



THE GRANGE

D'Arcy Boulton Jr.

In 1808, D'Arcy Boulton Jr. bought park lot 13 from the estate of Solicitor General Robert Gray for £350. The property ran between modern McCaul and Beverley Streets and the new owner named his estate for the Boulton ancestral home.

D'Arcy Jr., born in England in 1785, was the eldest son of Attorney General D'Arcy Boulton. Although the son articulated in his father's law firm, he was never particularly interested in a law career. He eventually went into the dry goods and grocery business and became a successful merchant. His wife, Sarah Ann Robinson, was a sister of John Beverly Robinson and another member of York's elite.

In 1817, Boulton began work on the foundations of his new home, making it one of the four oldest buildings now standing in Toronto. Boulton designed the two-storey brick house himself. A short time later, he added another twenty acres to the Grange estate.

Like other Georgian homes of its day, the Grange was a surprisingly elegant residence, far more sophisticated than one would expect in a backwoods outpost. It was the home of a genteel and aristocratic family, a replica of those estates scattered about the English countryside. Marion McRae and Anthony Adamson wrote about such early Upper Canadian homes in *The Ancestral Roof*: "This was not a shelter for immediate physical needs but a house 'like the one at home,' the simple dignified epitome of centuries of British experience." The balance and grace of the Grange were typical of Georgian design. So, too, were the grand entry with semicircular transom, the centre hall, and the fine interior panelling. McRae and Adamson remind:

We are looking at fine houses, built for people of taste and some means at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The tractless wilderness might be close at hand, but so was the port of Montreal with its cabinet-makers and silversmiths. To it, under billowing canvas in the tall ships of England and France, came textiles and tea sets, tobacco and spices, fine crystal and dinner wares.

The "tractless wilderness" was indeed just beyond a tiny clearing surrounding the Grange. In the early days, Boulton horses drove off a bear that wandered into the pasture. Mrs. Powell wrote to her brother describing the remote location of the Grange: "Mrs. D'Arcy might as well be in Kingston, the roads cut off all communication with her." In spite of its isolation, this little oasis of civilization came to occupy a position of prominence in the social life of York and later, Toronto. The Boultons and their social circle formed the core of the Family Compact, the province's governing elite.

The carriage drive originally entered past a gatekeeper's lodge on Lot Street, next to the Powells' property. Inside the Grange, a graceful, free-standing stairway dominated the spacious entrance hall and curved up to the second floor. Midway was a large leaded glass rendition of the family crest and motto, *Dux vitae ratio*, "the guide to life is reason." The drawing rooms and dining area were finished in black walnut. Around 1843, the Boultons added a grapery, a two-storey west wing with a library, a Regency-style orangery on the east, and a spacious second-floor music room for large social gatherings. Boulton also had lacrosse and cricket fields and a race-track built on the property.

Boulton had always viewed the Grange estate as an investment to be subdivided and sold off as values rose. The first lots went in 1828; the northern half, fifty-one acres above College, went to King's College to make up the western part of the campus. Sales were somewhat slow from 1832 to 1845, probably because the Garrison Reserve west of the fort was opened to development about the same time, but the racecourse had disappeared by 1850. Some of the grandstand was later incorporated into a greenhouse.

After D'Arcy Boulton Jr. died, Sarah Ann lived on in the house. The eldest surviving son, William Henry, was a lawyer and active politician, later a member of the Legislative Assembly and Mayor of Toronto. William's legal firm amassed liabilities in the tens of



Goldwin Smith in his library at The Grange in 1909. MTRL T32416

thousands of pounds and he was regularly plagued by debts. Just before his marriage to Harriette Mann Dixon, Sarah Ann deeded the Grange and twenty acres to William. He was preparing to sell it off to satisfy creditors when his younger brother intervened and repurchased the property for his mother. Sarah Ann preserved the Grange by willing it instead to Harriette, leaving her daughter-in-law complete discretion to dispose of it as she wished upon her death.

After William died in 1874, Harriette married Professor Goldwin Smith, renowned English essayist, historian, and political commentator. The Smiths began renovations in keeping with the Grange's aristocratic air. They replaced the original wooden portico with the stone one that survives and converted the graperies into a much-used library.

Subdivision continued. Beverley Street was laid out with large and highly fashionable lots in the 1870s. Dundas was put through in 1877 after the last gardens were sold off, but the Goldwin Smiths still enjoyed an idyllic setting. Wrote Smith in his 1910 memoirs:

The Grange at Toronto, with its lawn and its old elms, is the counterpart in style and surroundings of a little English mansion. It is the only

specimen of the kind that I happen to have seen on this side of the Atlantic.... In summer, only chimes were wanting to make me fancy that I was in England.

In a letter to Sir Edmund Walker in 1903, Smith wrote, "I have often felt some compunction at having this place, in the midst of a great city, given up to the sole enjoyment of two old people." Harriette died in 1909, her husband the following year. On Walker's fortunate suggestion, Harriette left the Grange to the fledgling Art Museum of Toronto. From 1911 to 1918, the house was used for exhibitions, and then for a number of other administrative functions as the Art Gallery of Ontario grew up around it. During the early 1970s, the building was carefully restored to its original grandeur as a gentleman's house of the late 1830s.

Though the Grange is now tucked away behind the Art Gallery of Ontario, the spacious front lawn and oval carriage drive survive. Neighbouring streets that still bear their Boulton names are Grange Road, D'Arcy Street, and Henry Street.