

# Research and Evaluation Report



(Town of Halton Hills 2022)

## **McCannah-Biehn House**

26 Queen Street, Georgetown, Town of Halton Hills

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## 2.0 Background

## 2.1 Historical Background

In 1821, the Crown granted the 200 acres of Lot 18, Concession 9 of Esquesing Township to John Moore (Figure 1), who sold the property to George Kennedy on December 15, 1823.

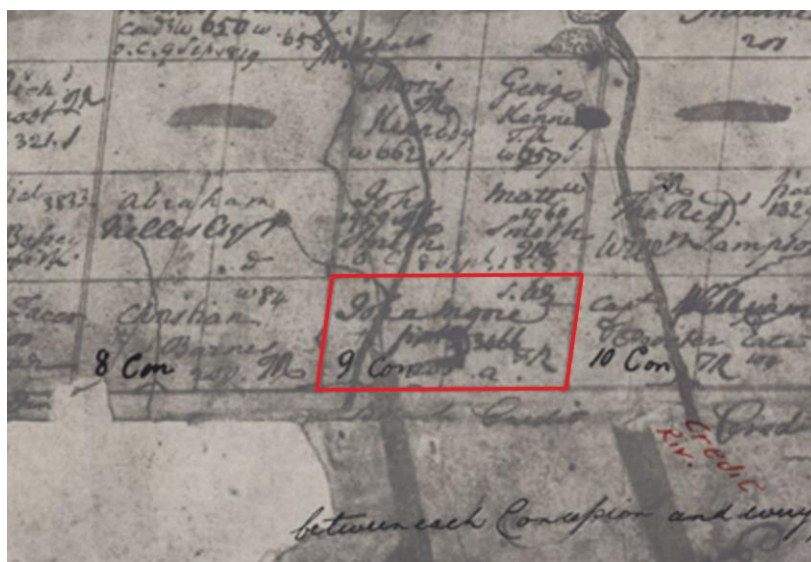


Figure 1: Excerpt from 1819 Patent Plan for Esquesing Township (Archives of Ontario RG 1-100-0-0-570)

The land was first subdivided in 1837 when Kennedy sold 13 acres, 3 rods to William and James Barber with the privilege of damming up the creek. In the 1850s, George Kennedy laid out this survey around the new railway station. The first passenger train came through Georgetown in 1856. Henry Cook purchased this lot in 1855 from Kennedy.



Figure 2: Tremaine's Map of the County of Halton 1858 – 26 Queen Street

The empty lot was purchased in 1883 by Elizabeth Burrows who sold it in May 1900 to Edward McCannah, the stationmaster for the Grand Trunk Railway at Georgetown. The house was likely constructed the same year and can be seen in early twentieth century photographs from the railway (Figure 4). Large, squared timbers, believed to have come from a dismantled railway trestle, were used to construct the residence.

McCannah constructed several other houses along Queen Street, including the twin dwellings at 22 and 24 Queen Street adjacent to the subject property (Figure 5 and Figure 6). McCannah resided at Grey Vernon, a Second Empire-style stone residence oriented towards Queen Street constructed in 1889 (now 5 Albert Street) (Figure 3). In 1907, Edward McCannah retired from the Grand Trunk Railway after 37 years in the business and became involved in local politics. He lived alone in his mansion until his death in 1932 at 80 years of age.





Figure 3: Grey Vernon (Toronto Daily Mail, June 24, 1893)



Figure 4: View of King and Queen Streets from the Georgetown Railway, c.1909; 26 Queen Street identified, appearing to show the edge of the porch roof (EHS11638)



Figure 5: This postcard shows Queen Street as an overgrown dirt lane with two gentlemen posing for the camera on the sidewalk. Shown (left to right) are the corner of #26, #24, #22 and the white quoins of the red brick house at #20 Queen Street (EHS13481)



Figure 6: "Twin" houses at 24 Queen Street (left) and 22 Queen Street (right) (Town of Halton Hills 2022)

Soon after its construction, the property at 26 Queen Street was leased to John McDonald, a paper maker at the Barber Paper Mill, and his family – Christina, James, Norman, and Joseph. McDonald eventually purchased the property in 1909 for \$3000. The 1934 Fire Insurance Map of Georgetown shows a two-storey wood structure with one-storey rear wing (Figure 8). The existing one-storey verandah on the north elevation is not identified in the 1934 map, however it is later shown (then un-enclosed) in an undated newspaper article in a photograph taken by Toronto Telegram editor Edward Wodson (who died in 1957), dating the porch to the early-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century (Figure 7). The property was purchased by Ray Kercher, superintendent of the Provincial Paper Coating Mill, in 1937. Kercher sold the property to Walter Biehn in 1949.



Figure 7: 26 Queen St, n.d., showing the one-storey porch prior to its enclosure (EHS MG1 A5)

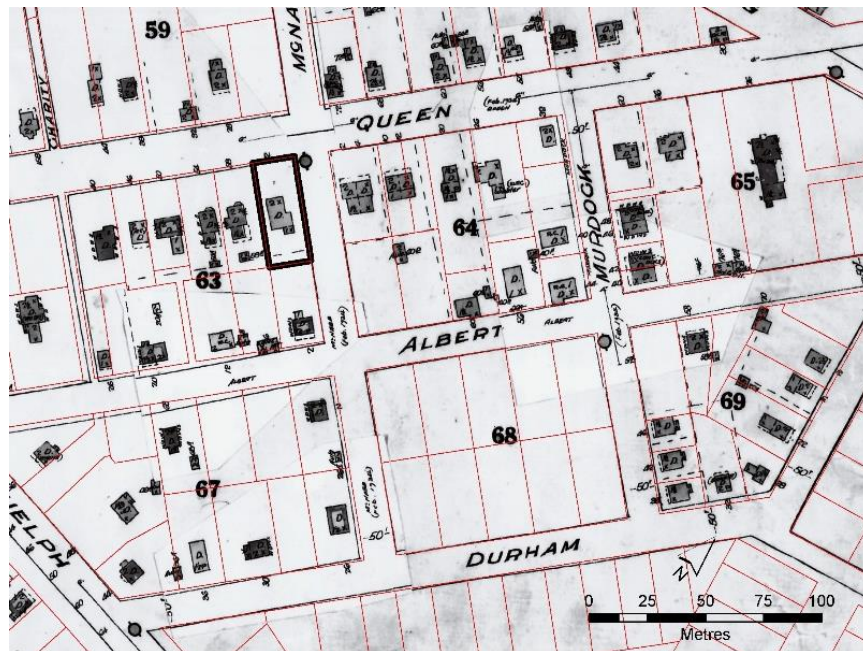


Figure 8: 1934 Fire Insurance Map of Georgetown - 26 Queen Street

Walter Biehn was the owner and publisher of the Georgetown Herald between 1940 and 1958, although his wife Mary ran the business during WWII (Figure 9). After selling the paper in 1958, he stayed on as publisher until 1973 and as the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce Secretary between 1974 and 1986. Biehn was also a member of the public elementary and high school boards as well as Councillor for Ward 3 in Georgetown between 1976 and 1982 (Figure 10).





Figure 9: Jim Snow, MPP presents editor Walter Biehn with a plaque recognizing the centennial of the Georgetown Herald (The Georgetown Herald, December 7, 1967; EHS04547)

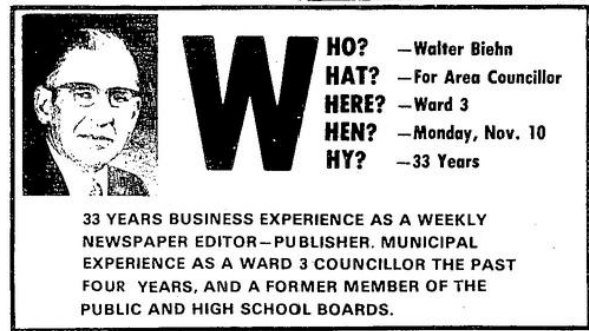


Figure 10: Advertisement for Ward 3 Councillor (The Georgetown Herald, November 7, 1980)

The 1965 aerial photograph (Figure 11) of the property shows the property in its well-established neighbourhood.

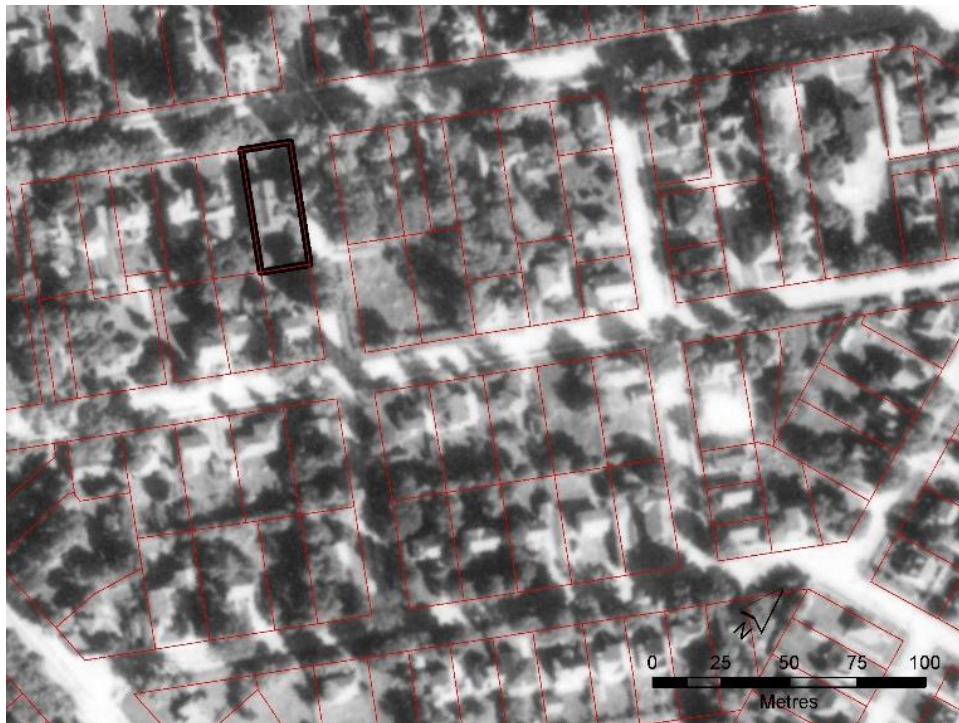


Figure 11: 1965 Aerial Photograph - 26 Queen Street

In 1987, the property was transferred to Judy and Lawrence Earl, who owned it until 2002 when purchased by Richard Seal and Dianna Morin. In 2021, the current owners Michael Whittaker and Claire Rethoret purchased the property.

### 2.3 Property & Architectural Description

The property is located at 26 Queen Street, Georgetown, Halton Hills, and is a rectangular-shaped parcel situated at the south corner of the intersection between Queen Street and McNabb Street. The property is legally known as PT LT 11, PL 37, NW OF ALBERT ST; PT LT 11, PL 37, SE OF QUEEN ST, AS IN 657750; Halton Hills (Figure 12).



Figure 12: 2021 Aerial View – 26 Queen Street

The existing two-storey, L-shaped house is constructed of railway ties with white chinking on a concrete block foundation. The cross gable roof features several dormers and a brick chimney located in the centre of the roof. A one-storey enclosed wood-framed verandah with below-grade, single garage is located along the north elevation. The foundation is constructed of concrete block with rusticated stone above.

The primary (northwest) elevation along Queen Street (Figure 13 and Figure 15) features a recessed porch supported by wooden piers that is accessed by a flight of wooden stairs, with the east elevation of the enclosed verandah extending along the porch. The porch ceiling features painted wooden boards (Figure 14). The entrance is a flat-headed opening with timber lintel and glass sidelight. A single flat-headed window opening is on the first storey with two symmetrically-placed, flat-headed window openings at the second storey. Beneath the gable roof is a small projection supported by simple wooden brackets. The extended eaves are supported by wooden brackets and have wooden soffits.





Figure 13: 26 Queen Street, Northwest Elevation (Town of Halton Hills February 2022)



Figure 14: 26 Queen Street, Front Porch Detail (Town of Halton Hills February 2022)



Figure 15: Looking south towards 26 Queen Street (Town of Halton Hills 2022)

The side (northeast) elevation along McNabb Street (Figure 16) features the side elevation of the rear one-storey wing with single, flat-headed window opening. The south end of the two-storey elevation contains two single window openings centrally located beneath the gable. The symmetrical dormers are visible above the second storey. Above the enclosed verandah are a small gable-roofed dormer within the roof and larger shed-roofed dormer towards the primary elevation. The verandah is enclosed with wood-framed windows. The timber exterior of the house is extant within the enclosed verandah (Figure 17).





Figure 16: 26 Queen Street, Northeast Elevation (Town of Halton Hills February 2022)



Figure 17: 26 Queen Street, verandah interior (Property Owner 2021)

Along the side (southwest) elevation (Figure 18) are several flat-headed window openings at the first and second storeys beneath the projecting eaves, with projecting roof features between the window openings.





Figure 18: 26 Queen Street, Southwest Elevation (Town of Halton Hills February 2022)

The rear (southeast) elevation features an enclosed, one-storey porch adjacent to the one-storey wing. The second storey contains flat-headed window openings with a projection at the south end of the elevation beneath the gable. Above the one-storey wing is dormer window with single, flat-headed window openings.





Figure 19: 26 Queen Street, Rear Elevation (Town of Halton Hills February 2022)

### 3.0 Description of Heritage Attributes and Evaluation Checklist

The following evaluation checklist applies to Ontario Regulation 9/06 made under the *Ontario Heritage Act*: Criteria for Determining Cultural Heritage Value or Interest. The criteria are prescribed for municipal designation of Heritage Properties under Part IV, Section 29 of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. The evaluation tables utilize an 'X' to signify applicable criteria and 'N/A' to signify criteria that is not applicable for this property.

<b>Design or Physical Value</b>	
Is rare, unique, representative, or early example of a style, type, expression, material, or construction method	<b>X</b>
Displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit	<b>N/A</b>
Demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement	<b>N/A</b>

The property at 26 Queen Street has physical and design value as a unique example of an early twentieth-century vernacular residential building constructed using timber salvaged from a dismantled trestle bridge. The residential building references the simplicity of Edwardian architecture in its form and detailing, with flat-headed window openings with large-paned sash windows, simple dormers following the roofline, and balanced façade, however its materiality makes it unique in character.

<b>Historical or Associative Value</b>	
Has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization, or institution that is significant to a community	<b>X</b>
Yields, or has potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture	<b>N/A</b>
Demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer, or theorist who is significant to a community	<b>N/A</b>

The property at 26 Queen Street has historical and associative value due to its association with Edward McCannah, Station Agent for the Grand Trunk Railway. McCannah constructed several houses along Queen Street, including the residences directly adjacent to the property at 20, 22, and 24 Queen Street, and Grey Vernon at 5 Albert Street.

The property is also associated with Walter Beihn, owner, and publisher of the *Georgetown Herald* between 1940 and 1973, Chamber of Commerce Secretary between 1974 and 1986, Board member for the public-school board, and Councillor for Ward 3 in Georgetown between 1976 and 1982.

<b>Contextual Value</b>	
Is important in defining, maintaining, or supporting the character of an area	<b>X</b>
Is physically, functionally, visually, or historically linked to its surroundings	<b>X</b>
Is a landmark	<b>N/A</b>

The property at 26 Queen Street has contextual value as one of several historic properties along Queen Street in Georgetown. The house is physically and historically linked to several of the existing residences along the street, many of which were constructed by Edward McCannah.



#### **4.0 Summary**

Following research and evaluation according to Ontario Regulation 9/06, it has been determined that the property at 26 Queen Street has physical and design, historical and associative, and contextual value and therefore meets Ontario Regulation 9/06 criteria for determining cultural heritage value or interest.

The heritage attributes of the property at 26 Queen Street are identified as follows:

- The setback, placement, and orientation of the building at the intersection of Queen Street and McNabb Street;
- The scale, form and massing of the two-storey, L-shaped building with cross-gable roof, brick chimney, concrete block foundation, and one-storey rear wing;
- Materials, including railway timbers/ties with chinking, concrete block, and wooden brackets
- Shed-roofed and gable-roofed dormers throughout;
- Flat-headed window openings, including sills and lintels, throughout;
- The one-storey recessed porch with squared columns and wooden ceiling on the primary (northwest) elevation.

The one-storey enclosed verandah with below-grade garage along the side elevation has been modified since its construction and is not identified as a heritage attribute of the property, however could be considered an attribute if restored to its original condition. The rear enclosed porch has also not been identified as a heritage attribute of the property.

## 5.0 Sources

### Primary Sources:

Archival Photographs, Esquesing Historical Society Archives and Halton Images (individual citations in-text)

Ontario Land Registry Records

The Georgetown Herald:

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### Historic Mapping and Aerials:

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Tremaine, Rev. J., *Map of Halton County*, 1858

1819 Patent Plan for Esquesing Township (Archives of Ontario RG 1-100-0-0-570)

1934 Fire Insurance Map of Georgetown