

The Anchorage



The Anchorage Today



The Anchorage in 1900

When *John Skynner* retired to his new home in Upper Canada he proclaimed, "Here I will rest; this is my anchorage." Having been a home, summer cottage, office, and lastly a warehouse for the *National Sewer Pipe Company*, the cottage was moved to its present location in 1978, but was left unused until sufficient funds for its restoration were raised in 1991. The Anchorage now contains the offices of the Museums of Mississauga, plus a gift shop, exhibition area, and a meeting room.

The Anchorage was originally located south of Lakeshore Road, west of Southdown Road on land that had been granted to *Colonel Stephen Jarvis* in 1812. Commander Skynner purchased the property in 1839. Whether he had The Anchorage built or not is still undetermined. In fact, Jarvis family history relates a story of purchasing a house in the Town of York in 1816 and floating it by barge along the shores of Lake Ontario where it was then pulled up on the beach. The Anchorage was situated on that same piece of land. Whatever its date of construction, it is considered an excellent example of the 'Regency' style of architecture. A transition between earlier Georgian and later Victorian styles, Regency homes were popular among the British military and were derived from the Indian bungalows of the Far East. The broad overhanging eaves and large windows were intended to keep the summer heat out of the building, however, they were not suitable for harsh Canadian winters.

About the Anchorage

The Property

The land on which The Anchorage was originally situated is located at the south end of Southdown Road, on the lakeshore. This lot was granted to Stephen Jarvis in 1812. The Jarvises did not build the Anchorage, living instead in a smaller home for 20 years. Stephen's son, Frederick Starr Jarvis, sold the property to James Taylor in 1832. Captain John Skynner purchased the land from Taylor in 1838. There is some uncertainty as to when the home was built or who built it and when, or if, the house was moved.

Origin of the Home's Name

There is also some uncertainty as to how the name 'The Anchorage' came to be. One source suggests that Captain John Skynner christened the house. "I have retired", Skynner proclaimed. "Here I will rest; this is my anchorage." However, Stephen Jarvis may have called his earlier home 'Anchorage'. There was a sandbar offshore of his property and, as a merchant, Jarvis used this sandbar to anchor merchant vessels bringing in goods from York and Niagara.

About Face

In 1978, Anthony Adamson – a professor of architecture at the University of Toronto – suggested that the Anchorage's interior layout was reversed sometime in the 1840s or '50s, so that the back of the

house (facing away from the lake) became the front, and the lake-facing side reduced to a back door. (Today, the Anchorage is situated on the Bradley lot in the latter configuration, with the front door facing Orr Road.) The change may have been the result of the declining importance of water transportation in Merigold's Point and the increased dependence of roads.

Years of Change

The present 375 square metre (4,070 sq. ft.) house is not precisely as it looked in the 1830s but instead shows the many additions and alterations made to the house over 170 years including its years of use as an office, not only by National Sewer Pipe, but also by the Bradley Museum staff. The present stairwell dates back only to the 1850s. Before then, residents got upstairs by way of a straight staircase located in the hallway between the present-day tea room door and the hallway leading to the washrooms. The house was veneered in yellow brick sometime in the 1870s but this was removed at an undetermined date. A dining room once stood where the washrooms and the modern kitchen are now situated. The main floor office was the kitchen and the little foyer at the back entrance was possibly a pantry, or may have been used by a servant. A servant's wing was added sometime in the early part of the 20th century. The dormers (the windows that project from the sloping roof) were not part of the original 1838 home. The present floors are not original.

From Private to Public Ownership

In 1953, the last residential owner, Jim Davidson, sold the home to the National Sewer Pipe Company. The building served as its main office until 1977. The Anchorage was moved to its present location in 1978. Exterior repairs were made and the house set on a new foundation, but the interior remained derelict until 1991 when the Mississauga Heritage Foundation raised sufficient funds for restoration were raised. A year later, The Anchorage had its official grand opening.

Commander John Skynner of The Anchorage

John Skynner commissioned the construction of The Anchorage after his retirement from the Royal Navy in 1838, at the age of 76. Skynner served in all of Admiral Nelson's campaigns except for Trafalgar - Nelson's historic final victory over Napoleon's navy in 1805. Skynner was there in spirit, however. He was commanding a ship in the Mediterranean, blockading that sea so that French ships could not make it out to the Atlantic to join in the battle.



Commander John Skynner

Skynner, John (1762 to 1846)

The following is from the Naval Biographical Dictionary: 1849, pg. 1077. "This officer entered the navy in 1795 as an able-bodied seaman on board the *Bedford*, under Robert Mann. This ship was attached to the fleet in the Mediterranean where he served from the following December until April, 1801. Skynner served as midshipman [a seaman in training for an officer's rank] and master's mate aboard the *Egmont*, under Capt. John Sutton. On that ship he was present at the evacuation of Corsica in 1796, and in the action off Cape St. Vincent 14 Feb. 1797. After this tour, he served on the *Ville de Paris* - the flagship of Honourable William Cornwallis. Skynner then served on the *Isis*, under Captain T.M. Hardy, then served as acting lieutenant on the *Nemesis*, under the command of Captain Edward Owen. Skynner was confirmed to the latter rank on 8 March 1802, in the *Amazon*, under captains Samuel Sutton and William Parker. Aboard this ship, Skynner brought the Duke of Kent [the father of Queen Victoria] home from Gibraltar. Skynner held command, from 19 June 1804 until 14 December, 1807, of the *Hirondelle* - a gunbrig. He retired as a Commander in 1838."

Skynner's Service in Malta

The Royal Navy assigned Lieutenant Skynner to Malta in 1802. Napoleon had captured the island four years earlier to blockade the Mediterranean Sea, but the Royal Navy successfully thwarted France's navy and Malta was liberated by the British. For his efforts in the Mediterranean campaign, Skynner was made a full captain and given command of his own brigantine (pronounced: brig-an-TEEN) called the *Hirondelle*. British brigantines, or 'brigs' were two-masted sailing vessels known for their speed and manoeuvrability.

The Hirondelle

Interestingly Skynner's ship, the *Hirondelle*, may have originally been a French vessel. Most navies tended to destroy enemy ships in battle. The Royal Navy rose to global dominance because its captains tried to capture enemy ships in as good a condition as battle permitted, refit these ships and then add them to the King's already massive fleet. Skynner may have been part of a battle in the Indian Ocean that saw the capture of the *Hirondelle*.

The Qualities of a Navy Captain

The First Lord of the Admiralty in 1805, Horatio Nelson, offered this job description:

"He should be deeply skilled in practical professional knowledge so as to know, from a sloop to a first-rate, what each is capable of performing, the time it will take to fit her, the services she is capable of performing and what time is necessary to perform it in. In preparing convoys . . . he should have his ships in such readiness as to be at the rendezvous by a given day."

The Skynner Cup

In 1808, the people of the British island possession of Malta, in the Mediterranean Sea, presented a commemorative silver urn to John Skynner. The cup recognized Skynner's efforts to protect the island during the Napoleonic wars from 1796 to 1815 and to his skill at keeping the lines of navigation open between Malta and Gibraltar during the war. For the United Kingdom, the Mediterranean was not only essential to the defeat of Napoleon, it was the main trade route to the empire's garrisons on the Indian subcontinent garrisons such as Benares.



Skynner Cup

The Inscription

The inscription on the cup reads as follows:

"This piece of Plate is humbly inscribed to LIEUTENANT JOHN SKYNNER late Commanding His Majesty's Brig of War HIRONDELLE by the Merchants and Others residing in the Island of Malta as a token of respect for his very meritorious conduct and unremitted [sic] attention to the numerous Convoys under his charge while in the MEDITERRANEAN."

The Cup's Creators

Mystery surrounds the cup's smiths. James Ede and Alexander Hewat were in business from 1808 to 1810. It is surmised that the Skynner Cup may have been the partnership's submission for entry into the Guild of Silversmiths.

Features of the Cup

The handles of the cup represent entwined snakes and appears to be accurate, right down to the individual scales. As with most honorary cups, the Skynner Cup typically features the rose of England, the thistle of Scotland and the shamrock of Ireland, but the cup also includes acanthus leaves. The acanthus grows only in the warm Mediterranean climate and was added to the usual British triumvirate to represent Malta's link to the empire.

Prize Possession

Ms. Adrienne Gates of New Brunswick generously donated the Skynner Cup to the Bradley Museum in 1995. She is a descendent of John Skynner, through the Jarvis family