

Hutchison House Designation Brief

THE HUTCHISON HOUSE
270 Brock Street

LOCATION AND LEGAL DESCRIPTION: 270 Brock Street, Peterborough. The south 100 feet of that part of Lot 10 west of the C.N.P. north of Brock Street and west of George Street and the south 100 feet of the east 76 feet of 11 north of Brock Street and west of George Street.

ORIGINAL OWNER: Dr. John Hutchison

OWNER & OCCUPANT 1977: The Peterborough Historical Society.

DATE CONSTRUCTION COMMENCED: 1837. Renovated in the 1850's, 1860's & 1920's

ARCHITECT: Unknown.

CONTRACTOR and/or BUILDER: The Citizens of Peterborough.

SITE AND SETTING: The house, located on the north-west corner of Brock and Bethune Streets, is slightly north-west of the main downtown section of Peterborough. A railway line swings past on the east side of the lot cutting off the back corner. The plot originally included, the lot to the west and considerably more depth, actually two full city lots. There is a moderate slope to Brock Street and a steep bank to Bethune Street and Jackson's Creek. The grounds are partially treed, with Norway Maples along the eastern edge, a spruce planted near the newer rear wing and a row of sugar maples along Brock Street. The site is a hillside position providing the basement kitchen with full-length windows at the north-east corner and the later rear wing with a ground level entrance. The upper level of the rear wing, which forms a separate apartment, is entered from a side door and vestibule on the west side near the north end.

SIGNIFICANCE: This is one of the oldest stone dwellings in Peterborough; a monument to citizens' co-operation for the benefit of the community; the dwelling of Peterborough's first resident doctor; and the home of Sandford (later Sir Sandford) Fleming between 1845 and 1847.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: The Hutchison House was built as a result of spontaneous community spirit. All the townspeople of Peterborough rallied to provide a suitable dwelling for their popular doctor, John Hutchison, to prevent him from moving to Toronto. Dr Hutchison was native of Kirkaldy, Scotland. Born in 1797, he emigrated to North America after completing his medical training in Edinburgh and Glasgow. He practiced in Cavan, Monaghan, Port Hope and Cobourg from 1818 until he moved to Peterborough in 1830. By 1836, Dr. Hutchison was seriously considering moving to Toronto because he could not get an adequate house for his wife and five children in Peterborough.

As an inducement to stay, the townspeople built the house at 270 Brock Street for him at a total cash cost of L45.18s.9d, or \$224.

The family lived here until Dr. Hutchison was stricken with typhus fever while tending the sick during an epidemic and died on July 1, 1847. Mrs. Hutchison and the children moved almost immediately to Toronto.

In mid April 1851, the property was purchased Harvey, a prominent Peterborough business man. His retained possession for four generations until Mrs. Connal Brown, a great grand-daughter, bequeathed it Peterborough Historical Society in 1969.

Sir Sandford and his brother, David, were cousins of Dr. Hutchison. When they emigrated to Canada in 1845, David obtained a position as a cabinet maker in

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Toronto, but Sandford lived with his cousin until 1847. His diary tells us that while here he tended the doctor's garden, building a dam and irrigation ditches from the creek, and constructed: a stable. He assisted Richard Birdsall with surveying, made working drawings for a new spire for St. Peter's Catholic Church and planned a house for "Haggart, the Taylor". He also surveyed, drew and printed a "Plan of Peterborough". He was about 18 years old at this time.

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION FOR DESIGNATION BY-LAW: The Hutchison House is a storey and a half stone dwelling with a three bay front, a center doorway flanked on each side by windows, with end gables and later center front gable ornamented with simple, heavy rope bargeboards of the 1850's, and massive end chimneys with projecting caps. The east end is a full two and a half storeys in height with the basement level above grade at this point and the windows arranged in pairs on each storey. To the rear stretches a long wing of an upper and lower level, the upper ~ level of which is slightly higher than the ground level of the main block. This wing is of red brick, trimmed in buff brick and would appear to date from the mid 1860's. Along the east side of this rear addition stretches a ground level verandah with an awning roof, chaffered posts and very simple trelliage.

The stonework of the main block is of small stones laid in random coursed rubble with large, roughly shaped stones at the corners of the building and not around the openings. The front windows are now fixed glass with stained glass transoms. The end openings have center mullions and single pane, double hung windows, while the gable ends still have casement sash, some being original. The front gable is finished in rough-cast and sports hood mould. The opening is now like the end windows with and double hung sash. The front bargeboard has a pendant and finial at the peak.

The porch is also an addition with tapered octagonal columns, flared caps and neat bases, the supports holding a simple pediment. The detail is contemporary with the bargeboards and suggests the 1850's. However, the door case is original with its sidelights divided in width into one and a half panes. The door is a later four-panel design, either contemporary with the porch or renewed at the time of the brick addition.

PRESENT PLANS FOR THE HOUSE: (1977) It is the intention of the Peterborough Historical Society to restore the basement and ground floor 1840 period, recreating the time when the Hutchison family was in residence. The upstairs bedrooms in the stone section and the lower level of the brick wing will be restored to the mid 1860 period by which time Elizabeth and Peter Connal were resident in the house.

On the exterior, the mid 1850's portico, gable and bargeboard trim will be retained and repaired. Casement windows, like the originals, will be installed. Where necessary the stone and brick will be re-pointed, and the entire structure re-roofed with hand split cedar shingles.

In time it is hoped that the grounds can be planted in the period of the house and the picket and board fence of the period replaced.

The restoration plans are well underway under the capable direction of restoration architect, Peter John Stokes.

CREDITS:

Peterborough Historical Society, PACAC, Martha Ann Kidd

BRIEF COMPLETED: 1977