



## Report

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**To:** The County of Brant Heritage Committee  
**From:** Marcus Davidson, Senior Planner  
**Date:** July 21, 2016  
**Subject:** Bawcutt Centre, 13 Burwell Street, Paris, Ontario  
**Purpose:** Designation under Part 4 of the Ontario Heritage Act

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### RECOMMENDATION

That the County of Brant Heritage Advisory Committee recommends to Council that the former Paris Old Town Hall, now known as the Bawcutt Centre, located at 13 Burwell Street, Lots 6 & 7, West of Burwell Street, Part Lots 6 & 7, East of Dumfries Street, designated as Parts 1 & 2, 2R-2832, former Town of Paris, County of Brant be designated under Part 4 of the Ontario Heritage Act.

### REASON FOR DESIGNATION (FEATURES):

- Designed by Architect John Maxwell and completed in 1854
- Architectural significance being the oldest Gothic style Civic building in Canada predating the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa by 5 years
- Historical significance as a meeting place for Council meetings, a market, Assembly Hall, Magistrate's Office and Jail

### REASON FOR DESIGNATION

#### Architectural

The hall was designed by architect John Maxwell, and is a prime example of early English Gothic Revival in North America. Completed in 1854, the design was ahead of its time. Although more common place in the design of churches, it was an unusual choice for a secular public building, and is especially unique in Maxwell's attention to detail in regarding to replicating medieval Gothic architecture in contrast to the more popular romanticized gothic versions that existed at the time.

Throughout the years, the hall was home to a variety of uses which involved two additions. Both additions, although not always perfectly aligned with the original style did not seriously challenge the integrity of the original structure. The original exposed beam roof design, with numerous braces creating a pointed arch pattern, still stands in the interior of the upper hall of the building. The strong lines of the west facing rectangular molded framed door at the entrance are still clearly visible, highlighting the lancet shaped doorway. The basement is made of stone, while the upper floors were constructed from brick with stone accents and intricate wooden beams and plaster.

Overall, the Gothic Revival Design of this building alone makes this building an ideal candidate for heritage designation. It represents one of the most spectacular and earliest examples of secular Gothic Revival, and specifically Medieval Gothic, in North America.

### **Historical**

John Maxwell, a Scottish immigrant, was first listed as a Paris, Ontario resident in 1851. When the committee in charge of town hall locations proposed a new location on Lot No. 7 and half of No. 6, Maxwell was listed as the architect on the project.

The project specifications included a sectioned off basement that served as an indoor market, as well as a portion of the building being home to prisoners' cells. The main floor provided the space for a council meeting area which doubled as community space.

Over the decades, the hall served as a community space in a variety of ways. Built in 1853, the building served as headquarters for Mary Maxim, a residence, an opera house, and even played a role during the First World War.

The hall has always sat on its current lot and for a time was at the centre of what was then Paris' downtown and right on the main road. Eventually, the downtown was shifted, but the area remains a marker of a significant point in Paris' and Southwestern Ontario's history.

Most recently, a donation by Degross Producers, Linda Schuyler and her husband Stephen Stohn, led to the purchase of the property by the County of Brant which has provided the building with much attention locally, provincially, nationally and beyond.

### **Environment**

The Bawcutt Centre sits at an ideal location being a short walk from a vibrant downtown and closely situated with other buildings of historical significance such as a number of Cobblestone homes, church and adjacent to the first residential survey in Paris. The hall has always served a commercial or municipal purpose at this location and its central location within the town would still allow a similar use to continue into the future.

The hall has easily identifiable physical features such as the bell tower and the Gothic architecture gives it a unique look within the community. Due to its change in use from a town hall and the strong historical nature of the Town of Paris, the building currently is not generally seen as a symbol for the town as a whole. Currently, it is home to an auction house, but with some revitalization could become a strong asset in the community once again, beyond just a historical structure.

### **Integrity**

The hall represents a unique example of early architecture style within the Canadian context and a high sensitivity to detail. Not only was the hall designed in the previously unheard of Gothic Revival, Maxwell, the architect, approached the design with a keen attention to detail specifically focused on Medieval Gothic detailing. Although the tall tower can be seen as more representative of Italian Gothic style, the rectangular doorway design and other distinction details show a strong English Gothic influence and replicate pieces of buildings such as Merton College, Oxford, which was built in the mid 1200s.

There are two additions to the original brick structure. The second and largest addition was added by Mary Maxim for their use when they occupied the building. Unfortunately, the bell

tower has been compromised due to limited upkeep. The bell was removed during the 1950's when the upper portion had to be removed due to being structurally unsound.

**Included in the designation are:**

**Exterior**

- Conservation of as much of the original exterior brick structures as possible
- The brick section of the bell tower
- Exterior elements over the doors including the skylight and transom over the west facing door
- Conservation of the windows or reproduction with 12 over 12, or 9 over 12 panes where they exist
- Brick tracery over the doors and windows where it exists
- Angle buttresses with finials
- Octagonal brick buttresses
- Stencil writing on the brick

**Interior**

- Integrity of the upper hall including the exposed beams and cross bracings. If the beams are unsalvageable then replicate beams must be used
- Wide plank wooden flooring where it exists
- Gothic style lancet entry ways and windows where they exist
- Interior brick and wooden beams on the main floor
- Stone walls and features such as lantern alcoves and at least 1 of the 2 jail cells

**Excluded from designation**

- The two later additions on the east side of the building
- The upper wooden section of the bell tower

**Financial Considerations** – Approximately \$1,200.00 for notice to be placed in newspapers. Other financial considerations to be determined.

**Report**

**Interdepartmental Considerations** – To be discussed with Corporate Services and County of Brant Legal Department

**Attachments**

1. County of Brant Heritage Building Evaluation Form
2. Photos of Bawcutt Centre

**Copy to**

1. Michael Bradley, General Manager of Corporate Services

2. Lynn Dale, Legal Co-ordinator

**In adopting this report, is a bylaw or agreement required?**

If so, it should be referenced in the recommendation section.

By-law required (Yes)

Agreement(s) or other documents to be signed by Mayor and /or Clerk (No)

Is the necessary by-law or agreement being sent concurrently to Council? (No)