



ARCHITECTURAL
CONSERVANCY
ONTARIO



**NORTH WATERLOO
REGION**

NEWSLETTER

Early Spring 2021 Volume 17, Number 1

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Welcome from President Marg Rowell

President's Report

The executive continues to meet virtually every month to conduct the business of the branch. Since the Annual General Meeting in early December, we have been fulfilling our goals of advocacy and education by supporting neighbourhood groups in the Mill and Courtland Street areas of Kitchener and the Olde Berlin Town Neighbourhood Association in the Civic Centre Neighbourhood.

The proposed high rise and townhouse development in the Mill Street area was of concern to the neighbours, since it was too dense and too high for the existing houses. The residents objected to it and we supported them with written comments to Kitchener Council. Since that time the developer has altered the plans and now the proposal is for townhouses, which is a better option. Unfortunately it still involves the demolition of two homes that we think have architectural and heritage value.

The other area of concern is the proposed development in the Civic Centre Heritage Conservation District at 22 Weber Street West. The site is a vacant parking lot between a Mansard-roofed Second Empire house and the Edwardian style house behind St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. A high rise is proposed to be built here. This would require a zone change and an Official Plan amendment. No public meeting has been held about this issue and since the city did not comment on the proposal within the required 120 days, the developer has requested a hearing with LPAT (Local Planning Appeal Tribunal). Hopefully, the city, the neighbourhood and the developer can come to a more satisfactory compromise before the hearing takes place.

Towards our goal of education we are very much looking forward to the publication and distribution of a map and guide for a walking tour of areas in downtown Kitchener that are now being developed for more intensive purposes. This walking tour concept was initiated by ACO Education Coordinator Susan Burke and Professor Rick Haldenby who engaged several talented students from the School of Architecture in bringing the project to completion. Stay tuned for details of its launch in the coming weeks.

We wish you a safe and happy spring and look forward to being able to hold in-person events in the future!

INTENCITY

Watch for notice of this Walking Tour of Kitchener's downtown that will expose the mysteries of the dramatic buildings taking form within our midst.

Printed guides are free of charge.

endangered places

keeping watch on endangered heritage buildings



Tudor Revival Cottage
43 Sheldon Ave N, Kitchener
Built 1936 Charles Knechtel, Architect
(1869 - 1951)

43 and 35 Sheldon Street were built for twin brothers, Egbert and Edgar Seegmiller, contractors in Kitchener. The two houses were designed to be simple and rustic in imitation of country houses in Britain. Positioned side by side toward the back of the properties, these mirror-image cottages were also linked by a curved driveway and related landscaping. Though the interiors were not examined at this time, they are known to have been influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement. # 43 exemplifies the Tudor style with decorative half timbering, a steeply pitched roof, elongated leaded glass windows, massive brick chimney and overhanging second storey.

43 Sheldon meets all three Ontario Heritage Act Regulation 9/06 criteria for significance and is worthy of designation under Part IV of the act:

1. design value: it demonstrates design value and a high degree of craftsmanship, and is a unique example of its style;
2. historical and associative value:
 - on land once owned by JY Shantz
 - both Seegmillers made significant contributions to the community
 - houses were designed by a well-known and respected architect
3. contextual value: 43 Sheldon is centred between its sister house and a mid-century designed church, Bethel Evangelical Lutheran.

Threats – The house has not been designated. #43 and the adjacent church are to be severed off and sold to One Roof which had moved into #35 in 2020. Its residents have neglected and abused the house where they currently reside and have been disrespectful of the community. The neighbors have complained of open drug use, threats, theft and damage to nearby properties.

article by Susan Burke



First Church of Christ, Scientist (FCCS)
64 Water Street North, Kitchener
Built 1899 - 1900
Architect, design: Joseph H Taft (1855 - 1911), NY
Architect, working plans: Charles Knechtel (1869 - 1951), Berlin (Kitchener)

The first purpose-built Christian Science (CS) church in the British Empire, FCCS is architecturally and culturally distinctive in the region. A local group of social elites and industrialists established the CS congregation and commissioned the building. At the time, Joseph Taft was an accomplished NYC architect and Charles Knechtel was a leading local architect. FCCS is triangular in plan on a triangular corner lot, possibly emulating the CS Mother Church (Boston).

The exterior is original and well-preserved; a blend of rustic styles, especially Tudor Revival and Craftsman, emphasizing materiality and building craft within the influential Arts and Crafts movement. Character-defining elements include complex massing; high rubblestone foundation; half-timbering; tinted roughcast stucco; corner tower; leaded windows; gable, hip, Dutch gable, and conical wood-shingled roof. The well-maintained interior, mostly original, includes character-defining elements such as woodwork and paneling; gallery; readers' platform; 1911 pipe organ; large semicircular stained-glass window; curved seating; exposed roof trusses; circular staircase.

FCCS meets all three Ontario Heritage Act Regulation 9/06 criteria for significance and is worthy of designation under Part IV of the act:

1. design value: a rare, representative example of its style demonstrating a high degree of craftsmanship;
2. historical and associative value:
 - connected to prominent local citizens and the CS movement of the period;
 - architecture reflects CS principles, and design preferences of commissioning group (above)
 - executed by two important architects, and a noteworthy builder (Casper Braun)
3. contextual value: a highly visible landmark in an enclave between historical factory and residential district, and comprises a heritage streetscape alongside contemporaneous homes

Threats – No heritage designation. Assumed low public awareness. In an area of intensification/development. Congregation and denomination are very small, and getting smaller. Very low heritage designation rate for active church buildings; high rate of church decommissioning generally.

article by Karl Kessler

Demolition alert: 16-20 Queen Street North

You know that thing they say about history?

article by Karl Kessler

Part I

W.H.E. Schmalz, a native of Kitchener, and son of a former mayor, graduated in architecture from the University of Toronto and is known as the Twin Cities' dean of architects. He designed Kitchener's city hall in 1919 as well as many other buildings in Ontario. . . .

So begins the Waterloo Region Hall of Fame entry for inductee W.H.E. Schmalz (1890-1981). But if we really do consider him “the Twin Cities’ dean of architects”, we’ve certainly had a strange way of showing it. And it appears our strange way is about to get stranger.

The brief Hall of Fame bio does not mention that his Kitchener City Hall — arguably his most important work — was demolished not fifty years after it opened in 1924. Its fate has become the stuff of local folklore.

Schmalz designed the city hall with involvement from another accomplished Kitchener architect, Bernal Jones, who was the same age as Schmalz but without his academic training in architecture.

Set back from the King-Frederick intersection by a public square (a general plan repeated at today’s city hall), it was photographed frequently and its image was published widely, suggesting an admired landmark. Yet it was torn down in 1973, sparking controversy to this day, thanks in part to the colossal building that followed on the site.

In a referendum two years earlier, a majority of residents (although less than 60%) voted in support of clearing away the city hall, and the farmers’ market building behind it, in favour of building a large-scale commercial complex. It was an era of urban redevelopment, which included downtown malls as a strategy to bring back into midsize city centres some of the commerce and activity drawn out of town by decentralizing trends, such as vast housing subdivisions, automobile infrastructure development and, of course, suburban malls.

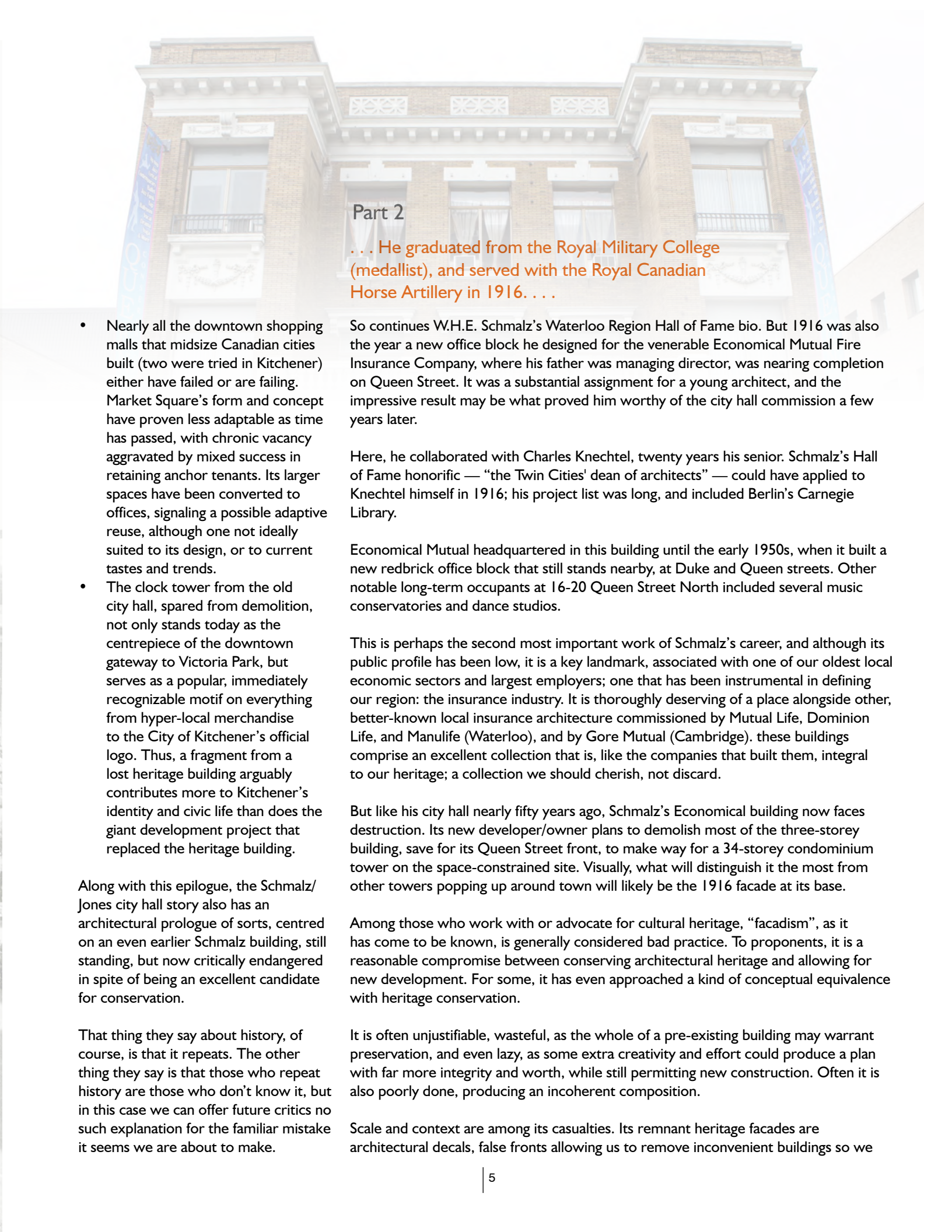
Market Square, named for the farmers’ market that had operated alongside the municipal offices at the site for more than a hundred years, and that would continue in the new building for another thirty, was conceived by people of good intentions trying to solve real problems. Instead, it proved to be a poor use of land: many thousands of square meters of the wrong kind of building, right in the heart of the city.

And, as with any big construction project that turns out to have been a mistake, Market Square is a mistake that persists, along with its consequences. Today less than 10% of its half-kilometer frontage allows walk-in access. The rest — blank walls, service doors, loading bays, parking entrances and exits, few street level windows — offers paltry visual interest or street engagement, even after a 1980s renovation. A six-level above-ground parking structure occupies a third of the total footprint and the entire Duke Street facade. Created to inject a cure into an ailing downtown, it is a city-block-sized island of a building that somehow manages to show its back to four streets at once. The story even has an ironic epilogue:



Image top: Kitchener City Hall, W.H.E. Schmalz and B.A. Jones; built 1924, demolished 1973.
P001206 Kitchener City Hall - Courtesy of the Waterloo Historical Society

Image bottom: Former Economical Mutual Fire Insurance Co., 16-20 Queen St. N., W.H.E. Schmalz and Charles Knechtel; built 1916, to be demolished c.2021?
Photo by author



Part 2

... He graduated from the Royal Military College (medallist), and served with the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery in 1916. ...

- Nearly all the downtown shopping malls that midsize Canadian cities built (two were tried in Kitchener) either have failed or are failing. Market Square's form and concept have proven less adaptable as time has passed, with chronic vacancy aggravated by mixed success in retaining anchor tenants. Its larger spaces have been converted to offices, signaling a possible adaptive reuse, although one not ideally suited to its design, or to current tastes and trends.
- The clock tower from the old city hall, spared from demolition, not only stands today as the centrepiece of the downtown gateway to Victoria Park, but serves as a popular, immediately recognizable motif on everything from hyper-local merchandise to the City of Kitchener's official logo. Thus, a fragment from a lost heritage building arguably contributes more to Kitchener's identity and civic life than does the giant development project that replaced the heritage building.

Along with this epilogue, the Schmalz/Jones city hall story also has an architectural prologue of sorts, centred on an even earlier Schmalz building, still standing, but now critically endangered in spite of being an excellent candidate for conservation.

That thing they say about history, of course, is that it repeats. The other thing they say is that those who repeat history are those who don't know it, but in this case we can offer future critics no such explanation for the familiar mistake it seems we are about to make.

So continues W.H.E. Schmalz's Waterloo Region Hall of Fame bio. But 1916 was also the year a new office block he designed for the venerable Economical Mutual Fire Insurance Company, where his father was managing director, was nearing completion on Queen Street. It was a substantial assignment for a young architect, and the impressive result may be what proved him worthy of the city hall commission a few years later.

Here, he collaborated with Charles Knechtel, twenty years his senior. Schmalz's Hall of Fame honorific — "the Twin Cities' dean of architects" — could have applied to Knechtel himself in 1916; his project list was long, and included Berlin's Carnegie Library.

Economical Mutual headquartered in this building until the early 1950s, when it built a new redbrick office block that still stands nearby, at Duke and Queen streets. Other notable long-term occupants at 16-20 Queen Street North included several music conservatories and dance studios.

This is perhaps the second most important work of Schmalz's career, and although its public profile has been low, it is a key landmark, associated with one of our oldest local economic sectors and largest employers; one that has been instrumental in defining our region: the insurance industry. It is thoroughly deserving of a place alongside other, better-known local insurance architecture commissioned by Mutual Life, Dominion Life, and Manulife (Waterloo), and by Gore Mutual (Cambridge). These buildings comprise an excellent collection that is, like the companies that built them, integral to our heritage; a collection we should cherish, not discard.

But like his city hall nearly fifty years ago, Schmalz's Economical building now faces destruction. Its new developer/owner plans to demolish most of the three-storey building, save for its Queen Street front, to make way for a 34-storey condominium tower on the space-constrained site. Visually, what will distinguish it the most from other towers popping up around town will likely be the 1916 facade at its base.

Among those who work with or advocate for cultural heritage, "facadism", as it has come to be known, is generally considered bad practice. To proponents, it is a reasonable compromise between conserving architectural heritage and allowing for new development. For some, it has even approached a kind of conceptual equivalence with heritage conservation.

It is often unjustifiable, wasteful, as the whole of a pre-existing building may warrant preservation, and even lazy, as some extra creativity and effort could produce a plan with far more integrity and worth, while still permitting new construction. Often it is also poorly done, producing an incoherent composition.

Scale and context are among its casualties. Its remnant heritage facades are architectural decals, false fronts allowing us to remove inconvenient buildings so we

can develop at maximum volume, while offering the illusion of street interest. It is a resource extraction method, having little to do with valuing the story of a place as reflected in the streetscape.

For 16-20 Queen Street North it is especially difficult to understand, because the building is a jewel box: lovely outside, with more treasure inside. We are being offered another disembodied clock tower as consolation for the loss of an excellent intact building.

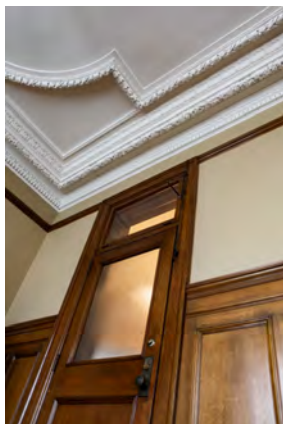


Images showing ceiling plaster and detail in the main office. Source: the author.

While not heritage designated, it has been listed on Kitchener's Municipal Heritage Register since 2010. The recorder and evaluation subcommittee that completed its Statement of Significance document filled in check boxes affirming the heritage value of its Queen Street facade, but as to the value of its interior, they indicated "not applicable" and "unknown". That may have been unintentional, but it is a misleading omission; a visit inside would have immediately revealed what so enthralled its hundreds of enthusiastic visitors when the building participated in Doors Open Waterloo Region 2012.



Images of Board Room interior.
Source: the author.



This building is, outside and inside, a showpiece of artisanship and handwork, all executed with a high degree of skill, and all by local building professionals and tradespeople, making it an extremely rare heritage asset. The overall design is also uncommon in our region.

When it opened in 1916, and the *Berlin News Record* noted that "beauty was not sacrificed for utility," it was talking about quarter-sawn oak trim and wainscot paneling by the Berlin Interior Hardwood Company, still preserved in the foyer, hallways, front offices, and second-floor boardroom. It was talking about profusely ornate plaster mouldings, still in place throughout much of the interior, most notably in the grand main office, originally two storeys in height. Famed Berlin general contractor Casper Braun oversaw the plasterwork, concrete work, stonework, and brickwork. Among the many other original features is marble trim in the entrance, and a wide, beautifully built three-floor wooden staircase in one of the projecting front bays.



Interior views, Economical Mutual Fire Insurance Co. From *Industry and Enterprise, 1871-1921*, by the Economical Mutual Fire Insurance Company.

Back outside, the Queen Street facade is balanced and textured civic architecture in the Beaux Arts vein, with classical and Renaissance details. Materials are unusual Roman brick, with concrete, stone, and possibly terracotta. A parapet, cornice, balustrade, and columned entrance porch are a few of the details that contribute to its street presence, which is dignified yet human-scaled.

This is an irreplaceable piece of our region's cultural heritage, but not only for its fine features and state of preservation, or for its rarity, or for its contextual and cultural associations, all mentioned above. In addition, few other buildings were completed in the war years between 1914 and 1918, and this was also built during the city's watershed year of 1916, marked by local unrest and intense feeling around questions of identity, and even loyalty; a year when the city, which four years earlier achieved cityhood as proud Berlin, changed its name to Kitchener.

Towards the promotion and safeguarding of good architecture and the best of our built environment, we commit our city heritage planners, municipal heritage committees, heritage impact assessments; our heritage property easements, Ontario Heritage Act building designations and conservation districts and municipal heritage register listings; our architecture lectures, panels, walking tours, appreciation events; our living history museums and National Historic Sites; our Waterloo Regional Heritage Foundation, Ontario Heritage Trust, Canadian Register of Historic Places, Architectural Conservancy Ontario. And once in a while things work out pretty well. But if a building as good as this one cannot expect better stewardship than to salvage only its facade, I confess that leaves me at a loss, wondering what things like heritage designation even mean.

Will future citizens see our condo tower rush as we see the urban renewal, downtown malls, infamous demolitions of the last century? The loss of places such as 16-20 Queen Street North make me think it likely. Because aside from market pressures and property availability, lately there seems to be little else guiding how we've been reshaping our cities, as long as zoning requirements are met (or adjusted).

But if citizens are more than consumers, our cities are more than real estate. Until we act accordingly, there will continue to be little else guiding urban development, and everything from a diverse and interesting built form to affordable housing will remain secondary considerations. And if we can't do that, then we should at least come up with a different sobriquet for W.H.E. Schmalz than "the Twin Cities' dean of architects".

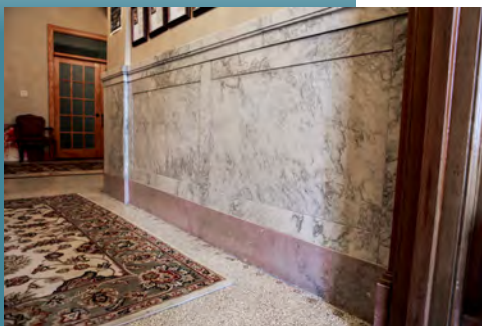


Image top: Second floor hallway.
Image bottom: Entrance foyer.
Source: Photos by author.

Reflections on Shoemaker House

In January 2021, there was much ado about the 1840 Shoemaker House located at 38 Sherk Place in the former village of Bridgeport.

article by Jean Haalboom



The 'much ado' at Heritage Kitchener Committee and Kitchener Council focussed on the new owners' plans for replacement of windows and roof, construction of the missing dormers, and a second storey rear yard addition.

This 180 year old Shoemaker House is an early Waterloo County Georgian style, a rare example of a substantial merchant's dwelling, and the last of its type and age in the City of Kitchener.

Whatever is done to this house, the municipality needs to ensure its survival for another 180 years.



Image top: Photo of the Shoemaker Mill complex
Source: Waterloo Historical Society

Image bottom: Jacob Shoemaker Homestead.
Source: Photo courtesy of Mennonite Archives of Ontario, Miriam Sokvitne Collection

Shoemaker(Jacob S. Schumacher) an entrepreneur, arrived from Pennsylvania in 1829. He constructed a dam and sawmill and by 1835, had added a flour mill, woollen mill, linseed oil business, distillery and blacksmith shop. The next step was to build a house in 1840.

In 1983 – 84, former North Ward Alderman/Councillor, the late Grace Stoner, brought this outstanding property to the attention of Kitchener's new heritage committee, the Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee(LACAC). Since Bridgeport had been annexed by Kitchener in 1973, Grace wanted to ensure that the heritage of Bridgeport village was recognized and remembered by Kitchener. She was well-informed about the villagers and their properties. As a result, Grace met with the owner of 38 Sherk Pl. and impressed upon owner 'Bruce' that having his property receive a heritage designation would be an honour. Bruce agreed. And Council voted unanimously for the property's heritage designation-specifically highlighting the windows!

The new owners of 2020 in their window replacement project propose the use of new vinyl windows and sills to "mimic the wood pattern". In the owners' opinion, why would they supposedly spend \$199,000 on restoring/reusing the original windows when vinyl windows can be purchased and installed for \$60,000. The owners were encouraged by Heritage Kitchener members who stated that today's vinyl windows are just as "energy-efficient and aesthetically appropriate and no longer inferior to wood!" After all, the product "wood" is not highlighted in the reason for designation! Also, precedents have been set by the approval of vinyl windows in heritage buildings such as Bread and Roses at the corner of Queen and Courtland Streets. Heritage Staff seemed not to have a problem with this rationale.

At the Council meeting, a number of Councillors suggested that by insisting on restoration using the wood-framed windows with original glass, the owners suffer a financial burden, face barriers to their work, and are punished for wanting to fix up the building. This demand interferes with saving old buildings! Councillors asked, “Who can see the property from the road? It’s way up on the hill, so why would you spend the money?” And I was asked, “What is the significance of Council not voting in support of the heritage designation by-law regulations?” For me, it lessens the value of the heritage property. It’s the same as receiving a speeding ticket; your property, like your licence, now has demerit points. But Council has the last word.

What’s missing in this discussion? There is the element of the look-alike – NOT! Just think about the 180 year old collection of glass with its reflecting surface shining in sunlight (see image top right) while new glass is flat with no reflection! GONE! Vinyl – lifetime guarantee. How long has it been used compared with 180-year-old wood firmly supporting the glass? Vinyl – environmentally friendly? No proven record for re-cycling! Cost? To those of us who have restored windows and renovated using newly-produced wood windows, the quotes given by the applicants appear exaggerated.

To see the difference wood windows make, please check out a house built by Shoemaker’s business partner, John Wissler, in 1842. At the Wissler-Cascaden designated house on Malabar Drive in Waterloo, all of the windows (both 12 over 12 and 12 over 8) that were remaining were restored. Where windows had been replaced around 1900, new locally-made wood sash replicating the originals and using mid-19th century glass were installed in the 1980’s. Nearly forty years have passed and all the windows are still performing well. Multi-paned wood storm windows have been added in the interim. The Cascaden’s report that paint maintenance needs to be assessed regularly and touch-ups done on an as needed basis. Only the exterior surfaces of the storms require painting with the regular painting schedule for other wood trim.

Would the result have been different had an experienced wood window craftsman examined the windows? Would the result be different if the so-called upfront cost was not as great or knowledge of available heritage grants or workshops on wood window restoration had been readily found?

Several other details proposed for 38 Sherk Place are questionable such as the style and colour of the metal roof, the size of dormers and their cladding. Keep a watch on this project!



Window restoration at the Wissler-Cascaden House showing the reflective quality of the historic glass.
Source: Ron and Wendy Cascaden



The designated Wissler-Cascaden House Source: Ron and Wendy Cascaden



38 Shirk Place, 2021 Photo: Gail Pool

Window Notes

Check out these excellent presentations, resources and ideas on wood window restoration:

- [Council presentations](#) were made by Jean Haalboom at minute 39:00, Gail Pool at 1:08 and windows consultant Shannon Kyles at 1:34.
- Shannon Kyles information on the importance of restoring those pre-1940 wood windows. [The Case for Older Windows](#)
- Other resources on the ACO NWR's website [here](#).

The House that Jacob Built*

article by Gail Pool

The development at 19-41 Mill Street in Kitchener proposes the demolition of two 19th century homes, including 25 Mill, the home of Jacob Baetz.¹



The 1886 home of Jacob Baetz at 25 Mill Street.
Image: by the author.

In previous presentations we argued that the houses at the properties municipally addressed as 19 and 25 Mill Street are worthy of heritage conservation. The properties have architectural and contextual value. The proposed development is directly adjacent to 45 Mill, a Part IV designated property, and borders the Iron Horse Trail, a designated cultural heritage landscape, and the Victoria Park Heritage Conservation District (See [ACONWR's blog submissions on the development](#)).

In addition to the architectural and contextual values there is also historical value because of the many contributions of the builder and owner of 25 Mill Street, Jacob Baetz, a member of the Waterloo Regional Hall of Fame.² His life and works help us understand the community and culture of Kitchener, as set out in [Ontario Heritage Act Regulation 9/06](#), principally because he built many homes and significant public buildings in Kitchener. Baetz and his sons were also major players in furniture manufacturing.

In 1886 Jacob Baetz built his own house at 25 Mill Street for \$2100. He installed heating in the house for \$200 in 1898 and he built the front verandah and second storey addition with gable roof c.1910. The house has many significant features as listed by City of Kitchener staff. Baetz resided in the house until his death in 1920 and his wife (née Katherine Hoelscher) lived in the house until her death in 1940.³

Born near Frankfurt in Germany, Jacob Baetz Sr. (1852-1920) landed in Canada in 1871. By 1877 he had moved from Woolwich to Berlin, was married and had the first two of nine children. He lived at 133 Church Street in a small house and the 1881 census lists him as a mason earning \$600. Baetz honed his trade with Caspar Braun in stonemasonry, bricklaying, and plastering (see article by Karl Kessler on p. 4).⁴ To better accommodate his growing family, he built 25 Mill Street in 1886.

With Reinhart Boehmer, he founded and operated the Berlin Brick Company, providing bricks for many Kitchener homes of the time. The 1912 Map of Busy Berlin shows that Berlin Brick was located on Queen Street at Hall's Lane.⁵

By the 1880s, Baetz "became a building contractor, beginning with homes and then some of the largest blocks and churches in his day."⁶ These included the popular Berlin Market, built in 1907 in the centre of the city at Frederick and Duke. Decades later, the City wanted to take it down. After prolonged discussions and secret meetings, an outraged citizenry took the proposed demolition to the Ontario Municipal Board. The Board recommended a referendum, which upheld the City's decision. It was reported that 8,000 people jammed the streets of downtown Kitchener in the rain to see the market demolition on August 1, 1973.⁷



Kitchener Market in 1907. Source: Souvenir of Berlin ca 1916, University of Waterloo Archives

Baetz even surpassed his mentor Caspar Braun by outbidding him by only \$95 when proposals went out to build the Trinity Methodist church in 1905.⁸ That church continued for many years and later housed the homeless. Trinity United was demolished in 2018 to build a 39-storey condo tower. Fortunately, Susan Burke and Karl Kessler documented the interior before it was demolished and the spectacular windows were saved.

Baetz built two more churches. He built St. Andrews Presbyterian in 1907. Being a Lutheran, he helped negotiate the sale of property at the corner of Courtland and Benson where he eventually built St. Matthews Lutheran Church.⁹ Despite their significant heritage features, they are not listed or designated on Kitchener's heritage registry. Although they currently have active congregations, they border Kitchener's high-density core and so are at risk.

Jacob Baetz also built Victoria Public School in 1910. Designed by architects Munro and Mead of Hamilton, with additions by local architect Charles Knechtel, the building is considered one

* Not familiar with the rhyme? The rhyme is not about the house; rather it is about how the house is connected to people and events in the community. See [This is the House that Jack Built](#).
Endnote references can be found [here](#).

of the finest examples of architecture anywhere in Ontario. The tower was torn down in 1960, but the building has many interesting features, some of which can be attributed to Baetz, including the use of the Flemish bond bricklaying technique, sandstone foundation and windows. Flemish bond has alternating stretchers (sides of brick) and headers (ends of brick). Despite its pleasing pattern, it is rare because it requires skill to execute.



Victoria Public School.
Source: rych mills and JC Jaimet

In the 1980s this remarkable building was in danger of being demolished. After protracted discussions at City Council, there was widespread protest, ranging from interventions by former pupil, author and activist June Callwood, the heritage architect Nicolas Hill, and mass demonstrations by the public. Eventually, the City conceded, and the building was restored and is now repurposed as a residential building with a medical facility in the lower floor.

According to his son Jake, Jacob Baetz built as many as 50 to 60 homes a year in the pre-war period. There is no doubt that Baetz was also a prominent citizen. In the 1890s he was elected to the Berlin town council and he was chairman of the Board of Works. However, his fame does not come only from his buildings but also from furniture manufacturing.¹⁰

By the 1880s, furniture manufacturing had become a major industry rather than a craft-based enterprise. Within a few years Berlin had so many furniture factories that it was considered the “furniture

centre of Canada.”¹¹ A dizzying array of companies were formed, amalgamated, and disappeared over the next fifty years.

It is not surprising that Jacob Baetz got involved with this growing industry even while he was building homes and other buildings. He encouraged his sons to enter the furniture business. Henry was born in 1880 and at the age of 20 was working as a cabinet maker with the Anthes Manufacturing Company.¹² Charles, born in 1882 and Jacob H. (Jake) born in 1884 entered the business when Jacob Sr bought the Pommer-Cowan Furniture Company. When that factory burnt down, Baetz built a new factory at 264 Victoria Street in 1910. It was at that location where the Baetz Brothers Furniture Company remained in business for many decades after Jacob Baetz Sr. died in 1920. The building at 264 Victoria was 45,000 square feet and employed as many as 50 people.



Baetz Furniture at 264 Victoria Street.
Image courtesy of Philippe Elsworthy.

In the 1990s a new owner wanted to tear down the building to allow adequate parking for another building nearby. At the time, Kitchener’s Heritage Advisory Committee urged the preservation of the factory to recognize Kitchener’s industrial past, but Council voted against designation. Parking took precedence over heritage preservation. As Councillor Mike Wagner argued, the parking issue was a “red herring on a dead-end street.” He added: “How many parking lots have you gone by that are totally filled?”¹³ The Baetz furniture factory at 264 Victoria was demolished in 1995.



Will the same fate befall the house that Jacob Baetz built on Mill Street? Should we disregard the accomplishments of members of the Waterloo Regional Hall of Fame in this way? Let us hope, while the memory of Jacob Baetz may fade, that many of the buildings that he carefully constructed will remain.

then and now...

snapshots in time with photographer Philippe Elsworth

These views are looking east along Bridgeport Road from just east of Regina. The older one was taken in 1995, the more recent in 2021.

Bridgeport Road, originally known as Cedar Street, was part of the first survey of the Village of Waterloo. It ended where it now bends at Moore Avenue. The east side of the Village toward the creek was surveyed into eleven large Park Lots from two to eleven acres. On the north side of Bridgeport between Regina and Pepler as far north as Elgin Street was an 11 acre lot (Park Lot VII) with the name of John Jacobi on it. Jacobi, born about 1815, was a potter from Darmstadt, Germany. This lot may have been a source of clay for his business, which was carried on by his son Daniel after his death.

The prominent building in the foreground of the older image is a typical four bay Pennsylvania-German house. The paired four pane attic windows, the slope of the roof, the eave returns and the symmetry of the gable end are common features of this style. The fire insurance map shows it to be a wooden structure with a partly stone section at the rear. It was unlikely to have been built as a duplex because of the asymmetry of the front which was no doubt reflected in the interior.

Further down the street were two more modest houses clad in insulbrick. They both probably dated from the 1880s. The first, with the side facing the street was originally clad with board and batten on timber frame. I think I can safely say that this type of exterior is now gone in Waterloo, and if any examples exist in the Region, they are extremely rare. Board and batten was easy to redo in insulbrick. All one had to do was rip off the battens, and there was a flat surface to reclad. The farther house with the gable to the street had clapboard siding under the insulbrick.

In the more recent view, the two prominent buildings have dealt with the Grand River Conservation Authority floodplain restrictions by having commercial uses on the ground floor and in the case of the condominium at 42 Bridgeport, some parking is below grade. So long as it is possible to leave the residential areas of the buildings above the flood line, then such use is permitted. It is difficult to anticipate the effects of climate change on future floodplain mapping, but I think there are worse areas in Waterloo than this.

The problems caused by human interventions in the environment have been slow to be recognized, and slow to be addressed. A century of deforestation and pollution of waterways and ground water became matters of concern in the early twentieth century, but it was not until 1946 that the Conservation Authorities Act and the Planning Act were passed. The 1974 flood in Galt shows that past negligence is not quickly dealt with.



Bridgeport Road view from 1995



Bridgeport Road view from 2021

Note: Those of you lucky enough to own a copy of Philippe's *EVOLVING URBAN LANDSCAPES* (2016) will want to watch for his next photographic memoir to be released this fall.



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