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CITY & County

Sod turned at new Bobier Home site

■ 'This is a great day': Mezenberg

BY LORI RIEGER
 TIMES-JOURNAL STAFF

DUTTON — Bone-chilling winds and a blustery sky weren't enough to keep more than 100 people from gathering at an empty site Saturday to witness a milestone in Elgin County's history.

County councillors, senior citizens and local residents ignored winter-like temperatures to take part in a sod-turning ceremony for the new Bobier Home on Lions Road beside Caledonia Gardens.

The new \$5.7-million facility, to begin construction soon, will replace the current Bobier Home located on Shackelton Street.

Fred Boyes, Elgin director of homes for seniors, said the new facility will have a more modern design and will feature activity and lounge areas, dining areas on each wing and community support space. He said 80 per cent of the rooms will be private and the home will be linked via an enclosed walkway to Caledonia Gardens.

"It will be a little bit more of a medical model," he explained in an interview.

During the ceremony, Elgin Warden Harry Mezenberg echoed the sentiments of many

Bobier figures

TOTAL PROJECT COST: \$5.7 million including furnishings and legal costs.

FUNDING: Provincial and federal funding through Canada/Ontario Infrastructure Program \$484,000 apiece; public/private sector \$550,000 plus \$165,000 to pay for enclosed walkway to Caledonia Gardens; all 15 Elgin County municipalities paid a total of \$4.032 million.

REVENUE: Sale of old building expected to bring in \$150,000.

FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN: Led by former Dunwich Reeve Leta West, to date has raised \$9,000. Asking anyone interested in making a donation to contact her at 762-3527 or call Fred Boyes at Elgin Manor.

ST. THOMAS CONNECTION: H.I.R.A. Construction Ltd. in charge on construction.

in attendance. Warden Bob Purcell and Dunwich Reeve Albert Ford, who pushed for a new facility a decade ago. He said the project could never have come this far without the co-operation of everyone involved.

"Without people working together for a common goal none of this would have been possible," he said.

Bayham Reeve Vane Chute, a past chairman of the county homes committee, called the event a "milestone" in the county's history.

"The wheels of process turned pretty slow and it's been a hard grind but I always had a positive outlook on it and knew it would happen," he said in an interview. "And I'm looking forward to completing this one and getting on with the Elgin Village."

Jean Edwards, 73, president of the Bobier Home residents' council, said the seniors who live there now are very happy with the facility as it is.

"It's a good place to stay," she said, noting she wasn't as enthusiastic about moving. But like many gathered at the ceremony, she admitted she's looking forward to the ribbon-cutting ceremony a year from now.

in attendance.

"This is a great day for Elgin County and west Elgin as well," he said, adding, "It's long overdue. It should have happened years ago."

Dunwich Deputy Reeve Rien Van Brenk remembered the ef-



(T-J PHOTO)

WELCOME DONATION... Jean Edwards, president of the Bobier Home Residents' Council, presents a \$1,000 cheque to Leta West, fundraising chairwoman for the new Bobier Home, with the help of Nancy Hunter, Bobier Home activities director. Fred Boyes, left, director of Elgin's homes for seniors, addresses the assembly. To date, fundraising efforts have brought in around \$9,000 toward construction costs for the new 57-bed facility expected to open in 14 months.



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DREAM COMES TRUE – After many years of hard work, planning and dreaming, the new Bobier Villa Home for Seniors was officially opened Friday, September 12th. The honour of cutting the ribbon went to, left to right: Elgin Warden Harry

Mezenberg, Long Term Care Regional Director Gail Ure, Scarborough Centre M.P.P. Dan Newman, Elgin County Homes Director/Administrator Fred Boyes and Elgin County Homes and Social Services Chairman Rien Van Brenk.

Bobier Villa Grand Opening

September 12th, 1997, marked a milestone in the history of west Elgin as the ribbon was cut to officially open the new Bobier Villa in Dutton.

An estimated 500 people attended the ceremony held in Whitelock Place, the Villa's multi-purpose room. It had been 20 years since the last County Home for Seniors, Terrace Lodge, was opened in Aylmer on September 11, 1977.

Work to replace the aging Bobier Home on Shackleton Street, which was opened in 1950, began in 1989.

Many Involved

Elgin County Homes Director/Administrator Fred Boyes, who acted as master of ceremonies for the opening spoke of the tremendous amount of time that had been dedicated to the project by Dutton, Dunwich and Elgin County councils, the former Bobier Home boards, the building and steering committees and various individuals.

Mr. Boyes also thanked the residents and the staff for their patience during planning and construction of the new 57-bed long term care facility. "We can now focus on providing the best care to our seniors," said Mr. Boyes.

Present Keys

Stu Harper, representing HIRA Ltd. General Contractors, and Mel Mekinda, of the architectural firm Mekinda Snyder Partnership, presented the key of the new facility to Mr. Boyes.

Dedicated

Referring to the seeds which she handed out at the ground breaking ceremony in April, 1996, Reverend Evelyn McLachlan said, "Now you can see what happens when you have the faith of a mustard seed." Reverend McLachlan gave a prayer of dedication for the building and for the people who live and work in it.

"It really is a beautiful day in Elgin County even if the weather didn't co-operate," said Elgin Warden Harry

Mezenberg. Commenting that the project was well thought out by the county he stated that "without the co-operation of everyone this wouldn't have happened."

Committed

The warden also noted the dedication of the staff and that Mr. Boyes had been a driving force for the project which was completed on budget. Saying that Elgin has always been committed to seniors and hoping that it always will be, he stated that he would like to see the opening of a new seniors home in central Elgin in the next two years.

Remarking that it had only been 16 months since the sod turning, Rien Van Brenk, chairman of the Elgin County Homes and Social Services Committee, he thanked the previous Bobier Home Board of Directors and many others for their support and work to bring this project to fruition. "If Edward Bobier were able to be here today I am sure he
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Bobier Villa Home open on Sept 12/97. Elgin
 Warden Harry Mezenberg, ² Elgin Homes
 Administrator Fred Boyes, ³ Long Term Care Director
 Gail Ure, ⁴ Scarborough Centre M.P.P. Dan Newman,
⁵ Elgin Homes Chairman Rien Van Brenk.



THANK YOU

Dear Friends:

On behalf of the County of Elgin, the Committee of Management, residents and staff of the Bobier Villa, we would like to take this opportunity of thanking the many people who visited the Bobier Villa over the 12th, 13th and 14th of September.

It was certainly a great pleasure for all of us to have the opportunity to have Dan Newman, M.P.P. Scarborough Centre, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Health; Bruce Smith, M.P.P. London/Middlesex; Gail Ure, Regional Director, Ministry of Health - Long Term Care division; the Warden of Elgin County, Harry Mezenberg; Chairman Rien Van Brenk and myself, to cut the ribbon for the Official Opening of the Bobier Villa which the west end of the County had waited for, for so long.

It was with tremendous excitement that we were able to proudly show off the new Bobier Villa to the community and we know the Bobier Villa will offer quality care in the future. It has, as mentioned before, already been visited by medical professionals from abroad who hope to learn much from the design of this state of art facility.

Our thanks go to Leta West and all of the fundraising committee who worked so very, very hard to reach the fundraising goal of \$665,000.00.

To those in the community who have not had the opportunity to visit the Bobier Villa, we are pleased to advise that the doors to the Bobier Villa are open to the public at all times; and we would be happy to make arrangements for more tours if so desired.

Our field of dreams is now completed with the Bobier Villa, Caledonia Gardens and the Day Care Centre all being on one piece of property and our thanks to everyone who has made this possible.

Yours truly,
 Fred J. Boyes, Director/Administrator
 ELGIN COUNTY HOMES