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A critique of the 2015 LACH report on the Rygar Properties, London,
Ontario

by

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August 2016

This response to the LACH Report on Camden Terrace and 93-95 Dufferin Street was prepared by David R. Elliott, Historical Consultant, for Rygar Properties which owns the said buildings. This report has been based on Samuel Peters' Log Books, land transactions, wills, census returns, civil registrations, voter's lists and city directories to determine ownership and occupancy of said buildings. In addition various legal cases in Canada and England were consulted.

The LACH report on the Camden Terrace townhouses on Talbot Street and 93-95 Dufferin Street has several historical inaccuracies which need to be corrected.

CAMDEN TERRACE

The report has identified the architect and owner of the Camden Terrace townhouses as Samuel Peters Jr. This is incorrect. There were three Samuel Peters in London during the second half of the 1800s. The first Samuel Peters was a prominent Londoner who developed the area known as Petersville on the west side of the Thames River, south of Oxford Street. He had a son Samuel Peters, (Jr. who died in 1854), and a nephew Samuel Peters. It is the nephew **Samuel Peters** (1822-1882) who developed and owned Camden Terrace. In all of the land and mortgage documents that I have examined concerning Samuel Peters (owner of Camden Terrace), he was never listed as Samuel Peters "Jr." None of the other documents at the time ever identified him that way and he never signed himself that way.

The call for tenders in the building of the townhouses (*Daily Advertiser*, 7 March 1876) was issued by S. Peters and Son. The son and partner was Samuel Frank, an architect who later worked in Toronto and Winnipeg. Who actually designed the townhouses is unclear.

The report has claimed that "Camden Terrace became a fashionable address for affluent Londoners," being part of the new suburb of North Talbot. An examination of the fire insurance maps from 1881 through 1922 reveals that Camden Terrace was within feet of the foundries, factories and other industrial plants situated along the north side of Fullerton Street between Talbot and Ridout. Even in the 1930s part of the north side of Fullerton was an auto wrecking yard. Such operations would have had a negative impact on the residential atmosphere of the Camden Terraces.

Samuel Peters acquired the properties for the townhouses (Instrument #10663 in 1873 for #5 & 6), (Instrument #11183 in 1874 for #3 & 4), and (Instrument #13526 in 1876 for #1 & 2). When he prepared his will on 3 April 1878 he bequeathed the townhouses to three of his children (Wesley, Emma J. Allen and Mary), each of them to receive two adjoining townhouses. They received them in Probate #2263, 1882.

Even before he died in 1882 Samuel Peters was renting out the townhouses to various people. There is no evidence Samuel Peters ever lived in the townhouses as the LACH report

claims. His obituary in the LFP (3 Feb. 1882) stated that he lived on Talbot Street, but that does not mean that he was living in one of the townhouses; he also owned 501 Talbot which was sold by his estate in 1884. Camden Terrace was simply one of many investment properties Samuel Peters owned in London.

After Samuel Peters' death, his heirs continued to treat the townhouses as rental properties. Only daughter Mary and Samuel's widow Mary H., and a younger sister lived in #2 from approx. 1882 to 1887. Daughter Mary, who actually owned townhouse #2, married John Boyd in 1887 and moved to Toronto. The townhouse then reverted to being a rental property.

The 1891 *Might's* directory shows Samuel's widow living at 87 Maple, a family property she inherited in 1882 (Instrument #20580), and had rented it out until 1890. She lived there for some years from approx. 1890 before she moved to Toronto. She sold 87 Maple in 1902, (Instrument #8511), the year of her death.

The LACH report indicates there were "affluent" people associated with Camden Terrace: D.S. Perrin, Col. John Walker, Mrs. S.L. Carfrae and Mrs. Louisa Ridout, Ethelwolf Scatcherd, and Richard Shaw-Wood. They were never owners, but only renters of the townhouses, many of them for a very short term. No evidence has been supplied to support their "affluence" or their social standing. I have provided some indication of their socio/economic status based on entries from the city directories. [It must be noted that these dates are only approximate because there was a lag between the time that the information was gathered and when the directories appeared].

According to the city directories Daniel S. Perrin, who owned a biscuit company on Dundas Street, lived as a tenant of Terrace #6 from approx. 1881 to 1883. Mrs. S.L. Carfrae and Mrs. Louisa Ridout were widows whose husbands had been active in London affairs, but they may have been in diminished economic circumstances in later years. Mrs. Ridout was a tenant of #5 from approx. 1887 to 1891. Mrs. Carfrae rented #4 from approx. 1891 to 1893. Ethelwolf Scatcherd, the son of a former Member of Parliament, became a prominent lawyer later in life. While he was a law student in 1878 he rented #3 for a short time. Richard Shaw-Wood, an oilman and manufacturer, who later built Woodholme Manor on North Wonderland Road, was renting #1 in 1880.

The report has incorrectly identified the prominent lawyer Abe Siskind as being the son of one of the long term owners of Camden Terrace. Abe Siskind's parents were actually Moses and Rachel Siskind, (the 1911 Census for London listed Rachel Siskind as Jennie), not Julius and Sadie (*nee* Siskind), who had owned three of the Camden townhouses at different times. [For the Siskinds see Bill Gladstone, *A History of the Jewish Community in London, Ontario* (Toronto: Now and Then Books, 2011), pp.41-42]. Sadie Siskind appears to have been Abe Siskind's

paternal aunt, the sister of his father Moses. There is no evidence that I could find to suggest that Abe Siskind ever lived in Camden Terrace.

While some of the other tenants of the townhouses were small business owners, merchants, a stock broker, and Dr. Edgar Macklin, who boarded with his parents, the majority of tenants of the townhouses during the first twenty years of their existence were widows and working class people. Only Richard Shaw-Wood and John Walker might have been considered affluent at the time and their tenancy was very limited. I will refer to Walker later.

Within twenty years of his death Samuel Peters' children had sold their townhouses. The new owners were not the affluent, but working class people. Wesley sold #5 and #6 to Simon Chiera, a laundryman in 1893 (Instrument #4186). Chiera quickly sold off #6 to Frank Fenech, a tailor (Instrument #4242) who used it as a rental property for a number of years before occupying it himself. In 1895 Emma J. Allen sold #3 to Lillian Dunbar, a widow whose husband had been a blacksmith (Instrument #5773). In 1899 Mary (*nee* Peters) Boyd sold #1 to Grace Laskey, whose husband was a bank messenger (Instrument #7068). In 1900 she sold #2 to Eva Park, whose husband was a butcher (Instrument #7457). Also in 1900 Emma J. Allen sold #4 to Henry Rea (Instrument #7481). Under Rea's ownership it remained a rental property until 1919 when it was purchased by Sadie Siskind, whose husband was a pawnbroker. (Instrument #20890). These new owners certainly were not part of the affluent members of London's society, nor were the other tenants then and later.

93-95 DUFFERIN STREET

Samuel Peters was in London by 1851 according to his log book in the Western Archives (M619). In 1858 he purchased land on the south side of Hitchcock Street [later renamed Maple, then later Dufferin], beginning at 110 feet from the corner of Talbot and Hitchcock, extending westward 80 feet (Instrument #9130). It was on this land that Samuel Peters built his home in 1864. In his log book there is a bill for the brickwork dated 1 March 1864 (Log Book 19). The house was first numbered 91, and later changed to 93. [*Irwin Directory*, 1876-77, p.154 has #91. The change to #93 is noted on the 1881 fire insurance map]. Samuel Peters also owned land to the east and west of that property along the south side of Maple Street.

Samuel Peters and his family lived in this house until 1881 when he sold it to Laura Walker (Instrument #19460). Laura Walker owned it until 1891 when she sold it to Eva Coe, whose husband operated a business school. (Instrument #3360).

The building created by Samuel Peters was nothing like its current state. According to the 1881 (Revised in 1888) fire insurance map, the building had a small annex to the east. I have not been able to find the building plans, but sometime about 1895, while the Coos owned it, an

east wing was added and the building was turned into a duplex. They moved into the new wing (now #95) and rented out #93. [See *Might's Directory*, 1895, p.92; *Foster's Directory* 1896-97, p.96].

In 1911 Eva Coe sold #93 Maple to Elizabeth Derr (Instrument #15124). In 1912 Eva Coe sold #95 Maple to the Rev. Thomas Wright (Instrument #16069). From 1912 onwards the two properties were variously used as private homes, rental units and business offices until 1987 when Lynnann Holdings acquired both parts of the building (Instruments #594716 and #766407). A major addition to the combined building occurred in 1987 (Instrument #785117).

Although Samuel Peters, who died in 1882, had once owned the land upon which 93-95 Dufferin Street now stands, his architectural involvement had only to do with #93 and even then it appears to have been modified with the front porch being added after 1888. The addition of #95 had no connection to him as it was built years after his death.

Col. John Walker was associated with both properties under consideration. Since LACH has made much of Walker's residency, I must address this matter.

John Walker was a commanding figure in London, as a leader of the militia and a pioneer oil man around Bothwell from the mid-1860s. LACH has noted Walker's involvement in the military, politics, the CPR and Imperial Oil.

Many reporters and historians have depended on Walker's self-serving biography submitted to Goodspeed's *History of the County of Middlesex* without doing serious fact checking of it. His account is very misleading; he mentioned his deceased first wife Janet, but not their minor children that he had left behind in Scotland. (1861-1871 Scottish census and vitals).

I will show evidence that Walker was a confidence man who used other people's money to advance himself. He courted the rich and powerful in the country and became involved in a string of legal battles involving his fraudulent activities.

Sometime before 1864 John Walker, a corn merchant from Glasgow, had made a deal to acquire oil lands from George Brown, the Canadian politician, who owned the area at Bothwell. Walker was able to get Scottish investors for the project which became known as the Bothwell Land and Petroleum Company. It was incorporated in Ontario in 1865. The chief investor was Alexander McEwan of Glasgow and the Walker was the general manager. It was commonly known as the Scottish Oil Company.

In 1871 Walker went to Britain and created another oil investment scheme called the Western of Canada Oil, Lands and Works Company, fraudulently dragging the names of two Canadian MPs John Carling and Aquila Walsh and his father-in-law Jacob Hespeler into his duplicity. He registered the company in England, listing the above men as directors, and sold stock in it over their names, even before asking them to be directors. He also listed the assets of

the Bothwell Company as part of his new company. Later he purchased some of that land from McEwan in exchange for stock in his new company.

This came out in court cases in England after Walker's company was forcibly removed from the Rolls there after failing to pay its dividends. The Master of the Rolls labeled Walker a fraudster who should never have been able to register the company. (Equity case: "In re Western of Canada Oil, Lands, and Works Company: Carling's Case," M.R. July 10, 1875 and (Chancery Division, 115, "In re Western of Canada Oil, Lands, and Works Company: Carling, Hespeler and Walsh's Cases," Nov. 11 and 12, 1875.)

At some point later Walker was successfully sued by his former Scottish oil company associates at Bothwell, and forced to pay over \$72,000. (*London Free Press* obit, 15 Aug. 1889, p.1). It may have been over the worthless stock in his new oil company which he had traded them

As for Walker's VP position with Sir Hugh Allen's proposed Canada Pacific Railway Company, it came to an end in 1873 because of bribery of government officials in the Pacific Scandal. Allen's Company was using American railway money to get the contract for a Canadian railway intended ostensibly by John A. Macdonald to keep American railways out of Canada! Walker was never part of the later CPR.

In 1874 Walker won the federal seat for London during election in 1874 but was soon judicially removed as Member of Parliament because of corruption and bribery during his election campaign. He appealed this and lost. Amelia Harris, whose family's money had financed his campaign, believed that he had perjured himself on the stand. (*Diaries*, 16 Jan. 1875, p.336). (Pritchard v. Walker, 1874 and Walker v. Prichard 1874).

Walker was also involved in fraud involving the secret purchase and sale of City of London debentures between 1876-1880 and theft from the bank account of the partnership. He was successfully sued and lost the appeal. (William E. Cornell and A.T. McCord v. John Walker, 1880; SCC digest: Walker v. Cornell, 1881).

When Imperial Oil was created in 1880 Walker was only one of the sixteen men who created the company and it is unclear how and for how long he was associated with it. He held no stock in it when he died.

Almost everyone who got involved in Walker's financial schemes was burned and their reputations damaged, including the Harris family. Walker appears to have lost every legal case that he appealed to higher courts.

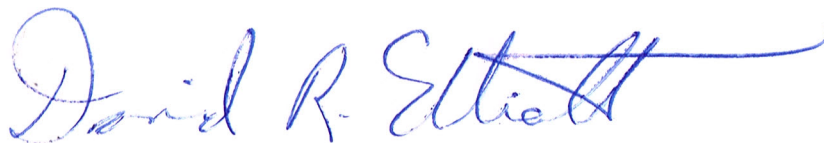
Most of the above aspects of Walkers' sullied career occurred before he had any association with Camden Terrace #2 and #93 Dufferin St. For a portion of the time, while living in the latter, he was the Registrar for Middlesex, a patronage appointment he received for past favours to the Liberal Party.

Walker died intestate in 1889. When his daughter Laura was administering his estate she appears to have known nothing about his earlier children John and Mary that he had left in Scotland. Laura, in consultation with her cousin Adam Beck, valued his personal assets at only two hundred dollars. (Middlesex County Surrogate Court administration case #3801).

While Walker gave the impression of being affluent, he seems to have been living off of his wife's inherited wealth. She bought #93 from Samuel Peters shortly after her father's death. It was never in John Walker's name. Mrs. Walker was living in Paris, France when she sold #93 in 1891 and later settled in California; she died there in 1935.

It is my opinion that the LACH report is serious flawed and inaccurate based on the information provided above.

Respectfully submitted:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David R. Elliott". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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