



Research and Evaluation Report

SMITH - THOMPSON HOUSE

548 Main Street, Glen Williams, Town of Halton Hills

March 2023

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1.0 Property Description

548 Main Street	
Municipality	Town of Halton Hills
County or Region	Regional Municipality of Halton
Legal Description	LT 34, RCP 1556; HALTON HILLS
Construction Date	1849
Original Use	Residential
Current Use	Residential
Architect/Building/Designer	Jacob Williams
Architectural Style	Gothic Revival
Additions/Alterations	
Heritage Status	Listed
Recorder(s)	John Mark Rowe
Report Date	March 2023

This research and evaluation report describes the history, context, and physical characteristics of the property at 20 Queen Street in Georgetown, Halton Hills, Ontario. The report includes an evaluation of the property's cultural heritage value as prescribed by the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

2.0 Background

2.1 Historical Background

The son of a Loyalist family, John Butler Muirhead (1800-1824) received a location ticket for Lot 21, Concession 10 Esquesing in 1818. John Butler Muirhead completed his settlement duties on his 200 acres on 13 June 1823. He married Ann Doestader in May 1824. On 25 September 1824, the Crown patent was issued to Muirhead. John Butler Muirhead died suddenly on 29 November 1824 and was buried at St. Mark's Church, Niagara.

Benajah Williams (1765-1851) was a clothier in Gainsborough Township, Niagara. His third wife was Elizabeth Kennedy (1788-1842) and since most of her family had left Niagara for Esquesing Township, they decided to move there as well. On 12 October 1824, Benajah listed his mill property and Grimsby township property for sale in the *Niagara Gleaner*. Benajah purchased Lot 21, Concession 10, Esquesing Township from the heirs of John Butler Muirhead on 9 November 1825. Benajah, then 60, reportedly had the saw mill up and running that same year.

The eldest Williams son, Joel, started farming Lot 21, Con. 10. Benajah divided his Williamsburg (after 1852 known as Glen Williams) property between his second and third sons. Charles (1811-1889) received the south-easterly 106 acres on 4 February 1842. Jacob (1816-1853) received the north-westerly 94 acres on 24 July 1843. Jacob Williams' land included the woollen mill he had established in 1839. Following the division of the property, the brothers had a village plan drawn up (Figure 1).

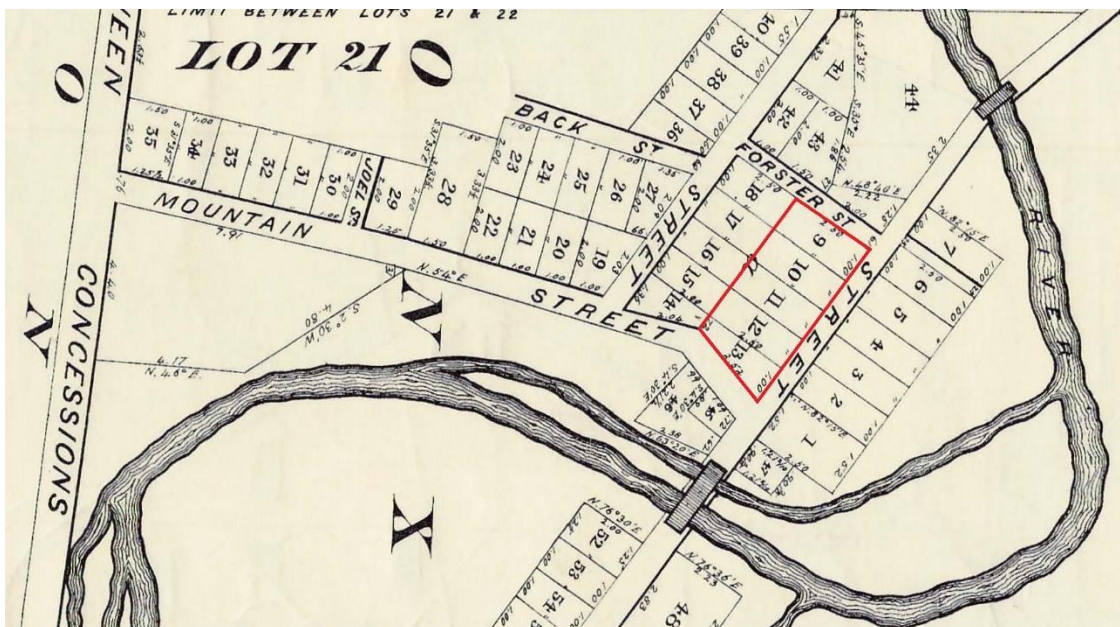


Figure 1: Figure 1: Survey Plan for Jacob Williams' land, highlighting Lots 9-13 in red.

Several dwellings were constructed by Jacob Williams for the workers he needed to employ at his woollen mill. An 1854 survey map of the village of Glen Williams (Figure 2), included all the existing

buildings, with five buildings extant in 1854. The three buildings shown on Lots 9 and 10 were destroyed by fire in 1864. The building on Lot 11 is the subject property (identified in Figure 2 with a red outline) and the large building on Lot 13 (a hotel and later general store) was destroyed by fire about 1976.



Figure 2: Lot 11 (548 Main Street) outlined in red on 1854 map of Glen Williams.

The 1861 Census for Esquimes Township included a column for house construction dates. Although ignored by the Georgetown census-taker, the Glen Williams recorder dated this house as 1849, the same as the house across the road (534 Main St.). In 1861, the house was occupied by Nicholas Gordon Smith (1801-1880) and Susan (Susannah Looby) Smith (1814-1893), both originally from Ireland.

The Smiths immigrated about 1842, having at least two children born in Ireland: Sarah Jane (1836-1848) and Maria Smith Elliott (1840-1922), followed by Eliza Smith Stull (1842-1914), Edward Smith (1850-1856), Isabella (d. 1856) and Ruth Ann Smith (1852-1906). Nicholas Smith lists himself as a stoker in 1861, but in 1869 and in the 1871 census he is a plasterer. Smith may have honed his skills starting with an 1852 renovation of the house, as evidenced by the American Temperance newspaper found between the walls when replacing a window.



Figure 3: Gravestone of Nicholas Smith -Glen Williams Cemetery

Woollen mill owner Jacob Williams died suddenly on 12 July 1853. After making provision for his wife and son, he ordered all his lands sold. His brother Charles Williams purchased the remainder of his

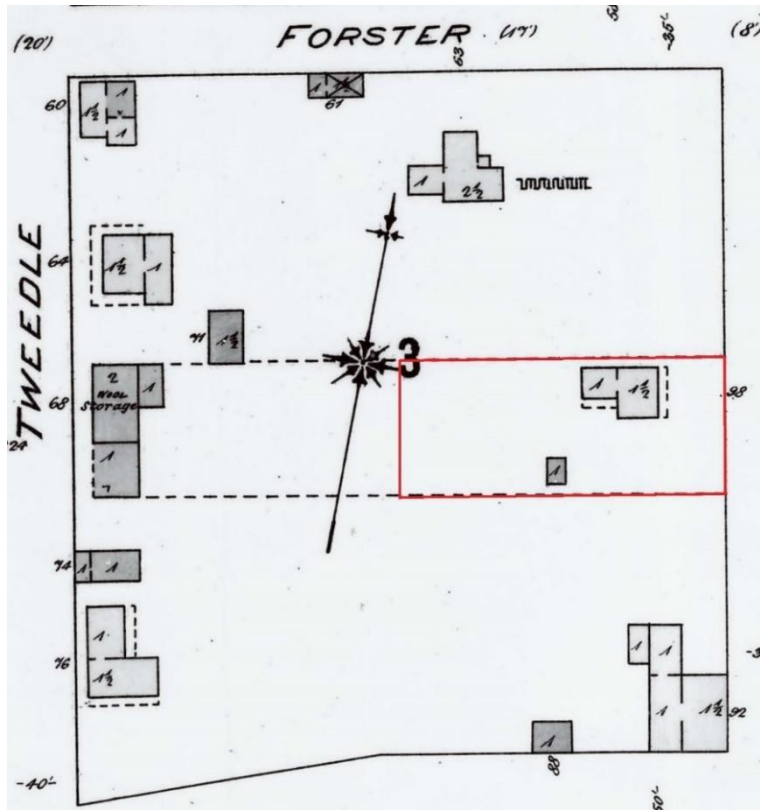


Figure 4: Lot 11 (548 Main Street) outlined in red on 1898 Fire Insurance map of Glen Williams

estate, including the woollen mill. It was not until 2 October 1871 that Charles Williams sold village lot 11 (548 Main Street) to Nicholas Gordon Smith. Once again, the large Smith family expanded the house, adding a bay to the south wall, evidenced by a beam signed and dated 1872 that was replaced in the window bay.

Nicholas Smith died 31 January 1880 and was interred in the Glen Williams cemetery with some of his children. On 15 April 1880 widow Susan Ann Smith sold the subject property to James Thompson.

James Thompson (1827-1897) and Isabella (Shaw) Thompson (1822-1920) had lived in Glen Williams for many years and raised several children there. The 1857 *Canada Directory* lists James Thompson as a millwright. The 1891 census lists the 63-year-old as a farm labourer. However, his resident children were listed as weaver, paper

maker, dyer, knitter and glove maker. James Thompson died in 1897.

John (also Jack) Thompson, the paper maker son of James and Isabella left Glen Williams after his father's death. He travelled to the United States where he learned a ginger beer recipe which he was pledged never to write down and never to pass on. He married Eva Allen of Allenford, moving to Hamilton. There he went into the ginger beer business, listing it as his occupation in 1911. Eva Thompson died in 1912, leaving Jack with an infant daughter named for her mother. Eva Thompson would spend time at 458 Main Street, living with her grandmother Isabella and her unmarried aunts Mary and Catherine. By 1918, Eva Thompson appeared in the Glen Williams School register. Isabella Thompson died in 1920 prompting Mary and Catherine Thompson to sell the house and move up the hill to the brick house at 15 Mountain Street, the former home of



Figure 5: Catherine and Mary Thompson, with their niece Eva Thompson standing in front of their home at 548 Main Street, about 1915. EHS11213

Jacob Williams' widow. It was to that house that Jack Thompson moved his ginger beer business, famous until the end of prohibition in 1927.

Mary Thompson sold to Helen Warren who passed the house onto Myrtle Warren Harrington. Unfortunately, a large mortgage forced a foreclosure on the property in 1962. Murray Young and his family lived here until 1968 when the property was sold to David and Helena Robinson. The Robinsons sold in 1971 to William and Priscilla Campbell who in turn sold to James and Barbara Stephens in 1977. James Stephens, a contractor, re-sided the house and added a second floor at the back with side gables. They sold in April 1983. Since 1983 the more recent owners have been Albert and Lynne Adlan, Steve and Wendy Robins, and Christina Rajsic and Blake Wiswell.

Since February 11, 2010, Kate Victoria Murray and Ian Robert Wilson have owned the subject property.



Figure 6: A side view of 548 Main St. showing Isabella Thompson (in black), Catherine and Mary Thompson and Eva Thompson about 1915. EHS19926

3.0 Property & Architectural Description

The Smith-Thompson property is located at 548 Main Street, Glen Williams, Halton Hills, and is a rectangular village lot #11, situated on the west side of Main Street, between Mountain Street and Forster Street. The property is legally known as LT 34, RCP 1556; HALTON HILLS.

The subject property contains a one-and-a-half-storey Gothic Revival residential frame cottage with moderately pitched asphalt shingle roof with a centre gable. It is situated near the northern property line, demarcated by a line of pine trees, with a one-storey former garage at the rear of the asphalt driveway, along the southern property line.

The house, roughly level with the road, has a front garden, picket fence and a narrow ditch along the road frontage. A concrete slab was laid where the front porch decking once sat, but the covered porch remains with four square wood uprights along the front. A decorative fascia is pierced by a unique pattern. The narrow centre gable has projecting eaves, plain fascia and modern soffit, as does the rest of the house.



Figure 7: Front elevation of 548 Main St. -March 2023



Figure 8: North side elevation of 548 Main St. -March 2023

The entrance with contemporary glass front door has been moved from the original central entrance to the left of centre, however the interior staircase still lines up with the location of the original front. Consequently, the façade is no longer balanced.

As noted in the overview of the property's history, the double bay window was added in 1872 to the original rectangular building. The original ornamentation was different from gingerbread on the front gable. (See Figure 5 and Figure 6). As can be seen in Figure 9, it retains the original structure, without the gingerbread fascia.

The rear kitchen, shown as a single storey in the 1898 map, (Figure 4) now has a second storey with two gable dormers facing south (added by owner Jim Stephens circa 1982). The back porch was maintained for a brief time until it was enclosed and now contains a bathroom.

The rear and north side do not contain any outstanding features.



Figure 9: South side elevation of 548 Main St. -March 2023



Figure 10: Rear elevation of 548 Main St. -March 2023

4.0 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 Yes or No to signify applicable criteria.

Design or Physical Value	Yes/No	Rationale
The property has design value or physical value because it is a rare, unique, representative, or early example of a style, type, expression, material, or construction method.	Yes	The Smith-Thompson House represents the earliest housing built specifically for factory workers, adapted over time to contemporary styles. The house is a representative example of nineteenth century residential Gothic Revival architecture in Ontario, despite the relocation of the central entrance at the first storey impacting the traditional symmetry of this architectural style.
The property has design value or physical value because it displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit.	No	This property is not known to meet this criterion at this time.
The property has design value or physical value because it demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement.	No	This property is not known to meet this criterion at this time.
Historical or Associative Value		
The property has historical value or associative value because it has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization, or institution that is significant to a community.	Yes	The Smith-Thompson House is associated with the immigrant Smith family as workers of the nearby woollen mill. It is associated with the Thompson family, a working family associated with Thompson & Wilson Ginger Beer.
The property has historical value or associative value because it yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture.	No	This property is not known to meet this criterion at this time.
The property has historical value or associative value because it demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community.	No	This property is not known to meet this criterion at this time.
Contextual Value		
The property has contextual value because it is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area.	Yes	The Smith-Thompson House defines the streetscape, maintaining the humble worker housing flanking the woollen mill. The property maintains the historic character of the area as one of several worker's homes in the area.

The property has contextual value because it is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings.	Yes	The Smith-Thompson House is physically, functionally, visually and historically linked to its surroundings along Main Street in Glen Williams to the west of the Credit River. Several properties along Main Street and to the rear of the property along Tweedle Street are extant that were constructed during the mid-late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and are also associated with the mill history of the area.
The property has contextual value because it is a landmark.	No	This property is not known to meet this criterion at this time.

5.0 Statement of Significance and Heritage Attributes

The Smith-Thompson house at 548 Main Street, Glen Williams, Halton Hills, is part of the fabric of the hamlet of Glen Williams that defines the charm and attraction of this Credit Valley hamlet as a tourist attraction.

The property at 548 Main Street has physical and design value as a representative example of simple industrial housing in the Gothic Revival residential style. The existing house was constructed in 1849, the beginning of the village phase in this area. While the original central entrance has been modified, the scale, form and massing of the house as visible from the public realm, the central gable with window centered beneath, and covered porch are reflective of the style which is extant throughout the Province. The changes made reflect the growing prosperity of the local working population.

The property at 548 Main Street has historical and associative value as one of the few surviving earliest village homes in the community of Glen Williams, built by the founding family. Its associative value is with the immigrant Smith family as workers at the village woollen mill. It is further associated with the labouring Thompson family who later established the Thompson & Wilson Ginger Beer business.

The property at 548 Main Street has contextual value as modest worker's housing, part of the streetscape definition of housing flanking the former woollen mill site along Main Street and Tweedle Street in the immediate area. The Smith-Thompson House is physically, functionally, visually and historically linked to its surroundings along Main Street in Glen Williams to the west of the Credit River amongst several other mid-to-late nineteenth- and early-twentieth century housing.

The heritage attributes of the property at 548 Main Street are identified as follows:

- The setback, placement and orientation of the c.1849 Smith-Thompson House along the west side of Main Street, Glen Williams;
- The scale, form and massing of the building as a one-and-a-half storey, simple rectangular frame Gothic Revival residential building with clapboard exterior;
- The gable roof with central dormer and gothic-arched window opening on the primary elevation; and, along the south elevation, the double bay clapboard window.

The rear addition, which has been modified, and the interior of the house are not identified as heritage attributes of the property.

6.0 Summary and Conclusions

Following research and evaluation according to Ontario Regulation 9/06, it has been determined that the property at 548 Main 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.

7.0 Sources

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548 Main Street, Glen Williams | LT 34, RCP 1556; HALTON HILLS

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