

The Ottawa Tennis and Lawn Bowling Club

– restoring an architectural treasure

By Jenny Mitchell

Nearly a century ago, a prominent Ottawa architect – John Albert Ewart (1872-1964) – designed Glebe Collegiate. The very same year, 1922, he stepped forward to design a clubhouse for the Ottawa Tennis Club, which had only recently moved from the Glebe into Ottawa South.

Ewart was a big deal in Ottawa during the early 20th century. The son of Dominion architect David Ewart, he designed many of Ottawa’s finest civic buildings. In a nod to his work, the City of Ottawa has recognized the clubhouse in Old Ottawa South as a designated heritage building.

The Ottawa Tennis and Lawn Bowling Club (OTLBC) spent years in the Glebe – from 1902 to 1922 – before urban development forced it to move outward into Ottawa South. Today, the club is both a municipal and national treasure. With the closure of two other major clubs in Ottawa in the past three years, it remains the dean of local tennis clubs, with people coming from all over the city to play. The club is also recognized nationally for having more high-quality clay courts than any club in the country, and it regularly hosts national and provincial tournaments.

When the city awarded the building a heritage designation in 2019, the honour recognized the clubhouse as an outstanding example of an old-style sporting venue and also as an important cultural landmark in Ottawa.

The designation underscores the importance of the club to the city’s heritage, both architectural and cultural. It also highlights the role of today’s club as the steward of physical heritage. In that light, the club has for several years now been planning and raising money for restoration and renewal of the clubhouse.

In 2019, the OTLBC was also honoured by a substantial federal grant from Canadian Heritage to help restore the clubhouse and to enhance its usefulness as a year-round facility where the community can host a variety of cultural events. The grant is for a maximum of \$375,000, depending on how much the club is able to provide in matching funds.

The city stands to benefit from this restoration, not just because an



The Ottawa Tennis and Lawn Bowling Club, an architectural heritage treasure dating from 1922, is in need of restoration. Donations can be made on the OTLBC website at OTLBC.com/donate.

architectural landmark will be preserved. OTLBC has a vision to restore the club as a year-round facility and meeting place for the whole Ottawa community, and it has made great progress. The initial goal was to raise \$1 million by 2020. Donors have proven very generous; the club has so far raised close to \$700,000. If the club reaches its target, the first phase of the project could be launched this year. A second phase will depend on the club’s ability to raise another \$1.6 million

The OTLBC invites all of Ottawa to come on board as partners in the exciting work of restoring a clubhouse that has local and national significance and opening it to new and broader kinds of use. As a tennis club and as a community meeting place the OTLBC is planning, working and actively raising funds to ensure that it can go on helping people of Ottawa to live more satisfying and connected lives. Help the club to fulfil that mission.

To donate to the Clubhouse Restoration Project, please visit OTLBC.com/donate and click on the “Donate Here” button. Tax receipts can be issued.

Jenny Mitchell is OTLBC president and chair of its fund-raising committee.



The Ottawa Tennis Club in its early days PHOTOS: COURTESY OF OTLBC



Skating before the snow comes at Browns Inlet. PHOTO: LIZ MCKEEN

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