



AUCHMAR ADVOCATE

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Writer/Editor: John Kajaste

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BEYOND THE FRONT DOOR

Inside the Auchmar Manor House: The Hard Decade

1930. THE SQUARE MILE, Montreal, Quebec.

In the library of an opulent home on Pine Avenue at the base of Mount Royal, Sir Henry W. Thornton, President of the Canadian National Railway, finished reading the morning papers. The butler came to the library door – Sir Henry's car was ready.

Economic storm clouds swirled across the financial landscape. The Crash of '29 took the wind out of the sails of many companies. Men were beginning to line the streets, searching for work.

It was difficult; going head-to-head against the Canadian Pacific. It was always who built the Grandest Hotels and Resorts or the Rail Stations on major lines first, Sir Henry mused, as his chauffeur opened the door.

The Canadian National Railway, formed a decade ago, made the former Grand Trunk Railway Head Office its' own, after absorbing it and the McKenzie and Mann railways in 1920.

John Schofield, Chief Architect, gave the driver his tip and stepped out of the vehicle. He adjusted his suit jacket and hat before walking into 360 McGill Street. A light rain began.

As he rode the elevator, he went over the upcoming week. In his briefcase, along with notes about the designs, was a book by a young author, Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*. He thought briefly about it: Hemingway with British and American Expats. Running with the bulls in Pamplona. F. Scott Fitzgerald and Gatsby didn't own the 1920s after all.

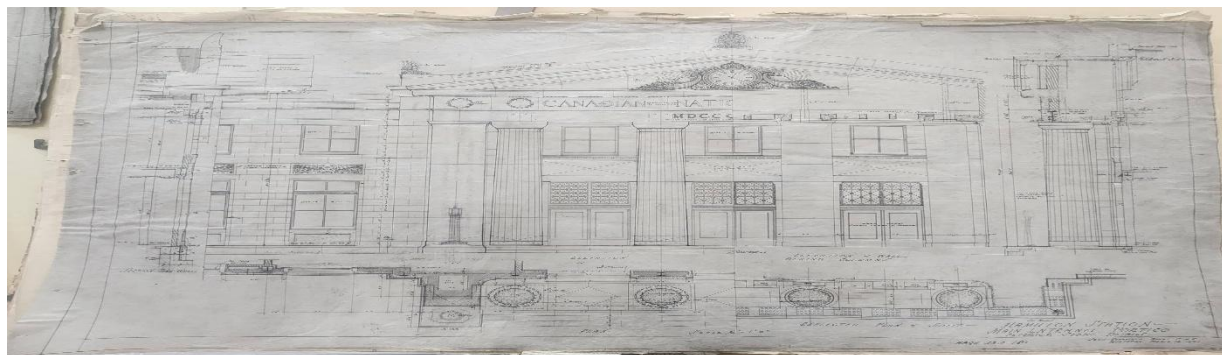
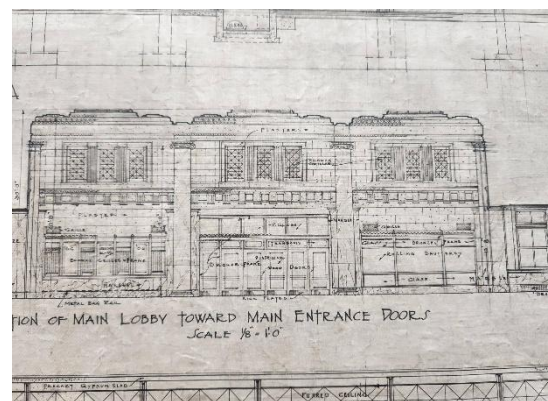
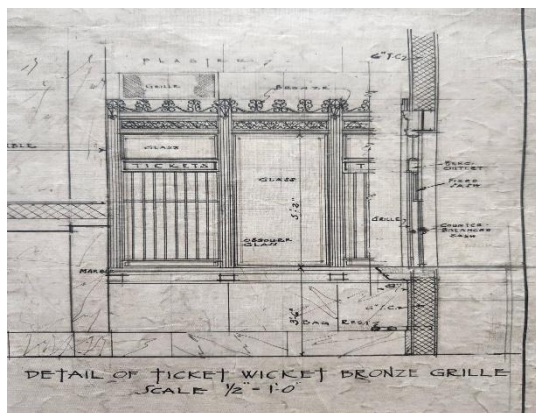
Upon entering the Offices, he checked with the clerk to ensure that the portfolios for the station in Hamilton and the Bessborough Hotel were out of the vault and in the conference room.



Sir Henry Thornton

There was a 9:00 am meeting with Sir Henry Thornton, followed by a 2-hour session with the design teams and construction managers about the Hamilton and Saskatoon projects. Had anyone followed up with Pigott Construction in Hamilton? Schofield would telephone J. Pigott personally later in the day.

Over 200 drawings were made for the Hamilton station. These included front and rear elevations, pilasters, detailed columns, light fixtures, and clocks. The Bessborough project, like the station in Hamilton was in mid construction stage and scheduled to open in 1931.



1934 Hamilton Ontario.

Alan and Edna Young were at home this Saturday in early June. In the Auchmar Library along with books by Stephen Leacock and Mazo de la Roche, was Hemingway's latest novel, *A Farewell to Arms* written before the Crash five years earlier. They would take lunch outside on the patio overlooking the grounds.

There were a few hours before Edna's sisters, Hattie Chamberlain Bull and Mabel Greening Braden would come for tea. Invitations were also sent to Gladys Greening, Wilmot "Maude" Holton Young, Elsie Watson and Anne "Doug" Lindsay.

Only a few weeks were left in the school year. Orders for the yearbooks *The Pibroch* (Strathallan) and *The Boar* (Hillfield) were placed months earlier. They arrived yesterday.

SCHOOL DAYS

Elsie and Wilfred's children, Mike, Joan and Susan attended Hillfield and Strathallan respectively, as did their cousins, Bill, David, Alan, Suzanne and Georgina. The children of the Burrill and Bull families did as well.

Like Hillfield, Strathallan School was structured in 4 Houses: Strathray, Strathyre, Strathearn and Strathmore.

The *Pibroch '34* was filled with passages and commentary by its school body with contributions by Georgina "Babs" Young "*A Beagle Hunt Told by A Hare*" and Beatrice Burrill "*The Broken Globe*."

Strathallan Sports Day was held in May of 1934. Mrs. H.B. Greening (Gladys) graciously made available the grounds of Reigate, her family home at Chedoke Mountain.

The highly anticipated and successful 2nd Strathallan Dance was held Easter Monday at the Brant Inn, overlooking the shoreline of Lake Ontario.

The school had many who contributed to the learning and teaching experience. Between 1931 and 1934, Strathallan received a duplication machine from Colonel Gibson, a gramophone and records from Wilson Balfour and a Minute Book for the Dramatic Society from Mabel Douglas.



Lady Bessborough

Hillfield was equal to the task. The boys of the Young, Bull, Burrill, Lazier and Braden families played cricket, hockey and boxing against athletes from other schools such as Ridley, Appleby College and Upper Canada College.



William "Bill" Holton Young

The businesses of Hamilton supported both schools. Among them were Birks, Westinghouse, Gore Park Floral, Hamilton Cotton Company and Lazier & Lazier Notaries. The 1934 yearbooks acknowledged these contributions.

The Pibroch devoted a lengthy passage to the visit of Lady Bessborough who visited Strathallan on October 26th, 1933.

In Memorium, The Pibroch recognized the contributions of two founding Patronesses who passed recently. Mrs. Hendrie passed in 1933, and Lady Gibson passed in January of 1934.

The Boar of 1934 listed the Houses of Hillfield and its students. Among those were David M. Young and William "Bill" Holton Young who was a Governor General Medalist.

ON MAY 28TH, 1934 a small town in northern Ontario, Corbeil, outside of Callander, captured the world's spotlight when news broke about the birth of the Dionne Quintuplets and spread across the wires.

Almost three years earlier to the day, on May 27th, 1931, the Official Opening Ceremony of the Canadian National Railway Hamilton station was held with great fanfare. Dignitaries in attendance included the Earl of Bessborough, Governor General of Canada.

Thomas McQueston, a local lawyer and Member of the Legislative Assembly was Minister of Transport and Chairman of the Niagara Parks. He had a vision of natural beauty which was uncommon during the dreary years of the early 1930s. His vision led to the foundations of and the creation of the Royal Botanical Gardens, the Niagara Parkway, and a highway from Toronto to the Niagara area which would become the Queen Elizabeth Way.



The Earl of Bessborough

John Schofield kept tight schedules. The Bessborough Hotel in Saskatoon was completed on time in 1931. The economic storm clouds, which Sir Henry thought about, became whirlwinds, effecting the country at large.

The Bessborough Hotel became the last of the Grand Hotels built in western Canada. When the doors opened in 1931, the Great Depression had swept across the country. It would sit empty, a ghost, until the middle of the decade. The Official Grand Opening of the Bessborough was in late autumn of 1935, on a cold December 10th. Sir Henry W. Thornton was not among the dignitaries who celebrated the occasion. He had left the Canadian National and departed Montreal in 1932.

By 1935, diplomatic channels advised the Federal Government frequently. The High Commissioners, and their emissaries were observing events in Europe with an alarming and increasing degree of concern. Were storm clouds of a different nature swirling once again?



Canadian National Railway Station, Hamilton, Ontario, 1931.



FRIENDS OF AUCHMAR

News, Events, Partnerships.

DOORS OPEN HAMILTON AT AUCHMAR

Once again, the Friends of Auchmar was pleased to act as Host at Auchmar for Doors Open Hamilton 2026 on May 2 and May 3.

The weather held as people waited for the ribbon cutting at 10:00 am each day.

Touring the Great Hall, peeking into the “Harry Potter” doorways, photographing the architectural details, walking the grounds, listening as life was described during the eras, speaking with the owners of a private collection of possessions which once belonged to Elsie Buchanan, enjoying musical interludes and inquiring why the Lusitania was important were all part of highly successful weekend.

Thank you to all the volunteers who made the weekend memorable.

Thank you to the City of Hamilton, Heritage and Culture, for their support.



Auchmar Estate Community Engagement

AUCHMAR ESTATE MASTER PLAN

The City of Hamilton, Director of Heritage and Culture, Lisa Abbott and staff attended the 2025 Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Auchmar.

The keynote address was the City of Hamilton Auchmar Estate Master Plan. An overview of the multifaceted, multi- stage restoration plan was presented.

Throughout the spring and summer of 2026, citizens were invited to complete a survey regarding future adaptive re-use for the manor house and grounds. That survey closed June 30, 2026.

The next step begins in September 2026. Please visit www.engage.hamilton.ca to catch up and participate.

Check the Engage Hamilton site and the Friends of Auchmar home page www.friendsofauchmar.ca for more information and updates.



THE AUCHMAR CHALLENGE FUND



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The Auchmar Estate was retained by the City of Hamilton as a Community Restoration Project. Heritage Hamilton joined the community with an Auchmar Challenge Fund in which the Foundation will match dollar-for-dollar donations from the community for an approved restoration project at the Auchmar Estate up to \$25,000.00.

Donate today by following this link -> [Donate to the Auchmar Challenge Fund](#)

After clicking the above link, please include a "message to charity" on the donations page, indicating that you are donating to the Auchmar Challenge Fund. A charitable donation tax receipt will be issued by Heritage Hamilton Foundation for all donations.



National Trust of Canada -APT Joint Conference 2025.

The conference will be held in the Waterloo Region, Ontario, October 24-26, 2026. Among the topics and themes this year is Housing Creations & Building Re Use – Solutions to Density.

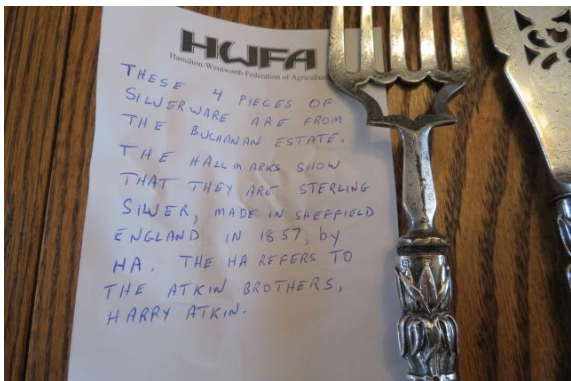
Participating in the conference are the Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals and the Indigenous Heritage Circle

A call for papers and presentations is posted the National Trust of Canada website.

For more information, visit info@nationaltrustcanada.ca

THE PHOTO GALLERY

This issue of the Gallery is dedicated to “Elsie’s Treasures”, a family-owned private collection of Elsie Buchanan and her family memorabilia and artifacts. It was part of Doors Open at Auchmar 2026.





THE BISHOP'S HOUSE OF GLENGARRY

BUILT HERITAGE – ADAPTIVE RE-USE

April 2015. The Pivotal Decision

In April 2015, The Diocese of Alexandria-Cornwall applied to demolish The Bishop's House of Glengarry and home to the College of Iona, which is situated across the grounds from the Church of St. Raphael's Ruins.

The South Glengarry Municipal Council rejected this application.

The Glengarry Fencibles Trust, an incorporated non-profit trust, initially known as the Bishop's House Committee, stepped into the breach. The Glengarry Fencibles Trust acquired the property and took possession in March 2016.

In the ensuing decade (2016-2026), after creating the mandate of the Trust, which heralds the preservation, restoration and public education about the Bishop's House, the members of the Trust forged key partnerships and fundraised \$100,000.00.

Parks Canada became a partner and co-shared the fundraising initiative, matching the Trust's \$100,000.00 with a grant of \$100,000.00 for a grand total of \$200,000.00. The Parks Canada grant is for buildings on National Historic Sites which are under threat. The Church of St. Raphael's Ruins was designated a National Historic Site in 1999.

All monies were allocated to the restoration of the Bishop's House.

The Glengarry Fencibles Trust established partnerships which every level of government, wrote grant applications, educated the community, and received backing from the Ontario Heritage Trust and from several foundations in Eastern Ontario including the McLean Foundation.

In 2026, it participated in Doors Open Ontario, Cornwall and SDG County.

The Bishop's House of Glengarry is open to the public and hosts community events.



THE BISHOP'S HOUSE OF GLENGARRY

BUILT HERITAGE – ADAPTIVE RE-USE

1807. Eastern Ontario

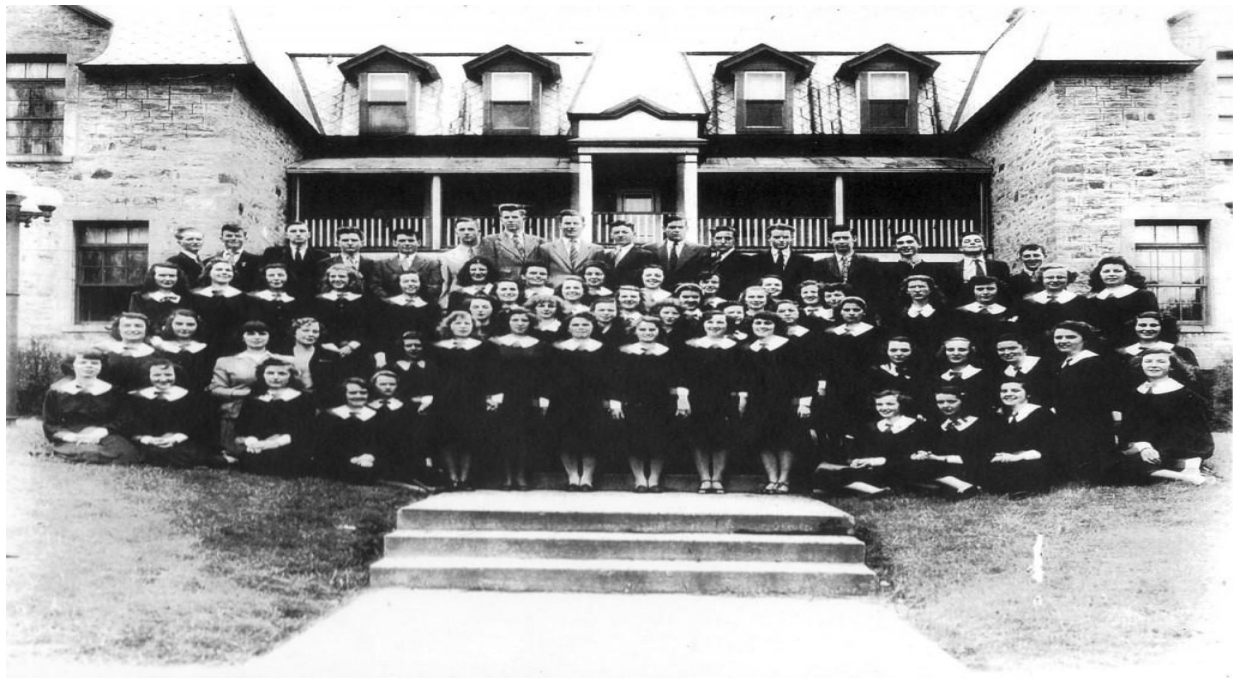
The Bishop's House of Glengarry and the Church of St. Raphael are two of the oldest buildings in English speaking Eastern Canada. The church was the earliest surviving Roman Catholic Church until 1970, when fire destroyed the interior and the walls remained.

Therefore, it became known as the Church of St Raphael's Ruins.

The Reverend Alexander Macdonell was the parish priest. Bishop's House was built and became his home.

The College of Iona was established here and operated for several decades.

Now, two centuries later, there are new chapters written in this long narrative.



College of Iona, Graduating Class, early 1940s
(Courtesy of Catherine (McGillis) Brownell Estate)



The Bishop's House of Glengarry in late summer and early autumn

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OR

Just come up and speak with us.



PHOTO CREDITS

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Page 2: (1) Sir Henry Thornton & Family (Geroge Grantham Bain Collection. (Library of Congress). (2-4) C.N.R. Hamilton Station (C.N.R. Archives McGill Digital Archives Collections).

Page 3: : (1) Lady Bessborough (McGill University Digital Archives).

Page 4 (1) William Holton Young (Hamilton Spectator, Humphrey Funeral Home). (2) The Earl of Bessborough (McGill University Digital Archives)

Page 5: (www.governorsgeneralcanada.com). C.N.R. Hamilton Station (www.militarybruce.com) C.N.R. Hamilton Station Archival photo (www.militarybruce.com) (Original Source: Library & Archives of Canada).

Page 6: (1) Welcome D.O.H. 2026 at Auchmar (F.O.A. Events).

Page 7: (1) Engage Hamilton Poster (www.engage.hamilton.ca). (2)) Auchmar Challenge Fund Auchmar Estate (University of Toronto Library Archives)

Page 8: (1) Auchmar Estate (University of Toronto Digital Archives).

Page 9: (1-6) Elsie's Treasures (Private Collection Vasseur and Martin Family).

Page 10 (1) The Bishop's House of Glengarry (The Glengarry Fencibles Trust).

Page 11: (1) Ontario Heritage Plaque (The Glengarry Fencibles Trust).

Page 12: (1) College of Iona Graduating Class early 1940s (Courtesy of Catherine (McGillis) Brownell Estate) (Glengarry Fencibles Trust) (2-3) Bishop's House of Glengarry (Glengarry Fencibles Trust).

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