

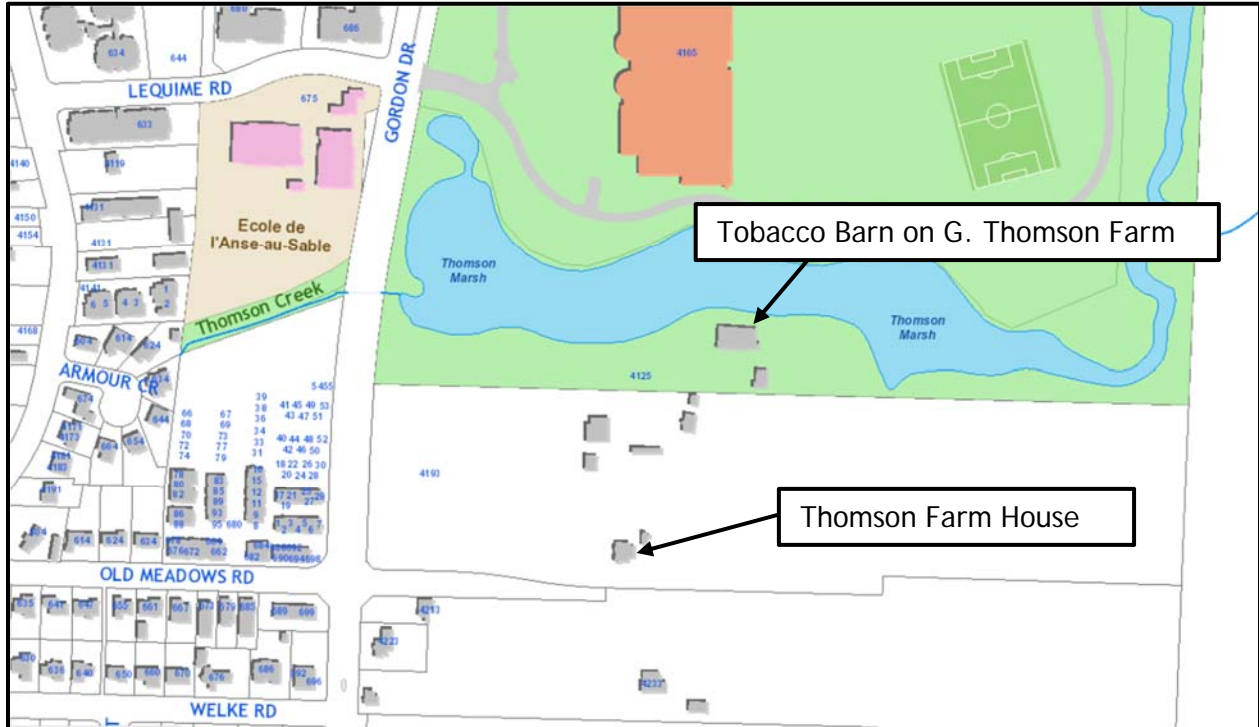


HRA16-0002

MAP A:

4125 Gordon Drive and 4193 Gordon Drive -

Thomson Farm House and Tobacco Barn on G Thomson Farm



Statement of Significance

4193 Gordon Dr - Thomson Farm House

Place Description: The historic place is the 1.5-storey wood-frame residential structure, built in 1922 at 4193 Gordon Drive in Kelowna's Mission Sector.

Heritage Value: This early-1920s farmhouse represents the agricultural heritage of a farming family whose roots in this area go back to 1892. The changes of crops over the years reflect the area's changing agricultural conditions.

The house stands on the third farm in the Kelowna area owned by the family of Gifford R. Thomson. Originally from the Shetland Islands of Scotland, Thomson came to Benvoulin in 1892 with his wife and eight children (a last, ninth, child was born shortly after they arrived). He bought this property in 1898, gradually clearing it and growing hay. Gifford's two sons, Wilberforce ('Wilber') and John ('Jock'), took over the 120-acre farm when their father moved to Vancouver, adding 60 acres to the original 120 acres shortly after their return from service in the First World War. Theirs was a mixed farm. In the 1920s they tried tobacco, then being promoted in Kelowna as a lucrative cash crop (see their tobacco barn at 4193B Gordon Drive). In 1932 they started growing celery, head lettuce, and other vegetables. In the late 1930s they operated the vegetable business in partnership with J.B. Knowles, Kelowna's pioneer jeweler (see 369-371 and 865 Bernard Avenue), as Okanagan Mission Producers, sending vegetables to the Prairies by the boxcar-load and by truck.

Their father, Gifford Thomson, originally bought 20 acres of land from G.G. MacKay, the Benvoulin promoter, but the fruit trees he planted did not thrive because of the high water table. In order to make a living he drove the mail three times a week to Vernon. Around 1900 he pre-empted a property just south of Bellevue Creek, where he built a large house for his family and grew grain; after he sold it in 1904 the house became the well-known Bellevue Hotel. Gifford Thomson then moved to this property, further north, which he had purchased six years earlier. Shortly thereafter he moved to Vancouver, where his ventures included building the Gifford Hotel. With seven of the children being girls, the Thomsons contributed largely to the marriages and population growth of early Okanagan Mission.

The house was built by Wilber and Jock, for the former when he married in 1922. It has features of the American Colonial Revival style, with its steep roof, horizontal clapboard siding, casement windows, and dormers. Wilber's sons Gifford and Kenneth eventually took over operation of the family farm. The vegetable business ended in 1951 because refrigerated shipments of California produce made it uncompetitive. The Thomsons then shifted to dairy farming, shipping milk from their Holsteins through NOCA Dairy. In 1953, under the name Okanagan Nurseries, they started growing dwarf apple root stock to supply the orchard industry, which was beginning the shift to planting high-density orchards on dwarf trees.

After Gordon Drive was pushed through the site of their dairy barn in 1983, the brothers shifted to beef cattle. In the early 1990s they sold 80 acres to the City of Kelowna for park development and divided the remaining 40 acres of the original block between them. Gifford Thomson continues to live in this house, maintaining the continuity of occupation of the house and the long Thomson agricultural tradition.

Character
Defining
Elements:

- 1.5-storey residence with features of the American Colonial Revival style
- Steep gabled roof and gabled dormers
- Projecting gabled bays on front elevation
- Large screened porch on left side
- Six- and eight-pane casement windows
- Horizontal wood beveled siding
- Corbelled brick chimney
- Large property with gardens, large poplar trees, grass, and open space



Statement of Significance

4193 Gordon Dr - Tobacco Barn on G. Thomson Farm

Place Description: The historic place is the tall, wood Tobacco Barn on the Thomson Farm, a utilitarian agricultural structure built in 1926 on the property at 4193 Gordon Drive in Kelowna's Mission Sector.

Heritage Value: This barn has value as is a relic of the third and final phase of the local tobacco industry, an endeavour that ultimately failed, but which for a time looked poised to become Kelowna's main industry. Tobacco was only one of a range of crops that have been grown on this farm, which has been operated by the Thomson family for more than a century, another aspect of the barn's heritage value.

The property on which this barn stands was purchased in 1898 by Scots-born Gifford R. Thomson (see 4193A Gordon Drive), and was subsequently operated by his sons Wilberforce ('Wilber') and John ('Jock') Thomson. In 1928 the Thomsons, along with several other farmers in Okanagan Mission, were growing tobacco, and the barn was presumably erected for that crop. It is not as large as some of the other surviving tobacco barns, but it would have functioned in the same way.

Tobacco is demanding both in its growing and in its curing, and barns such as this were designed to give closely controlled conditions for drying the tobacco after it was harvested. They were made large enough for a wagon and team of horses to drive right through. Cupola ventilators on the roofs and hinged slats in the walls could be opened or closed for air circulation. The harvested tobacco plants were speared through the thick bases of their stalks onto four-foot laths, and then hung in the barns in layers, with an air space between. Ventilation in the barn was controlled to allow fermentation, or 'curing', of the leaf as it slowly dried.

The leaf grown in the third phase of the local tobacco industry, which began in 1926, was mostly for pipe tobacco and for cigarettes (mixed with leaf grown at Sumas, Washington), as cigars were in decreasing demand, and it was sold under the 'Kelowna Pride' brand.

Thomson's venture into tobacco was not a success. Since the failure of Kelowna's tobacco industry, the barn has been used for general farm purposes and hay storage. The cupola ventilators have been removed and shed-roofed side bays added, but the tall, central portion remains from the original structure.

Character Defining Elements:

- Wood post-and-beam construction
- Utilitarian agricultural building style
- Tall, steeply gabled central core remains from the original barn
- Cupola Vents
- Large openings at the ends to allow carts to drive through
- Ventilators in side walls
- Horizontal wood siding on side bays
- Building is set on an active farm