

CURRENT (1977) REASONS FOR DESIGNATION

CURRENT (1995) HEA REASONS FOR IDENTIFICATION ATTACHMENT NO. 3
(Oaklands, Macdonald House, 131 Farnham Avenue)

The following Reasons for Designation is included in City of Toronto By-law 10-77, designating the property at 131 Farnham Avenue under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act in 1977:

SCHEDULE "B"

**Reasons for the designation of the MacDonald House
at 131 Farnham Avenue**

The MacDonald House was begun in 1860 and successive additions were made to the east to accommodate Senator John MacDonald's growing family. The building is designated on architectural grounds as a fine example of High Victorian domestic architecture, complete in almost all of its details, including some of the interior fittings. The Building is also designated on historic grounds for its association with an important Toronto businessman and National statesman, and with the McCormick agricultural implement family. In streetscape terms, the building is the eastern most house of the series that crown the escarpment above Toronto and its open gardens provide important greenspace in the area.

The following Reasons for Identification is included in the Heritage Easement Agreement, Instrument No. CA332829, registered on title 15 February, 1995. Please note: the property is known as 131 Farnham Avenue but was then known as 381 Avenue Road.

Reasons for Identification

**OAKLANDS
381 Avenue Road**

The property at 381 Avenue Road, known historically as Oaklands, is identified for architectural and historical reasons. The building was constructed in 1860 for owner Senator John Macdonald, according to the design of the Toronto architect William Hay. An addition, which included third storey dormer windows and a new northern tower, was erected in 1869 according to the design of the Toronto architectural firm of Gundry and Langley. In 1906, the porte-cochere and bay windows were constructed according to the design of the Toronto architectural firm of Gordon and Heliwell.

John Macdonald (1824-1890) was a merchant, churchman, philanthropist and politician. In 1849 he opened the John Macdonald and Co. company in Toronto, a dry goods business which became the largest wholesaler in Canada. In 1863 he was elected to Parliament as an independent Liberal, and became the first Liberal to be appointed to the Senate by Sir John A. MacDonald. Oaklands remained a private home until 1931 when it was purchased by the Christian Brothers. Today it is part of a complex known as De La Salle College.

Erected on an irregular plan, the 2½-storey buff brick and stone building features elements of the Gothic Revival style. The main (north) elevation comprises the main building and an east wing. The main building is highlighted by an asymmetrically placed tall tower, situated between two large gables. Two prominent chimneys rise from the main building. The main entrance is marked by a stone port-cochere, surmounted by a stone balustrade. The main doorway has a panelled wooden doorcase with multi-paned sidelights and transom. Flanking the entrance to the east is a 1-storey bay window, while to the west is a 2-storey bay window, both with stone surrounds. The north elevation of the east wing features flat-headed windows with stone surrounds and a corner turret. A variety of features highlight the building including an oriel window with a decorative corbel, dormer windows, decorative bargeboard, pinnacles, iron finials, patterned slate shingles and slender brick chimney stacks.

The west elevation has a two-storey bay window, flanked to the north by a one-storey bay window surmounted by a stone cartouche. Flat-headed windows with stone surrounds, dormer windows and a gable containing decorative bargeboard and a wooden pinnacle highlight this elevation.

The south elevation comprises the main building and an eastern wing, both of which have enclosed 1-storey porches. These are surmounted by wooden balustrades. The "L"-shaped main building

The important interior areas are situated on the first and second floor and are shown on the accompanying photographs of Schedule B. These areas are the Main Entrance and Vestibule; the Chapel; the Boardroom; the Office; the Dining Room; the Entrance Hall with staircase, a second storey Sitting Room; the second storey Sunroom and the second storey stairwell to the third floor.

The Main Entrance and Vestibule both feature wooden doors with glazing and multi-paned sidelights and transoms. (Photograph #9)

The Chapel contains a marble fireplace, doorways with wide surrounds and dentilated entablatures, fluted Corinthian pilasters and columns and a dentilated cornice which continues on all elevations of the room. (Photographs #11 and #12)

The Boardroom features a dentilated cornice which continues on all elevations of the room. The marble fireplace has a neo-classical surround and a frieze with neo-classical detailing. (Photograph #13)

The Dining Room contains wooden wall panelling, elongated trefoil transoms and wooden ceiling beams. (Photograph #15)

The Entrance Hall contains a wooden quarter-turn staircase with wooden panelling, carved newel posts with caps, and wooden door surrounds with neo-classical detailing. (Photographs #16, #17 and #10) Above the quarter-turn landing is a leaded glass window with stained glass detailing. (Photograph #18)

The second storey Sitting Room contains a marble fireplace with an arched stone surround, an ornamental keystone, incised detailing and a bowed mantelpiece. (Photograph #19)

The second storey Sunroom contains a fireplace with a marble and wood surround ornamented by egg and dart moulding, scroll detailing and a dentilated cornice. (Photograph #20)

The second storey stairwell contains a two-turn staircase with an open well, twisted balusters and carved tread brackets. (Photograph #21)

Oaklands is a landmark on the escarpment above Toronto. Its open gardens provide an important greenspace in the Avenue Road and Farnham Avenue neighbourhood.