

HARPER - SAUNDERS HOUSE

32 ELGIN STREET EAST

CITY OF OSHAWA

PREPARED FOR HERITAGE OSHAWA

BY

SU MURDOCH HISTORICAL CONSULTING

47 RODNEY STREET, BARRIE, 705-728-5342

SUMURDOC@SYMPATICO.CA

2002

HARPER-SAUNDERS HOUSE

32 ELGIN STREET EAST
CITY OF OSHAWA

CONTENTS

- 1 LOT HISTORY
 - 2 ARCHITECTURE
 - DATE OF CONSTRUCTION
 - 3 MASONRY
 - 4 STYLE AND FORM
 - FOUNDATION
 - WINDOW OPENINGS
 - VERANDAH
 - 5 DOOR OPENINGS
 - ROOF
 - CONDITION
- SIGNIFICANCE

APPENDIX

HARPER – SAUNDERS

32 ELGIN STREET EAST

CITY OF OSHAWA

**LOT 1, NORTH SIDE ELGIN, PLAN 164/H50011; SOUTHERLY 87 FEET EXCEPT PARTS 1 AND 2 ON
40R-14571**

PART LOT 10, CONCESSION 2, EAST WHITBY TOWNSHIP

LOT HISTORY

The dwelling at 32 Elgin Street East is on the south 87 feet of Lot 1, north side of Elgin Street, Plan 164, also known as the Cox and Soules Plan. Plan 164 was registered on May 10, 1913, by William Cox and Adelaide E. Soules as a subdivision of Lots 1 and 2, north side Elgin Street, Samuel Hall's Plan.

In 1877, Adelaide and James O. Henry sold Lot 1 to Euretta Hall. In April 1893, Euretta Provan (presumed to be Euretta Hall) placed it in trust with Jerry Squire Soules for her lifetime. For the 1901 census, Ontario-born Euretta, 60, and her spouse, James Provan, 53, were living on the lot in a single family, brick house with five rooms. James, a manufacturer, arrived from Scotland in 1872. They had a lodger, John Provan, who came from Scotland a year after James. As agreed in the trust, after Euretta's death the lot was transferred to Adelaide E. Soules.

A mechanic by trade, William Cox came to Canada from England in 1874. On May 12, 1898, he bought Lot 2 on the north side of Elgin Street from George Farewell. Farewell was an East Whitby farmer by 1898, but had been a master mariner in Oshawa. He may have lost the lot due to a default on the mortgage. In 1901, William was 35 and his wife, Lottie, was 31. They occupied a wood, single family dwelling with five rooms, on Lot 2. He and Lottie had several children born in Ontario. On the 1901 census, William is identified as a woodworker.

In 1913, Adelaide Soules and William Cox registered a plan of subdivision for Lots 1 and 2. By that date, the parcel must have been acquired by William as he sold the south 122 feet of Lot 1 to Elizabeth and Lillian Harper of Seagrave, Ontario County, on October 14, 1919. He was a widower by then. The sale price of \$5750 suggests there was a dwelling on that parcel.

In September 1926, Elizabeth Harper (a widow) and Lillian (Lillie May) Saunders (nee Harper), both of Oshawa, sold the north 35 feet of the south 122 feet to Charles Harper of Chicago for \$1000. Elizabeth died on December 12, 1928, leaving Lillian as the sole owner of the remaining south 87 feet. In November 1940, Lillian in her capacity as executor of Charles Telfer Harper, transferred the north 35 feet to herself and her spouse, Frederick George Saunders.

Lillian died on August 15, 1953, leaving her estate to Frederick and Marjorie Grace Saunders. Lillian's Will states that the residence at 32 Elgin Street East was to be granted to Frederick for his lifetime, then after his death, to Marjorie. Frederick died on February 12, 1965.

On April 22, 1965, Marjorie Grace Woods of Toronto, formerly Marjorie Grace Saunders of Oshawa, sold the south 87 feet of Lot 1 to Harold William Reddick for a dollar. Marjorie was a bank clerk and the surviving executor of Lillie May Saunders.

Following several short term owners, the property was acquired in 1993 by the current owners Julie Ellen Clark-Arkles and David Alan Arkles. In 2002 it was a law office.

ARCHITECTURE

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION

The architectural style and materials of the dwelling at 32 Elgin Street East suggest a first quarter twentieth century date of construction. A woodworker and not quite aged 50, when the Cox and Soules Plan was registered in 1913, it is possible that William Cox

erected the dwelling at that date. Widowed, he sold the south 122 feet to Elizabeth and Lillian Harper in 1919. The purchase price suggests an existing house that may be the subject dwelling.

MASONRY

A few years into the twentieth century, concrete block, also known as artificial or cast stone, became available as a building material. The demand for materials in building boom cities like Winnipeg was being met by companies such as North-West Pressed Stone. It promoted a concrete block with a double air space, made by pouring a mix into a mould. The blocks were faced to mimic the tooling of natural stone. Handled like oversized brick, they did not have to be trimmed and could be laid more rapidly than stone. Hand operated block making machines could produce several hundred blocks a day at the construction site.

Early in the twentieth century, the Roman Stone Company of Toronto developed a process for drawing out the water from the concrete leaving it just moist enough to set. This allowed the block to harden and become denser than those produced by other methods. Available in any size, a famous example of Roman stone is Henry Pellat's Casa Loma in Toronto.

About 1900, the Jarvis Concrete Block Machine Company in Toronto developed a block machine that could imprint blocks with any imitation stone or decorative face. Concrete block construction was never more than a small percentage of residential housing, yet examples are seen across the country in urban and isolated rural settings.

The Elgin Street house has buff-grey blocks with smooth faces that reveal many of the imperfections inherent in the moulding process. The grey mortar is thicker and has a greater cement content than was possible with brick. The lintels over the openings and the original window sills are cast.

STYLE AND FORM

The style of this dwelling is Edwardian Classicism. In contrast to the complex and decorative styles of the late nineteenth century, Edwardian Classicism has a simplified but formal composition. This Elgin Street example has fewer decorative elements and is more linear and balanced than comparable brick examples. This is likely the result of restrictions inherent in the use of concrete block as the building material. In an L-plan, a one storey addition on the north has been removed and infilled with block. Although a corner property, the prominent facade faces south to Elgin Street.

FOUNDATION

The foundation appears to be a combination of natural stone and brick. Evidently, the contractor was not willing to trust block or poured concrete as a foundation.

WINDOW OPENINGS

The fenestration (window placement) is balanced on the prominent facade but irregular on the remaining sides. The widths vary, but each flat opening is deeply recessed due to the thickness of the concrete block. Each has a flat, cast lintel or head. Some of the original cast lugsills have been replaced. Multipaned sashes are seen on other period examples, but these sashes are believed to be replacements. Some are double hung, others are fixed.

One of the ground level window openings of the prominent facade has a partial surround that is painted to imitate staggered quoins. Common as a stone accent, this quoining is correct for the period but it is not known if this is a remnant from a smaller opening or a recent paint experiment.

VERANDAH

The shed-roofed verandah of the south facade is within the recess created by the L-plan. The square columns give the impression of the popular Edwardian colonnettes supported on tall bases. The verandah likely has been replaced or is a reworking of the original.

DOOR OPENINGS

The main doorcase is a single leaf (replacement) door without a transom. A door opening on the west facade may be a renovation. A north entry is within the area recently blocked closed after the removal of the rear extension.

ROOF

Typical of the style, the roof is a large prominent feature and has a wide overhang. The main roof is a gabled hip type featuring a hipped dormer on the south face. The front projection has a gable roof with a wide overhang. Moulded trim defines the triangular shape of the gable. The gable contains two window openings and is sided with board and batten. The roof cladding is asphalt shingles. The soffit is tongue and groove. There is a brick chimney stack rising from the roof at the rear.

CONDITION

Converted to office use, this dwelling is in stable condition.

SIGNIFICANCE

It was likely William Cox who had the house built between 1913 and 1918. The Lillian (Harper) Saunders family owned the property from 1919 to 1965. The Edwardian Classicism style is dominated by the striking appearance of the concrete block walls. The builder knew enough to keep the form simple and restrain the use of popular decorative elements such as art glass, transoms, patterned shingles, and other features. The relatively bulky, "modern" concrete blocks have been skillfully incorporated into an attractive composition.

SUMMARY

It was likely William Cox who had the house built between 1913 and 1918. The Lillian (Harper) Saunders family owned the property from 1919 to 1965. The Edwardian Classicism style is dominated by the striking appearance of the concrete block walls. The builder knew enough to keep the form simple and restrain the use of popular decorative elements such as art glass, transoms, patterned shingles, and other features. The relatively bulky, "modern" concrete blocks have been skillfully incorporated into an attractive composition.

SOURCES

Conveyances Abstract and related documents. *Durham Land Registrar's Office*

East Whitby census, 1881 to 1901. *Barrie Public Library*

Assistance of the staff of the Oshawa Community Archives

Blumenson, John. *Ontario Architecture: A Guide to Styles and Building Terms 1784 to present*. Toronto: 1990.

Ritchie, Thomas; and the staff of the Division of Building Research National Research Council. *Canada Builds 1867 1967*. Toronto: 1967.

APPENDIX

Extracts from *Canada Builds 1867 1967*:

p. 241: Jarvis concrete block machine

p. 243: example of quoins on a concrete block house

Sources

Photographs September 2002

Cover	South facade
1	South and east facades
2	South facade and roof detail
3	Verandah, south facade
4	Window opening ground floor, south facade, showing quoins
5	West and south facades
6	West and north facades
7	North and west facades