



**November 21, 2015**

**Hamilton Municipal Heritage Committee  
City Hall  
71 Main Street West  
Hamilton ON L8P 4Y5**

**Attention: Loren Kolar**

**Dear Mesdames & Sirs,**

**RE: 1 ST JAMES PLACE**

We know that 1 St James Place is Heritage Designated under the OHA, and therefore demolition is against the law.

To allow demolition would require an argument that the building was not worthy of its designation. Failing this, demolition could only be warranted if the building was structurally failing and endangering the public. We know with certainty this is not the case.

The DNA would therefore like to stress the architectural and historical significance of #1 St James and why we think it is worthy of its designation. To do this we need speak about the home's architect and contractor, and follow with some history on its 'Art Moderne' stylistic and construction rarity. Please forgive us if this sounds like a history lesson, after all, it is the building's history that is in question here.

**The acclaimed ARCHITECT** of 1 St James was William Russell Souter. He grew up in Hamilton, and studied architecture in Pennsylvania. He then served in the Royal Naval Air Service and Air Force and was discharged in 1919. The following year he became junior partner in the firm of Hutton & Souter Architects, becoming a full partner later. In 1933 he was awarded

the Benemerenti Medal, by none other than the Pope Pius XI, for his design of the Cathedral Basilica of Christ the King in Hamilton.

Needless to say, Architect William Souter was a tour de force in this City's history. Besides designing the Cathedral of Christ the King, Souter is noted for work on many major Hamilton buildings and structures such as the John Sopinka Court House, the Skyway Bridge, and numerous schools and churches.

**The acclaimed CONTRACTOR** of 1 St James was the prominent Joseph Pigott of Pigott Construction. Together with his brothers, Joseph Pigott grew Pigott construction to become Canada's largest privately owned construction company. In 1930 Pigott Construction built Hamilton's first and only pre modern skyscraper, the 18 storey Pigott building. Pigott also built some of the country's finest buildings including the Royal Ontario Museum, and the Bank of Canada in Ottawa. Many designated Hamilton landmarks such as the Lister block and John Sopinka Court house were built by Pigott. He also was recognized by Pope Pius XI for his role in constructing the Cathedral of Christ the King.

Not only was the house at 1 St James built by a famous contractor and famous architect, but additionally it is a complete, rare surviving, classic example of the beginnings of the international Art Moderne movement in our country.

To understand the importance and rarity of Art Moderne, one needs to understand that it was a style variant that stemmed from Art Deco. The more recognizable Art Deco was a fashion in design that grew rapidly across the world from roots in Paris in 1925. Art Moderne then followed Art Deco with origins in the Bauhaus school in Germany. The emergence of Art Moderne in the 1930's can be attributed to the more austere times after the market crash in 1929. At that time society including Architects reacted to the times and looked to a more simplified design, with more usefulness in structure without ornamentation or excess. The style can also be linked to the avant garde influences of cubism, futurism, rationalism, and functionalism which spread worldwide and ultimately led to what we now call the "International Style". A stunning example of Art Moderne architecture in this City is the heritage designated 1933 TH&B railway station on Hunter Street, now known as the Hamilton Go Centre, which was built 3 years prior to 1 St James.

Art Moderne art, architecture, and fashion became popular in the 1930's just as the more decorative Art Deco fell out of favor. Many products in the 30s, from jewelry to kitchen appliances, expressed the new Art Moderne ideals; ideals that reflected the spirit of the early and mid-twentieth century, expressing excitement over technological advancements, such as high speed transportation, and innovative new construction techniques. Art Moderne design was highlighted at the 1933 World Fair in Chicago.

- Art Moderne buildings often emphasize simple geometric forms and have a lean industrialist machine aesthetic.
- The buildings are generally stripped mostly bare of decorative details, yet often have nautical nuances.

- Usually they are white in colour with smooth exterior wall surfaces like stucco, often with contrasting bright metals and flashings.
- They are characterized by horizontal window panes, flat or low slope roofs with no roof overhangs.
- Cubist compositions are common, sometimes with rounded corners, and porthole windows.

Not only is the house at 1 St James a rare, and perfect example of early Art Moderne constructed home in Hamilton, but it was also well published in 1936 upon completion. The home's construction was cited as "the first important experiment in modern Canadian housing" and the "first steel built house", which is most appropriate considering the history of steel in Hamilton. The home was described at the time as belonging to a "movement toward better housing in Canada". All of its structural members including the roof were built of structural steel. The internal systems including insulation were a radical modern departure for the time. Stylistically, the house was a beautiful simple cubist composition in white stucco highlighted by internalized eaves and a zinc roof. It was a remarkable modern and contemporary home for 1936.

The home at 1 St James is therefore most important, being a rare and early example of 'Art Moderne' and being designed by our City's most famous contractor and equally renowned architect. To add to this however is the fact that 1 St James is linked to a rare sister home, one street to the south, specifically the Hale house at #16 Inglewood; it was constructed the same year in 1936 by the same contractor and architect and is a similar Art Moderne styled home. It was constructed with the innovative use of steel, concrete, and glass block. It was similarly published upon completion as being "modern in style and construction".

These two homes reinforce the heritage significance of both and are a remarkable and rare historical part of the Durand record, a neighbourhood that includes some of the finest of architecture built over the last 200 years and by some of the continent's most celebrated architects.

Both 1 St James and 16 Inglewood abut the Markland Heritage District and are within the district's 50 meter cultural impact assessment zone under the Ontario Heritage Act. Both were built and published prior to the T. Eaton Company Ltd architectural house competition call for entries that stylistically cemented the Art Moderne movement in schools of architecture across Canada. These two homes in their complete unaltered condition are most rare and together form something very special.

It is also worth noting that both Joseph Pigott and William Souter lived in the Durand just blocks away from where they built these two modernist homes. Some 6 years earlier in 1930 Joseph Pigott had built his own home at 358 Bay Street South, with design by William Souter.

Not to be outdone, the architect William Souter designed his own home in 1932 at 108 Aberdeen, with contracting by Pigott construction. Both homes are landmarks within the Durand and both are heritage designated under the OHA. What is most striking however is how modern and contemporary #1 St James is when compared to these two residences built only a couple years prior.

The DNA would therefore like to express how culturally and historically important 1 St. James is to the Durand neighbourhood. Its architecture is a snapshot of the changing times in the Durand in the 1930's and was most likely the talk of the Town when built by its most important of Durand residents. It meets all criterion set out by the Ontario Heritage Act, as was recognized by the City of Hamilton in granting the building its historically designated status.

There has yet to be a plausible argument made as why this designated building should be demolished.

Yours truly,  
Janice Brown, President  
Durand Neighbourhood Association

<http://www.thespec.com/news-story/4515403-neighbours-fear-demo-will-bring-parking-lot-to-durand/>