



Heritage Buildings: Permanent or Purposeless?

HUMBOLDT – As motorists enter Humboldt from the east, they approach a landmark, one of the city's oldest buildings, a school built in 1912 and 1913.

The Humboldt Public School, like many public buildings, is set back from the street and is nearly surrounded by parks and playgrounds.

It is fitting that the street and the park are named for a former student, Glenn Hall, the famous NHL Hall-of-Fame goalie.

It is tragic that this historic school building will probably be demolished soon after its 100th birthday.

Humboldt Public School is characteristic of two and one-half storey educational buildings constructed in Saskatchewan in the early 20th century. It is an impressive structure composed primarily of multi-coloured brick walls surmounted by a mansard roof and rounded dormers.

Huge brick chimneys guard the roof. Crisp limestone trim adds interest to the school's strong symmetrical massing. Although some renovations have altered the exterior windows, part of an original mullioned window centres the south side.

Date inscription blocks and projecting eaves add to the architectural beauty of the building.

Neglect and disrepair are slowing eating away at the aesthetic beauty.

The school was built during a flourishing period in Humboldt's history and in this province is one of the few remaining schools of this design still being used for its original purpose.

Designed to impart a sense of authority, such imposing structures also met the functional needs of optimistic and growing communities.

When it was built, Humboldt Public School evoked a sense of permanency and spoke to the importance

of an educational system in a booming prairie town.

Now when the city and province are experiencing another economic growth period, preserving heritage buildings such as Humboldt Public School should be an important part of planning for the future.

The Humboldt Public School is cherished as a prominent symbol of the community's heritage having served its educational needs for nearly one hundred years.

Future students may move in to a more modern building but the pioneer sense of permanency and optimism and the value of education can be symbolized in the preservation of this architecturally detailed schoolhouse.

The public school provides citizens with a definite "Humboldt" sense of place that will surely be missed if it is demolished.W

• *Article and photos by Carol Oleksyn*