

THE EVOLUTION OF A CHERISHED HALTON HILLS COMMUNITY

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The Town of Halton Hills recently completed a Mature Neighbourhood Study on the hamlet focused on preserving the town's characteristic appeal.

"It really started with Georgetown and Acton," Steve Burke, manager of special projects and research for the Town of Halton Hills, said. "There was a home on a smaller lot in a mature neighbourhood in Georgetown, and there was concern about the size and scale of the home relative to the lot."

That concern triggered a mature neighbourhood character study for Georgetown and Acton.

When some Glen Williams residents expressed interest in a study of their own, the town explored options. This year the town

THE QUESTION:
WHAT MAKES GLEN WILLIAMS SIGNIFICANT?

THE CONCLUSION: A LONG HISTORY WITH WELL-MAINTAINED HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND MINDFUL DEVELOPMENT HAS ALLOWED THE HAMLET MAINTAIN ITS CHARACTERISTIC APPEAL

will review the hamlet's secondary plan, but ultimately the town chose to conduct a separate study for Glen Williams.

Billed as one of Ontario's last remaining hamlets, the population of Glen Williams is capped at 2,600 residents.



The Glen Williams Town Hall, one of the hamlet's historic buildings.

Founded in 1826 by Benajah Williams, the hamlet became the location of a sawmill used to process timber from the surrounding area as it was cleared for farmland. Mills played a major role in the hamlet's history, with a grist mill, and eventually a woollen mill that operated from 1839 until 1980.

Though no members of

the original Williams family reside in Glen Williams, six properties - including the Williams Mill, and the Georgetown Electric Generating Building - are designated under the Ontario Heritage Act.

Development of Glen Williams occurred over three distinct periods: From 1820 until 1945, from 1945 until 1990, and from 1990 to pre-

sent.

The first phase, is comprised of homes built of wood or brick and stone, with feature gable roofs and windows with exterior shutters.

The second phase, following the Second World War and a housing shortage for returning veterans. Growth of Glen Williams was steady until 1990, with development slowing considerably.

"The core has a historic feel," Steve Burke, manager of special projects and research for the Town of Halton Hills, said, "with small lots and small houses. Further out, the lots get bigger and the houses a bit more modern. They want to maintain the existing character of the hamlet."

But Glen Williams' natural and historical structures are only part of the characteristics residents said they

valued in the hamlet.

"When you look at how the hamlet was established, it was created as an all-in-one community," Elizabeth Bailey, a resident and member of the Glen Williams Community Association, said. "A lot of people who worked at the mills still live in the hamlet in their original homes."

While people now are less likely to converse "over the garden fence" with their neighbours, Bailey writes an online newsletter for residents.

"We're trying to keep that aspect of our life," Bailey said. "That's something Glen Williams is conscious of."

STORY BEHIND THE STORY:

With the completion of a "Mature Neighbourhood Study" reporter Bryan Myers was interested in learning more about the local history of Glen Williams.



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