

Friends of Auchmar Presentation to City Council – October 17th, 2012

To: The Clerk, Mr. Mayor and Members of Council

From: The Friends of Auchmar, Chair, Dr. Diane Gower Dent

Subject: Re: Auchmar Estate, October 17, 2012 General Issues Committee meeting

Mr. Mayor, Members of Council and fellow citizens

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak to you in support of the Auchmar Estate. This submission is prepared on behalf of the Board of the Friends of Auchmar of which I am currently Chair.

As background I would like to thank past members of Hamilton City Council and current members who supported the preservation of many of Hamilton's architectural landmarks.

During the 1970's, 80's and 90's your fellow councillors specifically, William McCulloch, Vince Agro, Dennis Carson and Robert Morrow worked with the citizens of Hamilton to save Sandyford Place on Duke Street, now condominiums, Central Public School, the Carnegie Library now the Unified Family Court, the Pigott and Sun Life buildings now condominiums, the Pigott Building stained glass windows, now restored and re-installed, the TH&B Station, the CN Station, now LIUNA, the Historic Core at McMaster University, Hamilton's Main Post Office now the John Sopinka Court House, the Bank of Montreal, now the Gowlings Building, and most recently the Lister Building. Many of these landmarks went through several transitions before an economic use was found. I sincerely hope that many of you understand the significance of safeguarding Hamilton's historic landmark sites – in particular I am now referring to the Auchmar Estate– the manor house, dovecote, stables, walled gardens and the unique cultural landscape.

In modern usage, a landmark includes anything that is easily recognizable, such as a monument, building, or other structure. It is the term used to designate places that might be of interest to tourists due to notable physical features or historical significance. As members of city council you will hold different perspectives when it comes to choosing to preserve or destroy Hamilton's history, however the Friends of Auchmar hope to convince you that:

- The entire Auchmar Estate is indispensable to the integrity of the culture of Hamilton.
- Auchmar is the container of human activity – such as this example when on August 1, 1859, Buchanan hosted a picnic at Auchmar in recognition of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the passage of the British Emancipation Act.
- To some extent, preserving Auchmar means respecting previous generations.
- One architectural historian asks, *if Ancient Rome had not been preserved till now, how could we know precisely about Ancient Rome's history?*
- Do we not have the responsibility to preserve Auchmar for the next generations so that they may have the opportunity to know about their predecessors?
- While it is true that we can transmit the civilization of our ancestors` by picture or in text form, which is vague and not authentic, we could also preserve the genuine buildings and lands of the Auchmar Estate which will be tangible to the next generation
- One architectural historian writes - *Only via the real trip to the Blue Mosque, Istanbul's imperial Mosque, are our next generations capable of acquainting an impressive view of the Turkish culture.*
- The problem is how to preserve?
- How to be responsible for the economic return?
- The Friends of Auchmar and the hundreds of Hamilton citizens who tour the

Auchmar Estate at Doors Open contend that the cultural value of the Auchmar estate is unique and worth preserving **even on economic grounds**. The Friends of Auchmar and many Hamilton citizens are willing to work with the City of Hamilton to make the restoration of Auchmar a reality. Funds have already been raised and more promised. Citizens care about the preservation of Auchmar because Auchmar is a unique historic site. It was the home of the Honourable Isaac Buchanan and also a significant monument to the economic, cultural and architectural history of Hamilton and Canada.

Who was the Honourable Issac Buchanan?

The Honourable Isaac Buchanan was the builder and owner of the Auchmar estate.

Buchanan:

- sat as a member of the Parliament of United Canada for Toronto between 1841 and 1843
- sat as a member for Hamilton between 1857 and 1865
- served as President of the Council in the Macdonald-Taché ministry between March and June 1865
- was the founder of Hamilton and Toronto Boards of Trade (forerunners to modern chambers of commerce)
- was the founder of the Thirteenth Battalion, a regiment which became the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry (RHLI)
- became a writer on the subjects of currency and trade and is generally credited as being a formative influence on John A. Macdonald's National Policy required to build a strong national economy and achieve Canadian national independence.
- was an international merchant
- was the first president of the Hamilton Club

Auchmar after the death of the Honourable Issac Buchanan

- After Buchanan's death Auchmar was sold to Captain Trigge.
- In 1900 James Buchanan, son of Isaac Buchanan, purchased Auchmar and was the owner until 1926.
- In 1926 Auchmar was purchased by A.Y. Young
- In 1943 the Young Family rented Auchmar to the Royal Canadian Air Force and was converted to a convalescent hospital for WW11 veterans. It has been reported that the Young family had planned to move back into Auchmar after the war, but when they saw the surgical scrub-down it had been subjected to they changed their minds.
- In 1945 the Hungarian Sisters of Social Service purchased Auchmar for \$32,500.
- It is reported that in 1949 the City of Hamilton bought a large portion of the Auchmar land for \$1. As a result, the Auchmar estate is now comprised of nine acres compared to an original 190.
- July 1997 Alexandra Langs and Jane O'Fynn, members of the Hamilton Garden Club, requested a meeting with me when I was Chair, Municipal Heritage Committee (LACAC) to discuss a request that the LACAC work with the Garden Club and to preserve Auchmar.
- September 1998, the Garden Club President Brenda Yates, sent a letter to the City of Hamilton requesting that Auchmar be preserved and remain in public ownership.
- Summer 1999, Ward 8 Councillor Frank D'Amico, met and toured Auchmar with Monica Buchanan Starkey (great granddaughter or great niece of Isaac Buchanan), Jane O'Flynn, Hamilton Garden Club, Hank Wroblewski, City of Hamilton and me to discuss preservation.
- About 1999, Auchmar was purchased by DeSantis Homes for approximately 3 million dollars.
- In the summer of 1999 at a meeting between Mr. De Santis and me, a swap between Auchmar and serviced city lands on the east mountain was discussed.
- The following morning the lawyer to Mr. De Santis telephoned me. I suggested a meeting with Councillor William McCulloch. They met and interest in that swap was confirmed.
- In 1999, the City of Hamilton took ownership of the Auchmar Estate.
- In 1999, the entire nine (9) acre Auchmar Estate was designated by Hamilton City Council under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act. That same year, the Ontario Heritage Foundation (now the Ontario Heritage Trust) placed a binding provincial easement on Auchmar.
- In 2000, the Auchmar Millennium Fund Organization was founded by Dr. Richard and Mrs. Eileen Butson. Funds from subscribers were used to erect a plaque to commemorate the life of Isaac Buchanan, his contribution to Hamilton and to celebrate the construction of Auchmar.
- From 2000 until the present, the Friends of Auchmar and an interim board of directors have organized meetings with MP David Sweet, MPP Andrea Horwath, and then MPP Sophia Aggelonitis to confirm government interest in and support for the preservation of Auchmar. Meetings have also taken place with Tim McCabe, Anna Bradford, Neil Everson, several councillors, city staff, the Ontario Heritage Trust and interested citizens to discuss preservation issues and provide tours of the Auchmar manor house and grounds. These group meetings provide an example of how private and public interests can achieve great results with cooperation and compromise and thus serve the public interest.
- In 2008, Heritage Hamilton Foundation under the direction of Dr. and Mrs. Grant Head, founders of and current directors of Heritage Hamilton Foundation (HHF) proposed the creation of the Auchmar Challenge Fund which offers a \$25,000.00 matching grant. Approval from Tim McCabe for HHF to proceed with fundraising was received in April 2012.
- In June 2012, The Friends of Auchmar was officially established and a board of directors elected. A membership drive is now in place and a website to be unveiled.

- At the June 2012 meeting and throughout this process, Ward 8 Councillor Terry Whitehead promised support and interest in the preservation of the Auchmar Estate.
- In October 2012, the Ontario Historical Society approved The Friends of Auchmar Incorporation and By-Laws, which now await consent by the Province of Ontario.
- October 30, 2012, The Friends of Auchmar, will hold the first Annual General Meeting. The guest speaker is Carolyn Samko, Senior Project Manager, Heritage Facilities and Capital Planning, Tourism & Culture Division of Economic Development.

Description and Location of the Auchmar Estate

The Auchmar Manor House is the centre piece of Clairmont Park, the estate of the Honourable Isaac Buchanan (1810–1883), one of Hamilton's most influential citizens. Auchmar was built in 1852 and is located at the northeast corner of Fennel and West 5th. The manor house and several remaining outbuildings; the dove cote and stables, along with the stone orchard walls. The current Auchmar occupies about 10 acres of land which includes most of the original estate features and landscaped grounds. However, the tiny Gatekeeper's Lodge, which resembles Auchmar House architecturally, became detached from the remainder of Clairmont Park and is privately owned. (It is located on the mountain brow at 71 Clarement Drive.) The Auchmar Manor House, the buildings and lands of the Buchanan estate is a unique, heritage asset owned by the citizens of Hamilton and is recognized by the Ontario Heritage Trust as having significant historical value. The Auchmar Manor House is recognized as an outstanding example of the domestic Gothic Revival and with its surrounding acreage, and therefore is not only important, but is significant and even unique as a cultural landscape. The estate is a very rare example of a mid-Victorian estate in Ontario which survives as the result of the careful effort to preserve the essential estate features.

To conclude I would like to make 2 requests:

1. That the city work toward creating a clear cut policy on heritage preservation for the City of Hamilton.
2. That members of Hamilton City Council and Economic Development staff continue to collaborate with The Friends of Auchmar and citizens of Hamilton to keep Auchmar in public ownership and create a plan for restoration to be completed within the next five years.

Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,

Diane G. Dent

Chair, Friends of Auchmar