

Antique piano returns to Town Hall Centre



PIANO MAN: This Bell upright grand piano, built in 1896, will be returned to its original home at the Acton Town Hall Centre next Tuesday. It was stored at the Band Hall, under the watchful eye of Bandmaster George Elliott until renovations at the town hall were complete. —Frances Niblock photo

Family gets keys to Habitat house in Acton

Habitat for Humanity Halton Acton presented the keys to their new “soy-house” on Sunday to Emil and Tess Nicolas at a dedication ceremony in Acton.

“The Nicolas family are role models of hard-working people for whom the housing market needs to be responsive,” said Anne Swarbrick, Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity Halton. “Habitat for Humanity Halton helps families to purchase safe, simple, affordable homes.” Habitat for Humanity works to help extend home ownership opportunities to people, keeping housing costs within 30 per cent of their income. The family’s contributions, in addition to their mortgage payments over a period of up to 35 years, includes 500 hours of “sweat equity” to help build it.

The home the Nicolas family is purchasing is uniquely “green”: its building materials include soy products grown by members of the Ontario Soybean Growers’ Association. It was built by Quality Engineered Homes at their factory in Kenilworth. The house was originally on display at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair to demonstrate how environmentally sustainable soy bean products can be used in house construction, hence the nickname for the house.

Building products used in the home include no-VOC paints and varnishes, bathroom fixtures, adhesives and insulation that use soy in place of petroleum oils. The main components of the house were pre-fabricated by Quality Engineered Homes at their factory, displayed at the Royal

Fair, then transported and “landed” at the Acton property, with subsequent work completed with the assistance of Habitat Halton volunteers, including the Nicolas family. Like all Habitat homes, it meets Energy Star standards.

“Our daughter is only 10-years-old and still enjoys playing. Her friends used to invite her to play in their backyard. Now she will be able to invite her friends to come over to play in our backyard. The house is perfect for us three,” said Emil Nicolas.

For more information on Habitat for Humanity Halton, the ceremony, volunteering, how low-income Halton residents can apply for a house, or for “ReNew It” home repairs to assist people living within low income levels, call 905-637-4446.

If it could talk, what stories the intricately carved Bell upright grand piano that will be repatriated to the refurbished Town Hall Centre this month, could tell.

Made in Guelph 1896, the piano’s first Acton home was the town hall where it was played at dances and parties.

“I think it was the Checker’s Club that decided the town hall needed a piano and they raised the money to buy it,” Acton Band Master George Elliott said after Band practice last Wednesday.

Elliott carefully removed the tartan blanket used to cover the piano where it sits, rarely used, in the corner of the Band Hall, among the stacks of toys from the

playgroup that shares the building.

Pointing to several burn marks made by musicians who paid closer attention to their music than their burning cigarette, Elliott said the instrument has a rich history.

“When they stopped using the upstairs of the town hall the piano sat there until the Seniors, who were using the YMCA building on Mill Street, decided they needed a piano,” Elliott recounted.

The piano was moved to the basement of the Y building and it remained there after the Seniors moved on.

“I remembered that it was there – it was such a good piano – and when I went to look at it the piano was

black with dirt and most of the ivories were gone from the keys and there was water damage,” Elliott said, adding he suggested to members of the Acton Citizen Band that they take on the project of restoring the piano as a Centennial project in 1967.

Elliott said not knowing better, they stripped the varnish and lost the beautiful patina that had built up over 70-plus years of use.

“I always thought that it would end up back at the town hall and now it will happen because the restoration of the building is well underway,” Elliott said, the piano will be moved back to its “home” – a small, specially built corner stage with ornate banisters in the auditorium – on April 8.

Looking Back



10 Years Ago

• Some Acton BIA (Business Improvement Area) members think an 11 p.m. to 8 a.m. curfew for anyone under 18 would help curb loitering and vandalism problems in the downtown area.

• Halton Hills Mayor Marilyn Serjeantson suggested the Town might buy some of the land at McKenzie-Smith Bennett School that

the Board of Education declared surplus.

• Brookfield Homes won’t say who is buying its 3.4-acre commercial site on Highway 7 in Acton east, but confirmed it was not selling to Sobeys, dispelling a rumour that the food giant would build the approved 74,600-square-foot plaza on the land.

Five Years Ago

• Acton’s Sue Hamilton, 51, forced herself to walk,

not run, as she prepared for the Weekend to End Breast Cancer benefiting Princess Margaret Hospital.

• Town politicians and staff continue to work with some downtown merchants who are frustrated and unhappy with the parking ban on the south side of Mill Street, between Main Street and John Street.

• Still no word if plans for a new medical centre in Acton will proceed sooner than later. The plans hinge on whether Halton staff finds any additional water capacity in the Acton supply.

HALTON REGION MUSEUM HALTON MUSEUM FOUNDATION

Volunteers Needed

Get Involved and Help
Build a Future for Halton’s Past

HALTON REGION MUSEUM

The Halton Region Museum is a year-round facility located in Kelso Conservation Area in Milton. It promotes an appreciation for and understanding of Halton’s natural and cultural heritage. Activities include:

- special events
- educational programs
- exhibitions
- facility rentals (e.g., weddings, corporate events)
- research services
- artifact collections management

Volunteers needed to help with events, education programs, and the gift shop.

HALTON MUSEUM FOUNDATION

A registered charitable organization, the Museum Foundation was formed in 1998 to support Museum projects and provide an active volunteer resource base.

The Foundation assists the Museum in:

- special events and fundraising activities
- increasing awareness of the Museum
- creating support within the community

Volunteers needed to serve as Foundation Directors. Monthly meetings are held in the evening.

Application deadline: April 14, 2010.

Applications are available online at www.halton.ca/museum or for pick up at:

Halton Region, 1151 Bronte Rd, Oakville OR
Halton Region Museum, RR 3 (Kelso Conservation Area) Milton

For more information, contact 905-875-2200, ext. 22.



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