



Conservation
Review Board

Ministry of
Culture and
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Commission des
biens culturels

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**RE: TOWN OF RICHMOND HILL - INTENTION TO DESIGNATE
231 DUNCAN ROAD (THE GAPPER-DUNCAN HOUSE)**

Judith Godfrey
Vice-Chairman

February 2, 1990

Hearing pursuant to Section 29(8) of the Ontario Heritage Act, R.S.O. 1980, Chapter 337 of the Notice of Intention given by the Council of the Town of Richmond Hill to designate 231 Duncan Road, (the Gapper-Duncan House), as being of architectural and historical value under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act.

Appearing for the Town of Richmond Hill:

Dave Melitzer, Deputy Clerk
Janet Fayle, LACAC Heritage Advisor, Richmond Hill

Objectors:

Gilles Bisnaire, for the owner, Forum Capital Corporation

FINDINGS OF FACT

The Board attended at the McConaghy Centre, Richmond Hill, to determine whether the property should be designated.

It was acknowledged by all parties present that the owner of the property is Forum Capital Corporation (Instrument #527926, November 29, 1989, Exhibit 5), and that all procedures stipulated by the statute had been complied with (Exhibits 1, 2, 3a, b, c, d, 4 and 5).

A certified letter on behalf of the prior owner, Mrs. George Stevenson, dated January 15, 1990, indicating that she has withdrawn her objection to the designation, was produced as evidence by the Town.

The witness for the Town of Richmond Hill, Janet Elizabeth Fayle, LACAC Heritage Advisor to the town, gave a brief summary of the report prepared by Fayle Associates for the Richmond Hill LACAC, January, 1990 (Exhibit 7) to show the architectural and historical importance of the Gapper-Duncan house.

Architecturally, the house, which was relocated in 1960 from Yonge Street, has retained its integrity, even retaining its interior fireplaces. Dating from c.1828, it is one of the earliest and finest gentlemen's residences remaining in Richmond Hill and the only one formally documented in a published journal (The Journal of Mary O'Brien, 1828-1858, edited by Audrey Saunders, 1968, MacMillan of Canada, Toronto).

The traditional rectangular three-bay Georgian building with low profile hip roof has had two major changes - a twentieth century design front porch and a clapboarded siding to the west. In addition there are 2/2 windows which replaced the original 12/12 lower and 12/8 upper sash seen in an undated photo (Exhibit 7). An original bell cast roofed verandah surrounding three sides of the building has been removed. The original doorcase is intact as well as two prominent red brick chimneys, and there is later clapboard siding.

According to the witness, the proposed reasons for designation do not include the interior; however, the floor plan, trim, doorcases and four of the original five fireplaces are still present and are architecturally significant.

The formal front entrance with its six-panelled door and multi-paned sidelights with wooden panels below and molded surround are intact and architecturally significant.

Stylistically, the house represents a simple example of the formal Georgian architectural styling appropriate to the social status of its original occupants. The interior is more stylistically sophisticated than the exterior, reflecting the means and English origins of the Gapper family.

Historically, the house is one of the most documented in Richmond Hill, due to the journal of Mary O'Brien, sister of Richard Gapper, a half-pay officer from England. The house reflects this British tradition in contrast to houses such as the Vanderburg House, a Loyalist house which is more in the American tradition.

The original owners, Richard and Fanny Gapper, were a cultivated, literate family actively participating on the "Family Compact" side of political and social life in this rural Yonge Street setting north of the Town of York.

Contextually, the relocated house sits on a large lot, well back from the street and is reminiscent of its original farm setting. The site forms a buffer between the commercial zoning on Yonge Street and the established residential area to the west.

In view of the withdrawal of the objection to the designation, there was no cross-examination by the objector. The owner asked how the connection was made between "The Journals of Mary O'Brien, 1828-1838" and the house. The witness replied that although the house was built earlier than the deed transfer in 1831 (of a 190 acre property, Lot 40, Concession 1, on the East side of Yonge Street, just south of present day Sixteenth Avenue, from which it was relocated to its present site), Richard Gapper was known to have lived there as early as 1828. The witness stated it was not uncommon at the time for there to be "gentlemen's agreements" prior to legal finalization.

As the present owner did not object to designation, no witnesses were produced. The owner clarified what could be changed if the property was designated, particularly with reference to the siding included in the Reasons for Designation.

The witness indicated that the siding is a twentieth century addition. It was included in the reasons for designation prior to being able to gain access to the interior, and thus the LACAC would have no objection to the removal of the siding if proper procedural steps were taken.

She stated that the 2/2 windows were mentioned (rather than the original 12/12 12/8 in order to give LACAC the opportunity to comment on any proposal relating to changing the windows.

A copy of the long form of the "Reasons for Designation" for registering on title was given by the municipality as Exhibit 8. This is a longer and more detailed description than the "short statement" published in the Notice of Intention to Designate (Exhibit 3.a) but adds no new architectural feature under "reasons for designation" not published in the notice.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Board concurs with the unchallenged evidence that the Gapper-Duncan House is a significant property architecturally and historically, and that designation of the details in the Reasons for Designation is advisable to preserve what is of value in this significant Ontario residence.

With regard to the details of the designation, the Board suggests that the inclusion of the siding in the reasons for designation might be re-worded or eliminated in the "Reasons" registered on title now that its twentieth century status is known, as this original wording does not reflect the present opinion of LACAC. The reference to the 2/2 windows in the published notice will be appropriately modified by adherence to the wording of the "Long Form for Registering on Title" (Exhibit 8).

It is the suggestion of this Board that if the wording of the "long form" is to be changed, consideration be also given to including the important features of the interior in the "Reasons". The original interior wall lay-out; staircase, newels, baluster and handrail; interior wood trim; black walnut, pine and other mantels and fireplaces; and original interior six-panelled doors, their original hardware and casings, should be considered for inclusion in the Reasons for Designation. Reference to some of these features extant in 1831 was made in Exhibit 7, p.6, "two rooms, plus passages and verandah".

In discussion, there seemed to be agreement between the parties that these details were architecturally significant, but it is suggested that this information be included so that future councils can make informed decisions on application to alter the property.

The Board suggests that future publications of the "Notice of Intention to Designate" in the Town of Richmond Hill, include direction as to where the "Long form of Reasons for Designation for registration on title" can be seen by the public.

Upon consideration of the evidence given at the hearing, it is the considered view of this Board that the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Richmond Hill has acted in the best interests of the community in proceeding in designating 231 Duncan Road (the Gapper-Duncan House), and the surrounding property, of architectural and historical value and interest. We therefore recommend that the property in question should be designated by by-law under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, Section 27.(1)(a), as being of historic and architectural interest to ensure its preservation.

(Original Signed by)

Judith Godfrey, Vice-Chairman

EXHIBITS

1. Statutory Declaration
2. Certified copy resolution of Council re Intention to Designate
3.
 - (a) Notice of Intention to the Ontario Heritage Foundation
 - (b) Notice of Intention to Grace Elizabeth Stevenson
 - (c) Affidavit re publication of notice in the Richmond Hill Liberal up to August 30, 1989
 - (d) Copy of objection of William G. Stevenson Projects Limited., September 14, 1989
4. Certified copy Assessment Rolls, Town of Richmond Hill, showing 231 Duncan Road as owned by Grace Elizabeth Stevenson, Legal description, part of Lot 20, Plan 3805 (highlighted).
5. Certified copy transfer November 29, 1989 by Deputy Land Registrar, Newmarket, same property transferred from Grace Elizabeth Stevenson to Forum Capital Corporation, instrument number 527926.
6. Certified letter, January 15, 1990, on behalf of Mrs. George Stevenson, showing she withdraws her objection to the designation.
7. Report prepared by Fayle Associates for Richmond Hill LACAC re Gapper-Duncan HUse (231 Duncan Road), January, 1990.
8. Long Form of Designation for Registering on Title