

May 17, 2010

RE: PROPOSED DEMOLITION OF 79 DAWLISH AVENUE

To whom it may concern,

I urge you to prevent the demolition of the Forsey Page House at 79 Dawlish Avenue, Toronto. As a local architectural historian I have been researching and photographing Toronto's architecture for sixteen years. In my experience the design of this house is unique in our city. In addition it was designed and lived in by a very important twentieth-century Toronto architect: Forsey Pemberton Page. This letter will describe the home's architectural features and briefly present the importance of Mr. Page.

THE HOUSE

Although Forsey Page often designed houses in the Georgian Revival style, he was clearly influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement in his design for this house. In 79 Dawlish, Mr. Page skillfully combines Georgian elements (such as the shuttered multi-light sash windows and monochromatic brick) with Cottage Style elements (such as the reduced scale and asymmetrical massing). The steep French-Canadian style roof is unusual in Toronto. The resulting house has an informal and welcoming character typical of residences stemming from the Arts and Crafts movement.

Additional architectural features of the house are as follows:

- cedar shake roof
- prominent metal roof ridge cap with tall pinnacles (unusual for Toronto)
- front-facing peaked dormers
- light golden-brown brick with a course of slightly protruding headers beneath the eavesline
- six-over-six sash windows throughout, except for twelve-over-twelve sash window above the front entrance
- elongated octagonal six-light casement window to the left of the entrance
- panelled door with six lights, black metal mail slot, knocker, and door handle appear original (hardware appears to be wrought iron)
- curves of the carved wood panel above the door echoed in the light fixture brackets
- bottom two-thirds of shutters louvered with top third solid except for curved cut-outs
- curved black wrought iron metal shutter latches
- raised basement with large windows
- attached garage, with shed dormers, well-integrated into the design
- window boxes mounted on large curved brackets (probably also wrought iron)

The house at 79 Dawlish was part of the second wave of major building in Lawrence Park. The development of this historic Garden Suburb had been interrupted by World War I but continued in the 1920s. Forsey Page – both before and after his partnership with Harland Steele – designed several houses in Lawrence Park during this period. Mr. Page had already designed and lived in 12 Weybourne Crescent before building 79 Dawlish Avenue.

THE ARCHITECT

Forsey Page (1886-1970) was born and educated in Toronto. He attended Harbord Collegiate and St. Andrew's College before earning his architecture degree at the University of Toronto. After a brief period of travel in England and France, he returned to work as an architect in Toronto and partnered with Stanford Warrington. Mr. Page volunteered for service in the Great War and was wounded at Vimy Ridge. He achieved the rank of major.

After a brief solo career, Mr. Page formed his long and historic partnership with Harland Steele in 1926. Page & Steele designed houses, apartments, commercial, and institutional buildings – among them several Toronto landmarks. The award-winning firm continues as Page + Steele.

Forsey Page was active and respected in professional associations. He served as president of the Ontario Association of Architects (1933-34) and the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (1943-44). He was also Chancellor of the College of Fellows, RAIC, a Fellow of The Royal Institute of British Architects, Academician of The Royal Canadian Academy, a Senator of the University of Toronto, and Knight of Grace of The Order of St. John. Mr. Page was awarded the Coronation Medal for his architectural work in 1952.

Mr. Page's Dawlish Avenue house should be preserved. Please contact me if you need to discuss this house further.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marta O'Brien". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Marta" and last name "O'Brien" clearly legible.

Marta O'Brien, B. Tech. (Architecture), M.E.S.
Architectural Historian