

SMALL NEIGHBOURHOOD, LOTS OF HISTORY

By Robert Williamson HMHS Historian

Last month this Mountain Memory column demonstrated how the Bonnington Neighbourhood between Upper James and West 5th, south of Fennell and north of Mohawk, may have got its name. It was selected as a tribute to Canada's industrial heritage by the Bertram engineering family of Dundas who came from Bonnington, Scotland.



Denckert photo

This small central mountain housing survey packs a lot of history for its size but was mostly empty fields in 1946 when these children were photographed in front of #24 West 3rd. This view looking north toward Fennell Avenue shows the former Auchmar Estate built by Isaac Buchanan in 1852. It was converted to a RCAF Convalescent Hospital during World War Two. Purchased from the RCAF by the Nuns of the Sisters of Social Services for \$32,000.00, it was renovated and became a religious retreat and training centre.



R. Williamson photo

Also on West 3rd near McElroy Road West are a couple of houses with a very unusual mountain story to tell. On the left is one of several identical houses built in 1913 as residences for doctors working at the somewhat isolated psychiatric hospital on West 5th. On the right is a house built in 1946 for a newly married member of the Tidey Construction Company. Note how the house was designed to conform to the neighbourhood housing style. Carol Ann Tidey was born in this house. While attending Westmount High School she won the Hamilton "Miss 16" contest in 1964; the "Miss Dominion of Canada" contest in 1965; and ranked very high in the Florida "Miss World" and London "Miss Universe" contests. She later served a term as a School Trustee, married a dentist and moved to Toronto.

In the middle of the survey is McElroy Road West. Robert McElroy contributed to the early development of Hamilton both as a contractor and politician. He operated a stone quarry where Sam Lawrence Park is today, helped to build a section of Hamilton's Great Western Railway, was elected three times as an alderman and served a term as Mayor of Hamilton from 1862-64. His stone house stood where Canadian Tire is today on the northeast corner of Mohawk and Upper James. Why the name McElroy was not chosen for the neighbourhood instead of Bonnington is any one's guess.

Footnote

I taught Carol Ann Tidey in Grade 11 Geography at Westmount Secondary School in 1964.

