

Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report

The Doctor's House



The Doctor's House
103 Queen Street, Almonte, ON
Prepared by: Sally Coutts
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contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3	CRITERION 6	13
INTRODUCTION	4	6.1 Description and Response	
CRITERION 1	5	CRITERION 7	13
1.1 Description and Response		7.1 Description and Response	
1.2 Supporting Details		7.2 Supporting Details	
CRITERION 2	8	CRITERION 8	14
2.1 Description and Response		8.1 Description and Response	
CRITERION 3	9	CRITERION 9	14
3.1 Description and Response		9.1 Description and Response	
CRITERION 4	9	BIBLIOGRAPHY	15
4.1 Description and Response			
4.2 Supporting Details			
CRITERION 5	12		
5.1 Description and Response			
5.2 Supporting Details			

Executive Summary

The Doctor's House was constructed in 1868-69 for Dr. William Mostyn, a medical doctor born in 1836 in Roscommon County, Ireland who emigrated to Canada in the 1850s and later attended medical school at Queen's University, graduating in 1858. He moved to Almonte immediately after graduation and practiced there until his death in 1881. As was typical of the era, Dr. Mostyn ran a solo practice, with offices in his house which had been built specifically for that purpose. Until recently, the Doctor's House had been exclusively owned by doctors and it remains well known in Almonte for its traditional occupants.

Dr. Mostyn was a prominent member of the community and sat on many boards and clubs. His participation in civic life was typical of 19th century professionals.

The Doctor's House was constructed of limestone quarried on the site. The building is a two-storey structure comprised of two distinct parts; the private residence that faces Queen Street and the office wing to its rear, where the medical offices were located. The two sections are different stylistically, the residential part is an example of the Italianate Style, popular in Ontario from the 1850s to the turn of the century and the medical office to the rear is a simple, gable roofed vernacular structure. Features of the Doctor's House that identify it as an example of the Italianate include its wide overhanging eaves with single and paired brackets, the stone quoins, and large round and square-headed sash windows.

The property has cultural heritage value for its design, associative and contextual values. It meets seven of the nine criteria for designation under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act.



Fig. 1 The Doctor's House, view from Queen Street and Clyde Street, Credit: Tim Austen Photos, 2025



Fig. 2 The Doctor's House Queen Street facade, Credit: Tim Austen Photos, 2025

Introduction

The Doctor's House is located at 103 Queen Street near the north end of the Queen Street Bridge that crosses the Mississippi River in downtown Almonte at the corner of Queen and Clyde Streets. It is located on a large lot surrounded by a high cedar hedge. A secondary entrance to the original doctor's offices faces

Clyde Street. This section of Almonte, referred to as "Professional Alley" is characterized by its handsome stone structures including the Wylie House on the banks of the river, St. Paul's Anglican Church and Rectory, the Windsor Hotel and the Registry Office on Brougham Street.¹



Fig. 3 Aerial View of the Dotor's House at 103 Queen Street, Almonte, ON, Google Maps

¹ "A Home Fit for a Doctor, Doctor's Past and Present: A History of Healthcare in Mississippi Mills," North Lanark Regional Museum, Digital Museums Canada. https://www.communitystories.ca/v2/doctors-healthcare-mississippi-mills_medecins-soins-de-sante/story/a-home-fit-for-a-doctor/

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 Doctor's House has cultural heritage value as a good example of an Italianate style house. Popular for large houses for wealthy owners from the 1860s, Italianate houses featured shallow pitched or mansard roofs, projecting eaves, often with paired or single brackets, bracketed eaves, and large windows, often with round arches. Italianate houses in towns and cities were frequently three bays wide, with a side entrance.</p>	

1.2 | Supporting Details

Description of Building

The Doctor's House is an Italianate structure, constructed in 1868-69 of stone quarried on the site. It is comprised of two sections; the two storey residential part facing Queen Street and the one and a half storey doctor's office to the rear. It features a side hall plan, tall sash windows, bracketed eaves and a shallow roof, all typical elements of Italianate houses build in cities and towns in Canada from the late 1860s until the 1880s.

Attributes

- Rough-cut limestone masonry laid in uneven courses;
- Shallow gable roof with deep returned eaves with regularly spaced single and paired brackets (main house);
- Three-bay front façade with a side hall plan;
- Flat roofed enclosed portico (constructed after the completion of the house).



Fig. 4 Front of Doctor's House, Credit: Michael Dunn Collection



Fig. 5 Doctor's House from River, Credit: Michael Dunn Collection



Fig. 6 Ground Floor sash window, Credit: Tim Austen Photos, 2025



Fig. 7 Round-arched second storey six paned sash windows, Credit: Sally Coutts, 2025



Fig. 8 Clyde Street facade, Credit: Tim Austen Photos, 2025

- Details on the portico include:
 - a wide cornice with corner brackets, multipaned transom windows and 18 over one windows in the double entrance doors.
- Rectangular ground floor sash windows with stone voussoirs and lintels
- Round-arched second storey six paned sash windows, also with stone voussoirs and lintels,
- The Doctor's Office wing, a one and a half storey rectangular structure with a shallow gable roof.
- Features of the Doctor's office include;
 - Offset doorway
 - Tall four-over-four rectangular windows with stone voussoirs and lintels flanking a slender four pane window on the ground floor.

Local Context

The Italianate style for residential buildings is not common in Almonte, but there are two prominent local examples located nearby, the Wylie House and 77 – 77a Little Bridge Street. All three buildings are located within the Heritage Conservation District.

The Italianate Style first became popular in Upper Canada in the 1850s for both commercial and residential architecture.² It was inspired by the villas and palazzos of the Italian Renaissance but it was not an imitative style, rather Italianate buildings featured certain elements such as bracketted eaves, shallow hipped roofs, tall, round arched windows with voussoirs or curved hood moulds, and quoins borrowed from the style and adapted to 19th century buildings. They frequently had square or rectangular plans with a side or centre hall plan, often featuring a porch or portico on the front facade.³ The Italianate style was popular for both commercial and residential buildings.

² Blumenson, John, Ontario Architecture, A Guide to Styles and Building Terms 1784 to the present (Toronto; Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1990)

³ Ricketts, Shannon, Maitland, Leslie and Hucker, Jacqueline A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles, Second Edition (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2004), pages 81-85

The Italianate Style was popularized in Ontario by widely-available pattern books such as Andrew Jackson Downing's *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850) or from plans included in publications such as the *Canadian Farmer*.⁴ These books were widely read and provided detailed illustrations and practical advice, allowing builders and homeowners to incorporate fashionable Italianate features into their designs.⁵ Italianate houses became popular in many Ontario towns and cities from the 1830s until the 1870s, and the style was popular with the emerging upper middle class who had the money to build substantial dwellings in the cities and small towns of the province.

There are two examples of the style within a few blocks of the Doctor's House; the Wylie House (81 Queen Street), constructed in 1884 to the plans of O.E. Liston for James Dowdall⁶ and 77- 77a Mill Street.

The Wylie House

The Wylie House is a two-storey stone building that has many typical features of the Italianate style, such as such the three bay front façade, side hall plan, overhanging eaves with brackets and the twinned chimneys. Like the Doctor's House, it has a portico, also with brackets, and is of masonry construction with stone quoins. Its steeply pitched, colourful slate roof shows the influence of the Queen Anne Revival style, which was just becoming popular in Canada at the time.

77 Little Bridge Street

Seventy-seven Bridge Street is simpler in design and execution than the Wylie House and the Doctor's House, but its overhanging eaves with brackets and



Fig. 9 The Wylie House, Google Street View



Fig. 10 Seventy-seven Little Bridge Street, Google Street View

⁴ <http://www.ontarioarchitecture.com/italianate.htm>, accessed 15/12/25

⁵ Kalman, Harold, *A History of Canadian Architecture, Volume 2* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 603-609

⁶ *Almonte Gazette*, 7 March, 1884, p.3.

decorative cornice, paired semi-circular and segmental arched windows with brick voussoirs make it a good example of the style.

Portico

At some point after the completion of the Doctor’s House in 1868, the distinctive front portico was added, presumably to provide shelter when entering. This feature distinguishes the front façade and, with its brackets, large windows and wooden details, reflects the original building’s Italianate style. Similar porticos that share details such as brackets, multipaned windows and flat roofs are found elsewhere in Almonte, suggesting that they were promoted by a contractor who took advantage of locally sourced wooden details such as brackets, cornices and multi-paned windows. Examples include 71 and 101 Martin Street, the Wylie House.

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.	Yes
Response to Criterion	
The Doctor’s House was constructed of limestone quarried on the site and as such demonstrates the skills of local masons who not only excavated the stone, creating a deep basement (about three metres) but also built the house.	

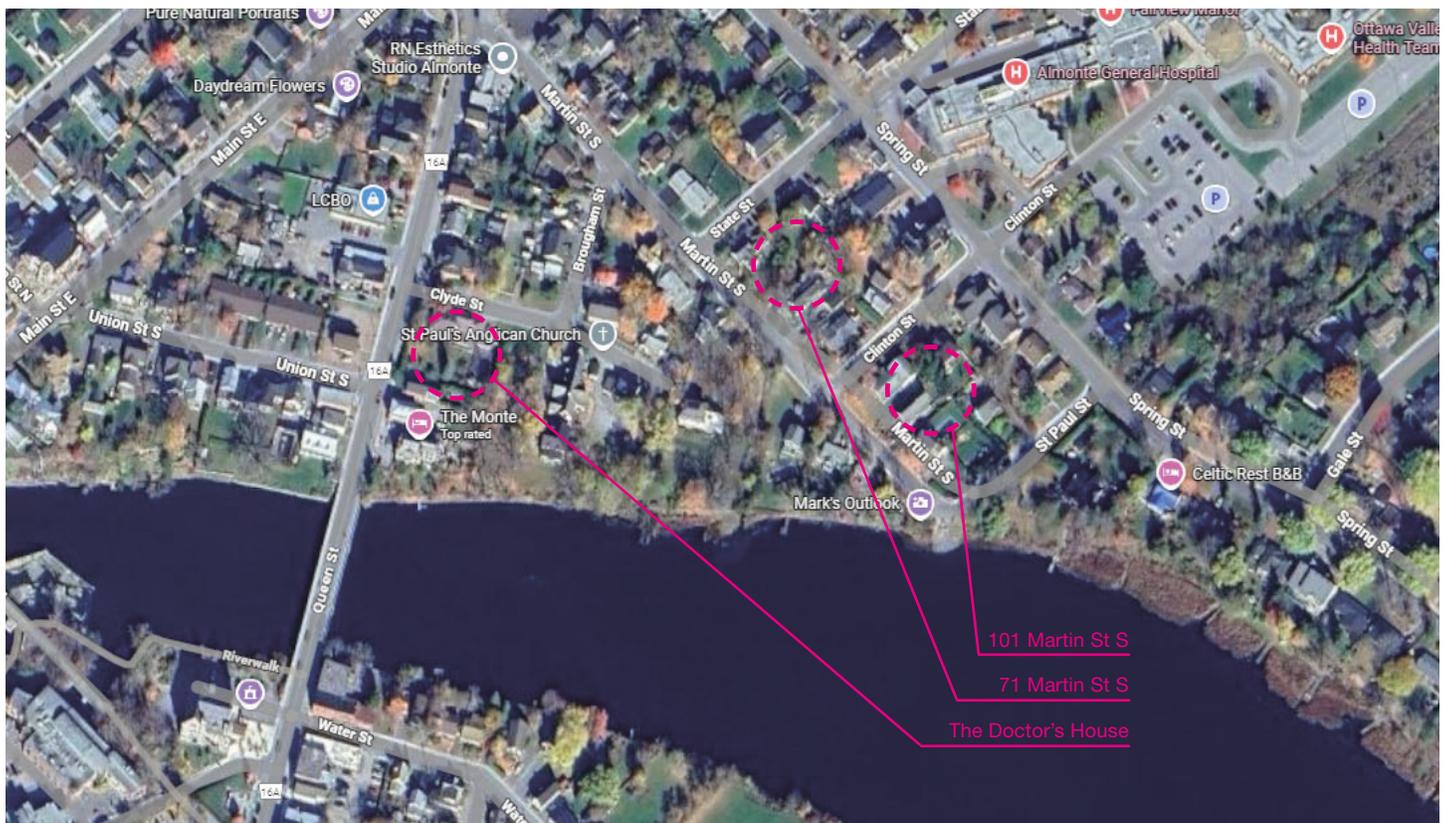


Fig. 11 Aerial View of the Dotor’s House at 103 Queen Street, and 71 and 101 Martin Street South, Almonte, ON, Google Maps

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 1868 the Doctor's House does not demonstrate a high degree of technical or scientific achievement. Research undertaken preparing this report did not reveal anything noteworthy about its construction method. The property does not meet this criterion.	

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 Doctor's House has historical value as the home and office of Almonte's first doctor, William Mostyn, an early graduate of Queen's University Medical school. As his office and home, it is related to and reflects the development of the medical profession in 19th century Ontario. It also has significance as the home of Dr. Mostyn who was a leader in Almonte during the years of his practice.	

4.2 | Supporting Details

History of Medical Profession in Ontario

When Upper Canada's population began to expand rapidly in the 19h century, there was little access to medical care, particularly outside of the larger cities and towns. There was no system to licence doctors and the range of abilities in the profession varied wildly. Some doctors came from reputable schools such as the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, and various schools in the United States, but many had sketchy

training. Settlers relied upon a variety of practitioners including midwives, naturopaths, bonesetters, barber surgeons and apothecaries to provide care. Often, those calling themselves “doctor” had few useful skills and caused harm. By the mid-19th century there were medical schools at McGill University in Montreal, Queen’s University in Kingston and the University of Toronto.⁷ Efforts to establish standards and provide consistent medical education began early in the 19th century and by 1865 regulatory licensing legislation had passed, followed by the establishment of the Canadian Medical Association in 1867.⁸

Ontario’s first medical schools opened in St. Thomas Ontario in 1824, and was followed by two more, Rolph’s and King’s College in 1843 in Toronto.⁹ The Queen’s medical school, where William Mostyn was in the first class, opened in 1854. That class of 27 graduated in 1859, although Mostyn arrived in Almonte as a fully-qualified doctor in 1858.¹⁰

From his arrival in 1858 until his death in 1881, Mostyn’s career reflected the early development of the modern medical profession in Ontario. Canadian medical schools offered lectures on therapeutics, anatomy and physiology, surgery, midwifery and contagious diseases, providing a comprehensive education. When Mostyn arrived in Almonte, he had received an excellent education and was well-prepared to serve his community as its first doctor. Mostyn developed a modern medical practice and, ten years

after his arrival in Almonte, he built his house with a medical office attached. The construction of a purpose-built doctor’s office was unusual at the time, when many doctors did not have offices, but undertook only house calls, or worked in a room in their house or shared space in an apothecary. The dedicated doctor’s office with medical equipment etc., demonstrates the growing professionalism of medical mid-19th century practitioners that is consistent with his approach to the medical profession. By the end of the 19th century, this model was very common.¹¹

Dr. William Mostyn

The Doctor’s House was built for Dr. William Mostyn, who arrived in Almonte in 1858 shortly after graduating from Queen’s medical school. Almonte’s first doctor, he quickly established himself as a community leader. This was a typical path for men in the 19th century when Canadian society was largely shaped by professional men who occupied positions of authority and influence. Mostyn and his counterparts throughout Ontario were paternalistic, seeing themselves as caretakers and decision-makers for society at large. They were informed by imperialist ideals, reflecting the prevailing British loyalties and colonial ambitions of the era. While the professional classes improved public schools, agriculture, and participated in many civic and religious organizations, political leadership excluded women and recent immigrants, remaining male-dominated into the 20th century.

⁷ Roland, Charles G., “History of Medicine to 1959,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, <https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/history-of-medicine>

⁸ Ibid., “Regulation of the Medical Profession.”

⁹ Duffin, Dr. Jacalyn, “Ontario’s Medical Legacy,” Heritage Matters, Ontario Heritage Trust, <https://www.heritage-matters.ca/articles/ontarios-medical-legacy#:~:text=Until%20the%20later%2019th%20century,and%20germ%20theory%20by%201882.>

¹⁰ Queen’s University

¹¹ Adams, Annmarie and Burke, Stacie “A Doctor in the House: the Architecture of Home-offices for Physicians in Toronto, 1885-1930, *Medical History*, Volume 53, pages 163 - 194

After his arrival in Almonte and the establishment of his practice, Mostyn quickly became involved in many organizations. In addition to his role as Almonte's first doctor, he was also associate coroner for Lanark for 15 years,¹² the representative for the area on the Medical Council,¹³ a Deputy Grand Master of the Freemasons,¹⁴ the president of the North Lanark Agricultural Society, where he included his parrot in the annual exhibition,¹⁵ the first reeve of Almonte (1871-74),¹⁶ an MPP,¹⁷ and a school trustee.¹⁸

Mostyn drowned in March 1881 after visiting a patient in Appleton. His death was mourned by the community and the following Sunday all the churches in the community honoured him.¹⁹ His funeral was estimated to have been attended by between 4,000 and 5,000 people, with many travelling from Ottawa, neighbouring communities and Kingston, his home town, to attend.²⁰

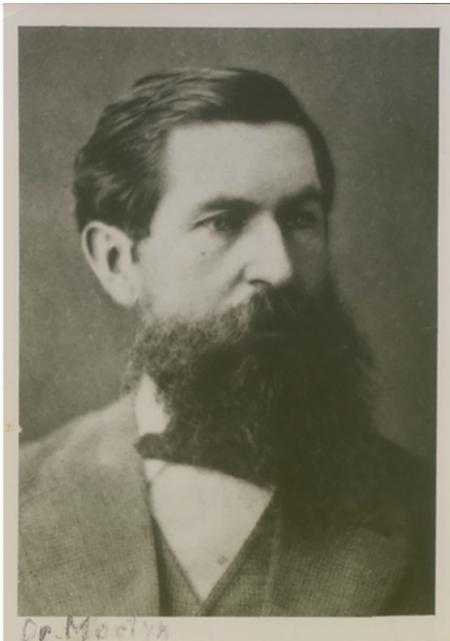


Fig. 12 Dr. Mostyn Headshot, Almonte, Ontario
Credit: <https://almonte.com/search-ngg-images>

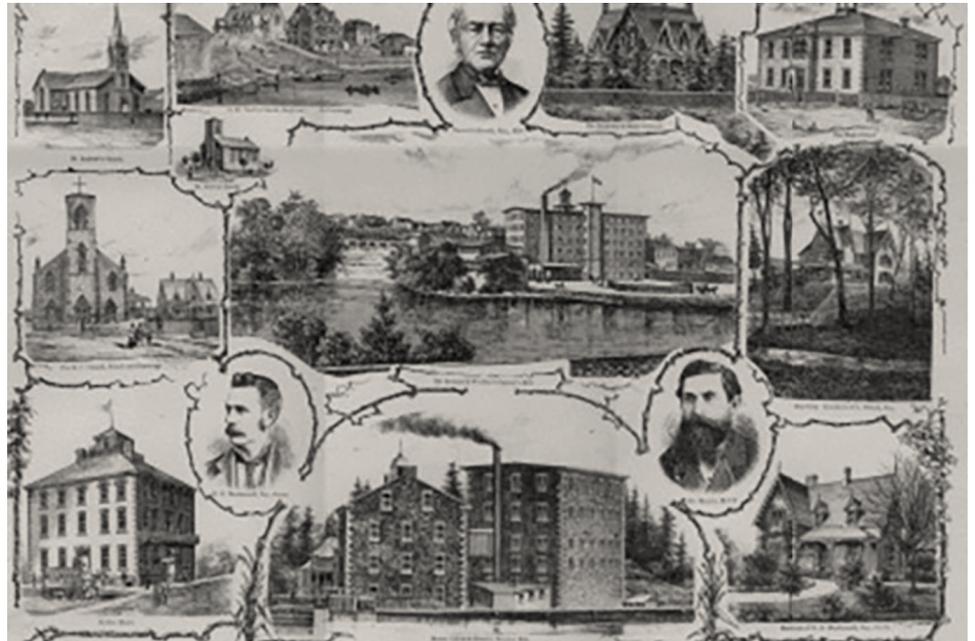


Fig. 13 Dr. Mostyn's photograph included in Canadian Illustrated News as the local MPP
Credit: <https://almonte.com/historic-photo-archive/>

¹² "The Late Accident," *Almonte Gazette*, April 8, 1881, page 3

¹³ "Ottawa Daily Citizen," June 9, 1869, page 2

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, July 11, 1873, page 4

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, October 3, 1879, page 1

¹⁶ "Melancholy Accident," *The Almonte Gazette*, April 1, 1881, page 3

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, July 23, 1875, page 2

¹⁸ "Melancholy Accident," *op.cit.*, page 3

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ "Canadian Journal of Medical Science," Vol. 6, p. 159, Obituary

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 Doctor's 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. By 1858, the town was large enough to warrant its first doctor when Dr. William Mostyn arrived to establish a medical practice. The rapid growth of the town as a milltown, the arrival of workers to the town and the increasing success of the surrounding agricultural area made Almonte an important centre in Lanark County. As the town grew, professionals such as doctors and lawyers arrived reinforcing its importance as a centre.	

5.2 | Supporting Details

The Doctor's 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 1866.²¹

In July 1868, the Almonte Gazette proudly highlighted the town's progress, noting that development was

²¹ "Bennett Rosamond," Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Volume XIII (1901-1910)

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.”²²

The late 1860s marked an important time for Almonte, as the construction of modern mills, churches, a new school, and houses suitable for professionals like doctors signalled 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.²³

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	
Research did not reveal the architect of the Doctor’s House.	

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 Doctor’s House is located at the corner of Queen and Clyde Streets, across the river from the town’s centre. It is part of a small enclave of houses and public and religious buildings bounded by the river, Queen and Martin Streets.	

7.2 | Supporting Details

Other noteworthy stone buildings in this enclave include the former Registry Office, Brougham Street, St. Paul’s Anglican Church and Rectory, and the Wylie House (shown to the right of the bridge, below). Other buildings include late 19th century red brick structures and 20th century infill structures. The area was formerly known as known as “Professional Alley,” because of the high concentration of professionals living there.



Fig. 14 Bridge and “Professional Alley”, Credit: Michael Dunn Collection

²² “Improvements,” Almonte Gazette, July 24, 1868

²³ “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 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.	Yes
Response to Criterion	
The Doctor's House has contextual value because it is historically and physically linked to its surroundings. As a doctor's office, it was conveniently located on a main thoroughfare just across the river from the commercial core, making it accessible to patients. In addition, as a structure constructed from limestone quarried on the site, it is physically connected to its lot. Its location also reflected Dr. Mostyn's social status, as he chose to build his house near other large residences and close to local institutions like the Reilly Hotel (demolished 1985), the Registry Office, and St. Paul's Anglican Church and Rectory.	

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	
Although the Doctor's house is surrounded by a tall hedge, it is a well-known local landmark because of its long history as a doctor's office and its distinctive architecture. The former office facing Clyde Street is clearly visible.	



Fig. 15 Insection of Queen Street and Clyde Street, Google Street View 2016

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