

Research and Evaluation Report



(J.M. Rowe 2023)

Glen Methodist Church

533 Main Street, Glen Williams, Town of Halton Hills

June 2023

Prepared by:

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533 Main Street | LT 58, RCP 1556; HALTON HILLS

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1.0 Property Description

533 Main Street	
Municipality	Glen Williams, Town of Halton Hills
County or Region	Regional Municipality of Halton
Legal Description	LT 58, RCP 1556; HALTON HILLS
Construction Date	c. 1840
Original Use	Institutional
Current Use	Commercial
Architect/Building/Designer	N/A
Architectural Style	Gothic Revival
Additions/Alterations	Bricked over in 1902; Interior alterations
Heritage Status	Listed on the Town's Heritage Register
Recorder(s)	John Mark Rowe; Laura Loney
Report Date	June 2023

2.0 Background

This research and evaluation report describes the history, context, and physical characteristics of the property at 533 Main Street in Glen Williams, Halton Hills, Ontario (Figure 1 and Figure 2). The report includes an evaluation of the property's cultural heritage value as prescribed by the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

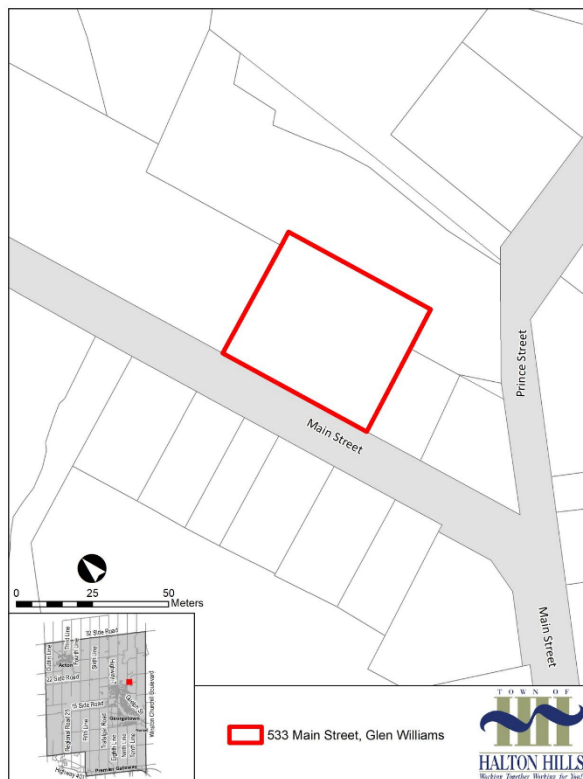


Figure 1: Location Map, 533 Main Street (Glen Williams)



Figure 2: 2021 Aerial, 533 Main Street (Glen Williams)

2.1 Historical Background

John Butler Muirhead (1800-1824) received a location ticket for Lot 21, Concession 10, Esquesing in 1818 (Figure 3). The son of a Loyalist family, Muirhead completed his settlement duties on his 200 acres on 13 June 1823. On 25 September 1824, the Crown patent was issued to Muirhead. However, Muirhead died suddenly on 29 November 1824 and was buried at St. Mark's Church in Niagara.

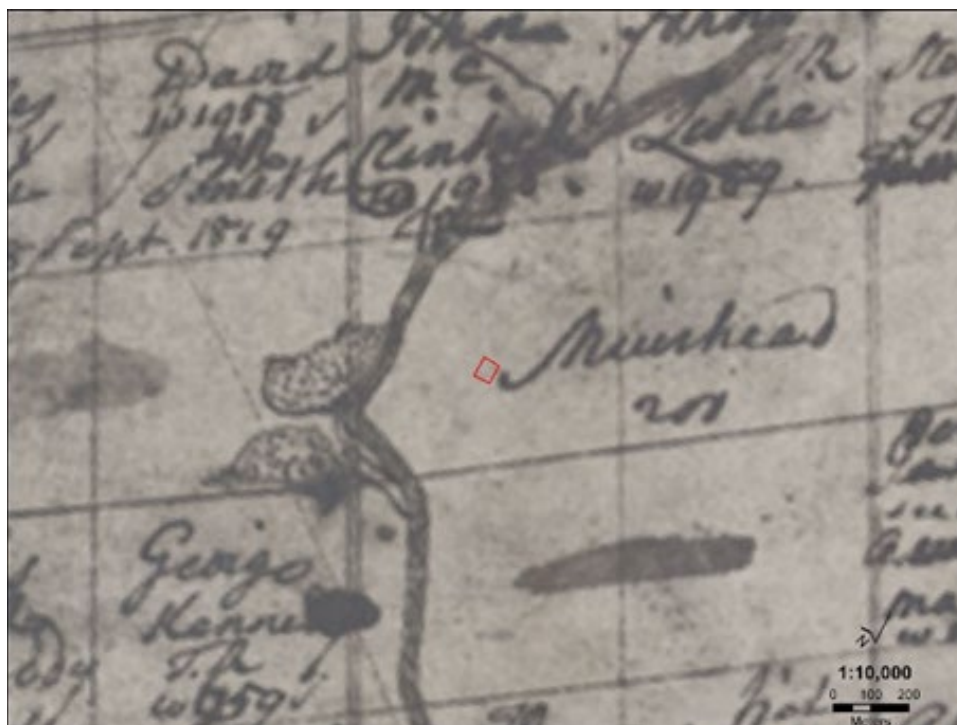


Figure 3: Patent Plan for Esquesing Township, c.1819, showing Muirhead's 200-acre property. The location of the subject property within Lot 21, Concession 10 is outlined in red.

Benajah Williams (1765-1851) was a clothier in Gainsborough Township, Niagara. Williams moved to Esquesing with his third wife, Elizabeth Kennedy (1788-1842), following the rest of her family. On October 12, 1824, he listed his mill property and Grimsby township property for sale in the *Niagara Gleaner*. Williams purchased Lot 21, Concession 10, Esquesing Township from the heirs of John Butler Muirhead on 9 November 1825, and had the saw mill up and running that same year.

Elizabeth (Kennedy) Williams' brother, Morris Kennedy (1794-1886), lived on the neighbouring farm, as did Charles Kennedy (who surveyed the township) and George Kennedy (after whom Georgetown was named). Elizabeth's nephew, Marris Kennedy Jr. (1824-1896), was licensed as a preacher in the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1833. Marris Kennedy Jr. began holding meetings in Williamsburg (later Glen Williams), since Charles Kennedy supported the Wesleyan Methodists who met in a chapel on Trafalgar Road (Lindsay Court Pumping Station). Williamsburg was put on the Methodist Episcopal Guelph circuit in 1836, ensuring regular visits from a preacher.

David Culp, the presiding elder of the Methodist Episcopal Church, proposed a building committee to build a church in Williamsburg, consisting of Benajah Williams, Peter Fox, and Joel Williams. The first Trustees of the church were Robert Lyman (son-in-law of Morris), Charles Williams, Morris Kennedy, Henry Grass, and George Kennedy (son of Morris).

In 1840, Reverend Luther Rice and Reverend Egerton Ryerson began a series of special services which was credited with inspiring a great spiritual revival. Also in 1840, Benajah Williams sold the land which became Village Lot 48 to the Trustees for five shillings.

The church was constructed in 1840 from wood sawn at the Williams' sawmill around the corner. There are no extant images of the original building, but it occupied the same footprint as the existing building.

The quarterly meeting of the Methodist Episcopal circuit was being held 'in Williams Meeting House' as early as November 1841. The 1854 survey of Glen Williams shows the church in its current location (Figure 4). In his writings, Reverend Richard Ruggle described a service with women sitting on one side and men on the other. There was no organ, however it is noted that Brother Culp sung a solo before preaching when he visited. Massive pillars supported the roof of the Church, and the pulpit was a huge structure rising six feet from the floor.

The Williamsburg Church was part of the Nelson circuit until 1843, when it was transferred to the Toronto circuit in Churchville. In 1852, the village name was changed from Williamsburg to Glen Williams.

In 1868, the frame church building was repaired, and a stone foundation was put in. The interior was renovated, removing the pillars, and renewing the wooden ceiling.

Benajah Williams' third son, Jacob (1816-1853), married Frances Huestis Beek (1822-1887). While they both supported the Williamsburg Church, Frances also supported the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary society.

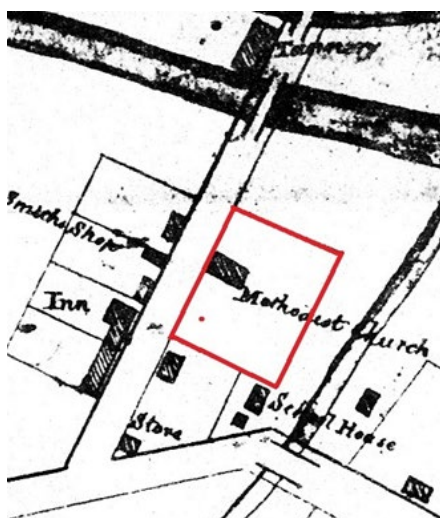


Figure 4: 1854 survey of Glen Williams showing Methodist Church (EHS - MG12 A3 #23)

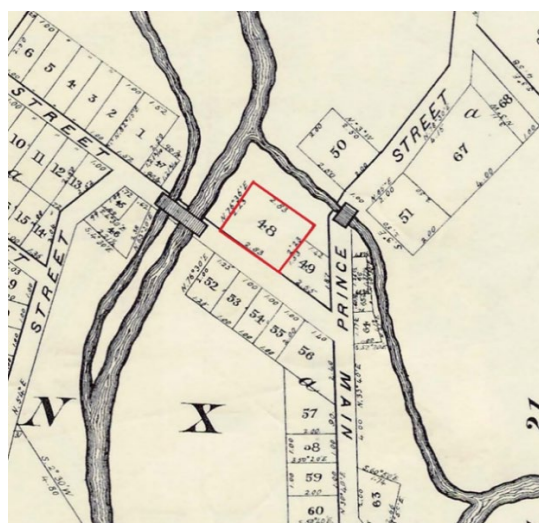


Figure 5: 1877 Halton Atlas detail showing Lot 48, Glen Williams (EHS - MG12 A2 #3.05)

In 1874, the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada and the Wesleyan Methodist Conference of Eastern British America united, annexing the Methodist New Connexion Church in Canada as well. In 1884, the Episcopal and Wesleyan Methodist Churches joined to form the Methodist Church of Canada.

In 1902, the Anglicans laid the cornerstone for a new stone church across the river from the Glen Methodist Church. The frame Methodist Church was showing its age, so Rev. G. Smitherman and the congregation decided to renew the original building in its existing location.

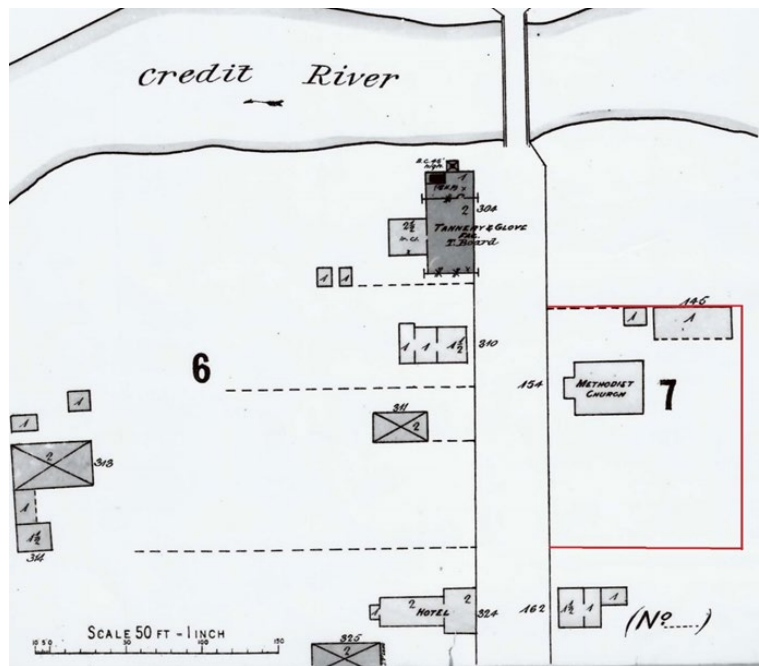


Figure 6: 533 Main Street labelled as Methodist Church on 1898 Fire Insurance map, showing additional structures within the subject property (EHS - MG12 A2 #3.01)

The November 19, 1902, edition of *The Georgetown Herald* reported the reopening of the church:

"Sunday and Monday were historic days in the Glen Williams Methodist Church. Early in the present year the Trustees decided that the old building which had done many a years' good service in the past, was not good enough for the advancing future, and so it was decided to make practically a new building of it. The workers in connection with the organization fell in with the proposal and all united to make the effort a success. The result is most gratifying. The building has been transformed inside and out: the old frame chapel is now a handsome brick one; the old uncomfortable seats are replaced by those of latest design; the coal lamps are out and electricity now does the lighting. It is a through transformation and all are pleased that the change made has been so radical and complete."

Photographs of the church from the early 20th century show its transformation from its more humble origin as a simple frame structure to a brick-clad structure with associated outbuildings (Figure 7 through Figure 9). The 1903 renovation maintained the "rectangular box" shape and was influenced by the Commissioner's Gothic Revival style introduced to England in response to the French Revolution. The vernacular box design emphasized simplicity with simple pine strip slightly vaulted ceiling and the altar at the east end of the building. Descriptions of the interior are suggestive of the Nova Scotian neo-classical influence brought by the Loyalists. The influence of Frances Huestis Williams and her strong Wesleyan Methodist views can be suggested.



Figure 7: Glen Methodist Church c. 1903, showing the wooden sidewalk along Main Street (EHS 21757)



Figure 8: Interior of Glen Williams Methodist Church c. 1912 (EHS19982)

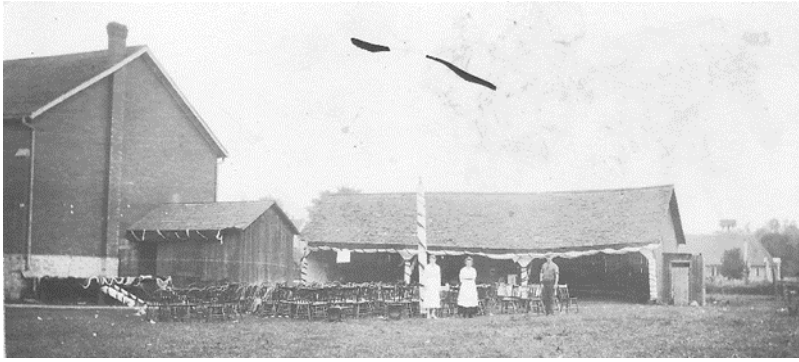


Figure 9: WWI Veterans service in 1918. Shown left to right are the Church, the woodshed, the driveshed, the outhouse, and St. Alban's Anglican Church beyond (EHS00968)

The Glen Williams Methodist Church was part of the Norval-Terra Cotta circuit from 1902 until 1925. Then it became part of the Limehouse and Churchill circuit. In 1925, a further union of the remaining Methodist churches and some Presbyterians created the United Church of Canada. In 1937, Limehouse United Church was closed, and the parsonage was moved to Glen Williams, in a cottage owned by Joseph Beaumont, opposite the woolen mill.

A 1925 photograph shows continued change to the landscape surrounding the church property, including a new concrete sidewalk along Main Street (Figure 10). Figure 11 shows the large church congregation in 1936.



Figure 10: Glen United Church c. 1925. Note the concrete sidewalk. EHS20354



Figure 11: Glen United Church congregation c. 1936. EHS20348

As with many churches, updates continued to be made throughout the years to the church building. In 1954, the old pump organ was replaced by an electric organ. A two-story brick addition was later made to the back of the church, officially opening on 1st April 1962. In 1967, as a Centennial project, the sanctuary was completely renovated. In keeping with the times, a suspended ceiling was installed, and all evidence of the original frame building was then hidden.

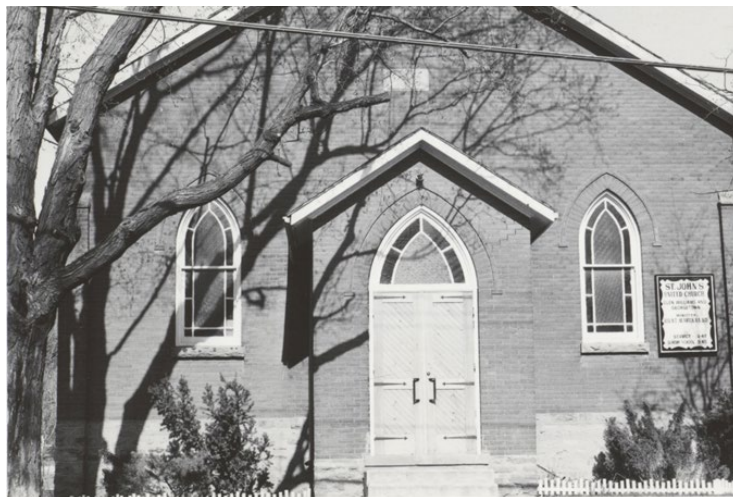


Figure 12: St. John's United Church, Glen Williams in April 1973 (EHS 13561)

In 1971, the Glen Williams United Church left Norval United and amalgamated with St. John's United Church, Georgetown. The church was then re-christened St. John's United Church, Glen Williams.

In 1986, the Fellowship Room within the 1960s addition was renovated and the exterior was landscaped. In the early 2000s, several improvements were made to the Glen Williams building. In 2004, the drop ceiling in the sanctuary was removed to expose the original vaulted ceiling of pine strips, dating from 1868. The basement and kitchen were fully renovated, a second exterior door was added accessing a rebuilt stairwell and new property fencing was installed, all in the hope of attracting a Montessori school as a tenant. In 2007, a main floor washroom was installed in the Fellowship Room to support their program.

During 2011 to 2014, St. John's celebrated its 175th anniversary in both locations. In 2011, the Glen Williams sanctuary was repainted, and the exterior landscaping removed and replanted. In 2012, the pews in Glen Williams were removed and replaced with stackable chairs.

As church attendance dropped, services were reduced at the Glen Williams church. Eventually, only summer services were held, and the building soon attracted a Montessori School. The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 accelerated the decline of church attendance, and the decision to close Glen Williams was made. The final service was held on 14 November 2021 and the church was then decommissioned.

On January 6, 2022, the congregation sold its Glen Williams church property to its long-term tenant, The Village Montessori School. Since January 2022, Village Montessori and Consulting have owned the property.

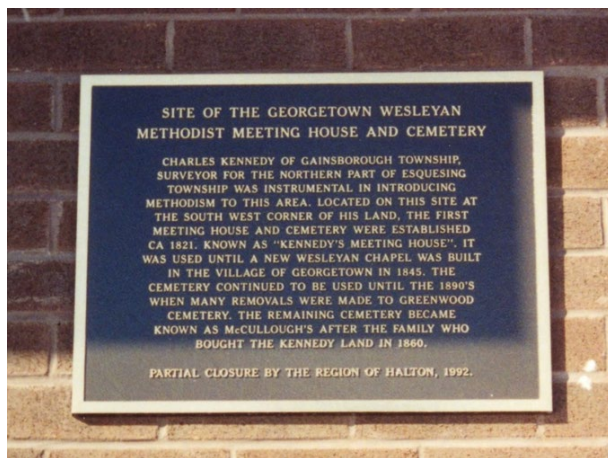


Figure 13: Site of Georgetown Wesleyan Methodist Chapel on Lindsay Court (1995) (EHS12529)



Figure 14: Plaque marking the addition of Williamsburg to the Guelph Methodist Episcopal circuit. (J.M. Rowe June 2023)

2.2 Property & Architectural Description

Village Montessori property is located at 533 Main Street, Glen Williams, Halton Hills, and is a rectangular village lot #48, situated on the east side of Main Street, between Prince Street and the Credit River Williams Bridge. The property is legally known as LT 58, RCP 1556; HALTON HILLS.

The subject property contains a two-storey Gothic Revival frame Methodist Church built in 1840 and bricked over in 1903. The building functioned as a church from 1840 until 2021.



Figure 15: Village Montessori & Consulting, 533 Main Street, Glen Williams (J.M. Rowe June 2023)



Figure 16: Front door and vestibule (J.M. Rowe June 2023)

Today, the building has a low pitch asphalt shingle roof, a single step raised chancel, lancet windows and decorative buttresses, all elements characteristic of Ontario Gothic Revival churches.

The red brick façade has a tiny brick vestibule containing steps leading to the interior doors of the nave of the church. Exterior steps lead to the raised lancet arch entranceway with double wood strip rectangular doors. The top of the arch contains a transom in a simple tracery window, containing a central white pebbled glass and four outline sections of yellow pebbled glass. Above the frame of the arch doorway is a brick hood mould with straight label stops. A simple black lamp sits at the apex of the lancet arch doorway. A bronze plaque to the right of the doorway states, “St. John’s United Church, Glen Williams, Founded 1836 A.D.” A commemorative stone is set into the brickwork above the peak of the vestibule. It reads, “Glen Methodist Church A.D. 1837 & 1902.” (Figure 17)



Figure 17: Looking northeast towards the existing building (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

Symmetrical lancet arch windows flank the vestibule. They are single hung sash windows with an interior framing of rectangular sash bars, forming squares in the two bottom corners. The rectangular glazing is tinted either yellow or red. The interior glazing is clear. The window framing is original wood, painted white. A sandstone sill with a rough front edging supports each window.

On each corner is a brick buttress, capped with rough sandstone. The buttress continues in mortared field stone at the basement level.

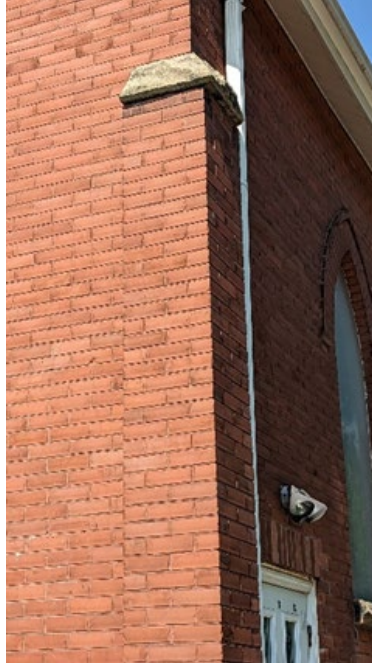


Figure 18: South-west corner buttress (J.M. Rowe June 2023)

On the south side of the building (Figure 19) are four arched lancet windows that match the front two. Four corresponding single hung sash windows are at ground level, for the basement. Each basement window is topped with a rough-finished sandstone header. Three brick and stone buttresses, matching the corners separate each window. The back corner of the original building also has a corner brick and stone buttress.



Figure 19: South elevation (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

A modern steel door is set in a doorway cut into the south-west corner of the original church, up against the corner buttress. Sympathetic red brick forms a brick header for the doorway. It was installed to improve fire safety for the Montessori school when they were tenants.

The 1962 red brick addition (Figure 20 and Figure 21) has two basement sash windows with a concrete block basement. The windows are topped by smooth stone headers. There is a single upper storey sash window. A modern steel door is fitted in the south-east corner, topped with a shingled wooden gable overhang.

The 1962 addition avoids the rear corner buttresses on both sides. The rear of the addition has three upper storey four-pane sash windows, while two windows serve at the basement level. The north-east side of the addition has two upper windows with two corresponding lower-level windows.



Figure 20: 2006 view of north side of the 1962 addition. J.M. Rowe photo



Figure 21: Looking towards the rear (east) elevation (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

The north side of the original church has the same four arched lancet windows with four corresponding lower windows as the south side. The buttress placement – each corner and three between the windows, matches the south side (Figure 22).



Figure 22: North elevation of 533 Main Street, Glen Williams, showing rear addition (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

The low-pitch roof is asphalt shingled with narrow fascia boards. They have been covered in white siding with matching gutters and downspouts. A single rectangular brick chimney sits at the rear of the original building.



Figure 23: North side of the Church during the 2006 Town Hall Shrub Sale (J.M. Rowe June 2023)

A stone driveway encircles the building expanding into a rear parking lot. To the south of the building and driveway is a large rectangular lawn. This is now enclosed as a children's playground (Figure 24 and Figure 25).



Figure 24: Looking south within the property towards the playground (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 25: Looking southwest along the driveway into the playground (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 are not applicable for this property.

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

The Glen Methodist Church at 533 Main Street has physical and design value as a representative example of a Gothic Revival church. Constructed originally as a simple frame church in 1840, sympathetic alterations to clad the structure in brick in the early 20th century retained its original rectangular form and contributed to its Gothic Revival aesthetic, including its gable roof, single-step raised chancel, lancet, or Gothic-arched, windows and decorative buttresses, all elements of Ontario Gothic Revival churches.

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

The Glen Methodist Church at 533 Main Street has historical and associative value as it is directly associated with the establishment and evolution of the Episcopal Methodist Church, and later United Church, within the Province, as well as the associative value with the religious community within Glen Williams for over 80 years. The property, and in particular the church building, demonstrate the historical significance of religious institutions as community hubs within hamlets like Glen Williams, while also reflecting the investments, alterations and improvements that are typically made in such institutions by their congregations over the lifetime of the church.

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

The Glen Methodist Church at 533 Main Street has contextual value as a landmark along Main Street in Glen Williams since its construction almost two hundred years ago. Located along a largely unaltered streetscape of nineteenth-century buildings, the former church building helps to define, maintain, and

support the historic character of Glen Williams and is, in its original location, is physically, visually, and historically linked to its surroundings.

4.0 Summary

Following research and evaluation according to Ontario Regulation 9/06, it has been determined that the Glen Methodist Church at 533 Main Street in Glen Williams 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 Glen Methodist Church at 533 Main Street are identified as follows:

- The setback, placement, and orientation of the mid-nineteenth century Gothic Revival Glen Methodist Church along Main Street in Glen Williams;
- The scale, form, and massing of the one-storey brick-clad frame structure with gable roof;
- Materials throughout, including red brick cladding and detailing, stone foundations, stone sills, and lintels;
- On the front (west) elevation,
 - o The one-storey brick-clad vestibule with gable roof, raised central Gothic-arched entrance with stained glass transom, and brick hood mould;
 - o Symmetrically-placed lancet window openings on either side of the main entrance with brick hood moulds;
 - o Brick buttresses at the corner of the front and side elevations; and
 - o Centered above the front elevation, the commemorative stone reading “Glen Methodist Church A.D. 1837 & 1902”; and,
- On the side (north and south) elevations,
 - o Four symmetrically placed lancet window openings with brick buttresses between, above flat-headed window openings at the basement level with stone lintels within the stone foundation.

The 1960s addition and interiors of the existing church building have not been identified as part of this report.

5.0 Sources

Primary Sources

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

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