

Attachment-3 Previous Research for Heritage Guelph in 2008

The following information is from previous research for a property background report on 108 Queen Street presented to Heritage Guelph in 2008.

Land Registry Records

The legal ownership of the property at 108 Queen Street can be traced back to 24 July 1828, when John Mitchell purchased from the Canada Company what was described as Lot 9, Concession 1 in Division F of the Township of Guelph.

Guelph was founded on 23 April 1827 by John Galt, Superintendent of the Canada Company. Records of the Canada Company include registers of sales of the original lots laid out in and around the town. These pre-patent land transactions are also summarized as part of the Ontario Archives Land Records Index. The registers of sales indicate that John Mitchell purchased several Farm Lots from the Canada Company soon after his arrival in Guelph in 1828.¹

The Canada Company required purchasers of Farm and Town Lots to begin improvements to the land within 12 months of the date of purchase. In an early advertisement of the Company, it was stated "Those who have not purchased Town Lots are required to commence preparations for building houses on their farms, within three months, and to have them finished and inhabited within 12 months from the date of purchase."² Mitchell would have needed to complete a house on one of his lots, and inhabit it, for the deed to be issued. The Canada Company's register states that 19 acres of land at Lot 9, Concession 1, Division F were sold to Mitchell for 20 shillings per acre. Mitchell paid the balance of £19 on 1 October 1828 and the deed was executed on 25 January 1834.³ It is therefore likely that the farmhouse had been erected on Lot 9 before the latter date.

The purchase of Lot 9 was not registered on the Abstracts of Titles held at Guelph's Land Registry Office until 24 March 1857. Registration was required in order for part of the property to be sold. On 1 September 1857, John Mitchell and his wife sold 200 acres of farmland to James Webster, including the northwest half of Lot 9, First Range, Division F. Webster subdivided this property into residential building

¹ These included: Lot 9, Concession 1, Division F; Lot 10, Concession 3, Division F; and Lots 4 & 5 East of the Eramosa Road, Division F. See the Canada Company Fonds, B3, volume 28, pp 23-24, Town of Guelph, Old Series, Guelph Farm Lots Sold, Nos. 193, 194, and 195. (Source: Archives of Ontario microfilm)

The registers of sales indicate also that John Mitchell was allocated one of the first Town Lots when they were made available for sale by the Canada Company on 12 August 1827. Mitchell did not take up this lot and the deed was issued to a third party in 1833. Canada Company Fonds, B3, volume 28, p 100: Town of Guelph, Old Series, Guelph Town Lots Sold, No 77, Lot 114.

² Thomas Blair Husband, Guelph, 25 September 1827. Quoted in Leo Johnson, 1977, *History of Guelph, 1827-1927*, p 28.

³ Canada Company Fonds, B3, volume 28, pp 23: Town of Guelph, Old Series, Guelph Farm Lots Sold, No. 193.

lots. John Mitchell and his family continued to reside in the farmhouse house on the southeast half of Lot 9.

John Mitchell died on 3 September 1861. On 15 June 1876, the Executors of Mitchell's Estate registered Plan 243, subdividing the southeast part of Lot 9 into 37 new building lots (Lots 73-109). The driveway of the former farmhouse was replaced with a new road, which extended Queen Street to the west of the Eramosa Road. The new section of road was built with an irregular bend that accommodated the historic position of the farmhouse.

In January 1883, the Executors of John Mitchell's Estate paid William Mitchell, Presbyterian Minister and John Mitchell's eldest son, £1900 for the Lots 93 to 96 on Queen Street, and Lots 103 to 107 on King Street.⁴ These lots included the farmhouse (on Lot 95) and its immediate surrounds.

On 14 January 1912, the Executors of John Mitchell's Estate registered another new plan, re-subdividing the lots immediately surrounding the house. The new plan allowed for the creation of a laneway, connecting Queen Street to King Street and providing rear access to most of the lots. Lots 92 to 96 and Lots 102 to 107 on Plan 243 were renumbered as Lots 1 to 11 on Plan 341. The Mitchell family retained ownership of Lots 3, 4 and 5, with the original house located on Lot 4, as well as the rear laneway. Most of the surrounding lots were sold over the course of the following two years.

Lots 3, 4 and 5 remained in the hands of the Mitchell family until 15 September 1955, when the Executors of Emma J. Goldie (nee Mitchell) sold the property to Charles W. Bedford and Margaret Bedford for \$6000. The Bedfords mortgaged the property in May 1961; this mortgage may be indicative of a period of extensive renovation to the house.

The Bedfords lived in the house for 15 years, then sold the property to Michael and Barbara Hall in 1970.

Historical Maps and Photographs

The earliest plan of Guelph, prepared for the Canada Company in 1828 by John McDonald, shows the Speed River as the northern boundary of the town.⁵ Land to the north of the river was sold to new settlers as farmland. As a consequence, there were only two houses located on the north side of the Speed River for the first two decades of the settlement – John Mitchell's and John McDonald's.⁶

This situation began to change around the middle of the nineteenth century, when the boundaries of the town were expanded to accommodate the increasing

⁴ William Mitchell also received an additional £4000, which was mentioned in John Mitchell's will, and to which he would be entitled on the death of his mother, Ann Mitchell.

⁵ This map is held in the Baldwin Room at the Toronto Reference Library.

⁶ Rev William Mitchell, "Reminiscences of Lifetime of One of Guelph's Oldest Citizens Presented Before Local Historical Society", *Guelph Evening Mercury and Advertiser*, 21 March 1925

population. Much of John Mitchell's farmland, which was located immediately to the north of the Speed River and adjacent to the Eramosa Road, was suitable for redevelopment as town building lots. By 1855, the population of the village of Guelph had grown to 3000 residents, the number required in order to be incorporated as a Town under Schedule B of the *Baldwin Municipal Act*.⁷ On 1 January 1856, the boundaries of the new Town of Guelph were set and the area was divided into four Wards. John Mitchell's farm became part of the North Ward of the Town of Guelph.

Some of these changes can be traced on historical maps and subdivision plans dating to the 1850s. For example, a *Map of the Town of Guelph* compiled in 1855 shows that John Mitchell had begun to subdivide the land south of his house, between King Street and the Speed River, into town building lots.⁸ At this point, the location of the farmhouse, on Lot 9, still lay outside the boundaries of the town. However, a plan from 1858 shows that Lot 9 was soon incorporated into the North Ward of the expanded town.

An 1862 *Map of the Town of Guelph* shows the rapid expansion of the new subdivisions north of the Speed River. The open land surrounding John Mitchell's farmhouse was greatly reduced and the property was enclosed on four sides by new town building lots. This map also shows the footprint of the buildings extant in Guelph at that time. Four buildings were indicated on the remaining Mitchell property beside the Eramosa Road – the farmhouse, a barn, and two subsidiary buildings. More than twenty-five other buildings had also been constructed on the land between the farmhouse and the Speed River.

Changes to the outward appearance of the house have also been captured in series of photographs taken during the 1960s and 1970s.

The photographic collection in the Archives of Guelph Public Library contains several pictures of the house while it was owned by Charles and Margaret Bedford. In 1960, the two-storey section of the house was finished with a dark coloured stucco, the trim and shutters were painted in a contrasting light colour, and the side windows appear to have been topped with small keystones. A photograph taken during a house tour in the following year (circa 1961) shows that the stucco had been replaced with light coloured siding, the shutters and some of the trim had been repainted in a dark contrasting colour, and the keystones had been covered up or removed. These renovations took place around the same time that the Bedfords took out a mortgage against the house (see Land Registry Records above).

A series of photographs taken by Gordon Couling in 1965 and 1977 show that the current form and layout had been established by 1977.

⁷ C Acton Burrows, 1877, *The Annals of the Town of Guelph*, p 80; Leo Johnson, 1977, *History of Guelph, 1827-1927*, p 190.

⁸ Plan 40, a subdivision plan registered on 15 July 1857, confirms that John Mitchell had subdivided this land into 73 building lots. This land formed part of Broken Front Lot 2, Division F.

Municipal Records (Property Tax Assessment Rolls and Censuses)

Property tax assessment rolls and censuses have been compiled for the Town of Guelph since 1828. These rolls often identify the name of the tenant and/or owner of individual properties, some personal information about them such as the number of people in their family, their occupation and religion, and an assessment of the value of their real property, including land, buildings, and livestock. The quality of this information for the Town of Guelph is mixed, however it is possible to gain some further clues from these documents as to the history of the building located at 108 Queen Street and the lives of the people who lived there.

The census and property tax assessment records for Guelph for the periods 1832 to 1840, the tax assessment rolls for 1852 to 1891, and the censuses for 1861 and 1901 have been reviewed for this report.⁹

The early records from 1832 to 1840 do not generally specify the lot numbers for the assessment of lots in the Township of Guelph, so it is only possible to consider the assessments associated with the name of John Mitchell during this period. These records indicate that Mitchell gradually began to clear his land for cultivation (Table 1).

<i>Year</i>	Names of the Heads of Families	Uncultivated acres	Cultivated acres	Framed house under 2 stories	Framed , brick or stone house, 2 stories	Additio -nal fire-places	Oxen 4 years old & up	Milch cows	Young cattle from 2 to 4
1828	John Mitchell	200							
1829	John Michel	194							
1830	John Mitchell	200	2						
1833	John Mitchell	63 + 68	7				2	2	
1834	John Mitchell	115	3				3	2	
1837	John Mitchal	113	27		1	1	2	3	2
1838	John Mitchal	105	32		1	2	2	3	1
1839	John Mitchel	179	30				2	3	3
1840	John Mitchell	165	22	1	1		2	4	

⁹ The assessment rolls for the years 1835, 1836, 1841 to 1851, and 1854 are missing from the records held on microfilm at Guelph Public Library.

Table 1. Details of property tax assessments for John Mitchell, between the years of 1828 and 1840, Township of Guelph, Gore District. Source: Guelph Public Library microfilm

The records for April 1837 also confirm that John Mitchell had a two-storey house with an additional fireplace by this date. Five people were living in his household, including two children under the age of 16.

In 1840, Mitchell was assessed for two houses – a two-storey house valued at £60 per year and a second smaller frame house valued at £35 per year. The census indicated that seven people of “Independent” religion were living in Mitchell’s household at this date, including four children.

The property tax assessment records from 1852 onward provide more specific information about individual lots. From 1852 to 1861, John Mitchell is listed as the freeholder of several properties, including Lot 9 on the Eramosa Road. From 1852 to 1857 his occupation is listed as “farmer”; in 1859 he is a “farmer” and a “gentleman”. In 1860 and 1861 he is listed as a “gent” only.

John Mitchell died in September 1861. The census records for that year indicate that he was 61 years old, while his wife, Ann Mitchell, was 46 years old. There were eight other people living in the house, ranging in age from 5 to 22 years.

From 1862 to 1875, Lot 9 on the Eramosa Road was assessed under the name of Richard Mitchell, Executor of Mitchell’s Estate. The six and one quarter of acres of real property increased in value during this time, from \$4280 in 1869 to \$7200 in 1874.¹⁰ Richard Mitchell was variously listed as the freeholder and/or householder of the property; his occupation was listed as “executor” and one year as “Mayor” (1872). Mrs Mitchell was listed as the freeholder in 1876.

In 1877, following the subdivision of the property into residential building lots, Richard Mitchell was assessed for taxes for Lots 92, 93, 94, 95, and 96 on Queen Street, and Lots 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, and 107 on King Street, each 1/7 of an acre in size. As before, he was variously listed as the freeholder or tenant of the property; his occupation was listed as “gentleman” (from 1877 to 1884) and “City Clerk” (from 1885 to 1891.) The owner of the property was variously listed as Mitchell’s Estate, Mitchell Estate, or the John Mitchell Estate. The value of the real property remained steady at around \$3000 for the next decade; it then dropped to \$2200 in 1886. From this point on, Ann Mitchell, widow, was separately listed as the freeholder of Queen Street Lot 92 and King Street Lot 102.¹¹

The census records for 1901 demonstrate the ongoing connection of the Mitchell family with this property. It listed four people in the household: Ann Mitchell, widow, 86 years old; Richard Mitchell, son, 68 years old; Fred Wm. Mitchell, grandson, 39 years old; and Catherine Botts, domestic, 18 years old.

¹⁰ The property included lots on Delhi, King, Bridge, Derry, Strange, George, Pearl, and Perth Streets.

¹¹ Robert Mitchell, solicitor, was also listed as the freeholder of nearby properties on Delhi Street Lot A (3/5 acre), Delhi Street Lot 75 (1/8 acre), and Queen Lot 87 (1/8 acre.)

City Directories

Commercial directories that publish lists of individuals and businesses by street address are available for the County of Wellington from 1871, and for the Town of Guelph from 1875 onward. The directories for the years 1871 to 1932 were reviewed for additional information the property at 108 Queen Street and its occupants.

The earliest Directory for the County of Wellington, for the years 1871-1872, listed Richard Mitchell (town Mayor) and Robert Mitchell (solicitor at McCurry & Mitchell) as residents of the house on the Eramosa Road.

The Directory for the City of Guelph, for the years 1882-1883, published by William W Evans, makes the first reference to the address on "Queen Street", on the west side of the Eramosa Road. This directory listed four people as residents of the house: Robert Mitchell, solicitor; Frederick W Mitchell, machinist; Mrs John Mitchell; and Richard Mitchell, water commissioner.

Vernon's Directories for the City of Guelph from 1894 to 1913 variously listed Mrs Ann Mitchell (widow John) or Mr Richard Mitchell (City Clerk) as residents of the house on Queen Street West. From 1908, Vernon's Directories began to indicate street numbers. The property was listed as 268 Queen West from 1908 to 1912, and 250 Queen West from 1913 onward.

Following the death of Ann Mitchell in 1913, Mrs Emma J Goldie (widow Thomas Goldie) moved into the house. Mrs Goldie was listed as the resident of the house at 250 Queen West from 1914 until at least 1932, at which point the current review was concluded.

Other Sources

Newspaper articles have provided an important source of additional evidence regarding the history of the farmhouse at 108 Queen Street.

An obituary for Mrs Ann Mitchell (nee Thompson), published in the *Guelph Evening Mercury* of 3 November 1913, recorded that Mrs Mitchell had "passed away in her hundredth year at 'The Old Homestead' on the Eramosa Hill." It noted that "more than eighty-two years ago Mrs. Mitchell entered as a bride the house on the Eramosa Hill where she has lived ever since and where all her children were born." It may be inferred from this statement that John Mitchell had started construction of the farmhouse before he married Ann Thompson in 1831.

On 21 March 1925, the *Guelph Evening Mercury and Advertiser* published an account of a presentation made to the Wellington Historical Society by Rev William Mitchell, son of John and Ann Mitchell: "Reminiscences Of Lifetime Of One of Guelph's Oldest Citizens." In his presentation, Rev Mitchell recalled that his father had come to Guelph in 1828 "and located on the Eramosa Hill, where the house he built still stands, which is probably now the oldest house in Guelph still occupied by a member of the original family."

In a description of his memory of the execution of two men at Guelph's court house, Rev Mitchell provided some incidental facts about the house and its surrounds:

"The first thing of importance that I distinctly remember is that on the 1st of July, 1847, I was standing on the upper verandah of our house (at that time there were no houses on the north side of the river but McDonald's and ours), I saw a great crowd of people in front of the court house. They were assembled to witness the first execution of the death sentence in this country."

This account confirms that the farmhouse had a two-storey verandah by this date. It also confirms that there was an unimpeded line of sight between the house and the town south of the Speed River.

Historical Associations

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

John Mitchell (b 1800 – d 3 September 1861)

John Mitchell was the son of Richard Mitchell of Londonderry, Ireland. In May 1824, John Mitchell sailed from Liverpool to New York with his friend James Buchanan. Buchanan was the British Consul in New York; Mitchell "was coming to seek his fortune in the new world."¹²

Mitchell had first settled in the Genesee Valley near Lockport, New York State. He remained there until 1828, when he moved to Guelph and was employed by the Canada Company to assist in allocating land to new settlers.¹³

Mitchell bought a farm on the Eramosa Hill, on the north side of the Speed River, in July 1828 and promptly began to clear and cultivate his land. Buchanan moved to Guelph a few years later. In March 1831, Buchanan purchased several farm lots on the north and west sides of Mitchell's property: Lots 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 and Lot 2 Broken Front in the 1st Range of Division F. In May 1842, Buchanan returned to England and sold his land to Mitchell.¹⁴

John Mitchell married Ann Thompson in 1831. The documentary evidence collected for this report suggests that Mitchell had begun construction of the house on the Eramosa Hill by the time of his marriage, and that the house had been completed

¹² Rev William Mitchell, "Reminiscences of Lifetime of One of Guelph's Oldest Citizens Presented Before Local Historical Society", *Guelph Evening Mercury and Advertiser*, 21 March 1925

¹³ Rev William Mitchell, "Reminiscences of Lifetime of One of Guelph's Oldest Citizens Presented Before Local Historical Society", *Guelph Evening Mercury and Advertiser*, 21 March 1925

¹⁴ James Buchanan sold 148 acres of land to John Mitchell on 28 May 1842. Abstract of Titles, Guelph Land Registry Office.

by January 1834. Property Tax Assessment Rolls for the Township of Guelph have confirmed that the house had two stories by 1837.

Mitchell lived in the house on the Eramosa Hill until his death in September 1861. The family tombstone at Guelph's Woodlawn Cemetery commemorates Mitchell as "a citizen of Guelph from the cutting of the first tree."¹⁵ There is no evidence to suggest that Mitchell was present in Guelph on 23 April 1827, when John Galt officially founded the town, however it is clear that he was one of the earliest successful settlers in Guelph.

Ann Thompson Mitchell (18 May 1814 – 2 November 1913)

Ann Thompson was born near Belfast, Ireland in 1814, daughter of James and Mary Thompson. The Thompson family immigrated to Canada when Ann was 10 years old, first settling in Galt. In 1828, the family moved to Guelph and James Thompson built a house on the Dundas Hill. Ann was educated by her mother, who ran a small private school.

Ann Thompson married John Mitchell in 1831. She lived at "The Old Homestead" on the Eramosa Hill for 82 years, from the time of her marriage until her death in November 1913.¹⁶ During that time she bore at least ten children, two of which died in infancy.¹⁷

The life of Ann Mitchell mirrored that of many pioneering women. Her obituary noted that she was a devout Christian, a prohibitionist, and that "she found time in the midst of the hardships and privations of pioneer life to take her share in promoting the religious welfare of the little settlement."¹⁸ When the British Consul at New York, James Buchanan, visited Guelph in August 1828, he organized the local Presbyterian community to set up a Sunday School. The fourteen year old Ann Thompson was one of the first to volunteer her services as a teacher at the school.¹⁹ Ann Thompson Mitchell lived for 99 years, outliving most of Guelph's first settlers and many of her own children.

¹⁵ Block F, Woodlawn Cemetery, Guelph.

¹⁶ "Death of Mrs Mitchell", *Guelph Evening Mercury*, 3 November 1913.

¹⁷ The 1861 Census of Wellington Count recorded seven children living in the house: Robert Mitchell, 22 years; Mary Ann, 20; William, 18; Eliza, 12; John, 10; Emma, 7; Andrew, 5. The Mitchell's eldest son, Richard Mitchell, does not appear to be living at the property at that date. The Mitchell family tombstone in Guelph's Woodlawn Cemetery also commemorates the death of two infants: James Thompson Mitchell, who died 15 January 1835, aged 7 months; and John Mitchell, who died 22 August 1848, aged 2 years.

¹⁸ "Death of Mrs Mitchell", *Guelph Evening Mercury*, 3 November 1913.

¹⁹ Her future husband, John Mitchell, also became a member for the first Board of Trustees of the new St Andrew's Church. See Leo Johnson, 1977, *Guelph, A History 1827-1927*, p 110; "Death of Mrs Mitchell", *Guelph Evening Mercury*, 3 November 1913.

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