

Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report

Snedden House



Snedden House
198 Church Street, Almonte, ON
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Executive Summary

The Snedden House was constructed in 1866, by William Snedden, a son of David Snedden who had arrived in Ramsay Township from Scotland in 1819-20 with his brother, Alexander. The Snedden families quickly became prominent within the community and owned a number of farms and a hotel in nearby Blakeney. Born in 1825, Snedden farmed in Ramsay Township until moving to his new house in Almonte in 1866.

The Snedden House is a one and a half storey stone structure with a medium pitched side-gable roof and a central gable above the main entrance. As is typical of houses of this type, the front façade is three bays wide and there is a large window within the central gable. The centre gable plan and three bay composition identify the structure as an Ontario Cottage, popular

throughout the province from the 1840s until the early 20th century.

It was one of the earliest houses in this part of Almonte and was a well-known local landmark as Church Street was on one of the entrances to town from the south.

As an excellent example of the Ontario cottage, built by members of the prominent Snedden family, the property has cultural heritage value for its design, historical and contextual values. It meets five of the nine criteria for designation under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act.



Fig. 1 Snedden House Church Street façade, Credit: The Municipality of Mississippi Mills



Fig. 2 Snedden House from Church Street and Country Street, Credit: The Municipality of Mississippi Mills

Introduction

Located on Church Street, in a residential area southeast of the downtown core, the Snedden House is located at the corner of Country and Church Streets, on an irregularly shaped lot. Church Street between Country and High Streets is a residential street, featuring a mix of houses from the 19th and 20th

centuries on large, treed lots. Nearby institutional buildings include the former St. John's Church, and the former Church Street School, now the Church Street Apartments. The mix of housing types, street trees and the institutional buildings together create a harmonious neighbourhood.

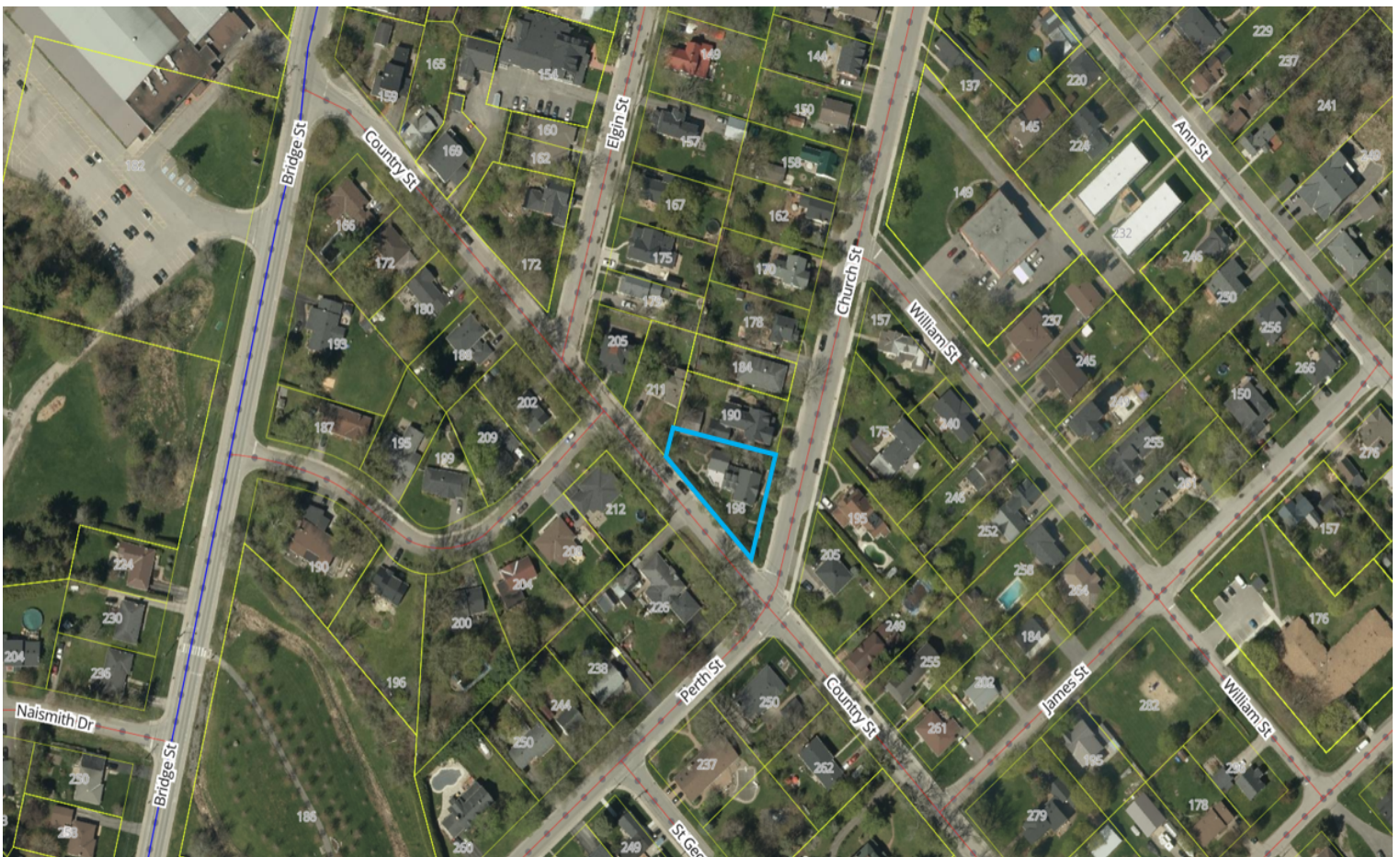


Fig. 3 Aerial View of Snedden House, Almonte, ON, <https://cgis.com/cpal/Default.aspx?CLIENT=MMILLS&MAPTYPE=Zoning>

Criterion 1

1.1 | Description and Response

Criterion 1	
Description	Property Meets Criterion
<p>The property has design value or physical value because it is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method.</p>	<p>Yes</p>
Response to Criterion	
<p>The Snedden House has design value as a representative example of an Ontario Cottage, a house type popular in rural areas and small towns in the 19th century. It is a three bay one and a half storey stone structure with a gable roof and a large central gable over the front door with a tall, narrow, round arched window with a carved fan motif in the arch. The roof has returned eaves and deep soffits. The building features large four over four rectangular double hung sash windows with stone voussoirs and sills, and the front door has a rectangular transom with a diamond-shaped light.</p>	

1.2 | Supporting Details

Description of Building

The Snedden House is an example of the Ontario Cottage, a building type popular in rural and small-town Ontario from the 1820s until the end of the 19th century. Ontario Cottages are generally gable or hipped roof structures, one and a half or two and a half storeys in height, with symmetrical three-bay front façades containing a central entrance, and a distinctive central gable above the door. Ontario Cottages also featured rectangular sash windows. The Snedden House, as a one and a half storey, gable-roofed structure with four over four sash windows and a central gable, is a representative example of this housing type. Historic photographs reveal that it originally had a veranda with treillage.

Attributes

Key exterior elements that contribute to the heritage value of the Snedden House as an excellent example of an Ontario Cottage include:

- Rough-cut limestone masonry laid in uneven courses;



Fig. 4 Snedden House before removal of a later veranda, not the original, Credit: Tales of Almonte Facebook page, October 2018



Fig. 5 View of two Snedden Houses, with William Snedden's 1866 house to the left, Credit: <https://almonte.com/historic-photo-archive/>

- Side gable roof with returned eaves, moulded soffit and frieze;
- Three-bay front façade with centre hall plan;
- Two stone chimneys, located at either end of the roof
- Rectangular four-over-four sash windows with stone voussoirs and lintels;
- The narrow round arched, four over four windows with a semi-circular decorative fan carving located in the gable end;
- The rectangular transom window with a diamond motif above the main door

The Ontario Cottage

This basic form of the Ontario Cottage was introduced by immigrants from the British Isles and imitated the simple cottages that the settlers had left behind, however it grew beyond its humble roots during the 19th century, partly because of the influence of pattern books and popular magazines. ¹ With their symmetrical plans, simple window details and returned eaves Ontario Cottages are essentially Georgian, however, later in the 19th century Gothic Revival ornamentation was frequently incorporated into their designs. ²



Fig. 6 Snedden House round arched window, Credit: The Municipality of Mississippi Mills



Fig. 7 Snedden House rectangular windows and returned eaves, Credit: The Municipality of Mississippi Mills

¹ Lynne D. DiStefano, “The Ontario Cottage: The Globalization of a British Form in the Nineteenth Century” *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, Vol XII, Number II, 2001, p. 36

² *Ibid*, p. 42

This is not the case with the Snedden House, as the gingerbread in the gable end is not original.

There were few architects in Upper Canada in the early decades of the 19th century and many people relied on pattern books and magazine articles for guidance when constructing their homes. Pattern books were already popular at this time; J. C. Loudon published *An Encyclopedia of cottage, farm and villa architecture and furniture*, in 1833 and Andrew Jackson Downing *The Architecture of Country Houses*, in 1850.³ These publications would have been familiar to the few architects there were in Upper Canada in the early decades of the 19th century, however, people building in rural areas might not have had access to them.

This situation changed in 1864 when *The Canada Farmer*, was first published by “The Globe.” The magazine described itself as “A fortnightly journal of agriculture, horticulture and rural affairs.” It offered advice to farmers regarding common pests, their crops and gardens also included a column entitled “Rural Architecture,” which supplied plans and descriptions of buildings suitable for farmers and rural dwellers, including houses, schools and churches.⁴ One typical article from *The Canada Farmer* appeared early in the journal’s history. Described as “A Cheap Farm House,” it had the three-bay front façade and twin chimneys, and central gable above the front door found on the Snedden House, although smaller in scale.⁵ The success of *The Canada Farmer* was soon evident; in 1869, *The Almonte Gazette* reported that “A new agricultural

journal to be styled the *Ontario Farmer*, is shortly to be issued. Rev. Mr. Clark, late editor of Geo. Brown’s *Canada Farmer*, will edit the journal.⁶ Both these publications continued to include plans and drawings as long as they existed.

The Ontario Cottage is found throughout the province and its familiar form and massing, constructed in stone, brick or wood is a defining element of the cultural landscape of the province. The frame farmhouse that William and his family lived in in Ramsay Township, was also one and a half storey structure, built in wood.⁷



Fig. 8 “A Cheap Farm House,” Credit: *The Canada Farmer*, Volume 1, #22, p. 340

³ Kalman, Harold, *A History of Canadian Architecture*, Volume 2, pps 604-605

⁴ Various issues, “*The Canada Farmer*.”

⁵ “A Cheap Farm House,” *The Canada Farmer*, Volume 1, #22, p. 340

⁶ AG, January 8, 1869, p2

⁷ Mississippi Mills, “Report on the Heritage Value of the House at 198 Church Street, Almonte”

Criterion 2

2.1 | Description and Response

Criterion 2	
Description	Property Meets Criterion
The property has design value or physical value because it displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit.	No
Response to Criterion	
The Snedden House was constructed of local limestone by stone masons from the area and is typical of the craftsmanship of other stone structures in the area constructed in the 1860s. The property does not meet this criterion.	

Criterion 3

3.1 | Description and Response

Criterion 3	
Description	Property Meets Criterion
The property has design value or physical value because it demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement.	No
Response to Criterion	
As a simply built stone building constructed in 1866 the Snedden House does not demonstrate a high degree of technical or scientific achievement.	

Criterion 4

4.1 | Description and Response

Criterion 4	
Description	Property Meets Criterion
The property has historical value or associative value because it has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community.	Yes
Response to Criterion	
The Snedden House has historical value for its association with the Snedden family, Scottish settlers in Ramsay and Beckwith Townships, Lanark County, who were among the area's first arrivals from the British Isles. Encouraged by free land, they endured long journeys and initial hardship. The extended family's history in the area and across Canada and the United States, as they moved and prospered is an excellent example of the experience of many Scottish immigrants after they left Scotland to find a better life in Canada.	

4.2 | Supporting Details

The Snedden Family came from Lanarkshire, near Glasgow area, where they had been coal miners.⁸ The first to arrive were David (the father of William who built 198 Church Street) and his brother Alexander. His parents, James and Christine Snedden, nee Montgomery, and their two youngest children followed in 1821 on the “Commerce”, one of four British sailing

ships that carried settlers to Upper Canada that year. Eventually nine members of the Snedden Family settled close to each other in Ramsay Township. where they thrived, eventually owning a number of farms, a mill, and a hotel in the Blakeney area.⁹

William Snedden, the owner of 198 Church Street, was born on June 20, 1825 at Bennie’s Corners, a small village about three kilometres from Blakeney. His parents, David and Agnes, had six children. David died in 1834 in an accident in Carillon, Quebec. There was confusion over his estate as he had died so young, but eventually his land went to his son, William, in 1847, who passed it to his brother James in 1856 and then moved to Lot 9, Concession IX, Ramsay Township. He lived there until 1866 when he moved to Almonte. Upon his arrival in Almonte, he played a role in civic life as a Justice of the Peace and in local politics.¹⁰ In the 1901 census, he was listed as “Farmer,” so it is possible that he retained some interest in his brother’s farming enterprises.¹¹

William Snedden’s life from his birth in Bennie’s Corners in 1825 to his death in his house in Almonte followed a trajectory typical in Canada in the 19th century. He was born to Scottish immigrants soon after their arrival, farmed for part of his career and moved to a comfortable house in Almonte when he was 47, spending the rest of his life there and raising a family.

⁸ Snedden, Marilyn, *The Snedden Saga: From Lanarkshire to Lanark County* (General Store Publishing, 1994), p. 15

⁹ McGill, Jean S. *A Pioneer History of the County of Lanark* (T.H. Best, 1968), pps. 34, 39, 85, 217

¹⁰ Almonte Gazette, various issues.

¹¹ <https://www.ancestry.ca/imageviewer/collections/8826/images/z000076104?pId=13699937>

Criterion 5

5.1 | Description and Response

Criterion 5	
Description	Property Meets Criterion
The property has historical or associative value because it yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture.	Yes
Response to Criterion	
The Snedden House has historical and associative value because it illustrates the transformation of Almonte from a tiny community in 1819 to a centre of the textile industry by the end of the century. The rapid growth of the town as a mill town, the arrival of workers to the town, the increasing success of the surrounding agricultural area made Almonte an important centre in Lanark County. By 1866, when the house was built, Almonte could offer services attractive to a farmer retiring to town, including a doctor, dentists, regular rail service to Ottawa and other destinations, churches of many denominations and good shopping.	

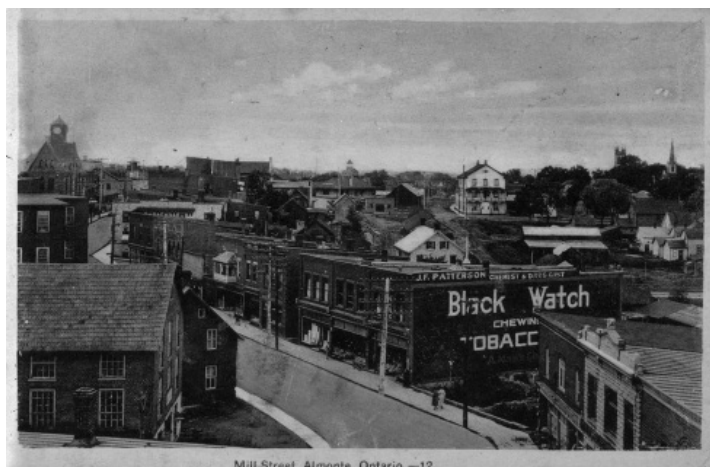


Fig. 9 Mill Street, Almonte, Credit: Almonte.com

5.2 | Supporting Details

The Snedden House has historical and associative value because it illustrates the transformation of Almonte (now part of the municipality of Mississippi Mills) from a small community with a grist mill in 1819 into an industrial hub by the end of the 19th century.

After the establishment of the first mill in 1819, further mills were developed to utilize the river’s 60-foot drop. Over the following decades, the region experienced an increase in woollen mills, and in the latter half of the 19th century, the Mississippi Valley rose to prominence as one of Canada’s leading wool-producing districts. This industrial growth stimulated population expansion and positioned the town as a central marketplace for surrounding agricultural areas that supplied much of the wool processed by the mills.

Settlers in Lanark County raised sheep and became skilled in wool production. As the production of wool became mechanized, mills were constructed in other towns along the Mississippi, including Appleton and Carleton Place. Early entrepreneurs such as David Shepherd (arrived 1819) and Daniel Shipman (arrived 1821) built mills in the pre-railway era. By 1850 there were seven woollen mills in the town and in 1856 the town was incorporated. The arrival of the Brockville and Ottawa Railway in the late 1850s further spurred growth in the community.

The town’s largest wool manufacturer, James Rosamond, built his first mill in Carleton Place in 1846. In 1852 he moved to Almonte after purchasing a share in the Ramsay Woollen Cloth company. The Ramsay Mill burnt down in 1857 and Rosamond bought all the land and water rights, constructing the Victoria Mill that same year. James’s sons, Bennett and William, leased the mill from their father in 1862 and

by 1866, they had organized a new firm, B. and W. Rosamond and Company, with financing from George Stephen of Montreal. Stephen was responsible for bringing the Merchants' Bank to Almonte at this busy period in its existence. The new company built the Rosamond Woollen Mill in 1866.¹²

In July 1868, two years after the construction of the Snedden House, the *Almonte Gazette* proudly highlighted the town's progress, noting that development was steady and new houses of various styles and sizes were quickly appearing. The paper noted that "The mason work of the large stone school house has been completed," and other stone structures like the Baptist Church, Dr. Mostyn's house, and Mr. J. Jamieson's house were "rapidly assuming shape."¹³

The late 1860s marked an important time for Almonte, as the construction of modern mills, churches, a new school, and substantial stone houses signaled a period of growth and prosperity. By the end of the nineteenth century, Almonte earned the nickname "Manchester of the North," with its mills becoming well-known for their output.¹⁴

The location of the Snedden House is shown as a vacant lot at the corner of Church and Country Streets at the bottom of the map from Walling's Atlas, 1863 shown below. At the time, few houses had been built at the south end of town, but the plan of subdivision was complete. The town grew rapidly in the years immediately following the publication of this map.



Fig. 10 Map of Almonte from Walling's Atlas, Credit: Walling, H.F. Map of the Counties of Lanark and Renfrew, 1863

¹² "Bennett Rosamond," Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Volume XIII (1901-1910)

¹³ "Improvements," *Almonte Gazette*, July 24, 1868

¹⁴ "Founding of Almonte," OHT Plaque, "The Rosamonds in Almonte," OHT Plaque, "Rosamond Woollen Mill National Historic Site of Canada," Almonte Ontario, Parks Canada. https://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/dfhd/page_nhs_eng.aspx?id=337

Criterion 6

6.1 | Description and Response

Criterion 6	
Description	Property Meets Criterion
The property has historical value or associative value because it demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community.	No
Response to Criterion	
The architect of the Snedden House is unknown, and it is probable it was built by a local contractor and masons using a plan that was either directly taken from, or inspired by, a pattern from a book or magazine, such as A.J. Downing's <u>The Architecture of Country Houses</u> or the biweekly journal, <i>The Canada Farmer</i> , which were widely available in Upper Canada at the time.	

Criterion 7

7.1 | Description and Response

Criterion 7	
Description	Property Meets Criterion
The property has contextual value because it is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area.	Yes
Response to Criterion	
The Snedden House has contextual value because it is important in defining the residential character of this neighbourhood, located southeast of the historic downtown core of Almonte. The area is characterized by its high concentration of 19th and early 20th century houses, built for the town's emerging middle class.	



Fig. 11 Church Street, Credit: <https://almonte.com/historic-photo-archive/>

7.2 | Supporting Details

The Snedden House has contextual value as one of the first houses in the area. It is critically located at the corner of Church and Country Streets, an historic gateway to the town that remains an important access to historic Almonte. At the other end of the street, closer to the town centre, two local institutions, St. John's Presbyterian Church (now Community Presbyterian Church), built in 1865, and the former Church Street School (now Church Street Apartments), constructed in 1866 served the growing community's needs throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.



Fig. 12 Postcard view of Church Street towards the river, Credit: <https://almonte.com/historic-photo-archive/>

Known for its tree-lined streets, large lots and varying setbacks, the area developed gradually throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, resulting in its continuing eclectic mix of housing types and styles. Properties such as the Snedden House help preserve this character.

The Snedden House in Figure 11, obscured by trees to the left, marked the gateway to the residential area. This photograph was taken before the removal of the original front veranda in the early 20th century.

Criterion 8

8.1 | Description and Response

Criterion 8	
Description	Property Meets Criterion
The property has contextual value because it is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings.	No
Response to Criterion	
The property does not meet the criterion.	

Criterion 9

9.1 | Description and Response

Criterion 9	
Description	Property Meets Criterion
The property has contextual value because it is a landmark	Yes
Response to Criterion	
The Snedden House, as a well-known historic building, located at a well-known intersection and access route to the town, is a landmark within the community.	



Fig. 13 Snedden House front façade, Credit: Sally Coutts

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