

## BALFOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

By Robert Williamson, HMHS Historian

A recent front page story in the Hamilton Spectator regarding restorations to Treble Hall, a Hamilton downtown landmark, caught my attention. Designed by legendary architect, James Balfour, I found it intriguing that one of our prominent Mountain neighborhoods bears the name, Balfour. Located on the central Mountain, the Balfour Neighbourhood is bounded by Fennell Avenue, Upper Wellington Street, Mohawk Road, and Upper James Street. Historically the Balfour name is also associated with the Southam newspaper empire, Chedoke House and a food wholesale company.

While the city's Planning Department is involved in the selection of neighbourhood names, it is noncommittal on this particular choice. I believe it is **recognition of one of Hamilton's most famous architects, James Balfour** 1854-1917. His father was a Scottish immigrant, deeply involved in the city's development as a builder, Hamilton alderman and assessment commissioner.

James Balfour received his architectural training in Edinburgh and New York. When he returned to Hamilton in 1873 he became well known for his Terrace and Townhome designs in the Durand neighbourhood. His popularity led to the design of larger buildings in downtown Hamilton in what became the "Balfouresque" style, featuring stone buildings with granite columns supporting entrance arches and portico. These included: Treble Hall 1879 on John Street North, the Canada Life Assurance Company (Birks Building) 1883, City Hall 1887, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) building 1889, the former Bell Telephone Exchange 1890 on Hughson Street, the Hamilton Jockey Club 1892 and the Scottish Rite 1896 on Queen Street.



*Source: the inlet on line*  
Terrace Homes designed by James Balfour 1877, at 46 Herkimer Street, one of his 35 city building designs.



*Photo by Robert Williamson*  
Ravenscliffe Castle designed by James Balfour 1881 has ten bedrooms and six bathrooms in 11,000 square feet.

None of Balfour's architectural styles will be found in the modern residential Balfour Neighbourhood which is dominated by the Mountain Plaza, Upper James (Canadian Tire) Plaza and Norwood Park School. However, should anyone ask in the future who was James Balfour, his achievements are on record here and acknowledged in the identity of a Hamilton Mountain neighborhood.