

The Life and Times of
Sunnyside Farm
now known as
Heintzman House

ARCHITECTURE

The original house on this spot is believed to have been built using adobe brick by Anthony Hollingshead. Building with adobe (unfired mud brick) became fairly popular in York County in the early to mid 1800s. Houses, churches and schools were built in this way. The resulting structure was a very simple, two-room homesteader's dwelling. It was completed sometime between 1798 and 1802.

The property was purchased in 1817 by George Crookshank. On it, he built a 13-room mansion in a Classic Revival style, with some Georgian features inspired, no doubt, by similar homes in Europe.

Crookshank built the main part of the house using adobe brick for the core, clad with wood. Existing records imply that this was the earliest substantial adobe house in Ontario.

There is a strong possibility that the adobe core of the main room was the same adobe building built by Hollingshead.

Crookshank is said to have imported fireplace mantels, doors and windows from England, however, the panelling, wainscoting and structural material would have been produced here with local materials.

The final private owners of the house, the Heintzmans, undertook major renovations in the Regency style with a Classic Revival porch, installing 20th century comforts and an additional 17 rooms, including the conservatory, the portico and pillars plus a garage and servants' quarters.



Original adobe construction beneath wooden walls.
It's possible this adobe was from the original
Hollingshead homestead.†

ARCHITECTURE

A number of architectural details of the Crookshank house can still be seen today.



Massive lock with a 7" key. †



Crookshank's stair rails & posts. †



There are many examples of the original panelling, doors and windows throughout the house. †



The doors and mouldings and the framing mouldings are Crookshank era. The wainscoting in the room is Heintzman era. †

2nd floor fireplace is Crookshank era, likely moved from the main floor to make way for the Heintzman fireplace. †

ARCHITECTURE

The Heintzmans made many modifications in the 1930s.



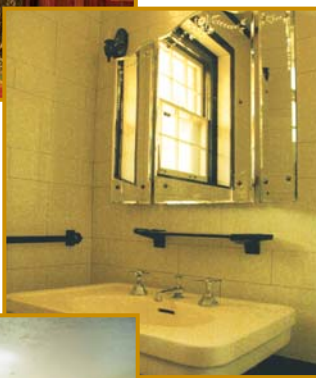
The front portico and pillars. †



Crown mouldings throughout are Heintzman era. †



The elaborate fireplace is a mid-20th Century combination of styles from other eras. A common embellishment to purchase when the Heintzman's did their re-building. †



Modern plumbing, wiring, heating and even an intercom were installed throughout the house. †

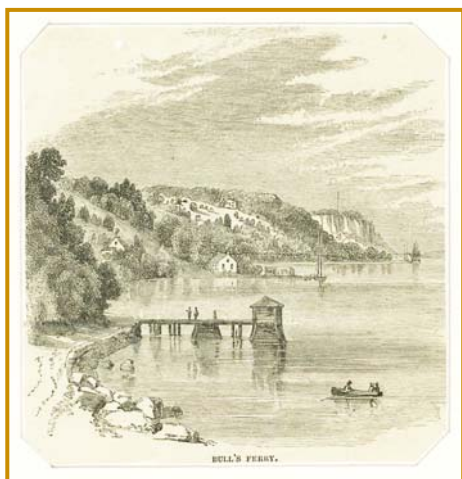


The Heintzman's grand ballroom was brightened by their Italianate conservatory. †

EARLY YEARS

Anthony Hollingshead was born in New Jersey. Although a Quaker, he joined the Loyalist New Jersey 3rd Battalion, to fight against the revolutionaries during the American Revolution.

After serving a short time with the Battalion, he resigned (January 1779) his commission to fight in a “refugee” (volunteer) company. In that group he was involved in the battle of Bull’s Ferry, where the band of 160 Loyalist volunteers held a wooden blockhouse and fought off a 2000+ rebel American force



An engraving of Bull's Ferry. ‡

killing and capturing a number of the enemy, an important Loyalist victory during the closing days of the war. British Commander Sir Henry Clinton, in a dispatch to Whitehall, England, described the battle as “an instance of courage which reflects the great honour of a small body of refugees”.

After the war, as a United Empire Loyalist and for his service to the Crown, his family was granted land, first in Nova Scotia, then, in 1798, in Upper Canada (Ontario).

In order to receive title to the 190 acre grant, he had to clear the land of massive trees, build a house of at least 16 x 20 feet and clear the frontage of his land on the new road, Yonge Street, being built from York to Lake Simcoe.

Anthony did this all by hand, horse and oxen. He built a two-room house, possibly out of adobe, and received full title to his land in 1802.

He lived here on what began to be called Sunnyside Farm until 1817 when he sold it to George Crookshank.

EARLY YEARS

An American by birth, George Crookshank emigrated to New Brunswick with his parents after the American Revolution. A close friend of Lieutenant-Governor John Graves Simcoe, he became a wealthy man of business and government.

During the War of 1812 he was in charge of supplying Fort York and other garrisons in the area as well as constructing a military road from Lake Simcoe to Penetanguishene on Georgian Bay.

Appointed Assistant Commissary General in 1814, he then became Receiver General of

Public Accounts from 1819-1820. After he retired, he was appointed to the Legislative Council from 1821-1841.

Crookshank helped found, and was a director of the Bank of Upper Canada from 1822 to 1827.

He owned much property in and around York, including Sunnyside Farm, as well as considerable property in America.

Sometime around his marriage to Susan Lambert in 1821, Crookshank built a 13-room mansion on the site of Hollingshead's farmhouse. Upon completion, he and his family enjoyed a privileged life between his "country" house, Sunnyside Manor and his 300 acre downtown Toronto property.

When Crookshank died in 1859, he was at the time the oldest inhabitant of Toronto. Sunnyside Manor was subsequently sold by his daughter Catharine Crookshank Heward.



Honourable George Crookshank.‡

LIFE IN THORNHILL, 1880S TO 1920S



*Sunnyside Manor was a gathering place for many local events and festivities.**



*Samuel Francis and his daughter Elizabeth at Sunnyside.**



*Leila (Francis) Teeson and Lizzie Francis in the fields of Sunnyside Manor.**

After Crookshank, Sunnyside Manor would pass through many hands until purchased in 1881 by John Francis of Newtonbrook. Two years later, his sons Samuel and Elijah took over the farm. Samuel married Mary Miller in 1882 and three years later purchased his brother's half of the farm. He continued farming the land until he retired and rented out the land in 1916. In 1930 Samuel sold Sunnyside Manor to Charles and Marion Heintzman. Samuel died in 1937 at 86 years old.

LIFE IN THORNHILL, 1880S TO 1920S



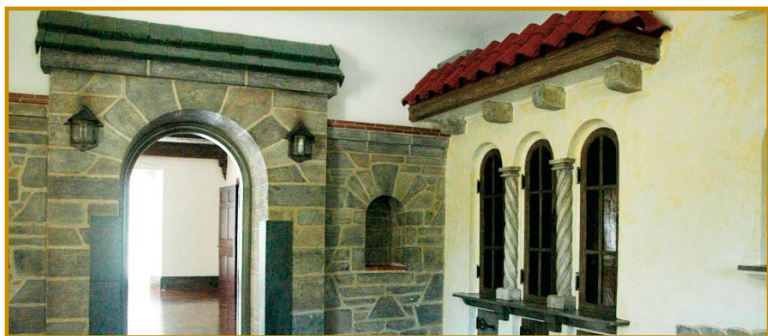
*Mamie Francis and Mrs. Minnie Findlay.**



*Thornhill Junior Horticultural Society on trip to Oakville.
Mr. and Mrs. J.E. Francis standing at left of picture.**

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Charles and Marion Heintzman (of the Heintzman Piano family) bought the house in 1930 and embarked upon a major renovation and expansion of Sunnyside Manor, installing modern plumbing and wiring, adding the conservatory and a number of other features.



A room designed to evoke a Mediterranean mood. †

The Heintzmans were prominent members of the community and the manor saw many social functions. Farming continued, with Charles' herd of prized Jersey cattle roaming the property.



From the main floor, looking straight up to the second floor French doors, overlooking the conservatory. †

TO THE RESCUE

When the land was sold to property developers in 1959, after the death of the Heintzmans, local residents were concerned that the house would be torn down to make way for a highrise.



Heintzman House as it stands today. It's easy to see the two wings and the front portico added by the Heintzmans.†

Led by Alan Sumner, they persuaded the Township of Markham to purchase and preserve the Manor. The Township renamed the property Heintzman House to honour the last private owners. The house was used as offices for the Town of Markham Parks and Recreation Department and as a community centre.

In 1984 the Heintzman House received designation as a heritage site under the Ontario Heritage Act. In 2000, Heintzman House was honoured by the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada with a special presentation of the First Union Flag. This was in honour of the property's first owner, United Empire Loyalist, Anthony Hollingshead. Only two other properties in the GTA have received such an honour, Fort York and Queen's Park. This was in recognition of Anthony's participation in the Battle of the Blockhouse at Bergen Wood, New Jersey, July 1780.

Today, Heintzman House is run by a volunteer Board of Directors and an Auxiliary that runs annual fundraising events such as the Upscale Craft Show (for over 40 years). Funds raised are used to maintain and run the House.

Heintzman House continues playing a part in community life as a municipal facility for community and private events.

† Photo © Capstone Communications Group

* Photo © Alf. Weaver Collection, Markham Museum

‡ Photo © Respective owner

*Produced by the
City of Markham
on behalf of the
Board of Directors
of Heintzman House
for the enjoyment of all.*

Councillor Valerie Burke

*designed and written by
Capstone Communications Group
thanks to
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