

Graham Block

Location: 503 Turnberry St. South, Brussels, Ontario
Year built: 1877

THE GRAHAM BLOCK was built in 1877 by Dr. Graham who bought 100 acres at the south edge of Brussels, since then known as the Graham Survey. The Graham Block had three main-floor stores. Dr. Graham had his office above what for 56 years was the Brussels 5¢-\$1.00 Store on the corner. Staircase scribblings indicate a dentist and a milliner once occupied shops on the second floor. The third floor was an elegant lodge and meeting room used by the Western Star Lodge (the Oddfellows).



Turnberry Street looking north c.1900 - note the Graham Block at the right of the photograph.

Fire destroyed the business section two or three times between 1860 and 1875. New, and more fireproof, brick buildings were erected. The Graham Block was one of five commercial blocks in Brussels in 1879. The others were the Holmes Block, Little Bros. Block, Fletcher Block, and Ament Block.

In the 1920s, the stores were occupied by Fred Hunter's Dry Goods, Fox's Drug Store and Moore's 5¢-\$1.00 Store. The building was used by the Post Office in 1934-35 while a new Post Office was being built. In 1935, two school teachers, Elizabeth and Christena Dickson, decided the town needed a 5¢-\$1.00 Store, something most towns had at the time. They rented until they were able to buy the property in 1947.

In 1949, the other two stores were bought by the occupants, Stewart Lowe's Grocery and William Mitchell's Barbershop.

In the late 1940s, two rooms on the second floor were renovated into an apartment. The occupant, Kate Menzies, paid \$3.30 a month rent. The rest of the second floor was used for storage. But, as mentioned, there was once a millinery shop and a dentist's office here.



The Graham Block as it looks today.

The building was heated with a wood and coal furnace in the basement. A large iron grate box with a wooden top stood in the centre of the store on the ground floor. People would gather round the grate for warmth and a chat.

The Brussels 5¢-\$1.00 Store kept a large stock of ladies' and children's clothing as well as men's work clothes. The store also stocked dry goods such as broadcloth, print, linens, and sewing needs. Dishes and giftwares were also sold.

The Graham Block has some features of the Gothic Revival style of architecture, mainly in the detailing of the windows. Note the slightly pointed arch of the window hoods which is emphasized by the decorative brickwork below the upper cornice. The brickwork pilasters mark off the three store sections while the window hoods and upper brickwork form horizontal lines uniting the three sections. The Gothic arch is also an element of the storefront cornice. Note the decorative carving and the latticework above the storefront windows of the 5¢-\$1.00 Store on the corner. Above the upper cornice, at the centre of the block, is a semi-circular plaque with the date the building was constructed.
