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The Corporation of The Town of Amherstburg

August 6, 2019

Ontario Heritage Trust
10 Adelaide Street East
Toronto, ON
M5C 1J3

ONTARIO HERITAGE TRUST

AUG 12 2019

RECEIVED

Re: Heritage Designation of 266 Dalhousie Street, Amherstburg

A review of the records provided to your office indicates that you have not received a copy of the By-law re-establishing the Heritage Designation on the Gordon House in the Town of Amherstburg.

On March 14, 1988 By-law 2013, designated 266 Dalhousie Street as a Heritage Property. The Gordon House had previously been designated at its original location, 290 Dalhousie Street, but was moved to protect the building from demolition by the Town of Amherstburg.

A copy of By-law 2013 has been attached for the Ontario Heritage Trust records.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paula Parker", is written over a horizontal line.

Paula Parker
Municipal Clerk
pparker@amherstburg.ca

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF AMHERSTBURG

BY-LAW NO. 2013

A By-law to designate Property located within the Town of Amherstburg as being of Historical and Architectural Value to the Heritage of the Town of Amherstburg.


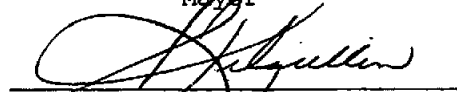
Passed this 14th day of March, 1988.

WHEREAS certain lands and buildings located thereon, within the Town of Amherstburg and hereinafter described, as the Gordon House, are deemed to be of historical and architectural significance;

AND WHEREAS in the opinion of the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Amherstburg, it is expedient and desirable to designate the said property to be of historical and architectural significance;

THEREFORE THE COUNCIL OF THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF AMHERSTBURG ENACTS AS FOLLOWS:

1. That for the reasons aforesaid, the property including buildings and lands within the Town of Amherstburg as described in Schedule "A" attached hereto, which schedule forms part of this By-law, be and the same is hereby proclaimed to be designated in accordance with the provisions of Section 29 subsection (6) RSO 1980 of The Ontario Heritage Act.
2. This By-law shall come into force and take effect on the day following the final passing thereof by the Council of the Town of Amherstburg.


Mayor

Clerk

1st Reading: March 14, 1988

2nd Reading: March 14, 1988

3rd Reading: March 14, 1988

This is to certify that this is a true copy of By-law 2013 passed by Council of the Town of Amherstburg, March 14, 1988.


Clerk

SCHEDULE "A"

(IV) THE GORDON HOUSE

Location

All and singular that certain parcel or tract of land and premises situated, lying and being in the Town of Amherstburg, in the County of Essex and Province of Ontario and being composed of Part of Lot 7-8 Plan 1 on the west side of Dalhousie St., and known as Municipal No. 266 Dalhousie St., in the Town of Amherstburg.

Historical Significance

The present structure, known as the "Gordon House", was situated on Lot 18 of the original town plot, as laid out under the orders of Captain Hector McLean. The lot was first issued about 1798, to a George Sharp.

The original town lots fronting on the river were acquired by merchants, who built their houses along present-day Dalhousie Street, and who built docks and warehouses along the river. The Gordon House is the last remaining of the merchants' establishments located along the river which still stands. One other, the Park House, also remains, but both have been relocated some distance from the original site.

Structurally, the house is constructed of timber framing, with stone or brick fill, covered by a clap-board siding. Although aluminum siding has been applied to the building, its exterior appearance has not been significantly altered.

HISTORY ASSOCIATED WITH THE GORDON HOUSE

- June 25 1795 In a petition for a land grant William Mills states that he was a resident of Upper Canada for 6 years (Native of Great Britain) "in prosecution of the profession of Mariner" having "commanded a merchant vessel transporting valuable Cargoes round the Lakes"
- Feb. 2 1798 Notice given by this date that town lots are to be granted, on which habitable houses are to be erected within twelve months.

HISTORY ASSOCIATED WITH THE GORDON HOUSE - Cont'd.

- May 13, 1798 By this date all lots are gone; more are to be laid out. George Sharp, a clerk for the merchant firm of Leith, Shepherd and Duff, acquires the initial grant to lot 18, the site of the Gordon House, during this period. (February 2)
- Sept. 9 1798 Sharp sells the lot to William Mills. There must have been a house on the property at that time, because Mills could not get title to the lot to sell it until he had "built thereon and improved the same". At the time of the 1798 purchase, Mills already had a house on the 3rd Street of Amherstburg, of which he retained ownership until his death.
- Jan. 17 1800 George Sharp dies in Montreal.
- 1804 Map of Amherstburg clearly shows a house of same size and relative position on lot 18 to that of the present Gordon House. This map also clearly shows Mills' rope walk that supplied rope for naval vessels. This is interesting because the June 1795 petition for a land grant states that he wants to enter into "the business of Ship Building etc". Mills is by this time a prosperous merchant in town, among other customers, supplying lumber and bidding on beef contracts for the Commissariat Department.
- 1812-1813 Mills is in the militia during the War of 1812 with a commission as a Captain in the First Essex. Local tradition holds that Isaac Brock dined at Mills' house during his Amherstburg visit. This certainly makes sense due to its proximity to the Fort and that it must have been the grandest house in town at the time. Tradition also suggests the house may have been leased by the military as an officers' quarters. He is severely wounded at Frenchtown as is his friend James Gordon, also a Captain in the First Essex. Mills is captured by General Harrison's Army on the retreat up the Thames in October 1813. Mills dies December 10, 1813 at age

HISTORY ASSOCIATED WITH THE GORDON HOUSE - Cont'd.

- 52 in Amherstburg, about 2 months after his capture by the Americans. Note that this is after the American occupation has begun. He is buried in the large sarco-phagus that still exists at the rear of Christ Church cemetery. James Gordon, who received the General Service medal with Detroit bar, transferred to the Provincial Marine after recovering from his wounds suffered at Frenchtown. He became commander of a gunboat.
- 1813 Reynolds painting clearly shows the house without the large rear porches, but with the outbuildings and dock that appear in earlier maps.
- 1813-1815 Occupying American troops use Mills' house as a billet, causing severe damage in the process.
- 1815 Gordon, as executor of Mills' estate, files detailed damage claims for both of Mills' houses, rope walk and other property destroyed or damaged as a result of the war. About this time Gordon becomes the Military Paymaster for the Western District. Shortly after the War of 1812 the house is rented by the Indian Department for storage.
- 1817 Gordon purchased the Mills house from William's brother, still residing in England.
- 1821 Gordon receives the crown patent to the Mills property. Gordon is elected member of the Legislative Assembly for Upper Canada, a position he holds until 1828.
- 1823 By this time Gordon is a Lieutenant Colonel in the 1st Essex.
- 1824 Woolford painting clearly shows the large 'galleries' or porches on the back of the house. They were probably added after 1817 when Gordon bought the house.
- 1825+ Gordon lives on in the house, as a merchant, until his death in 1865, one of the town, and province's most prominent citizens at the time.
- The Gordon house remains the only pre-War of 1812 structure in Amherstburg on its original foundation.

1975 to 1988

The Gordon House is believed to be the first historic building in Ontario to have been saved from demolition by the efforts of five separate municipal councils over a period of a dozen years.

In November, 1975, Council advertised its intent to designate the Gordon House. On December 8, 1975, the owners filed an objection to the proposed designation. Because of this objection, the Conservation Review Board held a hearing in Amherstburg on April 22, 1976, and on May 27, 1976 rendered a decision recommending that the Gordon House be duly designated by By-law.

On June 28, 1976 the then Council headed by Mayor H.M. Smith passed a by-law (No.1421) designating the Gordon House as a building of historic and architectural significance.

Mr. Vucinic next applied for a permit to demolish the house indicating his plans to add more units to his existing motel which then stood on the site from which the Historic Park House (designated) had been removed by the Amherstburg Rotary Club.

Attempts were made to persuade Mr. Vucinic to retain the heritage structure and to incorporate it into his motel unit as an 18th century inn.

The Amherstburg Town Planner provided several sketch plans for motel additions of the size contemplated by Duffy's Motel which would have left the Gordon House intact on its original site.

The next 10 years saw a lawsuit filed against the town, expropriation proceedings by the town proposing to take only the site occupied by the house and leaving ample land for a motel addition.

Much time elapsed with mounting costs as periods of inactivity were followed by requests for trial extensions. Examinations for discovery were completed in anticipation of an ultimate court hearing - always with the hope of mutual agreements leading to acceptable settlements. The formation of the 1986-88 Council under Mayor Wm. Gibb saw further actions. On one occasion a press release

1975 to 1988 Cont'd.

announced that Mr. and Mrs. Vucinic had given the House to the H.M.S. Detroit providing that the house would be moved off its original site. This happened at a time when the Town Solicitor advised the town fathers that they had been the legal owners in terms of expropriation for five years.

At a special meeting of Council on March 17, 1987 (with two members absent) a by-law was passed, No. 1956, agreeing to quash the expropriation proceedings and to move the house 200 yards northerly to a new site by July 1, 1987. Ironically the selected site proved to be too small and the time allowance quite inadequate.

On recommendation of the town solicitor, the original by-law No. 1421 designating the Gordon House was repealed on November 23, 1987. Redesignation procedures have been ongoing since then with the new By-law planned to go to Council in the Spring of 1988.

NEW LOCATION - LAKE VIEW PROPERTY

The Gordon House was moved to its new site at 266 Dalhousie Street on October 20, 1987. This site was formerly occupied by the merchant establishment of the Dougall Brothers, James and John Dougall. They were importers and exporters with John Dougall in charge at Montreal and James Dougall on the Detroit frontier. James Dougall came to Amherstburg in 1840. He at once assumed a leading part in local affairs taking a particular interest in the Agriculture Society and in education.

He built a lean-to to his merchant house which was used as a schoolroom. He brought his nephew, Robert Peden, from Scotland to be the teacher. His own children were among the pupils attending the school. Also attending were a number of children, sons and daughters of fugitive slaves then numerous in Amherstburg. This believed to be the first integrated school in the Province where whites and blacks studied together. The enterprise came to an end when fire destroyed the Dougall store about 1852. Dougall then moved to Windsor where he again became a community leader.

LAKE VIEW - continued

In later years this property came under the ownership of Theodore Jones Park who in 1876 began construction of a three storey Hotel which opened for business in early 1878 under the name "Park House". In 1884 shortly before his death Mr. Park disposed of the hotel property to John McClary, the stove manufacturer of London, Ontario. Mr. McClary and family had spent several summer vacations at the hotel and he was well-acquainted with its possibilities as a summer resort. It was he who changed the name from the Park House to the Lake View.

Amherstburg's location provided easy access by boats from Detroit, Sandusky, and Cleveland. Among the hotel's offerings was the services of a small steam-yacht which was used for picnics and fishing excursions. A two-story bandstand was erected on the river lawn where on occasion Amherstburg's two brass bands would perform at evening concerts.

Among the features of the hotel itself was a large and airy dining room which featured fish dinners. According to the season the diner could have served perch, bass, pickerel, or white fish, with an occasional sturgeon. In the winter months oysters in their shells were shipped in kegs by the Canada Southern to Gordon station and oyster suppers were enjoyed by social clubs.

Down through the years the Lake View has entertained many public figures and personages of note from Sir John A. Macdonald to the sister of General Custer. Sir John during an election campaign addressed the crowd on Dalhousie street from the hotel's second storey balcony. Miss Custer was an elocutionist and delivered a program built around the tragedy of her brother's death at the hands of the Indians on the Little Big Horn. The cast of winter "Lyceums" and summer "Chautauquas" always stayed at the Lake View. The Marx Brothers Minstrels were annual customers. Quite a few Western Ontario hotelmen at one time or another had something to do with conducting the Lake View either as owners or managers. Among the names recalled are those of Denis Ouellette, John McClary (mentioned above), J. L. Mudge, and Alexander Gillean. Mr. Gillean

LAKE VIEW - continued

was first with the well-known Crawford House in Windsor. He then acquired an interest in the Lake View and for some time managed both hotels. The Crawford House was noted for its elaborate entertainments especially at New Year. Some of this carried over to the Lake View and its menus were of a metropolitan character. Another well-remembered proprietor was Theodore J. Fox ("Pete"). During his regime the automobile made for new social habits. The rigours of Prohibition were felt and left their mark followed by the Great Depression. Many charitable acts by Peter and his good wife lightened the depression for many during that difficult time. Slowly more tranquil times returned and Mr. and Mrs. Fox were able to enjoy a few more prosperous years before going to their reward.

Several owners followed until the property was finally acquired by Javat (Jerry) Berberi in early 1977. He renovated the interior and renamed the building "Heritage Inn". The building was destroyed by fire on November 26, 1977.

The vacant land was eventually acquired jointly by the Essex Region Conservation Authority and the Town of Amherstburg with title to the land remaining in the name of the Conservation Authority who gave the Town permission to move the Gordon House onto the site.