

# ACO MATTERS



Architectural Conservancy Ontario – Port Hope Branch

Newsletter – April 2026

## CHAIR'S REPORT

Welcome to another busy year at ACO Port Hope. Let me begin by introducing myself. I was born and have lived in this area all my life. I spent my career as a public school teacher in Port Hope and Cobourg, and I am passionate about local history and conservation. I join a long and proud tradition of Port Hoppers serving their community and helping to guide it into the future. I look forward to working with the hundreds of other ACO Port Hope members to preserve the remarkable heritage architecture and landscapes that make this town unique.

As you will have noticed, there has not yet been an annual meeting of ACO Port Hope this year. As communicated in the last ACO Matters newsletter and on our website, we purposely delayed our annual meeting until after the exact nature of the structural changes coming to ACO Inc. was communicated to us by the ACO Inc. Board. We can now announce that our **annual meeting will be held on Thursday, May 7th, at 7:00 PM in the Sculthorpe Room at the Capitol Theatre.** The meeting is open to all ACO members, but you must get a (free) ticket at [eventbrite.com](https://eventbrite.com) to help us manage capacity. During this meeting, we will highlight a very busy and successful 2025 year, provide budgetary information, present our annual heritage awards, and provide details regarding the new structure planned for ACO Inc.

There is much to anticipate in the next few months of 2026: our participation in the Connect events at Port High School (April 15th), Don Mikel's book talk at the library (April 18th), our annual meeting (May 7th), our spring auction at the Port Hope Town Park Recreation Centre (May 31st), a busy schedule of walking tours beginning on May 16th, our always popular Summer Social (August 6th) ... in addition to this, we can all look forward to the unveiling of two important downtown buildings: **92 to 94 Walton St.** and, notably, **85 Walton St.** (formerly the Royal Bank). The survival and restoration of this grand building is a proud moment for ACO Port Hope, Hope Towns Initiatives and the whole community.

These are just two examples of your ACO dollars at work. We continue to invest in Port Hope's historic material, cultural, and environmental heritage, and we literally couldn't do it without you. Thanks so much for your continued involvement, support, and belief in ACO Port Hope and this special town.

– **Brian Buttery, Chair, ACO Port Hope Branch**

## ANNUAL MEETING

Thursday, May 7, 7:00 pm.

**A.K.Sculthorpe Room,  
upstairs at the Capitol Theatre, Port Hope.**

Be certain not to miss the Annual Meeting on May 7th, so well attended last year that this year you must obtain a (free) ticket at [eventbrite.com](https://eventbrite.com) to help us manage capacity.

Hear what's been achieved over the last year, what's to come in this one and the Treasurer's report on our finances. Meet our new Chair.

Discover who are the recipients of the Marion Garland and the Bluestone Awards for contributions to the community's heritage.

There will be light refreshments and a cash bar.



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# EXECUTIVE

## Executive Committee

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Brian Buttery

### Past Co-Chairs

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### Secretary

Susan Carmichael

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Tom Cruickshank

Malcolm Pike

Jenny Wadds

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### Auction Committee

Blaise Gaetz, Brian Buttery

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Susan Layard

### Communications & Marketing

Laura Antonik

### Education

Katherine McHarg, Marnie Bickle

### Grants

Susan Carmichael

### Membership

Lydia Bell-Gradon

### Newsletter

Patsy Beeson

### Bus Tour

Denise Johnson, Peter McLaughlin

# It's a Busy Spring for the Education Committee!

Katherine McHarg

Spring is packed with events planned by the Port Hope ACO Education Committee!

First up we are participating in an exciting evening on April 15 from 6 -8 pm at Port Hope High School's Connect event. This brings over twenty community organizations together to introduce our high school and middle school aged students to local activities and opportunities. ACO Port Hope will be hosting a table to introduce what we do to our young people, and encourage them to volunteer with us on the historic walking tours in the spring and fall.

Later that week on Saturday, April 18 we are pleased to present an illustrated book talk by Don Mikel, author of Canadian Architectural Styles: A Field Guide. (see poster) This is a free event at the library, with a one hour lecture and a book sale/signing to follow.

Our popular spring and fall historic walking tours are back again, with two brand new offerings written by our committee: "Saints and Sinners" and "Union Cemetery - A Living Past". An announcement in May will provide you with the link to the eventbrite tickets to these great strolls through history.

Here is the schedule for the weekly spring and fall Saturday Historic Walking Tours for 2026:

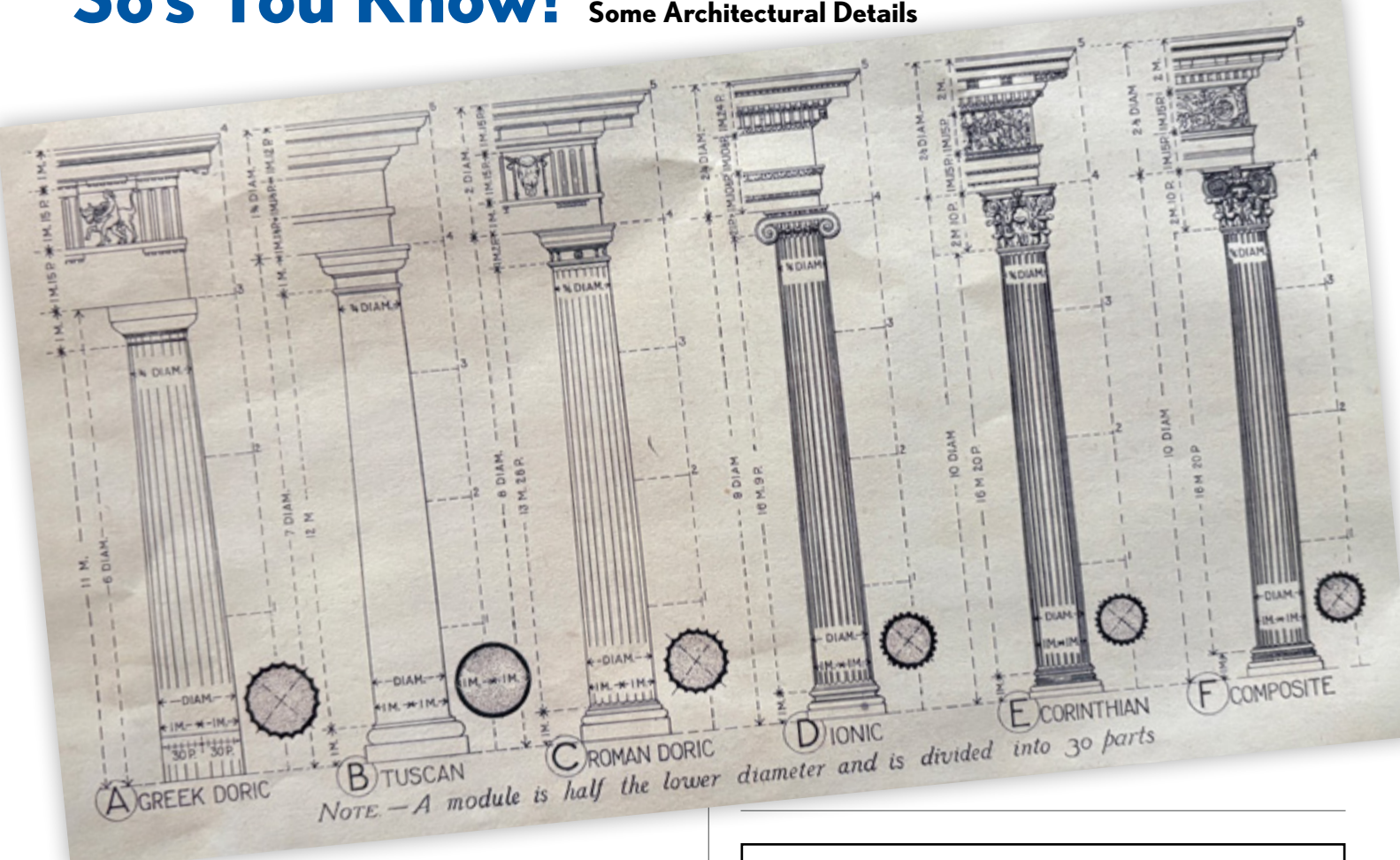
- **May 16:** *Parade of Stately Homes*
- **May 23:** *Windows of Walton Street*
- **May 30:** *Memories of King Street*
- **Jun 6:** *Saints and Sinners* **NEW TOUR!**
- **Jun 13:** *Welcome to Englishtown*
- **Jun 20:** *Union Cemetery - A Living Past* **NEW TOUR!**
- **Aug 22:** *Saints and Sinners* (Helen and Paul Evans, PH Jazz Festival) **NEW TOUR!**
- **Aug 29:** *Windows on Walton Street*
- **Sep 5:** *Parade of Stately Homes*
- **Sep 12:** *Union Cemetery - A Living Past* (Brian Buttery & Peter Bolton) **NEW TOUR!**
- **Sep 19:** *Memories of King Street*
- **Sep 26:** *Welcome to Englishtown*

The tour tickets are available on our eventbrite space for \$20 + fees and run for approximately 90 minutes. The tours all start at 11:00. The meeting spot is listed on the eventbrite details for each tour.

Looking forward to seeing you at one or more of these exciting heritage events!



# So's You Know! Some Architectural Details



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## PROFILE OF LOCAL TRADESPERSON

# Matt Desbarbieux Fine Woodworking & Design

**M**att Desbarbieux (pronounced *Day-bar-byuh*), his French surname notwithstanding, is a local boy, “born here in a hospital that doesn’t exist any more”. And raised in a family environment which fanned his own interest in fine woodworking as his father, now retired, was a tradesperson himself, an auto mechanic, who taught at Port Hope High School. “So, growing up” says Matt, “I was always around cars and wood shops,” with first class advice readily available.

Following high school Matt attended the Heritage Trades School at Algonquin College in Perth, taking a course in Heritage Carpentry and Millwork, which entailed aspects of new construction, interior and exterior restoration, timber-framing and log building — and the history of Architecture. “Each week we had an 8:00 a.m. class,” says Matt with a rueful smile. “and we would be taken on a walk to visit buildings which would illustrate the subject. It was dry but very interesting.”

He has high words of praise for both the course and the professors at the school. “Extremely high quality and fantastic teachers,” he says of them. But regrettably the course at the Algonquin campus in Perth is closing and in due course moving to Algonquin’s Ottawa campus, which Matt regards as a much less ideal setting, believing that this kind of program thrives far better in a heritage town such as Perth.

In addition to his Algonquin qualification, Matt has Red Seal licenses in both carpentry and cabinetmaking, a license awarded by Skilled Trades Ontario indicating that the recipient has mastered his trade and is now considered a ‘Journeyman’ with between 6000 and 9000 hours of experience.

Desbarbieux Fine Woodworking is a partnership between Matt and his wife, the interior designer Rachael Hinman who qualified at Fanshawe College in London, Ontario. “She’s very integral to the business — the process of the work — and she handles a lot of the project management. It all starts with Rachael’s designs and grows from there.”



Most of their business originates in Northumberland County, with its main focus on custom kitchens and bathrooms, along with built-in cabinetry and furniture pieces such as tables and chairs.

“What sets us apart is that we’re the only solid-wood cabinetry builders in the region. We try to do things traditionally — which comes from my heritage training.

“I’m proud of the fact that I’ve worked on some of the most significant homes in Port Hope. We take a lot of pleasure knowing that our work is both practical and handsome and affords the owners enjoyment.”

Are they busy? Indeed they are. I am staggered to learn that they are making appointments in January ‘27.

In addition, following in father’s footsteps it would seem, Matt now puts in ten hours a week teaching a very ‘broad-based’ carpentry program at Fleming College in Peterborough. “I wasn’t sure if I’d like it when I was asked to do it, but I do. I find it very satisfying, passing on the knowledge of what I enjoy most to the next generation - these kids straight out of high school.”

The imminent closing of the Algonquin Heritage Trade School in Perth will create an empty space in southern Ontario for this valuable program. What are Matt’s thoughts on the matter?

“Northumberland County — Port Hope particularly with all its handsome old homes — would be a perfect location for a Heritage Trades School. And it would provide all these highly qualified tradespeople in the community.” Not to mention introducing a lively young element into the area in need of food, clothing, accommodation and entertainment.

Summarizing Desbarbieux Fine Woodworking and Design and their role in it Matt says simply, “We’re a husband and wife team, both born and raised in the area, and count ourselves very fortunate that we can do what we love doing in our own home area.”

Couldn’t get much better than that.

**- Patsy Beeson**





# Live Auction!

**A**CO Port Hope presents our **LIVE** Spring auction on Sunday, May 31 at the Town Park Recreation Centre. There will be a tag sale at 10.00 a.m. and the auction will begin at 11.00 a.m. The auction features a great variety of locally donated items which includes: furniture from Georgian to MCM to contemporary, lighting, original artwork, Persian carpets, outdoor and garden pieces, books, collectibles and much more.

**Auctioneer: David Simmons | Food: Queenies (Port Hope)**

**– Brian Buttery**



# Advocacy Update

**By Susan Layard**

## 65 Ward Street

**A**CO Port Hope is delighted that, on February 13th, 2026, Southbridge Care Homes Inc. withdrew their Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) appeal of Port Hope Council's decision to deny them a permit for demolishing the heritage buildings on the 65 Ward Street site. While the Municipality's efforts on this OLT case are greatly appreciated, the ACO Port Hope Advocacy Committee is now advocating on behalf of this important heritage property in order to prevent the demolition of these buildings by neglect. A letter, written by Chris Wallace, was sent to Council asking them to take steps to ensure that an inspection of the building's interior for possible structural damage takes place. A corresponding article was also placed on the ACO Port Hope website, and ACO members along with other Port Hope residents, have begun to email the Municipality in support of Chris Wallace's recommendations. For further information and to view the article in full, please visit the ACO Port Hope website at: <https://acoporthope.ca/2026/03/16/call-for-action-protect-65-ward-street-from-demolition-by-neglect>

## 39 Pine Street North

**T**he current owners of the old Central School at 39 Pine Street North have proposed to rezone this property in order to facilitate the construction of a five-storey student dormitory building containing a total of twenty-eight rooms on the southern portion of the site. The ACO Port Hope Advocacy Committee members have serious concerns about this proposal. While we understand the need to provide accommodations for students coming from abroad to attend the educational institution, we don't believe that this proposal is the best solution for providing those accommodations. The stark modern structure does not appear to be a compatible or complementary fit either for the renowned old school or for the surrounding historic neighbourhood, and the tower will certainly be seen from the east and other viewpoints. More importantly, as Phillip Carter pointed out in his recent letter to the Mayor and Council, the proposed structure will use up land on the property that could be developed "as a well landscaped student campus for outdoor activities and leisure." Phil suggested instead that the residential needs of the students be accommodated "within the existing school buildings, perhaps with a modest addition to the rear or over the existing gym" which would have the added advantage of maintaining the property's flexibility for other uses, such as residential, should the property's viability as a school prove untenable. At a recent Heritage Port Hope meeting, Councillor Todd noted that it may be quite some time before anything further happens with this property, which is now for sale. Nevertheless, a letter from the ACO Port Hope Advocacy Committee expressing our concerns has been included in the Public commentary on the application, and we will continue to monitor the situation.



## Major Upcoming Events

- Don Mikel Book Talk** April 18 (p. 3)
- Bus Tour** April 29
- Annual Meeting** May 7 (p. 1)
- Saturday Walking Tours** Beginning May 16 (p. 3)
- Live Auction** May 31 (p. 5)
- Summer Social** August 6 (More information soon)
- House Tour** October 3

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Contact Patsy Beeson at [pbeeson@eagle.ca](mailto:pbeeson@eagle.ca).



## Membership Renewal Form

Please enroll me in or renew my membership to the **Port Hope Branch of the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario**. I have indicated below my/our applicable membership category.

Please Check One:  New  Renewal

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

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Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

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- Individual Membership: \$65
- Household Membership (for 2): \$80
- Each Additional Household Member: \$15
- Full-time Student/Emerging Professional: \$20
- Tax Creditable Donation: \_\_\_\_\_

**Note:** Membership is free for individuals who donate a minimum of \$1,000 in the calendar year.

Total Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

- I am interested in volunteering for ACO Events.
- I give permission for ACO to contact me electronically.

### Payment Options

- 1. E-transfers:** From your bank's Interac service, the address is [etransfer@acoporthope.ca](mailto:etransfer@acoporthope.ca). please provide your email and mailing address in the message box and indicate that the payment is for membership fee and/or donation.
- 2. 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**
- 3. Credit Card:** to pay by VISA or MasterCard, contact Architectural Conservancy Ontario ([acontario.ca](http://acontario.ca)) online. Please indicate that you wish to join the Port Hope branch.

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