A photograph of the historic Town Hall in Port Perry, Ontario. The building is a large, multi-story structure made of brick and stone, featuring a prominent clock tower with a green roof and a tall spire. The building is surrounded by trees and a utility pole is visible in the foreground. The sky is blue with some clouds.

HISTORIC TOWN PORT PERRY HALL

Port Perry Star: March 9, 1967

A Legacy
of Survival

BY J. PETER HVIDSTEN

TOWN 1873 HALL



Having survived fires and threats of destruction for more than 150 years, Town Hall 1873 is to this day, one of Port Perry's most important and historic structures.

By J. Peter Hvidsten

Town Hall 1873

Researched and Published by J. Peter Hvidsten

First Published October 2019

Updated in December 2024

Sketches throughout book by Catherine Christie in 1974.

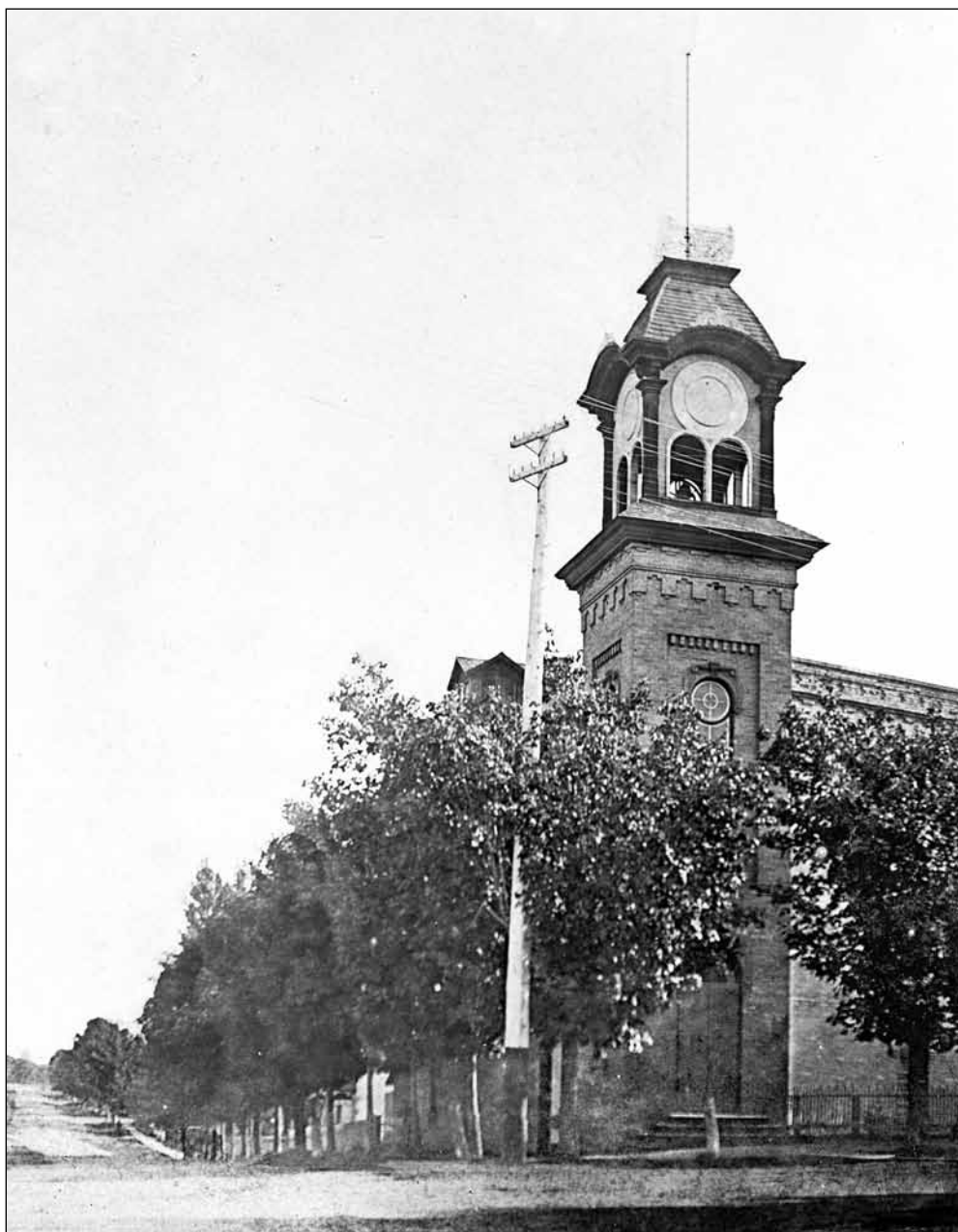
Cover photo courtesy of Frederick W. Brock.

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COVER PHOTO: The photograph on the cover of this document is a colourized version of the above black and white photo, which was taken during the early 1900s, and was provided courtesy of the family of Frederick W. Brock.

The Port Perry Town Hall was designed by well known architect Hiram R. Barber of Oshawa, who also was the architect for the towns' attractive Union High School, which was destroyed by fire in April 1926, and Joseph Bigelow's beautiful Victorian home which still stands on Cochrane Street.

Construction on the hall began in 1873 and it was completed during 1874. The above picture is the earliest known image of the historic Town Hall. Partially hidden by trees, just to the left of the clock tower, is a small section of a peaked structure, appears to be the roof of a second tower at the rear of the hall, used to dry the fire department's fire-hoses.



SCUGOG VILLAGE

Forty years before the inhabitants of Port Perry erected their stately Town Hall, this pioneer settlement was known as Scugog Village.

During 1836, Peter Perry, after a brief political career, began to immerse himself in the development of his business ventures. One of these ventures involved the beginnings of Scugog Village, also referred to as Scugog Landing, a small settlement on the south west shore of Lake Scugog.

Of all the significant settlements in Reach Township, Scugog Village (Port Perry) was among the last to get established. Settlements were well underway throughout Reach Township, in the communities of Prince Albert, Borelia, Manchester, Utica, Epsom and Greenbank.

All of these communities had been settled before the present day Port Perry. It wasn't until 1843 that a home was built on the present Port Perry waterfront area. In that year Elias Williams purchased Lot 19 on the 6th Concession, a two hundred acre property which included the present Port Perry waterfront and extended inland to include the whole of the downtown area.



PETER PERRY

In 1844 Peter Perry purchased the property from Williams and began to develop and promote it as a centre for the timber trade. He opened a trading post at the corner of Queen and Water Streets on the present site of Re/Max Real Estate. He opened this store in 1846 and placed Chester Draper in charge.

Perry then set about promoting his proposed settlement and convinced others to join him. By October of 1845, Perry had drawn up his plan of the proposed settlement of Scugog Village. This plan was not registered until January 1855, four years after his death.

With his village plan underway, Perry began selling off parcels of his 200 acres of land, nestled on the shore of Lake Scugog. The first to buy a property was Harrison Haight and his purchase was followed by other early settlers, including: Daniel Way, Samuel Hill, Thomas Paxton and Joseph Bigelow.

It wasn't until 1852 that Scugog Village was renamed Port Perry, in honour of Peter Perry, the man who laid out the original plan for the community.



Above: Sketch of Scugog Village (Port Perry), as it looked from Scugog Island in 1854, by artist Mr. Armstrong. Queen Street can be seen near the centre of the page, and above, some of the industrial buildings along the lakeshore of Lake Scugog.



Peter Perry's village plan for Port Perry, 1854. The dark patches show the locations of buildings already at this time.

A BRIEF HISTORY THE TOWN HALL

by J. Peter Hvidsten



J. PETER HVIDSTEN

The following is a condensed history of the town hall, primarily from 1872 to the turn of the next century. The details track how the hall was constructed, opened and used for the best part of a century, before falling into disrepair and miscellaneous uses.

A century and half after Port Perry's Town Hall 1873 opened, it remains one of the most important and imposing historical landmarks in the town.

In February 1872, the subject of building a town hall for the new corporation of Port Perry was tabled at a council meeting, which resulted in the forming of a committee, consisting of Reeve Joseph Bigelow and councillors William Tate and Allan N. Sexton to obtain plans and the possible cost of building a suitable town hall.

The following month, Port Perry council passed a by-law at a regular meeting, to debenture \$10,000 – *"for organizing a Fire Department, including the purchase of an engine and the building of water*

tanks; for purchasing site and building Town Hall and for school purposes."

They settled on a site on the south-west corner of Queen and Lilla (Simcoe) St. owned by Benjamin Crandell, who sold the village Lots 1,2 and 3, for \$1,000. Interestingly, the corporation of Port Perry didn't pay for the property until February 1875, with another \$152.50 added for interest.

Construction got underway during the summer of 1872 by respected local contractor William Spence. A few months later, in October, a local newspaper reported, *"The large and handsome Town Hall building has now attained its height and will soon be ready for occupancy."*

In December 1873, council authorized the basement of the new hall to be used as a



WILLIAM SPENCE



View looking south on Lilla Street (now Simcoe Street) about 1913, with the Town Hall, right, and the United Church on left.

temporary shelter for town's fire engine until a more suitable place could be found. And during the same month, Reeve Joseph Bigelow held a meeting in the hall, which was described as being "still naked of bricks on its lofty walls, had gaping joists and was in a general uncompleted state".

Work on the interior continued through the winter months and in March 1874, the editor of the *Ontario Observer* filed the following progress report:

"We had the pleasure the other day of visiting our new Town Hall. The mason work is being done in a manner which would do credit to any of our cities and fairly establishes the reputation of Mr. Wm. Spence, as one of our most skillful contractors. The ceiling is really handsome, surrounded by a fine cornice about six feet wide with some six or eight centre pieces. This hall will be no less an ornament to the village than a credit to the liberality, enterprise and intelligence of its inhabitants. From the appearance of things the Town Hall will be dry and thoroughly ready for use in a couple of months, and we would say by all means let us have an opening worthy of so splendid a building."

In March 1874 council passed a by-law appropriating \$2 per person to be used towards completing of the Town Hall and the same month they ordered 75 bench seats, at a cost of 35¢ per foot.

Three months later, in June 1874, the *Observer* reported "The handsome Town Hall is being completed with the erection of the tower. A Montreal clock manufacturer offered to furnish a five foot diameter clock for the clock tower at a cost of \$350." A clock was never ordered and council was criticized months later.

Surprisingly, despite all the fanfare about Port Perry's new municipal facility, there is no evidence that a special celebration or official opening of the Town Hall.

Exterior bricking was being completed in September 1874 when council received an offer from a Mr. Jones of Markham, to supply a bell for the Town Hall on a trial basis, and if considered satisfactory the cost to the town would be \$120.

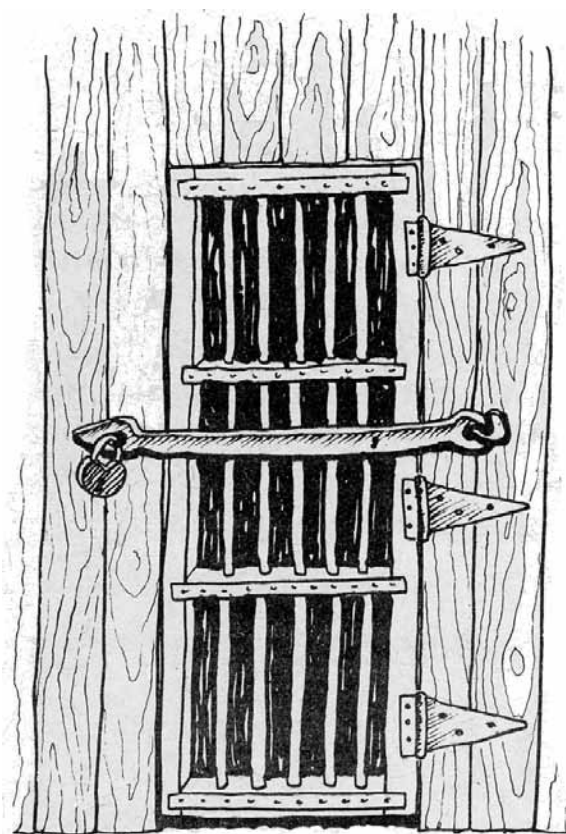
The bell was installed and was rung three times daily by the caretaker. Years later, worshippers in nearby churches complained about the bell being sounded during church services, so it was discontinued

The hall came under the scrutiny of the *Observer* editor once again in the spring of 1875, when he complained in the newspaper of the inadequate lighting in the building. He wrote, "Some six pieces of rusty crooked iron with four rush lights sticking on the ends of them are dignified with the title of chandeliers and made to do duty by furnishing sufficient glimmer so that people may not run up against each other or stumble over the benches."

He also commented on the state of the bell tower, saying, "It is certainly no credit to this thriving town to have a bell tower on our splendid Town Hall, looking down like a great dummy through its leather spectacles on the passers by. One looks up for a clock and finds the bottom of a flour barrel meeting his gaze. One thousand dollars will place a suitable four dial clock in the bell tower."

In May 1875 council discussed the merits and necessity of a bell and clock for the town hall, but no decision was made at that time. Estimated cost to build the hall in 1873 was about \$6,000.

In the last century, the hall has served as the gathering place for numerous events and functions, including political rallies, council chambers, court proceedings, live theatre, rolling skating, movie theatre, lingerie factory and fire department.



The old jail door



detail of
plaster
ornaments
around
windows

TOWN HALL ... in the news

On the following pages are actual news reports, pulled from the pages of the Ontario Observer and North Ontario Observer newspapers, referencing the construction and operation of a new Town Hall.

Council discusses town hall

Ontario Observer - February 15, 1872

The subject of a Town Hall for the village came up for discussion. Mr. William Sexton moved that the Reeve Joseph Bigelow, Messrs. William Tate, John Phillipo be committee to investigate and report.

Postpone Town Hall construction

Ontario Observer - March 14, 1872

Benjamin Crandell, speaking to council about the numerous duties to be performed in connection with the new corporation, considered it would be wise to postpone further action regarding the Town Hall until the corporation was in a proper position.

He said that the many things claiming the immediate attention of the council. Among the improvements required was the street improvements, water tanks, a fire engine and caretaker for the fire engine, which all had to be provided during the present year.

Reeve Joseph Bigelow remarked that the erudition of the Town Hall would not materially increase the taxes of the ratepayers as debentures could be issued for 10 years for the amount.

Later in the meeting a committee consisting of councillor John Phillipo, Benjamin Crandell and William Sexton was appointed to ascertain how much it would cost the corporation to purchase the fire engine, hose, and engine house and to report to the next meeting of council.

At the same meeting, Messrs., Sexton and Phillipo were appointed a committee to obtain plans, probable cost of a suitable Town Hall and report to the next meeting of the council, on the first Tuesday of April, 1872.

~

In the following months, council purchased a prominent site on a small rise that overlooked the business sector and lake. The lot, at the corner of the town's main street, Queen Street, intersected with Lilla Street (now Simcoe St.) was purchased from land owner Benjamin Crandell.

~

It wasn't long after the purchase the respected local contractor William Spence was picked to construct the village's new Town Hall.

Construction got underway early in the summer of 1872 and by late fall the outer structure had been near completed.



Port Perry Town Hall, circa 1900.



Port Perry council settled on a site on the south-west corner of Queen and Lilla (Simcoe) St. owned by Benjamin Crandell, who sold the Lots 1,2,3 to the village for \$1,000. They built the Town Hall on Lot #1, seen above circled.

Town Hall 1873 rapidly rising

North Ontario Observer - September 11, 1873

The editor of the local newspaper, in a Port Perry progress reported on eight buildings in the course of erection in the village, including the Town Hall.

He wrote, "The work on the Town Hall is in the hands of first class men who will leave us a building creditable to themselves and in keeping with this rapidly rising town.

A week later, council authorized a payment of \$200 to Mr. Spence in part for his contract on the masonry work on the Town Hall.

They also authorized a payment of \$100 to Mr. Cossit for his contract for woodwork in the hall.

Town Hall attains its height

North Ontario Observer - October 16, 1873

Editor James Baird wrote, "Our large and handsome Town Hall building has now attained its height and will soon be ready for occupancy. From all appearance will be alike credibility to the skill and workmen and the liberality on the corporation.

The Port Perry \$10,000 By-Law

North Ontario Observer: August 15, 1872

Several of our Port Perry readers have during the past week, been quipping regarding the manner and extent of the payments of the debentures about to be issued by the corporation with the view to raising \$10,000 to pay off the amount allowed to Reach by the award of the arbitrators on the matter of settlement between Reach and Port Perry; for organizing a Fire Department, including the purchase of an engine and building water tanks; to purchasing site and building Town Hall and for school purposes.

The by-law proposes raising \$10,000 payable at the end of 10 years with interest at 6 per cent, per annum, paid semi-annually; and it also proposes to provide a sinking fund of \$1,000 per annum to meet the payment of said debentures when they become due.

To meet interest and sinking fund the by-law proposes to raise \$1,600 per annum. This of course will much more than pay the amount. The interest at 6 per cent for 10 years, paid half yearly will amount to \$6,090, and this with the principal will amount to \$16,090.

But the \$1,000 a year of sinking fund may be invested at 6 per cent per annum also payable half yearly, so that the interest of the one will counteract the interest of the other and the following amounts collect annually will cover the ground:

1873.....	\$1,600.	1878.....	1,300.
1874.....	1,540.	1879.....	1,240.
1875.....	1,480.	1880.....	1,180.
1876.....	1,420.	1881.....	1,120.
1877.....	1,360.	1882.....	<u>1,060.</u>
			\$13,000.

Council pays for service

North Ontario Observer - November 20, 1873

At a regular meeting of Port Perry Council a number of items regarding the Town Hall came up for consideration. Among them were payment of Mr. Curtin for the purchase of brick for the hall, Mr. Spence the sum of \$100 for his account of work on the Town Hall.

Fire engine kicked-out

North Ontario Observer - December 4, 1873

A meeting of the council of the corporation of Port Perry was held at the council hall, in the Bigelow Block.

Mr. Austin Platten, the keeper of the village's fire engine told council the engine had been kicked out of Emaney's Carriage Factor, where it was to be kept until a suitable place could be found.

He said something was to be done at once for storage and council agreed that immediate steps be taken to secure a temporary shelter until the basement of the Town Hall is prepared and ready to receive the engine.

Insure Town Hall for \$4,000

North Ontario Observer - December 7, 1873

The council met in their chambers, in Mr. Joseph Bigelow's block of stores, with the Reeve in the chair.

With the Town Hall nearing completion Mr. William White, the village clerk was instructed to get the Town Hall insured for \$4,000, for a term of three years, at one percent.

Mr. White also moved that \$137 be paid to John Curran for work on the Town Hall and \$600 to Mr. Cossitt for work on the Town Hall.

Mr. Benjamin Crandell introduced and carried through a by-law to appoint a polling place for the approaching municipal elections. The nominations and elections were appointed to be held in the new Town Hall.

Reeve holds public meeting

North Ontario Observer - December 18, 1873

Reeve Joseph Bigelow of Port Perry called a public meeting of the ratepayers of the Village for Tuesday evening last, promising to give an explanation of his acts as head of the Corporation, and at the same time inviting all parties who had any charge to prefer against his administration

Continued on page 8

TOWN HALL ... in the news

Continued from page 7

to come forward and state them at said meeting.

The meeting was held in the new Town Hall - the making of a splendid hall, one which will not only be of vast importance of the village, and to this whole section of the country but an honour in the riding.

The cold naked brick of the lofty walls, the gaping joists and uncompleted state of everything within and about it - in the latter part of December, demand, in trumpet tongues "who is to blame for this?"

Council orders seats for hall

North Ontario Observer - March 5, 1874

Reeve Joseph Bigelow reported on behalf of the committee appointed to procure tenders for seats for the Town Hall. The committee had applied to all the principal establishments in this part of the province, including Oshawa and Toronto.

Tenders were received from the Oshawa Cabinet Company at 55¢ per foot; Luke & Bros. at 40¢ per foot and the Bowmanville Factory at 35¢ per foot. Total cost for the seating furnished for the Town Hall amounted to \$276.

On a motion of councillor J.W. Davis, the tender of the Bowmanville Factory was accepted and Reeve Joseph Bigelow was instructed to communicate with said company, and order 75 such seats as the sample seat sent by the company.

Mr. A.W. Roberts introduced and carried through a by-law appropriating the \$2 per head of the 1,500 accepted as population of the now corporation of Port Perry in 1871, to the completing of the Town Hall and discharging and debts in connection with the same. The by-law was passed, signed and sealed.

Manufacturer offers clock for hall

North Ontario Observer - April 9, 1874

Reeve J. Bigelow read a communication from a Montreal Clock manufacturer regarding a town clock, offering to furnish the corporation with a suitable clock for the tower on the Town Hall. The dial to be 5 feet in diameter and either brass or transparent, at a cost of \$350, with one or more additional dials if so required at from \$80 to \$100 each.

No free use of Town Hall

North Ontario Observer - April 16, 1874

Councillor A.W. Roberts moved that the council grant the Oddfellows, of Port Perry, the free use of the Town Hall for holding religious service on the evening of the 26th and 27th inst., said services to be for the benefit of the widows and orphans in the neighbourhood requiring assistance.

The Reeve stated that he considered that by giving

the hall free to any one party, others would as the same privilege and complain if there were denied. Good Templars, Sons of Temperance, Orangemen, Masons, etc., might all come and ask a similar privilege. To give it free would be setting a very bad precedent. The Reeve said he would approve of making everyone pay, who may occupy it.

Council agreed to grant the Oddfellows the use of the Town Hall, but charging \$5 for the use of it.

Wesleyan Methodists service in hall

North Ontario Observer - April 16, 1874

An application of the Wesleyan Methodist Church for the use of the Town Hall was taken up, when on motion of John W. Davis, it was agreed to let them have the use of the hall for worship on sabbath evenings for \$2 each, when neither fire nor lights are required and \$2.50 a night when fire and lights are required. The council reserved to itself the right of terminating the agreement whenever they deem it advisable to do so.

Town Hall caretaker appointed

North Ontario Observer - April 16, 1874

Mr. David J. Adams introduced and carried through the second reading of a by-law to appoint a caretaker of the Town Hall and Grounds and Fire Engine and hose to define his duties and name his salary. Mr. J.F. Mincks was appointed caretaker. Salary of \$150 per annum.

The matter of defining the duties was then entered upon with considerable spirit, and if anything which mortal man could be asked to do was omitted, we would like to know where it is.

His duties are: to ring the town bell (when one is installed), at least four times every day, being 7 a.m., at noon, at 1 and 6 p.m., and oftener if required.

He is to keep the town buildings and grounds in good order, keep the hall clean and tidy, attend to the hall at all times when in use; to see the fires, put out the lights and lock-up the hall when business is over.

To keep the fire engine and hose always in proper order, and in cold weather to maintain the temperature of the engine room night and day, so that the water will not freeze in the engine.

Tower is erected on town hall

North Ontario Observer - June 11, 1874

The *Observer* editor reported, "Our handsome Town Hall is being completed with the erection of the tower. All that was wanted to complete the structure." The hall is estimated to have cost the village about \$6,000.

THE TOWER

Since the tower on the Town Hall was finally completed in 1874, it has undergone a number of changes.

The earliest picture of the tower, right, circa 1900, shows the arches below the large circle, did not originally have any slats to cover the openings in the eight arches. The bell can be seen inside the tower.

By 1935, slates had been installed on the open arches, probably closing it off to birds and animals and to protect the bell which was used to warn residents of fire.

The tower was removed in 1951 and replaced by a squat cottage-style peak, but a replica tower was rebuilt and installed in May 1975. At this time, once again returning to the original design, without slats in the eight arches.

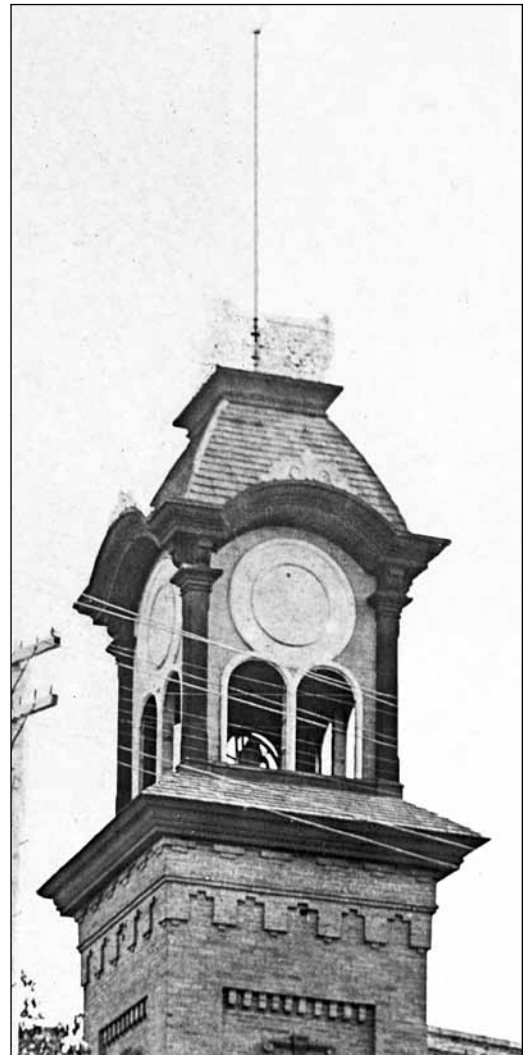
It was 29 years before slates were reinstalled, about 2004, to keep pigeons and the weather out, and also to protect the bell which was located at the top of the tower.

The Town Hall tower remained like this until, due to deterioration and fear of falling pieces, it was removed for the second time in February 2019.

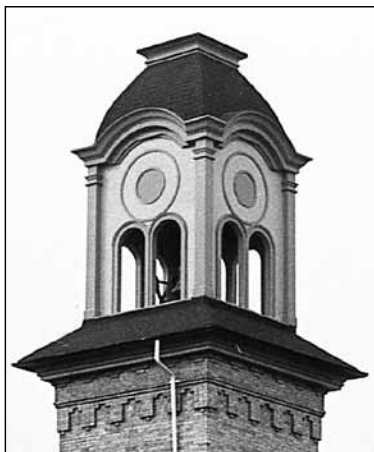
Plans are to rebuild and install a new replica tower when repairs are completed.



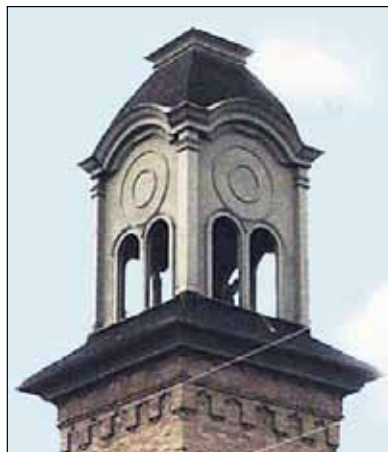
TOWN HALL TOWER, 1935



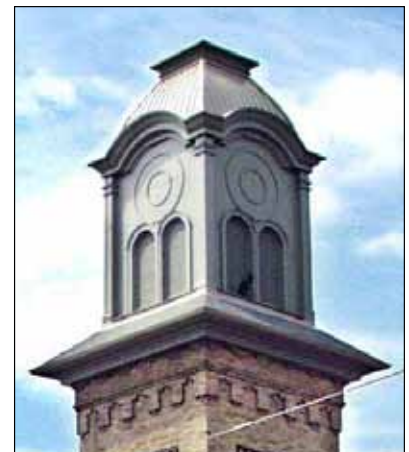
TOWN HALL TOWER, circa 1900



TOWN HALL TOWER, 1976



TOWN HALL TOWER, 2003



TOWN HALL TOWER, 2013

The New Town Hall

North Ontario Observer
April 23, 1874

"The nominations were held in the Town Hall and really it is magnificent. It is the very best Town Hall we know of and all concerned have done themselves much credit; the corporation for their large hearted liberality, the village council for giving effect to the desires of the people and securing the completion of so fine a building; and the contractors for the skillful manner in which they have filled the contracts.

The plastering, both the plain and ornamental part of it, reflects the highest praise on the skill of the workmen. The council has shown both economy and good taste in the seats.

The chandeliers are miserable things, some half dozen wretched apologies hung to the ceiling by dog chains. Why not introduce a grease pan with a burning rag in it!

Everything within the hall is tidy and clean, and though during the short time the meeting lasted there were no lack of tobacco spits of enormous dimensions scattered over the floor, this may be avoided in the future.

It may be however that the extra duty on the weed will tend either to lessen the number of spits in a given time or decrease their dimensions."

Council looks to purchase bell

North Ontario Observer - July 30, 1874

Council discussed the merits and necessity of a bell and appoints Messrs. Davis and Adams to negotiate for a suitable bell for the Town Hall at a cost of about \$200.

Work slows down on town hall tower

North Ontario Observer - September 10, 1874

At a regular meeting of the council of Port Perry, councillor John W. Adams asked why it was that the contractor was not proceeding with the bell tower of the town hall. Reeve J. Bigelow stated that the clerk, by his instruction, had written Mr. Tripp and that he had promised the work would be completed without further interruption.

A Mr. Jones of Markham offers to supply a bell for the Town Hall on a trail. If satisfactory as to tone and power, the cost would be \$120. No action was taken.

Council purchases town hall lot

North Ontario Observer - February, 1875

The corporation paid Mr. Benjamin Crandell \$1,000 for the purchase of the Town Hall site. Interest on the purchase amounted to \$152.50.

Criticism of appearance of hall tower

North Ontario Observer - June 10, 1875

James Baird comments: "It is certainly no credit to this thriving town to have a bell tower on our splendid Town Hall, looking down like a great dummy through its leather spectacles on the passers by. One looks up for a clock and find the bottom of a flour barrel meeting his gaze. One thousand dollars will place a suitable four dial clock and bell in the tower."

"Fair Ones" march on council with 457 signature petition

North Ontario Observer - February 24, 1876

The Town Hall was brilliant as an illumination for the regular meeting of Port Perry council on February 22, 1876, and the moment one entered he could see at a glance that something unusual was about to take place. The hall was tidy as a palace, the Throne, the head table and seats for the Privy Council were perched on the elevation at the further end of the hall with the flag of old England displaying its gorgeous folds over the seat of wisdom.

The gathering throng of unusual visitors added increasing interest to the scene. Honorable members began to drop in and showed by their every move that there were breakers ahead.

At half-past seven, Reeve Joseph Bigelow ascended the throne and honourable members took their seats, but the unsays movements and repeated shiftings proved that many thorns, log and sharp, were on those seats, while the furtive glances cast towards the door on every movement proved that something awful was threatened.

The Reeve called the council to order and

proceeding were commenced. While this was going on the door flew open and in marched, two by two, some hundred or so of the fair ones of the village; escorted and marshalled by many of the male inhabitants. The ladies occupied the centre of the hall, the gentlemen taking the right and left wings.

When all had got seated, the hall and its surrounding had a magnificent appearance, the centre filled with the aged, the young, the fair, and the gay, the mothers and daughters of the village, while the less attractive but no less useful fathers and sons flanked them on the right and left, while honourable members, for some reason or another, sat perched upon a platform a little less than ten feet high.

A document was placed in the hands of the Reeve which appeared to put him on his mettle. This was a request that Mrs. Maria Shipman might be heard on behalf of the ladies of the village. Leave being granted Mrs. Shipman stepped forward and in a few introductory remarks which we could not hear

Continued on page 11

Continued from page 10

distinctly, place in the hands of the council a petition signed by 457 of the ladies and ratepayers of the village praying the council not to grant any shop liquor licenses for the present year and to reduce the number of hotel licenses to four.

The Reeve expressed great satisfaction at seeing so many of the fair ones of the village honouring the council with their presence and well chosen remarks. He said the remarks and the respectable signed petition placed in their hand would receive careful consideration of the council, but the question was of so much importance that the matter cannot be decided tonight.

Town Hall lock-up considered

North Ontario Observer - April 6, 1876

Council appointed a committee to see to the construction of a Lock-up and the cost of it not to exceed \$75. Councillor Benjamin Crandell did not oppose the motion but considered that \$75 is more than is necessary for making the said Lock-up and he moved an amendment at \$50 be the extent of the appropriation.

Reeve Joseph Bigelow said he was not aware that the council had the authority to erect such a Lock-up as they please and considers it would be wise to ascertain if council has the power to confine any prisoner without the inspection of the Sheriff, lest it bring the corporation into trouble.

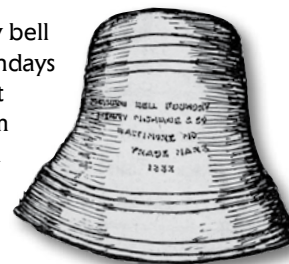
Council later authorized that the closet, under the front stairs of the Town Hall, be converted into a lock-up for prisoners at a cost not to exceed \$25.

Complaints about bell ringing

Ontario Observer - August 31, 1876

A writer, only identified as "Enquirer" wrote to the *Observer* newspaper to complain about the ringing of the Town Hall bell.

"Sir: - Hitherto the only bell to ring in Port Perry on Sundays was used by the Methodist Episcopal Church, and I am aware that they had timed their bell-ringing, so as not to ring during the hours of worship, in any of the other churches.



This is certainly commendable and Christian, and contrasts very strongly with the course pursued on the last Sabbath evening by a "certain body" of people who meet in the Town Hall on Sunday evenings and harangues (lectures) passers-by at the street corners.

On the evening referred to, the town bell was set ringing by the leading speaker and rung for a considerable length of time, to the great annoyance of the several congregations engaged in their worship at the time.

This course has given just cause for complaint to the various religious bodies in the village, more especially as the prime mover of the "innovation" is not even known as a resident of the village.

May I enquire if the Reeve or village Council have either authorized these proceedings or will tacitly allow them to continue?"

Village of Port Perry - Official By-Laws re: Town Hall 1873

Throughout the late 1800s, not only was Port Perry's Town Hall the place for council meetings, special events, the fire department and the village jail, the property on which it was located became the location for a local dog and stray animal pound. Following are just a few by-laws pertaining to the Town Hall.

BY-LAW 213

On July 18, 1884, the Village of Port Perry enacted By-Law 213, a by-law to regulate and restrain the running at large of animals and to regulate pounds and poundage fees. The by-law stated: "There shall be one pound for this village (Port Perry) and the same shall be the yard attached to the Town Hall."

The by-law went on to say that pound-keeper, Robert McKnight, was to impound any horse, bull, ox, steer, cow, heifer, calf, sheep, goat, pig, poultry caught running at large in the Town Hall pound.

BY-LAW 229

The following year, they established the Town Hall as the Lock-Up House, or jail. By-Law 229, passed on January 19, 1885, enacted the following: "The Lock-up House attached to the Town Hall shall continue to be a Lock-up House within the meaning of Section 457 of the Consolidated Municipal Act of 1883.

BY-LAW 411

Town Council met in September 1886 and during their regular council meeting decided to sell parts of lots two and three (see map on page 6) as the lots were no longer required by the village. They passed By-Law 411 to proceed with the sale on September 7, 1896.

TOWN HALL ... in the news

Drop curtain for the stage?

North Ontario Observer - March 15, 1877

At the regular meeting of the village of Port Perry council, William H. Marsh was granted the privilege of erecting a drop curtain for the town hall stage, providing that the same be satisfactory to the janitor. The motions was later debated with Mr. William Jones moving the application be laid on the table. The original motion was amended as to strike out the work Janitor and insert the words, "this council."

During the same meeting, on a motion by Mr. Mark Currie, the caretaker was instructed to purchase 10 cords of stove wood, green, for the use of the town hall.

Request to purchase lot

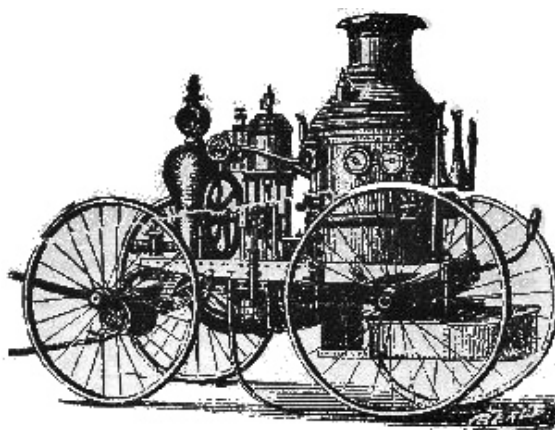
North Ontario Observer - May 24, 1877

During a council meeting at the Town Hall, a proposal by Mr. Henry McKenzie to purchase a portion of the Town Hall lot was again taken up and after a short discussion, was laid over until the next meeting of council. No report for the next meeting of council was published.

Steam Fire Engine meeting

North Ontario Observer - January 31, 1878

A *North Ontario Observer* newspaper article urged residents to attend a meeting at the Town Hall. "By all means be at the Town Hall this evening an hear the proprietor of the Chatham Steam Fire Engine Works discuss the subject of protection against fire in all its bearings. This is a subject deeply interesting every ratepayer in the village and all should hear the subject discussed."



Chatham Steam Fire Engine, circa 1870



Jubilee Singers toured the continent, introducing the public to songs of slavery.

Jubilee Singers at Town Hall

North Ontario Observer - January 24, 1878

The Port Perry Town Hall was the venue for a special concert. An article in the *North Ontario Observer* reported, "The community will learn with pleasure that the famous Sheppard Troupe of colored Jubilee Singers will appear in our Town Hall on the evening of Tuesday, 29th inst. These exquisite singers have given sacred concerts in the best cities and towns on the continent and have given universal satisfaction wherever they have appeared."

We risk nothing in promising the community a rare treat from this choice troupe, when they give one of their grand concerts in our midst."

Request to purchase town hall lot to erect a volunteer drill shed

North Ontario Observer - February 14, 1878

At the monthly meeting of council, held in the Town Hall, Mr. John Rolph stated for the information of the council, that Col. James Wallace had lately paid a visit to Port Perry for the purpose of securing suitable grounds on which to erect a drill shed for the use of the volunteers.

It is the intention of the Government to remove the drill shed from Prince Albert to Port Perry. Mr. Rolph suggests that the lot belonging to this corporation west of the Town Hall would be suitable for the purpose. He said it would be necessary to deed the lot on which the building stands to the Government.

After a further discussion in which Reeve Joshua Wright and Messrs Mark Currie and Clement Dawes took part, the matter was dropped.

In other council business - On a motion of Mr. Rolph, the use of the Town Hall was granted to the Odd Fellows, free of charge, for the purpose of holding a benevolent concert.

Town Hall roof caused high assessment

North Ontario Observer - September 12, 1878

The council of the Corporation of Port Perry met in the Town Hall, on the 9th inst. The Committee of Finance presented their report. The items having been read over Reeve Wright remarked that the rate of assessment was much higher than he could desire it to be, but no blame could be attached to the council, for matters they had no control.

He said that the corporation had been deprived of the liquor licenses amounting to about \$600, and that the new hose for the fire engine and the new roof for the Town Hall were large and unexpected items which were in now way under the control of the council.

Cost of the new Town Hall roof, provided by William T. Parrish was \$231.46 and was paid in a subsequent meeting on January 2, 1879.

Budget includes Town Hall debenture

North Ontario Observer - September 4, 1879

The session of Saturday, August 30, of the Port Perry council was the most important of the year being budget day. The day when the ratepayers are given to know how much their taxes will amount to for the present year. The total amount of the present year is \$7,999.

The Reeve said that the present council had no control over the \$10,000 debentures for the Town Hall or the \$5,000 for the fire apparatus, but that we have a Town Hall to show for this which is an honor to the place, serving many excellent purposes and will again be a source of revenue once the tide of prosperity returns.

Tenders let for Town Hall fire wood

North Ontario Observer - January 22, 1880

Councillor Rueben Crandell, acting as chair, accepted a motion by Mr. Stewart Bruce to instruct the Clerk to advertise for tenders for the supply of 35 cords of stone and 10,000 feet, face measure, of inch and half planks. The planks to 12 feet long and 12 inches wide. The above materials to be delivered to the Town Hall yard, not later than the first day of March, next.

Councillor questions ringing of bells

North Ontario Observer - May 4, 1882

At a meeting of Port Perry council in May 1882, the question of the ringing of the bell at the Town Hall came under discussion.

Councillor Edward Major said that "between foundry bells, school bells and mill whistles, he considers the town bell as quite unnecessary when the mills are running." He said it was not a good use of Mr. Robert McKnight's time, especially since he would have to leave his work to return to the Town Hall to ring the bell three times a day.

Mr. Major moved that the town bell not be rung until further notice, except in the case of fire, stating council was looking for savings and 50¢ a day may well be saved.

It was a tie-vote, requiring Reeve Richard Jones to cast the deciding vote. He voted with the "nays" and declared the motion lost.

Discuss town market, street lights

North Ontario Observer - August 10, 1882

Mr. Edward Major and Messrs. William R. Ham and Stewart Bruce were appointed a committee to ascertain whether it would be to the interest of this town to establish a market in the lower part of the Town Hall, and report to council.

At the same meeting Mr. Major requested the erection of seven lamps for lighting the streets of the village, to be placed as follows: at the Town Hall, Post Office, Wright's Shoe Shop, Brown & Currie's, Corrigan's store, Ruddy's Hotel and Dewart's Hotel.

Council approves opening a Public Market on Perry Street

November 9, 1882

At a meeting of Port Perry council a deputation was presented to establish a Public Market, with the Town Hall basement as a potential location.

A committee was established to obtain costs in proceeding and instructed to bring the information back as soon as possible.

Three weeks later, at a special meeting in the clerk's office, council agreed to establish a Public Market in the storehouse on Perry Street, behind Brown & Currie's store with rent at \$60 per year.

Fire bell rings at Town Hall

North Ontario Observer - July 4, 1884

A few minutes before midnight, on the evening of July 3, the towns people were rudely awakened by the persistent ringing of the Town Hall bell.

The Town Hall bell acted as an alarm clock for the townsfolk, ringing every day at 7 a.m., noon hour, one o'clock and at six o'clock in the evening. However, if it rang at any other time, it could only have one meaning; FIRE!

The volunteer firemen made their way quickly to the Town Hall to gather the limited fire fighting equipment available to them and to find out who was ringing the bell.

Business sets up in town hall

North Ontario Observer - July 4, 1884

Temporary accommodation for local businesses were set up in basements, barns, warehouses and other storage facilities while construction got underway.

Davenport and Jones set up their general store in the Town Hall basement.

MYSTERY OF THE BELL

There is ample documentation regarding the construction of a new Town Hall building for the Village of Port Perry, throughout the mid-1870s, but details about when the first town hall bell was installed, are unclear.

A clock and bell for the tower was first mentioned in April 1874, when a Montreal clock manufacturer offers to furnish a 5 foot diameter clock for the clock tower of the new Town Hall at a cost of \$350. Then in September 1874, a memo a Mr. Jones of Markham, Ontario, offered to provide a bell for the hall's tower on a trial basis. He said if it was considered satisfactory the cost to the town would be \$120.

Both of these two generous offers in 1874 appear to have been dismissed by the local council, there being no record of further discussion.

It wasn't until about seven months later, in April 1875, when the town hall bell came up for discussion at a regular meeting of Port Perry council. Councillor Richard Jones stressed the necessity for a town clock and a general conversation took place as to the merits of both a bell and clock. No decision was made but Mr. Currie insisted something be done and undertook a subscription list for the purchase of the town clock and bell.

After failing to make a decision the *North Ontario Observer* editor admonished the council, commenting in June 1875 that *"It is certainly no credit to this thriving town to have a bell tower on our splendid Town Hall, looking down like a great dummy through its leather spectacles on the passers by. One looks up for a clock and finds the bottom of a flour barrel meeting his gaze. One thousand dollars will place a suitable four dial clock in the bell tower."*

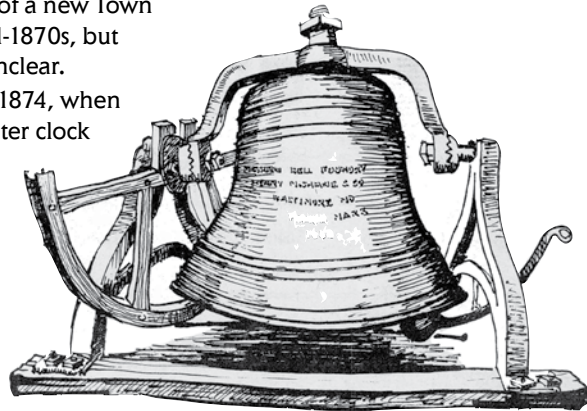
No records have been found to determine when a bell was finally purchased for the Town Hall tower, although it was installed before the summer of 1876, when the bell was being rung three-times daily by the caretaker.

An article in the *Observer*, in August that year, reported worshippers in nearby churches complained about the town hall bell being sounded during church services. Council reacted quickly and bell ringing during church services was discontinued.

No further information about the town hall can be found until May 4, 1882 when the question of the ringing of the bell at the Town Hall again came under discussion.

Councillor Edward Major said that "between foundry bells, school bells and mill whistles, he considers the town bell as quite unnecessary. He moved that the town bell not be rung until further notice, except in the case of fire, but it resulted in a tie-vote, which was broken by Reeve Richard Jones. He voted with the "nays" and declared the motion lost.

There are two "mysteries of the bell".



Sketch by Catherine Christie

First "mystery" is name of the manufacturer of the first bell and the date it was installed and removed from the tower.

The second "mystery" is when and why there was a need to install a second bell in the town hall tower. The second bell was manufactured in Baltimore, USA in 1888, indicating the new three foot diameter bell would have been installed sometime after that date.

Most Port Perry newspapers between the years 1885-1900 were lost in major fires in the town, wiping-out records which may have helped determine when or why the original bell was replaced with the present bell.



This Town Hall bell, pictured in 1975, is not the original bell that was installed in the bell tower. This one was manufactured in 1888 by the McShane Bell Foundry of Baltimore, Maryland, USA. When and why it replaced the original bell is unknown.

Fire station and hose-tower at town hall

Toronto World: September 23, 1889

There is a two-storey brick Town Hall, with square bell tower. At the rear of the hall is a fire station and hose-tower, and there is a steam fire engine and equipment required for a first-class fire department.

Pauline Johnson to present a recital at Port Perry Town Hall

North Ontario Observer - February 3, 1893

The *North Ontario Observer* announced that the famous Mohawk Indian Poet-Reciter, Miss E. Pauline Johnson would be in Port Perry to give some of her charming costume recitals. The exciting performance was arranged by members of the Literary Society of the Port Perry High School.

In helping promote the event, the *Observer* publisher quoted an article from the *Toronto Mail* newspaper "The Indian poetess is a very clever woman. Her voice is exquisitely tender, her facial power wonderful and her gestures graceful and telling. Her passionate dark face expressed every shade of feeling. Her Indian costume, which must have cost an immensity, was accurate in every detail and most becoming to its wearer."

Miss Johnson has given recitals in 50 cities and towns throughout Canada within a few months and locals were encouraged to hear her.



Prince Albert enjoy Pauline Johnson recital

Reprinted from Globe & Mail November 15, 1941



One black night in the autumn of 1892, a group of children set out to grope their way down the badly lighted street between Prince Albert and Port Perry. Usually such a trip would have been forbidden, but the Indian poetess, Pauline Johnson, was to give a recital of her poems in Port Perry Town Hall, therefore no rain or darkness could dampen the spirits of the eager throng.

Chaperoned by one who afterward became one of Ontario's public school inspectors, we arrived safely at the hall.

Our hopes were more than realized. Pauline Johnson appeared in a long, fringed, ivory leather coat-dress, with red sash and strings of beads and wampum around her neck. Her inky black hair was parted in the centre and hung in straight tresses around her shoulders.

We admired her costume very much, yet when she began to recite we forgot her attire. Everything was lost in the magic of her voice. Miss Johnson's dramatic impersonation of characters was one of her fine arts in holding an audience.

We awoke to the truth that the recital was over, and we had to face the walk home through rain and darkness. We did not risk the uncertain board walk. No motor cars endangered our way, so we gathered together in the centre of the street for our homeward walk. The weather was unpleasant, but that could not obliterate the joy of having watched, listened to and absorbed the poetic beauty of those two hours.

Bell awakens town

Ontario Observer - October 22, 1891

The inhabitants of our town got a rude awakening about 2:50 a.m. by the dreadful clatter of the Town Hall fire bell.

Our active and energetic fire company were at their posts on short notice and had well directed streams from both large and small engines fighting the devourer and confining it to the premises in which it started.

Council erects shed for road scraper

North Ontario Observer - May 1890

A rough shed was erected near the Town Hall woodshed, to store the village road scraper and protect it from the weather.

John Powers to repair Town Hall roof

North Ontario Observer: October 6, 1892

The regular meeting of Port Perry council was held at the Town Hall on Monday evening last. Council authorized repairs required to the Town Hall and instructed Mr. John Powers to purchase a barrel of pitch and barrel of coal tar and give the roof of the hall two coats of the same, and also a good coat of sand. Cost of work to be \$10.

TOWN HALL 1873

THE FIRE HALL

Port Perry's Town Hall, for many years during the past century, was the location of the fire truck and fire equipment, and meeting place for local firemen.

As early August 1870 Port Perry had purchased an "excellent fire engine" for the village. The Fireman's Hall at this time was located at a location, yet to be determined, on Perry Street.

Until the new Town Hall was completed, the fire engine was stored in other buildings around the town, including Emany's Carriage Factory. On one occasion in December 1873, council was informed the engine had been "kicked out" on the street and was sitting frozen and utterly worthless in the event of a fire taking place.

Mr. Austin Platten, the keeper of the engine, said that something must be done at once. It was finally agreed to secure a temporary shelter until the basement of the Town Hall is prepared to receive it.

In an effort to upgrade their fire equipment, during the summer of 1874, the village purchased three hand-fire engines with hooks, ladders and 100 feet of hose.

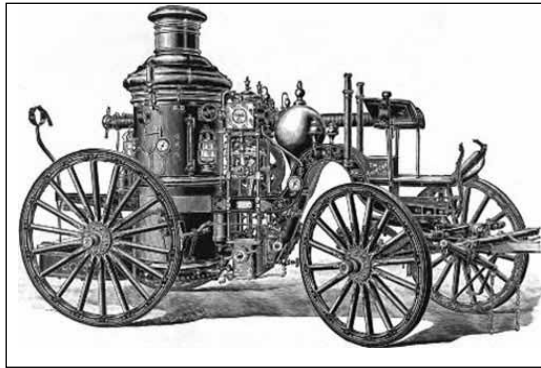
Not content with the fire protection they possessed, in 1877 Port Perry council recommended the purchase of and additional 300 feet of hose and the purchase of a steam fire engine.

Initial opposition to a \$4,000 debenture to purchase

the equipment delayed the purchase of a Brussels Steam Fire Engine until 1884. This new engine could stream 300-400 gallons a minute.

The Town Hall also became the location of the fire bell, which was rung when a fire was discovered.

In February 1914, the procedure for ringing the fire bell was described – "Any person noticing a fire in the town was to run to the Town Hall, break the glass in the door to access the bell rope, and then pull the rope and ring the bell."



Sketch of a horse-drawn steam engine, similar to the Brussels Steam Engine purchased for Port Perry.



Members of the Port Perry Fire Department, 1957, in front of old Town Hall, where the fire truck was kept. The truck was a 1945 International Air Force crash truck, the first motorized fire truck for the local department. Members are, from left, Harvey Mahaffy, Charlie Lown, Bill Gibson, George Parry, Merv DeNure, Jack MacGregor, Jack Cook, Chief Guy Raines, Bruce Beare, Harry Deshane, Ben Pickard, Howard Gibson, Bev Kent, Don Carnegie, Ray Webster and Keith Mark. - picture courtesy Clive Boyd

At this point, firemen and citizens would run from all parts of the village to the town hall, change into fireman's uniforms and rush to the fire, dragging the reels, unless a horse could be found to pull the fire hose reels.

It's not known when the fire-tower was built at the rear of the Town Hall, but for many years there was a tall structure there, presumably to dry the fire hose after fires.

Beverley Smallman, when a young man and prankster, recalled climbing up into the Town Hall's main tower to ring the bell, and then escape over the roof and down the "fire-tower" at the south end of the hall.

When considering renovations and repairs to the Town Hall in 1939, one suggestion was to remove the old tower and construct a new wing for the hall on the south end. Just when the fire-tower was removed, is unknown.

The Town Hall was used as the location for the Fire Department until the early 1960s, when a new three-bay fire hall was constructed and opened on Caleb Street.



Behind these two large wood doors, on the east side of the Town Hall, is where the fire truck was kept.



The Port Perry Fire Department fire truck, above, in its bay at the Town Hall, where the local fire department's truck and equipment was kept until the 1960s.



As near as can be determined, this picture shows what the lower east side of the Town Hall looked like before the large doors were cut into the brick to allow storage of the town's fire truck. Note: this is an illustrated picture, using photoshop to insert one window and one door where the two large openings were created.



The Port Perry Fire Department's new three-bay fire hall on Caleb Street, was constructed during 1964, and was officially opened on Saturday, September 11, 1965. The siren, seen on top of the hall, replaced the bell in the old Town Hall, which had been used for more than half a century.

A Town Hall Mystery

THE HOSE TOWER

After years of researching the history of Port Perry's first town hall, there had never been anything mentioned of a "hose-tower" or "fire-tower" connected with the building. It was a complete surprise, but gave a starting point to continue digging for more information.

The hint of a second tower came from an article written by Dr. Beverley Smallman in 1957. He reminisced about he and his friends would climb onto the roof of the town hall and ring the bell, then "escape over the roof and down the 'fire-tower' at the other end of the hall".

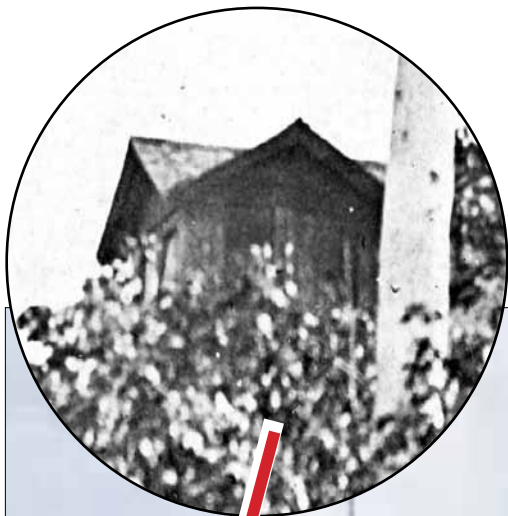
Ironically, this was not the first mention of a second tower. An article in the "Toronto World" newspaper, dated September 23, 1889, reported – "There is a two-storey brick Town Hall, with square bell tower. A fire station and Hose-Tower are in the rear and there is a steam fire engine and equipment required for a first-class fire department." The article was in connection with a story about the progress of Port Perry since the fire of 1884.

Extensive research after learning of a second tower at the town hall revealed very little information, and no firm date as to when council authorized the construction of a "hose-tower", at the south side of the

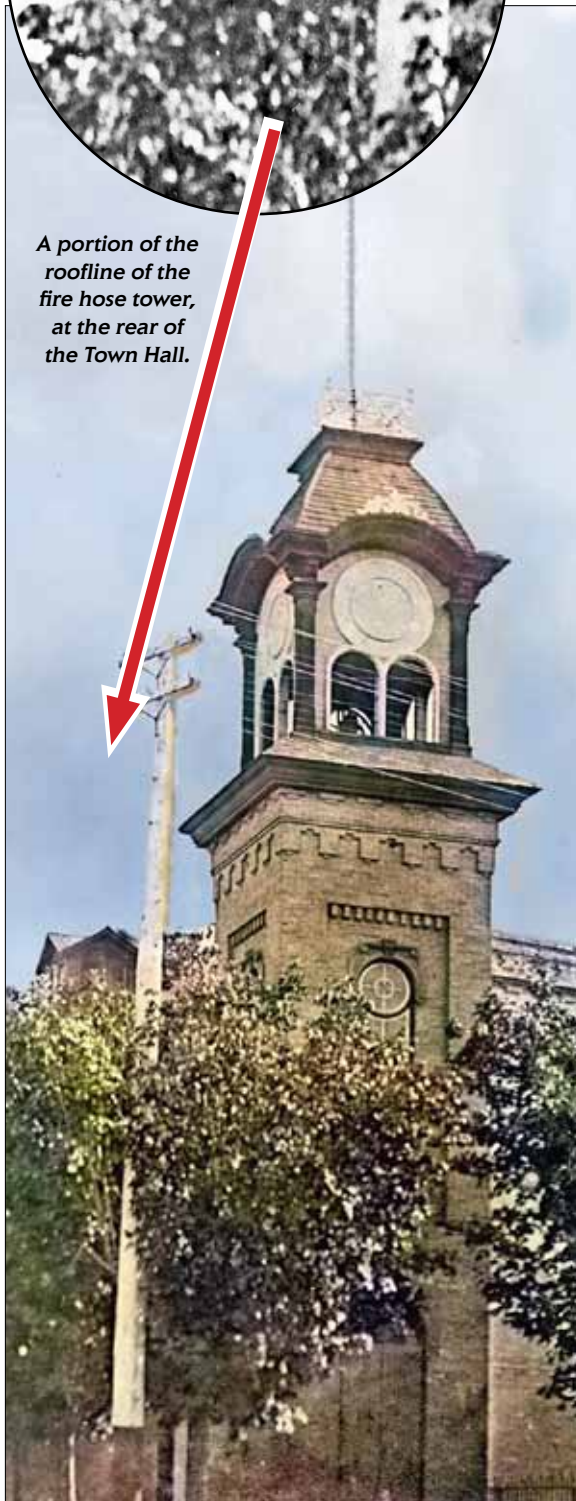
USE OF A HOSE-TOWER

A hose tower is a structure constructed for hanging fire-hoses to dry. Hose-towers have long been a feature of many fire station designs Canada. The purpose of such towers is to hang leather or canvas hoses for drying, slowing any deterioration caused if they were not dried thoroughly.

The firehoses were pulled to the top of the tower with a rope and looped over racks to allow them to drain and dry before they needed to be used again.



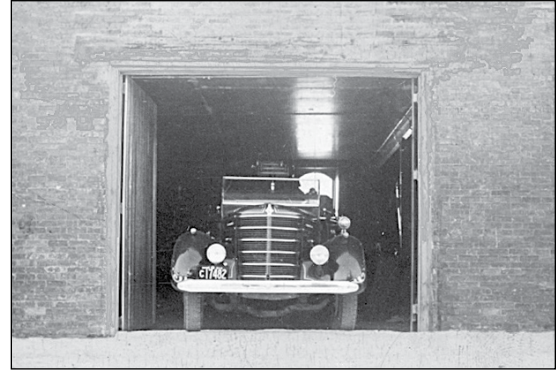
A portion of the roofline of the fire hose tower, at the rear of the Town Hall.





Port Perry Town Hall building.

Despite the lack of information, the *Toronto World* story does provide a guideline to when the tower was most likely constructed. Based on the date stated in the story, it is safe to determine that the hose-tower was built between 1885-1889, not long after the July 1884 fire which destroyed the entire business section of the town.



The Port Perry Fire Department was located in the bottom of the old town hall when this picture was taken in the 1950s, before the new fire hall was constructed.

The first local media report of a "hose-tower" is found in the *Ontario Observer* on February 4, 1892, when Port Perry council authorized a three-year renewal of insurance for the hose-tower.

A short article in the April 5, 1900 *North Ontario Observer* reports that the council was advertising tenders, for the painting of the hose-tower, which suggests the tower was a wood structure, rather than brick. The only other mention of the tower, to date, is from May 1907 when it was reported that the hose-tower's foundation was in poor shape and needed repairs amounting to \$50.

The hose-tower, which is only partially visible in a picture of the town hall on the opposite page, circa 1900, appears to be similar in size to the tower at the front of the hall, with a peaked roofline. Although difficult to tell from the photograph, it appears to be somewhat shorter than the main tower facing Queen Street.

It's believed the hose-tower was removed about 1939, but that's another story.



PLEASE NOTE: The illustration of a hose-tower used at the top of this page, and in the composite picture, above, behind the old town hall are not the Port Perry hose-tower. These illustrations are of the hose-tower in Pella, Iowa, and are being used only as an example of the style of wood structure that may have been constructed behind the Port Perry Town Hall.

Hose Tower Mystery Solved

The mystery surrounding when the hose tower was removed from its perch at the rear of the town hall has finally been solved.

It was reported in the April 4, 1946 issue of the *Port Perry Star* that council hired Leonard Leahy to remove the tower. Len hooked a block and tackle to the structure and then fastened it to his truck.

As soon as the truck started moving, the once stately tower lurched forward and crashed full length onto the tennis courts beside the town hall.

And that was the end of the old and crumbling hose tower at the rear of the Town Hall.

NEWS CLIPS... from the past

Town Hall roof replacement comes under fire

North Ontario Observer - May 1895

Port Perry council members were questioned for their method in awarding a contract for installing a new roof on the Town Hall.

Messrs. John B. Laing and John W. Meharry made a serious complaint to the council, after they picked a tender that was \$30 more than the one they presented. They complained that they were asked not to appear before council when the tenders were opened, although two other tenders were there.

Messrs Laing and Meharry claim they put in eight different kinds of tenders, ranging from \$5.50 to \$9 per square, either rib or flat roof, as no mention was made in advertisement of the quality of material to be used. Council awarded the contract to T.H. Philip and Co. at \$9.15 per square, for the same quality of roof that Laing and Meharry provided for \$8 per square.

They claimed their lower tender would have saved the town treasury \$30

Ontario Premier G.W. Ross guest speaker for Liberals at Town Hall

North Ontario Observer - November 29, 1899

Port Perry's Town Hall was the centre of Ontario politics on November 29, as Premier George William Ross came to town to endorse the Hon. John Dryden for the Liberal Party in the coming election.

The Town Hall was filled to overflowing, with several hundred persons being compelled to stand. The chair was occupied by Mr. William Ross of Port Perry.

Prior to the Premier speaking there were opening remarks by Mr. Leonard Burnett, M.P. for South Ontario and Mr. Isaac Gould, Liberal candidate for West Ontario.

As Premier G.W. Ross rose to speak, he received a warm welcome and thunderous applause. Miss Edith Ross, presented the Premier with a large bouquet before he began his remarks.



PREMIER G.W. ROSS

A good purchase

February 22, 1911

Town Council purchased the 100 chairs formerly used in the moving picture show, and placed them in the Town Hall basement.

They add greatly to the comfort and appearance of that room.

Enjoyable concert

December 22, 1909

The concert held in the Town Hall last night, under the auspices of the choir of the Methodist Church was a great success.

A choir of 125 voices, conducted by Mrs. H. M. Wright, supplied the principal features of the programme, and were ably assisted by the Sherlock Male Quartette, with Mrs. E. Willard as the accompanist.

Two tennis courts marked out on Town Hall property

North Ontario Observer - June 9, 1899

Tennis enthusiasts from Port Perry were forced to find a new piece of property for tennis courts after the location of Mr. Whitmen's property became unavailable due to his moving from town.

Through the permission of Reeve James Carnegie, the local tennis club secured the lot adjacent to the Town Hall for tennis courts. After being marked out for two courts, some of the

members drew cinders from the foundry to fix up the court.

Members of the local club include: Dr. F.D. McGrattan, James McBrien, Charles H. Allison, Dr. Wm. A. Sangster, Howard B. Clemes and Misses Marion Burnham, Nellie McGill, Louise Carnegie, Nellie Ross, G. Laing and Mabel McCaw.

Procedure for ringing the Town Hall fire alarm

Port Perry Star - February 11, 1914

Our attention has been called to the fact, by Mr. Wallace of the Bell Telephone Co., that there exists in our town no systemic rules for handling fire alarms.

The usual procedure is for the person who notices a fire to run to the Town Hall, break the glass in the door, and pull the rope.

The firemen and citizens run from all parts of town to the town hall, change into fireman's uniforms and rush to the fire, dragging the reels, unless a horse can be found, which can be pressed into service.

This arrangement has been handed down from a time when telephones were unknown, but with telephones scattered throughout the town, we believe a better, quicker and more systematic arrangement could be made.

Council offers idea for Town Hall improvement

Port Perry Star - August 9, 1911

It is the intent of the council to materially improve the interior of our Town Hall. In this connection a suggestion has been made that is worthy of consideration.

The suggestion is that the stage be enlarged by knocking out the rear wall of the building and building a small extension. This would of course mean additional expense, but if the work is done we are told that a group of public spirited young folk will at once go to work to help raise the money that is required to make this additional and much needed improvement.

The present stage can never accommodate anything of importance or real value, such as could be given with a better stage accommodation.

The time to make the improvement is now, while the work is being done, as it will cost less than it would to start improving a second time. More than that if once the improvement is considered as being complete there would be great difficulty in starting again.

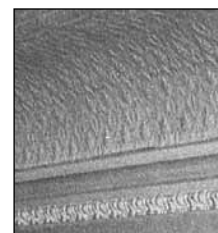
Those who favour the idea had better speak to some of the council at once. Them means you. Don't be bashful and wait for someone else to speak.

Town Hall gets new ceiling

Port Perry Star - August 23, 1911

The Town Hall is being improved by a metal ceiling put on by Mr. John Stovin. This week Mr. Harry Hall starts the work of decoration and the whole interior of the building will be much improved.

The work is underway just now, but if you attend the concert to be held in the Town Hall on Friday, September 15, the night of the Port Perry Fair, you will be able to see the progress for yourself.



Three weeks later, in the September 20, 1911 a report says the new ceiling a coat of paint and a general clean up have greatly improved the appearance of the Town Hall. The metallic ceiling is a particularly good feature of the improvements.

One part of the hall has still to receive attention – the stage. Here some paint and new curtain could work wonderful changes.

The wallpaper on the screening is out of date to say the least. The Council will be taking this matter up soon.

Exit the Bell Ringer

Port Perry Star - April 29, 1914

Year after year the town constable has climbed the hill to ring the bell at the Town Hall. Four times a day he has rung its notes to rouse the sleeping schoolboy, and call the labourer to his task; to spread the news that dinner time had come; to tell us that "noon-spell" was over; and then to remind us that –

*Be the day dreary, or the day long,
At length it ringeth to evensong.*

And now the bell ringer's task will end. A

machine will do the work. No more will the "chief" have to cut short his morning ablutions and leave his rasher of bacon untouched because time wears on. No more will he be cured by the hungry man whose "innards workings" did not tally with those of the chief's watch.

Soon we shall have to blame it all on the clock, for the belfry is being erected and slowly and surely the chief is being robbed of this his distinctive job.

TOWN HALL MEMORIES

by Dr. Beverley Smallman

The following memory was written by Beverley Smallman on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Port Perry Star in the ownership of the Samuel Farmer family, in 1957. Mr. Smallman was born and raised in Port Perry and used the occasion to reminisce about his boyhood in Port Perry and in particular his memories and experiences surrounding the old Town Hall bell.

THE TOWN HALL BELL had little character in itself. Its tone was flat and unmusical. But it was big enough to be heard all over the village and beyond it, and that was its purpose. It had two tunes - to ring solemnly to mark the intervals of the ten-hour working day at 7 a.m., 12 noon, 1 p.m. and 6 p.m. And it ran an exciting staccato, usually at night, to announce a fire and summon the volunteer fire brigade. It was rung also to celebrate great occasions. One of my earliest memories is hearing the town hall bell dominating the chorus of church bells to celebrate the Victory of 1918.

The bell hung in the tower of the old town hall and was rung by a rope which dangled down into the entrance vestibule of the hall. Since the hall was open much of the time, the temptation for young boys was irresistible. One good tug on the rope and the soul-satisfying boom from above was well worth the risk of being caught. And if the risk seemed too great, one could climb up into the tower and ring the bell there, escaping over the roof and down the "fire-tower" at the other end of the hall.

The bell was a target for many Halloween pranks. For years the tower was scaled by one route or the other and the clapper muffled, tied or removed so that the bell could not be rung on the day after Halloween. The authorities countered this routine in time by ringing the bell in what was then the Methodist Church just across the road.

To meet this challenge, the boys rigged a wire between the two belfries, tying the two clappers together so that neither bell could be rung. The thing ended badly for the boys were caught and fined for interfering with the fire alarm system.

About 25 years ago



BEVERLEY SMALLMAN

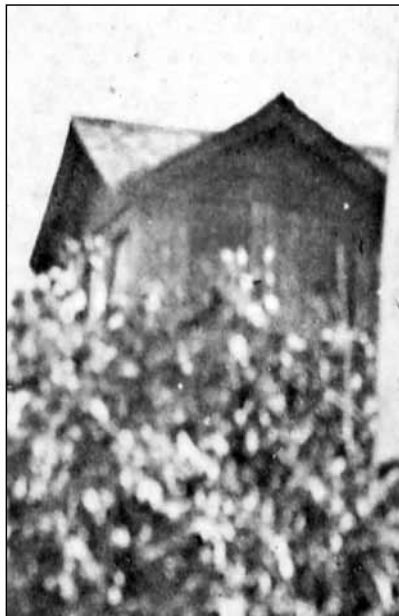
(1925) the town decided to stop the daily ringing of the bell. Mr. Nesbitt, chief of the police force which consisted only of himself, was instructed accordingly, and after so many years the bell remained silent.

About this time Ivan Wallace and I, returning from college for the summer vacation, decided

that this old tradition should not be allowed to die without a protest. For two days the old bell was mysteriously rung at the accustomed times. The first day was easy but on the second day we had to use all our knowledge of the hall and belfry to ring the bell and avoid Chief Nesbitt, who had now been posted to apprehend us.

We learned that most of the citizenry was amused but that the council took a dim view of this flouting of authority. The latter opinion was made amply clear to us the next day, when, preparing to right out the noon summons to dinner, we were ambushed by no less a personage than the reeve himself, Mr. Harold Archer.

Beverley N. Smallman
September 1957



The picture shows a portion of the roof-line of the fire hose tower, located at the rear of the Town Hall, early 1900s.

NEWS CLIPS... from the past

John Rolph switches lights on at Town Hall ceremony



JOHN ROLPH

Port Perry Star - September 29, 1922

When John Rolph turned the switch in the Town Hall on Friday evening last, starting Hyrdo for Port Perry, a new era for the town began.

He related conditions of his boyhood days - the days of tallow dips, of flint and steel; days when fire was jealously guarded, when a boy would be sent with a tin cup to borrow a live coal from one of the neighbours if the fire should go out.

Reeve Philip Figary presided over the meeting, and made the gratifying announcement that the cost of installation would likely be only about 75 percent of the estimate.

Mr. Wm. L. Parrish urged the use of electricity above the "minimum" rather than below it, pointing out the work that hydro can do.

Needed repairs at Town Hall

Port Perry Star - January 25, 1923

The work of renovation of the basement of the Town Hall is going on at the present time, and certainly not before it was needed. Practically every joist under the floor was rotten, and many of them were taken out in pieces, many of them so small that they had to be picked up with a shovel.

For the first time in many years, the basement will be in a fit condition to be used by those who are taking part in the various entertainments and proper dressing rooms are being constructed.

A particularly good feature is the fact that the back stairs have been rebuilt, and they are now in a safe condition. We hope the day is not far distant when the Town Hall can be enlarged and thoroughly overhauled.

Just at this time when money is scarce, may not seem to be a good time for building. Yet, on the other hand, labor is cheaper, and many of our citizens will need the work more now than at some later period when we feel more prosperous.

New emergency exit for hall

Port Perry Star - November 26, 1925

At last we have had a job done in the Town Hall that should have been done when it was built. An additional exit has been made at the stage end of the building, on the west side.

This is a safety movement that will be much appreciated, and one that has been rendered necessary by the coming of the Picture Show.

Note: Picture at right shows the emergency exit on the second floor, now boarded, which was created by removing the bottom section of one of the elongated windows. On the outside of the building was a metal staircase leading to the ground. This exit is no longer used.





Photo of the Port Perry Town Hall taken in 1973, before it had been saved from demolition.

Moving picture shows

Port Perry Star - November 26, 1925

We are to have a moving picture show in Port Perry to be conducted by Mr. James Scott, of Toronto, formerly chief inspector of theatres in Ontario.

Mr. James Scott is moving to town, having taken over Mrs. White's house, and will hold shows on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday night of each week at the Town Hall.

His experience in picture show business should be of real service in giving Port Perry people the best the screen can afford. He has already booked up some fine films, including: The Ten Commandments, Charley's Aunt, Lord Chumley and many other popular plays. The first show will be tonight.

The BEST IN Photo Plays	Announcing Opening PORT PERRY PICTURE HOUSE TOWN HALL	Every Tuesd'y Thurs. Saturd'y
THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 26, 1925		
Sat Nov. 28 ALL STAR CAST SPORTING CHANCE Christie Comic Tootay-wootay	Feature Presentation REGINALD DENNY IN OH DOCTOR CENTURY COMEDY ADDED ATTRACTION: PLASTIGRAMS The Hit of the Screen. ADULTS 25c. Doors open 7 p.m. CHILDREN 15c.	Tues. Dec. 1 PAULINE FREDERICK Smoldering Fires Cent'y Comedy Thurs Dec 3 RAYMOND GRIFFITH LORD CHUMLEY Merrill Com. Fares Please

NEWS CLIPS... from the past



BEN SMALLMAN

Committee cites repairs required for Town Hall

Port Perry Star - November 16, 1939

At a meeting of Port Perry Council held on November 11th, the matter of Town Hall improvement was introduced by a local committee represented by Miss Grace Davis, Mr. Benjamin Smallman and Mr. M.A. Gerrow. Mr. Smallman was spokesman and made the following suggestions.

1. Interior and exterior of hall to be decorated.
2. Hall roof and tower to be replaced by a new and guaranteed roof.
3. Stage enlarged by removing the stairs and wings, and by extending it 20 to 30 inches at the front.
4. Side wings to be replaced by drape curtains with new curtain at front of stage.

5. Wing to be constructed at south end of hall, after removal of old (fire) tower and shed. The size to be 30' x 10' and to consist of dressing rooms, with entrance on level with stage. This building to be frame, with cement foundation.

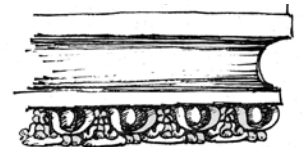
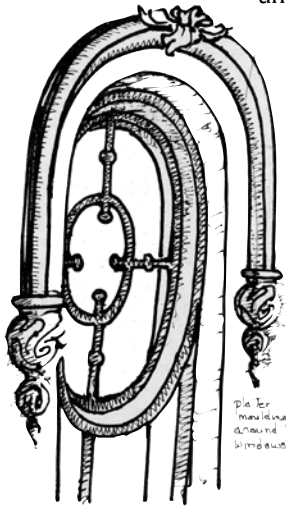
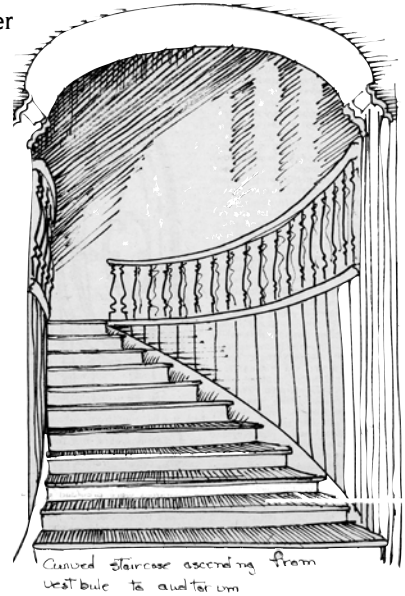
6. Make necessary repairs to windows.

7. Remodel the front entrance to lead directly up from the front, instead of winding stairs.

The estimated cost of these improvements is \$2,000. Of this sum the Town Hall Improvement Committee could contribute \$320, which is already in hand.

Mr. J.R. Bridger was of opinion that a "new town hall" is needed, including municipal offices.

The Reeve thanked the committee for their presentation of the case. No action was taken.



Tower Removed

Port Perry Star - October 18, 1951

Old boys and girls of Port Perry as well as the young fry will be interested in the change that is being made in the appearance of the "Town Hall". Although the building is now occupied by the Gossard Company of Toronto it is still familiarly known as the "Town Hall".

The tower of this ancient building has been considered in an unsafe condition and has been removed, in order to prevent any possibility of an accident from falling timber. The work is being done by Ed Storey and his workman.

In place of the tower, a shallow cottage-style roof covers the fire bell, which is still to be used as a fire alarm.

THE GOSSARD YEARS



The photos on this page show the Port Perry Town Hall about 1958. The Canadian H.W. Gossard Company opened a small manufacturing plant in the hall about 1946, before closing in the late 1960s after a labour dispute with employees.

After lying dormant for a number of years, the Town Hall was leased to the H.W. Gossard, a pioneer in the design and production of fashionable women's undergarments.

This was possibly the most unusual use for this historic, but aging building, and was an indication of how far it had fallen in the esteem of the town fathers.

The Canadian Gossard Company was a Montreal based company with a large factory in Toronto, but upon deciding to expand in Ontario, opted to open a smaller factory in Port Perry, renting the old Town Hall.

After extensive gutting and renovations to the building, including removing the sloped floor and stage, they constructed three production lines across the main level floor. These lines consisted of various types of sewing machines.

The company hired four local young women to begin production of high fashion women's undergarments. Marg Jeffrey, Merle St. John, Leona Rider and Rose Walker began working for Gossard during 1946, working a 40 hour week for \$14.00, which Marg recalls was considered pretty big money for the time.

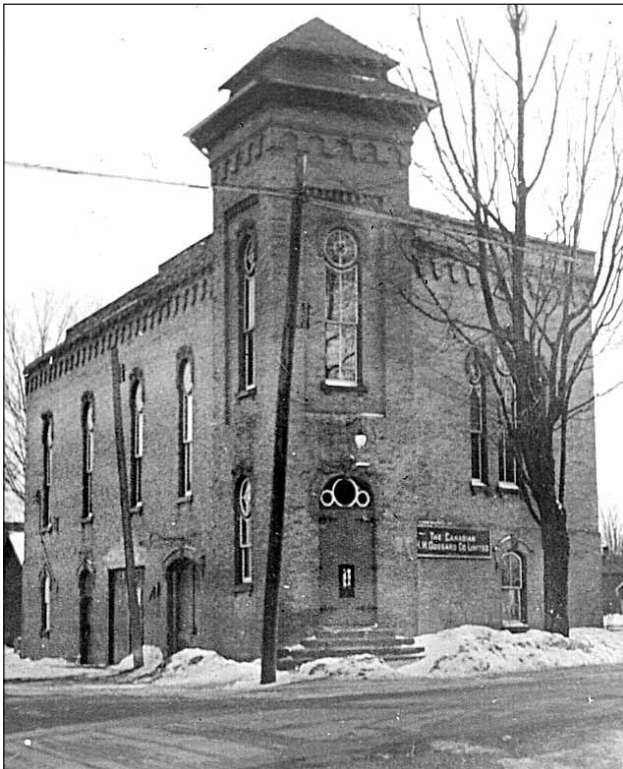
Eventually more than 35 women worked in the Town Hall producing fashionable girdles and bras.

The company renewed its lease for space at the Town Hall in 1959, agreeing to \$85 per month for a one year term. It then took out a longer term, leasing the building for \$100 a month.

By March 1967, Gossard had outgrown its space and was looking for council to provide a larger building.

Unwilling to take on a debt to build Gossard a new facility, they offered the company addition space in the basement with an increase in their rent, which had climbed to \$150 per month by then.

A few months later, disgruntled employees at the company went on strike, after Gossard management refused to give the staff a raise in



pay, not willing to pay more than \$1.00 per hour. This was the beginning of the end of the Gossard's 20 year relationship in Port Perry.

Reaction was swift and the first labour strike ever held in Port Perry took place during October 1967 with employees picketing in front of Canadian H.W. Gossard for higher wages.

Gossard would lease a new building

Port Perry Star: March 9, 1967

Mr. Morely of the H.W. Gossard Co., suggests to Port Perry council that his company would be interested in renting a new building. He claimed the Town Hall, where the company now is located, is too small and will not facilitate any expansion.

Council made it quite clear that the Village of Port Perry would not

be interested in the erection of a new building on a rental basis.

Council did however offer to provide additional space in the basement of the present building, without additional charge in rent. The rent increased for \$120.00 to \$150.00 a month on March 1st, 1967.



This picture taken during the 1950s, shows 18 of the women who worked at the H.W. Gossard Company, manufacturing plant which was located in the Town Hall. By the time the company left Port Perry, there were about 35 employees for the company.



A couple of women employees of the Canadian H.W. Gossard Company are seen here in October 1967, striking in front of the Town Hall with union organizer J.W. Kitt. The women were striking for higher wages from the women's garment manufacturer.

50 strikers show up

Port Perry Star: November 9, 1967

"That it should be necessary to call a 'public indignation meeting' in this quiet small town, is deplorable and shameful," was the opening remarks of Mr. J.W. Kitt, the man in charge of organizing a union for workers at H.W. Gossard Co. Limited, Port Perry site.

About 50 persons attended the meeting, held in the Legion Hall, in support of striking employees.

Mr. Kitt said the Union presented a proposal of \$1.25 per hour minimum, all statutory holidays, two weeks vacation with pay, and sick benefits.

The Conciliation Board appointed by the Ontario government suggested that the minimum should be \$1.25 in 1967, and \$1.50 in 1968, but the company refused to pay more than \$1.00 per hour.

TOWN HALL 1873 MEMORIES

by William (Bill) Brock



WILLIAM BROCK

The following story was written by lifetime Port Perry resident Bill Brock in 1973, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the opening of the communities new town hall, which is today most commonly known as Town Hall 1873.

The Town Hall was built in 1873, one of the first acts of the first council of the newly incorporated village. For 70 years it was to be the centre for cultural and recreational activities in the community. The High School built at Rosa and Queen Streets was built in the same year without gymnasium or auditorium, so that the new hall downtown was used for all school Commencements, dances, plays and variety programs. The students enjoyed this arrangement, for they were able to make one school dance last out three evenings — the night before a party to decorate, the big night itself, and a clean up party the following evening.

In those early years many parents also attended, and after dutifully participating in the opening reel, they would retreat to card-tables arranged at the back for Euchre or Whist. Occasionally a masked ball would be held, and on one occasion, all of the girls secretly exchanged dresses before the big night so that the confusion of the boys was doubled as they sought out their favourite partners.

Before the turn of the century, roller skating was a popular pastime, and the Town Hall's flooring was laid especially for this purpose. A fan-shaped section was inserted in both ends of the floor so that at no point would you have to turn off a plank and risk being upset in the crack between the boards. This floor is still there, and it is worn in an oval shape, testimony to the many miles the young people skated over its surface.

The skates themselves had wooden rollers and one local lady can remember the constable, Mr. Robert McKnight, giving the skates away when skating went out of fashion. Another can remember rummaging in a box in the balcony in about 1912 and finding a few old broken skates which had been left there.

The Town Hall was the scene of musical and dramatic events in bewildering variety. There was great excitement when Miss Drake would come to town. She would stay for two weeks, and at the end



CHIEF ROBT. McKNIGHT

of the time every one would crowd in for the play she had produced in that time using purely local talent.

Around 1900, the now-famous Indian poetess Pauline Johnson would come in with a troupe of musicians and elocutionists. Dressed in a beautiful beaded leather costume, feather and head-band, and with a necklace of eagle claws, she would hold the audience spellbound as she recited her own works.

Every year the Guy Brothers came with their travelling minstrel show, and inspired many acts in the amateur minstrel shows which were produced locally later in the season.

Court sessions were a regular feature of life in the Town Hall. The judge had an immense wooden chair from which he presided, it was always used in dramatics to enthrone a King or Queen should the script call for it. The chair was at some point removed to the Memorial Library, from which it disappeared. Court sessions were as formal as could be expected under the circumstances.

One local character was known for some time by the nickname 'Hello Ed!' On being led into the court by the constable to appear before the august figure of Magistrate Edward H. Purdy, he broke into smiles and hailed the judge with 'Hello Ed!' It broke up the court temporarily, but did not lessen the penalty incurred for the misdemeanor.

When war came in 1914, the Town Hall played its



PAULINE JOHNSON



MAGISTRATE E.H. PURDY

part as the scene of many fund-raising balls, concerts and meetings. One of the concerts was given by the local branch of the Edith Cavell Society, a women's patriotic society whose local members were given medals by the Belgian Consul after the war. In the winter of 1916 the 116th Regiment of Ontario county gave Battalion concerts in the Town Hall. They felt right at

home there because they were billeted in town and did some of their indoor training there.

Later, on May 16, 1914, when the Regimental route march took place from Beaverton to Oshawa, the men were billeted in the Town Hall, the Presbyterian Church and the Armouries behind the (then) new Post Office. They went to Niagara by boat from Oshawa, and then overseas on July 16.

Later during the depression years, the Town Hall was used as a hostel for transients (usually called 'tramps'). Chief William Nesbitt bedded down all comers, and in addition, vegetables and potatoes were provided so they could cook themselves a good meal. Such was the reputation of the Town Hall hostel that transients, who could stay no more than one night at a time, would arrange to be in Port Perry every second night.

It was natural that the Town Hall hostel should be hosted by the constable, for this was his preserve. He supervised the jail, a small room in the front of the building with one barred window. Later an iron cage was installed which was probably more comfortable. His visitors did not stay long. Often just to sober up overnight, or to await the time of their trial.

It was also the duty of the constable to ring the bell in the tower which was a sort of municipal alarm clock. At 7 a.m., 12 noon, 1 p.m., and 6 p.m. it had its significance for everyone.

- To all, a rousing call to get up and start the day.
- To the kids, time to get out of school for lunch.
- To mothers, a reminder that the kids would be home in about five minutes.
- To everyone, the signal that supper would soon be ready.

The bell could be heard on Scugog Island and in Prince Albert as well, so no one had the excuse that he had not heard the bell!

Some boys would head for the Town Hall when they heard the bell, and the constable would let them give the rope the last few pulls. The friendly sound of the bell would turn ominous if heard at the wrong time, for then it could mean 'Fire', and the signal for volunteers to race to the hall, or to ring up 'Central' on the telephone to see if she knew where the fire was, or

what else was amiss. She usually did!

The Town Hall had its regular routine, like everyone else. Every year Ben Hokea would arrive with his Hawaiian Orchestra and everyone would turn out to dance. His popularity was such that he drew 1,200 people to a garden party in Greenbank in 1921.

Every year a local Gilbert and Sullivan operetta was performed with staging and talent that everyone who attended still talks about. A performance of 'Virginia Heroine' was staged with lighting and thunder more natural than the real thing!

New Year's Eve was a gala occasion at the Town Hall. Ladies in silk gowns and gentlemen in striped trousers and kid gloves would see the new year in with an elegance probably not seen in Port Perry since.

From the earliest days, there had been a farmer's market in the building on Perry Street behind the present Royal Bank. Buyers would come from Toronto and buy wholesale quantities of poultry, eggs and butter which they would take away with them on the train.

When Archers turned the building into a garage in the twenties, the market moved into the basement of the Town Hall. It became just a Christmas Fair where turkeys and other Christmas wares were sold wholesale to stores and outside buyers until the end of the thirties. When it was finally decided to give up the Christmas Fair, the committee had a bank balance of about \$50., which was given to the Businessmen's Association who decided to sponsor a Santa Claus visit to Port Perry before Christmas. This event of course was the precursor of our successful Santa Claus Parade.

The beginning of the end for the Town Hall was probably the construction of the new High School and Public School on Rosa Street in 1926. In the auditorium on the third floor, there was a larger stage from which greater numbers could view all of the productions that they used to see down the street, and at least in winter, be more comfortable. School functions no more were held in the Town Hall, although there was still the odd play produced there which continued to pack the house in the thirties.

The Swiss Bell Ringers and a few vaudeville hangers on still made regular appearances, but it was Hollywood which gave the Town Hall another brief hold on life. For about fifteen years movies were shown twice a week to a generation eager to forget the more arduous forms of self-entertainment that their parents had enjoyed.

There was not much time for endless rehearsing and memorizing of lines for an amateur play when



CHIEF WM. NESBITT



NEW PORT PERRY SCHOOL



LAKEVIEW THEATRE

Abbot and Costello could take you for an evening with Rio Rita, or George Formby could take you zanily 'Up in the Air'; especially when on your opening night, the crowd your parents would have expected for the play were happily watching Frankenstein and the Werewolf down at the Town Hall.

The Town Hall's world crumbled with the opening of the Lakeview Theatre on Queen Street in 1946. With the exception of its basement use as garage for the

snowplow and later the Fire Department, its municipal life was over and it was put out to work – making undergarments for ladies at starvation wages.

It did not earn enough to warrant more than the occasional coat of paint or the replacement of the odd pane of glass, although through its labours, it did contribute to a lowering of the general tax rate for the village for twenty years.



Town Hall 1873, in 1976, not long after a new bell tower had been reinstalled on the aging building.

DEMOLISH OR RESTORE SAVING THE HALL

by Pat Procunier
Town Hall 1873 Historian



PAT PROCUNIER

By 1973, fate of the “magnificent Town Hall” was being discussed by the Scugog Council and the councillors were unable to decide what to do with the building. The Gossard Company no longer rented it and Port Perry Hydro, which had used it as a storage shed, built a new shed.

Council had obtained an engineering report which estimated that restoration repairs would be extensive, and obtained a bid for tearing the old building down for \$3,250.

William (Bill) Brock, then president of the Historical Society, remembers writing a letter to the *Port Perry Star* to support the restoration of the hall. Dr. Ralph Price recalls a phone call from Bill telling him of a meeting at Catherine Christie’s home to discuss saving the Hall - the first of many such meetings.

More letters were written to the *Port Perry Star*, as the public began to show some interest. A public opinion survey conducted by the *Star* during the summer of 1973 indicated about a 50-50 split in the public’s views regarding whether the hall should be restored or torn down.

However, a January 30, 1974, article in the *Star* stating “Town Hall Restoration to cost \$45,000”, and the headline of February 13, 1974, “Council will not

restore old town hall - cost too high” seemed to settle the matter.

At the meeting, one of the councillors repeated his opinion that the building was not worth restoring, and advocated tearing the building down and using the land it sat on as a park. He suggested that the bell, and possibly part of the bell tower, could remain in the park as a historic monument marking the spot where the building had sat.



This picture shows the condition of Town Hall 1873, about a year after work began on renovating the century old hall.



Meetings of the new Town Hall 1873 Committee where held in the hall. Above, a committee meeting 1974, from left, Dianne Lackie, Mina Mina, Jane Litt, Bill Brock, Per Hvidsten, Les Rogers, Dr. John Hammett, Nigel Harvey and Jim Catty.

Other councillors agreed, saying that they couldn't see spending \$45,000 on the building and that the money could be better spent. One suggested that the money would go a long way toward a new arena.

Nevertheless, at the next few meetings, Council was presented with proposals to save the hall from destruction. Catherine Christie suggested that the building be converted into apartments.

Professional actor and theatre director Mina E. Mina, suggested that the council restore the hall and turn it into a centre for the arts including a summer theatre along the lines of Stratford.

Charlie Foote, President of the Navy League which sponsored the Sea Cadets, suggested that the hall be put into shape and used for the community.

More letters and comments appeared in the *Port Perry Star*. An editorial comment on March 20, 1974, suggested that a Heritage Foundation grant might be available for restoration. William Brock contacted the Foundation and was informed that the local public must show that there was a need and the will to save the building.

Meanwhile, at the April 8th council meeting, Council was presented with a motion to demolish the hall but the motion was tabled. A many-signature petition was presented to Council by Bill Brock, Catherine Christie, and Diane Lackie.

Then, at the next meeting, Council decided to allow 55 days to save the old Town Hall and resolved "to offer the town hall and the lot it is situated on for sale to the public with the clause that the highest bidder

will not necessarily be accepted. The deadline is June 17, 1974."

A Save the Town Hall Committee was formed on April 28, 1974. The members were: Dr. Ralph Price and Dr. John Hammett, co-chairmen, Jane Litt, secretary, Bill Brock, treasurer, Charles Foote, Per Hvidsten, Norman Watson, Mina E. Mina, Catherine Christie and C. Clifford.



This counter with a built-in history will become part of the fixtures at the old town hall. The unique drug store counter was donated by A.M. Lawrence to the town hall renovation project in February 1975. Checking blueprints are, from left, David Litt, Randy Jobin and project supervisor Dale Procnier.

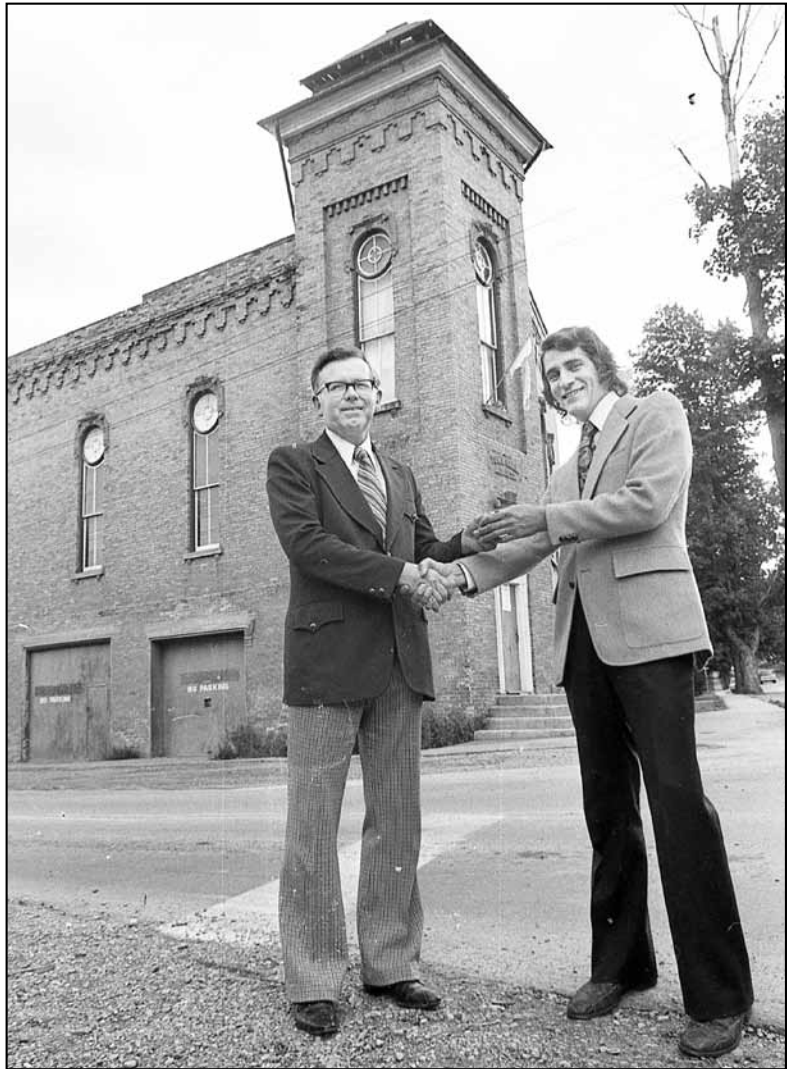
Keys to Town Hall handed over

Port Perry Star: Sept. 1, 1974

"Dr. Ralph Price and Dr. John Hammett, co-chairs of Town Hall 1873 made the proposal to Council. They told Council they would be submitting a tender not for purchase of the building but for a lease on it. If granted the lease, they would find the money to renovate and restore the building. Council would not be required to pay any tax dollars for the restoration, they emphasized."

At the June 17th meeting Scugog Township council unanimously voted in favour of saving the 1873 Town Hall but definitely would not provide any municipal financial assistance. The funds needed for the necessary repairs to make the building safe would have to be raised by the Committee.

On September 1, 1974, the Town Hall Committee officially took over the building, with Mayor Lawrence Malcolm handing the key over to Dr. Price, along with a 99 year lease.



Mayor Lawrence Malcolm handed the keys over to co-chair Dr. Ralph Price on September 1, 1974, along with a 99 year lease.

RESTORING THE HALL

The next phase in the plan to Save the Town Hall involved obtaining the services of Mr. Napier Simpson, a renowned historical architect, who was well qualified to advise the Committee.

He was a member of the National Historic Sites Board, consultant for Black Creek Pioneer Village, design consultant for Upper Canada Village, consultant architect for the Pauline Johnson Home, and consultant architect for Gibson House in North York.

After Mr. Simpson and his staff examined the building, he said, "This building is of high Victorian style and very representative of the pre-fire buildings in Port Perry. The building is Port Perry. If you tear down old buildings like this, it becomes a different

town. The old town hall is a building which must be saved."

When he spoke to the Lake Scugog Historical Society in November, 1974, Mr. Simpson said he couldn't help comparing the Town Hall with the St. Lawrence Hall in Toronto. He hoped that with the restoration of the Town Hall that the owners of business establishments on Queen Street would attempt to retain the early architectural styles of Port Perry.

On November 30, 1974, the first clean-up work bee for the Town Hall was held by the Lake Scugog Historical Society. The basement had to be cleared of all the debris of years of storage and abandonment. All members were challenged to be there at 9:30 a.m. and to bring their own brooms!

THE REPORT

by B. Napier Simpson, Architect



NAPIER SIMPSON, JR.

In 1873, two years after Port Perry's incorporation, the first town hall was constructed at Lilla and Queen Streets.

This impressive structure suggests that it was one of the many ambitious projects which Joseph, Bigelow promoted – he being the first Reeve of the Village. Its exuberant Victorian style and size seems very much in spirit with the enthusiasm Joseph Bigelow applied to all his projects.

Architecturally, the building has many of the components associated with the Italianate Style – the revival style which flourished in the last half of the 19th Century in Ontario, particularly in public buildings. The bold scale of this architectural style gave the desired impressive look.

The Town Hall features a tower, an important characteristic in Italianate buildings, and it is so located on plans to emphasize the corner lot -location. The crowning glory of the Tower was a belfry, and an ambitious suggestion for a future clock.

Arched windows, surmounted by elaborate overturn, and skillfully worked brick pattern detailing complete the Italianate character.

The exterior result, however, is somewhat stilted and set in a town other than Port Perry might not rate very high in architectural value. But for Port Perry it makes a substantial contribution to the Town's character, and is a very important landmark. Port Perry, as a result of the fires in the 1880s, is a late

Victorian Town, possessing a fine collection of buildings of this period. A stroll down Queen Street is all that is needed to realize how much in harmony the old town hall is with those buildings in the old commercial area. The architectural uniformity of Port Perry is also carried out in the many houses of the same period – Joseph Bigelow's own house being the finest example.

Recent decades of neglect have caused the old Town Hall to present a shabby appearance to the passer-by, but structurally, the building, for its age, is in good condition. A series of engineering reports have all confirmed that other than the brick parapet walls, the roofing and some minor roof framing, the buildings condition is good. The first stage of rejuvenation will have to be in these mentioned areas. The parapet walls present the most costly aspect in that they will have to be rebuilt for approximately \$10,000.00 to \$15,000.00.

Happily, the building, in and out, has suffered few alterations, making restoration work minimal in most areas. The restoration of the bell and clock tower will be costly, and may have to be postponed.

All exterior door openings need replacing as none of the original doors survived, and the two later utility doors to the workshop will need alterations when the use of the workshop area has been finalized.

Landscaping will be minimal, but in its execution some regrading will be required to the west to divert surface water from running into the foundation. It is recommended that the fence along Queen Street be restored.

If the Town Hall is somewhat lacking in architectural assessment as the best and finest example of Italianate style in Ontario, it takes no second place when it comes to the interior. The original Council Chamber is a magnificent room, beautifully proportioned, and finished in the best of detailing of the period. As a public assembly hall, it is as impressive as halls in St. Lawrence Hall, in Toronto, and Victoria



Jane Litt, a secretary of Town Hall 1873, Napier Simpson, well-known architect and Dr. Ralph Price, chairman of Town Hall 1873 stand inside the old Town Hall discussing plans for its future. The group hopes to have the hall in good enough shape to be used this year. October, 9, 1974.

Halls, Cobourg-two public buildings which have been recently restored by their respective communities.

Dirty and shabby, with remnants of the corset factory days lingering on, the room is all there, and waiting to be used. The Council Chamber takes up most of the first floor area, the balance being made up of halls and access stairs. While attractive, the stairs require work to meet fire and safety standards. The hall will also require improved fire exits in other locations.

The ground floor area indicates that the southerly half was well finished for offices, while the north-end has always been of a workshop nature. A lot of interior and minor partition work of a later date will

be removed, and presumably these areas will become meeting rooms with the necessary washrooms, coat rooms and kitchenette.

While this report recommends this project work towards restoration of the building. It does not recommend it be of a museum nature. The building should be adapted for modern uses, and made functional. Possibly the old jail cell, which is small in size is the only area where a museum approach could be considered as a small display area to tell the story of the building.

Regardless of use, the mechanical equipment of the building will need replacing shortly. The wiring is inadequate, and ungrounded.

The heating is by two warm air units which are capable of heating the building, but are lacking any degree of sophistication. The washrooms are poor, and in the wrong location, for the intended plans and will need replacing.

In spite of the mechanical weaknesses, the building can be of use with little work. As this report suggests, the renovation work can be of an ongoing nature. The roof and parapet repairs, and the creation of adequate exits are all that must be done before the structure is used for public assembly.

I trust this preliminary report will be of use to you and your Committee, Dr. Price. We are assuming you wish us to proceed immediately with the necessary repair work in the roof and brick parapets. I would suggest that when this report has been digested, we should have a meeting to discuss the intended uses of the building in more detail, particularly with regard to the ground floor area.

Yours truly,

B. Napier Simpson Jr.,
Architect.



Decorative window at the bottom of the tower in March 1975.

NEWS CLIPS... from the past



Visitors check out the Town Hall on a tour and admire the character and architecture of the balcony in the century old building.



The Town Hall bell is still alive, well and living in the tower of the old town hall. The bell was manufactured by the Henry McShane Fell Foundry of Baltimore, Maryland, USA in 1888.

Citizen tour Town Hall 1873

Port Perry Star - July 7, 1973

About 25 people took a look through Port Perry's old Town Hall last Thursday in answer to a public invitation from the Town Hall committee, with Reginald Rose and William Brock leading the tour.

The 100 year old historic building has been subject of considerable controversy in recent weeks and the committee has been appointed by council to determine if it is desirable and feasible to preserve it as an historic site.

Some consideration has been given to tearing the place down. Interested citizens who missed last week's tour get another opportunity tomorrow at 3 p.m.

This could be the last time members of the public will have an opportunity to see the inside of the building.

Council will not restore Town Hall - cost too high

Port Perry Star - February 13, 1974

Council decided Monday night that the 100 year old Town Hall at Lilla and Queen Streets will not be restored.

Tenders for the work had been opened a few weeks ago. They showed the cost of about \$45,000 to restore the building.

At Monday's meeting councilor Bob Kenny, a former reeve of Port Perry, repeated his opinion that the building is not worth restoring. Mr. Kenny has often advocated tearing down the building and using the land it sits on as a park. He suggests that the bell, and possibly part of the bell tower, could remain in a park as a historic monument marking the spot where the building had sat.

The Town Hall was built in 1873 and served as the first municipal office, but has not been used as a public building for several years.

Council member Don Frew agreed with Mr. Kenny. "I can't see spending \$45,000 on that," he said. "The money could be better spent."

"That money would go a long way towards a new arena," commented councillor Jerry Taylor.

Mr. Kenny presented a motion that the building not be restored, and it carried unanimously.

"Since we are not going to fix it," said Mayor Malcolm, "at the next meeting we will have to decide what to do with it."

Council asked to make Town Hall into apartments

Port Perry Star - February 20, 1974

Scugog Council was presented with a proposal which is intended not only to save the 100 year old Town Hall from destruction, but to make it "earn its keep."

Catherine Christie suggested that the building be converted into seven bachelor apartments.

Admitting that her idea was a little "far fetched", Miss Christie nevertheless asked for time to look into all the possibilities of the idea. "I would like you to give me time to work this out, so don't tear the building down in the meantime," she pleaded.

She described the building as "impossible to replace."

During the past year Port Perry Hydro has used it as a storage shed.

Miss Christie and Mr. Bill Brock both asked council "for more time to study the buildings possibilities.

Council made no decision.

Problem is how to find a good use for Town Hall

Port Perry Star - February 20, 1974

Mayor Lawrence Malcolm feels members of the Town Hall committee are "sound intelligent people" who will come up with a good solution.

But Mayor Malcolm said, "I don't know what the solution is. We've been discussing it for four months in council without finding one."

The Mayor is not too sure how the people of Scugog feel about the matter. "I've been hearing people tell me, 'Don't you send five cents on it and others asking me to fix it up.'"

He said the proposal to covert the Town Hall into a cultural centre and summer theatre is "a good idea," but is not sure of its practicability.

"I don't know how much support you would have for a cultural centre and summer theatre," he said.

Meeting endorses plan of saving Town Hall

Port Perry Star - May 8, 1974

Culture won the day at Thursday's Ratepayers' meeting with an overwhelming majority voting to support the Save The Town Hall committee in its efforts to raise funds and restore the Town Hall into a cultural centre and summer theatre.

There were a few who objected strangely to the move saying they had no interest in culture and did not want any of it, if it meant paying tax dollars; but when it was pointed out to them that the committee would raise private funds, their opposition decreased.

Bill Brock set the ball rolling, pointing to the tourist potential for Port Perry with a fully restored 100 year old Town Hall with a theatre in it.

Mina E. Mina, a professional actor and theatre director talked about the simple charming glamour of Port Perry. Mr. Mina would like the Town Hall to be converted into a centre for arts where people from all

walks of life will be able to learn about dance, music, art, sculpture and theatre.

Dr. Ralph Price, co-chairman of the Town Hall committee, wholeheartedly endorsed Mr. Mina's suggestions. He said a cultural centre would be an ideal solution for Port Perry whose only alternative to becoming a bedroom suburb of Toronto is to bring in industries.

Others backing the idea of saving the Town Hall were Scugog Ratepayers president Rowland Coy; Charles Foote of the Sea Cadets who saw the Town Hall as a great place for the sea cadets to meet, and Norman Watson, instructor of the Historical Society Choir, who said he had the support of 70 members and felt it would be a great place to rehearse.

Meanwhile town council has put the Town Hall for sale and invited tenders by 12 noon on June 17, 1974.

Council unanimous in plan to save century-old Town Hall

Port Perry Star - June 19, 1974

Town Hall 1873 won the first phase of its battle to save the old Town Hall when council accepted an offer to lease the building for 99 years at a nominal charge of \$2 annually.

Clerk administrator Neil Brodie reported to council there were no offers to buy the building by the June 17 tender deadline.

The lease offer which includes use of the vacant lot behind the Town Hall on Lilla Street, was presented by Drs. John Hammett and Ralph Price, trustees of Town Hall 1873, which has now been incorporated.

The lease offer states the premises are to be used for "historical, recreational, aesthetic, cultural and artistic purposes for the enjoyment and benefit of the public generally."

Town Hall 1873 proposes to appoint a board of directors and make necessary renovations and alterations to the building to make it suitable for use. The next step will be fundraising.

The motion to accept the lease offer was moved by Councillor Reg Rose and seconded by Councillor Jerry Taylor. The vote was unanimous.

NEWS CLIPS

Town Hall 1873 receives Local Initiatives Grant

Port Perry Star - November 27, 1974

Town Hall 1873 has been awarded a Local Initiatives Program (LIP) grant in the amount of \$14,248.

This announcement was received from Norm Cafik, M.P., for Ontario Riding at a meeting of the Lake Scugog Historical Society.

Mr. Cafik said, "Town Hall 1873 is a project to renovate and restore this century old landmark. Through this project it is hoped that a historical awareness can be maintained and augmented in the local populace."

Also at the meeting, Charles Reesor, on behalf of the Historical Society Choir, presented a cheque for \$500 to John F. Raines, treasurer of the Town Hall committee.

Mr. Raines said sufficient funds were now available to begin and complete the first stage of the Town Hall restoration. He said cash donations, pledges and grants now stand at about \$40,000.



Dr. John Hammett, co-chairman of Town Hall 1873, presents Bonnie Gerrow the prize for having the closest guess for the height of the Town Hall tower in June 1974. The correct answer was 2,057 cm. Mrs. Gerrow's answer was 2,047 cm. (67.1 feet)

Architect says hall is in good shape and should be saved

Port Perry Star - October 9, 1974

Another phase of the operation to save the old Town Hall started last week when well-known architect Napier Simpson and two of his employees were in Port Perry.

The spent most of the day examining the old building and checking into how much land goes with the old Town Hall.

Mr. Simpson, who has been involved in the restoration of many old buildings, has been retained by the Town Hall 1873 group to supervise the restoration of the historic building.

"This building is in remarkably good shape except for the roof and parapets. The roof is a relatively minor job, but the parapets are a major job," Mr. Simpson said.

Mr. Simpson went on to say "The building is Port Perry. If you tear down old buildings like this

it becomes a different town."

Town Hall 1873 is headed by Dr. Ralph Price and Dr. John Hammett and is made up of citizens interested

in saving the old building. Dr. Price said the first objective is to get the building so that it can be used this year.



Work got underway restoring the basement of the Town Hall in February 1975, including a new floor, cement block walls and steel support beams under the floor.

THE CAMPAIGN SAVE THE HALL

The next step in the drive to save the Town Hall involved a fund raising campaign and a canvass of Port Perry and surrounding areas. The committee hoped to receive enough donations to complete the first phase of work over the winter. Plans involved the roof, masonry work, and enough interior work so that the building could be used.

The *Port Perry Star* published a special supplement to its October 17, 1974 issue dealing with the history and plans for the historic building. "Your Living Landmark" was made possible by Per Hvidsten, publisher of the *Port*

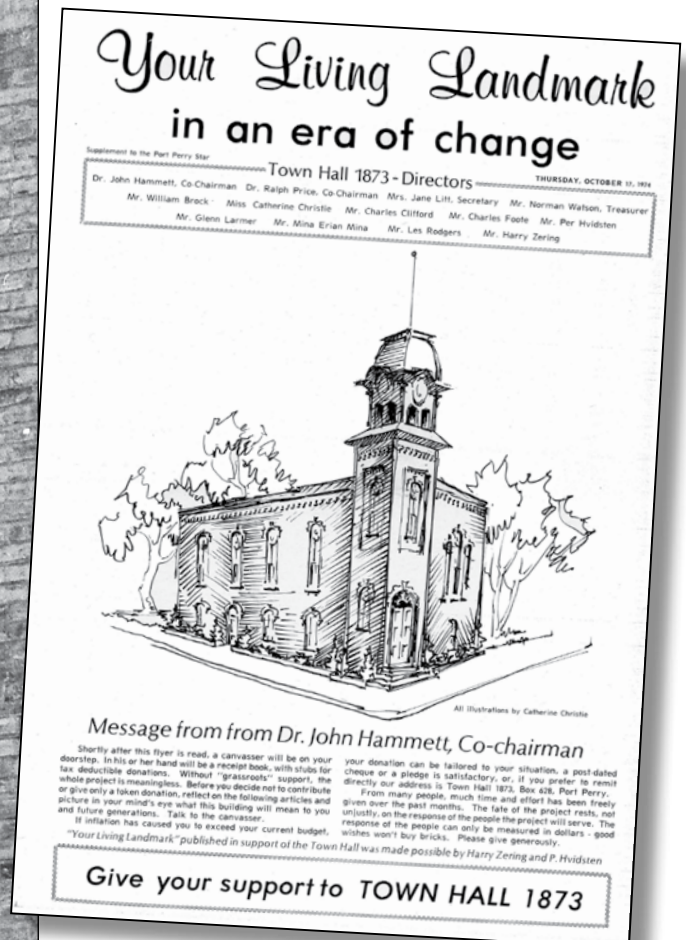
Perry Star and Harry Zering and the message from Dr. John Hammett, Co-Chairman, follows.

Very quickly sufficient funds were raised through the cash donations and pledges. A federal Local Initiative Project grant of \$14,248 was awarded.

Architect Mr. Napier Simpson recommended that the committee get one general contractor to oversee the whole project and Mr. Dale Procnier was asked to take charge of the restoration project.

Labour costs were partially paid under the Local Initiatives Project grant and local employees, David Litt, Ray Jobin, and others were hired to gain on-the-job work experience.

Funds for the materials had to be raised by the Town Hall Committee through other sources.



Front cover of a special 4-page supplement to the *Port Perry Star*, October 17, 1974.

Century old Town Hall gets a new lease on life

Port Perry Star - February 5, 1975

Theatre buffs are in for a real treat this summer, as Professional Summer Theatre is slated to use the old Town Hall for four productions during July and August.

This according to members of the Town Hall committee who appeared before the directors of the Chamber of Commerce with a review of their plans for the summer.

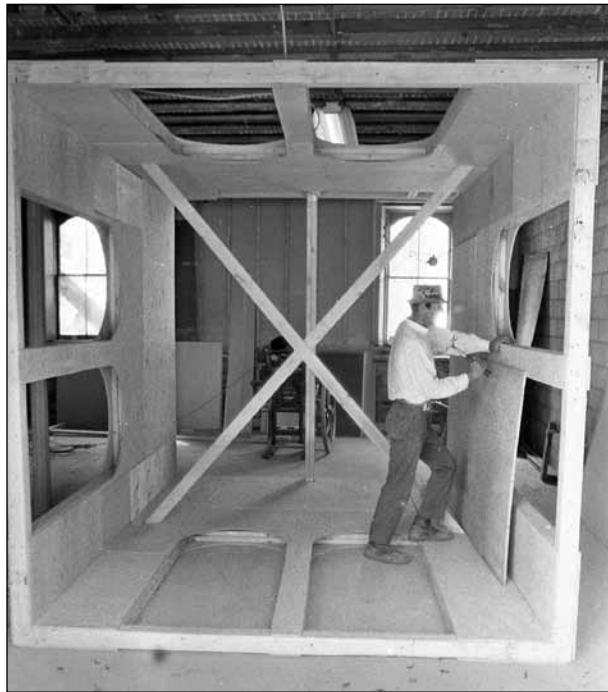
Now that the Town Hall has been saved and work has begun on the interior, Mr. Mina feels that with a little luck, a lot of hard work and money, they can begin practicing for the productions in June. Approximately \$50,000 is need to finish the inside of the building.

"Right now the Town Hall is only a workable shell, but with curtains, seating, lights and the proper programming the building will be a perfect spot, not only for theatre, but for all groups interested in the arts, music, dance, etc.," he said.

Norman Watson outlined the work to date. The basement has been torn out and new floor poured, steel beams have been inserted under the floor to level the floor and balcony. In future a new furnace will be purchased and the staircase for the stage erected.

Of the \$34,000 that has been raised one \$10,000 donation from an individual has been slated for reconstruction of the "bell tower," Mr. Watson said.

Mr. Mina asked the Chamber for their support, to get behind the committee and endorse them.



Dale Procnier works on the new replica tower, in the basement of the town hall, in April 1975. When completed the tower would be lifted into place on the top of Town Hall 1873.

Town Hall receives \$20,000 grant to continue work

Port Perry Star - March 26, 1975

A provincial grant of \$20,500 that, according to the old Town Hall committee was "squeezed from every nook and cranny" of the Culture and Recreation ministry's 1974 budget, will give the town hall

restorations the boost it needed to get over an approaching critical fund situation.

Bill Brock said that brickwork, heating and wiring work has already been contracted and now that the money has been made available, will begin almost immediately.

Organizers think that obvious enthusiasm on the part of Cultural Affairs consultant Michael Noon, as well as efforts by M.P.P. Dr. M.B. Dymond helped to project the last-minute funding.

Dr. Dymond announced the grant last Tuesday, two weeks after a visit to the old Town Hall by Mr. Noon.



The Town Hall 1873 was undergoing considerable activity throughout December 1974. After a thorough clean-up a couple of weeks ago, workman have moved in and broken up remnants of the old concrete floor and are making it ready for a new floor to be poured. In charge of the work is Mr. Dale Procnier, assisted by two local boys, David Litt and Randy Jobin.

RESTORATION BEGINS

Meanwhile the dropped ceiling and wiring installed upstairs by the corset factory was removed to expose the original embossed tin ceiling. The damaged section at the south end was replaced with similar embossed ceiling found by Catherine Christie at a school being torn down south of Prince Albert.

While the work was going ahead on the restoration, the directors of the Town Hall Committee became more and more concerned about finances. About \$25,000 had been raised through donations from the community but much more was needed if the work was to proceed.

Appeals were made to both federal and provincial governments for grants and fund raising continued. In March, 1975, an open house was held to show the public the work that had been completed in the basement of the building and to increase public awareness and enthusiasm for the project.

During the spring and summer, work continued as funds became available. The basement was drywalled, wiring and plumbing completed, and flooring installed. Upstairs, most of the original plastered walls were retained, and only the south wall had to be drywalled. Repairs to the plaster mouldings and trim were done by Mr. Roy Patton.

The unique wooden floor with its fan-shaped sections was refinished and many pins were removed from between the cracks – reminders of the garment factory's sewing machines.

On May 28, 1975, the Town Hall received its new

bell tower which replaced an identical structure taken down 50 years before. The base of the tower was built by Dale Procnier and his workers while the tower dome was built by a local firm, Jamie MacNab and Partner.

The tower was lifted into position by a huge crane and installed in two phases – the base and then the roof. A generous donation of \$10,000 by Mrs. Marjorie Letcher, a resident of the community all her life, and a great supporter of the restoration project, made the restoration of the bell tower possible.

Finally the building was ready for painting and decorating by Brian Jordan, Custom Decorator. A committee researched the old colours and finishes and then the work began.

All the old paint, layers and layers, was removed from the wood trim and wainscoting and an antique woodgrained finish was applied. The walls and ceiling were painted the original green colour.

On October 8th, 1975, the annual meeting of the Town Hall 1873 Committee was held at the Town Hall, and a year of "incredible" progress was reviewed.



MARJORIE LETCHER



A Lake Scugog Lumber flatbed truck transports the bottom section of the new tower, to the Town Hall for installation in 1975.

THE NEW TOWER

It was a big day on Wednesday, May 28, 1975 for the hundreds of people who have given their support to the efforts of the Town Hall 1873 Committee for the restoration of the old Town Hall on Queen Street.

Of all the local supporters, it was probably the proudest and most rewarding for Mrs. Marjorie Letcher, a resident of the community her entire life, and a driving force behind the restoration project, when the tower dome was lifted back on top of the old town hall. Mrs. Letcher's husband, Merlin, was Reeve of Port

Perry for 13 consecutive years, from 1933 to 1945.

It was a generous donation by Mrs. Letcher that put it there. The new \$10,000 tower that replaced the identical structure taken down in October 1951, took two months to be built by a local firm, and was lifted into position by a huge crane.

Watching the work was a small group of enthusiastic supporters, including Mrs. Letcher, who made it all possible.



On May 28, 1975, a reproduction of the former Town Hall tower was lifted, in two pieces, onto the roof of the century old building. The project was made possible by lifetime resident, Marjorie Letcher, who donated \$10,000 towards the project.



Town Hall 1873 after being 'crowned' with its new tower on May 28, 1975.

TOWN HALL 1873 INSIDE LOOK

March 5, 1975

Renovations were well underway when Port Perry Star editor and photographer John Gast took the photos on this page, of the inside of Town Hall 1873.



Section of the balcony and window on north side.



Town Hall 1873 windows overlooking on Queen Street.



Staircase looking down from balcony.

Port Perry is not Stratford, but it could be exciting

Port Perry Star - April 14, 1975

The old Town Hall, built in 1873, and only a few short months ago destined for demolition, is still very much alive.

While interior restoration and the construction of the Hall's tower is progressing favourably, the 1873 Committee and many other enthusiasts are planning the future operation of the building.

Some of the plans perhaps, may to the average person look rather ambitious, but not to those persons involved and taking a firm grip on the situation.

A Programme Committee has been formed and through negotiations with a professional theatre group in Toronto, five plays may be staged in the Town Hall during the summer of 1975.

A local couple, Mr. and Mrs. Mina E. Mina, both with many years of professional theatre experience and now residing in Nestleton, have done a tremendous amount of preparatory work in connection with the

possible productions by the N.D.W.T.

The Mina's are members of the Company theatre group and will participate in the staging of the play. Heading the Programme Committee is Nigel Harvey, a relative newcomer to the Township of Scugog.

At meetings on Wednesday and Friday last week. Mr. Harvey proved himself an enthusiastic and inspiring chairman. The most important and no small task, Mr. Harvey and his committee are faced with, is the fund raising of \$19,000 by the end of April.

This money is essential to get the productions started and is vital in securing much needed grants from the Federal Government for the purchases and construction of the stage, seating, lighting, etc.

If the program committee is successful, they plan to stage the Donnelly trilogy, Shakespeare's Hamlet and a local play, yet to be written, but based on interesting local incidents.



Construction inside the Town Hall had been steady all winter and now that spring has arrived repairs to the exterior got underway. Martens Masonry & Construction Ltd., commenced the work of repairing and replacing the brick parapet on top of the building. April 14, 1975,



Members of the Borelians theatre group were at the Town Hall to see how work is progressing in April 1975. Above, Nigel Harvey, Dianne Lackie and Judy McCall admire the 100 year old intricate window designs. Tangible proof of the Borelians interest was demonstrated when a cheque in the amount of \$300 was presented to help with the restoration. April 30, 1975.



It was not a bribe to gain his freedom – rather a \$40,000 provincial grant for work on the old Town Hall project. The cheque was presented to Town Hall committee chairman Dr. John Hammett by MPP Dr. Matthew B. Dymond, in April 1975. The \$40,000 grant brings the province's contribution to the project to \$60,500. The two doctors are seen hamming it up in the jail cell in the basement of the hall.

NEWS BRIEFS

March 1975 - Town Hall 1873 Committee hosted a 3-day Open House for the people of Port Perry.

March 1975 - Scugog council gave their endorsement for the Town Hall committee to begin using the basement once-a-week for art classes, since the structural work was now completed.

May 1975 - An 11 mile walkathon from Durham College to Port Perry's Old Town Hall raised over \$1,800 in pledges to go toward renovations. More than 100 people, mostly young public school students took part in the fundraiser.

May 1975 - A dozen enthusiastic high school students armed with brushes, paint, ladders and scrapers got to work scrapping flaking paint and repainting the trim and weathered old windows of the town hall.

June 1975 - After 50 years, a new tower was back on the Old Town Hall. It was made possible by the generous donation of Mrs. Marjorie Letcher.

October 1975 - The first official function in the restored Town Hall was a highly successful Antique Show.

Town Hall 1873 project gets \$40,000 provincial grant

Port Perry Star - July 16, 1975

The town has a right to be proud of itself for what they've accomplished over the past 11 months, said Town Hall Committee Chairman Dr. J. D. Hammett after he accepted a provincial government grant of \$40,000 that will put the project well on the way to an opening performance this year.

The grant, presented to Dr. Hammett by MPP Dr. Matthew Dymond Friday morning, will bring the province's contribution to the project to \$60,500 and total expenditures on the overall project to well over \$100,000.

Original estimates made a year ago (for the total project) were between \$150,000 to \$200,000. According to Dr. Hammett, the final figure looks now to be about \$175,000.

The provincial grant just received will be used mainly to turn the hall into a theatre-cultural centre. The money is expected to provide a good start to

scheduled work on seating, stages, lighting, sound and equipment. In fact, Dr. Hammett said the \$40,000 should bring the Town Hall to the point where functions can be held. Money generated from the use of the building will be applied to the remainder of the work.

He said the provincial government has been "very generous" and that the federal government has also assisted with financial support.

"We've had excellent support from two of the three levels of government," he said.

Although the latest contribution will not be enough to complete all the work needed, Dr. Hammett considered it a major shot in the arm for the project, that will make theatre in Port Perry a reality this year.

He said theatre doors could be open as early as the end of August, and that the first performance will probably be a local production of interest.



Almost 1,000 pounds of wiring, instruments, dials and electrical gadgetry was lifted through the tower window of Town Hall 1873 on November 20, 1975. The lighting panel has been long-awaited, and after installed in the upstairs of the hall will be used to light up stage productions. Cost of the equipment was about \$7,000. Lake Scugog Lumber provided the truck to lift the equipment into place.



Town Hall liquor licence approved by council

Port Perry Star - November 12, 1975

Scugog Council approved the holding of events at Town Hall 1873 where liquor is used or sold.

Requested by Jim Catty, of the Town Hall committee, the move is required before the committee can approach the Ontario Liquor Licensing Board.

Mr. Catty thanked council for their support and efforts, particularly their swift action in designating the building a valuable historical site – a move that led directly to granting of \$25,000 from Heritage Ontario.

Mr. Catty outlined the upcoming program and reviewed the project. He said about \$130,000 has been raised for the project, and about 80 percent of that money was spent inside the community. The only things that the committee has gone outside the community for was seating and lighting equipment.

NEWS BRIEFS

September 1975 - It was announced that the NDWT theatre company would perform The Donnellys Trilogy at the town hall in December. The trilogy will be performed in one day, beginning at 9 a.m. and ending about midnight.

October 1975 - The Town Hall 1873 board members cancelled The Donnellys Trilogy planned to take place in December. The reason was due to late delivery and installation of a very complicated lighting system which could not be installed in time.

October 1975 - While helping clean up the old Town Hall, Glenn Larmer found an old theatre ticket caught in boards on the floor. It was for a performance of Pinafore on April 9, 1915. The ticket shows the performance started at 8 p.m. sharp, and reserved seats were 50 cents.

February 1976 - An Open House was held at the newly renovated Town Hall 1873 from 2-5 p.m. This was a chance for the public at large to see what has been accomplished since the project got underway more than a year ago.

A CLOSE-UP LOOK TOWN HALL 2007



Unique and decorative windows highlight the tower.



Tower and windows on the north side of the Town Hall.



Beautifully refurbished curved staircase.



A trio of windows along the north side of the hall.



Ornate plaster mouldings.



View from the stage, looking over the seating and balcony at the rear.



Plaster moulding over one of the doors.



Decorative wood brackets support the balcony.



Period light fixtures upgraded with electricity.



Beautifully crafted tin ceilings and cove moulding around the top of the Town Hall auditorium.

*Photos by J. Peter Hvidsten
April 3, 2007*

Town Hall 1873 holds first event since being saved

Port Perry Star - October 22, 1975

After more than a year of penny pinching, fund-raising, knocking door-to-door in Ottawa, Queen's Park and making the best of what's available, the newly renovated Town Hall 1873 hosted its first major event last week, and the reaction by visitors as well as local people was overwhelming.

Helen Calder, one of the organizers of the antique show, said the reaction to seeing the hall was excitement. Many of the exhibitors first comments were "fantastic, wonderful".

Mrs. Calder said there was a great push to get things ready as the day for the show got nearer. Special efforts were made by contractor Dale Procnier, and Catherine Christie gathered dozens of quilts to cover an unfinished wall at the rear of the hall.

But perhaps one of the most beautiful finishing touches was the lighting fixtures, which were designed by Miss Christie and Evelyn Zering.

The show itself was a resounding successes in both quality and quantity. The more than 600 people who attended in the two days equalled the attendance of many larger shows, in larger centres.



Beautiful new lighting fixtures designed by Catherine Christie.



The main floor of the old Town Hall, was all decked out with antiques in October 1975, for the first event in the renovated hall.

Town Hall 1873 hosts its first New Year's Eve Gala





**NEW
YEARS
EVE
BALL**

TOWN HALL 1873

In the beautifully restored 1873 Town Hall!

Buffet - Bar Privileges - Two Bands!

Tickets \$25.00 per couple.

Only 20 tickets left

Call Irma Lewis 985-3633

Port Perry Star - December 1976

Port Perry Star - January 5, 1977

Residents from Port Perry and area celebrated the coming of 1976 at a New Years Eve Gala Ball held in the newly renovated Town Hall 1873. Patrons, many dressed in beautiful attire, enjoyed dancing the night away to the music of two bands, and celebrated at the stroke of midnight, sipping champagne as balloons dropped from the ceiling.



Town Hall officially opened Feb. 22, 1976

Port Perry Star - February 25, 1976

Just what Town Hall 1873 is trying to create in this community was in evidence at the open house and official opening ceremonies held last weekend. It was an event that not only was highlighted by internationally known contralto Maureen Forrester, who performed in an afternoon recital, but also by a hometown flavoured open house and performances Saturday.

While the packed house for the recital was no surprise to organizers, perhaps Saturday's turnout, despite adverse weather conditions, was an example of the kind of interest the Town Hall has already initiated.

A relaxed program of music gave Saturday's crowd a chance to look around while being entertained. Local performers included Dr. Tom Millar on the piano and a performance of folk songs by Nigel and Rosemarie Harvey.

On Sunday, Maureen Forrester's recital drew people from as far away as Toronto and provided local residents with a calibre of entertainment not often available here.

Following the recital, a brief ceremony marked the official opening of the Town Hall 1873, an event described by Mayor Lawrence Malcolm as an important one for the community. "Today we have a cultural centre. It will become increasingly important in the life of this community."

Durham Region Chairman Walter Beathe added his congratulations to those involved in the restoration and the people of the community in general, describing them as people "who do for themselves - rather than asking someone else to do it for them."

"I commend you on your "do-it-ourselves approach," he said. "There are some things that politicians cannot do... it must start here."

Dorothy Duncan, of the Ministry of Culture and Recreation saw this community's role as not only influencing the region, but the province.

It was Deputy Minister of Culture and Recreation, Bob Johnston who pronounced the Town Hall officially open.

He described the accomplishment as the kind of thing his department is promoting. "A happy marriage" of the two aspects to the department's program, the architectural as well as the development of programs."



Maureen Forrester, internationally-known contralto, highlighted the weekend's official opening program at the Town Hall 1873. Attendance was excellent both Sunday for Miss Forrester's performance and for the Open House held Saturday, featuring entertainment with a down-home flavour. The event will kick off an active season of music, theatre, art and more at the newly renovated Town Hall 1873. Seen above, with Miss Forrester, is John Newmark, her accompanist.

Below, Maureen Forrester signs an autograph for a fan, while Town Hall committee member Jim Catty, looks on.



A 'GALA' EVENT

10th ANNIVERSARY PARTY

Glitter lights-up Town Hall Gala

Port Perry Star - April 8, 1986

Well, wasn't that a party?

Special guests, limos, elegant attire, a receiving line, a full house and Moe Koffman with his Jazz Quintet at Town Hall 1873 on Saturday night.

It was decidedly a new wrinkle for the progressive Hall Board, but one that didn't need any iron out. All the Hall's Tenth Anniversary Gala celebrants loved it.

Moe Koffman dazzled and delighted the audience with an electric virtuosity that would be hard to match anywhere. Moe set the tone for an evening of bouncy, easy listening by announcing each of the numbers from the stage in an open programme format.

To mark the evening as a singular occasion, Programme Committee head Marg VanCamp had arranged for special guests to attend. Introduced by past Chairman Dr. Jack Cottrell at the end of Koffman's appearance, greetings were brought to Port Perry by M.P. Allan Lawrence, Ross Stevenson, Mayor Jerry Taylor, Ontario arts Council Rep, Ron Evans and Regional representative Gary Herrema. The speakers and their ladies greeting the audience from the stage.

Town Hall board member and former chairman, Howard Hall presented treasurer Susan Moon with the generous \$1,000 cheque from Mr. Kenneth Jackson. Then Town Hall chairperson Diane Lackie invited the current board onstage and introduced each individual and their duties: Marg VanCamp, Susan Moon, Dr. Jack Cottrell, Howard Hall, Val Krempowich, Mort Symington, David Sparling, Ray Nash, Donna Shanley, Brad Heintzman, Barry VanCamp, Gord Lee, Elgin Knopp and Elaine Hammett.

Town Hall supporters were thanked and a note of gratitude was extended to Dr. Tom Millar for his talent and generous support over the years.

Former board chairman Dr. John Price, Dr. John Hammett, James Catty, Nigel Harvey, Bill Brock, Doug Farndale, Howard Hall, Les Parkes and Jack Cottrell were also recognized at this point. Mention was also made of the Hall's many activities and the two busy main "user" groups the Scugog Choral Society and Borelians Community Theatre.

The stage portion of the evening was completed by vice-chairperson Marg VanCamp who gave a rundown on the Hall's cultural activities, thanked its supporters, and announced the 1986-1987 Subscription Series, to be headlined by Salome Bey and later the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra.

In celebration of the anniversary, a wine and cheese reception then followed in the lower hall. Most of the audience lingered to meet the performers, enjoy conversation with fellow concert-goers and browse through Les Parkes' carefully prepared Historical record of the hall set up on tables.



Marg VanCamp, the lady who was responsible for most of the 10th Anniversary Gala, is seen here toasting the successful event with guest entertainer Moe Kauffman.

20 YEARS LATER

GROUPS HOPE TO UPGRADE HALL

Theatre groups outline plans to upgrade Town Hall

Port Perry Star - February 15, 1994

Officials from the various theatre groups in Scugog have banded together to preserve their local venue.

Calling themselves "PARTS" (Performing Arts Resources for the Township of Scugog), the collection of officials from the major performing groups have combined forces to upgrade the facilities of Town Hall 1873.

The group, consisting of members of the Town Hall, Millar-Lites, Borelians and Scugog Choral Society, have drafted a \$56,000 plan which would significantly improve conditions at the historic theatre.

The plan was presented to council at a meeting on Monday.

The plan calls for the purchase of new seating, air conditioning, upgraded heating facilities and structural repairs to the building.

Dr. Tom Millar, spokesman for PARTS, estimated the cost to be approximately \$56,357.

The group appeared before council to present its scheme and seek direction from council.

"We're not here to ask for any money from taxpayers," Dr. Millar stressed.

Instead the group would find the project through its own fundraising activities over a period of five years. The township would be required to guarantee a loan, however.

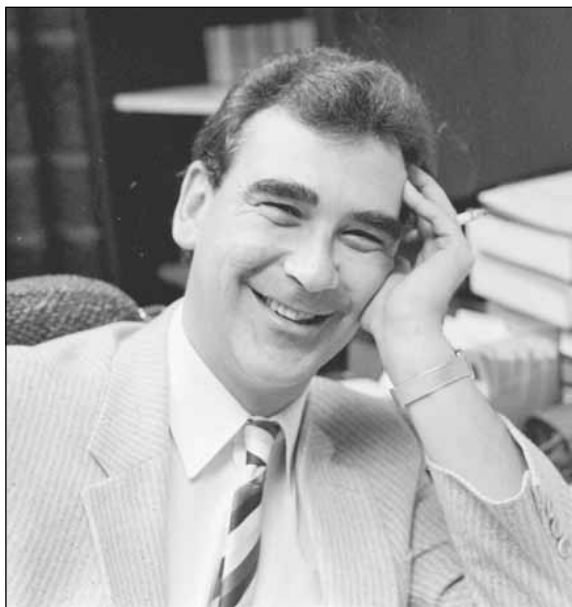
According to Dr. Millar, the money would be raised through a number of fundraising ventures, by groups including surcharges on tickets and free concerts. The group estimates more than \$23,000 could be raised per year.

Realizing the need to upgrade the facilities at the century old hall, the groups got together to identify the areas in need.

Seating was determined to be a prime concern. Raised seating would provide better vantage points for the theatre goers in a more comfortable atmosphere.

Improvements to the heating system was also identified in order to not only save on expensive heating bills, but to add to the comfort level of the patrons.

The most significant expense is the addition of air conditioning. But Dr. Millar said the \$20,000 expense, would enable the groups to offer summer



DR. TOM MILLAR

performances, greatly enhancing the programs at the hall.

At the present time, shows are offered only from October to May, but a slate of summer performances could be added should the facility be improved.

"A summer theatre market could flourish," Dr. Millar said. "I believe it could be successfully run here."

Council reacted favourably to the proposal, although it stopped short of making a commitment at the meeting.

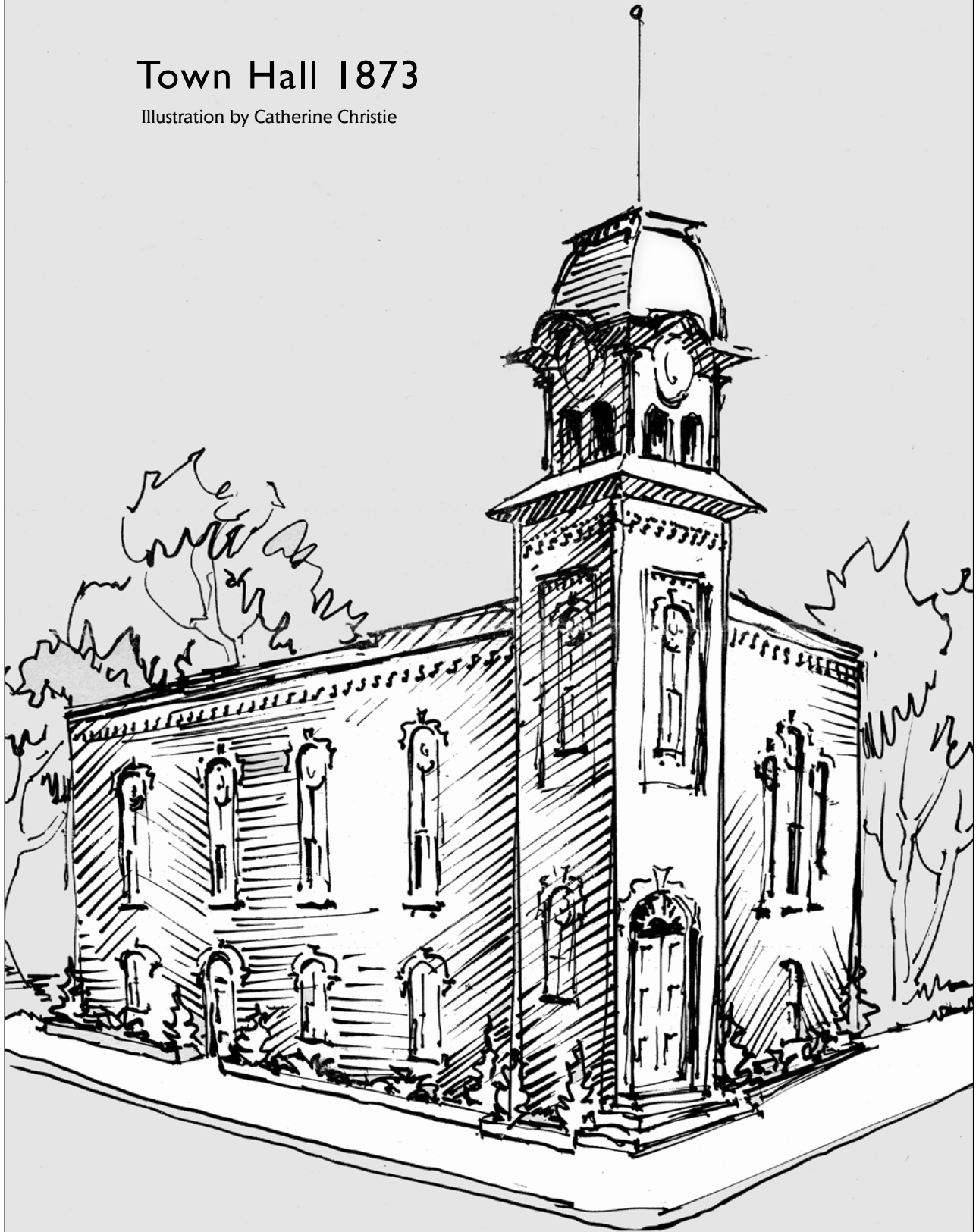
"I can't agree more with the importance of the theatre community," said Ward 2 Councillor Marilyn Pearce. She suggested the township and PARTS study the possibility of provincial funding for the project.

"In my mind, this fits all the criteria of a grant structure. We should be looking at it and investigating the grant structure, because this aspect of the community is important," she said.

The matter was sent to the Parks and Recreation Committee to investigate the possibility of a grant.

Town Hall 1873

Illustration by Catherine Christie



TOWN HALL DESIGNATED HISTORIC SITE



A special ceremony took place at Town Hall 1873 in May 1996. The local site has been designated a historical site by the Historic Sites and Monument Board. The dedication and unveiling of the monument was celebrated by many, including Pat Procnier, Mayor Howard Hall, Pat Smith, MP Alex Shepherd, Rev. Bob LePage, who dedicated the monument, and MPP John O'Toole.

Description on Plaque

During the 19th century, many villages and small towns across Canada constructed municipal meeting halls which served as political and social centres for their communities. This is a particularly fine example of the type. It was completed in 1873 to celebrate the opening of a rail link to Lake Ontario, an event which appeared to herald the economic triumph of Port Perry over other nearby communities.

Noteworthy for its commanding site and the quality of its design and interior finishes, this building testifies to the vision and optimism of its sponsors.

Port Perry Town Hall a National Historic Site of Canada

Port Perry Star - May 14, 1996

Following is a description of the Town Hall 1873 including its heritage value and defining elements.

The former Port Perry Town Hall is a three-storey brick building of Italianate design, built in 1873. It is prominently located at the corner of a major intersection in the town of Port Perry.

Heritage Value

The former Port Perry Town Hall was designated a national historic site in 1984 because: it is a particularly fine example of the municipal meeting hall which served as a community's political and social centre; and it is noteworthy for its commanding site and the quality of its design and interior finishes.

Constructed in 1873 following the incorporation of the Village of Port Perry and the arrival of the railway, the Town Hall reflects the community's optimistic view of its future prosperity. Like many small Ontario communities, Port Perry built a multi-purpose building to serve a variety of community purposes.

The simply decorated lower hall was used for village council meetings. The elaborate, balconied opera house on the second storey became the community's social centre. Although the building is

no longer used for municipal offices, it continues to function as a community centre and theatre.

The Town Hall is prominently sited at a major intersection, with its corner tower serving as a landmark in the Port Perry commercial district. Its Italianate design was a popular choice for civic buildings built in Ontario during the mid-19th century.

Character-Defining Elements

Key elements which express the heritage value of the former Port Perry Town Hall include:

Its vernacular Italianate design, evident in its Venetian Italianate references including the tall, narrow, round-headed window and door openings, the Palladian window, the decorative brick detailing along the frieze and outlining the tower, the broad expanses of undecorated brick wall, the corner tower with its broad eaves, and the use of a parapet to mask the profile of the low-pitched roof; the elaborate, wooden tracery of the windows and transoms; its surviving, original interior detailing; remnants of its original multipurpose plan, with a meeting hall on the ground floor and an auditorium above; its siting at a major intersection in the community.

\$1.2 MILLION PROJECT HALL EXPANDED

In the early 2000s, it became very evident that with the growing demands for the Town Hall, more room and proper facilities were required.

The Town Hall was outgrowing its capacity and plans were initiated for major renovations that maintained the historic integrity but fulfilled the modern needs of kitchen facilities, air conditioning, sloped theatre floor and comfortable seating.

Also required were dressing rooms, backstage area and stage wings and most importantly, making the building fully accessible with lift and washrooms.

Plans got underway for a \$1.2 million expansion to the building and renovations to the interior.

In September 2003, Town Hall board chairman Mike Wilson announced that the planned starting date had been delayed until the following spring, in order to raise more funds. He said they would re-tender the project in January in the new year.

At this point in the fundraising campaign, which was labelled "Reaching For The Stars", the committee had raised \$750,000 in pledges,



including donations from Scugog Township (\$320,000 max) and the federal government.

One month later, Town Hall 1873 officials received an enormous boost towards the project when the Ontario government provided a \$250,000 donation towards the renovation and expansion work. The funds were donated through the Ontario Heritage Foundation.

Tenders which were let for the work, closed on April 7, 2004 with 13 construction companies tendering.

Work finally got underway in April 2004, putting into motion the Town Hall boards ambition renovation and expansion project which they hoped would be completed by the fall.

In the fall of 2004, the newly renovated building opened first to audiences with the staging of the original musical production "Once Upon a Winter's Eve" by local playwright Liz Auston which was produced by Scugog Choral Society in November 2004.

The official Grand Opening Ceremonies were then held in December as a sparkling Gala and Concert event starring renowned pianist Michael Kaeshammer and MC. Sylvia Mina.

In total the \$1.2 million expansion and renovations took approximately 6 years in the planning, fundraising and building.



Town Hall 1873, with new addition on the south side of the building, in 2007.

TOWN HALL 2013



Decorative transom over front door of Town Hall 1873.



The old and the new blend together in 2004 addition.



Front entrance of Town Hall 1873.



Decorative brick detailing around the windows.



Round topped windows and cement window caps



The stately tower overlooking the east side of the hall.



Top of the tower, the reproduction tower head.



North side and front entrance to Town Hall 1873.



Looking east along Queen Street, with Town Hall on right and the Port Perry United Church further along the street.



Decorative cement keystone over one of the windows.



Intricate brickwork below the Town Hall parapet.

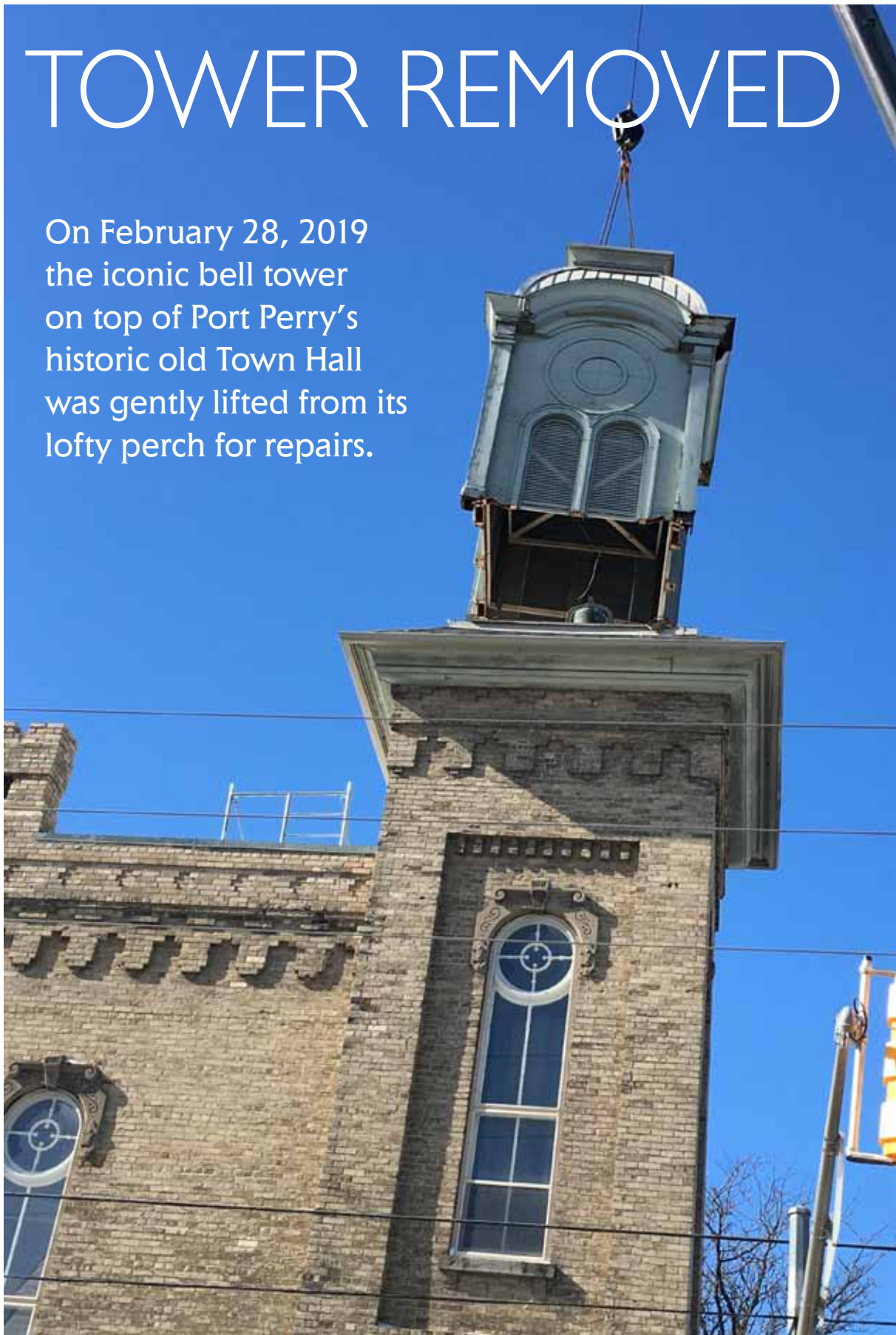


East side entrance to the theatre of Town Hall 1873.

Photos taken in August 2013 by J. Peter Hvidsten.

TOWER REMOVED

On February 28, 2019 the iconic bell tower on top of Port Perry's historic old Town Hall was gently lifted from its lofty perch for repairs.





Up, up and away! Town Hall 1873 bell tower was detached and lowered to the ground for repairs on February 28, 2019.

Removal of Town Hall tower in 2019 is the second time in past 70 years it was replaced

For the second time in the past 70 years the distinct tower, which sits atop the 146 year-old Town Hall, was carefully removed due to deterioration and danger to the public.

On the last day of February 2019, a large crane hoisted the ornate top from its two-storey brick pier, and gently lowered it to the ground. The tower was later transported by flatbed to Scugog's old Hydro building on Reach Road, where it will be stored until it is once again rebuilt. When completed it will be placed back atop one of the town's most iconic and historic buildings.

As seen elsewhere in the issue, 78 years after the first tower was installed, it was removed due to deterioration. Fears of pieces falling onto the street below had been raised over a decade earlier, but finally it became too dangerous to leave any longer. Once removed in October 1951, a low, cottage-style roof was installed, hiding the old town hall bell from view.

After the Town Hall being saved from demolition in 1973, it was leased to a group of concerned citizens, who along with community support, banded together to restore the hall.

The return of one of the most visible and recognized elements of the building took place in June 1975, when a reproduction of the original tower, was lifted into place. It was the crowning-touch for the newly renovated building, and one of the most significant and important pieces to showcase a new era for the historic structure.

By February 2019, time had weathered the tower, taking its toll on the wooden structure – and once again fears of debris falling



The Town Hall bell, installed about 1888, was visible for a short time after the tower was removed. It has since been put into storage.

onto pedestrians or vehicles prompted quick action.

The hall's second tower, now 34 years old, was gently lifted from its perch overlooking Port Perry, completing a familiar circle that began almost a century and half earlier.

Plans are to rebuild the tower and have it reinstalled again during 2020.

TOWN HALL 2019



Town Hall 1873 bell tower was removed in February 28, 2019, and was stored on the old Port Perry Hydro site on Reach Street, beside the arena, until it could be rebuilt. Plans are for the tower to be reinstalled during 2020.





Above, the east side of Town Hall now has large windows and an attractive entrance to the hall, where there once was two large wood doors for the fire department.



Photos taken in July 2019 by J. Peter Hvidsten.



Geordie Lishman's provided this artistic creation which hides an old bricked entrance.

TOWER RETURNED

Historic Town Hall tower restored, but cost rises from estimated \$75,000 to more than \$275,000

In March 2022, three years after the bell tower was removed from the stately old Town Hall, the board of directors of the hall received word that the federal and provincial governments had pledged \$562,000 towards ongoing renovations and restoration of the historical Town Hall 1873.

The project, which was already underway when word was received about the grant, includes restoration of the historic bell tower, renovations to the main floor spaces and installation of a fully accessible freight and passenger elevator to all levels of the theatre.

Of high priority to the hall board was the full restoration of the bell tower, and its return and installation atop of the tower.

Since 2022 the familiar the town hall crown sat rotting on Reach St., beside the arena, but finally it was loaded onto a flatbed truck and hauled away to Robertson Restoration, in Brantford, Ont. for restoration. The original cost of the project when announced in 2019 was pegged at \$75,000 but when the contract was finally awarded to the cost had ballooned to more than \$275,000.

It took more than four years in total, but finally



Old tower loaded on flatbed to go for restoration.



Refurbished bell ready for installation in tower.

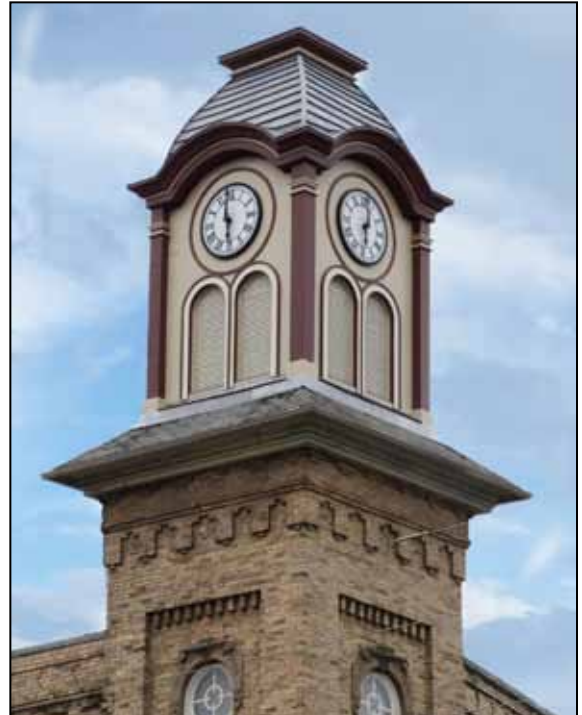


Work on re-installing the tower in October 2023.

IT'S ABOUT TIME!



Four clocks were installed in November 2024.



The morning after clocks were installed on the tower.

in October 2023 a truck rolled into town carrying the completely refurbished Town Hall clock tower to the base of the hall. By the end of the day, with the use of a crane to reposition the tower atop the building the historic old hall once again stood proudly as it had for more than 150 years.

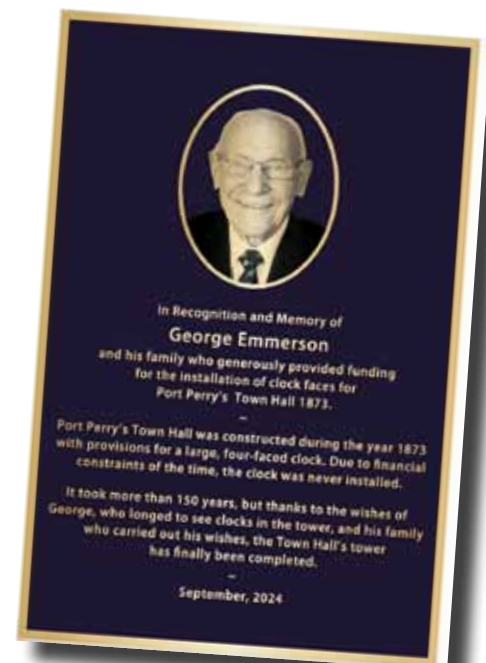
It was not long after the tower had been returned, that a very unexpected and a generous offer from came from Larry Emmerson to purchase and install four clocks for the tower, in memory of his father George Emmerson.

Larry explained, that every time he drove his father past the town hall, his father would look up and comment about the new tower having no clocks. "He could never understand why clocks weren't installed during the recent re-construction of the tower," Larry said.

George Emmerson, who was a lifetime resident, and businessman in Port Perry never did see the tower with clocks. He was 101 years old when he passed away on Monday, October 23, 2023 and in memory of his father Larry decided to have clocks installed.

He collaborated with the Scugog Heritage Committee to design four clock faces, and then provided more than \$120,000 to purchased and have them installed.

Installation of the four clocks took place on November 19, 2024. In appreciation of Mr. Emmerson's gift to the Township of Scugog, with assistance of the Scugog Heritage Committee, an attractive brass plaque was produced to commemorate the installation in the memory of George Emmerson, who completed an important feature of the tower, that was never completed 150 years earlier.



CLOCK DEDICATION

In appreciation of Mr. Emmerson's gift to the Township of Scugog, with assistance of the Scugog Heritage Committee, an attractive brass plaque was produced to commemorate the memory of George Emmerson.

On April 24, 2025, Larry Emmerson was a special guest for the dedication of the Town Hall bell tower clocks. About two dozen guests including members of Scugog Council, Scugog Heritage Committee and the Town Hall directors gathered for the occasion.

Mayor Wilma Wotten thanked the Emmerson family for their generosity before unveiling the large bronze plaque, on the east wall of the building.



Larry and Ruth Emmerson with Mayor Wilma Wotten following the dedication of the plaque.



Larry proudly standing in front of the Town Hall plaque to commemorate his father George.



Mayor Wilma Wotten thanked the Emmerson family for their generous gift and presented them a Certificate of Gratitude.

