

Group, trying to save house, invites public to share 'pioneer' memories

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Staff Writer

It was a cold, dark winter night in December when the Credit Valley Conservation came to Halton Hills council asking for permission to tear down Beecham House—a mid-19th century farmhouse designated as 'heritage' on the Town's own Heritage Register.

But that night, a lone couple begged for a reprieve—and got it—but for six months only.

Now spring has come, and with it, a 150-strong group of families and friends have joined with that lone couple, John and Irene Carroll, in a newly established group, Friends of Fallbrook Farm.

Fallbrook is Beecham House's true name—a misnomer by Credit Valley Conservation, owners of the property, which still rankles the Fallbrook faithful. Fallbrook is located on 27 Sideroad, within the Silver Creek Outdoor Education Centre, owned by the Credit Valley Conservation (CVC).

Under its current white clapboard siding is unique large squared-log construction—the only one of its kind remaining in Halton, says the group.

"It represents a style and quality of construction that is unique to the community and is a living testimony to the struggles and efforts of the first Scottish and Irish settlers to Esquesing Township. This farmhouse deserves and demands to be preserved," says John Carroll.

The conservation authority, in its argument to demolish the building, says the deteriorating empty farmhouse is a target for partying youths, vandals and a potential hazard to the hundreds of children who visit the Education Centre each year. Originally the CVC wanted demolition, but the Town's Heritage Halton Hills committee recommended the house be deconstructed and rebuilt elsewhere.

As part of the six-month reprieve, the Friends have been asked to develop a viable business plan to restore—estimated at least \$100,000—and to develop a raison d'être for remaining within the Education Centre.

The Friends are putting the call out to the public for help. The group is hosting an open house this Saturday, April 19, 2-5 p.m. at Limehouse Memorial Hall. An update will be provided on the work already done to save the squared-log farmhouse. But the group is no longer limiting its scope to the house, but also want preservation



The Keir family, who were managers of the farm for many years, posed in the garden at Fallbrook about 1975. From left to right, Irene (Keir) Carroll, her mother Catherine Keir; Cecil Manson (Catherine's visiting brother-in-law); Alexander (Sandy) Keir (Irene's father and resident/farm manager at the time); Jean Manson (Irene's visiting cousin), Ada Manson (Catherine's visiting sister) and Ada Kellas (Catherine's and Ada's mother visiting from Scotland). This picture portrays the excellence and splendour of the garden of which Catherine was very proud. She won awards for her efforts; and both casual and formal visitors to the farm were overwhelmed by the beauty of the grounds. It was once a spectacular site, says son-in-law John Carroll, who is now trying to save the house.



for the other works on the site such as an icehouse, bridge, stone wall and cemetery, which are "all classic examples of traditional Scottish architecture and craftsmanship."

At this weekend's open house, the Friends are urging the longtime residents and other interested people to bring their photos, letters and stories, so they can be recorded and taught to future generations.

In fact, teaching children about the past and environmental conservation for the future could be its destiny, says the group.

"We feel this little house could still be an integral part of a plan to promote

the watershed and energy conservation... perhaps no less important is the education value, which could be gleaned from restoring it to its period state," said Friends of Fallbrook member Wayne Gates of Guelph, who spent his early childhood on the farm. "The home has a rich cultural heritage from which sprung some of the co-operation that formed a Canada to which many have sought for years to live and grow. To move it to another location amounts to disrespect to the pioneers and a loss of most of its story and meaning."

For more information on the fight to save Fallbrook Farm, e-mail fallbrook@live.ca or call 905-878-8232.

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