

A Social and Legal History of 78 and 80 Wurtemberg St, Ottawa  
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## Contents

Laying Out Lowertown 1826-1842	2	
On the Edge of the City 1842-1890	2	
John Davis and the development of Macdonald Gardens 1890-1919		4
John Burroughs and Caius Roy: building no 78 and no 80 Wurtemberg		5
<i>Housing Commission of the City of Ottawa</i>	5	
<i>Burroughs and Roy cooperate to build their houses</i>	6	
The Roy and Burroughs Families		7
Macdonald Gardens, a Stable Neighbourhood 1920-1972		8
After Burroughs and Roy: turnover and renovation 1972-		9
Sources		11

*A house history is a living document...it is always evolving – author unknown*

### **Laying Out Lowertown 1826-1842**

Macdonald Gardens, the neighbourhood east of Cobourg St and north of Rideau St, has always been a part of the larger quarter of Lowertown, but set slightly apart from the commerce and industry found throughout the rest of the area.

When Col John By arrived in 1826 to begin construction of the Rideau Canal, he bought four lots for the Crown (the area bounded by today's Cathcart and Rideau Sts and the Ottawa and Rideau Rivers) and laid out a substantial townsite to support his proposed citadel and the commercial activity bound to follow the opening of the Canal.

By named the streets after military figures and the royal family, including Wurtemberg, Augusta and Gloucester (now Friel) for the king's sisters; Charlotte and Cobourg for the king's daughter Charlotte, Princess of Wales and her consort Leopold, Prince of Coburg (later King Leopold I of the Belgians), and Clarence for the king's brother William, Duke of Clarence (later King William IV). He laid out small town lots in the commercial quarter west of King St (now King Edward Ave) but large park or villa lots in the area to the east, where he expected substantial merchants and senior military officers to build their homes.

The first flush of optimism passed quickly: the citadel was never built, the Canal was a commercial failure, and Ottawa actually shrank in size until the new trade in sawn lumber and the transfer of the provincial capital from Quebec City caused the city to begin growing again. (Taylor 1985 ch 2)

### **On the Edge of the City, 1842-1890**

The growing town bypassed the Macdonald Gardens area: the land itself was swampy in the west, sandy and unstable in the east. People preferred to build closer to the new mills, or on higher and drier ground to the south and west.

The area did attract activities that Victorians felt should be at the edge of town for health reasons: cemeteries, hospitals and shooting ranges.

In 1844 or 45 (Ross 1925 p 102, Brault 1946 p 308) four new cemeteries were opened in what is now Macdonald Gardens park to replace the older cemeteries on the land reserved for the citadel (roughly at Queen and Metcalfe Sts) and the new RC cemetery on the south-east corner of Rideau and Cumberland Sts. The cemeteries were closed to new burials when Beechwood and Notre-Dame cemeteries were opened in 1872, but remained in use until after 1887 (Nagy 1974 p 31). After the turn of the century, the City leased the land to the Ottawa Improvement Commission, fore-runner of the NCC, to landscape as the present park.

The County of Carleton Protestant General Hospital was opened to patients at Rideau and Wurtemberg Sts in 1852 (Brault 1946 p 230). A new building (the present Wallis House condominium) opened in 1872. During the 1879 smallpox epidemic the old building was converted to an isolation hospital (for treatment of infectious diseases in the days before antibiotics). A maternity hospital, a nurses training institute and other medical facilities were built along Rideau St towards the River.

The Grey Nuns had maintained a small isolation hospital behind the old General Hospital (the present Elisabeth-Bruyere centre), but during the epidemic of 1879 were pressed by the neighbourhood to move to a more isolated location. They opened the new Ste-Anne hospital at Heney and Charlotte Sts that same year (Brault 1946 p 228). It was still in use in 1925.

At some point in the 1860s Anglesea Square (formerly south of Murray St between Chapel and Augusta Sts) was used as a rifle range for the militia (a big part of social life at that time) (Brault 1946, p 308). Old timers reminiscing in the 1920s recalled the sandy hill at the east end serving as natural butts for the range – a cheap source of spent lead slugs to serve as sinkers for fishing in the Rideau. The hill also made a fun spot for rolling into the water in the summer and tobogganing in winter. (Desjardins 1926)

Some houses had been built near Charlotte and Clarence by the 1870s, but most of the land remained as market garden, bush or swamp. A few large houses were built along the bluff over the Rideau, one of which (the current Turkish embassy) was converted to a children's hospital (Brault 1946 p 225ff). Ste-Anne's church (on Old St Patrick St, now used by St Clement's parish) was built in 1878, but most of the parish was in fact across the Rideau River in New Edinburgh and Clarkstown (Vanier).

### **John Davis and the Development of Macdonald Gardens 1890-1919**

John Davis immigrated from England with his family and settled in Lowertown about 1879 (Citizen 1911-03-21, Desjardins 1926), moving to 494 Clarence St in 1885. Described initially as a coachman and later as a wood dealer, by the turn of the century he had become a substantial member of the community, listed in legal documents as “gentleman”, and accepted as a spokesman for By Ward in a campaign against the construction of an isolation hospital on Porters Id (Citizen 1911-03-21). The loss of his house to a tornado and fire in 1906 was even picked up by the Montreal Gazette (1906-08-06). Although not confirmed, it appears that he was a partner in M.P. and J.T. Davis, “wealthy building contractors with excellent connections to [the] Laurier [government]”, and “well-known Liberals and members of St Joseph's church” (Gwyn 1984 p 480). The Davis firm were also awarded contracts on the National Transcontinental Railway by the Laurier government. (Stevens 1962 v2 p22).

Davis appears to have started buying land near his house in the 1890s. About 1910 a group of investors connected with other companies holding land in Ottawa South, Hintonburg, Rockcliffe, Vanier and other areas around Ottawa formed Riverview Property

Ltd to acquire and develop most of what is now Macdonald Gardens (Calvert 2013). The company surveyed the land in two blocks (registered plans 102148 and 106707) laying out a total of 47 building lots, a new street – Rockwood St (Rockwood was the name of one of the associated development companies) – a laneway between Rockwood and Wurtemberg Sts and extending Wurtemberg St along the bend in the river.

Davis may have been an investor in Riverview Property, or may have sold them the land and taken back the mortgage. In any case, the development does not seem to have been a success: by 1918 the company had sold only 15 of the 47 lots, and Davis foreclosed, gaining ownership of all the unsold lots (Registry Office, instrument 141693).

Initially, Davis does not seem to have been sanguine about development of his property: in April 1919 he tried, unsuccessfully, to sell the land to the City of Ottawa Housing Commission, which judged it too expensive (OHC minutes 1919-05-13). Writing the Provincial Architect that same year about the proposed house for the lot at no 80, the Commission's own architect commented that it was unlikely that there would be any development around it "in the immediate future" (Roy file, letter of 1919-08-02). However, Davis' concerns were groundless: his lots were soon selling, at increasing prices.

### **John Burroughs and Caius Roy: building no 78 and no 80**

Caius Roy bought lot 41 (site of no 80 Wurtemberg) in July 1919 for \$900, and John Burroughs bought the neighbouring lot 42 (site of no 78 Wurtemberg) in October 1919, also for \$900.

Joseph Aime Caius Roy was a clerk in the Money Order Department of the Post Office at a salary of \$1300 a year – a stable but modest income for 1919. 36 years old, he lived with his wife Albertine Cliche, at 195 Bolton St. From the records remaining, Roy seems to have been rather dramatic for a civil servant: his response to a form asking how much he could afford to pay on a mortgage was in effect "whatever it takes"; Over the course of three years he had two substantial run-ins with the Housing Commission (not without cause), with long letters and threats of lawsuits.

Burroughs was a clerk in the Department of Customs and Inland Revenue, 38 years old, with a salary of \$1400 a year, single (but possibly engaged) and living at 195 Waller St. Whether or not the two knew each other before, they seem to have gained each other's trust after they bought neighbouring lots. Both applied to the new City of Ottawa Housing Commission to finance construction of their houses.

### ***The Housing Commission of the City of Ottawa***

In the face of a returning army, a housing shortage and a post-war economic depression, the Federal government launched a "better housing scheme", loaning the provinces \$25M for 20 years at 5% interest (commercial mortgage rates were then 7%). Ontario then

provided its share (\$8M) and a provincial top-up of \$2M to municipalities for distribution.

As well as ensuring affordable housing, particularly for veterans, the scheme was also to promote good modern housing and encourage municipalities to introduce town planning (at the time there was no mortgage insurance, no building code, no site plan controls and no advance planning for installation of services such as water, sewers, parks, etc). Municipalities were to use their share of the money to lay out model neighbourhoods, support cooperatives or limited-dividend housing companies and provide low-cost loans to potential owner-occupiers.

The scheme lasted roughly three years (1919-1922). Approximately two thirds of the housing units funded across Canada were built by municipalities and co-ops or companies, and one third directly by owner/occupants. Historians in general do not consider the program a success, and brand Ottawa's experience in particular as a "spectacular failure to achieve the stated goals of the program". (Sendbuehler and Gilliland 1998)

The City of Ottawa established its Housing Commission in April 1919. After reviewing a number of sites (including the Davis estate) the Commission focused on developing three model subdivisions: Lindenlea, the Reid farm (Civic Hospital area) and the Parkdale Estate (possibly the area around the Royal Ottawa hospital) (OHC minutes Apr-May 1919). However, part of the funding went in loans (mortgages in all but name) to individuals who intended to build and occupy their own house. Owners had to be residents of Ottawa (this requirement was waived for veterans), to own a lot outright (free of mortgages and other charges) and to have their site plans and building plans approved by the Commission's own architect, W. E. Belfry, and for loans over \$3000 by the Provincial architect as well.

To promote "modern housing design", the Commission offered a number of standard housing designs, some developed by Belfry for Ottawa, some developed for the Province, and maintained a list of available contractors (OHC minutes 1919). The designs were available for sale to anyone, and even people who were not eligible for Commission loans (e.g. the original purchasers of 507 and 509 Clarence) had their houses built using standard Commission designs.

#### *Roy and Burroughs Cooperate to Build their Houses*

Roy applied in June 1919, supplying his own plans. Belfry was willing to accept them with modifications, but the Provincial architect was not: the house was too big for the lot, the rafters were too far apart, the stairs too steep, and "the cost of the house appears to us rather excessive". Roy withdrew his plans and did not respond to repeated requests over the summer to re-file. (OHC Roy file)

Burroughs applied in October 1919. He and Roy must have talked at this point, as Roy re-applied as well. Both chose Belfry's standard plan "L" (later called "style 15") though

Burroughs had the plan turned sideways on the lot, and both requested additional windows, changes to the porch, etc. Both chose the same contractor, Cardinal and Brunet from the Commission's list (OHC Burroughs and Roy files).

The Provincial architect had some concerns about the siting of the houses, notably the limited space between 78 and 80, and with the proposed use of 2x3 lumber for internal partitions, but with reassurance from Belfry, in November 1919 Roy and Burroughs were granted loans of \$4000, the maximum amount allowed for a solid brick house, payable in installments as building progressed.

Belfry inspected the completed house at no 78 on 22 April 1920. Burroughs moved in that spring, and in October wrote to confirm that all work had been done to his satisfaction. With that assurance, the Commission released the final installment of the loan for payment to the contractor.

Roy's experience at no 80 was not so positive. While using the same design and the same contractors, he had real problems, perhaps exaggerated by his temperament. As late as July 1920, when Burroughs had already moved into his house, Roy wrote at length to Belfry to complain that he could not move in: the roof and the foundation leaked, mouldings remained unfinished, window pulleys not working, the wash basins had been broken, and so on.

Belfry inspected the house in October 1920 and noted that most of the problems had been resolved, and that the plans had been carried out as contracted, with a few minor changes (e.g. addition of basement and attic windows). While he was concerned about the stability of the hot water tank and the size of the bay window (it was 4" deeper than designed) he advised Roy to accept the house and move in. Roy wrote again to Belfry in January 1921 to complain of leaks in the basement. By this point the contractor was desperate to be paid, and Belfry recommended that he sue Roy. Cardinal went to see Roy, and apparently they came to an agreement, as there was no lawsuit.

Although the contractors had tendered to deliver the houses as planned for \$4000, both Burroughs and Roy had spent an additional \$900 on their houses, and in November 1920 the Commission agreed to increase their loans to \$4200. There seem to have been no further problems, and the loans were paid off at \$28/month, the discharge for both properties being registered in 1942.

### **The Roy and Burroughs Families**

Both Burroughs at no 78 and Roy at no 80 owned their houses for over 50 years, both dying in 1972.

John Burroughs had met Alice Dumouchel of Aylmer at St Joseph's Church in Sandy Hill, where he was a parishioner and she the organist. They married in 1920, just after the new house was completed, and had four children: John, Charles, Henriette (married John Hudson), and Cecile (married Louis-Philippe Landreville). Alice became organist of Ste-

Anne, and both John and Alice were noted as active members of the parish. Alice died unexpectedly at home in 1954 aged 62 (Citizen 1954-11-11). John Burroughs continued to live in the house until his death 18 years later.

Caius and Albertine Roy lived in no 80 until 1961. Also members of Ste-Anne parish, they had no children of their own. In 1961 they moved away from Ottawa (possibly to Florida) and rented the house to John and Henriette Hudson, the daughter and son-in-law of the Burroughs. In any case, Mrs Roy died in 1969 at the Residence St-Louis, a nursing home at Hiawatha Park (now part of Orleans), and Mr Roy himself in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. in 1972. Both funerals were held at Ste-Anne's, and they were buried in Notre-Dame cemetery (obituaries in the Journal 1969-05-20 and 1973-01-02).

An aerial photo of 1928 shows that Roy had built a garage at no 80, at a time when car ownership was spreading but was still not universal, especially in cities. The 1956 Fire Insurance map shows that a one-storey wing had been added to no 78, and that the brickwork of both no 78 and no 80 had been covered with stucco. Around 1927 newspapers were stuffed into the attic of no. 80 as a first attempt at insulation. The Energy Crisis of the early 1970s sparked a second upgrade..

### **Macdonald Gardens, a Stable Neighbourhood**

Macdonald Gardens held its place as a well-maintained residential neighbourhood throughout the years between the wars. A study of income levels across the City in 1941 showed that Macdonald Gardens was in the highest of the three income bands used (\$1700 and over) (Taylor 1985 map 9 p. 180). The many hospitals gradually closed during the 1920s as newer facilities, opened, including the Civic Hospital (1924).

The 1950s were generally difficult years for older neighbourhoods. Houses were run down after the tight money of the Depression and the war years. The new, planned postwar suburbs offered quality housing at cheaper prices and with easier financing than established neighbourhoods. More cars and suburban growth put more pressure on existing streets, so that Charlotte St, for example, became a major traffic route between the eastern suburbs and downtown.

However The City's 1958 survey of housing stock rated the area east of Cobourg St as mostly "fair" – the best rating it would give to any area more than 20-25 years old (Ottawa 1962 map 14 "Housing Survey"). And the area attracted some diplomatic missions, notably the Turkish Embassy and the Soviet Trade Mission, as Canada exchanged diplomats with more countries after World War II.

The City's first comprehensive zoning by-law was passed in 1964, and assumed that older areas, particularly run-down areas, would be re-developed at a much greater density. Typical of what was happening in other central neighbourhoods, the first effect of this policy was demolition of houses along the River (including the Borden House) and the construction of waterside highrises like the Watgate.



Ironically, it was just about this time that renovating older homes and living in the centre of the city was again becoming fashionable (sparking some controversy over its effect on affordable housing). In Macdonald Gardens a number of initiatives tied to the Lowertown East urban renewal project of the 1970s encouraged this trend: the rebuilding of St Patrick St as an arterial, the closure of Charlotte St to through traffic, the elimination of the street through the middle of Macdonald Gardens, renewal of services, streets and streetlamps, etc.

### **After Roy and Burroughs: turnover and renovation**

After the death of Caius Roy and John A Burroughs, John's son Charles, already executor for his father, bought no 80 as well, and put both no 78 and no 80 up for sale in 1973.

Robert Thain, an employee of the Defence Research Board, and his wife Barbara bought no.78 for \$35,000 and moved in, living in the house until 2003. In December of that year, possibly because of the death of her husband, or a divorce, Barbara became sole owner. She sold the house immediately to Hugh Brennan for \$305,000 and moved to a condo on North River Road.

Brennan kept the house for only a year before selling to Robert and Ann Gagne for \$380,500 (1995). The Gagnes re-mortgaged the house in 2007, 2009 and 2010 before selling in 2010 to the present owners and residents, Simon and Christina Leadlay for \$509,000. Unfortunately there is a gap in the City Directories for this address, so it is not known whether Brennan and the Gagnes lived in the house or rented it out.

David and Catherine Preston, members of the Foreign Service, bought no. 80 from Charles Burroughs for \$33,000, and proceeded to renovate the kitchen (including blocking off a former side door). In 1975 they built a new and wider garage to replace the original one, which had burnt down. While assigned to Ottawa, they lived in the house (notably 1977-1980), and when posted abroad they rented it out, often to other Foreign Service colleagues (telephone call with David Preston). Known tenants during this period were:

1981-?1983 three students/researchers: Virginia, Nicholas and Ecto

1984-1985 Cathy P Ryan, occupational therapist.

The Prestons sold no. 80 in 1986 for \$120,000 to a partnership of Gregory Kozica, Steve Reed and David Grace; Grace withdrew from the syndicate in 1987, and Kozica and Reed sold to Michael Gurstein in 1988 for \$147,500. Gurstein in 1989 added another \$30,000 to the mortgage, which appears to have been used to renovate the bathroom, install a whirlpool tub, and finish a room and bath in the basement. The house was rented during this period (1986-1991), with the following tenants known:

1986-1987 or 1988 Dvakripa Cohen, consultant

1989-1990 M. Pincovich.

In 1991, Gurstein sold to Diane Bignell “in trust” for \$167,500. Bignell and her husband Philip Brouillard moved in, and took out three mortgages on the house for a total of \$186,125. The following year they took out additional mortgages for \$65,000.

Bignell sold in 1994 to Catherine Ann Mitchell for \$225,000, and moved to Kanata. Mitchell lived in the house from 1994-1997 and then rented it out to:  
1998-1999 Sean McDowell  
2000-?2003 Jay Johnson

Around 2000/2001 an engineer was contracted to look at cracks in the SE corner of the foundation: this was linked to the stress on tree roots and related shrinkage of clay soil caused by several years of dry weather. Once the tree was felled, the sinking stabilized, the cracks repaired and the leakage stopped..

Mitchell sold in 2003 for \$260,000 to Mario Mastroangelo and Zophia Porebski, who used it as an income property, assigning the rent directly to the mortgage company. The tenants were:  
2003-2005 possibly Jay Johnson (the tenant confirmed there in 2000-2001)  
2005-2006 Freitas C. de Sousa.

The Mastroangelos replaced all windows and doors and likely renovated the basement bathroom. An engineering survey of the roof was carried out in 2006, and some structural changes made when the roof was replaced that year.

The present owners, Richard Briggs and Carole Sauve, bought the house in 2007 for \$344,500. The Briggs replaced the furnace, renovated the electrical system to bring it up to code, upgraded the insulation in the attic to R50 and added insulation to the basement walls, replaced all the storm doors, and rebuilt the front steps. Subsequently they have replaced the fireplace and completely renovated the upstairs bathroom.

The most notable change has been the installation of solar panels on the southern face of the roof of the house, and on the garage. The roof structure was straightened and the rafters “sistered” to support the extra weight of the panels, and the roof and plumbing vents moved from the southern to the northern side. The electricity meter was moved from inside the basement to the exterior west wall, which required excavating the buried cables. The garage roof was also straightened and strengthened.

With this preparation, 38 solar panels were installed in January 2012, and the first power sold to the Ontario Power Authority in February of that year. In February 2014 two additional panels were installed in the space formerly occupied by two brick chimneys. (tricolour.ca – Tricolour Solar Roof microFIT installation).

Briggs was born in Ottawa and grew up in the area between Fisher Park and Hampton Park. With a degree in computer engineering from the University of Ottawa, he writes open source system software and is active in the Linux and computer security

communities. He has also been involved with solar-powered vehicles since his university days.

Carole Sauve was also born and raised in Ottawa, and after studies at University of Ottawa and Carleton completed a graduate degree at the University of Kent at Canterbury, England. Carole has several decades of experience working with refugees, both as a volunteer and a government official.

Both Richard and Carole have strong interests in environmental issues and have travelled extensively in China, Cuba, Australia and the UK. They plan to make Wurtemberg a home for themselves and their children, son Nicholas and daughter Annabelle, for the foreseeable future.

Richard is well known in Macdonald Gardens as the “the bike guy” because of his stable of unusual, practical and outright wacky bicycles for touring, hauling or parades. Both are active and visible members of the local community.

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Other house histories by Marc Lowell and partners

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25 Gilmour St  
43 Gilmour St (Clarke House)  
45 Gilmour St (Fagan House)  
18 Queen Elizabeth Driveway (Haydon House)  
25 Somerset St W  
300 Somerset St W (Mamma Teresa’s Ristorante)  
46 Cartier St (former Carmichael Inn and Spa)  
110 Waverley St  
117 Waverley St (available online through [johnkingteam.com/blog](http://johnkingteam.com/blog))  
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113 Crichton St  
the Caplan family  
18 and 20 Rockwood St  
59 Maclaren St (Harris House)  
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