

Research and Evaluation Report



(Town of Halton Hills 2015)

Lorne School

14021 Regional Road 25, Town of Halton Hills

May 2025

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1.0 Property Description

14021 Regional Road 25, Esquesing	
Municipality	Town of Halton Hills
County or Region	Regional Municipality of Halton
Legal Description	PT LT 31, CON 3 ESQ, AS IN 275645; AS SHOWN ON PL 1098; HALTON HILLS/ESQUESING
Construction Date	c.1882
Original Use	Institutional
Current Use	Residential
Architect/Building/Designer	Duncan Kennedy (foundation); William Young (brick construction); John Cameron (carpentry)
Architectural Style	Ontario Rural One-room Schoolhouse in the Gothic Revival Style
Additions/Alterations	Rear addition
Heritage Status	Listed on the Town's Heritage Register
Recorder(s)	Caylee MacPherson with Laura Loney
Report Date	May 2025

2.0 Background

This research and evaluation report describes the history, context, and physical characteristics of the property at 14021 Regional Road 25, 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*.

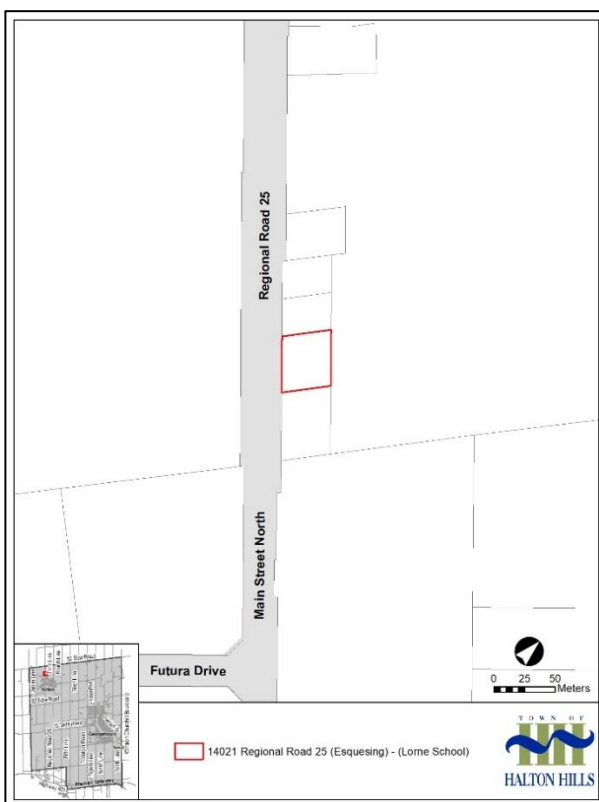


Figure 1: Location Map – 14021 Regional Road 25



Figure 2: Aerial Photograph – 14021 Regional Road 25

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.

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 Nation¹.

Early European Settlement

In 1819 Charles Teetzel (1787-1856) petitioned for land in Upper Canada, and by 1840, the Crown granted him the Patent for Lot 31, Concession 3. In 1844, Teetzel sold one hundred acres of land to Thomas Davidson (1813-1879). The year after Davidson’s death in 1879, the lands were deeded to his

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.

son, Charles Davidson (1854-1931). In 1882, Charles Davidson sold one acre of land to the School Trustees of Section No. 12.



Figure 3: Subject property identified on the 1819 Patent Plan



Figure 4: Subject property identified on the 1822 Patent Plan

Trustees of S.S. No. 12 Lorne School

In 1880, as the Acton village school expanded, the resulting tax burden became too high for local farming families. Consequently, arbitrations began between rural taxpayers and the Acton School Board, with the rural families eventually receiving \$1700 in return for their support of the Acton village school.

On December 14, 1881, the first meeting of School Section No. 12 was held in the home of Alex Lasby. The new School Section was intended to cover Lots 27-32 of Concession 1 and 2, and Lots 25-32 of Concession 3. On December 28, 1881, three Trustees and an auditor were elected at the second meeting of the School Section. The three elected Trustees included Messrs. Kennedy, Lachlan McMillan, and Joseph Lasby, while Donald Cameron was the elected auditor for 1882.

Many townships, including Esquesing Township, were divided into school sections that were typically 5-8 square kilometres. Every pupil was to pay a monthly fee of twenty-five cents, but in each district up to ten pupils from poor families were provided free education. During this time, attendance in public schools was not mandatory. Barriers including school fees, problems of transportation and travel, and the necessity of children's sharing chores in a rural wilderness made consistent and regular attendance in school challenging.

The 1846 *Common School Act* regulated the election of trustees, rates levied to support schools, the construction of new schools, teacher examination and licensing, curriculum, and government grants. School trustees were responsible for various administrative duties, including collecting fees, hiring teachers, and maintaining the school buildings. Trustee meetings were held semi-regularly at local homes, the post office, the schoolhouse, and various shops. By 1850, the *Common School Act* was amended to expand the school levy to all properties and further supported the principle of tuition-free education for all children. The *Common School Act* also allowed for schools to be solely paid for through provincial and municipal funds.

Around the late-nineteenth century, many schoolhouses saw growth in school populations due to the introduction of the 1871 *Ontario School Act* (the "Act"), championed by Egerton Ryerson. Ryerson

strongly believed that taxes should support schools and increase their accessibility to more children. The Act abolished the former fees for public schools and made attendance compulsory for children ages 7 to 12. Children within this age range had to attend school for a minimum of four months annually. However, it wasn't until 1891 that parents or guardians received penalties for not sending children between the ages of 8 and 14 to attend school; in 1919, the age range was extended to 16.

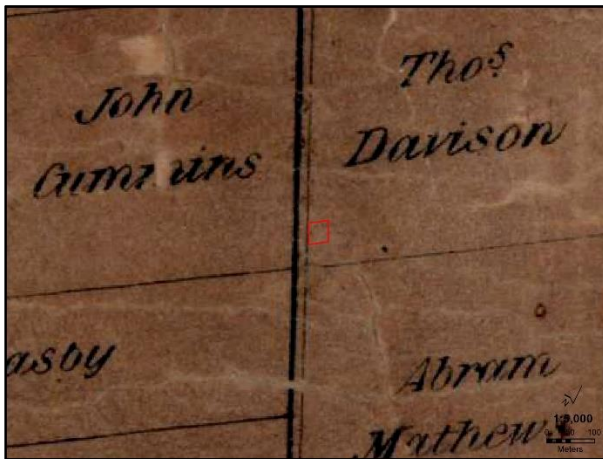


Figure 5: Subject property identified on Tremaine's 1858 *Map of the County of Halton, Canada West*

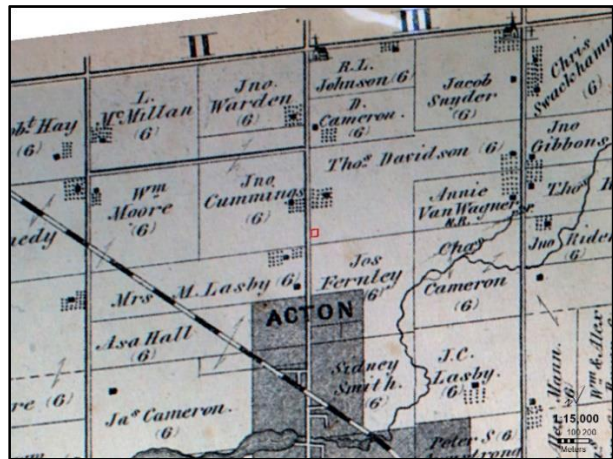


Figure 6: Subject property identified on the 1877 *Illustrated Atlas of the County of Halton*

In addition to these changes, each county was assigned a superintendent to oversee the school systems, each school became fully public, and a structured curriculum was introduced. With the changes made by the *Act*, additional one- and two-room schoolhouses were required to accommodate the growing student populations. In response, many communities took advantage of these government grants to build and operate new schools.

By January 12, 1882, a meeting was held to discuss the selection of a site for the new schoolhouse. Initially, the Trustees considered two alternative sites before purchasing the one-acre lot from Charles Davidson for \$100 in 1882. By January 26, 1882, the Trustees arranged for a survey to be completed for \$4, along with the deed for another \$4.

The school was constructed using 32,000 bricks, costing around \$6/1000 bricks. The contract for the foundation excavation was awarded to Colby Sherlock; the foundation construction to Duncan Kennedy; the brick construction to William Young; and the carpentry work to John Cameron (1846-1933). During his career, Cameron constructed and designed over one hundred buildings throughout Halton Hills and surrounding communities. He also served as a Town Councillor in Acton.

A picket fence was constructed by Robert Brown to enclose the yard. The total cost to construct the schoolhouse, including the land, survey, deed, fence, furniture and well was approximately \$1,600, while the schoolhouse itself cost \$598.

The schoolhouse was completed in 1882 and was insured by the Royal Insurance Company. The second annual meeting of the Trustees was held in the school on January 27th, 1883, and Miss. Annie Easterbrook (1863-1938) was selected as the first teacher with a salary of \$300 per annum. When the schoolhouse opened, approximately fifty students were in attendance. The name “Lorne” was likely chosen to honour John Campbell (1845-1914), the Marquis of Lorne, who was the Governor General of

Canada at the time. However, there have been many debates about the spelling of the school's name, as the exterior datestone reads as "Lorn" School.

In 1886, a Debating and Literary Society was formed, and a concert was held at the Acton Town Hall. Due to the success of the concert, the proceeds were used to purchase a new wall clock and large bell, both purchased in Guelph. In 1887, a new brick addition was constructed to store wood for the schoolhouse stove. In 1888, the size of the School Section was altered to cover the East Halves of Concession 3, Lots 30, 31, and 32, which was initially covered by School Section No. 13.

By 1922, the teacher's salary was increased to \$1,050 per annum. The schoolhouse was primarily lit by two small oil lamps until 1924, when two gas lamps were installed. By 1936, electric lights were installed in the school. A new stove was also installed in 1924, with a second stove added in 1935. To help with cleaning, a new Electrolux Vacuum Cleaner was installed in 1939.

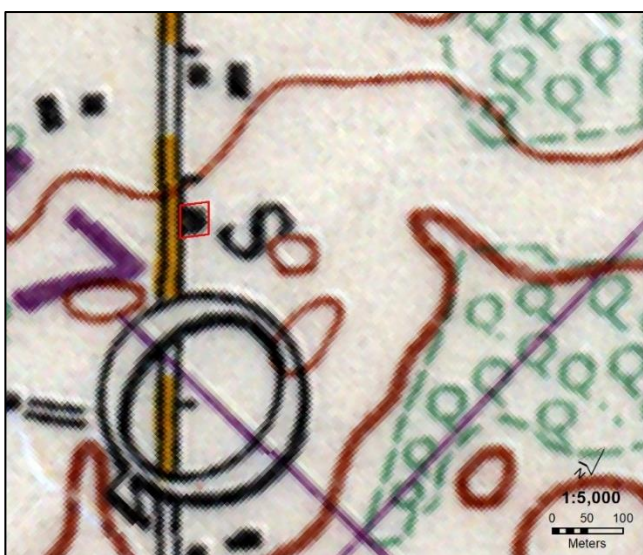


Figure 7: Subject property identified on the 1939 National Topographic Survey



Figure 8: Lorne Schoolhouse, c.1940 (Source Unknown)

Many teachers passed through Lorne School, with several being single women. In 1883, the *Canada School Journal* featured a report from Robert Little, the County Inspector of Schools in Esquesing, explaining that it was difficult to find married teachers for rural sections, as it was difficult for them to secure housing. Many of the married teachers either taught in towns or incorporated villages or already had homes near their respective schoolhouse. This was an issue as it was difficult to hire teachers and made turnover quite frequent. From 1883-1940, 33 teachers were employed and taught at Lorne School.

Many of the school's students later became teachers, including Anne McDonald, Margaret MacDonald, Etta Swackhammer, and Leslie Moore. Jack McDougall, Fred Townsend, and Wesley Townsend, became medical physicians.

To commemorate the memories made at Lorne School, a reunion was held at the property on July 1st, 1940 (Figure 1).

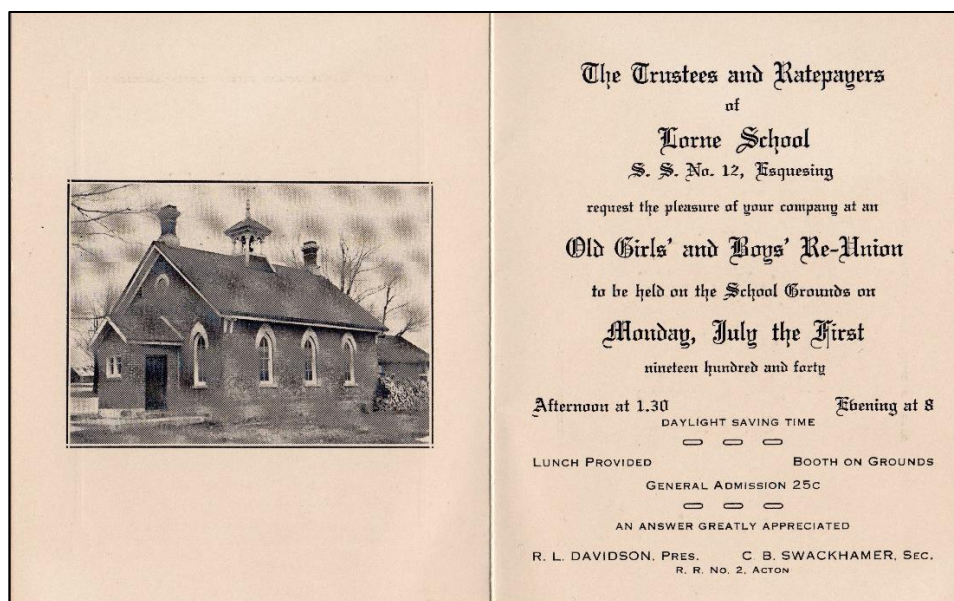


Figure 9: Booklet prepared for the Lorne School Reunion in 1940 (EHS MG4 A12 #3.01)

During the late 1940s, there were frequent discussions on building consolidated schools to accommodate students from multiple schoolhouses. With the “baby boom” population following WWII, rural schoolhouses began to experience overcrowding. The dramatic increase in the school-aged population led to increased investment in public education, constructing larger consolidated schools, and hiring more teachers. Additionally, since many families began to move into cities, and buses and personal vehicles were gaining popularity, fewer students walked to the local schools in their districts.



Figure 10: Lorne School class photograph, c.1941 (EHS 09600)



Figure 11: Photograph of Lorne School, c.1944 (EHS 11521)

In 1945, Waterloo School, along with Lorne, Dublin, Mount Pleasant, and Dufferin Schools formed School Area No. 1, Esquesing Township. In 1960, Speyside School was constructed north of Speyside along 17 Side Road and Regional Road 25, offering a new five-room public school for 180 pupils. Following the opening of Speyside School, Dufferin, Lorne, Dublin, Mount Pleasant, and Waterloo Schools were permanently closed. Despite the closure of Lorne School, the former pupils and teachers stayed connected and held two reunions at the nearby Ospringe School in 1979 and 1982.



Figure 12: Subject property identified on 1954 aerial photography



Figure 13: Plate from the Lorne School Reunion, costing \$3 per plate (Wellington County Museum & Archives, 1994.19.1)

1960s to Present

Following the school's closure in 1960, the property was purchased by Leonard Schneider, who was a member of the Jehovah Witnesses. Once the new Kingdom Hall was constructed adjacent to the schoolhouse, the lot was severed and the schoolhouse was sold to Andrew Hay (1929-2003) and Anne Moira (nee Emslie) (1936-2013) McDowall in 1961. The McDowall family owned the property until the late 1990s, when it was transferred to the current owner.



Figure 14: Subject property identified on the 1974 aerial photograph



Figure 15: The Kingdom Hall of Jehovah Witnesses adjacent to Lorne School in 1979 (EHS 22339)



Figure 16: Exterior of the former Lorne Schoolhouse, c.1995 (EHS 12505)



Figure 17: Exterior of the former Lorne Schoolhouse, c.1995 (EHS 12504)



Figure 18: Subject property identified on 2007 aerial photography

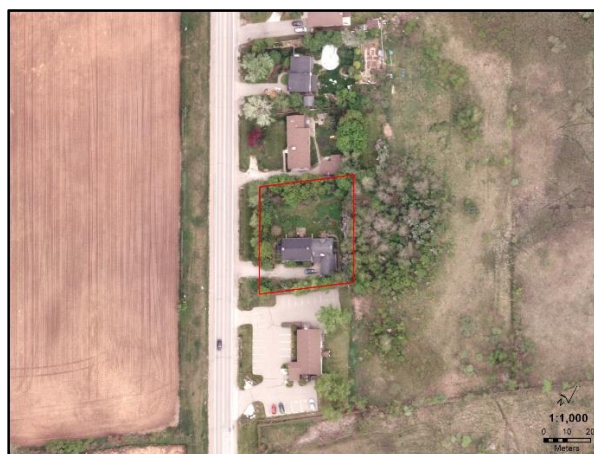


Figure 19: Subject property identified on 2017 aerial photography

2.2 Property & Architectural Description

The subject property is located along the northeast side of Regional Road 25 in the community of Esquesing within the Town of Halton Hills. The property is a rectangular-shaped lot and features a one-and-a-half storey red brick dwelling with a gable roof, circular datestone, dichromatic brick chimneys, lancet arched window openings with buff brick hood moulds and stone sills, a projecting brick plinth, and a stone foundation. The property can be accessed from a gravel driveway via Regional Road 25.



Figure 20: Subject property identified on 2023 aerial photography

The front (southwest) elevation consists of two lancet arched window openings, dichromatic brick hood moulds, and projecting stone sills. A single storey vestibule with a flatheaded entrance and window opening is encased by the lancet windows. Directly beneath the gable peak is a circular datestone inscribed “Lorn School Section No. 12” encased by a buff brick semi-circular voussoir and projecting stone sill. Above the gable peak is a single dichromatic brick chimney, which has since been altered with the removal of the buff brick capping.



Figure 21: Front (southwest) elevation of the schoolhouse obscured by vegetation (Town of Halton Hills 2025)



Figure 22: Front (southwest) and partial side (southeast) elevations obscured by vegetation (Town of Halton Hills 2025)



Figure 23: Lancet arched window with a buff brick hood mould and stone sill (Town of Halton Hills 2015)



Figure 24: Datestone inscribed: "Lorn S.S. No. 12" ... "A.D. 1882" (Town of Halton Hills 2015)

Both side (southeast and northwest) elevations feature three lancet arched window openings with buff brick hood moulds and projecting stone sills. Directly beneath the eaves on the corners of the front and

side (southeast and northwest) elevations are two wooden corbels. A contemporary garage is located towards the rear of the southeast (side) elevation.



Figure 25: Side (southeast) elevation of the schoolhouse (Town of Halton Hills 2015)



Figure 26: Side (southeast) elevation attached to the contemporary addition (Town of Halton Hills 2015)

Along the rear elevation is a contemporary addition with blue vertical siding, and a dichromatic brick chimney located above the original gable roof peak. Like the front chimney, the buff brick capping has since been removed.



Figure 27: Side (northwest) elevation of the schoolhouse obscured by vegetation (Town of Halton Hills 2025)



Figure 28: Side (northeast) elevation of the schoolhouse (Google Streetview 2018)

2.3 Architectural Style & Comparative Analysis

The property at 14021 Regional Road 25 is a representative example of a late-nineteenth century rural one-room Ontario schoolhouse with Gothic Revival architectural influences. The one-room schoolhouse was designed for sixty-four pupils and was intended to accommodate a small rural village or hamlet. Many of these designs were based on publications such as the *“The School House; Its Architecture,*

External and Internal Arrangements” published by the Department of Public Instruction for Upper Canada in 1857, or “*Cheap Country School Houses*” published by the *Canadian Farmer* in 1866.

These resources provided architectural plans for grammar, intermediate, and primary schools, along with recommendations for school site layouts and construction methods. Rural schoolhouse designs often featured a gable roof, semi-circular window openings, a central semi-circular door opening with transom, date stone, as well as a cupola and bell directly above the gable peak. Materials recommended included brick, frame, and stone.

Based on analysis from Shannon Kyles of *Ontario Architecture*, Ontario one-room rural schoolhouses often feature architectural characteristics, such as, but not limited to:

- One-and-a-half storey massing featuring brick, stone, or frame construction;
- One-room floorplan layout;
- One or two entrances;
- Gable roof with a cupola and bell;
- Two windows along the front elevations, with multiple windows along the side elevations; and,
- Date stone indicating the date of construction.

Additionally, based on John Blumenson’s *Ontario Architecture: A Guide to Styles and Building terms, 1784 to the Present*, buildings in the Gothic Revival architectural style often feature elements, including:

- A steep, gabled roof with decorative wooden bargeboard;
- Lancet window openings;
- One-and-a-half to two-storeys in massing;
- Central door flanked by transoms and sidelights; and,
- Dichromatic or polychromatic brick patterns.

The existing building features many characteristics typical of the one-room rural schoolhouse, such as having a one-and-a-half storey massing, gable roof, two window openings along the front elevation with multiple window openings along the side elevations, and a date stone inscribed “Lorn School Section No. 12”. Additionally, the building design reflects influences from the Gothic Revival architectural style, including the lancet arched window openings, dichromatic brick patterns, one-and-a-half storey massing, and a gabled roof.



Figure 29: S.S. No. 8 Woodside School, Erin Township
(HouseSigma 2020)



Figure 30: S.S. No. 10 Blue Mountain School, Ballinafad
(Courtesy of Owner of Blue Mountain School)

Throughout Erin Township and Halton Hills, there are schoolhouses which feature a similar layout and massing, including Woodside and Blue Mountain Schools. Like Lorne School, Woodside School features multiple lancet window openings with buff brick hoodmoulds and stone sills, a circular datestone with a buff brick semi-circular voussoir and stone sill, a chimney located above the gable peak, and two wooden corbels on both side elevations. Woodside School also features a cupola, which is similar to the cupola that was once featured on the roof of Lorne School. Additionally, Blue Mountain School displays common elements such as a front vestibule, two windows on the front elevation, multiple windows on the side elevation, and dichromatic brickwork.

Despite the alterations to the existing chimneys, the removal of the original cupola, and the construction of the rear addition, the subject property remains a representative and rare example of an Ontario rural one-room schoolhouse in the Gothic Revival style.

3.0 Description of Heritage Attributes and Evaluation Checklist

The following evaluation checklist applies to Ontario Regulation 9/06 made under the *Ontario Heritage Act*: Criteria for Determining Cultural Heritage Value or Interest. The criteria are prescribed for municipal designation of Heritage Properties under Part IV, Section 29 of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. The evaluation tables utilize an 'X' to signify applicable criteria and 'N/A' to signify criteria that are not applicable for this property.

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

The property at 14021 Regional Road 25 has physical and design value as a rare and representative example of an Ontario rural one-room schoolhouse in the Gothic Revival architectural style, in the community of Esquesing, within the Town of Halton Hills. The one-and-a-half storey schoolhouse features design elements such as dichromatic brickwork, a gable roof, two windows along the front

elevation with multiple windows along the side elevations, two dichromatic brick chimneys, and a date stone inscribed: “Lorn S.S. No. 12... A.D. 1882”. Lorne School originally featured a cupola and bell; however, this feature has since been removed.

The building’s design features influence from the Gothic Revival architectural style, as well as designs featured within *The School House; Its Architecture, External and Internal Arrangements* and the *Canadian Farmer*, which published architectural plans and construction methods for grammar, intermediate, and primary schools in Canada. The use of dichromatic brickwork, such as the buff brick hood moulds and voussoirs, and the dichromatic brick chimneys, which displays a high degree of craftsmanship and artistic merit.

Despite the construction of a rear addition, and the removal of the cupola and bell, the building remains a representative example of an Ontario rural one-room schoolhouse in the Gothic Revival style.

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	X
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 14021 Regional Road 25 has historical and associative value due to its associations with the early educational system in the community of Esquesing. The student population began to grow with the establishment of *Common School Act* and the *Ontario School Act*, which introduced rates levied to support and construct new schools and later abolished the former fees for public schools and made attendance compulsory for children ages 7 to 12. These legislative changes provided government funds to construct and operate more schools for the growing school populations.

Lorne School is also associated with Acton-based architect John Cameron, who designed more than one hundred buildings in Halton Hills and surrounding communities during his career.

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

The property at 14021 Regional Road 25 has contextual value as it is important in defining, maintaining, and supporting the rural character north of Acton, in the community of Esquesing. The former Lorne School is physically, visually, and historically linked to its surroundings as an early schoolhouse that serviced School Section No. 12. Due to the vegetation obscuring the front elevation of the schoolhouse, the property has not been identified as a landmark.

4.0 Summary

Following research and evaluation according to Ontario Regulation 9/06, it has been determined that the property at 14021 Regional Road 25 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 14021 Regional Road 25 are identified as follows:

- The setback, location, and orientation of the schoolhouse along Regional Road 25 in the community of Esquesing within the Town of Halton Hills;
- The scale, form, and massing of the c.1882, one-and-a-half storey schoolhouse with a gable roof, two dichromatic brick chimneys, brick plinth, and stone foundation;
- Materials, including red brick, buff brick, and stone;
- Front (southwest) elevation:
 - o Lancet arched window openings with stone sills and buff brick hood molds;
 - o Circular datestone inscribed “Lorn S.S. No. 12 ... A.D. 1882” with semi-circular voussoir and stone sill;
- Side (southeast and northwest) elevations:
 - o Lancet arched window openings with stone sills and buff brick hood molds, and;
 - o Decorative wooden corbels.

The identified heritage attribute of the property at 14021 Regional Road 25 that contributes to its historical and associative value includes:

- The legibility of the existing property as a late-nineteenth-century Ontario rural one-room schoolhouse along Regional Road 25 within the community of Esquesing in the Town of Halton Hills.

The identified heritage attributes of the property at 14021 Regional Road 25 that contribute to its contextual value include:

- The legibility of the existing property as a late-nineteenth-century Ontario rural one-room schoolhouse along Regional Road 25 within the community of Esquesing in the Town of Halton Hills;
- The setback, location, and orientation of the c.1882 institutional building on the northeast side of Regional Road 25 in the community of Esquesing; and,
- The scale, form, and massing of the one-and-a-half-storey Ontario rural one-room schoolhouse.

The rear elevation, interiors, and rear addition were not investigated as part of this report.

Please note, this Research and Evaluation Report reflects the most up to date findings relating to its cultural heritage value as identified by staff. This report may be updated in future to reflect future findings as required.

5.0 Sources

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