TOUR map

Vankleek Hill Companion Tour 2018

Vankleek Hill & District
Historical Society
95 Main Street East, P.O. Box 537
Vankleek Hill ON K0B 1R0
www.vankleek.ca info@vankleek.ca
fb Vankleek Hill Museum

VANKLEEK HILL

The Houses of Vankleek Hill Etc.

ART EXHIBIT
2018
Companion
tour
UNDER ONE HOUR

Vankleek Hill & District Historical Society
www.vankleek.ca

The Houses of Vankleek Hill Etc.

A Companion Tour, Art Exhiit 2018

It takes a village to write local history.

This walking tour benefits from the Vankleek Hill & District Historical Society Inventory of Early Homes. J. Denis Seguin Architect provided architectural comments. The generosity of local advertisers gave ink to the pages. We are pleased to introduce you to the enduring spirit of our community through histories of some of the houses and buildings that the artists have interpreted through paintings and photography.
Michelle Landriault, Museum Studies

Gentle advice for walkers & drivers:

The tour map is on the back cover.

A successful walking tour is based on goodwill and common sense. Walkers are asked to stay on the sidewalk during the tour, and to not trespass on private property.

For the short time that you are on the sidewalk tour, you are asked to be a good and gracious Vankleek Hill neighbour.

Should you choose to drive, please pull to the side and park, rather than slow down to view a home.

Thank you for your curiosity. Enjoy the walk, or the drive!

Produced as a companion to the art exhibit *The Houses of Vankleek Hill Etc.* hosted by
Linda Scott Harris Photographer/Fine Art/Fine Art Classes,
The Review 125th Anniversary, Arbor Gallery Cultural Centre
October 3-October 28, 2018.

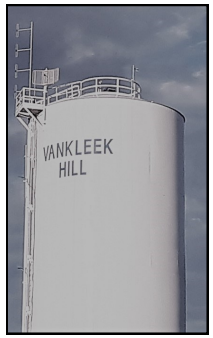
Design: Lennie Kuiper & Michelle Landriault

Gratitude to our advertisers whose support paid for printing.

Dwight Proudfoot, Proudfoot Financial
Rachel Proudfoot, Proudfoot Financial
Josée Carrière-Bertrand, Roy's Accounting
Alexandra Nantel-Soucy LL.B., J.D. Étude Légale Tolhurst Law Office

Vankleek Hill
Gingerbread Capital of Ontario

Thank you to our advertisers.



Utilitarian icons such as the water tower on Home Avenue deserve mention. Until the 1970s, homes in Vankleek Hill had individual wells. A public water system, operating from four large wells with water stored in the tower for distribution, was installed due to new provincial standards for all municipalities. Today, water is piped to Vankleek Hill from the Ottawa River through the water treatment plant in Hawkesbury, and the tower remains in operation. There are still a few homes who have kept their outdoor well pumps hooked-up … just in case…

49-51 Union Street — Dunning House

This corner was home to a saddle & harness business until 1878 when this fanciful Victorian home was built by carpenter Robert Dunning. Bargeboard gingerbread highlights the multiple gables, each topped with a spire and drop pendant. Note the enticing slope of the porch roofs with their original stamped tin, and the repeated triple windows. The formal entry is on Union, the casual entry on Mill. In its early years, the house had substantial lands on the north and west sides

28 Mill Street — Martin House

Built by carpenter Joseph Martin in 1873. He required three mortgages to purchase the building materials. In 1883, he sold the house for $737. This is a comfortable farmhouse style home with a set of sheds added over the years at the back.

Auction Sale

"Mrs. (Dr.) Jas. McIntosh will offer for sale by public auction, at her residence, corner Main street and Derby avenue, on Wednesday, April 13th [1898], a lot of valuable household furniture, comprising in part:"

"Square piano, rosewood sewing machine, parlor suite, 6 parlor chairs, 3 fancy chairs, 3 oak rockers, 2 arm chairs, 3 verandah chairs, 3 bedroom suites, iron and camp single beds, mattresses, sideboards, tables, book cases, large office desk, floor carpets, stair carpets, linoleums, curtains, curtain poles, window shades, parlor, hall and study hanging lamps, household lamps, cooking stove, single stove, chinaware, glassware, and many other household articles."

"Terms—$10.00 and under cash; over that amount 6 months credit upon furnishing approved joint notes."

Ref.: Eastern Ontario Review and Ottawa Valley Advertiser
April 1, 1898

A glimpse into a 19th century household.

Local history: it's about life and living.

Van Kleeck's Hill

Simeon VanKleeck (1745-1827) and his wife Cecilia Jaycox (1755-1849) were United Empire Loyalists from the Province of New York who sided with the British during the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783). After evacuation to Canada, and several land petitions, Simeon and his son Simeon Jr. began to clear acreage on Concession 6 in c.1797, the start of Van Kleeck's Hill. From their home, Cecilia operated an inn to serve travellers going from the Ottawa River to the St. Lawrence River, and to villages between Ottawa and Montreal. An inn operating near a crossroad location encourages trades, and soon the inn was joined by blacksmiths, coopers, merchants. By 1840, growth was assured when grandsons Peter and Barnabus VanKleeck began to sell lots to allow for roads and buildings. Vankleek Hill became a natural service centre for the surrounding agricultural community.

Tour Street Names

Home Avenue started as the laneway "home" to the Higginson Family farm.

Higginson Street is located on what was the farm of Thomas Higginson, one of four brothers who emigrated to Canada from County Antrim, Ireland. Thomas settled here in the 1820s. Two of his sons, Colonel William Higginson and John Higginson, built several fine homes in Vankleek Hill: Colonel William provided the backing, while John, "builder and manufacturer," carried out the design-build. The Higginson family was involved in local politics, advocated for rail and electricity, and promoted education and commerce. The Arbor Gallery was the retirement home for Thomas.

Derby Street began in 1855 when Stephen Cafs [Cass] provided land to open a street or lane. In the 1870s, Charles Derby operated a stationary business located near the corner of Main Street East on this lane. The location, referred to in advertising as "Derby's stand behind Main Street," became known as Derby Street. Another theory is that in the 1890s the street was named after Governor General Lord Stanley, the Earl of Derby, who gave Canada the Stanley Cup. Rejoice hockey fans!

Main Street East is the northern property line of the early Vankleeck farm (Con. 6, Lots 6,7,8,9). When Simeon Sr. died in 1827, his lands went to his grandchildren: east half to Peter; the west half to Getty, Barnabus, John, Robert, Jeremiah and William Henry. The family provided land to open streets, and purchases from their lands created the Main Street business district of Vankleek Hill.

Union Street was named to honour the 1841 union of Upper and Lower Canada. It is an early side street and retains its narrow characteristic.

Mill Street was the location of several sawmills. At the site of the Community Centre, playground and ball field there was once a large pond "Loch" and substantial sawmill.

36 Home Avenue — Higginson House

The house was built by Colonel William Higginson & his brother John over a seven-year span 1850-1857, as the retirement home for their parents Thomas (1794-1884) and Nancy [Park] Higginson (1798-1854), and their daughter Ann. There was no rush as the farmhouse sufficed. This home remained in the family until 1978.

St. John's Anglican Church was constructed in the same time period which may account for the delay.

This family, successful in agriculture and business, took part in local politics to advocate for education, commerce, and community services in Prescott County.

The house design is not embellished; it is simple and vernacular—using materials, brick and milled details, from Vankleek Hill. The over-extended flat tin roof protect the brick from water damage.

We offer you these capsules of their integrated history.

Higginson Tower

Higginson Tower was constructed c.1830 as a windmill by Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Higginson who emigrated to Canada in 1819 from Ireland. He bought land in Vankleek Hill in 1826, and settled here by c.1829.

Among many civic undertakings, Thomas was a founder and president of the local Mechanic's Institute in 1857 which offered the first local library. He was a published writer and poet.

The windmill, built c. 1830, was to harness wind to grind local wheat and corn, but the plan failed due to lack of consistent wind. Years later, Colonel William Higginson removed the fans and added a wood frame tower covered in tin to create the "first private observatory in Eastern Ontario."

In the 1970s, the 'look-out' tower was torn down due to concerns for public safety. The tower has since been restored. There is a full history panel on-site.

Art:
J. Denis Seguin
Architect OAA

St. John's Anglican Church

Built on land donated by Thomas Higginson, St. John's Church opened for divine service in 1854 in unfinished condition. The long driveway, Church Street, was provided by John Potter, and adjoining land came from Thomas Kerr. The church bell was purchased in 1855 from Troy, New York for 36 Pounds, 10 Shillings. This early brick building is derived from Gothic architecture.

Pen & Ink, Estate of Peter Dobush Architect (1908-1980). Library and Archives Canada

95 Main Street East — Musée Vankleek Hill Museum

Duncan MacDonnell, one of a handful of early Vankleek Hill settlers, constructed this timber frame store in 1834. He was bankrupt in 1836 before the store opened. The building was used for a time as a residence. The red brick was added c.1855 after a serious fire swept through Vankleek Hill. This building is historically recognized as the first in Vankleek Hill to be covered in local red brick.

To the west is a Georgian style house, with its balanced façade, built in 1858 by Archibald McLaurin who had lived in the store building since 1847. Malcolm McCuaig purchased the two properties in 1863. He and his partner Arthur Cheney made McCuaig, Cheney & Co. General Store a successful business into the 20th century.

In 1870, McCuaig built the three-storey warehouse to the east for farm equipment, grain sales, and a showroom for large household items.

The architecture of this general store is a strong example of the emerging Canadiana style with its round-headed south facing front windows that frame narrow double doors. The full width decorative front porch added later acted as both a connection to the wood plank sidewalk and a display area for store products during business hours.

Art: Jessica Sarrazin

Union Street is in the direct siteline of this building.

"Every class of merchandise, from the best silks and the latest fabrics in dress goods to a pound of nails or a bag of salt, they buy all kinds of grain, wool and farm produce, and are interested in several cheese factories in the neighbourhood; fine stock of all dress goods, tweeds, furs, carpets, oil cloths and window shades; heavy and shelf hardware of every description, and a full assortment of groceries; with boots and shoes..."
[Eastern Ontario Review & Ottawa Valley General Advertiser, 1895]

Vankleek Hill – Red Brick Town and Gingerbread Capital of Ontario

A fire in 1855 destroyed important timber and log buildings in Vankleek Hill, and sparked production at local brickyards. Our clay deposit produced our distinctive red-coloured, soft brick. Steady production ended in the 1920s. The family names connected to brickmaking include Johnson, Potter, Guindon (Yandow), Steele, Reasbeck. Visitors find the Vankleek Hill red brick warm and inviting.

In 1883, the Vankleek Hill Manufacturing Company sawmill (today the Vankleek Hill Community Centre) manufactured varieties of sash, doors, blinds, mouldings and house finishings, plus turned wood and scroll work. The gingerbread, or wood scroll work, enhancing our home exteriors and interiors was bought at local sawmills, or ordered through specialty catalogues. The end of the gingerbread craze came with WW I, when housing design simplified. We celebrate Vankleek Hill's unique 19th century craftsmanship as the Gingerbread Capital of Ontario.

148 Main Street East — Bates / Martel

Built in 1875 by blacksmith Alexander MacVicar , he used the building next door as his shop. Joseph Bates purchased the house and operated his monument business from next door; as did employee Napoleon Martel when he took over the business in 1905. Martel et Fils, a 5th generation business, continues today on Terry Fox Drive. The front porch exudes "monumental."

76 Main Street East — The Review

This c.1890 building was the McIntosh store with its two front windows for window-shopping, and its decorative trio of Canadiana style rounded windows upstairs. By 1905 it was the John Wilson General Motors Dealer showroom, with enough space to have two cars on display. Now home to The Review weekly newspaper, the original floors reveal the oil stains from the dealership. The Review proudly celebrates 125 years of publication in 2018, and this is its fourth home base in Vankleek Hill.

86, 90, & 94 Higginson Street
E.Z. Labrosse Housing Development

Queen Victoria dies in 1901, and design simplifies.

In 1903, Eustache Z. Labrosse, a respected Vankleek Hill general store owner, built his housing project for leasing. It was a time that saw a population shift, family farms moved into the next generation. In Vankleek Hill, retired farmers found homes and young adults found training and careers — yet they were close enough to help at planting and harvest.

There were trades and jobs at the Vankleek Hill Manufacturing Company, the Sylvester Rolling Mills, the railways, a shoe company, carriage works, hotels, retail stores and schools in Vankleek Hill. Retirees and young families needed affordable housing.

Repetitive design lowered construction costs, and a century later these 'mill houses' have proved to be sturdy. Each leased two-storey red brick home offered a decorative front porch and a drive shed at the back for stabling. The slightly angled flat roofs directed rainwater to catch-pipes for the basement cisterns. Purchase prices usually under $2,000.

In 1950, 94 Higginson sold for $5,200 plus $350 for *"one kitchen range, one Connor washing machine, one cupboard, and all the coal and wood on the premises."*

98, 102, 103 Higginson Street
Northcott Housing Development

Town merchant John Northcott also bought lots here in 1902. Labrosse and Northcott used the same building materials with differences in detail work. Northcott used wood brackets at the eaves; Labrosse used decorative brickwork.

They had the same goal: affordable housing. The house at 102 Higginson was constructed in 1902 by John Northcott for $1,200. Note the flat baluster porch railing.

The housing investment by these two men signalled a population shift at the entry to the 20th century. However, their business fates reflect another time. In the 1930s, both men were forced to declare the bankruptcies of their general stores. The *"Great Depression"* had arrived.

Photo:
Dorothy Hodge

107 Higginson Street

This home was built in 1901 for widow Kate Swails. The house seems to favour female owners, as women often owned the home during a 70 year period.

95 Higginson Street — Hall House

Barrister William S. Hall and wife Florence constructed this home in the summer of 1922. In 1943, their son Barrister William Robert Hall inherited the property. W.R. Hall Q.C. was president of the Vankleek Hill Agricultural Society 1934-1935. Today, third and fourth generations of the Hall family call this home.

The driveway was originally part of Elm Lane. There were several lanes to service the side- and back-yards of homes and businesses for deliveries, such as coal down a basement chute. Lanes gave access to stables, garages, sheds, and neighbours.

The Edwardian Classical style of this house, with its geometric foursquare massing is reflective of a country recovering from the severity of WW I, and marks the break from Victorian frivolity. It is the architectural entry into the 20th Century.

Foursquare offers simplicity and order with a balanced façade; and suggests stability with a large roof.

129 Higginson Street — Église St-Grégoire-de-Nazianze

In 1877, under the guidance of Curé Onésime Routhier of nearby l'Orignal, the first section of the Gothic Revival style church was built by contractor John Chisholm at a cost of $4,500. In 1895, contractor Mr. Fauteaux completed the north addition to the building: the sacristy, vestry and the transept at a total cost of $12,000. Also in 1895, the brick rectory was built to serve the 186 French Catholic, and 50 Irish Catholic families.

It is architecturally significant that the Catholic church occupies such a prominent position on the summit of the Hill. Of the five church buildings in Vankleek Hill, the Catholic church was one of the last to be completed. While the other four churches are located on Highway 34, High St., and Main St., the Catholic church is positioned as a sentinel within the Franco-Ontarian neighbourhood that occupies the northeast corner of Vankleek Hill.

By the end of the 19th century the French community in the area was thriving. After the War of 1812, French families from Lower Canada began to arrive to take possession of land grants for military service. From the 1850s, wage labour in Ottawa Valley logging jobs, plus available farm lands ensured the Québecois became the majority migrants here. Today, over 40% of Ontario's Franco-Ontarian population live in the Ottawa, Cornwall, Prescott-Russell region.

40-42 Derby Street — Poirier House

Col. William Higginson built this two-wing single family home in 1894, and sold it in 1900 for $3,000. In 1945, Abraham Poirier, retired owner of *The White Palace*, purchased the house for $4,000. It remained in the Poirier family until 1963 and sold for $10,500. Later divided into apartments. Rich in gingerbread: vergeboard in the eaves has applied details topped by spires; the porch running trim has sunburst brackets.

44 Derby Street — Eliza Hunter House

Col. William Higginson built this house in 1896 as an investment property. In 1897, he sold to Eliza and John Hunter, retired farmers and members of Knox Church. Eliza held title, however she died in 1900 without a will. As a result, her brother Robert Renwick became owner. Widower John Hunter paid Robert $1,000 to own his home. He remarried, and on his death in 1905 willed the house to his second wife Isabella until her death (1913); after which his niece Annie Hunter inherited. Annie sold the house for $3,000.

Styles subdued as Queen Victoria aged. This ample home is one of a few in town with a full second storey balcony.

43 Derby Street — Bancroft House

In 1895, Lester A. Bancroft bought this corner lot for $150 . David Steele was the builder. Sadly, Lester died in 1896 before the home was completed. His wife saw the house completed. In 1909, it sold for $2,051 and the owner William Dunning increased the lot size for $400.

The house compactly holds the corner with welcoming doorways on each street, and a charming decorative second storey balcony that hugs the corner.

In winter, at the back of the house, was the high school ice rink. The sound of skates and slapshots joyously rang out.

30 & 34 Derby Street — The Sister Houses

In 1867 Dr. James McIntosh purchased 1.5 acres which he divided into lots in 1875. His son James Jr. bought 2 lots for $500, and in 1877 he built the house at 34 Derby Street. A year later, Dr. James McIntosh, constructed 30 Derby as a reverse image.

A son and his father created the Sister Houses.