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Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report
Superintendents' Houses



Superintendents' Houses

81-83 and 89-91 Carleton Street,

Almonte ON

Prepared by: Sally Coutts

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Executive Summary

The wooden structures at 81-83 and 89-91 Carleton Street were constructed on adjacent lots in 1871 on what was then known as Coleman's Lane. [1] Coleman's Lane was located on Coleman Island, a small island north-west of Almonte's commercial core bounded by two channels of the Mississippi River, which was the site of the Rosamond Mills (now converted to condominiums and the Mississippi Valley Textile Museum). Bennett and William Rosamond, the sons of James Rosamond, who owned Victoria Mill No. 1 in downtown Almonte, took over his business in 1861. Seeing that new lands would be required if their milling business was to grow, the Rosamonds started buying land on the island as early as the 1850s. [2]

By 1867 they had enough land to begin construction and built Rosamond Mill No.1. By the end of the 19th century, there were a number of buildings associated with the mill on the island, including a boiler house, business offices and a warehouse. [3] The Superintendents' Houses were built in 1871 by the Rosamonds, soon after they built Mill No. 1 so that superintendents could be close to the mill at all times. They were among the earliest houses on the island and remained company owned until 1978. [4]

Constructed as two single detached dwellings, the Superintendents' Houses were later converted to semi-detached structures.



Fig. 1 Superintendents' House, 89-91 Carleton Street, Credit: Jennifer Russell, Mississippi Mills



Fig. 2 Superintendents' Houses, Carleton Streetscape, Credit: Jennifer Russell, Mississippi Mills

1 "Carleton Street Properties: 81/83 and 89/91 Carleton Street, Almonte, Ontario," Heritage File, Mississippi Mills, says that a dated cornerstone inscribed "1871" was found on the site.

2 Heritage Conservation District (HCD) Study

3 "Rosamond Woolen Company," plaque, located on Coleman Island.

4 "Carleton Street Properties: 81/83 and 89/91 Carleton Street, Almonte, Ontario," Heritage File, Mississippi Mills

They have hipped gable roofs with paired eaves brackets and hipped gable dormer windows that break the eaves. Each structure features a one storey entrance porch that was probably added when the houses were divided. Housing on Coleman Island includes a mix of 19th century brick and wood-frame houses, some of which were constructed as workers' housing, as well as houses dating throughout the 20th century. Many of the later houses replaced earlier dwellings, often substandard, that were occupied by millworkers.

Together, these buildings create an eclectic neighbourhood, that reflects several periods of residential development. Because of its physical separation from Almonte's commercial core and its close association with the woollen mills, Coleman Island has a distinct character.

The properties have cultural heritage value for their design, associative and contextual values. They meet four of the nine criteria for designation under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act.*



Fig. 3 Superintendents' Houses, Carleton Streetscape, Credit: Google Streetview, May 2023

Introduction

The Superintendents' Houses are located at the end of Carleton Street, one of the first streets to be laid out on Coleman Island. The island was developed to take advantage of the falls when there was no room left to either expand or build new mills along the shore across the river. Coleman Island remains an eclectic residential district with a lively mix of older houses originally occupied by workers in the mill and infill development, some of it recent, some dating from the 1960s and 1970s. The original mill building is now a condominium and the company's offices and warehouse have been converted to the Mississippi Valley Textile Museum, a popular tourist attraction.



Fig. 4 Aerial View of the Superintendents' Houses, Almonte, ON, Credit: Google Maps, 2026

Criterion 1

1.1 | Description and Response

Criterion 1	
Description	**Property Meets Criterion**
The property has design value or physical value because it is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method.	**Yes**

Response to Criterion

The Superintendents' Houses, 81-83 and 89-91 Carleton Street, are representative examples of simple balloon frame structures. Built as two single detached dwellings, they were later converted into semi-detached dwellings.

The buildings are balloon frame buildings, a construction method that spread rapidly across North American after its first appearance in Chicago in 1833, reaching Ontario later in the 1850s. [5] These buildings were built of vertical studs that ran from the foundations up to the roof plate, interrupted by floor joists. They were ideally suited to new communities in Ontario because of the vast quantities of timber, the increasing number of hydraulic sawmills and the fact that unskilled workers could easily and quickly build a balloon frame structure. [6] The widespread availability of nails also made these houses easy to build. As a cheap housing type that was easy to build quickly when needed, many balloon frame houses were very simple, lacking in exterior decoration. [7] This is the case with the Superintendents' Houses – they have few exterior decorative elements.



Fig. 5 Taken from Coleman Park, showing 81-83 Carleton Street, Credit: Linda Seccaspina, Tales of Almonte, Facebook



Fig. 6 Superintendents' House, 81-83 Carleton Street, Credit: Jennifer Russell, Mississippi Mills

5 Barbara Humphreys, "The Architectural Heritage of the Rideau Corridor, Frame Houses" Canadian Historic Sites: Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History No. 10, Parks Canada, 1974, p. 34

6 Balloon framing is a wood frame construction method, where wooden studs run from the sill plate or foundation to the eaves and floor joists are attached to them with nails. It replaced timber framing.

7 Op. cit., p. 34

1.2 | Supporting Details

Description of Building

Constructed in 1871, the Superintendents' Houses are an example of simple, symmetrical, wooden balloon frame vernacular buildings, built using local materials and labour. One and a half storeys in height, they have hipped gable roofs, with hipped dormer windows that break the eaves. There are pairs of rectangular sash windows centered below the dormers on the first floor. Each unit has a narrow, one storey enclosed porch, which was probably added when the houses were converted to semi-detached dwelling units. They are not identical but share a similar form and expression.

Stylistically, the houses are vernacular versions of the Ontario Cottage, the dominant domestic architectural form of the time. Their lack of detail and simple plans reflect their function as company housing.

Heritage Attributes

- Clapboard siding, with limited architectural detail
- Stone foundations
- Semi-detached with enclosed side entry porches
- Hipped gabled roof and dormers
- Paired eaves brackets
- Symmetrical plan
- Wooden sash windows, arranged singly and in pairs
- One and a half storey wooden balloon frame construction

Setting

- Location close to former mill buildings



Fig. 7 Hipped gable roof, Credit: Jennifer Russell, Mississippi Mills



Fig. 8 Wooden sash window, Credit: Jennifer Russell, Mississippi Mills



Fig. 9 Paired windows, 89-91 Carleton Street, Credit: Sally Coutts



Fig. 10 Stone foundation and clapboard siding, Credit: Jennifer Russell, Mississippi Mills



Fig. 11 81-83 Carleton Street, Rear East Elevation, Credit: Jennifer Russell, Mississippi Mills



Fig. 12 89-91 Carleton Street, Rear East Elevation, Credit: Jennifer Russell, Mississippi Mills



Fig. 13 81-83 and 89-91 Carleton Street, Rear East Elevations, Credit:Jennifer Russell, Mississippi Mills



Fig. 14 81-83 and 89-91 Carleton Street View, Credit: Jennifer Russell, Mississippi Mills

Criterion 2

2.1 | Description and Response

Criterion 2	
Description	**Property Meets Criterion**
The property has design value or physical value because it displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit.	**No**

Response to Criterion

As simple balloon frame structures constructed in 1871, the Superintendents' Houses do not display a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit. Physical examination and research undertaken preparing this report did not reveal anything noteworthy about its construction. The properties do not meet this criterion.

Criterion 3

3.1 | Description and Response

Criterion 3	
Description	**Property Meets Criterion**
The property has design value or physical value because it demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement.	**No**

Response to Criterion

The Superintendents' Houses do not demonstrate a high degree of technical or scientific achievement. As simple wooden houses, constructed by local labourers, using methods of the period, the properties do not display a high degree of technical or scientific achievement. The properties do not meet this criterion.

Criterion 4

4.1 | Description and Response

Criterion 4

Description	Property Meets Criterion
The property has historical value or associative value because it has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community.	Yes

Response to Criterion

The properties have significant historical and associative value because of their association with the Rosamond Woolen Mills, Almonte's most important mills for decades. The mills employed hundreds of people over the decades and gave Almonte its identity as a major Canadian manufacturing centre. The houses are historically linked to the adjacent woollen mill complex.

4.2 | Supporting Details

In 1880 13% of all Canadian manufacturing jobs were in the textile industry. The Mississippi Valley was a centre of the industry because of its ample water power, a supply of wool and the presence of large Scottish population skilled at weaving. [8] Textile mills were established there in the early 19th century, but protective tariffs enacted in 1879, the availability of capital, especially from Montreal, and general population increase, made the latter half of the 19th century a period of explosive growth in the textile industry. [9]

James Rosamond took advantage of the geographic advantages of the Mississippi River, first building a woollen mill in Carleton Place. In 1857, he left that town and moved to Almonte, hoping to take advantage of its superior water power. In 1862, two of Rosamond's three sons, Bennett and William, took over the business, founding B. and W. Rosamond and Company. Astute businessmen, they soon doubled the capacity of their existing mills. In the 1850s they began purchasing land on Coleman Island in anticipation of eventually expanding there. By 1866 they had brought Montreal financier George Stephen into the company, whose links to Montreal's financial interests proved vital. In 1871, a joint stock company, the Rosamond Woolen Company, was established. By then the new mill on Coleman Island, which was built to manufacture fine tweeds [10] and completed in 1867, was a great success. [11]

Rosamond was dedicated to the milling industry, bringing experts from England to advise him and keeping his machinery up to date. He joined the Canadian Manufacturers Association and was its president in 1890. In addition, he had a good reputation as a generous employer, hosting annual Christmas parties, landscaping his grounds for public use and creating a croquet court. The provision of workers' houses for foremen and managers demonstrate

8 McCullough, Allan "The Primary Textile Industry in Canada, History and Heritage," Studies in Archaeology, Architecture and History, National Historic Sites, Parks Canada, 1992, p.98

9 Ibid., "Causes of Growth: Tariffs and Finances," pp. 65-74

10 Parks Canada, Directory of Federal Heritage Designations, "Rosamond Woollen Mill National Historic Site of Canada".

11 Richard M. Reid, "ROSAMOND, BENNETT," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 13, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed July 14, 2026, https://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/rosamond_bennett_13E.html.

his interest in his workers and was a means of attracting and retaining workers.

Rosamond may have had a good reputation within the milling industry, but his employees worked long hours in dangerous conditions. The mills also employed children until the practice was banned and compulsory education meant that younger children were not available to work. There were strikes at the firm in the late 19th century. [12]

Almonte's development as a milling town followed a pattern common to 19th-century Ontario communities located near water power. Early settlers harnessed the water to operate simple grist and sawmills that served the local community. Where the power source was strong enough, additional mills followed, often allowing mill owners to build considerable wealth. Almonte followed this course, eventually becoming one of Canada's leading centres of the woollen industry.

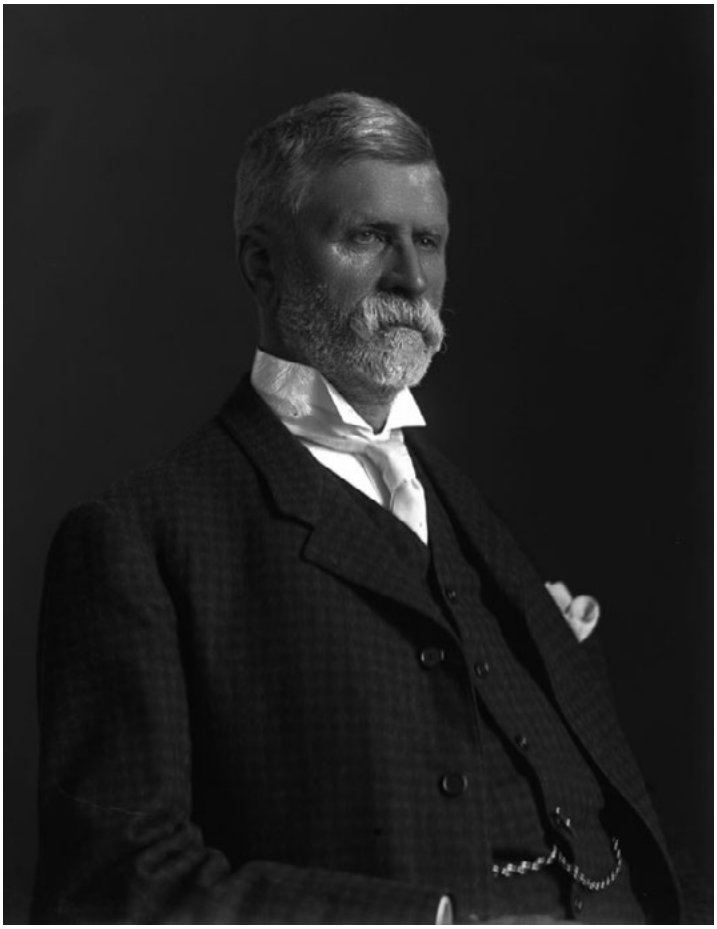


Fig. 15 Rosamond, Bennett, Credit: Dictionary of Canadian Biography, https://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/rosamond_bennett_13E.html

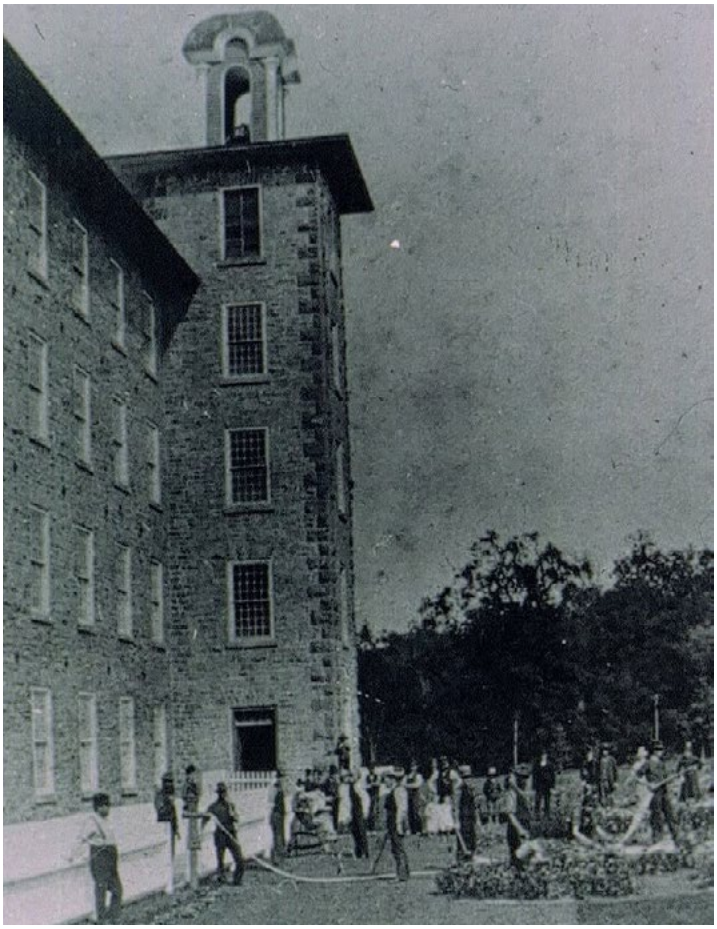


Fig. 16 Image showing landscaping around Rosamond Mill, Credit: Almonte.com historic photo archive

[12] Almonte Gazette, "Ten Hours a Day," 13 October 1871, p. 3. The article expressed the newspapaer's hope that the working day would be reduced, while acknowledging that the workers' pay would be reduced.

Criterion 5

5.1 | Description and Response

Criterion 5	
Description	**Property Meets Criterion**
The property has historical or associative value because it yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture.	**Yes**

Response to Criterion

The Superintendents' Houses have historical and associative value because they illustrate the transformation of Almonte from a tiny community in 1819 to one of Canada's largest industries by the end of the century. The rapid growth of the town as a mill town, the arrival of workers to the town, and the increasing success of the surrounding agricultural area made Almonte an important centre in Lanark County. By 1871, when the houses were built, Almonte's mills had grown to the extent that construction of housing for managers at the mill was warranted. By then, the town offered many services including a doctor, dentists, regular rail service to Ottawa and other destinations, as well as churches of many denominations.
It served as a local commercial centre for the surrounding agricultural communities.

5.2 | Supporting Details

The Superintendents' Houses have historical and associative value because they illustrate the transformation of Almonte (now part of the Municipality of Mississippi Mills) from a small community with a grist mill in 1819 into an industrial hub by the end of the 19th century.

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

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

The town's largest wool manufacturer, James Rosamond, built his first mill in Carleton Place in 1846. In 1852 he moved to Almonte after purchasing a share in the Ramsay Woolen Cloth company. The Ramsay Mill burnt down in 1857 and Rosamond bought all the land and water rights, constructing the Victoria Mill that same year. James's sons, Bennett and William, leased the mill from their father in 1862 and by 1866, they had organized a new firm, B. and W. Rosamond and Company, with financing from George Stephen of Montreal. Stephen was responsible for bringing the Merchants' Bank to Almonte at this busy period in its existence. The new company built

the Rosamond Woolen Mill in 1866, followed by the Superintendents' Houses in 1871. [13]

In July 1868, three years before the construction of the Superintendents' Houses, the *Almonte Gazette* proudly highlighted the town's progress, noting that development was steady and new houses of various styles and sizes were quickly appearing. The paper noted that "The mason work of the large stone school house has been completed," and other stone structures like the Baptist Church, Dr. Mostyn's house, and Mr. J. Jamieson's house were "rapidly assuming shape."[14]

The Rosamonds would begin the development of Coleman Island within the decade, further increasing opportunities for the town.

The late 1860s marked an important time for Almonte, as the construction of modern mills, churches, a new school, and substantial stone houses signaled a period of growth and prosperity. By the end of the nineteenth century, Almonte earned the nickname "Manchester of the North," with its mills becoming well-known for their output. [15]

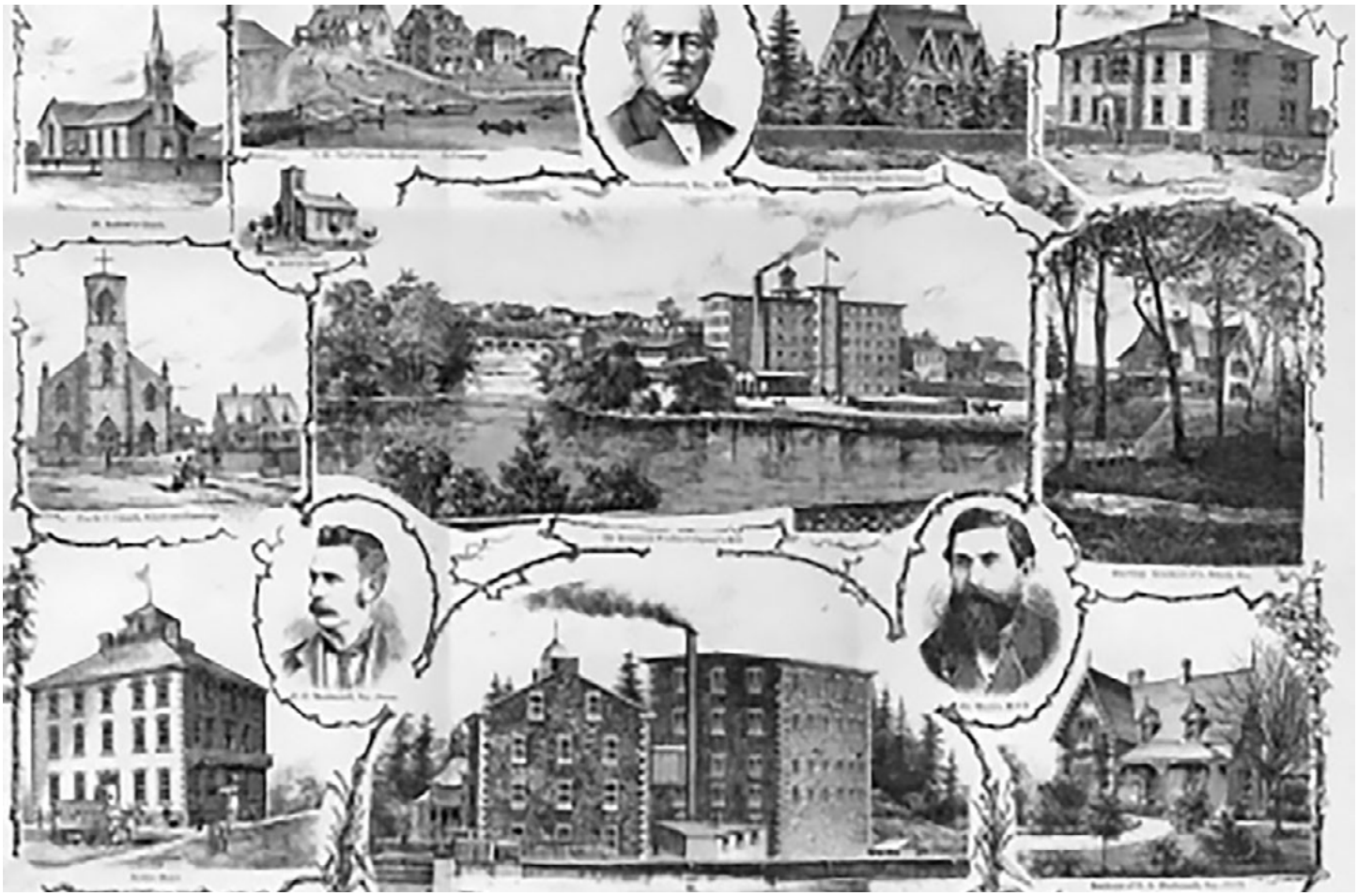


Fig. 17 The Rosamond Mill was included in a montage of Almonte published in the "Canadian Illustrated News" in 1879, Credit: "Canadian Illustrated News," Vol. 19, no. 1, January 4, 1879

[13] "Bennett Rosamond," Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Volume XIII (1901-1910)

[14] "Improvements," Almonte Gazette, July 24, 1868

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

Criterion 6

6.1 | Description and Response

Criterion 6	
Description	**Property Meets Criterion**
The property has historical value or associative value because it demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community.	**No**
Response to Criterion	
The research undertaken by the heritage consultant did not reveal the designer or builder of the Superintendents' Houses. They may have been built by employees of the company. The properties do not meet this criterion.	

Criterion 7

7.1 | Description and Response

Criterion 7	
Description	**Property Meets Criterion**
The property has contextual value because it is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area.	**No**
Response to Criterion	
The block where the Superintendents' Houses are located consists of primarily post-war houses and the houses do not define, maintain or support its character.	

Criterion 8

8.1 | Description and Response

Criterion 8	
Description	**Property Meets Criterion**
The property has contextual value because it is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings.	**Yes**

Response to Criterion

The Superintendents' Houses were constructed for management of the Rosamond Woolen Mills and have contextual value because of their proximity to the former mill complex. The property is functionally linked to the adjacent Rosamond Mill site and its buildings. From the initial construction of the first mill building on the site through decades of use for
milling, the Superintendents' Houses accommodated employees of the mill. The proximity of management to the mill was deliberate, as it enabled superintendents to get to the mill quickly if there was a problem, and to report for their shifts. The company landscaped the island providing amenities such as a croquet court.

The Superintendents' Houses were historically and visually connected to the site as they were visible from different vantage points around the town, establishing their relationship with the complex.

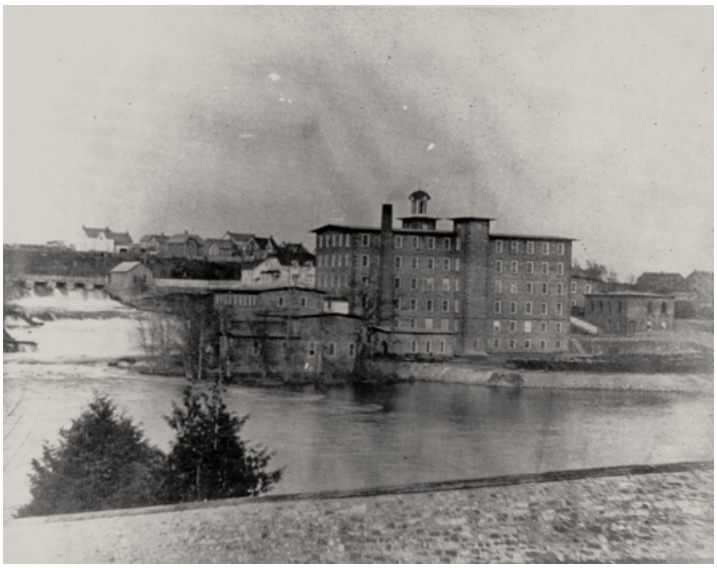


Fig. 18 The houses can be seen behind and to the left of Rosamond Mill, Credit: Almonte.com, historic photo archive



Fig. 19 Andrew Bell map of Almonte, 1872, Credit: Carleton Street Properties: 81-83 and 89-91 Carleton Street, Municipality of Mississippi Mills

Criterion 9

9.1 | Description and Response

Criterion 9	
Description	**Property Meets Criterion**
The property has contextual value because it is a landmark	**No**

Response to Criterion
The Superintendents' Houses are modest wood-frame houses on a quiet residential street and are not landmarks.



Fig. 20 Superintendents' Houses, Carleton Streetscape, Credit: Google Streetview, June 2012

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