

THE WYLIE HOUSE  
ALMONTE, ONTARIO

LOCATION: 81 Queen Street, Almonte, Lanark County, Ontario.  
Lot 14, Henderson Section.

PRESENT OWNERS: Gerald and Anna Wheatley

PRESENT OCCUPANTS: Same.

PRESENT USE: Dwelling House.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Situated along the banks of the Mississippi River, this eclectic styled home was built in 1882 for James Dowdall, a lawyer and member of Almonte's first Town Council. Characteristic features which make popular the Italianate style, c. 1850-70, as well as those belonging to the more recent Queen Anne Revival style, approx. 1880-1900, combine to provide a unique structure. At one time, a large closed-in veranda was displayed along the southern wall (facing the river) which was accessed only through one door, leading from the living room.

Of great historical value during the Cold War in the late 1950's, this home was owned by the Department of National Defense and served as a "Target Area Headquarters" for the Emergency Measures Organization. At that time, the building was commonly known as the "Almonte Armouries".

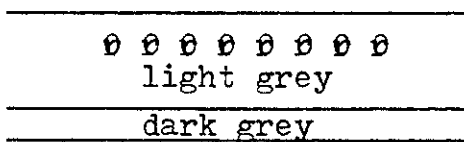
PART I - HISTORICAL INFORMATION

- A1. Beginning in 1836, Lot 14, Henderson Section was sold by Daniel Shipman to Stephen B. Shipman. Four years later, Stephen B. Shipman sold to Martin Kielly. From 1855 to 1863 various members of the Kielly family quit claim on the land to Richard O'Brien. In 1874, an inter-family transaction resulted in a sale of the land from Robert A. O'Brien to George O'Brien for \$2,000. George O'Brien took a mortgage against the property in 1877 with John Campbell, for \$1,100. The mortgage was passed from John Campbell to Patrick Spence for \$1,000. in 1878 and then to John O'Brien that same year for \$1,241. Towards the end of 1878, William Forgie purchased the property for \$1,000. by power of sale and immediately sold to Johanna O'Brien for \$1,000. In 1879, the land was sold to Mary E. Purdy for \$2,000. The following year, 1880, James Dowdall became owner for a price of \$1,750. James Dowdall willed Lot 14 to his wife, Onagh T. Dowdall in 1885. The property was bought by Patrick C. Dowdall in 1886 for \$7,000., indicating an increase in property value (a house, The Wylie House, was built on this property in 1882). Patrick C. Dowdall sold to Richard J. Dowdall in 1886 for \$7,000. Richard J., in turn, sold to Collie M. Wylie (wife of John By Wylie, mother of Allan H. Wylie) who paid \$6,050. for the property. Collie M. Wylie died in 1928 and Allan H. Wylie became the surviving executor of her estate. Robert Patterson bought the property for \$6,000. in 1933. Patterson died in 1938 and the executor of his will, Percy Alfred Greig sold Lot 14 and part of Lot 15 to the crown for \$9,000. during the year, 1950. George Charters Wright purchased this property from the Crown in 1966 for \$7,000. Later that year, George C. Wright sold to Marguerite L. Richard for \$12,000. In 1967, Richard sold to the present owners, Gerald and Anna Wheatley.
2. 1882
  3. The architect was Mr. C. Cameron.
  4. The present owners have made the following changes: several fixes on the house roof; house trim painted green; panelled and insulated; the first floor dining wing door facing east; a first floor window, north side; a door in the kitchen wing, facing west (a vent fan was also installed in this door for the kitchen stove).
- B. This home was constructed for James Dowdall, a lawyer and member of Almonte's first Town Council.

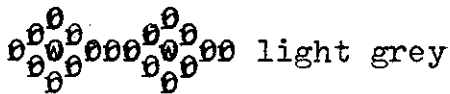
PART II ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

- A1. This home illustrates an eclectic style, incorporating a patterned slate roof, bay windows and asymmetrical shape, which are characteristic of the Italianate style popular from 1850-70; with prominent chimneys & gabled hip roof which resemble a Queen Anne Revival style, c. 1880-1900.

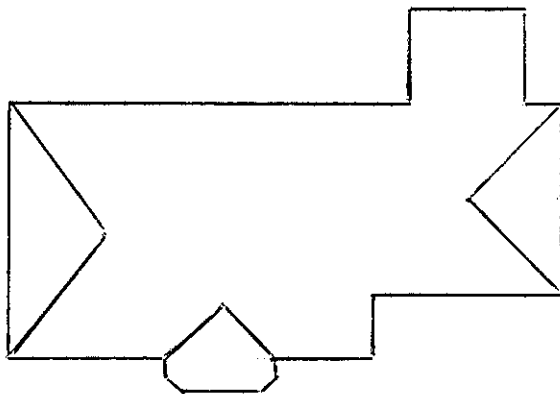
The roof has a character of its own with patterned slate identical to that found on the Almonte Town Hall roof. This decorative polychrome slate roof is typical of a style of roof once found on the more impressive residences and public buildings of Ontario in the second half of the nineteenth century. The style owes its origins to the decorative slate roofs of the middle ages which were brought to a fine state of perfection of craftsmanship and architectural expression in France in the 15th and 16th centuries. The slates are: light grey, dark grey, red, and white. The pattern is basically as follows:



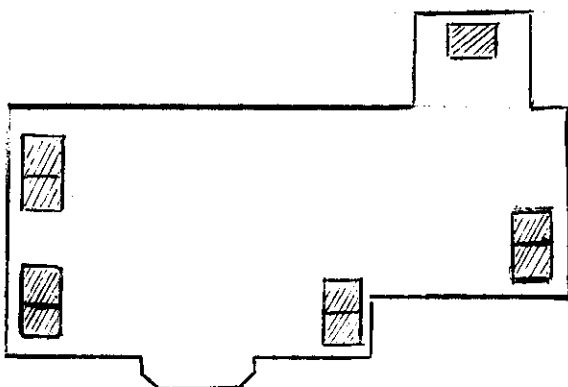
On the overhang above the bay windows, facing south:





The roof is gabled hip with hips projecting over the south, east and west sides of the house.

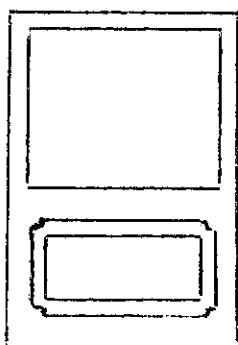


2. The architectural features (outside) have been maintained in their originality.
- B1. This two storey home consists of a facade, 4 bays wide (two bays from the Main Part, 2 bays from the Kitchen Wing) and three (3) bays long, as well as a dining wing, 2 bays long.
2. A limestone foundation of natural stone houses a full, partially below ground level basement. The house sits on solid rock. The foundation walls are 2' thick.
3. Constructed of cut limestone, broken course, the walls have a natural type of stone finish. Above door and window openings on the kitchen wing, facing east only, the stone is arranged to form radiating voussoirs.
4. A limestone frame, cut, broken course, supports the structural load.
5. Along the south side of the main part, a closed porch constructed of unpainted wood, has a shed roof supported by two corner boards with an offset door.
6. There are three double, stone chimneys on the Main Part and one on the Dining Wing. A single, brick chimney is found on the Kitchen Wing. The chimney marked with an asterisk is fake. It was sealed at the time of building; for design purposes only.



-  double chimney (all stone)
-  single chimney (1, brick)

7 a) The main entrance is off centered on the west end of the main part. It has a plain lintel of limestone, wooden lugsill painted dark green which trim the white, double doors. Each door has one window and two lower panels. A natural wooden door with a single window and two lower panels is located on the east side of the kitchen wing. It also exhibits an aluminum door.



A veranda on the west side encloses the main entrance. There are two identical leaves; however, only the right leaf, the door, is moveable. Structural opening shape is flat, a single window with four (4) lower panes. A shaped transom with single light rides above the veranda front. (Fig. A) Veranda sides show two (2) windows, side by side, supported by four wooden panels alternating with four patterned brackets. (Fig. B) The brackets from a side view are shaped as thus:

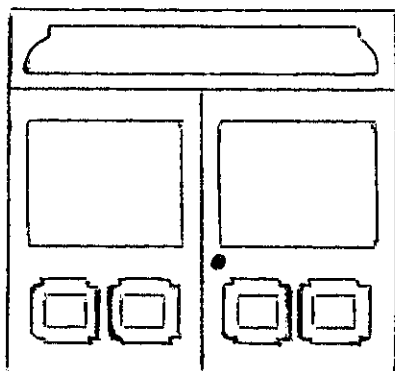
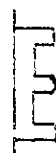


Fig. A



A transom above both veranda sides is identical to that on the front side.

This wooden veranda is painted dark green.

Decoration on the veranda eaves is identical to that found on the main support eaves of the house. The veranda is trimmed with moulded fascia, plain frieze, decorated brackets and projecting verges.

Four steps lead up to the veranda. These are directed straight ahead, are wooden, and are painted light grey.

A door on the Dining Wing, facing east is now closed off. It is wood, painted dark green. The Kitchen Wing facing west houses a second door no longer in use. It is dealt with wood, painted dark green. A third door facing south, on the first floor to the right of the bay window is

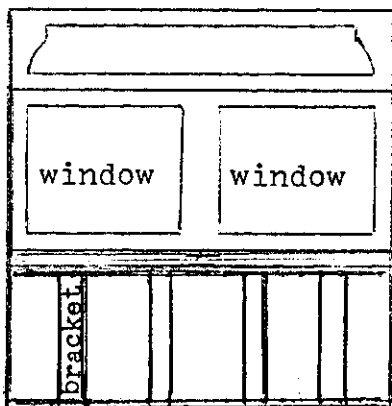


Fig. B

enclosed by a shed. This door was once the only door leading onto the veranda (which is now torn down). All the above doors have plain lintel heads - granite - and limestone lugsills.

b) In general, the windows have plain lintel heads of granite, limestone lugsills and are one-over-one double hung sash. Above ground, basement windows on the facade (main part) are blinds, having been filled in with cut, broken course limestone. These two basement windows on the facade have limestone, plain lintels.

A window on the first floor, facing north, is closed off with wood, painted dark green.

All windows on the first floor are 3' x 9', except the three bay windows, south side, which are 2' x 9'. Windows on the second floor are 3' x 6' excluding three bay windows on the south side - 2' x 6'.

8 a) A patterned, slate roof, identical to that found on the Town Hall roof covers the gabled hip roof. Hips are displayed on west, east and south sides of the roof. Trimming on the roof is accomplished using moulded fascia, plain frieze, decorated brackets, and projecting verges. Constructed of wood, the roof trim is painted dark green.

8 b) None.

8 c) Interior - From "A Walking Tour of Almonte".

A side hall plan insured that all main rooms faced the river, and

the ample dimensions, 2' thick walls, 10' high ceilings and ceramic tiled fireplaces, reflected the prosperity of its owner.

When used as an Armouries, the spacious drawing room was converted to a drill hall, the master bedroom suite became the Officers Mess and the basement was outfitted as a radio operations complex complete with bomb shelter.

The deep bay window, Victorian sofas and working player piano highlight the living room. A large gilt mirror and massive carved oak dining suite dominate the dining room.

Stone walls protrude four feet into the attic. 12' x 12' timbers make up an A frame. At the cross pieces, the tongues fit into wooden dowels. Three-way steele cross bracings sit on the stone, with two cross timbers that match at the points.

The railing winds from the first floor up into the attic. Above the attic door it is unpainted. Below, the rails are painted white but the handgrip remains as natural wood - unpainted.

- D a) Situated on the east side of the Mississippi River, the house faces northwest, onto Queen Street in Almonte.
- D b) None.

#### PART III SOURCES OF INFORMATION

1. North Lanark Registry Office, Almonte.
2. Almonte House Tour for Almonte Centennial, 1980.
3. Old photograph showing closed-in veranda. Year unknown.
4. Eileen Wylie
5. Gerald Wheatley.

#### PART IV

Compiled by Ann Marie Casey for the Almonte Local Architectural Conservation Advisory committee and the Ontario Heritage Foundation, August, 1976.