

Brougham, Ontario
Bentley House
272 Brock Road

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

Bentley House was built in 1853-55 for William Bentley, a local businessman and founder of Brougham village. It remained in the Bentley family until 1959, when it was purchased and restored by the Gibson family. The site is now part of the proposed Pickering Airport. Transport Canada is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 91-163.

Reasons For Designation

Bentley House was designated Recognized for its association with the growth of Upper Canada after the War of 1812 and the attendant development of towns; its Italianate architectural style; and the integrity of the site.

The period after the War of 1812 was one of growth and prosperity in Upper Canada. In 1829, William Bentley immigrated to Pickering Township from New York State. His brothers later joined him and they established a family store and patent medicine factory to serve the surrounding agricultural area. This attracted others to the village, and Bentley's Corners (now Brougham), grew and flourished. Bentley House represents the heyday of the village; development of the railway further south led to its subsequent decline.

A well-proportioned two-storey hipped-roof structure topped by a splendid belvedere, Bentley House is a fine example of vernacular Italianate architecture in Canada.

The Italianate style has two variations, based on different historic precedents. The Tuscan Villa style reflects the Picturesque values of variety in silhouette and textures and intricacy in detail, while the Italian Palazzo form emphasizes the symmetry and tripartite composition typical of Renaissance buildings. Both variations of the style became popular in North America during the period 1830 - 1860. Vernacular versions, made widely accessible in North America through the illustrated writings of American designers Alexander Davis and Andrew Jackson Downing, often combine elements of both types.

Bentley House, on its original four-acre site, is prominently located at the intersection of the Brock Road and Highway 7, the historic heart of the village of Brougham. One of the few remaining structures dating from the earliest period of Brougham's history, the house is a well-known area landmark.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of Bentley House resides in its vernacular Italianate style, as

evidenced by the combination of Renaissance massing with Picturesque expression in the materials and detailing; and by its significant contribution to the historic village of Brougham.

- 2 -

.../2

Brougham, Ontario
Bentley House (Continued)
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The Renaissance influence on the design of Bentley House is reflected in its symmetrical massing, shallow hip roof, regular arrangement of windows on all facades, and round-headed windows in the belvedere. Picturesque qualities are expressed in the variety of colours and textures of the materials: stone foundation, polychrome red-and-buff brickwork, large multi-paned sash windows, and elaborate wood trim and wood belvedere. The emphasis on ornamentation typical of Italianate villas in the Picturesque tradition is reflected in the tracery of the segmentally-arched window in the gable, eave brackets and dentils on both the house and belvedere, paneled door casing with carved colonnettes in antis, carved porch pillars, window shutters, and prominent decorative chimneys. This highly successful combination of profile, materials, and detailing must be preserved.

The materials and craftsmanship of Bentley House are of good quality. The house was rehabilitated in a sympathetic manner in 1959 by the Gibsons, and much of the original building fabric remains. The windows and exterior wood trim are apparently original; some of the wood is in need of attention. Repointing of some areas of brickwork has been done without concern for appearance; future repointing and masonry repairs should be done in consultation with a masonry expert. The building fabric should be carefully maintained, and any required repairs should be made in kind.

The interior retains its original layout and proportions. Many of the mouldings, fireplace surrounds, and other decorative features are original. The interior arrangement and original detailing and finishes should be preserved.

While a horse stable and carriage house are no longer extant, the site is suitably landscaped with mature trees and plantings. The garden was originally enclosed by a picket fence; the installation of a replica, based on historic information, could be considered.

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