

Archibald Fenwick House

c.1845

North Half Lot 25, Concession 6
4551 Elgin Mills Road



Historical Background:

The Archibald Fenwick House was built c.1845 on the north half of Township Lot 25, Concession 6, at the crossroads hamlet of Cashel. Archibald Hugh Fenwick (1813 - 1868) was a prosperous farmer and owner of considerable property in the community. He originally lived on the family homestead on Lot 26, Concession 5, which contained a sawmill, store, distillery and inn at various times in its history.

Archibald's father, James Fenwick (1777-1862), was born in Scotland in 1777 and served in the Royal Navy until he was discharged at Port Royal, Jamaica in 1802. He arrived in Markham Township in 1806, and settled at Crosby's Corners (later known as Cashel). In 1814, he purchased the east 70 acres of Lot 26, Concession 5. This property was valuable because a branch of the Rouge River ran through it, with ideal conditions for a mill site. James Fenwick married Ellen Thomson of Scarborough Township. He operated an inn and distillery at the crossroads as early as 1812. During the War of 1812, James Fenwick served as Captain of the Number 9 Company in the 1st Regiment of York, and participated in the defence of the Town of York during the American attack in 1813.

In 1844, Archibald Fenwick purchased the north 100 acres of Lot 25, Concession 6 (a property formerly owned by his father from 1816 to 1819). It is likely that the brick house on the farm was built at about the time he acquired the property. A second brick house and blacksmith shop was also located on the Fenwick farm. A fine portrait of

Archibald Fenwick appears on page 234 of the book, Markham 1793-1900. His wife was Barbara Ann Latham (1823-1901), and there were 12 children in the family.

Architectural Description

Exterior:

The Archibald Fenwick House is a one and a half story brick building with a simple rectangular plan. It rests on a raised fieldstone foundation that may have housed a basement kitchen. A one storey frame kitchen wing/woodshed, a later addition, extends from the north half of the east (rear) wall. The house is boarded up so detailed descriptions of doors and windows is limited at this time.

The house has a three-bay front with a centre doorcase flanked by tall, wide windows that were originally French doors. The lower, panelled portion of the French doors remain, in a fixed position, while the glazed upper portion has been replaced with windows of a more recent date. The doorcase has narrow sidelights and a transom light, but these have been boarded over for some time, so their original glazing pattern is not visible. Evidence on the front wall indicates the former presence of a bellcast-roofed, full-width verandah.

The brickwork of the front wall is laid in Flemish bond, while the remainder is in common bond. There are white brick quoins and cut limestone splayed lintels over the front and side door and window openings. At the rear of the house, the door and window openings have splayed brick arches.

The house has a low-pitched hip roof with a wide overhang and a narrow, moulded wood cornice. No historic chimneys remain. On the rear slope is a tiny, gable-roofed dormer window providing the only natural light for a room within the attic.

The rear kitchen wing is of frame construction, clad in vertical tongue and groove wood. There is a shed-roofed porch in the ell, formed by the extension of the roof slope. The rear wing has a medium-pitched gable roof containing a storage loft. At the east end of the wing, the woodshed is at grade level, and the kitchen is several steps above. A recycle window within the woodshed, containing Regency-style, small-paned glazing, may be a remnant of the original French doors on the brick portion of the house.

Interior:

The interior of the Fenwick house has undergone some alterations over time, and has suffered from the effects of weather and vandalism. However, much of the original trim and room layout remains intact. There is a fireplace in the south front room (likely the dining room), with its mantel removed. The north front room (likely the parlour) has wood wainscoting and a large, moulded chair rail. Ceilings are high, as is often the case with houses designed in the Ontario Regency Cottage style.

Stylistic Comments

The Fenwick House is one of Markham's finest, and most formal, examples of an Ontario Regency Cottage. The large French doors, Flemish bond brickwork on the façade, and

cut stone lintels are indicators a high-quality design and construction. With its original chimneys and bellcast-roofed verandah, the Fenwick House would have displayed all of the classic features of this elegant, early house form.

The Ontario Regency Cottage is typically associated with families of British origin, such as the Fenwick family. Due to Markham's predominant German-American culture, this style is locally uncommon. This house form, most often referred to as the Regency Cottage, is characterized by a low profile, hip roof, large windows and graceful verandahs, was built throughout the British Empire from the 1820s to the 1850s. It is thought that this type of house originated in India, and that the high ceiling height, French doors and verandahs commonly associated with the Regency Cottage helped keep these dwellings cooler in hot climates.

Contextual Comments

The Fenwick house is located at the end of a long lane of Norway Spruce trees, on the east side of Kennedy Road, south of Elgin Mills Road. Although the property is addressed as 4551 Elgin Mills Road, the lane is on Kennedy Road. On the next corner to the north is the historic Cashell hotel. No outbuildings remain on the property, though older air photos show that a barn complex was formerly located to the north east of the house. The land is in agricultural use. To the south of the Fenwick house, at 10725 Kennedy Road, is a brick house dating from the mid 19th century. This house was the residence of the local blacksmith and was historically associated with the Fenwick property.

G. Duncan
May, 2008

ADDITIONAL PHOTOS OF THE FENWICK HOUSE











Municipal Address: 4551 Elgin Mills Road East (10715 Kennedy)

Photograph:



Legal Description: Lot 25, Concession 6

Building Name: The Archibald Fenwick House

Date of Construction: c.1840

Current Owner: 435989 Ontario Limited, c/o Atlantis Realty Services Inc. 1131a Leslie Street, Ste 101, Toronto, On

Inventory Code: F3 - 6

Roll Number: 030235605000000

Architectural Style: Regency Cottage

Style Description: A 1 storey brick regency cottage with a 3 bay façade. The house has a medium pitched roof, with contrasting quoins. The house likely originally had French doors on the main facade

Exterior Wall Material: Red brick

Type: Residential

Preliminary Rating: "A"

Markham Heritage Estates Study 2004

Status: Vacant – for at least 15 to 20 years
Listed on the Heritage Inventory

Conclusions:

The Archibald Fenwick house is a rare example of the Regency Cottage Style in Markham. An example of a 5 bay regency exists in the estates, however, the Fenwick house with its floor to ceiling windows would be a truer adherent to Regency styling.

The house sits vacant in an area that is unlikely to be developed for at least 10 to 15 years.

The house is relatively close to the road and could succumb to vandalism.

Significant: Yes Threatened: Yes

Recommendations:

1. That the owner of the property be requested to repair the structure and either tenant the building or secure it, fence around it and post a sign on the property indicating that the building is to be preserved;
2. That if a compatible use is planned for that general site area, that the subject house be retained and suitably reused;
3. That in the event that all options for on-site preservation are reasonably exhausted, and given that the subject house is largely intact, represents one of the best examples of the Regency Cottage Style, in the Town of Markham, and is located in an area which is not likely to be subject for pressure for development for at least 10 years, that the Archibald Fenwick House could be considered to be appropriate for relocation to the Heritage Subdivision.
4. The building should be designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act.

HERITAGE MARKHAM
EXTRACT

APPENDIX C

DATE: May 26, 2008

TO: R. Hutcheson, Manager of Heritage Planning

EXTRACT CONTAINING ITEM # 22 OF THE FOURTH HERITAGE MARKHAM
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON MAY 14, 2008

22. HERITAGE ESTATES ELIGIBILITY
4551 ELGIN MILLS ROAD EAST
ARCHIBALD FENWICK HOUSE (16.11)
Extracts: R. Hutcheson, Manager of Heritage Planning

The Senior Heritage Planner gave a presentation on this application.

HERITAGE MARKHAM RECOMMENDS:

THAT in view of the heritage significance of the Archibald Fenwick House at 4551 Elgin Mills Road East and the serious level of threat to it, Heritage Markham recommends that Council declare it eligible for relocation to Markham Heritage Estates;

THAT Heritage Markham confirms that the Archibald Fenwick House meets the criteria for relocation to Markham Heritage Estates as indicated in the Markham Heritage Estates Study (2004) and is on the list of the 16 most significant and most threatened buildings in Markham;

AND THAT the property owner be contacted to discuss the potential relocation of this vacant building to Markham Heritage Estates to secure their cooperation in making the house available for relocation.

CARRIED.

Councillor Moretti, having declared a disclosure of interest with respect to Item 22 due to the fact that her son works for Fieldgate Homes, did not participate in the voting on this item.