

Everything you wanted to know about the cultural centre...

... and then some

Arts complex will be 'best of all worlds'

When The Herald began an investigation recently into the year-old, organized movement behind the new Halton Hills Library and Cultural Centre, in response to charges that concerns expressed in an Oct. 16 editorial were unfounded, it discovered an active but poorly publicized unit

of volunteer citizens engaged in the quick, effective work of raising a badly-needed arts and recreation facility. In this special report, Herald editor Paul Dorsey finds room for minor concern among an otherwise glowing example of community spirit in high gear.

The complex at a glance

Total cost	\$1,719,000
Official groundbreaking	Aug. 11, 1980
Approximate completion	late August, 1981
Grand opening	fall, 1981
Architect	Keith H. Wagland, Toronto
Gen Contractor	Q-Sons Construction Ltd., Toronto
Components:	
Library: 14,000 square feet, including 1,775 square feet of storage space beneath the sloped, theatre seating; main library to be housed in new section; reference library (new archives) in basement of old library	
Theatre: 6,600 square feet; 281 seats; housed in new section	
Gallery: 1,750 square feet inside old main library area; gallery lighting, fabric-coated walls	
Multi-purpose room: 750 square feet with much adaptability, chair storage, kitchen area shared with main foyer	
General circulation area: 1,750 square feet	
Actual gross area	24,650 square feet

When Halton Hills' unique new theatre-library complex opens at Church and Market Streets in Georgetown next fall, residents can expect "the best of all worlds", to use Rex Heslop's words: "an achievable entity that won't strain anyone" and "a focal point of self-expression for all kinds of groups" that were previously limited by their lack of a common arts facility.

All this for the price of another \$3 tacked onto your 1981 municipal tax bill, according to town treasurer Ray King, plus some minor, corresponding increases: Georgetown Little Theatre president Pat Joynes anticipates some rise in ticket prices for the group's 1982 productions. With few exceptions, representatives of many of the groups involved in planning for the new complex are excited and optimistic about the facility's ability to meet public demand. While some harbor cautious reservations about space limitations and future needs, they are nearly unanimous in their delight over the long-awaited complex. Any physical problems with the building, all agree, can only be minor ones. Predictably enough, architect Keith Wagland is the most excited of all.

"We've accommodated everyone's interests very well," he told The Herald recently. "Space has been allocated exceptionally well, keeping costs in mind. There's a great deal of adaptability. Citizens can expect a very warm, comfortable, friendly sort of building that's fairly intimate in keeping with the scale of the town itself. I think it'll become a sort of community focus. It's not the Four Seasons Hotel - we're using concrete block and a lot of wood - but there'll be nice, warm colors inside."

SOME DROPPED
Mr. Wagland is quick to stress that while some of the requests submitted by would-be user-groups for interior design factors have been dropped from the final design for cost reasons, the budget set by town council for the building's construction has not been prohibitive to his work. On the contrary, he said, he and other planners have managed to strike a fair balance between meeting current facility needs and exercising fiscal restraint.

The recently-built Oakville Centre for the arts, Mr. Wagland pointed out, is simply too big for that city's current needs. "It has this big, massive stage and everything," he commented. "People just won't use it; it's too intimidating. Here, we have room to grow into the complex for a long time to come."

Although Mr. Wagland has no qualms with his construction budget, he does admit to being "amazed" at his ability to work within council's cost guidelines, involving figures which were set "in no uncertain terms" by the town. Tender bids came within \$8,000 of construction cost targets, he said.

The arts complex's "very economic design" has limited the number of theatre seats to 281, has restricted its orchestra pit to provide room for only about 15 musicians and has eliminated initial plans for a full-fledged flytower and a

\$16,000 non-functional skylight ("They always leak, anyway," Mr. Wagland consoles himself).

The need for flytower, a vertical space directly above the stage area into which props and backdrops can be "flown", is considered of prime importance by several arts community representatives. While it's not the real thing that's going into the arts complex, Mr. Wagland has allowed for some room into which stage articles can be hoisted above the proscenium.

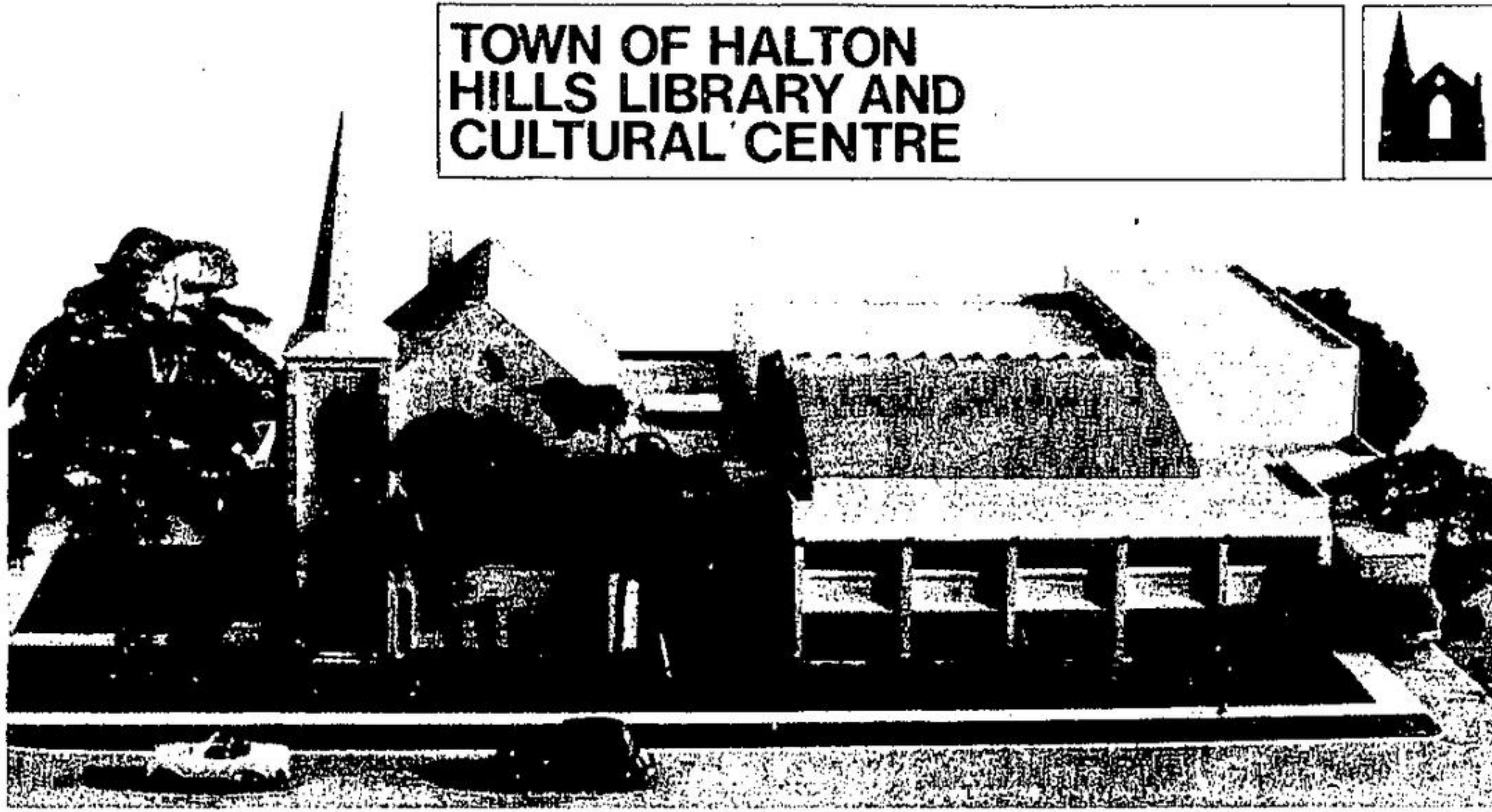
ALAY CONCERN
Apart from this admittedly minor cause for concern, Mr. Wagland has allayed virtually all other worries shared by arts-related groups in his design, according to several spokesmen interviewed by The Herald. Some of their recommendations were ruled out as too costly, impractical or just inapplicable, they acknowledged, but on the whole, there are no overt reservations about the final design among the complex's chief users-to-be.

"We have a sloping theatre floor, as requested," Mr. Wagland said. "We have an exceptional stage - something most small-town theatres just don't have. We'll have good sound and lighting."

"The gallery portion (about 1,000 square feet located inside the existing church-library) is a very good size for a community building. It won't be particularly sophisticated in terms of special temperature controls, but it is a workable size."

Ralph Ursel, who, as first president of the Halton Hills Arts Council and a motivating force within the Georgetown Rotary Club, was instrumental in bolstering initial support for such a complex, has his own

Continued on Page C5.



Splendid in exterior appearance and surroundings, Halton Hills' new library-theatre complex, now under construction at Church and Market Streets in Georgetown, is a unique combination of the old - the former Congregational Church-turned-library - and the new - the modern theatre portion that will provide seating for 281. Builders and fund-raisers point out another unique aspect in the facility's accommodating, economic design, prepared especially with lower costs in mind. Architect Keith Wagland prepared the above scale model.

Art history: diverse needs combine to provide ideal solution for town

Five years ago, Georgetown high school teacher Ralph Ursel was writing letters to the editor and letters to town council complaining about the lack of a proper theatre facility in Halton Hills. The Halton Board of Education, he noted, had exercised spending restraint and abandoned plans for a proper auditorium at the expanded high school, its policy on sharing capital costs with area municipalities still some years off.

Meanwhile, council was still wrestling with what architect Keith Wagland calls a major "thorn in its side" - an ever-shrinking public library. The Halton Hills Public Library Board had been consistently asking for more space in Georgetown since before the town's incorporation in 1974. The last Georgetown-council considered expansion plans for the Church Street site but found costs too cumbersome in light of the incoming regional government, then still an unknown quantity.

Current library board chairman Dick Howitt was completing his last term as a Ward 2 councillor in 1978 when a proposal to build a new library in Cedarvale Park was considered. Although a \$500,000 debenture was obtained from the provincial government for the ambitious, 15,000-square foot project, opposing forces came to bear and the Ontario Municipal Board was called upon to halt what many citizens considered the improper use of parkland.

Complicating council's deliberations was the fact that the old Methodist church at Church and Market Streets was decided to be used for use as a library and nothing else. Even if the library found a new home, council realized, the old church could be used for no other purpose.

AT HELM
By 1978, Halton Hills had an Arts Council, with Ralph Ursel at its helm. Well-known locally as an accompanist to church choirs and a musical director at the high school and with area musical societies, Mr. Ursel nevertheless describes himself as primarily an arts patron. Although the new Arts Council concentrated initially on "first things first", with Summerfest its prime objective, the need for a proper cultural centre remained its preoccupation.

Elsewhere in town, the Rotary Club of Georgetown, of which Mr. Ursel "just happened" to be a member, was in search of a worthwhile community project it could get behind. The proposed new theatre was an ideal goal, and the club soon obtained an option to buy land near the hospital.

Suddenly, the isolated facets of a town-wide problem all came together on the "gridiron" of the town council chamber, and the library's shortcomings, which Mr. Ursel and others saw as a "political

community needs in one, large project before anyone in town, and the idea suddenly made perfect sense.

"It's the inclusion of a library that makes this whole project viable," Mr. Wagland commented. "The mix makes this a solid concept."

With Mr. Wagland assisting, Bailey Consulting Associates (formerly of Toronto, now moved to California) conducted a feasibility study to determine whether so many diverse needs could be accommodated in a single facility and, if so, where.

SCHOOL PLAN
Mr. Wagland pointed out that the Georgetown Little Theatre at that time was keen on its own idea to have council share the cost of building a theatre into the new expansion at Wrigglesworth Public School. Fairly elaborate plans were drawn up and the Halton Board of Education indicated its readiness to assume half the cost.

"But the GLT would have been the only ones happy

Continued on page C5.

Architect designs place in history



Toronto-based Keith H. Wagland, Architect firm and designer of the new complex, earned his page in local history by accepting an invitation from Arts Plus committee members John Roe and Ralph Ursel to come to Halton Hills and lend his experience to the ongoing search for a new cultural facility. The invitation was made at a seminar on developing such facilities through joint provincial-community support, which had attracted the two Georgetown representatives.

Mr. Wagland was on hand that day because he'd designed a combination library-theatre for Conestoga College in London, a ceramics museum and an arts facility for Sault Ste. Marie and had renovated two existing art galleries. He's still designing exhibitions for special Royal Ontario Museum shows.

Keith Wagland, head of the

FUND-RAISING: WHO'S IN CHARGE?

With the town clerk's department (telephone 877-5185) acting as a watershed for all incoming donations, the fund-raising committee set up by council to co-ordinate all such efforts has appointed a number of individuals to approach select groups and areas of interest. They are:

- For Arts Council members and other arts-related groups - Theresa Millenaar
- For business and industry - Bert Arnold
- For sports organizations - Dave Kentner
- For miscellaneous groups - Mayor Pete Pomeroy and Rud Whiting

Committee chairman Rex Heslop reported that Mayor Pomeroy has been making personal, informal appearances at local service club meetings to rally support for the project and otherwise "using his office to demonstrate the importance" of the facility to Halton Hills.

- In next week's Herald
- ASSESSMENT IMPACT
- SOME DESIGN CONCERNS
- FUND-RAISING UPDATE



An historic groundbreaking ceremony took place at the site of the Georgetown public library last August, signalling the start of construction for Halton Hills' new theatre-library complex. Watching Mayor Pete Pomeroy turn the first spadeful of sod were his fellow building committee members (left to right) Derek Joynes, who represented a number of arts groups in the committee's deliberations, Ward 3 Coun. Roy Booth, builder Ab Tennant, library board chairman Dick Howitt, architect Keith Wagland, committee chairman Rex Heslop, Ward 1 Coun. Ross Knechtel and then-Ward 2 Coun. Pat Patterson.

(Herald photo)

GLT's success story: a funding head-start

More than any other individual or group involved in the arts community's initial, organized push to have town council prepare a proper theatre facility, the Georgetown Little Theatre has set the pace and established the standard for fund-raising.

Starting with an Apr. 30 fund-raising phone-athon which laid a \$3,000 foundation for future efforts, the GLT brought its seat plaque campaign to the public's attention quickly and effectively, getting a head start on plans for the arts complex that left other involved groups startled and amazed.

By last month, the GLT had collected more than two-thirds of its \$30,000 objective, having sold nearly 180 special plaques to area residents interested in having one of the new theatre's 281 seats commemorated in their name, the name of their company or in name of a loved one. Proceeds from two phone-athons (a third is being considered) and individual donations outside the seat plaque campaign have boosted the GLT's total amount raised past \$21,740.

Eager to maintain public



PAT JOYNES

interest in the seat plaque campaign, the GLT has prepared the following informative outline for would-be supporters:

Q: When I purchase a seat-plaque, what do I get for my donation?
A: A brass plaque, inscribed with your name, organization or in memory of an individual, which will be attached in perpetuity to the

back of one of the 281 seats in the new theatre.

Q: Does this mean that this is my seat for GLT shows?
A: We'd like to say yes, but unfortunately the answer is no! As we are careful to point out, you are purchasing the plaque, not the seat.

Q: Why do you insist on a minimum donation (single lump sum) of \$10 or \$20 in post-dated cheques?
A: We had originally planned to raise \$25,000 at \$100 a seat-plaque, including fund-drive and plaque-engraving costs. In our enthusiasm to get the project underway, we pledged to raise \$30,000-hence had to increase our minimum "price tag".

Q: Can I donate more than \$10?
A: Please be our guest! In fact, a number of people-organizations have donated as much as \$200 for a single seat-plaque.

Q: If I want to make a donation but can't afford to purchase a seat-plaque, what?
A: If you wish to make

Continued on page C5.

'Book builder' scheme easy way to get involved

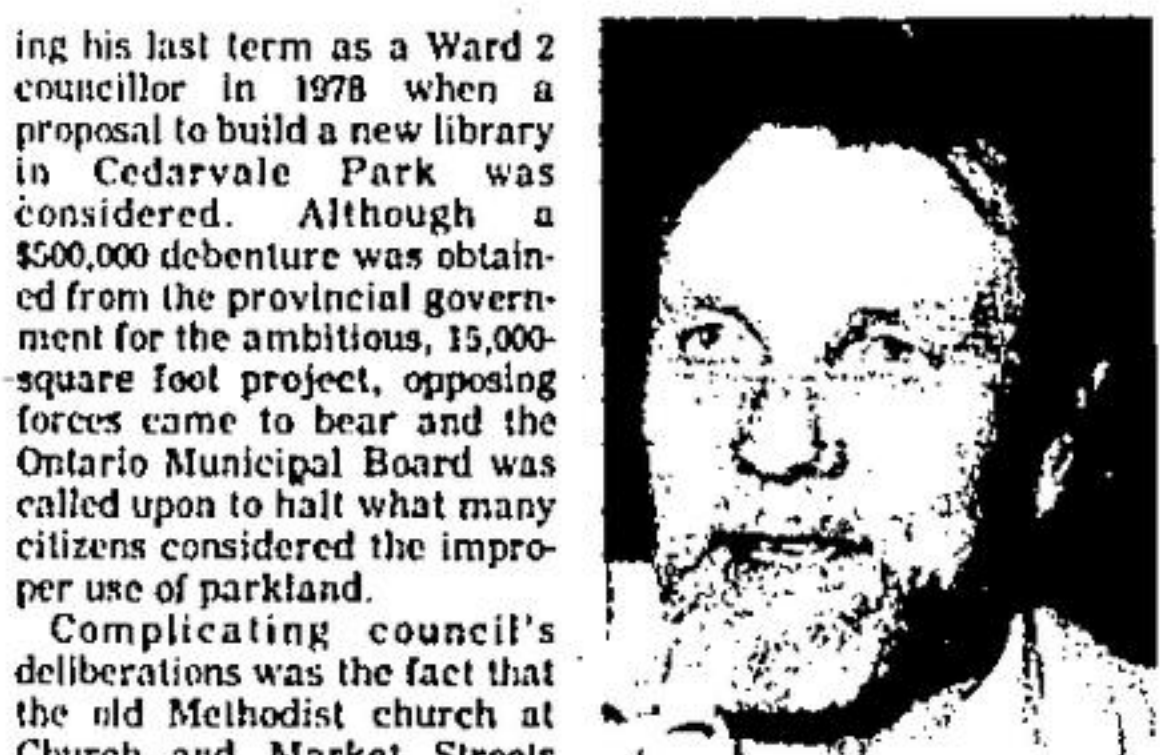
The Halton Hills Public Library Board has come up with a unique plan through which residents can help fill the shelves of the new library under construction in Georgetown.

Although estimates for the number of volumes the new library will handle are hard to come by because detailed plans have yet to be finalized, chief librarian Betsy Cornwell predicts the Georgetown facility should be able to double its former

capacity of 25,000 volumes. Norman Holt, proprietor of the new downtown store Oxbow Books (formerly the Book Shop), has made an arrangement with the board by which he'll deposit 20 per cent of the full list price of each book specially sold at his shop to the library. Donations are tax deductible; Mr. Holt and the libraries carry lists of suggested titles to be donated as well, although citizens are welcome to expand the library's collection on topics of special

interest. Apart from the financial donations through Oxbow, books can be donated privately to the library, and will carry stickers inside their front covers acknowledging the gift in the donor's name. These books will be specially displayed at the complex's grand opening next fall.

For more information, contact the Georgetown library at 877-2681 or Oxbow Books at 877-8861.



RALPH URSEL

ended up on the 55-yard line.

Mr. Wagland recalls the library site as almost an afterthought on Queen's Park's part when a list was being prepared of area locations to be scouted for the new theatre. The ministry of culture and recreation perhaps identified the possibility of combining both



The somewhat controversial proposed management structure for the new arts complex, while established in a simple format and, according to recreation director Tom Shepard, subject to some change, the structure is questioned by spokesmen for the arts community who feel a citizens' committee should be appointed to administer the theatre portion. Library board chairman Dick Howitt similarly has reservations about his board's control over the gallery portion.

CONSTRUCTION COST ESTIMATES (revised June 28, 1980)	
Estimated construction cost	\$1,250,000
Contingency on construction	62,500
Architect's fee, consultant's fees	110,000
Land purchases	221,500
Furnishings	75,000
GROSS COST	\$1,719,000

FINANCING	
Debenture proceeds plus interest	\$577,000
Lot levies	307,000
1980 operating budget	185,000
Provincial grants: Ontario Heritage Fund	30,000
Community Centres Act	75,000
Access for handicapped	75,000
Wintario grant for portable equipment	3,000
Proceeds from fund-raising	200,000
SUBTOTAL	\$1,452,000

Added to this figure are anticipated revenues from the sale of the former Walter Gray home, now boarded up, on Church Street facing the complex site (negotiations with the Royal Canadian Legion, branch 120, and downtown businessmen, with an eye to preparing a comprehensive parking lot scheme, are now getting underway) plus any additional required financing from town reserve funds.

Together, these two sources are expected to meet the balance of construction costs, the latter to be reduced accordingly in the event public fund-raising contributes more than \$200,000.