

Heritage Research Report



**The Acacias
573 Lakeshore Road West
Oakville, ON**

February 2015

HERITAGE RESEARCH REPORT STATUS SHEET

Street Address: 573 Lakeshore Road West

Roll Number: 2401030200076000000

Short Legal Description: PCL 20-8, SEC T-16 ; PT LT 20, CON
3 TRAFALGAR, SOUTH OF DUNDAS
STREET , PART 4 , 20R878 ;
OAKVILLE/TRAFALGAR

Heritage Type: Built Structure

Heritage Status: Listed Heritage Property

Research Report Completion Date: February 2015

Heritage Committee Meeting Date: February 24, 2015

Designation Brief Completed by: Susan Schappert,
Heritage Planner

Sources Consulted:

- Ancestry.ca including:
 - 1851, 1871, 1881 and 1891 Census
 - Toronto City Directories 1871, 1879, 1883, 1898, 1903
 - Registration of Deaths, 1869-1938
 - Ontario Marriages, 1801-1928
 - Manitoba Marriage Index 1879-1931
- Chain of Title for 573 Lakeshore Road East 1808-2002 including:
 - Bargain and Sales
 - Deeds
 - Grants
 - Transfers
- Town of Oakville GIS records
- Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada 1800-1950 (Molesworth)
- One Hundred Rings and Counting: Forestry Education and Forestry in Toronto by Mark Kuhlberg
- University of Toronto Archives – W.N. Millar
- A New Matrix of the Arts: A History of the Professionalisation of Canadian Women Artists by Susan Butlin
- Appleby College Archives

STATEMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE OR INTEREST

The subject property has been researched and evaluated in order to determine its cultural heritage significance according to Ontario Regulation 9/06. This Regulation, defined in the *Ontario Heritage Act*, outlines several criteria for determining whether a property is of cultural heritage value or interest. In order for a property to be designated under section 29 of the *Ontario Heritage Act* it must meet one or more of these criteria, which are outlined below. By using these criteria, staff can determine if the property's cultural heritage value or interest merits designation under the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

1. The property has design value or physical value because it,

i. is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method,

The subject house is a very good example of an early 20th century home built with Arts and Crafts inspired details. Known as 'the Acacias', the property illustrates many of the design features common to Arts and Crafts homes: the combination of brick and wood shingles as wall cladding, the grouped multi-pane windows, the entrance under a portico, and the exposed rafter tails on the unusual roof shape.

ii. displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit

The house displays a standard degree of craftsmanship typical of the era.

iii. demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement

There are no technical or scientific achievements associated with this property.

2. The property has historical value or associative value because it,

i. has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community,

The subject property is associated with the Windeat sisters, Emma Sarah and Louisa Helen, who constructed the Acacias circa 1913. Emma Windeat, likely the most notable member of the Windeat family, was one of the first female artists to become a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts. A painter of portraits and landscapes, Emma was also a founding member of the Women's Canadian Historical Society of Toronto, and exhibited her works at the Toronto Industrial Exhibition, Art Association of Montreal and Women's Art Association of Canada.

The property is also associated with author and forestry expert, Willis Norman Millar, whose family owned the property for over 15 years. Millar was a professor of forestry at the University of Toronto and published several books on forestry management practices for the Canadian government.

ii. yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture, or

The subject property has the potential to yield additional information regarding the early 20th century community of Oakville.

iii. demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community.

The Acacias is attributed to be the design of local architect George Molesworth, who lived in Oakville and had a successful architectural practice in Toronto. A student of Eden Smith, Molesworth's early designs were heavily influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement. He

designed several other Oakville private residences, as well as Brantwood and Linwood public schools.

3. The property has contextual value because it,

i. is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area,

The property maintains the residential character of the surrounding area, which is dominated by residences on the north side of Lakeshore Road West facing Appleby College.

ii. is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings, or

The subject property is historically, visually and physically linked to its surroundings. Known for the acacia trees clustered on the property, the house was designed to fit into its surrounding landscape and, despite the reduction in the size of the lot, the connection between the residence and its landscape, including the acacia trees, garden and proximity to the creek, is still significant.

iii. is a landmark.

The property is a landmark in the neighbourhood due to its historic presence, orientation to the street and architectural differences between it and the surrounding residences.

Design and Physical Value

The house at 573 Lakeshore Road West, known as The Acacias, has significant architectural value as 2-1/2 storey home with Arts and Crafts inspired details. The Arts and Crafts movement began in Britain as a reaction to the Industrial Age and the dehumanization of people that resulted from the sudden restructuring of the population to accommodate large factories.¹ It was a social movement that encompassed artistic, ideological, even political, ideals which affected many forms of visual art from pottery and wallpaper to furniture design and architecture.² The movement spread to North America and many structures built between 1900 and 1940 demonstrate Arts and Crafts influenced architectural details. Shannon Kyle of Ontario Architecture writes:

By the time the Arts and Crafts movement had reached Canada, the defining elements were well set. The overlying theme was the house as a living element within the natural environment; it was based on the function of the home as a shelter for the family, not a banner building relentlessly trumpeting the owner's status. Houses were meant to fit intrinsically into their sites: orientation of the house was based on the relationship of the house to the garden.³

Characteristics of Arts and Crafts inspired homes can include: a combination of cladding materials ranging from brick, stone, stucco, shingles and horizontal wood cladding; wide verandahs or porches sometimes created through an extension of the main roof; dormer windows and wall gables; recessed entrances typically under porches, exposed rafter tails or brackets and asymmetrical façades.⁴

¹ Shannon Kyles, Ontario Architecture, "Arts and Crafts" <http://www.ontarioarchitecture.com/ArtsandCrafts.htm>

² Shannon Kyles, Ontario Architecture, "Arts and Crafts" <http://www.ontarioarchitecture.com/ArtsandCrafts.htm>

³ Shannon Kyles, Ontario Architecture, "Arts and Crafts" <http://www.ontarioarchitecture.com/ArtsandCrafts.htm>

⁴ Shannon Kyles, Ontario Architecture, "Arts and Crafts" <http://www.ontarioarchitecture.com/ArtsandCrafts.htm>

The house at 573 Lakeshore Road West illustrates many of the design features common to Arts and Crafts homes: the combination of brick and wood shingles as wall cladding, the grouped multi-pane windows, the entrance under a portico, exposed rafter tails on the unusual roof shape. The house originally had a porch with roofline extending down from the main roof structure; however, this space has been filled in to create a sunroom without changing the roof structure or proportions of the space.



The Acacias, 1981

The Acacias is an excellent example of the Arts and Crafts theme of the residence designed into its site. The property was originally much larger than it is today – enough to support a small farm, stretching to the creek at the west and Rebecca Street to the north. Known for the acacia trees that surround the residence, the house was designed to fit into the landscape surroundings and despite the reduction in the size of the lot, the connection between the residence and its surroundings is still significant.

Historical and Associative Value

The residence at 573 Lakeshore Road West was likely constructed in 1912-1913 during the ownership of the Windeat sisters. Previous to that, the property was owned by the McCraney family as part of their extensive land holdings in the area.

Emma Sarah Windeat and her younger sister, Louisa Helen, were both born in Brockville to Louisa and James Windeat, formerly of Devonshire, England. Louisa and James also had two more children, Edmund (the eldest) and Mary Edith (the baby of the family). The family did not remain in Brockville, but moved to Toronto. After James passed away, the family remained together even after the children were well into their thirties living at 276 Spadina Avenue.



The Acacias, circa 1992

Emma Windeat, likely the most notable member of the family, was one of the first female artists to become a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts. A painter of portraits and landscapes, Emma was also a founding member of the Women's Canadian Historical Society of Toronto, and exhibited her works at the Toronto Industrial Exhibition, Art Association of Montreal and Women's Art Association of Canada.⁵

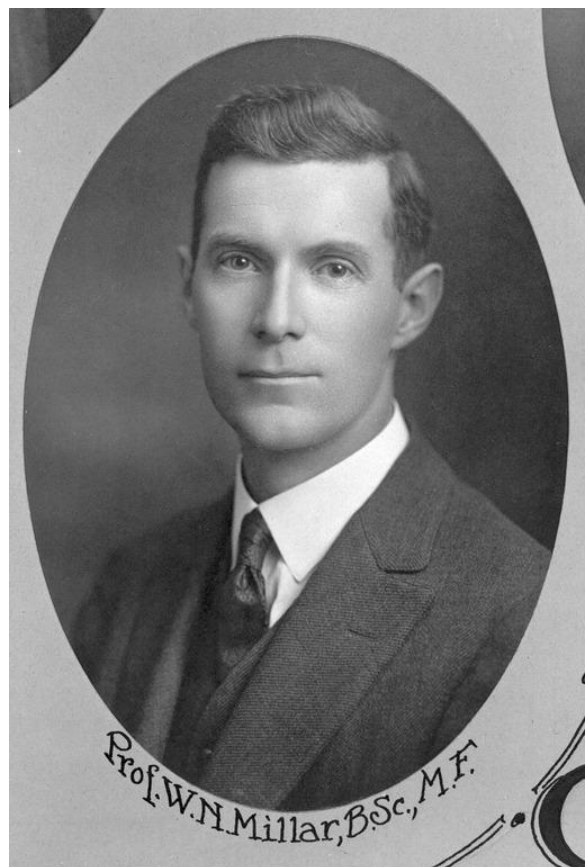
After her mother's death in 1893, Emma and Louisa continued to live together in Toronto, as it appears that both Edmund and Mary Edith had married and moved out. In 1898 they were living at 46 Cecil Street and in 1903, they lived on Indian Road. Why exactly they decided to move to Oakville is uncertain – possibly the country air and landscapes held some attraction for them – but in 1911, the sisters purchased the property from Hannah Pearen and constructed a new residence in the Arts and Crafts style. Considering Emma's involvement in the Toronto artistic community, their use of an up and coming Toronto-trained architect to build their new home is not surprising.

Emma and Louisa only owned their home for around ten years before selling the property to Willis Norman Millar. As Emma died in Toronto in 1926, it seems safe to assume they moved back to the city.

Willis Millar, at the time of his purchase of the house, was an assistant professor of Forestry at the University of Toronto. Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1883, Millar was educated at Yale and worked for the US Forest Service in Idaho before he immigrated to Canada in 1911 to work for the Dominion Forestry Branch in Alberta as an inspector. Eventually, Millar made his way to Ontario and worked at the university from 1914-1932⁶, while continuing to work for the federal government in various capacities, publishing several books on forestry management practices.

In 1921, Millar married Isa Underhill of Stouffville, Ontario and soon after, they purchased the Acacias in Oakville and raised their four children there. The location in Oakville was conveniently located near the Faculty of Forestry practice forest at the Atkins property in Bronte.⁷

Unfortunately, Millar died relatively young of a heart attack in 1933, shortly after his resignation



University of Toronto Archives, 2002-3-2MS

⁵ Susan Butlin, *A New Matrix of the Arts: A History of the Professionalization of Canadian Women Artists*, 2008 thesis for Carleton University.

⁶ Heritage: University of Toronto, Archives

⁷ Mark Kuhlberg, *One Hundred Rings and Counting: Forestry Education and Forestry in Toronto*, p.94

from the university and very soon after he returned to work in the United States.⁸ His widow was unable to maintain the house in Oakville and the estate was forced to sell the property in 1937.

The next owners of the Acacias, the Wethey family owned the property from 1937-1972. Henry Lewis Wethey was born in Toronto in 1874 and lived with Emma and Louise Windeat in Toronto in 1891. By 1901, he was a bank clerk living in Winnipeg and in 1906, he married Mary Louise (nee Ruttan) in 1906. They had three children: Henry Douglas Windeat, Drina Louise and Mary Edith. Based on the middle name of his eldest child and his stay with the Windeat family in 1891, the Wetheys appear to have a connection to the Windeat family; however, the exact connection is unknown. Henry retired to Oakville and is buried in St. Jude's Cemetery. The property passed to his children, who owned and lived in the house until 1972. His daughter, Drina Wethey, was secretary to Headmasters John Bell and Ned Larsen of Appleby College from 1962 to 1978.

Below is a summary of the owners of the property:

Name of Owner(s)	Years of Ownership
William McCraney	1808-1854
Rebecca McCraney	1854-1866
James McCraney	1866-1905
Hanna Eliza Pearen	1905-1911
Emma Sarah and Louisa Helen Windeat	1911-1921
Willis Norman Millar	1921-1937
Henry Lewis Wethey, Mary Louise Wethey, Henry Douglas Windeat Wethey, Drina Wethey	1937-1972
Joan Gwendolyn Base	1972-1974
Jochen Erner	1974-1976
Terrance Albert Moore	1976-1977
Heather Lynn Kirby	1977-1986

The house is also associated with well-known local architect, George Nepean Molesworth. Molesworth (1885-1958) was a prolific architect who designed many buildings (commercial, institutional and residential) in Toronto, Oakville and the surrounding area. Molesworth himself was a life-long resident of Oakville, commuting into Toronto for his architectural practice.

Educated at the University of Toronto, Molesworth went on to serve a 4 year internship with Eden Smith, the foremost architect of Arts and Crafts in Toronto, from 1908-1911. His work was certainly influenced by Smith's design aesthetic and the principals of the Arts and Crafts movement. Forming his own practice in 1911, some of his earliest designs were for

⁸ Mark Kuhlberg, One Hundred Rings and Counting: Forestry Education and Forestry in Toronto, p.99

properties in Oakville, including the residence at 573 Lakeshore Road West. Molesworth went on to design other notable local buildings including Brantwood School, Maplegrove School and Linbrook School.

Contextual Value

Contextually, the surrounding area is dominated by the Appleby College property located to the south of the subject property and the creek that runs along the western boundary of Appleby College into Westgate Park. At the time of the construction of the residence, the property was described as a small farm that ran north to Rebecca Street. The residence is still surrounded by the acacia trees for which it was named; however, the size of the lot has decreased over the years as parcels of land were severed off from the farm.



The front garden of the property includes a wall that links the house to the front yard and associated landscaping, an important design feature relating to the Arts and Crafts movement.

The property still maintains a strong connection between the residence and its landscape, including the acacia trees, the surrounding gardens and garden walls and the proximity to nearby Appleby creek.

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE ATTRIBUTES

Key exterior attributes of the house which embody its physical and historical significance include:

- Form of the 2-1/2 storey house;
- Clipped side gable bell cast roof with one storey projection;
- Exposed rafter tails;
- Painted brick first storey exterior cladding;
- Stained wood shingles on the second storey and in the gable ends;
- Belt course that defines the transition between brick and shingles;

- Triple stack brick chimney;
- Grouped multi-pane casement window style, including trim, dormers and surrounds;
- Front entrance, including door and sidelights;
- Front entrance portico.

Key exterior attributes of the property which embody its physical and historical significance and connections between the house and its landscape include:

- The acacia trees;
- The orientation of the house relative to the road, creek and garden;
- The front garden wall which links the house to the landscape.

PHOTOS OF PROPERTY



South elevation



South elevation (west corner)



West elevation



North elevation



East elevation



North elevation (east corner)



Front entrance detail