

# Advisory Committee of Council Information Report

---

Committee	Heritage Guelph
Date	Monday, November 4, 2024
Subject	<b>136 Glasgow Street North – Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report</b>

---

## Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report

### Key Findings

136 Glasgow Street North 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. As per the requirements of the OHA, the results of this Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report find that the property meets six of the nine criteria set out by 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

Bearing the legal description of PT PARK LOT 47, Plan 8, AS IN RO781295; Guelph, the subject property is on the West side of Glasgow Street North, east of Yorkshire Street North between Liverpool Street and Oxford Street.

Figure 1: 136 Glasgow Street North, taken by Heritage Planning, 2024.



## Historical Background

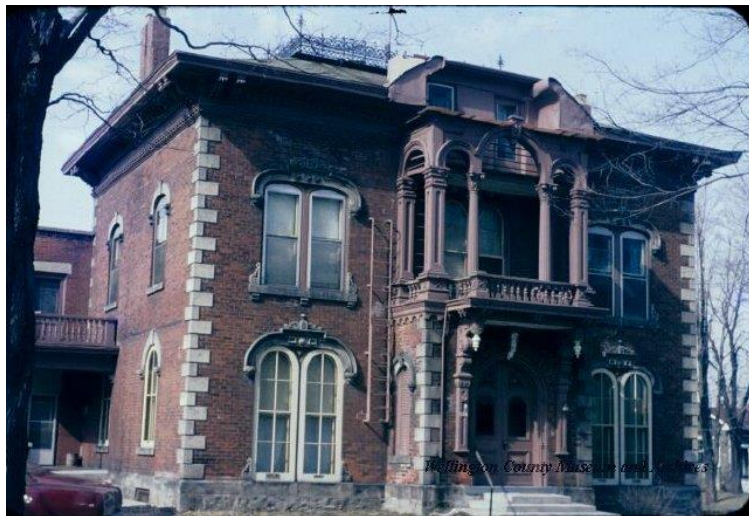
Situated on the corner of Glasgow Street North and Liverpool Street, the original Lot 47 as seen in Plan 8 initially made up the whole block but was subdivided into seven lots during the 1870's for residential, commercial, and industrial, such as the Burr and Skinner Furniture Factory, Dominion Casket Co Ltd., W.J. Armstrong Ltd. and Leland Electric Canada Ltd (Attachment 1, Figures 5-9).

The history of the home in question, however, begins with Thomas Gowdy's purchase of the northeast plot of the lot from Henry Hatch, a land agent, in 1875. Born in 1831 in Toronto to Joseph and Ann Gowdy of Belfast, Ireland, Thomas Gowdy moved to Guelph in 1853. Thomas married twice, first to Mary Ann Cunningham, with whom he had one daughter together named Annie Elizabeth, and then again to Margaret Moore in 1864, with whom he would sire another nine children ([Waterloo Historical Society, 1939, P. 50](#)).

To house his increasingly larger family, Gowdy commissioned architect John Hall Jr. to design and build his 1876 Italianate style home, which he would reside in until his death in 1913. John Hall Jr. was a prominent builder and contractor in Guelph, who within the prime of his career designed around thirty buildings in Guelph, Listowel, Galt and Alliston ("Hall, John Jr.", [Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada](#)).

Gowdy's choice of Hall comes as no surprise, as Hall was at this point in his career known simply as "The Architect" for new residences in Guelph (Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada, n.d.). Also involved were some of Guelph's finest contractors of the day, including Robert Emslie, William Day, George Howard, and Thomas Dobbie (Attachment 1, Fig 10).

Figure 2: 136 Glasgow Street North, before reconstruction of central tower. Circa 1969, from Wellington County Museum.



Gowdy himself was highly active in Guelph and diligently engaged in many civil and political engagements; he served as an original director of the Guelph Junction Railway, a director of the Guelph General Hospital, President of Guelph Poultry Society, Patron of Guelph Union Curling Club, Chairman of the Guelph Public Library, the President of the Toronto Lime Company, director of the Wellington Lime Company, as well as integral roles in the Dominion Life Assurance Company, Wellington Mutual Fire Assurance Company, and the Waterloo Mutual Fire Insurance Company. Politically, he served as part of the City Council for many years, and his devotion to the city was fully realized during his term as Mayor of Guelph between 1889-1890 ([Guelph Arts, 2016](#)).

Gowdy would live at 136 Glasgow Street North with his family for the rest of his life. In his obituary he was described as "a lover of his home and took a keen interest in the welfare of his large family of children", ([Acton Free Press, Dec 11, 1913. Page 2, Column 2](#)), with another Guelph obituary describing Gowdy as "one of the pioneer citizens of Guelph and to him is due a great deal of the credit for building up the city" (Waterloo Historical Society, 1939, P. 50). His wife Maragaret and youngest daughter Nettie took up ownership over the property, with Nettie gaining full ownership following the death of her mother Margaret in the 1920 (Vernon's City of Guelph Directories, 1922-1930).

In the decades since, the house was repeatedly subdivided into apartment units, and by 1978 the house made up twelve apartments, the bulk of which served as student housing (Vernon's City of Guelph Directories, 1970-1980). Currently, the Gowdy House is split into seven separate units, in addition to the attached dwelling on the rear that fronts onto 110 Liverpool.

Figure 3: Mayor Thomas Gowdy. Guelph Public Library, circa 1889-1890.



## **Building Description**

136 Glasgow Street North is an attractive blend of an Italianate Villa with Second Empire attributes, made particularly striking by its usage of its blend of stone and red clay brick sourced from a manufacturer north of Glen Williams (Attachment 1, Fig. 10). Main characteristics of this style include ornate cornice brackets, projecting eaves, dichromatic effects created with contrasting materials (especially evident around window decorations) and arched windows. The 'Second Empire' attributes, whose origins reside in France, are reminiscent within this structure from its symmetrical facade, mansard roof, iron cresting and a central front piece.

Historically, the main structure on the lot has undergone many changes since construction, with significant additions to the north and west sides. While the general form of home has been maintained, certain features have undergone significant alterations, namely the reconstruction of the central tower, the mansard roof of the central building and hipped roof of the tower, and the removal of the original brick chimney and iron-cresting that previously topped the roofline.

The masonry employed in this structure is of a high degree of craftsmanship, particularly in the ornate stonework framing the window openings and central entry, as well as with the tool-margined, bush-hammered, and bevel-edged stone quoins. Similarly, the roofline is accented by decorative stonework paired with carved cornice and brackets

The central attraction of the house is the tower, which has been rebuilt multiple times. This feature starts at the outer section of the front door, going up to the roof. There is balcony access on the second and third floors. The current tower was rebuilt in the last thirty years, containing simple paneled rectangular columns at each corner, with a similarly designed overhang. The facade itself is symmetrical, containing a central tower with identical windows on either side, which is not typically characteristic of the Italianate Villa architectural style. The front door is a double door with arched windows on the top half and paneling on the bottom surround a foliate bolection ornament. There is an arched transom over the doors containing a triangular window over each door.

There are five primary windows on the facade, with ornate frames, lintels, and sills constructed from stone with by ornately carved stone-scroll accents. The central second-floor window that faces onto the balcony of the tower is also a paired, floor-to-ceiling pane with an arch-top transom containing three circles with distinct window shapes; the central circle is the biggest of the three and contains a four-leaf clover-shaped design while the other two reside on each side of the central circle, containing a three-leaf clover design.

## **Statement of Significance**

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

### **Design/Physical Value**

This property meets Criterion 1 as it is a representative example of the Italianate style within the City of Guelph.

This property meets Criterion 2 due to its impressive display of craftsmanship and artistic detail throughout its masonry work, most notably around the front entrance and windows, the way the decorative stone design is paired with the cornice brackets at the base of the roof, and the transoms above the front door and central window.

### **Historical Associative Value**

This property meets Criterion 4 due to its direct association with the highly successful industrialist and eminent public official Thomas Gowdy, the founder of Gowdy's Agricultural Works and the Mayor from 1889-1890.

This property satisfies Criterion 6 as it was designed by architect John Hall Jr, a prominent builder and contractor in Guelph, who within the prime of his career designed around thirty buildings in Guelph, Listowel, Galt, and Alliston.

### **Contextual Value**

This property meets Criterion 7 as it supports the character of the area. It is one of the earlier and more prominent residences on Glasgow Street North.

This property meets Criterion 9 as its location on the corner of Glasgow and Liverpool has historically and contemporaneously allowed it to function as a prominent landmark, as demonstrated by its repeated use as a reference point in the Guelph Daily Mercury.

## **Attachments**

Attachment-1 Historical Documents

## **Report Author**

Jack Mallon, Heritage Planner