

Advisory Committee of Council Information Report



Committee	Heritage Guelph
Date	Monday, June 3, 2024
Subject	22 James Street East – Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report

Executive Summary

Key Findings

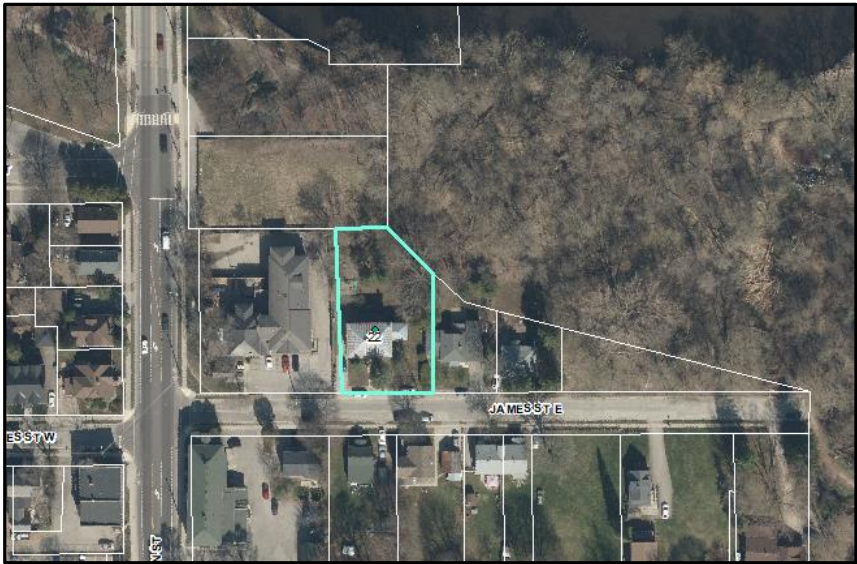
22 James Street East is listed as a non-designated built heritage resource on the City of Guelph’s Municipal Register of Cultural Heritage Properties under Part IV, Section 27 of the Ontario Heritage Act. This Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report has evaluated the property in accordance with the requirements of the Ontario Heritage Act and finds that the property meets five of the criteria for determining cultural heritage value or interest, according to Ontario Regulation 9/06. It is therefore recommended that the property be designated under Part IV, section 29 of the OHA.

Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report

Location

Bearing the legal description of “Plan 302, PT Lot A, DESC INCL RP 61R5259, PART 3”, 22 James Street East is located on the north side of James Street, which itself is north of Gordon Street, it is close in proximity to the Speed River, Dormie Lane, the Cutten Club Golf Course, and the University of Guelph. The property is in close proximity to the Brooklyn and College Hill Heritage Conservation District.

Figure 1: Current view of neighbourhood around 22 James Street East.



Background

22 James Street East has a strong association with the history of 'Railway Fever' in both Guelph and Toronto, due to its connection to the Toronto Suburban Railway (TSR). The former railbed leading to this structure is present today, in the form of the Guelph Radial hiking trail. The Beaux-Arts style building was constructed between 1915 and 1917 to serve as a transformer substation for the Guelph branch of the Toronto Suburban Railway. One of very few remaining TSR buildings in Ontario, it was decommissioned and sold in 1932, and later converted into apartments in 1952.

The recorded history of Lot A begins in 1892 with its sale to Christian Kloefer, a local businessman and politician. While he never lived there, it seems that he used the lot as an investment tool as parcels were sold to working-class locals and other businessmen, namely William Johnson, the owner of the Boathouse, which still stands on the opposite bank of the Speed River. The most consequential history of the property, however, is related to the development of the Toronto Suburban Railway. Opened in the 1890s, the TSR was a collaboration of industries across the province; the cars were built in Preston, the electronics were built in Peterborough, the tracks were made with Algoma steel, and the line was powered by Niagara hydro. It quickly stepped into its role as a commuter railway between Toronto and its surrounding suburbs such as Weston, Lambton Mills, and the 'Junction'.

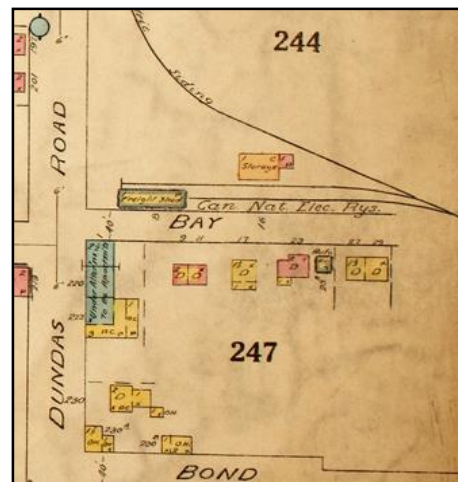
By 1912, the TSR planned an extension from Toronto to Berlin (now Kitchener). Ahead of this expansion, the property at 22 James Street, then known as Bay Street, was purchased by the TSR to serve as a transformer substation to power the Guelph-Berlin line. The substation was designed by George Briggs, of Mackenzie, Mann, & Company, a railway-contracting partnership and financial holding company that, among other commissions, built and promoted Canada's third transcontinental railway, the Canadian Northern Railway. Between 1912-1918, Briggs designed all passenger stations and related structures for the Eastern Division of the Canadian Northern Railway. In 1920, he was appointed superintending architect for the Canadian National Railway (CNR), and is well-known for designing the major CNR resort hotel, Minaki Lodge near Kenora, Ontario.

The start of the First World War and an amendment to the Hydro Electric Railway Act in 1914 stifled interest in extending the line from Guelph to Kitchener, but the Toronto-Guelph line went ahead full steam, and as noted by Cameron Shelley for the Waterloo Record, "August 12, 1917, is remembered in Canada mainly as the final day of the battle of Vimy Ridge... important events also came close to home, in this case, with the arrival of streetcar service all the way to Toronto" ([From Guelph to Toronto and Back, 2019](#)). As plans for expansion to Kitchener were scrapped, the recently complete Beaux-Arts structure was no longer needed as a substation and was thus converted into a railcar barn.

Figure 2 TSR car #105 in front of old City Hall, Carden Street, January 1918. Source: Guelph Public Library.



Figure 3 Fire Insurance Plan 1922 (Revised 1929), corner of Dundas and Bay streets, now Gordon and James.



With one hundred official stops along its route, ranging from open-front shelters and flag-stops on the side of the tracks to purpose-built stations in Georgetown and Acton, electric service between Guelph and Toronto began. While Guelph and Toronto were well served by other railways, the TSR was the only public transit option available to many communities along the TSR's route.

The railway was a cornerstone of the local economy; for example, the car carried milk from the Ontario Reformatory prison farm, and on Sundays an extra car was added to accommodate extra baggage accumulated on shopping trips to Toronto. In 1918 the owners of the TSR went bankrupt, and the line was purchased by the newly formed Canadian National Railway. The last TSR train left Guelph on August 15th, 1931. While the Guelph branch was never profitable, during its time it provided a vital service to the communities it passed through.

By 1932 the whole lot was sold to Joseph Wolfond, a well-reputed local businessman, who operated a towing/automotive service company on the lot but fronting on Gordon Street. In 1952 the property was sold to Clarence Redwood, a carpenter from the Brooklyn neighbourhood, who converted it into the apartment building that it is known as today.

Building Description

The property is a restrained and functional form of Beaux-Arts, namely characterized by the stylistic elements on the pilasters, the monumental windows, a highly visible central entrance, and the architectural symmetry. Beaux-Arts originated in the 1890s as a synthesis of Classical Greek and Roman styles with Italian and French Renaissance styles. It is typified by symmetry, monumental scale, and its classical influences. Even relatively simple Beaux-Arts buildings can display both clarity of form and classical elements, such as the former CNR Station in North Bay, which was also designed by George Briggs, or the TSR station in Georgetown (Attachment 2, Figures 9-13).

The property has a cast stone foundation and is constructed of brick. Twin brick pilasters are on either side of the entrance, with one on each corner, and are topped with sheet metal Tuscan capitals. It has a sheet metal cornice surrounding the whole building, and a corrugated steel hipped roof. It has half-round, two-storey windows, although these are not original.

Figure 3: Gordon Couling Inventory Photograph, 1974



Figure 4: Photo from Google Maps, September 2011.



While 22 James St E is a relatively restrained example of beaux-art architectural style in Southern Ontario, the choice to employ this style here is undoubtedly connected to more resplendent train stations built during the 1910's like Toronto and Ottawa's Union stations, the North Toronto Station, and Hamilton's Liuna Station (Attachment 2, Figures 5, 6, 7, 8).

Statement of Significance

The subject property 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. The heritage attributes of 22 James Street East display: design/physical, historical/associative, and contextual value.

Design/Physical Value

The subject property meets criterion 1 because it is a rare example of the functional Beaux-Arts style in Guelph and a rare extant example of a building associated with the Toronto Suburban Railway.

Historical Associative Value

The subject property meets criterion 4 because it is directly associated with the Toronto Suburban Railway, which provided a vital service to Guelph residents between 1917 and 1931. The TSR also served the nearby prison farm. Criterion 4 is also met through its association to George Carruthers

Briggs, a significant architect who served as the superintending architect for the Canadian National Railway from 1920 until his death.

The subject property meets criterion 5 because it yields information about the history of the Toronto Suburban Railway in Guelph.

Contextual Value

The subject property meets Criterion 8 because it is physically and historically linked to the extant railbed that is now used as the Guelph Radial Line Trail.

Attachments

Attachment- 1 Historical Documentation and Photos

Attachment -2 Current Photos

Report Author

Jack Mallon, Heritage Planner, & Robert Flewelling, Heritage Research Assistant