

Stoneboats ready to sail into new season

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the fence of the building at 49 Bronte Rd. has been replaced with one reading, "OPEN."

Ready to seat diners and begin serving up Stoneboats fare again are the Abrahams.

Patrons are likely to find the couple wearing bright smiles, and a brightness in their eyes.

"It's overwhelming," said Molly.

"I'm not sure how to feel," admits David who was on site at the restaurant every day since the fire to check on progress.

It has been a long year since the couple watched with a crowd of onlookers as 30 firefighters from four Oakville fire stations drenched the burning building in icy water in a bid to save the historic property.

"That was in their mind, to save the historic value of the restaurant," said Molly. The firefighters were able to contain the blaze to within 18 inches of the dining room — the historic part of the building.

Now, what had been destroyed — Molly said "the bar was a total disaster" — has been replaced.

Molly credits the building's survival on its historic nature — it was originally constructed from the stones "hooked" from nearby Lake Ontario in the famed stonehooking trade days — hence its name.

The dining room, which wasn't



BARRIE ERSKINE / OAKVILLE BEAVER

WELCOME IN: Bronte residents David and Molly Abraham have re-opened the doors to Stoneboats Restaurant.

claimed by fire, but which was severely damaged, has been fixed up.

The Abrahams are hopeful after all the change they've had to cope with, it will soon be business as usual.

In the nearly 2,000-sq.-ft. dining room/bar, patrons will see a new cream (the paint is called seaspray, said Molly) and black decor, with a touch of green.

The carpeting and tiling has been replaced, as has the serving area. The black tables and chairs have been refinished and the original light fixtures in the dining room were saved.

Gone, however, are the well-known pillars that used to spot the

dining room, but Molly said they had to be let go for building code purposes — and now allow for larger tables.

Gone, too, is the yellow-coloured wood bar. In its place is a new cherry-coloured bar that's again solid wood.

Gracing the walls are the bright paintings of artist Elizabeth Jaworski — thanks to Stoneboats neighbours Robert and Colleen Koolen, who operate Bronte Harbour Fine Arts and worked, according to Molly, tirelessly last week to hang the art at the restaurant before it opened.

As always, diners looking past the walls and out the windows of the Bronte Harbour gem, will see the pic-

turesque boardwalk and harbour.

Stoneboats menu and prices will remain what they were with, like the restaurant, a bit new added.

The luncheon menu offers the same salads that once graced it, but now there's an expanded offering.

"I've had a wee taste of them," said Molly, rolling her eyes to convey that it's tasty fare.

The Abrahams boast all of their former employees — nearly 30 people, with four of them having worked at the restaurant for 22 years.

Simon Binks is still at work in the kitchen, too, creating what diners come to consume. However, his

ranks have been augmented with the addition of chef Steve Cutler who, Molly said, comes "highly recommended" with experience in major Toronto and Burlington restaurants under his belt.

Stoneboats seats 52 in its dining room, accommodates about 20 at the bar and can seat 70 on its patio as soon as warmer winds blow in. Reservations are highly recommended by calling 905-825-2727.

Stoneboats is a well-established Bronte fixture, first operated by Randy Myers, then Kerry Salari and most recently the Abrahams.

It sits on the Bronte Quadrangle as one of four original historical structures including the former Glendella Inn. The rest of the property is the subject of a condominium development application.

Stoneboats was built circa 1840 when the industry known as stonehooking was in full swing.

Men raked slabs of Dundas Shale from the lake bottom to build basements and foundations such as those found in The Murray House downtown Oakville and Glendella.

After 1934, Sylvester Davis built Stoneboats.

Two generations of Pickard family fishermen lived there followed by the Brays. In 1922, a fire threatened the building, but a bucket brigade, hoisting water from Bronte Creek saved Stoneboats.

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