

Strathmore Revisited

Strathmore, at present the Administration building of the Brookside Youth Centre, is a well-known landmark associated originally with Judge George Clark, a prominent local politician and county judge, as well as Chief Solicitor to the C.P.R. during the latter half of the 19th century.

Judge Clark had purchased the future site of Strathmore in 1869; it is probable that the house was built some time during the 1870's.



Strathmore in the 1930's

The house is one of the few representatives left in Cobourg of the palatial homes built or renovated by the American summer colony. It is a good example of domestic Beaux Arts architecture popular from 1890 to 1910, to which it was adapted by its subsequent owners, the Charles Donnelly family from Pittsburgh, Penn., in 1905-6.

Mr. Donnelly purchased the fourteen acres and buildings of Strathmore in September 1904 for \$14,500. It is commonly believed that the extensive renovations of the main house in 1905-6 resulted in its most notable feature, the monumental front portico.

After his death in late 1906, the Donnelly family continued to summer in Cobourg, but by 1913 financial reverses saw the estate going into receivership until 1918 when it was finally sold, fully furnished, to Stephen Haas of Toronto, for \$28,000.

The Haas family used Strathmore as a summer residence until 1942. Following the death of Stephen Haas in March 1943, it was then leased to the Ontario Government to be used first as a girl's training school, then, in 1950 junior boys, and in 1951 it was purchased from Stephen Haas' heirs.

The interior of Strathmore retains some features of note, although it has suffered many changes over the years. Fortunately, the impressive double staircase continues to take pride of place on the ground floor. It would appear that the present office for the superintendent is the only room to remain intact from Strathmore's days as a private home. The exterior, however has fared better, and it's essential character has been maintained.



Members of the F.

While, to a large extent, Strathmore is the creation of an American family, the Donnellys, with its purchase by Stephen Haas in 1918 it was returned to Canadian ownership. Stephen Haas's wife Kate, née Hees, was the eldest child of George H. Hees who, during the 1880's, co-founded the manufacturing company in Toronto that bore his name from 1891 until it was sold in the 1950's.

- George Hees' son Harris (Harry) also owned property in Cobourg, "Rathbunwood", Power & Son, Architect, on Brook Rd. N until his accidental death in 1929. Thereafter, it was the country home of his son, the second George H. Hees, M.P. and cabinet minister.

A third property, a farm adjacent to Rathbunwood known as "Green Pastures" on Elgin St. E., was owned by Kate and Stephen's youngest son, Karl Haas, until the late 1940's.



Haas family 1939

Much historical information surrounding Cobourg's development as a summer resort has been quite comprehensively recorded in numerous publications. The history also reflects the sociological, however, and Strathmore epitomized the values of several eras, especially the Edwardian.

Opulence, together with social activity and entertaining, was maintained throughout the 1920's and 1930's but, as elsewhere, failed to survive the onset of the Second World War.

Historical data re Strathmore courtesy Archeology and Planning Branch Report # B10773 1982, as provided by the Cultural Programs Unit, Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation.

Compiled by Kate Haas Stone, 1996.

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Strathmore in the '20's



Members of the Hees and Haas families
Strathmore, 1920's

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