

Most of money in place for Nineteen on Park

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that raised \$300,000 last fall, naming rights, the town's voluntary assistance agreement, development charges and park trust funds.

Mayor Wayne Emmerson said last fall he was surprised by the lack of interest in the project from the entertainment community.

Mr. French hopes that changes June 25.

While inviting downtown merchants, he has been encouraged by the response, including proposals to rent the building or offer spin-off business to events.

Concerts, recitals, trade shows, receptions, art shows and parties have all

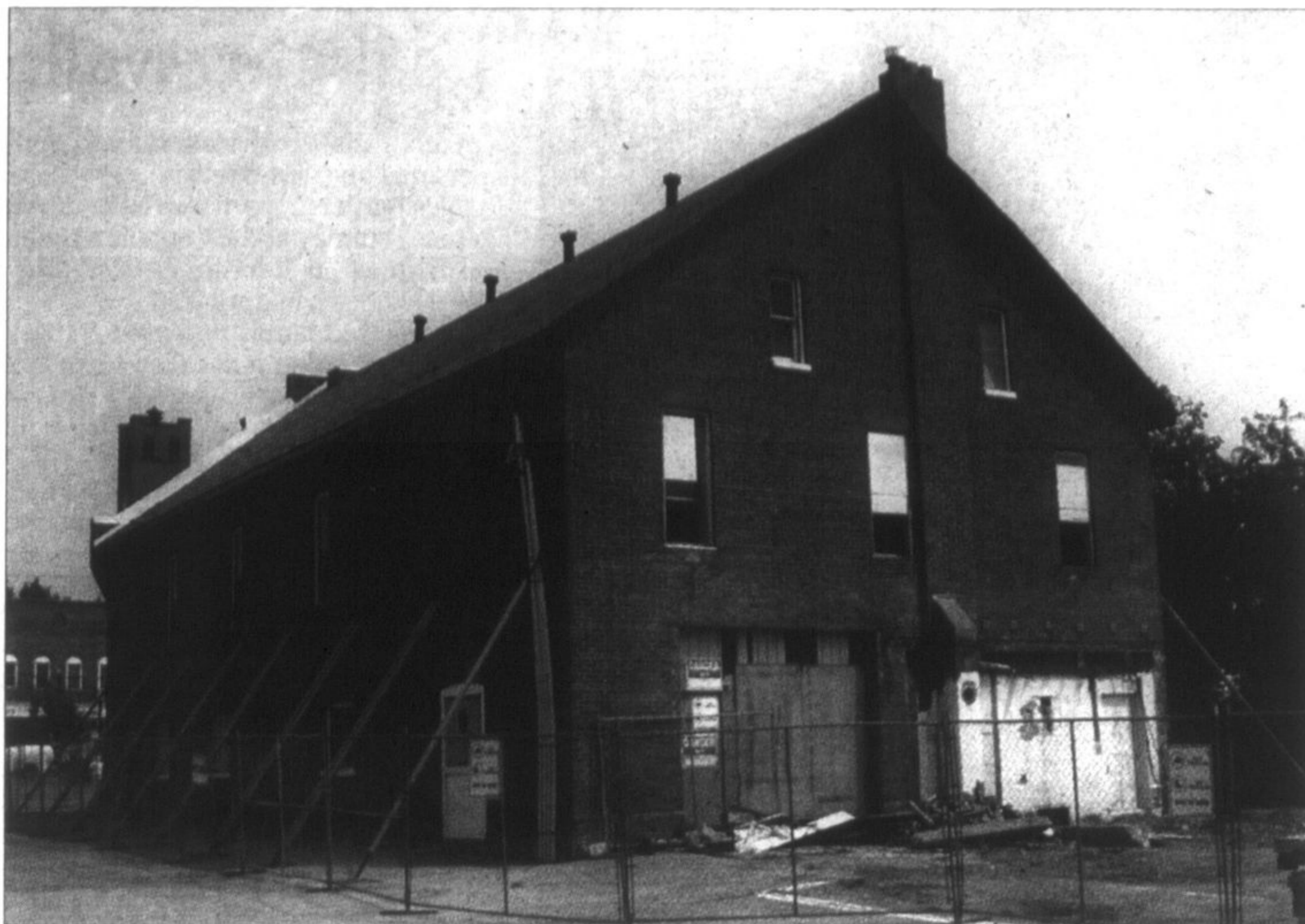
been suggested.

"With the price of gas, people aren't going to be traveling as much," said Mr. French, who expects residents to look for hometown activity more than before.

The redevelopment of the centre and adjoining Civic Square and Memorial Park, all a few metres from his home, are exciting.

"I wonder if people know what kind of a gem they have?" the former Ottawa resident said.

The June 25 meeting goes from 7:30 to 9 p.m. in the council chambers at Main Street and Sandiford Drive. RSVP by June 20 by calling 905-640-1910, ext. 292.



STAFF PHOTO/JIM MASON

The restoration of 19 Civic Ave. into an arts centre is expected to be complete next spring. You can take part in planning for the opening at a meeting June 25.

Competition turning point for Panetta

BY SIMONE JOSEPH
Staff Writer

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The Celebration of the Arts talent competition marked a turning point in Daniel Panetta's life.

"It helped me realize I have something I can use for good to entertain people. It was a foot in the door," he said.

Most importantly, the 2006 event he competed in gave the young baritone confidence in his ability.

Mr. Panetta, who has been singing since age five, earned first place in the vocal intermediate category plus a \$1,500 bursary after he performed Michael Bubl 's version of Fever. He has saved the money and plans to put it towards music education or training.

Celebration of the Arts is the brainchild of York Region Media Group publisher Ian Proudfoot. He was honoured last weekend by the Markham Arts Council for the event's contribution to cultural life in York.

Shortly after competing in Celebration of the Arts, Mr. Panetta participated in the CNE's Rising Star competition and won first place.

Since then, the Grade 10 student at Thornhill's St. Elizabeth Catholic High School has continued his singing career. Five thousand copies of his recording of Il Divo's

Mama were distributed to families of troops serving in the Canadian forces in Afghanistan.

Mr. Panetta, a Maple resident, has been signed to a contract with 3PK Plasma Productions. Farley Flex, of Canadian Idol fame, is part of that management team.

He will be recording a demo CD and hopes it results in a recording contract.

The 16-year-old has advice for young people considering entering the Celebration of the Arts competition: "Do it. It will be the greatest thing of your life. It will open your eyes to different kinds of art. You will gain a new respect for art in general," he said.

Mr. Panetta also had another piece of advice: "Never give up. No matter what, give it your all".

The deadline for entering the competition is next weekend.

Elimination judging begins July 11 at Newmarket Theatre. A limited number of live audition opportunities will be held at the theatre Thursday. (The semifinals are in July and the finals in August). The competition will be complete by Labour Day.

—With files from David Fleischer

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