

48 Main Street, Village of Bobcaygeon (J.L. Read General Store/The Promoter Building)

Heritage Designation Evaluation

Village of Bobcaygeon

PT LT 2 W/S BOBCAYGEON RD PL 70 PT 2 57R1099; CITY OF KAWARTHA
LAKES

2025



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. Staff have determined that 48 Main Street 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:

The property is a representative example of a late nineteenth century Italianate commercial building constructed in a small community. Built in 1898 as a replacement for an older wooden commercial building on the same location, the property displays key characteristics of this architectural style including its recessed Victorian storefront, gently sloping roof, bays divided by pilasters, and decorative brickwork.

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

The property displays a typical degree of craftsmanship for a commercial 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 historic associations with the development of Bobcaygeon's Market Square in the late nineteenth century. Constructed as a commercial building in the original townsite of Rokeby, the building is one of a number of commercial buildings that developed around Market Square outside of the village's commercial core in the nineteenth century where it originally operated as Read's General Store. The Square was originally intended as the commercial hub for Rokeby and as a central gathering square.

The building is also associated with Group of Seven artist A.J. Casson who depicted it in two separate paintings he completed of Bobcaygeon in the mid-1930s as part of his broader collection of work of the landscapes and small communities of Ontario's cottage country.

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 commercial development of Bobcaygeon in the late nineteenth century, particularly regarding the development of the Market Square outside of the village's main commercial core.

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

The designer or builder of this 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 maintains and supports the historic character of Bobcaygeon's Market Square. Located on the north side of the Bobcaygeon River on the main land, Market Square developed as part of the original town site of Rokeby and is currently characterized by a collection of commercial buildings clustered around a central square, of which the subject property is one, that it distinct from the grid pattern and main street pattern found on the main island of the village.

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

The property is historically and visually linked to its surroundings as part of Market Square which developed throughout the nineteenth century as a public square and commercial hub for the north side of the community. The Square continued to be marked by a cluster of commercial buildings facing the square which date from the nineteenth to early twentieth centuries.

iii. is a landmark.

The property is not a specific landmark.

Design and Physical Value

48 Main Street has design and physical value as a representative example of a late nineteenth century Italianate building constructed in a small-town setting. Built 1898 as a replacement for an older wooden commercial building on the same location, the property displays key characteristics of this architectural style including its recessed Victorian storefront, gently sloping roof, bays divided by pilasters, and decorative brickwork. It demonstrates the way in which the Italianate commercial style was used outside of major urban areas, where it was primary used as part of continuous urban streetwalls, and the execution of this building type as a free-standing detached commercial building.

Commercial architecture in Canada's cities, towns and villages, including Bobcaygeon, underwent a period of significant evolution throughout the nineteenth century. 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. As the century wore on, these structures often took on the stylistic trappings of contemporary architectural styles, but remained relatively basic detached structures on their own lots. A new structural type also developed: a two-storey structure with the commercial establishment on the main floor and the business owner's residence on the upper storey. Architecturally, these buildings still generally resembled residential structures although the ground floor would often have larger window to showcase the store's products. This type of arrangement was, and remained, typical for small hamlets with a few commercial enterprises.

However, with the increasing urbanization of many of the province's communities, commercial architecture was forced to adapt to the rapidly changing conditions of Ontario's towns and cities; this change was not limited to Ontario and is reflective of the condition of commercial structures across North America. One of the most significant changes was the centralization of commercial structures together in downtown areas. Although the concept of formal zoning was just being developed during this period, it was a time when commercial enterprises and work were being moved outside of the home and businesses were beginning to establish their own spaces in communities; as had and was continuing to occur in urban centres in Europe, businesses naturally clustered together for convenience, creating the beginnings of the commercial downtown and the idea of a main street.

As more businesses came together to form a downtown core, their buildings began to get closer together to respond to the increasing density and desire to not waste limited space. By the mid-century, the idea of commercial buildings being linked in a continuous street wall was common in urban areas as commercial structures were built directly adjacent to one another and even

shared dividing walls. This arrangement was a direct mirror of European urban spaces where tightly packed commercial cores necessitated buildings attached to one another, and built directly to the edge of the lot to maximize space. In the early days of this new commercial arrangement, two types of buildings prevailed. The first were two- to three storey buildings similar to a basic Georgian plan, and often with a gable roof divided by a parapet wall, forming a continuous gable along the street; good examples of this type of structure can be seen in Kingston where a substantial portion of the downtown developed during this time. Like their predecessors, these invariably included commercial space on the ground floor with residential space on the second and third storeys; the third storey was often located in the gable and included dormer windows for light. This was a continuation of the two-part commercial block which had developed in the first part of the nineteenth century. The second was the use of false facades to create the look of a much taller building when in fact, a flat rectangular façade was applied to a much smaller, generally gable roofed structure behind it. These were usually built using wood and located in areas where erecting a large commercial building was not feasible. Examples of this type of commercial architecture are less common because they were often replaced with larger brick buildings, but there are extant examples in Kawartha Lakes, particularly in Bethany where several of these structures are still standing. In both types, the idea of the storefront had developed with large windows and often a recessed entrance to show off products and entice shoppers inside. Whichever form of architecture they used, these mid-century streetscapes were often an eclectic mix of architectural forms but represented the shift towards a highly urbanized downtown with densely packed buildings, a continuous street wall and distinctive commercial architecture separate from purely residential spaces.

By the late 1850s, a new architectural style had evolved to respond to the need for urban commercial space. The Italianate style had become popular in residential architecture integrated elements from Italian and other European Renaissance architecture into eclectic and often exaggerated combinations. Features such as columns and pilasters were common, as well as wide eaves with decorative brackets, decorative brick and iron work and arched windows with elaborate hoods and surrounds. Increasing mobility and the growth of pattern books allowed people in North America to see and experience European architecture and it was increasingly something seen as being desirable to imitate and adapt for the North American context.

This style was quickly adapted into commercial architecture where its decorative elements could be easily applied to the facades of downtown structures. With the high density of commercial buildings, and the fact that they now shared walls, the front façade of the structure was the only one that was seen from the street. As a result, builders and architects focussed on this side of the structure as the focal point for decoration and ornamentation. The

space for this type of work on these buildings was substantial: the increasing density of urban downtown necessitated buildings going up, instead of out, and by the 1860s, the majority of commercial buildings in downtown areas were two to four storeys, high enough to create upper storey residential or, by this time, office space, but still short enough to allow a person to comfortably ascend to the top storey by the stairs. This gave architects several storeys, albeit only on one side, of a building to craft ornate and decorative spaces

By the 1860s, a new standard form for downtown commercial buildings had fully emerged. These buildings, which like their predecessors were linked together in a continuous streetwall, were generally two to four storeys in height with commercial space on the ground floor and residential or office space upstairs. The commercial space on the ground floor generally included large plate glass windows and a recessed entrance which allowed for a substantial amount of display area visible from the street. This was not always the case for non-retail establishments such as hotels where the ground floor might have been used as a tavern so required a different orientation and focus and less visibility to the interior. The upper storeys were generally similar to one another with bands of tall sash windows differentiating each floor and the façade often divided into repeating bays by pilasters. These upper storeys also included extensive decorative elements, such as decorative brickwork in a variety of patterns, elaborate window hoods and large and heavy cornices. A flat, or gently sloping, roof was hidden behind the cornice. When placed together as part of a block of these structures, each individual building was distinct, but fit into a wider cohesive whole with consistent styling and massing.

Technological advancements were integral in making this style, and its widespread adoption, possible. Advances in glass manufacturing made the glass storefront possible, with newer larger pieces of plate glass facilitating the substantial expanses of glass necessary for the large uninterrupted windows. The elaborate ornamentation was also made possible by advances in cast iron manufacturing technology which allowed for the creation of prefabricated metalwork that could be ordered and applied to a building's surface and were substantially cheaper than bespoke and handmade decorative features. Most of the elaborate cornices and window hoods were made in this way and prefabrication allowed for consistent decoration to be applied across the façade of a structure. At the same time, increased mechanization in brick manufacturing made large quantities of brick available for use on structures of this size.

The redevelopment of many downtowns across Ontario in this style was not gradual and occurred rapidly between the 1860s and 1880s, although Italianate commercial buildings were still being constructed, although with less regularity, into the 1890s. Many business and property owners were eager to

adopt the new style and it quickly gained popularity as the go-to style for new commercial architecture. The late Victorian era was where architectural style was seen as being imbued with meaning, and Italianate commercial architecture was no exception. Italianate architecture, similar to other Neoclassical forms, was often associated with business and commerce due to its historical connection with ancient Greece and Rome, as well as the commercial centres of Renaissance-era Italy. Therefore, it was seen as an appropriate style for commercial downtown buildings, in a similar way that the Gothic Revival style was seen to be appropriate for ecclesiastical buildings because of its wider historic and conceptual associations with medieval Christianity. Similarly, the style very quickly came to represent a prosperous and economically vibrant community and to create a sense of permanence and confidence in the urban commercial landscape. As a result, business owners wanted to construct these types of buildings to help demonstrate their successes and promote an image of a prosperous community which, by extension, would increase visitation and investment in a community.

While the cost of buildings structures of this type was substantially decreased by the development of prefabricated decorative elements and mass-produced bricks, it was still expensive to erect a building of this type. Many business owners were keen to develop blocks of these structures in concert to provide a consistent aesthetic throughout a downtown area, but it represented a substantial financial investment in building stock. Fire often provided the impetus, and the opportunity, for redevelopment and the application of a consistent architectural style and size across an entire connected streetscape. Many early commercial downtowns were built with a substantial number of wooden buildings which made fire a highly destructive and often inevitable occurrence. However, faced with the need to rebuilt from the ground up, business owners were able to consistent apply the Italianate style across their buildings which, while not exactly the same, were built in tandem to create a consistent aesthetic across an entire downtown area. This occurred in both Fenelon Falls and Lindsay where their substantial Italianate downtowns were reconstructed as a result of major fires. However, older commercial structures, were often replaced without that particular need, as business owners and commercial property owners became more prosperous and wanted to display a wealthier and more permanent aesthetic to provide better premises for their buildings and meet modern demands. Whatever the cause of the reconstruction, however, the Italianate streetscape is representative of a second generation of buildings having evolved from more modest structures in the early and mid-nineteenth century to a fully formed and mature downtown architectural landscape.

48 Main Street was constructed within this content. It was built in 1898 to replace an older building on the same location which can be seen on the 1890 Bobcaygeon Fire Insurance plan. The older building on this site is believed to

have been constructed in the mid-1860s by John Landon Read as a general store. Little is known about this building, although it was built of wood and one-and-a-half storeys in height and clad in rough-cast cladding; Read operated his general store out of this structure for the next thirty years. By the 1890s, Read was a prosperous businessman in Bobcaygeon and, in spring 1898, commenced the construction of a new brick store on the site for his business. By October of that year, the new building was completed and Read, who had been operating his business out of the basement of the nearby town hall, had installed himself in the new store, placing an ad in the Bobcaygeon Independent that read:

J.L Read is now in his New Store and is receiving a Stock of Fall Goods, having added another line of Staple Dry Goods to his Choice Stock, which on Inspection will be found as Cheap as any house in the trade.¹

The new building – the subject property – is a two-storey structure in the fashionable Italianate style of the late nineteenth century. It is built of frame, clad in red brick, which had since been painted on the street facing elevations, and faces onto Market Square. The building has a relatively flat roof that slopes gentle to the rear of the building which is typical for structures of this type to give the rectangular, flat roofed aesthetic preferred in the Italianate style, while still allowing for water drainage. The building itself is not actually rectangular, but rather was built in a trapezoid shape to allow for the front façade building to face Market Square while its southwest still aligns with the angle of Joseph Street.

Most Italianate buildings constructed in Ontario in the second half of the nineteenth century were built as part of a continuous streetwall along the main street of a commercial downtown or in an urban commercial core, but this building is not. Unlike the majority of other examples, including those constructed in Bobcaygeon around this time, in other communities and in Kawartha Lake and in Ontario more broadly, the subject property is free standing and detached from any other commercial structure, although it does have a modern one-storey addition on its northeast side which houses another commercial space. However, detached Italianate buildings did exist, primarily in small communities that did not have a large collection of commercial buildings and where singular Italianate buildings were often constructed on their own to replace older buildings. These structures were unique from their more urban counterparts in that they generally had windows on all four elevations, and often the entrances to the upper storey residential spaces on the sides as well. This can be seen in the subject property which was built in an area of Bobcaygeon – Market Square – where the continuous streetwall

¹ “The New Store,” *Bobcaygeon Independent*, October 7, 1898, 3.

present in other areas was not achievable because of the unique orientation of the streets towards the central square.

The building houses a commercial space on its ground floor, with a residential space on the second floor. The ground floor space was constructed with a recessed Victorian storefront, typical of Italianate buildings with large picture windows on either side of the recessed entrance. For the proprietor of a general store such as Read, this storefront layout allowed for a large and visible display of goods for passing customers. The entrance is flanked by decorative pilasters and decorative panels were installed below the storefront windows; these decorative elements were likely mass manufactured and installed in the storefront for aesthetic appeal which was common in this architectural style. The storefront also includes a large signboard with decorative corbels and a storefront cornice to frame the ground floor of the building. Signs for the various businesses that have been located in the building had been installed either on or directly above the signboard and, during the early twentieth century, there was also a retractable awning that extended from the signboard but this has been removed.

The upper storey of the building is also typical of an Italianate building of this size. The upper storey is divided into two bays by pilasters with a sash window centrally located in each bay. For an Italianate building, this structure is not particularly ornate and the decorative features on the upper store are achieved through decorative brickwork which looks largely the same as it does in photographs of the building from the early twentieth century. These decorative features include brick lintels, the pilasters, an entablature and a thin dog-tooth cornice along the top of the building. Although less ornate than some examples of the Italianate style found elsewhere, the building remains a good example of its execution in a more simplified form and is similar to other Italianate commercial buildings constructed in Bobcaygeon around this time which were of a similar size, massing, and level of ornateness. Most other examples in the village, which were primarily located along Bolton Street, are no longer extant making this an important surviving example.

Overall, the property is an important and representative example of a late nineteenth-century Italianate commercial building in Bobcaygeon. With its two-storey detached construction and minimal level of ornateness, it demonstrates the application of this very popular architectural style in small-town Ontario at the end of the nineteenth century when the Italianate style had become the preferred style for new commercial buildings across the province.

Historical and Associative Value

48 Main Street has historic and associative value as a historic commercial building in Market Square in the section of Bobcaygeon known originally as

Rokeby. First constructed in 1898 for John Landon Read's general store, the commercial building had housed a number of businesses throughout the twentieth century and is directly associated with the development of Market Square as the commercial hub and community gathering space for Rokeby, the original government townsite, outside of Bobcaygeon's main commercial core along Bolton Street. Through its longstanding use as a business premise, it yields information regarding Bobcaygeon's commercial development throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It also has specific historic associations with Read himself, a prominent local businessman and community leader. The property also has direct historic associations with Group of Seven artist A.J. Casson who painted the building twice in two different paintings of Bobcaygeon that he completed in the mid-1930s as part of his broader study of small-town Ontario and central Ontario cottage country throughout the middle decades of the twentieth century.

Verulam Township, the township in which Bobcaygeon is geographically located, was first surveyed by John Houston in 1831, slightly later than the townships to the south, and lots were placed on the market by 1832. The first settlers arrived soon after, although many lots were purchased early by speculators and were not settled for some years. As with most townships across the territory, the government of Upper Canada deemed it appropriate to reserve a village and mill site as part of the survey which it located in lot 16 of concession 10. The village site was chosen in 1833 and located on the north side of the Bobcaygeon River. Initially named St. Albans, after the English village, the name was changed the following year by Lieutenant Governor John Colborne to Rokeby, named after Rokeby Park in England's County Durham.

At the same time, lot 15 to the south of the townsite was purchased from George Boulton, an early speculator, by Thomas Need, an Oxford-educated son of an English country landowner and magistrate and one of many sons of the landed gentry who emigrated to Upper Canada in the first half of the nineteenth century. The land Need purchased included the islands to the south of the government townsite and he quickly set about establishing a saw mill on the river, as well as surveying a new village site with the assistance of surveyor John Read. By 1834, the streets were laid out and named, with the main street named Boulton after the original landowner; this was eventually changed to Bolton Street as time passed.

The two village sites were both intended to be laid out in grid patterns, but in reality, it did not materialize in this way. An 1837 plan of Rokeby, which also shows the northern end of the main island, shows streets laid out in a grid pattern, which is consistent with the Read survey on the island, but not on the government town site which was realigned to centre around Market Square, intended to be the commercial centre of Rokeby. This altered the alignment of

the streets and removed the strict grid pattern present in the island survey, creating unique lots configurations and layouts on the main land with a central public gathering square and commercial buildings surrounding the square.

A saw mill was quickly established by need and other businesses formed soon after, including as well as grist mill, general store, post office and a tavern, staples of a pioneer settlement. With the advent of these services, the new settlement quickly became a primary centre for settlers in the surrounding rural area and Bobcaygeon increasingly became an important commercial centre for the area and continued to attract new residents throughout the middle of the century. By the late 1850s, the 1858 Directory for Peterborough and Victoria Counties reported that not only was the community expanding demographically and economically, but it was also being used as a starting point for population expansion further north. The directory reported:

This rising village stands on an island on the east side of the township of Verulam. The island is formed by the waters of Sturgeon Lake on the west side and Pigeon Lake on the east, and is comprised of a very superior christaline [sic] limestone. There is an excellent grist and saw mill at Bobcaygeon, although stopped for some time during the progress of the construction of the Bobcaygeon lock, are now at work again. There are two other saw mills on the south side of Sturgeon Lake, worked by a stream called Sheriff's Creek; and on the north side of the Lake Mr. J.W. Dunsford has a shingle factory, capable of cutting 12,000 shingles in 12 hours. There are two stores in the village and the industrial callings are fairly representative. The Government have recently opened up a road, for free settlement, from Bobcaygeon into the interior country. Upwards of a score of new townships are being opened up and settlement is taking place very rapidly. Population of the village about 150.²

The growth continued throughout the next two decades. By 1877, Bobcaygeon was incorporated as a separate village from Verulam Township and the new village included both Need's settlement at Bobcaygeon and the government townsite at Rokeby which were amalgamated into a single community. A new town hall was constructed on Main Street near Market Square to serve the newly incorporated village. At the time, it had a population of approximately 1000 people with a booming local economy centred on the lumber industry, although the village was home to a wide range of businesses and industry

² *Directory of the United Counties of Peterborough and Victoria* (Peterborough: T. & R. White, 1858), 39-40.

including shingle, carding and grist mills, a tannery, a large lime works and many independent retail businesses to serve the needs of the community.

Although Rokeby had been initially earmarked as the main townsite by government surveyors, the commercial core of the community had developed along Bolton Street by the middle of the nineteenth century with substantial development occurring on the main island. However, even by the mid-century, Market Square had begun to develop as a secondary commercial area for the community. The 1859 map of the area shows a number of buildings already clustered around the Square, with the beginnings of a commercial area developing there. By the end of the century, the area had become built out with a range of stores and businesses, including the subject property which operated as a general store, several other general stores owned by different proprietors, hotels, a blacksmith shop, a cooper, a livery stable, and a tailor, as well as a carding mill and carriage shop just to the west along Front Street. Bobcaygeon's Town Hall was also constructed here in 1876 on the north side of the square. The square had initially been intended for a location for farmers to set up stands to sell produce and other goods, but it does not appear that this ever happened throughout much of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, although the square did become the starting place for the Bobcaygeon Fair parades beginning in the late nineteenth century.

The subject property was constructed in 1898 as a general store for Bobcaygeon businessman John Landon Read, as a replacement for an older building on the same site. Read was born in Augusta Township in 1830 to Guy Carleton Read and Annah Buell and the youngest of their ten children; his father had come to Canada as an infant from Connecticut around 1786 as part of the migration of United Empire Loyalists into Canada after the American Revolution while his mother's parents had also come to Canada as United Empire Loyalists at some point in the early 1780s. By 1851, he had moved to Keene to work as a clerk in a store, although which business he worked for is not known. There he married Margaret Howie in 1859 but who died in 1860 after the birth of their son John. Around the same time of his marriage, Read moved to Bobcaygeon to work for his older brother William who had set up shop in the village several years prior. Soon after, he married his second wife, Emma Weller with whom he had six more children.

In 1865, Read bought the piece of property where the subject building is located and soon after, is believed to have constructed a small one-and-a-half storey frame building where he opened a general store; there may have been another building previously on this site, but it is not known how this site was built out prior to Read purchasing it. From this building, Read operated his general store for the next thirty years, selling a range of goods including boots and shoes, fabrics, seeds, and both dried and fresh groceries, including meat. In 1898, he replaced his old store with the subject property, formally opening

his new business premises in October of that year. Read ran his general store until about 1904, when he retired and sold the business.

General stores were central aspects of community life in nineteenth century Ontario as the primary retail source for rural and small-town 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, particularly for the many people who lived in hamlets and villages, such as Bobcaygeon, and did not practice agriculture. Settlers – both those engaged in farming and those who settled in growing hamlets and villages – always relied on products brought into their communities, whether they were coming from urban areas across the province or from international sources. The products that general stores supplied were core goods to everyday Victorian life from cottons and iron goods to groceries ranging from dried exotic fruit to flour and meat. The establishment of a general store allowed for the development of a small community around it, as an economic and supply hub for the surrounding area 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, including Bobcaygeon, often ended up with more than one store of this type, as a growing population led to an increased demand for products. In the 1898 *Eastern Ontario Gazetteer*, Bobcaygeon was listed as having seven general stores, including Read's, which catered to both the inhabitants of the village and to farmers who lived in the surrounding area, both in Victoria and Peterborough counties, for whom Bobcaygeon was their major economic and service hub.

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 which required both specific skillsets and equipment that most people did not own. This commodity was important both for those who lived in towns and villages, but also for farmers in rural areas who, by the second half of the nineteenth century, may not have been growing wheat as their main crop, particularly as wheat production shifted to western Canada on an industrial scale. General store merchants also sold a variety of grocery items, including

fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as dried fruits, canned goods and other miscellaneous non-perishables. Some, but not all, general stores also carried fresh meat and operated butcher shops within them. Read's certainly did as it was heavily and consistently advertised in local newspapers as having a butcher shop within the store, something that likely set it apart from other general stores in Bobcaygeon, both in Market Square and along Bolton Street.

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. It is not known if Read's store operated in this capacity, although the huge number of lumber camps in and around Bobcaygeon make it entirely possible that he did. However, wholesaling was, and remained into the twentieth century, an important function of rural and small-town general stores, both supporting the business itself as well as other businesses in the local area.

General stores were hubs of community activity as people came in and out for their everyday goods and interacted with both each other and the storekeeper. Many general storekeepers were also prominent figures in their community, as merchants who many people interacted with and who, particularly in smaller communities, often acted in other roles such as postmaster or as a loan agent. Some of these businessmen, who were often quite prosperous, also stepped into leadership roles in their communities, whether in business, religion or local government. In addition to his role as a well-known local merchant, Read was certainly a prominent and well-respected member of the local community. In his obituary in February 1918 on the front page of the *Bobcaygeon Independent*, it noted:

While interested in business life in the community, Mr. Read serves the Village as Reeve. He also was one of the oldest members of the Masonic Lodge here, and a life long Conservative in politics. Mr. Read was also involved in extensive farming operations and the splendid farms now occupied by Messrs. D. Hetherington, Gerald Murphy and

Leslie Anderson were largely improved by the direction of John L. Read. ...He was a valued member of the Board of Managers and an Elder of Knox Church and to him rightfully belonged the highest of titles – an honest man.³

Read and his store were certainly important aspects of the business community in both Bobcaygeon as a whole and Market Square more specifically. With Read's retirement in 1904, he continued to own the property but began to lease it out to other business tenants; at the time of his death, the store was occupied by the Conway Brothers who operated a clothes store from this location. After Read's death, his son Frederick Read retained ownership of the building until 1926 when it was sold to Edward and Clifford Beck, who owned and operated the lumber yard behind the building and rented out the store. Throughout the twentieth century, it was home to a range of businesses, including a furniture store, a restaurant, a movie theatre known as the Iroquois Theatre in the 1950s, and a Becker's Milk and Convenience Store. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, the building was home to the local newspaper, *The Bobcaygeon Promoter*, later known as *The Kawartha Promoter*, and this building is often associated locally with that publication and known as the Promoter Building.

The property also has historic and associative value through its association with Group of Seven artists A.J. Casson who painted the building twice in two different paintings of Bobcaygeon that he completed in the mid-1930s as part of his broader study of small-town Ontario and central Ontario cottage country throughout the middle decades of the twentieth century. Casson was born in 1898 and first began to exhibit his work as an artist in the late 1910s. He began his career as a commercial artist where he was apprenticed to Franklin Carmichael; he was invited to join the Group of Seven by Carmichael in 1926 after the departure of Frank Johnston from the group. With the dissolution of that group in 1932, he, along with several other members of the Group of Seven, founded the Canadian Group of Painters which came together in 1933.

Like other painters in the Group of Seven, Casson was inspired by and regularly painted the Canadian wilderness but, instead of the significant focus by other group members on the rugged landscape of northern Ontario and beyond, Casson also focussed significantly on scenes from southern and central Ontario, including landscape, farm and village scenes. In the late 1920s, Casson purchased his first car and used this vehicle to begin his exploration and renderings of southern and central Ontario which he continued to do for the rest of his career. He first began to visit Elora, of which he completed twenty-four watercolours in and around the community where his focus began to shift from the rugged wilderness themes that defined much of the body of

³ "The Passing of John L. Read," *Bobcaygeon Independent* February 14, 1918, 1.

work produced by the Group of Seven throughout the early twentieth century towards a more pastoral focus and approach to farm and village scenes that often included people and depictions of everyday life.

By the early 1930s, he was making road trips into Ontario's emerging cottage country, including Kawartha Lakes noting in a 1977 interview that "[t]his began the period where I was circulating all over Ontario in my car trying to find other interesting spots, with interesting old buildings and houses."⁴ Of the art he did during this period, Casson said: "If I have to define my own contribution to the Canadian art scene, what was particularly mine were really the rural villages and houses. In a way, it is a record of a disappearing society and a disappearing world."⁵ Through this work, Casson captured, in addition to wilderness landscapes, scenes that included farms, villages, and, unlike much of the Group of Seven's collective body of work, domestic, commercial and institutional buildings, many of them constructed during the Victorian era.

From the 1930s to the 1960s, Casson completed a large body of work throughout Ontario's emerging cottage country in Kawartha Lakes, Haliburton, northern Renfrew, northern Hastings, where he rented a cottage on Baptiste Lake for many years, and the Almaguin Highlands region. The body of work he completed during this period includes a variety of wilderness landscapes of the lakes, hills and forest that characterized the region as well as depictions of farms, churches, and villages throughout the region. This body of work includes identified images of towns and villages as they appeared in the middle decades of the twentieth century including painting of communities such as Magnetawan, Haliburton, Barry's Bay, Bancroft and Whitney. During this time, Casson travelled to Bobcaygeon, likely around 1935, where he completed sketched that ultimately resulted in two paintings, a watercolour and a small oil on board, both entitled *Bobcaygeon*. The focal point of both of these painting is a small country store, which is believed to be the subject property. Casson took artistic license with both the building and the surrounds for a better composition and focal point on the building, such as changing the surroundings of the building and moving it closer to the water; it is notable that both paintings clearly feature the same building, but its surroundings are different in both. He also took license with the building itself, simplifying its forms and massing. While Casson is not specifically associated with Bobcaygeon and it is not known how many times he visited, he is associated with this building because of its well-known depiction in his work and its use to represent Bobcaygeon as a village within the artist's larger body of work depicting small-town Ontario.

⁴ A.J. Casson in *A.J. Casson* (Windsor: Art Gallery of Windsor, 1978), 9.

⁵ A.J. Casson, *A.J. Casson*, 8.

Overall, 48 Main Street has historical and associative value in its longstanding role as a commercial building in Bobcaygeon, specifically in the Market Square area. Through this role, particularly as Read's General Store, it yields information regarding the commercial development of the village and particularly of the former government townsite of Rokeby in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It has a specific historic association with John Landon Read, who built the building for his general store, a prominent nineteenth century businessman and community leader in the village. It also has specific historic associations with Group of Seven artist A.J. Casson as the subject of two of his painting and speaks to his broader preoccupation with southern and central Ontario's villages and rural areas throughout his career.

Contextual Value

48 Main Street has contextual value as part of the historic commercial landscape of Bobcaygeon's Market Square. Located on the north side of the Bobcaygeon River on the main land, Market Square developed as part of the original town site of Rokeby and is currently characterized by a collection of commercial buildings clustered around a central square, including the subject property which maintains and supports its historic character with regard to the street pattern and layout that is distinct from the rest of the village. It is historically and visually linked to its surroundings as part of the development of Market Square as a distinct commercial area and public square in the nineteenth century for the northern part of the community.

The area that is now the village of Bobcaygeon was surveyed in the early 1830s as part of the broader survey of Verulam Township at this time. As part of the survey, a village site was reserved on Lot 16 in Concession 10 on the north side of the Bobcaygeon River and named Rokeby. At the same time, Lot 15 in the same concession, which included the islands in the Bobcaygeon River, was purchased by George Boulton, then sold to Thomas Need who quickly established a saw mill in this area and set about surveying streets and lots on the island with the assistance of surveyor John Read.

The two village sites were both intended to be laid out in grid patterns, but in reality, it did not materialize in this way. An 1837 plan of Rokeby, which also shows the northern end of the main island, shows streets laid out in a grid pattern, which is consistent with the Read survey on the island, but not on the government town site which was realigned to centre around Market Square, intended to be the commercial centre of Rokeby. This altered the alignment of the streets and removed the strict grid pattern present in the island survey, creating unique lots configurations and layouts on the main land where the subject property is located.

Market Square was intended to serve a primarily commercial purpose, but also serve as a public square with five streets - Front Street East, Front Street West, Queen Street, Joseph Street, and Main Street - emptying into it. The area was originally intended to serve as an outdoor market where farmers could sell their produce, although this function did not actually begin in the nineteenth century. However, the area quickly became a commercial hub for Rokeby and the northern part of the community. There is evidence of businesses being established in this area as early as the mid-nineteenth century and likely as early as the late 1830s in this area as the first businesses in Bobcaygeon began to open.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the area around Market Square was home to a range of small businesses encircling the square, which centred around a water fountain where local residents collected water. The 1904 Fire Insurance Map, which was prepared just six years after the subject property was constructed, shows a range of commercial properties around the square including several general stores, a grocer, livery stables, a carriage shop, carding mill and the Rokeby Hotel, which burned down the following year but was soon rebuilt. Two institutional buildings, Knox Presbyterian Church and the Bobcaygeon Town Hall, were also built on the square by this time.

In the present day, many of these commercial buildings have been retained, although not all of them and some of them have been converted to residential use; the two major institutional buildings also remain extant. Some of the buildings, such as the former Cain Brothers general store which has been converted into the Bobcaygeon Inn, are heavily modified but still retain certain historic features that make them recognizable as older structures within this area of Bobcaygeon. The buildings are oriented facing the main square where there is the fountain and gardens that mark the centre of Market Square which is a defined and recognized area of the village. The area exists as a secondary commercial area, separate from Bolton Street on the main island which is the village's main commercial area. These two areas differ in their massing and layout, creating two distinct commercial spaces within the community; whereas Bolton Street is a typically historic main street with commercial buildings lining both sides of the street, Market Square is oriented in a square layout, with buildings facing the central irregular square.

48 Main Street supports and maintains the specific historic character of Market Square as one of its remaining historic commercial buildings, and one that is still used for commercial purposes. The majority of the historic buildings, including the subject property, are between one-and-a-half and three stories in height and built in a range of late Victorian commercial styles. Like the other buildings in this area, the property faces the square and forms part of its historic landscape. It is historically and visually linked to its surroundings as part of the development of Market Square as a distinct commercial area in

Bobcaygeon beginning in the late nineteenth century where many of those commercial structures are remain extant. It remains an important part of the overall character and landscape of the square, and is important both individually, as a late nineteenth century commercial building, and within its context of Market Square.

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

48 Main Street has design and physical value as a representative example of a late nineteenth century Italianate building constructed in a small-town setting. Built 1898 as a replacement for an older wooden commercial building on the same location, the property displays key characteristics of this architectural style including its recessed Victorian storefront, gently sloping roof, bays divided by pilasters, and decorative brickwork. It demonstrates the way in which the Italianate commercial style was used outside of major urban areas, where it was primarily used as part of continuous urban streetwalls, and the execution of this building type as a free-standing detached commercial building.

Historical and Associative Value

48 Main Street has historic and associative value as a historic commercial building in Market Square in the section of Bobcaygeon known originally as Rokeby. First constructed in 1898 for John Landon Read's general store, the commercial building had housed a number of businesses throughout the twentieth century and is directly associated with the development of Market Square as the commercial hub and community gathering space for Rokeby, the original government townsite, outside of Bobcaygeon's main commercial core along Bolton Street. Through its longstanding use as a business premise, it yields information regarding Bobcaygeon's commercial development throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It also has specific historic associations with Read himself, a prominent local businessman and community leader. The property also has direct historic associations with Group of Seven artist A.J. Casson who painted the building twice in two different paintings of Bobcaygeon that he completed in the mid-1930s as part of his broader study of small-town Ontario and central Ontario cottage country throughout the middle decades of the twentieth century.

Contextual Value

48 Main Street has contextual value as part of the historic commercial landscape of Bobcaygeon's Market Square. Located on the north side of the Bobcaygeon River on the main land, Market Square developed as part of the original town site of Rokeby and is currently characterized by a collection of commercial buildings clustered around a central square, including the subject property which maintains and supports its historic character with regard to the

street pattern and layout that is distinct from the rest of the village. It is historically and visually linked to its surroundings as part of the development of Market Square as a distinct commercial area and public square in the nineteenth century for the northern part of the community.

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 property's value as a representative example of late nineteenth century Italianate commercial architecture.

- Two-storey red brick construction
- Flat roof, sloping towards the back of the property
- Cornice with dog-tooth brickwork
- Decorative brickwork
- Bays divided by pilasters
- Fenestration including:
 - Sash windows
 - Voissoirs
 - Ground floor picture windows in storefront
- Victorian storefront including:
 - Recessed entrance
 - Picture windows
 - Signboard with cornice and brackets
 - Columns
 - Decorative panels

Historical and Associative Attributes

The historical and associative attributes support the property's value as part of the historic commercial development of Bobcaygeon's Market Square.

- Location in Market Square
- Historic and continuing commercial use
- Relationship to the historic commercial development of Market Square, including to J. L. Read

Contextual Attributes

The contextual attributes of the property support its value as a contributing feature to the historic landscape of Bobcaygeon's Market Square.

- Construction facing Market Square
- Irregular massing to align with Joseph Street
- Views of Market Square from the property
- Views of the property from Market Square
- Construction to the lot line

Images









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