



STAFF PHOTO/ERIN RILEY

HONOURING 200 YEARS OF WHITCHURCH HISTORY

Daniel Lamarche, 4, and his brother Jordan, 7, are in period military costume during the unveiling of a sign commemorating the 200th anniversary of the first settlement of Whitchurch Township. The ceremony was Saturday at the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum in Vandorf. The men in red are from the 12th York Battalion of the Upper Canada Volunteer Regiments organization. The township and the village of Stouffville were merged by the province into Whitchurch-Stouffville in 1971.

York Region homeowners bilked by phoney brick sales

BY KATHLEEN GRIFFIN
Staff Writer

Residents in new subdivisions across York Region are being warned by police about a scam artist who has bilked dozens of people of thousands of dollars.

According to York Regional Police, a man approaches people in new houses, offering deals on interlocking brick driveways, walkways or patios.

Most recently, he's worked subdivisions north of 16th Avenue on Woodbine Avenue in Markham and at Leslie Street and Major MacKenzie Drive in Richmond Hill.

But police are sure the scam is operating across the region.

The man carries catalogues from a well-known interlocking brick supplier, but he doesn't have business cards

or a company vehicle.

He tells people he can give them a deal, then draws up a written contract for the work right at the door, using forms available at any office store.

Then he collects a deposit, or in some cases the total amount.

"I talked to one victim and as I was leaving the house, a man flagged me down and asked if I was here about the interlocking brick," said Const. Lawrence Stevenson.

"He said he was out \$10,000. The man is a suspect in at least 30 incidents."

One victim paid \$1,200 for the brick, but said he would do the work himself.

A pile of broken brick collected from another site was dropped off at the house, and the salesman hasn't been seen since.

"But the victims all say the man is very friendly," added Const. Stevenson.

He recommends, "If people come to your door, don't hand over a cheque.

"If they say they represent a company, ask for a business card or make a call and check it out. Don't provide money the first meeting; get a quote and a call-back number."

Police say a man, who sometimes calls himself Joe, has been charged with similar offences in Durham and Peel regions.

They want to hear from any more people in York have been fleeced by the ploy.

If you are a victim or have information call 905-881-1221, ext. 7541 and ask for Const. Stevenson or the fraud squad.

Demolition of house ends with \$10,000 fine

BY KATHLEEN GRIFFIN
Staff Writer

A Markham developer and his contractor were fined a total of \$10,000 Tuesday for demolishing a 127-year-old heritage home illegally last fall.

Wynberry Developments Inc., a subsidiary of Ballantry Homes, was fined \$7,500. Its contractor, Metric Contracting Services Corp. of Brampton, faces a \$2,500 penalty for razing the Andrew Wideman Home, circa 1847, without a permit last November. The maximum fine is \$50,000.

Town of Markham solicitors agreed to a joint submission on the charges, which was accepted by the courts. Charges against Ballantry principals — president Dave Hill and directors Bobby Bhoola and Atul Varmali — and Metric directors Ennio and Frank Liorti, were dropped in the deal.

"In all circumstances, the town agreed to put these fines forward as an appropriate resolution to these charges in these specific circumstances," said Markham's assistant solicitor Steven O'Melia.

Ward 4 Councillor George McKelvey said the fines were likely lowered because the incident was a first offence for Ballantry. And he reminded residents the town has already negotiated a private reparation deal with the high-profile developer.

"I think the fine was about as much as we could expect for a first offence," Councillor McKelvey said.

As additional restitution to the town, Ballantry has agreed to build a \$250,000 reception and research centre for the Markham Museum, using goods and services from its contractors while a nearby subdivision is being constructed.

"I'm not sure the public realizes this developer could have gone to court, paid the fine and walked away," Councillor McKelvey pointed out. "I think he learned the hard way."

But that's not good enough for resident Cameron MacDonald, who lives next door in another heritage home built by the Wideman family.

"It's a joke," he said.

"There's no deterrent here. It gives developers open season to destroy rather than preserve."

He complained about the huge pile of rubble, all that is left of the red-brick Gothic Revival homestead, that still sits on the property six months later.

Mr. MacDonald also questioned whether the courts meted out a lighter penalty in light of the restitution offered to the town — but Mr. O'Melia dismissed that.

"The judge did not take into consideration and was not advised of the offer to the town," he said.

"This penalty was reached independently of other considerations."

Ballantry president Hill has maintained the demolition was an error — a mix up between his company and Metric.

In earlier interviews he said Metric was supposed to bulldoze three outbuildings on the property. Instead it destroyed the heritage home and left the sheds, despite desperate pleas at the time from neighbour MacDonald and former tenant Lindsay Draper.

However, Ballantry neglected to obtain demolition permits for any of the structures on the site, leading to formal charges.

'It's a joke. There's no deterrent here.'

— Wideman house neighbour
Cameron MacDonald

The loss shocked the community and council, with Mayor Don Cousens brokering the additional restitution deal.

The Widemans were a prominent family in Markham in the late 1800s. In

1902 Andrew's two sons, Albert and Harvey, founded A. & H. Wideman Hardware and Jewellery at 85 and 87 Main Street North, a building that still stands today.

Councillor McKelvey said he believes the agreement between Ballantry and the town, in addition to the court fines, will encourage other developers with heritage buildings on their land to do the right thing.

"I think any major developer in Markham certainly gets this message," said Councillor McKelvey.

"We are sending a strong message and this case will now serve as a benchmark."

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