

Stouffville Says

By Hannelore Volpe

Tommy Douglas was chosen as the greatest Canadian Monday. Do you agree?

— Asked at A & P in Stouffville Tuesday morning



Stan CAMPBELL

I was hoping Frederick Banting, the discoverer of insulin, would win. But I think Tommy Douglas was a good choice.



Jeannette ZUCCOLIN

I am disappointed Don Cherry was even on the list. I think Tommy Douglas was a good choice.



Ron COOPER

Tommy Douglas was a very appropriate choice. He did an awful lot for people out west and for the country when he got to Ottawa.



Susan DEKKER

I had Terry Fox in mind because of the awareness he brought to cancer research and the fact the Terry Fox Run is now worldwide.

Theatre proposals have long history

From page 1

has received municipal funding. In the latest move, council agreed in September a concept and business plan for building done by the Ventin Group.

Ventin shares its findings and receives public response Monday at 7 p.m. during a meeting in the council chambers, fourth floor, 37 Sandiford Dr.

This is the third time Ventin has studied the building. The first was for the Clock Tower Theatre Association, the second for then-councillor Sherban's proposal in the summer of 2002. At that time, she proposed the building house the municipal offices and a multi-purpose centre. That required an addition on the building and her proposal was not chosen at a subsequent council meeting.

A nine-year journey for the structure, which sits almost empty at 19 Civic Ave., started in December 1995.

A nine-year journey for the structure, which sits almost empty at 19 Civic Ave., started in December 1995. That's when Jim Rehill and Dave Duggan made a presentation to council suggesting a performing arts centre in the old town hall.

The Clock Tower Theatre Association held numerous fundraising concerts, the last one in March 2001. Through the years, the association managed to raise around \$10,000.

After the municipal offices were moved out of the building in September 1998, the association asked council to lease the building for five years and explore putting a theatre in it. The association paid a nominal sum plus utility bills and the building became home to several groups of artists, potters and musicians.

In 2000, the association had a study done by Ventin to determine the feasibility of constructing a 350-seat live theatre there, valued at \$2.5 million. In this scenario, the building would have been expanded at the back and the theatre would be on the second floor.

However, in March 2002, council decided not to convert the town hall to a multi-purpose facility.

"We simply do not have the finances," Clock Tower committee chairperson Eric Button said at the time. Fundraising was going on simultaneously for what became the Lebovic Centre library and indoor pool.

"We couldn't get major spon-

sors or the town to commit funds," committee member Doris Harvey said.

Council considered leasing or selling the building in April 2002 and put out a call for proposals that summer. Among them was one by Mrs. Sherban.

She hired Ventin to make an artistic rendering of the building as a theatre. At that time, Ventin's Paul Sapounzi urged council to abandon plans to lease or sell the building and "recognize the historic and architectural value" of the building and use it as a theatre. He also suggested a 25,000-square-foot addition be added to house the municipal office.

In other proposals, Don Quarles, owner of the Melody Man entertainment production company, wanted to partner with the town to lease the building and turn it into a multi-purpose cultural centre.

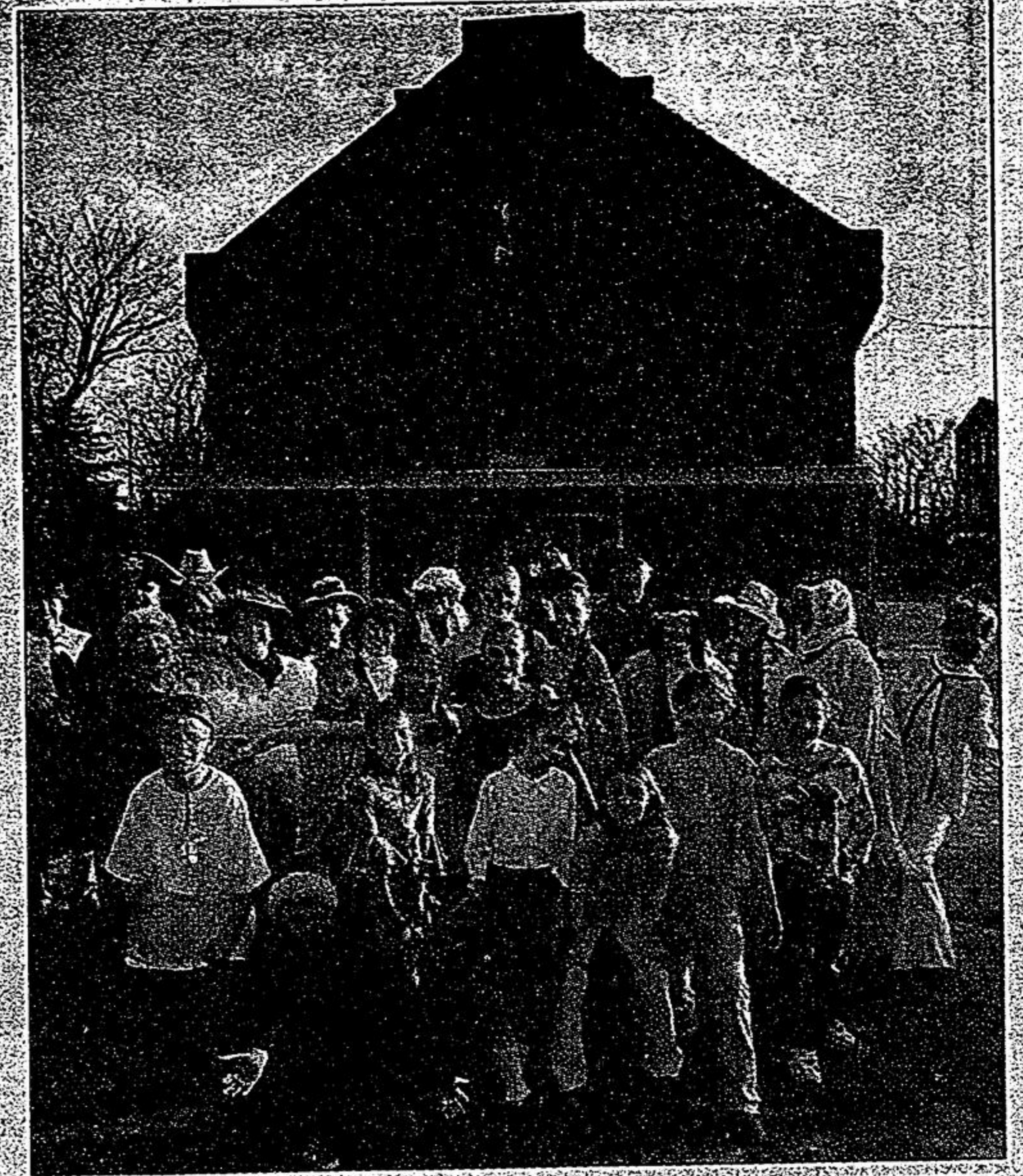
Karen Young of the Clock Tower Potters group wanted a decision on leasing or selling the building to be delayed to give her group time to form an arts council.

Council chose the proposal of Arrowsmith Architectural Group and its partner Roberts Bell Engineering Ltd. in June. The proposal involved the architectural and engineering firms using the top floor for offices while buying or leasing the bottom floor for a cultural arts centre.

However, two months later, Mrs. Sherban pleaded with the owners of Arrowsmith during a council meeting to pull out of the running to occupy the building's top floor. The deal fell through a short time later.

The building received its heritage designation in November 2002. A month later, council decided a seniors centre could be put into the first floor, but nothing came of it.

At the same council meeting, artist Benny van Velsen, represent-



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEN

Performers from York-Durham Academy of the Performing Arts, Newman Concepts in Dance, Anne Milne School of Dance, Music Mania and Motus O gather in front of the old town hall. Supporters want the building turned into a theatre complex.

ing artists in the building, calling themselves the Clock Tower Artists Association, proposed constructing studio space, creating a gallery, giving art lessons and opening a music and art supply store.

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Arts and Culture Committee was formed (as a town committee) at the beginning of 2003.

During a February 2004 capital budget meeting, \$1.5 million was earmarked for the old town hall in 2006, \$750,000 from the town's hydro reserves and the rest from grants and other fundraising. The old town hall needs about \$1 million in exterior and structural renovations before it can be developed into a cultural arts centre.

The first fundraiser for the proposed centre, the Motus O gala was held in April at the Markham Theatre, where a silent auction raised \$1,300. Half the money went to Motus O, a Stouffville-based professional dance troupe and the rest to the culture, art and heritage committee for Whitchurch-Stouffville.

The committee, an initiative by concerned residents, was registered at that time as a non-profit association, enabling it to receive

donations.

Mrs. Mandich spoke on behalf of the town's arts and culture committee in May, making a pitch for a theatre in the old town hall to the approval of more than 45 residents in the Whitchurch-Stouffville council chambers.

Council decided to have a new committee, separate from the Whitchurch-Stouffville arts and culture committee, come up with a plan for the old town hall, including a permanent arts centre, within 30 days. However, council appeared to kill the idea during its June 15 meeting.

Only those intrepid few who stayed in the council chambers until midnight witnessed a reversal of that decision.

Councillors then made the decision to hire a consultant to investigate if a 350-seat theatre for live theatre, dance productions, films, music performances and lectures is possible.

Councillors decided unanimously at a Sept. 7 meeting to hire Ventin, at a cost of \$27,000, to go ahead with the concept and business plan for a theatre in the old town hall. Ventin was chosen over two other bidders.

SHOW MUST GO ON

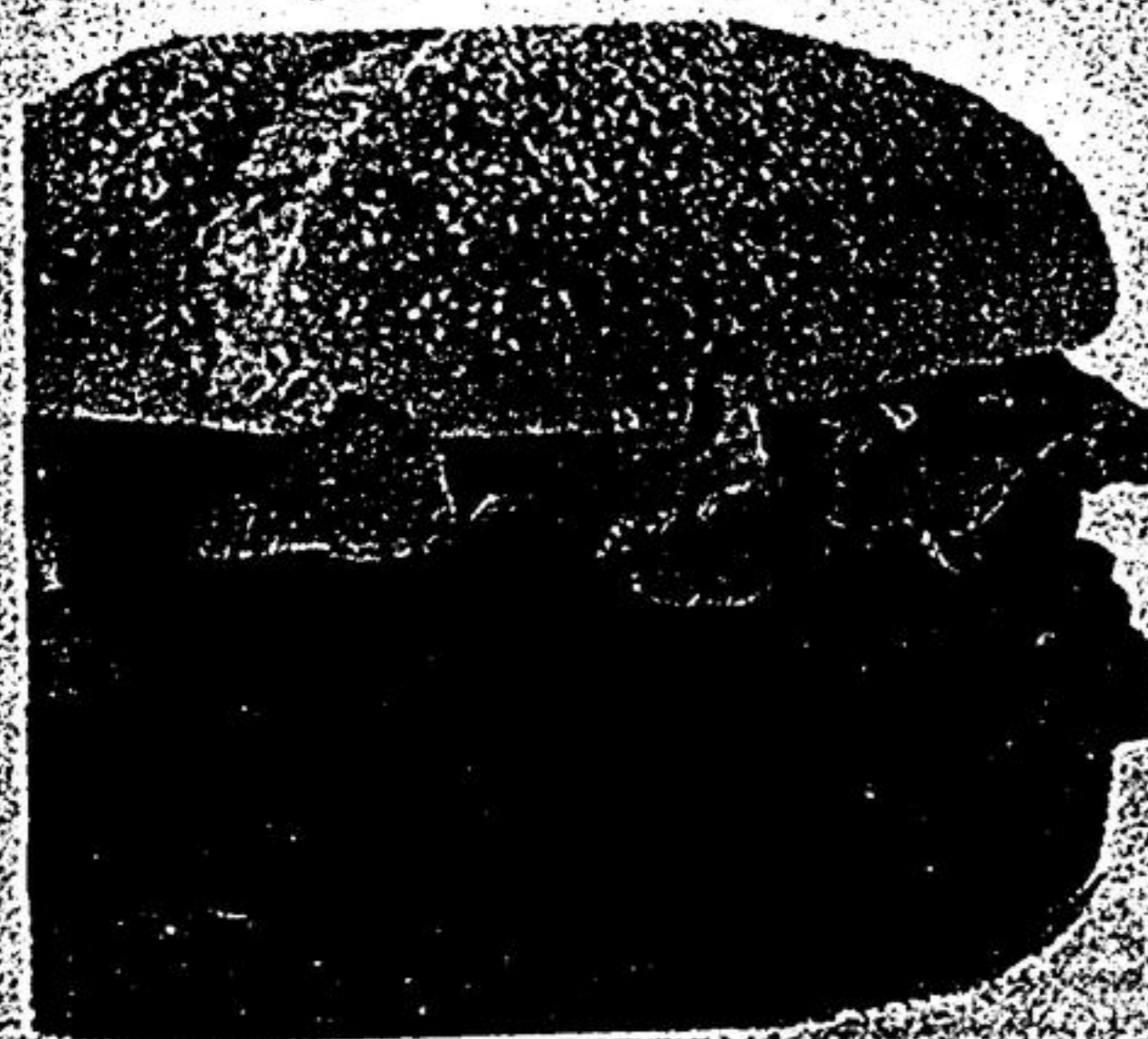
Old town hall steeped in showbiz history.

The old municipal building was constructed in 1900.

The lower level was a Dutch market while the upper became a concert hall called the auditorium. A bowling alley was added later by Ernie Stouffer.

Silent movies were first shown here in 1923, followed by talking pictures.

The building was bought by the Odeon Theatre chain in 1949. The village of Stouffville bought the building in 1959.



FOR REAL BEEF LOVERS
THE NEW BK™ Steak Burger

