

# THE LACAC OF BROCKVILLE

June 6, 1985

## DESIGNATION REPORT

Designation Recommendation  
and Description for

# "BEAUVOIR" George Easton House

41 Cochrane ~~Street~~<sup>Drive</sup>,  
Brockville, Ontario

Block 2, Lot B

## Reasons for Designation

The George Easton House is being recommended for designation for architectural reasons. Built c. 1853, it is a rare example of Tudor Revival architecture in Brockville.

## Historical Background

The land on which the house stands was originally part of (1) 100 acre parcel of land granted to William Leahy, who sold it to Robert Leahy in 1807 for 300 pounds. (2) The land changed hands several times between 1807 and 1845 when George Crawford bought it and other land from Jonas Jones for 4400 pounds. (3)

Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee

Crawford had an active political career. A supporter of the Family Compact, he became the first treasurer of Brockville when it was incorporated as a police village in 1832. In 1847 he was president of the Board of Police (i.e. mayor), and from 1852-55 he represented Brockville in the Fourth and Fifth Parliaments of Canada. (4) In 1852, when Crawford's daughter Isabella and her husband George Easton, whom she married in 1840, returned to Brockville, Crawford made over a 9-acre parcel of land to Isabella "for natural love and affection, and five shillings." (5)

Isabella and George Easton were the first residents of the house known as "Beauvoir", built c.1853. Easton, born in Brockville in 1812, spent most of his life engaged in "general mercantile pursuits" (6) except for two years in the 1840's when he was involved in building part of the St. Lawrence Canal at Farran's Point. In 1850 he returned with his family to Brockville for good, continuing to employ himself as a merchant until he was appointed Collector of Customs in 1868.

After the death of Isabella in 1872, Easton sold the property to John C.T. Cochrane. (7) In 1899 Cochrane sold the road allowance for Cochrane Street to the Town of Brockville for \$1. (8)

In 1914 the property again changed hands when it was bought by William Arthur "Singapore" White. (9) White had been an insurance agent in Singapore and was regarded locally as an eccentric. (10) He undertook extensive remodelling of the house, emphasizing its Tudor qualities: he removed the decorative bargeboards, the shutters, and the verandah on the west and south sides. He added hood mouldings to the windows, a massive entrance porch at the corner of the L, a tiled terrace with a brick parapet, and an extension to the east wing. Two windows on the south side were converted to bays. The interior panelling and the staircase also date from this time.

In 1943, after White's death, the property was bought by John R. Baxter, owner of Lion Grinding (now Universal Grinding) on Pearl Street. A bachelor and avid bridge-player, Baxter resided at the Brockville Club. He hoped to persuade the club to relocate at Beauvoir which was so much more convenient to his place of business, but his proposal was turned down on the grounds that the house was too far out of town. Baxter had the property surveyed for subdivisions (11) and sold it to Allan Fairbairn in 1945.

Fairbairn's plan to convert the house into apartments was locally nicknamed "Fairbairn's Folly". No tenant would be willing to rent so far from town. (12) But Fairbairn pressed on, consulting the Kingston architectural firm of Drever, Smith (13) to achieve a sensitive conversion of the house with minimal sacrifice of the rooms proportions.

In 1980 the house was purchased by the present owners, David Walsh and Michal Vavro.

## Architectural Description

The mellow combination of Ontario Gothic and Tudor Revival elements in the design of 41 Cochrane Street make it a unique example of Brockville vernacular architecture. This three-storey house is built on a modified L-plan, with the reception rooms originally in the L and a kitchen wing extending to the rear.

Solidly built of stucco-covered stone, the house shows its Gothic inspiration with its steeply pitched roof, ornamented by decorative drops at the gable ends. The Tudor windows are rectangular with hood mouldings; three diamond shaped chimneys, decorated with dentil work and cross-hatching repeat the Tudor references.

The horizontal roofline of the porch contrasts with the angles of the main roof. The doorway is a wide Tudor arch. A terrace of Staffordshire blue tile bordered by a low wall of Staffordshire blue brick surrounds the house on the west and south sides. (14)

The house contains some fine oak panelling with square frames in the Tudor style, and an impressive Jacobean style staircase in a series of flights and landings. The banisters consist of a wide flat handrail, supported by spiral pillars and decorated at the turns by large acorn finials.

## Recommendation

Brockville L.A.C.A.C. recommends that building at 41 Cochrane Street be designated under the Ontario Heritage Act, 1980 for architectural reasons.

The committee is particularly concerned with preserving the interior panelling and staircase, and the exterior architectural characteristics.

## References:

1. Abstract of deeds filed at Leeds County Registry Office
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Leavitt's History of Leeds and Grenville.
5. Aug. 14, 1852; Abstract of deeds, Leeds County Registry Office.
6. Cyclopedia of Canadian Biography, 1888.
7. Apr. 29, 1872; Abstract of deeds, Leeds County Registry Office.
8. Abstract of deeds, Leeds County Registry Office.
9. May 28, 1914; Abstract of deeds, Leeds County Registry Office.
10. Conversation with Mrs. Allan Fairbairn.
11. Abstract of deeds, Leeds County Registry Office.
12. Conversation with Mrs. Allan Fairbairn.
13. Ibid.
14. Canadian Homes and Gardens, November 1928.