

## **APPENDIX 'D': Research Reports**

## RESEARCH REPORT



### **Christian and Nancy Hoover House**

**East Half, Lot 22, Concession 7**

**10224 Highway 48**

**1882**

**Heritage Section**

**City of Markham Planning & Urban Design**

**2023**

#### **History**

The Christian and Nancy Hoover House is located on the east half of Markham Township Lot 22, Concession 7.

John Gray received the Crown patent for the east half of Markham Township Lot 22, Concession 7, in 1804. In 1821, he sold the property to Jacob Heise, a member of a Pennsylvania German Tunkard family. Jacob Heise did not reside on this property. He lived on Lot 26, Concession 3, west of the area that became the crossroads hamlet of Victoria Square. In 1831, Jacob Heise and his wife sold the east half of Lot 22, Concession 7 to Abraham Heise. By the time of the 1851 census, Samuel Heise, likely Abraham's son, was farming the property and living in a two-

storey log house. When the 1861 census was taken, the family had replaced the log dwelling with a two-storey frame house.

Samuel Heise sold to Christian Hoover in 1864. The Hoover family were Pennsylvania Germans of the Mennonite faith that came to Markham from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania in the 1810s. There were four brothers: John, Martin, Daniel and Christian. The Christian Hoover that purchased Lot 22, Concession 7 was the son of Daniel Hoover and Anna Stouffer. Christian Hoover and his wife, Anne (Barkey) Hoover lived on Lot 29, Concession 7, a number of farm lots to the north, therefore this property was purchased as an investment, likely with the idea that one of their sons would farm there.

In 1875, Christian and Anne Hoover sold to their son, Christian B. Hoover, who was noted as living on the property at the time of the 1871 census. He was married to Anna (Burkholder) Hoover, who went by Nancy. They had four children, Isaiah, Benjamin, Adeline and Emma. In 1882, the family built a new brick farmhouse on their property. A marble datestone in the front gable peak bears the initials C B H and the year 1882, which is helpful for knowing the name of the original owner and the date the building was erected. The rural community where the farm was located was known as Milnesville. The family appears to have moved off the farm during the construction of the brick farmhouse, because according to the 1881 census, they were living on the west half of Lot 25, Concession 7 at that time.

Christian B. Hoover and Nancy (Burkholder) Hoover both died in 1893. Like many of the Hoover family, they were Mennonites and were interred in the cemetery associated with Wideman Mennonite Church, located a little to the north of their farm. In that same year, ownership of the farm was transferred to their son, Benjamin B. Hoover. Benjamin B. Hoover married Margaret B. Raymer. They had two children, Arthur L. Hoover and Clarence H. Hoover.

Clarence H. Hoover married Mary A. Barkey. Ownership of the farm was transferred to Clarence H. Hoover in 1942. He died in 1989. Clarence and Mary Hoover's daughter, Florence Bernice Hoover, who had stayed on the farm, married John Tilman Reesor late in life. This was the third marriage for John T. Reesor. His previous wives were Margaret Wideman, then Elsie May Wideman. John T. Reesor was a concrete technician at McCowan Ready Mix. In 2006 the Hoover-Reesor farm was the site of what was probably one of the last farm auction sales at an old family farm in the City of Markham, with artifacts, furnishings and farm implements accumulated over four generations were offered for sale. Since that time, the land was sold out of the family for future development.

### **Architecture**

The Christian and Nancy Hoover House is a one-and-a-half storey brick dwelling with a T-shaped plan. The house is of solid brick construction with the brick laid in common bond. Red local brick is used that has been trimmed with buff brick quoins, plinth, door and window heads, and a belt course. The belt course is on the primary (east) elevation only. The building rests on a fieldstone foundation with the ground floor set several steps above grade.

On the primary elevation, there is a flat-roofed modern-era porch. Elaborately turned wood half posts on either side of the front door and a wooden nailing strip above the ground floor door and window openings are remnants of a former full-width veranda. The presence of a second storey “suicide door” in the centre gable suggest that the former veranda incorporated a balcony. Centred on the south gable end wall is a small, brick and frame enclosed porch that may provide access to the basement in the front section of the house. It appears to be an addition that has modified an exterior “storm cellar” type of basement entrance.

The north wall of the rear wing of the house has a small, shed-roofed porch supported on simple turned wood posts sheltering a north-facing door. An outline on the wall indicates the former presence of a full-width bellcast-roofed veranda in the ell. The turned posts appear to have been salvaged from the former veranda.

The south elevation of the rear wing has a partially enclosed veranda in the ell, and a south-facing door. This veranda has a shed roof which is integrated with an offset one-storey frame summer kitchen/woodshed on the west end wall of the rear wing. This structure has vertical tongue and groove wood siding and was built up against a brick exterior cellar entrance centred on the west end wall of the rear wing.



Detail of East (Front) 10224 Highway 48

The house has a medium-pitched, cross gable roof with projecting, open eaves. There are steep centre gables on the front or east wall, and on the north wall of the rear wing. In the front gable is a white marble datestone bearing the inscription C B H 1882. Datestones are rare in vernacular dwellings and Markham has only a few extant examples. These gables are ornamented with turned finials and kingposts, hinting that there once may have been decorative wooden bargeboards. At present, there are no known archival photographs that document the earlier appearance of the building. No historic chimneys remain. There is an exterior concrete block chimney centred on the north gable end wall of the main block.

The centrally-placed front entrance consists of a single-leaf, glazed and panelled wood door with a three-part, segmentally-headed transom light and two-paned sidelights with panelled aprons. The front of the house has three bays, with the front entrance flanked by a window on either side. The placement of window openings on this elevation and elsewhere on the house is balanced and regular. Windows are wood, single-hung, segmentally-headed, with a 2/2 pane division. Some windows have unusual casement-style storm windows. All window openings have projecting lugsills and have eyebrow-like, segmentally-arched window heads with radiating brick arches in buff brick. Door openings also have the eyebrow-like heads.



North side showing rear wing, 10224 Highway 48

The Christian and Nancy Hoover House is a very good representative example of an Ontario Classic farmhouse, as defined by Marion MacRea and Anthony Adamson in *The Ancestral Roof – Domestic Architecture of Upper Canada* (1963):

*“The little vernacular house, still stubbornly Georgian in form and wearing its little gable with brave gaiety, became the abiding image of the province. It was to be the Ontario Classic style.”*

The Ontario Classic is a house form that was popular from the 1860s to the 1890s, with many examples constructed on farms and in villages throughout Markham Township. These vernacular dwellings were often decorated with features associated with the Gothic Revival style or Italianate style, as was the case here with the steep centre gables ornamented with turned finials and kingposts and the eyebrow-like window heads. With its one-and-a-half storey form, T-shaped plan, symmetrical 3-bay front, patterned brickwork, and segmentally-headed 2/2 windows, this vernacular building is representative of farmhouses built in old Markham Township in the third quarter of the nineteenth century.

This house is one of Markham's best examples of polychromatic or patterned brickwork, a style that originated as a revival of the colourful brickwork of Medieval Venice that was in vogue in Southern Ontario from the mid-1840s to the 1880s. The brick has not been cleaned or sandblasted, which means that the contrasting effect between the red brick body and the buff brick trim has been well preserved.

### **Context**

The Christian and Nancy Hoover House is located in a rural area north of Markham Village, historically known as Milnesville. It is one of 12 properties in the immediate area that are listed in the *Markham Register of Property of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest*. Two are designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act: 10451 Highway 48, is the relocated Chancey Crosby House at 10451 Highway 48 (By-law 94-98), and the Samuel Wideman House at 10541 Highway 48 (By-law 2009-21). The other listed properties are historically associated with other Pennsylvania-German families including Koch, Wideman, Raymer, Byer and other members of the Hoover family. Wideman Mennonite Church and Cemetery are two lots to the north at 10530 Highway 48.

The Christian and Nancy Hoover House is located on a large farm property, with mature vegetation surrounding the vacant dwelling. A large barn complex located behind the house was demolished in 2007. The barn complex included a classic Pennsylvania German bank barn that had been modified by the infilling of the area below its overhang.

### **Sources**

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

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

Maps: McPhillips (1853-54), Tremaine (1860), Historical Atlas of the County of York (1878).

Directories: Walton (1837), Brown (1846-47), Rowsell (1850-51), Mitchell & Co, (1866), Nason (1871).

Property file for 10224 Highway 48, Heritage Section, City of Markham.

Find-a-Grave website with information from grave markers of the Hoover family in the Wideman Mennonite Church Cemetery.

*The Reesor Family in Canada 1804-2000*. Page 239.

Champion, Isabel (ed.). *Markham 1793-1900*. Markham: Markham Historical Society, 1989 revised edition. Pages 45-46.

### **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 Christian and Nancy Hoover House has design value or physical value as a very good, representative example of an Ontario Classic farmhouse.**

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

**The Christian and Nancy Hoover House has design value or physical value because of the high quality of its solid brick construction and because it is a very good example of late nineteenth century polychromatic or patterned brickwork.**

*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 Christian and Nancy Hoover House has historical value or associative value, representing the religious and cultural mosaic theme of Pennsylvania German Mennonites being attracted to Markham Township in the early nineteenth century. The theme of the improvement of nineteenth century farmsteads as the agricultural community progressed past the early settlement phase is also relevant when examining the history of the property.**

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

**The Christian and Nancy Hoover House has contextual value as the farmhouse that historically served the Hoover family in the rural community of Milnesville, on the east half of Lot 22, Concession 7, where it has stood since 1882. It helps maintain legibility of the agricultural character of Markham Township.**

## RESEARCH REPORT



### **Jesse and Emma Byer House** **East Half Lot 23, Concession 7** **10388 Highway 48, Milnesville** **c. 1915**

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

#### **History**

The Jesse and Emma Byer House is located on a portion of the eastern half of Markham Township Lot 23, Concession 7, in the historic rural community of Milnesville.

The community of Milnesville, south of Dickson Hill, began to take shape in the 1830s with the establishment of a general store at the northwest corner of the Eighth Concession (known today as Highway 48) and Elgin Mills Road East. The Markham and Elgin Mills Plank Road connected the community to Yonge Street by the 1850s. In time, two blacksmith shops were established near the crossroads along with two sawmills, a brickworks, a pottery, and the Wideman Mennonite Church. A post office was established in the general store in 1852. Milnesville was a diffuse community rather than a hamlet. Most of the land in the vicinity was agricultural with many farms owned by Pennsylvania German Mennonite families.



Edward McMahon received the Crown patent for the eastern 100 acres of Markham Township Lot 23, Concession 7 in 1817. In 1820, the property was sold to Jonas Boyer, a Pennsylvania German who came to Markham from York County, Pennsylvania in 1810-1811. The family name is also spelled Byer or Beyer depending on the primary source consulted. This family was of the Tunker faith, an Anabaptist Christian sect historically and doctrinally related to the Mennonites.

Jonas Boyer was married to Elizabeth (Schwartz) Boyer. The family settled on the western halves of Lots 22 and 23, Concession 8, purchased in 1811. The second home of Jonas and Elizabeth Boyer (10235 Highway 48) was built on the western half of Lot 22, Concession 8, in 1829. It is one of the oldest houses still standing in Markham and a locally unique example of a large, early, traditional Pennsylvania German farmhouse with a two-tier front veranda.

David Boyer Sr., a son of Jonas and Elizabeth Boyer, married Anna Doner. Their twin sons David Byer Jr. and John Hoover Byer were born in 1820 and would become noteworthy in the history of their community. In 1831, Jonas Boyer sold the property on Lot 23, Concession 7 to his son David. A frame house was built there in 1836. This house, which stood until the 1980s, is said to have been of plank-on-plank construction.



John Byer House on the west half of Lot 23, Concession 7, built in 1836. This house (demolished) was similar in design to the Byer Homestead on Lot 22, Concession 8, built in 1829. Markham Museum Collection M.1987.0.646

David Boyer/Byer died in 1844. By the time of the 1851 census, his son John Hoover Byer lived on Lot 23, Concession 7 (the subject property), and his other son David Byer Jr. lived on the Boyer family homestead, Lot 22, Concession 8.

John H. Byer was a farmer and a minister of the Tunker church from 1872 to 1892. In 1877, after years of services held in church member's homes, a church building was constructed at Heise Hill, south of Gormley's Corners. John H. Byer was married to Margaret (Cober) Byer. She was his second wife. His twin brother David Byer Jr. was a farmer but also operated a sawmill on his property. This sawmill supplied some of the lumber for plank roads in Markham

Township in the mid-nineteenth century. David Byer Jr. is best known in Markham's history as a healer who developed a treatment for certain types of external cancerous growths and tumors that was said to have been derived from a traditional First Nations remedy.

Based on census data, there were two dwellings on Lot 23, Concession 7 by the late nineteenth century. In 1891, a two-storey frame house containing eleven rooms was home to John H. Byer and his wife, Margaret (Cober) Byer. Another two-storey frame house containing eight rooms was the home of their son Peter Cober Byer and his wife Mary Jane (Herrington or Harrington) Byer. Peter and Mary Jane Byer previously lived on the eastern half of Lot 25, Concession 7 according to the 1881 census. At that time, they were tenants on the property formerly owned by Peter Milne Jr.

John H. Byer died in 1892. In 1894, the executors of John H. Byer's estate sold the farm to his son Peter Byer (1851-1936). Peter Byer sold to Daniel Smith in 1904. In 1914, the executors of Daniel Smith sold the farm to Christopher D. Smith. In that same year, Christopher Smith sold a 2-acre parcel of Lot 23, Concession 7 to Jesse Lewis Byer (1873-1950), a son of Peter and Mary Jane (Harrington) Byer (1852-1903). It is likely that this property contained one of the two frame dwellings noted in the 1891 census, most likely the home of his parents before they moved into the larger, older house on the farm after the death of John H. Byer in 1892. Jesse Byer married Emma Caroline Haacke (1874-1968) of Uxbridge in 1894. They had eight children. In 1915, according to Byer family history, Jesse Byer constructed a new two-storey brick residence on his property at a cost of \$1,900 (10388 Highway 48).

After training as a telegraph operator with the intention of working for a railway company, Jesse Byer instead decided to continue and expand the family tradition of honey production carried out by his grandfather and father. The family believe that their ancestors brought beehives to Markham when they came here from Pennsylvania. Jesse Byer produced honey on a commercial scale, and according to Trevor Watson in *Pioneer Hamlets of York*, this was the first commercial apiary in Canada, a statement supported by the Byer family who confirm that it was the first large-scale commercial apiary in the country. Jesse Byer is remembered by the family as a progressive person. He was one of the first in his community to own an automobile.

Jesse Byer was listed as an apiarist or beekeeper in the 1901, 1911 and 1921 census returns. His first beehives were located at Cashel, followed by the communities of Peaches, Altona and beyond. Jesse Byer's sons Edwin, Walter and Lloyd were part of the business, which was known as J. L. Byer and Brookside Apiaries, and later Byer Brothers Brookside Apiaries. Christopher Smith, who owned the former Byer farm, was also listed as an apiarist in the 1921 census. In 1918, Jesse Byer purchased a six-acre parcel on the northwest quarter of Lot 23, Concession 8 and two years later erected a frame building in relation to the honey business. The property was sold to his son Edwin Byer in 1923. A house adjoining the business was built on the property in 1957. Edwin and Ruth Byer's son Erle was the next owner and the last to operate the family business which closed in 1991.

Erle Byer wrote a detailed history of the family's multi-generational honey business that was included in a book titled *Those Enterprising Pennsylvania Germans*, published by the Pennsylvania German Folklore Society in 1995. In that article, aspects of the expansion of the business and the various areas where the beehives were located are described. According to Erle Byer, Jesse Byer was a prolific writer. His articles appeared in trade publications such as *The American Bee Journal*, *Bee Culture* and the *The Canadian Bee Journal*. Through his writings, says Erle Byer, Jesse Byer became the best-known bee-keeper in Canada. J. L. Byer and Sons Brookside Apiaries became one of the largest businesses of its kind in Ontario. Both Jesse Byer and Erle Byer were members of the Ontario Bee Association, and both served as president at one time.

The obituary of Jesse Lewis Byer that appeared in the June 22, 1950 edition of *The Stouffville Tribune* provides the following details about his significant apiary business:

*"Through the years the late Mr. Byer pioneered in commercial bee-keeping on a vast scale. Mr. Byer was at one time President of the Ontario Beekeepers Association, and has been one of the two surviving charter members of that organization."*

*"Mr. Byer was a man of quiet speech, devoted to the local church and home, but he was also a distinguished man, well-known throughout Canada and the United States, and having business relations in many countries. His picture and his articles appeared through the years in the Bee Journal and other magazines for bee-keepers, and were authoritative as well as interesting. He knew as no other Canadian did the problems attending commercial production of honey in this country, because he pioneered in this field. Where others produced a few pounds, he produced carloads. The novice could learn about Foul Brood in a few minutes spent with Mr. Byer than he could from studying books or taking short courses. Out of what had been a side-line or hobby, J. L. Byer built a modern, scientific business."*

In 1939, Jesse and Emma Byer sold a building lot off the southern portion of their property to their son Walter G. Byer, and a house was built there. Jesse Byer died in 1950. The larger property containing the red brick house of c.1915 became the home of another son, Lloyd Byer. Lloyd Byer obtained formal ownership of his home in 1975 from the executors of Jesse L. Byer's estate. Lloyd Byer was a long-time owner. He died in 1992.

### **Architecture**

The Jesse and Emma Byer House is a two-storey dwelling, faced in red pressed brick, with a square plan. The building rests on a concrete foundation with the main floor raised a few steps above grade. The pyramidal roof has a wide overhang with flat soffits. There is a single-stack brick chimney on the north side. On the south side of the house, there is a box bay window capped with an early twentieth century version of a mansard roof. An open veranda with a low-pitched hipped roof shelters the front door on the east wall. The veranda has full-height wooden Tuscan columns and a wood lattice base. There is a simple railing with plain balusters. A one-storey frame addition extends from the rear wall.

The house has a three-bay front with a single-leaf door placed off-centre with a window on either side. The placement of the three window openings on the second floor is regular in contrast to the asymmetry of the ground floor front wall openings. The heads of the rectangular door and window openings have cambered brick arches but the doors and windows themselves are flat headed. Windows are single hung with one-over-one panes and cast concrete lugsills. On the south side of the house there is a horizontally oriented accent window that likely lights the entrance hall and staircase. The box bay window has paired one-over-one paned windows on the long side and narrow one-over-one windows on the short sides.



10388 Highway 48. View of south side showing box bay window.

The Jesse and Emma Byer House is typical of the practical, simply detailed houses built on farms and in villages throughout Markham Township in the early twentieth century. Its architectural detailing is characteristic of 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 a deep front porch with Edwardian Classical details. The red pressed brick cladding, two-storey form, and broad hipped roof are representative features of the style as seen in this region, however the asymmetrical placement of openings on the ground floor front is unusual for an early twentieth century house of this style.

### **Context**

The Jesse and Emma Byer House is one of a number of nineteenth and early twentieth century dwellings in the vicinity of the historic rural community of Milnesville that make legible the agricultural history of the area. The property at 10388 Highway 48 is historically linked to the Byer Homestead at 10235 Highway 48, another property listed on the *Markham Register of Property of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest*.

### **Sources**

Deed Abstracts for Markham Township Lot 23, Concession 7, and Lots 22 and 23, Concession 8.  
Canada Census: 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901, 1911 and 1921.

Markham Township Directories: Walton (1837), Brown (1846-47), Rowsell (1850-51), Mitchell (1866), Nason (1871), and Markham Township Directories of 1892 and 1918.

Maps of Markham Township: McPhillips (1853-54), Tremaine (1860), and Historical Atlas of the County of York, Ontario (1878).

Family History File for Byer, Heritage Section, City of Markham Planning & Urban Design.

Byer Family Cemetery Memorial Service Program, August 11, 1996.

*The Reesor Family in Canada 1804-2000*. Page 131.

Byer, Erle. "Byer Family Honey." *Those Enterprising Pennsylvania Germans*. Kitchener: Pennsylvania German Folklore Society of Ontario, 1995. Pages 80-85.

Interview with John Byer of Stouffville, June 27, 2024, regarding Byer family history.

Champion, Isabel (ed.). *Markham 1793-1900*. Markham: Markham Historical Society, Second Edition, Revised, 1989. Page 40, 43-44, 151-152, and 184.

Champion, Mary B. (ed.). *Markham Remembered – A Pictorial History of Old Markham Township*. Markham: Markham Historical Society, 1988. Page 50.

Watson, Trevor. "Milnesville." *Pioneer Hamlets of York*. Kitchener: Pennsylvania German Folklore Society of Ontario. 1977. Page 146.

Find-a-Grave Website Search for Jesse L. Byer.

"Prominent Markham Twp. Apiarist, J. L. Byer is Laid to Rest." *The Stouffville Tribune, June 22, 1950*.

*Gospel Herald Vol. XLIII, Number 32, August, 1950*. Obituary for Jesse L. Byer.

"The York County Bee-keeper." *The Canadian Bee Journal, Vol. XIV, February 1906*. Page 31.

"Canadian Bee-Keepers – J. L. Byer." *The Canadian Bee Journal, October 1910*. Pages 295-297.

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

*The property has design value or physical value as a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method.*

**The Jesse and Emma Byer House is a representative example of a brick rural dwelling in the form of an American Foursquare, with Edwardian Classical features.**

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

**The Jesse and Emma Byer House has historical value for its association with the Pennsylvania German Tunker community who were early European settlers in Markham Township and for its association with the Byer apiary business, said to have been the first, and at one time one of the largest, commercial honey-producing operation of its kind in Ontario.**

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

**The Jesse and Emma Byer House has contextual value as an early twentieth century dwelling within the historic rural community of Milnesville. Its presence makes legible the historically**

**important agricultural character of the community which was the economic foundation of Markham Township.**

## RESEARCH REPORT



**Joseph & Mary Steckley Houses**  
**West Half Lot 24, Concession 7**  
**10535 & 10537 McCowan Road**  
**c.1850 & c.1855**

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

## History

This property contains two mid-nineteenth century farmhouses which stand side-by-side on a portion of the western half of Markham Township Lot 24, Concession 7. The stone dwelling, the older of the two, is addressed 10535 McCowan Road. The brick dwelling, located a short distance to the west of the stone house, is addressed 10537 McCowan Road.

John McGill received the Crown patent for the entire 200 acres of Markham Township Lot 24, Concession 7 in 1806. The Honorable John McGill, Lieutenant of the County of York in 1807, was in charge of raising a militia in defense of the colony in the event of war with the United States in the uneasy years leading up to the War of 1812.

In the same year that he received the Crown patent for Lot 24, Concession 7, John McGill sold the property to Elijah Bentley, an Anabaptist preacher. Bentley was a sympathizer with the American forces that attacked Upper Canada during the War of 1812 and occupied the Town of York in 1813. He was tried, convicted, and sentenced to six months imprisonment by the colonial government. Before the events of 1813, Elijah Bentley had sold his property to Christopher Hoover, a Pennsylvania German Mennonite, in 1807.

Christopher Hoover sold to Abraham Lehman in 1826. Like Christian Hoover, Abraham Lehman was a member of Markham's Pennsylvania German Mennonite community. He was one of several men named Abraham Lehman that lived in Markham Township in the early nineteenth century. Abraham Lehman was married to Mary or Marie (Stewig) Lehman. Abraham Lehman died in 1827.

Jacob Lehman, possibly a son of Abraham and Marie Lehman, purchased the western 100 acres of Lot 24, Concession 7 in 1829. In 1832, Jacob Lehman sold to Joseph Steckley. Joseph Steckley (or Stickley) was born in the Short Hills/Fonthill area of the Niagara Region. His family was of Pennsylvania German origin. They were members of the Dunkard or Tunker Church, an Anabaptist sect related doctrinally and historically to the Mennonites. This Christian sect later became known as the Brethren in Christ. In Markham, the Tunker congregation was known as Heise Hill. Initially, church members worshipped in members' homes, circulating between sixteen different places. In 1877, a church was built at Heise Hill, south of Gormley's Corners. The location is now part of the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville. Steckley, Hoover, Heise, Doner, Baker and Horner were some of Markham's Tunker families.

Joseph Steckley's wife Mary was born in Pennsylvania. At the time of the 1851 census, Joseph Steckley was a farmer, age 56. His unmarried son John Steckley, age 23, resided with his parents in a two-storey stone house. This is the stone house at 10535 McCowan Road. A date of construction of c.1850 is suggested for this house, but it may be earlier, possibly built in the 1840s. Also on the property in 1851 was a one-storey log house lived in by Joseph Harrison, a painter, and Paul Duncan, a labourer, and his wife and infant son. This log house was likely the Steckley family's first residence on the property.



By the time of the 1861 census, John Steckley was married to Mary (Smith) Steckley. Based on the age of their oldest child, they married about 1855. In 1861 Joseph and Mary Steckley lived in a two-storey brick house (10537 McCowan Road) that was likely constructed around the time of John and Mary Steckley's marriage. This house is smaller than the stone house, having been designed as a home for Joseph and Mary Steckley's retirement. John and Mary Steckley lived in the larger stone house with their three young children.

This John Steckley should not be confused with John Steckley, the son of Christian Steckley Jr. and Elizabeth (Hilts) Steckley. That John Steckley lived on Lot 31, Concession 4, west of the hamlet of Almira. His home was one of the sixteen residences where members of the Heise Hill congregation worshipped before their church was built in 1877.

By 1871, Joseph Steckley was a widower. His son John Steckley remained on the family farm but in 1874 purchased the eastern half of Lot 24, Concession 6, the farm directly across the road from where he resided.

Joseph Steckley and John Steckley both died in the mid-1870s. The home farm passed to Joseph Steckley, the grandson of Joseph Steckley Sr. He was a teenager at the time. The farm on the opposite side of the road passed to the younger sons of John and Mary Steckley, John Steckley Jr. and William Steckley. According to the 1881 census, the boys lived on Lot 24, Concession 7 with their widowed mother,.

Joseph Steckley was married by the time of the 1891 census. He lived in the stone farmhouse with his wife Jane and their four children. Mary Steckley, the widow of John Steckley, was also in the household. The brick farmhouse was lived in by a tenant farmer, Frank Lester.

In 1902, John Stickley Jr., the administrator of the estate of Joseph Steckley/Stickley, sold the farm to Anna Maria Cleverdon, the wife of Richard Cleverdon. The Cleverdon family previously farmed in East Gwillimbury. Richard Cleverdon was born in England; his wife was born in the U.S. In 1951, their son William A. H. Cleverdon sold the property to John and Jane Gulham. The next owners were William G. Nigh and John Nigh (Nigh Brothers), who purchased the farm in 1953. In 1968, Nigh Brothers sold to investors.

## **Architecture**

### ***Stone Farmhouse***

The older Joseph and Mary Steckley House at 10535 McCowan Road is a one-and-a-half storey fieldstone dwelling with a rectangular plan. The ground floor level is several steps above grade, allowing for a cellar area as indicated by basement windows and an enclosed exterior cellar entrance on the east gable end. The lower part of the front wall has been parged, probably for waterproofing. An enclosed porch is located on the front or south wall, sheltering the main entrance. At the rear of the main block is a non-historic two-storey frame addition linked to the front portion by a one-storey frame connection. This connection may be a remnant of a frame kitchen wing or summer kitchen.

The walls are of coursed split rubble composed of grey limestone, black basalt, and pink and grey granite – transported glacial material that was likely gathered from the fields and nearby stream beds. Larger squared stones were used at the corners and on the front wall. On the side walls, some squared stones were used, intermixed with random rubble. A strip of less formal stonework is located above the front windows, an indication of a former full-width veranda which would have had a roof that would conceal this less sophisticated stonework.

Window openings are framed with flat red brick arches and narrow quoin-like margins. The arches over the front windows consist of a narrow course of headers, another indication that the area above them was intended to be concealed by the roof of a veranda. On the gable end walls, the brick arches are splayed and composed of stretchers and headers. The front windows are recent replacements with one-over-one panes. Windows on the gable ends are single-hung wood windows from the late nineteenth century with two-over-two panes.

The roof is a medium-pitched gable with projecting eaves. At the time when a photograph was taken for the 1991 *Markham Inventory of Heritage Buildings*, there were deep eave returns with a Classical bedmould. Now there are flat soffits with no traces remaining of the eave returns. At the east end of the roof is a heavy, corbelled, single-stack fireplace chimney of a type that would have typically served a fireplace. At the west gable end there is an exterior brick chimney that is placed slightly off-centre on the wall.

The house has a three-bay front. The centrally-placed entrance is concealed within a twentieth century enclosed porch. According to a description of the entrance in the 1991 *Markham Inventory of Heritage Buildings*, there is a door with a flat-headed transom light and sidelights.

Joseph and Mary Steckely's stone house is a fieldstone farmhouse displaying the symmetry and formality typical of Georgian architecture combined with elements of the Classic Revival style, including a doorcase with a rectangular transom and sidelights and formerly, eave returns with a Classical bedmould. Farmhouses designed in the Georgian architectural tradition embellished with Classical detailing were the norm for this area in the mid-nineteenth century. Most were one-and-a-half storeys in height and had a single-storey kitchen wing at the rear (absent or altered in this example). Stone or brick construction were typical. In this house, the formal Georgian design principles of balance and proportion are relieved by multi-coloured squared stonework accented with red brick window surrounds. The quoin-like brick margins around the window openings are narrower in width compared to other examples in Markham. This window treatment, combined with the use of squared stone at the corners, may be an indication that the owner was minimizing the use of brick for reasons of economy.

### ***Brick Farmhouse***

The brick house at 10537 McCowan Road is a one-and-a-half storey red brick dwelling with a rectangular plan. The ground floor level is several steps above grade allowing for a cellar area as indicated by an enclosed exterior cellar entrance on the east gable end. The foundation has a parged concrete finish. It is not certain if this is a later foundation, or if the parging covers fieldstone. A hip-roofed enclosed porch clad in wood shingles is located on the front or south

wall, sheltering the main entrance. There is a non-historic one-storey frame addition on the west gable end wall. The addition is clad in wide wood clapboard and has a low-pitched gable roof. It appears to date from the 1960s or 1970s.

The walls are of local red-orange brick laid in common bond. Decorative features of the brickwork are limited to simple spayed arches over window openings consisting of a single course of headers. A horizontal line on the front and west walls indicates the former presence of a wrap-around veranda.

The roof is a medium-pitched gable with projecting eaves. There are eave returns and a narrow bedmould. At the west end of the roof is a heavy, corbelled, single-stack fireplace chimney.

The house has a three-bay front. The centrally-placed entrance is concealed within a twentieth century enclosed porch. Details about the door are unknown, but given the modest scale of the dwelling, it is most likely a single-leaf door without sidelights. Ground floor windows on either side of the enclosed porch are large in size for such a small house. The one-over-one single hung windows may be altered multi-paned windows (six over six panes?) more typical of the mid-nineteenth century period of construction, or they are later replacements for the original windows. The window openings have projecting concrete lugsills that may have replaced wooden lugsills.

On the east gable end wall there is one ground floor window placed toward the north, and two smaller windows in the gable wall above. The windows have a one-over-one glazing configuration. The exterior cellar entrance is of brick that matches that of the main body of the house. The cellar entrance has a gable roof. Any basement windows on the nineteenth century portion of the house have been closed.

The west gable end wall is partially obscured by the frame addition. It is likely that a ground floor window was converted to a door leading into the addition. In the gable wall above, the northerly second storey window has been bricked in.

Joseph and Mary Steckley's later brick house is a vernacular dwelling designed with the symmetry and formality of the Georgian architectural tradition. The house is modest in scale, in keeping with its original function as Joseph and Mary Steckley's home constructed when they retired and handed the farm's operation over to their son John Steckley. In Pennsylvania German culture, the provision of a self-contained dwelling called a "doddy house" for the aged parents was a common practice. Often the separate quarters were housed in an addition to the main farmhouse. In this case, the Steckley family chose to build a completely separate dwelling beside the farmhouse. This example of side-by-side multi-generational dwellings is locally rare.

### **Context**

The Joseph and Mary Steckley Houses are located in a rural setting south of the McCowan Reservoir. They are two of several important mid-nineteenth century farmhouses on the stretch of McCowan Road between Major Mackenzie Drive and Elgin Mills Road, representing

the agricultural heritage of the area. On Lot 23, Concession 7 to the south is the Thomas and Catharine Peach House, c.1845 at 10387 McCowan Road. On Lot 22, Concession 7 is the Haacke-Warriner House, c.1855 at 10159 McCowan Road. Together these farm residences are an indication of the prosperity of Markham's agricultural community in the mid-nineteenth century.

A gable-roofed barn associated with the two farmhouses was demolished in 2004.



10535 and 10537 McCowan Road, showing the relationship between the two dwellings. Note the exterior cellar entrances.

### Sources

Deed Abstracts for Lot 24, Concession 7, Markham Township.

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

Directories of Markham Township: Walton (1837), Brown (1846-47), Rowsell (1850-51), Mitchell (1866), Nason (1871) and 1892 Directory.

Maps of Markham Township: McPhillips (1953-54), Tremaine (1860), and Historical Atlas of the County of York, Ontario (1878).

Property Files for 10535 and 10537 McCowan Road, Heritage Section, City of Markham Planning & Urban Design.

Champion, Isabel (ed.). *Markham 1793-1900*. Markham: Markham Historical Society, Second Edition, Revised, 1989. Pages 49, 151-152, 161, 204-205

## **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 examples of a style, type, expression, material or construction method.*

**The Joseph and Mary Steckley Houses have design value and physical value as a locally rare example of two separated Pennsylvania German multi-generational dwellings on the same property, and as representative examples of mid-nineteenth century farmhouses in the vernacular Georgian architectural tradition.**

*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 Joseph and Mary Steckley Houses have historical value and associative value, representing the early religious diversity of Markham Township, namely the Pennsylvania German Tunkers who arrived in the early nineteenth century and were a distinct community from the Pennsylvania German Mennonites that settled here during the same time period.**

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

**The Joseph and Mary Steckley Houses have historical value and associative value as noteworthy examples of the practice of Pennsylvania German families to provide multi-generational dwellings on their farms.**

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

**The Joseph and Mary Steckley Houses have contextual value as two of several important mid-nineteenth century farmhouses on the stretch of McCowan Road between Major Mackenzie Drive and Elgin Mills Road. Together these farm residences are an indication of the prosperity of Markham's agricultural community in the mid-nineteenth century, and for being physically, functionally, visually and historically linked to property where these houses have stood since the mid-nineteenth century.**