

City adds to historic places register

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Heritage | Councillor says old roundhouse could be turned into a museum

A former railway roundhouse built on Union Street in 1885 by B. Mooney and Sons for the Northern and Western Railway has been added to the city's local historic places register.



STEPHEN MACGILLIVRAY PHOTO

THE OLD TRAIN YARD: This view from the walking trail shows the old northside roundhouse on Union Street.

The register is a list of buildings, archaeological sites and spaces deemed to be of historical significance. Sites are placed on the register with the permission of the property owner, and they're researched and recommended for inclusion by a subcommittee of the preservation review board of the city.

The railway roundhouse is one of seven buildings city council has endorsed for inclusion in the register and that pleases Ward 4 (South Devon) Coun. Eric Megarity, who sees the potential to preserve the building's history and give it a new purpose.

The structure, located at 912 and 930 Union St., is owned by the city.

"That would be a true historical property," Megarity said of the roundhouse. "The way I see it, that property will complement Carleton Park and it will make a nice focal point for South Devon."

If the city strikes a deal on the former Irving bulk storage site, once the site of Fort Nashwaak, the roundhouse would be another historical element to incorporate into the city park area, Megarity said.

Restoration and re-use of the roundhouse will have to be done as funds become available, but Megarity sees potential for the building to house a museum showcasing the history of Marysville, Devon and Barkers Point.

"It's on the radar now. I was happy that it was included (in the register)," Megarity said.

One idea is to restore the roundhouse floor and show the layout of the tracks, he said.

Roundhouses were used for repairs and to change the direction of early locomotive engines, which could only go forward.

The railway roundhouse is adjacent to Carleton Park. The bricks - 500,000 of them - used in its construction came from Alexander Boss Gibson's brickyard. Gibson, the empire builder of his day, built the Marysville Cotton Mill and the brick-work houses surrounding it.

Other places added to the city's register include Wilmot Park, named in honour of benefactor Edward Henry Wilmot who restored and opened the park in 1895.

The Wilmot Park caretaker's cottage, formerly Government House gatehouse, was added to the list as well.

In 1882, John Jarvis was hired as a caretaker for the grounds of Government House and moved into the gatehouse, built for his family.

The building was moved from Old Government House grounds to Wilmot Park to provide for a caretaker for the park.

A privately owned house at 311 University Ave., known as Babbitt House, has been added to the register. The house was built in 1875 for George N. Babbitt, deputy receiver general of New Brunswick.

The two-storey, Second Empire-style dwelling was the location for the first telephone transmission in Fredericton. Babbitt and his brother John were both inventors and in the late 1870s, John Babbitt built his own telephone.

A residence at 871 Charlotte St., dating back to the 1860s, was the home of local building contractor Robert McElvaney.

He worked on the Queen Street post office and the Gibson Methodist Church. He built six duplexes designed by renowned architect J.C. Dumaresq.

The Pauper Cemetery, located in Nashwaaksis, was also added to the list. Established in 1921, it's located between the juncture of Ferris and Jewett streets and the walking trail.

The graveyard was established as the final resting place for York County's poor and disadvantaged.

The city has also added Queen Square playground to its registry. The park has been a public space for more than 100 years.