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HISTORIC HOME GETS NEW LEASE ON LIFE

Whitby couple to build their future in Jones-Puckrin home after saving it from demolition. It will be relocated to a nearby farm



Parvaneh Pessian
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WHITBY -- The first time Jake Chomisky laid eyes on the Jones-Puckrin House, a two-storey Victorian home dating back to the 1840s, was as a child visiting Cullen Gardens and Miniature Village in Whitby.

Many years later, he would return to the site -- this time as a young man in search of the perfect place to call home. The historic farmhouse had continued to age over the years and now sat vacant, teetering on the brink of demolition if a new owner was not found. But to Mr. Chomisky, it had never looked better.

"It was dark outside by the time I got there. I finished work around 7 and went over. This was later in the fall, winter time probably, and I didn't even have to look at it in the daylight to know that I wanted it," he says.

Growing up in an old farmhouse in Whitby, the 23 year old developed a passion for historic homes. So when he and his fiancée, Dusty McCarrell, were looking for somewhere to live that was close to the tree farming business he runs with his uncle, John, he says he was immediately drawn to the Jones-Puckrin House.

The couple recently purchased it from the Town of Whitby with plans to move it from the Cullen property at 300 Taunton Rd. W. to Mr. Chomisky's family farm on Coronation Road.

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Ryan Pfeiffer / Metroland

WHITBY -- Jake Chomisky of Whitby and his fiancée Dusty McCarrell have purchased the historic Jones-Puckrin House and will be moving it from Cullen Central Park to his farm property on Coronation Road. The house, which was built in the 1840s and is original to the Cullen site, was slated for demolition if a new owner was not found.

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Ryan Pfeiffer / Metroland

WHITBY -- Jake Chomisky of Whitby and his fiancée Dusty McCarrell have purchased the historic Jones-Puckrin House and will be moving it from Cullen Central Park to his farm property on Coronation Road. The house is 173 years old.

Whitby couple save little piece of Town's history; relocate house

From page 1

"I just knew that house would look like a million bucks on the farm up on the hill compared to anything else," he says. "It's a beautiful old farmhouse; it's got nice woodwork and everything about it is (well) suited to the farm ... this house has real character. It's 173 years old."

The Jones-Puckrin House is an example of the Gothic Revival style in the Victorian period, later labeled Carpenter Gothic (1840-1865) architectural style. It's original to the Cullen site and served as an integral part of the popular tourist attraction for 25 years (1980-2005).

In 2013, a more than \$2.6-million transaction closed between the Town and Quebec-based company Auberge et spa Le Nordik Inc. for the development of a nature spa at what's now known as Cullen Central Park. The Town then had to determine the fate of the heritage buildings on the property, including the

Jones-Puckrin House, Lynde House and Log Cabin. Later that year, the Lynde House was relocated to 900 Brock St. S. to be repurposed as a museum.

In 2015, council approved the relocation of the Log Cabin on lands owned by the Town within Cullen Central Park to be used as a community meeting space, as well as the disposition of the Jones-Puckrin House to Laurie McCulloch Building Moving. According to staff's report on the matter, Mr. McCulloch would attempt to find a buyer for the house and if no buyer is found, the building will be demolished.

"It's nice knowing that I can do something to save a little bit of the history," says Mr. Chomisky, adding that any renovations he undertakes will remain true to the home's historic look.

"You smash this 173-year-old house and put it in a dumpster and it's gone forever ... you put some money into it, you can fix it up and it's a good home again."

FAST FACTS

A brief history on the Jones-Puckrin House

• The first bona fide settler on what later became the Cullen Gardens property was a farmer named John Jones Jr. (1819-1881), a native of Montgomeryshire, Wales. It is believed he built the Jones-Puckrin House around 1843 as it is listed as a frame house in the 1851 census of Whitby Township. In 1920, the farm was bought by Frank Puckrin (1890-1970), who rented it out to various hired help.

• In 1966, the farm was purchased by Len Cullen. The house was originally board and batten but later covered with Insulbrick. In 1984, Laurie McCulloch was hired to move the house several feet to the west, after which an addition was built onto the side of the house and it was opened as a gift shop. The second floor was used for office space, while the basement was used as a staff room and storage area. Mr. Cullen made further changes to the building and removed the Insulbrick and covered the building with white clapboard. A porch was added to the front of the house and in 1985 it was joined with an enclosed passage to the Log Cabin Emporium to the north. All the windows were replaced with the exception of the gable window over the front door.

• The Jones-Puckrin House, along with the Lynde House and the Log Cabin, were integral to the Cullen Gardens tourist site from 1980 to 2005. Following the closing of Cullen Gardens, the property was purchased by the Town of Whitby and renamed Cullen Central Park. The Jones-Puckrin House and the Log Cabin Emporium exteriors were designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act in 2010. The Lynde House received its heritage designation in 1992.

Source: Town of Whitby



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