

Fleury Street gathers for historic party and recognition



Each year, as the summer approaches, residents of Fleury Street gather for their annual street party.

It's always a chance to catch up with neighbours and have some fun before summer holidays get underway, but this year's party was extra-special as it featured the unveiling of a historic plaque marking 48 Fleury Street and helping to do the honours was Aurora's official Town Crier, John Webster, whose family once called the dwelling home.

Webster's grandfather, Donald (Dan) Webster, a notable local school trustee, made the house a home for many years and, today, it's known as the Scott-Webster house, sharing recognition with the building's first owner, Walter Scott.

Also on hand for the ceremony was local historian Jacqueline Stuart, whose research helped make the case on why the house, which lies within the Town's only Heritage Conservation District, was deserving of a little extra recognition.

It's actually one of those cases where the house itself is not particularly distinctive, but is one of actually, in this case, a block full of homes all much of the same period from the nineteen-teens and somewhat similar styles, Stuart explains. If you change just one of them if you took down #48 and made it into a fake French chateau, it's really going to spoil the look of the street. It's going to upset it. This keeps the flavour of the street.

She describes it as an example of a pleasant house for Aurorans with comfortable incomes according to the era, not necessarily hugely wealthy people.

There are a couple of values [of the house] one is the context. There is kind of a flavour to that street and you don't want to put it at risk by changing one of the houses hugely or something like that, Stuart continues. The other value is generally known as 'associative value' if it is associated with a particular industry [for example], but it is usually a person. This Donald Webster or Dan Webster, as he was confusingly known was very well-known in the community, lived here forever, but he was on the school board for 30 years and continued to Aurora in that way for a long time and in lots of other ways, too, I'm sure. That was a particular distinction.

Designations like these help preserve context in Aurora, she adds.

I mean, I would put a huge glass dome over Aurora and not change anything old, new, whatever, let's just keep it exactly what it is however, that is not going to happen, and of course, it shouldn't, says Stuart with a laugh. You have to have places for people to live, a huge problem these days.

She says she's glad homes in the Fleury Street area are part of the Heritage Conservation District, but says more can be done to preserve the community's architectural flavour in years to come.

'Fleury Street is in a special area and after that district was established, quite a few people in Southeast Old Aurora, south of Wellington, east of Yonge Street, wanted to establish a Southeast Old Aurora Heritage Conservation District,' says Stuart of streets in and around the Town Park area. 'That [idea] went quite a distance down the road, but it was eventually rejected, I suspect, because of a certain amount of 'I'm never sure whether it's misinformation, disinformation, or just gossip; who knows, but word got out that, 'If your property is in an area like that, you'll never sell it because' because there are restrictions around changes to your house ' but they're not humungous restrictions, really, but there are some. People who lived in the proposed new district began objecting to its designation because they were fearful of whatever would happen to their own properties if they decided to alter them.

'I was disappointed that that southeast area did not achieve overall designation because, again, there's streets, parts of streets and so on that have a particular aura, if you like, that I think is worth preserving. It seems to me now every couple of months you drive down the street and see another house has been demolished and has been replaced by a giant.'

By Brock Weir