

Nomination:

Town of Halton Hills Heritage Conservation Award



Submitted by:

Kevin Reid-Morris

Owner and Restorer, 36 Edith Street

Dear Heritage Halton Hills,

Please accept this nomination for the project at 36 Edith Street in Georgetown, recently completed to restore the front porch and related elements. This project is the result of over two years of work researching, discovering, studying, and crafting the facade-wide verandah on the property after finding impressions in original paint upon inspection that led us to believe - and was later confirmed - the presence of an ornate porch structure, unlike the enclosure that was added decades ago.

Thank you for protecting Halton Hills' heritage resources and considering me for this award.

I look forward to hearing from you upon review.

Kevin Reid-Morris

Owner & Restorer, 36 Edith Street



1 - Goal and Purpose

The home at 36 Edith Street was built in 1904 by H.P. Lawson. Upon purchasing the property in 2022, we discovered that it originally featured a veranda/porch that stretched across its facade, serving as a focal point for both the architecture and the social life it fostered. Many decades ago, this original porch was demolished, and the space enclosed, likely increasing interior room in what was once a much smaller house.

Clues of the original verandah included a tongue-and-groove ceiling, framing discrepancies at the threshold between interior/enclosure space, and a pitched ceiling within the enclosure that matched the pitch on the remaining exposed porch and doorstep. An early photograph from the Esquesing Historical Society, taken in 1908, confirmed our suspicions, showing a glimpse

of the original porch, which had been lost for nearly a century. This photograph also confirmed the presence of ornate millwork and fretwork, including large finials at the ends of each gable and roof cresting running the entire length from front to back of the house.

The goal of this project specifically was to accurately reveal, recover, and represent the front porch and adjacent elements as they would have been at the time of the home's 1904 construction. Porches like these serve a vital role not only in architectural design, but also in community building and social life, offering a place where neighbors interact and, in the words of Jane Jacobs, allowing residents to have "eyes on the street" in a way that reinforces community wellbeing, safety, and connection. Beginning in the 1930s, however, porches

were often demolished and enclosed for various reasons, including the introduction of air conditioning, television/radio, larger family units, and the desire for more interior space.

During this restoration project, I was concurrently completing studies in Sustainable Historic Preservation at Cornell University. This provided a unique opportunity to apply professional preservation and conservation standards directly to a personal project. The restoration allowed me to integrate best practices in historic research and restoration, ensuring that the project would not only revive an essential element of the home but also, hopefully, serve as a meaningful contribution to Halton Hills' heritage assets.

2- Adherence to Standards

The project meets *Parks Canada's Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada* in several ways.

First and foremost, this project qualifies as a Restoration project according to the Standards. Original character-defining elements of the home had been obscured and removed, however were able to be revealed through removals, repairs, and replacements whose forms, materials, and detailing are based on historical evidence. That being said, the original tongue and groove porch ceiling was essentially intact and did not require extensive repair or replacement, which would qualify as Preservation.

Most notably, we'd like to call out the following four principles that were followed closely during the project:

i. Identification of Character-Defining Elements

We identified the porch's character-defining elements using a combination of historical documentation,

physical evidence, and comparative analysis. Accessing the Esqueusing Historical Society archives, we found a 1908 photograph confirming the presence of a verandah. This image validated the home's ornate style, including operable exterior window blinds (shutters) and roof cresting, which influenced our restoration plans.

On-site, we discovered "ghost marks" indicating the locations of original porch posts, eave corbels, and the porch's footprint. These findings corresponded with existing architectural elements, such as the dining room bay window corbels on our home that escaped demolition over the years. To further refine our design, we studied other local Lawson-built homes, particularly a designated heritage building at 126 Main Street South. This home had identical corbels and placements, which reinforced our findings.

We also consulted late 19th and early 20th-century architectural millwork

catalogs to ensure our design choices aligned with materials from Lawson's era. Lastly, we interviewed descendants of previous owners, gathering oral histories that enriched our understanding and helped confirm the porch's original configuration.

ii. Repair vs. Replacement

We prioritized repair over replacement to maintain the authenticity of the original elements. For example, we preserved the original stone foundation through tuck-pointing rather than replacement. We collaborated with Halton Hills' building department and engineers to ensure that our approach preserved the foundation while supporting the rebuilt porch for long-term durability.

Similarly, the tongue-and-groove ceiling was carefully spot-repaired without replacing any boards. By retaining these original materials, we balanced conservation with the practical needs of a sustainable structure.

iii. Restoration of Missing Features

Using historical documentation, physical evidence, and comparative analysis, we confirmed the porch's original design. The 1908 photograph provided an overall reference, and “ghost marks” on-site indicated details like post placements and corbel locations. We verified these findings by comparing them to other local Lawson-built homes and consulting architectural catalogs. This comprehensive approach enabled us to restore the missing features accurately.

iv. Sustainable Methods

Sustainability was a priority, and we aimed to minimize carbon emissions and avoid toxic materials. We reused old-growth pine timbers from a previous interior renovation, crafting 44 porch corbels from this reclaimed wood. This reduced material waste and aligned with the historical materials used in the porch's original construction.

We used thermally treated solid white ash for the porch flooring, achieving durability similar to pressure-treated wood but without chemicals. This hardwood was stained to replicate the look of a

period-appropriate porch floor. Additionally, we sourced reclaimed porch posts from a historic home in Rosedale, Ontario, which matched the original post outlines on our home.

v. Documentation and Reversibility

The restoration process was thoroughly documented through video and photographs, which we shared on Instagram. This created an accessible archive for restoration enthusiasts and recorded key moments, such as discovering original elements. We also created detailed plans and drawings, which have been archived for future reference. This documentation will assist with ongoing maintenance and support any future interventions, preserving a clear record of the restoration for future stewards of the home.

To specifically and granularly outline the guidelines followed for the preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration of Entrances, Porches, and Balconies (4.3.6), we have provided comment for each in the table below:

Recommended by Parks Canada Standards & Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada	Our Comments
Understanding entrances, porches or balconies and how they contribute to the heritage value of the historic building	Completed. We studied the general application of porches and verandahs to home built in the period but also the specific builders and occupiers of the home to understand cultural, social, and architectural value/dynamics that would have been in play during 1904 construction.
Documenting the form, materials and condition of entrances, porches and balconies before undertaking an intervention.	Completed. All existing character and condition was documented including through the use of photographs, video, and technical/design drawings.
Assessing the condition of entrances, porches and balconies early in the planning process so that the scope of work is based on current conditions.	Completed. Several studies of the porch were completed to adequately prepare for the restoration in terms of budget, expertise, materials, and methods.
Determining the cause of distress, damage or deterioration of entrances, porches and balconies through investigation, monitoring and minimally invasive or non-destructive testing techniques.	Completed. While no physical distress was present, select and non-invasive inspection was done to understand the current state.
Protecting and maintaining entrances, porches and balconies, by using appropriate surface treatments, such as cleaning, rust removal, limited paint removal, and reapplying protective coating systems in kind.	Completed. Existing materials, namely the original tongue & groove porch ceiling, were cleaned, patch repaired, and coated to ensure longevity and character retention.
Retaining sound or repairable entrances, porches and balconies and their functional and decorative elements.	Completed. See notes about original materials above.
Repairing parts of entrances, porches or balconies by patching, piecing-in, consolidating, or otherwise reinforcing, using recognized conservation methods. Repair might also include the limited replacement in kind, or with a compatible substitute material, of those extensively deteriorated or missing parts of entrances, porches and balconies. Repairs should match the existing work as closely as possible, both physically and visually.	Completed.
Protecting adjacent character-defining elements from accidental damage or exposure to damaging materials during maintenance or repair work.	Completed. Original and intact shutters and front door were protected throughout and also received maintenance and restoration work in the final stages of the project.
Replacing in kind extensively deteriorated or missing parts of entrances, porches or balconies where there are surviving prototypes.	Completed. Decorative and functional elements were replaced using locally available prototype and in-situ models, such as eave corbels and porch posts, all using original materials (including 80% of corbels being constructed from period-sourced lumber)
Testing proposed interventions to establish appropriate replacement materials, quality of workmanship and methodology. This can include, reviewing samples, testing products, methods or assemblies, or creating a mock-up. Testing should be carried out under the same conditions as the proposed intervention.	Completed. Several iterations of mockups underwent testing, evaluation, and revision until a congruent system of decorative elements was achieved as per the historical evidence gathered.
Documenting all interventions that affect the building's entrances, porches and balconies, and ensuring the documentation is available to those responsible for future interventions.	Completed. Photographs, videos, drawings, and documentation of materials and methodologies has been made available for future interventionists and maintainers.

<p>Replacing in kind an irreparable entrance, porch or balcony based on physical and documentary evidence. If using the same materials and design details is not technically or economically feasible, then compatible substitute materials or details may be considered.</p>	<p>Completed. Original materials were used for all elements with the exception of porch flooring, which was known to be douglas fir tongue & groove. For technical feasibility reasons, a substitute material was chosen in thermally treated white ash laid as contemporary deck boards, allowing water to shed through the structure and avoiding future risk of rot, mold, and moisture entry. While this was a compromise on physical material it was a novel use of innovative material that does convey the same appearance as the original part.</p>
<p>Replacing missing historic features by designing and constructing a new entrance, porch or balcony, based on physical and documentary evidence, or one that is compatible in size, scale, material, style or colour.</p>	<p>Completed. That's the whole project!</p>
<p>Removing or encapsulating hazardous materials, using the least-invasive abatement methods possible, and only after thorough testing has been conducted.</p>	<p>Completed. Lead paint was found on the preserved porch ceiling. Encapsulation primer was applied, in addition to new paint, to protect the material and occupants.</p>
<p>Working with specialists to determine the most appropriate solution to energy efficiency requirements with the least impact on the historic building's character-defining elements and overall heritage value.</p>	<p>Completed. Upon replacing the exterior wall (front facade of the home) extensive air sealing and insulation was completed as part of a larger, whole-home effort to do so. Air changes per hour in the home were reduced by 75% and the overall annual energy consumption is now estimated to be less than 100GJ/yr, compared to nearly 400GJ/yr previously.</p>
<p>Repairing entrances, porches and balconies from the restoration using a minimal intervention approach, such as patching, splicing, consolidating or otherwise reinforcing its materials and improving weather protection.</p>	<p>Completed. Patching was done on original materials to avoid replacement.</p>
<p>Reinstating an open porch or balcony that was enclosed.</p>	<p>Completed! This is the overarching project!</p>
<p>Replacing in kind an entire entrance, porch or balcony from the restoration period that is too deteriorated to repair, using the physical evidence as a model to reproduce the assembly. The new work should be well documented and unobtrusively dated to guide future research and treatment.</p>	<p>Completed! This is the overarching project! Corresponding documentation outlines all methodologies, materials, and dates.</p>
<p>Removing or altering a non-character-defining entrance, porch or balcony from a period other than the restoration period.</p>	<p>Completed. The enclosure was comprised of non-character-defining elements and materials that were not aligned to the period of the home.</p>
<p>Recreating a missing entrance, porch or balcony, or one of its features, from the restoration period, based on physical or documentary evidence; for example, duplicating a fanlight or porch column.</p>	<p>Completed. Corbels and posts were all recreated using evidence gathered from paint impressions, photographs, existing character-defining elements on the home, and reference elements on related homes by the same builder and in the same period.</p>

3- Who worked on it? What problems were encountered, and how were they solved?

The project was primarily led by Kevin Reid-Morris, the homeowner, with assistance from a dedicated team. Rick Morris, an engineer and building materials expert, played a key role in preserving the original fieldstone foundation and installing structural elements. He collaborated on structural planning, ensuring historical integrity was balanced with safety requirements. Ken Roginsky, a restoration consultant and author, advised on historic elements, helping verify design plans to align with the period.

Ian Koerssen, Building Plans Examiner at Halton Hills, was instrumental in navigating the project through municipal requirements. He worked

closely with Reid-Morris on assessing plans, reviewing drawings, and securing permits. Koerssen's collaborative and innovative approach turned challenges into opportunities, showcasing how municipal support can drive heritage conservation. He helped solve technical hurdles, such as tying the restored structure into the preserved foundation, which required traditional and modern techniques. Bill Clelland of Halton Hills was also of significant support throughout the permitting and inspection process.

The project encountered significant challenges. One was preserving the fieldstone foundation while ensuring

compliance with current codes. Through an iterative process with the Halton Hills building department, we paired traditional tuck-pointing with contemporary techniques, such as specialized foundation-to-beam connection products. Additionally, without original facade photographs, we engaged with the community to accurately verify and recreate character-defining elements. Helen Lu, owner of the designated property at 126 Main Street South allowed us to study, measure, and trace porch elements similar to ours, enabling us to replicate proportions, patterns, and styles accurately.

4- Benefits to Halton Hills

This project enriches Halton Hills' cultural heritage by adding another restored character-defining element to the town's inventory of historic properties. Through our efforts, we also uncovered new information about the Buck-Jackson family, who owned the home from 1904 and operated Jackson's Department Store on Main Street. This research yielded significant artifacts, including vintage wallpapers, product tags, and records from the early 1900s, some of which we've shared with the Esquesing Historical Society to ensure this history is preserved for future generations.

Our research and evidence-gathering work extended beyond our property to nearby historic homes, such as 34 Edith Street. We unearthed rare photographs and findings about the history of its early owner, a notable Canadian barrister who was one of the first to call for the hanging of Louis Riel. We have also started the process of filing these with the Esquesing Historical Society.

This restoration also demonstrates how historic preservation can align with sustainability, budget considerations, and modern living. As historic homes disappear, taking with them stories of our cultural and social heritage, it's more crucial than ever to showcase how restoration can preserve and sustain these narratives. The local community has shown immense support and interest in the project, with neighbors and heritage home enthusiasts engaging deeply with the process and now even seeking guidance for their own restorations! This has fostered a collective enthusiasm for Georgetown's architectural heritage and the value of restoration.

5- Photographs

I. Before and after the restoration, as seen standing on Edith Street looking East toward 36 Edith Street



II. Before and after the restoration, as seen standing on Edith Street looking East toward 36 Edith Street, showing corbel, fretwork, brackets, posts, ceiling, door, and shutter details.



III. Porch through-view, standing in the driveway looking South at the verandah



IV. Before-and-after standing on Edith Street looking South-East at the property



V. Process photos of corbel prototype development, validation, restoration & reproduction, and period materials used



Top Left: corbels created using measurements found in original paint marks, using old-growth lumber from the property

Top Right: original corbels remaining on the property (South Elevation dining room bay), combined with eave corbel spacing paint impressions, led us to identify 126 Main St South as having a near-identical porch kit. The corbels were verified to have been featured prominently on many HP Lawson homes.

Bottom Left: with collaboration from Helen Lu of 126 Main St South, all measurements were taken from their preserved verandah to apply to the property at 36 Edith St

Bottom Right: reproduced corbels primed and painted for installation, matching the exact dimensions, proportions, scale, and style and those found on the South Elevation of 36 Edith St and on the porch at 126 Main St South.