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City of Brockville
LOCAL ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION
ADVISORY COMMITTEE

February 1, 1978

Designation Recommendation
and Description for

Newton Cossitt House

58 Wall Street,
Brockville, Ontario.

Block 32 Lot 15

A. REASONS FOR DESIGNATION
UNDER THE ONTARIO HERITAGE ACT, 1974

The Newton Cossitt House is being recommended for designation for both Historical and Architectural reasons.

Prominently and centrally located, it is an example of a recognized style of architecture popular in Ontario in the late nineteenth century. Its design is the work of an architect well-known in the district at the time. Its original owner was a member of a family which was then and still is prominent in local affairs.

The present owners of the property the Brock Cottage have requested designation of the building.

B.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

During the 1870's and 80's, and until after the 1914-18 war the agricultural implement factory of THE COSSITT FAMILY was a major force in the local economy and a large employer of labour. Its products included a wide range of farm machinery.

About 1881, on Wall Street at the corner of Pearl, a block south of the factory, one of the owners, Mr. Newton Cossitt (1829-1911) had a home constructed for himself.¹ It was representative of the style of the time, was solidly constructed and is today in good condition as an example of the expansive mood of late nineteenth century Brockville and Ontario.

Newton Cossitt was born in Perry Centre, N.Y.² His brother and associate in the manufacturing business, Mr. German Cossitt was the great-grandfather of Thomas Cossitt, Member of Parliament for Leeds.

Newton Cossitt was a Town Councillor and Mayor of Brockville. He was also a promoter of the Brockville Navigation Co., which built the steamer "Brockville".

Mr. J. P. Johnston designed the First Presbyterian Church in Brockville, and to him is attributed the architectural design of The Cossitt House.³

C. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Newton Cossitt house is an example of High Victorian house design. The house is appropriately large to befit the first owner's station in the community - it is about 52 feet by 74 feet in outer dimensions, with two full stories, a large attic, a tower, verandahs and a basement.

This High Victorian style emphasizes broken outlines, strong vertical accents and the contrast of light and shadow.

The Newton Cossitt house shows these features in the many peaks and dormers of its roof line, the high narrow windows, the superpositioning of windows in successive stories and especially in its square tower.

The house is an irregular rectangle in plan. The principal entrance is on Wall Street, and the longer dimension parallels Pearl Street.

Exterior construction is red brick, now painted pink, with stone lintels and insets, and slate roof. A verandah surrounds the north-east corner. The verandah roof has supporting columns with bracket capitals, and under-eave brackets. Small verandahs similiar in design are provided at the north-west and south-west corners.

There are prominent chimneys on the north, west and south sides. Vertical patterns are built into the brick work. Gables on the

north, east and south sides have elaborate verge boards, and are decorated with double side-by-side pointed arch designs. The steeply sloping roof is shingled with slate, generally gray but with pale green and red-brown horizontal and diamond patterns. Over the centre of the house the roof slopes inward forming a basin to catch rain water for a wooden cistern. Decorative iron work surmounts the roof peak surrounding this basin.

At the north-west corner the roof sweeps dramatically down from the peak to verandah eave level.

On the east wall, south of the entrance there is a two-storey bay window rising to a semi-conical roof peak. The lintels in this bay are pentagonal in elevation rising to a shallow peak, with the face decorated by a quatrefoil.

A band of stone (string course) is set into the brick work around the house, below the level of the top of the lower floor windows. Between the windows this is cut into geometric dentil-like pattern. At the windows the stone rises to support the lintel and form a semi-rectangular cap to the window. A similar band surrounds the upper storey. In this case the band is at the top of the windows and forms an extension of the lintels.

The most striking feature of the house is the tower at the

main (Wall Street) entrance. The tower is square in section, and is surmounted by a steep-sided pyramid roof structure. There are brackets under the eave and dormer windows on each of four roof faces. An iron pinnacle with a weather vane bearing the initials of the first owner forms the summit, rising some fifty feet from street level.

The east face of the tower presents an imposing vertical array consisting of the entrance door and three windows.

The door is constructed in six panels, the lower pair in wood, the upper two pairs in glass. The top of the door has a shallow convex curvature matching the curvature of the relatively shallow doorway.

REFERENCES:

1. Copy of DEED, dated 16 April 1880, registered in
Leeds County Registry Office.

also MINUTES, Brockville Town Council, 7 May 1883.
(refer to: "Mr. N. Cossitt's new residence
at Wall and Pearl Streets)
2. Obituary, Brockville EVENING RECORDER, 9 December 1911.
3. Article, "Brock Cottage Building Example of Late
Victorian Architecture, by John Dance, Brockville
RECORDER & TIMES, 23 February 1977.

D. RECOMMENDATION

The Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee recommends that the Newton Cossitt House be designated under the Ontario Heritage Act, 1974.

Its contribution to the distinctive appearance of the City is evidence of an important and colourful period in the City's development. Its association with people who have been a part of that development is also noteworthy.

The Committee is concerned with the preservation of the building's outstanding architectural features. It is understood, however, that in order to retain the building's usefulness, certain alterations and renovations may from time to time be required. Of main concern is the exterior of the house. Our committee would wish to examine any proposals to change the outside, such as the erection of signs, masonry cleaning, painting, and alterations to doors and windows.