

The Case of the Missing Clock: It was about Time

You can see it from four directions. You can hear it for miles. The iconic clock tower on the historic Town Hall, at 97 Hurontario Street, is so recognizable, it's become a marketing tool for Collingwood.

But for more than 60 years, there was no clock in the tower. Designed in the Romanesque Revival style by Toronto architects C.J. Gibson and Henry Simpson, the Town Hall was built in 1889 and opened in 1890 – ready for business but not yet fitted with a clock. Just a few months later, a fire broke out at a neighbouring property. It quickly spread to the new Town Hall, sparing little but the brick walls. Local architects Fred T. Hodgson and Thomas Kieswetter answered the call to lead the reconstruction, seizing on the opportunity to upgrade the original design. The new and improved Town Hall opened in 1891 – still without a clock.

It took until 1950 for a swanky, four-faced clock to be custom-ordered and another year to get it installed and ticking. It may not have happened for another decade, if not for the impatience and generosity of Frank and Emma Courtice, prominent Collingwood citizens who footed the bill for the clock.

Why did it take so long? We now know more about the matter, thanks to Collingwood Museum Assistant Lindsay Cook, who unearthed a front-page article from *The Enterprise-Bulletin*, dated Aug. 9, 1951. The reporter (who didn't get a byline) gives us the back story:

"(After the fire), the building was repaired insofar as all outward appearances would show, but the tower remained a gutted mass of ruins. No Council during the years would spend the money to repair the tower and purchase a clock, so the tower remained a roosting place for pigeons."

The story recounts the events of Sunday, Aug. 5, 1951 when hundreds of citizens gathered to witness the official presentation and dedication of the new clock.

Frank Courtice, Chief Engineer at the Collingwood Shipyards and an active community volunteer, told the crowd he and his wife, Emma, a leading volunteer in her own right, were dismayed that Collingwood, unlike neighbouring towns, still had no clock. Courtice had set aside money for a town clock in his will. But he decided, at his wife's urging, that he wanted to hear the clock chiming while he was still alive to enjoy it.

"Two or three years ago, I was feeling pretty well at the time and didn't know just how long the town people would have to wait for the clock (he died Jan.5,1957), nor how long they would be willing to keep looking at the bare boards which closed the openings where the dials are now."

Courtice did the legwork, travelling to Owen Sound, Midland and Orillia to climb towers and measure their bells. (He boasted that Collingwood's bell, at 2,478 pounds, was "the largest and heaviest of any in the vicinity"). He admired Owen Sound's clock, installed in 1921, and called a friend to find



The Town Hall clock tower without a clock in an archival photo taken by James Asa Castor sometime between 1890 and 1900. Courtesy The Collingwood Museum

out the name of its English maker (Gillett & Johnston Limited). And he persuaded Collingwood architect John Wilson to give him a blueprint of the Town Hall to send to the clockmaker for a quote on a suitable clock.

Courtice also enlisted Wilson to supervise the repair and preparation of the tower at the town's expense – a condition of his gift.

Emma Courtice had the honour of officially starting the clock "promptly at twelve-fifty," and the flag over the Town Hall was raised at the same time. Seeing their dream realized was "one of the happiest days of our lives," said Courtice.

"There is no excuse for anyone in Collingwood being late for work or for church or any meeting, so after this everything should proceed just like Collingwood," he said at the dedication ceremony. "The clock is more or less like the sun, as it shines on the just and the unjust, the rich and the poor, and we do hope that considering God's great goodness in us, that it will be the means of uniting us in one family to make Collingwood the cleanest, prettiest and happiest town in Ontario."

Some clockwise facts:

- Collingwood's clock was made by Gillett & Johnston Limited of Croydon, England. Ordered during the summer of 1950, the clock, dials, hour striking device and bell were installed in late July 1951.
- The clock has four faces and is driven by heavy weights. It is wound by an electric motor, which lifts the weights.
- The bell is 48.5 inches in diameter and weighs 2,478 pounds.
- The clock does not chime between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m.
- The numbers IIII are on the face of the clock rather than IV, which means this clock is made in the European style.
- The inscription on the bell reads: TOWN CLOCK AND HOUR STRIKING BELL / DONATED 1950 / TO / TOWN OF COLLINGWOOD / BY / MR AND MRS. FRANK COURTICE

Countdown to 'Launch Day' exhibit

The folks at the Collingwood Museum can't wait for the day when they can open the doors to the public. In the meantime, staff are working hard to mount an impressive new shipyard exhibit. Through stories, photographs and artifacts on display for the first time, the exhibit will bring to life the adrenaline-fuelled Launch Day.

"The exhibit focuses on the second-long community event that came to define Collingwood – the side launch," says Museum Supervisor Melissa Shaw. The artifacts, including ropes, axes and a collection of special models, help to tell the story of the intricacies and ever-present dangers of a Collingwood side launch. A giant photograph of the launch of the *Hon. Paul Martin*, taken by Fritz Schuller, captures the big moment crowds gathered to watch.

Five half-block models constructed at the shipyards served as three-dimensional blueprints and illustrate the unique nature of each ship and launch. These one-of-a-kind models were created between 1904 and 1974. "They are all different colours – they're quite striking," says Shaw.

The largest model, Hull 205, *Chi-Cheemaun*, weighs 89 pounds and measures more than six feet in length. "There's an interesting story about that one," says Shaw. "A local family donated it. They had received the model as payment for pool services they provided. It speaks to the use of these models as currency. It seemed to be a tradition."

Because the pandemic has affected the planning and installation of the exhibit, she says, it's unclear when or how the Museum will celebrate the opening. Stay tuned! 📺



Heritage Collingwood is published by the Collingwood Heritage Advisory Committee.

The group of citizen volunteers serves as an advisory committee to Council on heritage matters.

Heritage Advisory Committee:

Cathy de Ruiter, chair;
Jennifer McEwen, vice-chair;
Patricia Butler; David Jefferies; Kelly Nesbitt
BIA representative: Penny Skelton (non-voting)
ACO representative: Margaret Mooy (non-voting)

Staff resource: Justin Teakle, Community Planner (Heritage), Planning Services

Writer/editor: Laurel Lane-Moore,
email: llmcom@rogers.com

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For more information on the Heritage District, call 705-445-1290, ext.3270, or email jteakle@collingwood.ca, or visit www.heritagecollingwood.com

Heritage Collingwood

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Heritage awards honour east-end landmarks

In a bid to promote awareness and stewardship, the Collingwood Heritage Committee pays tribute to property owners who have made an outstanding contribution to the preservation of Collingwood's built heritage.

The 2020 Heritage Awards recognizes the owners of two commercial projects located in the Ste. Marie Street neighbourhood: Mike and Sheri Johnson for the restoration of one of the Town's earliest houses, at 33 Ste. Marie Street; and Bryn Davies, Scott Brown and Peter Brault for the adaptive re-use of the former Dey's property, home of Collingwood's oldest family-run business.



This old house, at 33 Ste. Marie Street, retains its heritage features on the outside, but is ultra-modern and accessible on the inside. Photo by Sheri Johnson.

Here's a closer look at the award winners: 33 Ste. Marie Street c. 1870

Four years ago, when Mike Johnson was searching for a new location in downtown Collingwood for his growing business, he wasn't looking for a heritage property. But he picked a winner – or rather, he turned it into a winner. The transformation of a rundown old house into a stunning office and second-storey apartment earned him a 2020 Heritage Award.

The sensitive restoration of the 150-year-old structure and construction of a sympathetic addition took two years and an unexpected schooling on heritage preservation and his property's place in the historic neighbourhood.

"I was surprised – happily surprised," he says, on learning that his project had been selected for the honour. "I thought there was only one award handed out each year and I assumed Black Bellows would get it."

Johnson says he had never taken on a renovation and had no idea that the old frame house was such a significant heritage building. Nor was he aware of the rules he would need to follow to retain the heritage features of the original structure.

"I was kind of laughed out the door at my first meeting with the heritage committee," he recalls. "I knew it was a heritage building and there would be some guidelines. I just didn't realize the extent of them. But it wasn't a big deal. We went back and redesigned the plan to match what was there originally."

That meant replacing the existing blue vinyl siding with board and batten, replicating the look of the original windows and doors, redesigning the front porch and defaulting to period-appropriate materials (mainly wood).

The first job, starting in March 2019, was launching the project on a firm foundation. The original structure, including a poorly built addition that was once a chicken coop, was "not in great shape," says Johnson. "The floors were all wonky, very uneven. We had a lot of work to do."

It was clear the building had to be raised in preparation for a new foundation.

"That was a bit of an ordeal," he says. "The building was up in the air for a couple of months."

Continued on page 2

'Light Up' pilot gets green light

Watch for Collingwood's historic clock tower to glow with many colours over the coming months. A pilot project, using various coloured lights to mark special events, will be switched on July 1 and run through to New Year's Eve.

The 'Light up the Town' initiative offers a new option for community organizations looking for a public show of support. They may now submit requests to the mayor's office to illuminate the clock tower with a specific colour on a certain date. They can choose from a palette of six colours: blue, green, red, pink, purple and orange.

A staff report sheds light on the growing demand for community recognition of various public awareness campaigns: "In 2020, the Office of the Mayor received 21 proclamation requests from various organizations in Collingwood and surrounding areas with more than 50 per cent accompanied with a request to have a flag raised at the Town's community flagpole."

In a report to council, Jenny Haines, the staffer leading the project, said the Town often gets requests to light up local landmarks to highlight certain events. But, without a policy in place, the requests are regularly turned down.

Staff investigated illuminating three popular landmarks: The Terminals, the Collingwood Public Library, and the Town Hall clock tower. Lighting up the clock face and belfry produced the most striking result. Because the Town Hall is a significant heritage building, the plan was vetted with the Collingwood Heritage Committee and the Ontario Heritage Trust. Both supported the idea.

For more about the Town Hall clock and its mysterious history, see Page 4. 📺



The clock tower is backlit in green in this test photo by Town staff.

No pause for most projects

Wondering if a new bylaw pausing development will affect plans for your heritage property? The short answer: it shouldn't.

In April, Collingwood Town Council approved a pause in development to address drinking water capacity for future development, using an Interim Control Bylaw (ICBL). The pause could last up to a year while a Land Use Policy is completed.

"The water supply is safe and available for current residents, industry, commercial uses, and temporary visitors," according to a post on the Town's website. "There is enough water for several years of growth, but not enough to continue at the same pace of development until the water treatment plant is expanded in 2025."

The ICBL limits the approval of building permits, "however, construction that does not use more water, such as most residential renovations, can continue."

The new bylaw generally restricts development that does not have a building permit. However, there are exemptions for projects that include decks, patios, fences, porches, accessory buildings or structures, temporary buildings or structures, and interior or exterior renovations to an existing building. 📷

More help on the way?

Maintaining a heritage property can be expensive. To help with the extra cost, the Town of Collingwood offers two popular programs to qualifying property owners.

Under the Heritage Grant program, owners of heritage properties in the heritage district or properties designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act may be eligible for a grant of up to \$3,000 towards the cost of projects aimed at preserving and restoring the heritage features of their property. This year, the Town has approved 16 applications for heritage grants.

The Heritage Property Relief program is another resource for heritage property owners, providing a 10 per cent rebate on the municipal and county portion of their property tax bill. In 2020, rebates went to 31 property owners, representing \$29,876 in municipal, county and education property tax. The Town has received 33 applications for the 2021 tax year.

That 10 per cent rebate may be doubled next year, if Council approves a proposal pitched in March by heritage committee former chair Jennifer McEwen. The committee wants to see an increase to 20 per cent in 2022 and a further 5 per cent a year until it reaches the 40 per cent maximum allowed by the Ontario Municipal Act. The cost of the rebate is split between the Town, county and province.

A survey by the committee revealed Collingwood trails many communities in Simcoe County. Tay Township, Midland, Springwater, Penetanguishene, and Bradford West Gwillimbury each offer 40 per cent tax breaks for heritage properties. 📷

Much about Museum Matters

While the Collingwood Museum has been closed to in-person visits for months, staff and volunteers have been finding ways to connect with the community. That was especially true during Museum Month in May when they launched several exciting projects aimed at celebrating this year's international theme: The Future of Museums: Recover and Reimagine.

Listen!

A new podcast, hosted by museum volunteer Ken Maher, kicked off the celebrations. 'Stories from Another Day' mines Collingwood's rich history for tales of tragedies, triumphs, and perseverance.

"Having volunteered at the Museum for the past six years, I was regularly surprised by the rich and diverse stories of Collingwood's past," says Maher. "Who would have thought that our little town would have such a fascinating history? I am sure others will be similarly enthralled, and I hope the listeners will enjoy hearing Collingwood's stories as much as I enjoy telling them."

The first episode, "Beginning at the End," aired May 4, with new episodes released every second Tuesday. Listen on Spotify or wherever you get your podcasts.

Wear it!

Museum staff are over the moon about the success of another new venture: the launch of

heritage-inspired t-shirts that lets Collingwood-lovers wear their hearts on their sleeves, so to speak. The first design – "This is Women's Work" – portraying a proud gang of women welders, was snapped up quickly. And people are loving the second design, featuring a 1940s-era photograph of Collingwood's marine heritage with the slogan, "Get Your Ship Together."

"The community excitement generated by the Women's Work shirts has created the closest feeling of community involvement for staff since the beginning of the pandemic," says Museum Supervisor Melissa Shaw. "We have been overjoyed by the community's response to our new line of apparel, even more so by the number of descendants calling from across the province to share stories about their mothers, aunts, cousins, and grandmothers who built ships in Collingwood during World War II."

Follow us!

Social media has become an essential tool for keeping in touch with the community and beyond, according to Melissa Shaw. "In reimagining the Collingwood Museum's role, staff have a more complex understanding of their ability to generate conversations within the community. A simple post on the Museum's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/collingwoodmuseum) provides opportunities for conversation and sharing in a time when everyone is looking for a way to safely connect with those near and far." 📷

Heritage awards honour east-end landmarks

Continued from page 1

The old house, believed to be one of the oldest remaining structures in the vicinity of the former railway station, had to be gutted and reframed. "It wouldn't be structurally sound," says Johnson. "We did reframe it, but we kept a lot of the beams and used the wood for a feature wall upstairs."

Exterior features such as the gingerbread trim on the Ontario Gothic Revival-style façade had become "punk" and needed to be replaced. "Bill Brown (Woodworking & Building Supplies Limited) copied it exactly."

In contrast to the traditional exterior, the airy, white interior is decidedly contemporary and totally accessible.

That was a practical necessity for Johnson, who suffered a spinal cord injury during a high school football practice in Owen Sound in 1995. The challenges he faced sourcing specialized supplies planted the seed for his current business. SCISupply Inc., launched in 2010, has grown into a thriving online business selling and distributing medical supplies across North America.

The company previously operated out of rented premises on Hurontario Street, but Johnson and his

wife, Sheri, felt it was time to invest in a permanent home for the maturing business.

The project called for a significant addition to the original twin-gabled structure. Echoing the Gothic Revival elements on the outside, the new portion houses an accessible entrance, sleek kitchen, bathroom, garage, and elevator on the main floor and a spacious three-bedroom, two-bathroom apartment with skylights and balcony on the upper level.

While designer/drafter Catherine Lockhart helped with the layout of the building, the interior design and décor was "100 per cent my wife and I," says Johnson. "We picked all the furnishings, appliances, décor, and I chose the exterior materials." The builder was Brian Muller of Muller Contracting.

Over its long lifetime, this modest house has served many uses – family home, antique store, vintage clothing shop, law office to name a few. Although this latest incarnation devoured more time and money than expected, it seems destined to endure for many more years to come. "All in all, I'm very happy with the way it turned out," says Johnson. 📷

Black Bellows Brewing Company

40 Simcoe Street

The Black Bellows Brewing Company is once again getting accolades for the creative re-purposing of an industrial property with deep roots in the history of Collingwood.

Owners Bryn Davies, Scott Brown and Peter Braul can add a Collingwood Heritage Award to the honours recognizing their efforts to forge a new use for the Dey's Body Shop at the corner of Simcoe and Ste. Marie streets.

"We're thrilled to have won the heritage award," says Bryn Davies. "We put a lot of effort into restoring the building so it's great to know that the Collingwood community and the heritage committee supports the hard work we put into the project."

Tapping into the blacksmithing history of a local landmark, the Black Bellows Brewing Company reimagined the c.1906 brick building and 1950s auto shop bay, as a brewpub and bottling plant.

Last fall, the project was nominated for an Architectural Conservancy of Ontario Award (the Paul Oberman Award for Adaptive Re-use in the Small Scale/Individual/Small Business category). While the award ultimately went to another candidate, the nomination brought welcome attention and validation to the Black Bellows team.

The history of the property and location within an emerging arts and culture hub dubbed "Creative Simcoe Street" was key to the vision for the brewpub, says Davies.

"The brand is inspired by it. That's the beauty of this space, what inspired us to move into the building – there's such rich character to it. It adds to the story that we're trying to tell."

Telling the story took longer than the partners anticipated. Construction began in May 2018, but the brewpub did not officially open until January 15, 2020. Then, just a few months after opening, the bar and restaurant had to close due to the pandemic, only re-opening in July with patio dining. With safety measures in place to fully open after Labour Day, the business was briefly up and running with 22 employees. Regional and province-wide lockdowns again forced the shutdown of in-person dining.

"It's been a difficult first year for our brewpub operations but the beer retail shop has been our backbone during the pandemic since it has remained open the entire time," says Davies. "We've been able to shift our focus to more online and LCBO sales with the intention of increasing awareness of the Black Bellows brand to drive more traffic to the brewpub once it is able to operate again."



Black Bellows scores another award for adaptive re-use at 40 Simcoe Street. Photo by Laurel Lane-Moore.

Now that patio dining has re-opened and indoor dining may not be far behind, guests may soon get to see for themselves why Black Bellows deserves the honours coming its way.

As for lessons learned, Davies has this advice for anyone considering redeveloping a heritage building in the heritage district:

"The best advice is to do your research ahead of time. Speak with as many people as possible regarding heritage restoration and what might be different than a typical building restoration. Having as much information as possible going into the project will ensure that the project is a success." 📷

Dark days for Gaslight Tour

It's official: The 2021 Gaslight Tour has been postponed until the fall of 2022. Organizers of the popular event had been gearing up for a comeback this year, after the 2020 Tour was cancelled, due to the pandemic lockdown.

But by mid-June, the prospects for moving ahead with the event looked dismal.

"Unfortunately, there are still many unknowns," said Laurie May, executive producer of Gaslight Community Theatre Productions. "We still have not been given the 'go ahead' for a rehearsal timeline. The performances that we hope to have in October will require much prior planning and rehearsal times. We do not know what the audience capacity limits will be. This is vital information because our venues are generally quite small."

Covid-related restrictions have big implications for theatre groups like Gaslight Productions: limited ticket sales, revenue loss, longer runs, higher costs for rent and insurance and implementation of safety protocols.

"Our volunteer actors/directors/stage managers would need to perform the plays 50 or 75 times instead of the usual 25 performances," said May. "There are many theatre and music groups that are feeling frustrated with the current situation."

Faced with ongoing operational costs, the theatre company is pleading for donations to "to help keep the light in Gaslight." For the latest news, visit gaslighttheatreproductions.com, or the Gaslight Community Theatre Production Facebook page. 📷

Look us up on Wikipedia!

Did you know the Collingwood Downtown Heritage Conservation District has its own Wikipedia page? According to the online site, Collingwood has bragging rights when it comes to its heritage district: "The town of Collingwood, Ontario was the first municipality in Canada to have a heritage conservation district included on the Canadian Register of Historic Places."

This boast is often misinterpreted to falsely claim that Collingwood was the first town in Canada to establish a heritage conservation district. Not so, but it was ahead of the crowd. Wikipedia notes that "the Collingwood downtown heritage conservation district was formally recognized on December 2, 2002, designated under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act."

Our grand main street and unique angled parking get top billing in Wiki's introduction:

"The heritage district is centred around the main street. It houses a collection of

commercial and public buildings, mostly built between 1880-1910, and is linked by streets and pedestrian pathways to enclaves of historic residential, institutional, and public buildings, as well as park spaces. The main street, Hurontario Street, is among the best-preserved 19th century grand main streets in Ontario. It is wider (at 99') than the standard street (66') and is unique in maintaining the angled parking originally designed to accommodate the first automobiles in the town. Hurontario is also a historic road that connects several individual properties designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, including the Town Hall, as well as a Federal Heritage Building, The Collingwood Federal Building."

An image of the Town Hall and a view of Hurontario Street looking north, illustrates the page. There's more, including information about bylaws, boundaries, grants, and links to references. You can look it up... 📷