

It is with great interest that I read the article entitled “Planning Process under way for conversion of Mount A’s historic Memorial Library”. I must admit that as I read the title I was thrilled to see that in fact the Memorial Library was now going to be saved and converted as it should be. However as I read further along my hopes sank significantly. Although the article quotes Mount A’s VP of Admin. David Stewart as saying that the university is in the “information gathering stage” the tone of the article seems to say something very different.

Firstly, the article states that the building was built as a memorial to those alumni who were lost in WWI by renowned designer Andrew Cobb; a significant fact in and of itself, however then the article goes on to say that the plaques stating this have already been removed and placed elsewhere. I am sorry folks but this does not bode well and speaks loud and clear to me that the Memorial Library is already being dismantled. I think this could be called ‘foreshadowing’?

Mr. Stewart also states that nothing has been designed and, as mentioned earlier that the university is only in the ‘information gathering stage’. If this statement is accurate then why have conceptual plans already been drawn by the firm Zeidler Partnership Architects which are clearly visible on their website and do not seem to include the existing Memorial Library? Foreshadowing?

If the MTA is entering these discussions with an open mind why all the negative comments about the building such as not being up to code and costing more and not being energy efficient? What house in Sackville deemed historic is up to code, mine certainly isn’t and its older than the Memorial Library but I am getting there and its almost energy efficient now too. I didn’t once think it might be better to tear it down!

Mr. Stewart also is quoted as saying that ‘ultimately it is the students who will have to pay for it’. I find this statement interesting. It seems to me that it is generous alumni who have come through for MTA on its various fund raising campaigns. Have they been consulted? Have students been consulted? Every current student I have spoken to have been as horrified as alumni when the thought of tearing down the Memorial Library was presented to them.

Mount Allison is part of the town of Sackville. Has the town been consulted? If so what was their view on the possible destruction of one of THEIR historic buildings? Does Mount Allison consider themselves to be part of this community or do they see themselves as an entity unto themselves with regard to historic properties? I find it most interesting to note that Mr. Stewart sits on the Heritage Review Board for Sackville which has as its mandate that **“heritage preservation is important because it generates community pride and contributes to the communities quality of life, making Sackville an attractive place to love, work, teach and retire”**.

If this is true why is the destruction of the Memorial Library on the table?

Wiser men and woman than I are scratching their heads in stunned disbelief that this debate is happening at all in our town... but alas it is. Once again Mount Allison, take the possible demolition of the Memorial Library off the table and use the creative genius that MTA is so famous for to find viable solutions for the use of the historic Memorial Library or I fear that the additional funds that you note that it will take to restore the Memorial Library will be far exceeded by the reputation lost by the act of destruction of one of, NOT only MTA’s finest structures but also of one of Sackville’s and New Brunswick’s most beautiful historic buildings!

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