

**STATEMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE****LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

ADDRESS: 141 Centre Street  
LEGAL: Plan 9834 Pt Lot 44 RP65R35793 Pt 2  
ROLL: 192800004143005

**OVERVIEW**

The cultural heritage value of the property known as 141 Centre Street meets the criteria set out by the *Ontario Heritage Act* under Province of Ontario Regulation 9/06 for the categories of design/physical, historical/associative and contextual value.

Name: The Owen McCartney House  
Date Built: Circa 1840  
Address: 141 Centre Street  
Location: South side of Centre Street, adjacent to the Thornhill Heritage Conservation District. Is also adjacent to 121 JEH MacDonald  
Condition: Very good.

**REASONS FOR DESIGNATION UNDER PART IV OF THE *ONTARIO HERITAGE ACT*****Description of Property**

The cultural heritage value of 141 Centre Street based on the building being an excellent example of Georgian architecture, dating from c.1840, within Thornhill's historic core. It has the potential to yield information that contributes to the understanding of a community.

**HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

The property, located on Lot 30, Concession 1 has several associations with the early settlement of Village of Thornhill. The Lot and Concession was "created" in 1794 when Governor Simcoe first commissioned the survey of Yonge Street to connect Lake Ontario at York. Despite its official creation, it was not until 1810 that Lot 30 Concession 1 (comprising of 210 acres) was officially granted to John Wilson Sr, as the first registered private owner of the lot (Land Records, City of Vaughan Archives). Wilson (alternately spelled Willson) was one of the first Loyalists to move to Vaughan area and is a signatory to a manuscript compiled between 1800-1806 declaring his loyalty on March 11, 1805. He is thought to have been the first miller in the area and did serve as Justice of the Peace in Thornhill and "took an active part in local affairs" (Fitzgerald 20). Stilwel Wilson, possibly a relative of John, was elected overseer of highways, and fence viewer on Yonge Street from lots 26 to 40 in 1799 (Fitzgerald 20).

In 1823, Lot 30 was first severed, recorded as a "Buy and Sell" transaction Registered on July 31 with the northeast 55 acres sold by William Allan to Henry Boulton, and subsequently divided into several smaller parcels sold off to new arriving parties. One of these portions was sold to Owen McCartney (alternatively spelled McCarty and McCartney), an upper Canada born settler. He purchased the 1-acre lot in 1835 and is thought that the house was built around 1840 Census as he married his wife Christiana in 1838, and they were noted to be living in Thornhill. It is not certain as to whether the house was a 2-storey house from the beginning or if this was a later expansion by the next owner.

The next family to own and reside on the property was in 1844 when the property was sold to Robert and Susannah (née Chapman) Jarrett (also spelled Jarrott and Jarratt in various sources). Robert Jarrett was a notable carpenter and joiner in the Thornhill community and his wife Susannah is thought to be a daughter of Nathan Chapman, the first settler of Lot 28. They were well connected in the community and by 1861 the Jarretts had 12 ½ acres "attached to the tenement" (Broughton, 1861 Census). The home is described as a 2-storey home by this point.

May 12, 1871 instrument 848 reflects the decision at the Court of Chancery that gives ownership to the

parcel to Mary Jane Jarrott. Subsequently, instrument 1102 (reg. 18 May 1872) reflects the decision at the Court of Chancery that gives ownership of two acres to Joseph Cox. He and his first wife Sara (née Armstrong) lived in the house for several more years and were known for being active in the local community and the Presbyterian Church. Having no children, it has been speculated that the Coxes decided to leave their house to the Thornhill Presbyterian Church as a manse. However, after Sara Armstrong died in 1897, Joseph married Agnes Abraham a few years later.

Therefore, when Joseph Cox died in 1905, Agnes Cox was able to live in the house for the next 20 years before her own passing in 1925. As circumstances for the Thornhill Presbyterian Church had changed considerably since the 1890's, the trustees of the Thornhill Presbyterian Church sold the property in 1928 to Earl Victor Doan and his wife Vera Doan and held the mortgage until 1935, when the deed was transferred back to the Trustees of the church (Ins. 16976). In December 1937 the property was bought by John and Gladys Guest (only Gladys' name appears in the Instrument). Gladys' husband was notable Canadian John S.H. Guest, co-founder of Appleby College, Oakville.

In 1953, Gladys Guest, at that time a widow, sold the property to Edward and Joyce Duder. The Duder family owned the property until 2015, after subdividing the property for future lots.

## **ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION**

This house is an excellent example of the domestic Georgian style, constructed as a last structure of its time and place that has remained remarkable integrity. The building's siting, building envelope, structure, original exterior finish materials all contribute to the property's significant cultural heritage value at 141 Centre Street and are described in the points below:

- Massing:** front portion is rectangular in plan with a narrower rectangular two storey tail addition on south façade, two storey and hip roof throughout. The east wall of the addition aligns with the east wall of the original front portion of the house.
- Front façade symmetry, aligned arrangement of windows (ground floor with top floor in three bays)
- Understated main entry door surround with tapered pilasters of classical style, entablature and cornice
- Rough-cast stucco exterior cladding
- 12 over 12 pane wood sash windows on ground floor, 8 over 12 pane wood sash windows on the second floor.
- Original window locations and dimensions at front, east and west facades.

The property also had a significant outbuilding to the rear of the house that was demolished in 2015.

## **CONTEXTUAL ELEMENTS**

The subject building and siting is important in defining, maintaining and supporting the early 19th century architecture style of early Thornhill at the cusp of its first economic growth, just before the abolition of the Corn Laws in 1846, which impacted the community with the tragic loss of Benjamin Thorne (the man who gave the name to the Village) just four years later, and with that, the start of the twenty-years economic struggle (Fitzgerald, 40-43); the building has maintained its Georgian features through history since then.

The setback of the house is unique and is a remnant of the varied setbacks of original Centre Street farms.

## **SUMMARY OF CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE**

### **Physical/Design Value**

- Massing:** front portion is rectangular in plan with narrower rectangular two storey tail addition on south façade, two storey and hip roof throughout. The east wall of the addition aligns with the east wall of the original front portion of the house.

- ❑ Front Façade: Symmetry in front façade, aligned arrangement of windows (ground floor with top floor in three bays)
- ❑ Understated main entry door surround with tapered pilasters of classical style, entablature and cornice
- ❑ Roughcast stucco exterior cladding
- ❑ 12 over 12 pane wood sash windows on ground floor, 8 over 12 pane wood sash windows on the second floor.
- ❑ Original window locations and dimensions at front, east and west facades.

### **Associative Value**

- ❑ The property known as 141 Centre Street is known for its associative value with the early settler families of Thornhill, such as Willson, McCarty, Jarrott and Cox. All families are known for their significant contributions to the Thornhill community.
- ❑ It has an associative link to John S.H. Guest, an important early 20th century educator in Ontario.
- ❑ It is one of the oldest built structures that were part of early Thornhill life that is not included in the Thornhill Heritage Cosne

### **Contextual Value**

- ❑ The setback and location of the house, facing onto Centre Street are directly related to the construction of the property in the 1840's and serves as a visible reminder of early 19th century settlement of Thornhill and its rural streetscape
- ❑ The house has contextual value as being one of the earliest surviving structures of the original village, thus contributing to the rich history of the area as a pioneer village of former Upper Canada.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY AND RESOURCES**

### **Articles:**

Broughton, Jim. The Story of 141 Centre Street, The Society for the Preservation of Historic Thornhill, Newsletter, February 2005.

### **Books:**

The Heritage Years: Thornhill, Vaughan Township, 1796 to 1900. Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee for the Thornhill Area, Town of Vaughan, 1979

Fitzgerald, Doris M. Thornhill 1793-1963, The History of an Ontario Village. Coyright, Canada, 1964, by Doris FitzGerald.

Old Time Thornhill. FitzGerald, Doris M., 1970.

Reaman, G. Elmore A History of Vaughan Township, Two Centuries of Life in the Township, University of Toronto Press, 1971.

### **Land Registry Records and Instruments for Concession 1, Lot 30:**

York Region Land Registry Office, 50 Bloomington Rd W, 3rd Floor, Aurora, ON L4G 3G8

### **Websites:**

[OurOntario.ca](http://OurOntario.ca)

<https://www.thornhillhistoric.org/> - The Thornhill Historic Society