

Research and Evaluation Report



(Town of Halton Hills 2023)

Wesleyan Methodist Church
77 Market Street, Town of Halton Hills

December 2023

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1.0 Property Description

77 Market Street	
Municipality	Georgetown, Town of Halton Hills
County or Region	Region of Halton
Legal Description	PT LT 6, PL 51', PTS 1-5 20R7849 EXCEPT PT 1 20R9908 & PT 2 20R11534
Construction Date	c.1877
Original Use	Religious
Current Use	Commercial/Institutional
Architect/Building/Designer	Built by William Watson
Architectural Style	Gothic Revival
Additions/Alterations	Stuccoed; Porch on front elevation
Heritage Status	Listed on the Town's Heritage Register
Recorder(s)	Laura Loney
Report Date	December 2023

2.0 Background

This research and evaluation report describes the history, context, and physical characteristics of the property at 77 Market Street 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*.



Figure 1: Location Map – 77 Market Street



Figure 2: Aerial Photograph – 77 Market Street

2.1 Historical Background

Indigenous History Background

The enduring history of First Nation Peoples in Halton Hills can be traced back through time immemorial before contact with Europeans in the 1600s. Prior to the arrival of European settlers, the Credit River was central to Indigenous ways of life, supporting settlements, fisheries, horticulture, transportation, and trade. Iroquoian-speaking peoples, ancestors of the Wendat, occupied the Credit River Valley for hundreds of years until approximately the mid-1600s, establishing semi-permanent villages. There are numerous archaeological sites in Halton Hills dating from this period, ranging from village sites to burial grounds, which reveal a rich cultural heritage.

The Wendat were displaced by the Haudenosaunee around 1649-50 amid the conflicts that arose between European colonial powers and their First Nation allies. The Mississaugas (part of the Anishinaabe Nation) arrived in southern Ontario in the 1690s, settling in two groups along the north shore of Lake Ontario and Lake Erie. The western group, occupying the area between Toronto and Lake Erie, became known as the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. Until the early 19th century, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation followed a seasonal cycle of movement and resource harvesting along the Credit River (Missinnihe, meaning “trusting creek”), and other rivers. In the winter months, extended family groups hunted in the Halton Hills area, travelling south towards the mouth of the river in the spring for the salmon run. The Mississaugas’ fisheries and traditional economies were diminished as a result of increased Euro-colonial settlement, leading to a state of impoverishment and dramatic population decline.

In 1818, the British Crown negotiated the purchase of 648,000 acres of land from the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, including present-day Halton Hills, under the Ajetance Treaty (No. 19), named after Chief Ajetance. This left the Mississaugas with three small reserves on the Lake Ontario shoreline. The legitimacy of early land “surrenders” to the Crown is questionable when considering the Mississaugas’ traditional understanding of property ownership. Unlike the British, the Mississaugas understood land in spiritual terms, and did not share the idea that access to land and resources could be given up permanently¹.

¹ This brief overview of Pre-Treaty Indigenous Territory within the land now known as Halton Hills is taken from the Town of Halton Hills’ 2023 *Cultural Heritage Strategy*. This document includes additional recommendations relating to Truth and Reconciliation in Heritage Planning as part of the Town's commitment to advancing Truth and Reconciliation.

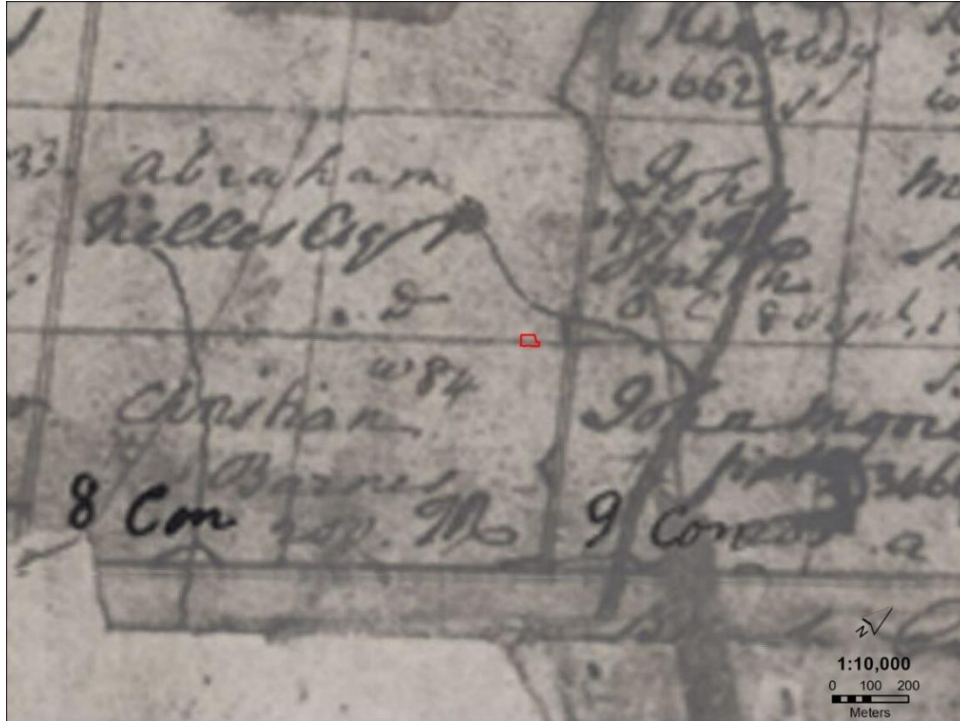


Figure 3: Subject property identified on the 1819 Patent Plan

Wesleyan Methodist Church

The Wesleyan Methodist Church was established in Canada in 1833 through the union of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Upper Canada circuits of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. This union dissolved in 1840 however resumed in 1847. By 1874, another amalgamation with the Wesleyan Methodist Church of Eastern British America and the Methodist New Connexion Church of Canada resulted in the establishment of the Methodist Church of Canada. The Wesleyan Methodists opened their first church in Georgetown in 1841. Figure 4 outlines the general evolution of the Methodist church denomination in the Township of Esquesing.

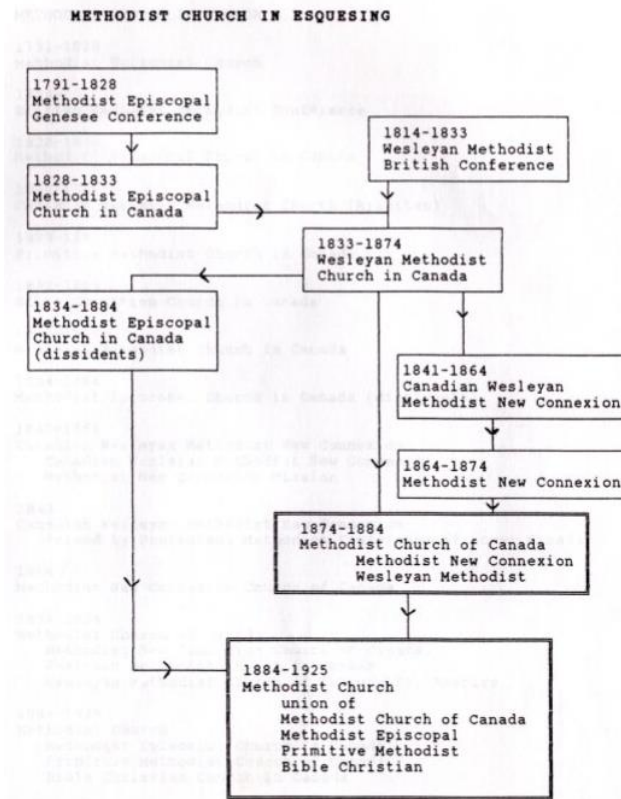


Figure 4: Evolution of the Methodist Church in Esquesing (Esquesing Historical Archives - MG8 A17 1.04a)

The subject property was granted to the Georgetown Congregation of the Methodist Church in Canada in 1875. In 1877, the existing church building was built by William Watson, replacing the original c.1841 church building. Watson (1826-1902) was a bricklayer, originally from England. Prior to establishing their own building, the Presbyterian congregation in Georgetown also worshipped in the Wesleyan church.



Figure 5: Subject property identified on Tremaine's Map of the County of Halton, Canada West



Figure 6: Subject property identified on the 1877 Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of Halton

Rex Theatre

In 1910, the Rex Theatre was established in the old Wesleyan Methodist Church. Owner Russell Gregory, a native of New York, had first established a nickelodeon on Acton. The silent movie house at the former Wesleyan Methodist Church was run by Harold McClure, with a Mrs. Byrne playing the piano to accompany the films. In the late 1920s, Gregory engaged local builder J.B. Mackenzie to build his new theatre, The Gregory Theatre, on Mill Street, which was completed in 1928, following which the subject building was vacant.

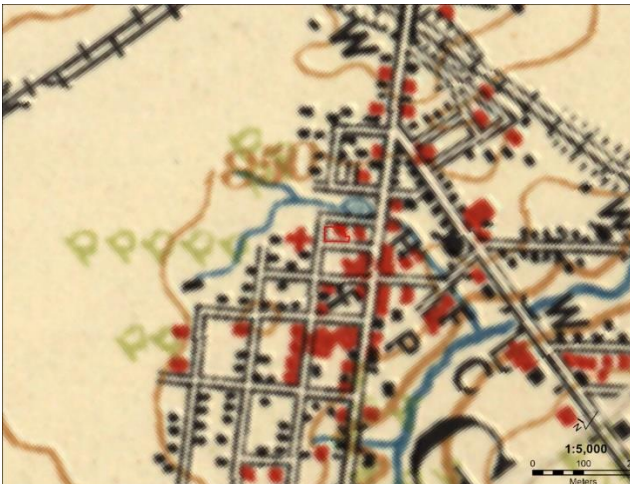


Figure 7: Subject property identified on the 1915 National Topographic Map

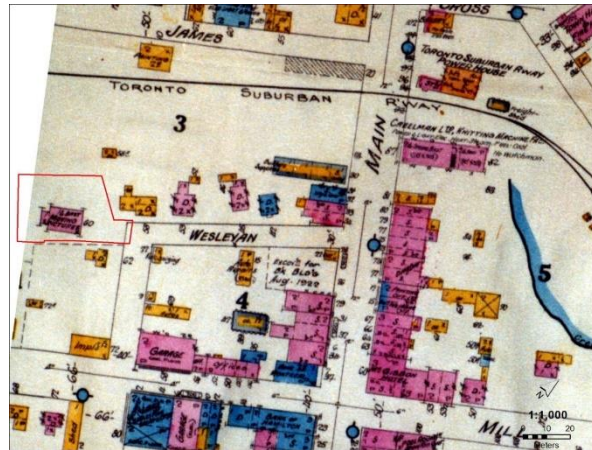


Figure 8: Subject property identified on the 1922 Fire Insurance Map; the existing building is identified with "Moving Picture"

The 1934 Fire Insurance Plan (Figure 9) identifies the subject property as vacant following the closure of the theatre at this location.



Figure 9: Subject property identified on the 1934 Fire Insurance Map

Oddfellows

The Oddfellows are one of the oldest fraternal societies, with many groups extant in England as of 1700 (although some believe its roots are in the 12th and 13th centuries). By the early 19th century, the Independent Order of Odd Fellows in North America had been chartered, with the first Order organized in Baltimore, Maryland in 1819. The Independent Order of Odd Fellows (I.O.O.F.) has since spread throughout the world with over 10,000 lodges. In 1851, the I.O.O.F became the first fraternity in the United States to welcome women with the adoption of the Degree of Rebekah, led by then Vice President of the United States Schuyler Colfax; the group was chartered in 1878 in Bloomfield, Iowa and the first Ontario lodge was established in London in 1869.

In Canada, the first lodge was the Prince of Wales in Montreal, given its charter in 1843. The I.O.O.F as a fraternal organization are primarily committed to taking care of their own internal groups, however, also have a history of serving their communities. While it is unknown where the Oddfellows locally met before the turn of the last century, as of 1900 they were paying rent to the Louise Lodge, the Ancient Order of United Workmen. By 1914, the Oddfellows were renting rooms in the Bailey Block. When the Block was damaged by the adjacent fire at O'Neill Carriage Works in 1922, the Oddfellows relocated to the public halls that were being built as part of the arena building, including a space known as the Rose Room.



Figure 10: Independent Order of Oddfellows in Georgetown, c.1925 (EHS 11750)

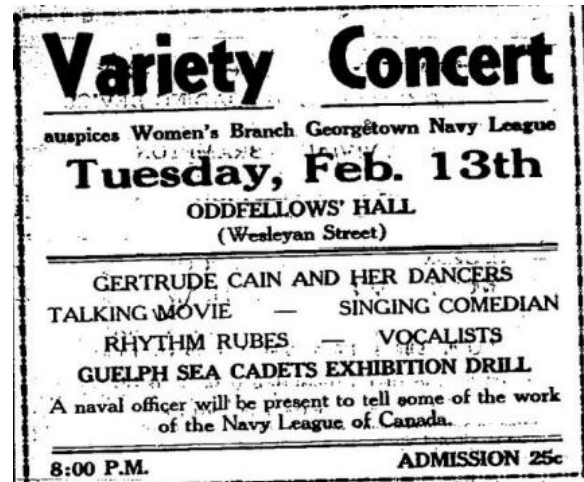


Figure 11: Notice in *The Georgetown Herald* (January 31, 1945, p.3)

The Oddfellows purchased the subject property from Russell Gregory in 1944 and began renovations shortly after, including dropping the ceiling, new windows, disassembling the existing balcony, electrical and heating work. In 1953, the Oddfellows celebrated having paid off their building, purchased from R.L. Gregory after it had been vacant for several years. The Oddfellow and Rebekah lodges modernized the church building for their own use, turning it into a widely-used meeting place for the lodges, dancing schools, religious groups, parties, rummage sales, and medical clinics.



Figure 12: Notice in *The Georgetown Herald* (December 31, 1952, p.5)

Credit to the Oddfellows

The achievement of the local Oddfellows Lodge and its associate, the Rebekahs, in buying and outfitting the splendid hall on Wesleyan Street, is worth noting.

When the town took over the arena some ten years ago the lodge, which had been meeting for several years in the upstairs portion of the building decided that a hall of their own would be more suitable under the new arrangement. They tackled a real job when they purchased an old building, once a church and latterly a movie theatre, and set to work to convert the dilapidated structure into a usefui, modern meeting place.

Their success does not have to be told. The Oddfellows Hall is used, not only for meetings of the two lodges, but for a wide variety of local activities.

The recent TB X-ray clinic had its headquarters there. Orange Lodge, firemen, unions, church groups use it extensively for public and private affairs. There have been dancing schools conducted there, rummage sales, Christmas parties, dances, Arts & Craft sales.

The Oddfellows have created something which goes far beyond their own needs for a meeting place. The Oddfellows Hall has been a real addition to the community and no one has ever been refused its use for any worthwhile community effort. The twelve members who underwrote the building fund have been recognized by their lodge, and they should equally be recognized by every citizen of Georgetown.

Figure 13: *The Georgetown Herald*, March 11, 1953, p.6

The 1960 Fire Insurance Plan identifies the existing buildings as “Lodge Hall” (Figure 14).

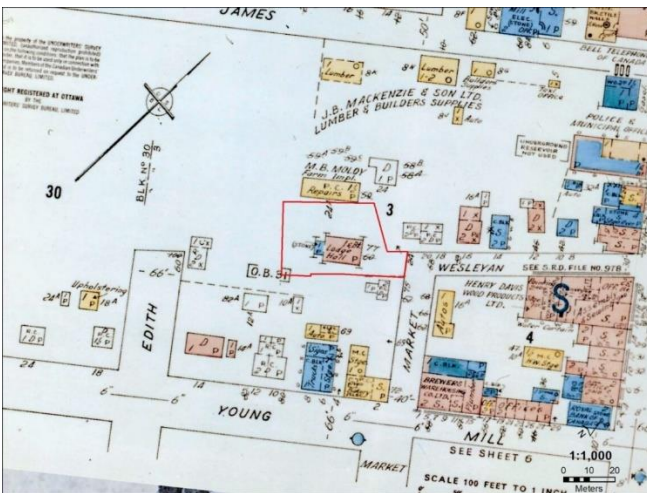


Figure 14: Subject property identified on the 1960 Fire Insurance Map



Figure 15: Former Wesleyan Methodist Church identified in 1961 aerial photography (EHS 08945)



Figure 16: A side view of the Odd Fellows Hall (former Wesleyan Methodist Church) at 77 Market Street (EHS 26132)



Figure 17: The Rebekah's executive, c.1976 (*The Independent*, October 6, 1976)



Figure 18: Subject property identified on the 1977 aerial photograph



Figure 19: Odd Fellows Hall, Wesleyan Street, c.1989 (EHS 00494)

In 1994, the property was transferred to Mark Lindauer, who sold in 1998 to Halina and Biagio Polsonello. Between 2003 and 2009, the property was owned by numbered company 1559174 Ontario Ltd., and from 2009 to present has been owned by 2197684 Ontario Ltd. and currently serves as a Montessori school.



Figure 20: Subject property identified on the 1995 aerial photograph



Figure 21: Former Wesleyan Methodist Church, c.1995 (EHS 16805)



Figure 22: Former Wesleyan Methodist Church, c.2010 (EHS 21148)



Figure 23: A view of the municipal parking lot off Mill Street; the subject property and former Wesleyan Methodist Church are pictured at centre, c.2012 (EHS 06211)



Figure 24: Subject property identified on the 2007 aerial photograph

2.2 Property & Architectural Description

The subject property is an irregularly shaped parcel located at the western terminus of Wesleyan Street, as it turns the corner to become Market Street, in downtown Georgetown. The property contains a large former church building surrounded and accessed by an asphalt parking lot.

Originally faced in brick, the exterior façades of the building, including buttresses, have been covered in a light-coloured stucco. The original gothic style entrance to the building has been maintained in the centre of the front façade. The entrance retains its original arched shape with a circular wooden tracery in the window above the door. On either side of the entrance are flat-headed window openings containing non-original sash windows. The front façade includes four, evenly spaced buttresses and culminates in a gabled peak with a narrow, lancet-arch window just beneath the peak.



Figure 25: Front elevation of the former Wesleyan Methodist Church (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 26: Partial front elevation of the former Wesleyan Methodist Church (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

This front elevation is partially obscured by an exterior, contemporary, two-storey porch and balcony addition that spans the building and extends to the southeast. The columns supporting the porch addition mimic the positions of the buttresses on the front façade of the building. The balcony is accessed via a door on the second storey of the building.

The rear façade of the building includes a single storey, enclosed addition, above which two lancet arched window openings can be seen. The addition is contemporary in style and material, indicating that it is not original to the building. One lancet arched window is located on the second storey of the building and has decorative wooden tracery similar to, but more elaborate than, the tracery that can be seen in the window on the front of the building. Just beneath the peak of the gable is the second lancet arched window opening that is currently covered with a protective metal grate. Remnants of two removed buttresses can be seen on the rear façade on either side of the single storey addition. The rear of the building also contains a single flat-head door opening that appears to be a later addition.

On the north and south façades of the building the original buttresses remain generally intact to varying degrees with some retaining their original shape and some having been modified. Lancet arched window openings are located between the evenly spaced buttresses on the north and south sides of the building. Contemporary flat-head windows have been added and the arched segments of the window openings have been filled.



Figure 27: Partial rear elevation of the former Wesleyan Methodist Church (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 28: Partial rear elevation of the former Wesleyan Methodist Church (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

The rear elevation features a small lancet window beneath the gable peak, with a larger lancet window opening with tracery below. The façade is obscured at grade by a one-storey, flat-roofed addition.

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	
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 property at 77 Market Street has physical and design value as a representative example of a nineteenth-century Gothic Revival church building. Although modified with the addition of the stuccoed exterior and two-storey porch on the front elevation, the extant window openings throughout, buttresses along the side and front elevation, and gable roof reflect characteristics typical of the style.

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 property at 77 Market Street has historical and associative value due its associations with the Wesleyan Methodist Church in the community of Georgetown as it was purpose-built for the community in the late 1870s. Used by the congregation for several years, the building was later used as a silent movie theatre under the management of Russell Gregory who owned several theatres in the area. After the silent movie theatre closed, the former church building became the home of the Oddfellows, one of the oldest fraternal organizations in the world. The building has also served as a Montessori school for several years.

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	N/A

The property at 77 Market Street has contextual value as it remains in its original location at the terminus of Wesleyan Street in the community of Georgetown within the downtown. The property with its 1877 Gothic Revival Church structure remains physically, functionally, visually, and historically linked to its surroundings since its construction almost 150 years ago.

4.0 Summary

Following research and evaluation according to Ontario Regulation 9/06, it has been determined that the property at 77 Market Street has physical and design, historical and associative, and contextual value and therefore meets Ontario Regulation 9/06 criteria for determining cultural heritage value or interest.

The heritage attributes of the property at 77 Market Street are identified as follows:

- The setback, location, and orientation of the late nineteenth-century Gothic Revival church building within the community of Georgetown;
- The scale, form, and massing of the existing building with gable roof and symmetrical façade;
- Brick buttresses along the side elevation and within the symmetrical front façade;
- Lancet windows along the side elevations and beneath the gable peaks at the front and rear elevations; and,
- The lancet window with tracery on the rear elevation.

5.0 Sources

Primary Sources

Ancestry Records

Year: 1871; Census Place: *Georgetown, Halton, Ontario*; Roll: C-9957; Page: 27; Family No: 95

Newspapers

Georgetown Herald

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Independent

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