

The Briars Heritage Buildings (Draft 1 Hugh Sibbald October 7, 2024)

The Briars has a rich history. It has long been an attraction that has left a legacy of interesting buildings, structures and interactions here in Georgina.

On September 12, 2024, I met at the Georgina Civic Centre with Tolek Makarewicz and Alan Drozd of Development Planning at the Town of Georgina and remotely with Mitchell May of Giaimo who are compiling the Town's Heritage Register Review. This left a rather short window of time before the October 9th submission to Council.

From that meeting, there were several questions and gaps in the information on The Briars built structures and this study is an attempt to answer some of those questions, create a record for the public, the Sibbald and Lu families and others involved in local heritage.

We live in a cottage in a far corner of the old Briars Estate. Our home is surrounded by oak trees that are over 100 feet tall, which grew on this sandy ridge when it was part of Dr. Frank Sibbald's far pastures.

At this time of year, the acorns fall in batches on the deck, sometimes sounding like artillery fire. Until I sweep them up, they lie in wait like abandoned ball bearings to trip unsuspecting visitors who arrive in the evening darkness. For over a week they've been left there while I try and complete this rather slim study.

Like sweeping up those pesky acorns, this report has attempted to sweep into something organized all those facts that I learned so long ago and used in entertaining stories during our Briars history tours. Those stories have been left aside for now but it's helpful to understand the people who have built and nourished The Briars over the last 184 years because, as much as the heritage is visible in the buildings, it's the ideas and dreams of those buildings' creators and stewards that have helped find the financing that has kept them alive for visitors from Georgina and around the world to enjoy.

When we sold The Briars to Dr. "Vincent" Lu in 2017, none of us could have predicted the challenges the Lu family has faced in keeping it going. Vincent's name Lu, means Deer. We gave him a welcome gift - a ceramic canoe by well-known Orangeville potter Alan Pace. The piece displays deer dancing around the hull and held a cargo of sweet grass from Georgina Island. We pictured that canoe gliding smoothly across a calm lake, perhaps encountering the odd rough sea. Instead, Vincent has had to portage that mythical canoe around continual rapids of the pandemic and the changes that have occurred in hospitality since. In this, he is not unlike many predecessors at The Briars who have taken years to dream up their vision for its future while working to keep things going day to day. Vincent has not

been consulted for this discussion paper as time has simply been too limited. However, he will have a copy this week and I'm sure we will have an opportunity to discuss it soon.

This information is a work in progress. While most of the information here comes from knowledge gained acquired growing up and practicing a forty-year career at The Briars, the Briars historian Diana Rowney has worked tirelessly to document the history of the property referring to materials available in The Briars Sibbald family archives and public record. She has read vast swaths of the early diaries and will continue to work on fact checking. Diana's daughter Wendy Rowney, currently Senior Manager of Community Outreach & Education at The Village at Black Creek, has been a tremendous support to The Briars efforts at compiling and presenting its history. Georgina's Hessel Pape transcribed many pages of Dr. Sibbald's and Bessie's diaries which were written in beautiful but difficult to read script. The dates for the early buildings come from those diaries and/or dates established by other archives and noted by the Ontario Heritage Trust. Some of the early buildings took as long as five years to complete so the date is as close as possible to the completion date picked up from diary entries like Frank's quip "Bricklayer arrived today. Lazy looking fellow". A special thanks to my wife Sheila Maxwell for proofreading and working on the technology this week and dodging acorns. Thanks to Andrew Sibbald in his ongoing efforts compiling the history in his research for his upcoming novels. Any errors or omissions are mine.

The original Briars home was built by Captain William Bouchier. After a successful career in Britain's Royal Navy, Bouchier received his crown grant. Through arrangements with family members his father-in-law Captain Jackson established Jackson's Point and his brother James O'Brian Bouchier established Bouchier's Mills which was later renamed Sutton. It was almost twenty years and many trials and tribulations later that Captain Bouchier was able to complete his new home The Briars, which he named after a friend's family home on the island of St. Helena, a well-known house in which Napoleon had stayed after being exiled to the island.

During this same period, the Sibbald family arrived in Georgina settling at Eildon Hall and several adjacent properties. They played an instrumental role in establishing this part of Georgina and I believe the Heritage Review team is aware of those early influential settlers.

Dr. Francis Clunie "Frank" Sibbald had come to Georgina with his mother Susan as a young boy, attended Upper Canada College, was later home schooled at Eildon Hall in Georgina and then earned his medical degree at University of Edinburg, Scotland. As a doctor in the Royal Navy, he spent much of his career in Shanghai, China where he practiced medicine and worked to improve sanitation and living conditions in the British settlement. During this time, he invested successfully in numerous business ventures and travelled extensively in India and throughout Asia and later, early in semi retirement, in Europe. During his travels he was greatly influenced by the art, architecture and farming practices.

He retired to Georgina to be close to family. He continued to travel and explore while he dreamed up his estate while living at or near Eildon Hall. As money became available and the ideas coalesced, serendipity and a sleighing accident brought him to The Briars, which he had admired for many years. He accumulated parcels of land including The Briars and adjacent properties so he could build his retirement estate, some buildings of which would be later recognized by the province through Ontario Heritage Foundation easements. Dr. Sibbald established a thriving farm with a successful business breeding cattle, expanded The Briars, built fine outbuildings which will also be featured in this study, had guest rooms and welcomed visitors who came via connections or letters of introduction and his estate became well-known.

The estate passed through several generations of family members who made tremendous contributions to the Georgina Community.

Frank's niece Elizabeth Kemp "Bessie" Sibbald continued Frank's traditions hosting charity gatherings at the property. Bessie was influential in women's charity groups and established the first tourism business welcoming paid guests to cottages and lodges which she built at The Briars, as well as continuing to manage the farm.

Bessie's nephew John Drinkwater "Jack" Sibbald II, my grandfather, with the support of his wife Marjorie, established The Briars Golf Club, Briars Dairy Limited, several service stations, an Imperial Oil delivery service and was Mayor of Georgina and very involved in provincial business and politics. He expanded the tourism business and founded Jack Sibbald's Golf and Country Club which included accommodation for one hundred guests.

Jack's son John worked planting trees in the York Region Forest and with the R.O.T.C. in British Columbia. He returned to the family business after graduating from University of Toronto in 1952 with a degree in Engineering and Business, and with the goal of expanding the Resort's corporate and group business and the hope of creating year-round infrastructure to welcome guests. His experience planting trees, working with his father to manage the estate engendered a tremendous love and respect for nature which inspired his environmental activism throughout his life. He married Barbara Watts soon after graduating. Working on a vision with his Dad, he became frustrated with the slow progress of trying to expand the business, returned to university and graduated from Ontario College of Art (now O.C.A.D.). That experience, along with the experience of wiping coal dust daily from his Toronto windowsills, fueled his love of nature, art and architecture and, with his new friends and associates at O.C.A., would influence his business and life goals.

John's wife Barbara had been part of an early female cohort to graduate from U of T's Sociology program. She came from an accomplished and competitive family. Her father

was a bishop, her mother spent many years in China and later lectured in Mandarin at U of T. Her brothers and sisters became highly successful. Barbara launched her career when she became the first National Director of Recreation for the Canadian National Institute for the Blind and brought her full creativity and intellect into the Sibbald family.

Our generation – the fifth generation at The Briars – worked tirelessly to update the guest experience by investing in technology, recreation, accommodation and food and beverage. Our full-service Spa became recognized as a top destination and included treatments, yoga and related recreation programs. We navigated through two stock market crashes and substantial changes in the travel market, always keeping the goals of heritage, a warm guest experience and community service in the forefront. During our forty-year involvement, we employed at our peak 80 year round and an additional 75 seasonal staff and brought almost \$400,000,000 in revenue into the local economy.

I include this background on the people because without ambition, drive, business plans and the ability to find money to fund their enterprises, it's quite likely that many of the structures at The Briars would be less significant or gone. Dr. Sibbald invested in business. Bessie founded the tourism operation and kept the farm going. Jack and Marjorie invested in numerous local and regional businesses. John and Barbara borrowed almost \$4,000,000 between 1977 and 1980 – almost \$15,000,000 today adjusted for inflation – an ambitious amount to invest in heritage buildings in a village of some 2000 people.

As fourth generation Briars owners in the 1970s, John and Barbara approached what was at that time the Ontario Heritage Foundation OHF (now Ontario Heritage Trust) to let the Foundation know of The Briars significant buildings. The Sibbalds facilitated OHF easements to preserve significant buildings at The Briars to for future generations of owners and visitors. At the time of OHF easement, they understood that The Briars was the first privately owned, commercial building with such easements.

John and Barbara Sibbald's vision was not to be a museum, but rather to feature the attraction of these marvelous buildings, share them with the public and host guests and events in a successful enterprise that would preserve the buildings. This was a continuation of a long proud tradition at The Briars.

They engaged B. Napier Simpson Jr. to do an initial set of drawings for turning The Briars into a year-round inn. Mr. Simpson was well-known in Canada for his heritage restoration work. With this in hand, they began the search for a business plan and financial support.

Several years later MacLennan Associates Architects were engaged to expand the plan to commercial viability. The firm had designed many heritage restorations in Kingston Ontario as well as Christ Church Cathedral in Montreal. They updated, expanded and completed

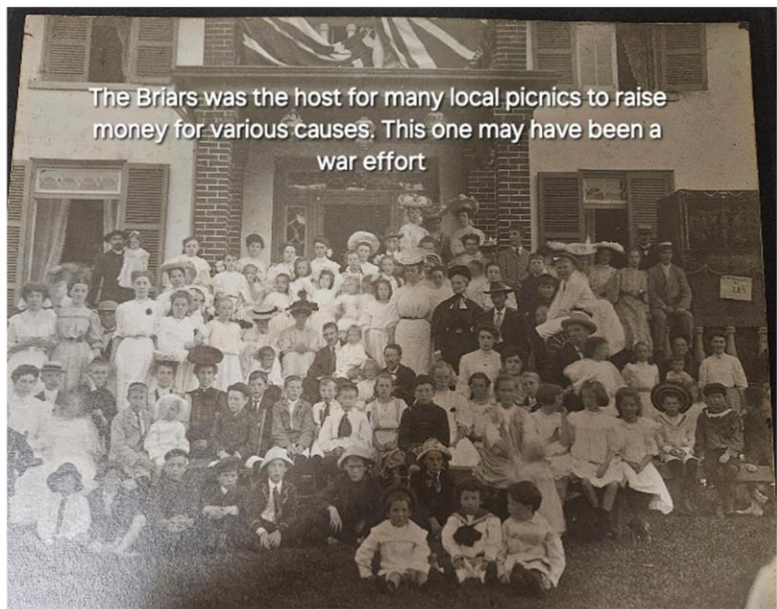
the design of the restoration and new buildings. Ontario's Lieutenant Governor Pauline McGibbon officially opened the Briars Inn in 1978. The Briars set a strong, successful direction in Ontario Tourism and was followed by the opening of other successful heritage Ontario inns in the next decade as they discovered that heritage is an investment that pays.

Over the succeeding forty plus years, The Briars has welcomed hundreds of thousands of guests for holidays, conferences, reunions, weddings and so on. Among the many guests have been numerous dignitaries, business influencers, actors, writers and musicians. The Right Honourable Brian Mulroney, Premier Bob Rae and Nicole Kidman and many more. As a family, we saw it as our mission to create a place where gatherings – whether two or two hundred – would thrive. Peter Gzowski and his team met here in the Lakeside Lounge and created the format for CBC's Morningside, which launched Peter as one of the era's great radio stars. The Clearnet Management Team met yearly in the West Loft of the old Coach House and hatched the plan that would result in 2000 in Telus buying them for over \$6 billion – at that time the biggest telecom acquisition in Canadian history. The Red Barn theatre housed Dr. Sibbald's ambitious barn, became well-known across Canada. Those and many other creative successes helped fuel The Briars reputation across Canada.

In 2017 The Briars was sold to Dr. Vincent Lu. Dr. Lu continues his successful career in China while establishing he and his family in Canada. After practice as a Doctor of Acupuncture, he built a medical device manufacturing business in China as well as operating a hotel. His home city, Nanjing, is one of the most historic and cultural cities in China and he has travelled widely. He has a keen interest in history, the arts and in enterprise and has navigated the choppy waters of tourism here at The Briars through the difficult Covid 19 pandemic as he works to develop a plan for The Briars.

Throughout the years, the contribution of heritage structures to business success has been indisputable. In 2015 Boston University completed a study of the Pricing Effects of Heritage at an Iconic Hotel. They concluded that heritage has a positive effect on the ability to attain a premium price. Visitors value the feeling of being in a place with a rich history. We see this played out daily worldwide in towns, villages and cities who have valued heritage. The Town Council of Georgina should recognize this and boldly encourage heritage opportunities.

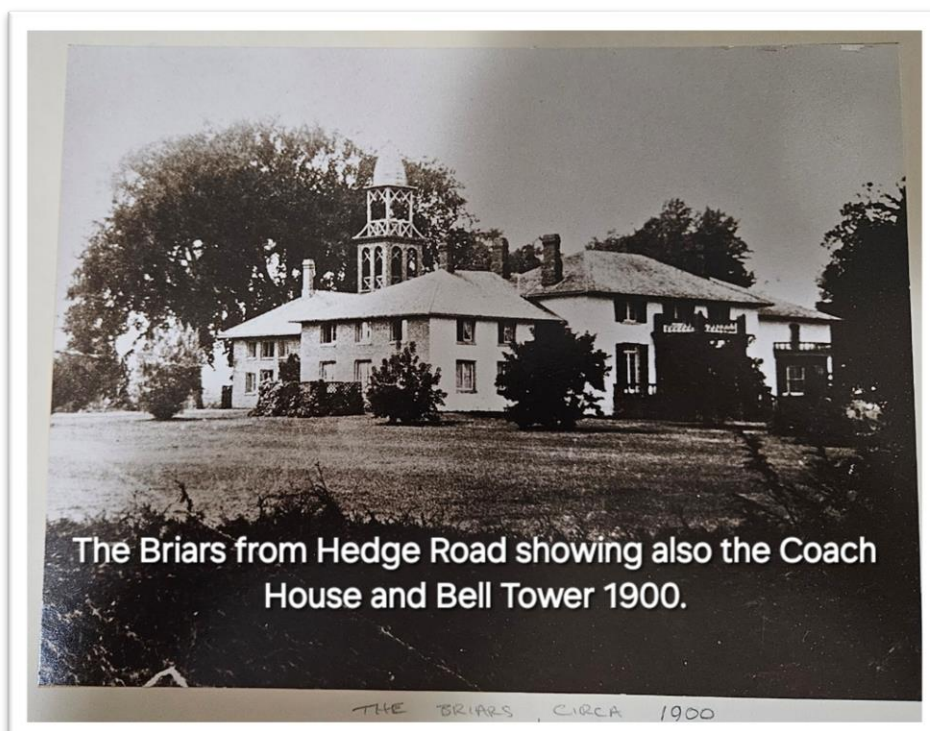
For this discussion paper, the buildings have been categorized as those with Ontario Heritage Trust (OHT) Easements; Heritage Buildings at or beside 55 Hedge Road; other heritage buildings of interest.



Pictured: clockwise from top The Briars Gate 55 Hedge Road; a sketch of The Briars Centre House 1842 shows the original verandah which was removed by Dr. Sibbald when he built the East and West wing additions. The front door details are visible in the sketch; after its expansion and additions by Dr. Sibbald, The Briars hosted numerous charity events and continued to do so after becoming a commercial venture.



Pictured: Above, The Briars as it is today. The O.H.T. easement includes a wedge shape starting at the left side of the left (East) wing – the white wall – to the right corner of the right (West) wing, the view of the distinctive shaped shrubs, roof and chimneys, etc. from Hedge Road. At right the viewer can see the small belfry where the original bell cast in Troy New York for Dr. F.C. Sibbald is currently housed. Below, The Briars in 1900. Changes prior to the O.H.T. easement include the balustrade atop the porch roof and west wing bay window. The Coach House and bell tower are visible south of the main house. The shutters on the main level French windows/doors were removed this summer.



The Briars Collection of Heritage Structures

Ontario Heritage Trust (OHT) Easement Briars Centre House, East and West Wings:

Centre House 1840 -

Built by Captain William Bouchier, the Crown Grantee for lands that became Sutton, Jackson's Point and The Briars which was in the Township of Georgina. This Regency Cottage Style structure includes a front door that is an excellent example of the type as noted in *The Ancestral Roof: Domestic Architecture of Upper Canada*, a reference book by Marion MacRae. The walls are field stone and rubble later stuccoed. The wall material is visible now as one descends to the lower level from the current dining room and has remained a successful building material with little change until today. The original basement of the house had staff quarters and a kitchen. The kitchen fireplace is still visible there but not functional. The original windows with their wavy/rippled glass from 1840 are still in use with new storm windows. The original shutters have been in situ although several were removed this summer. Captain Bouchier passed away several years after completing the house. His wife returned to England several times renting The Briars. On a return visit here in the 1870s she put the house up for sale. The Sibbald family have a copy of the ad that was placed in the *Globe*. As it turned out, Dr. Sibbald's sleigh had a mishap in front of the house and when Mrs. Bouchier's sons came to rescue him, he had tea with Mrs. B and learned of the sale opportunity. Dr. Sibbald's first order of business after purchase was to build a new bridge over the River Jordan, a structure on Hedge Road that is in place until today, with the north wall visible beside the road and the arch visible on the south wall by the River Jordan.

West and East Wings 1880 -

After purchasing The Briars, Dr. Francis Clunie "Frank" Sibbald focused his love of art and architecture on the challenge of uniting his new brick construction with the original stucco. He used white painted local red brick and red brick stained to a deeper red on brick pillars which support the verandah's roof. These appeared again as faux brick red stained tin pillars (removed at an earlier date) on the roof of the verandah. Turned balustrades, a simple wing to the east and the more elaborate entertainment wing to the west were used in a unique way to unite the Victorian elements of the house with the original 1840 structure. The East wing displays flat top windows, and the West wing arched top doors and windows, a style that was repeated in several outbuildings. The home and grounds became well-known, being featured in the [Canadian Agricultural Journal in 1888 and in Smileys Travel guide]. The OHT Easement includes the façade of the wings and centre house, the roof and chimneys and approximately an acre through a wedge shape of

property which goes from the east and west walls of the facade to the road, including certain trees and shrubs - those elements that can be viewed from Hedge Road. A large black locust tree was lost in a storm a decade or so ago and several evergreen trees were planted. At her inspection, notes of which can presumably be found in the OHT files, the OHT representative suggested to the Sibbalds to plant a replacement locust and consider removing the newly planted evergreens to restore the view from Hedge Road. This was in the planning stages when the property was sold to Dr. Lu.

Additional notes:

The building has important Design and Associative Value, and Collective with relation to the other heritage buildings of the estate.

The Centre House remained the home of day to day living. The West Wing contains a large gathering space downstairs with ornate plaster work on the ceilings that was restored in 1977. Upstairs a comfortable lounge and hallways have romantic bay window seats. The window seats were the location of hidden shares in enterprises that, once discovered, were sold by Jack Sibbald to finance the repair of the shoreline and landscape work of the Golf Club. The interior of the Centre House includes elaborate wood carved adornments around the fireplace and above the stairwell that were completed by a local carver (we have his name in our archives) as well as interesting stairwells that were added by E.K. "Bessie" Sibbald to allow access from the Centre House to the Wings. The Library and Drawing Rooms of the Centre House have been used by numerous local families and groups for important events. The upstairs of the West Wing later housed a museum of Briars and local history. During the Covid 19 pandemic displays were removed to storage due to security concerns but are still available should the opportunity arise for display. The East Wing, which now has four charming guest rooms, was a guest wing.

Ontario Heritage Trust (OHT) Easement The Peacock House:

Peacock House - 1885

The octagonal, brick clad, bell roofed Peacock House is quite unique in North America. It was designed by Dr. Francis Clunie Sibbald and finished with red brick from Cannington. The original roof finial was a cylinder. This was replaced with the current carved pineapple with permission of OHT. Cannington brick was used in the 1977/78 restoration of the building. The original windows are still in situ although repairs were required from time to time. This OHT Easement goes about 1 metre beyond the exterior walls and foundations. The building housed peacocks for sixty or so years, then served as an implement building, then as a warmup pavilion for skating, then a writing room. Throughout its life as part of the inn, it has been the signature building in marketing and has been the background to countless photographs for guest weddings, anniversaries, reunions, family and corporate events. The building has important Design, Associative and Contextual Value.



Pictured: Previous page, the Peacock House today. The pineapple finial replaced a broken sphere that was not part of the original O.H.T. easement. This was approved by the O.H.T. The pineapple is a traditional symbol of welcome which is appropriate for the buildings use and location. By the 1970's the building was in poor condition after cattle were removed from nearby fields, resulting in drainage ditches and swales becoming overgrown. The building had tilted. Local kids – including John Sibbald as a young lad – had enjoyed throwing stones at the windows. Some original glass is still in place. The Peacock House has become an attraction in Georgina and is an important backdrop for photos and events.

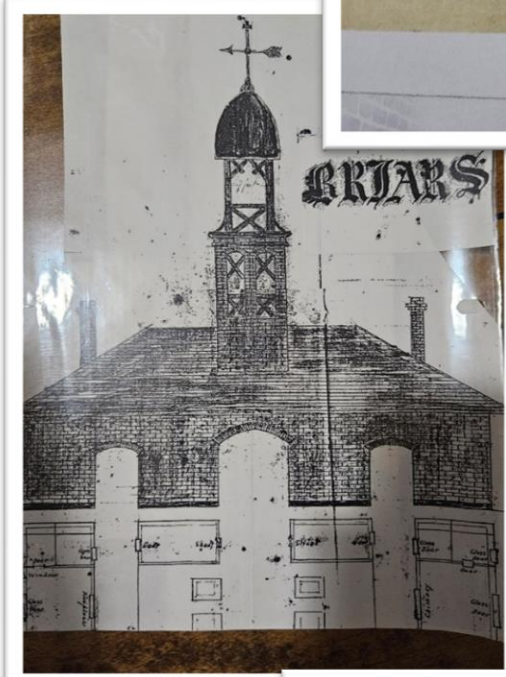
Why suggest these buildings be added to the Georgina Heritage Register?

Addition to the local register gives early identification of proposed repairs or changes. The Ontario Heritage Trust, as a more physically distant organization, enjoys the advantage of working with local municipalities and the owner to assure that the heritage of the structure is adhered to.

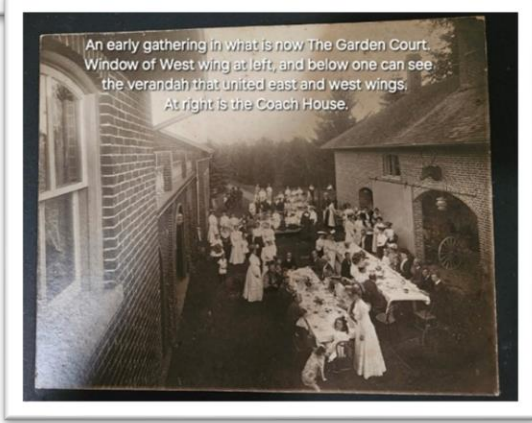
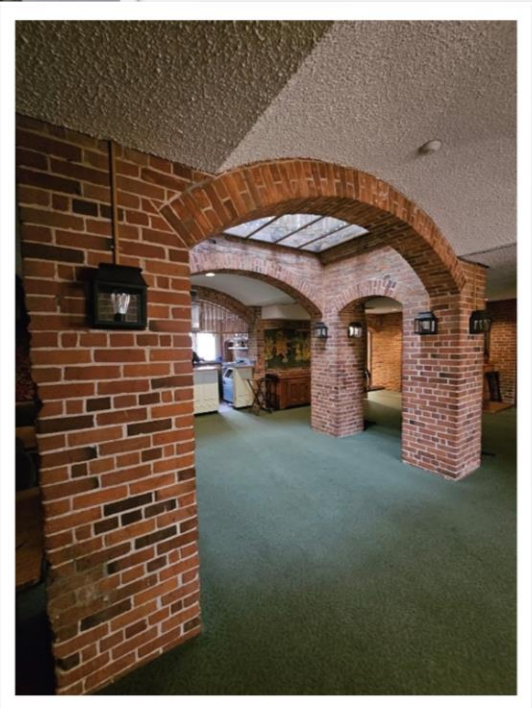
Additional Briars original heritage structures adjacent to the Briars Inn:

The Coach House (1880 - 1885) is of brick construction designed by Dr. Francis Clunie Sibbald. While partially within the walls of the modern resort structure, it is exposed at the roof and four walls on the second level. MacLennan Associates Architects, who designed many Heritage restorations in Kingston, Ontario as well as Christ Church Cathedral in Montreal was inspired by Sharon Temple in their design for the Garden Court and its clerestory windows that now joins the original Briars house and Coach House. The stone carved coat of arms, unique in the region, was moved from above the main doorway to the northeast wall to preserve it. The arches of the Coach House are very sturdy as they held the 70-foot-tall bell tower, at the time the tallest structure in the area. It was a rite of passage for teens who reached age sixteen to climb the tower using the supports and lattice. The tower was removed for structural reasons in 1942 or 43 and the bell is currently in the small bell tower to the west of this structure. The new small bell tower includes several similar design elements. The current faux chimneys with their wooden, hand painted bricks are in poor condition. These were erected in the 1990's as the two original fireplaces and chimneys were removed in the 1978 construction to make way for dining and meeting space. The 1989 viewing tower at the Inn was inspired by the old bell tower. The Coach House building displays flat top windows to the east, arched to the west to match the main house. The Coach House had three drive through bays, women's and men's washrooms on the south side to accommodate farm hands and kitchen staff, a laundry, tool and paint rooms – all of which are visible if you know where to look. The second floor held an interesting loft area and access to the bell tower. **Pictured:** The Coach House today, at left, is joined to the East Wing of the house by the Garden Court which clerestory windows are visible.

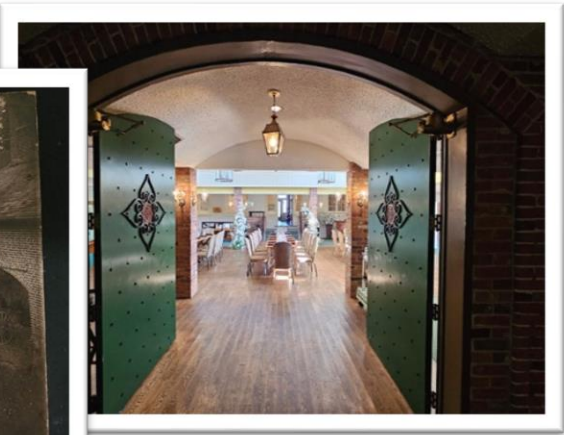




Dr. Francis Clunie Sibbald coat of Arms.
 Sae Bauld – a play on his last name.
 Dr. Sibbald was from Scotland and this was a Scots
 expression meaning "so bold".



An early gathering in what is now The Garden Court.
 Window of West wing at left, and below one can see
 the verandah that united east and west wings.
 At right is the Coach House.

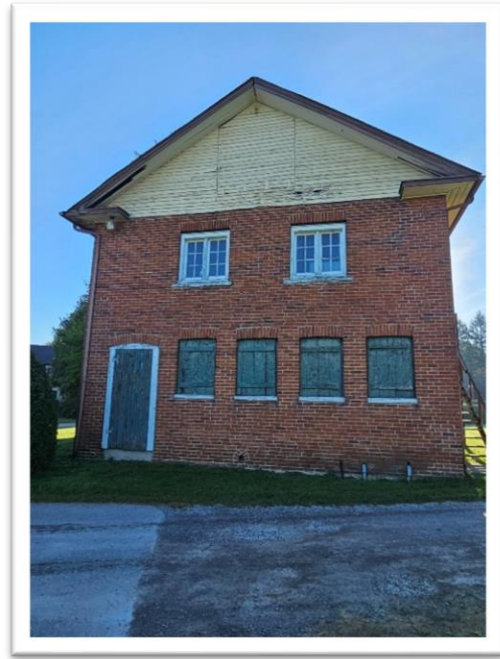
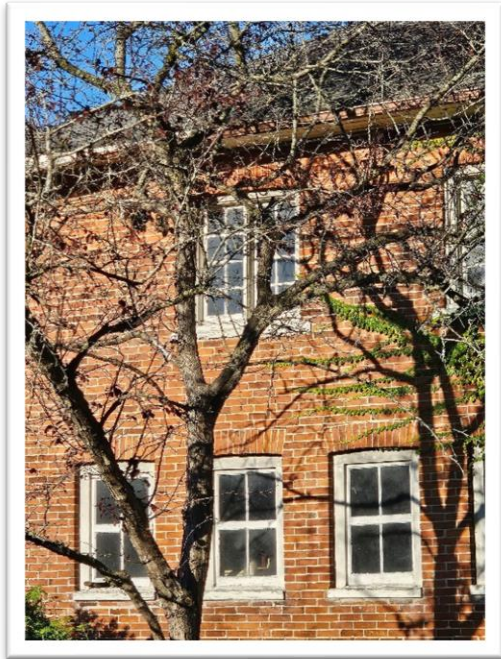


Pictured: Coach House Upper left part of Dr. Sibbald’s plans for the Coach House; upper right the Coach House pillars today; lower left an early gathering; lower right view today from Coach House into Garden Court dining room; centre Dr. F.C. Sibbald’s Coat of Arms “Sae Bauld” Scots for So Bold and indeed he was.

The Brick Stable (1880 - 1885) design by Dr. Francis Clunie Sibbald stands to the west of the current driveway. It held a prominent position when viewed from the original arrival drive and it still does. The inside stalls are in situ and contain handwritten notes from stable hands. The unique design carried through Dr. Sibbald's use of both arch topped and rectilinear doors/windows which are also used in the wings of the Main house and Coach house. The north roof, which would have been visible from the wings of the house or Coach House, is a hipped roof to match the other buildings. The south side is a gable roof to accommodate winches for the hay loft, parts of the mechanism that are still in place today. The building has Associative and Contextual Value and perhaps Design Value.



Pictured: Plan West wall of the Brick Stable includes two bull's eye windows above two arched doors. The centre arched main door has a gabled rooflet supported by two brick pillars. This handsome structure was prominent in the view from the main entrance of The Briars.



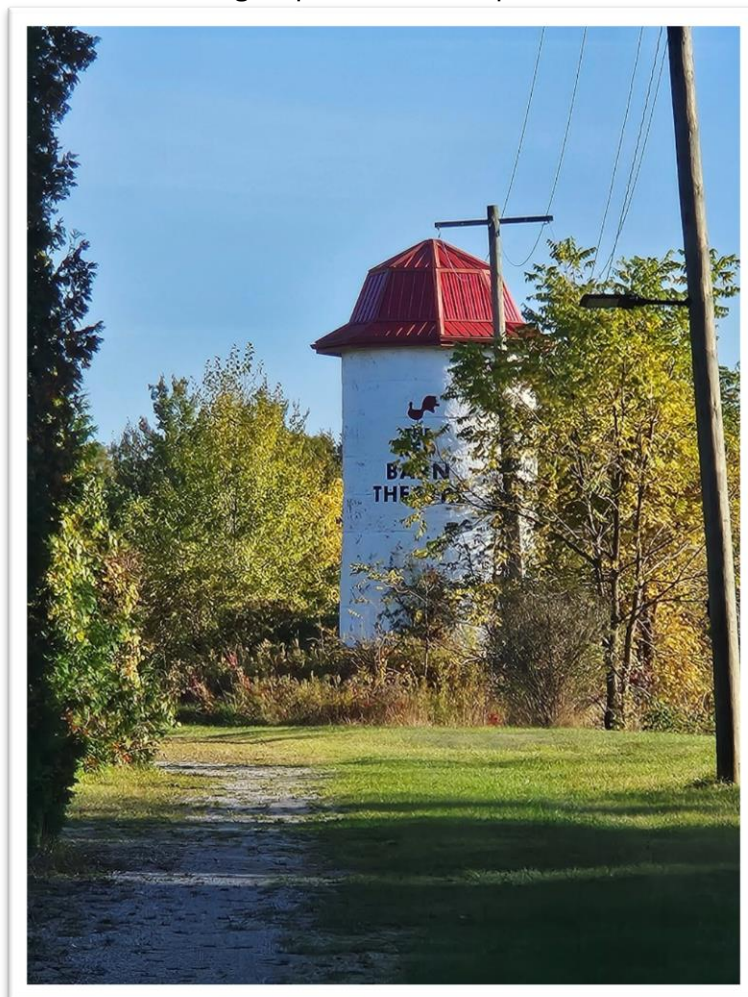
Pictured: Upper left is the plan north side of the stable displaying arched windows. Upper right the plan south wall displays flat topped windows with original shutters. Just out of view is the wooden door in the gable that allowed hay to be raised and stored. Below centre is the plan east wall which appears to include both arched and flat-topped doors and two bulls eye windows. These were filled in after construction due to the strength of the winter west winds and the horses needing better shelter. The cup in the roof has not changed since repairs were made in 1978.

The Ice House (c 1900) design by Dr. Francis Clunie Sibbald is just south east of the stable. At the time of construction this was in back fields separated from the more ornate outbuildings by cedar hedging. An expert in concrete history told John Sibbald that this rough farm building, originally ice storage for The Briars, is an outstanding example for Ontario of early poured concrete. This was a large icehouse for a prominent and busy household. Ice was an important economic driver in Jackson's Point, and this may be one of the last remaining icehouse structures in the area. The wall openings were added later and held flip flop doors when it was used as a Piggery and more recently a workshop. This long overlooked building may have important Contextual and Design Values.

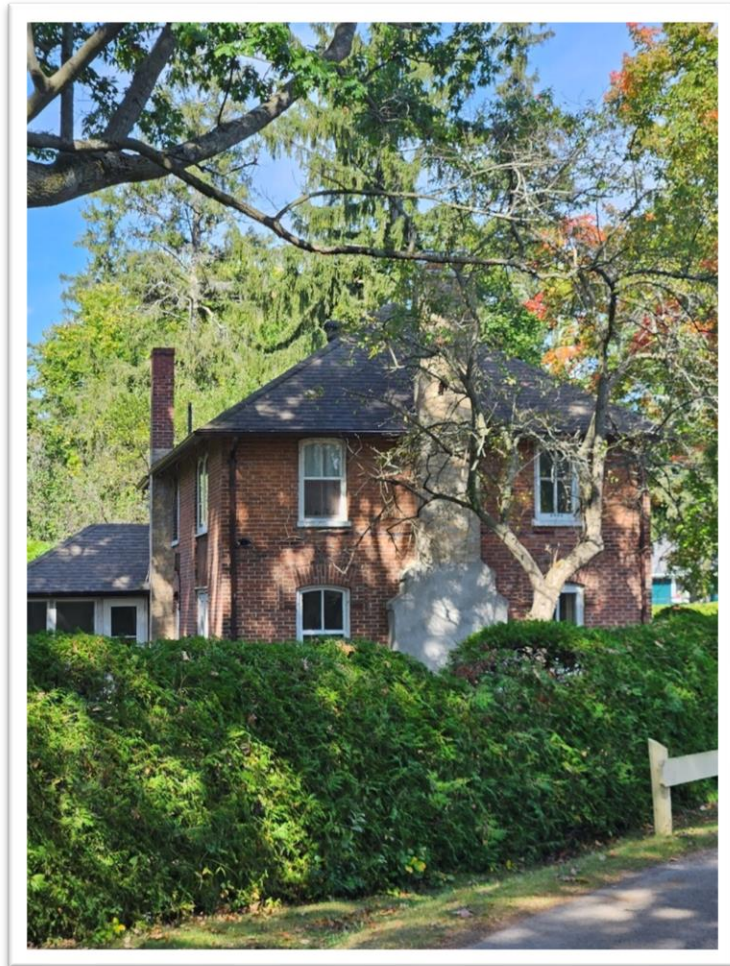


Pictured: Above left the southwest view of the Icehouse showing the addition of windows in the locations that held piggery flip flops in its second life. Above Right displays the northeast view of the icehouse, showing the method of large board molds used to pour the rough concrete. The location of the door and window are original.

The Silo on the former Red Barn site (1880) - the Red Barn Theatre (1949 to 2009) was owned by the Sibbald family and lost to fire. It was an enormous barn originally designed and built in 1880 to 1885 by Dr. F.C. Sibbald. The theatre became famous for straw hat summer theatre and hosted many of Canada's great entertainers. John Sibbald, as the owner, was dedicated to the vision of having Summer Theatre in Jackson's Point to make a more complete tourism experience to visitors and to enrich the lives of Georgina citizens. This is the last remaining structure from the theatre. The Red Barn was arguably Georgina's most famous structure, housing theatre for 59 years. The Barn itself was ambitious and enormous, famous as a farm barn in its day. It was lost to fire in April 2009. Attempts to rebuild were stymied by the deep recession. By the time support began to gather in 2011 the Town had decided to build a theatre in the Link in Sutton – an idea which did not come to fruition but nonetheless put the final nail in the Red Barn's coffin! The success of the theatre was an ode to the enormous energy of numerous volunteers, the Sibbald family and the Town of Georgina. The silo has considerable Contextual and Associative Value. However there has been no discussion to date that I know of with Dr. Lu – Vincent – who is working on plans to develop the former Red Barn site.



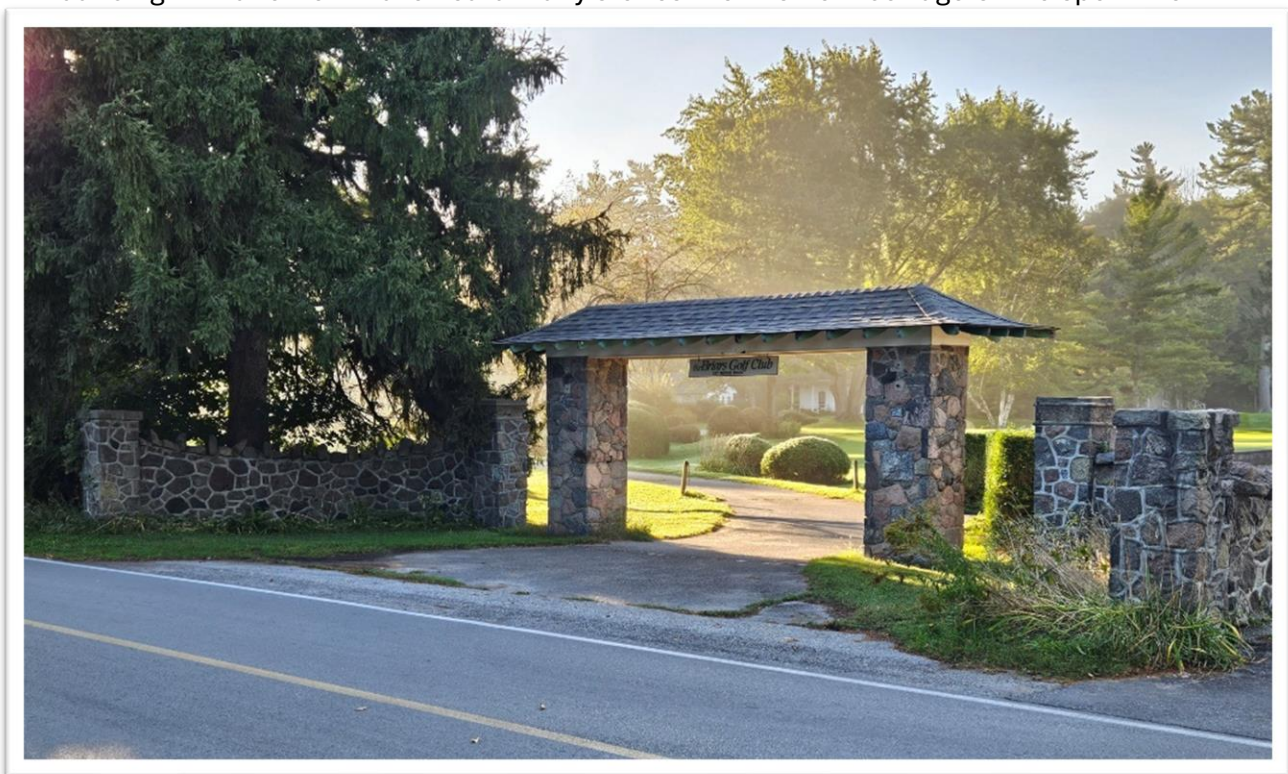
The Gate House 27 Hedge Road (formerly The Lodge) 1887 is privately owned by another family. It is included not as a candidate for the Register, but only as a record of note that it was part of Dr. Sibbald's original brick and brick-clad building period and it's an interesting part of the original Briars Estate. This was the original farm manager's house and possibly one of the first guest houses on the Briars property. The Gate House was later John and Barbara Sibbald's family home and hosted many famous Canadians at parties that were held for the cast of the Red Barn Theatre and guests of The Briars each Thursday "theatre night" throughout the 1960s and 70s. The new owners have cleaned up the exterior and are very interested in obtaining any historic photos of the house or stories of its history.



Other heritage structures which are of interest from the early 20th century

A second phase of intensive additions to The Briars property began when Dr. Sibbald's niece Bessie (Elizabeth Kemp Sibbald) began to sell lots and build cottages after 1907 and intensified when Bessie's nephew Jack (John Drinkwater Sibbald III) facilitated establishment of the Briars Golf Club and later Jack Sibbald's Briars Country Club. These are included for consideration of their heritage interest and to complete the inventory of heritage structures for those interested.

The Briars Golf Club Gate (1923) - stone gate with rooflet. An important landmark on Hedge Road. I call it the "Gate of Longing". Imagine standing beneath the gate, a light rain falling, dance music playing in the old Clubhouse as you watch the object of your heart's desire dancing with another. I have heard many stories like this from cottagers who spent their



Pictured: The Briars Golf Club gate as it appears today on Hedge Road

The Briars Golf Club House (1923) - Originally designed by Charles Sherman Cobb. We are searching our archives for the rendering. The design's round posts were changed to square for practical reasons during construction by local builder Mr. Lake. The design includes repeating pairs of square posts across an open verandah, repeated as single posts on the second-floor balcony. The verandah was later glazed and screened by Jack Sibbald with sections that can be easily removed to reveal the original structure. This building operated as the Club's club house from 1923 to the late 1980s. From 1942 it was under license to The Briars and used for dining, club and other events. From the 1920s to the 1950s Saturday dances often included live music when bands played from the second story balconies. This building is the last remaining of the south shore of Lake Simcoe's famed dance period.



Pictured: Upper The Club House 1923 now called the Summer House. Lower detail shows the repeating pairs of pillars which are echoed by single posts on the second floor

Writer's Road

The Hedge Road has been home to many creative ventures. These structures and notes are included for the record as Georgina considers things of cultural and heritage value. Stephen Leacock, Mazo de la Roche, Stephen Williams, Peter Gzowski and Timothy Findley have all found creative spaces on The Briars Estate and Hedge Road.

Birdie Cottage (1942) 136 Hedge Road is one of five unique two bedroom lakefront cottages which were constructed for the opening of Jack Sibbald's Briars Country Club using recycled farm buildings from around Georgina. Mazo de la Roche loved Birdie Cottage. It has wonderful views of Lake Simcoe and the two bedrooms allowed her to stay with her companion Caroline Clement. Ms.de la Roche wrote parts of several of her best-selling Jalna series of popular novels there. The series went on to sell more than eleven million copies. Mazo was often an interesting dinner guest of Jack and Marjorie Sibbald.

Leacock Cottage (c 1900) 10 Sibbald Crescent (pictured below) This small two bedroom cottage is constructed of elm logs which are now hidden under later construction. Originally located at approximately 104 Hedge Road, it was Stephen Leacock's mother's waterfront cottage, frequently visited by renowned author Stephen Leacock who was, at one time, the best-known English-speaking humourist in the world. Stephen was a wonderfully entertaining and frequent dinner guest of Jack Sibbald and his wife Marjorie.

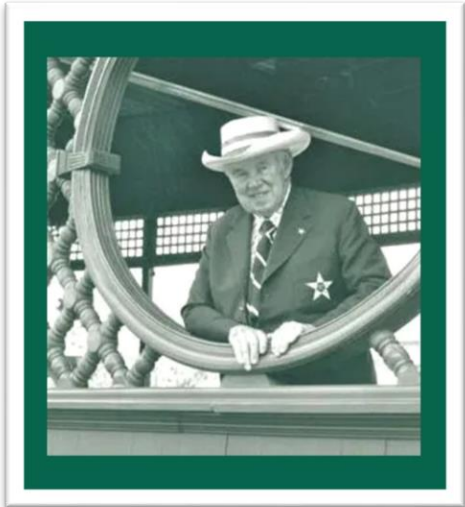


The Tennis Pavilion (1989) 55 Hedge Road

This is included to round out the description of The Briars unique heritage structures. Although not from the original building period of The Briars, this interesting pavilion was designed by MacLennan Associates after the McKim, Mead & White Pavilion at the National Tennis Hall of fame which is situated in the venerable Newport Casino. It features ornate lattice with viewing circle, interesting roof adornments and the interior - which can be viewed from the exterior- features tongue and groove walls and ceiling rescued from "Pippy Longstocking's House" in Jackson's Point. It marks an important period in The Briars history during which tennis was incredibly popular in Ontario and the northern USA. Tennis was a staple of guest visits to The Briars and the Pavilion provided a centre of social life and a much needed shady escape from the summer sun. The Pavilion is in pretty good condition with replacement needed of two roof adornments and several repairs to lattice work required in the near future. John McEnroe once came to stay. His limousine rolled up to a rear door, he was smuggled up a back stair and enjoyed a night away from the press gallery. He probably doesn't remember, but we do!



Pictured: The Briars Tennis Pavilion 1989 by MacLennan Associates Architects after McKim, Mead & White's Pavilion in Rhode Island



Pictured: Upper Centre The Briars Tennis Pavilion from the “interior “showing detail of the lattice viewing circle ; bottom left a dignitary looks out of the viewing circle at the Rhode Island Tennis Club; bottom right McKim, Mead & White.

There are many far more interesting and entertaining stories to tell of the people and events that have created The Briars...