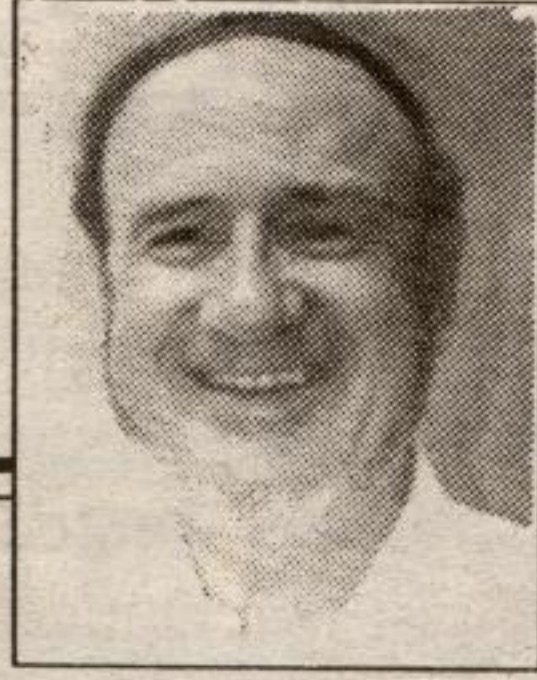


EDITORIAL

With Hartley Coles



YMCA building: once the hub, now an eyesore

One cannot help being disturbed by the condition of one part of Acton's downtown business section. Empty stores and buildings have made two blocks on Mill Street, bounded by Main and John, into an eyesore for business people who are improving their premises and trying to revive the once prosperous area.

The latest news to come from the area — the decision to sell the Acton YMCA building at 42 Mill St. E. — is another loss to the area's stability. Once the hub for most of Acton's social and recreation programs, the building has been vacant since November of 1991.

The Town of Acton offices, public utilities offices, the town library, meeting rooms for the Masonic Lodge, police offices and an apartment for the YMCA director, were once located in the streetfront stores and second floor of the "Y", as the building was known.

The gymnasium, meeting rooms, public lavatories and finished basement in the rear of the "Y" provided a social network which was the envy of small towns across the country. In fact, it once was a proud boast in promotional literature for Acton that it was the smallest town in Canada to have a YMCA. The Y's Men and Y's Menettes were the town's most active service clubs.

However, over the decades, the building could not longer serve the growing needs of the town. As Acton grew the facilities at the "Y" shrank.

The library, squeezed by space, moved into new facilities on the 100th anniversary of Confederation, the utilities office moved into the new Hydro buildings, the new Town of Halton Hills decided to share office facilities with Hydro, the police, the last tenants, decided it no longer suited their needs and moved across the street.

That was the last straw. Unable to find the funds to update the building, the staff and volunteers of the "Y," convinced no others would use the building in its decayed state, voted to close it down until some community group could redevelop the building. There have been several proposals but none have been financially viable.

Now the group in charge has decided to list the property for sale, to see if any other private or public agencies are interested in the site.

Not many years ago the YMCA and the post office at the corner of Mill and Willow Streets dominated Acton's business section. It seems incongruous that both of these landmarks have gone, one to the wrecker's ball, the other to decay and obsolescence.

The money for the YMCA was left to Acton as a bequest from J.A. Murray. Back in the 1930's it was known as the Murray Memorial. "Acton's Early Days," the bible for this community's history, says: "I often wish my old friend, J.A. Murray (or Al as I used to call him) could see this fine structure and the fine community centre he has made for Acton by his generous bequest to the home town.

"I see the young life going in and out from the YMCA and the fine library quarters and Public Utilities Office and I can't help but admire this latest community asset. It fills up this lot pretty thoroughly and leaves few vacant places on our front street."

If J.A. Murray were alive today he'd have a right to question our stewardship of a building which has done so much to shape the cultural and social needs of Acton.

Circumstances do change. Interests which revolved around the "Y" and its programs have taken other directions but nothing has really taken the place of the "Y." An asset has become a liability.

The author of "Acton's Early Days" who noted the YMCA "fills up the lot pretty thoroughly and leaves few vacant places on our front street" would be saddened to see it has added another vacant place on our front streets.

There's one consolation. Proceeds from the sale of the property will remain in Acton to be used by the YMCA to expand and enrich its programming. Let's hope the buyer has the interests of Acton at heart and the site once more becomes an asset to the community.



WHAT'S HAPPENING!

A Weekly Round-Up of Coming Events in Acton & Area

March 17, 18, Thursday and Friday — 2 to 4 pm: There are still two more days of special March Break swims at the Acton Indoor Pool. For more information call 873-2600, ext. 276.

March 17, 18, Thursday and Friday — 1 to 2:20 pm: Local service clubs have sponsored free skating for March Break. Enjoy these last few days at the Acton Community Centre.

March 17, Thursday — 2 pm: Go back in time to Ancient Egypt when you visit the Acton Library during March Break! For children five years (attending Sr. K.) and up. Colourful beads and Egyptian headwear will be crafted from paper. There is no charge for this program but spaces are limited. For more information call 873-2681.

March 18, Friday — 5:30 pm: St. Patrick's Dinner at Knox Presbyterian Church, Acton. Entertainment follows. Adults \$8, children 12 and under \$4. Tickets available from Gladys Davidson, 853-2727; Church Office (mornings) 853-2360 or Village Variety Store, Acton.

March 21, 23, 28, 30, Monday and Wednesday evenings — 6:30 to 9:30 pm: First Aid Course. For more information please call Yvon Essiembre at 853-4889.

March 23, 24, Wednesday, Thursday — 7 to 10 pm: Open House, seminar, workshop and registration for all levels offered in Folk Art Classes. Six-week beginner class starts Monday, April 11. Basket Weaving also offered. For more information call Brenda 853-3274. (11)

March 24, Thursday — 7:30 pm: The Smile Theatre Group presents the play "Hey Ruby" at the Acton High School. A dance musical, the play is about Ruby Keeler who tap danced her way into the hearts of many. Tickets are \$6 and are available at the door, at ASSIC or from the Village Constable.

March 25, 26, Friday and Saturday — 5:00 - 9:00 pm (Friday) and 10:00 am. to 5:00 pm (Saturday): Over sixty social service and recreational organizations will gather at the Georgetown Market Place Mall to celebrate The International Year of the Family. For more information call Joy Thompson at the Parks and Recreation Department 873-2600, ext. 263.

March 26, Saturday — 10 am to 3:30 pm: Ladies Enrichment Day at Churchill Community Church. Everyone welcome. Bring a friend and a box lunch. Refreshments provided. For more information call Helen Pasanen 853-3663.

March 26, 27, Saturday and Sunday — 9 am to 4pm (Saturday), 1 pm to 4 pm (Sunday): C.P.R. course. For more information please call Yvon Essiembre at 853-4889.

March 26, Saturday — 10 am to 2 pm: You're invited to the Rockwood Nursery School Alumni Bunny Brunch at the Rockwood Town Hall. Twenty-five years of memories will be on display. If you have anything to add or to make sure your class list is complete, call Shirley Facey at 856-9588.

April 1, Friday — 10 am: Don't be an April Fool! Worship with us Good Friday at the Acton Baptist Church. A nursery will be provided.

April 1, Friday — 7 pm: Come and celebrate Good Friday with the whole Christian Community of Acton. Trinity United Church. Nursery will be provided.

THE ACTON Tanner

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