



Willistead Manor, photographed in December 2015 by C.L. Menard

Willistead Manor

Willistead Manor was built in 1906 for Edward Chandler Walker, the second son of Hiram Walker, founder of the world-renowned distillery. Albert Kahn, a noted Detroit architect of the day, built three buildings on the 15-acre estate: the Manor House, the Coach House, and the Gatehouse. Designed in the 16th Century Tudor-Jacobean style of an English manor house, the main building was started in 1904. No expense was spared in the materials or labour. The exterior of gray limestone, quarried in Amherstburg, was hand-cut at the Willistead work site by Scottish stonemasons specifically imported for the project.

The home was commissioned by Edward Chandler Walker, the second son of Hiram Walker. Contrary to popular belief, Hiram Walker never lived in the home. Edward and his wife, Mary Elizabeth Griffin Walker, moved

into Willistead Manor in 1906. In naming the estate, Edward commemorated his older brother Willis, who had died some years before.

One of the unique features of the mansion is that it contained only one bedroom. Edward and Mary never had any children, and the coach houses provided ample room for guests. Edward lived in Willistead Manor only nine years, until his death in 1915. He was buried in St. Mary's churchyard across the street from his property on Niagara Street.

In 1921, five years after Edward's death, Mary Walker and the heirs of the Edward Chandler Walker's estate deeded Willistead Manor to the town of Walkerville. Upon amalgamation of the Border Cities in 1935, the City of Windsor inherited this magnificent gift from the past.

In the years after its use as a residence, Willistead served as the Walkerville Town Hall, Art Gallery of Windsor and as a public library branch. In the late 1970s early 1980s, preservationists stepped in to save the home from possible demolition.

Today the 36-room mansion is one of the City of Windsor's most beloved rental facilities, while the nearby Gatehouse is home to the City's Cultural Affairs Office, and the three-acre (12,000 m²) grounds are incorporated in a larger public park known as Willistead Park.

The house can be rented for weddings, corporate meetings, special events (such as the annual Art in the Park Festival), photographs, and private parties. Public Tours of Willistead Manor take place in the summer months, and also during the holiday season when the home is decorated by The Friends of Willistead.



Poetry at the Manor Vol 1; 2012 by C.L. Menard



Bride photographed at Willistead



Willistead Manor; Museum Archives