

## History of 117 Waverley Street Ottawa and Neighbourhood Development

What is now 117 Waverley Street was built in 1899 on what was then Charles St in the neighbourhood called “Deep Cut” after the deep cutting that took the Rideau Canal from the entrance locks through Sandy Hill to Frank St. Since then, the house has mirrored the ups and downs of the whole neighbourhood.

A land development company, the Ottawa Freehold Association, bought up all the remaining vacant land within the City Limits (then at Gladstone Ave) in 1876/77 and began to market town lots more aggressively. However, the real spur to growth came with the arrival of the Canada Atlantic Railway (later the Grand Trunk, Canadian National and now the Via Rail line to Montreal) in 1882. The Railway built its station on Catherine St at Elgin, and a roundhouse and engine shops between Macdonald St and the canal south of Waverley. Suddenly there was a demand for cheap housing for railway workers within walking distance of the shops. The creeks were filled in and the banks of the canal raised. Lots were sold and houses built. Although the north side of Waverley was not developed at this time, the character of the street was established: modest houses for workers as opposed to the grander houses built a few blocks away.

In 1891 streetcars began to operate on Elgin Street, making the area more accessible to older parts of town. In 1896 a grand new central train station was built downtown east of the Canal across from the Chateau Laurier (what today is known as the Government Conference Centre) and the shops and terminals were also moved. In 1901-1903 the Driveway was built (now Queen Elizabeth Driveway), making the area entirely residential.

Many local institutions appeared at this time: Elgin Street Public School (rebuilt in the 1950s), Holy Angels Separate School (Waverley and Cartier: replaced by condos in the 1970s), St. John’s Church and the Unitarian Church (now Église St. Marc), Minto Park and St. Luke’s Hospital (demolished in 1924 when the Civic Hospital opened to make way for St Luke’s Park).

Charles Street was renamed Waverley Street at this time and the houses were renumbered. In 1899 William Weston bought most of the lots on the north side of Waverley between Cartier and Macdonald and built a row of identical frame houses for resale. These houses were likely finished in beaded pine siding.

The house at 117 Waverley Street was sold to Patrick Hart in YEAR?, who rented it to John Telford, a porter at the Elgin St station. Telford bought the house himself in 1903, but moved away in 1906, renting the house to fellow railway workers and other craftsmen. It was likely at this time that the pine boards were covered with “patent siding” (a form of stucco). Always an income property up to this time, the house changed hands several times until 1921, when William Perkins, a clerk in the ordnance department (now part of Department of National Defense) bought the house and lived there with his wife until his death in 1951.

The house at 117 Waverley Street was sold in 1952 to Mary Morgan, who bequeathed it on her death in 1967 to Bertha and George Blyth. During this time the house sat vacant for over two years and then was rented out to short-term tenants, reflecting the change in the neighbourhood.

While studies carried out in the 1940s for the famous Greber plan (the grand development for Ottawa as a National Capital) showed that “Deep Cut” was a stable mix of small and large houses, by the 1950s the neighbourhood was in trouble. Older residents could not afford to keep their houses in good repair, while young families could find better housing at more affordable prices in the new suburbs of Ottawa. A City of Ottawa survey done in the early 1960s found “Deep Cut” to have one of the highest concentrations of substandard housing and overcrowding in Ottawa, comparable to Lebreton Flats and Lowertown. The City considered major demolition and urban renewal for the area but rejected the idea on the grounds that the area was still a desirable location and that private builders would soon replace the housing stock with high-rise apartments.

Urban renewal for the neighbourhood came about differently, however. The idea of fixing up old houses and conserving old neighbourhoods (often called “whitepainting” at the time) began to spread from Toronto and other larger cities during the 1960s. People began once again to buy houses in the neighbourhood and improve them for self-occupancy. In the 1970s the City of Ottawa changed the zoning rules to support renovation rather than replacement and the label “Golden Triangle” was first used. The influx of owner/occupiers was an important reason that residents were able to defeat proposals in the 70s and 80s to turn Somerset, MacLaren, Catherine and Cartier streets into major cross-town arterial roads, and to build a “downtown distributor” expressway north of Lisgar St, support the renovation of Lisgar Collegiate in the 90s and the construction of the Corkstown footbridge.

Carl Morrison, an electrical technician, bought 117 Waverley Street in 1976 from the Blyths and replaced the stucco with brick. The current owners of the property – Dr. George Parry and Jean-Louis Bouchard – acquired the property in **YEAR?** and have made a series of improvements to it. This included building a lovely deck off of the main house and a beautiful roof-top patio above the garage. They have modernized the entire interior of the house including a modern kitchen and family room. (You could add other improvements or features of the house as desired. John is probably best to decide what merits being included.)

Picture – taken 1899 looking south across Minto Park from Gilmour St. The slash of mud behind the row of houses is Waverley St. The big building is St Luke’s Hospital (now St Luke’s Park). (no. 19 in folder of pictures)

By Marc S. Lowell and David LaFranchise August 15<sup>th</sup> 2013