

A TOUR OF HISTORIC SANDY HILL, OTTAWA

SANDY HILL IN THE 1800's

To begin, imagine that it is over 100 years ago and that you have come to visit this new development of Sandy Hill, rapidly becoming the fashionable residential area of the town. A horse-drawn cab has dropped you at the corner of Daly and Nicholas Streets. Here, a cluster of public buildings provides a starting place in time and atmosphere for this tour of a 19th century quarter.

ALBION HOTEL

1

Allan Cameron first opened the hostelry doors in 1844. Since then it has never ceased to operate as a hotel. As Sandy Hill developed, the Albion's trade flourished, particularly when the splendid new Court House was built across the street in 1871. That same year, a wing was added to the hotel, and it has been a meeting place of judges and lawyers from that time till today. The Albion has a warm place in the hearts of the people of all ages in the community, from college students to the oldest residents who still meet to mull over old times. The lovely old staircase in the entrance hall is worth a look, and the stained glass window above the lobby still retains the flavour of past elegance. The original fireplace in the old tap-room was discovered not long ago when renovations were being made.

CARLETON COUNTY COURT HOUSE

2

Opposite is the Carleton County Court House built in 1871. This building is reminiscent in some details, such as the pillars and pediment (the triangular part over the pillars), of Greek and Roman temples, but these are subordinated to vigorous compositions in the several facades that drew on other sources as well, with typical mid-Victorian freedom.

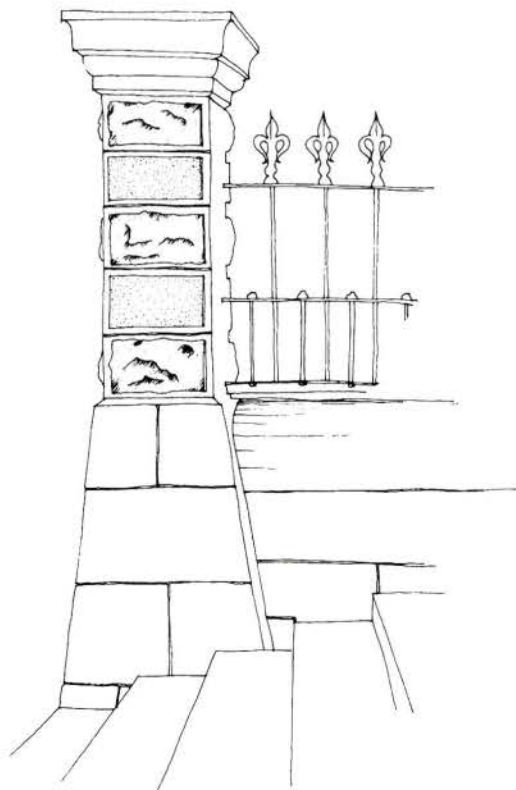
It is an imposing, symmetrical building, designed by architect Robert Surtees, to give weight to the majesty of the law and the presence of county government. Note the bold contrasts of rusticated limestone with the smooth surfaces and rougher hewn rock. This fine building illustrates the skills of the mason's trade, already highly developed in early Ottawa because of the experienced masons here to build the canal. Note the plaque at the Daly Street entrance.

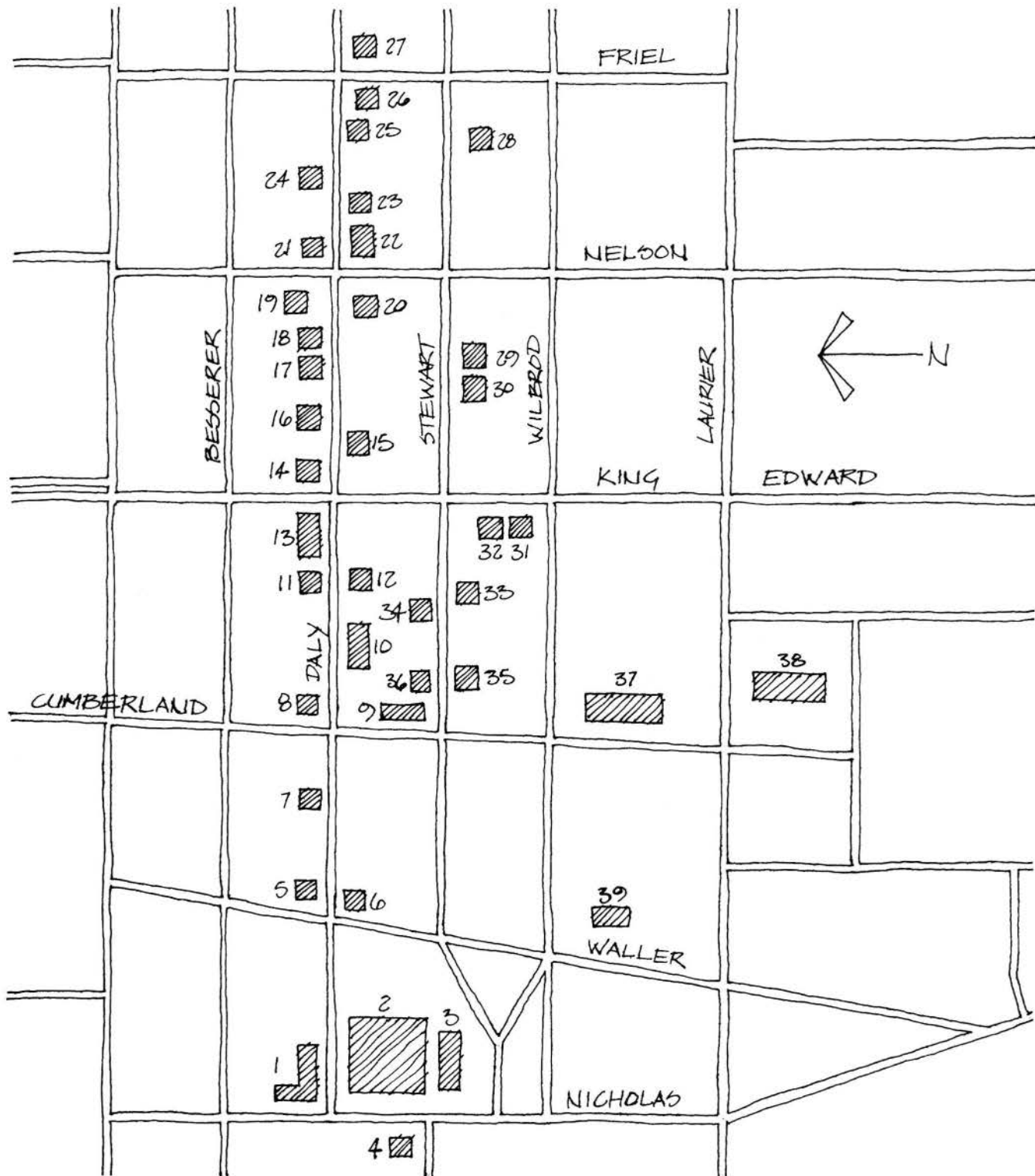
CARLETON COUNTY JAIL

3

Following the original fleur de lys decorated iron fence south along Nicholas, one can see the modern addition to the Court House, separating it from the Carleton County jail behind. The "GAOL" (as the sign described it until a few years ago) was built in 1862 to a design by Horsey and Sheard. Their plans followed basic designs for similar structures that were being built throughout the British Empire. The front portion of the building facing Nicholas Street is the Governor's quarters, where the superintendent and staff lived. Here there is a pleasantly proportioned living room with open fireplace.

The jail interior itself has been described as "straight out of Dickens". The main block consists of four floors of corridors and unlit cells which are scarcely wide enough for the narrowest cot. Every tiny single or double cell is like a dungeon, with massive stone walls and vaulted ceiling. As a sort of visual climax and grave moral lesson to all lawbreakers there is the hanging chamber four floors high on the east end of the building.





The chamber was designed so that the spectators might have a good view of the executions. Eagerly attended by the local residents, the last public execution in Canada was in 1869 when the trap was sprung on the assassin of Thomas d'Arcy McGee, who was a Father of Confederation and the first victim of a political assassination in Canada. The convicted murderer, James Patrick Whelan, is buried in the prison yard in an unmarked grave.

The exterior of the jail spells strength and austerity—the vertical facade, the bold window framing, the imposing chimneys. The gentler portico, over the now unused front door, was added later in the century. Several times throughout its 110-year use as a jail the building has been condemned. Now, after suitable conversion, it is being used by the Canadian Youth Hostels Association as a hostelry. For permission to tour the building, please inquire at the office inside the main door.

REGISTRY OFFICE

4

The old Registry Office (c. 1874) is across the street. Obsolete and forlorn in its present environment, it displays decorative patterns almost covering the entire face of the building in an exuberant expression of Victorian detail. One sees the same style in registry offices in countless cities and towns throughout Ontario, differing only in the color of brick or stone. Throughout Sandy Hill buildings of 1870 vintage predominate. 49 per cent of the houses on Daly Avenue predate 1880. The red brick family homes, both large and small, illustrate the brick-mason's skill in creating interesting patterns around windows and doors and along walls. Watch for chimneys. They are interesting with their various treatments; some are magnificent. The most elegant are the double-joined stacks. The wooden boards on the eaves and gables are often cut out in many different patterns. Verandahs have knobs, spools, brackets and turned pillars. Patterned facings appear over doors and under dormers.

Lacy charm is also added with the cast-iron ornamental trim on roof ridges and over bay windows. All this the builders could buy by the yard, and therefore they could indulge in any number of creative combinations. The cast components for iron fences, so sadly missing now, could be worked onto iron rods and assembled to personal taste. Many short stretches of fence can still be seen that attest to the former profusion of



such craftsmanship.

Now, from this corner, begin your walking (or cycling) tour of Sandy Hill, following Daly Avenue named after Sir Dominick Daly, Provincial Secretary for Lower Canada (1827-1848). The street was named about 1843 when Louis Besserer, inheritor of the largest land holdings in the area, began the subdivision of his land. By 1867 Daly Avenue was considered the most fashionable street in Ottawa.

47-49 DALY

5

The earliest buildings at this end of Daly were predominantly row houses—now referred to as townhouses—and an interesting example is at 47-49. This original limestone double has had an unsympathetic fourth floor added since it was built in 1862. Miss A.M. Harmon's Ladies School provided "civilized" education in this building to the daughters of prominent Ottawa families. In 1912, the building became the Union Mission for Men, yet it still preserves its plaster ceiling medallions and other fine interior details, such as the S-shaped newel post at the foot of the main staircase.

46-48 DALY

6

Across the street, the eye is caught by a bold and flamboyant facade with all sorts of gay details. Built about 1870, the front is similar in type to buildings in Montreal. Note that the roof brackets and window details on the Waller Street side are of a different style.

75 DALY

7

Louis Besserer sold the lot at 75 Daly in 1832 for 50 pounds sterling. In 1857 it was in turn sold to Samuel Howell, a prosperous grocer whose store on Rideau Street at Sussex was well known. The "Howell House" was built in 1862. Here is a handsome, well-proportioned structure with a doorway of unusual detail. Originally a wooden building, it is now stucco finished.

The entire block on the south side of Daly from the Cumberland Avenue corner was destroyed by fire in 1873. Before that three Fathers of Confederation lived in row houses here: Sir John A. Macdonald, Sir Samuel Leonard Tilley, and Sir Alexander T. Galt. Sir John, Canada's first Prime Minister, was continually complaining about the drains at his house in St. Alban's Terrace, as this row was called.

87-91 DALY

8

With its stone walls, this originally was a three-unit house, similar to 47-49. The third floor addition spoils the original roof line—someone along the way wanted to take advantage of extra space under the roof. As you walk along, watch for such changes and additions.

ST. PAUL'S EASTERN UNITED CHURCH

9

On the corner of Cumberland and Daly stands St. Paul's Eastern United Church, built in 1888. The original church was a wooden structure where the present Manse now stands at 104 Daly. From across the street, observe the marble pillars and the arched entry, reminiscent of Romanesque cloisters. The large circular stained glass window on the Daly facade is impressive. There was once a tower with a spire on the northwest corner of the church. If you are interested in seeing the interior of the church please make an appointment by phoning 233-8182.

106-112 Daly

10

Next to the Manse is a most unusual row of three 1870 houses. It is worth crossing the street to note the details. The windows with their semi-rounded tops, the unique door placement, and the elegant interior detail are undoubtedly some of the features that attracted Sir Alexander Campbell, one of the Fathers of Confederation, to live here. He was appointed to the Senate in 1867, named Canada's first Postmaster General and, after holding various cabinet positions, was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario in 1887. James King, the Director of Penitentiaries, Robert Bouchette, Commissioner of Customs, and Colonel Walker Powell, Deputy Adjutant General, also lived here. In 1889, Number 106 was listed as renting for \$20 a month. Note the very fine hand carved facings on the house next door at 112 Daly, as compared to the more usual fretsaw workmanship.

121-123 DALY

11

This was built as a double in 1862 for William Himsforth, Clerk of the Privy Council. The brick has been covered with stucco but the beautiful moulded doors and the Gothic-type window in the gable are authentic. A charming well-proportioned house.

122 DALY

12

See if you can find the original house! On the map of 1888 it is shown as a large property with a coach house and stables.

ST. ALBAN THE MARTYR

13

On the northwest corner of Daly and King Edward is beautiful St. Alban the Martyr, the oldest Anglican church in Ottawa, opened for worship in 1867. Designed by King Arnoldi, pupil of Thomas Fuller who designed the Parliament Buildings, this charming early English country-style church with Gothic detailing in windows and doors was intended to have a central steeple with bells, but the sandy soil made it impossible to support the weight.

Here you will see the first ornamental cast-iron work on your tour, and perhaps the finest. Part of the cresting on the pressed tin roof is missing, but fortunately, much remains. The lovely crowning ornaments and the fence on King Edward Avenue are worth pausing to examine. The dedication stone can be seen just down the hill in the wall. For an appointment to see this church please phone 236-5034.

140 DALY

14

This was the handsome, Georgian-style stone house of Louis Theodore Besserer, in 1844 the first large residence to be built in Sandy Hill. Originally it had a graceful arcaded verandah on three sides. The casement windows, an element of Quebec architecture, are rare in Sandy Hill. The tiny dormers on the roof are called lunettes. The arch of the original huge fireplace with its bake-ovens can still be seen in the old kitchen area on the lower floor, though it is now bricked in. There was also a widow's walk on the roof, where Louis Besserer could survey all the rolling land he had inheri-

ted in 1828 from his brother, who had fought in the war of 1812. Later, William McDougall, another Father of Confederation, lived here. He was responsible in 1867 for the purchase of the great Northwest from the Hudson's Bay Company, thus doubling the land mass of the new Dominion.

Next door is a flamboyant, fanciful house of the 1910's. What a difference in style in 70 years! Pause and enjoy it, with all its ornate metal trim and romantic tower.

154 DALY

15

Here resided from 1868 to 1874 the rector of St. Alban's, the Rev. T. Bedford Jones. One of several Georgian-influenced houses built in the 1860's, it has been altered several times.

161 DALY

16

This was built about 1870 as the Anglican Bishop's Palace. The top floor was added in 1910 to enable the servants' quarters to be moved up from the basement. The considerate owner then was the Honourable Louis Arthur Audette, Judge of the Exchequer Court. The ornamental iron cresting is worth noting.

171 DALY

17

The picture shows this building as it appeared in the 1870's, charming with its fountain, flowers and fence. In 1877, Sir Charles MacIntosh, editor of the Daily Citizen and Mayor of Ottawa 1879-81 lived here before becoming Lieutenant Governor of the North West Territories.

173 DALY

18

Built about 1871, the picture shows this handsome house in 1908. The rear garden had the first tennis court in Ottawa. Purchased in 1871 for \$5,000 by the Hon. Malcolm G. Cameron who for many years was a Member of Parliament and who ended his career as Lieutenant Governor of the North West Territories, succeeding his next door neighbour Sir Charles MacIntosh.

185 DALY

19

J.J. McGee, Clerk of the Privy Council and half brother to Thomas D'Arcy McGee, lived here from 1886. The ornate chimneys, the graceful front entrance and the unfortunate east addition should be noted.

192 DALY

20

This house with its Queen Anne details is well worth your close inspection. Built by Robert Allen about 1888 it has unusual terracotta plaques of fruit and cornucopias. While there are other examples to be found in the area of terracotta as decorative trim, here hard, unglazed pottery has also been used as a building component around the doors and windows and as fine panels and ledges under the front bow window. Note the fancy brickwork, chimneys, and the variety of colour, texture and ornamentation.

In 1920 the house was bought by Mr. and Mrs. Norman Wilson. Mrs. Wilson was later better known as the Honourable Cairine Wilson when she was summoned to the Senate of Canada in February 1930, the first woman to be so honored.

Before the days of cars and rock salt the slopes in Sandy Hill made magnificent toboggan slides. The Daily Citizen of March 20, 1876 commented:

"The police would do well to pay Sandy Hill an occasional visit and keep the boys from coasting on King and Nelson Streets; pedestrians are often knocked off their pins. These sudden sit downs are disagreeable, under any circumstances."

199-205 DALY

21

Crossing Nelson Street observe on the left an early example of good row housing built about 1870-72 and still containing its graceful staircases, plaster ceiling medallions, and marble fireplaces. The additions at the rear appear on the insurance maps of 1888. The brick shows the markings of an early awning-type verandah across the front.

200-206 and 208-214 DALY

22, 23

On the other side of the street are other illustrations of early row housing. Number 200-206 had had the exterior modernized. The next group, 208-214, has a Victorian face, with stained glass windows, brick trim and columned verandahs.

219 DALY

24

Vintage 1880, this building has a very fine stone treatment of its windows, marred somewhat by loss of some of the detail and unbalanced by the unfortunate verandah renovations over the original front door.

232-236 DALY

25

Next to the modest double at Number 230 there is a large spacious semi-detached home built in 1870. Note the pleasant rhythm of windows. The dormers and door hoods are obviously of a later date.

240 DALY

26

At the corner, this house was written about in the "Daily Citizen", Monday, December 6, 1875:

"Mr. Moore's New Residence"

"A new residence erected for Isaac Moore on Daly Street forms a handsome addition to the many fine buildings in that vicinity. It is of white brick relieved with cut stone, and is two stories high having a gothic roof. The cost of this building when finished will be \$10,000. Mr. W. Hodgson was the contractor for the mason work. He was also the contractor for the carpentering."

Mr. Moore was a lumber merchant, obviously a successful one. Until 1891 the house was occupied by Sir Henri Elzear Taschereau, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. -Adjacent to this house were stables and sheds, common sights on the properties of most of the larger houses. On the old maps, too, long covered cordwood sheds were shown at frequent intervals.

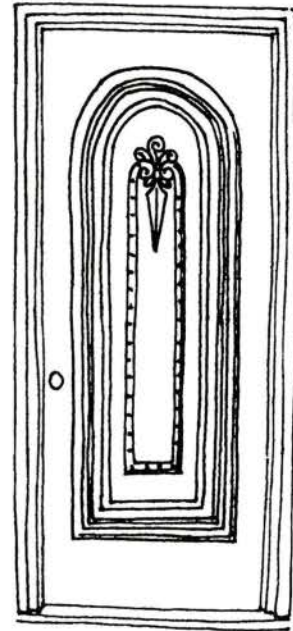
Now cross Friel Street, named for Henry James Friel, journalist and Mayor of Ottawa in 1863 and again in 1868-1869.

From here look back to the northwest corner and see the fine chimney brickwork, This type of large Victorian chimney is worth noting, displaying as it does the craftsmanship of the early bricklayers.

250-252 DALY

27

Continuing along the south side of the street there is a once elegant house, a large double on the corner, that has beautifully proportioned rooms, windows and staircases. Do look at the doors on Daly. These particular ones are of fine pine. Moulding pine, which came from the forests around, was the wood used by the builders of that time and it lent itself to decorative handling as well as to the sturdy planking for floors.



Next door is a little remodelled house which still shows its original shape; after this, a good Victorian red brick. Keep looking for special touches of the individual builders.

188 Stewart

28

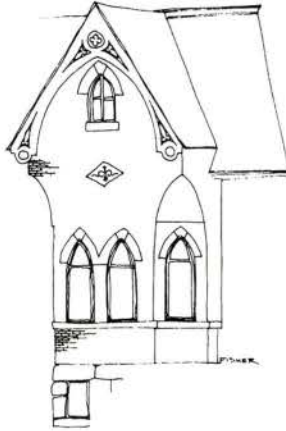
Crossing Friel, on the left in Number 188, a rare example in Ottawa of the "Tuscan-villa" style. Observe the unusual shape of the windows, the strong emphasis of the wood trim, the gentle slope of the roof and the wide overhang of the eaves—all reminiscent of Alpine houses. Despite its 100 years, it has a very contemporary air.

Across the street is a fine row, well-maintained and offering generous living space behind varied and interesting facades. Next is the rectory of St. Alban's Church and then, on the corner, a house with a fine verandah.

138 and 132 STEWART

29, 30

If a little side trip appeals, continue ahead on Stewart and look at Number 138. This fine cream-coloured clapboard house with a most interesting pinewood door, has the house number in the stained glass panel at the top. Halfway down the block at Number 132 is a charming small Gothic brick house with cream brick trim. It has a graceful bow window with two arched sides, a lovely door and unusual trim around the gable window. A delightful house.



312 WILBROD

31

Across from the church is a fine house dating from 1869 which still retains its classic proportions despite changes and additions. One of the very early stone houses in Sandy Hill, it was built for Olivia Cote. Vines of purple grapes once twined around the pillars of the graceful verandah that extended across the house front.

184 KING EDWARD

32

Continue along King Edward to "Gora's House of Antiques". Built about 1920 by Miss May E. Loucks, it was named "The Old Curiosity Shop". Here she sold a wide selection of antiques and her shop was known throughout Canada and the Eastern United States for its fine furniture and china. Much of the original character of the house has been preserved by the present proprietor.

Pausing at the corner of King Edward and Stewart, look carefully at the fine dormers and trim on the old stone house on the north-west corner. There are so many additions it may be difficult to locate the original house and to admire its good features.

84, 75, 77, 79, 65, and 66 STEWART

33-36

Walk west on Stewart. On the left at Number 84 there is a very small frame cottage tucked away behind two other houses. The city seems to have simply moved around it but miraculously it has survived. On the right is a row numbered 75, 77, 79, with two original porches and one that has now been changed. The name Loretto Place, and date, 1904, appear on the plaque. Number 65 is a delightful white-painted frame house with the air of a farm home in the city. The large house across the street at Number 66 still wears its heavy Victorian trim. Look up under the porches to see the tall Gothic doorways.

At the corner of Stewart, a few steps north (right) on Cumberland, there is a tiny house with three large dormers, now a beauty shop. It shows on very early maps as being a stucco construction. Turning left along Cumberland, walk south to the corner of Wilbrod.

ST JOSEPH'S CHURCH

37

Here at Wilbrod and Cumberland is an impressive corner and lovely open square. On the left is St. Joseph's Church. The present fine stone building is the third church to occupy this site. In 1856 the Oblate Fathers, who were brought to Canada in 1841, signed an agreement with Bishop Guigues of Bytown. He exchanged St. Joseph's College (College of Bytown), the Seminary, and St. Joseph Church (then being built) for Notre Dame Basilica on Sussex Drive. The first St. Joseph's Church was completed in 1857. When it proved inadequate, a second church was begun in 1892. St. Joseph's was originally the church for both French and English-speaking Catholics of the area. The rapid growth of the community led to the division of the parish in 1889, and the French-speaking parish of Sacre-Coeur was established across the street on Laurier Avenue. St. Joseph's was destroyed by fire in 1930 and the present church was completed in 1932. The side door on Cumberland is open from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

SACRE-COEUR CHURCH

38

Directly behind St. Joseph's on Laurier stands Sacre-Coeur Church. The first Sacre-Coeur, built in 1889, was gutted by fire in 1907. The present structure dates from 1910 and is the largest of all the churches in Sandy Hill. Its 217 foot central steeple, topped by a gold cross weighing 1,100 lbs., dominates the surrounding area. Sir Wilfrid and Lady Laurier attended services here, and the story goes that whenever the daughters of friends were married, Lady Laurier always lent her elegant coach for the bride.

550 CUMBERLAND

39

The campus of the University of Ottawa, the oldest and largest bilingual university in Canada, lies south of Stewart Street and west of Cumberland.

On April 24, 1845, the following appeared in the "Bytown Gazette and Ottawa Advertiser":

"We understand L.T. Besserer, Esq. of this town has conveyed six of his town lots to the R.C. Bishop Phelan, and his successors in the diocese, for the purpose of erecting a College thereon. The college is to be completed within five years from the conveyance."

Dominating the fine square in front of you is the central building of the University with its handsome pillars, each fashioned from a solid block of stone. This is Tabaret Hall, named after Rev. Father Henri Tabaret, the "father" of the College of Bytown, which in 1866 became the University of Ottawa. The cornerstone of the present building was laid on May 24, 1904 (architect A.O. Von Herbulis), fire having razed the original building dating from 1856.

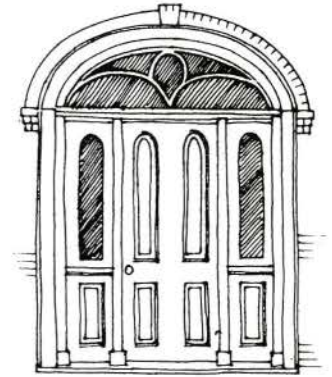
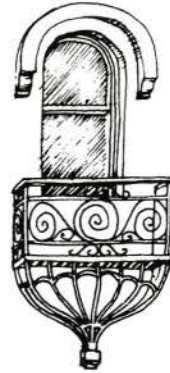
In 1861, board and tuition at the University cost \$100 a year. In 1848, the enrolment was 85 students and in 1971-72 was 8,381.

For further information about the university inquire at the Public Relations and Information Services in Room 209 of Tabaret Hall.

On the left of the square (south) across from Sacre-Coeur and facing Cumberland, is the Juniorat, now part of the University of Ottawa complex, and formerly the residence of priests

working in the parish. This square stone building has many decorative flourishes and an interesting roof line.

The Wilbrod Street houses on the immediate right (north) are former fine residences, now all painted grey and all part of the university and identified as to faculty by the markers outside. Note the graceful fanlights, the handsome doors and the beautifully designed windows of the double on the corner of Wilbrod and Cumberland. Next door there is a lovely piece of decorative ironwork outside the upper window.



The largest of the original university buildings, which began as a Science building and is now known as Academic Hall stands at the far north-west corner. Again, a stone building, with an interesting roof line and handsome iron finials, almost medieval in character.

To return to your starting point at the Albion Hotel, proceed north on Cumberland for two blocks to Daly, then turn left. To return to the centre of the city, continue along Wilbrod Street and cross either of the two bridges over Colonel By's Rideau Canal built some 150 years ago and by whose banks this residential area was developed.

We hope you have enjoyed your walk around the historic highlights of old Sandy Hill.

Excerpts made with the permission of Heritage Ottawa. Copies of the complete tour may be obtained from:

Heritage Ottawa
Box 510, Stn B
OTTAWA, Ontario
\$5