

Advisory Committee of Council Information Report

Committee	Heritage Guelph
Date	Monday, July 1, 2024
Subject	19 Woodycrest – Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report

Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report

Key Findings

19 Woodycrest 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 Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report finds that the property meets three of the nine criteria set out under Ontario Regulation 9/06. It is therefore recommended that the property’s heritage attributes be designated under Part IV, section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act.

Location

Figure 1: Location of 19 Woodycrest (City of Guelph GIS).



The subject property is located on the east side of Woodycrest Drive, near the cul de sac. The property has the legal description of PLAN 429, PT LOT 14, PT LOT 13, DIV A, PT LOT 21, PT WOODYCREST CL RP 61R155, PART 11. The original lot was roughly 58 ¼ acres and fronted onto Waterloo Avenue with the address of 475, until it became 19 Woodycrest following the creation of Woodycrest Drive in Registered Plan 429 in 1952.

Historical Background

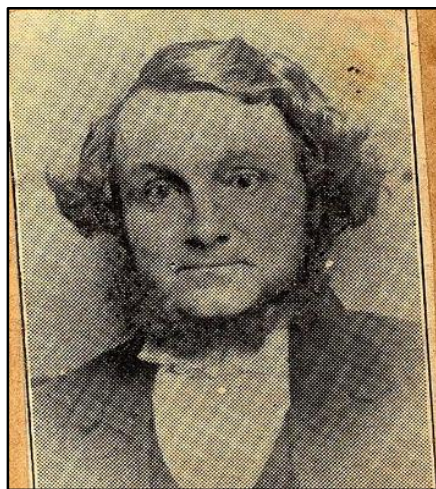
Constructed sometime between 1854 and 1860, the house at what is today 19 Woodycrest Drive, known locally as “the Homewood,” is an exemplary representation of mid-19th century Italianate/Tuscan villa architectural style in Guelph. The property itself was part of lands first purchased shortly after the founding of Guelph in 1829 by John Jones. During the 1830s, ownership varied and changed often, with the famed settler Sheriff George Grange and family maintaining ownership until the mid-1850’s. Sheriff Grange’s ownership predated the construction of “Homewood,” but his ownership of the land is important in defining the historical context of the area because he also owned the nearby Red Mill and Distillery and the accompanying 50 acres (1877 Annals of Guelph, Page 47). In 1852 Grange gained considerable wealth upon the death of a relative in Ireland and invested it heavily in land speculation in Guelph and Puslinch townships ([“George John Grange, 1808-1876”](#) Guelph Historical Society, 2021).

The Wellington County Atlas of 1906 attributes the construction of the “Homewood” to John Juchereau in 1860, however, land title abstracts and tax assessment records show a significant jump in value in 1854 from £200-400 to £2000, when the property was transferred from Walter and George Grange to John Howitt. This is important to note, as dramatic increases in tax assessments usually indicate a major construction project or improvement to the property (Attachment 2, Table 1: 15058 B&S, and 1906 Wellington County Atlas, Page 36). This uncertainty is also reinforced in one of historian Rae Stuart’s “History in Homes” articles, where he wrote that Ellen Diana Grange, Sherrif Grange’s daughter, married John Juchereau Kingsmill, whereupon “John J. purchased ‘Homewood’ from C. Sharpe and lived in it until 1876,” thus loosely implying the house was built prior to being acquired by the Kingsmill’s (Attachment 2, Figure 21). The footprint of the house is visible in Cooper’s map from 1862, so it is certain that the house dates from at least 1862. “The Homewood” undeniably bears significant historical associations with the Grange, Kingsmill, and Howitt families, all of whom feature prominently in the history of Guelph Township as seen in Cooper’s maps (Attachment 2, Figure 2 & 3).

Figure 2: 19 Woodycrest. Source: Site Visit in 2009.



Figure 3: [Sheriff George J. Grange, Wellington County Museum.](#)



To date, the property amounts to roughly 1 acre of land, with only the main structure and root house remaining (Attachment 2, Fig. 7 & 9). While the original lot amounted to almost 60 acres, at several points during the late 19th century major severances to the property were made, with nearly 5 acres to Absalom Shade and 11 ½ acres to the Galt and Guelph Railway Company, respectively (Attachment 2, Table 1: 8600 Release and 8875 B&S). Interestingly, the first president of the Galt and Guelph Railway was Sheriff George Grange, so the sales may have been his suggestion (1877 Annals of Guelph, Page 72). It is possible that Shade was involved in the sale of lands to the Galt and Guelph Railway company, as he was a staunch supporter of establishing rail connections in Southern Ontario, in addition to a long legacy of public works that included the initial contracts for clearing the Waterloo and Dundas/Gordon roads during Guelph's early years ([Absalom Shade, Dictionary of Canadian Biography](#)).

Figure 4: Sir Charles Kingsmill, 1910. Source: Guelph Civic Museum.



The estate also has a strong historical association with the Kingsmill family, particularly as the childhood home of Sir Charles Kingsmill, admiral in the British Royal Navy and the inaugural Director of the Naval Service of Canada. As per his 1935 obituary in *The Mail*, Charles Kingsmill was born in Guelph in 1855 and spent his childhood living at "the Homewood" in Guelph prior to his illustrious career in the British Royal Navy. Kingsmill was made a grand officer of the Crown of Italy and was invested as an officer of the French Legion of Honor, before he ultimately retired from active service in 1917 with the rank of admiral and was given the title of knight-bachelor a year later in 1918.

Kingsmill first served as a midshipman at the age of 14, and from there he quickly rose through the ranks: lieutenant by 1877, commander in 1891, and captain by 1898 (Gimblett, Richard. "The Naval Service of Canada, 1910–2010: The Centennial Story.", 2009). Despite a near court martial in 1907 for his role in running aground the HMS Dominion in the St. Lawrence a year prior, he was hand-picked by Sir Wilfred Laurier to head the Canadian Naval Service on May 4th, 1910, a few years shy of the First World War (Gimblett, 2009).

Some highlights from his career include four years in "the Middle East suppressing illicit traffic in humans and firearms," command of ships like the HMS Goldfinch, Archer, and Mildura, and the command of the town of Zela in the Gulf of Arden during the Somali Campaign of 1884 (Attachment 2, Figure 17). During WW1, however, Admiral Charles Kingsmill gained renown for his role in strengthening the navy's coastal commands and intelligence gathering organizations to better assert Canada's authority, and work on a more equal basis with Britain. The Canadian Navy was thus able to assume an effective role in the defence of shipping in the Western Atlantic when large German submarines crossed the ocean in the summer and fall of 1918 ("Admiral Sir Charles Edmund Kingsmill 1855-1935", Ontario Heritage Trust). He lived on Grindstone Island near Portland, Ontario until his death in 1935. Kingsmill Avenue, nestled between York and Victoria Roads in St. Patrick's Ward, is named in honour of Kingsmill.

The final association is with the Howitt family, namely John, Jane, and Charles E. Howitt. John "Quaker" Howitt was esteemed as one of the wealthiest men in the country, in addition to his role as the first President of the Guelph Agricultural Society and a member of Guelph's first Township Council. While John and his family lived nearby on the 500 acres known of as "the Grange", roughly where the Dolime Quarry is today ([John Quaker Howitt](#), 2012), the death of Henry Howitt in 1874 led to "the Homewood" and other properties passing to the newly widowed Jane Howitt, who travelled to Guelph from England to manage the extensive properties (1906 Wellington County Atlas, Page 36).

Jane was far from alone at "the Homewood"; the Vernon City Directory for 1894-1896 lists additional residents including Miss Marg Bulger, cook; Mrs. Sarah Deacon, domestic; and Fred Hughes, manservant, in addition to Jane's son Charles E. Howitt (Vernon's Directory 1894-1896, Pp. 48, 64, 74, 93). Anecdotally, Jane's death several decades later in 1894 triggered the largest ever estate sale in Wellington County up until that point, as the Howitt properties included not only "the Homewood" but three stone buildings on Market Square (presumably across from where City Hall now stands on Carden Street) and three stone buildings on Paisley Street, potentially 9-13 Paisley Street (Attachment 2, Figure 24). Again, while "the Homewood" provenance is subject to debate, the Howitt's undeniably left their mark in the form of major additions in 1881, as per the Guelph Mercury Buildings Operations, which makes note of;

"Chas. C. Howitt enlargement and improvement of his residence on Waterloo Avenue, by building a stone addition 27 x 26 ft, and raising the original house one storey. It is... one of the finest residences in the city. Dobbie & Grierson, stonework; A. Bruce & Son, carpentering; Day, plastering; Humphries & Reynold painting; Feek, plumbing; Mrs. Kerr, tin work. Cost \$3,000 (Guelph Mercury, December 7th, 1881).

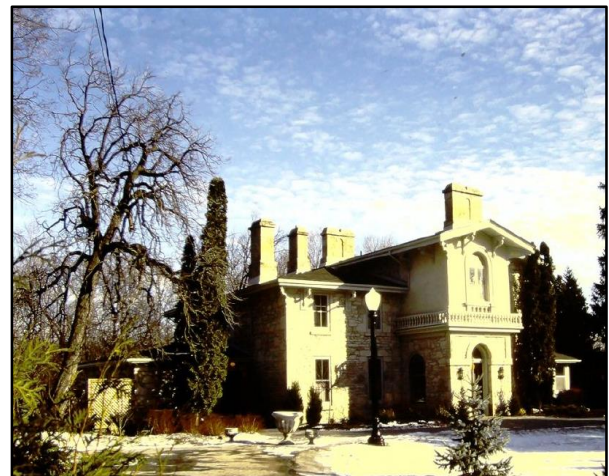
Charles E. Howitt, son of Jane and Henry Howitt and nephew to John "Quaker" Howitt, was the last of the Howitt's to own the property, which he held until 1941 (Attachment 2, Table 1). Charles was also a well-reputed member of Guelph society. In addition to his work as a private banker and real estate broker with Howitt's Banking Office and the Norwich Union Fire Insurance Society at 95 Market Square, Charles took on civic roles like Chairman of the Guelph Public Library and Alderman for St. John's Ward in 1906 (Attachment 2, Table 2 and Figure 20).

The nearby Howitt Park and Howitt Creek are attributed to Charles, and he is also responsible for commissioning the construction of the "Homewood Cottage," or what is today known as the Guelph Bible Conference Grounds at 485 Waterloo Avenue (Attachment 2, Figure 19). Additionally, the Howitt Street that connects lower Wyndham and Neeve streets are named after Alfred Howitt, who subdivided the lands before they were acquired by Jane in 1875 and Charles after Jane's death in 1894 (Attachment 2, Figure 22). Following the death of Charles E. Howitt in 1941, the property was sold to Clarence D. McCall for \$4700. The McCall family owned and operated McCall Groceteria/Foodland, located at 23-25 Quebec Street (Attachment 2, Fig 14 & 15). The house was divided into apartment units post-WW2, before being returned to its original form and current state by Francis Valeriote from Edgehill Properties in 1984 (Attachment 2, Table 1: 388267 Grant).

Figure 5: 19 Woodycrest Drive.
Wellington County Museum, 1969.



Figure 6: 19 Woodycrest Drive.
[Source: Guelph Civic Museum 1990.](#)



Building Description

The large, sprawling limestone construction at 19 Woodycrest is a robust representation of an Italianate/Tuscan-style villa that is distinctly built of local limestone (Attachment 2, Figure 18). The structure is defined by irregular massing, exuberance in detailing, and varied elevations, primarily around a central tower or campanile. American architect A.J Dowing described this style in the mid-1850's as a blend of rural Gothic and city Georgian styles, and thus "expressed not country life or town life, 'but a mingling of both" (Ontario Architecture, Page 52).

Figure 7: "Lornewood", 123 Norfolk Street in Guelph. Source: Gordon Couling, 1965.



Figure 8: Bellevue House in Kingston, Ontario. Source: Ontario Architecture, Page 52.



For wealthy families living on the peripheries of urban centers like the Howitts and Kingsmills, the Italianate/Tuscan Villa style was a way of showcasing that wealth in a way that accentuated the rural surrounding, rather than dominate it. The Raymond House at 123 Norfolk Street in Guelph, built in 1877, or the Bellevue House in Kingston, built in the 1840's, are both comparative structures.

The exterior stone walls were initially covered in white plaster, like the Bellevue House pictured above, but this was later removed to reveal rustic, random-rubble local limestone, punctuated by partially squared quoins and lintel arch stones. Intricately carved wooden cornice and brackets are present in the gables of the more prominent and visible rooflines, particularly on the main façade as well as flanking the stone chimneys (Attachment 3, Fig. 1-3).

Single, round-headed windows are located above the front door and on the second floor of the frontispiece. One of two windows on the northeast façade contains elegant stained glass. The second-floor window on the east façade has a carved stone hood mold with segmented arch. Original windows and doors in the exterior stone walls have a smooth, stone lug sill, accompanied by either a corresponding flattened stone lintel or arched, roughly hewn voussoirs/claveaux. Large, irregularly shaped quoins have also been employed around some windows, further accenting the appearance of a random, rubble-stone construction (Attachment 3, Fig 4).

Statement of Significance

This property meets three of the nine criteria outlined in Ontario Regulation 9/06, including design/physical value and historical/associative value. It is therefore recommended that the property be designated under Part IV, section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act.

Design/Physical Value

The subject property meets Criterion 1 as “The Homewood” is an early and unique example of Italianate/Tuscan-style villa, made particularly defined due to its usage of Guelph’s distinct locally quarried limestone.

The subject property meets Criterion 2 through both the quantity and the quality of the heritage attributes, many of which date back to its original construction. Of note on the exterior is the locally quarried limestone walls and chimneys, as well as the intricately ornamented brackets, cornices, and rustic-yet-ornamented quoins. For the interior, many of the original stained-glass windows are present throughout the home, in addition to the original glass shelves in the library and vitrolite glass in the bathroom. Many rooms still bear original tin ceilings and wood paneling.

Historical Associative Value

The subject property meets Criterion 4 because of its strong historical association with the Grange, Howitt, and Kingsmill families, all of whom are prominent historical families not only locally, but provincially and nationally. Significantly, “The Homewood” was the childhood home of Sir Charles Kingsmill, admiral in the British Royal Navy and the inaugural Director of the Naval Service of Canada.

Attachments

Attachment 2: Historical Documentation and Photos

Attachment 3: Current Photos

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