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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON ARCHITECT OF CROWICK HOUSE (WILLIAM MCCROW)

INTRODUCTION

A substantial amount of time has been spent on additional research in relation to the above. Further information has been uncovered on the architect of Crowick House (William McCrow) in order to:

- 1) Respond to Design Review Panel (DRP) and Local Planning Authority (LPA) comments regarding the benefits of having more information William McCrow and other houses designed by him;
- 2) Explore whether a website created as part of the relocation of Crowick House could act as a resource for information on the architect and whether that information exists; and,
- 3) On the basis of above, provide further information to demonstrate very special circumstances for the house to be rebuilt.

Additional information has been sourced by:

- Additional internet research of articles
- Contact with local authorities in Canada
- Contact with Paris Museum and Historical Society. William McCrow was part of the community
- Desktop review of online mapping services and other resources.

We provide more information below on further information found.

- Firstly the following article was found which provides references to Bill McCrow's work as an architect of other houses. The article is based on a Canadian broadcaster called Lister Sinclair and interestingly notes that:

*"Soon after settling in Toronto, Mr. Sinclair and wife, Alice, whom he had met at UBC, became part of an artist's community in **Kleinberg**, north of Toronto. The community was called **Windrush** and the houses were designed by **Bill McCrow** who was a set designer at the CBC," said Peter Sinclair, a technology entrepreneur who is his son from his first marriage."*

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/lister-sinclair/article20415556/>

- The following article provides additional information about the settlement of Kleinberg / Windrush and references that:

In the 1940s Pierre Berton, the writer and broadcaster, settled here with a group of CBC types, tucking 10 Frank Lloyd Wright-inspired homes into the verdant valleys in a kind of arts colony they called Windrush. Promoting the town's Binder Twine Festival in 1968, Mr. Berton noted that, "we still seek the countryside with nostalgia, affection and longing."

<http://nationalpost.com/news/canada/in-kleinburg-legacy-might-not-be-enough>

- The City of Vaughan has a KLEINBURG-NASHVILLE HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT STUDY AND PLAN. On that basis contact was made with the City of Vaughan Council.
- Shelby Blundell - Cultural Heritage Coordinator at City of Vaughan Council wrote back stating:

"This is a very interesting research request, and I'm glad you reached out to the City of Vaughan. The Windrush Co-op is located within the Kleinburg-Nashville Heritage Conservation District area, and is therefore designated under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act. The Plan itself does speak specifically about this area on page 39, but unfortunately does not credit William (Bill) McCrow. I am going to look through all the materials we have in regards to this area for any mention of this architect and I will get back to you as soon as possible.

In the meantime, I would suggest speaking with our Archives department (archives@vaughan.ca) as they may have more information as well. I will continue to research this but I thought I would let you know to reach out to Archives as well as this seems like a time sensitive matter"

- Contact was then made with the City of Vaughan Archives who wrote back stating:

"Thank you for contacting the City of Vaughan Archives regarding your interesting research enquiry. I have had a chance to look through our collection and unfortunately we don't have a lot of material on William (Bill) McCrow or his involvement with the development/building of Windrush Properties. I was able to find a few items which I hope will be of use to you – please find the following attached:

- *McCrow Agreement re: Windrush Properties, December 30th, 1952*
- *Land transfer of McCrow property – June 3rd, 1968 (according to this, they sold their Windrush property around 1953)*
- *Lawyer Letter re: McCrow's Windrush Property – October 1st, 1969*
- *Lawyer Letter re: McCrow's lack of response – February 27th, 1970*
- *Excerpt from "WEEKEND Picture Magazine" about McCrow and Windrush – March 1, 1952*

(NB. All of these documents are attached and it is specifically the WEEKEND Picture Magazine which is of relevance.)

In terms of Windrush Properties, the Archives does have two boxes in our collection relating to this area, however I am not sure if any of the material is of value to your research request. These materials were donated by Janet Berton in 2001 and include financial statements over the years, various receipts, tax documents, insurance documents and information pertaining to the reconstruction of the Windrush Bridge. I was not able to find any architectural drawings or details regarding any of the homes in the area or any information on McCrow (other than the legal documents attached). If you think any of the items in these boxes that I mentioned may be of use, please let me know and I would be happy to scan anything you think is of value.

Moving forward, you may also wish to reach out to the Paris Ontario Museum and Historical Society, as I was able to find one other article online which connects a "Bill McCrow" with the community of Paris:
<http://www.parisstaronline.com/2010/12/23/life-of-jack-of-all-trades-on-display-at-paris-museum>

The article mentions that some of McCrow's materials were donated here, so it may be worth reaching out to this museum and historical society as well to see if they have any additional information for your project:
<http://theparismuseum.com/contact.php#loaded>

- Contact has been made with the Paris Ontario Museum and Historical Society. Ongoing dialogue has been had with the museum and historical society. Most recent correspondence from Margaret Deans

– I've just had a look at the McCrow fonds – we have 5 “banker” sized boxes... I've opened the one labelled architecture. There are two binders with photos of the Windrush development – there are approximately 50-60 photos. The second binder is labelled William McCrow's architecture and has photos etc. of several houses he built in Brantford (2) and Simcoe I, as well as a business. A third binder has photos of models of houses. None of these are labelled, so I don't know whether these were built or not.

There are some newspaper clippings.

I've discussed your request with executive members of the society and rather than charge the usual \$20 for each photo, we thought we could do the scanning and include some personal info about Bill for a total of \$500 in Canadian funds.

If this is agreeable, let me know and we'll go forward with the project.

NB. As this last correspondence was received in mid-January we have not requested the additional research yet. We recommend that this be part of future research and information sharing related to Crowick House and Bill McCrow (see conclusion and next steps section). We have written to the society outlining this intention and a copy of this correspondence can be provided as required.

- The Paris Ontario Museum and Historical Society (the contact at the society Margaret Deans has provided our details to a member of William McCrow's family (a niece). Correspondence has been shared with William McCrow's niece who notes as follow (this predates the email below):

“My name is Mary Perriman my Mother was Bill's oldest sister. I have a few things for you My Uncle was educated at The Ontario Art College in Toronto in the 1930's I think that is now part of The University of Toronto. Aside from the info from the museum he built several houses in Brantford and Simcoe Ontario. He was writing a book on the houses he built with the plans etc I have not seen it but I think his family gave it to The museum. I will get back to them and check.

I hope this is some help to you if they can't find the book I have a connection with a home owner who still lives in her McCrow designed and built home so I can get info from her.”

- From a review of other sources details have been found of a video of a William McCrow house in Kleinburg:

75 Valley Rd, Kleinburg, Ontario

(You Tube Video)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8sWZGr_Ft4

An aerial image of another house in Kleinburg is attached as an appendix.

- A query for additional information has been placed on a Canadian architecture forum with responses received and a suggestion to contact The Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal (due to resources it has not been possible to contact this organisation yet, but this is proposed in due course):
<https://archinect.com/forum/thread/150042023/query-from-england-on-canadian-architect-william-bill-mccrow>

Conclusions and Summary

In conclusion, it is clear that William McCrow was far more than just a set designer but also a pioneering architect who built many houses, including others that had references to Frank Lloyd Wright's prairie house style. William McCrow in particular was one of the driving forces behind a new community known as Windrush.

The architect's legacy has specific links to Paris, Ontario where William McCrow used to live and members of his family still live and Kleinburg / Windrush.

It is clear that information is fragmented and there is no clear (online) resource where information on William McCrow is available. Whilst the Paris Ontario Museum and Historical Society holds information on William McCrow this is in archive and not publically available. There is certainly no central online resource on William McCrow and certainly no resource which looks specifically at his architectural body of work.

A planning condition and / or legal agreement has been suggested in relation to the rebuilding of Crowick House to ensure that as part of the house a website is created on the life and architectural work of William McCrow. A website would act as a valuable central resource which highlights not only the unique nature of Crowick House but also the varied and unusual life story of the man who built it.

In creation of the website the further archive collection from the Paris Ontario Museum and Historical Society would be undertaken and this could form a requirement. Details of the new central online resource created and linked to Crowick House would be shared with:

- William McCrow's family
- The Paris Ontario Museum and Historical Society
- City of Vaughan Council
- The Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal
- The Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (RAIC)
- Barnsley Council
- The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA)
- Local schools
- University of Sheffield Architecture Department
- Integreat Design Review Panel
- Other organisations as suggested / considered appropriate

There is interest within Canada in relation to William McCrow and uncovering his architectural legacy and Crowick House has the potential to facilitate trans-Atlantic historical research.

Ends.

Attachments:

- Information from City of Vaughan Council Archives as referenced at p.3
- Correspondence with City of Vaughan Council
- Correspondence with The Paris Ontario Museum and Historical Society
- Correspondence from William McCrow's niece

Appendix I - Aerial image of William McCrow House in Kleinburg

CC: Jamie Wilde, Integreat Design Review Panel

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