MUNICIPALITY OF PORT HOPE

HERITAGE DESIGNATION

Address: 21 Dorset Street East

Known as: John David Smith House (The Bluestone)

Architectural Style: Neo-Classic

Date Built: Circa 1834 (RESTORED)

Date Designated: September 30, 1985 to By-Law No. 62/85, SCHEDULE B-2

Lot Description: PT 46



Architectural Description

The two storey house is rectangular in plan and measures 53' x 37'. The basement is of random rubble and the four end chimneys are brick. The style of the house is Greek Revival, which was, then, at the height of its popularity in New England and northern New York State. Although the symmetry and the rectangular plan are typical of the Georgian style, much of the exterior and interior detail is definitely Greek in derivation. The house is well-proportioned and balanced with nine windows on the main and rear facades and six windows on the west end (one false).

All the windows are six over six double hung sashes. A small semi-circular radiating fan window punctuates the west end under the gable. The structure has a medium pitched gable roof with returned eaves on the gable ends, a bracketed cornice, and a moulded architrave under the eave. The focal point of each of the front and rear facades is the porch with Ionic fluted pillars, which provides an element of simple yet imposing grandeur. The recessed, broad, six panel doors of both entrances are accompanied by fluted pilasters, sidelights with fine tracery, and semi-elliptical fan transom. The surrounding trim (of red sandstone painted white) is moulded and carved with classical motifs.

The interior features decorated with classical designs include the mantelpieces. In the upstairs bedroom the carved mantelpiece is supported by two fluted Doric pillars. The mantelpieces in the parlours are known to have come from Rochester. The curved staircase in the central hall and the skilled interior woodwork, panelled doors with moulded surrounds and deep moulded baseboards are notable features. The trim surrounding the sliding doors between the windows on the west end (one false).

Double drawing rooms consists of fluted Ionic pilasters with rosettes above in square boxes. Above the doors is a heavy elaborate plaster moulding of a half wreath. The ornamental plasterwork throughout the house and particularly in the upstairs northeast chamber room, and the several patterns of ceiling medallions are also remarkable.

Historical Abstract

John David Smith (1786-1849), son of Elias Smith (1736-1820) built the Bluestone in 1834. Elias Smith was a United Empire Loyalist who settled in the area in 1797 and laid out Smith's Creek, the village that became Port Hope. In addition to establishing the first mills in Port Hope, his business enterprises included being involved in the shipping trade between Montreal and American markets. He is also acknowledged as the first owner of a distillery in Port Hope in 1802.

John David was a prominent citizen of the Town and held the offices of Magistrate and member of the Legislative Assembly (1829). In addition to his involvement in public affairs, he was a merchant and mill owner. Susan Hawkins, his first wife with whom he had ten children, died in 1832.

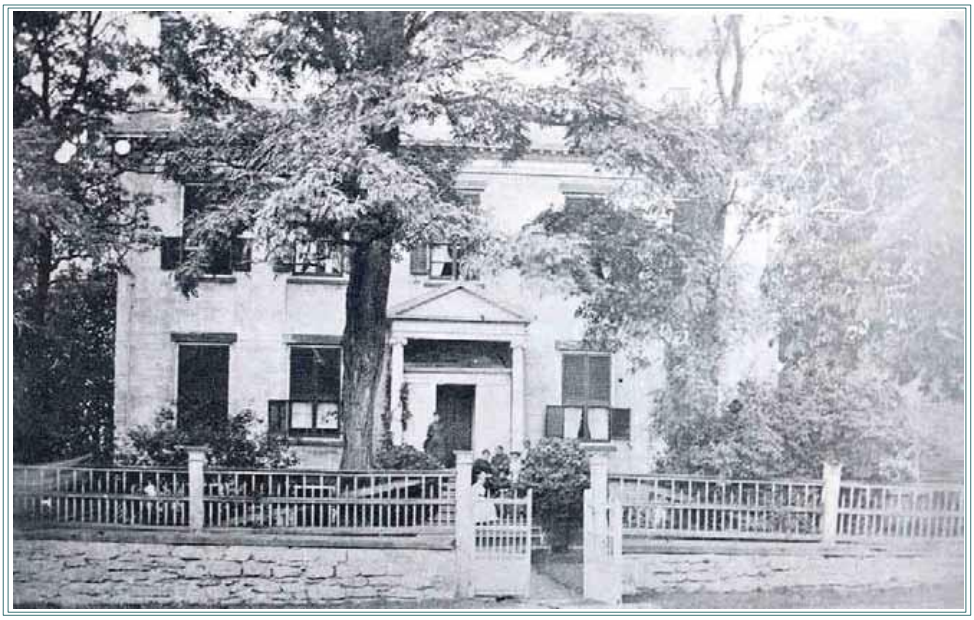
The Bluestone was built on the occasion of J.D. Smith's second marriage to Augusta Louisa Woodworth (1813-1907) with whom he had four children. Many of John David Smith's children would rise to prominence in local politics and business in the ensuing decades.

Augusta Louisa Smith was born in Bridgewater, Oneida County, New York in 1813. The strong American-influenced architectural style and interior details such as the mantelpieces that were made in Rochester are often attributed to John David's second wife's background.

Renowned as one of Upper Canada's premier early houses, it was a stylistic tour de force in 1834, combining a symmetrical Georgian shell with Greek Revival details including the Ionic-columned porch, red sandstone sills and lintels, large six-over-six windows, and boldly handled cornice. The front and back facades are virtually identical, one facing the street, the other facing the lake. The method of construction was also unique; walls were covered in blue stucco then ruled to resemble an ashlar surface. The blue colour of the stucco provided the source of the house name, the Bluestone.

At the time of his death in 1849, John David Smith had acquired vast real estate holdings not only in Port Hope but also in nearby townships. The family's mill and shipping interests had been maintained and prospered, although John David's mercantile and distillery business had been sold.

Augusta Woodworth Smith remained at the Bluestone until her death in 1907, outliving her stepchildren and two of her own. The house remained in the Smith family until 1950. Like so many of the large residences in Port Hope, the house was briefly converted for apartment use and had several owners until the late 1970's. The house needed extensive repair and exterior restoration that included replacement of the stucc and cedar roof, rebuilding the chimneys, and authentically restoring the cornice gutter. The kitchen and garage wing were added as new additions.



A view of the Bluestone enclosed behind a fence with sectional shutters both open and closed and with a seasonal entrance enclosure under the front porch.

