

Research and Evaluation Report



Villanore

68 Bower Street, Acton, Town of Halton Hills

April 2023

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1.0 Property Description

68 Bower Street	
Municipality	Town of Halton Hills
County or Region	Regional Municipality of Halton
Legal Description	LT 41, BLK 4, PL 31, ALSO SHOWN ON PL 1098; HALTON HILLS
Construction Date	c. 1893
Original Use	Residential
Current Use	Residential
Architect/Building/Designer	J. Francis Brown (Architect) for Alexander Secord Esq.
Architectural Style	Vernacular with Gothic Influences
Additions/Alterations	Rear One-storey Addition; Skylights
Heritage Status	Listed
Recorder(s)	Laura Loney
Report Date	March 2023

This research and evaluation report describes the history, context, and physical characteristics of the property at 68 Bower Street in Acton, 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

In 1829, Lot 28, Concession 3 was granted to the Canada Company. Three years later, Rufus Adams purchased the lot. The orchard lane within the property later became Bower Avenue. The 1819 Patent Plan (Figure 1) shows the property within Lot 28, Concession 3, and the 1858 Tremaine's Map (Figure 2) and 1877 Halton County Atlas Map (Figure 3) show the location of the property within Acton.

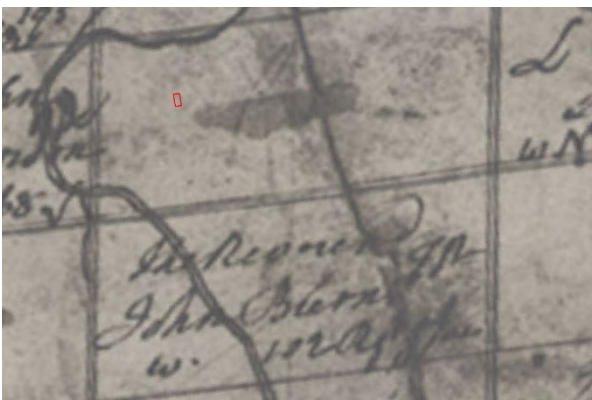


Figure 1: 1819 Patent Plan, subject property identified in red



Figure 2: 1858 Tremaine's Map, subject property identified in red.

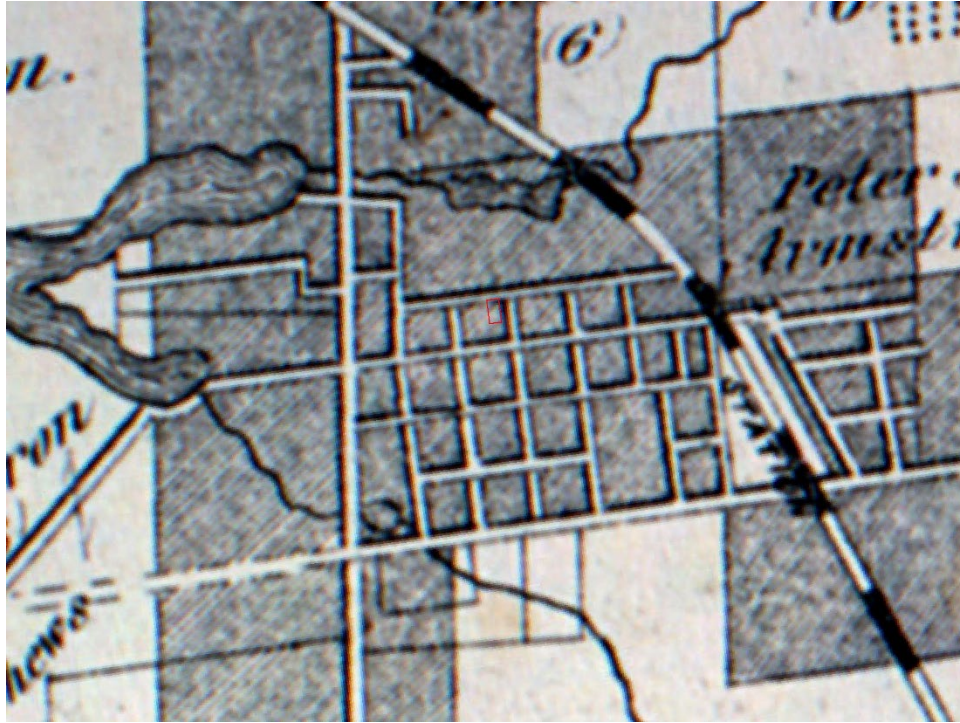


Figure 3: 1877 Halton County Atlas Map

In 1891, Alexander Secord purchased the subject property. Secord was born in on January 2, 1850, to Alexander Augustus Secord and Eliza Secord (nee McNamara), and his great aunt was Canadian hero Laura Secord. Alexander Secord was a clerk for his cousins' store, the Secord Brothers, and in 1878 accepted a position as traveller for Storey & Co, glove manufacturers. Secord is identified in the 1881 Census as a storekeeper in Acton. The September 23, 1889, edition of the *Acton Free Press* notes that W.P Brown had opened a grocery store in the premises formerly occupied by Secord.

The subject property was once the site of the Government's Drill Shed, constructed between 1867 and 1868. In 1893, at the bequest of Alex Secord, the Drill Shed was moved to Prospect Park; the shed was again moved in both 1929 and 1999. Secord then had this home, designed by architect John Francis Brown, constructed on the subject property. Brown (1866-1942) was a prominent Toronto-based architect who designed many ecclesiastical, institutional, and residential buildings throughout the City and surrounding areas. His residential commissions date from 1892, primarily in Toronto communities such as the Annex, Rosedale, and Cabbagetown, however over 140 works have been attributed to Brown's architectural practice, with over fifty residences designed between the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Alexander Secord called the home "Villanore" after his wife Leonora Secord, the eldest daughter of W.H. Storey who built the glove factory on Bower Avenue (Figure 4 and Figure 5).



Figure 4: W.H. Storey and Son Glove Factory on Bower Avenue (EHS 383f)



Figure 5: Sketch of W. H. Storey & Son glove factory on invoice, 1 Sept 1894 (EHS00131)

Storey was one of the leading leather and glove makers of the nineteenth century, coming to Acton in 1866 to open his saddlery and harness business and then expanding into glovemaking by 1868. Storey's business became a major industry in Acton, later operated by the family of H.T. Arnold until it closed following the Second World War, later demolished in 1962 and the current Post Office constructed on the site. Storey's main residence was Sunderland Villa, now the Shoemaker Funeral Home, along Mill Street in Acton. The May 12, 1892, edition of the Acton Free Press reports that Secord built a fence around the home at that time. The Acton Free Press in its March 13, 1913, announcement of the death of famous Canadian and Mohawk poet Pauline Johnson, whose stage name was Tekahionwake, notes the poet visited Acton several times and was the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Secord at Villanore.

The *Acton Free Press*, November 22, 1894, edition noted the following about Secord's residence:

"What Acton lacks in attractive business blocks is largely compensated for in handsome private residences, of which it possesses more than most towns of this population. One of the prettiest and most homelike is the new residence of Mr. Alex Secord, manager of the manufacturing department of the Canada Glove Works, at the corner of Bower Ave. and Elgin St. The house is very conveniently arranged. The front entrance is through a pillared piazza into a commodious hall which opens into double parlors. The staircase is very artistic, built of cherry with carved newel posts, and on the landing are two stained glass windows. It has hot and cold water and also a splendid cellar."

His obituary notes that he went into business selling groceries and chinaware, and later partnered with his brother T.E.M. Secord. Following his marriage to Lenora, he was superintendent of the W.H. Storey glove works. The obituary notes that "... Mr. Secord was popular and highly esteemed by a large circle. He was public-spirited and interested in the progress of the town. He had been a member of the Municipal Council, was connected with several societies, and two years ago was honored by being gazetted a Justice of Peace. He was a member of the Methodist Church and was Secretary-Treasurer of the Trustee Board when he died."

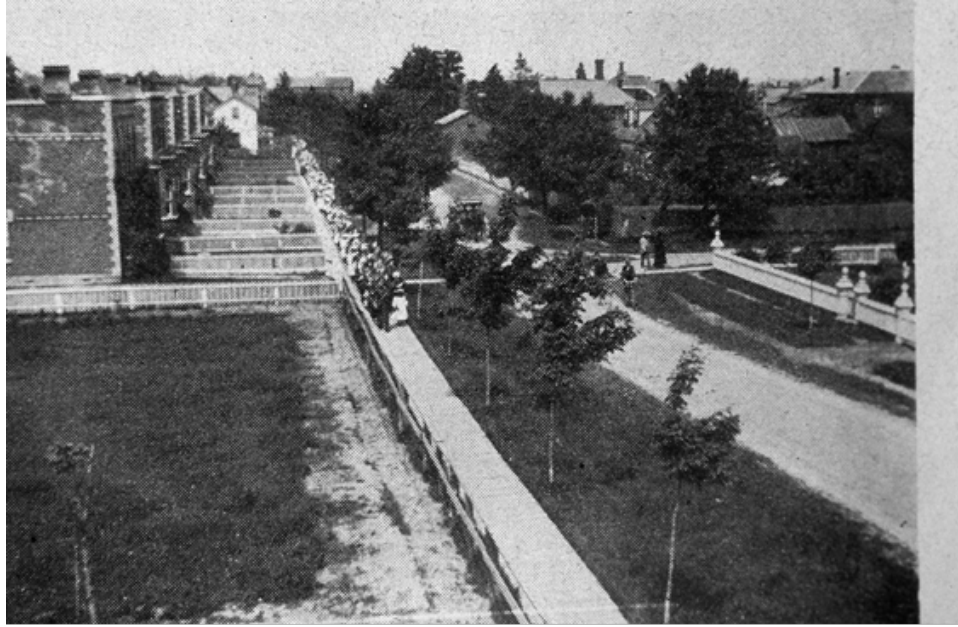


Figure 6: Acton Citizen's Band leads the Parade marking the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria, down Bower Avenue. Photographer A.T. Brown took the photo from the Storey Glove Factory, 18 June 1897 (EHS 18395)

Following Secord's death at 58 in 1908, the funeral was held at Villanore. Leonora lived at the residence with her second husband, railroad agent Harry Holmes until her death on September 15, 1941. Lenora's brother, W.A. Storey, and her sister Jennie Dryden lived at Villanore until her death. Alex and Leonora are buried with their daughter Maude Secord, who lived less than a year, at the Fairview Cemetery in Acton.



Figure 7: Aerial view of Bower Avenue, c. 1919. Mill pond is at right, Storey Glove Works is the larger building in the upper left quadrant (EHS 00063)

The 1935 Fire Insurance Map identifies a wood-frame structure to the south identified as "Furne Storage"; however, this structure is no longer extant (Figure 8).

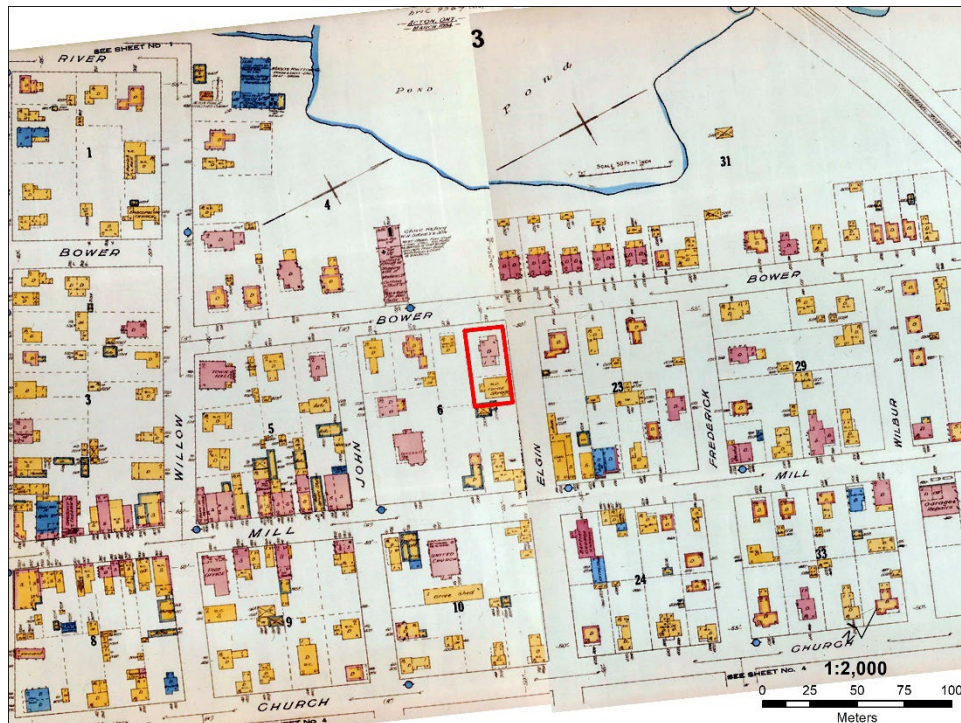


Figure 8: 1935 Fire Insurance Plan, property identified in red.

After Lenora's death, Bertie (Bertha) Smith, who had lived with the Holmes, remained at Villanore with her husband Clarence Poole. Bertha Poole is described as "a daughter of the home" in the Acton Free Press on Sept 25, 1941. The Pooles made the house into apartments. Bertha Poole died in May 1965 (born in 1886). Clarence Poole, first married to Helen Robertson who died in 1928, is identified as a Clergyman in the 1935 Voter's list. Reverend Poole was the pastor for the United Church in Acton (replaced in 1935), however he returned to Acton from Ridgeway upon his retirement 11 years before his death in 1959. "Their attractive large home at 68 Bower Ave. is flanked by a lovely garden which Mr. Poole tended with great pleasure. He spent many hours beautifying his home grounds, pausing to chat with passers-by. Poole died following a short illness at 83.

In 1965, the property was purchased by Earl and Myrtle Lambert who added another apartment on the third floor, installed a furnace and bathroom, and sandblasted the brick in 1972. Earl Lambert married Myrtle Hamilton on September 14, 1929, and lived in Acton since their marriage. Myrtle died in 1977. Earl Lambert is identified in voter's lists as a Tanner, until 1945 when he is identified as a carpenter.



Figure 9: 68 Bower Avenue, c.1986 (EHS 18343)



Figure 10: Brick house with Gothic Revival influences at 68 Bower Street, c. 1996 (EHS 23645)



Figure 11: 68 Bower Street, c. 2015 (EHS 23645)

2.2 Property & Architectural Description

The property is located at 68 Bower Street, Acton, Halton Hills, and is a rectangular parcel situated at the southwest corner of Bower Street and Elgin Street North (Figure 12, Figure 13, and Figure 14).



Figure 12: Property at 68 Bower Street identified in red



Figure 13: Looking west along Bower Street towards 68 Bower Street (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 14: Looking east along Bower Street towards 68 Bower Street (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

Exterior

The existing two-and-a-half storey L-shaped residential building is set back from Bower Street and situated within the centre of the lot (Figure 15). The house is accessed by a walkway extending from the sidewalk along Bower Street. The front yard features two large, mature deciduous trees with soft landscaping along the front elevation and a grassed lawn. Mature deciduous trees are located along the rear and sides of the property with a low hedge at the south end of the property along Elgin Street. The single asphalt driveway is accessed from Bower Street and extends to a one-storey garage with gable roof at the rear of the house.

The front elevation features a projecting bay with gable peak and the front entrance along the recessed portion of the elevation. features a covered wooden porch at the first storey with balcony above at the second storey. The porch is accessed by a flight of two stone steps. At the first storey, the wooden porch features a wooden railing with turned balusters and wooden Doric columns above squared bases with recessed panels supporting the flat roof with dentil moulding. The second-storey railing features squared wooden columns with turned balusters.



Figure 15: Front (northwest) elevation of 68 Bower Street (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

The front entrance features a flat-headed door opening with stained glass transom (Figure 16). Beside the entrance is an oval window with detailed brick surround. Above the first storey are a flat-headed window opening with stone sill and flat-headed door opening onto the porch roof. The front elevation of the projecting bay features a large, flat-headed, rectangular window opening with stone lintel and sill (Figure 17). Brick detailing extends above the lintel and wraps around the corner to the side elevation. At the second storey, a smaller rectangular window opening with brick lintel and stone sill is centered beneath an oval window with brick surround. The gable features decorative brackets with bargeboard

beneath the gable peak, with projecting eaves featuring wooden soffits. The steel roof facing Bower Street features contemporary skylights (Figure 18).



Figure 16: Front Porch Detail, 68 Bower Street (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

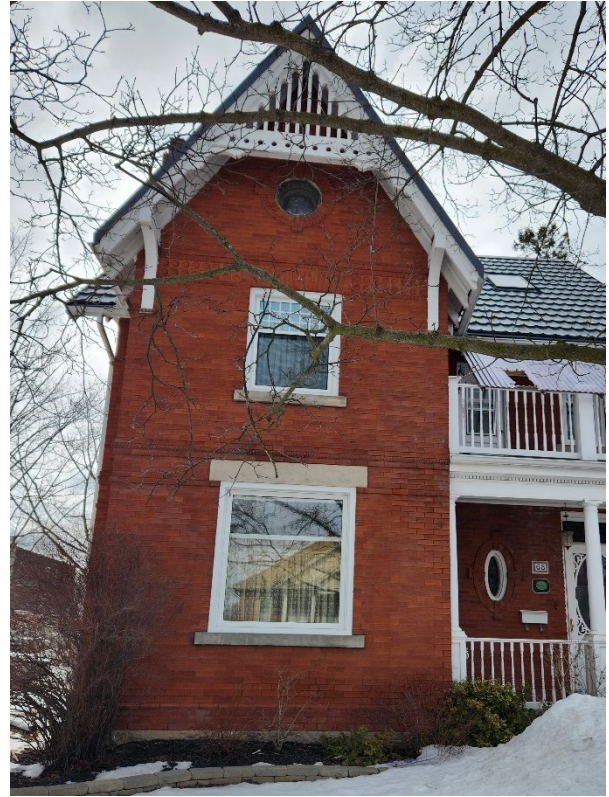


Figure 17: Front elevation detail, 68 Bower Street (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

Along the west elevation (Figure 18 through Figure 21), a projecting bay extends above the first storey with a flat headed window opening beneath a small roof, aligning with an interior staircase. Beyond the project bay are smaller rectangular window openings at the first and second storeys. An oval window is located beneath the gable in the upper storey which features bracketed eaves with wooden soffits and decorative bargeboard.



Figure 18: Northwest corner of 68 Bower Street (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 19: Partial side (southwest) elevation and rear garage, 68 Bower Street (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

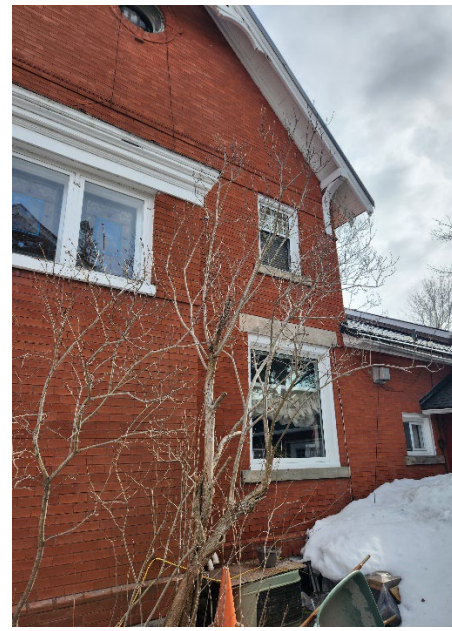


Figure 20: Partial side (southwest) elevation, 68 Bower Street (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 21: Partial side (southwest) elevation showing front covered porch (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

The first storey of the east elevation along Elgin Street features two small vertical window openings and a larger rectangular window opening with stone lintel and sill towards the rear (Figure 23). At the second storey are a smaller rectangular window opening with contemporary hung window with a smaller, horizontal window opening with slider window and stone sill. Centered beneath the gable is a round window opening below the bracketed eaves with wooden soffit and bargeboard, like that on the north and west elevations. A brick chimney extends above the east elevation.



Figure 22: Partial side (northeast) elevation, 68 Bower Street (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 23: Partial side (northeast) elevation, 68 Bower Street (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

At the rear, a one-storey addition with gable roof, with additional height in the south portion of the addition, connects into the original structure (Figure 22). The contemporary addition is clad in wooden bargeboard. Above the one-storey addition, a gable-roofed dormer is visible within the roof of the original structure, with a small contemporary skylight directly beside it (Figure 24 and Figure 25).



Figure 24: Looking east from Elgin Street towards 68 Bower Street, showing southeast corner (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 25: Rear elevation showing one-storey garage, 68 Bower Street (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

The current owners have the architect's original plans and elevation drawings on display within the residence's foyer (Figure 26 and Figure 27). In 2020, the side verandah (shown on the first-floor plans) was removed for the rear addition which also modified the rear kitchen wall. The plans also demonstrate the alterations to the front porch railings as well as the original windows.



Figure 26: Photograph of the architect's elevations for Villanore

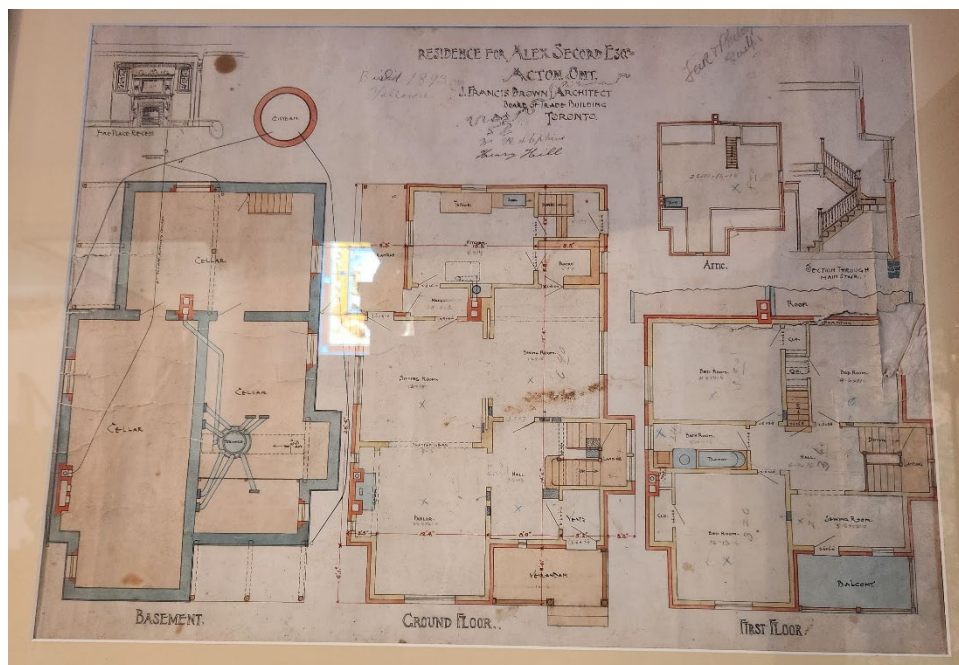


Figure 27: Photograph of the original floor plans for Villanore by J. Francis Brown

Interior

The interior of Villanore has retained many original details and features, while some areas have been renovated over time. At the basement level, the original rubble stone foundation is visible on the interior within the rear addition (Figure 28).



Figure 28: Rubble stone foundation within interior basement, 68 Bower Street (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

On the first floor, the dining room and living room ceilings feature the original painted tin ceiling supported by decorative brackets (Figure 29, Figure 30, and Figure 31). Dark wood trim is extant around window openings throughout, in addition to wood trim around doorways and along the baseboards (Figure 32 and Figure 39).



Figure 29: Original tin ceiling within the dining room, 68 Bower Street (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 30: Original tin ceiling within the living room, 68 Bower Street (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 31: Interior ceiling detail within the living room and dining room, 68 Bower Street (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 32: Wood door trim and doors within dining room, 68 Bower Street (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 33: Wooden decorative feature within dining room, 68 Bower Street (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

A built-in decorative shelf features the same wood detailing (Figure 33). While the original windows in the home have almost all been replaced, some of the stained glass windows have remained, including the glass transom above the entrance, oval stained glass window on the primary elevation next to the entrance, two small stained glass windows flanking the fireplace, and a hand-painted pair of stained glass windows above the staircase landing (Figure 34 through Figure 37).

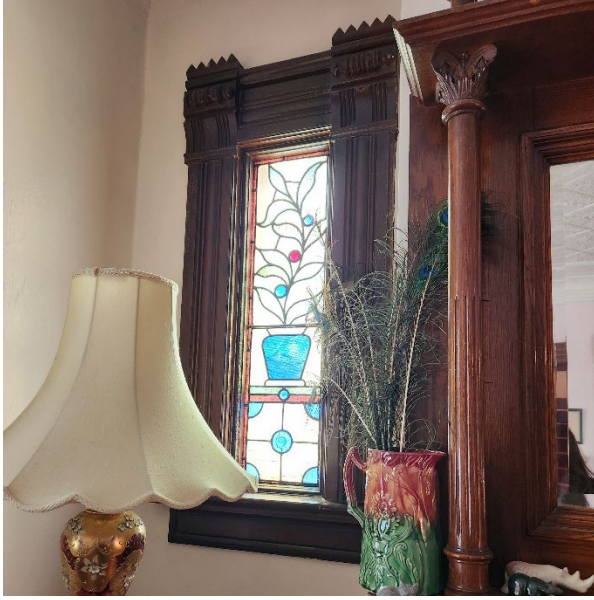


Figure 34: Stained glass window with carved wooden trim within the living room, 68 Bower Street (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

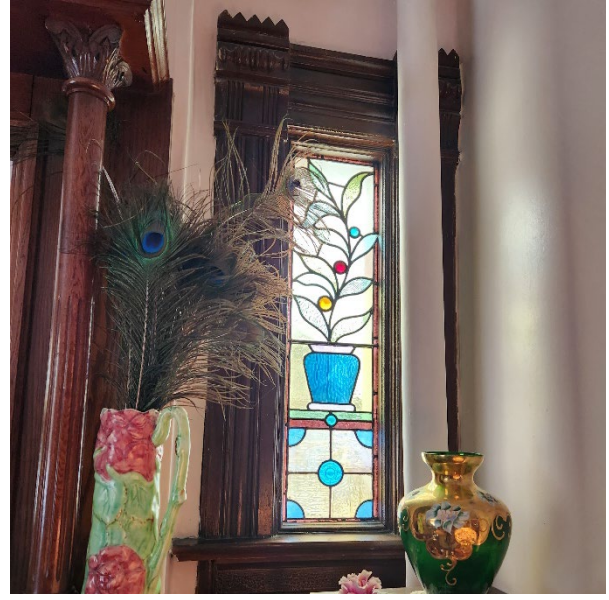


Figure 35: Stained glass windows with carved wooden trim within the living room, 68 Bower Street (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

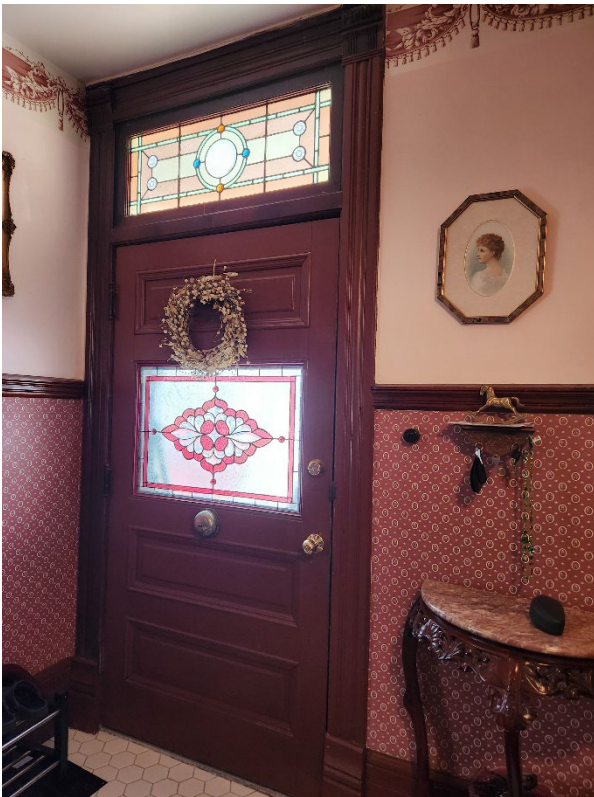


Figure 36: Front entrance within foyer showing wooden door trim and stained-glass transom above, 68 Bower Street. Existing door is not original (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

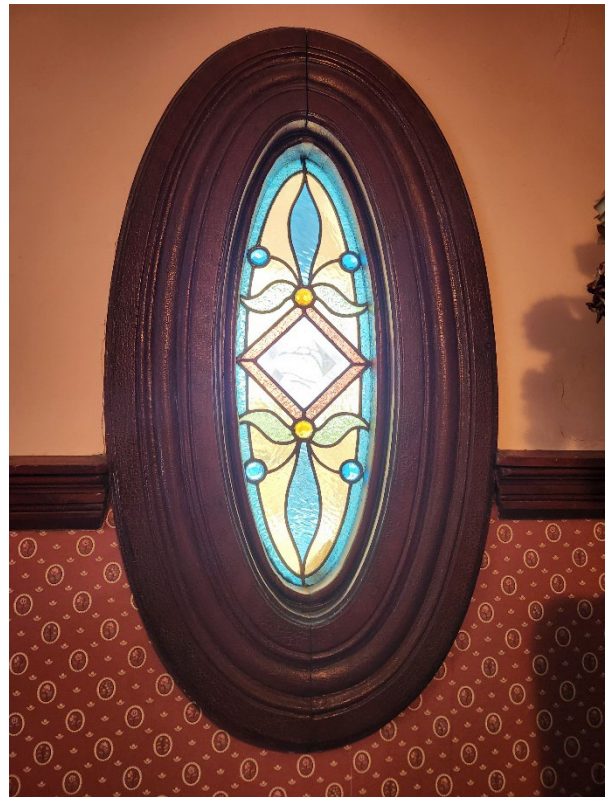


Figure 37: Stained glass window adjacent to front entrance from within foyer, 68 Bower Street (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

The living room features an ornately carved fireplace surround and mantel with its original tile hearth (Figure 38).



Figure 38: Original wooden fireplace within the dining room, 68 Bower Street (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

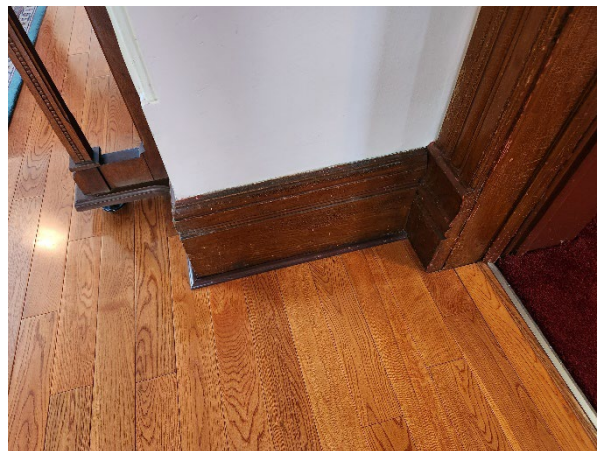


Figure 39: Interior wooden baseboard within living room, 68 Bower Street (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

Within the front foyer, an ornately carved and detailed staircase extends to the second floor, providing access to the hand-painted stained glass windows above the landing in between floors (Figure 40 through Figure 44).



Figure 40: Carved wooden staircase, 68 Bower Street (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 41: Carved wooden staircase, 68 Bower Street (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 42: Carved wooden staircase, 68 Bower Street (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

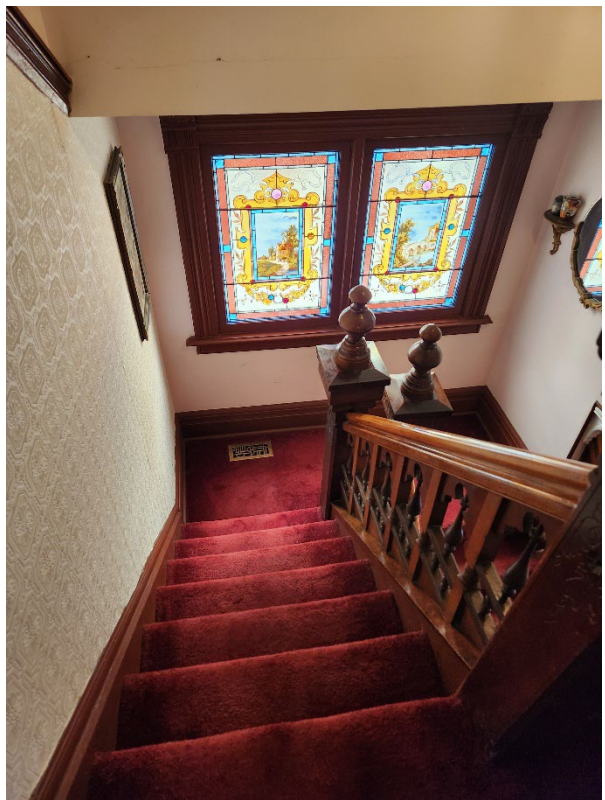


Figure 43: Carved wooden staircase, 68 Bower Street (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 44: Hand-painted stained-glass windows at staircase landing, 68 Bower Street
(Town of Halton Hills 2023)

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.

Design or Physical Value	
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.	<p>The subject property is an excellent example of a residential Victorian-era vernacular building with Gothic Revival influences and a high degree of artisanship on both the exterior and interior.</p> <p>The Victorian-era residence at 68 Bower Street exhibits many of the features that are characteristic of this period with Gothic Revival influences, including its red brick construction, decorative woodwork and bargeboard beneath steeply pitched gables, wooden porch with decorative trim, and flat window arches. On the interior, the Victorian commitment to dressing up the house is evident in the carved woodwork throughout the home, including the fireplace, staircase, door and window trim and baseboard. Additionally, the painted tin ceilings within the first floor as well as the stained-glass windows contribute to the decorative style.</p>
The property has design value or physical value because it displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit.	The subject property displays a high degree of design and physical value primarily related to the hand-painted stained-glass windows extant above the staircase landing on the side elevation. Additionally, intricate woodwork, detailing and original tin ceilings remain throughout the first floor of the property in addition to the main staircase, displaying a high degree of artisanship and artistry.
The property has design value or physical value because it demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement.	The subject 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.	The subject property has significant historical and associative value within the community of Acton. The property is associated with the family of Alexander Secord, great-nephew of Laura Secord

	and son-in-law of W.H. Storey who built the glove factory on Bower Street.
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.	The subject 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.	Villanore was designed by architect J. Francis Brown, a prominent Toronto-based architect during the late 20 th century.
Contextual Value	
The property has contextual value because it is important in defining, maintaining, or supporting the character of an area.	The property at 68 Bower Street has contextual value as it is important in maintaining the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century character of Bower Street.
The property has contextual value because it is physically, functionally, visually, or historically linked to its surroundings.	The 19 th century brick residence within the subject property is 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.
The property has contextual value because it is a landmark.	The subject property is not known to meet this criterion at this time.

4.0 Statement of Significance and Heritage Attributes

Villanore at 68 Bower Street has physical and design value as an excellent example of a residential Victorian-era vernacular building with Gothic Revival influences and a high degree of artisanship on both the exterior and interior. The Victorian-era residence exhibits many of the features that are characteristic of this period with Gothic Revival influences, including its red brick construction, decorative woodwork and bargeboard beneath steeply pitched gables, wooden porch with decorative trim, and flat window arches. On the interior, the Victorian commitment to detail is evident in the carved woodwork throughout the home, including the fireplace, staircase, door and window trim and baseboard. Additionally, the painted tin ceilings within the first floor as well as the stained-glass windows contribute to the decorative style.

The property at 68 Bower Street has historical and associative value within the community of Acton. The property is associated with the family of Alexander Secord, great-nephew of Laura Secord and son-in-law of W.H. Storey who built the glove factory on Bower Street. Villanore was designed by architect J. Francis Brown, a prominent Toronto-based architect during the late 20th century.

The property at 68 Bower Street has contextual value as it is important in maintaining the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century character of Bower Street. Villanore is in its original location at the corner of Bower Street and Elgin Street, and as such is physically, functionally, visually, and historically linked to its surroundings within the historical streetscape within Acton's core.

The heritage attributes of the property at 68 Bower Street are identified as follows:

- The location, setback, and orientation of the nineteenth century brick residence along Bower Street in Acton;
- The scale, form, and massing of the two-and-a-half storey brick residence with cross gable roof with brick chimney and dormers;
- Exterior materials, including red brick, stone, wooden features, and original stained-glass windows;
- The front elevation facing Bower Street, including the front entrance with stained-glass transom and oval stained-glass window, flat-headed window openings at the first and second storey round window beneath the front gable, and wooden two-storey porch;
- The side (west) elevation featuring a one-storey projecting bay with hand-painted stained-glass windows, and flat-headed and oval window openings;
- The side (east) elevation facing Elgin Street, featuring narrow stained-glass windows, flat-headed window openings at the first and second storey, a round window beneath the gable, and brick chimney above;
- On the rear elevation, the gable-roofed dormer;
- On the first-floor interior:
 - Original wooden detailing including window and door trim, baseboards, and built-in shelving in the dining room;
 - The carved wooden fireplace and mantel within the living room;
 - The carved wooden staircase extending to the second floor;
 - At the staircase landing, original hand-painted stained-glass windows; and,
 - The original tin ceilings within the living room and dining room with decorative brackets.

The rear addition attached one-storey garage, and interior features on the second floor of the home have not been identified as attributes of the subject property.

5.0 Summary and Conclusions

Following research and evaluation according to Ontario Regulation 9/06, it has been determined that the property at 68 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.

6.0 Sources

Primary Sources

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

Ontario Land Registry Records

Ancestry.ca

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