

Research and Evaluation Report



(Town of Halton Hills, 2023)

Perryman-Mainprize Building

46 Mill Street East, Acton, Town of Halton Hills

December 2023

Project Personnel

Report Authors

Laura Loney, MPlan, MCIP, CAHP, RPP
Manager of Heritage Planning

Historical Research

Laura Loney

Field Review

Laura Loney

Madison Hendricks, MA
Cultural Heritage Assistant

Report Preparation

Laura Loney

Mapping Graphics:

Rehan Waheed, MA
Planning Data Analyst

Report Reviewers:

Madison Hendricks, MA

Bronwyn Parker
Director of Planning Policy

John Linhardt
Commissioner of Planning & Development

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1.0 Property Description

46 Mill Street East	
Municipality	Acton, Town of Halton Hills
County or Region	Regional Municipality of Halton
Legal Description	PT LT 13, BLK 13, PL 31, AS IN 352765, S/T 352765; HALTON HILLS
Construction Date	c.1895
Original Use	Commercial/Residential
Current Use	Commercial/Residential
Architect/Building/Designer	Thomas Perryman
Architectural Style	Gothic Revival
Additions/Alterations	Rear addition; Alterations at first storey
Heritage Status	Listed on the Town's Heritage Register
Recorder(s)	Laura Loney
Report Date	December 2023

2.0 Background



Figure 1: Location Map – 46 Mill Street East



Figure 2: Aerial Photograph – 46 Mill Street East

This research and evaluation report describes the history, context, and physical characteristics of the property at 46 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

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

In 1829, Lot 28, Concession 3 was granted to the Canada Company. Three years later, Rufus Adams, one of the founders of the community of Acton (originally called Adamsville) purchased the lot. The orchard lane within the property later became Bower Avenue. The 1822 Patent Plan (Figure 3) shows the property within Lot 28, Concession 3, and the 1858 Tremaine’s Map (Figure 4) and the 1877 Halton County Atlas Map (Figure 5) shows the location of the property within Acton.

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 1822 Patent Plan



Figure 4: Subject property identified on Tremaine's 1858 Map of the County of Halton, Canada West



Figure 5: Subject property identified on the 1877 Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of Halton

Perryman Shop and Residence

The subject property within Lot 28 was purchased by Agnes Perryman (1852-1933) from Alex Grant in 1892, although the local news reported that it was her father, Thomas Perryman (1816-1909), who owned it (*Acton Free Press*, December 20, 1888, p.3).

Thomas and his wife Eliza (Clark) Perryman (1820-1903) had moved to Acton from Markham, Ontario, where Thomas was a stone mason and plasterer in 1848. Eliza, like her husband, was a long-time member of the Methodist Church and often entertained methodist preachers in their home. As a local contractor, Perryman built the first brick home in Acton as well as the Methodist Church in Ballinafad and did the plaster work at the first Methodist Church in Acton. Perryman was also one of the first contractors to deliver mail from the railway station to the post office.

Perryman, who had previously constructed his residence in Acton's east end in 1885, demolished a stable (previously a blacksmith shop) that had been on the subject property since the mid-19th century. In May 1893, the *Acton Free Press* reported that Thomas was working on the foundation of his new

building at the subject property. Agnes and her sister, Sarah Perryman (1854-1931) sold knitting and embroidery materials from the store, while living on the second floor and taking care of their elderly father, according to reports within the *Acton Free Press*. Sarah, who purportedly was ill throughout her life, was also nursed by her sister at the subject property.



Figure 6: Advertisement in the *Acton Free Press*, May 5, 1887, p.2

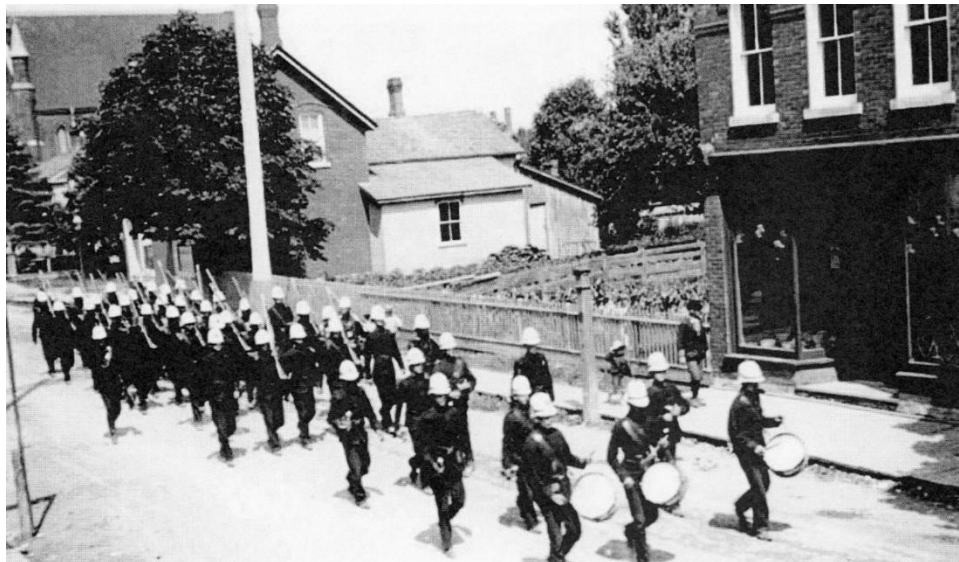


Figure 7: Boys marching along Mill Street East, c.1898 (A.T. Brown/Dills Collection, courtesy of Vintage Acton)

Merchant's Bank

The Merchant's Bank was first established in Montreal in 1817. At the turn of the century, the Acton Branch of the Merchant's Bank was opened at the subject location. However, it was located there for only a year before it was moved to the northeast corner of Mill Street East and Willow Street in Acton. The first bank manager was Mr. Gentiles, and his assistant was Reuben McNabb. Note the purpose-built dual storefronts on the front elevation in Figure 8 for commercial purposes, Merchant's Bank of Canada identified on the right, with living quarters above.



Figure 8: Acton Merchants' Bank (Acton's first bank) at the corner of Mill and John Streets -- April 6th, 1900 (EHS)



Figure 9: Moving Ransom Adams's House along Mill Street; the subject building is shown to the right of the house being moved, c.1905 (Courtesy of Vintage Acton)



Figure 10: Laying the cornerstone for the YMCA on Mill Street East in Acton; the subject property is visible on the right of the photograph, c.1934 (Historic Acton/Scott Brooks, courtesy of Vintage Acton)



Figure 11: Subject property identified on the 1935 National Topographic Map



Figure 12: Subject property identified on the 1934 Fire Insurance Plan, showing the two units within the brick building and rear 1 ½ and 1-storey additions. The YMCA, for which construction began in 1934, is not yet identified.

Harry and Martha Mainprize

In 1940, the property was sold to Harry and Martha Mainprize. Harry moved to Acton in 1920 and worked with local barber Sandy McLean. He operated his barber shop in various locations throughout town until he moved his business and residence to the subject property in 1940. Mainprize, also a long-

time elder and usher at Knox Presbyterian Church, retired in 1962 at the age of 74, at which time Joe Hurst took over the business. Martha Mainprize was a teacher and a member of and secretary for the I.O.D.E. (Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire), and a prominent member of the Women's Missionary Society and Daughters of Knox at Knox Presbyterian Church in Acton.



Figure 13: Barbers Sandy McLean (standing left) and Harry Mainprize (standing right) at McLean's Barber Shop, c.1921 (Ray Arbic Collection/Acton Free Press Courtesy of Vintage Acton)



Figure 14: Mill Street East in Acton c.1960s, subject property on the far left; the dual storefronts are extant in this photograph however appear modified based on earlier photographs (Dills Collection Courtesy of Vintage Acton)

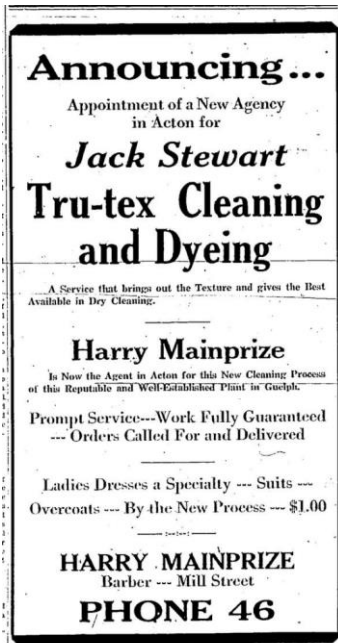


Figure 15: *Acton Free Press*,
November 28, 1935, p.4



Figure 16: Subject property identified on the 2007 aerial photograph.

The existing building has been home to many different businesses and services over the years, including optometrist E.L. Buchner, the Blue Springs Flower Shop, and Wedding Bells home and gift shop. In 2014, the property was owned by Corey and Tamara Wilson. Blue Grotto Global Investments has owned the property since 2019, which is currently a dental office.

2.2 Property & Architectural Description

The property is located at 46 Mill Street East along the south side of the roadway in Halton Hills and contains a one-and-a-half storey brick residential building with rear addition (Figure 17). The property is legally known as PT LT 13, BLK 13, PL 31, AS IN 352765, S/T 352765; HALTON HILLS.



Figure 17: Looking towards the subject property along Mill Street East in Acton (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

The front (northwest) elevation of the existing one-and-a-half storey building (Figure 18 through Figure 20) faces Mill Street East and features a red-brick façade. Evidence of the original openings pictured in 1900 is extant. One flat-headed entrance remains at the east end of the façade beside a wider single window opening with concrete sill. A wider rectangular window opening with a concrete sill and narrower window beside it sit in the same location as the west side entrance pictured in 1900. A round-headed window opening with stone sill and brick arch above is located at the upper storey beneath the centre gable peak. The stone foundation is not visible at the front elevation due to the existing sidewalk.



Figure 18: Front (northwest) elevation of 46 Mill Street East (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 19: Detail of the front (northwest) elevation of 46 Mill Street East (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 20: Detail of the front (northwest) elevation of 46 Mill Street East (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

The side (southwest) elevation of the existing building (Figure 21 and Figure 22) features a contemporary window opening at the first storey. At the second storey are two symmetrically placed, segmentally arched window openings with stone sills below and brick voussoirs above.



Figure 21: Side (southwest) elevation of 46 Mill Street East (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 22: Northwest corner of 46 Mill Street East (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

The side (northeast) elevation along John Street South (Figure 23 and Figure 24) includes both the original one-and-a-half storey building as well as a rear one-storey brick exterior addition and one-storey sun porch and entrance at the rear. The stone foundation is partially visible along this elevation. The side elevation of the one-and-a-half storey original building has no openings at the first storey and two window openings at the upper storey, as can be observed on the southwest elevation on the other side of the building. Two contemporary rectangular window openings are located within the rear one-storey portion of the addition with a gable dormer and small brick chimney above.



Figure 23: Side (northeast) elevation of 46 Mill Street East (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 24: Southeast elevation of 46 Mill Street East (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

2.3 Architectural Style & Analysis

The existing one-and-a-half storey building at 46 Mill Street East can best be described as a vernacular variation of the Gothic Revival, or Ontario Cottage form, modified for commercial use at grade with residential use in the upper storey. Gothic Revival architecture was immensely popular in Ontario in the 19th century (it was promoted in *The Canadian Farmer* in the 1860s; see Figure 25) and can be found in communities throughout the province, likely in part due to the cheaper tax rates for one-and-a-half storey structures as opposed to two storeys once constructed.

Early photographic evidence of the existing building reveals a symmetrical front elevation with dual storefronts that reflects the symmetry of more typical examples of this style (namely a central entrance with symmetrically placed window openings on either side). The existing composition, although modified from its original configuration, reflects the original division of the front elevation into two bays at grade. The materials, as well as the scale, form, and massing of the building reflects the characteristics typical of the style (demonstrated in *The Canadian Farmer* in 1865). The extant side gable roof, centre gable with window beneath the gable peak, round-arched and segmentally arched window openings are also typical of this style.



Figure 25: Illustration from *The Canadian Farmer*, vol. 2, 1865, p.244

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 property at 46 Mill Street East has physical and design value as a representative example of a vernacular Gothic Revival building. The existing composition, although modified from its original configuration, reflects the original division of the front elevation into two bays at grade. The materials, as well as the scale, form, and massing of the building reflects the characteristics typical of the style, along with the extant side gable roof, centre gable with window beneath the gable peak, round-arched and segmentally arched window openings. The building, constructed for both commercial and residential use, is a unique interpretation of the style within the community of Acton.

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 46 Mill Street East has historical and associative value due to its associations with Thomas Perryman, a local stone mason and plasterer who built the first brick home in Acton and who also worked on two different Methodist churches in the community. Agnes and Sarah Perryman, Thomas' daughters, operated their business at the first storey of the home while caring for their elderly father. The building was also briefly home to the first branch of the Merchant's Bank in Acton. The property is also associated with long-term local barber Harry Mainprize and his wife Martha, a teacher and prominent community member. The existing building has been used for both residential and commercial purposes since its construction c.1895.

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 46 Mill Street East has contextual value as it serves to help define, maintain, and support the character of the area in its original location at the intersection of Mill Street East and John Street

South in the community of Acton. The existing building is physically, functionally, visually, and historically linked to its surroundings, with photographic evidence demonstrating its continued presence at this corner despite changes along Mill Street East, including the adjacent former YMCA building next door. The existing building has formed an important part of the built evolution and growth of the Acton community for over 128 years.

4.0 Summary

Following research and evaluation according to Ontario Regulation 9/06, it has been determined that the property at 46 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 46 Mill Street East are identified as follows:

- The setback, location, and orientation of the Perryman-Mainprize Building along Mill Street East in Acton;
- The scale, form, and massing of the existing one-and-a-half storey brick building, including its side gable roof and centre gable at the front elevation;
- Materials, including the stone foundation and red brick exterior in running bond;
- On the front elevation, the centrally located round-headed window openings beneath the centre gable peak; and,
- Segmentally arched window openings on the side elevations with brick voussoirs and stone sills.

The modified first storey of the front elevation has not been identified as an attribute, however photographic evidence of the building c.1900 provides an opportunity to restore the original configuration in future. The interiors, rear elevation of the original one-and-a-half storey building, and rear additions are not identified as heritage attributes as part of this report.

5.0 Sources

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