

Research and Evaluation Report



(Halton Hills Images n.d.)

Hide House

49 Eastern Avenue, Acton, Town of Halton Hills

April 2024

Project Personnel

Report Authors

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

Historical Research

Laura Loney

with Chirag Patney, Cultural Heritage Assistant
(2021)

Field Review

Laura Loney

Report Preparation

Laura Loney

with Chirag Patney (2021)

Mapping Graphics:

Rehan Waheed, MA
Planning Data Analyst

Report Reviewers:

Bronwyn Parker
Director of Planning Policy

John Linhardt
Commissioner of Planning & Development

Table of Contents

1.0 Property Description	5
2.0 Background	5
2.1 Historical Background	6
2.2 Property & Architectural Description.....	17
2.3 Architectural Style & Comparative Analysis.....	22
3.0 Description of Heritage Attributes and Evaluation Checklist	23
4.0 Summary	24
5.0 Sources.....	26

Table of Figures

Figure 1: Location Map – 49 Eastern Avenue.....	5
Figure 2: Aerial Photograph - 49 Eastern Avenue	5
Figure 3: Subject property identified on the 1822 Patent Plan	7
Figure 4: George Beardmore (1818-1893) (EHS/HHPL – Vintage Acton).....	8
Figure 5: Subject property identified on the 1858 Tremaine <i>Map of the County of Halton, Canada West</i> ..	9
Figure 6: Subject property identified on the 1877 <i>Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of Halton</i>	9
Figure 7: Beardmore Tannery, c.1900 (EHS/HHPL - Vintage Acton).....	10
Figure 8: Beardmore Tannery, c.1917 (EHS - Vintage Acton).....	10
Figure 9: North facade of the Hide House, n.d. (The New Tanner 2006).....	10
Figure 10: Beardmore Tannery, c.1920 (EHS/HHPL - Vintage Acton).....	11
Figure 11: Beardmore Tannery Warehouse, c.1920 (EHS/HHPL - Vintage Acton)	11
Figure 12: Aerial photograph of the Beardmore Tannery, c. 1920 (Courtesy 4Transit Report Sept 2022) .	11
Figure 13: Subject property identified on the 1934 Fire Insurance Plan of Acton.....	12
Figure 14: Subject property identified on the 1934 Fire Insurance Plan of Acton within the broader context – note the industrial complex to the southwest.	13
Figure 15: Subject property identified on 2023 aerial photography, with an overlay of the 1934 Fire Insurance Map showing the tannery complex to the southwest of the Hide House site.....	13
Figure 16: Subject property identified on the 1935 National Topographic Map	14
Figure 17: Subject property identified in 1954 aerial photography.....	14
Figure 18: View of the Beardmore Tannery, c.1950s (Dills Collection - Vintage Acton)	14
Figure 19: Gates and parking lot at the Beardmore Tannery, c.1954 (Dills Collection - Vintage Acton).....	14
Figure 20: Subject property identified in 1985 aerial photography.....	15
Figure 21: Subject property identified in 1999 aerial photography.....	16
Figure 22: Subject property identified in 2007 aerial photography.....	16
Figure 23: Subject property identified in 2017 aerial photography.....	16
Figure 24: Subject property identified in 2023 aerial photography.....	16
Figure 25: Subject property identified in 2023 aerial photography.....	17
Figure 26: North elevation of the Hide House (Town of Halton Hills 2023).....	18

Figure 27: Looking along the north elevation of the Hide House from within the existing parking lot (Town of Halton Hills 2023) 18

Figure 28: Detail of the north elevation showing the brick pilasters, brick detailing and remnant advertisements (Town of Halton Hills 2023) 18

Figure 29: Detail of the north elevation showing the brick pilasters, brick detailing and remnant advertisements (Town of Halton Hills 2023) 18

Figure 30: Detail of the basketweave brickwork on the north elevation (Metrolinx 2022) 19

Figure 31: East elevation from Eastern Avenue (Town of Halton Hills 2023) 19

Figure 32: Detail of the cinderblock addition at the north end of the east elevation (Metrolinx 2022) 19

Figure 33: West end of the south elevation along Eastern Avenue (Town of Halton Hills 2023) 20

Figure 34: Detail of the eastern end of the south elevation (Town of Halton Hills 2023) 20

Figure 35: Detail of the eastern end of the south elevation (Town of Halton Hills 2023) 20

Figure 36: West elevation of the existing building from within the parking lot (Town of Halton Hills 2023) 21

Figure 37: Detail of the south end of the west elevation (Town of Halton Hills 2023) 21

Figure 38: Interior roof structure within the Hide House (Heritage Halton Hills 2024) 21

Figure 39: Interior roof structure within the Hide House (Heritage Halton Hills 2024) 21

Figure 40: Interior roof structure within the Hide House (Heritage Halton Hills 2024) 22

1.0 Property Description

49 Eastern Avenue	
Municipality	Town of Halton Hills
County or Region	Regional Municipality of Halton
Legal Description	PT LT 309, PL 1098, PT 2 20R14597; HALTON HILLS
Construction Date	c.1899
Original Use	Industrial
Current Use	Commercial
Architect/Building/Designer	Thomas Maxted - Brickwork
Architectural Style	19 th Century Victorian Industrial
Heritage Status	Listed on the Town’s Heritage Register
Recorder(s)	Laura Loney (2024) with Chirag Patney (2021)
Report Date	April 2024

2.0 Background



Figure 1: Location Map – 49 Eastern Avenue



Figure 2: Aerial Photograph - 49 Eastern Avenue

This research and evaluation report describes the history, context, and physical characteristics of the property at 49 Eastern Avenue in Acton, 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 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.

Acton’s Early Tanning Industry

A tanner was an important role in most settler villages to make many different goods, including shoes, jackets, and saddles. In Acton, as in Georgetown, Glen Williams, Norval, and Limehouse, the tannery was an important trade in its early European settlement. As these settlements grew, they began to specialize in different industries; whereas Georgetown went on to specialize in paper, Glen Williams in wool, Norval in flour, and Limehouse in lime, Acton’s leather industry began to flourish. This was, in part, due to the abundance of hemlock spruce trees in the area that provided the tannin required for firm, high quality leather that has a reddish colour.

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.

John Zimmerman established Acton's first leather tannery in 1832 on his father's farm on Lot 29, Concession 2, however it only operated until 1842.

As compensation for his survey work in 1819, Esquesing Township surveyor Abraham Nelles had been granted 1400 acres from the Crown. Nelles soon established himself as a farmer on this land in 1840; however, in 1842 he moved to Acton to establish his tannery south of the village. Nelles built the tannery and paid a tanner to cure the hides, however the business was sold in 1851 to Coleman and McIntyre from Dundas. In June the following year, the tannery was mostly destroyed by a fire.

Early Lot Ownership

In 1829, the Canada Company received the patent for Lot 28, Concession 3 in Esquesing Township. In 1835, portions of the lot were sold to Ezra and Zenus Adams, and in 1846 Adams sold the western half of Lot 28 to John Holgate.

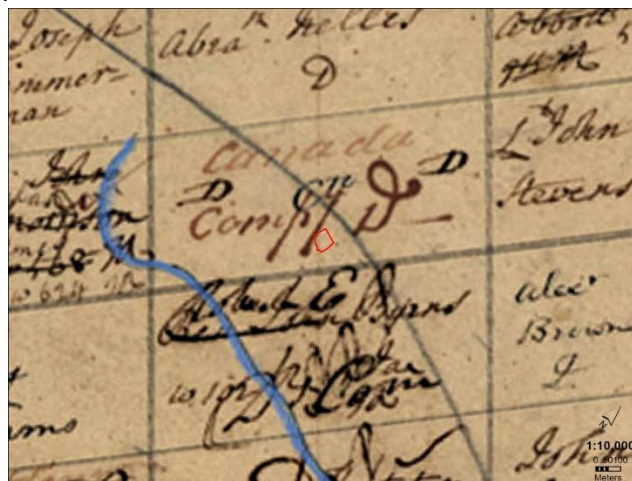


Figure 3: Subject property identified on the 1822 Patent Plan

On March 9, 1856, George Beardmore purchased part of Lot 28, Concession III from Joseph Holgate, James Adams and Adams' wife, the same year the Grand Trunk Railway was constructed through Acton.

Beardmore and Co. Tannery

George L. Beardmore was born in 1818 in Islington, London, England and moved to Canada at the age of 14. In 1838, George returned to England for a short period in which he "took French lessons, visited family and friends, and walked with his brothers and sisters." In April 1839, George returned to Canada with his brother, Joseph, who was a year younger than George and had learned the tanning trade at a leather tannery near Liverpool.

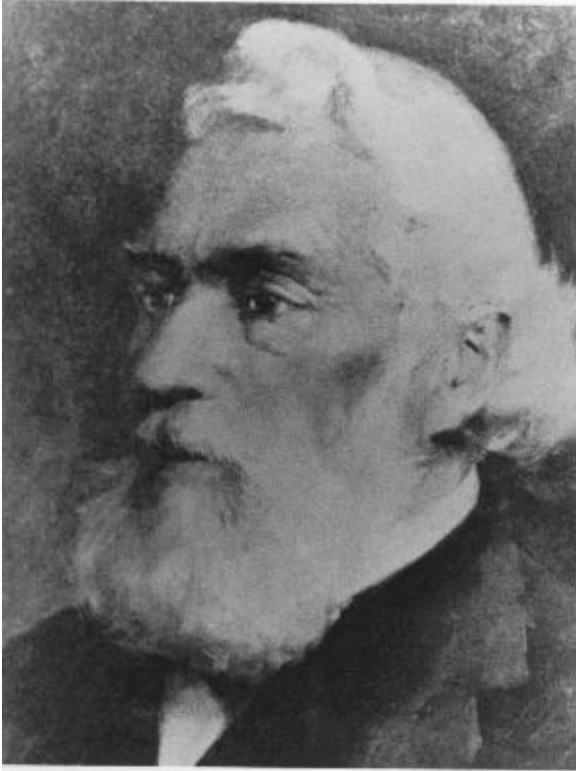


Figure 4: George Beardmore (1818-1893) (EHS/HHPL – Vintage Acton)

Prior to returning to Canada, George purchased several goods in London to be shipped to Canada, allowing him to open a store on September 14th, 1839. George sold this store less than a year later on July 26, 1840, following the construction of the stone tannery in Hamilton with his brother Joseph. In 1914, W.D. Beardmore wrote to Fred Beardmore detailing how Joseph had induced George into opening a tanning business. The corner stone for this tannery was laid on March 31st, 1840. The stone tannery in Hamilton was purported to be quite unique, as most tanneries at the time were frame structures covered with a mixture of red lead and fish oil; the use of these materials significantly increased the risk of fire in combination with the oil used in the tanning process and oil lamps used for lighting.

Shortly after opening the tannery, Joseph began to suffer from health problems and eventually withdrew from the business in 1846; as of 1844, the company was carried under George's name. Joseph returned to England where he died in 1852 at the age of 33.

The Hamilton tannery was destroyed by fire on July 11th, 1850; the insurance covered 1,150 British Pounds however was not enough to cover the cost of losses. Following this devastating loss, George acquired a new tannery in Grand River while maintaining a leather goods store in Hamilton. However, this tannery too was struck by a fire and destroyed forcing George to move to Guelph to open and operate his third tannery. John Harvey was appointed by George to manage the tannery in Guelph. During his tenure, Harvey provided information to the Select Committee of the 1st Parliament of Canada on "The Best Means of Protecting Hemlock Timber from Destruction". The Guelph tannery closed in 1865 or 1866 after George purchased a tannery in Acton in June of 1865 noting that "Acton being a better point for bark."

The Acton tannery had been vacant since 1851 before its purchase by George L. Beardmore. Beardmore had purchased part of Lot 28, Concession 3 from Holgate and James Adams and his wife in 1865. The tannery property was roughly 500 acres, of which about 80 acres was part of the Fairy Lake, a major water source in the area. The tannery property complex was located southwest of the current Hide House site. Approximately 19 acres of the property was occupied by buildings. Beardmore commissioned extensive renovations of the area and equipped the buildings with the latest tanning machinery available at the time.

In 1865, the eldest Beardmore son, Walter (W.D.) Beardmore, was brought into the family business at the age of 16. Walter had worked as a tanner in the Guelph tannery until George purchased the Acton Tannery. In 1868, a man named Bain was brought into partnership by George Beardmore and the company was renamed Beardmore, Bain & Company. This partnership was short-lived as Bain passed away three months later. The company was again renamed Beardmore & Co.

In 1872 a serious fire at the Acton tannery destroyed most of the buildings in the complex. A \$17,000 insurance payout was noted, covering only a small portion of the loss. The same year, George Beardmore built his home, a Second Empire mansion “Chudleigh” (named for his home in Devon, England), on Beverly Street in Toronto which had 35 rooms and was renovated by prominent architect Eden Smith between 1890 and 1934.



Figure 5: Subject property identified on the 1858 Tremaine Map of the County of Halton, Canada West



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

The 1877 *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of Halton* identifies the tannery in its description of the community of Acton as follows:

Among the most prominent industries is the sole Leather Tannery of Messrs. Beardmore & Co., of Toronto, being one of the largest in the province . . . The tannery turns out from 18,000 to 20,000 sides of sole leather per year, and use in its manufacture from 1,800 to 2,000 cords of bark, at a cost of \$10,000. The hides are principally imported from South America. The present building is entirely built of stone, 147 feet long by 60 wide, with leech-house 70x30 feet, engine-room etc. The tannery and yard occupy four acres, and the invested capital is about \$60,000.

At this time, local farmers who were clearing their land would bring wagon loads of hemlock bark to the Acton tannery and make between \$3 and \$4 per cord. Hemlock bark contains 8%-10% tannin and when made into a liquor in which the leather soaks to cure the hides, it produces a firm piece of leather with a reddish colour. The supply of hemlock in the Acton area, coupled with a generous supply of water, were two reasons why the tannery was so successful. As business grew, hemlock bark became scarce locally and it became extremely expensive to source the bark from further suppliers. In 1879, a second tannery was opened by the Beardmore family in Bracebridge, however resources soon became scarce there as well. In 1906, the Bracebridge tannery was closed, and employees were relocated to Acton.

Three subsidiaries of Beardmore & Company, the main plant devoted to the production of sole leather, were active at this time, including: The Acton Tanning Company (harness and belting leather along with chrome, sole, upper, case, bag, strap, sandal, and other light leathers); The Muskoka Leather Company (hemlock sole leather); and the Beardmore Belting Company Limited (belts).

As the business grew more successful, Beardmore & Company looked for ways to expand. In 1899, the brick warehouse extant on the subject property was built next to the railway line for the company by Thomas Maxted, a bricklayer and resident of Norval. Maxted was also the brick layer for multiple other

significant properties in Halton Hills including the Norval Presbyterian Church (1878) and the Norval Presbyterian Manse (1888).



Figure 7: Beardmore Tannery, c.1900 (EHS/HHPL - Vintage Acton)

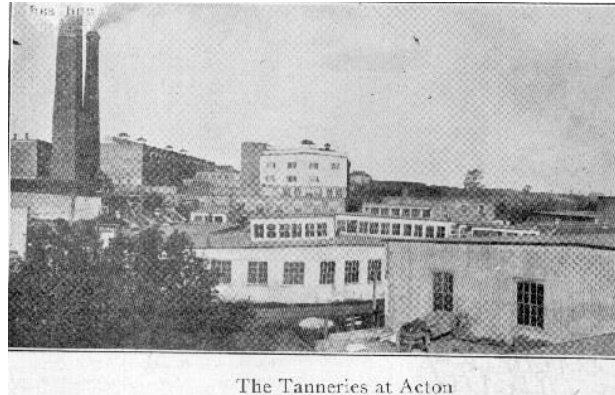


Figure 8: Beardmore Tannery, c.1917 (EHS - Vintage Acton)



Figure 9: North facade of the Hide House, n.d. (The New Tanner 2006)

Known then as the “Hide House”, the building, located to the northeast of the overall tannery complex (see Figure 13 and Figure 14), served as a terminal for Beardmore and Company and was used to store raw hides that were brought in by rail. The building was constructed of brick with Douglas Fir used for the trusses spanning 48 feet. The design of the warehouse was meant to be utilitarian, storing hides and finished leather before they were transported by horse-drawn wagon. This became problematic due to the surrounding low-lying swampy area, however in 1914 this issue was solved with a spur line built directly to the plant from the Grand Trunk Railway. This resulted in the Hide House becoming defunct as hides could be stored on the premises of the tannery. The warehouse was deemed excess and sold in 1933 to Amos Mason for \$1500.00.

At one point in its existence, the Acton tannery amassed nearly one million square feet of factory space with a further 500 acres of farm and housing for employees. Acton was often considered a Beardmore

'company town' as most of the 2000 people that lived in the area were Beardmore employees. Beardmore & Co. created a recreation club for employees and residents, including a skating rink with spectator seating, tennis courts, bowling greens, quoiting grounds, and a club room for events. These recreational services were subject to a fee; however, they were costly to maintain for the company. The impact of these costs amidst the Depression resulted in the consolidation of the Toronto and Acton offices, leaving only a small sales office in Toronto.



Figure 10: Beardmore Tannery, c.1920 (EHS/HHPL - Vintage Acton)



Figure 11: Beardmore Tannery Warehouse, c.1920 (EHS/HHPL - Vintage Acton)

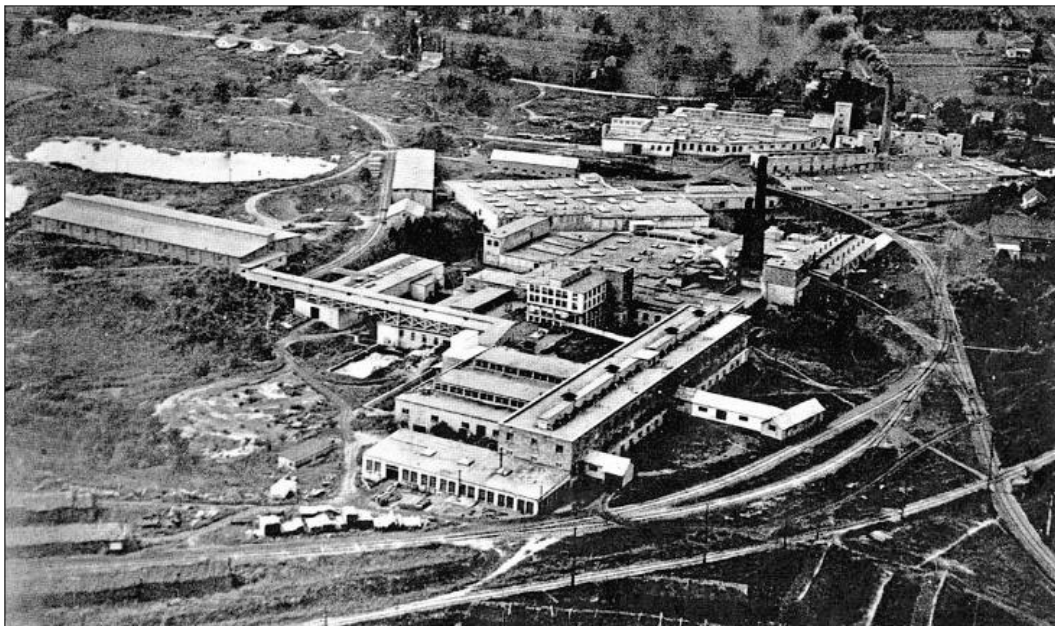


Figure 12: Aerial photograph of the Beardmore Tannery, c. 1920 (Courtesy 4Transit Report Sept 2022)

In-between History (1933-1980)

The 1934 Fire Insurance Map of Acton (Figure 13) identifies the Hide House as a Beardmore Leathers Ltd.'s "Sole Leather Warehouse", noting that it had 18" walls and a wood metal covered room on heavy wooden trusses. Smaller outbuildings were extant at that time, including a frame Dryer Shed and Hide Warehouse to the south of the Hide House and Coal and Freight Sheds to the north of the building. A rail station is extant beyond the northeast corner of the property. Additional smaller buildings are located at the south of the property. The Fire Insurance Maps below also show the Hide House in its broader context with most of the tannery buildings located to the southwest of the property.

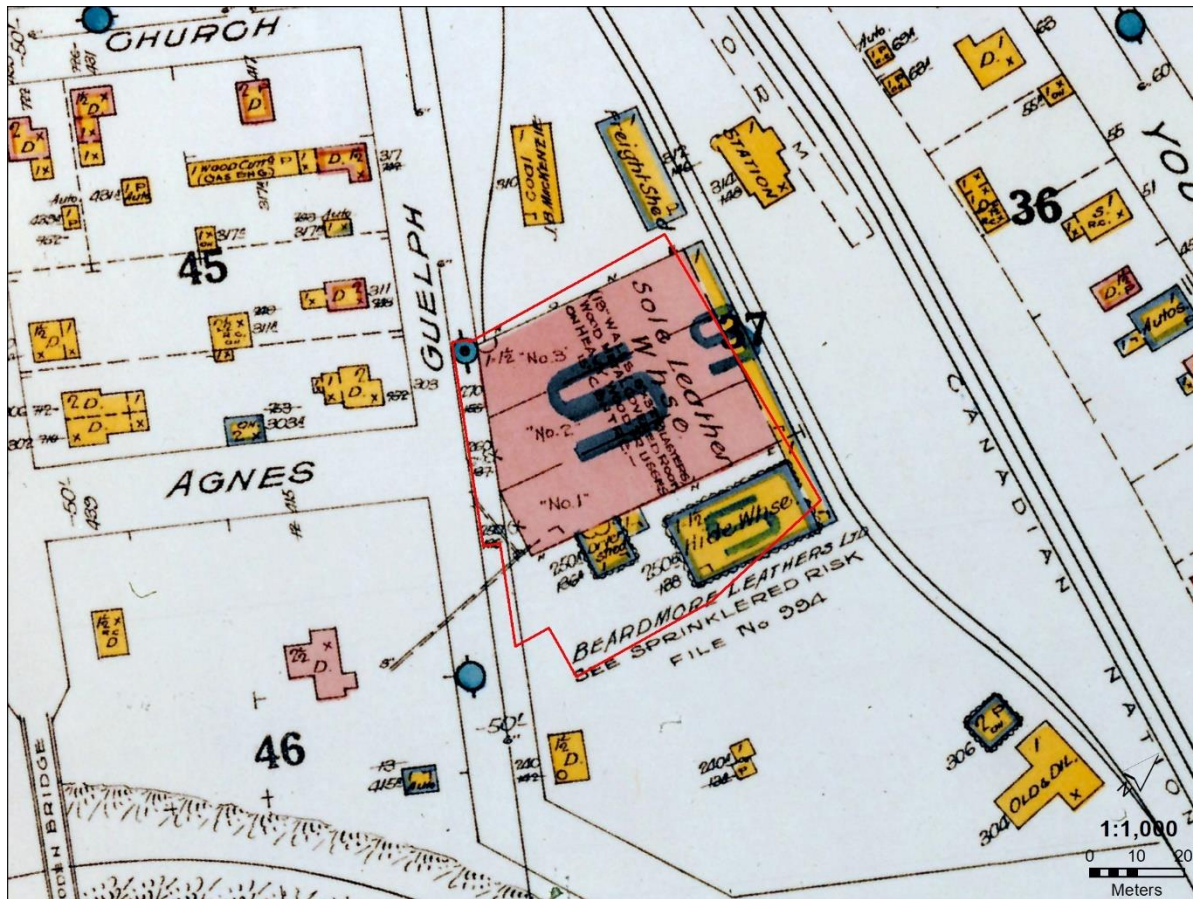


Figure 13: Subject property identified on the 1934 Fire Insurance Plan of Acton



Figure 14: Subject property identified on the 1934 Fire Insurance Plan of Acton within the broader context – note the industrial complex to the southwest.



Figure 15: Subject property identified on 2023 aerial photography, with an overlay of the 1934 Fire Insurance Map showing the tannery complex to the southwest of the Hide House site

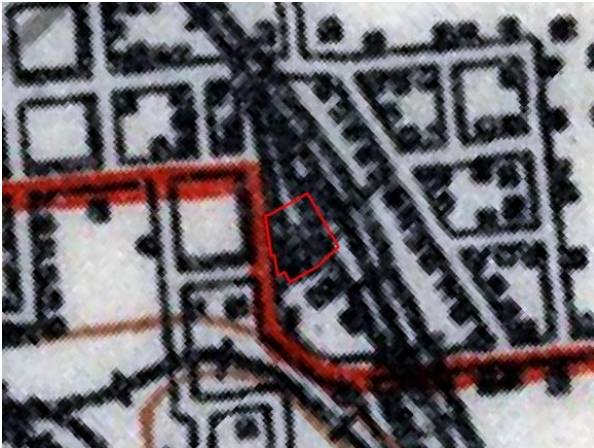


Figure 16: Subject property identified on the 1935 National Topographic Map



Figure 17: Subject property identified in 1954 aerial photography

In 1933, the Hide House property was sold by Beardmore and Co. to the Mason Knitting Company. Mason Knitting Co. moved his knitting operation to Acton from Alton following encouragement from the Acton Chamber of Commerce. Amos Mason was a prominent figure in Acton. Along with being a major source of employment in Acton, especially for women, the Mason's were talented musicians and had their own orchestra. Amos Mason was also the band master for the Acton Citizens Band and was the first mayor in 1951 when Acton incorporated as a town.

The Mason Knitting Company was first located on 59 Willow Street North until they later moved to the subject property at 49 Eastern Avenue where they manufactured and packaged primarily children's clothing. In 1968, the Carter Line, one of the largest names in childrenswear, established their Canadian Outlet at the Mason Knitting Co. and engaged them to manufacture children's clothes while they paid royalties to the Carter Line. To meet demand, they increased staff from 60 to 83 in the 1960s.



Figure 18: View of the Beardmore Tannery, c.1950s (Dills Collection - Vintage Acton)



Figure 19: Gates and parking lot at the Beardmore Tannery, c.1954 (Dills Collection - Vintage Acton)

In 1969, Amos Mason sold the 49 Eastern Avenue premises to Frank Heller and Company, a firm specializing in the production of split leather. Frank Heller had served as the superintendent of specialty leathers for Beardmore until he started his own business in 1961. Initially, Frank Heller and Co. were leather finishers specializing in footwear, however they soon transitioned into split leather following their move to the subject property. In 1971, the Hide House property was granted to Canada Packers

Ltd. Frank Heller and Co. used the site for 11 years before moving in June of 1980 to a larger premise in Acton's industrial park.

The Olde Hide House

In 1980, Frank Heller, Don Dawkins, and Fred Dawkins purchased the Hide House property. Following extensive renovations in the fall of 1980, the Olde Hide House opened on November 14 of that year. The initial vision for the Olde Hide House was for sales, however as the business evolved, they began to offer commercial and manufacturing operations on site, honouring the traditional role that leather played in the development of Acton and the reputation that Acton has as Canada's 'Leathertown'.

Upon opening, the Olde Hide House manufactured high quality pine and oak furniture on site. In June 1982, The Olde Hide House opened a restaurant within the building called Jack Tanner's Table which seated 300 people. The Olde Hide House was very successful, and in 1989 they expanded and opened the Flight-Line Leather store at 7-11 Mill Street East in downtown Acton. This location featured aviation leathers, books, and other nostalgic items; the business also included a national catalogue and partnerships with a mobile air show. Representatives of the company attended air shows across the country to sell items and promote their business. Promotions for the Olde Hide House advertised that "It's worth the drive to Acton!".



Figure 20: Subject property identified in 1985 aerial photography

In 1993, the Acton outlet closed briefly while the company restructured its finances. Part of this financial restructuring was the closing of Jack Tanner's Table. In late 2007, the Olde Hide House began experiencing financial difficulties and the company filed for bankruptcy in 2010. At this point, the Olde Hide House had three locations, including their headquarters in Acton and two sales and outlet centers in Toronto and Vaughn. These other locations were soon closed, and the headquarters in Acton remained the only location. This resulted in further emphasis on their slogan that initially popularized Acton as a tourist destination. Now known as the Hide House, the store continues to operate at this location as of the finalization of this report.



Figure 21: Subject property identified in 1999 aerial photography



Figure 22: Subject property identified in 2007 aerial photography



Figure 23: Subject property identified in 2017 aerial photography



Figure 24: Subject property identified in 2023 aerial photography

2.2 Property & Architectural Description

The property is located at 49 Eastern Avenue in Halton Hills and contains a late-nineteenth-century warehouse building that has been adaptively re-used for commercial purposes. The site is bordered by a paved parking lot to the northwest, the railway line to the northeast, open space to the southeast, and residential and commercial properties to the southwest. For the purposes of clarity in this report, the elevation facing northeast/the railway line will be described as north.

The property is legally known as PT LT 309, PL 1098, PT 2 20R14597; HALTON HILLS.



Figure 25: Subject property identified in 2023 aerial photography

The existing building is a Victorian-era industrial building with timber-frame construction on a rubble stone foundation with brick cladding and varies between one and two storeys. The rectangular plan building features a butterfly, or inverted-pitched, roof with metal roofing featuring skylights. Along the east side of the building are three mid-century additions.

North Elevation

The north elevation of the building facing the rail line, originally the main elevation of the building, is divided into three bays with symmetrically placed openings (now infilled with cinderblocks) for loading doors. The bays feature segmentally arched brick voussoirs and a double-width brick stringcourse, with a basket-weave pattern in the tympanum of the central bay and an additional stringcourse near the top of the opening. The bays are defined by brick pilasters that extend the full height of the building with remnant advertisements visible in the gable ends and between the pilasters. The brickwork on this

elevation includes common bond brickwork as well as a variation of the English Garden Wall bond. The parapet walls, once decorative, now feature a steep pitch with brickwork laid in stretcher bond. In each of the gable ends, two windows now feature vents while another has been infilled with buff brick.



Figure 26: North elevation of the Hide House (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 27: Looking along the north elevation of the Hide House from within the existing parking lot (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 28: Detail of the north elevation showing the brick pilasters, brick detailing and remnant advertisements (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 29: Detail of the north elevation showing the brick pilasters, brick detailing and remnant advertisements (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 30: Detail of the basketweave brickwork on the north elevation (Metrolinx 2022)

East Elevation

The east elevation is divided into bays with brick pilasters and features common bond brickwork. This elevation features several alterations and includes three additions:

- 1) A one-and-a-half storey addition with rectangular plan and gable roof, garage door and shed-roof dormer with rectangular window openings and door on the north façade;
- 2) A two-storey addition with gable roof and one-storey wing with flat roof; the first storey is concrete block, and the east elevation features the main entrance now featuring metal fire doors;
- 3) A cinder block addition with loading bay and pedestrian door featuring a gable roof and large rectangular window openings.



Figure 31: East elevation from Eastern Avenue (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 32: Detail of the cinderblock addition at the north end of the east elevation (Metrolinx 2022)

South Elevation:

Facing Eastern Avenue, the south elevation is constructed using common bond and is also utilitarian in design. The western portion of the elevation is an asymmetrical brick façade featuring two door and four rectangular single window openings. A historic plaque is affixed to this portion of the elevation. The eastern portion of the elevation features the shallow pitched-gable end, a central loading bay featuring segmentally arched voussoirs and rectangular window openings (all of which are covered with wood panels).



Figure 33: West end of the south elevation along Eastern Avenue (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 34: Detail of the eastern end of the south elevation (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 35: Detail of the eastern end of the south elevation (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

West Elevation:

In keeping with the east and south elevations, the west elevation is utilitarian in design and does not feature any additional ornamentation on its common bond façade. The main entrance with wooden double doors to the Olde Hide House is located within the third bay from the railway corridor within a modern gable-roofed portico; the façade also features a single fire door and a loading dock with metal doors covered by a shed roof.



Figure 36: West elevation of the existing building from within the parking lot (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 37: Detail of the south end of the west elevation (Town of Halton Hills 2023)

The wooden trusses and original roof are extant within the interior of the existing Hide House building. The beams are a minimum of 6"x8" to 8"x8", and some are larger. The rafters and joists are secured using nutted steel rods, and the main cross beams are made of four boards that are bolted together.



Figure 38: Interior roof structure within the Hide House (Heritage Halton Hills 2024)



Figure 39: Interior roof structure within the Hide House (Heritage Halton Hills 2024)



Figure 40: Interior roof structure within the Hide House (Heritage Halton Hills 2024)

2.3 Architectural Style & Comparative Analysis

The subject property is described in the Town's Heritage Register as: "A rare surviving example in Acton of a Late Victorian industrial vernacular building with impressive brick façade and vast cathedral-like interiors; the original wooden beams and roof are visible on the interior". The Hide House is also noted as serving as a landmark in Acton and the last remaining building associated with the Beardmore Tannery. In Acton, and within Halton Hills, there are no comparable late-nineteenth-century industrial properties.

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 Hide House at 49 Eastern Avenue has physical and design value as a rare surviving example of a late-nineteenth century Victorian industrial warehouse, the only one of its kind in Halton Hills and the only remaining building associated with the former Beardmore & Company industrial complex. The building, while primarily utilitarian in its design, features characteristics consistent with late-nineteenth-century architecture including its red brick façade and Classical detailing and has retained much of its original integrity since its construction in 1899, as well as remnant advertisements along the north elevation. The brickwork on the north elevation displays a high degree of craftsmanship, including the basket-weave pattern in the tympanum of the central bay, the brick stringcourses, and the inclusion of a variation of the English Garden Wall bond. The original trusses and roof structure are also extant within the existing building. Construction techniques used within the existing building are typical of its period of construction and therefore the construction of the building would not display a high degree of technical or scientific achievement.

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 49 Eastern Avenue has historical and associative value due to its direct association with the development of the tanning industry in Acton and within Ontario, as well its associations with the evolution of railway transportation. The Hide House was built as a warehouse for the Beardmore & Co. Tannery, at the time the largest Tannery in the British Empire and a major employer in the Town of Acton with almost 6,500 people working for the company at its peak. The property is directly associated with the Beardmore Family and with its owner George Beardmore, who established the Beardmore & Co. Tannery. The Beardmore family also built employee housing, operated a co-operative store, tennis courts, a bowling green, a golf course, boathouse, and an outdoor arena on Frederick Street within the community of Acton.

Since its adaptive re-use in the 1980s, the site has operated as a tourist destination and commercial outlet, formerly known as the Olde Hide House and now the Hide House.

The brickwork on the Hide House was completed by local bricklayer and builder Thomas Maxted, who also undertook work on many other significant buildings in the area including Norval Presbyterian Church and Manse, Acton’s Presbyterian and Baptist churches, Georgetown High School, and Robert Noble’s Flour Mills.

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 49 Eastern Avenue has contextual value as it is a significant landmark in the community. The last remaining building associated with the Beardmore & Company Tannery, the Hide House has remained a focal point in the community through its years of industrial use and beyond as a retail outlet, “The Olde Hide House”. The adaptive re-use of the former warehouse as a commercial space for leather goods continues the site’s connection to Acton’s foundational leather and leather-related industries and for many has become a destination with the famous tagline “It’s Worth the Drive to Acton” used in advertisements for the site over decades. Legible still as a former warehouse with its significant industrial form and extant original detailing, the Hide House is physically, functionally, and historically linked to its surroundings along the rail line through Acton. While an isolated remnant of the former industrial landscape, the presence of the Hide House in this location since its construction in 1899 is important in defining the character of the area.

4.0 Summary

Following research and evaluation according to Ontario Regulation 9/06, it has been determined that the property at 49 Eastern Avenue 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 49 Eastern Avenue are identified as follows:

- The setback, location, and orientation of the existing building along Eastern Avenue and adjacent to the rail corridor in the community of Acton, Town of Halton Hills;
- The scale, form, and massing of the existing one-to-two-storey building on a rubble stone foundation with butterfly or inverted-pitch roof;
- The materials, including red brick cladding and detailing, brick construction in varied patterns throughout, heavy timber frame construction and wooden trusses on the interior;
- On the north elevation:
 - The three-bay elevation with symmetrically placed former loading bays;
 - Segmentally arched brick voussoirs and brick stringcourses;
 - Basket-weave pattern in the tympanum of the central bay;
 - Brickwork in common bond and a variation of English Garden Wall bond;
- On the east elevation:

- The original brick exterior wall with brick pilasters where visible beyond existing additions;
- On the south elevation:
 - The loading bay opening (currently infilled) with segmentally arched brick voussoirs centered beneath the gable peak at the east end of the elevation;
 - The brick exterior (currently modified openings along this elevation);
- On the west elevation:
 - The brick exterior with brick pilasters along the elevation; and,
- On the interior, the heavy timber frame beams and trusses within the existing roof structure.

The interior spaces (apart from the timber-frame structure that is visible including heavy wooden trusses) and openings that have been modified over time along each elevation have not been identified as heritage attributes. Given the nature of an industrial warehouse, it is not unusual that several new openings have been introduced and that others have been infilled over time.

5.0 Sources

Primary Sources

Correspondence from W.D. Beardmore to F.N. Beardmore, 03 December 1914, MG3 A78, Esquesing Historical Society Archives. Halton Hills, Ontario, Canada.

Typescript of The Acton Tanneries of Beardmore & Co. and Their Far-Famed Product, 1975, MG1 A9, Esquesing Historical Society Archives. Halton Hills, Ontario, Canada.

The Old Hide House. "Leather -- Still the Largest Industry in 'Leathertown'." June 1982. MG3 A74, Esquesing Historical Society Archives. Halton Hills, Ontario, Canada.

Typescript of Beardmore History - Founded 1844, 5 December 1979, MG10 A6, Esquesing Historical Society Archives. Halton Hills, Ontario, Canada.

The Old Hide House. "The New Hide House?" February 8, 1989. MG3 A74, Esquesing Historical Society Archives. Halton Hills, Ontario, Canada.

The Old Hide House is Back in Black. (1996, December). *Success Weekly*. MG3 A79, Esquesing Historical Society Archives. Halton Hills, Ontario, Canada.

Newspapers

Georgetown Independent

"Aim open Jack Tanner's Table in 9 days". (1982, November 25). *Georgetown Independent*. MG3 A79, Esquesing Historical Society Archives. Halton Hills, Ontario, Canada.

"Aim to open this summer, The Hide House Plans Restaurant". (1981, January 21). *Georgetown Independent*. MG3 A79, Esquesing Historical Society Archives. Halton Hills, Ontario, Canada.

"Leathertown Student Researchers find Newfoundland-Acton Link in Leather Industry for Years". (June 3, 1987). *Georgetown Independent*. MG3 A79, Esquesing Historical Society Archives. Halton Hills, Ontario, Canada

"New Leather Factory Outlet- Soon Acton Tourist Attraction". (1980, October 1). *Georgetown Independent*. MG3 A79, Esquesing Historical Society Archives. Halton Hills, Ontario, Canada.

"Old Hide House Opens Friday". (1980, November 12). *Georgetown Independent*.

Independent Free Press

Maher, E. (2010, January 26). "Hide House files for bankruptcy protection". *Independent Free Press*. <https://www.theifp.ca/community-story/5359928-hide-house-files-for-bankruptcy-protection/>.

49 Eastern Avenue | PT LT 309, PL 1098, PT 2 20R14597; HALTON HILLS

Secondary Sources

“Chudleigh”. ACO: Toronto. <https://www.acotoronto.ca/building.php?ID=3114>.

“Was it Worth the Drive to Acton?” Heritage Toronto. <https://www.heritagetoronto.org/explore-learn/acton-slogan-local-sayings/>.

4Transit. “Metrolinx – Regional Express Rail (Package 2) – Technical Advisory Services. ESR Contract C – Acton GO Station – Cultural Heritage Report – 49 Eastern Avenue”.

Conway, A. (1990). *A History of Beardmore and Company Limited and Anglo Canadian Leather Company Limited*.

Elstone, E. (1987, June). The Old Hide House: Marketing by Identity. North Halton Business Digest, 31. MG3 A79, Esquesing Historical Society Archives. Halton Hills, Ontario, Canada

McDonald, J. (2003). Halton Sketches Revisited: Historical Tales of People and Events in North Halton.

Moore, H. P. (2006). Acton’s Early Days: Recollections of The Old Man of the Big Clock Tower (D. R. Dills (Ed.)). Acton Free Press.

Rowe, J. M. B. (2002). Acton: The History of Leathertown. Esquesing Historical Society.