

Staff Report



To	City Council
Service Area	Infrastructure, Development and Environment
Date	Tuesday, June 10, 2025
Subject	15 Gordon Street – Notice of Intention to Designate

Recommendation

1. That the City Clerk be authorized to publish and serve notice of intention to designate 15 Gordon St. pursuant to Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act.
 2. That the designation bylaw be brought before Council for approval if no objections are received within the thirty (30) day objection period.
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Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

In November 2022, the Government of the Province of Ontario passed Bill 23 (amended by Bill 185), which made changes to the Ontario Heritage Act that will remove all non-designated properties from the Municipal Heritage Register on January 1, 2027. Heritage planning staff and the Heritage Advisory Committee have been reviewing properties on the Municipal Heritage Register for designation under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act.

The purpose of this report is to recommend that Council publish its intention to designate 15 Gordon St. pursuant to Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. The cultural heritage significance and heritage attributes of the property are described in this report.

Key Findings

15 Gordon St. 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.

A property may be designated under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act if it meets two or more of the criteria used to determine cultural heritage value or interest as set out in Ontario Regulation 9/06 (as amended by Ontario Regulation 569/22; see Attachment-1).

Heritage planning staff, in consultation with Heritage Guelph, have completed a Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report and Statement of Cultural

Statement of Significance

Figure 2 1955 Photo showing the complete "Day's Block" on Gordon St. (Wellington County Museum and Archives, A1985.110)



15 Gordon St. is the last remaining section of a once larger block of limestone commercial buildings facing Gordon St., between Nottingham St. and Essex St. Lot 178 at the corner of Gordon and Nottingham, and adjacent lot 194 at the corner of Gordon and Essex were purchased from the Canada Company in 1834 by Joseph Croft. He replaced earlier wood-frame structures on the site with one of the earliest brick homes in Guelph, though that structure did not last long. After Joseph Croft's death in 1840 the property was purchased by contractor William Day and wife Sarah. Over the next several years, Day built a row of 3-storey limestone commercial buildings along Gordon St. William Day and his brother Thomas Day, a mason, worked on many noteworthy buildings in the Guelph area including the inn that would become the city's Civic Museum at 6 Dublin St., and the King Edward Hotel at the corner of Wyndham St. and Carden St. 15 Gordon St. was constructed circa 1844, between the purchase of the property by William Day from Joseph Croft, and the sale of the 2-bay limestone building at 5 Gordon St. to Eugenia Clarissa Mclean in 1846. Eugenia, wife of the noted trapper, trader, and explorer John McLean, would operate the space as a ground level grocery store with apartments on the floors above. This row of buildings would come to be known as Day's Block, though there were other Day's Blocks in the area including the block at the corner of Carden St. and Wyndham St. which included the King Edward Hotel.

Initially, there were five limestone buildings comprising this Day's Block. Four were 3-bay structures like the remaining example at 15 Gordon St. (7,9,11 and 15 Gordon St.), and one, the narrower 2-bay at 5 Gordon St. owned by McLean. Around 1850, William Day also built the much larger, 4-storey limestone building at the corner of Gordon St. and Essex St. (see Figure 2) which served for many years as a public school, the Jones American hotel, as a space for companies like the Organ Manufactory of Wood, Powell & Co., and finally as a large commercial space operated by Guelph Cartage. William Day stayed involved in the operation and management of Day's Block until his death in 1863 and wife Sarah Day would continue to be involved with the properties until 1889. Likely due to its proximity to Guelph's market square, many of the Day's Block buildings had commercial or mercantile uses including meat packing, produce, grocery and eventually a dairy producer.

15 Gordon St. served as a produce building for many years and is connected to grocer James E. Merlihan in the 1875 Fire Insurance Plan. Grocer Merlihan is identified as the occupant of 15 Gordon St. through the 1870s and 1880s. The upper floors of 15 Gordon St. and neighbouring properties were likely used as apartments or residential space for the families of the business owners. In the 1882 City Directory, James Merlihan is still connected to 15 Gordon St. as a grocer, while grocery clerk Chris Merlihan is listed as occupying an upstairs bedroom. In the early 20th century, many of the upper rooms were dedicated to the Army Service Corps. In 1894, 15 Gordon St. continued to operate as a grocer but under J.R. Marks. In the early 20th century, J.A. McHardy who operated the pork packing business at the corner of Nottingham St. and Gordon St. (in the former J.T. Brill Packing House) would take over ownership of 11, 15 and 17 Gordon St. to expand his meat packing operation, with this business still being noted in a 1912 souvenir book from the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada. The early 20th century would also see the first substantive change in 15 Gordon's use. In 1917, 15 Gordon St. was purchased by McKenzie Machinery Co. McKenzie Machinery Co. also purchased the stone property at 9 Nottingham St. and connected 15 Gordon and 9 Nottingham together through a brick machine shop structure behind the two properties.

15 Gordon St. is a 3-bay, 3-storey building constructed of local limestone. It is designed in a neo-classical, vernacular style with Georgian elements including its symmetrical façade, sash windows and classical decorative elements like the projecting pilasters. The original sash windows would have been 6 over 6 and 6 over 3 sash windows. The windows were replaced in the 1980s with something of a similar style to the original and the original window openings with rough-tooled sills (top floor only) and cut-stone flat arches above each window remain. 15 Gordon St. has a box gable roof line with gable chimneys extending from parapet end walls on both sides of the building. The parapet end walls would have served as fire breaks when it was still connected to the rest of the limestone block.

Originally oriented and sited in relation to the original Market Square, 15 Gordon St. was also located very close to what was Market St. and is now Waterloo Ave. which served as a major route for trade. It was part of not only a larger limestone commercial block, but a part of a limestone streetscape, with several of these structures still standing. By 1960 the Silverwood Dairy building at 9-11 Gordon St. was vacant, and within a few years demolished. In 1964, the large Guelph Cartage building was demolished leaving only 5, 7, and 15 Gordon St. standing. Between 1967 and 1968, 5 and 7 Gordon St. were also demolished, leaving 15 Gordon St. at the last remaining piece of the once massive Day's Block.

Determination of Cultural Heritage Value

Figure 3 Current photo of 15 Gordon St. (Imogen Goldie, 2025)



The neo-classical/Georgian structure at 15 Gordon St. is worthy of designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act because it

meets six 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 15 Gordon St. has design and physical value, historical and associative value, and contextual value.

Design/Physical Value

The subject property meets criterion 1 because of its construction of local limestone and as the last remaining section of the original Day's Block.

Historical/Associative Value

The subject property meets criterion 4 because of its connections to the early commercial development of Guelph and its direct connection both geographically and thematically to the originally planned Guelph Market Square.

The subject property meets criterion 5 because of the connection to the early agriculture and commercial market landscape and is located directly across from the original Market Square site.

The subject property meets criterion 6 because of its ownership and development by builder William Day who was involved in many early limestone buildings in Guelph including several large inns and hotels in the city.

Contextual Value

The subject property meets criterion 7 because of its connections to and support of local limestone as a frequent building material in the area. This includes the early limestone homes built by William Day at 26 Gordon St., and the F.W. Stone Store at 32 Gordon St.

The subject property meets criterion 8 because it is physically linked to its geography through its use of local limestone. It is functionally linked to its surroundings due to its connection to the early market and trade district. It is visually linked to its surroundings through its building material and neo-classical style and its historically linked to the area through local builder William Day.

Heritage Attributes

The following elements of the property at 15 Gordon St. should be considered as heritage attributes in a designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act:

- Original location across from original market square
- Building form, including:
 - Box gable roof
 - Gable chimneys
 - Parapet end walls
 - Symmetrical facade

- Local limestone construction
- Projecting pilasters
- Original **Georgian** window openings
- Cut-stone flat arch window openings
- Rough-tooled sills (top floor)
- 8 small square window openings on building's south side

Consultations and Engagement

A letter was sent to the property owners on March 13, 2025.

At the [April 3, 2025 meeting of the Heritage Advisory Committee](#), the Committee passed the following motion:

1. That the Heritage Advisory Committee advises City Council that 15 Gordon St. merits designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act; and
2. That the Heritage Advisory Committee advises City Council that the committee supports the heritage attributes for 15 Gordon St. as outlined in the Heritage Planning staff report dated April 3, 2025.

Attachments

Attachment-1 Ontario Regulation 9-06 Criteria for Determining Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

Departmental Approval

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