

Research and Evaluation Report



Armour Block

61-65 Main Street South, Georgetown, Town of Halton Hills

December 2023

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1.0 Property Description

| 61-65 Main Street South | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Municipality | Georgetown, Town of Halton Hills |
| County or Region | Regional Municipality of Halton |
| Legal Description | 61 Main Street South: LT 28 & PT LT 45, PL 59, AS IN 856873; HALTON HILLS; 65 Main Street South: PT LT 1, PL 37, E OF MAIN ST OR NW MILL ST, AS IN 439680; T/W 439680; HALTON HILLS |
| Construction Date | c.1871 |
| Original Use | Commercial |
| Current Use | Commercial |
| Architect/Building/Designer | Unknown |
| Architectural Style | Commercial Vernacular |
| Additions/Alterations | Alterations to storefronts |
| Heritage Status | Listed on the Heritage Register |
| Recorder(s) | John Mark Rowe; Laura Loney |
| Report Date | December 2023 |

2.0 Background

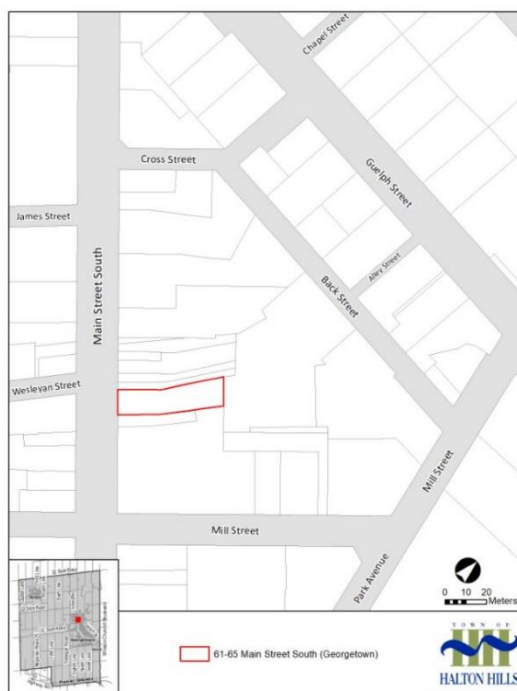


Figure 1: Location Map – 61-65 Main Street South



Figure 2: Aerial Photograph – 61-65 Main Street South

This research and evaluation report describes the history, context, and physical characteristics of the property at 61-65 Main Street South in Halton Hills, Ontario, named the Armour Block, after the owner at the time of construction. The report includes an evaluation of the property's cultural heritage value as prescribed by the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

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.

European Settlement

Lot 18, Concession 9 in Esquesing Township was part of the 200 acres purchased by George Kennedy in 1823, from patent holder John Moore. However, early efforts to attract settlers to the mill here were not successful; a village was not established until the arrival of the Barber family in 1837, who dubbed the mill seat Georgetown. By 1839, the village lots had been laid out (although not registered), surveying lands belonging to George, Morris and John Kennedy, Philo Dayfoot, James Young, and the Barber brothers. The building within the property at 61 to 65 Main Street South occupies 22.8 perches (.14 acres) of the West half of Lot 18, Concession 9 East of Main Street, part of Lot 1 as identified by George Kennedy’s survey.

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.

On the January 1854 map (Figure 3), Provincial Land Surveyor Charles Kennedy plotted the existing buildings. A rectangular building (likely frame construction) is identified within the subject property, with an outbuilding belonging to the hotel on Lot 2, encroaching on Lot 1. The property was purchased in May 1852 by John Freeman, who farmed the 200 acres of lot 17, which now includes Cedarvale Park. John Freeman, along with the Kennedy family, was a principal supporter of the Wesleyan Methodist Church built at the head of Wesleyan Street (across the road from the subject property) in 1840.

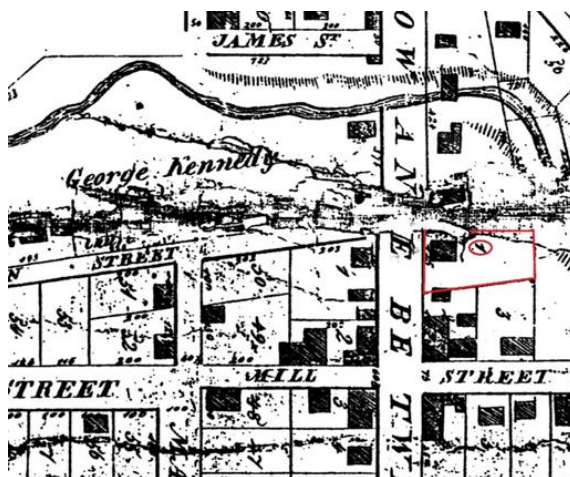


Figure 3: Detail from 1854 map showing the subject Property outlined in red. EHS Archives: MG12 A3 #23



Figure 4: Detail from 1877 map in Halton Atlas showing the subject property in red

The only confirmed business that occupied this building at the time was John Rue, a tailor and clothier. An advertisement in the February 25, 1864, issue of the *Canadian Champion* gives direction to the store as “opposite Culp and Mackenzie wagon shop.” Culp and Mackenzie’s shop is the square building shown on the 1854 map (Figure 3) at the corner of Main and Wesleyan.

N. ARMOUR,
CHRONOMETER AND
WATCH MAKER,
JEWELLER, & CO
NEW STORE, MAIN-ST., GEORGETOWN.
LARGE Selections of Watches, Clocks,
and Jewelry. Terms moderate and
strictly Cash. All work warranted to give
satisfaction, or the money returned. 5-20

Figure 5: Advertisement for Nicholas Armour from 4 Jan. 1866 issue of the *Canadian Champion*.

In 1864, Maurice Armour was a chronometer and watch maker in Milton. The 1861 census shows the married Irish-born Armour (then 28) living with brother Nicholas Armour (then 26). On January 4, 1866,

Nicholas Armour placed his own advertisement as a chronometer and watch maker in his new store on Main Street, Georgetown. On May 26, 1870, the *Canadian Champion* announced the awarding of a contract by Thomas Clark of The Exchange Hotel to build a substantial three-storey brick addition to his two-storey frame hotel on the corner of Mill and Main. Nicholas Armour purchased the frame building housing his store from John Freeman the same year, taking a mortgage with John Freeman for \$1500 in July 1870 and for \$800 in February 1871. In October 1871, a significant fire broke out along Main Street across from the subject property. Properties between Chace's Hotel (site of Old Bank) to Culp and Mackenzie's shop were destroyed, with fire catching for a short time on other buildings near the scene of operation.

The photograph shown in Figure 6 shows a man driving two oxen as they pull a wagon across Main Street from Mill to Young Streets. On the left of the photograph is Chace's Hotel with the double-balcony, and sundry wooden buildings, all of which were consumed in the fire of October 1871. On the right is the double-balcony Exchange Hotel (Clark House) with its three-storey brick addition. North of the hotel is the shorter brick building with the distinctive curved upper windows of Nicholas Armour. North of the Armour Block are the frame stores that were to be consumed by an incendiary fire in 1887, to be replaced by the Roe Block in 1888.



Figure 6: Main Street Georgetown, looking north from Young and Mill Streets in the summer of 1871. EHS00262

Local newspapers reported on April 13, 1879 that Nicholas Armour had died at the Bennett's Hotel:

"About seven o'clock on the morning of his death he arose and told one of the hotel girls not to get any breakfast for him as he was going to sleep, when he locked his door, and he was not seen again until the afternoon when his door was forced open, and to the surprise of those who entered, he was breathing his last. Drs. Starr and Standish were called in, but their assistance was of no avail, as his heart almost immediately ceased beating."

Armour's death was ruled an accident due to the Chloral-Hydrate he took habitually to induce sleep. Following his death, the building was sold by his executors to William Thompson in July 1879.

William Thompson was listed on the 1881 census as a 45-year-old grocer, married to Mary with two small children. The June 8, 1882 issue of *The Acton Free Press* reported the arrest of Thompson for violation of *The Scott Act* by selling liquor; Thompson was later acquitted but his employee James Moore was found guilty. Thompson died the following year, and on February 15, 1883, the *Acton Free Press* re-printed the following announcement from *The Georgetown Herald*: "The sudden death, on Saturday

morning of Wm. Thompson, grocer, of this place, familiarly known as “Billy Thompson,” surprised and saddened the entire community. He was buried on Monday with Masonic honors”.

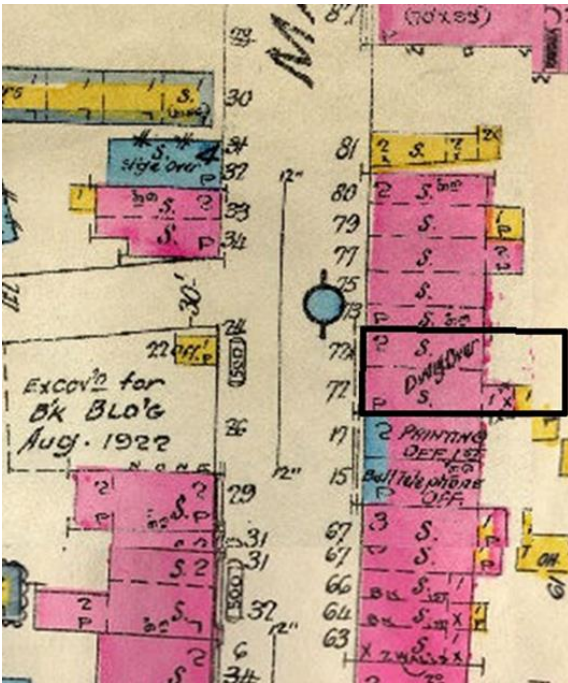


Figure 7: The Armour Block is outlined in black on this 1922 Fire Insurance Plan. The colour red denotes buildings built of brick, while wood is identified in yellow and stone in blue. “Dwg Over” is noted on the subject property identifying that a dwelling was located at the upper storey (EHS 00121)



Figure 8: Subject property identified on the 1934 Fire Insurance Plan

In February 1880, the property was sold to Thomas J. Wheeler and Mary Ann Wheeler. The 1880 purchase of the building was from William Thompson’s mortgage holders to Mary Ann Wheeler, wife of Thomas James Wheeler. T. J. Wheeler, an English immigrant, had come to Georgetown in 1855 at age 17, however he returned to Toronto to learn his trade of watch maker. He then returned to Georgetown and set up his business in part of Alfred Galbraith’s store, elsewhere on Main Street.



Figure 9: Mrs. Wheeler's advertisement from 8 May 1879 in The Herald.



Figure 10: A clock built by T. J. Wheeler. EHS02631



Figure 11: Paper pasted to inside of the clock reads, "Manufactured for and sold by T.J. Wheeler, Georgetown." EHS02630



Figure 12: Herald 22 Nov. 1909

In 1868, Alfred Galbraith died, leaving his widow with four children. The following year Mary Ann Galbraith married Thomas J. Wheeler, whose advertisements often appeared adjacent to those of his competitor, Nicholas Armour. After the purchase of the Armour Block by Thompson, Mrs. Wheeler appears to have occupied a portion of the building, along with Thompson, given that she placed her own advertisements for dolls and Christmas goods in 1879.

The January 2, 1890 issue of the *Acton Free Press* reports that "...[a]t an early hour on Tuesday morning of last week, the frame row on Main Street, situated between the brick blocks of Thomas Clark, innkeeper, and T.J. Wheeler, jeweler, was totally destroyed by fire....".

Mary Ann Wheeler was still in business in 1911 when the census listed the 71-year-old as a merchant, however she died a few years later on January 22, 1913. Wheeler had previously served in 1865 during the Fenian Raids; when Wheeler died in October 1910, he was the second last Fenian Riad veteran in Georgetown, outlived only by Joseph Barber. One part of the building had been let to J. F. Levinsky by 1909, who sold ready-made boys and men's clothing, boots, and shoes. By 1910 Levinsky had also opened a Milton store.



Figure 13: Detail of photo showing Levinsky's signs outside his store at 61 Main St. S. about 1910, from EHS00240.

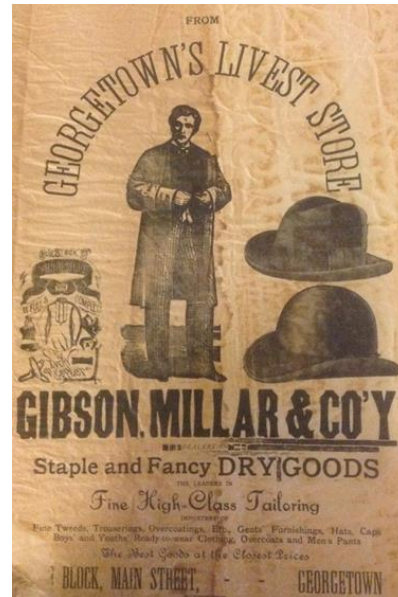


Figure 14: Advertisement for Gibson, Millar & Co. when they were in the Roe Block. EHS21512

Mrs. Wheeler's executors sold the property in Nov. 1913 to William A. Millar for \$5500. Millar was a well-known Georgetown local who started his career under William MacLeod at the Mammoth House, the department store at Main and Mill Streets. In 1897 he ventured into a partnership of Gibson, Millar, and Co., operating in the Roe Block next to the subject property, likely taking over the Levinsky premises before eventually buying the building. Millar died suddenly at age 65 in April 1925.

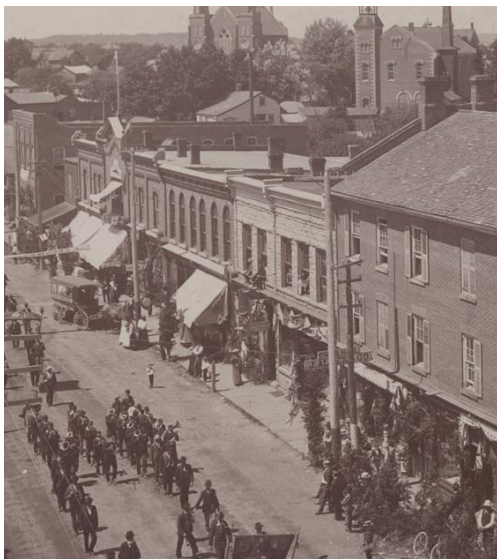


Figure 15: Detail from EHS00378 showing a parade on Main Street. From the right are the 1870 addition to the McGibbon Hotel, Herald Office, Bank of Hamilton, Armour Block and Roe Block.



Figure 16: Advertisement for the opening of Dominion Stores from The Herald 22 Feb. 1922.

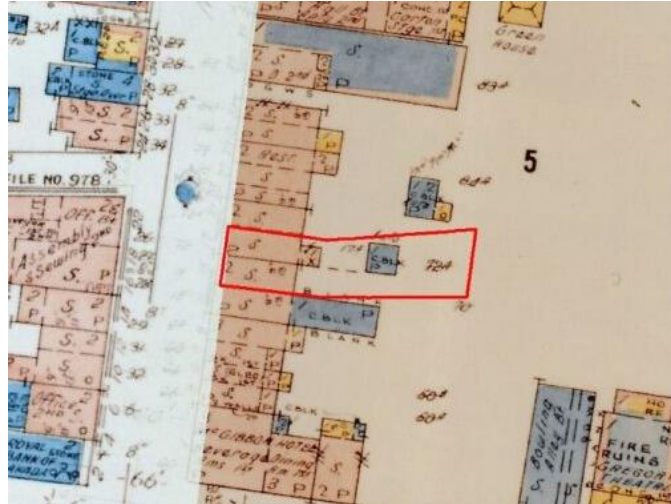


Figure 17: Subject property identified on the 1960 Fire Insurance Plan of Georgetown. A concrete block building is identified at the rear of the subject property.

Agostino (Tony) and Rosie Restivo purchased the subject property in 1925. The Restivo's came to Georgetown about 1916, opening their fruit and vegetable store in the Roe Block and later moving to 119 Mill Street before purchasing the subject property.

In 1930, Tony Restivo's son-in-law Dick Licata took over the fruit and vegetable store. Licata operated the store for several years until selling in 1951 to Enrico and Lennie Caruso of Brampton, where their father had operated since 1917. Caruso's was at 21 Main Street North with Dominion Stores at 19 Main Street North². In 1933, A.M. Nielsen ran his chiropractic office and offered x-rays within the second floor of the subject building. In 1959, Kay's Beauty Shop opened upstairs of Goldham's Meats at 19 Main Street and was still in business in the 1970s.

² In May 1948, an editorial in the *Georgetown Herald* called for street numbering, though street numbers would not start appearing in the newspaper until 1955. That 1950s street numbering on Main Street changed with the creation of a regional government in 1974. Before 1974, the addresses would have been #21 and #19 Main Street North.



Figure 18: The roof of the subject building is outlined in red in this 1961 aerial view of Main Street (EHS 09031)



Figure 19: Detail from EHS21915 about 1975 with Caruso's Fruit Market at #61 and Georgetown Decorating at #65.



Figure 20: Armour Block c. 1970s (Georgetown Vault)

Caruso's Fruit Market closed with Enrico's retirement in 1976 (then addressed as 61 Main Street South), following which the property was sold to George Bergsma. George and Shirley Bergsma opened Georgetown decorating Centre in 1976 at 65 Main Street South. Kobe's Nook, a gift shop, opened that year at 61 Main Street South, and Quartet Music Centre opened a store at 65 Main Street South in 1978.



Figure 21: Front elevation of the existing building, c.1983 (The Georgetown Vault via Patrick Cummins)



Figure 22: Looking along the front elevation of the existing building, c.1983 (The Georgetown Vault via Patrick Cummins)

Vivian's Greeting Cards occupied the space in 1983, the same year Bergsma Decorating moved to the Georgetown Market Place Plaza on Guelph Street. In April 1991, My Generation opened at 61 Main Street South. By 1992, My Hometown Gift Shop was opened by Doreen Bergsma, which expanded in 1993 and which was still operating in 1998. Other businesses at the subject property have included Glazed Expressions Ceramic Studio (on site since 2004) and Barbara Ford's In Spirit Centre at 61 Main Street South since about 2017.

While this report does not include an exhaustive list of tenants and uses, those identified illustrate the variety of services offered in the Armour Block over the last 151 years since its construction, with several owners of significance.



Figure 23: Armour Block in 2022. EHS28490

2.2 Property & Architectural Description

The 1871 commercial building comprised of 61-65 Main Street South in Georgetown is located along the east side of Main Street South, north of Mill Street. The existing building is two storeys, with recessed storefronts and entrances above a single step at the first storey.



Figure 24: Looking southeast along Main Street South towards the subject property (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 25: Looking towards the subject property from the west side of Main Street South (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

The first storey of the front elevation features two storefronts with panelled surrounds and large glazed windows. The building has a single entrance door in between the two storefronts allowing access to the upper storey from Main Street South. Above the storefronts is a panel that extends across the front façade with painted wooden signs for each business within the panel. At the second storey, six round-arched window openings with stone sills, brick voussoirs and keystones are evenly spaced; below the voussoirs, the windows are infilled with rectangular hung windows within the existing openings. The bracketed cornice adds visual interest at the parapet and defines the extent of the commercial building

within the commercial row. The façade at the second storey is red brick, similar to that of its neighbour, the Roe Block.



Figure 26: Front (west) elevation of the existing two-storey building (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

A large municipal parking lot is located to the rear of the existing building. The rear elevation features a small gable-roofed addition and wooden porch at the second storey, with a central chimney. The rear elevation is clad with vinyl siding.



Figure 27: Rear elevation of the existing building from within the municipal parking lot (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 | |
|--|------------|
| 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 Armour Block at 61-65 Main Street South has physical and design value as a representative 19th-century commercial structure within downtown Georgetown. The two-storey building height with red brick exterior at the upper storeys, round-arched windows with brick voussoirs, stone sills and keystones, and bracketed cornice, with dual storefronts recessed at the first storey, is reflective of typical commercial buildings constructed within Ontario during its period.

| 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 | X |
| Demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer, or theorist who is significant to a community | N/A |

The Armour Block at 61-65 Main Street South has historical and associative value due to its associations with builder Nicholas Armour, a local chronometer and watch maker, as well as the property owners and businesses located within the building since its construction in 1871, including William Thompson's grocery store, the Wheeler Family (selling dolls and jewelry), J.F. Levinsky (selling boys and men's clothing), William Millar's department store, and Agonstino and Rosie Restivo's (later Dick Licata's and then Enrico Caruso's) fruit and vegetable store. The existing building has also housed chiropractic offices, a beauty shop, Goldham's Meats, a decorating centre, gift shop, and spiritual gift and service centre over the years. The subject property is linked to over 150 years of commercial development and services in downtown Georgetown and its uses have evolved over time since its construction.

| 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 Armour Block at 61-65 Main Street South has contextual value as it is important in defining the built heritage character of the downtown. The existing two-storey building remains in its original location, physically and functionally linked to its surroundings as a commercial property on the Georgetown main

street. The scale, form and massing of the building helps to define the historic streetwall along Main Street South in the downtown.

Heritage Attributes:

- The setback, placement, and orientation of the two-storey, mid-19th century commercial building within a commercial row in historic downtown Georgetown;
- The scale, form, and massing of the two-storey building with flat roof and red brick exterior, with bracketed cornice;
- The materials, including red brick exterior and stone detailing;
- The balanced vertical, round-arched window openings with voussoirs and stone sills and keystones on the second storey of the front (west) elevation;
- The recessed storefront configuration along the first storey of the front elevation.

The interiors and rear of the property have not been identified as heritage attributes as part of this report.

4.0 Summary

Following research and evaluation according to Ontario Regulation 9/06, it has been determined that the property at 49-57 Main Street South 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.

5.0 Sources

Primary Sources:

Land Records for Lot 1 East of Main, George Kennedy survey, Georgetown (Plan 37)
Georgetown Urban Inventory, Phase 1, Barbara Szczepanik, Heritage Halton Hills, 1994.
Various Photographs, Esquesing Historical Society Archives (individual citations in-text)
Various Photographs dated 2023 taken by John Mark Rowe
Census Records for 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891 1901, 1911, 1921 for Georgetown and Milton
William Watson Daybooks EHS Archive MG3 A2

Secondary Sources:

Cedarvale Designation Report, John Mark Rowe, 2010.
Georgetown: Reflections of a Small Town, John Mark Rowe, 2006
"Georgetown in the 1850s," Elaine Robinson-Bertrand, *Georgetown Independent*, 15 January 1986
Advertisements from various issues of the *Canadian Champion*
Advertisements from various issues of *The Georgetown Herald*
"Georgetown Poisoning Case," *Acton Free Press*, 24 April 1879
"Georgetown," *Acton Free Press*, 2 January 1890
"Shoebox Memories: Wheeler's of Georgetown," *North Halton Compass*, 28 Feb. 2002
Small news items from various issues of *The Georgetown Herald*
"The Changing Scene," *Georgetown Herald*, 11 Jan. 1950, page 6
"The Changing Scene," *Georgetown Herald*, 20 Aug. 1952, page 8
"Pot Pourri," *Georgetown Herald*, 6 April 1955, page 6
"There's Been Changes," *Georgetown Herald*, 12 April 1973, page 12.

Historic Mapping:

"Georgetown in Esquesing," 1854 Esquesing Historical Society Archives MG12 A23
Historical Atlas for the County of Halton, 1877
"Georgetown, Ont.," Fire Insurance Map #1, August 1922, Revised to 10 Feb. 1934, Underwriters' Survey Bureau. Esquesing Historical Society Archives MG12 A3 #17.02
"Insurance Plan of the Town of Georgetown, Ont." Fire Insurance Map #6, May 1960, Underwriters' Survey Bureau. Esquesing Historical Society Archives MG12 A9 #2.05