



Architectural Conservancy Ontario – London Region Branch
Grosvenor Lodge
1017 Western Road
London, ON N6G 1G5

Monday, July 2, 2018

Members of Planning & Environment Committee (PEC) via email:

Councillor Stephen Turner (Chair)
Councillor Anna Hopkins
Councillor Jesse Helmer
Councillor Maureen Cassidy
Councillor Tanya Park

Members of the London Advisory Committee on Heritage (LACH)
through the LACH Committee Secretary

Re: Demolition Request for 172 Central Avenue

Dear Councillors:

I write to oppose the demolition request for 172 Central Avenue. This listed property, a Priority 1 on London's Inventory of Heritage Resources, is of significant historical and architectural value for the following reasons:

1. The first known occupant of this house was Dr. Oronhyatekha, a Mohawk from the Six Nations who practised medicine in London. "Dr. O.", who lived in London from 1874 to 1889, was respected as a skilled and learned physician. He was the first known indigenous Oxford scholar and second individual of indigenous descent to become a physician in Canada. In 1878, while living in London, he applied to become a member of the Independent Order of Foresters, a fraternal and financial institution. By 1881 he had become Supreme Chief Ranger of Foresters (IOF), the organization's international leader, and held the position for 26 years.

Dr. O. played a pivotal role in the growth and financial stabilization of the IOF during his tenure, enforcing rigorous medical underwriting procedures and expanding product offerings. Between 1881 and 1907, the organization grew from fewer than 500 members to more than 250,000.

Dr. O. was designated a Person of National Historic Significance by Parks Canada in the early 2000s. A 2016 biography, *Dr. Oronhyatekha: Security, Justice, and Equality*, by Keith Jamieson and Western University Professor Michelle Hamilton, has increased the profile of this accomplished member of Ontario's indigenous community.

In 1889, Dr. Oronhyatekha moved to Toronto where IOF had relocated. In Toronto Dr. O. has been honoured with a Toronto Historical Board plaque dedicated in 1995. The house he rented at 209 Carlton is listed in the Cabbagetown Heritage Inventory and a nearby street has been named Doctor O. Lane. It seems a shame for Dr. O. to be so honoured in Toronto while his London home is at risk of being demolished! Furthermore, all other buildings associated with Dr. O. are believed to be gone, including those at Six Nations and Tyendinaga. Approval of this demolition request could be construed as a statement that the City of London does not value and does not wish to commemorate the significant contributions of this indigenous resident of our community.

2. This solid Italianate-style home built ca. 1881 makes a strong heritage statement due to its as a modified Italianate design with typical symmetry, height and mass, projecting eaves, pronounced brackets, and a small central gable reminiscent of Ontario cottages. The buff brickwork has a contrasting course at first storey height and is augmented with brick quoins at all corners. The home's powerful structure features a three-foot thick stone foundation and sturdy roof rafters formed from three trunks split in half.

Most homes with this three-bay Italianate design are two rooms deep with the main stairway parallel to the wall in a long centre hallway. The main block of this unusual plan is only one room deep with a stairway turning to run along the back wall. This allows for three upstairs bedrooms all at the front. The home is relatively unaltered with high ceilings and doors and probably its original mantles.

3. This home is a significant historical and architectural gem within the Talbot North district which is next in line for consideration as a Heritage Conservation District. The history and stateliness of 172 Central contributes to the collective character of the area and to the cultural mosaic of London. This is a building and a story of national significance. It must be preserved.

Jennifer Grainger
President, London Region Branch, Architectural Conservancy Ontario

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Jerri Bunn, LACH Committee Secretary – jbunn@london.ca