



Rear view of Phillips-Stoddart "mud brick" house, circa 1837, now boarded up.

Another landmark house in BWG at risk?

The simple one and a half storey house on the 6th Line of Bradford West Gwillimbury has charm; it also has a lengthy history.

The land was deeded to Aaron Munshaw in 1823, then sold to William Phillips Sr. circa 1825. The family cleared the land for farming and, in 1827, the property was inherited by the son, William Pen Phillips, who built the current home circa 1837 - using mud blocks, protected by a thick layer of stucco.

It's a combination that has withstood the years, but now may be at risk. Not because the brick is crumbling, but because the property has been sold to developers, and some local historians worry that its future is in question.

The house remained with various branches of the Phillips family until it was sold to the Stoddarts, another early family, in 1936. The Stoddarts, who began farming in West Gwillimbury in 1819 on what is now Hwy. 88., retained ownership of the 6th Line farm until recently, when it was sold to Geranium Corporation. The land has continued to be farmed, and the farmhouse was rented out.

The house has many of its original features, including an open cooking fireplace on the west wall. "We preserved all the windows, the floors, the two original fireplaces. I spent a long time refinishing that," says Vera Stoddart. When she and husband Wilson decided to add a window for a second floor bathroom, they carefully cut out several of the mud bricks - each of which weighed approximately 100 lbs. She still has the bricks.

"It's about 80% original, and that's a rare bird," says David Chambers, historian and family friend, who

has launched a campaign to ensure that the home is listed on a heritage building registry, and eventually designated. Not only is it "a perfectly good, structurally-sound house," he says, "it's a unique building, one of the most significant in Simcoe County."

But Mario Giampietri of Geranium Corp., denies that there are any plans to demolish the 170 year old house. The house has been boarded up, but "it's for safety issues," he says. "It's been vandalized two or three times" in recent weeks, and several items stolen. A security firm has been hired to keep an eye on the property, and turn away trespassers - not only to preserve the house, but also over safety concerns, that prowlers could be injured.

Giampietri noted that Geranium Corp. is "very community-minded," and indicated that they are just waiting for the municipality to set the protocol, before

deciding on the future of the house.

Bradford West Gwillimbury Mayor Doug White has expressed an interest in bringing in an outside expert to evaluate the Phillips-Stoddart house and other potential Heritage homes in the community. He suggested the issue will come up in Council during August, and said he was disappointed that there have been so few volunteers for a reconstituted BWG Heritage Committee.

Historical Association members meanwhile are renewing calls for the municipality to approve a Municipal Register - a list of homes of interest, that would provide limited protection to buildings such as the Phillips-Stoddart house. Being named on the list delays, but does not prevent, demolition - allowing for further study and review, and an opportunity for Council to consider a Heritage designation.



Barbara Verney, BWG Local History Association, brought an 18th C. Patch box to the July 20th "Show & Tell" meeting of the Association at the Scotch Settlement's Auld Kirk, on the 6th Line. Topics of discussion included the patch box, a Victorian memory ring with a plait of braided hair, a musical photo album, letter from the Red River Settlement - and a discussion of the current ownership of the Auld Kirk, which was in use for only 50 years, from 1822 to 1872, and which may still be owned by the Church of Scotland.