

Final audit approaches

GBI leaves colourful past, unfulfilled dreams

By JULIAN BELTRAME

Had events gone differently, York students might have done most of their drinking inside a 40 foot long, 28 foot wide re-built 1830 historical building, courtesy of the Green Bush Inn, the student corporation largely responsible for the availability of liquor at the university.

A place in the wooded lot opposite Founders College had been set aside for the building, which was to house a permanent central pub to service the York community.

The former hotel (named the Green Bush Inn because of a large balsam tree in front of the building) owned by Joseph Abrahams, changed owners and names several times before Thomas Steele returned its original name.

The inn, situated on the corner of Yonge and Steeles, prospered from the heavy stream of traffic along Toronto's — then York's — major street, and was officially recognized as an historical building. A record of the building can still be found in the archives at Queens Park.

PIONEER INN

The inn is also mentioned in Edwin C. Guillet's book, *Pioneer Inns and Taverns*, and was seriously considered as one of the buildings to be moved to Pioneer Village. But, the village eventually rejected it because of its dilapidated condition, and the building remained dormant until the newly incorporated Green Bush Inn thought of reviving it for use as a central pub at York.

Such were the dreams of John Adams, the Bush's first president, and the man most responsible for the Bush's formation and incorporation in 1969.

Plans to bring the building to York went as far as soliciting a report from a Toronto architect who placed the sum of the venture at over \$125,000. The Green Bush Inn board also founded the York Student Charitable Foundation whose function was to collect monies from donors with the purpose of paying the costs of the project.

Needless to say, the plan never materialized, for neither the GBI nor the CYSF could scrape up enough funds to rescue the building from the wreckers, who cleared the site for development in the early seventies.

But before its end, the GBI building was able to give the corporation its name as well as the goal of a central York pub to serve the needs of all students at the university.

In retrospect, the record of the Green Bush Inn, on the verge of its dissolution as a force on campus, is marked by discrepancies between projected achievements and actual accomplishments.

When the corporation was granted its charter on May 28, 1969, it was for the purpose of not only maintaining a pub two nights a week, which in fact it did, but to occupy someday a permanent building "for the association, pleasure, recreation and convenience of the members of the Corporation and their guests."

Since the GBI sold both yearly and life-time memberships to students, it meant that any

student or faculty who valued the existence of a place where they could congregate with others of their ilk and engage in conversation over a beer and sandwich, would be provided the opportunity.

MIGRATORY EXISTENCE

In fact, the GBI was never able to obtain any one building or room they could call their own, but spent a migratory existence jumping from Central Square, to Atkinson and to Founders, and finally ended their pub operations in Winters last February.

It seems no college wanted to be associated with the GBI for any longer than one year. When, in the spring of 1972, it found it could no longer operate in Founders, the GBI searched for a new location in complex one, but both Vanier and McLaughlin wanted no part of the monster pubs, for which the corporation was known.

Although it signed a contract with McLaughlin's college council for the use of the college's dining hall, McLaughlin master, George Tatham quickly vetoed the contract complaining that "the amplified sound will disturb the college fellows in their offices near the dining hall".

The GBI found a more receptive listener when it turned to Winters with their dilemma and for the next year it held its pub operations in that college's dining hall.

CHANGING LIFE STYLE

But by that time the college pubs around campus had taken a large chunk of the GBI's clientele, and the two nights were cut to one and finally, in February, to none. The monster pubs began to lose money over a year before they were discontinued, running up large costs in labour and entertainment and faced with a changing life style which cut deeply into their source of revenue.

John Mitchell, the GBI's pub manager from December 72 to August 74, stated that the per capita consumption of alcohol had dropped by as much as 50 per cent from the early days of the GBI. He saw two factors contributing to this decline — the reduced drinking age and the increased availability of liquor on campus.

If one were to single out one specific cause for the GBI's failure to place itself in the forefront of liquor operations at York, it must be its inability to find a permanent home.

The corporation's bid for a permanent liquor licence was turned down by the Liquor Licence Board of Ontario on this ground, and the drop in attendance can be traced back directly to the lack of a permanent pub by which it could attract regular customers.

Perhaps not by coincidence, the corporation's migratory pub operations mirrored its changing administration within. Throughout its life, there has been a different president for every year of its operation.

Not unlike most organizations run by students on a part-time basis, the GBI's management ran into more than its share of problems. One of its first acts was to spend close to \$1,000 on a substantial amount of



The original Green Bush Inn, seen in happier times.

letterheads for the GBI and the CYSF.

The GBI's letterheads were printed on woodgrained paper, lined in brown, with the corporation's name in a semi-circle adorned with its insignia and a metal door-knocker. So impressive was the letterhead that it showed a shadow formed by the insignia from an imaginary source of light.

TORY LINK

The Charitable Foundation's letterhead did not feature any design, but it too used the GBI's wood-grained paper. Adams who was responsible for the letterheads was at the same time vice-president of the York Progressive Conservative and he, not surprisingly, gave the contract for both types of letterheads to Dalton Camp Associates. Camp was president of the federal PC party.

Such letterheads are usually reserved for outgoing mail, but as neither the GBI nor the CYSF contacted any substantial number of outside associations, they later had to be used for notices of board meetings.

The following year, James Park was hired as general manager in charge of pub operations at a salary of \$7,500. One of his first duties was to report that two of three speakers and one record turntable, bought to supply entertainment for the GBI's pub operations had been confiscated by parties unknown.

Such are the fortunes of a corporation with almost a 100 per cent yearly turnover of board members. Another of Park's acts was to spend \$631 to advertise the corporation's activities in Excalibur.

To the GBI's credit it saw its mistake and the following year, upon Park's resignation, the general manager's salary dropped to \$75 a week.

CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

The York Student Charitable Foundation, formed by Adam's GBI board (who also comprised the foundation's board) is another case of a good idea that didn't materialize, partly because of a lack of strong leadership, waning interest, and the absence of any continuity of leadership.

Originally formed to solicit money for the GBI building's move and renovation, it acquired \$610 in donations from individuals during its first six months of operation. Cheques for letterheads (above) and lawyer's fees reduced that amount to \$166.83 by May 29, 1970. To this day the foundation shows the same balance in its account.

So abandoned was the foundation that the federal government was about to revoke its charter for failing to file a financial statement, until Doug Wise, CYSF business manager, saved its incorporation.

The Green Bush Inn had its best year in 71-72, with Carter Hoppe as president. The Inn ended its financial year showing cash assets of nearly \$7,000 and Hoppe took this opportunity to ask then York president David Slater for assistance in the financing of a student union building which could house a permanent pub for GBI, as well as offices for Excalibur, Radio York, and CYSF.

LAST HOPE

The request resembled that of a drowning

man begging another for the use of his life-jacket, as Slater was already beset with financial problems and could hardly be expected to compound them by committing the university to a costly and risky venture.

The university's rejection of the request ended all chances the GBI might have had for a permanent home and must remain as the corporation's most glaring failure.

The very next year GBI began its downward trend as revenues from the Wednesday and Thursday night monster pubs took a sudden and irrevocable turn for the worse. Under the guidance of general manager Paul Culver and later, John Mitchell, the GBI was able to save itself from extinction by changing its field of operations from the monster pubs to one of management operations.

For a 10 per cent management fee, the GBI handled the financial affairs of the college pubs as well as supplying them with the daily permits the pubs needed to sell liquor.

With the GBI readying itself for the final audit, John Mitchell, York's new beverage manager, feels the contributions of the corporation should be remembered.

IDEAL RELATIONSHIP

Mitchell credits the GBI as the group most responsible for York's ability to obtain a canteen licence, something other universities have been unable to do. Mitchell says the GBI's relationship with the LLBO has remained ideal, owing to the GBI's responsible handling of liquor sales.

As well as providing for the liquor needs of students in the university at a time when no other group was capable of doing so, Mitchell says the GBI was to a large part responsible for the smooth operations of the college pubs.

Despite the fact that the GBI is ready to close up its books, the controversies which have always seemed to follow it wherever it went, have not stopped. Some college pub managers have complained that the corporation is still charging them a five per cent management fee, although in effect, the GBI does nothing for its percentage other than purchase daily permits.

FEE JUSTIFIED

The five per cent fee is justified, however, says Mitchell, because the corporation needs money to pay for its final audit and for recognition of what the GBI has done in the past. Mitchell also points to the fact that he had lowered his management fee from 10 per cent to 6.5 per cent during the summer, so as to free more revenue to the college pubs for needed renovations to comply with LLBO requirements under the canteen licence.

The projected date for the canteen licence to come into effect is November 15, at which time Green Bush Inn Incorporated will be little more than a name and a legal charter, lying dormant until such a time as it might again be needed to supply the needs of York's liquor drinking population.

Behind it, the corporation leaves a colourful history, a \$2,700 debt to the university, and a lot of unfulfilled dreams.



Green Bush Inn just prior to demolition.