

Research and Evaluation Report



St. Alban the Martyr Anglican Church
19 St. Alban's Drive, Acton, Town of Halton Hills

February 2026

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1.0 Property Description

19 St. Alban's Drive	
Municipality	Acton, Town of Halton Hills
County or Region	Region of Halton
Legal Description	PT LT 5, BLK 1, PL 31, AS IN EW128, EW1658 ALSO SHOWN ON PL 1098; HALTON HILLS; PIN: 250020043
Construction Date	c.1872
Original Use	Religious
Current Use	Religious
Architect/Building/Designer	Original Church Builder - George Hynds
Architectural Style	Gothic Revival and Tudor Revival influences
Additions/Alterations	Major renovation c.1907; Stucco c.1934; Parish Hall c.1951; Narthex c.1985
Heritage Status	Listed on the Town's Heritage Register
Recorder(s)	Laura Loney
Report Date	February 2026

2.0 Background

This research and evaluation report describes the history, context, and physical characteristics of the property at 19 St. Alban's Drive 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*.

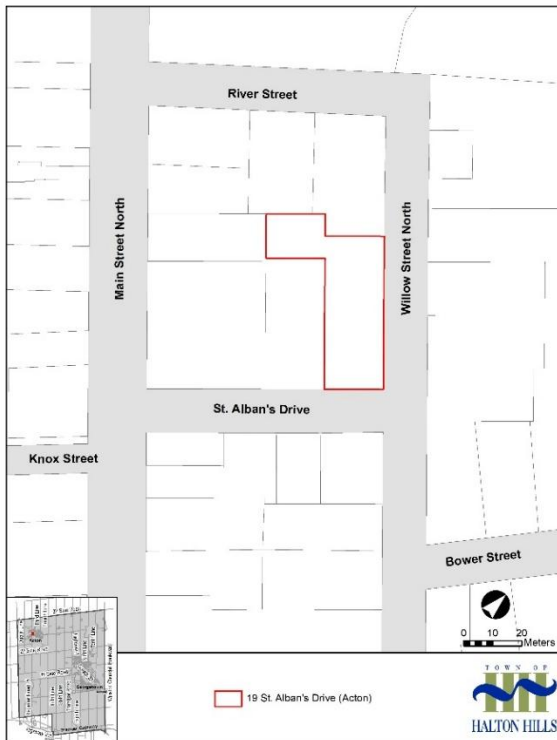


Figure 1: Location Map – 19 St. Alban's Drive



Figure 2: Aerial Photograph – 19 St. Alban's Drive

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.¹

Church of England in Acton and St. Alban the Martyr

The first Church of England ministries in Esquesing Township were undertaken by travelling missionary Reverend Adam Elliot in the mid-1840s, while the earliest recorded mission station in this area was in Ballinafad in 1849. From there, services were held in the Old Temperance Hall by Reverend W.W. Bates from Rockwood, who had congregations throughout the area. In 1872, the parish was divided between

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.

Reverend William Massey (Erin, Hillsburg and Garafaxa) and Reverend W. Swallow (Acton, Rockwood, and Eramosa).



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 1872, William and Esther Sharp deeded part of Village Lot 5 in Block One to the incorporated Synod of Toronto. George Hynds, who worked as the foreman for the tannery, built a rectangular frame church with an entrance at the east end, within the area that served as the original farm lane to the home of Rufus Adams, one of the founders of Acton. The church held only 200 people at the time. Reverend William Swallow named the church "St. Alban's" in 1873². The diocese of Niagara was formed in 1875, and the church was subsequently consecrated on July 4, 1876, by T.B. Fuller, the first Bishop of Niagara.

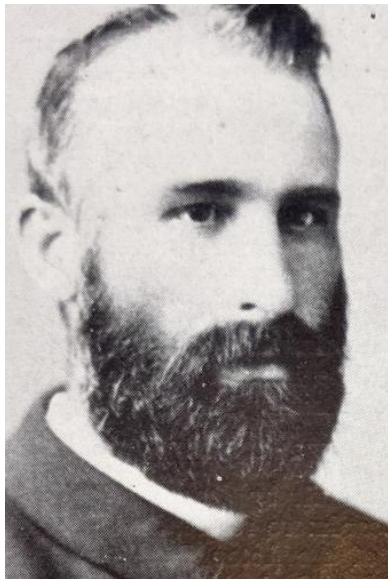


Figure 5: Reverend W.F. Swallow ("The Church of St. Alban the Martyr. Acton, Ontario. Seventy-Fifth Anniversary 1872-1947")



Figure 6: St. Alban's Sunday School class, c.1873 (EHS 11388)

² St. Alban was the first recorded martyr of Britain who sheltered Christian priest Amphibalus during the fourth century and was beheaded as a result around 304 C.E.

In 1875, the adjacent property on Willow Street was purchased from John Sharpe for use as a rectory for then Reverend Charles Russell.



Figure 7: Subject property identified on the 1877 *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of Halton, Ontario*

In 1880, then Rector Reverend W.W. Piggott led upgrades to the interior of St. Alban's, including cream walls, a lavender ceiling, rose pink chancel, stone-coloured woodwork and a maroon border, in addition to a \$500 organ. In 1886, Piggott dedicated the Fairview Cemetery Grounds.

In 1895, the rectory underwent significant renovations, as the previous rector's family had been too large to be accommodated within the home. The same year, Reverend John Godden obtained a bell for the church steeple, and electric lighting was installed in the church.

In the early 1900s, Reverend Matthew Wilson began a fundraising campaign to replace the existing frame church, holding a three-day fundraising bazaar on April 4, 5, and 6, 1907. However, instead of a new church, improvements were made to the existing building, including several interior improvements and construction of the southeast wing which served as the original vestry. The porch at the southeast corner of the building was also constructed at this time to provide shelter coming into the church itself.

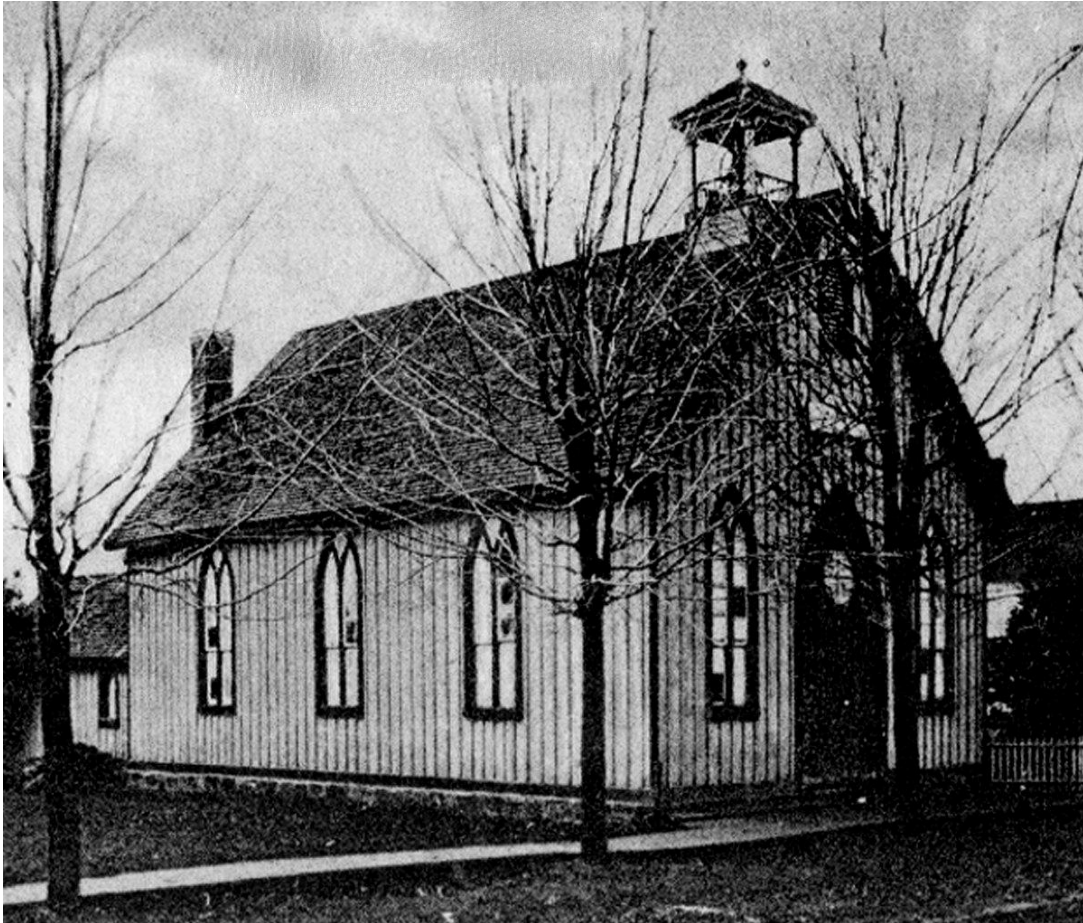


Figure 8: St. Alban the Martyr Anglican Church, c.1908 (Courtesy Vintage Acton)

In 1912, a new parish hall was built, with a mortgage placed on the rectory of \$900. Improvements were made to the hall in 1927 as well.

In 1934, the frame church was covered in stucco, and a mortgage was again taken out on the rectory to help the church which was undergoing financial issues at the time. The mortgage was paid off in 1943. Stained-glass windows were added to the church between 1938 and 1944, followed by additional improvements to the church and parish hall interiors, including a new pipe organ in 1946.

The 1934 Fire Insurance Plan of Acton shows the one-storey frame church building within the south portion of the lot, with a one-storey garage adjacent to the building, and a one-and-a-half-storey frame residential building (the rectory) with one-storey frame parish hall addition within the north portion of the lot (Figure 9 and Figure 10). Stained glass windows were added during the 1940s, and a new pipe organ was installed.

St. Alban's Church | PT LT 5, BLK 1, PL 31, AS IN EW128, EW1658 ALSO SHOWN ON PL 1098; HALTON HILLS

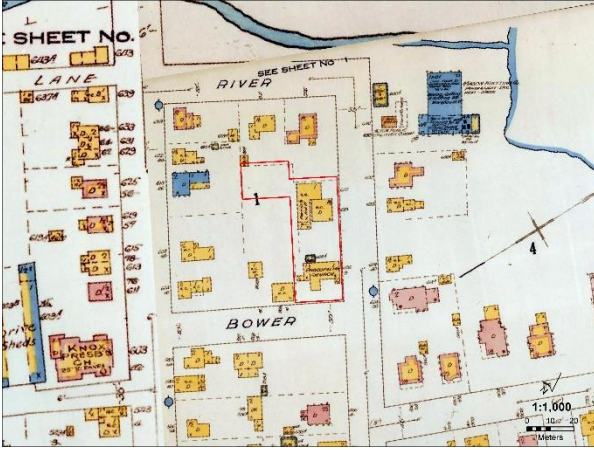


Figure 9: Subject property identified on the 1934 Fire Insurance Plan of Acton

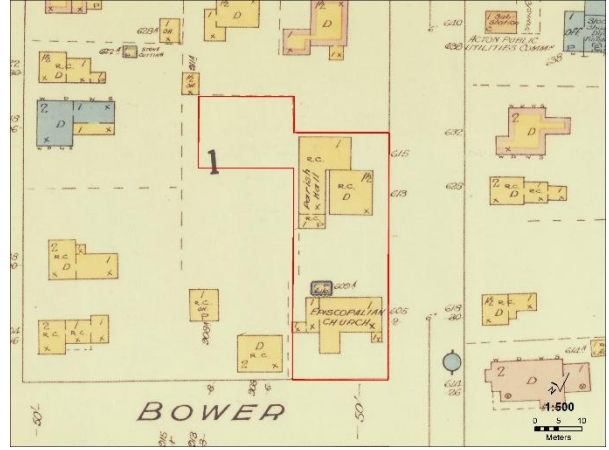


Figure 10: Subject property identified on the 1934 Fire Insurance Plan of Acton, showing the former rectory and original parish hall to the north of the original church building

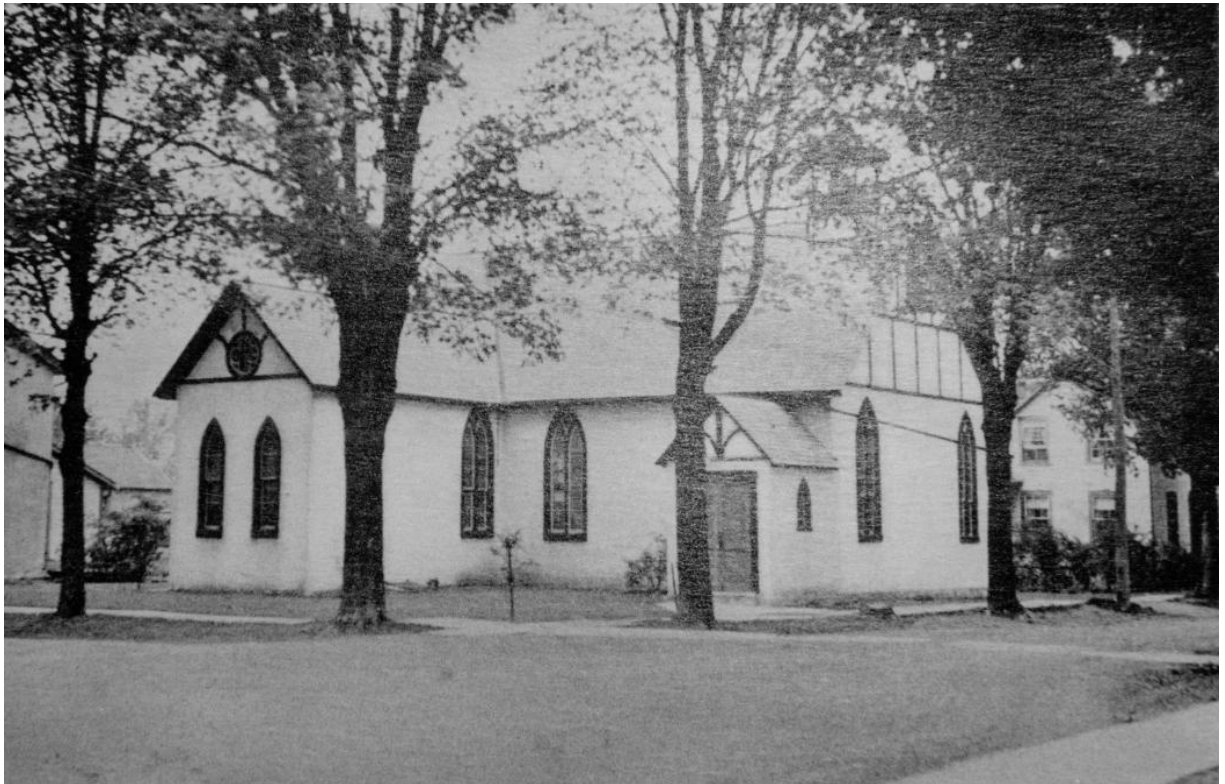


Figure 11: St. Alban the Martyr Anglican Church, c.1933. Note the former rectory building in the background (demolished c.1969) (EHS 11367)



Figure 12: Subject property identified on the 1935 National Topographic Map

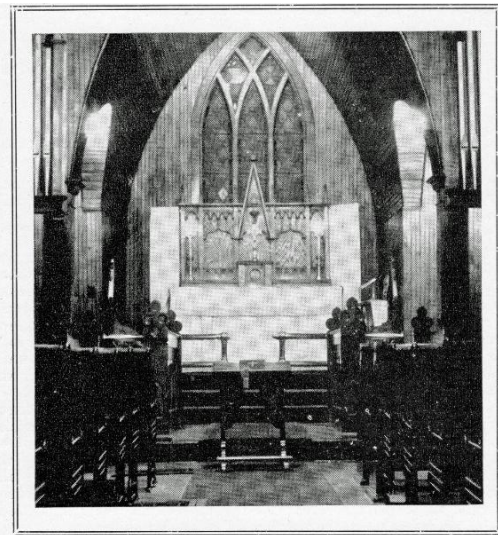


Figure 13: Interior of St. Alban the Martyr Anglican Church, c.1947 (Courtesy of Vintage Acton)



Figure 14: St. Alban the Martyr Anglican Church, c.1947 (Courtesy of Vintage Acton)

Construction of the new parish hall began in 1950, and the cornerstone was dedicated in June 1951. In 1959 the Parish Hall was dedicated to Reverend W.G. Luxton following his death.

In 1953, St. Alban's had a congregation size of 265 families. In 1957, a new rectory was purchased for the church on Jeffrey Avenue, and the old building was rented, however was later demolished in 1969. The first Young People's group was formed in 1961. Exterior repairs to the existing stucco were undertaken in 1967.



Figure 15: St. Alban the Martyr Anglican Church, c.1955, showing the newly constructed Parish Hall adjacent to the church (EHS 25068)



Figure 16: A guard of honour holds flags at St. Alban's Church in honour of Lord and Lady Baden-Powell's birthday in February, c.1960 (EHS 14540)



Figure 17: A bridal party outside St. Alban's Anglican Church, c.1960 (EHS 14566)



Figure 18: St. Alban the Martyr Anglican Church, c.1970 (EHS 18699)

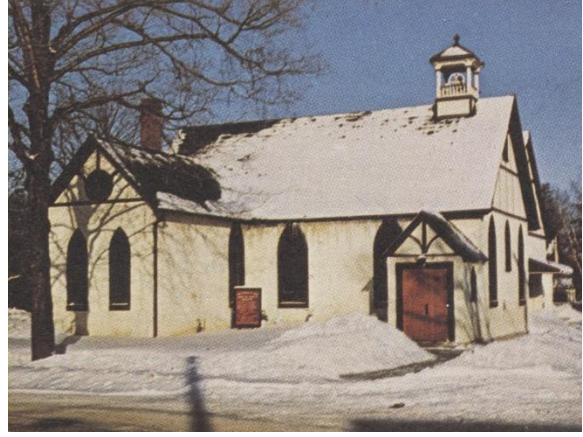


Figure 19: St. Alban the Martyr Anglican Church, c.1980 (EHS 16286)



Figure 20: Subject property identified in 1974 aerial photography

In 1985, the narthex was constructed to allow a connection between the church and the parish hall. Through this project the original northwest elevation of the church building was retained, and the original stained-glass windows are extant within the narthex. An elevator was later added to the narthex in 2011. Since that time, the church has remained in continuous use as a place of worship within the community of Acton, with relatively minor change since 1985 to its exterior.

St. Alban's Church | PT LT 5, BLK 1, PL 31, AS IN EW128, EW1658 ALSO SHOWN ON PL 1098; HALTON HILLS



Figure 21: St. Alban the Martyr Anglican Church, c.1986 (EHS 18349)



Figure 22: St. Alban the Martyr Anglican Church, c.1987 (EHS 25175)



Figure 23: St. Alban the Martyr Anglican Church, c.1995 (EHS 16795)



Figure 24: St. Alban the Martyr Anglican Church, c.1999 (EHS 18841)



Figure 25: Subject property identified in 1999 aerial photography



Figure 26: Subject property identified in 2002 aerial photography



Figure 27: Subject property identified in 2007 aerial photography



Figure 28: Subject property identified in 2021 aerial photography

2.2 Property & Architectural Description



Figure 29: Subject property identified in 2025 aerial photography

The subject property is located at the northwest corner of St. Alban's Drive and Willow Street North within the community of Acton in the Town of Halton Hills. The property is an irregularly shaped lot, extending northwest along Willow Street North and including a small rectangular area within the centre of the block. The property features the original c.1872 one-storey frame church building with gable roof, with a c.1951 one-storey frame parish hall addition connected to the original church building on the northwest side via a c.1985 narthex, similar in scale and design to the original church building and featuring a small flat-roofed entrance vestibule on its front (northeast) elevation. On the southeast side of the building are a small one-storey entrance at the southeast corner, and a larger one-storey wing towards the southwest end of the original church building. The church building and additions are stuccoed and feature decorative half-timbering beneath each gable peak. The northwest portion of the lot features a large, paved parking area, while the southeast portion beyond the church building features soft landscaping and two mature deciduous trees along St. Alban's Drive.

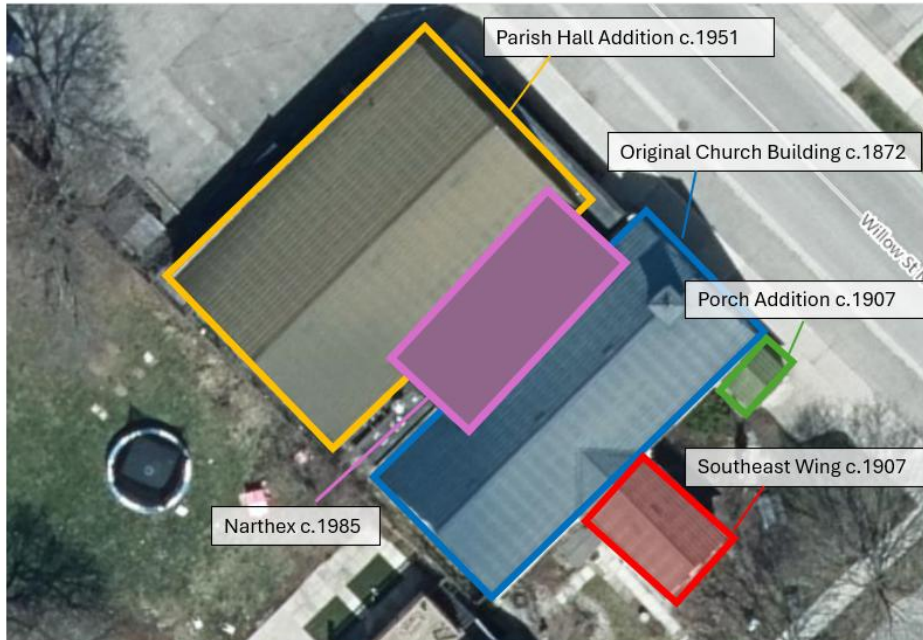


Figure 30: Annotated aerial photograph showing the subject property and dates of buildings and additions (Town of Halton Hills 2026)

The original c.1872 building was originally oriented towards Willow Street North, featuring a central Gothic-arched entrance on the northeast elevation, however the entrance is now located through wooden double doors within an entrance within the small, one-storey vestibule with gable roof at the southeast corner. This entrance features a simple wooden surround and decorative half-timbering beneath the central gable. Small Gothic-arched window openings featuring stained glass windows are extant on either side elevation of this vestibule. Two Gothic-arched window openings are extant along the southeast elevation of the original church building beside the vestibule.

The one-storey southeast wing with gable roof features a single Gothic-arched window opening on its northeast elevation, paired Gothic-arched window openings on the southeast elevation, and a single flatheaded entrance on the southwest elevation. Beneath the gable peak and within some half-timbering is a circular window opening featuring a quatrefoil window. To the southwest of this wing, a single Gothic-arched window opening is extant on the southeast elevation of the original c.1872 church building.

The rear elevation of the c.1872 church building (southwest) is partially visible from St. Alban's Drive and features a single Gothic-arched window opening centered within the elevation and a small louvered opening above, centered beneath the gable peak.



Figure 31: Southwest corner of the existing building within the subject property (Town of Halton Hills 2025)



Figure 32: South elevation of the existing building within the subject property (Town of Halton Hills 2025)



Figure 33: Looking northwest towards the existing building within the subject property (Town of Halton Hills 2025)

The front (northeast) elevation of the c.1872 church building is symmetrical in design, featuring two large Gothic-arched window openings with a smaller Gothic-arched window opening centered between these two windows, in the original location of the central entrance. Decorative half-timbering is extant above the window openings, with a small Gothic-arched louvered opening centered beneath the gable peak. A frame bell tower is extant above the gable peak, featuring a pyramidal roof, bell, and cross at the roof peak.



Figure 34: Northeast elevation of the existing building at 19 St. Alban's Drive (Town of Halton Hills 2025)

The c.1912 parish hall addition is connected to the original church building with a flat-roofed addition that connects mid-slope between each gable roof. Three Gothic-arched windows are extant within the side wall of this connection above the contemporary entrance in the flat-roofed, one-storey addition that extends along the front elevation of the parish hall. This addition features a contemporary entrance with glass transom and sidelights, and three symmetrically placed tall rectangular window openings along its front (northeast) elevation. The addition also features a side entrance accessed by a flight of concrete steps. Like the original church building, the parish hall features decorative half-timbering above the one-storey entrance addition, with a small rectangular window opening centered beneath the gable peak. A buttress extends partially up the northeast corner of the parish hall.



Figure 35: Partial northeast elevation of the existing building at 19 St. Alban's Drive (Town of Halton Hills 2025)



Figure 36: Partial northeast elevation of the existing building at 19 St. Alban's Drive (Town of Halton Hills 2025)

Within the narthex, the original northwest elevation of the church building is extant, including the stuccoed exterior and Gothic-arched window openings with stained-glass windows.



Figure 37: Interior of the narthex, showing the side (northwest) elevation of the original c.1872 church building (Town of Halton Hills 2026)

The side (northwest) elevation of the parish hall features three stuccoed buttresses separating four rectangular window openings, smaller rectangular window openings at the basement level, and a shed-roofed basement entrance. A wooden porch accessed via a flight of stairs is extant towards the rear (southwest) corner of the building. A large asphalt parking area is extant within this portion of the property.



Figure 38: Northwest elevation of the existing building at 19 St. Alban's Drive (Town of Halton Hills 2025)

2.3 Architectural Style and Analysis

Thomas McIlwraith notes in *Looking for Old Ontario* that “[t]he pointed gothic window is a universal architectural signal of the Christian church. The revival of Gothicism in the Western world in the 1830s was just one more upswing in the cyclical way styles rise and fall in favour. By chance, it coincided with Upper Canada’s first widespread demand for church building” (p.150). The steeply pitched gable roof of St. Alban’s Anglican Church is characteristic of the Gothic Revival style, as are its pointed lancet, or Gothic-arched, windows. Aside from those features, however, the original church building itself is a vernacular box shape and features no other significant ornamentation on the exterior, apart from the half-timbering and stained-glass windows which were added over 40 years after its construction.

The existing style of the original church building, with c.1907 wing and porch, could be described as vernacular with Gothic Revival and Tudor Revival influences, as a simple, frame interpretation of a grander style within a small community in the late-nineteenth century, with additional work during the early-twentieth century to further improve its exterior, including the addition of stucco, half-timbering, and stained-glass windows.

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	N/A
Demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement	N/A

The steeply pitched gable roof of St. Alban’s Anglican Church is characteristic of the Gothic Revival style, as are its pointed lancet, or Gothic-arched windows. Aside from those features, however, the original church building itself is a vernacular box shape and features no other significant ornamentation on the exterior, apart from the half-timbering, stained-glass windows, and quatrefoil window on the southeast wing, added between 1907 and the 1940s. The existing style of the original church building, with c.1907 wing and porch, could be described as vernacular with Gothic Revival and Tudor Revival influences, as a simple, frame interpretation of a grander style within a small community in the late-nineteenth century, with additional work during the early-twentieth century to further improve its exterior, including the addition of stucco, half-timbering, and stained-glass windows.

While the c.1951 parish hall was designed to complement the original church building, it has not been identified as a significant attribute of the property as it is a contemporary addition to the historic property.

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

The property at 19 St. Alban's Drive has associations with the early Anglican community in Acton and the surrounding area, and with the early growth of Anglican congregations throughout Halton Hills. The first Church of England ministries in Esquesing Township were undertaken by travelling missionary Reverend Adam Elliot in the mid-1840s, while the earliest recorded mission station in this area was in Ballinafad in 1849. From there, services were held in the Old Temperance Hall by Reverend W.W. Bates from Rockwood, who had congregations throughout the area. In 1872, the parish was divided between Reverend William Massey (Erin, Hillsburg, and Garafaxa) and Reverend W. Swallow (Acton, Rockwood, and Eramosa).

In 1872, William and Esther Sharp deeded part of Village Lot 5 in Block One in Acton to the incorporated Synod of Toronto. George Hynds built a rectangular frame church with an entrance at the east end, within the area that served as the original farm lane to the home of Rufus Adams, one of the founders of Acton. The diocese of Niagara was formed in 1875, and St. Alban's was subsequently consecrated on July 4, 1876, by the first Bishop of Niagara. Since that time, St. Alban the Martyr Anglican Church has undergone physical changes on its exterior and interior, however, the church has continued to serve as a place of worship for the local community in Acton.

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

St. Alban the Martyr Anglican Church at 19 St. Alban's Drive has significant contextual value as it serves to define and maintain the character of the community of Acton in the Town of Halton Hills. St. Alban's Church remains physically, functionally, visually, and historically linked to its surroundings as one of the earlier places of worship in Acton. The Church has remained in its existing location for 150 years and 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 19 St. Alban's Drive 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 19 St. Alban's Drive that contribute to its physical and design value include:

- The setback, location, and orientation of the original c.1872 church building along St. Alban's Drive and Willow Street North in the community of Acton in the Town of Halton Hills;

- The scale, form, and massing of the one-storey c.1872 church building with gable roof and frame belltower, with one-storey porch and one-storey wing;
- The materials, including the stuccoed exterior, half-timbering, wooden window surrounds, and stained glass within the original c.1872 church building;
- The southwest elevation of the c.1872 building, including:
 - Single Gothic-arched window opening featuring wooden surrounds, sills, and tracery, and stained-glass window within the opening;
- The southeast elevation of the c.1872 building, including:
 - Gothic-arched window openings featuring wooden surrounds, sills, and tracery, and stained glass windows;
 - The c.1907 wing with gable roof and Gothic-arched window openings featuring wooden surrounds, sills, and tracery, and stained-glass windows, and circular window opening featuring a quatrefoil window beneath the gable peak;
 - The c.1907 one-storey porch entrance with gable roof, wooden double doors, small Gothic-arched window featuring stained glass, and half-timbering beneath the gable;
- The northeast elevation of the c.1872 building, including:
 - Symmetrically placed Gothic-arched window openings, with a smaller centrally placed window opening between and beneath the gable peak, featuring stained-glass windows;
 - Half-timbering within the upper portion of the façade;
 - Above the gable peak, the frame belltower with c.1895 bell;
- Within the narthex, the northwest elevation of the c.1872 building, including:
 - The stuccoed exterior;
 - The lancet window openings featuring wooden surrounds, sills, tracery, and stained-glass windows.

The interiors of the church building, the c.1985 narthex, the flat-roofed porch along Willow Street North, and the c.1951 parish hall addition have not been identified as heritage attributes of the property at this time. Additionally, although the church has been stuccoed since 1934, the original church exterior featured board-and-batten siding, which could be restored at a later date.

The heritage attribute of the property at 19 St. Alban's Drive that contributes to its historical and associative value includes:

- The legibility of the c.1872 church building as a late-nineteenth-century example of a vernacular church building with Gothic Revival and Tudor Revival influences within the community of Acton in the Town of Halton Hills.

The heritage attributes of the property at 19 St. Alban's Drive that contribute to its contextual value include:

- The legibility of the c.1872 church building as a late-nineteenth-century example of a vernacular church building with Gothic Revival and Tudor Revival influences within the community of Acton in the Town of Halton Hills;
- The setback, location, and orientation of the original c.1872 church building along St. Alban's Drive and Willow Street North in the community of Acton in the Town of Halton Hills; and,

St. Alban's Church | PT LT 5, BLK 1, PL 31, AS IN EW128, EW1658 ALSO SHOWN ON PL 1098; HALTON HILLS

- The scale, form, and massing of the one-storey c.1872 church building with gable roof and frame belltower, with one-storey porch and one-storey wing.

5.0 Sources

Primary Sources

Acton Free Press

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