

Galts "Dickson's Hill": The Evolution of a Late-Victorian Neighbourhood in an Ontarian Town

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Article abstract

Previous research has shown that the economic growth and urban population increases which occurred in the 1880s prompted the development of many new residential neighbourhoods in central Canadian municipalities. Much of this housing was of superior quality, to meet the needs of the growing middle and upper classes, who began to segregate themselves in affluent enclaves within cities. These neighbourhoods evolved slowly, reflecting the small scale of the processes of land subdivision and housing construction which then existed. These processes, however, were in a state of transition, and by the early 20th century, housing provision had become more professional and large scale.

The present research uses the case of Dickson's Hill to explore how these and other events unfolded in a Late Victorian neighbourhood in a small Ontarian town. The social segregation which occurred here was not extreme, as the rich and poor lived on opposite sides of the same neighbourhood. The basic street pattern and most of the subdividing of land was done by one person — Florence Dickson — but many builders and tradesmen were involved in the provision of housing. There was much variation in house styles, even on the same block, since individual lot owners contracted for the construction of their homes, and since the pace of development was so slow that the popularity of certain architectural styles had changed. This variety, together with a number of planning decisions, explains in part the character and charm exuded by the neighbourhood.

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Résumé:

Une étude antérieure a démontré que la croissance économique et l'augmentation de la population urbaine des années 1880 ont précipité le développement d'un grand nombre de nouveaux quartiers résidentiels dans les municipalités du centre du Canada. Une forte proportion des nouvelles habitations était de qualité supérieure, afin de répondre aux besoins des classes moyenne et supérieure, alors en plein essor, qui commençaient à se regrouper dans de riches enclaves à l'intérieur même des villes. Ces quartiers se sont développés lentement, les opérations de lotissement et la construction s'effectuant, à l'époque, à petite échelle. Ces processus étaient toutefois en période de transition car dès le début du 20^e siècle, la construction résidentielle se faisait de façon plus professionnelle et sur une plus grande échelle.

La présente étude s'appuie sur le cas de Dickson's Hill pour découvrir comment ces événements et divers autres ont donné naissance, dans une petite ville de l'Ontario, à un quartier de la fin de l'époque victorienne. Nous ne pouvons parler dans ce cas de ségrégation sociale radicale, car riches et pauvres vivaient dos à dos, dans le même quartier. L'établissement des quadrilatères de base

et la plus grande partie des opérations de lotissement furent effectués par une seule personne, Florence Dickson, mais de nombreux constructeurs et ouvriers ont contribué au développement des quartiers. Grande a été la variété dans le style des maisons, dans certains cas pour le même pâté de maisons, d'abord parce que les propriétaires des lots confiaient eux-mêmes la construction de leur maison aux entrepreneurs et ensuite parce que le rythme de développement était tellement lent que certains styles architecturaux devenaient désuets. Cette diversité, associée à un certain nombre de décisions relatives à l'aménagement, explique en partie le caractère et le charme de ce quartier.

The late 19th century was an important era in the history of Canadian cities and society. An economic boom during the 1880s, coupled with the favourable effects of the federal Tories' "National Policy" of 1879, significantly increased industrial activity, urban population levels, urban construction activity, and the size of the middle and upper classes. This rapid expansion of industry occurred mainly in the urban areas of central Canada and the Maritimes, and the attraction of labourers from rural areas hastened the trend toward an urban society. The profitability of these industries created a small number of newly-rich industrial entrepreneurs, while a larger class of merchants and professionals formed to meet the needs of the growing urban populations. These middle- and upper-class urbanites required quality housing not previously available, while the growing urban working classes also needed accommodation. This was the impetus for a residential construction boom during the 1880s, which featured the creation of much elite housing in many central Canadian municipalities. In larger cities, exclusive neighbourhoods of elite housing were built, while in smaller centres there was less separation between the social classes. Many of these neighbourhoods still exist, and are tangible, enduring evidence in the urban landscape of abstract social and economic changes which occurred a century ago. They also constitute some of the most charming neighbourhoods in many municipalities. While the 19th-century land development process has been described as piecemeal, small scale, fragmented and uncoordinated, the many tasteful, distinctive and diverse neighbourhoods which resulted suggest that the process had its virtues.

There have been few Canadian studies of the development of elite neighbourhoods, and practically none have examined small towns.¹ This case study begins to fill this void by examining one such neighbourhood called Dickson's Hill in Galt, Ontario (see Figure 1), which in 1973 joined with Preston and Hespeler to form the City of Cambridge. This study examines the land subdivision process, the house construction process, the architecture of the housing, and the social geography of the neighbourhood. The goal is to explain how late 19th-century neighbourhoods were created, and also perhaps to better understand our experience of the charm and character such

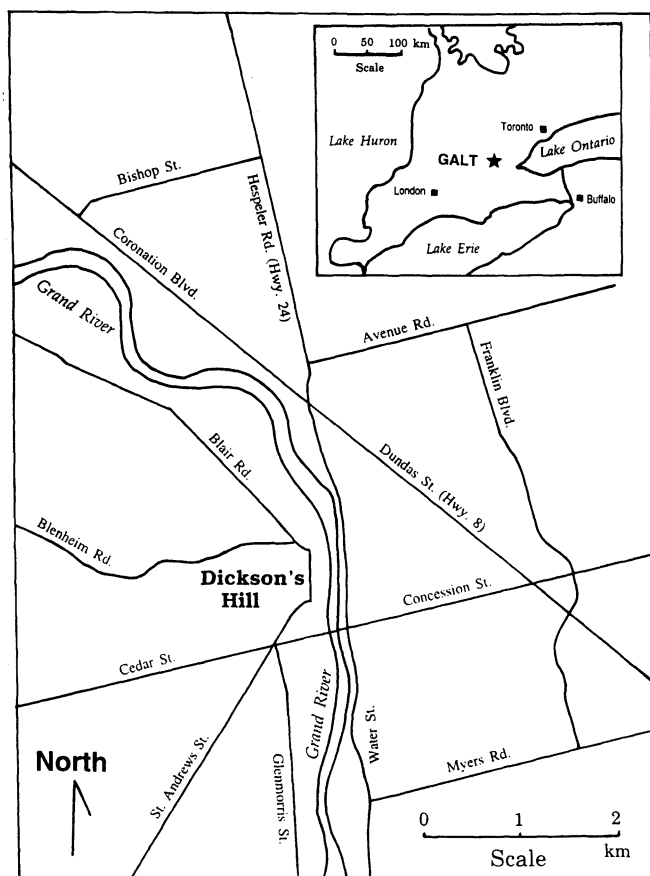


Figure 1: The Location of Dickson's Hill in Galt, with Inset Map of the Location of Galt in Southern Ontario.

neighbourhoods exude. The study of Dickson's Hill also contributes to an understanding of the role of women in 19th-century property development. Florence Dickson, a grand-daughter of Dumfries Township founder William Dickson Sr., was the largest subdivider of lands in the neighbourhood. The imprint of her efforts is still visible today in the network of streets and alleys, in the sizing and orientation of most of the lots, and in the social geography of the neighbourhood.

Urban Development and Housing Provision in the Late Nineteenth Century

The rapid growth of industry in central Canada during the 1880s was hastened by the three "integral parts" of the National Policy: inter-provincial railway construction, protective tariffs on imported manufactured goods, and a favourable immigration policy.² Western Canada, particularly Manitoba, became a lucrative, captive market for central Canadian manufacturers. The increase in manufacturing activity after 1880 tended to be situated in urban areas, and in south-central Ontario manufac-

turing became "the most powerful factor in urban growth."³ Initially, much of this production took place in small factories and in small municipalities. Indeed, "Over 50 per cent of the manufacturing in Ontario in the 1880s took place in communities where populations never exceeded 10,000."⁴ After 1890, however, a tendency toward large-scale production in larger towns and cities was evident.⁵ Some medium-sized municipalities such as Galt, Guelph, Brantford, and Berlin (Kitchener) which had been "significant industrial producers" in the 1880s gained a greater share of Ontario's industrial production by 1910.⁶ Urban areas generally became magnets for rural migrants in search of industrial employment, and this greatly altered the distribution of Ontario's population. In 1871, only 20 per cent lived in urban areas, but by 1901, 40 per cent did.⁷

The urban building boom of the 1880s was prompted by both a national population increase and by internal migration. In absolute terms, rural populations levels remained constant, but what would have been the natural increase in rural populations was lost by migration to cities.⁸ The boom was not restricted to the construction of dwellings for migrating factory labourers, as throughout "southern Ontario, society's increased wealth gave rise to beautiful public edifices," and "many new homes, schools, and churches were built."⁹ Moreover, the new urban-industrial economy was qualitatively changing the nature of work, and thereby increasing the size of the middle class.¹⁰ From 1871 to 1901, the proportion of "white collar" jobs in Ontario increased from 14 per cent to 27 per cent.¹¹ On both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, "The new wealth created by industrialization meant that an emerging middle and upper-middle class now had the resources to begin building homes of greater distinction and individualization."¹² There had been relatively little social segregation up to 1870,¹³ but ensuing industrialization changed this. In Canada's largest cities, the needs of the growing middle class were met by the construction of entire neighbourhoods of upscale housing.

In Montreal, the 1880s boom saw "a considerable increase" in the number of wealthy residents in the elite area known as the (Golden) Square Mile, prompting "favourable comparisons between Sherbrooke Street and New York's Fifth Avenue."¹⁴ In Ottawa, public servants, merchants and professionals "established the quality residences that continue to mark" Upper Town and Sandy Hill.¹⁵ In Toronto, a "Golden Horseshoe" formed along Jarvis, Bloor, and St. George Streets, where "The rich were displaying their affluence in the size of their mansions."¹⁶ The 200-acre lot which became elite Rosedale was subdivided in 1890, and contained 80 mansions by 1900.¹⁷ Other affluent areas included Parkdale and "The Annex", which was Toronto's "first middle- and professional-class suburb," while "dozens of new neighbourhoods of solid brick middle-class houses" were also built.¹⁸ Even in Kitchener, whose population increased by 83 per cent during the 1880s,¹⁹ a new, elite neighbourhood in "Centre Ward became the showplace for the homes of the industrialists, professionals, and mercantile lead-

ers whose wealth had been largely created by the growth of commerce and industry."²⁰

The 1880s represent a period of transition not only in the social geography of cities, but also in the process of housing development. The "era of individualism" in housing provision began to fade in 1880, and was largely replaced by the corporate era during the next 30 years.²¹ Before 1880, residential development was largely uncoordinated and unregulated.²² The organization of the housing industry was fragmented in that those who subdivided land were usually not also home builders, and those who did build homes built only a few at a time.²³ There were no vertically integrated building companies, but rather only self-employed tradesmen and labourers who were assembled by a lot owner to perform the various tasks involved in building a home.²⁴ There was little speculative building, that is, building for unknown future purchasers.²⁵ The architectural styles found on any given street were mixed, because of the small scale and slow pace of development. Some lots on the same block were developed 20 or 30 years apart, during which time architectural styles had changed.²⁶ Though the grid system of street layout was common, the street pattern was nonetheless irregular and discontinuous because the subdivision plans did not create equally sized blocks. The lots within these blocks also varied in size and orientation.²⁷ Such blocks tended to be socially mixed, as the larger lots appealed to affluent purchasers, and the smaller lots appealed to poorer ones.²⁸

After 1880, a trend began whereby construction firms became larger and more integrated, as sanitation and aesthetic requirements made houses more complicated to build.²⁹ Corporations subdivided half of the building lots placed on Hamilton's real estate market between 1906 and 1913, and one Hamilton builder produced 150 houses per year.³⁰ This professionalization of the land development industry prompted an increase in speculative building. Subdivision blocks by now had equally sized lots and comparably priced homes, as developers targeted a particular class of purchaser with their developments.³¹ Some segregation in the social geography was evident, as people of similar class standing lived in identifiable enclaves.³² Of the available housing types, the suburban separate family dwelling became the preferred housing choice.³³ In North American Victorian suburbs, the basic plan involved "front-facing detached structures which were centred on long narrow lots and set in rows within a pattern of grid streets."³⁴

Late Victorian neighbourhoods often had a natural beauty, as more elite areas were carefully landscaped, and nearby parks were created to increase land values.³⁵ A tree-planting movement began in the 1870s, and by the 1880s most American states had recognized Arbor Day as a day to plant trees.³⁶ By 1891, Toronto's residential areas were graced by "boulevards, lawns and fine shade trees," and by a number of parks.³⁷

Opinions differ as to the architectural merits of the housing created in Canada during this time. Gowans describes the "High Victorian" domestic architecture of the 1860s to the 1880s as

"over-lavish, over-ornate" and gaudy because nouveau riche Victorians had risen to affluence too quickly "to wear their wealth lightly." Late Victorian architecture of the 1890s and early 1900s was hardly better in his estimation, as it was lifeless, monotonous and half-hearted.³⁸ However, Dendy and Kilbourn lauded "the Victorians' intelligent use of architecture and planning to achieve pleasant residential surroundings." They believe that this period represents "forty of the most creative years in Toronto architecture."³⁹

After 1900, Canada's larger cities became more socially segregated, as elite suburban neighbourhoods were carefully planned and developed. Some of these neighbourhoods incorporated principles associated with the "Garden City" movement, such as large, treed lots, a substantial park system, and curvilinear streets which were sensitive to the local topography. The socially exclusive character of these neighbourhoods was sometimes assured by the use of restrictive covenants in the deeds of sale which required the construction of detached houses only, one to a lot, and at a considerable minimum value at that. As with the less holistically planned subdivisions of the 19th century, these neighbourhoods, too, developed slowly and had a diversity of architectural styles.⁴⁰

Galt and Dickson's Hill

Galt participated greatly in the industrialization and urbanization that characterized the 1880s. In 1881, there were 974 houses in Galt, but by 1891 there were 1,624, an increase of 66.7 per cent.⁴¹ Galt's population was 5,187 in 1881, and rose to 7,535 in 1891, an increase of 45.3 per cent.⁴² Though Galt had been a notable manufacturing centre since the 1850s, its machine shops and foundries were thriving in the 1880s, partly because of work orders received from Manitoba for the sale of engines, boilers and machinery.⁴³ In 1891 Galt's factories employed 1,698 workers.⁴⁴ Galt's Goldie-McCulloch was an "important and dynamic" factory which in 1883 registered the first grain roller-mill patent in Canada.⁴⁵ The town became a city in 1915, with a population of 11,852.

Quality housing was built during the 1880s in several parts of Galt, but the largest section was located on the elevated land west of the Grand River, which bisected the town (see Figure 1). This area was largely undeveloped before the 1880s because it was still privately held by William Dickson Jr. In 1816 his father, William Sr., had purchased land which became the entire township of Dumfries. The settlement of Galt began in the 1820s at the forks of the Grand River and Mill Creek. In time, it spread out evenly on the east side of the Grand, but development was limited to mainly low-lying areas on the west side because of the Dickson family's holdings as shown in an 1875 birds-eye sketch (see Figure 2). William Jr. died in 1877, and in 1883 his beneficiaries decided to sell his remaining lands. The story of the creation of Dickson's Hill is essentially the story of the conversion of much of what was then called "Dickson's Bush" to a residential neighbourhood. An 1893 birds-eye sketch shows the progress that had been made to that point (see Figure 3). By

Galt's "Dickson's Hill"

1900, "The considerable number of large, pretentious homes in spacious grounds showed the presence of the aristocracy. ... Classic hills behind their homes rolled back into verdant fields and woodlands."⁴⁶

Figure 4 shows the various sections of Dickson's Hill. William Dickson Jr. built his stone, Regency-style house, named "Kirkmichael", on the brow of the Hill overlooking the village in about 1830. By 1835 he had acquired from his father all of the land south of Blenheim Road, west of George Street, north of St. Andrews and Cedar Streets, and east of the line between lots 11 and 12 of the 11th concession of North Dumfries Township. Later he also acquired most of the land north of Blenheim Road, south of Grant Ave, west of the Grand River, and east of the line between lots 11 and 12 in the 11th concession.

A few notable dispositions from these lands had been made before 1880: for St. Andrew's Church and Cemetery in the 1830s; for lawyer John Miller's mansion at the corner of

Blenheim Road and Blair Road in 1857; for an Anglican Cemetery and manse on the north side of Blenheim Road in the early 1840s; for a large public cemetery beside it in 1867; and in 1871 for Dickson Park just east of Park Avenue and west of the Grand River.

William Jr. died during the recession of the late 1870s, and perhaps for this reason his will specified that none of his lands could be sold for five years. By the early 1880s the economy had recovered and the demand for housing in Galt increased greatly. There had been more construction activity locally in 1882 and 1883 than in any previous years, yet a housing shortage persisted. The *Galt Reporter* attributed Galt's economic boom to the town's large manufacturing base, its excellent rail service, and to the "Fiscal Policy of the Government", which likely meant the federal Tories' National Policy.⁴⁷ Much of the land north and west Dickson's Park and east of Blair Road was sold by William Jr.'s estate in 1883 to James Patterson, who pro-

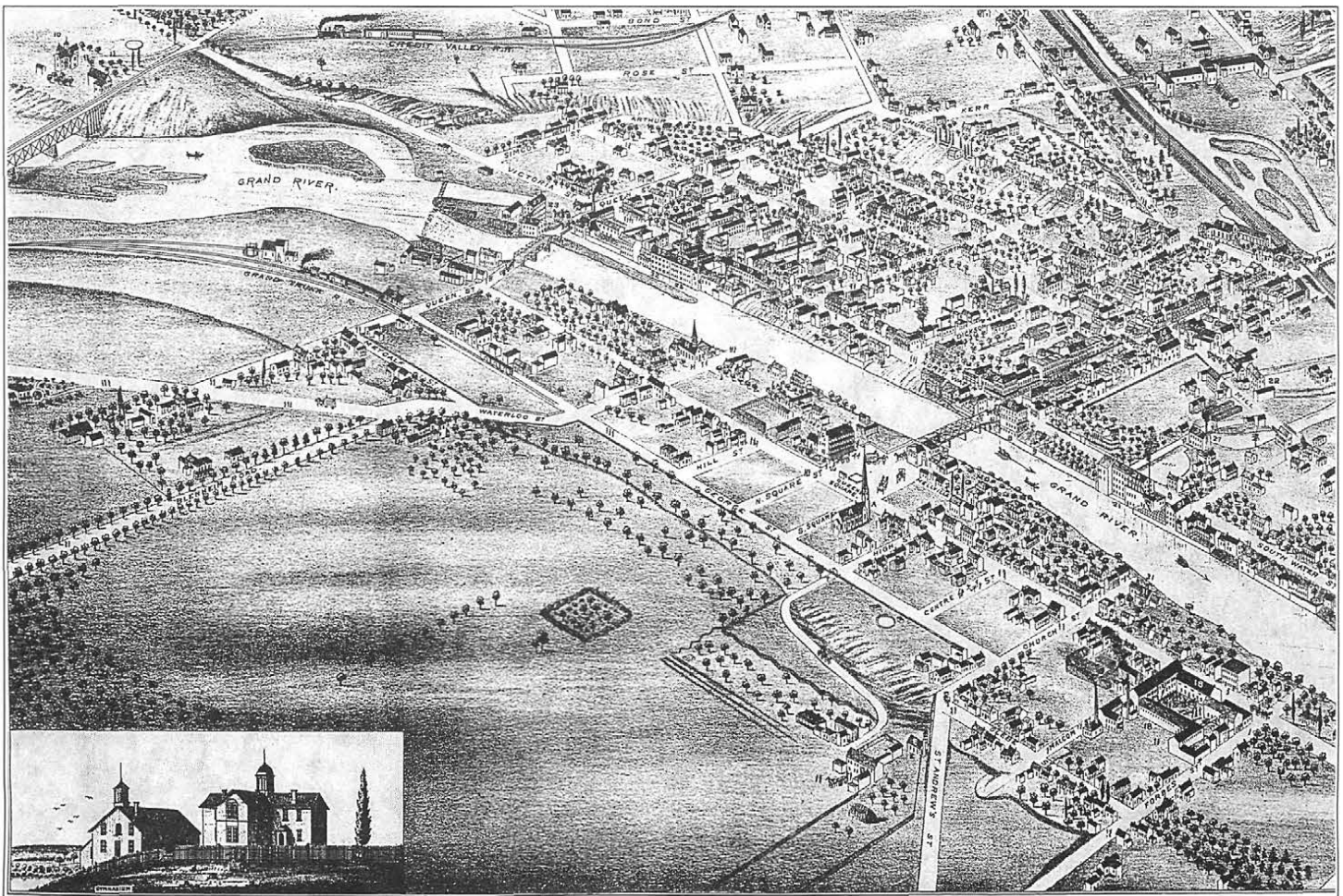


Figure 2: Bird's-Eye View of Galt, 1875, showing Dickson's Hill to the left (west) of George Street, and William Dickson Jr.'s home, Kirkmichael, just west of St. Andrew's Street. Source: City of Cambridge Archives, Map 5.

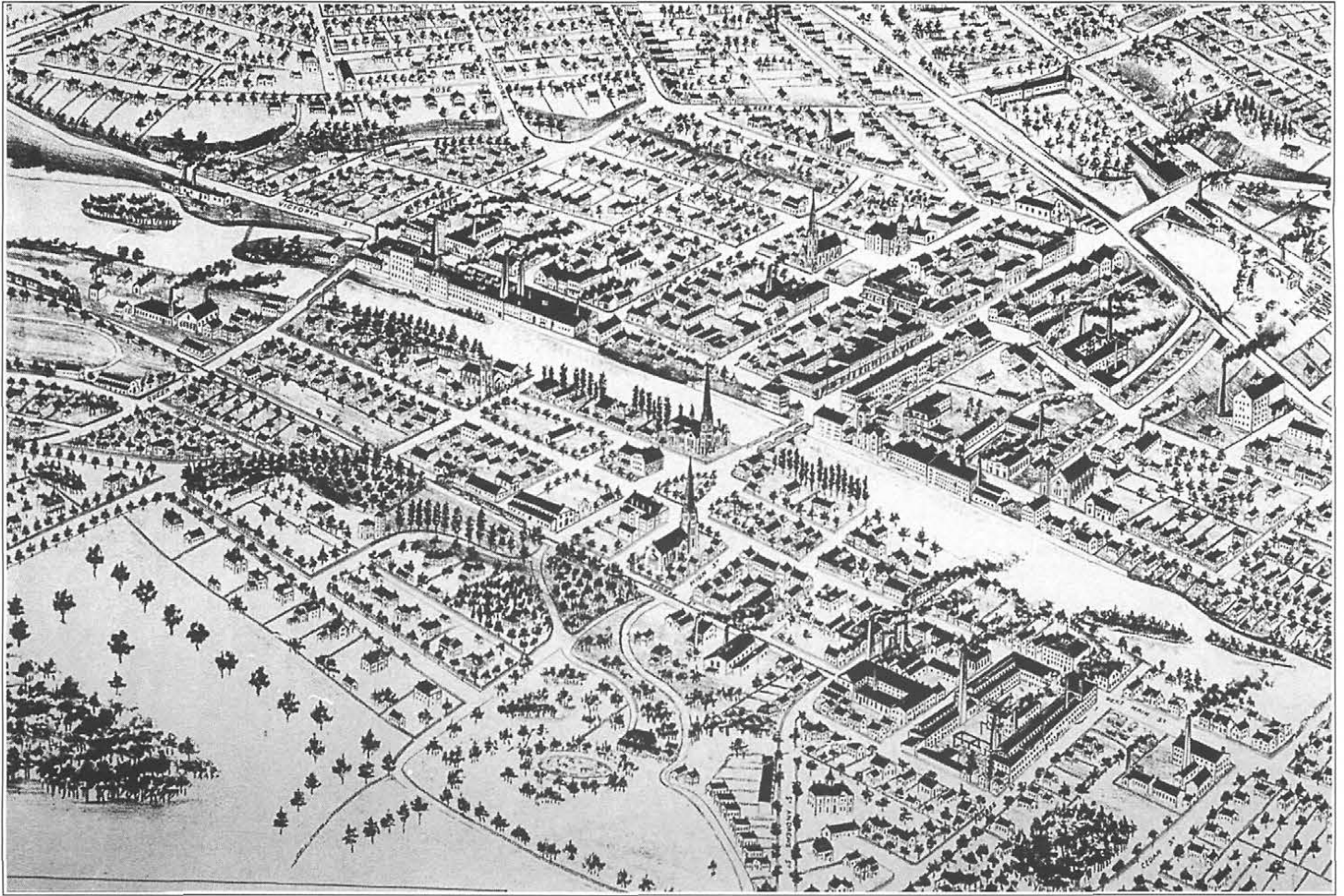


Figure 3: *Bird's-Eye View of Galt, 1893, showing in the centre foreground the extent of development in blocks D, F, G, H and I of Plans 473 and 474 of Dickson's Hill.* Source: City of Cambridge Archives, Map 128.

ceeded to develop "Parkdale", a subdivision of about 25 acres. The 178-acre tract lying south of Blenheim Road was sold on 29 October 1884 to William Jr.'s niece Florence Dickson (see Figure 5). This portion of Dickson's Hill is the subject of this study.

Florence Dickson's Early Subdivisions on Dickson's Hill

Florence Dickson was a life-long spinster who was born into privilege in 1847 and died poor in 1924 at age 77.⁴⁸ She lived much of her life in Galt at "Kirkmichael", but spent some years in Toronto, and was "prominent in society at Niagara Falls, Toronto and Ottawa."⁴⁹ She controlled most of the subdivision activity on her tract until about 1915, though she appears to have relied greatly, and perhaps to her own detriment, on a number of family members who acted as her agents, mortgagees, and solicitors. Before 1901, five notable subdivision plans were registered, two by Florence and three by her brother-in-law, J. J. Kingmill, who had purchased unsubdivided blocks

from her (see Table 1). Florence registered four more subdivision plans between 1906 and 1913, while five notable ones were registered between 1901 and 1922 by other persons in respect of lands Florence had either sold or lost through foreclosure upon defaulted mortgages. At her death in 1924, Florence still owned 29 building lots, and about 13 acres of "bushland" which were not subdivided until two plans were registered in 1947 and 1954. Thus, it took 70 years to fully subdivide Dickson's Hill, and longer still to build on all of the lots.

Florence Dickson had her first subdivision survey completed in December 1884 by the surveying firm of Unwin, Browne and Lankey. It entailed seven blocks of lots labelled "A" to "G" along the south and east perimeter of her tract. Now known as Plan 473 in the land registry for the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, this survey determined to a large extent the future pattern of the street network and the social geography of the neighbourhood. Most of the streets in this plan followed a grid

Galt's "Dickson's Hill"

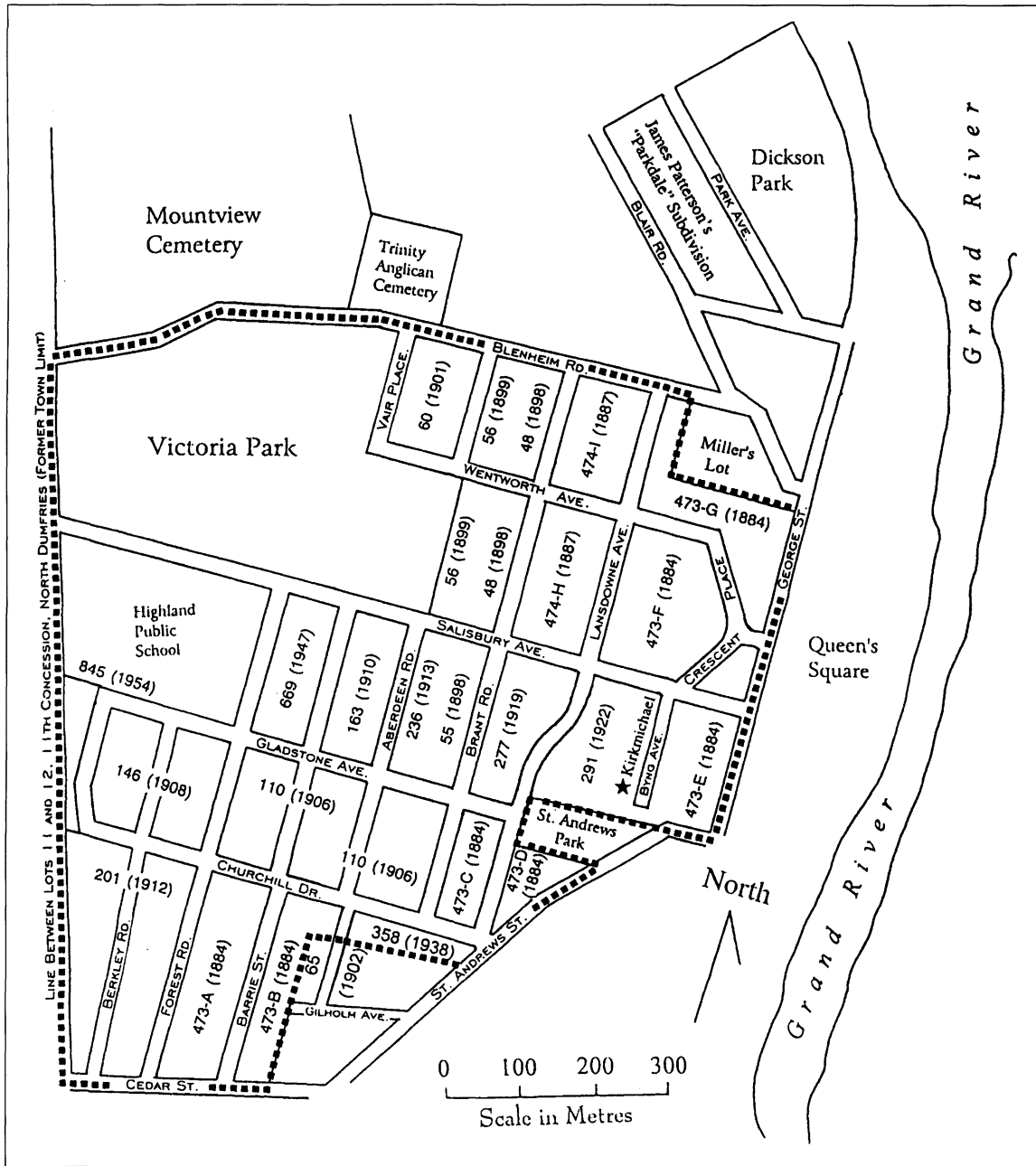


Figure 4: Streets, Subdivisions, and Landmarks in Dickson's Hill.

pattern aligned almost exactly with the ordinal directions. The only exception was the main entrance to the neighbourhood from George Street, which branched into two roads that scaled the Hill at an angle, so as to lessen the steepness of the slopes. These two branches became known as "The Crescent", and effectively framed Block F, which was the centrepiece of the plan and of the neighbourhood. In later years, the rest of the streets in the neighbourhood also followed a grid pattern,

except the middle portion of Lansdowne Road which remained undeveloped and part of the Kirkmichael lands until 1919. The section of roadway here had to curve in order to connect the earlier-constructed northern and southern sections which had not been properly aligned.

The social geography of this area was determined by the way Florence scaled her lot sizes to the topography and locational



Figure 5: Florence Augusta Dickson, shown circa 1865, was the major subdivider of land in Dickson's Hill. As a grand-daughter of Dumfries Township founder William Dickson Sr., she was "a member of one of Canada's distinguished families," and "devoted her life largely to philanthropic and religious activities." (Toronto Daily Star, 9 Sept. 1924.) Photo: City of Cambridge Archives, Dickson Papers, A988.213.291, 1.

advantages of each site. She thereby met the housing demands of different class segments in the marketplace. Block F was situated close to the town's core, and afforded an excellent view of the town from the crest of the Hill, as did some parts of block G. Blocks A and B, on the other hand, were further removed from the crest and the town's core, and afforded no view. Blocks C, D, and E were intermediate in desirability. Accordingly, the lots in blocks A and B were generally the smallest (most were about 60' by 120'), while many of the largest were in blocks F and G, most of which were at least 87' by 150', with some exceeding 300 feet in length.⁵⁰ Florence sold lots in blocks A and B for about \$125 to mainly working-class buyers, while lots in block F sold for between \$500 and \$1,500 to a

Table 1: Chronology of Subdivision Plans on Dickson's Hill

| Year of Plan | Registration Number | No. of Lots in Plan | Name of Subdivider |
|--------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| 1884 | 473 | 106 | Florence A. Dickson |
| 1887 | 474 | 29 | Florence A. Dickson |
| 1898 | 48 | 15 | John J. Kingsmill |
| 1898 | 55 | 7 | John J. Kingsmill |
| 1900 | 56 | 15 | John J. Kingsmill |
| 1901 | 60 | 15 | G. S. MacKay |
| 1901 | 61 | 21 | Florence A. Dickson |
| 1902 | 65 | 24 | Stephanie Warnock |
| 1906 | 110 | 81 | Florence A. Dickson |
| 1908 | 146 | 53 | Florence A. Dickson |
| 1909 | 163 | 20 | Florence A. Dickson |
| 1912 | 201 | 78 | James Wardlaw |
| 1913 | 236 | 9 | Florence A. Dickson |
| 1919 | 277 | 20 | Estate of Pauline Wilks |
| 1922 | 291 | 21 | Estate of Pauline Wilks |
| 1938 | 358 | 10 | Estate of Edward Seagram |
| 1947 | 669 | 25 | City of Galt |
| 1954 | 845 | 11 | City of Galt |

Source: *Kitchener Land Registry*

more elite clientele. In 1887 Florence completed her second survey, known as Plan 474, which added blocks H and I to her offerings. Located just west of blocks F and G, the lots in block H were also large and targeted at the elite, while those in block I were mid-sized. Blocks A and B contained a total of 50 lots, while blocks F, G, H and I contained 54 lots.

The difference in the value of these lots was soon matched by the difference in the value of the houses that were built on them. By 1912, for example, the 18 properties in block A which had been developed had a mean-average tax-assessed value of only \$1,040, while the 17 properties in block F had an average value of \$2,627. All but two of the houses built in Block A up to 1910 had always been owned by members of the working class. All but four of the homes built in block F up to 1910 had always had white-collar owners including merchants, manufacturers, and professionals such as dentists, accountants, and insurance agents.

The Social Geography of Later Developments on Dickson's Hill

The correlation between lot sizes and the social geography continued as the rest of the neighbourhood was developed, with Gladstone Avenue becoming an unofficial dividing line between the working class and the more affluent classes. North of here, eight subdivision plans were registered between 1898 and 1922, each containing medium- to large-sized lots. South of here, two subdivisions were registered by Florence in 1906 and 1908 which contained 134 lots, most of which were about 45' wide and 110' long. These lots were promoted as "fine building lots suitable for homes for working men," and were priced as low as \$75, including a mere \$10 down payment.⁵¹ Another subdivision (Plan 201) of small lots was registered south of Gladstone and just west of Block A in 1912. It consisted of 78 lots, most of which were about 40' wide and 110' long — the smallest lots yet in Dickson's Hill.

(While Gladstone Avenue was the social dividing line, Salisbury Avenue is the street which divides the addresses on the crossing streets of Lansdowne, Brant and Aberdeen Roads into North and South. Thus, properties along these three streets between Gladstone and Salisbury Avenues are classified in this study as part of the northern section of the neighbourhood, even though their addresses are Lansdowne, Brant, and Aberdeen Roads South.)

The significance of Gladstone Avenue as a social dividing line is clear from a comparison of the tax assessment values of houses on the streets which cross it. In 1915, for example, the mean average value of the houses on Lansdowne Avenue north of Gladstone was \$3,255, while those south of it were worth on average only \$1,534. This approximate doubling of value of the houses north of Gladstone was also true on Brant Road (\$4,109, compared to \$1,903 south of Gladstone), and on Aberdeen Road (\$2,607, compared to \$1,356).

The area north of Gladstone also had a greater proportion of its housing constructed of solid brick or brick veneer over a wood frame. Table 2 shows that solid brick construction was prevalent in Blocks F and G of Plan 473 and Block H of Plan 474. In the southern section of Dickson's Hill, wooden houses (often with a "rough cast" or stucco finish) were as common as brick veneer ones, while solid brick houses were rare.

An analysis of the occupations of residents of Dickson's Hill reveals sharp differences between those persons who resided on either side of Gladstone Avenue (see Table 3). The years 1902, 1919 and 1941 were selected for this analysis because detailed fire insurance maps showing the housing stock of the neighbourhood were available for the latter two years, and 1902 represents the midway point between 1884 — when the development of the Hill began — and 1919. Occupational data were derived from the municipal tax assessment records from those years, and the Galt city directories for 1920 and 1942. (City directories of Galt were apparently not prepared in odd years during this time period, and no detailed directories of Galt were

Table 2: Types of House Construction in Selected Areas of Dickson's Hill, 1941

| Area | Stone | Wood | Solid Brick | Brick Veneer |
|--|-------|------|-------------|--------------|
| North of Gladstone Avenue | | | | |
| Blocks F and G of Plan 473, and Block H of Plan 474 | 3 | 0 | 31 | 9 |
| Plans 48, 55, 56, 60, and Block I of Plan 474 | 0 | 13 | 11 | 24 |
| South of Gladstone Avenue | | | | |
| Plan 110 | 6 | 33 | 3 | 33 |
| Area Bounded by Churchill, Forest, St. Andrews and Cedar Streets | 4 | 37 | 4 | 36 |

Source: Provincial Insurance Surveys, City of Galt, Waterloo County, Ontario, June 1941.

produced before 1912.) This analysis includes only adult householders who actually resided in a dwelling on the Hill, and excludes absentee landlords.

The area south of Gladstone Avenue was consistently dominated by the working class. In 1902, 77.3 per cent of its residents were unskilled, semi-skilled, or skilled labourers. The proportions in 1919 and 1941 were 72 and 64 per cent respectively. North of Gladstone, only 23.8 per cent of residents were labourers in 1902, decreasing to 16.8 per cent in 1919, and only 9.1 per cent in 1941. The proportion of white collar workers north of Gladstone in 1902 in 47.6 per cent, and increased to 63.6 per cent in 1919, and 67.3 per cent in 1941. While the proportion of labourers in both areas decreased over time, the northern section was still largely white collar by 1941, while the southern section was still largely working class. In 1919, 22 persons living north of Gladstone had taxable incomes exceeding \$1,000, while only four persons living south of Gladstone did.⁵²

The residents of the area south of Gladstone lived in greater density than did the residents in the northern section. In 1919, there were 189 householders living on 158 developed lots in the southern section, and only 107 householders living on 101 lots in the northern section. Though they were smaller, the lots in the southern section were more frequently split into two parcels than were lots in the northern section, thus accounting for the greater number of householders (and houses) than building lots.

The two sections of Dickson's Hill also differed in their rates of home ownership. In 1902, 1919, and 1941, rental rates in the northern section were 18.2, 9.2, and 27.2 per cent respectively. In the southern section, the rates were 62.2, 23.9 and 40.4 per cent. Thus, residents in the northern section were at all times far more likely to own their homes. The rental rate in the southern section is somewhat inflated by the fact that the ten dwelling

Table 3: Occupations of Dickson's Hill Residents

| Occupation Category | 1902 | | 1919 | | 1941 | |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | North | South | North | South | North | South |
| 1. Unskilled Labourers | 2 | 9 | 1 | 37 | 1 | 19 |
| 2. Semi-skilled and Skilled Labourers | 8 | 25 | 17 | 99 | 14 | 132 |
| 3. Foremen | 0 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| 4. Spinsters/Widows | 8 | 4 | 14 | 16 | 35 | 31 |
| 5. Gentlemen/Farmers | 4 | 1 | 7 | 1 | 4 | 2 |
| 6. Manufacturers | 6 | 2 | 17 | 5 | 31 | 3 |
| 7. Merchants | 7 | 1 | 12 | 6 | 14 | 4 |
| 8. Professionals and Government Officials | 0 | 1 | 14 | 12 | 37 | 22 |
| 9. Agents, Managers and Salesmen | 0 | 0 | 20 | 4 | 26 | 15 |
| 10. Clerks | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 5 |
| TOTAL | 42 | 44 | 107 | 189 | 165 | 236 |
| Summary | | | | | | |
| Number of Working-Class Residents (Occupational Categories 1 plus 2) | 10 | 34 | 18 | 136 | 15 | 151 |
| Percentage of Working-Class Residents in this Section | 23.8% | 77.3% | 16.8% | 72.0% | 9.1% | 64.0% |
| Number of Spinsters, Widows, Gentlemen, and Farmers (Occupational Categories 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10) | 12 | 5 | 21 | 17 | 39 | 33 |
| Percentage of Spinsters, Widows, Gentlemen and Farmers in this Section | 28.6% | 11.4% | 19.6% | 9.0% | 23.6% | 14.0% |
| Number of White-Collar Residents (Occupational Categories 3 plus 6 to 10) | 20 | 5 | 68 | 36 | 111 | 52 |
| Percentage of White-Collar Residents in this Section | 47.6% | 11.4% | 63.6% | 19.0% | 67.3% | 22.0% |

The dividing line between the north and south sections of Dickson's Hill is Gladstone Avenue.

Sources: *Vernon's City of Galt and Town of Preston Street, Alphabetical, Business and Miscellaneous Directory for the Year 1920, twelfth edition (Hamilton, ON: Henry Vernon & Son, 1920);*

Vernon's City of Galt and Town of Preston (Ontario) Miscellaneous, Business, Alphabetical and Street Directory for the Year 1942, twenty-fourth edition (Hamilton, ON: Vernon Directories Limited, 1942);

Municipal Tax Assessment Records, Town of Galt, 1902 and City of Galt, 1919 and 1941.

units in the St. Andrews Street rowhouse could only be rented, and not purchased, by the occupants.

Chronology of Development on Dickson's Hill

An analysis of the chronology of lot subdivision and house construction on Dickson's Hill suggests that up to 1902 and between 1919 and 1941, the middle-class northern section developed to slightly greater extent than did the working-class southern section. However, between 1902 and 1919, far more development took place in the south than the north (see Table 4).

By 1902, 118 building lots had been surveyed in the northern section of the Hill, and 44 dwelling units had been built on 44 lots. (There was one duplex, while two houses occupied double lots, and several other houses occupied parts of one or two lots.) In the southern section, only 68 lots had been surveyed,

and only 28 of these had been developed, though they included 45 dwelling units. Of these 45, ten were rental units in a rowhouse, and twelve were halves of duplexes.

Between 1902 and 1919, more than three times as many lots (236 to 71) had been surveyed in the southern section than in the northern. More than twice as many lots (130 to 57) were actually developed during this time in the southern section. By 1919, there were 109 dwelling units in the northern section, and 180 in the southern. There was still only one duplex north of Gladstone, but there were now seventeen south of it.

Between 1919 and 1941, only ten new lots were surveyed in the southern section, while 41 were surveyed in the northern section. During this time, 53 houses occupying 53 lots were constructed in the north, while 55 dwelling units occupying 41 lots

**Table 4: Chronology of Building Lot Creation
and Housing Construction In Dickson's Hill, 1902 To 1941**

| | 1902 | | | 1919 | | | 1941 | | |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | North | South | All | North | South | All | North | South | All |
| Number of surveyed lots | 118 | 68 | 186 | 148 | 304 | 452 | 189 | 314 | 503 |
| Number of developed lots | 44 | 28 | 72 | 101 | 158 | 259 | 154 | 199 | 353 |
| Percentage of then-existing lots developed | 37.3% | 41.2% | 38.7% | 68.2% | 52.0% | 57.3% | 81.5% | 63.4% | 70.2% |
| Number of dwelling units | 44 | 45 | 89 | 109 | 180 | 289 | 162 | 235 | 397 |
| Number of dwelling units rented | 8 | 28 | 36 | 10 | 43 | 53 | 44 | 95 | 139 |
| Percentage of dwellings rented | 18.2% | 62.2% | 40.4% | 9.2% | 23.9% | 18.3% | 27.2% | 40.4% | 35.0% |

The dividing line between the north and south sections of Dickson's Hill is Gladstone Avenue.

Sources: *Charles E. Goad Fire Insurance Map of Galt, August 1910, reprinted March 1919;*
Provincial Insurance Surveys, City of Galt, Waterloo County, Ontario, June 1941;
Vernon's City Directories of Galt, 1920 and 1942;
Municipal Tax Assessment Records, Town of Galt, 1902, and City of Galt, 1919 and 1941.

were constructed in the south. There was now a total of 235 dwellings in the southern section, and 162 in the northern. There were more lots in the southern section than in the northern (314 to 189), yet the total area they covered was approximately equal since the northern lots were generally larger. By 1941, 81.5 per cent of the lots in the northern section were developed, while only 63.4 per cent of those in the southern section were developed. No duplexes were built in Dickson's Hill between 1919 and 1941, though an existing dwelling was converted to a duplex in 1928.

The chronology of the preparation of subdivision plans in Dickson's Hill coincided with national building trends. After the boom of the 1880s, there was a national building slump from 1889 to 1896.⁵³ Accordingly, there were no subdivision plans registered on Dickson's Hill during this time. In fact on 3 May 1889, the *Galt Reporter* announced that house construction in town had ceased, and that many builders had left the community. During the next national building boom of 1896 to 1912, nine subdivision plans were registered in Dickson's Hill. Four of these subdivisions were registered between 1898 and 1901, and were located north of Gladstone Avenue. Appropriately, they contained large building lots, and were intended to meet the demand which then existed for "handsome, modern houses ... in a quiet and pretty spot."⁵⁴ But houses of all descriptions were in demand in Galt in 1899, largely because many workers had recently been hired by local factories.⁵⁵

There was a great influx of immigrants to Canada between 1902 and 1913,⁵⁶ and it is therefore not surprising that a national building boom coincided with this interval. It has been found that in Hamilton most of the new houses built between 1906 and 1913 were for the working class.⁵⁷ This was the case, too, in

Dickson's Hill as the working-class subdivisions plans #110, 146, and 201 were all registered during this period. In 1910, all of Galt's builders were engaged exclusively in residential construction. Most of these homes were intended for "the prosperous mechanic", and in highest demand was "a medium-sized house with modern conveniences."⁵⁸ Both 1912 and 1913 were record-breaking years for house construction in Galt, as there was "plenty of work for newcomers here and all that was necessary to get more people in town was to provide the houses."⁵⁹ Forty per cent of the houses built in Galt in 1913 were built in Ward 5, which included the working-class portion of Dickson's Hill, but not much of the elite portion.

Architecture and The Construction Process

The houses in the elite sections of Dickson's Hill are both distinctive and diverse. They are distinctive in that many are of identifiable styles which are associated with particular periods of popularity. In general, Queen Anne and Italianate styles were most prevalent from 1885 to 1900, followed by Edwardian Classicism until about 1915, and then Tudor and other Period Revivals until about 1930.

The elite housing in Dickson's Hill can be described as diverse for several reasons. Blocks of housing of different styles and ages are located very close to each other. Even on the same block there is diversity because each lot owner privately contracted for the construction of his customized house. Notices like this one from 1889 appeared in the local newspapers: "Mr. Thos. Kerr has let the contract for his new residence on the Dickson Survey, the brick, carpentering and painting work to Mr. Peter Nicol, for \$1,665, and the plastering to Mr. Robt. Veitch, for \$160."⁶⁰ Thus, on the same block are houses built at

different times, by different builders, in different styles, with different decorative details, and constructed of different materials. Some houses in Block F of Plan 473, for example, are obvious juxtapositions of styles from the late Victorian and Edwardian eras. While differences in taste explain in part this architectural diversity,⁶¹ still the slow pace of development meant that members of the elite expressed their individuality within sets of options that varied over time.

Few of the houses in the working-class areas of Dickson's Hill are good examples of a particular style, which supports the generalization that "Architecture has never been a poor man's game."⁶² Most working-class homes here are plainly designed, simply constructed, and do not reflect any pure forms. Consequently they seem less distinctive and diverse than the housing in the more elite areas. In a paradoxical sense, the very diversity of elite housing in late Victorian neighbourhoods is also one of their distinctive characteristics.

Good examples of popular late Victorian styles can be found at 3 Lansdowne Avenue North (Romanesque), 15 Lansdowne Avenue North (Italianate), 34 Salisbury Avenue and 2 Crescent Place (a Queen Anne duplex, see Figure 6), while a number of equally striking houses combine various styles. Good examples of other styles can be found at 2 Lansdowne Avenue North (Edwardian Classicism), 89 Salisbury Avenue (Colonial Revival), 1 Brant Road North (Georgian Colonial), and 33 Salis-

bury Avenue (Neo-classical). A number of impressive Tudor and Period Revival homes were built after 1915, including 7 Lansdowne Road South, 9 Brant Road South (see Figure 7), and 93 Salisbury Avenue). William Dickson Jr.'s circa-1830 house at 16 Byng Avenue is itself an excellent example of the Regency style (see Figure 8), while a Second Empire rowhouse was built on St. Andrew's Street in 1885.

Florence Dickson herself never engaged the services of a builder, but merely sold empty lots or large, unsubdivided blocks of land. This separation of the subdividing and building functions was typical of the fragmented, nineteenth-century development process whereby lot owners normally hired their own building contractor. In some instances, Florence sold lots directly to speculative builders or developers. For example, in 1885 George Sylvester and J. W. Ward hired William Lapsley to build the 10-unit rowhouse on St. Andrews Street, which for years served as working-class rental accommodation. Builder William Dando erected three identical Queen Anne dwellings on Waterloo Avenue (now known as Churchill Drive) shortly after he purchased these lots in 1888. In 1892, Aaron Roos hired William Hallman to build two mirror-image Queen Anne houses on Lansdowne Avenue North, which he sold shortly after completion (see Figure 9). Most of the other speculative developments involved only one lot and building, whether it be a duplex or a detached house. Speculative building appears to have been more common in the working-class section of



Figure 6: *Almost all of the many Queen Anne houses in Dickson's Hill are made of brick, especially yellow brick which was very popular in the 1880s and 1890s. This Queen Anne duplex (at 2 Crescent Place and 34 Salisbury Avenue) is unique because of its limestone construction. It was built in 1888 for widow Catherine Moore, and was converted to a duplex in 1928. Photo: John S. Hagopian, 1998.*



Figure 7: This Tudor-style Arts & Crafts cottage at 9 Brant Road South was built in 1929. It is constructed of mauve sandstone and has a cedar shingle roof. Photo: John S. Hagopian, 1998.



Figure 8: Built in the early 1830s in the Regency style, Kirkmichael was the home of William Dickson Jr. until 1877, and of Florence Dickson until 1924. It is located at 16 Byng Avenue. Photo: John S. Hagopian, 1998.



Figure 9: Aaron Roos speculatively built these two mirror-image Queen Anne houses at 22 and 26 Lansdowne Avenue North in 1892. Most houses built in Dickson's Hill at this time were not intended for sale, but for occupation by the owner of the lot.
Photo: John S. Hagopian, 1998.

Dickson's Hill than in the affluent section. Of the ten buildings erected in Block A of Plan 473 before 1900, only six were owner occupied, including half of a duplex. The others were either rented out or sold shortly after completion. Of the eleven buildings erected in Block F of Plan 473 before 1900, ten were owner occupied, including half of a duplex.

Annual summaries of local building activity published in Galt's newspapers indicate that up to 1900, most houses continued to be built by a number of tradesmen who had been hired by an individual contractor or lot owner.⁶³ Shortly after 1900, the construction process changed as the role of the contractor expanded, and integrated building companies formed. In 1907, the contracting firm of Hart & Carlow were hired by a speculative subdivider to build two houses at 15 Blenheim Road and 49 Lansdowne Avenue North. Hart & Carlow "take over the contract for the whole house in a finished state and ready for occupancy. They supervise the plumbing, mason work, brick-laying, supply the furnace, and do the carpentering work themselves."⁶⁴ By 1910, the firm of Plested & Parker had integrated most aspects of the house construction process into their operation:

The firm do their own mason work and bricklaying, carpentering and painting, only subletting their plastering and plumbing. ... They had on their payroll seventeen to twenty-five men and own their own team equipment. They have about twenty lots, bought for the purpose of placing houses thereon and probably will fill them all this year.⁶⁵

Plested & Parker specialized in the construction of what were called "moderate-priced" or "workingmen's" homes. In 1910, they erected 19 houses at an average cost of about \$1,800. The firm developed a number of lots in the working-class section of Dickson's Hill, but do not appear to have built many in the wealthier section. During 1910–11, the firm owned nine lots in working-class Plan 110. In 1912 the firm was reorganized as the Plested Construction Company, and began to operate on a larger scale:

The first big move of the newly-organized Plested Construction Company to supply the demand for houses in Galt was made today when the company made application for building permits for sixteen houses. ... All of the houses to be erected by the company will be two-story, and just the kind that are needed for the workingmen of Galt.⁶⁶

The Plested company offered to custom build houses, to sell undeveloped lots, and to sell or rent their speculatively built houses.⁶⁷ Galt Lands Company, another local construction company, also offered modest homes and undeveloped lots on the north side of town, close to Galt's newly forming industrial district.⁶⁸ Florence Dickson had hired the Galt Realty Company in about 1908 to act as her agent in the sale of building lots in the working-class subdivisions of Plan 110 and Plan 146, and the company also offered to construct houses for the lot purchasers.⁶⁹

In both the working-class and elite areas of Dickson's Hill, there is a noticeable dearth of apartments and rowhouses. The housing here largely fits the middle-class Victorian stereotype of a "detached house built in the new, tree-lined suburbs with a moderate-sized garden."⁷⁰ Even Galt's working class lived this way, as a local bias existed against both higher density forms, and, to a lesser extent, against rental accommodation of any sort. In 1896, a reporter, struck by the contrast between Galt's housing and that of his native Montreal, remarked that in Galt, "There is no crowding into tenements, and every mechanic has his own comfortable, substantial home."⁷¹ It was claimed in 1889 that three-quarters of Galt's mechanics owned their home.⁷² In 1903, a speaker at Galt's Board of Trade insisted that new housing in Galt

must not be in tenements, so-called — or terraces. Some of them might be double, but they had best be single. Then the occupant could be induced to buy. When a good mechanic came to Galt the townspeople wanted him to stay. He would have little inclination to move if he owned his home.⁷³

In 1902, the editor of the *Galt Daily Reporter* argued that working-class home ownership would lead to class harmony:

Beautiful homes ... will go far towards solving more than one vexed social question. If the laboring man of ordinary means can go home every night to a neat, comfortable home ... what, think you, he will care about the millions of the rich man? A more beautiful home will go far towards working out the problem from the standpoint of the employer and the employed. Tenements and rent receipts have been emphasized long enough.⁷⁴

By 1920, there were 11 sets of rowhouses in Galt, but the *Galt Reporter* now argued that the local housing crisis could best be alleviated by the construction of apartment buildings, of which there were none in Galt.⁷⁵ The Galt Board of Trade was pleased with the local housing stock in 1920. It described Galt as,

... a City of Attractive Homes ... where citizens vie with one another in creating beauty spots in residential districts ... where a large majority of the citizens are home owners. ... A City Without a Slum or Foreign Quarter. ... Care has been exercised in establishing building lines, in the planting of trees and in the construction of boulevards.⁷⁶

Restrictive covenants did not appear frequently in deeds to Dickson's Hill properties. Only 27 lots were affected by covenants, 23 of which were north of Gladstone Avenue. Most of these covenants originated between 1909 and 1914. The most common covenants concerned the minimum value of dwellings (17 lots), minimum setbacks from street lines (15 lots), and the exclusively residential use of the properties (15 lots).⁷⁷ In a few

instances, covenants specified a maximum number of dwellings per lot, banned duplexes and apartments, and directed that dwellings face a particular street.⁷⁸ South of Gladstone Avenue, Florence Dickson sold four adjoining lots subject to covenants that subsequent purchasers "shall not erect on any one of the said lots any dwelling house worth less than any of the Colonial Plaster houses lying immediately to the East of the said four lots," and "that no manufacturing establishment or house for the sale or manufacture of liquors shall be erected."⁷⁹

In short, restrictive covenants were not applied systematically or to whole subdivisions in Dickson's Hill, but rather on an irregular and infrequent basis. In 1910, however, a measure was taken by Galt's town council which significantly affected all local construction activity. Council passed bylaw 963, "A Bylaw for Regulating the Erection of Buildings in Said Town," after it had received a letter from a local ratepayer who complained that "certain parties were erecting shacks in his neighbourhood."⁸⁰ The bylaw required that plans and specifications relating to the erection, expansion, or repair of any building be deposited with the town clerk, and that building permits be obtained from the Board of Works before any work could begin. The Board of Works could also compel that work be done to any existing building which it considered unsafe. Most important was section six, which stated, "It shall be the duty of the Board of Works when granting building permits to see that buildings to be erected conform with a satisfactory standard having regard to the locality surrounding, and that a uniform system be observed as to distance of front walls from street lines." Thus, the bylaw seemingly gave power to the Board of Works to establish standards of construction which varied with the quality of the neighbourhood, and it was explicitly given jurisdiction over the matter of setbacks.

The co-incidence of the passing of bylaw 963 in 1910, the inclusion of a relatively large number of restrictive covenants between 1909 and 1914, and the ratepayer's reference to "shack" construction in 1908 suggest that there was much inferior housing being constructed in Galt at this time. This interpretation is supported by the words of a local newspaper editor, who wrote of the new bylaw, "Now, let its provisions be strictly enforced and the erection of eye-sores prevented."⁸¹ After the bylaw was passed in 1910, restrictive covenants were likely used when a developer sought to surpass the standards set by the Board of Works, or when a developer wished to assure purchasers that regardless of future amendments to the bylaw or changes in policy by the Board of Works, the standards specified in the covenants on title would always apply.

Other bylaws passed after 1910 pursuant to section 406 of Ontario's Municipal Act regulated both land use and setbacks in more affluent parts of Dickson's Hill.⁸² Section 406 (10) enabled the councils of cities and towns to pass bylaws "declaring any highway or part of a highway to be a residential street, and for prescribing the distance from the line of the street in front of it at which no building on a residential street may be erected or placed." In 1916, the portions of Lansdowne Road

North and the east side of Brant Road North lying between Blenheim Road and Salisbury Avenue were declared to be residential streets, with a minimum setback of 25 feet.⁸³ In 1920, the declaration was expanded to include the portions of Lansdowne and Brant Roads lying north of Gladstone Avenue, as well as all of Wentworth and Salisbury Avenues.⁸⁴

In 1940, a more elaborate bylaw was passed which regulated most of the area within Blenheim, Aberdeen, Churchill, and Crescent Place.⁸⁵ Within this "Restricted Zone", only residential uses were permitted, and no building could be erected for any purpose other than "a detached private residence or duplex of four family dwelling." No building could exceed three storeys, and each building had to cost not less than \$2,500 exclusive of the cost of the land. Within this Restricted Zone was a special zone in which houses had to cost at least \$4,000. This special zone included Crescent Road, Byng Avenue, the portions of Aberdeen and Brant Roads lying north of Churchill Drive, and the portion of Lansdowne Road lying north of Gladstone. The bylaw was of course not retroactive in effect, and existing non-conforming buildings were considered legal.

Each of these bylaws was passed upon the presentation to council of favourable petitions signed by the owners of property on the relevant streets.⁸⁶ Thus, residents used the power of city council to ensure that any infilling or redevelopment on their streets would produce quality housing.

A Sense of Neighbourhood

The sense of place that one experiences on Dickson's Hill is created not only by the variety of historic housing, but also by the presence of open public spaces, and by urban planning considerations such as road design, traffic routing, land use, and infrastructure design. Dickson's Hill was planned and developed on a patchwork basis by many people over many years, yet the various measures taken were sufficiently consistent to produce a unified, evocative neighbourhood.

Public space is a prominent aspect of the Hill. The neighbourhood benefited from William Dickson's creation during the 1830s of Queens Square, which lies just west of the Main Street bridge and extends two blocks to the foot of Dickson's Hill. At this point, the "Crescent" road created by Florence Dickson's 1884 survey begins to scale the Hill. Thus, the neighbourhood is nicely framed even before one enters it from the town's core.

Open space also exists in the form of cemeteries and parks within or immediately adjacent to the neighbourhood. On the north side of Blenheim Road is the small Trinity Anglican Cemetery, which dates from the 1840s, and beside it is the much larger public cemetery, now known as Mountview, which was established in 1867. On the brow of Dickson's Hill, just south of Kirkmichael, was St. Andrew's Church and cemetery, which was built in 1835. This church was demolished in 1889, while the cemetery had fallen into disuse after 1873, the year of the last burial in it. In 1895, a movement began to have this

"unsightly" and "long-neglected" spot improved, and by 1898 it had been converted into St. Andrew's Park. Florence Dickson assisted the venture by granting additional land for it along both St. Andrews Street and Lansdowne Road. Not all of the persons buried in the cemetery were removed, and some remain in unmarked graves today. The various remaining tombstones were gathered in 1907 and placed in a "Pergola" which still stands in the park.

These cemeteries contribute to the sense of history evoked by the neighbourhood, as they are visual reminders of the passage of time and the succession of generations. But they are also attractively landscaped, peaceful public spaces which contribute to the beauty and spacious "openness" of the neighbourhood. The effect was only enhanced in 1901 when the town acquired two large tracts on Dickson's Hill and combined them to form Victoria Park.

It is not coincidental that St. Andrews Park and Victoria Park were created when they were, as a civic beautification movement swept through Galt during the 1890s. This movement was international in scope, and was most clearly expressed at the World's Columbian Exposition (the Chicago World's Fair) in 1893. The famous "White City" was there constructed to show how architecture, landscaping, and urban design could be combined to produce an ideal urban environment. Galt's two newspapers provide evidence that the impact of the Fair was felt locally. For example, in 1893, the *Weekly Reformer* reprinted an article from the *Boston Herald* which advocated the increased use of landscape engineers in view of their achievement at the Fair. The article called for the creation of a parks system and a beautification of city streets.⁸⁷

Meanwhile, J. P. Jaffray, who became editor of the *Galt Reporter* in 1896 had attended the 1893 Fair as British Columbia's resident commissioner. Jaffray began a civic improvement campaign within six weeks of taking control of the *Reporter*, and served as a local parks commissioner in 1905.⁸⁸ In 1899, he made a number of recommendations for the town, including the planting of more trees, the construction of more boulevards, and the purchase of "at least ten acres of Dickson bush for a park and let it remain in its natural and native beauty."⁸⁹ Jaffray's concern for the preservation of part of Dickson's Bush was addressed in 1901, when Eugene Langdon Wilks (who was married to Florence Dickson's niece Pauline) donated 28 acres of land to the town for the creation of Victoria Park. The gift specified that it was to be "a free open and public park" to be kept in "its present natural wild and wooded state."⁹⁰ The town also bought an abutting nine-acre tract which was cleared and added to the park for use as a playing field. Jaffray himself lived two blocks from Victoria Park, at 50 Brant Road North.

The character of the neighbourhood was also determined or preserved by a number of planning decisions. Galt's first comprehensive zoning bylaw (#5319 passed in 1965) prohibited commercial and industrial land uses in almost all of the Hill,

Galt's "Dickson's Hill"

thus preserving its residential character. Traffic is essentially channelled around Dickson's Hill by having stop signs at most intersections within the neighbourhood. Thus, the Hill remains free of the major causes of noise, odour, and annoyances.

There are no traffic lights within the neighbourhood to diminish the aesthetic value of the streetscape (see Figure 10). Most of the lampposts are Edwardian in style, with tree-green, cast-iron, pedestal standards topped by round white globes. On most of the elite blocks there are no front-yard driveways to disrupt the streetscape, because the original subdivision plans created rear laneways which provide access to each house. Most of the telephone and electrical service posts are also located in these rear alleys, which improves the streetscape and allows the road-side trees to grow tall and full as they need not be trimmed to accommodate wires. This aspect of the neighbourhood was emphasized in a 1922 article promoting the sale of building lots in Plan 291, which described Dickson's Hill as "Galt's beautiful west side residential district, where paved streets and ornamental lighting is the rule, with all overhead wires passing along rear alleys."⁹¹ Most of the working-class areas of Dickson's Hill also have rear laneways, but some of the service wires are

today on the street front, thus impeding tree growth. There are also fewer Edwardian lampposts in the working-class areas.

Conclusion

This case study of Dickson's Hill provides support for a number of observations by other researchers of 19th-century residential development. The development of the Hill began in the 1880s, which was a time of economic and urban expansion. Much of the new housing was of high quality, to meet the needs of the growing middle and upper classes. The development process was slow, fragmented, and piecemeal, and consequently produced a diverse landscape. The construction of most houses was directed by individual lot owners, some of whom built for speculative purposes. Even the speculative developments were small scale, and usually involved single lots, reflecting the non-professional status of developers. This custom building process also accounts for the diversity of housing styles and dimensions found on the Hill. By about 1910, the building process became more integrated as speculative construction companies began to appear. Between 1902 and 1913, much working-class housing was created, reflecting a national trend. There was social segregation by class, but the enclaves of the rich and the poor



Figure 10: *This is the view looking north along Lansdowne Street North from Salisbury Avenue. The original lampposts were made of iron and steel and weighed 450 pounds. The City of Cambridge replaces them as they wear out with custom-moulded aluminum ones weighing 150 pounds. The trees in this elite area need not be trimmed, as all electrical and telephone wiring is located along rear alleys. No driveways interrupt the streetscape, as vehicular access is also gained through these alleys. Photo: John S. Hagopian, 1998.*

lay on either side of a single street in the same neighbourhood. The formation of these enclaves was fully intended by subdividers who scaled the size of subdivision lots toward a particular class of purchaser. The die was cast for this social geography by Florence Dickson, whose early survey plans clearly attracted the elite to blocks F, G, H, and I in the north, and the working class to blocks A and B in the south. Had Galt been a larger city, it is likely that the social classes would have lived further away from each other, and perhaps in separate neighbourhoods.

However, there are a few unusual aspects of Dickson's Hill which can be attributed to the peculiarity of Galt's history. First, the remarkable prevalence of single-family dwellings on the Hill reflected the strong bias which existed against the provision of other housing forms in Galt. The number of duplexes, rowhouses, and especially apartments built on the Hill by 1941 was lower than expected.

Second, Dickson's Hill had the characteristics of a suburb even though it was located very close to the town's core. It featured widely-spaced, single-family dwellings placed along tree-lined streets which followed a grid pattern, and was almost completely residential. This can be explained by Galt's small size, by the private ownership of the Hill which delayed its development, by Florence Dickson's early survey plans, and by the building and zoning bylaws which regulated development. In the 1880s, there were large areas of undeveloped land surrounding Galt, all of which were reasonably close to the core because Galt was only a small town. Dickson's Hill was particularly notable as a central yet undeveloped tract because it had been withheld from development by the Dickson family for the first 60 years of the settlement's existence. Florence Dickson's Plan 473 created the grid street pattern and the over-sized lots which appealed to the elite by accommodating their large homes. The building and zoning bylaws of 1910 to 1940 showed the interest that the Hill's residents and municipal council had in creating exclusively residential streets with even building lines.

Third, few residential areas have Dickson's Hill's tangible sense of unity and of neighbourhood. This, too, is likely explained in part by its ownership history as one large block, though planning decisions and geographical factors are also relevant here. The neighbourhood is unified and identified by its elevated topography. Much of it is a relatively flat plateau, perched above the river valley. The slope of the Hill forms the eastern border of the neighbourhood, while the northern and southern borders are defined by roads built before 1850 to skirt around the Dickson homestead lands. These roads are major through streets today, serving as corridors of relatively unimpeded traffic which contrast with the tight control of vehicular movement within the neighbourhood.

Today, Dickson's Hill continues to be a neighbourhood composed almost exclusively of single-family dwellings. In addition to the St. Andrews Street rowhouses, there are two condomin-

ium complexes on the eastern and western margins of the neighbourhood, and a few very small apartments on working-class Barrie Street. A local resident has recently received approval to construct a number of townhouses and an apartment on his four-acre lot at the corner of Blenheim and Blair Roads, in spite of strong objections from a well-organized, middle-class neighbourhood association. The controversy over this project has prompted city council to initiate proceedings to designate Dickson's Hill as a Heritage Conservation District pursuant to Ontario's Heritage Act. Interestingly, a large section of the working-class area (south of Churchill Drive) has been severed from this proposed district.

Modern urban planners will have difficulty replicating an environment similar to Dickson's Hill's because topography and history have played such a prominent part in its creation. Even aside from Galt's peculiarities, the subdivision and residential construction processes by which it was developed were typical of a time which is now lost forever. The late-Victorian neighbourhood is more than a collection of tasteful, varied houses built of materials and according to techniques which were popular a century ago. These neighbourhoods are also crystallizations of less tangible events such as: the economic and industrial impact of the National Policy; the rural to urban migration prompted by industrialization; the division of labour within the construction trade; societal beliefs concerning the location and style of residences for the various classes; and the value society placed on the incorporation of open spaces and vegetation in residential areas. Just as every artefact suggests circumstances associated with the time and place of its creation, so too are late-Victorian neighbourhoods useful in much broader studies of urbanism, economy, and society.

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Endnotes

1. For studies of elite neighbourhoods in Montreal and Victoria, B.C., see L. D. McCann, "Planning and building the corporate suburb of Mount Royal, 1910-1925", *Planning Perspectives*, 11 (1996), 259-301; and C. N. Forward, "The Immortality of a Fashionable Residential District: The Uplands," in *Residential and Neighbourhood Studies in Victoria*, ed. Charles N. Forward (Victoria: Dept. of Geography, University of Victoria, 1973), 1-40.
2. George A. Nader, *Cities of Canada*, vol. 1: *Theoretical, Historical and Planning Perspectives* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1975), pp. 202-7; and K.A.H. Buckley,

- "Urban Building and Real Estate Fluctuations in Canada," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 18, no. 1 (February 1952), 47.
 3. Jacob Spelt, *Urban Development in South-Central Ontario* (Toronto and Montreal: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1972), 186.
 4. Bryan D. Palmer, *Working-Class Experience: Rethinking the History of Canadian Labour, 1800–1991* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1992), 120.
 5. Spelt, *Urban Development in South-Central Ontario*, 170–83; and J. M. S. Careless, "Some Aspects of Urbanization in Nineteenth-Century Ontario," in *Aspects of Nineteenth-Century Ontario*, ed. F. H. Armstrong, H.A. Stevenson, and J.D. Wilson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 72.
 6. Ian M. Drummond, *Progress Without Planning: the Economic History of Ontario from Confederation to the Second World War* (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 167.
 7. Palmer, *Working-Class Experience*, pp. 117–18; and Drummond, *Progress Without Planning*, 21.
 8. Buckley, "Urban Building and Real Estate Fluctuations in Canada," 49.
 9. Pat Keough and Rosemarie Keough, *The Niagara Escarpment: a portfolio* (Don Mills, ON: Stoddart, 1990), 41.
 10. Similar changes were also occurring in the United States at this time. See Sam B. Warner, Jr., *Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870–1900* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press and the M.I.T. Press, 1962), 155.
 11. Drummond, *Progress Without Planning*, 22, 364.
 12. *Victorian Dream Homes*, (Tucson, Arizona: Home Planners Inc., 1991), 5. See also Linda Osband, *Victorian House Style: An Architectural and Interior Design Source Book* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1991), 1.
 13. John C. Weaver, *Hamilton, An Illustrated History*, (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1982), 60; and Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: a social history of housing in America*, (New York: Pantheon, 1981), 96–99.
 14. Donald MacKay, *The Square Mile: Merchant Princes of Montreal* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1987), 133.
 15. John H. Taylor, *Ottawa: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1986), 94; and Shirley E. Woods, *Ottawa: The Capital of Canada* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada Limited, 1980), 204.
 16. Frederick H. Armstrong, *Toronto: The Place of Meeting* (Burlington ON: Windsor Publications, 1983), 119.
 17. Marjorie Harris, *Toronto: The City of Neighbourhoods* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1984), 71.
 18. William Dendy and William Kilbourn, *Toronto Observed: Its Architecture, Patrons and History* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1986), 95, 118.
 19. Census of Canada, 1891, vol. 4, Table F, p. 398.
 20. John English and Kenneth McLaughlin, *Kitchener: An Illustrated History* (Toronto: Robin Brass, 1996), 97.
 21. Michael Doucet and John Weaver, *Housing the North American City* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1991), 57, 78–82; Mason C. Doan, *American Housing Production 1880–1920: A Concise History* (New York: University Press of America Inc., 1997), 11–14.
 22. Michael Doucet, "Building the Victorian City: The Process of Land Development in Hamilton, Ontario 1847–1881," (Unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Toronto, 1977), 88; Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs*, 4.
 23. Doucet, "Building the Victorian City," 88–90, 347–55; Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs*, 4, 37, 60, 121; Alexander Von Hoffman, "Weaving the Urban Fabric: Nineteenth-Century Patterns of Residential Real Estate Development in Outer Boston," *Journal of Urban History* 22, no. 2 (January 1996), 194.
 24. Doucet and Weaver, *Housing the North American City*, 57.
 25. Doucet and Weaver, *Housing the North American City*, 74. Speculative building was practically the norm, though, in Camberwell, England. See H. J. Dyos, *Victorian Suburb: A Study of the Growth of Camberwell*: Leicester (Leicester University Press, 1966), 125.
 26. Doucet, "Building the Victorian City," 308.
 27. Doucet, "Building the Victorian City," 236, 259; Von Hoffman, "Weaving the Urban Fabric," 194.
 28. Von Hoffman, "Weaving the Urban Fabric," 203.
 29. Doucet and Weaver, *Housing the North American City*, 57.
 30. Doucet and Weaver, *Housing the North American City*, 78–82.
 31. Von Hoffman, "Weaving the Urban Fabric," 203; Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs*, 108; Michael Doucet, "Urban Land Development in Nineteenth Century North America: Themes in the Literature," *Journal of Urban History* 8 (1982), 299–342.
 32. Von Hoffman, "Weaving the Urban Fabric," 212–13; Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs*, 76.
 33. Wright, *Building the Dream*, 95–96., Dyos, *Victorian Suburb*, 82–83.
 34. Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs*, 132.
 35. Von Hoffman, "Weaving the Urban Fabric," 201–4.
 36. David P. Handlin, *The American Home: Architecture and Society, 1815–1915* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1979), 103.
 37. G. Mercer Adam, *Toronto, Old and New* (Toronto: The Mail Printing Company, 1891), 44, 48.
 38. Alan Gowans, *Building Canada: An Architectural History of Canadian Life* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1966), 126, 133.
 39. Dendy and Kilbourn, *Toronto Observed*, 118, 120.
 40. McCann, "Planning and building the corporate suburb of Mount Royal," and Forward, "The Immortality of a Fashionable Residential District."
 41. Census of Canada, 1881, vol. 1, Table I, 82–3; and Census of Canada, 1891, vol. 1, Table II, 68–69.
 42. Census of Canada, 1891, vol. 4, Table F, 398.
 43. *Galt Reporter*, 14 April 1882.
 44. Census of Canada, 1891, vol. 4, Table VIII, 368.
 45. Drummond, *Progress Without Planning*, 118–20.
 46. Jessie L. Beattie, *A Rope in the Hand*, (Hamilton, ON: D.G. Seldon Printing Limited, 1975), viii.
 47. *Galt Reporter*, 14 September 1883. The *Galt Reporter* strongly supported the National Policy and claimed that all of Galt's manufacturers approved of the tariff protection they enjoyed. *Galt Reporter*, 27 November, 11 December 1896.
 48. Florence's impoverishment could have resulted from several factors. She had "devoted her life largely to philanthropic and religious activities." (*Toronto Daily Star*, 9 Sept. 1924.) Her accountant complained that the records she sent to him were mixed and incomplete, making it impossible to "keep a proper check on your business." (City of Cambridge Archives (hereafter CCA), Dickson Papers (hereafter DP), A988.213.158, letter from R. T. Randall to Miss F.A. Dickson, 7 March 1912.) She lived beyond her means, maintaining a second residence in a fashionable Toronto apartment at 74 St. George Street. But the most important factors were likely related to her development of Dickson's Hill.
- It is unfortunate that she appears not to have attended the meetings of the beneficiaries of William Dickson Jr.'s estate. She was instead represented by her brother, Walter A. Dickson. After considering two consultants' reports, it was decided that selling the Dickson Homestead tract "en bloc" to Florence for \$35,000 was the most profitable alternative for the estate. (CCA, DP, A988.213.153, Minutes of Meeting, 3 November 1883.) Rejected were suggestions to subdivide the lands or to sell them by auction. An advertisement for sale of the tract had brought no acceptable offers. (*Galt Reporter*, 28 April 1882.) Florence thus likely paid an excessive amount for the land, and bought too much of it. She had to pay property tax on most of it for many years as it lay idle, as town council rejected her request for a tax reduction. (*Dumfries Reformer*, 30 April 1885.) Still worse, she financed the purchase with a \$10,000 mortgage, and paid interest at six and a half per cent. (Kitchener

Land Registry, Instrument #5514, Florence Dickson, mortgagor, Alexander Irvine Ross, Mortgagee, registered 29 October 1884.)

Florence placed many more mortgages in later years, sometimes involving family members who did not forgive her defaults in payment. She seems not to have understood the legal effect of complicated transactions she made with relatives, and later there were arguments as to who was responsible for certain debts. (CCA, DP, A988.213.158, letter from Dyce Saunders to "J. G. D." [John Geale Dickson], 8 June 1910.) Florence sought an investigation into the conduct of family members (CCA, DP, A988.213.158, undated letter signed "Florence Dickson") and alleged there had been "crookedness" in the administration of William Dickson Jr.'s estate, the executors of which were Florence's brothers Walter A. Dickson and John Geale Dickson. (CCA, DP, A988.213.158, J. Geale Dickson to "Florence", 25 July 1910.) Thus, it was ill-advised for Florence to have granted Walter A. Dickson several extremely comprehensive powers of attorney over her affairs in the 1880s. These allowed him to collect all debts owing to her, to draw funds out of her accounts, to sell any of her assets at any price he found "reasonable or expedient", and to execute deeds and mortgages on her behalf. (See, for example, Kitchener Land Registry, Instrument #GR829, registered 2 December 1886.) She later revoked all of these powers of attorney.

At her death, Florence's assets totaled \$1,542, while her remaining lands "had arrears of taxes owing thereon amounting to \$2810.00," and were "mortgaged for the full value thereof and there is no equity therein." (Archives of Ontario, MS1634, Surrogate Court Records, County of Waterloo, Estate of Florence Augusta Dickson; Court File #9001, Affidavit of R.H. Dickson.) For more information about Florence Dickson, see John S. Hagopian, "Galt's West Side Story: Florence Dickson and the Development of Dickson's Hill," *Waterloo Historical Society* 84, (1996), 84–99.

49. *Toronto Daily Star*, 9 September 1924, 4.
50. Lots 15 to 20 in Block B of Plan #473, and all of the lots in Block C were also large, but they were greatly reduced in size before they were developed. The Warnock family (who owned abutting land to the south) re-surveyed the six Block B lots into parts of Plans #65 and #358 after 1900. The Block C lots were reduced from 61' by 160' to 61' by 93' after being re-surveyed by Florence Dickson in Plans #61 and #110 after 1900. The three large lots in Block D were each subdivided into smaller parcels, especially lot 3, which was re-surveyed as Plan #479 and became the site of a ten-unit rowhouse.
51. CCA, DP, File #A988.213.162.
52. Provincial legislation enabled Ontario's municipalities to levy an annual tax on certain forms of income earned by residents. Data concerning this tax are included with property tax data in the municipal assessment records.
53. Buckley, "Urban Building and Real Estate Fluctuations," 44–47.
54. *Galt Daily Reporter*, 14 July 1898.
55. *Galt Daily Reporter*, 11 May 1899.
56. Reg Whitaker, *Canadian Immigration Policy Since Confederation* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1991), 2.
57. Doucet and Weaver, *Housing the North American City*, 93.
58. *Galt Daily Reporter*, 10 August 1910.
59. *Galt Daily Reporter*, 31 July 1913.
60. *Galt Reporter*, 10 May 1889. Kerr's house is 28 George Street North, which is part of lot 10 of Block G in Plan 473.
61. For more information on the individual expression of architectural tastes by the Canadian elite at this time, see Peter Ennals and Deryck Holdsworth, *Homeplace: The Making of the Canadian Dwelling Over Three Centuries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 150–61.
62. Alan Gowans, *Building Canada*, 126.
63. See for example the annual summary of local construction activity in the *Galt Daily Reporter*, 14 December 1899. Different tradesmen were typically hired to perform the stone, brick and tin work, carpentry, plastering and painting.
64. *Galt Daily Reporter*, 26 April 1907.
65. *Galt Daily Reporter*, 27 January 1911.
66. *Galt Daily Reporter*, 1 November 1912.
67. *Galt Daily Reporter*, 29 October 1912.
68. *Galt Daily Reporter*, 9 September and 15 October 1912.
69. CCA, DP, file #A988.213.162.
70. Osband, *Victorian House Style*, 15–16.
71. *Galt Daily Reporter*, 11 December 1896.
72. *The Globe (Toronto)*, 27 July 1889.
73. *Galt Daily Reporter*, 24 September 1903.
74. *Galt Daily Reporter*, 29 March 1902, 6.
75. *Galt Daily Reporter*, 24 February 1920.
76. *Galt: The Gem City of the Famous Grand River Valley* (Galt, ON: Galt Board of Trade, 1920), 9, 18–19.
77. See for example the following deeds: Instrument #20539, registered 4 August 1914, from Henry Spotton to William Hallman, Lot 13, Plan 56 (now known as 45 Aberdeen Road North); and Instrument #23347, registered 13 September 1918, from Florence Dickson to David Anderson, Lot 16, Plan 163 (now known as 22 Aberdeen Road South). All of the title deeds to which reference is made in this essay were originally registered in the land registry for Waterloo County in Kitchener.
78. See for example the following title deeds: Instrument #39474, registered 25 May 1944, from Alexander Goldie to Duncan McIntosh, Lots 1 and 2, Plan 56; and Instrument #36622, registered 11 January 1940, from Alexander Goldie to Frank Wilkie Hogg, Lot 4 and part of Lots 3 and 5, Plan 277 (now known as 5 Brant Road South). It is not surprising that restrictive covenants banning apartments were used at this time, as the councils of Calgary and Toronto passed bylaws between 1909 and 1912 which regulated the location of apartments. Various social, economic, and moral criticisms were also leveled at apartment buildings. See Richard Dennis, "Apartment Housing in Canadian Cities, 1900–1940," *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine* 26, no. 2, (March 1998), 17–31.
79. Instrument #16039, registered 8 June 1909, from Florence Dickson to George Crawford Easton, Lots 7, 8, 9, and 10, Plan 110 (now known as 41, 43, 45, and 55 Brant Road South).
80. CCA, City of Galt, Clerk's Department, Council Records, Minutes of the Town of Galt Council, 4 May 1908.
81. *Galt Weekly Reformer*, 4 August 1910.
82. The Municipal Act, 1913, Ontario, *Statutes*, 3 George V, c. 43, s. 406 (10). A differently-worded version of this section had been enacted in the Municipal Amendment Act, 1904, Ontario, *Statutes*, 4 Edw. VII, c. 22, s. 19.
83. CCA, City of Galt, Clerk's Department, Bylaw Records, City of Galt Bylaw #1378, passed 6 March 1916, and Bylaw #1387, passed 17 April 1916.
84. CCA, City of Galt, Clerk's Department, Bylaw Records, City of Galt Bylaw #1638, passed 5 July 1920.
85. CCA, City of Galt, Clerk's Department, Bylaw Records, City of Galt Bylaw #3326, passed 20 May 1940.
86. CCA, City of Galt, Clerk's Department, Council Records, Minutes of the City of Galt Council, 21 Feb. 1916, 5 July 1920, and 1 April 1940.
87. *Galt Weekly Reformer*, 20 January 1893.
88. *Galt Daily Reporter*, 16 July 1934. Jaffray had led the movement to form the commission through numerous articles and editorials in his newspaper, and through his efforts as a member of town council.
89. *Galt Daily Reporter*, 23 March 1899.
90. Instrument #12065, registered 18 June 1901, from Eugene Langdon Wilks to the Town of Galt.
91. *Galt Daily Reporter*, 16 September 1922.