

52 and 56 Charlton Avenue West, Hamilton

## **STATEMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE OR INTEREST AND DESCRIPTION OF HERITAGE ATTRIBUTES**

*NOTE: Alternative wording is presented for the opening paragraph. The first version is written for a single designation By-law. The other versions are written for two designation By-laws. The versions of the opening paragraph are suitable for the notice published in the newspaper. The paragraphs that follow the opening paragraph separately explain the value of 52 Charlton Avenue West and 56 Charlton Avenue West.*

### **Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest**

#### Opening Paragraph for a Single Designation By-law

The buildings at 52 and 56 Charlton Avenue West illustrate two themes of significance to the history of Hamilton – first, their construction at the turn of the twentieth century by wealthy local landowners who were developing the Durand neighbourhood as a place for upper-class dwellings; and second, their adaptation in the mid-twentieth century by a non-governmental association and the City for innovative social housing geared to teenaged girls. The property’s architectural value derives from the period when the buildings were in single-family use. Their extant features provide insight into the domestic tastes of affluent Hamiltonians at the turn of the twentieth century and demonstrate the capacity of Hamilton-based architects and craftsmen to offer high style to their patrons. The property’s historical value relates to both the period of single-family use and the time when it served the Big Sister Association of Hamilton as the residence known as Charlton Hall.

#### Opening Paragraph for a Designation By-law about 52 Charlton Avenue West Alone

The single-detached house at 52 Charlton Avenue West illustrates two themes of significance to the history of Hamilton – first, its construction at the turn of the twentieth century by a wealthy local landowner, one of several who were developing the Durand neighbourhood as a place for upper-class dwellings; and second, its adaptation in the mid-twentieth century by a nongovernmental association and the City for innovative social housing geared to teenaged girls. The property’s architectural value derives from the period when the building was in single-family use. Its extant features provide insight into the domestic tastes of affluent Hamiltonians at the turn of the twentieth century and demonstrate the capacity of Hamilton-based architects and craftsmen to offer high style to their patrons. The property’s historical value relates to both the period of single-family use and the time when it served the Big Sister Association of Hamilton as a wing in the residence known as Charlton Hall.

#### Opening Paragraph for a Designation By-law about 56 Charlton Avenue West Alone

The semi-detached dwelling at 56 Charlton Avenue West and the garage behind it illustrate two themes of significance to the history of Hamilton – first, the dwelling’s

construction at the turn of the twentieth century by a wealthy local landowner, one of several who were developing the Durand neighbourhood as a place for upper-class dwellings; and second, its adaptation in the mid-twentieth century by a non-governmental association and the City for innovative social housing geared to teenaged girls. The property’s architectural value derives from the period when the buildings were in single-family use. The dwelling’s extant features provide insight into the domestic tastes of affluent Hamiltonians at the turn of the twentieth century and demonstrate the capacity of Hamilton-based architects and craftsmen to offer high style to their patrons. The property’s historical value relates to both the period of single-family use and the time when it served the Big Sister Association of Hamilton as the principal part of the residence known as Charlton Hall.

### Remaining Paragraphs for 52 Charlton Avenue West

The construction of 52 Charlton Avenue West in 1896 was initiated by John H. Park, who owned a great house nearby. He was partner in the pan-Canadian wholesale grocery business of Lucas, Park & Company. The single-detached house was first owned by Jane Bell, wife of insurance agent John Bell.

In 1970, the Eastburn Wing of Charlton Hall opened in No. 52, which was joined to the principal part of Charlton Hall at 56 Charlton Avenue West by a one-storey link. Charlton Hall was the most important program of the Big Sister Association of Hamilton, providing a temporary home for teenaged girls.

The single-detached house exhibits architectural features representative of fine Queen Anne dwellings of the late nineteenth century. In particular the rounded turreted bay displays an effective handling of brick construction, large curving windows fit into the brick wall, and interior features follow the curvature.

Documentary and as-found evidence indicate that the front entrance used to be in the southeast corner of the house and that the interior plan once revolved around a large central stair hall in the Queen Anne manner. William Palmer Witton, who designed the house, was likely influenced by the interior plans of important American architects, Adler & Sullivan, with whom Witton worked in 1893-94. The house is an early commission for Witton, whose career in Hamilton lasted from 1895 to 1937.

Despite the alteration of the original interior plan, quality interior features have survived. The finest rooms in the house – the parlour in the turreted bay, the dining room in the northeast corner of the ground floor and the upper-floor room in the turret – artistically combine baseboard, doors or door casing, window surrounds, fireplaces, built-in cabinets, and plaster moulding at cove ceilings. Even the cast-iron radiators have been thoughtfully integrated beneath windows. Although the foot of the wood staircase has been altered, its beauty is revealed at the upper-floor hall. Its simple balustrade of square-profiled balusters and curving handrail point to Arts and Crafts influence. The Arts and Crafts movement, which was formalized in the 1880s, co-existed with the Queen Anne style.

Erected for an upper-class family, the single-detached house supports the historic character of the Durand neighbourhood, which was prized as the most desirable

community in Hamilton before the Second World War. The mid-block building at 52 Charlton Avenue West blends harmoniously into the turn-of-the-twentieth-century, red-brick, residential streetscape extending along the north side of Charlton Avenue West from Park Street South eastward.

#### Remaining Paragraphs for 56 Charlton Avenue West

The dwelling at 56 Charlton Avenue West, part of the semi-detached house at 56-64 Charlton Avenue West, was a project of Andrew Trew Wood's, who owned a great house nearby and who had registered the small plan of subdivision where his project was built in 1896. Andrew Trew Wood was partner in Wood, Vallance & Company, which probably conducted the largest wholesale hardware business in Canada at the turn of the twentieth century. Wood had many other interrelated commercial interests, including the fledgling steel industry in Hamilton. In addition, he served as Member of Parliament in the government of Alexander Mackenzie and later in the Wilfrid Laurier government. He carried through a bill to incorporate the Nickel Steel Company of Canada – the first of three companies that launched the nickel-steel industry in Canada. Late in life, Wood presided over the Hamilton Art School, held a seat in the Senate, and sat on the board of trustees of the University of Toronto.

56 Charlton Avenue West was first owned by Mary Andrewina Hobson, Wood's daughter who had married Robert Hobson in 1891. In 1896 when the semi-detached house at 56-64 Charlton Avenue West was being built, Wood named his son-in-law, Robert Hobson, secretary-treasurer of the Hamilton Blast Furnace Company, the first producers of high-grade pig-iron in Ontario. Hobson rose to the presidency of the amalgamated Steel Company of Canada (Stelco) – the largest, most diversified steel maker in Canada by the end of the First World War. Like his father-in-law, Hobson's business interests extended into several spheres besides steel making. His other accomplishments were as president of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, director of the Canadian Patriotic Fund, member of the new Honorary Advisory Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (later, the National Research Council) and member of the Munition Resources Commission. At the time of his death in 1926, Hobson's work as an industrialist was acknowledged for greatly aiding Hamilton's growth and prosperity in the first quarter of the twentieth century.

Edith Hamilton Olmsted, wife of Dr. Ingersoll Olmsted and Wood's daughter, acquired No. 56 after her sister Mary Hobson's death and leased it for 32 years before conveying it to the Big Sister Association of Hamilton. Both Edith Olmsted and Mary Hobson were early associate members of the Big Sister Association of Hamilton, which was founded in 1919 to promote the welfare of underprivileged girls. In 1961, the Big Sister Association of Hamilton, with the support of the City of Hamilton, opened Charlton Hall in No. 56 to provide a temporary home for teenaged girls, the first of its kind in Hamilton. In 1970, the Eastburn Wing of Charlton Hall opened in 52 Charlton Avenue West, which was joined to No. 56 by a one-storey link. Charlton Hall was the most important program of the Big Sister Association of Hamilton.

The semi-detached dwelling exhibits architectural features representative of fine Queen Anne houses of the late nineteenth century. In addition to the Queen Anne features on the exterior, many original interior features as well as the original interior plan have

survived. The interior plan revolves around a large central stair hall in the Queen Anne manner. William Palmer Witton, who designed the house, was likely influenced by the interior plans of important American architects, Adler & Sullivan, with whom Witton worked in 1893-94. The house is an early commission for Witton, whose career in Hamilton lasted from 1895 to 1937.

The brick walls, red sandstone window sills and lintels, wood window sash, decorative cornices and dormer windows, and leaded and stained glass windows are well-crafted and have stood the test of time. The sun porch, a complementary addition probably dating from the early twentieth century, is finely detailed with its tall French doors, pilasters and quarry tile floor. The original front doorway, which is hidden to public view by the current entrance, has double leaves of hardwood and glass that are embellished with diamond-shaped panels and an ornamental door knob and escutcheon. The large ground-floor stair hall, which has a plaster cornice with egg-and-dart moulding, features the grand front staircase, made of carved wood and illuminated by two pictorial stained glass windows on the ascent. The back staircase, although simpler, is of a similar quality to front staircases in modest homes of the Late Victorian period. The elegance of the former drawing room and the room to which it connects can still be visualized in its extant features, including a plaster ceiling panelled with a design of flowers and fruit. The richly appointed dining room is replete with dark polished woodwork, a contrasting parquet floor in a lighter-coloured herringbone pattern, an alcove framed by a carved Tudor arch and centring on a masterful fireplace, and another alcove formed by an oriel window of leaded and stained glass. The dining room is an outstanding example of the Arts and Crafts movement, which coexisted with the Queen Anne style. Another fireplace in the northeast bedroom on the upper floor has a wood mantle, glazed tile surrounds and floor, and a decorative cast-iron hearth.

Erected for an upper-class family, the semi-detached dwelling supports the historic character of the Durand neighbourhood, which was prized as the most desirable community in Hamilton before the Second World War. The mid-block building at 56 Charlton Avenue West blends harmoniously into the turn-of-the-twentieth-century, red-brick, residential streetscape extending along the north side of Charlton Avenue West from Park Street South eastward.

### **Description of Heritage Attributes**

The following elements give meaning to the property’s cultural heritage value.

#### 52 Charlton Avenue West

The heritage attributes on the exterior, and in the interior, of 52 Charlton Avenue West are embodied in all original materials and features and include the:

- brick walls, red sandstone window sills, and limestone foundation;
- wood window sash and window glazing;
- wood eaves decorated with moulded brackets, the east elevation’s pediment which is also decorated with moulded brackets, and the rear elevation’s plain wood eaves;

- carved wood canopy over the side entrance on the west elevation;
- parged plaster back wing and its wood doors and window;
- profile of hip roof, conical roof and surviving brick chimney stack;
- vestiges of the original interior plan;
- cove ceilings with plaster moulding, plaster medallion for the light fixture in the original vestibule space (now a closet) and plaster arches at the upper-floor hall;
- wood baseboard, door casing, doors, window surrounds, built-in cabinets and staircase;
- door hardware;
- fireplace mantles, surrounds, hearths, floors and electric grates; and,
- cast-iron radiators.

### 56 Charlton Avenue West

Heritage attributes on the exterior, and in the interior, of 56 Charlton Avenue West include the:

- brick walls and fire wall parapet, red sandstone window sills and lintels, and limestone foundation;
- wood window sash and window glazing;
- leaded and stained glass at the east bay window and rear oriel window;
- oval window on the east elevation and the Palladian window in the east elevation's pediment;
- pedimented wood dormer windows on the front facade and east elevation;
- wood cornice and eaves decorated with dentils and moulded brackets at the front bay window, along the east elevation, and in the east elevation's pediment;
- plain wood cornice and eaves on the rear elevation;
- sun porch with its tall French doors, pilasters and quarry tile floor;
- brick back wing on concrete block foundation;
- complex roof profile of gables and hip and surviving brick chimney stack;
- original front doorway with its double leaves of hardwood and glass, door hardware and transom light;
- interior plan consisting of vestibule, stair hall, interconnected drawing room, dining room, ground-floor back hall, front and back staircases, upper-floor hall and bedrooms;
- vestibule's woodwork and cast-iron radiator;
- stair hall's woodwork and plaster cornice with egg-and-dart moulding;

- interconnected drawing room's door and door hardware, woodwork, fireplaces, cast-iron radiators, moulded plaster cornice and panelled plaster ceiling with a design of flowers and fruit;
- entirety of the dining room, the most intact room in the dwelling – lightly coloured parquet floor in a herringbone pattern; dark polished woodwork for wall panelling and ceiling beams; light-coloured plaster walls with cup-shaped wall scones; east bay wall alcove framed by a carved Tudor arch; east bay fireplace featuring carved wood, cup-shaped wall scones and bronze hooded hearth surrounds, floor and andirons; leaded and stained glass with benches below for the east bay window; north alcove formed by an oriel window of leaded and stained glass and incorporating another bench; concealed cast-iron radiators; panelled west wall and its large round mirror, cup-shaped wall scones and two doors, door hardware and transom lights;
- polished wood front staircase and its stairwell – newel post, bench with cast-iron radiator below, built-in bookcase, balustrade, moulded string along the wall, risers and treads, landings, pictorial stained glass windows and their surrounds, and balcony;
- polished wood back staircase;
- back hall's polished wood doors;
- baseboard, door casing, window sash, window surrounds, cast-iron radiators and fireplace on the upper floor; and,
- garage's brick walls, bracketed door canopy and window openings.