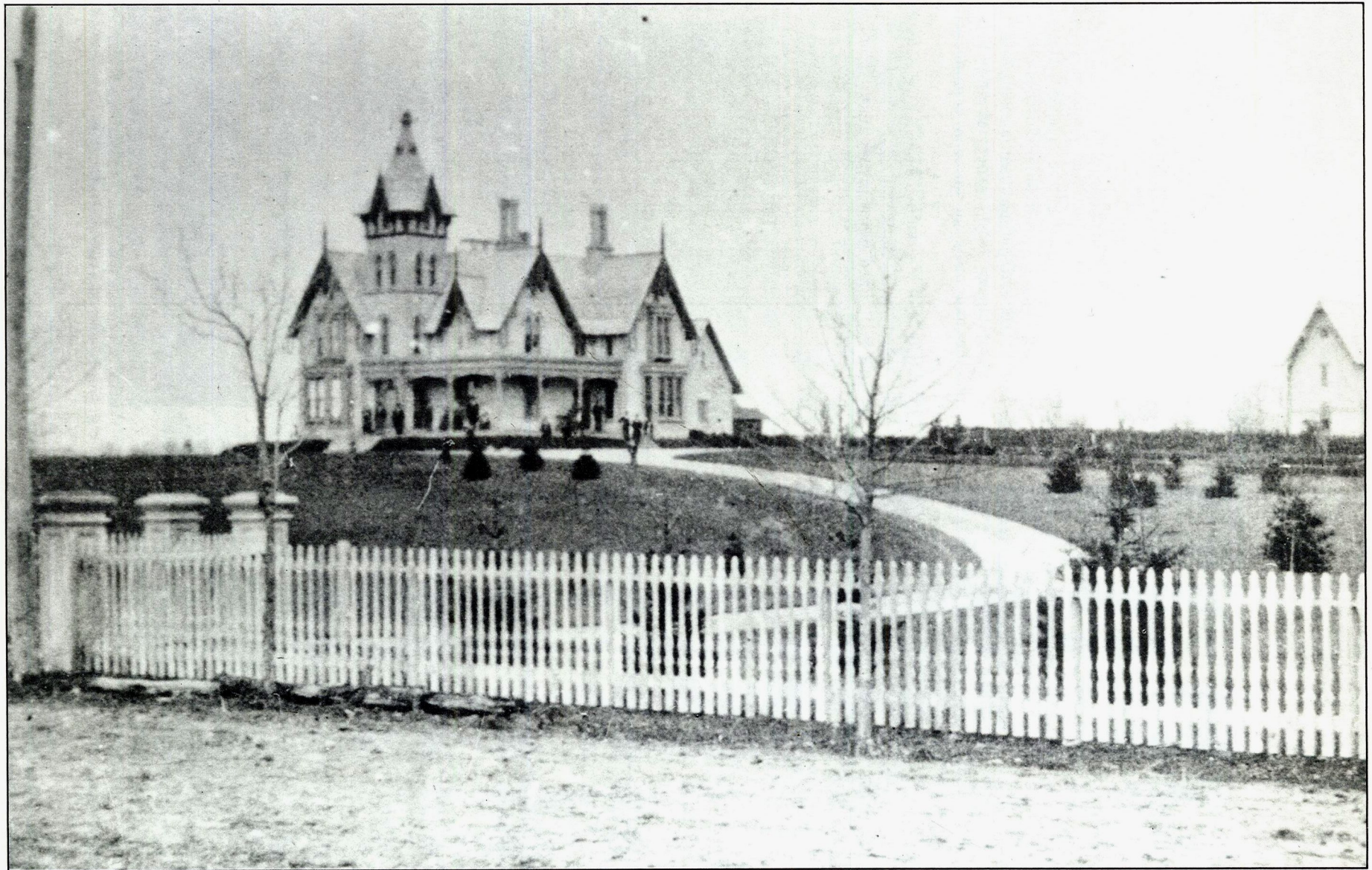




ELMHURST IN THE 1970's, UNDERGOING RENOVATION AS A RESTAURANT.

Photograph by Edgar Hugill, image taken from 'The Hugill Chronicles by David L. Gibson



ELMHURST — HOME OF J. H. HARRIS, CIRCA 1870 BEFORE NEW BARN WAS BUILT, CIRCA 1880. INGERSOLL, ONTARIO. PREMISES ARE NOW USED AS A RESTAURANT AND MOTEL.

Photograph by Edgar Hugill, image taken from 'The Hugill Chronicles by David L. Gibson



BARN OF J. H. HARRIS HOUSE, INGERSOLL

Photograph by Edgar Hugill, image taken from 'The Hugill Chronicles by David L. Gibson

Restaurant proposed for old Harris estate

Four Ingersoll area businessmen are in the process of completing plans to develop the former Harris estate, at the highway 19-401 interchange south of Ingersoll, into a restaurant and motor hotel. Plans for the development were disclosed at a Thursday night meeting of the Oxford County Council planning committee.

Clair Bray, president of Clair Bray Real Estate and representative for the developers, said in an interview with the Times "At this point it is imperative for us not to disclose the buyers." He noted, however, that the estate is presently owned by Ingersoll Elevators Limited and said the land has been sold only on the condition that a portion of it can be rezoned from agriculture to commercial for the purpose of renovating the house into a restaurant and construction of a motor hotel.

Gerald Ball, an employee of Clair Bray Real Estate and also a representative for the four local developers, approached the county about rezoning of the land at last Thursday night's meeting of the county planning committee. The committee decided that plans for the development would be circulated among county agencies for comment. The development call for conservation of the home and the land it sits upon.

If developers meet with any valid opposition to the plan, Mr. Bray said they will not proceed with it. He noted that objections could create an Ontario

Municipal Board (O.M.B.) hearing, and said his clients do not want to delay with their plan. An O.M.B. hearing could cause as much as a two year delay.

According to Mr. Bray the former Harris house will be completely restored inside. He noted, however, that other than minor changes which may be necessary to conform with current building and health by-laws, no alterations will be made to the interior or the exterior of the building.

Four dining rooms will be made-up on the main floor of the building, said Mr. Bray. He suggested that two of the four would be designed in an elegant fashion while the remaining two would be styled in an old-fashioned country manner. He noted that a banquet room is also being considered in the plans.

It was suggested that the second floor of the home will possibly be used for an antique shop and Mr. Bray indicated that each of the rooms on the second storey would contain antiques from different parts of the world, such as early American, French antique and English antiques.

As well as the house being restored, Mr. Bray confided that the building to the north side of the house, which was at one time a carriage house, may also be set up as an antique shop, if the building proves to be structurally sound.

"The beautiful grounds consisting of two or three acres of trees will not be disturbed," he assured the Times.

He said that the stately atmosphere of

the house will not be ruined by a modern motel but suggested that it will be complimented by a castle-styled motor hotel.

If approval is given to the proposal, Mr. Bray said the developers hope renovations for the dining area will commence early this spring with the proposed opening date set for July 1, 1978.

He noted that the developers have proposed to construct the motor hotel in three phases each consisting of 20 units.

He said if approval is given in the immediate future, construction of the first phase will get underway in the spring and he indicated that the first phase would be completed within 60 days.

Of the 28 acres that makeup the former Harris estate, Mr. Bray said his clients are hoping 14 acres will be zoned commercial and the remaining 14 acres, to the rear of the property, will be zoned open property, as none of the land lends itself for agriculture use.

If council does vote to re-zone the area in question and if developers do go ahead with their proposal, Mr. Bray said, an estimated 20 to 30 jobs will be available to local people.

The house, which was built in about 1862, is one of the oldest in town. Last spring it was sold to Ingersoll Elevators Ltd. by Monica Gilling, a member of the Harris family. The house was built by Mrs. Gilling's grandfather and until this spring, was passed down from generation to generation.

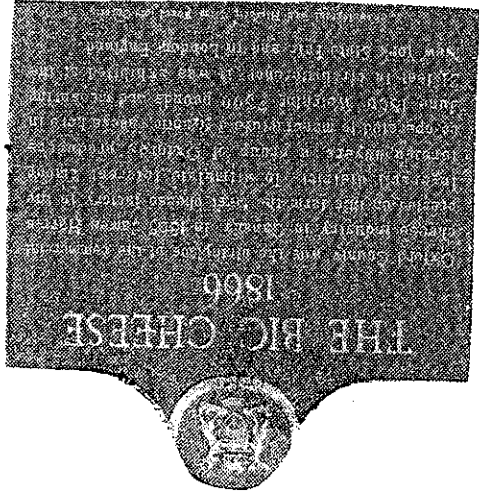
The Big Cheese project

ELM HURST

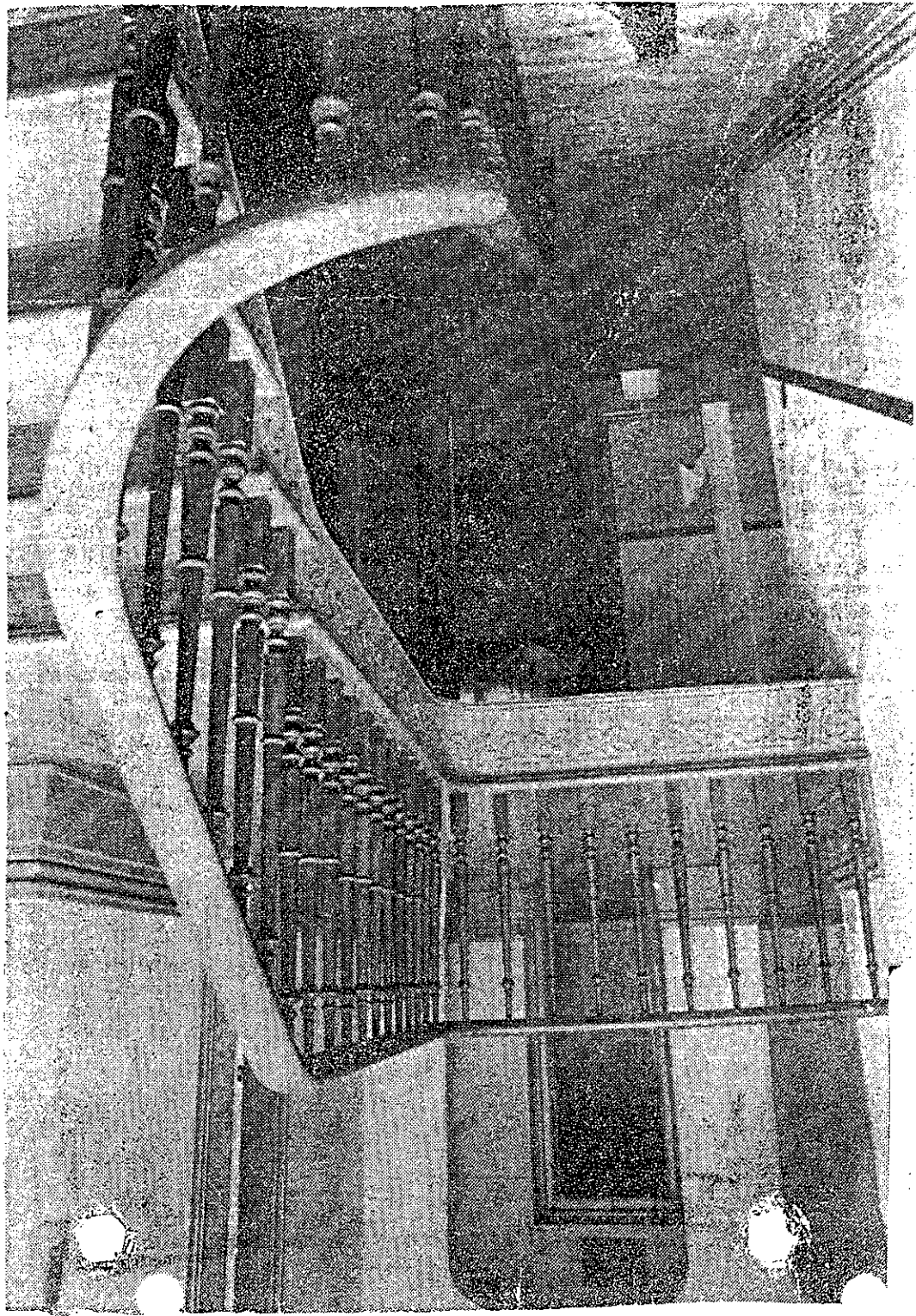
The 98-year-old home on Highway 19, of Ingersoll's historic cheese-maker James Harris may become part of an elaborate motel-restaurant complex, fashioned in the style of an early-Canadian country manor. Ingersoll town council has agreed to recommend necessary rezoning for the project, involving four Ingersoll area developers headed by realtor Clair Bray. Harris was the man who brought Ingersoll its first cheese factory and it was at the Harris factory that a group of Oxford County cheese producers made a 7,300-pound cheese for exhibit at the New York State Fair and in London, England.



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to stimulate foreign sales as explained on a plaque located near the motel-restaurant site. Bray said the developers hope, in restoring the house, to preserve its present beauty of structure, such as the curving staircase and making only minor changes to conform with current building and health codes.

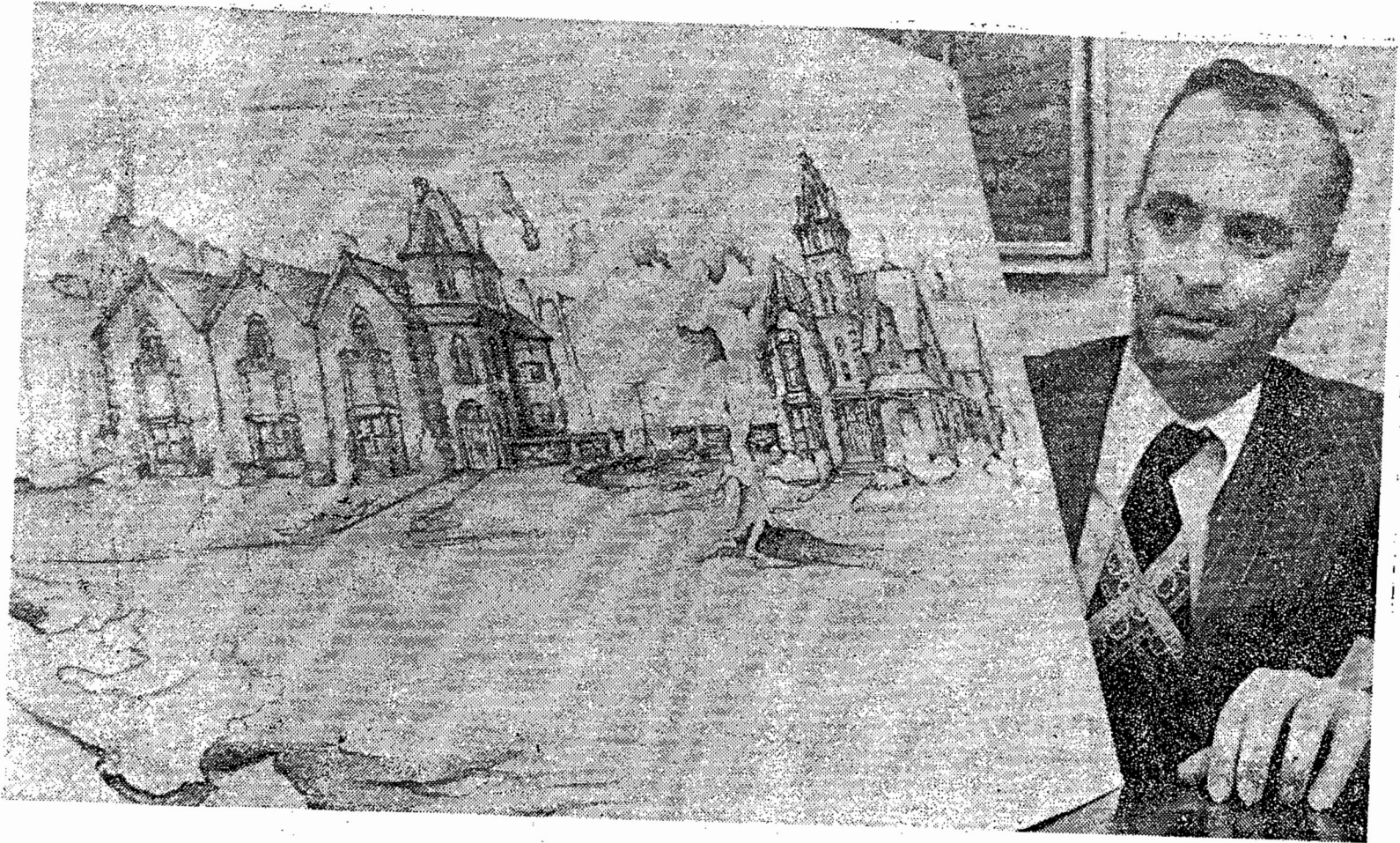


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ELM HURST

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Plans for the motel-restaurant complex on the former Harris estate at Ingersoll are explained

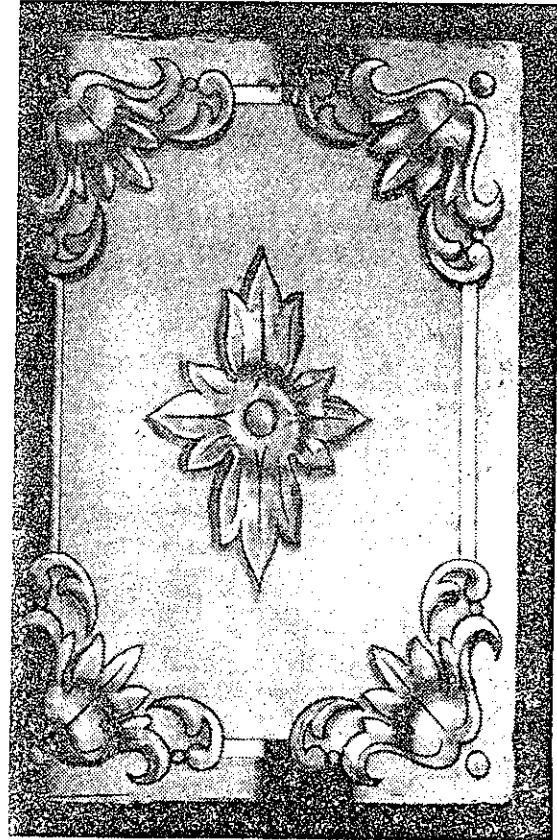
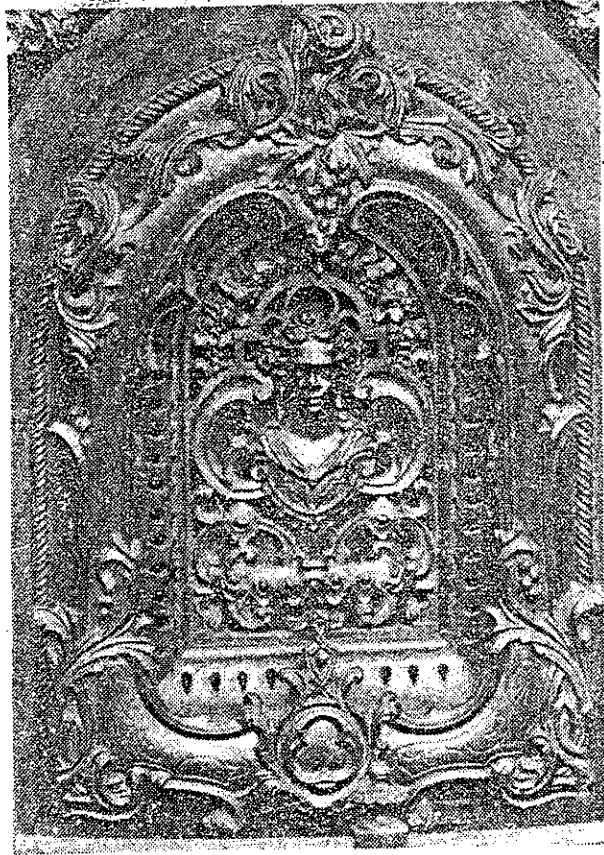
by Clair Bray, representing the developers involved.

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Four dining rooms will make up the main floor of the house, with two designed in an elegant manner and the other two in an old fashioned country manner. A motor hotel with a tower-like design, conforming with the existing house style, will be built near the stately house. Antique shops will be located in the second storey of the house and in what was formerly a carriage house. Developers hope to preserve ornate wood and brick work, such as that at left, and decorative glass door panels, seen at right, in the restoration process.

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ELM HURST

Final approval given to motel complex

Oxford County council gave its final approvals to the motel-restaurant complex proposed on the former Harris Estate south of Ingersoll Wednesday.

Council accepted the recommendation of the planning committee to approve the project, requiring an official plan amendment. Sitting as the Oxford planning board, council approved the amendment. During bylaw sessions the necessary bylaw to implement the amendment was approved.

The amendment is subject to ministry of housing approval.

The two stage development calls for a 52 unit motel complex at the intersection of

Highways 401 and 19 in South-West Oxford Township. The existing house on the property is to be renovated to a restaurant.

Councillor Ken Bullen of Woodstock was the only councillor to speak against the amendment. His concern centred on the possibility of extension of municipal services to the site from Ingersoll and further future requests for service extensions.

Planning committee Chairman Ken Webster of Tillsonburg said the planning committee recommended the development because "in this particular situation it is the best possible use for the property." To allow the development was a "common

sense" decision, despite the unusual move allowing a commercial development in a rural area.

The official plan amendment changes the zoning of the property from rural to special highway commercial. It includes requirements for adequate off-street parking and buffer planting, screening and design between the development and any adjacent residential properties.

However, Mr. Webster cautioned Ingersoll and South-West Oxford councillors on the possibility of pressure building for infilling of the land back to Ingersoll, since the planning committee felt

that the development could be considered an extension of urban planning outside the urban municipality's borders.

Councillor Doug Harris, mayor of Ingersoll, said it was "ironic" that Mr. Webster should mention possible infilling because council has recently received a request to approve a subdivision in the same area.

He said the technical advisors to council looked at the development as a risk.

Personally he supported the development from "a purely political" viewpoint, but "maybe if I knew a little more technically, I'd be opposed."

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ELM HURST

VICTORIAN ELEGANCE RETURNING TO INGERSOLL

Harris estate getting new lease on life

By JANICE MIDDLETON
Sentinel-Review staff writer
INGERSOLL—With only 30 shopping days left until Christmas one can hardly be thinking about Valentines, but here's a suggestion to keep in mind.

Wine and dine your sweetheart in upper-class elegance in the house where Prince Edward once slept.

The cream-colored country mansion on the old Harris estate situated on Highway 19 south of Ingersoll at the 401, will open in late January or early February.

Two Ingersoll families, Mr. and Mrs. Clair Bray and Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Ball saw the commercial possibilities of the property and started working on them a year ago.

Mary Bray and her daughter Debbie, 18, had been in love with the house a long time and finally talked the others into buying it, Mrs. Bray said.

"We really don't have much experience in the restaurant business but I feel there is a need for a place like Elm Hurst in this area."

There will be five dining rooms, each one in a different decor.

The Victorian room, small and intimate with velvet chairs, will seat 12 to 14 people.

The main drawing room will be known as the Prince Edward room. It will seat 24.

If you prefer country atmosphere and pine furniture try the Elm Hurst dining room, large enough for 28 diners.

The main attraction of the Morning Room is the field stone fireplace. It will be decorated in early Canadiana and has room for 12.

Decorator Mary Bray's personal favorite is The

Wood Shed. The ceiling, two storeys high, angles to a peak and a brick wall backs a cast iron wood stove. This will be the largest dining room with seating for 36. Large windows overlook the wooded valley below.

The menu will include "all the dishes served in an upper-class English-Canadian home 110 years ago," Mrs. Bray said.

However, prices won't be out of sight, she said. "We hope to offer a good meal for \$5 but we'll also have pheasant for \$12."

Dishes such as roast beef and Yorkshire pudding, chicken and dumplings, homemade apple pie and cheese will be main features.

Cheese, certainly, because the house was built by cheese king James Harris.

Harris put Ingersoll on the map in 1867 with a mammoth 7,300 pound cheese which flabbergasted viewers at the New York State Fair in Saratoga, almost caused a ship's crew to mutiny when it arrived in England—a touch overripe—and inspired Canadian playwright James Reany to write *Colors In the Dark*.

The property was owned by the Harris family until Harris's granddaughters, Monica Gilling and Margaret McTye sold it to Ingersoll Elevators on April 28, 1977 for \$150,000.

In October Ingersoll Elevators sold 28 acres of the estate to Clair Bray and Gerald Ball.

Fourteen acres along Highway 19 towards Ingersoll has been rezoned for commercial use and a liquor plebiscite held along with Southwest Oxford's municipal elections last Monday made it possible for the dining rooms to be licensed.

Besides the dining rooms, the plans also call for a 22-room, two-storey motel in a similar architectural style which will include a honeymoon suite. The carriage house will be restored and converted into an antique store and the silo will be transformed into a fairy tale turret with a spiral staircase inside leading to a lookout on the top.

Several of the five rooms on the second floor of the house will be meeting rooms and others will be rented to boutique operators.

Clair Bray said there are plans for further expansion of the facilities in the future.

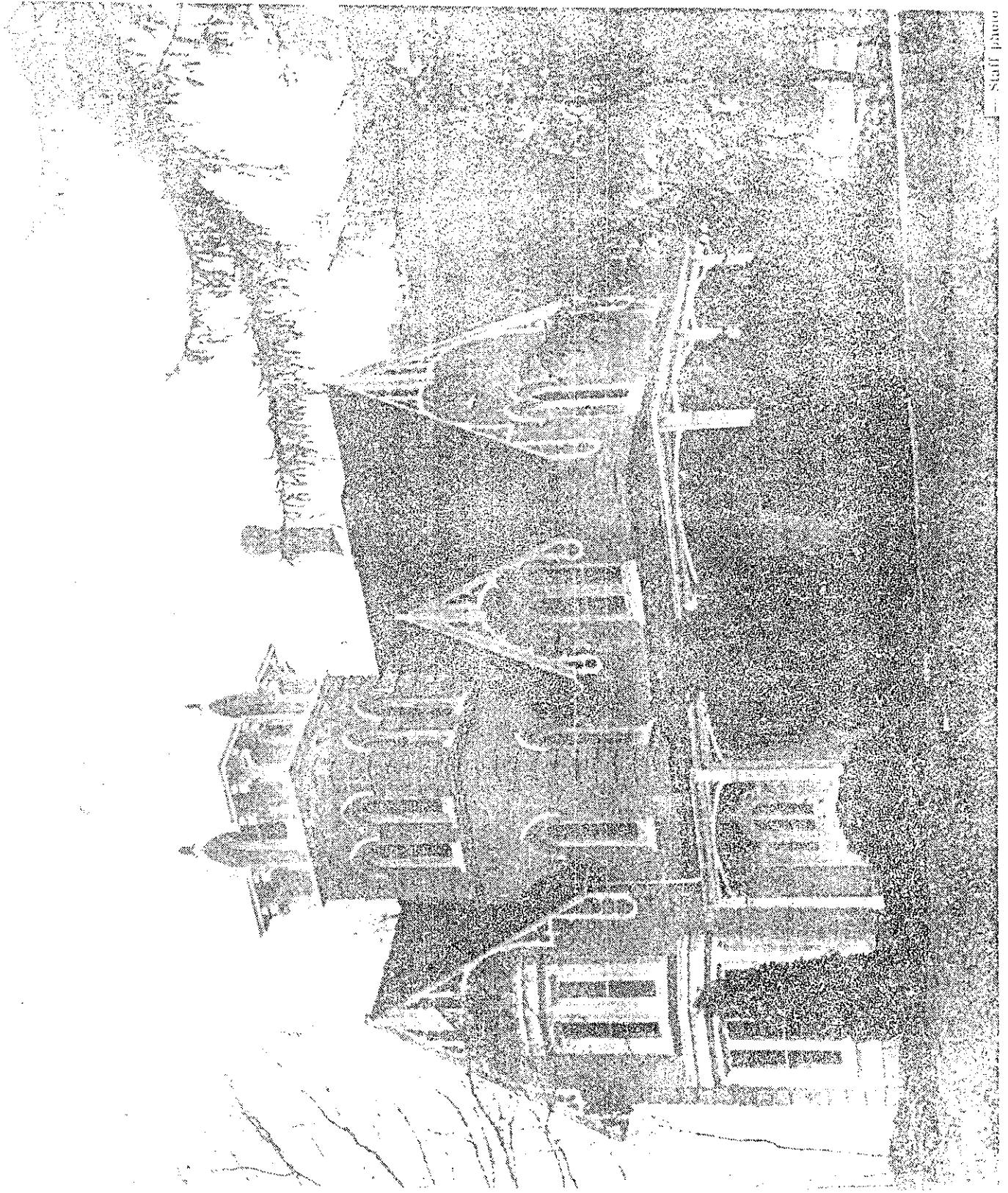
Oh yes, there is to be a sequel to the Big Cheese only you won't be able to put a hunk of it on your apple pie. Big Cheese II, 21 feet in circumference and three feet high, will be Elm Hurst's calling card.

It will sit somewhere on the grounds, "maybe under the historic plaque," Mrs. Bray said.

Definitely a hazard for unwary mice.

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— Staff photo

A view of what the Harris House looks like now.



— Staff photo.

Mary Bray shows artists' sketches of Elm Hurst. On desk is motel and main house, right. Top is renovated silo.

A close up of Elm Hurst

The historic Harris house, for many years a monument and ornate architecture of the past, is presently undergoing extensive renovations toward the creation of a new restaurant-motor hotel complex.

The mansion-like estate, situated on a 28 acre parcel of land at the intersection of Highways 401 and 19, has been purchased from Ingersoll Elevators by Bray-Ball and Associates Inc., consisting of beef farmer and realtor Gerald Ball of Embro, local realtor Clair Bray, and various members of both families.

Plans for the complex include the construction of five individual dining rooms, varying in decor from grandiose Victorian to a country kitchen atmosphere, which will serve approximately 100 people from common kitchen facilities. All of the dining operation will be housed in the first floor of the estate in existing rooms, with an attempt to maintain as much of the original fixtures and decor of the structure.

Within the 13.5 acres of commercially-zoned land, plans are underway for the creation of a 22 to 24-unit motor hotel, to be located just to the north of the present estate, at an estimated cost of \$500,000.

An existing carriage house, to the rear of the

main building, is also to be renovated, for the purpose of establishing several commercial "stalls", which will house displays of antiques offered for sale from various dealers in the area. The remainder of the property, 14.9 acres of open spaces and forest is slated to be cleaned up and utilized as parkland to be enjoyed by patrons of the complex.

At present, restoration plans for the exterior of the home are nearly complete, with the bulk of the work to be done the responsibility of landscapers. However, alterations to the interior are behind schedule, pushing the projected completion date back to early 1979. Estimated cost of the renovations to the main structure, not including furnishings, are in the range of \$100,000. It is expected that tenders and plans for the proposed motel hotel will be decided by the first of February of next year, with construction completed by the following June.

Co-developer of the project Clair Bray sees the complex as a beneficial new enterprize for the town.

"I feel that the restaurant and hotel will help in attracting tourists to the Ingersoll area, which may be profitable to other businessmen in the town. It should certainly help to divert some of the traffic passing Ingersoll along the 401. A recent traffic survey of the highway stated that an average of something like 25,000 cars pass the No. 19 highway interchange each

day, so, there certainly exists large business possibilities," he said.

Bray stressed that the emphasis in renovating the estate would be placed on preserving the original building as much as possible, for the benefit of those concerned with the future of the area's historic structures.

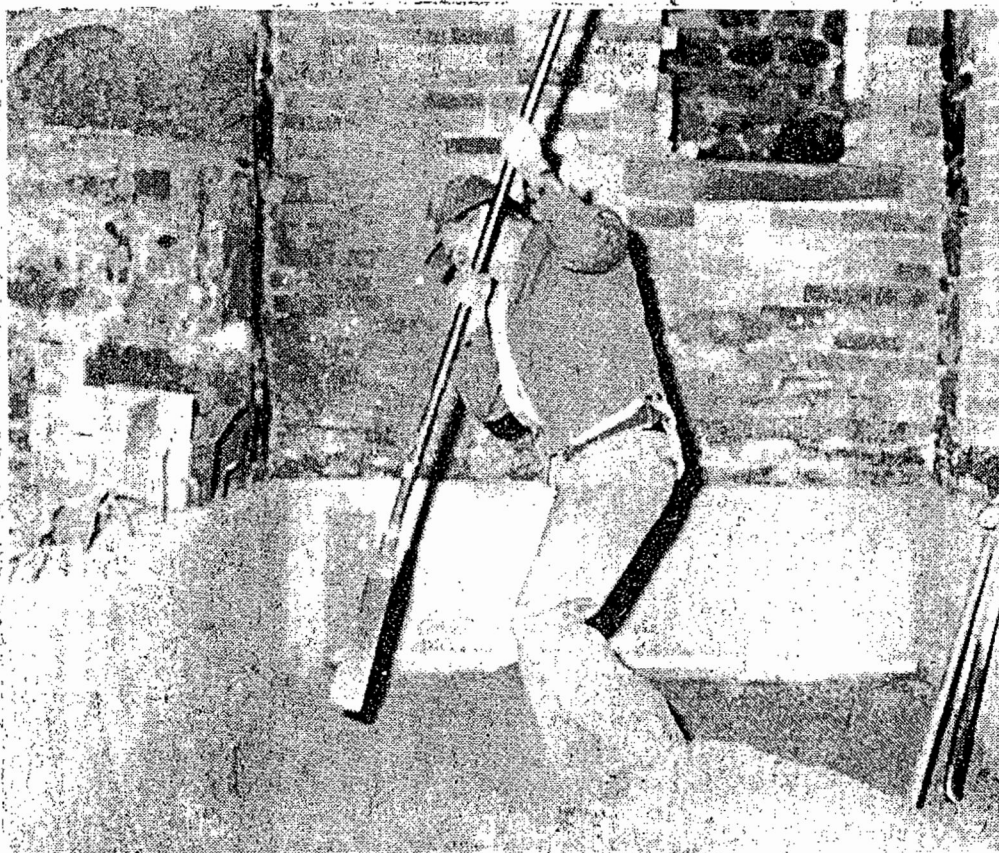
"By changing the Harris home to a commercial structure, the building will be always accessible to the general public. Everyone will be able to enjoy it."

The original structure was completed in 1868 by James Harris, one of the founding fathers of the town of Ingersoll. Previous to being obtained by Ingersoll Elevators, the home was last occupied by Mrs. Edward Gilling, the former Monica Harris, granddaughter of the first resident.

Bray sees the concept of having five dining rooms as a unique convenience. "That's what's always bothered me about going out to dinner. It seems that you always have to match the fanciness of the restaurant with the way that you're dressed.

"With five dining rooms, each with its own decor, you're given a choice between sitting on posh velvet chairs or on less formal antique wooden ones," Bray stated.

Concerning the future of the complex, Bray is quite unguarded in his optimism. "I think that this is the kind of thing that the people of Ingersoll and surrounding communities will patronize. And I can guarantee the folks won't have to empty their wallets everytime they come out to eat."



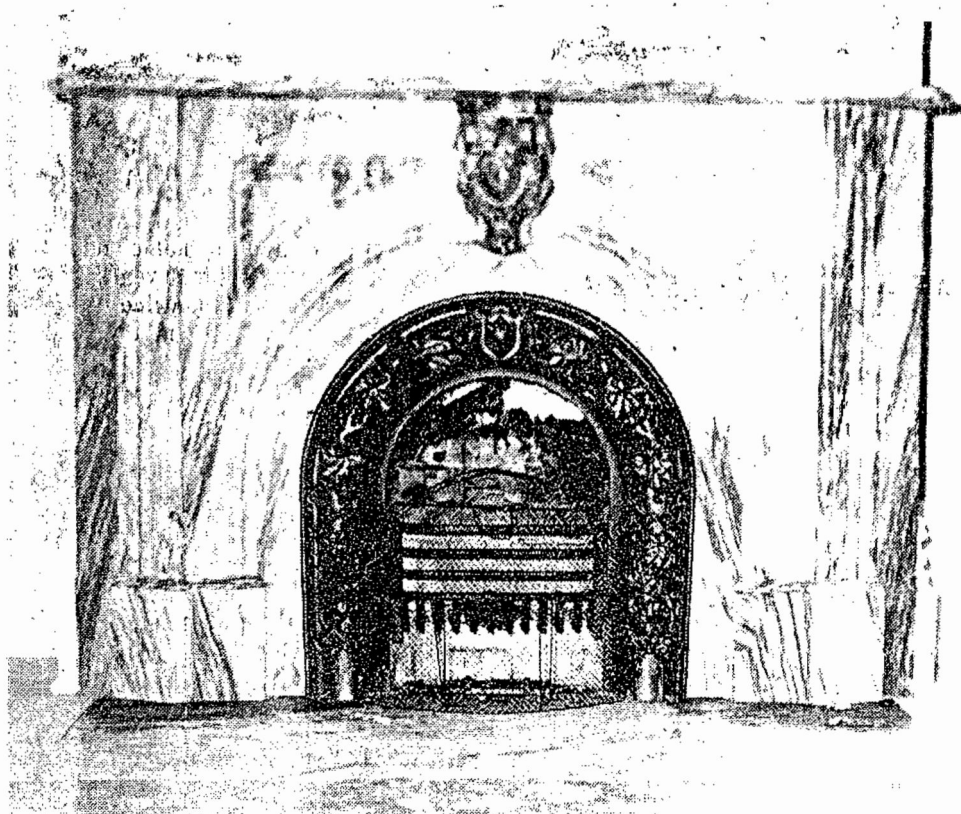
Workers are busy doing renovations to the home, in order to meet building and health codes. It is expected doors to the restaurants will be open shortly after the new year. Developers have stated that they feel the opening of the hotel-restaurant complex will be beneficial to the town in attracting tourists.

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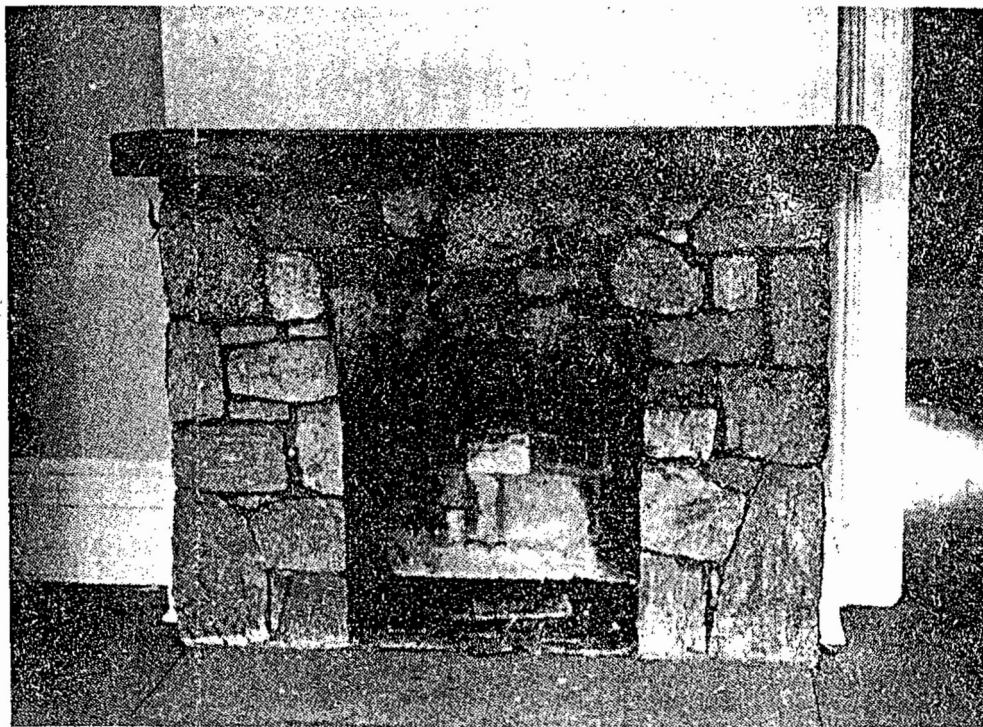
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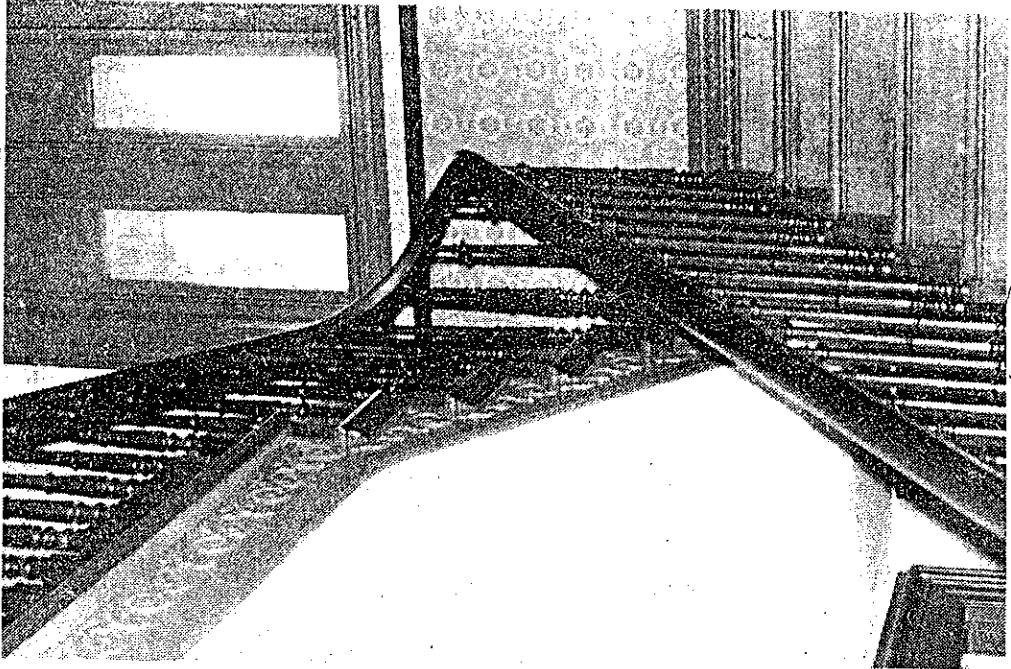


Fire places galore! Elm Hurst, perhaps more commonly known as the former Harris estate, has plenty of fire places, ranging in styles from country brick to elegant marble and wooden frame ones. In all, there are five, scattered throughout the house.

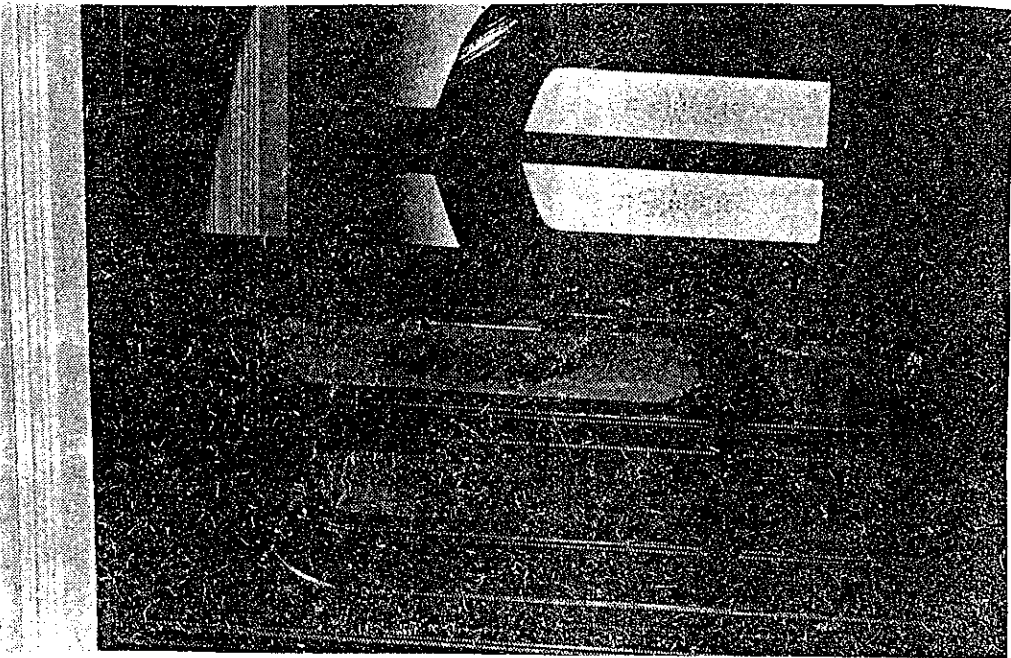


Despite the elegant appearance of the old Harris estate, this field stone fire place adds country charm to the home. An existing carriage house to the rear of the main building is presently being renovated for the purpose of establishing several commercial stalls, which will house displays of antiques offered for sale from various dealers in the area.

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The elegant banister leading to the second flight of the home, still glows as if freshly polished.



The entrance into the old Harris home is decorated with door.

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INGERSOLL TIMES
November 22, 1978

Edm. H. H. H.

In late September, the former Harris estate underwent a face lift to the outside of the building. Plans for the complex include the construction of five individual dining rooms, varying in decor from grandiose Victorian to a

county kitchen atmosphere, which will serve approximately 100 people. All of the dining operation will be housed in the first floor of the estate in existing rooms, with an attempt to maintain as much of the original fixtures and decor of the structure.

ELM HURST

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Elm Hurst, the original name of the former Harris estate, has slowly changed in appearance under the watchful eye of Ingersoll residents. Developers Bray-Ball and Associates have repainted the building's trim, altering the

appearance somewhat. Although renovations are being made, in order to meet with present day building and health codes, according to Mary Bray, renovations are being kept to a minimum.

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County planners urge appeal against Harris estate variance

ELM HURST

By KEN WILLETT
Sentinel-Review staff writer

A township decision to allow additional development at the former Harris estate near Ingersoll should be appealed, county council's planning committee recommended Thursday.

The committee decided that, if necessary, it will appeal a minor variance decision, made by South-West Oxford Township council in December, to the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB).

The development proposal is for additional construction on the site of the former Harris estate, located on Highway 19 on the fringe of South-West Oxford, just south of Ingersoll at Highway 401.

The variance application from Bray-Ball Associates Inc. would allow construction of a one-storey banquet hall to connect the already approved dining establishment and motor hotel.

The new-look Harris estate is known now as Elm Hurst.

Planning committee members agreed that the application, which it estimated could mean as many as 100 additional dining seats, was not a minor variance but a major deviation from the existing bylaw.

The proposed banquet hall, 74 feet by 42 feet, would occupy an area of about 3,100 square feet.

County Planning Commissioner Peter Atcheson said the lot was granted a special commercial zoning, against the grain of planning trend, because it was felt an historic building would be refurbished and preserved.

Atcheson said there is no question that the former Harris estate had been rejuvenated, but he added, the addition was not minor in nature and did not comply with the county's official plan.

Atcheson said South-West Oxford Township, by approving the variance application, was "not meeting the policy established."

Committee members agreed that although it favored the developer's initial plans and concept, the developer should follow the original provisions of the construction agreement.

There was also concern expressed about sewage waste and how it would be handled.

Atcheson said 14 acres of creek flats behind the estate were

to be preserved in their natural state. He said with the proximity of the creek, the area was not appropriate for sewage excretion.

The property was owned by generations of the Harris family until 1977, at which time it was sold to Ingersoll Elevators for \$50,000.

Last October Ingersoll Elevators sold 28 acres of the estate to Bray-Ball Associates Inc.

A liquor plebiscite accompanying the November municipal elections ballot in South-West Oxford made it possible for the proposed dining rooms to be licensed.

The minor variance appeal by the county will not stand in the way of the developer's initial plans for construction. It has been reported that the owners wish to have the stately dining establishment open for Valentine's Day in February.

Harris Estate complex held up by variance objection

Construction of a motel-restaurant complex on the Harris Estate south of Ingersoll has been delayed after developers ran into a bureaucratic snag Wednesday with county council.

Council decided to file an objection to a minor variance agreement reached earlier between Bray-Ball Associates Inc. and South-West Oxford Township.

Bray-Ball discovered its original plans to build a 100-seat dining room within the existing structure couldn't be done and decided instead to add a 200-seat banquet hall.

South-West Oxford gave approval but council, on its planning committee's advice, decided the 3,100-square-foot increase was not a minor variance.

Dick Treleaven, lawyer representing Bray-Ball, said if council objected the company would withdraw the minor variance application and try for a site plan amendment.

Treleaven said getting a site plan amendment would delay construction but would still be faster than going through an Ontario Municipal Board hearing that would result from council's minor variance objection.

Planning committee chair-

man Mayor Ross Livingston of Blandford-Blenheim Township, told council his committee did not object to the development but decided it was not a minor variance.

Health and social services chairman Coun. Jack Warden of Ingersoll voiced concern about ability of a septic tank system to handle the doubled capacity.

Treleaven told council the minor variance would have allowed Bray-Ball to continue the revised construction without delay.

"We had numerous hurdles to get past and the minor variance was the most expeditious route," Treleaven said. "This was the first hurdle and we've slightly stumbled on it."

Harris Estate project delayed

Today was to mark the opening of a restaurant complex at the former Harris Estate but unfortunately it appears the opening may take another month according to Mary Bray of Clair Bray Real Estate Company, owners of the complex.

"There are always things you come across that you hadn't counted on," said Mrs. Bray. She said that electrical work, plumbing and various other tasks had taken longer than expected. "It just goes on and on," she said.

The company also awaits a hearing tomorrow to acquire a liquor license for the complex. However Mrs. Bray indicated that although they would prefer

to open with the license it has not been a determining factor in the delay. "We would rather have everything ready for the opening instead of starting with real bedlam," said Mrs. Bray.

The complete project which will eventually include motel rooms and a large ball room continues to be hampered by 'red tape'. The developers were forced to re-route an application for changes to the plan to accommodate the ballroom facility. County planners will have to approve the proposal currently being prepared by Bray. The motel section received approval early last year.

development plan

Elm Hurst

wins committee okay

By JANICE MIDDLETON

Sentinel-Review staff writer

Elm Hurst, known locally as the Harris Estate south of Ingersoll, received approval Thursday by county council's planning committee to go ahead with expansion plans.

Clair Bray of Bray-Ball Associates, developers of the 28-acre site which will be officially opened next Monday by Environment Minister Harry Parrott, Oxford MPP, said the large cream brick house has facilities now to accommodate more than 70 diners.

With planning committee's approval of the bylaw amending the county's official plan, Elmhurst's developers can go ahead with a ballroom-banquet hall, antique and gift shop and a 24-unit motel.

One snag, committee member Ald. Charlie Tatham of Woodstock pointed out Thursday, is the sewage bed located near a stream running through the property.

Bray said in an interview Thursday the seepage bed meets all the regulations required by the environment ministry and the Oxford County health board.

"It was installed near the creek," he said, "because it had the best type of soil for a septic tank."

County health officials have said they will be monitoring the 10,000-gallon septic tank and the tile bed which runs parallel to the creek, a tributary of the Thames River.

Bray said construction on the additional facilities may begin in June.

Elm Hurst's four finished diningrooms have been open, unofficially, to the public for the past two weeks, Bray said.

He said the banquet hall will join the motel with the main house. The front will resemble a stone wall with a glassed back opening out to the valley.

Harris estate re-opens as Elm Hurst complex

BY YVONNE HOLMES
MOTT
AND PAM RIGHTON

Elm Hurst, once a stately private home on Highway 19, just south of Ingersoll, was re-opened April 23 as a restaurant complex.

Officiating at the opening ceremonies held that evening were Lou Barrett, mayor of South-West-Oxford and Ken Webster, warden of Oxford County. The ribbon cutting ceremony was performed by Dr. Harry Parrott, Oxford County MPP and minister of the environment.

Guests arriving at the Bray-Ball complex were greeted by Pipe Major Bob Collins of the Ingersoll Pipe Band.

Staff members, wearing Victorian style gowns, seated the special guests at their tables. Later they were piped back outside for the official ceremonies when Dr. Parrott praised the Bray and Ball families for maintaining part of Oxford County's history "in such a beautiful way."

The house is more than 100 years old. Originally it was built by pioneer James Harris who erected on his farm in 1865 the first cheese factory in the Ingersoll district. It was from that factory that the historic "big cheese" was manufactured in 1866. Intended to stimulate interest among foreign buyers, the cheese was manufactured by a group of Oxford producers and weighed 7,300 pounds. It measured 21 feet in circumference. That Oxford County cheese was exhibited at the New York State Fair and in London, England.

Elm Hurst is the original name of the house.

It was a year ago that Clair and Mary Bray of Clair Bray Real Estate in Ingersoll and their associate Gerald Ball, purchased the property. A number of delays, caused both by "red tape" and by work taking longer than had been anticipated, resulted in the complex not opening as early as had been originally planned.

However, the opening has been eagerly awaited by both local and area people and the response was enthusiastic even before the restaurant was officially opened.

There are now four dining rooms downstairs; beautifully decorated and appropriately named the Victorian Room, the Prince Edward Room, Elm Hurst Room and the morning room. Period furniture, glistening chandeliers, traditional china and table appointments provide a comfortable, historical atmosphere.

The upstairs rooms are arranged as small galleries, with different displays in each of those rooms. These rooms and a waiting room are comfortable places to browse while people are waiting to be told their tables are ready.

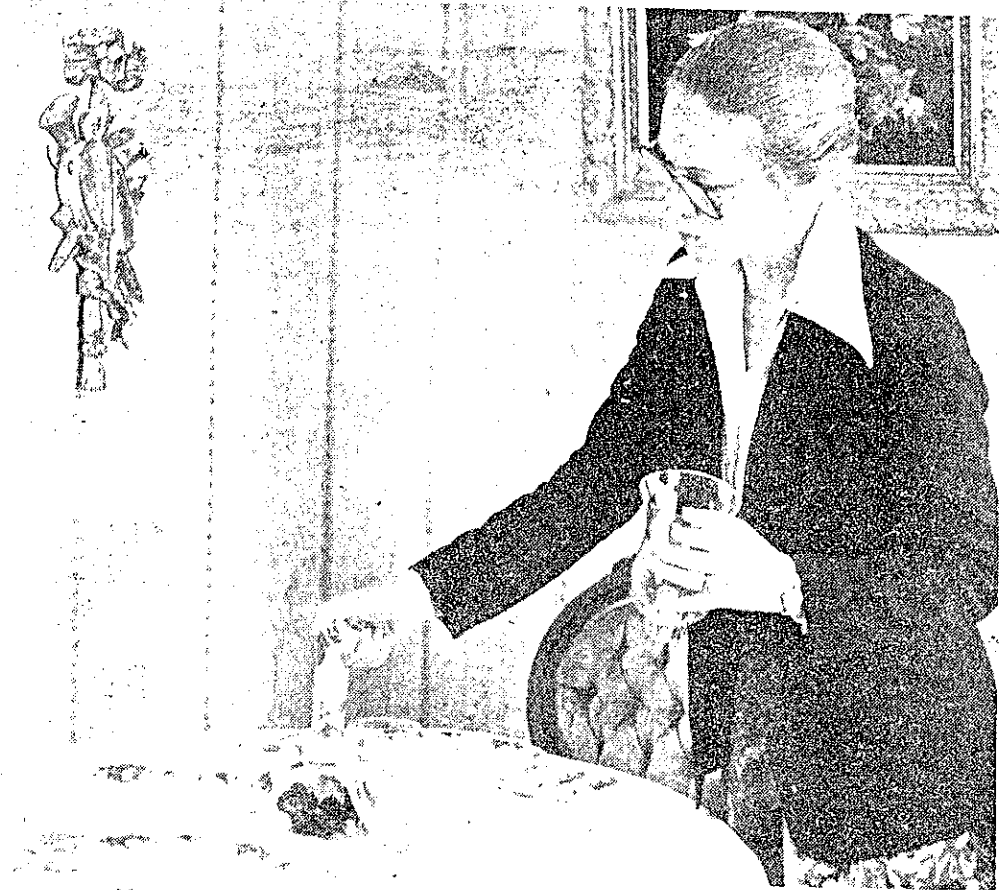
The featured Victorian suppers, including a seven-course pheasant dinner, are by reservation only. Stuffed pork tenderloin, roast breast of chicken, stuffed trout and prime rib of beef are only a few of the tempting and reasonably priced items on the menu.

"The food has to be a little up to date or nobody will eat it" remarked Mary Bray with a laugh as she referred to the more modern items on the menu.

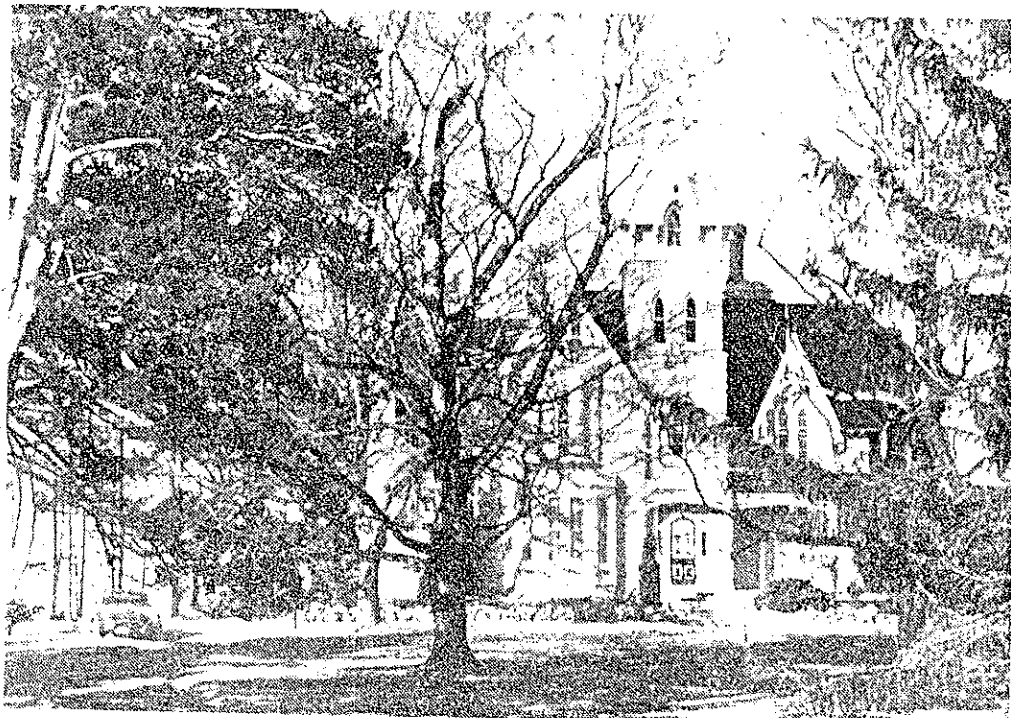
Mrs. Bray also revealed that numerous consultants had been hired to plan an authentic Victorian atmosphere in the house and to plan the type of meals that would have been served to a middle upper class family in that period. None of the original furniture has been left in the house.

Future plans for the complex include a 23-unit motel and a large ballroom.

At present Elm Hurst employs a staff of 12 full-time people and several part-time employees.



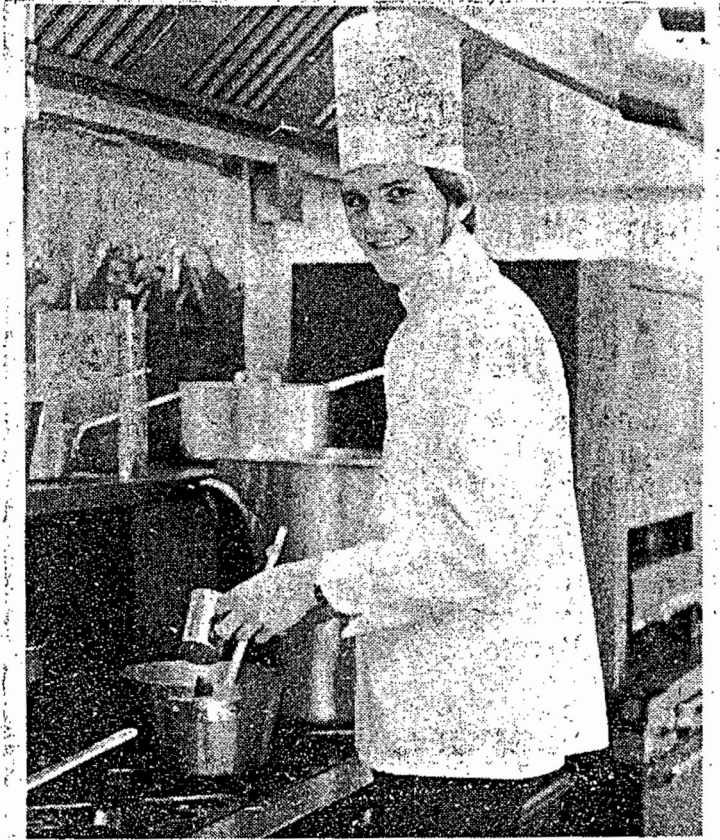
Mary Bray puts finishing touches to a table in the Princee Edward Room.



Elm Hurst, a new restaurant-motel complex, is located south of Ingersoll at Highways 19 and 401. Several dining rooms are located in this stately mansion which was built more than 100 years ago.



Pipe Major Bob Collins of the Ingersoll Pipe Band pipes in the dignitaries for Elm Hurst's grand opening, which featured a traditional Victorian supper. Left to right, are: Oxford MPP Harry Parrott, Clair Bray of Bray-Ball Associates, Oxford County Warden Ken Webster, Mr. Collins, and South-West Oxford Township Mayor Lou Barrett.



Wayne Zavitz, 26, of Ingersoll, with 10 years experience as a chef, oversees the Elm Hurst kitchens. Mr. Zavitz has four assistants. Here, he is shown making stocks and sauces for Elm Hurst's grand opening.

A new career for Coyle

By ARMITA JANES
Sentinel-Review staff writer
INGERSOLL — Marian Coyle, by accident, has embarked on a new career as co-ordinator of the five upstairs rooms at Elm Hurst.

Not that she needed a new one. The former Ingersoll councillor, who now represents South-West Oxford on Oxford County board of education in her own right is a music composer, teacher of piano and organ, as well as an artist on canvas and other media.

It began when Mrs. Coyle put together a one-woman show for the opening of Elm Hurst — the restored Victorian manor house of the James Harris family that is an elegant dining place on Highway 19 at Highway 401.

That exhibition featuring her miniature oil paintings, hand-painted candles and cards now is one of five upstairs showcase rooms that are an extension of the Elm Hurst dining area.

"I stumbled into this (the new job) by accident," she said. "People wanted to stay around (after dining). They seemed to want to hear the history. They wished we had it written down for them to take home."

So Mrs. Coyle now takes visitors on tours of the restored mansion on the hill south of Ingersoll. They learn that it was on the surrounding grounds that the first cheese factory in the Ingersoll district was built in 1865, and one year later the Big Cheese was manufactured there as a promotional gimmick to focus attention on Oxford's cheese manufacturing industry.

Then she leads visitors up the winding staircase to the upstairs rooms.

The Candle and Card Habitat is a glittering array of original hand-painted cards, candles and soap, hand-painted walnut gift items, and oils in miniature.

The Candle and Card Habitat is also the place where you may plan with Mrs. Coyle special occasion parties for showers, birthdays, anniversaries and such.

The parties can range from simple (costing no more than you would spend yourself) to supreme, she said, — but all are elegant, with everything from invitations to table decorations and gifts hand-painted and co-ordinated.

Next to the Candle and Card Habitat is the gallery —

a treasure trove of antiques, art and hand-crafted items.

The gallery will feature work by artists and artisans on a rotating basis.

On the first Tuesday of every month Luncheon Guild members get a preview of the upcoming exhibit and sale.

Marion's Luncheon Guild — already filled to capacity — has sparked interest in a similar supper club for business and professional women.

Future Luncheon Guild previews will include mini-fashion shows, and guest entertainers such as singers and strolling guitarists.

Work on display and for sale now in the Gallery includes Joyce Kennedy's Stewart House antiques, Elizabeth Heeney's oil mono prints, handcrafted toys by John Eacott of Woodstock and handpainted china by Evelyn Gagnon of Tillsonburg.

In the upstairs studio room visitors can watch artists and craftsmen as they work — painting, making pottery, or doing needlework.

Then there is the cheese room with its wide-planked wood flooring and pine furnishings where Mennonite



Marian Coyle
...co-ordinator

quilts now are on display and where Oxford County cheddar will be sold.

The fifth upstairs room is the drawing room where visitors to Elm Hurst may have their second cup of coffee served, before they begin their browsing.

Historical series on display at local gallery

BY CHERYL STEWART

"It Happened in Canada," the long-running series which was seen in newspapers across the continent

and taught Canadians a bit about their own heritage, is currently being displayed at the Elm Hurst art gallery. The originator and the man who researched, wrote and illustrated the famous

series, is now retired from doing it for newspapers but is still doing some for books he hopes to publish.

Gordon Johnston, who now resides in London, came up with the idea for

the series after a change of jobs in the late 1950's. He ended his career as a political cartoonist in the early 1960's and decided to look for something that could be syndicated besides his car-

toons.

"It Happened in Canada" was his brainwave and it became a reality in 1966.

"I have always thought Canadians didn't know enough about their own history. With the Centennial year coming on, I thought I would put some history in capsule form and have them learn about it," he explained.

A love for history and reading has kept Mr. Johnston interested in the series over the years, as well as positive response from readers.

"The series was only out a couple of months when the letters started pouring in, so I figured I was on the right track," said Mr. Johnston.

Mr. Johnston gained information for the series mainly from the University of Western Ontario library. He said there is only one way to get his information, and that is to "jump in and swim out." He said when he first started the series, there was very little information on the ordinary bookshelf. "I had to get into the library and get beyond the bookshelves into the journals, documents and actual letters.

"The old Hudson Bay

records are a great source of Canadian history," said Mr. Johnston. The records are situated in Winnipeg and he said he use to do a lot of travelling when he first started writing the series. Mr. Johnston also used the Public Archives in Ottawa for much of his extensive history research. He said he could read one history book but would have to check it out to make sure the sources were reliable.

"I never make mistakes. People think I do," stressed Mr. Johnston. He said he has had people write him over the years upset with a certain capsule. "I did get some responses from people who felt that what I have written is wrong," he said.

Many hours of research go into Mr. Johnston's work before he can start writing, then he has to research again to make sure his sketch is correct for the time period. He then condenses his writing and fits everything together in an artistic way.

"It's four jobs in one that takes the time of two jobs," Mr. Johnston explained.

Some of Mr. Johnston's history capsules took longer to do than others, depending on where he had to go for information.

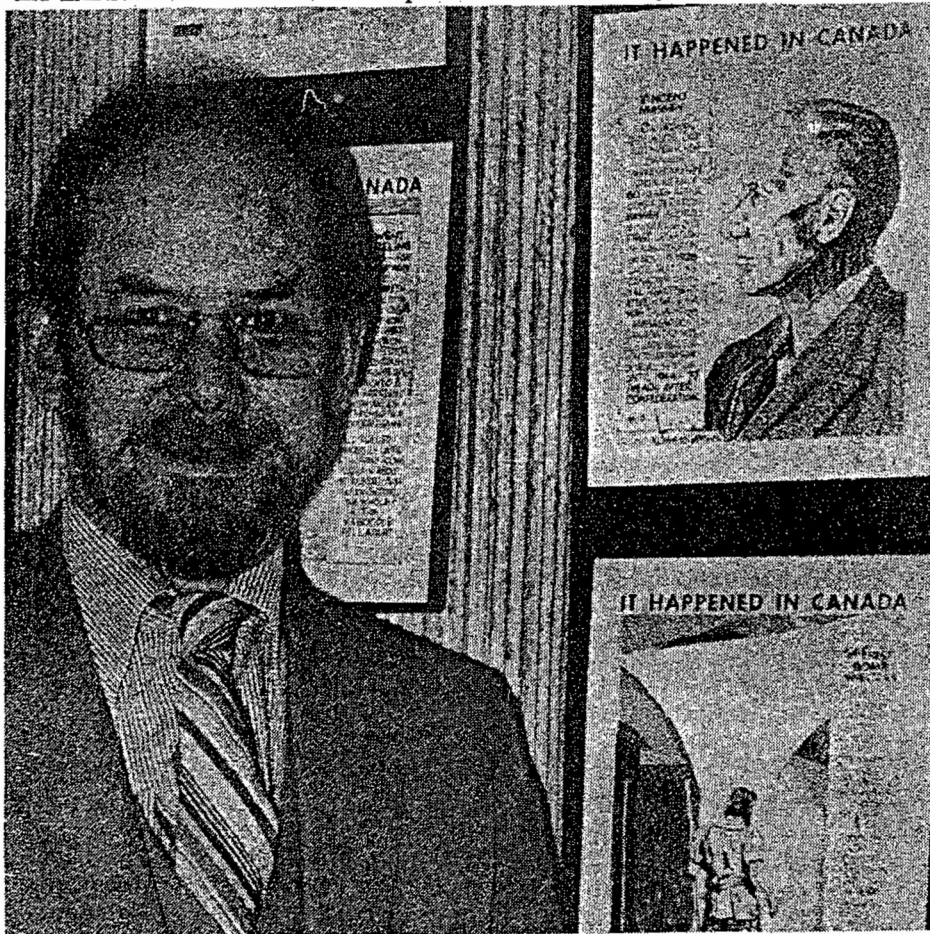
He spoke of one story which he researched through various American newspapers.

"There was a man named Coghlin who was born in Prince Edward Island," began Mr. Johnston. "He wanted to be an actor but there wasn't any way he could become one in Canada so he moved to the United States. He became a better and better actor there and one day he went to see a psychic. She told him he would reach his pinnacle of success, but he would die soon after and his soul would not rest until he went back to his hometown in Prince Edward Island," explained Mr. Johnston.

"He died in Texas, and a hurricane hit the area where he was buried and swept half the cemetery out to sea. Eight years later his coffin was found bobbing in the water at the port of his hometown," he finished.

"That's still my favorite story. I thought that was a fascinating story."

Although he is retired from doing his series for newspaper, originals of his series are on display at the Elm Hurst until the end of October, and can be purchased there.



Howard Johnston started his series "It Happened in Canada" in the 1960's so he could teach Canadians about their heritage. The series ran in many newspapers across the country. Mr. Johnston retired from doing it for newspapers in June, but is still doing some for future books.

1066RSOLL TIMES
October 14, 1981

13

1066RSOLL TIMES
October 14, 1981

Elm Hurst

Elm Hurst launches expansion

INGERSOLL — Construction has started on a new 1,700 square foot addition to the Elm Hurst restaurant just outside Ingersoll.

Margaret Ball, the wife of owner Gerald Ball, said the two floor addition will add about 60 tables to the restaurant's current 125 and mean an expansion of staff. There will also be a small conference room for groups wishing to have business meetings before eating.

Business has been "excellent" this summer, said Mrs. Ball, with word of mouth providing valuable publicity. She said many out-of-town people came to Ingersoll specifically to dine at the Elm Hurst.

But that was not the only reason for the expansion. She said adding the extra tables would ease the pressure on the existing tables and allow more time to prepare and enjoy meals.

In response to people's concerns that the addition, being built off the library, would take away from the architecture of the old structure, Mrs. Ball said the new part would "complement the rest of the house."

She said she hoped the addition would be open by mid-September but she warned that there were many things which could delay construction.

The restaurant has also received South West Oxford Township approval for a motor hotel but Mrs. Ball said those plans were "on hold" at this time.

Expansion plans made for local restaurant

Diners at the Elm Hurst will soon be able to eat at a more leisurely pace as 1,700 square feet will be added to the restaurant. Margaret Ball, wife of owner Gerald Ball, said the expansion was necessary for seating larger groups.

"We will be able to accommodate larger groups," Mrs. Ball explained. "It will be built off the library, and we can close it off for smaller groups." The expansion will seat an

additional 60 tables, which, she said, will take the stress off the existing 125 tables.

"For small wedding parties of about 60 people, this room will be ideal," she said. "We've had to turn some parties away in the past."

Mrs. Ball added there will also be a small conference room for business meetings.

The addition will be built to blend in with the present atmosphere of the building. "It wouldn't be wise to build

it as a modern addition," she said.

"We're hoping to be done by mid-September, if everything goes according to plan," she said. "We're trying not to be too positive because there's always something that can go wrong."

The restaurant has also received approval by South West Oxford Township for a motor hotel but Mrs. Ball said those plans are temporarily on hold.

SENTINEL REVIEW
July 8, 1982

INGERSOLL TIMES
July 24, 1982

James Harris estate now a restaurant

Hwy. 19, Ingersoll

On the edge of Ingersoll, set far back from the road and shrouded by trees, is one of Ingersoll's most historic homes. Today it is known as the Elm Hurst, a restaurant, but at one time, it was known as the James H. Harris estate. Mr. Harris was one of the town's most prominent citizens, and was a cheese maker by trade.

The early Victorian styled home was occupied by four generations of the Harris family until 1977, when it was renovated to a restaurant. Although it has been altered and added to since becoming a restaurant, many of the rooms within this mansion are just as they might have been in 1871 when the home was first built.

According to the book 'Ingersoll Our Heritage,' written by Michelle Hanlon, Merril La Rose, Ruth Merrill and the late Harry Whitwell, the home and Mr. Harris gained fame after Ingersoll's Big Cheese was constructed on a portion of the Harris property.

Mr. Harris built a lean-to of 16' x 16' behind his house, in order to accommodate the mammoth cheese.

The Big Cheese was made in 1866, weighing 7,300 pounds. It was 6'10" in diameter and 3' high. Made from curd assembled at three different factories, Mr. Harris, his father-in-law Hiram Ranney, and George Galloway, were responsible for making it.

The Big Cheese was exhibited at the New York State Fair at Saratoga, U.S.A., then shipped to England where it was exhibited many times. It was eventually sold to a buyer from Liverpool, England, but not before it had brought fame to the small community of Ingersoll.

Inside the home's beautiful, double French front doors, is an inner foyer with another set of stained glass double doors. They lead to a large hall. The hardwood oak flooring on the main floor has been partially covered with carpeting, but one can still see the herringbone pattern of wood, along the sides of the hall floor.

On the original first floor was a large living room, sitting room, breakfast room, music room, a formal dining room, a kitchen, pantry and storage room. Most of these rooms had high, heavily sculptured ceilings, and they remain that way in the original, unaltered portion of the home.

Open to tour
from 2 to 4 p.m.



There were fire places in almost all of the rooms of the original home, necessary years ago to heat a home of that proportion.

Nine bedrooms, including three in the servants quarters, made up the second floor. Fire places were located in six of the main bedrooms. Interestingly, there was only one bathroom in the enormous home when the Harris family resided there, although more have since been added.

In the attic were three cisterns which stored rain water for the family's needs.

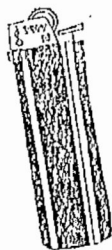
"A unique feature of this home is the tower directly above the front door. At the top of the tower is a door leading to a landing. The purpose of this structure was to make repairs to the home, for in the past, the roofs were too high pitched and dangerous to be reached by ladders," according to 'Ingersoll Our Heritage.' On a clear day, Woodstock can be spotted from the tower's landing, and it is suspected the Harris family used this landing for sunbathing in privacy.

Again, according to the book, "Another feature is the fancy barge boards, hand-cut, protruding around each gabled end.

"The grounds surrounding the building are spacious and beautifully decorated with large trees and shrubs. The east end of the grounds are terraced and lead down to a pond. On the south east side of the home is a barn where horses were kept for transportation and recreation.

"A tollgate was located about 100 yards north of the Harris home. Farmers from the south used to go through the back east end of the Harris property and drive out the north driveway, past the cheese factory, and avoid the tollgate fee."

Renovations done to the building since 1977, have all been in keeping with the Victorian charm this home eludes.



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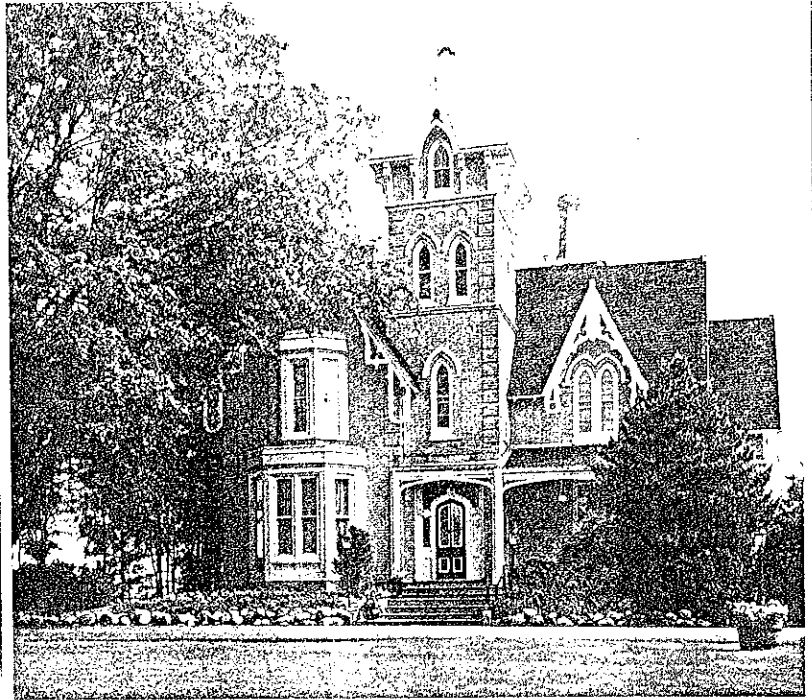
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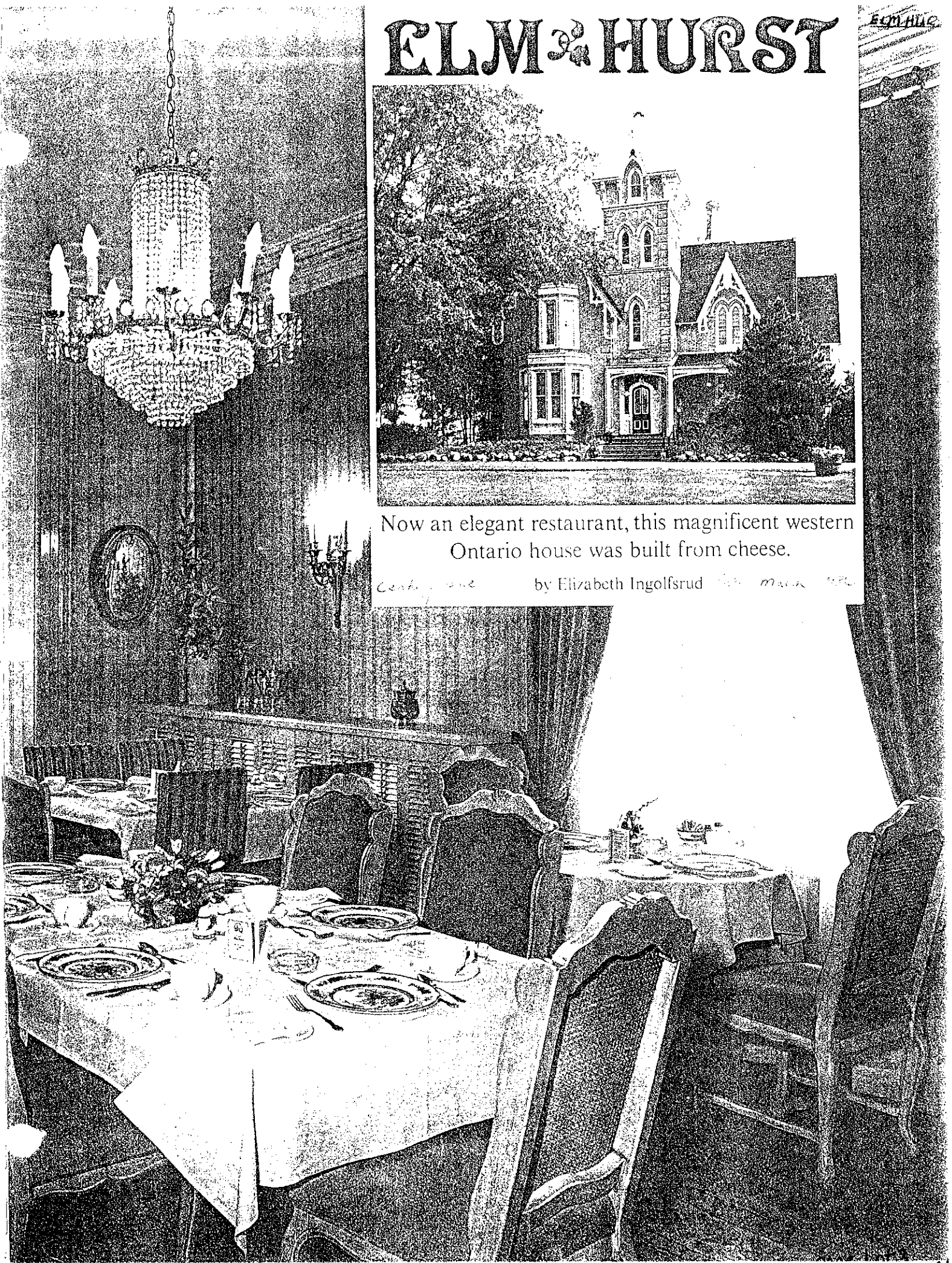


ELM & HURST

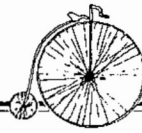


Now an elegant restaurant, this magnificent western Ontario house was built from cheese.

Courtesy of the by Elizabeth Ingolfsrud *March 1966*



Hyways & Byways



Ever since Highway 401 was pushed through the lush farmland of Oxford County, motorists have been able to catch a glimpse of an imposing Victorian villa in a parklike setting at the junction of Highway 19. But only since 1980 have they been invited to leave the freeway, drive through the tall monogrammed iron gates and enjoy a sumptuous meal in the old mansion.

Before that time, Elmhurst was the home of many generations of the Harris family, well known in the area as pioneers in the commercial cheese industry, and later in the apple orchard and export business. The farm lot where Elmhurst was built in 1871, belonged to them from the very early 1800s when they were one of forty families who came to Ingersoll with Major Thomas Ingersoll from Salem, Massachusetts in 1798, some years after the American Revolution.

In 1864, a cheese factory was begun at Salford, a few miles south of Ingersoll by Lydia Chase and her husband Hiram Ranney. The Ranneys, early settlers from Vermont had been in the cheese business in a small way for some years. In fact there is evidence that indicates that the Ranneys, and Lydia in particular, were the real force behind the development of cheesemaking in Oxford County. Lydia found time to teach her son-in-law, James Harris, how to make cheese and in 1865 James Harris established his own factory on the farm where Elmhurst stands today.

To stimulate interest among foreign buyers, James Harris (along with Hiram Ranney, H.S. Pendleton and George Galloway) combined the efforts of their respective factories in 1866 to produce a mammoth cheese to be sent to the New York State fair. It took thirty-five tons of milk (the one-day produce of 7,000 cows) to make the cheese. When finished it weighed three and a half tons. The cost of producing it was \$2,000.

By September of 1866 all was ready. Imagine the excitement in Ingersoll that day. The cheese was loaded on a cart

PREVIOUS PAGE: Gothicism abounds at Elmhurst, a country villa in all its glory. The stately house was built for James Harris, a leader in the Canadian cheese industry.

The former drawing room of Elmhurst as it looks today with soft blue curtains and upholstered chairs, elegant against golden-white walls, a crystal chandelier and a harmonious rug on the floor.

ELM HURST



Elmhurst displays a certain eclecticism in its architecture: such massive towers are usually associated with the Italianate influence while the pointed window arches are decidedly Gothic. Note especially such elaborations as the circular panels and brackets on the tower, and projecting quoins (corner brickwork).

built specially to hold it, and was drawn by twelve dapple grey horses to the Great Western railway station. The procession was led by the Ingersoll brass band. The cheese was such a success at the New York fair that it was brought back to Ontario to be shown at the Toronto and Hamilton fairs.

After more than two years of being on display in Canada, the Oxford cheese entrepreneurs were so encouraged by the favourable response to their venture that they decided to take the giant cheese to England. There was speculation that it might travel even further—to Paris. The evidence for this was found in the poem *Ode on the Mammoth Cheese* written by Ingersoll furniture manufacturer and poet James McIntyre. Billed by William Arthur Deacon in his book *The Four Jameses—Canada's four worst—and funniest—poets* as "the cheese poet", McIntyre published the immortal poem:

We have seen thee, queen of cheese
Lying quietly at your ease,
Gently fanned by evening breeze,
Thy fair form no flies dare seize.

All gaily dressed soon you'll go
To the great Provincial show,
To be admired by many a beau
In the city of Toronto.

May you not receive a scar as
We have heard that Mr. Harris
Intends to send you off as far as
The great world's show at Paris.

Of the youth beware of these,
For some of them might rudely squeeze
And bite your cheek, then songs or glees
We could not sing, oh! queen of cheese.

Whether those dangerous young people squeezed or bit the cheek is not known but in any case after three years the great cheese was very nippy and ever so aromatic by the time it reached England. Can you imagine having been a passenger on the same boat that carried it?

There are varying reports as to what finally happened to the Mammoth cheese. Some say it was cut up and sold. Others insist that it went bad and had to be destroyed. Whatever the end, it had served its purpose handsomely as far as the Oxford cheese industry was concerned, and for James Harris in particular. In 1871, his prosperity enabled him and his family to move into a new and beautiful home which he called Elmhurst.

Elmhurst is an excellent example of the country villas that A.J. Downing strove to promote in his book *The Architecture of Country Houses*. Downing, an American from New York State whose book was first published in 1850, strongly influenced architectural taste in North America with his detailed proposals for what he considered to be the most appropriate and satisfactory houses, furnishings and gardens.

Elmhurst, and indeed its owners, conformed perfectly to Downing's definition of a villa—"the country house of a person of competence or wealth sufficient to build and maintain it with some taste and elegance. The villa should be a private house, where beauty, taste, and moral culture are at home."

The Gothic-style house was entered through Tudor-arched, stained-glass double doors. Beyond the vestibule was a generous central hall, opening on the left to two large rooms, the drawing room and the dining room. On the right side of the hall was a smaller sitting room or library, the main side stairway, and a side hall that led to a verandah and another small room.

Downing would have been pleased with the furniture that the Harrises chose for their home. In the principle rooms downstairs there was a tasteful blend of the various Victorian furniture styles.

Upstairs, in the master bedroom was

the piece de resistance—a wonderful Victorian bed with a high headboard and footboard carved with the Prince of Wales feathers and crest. This bedstead was one of three that were made for the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) during his historic visit to Canada in 1860. It was brought from London, Ontario after the visit.

Downing likely would have approved of the landscaping as well. The small bushes and trees that were carefully laid out in the park-like lawns have grown to a tremendous size over the years. As for garden furniture, today, a single Gothic-style wicker settee sits on the wide verandah.

The Harris family managed to keep Elmhurst until 1978 despite the intrusion of the freeway and the lack of an heir who wished to remain and take over what was left of the farm. During the last years Elmhurst was used by the family as a summer home but there was constant trouble with vandals. Finally, with reluctance it was decided to sell. Before the house was taken over, Mrs. Margaret Mactye, a granddaughter of

The former sitting room to the right of the main hall, now decorated in Victorian-Rococo medallion-back chairs. Note plaster cornice mouldings and fireplace mantel, very much representative of the Victorian era.

James Harris, generously made it possible for the National Museum of Man to acquire several of the more important pieces of furniture in the house including items previously described. Before the furniture was removed a photographer was sent from Ottawa to take pictures of the furniture *in situ*.

The new owners of the property, Ingersoll Elevators Ltd. obviously had no need for the house and its grounds. Fortunately its size and location made it an ideal spot for a restaurant and it was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Clair Bray of Ingersoll who spent two years refurbishing it. Mrs. Bray did most of the decoration helped by Marlene Ball Van Den Brink whose parents, Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Ball, now own and operate the restaurant with the help of their daughters.

The Balls are very conscious of Elmhurst's past and are careful to preserve as much of it as possible. Each of the dining rooms are furnished with a different period theme, and the bedrooms have become boutiques selling antiques, gifts and paintings by area artists.

Prominent on the menu is *The Harris Fare*, a delicious meal that ends with the now famous Elmhurst trifle. On the back of the menu, a description of the house and its history ends with the following paragraph. "In restoring Elm-

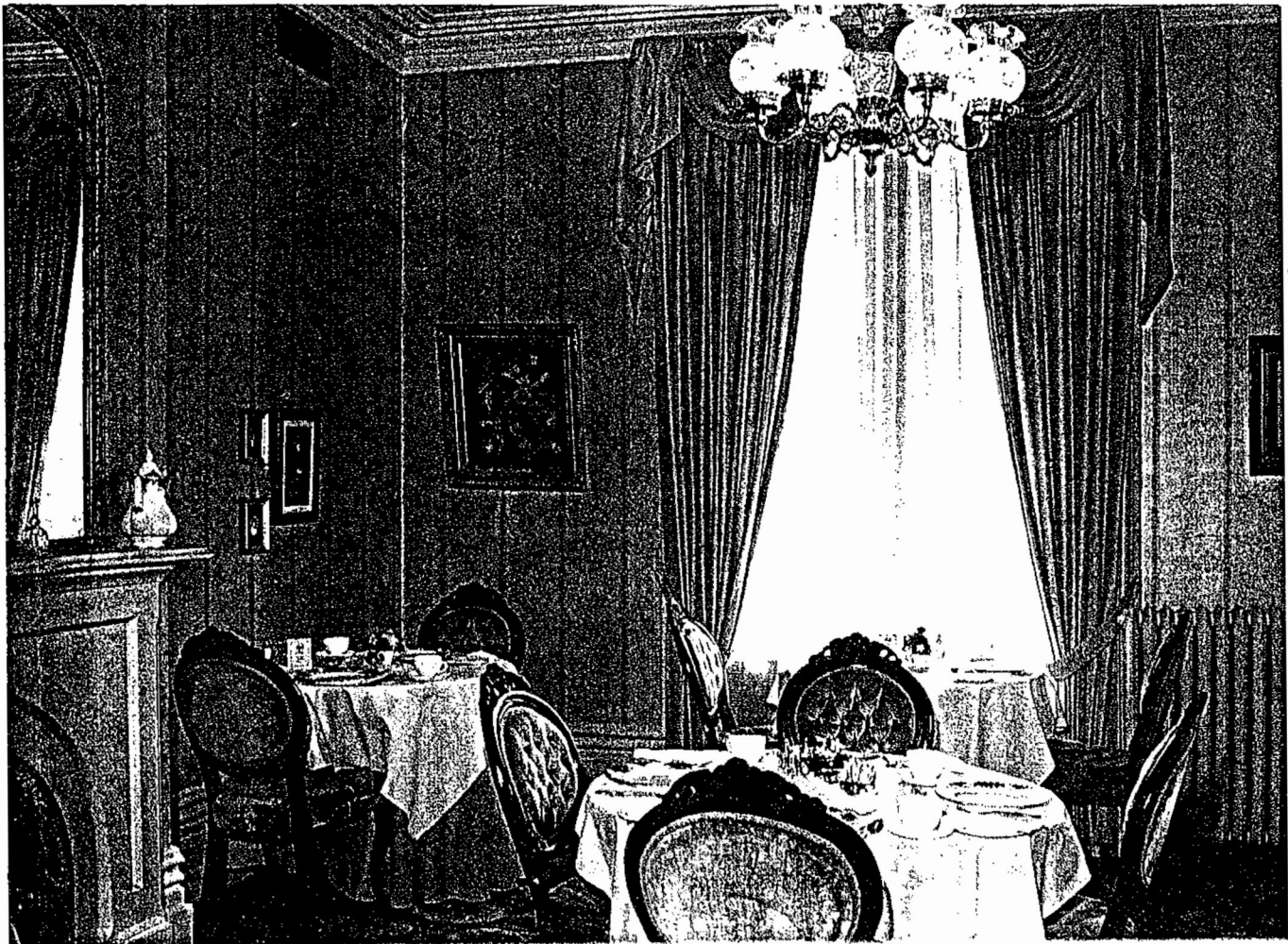
hurst we have tried to capture the atmosphere reminiscent of that found in an upper class Victorian home in an Agrarian setting". What more fitting way to describe the new chapter in the life of Elmhurst. □



Nearby Attractions

If you go to Elmhurst for a meal (reservations advised—request dining room preference) be sure to continue along Highway 19 a mile or so to visit the Ingersoll Cheese Factory and Historical Museums. Here you can see and learn about relics used in the cheese making process. You can also buy cheese to take home. Drive on into Ingersoll and go up some of the old streets near the downtown core to see several homes of the same period and scale as Elmhurst.

Elizabeth Ingolfsrud has written extensively on antiques and has acted as furniture consultant on a number of museum projects. Her interests range broadly into the fields of architecture and restoration.



Century
Home

Feb-Mar
1986

ELM HURST



Dinner Selections

WELCOME TO
THE Elm Hurst
WE PRESENT FOR YOUR PLEASURE

Appetizers

Pate "Country Style"

Our special chicken liver
paté, perfumed with Cognac,
and served with melba toast

Two dollars and ninety-five cents

Crepé Regency

Scallops, shrimp & crab
poached in white wine sauce encased
in a delicate crepe

Three dollars and fifty cents

Artichoke Bottom "Unique"

An exciting combination of artichoke bottoms
stuffed with crab meat and napped with
a velvety Hollandaise sauce

Four dollars and ninety-five cents

Elm Hurst Shrimp Cocktail

Jumbo Shrimp
tangy cocktail sauce

Six dollars and ninety-five cents

Escargots Bourguignonne

One half dozen large snails
(imported from France)
garlic butter

Four dollars and seventy-five cents



From The Soup Tureen

French Onion Soup Au Gratin

A hearty home made Onion Soup flavored with a touch of fine dry red wine, baked under a crust of Mozzarella & Parmesan cheese

Two dollars and seventy-five cents

OUR FAMOUS Creamy Victorian Cheddar Cheese Soup

A fine home made cheese soup,
using local cheddar

Two dollars and fifty cents

Chef's Fresh Soup du jour

Different and delicious
every day - created from a wide selection
of fresh ingredients

Two dollars and twenty-five cents



Salads

Fresh Garden Salad

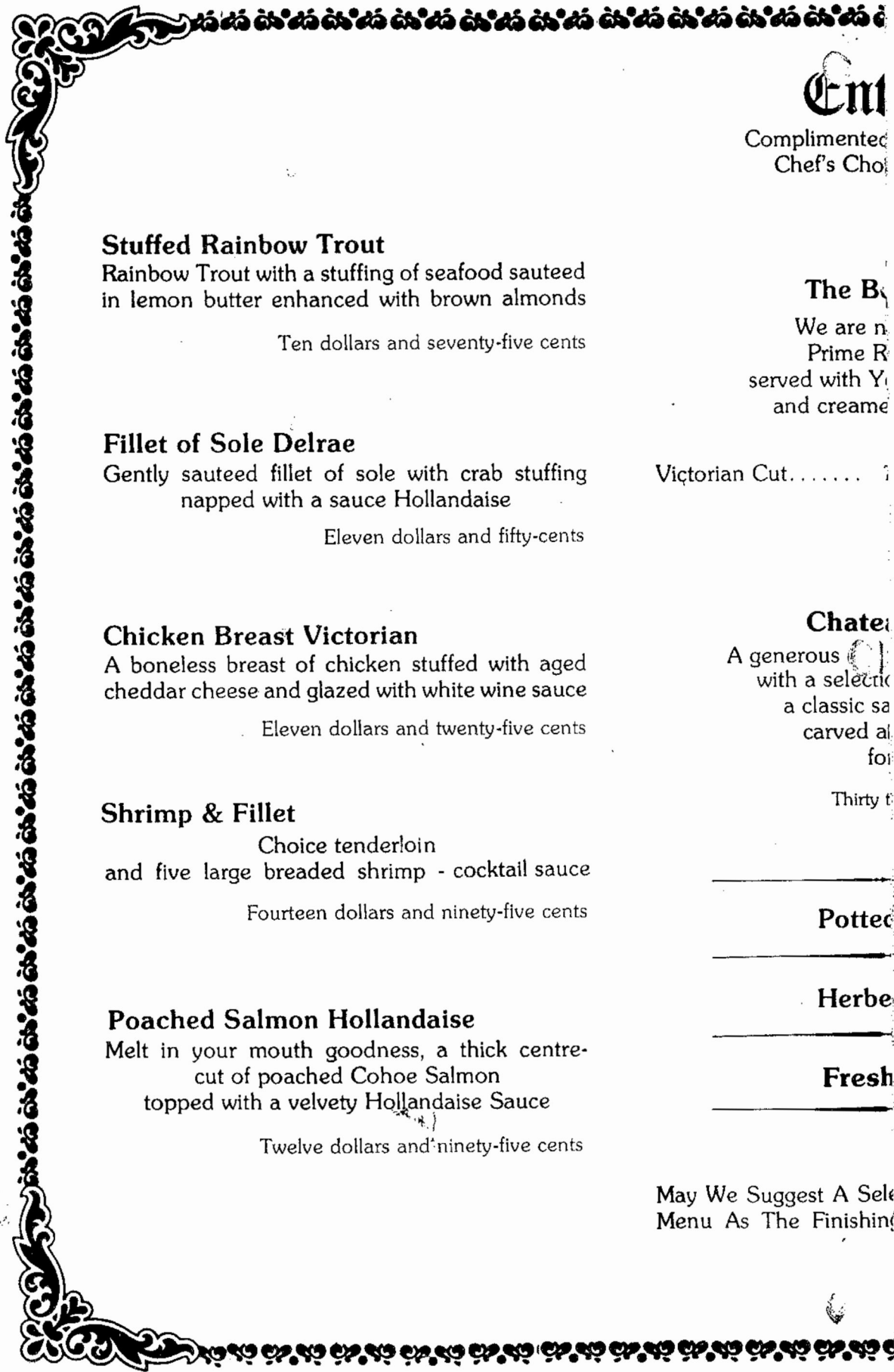
An array of fresh verdent greens
garnished with cheddar cheese and
baby shrimp enhanced by our own
creamy cheese dressing

Two dollars and ninety-five cents

Caesar Salad

A traditional favorite
prepared with our unique touch

Three dollars and fifty cents



Em

Complimented
Chef's Choice

Stuffed Rainbow Trout

Rainbow Trout with a stuffing of seafood sauteed in lemon butter enhanced with brown almonds

Ten dollars and seventy-five cents

Fillet of Sole Delrae

Gently sauteed fillet of sole with crab stuffing napped with a sauce Hollandaise

Eleven dollars and fifty-cents

Chicken Breast Victorian

A boneless breast of chicken stuffed with aged cheddar cheese and glazed with white wine sauce

Eleven dollars and twenty-five cents

Shrimp & Fillet

Choice tenderloin and five large breaded shrimp - cocktail sauce

Fourteen dollars and ninety-five cents

Poached Salmon Hollandaise

Melt in your mouth goodness, a thick centre-cut of poached Cohoe Salmon topped with a velvety Hollandaise Sauce

Twelve dollars and ninety-five cents

The B

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and cream

Victorian Cut.....

Chate

A generous
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Thirty t

Potte

Herbe

Fresh

May We Suggest A Sele
Menu As The Finishing

rees

l By Vegetables
ice of Potato

ef Eater

oted for our
ibs of Beef
orkshire Pudding
d Horseradish

Thirteen dollars and fifty cent

Steak Neptune

A well marbled steak - selected for tenderness
topped with crabmeat, white asparagus tips and
sauce Bernaise

Fifteen dollars and fifty cents

Swiss Style Pork

Boneless butterfly pork loin
topped with peameal bacon & cosino Swiss style
cheese

Ten dollars and ninety-five cents

aubriand

Choice tenderloin
on of vegetables
auce Bernaise
t your table
r two

wo dollars

Peppercorn Steak

Prime New York Striploin Steak
served with green Madagascan peppercorn sauce

Thirteen dollars and seventy-five cents

l Cheese

d Butter

Bread

Veal Oscar

Choice Veal slice, lightly seasoned
topped with crab meat - white asparagus tips
sauce Hollandaise

Twelve dollars and ninety-five cents

ection From Our Dessert
3 Tough To Your Meal



Hunt Feast For Two

Crudités with Sour Cream & Onion Dip

Consumè Jullienne

Spinach Salad with Hot Bacon Dressing

Roast Pheasant - Sauce Burgundy
Bouquetiere of Fresh Vegetables

Baked Alaska

Cheese 'n Fruit Tray

Fresh Roasted Nuts

Coffee or Tea

Twenty Four Hours Notice Please



Enjoy Early
Canadian
Cuisine in our
old Victorian
home.

LUNCH:
MON.-SAT. 12:00-2:00 Buffet Style
or à la Carte

DINNER:
MON.-SAT. 5:00 onward
SUNDAY 4:00 onward

SUNDAY BRUNCH:
11:00-2:00 Buffet Style

“Not So Much Bound
By Tradition
As Inspired By It”

Please call for reservations.
It's always nice to know when
company is coming.

485-5321

The Elm Hurst
Welcomes You To
Visit Our Upstairs Gallery



Chef des Cuisines
Wayne Zavitz

Sous Chef
Brian Seabrook

Elm Hurst expansion underway

One soil report, one written approval (already given verbally) and the \$2.8 million Elm Hurst expansion will be on its way.

That is yesterday's verdict by South-West Oxford council, which indicated it will approve the necessary zone changes when the application is returned pending action on the two remaining requirements.

All going as planned, the project initiated last February will be completed by the start of 1988.

The only reason the application had to go to council in the first place was to allow an expansion of the permitted expansion. Elmhurst Inn

(what the total project is being named) will contain, under one roof, a 200-person banquet hall, four meeting rooms, an 80-person lounge and 50 motel rooms with a possible 30-room expansion at a later date.

The lounge would offer dining, primarily for the motel clients, serving mainly breakfast and lunch in a less formal atmosphere than the established restaurant.

This proposal is an enlargement on the permitted zoning by 26 rooms, four meeting rooms and 45 persons allowed in the lounge.

It will all be contained in an L-shaped, two-storey building set slightly back from the existing restaurant.

"We're striving to let the original home dominate," said President Ben Hosman of the engineering firm Project Design. "It is still the first building you will see and the first to catch the eye."

The addition is not meant to copy, but enhance the Victorian Gothic restaurant, which will be connected by a glassed-in porch.

There is also a plan to transform the nearby barn, or coach house, into an antique gift shop and gallery. The barn would be split in two levels to create 5,000 square feet of space.

Exhibits such as art and handicrafts by local artists would take up one level, the other for gift items and antiques.

Tenders will be called for during the 35-day period following council's acceptance of re-zoning. Construction will not begin before the 35-day time period, set aside for objections, has passed, said Mr. Hosman.

He hopes to begin construction in mid-May, and is aiming for project completion by the end of the year. Observers have noted the land is already being surveyed for development.

Holding up the works is a green flag by Oxford County Board of Health, which has requested a Soil's Consultant Report and a copy of the engineer's drawings regarding the proposed sewer system.

Copies of the engineer's drawing will be available at the end of the week; a copy will be sent to South-West Oxford.

The Ministry of Transportation and Communications, while giving verbal approval, did not get a written submission to the planning department in time. Their concern is that the owners realize that planned changes to the Highway 401-Highway 19 intersection may reduce several parking spaces.

The proposal allows for 200 parking spaces, which the county planner said is adequate, but may become a little tight during peak periods. Perhaps the plans will be juggled to situate the jeopardized spaces elsewhere.

INDEXED
T.M.E.S.
Apr 18, 1987

Council halts Elm Hurst expansion

By MARILYN SMULDERS

The project manager for Elm Hurst's development plans was stepping all over himself in trying to avert bureaucratic red tape. Instead of evading it, however, he found himself in a bind that kept getting tighter and tighter.

Ben Hosman appeared before South-West Oxford council Tuesday to give a progress report on the \$3 million expansion on Elm Hurst

Restaurant, located along Highway 19 just south of Ingersoll. As he talked, it became apparent that construction had exceeded what council had yet to approve. For example, footings have already been poured for the foundation of the addition, even without a building permit being issued.

South-West Oxford council put a stop order on all future construction until such time that they have seen permits from the Ministry of Transportation and the Oxford

County Board of Health. Council had approved in principle a zoning change for the expansion in April, conditional upon getting the go-ahead from the transportation ministry and the health board. They have yet to see the okays from those two bodies.

"Don't you think you're being a little bit presumptuous in going ahead without the proper documentation?" demanded Gerri Klosler, South-West Oxford councillor, after she had glanced at a photograph which

showed progress well underway on the foundation.

Mr. Hosman replied that they had only poured the footings of the building. In response, councillor Ernie Hardeman retorted: "These are more than footings. There are walls here."

"I don't think there are people anymore approving than us," added Mrs. Klosler in reference to Elm Hurst expansion. "But, it does have to be done within our regulations."

Mr. Hosman admitted he was anx-

ious to get the project underway.

"To go through all the bureaucracy takes longer than what we can wait," he said. "We're under tremendous pressure to get this finished. It's a process that's faster than the bureaucratic process."

A project the size of the Elm Hurst expansion requires approval from 18 agencies. Mr. Hosman said that if they had to wait for approvals, it would take until October to get started. He told councillors that at a project he worked on in London, the roof was already on before they were issued a building permit. He spoke in relation to a construction project at the London airport.

Mr. Hosman sought approval by council to let their building inspector issue a foundation permit, and thereby legalize what had already been done. South-West Oxford councillors were adamant about waiting until the zoning by-law was finalized, and word came from the Ministry of Transportation and the board of health. Mr. Hosman claimed he had verbal approval from the two bodies. The Ministry of

Transportation was concerned about the entrance to the restaurant, considering its proximity to the 401 ramp. The Oxford County Board of Health was looking specifically at the sewage system.

Ken Whiteford, the planning commissioner for Oxford County, justified council's caution in not granting a foundation permit.

"You'd be getting into some fairly deep water with this issue," he commented. "There's a very clear infraction here. The fact is you have to have a building permit before you start putting up walls."

Plans for Elm Hurst Inn include a 200-person banquet hall, four meeting rooms, an 80-person lounge and 48 motel rooms. The proposed expansion will be an L-shaped, two storey building attached to the original Victorian mansion. The contractor for the project is Gilvesy Construction of Tilsonburg. Mr. Hosman said he hoped the walls could be up before winter, and total construction completed by the spring of 1988.

July 8, 1987

Times

Ingersoll

Stalled Elm Hurst project in the throes

By RICK HUGHES
of The Sentinel-Review

DEREHAM CENTRE — While illegal construction at the Elm Hurst Restaurant near Ingersoll is still on hold, things are starting to come together for owner Gerald Ball.

South-West Oxford township council Tuesday passed two bylaws which together begin the process of putting the stalled project back on track. It approved of the zone-change request, and established the site as a site-plan control

area. Council hopes to be able to sign a site plan development agreement with Ball at its next meeting in two weeks. That will clear the way for the lifting of the stop work order and the recommencement of construction.

Ball is planning a a \$3 million expansion of the restaurant on Highway 19, which will include a 48-room hotel, banquet hall, lounge and meeting rooms.

However, a stop-work order was issued last

month when council learned Ball had started construction without either the zoning approval or a building permit.

Ball said he was faced with a race against time to have the project completed by winter.

In closed session yesterday council reviewed the situation with Ball, township building inspector Ed Lovell, and county planner Bruce Curtis.

Council emerged from the session to pass the bylaws. It was able to make the zone change

of getting back on track

making the area highway commercial, because two needed approvals, which had been delaying the bylaw's passage — from the Ontario Ministry of Transportation and Communications (MTC) and the county's board of health — had come through.

The health board had reviewed the plans and satisfied its concerns about the septic system.

The MTC extracted a number of conditions from Ball for its approval, according to Curtis. He agreed no construction would take place at

the south-west end of the property, near the Highway 19/Highway 401 interchange, to give the MTC leeway for expansion of the ramp; he will have to relocate his main front gate off of ministry property, and he will be able to have only one entrance.

Ball refused to comment.

There is still a 35-day waiting period after the zoning bylaw is passed before any construction can begin. So even if the site-plan agreement is signed in two weeks, Ball cannot restart construction until at least September.

SENTINEL

REVIEW

August 5, 1987

Elm Hurst reopened

The kitchen is now reopened at the Elm Hurst Inn after a recent two week closing for renovations. The kitchen has been remodelled to accommodate the increase in size of the expanding hotel and restaurant.

Construction on the north end of the building was started in May and is expected to be complete in early April.

The color of the brick and the design of the new addition is in keeping with the original, turn of the century, appearance of the Elm Hurst Inn.

Included in the newly constructed section will be a banquet room able to hold up to 200 people, and the addition of 48 hotel rooms.

Gilvesy Construction of Tillsonburg, is the builder.

February 10, 1958

The new wing and renovations are completed . . .

You're invited to Elm Hurst Inn's Open House, Tuesday, May 24!

A short drive to and through Ingersoll and you come to the Elm Hurst Inn on highway 19. It has recently been expanded to include accommodations for 49 overnight guests, a grand ballroom that will seat 200 guests, plus several smaller party-come-seminar rooms and a handsome new dining room, known as the James Harris Cafe. To celebrate the completion of the new addition to Elm Hurst Margaret Ball and her family (it is a family owned country inn) is holding Open House, Tues-

day, May 24 from 2 to 8 p.m. You're invited to drop in and wander through the new complex that includes the new James Harris cafe. See the various style rooms available from the jacuzzi suite, to the two executive suites that consist of a living room and bedroom as well as bathroom. Look over the junior (mini) sitting room/bedrooms and the seminar rooms, one seats 50 the other 30 for business meetings or small family get-togethers.

A handy walkway between the old and new areas gets you where you want to be quickly and quietly. Beautifully carpeted and decorated the walkway is hung with water color and oil paintings by local artists. There's a fine selection of these oils and water colors as well as other craftwork from local area artisans scattered throughout the various rooms of both the old and new sections of Elm Hurst.

The guest rooms in the new wing are quietly elegant in a muted rose shade giving each room a relaxed but cosy atmosphere. The rear rooms enjoy a lovely view of a silvery stream, greenery and rural country as far as you look. The

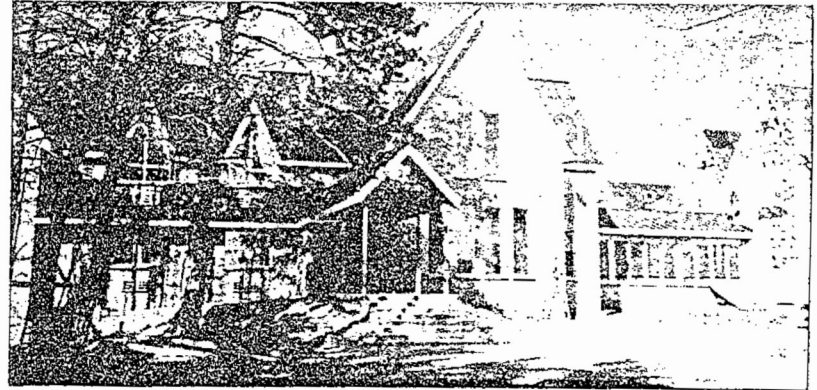
front rooms are shaded by the large trees in the wooded entrance drive up to the main house. Cathedral ceilings add to the elegance of the second floor rooms while the large windows throughout let the sun shine through the sheer curtains and valanced drapery.

Each guest room has ample storage space for your things, with dressers and night tables as well as a conveniently centred armoire holding drawers and the television set. The cream bathroom is easy on the eye and a handy well-lit make-up table is set just around the corner in the bedroom dressing area. The clothes closet, conveniently placed just inside the entry to your room, is open and handy for travellers. Double beds are extra long for your added comfort.

The month of June is very special to the Elm Hurst Inn. There'll be special room rates in celebration of the opening of the new wing. Enjoy a weekend away from the hassle and to-do of everyday life, give the Elm Hurst Inn a call and reserve a peaceful weekend in the country. Phone 485-5321 for reservations.

The Elm Hurst Inn encourages business and conference groups to use its facilities. There are various sized meeting or conference rooms on the lower level, with audio/visual aids available, as well as the guest rooms for overnight stays. These conference rooms are ideal for small, medium and large sized conferences, wedding parties, bus tour dining or large family get-togethers.

The grand ballroom holds a 200 person conference or dinner party easily and conveniently.



An early view of the newly completed wing of the Elm Hurst Inn showing the walkway joining the old with the new. A winding ramp is located next to the entry stairs.

The James Harris Cafe with its pale walls, patio view overlooking the valley and brass chandeliers, is a delightful dining room where you'll indulge your gourmet tastes from a well-planned menu. Located in the new addition, which also houses the foyer and registration area with a cosy fireplace for cold winter nights. Deep carpeting adds luxury underfoot with cosy armchairs where you can sit and dream watching the dancing flames.

Coming in June, the old carriage house on the property will become a spacious art and craft gallery showing handiwork produced by well known local artists. You'll never recognize the old silo, added to the carriage house as a point of unusual interest, displaying prints and original paintings as well as hand-crafted items. A browse through the Carriage House will show off an amazing number of articles, all for sale at reasonable prices.

Whether it's a quiet dinner for two, a relaxing week-end in the country or a dinner party for 200, the Elm Hurst Inn is ready to accommodate you, your family and friends or special groups, whether for business or pleasure.

Losses Free Press

May 21, 1988

ELM HURST

Expanded Elm Hurst opened last summer

By MARILYN SMULDERS
of The Sentinel-Review

INGERSOLL — Back a century ago, cheese baron James Harris and fellow farmers put their heads together to think of a way to stimulate foreign interest in their domestic product.

The result was a huge undertaking called the Big Cheese. When finished, it weighed 3,200 kgs and measured more than six metres around. It was destined for the world's fair in New York City.

The mammoth cheddar's birthplace is the Harris estate on Highway 19, now better known as Elm Hurst Inn.

The Elm Hurst Inn is a 'big cheese' in its own right. Last year, an expansion project extended the 121-year-old original mansion to include 49 hotel rooms, a cafe, ballroom and conference rooms. The addition was constructed along lines sympathetic to the Victorian-Gothic styling of the James Harris homestead.

Since opening in May of 1988, Elm Hurst has been successful in competing for the much-sought-after tourist dollar.

"We're very pleased with the results," smiles Margaret Ball, operator of the Inn, sitting comfortably in the new elegant foyer to the hotel area.

Rather than acting as pit stop for travellers en route to other locations, Elm Hurst management sought to make the Inn a destination. That idea is catching on, especially with business firms from Toronto to London; they're finding the quiet atmosphere of the country a good setting in which to get work down away

from the office, said Ball.

Elm Hurst is also popular with motor coach tours. The Inn's dining spots can accommodate up to four buses a day. For these out of town tourists and for nearby residents, there's also the Carriage House to drop into. The renovated barn maintains a local flavor with hand-made crafts and art works.



Since the conversion in 1978 from private home to restaurant, Elm Hurst's treed grounds and old world class have always made it a popular choice for weddings and other special occasions. Now it's even more in vogue with party-goers because of the spacious, 200-seat banquet hall. May and June are already completely booked.

For Gerald and Margaret Ball, the ambitious expansion of the inn has meant a busier life. The staff alone more than doubled, increasing from 45 full and part-time staff to 100.

"There's definitely lots to look after but we certainly enjoy the challenge," said Mrs. Ball.

SENTINEL REVIEW
March 28 1989

Corporate crowd favors rural inn near Ingersoll

INGERSOLL, Ont.

I COULD SCARCELY believe my ears. The bellboy carried three heavy bags to my room, but when I tried to tip him, he shook his head.

"No thank you ma'am," he said. "I'm quite happy to serve you. If people don't ask me for help, I really get very upset."



WEEKEND
ESCAPES
HELGA
LOVERSEED



HELGA LOVERSEED

The Elm Hurst Inn near Ingersoll was originally a private home and only recently became a hotel.

"Our corporate clients like the quiet atmosphere," said Mrs. Ball. "They can get on with their work without distractions."

The inn, which is surrounded by farms, is situated on 38 acres of land with an 18-hole golf course nearby. As yet, there are no recreational areas such as a gymnasium or a swimming pool, but plans are afoot to build a parcours trail of exercise stations in the woods.

The rooms at the inn reflect the clientele. Decorated in pastel blues, greys, beiges and dusky pinks, they are elegant and func-

tional, rather than cosy or quaint. A desk or table is provided in each room (there are also executive suites), as well as a couple of armchairs.

Although the rooms are modern, the main part of the inn was built in 1872 and for almost a century was the home of the Harris family. James Harris, the patriarch, is best known as the founder of Ingersoll's cheese industry. In 1865, he erected the first factory in this part of the country (there is still cheese making in the area) and a historic plaque in the inn's grounds commemorates his achievements.

Like some of the inn's present-day clientele, Harris was an entrepreneur. To publicize Ingersoll's cheese industry overseas, he and a group of other farmers got together and manufactured a giant cheese to display in London, England, and at the New York State Fair. The cheese, which weighed 7,300 pounds, created quite a stir and helped put Ingersoll's fledgling industry on the map.

James Harris went on to become a major exporter of apples and as befitted a successful businessman, he built his house in the grand, Victorian style. The outside walls are

constructed of pale, yellow bricks with peaked gables. (The new hotel section has been carefully constructed to blend in with the old.) The interior has several large rooms with bay windows, fancy plaster friezes and marbled black-and-white fireplaces embellished with ornate gilt trim.

Inspired by the nineteenth-century setting, we decided to order a "Victorian hunt feast" — a hearty dinner for two that included pate, consomme, spinach salad, roast pheasant in red wine sauce, baked Alaska, cheese, fruit and coffee. Unfortunately, it sounded better than it tasted. Basically, it was a run-of-the-meal dressed up with a fancy title.

The spinach was drowned in a pungent, hot bacon sauce. The pheasant was tough and the dessert was encased in soggy, unbaked egg white. It was a disappointment after the good service and the pleasant atmosphere. Maybe we would have fared better had we ordered an a la carte dish rather than a set meal, which tends to be prepared far in advance.

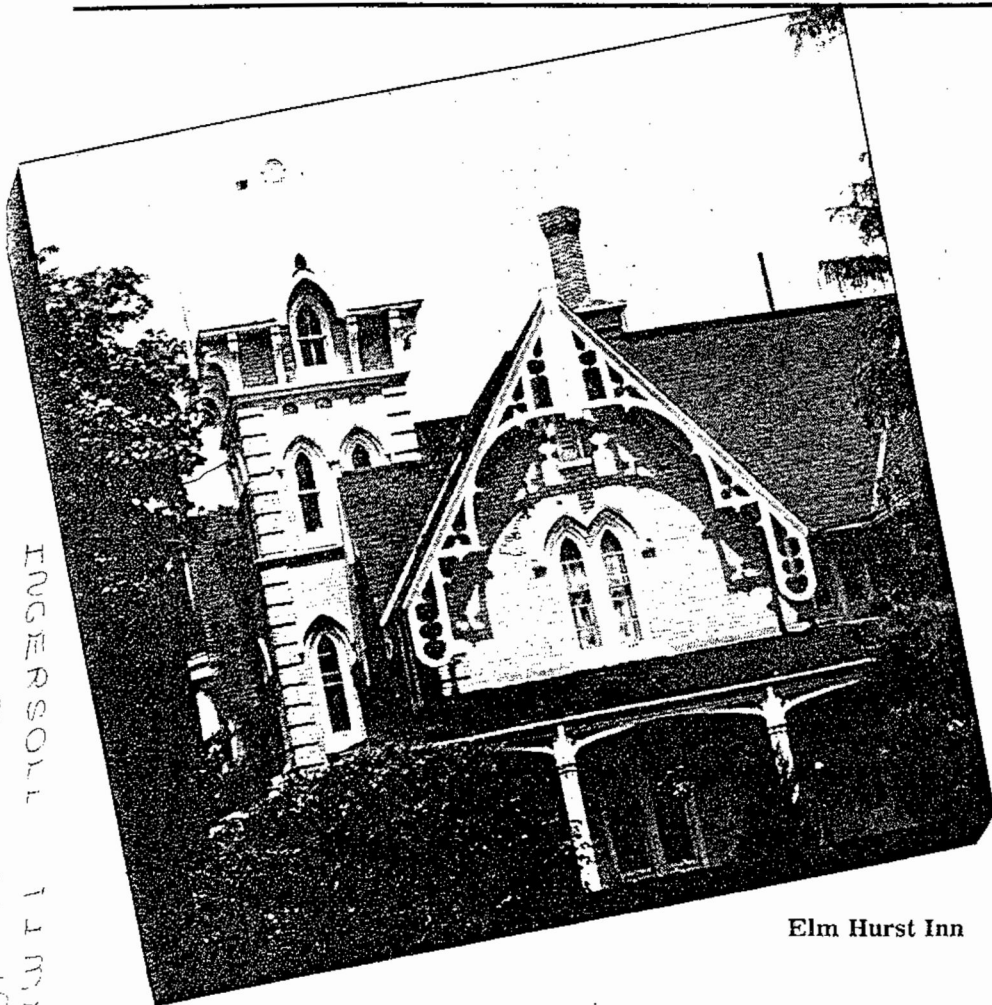
IF YOU GO

The Elm Hurst is a two-hour drive from Toronto. Take Highway 401 west and get off at exit 218B. The inn is right by the exit. A "rejuvenate-yourself" weekend package costs \$119 per person. Based on two people sharing a room, it includes two nights' accommodation, a bottle of wine, two breakfasts, and a dinner for two. For further information, write to the Elm Hurst Inn, P.O. Box 123, Ingersoll, Ont, N5C 3K1; or telephone (519) 485-5321.

GLOBE AND MAIL

ELM HURST

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Elm Hurst Inn

Old world charm offered at historic inn

short, for just about everything.

Diners are advised to reserve ahead for both small and large parties, especially at lunch and on the weekend.

Those wanting a taste of amateur theatre might want to check out the Ingersoll Theatre of the Performing Arts, which puts on several full-scale productions during the summer. Plays are usually two-act dramas, comedies and mysteries by well-known contemporary playwrights, performed by extremely talented amateur casts.

There are a couple of interesting museums in Ingersoll. The Ingersoll Cheese and Historical Museum, located off Canterbury Street as one enters Ingersoll from the south, runs several special collections through the summer, focussing on aspects of Oxford County regional history. A tourist information booth also operates at the museum during summer months.

The Ingersoll Sports Hall of Fame, located adjacent to the cheese museum, contains tributes to Ingersoll athletes of note, and mementos of past athletic accomplishments and triumphs.

Ingersoll also offers a pleasant stroll for connoisseurs of architecture. Many of the buildings in the downtown core date from the 19th century, while many of the houses along Canterbury Street are also of 19th century vintage. While the beloved 150-year-old town hall was demolished early this year to make way for another parking lot, there are still a few fairly splendid looking buildings in town, including the Sacred Heart Church, with its soaring spire, located at the corner of Thames and Bell Streets.

A look at the sprawling GM-Suzuki CAMI automotive assembly plant may be obtained by taking a drive or stroll down Ingersoll Street, or by driving towards London on the 401. The plant, a kilometre long, is slowly gearing up for full automotive production before the year is out.

Looking farther afield, nearby towns and villages offer unique travel opportunities of their own.

The Ingersoll Golf and Country Club and the Mount Elgin golf club offer a few hours on the links to golfers looking for new courses to conquer.

The nearby village of Salford, once home to a number of cheese factories, new houses the Village Cheese Mill. A popular stop on the way between Tillsonburg and Ingersoll, the mill sells a wide variety of fresh cheeses and curds. Those desiring fresh curds should drop in at the Mill - located right on Highway 19 as it passes through Salford - early in the day, as curds tend to sell out quickly.

The Beachville museum, located east of Ingersoll, contains many interesting exhibits about Oxford County's heritage. One exhibit claims the distinction of the first baseball game played in North America for the tiny town.

Thamesford, about ten kilometres north of Ingersoll, offers a quaint small town feel to curious visitors.

So, whether your tastes run to walking tours or regional theatre, Ingersoll and area offers a plethora of off-beat entertainment. Enjoy!

There's more to Ingersoll than the Cheese Museum and CAMI.

For instance, there's the Elmhurst Country Inn, located on Highway 19 just north of the 401 overpass. With the recent addition of a large hotel facility, the Elmhurst has become a popular stopover for anyone travelling along the 401.

The Inn's impressive dining facilities and

banquet rooms cater to tastes of every kind, with both a coffee shop and the elegant main restaurant in operation. The main restaurant, housed in a 19th century home of one of Ingersoll's founding residents, has become immensely popular over the years for its luncheon and dinner buffets, its week-end brunches, its regular meals, its impressive wine list and friendly service -- in

INGERSOLL 11 M.L.S. 1979

ELM HURST

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FEATURES

Review

Piano man tickles ivories at Elm Hurst

BY MIKE SWITZER

"Can you play Louis Armstrong?"

The piano man leafs through his notes and pulls out a sheet of music. Placing it atop the electronic keyboard he clears his throat and begins a soft piece from the era of the big bands - "What a Wonderful World."

The crowd sings along as he goes from a soft rendition of the song to an actual impersonation of Armstrong's guttural voice. "... Oh yeah."

The crowd shows its approval with applause and another request is made from the floor.

It's all in a night's work for Jack Roach - big band member, impersonator and solo performer.

Roach is currently playing Saturday evenings in the James Harris Cafe at the Elm Hurst Inn. Having been involved in the entertainment industry since the age of 12, Roach's professional approach lends itself well to the classic decor of the Elm Hurst's dining lounge.

Roach's repertoire of voices ranges from Armstrong, Arthur Godfrey, Jimmy Stewart and Frankie Lane to Peter Lorre, Walter Brennan and Nat King Cole. His musical abilities span across time and tastes, encompassing everything from big band music, 1950s and 1960s rock and roll, current chart hits and country and western music.

"I try to keep a party-type atmosphere and make it very dancy,"

Roach said. "I can actually make it sound as if there were a five-member band present. Technology allows me to do that."

Roach recalls a time when he was playing at Toronto's Kingsway Club, playing during intermissions for Louis Armstrong's band.

"The management at the club asked me to do my impersonation of Armstrong while he was there. I felt a little embarrassed at first. I didn't want him to take it as an insult. But management asked me to do it and I did."

"About four years later Armstrong's band was back in Toronto. I went to look for him in the bus, and there he was sipping tea. Well, he took one look at me and said in that

voice of his, 'Jack Roach.' He actually remembered me. It was quite a pleasant surprise.

"That has to be one of the more memorable moments of my career in music."

In addition to his solo act, Roach is also lead singer of the London-based New Modernaires, a group that helped make possible the city's Big Band Festival. In the past he has performed with other acts such as Mart Kenny, Benny Lewis, Art Hallman, Franky Kay, Ozzie William and Jack Denton.

"We always had, and still have a very good following with the big band," Roach said. "It really is a great time. I enjoy the big bands still, always will because it's where my roots are. But solo performances give me more control. I can control the keys, the tempo, and all the rest."

He said his performances at the Elm Hurst, which started in September, have been going very well.

"It's a cafe atmosphere. They dim the lights and put candles on the tables. It's quite a classy place."

"Some people even say they like the music."



Jack Roach plays for an appreciative audience at Ingersoll's Elm Hurst Inn in the James Harris Cafe. Roach plays a wide variety of music, ranging from big bands, 50's and 60's rock and roll, current hits and country and western. (Mike Switzer photo)

Elm Hurst

4/0

Casson pieces to be sold at Elm Hurst

Nearly \$1 million worth of art pieces by the last surviving member of the Group of Seven will be sold in Ingersoll this weekend.

A number of works by A. J. Casson will be made available for purchase at the Elm Hurst Inn Friday and Saturday. Reproductions from five separate collections have been assembled for the event, which is also being used to raise \$25,000 for the Toronto Children's Hospital. The total value of the works available is more than \$750,000.

Casson, 93, currently resides in Toronto. For approximately 70 years he travelled across Ontario, capturing its scenery, villages and rural life on canvas in a style which earned him acclaim nationally and around the world.

He became the seventh member of the Group of Seven in 1928, remaining within Canada's most celebrated artistic circle until it disbanded in 1932.

Gerald Ball, owner and manager of the Elm Hurst Inn, said this will be the largest offering of Casson's works ever in this area. Many of the works available this weekend were made from originals that have never before been reproduced, having remained in Casson's home until recently.

All orders taken during the sale will be filled during February. Museum framing will be optional at \$260 for each order.

Anyone seeking additional information is asked to call 485-5321.



Gerald Ball, owner and operator of the Elm Hurst Inn, sits beside a pair of A.J. Casson prints which will be available for purchase this weekend in Ingersoll. Approximately \$750,000 worth of Casson's art will be put up for sale at the Elm Hurst, with \$25,000 going towards the Toronto Children's Hospital. (Mike Switzer photo)

Ingersoll Times
Feb 6, 1991

ELM
HURST

47

A Victorian Manner

Restored to its former glory, the Elm Hurst in Ingersoll is a tasteful tribute to days gone by

By Andrew MacFarlane



She would have approved. Owners Margaret and Gerald Ball and chef Wayne Zavitz strike a formal pose before the Old Queen's portrait in the Elm Hurst dining room. Before them are two house specialties: crème caramel and, naturally, chicken Victoria.

Another spring greets the awakening acres of Oxford — a century ago Ontario's "Banner County." Pigeons trundle their plump selves down the western-facing slope of the carriage-house roof at Elm Hurst, to fluff up in the faint but distinct afternoon rays of April. The long grass struggles to its

feet by the historic plaque to the Big Cheese at the end of the graceful circular drive, and maples are in bud near the handsome Victorian manor, now home to one of the region's most culturally congenial dining establishments.

James Harris built Elm Hurst in 1872 on a farm just northeast of the present-day

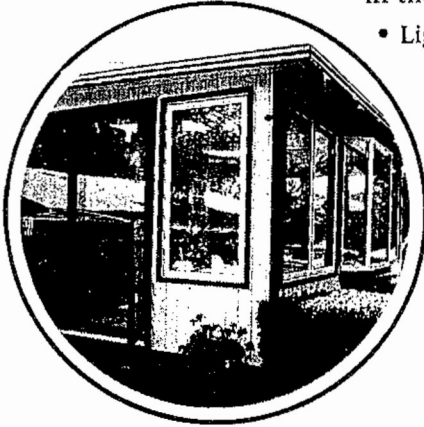
junction of Highways 19 and 401 where, in 1865, he had established the first cheese factory in the Ingersoll area. The site seems to have been good for a hardy strain of the home-grown entrepreneurial gumption that made Oxford County the dairy capital of Canada in days when indigenous poet James McIntyre saluted the region's prime benefactress: *The cow, a kindly creature/ kind and pleasant in each feature.*

McIntyre was one of the most famous Canadian exponents of a genre of poetry that sounds, well, fairly terrible to modern ears, but was generously appreciated by Victorian contemporaries. Its practitioners included William McGonagall of Dundee, Scotland, the most famous bad verse writer of the age, who tried to personally deliver his poems to the Queen at Balmoral Castle, and whose art was obviously a model for such McIntyre works as: *To us it is a glorious theme/ To sing of milk and curds and cream/ Were it collected it could float/ On its bosom, small steam boat/ Cows numerous as swarm of bees/ Are milked in Oxford to make cheese.*

McIntyre celebrated the spirit of enterprise that led Elm Hurst's James Harris to produce the world's biggest cheese right here in 1866. Similarly inspired a century later, Gerald Ball and his family, Elm Hurst's present proprietors, have just completed a project that began 10 years ago with the restoration of the old mansion, and climaxes this month in the opening of a discreetly adjoining \$3-million inn and conference centre.

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LOCAL FLAVOR

Gerald Ball is a cheery, pink-cheeked, country-gentle Oxford County native who grew up in Zorra Township and dairy farmed there after attending Embro Continuation School. In 1970, he says, "I decided I needed another challenge so I took the real estate course in London and got my licence."

He became an agent with Ingersoll real-estate broker Clair Bray, whose wife, Mary, was looking around for development projects. In 1977, James Harris's granddaughter, the last member of the Harris family, sold the property to Ingersoll Elevators, and Mary persuaded Clair to buy the house and 28 acres with Gerald and his wife Margaret.

"It was just when old homes were starting to be made into restaurants," says Gerald, "and Mary's idea was to turn it into a nice place, keeping to the Victorian era."

McIntyre was one of the most famous Canadian exponents of a genre of poetry that sounds, well, fairly terrible to modern ears.

Mary became the manager, and with Ball's daughter Marlene as her assistant, they spent a year prowling the attics, basements and "ye olde junk shops" of the region for Victorian furniture and elegancies. They bought tables, trivets, sconces, stands, clocks, chairs, paintings and paraphernalia of all sorts, some of it perhaps manufactured in the very steam factory operated on the banks of the Thames in Ingersoll by McIntyre, eulogist of the Oxford County cow, as well as a renowned furniture manufacturer and undertaker of the time.

Harris, McIntyre and Elm Hurst are forever linked in McIntyre's poetic masterpiece, commemorating Harris's creation of a giant cheddar cheese measuring nearly seven feet across, 21 feet around, three feet high and weighing 7,300 pounds. The cheese, intended to promote far and wide the sale of the genuine Oxford County article, was paraded on a special wagon drawn by six grey horses to the Great Western railway station in Ingersoll, exhibited at the New York State Fair in Saratoga, and shipped to England where it was sold to a Liverpool wholesaler. Jealous American

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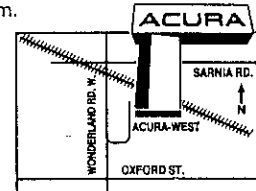
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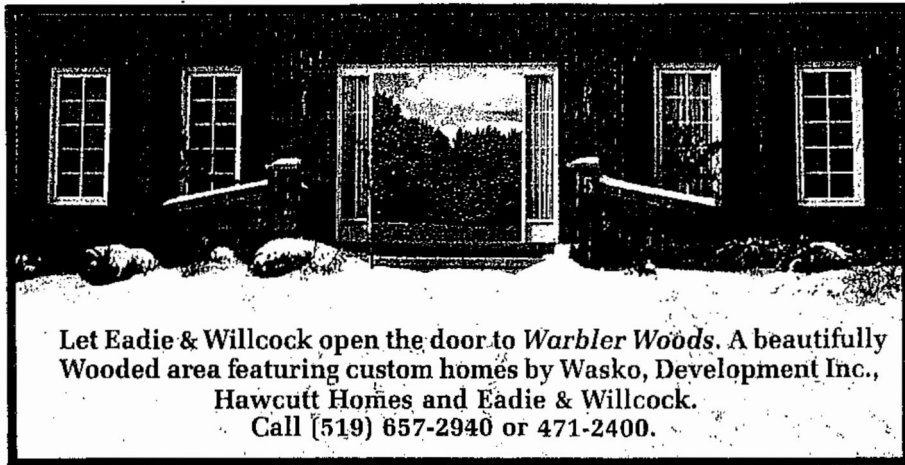
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LOCAL FLAVOR

cheesemakers concocted a story that it went bad on the ship causing a mutiny before being jettisoned. A truer picture is revealed by McIntyre in "Ode on the Mammoth Cheese": *We have seen thee, queen of cheese/ Lying quietly at your ease/ Gently fanned by evening breeze/ Thy fair form no flies dare seize/ We'rt thou suspended from balloon/ You'd cast a shade even at noon/ Folks would think it was the moon/ About to fall and crush them soon.*

The moon did not fall on the new restaurateurs of Elm Hurst, but quite a number of other things did. They found that the surrounding community was dry — but that their first chef was not, nor the cook who replaced him. And a few weeks after Elm Hurst opened, nine years ago this month, Mary and Clair Bray's marriage broke up. Mary drove off to London in her trademark Rolls to seek her fortune, and has pros-

In converting Elm Hurst, Mary Bray found that the surrounding community was dry — but that their first chef wasn't.

pered in the real estate business.

"When Mary and Clair had their problems," says Gerald Ball, "Marlene was home from the West. Marg started working here. Our family was interested, and we weren't ready to give it up. So we bought them out and carried on with it." In time, Ball's youngest daughter Shirley also joined the business. Both girls have country-fresh good looks, boundless enthusiasm and solid restaurant experience gained in establishments ranging from the Corkscrew in Calgary to tiny Port Cunnington Lodge at Lake of Bays in Muskoka — famous among generations of cognoscenti for its simple, superb food.

A consultant advised the Balls on serving cuisine that might have been transplanted from England a century ago — as were many of the Ingersoll gentry. The Balls also selected a new chef, and they turned out to be third-time lucky.

Wayne Zavitz is a six-foot-four 34-year-old with an Ivy-League look mildly surprising in a Strathroy farm boy. His family moved to Woodstock when he was 16, and he started washing dishes weekends at the Queens restaurant there. Next came

full-time cooking jobs in the United Cigar Store coffee shop (later Tina's Restaurant) and the Woodstock Inn — where he was sous chef for a year and head chef for seven. Then, despite his years in the business, he went back to school, first for upgrading at Fanshawe College, then for cooking courses at George Brown College in Toronto. "I thought it would be better if you had your papers — that you'd get into better places, which I always wanted to do."

Between stints at school he generally held jobs two at a time: at the Woodstock Inn, with nights off cooking steaks at the Town Gate Inn, Tillsonburg; or days as *garde-manger*, cutting meat and making salads at London's City Centre Holiday Inn, and evenings as chef at the Woodstock Inn. "It was only open from five to nine so I still had time for my nightlife afterwards," he recalls. "You have lots more energy when you're younger, I guess." He also found time to court and marry a Royal

"I still had time for my nightlife afterwards," says chef Zavitz. "You have lots more energy when you're younger."

Bank management trainee. Wife Diane is now a manager of consumer loans in Tillsonburg, and they have a home in Ingersoll and two sons aged three and five.

When a former bartender at the old Ingersoll Inn named John Brown won \$1 million in Loto Canada and bought the inn, he hired Zavitz as his chef. "I don't know whether it was because I worked there or not, or the fact that John Brown was a millionaire, but we were busy all the time. We had all kinds of comments on the food." Among the enthusiastic diners were the Balls of Elm Hurst, who hired Zavitz as head chef in 1979.

What Zavitz has developed over the years amounts to an approach to food suitable for a gentleman's table in 19th-century Oxford County: "Fine dining in a country-home atmosphere, everything fresh, and with a lot of items on the menu using local cheeses." It was, of course, an eclectic age, and Zavitz's training is classical, so the present bill of fare continues the commendable Victorian practice of accepting something good from wherever it's to be found.

For instance, the dinner specialties,

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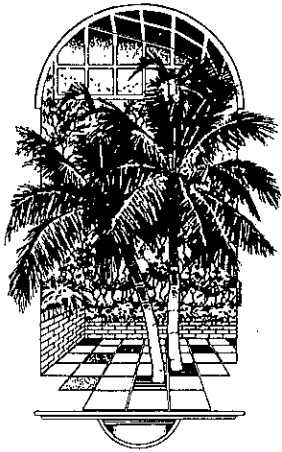
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LOCAL FLAVOR

priced between \$12 and \$18, include not only pheasant (a day's notice required) and prime rib of beef with Yorkshire pudding and creamed horseradish, but also Australian orange roughly, veal Oscar, poached salmon, peppercorn steak and chateaubriand, as well as a medley of scallop, shrimp and crab, baked in local cheese with asparagus.

Zavitz's cuisine and Elm Hurst have both been evolving. The main house remains as its builder James Harris knew it: a splendid buff-brick Gothic residence with gorgeous gingerbread vergeboards framing its steep gables, and a commanding three-storey tower with tall cathedral windows — accessible by a secret staircase behind the upstairs medicine cabinet. Inside, living rooms, parlors, drawing rooms, the dining room and what was once an attached woodshed have progressively been con-

God bless the Queen. And pudding. And cheese. And the Jameses, for pleasures that reached us across the years and stayed with us at Elm Hurst.

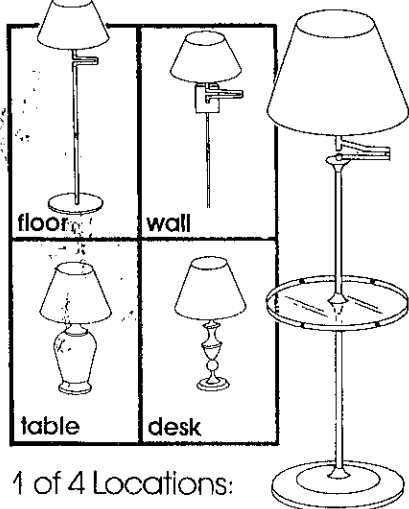
verted to restaurant rooms. The upstairs bedrooms, which began as a warren of galleries for local artists and craftspeople, have also gradually been taken over for dining, and the arts and crafts have moved out to the renovated carriage shed. There are now a grand total of 10 dining rooms. The new Inn complex, attached through a shining new kitchen that is twice the size of Zavitz's old one, is built of brick dyed to the antique buff of the old building, and features high vertical pitches and angles that complement it.

On a recent evening visit, candles and twilight brought a cosy glow to the little parlor that has become the Victoria Room, glinting on rose-patterned, gilt-edged show plates and gently warming two portraits of the Gracious Lady herself. (Prince Albert adorns his own dining room across the hall.)

We chose for our appetizer the terrine of pâté — dark and vivacious with a slight peppery aftertaste, and concocted of chicken livers, onion, carrots, celery and brandy, bound in bacon and served with ruby-red Cumberland sauce. My companion had a delicious, creamy asparagus

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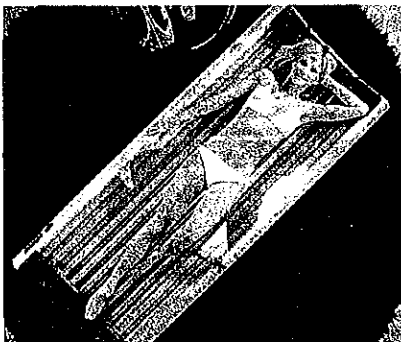


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soup with lots of submerged tender green tips in it — doubtless from Putnam, the nearby asparagus capital. My Victorian cheddar cheese soup was a smooth blend of orange Tavistock cheddar and béchamel sauce, yielding from its velvety depths little discoveries of celery, carrots, onion and broccoli. We devoured our fresh, warm rolls and potted cheese — the house signature, made of whipped cream cheese, cheddar, garlic, Worcestershire and chives. Then disregarding any danger of glut, I tucked into an excellent boneless, butterfly pork loin chop adorned with a layer of peameal bacon — and over that, melted Swiss cheese. My companion soon flagged but not before almost doing justice to a delightful "chicken breast Prince Edward" (named for that gallant trencherman, Victoria's son the Prince of Wales, who visited Canada in 1860). The chicken — *bosoms*, as Victorian propriety would have had it — was stuffed with shrimp, cheddar and sliced mushrooms, then decorated with a St. George's cross of red peppers not unlike the royal orders bedizening a plump Queen Victoria in the portraits that hang on the wall.

I studied her as I experienced once again that epiphany of British Pudding, a vast trifle, containing layers and layers of sherry-soaked cake, raspberry jam, pears, peaches, a layer of custard and curls of white and dark choc. With patriotic pudding fervor, I thought warmly of McIntyre's ode to his future, our present: *While British blood doth course each vein/ Proudly this heritage maintain/ With fertile acres by the billions/ Future homes of two hundred millions.*

God bless the Queen, I thought. And pudding. And cheese. And all good food for eager eaters. And the Jameses, Harris and McIntyre, for pleasures that reached us across the years and stayed with us as, fast lane zipping past, we lagged luxuriously Londonwards, happy and glorious along the 401.

Wayne Zavitz has an eclectic approach, but the core of his Elm Hurst cuisine still reflects the good life as lived by the Victorian gentry of Oxford County. This favorite chicken specialty salutes the Sovereign Lady as well.

CHICKEN BREAST VICTORIA WITH WHITE WINE SAUCE

6 6-oz./170-g boneless chicken breasts
6 1-inch/2.5-cm cubes cheddar cheese
Flour seasoned with salt, white pepper
and tarragon, for dusting
2 oz./55 g salted butter
3 oz./90 mL white wine


Flatten chicken breasts with mallet. Place cheese cube in centre of each breast, then

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