



THE HERMITAGE

HAMILTON REGION

CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

cover: "The Hermitage", watercolour and ink by Gerald Wright, 1932

THE HERMITAGE

Hamilton Region
Conservation Authority

PROLOGUE

In 1974 a summer employee of the Hamilton Region Conservation Authority, Mr. Paul Grimwood, proposed the use of The Hermitage as an historical interpretation facility. With the full blessing of the Conservation Authority, Mr. Grimwood was asked to undertake the research of The Hermitage and the Leith family and to prepare the lodge as an interpretive museum.

It is to the credit of Mr. Paul Grimwood and the other members of his study team, Mr. Craig Sims and Miss Christina Waterston that The Hermitage lodge is now, as the Gatehouse Museum, a functioning interpretive centre. Since 1975, this museum has become a fascinating and popular focal point for the interpretation of the Scottish estate built in Canada West in 1855.

This booklet presents the essence of diligent research. The study team owes a great deal to the surviving members of the Leith family, faculty members of the University of Edinburgh, the late Mr. B. N. Simpson, Jr., Miss E. Farmer and many others for their help and support. Thanks are also due to Mrs. Pat Green for the sketches in this booklet. The Hamilton Region Conservation Authority and the thousands of visitors to the Gatehouse Museum are thankful to the three young people, Paul, Craig, and Christina who so carefully reconstructed for all, the life and times of the Leiths and their beloved Hermitage.

The assistance and support of the members of the Historic Sites Advisory Board of the Hamilton Region Conservation Authority, in particular, Mr. Charles Hobbs, in the establishment of the museum is also gratefully acknowledged.

SYNOPSIS

- 1793 Land deeded by the Crown to Henry Chrysler.
- 1826 The Reverend George Sheed builds a frame manse on the land.
- 1833 Otto Ives purchases the land and names it The Hermitage.
- 1855 The Hermitage purchased by George Leith. Mansion planned, park laid out.
- 1902 Property purchased by Alma Dick-Lauder, fifth child of George Leith.
- 1934 Mansion destroyed by fire, October 10.
- 1948 Property sold out of the family.
- 1972 125 acres of the estate purchased by Hamilton Region Conservation Authority.
- 1975 The Lodge museum opened to the public.

THE HERMITAGE

" . . . In short, I have come to the conclusion not to settle more than a dozen or so miles from Toronto or Hamilton as they offer advantages of education, society, market, and medical men, which no other part of the country is likely to do for some time . . . " George Leith, May, 1853.

The outcome of George Leith's determination to settle near Hamilton was an estate called "The Hermitage", in Ancaster. It was a remarkable property in every way, but then, George and Eleanor Leith were very unusual settlers.

The Leith Family

George Leith was born on January 26, 1812, the second son of Major-General Sir George Alexander William Leith, Baronet, Member of Parliament, Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath, and Assistant Adjutant-General of the British Forces in Ireland.

Major-General Leith had come from an old family in Aberdeen, Scotland. The army was a career for most of the family; his grandfather, Alexander Leith was slain, commanding artillery at the siege of Havanna in 1763. His father, Alexander Charles Leith was made a Baronet (a type of hereditary knight) in 1775.

Major-General Leith, also had an interesting military career, seeing much of the Orient. He was in Madras, India by 1786 and served under Lord Cornwallis at the siege of Seringapatam, a battle fought by British forces in an attempt to consolidate their holdings in Southern India. He was later appointed the first Governor of Prince of Wales Island (Penang), a British outpost on the west coast of Malaya.

Sir George Leith was appointed Assistant Adjutant-General of the British Forces in Ireland in 1806. Their second son, George Gordon Browne, was born six years later. At twenty-two years of age, young George decided to come to Canada

to settle. After a stormy crossing, he eventually found congenial company in Toronto, where he called on the Governor, Sir John Colborne, before setting off for Hamilton by steamer.



George Leith about 1860

Hamilton was a small town, with the business district located at King and James Streets, far away from the residential north end by the harbour. Its location at the head of Lake Ontario offered advantages to the settler that would be hard to find elsewhere. Leith was convinced that the area was admirably suited to a settler of his upper class background. In the spring of 1835, he returned to Scotland to marry Jemima Ramsay. After a round of social calls, the couple set sail for Canada. They arrived after a two month voyage, and registered at Burley's Hotel, Hamilton.

Leith soon bought a 400 acre farm in Binbrook Township, near the present hamlet of Woodburn. The land cost him £1,000. The purchase price included a log house, a yoke of oxen, three cows, two heifers, four calves, a mare and colt, five pigs and various farm implements.

He soon had additions built around the log cabin. There were cellars for wine, a kitchen, and a room for Jemima. An ice house, stable, and "ditch-fence" were constructed. The farm was named Craigleith in 1837.

By his own admission, he was the largest landholder and

most prominent man in the district. When he had leisure time, he read French or Spanish, or the latest British publications. He also spent much time drawing local scenery. The generous allowance from home allowed the couple to travel extensively.

In 1842, Major-General Leith, Lady Leith, and George's older brother, Alexander died in quick succession. Although the title and lands in Scotland were inherited by Alexander's young son (George Hector), George and Jemima hurried home to look after their interests in the wealthy estate. Jemima died at sea on the voyage.

In September the next year, George married a member of one of the most prominent Edinburgh families, Eleanor Ferrier (1815-1900) of York Place, Edinburgh. Her father, John Ferrier, was a Writer to the Signet, (roughly corresponding to a barrister) and was concerned with many new building projects in Edinburgh. Needless to say, he was quite wealthy.



Eleanor Leith about 1852

Eleanor's aunt, Susan Ferrier, became one of the most famous authoresses in the country. Her novels *Marriage*, *The Inheritance*, and *Destiny*, were financially successful and very popular. Her circle of friends included famous authors of the time, nobility, and even the Lord Chancellor of England.

Having grown up in this society, the new Mrs. George Leith's knowledge of current trends in Scotland was great. When it came to planning a house or gardens, it would be her knowledge of these important matters that would mold the shape of a property.

For the next six years, the couple spent their time waiting for the disposal of Major-General Leith's estate. They lived in comfort in a large country house around Edinburgh. Three daughters were born to them—Margaret in 1844, Jemima in 1846, Charlotte in 1849.

In 1849, a decision was reached with Major-General Leith's estate. George received just over £11,000. Wisely invested, they would have no money problems for the rest of their lives.

In May of 1850, they moved to Bowland Castle in Midlothian County, Scotland. The time here was very happy for the family. A son, Alexander Henry, was born in 1852 and the servants were numerous—housekeeper, cook, three nursery servants, laundrymaid, tablemaid, housemaid, dairymaid, groom, gardener, forester, labourer, two dressmakers, and a coachman.

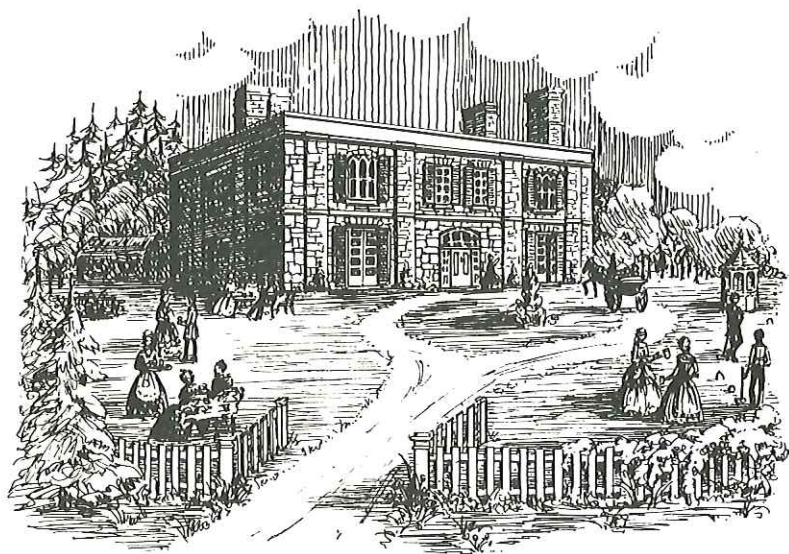
The following spring George Leith left for Canada to look for more land. He found much changed—Hamilton was becoming an industrial city. Wholesale merchants had downtown warehouses stocked with Scotch whiskey, oriental silks, and imported foods. The beginnings of the steel industry and railroad were bringing fortunes to tradesmen, and the wealthy built enormous stone gothic "villas" in the city's south end. The population had doubled within the decade and would expand further. By September of 1853, he had viewed The Hermitage lands. Arrangements were soon made to purchase the property from the owners, then living in England.

The lands had originally been settled in 1826 by the Reverend George Sheed, Ancaster's first Presbyterian minister. He built a frame manse near the stream that ran through the property. Later, the land belonged to Otto Ives, a retired British officer. Mr. Ives had married a Greek woman who

brought her sister with her to Upper Canada. A friend of Mr. Ives fell in love with Mrs. Ives' sister. When she did not return his affections, he hanged himself from a tree on the property. His body was buried at the crossroads of Lover's Lane and Sulphur Springs Road. Romantic stories say that he can be heard calling at night for his lost love.

Upon George Leith's return to Scotland, the final decision to move to the New World was made. Much time was spent packing for this tremendous move. Furniture, silver, paintings, tableware, and books were part of their cargo. They arrived in Hamilton in September of 1854, and lived in a home at the corner of James and Vine Streets.

The fifth and last child, Eleanor Alma, was born in October, 1855, in Hamilton. When The Hermitage mansion was completed, it was used basically as a summer home. Most winters were spent in Hamilton, or even in Scotland.



The Hermitage as it might have looked, shortly after it was completed.

Note the flat roof, and lack of verandahs or additions.

The friends of the Leiths, in Canada, all had a common bond—they were all British, Church of England, and Conservative. Most of them lived as country “squires” near Ancaster and formed a pleasure-loving society where balls and suppers for a hundred people were not uncommon.

Leith’s son, Alexander, whose letters were a prime source of information on many family matters, eventually was sent to join the British navy in 1865 at 13 years—not an unusual age at that time. He served on several ships, notably H.M.S. Royal Alfred. He visited and sketched Bermuda during his years in the navy.

The daughters in the family were taught by governesses and sent to finishing schools. The three older girls married well and moved away. The youngest daughter, Eleanor Alma, befriended a family acquaintance who visited The Hermitage in the 1870’s. He was Stair Dick-Lauder, son of Sir John Dick-Lauder, Baronet. His family home was “Fountainhall” near Edinburgh. After a year of farming, Stair took to driving the Ancaster-Hamilton stagecoach. He later moved into the Andruss house, “The Poplars” formerly located on the site of the new telephone exchange in Ancaster.

He must have been taken by Alma Leith as they exchanged letters for over a year and married in Hamilton against her parent’s wishes, in December, 1878. Three years later, the



Alma Leith in riding costume, 1888

couple departed on a two year wedding trip to visit family and friends in Britain. The Dick-Lauders accomplished a good deal of visiting, generally spending a month or more with each friend.

After the overseas trip, the Dick-Lauders moved back to "The Poplars" in Ancaster, but renamed the home "Fountainhall" after Stair's family home in Scotland. It was quite a comfortable place—pale green clapboard, with two conservatories, a Japanese garden, a large picture gallery or ballroom, a drawing room with a marble fireplace, and out back a henhouse and barn. This house was demolished during the summer of 1976.

At some time in the 1880's, the Dick-Lauders separated; Stair took a position as Secretary of the Albany Club in Toronto.

In the meantime, Mr. & Mrs. George Leith continued to spend their summers in Ancaster and winters in Hamilton. In the winter of 1886, lodgings were taken at 56 John Street North. It was here that George Leith died of a congested lung on January 2nd, 1887.



Alexander Henry Leith (1852-1896)
and his wife, Mary

With the master dead, much of the impetus behind the estate disappeared. During the summer of 1887, Alexander Leith and his wife Mary moved into The Hermitage with

Mrs. George Leith, but the property was not well tended. In 1894, the family left for Bermuda to winter there with their two daughters, Eleanor Marjorie and Mary Penelope. Alexander died very young in 1896. By the time Mrs. George Leith died in 1900, the property had deteriorated even more.

In 1897, Mrs. Dick-Lauder's literary efforts were recognized with the publication of *Wentworth Landmarks*. The book was a collection of articles, many of which were written by Alma Dick-Lauder. Her stories about Ancaster's past are fascinating.

In 1902, Alma Dick-Lauder bought *The Hermitage* from other surviving members of the family for \$5,500.00. She hoped to run the 162 acre estate herself or, if necessary, employ a hired man. Her grand plans included raising short-horns and feeding them on the splendid grass lands. Money could be made from selling timber, keeping hens, running the garden, and selling stone from the quarry. Money would be safe in *The Hermitage*; the plans could not possibly fail.

Unfortunately, none of these grand plans materialized. The verandah fell off the house, and the ornamental trees were allowed to die. The park became overgrown. She also allowed animals to inhabit the reception rooms. Not only were there cats and dogs but also sheep, chickens, cows, and horses.

Many people remember having tea at *The Hermitage*, with horses and cows wandering in and out at will. Cats were guests at these teas also—drinking from the cream jug!

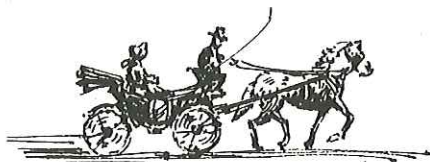
Mrs. Lauder's favourite horse was named *Me Too*, and had Arabian ancestry. When she was younger, Mrs. Lauder was one of the finest riders in Canada, always of course, riding side-saddle. She usually kept *Me Too* tied to the mulberry tree in the front yard. When he died, he was buried underneath the tree.

The Hermitage was completely destroyed by fire on October 10th, 1934. During a luncheon it was discovered that the second floor was ablaze. There was no chance of saving the house. While one guest ran to phone for the fire

department, neighbours and friends worked to save the furnishings. Because of their quick work, the Raeburn portrait, the silver, china, books, Chippendale desk, and other valuables were rescued. The Ancaster fire department was hampered by not having a long enough hose or an adequate water supply with which to fight the fire. The fire had started apparently as a result of a spark from one of the chimneys alighting the roof.

After the fire, a friend loaned Mrs. Lauder a tent in which she stayed during the next several weeks until a new home could be finished for her. This was built inside the walls of the mansion and here she lived until her death in 1942, tended by a manservant and surrounded by her ancestral possessions.

In her will she left her estate to relatives and was especially anxious for her animals. Her death marked the end of the Leith influence on this gracious property.



The Hermitage Park and Buildings

The Entrance — The entrance to The Hermitage was carefully planned to be seen on the bend of the road from Ancaster. A lodge was an usual feature of every estate in Britain. It provided a suitable entrance and also housing for workers. There were originally double gates between the walls which were opened to admit visitors. The paisley-shaped flower beds are taken from the 1859 planting plan for Woodend, now the head office of the Hamilton Region Conservation Authority, and reflect the popular “gardenesque” style of the times.

The Lodge Cottage — The lodge cottage was the home of Leith’s gardener and family—there were five people living in this building in 1861. In later years, Penelope Hutchison (1887-1974), daughter of Alexander Leith, lived here until the Lodge burned in 1971. The building consisted originally of two rooms with a small kitchen added to the rear. The cottage was renovated in 1974 and officially opened to the public as the Gatehouse Museum in 1975.

The original function of the small stone building behind the lodge cottage, now used as a theatre, is not known. Since 1900 it was used as both a laundry and a guest house. However; at one time, it likely provided stabling for livestock. Behind this building is located the remains of the stone privy.

The Avenue and Parkland — The path from the lodge to the mansion ruins follows the route of the avenue, or carriage drive, for most of the way. It is difficult to appreciate George Leith’s planned park in its present wilderness state, but areas of older forest, which would have formed part of the fabric of the park, are easy to see. The open areas, once pastured by sheep, are now occupied by pine plantations or scrub growth. The parkland was once about forty acres in extent. Leith relied on the landscape gardening principles of Humphrey Repton, a popular English designer, in laying out these



The Hermitage park, about 1905

grounds. As one rounds the turn of the avenue with the house in front to the east, one stands under oaks at least three hundred years of age which surely formed part of the Leith designed parkscape.

The Hermitage Mansion – (Exterior)

Even in ruins, the house seems as permanent as it ever was. Built by Scottish masons who quarried the stone on the property, the home cost £2,000 and likely took two years to construct. The fire of October, 1934, caused complete destruction of all the wooden parts of the building.

Tall, decorative double chimneys, long since vanished, served the fireplaces in the rooms below. Note the location of the French windows downstairs which opened directly to the lawn and the attractive, roundheaded Italian windows above them. All windows on the house were originally shuttered.

The exterior of The Hermitage was designed to be compatible with the landscaped park—regular and pleasing, with a fine overall design.

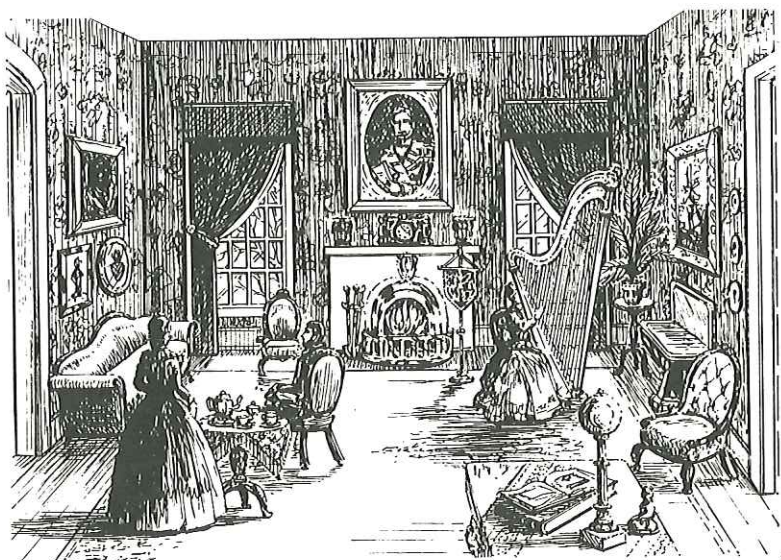
The Hermitage Mansion — (Interior)

Entrance Hall — A photograph of the spacious hall, taken about 1915 or 1920, shows it to be divided midway by an arch with a stairway running perpendicular to its length. The entrance hall contained a variety of objects which would be of interest to visitors. In the photograph one can see a “Gothic” hall chair, two matching hall chairs, a grandfather clock, and a curious carved desk on the left containing a “secret” drawer.



The Entrance Hall circa 1915.

Drawing Room — From the hall a housemaid would show a caller into the drawing room on the right. This room was the most elegant in the house. A French window, facing south, gave access to the lawn, and a marble fireplace was centred between the two narrow windows. Completing the heating of the room was a hot air duct from the “furnace” in the basement. The furnishings of the room were brought from Scotland, and included a harp and a square piano. Hanging on the walls were a portrait of Major-General Leith by Sir Henry Raeburn, sketches by William Hogarth and a crayon study of Mrs. Leith and her three daughters, by James Archer.



The Drawing Room circa 1880.

Library — Connected to the drawing room by double doors was the morning room and library. This apartment was probably used for breakfast and for business activities such as balancing household and estate accounts, receiving servants and giving them instruction, or general work and study. It also contained the valuable library collected by the Leiths with many first editions on the shelves, and works of British, French, Italian, and Spanish authors. Here stood George Leith's massive oak desk and Mrs. Leith's elegant desk of mahogany, in the Chinese Chippendale style.

Dining Room — The dining room was to the left of the front door and was the same size as the drawing room. There was a large wooden fireplace in the centre of the north wall. The silver was massive sterling, imprinted with the Leith coat of arms. The best china service was that which was presented to Major-General Leith in Penang in 1805 by the King of Burma.

Kitchen Apartments — A door to the west of the fireplace led to the kitchen apartments. The kitchen contained a stove

by 1866. There were likely rooms for china and food storage, rooms for servant's use and a scullery, but nothing is really known about these. The addition on the west, added about 1860, was the actual cooking area.

A flight of steps led down to the cellar. One room (a "plenum chamber") contained a stove. The stove heated the air in the room, which rose via wooden ducts to heat the main rooms upstairs. The cellar probably held preserves of fruit, vegetables, and meat. The Leith's supply of meat for those winters that they chose to spend in the country might have been similar to their friends, the Whytes and Gourlays of Barton Lodge, Hamilton.

"Mr. Whyte keeps all his meat in a stone cellar during the winter, without actually freezing it. We will have two oxen, eight or ten sheep killed and a certain number of pigs and smaller animals hung in the cellar",

"Western Wanderings"

J.H.G. Kingston, 1854.

Wine was also purchased in barrels to be decanted into bottles. Port is constantly mentioned in George Leith's diaries.

Second Floor — On the second floor were the bedrooms. Nothing is known about them except that they all contained fireplaces. The floor plan shows a conjectural idea making the best use of downstairs support walls and upstairs windows and fireplaces. Bedrooms for the numerous servants were located on both floors at the back of the house.

There was a full attic in the house lit by dormer windows and from the attic there was some way of access to a walk-around on the top of the roof.

Nursery — A nursery for the children was connected to the back of the house by a passageway. Here the governess taught the various generations of Leith children. It is possible that the younger children slept there also.

The Hermitage Mansion — Attendant Buildings

Woodshed/Coach House — A great many outbuildings were necessary to serve a 19th century villa. At The Hermitage, these were located to the north and west of the house. On the back wall, just north of the kitchen addition, was a courtyard. The entrance into the woodshed off the courtyard was by an archway. The woodshed also contained the privies, likely used only by servants. On the north end of the building was the coach house. An old servant once described the landau which the family owned as an elegant equipage, slung on the best springs, with two seats facing each other. There was a seat at the front for a coachman and a step at the back for a footman. It was pulled by two horses or four high-stepping hackney ponies.

Hen House — Directly north of the coach house was a hen house, a small building only 17 by 25 feet. We are fortunate in having a description of The Hermitage poultry in 1866 written by Alma Leith, aged eleven years:

"... We have great advantages in the way of raising poultry, our hens having a good run in two meadows, a small orchard, a drying green, yard and a fine wood. The wood however is rather objectionable as it is rather frequented with foxes, who have more than once made inroads on my hen house. . ."

Laundry and Wash-House — The laundry and wash-house stand to the north of the mansion on the far side of the yard. An architectural pattern book explains why:

"a wash-house and laundry are almost indispensable, either attached . . . or forming a separate building placed a short distance away from the house. This latter arrangement is sometimes recommended, especially when the house is of such small size as to render it possible for the objectionable odours

from the wash tubs to penetrate to the public apartments."

W. & G. Audsley, 1848

The east room of this building was fitted with a washing bench, large square tubs and a boiler for clothes. A cistern in the floor of this room, which collected rain from the roof, provided water for washing the clothes. The west room in the building was the laundry, used for drying and pressing clothes. There would be an ironing table in the light of the windows and a stove for heating the irons.

Details still to be seen in the ruined building include a hole in the dividing wall for a stove pipe; ventilators in the east end wall to serve as steam outlets; a stone ledge for floor joists to sit on; and the remains of the cistern with a vaulted stone roof.

Stables — The frame outbuildings were probably later additions to the original building plan. The stable was about seventy feet to the west of the mansion and was not a large building. The estate had eight horses in 1861 and it is likely that four of them lived in this stable—two carriage horses, a riding horse for George Leith and a mare for ladies or children to ride.

Ice House — The ice house was a small frame building between the stable and the mansion. It existed in the late 1860's, but did not last for too many years into the 20th century. As its name implies, it was used to store ice for summer use.

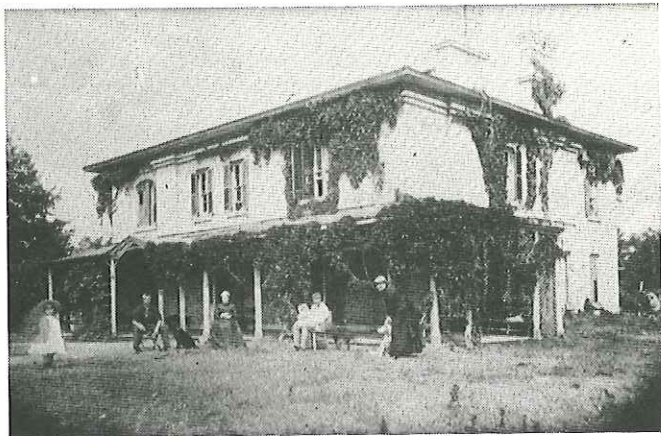
Belvedere — Southeast of the house near the sunken garden and on the edge of the hill was the belvedere, or summer house. This would command a view of the gardens and also a beautiful vista over much of the grounds.

The Hermitage Farm

The Hermitage Farm is one half mile east of the mansion and outbuildings, and is in private ownership. It consisted of a

two storey stone farmhouse, a stone root house, a stone hay barn and another large barn which was demolished in the 1920's or 1930's. It is not known when the complex was developed as the buildings are not shown in any of the census, but tenants worked for George Leith from the earliest days.

In Leith's time, a text in stone hung in the barn "O ye sheep and cattle, bless ye the Lord".



The Hermitage circa 1890.

Stone Walls — In the south-east corner of The Hermitage property is a very long stone wall, obviously well built. It was originally mortared together. The function of this wall is not known as it does not mark the estate boundary. It was built in 1859.

Deerspring

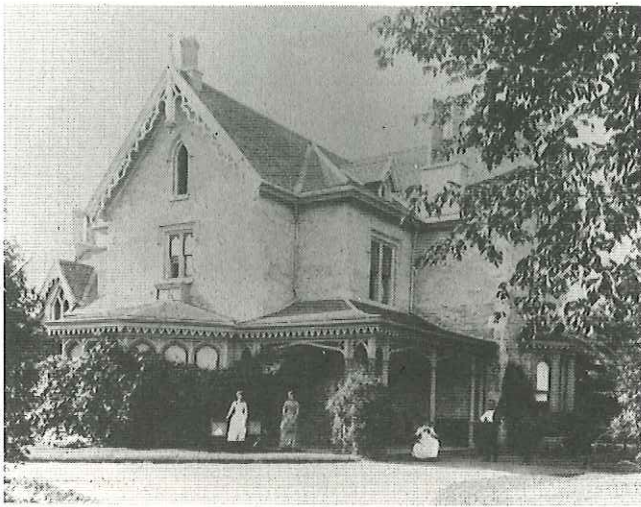
Deerspring was a house, supposedly built by George Leith for Jemima Leith and her husband, Matthew Wright, as a wedding present. They were married on November 3rd, 1865. Deerspring was a very large two and one-half storey brick house in a Gothic Revival style. It had eighteen rooms and was an elegant home for a young couple. Also connected with Deerspring was a bath house which used sulphur water.

Shortly after it was built, the house was put up for sale. A family member said:

"Is Deerspring still for sale? I hope some nice person will buy, not some abominable Yankee, such with whom it will be impossible to associate."

1868

In 1870, Deerspring was sold to John Ferguson of Huron County. Ten years later, it was sold to Richard A. Smith who converted it into the Sulphur Springs Spa, catering to those who wished to take the waters. Smith either used the Leith bath house or built his own. These buildings were located half way down the hill to the Spring. The hotel burned on October 27th, 1900. A new house was built on the site after the fire. It is privately owned.



Deerspring in 1895

HISTORIC MANSION FALLS PREY TO CONFLAGRATION

Home of Mrs. Alma Dick
Lauder Burns

NEAR MINERAL SPRINGS

Part of Priceless Con-
tents Destroyed

The Hermitage, historic mansion on the Mineral Springs road, surrounded by its acres of park land, framed in a setting of ancient oaks, to-day lies a smoking mass of ruins. Fire swept the structure, owned by Mrs. Alma Dick Lauder, shortly after noon and left it practically destroyed, notwithstanding the efforts of the Ancaster fire department, which responded to the call for assistance.

Flames Unchecked

The flames, under impetus by a strong breeze, swept through the structure, battenning on time-dried wainscotting and blazing through rooms, which many years ago, saw the "county" entertained.

The house, the old Leith homestead, stands in gracefully sloping park lands in the centre of a farm, guarded by an old stone fence at the entrance gates, from which the house is reached by a winding driveway. Built about 55 years ago of native limestone, with the dignified architecture employed by the pioneers of the district, the dwelling was well known through the countryside, as is Mrs. Lauder, its occupant for many years past.

Although of a retiring disposition, Mrs. Lauder is very well known in the district and she is a connection of many of the older families in the Ancaster and Hamilton area.

Inestimable Loss

Lost in the fire were priceless heirlooms, furniture, first editions and engravings, which had been in the family for generations. Despite the efforts of the household, assisted by neighbours and members of the Ancaster Department, little was saved, as the dried timbers fed the flames, which spread with great rapidity.

The fire was thought to have started from a spark from one of the chimneys lighting on paper (Continued on page 15.)

A luncheon party was in progress when the fire broke out, with Mrs. Sheriff Hubbard, Toronto; Mrs. Sanford Carpenter, Mrs. Fred Hutchison and Mrs. T. G. Anderson as guests. It was Mrs. Anderson who first heard a crackling sound, and went upstairs to investigate. She discovered that the whole top floor of the house was a seething mass of flames.

Some Valuables Saved

The Ancaster fire department was called immediately and responded rapidly. When the firemen arrived, however, the whole upper storey of the house was in flames, and all the contents of the second floor had been ignited. So sturdy was the construction of the building, however, the flames were slow in breaking through to the ground floor, and it was possible for the firemen to clear this part of all furniture and valuables.

Col. Clifford Hurt

Colonel E. W. Clifford, member of the Ancaster volunteer fire brigade, suffered a nasty head injury when he was struck by a falling fragment of glass. The hurt was not a serious one, however.

An irreparable loss to the community and to the literary world has been suffered in the burning at the Hermitage of some original Hogarth and Archer sketches. These were highly prized by the family, in whose keeping they have remained for many years. There were, too, many priceless books from the Leith library, and furniture brought out from the family estates in Scotland.

The Hermitage has been for years an Ancaster landmark. A beautiful old stone mansion, it was set back in rolling park land at the head of the Sulphur Springs hill. The estate comprises many acres of fine bush and fertile field. It has been the homestead of the Leith family for many years.

Mrs. Alma Dick-Lauder, the present owner and tenant of the Hermitage, is the youngest daughter of George Gordon Browne Leith, from whom she inherited the estate. Her grandfather was Major-General Sir George Leith, Bart., K.C.B.

EPILOGUE

A few years after Mrs. Dick-Lauder's death, The Hermitage was sold out of the family. The property was logged extensively and many of the fine trees were removed. During the following years, the park and farm were reforested, with the result that the land now bears little resemblance to the carefully planned grounds created by George Leith.

The Hamilton Region Conservation Authority purchased a portion of the estate in 1972. The Hermitage mansion and outbuilding ruins were repointed and capped between 1972 and 1975 to prevent further deterioration.

THE GATEHOUSE MUSEUM

In 1974, many objects were discovered during an excavation of the mansion cellars. A parian bust of John Wilson, Mrs. Leith's uncle, was found beneath the dining room. A great number of heavy wine bottles indicated the presence of a wine cellar—port was a favourite wine. The flow-blue pottery was undoubtedly part of the service used by servants or by the children in the nursery, being of an inferior grade to that which would have formed the service in the main dining room.

These and other objects were placed in the museum when it opened in June, 1975. The splendid model of The Hermitage mansion and its outbuildings was built by Mr. Craig Sims. It portrays The Hermitage as it was in the period 1860-1880.

In addition, a slide-sound presentation, utilizing many of the old photographs of the estate and of the Leith family is available at the Museum.

The Gatehouse Museum is open to the public every weekend from Victoria Day through to and including Thanksgiving Day between the hours of 12:00 noon and 6:00 p.m.