

THE FITZHUGHS

The Fitzhugh's came to Cobourg around 1880. They, like many other wealthy Americans, stayed at the Arlington Hotel whose site is now marked by a historic plaque in Victoria Park. In 1902, General Charles Fitzhugh, bought some land east of Cobourg in Hamilton Township. This land originally belonged to Captain Walter Boswell R.N. and his son-in-law Captain Archibald Macdonald.

Captain (the Hon.) Walter Boswell R.N. was born in 1770 and died in 1846. His wife Catherind died in 1850. They were very prominent in the town of Cobourg. Walter Bowell became a member of the Legislative Council.

The Boswells had a son named George (see page 9) born in 1810 and died in 1854. He also became a well known figure in Cobourg.

The Boswell's daughter married Captain Archibald Macdonald. They had a home near her parents called Merina and the wood between East House and Ravensworth is what is left of Macdonald's Wood.

Capt. Boswell, his wife and son George were buried between St. Peters Church and the Rectory where their graves may still be seen.

General Charles Fitzhugh built two large homes on this property overlooking the Lake. One he named Ravensworth, after a southern plantation where he had been billeted. The other known as East House from its geographic relationship to Ravensworth. Because the houses were almost identical, the workmen labelled the materials "Ravensworth" or "East House" to differentiate their destinations. The name "East House" stuck to the present day.

He built East House for one of his son's, Carroll. For his other son Henry, he bought a house in Cobourg called Northumberland Hall. ^{now demolished} It was one of the oldest, large homes on the town and was owned and built by George S. Boulton. It is still standing and is located on D'Arcy Street just west of C.D.C.I. East.

Carroll had not wanted to live in Cobourg. He and his new bride intended to build their home in the States. However, General Fitzhugh promised to build their home for them if they would locate it in Cobourg.

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Cobourg Architecture

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They finally agreed, and giving him their plans, they went on an extended honeymoon in Europe. The General decided it would be cheaper to build the two houses similarly, so he went ahead and built the homes the way he wanted. Carroll was disappointed at first but in later years admitted that he liked the house better the way his father had built it.

The two houses were completely landscaped with lawns, gardens and mazes to the front and farms behind to provide for the carriage horses. A large woods separated and still separates the homes. There is still a long treed laneway from the highway that branches into a small lane and a large circular driveway. The small lane heads to East House and the circular driveway services Ravensworth, a large white guest house (now the residence of Col. J.W. Foote V.C.) a coach house (Dr. M. Stobie) and a small frame cottage (Mr. G. Spratt). Originally the whole estate of more than one hundred acres extended north to the highway, east to the rifle range, south to the lake and west to the end of Lakeshore Road.

The homes are Neo classical-Revival in style. They are spacious, symmetrical and perfectly proportioned. Ravensworth is a little larger and a little nicer than East House. It is situated on five acres of land along the lake. The rest of the land west of the lane has been sold for the above mentioned houses, for Dr. Shaw's and Mr. Gibson's properties, and for the whole Meadowvale subdivision and Merwin Greer School.

The other half of the estate (East House included) remains much as it was when it was built including its barn and out-buildings. East House is now owned by Mr. Daintry Fitzhugh.

For a detailed description of Ravensworth see the appended description prepared recently by a real estate company and labelled Appendix "A" and the accompanying photographs.

East House is quite similar but does not have the tapestry in the dining room. The study is panelled but not as ornately, and it does not totally cover the walls but is a very high wainscotting. It is also a much darker wood. The living room is much the same, but East House has two built in bookcases and it does not have a chandelier, depending instead on large crystal wall sconces for lighting.

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The exterior is much the same too. Instead of a large south portico, East House has a colonaded terrace. It has no porte cochere and no sun room.

East House still has a large hedged garden to the east. Many gardeners were employed at both houses as well as some twenty house servants.

In the cellar at Ravensworth is a large vault with a steel door such as a bank would have. During prohibition, the American rum runners would anchor offshore from Ravensworth. The illegal liquor was quickly loaded into the chauffeured cars of all the American colony, who were waiting in the lane. It was quickly hidden in safe places in their homes. The Fitzhugh's stored their expensive whiskey in this vault. There is also a wine cellar which had a capacity of about seven hundred bottles. To-day it has a capacity of 150 bottles.

About 1920, Ravensworth was sold to Mr. Hickman, a friend of General Fitzhugh from Kentucky. The Hickman's already had a small home in Cobourg. It was located on the north-west corner of John Street and University Avenue.

Mr. Hickman raised horses in Kentucky and one of them won the Kentucky Derby.

It was Mr. Hickman who had the study panelled. This paneling is a replica of a *seventeenth century drawing room that he saw and liked in England. To fit the panelling of the room, it was necessary to lower the top of the doorways about two feet. He also made some changes upstairs.

Mrs. Hickman was an invalid who died in the house shortly after her husband bought it. General Blakley, the Hickman's son-in-law used the White Guest House, where Col. Foote now lives as his summer home.

* The room donated by Garfield Weston, now in the Ontario Museum as an example of seventeenth century living, is of almost identical appearance.

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In 1948, the estate was sold to Col. John W. Foote who won the V.C. for outstanding bravery at Dieppe in 1942. In 1962 Ravensworth was bought by Dr. D.E. Mikel. The Foote's then moved to the White Guest House which had been the Mikel's home for the previous ten years. The Mikel's lived in Ravensworth until 1973 when it was sold to its present owners, Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Peters of Toronto.

Northumberland Hall, the home General Fitzhugh bought for his son Henry was built in the early 1820's. It was owned by George S. Boulton, a very prominent Cobourg citizen of the time.

It may be classified as Edwardian although originally built in 1820's with Georgian features, then in 1906 additions were made. The house is constructed of white brick. The living room is long and has two fireplaces and high ceilings. There are about ten rooms plus servants quarters in the gracious home. This home was recently sold by Mr. Daintry Fitzhugh, a son of Henry, the same man who now owns East House.

General Charles Fitzhugh came from an old Virginian family and attended the Military Academy at West Point. When the Civil War broke out, he fought on the side of the north and ended the war as a Brevet Brigadier General of Cavalry.

Before the war, General Robert E. Lee was a close friend of the Fitzhughs and named his son*after them.

General Fitzhugh married Miss ^{Emma} Schoenberger, a wealthy Pittsburgh heiress. Her family had great wealth and owned one of the largest steel companies in the United States. It was because of his interest in steel that the general first came to Cobourg on his way to the iron deposits in Marmora. He and other American steel magnates left their families at the Arlington Hotel, whose site is now marked by a historic plaque in Victoria Park. The Americans made Cobourg their summer resort as a result of this, not only for its gay social life but because of its salubrious air which was supposed to have the second highest ozone content of anywhere in the world.

They had two sons, Henry and Carroll (1876-1968). Carroll was the youngest. These men were well educated. They could read and write fluent French and knew some Greek.

* Fitzhugh Lee became a famous cavalry general in his own right and served with distinction in his father's Confederate Army.

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A-Fitzhugh Family (07-03)

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Carroll was extremely interested in English literature. Up until the time he died he could recite at length the works of the great English poets. The family often got together for ~~Sat~~ Sunday dinner. They often played a game in which one person would begin by saying a line of poetry. The next person would take the last word of this line and then recite a line which began with that word. This could go on for hours.

When Carroll was a little boy of seven he was introduced to a very old lady who had been in Paris at the time of the execution of Marie Antionette. At seventeen his mother took him on a world tour. One of the places he visited was Khartoum. This was just two years after the Battle of Ondierman. While the Sahara Desert he met an Arab who told him in English that he had worked in Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show in Buffalo and Toronto.

His wife whose name was ^{MARY} was a semi-invalid. She died in 1921. Carroll loved her dearly and had the gardens of East House kept exactly the way she had them up until the time of his death in 1968.

Henry Fitzhugh was married three times. His first wife was a Poe, daughter of General Poe. The Poes were friends of the Fitzhughs and General Poe had also fought on the Civil War. This family were also Cobourg summer residents. General Poe's wife lived out her life in the red brick house with the gas light in front of 188 King E.

now the residence of Mr. and Mrs. T.P. Connolly. His second marriage was to a local girl. Her name was Miss ^{with} Daintry who belonged to an old Cobourg family. The Daintry's owned a lovely old home on Spencer St. E. called the Poplars. It stands just west of the bowling alley and its land extended from Division St. east beyond the new apartments. The Daintry's were directly related to Egerton Ryerson. There were three children by the second marriage - Henry, ^{Loise} and Daintry.

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His third wife was another Poe, Betty, another daughter of General Poe.

Loise and Henry lived in Kentucky but Daintry always came to Cobourg in the summers and lived in the Poplars which he had inherited from the Daintry family. After his father Henry died in the early 1950's, he moved to Northumberland Hall.