

BELLEVUE

National Historic Park





Sir John A. Macdonald about the time he lived at Bellevue

Public Archives of Canada

BELLEVUE HOUSE

A National Historic Park

*Administered By
Canadian Historic Sites Division,
National and Historic Parks Branch,
Department of Indian Affairs and
Northern Development*

**Text by Mrs. Margaret Angus,
Kingston.**

Issued Under the Authority of the
Honourable Jean Chrétien, P.C., M.P., B.A., LL. L.
Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development

©
THE QUEEN'S PRINTER
OTTAWA, 1969

Price 25¢ Additional copies may be purchased from the Queen's Printer, Ottawa

Bellevue House, Kingston, built in 1838-39 by Charles Hales and occupied for a time by Sir John Alexander Macdonald, is a memorial to men and affairs often overlooked in formal history. It is one of the many country houses built in Upper Canada by successful merchants, lawyers, doctors and businessmen who made, and often lost, fortunes in the rapid expansion of the colony. The architecture is a radical departure from the functional shop and dwelling combinations or English style town houses built within the early town limits of Kingston.

The Macdonald family came from Glasgow to that early town in July, 1820. Hugh Macdonald, his wife, sons John A. and James and daughters Margaret and Louisa, were welcomed by their relatives, Col. and Mrs. Donald Macpherson. By October the Macdonalds had set up shop and housekeeping in a small building on King Street. Hugh Macdonald was not a successful merchant and within four years he moved to Hay Bay, near Adolphustown, where his fortunes were no better. John A. went to classes for a time at Adolphustown and then returned to Kingston to attend school.

He lived and boarded in Kingston, frequently visiting his Macpherson relatives at Cluny House, three miles away. It was a pleasant distance for visits and he spent many happy days with his Macpherson cousins. John A. was a student at the Midland District Grammar School until January, 1829 when he attended a new school for classical and general education run by the Rev. John Cruickshank.

Macdonald travelled to Toronto in April, 1830 to apply to the Law Society of Upper Canada for admittance as a student at law. Back in Kingston he entered the law office of George Mackenzie as a student and the house of Mackenzie as a boarder. Macdonald was sent two years later to Mackenzie's branch office in Napanee where more Macpherson cousins welcomed him. In 1833, after a summer in Kingston, he took over, temporarily he thought, the law office of his ailing cousin, Lowther Macpherson, in Hallowell (now Picton). He was conveniently close to his family at Stone Mills and the temporary job which lasted two years might have been permanent but Kingston was more attractive to Macdonald.

His friend and teacher, George Mackenzie, had died in the cholera epidemic of 1834 and, although there was no arrangement about the practice, Macdonald knew the clients and much of the business. In August, 1835, Macdonald advertised the opening of his office on Quarry Street (now Wellington), Kingston. At about the same time his father, mother and two sisters came back to Kingston and moved into a Macpherson house on Rideau Street (now 110). The law practice started well; he was already known for his work in Napanee and Hallowell; the Scotch Presbyterian community encouraged him; and two weeks after his 21st. birthday he had his first law student. On January 27, 1836 young Oliver Mowat, a future premier of Ontario, was articled to John A. Macdonald. Early the next month Macdonald went to Toronto to be formally admitted to the degree Barrister at Law on February 6.

His Career Begins

Three years later his practice had grown, his reputation as a trial lawyer was established and his business and family connections secured his election to the Board of Directors of the Commercial Bank. He was appointed the bank's solicitor that same year and took another law student, Alexander Campbell, into his office. With two law students he had to move to larger quarters on Princess street and he moved his family to the more fashionable Queen street.

Hugh Macdonald, now a clerk in the Commercial Bank, died in 1841, and John A. became the sole support of his mother and two unmarried sisters. In September, 1843, Macdonald married his cousin, Isabella Clark, whom he had met on a trip to Scotland the year before. He now had two households, for he took his bride to a handsome house on Brock street.

Meanwhile his practice was expanding with the town—business deals, property transfers,

court cases, estate business. He was moving gradually into politics—making his first appearance in 1840 speaking for the nomination of J. R. Forsyth as member for Kingston. In February 1843, he started in municipal politics as an alderman. Macdonald was elected Member of Parliament for Kingston on October 14, 1844—the beginning of a long and illustrious career.

The Hales House

This was a period of expansion in every business and profession in Upper Canada. As a military centre Kingston had benefitted from defence construction in the Rideau Canal and Fort Henry. As a transshipment point it had become increasingly prosperous as lands were opened for development in Upper Canada and farther west. The political unrest which caused the Rebellion of 1837 affected Kingston when Lord Durham's recommended solutions to the political and financial troubles resulted in the union in 1841 of Upper and Lower Canada. Kingston became the capital of Canada on February 6, 1841.

Even before the first rumors of union Kingston's prosperity was evident. The wealthier business and professional men were moving their families from their old quarters above shops and offices to substantial homes outside the business district and sometimes outside the town. The biggest country houses, with names like Summerhill, Hawthorne Cottage, St. Helens and Alwington, were built along the lakeshore road west of town, towards the new penitentiary. On this road Charles Hales, Esq., merchant, bought nine acres and his Bellevue House rose on the limestone shelf above Lake Ontario. His nearest neighbour to the east, in Edgehill House, was Mrs. Jane McLeod, widow of a business associate.

Hales was representative of the builders, bakers, coopers and merchants who came to Canada from the British Isles in the 1820's and 30's. He was a member of a small but militant group of Wesleyan Methodists who played an important part in business, religious and municipal affairs in Kingston. Charles Hales was an established merchant, a forceful man with strong religious views. He married Elizabeth Charlotte Chettle, daughter of a Wesleyan Methodist minister in 1836 and they lived in a dwelling over his grocery on Front street (now Ontario).

Hales' association with the Torrance firm of Montreal provided excellent credit and he opened a crockery store beside his grocery. He bought stock in two steamboats and in the Marine Railway. He met with other businessmen to form a Board of Trade.

Hales advertised his town dwelling over his store for rent in July, 1839 and moved his wife and baby daughter to the new villa on the lakeshore road. Diligent research has failed to discover any record of the architect or contractor for Bellevue House. The Scobell brothers, architect and builder, in Hales' Wesleyan Methodist group, may have been involved. The house plans probably came from one of the latest builders' manuals.

The Tuscan Italian design was recommended for its uneven outline—an L shape with centre tower and interesting roof lines. It was usually built of brick but in Kingston the basement excavations produced stone for building the house. Careful shaping of the stone was not so necessary since stucco would cover irregularities. The balconies, the tower finial, the dentilled barge boards decorating the eaves, were all in the manual. The colour contrast was a bit gay but set amongst trees, with shadow patterns constantly moving, it was a change from austere limestone.

Bellevue was arranged inside for a proper gentleman's residence—the servants' quarters and kitchens discreetly separated from the rest of the house. An entrance hall, square and formal, in the thick-walled base of the tower section, emphasized the deep panelling of the four doorways. One led to the dining room, one to the stair hall, and two to the double parlour. The larger room with handsome panelled fireplace and three long windows in the bay was elegantly furnished. The wallpaper probably came from Montreal; some furniture was new, some fine old pieces had been bought from military officers before they went

home to England. The inner room with a French door opening to the garden could be cut off by closing the big sliding doors for a smaller party or perhaps simply for warmth.

The dining room, formal and somewhat dark in spite of two long windows, was tastefully furnished with centre table and chairs, side table, serving table, sideboard and china cabinets in wall niches. A chandelier hung over the table and in the winter a decorative stove stood in front of the fireplace.

The Family Room

Off the stair hall was the family, or ladies' sitting room—smaller and more easily heated. It was conveniently away from the main door if Mrs. Hales was "not at home" but close enough to the everyday life of the house for her to keep an eye on things. Here the family and servants gathered each morning to hear Mr. Hales read a lesson from the Bible. The room had a homey air—a basket of sewing on the footstool, a sock half-knit on a chair, and, perhaps folded beside the table lamp, copies of the *Christian Guardian* and the *British Whig*, a local newspaper.

During the Hales' occupancy, the nursery was in the big room to the right at the top of the stairs. Its windows, open to fresh air all day, could be closed tight to keep out the dangerous night air. Across the hall the spare bedroom was ready for overnight guests from town or visitors from afar who might stay for weeks.

The master suite opened off its own hallway. First was the dressing room with wardrobe, chests, washstand and a couch. The master bedroom matched the main parlour in size and design. The fireplace was plainer, the bay not so high but the view was much better. A big curtained four-poster bed was piled high with feather ticks and quilts. On Mrs. Hales' desk a ribbon marked the page where she had entered a copy of her last letter to her parents in Frome, Somersetshire.

From the upstairs hall two steps led up to the first tower room which Mr. Hales used as an office. Sometimes he brought ledgers and letters home from the shop, checked household accounts or wrote letters concerning the Auxiliary Bible Society. Then he could climb the winding stairs to the top tower room and look over the trees to watch ships on the lake.

The servants' section of the house was definitely and properly "below stairs"; its three floors were each at least half a flight below the main rooms. At the foot of the cellar stairs the scullery, bright with lime wash on beams and stone walls, had running water supplied from a stone cistern fed by rainwater from the roof drains. Here the scullery maid polished the shoes and brass and pewter, scrubbed the vegetables and pots and pans and peeled potatoes.

In the kitchen the cook took out the last fresh loaves and put a seed cake in the oven. She tested the pot roast and stirred up the fire, then sent the scullery maid to tell the boy the wood box was nearly empty. The second maid stirred the pot of soup hanging from the fireplace crane, moved the teakettle a little closer to the fire and finished running an iron over the last of Mr. Hales' shirts. At one end of the big table were the thick mugs and loaf for the servants' tea; at the other end a silver tray with white linen and fine china was ready for Mrs. Hales' fine pekoe tea and pound cake.

The storage room farthest from the big fireplace was a cold room holding pans of milk, pats of butter, crocks of pickles and preserves and a leg of beef shrouded in muslin. Near the back door and the stairs to the main hall the larger pantry held everyday china and glass and a locked cupboard with tea, sugar, tins of biscuit, dried fruits and sweets.

At the back of the kitchen a steep, narrow, ladder-like stairway led to the women's servants rooms above. They could also be reached from the landing of the main stairway but only for housework and special errands. No dirty laundry or slop pails were carried down the main stairway, at least not when Mr. or Mrs. Hales might be about. Even the wood trim

marked the social distinction. The hall doors were panelled and grained on the landing side, plain and drab on the servants' side.

The Heating System

Bellevue was planned with many conveniences besides the kitchen range and double windows. Sometimes Mr. Hales would roll back the rug in the entrance hall and lift the small trap door to satisfy himself that the overflow pipe to the rainwater cistern was working properly. Beside each fireplace was a bell knob connected through metal tubing set in the plaster to a set of bells in the scullery. For the cold Canadian winter this Italian villa was provided with a number of stoves and a positive maze of stovepipes and heat holes. Where each pipe went through a wall or floor there was a heavy stone "surround" for fire protection. In the stair hall a three-way heat hole connected inner parlour and ladies' sitting room to the hall stove.

The Hales had been in Bellevue House about a year and a half when Kingston was named the capital and the frantic rush to provide immediate housing for government officials began. The Board of Trade made a special appeal to its members. The Mayor gave up his house and dozens of others followed suit. Hawthorne Cottage went to the Governor General's Chief Secretary, Mrs. McLeod shared Edgehill with one family and the Hales moved back to the dwelling over the grocery on Front street.

Charles Hales made good use of the front of his nine acres by building five stone cottages—still standing—close to the lakeshore road and renting them to government officials. He bought more land near town to subdivide and commissioned architect George Browne to add a wing to his downtown building. His first tenant had left Bellevue by the summer of 1842 and he moved back to his quiet villa to be close to Hales' Cottages which had frequent changes of tenants as civil and military secretaries came and went.

Hales gave up his crockery store to spend more time selling his real estate, now less in demand as rumours spread that the capital was to be moved once again. The decision to move to Montreal was made in November, 1843; by June, 1844, the last officials had left Kingston. Business was bad, his downtown building was empty and no one wanted building lots. The cruelest blow came that fall of 1844 when baby Charles Hales, aged five months, died to be followed a few weeks later by his mother.

The next spring Hales rented his Italian villa again. His tenants to 1848 included James Harvey and William Ermatinger.

John A. Macdonald rented Bellevue House from Charles Hales in August, 1848. Macdonald was 33 years old, a well-established lawyer and a Member of Parliament. On August 2nd. the Macdonalds had celebrated John A. junior's first birthday. On September first they would celebrate their fifth wedding anniversary and would also mark five years of the law partnership of Macdonald and Alexander Campbell.

The Family Reunited

John A. was delighted to have his family together again. He had brought his invalid wife, Isabella, home from the United States in June after an absence of three years. She was exhausted from the trip but was enjoying her reunion with young John A. who had been brought to Kingston shortly after his birth in New York. He was a bright, happy baby who, as Macdonald wrote, had got through his first year with no illness or trouble of any kind.

The Macdonald house on Brock street where his mother and sisters were keeping house for him was not a good place for an invalid. A tavern near-by was noisy day and night; the dust and stable smells from the innyard and wood smoke drifted in to make Isabella cough incessantly. Dr. Hayward advised them to find a place where country air could help nature do the healing. Macdonald found the best available house on a rocky knoll, surrounded by

trees and cooled by the breeze from Lake Ontario. The unusual style, the gay trim and the landlord's business had given the house a variety of nicknames—Muscovado Mansion, Tea Caddy Castle and Pekoe Pagoda.

So in August 1848 the Macdonalds rented Bellevue House. The move took over a week although the house was partially furnished. There was a great flurry in the Brock street house as John A.'s mother and sisters supervised the packing to save Isabella's strength. There were conferences on household arrangements, lists of bedding and linen, dishes, pots and pans—to consider how best to supply two households. Things were brought out of storage and each time the carriage travelled to Bellevue House it was loaded.

The servants went out the first of the week to sweep carpets, air curtains, scrub pantry shelves and put away supplies. John A.'s cousin, Willina Harper, came across from Hawthorne Cottage to see what she could do to help. The furniture was rearranged so Isabella could use the ladies' sitting room as her bedroom. She would then be on the main floor and not so isolated when John A. was in town or away on business.

Finally Bellevue House was ready. On Friday evening the carriage was brought to the door in Brock street. The nurse holding baby John climbed in. Dr. Hayward and John A. helped Isabella in and supported her during the dusty, bumpy drive. She arrived at the country villa coughing and exhausted. In her own bed, her room darkened and quiet, the cool, clean breeze ruffling the curtains Isabella Macdonald was home in Bellevue House. With a week of rest and quiet she began to take an interest in household affairs.

In the rest of the big house everyday life had been going on quietly. Now the mistress of the household, still in her bed, began to take hold; a discussion with the cook about Mr. Macdonald's meals, a direction to the maid about Mr. Macdonald's laundry, a careful check of the list of supplies. Best of all were the days when baby John sat on her bed playing with his toys while Isabella watched.

It was a time of growing contentment for Macdonald. Isabella seemed to be improving and life in Pekoe Pagoda was pleasant. When the maid knocked at Macdonald's bedroom door with his morning tea he was usually propped up in bed reading. A jug of hot water for shaving was put on the washstand in the dressing room and before long John A. looked into the nursery to greet his small son before he went down to the dining room for more tea with toast and jam. He looked in to see how Isabella had slept and to tell her his plans for the day.

Macdonald's Day

Macdonald was off to town by nine o'clock to spend the day at his office or in court. Sometimes he rode in with his partner, Alexander Campbell, who was living in one of Hales' Cottages. He occasionally rode in with Francis Harper and discussed family affairs or business of the Commercial Bank which concerned him as solicitor and director. At about eleven he had a hearty breakfast with friends then went back to work.

At Bellevue House the cleaning, baking, washing and ironing went on as usual. Mrs. Harper sent over some calves foot jelly for the invalid. Isabella's sister, Maria Macpherson, came out to tell Isabella about her trip to the seashore. Mrs. Macdonald, who adored her grandson, drove out with Margaret and Louisa to have tea with Isabella and to take the baby for a short drive.

Then on September 23, 1848, the *Chronicle and News* carried this announcement: "Died on Thursday 21st. inst. the infant son of Hon. John A. Macdonald, aged 13 months." No record has been found of the cause of death. The boy was due to be weaned just before that and he was sick only a few days. The whole family were in great distress and Isabella was prostrate. But the fall assizes had opened and a few days later Macdonald had to get back to court, leaving Isabella to be consoled by her sister.

The household settled into the routine of Macdonald's departure at nine, with activities and plans for the day centred on his return at six. Most of the time he had dinner alone at

seven in the big dining room. Sometimes the maid would set a small table in Isabella's room and they would have dinner together. Usually he joined her after his solitary meal and read to her for an hour or so. Then after a cup of tea she was settled for the night and Macdonald went up to the tower room to read or work on a case. Later he would replenish the fire in Isabella's room and make sure she had water and her medicine within reach. There was a little hand bell there, too, for the bell knob at the fireplace was too far away. Then John A. went up to the big curtained four-poster bed and read until late.

Macdonald was out of town only a fortnight that fall when he had to attend the Court of the Queen's Bench in Toronto. While he was away Isabella sat up for a while each day determined to show her husband that she was better, and on the day John A. came home from Toronto they had dinner together in Isabella's room.

She was still beset by "neuralgia in the head" so severe she often had to have opium, which left her weak and listless. But her cough was better and the telltale spots of blood on her handkerchief fewer. Best of all she was cheerful and concerned with managing the household as well as she could from her bed.

John A.'s other household, with his mother and two sisters, required attention too. At the office he had the normal life of a very busy lawyer with more business than he and Campbell could handle with ease. As solicitors for the Commercial Bank they were involved in long negotiations with the city for payment of interest on the city debt.

Macdonald's position as Member of Parliament for Kingston brought problems and responsibilities. Sometimes the public petitioners seemed to crowd out the private clients; and committee meetings, speeches and personal appearances were a constant drain on time and energy. Macdonald always took work home with him and sometimes Campbell came to Bellevue House for an uninterrupted conference.

Friends came, too, to ask for advice. Henry Smith, Jr., member for the county, came to talk about the commission investigating the Provincial Penitentiary in Kingston. Smith's father had just been suspended as warden and the commission was hearing further witnesses. Macdonald was in a difficult position; there was evidence of mismanagement, yet the senior Smith felt he had not been given a reasonable chance to defend himself. Macdonald finally presented Smith's petition to Parliament and asked for an inquiry, which was denied.

There were happier dealings with other Kingstonsians. The Mechanics Institute elected Macdonald president; the St. Andrew's Society did the same. He met with Queen's University officials to discuss the University Bill which would be considered when Parliament met after the holidays.

A Quiet Celebration

The Macdonalds celebrated the holidays very quietly. Isabella was well enough to be drawn in her chair across the hall to the dining room to dine in state. And she had finished a new waistcoat for John A. which he showed to the rest of the family when he visited his relatives. The ladies of the family called on Isabella—short calls over a number of days. Yet even the few visitors tired Isabella and brought on a severe attack of neuralgia. John A. excused himself from the Mayor's traditional dinner at the British American Hotel on December 28 to stay with her. On New Year's Day Macdonald made his courtesy calls on his neighbours and on friends and officials in the city.

Business and family problems had to be dealt with early in January for Parliament was to meet in Montreal later that month. Once again Alexander Campbell would have to take care of all the firm's clients and he was not pleased. Macdonald wondered if his political career would ruin his law firm. Isabella dreaded his going and he was worried about leaving her. Again he would have to depend on his female relatives and Dr. Hayward to look after his wife.

Macdonald had little time to worry when Parliament met. He presented a number of

petitions concerning local matters and bills to incorporate the Kingston Water Works and the Kingston General Hospital. The bigger issues had local implications and the University Bill and Robert Baldwin's Municipal Bill both brought to Macdonald's desk petitions from Kingston groups. The Rebellion Losses Bill was the hottest political issue of the time and Macdonald presented a Kingston petition against it to Solicitor-General Blake. When Blake read it to the House he omitted some words from the Kingston address which altered the meaning and Macdonald called him to account promptly and sharply. Words were exchanged, rumours of a duel began to circulate and in a closed session they were both bound to keep the peace.

Early in April Macdonald was given leave to return home on urgent private business. The District Court and Quarter Session had opened in Kingston April 3, the Grand Jury had met, the Assizes were to open April 10. So Campbell needed his partner in Kingston. The Assizes closed on the 23rd. with a third of the civil cases undisposed and more work on the lawyers' desks.

Macdonald was still in Kingston when the Governor-General gave his assent to the Rebellion Losses Bill and the angry mob burned the Parliament Buildings in Montreal on April 25. A few days later Macdonald spoke to a crowded meeting in City Hall. Back in Montreal he moved that Kingston might again be the capital of Canada but his motion was lost. By the end of May Parliament was prorogued and he was once again back in Kingston.

Campbell, his partner, had been ill and the work was piled high. An additional task was the organization for a convention in Kingston of the British American League. There were meetings at the office, evening conferences at Bellevue, trips to nearby towns and stacks of letters to be answered as the meeting day approached.

Yet in all this excitement Macdonald wrote his weekly letter to Isabella's sister, Margaret Greene, to give her the family news. Isabella's brother, John Clark, visited them for three weeks in July and Macdonald took him to Picton showing him "fine farms, beautiful scenery and bad roads." Clark spent only a little time each day with his sister so as not to tire her but when other relatives came to see him Isabella insisted on seeing them too. Macdonald scolded Isabella and his fears were realized when she became quite ill after her brother left.

The British American League met at City Hall for five days the end of July and Macdonald was home for only brief visits at Bellevue House. Once the convention was over Macdonald had to settle a problem that had been growing over a number of years. His partnership with Alexander Campbell had reached a crisis. One night in June they had a long discussion in the tower room at Bellevue and Campbell put the whole matter on paper the next day. The profit sharing arrangement would have been satisfactory if the work of the firm could have been shared in the same way. Macdonald's parliamentary career had taken him away for long periods but had brought increased business to the firm.

Macdonald's family responsibilities were the main cause of the trouble. Isabella's previous illness in the United States and Macdonald's frequent visits to her were heavy expenses. He always had two households to support and his mother's attacks of ill health increased the bills. Bellevue was expensive to rent, difficult to heat and required extra servants and a second carriage. Macdonald's calls upon the cash of the firm had been distressing but terribly necessary as far as Campbell could see.

The Partnership Dissolved

They agreed on dissolution of the partnership and on securities to settle the finances. In August Macdonald made one last attempt to avoid a break. In a letter dated "Sunday morning" he sent an agreement for Campbell's consideration but it was no use and the partnership ended September 1, 1849.

Macdonald had to cut his expense to settle the firm's debts. He rented a smaller office

and mortgaged his Brock street house to buy Campbell's interest in the firm. He informed his landlord, Charles Hales, that he would give up Bellevue House on September first. The Brock street house, however, already had its full complement of women and servants, and, with Isabella pregnant again, she would need rest and quiet. The Macdonalds moved into half of Thomas Askew's double stone house on Johnson street.

Hugh John Macdonald, a fine, healthy boy, was born there March 13, 1850. John A., Isabella and little Hugh John moved back to the Brock street house in September, 1852. Louisa and her mother moved to a smaller place after Margaret Macdonald's marriage to Prof. James Williamson of Queen's University that fall.

When Macdonald became Attorney General in September 1854, he knew he would have to spend most of his time in Toronto. His new partner, A. J. Macdonnell, could handle the firm's business in Kingston but John A. wanted his wife and son with him in Toronto. So another move was made to keep the small family together. Isabella died in December 1857.

The young lawyer who decided that he would stay in politics in spite of difficulties met the troubles and triumphs of a remarkable career with the courage and humanity that caused people to say, "You'll never die, John A." The small boy from Glasgow little dreamed he would one day be given such formal or friendly titles as Prime Minister of Canada, Knight Commander of the Bath, Father of Confederation, Old Tomorrow, or, affectionately, just John A.

Charles Hales went bankrupt while the Macdonalds were in Bellevue House and the Torrances of Montreal became owners with Hales as their agent. Business was bad and Bellevue was empty for over a year. Then it was papered and painted for Col. Henry Wulff, who was transferred from Kingston before a year was up.

Mr. and Mrs. William Ferguson and their nine children moved into Bellevue House in 1853. Seventeen years later Thomas Baker was the owner, followed in 1877 by Lt. Col. P. W. Worsley. Succeeding owners and tenants papered and painted until the interior wood trim had as many as eight coats over the original graining. There is no record when alterations in the house were made. Perhaps James Wilson who owned Bellevue from 1887 to 1907 was responsible for some changes.

Changes to Bellevue

A hot air gravity furnace replaced the stoves and stovepipes. Sections were cut from the main floor for hot air registers and stovepipe holes were closed. The hot air furnace was replaced by a hot water type; floor beams were cut to take pipes which ended in loops in the rooms and were discreetly covered by iron "lace-work" screens and marble tops.

Hardwood flooring was laid over the wide pine boards in the entrance hall, parlours and stair hall with carpeting in the other rooms until linoleum took its place about 1929. When the first bathroom was installed the servants' staircase was removed, the hole blocked and plastered over. Fireplaces were rebuilt and the parlour fireplace had a number of new mantels to keep pace with fashion.

John Gilbert, who bought Bellevue House in 1907, installed electric lights and moved the kitchen from the basement to the servants' hall. The fireplace was blocked and a big range stood against the outside wall.

Time naturally took its toll. The wooden pillars on the front porch rotted and were partially repaired then covered with stucco. The upper porch railing was replaced; the rotting base of the tower finial was covered with tin; stucco was patched and tinted.

While the F. W. Atacks were tenants from 1927 to 1959 a wall of the stables collapsed and the building was demolished. A fireplace in the guest room was removed and the one in the master bedroom rebricked to take an electric grate.

The last owners, the J. M. R. Beveridge family, had started making plans for a gradual

restoration when they moved from Kingston and the federal government bought Bellevue House.

The Restoration

To restore a private residence over 125 years old as a building open to the public raised immediate problems of weight loads and floor strength. Even before restoration could begin the basic structure had to be strengthened and plans made for inconspicuous heating and lighting.

No original plans or records of changes, beyond very recent ones, could be found for Bellevue House. The approach to restoration after careful research became a process of search and discovery. There were a series of discoveries, sometimes unhappy, like the floor beams almost severed to take pipes and wires, or some rotting wood and crumbling cement. More often the finds were exciting and helpful like the strip of original wallpaper behind an early built-in cupboard, the metal tubing for bell pull wires embedded in the plaster beside each fireplace, the opening showing where the servants' stairs had been and remnants of a porch pilaster which showed the design of the original pillars. When the hardwood floors were removed the trap door to the stone cistern under the entrance hall was revealed and the rusted pipes traced to their sources. Careful scraping of the woodwork showed the layers of paint on top of the original graining.

Although the scullery was originally in the basement the necessity of providing furnace heat and washrooms for the public has filled the basement area. In the restoration the women servants' rooms have been used for staff offices.

Bellevue House is furnished as it might have been in 1848. Some rooms appear as they would have been in the summer, others as they would have been in the winter to show the use of stoves and stove pipes. A long and intensive search has revealed little furniture that could have belonged to Macdonald at the time. The cradle is believed to have belonged to baby John A., in which he died in 1848.

The grounds have been developed according to an early plan. However, four sections of the original lot have been sold and built on and the old outbuildings have disappeared. The summer house is gone but landscape features are gradually being restored.

Bellevue House has been restored to the period of its occupancy by John A. Macdonald, who became in 1867 the first Prime Minister of Canada.

