Research and Evaluation Report



(Town of Halton Hills 2024)

Wright Block 99-103 Main Street South Georgetown, Town of Halton Hills

January 2025

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1.0 Property Description

99-103 Main Street South, Georgetown	
Municipality	Town of Halton Hills
County or Region	Regional Municipality of Halton
Legal Description	99 Main Street South: PT LTS 4 & 5, PL 37, E OF MAIN ST OR S OF MILL ST, AS IN 611469; T/W & S/T 611469; HALTON HILLS 103 Main Street South: PT LT 4, 5 & 8, PL 37, E OF MAIN ST OR S OF MILL ST, AS IN 738944; T/W & S/T 738944. "S/T EASE H698005"; HALTON HILLS. "ADDED 2003 03 31."
Construction Date	c.1850s
Original Use	Commercial
Current Use	Commercial
Architect/Building/Designer	Unknown
Architectural Style	Commercial Vernacular
Additions/Alterations	First storey alterations; Rear additions; Interior alterations
Heritage Status	Listed on Halton Hills Heritage Register
Recorder(s)	Austin Foster with Laura Loney
Report Date	January 2025

2.0 Background

This research and evaluation report describes the history, context, and physical characteristics of the property at 99-103 Main Street, Georgetown. The report includes an evaluation of the property's cultural heritage value as prescribed by the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

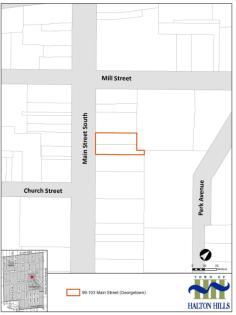


Figure 1: Location Map: 99-103 Main Street (Town of Halton Hills, 2024)



Figure 2: Aerial Photograph: 99-103 Main Street (Town of Halton Hills, 2024)

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 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 nineteenth 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.

In 1986, the Mississaugas initiated a claim against the Government of Canada over the 1805 Toronto Purchase. On June 8, 2010, the parties involved reached a final compensatory agreement. It resulted in a cash payment of \$145 million to the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.¹

Early European Settlement

In the early 1820s, a modest settlement known as "Hungry Hollow" emerged around the Kennedy mills on Silver Creek as the Kennedy family attracted settlers to work in their sawmill, gristmill, and woolen mill. This modest settlement drew wider attention in 1828 when John Galt, representing the Canada Company, opened the York to Guelph Road. This new route connected the community to nearby towns and extended to Galt, Guelph, and Goderich, fostering further growth and development over the next decade. In 1837, William and James Barber purchased George Kennedy's woolen mill, renaming the

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.

settlement Georgetown. The subject property is located within the 200 acres purchased by George Kennedy in 1823 on Lot 18, Concession 9, Esquesing.

By 1839, village lots had been informally laid out, though not yet registered, surveying lands belonging to George, Morris, and John Kennedy, Philo Dayfoot, James Young, and the Barber brothers. The property at 99 and 103 Main Street South occupies Lots 4 and 8, East of Main Street and South of Mill Street, within George Kennedy's survey. On the January 1854 map, Provincial Land Surveyor Charles Kennedy plotted the existing buildings, showing the southern half of Lot 4 and all of Lot 8 as vacant land at that time.

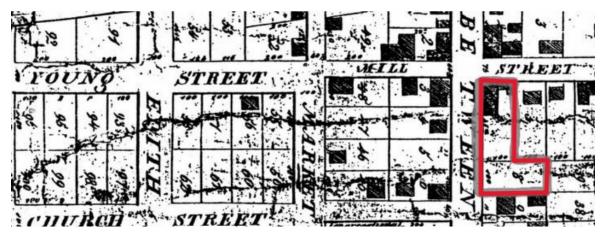


Figure 3: Detail from 1854 survey of Georgetown identifying Lots 4 and 8 in red (EHS MG12 A3 #23)

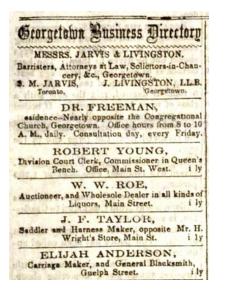
Raised on a farm in Chinguacousy Township, Henry Wright (1822-1865) married Sarah Jane Webb (1824-1859) on June 18, 1845, and the couple settled in Georgetown shortly thereafter. At 26 years old, Henry Wright established a prosperous dry goods and grocery store on Main Street. Over the course of the decade, he successfully grew his business and became a well-known merchant in Georgetown.

On December 6, 1848, Henry Wright acquired portions of Lot 4 and Lot 8 with the intention of constructing a commercial block. The lots remained undeveloped for nearly a decade. Between 1848 and 1854, Wright focused on saving the profits from his dry-goods business, gradually accumulating the resources necessary to undertake construction. By 1854, he was able to commence work on both a private residence and a commercial block, fulfilling his original plans for the properties.

In May 1854, Henry Wright contracted local builder William Watson to construct a residence measuring 52 by 32 feet, with brickwork rising 19 feet and a stone foundation standing 7 feet high. By 1855, Wright secured a mortgage on Lot 8 for £250, likely to finance the construction of his home. In 1858, Wright further expanded his investments, obtaining two additional mortgages on Lots 4 and 8: one for \$1,000 in January and another for \$3,000 in September. These funds were allocated to the construction of a commercial block, known as the Wright Block.

Construction of the Wright Block began in October 1858 and extended into the following year, resulting in a two-storey red brick structure laid in a common bond pattern along Main Street. Wright relocated his dry-goods store to the new building in 1859. Upon completion, the Wright Block quickly became a landmark in downtown Georgetown. Advertisements placed in the Georgetown Herald between 1860

and 1862 for local saddler J.F. Taylor's shop referenced Wright's store as a landmark, emphasizing its growing prominence within the community.





in the Canadian Champion, June 12, 1861.

Figure 4: J.F. Taylor references the Wright Block Figure 5: Crowds watch a Drummer's Snack parade in July 1912. The buildings in The Georgetown Business Directory published from left to right are Barclay Block (1854); Barclay Post Office (1866) and Wright Block (1858) (detail) (EHS21580)

Henry Wright thrived throughout the remainder of the 1850s and into the 1860s. In 1857, he was joint assignee with Francis Barclay from local blacksmith Hugh Milloy, and the Canada Directory of that year listed him as a general retail and produce dealer. He also purchased a subscription to the 1858 Tremaine Map of Halton.

Sarah Jane Wright died in 1859, and by the 1861 census, Henry Wright was recorded as a widower at the age of 39, living in his two-storey brick house with his four children. He continued to run his shop and live in his home until his sudden death in 1866. In January of that year, the Canadian Champion reported that Wright died after felling a tree on G.K. Chisolm's farm. Following Wright's untimely death, the subject property was sold on October 5, 1867, to Francis Barclay, owner of the adjoining Mammoth House. It is likely that Barclay incorporated Wright's property into his clothing store. In 1871, Barclay sold the property to his successor, William McLeod.



Figure 6: Main Street South, looking north. On the far right is the veranda on the north half (#99) of the Wright Block. (EHS 21524)

The northern portion of the Wright Block at 99 Main Street South became home to the furniture store and funeral parlour operated by the Willson family. John G. Willson (1826–1903), originally a cabinet maker, began his trade around 1869 in the former Travis planning mill on Main Street. Over time, Willson expanded his services to include the production of furniture and coffins for the village. In 1881, following the demolition of the Travis building, Willson relocated his business to the north section of the Wright Block, officially opening his furniture store and funeral parlour. John's son, William Harvey Willson (1860–1950), later joined the business and pursued formal training at the School of Embalming, where he obtained certification. With these credentials, William advertised his skills as an undertaker while continuing the family's furniture enterprise, ensuring the dual operation of the store and funeral services in Georgetown for many years.



Figure 7: An 1898 photograph of Hornby Division Sons of Temperance. William Harvey Wilson pictured as first figure on left in third row (EHS 11456)

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Figure 8: An advertisement for J. G. Willson's funeral services placed in the Herald (Georgetown Herald, December 11, 1891).

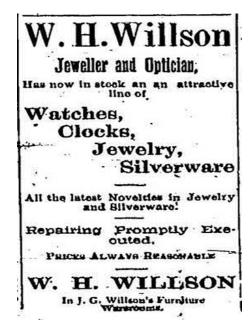


Figure 9: An advertisement for W. H. Willson's furniture Business placed in the Herald (Georgetown Herald, November 19, 1902).

In 1927, the Willson business was sold by Harold C. McClure (1904-1975). McClure modernized the structure and interior as needed, adding musical records and a Simpson's order office. For the undertaking side of the business, he offered a motorized ambulance service.



Figure 10: An advertisement for H. C. Mclure's Ambulance Services placed in the Herald (Georgetown Herald, December 28, 1927)



Figure 11: An advertisement for H. C. Mclure's Home furnishing store placed in the Herald (Georgetown Herald, March 14, 1928)

When the funeral home relocated to Market Street, 99 Main Street South transitioned to commercial retail use, first becoming Ready's and later Bain's 5c to \$1 store. In 1954, Don Barrager purchased the building and opened Barrager's Cleaners, as identified in the 1960 Fire Insurance Plan of Georgetown. Over the following years, the property housed various businesses, including a lingerie store, a plant store, and a Dollar Plus store, which shared space with Irma's Beauty Chalet for a time. In November 2013, 99 Main Street South became Latitudes restaurant, and in 2019, it was rebranded as The Berwick.



Figure 12: Ready's 5-cent to \$1.00 Store on the left. Main Street South in 1949 (EHS 00026)





Figure 13: Barrager's Cleaners and The Herald in the Wright Block in 1961 (EHS 18401)

Figure 14: An advertisement for Bain's 5-cent store placed in the Herald (Georgetown Herald, January 26, 1955)

The southern portion of the building, known as 103 Main Street South, remained part of the property until 1882, when William McLeod sold Lot 8. J.G. Willson, who had established his furniture and funeral business in the north part of the building, used the southern portion in collaboration with his brother, William Willson, a jeweler.

By 1908, the building underwent renovations, which included the addition of brick bake ovens in the basement to supply J.J. Gibbens' bake shop located upstairs at 103 Main Street. The shop remained in operation until the beginning of World War II, after which it sat empty until Stan Grabb opened Georgetown Furniture Sales. During this time, the Misses Claridge also operated a millinery shop on the second floor.

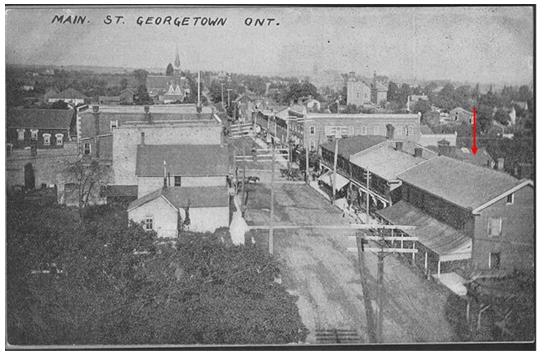


Figure 15: Main Street, Georgetown, c.1910 The Wright Block is on the right indicated by a red arrow. (EHS 00009)



Figure 16: The east side of Main Street south of Mill, taken from the balcony of the Bennett House in July 1912. The Wright Block is at the centre back of the photo (EHS 21576)

In November 1950, the *Georgetown Herald* Newspaper, under the ownership of Walter Biehn, moved its offices to 103 Main Street South. The Newspaper operated from this location until April 1980, when it relocated to Guelph Street. After the Newspaper's departure, former publisher Bill Evdokimoff took over the space and opened Rameses Printing and Publishing. The bakery tradition returned in November 1993 when Cakes of Elegance opened in this building. In 2005, it was replaced by Heather's Bakery, which continues to operate at 103 Main Street as of 2024.



Figure 17: Christmas Special advertisement placed in the Herald (Georgetown Herald, November 21, 1984)



Figure 18: Dollar Plus, Irma's Beauty Chalet and Cakes of Elegance c. 1994 (EHS 10889)

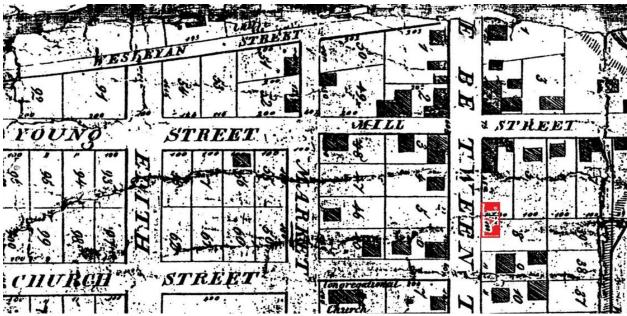


Figure 16: 1854 survey map of Georgetown showing (in red) the approximate location of the Wright Block. EHS MG12 A3 #23

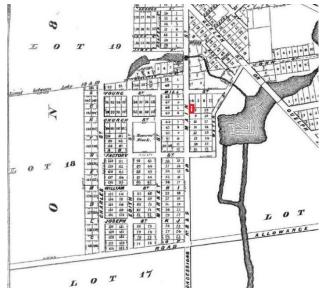


Figure 17: Plan of Georgetown, showing village lots, taken from the 1877 *Illustrated Historical Atlas of Halton County*. The Wright Block is shown in red.

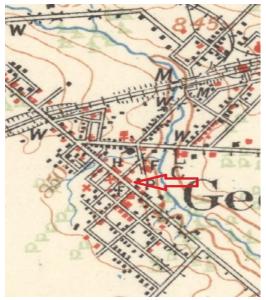


Figure 18: 1909 Brampton Topographical Map



Figure 19: 1934 Fire Insurance Plan, showing the subject property outlined in red. (EHS MG12 A3 #17.02)

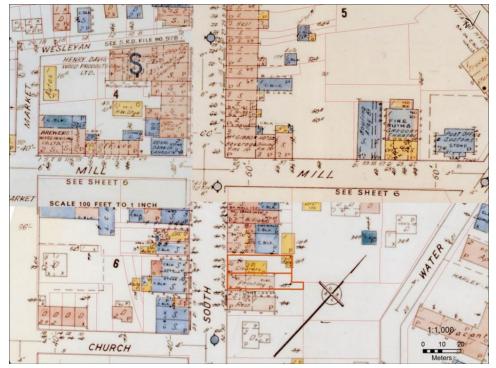


Figure 20: 1960 Fire Insurance Plan, identifying cleaners in the northern portion of the building and printing in the southern portion.

2.2 Property & Architectural Description

The 1858 commercial building at 99-103 Main Street South in Georgetown is located along the east side of Main Street South within a commercial row. The existing two-storey building with rear additions has been modified at grade, as with many of the nineteenth-century commercial properties extant within Georgetown's commercial core. The subject property's legal address is 99 Main Street South: PT LTS 4 & 5, PL 37, E OF MAIN ST OR S OF MILL ST, AS IN 611469; T/W & S/T 611469; HALTON HILLS; 103 Main Street South: PT LT 4, 5 & 8, PL 37, E OF MAIN ST OR S OF MILL ST, AS IN 738944; T/W & S/T 738944. "S/T EASE H698005"; HALTON HILLS. "ADDED 2003 03 31."



Figure 21: Subject property identified in 2023 aerial photography



Figure 22: Looking north along Main Street South towards the Figure 23: Looking south along Main Street South towards the subject property (Town of Halton Hills, 2022)

subject property (Town of Halton Hills, 2022)

The scale, form, and massing of the two-storey structure has been conserved through the alterations to the property since its construction. A single brick chimney is located at the peak of the gable roof on the south end of the building and appears to have been parged and likely capped. Looking southeast towards the building from the right of way, the existing one-storey addition with roof deck is visible beyond the building's gable roof. The south side of the building abuts the existing nineteenth-century building at 109 Main Street South.



Figure 24: Looking southeast towards the subject property from Main Street South (Google Streetview, 2022)

The west (front) elevation of the building features red brick laid in a common bond pattern, with symmetrically placed rectangular window openings at the second storey above the existing storefronts. The windows have been replaced and shutters added. Brick voussoirs are featured above each window opening, and contemporary gooseneck lighting is installed above the first storey. A covered wooden awning once encompassed the entire façade. Modern signs cover any signs of the awning anchor strip.

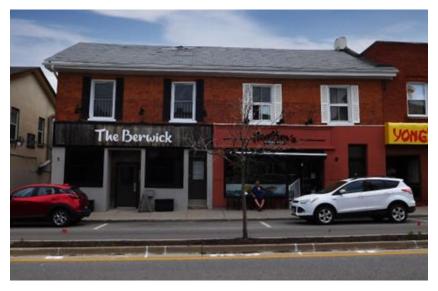


Figure 25: 99-103 Main Street Front (West) Elevation (Town of Halton Hills, 2022)

The northernmost storefront on the building at 99 Main Street South also features a single entrance door along with a central entrance to the existing restaurant flanked by two wide rectangular windows on either side. At the south end of the building, the first storey features an entrance for 105 Main Street South, presumably accessing the second storey, with a recessed entrance to the existing bakery and large storefront window adjacent to this entrance. The storefront is clad in what appears to be EIFS or stucco panels.





Figure 26: Partial west elevation (Town of Halton Hills, 2022)

Figure 27: Partial west elevation (Town of Halton Hills, 2022)

The side (north) elevation of the building is within a narrow alleyway. The two-storey building's red brick is extant throughout this elevation above a parged foundation. A single window opening is located at the second storey.



Figure 28: Looking east along the alleyway along the north side of the subject property (Town of Halton Hills 2022)

The rear (east) elevation of the building shows a frame one-storey addition at the rear of the northern half of the building, and a raised one-storey brick addition with flat roof to the rear of the southern half of the building.



Figure 29: Rear elevation of the existing building, showing rear one-storey additions (Town of Halton Hills 2022)

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	Х
construction method	
Displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit	N/A
Demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement	N/A

The Wright Block at 99-103 Main Street South has physical and design value as a representative example of a nineteenth-century commercial structure within downtown Georgetown. The two-storey building height, red brick exterior, vertical second-storey windows with articulated lintels and sills, and recessed entry doors are reflective of commercial buildings constructed along many main streets throughout Ontario during this time.

Historical or Associative Value	
Has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization, or	Х
institution that is significant to a community.	
Yields, or has potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a	N/A
community or culture	

Historical or Associative Value

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

The Wright Block at 99-103 Main Street South has significant historical and associative value through its long-standing associations with key individuals and businesses in Georgetown's early history. Constructed in 1858 by Henry Wright, a notable local merchant, the building originally housed his dry goods store and was among the first brick commercial buildings on Main Street.

After Wright's death in 1866, the northern portion of the existing building at 99 Main Street South became the location of the Willson family's furniture store and funeral parlour, operated by John G. Willson and later his son, William Harvey Willson, from 1881. This association with the Willson family, a prominent name in Georgetown's business and service sectors, continued for several decades, making the building a significant site for community services such as funeral arrangements and furniture sales.

The southern portion of the building at 103 Main Street South housed several notable businesses, including J.J. Gibbens' bakery, which operated until World War II, and later the Georgetown Herald from 1950 to 1980. The building's continuous use as a commercial property for over 160 years, along with its associations with prominent local figures and businesses, emphasizes its historical and associative value to Georgetown.

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

The Wright Block at 99-103 Main Street South holds significant contextual value in defining, maintaining, and supporting the built heritage character of Georgetown's downtown. Main Street South is characterized by its collection of nineteenth and early twentieth-century two-storey redbrick commercial buildings, which served as the economic heart of the community during this period. As one of the earliest structures of its kind, the Wright Block continues to exemplify the architectural and commercial character that defines Main Street South. Alongside other prominent buildings such as the Roe Block at 51-57 Main Street South, the Armour Block at 61 Main Street South, and the Barclay Block at 87 Main Street South, the Wright Block plays a critical role in preserving the cohesive streetscape of Georgetown's commercial core.

The property remains physically, functionally, and visually connected to its surroundings, having continuously served as a commercial structure in its original location for over 160 years. Its enduring presence reinforces the historical connection to Georgetown's commercial development and ensures that it maintains the essential component of the area's commercial identity.

4.0 Summary

Following research and evaluation according to Ontario Regulation 9/06, it has been determined that the property at 99-103 Main Street in Halton Hills 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 99-103 Main Street South are identified as follows:

- The location, setback, and orientation of the two-storey min nineteenth century commercial building within a commercial row in historic downtown Georgetown;
- The scale, form, and massing of the two-storey building with gable roof and red brick exterior
- The materials, including red brick laid in a common bond pattern;
- The four symmetrically placed, flatheaded window openings on the second storey of the front (west) elevation;
- The window opening at the second storey of the side (north) elevation; and,
- The chimney on the south end of the gable roof.

The interiors of the buildings have not been identified as heritage attributes as part of this report.

5.0 Sources

Primary Sources

Archives of Ontario. Division Registrar Vital Statistics Records, 1858-1930. MS 940, reels 5-10, 16, 21, 26-27. Archives of Ontario, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Archives of Ontario. Registrations of Deaths, 1869-1942 (MS 935, reels 1-694), Archives of Ontario, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Archives of Ontario. Registrations of Ontario Overseas Deaths, 1939-1947. MS 944, reels 1-11. Archives of Ontario, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Archives of Ontario; Toronto, Ontario, Canada; Registrations of Deaths, 1942; Series: 688; Reel: M023573

Archives of Ontario; Toronto, Ontario, Canada; Registrations of Deaths, 1903; Series: 110 Archives of Ontario; Toronto, Ontario, Canada; Registrations of Deaths, 1950; Series: 80-08-0-2935

Archives of Ontario; Toronto, Ontario, Canada; Registrations of Marriages, 1869-1928; Reel: 126

Archives of Ontario; Toronto, Ontario, Canada; Series: Registrations of Births and Stillbirths, 1869-1913; Reel: 168; Record Group: Rg 80-2

Census of Canada; Year: 1881; Census Place: Georgetown, Halton, Ontario; Roll: C_13258; Page: 52; Family No: 268

Census of Canada; Year: 1881; Census Place: Georgetown, Halton, Ontario; Roll: C_13258; Page: 38; Family No: 202

Census of Canada; Year: 1891; Census Place: Georgetown, Halton, Ontario, Canada; Roll: T-6340; Family No: 76

Census of Canada; Year: 1901; Census Place: Georgetown (Village), Halton, Ontario; Page: 5; Family No: 52

Census of Canada; Year: 1901; Census Place: Georgetown (Village), Halton, Ontario; Page: 6; Family No: 69

Census of Canada; Year: 1911; Census Place: 31 - Ward 1, Halton, Ontario; Page: 2; Family No: 24

Library and Archives Canada; Ottawa, Ontario, Canada; Census Returns For 1861; Roll: C-1030-1031

Library and Archives Canada; Ottawa, Ontario, Canada; Seventh Census of Canada, 1931; Folder Number: T-27267; Census Place: Halton, Ontario, Canada; Page Number: 11

Ontario Marriage Notices, June 1845. Ontario: Christian Guardian 1836-1849.

Reference Number: RG 31; Folder Number: 62; Census Place: Georgetown, Halton, Ontario; Page Number: 2

Newspapers

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