


No longer *F*orgotten or friendless

A history of Ottawa's Protestant Orphans Home,
Protestant Home for the Aged,
and Home for Friendless Women



THE
HOME FOR FRIENDLESS WOMEN
PLOT

By Thomas Ritchie

In 2013, a generous donor paid for the expense of creating and installing a plaque to commemorate the individuals buried in three plots located in Section 17. As well, in 2010, a group of women touring Beechwood with the Canadian Federation of University Women's diplomatic hospitality group, led by Liza Vastagh, wife of Hungarian Ambassador Pavel Vastagh, donated funds to pay for the re-lettering of the three monuments.

These three plots were owned by the Protestant Orphans' Home, the Protestant Home for the Aged and the Home for Friendless Women, and were used by each organization to inter the remains of those unfortunates who died while under their care. The plaque contains the names of the over 80 men, women and children buried by these three charitable organizations. This beautiful plaque is by the road in Section 17, near the plots. The Foundation gratefully thanks our anonymous donor as well as the women of the Canadian Federation of University Women's diplomatic hospitality group for their kindness and support.

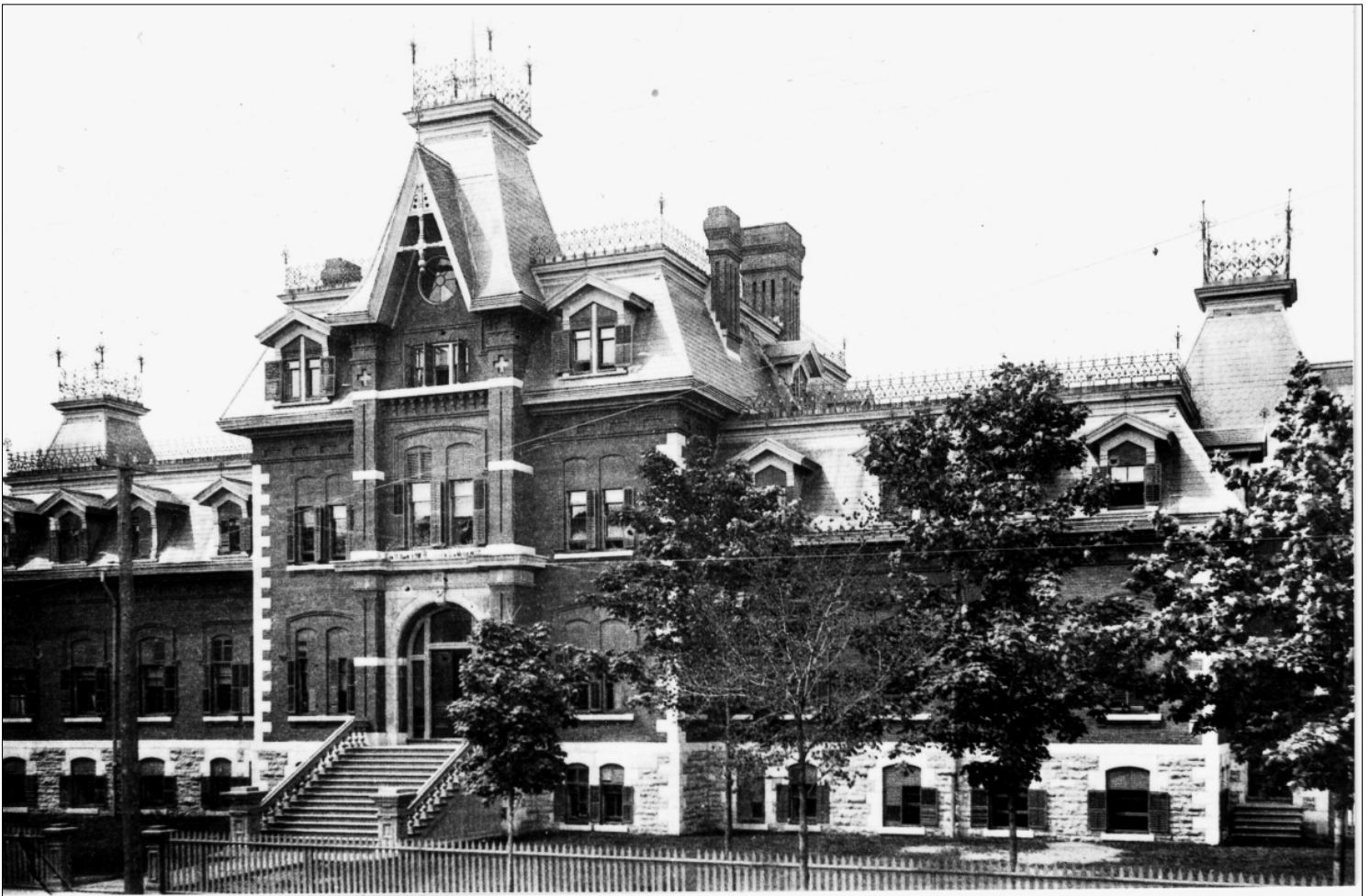
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Cover photo: The headstone at The Home for Friendless Women plot, located in Beechwood's Section 17.



The Protestant Orphans' Home was first located on Bank Street in a private house owned by Enoch Walkley. In 1874, an entire block of Elgin Street, between Lisgar and Cooper, was bought and a much larger facility was built based on plans by well-known architect James Mather as shown here.

A short distance from the St. Laurent Blvd entrance to Beechwood, along the road marked with a yellow stripe, are three side-by-side monuments which identify the burial plots of the Protestant Orphans' Home, the Protestant Home for the Aged, and the Home for Friendless Women. The names of two reflect their religious nature, and all were created by groups of prominent Ottawa residents who wished to ameliorate the harsh living conditions of society's unfortunates.

The Orphans' Home opened in 1865, the Home for Friendless Women in 1887 and the Home for the Aged in 1889, but their burial plots were obtained from Beechwood much later, in 1918, 1923 and 1925. Ottawa's city directory listed the Homes from the year of their opening, but by 1968 no longer listed the Protestant Orphans' Home, and at about the same time the Home for the Aged disappeared from the directory. The Home for Friendless Women remained listed until 1930.

The Protestant Orphans' Home was the creation of the Ladies' Protestant Benevolent Association of Ottawa. Their objective, as one of them wrote, was to raise funds to provide "...the relief, support and education of



A well decorated Christmas tree brightens the Orphans' Home and the lives of its occupants.



Left: For many years, the Home for Friendless Women occupied a large, three-story building at 327 Cambridge Street. The building is still there today and has since been converted into apartments.



Right: The home's operation was financed by revenue from a laundry business located next door.

orphans and other destitute children and the relief and support of destitute widows and for affording temporary refuge for female servants out of place." The women's part of the home became known as "the Refuge Branch of the Orphans' Home of the City of Ottawa."

Funds for the Home came from donations and from bazaars, concerts and other events, enabling the rental of a brick house on Bank Street owned by Enoch Walkley. It received its first orphan in 1865 and in a few years it was caring for twenty-five. It moved to a building on Albert Street near Elgin, and when that became unsuitable, architect James Mather drew plans for a new home on Elgin Street. The Board purchased an entire block of Elgin, between Lisgar and Cooper Streets in 1874, but it took another 10 years before they had raised enough money to have the facility built. The children attended a local school, but the Home had teachers on its staff.

Members of the Home's executive, listed in the city's 1869-70 directory, were its patroness, Lady Young, wife of Governor General Sir John, Directresses Lady MacDonald (Sir John A.'s wife, misspelled), Mrs. H. F. Bronson and Mrs. P. LeSueur, and secretary Mrs. J. Thorburn. Two of Ottawa's leading doctors, J. A. Grant (later, Sir) and Hamnet Hill were the home's attending and consulting physicians.

In 1900 the Home cared for 53 children and 19 elderly women and in the following years more space was required. Unfortunately, this came at a time when the provincial government ruled that the housing of orphans and aged women in the same building would not be allowed. When a new building was obtained on Queen Street it was named the Protestant Infants Home and housed orphans and other children. The need for addi-

tional space in the 1920s had architect J. A. Ewart draw plans for a new building which when opened in 1931 on Carling Avenue was named the Protestant Children's Village. It became affiliated with the Children's Aid Society, providing occasional care for Society children. The Protestant Children's Village was listed in the city directory until 1968.

On the opening of the Home for Friendless Women in 1887, the Board of Management of this home included Lady Macdonald, Mrs. A. C. Chisholm, Mrs. J. Tilton, Mrs. A. P. McDiarmid and Mrs. C. Falconer. As expressed in an annual report, the Home's purpose was to provide "a temporary shelter and employment to any homeless, friend-less women, without reference to creed, nationality, age or condition, at any time, night or day; the only condition of admission being a desire to forsake sin and a willingness to comply with the rules of the Home." In its first year, when located on Wellington Street, it housed, as they were described, six discharged prisoners, four unfortunates, nine servants out of employment and two destitute women with three children.

The Home's operation was financed, probably in large part, by revenue from a laundry business. For many years the Home occupied a large, three-storey building at 327 Cambridge Street with the laundry next door at 329 Cambridge. In the laundry's Steam Mangle and Wash Room and its Ironing Room, "work is done by poor women who are otherwise out of employment and in need of help." They received "reasonable wages, and became skilled Laundresses." In 1917 the laundry's revenue exceeded \$15,500.

After 1930 the Home for Friendless Women ceased to



In the laundry's steam mangle, wash room and its ironing room, work was done by poor women who were out of employment and in need of help. They received "reasonable" wages, and became skilled laundresses. In 1917 the laundry, located at 329 Cambridge Street, had revenue in excess of \$15,500.

be listed in the city directory, but the Home Steam Laundry continued in operation, at least until 1939. The building that housed the women became an apartment building, still in use. The laundry was for a time the apartment building's annex, but was demolished.

The Protestant Home for the Aged opened in 1889 to provide a place of refuge for aged men. A year later it moved to a substantial stone building on Bank Street which continues to be a part of a complex of buildings used by the elderly. It was originally the farmhouse of Alexander Mutchmor who sold it in 1879, with property, to prominent citizen Charles Mackintosh. After living in it for a decade he sold it to the Protestant Home for the Aged, which retained its name: Abbotsford House. Additions were made over the years, the first a large extension to the rear of the building in 1895, designed by architect James Mather. By 1913 the Home cared for 34 men, one of whom was 104.

The counterpart of the Bank Street home for elderly men was the Bronson Home for Protestant Aged Women. It originally housed the women in the Bronson family residence located on Bronson Avenue, which the family donated with its grounds to provide a home for elderly women. The Home's name, originally the Bronson Memorial Home for Protestant Aged Women, later



The Bronson Home for Protestant Aged Women was originally housed in the Bronson family residence located on Bronson Avenue. The family donated it and its grounds, to provide care for elderly women.

changed to the Bronson Home for Protestant Aged Women, then to the Bronson Home. In its early years the Home housed 27 elderly women. However, some of them had rooms on the upper floor, which, with other problems affecting their care, resulted in architect J. A. Ewart's design of a new building at the corner of Bronson and Albert Streets which served for six decades.

A later expansion of Abbotsford House created the Glebe Centre Residence, possibly intended to house aged women as well as aged men. By 1970 the Protestant Home for the Aged ceased to be listed in the city directory, replaced by the Glebe Centre, but the Bronson Home continued to be listed until the 1990s.

The monuments that bear these names are reminders of early efforts in Ottawa to provide relief, support and



A photo of the Protestant Home for the Aged, also known as Abbotsford House, possibly taken sometime in the 1940s or 1950s. Several residents of the Home can be seen enjoying the sunshine in front of the Home. Originally, it had been the farmhouse of Alexander Mutchmor who sold it in 1879 to Charles Mackintosh.

assistance to the community's unfortunates. Such efforts were made through church-based organizations, but after many decades responsibility for the care of those in need was assumed by government agencies. The monuments are also reminders that for the many years between the establishment of the homes and their burial plots, those who died in the Homes were buried, according to cemetery records, in the "free ground,"

"the "poor ground," or the "pauper's ground."

Thomas Ritchie has been a Friend of Beechwood since 2005, and wrote a regular column, 'Set in Stone,' for Beechwood's quarterly newsletter, THE BEECHWOOD WAY, until his death in 2014. Mr. Ritchie was laid to rest in Beechwood cemetery and is fondly remembered for his many contributions to Beechwood.



A plaque commemorates the men, women and children buried in the Protestant Orphans' Home, Protestant Home for the Aged and the Home for Friendless Women plots. Between the establishment of the Homes and their burial plots, those who died were buried in the "pauper's ground."