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**Mediated Ecologies**

**Dominion House--A True Celebrities' Cradle and a Landmark of the City Windsor**

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### **Abstract**

As an urban site analysis, the Dominion House on Sandwich Street in the city of Windsor, Ontario, deserves a place of mention. The house's history is longer than the city's history; it was built in the 1850s while Windsor became an official city in 1892. The Dominion House is the oldest remaining continuously running tavern in the border region and one of the oldest in Ontario (Morgan,1994, p.25). The City Windsor By-law 11345 recognized its heritage value in 1992. (Dominion House Tavern,1992). Surrounded by the Windsor-Detroit border environment, near the bank of the Detroit River, the Dominion House witnessed the construction of the Ambassador Bridge. With many previous owners' business run efforts, it housed and served many residents, travelers, and bridge workers. Also, numerous celebrities enjoyed this place; since then, it has been a popular inn crossed the century. What to be worth raising is not only about being the historic heritage but also how the effectiveness of the subjective involvement; in Windsor, local people approximately age fifty and up are still taking delight in how popular the old tavern was, and such popularity impacted its community so that the Dominion House lived up as a true celebrities' cradle and a landmark of Windsor. Theoretically, by the human mind developing society and the subjectivity interacting within a natural environment, the Dominion House has been affecting by history, culture, economics, urban or region architecture, landscape, and media ecology studies, which are transdisciplinary approaches to the Ecosophy (Guattari, 2005), a philosophy of ecological harmony or equilibrium (Naess, 1994). All relationships in social-ecological systems are a kind of mediated relation; the flow of matter and energy exchange is the mediated ecological form in a material environment (Hroch et al, 2015). The social activity as the force shaped the well-known DH. We want to recognize many activities, rhythms, senses, and connections that make this location dynamic rather than static. Also,

expounding through the history of the Dominion House and references of the impacted social involvement may urge preservation to all inherited urban sites or facilitate their community development.

*Keywords:* Dominion House, tavern, celebrities' cradle, landmark, city Windsor, 3140 Sandwich St., Sid Walman, urban analysis, mediated ecologies.

## Mediated Ecology

### Dominion House--A True Celebrities' Cradle and a Landmark of the City of Windsor



Fig-01. The Dominion House.

Fig-02. The Dominion House on Google Map.

3140 Sandwich St, Windsor, Ontario. A cultural heritage site in Canada, number 8666 in the Canadian Register of Historic Places. The Dominion House was built before 1859, but many people count the history from its named date in 1878. Through ages, with its popular inn culture and impact on the entire Sandwich community, the old roadhouse interacts between its unique culture and the riverbank environment observing as an outstanding scenery line of the City of Windsor.

Theoretically, mind, society, and environment, the Félix Guattari's Ecosophy registered *Three Ecologies*, a philosophy of ecological harmony or equilibrium, which coincidentally matches the Dominion House's mindful development of the subjectivity interacting natural environment in its society. Also, the *Ecological Urbanism* considers a city with multiple instruments and with a worldview that is fluid in scale and disciplinary focus. As

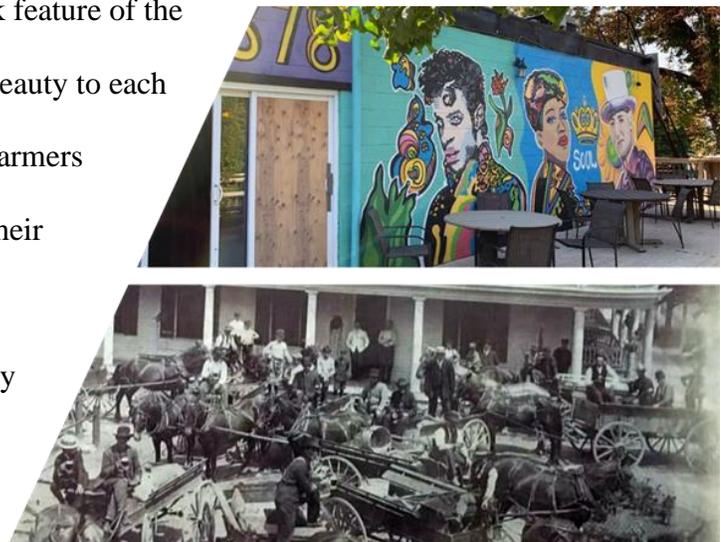
an impactful site in town, we shall analyze its history, culture, economics, urban or region architecture, and landscape approaches.

### The Landscape and Architecture Style



*Fig-03.* The landscape of the Dominion House, oil painting (Jensen)

The Dominion House and its back feature of the Ambassador Bridge—add radiance and beauty to each other. To visualize the past scenery, the farmers from LaSalle and River Canard hauling their produce by horse and wagon to Detroit's Eastern Market, crossing the river by ferry on Friday night and returning Saturday. The horses would automatically turn



*Fig-04.* The Dominion House 's past and present.

into the lot on the west side of the building where a watering trough and well were located and refresh themselves, while the owners would do likewise at the bar. An old batwing door (swinging door), that we see in cowboy movies, was kept until the 1990s (Walman). Flip to another vision, the Dominion House often recalled juries from the old County Courthouse would dine at the hotel and Essex County Council members who also would spend off-session time at the hotel since the 1880s, until the 1970s when the Sandwich courthouse closed (Perrie, n.d. p.173)

Today, the old house is still running as a popular English pub, but the scene has been changing, which is catching more modern sensibilities, so to say, “the landscapes do not return to a state of equilibrium but are palimpsests of successive disturbances over time.” (Balée, 2006, p.75-98). If an ecosystem can be static and cyclic, a landscape is historical. In historic ecology, “The landscape is a perpetually changing, physical manifestation of history.” (Barnes), so the landscape is defined as an area of interaction between human culture and the non-human environment; thereby, the Dominion House kept dynamic rather than static.

In the same way, the two-stories plus Root-Cellar below with its history of architectural backgrounds. The Dominion House is a Georgian architecture mixed with Neo-Classical elements and vernacular materials. The original Dominion House, originally located on the south side of Sandwich Street across from today's building, was burnt down in 1879 (?), but it was quickly rebuilt within that year.



*Fig-05. The Changing of the architecture style.*

In 1945, its grant porch was removed. After many times of modernizing, the rebuilt Dominion House's majority of the exterior was brick and accented with decorative half-timbering, often in triangular gables. The external appearance is the mock frame of thin boards with stucco or stone filling in the spaces between the boards. The interiors are often heavily accented in dark wood as well as the ceiling beams of intricate wall paneling; the look more or less was an English manor, the Tudor style (Burch,2018).

The Tudor style was supposed to serve the upper Canadian class, the stock market shareholder's living, but this house has been running by many hard-working tavern owners for more than a century.

### **The DH's History is the Owners' History**

Playing the History role, the Dominion House has been owned by many people over a century:

As a hotel, it dates back to 1859, originally operated by James Cotter and owned by Charles Askin. Then the Dominion House was named by Frank Dent in 1878 (some counts this year as the start of the DH history).

After it burnt down in 1879, Albert Lininger rebuilt the hotel across the street in an existing building with a clapboard exterior and a front porch side topped by a railed veranda.

Mr. Daniel Marentette operated the house from the late 1880s until his untimely death of heart failure at the bar on Saturday evening July 28th, 1902. Some said his spirit is still wandering in the back room (Marentette,2001, p.251-252).

In 1909, the hotel was sold to Mr. Eugene Breault who was a long-time friend of the Marentette family, and he was later elected Reeve of Sandwich and Police Magistrate.

Following Breault's ownership, the hotel was purchased by Capt. John J. McCarthy. In the same year, Frederick Neil published "The Township of Sandwich Past and Present in 1909".

Then Lorne White (1920-1922) was innkeeper during the first years of Prohibition.

William and Jean Boyer (1923-1948) were owners during the rest of the Prohibition years.

1948-1989, the owner Sid Walman had run it for forty-three years and brought the tavern to prosperity. The roadhouse has been well-known as the DH since 1983.

1989, Amanda Heiser and Co., Ann Peterson are the following owners.

1994, Ron Limarzi and Sam Simoff.

1996, Mike Balun and Natalie Bouliann.

2013, Kristian Neill and Chris Mickle are the current owners.

### **The Economics**

The Dominion House run as a business, its rise and decline are closely tied with the economy. Specifically, the Dominion House passed through an economic dark age, also reached the highlight of prosperity in different historic period.

The 1920s. The Great Depression made the owners Lorne White, William, and Jean Boyer had undergone hardship during the Prohibition years. Also, rationing of beer and restricted hours during WWII was not the best time to run a tavern. The business runners faced many problems, as did most hotel owners during that time. But they witnessed the construction of the

Ambassador Bridge and housed many bridge workers.



*Fig-06.* The Prohibit years-the dark age of the economics. (Library of Congress/Reuters)

*Fig-07.* The transition of the two owners and the highlight of the economic era (Star photo by Nick Brancaccio,1989).

Prohibition in the United States was a nationwide constitutional ban on the production, importation, transportation, and sale of alcoholic beverages from 1920 to 1933.

National prohibition of alcohol (1920-33), the "noble experiment" — was undertaken to reduce crime and corruption, solve social problems, and reduce the tax burden created by prisons and poorhouses. The goal is to improve health and hygiene in America (Black, 2010).

An alarm system was in place at the bar from the days of Prohibition. When the police came into the tavern, the bartender would ring a small alarm bell to the storeroom, and the alcohol would be moved to a secret location (Walman, 2019). In the 1960s, this alarm system became a simple intercom working as a walky-talky to call its staff down to the main floor. A storyline of the historic derivative was repurposed, keeping its use that reminisced the special historical period.

During 1948-1989, the owner Sid Walman brought glory to the Dominion House for reaching the highlight of the economy. Sid's greatest economic moment, as well as his other contributions and reputation, significantly shaped the DH's value in the entire ecology category. He maximized the Dominion House's value; as a finished journey, he successfully sold it to a new corporation in 1989.

### **DH as a Gathering Place**

The charm of the old building and the owner's offer of homespun hospitality gathered a variety of people to join as a society.

This place gathered people includes the former Anglican minister who frequented the DH; the noted cellist Tom Akeley who loved the DH's "Tom Tom" and "Bam Bam" burgers. The football players from Jack Morneau to the CFL Hall-of-Famer Bobby Simpson who frequently stopped there; with the famous athletes' recommendations, the DH hosted annual athletic banquets. The Detroit Channel 4 News reporter Bob Bennett enjoyed being in the DH very much. The president of Chrysler, Yves Landry once drove the first mini-van (invented by Chrysler) to show it to the DH owner. The showing of celebrities means a lot about adding social value to the Dominion House.



*Fig-08.* The celebrities from all walks of life. Football players, reporter, and the Chrysler President (Part of the photos provided from the Walmans) (Landry, 1990, p. A16.)

Connecting to culture, the DH is an artsy place: The Windsor Stars editor Pat Whalen had his own bench, and his wife Barbara had an art studio upstairs. The DH is the cartoonist’s favorite subject to draw; many interesting comics were created for this place and as gifts to the owner. The owner Sid is not only a shrewd businessman but also a talented potential artist. He designed the DH logo and created most of the event posters himself.

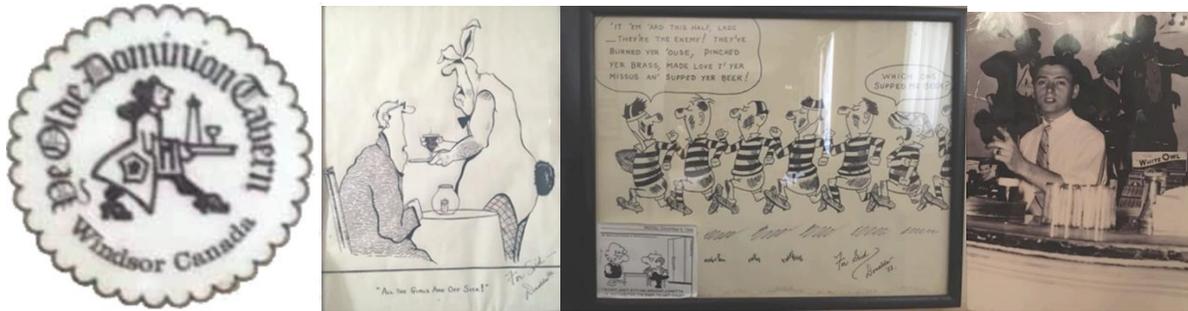


Fig-09. The DH logo design and poster (Walman), comic drawing ( Donalda, 1982-1983)

The DH is a place gathering judges, lawyers, police officers...that is not only because of its location so close to the public officials for their dining convenient but also the popularity and reputation of this place profoundly attracted these crowds. The well-known judge Saul Nosanchuk had a long-term friendship with the owner Sid from the DH; in fact, the judges and lawyers’ visiting the DH never ended from the Sandwich courthouse’s closing. The police officers might be the customers only without revolving any duty for maintaining public order because the DH is a peace permeated place that everyone was treated as a guest of honor; the owner Sid had never hired any bouncers.



*Fig-10. a.* Judge Saul Nosanchuk. 2001(Legal Edge Magazine.)

*b.* 21st Prime minister Paul Martin (Chan, 2003).

*c.* Herb Gray in 2001 (ARCHIVES PC) and Birthday card for Sid Walman.

The DH gathered the most famous politicians, and they had great friendships with the DH's owner Sid Walman. Herb Gray, a former deputy prime minister and one of Canada's longest-serving parliamentarians, was at the landmark so much during his university days that his friends joked he would get his degree from the Dominion House (Windsor Star). He even sent a birthday card officially from the government to the owner Sid for the best friendship.

The owner's friendship is also with the 21st Prime minister Paul Martin, with the generation of the politicians, such as Susan Whelan and her father Eugene Whelan, Canada's minister of agriculture and the ambassador to the United Nation was the best of friends of Sid Walman.



*Fig-11. a.* Meeting with Justin Trudeau and Susan Whelan.

*b.* Eugene Whelan wearing his famous green cowboy hat (Windsor Star,2015).

The DH was closely tied to the University of the Windsor. The psychology professor Art Smith was one of the professors to use the DH as a substitute classroom for the scheduled classes and the impromptu seminars. As an active poet member, Smith felt the atmosphere of the old tavern was conducive to creative thoughts.

The famous author teaching at the University of Windsor, Joyce Carol Oates also used to frequent the DH, both for refreshments and ideas. At her Friday lunchtime, she recorded the

scenes of the DH and used the people at the place as models for her short stories; many DH staff might have been made into her *Ontario Tavern*.



*Fig-12.* Joyce Carol Oates (google image), Ronald Ianni, Signatures of the University of Windsor class of 86, 25th reunion, and the sign of the University of Windsor (Vlasveld).

The former President of the University of Windsor and the Law building named after Dr. Ronald Ianni was a bartender of the DH. For Ron, the DH is as much as a home-away-from-home and as a part of the university campus. He complimented Sid Walman as being an ambassador for Sandwich and in many ways of an honorary professor of the university, also a good friend of the university students.

Moreover, a contribution as the community partner from the DH owner was the idea to put up the “University of Windsor” sign over Vanier Hall, so from far away, people will know a very distinct and a great looking campus alongside the bridge, which was a great suggestion for the school.

For playing the role of an active community partner, the owner of the DH built up a social environment that this place is a future elite-born place as if a true celebrities’ cradle. It is not simply the owner's offer of homespun hospitality from a private business to say so; it is truly significant about the DH owner’s contribution to the entire community. Sid’s reputation finally brought him to light at the Windsor Star.



Fig-13. The Windsor Star.

### **DH is A Culture in Town**

At the DH, the cast of characters has changed dozens of times—the downstairs euchre ladies club; the Grey Cup-toting professor; the dishwashing students from Buffalo; the peace-loving poets and the actress from South Pacific (Memories Live on with DH Sale, 1989). The common customers at the DH, as well as the supreme mainstays, could overwhelm its surroundings.

As a university classroom, as a poetry reading and drama performing place, as an artist's studio, as a mainstream showroom, a great number of quondam disciples in the DH became today's elites that the DH is a place where stars are born. It was also the best place to go for Windsor's Saturday night live, which was mentioned in the Windsor Star. For many people in town, the DH always being an enthusiastic talking hot topic; it is where we can find the rhythm of the city. Nearly utopia, the DH created a culture and wrote its own *ideal Cities and City Ideal* (Tyrwhitt).

According to the cultural ecology, the study of human adaptations to social and physical environments embodied in the successful DH within its community; this place has been thriving in a natural environment for so long and adapted with nature very well.

### **Historic Preservation**

The private business from the DH thriving entire community is possible, also many people came to Windsor because of their beloved DH. Here, a singular building never limits the

impact and a realization of urbanism (Mostafavi, 2010). The DH truly served to define its community to prosper; certainly, it is a shining star of Sandwich Street and brought an entire community to light.

Alternately, the DH contributed to the community, the community would repay a favorite to urge preservation by voice over the public or to the authorized department. Historic preservation is the practice of protecting and preserving sites, structures, or districts that also reflect elements on local or national cultural, social, economic, political, archaeological, or architectural history. Preservation will benefit to the old tavern and keep the wonderful DH for many generations. Today's Dominion House is physically aging; it is not difficult to find the worn out floor, the falling parts furnishing, and the declining stairs that may be unpleasant or dangerous being used. The most important is missing many historic relics, the sense of the history; such as the old batwing door that once brought so much fun for having the Wild West cowboy feeling to the modern costumers, the repurposed alarm bell, and the red light shining for the winning Red Wings....

Reviving its glory past may create a brighter future, this also hints to improve many other heritages like those surrounding the DH. Gratefully, the City Windsor did many locally inspired improvements on Sandwich Street, but the DH still appeared isolating relatively from the others. There is a good example of a tourist city Frankenmuth, Michigan, its historical museum highlights the area's German roots, and whenever we travel there, we feel thriving scenes and a delightful mood. A comparison is necessary to establish our own. The DH once thrived in the Sandwich community, then to facilitate its surroundings may revive the old tavern's greatest moments again.

### **The Media Translates A World to the World**

All social and natural environments mediate the DH's development. "Media is a message" that creates "a global village" (McLuhan, 1951). Through mass media, we notice how the DH in its community be, and the communication through one community to the others. The modern world cannot develop without the media. Beginning in the mid-19th century, the early development of the DH had been using traditional media that are part of its culture for over half a century. Television, radio, print advertisements, and signs. Simply, passing messages through oral, vision, hearing, or writing. Considering the business term "word of mouth", the DH was well-known from its customers passed to customers. From the business strategies, its wise owner advertised this place by using unique signs. For example, when its road sign "Good Food" was unintentionally hung up-side-down, people passing by would try to warn the owner and then stay for meals; so, a false sign was kept for a long time. Also, for the newspaper, if the reporters wrote about their meals, the newspaper might reimburse them. The Windsor Star probably was the best medium informing the DH to the public.

During the later period of the modern world, technology discovered the internet that informed the DH from many on-line platforms. The Windsor Star reported the 140 years celebration of the DH through its official YouTube channel, and the old customers enthusiastically gathered together through Facebook. The digital database made a huge difference to transmit information that supposed to accelerate the pace of the DH's development for the future and the reviving improvement for the present.

"Media is the extension of man that we become what we behold, we shape our tools and then our tools shape us." (McLuhan, 1951). Media communication processes affect human perception, feeling, emotion, and value in its social and natural environment. Eventually, the

media brought us an *Ecstatic World* (Marchessault, 2017), such as to notice the DH is a celebrates' cradle and the landmark of the city.



*Video.* Windsor's oldest tavern celebrates 140 years (Windsor Star,218).

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=QeTWJ6wm\\_go&feature=emb\\_title](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QeTWJ6wm_go&feature=emb_title)

## **The Conclusion**

In summary, this urban site analysis examined a range of approaches to how the DH is made up of complex ecologies. Many related activities, rhythms, senses, and connections that make the DH dynamic rather than static. The representation and analysis of DH's ecological activities and connections make its urban space a very specific place in people's minds. At the same time, an image of the DH's continuing possibilities is from the profound passion and desire to hope the DH has a great future.

The DH today, the old customers are back to their favorite place. A retired English professor Ed from the University of Windsor has been in his favorite spot since the 1960s; like Ed, the other familiar customers still recall every scene or every single object from the past; a grateful young generation is active, its popularity being revived. The DH is a wonderful example

of how the human culture interacts with the natural environment, and the media through its message (McLuhan, 1967) telling us that the old roadhouse is constructed by hybrid disciplinaries that mediates its history, architecture style, unique culture, economic, and social aspects. The new owner Mickle said, “Part of the best thing about owning the Dominion House is owning a piece of Windsor’s history.” Because of the precious heritage, the preservation should be put on the foreground, let the wonderful memories of the popular DH live on to the infinity.

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