

Appendix A – Report IPGPL25-034

Heritage Designation Brief



Stevenson Hall

216 Simcoe Street

Peterborough Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee

2025

Heritage Designation Status Sheet

Street Address: 216 Simcoe Street

Roll Number: 040050114000000

Short Legal Description: LT 6 N OF SIMCOE ST AND W OF
GEORGE ST PL 1 TOWN OF
PETERBOROUGH AS IN R177860 ;
PETERBOROUGH CITY

PACAC Application Review Date: May 6, 2025

Heritage Type: Built Structure

Designation Type: Ontario Heritage Act – Part IV

Designation Brief Completed by: Emily Hamilton

Comments:

STATEMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE OR INTEREST

The subject property has been researched and evaluated in order to determine its cultural heritage significance under Ontario Regulation 9/06 of the **Ontario Heritage Act** R.S.O. 1990. A property is eligible for designation if it has physical, historical, associative or contextual value and meets **any two** of the nine criteria set out under Regulation 9/06 of the Act. Staff have determined that 216 Simcoe Street has cultural heritage value or interest and merits designation under the **Ontario Heritage Act**.

1. The property has design value or physical value because it:

- i. **is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method:**

Stevenson Hall at 216 Simcoe Street is a unique example of Neoclassical style architecture in Peterborough. This style was among the earliest of the revival movements which gained popularity in the nineteenth century and was often employed for public buildings and homes of prominent individuals.

- ii. **displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit:**

This property displays a high degree of craftsmanship and artistic merit in its exterior architectural features which are executed to a high standard of quality. Specific features with notable merit include its symmetrical massing, painted buff brick construction and decorative elements typical of the Neoclassical style, such as the pilasters and entablature.

- iii. **demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement:**

There are no specific technical or scientific achievements associated with this property.

2. The property has historical value or associative value because it:

- i. **has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community:**

This property has direct association with its first owner, James Stevenson, a significant political figure. Stevenson served ten terms as Peterborough's mayor and two as Member of Parliament for Peterborough West. His major achievements in these positions include bringing the Trent-Severn Waterway and General Electric to Peterborough. He was on several boards and committees that positively contributed to Peterborough

and its surrounding area, including serving 55 years on the Peterborough County Board of Education. After Stevenson's death, the property has been the home of community organizations, namely the Knights of Columbus and the YWCA.

ii. yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture:

216 Simcoe Street has the potential to yield information that contributes to an understanding of the political culture, the Roman Catholic community, and women's recreation in Peterborough through its associations with James Stevenson, the Knights of Columbus and the YWCA.

iii. demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community:

216 Simcoe Street likely demonstrates the work of local bricklayer and contractor David Carlisle. Carlisle is responsible for a number of mid-nineteenth century landmark buildings in downtown Peterborough and is known to have completed other projects for Stevenson.

3. The property has contextual value because it:

i. is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area:

The property maintains and supports the character of an early residential area downtown near Jackson Creek. The property is one of few remaining residential buildings in an area which overtime transitioned to industrial uses. It serves as a reminder of its former use.

ii. is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings:

216 Simcoe Street is historically linked to its surroundings as a part of the western edge of Peterborough's downtown core. In the context of its current use as the YWCA, it is historically linked to its surrounding as it neighbours the site of the organization's original home in Peterborough. As the home of service organizations for over a century, it is functionally linked to surrounding institutions such as the Salvation Army and the Peterborough Public Library.

iii. is a landmark: O. Reg. 9/06, s. 1 (2).

Stevenson Hall is a landmark in downtown Peterborough. With frontage on a major downtown street, it is one of few surviving Victorian buildings on the north side of Simcoe Street.

Design and Physical Value



216 Simcoe Street has design and physical value as a unique Neoclassical style residential building in Peterborough. Constructed around 1860 and through alterations and renovations, its principal façade fronting Simcoe Street retains several features typical of the Neoclassical style executed in buff brick which has since been painted. It features a moderately pitched roof, classical-order pilasters with capitals, an entablature with frieze, and geometric decorative brickwork. At the time of

construction, there was an expansive veranda which has since been removed.

The restrained Neoclassical style began in Europe as a rejection of the flamboyant Baroque and Rococo styles. The desire at the time was to approach architecture in a more simplistic way, focusing on the architecture of the ancient Greeks and Romans. It is considered to be one of the early revival styles, taking element from Greek and Roman architecture. It is similar to the Greek and Romanesque Revival styles but allows for more of a blend between Greek and Roman influences. The dramatic ornamentation and decorative elements of the Baroque style fell out of favour and replaced with geometric shapes and columns or pilasters. The styles focus was a limited use of ornamentation while still maintaining an imposing presence with its grand scale of construction. The grand scale of construction focused on symmetry, favouring geometric shapes. The Neoclassical style became popular in Canada in the early nineteenth century. Though the exact architect of Stevenson Hall is unknown, champions of the style in Ontario include Thomas Ridout and Kivas Tully.

Historical and Associative Value



Stevenson Hall at 216 Simcoe Street has strong historical and associative value through its associations with its first owner, James Stevenson. Stevenson was born in County Fermanagh, Ireland, in 1827 and immigrated to Canada in 1843. He began his career in Peterborough as a merchant in tin, coal, stoves and sewing machines.

He first married Margaret Bruncker Dundas on January 24, 1851. She died on March 19, 1852, shortly after giving birth to their first son. He married his second wife Emma Rankin Appleton in 1858.

Stevenson built Stevenson Hall around 1860 as a home for himself and his growing family. He likely employed builder David Carlisle. Carlisle had completed other projects for Stevenson, such as his hardware store at 379 George Street North, known today as the Dixon-Stevenson-Bradburn Building. Carlisle's other known local projects include the Fair-Bierk Building at 383 George Street North and George Street Wesleyan Methodist Church (now Emmanuel United Church) at 534 George Street North.

Stevenson's career in public life began when he joined the board of education upon its formation in 1850. He was appointed mayor of the Town of Peterborough in 1857. Stevenson was Peterborough's first mayor to serve a term of more than one year. In addition to being mayor, Stevenson served as a justice of the peace, a requirement of mayors at the time. Prior to 1859, mayors in Ontario municipalities classed as a town were appointed by the elected councillors. In 1859, the Municipal Handbook was updated to state that towns must now elect their mayor. Stevenson placed a notice in *The Review* on November 19, 1858, informing voters of this important policy change and appealing for their vote in the upcoming election in January 1859. In the mayoral race for 1860, he was defeated by Augustus Sawers, founding editor of *The Peterborough Examiner*.



Stevenson's political career continued when he was elected Member of Parliament for Peterborough West in 1887. A Conservative, he ran against George A. Cox in his first election and won with only sixteen votes between them. During his time as MP, he campaigned for the construction of the Trent Valley Canal (known today as the Trent-Severn Waterway) and was president of the Trent Valley Canal Association in the late 1880s. He ran again in 1891 and won against Richard Hall with ease. He was a

personal friend of Sir John A. Macdonald who visited him at Stevenson Hall on occasion. After his second term as MP, he did not run again in 1896.



Stevenson was re-elected mayor in 1889, serving simultaneously as mayor and MP until 1891. As mayor, he laid the cornerstone for the new Market Hall in 1889, pictured here. Yet his most notable achievement was bringing the Edison General Electric Company (later Canadian General Electric) to Peterborough. The Edison Company By-law was passed in September 1890 which allowed for

Council to purchase a thirty-acre site, provide town water and sewer mains, and the provision of rails needed from the Grand Trunk and the Canadian Pacific Railways. This met the company's terms, and the Peterborough plant opened in April 1891.

Although Stevenson was heavily involved in the political landscape of Peterborough, he was also involved in several committees and community organizations that had a lasting impact in Peterborough. He was a founding member of the Peterborough Horticultural Society. He paid for and oversaw the installation of a fountain in Courthouse Park, now known as Victoria Park. He was a member of the board of education for over 50 years, serving as the chairman of the board 27 times. He was director of the Little Lake Cemetery Company from its inception in 1851 until his death in 1910, overseeing the cemetery's expansion and finances. Though born an Anglican, he was an active member of Charlotte Street Methodist Church.

Upon his death on October 25, 1910, all of Peterborough went into mourning. Many of his achievements were published in both *The Examiner* and *The Review*. Both City Council and the board of education ensured their condolences were on record at their subsequent meetings. He is buried in Little Lake Cemetery with both his wives and many of his children.

After Stevenson's death, his children sold Stevenson Hall to the Knights of Columbus, a Catholic fraternal service order. The Knights were founded in New Haven, Connecticut in 1882 by Father Michael J. McGivney to encourage Catholic men to grow in their faith and contribute to the community. The local chapter were granted their charter in 1903. They made use of Stevenson Hall from 1913

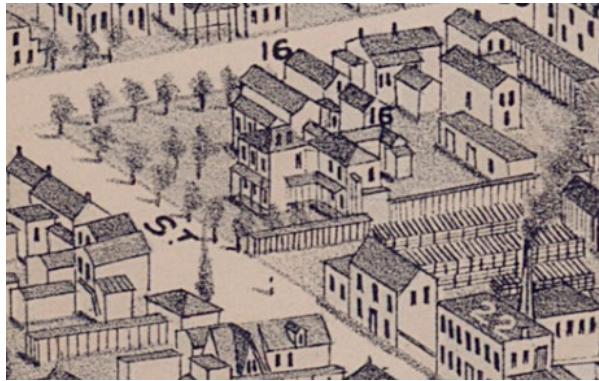


The Knights of Columbus in Stevenson Hall, circa 1925. Trent Valley Archives

until the 1960s. They later moved to 379 Rubidge Street, the former Notre Dame Convent and St. Mary's School, across from the Cathedral of St. Peter-in-Chains.

In 1967, Stevenson Hall was sold to the YWCA for \$75,000. The local chapter of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) was first organized in 1891, originally sharing facilities with the YMCA at George and Murray Streets. The YWCA purchased a lot at 220 Simcoe Street, neighbouring Stevenson Hall, in 1904. Architect William Blackwell, also responsible for the YMCA, designed a building in the Romanesque Revival style. They sold 220 Simcoe Street in 1983 and fully moved their operations to Stevenson Hall. 220 Simcoe Street was left vacant, heavily damaged in a fire in February 1996, and subsequently demolished. The YWCA remains in Stevenson Hall to this day.

Contextual Value



1875 map

The property is a landmark within the downtown with prominent frontage on Simcoe Street. It contributes to our understanding of the growth and development of the downtown core. Built as a residence on what was the edge of downtown along Jackson Creek, it is now one of few surviving residences downtown east of Aylmer Street. It is one of few remaining Victorian structures on the north side of Simcoe Street between Aylmer Street and George Street North. The

commercial buildings which stood where the Peterborough Bus Terminal is now located were demolished in the 1960s. The Edwardian YWCA building neighbouring was damaged by fire and demolished in 1996.

This property is significant within the local context thanks to the important role James Stevenson played in the life of the town and eventually city. It is in the same block as his business at 383 George Street North. Since Stevenson's death in 1910, the building has served as the home for community organizations such as the Knights of Columbus and the YWCA. It is functionally linked to surrounding institutions such as the Salvation Army and Peterborough Public Library. It is significant within the context of its association with the YWCA, being located directly beside the site of their original building.

"The short statement of reason for designation, including a description of the heritage attributes along with all other components of the Heritage Designation Brief constitute the "Reasons for the Designation" required under the Ontario Heritage Act. The Heritage Designation Brief is available for viewing in the City Clerk's office during regular business hours."

SHORT STATEMENT OF REASONS FOR DESIGNATION

Stevenson Hall at 216 Simcoe Street has cultural heritage value as a landmark structure on Simcoe Street in Peterborough's downtown core. It is a rare surviving example of a mid-nineteenth century Neoclassical style residence in Peterborough, employing key stylistic elements such as a symmetrical façade adorned with classical order pilasters supporting a decorative frieze. It is a reminder of the area's past as a residential neighbourhood which evolved into a commercial and industrial area as those sectors expanded.

The building has historical connections to an important figure in Peterborough's history, sometime mayor and member of Parliament, James Stevenson. In his political offices, Stevenson championed the construction of the Trent Valley Canal (later the Trent-Severn Waterway) and the Edison General Electric Company (later Canadian General Electric) in Peterborough. Outside politics, Stevenson was an upstanding resident, serving on the board of education for nearly 60 years, he was as a founding member of the Peterborough Horticultural Society and director of the Little Lake Cemetery Company.

Though long the home of community organizations such as the YWCA, it remains widely recognized in the community as "Stevenson Hall".

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE ATTRIBUTES TO BE DESIGNATED

The Reasons for Designation include the following heritage attributes and apply to all elevations and the roof including all façades, entrances, windows, chimneys, and trim, together with construction materials of wood, brick, stone, plaster parging, metal and glazing, their related building techniques, and landscape features:

Exterior Elements:

- Two-storey brick construction
- Hipped roof
- Decorative brickwork
- Coursing
- Pilasters
- Frieze
- Fenestration
- Entrance