



MEMORANDUM

TO: Heritage Markham Committee

FROM: George Duncan, Senior Heritage Planner

DATE: February 12, 2020

SUBJECT: HERITAGE PERMIT APPLICATION HE 19 141022
Front Yard and Side Yard Fences
30 Colborne Street
Thornhill Heritage Conservation District

Property/Building Description:

- John Ramsden House, c.1852, Georgian architectural tradition. A one and a half storey frame dwelling with a recently constructed addition (File No. SPC 19 115724).

Use:

- Residence.

Heritage Status:

- A Class A heritage building within the Thornhill Heritage Conservation District.

Application/Proposal:

- A Heritage Permit application has been submitted for a new front yard fence, 4 feet in height, a new side yard privacy fence 6 feet in height, and a new evergreen hedge along the west side property line, adjacent to the driveway.
- The front yard fence is a wood, board-style fence with a top and bottom rail, and the privacy fence is a horizontal board wood fence. See attached photographs,
- The fences were constructed prior to the application being made.
- The applicant has advised that the front yard fence will be painted white when the weather permits it.

Background:

- This property previously had a traditional white picket fence in the front yard (see attached photograph). It is not known how old the fence was.

- The majority of this picket fence was removed during the construction of the residential addition to allow the installation of construction hoarding. Staff was under the understanding that the former fence would be returned once construction was completed. The District Plan does note in the front yard fencing guidelines that “where historic fences or hedges exist, they should be retained”.
- Staff was advised in late November that a new fence was under construction. Staff contacted the owners to advise them that a Heritage Permit is required for any alteration to the property (not previously approved through other applications), and a Heritage Permit application was submitted on November 26, 2019. The application showed the height and location of the fences, but no illustrations of their style were provided.
- Photographs of the completed fences illustrate the style (see attached photographs).
- Because the front yard fence design is not a traditional picket fence and is not a design reflected in the guidelines of the Thornhill Heritage Conservation District Plan, staff was hesitant to approve it under the delegated approval process. Therefore, the application has been referred to Heritage Markham for review and comment.
- It should also be noted that the northern section of a mature yew hedge was removed by the applicant in order to install the side yard fence (west side), and this hedge will be replaced with a new hedge as indicated in the Heritage Permit application.

Staff Comment:

Front Yard Fence

- Although the new front yard fence is not reflective of the traditional picket fence designs in the District Plan, it is in some ways similar to examples of fences illustrated on page 172 of the guidelines (see excerpt from the District Plan, attached).
- Staff has located an archival photograph of an old fence very similar to the new front yard fence at 30 Colborne, on a farm once located at Stouffville Road and McCowan Road (see the archival photo from page 58 of the book, *Markham Remembered*, attached). Based on this photograph, there is some historical precedent for this fence design in Markham Township. The main difference between the historical example and this new fence is that the vertical fence boards are double-layered at 30 Colborne Street (front and back sides).
- Once the new fence is painted white, it will blend better with the Colborne Street streetscape.

Rear Yard Fence

- The taller privacy fence is constructed of wood, but is different from the recommended privacy fence examples shown on page 174 of the District Plan (see excerpt from the District Plan, attached) because its boards are placed horizontally rather than vertically.
- The new fence is behind the front corner of the dwelling and is therefore set back from the street and appears to be in compliance with the Fence By-law.
- The Thornhill Heritage Conservation District Plan does indicate that “new or replacement rear yard fencing, unless on a corner lot” is exempt from review/heritage permit. However, the Plan also indicates that “front yard and backyard fences will conform to the Guidelines...” This would appear to indicate that those rear yard fences on corner lots

which are more visible to the public, should adhere to the designs suggested in the Guidelines.

- The visual impact of the new side yard rear privacy fence will be lessened if new hedge material is planted and grows as is proposed by the applicant.

Evergreen Hedge

- The owner is already committed to re-planting part of the former yew hedge that was removed without approval along the west property boundary near the front of the property. In order to install the new fencing, the owner indicated that the remainder of the former mature hedge was removed, but the owner is proposing to re-plant a new yew hedge along the west boundary.

Suggested Heritage Markham Recommendation:

THAT Heritage Markham Committee has no objection to the Heritage Permit application for a new front yard fence at 30 Colborne Street based on the example of a historic precedent shown in the book, *Markham Remembered*, on the condition that the new front yard fence be painted white and appropriate wooden caps be installed on the posts;

THAT Heritage Markham Committee has no objection to the rear yard privacy fence (visible from the front of the property) as the re-planting of a vegetative hedge along the west boundary (near the garage) will help soften the impact over time.

AND THAT Heritage Markham Committee supports the re-planting of the vegetative hedge to replace the yew hedge that was removed along the west boundary of the property.

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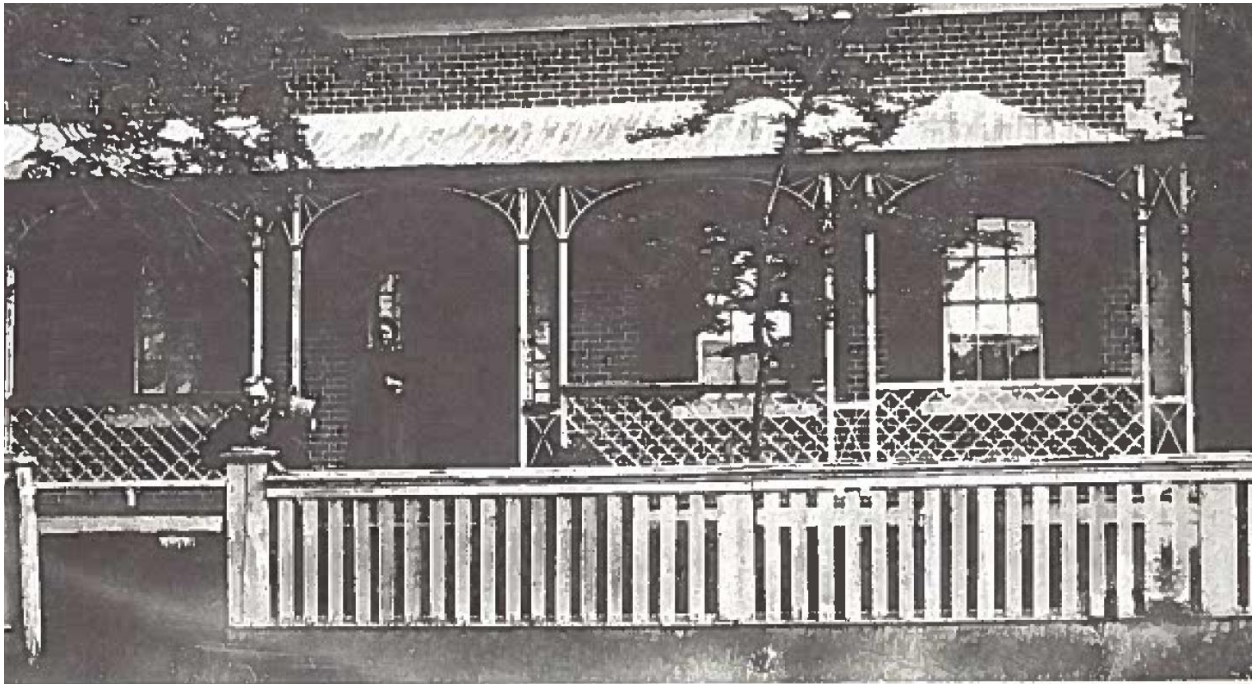


Previous Picket Fence at 30 Colborne Street (above), New Fence, Below





New Front and Side Yard Fences at 30 Colborne Street



Historic example of similar fence, Bartholomew House, Stouffville Road at McCowan Road