

This summer I came across the CBC News article “Advocates fight proposed demolition of Regina’s historic Cook Residence”. I am Deirdre Malone from Toronto, grandchild of the Cook’s - my mother, Helen was their daughter and I am deeply concerned that the building will be demolished.

The story has shocked me into attempting to save a house that marked a pinnacle in my grandparents’ life on the Prairies. I visited the house in 1965 and was entranced as my mother showed me the Arthurian wall motif in the dining room. It shows King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table. We viewed the wonderful winding staircase where she posed for her wedding picture showing her lovely wedding gown in 1935.

Jackie Schmidt of Heritage Regina has encouraged me to tell of some of this home’s extraordinary past. Certainly it would be a tragedy to lose such a well-built, historical Regina structure, a splendid example of fine home construction in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Many similar buildings have been demolished, leaving Regina with what? The Cook Residence is a grand residence that should be restored to its former glory.

### The Cooks’ Heritage

Andrew B., Robert H., who eventually built the house, and Charles C. Cook “were sons of a courageous widowed mother, Sarah Jane who moved from Ontario to Manitoba in 1889 and undertook the onerous task of establishing a homestead in order to support and educate her family of six children. The three boys who later became a worthy part of the province’s rich heritage assisted with the establishment of the homestead before going their separate ways...

Each [son] was public spirited giving much of his time to the betterment of others and each made a fine contribution to Regina’s cultural and social life ... Each married fine women and established their homes well and substantially.

The three brothers and their wives turned their gardens into places of great beauty and their homes into gracious havens of hospitality. A fireside Sunday tea with young and old conversing about matters of importance of the moment, in any one of those homes is a memory long to be cherished.

As Regina remembers its developers, it might well recall gratefully the contribution of many sorts made by these men.”

From a *Leader Post* (?) article by Lilian Fairley

My grandfather, Robert Cook was an ambitious man with a pioneering spirit. He had a self-starter’s determination and was described in business as a “spark plug”.

He commissioned William Van Egmond and Storey, knowing of the architect’s ability to create a flagship home at the entrance to Regina. Robert and Helena Cook would have wanted the design of their Van Egmond Tudor Revival house to be on the 1920s cutting edge.

A little of the History of the Cook's

As Andrew King said in his book, "Pen Paper and Printing Ink, "In 1901 he let go his partnership in the Plaindealer newspaper in Souris, [Manitoba] and went to Arcola, [Saskatchewan]. His analysis of insurance convinced him of the need for crop hail insurance – set up Farmer's Mutual Hail Insurance Co. which expanded so rapidly that head office moved to Regina."

Then as RH Cook himself says, " In January of 1935, I moved my Insurance business as Canadian Brokers Associated with Lloyds of London to Toronto until 1948, Dec 31<sup>st</sup> when I turned over my \$3 million premium business to my sons Robert Egerton and John Wilfred Cook share and share alike."

He also was the writer of the Poem," Chaske at the Ball" in 1901 that Pierre Berton read out on his show in the 60's. Originally written February 16/1900, it later formed part of a fine little book telling about his life growing up on the homestead and in Souris, Manitoba and today makes a fine statement for the Indigenous people of Canada.

My grandmother, Helena Cook, was very conscious of what was in vogue in fashion, style and design. She wanted her surroundings to be beautiful, artistic and pleasing to the senses. The choices in the design of the building would closely tend to her wishes.

Her daughters were part of the social scene noted in the Leader Post in such items as their Debut and Helen's photo as an example of the Canadian Girl. Specifically, as an important note, the Van Egmond family were friends of the Cooks. Their daughter, Lois joined both Helen and Louise as debutantes and Lois and her mother hosted a High Tea at the Van Egmond's Lakeview home prior to my mother, Helen's wedding.

As an objection made by Lien and Gourgarris to the heritage designation of the Cook Residence and stated by their lawyer, Fashia Richards: "That the property does not have heritage value because It was designed by Van Egmond and Storey's draftsman, Harold C. Bishop and never inspected by Van Egmond and Storey or any subsequent architects firm."

I refute this because I am sure that Van Egmond, being a friend of the Cook's, would have kept a sharp eye on the work of his draftsman during the design of this home.

### **Meetings and Receptions of Interest at 3160 Albert Street**

#### **Prime Minister Mackenzie King in 1933**

During his visit to Regina, he spoke at the World Grain Exhibition and Conference Building, another grand structure designed by Van Egmond and Storey. He describes the day in his diaries:

Tuesday July 25, 1933

" Went from Government House to Mr. Cook's to tea, served indoors after an hour spent on his beautiful grounds, the tea served was really a buffet dinner. About 5 leading men were present.

At 8 I went on to the Regina Agriculture Industrial Exhibition – the 50<sup>th</sup> and then spoke after Meighen who opened the exhibition to a gathering of about 8000 in the grandstand.

I went back to the hotel and had a half hours rest packed up baggage etc. Then went back to Mr. Cook's where we had an evening party at 10.30 of about 150 persons, leading Liberals a fine gathering of splendid people of the social set I was asked at 12 p.m. to speak and did so until about 12:30 setting out the need of Liberals to save the situation today... The gathering quite a unique one and I believe will do great good."

His telegram later expressed his thanks -  
WL Mackenzie King  
Canadian National Telegram  
PRINCE ALBERT SK AUG 1 1933

RH COOK  
REGINA SASK

HAVE TRIED TO GET OFF A LETTER BY HAND TO MRS COOK AND YOURSELF EXPRESSING APPRECIATION YOUR GREAT KINDNESS TO ME IN REGINA ENGAGEMENTS THUS FAR HAVE MADE THIS IMPOSSIBLE BUT WILL WRITE FIRST OPPORTUNITY SHALL NEVER FORGET GREAT PLEASURE OF AFTERNOON AND EVENING

### **Malone - Cook Wedding Reception**

On September 9, 1935 their wedding with Reception to follow at 3160 Albert Street was heralded by the Leader Post. Over 200 guests attended including Mr. and Mrs. Van Egmond and their daughter, Lois who was asked to assist in serving at the reception.

In summary, I want to emphasize the Heritage Report's apt remark that "The number of heritage properties in Regina is finite. Each heritage property lost is gone forever."

Recall the other Cook home that was demolished, again to quote the Lilian Fairley article in the *Leader Post* about Robert's brother Andrew's home:

"A.B. Cook's lovely residence Faraway house in Douglas Park near the riverbank was alas, one of the first buildings to be demolished under the Wascana Development Plan. Many visualized it as a residence which could have been renewed and preserved as a part of the plan signifying a charming symbol of another era."

I also would be concerned about the land on which 3160 Albert Street sits. To reduce the lot size would be a mockery of the architectural statement the house makes, situated beautifully as it is at the city entrance.

The Cook Residence is a grand residence and I am available to help save and restore the home to reflect its' former glory.