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Architectural Conservation Award for Old S.S. No. 2

By Bruce S. Elliott

On December 14, Ottawa City Council approved an Ottawa Architectural Conservation Award of Excellence in the category of adaptive reuse to the owner and architects involved in the renovation of old March Township S.S. No. 2. Certificates were presented on Heritage Day, February 19, 2007 to Dr James Lacey, the owner, Ralph Vandenberg and Malcolm Wildeboer of Ralph Vandenberg Architect Inc., and Roy Nadram of RND Construction Ltd. Mr Vandenberg received a similar award in 2005 for his adaptive

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Old S.S. No. 2 at 895 March Road, now Dr James Lacey's surgery, dates from 1892 but occupies the site of March Township's first schoolhouse, built in 1828. *Michèle LeBoidus*

Attention amateur and aspiring singers...

Gentleman and Lady Amateur Singers are invited to join the first **Pinhey's Point Catch and Glee Club**, an eight-week course in singing the historic – and witty – partsongs that enlivened many a long evening in the nineteenth century.

The Club will learn and perform music from the volumes in the Pinhey family collection as well as other choice samples of these unaccompanied songs that spilled out of the English gentlemen's catch clubs and into colonial Canada from the eighteenth century on. Some are

self-harmonizing rounds, some are a little racy, and some are the height of Victorian respectability, but all of them evoke the bantering sociability of a bygone era. A special sense of comradeship develops as singers learn to depend on each other to pick up or "catch" the musical and verbal puns and weave individual lines into a complex whole. While this music developed as the manly equivalent of ladies' parlour music, the Pinhey's Point Catch and Glee Club also welcomes ladies who enjoy boyish glee and a good sing.

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reuse of the old South March Orange Hall at 160 Flamborough Way, which serves as his architectural offices. The citation for S.S. No. 2 notes that "this project involved the conversion of a former schoolhouse into medical offices. A sympathetically designed board and batten addition at the rear of the building provides a new main entrance and reception area. The interior offices feature the exposed masonry walls of the former classroom and other original building elements such as wainscoting and a blackboard. The increased structural requirements of the second floor operating room and offices were cleverly incorporated into the building design without compromising its heritage character."

Site of Schoolhouse Since 1828

The stone schoolhouse in old School Section No. 2 is the lineal descendant of the first schoolhouse in March Township, erected in 1828. The first common school teacher in March was John Younghusband (1795-1885), an English immigrant from Egremont in Cumberland and the progenitor of the numerous Younghusbands living in the Ottawa area. Younghusband arrived in March Township with his wife Mary Ashburner and three young children in that year, and commenced teaching in what would become School Section 2 in July (AO, RG2 M-2, J. Younghusband superannuation file). Younghusband had not been a teacher in England. At the births of his first three children, the Egremont parish register had recorded his occupation successively as yeoman, husbandman, and labourer. His grandfather Nicholas had also been a yeoman or freeholding farmer. John appears to have lost the family farm and emigrated to make good his loss of status. Having few resources, he chose to parlay his English education into a career in the new land.

The schoolhouse must have been erected about the time Younghusband arrived, as the Rev. Amos Ansley, the Anglican missionary serving Hull and March, wrote to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel on August 7, 1828 that his plan for building a second church (St Mary's had opened on the riverfront in October 1827) in a central location to serve the people of March, Nepean, Goulbourn and Huntley had not progressed as he had hoped but that "at the central site above mentioned a school-house has lately been erected, which serves the purpose of a temporary church. The intention of erecting the church, however, has not been abandoned." (SPG Report 1828, p. 147, General Synod Archives, Toronto) The school lot, one-twelfth of an acre, was deeded on May 1, 1833 by John Armstrong to Hamnett Pinhey and James Read and their successors as churchwardens. It was described as commencing 3 chains (198 feet) south of the northeast

corner of lot 11, con. 3. Younghusband signed as witness to the deed (Ottawa-Carleton Registry, deed no. 1134). In 1831 the teacher purchased a farm, the south half of lot 12, con. 4, from William Brown Bradley, mortgaging the property to Hamnett Pinhey. He may well have rented the property from Bradley since his arrival, as it was so convenient to the schoolhouse which was near the northeast corner of lot 11, con. 3, diagonally across from this land.

The schoolhouse, being centrally located in the most heavily-populated part of the township, played a central role in the lives of the inhabitants. Initially the sole schoolhouse in the township, it also served as a temporary church for Anglicans in the interior until the opening of St John's at South March a decade later. The schoolhouse was also the venue for the annual township meetings from at least 1837 to 1850, when the first township hall was built (LAC, MG9 D8-56, first twp. min. book). The school was also just a short distance north of the intersection of the township's earliest roads. The Goulbourn Forced Road had been laid out in 1823, originally angling north to the Torbolton line beyond Pinhey's Point. The site of South March became a road junction in the summer of 1829 when the township's first road was joined by March Road, proceeding north to Fitzroy Harbour, and the Sandhill Road linking with the Richmond Road in Nepean. The schoolhouse stands near the corner of March Road and the Old Carp Road, but when the latter was laid out in 1830 for some reason it ran along the road allowance between lots 10 and 11 through con. 3 and then north along the second line before joining its present course west to Huntley. The school lot was therefore not at the major road junction, but a short distance north of the primary intersection at March corners. There seems little doubt, however, that the location of this multi-purpose structure helped influence the decision to create the township's primary intersection in its vicinity.

In addition to his role as schoolmaster, John Younghusband was for many years the township tax collector, and he did double duty as town clerk from 1836 to 1842. In the latter year he departed to teach in Ernestown near Kingston for a year, assigning his farm to South March storekeeper J.J. Goodman as trustee for his son John Younghusband Jr., then about 17. It is unclear whether or not the family accompanied him. John Sr. taught in Beckwith for eight years and then for a year in Goulbourn. In the January 1852 census his wife and children were recorded living on their old farm in March with son John Jr., but John Sr. was not with them. We have not located him anywhere in that census, but we know from his superannuation file at the Ontario Archives that he taught in Huntley for eight years before resuming the

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mastership of March S.S. No. 2 in 1860. He retired on 24 December 1863 due to failing eyesight.

The present handsome stone building dates from 1892. In the 1960s the province implemented a policy of school consolidation, drawing all public elementary

education in a township under the central control of a five-member board. S.S. 2 closed in 1963 when March Central School opened. The final lessons taught in 1963 were never erased from the blackboard. Hidden behind drywall while the building was in use as the Arteca Gallery, the blackboard has now been returned to view in Dr Lacey's surgery. Another charming vignette from the

history of the school is that in 1947 a former pupil, Alban Tracy, donated \$1,000 in trust to establish academic awards for the pupils, and to provide them with a hamper of MacIntosh apples annually at Hallowe'en and Christmas. We offer our congratulations to Dr Lacey for facilitating the survival of this important historic structure, and to Mr Vandenberg and his associates for their fine work.