

Lakehurst: Brewery owner built

By Peggy Wright

The view from the beach at the bottom of Durham Street reveals *Lakehurst*, the former home of James Calcutt.

The building is now called the Calhoun Apartments, after a previous owner, and faces Legion Village and its west parking lot.

Calcutt arrived from Ireland in 1832, a victim of persecution by a terrorist group. He purchased the three-acre block of land bordered by Durham, Orr and Hibernia Streets.

On this property he built not only the mansion, but one of the first breweries in Cobourg, complete with a malt house, kiln, a mill powered by six horses and a business office. All of the structures were constructed of either brick or stone, and a few years later a windmill was added.

According to historian Rob Mikel, the grouping of buildings was typical of those found in Great Britain, where the landowner would locate his home and business establishments in the same area.

The stone building located to the north of the house was probably the only structure on the property when Calcutt purchased it from the Crown. It was built around 1811 and used as a barracks for militia regiments during the war of 1812.

The Calcutt family used it as their stable and coach house.

There are many rumours of secret tunnels running from both the house and the stables to the harbor.

Building history

hands again after several years, and burnt to the ground in 1899.

Meanwhile, the residence, now severed from the business interests, was purchased by the Armour family around 1872.

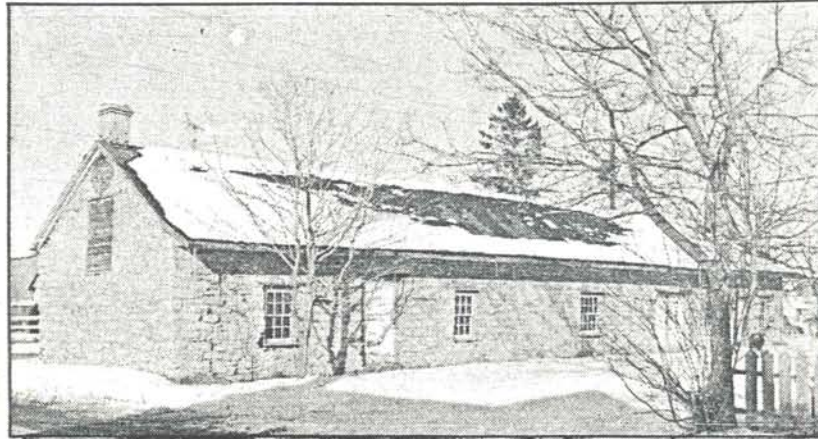
The Armours were an extremely prominent and influential family of that era, known for their wit and forthright opinions.

The father, John D. Armour, began as a justice of the Ontario Courts and was later a Chief Justice in the Supreme Court of Canada.

A cook of the Armour's, Miss Lucy, who had been a manager of the Cedarmere Hotel (a large establishment which stood on Ontario St. south), bought the house from them in 1910. She turned it into a hotel which remained in operation into the 1920s.

To add further evidence to the old saying "it's a small world", Orville Calhoun, currently working on his family history, has discovered that he is a distant relative of the Armours.

Both families can be traced back to the Lord Bellmore of 1800, who had a castle in Inniskillin, Ireland.



The old stone structure north of the house, 84 feet long and built of unfinished and uncut rubble stone.

Orville Calhoun, a Cobourg resident who owned the property from 1954 to 1980, says that in the oldest part of the basement of the residence there is a four-foot crawlspace which contains the entrance to a tunnel, now covered with a concrete slab.

Calhoun said that when the parking lot for Legion Village was being excavated, he and his wife sat in a front living room and every time the heavy machinery passed over the line of the tunnel, the noise in the house was deafening.

Mikel says that the only tunnel he could see a reason for would be one which would run in between the house and the brewery.

Secret passages aside, the house was one of Cobourg's early mansions.

It was constructed in the Neo-Classic, or Loyalist, style (from the influence of the United Empire Loyalists), and it has been cited by historical references as the oldest surviving brick residence in Cobourg.

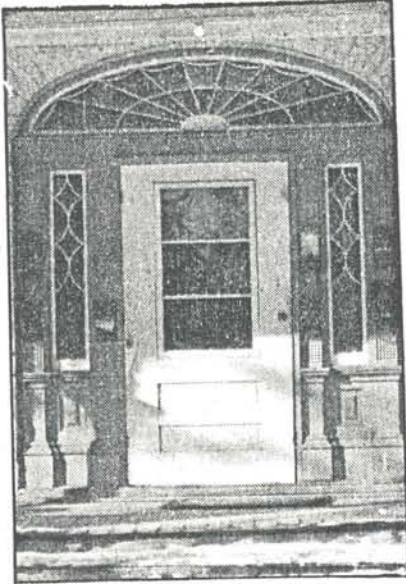
There were later additions on the east side which reflect a more Victorian taste, and where apt. 3 is now located on the northwest corner, there was a huge ballroom with a 14-ft. concave ceiling. Calhoun installed a drop ceiling when he renovated for apartments, but there is still access through a closet where the magnificent evidence of a bygone era can be glimpsed.

Again according to Mikel, the house was used for Anglican Church services around 1850 while St. Peter's Church on King Street was being enlarged.

Calcutt ran into financial difficulties later in the 1850s and was forced to sell the entire group of buildings.

He died in 1869. Only one of his sons, Kingsley, remained in Cobourg, running a branch brewery on Seminary Street (University Avenue) on the east side of George Street. Kingsley also had a residence near his business operation, which still stands on the north side of University. Another brother, James Jr., built a house by the lake which is now the Breakers Motel.

The brewery stood idle until purchased by Henry MacKechnie, a brother of Stuart who had the Ontario Woolen Mills (Building History, Feb. 5). He called it the Victoria Brewery. It changed



The beautiful front entrance of Lakehurst.

earliest brick house in Cobourg



View of Lakehurst from the west side, emphasizing the size of the residence.