

1473 Highway 7A, Geographic Township of Manvers (Bethany General Store)

Heritage Designation Evaluation

Geographic Township of Manvers

LT 4 N/S KING ST PL 5 MANVERS; PT LT 5 N/S KING ST PL 5 MANVERS AS
IN MV10945

2023



Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

The subject property has been researched and evaluated in order to determine its cultural heritage significance under Ontario Regulation 9/06 of the Ontario Heritage Act R.S.O. 1990. A property is eligible for designation if it has physical, historical, associative or contextual value and meets any two of the nine criteria set out under Regulation 9/06 of the Act. A heritage evaluation of the property has determined that 1473 Highway 7A has cultural heritage value or interest and 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:

1473 Highway 7A is a representative but rare example of a false façade commercial building. Constructed in 1859, it is typical of early commercial architecture constructed throughout communities in Kawartha Lakes in the mid-nineteenth century prior to the adoption of the pervasive Italianate style. It is one of the few surviving example of this type of commercial building and one of the few commercial buildings in Bethany that predates the 1911 fire that destroyed much of the downtown.

ii. displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit:

The property displays a typical degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit for a building of this type.

iii. demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement:

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

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

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

The property has direct historical associations with the commercial development of Bethany in the mid-nineteenth century, particularly after the arrival of the railway in 1856, as the Bethany General Store. The property, as the earliest surviving commercial building in the community, is specifically linked to that period of development which saw Bethany come the major settlement hub for the surrounding rural region. The property also has direct associations with Alfred Ryley, who established the Bethany General Store, and who also served as the first clerk of Manvers Township and held the position for forty-five years.

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

The property yields information regarding the mid-nineteenth century development of Bethany as a commercial hub for Manvers Township after the arrival of the railway there in 1856. The property also yields information on the role of the general store in rural Ontario during this period through its original and continuing use.

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

The designer and builder of the property is not known.

3. The property has contextual value because it:

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

The property is important in maintaining the historic character of downtown Bethany as the commercial core of the village. The property forms one of a range of commercial, residential and institutional properties along the Highway 7A corridor through the village which together make up the centre of the community and help provide a historic small town character to Bethany.

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

The property is visually and historically linked to its surroundings as part of the historic landscape of downtown Bethany. The corridor of Highway 7A which runs through Bethany includes a range of commercial, residential and institutional structure which form the historic core of the village dating from the nineteenth century and this property is linked to its surroundings as part of that development.

iii. is a landmark.

The property is a landmark as Bethany's oldest commercial building which continues to operate in its original capacity from 1859. It is a well-known local commercial building and an important pillar in the hamlet's downtown core.

Design and Physical Value

1473 Highway 7A is a representative, but rare, example of false façade commercial architecture in Bethany. Constructed in 1859, the property displays key characteristic of a false façade commercial building, an ubiquitous mid-nineteenth century vernacular building type which is typified by the use of a large false façade, often including decorative elements, covering a plain, vernacular building to the rear to lend an air of permanence and size to an otherwise non-descript building. 1473 Highway 7A is one of the few buildings of this type remaining extant Bethany, and in Kawartha Lakes more generally, where the majority of these early commercial structures were replaced in the late nineteenth century with larger brick buildings in the Italianate style.

False façade commercial architecture, or false front architecture as it is alternatively called, is, in popular culture, most closely associated with the boomtowns of western North America, where false façade buildings were erected quickly to create commercial downtowns in response to rapid population growth. However, this type of architecture was not limited to western areas; in fact, these structures were extremely prevalent throughout eastern and central North America throughout the early and mid-nineteenth century, although, by the turn of the twentieth century, many had been replaced by larger brick buildings. The association of this building type with western provinces and states is likely due to the fact that these buildings were constructed later than their more eastern counterparts and in many cases are still standing and in use where they form a substantial percentage of urban commercial architecture, particularly in towns where there has been limited subsequent growth. For example, in Canada, this type of architecture is most closely associated with Dawson City where commercial buildings with false facades were rapidly erected with the 1898 Klondike Gold Rush, but never replaced as the population declined in the bust that followed an exponential rise in population in the final years of the nineteenth century.

In reality, false façade buildings form an important part of the evolution of commercial architecture in North America throughout the nineteenth century. Even more so than residential or institutional architecture, commercial architecture underwent periods of significant evolution throughout the nineteenth century and changed drastically from the early periods of non-indigenous settlement to the more settled villages, towns and cities of the late Victorian period. The earliest commercial architecture was purely functional, such as small general stores or blacksmith's shops in nascent communities where the proprietors would build a structure, often in a vernacular style, near or adjacent to their residence. These could take on a variety of styles, but were often very plain, with limited decorative features, with the exception of signage to indicate the purpose of the business.

However, by the mid-nineteenth century, urban commercial architecture had definitively shifted away from vernacular forms in favour of brick buildings in the developing Italianate style, which would become the most popular commercial architectural style across North America in the second half of the nineteenth century. The Italianate style was characterized by tall, flat front facades joined in a continuous streetwall with the adjoining buildings. These buildings, which ranged in height from two to four storeys, were nearly always constructed in brick with elaborate decorative details, either in brick or using prefabricated metal elements that were intended to reflect a Classical aesthetic consistent with that of Renaissance-era Italy. In particular, architects and designers used the front façade of the structure to create often elaborate designs in tightly backed urban spaces where space was at a premium and buildings were built directly adjacent to one another. They were also characterized by their storefronts with recessed doorways and large sheets of plate glass, intended to both help light the interior of the building and display goods for sale to entice the passerby. By the later decades of the century, these buildings were ubiquitous in towns and cities across North America and formed the quintessential Victorian streetscape, comprised of a continuous street wall of ornate Italianate commercial buildings.

But, in many communities, particularly in rural or newly developed areas, these types of buildings were not accessible for business and property owners. Built in brick, these structures were expensive to erect and were not a realistic building solution for businesses in small communities with limited financial resources or in newer communities that were being quickly settled and needed commercial buildings rapidly, but without necessary sureties of a community's long-term prosperity; this latter scenario was the case in many western boom towns where commercial downtowns were erected rapidly – sometimes over the course of a year or two – to respond to rapid influxes in population, often due to industries like mining. Similarly, in areas where there was no readily available brick, wood was by necessity the material of choice for commercial architecture. At the same time, business wanted to erect buildings that displayed permanence and echoed the popular commercial architectural trends of the time. The intention of the false façade, as an architectural feature, was to mimic and replicate more permanent commercial structures in urban areas to lend an air of permanence and prosperity to a commercial area in smaller or newly developed areas.

The false façade building, as the name suggests, was defined primarily by its façade. The building itself was generally a plain vernacular building with a gable roof, either one or two storeys in height; these were often built using frame construction – generally balloon framing – or, depending on the location and availability of dressed lumber, log. On the front of the building was constructed a structurally independent and non-loadbearing tall façade,

usually two or more storeys in height but at least high enough to conceal the gable behind, that stretched the width of the building. This façade was erected in sawn lumber on the street side of the building and included the storefront on the ground level, sometimes but not always with a decorative entrance and surround, ground floor windows, upper storey windows where the main structure had a second floor and often decorative elements along the cornice at the top of the façade.

There were a number of designs and formats that these facades took, much of which was attributable to the preference of the builder and the size of the building itself. The most basic of these was the flat cornice type where the façade was effectively a rectangle with a cornice along the top. However, some builders also chose to take a more decorative approach with broken cornices, where the top of the gable roof behind was integrated into the façade, or with a stepped gable format to add additional visual interest to the front of the structure. Additional decorative elements, such as ornate cornices, pilasters, and brackets, were often added, expressed in wood. These were not direct replicas of masonry Italianate buildings, but took their design cues from them. The intent of these facades was to mimic established masonry forms and builders employed a variety of strategies to do so in alignment with the popular architectural styles of the day.

Through their mimicry of masonry forms, false facades served a number of purposes, mostly with regard to perception. During the Victorian period, there was a strong association of architectural forms with symbolism and meaning, and commercial buildings were no exception. Italianate commercial buildings were seen to embody ideas of permanence and prosperity for the simple reason that they were usually only erected when a community was stable and wealthy enough to build them. The strong associations of these forms with the commercial prosperity of a community meant that most communities wanted to replicate them elsewhere, even if that was not feasible from a financial and material perspective. It is notable that many false façade buildings were eventually replaced with brick Italianate structures, a clear indication of the types of buildings that most communities were striving for and that false façade buildings, although they served a clear aesthetic and functional purpose, were very much intended as temporary solutions to an immediate need.

1473 Highway 7A is an excellent example of this type of structure and displays for the design forms associated with this type of architecture and the conditions for its construction. The building was erected in 1859, just three years after the arrival of the railway and the construction of a station there. The village sprang up around the railway station as a service and commercial hub for the surrounding rural agricultural area and, throughout the late 1850s and early 1860s, Bethany developed rapidly from an agricultural area to a

bustling community. As a result, new buildings were speedily erected to house various commercial enterprises and services associated with the new railway, such as a post office which was also established in 1859. Bethany's rapid development reflected the conditions present in many other communities, including rapid development and limited financial and material resources, where false façade architecture was prevalent, and the buildings in what would become downtown Bethany were no exception where a collection of structures in this style were erected throughout the following decades.

The subject property was constructed as a general store and, as a result, adopted the false façade commercial form in alignment with the wider trends in commercial architecture at this time. General stores, because of their frequent location in rural areas, often made use of false facades, and the property is highly representative of this trend. The building itself is a one-and-a-half storey frame building with a steeply pitched gable roof; on the eastern side of the building the gable reaches to around one and a half metres above the level of the ground. A shorter rear addition has been constructed on the north side of the building. The façade is two storeys above the storefront, stepped to a single storey on the east side of the building, where it forms a solid wall to hide the lower portion of the gable roof. A single window on the upper level of the façade demarcates the point of the gable.

The façade itself is fairly plain but there are a number of notable features which are also in alignment with the general use of false facades in commercial architecture. The upper section of the façade includes a substantial overhanging cornice supported with decorative wooden brackets; this is an architectural form taken directly from the Italianate style and is commonly found on false façade commercial buildings. The store also contains a wide storefront with large multi-pane windows and a recessed entrance, another feature derived from Italianate architecture and common in urban commercial architecture.

The one feature of the building not common in urban commercial architecture is the store's front porch which includes decorative columns and a sloped roof which runs the length of the storefront. This feature, however, was used frequently in rural and urban communities where many commercial buildings, but particularly general stores which were high traffic commercial buildings, included a first storey porch or entranceway where large goods could be displayed outside and customers could congregate; unlike in urban areas where commercial buildings were built directly to the street, the less densely packed fabric of rural communities gave storeowners scope to include this kind of space. Entrances porches of this type were frequently found on false façade commercial architecture and further expands the value of the property as a representative example of this type of structure.

The architectural value of the subject property is enhanced in that it is one of only a handful of false façade commercial buildings that remain extant in Kawartha Lakes. While most of Kawartha Lakes' communities had any number of these structures as they developed throughout the mid- to late-nineteenth century, as evidenced by early photographs, descriptions and drawings, the majority of them were replaced in the second half of the nineteenth century with brick Italianate structures. There are a number of reasons for this shift. The first was that, as communities developed and became more prosperous, building and business owners generally preferred to have more modern brick structures that were up to date in the most popular architectural style, as noted above; while the false façade building served its purpose both practically and from an aesthetic standpoint in the early days of a community's development, it was heavily associated with early stage urban development and most property owners wanted to replace them when they were financially able with larger and more stylish structures. Several other false façade buildings exist in Bethany itself, while several are also extant in Cobocok, but these examples are substantially in the minority of nineteenth century commercial buildings in Kawartha Lakes most of which are brick and built in the Italianate style.

The other reason was that many of these early wooden structures burnt down and were replaced, and usually with Italianate buildings. Fire was an ever present reality in nineteenth century communities. In an era where heating, cooking, and lighting were undertaken with fire from various sources, building fires were very common and particularly so in areas where wood was the primary building material. In early urban areas and small towns where buildings were mostly built in wood and close together, these fires could be catastrophic. Most communities across Ontario had at least one, if not more, disastrous fires in their commercial areas that facilitated substantial rebuilding of their downtown cores. Usually, this rebuilding was undertaken in the Italianate style and generally in brick to reduce the threat of fire in future; many larger communities had specific building ordinances by the second half of the nineteenth century that prevented commercial construction in wood for this reason. Bethany's major fire occurred in 1911 but, unlike most of the surrounding commercial buildings in the downtown core, the subject property did not burn down and, as a result, continued to exist in situ while the community was rebuilt around it.

Overall, the subject property holds a high degree of design and physical value as a representative example of a false façade commercial building in downtown Bethany. Its design features are typical of this type of building which was common in small towns and rapidly developing areas throughout the nineteenth century. It is, however, a rare surviving example of this building

type in Kawartha Lakes where few false façade commercial buildings remain extant.

Historical and Associative Value

1473 Highway 7A has historical and associative value as the Bethany General Store and a key commercial establishment in downtown Bethany. It has direct historical associations with the commercial development of Bethany in the mid-nineteenth century after the arrival of the railway in 1856 when the community grew up as the major settlement, commercial and service hub for the surrounding rural agricultural area. In its historic and continuing role as the Bethany General Store, it yields information regarding the role of the general store in nineteenth century Ontario communities and has direct associations with prominent local citizen Alfred Ryley who established the store and also served as the first Clerk of Manvers Township and held the position for forty-five years.

Manvers Township was first surveyed for non-indigenous settlement between 1816 and 1817 by Samuel S. Wilmot, and the first non-indigenous settlers likely arrived around 1820, although several families who bought portions of the clergy reserves may have arrived slightly earlier. However, settlement throughout the first several decades was slow and by 1842, there were 111 households in the townships, most of whom were engaged in agricultural work. Industries and businesses, such as mills, blacksmiths and stores, had yet to become established. However, by the 1851 census, the township's employment base was beginning to diversify with three mills, new stores, churches, schools and taverns. Nascent villages were also beginning to form, with Ballyduff having the largest concentration of residences and businesses at this time, while Bethany was also slowly developing.

However, in 1856, the Port Hope, Lindsay and Beaverton Railway was constructed north through Manvers Township on route to Lindsay and a stop was established at Bethany. The construction of the railway was part of a massive boom in regional railway construction across Canada in the mid-1850s that reshaped both Canadian transport networks, as well as demographic and settlement patterns. The company had formed in 1854 in Port Hope to provide a new transport link into central Ontario and to compete with its rival, the Cobourg and Peterborough Railway, which had been completed that same year. Lindsay was chosen as the first terminus due to its connection to the new Trent-Severn Waterway and access to further, more northerly markets. Construction began in Port Hope, through Millbrook, Bethany and Omemee before reaching Lindsay in 1857. The railway was renamed the Midland Railway in 1869 with its expansion westwards, eventually reaching its final terminus of Midland on Georgian Bay in 1878. The Midland system was eventually absorbed by the Grand Trunk Railway in 1893 and, in 1923, the Canadian National Railway.

The arrival of the railway in Bethany was the impetus for the growth of the community. While the area had been settled since the early nineteenth century, it was mostly scattered farms with smaller hamlets throughout. The new station allowed for Bethany to grow into a much more sizable village with increased access to trade, transport in and out of the community, and post. By 1869, the population of the village had grown to 300 inhabitants and boasted a range of stores, including the subject property, and services as well as several hotels, a school and three churches. Through the proximity to the railway, the village became a local hub for the surrounding rural community. By the end of the century, the *Eastern Ontario Gazetteer and Directory* for 1898 recorded the village with a population of 500 with an expanding range of businesses and small industries to serve the local community and the railway.

This growth as the result of the arrival of the railway was an extremely common demographic trend, particularly in small communities across Canada. The railway allowed for new and increased economic opportunities as well as better access to new residents to reach communities. The use of the railway as a mechanism for shipping out agricultural products brought new wealth to an area and in turn attracted new businesses and services to railway communities. Increased domestic markets in growing urban centres fueled the demand for rural agricultural produce providing a ready and growing market. This was particularly the case for domestic wheat and grain which were in high demand in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, corresponding with the boom in railway construction.

It was in this context that the Bethany General Store was constructed by local businessman Alfred Ryley in 1859, just three years after the railway arrived in the community and quickly became an important centre for the community. Bethany, although connected by rail to Lindsay to the north and Port Hope to the south, was still relatively isolated; routes in and out of the community by road were limited and there were few other population centres in the local area. As a result, the general store became an important place for local people to buy goods, from groceries to farm implements that they required for their everyday lives. As the community continued to expand throughout the second half of the nineteenth century with new businesses and residents coming to Bethany, Ryley's store grew and prospered and remained a key retail establishment for Bethany and the surrounding area.

General stores were central aspects of community life in nineteenth century Ontario as the primary retail source for rural families and their establishment in an area was a significant boon for settlers and their ability to purchase goods they needed. Nineteenth century settlers have often been viewed and discussed as if they were entirely self-sufficient on the produce of their own farms, but this is not an accurate picture of nineteenth century life. Throughout Ontario in the nineteenth century, settlers always relied on products brought

into their communities, whether they were coming from urban areas across the province or from international sources. Many of these items, such as sugar or tea, were standard aspects of everyday Victorian diets and simply could not be produced in Canadian climates; others, such as cottons and iron goods, were mass manufactured products that were not feasible for settlers to make on their own farms but were easy to purchase with the development of new manufacturing techniques and the rapid industrialization of urban areas during this same period. For those who lived in hamlets and were not farming themselves, more basic and local food products, such as meat and eggs, were also required for purchase.

For rural communities, such as both Bethany and the surrounding agricultural hamlets, general stores provided a source for these vital goods in close proximity to their own homes and farms. In areas where there was not general store in close proximity, settlers had to travel large distances to get supplies which was inconvenient, difficult and extremely time consuming; in the early and mid-nineteenth century, settlers in Manvers Township had to travel to Lindsay, Peterborough or Port Hope, a journey that took place over days or weeks during this period. However, when a general store was established in a community, it meant that this type of travel was no longer required to access basic goods and often communities developed in close proximity to general stores, when they were established independently, or their opening in a small community often led to increased economic activity locally because they allowed people to access goods and products more efficiently. For farmers, general stores also provided a place to sell their products locally; although the increasingly interconnected provincial economy in the second half of the nineteenth century meant that many products were shipped elsewhere, many still stayed in local areas and general stores provided a vital link between farmers and customers, particularly with more perishable products such as fruits and vegetables. Larger hamlets and villages often ended up with more than one store of this type, as a growing population led to an increased demand for products.

When examining the types of products that general stores were selling in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a number of trends emerge. In the majority of stores for which data exists and had been studied, hardware and textiles form the two largest categories of purchases and this is reflective of the growth of cheap manufacturing for both of these categories of items which led them to be purchased from the store, as opposed to made at home. Cotton manufacturing, for example, was virtually non-existent prior to the nineteenth century and wool, which could easily be processed by homes industries was the dominant textile in Britain and its settler colonies. However, the advent of new industrial technologies for spinning and weaving as well as the rise of steam power, the production of textile moved factories which could

produce fabric cheaper and faster than people could make it on their own; as a result and by the second half of the nineteenth century, it became more cost and time effective for settlers in Canada to purchase cotton made in mills in Lancashire, the heart of the British textile industry, to make their clothes than to spin and weave their own wool for every garment. The same was true for products such as nails which underwent a similar shift to industrial production. In rural Ontario, the general store became the key conduit between these larger manufacturing trends and the everyday needs of families for whom it now made more sense to buy, as opposed to make, many of the vital items they required. Although mail order catalogues made their first appearance in Canada in the 1880s and provided a much greater range of products for purchase than the local store, ordering these items from the general store was often easier in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and it continued to be an important supplier of non-grocery products into the early twentieth century.

The other major item which dominated general store was flour, an extremely important commodity that most settler families were using every day. Although many early settlers grew or attempted to grow their own grains, including but not limited to wheat, not every area in the province was suitable for this on a large scale. Similarly, by the second half of the nineteenth century, many farms, particularly in parts of southern Ontario which had been settled since the late eighteenth century, were beginning to produce products for market beyond their own farm and own communities; although wheat had always been exported to Britain, the mid-century marked a period of uptick in production and exports and a move away from local to more global and industrialized production. By the end of the century and the expansion of settlement into the Canadian Prairies, wheat and flour were commodities produced on an industrial scale, certainly when compared to the early decades of the nineteenth century, and were readily and cheaply available for purchase. While Manvers Township did produce a variety of grains in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the ability to purchase flour was still extremely important for people in and around Bethany, particularly as agriculture became more specialized, farm families were not necessarily growing wheat as it was not the area's primary agricultural product. Similar, many residents of the community and surrounding area were not farmers and the ability to buy flour in the local store was vital for families and their diets.

General stores did not just cater to the everyday needs of local families, however; they also acted as wholesalers for a variety of local businesses and industries. In central Ontario in the second half of the nineteenth century, the largest client of many general stores were the lumber camps operating throughout the region from the 1860s to the end of the century. Buyers for the camps relied on general stores in close proximity to their camps to purchase

essentials such as flour, pork, tea and sugar which were needed throughout the winter; products that could be grown locally were purchased from local farmers, but general stores were often used as intermediaries between the buyer, who generally already had a relationship with the store, and the supplier. Similarly, for imported and manufactured products, such as tools, or for certain types of raw materials, such as iron, the general store often acted as the local supplier and wholesalers for various businesses within the community. Given the location of Bethany well away from the major lumber operations in the region, it is unlikely that the store operated as a lumber camp supplier, but it is highly likely that it was to have been a substantial wholesaler and industrial supplier for the various businesses in the surrounding area.

The storekeepers were often significant figures in their communities and someone well-known to most people in the surrounding area. In addition to providing goods for people to purchase and ordering supplies required, storekeepers sometimes acted in other capacities such as post master or banker as sometimes the local post office was contained within the general store, particularly in very small communities, or the lack of access to established banks in larger centres meant that storekeepers often gave loans and credit where those in urban areas would access formal banking services. More informally, general stores were centres of community life and many storekeepers strove to help make them so such as allowing gatherings in the space such as gathering to listen to the radio.

Through its operations, particularly in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Ryley's General Store functioned much as other general stores across small town Ontario: as a retail and community hub. The store carried some of everything that someone might need including groceries, meat, hardware, gas, oil, dry goods, clothing and animal feed; in the early twentieth century, the store installed Bethany's first gas pumps, although these are no longer in existence. A drug store, operated by Ryley's son Alfred was eventually added to the west side of the store. Local residents and businesses could order what they needed or come in and purchase it, if the item was in stock. The barter system was often used, particularly in the nineteenth century, where farmers would bring in goods such as butter, eggs or vegetables and trade them for products in the store. At one time, residents could even purchase a marriage license at the store. For residents both in the community and the surrounding area, the store provided a much needed local service, allowing them to conveniently shop and purchase what they needed without having to travel to Lindsay, Peterborough or Port Hope for their goods. Despite the opening of good roads throughout both Manvers Township and the surrounding area in the early and mid-twentieth century and increased car ownership allowed residents to travel further to shop, the general store

remained and continued to operate, demonstrating the continuing importance of a local retail establishment for rural residents.

As the local general store owner, Alfred Ryley was a prominent and important figure in the late nineteenth century history of Bethany and the property's direct association with him provides additional historical value. Ryley was born in Birmingham, England in 1827 and, along with his father George Ryley, a hardware merchant, he emigrated to Canada around 1841, settling in Port Hope where his paternal uncle had already settled. At some point in the 1840s, the family is believed to have moved to Cavan Township, before Alfred settled in Manvers around 1850. In 1856, he married Elizabeth Argue, with whom he eventually had seven children.

Ryley first worked as a grain buyer, an important need as the railway opened up new markets for local grain. However, in 1859, he opened his general store selling a variety of goods, including groceries, dry goods and household supplies. Coming from a family of merchants, his opening of this new business was within the family's business tradition. In this business, he partnered with another local businessman, James Preston, who operated a grist mill on his property to the west of Bethany; although Ryley bought out the business from Preston in 1892, when it formally became known as Ryley and Sons when his son Harry entered the business, the Preston and Ryley families remained connected as Ryley's daughter Mary had married Preston's son James Alexander in 1889 and the families remained congenial. Ryley also built the adjoining house in the years following the opening of the store. For near four decades, Ryley continued to operate his store until his death and his obituary made clear his importance in the community with the *Lindsay Watchman* noting that he was "one of the best and most favourably known citizens of Durham County."¹ The family continued to operate the store for several generations, before selling the business to new proprietors and were important and well-respected merchants in Bethany throughout the twentieth century.

Ryley was not just known for his business operations, however. He was active in many community groups and activities including the local Conservative Party and the Methodist Church. However, his major contribution to local life, beyond his role as a prominent merchant, was in his position as the township clerk for Manvers Township, beginning in 1853 until his death in 1897, as well as the local tax collector where he played a key role in the evolution of local government in Manvers Township throughout the second half of the twentieth century. He was the first clerk for the township and held that position for nearly half a century, while simultaneously operating his general store.

¹ "Obituary," *Lindsay Watchman* December 9, 1897, 3.

The creation of a township Council for Manvers Township occurred in 1849, with the passage of the Municipal Corporations Act, which established the role and compositions of municipal governments and their administrative function. Taxes were first collected for 1851 and early meetings are recorded as taking place at Bushell's Inn in Lifford, William Fallis' Tavern and Benson's Inn in Ballyduff. The first dedicated township hall was erected in Lifford in 1865, before moving to Bethany to 1876 when a new township hall was built for Council and the township administration, reflecting the demographic growth there and the firm establishment of Bethany as the township's primary settlement. Throughout this period, the township administration grew and matured, taking responsibility for a range of local services including taxation, roads and other infrastructure, and education funding.

In the development of the township's municipal administrative structure, Ryley was, for nearly the entirety of the second half of the nineteenth century, its primary administrator. While decision-making was driven by Council, Ryley, in his role as township clerk, ensured the smooth administration and record keeping of the township's operations and was integral to the development of a functional municipal government in Manvers Township. An apolitical figure, the township clerk in the nineteenth century effectively ensured that the basic functions of local government were undertaken and kept the records that documents township operations. Townships, at this time, has few employees with the number of employees largely dependant on the size and population of the area, but all had a township clerk who oversaw the day to day administration of government. Although largely unheralded, this was Ryley's role in local government and one that he undertook for nearly half a century; his knowledge of municipal affairs was recognized after his death with the *Lindsay Watchman* noting in his obituary that "He has long been recognized as one of the best posted men in the province in municipal law and custom."² Ryley's role in Manvers Township and the development of its local government was integral, and one that he undertook alongside the operation of a busy and prosperous general store.

Through its role as a general store dating back to 1859, the subject property yields information regarding nineteenth century life in Bethany as the community grew and prospered with the arrival of the railway. The property has direct historical associations with the growth of the community during this period where its role as a railway stop yielded substantial demographic and economic growth and cemented Bethany's place as the primary settlement area in the largely rural Manvers Township. The property's direct associations with Alfred Ryley also provide it with cultural heritage value, through his important role in every day life in late nineteenth century Bethany, both as a

² "Bethany," *Lindsay Watchman*, December 16, 1897, 2.

general store proprietor and as the local township clerk and key member of the local government.

Contextual Value

1473 Highway 7A has contextual value as a defining feature of downtown Bethany and a local landmark. The property is a defining feature of the historic streetscape of Highway 7A which forms the commercial core of the hamlet and supports and maintains its historic small town character as a key nineteenth-century commercial building. The building is also a local landmark for its longstanding presence in the community and continuous operation as a general store since 1859. It is Bethany's primary retail establishment.

Downtown Bethany is located along Highway 7A and is comprised of a mix of residential, institutional, and commercial buildings. The hamlet itself extends to both the north and south of the highway and the Highway 7A corridor forms the core of the community. This area developed as the community's commercial heart beginning in the 1850s, when new buildings were erected to serve the growing population and status of the community as a railway hub. By 1898, the hamlet's fire insurance plan shows the general store, alongside a tailor, drug store, harness maker and furniture store in the downtown area, alongside the Manvers Township Hall. Unfortunately, the significant fire that swept through the community in 1911 destroyed many of the buildings in the commercial core, but most of these were rebuilt; the subject property survived this fire and is one of the few commercial buildings in the community that predate 1911, alongside the former post office.

After the reconstruction of the community, the commercial core of the village continued to be located along the Highway 7A corridor and, in the present day, this commercial heart remains. The subject property is one of a small collection of historic buildings in the core of the community that helps define and support its commercial centre, alongside the reconstructed Manvers Township Hall, dating from 1912, which now serves as the local library. Taken together, these structures form a cohesive small town streetscape characterized by its small commercial buildings, mixed with both residential and institutional properties which surround the collection of commercial establishments.

The property is also visually and historically linked to its surroundings as part of the historic development of the community which evolved organically over time throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, more specifically, it is visually linked to its surroundings as part of a collection of historic false façade commercial buildings. These types of buildings are rare in Kawartha Lakes; most were demolished and replaced in the late nineteenth century with brick Italianate buildings. In contrast, a collection of three of these buildings remain extant in Bethany, a significant number given that these

buildings were often seen as temporary solutions to housing businesses as a community developed. These include the subject property, constructed in 1859, the former Bethany Post Office at 1480 Highway 7A which was originally constructed as a grain office in 1875, and 1470 Highway 7A, a 1911 reconstruction of an earlier commercial property which has housed a range of commercial uses. Taken together, these three buildings form an important, if small, grouping of this type of commercial building in Kawartha Lakes and the subject property has important visually links to these other two structures.

In addition to its role in defining and supporting the local streetscape, the subject property is a landmark in Bethany in the surrounding area. Although architecturally utilitarian, its landmark status comes through its function, although it can also claim this status as Bethany's oldest extant commercial building. Since its construction in 1859, the property has functioned as a general store, first owned by the Ryley family and later by other proprietors. Located in a prominent position on Bethany's main street, it has served the community continuously as a general store for over 150 years and has firmly established its role in the community and surrounding area. To further define its important role as a local business, it is one of only a few retail establishments in Bethany and its only non-specialized retail store; while other stores locally sell specialized or limited range of products, the general store is unique in its generalized merchandise including groceries and hardware not available elsewhere. It is well known, for this reason, in the local community and the surrounding area that it serves.

Summary of Reasons for Designation

The short statement of reasons for designation and the description of the heritage attributes of the property, along with all other components of the Heritage Designation Brief, constitute the Reasons for Designation required under the Ontario Heritage Act.

Short Statement of Reasons for Designation

Design and Physical Value

1473 Highway 7A is a representative, but rare, example of false façade commercial architecture in Bethany. Constructed in 1859, the property displays key characteristics of a false façade commercial building, an ubiquitous mid-nineteenth century vernacular building type which is typified by the use of a large false façade, often including decorative elements, covering a plain, vernacular building to the rear to lend an air of permanence and size to an otherwise non-descript building. 1473 Highway 7A is one of the few buildings of this type remaining extant in Bethany, and in Kawartha Lakes more generally, where the majority of these early commercial structures were replaced in the late nineteenth century with larger brick buildings in the Italianate style.

Historical and Associative Value

1473 Highway 7A has historical and associative value as the Bethany General Store and a key commercial establishment in downtown Bethany. It has direct historical associations with the commercial development of Bethany in the mid-nineteenth century after the arrival of the railway in 1856 when the community grew up as the major settlement, commercial and service hub for the surrounding rural agricultural area. In its historic and continuing role as the Bethany General Store, it yields information regarding the role of the general store in nineteenth century Ontario communities and has direct associations with prominent local citizen Alfred Ryley who established the store and also served as the first Clerk of Manvers Township and held the position for forty-five years.

Contextual Value

1473 Highway 7A has contextual value as a defining feature of downtown Bethany and a local landmark. The property is a defining feature of the historic streetscape of Highway 7A which forms the commercial core of the hamlet and supports and maintains its historic small town character as a key nineteenth-century commercial building. The building is also a local landmark for its longstanding presence in the community and continuous operation as a general store since 1859. It is Bethany's primary retail establishment.

Summary of Heritage Attributes to be Designated

The Reasons for Designation include the following heritage attributes and apply to all elevations, unless otherwise specified, and the roof including: all façades, entrances, windows, chimneys, and trim, together with construction

materials of wood, brick, stone, stucco, concrete, plaster parging, metal, glazing, their related building techniques and landscape features.

Design and Physical Attributes

The design and physical attributes support the value of the property as a representative, but rare, example of a false front commercial building in Kawartha Lakes.

- One-and-a-half storey frame construction
- One storey east elevation addition
- Gable roof
- Horizontal weatherboard-style cladding
- Stepped false façade including:
 - One and two-storey facades
 - Cornice
 - Decorative brackets
- Ground floor storefront with recessed entrance
- Entrance porch including:
 - Sloped roof
 - Columns
- Fenestration including:
 - Storefront windows
 - Upper storey sash window

Historical and Associative Attributes

The historical and associative attributes support the value of the property as a longstanding general store with important historical connections to the development of Bethany in the mid-nineteenth century and with its original owner, Alfred Ryley.

- Continuous use as a general store
- Historical association with Alfred Ryley and the Ryley family

Contextual Attributes

The contextual attributes support the value of the property as a local landmark and contributing feature to the historic commercial streetscape of Bethany along the Highway 7A corridor.

- Location of the property in downtown Bethany
- Construction to the front lot line
- Views of the property from Highway 7A and George Street
- Views of downtown Bethany from the property
- Relationship to extant historic commercial buildings in Bethany

Images



Ryley's Store, c.1900







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