

**Birthplace Of Progressive London (1891-1894)  
467 Dufferin Under Imminent Threat of Destruction**

We are requesting that the building at 467-469 Dufferin (on the south side at Maitland) receive a Heritage Designation from the City of London under part 4 of The Heritage Act.

The duplex although a priority two heritage listing in the Woodfield Heritage District, has been boarded up and abandoned by its owner for two years. The owner tried to get a demolition permit without a building permit. The application was withdrawn when it was pointed out by city hall that this was against city policy.

This situation is a classic example of the growing trend in London of demolition by neglect. It appears that no attempt since purchase was made to continue to rent the building for low cost housing and the grass and weeds have not been cut this year. At least two by-law complaints were made to the city. The building was broken into.

The units on Dufferin have been placed on the city's list of 147 houses for immediate demolition of abandoned buildings. Some have already been destroyed. The city's new planning policy of demolishing abandoned buildings could lead to unintended consequences. An historic building could be wrecked because the owner, by not applying for permits, would leave the neighbourhood association in the dark.

467-469 Dufferin was subsequently red flagged by city heritage planners because, as a heritage listed property, it still requires a demolition permit. This situation further increases the need for an immediate Heritage Designation and plaque. The property at 465 Dufferin also merits a Designation but it is currently occupied and not under immediate threat.

The building at 467-469 was listed as being built in 1874. But a previous attempt at demolition in 2004 revealed that the "date is probably earlier c. 1845... placing it in a very rare category." This is according to the then London L.A.C.H. (London Advisory Committee on Heritage) Stewardship Sub-committee chair. The report from 2004 stated that the building seemed to be in very good condition.

Ironically, it is not just the design value or the contextual value (Fitzgerald Corners) of these houses that require designation. It

turns out that they have great historical value that was only recently discovered.

The simple Spartan one story frame building, long overlooked and forgotten by Londoners turns out to have an unbelievable rich social history.

This building was not the home of one of the elite of London, the Labatts or the Becks but rather the home of the working class movement of London that opposed them in the 1890s

The building immediately to the west of 467 is now another duplex, 465-463 Dufferin. In 1890 it was a single dwelling (465). The building was the home of Joseph T. Marks, the first President of the London Labour Council. Marks was a skilled tinsmith at the London Car Shops building luxury railway passenger cars. He was a member of the Knights of Labour.

In the 1890s the London Labour Movement was a significant political force in London. Marks spoke to 25,000 workers at a Labour Day Parade and Rally, when London was much smaller than it is today.

Next door at 467 lived Salmene Alexander, a printing union leader at the *Daily Advertiser*, a Liberal newspaper that was renamed *The London Advertiser*. Alexander moved out in 1891 and the United Labour Hall was set up at 467 Dufferin. Marks and the Labour Council bought a printing press and began printing the famous *Industrial Banner* union newspaper in the Labour Hall.

The Labour Leaders also founded one of the first local branches of *Independent Labour Party*. The Labour Party ran and elected the first Labour Party Councillor, mayor and M.P.P. in London (Dr. Stevenson). They were also part of the 1919 coalition government of Ontario. (United Farmers – Independent Labour)

The Labour Council leaders also wanted to set up a public library in London. They decided at 467 Dufferin to organize a citywide referendum on the issue. They lost the vote so they opened up their reading room at 467 to serve the public until they could organize another referendum, which was successful. Joseph T. Marks was on the founding Board of the London Public Library, which built our first library building. The United Labour Hall moved next door to 465 Dufferin in 1895 after Marks moved to a house on Gray Street.

The official date of construction of these buildings is **1874**, but in 2004, L.A.C.H. put the date c. 1845. They could be as old as

1838, which would mean they were around at the time of The Rebellion of 1837-38. The British Barracks and Fort, which occupied what is now Victoria Park, had two building periods: 1838-1853 and 1862-1869. The architectural style resembles barracks at Fort York in Toronto from 1812. The British Barracks in Victoria Park had many buildings, which the city inherited and sold at auction in **1874** in order to clear space for the park, as well as the original location of the Western Fair. The buildings were moved into neighbourhoods nearby.

Considerable evidence points to the conclusion that 467 Dufferin was moved to its present location in **1874**. Further research is immediately needed to determine the age and origin of these homes. If they are from the barracks, these buildings may also have been used by slave refugees from the southern United States.

Even without a British Military origin 467-469 merits Heritage Designation just on the basis of its Labour History.

We are requesting Heritage Designation for 467-469 Dufferin as soon as possible as they are in grave danger. Arson or vandalism is a real possibility. Neighbours have put up with this stalemate for too long. These houses are a unique part of London's heritage. They should be restored and used as affordable housing in their current location. They could also be used as a museum to display the military artifacts from Victoria Park, which has recently, been labeled London's most important archaeological site.

A citizens' committee has been created to save the buildings on Dufferin. Support has been received from the London and District Labour Council, The Architectural Conservancy of Ontario, the Local Ridings of the New Democratic Party and the Woodfield Community Association. Potential support could also come from The London Public Library, The Royal Canadian Legion and The Museum Of Ontario Archaeology.

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Gil Warren is the Acting Chair of the Committee to save the houses on Dufferin.

All original source material and references are available on request.