

# Research and Evaluation Report



(Town of Halton Hills 2024)

## **Henderson-Mason House**

41 Bower Street, Acton, Town of Halton Hills

May 2024

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1.0 Property Description

Henderson-Mason House	
Municipality	Town of Halton Hills
County or Region	Region of Halton
Legal Description	PT LT 262, MUP 1098, AS IN 680689. TOWN OF HALTON HILLS
Construction Date	c.1891
Original Use	Residential
Current Use	Residential
Architect/Building/Designer	Unknown
Architectural Style	Victorian with Queen Anne influences
Additions/Alterations	Two-storey enclosed front porch, rear additions
Heritage Status	Listed on the Town’s Heritage Register
Recorder(s)	Laura Loney
Report Date	May 2024

2.0 Background

This research and evaluation report describes the history, context, and physical characteristics of the property at 41 Bower Street in Halton Hills, Ontario (Figure 1 and Figure 2). The report includes an evaluation of the property’s cultural heritage value as prescribed by the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

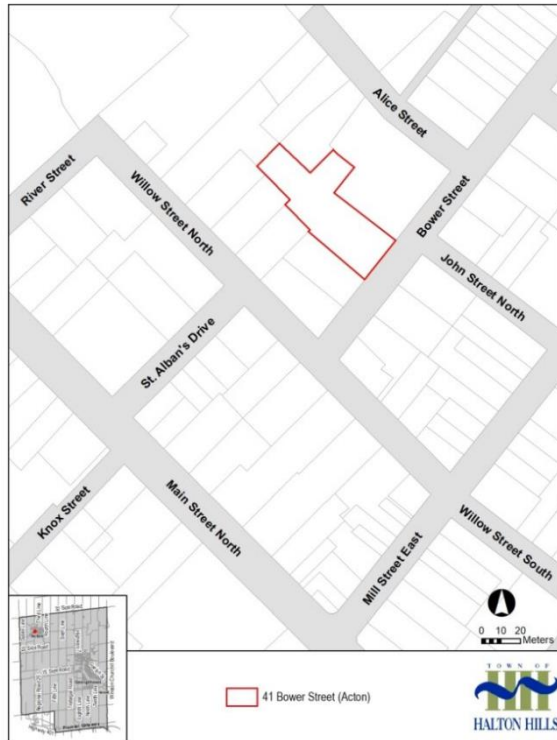


Figure 1: Location Map – 41 Bower Street



Figure 2: Aerial Photograph – 41 Bower Street

## 2.1 Historical Background

### *Indigenous History*

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 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 permanently<sup>1</sup>.

### Early Settlement

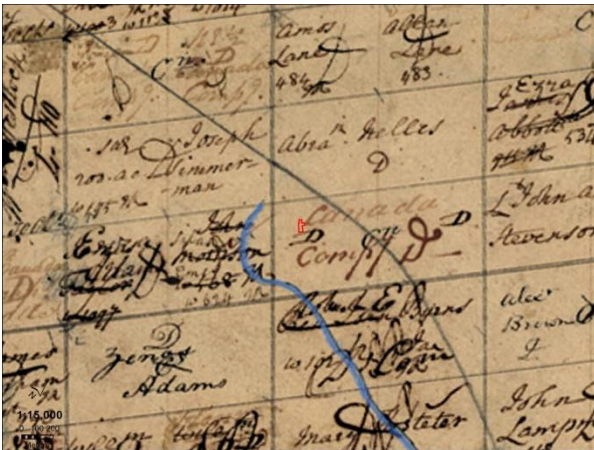


Figure 3: Subject property identified on the 1822 Patent Plan



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

In 1829, Lot 28, Concession 3 was granted to the Canada Company. Three years later, Rufus Adams purchased the lot. The orchard lane within the property later became Bower Avenue. David Henderson purchased the old Adams farmhouse and surrounding property from the Adams family towards the end of the nineteenth century and created three properties from the land. The subject property is located on the same site as the former farmhouse which was demolished in 1900; Henderson constructed the

<sup>1</sup> 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.

home at 35 Bower Street from the bricks of the old farmhouse and constructed the existing house on the subject property c.1891.

The Hon. David Henderson was born in 1841 and moved to Acton in 1878. Henderson was a storekeeper for many years, later forming a partnership with his wife Alison Christie's family to establish Christie, Henderson & Co., a private bank. Henderson was soon elected to Council and the Board of Education, and in 1888 was elected as the Conservative candidate for the House of Commons. While defeated at a by-election in 1891, Henderson was re-elected in 1893, appointed member of the King's Privy Council of Canada in 1916 and served in the House of Commons until his retirement in 1917. Henderson's wife Alison died a tragic death in 1914, falling off their balcony, while Henderson died in 1922.



Figure 5: Hon. David Henderson, c.1900 (MHS 5969)

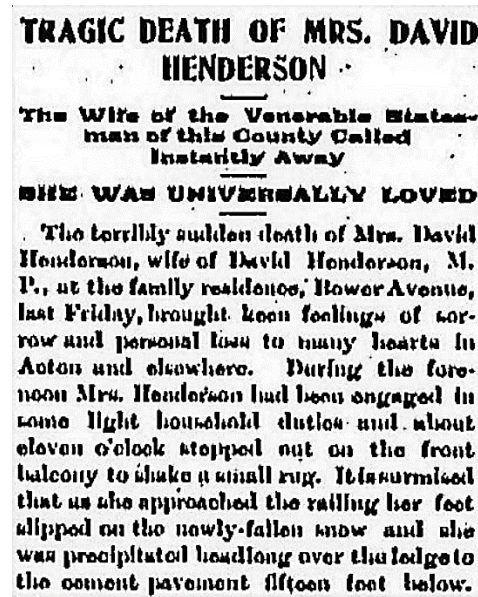


Figure 6: Excerpt from the Acton Free Press, 26 November 1914

In 1898, the property was transferred to his brother John Henderson (1836-1915) and son Charles Henderson (1873-1944). In 1906, John and Charles transferred the property to William Anderson (1838-1924). William Anderson's first wife was Catharine (nee Hume) (1842-1891), and in 1892 Anderson remarried widow Matilda Colemand (nee Cripps) (1854-1929).



Figure 7: Aerial view of Acton, subject property identified with arrow (A.T. Brown/Dills Collection c. early 1900s)



Figure 8: Bower Street c.1908, the existing building at 41 Bower Street shown on the left; the residential building and glove factory are no longer extant. Subject property identified with a red arrow (EHS 00325)

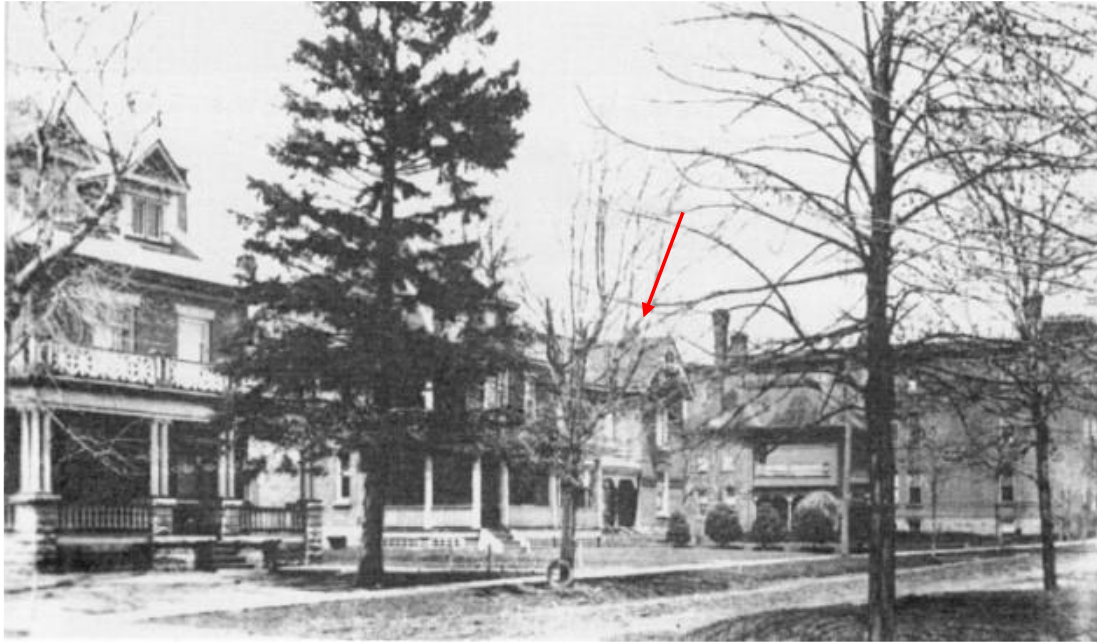


Figure 9: Bower Street looking east, c. early 1900s; subject property identified with a red arrow (A.T. Brown/Dills Collection)

In 1911, the property was purchased by carpenter Jeremiah Bell (1876-1953). The *Acton Free Press* reported that Anderson had sold the whole of the property to Bell, including the new brick house, the rough cast house, stable, lots known as the gravel pits, the pond, and the lots on the north side. Bell was married to Mary Elizabeth (nee Storey) (1875-1931), daughter of farmers Robert and Mary Storey. Bell served as a local councillor in Acton.

#### *Amos Mason & the Mason Knitting Company Ltd.*

Amos Mason purchased the subject property from David Henderson's estate in 1923. It was noted that he took great pride in the landscaping of his home, and at one point installed a conservatory on the front elevation of his room to raise special plants and flowers.

Amos Mason (1882-1960) was born in Lisgar, Ontario, and moved to Acton when he was 13. For a time, Mason worked in Meadowvale and later moved to Alton where he met his wife Cordelia (Nee Algie) (1885-1960), after which they married in 1908.

Mason moved to Acton from Caledon in 1920 to open the Mason Knitting Company. The Mason Knitting Company Ltd. began with five employees in an approximately 2500 square feet space at the corner of Willow Street and River Street. In 1932, a second storey was added to the Mason Knitting Mills by local builders J.B. Mackenzie & Son. In 1938, the company took over warehouses from Beardmore & Co, then known as the Hide House. In 1955 the plant was 28,000 square feet and employed around 60 people, specializing in children's underwear. The business was taken over by Mason's son George, and in 1968 it was sold to a group headed by Brendan Swan and ownership was soon assumed by B.H. Dorfman of Toronto in 1970. By 1971, the company was experiencing financial difficulties with almost 100 employees laid off.



Figure 10: Halton County Council c.1931; Warden Amos Mason identified sitting at centre (EHS 25806)

Mason was very involved in the community, leading the Acton Citizen's Band, working on the Public-School Board, serving on municipal council, Reeve (1925-1931), Warden of Halton County, and Acton's first mayor. Mason was involved in the Rotary Club and the Crippled Children's Campaign, the Halton Children's Aid Society, and a member of the Walker Lodge A.F. and A.M. Mason also served on the Acton YMCA board, for a time as president, and was the president of the Acton Board of Trade and chairman of the Swimming Pool Committee. During WWI, Mason headed the Acton and Community War Service League, led fundraising initiatives, and was Chair of the Red Cross. Amos was awarded Citizen of the Year by the Chamber of Commerce in 1958 for his work as a civic and community leader in Acton. Mason was also elected Acton's first mayor.

The 1934 Fire Insurance Plan of Acton shows the brick two-and-a-half storey structure with a one storey frame addition to the rear. The former Canada Glove Company factory to the east, as is a brick-veneered two-storey structure with one storey addition that is no longer extant.

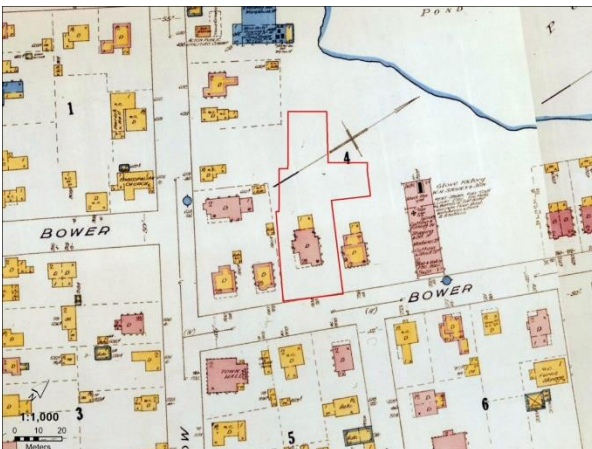


Figure 11: Subject property identified on the 1934 Fire Insurance Plan of Acton

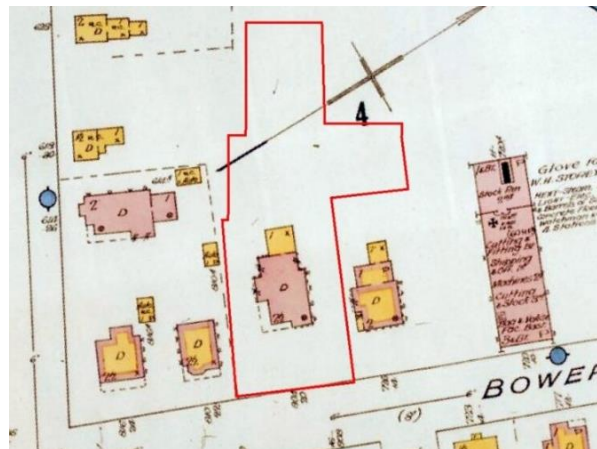


Figure 12: Subject property identified on the 1934 Fire Insurance Plan of Acton, detail

Following Mason's death in 1960, his son William George Mason (1909-1995), who had worked as a manager at the knitting mill, sold the property to Cordelia's cousin Robert Laird Algie and his wife Josephine Algie for \$15,000.

Robert Algie (1893-1965) worked for the Timothy Eaton company in Toronto and moved to Moncton in 1920, working in the mail order department of Eaton's for 40 years before retiring in 1960 and moving to Acton. Algie served in active duty in WWI and coordinated war services in Moncton during WWII, was Secretary of the board of managers for Knox Presbyterian Church, and an attendance officer for the local schools.

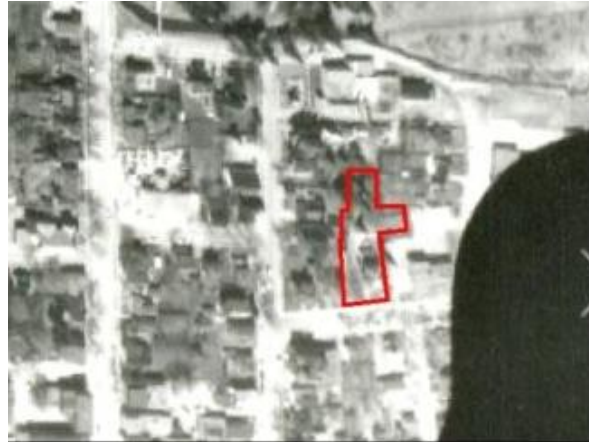


Figure 13: Subject property identified in 1974 aerial photography

In 1979, the property was sold by Keith G.S. and Susan A. Robbins to Douglas and Joanne Luck, who in 1982 sold it to Neville and Valerie Ashworth. In 1987, the property was sold to Gerry and Susan Rivers and was purchased by its current owners in 2011.



Figure 14: Subject property identified in 2002 aerial photography



Figure 15: Subject property identified in 2011 aerial photography



Figure 16: Subject property identified in 2021 aerial photography

## 2.2 Property & Architectural Description



Figure 17: Subject property identified in 2023 aerial photography

The subject property is located along the north side of Bower Street in the community of Acton in the Town of Halton Hills. The existing two-and-a-half storey residential building is located adjacent to the roadway within an irregularly shaped parcel that extends to the north at the rear of the properties along Willow Street North. The hipped roof of the original building is intersected at the front elevation with a hipped roof over the extant two-storey porch. A one-storey addition extends towards the rear.



Figure 18: Looking towards the subject property from 41 Bower Street (Town of Halton Hills 2024)



Figure 19: Looking along Bower Street towards the subject property (Town of Halton Hills 2024)



Figure 20: Looking along Bower Street towards the subject property (Town of Halton Hills 2024)

The front (southeast) elevation facing Bower Street is a two-bay configuration, with the eastern portion of the façade projecting in front of the recessed elevation behind the two-storey enclosed porch. The original elevation appears to be extant within the porch. This porch is not original based on a review of historic photography, however, is sympathetic to the original design and its wooden construction ensures legibility from the original brick structure. Within the first storey of the brick bay at the front elevation is a segmentally arched window opening with stone sill below and brick hood moulds above. Brick string courses wrap the elevation and extend along the side elevation. At the second storey, a round-arched window opening with brick hood moulds and detailing is centered beneath a smaller round-arched window with brick hood moulds located beneath the gable peak.

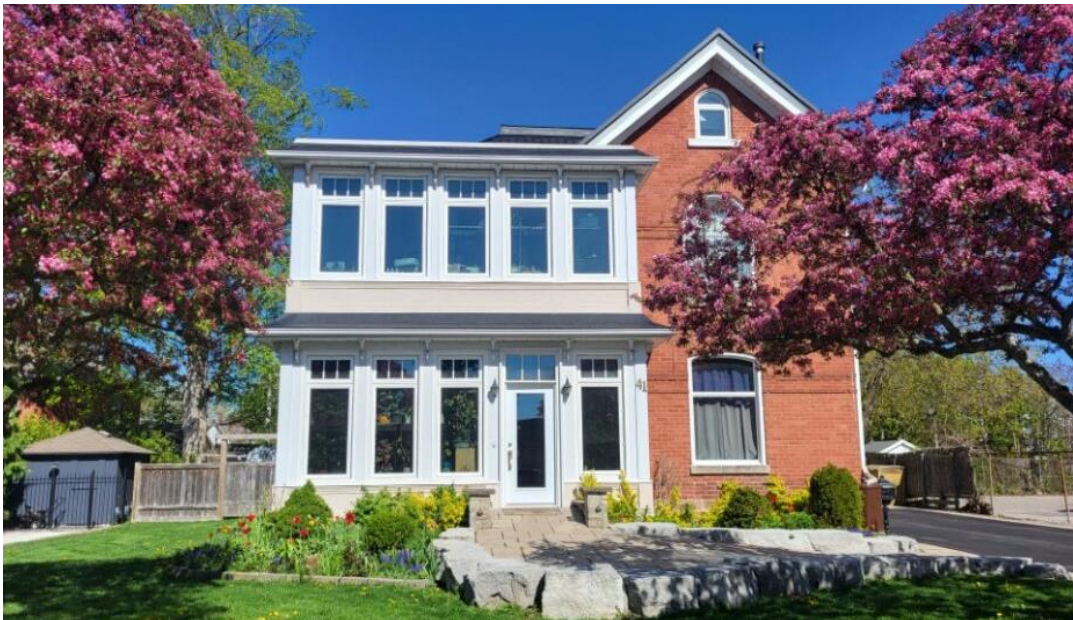


Figure 21: Front (southeast) elevation (Town of Halton Hills 2024)

The side (northeast) elevation is also composed of two bays. The brick string courses extend at the first and second storeys across the entire elevation. At the first storey towards the front elevation, a single segmentally arched window opening with brick hood moulds and stone sill is extant, and above are two single round-arched window openings with brick hood moulds and stone sills. The façade is divided by a brick projection that extends both storeys. Towards the rear of the elevation, a large segmentally arched window opening is extant at the first storey beneath paired single window openings with round-arched openings connected through brick hood moulds. A smaller round-arched window opening is located beneath the gable peak above. Within the existing roof, a small gable-roofed dormer clad with siding is extant beside a brick chimney that extends above the roofline.



Figure 22: Partial side (northeast) elevation as seen from Bower Street (Town of Halton Hills 2024)



Figure 23: Partial side (northeast) elevation as seen from the rear yard



Figure 24: Side (northeast) elevation (Town of Halton Hills 2024)

The side (southwest) elevation beyond the enclosed two-storey wooden porch features paired segmentally arched window openings with stone sills and brick hood moulds at the first storey, and above at the second storey are paired round-arched window openings with stone sills. Brick string courses are extant within the first and second storeys. A single small round arched window opening is located beneath the gable peak. Beyond the two-storey elevation, a one-storey brick addition extends to the rear.



Figure 25: Side (southwest) elevation (Town of Halton Hills 2024)

The interiors were not investigated as part of this report.

## 2.3 Architectural Style

The listing report originally prepared for the subject property identifies it as Queen Anne Revival style architecture, with unique detailed brickwork. The original bargeboard beneath the central gable and original decorative wooden wrap-around wooden porch have been removed; a contemporary two-storey sunroom porch now dominates the front elevation. However, the building has retained much of its original integrity despite these alterations. While all buildings constructed during the 63-year reign of Queen Victoria can be described as “Victorian”, it is typically those buildings that do not fit within specific architectural styles that are described as Victorian.

While the Henderson-Mason House reflects some features characteristic of the Queen Anne Revival style, including the mix of segmentally arched and round arched windows, decorative brickwork including brick hood moulds and string courses along each façade, as well as front-facing gables and steeply-pitched and varied rooflines, it exhibits only some of the prominent characteristics of the style. The Queen Anne style was built primarily between 1870-1880 to 1910 and was popular amongst the wealthy upper middle classes as buildings in this style are designed to be impressive. Shannon Kyles notes in *Ontario Architecture* that the inspiration of Queen Anne Revival architecture was from medieval

principles of neighbourhoods and towns that focused on craftsmanship and community. The style featured a variety of decorative elements and forms, with complex and variable aesthetics that served to express the success of those who built the homes, often featuring characteristics including asymmetrical facades, steeply pitched and irregular rooflines, front-facing gables, overhanging eaves, towers with turrets in the corners, unusual windows, detailed textures, and bright colours.

The Henderson-Mason house can be best described as a vernacular Victorian building with Queen Anne Revival influences. The residence was designed to reflect the prominence of its original owners and maintains its stately presence along Bower Street in a row of grand brick homes. Photographic evidence of original wooden decorative elements and the original wooden porch provides an opportunity for restoration of these features which would further contribute to its architectural style as a Victorian building with Queen Anne Revival influences.

### 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.

<b>Design or Physical Value</b>	
Is rare, unique, representative, or early example of a style, type, expression, material, or construction method	<b>X</b>
Displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit	<b>X</b>
Demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement	<b>N/A</b>

The property at 41 Bower Street has physical and design value as vernacular Victorian building with Queen Anne influences. The original L-shaped, two-storey residential building is legible from the contemporary two-storey enclosed porch on the front elevation, which is sympathetic to the original structure, and rear one-storey brick addition. Although the original bargeboard and decorative wrap-around wooden porch have been lost over time, the original detailing of the building's exterior has remained extant. The exterior façade features detailed brick string courses at the first and second storeys, segmentally arched and round-arched window openings with brick hood moulds and stone sills, and a detailed brick chimney, demonstrating the influence of the Queen Anne Revival style, which was designed to reflect the success of its owners, and which was primarily prevalent in Ontario between 1870 and 1910.

<b>Historical or Associative Value</b>	
Has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization, or institution that is significant to a community.	<b>X</b>
Yields, or has potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture	<b>N/A</b>
Demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer, or theorist who is significant to a community	<b>N/A</b>

The property at 41 Bower Street has historical and associative value due to its associations with several significant owners throughout the years including the Honourable David Henderson, Jeremiah Bell, Amos Mason, and Robert Algie. This property is one of three lots purchased by David Henderson from the land part of the original Adams farmstead. Henderson was a prominent local businessman, bank owner, and later significant politician and member of the King's Privy Council of Canada.

In addition to Henderson, the property has other significant local community and political connections. Local carpenter Jeremiah Bell owned the property between 1911 and 1923 and served as a local councillor in Acton. Prominent local businessman Amos Mason owned the property between the 1920s and 1960; Mason established the Mason Knitting Company, a significant local employer which later relocated to the former Beardmore warehouse known as the Hide House in 1938. Like Henderson, Mason was significantly involved in the community, serving with many different community groups and organizations. Mason was also a member of Council and became Acton's first mayor in 1950. In 1958, Mason was awarded Citizen of the Year by the local Chamber of Commerce for his work as a civic and

community leader. Later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the property was owned by Robert Algie, who also served the community as part of Knox Presbyterian Church and as attendance officer for the local schools.

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

The property at 41 Bower Street has significant contextual value as the existing Victorian building, together with the neighbouring properties at the corner of Bower Street and Willow Street North in the community of Acton, help to define and maintain the late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century development of this residential neighbourhood on the periphery of Acton's historic downtown. The property and existing residence are physically, functionally, visually, and historically linked to its surroundings in the community and has maintained its significant presence along the streetscape as captured in historical photography. The property is similar in scale and materials to the neighbouring properties and has not been identified as a landmark in the area.

#### 4.0 Summary

Following research and evaluation according to Ontario Regulation 9/06, it has been determined that the property at 41 Bower 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 41 Bower Street are identified as follows:

- The setback, location, and orientation of the existing late 19<sup>th</sup>-century residential building along Bower Street in the community of Acton in the Town of Halton Hills;
- The scale, form, and massing of the two-and-a-half storey Victorian building with Queen Anne Revival influences, featuring a brick chimney and stone foundation;
- The materials, including the red brick exterior and architectural detailing, stone sills, and stone foundation;
- The front (southeast) elevation, including segmentally arched and round arched window openings with brick hood moulds centered beneath the front gable;
- The side (northeast) elevation, including segmentally arched and round arched window openings with brick hood moulds and small window opening centered beneath the gable at the upper storey; and,
- The side (southwest) elevation, including the paired segmentally arched windows (first storey) and rounded arched windows (second storey) featuring brick hood moulds and stone sills, and round arched window centered beneath the gable peak.

The rear elevation, rear addition, two-storey sunroom, and interiors have not been identified as heritage attributes as part of this report.

## 5.0 Sources

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Reference Number: RG 31; Folder Number: 62; Census Place: *Acton Ward 2, Halton, Ontario*; Page Number: 6

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