

# Research and Evaluation Report



(Town of Halton Hills 2023)

## **Sunderland Villa**

55 Mill Street East, Acton, Town of Halton Hills

September 2023

55 Mill Street East | PT LT 21, BLK 4, PL 31, ALSO SHOWN ON PL 1098; PT LT 22, BLK 4, PL 31, AS IN 835185 ALSO SHOWN ON PL 1098; "T/W 242792" HALTON HILLS "AMENDED MAR 9 '99 & OCT 13/99 J. MENARD" SUBJECT TO AN EASEMENT IN GROSS OVER PT 2 20R19598 AS IN HR1160481

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## 1.0 Property Description

<b>55 Mill Street East</b>	
<b>Municipality</b>	Town of Halton Hills
<b>County or Region</b>	Regional Municipality of Halton
<b>Legal Description</b>	PT LT 21, BLK 4, PL 31, ALSO SHOWN ON PL 1098; PT LT 22, BLK 4, PL 31, AS IN 835185 ALSO SHOWN ON PL 1098; "T/W 242792" HALTON HILLS "AMENDED MAR 9 '99 & OCT 13/99 J. MENARD" SUBJECT TO AN EASEMENT IN GROSS OVER PT 2 20R19598 AS IN HR1160481
<b>Construction Date</b>	c. 1879
<b>Original Use</b>	Residential
<b>Current Use</b>	Funeral Home/Commercial
<b>Architect/Building/Designer</b>	Built for W.H. Storey
<b>Architectural Style</b>	Queen Anne Revival
<b>Additions/Alterations</b>	One-storey addition at front and rear elevations, garage addition
<b>Heritage Status</b>	Listed on the Town's Heritage Register
<b>Recorder(s)</b>	Laura Loney
<b>Report Date</b>	September 2023

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## 2.0 Background

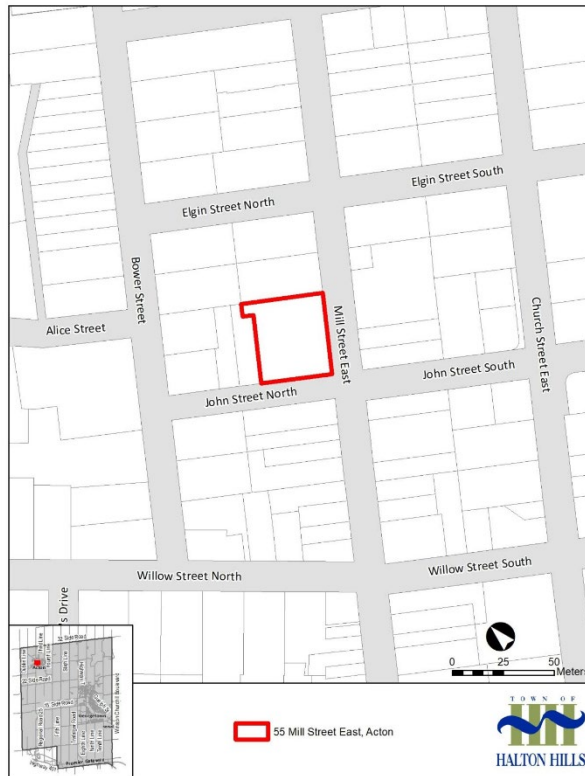


Figure 1: Location Map – 55 Mill Street East



Figure 2: Aerial Photograph - 55 Mill Street East

This research and evaluation report describes the history, context, and physical characteristics of the property at 55 Mill Street East in 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*.

## 2.1 Historical Background

Lot 21, Block 4 in Acton was sold by the family of Rufus Adams to Charles Tubby in 1865, and the following year to Charles Symon. In 1866, Charles Symon sold the property to Thomas Marshall who owned it for almost 10 years, and in 1875, Marshall sold the property to William Heslop (W.H.) Storey.



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Figure 3: Subject property identified on Tremaine's *Map of the County of Halton, Canada West*



Figure 4: Subject property identified on the 1877 *Illustrated Atlas of the County of Halton*

### *William Heslop Storey's Residence*

W.H. Storey came to Acton around 1866 to open a saddlery and harness business, originally establishing his store on Mill Street. In 1868, Storey began making sheepskin mitts and buckskin gloves.



Figure 5: William Heslop Storey (1827-1898), c. 1973 (EHS)

In 1875, Storey's company moved into his new factory on Bower Avenue, the Canada Glove Works, built at a cost of \$14,000. The Canada Glove Works employed hundreds of people in the area and became known throughout Canada. Storey was instrumental in the incorporation of the village of Acton in 1873 and served as Acton's first Reeve. He also served as a councillor for 18 years and was Warden of Halton County, Justice of the Peace, chair of the school board, director of several insurance companies, president of the Canadian Manufacturer's Association, and long-standing member of the Methodist church. John McDonald identifies Storey in *Halton Sketches* as "... a great industrial pioneer and public-spirited citizen of early Acton" (p.82).

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In 1879, Sunderland Villa was constructed for Storey on Mill Street, who named the building for his home country in England. The *Acton Free Press* reported that the Storey family had moved into their residence by September 1880. The carriage house for the home was located at 7 John Street. Sunderland Villa was heated by steam piped underground from the factory to the home and was the first residence to be heated by steam in Acton.

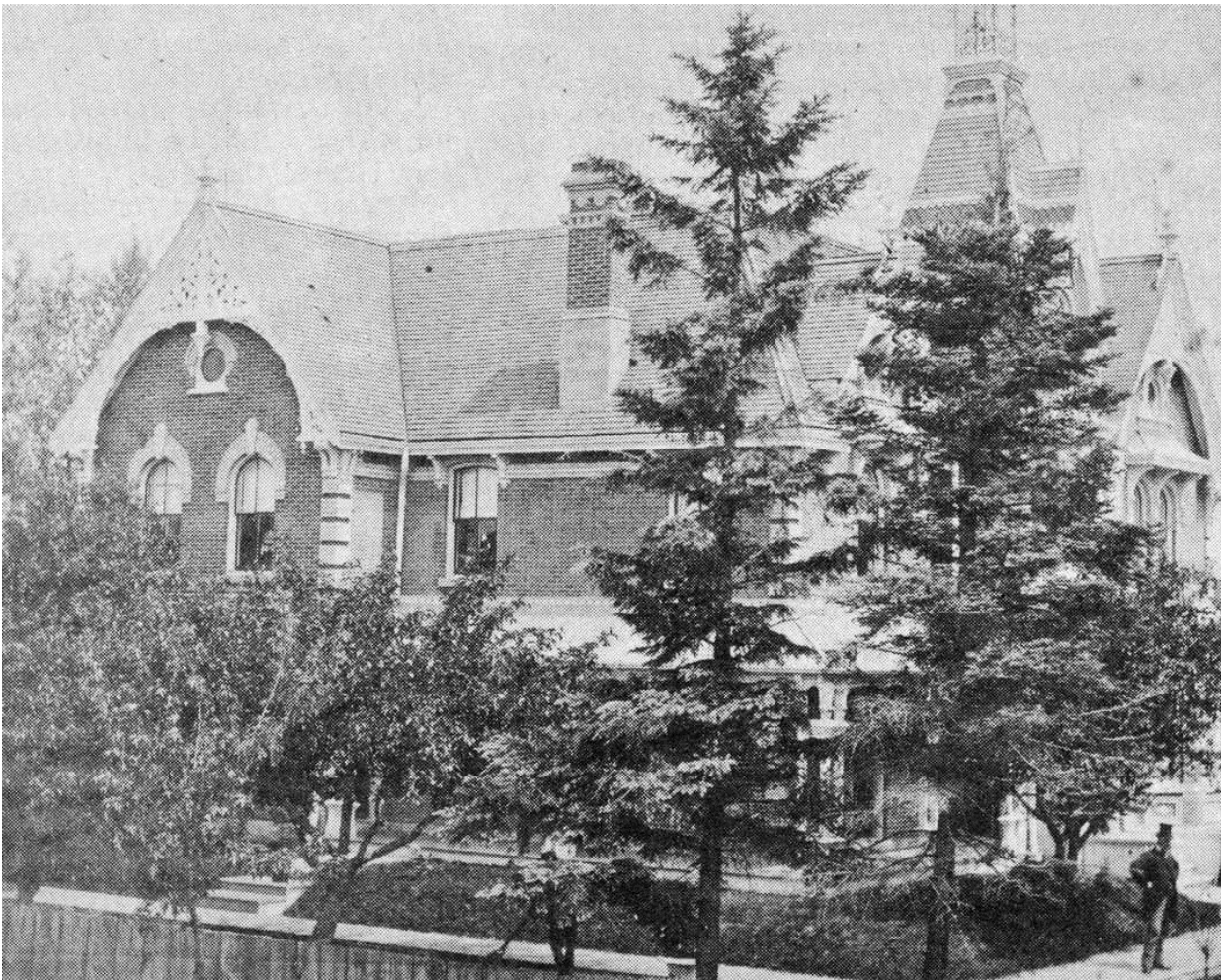


Figure 6: Sunderland Villa, c.1897, showing W.H. Storey standing outside of his home (A.T. Brown/Dills Collection)



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Figure 7: Sunderland Villa, c. 1900 (A.T. Brown/Dills Collection)

W.H. Storey died on March 7, 1898, with over 1100 people attending his funeral. In 1924, W.H. Storey and glove manufacturer H.T. Arnold's glove firms amalgamated. Later, local H.T. Arnold and Sons took over the Bower Avenue factory and ran the business until it was closed following World War II.



Figure 8: W.H. Storey and Son Glove Factory (EHS00383)



Figure 9: Sketch of W.H. Storey & Son glove factory on Bower Street on the letterhead of an invoice to Mr. H. T. Dunbar of Pickering, dated 1 Sept. 1894 (EHS00131)

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Figure 10: Glove cutter at W.H. Storey Glove Factory, c. 1900 (A.T. Brown/Dills Collection)



Figure 11: Storey Glove Factory Advertisement (*Acton Free Press*, May 4, 1911)

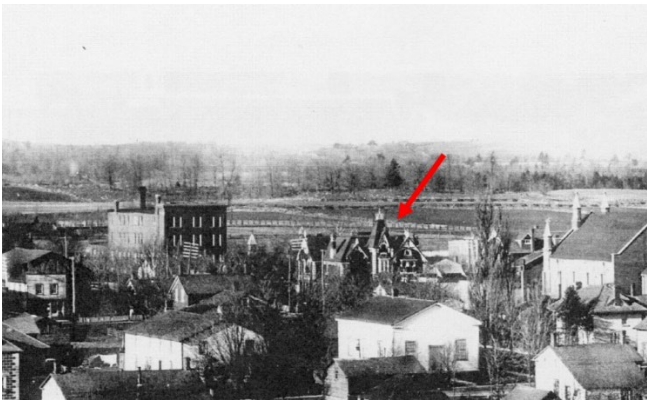


Figure 12: View of Acton looking north-east, with Sunderland Villa located within the centre of the photograph and identified with red arrow, c. 1900 (A.T. Brown/Dills Collection)



Figure 13: Sunderland Villa, c.1910 (EHS 21684)

### *Great War Veterans Association – Community House*

In 1920, the property was sold to the Trustees of the Acton Branch of the Great War Veterans Association. The *Acton Free Press* reported in the March 4, 1920 issue that the fences surrounding the property would be removed and that the grounds would become a public park. In 1922, the house, known as “The Great War Veterans Association Community House”, was purchased by its proprietor Daniel Ritchie who had managed it for the last few years. In January 1923, the *Acton Free Press* identified the existing house as “The Community House” and noted that it would be renamed the “Sunderland” after its original name. By August of that year, an advertisement in the *Acton Free Press* identified the property as The Sunderland House, with proprietor D.V. Ritchie. The home was used as a boarding house and hotel to house war veterans and was renovated in 1928, however later the property became derelict during the Great Depression.



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Figure 14: Sunderland Villa c.1920 (MacKinnon Family Funeral Home via Vintage Acton)

The 1934 Fire Insurance Plan (Figure 15) identifies the building as vacant and shows the building prior to its current additions.

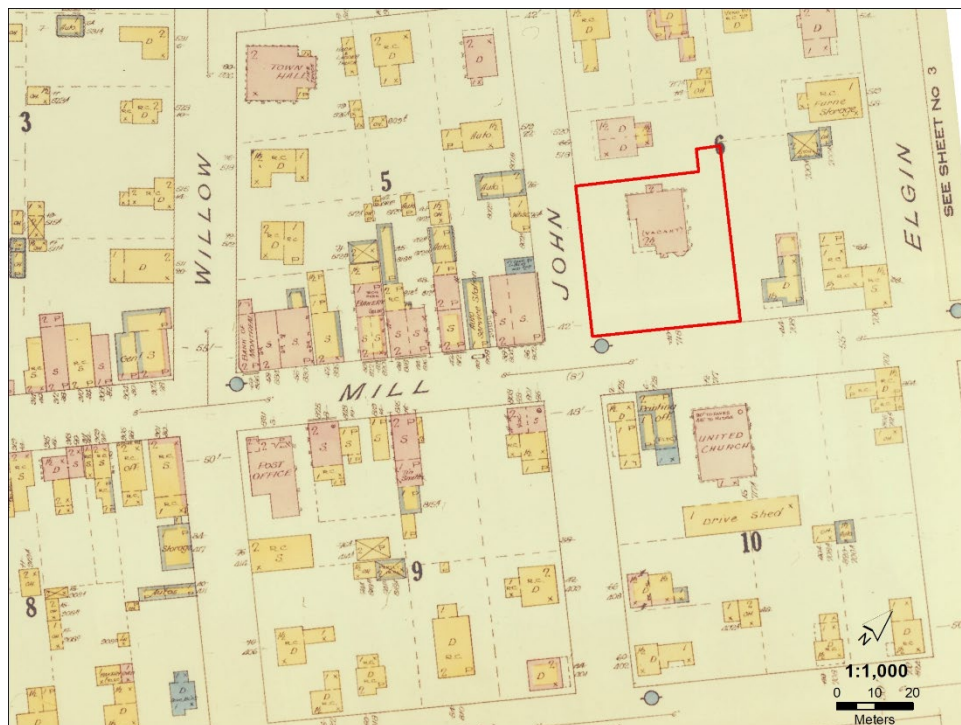


Figure 15: Subject property identified on the 1934 Fire Insurance Plan for Acton

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### *Funeral Home*

In 1860, John Speight had opened an undertaking business in Acton, the first in the community, on Willow Street. In 1881, upon Speight's death, his son Joseph took over the business.

William Johnstone (1862-1930) (Figure 16) relocated from Freelon to Acton with his wife Mabel to establish his furniture and funeral home. Johnstone founded a funeral home known as "Johnstone & Company" in 1885, and in 1903 purchased Joseph Speight's undertaking business. In March 1926, Victor Rumley (1901-1963) (Figure 17) married William's daughter, Alice Mae Johnstone. Johnstone soon partnered with his son-in-law, who would later take over the business from Johnstone.



Figure 16: William B. Johnstone (MacKinnon Funeral Home - Our Heritage)



Figure 17: Victor Rumley (MacKinnon Funeral Home - Our Heritage)

In 1925, the *Acton Free Press* reported that businessman Victor Rumley's building, including his confectionery and restaurant business, had been sold to Mr. Tony Scynuk. In 1937, Rumley had purchased the subject property from John Clarke and moved his undertaking business from down the street to 55 Mill Street East. The furniture store was then sold to Elma Braida and Ray West in 1948.

In 1942, the *Acton Free Press* reported that the exterior of the Johnstone & Rumley Funeral Home was being redecorated. In 1943, Rumley paved the circular driveway and added new sidewalks to the building's entrance.



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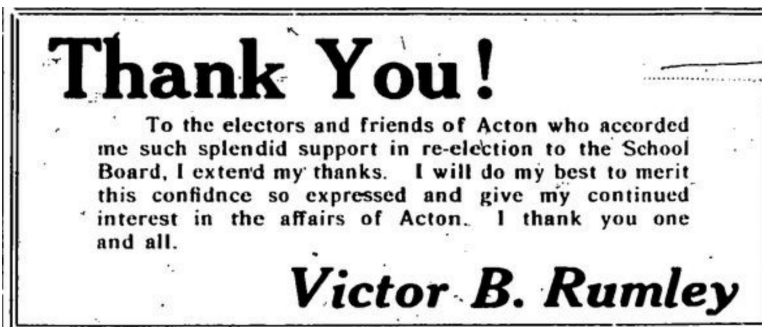


Figure 18: Notice in the *Acton Free Press*, December 15, 1940, p.4.

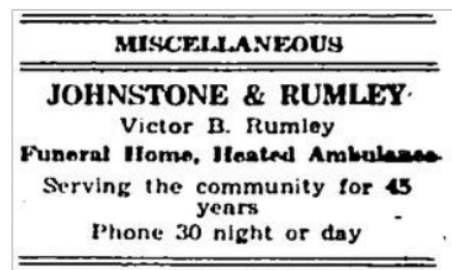


Figure 19: Business Directory Listing for Johnstone & Rumley, *Acton Free Press*, December 23, 1948, p.2.



Figure 20: Sunderland Villa, c.1951, showing the front elevation prior to the construction of the one-storey addition (Dills Collection)

In October 1953, Rumley announced that Mr. Bruce Shoemaker would be associated with the funeral home as a licensed embalmer. In November 1954, it was announced that Shoemaker would be succeeding Rumley as owner of the Rumley Funeral Home following Rumley's retirement in October of that year. In 1958, the name was changed from "Rumley Funeral Home" to "Rumley Shoemaker Funeral Home". The Shoemakers purchased the property from Victor and Alice Rumley in 1954.

In 1976, additions to the Sunderland Villa were constructed by the Shoemakers.



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Figure 21: Sunderland Villa behind the Colour Party as they line up before the cenotaph, c. 1977 (EHS 24220)



Figure 22: The Acton soccer club parades up Mill Street in front of the funeral home (Sunderland Villa). This photo appeared in The Acton Free Press, of 21 September 1977 on page 17 (EHS 14094)



Figure 23: Bruce and Rhoda Shoemaker in front of Sunderland Villa, c.1979 (Dills Collection)



Figure 24: Bruce and Rhoda Shoemaker, *Acton Tanner*, August 30, 1995, p.9.



Figure 25: Sunderland Villa, c.1994 (EHS 18539)



Figure 26: Shoemaker Funeral Home, c.1994 (EHS 25828)

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Figure 27: Sunderland Villa, c.1996 (EHS 19063)



Figure 28: Sunderland Villa, c.1996 (EHS 19064)



Figure 29: Detail of the centre tower, c.1996 (EHS 23535)



Figure 30: Detail of the west wing, c.1996 (EHS 23536)

The property was owned by the Shoemakers until 1998, however the business was sold in 1995 to the Abor Corporation following their retirement (Figure 24).



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In 1999, the Shoemaker Funeral Home was purchased by Arbor Funeral Services, owned by Bob and Margaret MacKinnon. At this time, the MacKinnons renovated the second floor of the building for their own residence. In 2015, Bob MacKinnon retired, and the funeral home was purchased by its current owners. The property is currently owned by MacKinnon Family Funeral Home Inc. and numbered company 2445004 Ontario Limited and continues to operate as a funeral home.

## 2.2 Property & Architectural Description

The property is located at 55 Mill Street East along the north side of the roadway in Halton Hills and contains a one storey brick residential building (Figure 31 and Figure 32). The property is legally known as PT LT 21, BLK 4, PL 31, ALSO SHOWN ON PL 1098; PT LT 22, BLK 4, PL 31, AS IN 835185 ALSO SHOWN ON PL 1098; "T/W 242792" HALTON HILLS "AMENDED MAR 9 '99 & OCT 13/99 J. MENARD" SUBJECT TO AN EASEMENT IN GROSS OVER PT 2 20R19598 AS IN HR1160481.



Figure 31: Looking northwest from Mill Street East towards the subject property (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 32: Looking north from John Street South towards the subject property (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

The existing residential form building on the subject property is set back from Mill Street East in Acton, with a large, paved driveway directly in front of the house, separated from the public right of way by an evergreen hedge extending along the southeast and northeast lot lines. Mature trees are extant along the northeast lot line, and a single driveway extends along the rear (northwest) lot line behind the existing building from John Street North. The building is irregularly shaped, with an asymmetrical front elevation partially obscured by a one-storey flat-roofed addition with wheelchair ramp. Garden beds extend along the southeast elevation (Figure 33 and Figure 34)

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Figure 33: Looking towards the southeast elevation from Mill Street East, showing the hedge along the front property line and mature trees (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 34: Looking northeast towards the subject property from John Street East, showing the rear garage and driveway (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

The front elevation (Figure 35 and Figure 36) features a painted brick exterior and is divided into three irregular bays. The bay furthest to the southeast is two-and-a-half storeys. At the first storey, a one-storey projecting bay with mansard-style roof is extant, containing three segmentally arched window openings with painted hood moulds above a stone course wrapping the projecting bay. The existing windows appear to be original wood, two-over-two hung windows. Above the first storey, a pair of round-arched window openings are located beneath a shallow, bracketed projecting roof, with a singular stone sill below and rounded stone hood moulds above the openings. Above the shallow projecting roof is a circular window with decorative surround. The gable peak features intricate bargeboard/vergeboard beneath the eaves. The corners of the projecting bay feature brick quoining which has been painted a contrasting colour to the main façade.



Figure 35: Partial southeast elevation of Sunderland Villa (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 36: Detail of the southeast elevation of Sunderland Villa (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



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The front elevation steps back to its central bay with a two-and-a-half storey tower which contains the front entrance with wooden door surround, transom, and sidelights beneath a contemporary canopy (Figure 37 and Figure 38). At the second storey are paired, round-arched windows with one-over-one wood windows and a decorative projecting roof above. At the upper storey, a singular round-arched window opening with stone sill and decorative hood mould is located beneath the gable peak which features decorative additional carved detailing and bargeboard. The tower with pyramidal roof features returning, bracketed eaves, decorative brickwork and quoining on either side, and a finial at the tower peak.



Figure 37: Partial southeast elevation showing the entrance and central tower (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 38: Detail of the central tower on the southeast elevation (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

The first storey of the westernmost bay on the front elevation is obscured by the flat-roofed, mid-20<sup>th</sup> century addition, with concrete wheelchair ramp extending along the front of the addition, connecting with the concrete steps to the main entrance of the building (Figure 39). The contemporary addition features a double door entry with large flat-headed window opening on the southeast elevation. At the second storey (Figure 40), the window and roof configuration on the easternmost bay is echoed with a single window opening beneath a circular window and gable peak with bargeboard and wooden architectural detailing. Painted brick quoining continues at the southwest corner of this elevation.



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Figure 39: Southwest corner of Sunderland Villa showing the one-storey addition (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 40: Detail of the southeast elevation, showing the second storey above the one-storey addition (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

The original southwest elevation along John Street North (Figure 41) is also obscured by the flat-roofed addition which is met further to the rear by a flat-roofed, three-bay garage. At the second storey, the asymmetrical elevation features two single window openings beneath the bracketed eaves with two-over-two windows above the one-storey addition. To the rear of the elevation, a pair of single window openings is centered beneath the decorative gable peak which features similar details to that of the front elevation. A wooden deck extends from these window openings, one of which has been modified into a door opening. A tall brick chimney with contemporary stack is visible beyond the side elevation. The rear (northwest) elevation of the building (Figure 42) is mostly obscured by the one storey garage addition and features the unpainted brick chimney and gable-roofed feature towards the northwest corner of the building.



Figure 41: Southwest elevation of Sunderland Villa (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 42: Rear (northwest) elevation of Sunderland Villa (Google Streetview)

The side (northeast) elevation (Figure 43) is less decorative than the southeast and southwest elevations facing Mill Street East and John Street North, respectively. At the first storey, the elevation is divided into

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three bays, with brick quoining defining each bay and single, flat-headed window opening extant throughout. A dormer is extant within the roofline along this elevation as well. Additional parking spaces extend along this elevation.



Figure 43: Side (northeast) elevation of Sunderland Villa (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

## 2.3 Architectural Style & Comparative Analysis

Several styles of homes were built throughout Ontario during the Victorian Era from the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. Sunderland Villa, a Victorian era building constructed c.1879, has been described in past analysis as both an example of the Second Empire Style as well as the Queen Anne Style. However, although the home expresses some architectural features consistent with Second Empire residential buildings in Ontario from this period (including its brick construction, dormers of various shapes and sizes, windows with enriched surrounds and mouldings, and dichromatic brick quoining typical at the corners), the defining feature of a Second Empire residence is typically a mansard style roof. As such Sunderland Villa is better defined as constructed in the Queen Anne Revival style.

The Queen Anne style was built primarily between 1870-1880 to 1910 and was popular amongst the wealthy upper middle classes as buildings in this style are designed to be impressive. Shannon Kyles notes in *Ontario Architecture* that the inspiration of Queen Anne Revival architecture was from medieval principles of neighbourhoods and towns that focused on craftsmanship and community. The style featured a variety of decorative elements and forms, with complex and variable aesthetics that served to express the success of those who built the homes, often featuring characteristics including asymmetrical



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facades, steeply pitched and irregular rooflines, front-facing gables, overhanging eaves, towers with turrets in the corners, unusual windows, detailed textures, and bright colours. Sunderland Villa features many of these architectural characteristics, and although the existing brick has been painted, the decorative wooden detailing and bargeboard as well as the stone quoining, window surrounds and details remain legible. Additionally, while the southwest and southeast street-facing elevations of Sunderland Villa are quite elaborate, the northwest and northeast elevations are much plainer, a characteristic noted by Kyles as typical of many Queen Anne Revival buildings.

Within Acton, 11 additional properties<sup>1</sup> are identified on the Town's Heritage Register as examples of the Queen Anne Revival style (some represented in Figure 44 through Figure 46 below). However, none are of a similar scale or level of detail as extant within Sunderland Villa at 55 Mill Street East and could be better described as vernacular buildings with Queen Anne Revival influences, making the property a unique example of a building of this scale and level of architectural detailing within the community of Acton.



Figure 44: 39 Willow Street North, Acton (Google Streetview 2020)



Figure 45: 31 Young Street, Acton (Google Streetview 2014)



Figure 46: 259 Queen Street East, Acton (Google Streetview 2014)

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<sup>1</sup> 35 Bower Street, 41 Bower Street, 47 Frederick Street South, 115 Church Street East, 72 Main Street South, 250 Mill Street East, 16 Park Avenue, 259 Queen Street East, 39 Willow Street North, 15 Willow Street South, 31 Young Street

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### 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	<b>X</b>
Displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit	<b>X</b>
Demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement	<b>X</b>

The property at 55 Mill Street East has physical and design value as a unique example within Acton and the Town of Halton Hills of an elaborate Queen Anne Revival style residential building within the core of the Acton community. Sunderland Villa, although modified with a one-storey addition and garage addition to the side and rear, remains an excellent example of the style, with architectural detailing including its asymmetrical facade, steeply pitched and irregular roofline, front-facing gables, overhanging eaves, the central turret, unusual windows, and significant decorative wooden detailing beneath and eaves and throughout the building. Sunderland Villa was also the first residence in Acton to be heated by steam as owner W.H. Storey had steam piped from the glove factory on Bower Street to heat his own residence. The craftsmanship within the architectural detailing and building design is exemplary and has been well-preserved through many ownership changes and through its adaptive re-use from residential building to funeral home. Sunderland Villa is an excellent and unique example of a Queen Anne Revival manor in Halton Hills, representative of the success and prosperity of one of Acton's most influential residents in the late-nineteenth century.

Historical or Associative Value	
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>X</b>

The property at 55 Mill Street East has historical and associative value due to its associations with William Heslop Storey, a notable figure in the mid-to-late-nineteenth century in Acton with significant ties to the community. Storey established the Canada Glove Works on Bower Avenue, employing hundreds of local individuals and was known throughout Canada. Storey was instrumental in the incorporation of the village of Acton in 1873 and served as Acton's first Reeve. He also served as a councillor for 18 years and was Warden of Halton County, Justice of the Peace, chairperson of the school board, director of several insurance companies, president of the Canadian Manufacturer's Association, and long-standing member of the Methodist church. Sunderland Villa, an extravagantly designed Queen

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Anne Revival residence, was the first home in Acton to be heated with steam and demonstrates Storey's entrepreneurial status and status within the community as one of the most important employers of that time.

Sunderland Villa has also been historically associated with the Great War Veterans Association as it was used as a boarding house and hotel for veterans following World War One in the early twentieth century.

The property has long been associated with the funeral home industry in Acton, serving as a funeral home since 1937. Notable funeral home directors associated with the property include Victor and Alice Rumley, Bruce and Rhoda Shoemaker, and Bob and Margaret Mackinnon.

<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>X</b>

The property at 55 Mill Street East has contextual value as a landmark along Mill Street East within the community of Acton. Although set back from Mill Street East, the position of Sunderland Villa beyond the circular drive extending from the right-of-way provides a significant vantage-point for passersby to view the extensive detailing and fine craftsmanship still extant within the exterior of the existing building. Sunderland Villa, in its original location in the heart of Acton, is physically, visually, and historically linked to its surrounding, and continues functionally as a funeral home as it has since 1937 in the community. Sunderland Villa is important in defining and maintaining the character of the area and represents the late-nineteenth century prosperity of businessman and local William Heslop Storey within the community.

#### **4.0 Summary**

Following research and evaluation according to Ontario Regulation 9/06, it has been determined that the property at 55 Mill Street East 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 55 Mill Street East are identified as follows:

- The location, setback, and orientation of the residential building along Mill Street East in Acton, Ontario;
- The scale, form, and massing of the two-and-a-half-storey Queen Anne Revival building, including its hipped roof with multiple gable dormers and stone foundation;
- The materials, including stone foundation, brick exterior, copper where extant, and wooden architectural detailing;
- The front (southeast) elevation, including:
  - o The composition of the southeast elevation into three bays with brick quoining throughout;
  - o Within the northeast bay: the one-storey, mansard-roofed projecting bay with decorative panels and a stone course including segmentally arched window openings with brick hood moulds and stone sills; round-arched windows at the second storey



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- beneath a shallow copper projecting roof with stone sill and rounded stone hood moulds; at the upper storey, the circular window with decorative surround beneath the gable peak with intricate wooden bargeboard and architectural detailing;
  - Within the central bay: the central entrance at the first storey with brick surround beneath a shallow bracketed projecting roof; at the second storey, the paired round-arched windows with stone sill and decorative copper projecting roof; at the upper storey, the single round-arched window openings with stone sill and decorative hood mould beneath the gable peak with intricate wooden bargeboard and architectural detailing; and the tower roof with bracketed eaves, decorative brickwork and quoining, and a finial at the tower peak;
  - Within the southwest bay: at the second storey, the single round-arched window opening with stone still and brick hood mould with a shallow bracketed projecting copper roof, beneath a circular window and gable peak with wooden bargeboard and architectural detailing;
- The side (southwest) elevation, including:
  - The two segmentally arched window openings towards the front elevation, and towards the rear, the two round-arched window openings with brick hood moulds with decorative keystones; beneath the gable peak with wooden bargeboard and decorative wooden detailing, a circular window opening with decorative wooden surround, stone sill, and brick hood mould with decorative detailing; and the brick chimney extending above the roof beyond the southwest elevation;
- The side (northeast) elevation, including:
  - The three-bay composition with brick quoining; single flat-headed window openings throughout; and dormer within the roofline.

The interiors of the building, contemporary additions and rear elevation have not been identified as attributes of the subject property.

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