

## Research and Evaluation Report



**St. Joseph's Patron of Canada Catholic Church**  
64 Church Street East, Acton, Town of Halton Hills

March 2026

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## 1.0 Property Description

<b>64 Church Street East</b>	
<b>Municipality</b>	Acton, Town of Halton Hills
<b>County or Region</b>	Halton Region
<b>Legal Description</b>	LT 2, BLK 17, PL 31; HALTON HILLS PIN: 249960088
<b>Construction Date</b>	c.1877
<b>Original Use</b>	Institutional
<b>Current Use</b>	Institutional
<b>Architect/Building/Designer</b>	Builders: John Cameron and Hugh Cameron
<b>Architectural Style</b>	Gothic Revival
<b>Additions/Alterations</b>	1920s building extension; Tower and spire removed
<b>Heritage Status</b>	Listed on the Town’s Heritage Register
<b>Recorder(s)</b>	Laura Loney
<b>Report Date</b>	March 2026

## 2.0 Background

This research and evaluation report describes the history, context, and physical characteristics of the property at 64 Church Street East in the community of Acton in the Town of 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 – 64 Church Street East



Figure 2: Aerial Photograph – 64 Church Street East

## 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 Nation.<sup>1</sup>

### *Catholic Foundations in Esquesing Township*

Early records in Esquesing Township indicate that some of the first Catholic settlers in the area arrived in 1834, including Matthew and Honora McCann who settled on Lot 25, Concession 1 that year. Informal masses within the McCann home between 1852 and 1857 led to the more formal organization of a church for the local Catholic community. Families who contributed to the building of a new church included the Carty, Claffey, Connell, Corrigan, Cummins, Curren, Cusick, Dalton, Donahoe, Donnelly,

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<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.



surrounding communities. Cameron designed several homes for prominent Acton families on Main Street, Mill Street, Willow Street, Bower Street, Young Street, Lake Avenue, Church Street, and Agnes Street. Cameron also constructed institutional buildings, such as St. Alban's Church (Acton) and Lorne Schoolhouse. He was also a member of Knox Presbyterian Church, served as an Acton Town Councillor, and sat on the Acton Free Library Board. His brother Hugh Cameron, a carpenter and builder, collaborated with John for several years in Acton, however he left in 1882 for Sarnia to work for the Grand Trunk Railway.

The existing church building at 64 Church Street East was built for \$8000, however the Congregationalists soon found themselves unable to pay for the building. In 1881, the Congregationalists listed their building for sale, following which it was rented by the Catholic congregation for only about a year before they returned to their Little Dublin location. The building was rented for a time by first the Lord's Army, and then the Salvation Army who used the space as a barracks, however it proved to be too expensive for both groups.

#### *St. Joseph the Patron of Canada Catholic Church*

In 1886, the Catholic congregation from Little Dublin re-established their congregation within the former Congregationalist church and purchased the property, establishing their roots in the Acton community. The original Little Dublin church building was torn down, however the St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church Cemetery remains at the location of the original church at 12932 Dublin Line.



Figure 6: St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church Cemetery, c.1995 (EHS 16855)

The first Catholic wedding ever consummated in Acton was at St. Joseph's in 1886. In 1893, Acton was established as a parish by Bishop Thomas J. Dowling, with the first resident priest being Father Patrick Haley. The original steeple was destroyed by lightning in 1895, following which it was rebuilt. In 1899, Father Feeny purchased a brick dwelling and lots at John Street South and Agnes Street to be used as a parsonage for the church; the former parsonage is no longer extant.



Figure 7: Reverend J.J. Feeny, c.1900  
(Courtesy of the St. Joseph Patron of Canada Parish, Acton)



Figure 8: St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, c.1919; the church's original steeple is prominent in this photograph (EHS 00065)



Figure 9: Steeple for St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church identified behind the Cenotaph on Mill Street in Acton, c.1920 (EHS 11337)



Figure 10: St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, c.1977 (EHS 18706)



Figure 11: Former parsonage at John Street South and Agnes Street, c. 1994 (EHS 18485)

During the late 1920s, the congregation had grown again, resulting in renovations including moving the exterior wall out to accommodate additional pews and a new position for the altar, and a vestry was added at the same time. During the 1930s, the original clear glass windows were removed and ten stained glass windows were installed within the church, and repairs were made to the church belfry and spire. The 1934 Fire Insurance Plan of Acton (Figure 12) shows the brick church building with a one-storey brick drive shed at the rear lot line of the property.

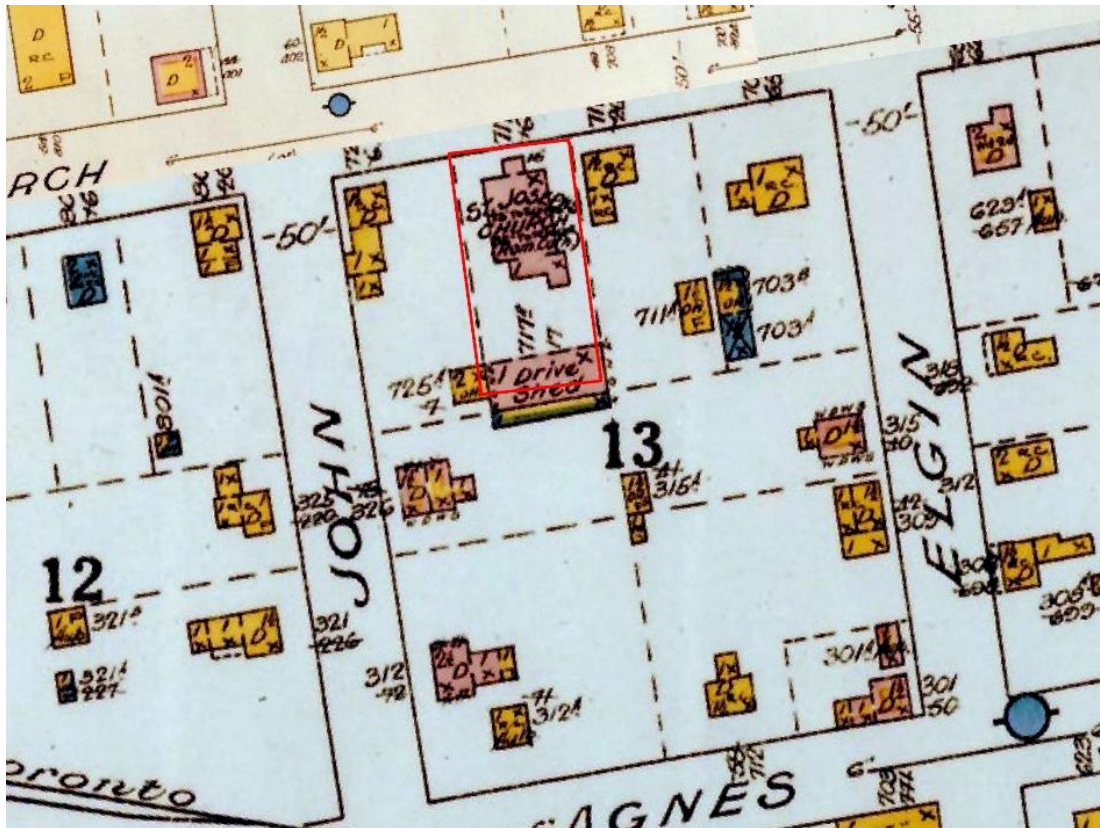


Figure 12: Subject property identified on the 1934 Fire Insurance Plan of Acton



Figure 13: Subject property identified on the 1935 National Topographic Map

During the mid-twentieth century, the basement was renovated to make additional meeting room space. Work was undertaken on the building's exterior during the 1960s, which is likely when the original steeple at the top of the tower was removed, however an exact date of its removal has not been confirmed. During the 1970s, a new heating system and hall kitchen were also introduced within the church.

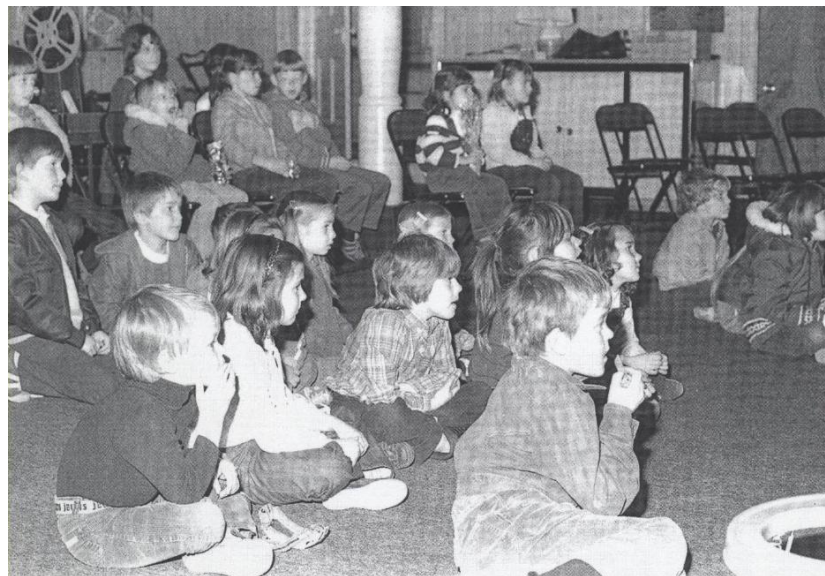


Figure 14: Children pay rapt attention to entertainment in the basement of St. Joseph's Catholic Church, c.1980 (EHS 16417)

In 1981, the church bells were automated.



Figure 15: St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, c.1982 (EHS 17568)

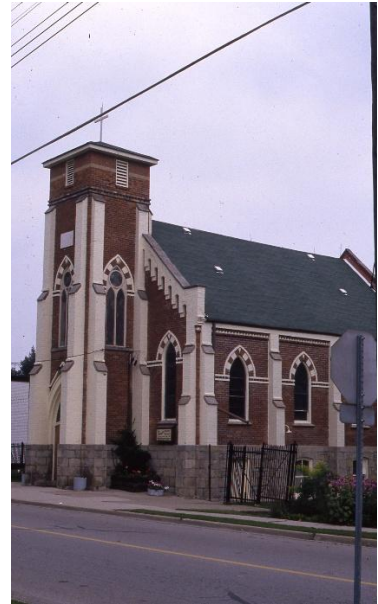


Figure 16: St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, c.1986 (EHS 18353)



Figure 17: The interior of St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, c.1993 (EHS 008561)



Figure 18: St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church Rectory on John Street, c.1994 (EHS 18485)



Figure 19: St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, c.1995 (EHS 16852)



Figure 20: St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, c.1995 (EHS 16851)



Figure 21: Subject property identified in 1999 aerial photography



Figure 22: Subject property identified in 2002 aerial photography



Figure 23: Subject property identified in 2011 aerial photography



Figure 24: Subject property identified in 2015 aerial photography



Figure 25: Subject property identified in 2021 aerial photography

## 2.2 Property & Architectural Description



Figure 26: Subject property identified in 2025 aerial photography

The subject property at 64 Church Street East is located along the southeast side of Church Street East in the community of Acton in the Town of Halton Hills. The property is a rectangular lot and abuts a parking lot on the southeast side, also owned by the Roman Catholic Diocese but not part of the subject property. Residential properties surround the church property on all sides. The existing church building is a rectangular plan dominated by a central tower on the front (northwest) elevation. The exterior is red brick with buff brick detailing throughout.



Figure 27: Looking southwest towards the subject property along Church Street East (Town of Halton Hills 2026)



Figure 28: Looking northeast towards the subject property along Church Street East (Town of Halton Hills 2026)

The front (northwest) elevation features three bays with a central tower dominating the façade. The entrance is centered within the tower and features double wooden doors within a lancet arched opening featuring glass transom above. A wooden portico with a gable-roof supported by wooden brackets is extant above the central entrance. Stepped buff brick buttresses extend upwards along the tower at each corner. Above the central entrance is a lancet arched window opening with stone sill and dichromatic brick voussoir above the window which features decorative tracery. A datestone reading “SAINT JOSEPHS CHURCH” is located above the window opening. A decorative “string course” featuring projecting buff brick and red brick is located above the buttresses on the tower. A rectangular louvered opening is extant above the flat roof and is intersected with a buff brick string course.

A single lancet arched window opening is extant on either side of the central tower, each featuring a stone sill and dichromatic brick voussoirs, with a double-buff brick string course with the same decorative brick detail between extending on either side of the window opening within its upper portion. Buff brick detailing is featured along the roofline on either side of the gable roof as it extends from the tower.



Figure 29: Front (northwest) elevation of the existing building at 64 Church Street East (Town of Halton Hills 2026)

The side elevations of the central tower feature similar details to its front (northwest) elevation, including stepped buff brick buttresses capped with stone, lancet-arched window openings featuring stone sills and dichromatic brick voussoirs above the windows which feature decorative tracery, and the same rectangular louvered opening surrounded by decorative brickwork below the roofline. A cross spire is located above the roofline of the tower.



Figure 30: Southwest corner of the existing building at 64 Church Street East (Town of Halton Hills 2026)



Figure 31: Northeast corner of the existing building at 64 Church Street East (Town of Halton Hills 2026)

The side (southwest) elevation of the existing building beyond the tower at the front features four symmetrically placed bays, divided by buff brick buttresses that extend from the existing foundation to the roofline of the gable roof. Segmentally arched window openings are extant at the basement level within each bay. Single lancet arched window openings are extant between each buttress and feature stone sills, dichromatic brick voussoirs, and are connected by the same detailed buff and red brick detailed string course that extends along the front (northwest) elevation. Additional dichromatic brick detailing is extant beneath the eaves of the gable roof and is topped by a course of buff brick that extends from the buff brick buttresses along the elevation.



Figure 32: Side (southwest) elevation of the existing building at 64 Church Street East (Town of Halton Hills 2026)

The other side (northeast) elevation of the existing building mirrors the southwest side, however, is partially obscured at grade by a wooden ramp and porch. The northernmost window opening on this elevation has been modified to serve as an entrance to the existing building.



Figure 33: Side (northeast) elevation of the existing building at 64 Church Street East (Town of Halton Hills 2026)



Figure 34: Rear (southeast) elevation and additions on the existing building at 64 Church Street East (Town of Halton Hills 2026)

### 2.3 Architectural Style and Comparative Analysis

Within Ontario there are several examples and variations of Gothic Revival architecture, popular within the province between 1830 and 1900. After 1850, Gothic Revival architecture became influenced by Augustus Pugin and his emphasis on medieval construction. In Gothic Revival church architecture in Ontario, many features help to articulate the style, including: lancet, or pointed arch window openings; asymmetrical elevations with Medieval-inspired details, architectural details such as string courses, dichromatic brickwork, mouldings, and surrounds, tracery, buttresses, steeply-pitched and cross-gabled roofs, dormers, oversized towers, or a tall thinly proportioned tower with bell-cote, rock-faced stone walls with smooth stone trimming, emphasis on verticality, and leaded windows.

St. Joseph's Patron of Canada Catholic Church at 64 Church Street East can best be described as a representative example of the Gothic Revival style, displaying many key features including the dichromatic brickwork, string courses, steeply pitched roof, lancet arched window openings, tracery, brick voussoirs, buttresses, and a central tower. The original steeple has since been removed from the central tower.



Figure 35: Photograph of 14369 Trafalgar Road (Town of Halton Hills 2024)



Figure 36: Photograph of 499 Guelph Street (Town of Halton Hills 2024)

Similar examples are extant within Halton Hills, such as 14369 Trafalgar Road (Figure 35) and 499 Guelph Street (Figure 36). The building at 14369 Trafalgar Road features a modest Gothic Revival design, with dichromatic brickwork, a central vestibule with a semi-circular arch opening, buff brick quoining, lancet arched windows, and dichromatic voussoirs. In comparison, the building at 499 Guelph Street consists of red brick, buttresses, a central lancet arched entryway, lancet arched windows, hood moulds, string courses, and a tall tower. Brick turrets on squared bases are located at each corner of the tower; the turret tent roofs have octagonal bases with steeply pitched slopes rising to a peak. The steeple features wooden louvered openings with pointed roofs featuring trefoils and terminates in a finial. In comparison, St. Joseph's Church features dichromatic brickwork and features a distinctive composition of Gothic Revival elements, making it a unique example in Halton Hills.

Despite the removal of the original steeple, St. Joseph's Church retains many of its original features, and remains a rare, unique, and representative example of a religious building 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.

<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>

St. Joseph's Patron of Canada Catholic Church at 64 Church Street East has design value as a unique and representative example of a late-nineteenth-century Gothic Revival religious building in the community of Acton within the Town of Halton Hills. The building features elements typical to this style, including the dichromatic brickwork, string courses, steeply pitched roof, lancet arched window openings, tracery, brick voussoirs, buttresses, and a central tower. Despite the removal of the steeple, the religious building retains many of its original features. The dichromatic brick work, string courses, and tracery all display a high degree of craftsmanship and artistic merit.

<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>X</b>

St. Joseph's Patron of Canada Catholic Church at 64 Church Street East has historical and associative value due to its associations with both the Congregationalist Church and Catholic Church. The extant building was originally constructed to accommodate the Congregationalist parishioners in 1876. However, in 1886, the Catholic congregation from Little Dublin re-established their congregation within the former Congregationalist church and purchased the property, establishing their roots in the Acton community. During the late 1920s, the congregation had grown again, resulting in renovations including moving the exterior wall out to accommodate additional pews and a new position for the altar, and a vestry was added at the same time. During the 1930s, the original clear glass windows were removed, and ten stained glass windows were installed within the church, and repairs were made to the church belfry and spire. Other changes were made in the mid to late twentieth century, including renovations to the basement, the automation of the church bells, and the removal of the steeple. The Catholic community continues to occupy the space.

The property is also associated with brothers John Cameron (1846-1933) and Hugh Cameron (1842-1933) who designed and built the extant Church. During his career, architect and builder John Cameron constructed and designed over 100 buildings throughout Halton Hills and surrounding communities. Cameron designed several homes for prominent Acton families on Main Street, Mill Street, Willow Street, Bower Street, Young Street, Lake Avenue, Church Street, and Agnes Street. Cameron also constructed institutional buildings, such as St. Alban's Church (Acton) and Lorne Schoolhouse. He was also a member of Knox Presbyterian Church, served as an Acton Town Councillor, and sat on the Acton Free Library Board. His brother Hugh Cameron, a carpenter and builder, collaborated with John for several years in Acton, however, left in 1882 for Sarnia to work for the Grand Trunk Railway.

<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>X</b>

St. Joseph’s Patron of Canada Catholic Church at 64 Church Street East has contextual value as it serves to define and maintain the character of the community of Acton in the Town of Halton Hills. St. Joseph’s Church remains physically, functionally, visually, and historically linked to its surroundings, and has remained in its existing location for 150 years. Sitting prominently at the corner of Church Street East and John Street, the property is a landmark in the community.

#### **4.0 Summary**

Following research and evaluation according to Ontario Regulation 9/06, it has been determined that the property at 64 Church Street East 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 64 Church Street East that contribute to its physical and design value include:

- The setback, location, and orientation of the original c.1876 church building along Church Street East and John Street South in the community of Acton in the Town of Halton Hills;
- The scale, form, and massing of the one-storey c.1876 church building with gable roof, cut stone foundation, buff brick string courses, central tower, and buff brick buttresses;
- The materials, including the dichromatic brick, stone, and wood;
- The front (northwest) elevation, including:
  - The central tower, including:
    - The lancet arched entryway with a buff brick voussoir and a wooden portico with gable roof and wooden supporting brackets above;
    - Lancet arched window openings with wooden tracery, dichromatic brick voussoirs, and stone sills;
    - Double-buff brick string course detail extending on either side of the window openings and at the top of the tower;
    - Datestone located above the lancet arched window opening inscribed “SAINT JOSEPHS CHURCH;”
    - Buff brick buttresses with stone capping extending from the foundation to the roofline;
  - Lancet arched windows with dichromatic brick voussoirs, stone sills, and double-buff brick string course with the same decorative brick detail between extending on either side of the window opening;
  - Buff brick buttresses with stone capping extending from the foundation to the roofline;
  - Buff brick detailing is featured along the roofline on either side of the gable roof as it extends from the tower;
- The side (northeast and southwest) elevations, including:

- Five brick buttresses with stone capping extending from the foundation to the roofline;
- Single lancet arched window openings in between each buttress with stone sills, dichromatic brick voussoirs, and double-buff brick string course with the same decorative brick detail between extending on either side of the window openings; and,
- Dichromatic brick detailing topped with buff brick beneath the roofline.

The heritage attribute of the property at 64 Church Street East that contributes to its historical and associative value includes:

- The legibility of the c.1876 church building as a late-nineteenth-century example of a Gothic Revival church building and landmark within the community of Acton in the Town of Halton Hills.

The heritage attributes of the property at 64 Church Street East that contribute to its contextual value include:

- The legibility of the c.1876 church building as a late-nineteenth-century example of a Gothic Revival church building and landmark within the community of Acton in the Town of Halton Hills;
- The setback, location, and orientation of the original c.1876 church building along Church Street East and John Street South in the community of Acton in the Town of Halton Hills; and,
- The scale, form, and massing of the one-storey c.1876 church building with gable roof, cut stone foundation, buff brick string courses, central tower, and buff brick buttresses.

The rear elevation, rear addition, and interiors were not identified as heritage attributes as part of this report.

## 5.0 Sources

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