

Builder of the Maples founded Campbellford

By Peggy Wright

The story of the Maples, located at 272 King St. E., predates the building of the house.

Major David Campbell of Scotland and his brother, Colonel Robert, arrived in this area in 1832. David received a grant of 800 acres and Robert 1,000 acres on the location of present-day Campbellford.

The brothers purchased a further 1,000 acres and founded the town, where a historical reference states "they found a good ford in the Trent River and fertile land".

David was the Crown land agent in the Campbellford region from 1832 to 1839.

Robert died in 1836, and David arrived in Cobourg around 1840 for indeterminate reasons. We can speculate that he was drawn to the town for its popularity and speedy growth.

He had the Maples built around this time. The house originally consisted of a squarely-built sub-

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stantial residence, regency in style, with one main dormer over the front door. There are now three dormers spanning the front.

The files of the Local Architectural Conservancy Advisory Committee state that the doorway is not the original one, but reflects the classical revival influence.

The west wing was constructed in the 1850s, probably by Campbell, just before the residence was sold to the Kerr family.

Campbell moved to Sidbrook, and remained there until his death in 1881.

William Kerr, the purchaser, came to Cobourg with his brother John. John built a large house, Sunnyside, on King Street East. This home still stands, but now faces Queen Street and has been converted into apartments.

William attended Victoria College from 1852 to 1855 and, in 1858, founded a law firm with his brother and colleagues Smith and Armour. Together they had

the largest law practice in the United Counties.

William was also a mayor of Cobourg from 1868 to 1873 and was appointed to the senate around the turn of the century by Sir Wilfred Laurier.

William married Myra Field. Her family home was the subject of the first article in this series.

The Kerrs had seven children. Three of the boys became lawyers, and William Jr. carried on in his father's law firm.

The Kerr offspring were noted for academic ability, as well as athletic prowess. Son Frank was one of the noted few who could kick a football over the top of Victoria College.

After John Kerr died in 1903, William bought Sunnyside, using the Maples as a winter residence and Sunnyside for the summers. One can imagine the family's bi-annual trek along King Street and the comments it must have raised.

The Maples was sold around 1920 to D'Arcy Kay of Pittsburg and a few years later was sold again to Mrs. Neave of Cincinnati.



Once the Maples, this building on King Street East is now the Harris Arms.

She added the long north wing in the 1920s.

A Mrs. Harrison bought the house sometime later, and it was she who erected the *Harris Arms* sign above the main entrance.

The house, now turned into apartments, reflects a variety of

styles. There is ornate bargeboard around the gables and roof, with decorative finials. It is mostly stucco and has a rubble-type foundation. A new door has replaced an old window to the left of the main entrance and provides access to an apartment.

The Maples is another in a long

list of residences which were too costly for one family to maintain, but which remain as a part of Cobourg's past, retaining the town's unique character.

This article and others in the series owe a debt to the research assistance of local historian Rob Mikel.

