

By-law 155-78

City of Brockville  
LOCAL ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE

February 1, 1978

Designation Recommendation and  
Description for

# Isaac Beecher House

5 Henry Street,  
Brockville, Ontario.

Block 30 Lot 50

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

The Isaac Beecher House is being recommended for designation for both Historical and Architectural reasons.

The house is a fine example of vernacular Loyalist stone construction, common to this area during the early 19th Century. The well-preserved structure retains much of its original materials and workmanship. The Beecher family was influential in the early Political and Industrial History of Brockville.

The building is also destined to become Brockville's first permanent Museum.

B. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Beecher House is located by the waterfront on Henry Street, just south of Water Street. The land on which the house stands was originally deeded to Daniel Jones in 1790, one of the first settlers in the area.<sup>1</sup>

Isaac Beecher came to Brockville in the early 1820's from the United States.<sup>2</sup> He operated a Tannery on the north side of the Mill Pond just west of St. Paul Street.<sup>3</sup> He was also involved in the political life of Brockville, representing the West Ward on the Police Board in 1839 and the Town Council<sup>4</sup> from 1855 - 60. He, therefore, was involved in the decision to build Victoria Hall and the great debate concerning the Railway Tunnel. Beecher was also a member of the Building Committee for the first Town Hall, now the Civic Auditorium.<sup>5</sup>

In 1824 Beecher bought the property<sup>6</sup> and may have built his house shortly after. Beecher owned the house until his death in 1870, at the age of 77. His wife Aurinda retained the property until her death in 1888<sup>7</sup> at which time their son, George, took possession.

In 1884 Aurinda Beecher made an Agreement with the Rathburn Company of Deseronto, to put up lands owned by her to secure the supply of coal, horses, etc. for her son, George, to go into the coal supply business.<sup>8</sup> In 1892 the business went bankrupt and the Bank foreclosed against George Beecher. The property was deeded over to the Brockville Savings & Loan

Company.<sup>9</sup>

In 1897 a former competitor, The Central Canada Coal Company bought the property.<sup>10</sup> They retained possession until November of 1976 when the City of Brockville bought the house and surrounding property.

Management of the property has been entrusted to the Brockville Museum Board of Management by City Council.

C. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Beecher House, as it stands today, is a well preserved example of vernacular Loyalist stone construction. The symmetrical dwelling, with its harmonious proportions were common in the area during the early nineteenth century. It has retained much of its original materials and workmanship.

The two storey structure is three bays wide and constructed of coursed rubble. The most unique elements of the building are the two end walls. They rise above the roof to form an upward sloping parapet which result in a chimney at each peak of the Gable roof. This is unusual in that this type of wall is used as a fire wall and is normally found when two or more buildings are joined. To add further interest, each end wall contains two quarter-round windows in the upper gable.

The original, semi-elliptical main entrance is framed by a heavy ornate moulding extended to form a reveal. The deep

reveal of the entrance is a unique characteristic of Brockville architecture. Brockville is one of the few places in Ontario that has such a high concentration of these deep reveals. The woodwork in the reveal contains four panels that horizontally match those in the door. The wide seven panel door is surrounded by plain rectangular sidelights and a fan transom above.

The fenestration in the main facade contains the original, well spaced sash windows. The first floor windows are the regular twelve over twelve pane type. The second floor windows are a more interesting twelve panes over eight.

At the rear of the house is found a one-storey kitchen wing, probably added at a later date.

D. RECOMMENDATION

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

The Committee is particularly concerned with the preservation of the building's architectural characteristics. However, it is understood that in order to retain the building's usefulness, certain alterations and renovations may from time to time be required. Areas of particular concern on the exterior involve all four of the elevations.

The Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee would wish to examine any proposals affecting these areas such as the construction of any additions, masonry cleaning, installation of exterior lighting or alterations to the doors and windows.

REFERENCES:

1. CROWN GRANT, dated 4 November 1803, west half of Lot 12 1st Concession, Elizabethtown Township.
2. Canada West CENSUS, 1851, West Ward, Brockville.
3. Copy of Deed, Dated 17 November 1831, Registered in Leeds County Registry Office  
also ..... Map of Brockville published in 1861-62 by F. W. Wallings.
4. Leavitt, Thad. W., HISTORY OF LEEDS AND GRENVILLE, page 190 - 192.
5. See, DATE STONE in Wall of Brockville Civic Auditorium.
6. Copy of DEED, dated 20 February 1824, registered in Leeds County Registry Office.
7. Family TOMBSTONE in Brockville Cemetery.
8. Copy of AGREEMENT, dated 26 July 1884, registered in Leeds County Registry Office.
9. Copy of COURT JUDGEMENT, dated 4 May 1892, filed in Leeds County Registry Office.
10. Copy of DEED, dated May 1897, registered in Leeds County Registry Office.