

# Research and Evaluation Report



(Town of Halton Hills 2022)

## **McNiven-Elliott House**

76 Bower Street, Acton, Town of Halton Hills

May 2022

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## 1.0 Property Description

76 Bower Street	
Municipality	Acton, Town of Halton Hills
County or Region	Regional Municipality of Halton
Legal Description	PT LT 42, BLK 5, PL 31, AS IN 685522 ALSO SHOWN ON PL 1098; HALTON HILLS
Construction Date	c.1909
Original Use	Residential
Current Use	Residential
Architect/Building/Designer	Unknown
Architectural Style	Edwardian Residential
Additions/Alterations	Rear one-storey additions
Heritage Status	Listed on the Town's Heritage Register
Recorder(s)	Laura Loney with Mark Rowe and Tharushe Jayaveer
Report Date	March 2022

## 2.0 Background

This research and evaluation report describes the history, context, and physical characteristics of the property at 76 Bower Street in Halton Hills, Ontario. The report includes an evaluation of the property's cultural heritage value as prescribed by the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

### 2.1 Historical Background

In 1856, 1/5 of an acre of Lot 42 was purchased by Charles Hill from Maria Adams. According to available records, Hill was born circa 1840 in the New York State, later moving to the Milton area then to Acton in 1856. Hill is identified in the 1877 *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of Halton* as a general merchant on Mill Street. According to *Acton's Early Days*, Hill is described as a fond gardener, and his lot was used as a family garden with an abundance of potatoes, corn, and other vegetables such as white carrots for his blood mare. According to death records, Hill died on April 5, 1901 of old age and "lagrippe", presumably influenza.

In 1907, the subject property was sold by Hill's son John to David Milton Henderson. D.M. Henderson's father, the Hon. David Henderson was born in 1841 and moved to Acton in 1878. Henderson was a storekeeper for many years, later forming a partnership with his wife Alison Christie's family to establish Christie, Henderson & Co., a private bank. Henderson was soon elected to Council and the Board of Education, and in 1888 was elected as the Conservative candidate for the House of Commons. While defeated at a by-election in 1891, Henderson was re-elected in 1893, appointed member of the King's Privy Council of Canada in 1916, and served in the House of Commons until his retirement in 1917. Henderson subdivided the former Adams farmhouse property, creating 29 Bower Street, 35 Bower

Street, and 41 Bower Street. Tragically, Henderson's wife Alison died falling off the balcony of their home in 1914, while Henderson died in 1922.



Figure 1: Hon. David Henderson, c.1900 (MHS 5969)

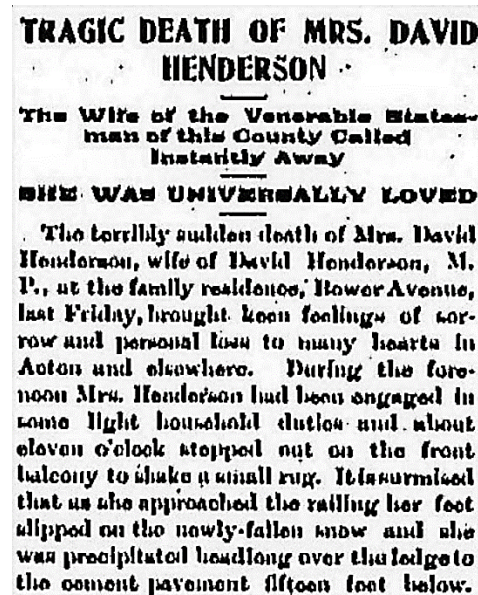


Figure 2: Excerpt from the Acton Free Press, 26 November 1914

D.M. Henderson took out a mortgage on the property in 1908 for \$2000, presumably to build the existing house at 76 Bower Avenue which was constructed c.1909. D.M. Henderson operated the General Store of Henderson and Co. in Acton with his brother Charles until moving to Galt in 1918 to set up his lime enterprises there as part of the Christie Henderson Company. Henderson also conducted the Galt Fuel and Supply Co, was a member of the Kiwanis Club, on the Board of the Central Presbyterian Church, and a Mason. Henderson's wife was a member of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire, the primary chapter of which was formed in 1916 at the home of a Mrs. Beardmore, wife to Torrance Beardmore of Beardmore & Co. tanners.

In 1917, Dr. J.A. McNiven, a physician and surgeon, purchased the property from D.M. Henderson for \$4200. McNiven lived and worked out of the house at 76 Bower Street, with advertisements for his practice available as of March 1918 in the local paper (Figure 3). McNiven came to Acton in 1916 from Oakville, having previously practiced medicine there. McNiven was appointed Medical Health Officer for Acton in 1936, also serving as the coroner and as a Mason (and master) for 62 years. McNiven left Acton following his retirement in January 1942 and was succeeded by local Acton resident Dr. W.G.C. Kenney. McNiven died in 1952 at the age of 87.

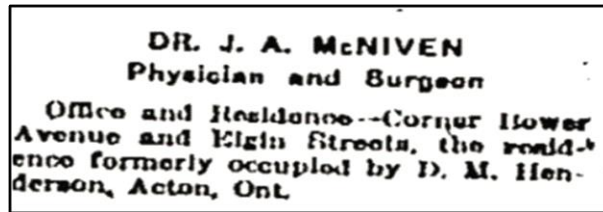


Figure 3: Advertisement in the Acton Free Press, October 30, 1918, p.3

In 1941, McNiven sold the property to Winnifred Elliott, for \$4000, mother to Charles George ("George") Elliott. Elliott was born in Comber and moved with his family to Acton in 1932, first living on Church Street and later moving to Bower Ave following his mother's purchase of the property. Elliott's parents, Hilton and Winnifred (Win) Elliot, owned a dry goods store at Mill Street and Willow Street in Acton.



Figure 4: The existing brick house is identified on the 1934 Fire Insurance Map of Acton

Elliott lived at 76 Bower Street the rest of his life. Named Acton Citizen of the Year in 1973, Elliott was celebrated for his contributions to the community as Acton Citizen's Band Master from 1963 to 2017, organist and choir director of Trinity United Church from 1957 to the early 1990s, participation in the re-development of Acton Town Hall, and an avid historian and member of the Acton Historical Society. Elliott had a Masters degree and PhD and was a Professor of Biochemistry at the University of Guelph from 1962 until his retirement in 1988. Elliott died at the age of 90 on March 6, 2019 (Figure 5 and Figure 6).

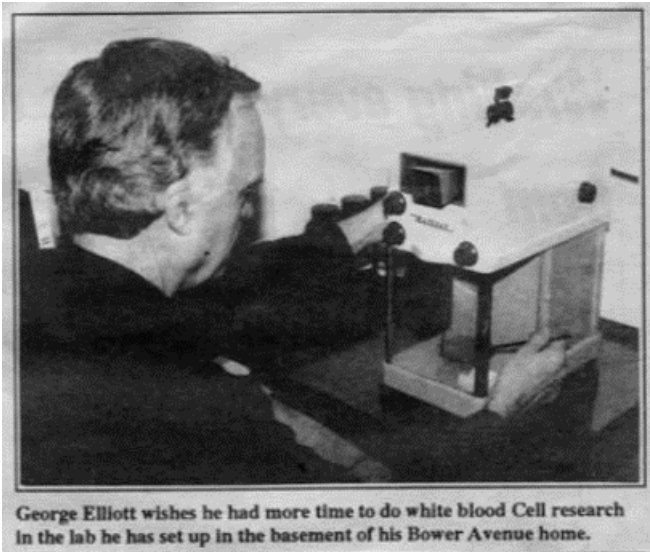


Figure 5: Acton Tanner (Acton, ON), 26 May 1992, p. 16

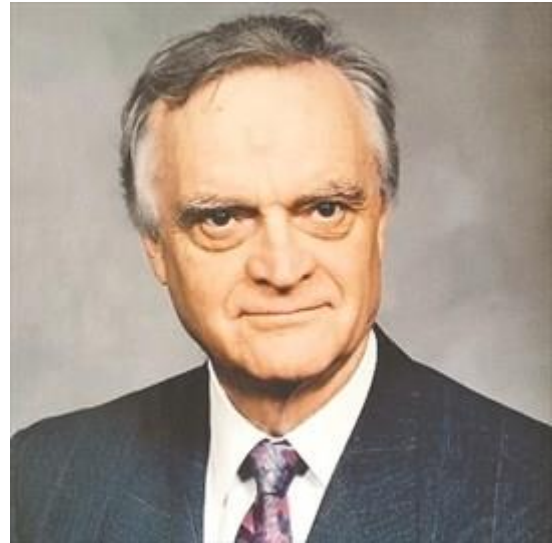


Figure 6: George Elliott, Ph.D. (Obituary 2019)

The property at 76 Bower Street is currently owned by Myles Sloan and Camilla Sloan.

## 2.2 Property & Architectural Description

The property is located at 76 Bower Street, Acton, Halton Hills, and is a rectangular-shaped parcel situated at the southeast corner of Bower Street and Elgin Street North. The property is legally known as PT LT 42, BLK 5, PL 31, AS IN 685522 ALSO SHOWN ON PL 1098; HALTON HILLS. The property is oriented towards the northwest, with the northwest elevation facing Bower Street (Figure 7 and Figure 8).



Figure 7: Looking south towards 76 Bower Street from Bower Street (Town of Halton Hills 2022)



Figure 8: Looking east towards 76 Bower Street from Bower Street (Town of Halton Hills 2022)

The existing house is a two-storey, red brick structure with hipped roof and stone foundation. The roof contains hip-roofed dormers on the west, south, and east slopes, with a brick chimney along the north elevation. A one-storey addition is located to the rear with three distinct components. The side (south) elevation along Elgin Street is flanked by three mature deciduous trees and a portion of the yard is fenced (Figure 9).



Figure 9: Looking north towards 76 Bower Street from Elgin Street (Town of Halton Hills 2022)

The front (west) elevation is symmetrical and is dominated by a one-storey covered porch with hipped roof. The main entrance is accessed from the porch and is centrally-located within the first storey, with

large vertical windows with stone sills and lintels symmetrically-placed on either side of the entrance beneath the porch. The porch features simple squared wooden columns and railing, with a gable peak centered above the entrance. At the second storey, two vertical windows are symmetrically-placed with a smaller single window opening centered on the façade. The dormer window is centered on the roof above (Figure 10).



Figure 10: 76 Bower Street, Front (Northwest) Elevation (Town of Halton Hills 2022)

The front elevation features a centrally-placed, flat-headed entrance with stone lintel at the first storey (Figure 11). The northeast end of the porch is partially screened within the interior with a wooden storm door (Figure 12). The porch ceiling features stained wood paneling (Figure 13).



Figure 11: 76 Bower, Front Entrance Detail (Town of Halton Hills 2022)



Figure 12: 76 Bower Street, Front Porch Detail (Town of Halton Hills 2022)



Figure 13: 76 Bower Street, front porch detail showing wood-panelled ceiling, stone lintels above the entrance and window, and stained glass transom (Town of Halton Hills 2022)

The side (north) elevation contains various flat-headed window openings at the first and second storeys and basement windows within the foundation wall, with the brick chimney extending above the roof. The rear one-storey addition with vinyl siding is visible at the rear from Bower Street (Figure 14 and Figure 15).



Figure 14: 76 Bower Street, Side (East) Elevation from Bower Street (Town of Halton Hills 2022)



Figure 15: 76 Bower Street, Side (East) Elevation from the rear (Town of Halton Hills 2022)

The side (south) elevation along Elgin Street features a pair of oval windows symmetrically-placed beneath a single window opening with stone sill and lintel at the second storey towards the front elevation. Towards the rear elevation, a shallow, two-storey projecting bay features flat-headed window openings with stone sills and lintels at the first and second storeys (Figure 16 through Figure 18).



Figure 16: 76 Bower Street, Elgin Street (West) elevation (Town of Halton Hills 2022)



Figure 17: 76 Bower Street, side elevation detail showing flat-headed window opening with stone lintel and sill, red brick exterior and block stone foundation (Town of Halton Hills 2022)



Figure 18: 76 Bower Street, side elevation detail showing projecting bay with flat-headed window openings at the first and second storey with stone sills and lintels (Town of Halton Hills 2022)

The one-storey red brick addition with block foundation contains a single flat-headed window opening with stone sill and lintel. Along the east elevation of the brick addition is a frame single-storey addition connecting into the one-storey gable-roofed portion of the addition at the east elevation of the main residence (Figure 20 and Figure 21). A single-storey double garage is located to the rear of the house with a large mature deciduous tree to the rear (Figure 19).



Figure 19: 76 Bower Street, front elevation of garage with vinyl siding along Elgin Street with mature deciduous tree to the rear (Town of Halton Hills 2022)



Figure 20: 76 Bower Street, rear one-storey frame addition with vinyl siding (Town of Halton Hills 2022)



Figure 21: 76 Bower Street, rear elevation (Myles Sloan 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 76 Bower Street has physical and design value as a representative example of residential Edwardian architecture within the historic community of Acton. The existing two-storey, red brick structure with hipped roof and stone foundation features a balanced façade, simple hipped roof with dormers, and smooth, red-brick surfaces. The roof eaves are supported by simple brackets, and several large-paned sash windows are featured throughout. The front porch with squared wood columns on the primary elevation features a gable peak above the central entrance within a balanced façade characteristic of residential Edwardian architecture. Architectural features throughout include oval windows on the side elevation, a two-storey projecting bay, stained glass transoms on the front elevation at the first storey, and stone sills and lintels throughout.

<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 76 Bower Street has historical and associative value due to its associations with the Henderson family, local doctor J.A. McNiven, and George Elliott. The existing house was constructed by D.M. Henderson, local businessman and son of the Honorable David Henderson, who constructed several houses in the immediate area. Dr. McNiven lived in and operated his practice out of the property for several years. Additionally, local musician and one-time Citizen of the Year George Elliott lived in the home for many years, hosting many events at the property.

<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 76 Bower Street has contextual value as it is important in maintaining the late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century character of Bower Street. The existing house, in its original

location at the corner of Bower Street and Elgin Street, is physically, functionally, visually, and historically linked to its surroundings within the historical streetscape within Acton's core.

**Heritage Attributes:**

- The setback, placement, and orientation of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Edwardian residential building at the intersection of Bower Street and Elgin Street in Acton;
- The scale, form, and massing of the two-storey brick structure with hipped roof featuring dormers and a brick chimney;
- Materials throughout, including wood architectural detailing, red brick, and stone sills and lintels throughout;
- Stained glass windows on the front elevation at the first and second storeys;
- The front elevation facing Bower Street, including its symmetrical façade, covered one-storey wooden porch with wood columns and bracketed eaves, central entrance with stone lintel and wood surround, and large sash windows;
- The side (south) elevation facing Elgin Street, including oval and large-paned sash windows with stone sills and lintels, two-storey projecting bay and rear one-storey brick addition;
- The side elevation (north) and rear elevations featuring original window openings with stone sills and lintels.

The interiors and frame additions to the rear have not been identified as heritage attributes of the property.

**4.0 Summary**

Following research and evaluation according to Ontario Regulation 9/06, it has been determined that the property at 76 Bower 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 76 Bower Street are identified as follows:

## 5.0 Sources

### Primary Sources:

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