



SANTA'S HELPERS: Rotarians Brian Robertson, Rob Charette and Ed Lawson pack Christmas hampers into a van for delivery to local families. The hampers were collected, packed and distributed through the efforts of The Salvation Army, St. Vincent de Paul, the IODE and the Rotary Club. — Maggie Petrushevsky photo

Woodside school being restored

By **MAGGIE PETRUSHEVSKY**
The New Tanner

Recent rain and wind has delayed the completion of a restoration project for Erin Township's old Woodside school.

Owner Grant Robinson restored the school's belfry and planned to have it lifted back into place before Christmas. Then bad weather interrupted those plans and the finale to the project awaits re-scheduling in the new year.

The school, which was built in 1888, closed in 1965 Robinson says. The belfry was taken down probably in the 1940s, because of a leak in the roof. Cost estimates persuaded trustees of the day that removing the belfry and recovering the roof was the cheapest repair method. So

the belfry came down and was left to deteriorate beside the school.

Soon after the school closed it was purchased and the traditional 14 foot schoolroom ceiling lowered to create a single-storey house, Robinson says.

The fifth owner since the closure, Robinson jokes the bats and cluster flies have more room in the "attic" than he has on the first floor.

At some point he'd like to make that attic into a second storey, he says.

He has already done a number of smaller restorations, including re-installing a flagpole, since purchasing the structure in 1995. During those projects he met a number of former pupils still living in the area and saw pictures of the original school taken in the 1930s, when it was

still with its belfry.

"It was a very ornate structure," he says. "To me the bell and belfry were like the centrepiece and without them the building just wasn't a school."

The belfry is the last restoration project of this scale.

Woodside, built on Erin 5 Sideroad between the Fourth and Fifth Lines, opened in 1888 with Pricilla Menzies as the teacher and the late Minnie Zoe Bennett as a pupil. By 1899 Bennett taught in the one room school. Vera Denny was the teacher when Woodside closed.

Because Bennett was a longterm teacher and principal at Acton Public School the elementary school on Acton Boulevard was named for her. Later it was joined to McKenzie-Smith Middle school.

Pay, benefits are cut...

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duction is coming," Dowell said on Friday, adding either the client or the agency that they were being driven to paid a fee but it wasn't enough to keep the program going.

Dowell said for 1999-2000 they will come close to balancing their budget and will go into 2000-2001 with a balanced budget.

"We going into next year with a more aggressive fund raising strategy and are also very aggressively searching out potential grants," Dowell said when asked about efforts to raise more money.

Dowell said the amalgamation of the former Acton Social Services and Information services with services in Georgetown was the first step to reducing costs, along with asking smaller agencies to amalgamate to cut down on administration costs and stretch available dollars and that shaving has brought the cuts "down to the bone."

Seventy-five per cent of HHCSI's funding comes from the provincial government — from the Ministry of Health for seniors and the Ministry of Community and Social Services for child care programs. The balance of the funding comes from the United Way of Halton Hills, one-time grants, fundraising and grants.

"The staff are really working full out to keep the range of services going. We believe strongly in the model of children through seniors and everyone is working really hard

and giving their all to make it happen," Dowell said, adding that morale is always low when cuts are being made.

HHCSI president Anna Spiteri said it was a year of mixed blessing with the cuts in regional social service grants and the move to 45 and

47 Mill Street. Spiteri said all programs will be reviewed in 2000, especially those that don't have ongoing government assistance.

"We're looking at trying to reduce our cost of running programs without cutting the programs," Spiteri said Friday.

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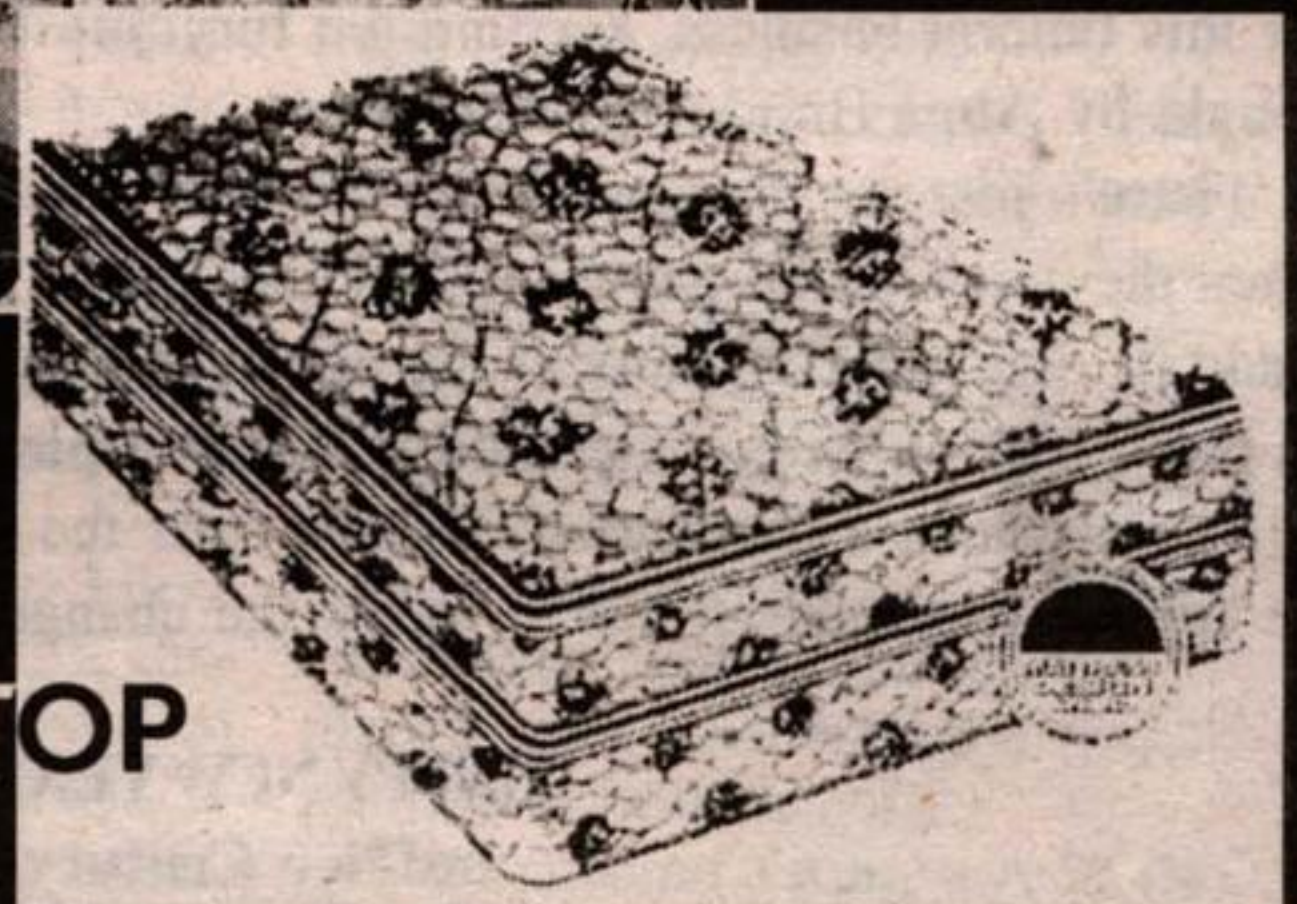
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