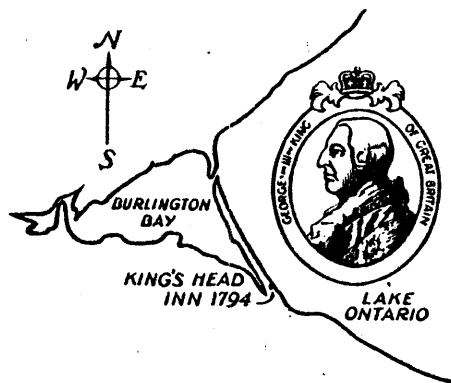


The Head-of-the-Lake Historical Society

Hamilton, Ontario



EXPLORE ● PRESERVE ● RELATE

Number ^{TEN} Eleven

NEWSLETTER

January, 1980

JANUARY MEETING

Mr. John Penman will be the guest speaker at the coming meeting of the society, to be held Friday, January 11, 1980, 8 o'clock p.m., at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, James Street South, Hamilton. Mr. Penman will give a slide presentation entitled 'Changing Hamilton'.

John Penman to London, Ontario, from Kirkcaldy, Scotland in 1957, and moved to Hamilton two years later. In September, 1961, he joined the Hamilton Recreation Department and he is currently supervisor of Central Memorial Recreation Centre. Mr. Penman has been interested in photography since he was boy. He is also interested in special events and prominent buildings, and for many years he has been building a slide collection portraying the changes that have taken place in Hamilton and especially in the central area. A selection of these slides will from the basis of Mr. Penman's presentation to the society.

HISTORIC BUILDINGS IN HAMILTON

by William D. King

ABBOTSFORD HALL AND WESTLAWN

In 1833 the town of Hamilton was named a police village and in 1846 was incorporated as a city. The intervening years were ones of distinct commercial progress and Hamilton, with a population then of only one to two thousand, was competing with nearby Dundas for commercial supremacy at the Head-of-the-Lake. The 1830's was also the first decade when really substantial buildings began to be constructed in Hamilton. The Courthouse and the Gore Bank were two elaborate public buildings whose presence was seen as a credit to the village. A number of stone mansions were built by Hamilton's wealthiest citizens. But of all the buildings constructed then there appears to be only one, Dundurn Castle, still standing close to the area which Hamilton then occupied. This article is concerned with two other homes, Abbotsford Hall and Westlawn, which were also built during this period. One was close by central Hamilton and the other was originally in the Dundas area but, because of later boundary changes, also became part of Hamilton.

Westlawn was built at the north-east corner of Queen and York Streets in 1836 for the home of Colin Campbell Ferrie, later the first mayor of Hamilton. It was a stately Georgian house of two storeys, constructed of limestone. The interior followed the central hall plan with a curving staircase leading to the second storey. The reception rooms on the first floor were particularly large, the ceilings decorated with wide cornices and medallions moulded in an oak leaf pattern. The estate itself was once described by P. R. Austin: "The grounds were laid out with grass, flowers and fruit trees. At the house, the lawn was terraced. No buildings blocked its view of the bay. At the corner of Queen and York Streets was an iron gate supported by stone pillars, and with a gatekeeper's lodge. A drive circled past the door."

The builder of Westlawn was born in Scotland in 1808. Colin Ferrie was the son of The Honourable Adam Ferrie, a highly successful Scottish merchant and politician. With the as-

sistance of his father, Colin Ferrie established himself in business in Canada and he, too, enjoyed considerable success. He headed the wholesale trading firm of C. C. Ferrie and Company and was involved in numerous other commercial pursuits in the city. Ferrie's life was, however, a short one: he died in 1856 at the age of forty-eight. In 1868 Senator Samuel S. Mills purchased Ferrie's residence and property, and it is believed that it was he who gave it the name Westlawn. Mills died at the house in 1874 and it was purchased from his estate by Anthony Copp, head of the foundry bearing his name. Copp diminished the size of the property in 1883 by having Oxford Street constructed north of Queen Street. He died in 1910 and in 1916 Westlawn was purchased by the Tuckett Tobacco Company. This company, incidentally, had been founded by another one-time mayor of Hamilton, George Elias Tuckett, who occupied the position in 1896. Westlawn, however, was of course unsuited to manufacturing and after some years in a state of decay, it was demolished by the company in 1956.

A contemporary of Westlawn, Abbotsford Hall, was located some distance to the northeast. It was built about 1838 by Lockhart Duff. Duff lived the first part of his life in Scotland where he was a friend and great admirer of the novelist, Sir Walter Scott. However Duff's fortunes did not prosper in Scotland and so in 1830 he came with his family to Canada and settled in Hamilton. With the encouragement of Sir Walter, he succeeded here in obtaining the wealth that had eluded him in his homeland. While in Scotland, Duff had observed the construction of Scott's country home on the River Tweed and he resolved that in Canada he would also build a handsome house called by that name. Abbotsford Hall was constructed on a property on Main Street West, then in Dundas but now in Hamilton, opposite the grounds of McMaster University. As recounted by The Spectator in 1936, "Abbotsford Hall was so substantially built of the heavy materials fashioned in that earlier day, that it shows very little deterioration after the wear and tear of a century. Two stone masons were brought over from Scotland and they remained on the estate for two years. The pillars which support the porch were brought from Scotland at the cost of a thousand dollars apiece." The house itself was considerably smaller than the house of Colin Ferrie, but it followed a similar Georgian pattern and was constructed, like Westlawn, of limestone. The builder of Abbotsford Hall died in 1957. Like so many of the houses built at the time, Abbotsford Hall passed through several hands until it was eventually found unsuitable and was demolished.

The Head-of-the-Lake Historical Society

Hamilton, Ontario

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Newsletter Committee: Mr. William Rosart, Mr. Gordon Powell,
Mr. William D. King.

The newsletter committee welcomes brief contributions and notices, which will be included where possible. Inquiries may be addressed to Bill Rosart, P.O. Box 985, Main Post Office, Hamilton, or to Bill King, 26 Bromley Road, Hamilton, phone 383-1876.

Miniatures at Whitehern

A collection of over 2,000 miniatures on loan from the Art Gallery of St. Thomas - Elgin, St. Thomas, Ontario, will be on display at Whitehern from Sunday, November 18 until Thursday, January 31, 1980. Miss Elsie Swetnam and Miss Roxie Matthews started collecting the miniatures over 15 years ago. Some of the pieces were purchased by the ladies but a great many were given to them by friends and relatives from places they had visited. In 1978 Miss Swetnam and Miss Matthews donated their delightful collection to the Art Gallery of St. Thomas - Elgin.

Whitehern is open daily to the public from 1 until 4 p.m.

Admission: Adults: \$1.
Seniors: \$.75
Students: \$.50
Children: \$.25

Group bookings may be arranged by appointment. Phone 522-5664.