

Research and Evaluation Report



(Town of Halton Hills 2023)

Mackenzie Mill

8 James Street, Georgetown, Town of Halton Hills

February 2024

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1.0 Property Description

8 James Street	
Municipality	Georgetown, Town of Halton Hills
County or Region	Regional Municipality of Halton
Legal Description	PLAN 33 LOTS 19 & 20
Construction Date	c.1897
Original Use	Commercial/Industrial
Current Use	Institutional/Commercial
Architect/Building/Designer	H.P. Lawson
Architectural Style	Industrial Vernacular
Additions/Alterations	Rear/side additions; Interiors
Heritage Status	Listed
Recorder(s)	Laura Loney
Report Date	February 2024

2.0 Background

This research and evaluation report describes the history, context, and physical characteristics of the property at 8 James Street in Halton Hills, Ontario, named the Mackenzie Mill. The report includes an evaluation of the property’s cultural heritage value as prescribed by the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

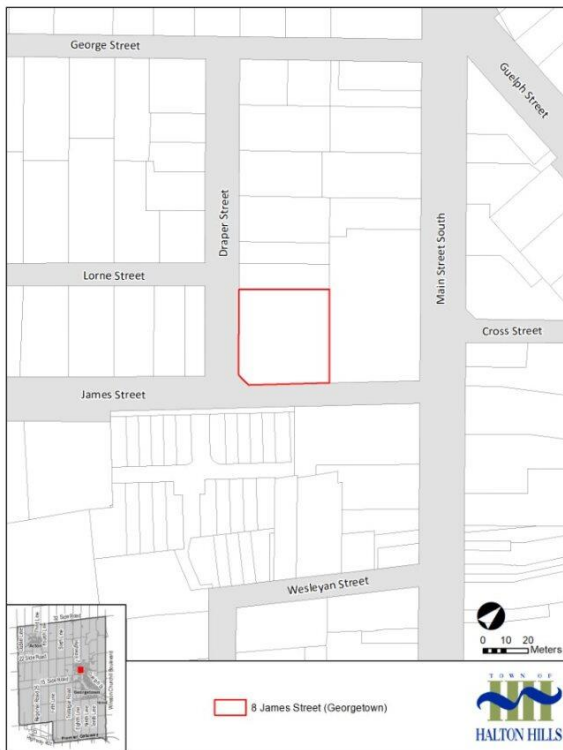


Figure 1: Location Map - 8 James Street



Figure 2: Aerial Photograph - 8 James 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 because 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 1855, Lot 19 as established by Plan 33 was transferred from John Kennedy and his wife to Benjamin Thompson. In 1864, there was a Quit Claim from Benjamin Thompson to John N. Tutthill. In 1878, Lot 19 was transferred from Samuel Phillips and wife to John Watkins Crawford and William McKindsay Crawford. In 1881, a mortgage was granted from Crawford to Henry P. Lawson, who in 1888 purchased the property for \$1000.

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



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, Ont.

The existing building was constructed by Henry Pratt (H.P.) Lawson in 1897 as a planing mill.

H.P. Lawson

Henry Pratt Lawson, better known as “H.P.” was born in Fyfeshire, Scotland in 1840 and came to Canada with his family in 1852 at 12 years old. The family settled near Stewarttown upon their arrival. Lawson is regarded as one of the most enterprising men of his time in the Georgetown and Acton areas. He became an extensive landholder in Esquesing township and subsequently had several sawmills and lumbering operations under his control, including the Stewarttown Mill which H.P. and his brother David owned, and whose families operated through four generations until it was destroyed by fire in 1972. Lawson also created the former “Lawson’s Trout Pond” in downtown Georgetown that he stocked with trout.

Lawson and his family were active in local community affairs; H.P. served on Esquesing Council and was deputy reeve in 1893. In 1901, H.P. married Margaret Maybel Grant and the two raised four children who went on to be noted citizens within the local community. Mrs. Lawson was an active member of Knox Presbyterian Church and taught Sunday School classes for over 12 years. H.P. Lawson died on March 5, 1920; Mrs. Lawson died later on December 7, 1926, at the age of 51.

In 1911, Lots 19 and 20 were transferred from Henry Pratt Lawson and his wife to John Boyd Mackenzie for \$4050.

John Boyd (J.B.) Mackenzie

John Boyd (J.B.) Mackenzie (1876-1947) was born in Esquesing Township and attended Dublin School. He was trained in carpentry and opened his first shop in Acton. His interest in contracting led him to become a dealer in lumber, and the growth of his business resulted in him establishing a planing mill in Acton in 1900. In 1907, Mackenzie married Eliza McQueen, who taught classes in Acton. The couple resided at Church and Main Street in a block home Mackenzie had constructed prior to the marriage, before moving into The Birches (75 Mill Street) in Georgetown in 1915. After purchasing the planing mill on James Street, at the age of 33, Mackenzie owned both the Acton and Georgetown mills.



Figure 6: J.B. Mackenzie, c.1920 (EHS 08542)



Figure 7: "The Birches" (70 Mill Street) c. 1994

Alongside running the two mills, J.B Mackenzie ran a contracting business for a variety of different buildings, operating under the name J. B. Mackenzie & Son of Georgetown. Mackenzie constructed several homes in Georgetown, including the house known as "The Birches" at 75 Mill Street in 1915 that he built for his family upon their move to Georgetown.

Mackenzie acquired the contract for the Post Office and Customs House at 70 Mill Street, which was noted in the 24 April 1935 edition of the local paper. Work on the Post Office was to commence on May 1, 1935. The Georgetown Herald revealed that the limestone and sandstone structure would include a clock tower and be designed by J. E. Walker and J.G. Elliott, prominent Toronto architects. Mackenzie also built the theatres in Georgetown and Acton, namely the Roxy Theatre at Mill Street, Acton and the Mackenzie Building which had the Roxy Theatre on Mill Street in Georgetown. Both the Post Office/Customs House and Roxy Theatre are within close proximity to his home, The Birches.

Mackenzie constructed the Coated Paper Mill beside the CNR tracks. He remodeled the Willoughby Stables into what is now the Georgetown Royal Canadian Legion and constructed homes in Halton Hills. Mackenzie's family also joined his business, including daughter Jean who was his bookkeeper for many years, and Samuel who operated the store and office for many years, son Ken, who managed the Acton Branch between 1945 and 1950, and daughter Marjory who helped at home.



Figure 8: J.B. Mackenzie and Son Samuel Mackenzie c.1931



Figure 9: J.B. Mackenzie (front row, second from left) and Town Council c. 1930

Mackenzie was a prominent local and contributed significantly to the Town of Halton Hills. His business also manufactured small incubators by a coal-oil burner which was found in many chicken farms from coast to coast during the early 1900s. In the 1930s, they advertised coal with the slogan "Good Coal Makes Warm Friends". Mackenzie served on Georgetown Council for four years and was Mayor from 1930-34 and then Chief Magistrate. Mackenzie was member of the Public School Board for ten years and was also a member of the Board of Management of Knox Presbyterian Church. He was one of the members who arranged the Lawson Memorial Chimes in the Church. He was also a charter member of the Lions Club, president of the Ontario Retail Lumber Dealers' Association, member of Walker Masonic Lodge, Acton, and Halton Chapter, Georgetown.

J.B. Mackenzie transferred the property to Samuel John Mackenzie in 1946. Mackenzie died in his sleep in 1947 after attending the Acton Fall Fair. Local businesses closed for an hour during the funeral services as a token of respect.

Mackenzie's Mill

Given its proximity to Georgetown's downtown core, the former planing mill has been well documented over its history. Early photographs (Figure 10) show its former hipped roof and prominence along the north side of James Street, as well as Mackenzie's lumber yard along the south side of James Street. Figure 13 also shows the wooden storage structure to the east of the main building. James Street is shown as an unpaved, dirt roadway in these early photographs.



Georgetown Planing Mill

Figure 10: Georgetown Planing Mill c.1913 (EHS 00213, *Georgetown Herald*, Dec 17, 1913, p.4)



Figure 11: Driver Ira Rozell with coal wagon in front of Mackenzie's Lumber Yard, c.1920 (EHS 08545)



Figure 12: Ira Rozell in front of Mackenzie's Stone Mill, side view, c.1920 (EHS 08544)



Figure 13: Driver Ira Rozell with coal wagon in front of Mackenzie's Stone Mill, c.1920 (EHS 08543)



Figure 14: Driver Ira Rozell with coal wagon in front of Mackenzie's Stone Mill, c.1920 (EHS 08546)



Figure 15: Original frame Wesleyan Methodist Church, c.1841, moved to James St in 1876; first used as a car garage and sign painting shop by J.S. Ruddy and later used by Mackenzie as a lumber shed, c.1925 (EHS 10231)

The 1922 and 1934 Fire Insurance Maps (Figure 16 and Figure 17) show the subject property with the main stone building and several wooden accessory structures for lumber storage. The former printing shop (later used by Mackenzie for lumber storage) is also visible on the south side of James Street in these images. Figure 18 shows the former printing shop used as storage, with the stone building barely visible at the far left of the photograph.

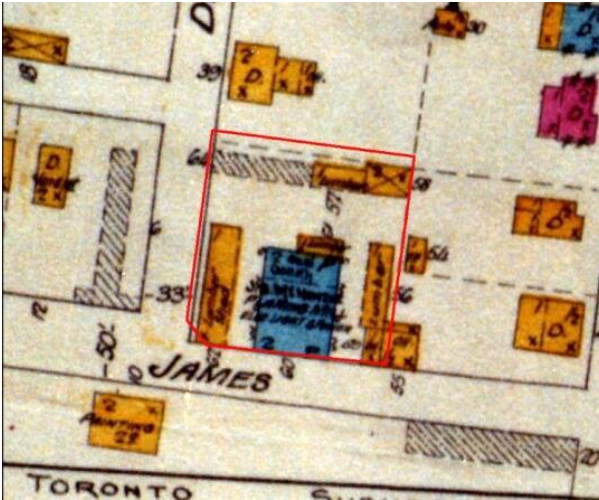


Figure 16: Subject property identified on the 1922 Fire Insurance Plan

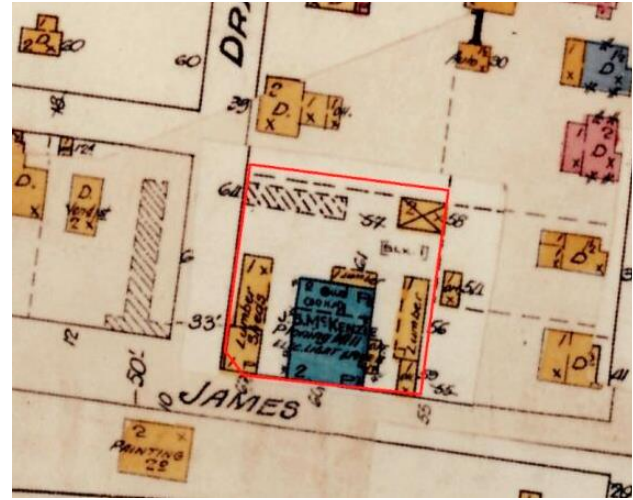


Figure 17: Subject property identified on the 1934 Fire Insurance Plan



Figure 18: A winter view of the lumber yard for Mackenzie Lumber, c. 1955 (EHS 22696)

The 1960 Fire Insurance Plan (Figure 19) shows the property in greater detail, showing the stone building with the concrete block addition at the east side, and the lumber yard to the south of the property along James Street. Although not as clear, aerial photographs from that time (Figure 20 and Figure 21) show the subject property and lumber yard to the south in the context of the surrounding area becoming more established.

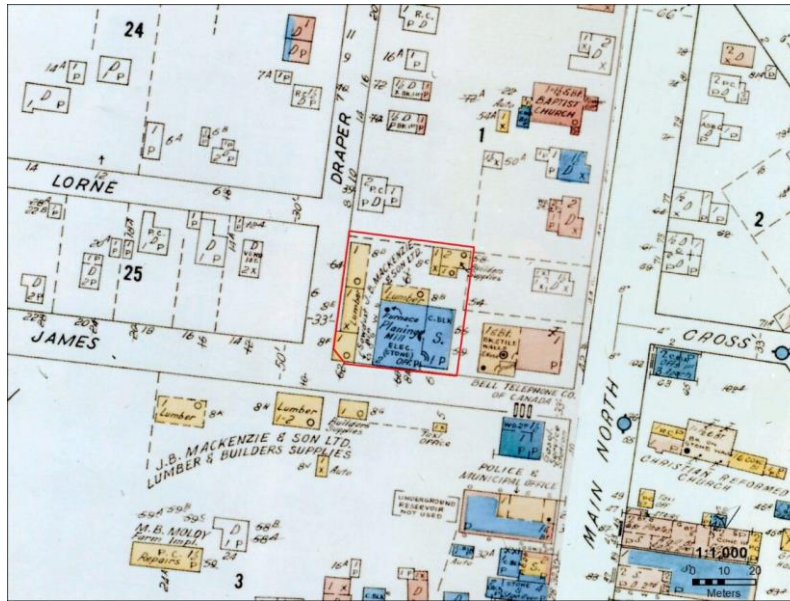


Figure 19: Subject property identified on the 1960 Fire Insurance Plan



Figure 20: Subject property identified on a 1954 aerial photograph



Figure 21: Subject property identified on a 1965 aerial photograph

In 1969 the property was under the ownership of J.B. Mackenzie & Son Ltd. Around this time, the business continued to operate as Mackenzie Lumber Buildall (Figure 22).



Figure 22: Mackenzie Lumber Buildall, c.1970 (EHS 08547)



Figure 23: Inside the Mackenzie Planing Mill with Mackenzie grandchildren, c.1970 (EHS 08550)



Figure 24: Inside the Mackenzie Planing Mill with Mackenzie grandchildren, c.1970 (EHS 08548)



Figure 25: Subject property identified on a 1977 aerial photograph

Photographs of the subject property during the 1980s show how little changes had been made to the original stone building over time since early photographs at the beginning of the twentieth century (Figure 26 through Figure 28).

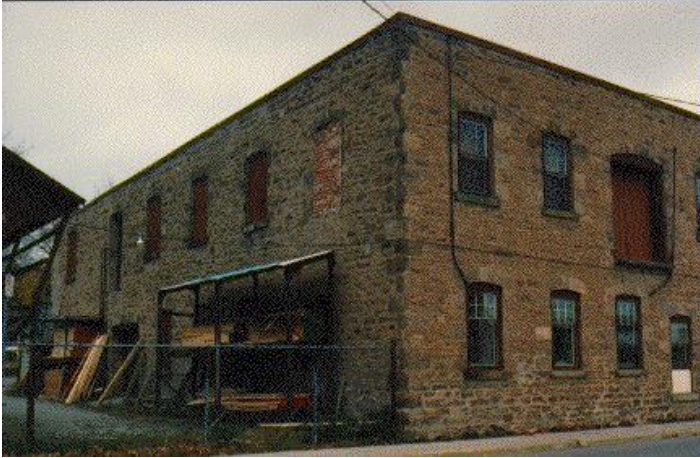


Figure 26: Mackenzie's Sawmill (Georgetown Lumber), c.1988 (EHS 10747)



Figure 27: Mackenzie's Sawmill (Georgetown Lumber), c.1988 (EHS 10745)



Figure 28: Mackenzie's Sawmill (Georgetown Lumber); front view, c.1988 (EHS 10750)



Figure 29: Mackenzie's Sawmill (Georgetown Lumber), c.1988 (EHS 10749)

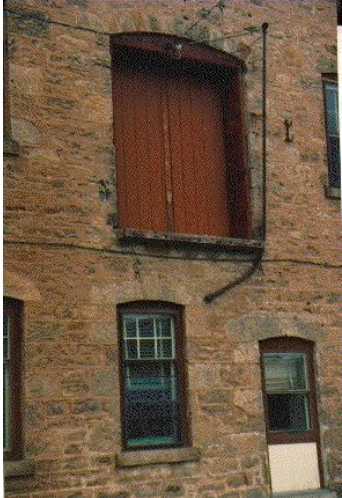


Figure 30: Close-up of shipping door, c.1988 (EHS 10748)



Figure 31: Subject property identified on a 1995 aerial photograph

The property remains under the ownership of J.B. Mackenzie & Son to this day and is home to an arts academy, community food box program, and an early learning centre, as well as several additional businesses located within the rear building known as 2 Draper Street.

2.2 Property & Architectural Description

The property at 8 James Street is located along the northwest side of James Street, west of Main Street South in downtown Georgetown. The existing property contains a two-storey stone building with concrete-block addition on the northeast side which extends to the existing two-storey building at the rear of the property. A fenced-in yard is located at the corner of Draper Street and James Street adjacent to the stone building, with an asphalt parking lot along the rear property line accessed from Draper Street.



Figure 32: Looking towards the subject property from the south side of James Street (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 33: Looking towards the subject property from James Street (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 34: Looking from Draper Street towards the c.1897 stone building (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

The primary (southeast) elevation of the existing stone building is remarkably intact, with original segmentally arched window and door openings, stone sills and voussoirs, and quoining at the corners extant at the first and second storey. The roof, originally hipped and now flat (replaced sometime in the mid-twentieth century), is capped at the parapet.



Figure 35: Primary (southeast) elevation of 8 James Street (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 36: Evidence of parging and repair along the front elevation (Town of Halton Hills 2024)

The side (southwest) elevation along Draper Street has also retained its integrity over the years, with segmentally arched window and door openings with stone sills and voussoirs throughout.



Figure 37: Southwest elevation of the existing building (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

The rear (northwest) elevation facing the existing parking lot features fewer openings however is also remarkably intact with little visible alterations to the original layout.



Figure 38: Northwest elevation of the existing building (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

The side (northeast) elevation is obscured at the first storey by the existing concrete block addition. At the upper storeys, symmetrically placed, segmentally arched window openings are visible in addition to a brick chimney extending up the elevation above the concrete block addition.



Figure 39: Partial side (northeast) elevation of the original building obscured by the one-storey concrete block addition (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

The concrete block addition facing James Street, rear addition, and rear two-storey building, as well as the interiors of the buildings, have not been identified as heritage attributes as part of this report.

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	X
Demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement	N/A

The property at 8 James Street has physical and design value as a representative example of a late-nineteenth-century vernacular industrial building within the historic core of Georgetown. Built in 1897 as a planing mill, the existing two-storey stone building has retained its integrity over the years through its use as a lumber mill and through adaptive re-use over time. The stone construction and quoining, segmentally arched window, and door openings and second-storey loading doors are extant throughout. Although the originally hipped roof has been modified to a flat roof, the character of the original industrial building has remained intact and is a testament to the care of its long-time owners, the Mackenzie family.

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	X

The property at 8 James Street has significant historical and associative value as a representative example of one of Georgetown's earliest industries. The existing building was constructed by prominent entrepreneur and land-owner Henry Pratt (H.P.) Lawson, who owned several sawmills and lumbering operations in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. Following Lawson's ownership, the planing mill was purchased by another prominent local, John Boyd (J.B.) Mackenzie. Mackenzie served the community as a member of the Board of Management for Knox Presbyterian Church, the Lions Club, the Ontario Retail Lumber Dealers' Association, the Walker Masonic Lodge, and was a Councillor, Mayor, and Chief Magistrate for the Town. Owned by the Mackenzie family since 1911, the property is an integral part of the downtown and an example of the impact of 19th century European settlement on the development of the community of Georgetown.

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

The property at 8 James Street has contextual value as it helps to maintain and support the character of the area along James Street within the downtown core west of Main Street. The existing building is in its original location at the corner of James Street and Draper Street and is linked to its surroundings within the commercial and industrial streetscape in Georgetown. The unique stone construction and architectural detailing, along with its prominence on the street as an adaptively-reused historic building, contributes to its landmark status within the community.

4.0 Summary

Following research and evaluation according to Ontario Regulation 9/06, it has been determined that the property at 8 James 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 8 James Street are identified as follows:

- The setback, location, and orientation of the existing building at the corner of James Street and Draper Street in Georgetown in the Town of Halton Hills;
- The scale, form, and massing of the late-19th century, two-storey stone industrial building;
- The materials, namely the stone construction and detailing, including stone quoining at the corners;
- The front (southeast) elevation, including:
 - o Segmentally arched door and window openings with stone sills and voussoirs at the first and second storeys;
 - o The second storey loading bay within a segmentally arched opening with wooden doors;
- The side (southwest) elevation, including:
 - o Segmentally arched window openings with stone sills and voussoirs at the first and second storeys;
- The rear (northwest) elevation, including:
 - o Segmentally arched window openings with stone sills and voussoirs at the first and second storeys;
- The side (northeast) elevation, including:
 - o Segmentally arched window openings with stone sills and voussoirs at the first and second storeys; and,
 - o The brick chimney as it extends above the concrete block addition above the roofline.

Modified door openings along the southwest elevation, interiors, the northeast concrete-block addition, and rear two-storey addition have not been identified as attributes as part of this report.

5.0 Sources

Primary Sources

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