MUNICIPALITY OF PORT HOPE

HERITAGE DESIGNATION

Address: 118-120 Walton Street

Known as: The Guide Office

Architectural Style: Walton Street Heritage District

Date Built: Circa 1841

Date Designated: August 30, 1993 to By-Law No. 42/93, SCHEDULE B

Lot Description: PLAN 12 LOT 2



Architectural Description

This, the oldest surviving structure in the commercial section of Walton Street, is a typical building of the period. The stone front was restored from evidence in old photographs and utilized the original doors to the shop, which housed a bakery for many years. Original sash survive in the front, lintels and flat splayed arch shape are stone and, like the sills, are tooled. Shutters are part of the original treatment. This three-storey brick building also has a gable roof, parallel to the street, with parapet walls. There is an interesting brick motif on the facade of the block located between the bays on the third storey of the facade. The later one storey addition to the west is not part of the original building and is not included in this designation.

Historical Abstract

James Smith purchased three quarters of an acre of this downtown section of Port Hope referred to as the Gilchrist Property from his brother William Smith, a surgeon, in June 1841. William Smith had bought this parcel of land a year earlier. James Smith (1811-1874), third son of John David Smith (21 Dorset Street East), and grandson of Elias Smith, was a member of one of the founding families of Port Hope who were instrumental in settling the Town and establishing the first mill. James, who resided nearby at the Grange (33 South Street), like many of the sons of J.D. Smith, was very active in local politics and business. He was a distinguished town lawyer, and later a Judge for Victoria County. He was a Member of the Legislative Assembly in 1848-54 holding the office of Mayor of Port concurrently in 1851. He was actively involved in the development of the railway and was appointed President of the Railway Company in 1853. As Mayor of Port Hope in 1851, he oversaw the proceedings of the laying of the cornerstone of the Town Hall and Market Building in September 1851 (56 Queen Street). Along with his brother, John Shuter Smith, James was responsible for the construction of the Smith Block erected on Walton Street (16-26 Walton Street) in 1851. The block was designed by Rochester architect Merwin Austin. Austin had also been commissioned to design the Town Hall in 1850 (56 Queen Street).

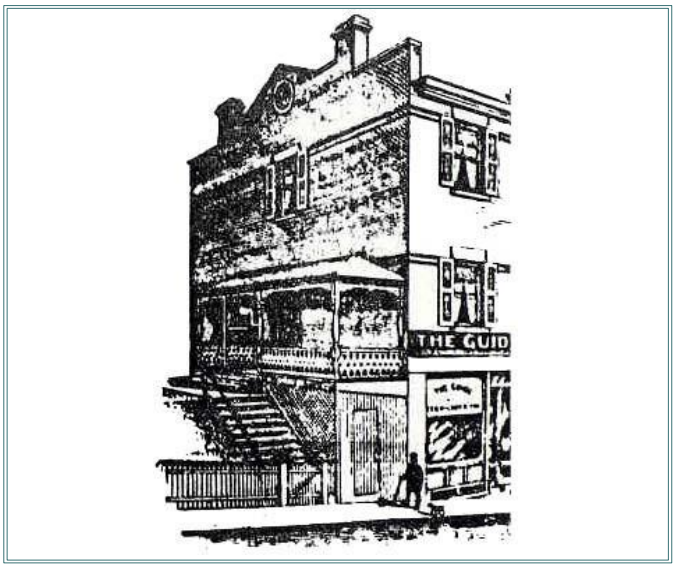
Between 1840 and 1841, this building was erected on the eastern portion of the three quarter acre property to be used as the offices of the Bank of Upper Canada, with Elias Peter Smith, James oldest brother, acting as manager. In 1857, the bank moved to a more commodious location on John Street (86 John Street). This Walton Street location was then occupied by Ballagh and Shepherd as a fruit stand and bakery. Henry Shepherd was a merchant grocer who was in partnership with Thompson Ballagh, a baker. Later in the century, in 1875, Shepherd would have a house constructed on Bloomsgrove Avenue (44 Bloomsgrove Avenue).

In his will, dated 1873, James Smith left this building and lands to his wife Mary Anne Smith, who sold the block and premises to George and Frederick Wilson in 1884. The Wilsons also purchased the land on which they had their neighbouring house built in 1885 (126 Walton Street).

The Wilson Brothers, who had been publishing the Guide since 1875, continued their operations from this location with George

Wilson acting as editor. Prior to the purchase of this property, the Guide office had been located in the Sculthorpe Building (113 Walton Street)

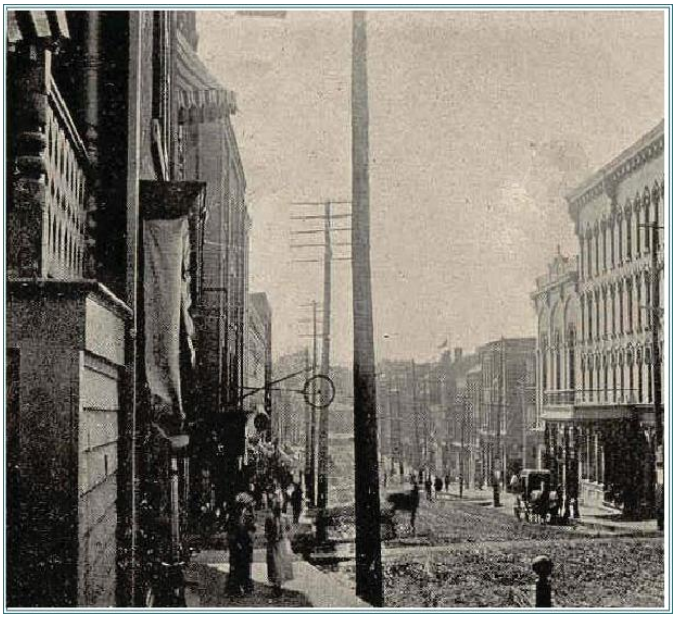
Historical Illustration



This illustration of the Guide Office appeared on the billhead for George Wilson & Son, Publishers of the "Guide" (from the Clayton Collection). The archival photo below from Picturesque Port Hope published by bookseller W. Williamson at the turn of the century is a view of Walton Street from this porch that leads to a second floor entrance.

in 1878. The Guide Office remained in the Wilson Family for 85 years.

Archival Photo



This is the oldest surviving commercial structure on Walton Street. The stone front was restored based on archival photos and the original doors were utilized. The reconstruction was done in the late 1960's under the direction of Peter (A.B.) Schultz, who was then publisher and editor of the Port Hope Evening Guide.