

Advisory Committee of Council Information Report



Committee	Heritage Guelph
Date	Monday, February 5, 2024
Subject	108 Queen Street – Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report

Description

This information report provides a cultural heritage evaluation, a draft statement of significance and determination of cultural heritage value or interest for 108 Queen Street. The report is presented for review and comment by Heritage Guelph to assist staff in the confirmation of cultural heritage value for the John Mitchell farmhouse at 108 Queen Street.

Executive Summary

Key Findings

The property addressed municipally as 108 Queen Street is listed as a non-designated built heritage resource on the City of Guelph's Municipal Register of Cultural Heritage Properties under Section 27, Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act. This report recommends that the historic John Mitchell house at 108 Queen Street meets four of the nine prescribed criteria for determining cultural heritage value or interest, in accordance with Ontario Regulation 9/06 (as amended by Ontario Regulation 569/22) made under the Ontario Heritage Act.

Attachment-3 contains excerpts from a previous report prepared for Heritage Guelph in 2008. The 2008 background report has served as a basis for the following Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report prepared by Heritage Planning staff.

The property owners of 108 Queen Street have been contacted by Heritage Planning staff making them aware of the research being conducted to confirm the cultural heritage value of the John Mitchell farmhouse at 108 Queen Street. The owners have indicated to Heritage Planning staff that they do not support any recommendation by staff and Heritage Guelph that Council publish its intention to designate the property under the Ontario Heritage Act.

Cultural Evaluation Report

Location

The subject property, known as the John Mitchell house, is located at 108 Queen Street. (Figures 1 and 2). The area was formerly part of the Township of Guelph, the North Ward of the Town of Guelph, and St John's Ward.

The property is located on the southwest side of Queen Street, between Eramosa Road and Derry Street. The northwest and southwest sides of the property are bounded by laneways.

The boundary of the property is legally described as: Lots 3, 4 and 5, Plan 341 and previously described as: Part Lot 9, Concession 1, Division F; and Lots 94, 95 and 96, Plan 243.

Figure 1 – GIS map showing location of subject property at 108 Queen Street. (City of Guelph GIS).

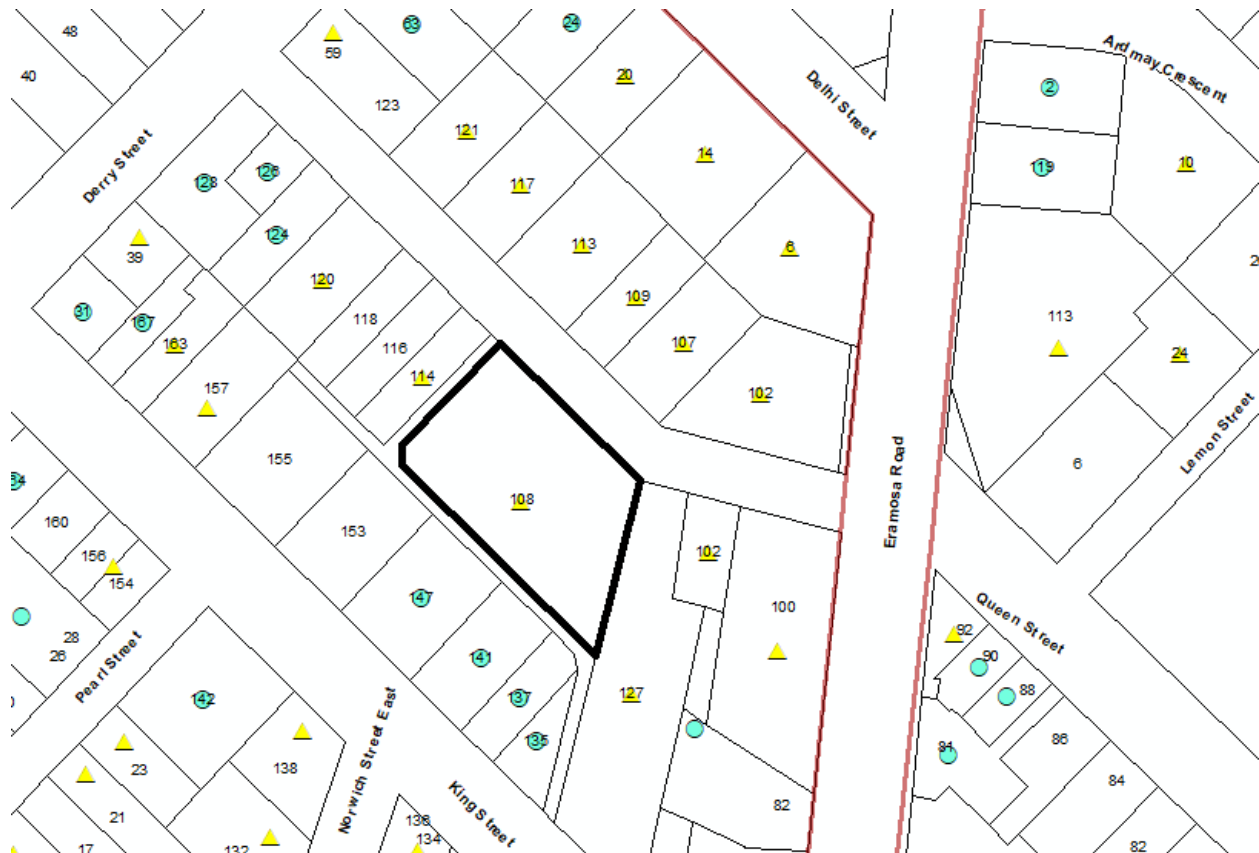


Figure 2 - 2021 Orthographic photo showing 108 Queen Street. (City of Guelph GIS)

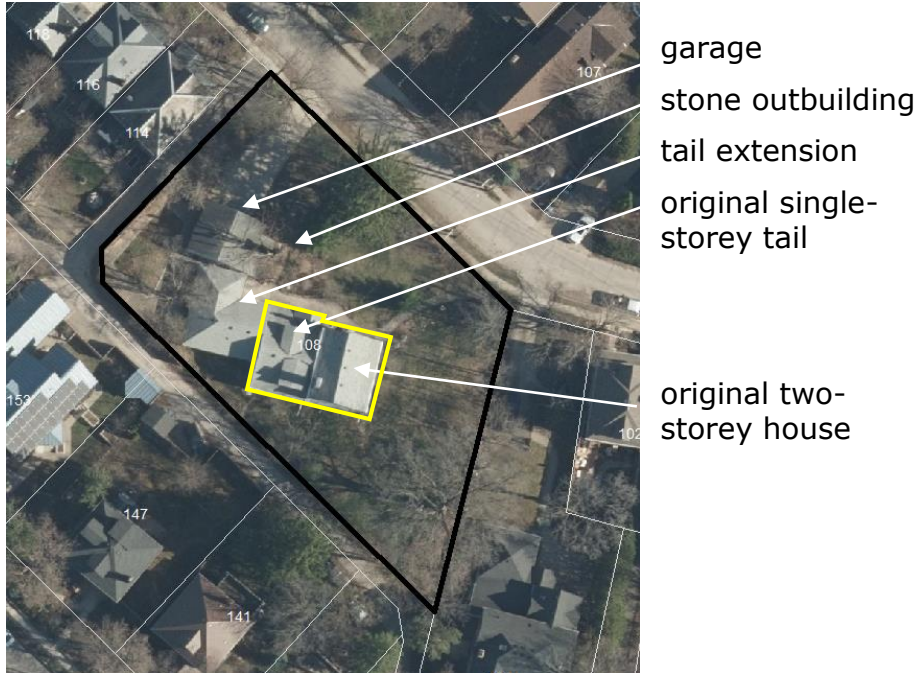


Figure 3 - View of the John Mitchell house from Queen Street. (Photo: S. Robinson, Heritage Planning, 2023)



Background

Constructed between 1831 and 1834, the John Mitchell house may be the oldest extant farmhouse in Guelph. It provides an early example of a 2-storey, wood frame farmhouse, built in the Georgian style.

The house is located in an established residential neighbourhood, on a relatively large property comprised of three lots. However, the unusual orientation of the building's facade away from Queen Street and toward Eramosa Road provides evidence of the building's former setting in a rural landscape, prior to the expansion of the city in the second half of the nineteenth century. Like many Georgian era farmhouses in this area, the house was originally situated at the crest of a hill with a picturesque view, overlooking the Speed River and the Town of Guelph.

The house at 108 Queen Street has a significant historical association with the Mitchell family, one of Guelph's earliest and most successful settler families. Between 1831 and 1955, three generations of the Mitchell family lived in the house, affectionately known as "the old homestead".

John Mitchell moved to Guelph in 1828 and was employed by the Canada Company to assist in allocating land to new settlers. He promptly bought a farm on the Eramosa hill and began to clear and cultivate the land.

John Mitchell married Ann Thompson in 1831. Ann Thompson Mitchell lived at the house for 82 years, from the time of her marriage until her death in November 1913. She died in her hundredth year, outliving most of Guelph's first settlers and many of her own children.

Several of John and Ann Mitchell's children went on to have distinguished public careers in Guelph. Their eldest son, Richard Mitchell became Mayor of Guelph and City Clerk; Robert Mitchell was a well-known solicitor and Town Councillor; William Mitchell was a Presbyterian minister. Their daughter, Emma Jane Mitchell married Thomas Goldie of James Goldie Milling Company; Thomas Goldie also became Mayor of Guelph.

Property Description

The evolution of the building is seen as occurring in two periods: the original 2-storey house with a 1.5-storey tail; and an expansion of the tail footprint with dormers and a hip roof after 1946, following the purchase of the property by the Bedford family in 1955.

The original 2-storey portion of the John Mitchell farmhouse was designed in a Georgian style with a side gable roof, a symmetrical three-bay front façade and a central front door with sidelights. The house has a 2-storey, front verandah with stop-chamfered wooden posts. The front elevation has wooden hung sashes with 12-over-12 panes on the main floor and 12-over-8 panes in the upper floor. The side windows of the original house are also wooden hung sashes with 6-over-6 pane arrangement. The front door and windows of the front and north elevations of the original house have louvered wooden shutters. All of these shutters may not be original to the house as their sizes don't often match the size of the window or door opening.

What was likely the original building footprint of the house is seen in Thomas Cooper's maps of the Town of Guelph in 1862 and 1875 with a slightly wider rear (or tail) section extending past the north wall of the rectangular front section. The panoramic view of Guelph drawn by Brosius in 1872 shows the Mitchell house laneway before it became Queen Street through the registration of Plan 243 in 1876. Although the Brosius drawing is known for its accuracy, the depiction of the grouping of buildings on the John Mitchell property does not seem to match the footprint of the house indicated by Cooper, the Town's Civil Engineer. As for the outbuildings northwest of the house – a portion of the T-shaped footprint is likely the stone outbuilding that remains today.

The house is currently clad with wood clapboard siding painted white with trim and shutters painted blue. The City of Guelph Fire Insurance Plans (dated 1897 through 1946) indicate the original wood frame house and tail had a rough-cast stucco exterior and a wood shingle roof. In 1897 (1911) the property address is 234 Queen Street North and a single-storey wood frame extension seen on the north side was removed before 1946. During this period the detached, stone outbuilding is seen northwest of the house and the property address was changed to 250 Queen Street North.

The 2-storey verandah has stop-chamfered wooden posts with simple railings and balusters on the second storey. There is an external brick chimney on the north side of the building and an internal brick chimney on the west side of the building. Both of these chimneys would have been constructed during the Bedford ownership.

A gable roof, two-car garage is located near the northwest corner of the house. The garage, built after 1946, incorporates three of the stone walls of an original outbuilding into its structure.

Statement of Significance

Heritage Planning staff propose the following Statement of Significance for the John Mitchell farmhouse at 108 Queen Street.

The subject building is an excellent example of what was an important farmstead in the Township of Guelph and now within the City of Guelph. The John Mitchell farmhouse at 108 Queen Street is worthy of designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act because it meets four of the nine prescribed criteria for determining cultural heritage value or interest, according to Ontario Regulation 9/06 as amended by 569/22. The subject building at 108 Queen Street has design/physical, historical/associative, and contextual value.

Design/Physical Value

Thought to be the oldest extant farmhouse in Guelph, the subject property meets Criterion 1 because the building exhibits design or physical value as an early example of Georgian architectural style from the 1830s in a rural residential building design in the former Township of Guelph and an excellent representation of timber frame rural residential construction method.

Historical/Associative Value

The subject property meets Criterion 4 because the building has a significant historical association with the Mitchell family, one of Guelph's earliest and most successful settler families. Between 1831 and 1955, three generations of the Mitchell family lived in the house on the Eramosa Hill, affectionately known as "the old homestead".

Contextual Value

The subject property meets Criteria 7 because it is important in defining, maintaining and supporting the architectural character and agricultural history of the Queen Street and Eramosa Road area.

The subject property meets Criteria 8 because the John Mitchell farmhouse at 108 Queen Street provides evidence of the rural landscape, prior to the expansion of the city in the second half of the 19th century. Like many Georgian farmhouses, the house was originally situated at the crest of a hill with a picturesque view, overlooking the Speed River and the Town of Guelph.

Attachments

Attachment-1 Photos of Subject Property

Attachment-2 Historic Images

Attachment-3 Previous Research for Heritage Guelph in 2008

Departmental Approval

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