

Pickering College dining hall a tribute to its Quaker past



By Jake Courtepatte

After a busy summer of construction, Newmarket's Pickering College unveiled their newly-renovated dining hall to the public last Tuesday with a touch of both historic and international flair.

Among the expansion of the hall hangs dozens of international flags, representing all the different backgrounds that the students of the college come from. But the new namesake of the dining hall is a homegrown legend on campus.

The Harry M. Beer Dining Hall is a tribute to the school's longest serving Headmaster, who oversaw the construction of the original dining hall in 1966.

Harry McWaters Beer was a pivotal figure in Pickering College's history, and in the history and evolution of education in Canada. He attended Pickering College, graduating in 1931, and taught at the school in the '30s, '40s and '50s (alongside such notable colleagues as Ran Ide who went on to start TVO and former head of the CRTC, John Meisel). Beer served as Headmaster from 1953 to 1978.

He was also considered 'Dean' of the Canadian Headmasters' Association, where he achieved one of his proudest accomplishments - the elimination of corporal punishment in independent schools in Canada.

Harry, a Quaker, was a much beloved teacher and Headmaster, believing always in the good in every child.

With Quaker roots in mind, the expanded dining hall follows the concept of both symmetry and simplicity. Added were energy-efficient doors and windows, washrooms, sound-absorbing flooring, and air conditioning.

The formal dedication of the Harry M. Beer Dining Hall will take place in October during Pickering College's Alumni Reunion Weekend.