

City of Brockville
LOCAL ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

May 7, 1979

Designation Recommendation and description for the

BROCKVILLE CLUB
22 CourtHouse Ave.,
Brockville, Ont.

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

The Brockville Club is being recommended for designation for both architectural and historical reasons.

The building is a fine example of Loyalist neo-classic style, which was popular in the early nineteenth century, and it is in an excellent state of preservation.

Members of the Morris family were active participants in the early political and financial history of both Brockville and Upper Canada. The building also housed a branch of one of Canada's first chartered banks, the Bank of Upper Canada.

B. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Brockville Club is located on the south-west corner of Court House Green, at the junction of George and William streets.

The property originally belonged to various members of the Morris family which originated in Wales and settled in Kilmarnock, County Ayr, Scotland. The first known person by this name in Kilmarnock was William Morris (b. 1636, d. 1708).¹

Alexander Morris (b. Dec. 13 1752, d. Mar. 21 1809), second son of Alexander Morris was the first member of his family to settle in Canada. After living in Paisley, Scotland for a time, he arrived in Montreal in 1801 and settled in Elizabethtown, Brockville. He then returned to Montreal where he was a merchant until 1805, when he returned to Elizabethtown.²

He married Janet, daughter of Alexander Lang of Paisley and they had four children: Alexander, William, James (Nov. 1 1798-Sept. 29, 1865), and Margaret.³

Alexander Morris (Sept. 13, 1782-June 9, 1851) was a merchant in Elizabethtown (Brockville) and later in Perth. He married first Elizabeth (1791-1832), daughter of Joseph Jones of Brockville, on July 12, 1827; and then Alithea, daughter of Israel Jones, also of Brockville, in 1833. Alexander had two children by his first marriage: William Lang (Dec. 29, 1829-Nov. 14, 1884) who became a banker in Brockville and Montreal; and Sophia-Elizabeth.⁴

William Morris (Oct. 31, 1786-June 29, 1858) entered the militia in 1812 and was present at the taking of Ogdensburg. As colonel he commanded the Militia of the County of Lanark from 1837 to 1838. He also took an active role in government. He was a member of the Legislative Assembly from 1821 to 1836 when he was called to the Legislative Council; was a member of the Executive Council and Receiver-General, 1844-1846; became president of the Executive Council, 1846-1848; and was Warden of Johnstown District Council, 1842-1843. William was also one of the founders and chairman of the Board of Trustees of Queen's University, Kingston.⁵

On June 9, 1814 William Buell sold the lot on which the Brockville Club now stands, to Alexander and William Morris.⁶ By 1815, the two brothers had bought all the land on the west side of Court House Ave. from King to George streets.

On Feb. 13, 1834 William sold his share to his brother Alexander, along with other lands, for the sum, £1000.⁷ Alexander built first a frame house and later a stone one on the site of the present Catholic Cultural Centre.

Alexander willed this property to his daughter Sophia E. Morris on Oct. 30, 1850,⁸ and she (now Mrs. James Nicol Holmes) left the lot and house to her brother William Lang on April 27, 1861.⁹ The property was actually transferred in 1857 but this was not considered valid and a later document was drawn up.

The Second or Chartered Bank of Upper Canada, established in 1821 with the financial backing of the government, bought the property from William Morris on May 8, 1861.¹⁰ The founding of this bank and of the Bank of Montreal in Lower Canada marked the first stage in the development of Canada's modern banking system.¹¹ By mid-1825 the estimated whole circulating medium of the Bank of Upper Canada was £105,000 in bank notes and £30,000 in specie.¹² However, a depression followed the collapse of the land speculation boom of 1857-58.¹³ The bank had extended too much accommodation based on inflated real estate values and it had also imprudently supported the milling industry.¹⁴ As a result, in 1866 the Bank of Upper Canada collapsed, the first major banking disaster in Upper Canada.¹⁵

On May 22, 1868 the Morris property was sold for \$4000 to John G. Richardson¹⁶ who next sold it to his agent, Harry Abbott on June 14, 1872.¹⁷ He and his wife Margaret Amelia sold it to Henry Lancelot Read Head on Apr. 6, 1874.¹⁸ On May 29, 1874 Head sold it to Francis DeLong of San Francisco for \$5,500¹⁹ and Dr. Harry Edward Vaux, a physician, bought it from DeLong on May 20 1884 for \$6,000.²⁰

Finally, Dr. Vaux (then of Toronto) and his wife Lydice sold the property to the Brockville Club for \$5,000 on Apr. 22, 1904,²¹ for use as a private men's club.

C. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Brockville Club is a two and a half storey rectangular stone building in the Loyalist neo-classic or Georgian style, and was probably built shortly after the land was purchased in 1834 by Alexander Morris.

The central structure is three bays wide with an attached one-storey wing on the south side. On the east elevation, the original entrance to the wing has been blocked in, as have the two large rectangular windows on either side. On the left at basement level there is a smaller rectangular window.

The main entrance which is sheltered by a porch is impressive. The heavy eight-panelled door is framed by two pairs of decorative pilasters. The plain fan transom window, which has in its center a vertical mullion, is framed by heavy molding in a semi-elliptical shape. On either side of the door, between each pair of pilasters, is a plain rectangular sidelight. The door is framed by seven windows: six large rectangular ones, one on either side and three above across and front; and two smaller basement windows.

On the north and south elevations there are two quarter-round windows in the gable and below each of these are two more large rectangular windows.

There are two chimneys, one on the north and the other on the south end of the roof.

On the Church St. side, a stone wall frames a wooden gate which leads to the back of the property.

D. RECOMMENDATION

The Local Architectural Advisory Committee recommends that the Brockville Club be designated under the Ontario Heritage Act, 1974.

The Morris family made important contributions to the economic, political and cultural life of Brockville and Upper Canada. The Brockville Club was also the site of a branch of one of Canada's first chartered banks.

REFERENCES

1. Chadwick, Edward Marion. Ontarian families; genealogies of United Empire Loyalist and other pioneer families. Lambertville, N.J., Hunterdon House, 1894, 1970, p. 187
2. Ibid., p. 187.
3. Ibid., p. 187.
4. Ibid., p. 187-188.
5. Ibid., p. 188.
6. Copy of Deed, dated June 9, 1814, registered in Leeds County Registry Office.
7. Copy of Deed, dated Feb. 13, 1834, registered in Leeds County Registry Office.
8. Copy of Deed, dated Oct. 30, 1850, registered in Leeds County Registry Office.
9. Copy of Deed, dated Apr. 27, 1861, registered in Leeds County Registry Office.
10. Copy of Deed, dated May 8, 1861, registered in Leeds County Registry Office.
11. McIvor, R. Craig. Canadian monetary, banking and fiscal development. Toronto, Macmillan, 1958, p. 33-34.
12. Ibid., p. 36.
13. Ibid., p. 54.
14. Ibid., p. 54.
15. Ibid., p. 54.
16. Copy of Deed, dated May 22, 1868, registered in Leeds County Registry Office.
17. Copy of Deed, dated June 14, 1872, registered in Leeds County Registry Office.
18. Copy of Deed, dated Apr. 6, 1874, registered in Leeds County Registry Office.
19. Copy of Deed, dated May 29, 1874, registered in Leeds County Registry Office.
20. Copy of Deed, dated May 20, 1884, registered in Leeds County Registry Office.
21. Copy of Deed, dated Apr. 22, 1904, registered in Leeds County Registry Office.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Chadwick, Edward Marion. Ontarian families; genealogies of United Empire Loyalist and other pioneer families. Lambertville, N.J., Hunterdon House, 1894, 1970.

Leavitt, Thaddeus W. History of Leeds and Grenville. Belleville, Mika, 1972.

McIvor, R. Craig. Canadian monetary, banking and fiscal development. Toronto, Macmillan, 1958.



• • • • •

