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SANDSTONE STEWARDSHIP

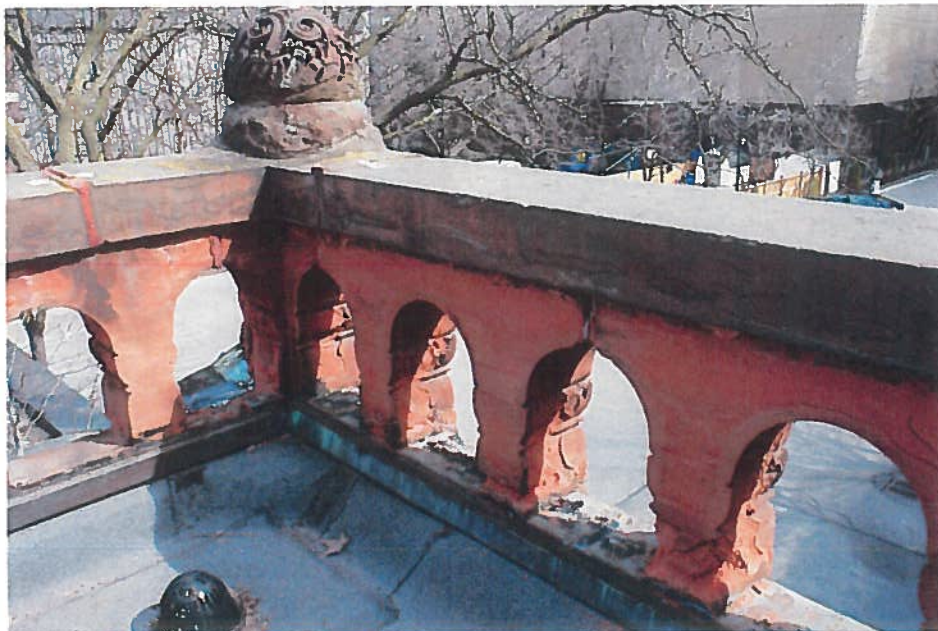
by Guy Burry and Liz Lundell



▲ Originally the George Gooderham House, 135 St. George Street in Toronto has been home to The York Club since 1909. The porte cochère prior to restoration. Photo The York Club, 2017

Standing at a busy Toronto intersection, a property of national historic importance has been screened by imposing red brick walls from the view of passersby for decades. Pedestrians — many of them students at the University of Toronto — have bustled to and from the TTC's St. George Station largely unaware of the efforts of a private club to preserve this important heritage resource; however, hoarding and equipment visible from the sidewalks have drawn attention recently to a significant restoration project.

Designated by the City of Toronto for its architectural value in 1980, the former George Gooderham House at 135 St. George Street at Bloor has been under the stewardship of The York Club since 1909.



▲ The parapets showing signs of weathering and damage before restoration. Photo Spencer Higgins Architect, 2017

The 1980 designating bylaw stated the reasons for designation were architectural, outlining that the building "is an outstanding architectural landmark in Toronto designed in 1890 by David Roberts Jr." George Gooderham's home reflected the Romanesque style made fashionable by American architect H. H. Richardson in the 1870s and '80s. Richardson died in 1886 at age 47, but the appeal of the architectural style associated with his name continued well into the 1900s. Gooderham named his home "Waveney" after the river close to his birthplace in Norfolk, England. Gooderham died in 1905 and The York Club purchased the property from Harriet (nee Dean) Gooderham within a few years.

The exemplary architecture and craftsmanship were the primary reasons for heritage designation in Designation Bylaw No. 355-80:

The imposing exterior skillfully executed in red brick and Portage sandstone is enriched by the decorative stone carving of Holbrook and Mollington, fine metal-work embellishments and slate roofing. The panelling and magnificent craftsmanship in the fireplaces, light fixtures and plaster work of the main rooms, and especially in the wood carving of the front hall and stairway, are unique. The attention to the refinement of detail on the exterior as well as the interior identifies this splendid house as an excellent example of the period.

At The York Club's request, Spencer R. Higgins, architect and consultant in conservation of historic buildings, undertook an extensive analysis of the building's condition in 2017. Higgins' "Historic Structure Report" identified that the property was "rapidly developing age-related issues" evidenced "in some of the stonework, which is beginning to crumble, and the roof which although well maintained and not leaking, will require some fairly major rehabilitation in the next decade in order to continue to shelter the club. There are also significant issues with the garden wall related to aging of the ironwork and damage to the bricks from road salt and water."

Higgins assessed that elements of the sandstone exterior needed

conservation work urgently. Replacement of deteriorated stone in the east chimney and south gable wing were completed in early 2018. The time-worn stone elements were replicated by Traditional Cut Stone Limited in Mississauga and installed by Roof Tile Management.

The next priority became the restoration of the stone pillars and parapets, and installation of a replacement roof over the porte cochère with new lead flashings. The porte cochère stone is, once again, being crafted by Traditional Cut Stone and will be installed by Colonial Building Restoration Limited of Scarborough.

The original stone for the Gooderham residence was Portage Entry Red Sandstone quarried near Jacobsville on the south shore of Lake Superior. Michigan's Upper Peninsula near the town of Jacobsville possessed cliff shorelines composed of desirable sandstone layers that could be quarried and easily transported by ship.

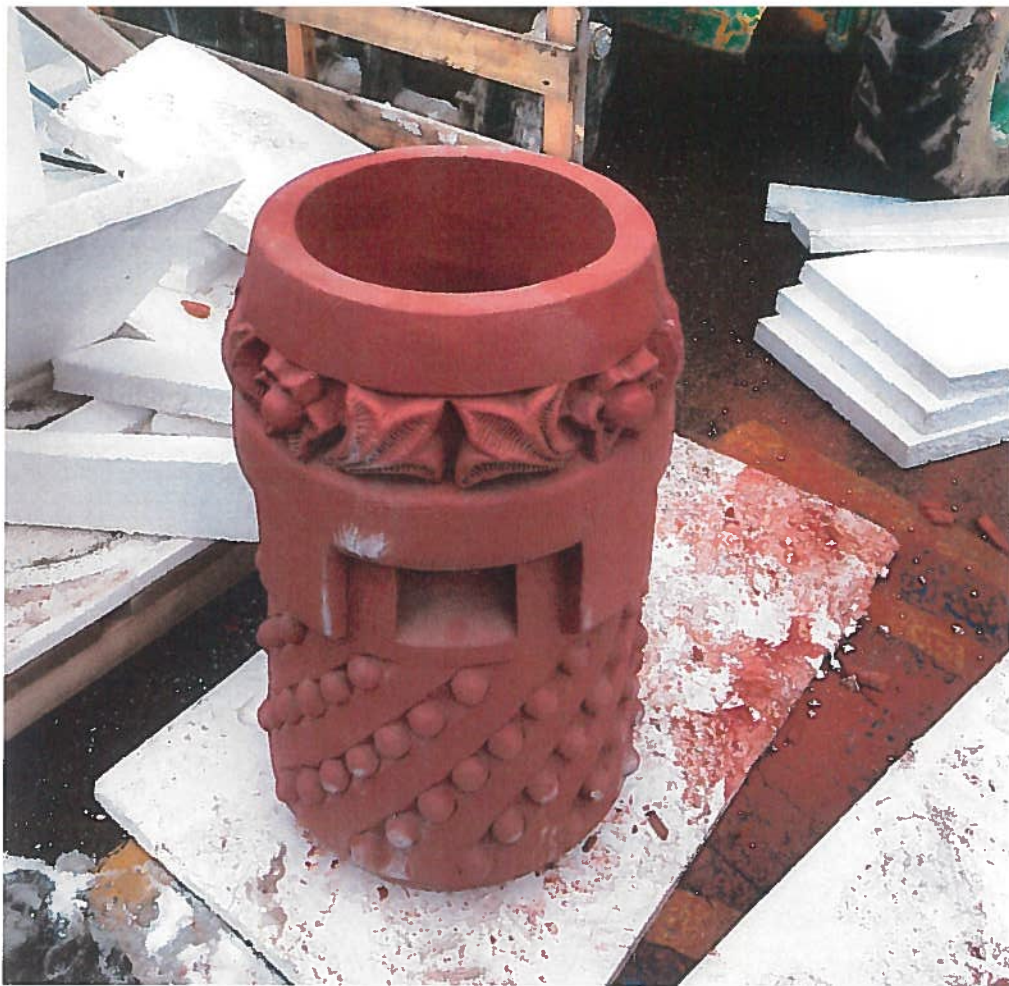
As a result, Jacobsville-area sandstone was used extensively in hundreds of important projects in America between 1880 and 1920 when the quarries closed. These include prominent buildings in Chicago, Cleveland, St. Louis and New York City.

Spencer Higgins' report noted the high-quality finish and materials used for the Gooderham residence and described the craftsmen who carried out the work:



▲ Careful removal of damaged stonework. Photo The York Club, 2018

The craftsmen whose names appear most prominently in the history of the Gooderham house are Toronto's William Holbrook (1842-1925) and his partner, William Mollington (c. 1846 -1887). Their wood-carving decorates the bookshelves and walls of the Library of Parliament in Ottawa, where their preferred carving medium — clear, white pine — showed off their skill to great advantage. The firm of Holbrook & Mollington was formed about 1874. The Ottawa Library job in 1876 led to other prestigious work, including the stone carving on the Western Block extension of Parliament (1877), the new Post Office in Hamilton



(1882-87), the Manning Arcade in Toronto (1884-85) and the Bank of Montreal (Yonge and Front streets) in Toronto, to mention projects completed before Mollington's death in 1887. The Gooderham House was constructed in 1889-92 so it can be inferred that the stone carving work was carried out under the supervision of Holbrook.

The replacement stone selected for the 2018 restoration, Corsehill Red Sandstone, comes from the Annan Quarry in Dumfriesshire, UK. It is a finely grained, Triassic sandstone of medium strength. Corsehill was quarried extensively in the 1800s, closed in the 1940s, but reopened in 1982 to again supply stone for prestigious projects across Great Britain and abroad. The stone's hard-wearing and consistent texture makes it ideal for masonry work, cladding and walls. It is also a very close match for the Portage Entry Red Sandstone of the original Gooderham work.

Traditional Cut Stone's master carvers have been entrusted with the replacement stonework. David Tyrrell, Managing Director, co-founded Traditional Cut Stone with Richard Carbino and master stone carver and artist Lawrence Voaides in 1998 at a time when stone carvers were becoming increasingly scarce in North America. Over the past 20 years, their restoration projects have spanned the United States and Canada and, in Toronto alone, they include projects of high complexity and significance, such as the Ontario Legislative Building, St. James Cathedral, St. Michael's Cathedral and Toronto's Old City Hall. The firm's projects have won many awards for excellence in craftsmanship and construction, and aiding architects in achieving their vision.

▲ Traditional Cut Stone has been recreating the damaged architectural features, including highly detailed chimney pots. Photo The York Club, 2018



▲ The porte cochère restoration will be completed in 2018. Photo The York Club, 2018

The York Club's General Manager, Cyril Duport, has followed and photographed the work as it has progressed. M. Duport observes that the membership has been very supportive of the large-scale project. He says, "The York Club is extremely fortunate to possess a clubhouse of historic significance, so it is of utmost

importance to the membership to maintain the exquisite craftsmanship, both interior and exterior." It is a tribute to the organization's stewardship that the work is being carried out so carefully to preserve this important resource for future generations.

About the authors

Guy Burry is a member of ACO Muskoka and the photography editor for ACORN. Liz Lundell, managing editor of ACORN, is a historian and author of seven books on aspects of Ontario heritage. She is past president of ACO Muskoka and is the branch representative on Provincial Council.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

PLACES OF PLAY – ACORN SPRING 2018



▲ Gerry Dunn built his first dance hall in Bala with a slogan of "Where All of Muskoka Dances." This larger pavilion opened in 1942 and is now The Kee to Bala. Source Explorer's Edge, accessed 2016

Leisure, amusement, sport, dance and entertainment. Author Edward Bellamy (1850 - 1898) once wrote, "If bread is the first necessity of life, recreation is a close second."

The Spring 2019 ACORN will look at the places where past generations found pleasure, respite and relaxation after work. Articles should be a maximum of either 500 or 1000 words in length and "encourage the conservation and reuse of structures, districts and landscapes of architectural, historic and cultural significance to inspire and benefit Ontarians."

Before commencing work on an article, please send your proposal or questions to liz.lundell@rogers.com to avoid duplication and ensure photo guidelines are received. Deadline for submissions is January 29, 2018. Submitters are encouraged to look at past issues available on the ACO website: www.acontario.ca.