

THE LACAC OF BROCKVILLE

JANUARY, 1986

DESIGNATION REPORT

C1850 By-law-227-87

Designation Recommendation
and Description for

Dr. Thomas McQueen House

36 Broad Street,
Brockville, Ontario
K6V 4T8

Block 29, Lot 21

Reasons for Designation

The Thomas McQueen house is being recommended for designation for architectural and historic reasons.

Since the mid-nineteenth century the house at 36 Broad Street has been an integral part of one of Brockville's most important residential streets. In its original form - which can be reasonably documented - the house was a late example of Brockville's early building tradition, and remains today as a visible record of periodic stylistic alteration.

Historical Background

The land upon which the house stands is part of the lot granted to William Buell in 1804. Buell sold the land to John McDonnell in 1816 for £50 and this is shown on a plan and survey of Brockville dated that same year.¹ McDonnell's heir, Peter McDonald sold the property in 1839 to Mary Fraser McQueen for £120. It is not likely that the present stone structure was in existence at that time.

In 1849 Thomas Fraser McQueen and his wife Mary took out a mortgage for £100 and another for £408 in 1855. It appears likely that the stone house was built in this period, for the holder of the mortgage of 1855 was George Weir, a builder and contractor, who sold the mortgage six days after acquiring it.² The house is illustrated on the 1853 map of Brockville and is noted "Dr. McQueen". Lovell's Directory for 1857 lists Thomas Fraser McQueen as M.D., Coroner, Broad Street.

The second mortgage for £408 was to be paid in instalments with the balance due in 1858. Mr. Weir did not keep title but assigned the mortgage to William Gibson, who moved subsequently to Dundas County. The McQueens defaulted on their payments and in 1859 the property was sold at public auction to Robert Fitzsimmons, Jr.³ The announcement was published in the weekly "Recorder" on March 17, 1859 and the property was sold for £391 on May 13, 1859.

According to family history, the house was purchased as a wedding present by Robert Fitzsimmons, Sr. for his son Robert, Jr. A descendent of the Fitzsimmons continues to own and occupy the house.^{4.}

The Fitzsimmons were a prominent family in Brockville. Robert Fitzsimmons married four times and had many offspring. The Fitzsimmons were merchants, particularly of groceries and liquors. Two of Fitzsimmons' sons had a grocery store on King Street (then Main Street).^{5.}

Robert Fitzsimmons served on Council and as Mayor in the 1850's and 1860's. It is possible also that he had something to do with the forwarding trade as he often entertained the forwarders in his home.^{6.} The Broad Street house was but one of many residences owned by Robert Fitzsimmons as evidenced by his will probated in 1890.

The McQueen house was given to his wife, Elvira Adelaide Fitzsimmons, nee Potter and at her death was to go to his daughter Lillian, a minor. Mrs. Elvira Fitzsimmons died in 1918 and the property passed to her widowed daughter Lillian May Gowan. On Mrs. Gowan's death in 1959 the property passed to her daughter Honor Fitzsimmons Dempster, the present owner.

Architectural Description

The house cannot be typified as one particular architectural style. It is certain the stone section has been remodelled at some point. The windows and front door are not original and it is thought that the tower on gable is an addition as well.⁷ There is a red brick addition on the back of the house.

The stone structure is three bays wide with a centre gable flush with the face. The style is essentially "Loyalist" with the eave-side presented to the front. There are two chimneys, one at either end, constructed of red brick and side walls extended above the roof.

The front door was remodelled in 1984 by Don Glover in Greek revival style. There is documented evidence of an original semi-elliptical fan-lit entrance.

The front is of coursed stone, while the sides are rubble stone.

The front windows have stone sills and voussoirs.

There is an overhanging cornice supported by four brackets. The two end brackets have a design which looks like a stylized sun. The cornice is likely part of the late 19th century remodelling.

On the south wall, there is evidence of a verandah, which was confirmed by the present owner.⁸

The interior of the house was remodelled into three apartments in 1938/39. These changes are apparently reversible.

References:

1. Plan and Survey of Brockville as surveyed by Andrew N. Buell, September 25, 1816, showing initials of purchasers.
Redrawn by Frederick C. Curry - in Museum Collection.
2. ABD #3 William Gibson and Robert Fitzsimmons, 1859.
Abstract of the Register for Blk.29, Lot 21,
Leeds County Land Registry Office.
3. ABD #3
4. Interview with Mr. & Mrs. H. F. Dempster.
5. Probate of Will - 27-6647
Leeds County Land Registry Office.
6. Interview with Mr. & Mrs. H.F. Dempster.
7. Letter from Don Glover to Mr. & Mrs. Dempster, March 17, 1984.
8. Interview with Mr. & Mrs. H.F. Dempster.