylaw before the first snow reaches Halton Hills. "We could tow

around the cars as we do now," explained engineer Bob Austin.

"We could develop snow clearance routes similar to those of the city or we could just tow everyone away as

they used to in Acton if you parked on the street during winter."

The committee is trying to contact other municipalities for their input into solving our parking dilemma.



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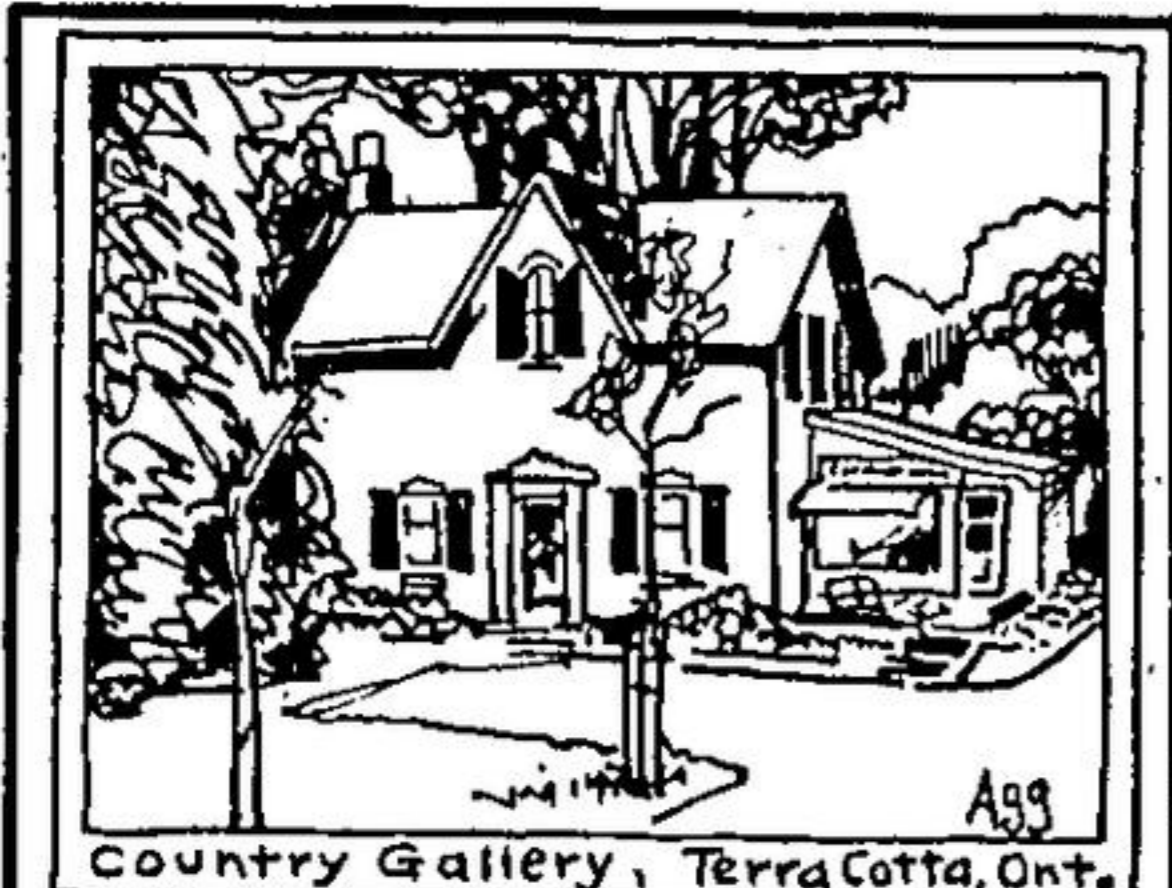
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Leather garage

T.E. Leather, 64 Confederation Street, Glen Williams, received approval from the Credit Valley Conservation Authority for construction of a 10 - 20 foot garage. The building is above the regional storm level the CVCA staff reported to the authority's executive Thursday night.



Country Gallery, Terra Cotta, Ont.

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MONDAY, NOVEMBER 17
LAST FOUR DAYS TO SHOP FOR CRAFTS AND PAINTINGS
Good bye and Thank You to our many patrons.
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SAT. NOV. 15th
7:30 P.M.
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