



MEMORANDUM

TO: Heritage Markham Committee

FROM: Evan Manning, Senior Heritage Planner

DATE: June 14, 2023

SUBJECT: **Second Batch of Priority Designations**
Designation under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act
81 Dickson Hill Road, 2972 Elgin Mills Road, 7880 Highway 7,
10159 McCowan Road, 4130 Nineteenth Avenue, 4159 Nineteenth Avenue

FILE: N/A

Application/Proposal

As part of the priority designation project, and in accordance with the heritage significance of each property as described in the appended Research Reports (refer to Appendix 'B'), Heritage Section staff ("Staff") recommend that the following listed properties be designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act. The properties identified below constitute the second batch of six properties proposed for designation:

- 81 Dickson Hill Road – “Dickson Hill Mill House”
- 2972 Elgin Mills Road – “John Rowbotham House”
- 7880 Highway 7 – “Albert Reesor House, Locust Hill”
- 10159 McCowan Road – “Haacke-Warriner House”
- 4130 Nineteenth Avenue – “Almira Mill House”
- 4159 Nineteenth Avenue – “Almira General Store and Post Office”

Background

This report is intended to be read in conjunction with the report prepared for Heritage Markham consideration dated May 10, 2023 and titled “Priority Designation Information Report”. This document provides a summary of the work plan as prepared by Heritage Section staff to designate significant listed properties within the two-year timelines imposed by Bill 23, and describes our evaluation method to identify these properties.

Refer to the link below for a copy of the report:

<https://pub-markham.escrimemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=75337>

Legislative Context

The following summarizes the key processes and notification requirements associated with designation under Part IV of the Act

- Staff undertake research and evaluate the property under Ontario Regulation 9/06, as amended, to determine whether it should be considered a significant cultural heritage resource worthy of Part IV designation
- Council is to be advised by its municipal heritage committee with respect to the cultural heritage value of the property
- Council may state its intention to designate the property under Part IV of the Act and is to include a statement explaining the cultural heritage value or interest of the property and a description of the heritage attributes of the property
- Should Council wish to designate the property, notice must be provided to the property owner and the Ontario Heritage Trust that includes a description of the cultural heritage value of the property. A notice, either published in a local newspaper or posted digitally in a location that can be readily accessed, must be provided with the same details
- Following the publication of the notice, there is a 30-day window in which interested parties can object to the designation. If a notice of objection has been served to the municipality, Council is required to consider the objection and make a decision whether or not to withdraw the notice of intention to designate
- Should Council wish to proceed with designation, it must pass a by-law to that effect within 120 days of the date in which the notice was published. There is a 30-day appeal period following Council adoption of the by-law where interested parties can serve notice to the municipality and the OLT of their objection to the designation. Should no objection be received within the 30-day time period, the designation by-law comes into force. Should an objection be received, an OLT hearing date is set to examine the merits of the objection.

Individual research reports are attached in Appendix ‘B’. Each properties also would comply with Provincial Regulation 9/06, as amended which requires a property to meet at least 2 of the 9 criteria for determining whether it is of cultural heritage value or interest.

Suggested Recommendation for Heritage Markham

THAT Heritage Markham supports designation of 81 Dickson Hill Road, 2972 Elgin Mills Road, 7880 Highway 7, 10159 McCowan Road, 4130 Nineteenth Avenue, 4159 Nineteenth Avenue under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act based on the appended Research Reports.

ATTACHMENTS:

Appendix ‘A’ Research Reports

- 81 Dickson Hill Road – “Dickson Hill Mill House”
- 2972 Elgin Mills Road – “John Rowbotham House”
- 7880 Highway 7 – “Albert Reesor House, Locust Hill”
- 10159 McCowan Road – “Haacke-Warriner House”
- 4130 Nineteenth Avenue – “Almira Mill House”
- 4159 Nineteenth Avenue – “Almira General Store and Post Office”

Appendix ‘A’
Research Reports

RESEARCH REPORT



Dickson Hill Mill House
West Quarter, Lot 30, Concession 8
81 Dickson Hill Road
c.1864

Heritage Section
City of Markham Planning & Urban Design
2023

History

The Dickson Hill Mill House stands on the west quarter of Markham Township Lot 30, Concession 8, in the hamlet of Dickson Hill.

John Dickson was a Scottish-born millwright. The year of his arrival in Markham is not known, but in the 1830s, John Dickson and his business partner, Robert McNair, leased the North Markham Mills (on the site of Bruce’s Mill, now part of the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville). The operation included a sawmill and a flouring mill built by Caspar Sherk on land leased from the Crown. John Dickson was married to Elizabeth McNair, so there was a family connection to his partner in the milling business. Both the Dickson and McNair families were supporters of William Lyon Mackenzie and the politics of reform that led to the Upper Canadian Rebellion of 1837. In December 1837, John Dickson’s father-in-law, who resided in Vaughan Township, sent

two escaping rebels to hide out at the mill after the skirmish at Montgomery's Tavern in Toronto.

When John Dickson's lease of the North Markham Mill ran out in the early 1840s, he and Robert McNair arranged a lease on Crown land on the west part of Lot 30, Concession 8, that contained a branch of the Little Rouge River, where a sawmill had been built by Jacob Grove in 1831. On this leased land, John Dickson constructed a flouring mill. His grandson, Markham historian Alex D. Bruce, stated that the mill was built in 1842. Other sources say the mill was constructed in 1843-44. The establishment of the mill was significant to the area, and the community became known as Dickson's Hill, or Dickson Hill. Dickson Hill was never quite big enough to have a store and post office, but it did have the mill, a cooperage, a Mennonite church, and a schoolhouse. Interestingly, the old Dickson Hill Schoolhouse is now one of the historical buildings at Black Creek Pioneer Village.

Henry Wideman received the Crown patent for the west 50 acres of Lot 30, Concession 8, in 1846. In 1844, before he formally owned the property, he sold a parcel of 17 acres, 25 rods, to John Dickson. This parcel contained the mill and the mill pond. According to the 1851 census, there were at least two one-storey frame dwellings on the mill property, one occupied by John Dickson, miller, and his family, and the other occupied by Patrick Davidson, miller, and his family. There was also a log house occupied by John Pasly and John Burgess, coopers, who likely produced flour barrels in support of the mill. At the time of the 1861 census, John Dickson was listed as residing in a one-and-a-half storey frame house, which may have been the same dwelling noted in the 1851 census. Another miller, Robert McKennell, lived in another one-and-a-half storey frame house on the property, which again may have been the second dwelling noted in the 1851 census. In the early census records, census-takers sometimes described one-and-a-half storey houses as one-storey, which leads to confusion at times when researchers are tracing the history of a building.

According to a detailed history of Dickson Hill by Mary Ann Mihorean, published in 1985, it is stated: *"Another frame house, still standing on the hill [81 Dickson Hill Road], is believed to date back to the time of the mill's construction and was used as a home by early millers."* This would place the date of construction of 81 Dickson Hill road in the early to mid-1840s. However, a long-time owner of the house, Mildred Sherwood, provided a date of construction of 1864. That was the same year of John Dickson's death, so that fact casts some doubt on the 1864 date of construction. Another question posed by research into this property is whether the existing one-and-a-half storey frame house was the Dickson residence or the other one related to the mill operation. The house at 81 Dickson Hill is larger than a typical mill worker's cottage, which gives some weight to the proposition that this may be the former home of John Dickson and his family from the 1840s. According to the 1891 census, John Lehman, miller, tenant, occupied a 6-room, two-storey frame house on the property (the census did not distinguish between one-and-a-half and two-storeys). The dwelling described could be the house at 81 Dickson Hill Road. In any case, the house was on the mill property and was therefore historically associated with it.

After the death of John Dickson in 1864, his son Robert Dickson took over the operation of the mill. In 1865, he purchased the property from his mother, Elizabeth Dickson. He must have gotten into financial or legal trouble, as in 1870 the Court of Chancery awarded the property to John B. Lloyd *et al.* The Dickson Hill Mill went out of the Dickson family in 1870, and thereafter passed through a series of owners. Some of these included Jacob Grove, Amos Glover, John Lehman, Jonas Miller and P. R. Hoover. These owners, or those that operated the mill on their behalf, likely occupied the mill house.

The Dickson Hill Mill was last operated by William A. Jones until Hurricane Hazel damaged the mill pond dam in 1954. In 1951, Jones sold the Dickson Hill Mill House to William and Mildred Sherwood. The Sherwood family owned the property for over 50 years. A remnant of the old mill building, which had been altered in 1914 by the removal of the upper two of its original three-and-a-half storeys and the installation of a broad gambrel roof, still exists next door at 87 Dickson Hill Road, housing a commercial enterprise.



Lower portion of Dickson Hill Mill c.1842, altered in 1914 and in more recent times. 87 Dickson Hill Road.

Architecture

The Dickson Hill Mill House is located at the top of a rise of land on the east side of Dickson Hill Road, with its side gable end facing the street. It is a one-and-a-half storey frame dwelling with board and batten siding and a medium-pitched gable roof with open, overhanging eaves. There are no eave returns. An open porch that appears to date from the early twentieth century, with a shed roof supported on wood columns resting on masonry pedestals, shelters the front door. Additions have been made to the rear of the main block of the dwelling, and a brick fireplace chimney is centred on the street-facing west gable end.

The house has a 3-bay front, with a single-leaf door flanked by 1/1 single-hung windows on each side. Ground floor windows are larger than those on the second floor gable ends. Window openings are flat-headed and regularly placed, except for one smaller window on the east gable end that appears to be a later addition due to the placement and proportions that differ from other second-storey gable-end windows. The existing windows likely replaced multi-paned windows typical of the mid-nineteenth century period of construction.

The Dickson Hill Mill House is a simple, vernacular building, without ornamentation, designed to meet the modest needs of the owner or operator of the flouring mill. The symmetrical plan and simple, formal design follows the Georgian architectural tradition that continued to influence vernacular architecture in Ontario long after the historic Georgian period ended in 1830.

Georgian houses were built throughout Markham Township from the earliest period of European and American settlement into the 1860s. This style of conservative, symmetrical dwelling following a standardized formula of design and proportion was based on principles established by the sixteenth century Italian architect Andrea Palladio as interpreted by British architects in the 1700s. The Georgian tradition first came to North America via Britain's New England colonies, then came to Canada with the Loyalists, and later, British immigrants.

Although the Dickson Hill Mill House has been added to and updated, the main rectangular block of the mid-nineteenth century building retains a good measure of its historical character.

Context

The Dickson Hill Mill House is one of several heritage buildings that represent the nineteenth to early twentieth century development of the hamlet of Dickson Hill. The house is located on a large property within the hamlet, a residential enclave which has evolved since the mid-twentieth century but has otherwise retained a distinctive character from nearby suburban growth. The Dickson Hill House is historically related to the remnant of John Dickson's flouring mill of c.1842, which stands next door to the north at 87 Dickson Hill Road,

Sources

Abstract Index of Deeds for Lot 30, Concession 8, Markham Township, and Abstract Index of Deeds for Lot 34, Concession 5, Markham Township.

Canada Census 1851, 1861 and 1891.

Property file for 81 Dickson Hill Road, Heritage Section, City of Markham. Notes of information from listing agent regarding the history of the house from vendor Mildred Sherwood (no date). Mihorean, Mary Ann, in *More Pioneer Hamlets of York*. Pennsylvania German Folklore Society of Ontario, 1985. Pages 75-76.

Champion, Isabel (ed.). *Markham 1793-1900* (Revised Edition). Markham: Markham Historical Society, 1989. Pages 118, 125, and 193.

Compliance with Ontario Regulation 9/06, as amended - Criteria for Determining Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

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.

The Dickson Hill Mill House is a representative example of a mid-nineteenth century vernacular dwelling designed with the influence of the Georgian architectural tradition.

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

The Dickson Hill Mill House has historical/associative value because of its association with the Dickson Hill Mill, an important local industry that operated from c.1842 until 1954, and with the Dickson family, owners from c.1842 to 1870.

The property has contextual value because it is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area.

The Dickson Hill Mill House has contextual value as one of several heritage buildings that define the character and extent of the historic hamlet of Dickson Hill. The house is located on a large property within the hamlet, a residential enclave which has evolved since the mid-twentieth century but has otherwise retained a distinctive character from nearby suburban growth

The property has contextual value because it is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings.

The Dickson Hill Mill House has contextual value within the historic hamlet of Dickson Hill due to its position next door to the remnant of John Dickson's flouring mill of c.1842 at 87 Dickson Hill Road.

RESEARCH REPORT



John and Elizabeth Rowbotham House **East Part, Lot 26, Concession 3** **2972 Elgin Mills Road** **c.1890**

Heritage Section
City of Markham Planning & Urban Design
2023

History

The John and Elizabeth Rowbotham House is located on the east part of Markham Township Lot 26, Concession 3, and more particularly on Lot 4, Plan 404, in the hamlet of Victoria Square.

John Edmond Rowbotham was an Ontario-born carriage maker of English origin. He was from Dixie, a small community in what is now the City of Mississauga. At the age of 16, he began an apprenticeship in the Eakin brother's Unionville Carriage Factory, a business established by the brothers in the late 1850s. The site of the carriage factory was 147A Main Street. They manufactured a wide variety of horse-drawn vehicles until the business closed down in the early 1870s when William Eakin turned his attention to building and operating the Unionville Planing Mill. In the 1871 census, John Rowbotham was listed as a carriage-maker, age 18, living in the household of his employer, William Eakin, carriage-maker.

In 1875, John Rowbotham purchased Lot 4, Plan 404, from Christopher Heise. This plan of 11 village lots was laid out by Peter S. Gibson, P.L.S., in 1875. Plan 404 formalized a lot pattern that had been informally established before the creation of the plan through the sale of parcels of varying sizes at the eastern end of the Heise farm. Christopher (also known as Christian)

acquired the eastern 75 acres of his father Jacob Heise's farm on Lot 26, Concession 3, in 1867. He and his wife Leah lived in a brick farmhouse further west on the property that still stands at 2730 Elgin Mills Road. Christopher Heise helped develop the northwestern quadrant of Victoria Square by selling lots and by building houses at the crossroads. In addition to houses, this area of Victoria Square contained a general store, blacksmith shop, carriage factory, and temperance hall.

When John Rowbotham purchased the property, it already contained a carriage and wheelwright shop that had been established as early as the 1850s. A dwelling for the operator of the business was likely located next to the shop. John Cook was a wheelwright in the late 1850s, followed by Thomas Kempton, wagon maker in 1860, then Joseph Hall from the mid-1860s into the early 1870s. John Rowbotham purchased the business from Joseph Hall. Rowbotham's occupation was variously described in census records or assessment rolls as wheelwright, carpenter, or wagon maker.

The existing house at 2972 Elgin Mills Road assumed its present form c.1890. It was either an expansion of an earlier dwelling or a completely new structure. In the 1891 census, the Rowbotham residence was described as a two-storey, frame house containing five rooms. In the 1901 census, the number of rooms in the house had grown to seven, suggesting an addition had been made by that time. John Rowbotham and Elizabeth Curtis married about the year 1874. They had four children. One of their sons, Walter, worked in the family business.



An excellent archival photograph of the Rowbotham house and wagon shop, dated 1893, is in the collection of the Markham Museum (above). The photograph appears on page 312 of *Markham 1793-1900*.

Elizabeth Rowbotham died in 1892. John Rowbotham sold the property out of the family in 1915. He moved to Main Street Stouffville, where, according to biographical notes in his obituary and data in the 1921 census, he still continued in his trade at the age of 69 and beyond. Many of his customers from Victoria Square sought him out in his new location. He lived in Stouffville until his death in 1943 at the age of 89. His obituary provides some interesting details about John Rowbotham and the work that he did:

“The late Mr. Rowbotham was of a very retiring disposition, but had a wide circle of acquaintances in his business life where he proved himself a master mechanic in the making of wagons, buggies, sleighs and cutters and in woodwork repair which he continued to the day of his passing. Although he had come to Stouffville intending to retire, he was so besieged with requests from old customers he continued to ply his trade at the bench which he had made when he began his own business seventy years ago.”

“The passing of this nonagenarian marks the end of an era of hand craftsmanship in which the workman with his wood and hand tools fashioned the finished product from beginning to end and with a perfection of quality seldom equaled by modern methods, as was proven by the fact that the late Mr. Rowbotham was never called upon to replace one of his wagon axles although he could stand by any local country mill and point to wagons made by himself and his cousin, the late William Frisby, whose blacksmith shop adjoined the carriage shop.”

Later owners of the former Rowbotham House included the Boynton and Corcoran families. Percy Bennett was a tenant in the 1940s. In more recent times, a townhouse development has been constructed immediately to the west of the former Rowbotham property.

Architecture

The John and Elizabeth Rowbotham House is a one-and-half storey frame dwelling with an irregular plan. The main block generally has an L-shaped plan, with the main entrance tucked into the ell on the south-east side of the building, sheltered under a porch. The ground floor is set close to grade, therefore the foundation material is difficult to determine. Based on the age of the building, the material is likely fieldstone. The house is sided in narrow clapboard which may cover the vertical tongue-and-groove siding seen in the archival photograph of c.1893. The roof is cross-gabled, with the portion at the rear running east-west having a medium pitch, with overhanging, open eaves, and the portion at the front running north-south having a steep pitch, with overhanging, open eaves. There are single-stack brick chimneys on the street-facing gable end, and on the west-facing gable end which are in the same position as two of the three brick chimneys shown in the archival photograph.

The open porch in the ell has a shed roof with a closed gable end. It is supported on plain, square wooden posts. A photograph from the Markham Inventory of Heritage Buildings, 1986, shows the same porch roof supported on wood columns resting on brick pedestals with concrete caps, a typical detail from the first quarter of the twentieth century. A single-leaf front door is within the porch, on the east-facing wall. The archival photograph taken c.1893 shows a slightly shallower porch with a bellcast roof, supported on turned posts, and decorated with fretwork brackets and spandrels.

Window openings are regularly placed and flat-headed, with simple trim. The gable-end windows of the rear portion of the house are squatter in shape than the windows of the front section, which are more vertical in orientation. The overall differences in window proportions and roof slope between the two sections of the house suggests that the rear portion may be earlier, and the front portion projecting toward the street was added later, some time between 1891 and 1893. The wider window openings contain 2/2, single-hung windows. Narrower

window openings on the front wall contain 1/1 windows. A significant decorative feature is the canted bay window on the front wall, which is capped with a mansard roof clad in fishscale-shaped wood shingles.

There is a single-storey wing on the rear or north wall which may have housed the dwelling's kitchen. It has a single-stack brick chimney at the north end of the gable roof.

The John and Elizabeth Rowbotham House is a vernacular building that does not neatly fit into any stylistic category. The L-shaped plan, steep roof pitch of the projecting front section, and the canted bay window, are features often associated with the Gothic Revival style, but there are no specific Gothic Revival decorative details such as pointed-arched windows or bargeboards. The previous porch shown in the c.1893 photograph was a prominent feature, along with the bay window, that provided some decorative relief to an otherwise simple village dwelling. Overall, the house retains much of its historic character.

Context

Victoria Square is a former Heritage Conservation District Study Area that contains 44 properties, 22 of which are listed on the *Register of Property of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest*. Of these 22 properties, two are individually designated under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

The John and Elizabeth Rowbotham House is located on a village property in the north-west quadrant of the historic crossroads hamlet of Victoria Square. The Frisby blacksmith shop was formerly located next door to the east, at 2982 Elgin Mills Road. It was relocated to the Victoria Square United Church property in 2003 and replaced by a new, two-storey residence. Another nearby property listed on the *Register of Property of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest* is the William and Mary Frisby House at 2992 Elgin Mills Road. It is architecturally similar to the John and Elizabeth Rowbotham House and retains its ornate Late Victorian porch.

Sources

Abstract Index of Deeds for Markham Township Lot 26, Concession 3.

Abstract Index of Deeds for Plan 404, 1875, Markham Township.

Canada Census Records 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901, 1911 and 1921.

Obituary for John Rowbotham in the *Stouffville Tribune*, February 11, 1943.

Historical Photograph Collection, Markham Museum Archives.

Victoria Square Heritage Conservation District – Historical Background and Inventory, by Su Murdoch, Heritage Consultant, 2010. Pages 40-43.

Property File, 2972 Elgin Mills Road, City of Markham Heritage Section.

Research Report on 2730 Elgin Mills Road, Heritage Section, City of Markham Planning & Urban Design, 2002.

Markham Inventory of Heritage Buildings, 1986 edition.

Champion, Isabel, ed. *Markham 1793-1900* (Revised Edition). Markham: Markham Historical Society, 1989, pages 311-313.

Compliance with Ontario Regulation 9/06, as amended – Criteria for Determining Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

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.

The John and Elizabeth Rowbotham House is a representative example of a vernacular, village tradesman's dwelling of the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

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

The John and Elizabeth Rowbotham House has historical and associative value as the former residence of John and Elizabeth Rowbotham. John Rowbotham was a wheelwright, carpenter and wagon maker who operated his business in Victoria Square from 1875 to 1915.

The property has contextual value because it is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area.

The John and Elizabeth Rowbotham House is one of a number of nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings that help to define the character and extent of the historic crossroads hamlet of Victoria Square.

RESEARCH REPORT



Albert and Bertha Reesor House

7880 Highway 7

Lot 11, Concession 10, Markham Township

c.1903

Heritage Section

City of Markham Planning and Urban Design, 2023

History

The Albert and Bertha Reesor House stands on the west half of Markham Township Lot 11, Concession 10, within the historic hamlet of Locust Hill.

Abraham Moore received the Crown patent for the entire 200 acres of Lot 11, Concession 10, in 1828. In 1830, he sold the west 100 acres to Abraham Reesor, who died the following year. The property passed to Peter Reesor, who sold to Christian Reesor in 1853. Christian Reesor was the owner of considerable property in the Locust Hill area. He resided on Lot 14, Concession 10, in a fieldstone farmhouse that still stands at 9035 Reesor Road on land that is now part of the Rouge National Urban Park.

When Christian Reesor died in 1877, he willed this property on Lot 11, Concession 10, to his son, John Arthur Edward Reesor, who was a child at the time. In 1893, when John A. E. Reesor was 21 years of age, his widowed mother, Melissa Ann (Cornell) Reesor, relinquished her claim on the property, leaving clear title to her son. The southern frontage of the Reesor property became

the core of the northern part of the hamlet of Locust Hill as it evolved in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In 1905, John A. E. Reesor sold a building lot to his sister-in-law Bertha Elizabeth (Pike) Reesor, who had married his older brother, Albert Christian Grasset Reesor, in 1894. Albert C. G. Reesor farmed locally until he graduated from the Ontario Agricultural College Dairy School in Guelph in 1900. He then took over the operation of the Locust Hill Creamery, which had been established in 1893 by John Pike, D. Nighswander, and William Armstrong, as a co-operative. In 1905, Albert C. G. Reesor's younger brother, Frederick Ernest Nelson Reesor, joined him in the business. Albert C. G. Reesor was a member of the Toronto Board of Trade and the Markham Masonic Lodge. In addition to the creamery business, he operated Locust Hill Coal and Lumber Yard. The family were members of the Locust Hill Methodist Church, which was built on a site donated by Melissa A. Reesor in 1890.

A spacious new American Foursquare residence designed in the Edwardian Classical style was built for Albert and Bertha Reesor c.1903. Some sources give the construction date as c.1905. It is possible that the house was built a short time prior to the formal transfer of the property in 1905. Albert C. G. Reesor and Bertha E. Reesor had three children: Alberta Irene, Eldred Maude, and Lloyd Christian. Albert C. G. Reesor died in 1920, followed by his wife, Bertha, in 1929. Daughters Alberta and Eldred remained unmarried. Alberta was a school teacher and her sister, Eldred, was a Registered Nurse. In 1961, ownership of the Locust Hill property was transferred by the estates of Bertha and Eldred Reesor to Alberta Reesor and Lloyd Christian Reesor. The property was sold out of the Reesor family in 1974.



Archival photograph of 7880 Highway 7
Markham Museum Collection

Architecture

The Albert and Bertha Reesor House is a two-and-a-half storey dwelling organized in a rectangular plan and faced with red pressed brick. The building rests on a concrete foundation with the main floor raised approximately two feet above grade. The hipped roof has a wide

overhang with flat soffits and small, hipped-roofed dormers on the south and west sides. No historic chimneys remain.

An open veranda extends across the front or south wall of the dwelling. There is a gable-roofed, closed pediment aligned with the main entrance. The upper portion of the eastern two thirds of the veranda is a sunroom with a low-pitched or flat roof and a flared, shingled apron. The veranda has full-height square wooden Tuscan columns resting on a masonry base. A smaller porch with a hipped roof and wood columns is located on the east wall.

Door and window openings are in the shape of upright rectangles, and are flat-headed with radiating brick arches and masonry lugsills. The placement of openings generally follows a balanced pattern. The main entrance is a single-leaf door placed slightly off-centre to the left, on the front wall. Next to the door, to the right, is a small window that lights the interior stair hall. There is a small, double casement window positioned above the front entrance on the second floor, set low in the wall. The original wood 1/1 single-hung windows seen in the archival photograph have been replaced with modern single-hung windows set within the original openings. These windows have multi-paned grilles and modern, louvered, non-functional shutters. There is another entrance door on the east wall, sheltered within the open porch, positioned toward the north.

The Albert and Bertha Reesor House is typical of the spacious, simply detailed houses built on farms and in villages in Markham Township in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Its architectural detailing reflects the Edwardian Classicism that was popular from the early 1900s through the 1920s. The house was constructed in the form of an American Foursquare, with a functional, compact shape and spacious front veranda. The red pressed brick cladding and two-and-a-half storey form of the house, with a broad hipped roof and dormers, are representative of the style.

The architectural integrity of this house, from an exterior standpoint, is very good. This is confirmed by comparing the existing condition of the house with an excellent archival photograph in the collection of the Markham Museum that shows the house shortly after it was built. The sunroom, an early addition, is a dominant feature and is consistent with the period and style of the building. The window replacements were done with sensitivity and represent a minor alteration to the overall Edwardian Classical architectural character of the exterior. The interior has been completely updated, as seen in a real estate brochure in the City of Markham files.

Context

The Albert and Bertha Reesor House is one of a grouping of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century residences that contribute to and define the character of the historic hamlet of Locust Hill. A gambrel-roofed, frame stable associated with the house, visible in the background of the archival photograph, still stands in the rear yard. The setting, with mature trees, retains its village-like character. The property is historically-related to the Frederick E. N. Reesor House (1905), which stands next door to the west at 7846 Highway 7.

Sources

Abstract Index of Deeds for Markham Township Lot 11, Concession 10.

Canada Census 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901.

Markham Museum Archival Photograph Collection

The Reesor Family in Canada 1804-1980, pages 453-454.

Armstrong, Mrs. R. J. in *Pioneer Hamlets of York*. Kitchener: Pennsylvania German Folklore Society of Ontario, 1977. Page 65.

Champion, Isabel (ed). *Markham 1793-1900* (Second Edition, 1989). Markham: Markham Historical Society. Pages 52-53, 246-248.

Champion, Mary B. (ed). *Markham Remembered – A Photographic History of Old Markham Township*. Markham Historical Society, 1988. Pages 30-31, 64.

Real Estate Brochure for 7880 Highway 7, produced by Nu Stream Markham (undated but appears to be from the 2010s).

Compliance with Ontario Regulation 9/06, as amended – Criteria for Determining Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

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.

The Albert and Bertha Reesor House is a representative example of a village dwelling in the form of an American Foursquare, with Edwardian Classical details.

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

The Albert and Bertha Reesor House has historical and associative value as the former residence of Albert and Bertha Reesor and their three children Alberta, Eldred and Lloyd. Albert C. G. Reesor owned and operated the Locust Hill Creamery from 1900 to 1920, and also operated the Locust Hill Coal and Lumber Yard. His brother, Frederick E. N. Reesor was a partner in the creamery business beginning in 1905. The land this house was built on c.1903 was in the ownership of the Reesor family for 144 years.

The property has contextual value because it is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area.

The Albert and Bertha Reesor House is one of a number of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century residences that help to define the extent of the historic hamlet of Locust Hill.

The property has contextual value because it is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings.

The Albert and Bertha Reesor House has stood on this property since c.1903 and is historically linked to the Frederick E. N. Reesor House next door to the west at 7846 Highway 7.

RESEARCH REPORT



Haacke-Warriner Farmhouse

Lot 22, Concession 7
10159 McCowan Road
c.1855

Heritage Section
City of Markham Planning & Urban Design
2023

History

The Haacke-Warriner Farmhouse is located on the west half of Lot 22, Concession 7, which was originally granted to John Henry Pingle by the Crown in 1807. The property passed through a number of Pingle family members until 1834, when George Haacke purchased the west half of Lot 22. His father, John Haacke (born 1778) of German origin, joined the Berczy settlers in Niagara, where he had been living since 1792. The Berczy settlers were *en route* to Markham Township. John Haacke settled on Lot 17, Concession 4, Markham Township, and in 1796 and married Hannah Adams.

George Haacke and his twin brother, Henry, were born in Markham in 1810, the fourth and fifth children of John and Hannah Haacke. George Haacke was the only male child to remain in

Markham Township. He was a farmer and followed the Lutheran faith. He married Sophia Quantz on May 1, 1837. Together they had 15 children, eleven of whom survived to adulthood. In addition to farming, George Haacke was a land and mortgage broker.

The Haacke farm was increased in size to 150 acres in 1846, when George Haacke purchased the west 50 acres of Lot 21, Concession 7, the adjoining property to the south.

The 1851 census listed the George Haacke family as occupying a one-storey log house. The 1861 census describes the Haacke residence as a two-storey brick house. The Haacke-Warriner Farmhouse was therefore constructed some time between 1851 and 1861 (c.1855 is the estimated date of construction).

The property remained in the ownership of Haacke family descendants until 1902, when it was sold to John Wilmot Warriner, who moved there in 1905 from a farm in Keswick. He went by the name Wilmot. Wilmot Warriner was married to Ina Viola Morton. In *Markham Remembered*, there is a 1925 photo of J. W. Warriner among the members of the Markham Fair Board. His son, Harry Morton Warriner, later ran the farm and was also a member of the Markham Fair Board as shown in a 1955 photo in *Markham Remembered*. With Harry Warriner and his wife, Mary "Maisie" (Miller) Warriner taking over the operation of the family farm, Wilmot and Ina Warriner opened a confectionary and tobacco shop at 4 Main Street North, Markham Village in 1929-1930 in a building that for many years has contained a Pizza Pizza franchise. In the winter, they lived in an apartment above the store, and returned to the farm in the summer months.

The Warriners ran a mixed farm with Guernsey cattle, pigs and turkeys raised for the Christmas market. They also had dairy cows. Harry Warriner's son, John Merlin "Jack" Warriner and his wife Patricia (Stalter) Warriner, next operated the family farm, then moved to Dickson Hill. Michael Douglas Warriner and his wife, Collette (Shantz) Warriner, were the last of the family to farm the property, which was sold for future development in 2011. The Warriners stayed as tenants until 2014, growing corn and soy beans.

Architecture

The Haacke-Warriner Farmhouse is a one-and-a-half storey brick dwelling with a rectangular plan main block and a one-storey rear kitchen wing, creating a T-shaped plan. The knee wall height is such that the farmhouse is almost two storeys. The structure rests on a fieldstone foundation that raises the ground floor several steps above grade. The farmhouse is oriented to face south rather than McCowan Road. The brick walls are laid in Flemish bond on the front, and common bond on the remaining sides. The brick has been cleaned to expose the natural colour as the surface colour is light and does not appear aged. Brick arches over window openings are small and understated.

On the 5-bay south façade, the central front entrance has a single-leaf door, a flat-headed, multi-paned transom light with geometric glazing, and multi-paned sidelights. The sidelights have a wood panelled base. Directly above the front entrance is a door without transom or sidelights giving access to a balcony formed by the flat roof of a simple, later porch that

shelters the front entrance. A wooden nailing strip inset into the brickwork indicates the former existence of a full-width veranda.

Window openings are flat-headed and have simple brick arches. Windows are 6/6, single-hung, with lugsills and non-functioning decorative shutters. Ground floor windows on the side elevations are similar in design to those on the primary elevation. On the second floor, the windows are smaller in scale and have 6/1 glazing, likely a later modification of a 6/6 window glazing pattern. Placement of window openings is balanced and symmetrical.

The roof is a medium pitched gable with boxed eaves and eave returns featuring wood mouldings. There are heavy, single stack chimneys at each gable end that suggests the current or former presence of fireplaces.

The Haacke-Warriner Farmhouse follows the balanced, symmetrical form of the Georgian architectural tradition. The 5-bay front represents a superior class of farm residence, uncommon in Markham where the average mid-nineteenth century farmhouse had a 3-bay front. The use of Flemish bond brickwork is another indication of high-quality construction.

The large 6/6 windows and front entrance with its flat-headed transom and sidelights, along with the medium-pitched gable roof with eave returns, are design elements related to the Classic Revival architectural style in popular use at the time of construction. The presence of substantial gable-end chimneys adds to the overall character of solidity of this mid-nineteenth century farmhouse.

One missing element from the original construction is the full-width front veranda, today indicated by the wood nailing strip inset into the brickwork but also visible in an archival photograph from the 1920s. Otherwise, the Haacke-Warriner Farmhouse exhibits an excellent state of integrity.

Context

This property is located in the countryside, in a future development area. The trees and outbuildings have been removed in recent years, leaving the Haacke-Warriner Farmhouse the sole remaining feature of the old farm. The house is located outside of any specific hamlet, but is east of Colty Corners. The Haacke-Warriner Farmhouse is one of a local group of important early buildings listed on the *Register of Property of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest*. To the north at 10387 McCowan Road is the two-storey Thomas Peach House, a fine example of mid-nineteenth century Georgian architecture, and north of that the one-and-a-half storey fieldstone farmhouse of Joseph Steckley at 10535 McCowan Road, both of which were standing at the time of the 1851 census.

Sources

Abstract Index of Deeds for Lot 22, Concession 7, Markham Township.

Canada Census 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881.

Township Directories: Walton (1837), Brown (1846-47), Nason (1871), 1892 Directory.

Warriner Heritage, compiled by Collette Warriner, 2016.

Research File, Heritage Section, City of Markham.

Champion, Isabel (ed). *Markham 1793-1900* (Second Edition, 1989). Markham: Markham Historical Society. Page 18.

Champion, Mary B. (ed). *Markham Remembered – A Photographic History of Old Markham Township*. Markham Historical Society, 1988. Pages 201-202.

Compliance with Ontario Regulation 9/06, as amended – Criteria for Determining Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

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.

The Haacke-Warriner Farmhouse is a locally rare example of a mid-nineteenth century brick farmhouse with a 5-bay front in the Georgian architectural tradition with design elements from the Classic Revival Style.

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

The Haacke-Warriner Farmhouse has historical and associative value as the former residence of the George and Sophia Haacke family from c.1855 to c.1902, and the Wilmot and Ina Warriner family from c.1902 to c.2014, and as a reminder of the prosperous agricultural past of Markham.

The property has contextual value because it is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings.

The Haacke-Warriner Farmhouse has contextual value for being historically linked to this property, where it has stood since c.1855.

The property has contextual value because it is a landmark.

The Haacke-Warriner Farmhouse has contextual value as a landmark near the north-east corner of Major Mackenzie Drive and McCowan Road.

RESEARCH REPORT



Almira Mill House Centre of Lot 31, Concession 5 4130 Nineteenth Avenue c.1855

**Heritage Section
City of Markham Planning & Urban Design
2023**

History

The Almira Mill House is located in the centre of Markham Township Lot 31, Concession 5, in the community of Almira.

Three brothers, Benjamin, James and Robert Bowman, came to Upper Canada from County Derry, Ireland, in 1823. They were the sons of Benjamin Bowman and Margaret (Redfern) Bowman. The Bowman family background, prior to the generations that lived in Ireland, is believed to have originated in the Rhine-Palatinate. Benjamin Bowman first lived in Niagara, then in 1826 moved to Yonge Street (Thornhill?), and next settled in the Markham area that became known as Almira. James Bowman settled in Thornhill. Robert Bowman settled near Queensville. Benjamin Bowman and his brother, James Bowman, were listed as members of the North York Militia, 1st Regiment, 5th Company, according to a document titled *Men of Upper Canada Militia Nominal Rolls 1828-1829*.

Benjamin Bowman's early presence on Lot 31, Concession 5, was noted in Walton's 1837 directory of Markham Township, and in Brown's directory of 1846-47. At this time, he would have been a tenant on Crown land, a Clergy Reserve lot. In 1850, Benjamin Bowman received the Crown patent for the west 40 acres of the east half of Lot 31, Concession 5. This land contains Bruce Creek, a tributary of the Rouge River, making it valuable as a mill site. According to local tradition, Bowman established a mill on the property in 1844, before he owned the land. He must have had built a residence to have qualified for the Crown patent.

Curiously, no information is provided in the 1851 census about the Bowman residence. Previous researchers have speculated that the family resided within the mill, which would have been unusual if he already had built a dwelling on the property. According to *Markham 1793-1900*, in addition to erecting the first mill, he also built a number of houses in Almira with locally-produced brick. Since the house at 4130 Nineteenth Avenue is brick, it is likely that it was constructed by Benjamin Bowman. Perhaps he waited until he formally owned the land to erect a substantial house upon it. A date of construction of c.1855 is proposed. In 1862, Benjamin Bowman received the Crown patent for the east 50 acres of the west half of Lot 31, Concession 5, giving him ownership of 90 acres in the centre of Lot 31.

In Rowsell's directory of 1850-1851, Benjamin Bowman was noted as residing on Lot 31, Concession 5. The 1851 census also located him on Lot 31, and provided the following details: Benjamin Bowman, clothier (manufacturer of cloth), born in Ireland, age 55, and a member of the Free Presbyterian Church. Associated with his name is a woolen mill. His wife was Jane (Dowling) Bowman, also born in Ireland, age 50. Their oldest son, John, was a miller. His name is associated with a flour mill. Other children in the family included Robert, a clothier, Scott, a farmer, Benjamin, a clothier, and Thomas, Mary Ann and Jane, with no occupations listed.

The Almira Mill was unusual in that it combined flour, grist and woolen mill operations within a single building. It was the only one of its kind in Ontario in its day, according to *Markham 1793-1900*. Benjamin Bowman must have brought skills learned in Ireland to Canada as he set up the carding and fulling operation in the woolen mill. The Almira Mill was a three-storey brick structure, divided in half by a heavy fire wall. The woolen mill was in the west half, the flour and grist mill in the east half. The mill operation passed from Benjamin Bowman to his son, John Bowman, then to William Spofford Jr. in 1869, and in 1877, to Alfred Spofford. In 1880, the mill was sold to Samuel Boyer Lehman, who operated it with his sons Harman Daniel and John Willis until a devastating fire destroyed the business in 1943. The ground floor of the mill survived until the late 1980s, when it was demolished and replaced by a large new commercial building that resembled a mill-like structure. A concrete section of the old building, a later addition, was incorporated into the new building in an altered form.

By the time of the 1861 census, the Bowman family was smaller. Benjamin Bowman was listed as a merchant, rather than a clothier. His son, Benjamin was listed as a student rather than a clothier. Daughter Jane was a student. Siblings Thomas and Mary Ann did not have any occupation listed. The family was noted as residing in a two-storey brick house, presumably 4130 Nineteenth Avenue.

The Bowman family owned and operated a general store on Lot 30, Concession 5, opposite their home and mill, on land purchased from the Klein family. An archival photograph of the store appears on page 227 of *Markham 1793-1900*. A post office was established at Almira in 1857, and was located in the Bowman store. Benjamin Bowman was the first postmaster, serving from 1857 to 1863, followed by son John from 1863 to 1879, then son James from 1879 to 1902.

According to Markham Township assessment rolls, Benjamin Bowman continued to reside next to the Almira Mills even after he changed careers from miller to merchant, until his death in November, 1862. His son, John and his family continued to reside in the house, and according to the 1871 Census, John Bowman was both a farmer and a manufacturer. His brother, James, lived across the road with his family and was listed as a woolen manufacturer. William Spofford Jr., a neighbor, was a miller. Other employees that lived in the vicinity of the Almira mill included Henry Warren, a dyer, Joseph Cook, a carder, and Henry Neville, a miller.

The 1871 census tells us that Benjamin Bowman's widow, Jane, had left Almira and resided with her daughter Jane and her husband, James Moore, in St. Mary's Ontario. James Moore was employed at a foundry. Jane Bowman died in 1886.

The Almira Mill House property was sold out of the family by John Bowman's wife, Sarah Bowman, in 1881. This ended the association of the house with the mill, and thereafter it was a farmhouse. According to the 1891 census, the brick house was tenanted at that time by Robert Harman, a farmer. The 1891 census tells us that the two-storey house contained 12 rooms. Many owners followed the Bowmans from 1881 to the present, including Williamson, Todd, Jackson, Gayman, Francey, Cober, Wideman, Reed, and most recently, Meyer.

Architecture

The Almira Mill House is a two-storey brick dwelling with a rectangular plan and a low-pitched hipped roof with a wide overhang. The brick was laid in Flemish bond. There are heavy, single-stack brick chimneys at the east and west ends of the roof. A gable-roofed, one-and-a-half storey frame wing is offset on the west wall of the brick main block. It is sided in board and batten and may have been added as a kitchen wing, or perhaps as a *gross doddy* by one of the Pennsylvania-German families that owned the property after the Bowman family. There is a twentieth-century sunroom addition on the east end wall of the brick dwelling. The house sits close to grade. A shed-roofed open porch with square wooden posts is located on the western portion of the front or south façade. It appears to be a relatively modern structure. The house has a 5-bay front, with a central doorcase containing a single-leaf door with sidelights. The doorcase is framed by a moulded surround, eared in the Classic Revival style. The windows of the ground floor are 6/6 double-hung style. Windows at the second-storey level are small, square casements. All window openings have the same style of eared Classic Revival trim as seen on the front doorcase, but instead of having window sills, the trim is picture-frame style.

The Almira Mill House is a distinctive vernacular building with a design that combines several architectural design influences. The architectural character of the dwelling reflects the formality and balance of the Georgian architectural tradition, which Benjamin Bowman would

have been familiar with in Ireland. The large ground floor windows, small, square second storey windows, and low-pitched, hipped roof suggest a Regency architectural influence, while the eared door and window surrounds point to the Classic Revival style, or more precisely, the Greek Revival style. The door and window surrounds are unique in Markham and unusual for the absence of traditional window sills.

The one-and-a-half storey frame wing on the west wall of the brick dwelling may represent a traditional *gross doddy* associated with Pennsylvania-German Mennonite culture. The *gross doddy* was a separately tenanted, attached dwelling unit that provided for multi-generational occupation of a farmhouse. When the parents aged and passed the operation of the farm on to one of their sons, often the oldest one, they moved into a smaller dwelling unit suited to their diminished need for space. Since some of the later owners of the Almira Mill House were of this cultural background, this suggests the possibility that the side wing once served as a *gross doddy*. Otherwise, an addition or wing of this type would have served as a kitchen wing combined with quarters for hired farm hands.

Context

The Almira Mill House is one of a grouping of older buildings that define the character and extent of the historic community of Almira. Its location close to the site of the Almira Mills at 4160 Nineteenth Avenue, designated under By-law 2005-76, highlights the historical relationship with this important local industrial site. It is also historically linked to the Almira General Store and Post Office at 4159 Nineteenth Avenue, and the Klein-Bowman Double House at 4165 Nineteenth Avenue, designated under By-law 2003-240.

Sources

Abstract Index of Deeds for Markham Township Lots 30 and 31, Concession 5.

Canada Census 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901, 1911, 1921.

Directories: Walton 1837, Brown 1846-47, Rowsell 1850-51, Mitchell 1866, Lovell's Gazetteer 1871.

Markham Township Assessment Rolls 1853, 1856, 1859, 1860, 1862, 1870 and 1875.

Bowman Family, Markham Museum, research by James A. Bowman of Waterloo, 2000.

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Champion, Isabel (ed.). *Markham 1793-1900* (Revised Edition). Markham: Markham Historical Society, 1980.

Keith, Fern in *More Pioneer Hamlets of York*. Kitchener: Pennsylvania German Folklore Society of Ontario, 1985. Pages 9-12.

Compliance with Ontario Regulation 9/06, as amended – Criteria for Determining Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

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.

The Almira Mill House is a unique example of a mid-nineteenth century vernacular architecture that combines design details of the Georgian architectural tradition, the Ontario Regency style, and the Greek Revival style.

The property has design value or physical value because it displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit.

The eared window surrounds of the Almira Mill House are noteworthy for their application to a brick dwelling and their picture frame form.

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

The Almira Mill House has historical/associative value as the home of Benjamin and Jane Bowman, then the home of John and Sarah Bowman, and for its association with the Almira Mills, an important local industry founded by Benjamin Bowman in 1844.

The property has contextual value because it is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area.

The Almira Mill House is one of a grouping of older buildings that define the character and extent of the historic community of Almira. The property is historically related to the site of the Almira Mills at 4160 Nineteenth Avenue to the east, the Klein-Bowman House at 4165 Nineteenth Avenue, (both designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, and the Almira General Store and Post Office at 4159 Nineteenth Avenue.

RESEARCH REPORT



Almira General Store and Post Office
Centre Part, Lot 30, Concession 5, Markham Township
4159 Nineteenth Avenue
c.1853 & c.1915

Heritage Section
City of Markham Planning & Urban Design
2023

History

The Almira General Store and Post Office stands in the centre of Markham Township Lot 30, Concession 5.

Matthias Cline (more commonly spelled Klein) received the Crown patent for all 200 acres of Lot 30, Concession 5, in 1815. According to William Berczy's 1803 census of Markham settlers, he was residing on this property at that time with his wife Anna and their three sons, John, Henry and Jacob, and two daughters, Mary and Louisa. Klein had drawn this lot in 1801. The Klein family were not included in Berczy's list of families that he settled in Markham, dated 1798, but like the Berczy settlers, they were Lutherans. Matthias and Johan Klein were contributors to the construction of St. Philips Lutheran Church, north of Unionville, in 1820.

Matthias Klein died in 1834, and his property was willed to his sons John, Jacob and Abraham. In 1857, Benjamin Bowman, owner of the Almira Mills, purchased 67 acres of the east half of

Lot 30, Concession 5, from John Klein *et al.* The tail race of the mill passed through this property, as it was directly south of the mill located in the centre of Lot 31. In the mid-1840s, John and Jacob Klein built a frame double house as mill workers' cottages opposite the mill. The double house still stands at 4165 Nineteenth Avenue, converted into a single dwelling in later years. The property is designated under the Ontario Heritage Act (refer to By-law 2003-240).

The construction of the Almira Mills in 1844 created the impetus for the establishment of a hamlet, a common theme in Ontario's history of colonial development. A cluster of businesses and trades grew up around the mill, including a general store, blacksmith shop, wagon shop, pottery, weaver, harness shop, church and schoolhouse. Almira was granted a post office in 1857.

Some accounts of the history of Almira state that a general store was established in Almira in 1844, but no store-keepers or merchants are listed on or near this location in the 1851 census. However, a merchant named Robert Hunter was listed on Lot 30, Concession 5, in the Markham Township Assessment Roll of 1853, the earliest Assessment Roll in the collection of the Markham Museum, suggesting that a store was built here some time between 1851 and 1853 when the land was under the ownership of the Klein family. The store, and the double mill workers' cottage, were included in the sale of the 67 acres to Benjamin Bowman in 1857.

The Almira General Store housed the local post office from 1857 until 1915. At times, the postmaster was the operator of the store, but that was not always the case. The store had a series of owners and operators between 1853 and 1930-1931. Census data, township directories and township assessment rolls provide the names of most of the store-keepers. In 1859, Benjamin Bowman was listed as a merchant in the Assessment Roll. By 1860, he was joined by his son, Thomas. Tremaine's map of 1860 shows the location of the store. The 1861 census lists Benjamin Bowman as a merchant, and the 1862 Assessment Roll lists Benjamin Bowman and his sons Thomas and James as merchants. James was in a separate household. Benjamin Bowman died in 1862. Mitchell's directory of 1866 lists Benjamin Bowman's son, James Bowman, as a grocer, and his sister, Mary Bowman, as a general store keeper. In 1870, the store-keeper was James Gilmour, a tenant of the Bowman family. In 1871, the store-keeper was William Ayerst, whose wife was Margaret Bowman, making him a relative by marriage. In 1881, Thomas Pearson was the store-keeper. At the time of the 1891 census, James Bowman was listed as postmaster, and Minnie Bowman was the store-keeper.

According to the recollections of long-time local resident Fern Keith, whose mother recalled shopping at the store, Alfred Spoffard succeeded the Bowman family as the owner and operator of the Almira General Store. The Spoffard family were of English origin and owned farm properties in the area around Almira. Their name is variously spelled Spafford, Spoffard, or Spofford, depending on the source consulted. The last owner and operator of the store was Herbert H. Spofford, who purchased it in 1915 from his father, Arthur, who was Alfred Spofford's brother. Herbert Spofford was also owner of the local blacksmith shop on the east side of the river for a time. Herbert Spofford rebuilt the old store and added a residential section, resulting in the current form of the building. The building is said to incorporate part of

the old frame store within its structure. The store closed in 1930-1931, and the property was sold out of the Spofford family. The old storefront was altered to the form of a large window with five sections when the building was converted to full residential use by a later owner, possibly Edward Wettlaufer.

Almira's Post Masters

Benjamin Bowman 1857-1863

John Bowman 1863-1879

James Bowman 1879-1902

Harman D. Lehman 1902-1908

George Baker 1908-1909

Herbert Spofford 1909-1915



Archival view of the Almira General Store and Post Office before the alterations of c.1915. The existing building at 4159 Nineteenth Avenue is said to incorporate a part of the old frame store shown here. Note the remnants of a former veranda.

Markham Museum Collection

Architecture

The Almira General Store and Post Office is a two-storey, brick-veneered frame structure. The building rests on a concrete foundation, with its ground floor level close to grade. Its former use as a combined store and residence is readily apparent from the large front window opening in the portion of the building that projects toward the street, with a concrete pad in front. There is no longer a door between the window panels. The overall plan is L-shaped, with the original residential portion positioned at the back. A frame vestibule containing the main entrance extends from the west gable end wall of the rear part of the building, and a modern carport is located on the east wall of the main building. A box bay window is located on the east wall, within the carport. It is of frame construction and is a later, likely recent, alteration. There is an exterior fireplace chimney on the west wall which appears to be an early alteration. A canted bay window is located on the west wall, a later alteration that replaced a flat window some time between 2004 and 2011.

The former commercial section, the larger part of the building, is in the section that runs north-south. The second storey was likely intended to be fully residential when the 1850s building was remodeled and enlarged c.1915. The former store front is framed by shallow, flat brick pilasters. The windows are a series of six-paned fixed windows with louvered aprons, separated by plain mullions. On the second floor over the former storefront is a pair of one-over-one single hung windows. Old window openings on the side elevations are for the most part regularly placed and are either single or in pairs. Later window openings do not follow the same regular placement as the old ones. Original window openings have radiating, segmental brick arches and concrete lugsills. The windows themselves are flat-headed and are modern replacements.

The building has a medium-pitched hipped roof with overhanging, closed eaves. The rear portion of the building that projects toward the west has a gable roof, with a closed gable facing west. The closed gable contains horizontal siding, but was most likely previously shingled.

The Almira General Store and Post Office is a vernacular building designed with the influence of Edwardian Classicism. Its character is similar to houses constructed in the early twentieth century on farms and in villages throughout Markham Township. As the Victorian period transitioned into the Edwardian, there was a trend toward the simplification of domestic architecture, moving away from the highly decorative styles that were popular in the late nineteenth century. The plain red brick walls, full two-storey form, hipped roof and one-over-one single-hung windows in pairs or as single units are typical features of the new mode of building ushered in by the new century.

As a building type, the combined store and residence was typical of hamlets and villages in Markham throughout the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century. Traditionally, the owners and operators of small businesses like a general store would live in part of the building that housed their place of business. The residential quarters incorporated into commercial buildings in smaller communities were typically at the rear or at the side of the store. In more urban settings, such as Markham Village, the residential quarters were typically upstairs. While there are several good examples of this built form in the Unionville Heritage Conservation District, very few remain in Markham's historic crossroads communities.

Context

The Almira General Store and Post Office is a key building within the historic hamlet of Almira, having been the community's general store from the early 1850s to the early 1930s, and the local post office from 1857 to 1915. Its location in the centre of the hamlet, across from the former site of the Almira Mills, illustrates the historic relationship between the mills, their owners and operators, and the store and post office. The Almira General Store and post office is one of a grouping of older buildings that define the character and extent of the historic community. It is historically related to the Klein-Bowman House at 4165 Nineteenth Avenue to the east, and to the site of the Almira Mills at 4160 Nineteenth Avenue, both designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act.

Sources

Abstract Index of Deeds for Markham Township Lot 30, Concession 5.

Canada Census 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901, 1911, 1921.

Directories: Walton 1837, Brown 1846-47, Rowsell 1850-51, Mitchell 1866, Lovell's Gazetteer 1871.

Markham Township Assessment Rolls 1853, 1860, 1870 and 1875.

Research Report on 4165 Nineteenth Avenue (2002), and background research, Heritage Section, City of Markham.

Champion, Isabel (ed.). *Markham 1793-1900* (Revised Edition). Markham: Markham Historical Society, 1980. Pages 62-63, 225, 227, 326, 338.

Fern Keith in *More Pioneer Hamlets of York*. Kitchener: Pennsylvania German Folklore Society of Ontario, 1985. Pages 9-12.

Compliance with Ontario Regulation 9/06, as amended – Criteria for Determining Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

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.

The Almira General Store and Post Office is a representative example of a combined store and residence in a hamlet or village setting, designed with the influence of Edwardian Classicism.

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

The Almira General Store and Post Office has historical or associative value as the local general store and grocery store for the community of Almira from c.1853 to 1930-1931, a business central to the life of the local residents. It also has historical/associative value as the location of the Almira Post Office from 1857 to 1915, an important local institution.

The property has contextual value because it is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area.

The Almira General Store and Post Office is a key building within the historic hamlet of Almira, having been the community's general store from the early 1850s to the early 1930s, and the local post office from 1857 to 1915. The Almira General Store and Post Office is one of a grouping of older buildings that define the character and extent of the historic community of Almira. The property is historically related to the Klein-Bowman House at 4165 Nineteenth Avenue to the east, and the site of the Almira Mills at 4160 Nineteenth Avenue, both of which are designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act.

The property has contextual value because it is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings.

The Almira General Store and Post Office has contextual value due to its location in the centre of the hamlet of Almira, across from the former site of the Almira Mills, which

illustrates the historical relationship between the mills, their former owners and operators, and the store and post office.