

Old Stone School to face wrecker's ball

By LISA BOONSTOPPEL-POT
The Herald

A monument to early education in Acton, the Old Stone School on School Lane, in front of Robert Little Public School, is to be demolished.

Halton Board of Education just purchased the school and approximately one acre of land around it for \$80,000 and have plans to tear it down to possibly create a natural parkland and improve Robert Little School's parking area.

"We have no definite plans for the site but the intent is to maintain the trees and park area," said Gord Dickson, Assistant Superintendent of Business for the Board.

In a report presented to Halton trustees Thursday night, it was stated the acquisition of the site would provide for an improved parking area, potential for improving bus access, improve vehicular and pedestrian access, protect area from future development, improve sighting of school and a removal of a safety hazard.

Despite specific references to parking made in the report, Mr. Dickson stated there is no intention to transform the land into a parking lot.

"We're not going to ravage the lot. The trees there are beautiful and we want to keep them there," said Mr. Dickson.

His main concern was that the old school building had become a safety hazard. The Town of Halton Hills purchased the site in 1984.

"The Town never made use of the site and in the meantime, the building deteriorated," he said. "It's an object of vandalism and it's crumbling inside."

Bev Picard, vice-principal at Robert Little School, agreed the school building had deteriorated to the point of being considered hazardous.

"It's been left so long it's become a safety hazard," she said. "There's all kinds of critters in it and it's been vandalized inside and out."

She said she's "sorry" the building will be torn down but is

happy the site is back in possession of the Board of Education.

"In keeping it as part of the school grounds, that will prevent other buildings from being built there," she said.

That fear was shared by many residents who were opposed to a Town proposal to build public housing on the site.

Halton Board officials stated in their report the site was originally purchased by the Town so they could convert it into a museum. But Tom Shepard, the Town's Director of Recreation and Parks said that was never confirmed.

"When council agreed to purchase the land, there was nothing pre-conceived for the site," he said. "A number of things were considered for the site such as creating a museum, a day care facility, a community meeting room or including it in a possible library expansion. But it was not purchased with the specific intent to do something with it."

He stated lack of finances resulted in the abandonment of the

school.

"It came down to financial priority over project priority and council was never able to fire up the extra finances to do anything with the building."

Then, when council was reviewing its financial situation a couple of months ago, it was agreed that the school and accompanying site was a "surplus."

"At one point, it was decided it would require a tremendous amount of money to make the building structurally sound, let

alone making it usable for some purpose," he said. "It became cost prohibitive."

The Town decided to sell the school and offered it to the Board, which purchased the site for \$80,000 or \$11,000 more than what they sold it for in the first place.

Ms. Pickard said Robert Little is hoping to make use of parts of Old Stone School in the renovation the school is currently undergoing.

She said a lot of people who teach at Robert Little were themselves once students at Old Stone School.



Puppets and puppeteers

Members of the Acton Puppeteers community group met Sunday at Acton Baptist Church to practice for their upcoming puppet show, 'Where's Christmas.' The show features puppeteers (in window) Brooke Inglis, (behind screen, left to right) Jamie Birrell, Shannon Birrell, Nick Fread, Sarah Austin, Derek Lambert, Damian Banyard, the

groups leader Tom Cullin and (at bottom) Matthew Bunt. The group was formed a year-and-a-half ago and this is the second feature performance they've given. 'Where's Christmas' will be presented Dec. 6, 7 and 8 at the Acton Baptist Church at 7:00 p.m. Tickets are \$2 for adults and \$1 for children and are available at the door. (Herald Photo)

On-site billing put on hold

By BEN DUMMETT
The Herald

Halton Hills Hydro will have to wait a long time, before it may be able to process its customers' bills at the time of taking the meter reading.

During a recent interview, local Hydro Commissioner Murt Allison, a staunch supporter of the on-site billing program, confirmed the commission was recently informed it has an insufficient number of customers to cover the program's start-up costs.

The utility needs 26,000 customers, double the current total, said Mr. Allison.

The program would permit utility officials to process and hand over the hydro bill to each customer immediately after taking the meter reading.

However, the significant start-up costs call for the purchasing of a van equipped with the necessary computer processing equipment, he explained.

Under the current billing system, utility employees go out and conduct a monthly meter reading of each customer, then return to the commission office where the bills are processed and then mailed to the customers.

Mr. Allison said he is hopeful the program will be able to be implemented at a future date.

Mr. Allison said the program, once implemented, will save the utility a significant amount of money by reducing postage costs and increasing interest earnings as a result of customer payments arriving at the commission's Acton office up to 10 days faster.

Mr. Allison said Mississauga-based company C and D Meter Reading Services, which did the feasibility study concerning on-site billing for Halton Hills Hydro Commission, is now looking at the possibility of setting up an on-site billing program to be split between Halton Hills and another

municipality.

Milton is one municipality currently being considered for this kind of arrangement, said Mr. Allison.

He concedes the other four commissioners are perhaps not as anxious to see the program go ahead as he is.

None of the other commissioners could be reached for comment at press time.

Mr. Allison said another reason the program is being held back is because it requires all meters be located on the outside of a building or house.

Yet in Acton, said Mr. Allison, most meters are located inside the buildings and houses.

Asked why the commission supports C and D Meter Reading Service continued investigation into the matter given the Acton situation, Mr. Allison would only say because the company wants to do it.

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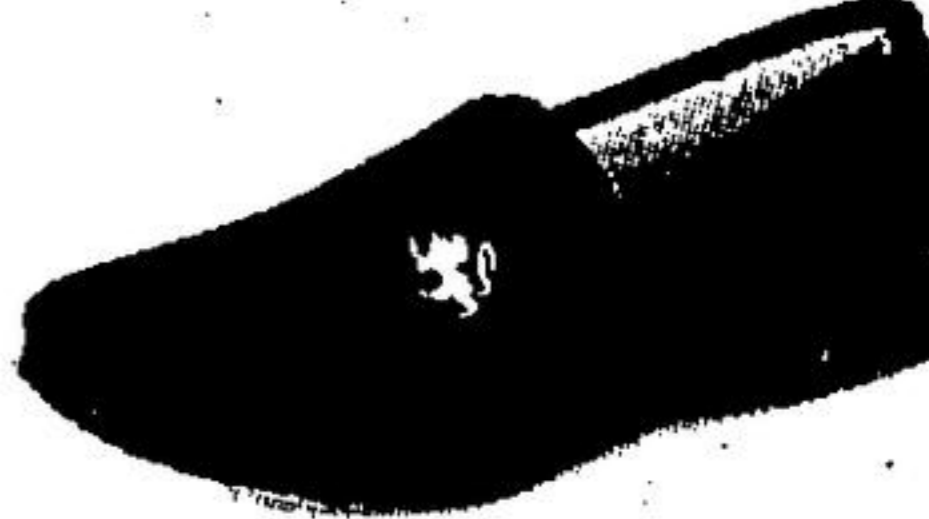
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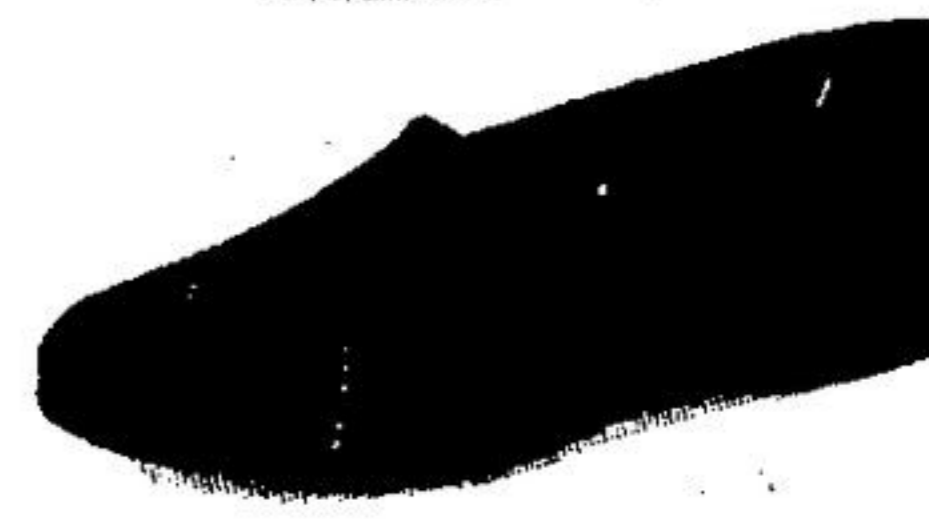
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