

# Advisory Committee of Council Information Report

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Committee	Heritage Guelph
Date	Monday, July 10, 2023
Subject	<b>49 Metcalfe Street: Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report</b>

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## Description

This information report provides a cultural heritage evaluation and draft statement of significance and determination of cultural heritage value or interest for 49 Metcalfe Street, known as the “Dario Pagani house,” for Heritage Guelph’s review and comment in preparation for a notice of intention to designate the property under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act.

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## Executive Summary

### Key Findings

49 Metcalfe Street is listed as a non-designated built heritage resource on the City of Guelph’s Municipal Register of Cultural Heritage Properties under Part IV, Section 27 of the Ontario Heritage Act. This report recommends that 49 Metcalfe Street meets five of the prescribed criteria for determining cultural heritage value or interest, in accordance with Ontario Regulation 9/06 made under the Ontario Heritage Act.

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## Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report

### Location

The subject property is located on the northeast corner of Metcalfe Street and Parkholm Avenue. The legal description is PLAN 357 LOT 26 PT LOT 24.

### Design Value

The structure located at 49 Metcalfe Street (formerly 79 Metcalfe Street) is a two-story, flat-roofed, cast-in-place concrete residential dwelling clad in white stucco. The residence features an L-shaped floorplan and asymmetrical façade that responds to its corner-lot siting, with a curved two-story wall encasing an interior curved staircase. A stepped staircase window follows the curve of the wall between the first and second stories. The windows appear to be the original wood frame windows with interior and exterior operable sashes, horizontal muntins, and original hardware. The front entrance contains a door with a porthole window. Above the entrance is a second-floor balcony supported by a metal pillar and wrapped with

metal balustrade. A drive-in garage protrudes from the northwest façade of the structure.



Figure 1: Dario Pagani House in January 1975 from the Couling Building Inventory

Known as the "Dario Pagani House," the residence was constructed in 1936-37 by Guelph-based contractor Dario Pagani and is considered the first residence in the City of Guelph to be designed in the Art Moderne style. Inspired by aerodynamic design, the Art Moderne style emphasized streamlined, curving forms, and long horizontal lines. The Pagani house includes features typical of the Art Moderne, with smooth, rounded stucco walls, a flat roof with a small ledge at roofline, an asymmetrical façade, corner sash window groupings, and metal balustrades. Art Modern architecture was most commonly utilized for institutional and commercial constructions, making the Dario Pagani house a rare example of Art Moderne residential architecture.

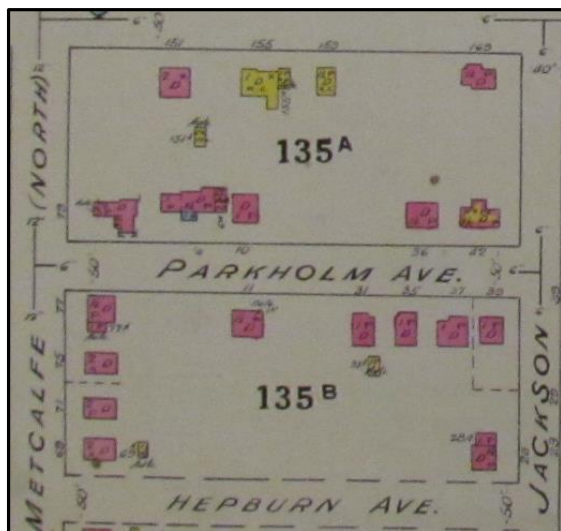


Figure 2: Detail from 1946 Fire Insurance Plan showing Pagani House, then 79 Metcalfe Street

## Historical/Associative Value

The house has historical or associative value due to its direct association with Dario Pagani, an Italian immigrant who became one of Guelph's leading building contractors from the 1930's to the 1960's. The house is also associated with Dario and Mary Pagani's son, Richard, who was raised at 49 Metcalfe and would go on to study architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and become one of Guelph's most notable mid-century architects. The residence Richard designed for his family at 13 Evergreen Drive was designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act in 2002.

127	128	Pagani Dario	17	Months	R.	28	S.	B.	6	no	Head	M	M	28	Italy
		" Mary	"	"	-	-	-	-	-	-	Wife	F.	M	23	Ontario
		" Richard			-	-	-	-	-	-	Son	M	S	1	Ontario
		" Peter	"	"	-	-	-	-	-	-	Father	M	M	52	Italy
		" Angella	"	"	-	-	-	-	-	-	Mother	F.	M	49	Italy
		" Balia	"	"	-	-	-	-	-	-	Sister	F.	S	23	Italy

Figure 3: Detail from 1931 Canadian Census showing the extended Pagani family residing at 17 Morris Street

According to the 1931 Canadian Census (Figure 3), Dario's father, Peter, immigrated to Canada in 1913 ahead of the rest of his family. Dario's immigration papers record that he entered Canada from Italy on December 13, 1920, at age seventeen (Figure 4). The immigration records note that he intended to join his father in Guelph at 144 Ferguson Street. Both Dario and his father are listed as carpenters working in building construction, which suggests that Dario learned his trade from his father. The census records 17 Morris as the Pagani family home in 1931. In the early-1930s, Dario partnered with Angelo Battaglia and established the construction firm Battaglia and Pagani, with an office at 120 Ferguson Street. By 1937 Dario had established his own firm, with an office operated out of his newly built house at 79 Metcalfe Street (Figure 5).

DUPLICATE  
SCOTLAND 1920

S.S. Page 23 Line 4 Class 3

PASSENGER'S DECLARATION

1. NAME Dario Pagani

2. Age 17 Male Married Single Intended occupation do

3. Birthplace Vercelli Race or people Italian

4. Citizenship Italian

5. Religion Catholic (State Denomination)

6. Object in coming to Canada for work

OFFICE CANADA of Canada Post Agent  
DEC 13 1920  
SEE OVERLEAF

Figure 4: Dario Pagani's Immigration Papers from December 13, 1920

The Paganis lived in the house from 1937 to 1943. An ad in the 1938 City of Guelph Directory for Pagani's Contracting business lists 79 Metcalfe as his "Office and Residence." It is likely that Dario wanted the house to showcase his firm's ability to

build modern houses. Cast-in-place concrete was a rarity in 1930s Ontario residential construction.



Figure 5: Detail from 1938 City of Guelph Directory listing 79 Metcalfe as Pagani's "Office and Residence"

By the 1930s, Italian immigrants had established a distinct community in St Patrick's Ward, but St. George's Ward was occupied primarily by upper-middle class Canadians of Anglo-Celtic descent, as is evident in the names of Pagani's neighbors listed in the City Directory from the 1939 (Figure 6). The Dario Pagani house represents the social and economic mobility of working-class Italian immigrants in mid-twentieth century Guelph, especially those involved in construction trades.

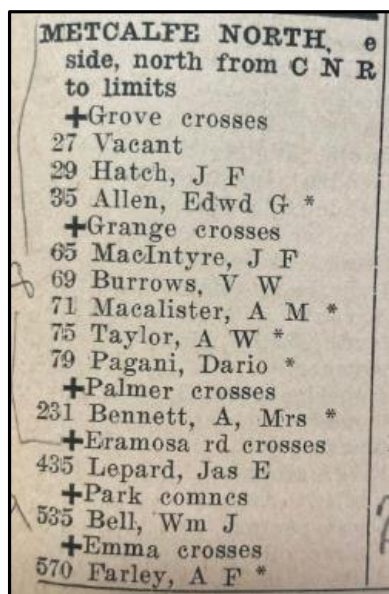


Figure 6: Detail from 1939 City of Guelph Directory

### Contextual Value

The property stands out amongst the predominantly brown, yellow, and red brick revival style residences that ring St. George's Park on Metcalfe, Grange, and Palmer streets. The stark white stucco walls, situation on a corner lot across from St George's Park, and unique Art Modern architectural style make the residence a landmark in the neighborhood.

### Statement of Significance

The subject property is worthy of designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act because it meets five of the prescribed criteria for determining cultural heritage value or interest, according to Ontario Regulation 9/06 as

amended by 569/22. The heritage attributes of 49 Metcalfe Street display: design or physical, historical or associative, and contextual value.

### **Design/Physical Value**

The subject property meets Criterion 1 because it exhibits design or physical value as a rare example of the Art Moderne style architecture in the City of Guelph. The Dario Pagani house is the first Art Moderne residence constructed in the city, and remains Guelph's only example of Art Moderne residential architecture.

The subject property meets Criterion 2 because it displays a high degree of artistic merit. Inspired by aerodynamic design, the Art Moderne style emphasized streamlined, curving forms, and long horizontal lines. The Pagani house includes features typical of the Art Moderne, with smooth, rounded stucco walls, a flat roof with a small ledge at roofline, an asymmetrical façade, corner sash window groupings, and metal balustrades.

### **Historical/Associative Value**

The subject property meets Criterion 4 because it has direct associations with Dario Pagani, an Italian immigrant that became one of Guelph's most significant mid-century building contractors, and Dario's son, Richard Pagani, who was raised at 49 Metcalfe and would become a provincially significant architect.

The subject property meets Criterion 5 because it yields information that contributes to an understanding of the Italian immigrant experience in the first half of the twentieth century. When the Dario Pagani House was constructed, St. George's neighborhood was occupied primarily by Canadians of Anglo-Celtic descent. The Dario Pagani house represents the social and economic mobility of working-class Italian immigrants in mid-twentieth century Guelph, especially those involved in construction trades.

### **Contextual Value**

The subject property meets Criterion 9 because it is a landmark. The property stands out amongst the predominantly brown, yellow, and redbrick revival style residences that ring St. George's Park on Metcalfe, Grange, and Palmer streets. The stark white stucco walls, situation on a corner lot, prominent visual location across from St George's Park, and unique Art Modern architectural style make the residence a landmark in the neighborhood.

### **Attachments**

Attachment-1: Current Location, Historic Maps, Documents, and Photographs

Attachment-2: Current Photos

### **Departmental Approval**

Melissa Aldunate Manager, Policy Planning and Urban Design  
City of Guelph

### **Report Author**

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City of Guelph