

**AYLMER REGISTER OF PROPERTIES OF
CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE OR INTEREST**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	5
Designated Properties	9
1. 38 John Street South	10
2. 76 King Street	12
3. 11 Pine Street East	16
4. 24 Pine Street East	21
5. 62 Talbot Street East.....	29
Listed Properties	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1. 62 Centre Street.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2. 74 Centre Street.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3. 170 John Street North	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4. 153 John Street South	Error! Bookmark not defined.
5. 170 John Street South	Error! Bookmark not defined.
6. 193 John Street South	Error! Bookmark not defined.
7. 213 John Street South	Error! Bookmark not defined.
8. 23 Oak Street.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
9. 20 Pine Street East	Error! Bookmark not defined.
10. 18 Pine Street West.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
11. 26 Pine Street West.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
12. 36 Pine Street West.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
13. 59 Pine Street West.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
14. 30 South Street West.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
15. 103 Sydenham Street West.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
16. 109 Sydenham Street East	Error! Bookmark not defined.
17. 116 Sydenham Street East	Error! Bookmark not defined.
18. 179 Talbot Street East.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
19. 236 Talbot Street East.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
20. 302 Talbot Street East.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
21. 155 Talbot Street West.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
22. 187 Talbot Street West.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
23. 369 Talbot Street West.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
24. 375 Talbot Street West.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
25. 445 Talbot Street West.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
26. 452 Talbot Street West.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
27. 67 Water Street	Error! Bookmark not defined.
28. 58 Wellington Street	Error! Bookmark not defined.

PHOTO CREDITS

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INTRODUCTION

Section 27 of the Ontario Heritage Act requires the clerk of a municipality to keep a current, publicly accessible register of properties of cultural heritage value or interest situated in the municipality.

The municipal register is the official list or record of cultural heritage properties that have been identified as being important to the community.

Contents of Register

The register must include all properties in the municipality that are designated under Part IV (individual designation) and Part V (district designation) of the Ontario Heritage Act. For properties designated under Part IV, the register must include:

- (a) a legal description of the property;
- (b) the name and address of the owner; and
- (c) a statement explaining the cultural heritage value or interest of the property and a description of the heritage attributes of the property.

For districts designated under Part V, the register must include a map or description of the area of each district.

Listing

In addition to the property listed in the register under Part IV and Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act, the register may include property that has not been designated under the Act, but that the council of the municipality believes to be of cultural heritage value or interest and shall contain, with respect to such property, a description of the property that is sufficient to readily ascertain the property.

The listing is a means to formally identify properties that may have cultural heritage value or interest to the community. It is an important tool in planning for their conservation and now provides a measure of interim protection.

Consultation with the Aylmer Heritage Committee

Where the council of a municipality has appointed a municipal heritage committee, such as the Aylmer Heritage Committee, the council shall, before including a property that has not been designated under the Ontario Heritage Act in the register, or removing the reference to such a property from the register, consult with its municipal heritage committee.

Why List A Property on the Register?

- To recognize properties of cultural heritage value in Aylmer
- To promote knowledge and enhance an understanding of Aylmer's cultural heritage
- To be included in a planning document that should be consulted by decision makers when reviewing development proposals or permit applications
- To provide easily accessible information about cultural heritage properties for land-use planners, property owners, developers, the tourism industry, educators and the general public
- To provide interim protection for listed properties.

Interim Protection for Listed Properties

Amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act in June 2006 allow for interim protection for properties listed on a register. Owners of listed properties must give council at least 60 days notice of their intention to demolish or remove a building or structure on the property.

The notice period allows time for the Town of Aylmer to submit any proposed changes of a listed property to the Aylmer Heritage Committee for review and recommendations.

The Listing Process

Approval from Aylmer Town Council (normally by resolution) is required to add cultural heritage properties that have not been designated to the register. Aylmer Town Council must consult with the Aylmer Heritage Committee before a non-designated property is added to or removed from the register.

The only information required for a non-designated property to be entered on the register is a description sufficient enough to uniquely identify the property without chance of confusion, such as the property's street address.

Although detailed research and evaluation of the property is not required, a brief rationale should be provided explaining why it may be important to the community.

The Town of Aylmer is not required to consult with property owners or the public to list non-designated properties in the register, however, notifying owners of the listing of properties is recommended by the Ministry of Culture. Discussion with the community is also encouraged.

Requests to list a property on the register may come from property owners, the Aylmer Heritage Committee, Town planning staff, historical societies or residents' associations.

Further Information

For more information on the municipal register and listing, please refer to the Heritage Property Evaluation Guide in the Ontario Heritage Tool Kit at:

www.culture.gov.on.ca/english/culdiv/heritage/Toolkit/HPE_Eng_large.pdf

The Ontario Heritage Act is available at:

www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/DBLaws/Statutes/English/90o18_e.htm

The Town of Aylmer Website is www.aylmer.ca

Designated Properties

1. 38 John Street South – Old Town Hall

Property Description: That parcel of land situate in the Town of Aylmer in the County of Elgin, containing by admeasurement one fifth of an acre more or less, being composed of part of the North part of what was Lot number 83, South on Talbot Road East and more particularly known as the North halves of Town Lots numbers 1 and 2 North on Sydenham Street in the said Town of Aylmer as the same is surveyed and laid out on the North end of said Lot 83 according to a plan of the said Town of Aylmer by John D Baikie, Public Land Surveyor.

Property Owner: The Corporation of the Town of Aylmer, 46 Talbot Street West, Aylmer, ON, N5H 1J7

Designation: Designated by By-Law No. 21-80 on March 14, 1980

Reason for Designation: This grand example of Italianate architecture has been used since 1873 as a municipal centre of Aylmer and area, and the upper floor contains one of the few remaining Opera Houses in the province. It is centrally located in the core area and serves as a singular memorial to the social, cultural and civic life of the community.

Short Notes: This building, built in 1874 has served as the Town Hall, Police Station, Mechanics Institute, and Opera House of mid-Victorian Aylmer. Its styling is Italianate, its expansive windows Romanesque. While grand in scale, the brickwork is deft, giving the building quite a light and delicate feel. It was restored in 1982 and now houses the town library and opera house.

There is a Conservation Easement between the Corporation of the Town of Aylmer and the Ontario Heritage Foundation for the restoration and renovation of the Old Town Hall.



38 John Street South – Old Town Hall

2. 76 King Street – Bingham-Dell House

Property Description: ALL AND SINGULAR that certain parcel or tract of land and premises situate, lying and being in the Town of Aylmer, in the County of Elgin and Province of Ontario, containing by admeasurement about one-third of an acre be the same more or less, being composed of a part of Lot number Eighty-four South on Talbot Road East in the Township of Malahide in the County and the Province aforesaid and better known as being situate in the Town of Aylmer aforesaid, and composed of Town Lots numbers Five and the east part of number Four in Block number One in the fourth range of lots surveyed upon the front end of said lot number Eighty-four and butted and bounded as follows:

Commencing at the north-west angle of Pine and King Streets; thence westerly along the north side of Pine Street One hundred and fifteen feet more or less to where a post has been planted; thence northerly and along a picket fence One hundred and thirty-two feet (two chains) more or less to where a post has been planted on the south side of Pleasant Alley; thence east along the south side of Pleasant Alley one hundred and fifteen feet more or less to the south angle of Pleasant Alley and King Street; thence south along King Street One hundred and thirty-two feet (two chains) more or less to the place of beginning.

Property Owner: Jean Matheson, 76 King Street, Aylmer, ON, N5H 2A3

Designation: Designated by By-Law No. 18-83 on April 25, 1983.

Reason for Designation (Owner's Response for Requesting Designation):

It was built in 1868, one year after Canada became a Nation. It was built several years before our Old Town Hall which now, in its rejuvenated beauty, houses our Town Library. My home, like the Old Town Hall, is of Italianate Villa design.

William Bingham, a prominent pioneer in our Town's early years, had the house built for his family. In 1834, when Aylmer could scarcely lay claim to the title of "Village", Mr. Bingham had come from New Hampshire, to farm and teach school at Rogers Corners. He married the daughter of Deacon Davis, one of the founders of Aylmer Baptist Church. Mr. Bingham decided to give up farming and teaching to set up a business on Aylmer's Main Street. According to Aldrich' Pocket Dictionary of Aylmer "the Bingham business increased - until it was considered to surpass any in the Village". On more than one occasion he suffered financial loss from the fires that ravaged Aylmer's wooden buildings in those early years, but he would never give up, he would rebuild and start over again. He was one of the pioneers instrumental in promoting the construction of brick

buildings in Aylmer. In the “Historical Atlas of Elgin County”, published in 1877 one reads: “The fires found Aylmer of wood, and left it of brick, through the enterprise of men like Stewart, Price, Bingham...”.

Although William Bingham had four sons there are no Bingham living in or near Aylmer today. It appears that most of them moved to the United States. In the Aldrich book one reads that one son, Joel Wallace Bingham, “became possessed of very great wealth, to such an extent that he was dubbed the millionaire of Wisconsin”.

One day last summer a young couple and their two children came to my door. The man said, “We are from California. I am Joel Wallace Bingham III. My great-great grandfather lived in this house”. He had little trace of his early beginnings and had had a long search to find his roots and found them here in Aylmer. How much it meant to him to find his great-great grandfather’s house still stand, still much the same as it was back then, still lived in and dearly loved!

This home has been owned by only two families – the Bingham and the Dells. The latter are my parents, Elizabeth and Ernest Dell, now both deceased, whose legacy of appreciation of Home and Heritage I continue to possess and love. My parents purchased the property in 1935 from Dr. Roy Bingham of Wisconsin who, I believe, was the son of William Bingham Jr. When my parents purchased the property, the last of the Bingham had departed and the house had stood empty for some time. The old home was in a state of disrepair and the yard overgrown. Fortunately, as at its beginning, it had once again fallen into loving hands that worked and laboured hard and long to restore it inside and out to its original beauty. Even today one could almost say that nothing has been altered on either the interior or exterior of the house. Through the years it has been so lovingly tended, and with all my heart I hope to keep it that way. However, I am the last of a line and I would like so much to know that it will be kept a heritage building, which protection can only be assured by the Ontario Heritage Foundation.

I believe that the house possesses unique aesthetic and picturesque qualities - the massive ornate verandah with its 25 pillars; a solarium with iron trellage on its roof; the brackets under the eaves; the moon-shaped glass transom above the double doors, and the ruby-red glass in the transom and the doors and the little rose window; the large winding staircase in the front hall; the curved lintel design above the windows, each window in the house still enhanced by its original shutters; the hand-carved mirror from floor to ceiling in the front living room with wings out over each window; the decorative moulding around the perimeter of the ceiling; the original fireplace; the chandelier that was originally equipped for gas-light; the wainscoting in the kitchen, the cupboard’s dumbwaiter

shelves, now unused, but still with their original ropes; the high ceilings, the suspended ceiling lights of brass, the extensive ornate woodwork throughout the interior, including the paneled doors.

The house is situated in Aylmer's core area of today as it was in the year it was built. As a local citizen has said, our Old Town Hall is the "Crown Jewel" set in the midst of a ring of heritage buildings. Around these old buildings our Town has grown. These buildings have looked on silently as Aylmer's history has been written. These buildings have witnessed our Town's triumphs and failures, its tragedies and its celebrations. They have seen Aylmer's citizens come and go, have played a part as those people lived out their lives and watched them depart, only to be replaced by others coming on and taking over and loving our Town just like those in whose footsteps they followed.

As has been said, "Of all living things MAN is the only one for whom YESTERDAY and TOMORROW are as important – possibly more important – than today". The Town of Aylmer is unique because of its many heritage buildings. It has already become known for this outstanding feature and there are carloads and busloads of people who come to Aylmer to see these buildings about which they have heard so much. A few summers ago I was talking to a priest from Vancouver Island who was visiting in Aylmer for the first time. He expressed his amazement and delight at the number of beautiful old buildings in our Town. I remember his saying: "I have been in many places where there were just as many, maybe more, old buildings, but never before have I seen so many so beautifully preserved and lovingly kept".

I believe that the Town of Aylmer should capitalize on this uniqueness. The Old Town Hall has been restored as "the Crown Jewel". From there the opportunities are endless.

Short Notes: In 1882, one of Aylmer's pioneer merchants, William Bingham, built this grand home at the corner of King and Pine Streets. It has been lovingly maintained by Jean Matheson, daughter of only the second family to own to the house. Its exterior is decorated in Italianate style. At total of 25 pillars adorn the verandah. The interior is designed in pure Victorian style. This house was the first building to be plaqued in recognition by the Town of Aylmer for being of cultural heritage value.



Bingham-Dell House in 2006

3. 11 Pine Street East – Bingham-Foy House

Property Owners: Mary Foy, 11 Pine Street East, Aylmer, ON, N5H 1N1

Designation: Designated by By-Law No. 29-94 on November 4, 1994.

Reason for Designation: The Bingham family built four fine homes in this vicinity, including the Foy home at 11 Pine Street East.

William E. Bingham (1814-1882), born in New Hampshire, came to Canada in 1834 and was engaged to teach school at the Baptist School House at Rogers Corner, just west of Aylmer. This school, built in 1816, was the first school and the first Baptist Church in Elgin County. Bingham boarded at the home of Deacon William Davis and in 1838 married the Deacon's daughter, Elizabeth Jane.

Elizabeth Jane is shown in the land registry records as the sole owner of the various family properties at one time or another. In each case her name appears as "Betsy Jane"

William Bingham was a worker. He farmed his father-in-law's farm as well as teaching school; bought 100 acres a mile east of Springfield; worked another farm across the road from his father-in-law's farm north of Orwell; bought a building in Orwell and operated a General Store.

In 1859-60, the Bingham's moved to Aylmer and rented a small store on the south side of Talbot Street between John and King Streets. In 1882 they built the superb dwelling known now as the Dell-Matheson home, at 76 King Street.

By this time they had four sons; Davis George (1841) (father of the late Bert Bingham), Joel Wallace (1845), Charles William "Will" (1847) and Beecher Albert (1857).

The Bingham's owned successful retail and service businesses, built several stores, were burned out twice and rebuilt. Davis Bingham operated a grocery, crockery and glassware store and his son George Albert took over. Old Timers will remember George Albert as "Bert" with his specialty seed store at the present location of the Province of Ontario Savings Office.

Following is a chronological history of the property at 11 Pine Street East:
1866 Lot 3, North of Pine Street East, the site of the present Foy home, was purchased by 21 year old

- Joel Bingham, for \$30.00. Joel went to the United States, speculated successfully and was referred to as the “Millionaire of Wisconsin”. Will and Beecher remained in Aylmer.
- 1870 Joel sells the lot to his mother, Betsy Jane.
 - 1878-79 Betsy Jane built the present house.
 - 1891 Betsy Jane sells to son Davis, for \$1800 (Davis died in 1918).
 - 1912 Purchased by Mahlon M. Griffin.
 - 1917 Purchased by Mary Elizabeth King
 - 1922 Purchased by George Demary, cattle dealer and farmer (his daughter married Walt Patterson)
 - 1933 New owners: Ansel and Edith Charlton. Home to their daughters Ruth and Florence who were both school teachers, and a granddaughter Jean Martindale. Miss Ruth Charlton makes her home in Aylmer.
 - 1944 Purchased by John S. Foy and his wife Mary.

John Foy was born in the Norwich area but attended Aylmer Schools. He succeeded Dan Davis as Town Clerk and held the position for 38 years, retiring in 1978. During his early years in office he endured the difficult war years which saw the great influx of new citizens and the responsibility of ration coupons. His only staff was Miss Margaret Poutsie and often his wife as an unpaid assistant. Later, Gloria Campbell and Phyllis Ketchabaw, came on staff. John Foy was an active member of the community with involvement in the Rotary Club, Masonic Lodge, Aylmer Public School Board and St. Paul’s United Church. John passed away in 1985.

Mary Foy, the present owner of the property, is the daughter of Jesse Arnup, born to Cultus and Ella Leeson of Summers Corners. Mr. Arnup was Moderator of the United Church of Canada during 1945-46. The Arnups were very well known in the Aylmer area and maintained a summer home at Port Bruce for many years. The Foyes have two daughters, Betty and Dorothy.

Exterior Features

This yellow brick house is a good example of the Italianate style as evidenced by the low pitch roof, wide overhanging eaves with decorative brackets and the rather tall narrow windows with two-pane sashes. Unlike many houses of this period, which were quite heavily decorated, this house features only a simple but rather elegant frieze at the wall and soffit intersection.

Originally the house had a wrap-around veranda, which has been removed due to its poor state of repair.

The house is situated on a double lot, which provides a beautiful setting for the house. As well, the original wood frame coach house remains at the rear of the property where it now serves as a garage and storage area.

Interior Features

The following is a list of features seen throughout the house:

- a) 1 1/4" oak flooring
- b) 10' ceiling height on first floor
- c) 9' ceiling height on the second floor
- d) 12" baseboard trim
- e) lath and plaster walls and ceilings
- f) four panel wood doors.

The parlour, immediately left of the foyer, features double entrance doors with half sashes and beveled glass side lites.

The dining room has beautiful period light fixtures, which was refurbished and installed by the Foys. The den, situated just off the dining room features wide pine floor boards.

The back of the main floor has been extensively remodeled over the years. A side porch entrance was incorporated into the kitchen area and a bathroom and laundry area have also been located in this area. The original summer kitchen remains at the rear of the main floor and currently serves as an uninsulated storage area.

The staircase to the second floor features slender walnut spindles, an ornate newel post and fretwork at the stringer. The second floor contains two large bedrooms. The third bedroom has been converted into a bathroom. The large windows on the second floor extend right to the floor level.

Summary

Due to the architectural merit of this house and its setting as well as the excellent condition in which the property has been maintained, it was recommended that the request for Heritage Designation put forth by Mrs. Mary Foy be granted. The designation should include the interior and the exterior features aforementioned as well as the double lot setting on which the house is situated.

Short Notes: Built in 1878-1879 for Betsy Jane Bingham, it was purchased by John and Mary Foy in 1944. A yellow brick built in a simple Italianate

style, the house originally had a wrap-around verandah. Its original wood-frame coach house remains.



Bingham-Foy House in October 2007

4. 24 Pine Street East – McLay-Minielly House

Property Description: ALL AND SINGULAR that certain parcel or tract of land and premises situate, lying and being in the Town of Aylmer, in the County of Elgin, and Province of Ontario, and being composed of and containing by admeasurement 0.341 of an acre, more or less, being composed of part of Block K, Plan Number 164, of the said Town of Aylmer, designated as Part 1 on Plan 11R-3699.

Property Owners: Bruce & Jane Minielly, 24 Pine Street East, Aylmer, ON, N5H 1N2

Designation: Designated by By-Law No. 13-89 on February 13, 1989.

Reason for Designation:

History

Three families have enjoyed the subject property prior to the present owners. Nathan L. Wood built the home, lived and died there. The Hambridges lived there about 11 years. It has been home to the McLay family since 1935. Nathan Wood, J.B. and Harold Hambidge and Dr. and Mrs. Homer McLay made a great contribution to the Aylmer district.

The subject building was erected for Nathan Loring Wood in 1853, on a 20 acre farm which he purchased in 1839.

Mr. Wood was a commercial traveler and about 1835 was passing along the Talbot Trail, likely on horseback. He stopped at Hodgkinson's Corners, sometimes known as Troy and now called Aylmer. He decided to spend the night here and attend a meeting to be held in a wagon shop. The purpose of the meeting was to select a new name for the community. Troy was the name of town in New York State and that was not popular with the settlers. Mr. Wood suggested the name "Aylmer" in recognition of Lord Aylmer, the Governor General. The name was voted on, accepted and recommended to the Post Office. Mr. Wood made his mark here, on his first visit. Two years later, the only area post office was relocated from Temperanceville, now Orwell, to Aylmer. Phillip Hodgkinson was appointed the first Postmaster. From 1820 to 1840 Temperanceville and Richmond were larger than Aylmer.

Nathan Wood purchased the southeast corner of Talbot Road and Gravel Road (now Talbot and John) and had the North American Hotel built. Our first hotel. Up to this time travelers were taken in by the settlers.

The hotel was a fine frame facility with a barroom, 4 fireplaces and a stable. It burned in 1874. At this time the hotel was owned by Hiram J. Brown, who then built the Brown House, of brick. The Brown House burned out in the early 1930s, was rebuilt to retail use and demolished in the 1970s to be replaced by the present Lover building (Big V).

Mr. Wood ran his hotel at intervals; he preferred storekeeping. Along with Phillip Hodgkinson and Hiram J. Brown he purchased lands from Ebenezer Wilcox; the northeast corner of Talbot and John. Wood built himself a store on the north side of Talbot Road about where Steen's Cigar Store now is. It appears that Mr. Wood used good planning. His store was across the road from his 20 acre farm on which he eventually built his home. There was no King, Sydenham, Pine or South Streets at that time. Mr. Wood and partners in the land made a free gift of a building site to the original English Church on the north side of Water Street, at the north end of Queen. A small cemetery remains there today.

The Historical Atlas of the County of Elgin, 1877, describes the earliest merchants as including Wood and Waring and Wood and Kirkland. Interesting anecdotes of Nathan Wood are found on pages 28 & 30 of Aldrich's Pocket Directory of Aylmer, 1888. They describe his part in the draft of soldiers during the Rebellion of 1837 and years later his famous tamed black bass. These fish were in a pond about where the Gunstone home is at 24 South Street East. Mr. Wood died at home at the age of 85 in 1889. He and Mrs. Wood are buried in the Aylmer Cemetery.

The Woods had a son, George Rodney Wood and three daughters; Evangeline, who died in 1892 and was the wife of J. H. Arkell. Arkell was a very well known Aylmer name. Olive Wood Sturges died in 1908. Amy Hoag died about 1924 and was the last family member to own the subject property and call it home. Her husband Walter died in 1910 and their son Don visited Aylmer and his boyhood home in the early 1980s.

An interesting and no doubt disturbing flurry of events came to light during a thorough title search at the Elgin County Registry Office. In 1864 Nathan Wood deeded, for \$1.00, fourteen acres of the home property to his son George. Two years later George mortgaged the property to Adolphus Williams. Another two years and George defaulted on the mortgage. Dr. Williams sold the property, under Power of Sale, for \$2,025 to Thomas M. Nairn. The same day, Mr. Nairn sold the property back to George Wood for \$2,030. Thomas Nairn did the family a great favour. About this time he became the first Reeve of the Village of Aylmer and his many accomplishments are well known to those familiar with local history. Of course, he was a Scotsman and a Liberal.

In 1873 the Corporation of the Village of Aylmer registered Plan 74. This permitted the orderly development of property; streets were laid out and lots were sold. This enabled the subdivision of the northerly part of the Wood property, in the area of Sydenham, Pine, King and South Streets. Plan 164 was put on in 1890. By 1924 the subject Homestead was whittled down to what is covered in this report.

Eliza Hambidge (Mrs. J.B.) purchased the subject property in 1924, lived there and in 1931 deeded it to her son, Harold Miles Hambidge. During the 1870s J.B. Hambidge built a brick family home at the northwest corner of Sydenham and King (remembered by many as the Harry Durkee home). It has been removed for the municipal parking lot. Mr. Hambidge also built a store as bake shop and confectionary shop, which is now Clarke's Restaurant at 22 Talbot Street East. Next, he built a frame warehouse and ice house, for refrigeration, which was at the present site of the Aylmer Hotel.

By this time J.B. Hambidge was a dealer in eggs, buying them from local farmers, storing them until sold to large distributors. Apples were a part of this business and were shipped to Glasgow and Liverpool from Aylmer. In 1902 a large brick ice house was built by Joe Davis for the expanding business, capacity 300 tons of ice. J.B. Hambidge died in 1914 and his son Harold carried on the business. During this time the Hambidges were handling up to 200,000 dozen eggs annually. This before modern refrigeration. Harold married Aileen Kennedy of Wingham and they made their home at 24 Pine Street East until 1935.

The Hambidges were very much a part of the business, social and musical life of Aylmer. Harold was a fine, trained Irish tenor and loved to sing. He took a leading part in most of the old Aylmer Minstrel Shows. After moving from they established a model apple orchard on Rogers Road South; a delightful old home was restored and the property was a local showplace featured in the recent Du Maurier Collection by Peter Robson. Upon retirement the Hambidges moved to 27 South Street East. Both passed away in the late 1970s.

The next family to call 24 Pine Street East home were the McLays; Dr. Homer, wife Kathleen and sons Peter and Ian. Dr. McLay was the son of Dr. Peter McLay and was born, raised and started to practice medicine in the family home at the northeast corner of John and Pine, now the Baptist parsonage. From 1908 to 1935 the McLay home was at 89-91 Talbot Street East and the office remained there until 1946 when it was moved to 113 Sydenham Street East.

Dr. McLay described himself as a country doctor, which was correct. After graduation from medical school in London he spent 2 years as a house surgeon at the London Asylum. His professional life in Aylmer

started at the period in medicine when control of infection required very sterile conditions. There were no wonder drugs and no anti-biotics. Care was mostly in the home; emergency surgery on the kitchen table; chloroform for anesthetic; babies delivered at home; horse and buggy or cutter travel; Model T Fords; poor roads; house calls night and day; no hospitalization. The patients who could, paid.

Dr. McLay's nephew, Dr. McLay Miller joined the practice in 1935 and an X-Ray machine was added. Up to this time the local doctor took care of home, farm accidents and highway crashes in the patient's home, barn roadside or in his office. It was a busy life – full of dedication.

Patients came to Homer McLay from far and wide and he enjoyed a large practice. We say enjoyed because he loved people and his work. He delivered many babies, all in the home in the early days and was the family doctor to generations. His reputation as a diagnostician survives to this day. The great grandson of Deacon William Davis, one of Malahide's first settlers and descended from a long line of Liberals, Dr. McLay had a life long love of politics. Illness forced him to retire about 1948. He died in 1958.

Mrs. McLay was the right person at the right time. A country doctor's wife had to be a special person. This lady was a graduate of St. Joseph's Hospital School of Nursing and often assisted those patients who could not get help in the home, when it was needed. Particularly at the time of injury, accident or confinement. Her help was required in the office as well. Even to scrubbing the place out at the end of the day.

Kathleen McLay was a skilled home maker and an outstanding house keeper. She didn't get the free time some others did and made her home and family her life. She loved to entertain and 24 Pine Street East was the scene of countless tea parties. The ladies of the community loved tea parties. They laughed and talked and raised money for various groups including the Red Cross during wartime and the Hospital and Church. It was almost one big open house. In fact, people didn't lock their doors years ago and patients often walked in during the night and called up the stairs for "Doc". Homer would sometimes get home in the evening at what he thought was an early hour; Kathleen would have to round up some partners for a game of bridge. A few of the friends have told of getting out of bed and coming to Pine Street to play cards, at midnight. Homer and Kathleen McLay's presence at 24 Pine Street East made it an outstanding family home.

Kathleen McLay died in 1982. Peter and Carol McLay live in the home at this time. Ian McLay, his wife Bonnie, their children Tom, David and Kathleen McLay and Kristen and Donald Webber live in London.

Architecture

The home is described as a very pure example of Classical Neo-Grecian architecture and demonstrates the “Golden Proportions”; the exquisite and pleasing proportioning typical of the early Greek builders.

These proportions are evident in the basic outline of the house; the roof line; centre doorways at the front; the equal number of windows on each side of centre; even the double hung sash with six panes each and each pane with a well proportioned 9” by 14”. Incidentally, much old “Bubble” glass is found.

Another dramatic feature of this home is the entablature high on the walls. Consisting of dentils, bands of moulding, frieze and architrave, you have a rare and beautiful example of pioneer workmanship and attention to detail.

The house is of frame construction, typical of the period. Squared, hand hewn timbers with wooden pegs form the frame and the original 1” x 8” clear pine tongue and groove siding is in excellent condition. A lap siding was used on the rear and that on the main building is original. Nathan Wood’s hay barn and stable was torn down about 1938 to make way for the Assumption School.

It is interesting that a village merchant and tool man in the semi-wilderness of 1853 Aylmer would attempt such a structure. Designers must have been brought in from the United States, where the Classical design was popular. This was 20 years before rail travel to Elgin County.

The interior of the house presents the well proportioned features as on the exterior. Centre hall, on 3 levels; pleasingly proportioned rooms on each side – all with lovely windows. An open stairway serves the three levels and a simple walnut banister is original to the second floor and has been reproduced to the third. The stairs to the second floor is exceptional. Width is four feet. The important feature is a rise of 7” and a tread of 12”. Another example of beautiful proportions. It’s a perfect stairway.

Ceiling height of 8’8” is ideal; much less in the later Victorian period. The original flooring is a tongue and groove 1 1/8” x 7” and has been covered by a typical oak hardwood, likely laid early in this century.

In 1935, the McLays found the home quite similar to most older homes at that time. No insulation in the ten inch thick walls; only a semblance of heating system; little unvented gas heaters in several rooms; outdated kitchen, bath and wiring. These things were taken care of. A one storey kitchen-wood shed was removed and replaced with a two storey addition consisting of family kitchen below and sitting room above. This unit was

designed by Mr. Bridgeman of London and ties into the original structure well. Wood lap siding was used to match the rear of the original.

While recovering from illness in the late 1940s the McLays traveled the Southern States. There Homer realized that the homes with columns were the style of their own. On his return he made a study of Classical architecture. Architect J. Fred Green of St. Thomas, was consulted.

During 1948 George Craik, builder and mill man of Springfield, with the help of Milt Craik, Lefty Burgess and Frank Wiltsie and the detailed building plans of Fred Green, built the portico and pediment presently gracing the front of the home. Clear native white pine from Fred and Gord White of Springwater was used to construct the columns. These were built in the Green Lumber mill at the corner of Talbot and White Streets in St. Thomas by Col. W.J. Green, Fred's father. Of course, Norm Brooks placed the columns on the newly built deck.

This addition was well planned and executed by those concerned. Ornamentation was reproduced by the Craiks and carried through to the new portion, as on the original. Several architects and students of architecture have praised the result.

An early photograph, used by the Aylmer Express in the past, shows a structure situated on the flat part of the roof. Improperly called a "cupola", it was removed many years ago. The "Bird's eye" sketches of Aylmer, 1881 and 1887, show the subject property on the outskirts of the Village, with the "cupola" in place.

Specific Items on Which Designation was Recommended:

Subject Lot: existing dimension, 110.7' by 132.46'

Exterior of Dwelling:

- The entire exterior. Walls, siding, painted wood.
- Windows, doors, portico, pediment, columns.
- Front deck of stone and marble.
- Southeast deck of granite and marble
- Dinner Bell.
- Front walk of Credit Valley sandstone
- Copper eavestroughs
- Approximately 150 linear feet of wooden fence, painted white

Interior of Dwelling

- Existing floor plan – centre hall
- Open stairs to third floor
- Newel posts, banister and spindles of walnut

- Original wood trim, baseboards in living room, first and second floor hallway, bedrooms
- Wood panel under living room windows
- Original flooring of 1 1/8" by 7" tongue and groove.
- Fireplace of walnut and marble
- Bay window
- See through cupboard between butler pantry and kitchen
- Ceiling light fixtures in dining room, den, lower hall, upper hall, sunroom; numerous wall fixtures and exterior light fixtures.

Short Notes: Built in 1853 by hotelier Nathan L. Wood, this Georgian neo-classical has original 1"x8" clear pine tongue and groove siding cut to resemble an ashlar, stone fabric. The size of the windows and the classical style of the entrance create a most dignified look. The lowering Doric pillars, pediment, and frieze were added in 1950.



24 Pine Street East in 2006

5. 62 Talbot Street East – Catfish Creek Hotel, formerly known as the Central Hotel and Kennedy Central Hotel

Property Description: All and singular that certain parcel or tract of land and premises situate, lying and being in the Town of Aylmer, in the County of Elgin, and Province of Ontario, and being composed of and containing by admeasurement 0.25 of an acre, more or less, being composed of Block 1, Part of Lot 5, Plan 74, of the said Town of Aylmer.

Property Owners: Diane Gulyas, Central Hotel, 62 Talbot Street East, Aylmer, Ontario, N5H 1H4

Designation: Designated by By-Law No. 21-05 on April 25, 2005.

Reason for Designation: Aldrich's Pocket Directory of the Town of Aylmer as completed and published in April, 1888 by Aylmer resident M.L. Aldrich. In it, he lists the presence of 7 hotels: Brown House and Mansion House on the southeast and southwest corners of Talbot and Gravel Roads respectfully; the Airline Hotel and Electric Hall, both on Gravel Road North; Ocean House on Sydenham Street; Mero House at 79 Talbot Road East; and the Kennedy Central Hotel at 35 Talbot East (now known municipally as 62 Talbot Street East). T.T. Kennedy is listed as the proprietor of the Kennedy Central, a building that housed not only a hotel "second to none" but also the Shaving Parlour of J. North.

Aldrich's reference to the Kennedy Central is confirmed by records at the Land Registry Office of Elgin County and in Kirk Baron's book, "The History of Aylmer to 1900". It is noted in registry records that on 28 May, 1883, Thomas Kennedy purchased the property on which the hotel now stands from William Farthings. This lot has been the site of a hotel since 1844, when Henry Martin had the Martin's Hotel built. The name of that establishment was changed in the early 1860's to Laing's Hotel. Laing's was razed by fire in January 1862, but was rebuilt and subsequently sold in 1872 to Adolphus Williams and Peregrine Mann, who, in their time, renamed it the British American Hotel. As noted, Thomas Kennedy bought the property in 1883 and, as evidenced by the chiseled sandstone above the main entrance "CENTRAL HOTEL – 1883", must have had the British American torn down and had what we now refer to as the Central Hotel built that year.

The Central Hotel was and is an imposing structure, solid and of some mass, the cornerstone on the eastern end of a block of 2 and 3 storey brick buildings. It is a lofty 3 storeys and is crowned by an ornate brick cornice. Tall windows, place one above the other three floors up, all with

Romanesque top sashes and raised architraves add to its height and presence.

The architectural style of Kennedy's Hotel is similar to other commercial buildings built on Talbot Street at this time. Thomas Wooster, an Aylmer contractor with a talent for design and many buildings to his credit, and a Mr. M.L. Buffy, Architect, are both listed in Aldrich's Directory. Whether either had a hand in the design of the Central or other Talbot blocks, cannot be told. But whoever the designer, there is a similarity in style, perhaps best described as a local, commercial Italianate or Italianate vernacular.

As in the classic Italianate mode, the design of the Central utilized Romanesque windows and stylishly-carved, stone architraves and sills. The bricks of the facades are set flat and in and out, giving texture and relief to the walls and window wells and an ornateness to the cornice. The windows are set 3 high, one above the other in 12 vertical rows, all with eye to symmetrical order.

Internally, the whole is organized in a centre hall plan causing the main entrance to be set front and centre on the north façade. The east wall is distinctive with 21 identical, symmetrically-set windows, a pattern broken only by a sympathetic door opening.

The fabric is solid brick, no doubt 3 bricks thick.

Summary

Given its place in the history of Aylmer, its location on the corner of Talbot and King Street, the eastern anchor of a long-standing commercial block, the quality of the styling and materials used, and the obvious skills of the tradesmen involved, the Central Hotel is a property of cultural value that should be preserved. The brick walls, the stonework and the windows on both the north and the east facades should be designated, reminders of the many innkeepers and numerous travelers, the rooms, meals, and personal services available in Aylmer in the 1880's.

Short Notes: Three hotels have stood at the southwest corner of King and Talbot streets since 1844 with The Central Hotel being the third, built in 1883. Design of the Central utilized Romanesque windows and stylishly-carved stone architraves and sills. The windows are set in symmetrical order, three high, one above the other in 12 vertical rows. The façade gives texture and relief to the walls, window wells and cornices.



62 Talbot Street East in 2006

