

York Cottage: Merchant's home of the 1850s in classical style

By Peggy Wright

The cottage located at 284 College St. was lived in by the same family for over 80 years.

It was built around 1850 for the York family, one of the few black families of middle-class status recorded in Cobourg during that era.

William York and his wife Margaret McGuire had at least seven children, all named on the family tombstone at Union Cemetery. It is thought one or two more may have been buried elsewhere.

York Cottage, as it was known, was a far cry from the homes of

other black families in the area. Covert Street was known at the turn of the century as "nigger alley."

The York family had a store on King Street. Historian Rob Mikel says the business was probably a bath house and shaving parlour when it first opened. It later became a very fine tobacconist shop.

Cobourg resident Madeline Rooney can remember that the store had a "first-class" reputation.

The house is a fine example of the classical revival style of architecture and features a beautiful front entrance. The single-leafed door has Greek Revival details similar to a handful of other homes in Cobourg and is situated within a classically styled portico.

It is single-storey dwelling, sitting high on a full basement. A low-pitched hip roof with wide eaves and boxed cornices enhance the classical feeling of the house.

It has a crushed marble exterior which is not believed to be original.

There are porches on the front and back, the latter called a "charming Regency glazed porch/sun room" in files of the local architectural conservancy stored at Cobourg Public Library.

A small wing has been added on the south side, the date of which is unknown.

The house is surrounded by a beautiful wrought iron fence with a cobblestone base and posts. The fence once ran further to the south, to include property which has since been sold and built upon. The remains of the cobblestone base and one fence

post can still be seen on the south property.

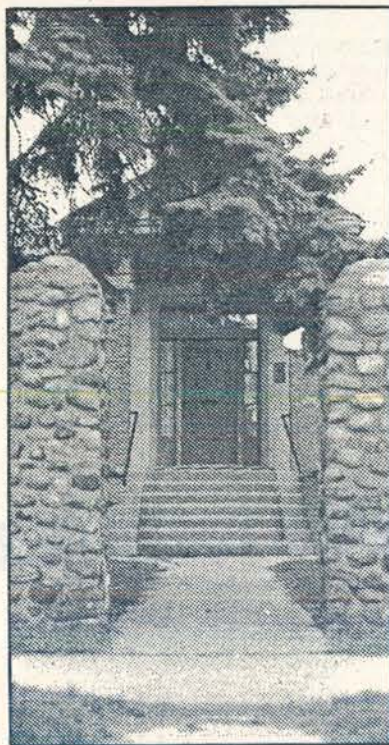
When the property finally left the York family in 1937, the new

owners replaced the front windows and exchanged the large classical fluted columns on the front porch with brick ones.

These changes perhaps give the house a more turn of the century look.

The original windows are still

contained on the north and south sides of the house. They are double-hung, with four panes, plain surrounds and wooden lugsills.



The front entrance features a Greek revival porch.



York Cottage — fine sample of classical revival architecture at 284 College St.