



Conservation
Review Board

Ministry of
Culture and
Communications

Commission des
biens culturels

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**RE: TOWN OF LISTOWEL - INTENTION TO DESIGNATE
580 MAIN STREET WEST (THE PUMP HOUSE)**

Judith Godfrey, Vice-Chairman
John T. Fleming, Member

February 4, 1991

Hearing pursuant to Section 29(8) of the Ontario Heritage Act, R.S.O. 1980, Chapter 337 of the Notice of Intention by the Council of the Town of Listowel to designate 580 Main Street West (The Pump House), as a property of architectural value or interest, under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act.

Appearing for the Town of Listowel:

- R. L. Tervit, Administrator, Clerk-Treasurer, Town of Listowel
- Douglas Pratt, Solicitor, Chairman of Public Utilities Commission, representing the owner, the Town of Listowel Public Utilities Commission

Appearing for the Objector:

- Mr. Ross Somers

Members of the Public - Glen Thompson, resident, Town of Listowel

On Monday, February 4, 1991, the Conservation Review Board held a hearing at the Town of Listowel Municipal Building, Council Chambers, Listowel, to determine whether or not the property at 580 Main Street West, known as "The Pump House", should be designated as being of architectural value or interest.

FINDINGS OF FACT

It was acknowledged by all parties present that the registered owner of the property is the Town of Listowel Public Utilities Commission (Exhibit 11) and that all procedures stipulated had been complied with (Exhibits 2-9). An affidavit of publication of notice was filed (Exhibit 1). The Board, in accordance with its custom, had the opportunity to view the property and the surrounding area prior to the hearing.

The letter of objection which caused the hearing was received from Mr. & Mrs. Somers who stated in evidence (Exhibit 10) that "we had no idea that the objection would force a hearing and hold up a decision and a project for possibly several months" and incur extra costs.

Their objection that heritage, while important, can be appreciated "in the form of a selection of artifacts, displayed in an understandable and educational way" and that heritage should not be in the form of an old building, possibly in less than pristine condition, that everyone drives past and nobody notices other than as an old building, "does not specifically refer to the reasons for designation in the notice of intention to designate (nor did the evidence of Mr. Somers), but rather to the designation of old buildings under the Ontario Heritage Act generally. The validity of the Act, which has been in effect since 1974 (and is currently in the process of review with associated public consultation), is not a matter which this Board deals with. Under the Ontario Heritage Act, the Conservation Review Board is in place to "report to the municipality its findings of fact, its recommendations as to whether or not the property should be designated under Part IV, and any information or knowledge used by it in reaching its recommendations".

Statements such as "The fact that a heritage designation can be forced on an owner that doesn't want it, I find personally appalling", and "Some owners find it unacceptable that they no longer have a clear title to their property" are not the effect of the Ontario Heritage Act, Part IV, on property owners.

These statements of objection are issues which relate to a Provincial Act, in place since 1974. The Government of Ontario is the appropriate body to which this objection should be directed, as it is they who put the Ontario Heritage Act and the Planning Act, which place certain restrictions on what a person can do with his property, into effect. In this regard, Mr. Ross Somers did acknowledge that "there must be lots of people who think Heritage is important or we wouldn't be here to-day".

Mr. Somers spoke on behalf of himself and his wife, Marie Somers. Mr. Somers, who is experienced in construction and demolition work for over twenty years, brought forth the position in a letter to Council (Exhibit 10) that modern construction which, is more cost effective and energy efficient, has not been considered for the Public Utilities Commission use and he felt the municipality should "bypass architects and consulting engineering firms" but did not bring forth facts, figures, cost estimates, etc. to substantiate these opinions. He made a convincing argument that, in today's world, there is rapid obsolescence in the uses structures and buildings are put to. He did not show that an old building could not be adaptively re-used in a practical and economic way. The objectors' position seems to be that old buildings, if important

enough to be retained, should be artifacts in a "pioneer village". It was Mr. Somers orientation that the citizens of Listowel could only have real pride in new buildings, and that the old ones had no place in the future. "I don't believe designating old buildings is the way this area should go. It is holding back to the past rather than looking to the future. Obsolete buildings need replacing with something better", and "Canada didn't come from the bush to where we are to-day on sentiments of the past, but rather the dream of the future" were two statements he made to illustrate this position. It is his view that "value" in terms of historical value is in the view of the person looking at it.

The first witness for the municipality was Christopher Borgal, Architect. Mr. Borgal's curriculum vitae (Exhibit 12) establishes him as an expert, with extensive experience in over 600 architectural projects including restoration and upgrade of the Oxford County Museum (now City of Woodstock museum, Goderich Town Hall, St. Paul's Anglican Cathedral (London)); Stornoway, Ottawa (official residence of the leader of the opposition, Government of Canada); The Anchorage, Bradley Museum, City of Mississauga; Owen Sound Court House (for the Grey County Arts Council); Huron County Museum, Goderich; Joseph Schneider Haus, Region of Kitchener-Waterloo; and Muskoka Heritage Village. He has presented many papers and training sessions in historic restoration, including the annual meeting of Association for Preservation Technology (the premier restoration organization in North America). His professional history includes being a member of and chair of the Professional Development Committee of Ontario which produces seminars for professional upgrading of architects.

In addition, Mr. Borgal's studies and positions include Restoration Philosophy and Techniques at West Dean College, England, and he was subsequently named the Canadian Co-ordinator for the College; he has served as an advisor to the grant program of the Museum Assistance program of National Museums of Canada; as well as being on the organizing committee for the 1991 Association for Preservation Technology symposium on Museums and Heritage Buildings. He is the author of several publications as well as having lectured extensively in architectural restoration and related subjects.

Mr. Borgal's evidence showed that, contrary to the statement in the letter of objection which indicated heritage should be preserved by "artifacts", not buildings, Mr. Borgal established that the "pump house" on its original site, represents a very early example of a public works facility designed to improve the municipal health facilities, an idea emerging from the latter part of the 19th century. It is quite unique in Listowel, as many of the most important public structures of the town have been lost to fire or demolition.

That the Pump House was considered important locally is evidenced by its elaborate design, ornate cast iron fountain, and extensive landscaping. This is unique in that there are no other examples of this type of public works structure (as water power in Listowel was not viable for the production of power and so a boiler-fired pumping station had to be installed) except for one in Sault Ste. Marie. Thus, this is an important "artifact" for the Province of Ontario which actually, (as Mr. Somers stated in his letter of objection), is "heritage. . . can be enjoyed and appreciated by a greater number of people in the form of a selection of "artifacts" displayed in an understandable and educational way".

In addition, Mr. Borgal give evidence that there are few other examples of public utility buildings in the romantic industrial style which give Canada its unique style, unlike that of other countries (Exhibit 14, page 5).

Mr. Borgal's evidence addressed the objection regarding the town's image of being "modern, futuristic, efficient, and businesslike", by showing that the proposed restoration and design is efficient and businesslike both with regard to energy conservation, use of function and how it would comply with the Public Utility requirements.

He presented evidence to show that is "modern" in that sense, and also "futuristic" in its appreciation of good quality construction, by leading evidence proving that "old" does not necessarily mean worse, as was assumed by many in previous decades, but that "old", if well built, can be practically re-used and is actually of superior quality, workmanship and durability compared to much of the "new"; particularly a new industrial type of building which may have to be demolished two or three times over the lifetime of a building such as the Pump House, which was built to "last 300 years if properly maintained" (Exhibit 14, page 15).

The example cited for this was in Exhibit 14, page 5, which compared the existing wellhead (or enclosure) built much later than the Pump House which has deteriorated "at a rate far in excess of the rate of the original building".

Mr. Borgal made the point that, since World War II there has been a constant call for "maintenance-free buildings", and the building industry has advertised many new "miracle components which purported to be maintenance-free and which, over time, have been found to be exactly the opposite", . . . "Because of its sound construction, the Pumping Station has absorbed considerably more abuse than a contemporary structure could hope to survive".

He stated that although annual maintenance costs for the existing building would be somewhat higher, a new building would probably have to be totally replaced in 20 to 30 years' time unless built to an affordably high standard.

These facts, as well as the financial projections provided to the town (Exhibit 14, pages 5-3), show that the objectors' concern regarding costs, as well as the practicality of remaining in that location, have been seriously considered by the municipality and by the Public Utilities Commission. This was backed-up by evidence given by Mr. Rod Carle, General Manager of the Public Utilities Commission, the second witness for the municipality. Both the Town and the Public Utilities Commission have judged that the proposed restoration and new construction will be practical for employees and efficient, (as well as energy-efficient), for P.U.C. needs with the added bonus that the long-term cost to the municipality will be considerably less than by the demolition of the existing building and the erection of a new industrial building of today's standards to replace it.

Although the Board is not required to look at practicality, image, or cost, this hearing has been an important exercise, as this evidence has not been forthcoming at previous Conservation Review Board hearings. The evidence and cross-examination of all witnesses serves to outweigh the popularly held assumptions that a new structure is always a better and a cheaper structure. As the wording of the Ontario Heritage Act refers to architectural "value" or interest, this evidence tends to lend additional weight to the importance of the heritage preservation of significant structures across the province.

The objectors' position seems to be that buildings should not be part of Ontario's heritage, and that they object to "any further designations in Listowel (Exhibit 10)" as they are not artifacts which educate but rather merely practical structures built to house the needs of to-day, and should be replaced. This is without due consideration to either the role they played in the formation of today's society or consideration of the loss of both resource and human energy in the building materials and painstaking construction labour and equipment required in the construction of the original structure, or consideration of the waste created by the demolition as well as the resources and labour required to erect an inferior new structure to create the same square footage of usable space for a utilitarian purpose.

Mr. Borgal gave unopposed evidence regarding the reasons for designation that the following details are important architecturally in the Pump House:

- . the tower or "feature" turret
- . the north wall) windows, doors, original cast
- . the east wall) stone, keystones, ornamental arches
- . part of the south wall) and lintels, decorative brickwork
- . roof slope and dormers

In addition, the details of the original design which he felt should be restored is the exquisite formal garden in front of the building with its existing art nouveau cast iron fountain and the original well-head which was designed as a gazebo type structure with a windowed greenhouse style roof over the top.

The member of the public who gave evidence, Mr. Glen Thompson, resident of Listowel and formerly a commissioner, stated that he feels the building is architecturally and historically significant but that this should be weighed against the value of the land on which it stands which he feels will be an expensive piece of real estate in the future. He felt the land should not be "tied-up" just for heritage reasons, and that the P.U.C. functions could be relocated and the land sold for development at its highest and best use, to pay for municipal needs such as a new water tower. He was apparently under the incorrect impression that funding for this project would come out of the water tower funding, rather than hydro, and his priority is that of providing adequate water to allow for future expansion of the town.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board shares the view of the objectors that government at all levels have massive debts, that there are tax burdens and therefore that governments must look carefully at projects such as these. The Board agrees that as a public body, the Public Utilities Commission must evaluate carefully whether the heritage value of the "Pump House", in terms of what it will say to people in the future about the kind of place Listowel was in 1903, and is in the 1990's, will be best accomplished by designation and subsequent restorations and additions, or by demolition and new construction. However, this hearing, in response to the objection, has brought out very clearly that the "image" of Listowel as a municipality, that has always placed great importance on the public health of its citizens, can be shown more effectively by the designation and retention of the "Pump House"; and further, that there may in fact be a long term economic benefit to the local taxpayer by following this course, not to mention the ecological and energy benefits derived from the re-use of an existing structure.

The fact that this evidence was brought forth by a consultant, who is known internationally for his expertise, makes this an even more significant finding.

The Board feels that, although the main subject of the hearing has not been directed merely to the specific "reasons for designation", that the objection has resulted in a valuable exercise in which the public has had the opportunity to review at length the premise that "new" is better and cheaper. For the record, and in view of the statement made in Exhibit 10, "I believe the Heritage Committee possibly will have even made their decision before the hearing", there have been several cases where this Board has recommended against designation of all or part of a proposed structure to be designated. In this case, evidence has been led which strongly supports designation on both architectural and historical grounds.

The Board recommends that the wording of the Reasons for Designation be changed to include specific detailed reference to the north, east and part of the south walls which are intended to be kept, with consideration given to including the remaining walls, but without specific reference to their detail unless it is envisioned that at some time in the future certain details should be retained, (so that if the new addition were to be removed and the 1903 structure retained for heritage reasons, it could retain its structural and design integrity). In addition, the shape of the roof lines of the tower and its cap and the existing portion of the pump house should be carefully worded and added to the reasons for designation.

The Board recommends that the section referring to the landscaping be worded to refer to a picture (e.g. the 1910 photo, Exhibit 13, page 7; or those in Exhibit 13, page 8) to ensure appropriate design in the future. Also, a description of the original well-cap and smokestack could be included in the reasons for designation as guides to any future design surrounding the property.

The wording of the reasons for designation has historical content, and thus the property could be designated as a property of architectural and historical value or interest.

The Board shares the objectors' concern at the costs generated by a hearing which they did not know would be caused by an objection, based on the wording of notices of intention to designate.

To improve the public awareness of the civic and provincial importance of the "Pump House", the Board recommends an "educational and understandable" plaque be erected on the site to indicate why this "artifact" is important to the Town of Listowel. This will help to establish civic pride and an "image" of a long history of municipal responsibility for the well-being of its citizens.

Upon consideration of the evidence given at the hearing, and taking into account what was said in summary by the representatives of the municipality, the objectors and the public, it is the considered view of this Board that the Council of the town of Listowel has acted in the best interests of the citizens of the community in designating 580 Main Street West, Listowel (the "Pump House").

We therefore recommend that the property in question should be designated by by-law under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act as being of architectural and historical value and interest to ensure its preservation.

(Original Signed by)

Judith Godfrey, Vice-Chairman

John Fleming, Member