

“Avonsyde” - 493 Dundas Street East

The stately red brick house now in the middle of a residential construction zone has a long history in the former township of East Flamborough. The house and the associated property are part of Lot 3, Concession 3 although only a small portion of the original farm property remained with the house, prior to the sale to a developer.

The land on which “Avonsyde” is located was part of a parcel of two hundred acre Crown Grant, awarded to King’s College, Toronto on 3 January 1828. However like many lots of the time, it was not built upon over the next decade. In 1839 the property which was already divided by Dundas Street into two one-hundred acre sections was officially separated. The north half, where “Avonsyde” would be built, was sold to John Brown, a Waterdown grocer. Early records suggest that he may have resided on the property, as a ‘frame house under two storeys’ is listed for tax purposes from 1841 onwards. It then changed hands several times during the next decade.

The exact date of the house’s construction and the builder are unknown. It has been suggested that it may have been built during Richard L. Johnston’s ownership (1846 – 1856) as he purchased it for 750 pounds and when it sold it ten years later, the price was a much more substantial 1700 pounds, suggesting that a larger house had been erected.

The present house appears to have been built in two stages, the back section being constructed before the front section that faces onto Dundas Street. This may mean that the back portion dated from Johnston’s ownership and the front portion being added when James Forbes became the owner in 1857. James Forbes was a successful, retired Hamilton businessman, with a wife, Jane Little, and five children at the time of his move to East Flamborough Township. Born in Aberdeen, Scotland, he had come to Canada about 1830. Shortly after arriving he founded and operated the Forbes-Fisher Stove Foundry Company at the corner of McNab and Vine Streets in Hamilton. In 1857, owing to ill health, he sold his business to the James Stewart Stove Company and moved with his family to Waterdown, where he died in 1870. However the house and farm remained in the Forbes family until 1913 when it was sold to George Pearson, whose family owned and farmed the property for close to the next 70 years.

Soon after his purchase of the property, George Pearson, together with his sons, Bill and Cuthbert, began a family business known as The Avonsyde Dairy. This operation was the first in the Waterdown area to use glass bottles for delivering milk, and eventually the deliveries extended to the Aldershot and Burlington areas. In 1940, the Pearsons sold their milk delivery business to the Sunnybrook Dairy in Waterdown although they continued to supply milk to this company, and later the Oakville Dairy. In 1973, the Pearson Dairying operation came to an end when the last of their dairy cows were sold. A small area to the east of ‘Avonsyde’ was severed to provide a home for Cuthbert Pearson and his wife Annie, while Bill and his wife Mary retained ‘Avonsyde’.

On 3 September 1986, at the urging of the Town of Flamboroughs L.A.C.A.C. and with the full agreement of the Pearson family, the Council of the Town of Flamborough designated ‘Avonsyde’, 493 Dundas Street East, under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, as a property of architectural and historical importance in the history of Flamborough.

The death of George Cuthbert Pearson on 7 March 1988 marked the end of the Pearson family ownership of the property, as soon after all of the land in Lot 3, Concession 3, with the exception of the

two family homes at 477 and 493 Dundas Street East were sold to Upcountry Estates for future residential development.

Even though it is now surrounded by residential construction, “Avonsyde” will remain on the property and a Heritage Plaque will be erected, honouring the agricultural history of the farm as well as the architectural history of the house.

