

Landmarks or old houses?

By JOHN STEWART
Times staff writer

It may take a long time to broaden the definition of "heritage" so public officials realize there is value in saving buildings such as those in Cranberry Cove Park, says a University of Toronto professor.

Professor Derek Holdsworth of the geography department at Erindale College says Canadians tend to define a heritage home as a Victorian structure in which someone famous slept. "They like to be able to put a plaque up in front of it," he says.

"I've been involved in trying to argue that the ordinary houses of ordinary people are as important a heritage as Casa Loma or the house where John A. Macdonald was born."

The cottages on the Bevak property, now known as Cranberry Cove Park "were a way of life of one part of Mississauga past," says the urban studies teacher.

"It's not superb architecture but it will tell me and a lot of other people how ordinary people used to build homes," says the professor.

Holdsworth supports the contention of Janis Alton, a 21-year tenant in one of the cottages, that city council should hold off on demolition until an inventory is done along the city's waterfront to see if there are any comparable existing structures. Four students working for the Mississauga library are taking a photographic inventory of the area this summer.

Alton has approached teachers at Port Credit and Lorne Park secondary schools to do some historical research this fall to see if any of the cottages could be retained because of their importance in the city's past.

A sign on the outside of the Alton home, which looks much like it did

when it was first built, indicates Alton's approach.

It says, "This home was built in 1938 as a summer cottage for Colonel Thomas Sutton, whose winter home is at the northwest corner of the park. (It is also slated for demolition). The house was rented during the war to Norwegian officers serving in the Commonwealth Air Training Plan. During the war parts of the land were cultivated for victory gardens. The house was later winterized by Alex Gooderham who built the barn and raised pigeons, pheasants and retrievers."

There are cottages in Lorne Park Estates which predate those in Cranberry Cove Park. But Alton believes the Bevak homes are a unique representation of their period. The city plans to save three homes on the land. Two others have already been demolished and two more, including the Alton's home, are scheduled to be torn down this fall.

Local historical groups support a deferral for further examination of the issue. Tom Adamson, president of the Mississauga South Historical Society, says in a letter to the city. "We feel this area reflects the way people lived in the early half of the century, with a variety of homes and open space, a way of life that is fast disappearing from this area. Indeed, it is almost surely the only such site left on the lake shoreline between Toronto and Hamilton."

But even if Alton's request for a demolition deferral is not granted, and the houses are torn down, Holdsworth feels, "There's been some value just in raising the level of consciousness. Maybe you'll think about it the next time around," before deciding to tear down "historic" homes, he says.



MORRIS LAMONT/THE TIMES

Janis and Melanie Alton want to save their family home



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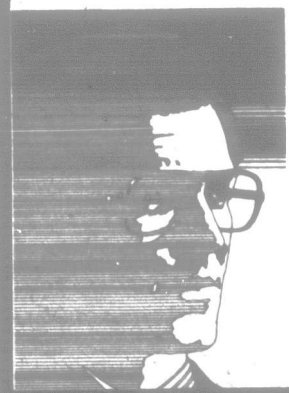
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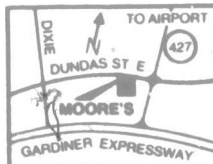
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