

Chair's Report

As the weather slowly turns colder, darker and damper, we rediscover the joys of the smells of leaves, wood fires and earth. Often a contemplative and even melancholy time of year, it can also be a time to reconnect.

For those of you who participated in our **ACO Walking Tours** in September and October, it was a great opportunity to learn more about our town, and its deep heritage. While the Tours serve to educate, they also serve to engage. I think both our volunteer tour guides and tour attendees would agree — the more you learn about our town, the more you are engaged in ensuring its successful future.

Mark **Friday, December 1st** in your calendars. We have a truly wonderful venue lined up for our **Members' Christmas Party**, courtesy of our generous hosts, **Eve and Terry McBride**. And the committee (headed by the inimitable **Anna Gray**) is hard at work planning a beautiful evening. Speaking of Anna, I am also thrilled to report that the Italian trip she has organized as a fundraiser for ACO is fully subscribed. Congratulations to the lucky few who reserved early.

Our **Auction Committee** (headed by **Sharon Hancock** and **Peter Duck**) has been hard at work, with an upcoming online auction following behind September's successful event. Over at PHHF, the **House Tour Committee** (chaired by **Linda Meldrum**) follows in the footsteps of the PHHF **Garden Tour** in delivering new record results in funds raised — funds that are so important in maintaining and enhancing the heritage and beauty of Port Hope.

Our **Grants Committee** has continued to be busy with projects about town, and work is well underway to restore the **Little Station** to the jewel of a building occupying such a prominent place in Port Hope, not just in its location on Lent's Lane but in its active use as a centre of art by **Critical Mass**.

On **65 Ward Street**, ACO Port Hope has applied for participant status in Southbridge's appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal against the Town's denial of a heritage demolition permit. We (together with other community groups) will be standing beside the Town in the fight to find more creative solutions that benefit the community and seniors.

Finally, I am delighted to report that at the 2023 **ACO Heritage Awards**, **Rod Stewart** was awarded the James D Strachan Award for Craft. While we had nominated Rod for the Eric Arthur Lifetime Achievement Award, based on his incredible work rescuing heritage buildings and bolstering local and international heritage organizations, the jury chose to award him for his achievements at Historic Plaster Conservation Services (together with **Masumi Suzuki**).

Hope to see many of you on December 1st!

– **Ian MacKay, Chair, ACO Port Hope**

ACO Annual Christmas Party at Bloomsbury

By **Anna Gray**

Terry and Eve McBride will be generously opening their home for the ACO Christmas party at **2 Baldwin St.**



Bloomsbury is a mid 19th century Georgian townhouse, with a large modern addition, overlooking extensive lawns. Many of you

may remember it from the time when the McBrides hosted the reception for the opera house concert, with Mary Lou Fallis as the star. The beautiful gardens have also been open for the Port Hope Garden Tour.

Because the party is being held in a private home it is necessary to limit the number of guests. All guests must be ACO Port Hope members.

Christmas Details, continued on page 2



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Patsy Beeson

The ACO was incorporated in 1933 for the preservation of the best examples of architecture in the province and for the preservation of its places of natural beauty.

PLACE AN AD IN ACO MATTERS!

Why not place an advertisement in the pages of ACO Matters?

Our readership is interested in buildings and their preservation, furnishing, gardens, and everything else connected with them.

There are now 2 rates for advertising in ACO Matters:

Business Card Size

**Width: 3.5 in., Height: 2 in.
\$150 per year (tax included)**

Square

**Width: 3.5 in., Height: 3.5 in.
\$175 per year (tax included)**

Contact Patsy Beeson at pbeeson@eagle.ca.

Christmas Details, continued from page 1

- **LOCATION:** Bloomsbury, 2 Baldwin St, Port Hope
- **DATE & TIME:** Friday, December 1st, 2023, from 5:30 – 8 pm
- **PRICE:** \$45 per person, payable in advance. Members only.
- **ATTENDANCE:** 150 guests. There will be no admission without prior reservation and payment. The deadline for payment is Wednesday, November 22.
- **PARKING:** Bloomsbury is at the end of a dead-end street, so parking will have to be on the side streets. It will be possible to drop someone off close to the front door and then turn around and park the car somewhere else. We encourage carpooling!! Parking will be a challenge, we know.
- **BAR SERVICE:** The bar service is by donation which covers the cost of the libations. So please bring cash to drop in the donation bowls.

To reserve your ticket, please email **Lydia Bell-Gradon** at tickets@acoporthope.ca to register on the guest list. Your reservation will be confirmed by email and payment instructions will be given at that time. Only the first 150 guests will receive confirmation. Beyond those numbers, we will form a waiting list in case of cancellation. We do hope that you can join us for a wonderful event at the start of the Christmas season.



Heritage Demolition Permits – Only as a Last Resort

by Susan Layard

ACO Port Hope is advocating against the issuance of Heritage Demolition Permits in both Port Hope and Clarington. A Heritage Demolition Permit must be obtained from a Municipality if an owner of a designated property wishes to demolish one or more heritage attributes on the site. To us, these permits should be issued only as a last resort, but they seem to be appearing with greater frequency, as developers claim that a plaque or a display will be enough to convey the property's heritage significance.

With regard to **65 Ward Street** in Port Hope, after Council denied Southbridge's application for a Heritage Demolition Permit, Southbridge appealed that decision to the Ontario Land Tribunal, claiming in their Letter of Appeal that "the only cultural heritage value of the property arises from its associations with historical activity and informational value and that these types of heritage values are especially suitable for "preservation by record", through efforts of documentation, salvage and commemoration." Needless to say, ACO Advocacy disagreed, arguing that the hospital buildings on the 65 Ward Street site are powerful symbols of the provision of health care in Port Hope during WWI and beyond, and that such symbols cannot be replaced — once destroyed, their associations and context are lost forever.

At the OLT Case Management Conference for the Southbridge Appeal, held on October, 13th, 2023, Jennifer Savini of Templeman, who is representing the Municipality, agreed with us, stating that mediation in the case would be possible only if Southbridge agreed that the buildings on the 65 Ward Street heritage property could stay.

Unfortunately, at the same Conference, David Tang of Miller Thomson, who is acting for Southbridge, put forward a motion claiming that the Heritage Demolition Permit that was issued to Southbridge in February, 2022, as part of an agreement between Southbridge and the Municipality and which was rescinded

in December, 2022 after that agreement expired, is still valid. A date to consider this motion was set for November 23 at 10 a.m. Let's hope that the Municipality's decision to rescind the Heritage Demolition Permit will be upheld. Should this be the case, then there will be a second CMC on January 23, 2024 and the Hearing on March 6, 7, 8, 2024.

In Clarington, the Council there is also facing an application for a Heritage Demolition Permit. The Planning & Development Committee for Clarington will be meeting on October 23, 2023 to consider an application from developers who own a portion of the Bowmanville Boys Training School / Camp 30 heritage property, for the demolition of the Triple Dormitory on the site. According to the designation report, the Boys Training School/ Camp 30 is of heritage value because of its long association with the national reform school movements of the early twentieth century and its significant association, as a POW camp for German officers, with WWII." In fact, according to the designation report, a riot, which occurred at Camp 30 in October 1942, "resulted in the 3-day 'Battle of Bowmanville.' Moreover, there were also many escapes and escape attempts made by the German prisoners who built tunnels from the Triple Dormitory. The property is of further value because "the buildings (and their layout within the site) reflect modern architectural influences of the 1920s and 1930s," most notably the influence of Frank Lloyd Wright and the Prairie Style of architecture.

Losing the Triple Dormitory would therefore seriously undermine the heritage value of the Bowmanville Boys Training School / Camp 30 heritage property. ACO Port Hope along with a number of ACO members who visited the site during our April bus tour have therefore written to the Clarington Council encouraging them to deny this permit application.

At ACO Port Hope, we believe that heritage buildings should be preserved and repurposed. The more frequent use of Heritage Demolition Permits is of deep concern.



The Little Station

The Little Station on Lent’s Lane is a small railway building owned by the ACO. This small building we believe was a “whistle” stop on the **Port Hope Midland Railway** and when it lost its original function with the closing of that railway it was relocated on the shore of the inner harbour where it was used by the yacht club. In late 2017 it was relocated once more to the Lent’s lane site to clear the harbour area for the ongoing PHAI cleanup.

In its new location the building sits on Lent’s Lane, the former PH&M RR track right of way. A new foundation with a basement was prepared and the station placed just above track height with a front apron reminiscent of a RR platform. It was subsequently rented to **Critical Mass**, a local arts group that uses it as the centre of its downtown programming.

The building was not in pristine condition when it was relocated, and in the years since, the remaining time for the roofing passed and the existing roofing needed replacement. As this took some time to complete and as the roof was not in ideal condition when moved, some wood repair was required where rot had set in.



The current project is replacing the old asphalt roofing with eastern cedar shingles on a repaired wood structure and roof deck. In addition other minor wood repairs have been made where pests, birds, and squirrels had made openings in the siding, and the building is being repainted. This repair and maintenance work should stabilize the building for many years to come.

by **Phil Goldsmith**.

Heads Up, Everyone! On Wednesday, April 24, 2024 the ACO Coach Tour heads to Belleville and Deseronto



Belleville City Hall



Downtown Deseronto Architecture

We’re quite confident that – as always – we’ll show you aspects of these two towns you never knew existed. The more we saw of them the more we were amazed and impressed. And there will be some special highlights exclusive to our group!

Come for a fun day of many discoveries and enjoy the company of your fellow ACO members.

Final details and price of the coach tour will be available early in the new year, at which time we will take bookings but not before.

If you have any questions, please email **Denise** at johnson.4d@gmail.com.



57TH PORT HOPE HOUSE TOUR

Saturday, September 30, 2023





The Unsung Port Hope Hero – J. Stuart Smart

by Patsy Beeson

Never heard of him, have you? Recognition has simply passed him by. But Port Hope would be very different without him.

Stuart Smart was a Port Hope boy, born in 1895. As a young man he managed the building at John and Walton Streets then known as the **Grand Opera House**, which in the early 20th century repurposed itself as the only movie house in town, run by Famous Players' Theatres. But in the late 1920s it was decided to close it down for a variety of reasons. Chiefly it was regarded as unsafe — a fire trap — with only one access, a narrow staircase from John Street.

So it was that in 1929 the 34-year-old Smart suddenly found himself jobless, at, of all times, the beginning of the Depression.

He would certainly have pointed out to Famous Players' that the region anchored by Port Hope and Cobourg now lacked anywhere to view moving pictures, an exceedingly popular form of entertainment at that time. But suggestions that a new, safe movie theatre be built failed to move Famous Players. The tremendous cost wouldn't bring adequate return and times couldn't have been worse. Nope. Forget it.

But Smart was undaunted; furthermore, he had one priceless advantage: time on his hands.

Off to Toronto he went and tracked down F.P.'s Head Office where he continued his assault on the movie conglomerate's resistance. Famous Players was not to be moved. No-one in their right mind would be crazy enough to build a new theatre in a village the size of Port Hope at a time like this. Nothing doing.

But Smart, equally resolute, camped on their doorstep; in fact a fear grew that he might become a permanent fixture. With remarkable speed sheer attrition won out for, amazingly, only a year later, we find Eastern Theatre Division's manager, Harry Sedgwick addressing an audience on a momentous occasion. Friday, August 15th, 1930, the opening night of a new theatre in Port Hope. And its name? **The Capitol**.

Sedgwick recalled Smart's threatened permanent encampment. "So to avoid that," he said, no doubt with a rueful smile, "we went ahead and built a new theatre!"

As we know, this was at **14 Queen Street**. It had cost around \$60,000, a very sizeable sum in the early '30s, especially in view of the continuing Depression. **Murray Brown**, a Toronto architect whose credentials included a million dollar theatre in



J. Stuart Smart in front of the Capitol in the 1980s.
Photo courtesy of the Port Hope Archives

Halifax, designed it, and a Port Hope firm, **Thomas Garnett & Sons Ltd**, built it. A unique building resulted. Its external façade combined a Tudor diamond-paned window (still there), and a shingled roof-brow. Inside, the remarkable auditorium with which we are so familiar was decorated on a medieval theme, with a projected diorama on the ceiling of clouds and stars. The acoustics were cutting edge, with a recently developed spongy-textured plaster used on the walls to absorb sound. Furthermore, it was reported to be the first theatre in Canada designed expressly to show talking movies, and Smart was recognised as having been "instrumental in its building and décor."

It was a stunning sight when finished. Smart, who had fought so hard for it, admitted that it far surpassed his expectations. It must have been a deeply emotional occasion for him. "I remember saying at the opening 'This is a dream come true.' But I never dreamt of anything so beautiful," he observed.

In those early days if a Port Hope youth wanted to impress his

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Smart, continued from page 6

lady friend he took her to the Capitol. Journalist **Cessie McLaren** was one of these lucky young women. Long after, in the Port Hope Evening Guide of April 1985, she recalled nostalgically the experience of visiting that magical building. “Imagine a summer’s night in a castle courtyard. The walls rise around you hung with the banners of distant crusades. A blue-black sky arches overhead and stars, like innumerable diamonds, sparkle through wisps of gentle cloud. It is a canopy of dreams.

“From somewhere strains of music can be heard. The stage is set, you pull your sweetheart closer, unwrap your candy bar and prepare to enter a world of sight and sound that for two hours will dispel your cares and fan the fires of your imagination.

“It is Port Hope’s Capitol Theatre.”

How many theatres ever received similar accolades? And so inexpensively? Smart remembered that in 1930 admission for an adult was 35 cents and 15 for a student.

“We had line-ups every night,” he recalled. “For six months, until Cobourg built its own theatre, the Capitol was the only place [in the locality] showing talking movies.”

Initially the seating capacity was 684, seats were wooden and the rows spaced a cramped 30 inches apart. Then plush seats were installed and spacing increased to 36 inches, affording more leg room though reducing capacity to 550. Later additions were a snack bar and a wider screen.

In the early days, Smart recounted, prior to the invention of the sound track, music and dialogue were reproduced by huge records the size of platters, and making sure they synchronized perfectly with the film reel was the work of **Mike Freeman**, the projectionist. Should something need to be censored, blank film was used to replace the offending frames to avoid disturbing the synchronization. This, said Smart, could have an upsetting effect

on the audience, so he recounted walking up and down the aisles to allay apprehensions, explaining the cause of the interruption. “Of course,” he added, “that didn’t happen often because there wasn’t much to censor back then.”

Smart (whose apartment on Walton Street in what was once the North American Hotel was only steps away from the theatre) worked there for 50 years, along with the doorman, **Harold Connors**, and Freeman, the projectionist.

In 1945, at the end of WWII’s end, the Capitol was sold to Premier Theatres and continued on under their management well into the second half of the century. But times were changing. By the 1980s the Capitol as a movie venue was failing to make money as television increasingly took hold. To quote Barry Allen, president of Premier Theatres: “...nobody could make a nickel showing movies in Port Hope.”

In 1987, just a few years after Smart had retired, the Capitol’s doors were closed, the seats removed, and it was put up for sale, barred from re-opening as a movie theatre.

Looking over from his Walton Street apartment, the retired Smart grieved, but was philosophical. “I feel sad to see it closed”, he said. “but that’s the way it goes. Times change.”

Susan Dewhurst, owner of a Port Hope fashion business for many years, remembered Smart fondly as “a lovely old gentleman.” Finally, concerned at the negative aspect for Port Hope of a large property sitting empty in its downtown for a protracted period, she and her partners bought the building.

Smart died in 1990 at 95 so didn’t live to see the new chapter of the story of the ‘palace of dreams’ which owed its origins to his unquenchable tenacity and foresight.

But that’s a whole other story with an entirely different cast of characters.



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Major Upcoming Events

Christmas Party December 1, 5:30-8pm (p. 1)

Annual Meeting February 22, 2024

Bus Tour April 24, 2024 (p. 4)


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I am interested in volunteering for ACO Events.

I give permission for ACO to contact me electronically .

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- Cheque:** Please complete this form and mail it with your cheque payable to **ACO Port Hope at P O Box 563, Port Hope, Ontario L1A 3Z4**
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