

## **STATEMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE**

### **BRIEF DESCRIPTION**

ADDRESS: 2057 Major Mackenzie Drive West

LEGAL: Concession 3, Part Lot 20, East Half

### **OVERVIEW**

The cultural heritage value of the property known as 2057 Major Mackenzie Drive West 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.

Building Name: The Joshua Oliver House  
Date Built: 1837  
Community: Maple  
Condition: Stone walls

### **ARCHITECTURAL/PHYSICAL VALUE**

The property was originally a part of Lot 20, Concession 3 in the former Township of Vaughan. The lot appears to have been first granted to James Perigo in 1802, who was recorded as taking oath of allegiance to the Crown in 1802.

According to the 1837 census, reproduced in Appendix A of Daniel Reaman's *A History of Vaughan Township*, Lot 20, Concession 3 was owned by Wainman Scott. However, the *Ontario Land Titles Historical Book* records online, do not have a Wainman Scott anywhere listed as the owner. Instead, there is an entry in September 1836 that David Porter purchased the property from one James Newbigging. All records – including Daniel Reaman – note that the Porter brothers began constructing the square stone house that survives on the property in 1837 and was finally finished following his return in 1838.

The finished house itself resulted in the following: 50 foot (15.2 m) by 40 foot (12.2 m), single-storey structure believed – due to the orientation of its former medium hipped roof in the Picturesque Cottage Orné style – to have had its principal or public facade on the north, facing onto what is now Major Mackenzie Drive West.

The house has four bays: two six-over-six double-hung windows either side of two centrally located ten-and-ten casement windows, although originally the latter may have been doorways. The presence of double doors is not unusual during the period in which the Cottage Orné was built and are often seen in semi-detached houses shared by two members of the same family. It has been speculated that the structure was conceived to house the families of both Porter brothers.

The walls are constructed in rubble stone left in a natural finish and laid in courses, some of which are more prominent and appear as belts. Large, squared and irregularly dimensioned stones were used to form quoins at each corner. The mortar joints between the stones are narrow, indicating the masons' high level of expertise in fieldstone construction.

Previous to the 2022 fire(s), the hipped roof was truncated by the recent second storey addition and appeared as a “skirt”. The plain fascia and asphalt covering was also recently added but the original rafters were exposed on the exterior, and the rafters and ceiling joists were visible inside the second storey. A low brick chimney pierces the skirt inside the west facade, where once there was a large central chimney, the fireplace for which still partially survives inside.

Access to the low basement is through a central stairway off the dining room. The basement space is unfinished except for concrete flooring, and the original wall masonry is exposed. A room on the southwest provides access to the large coal chute, which opens onto the exterior patio. A column of the original limestone bedrock is situated in the centre of the basement and was likely cut as a pedestal to support the fireplace on the ground level above.

In 2016, a Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment (CHIA) for the property indicates that there have been three phases of building on the property (see Attachment 7):

#### Phase 1 (1837-1940)

The first elements to be built in the property include the square stone cottage and surviving roof sections of Joshua Oliver House

Farm buildings which are now largely outside the property but may have been constructed as early 19th century. These have since been removed circa 2010-2015.

#### Phase 2 (1940 – 1988)

The elements of the second phase are believed to date after 1940, although this cannot be confirmed by the documentary or architectural features. The Phase 2 features include the rear stone wall and wood frame wing. Although the wood and stone components of the rear wing may be contemporaneous, there is no access from one to the other, suggesting the stone construction was built first, followed by the wood frame addition. Both were standing when the first available air photo was taken in 1942. The wood frame section sits on a fine-aggregate poured concrete foundation, while the foundation of the stone section appears to have been laid in a builders' trench filled with a heavy aggregate concrete (see Section 6.2.2 below). The latter is reminiscent of reconstruction-era (1936-38) construction at Fort Henry National Historic Site and may date to the same period.

The visible heavy aggregate concrete, combined with the generally lower quality stonework and heavy use of Portland cement (as compared to the masonry of the original portion of Joshua Oliver House) suggests the stone wing was built in the 20th century, probably after the First World War. This is further supported by the overall narrow and unusual placement of the wing; in the 19th century, wings more often extended from the centre of a rear wall.

#### **Outbuilding 1**

Historic aerial photography from as early as 1942 shows the stone house and its rear wing along with a barn and a series of outbuildings accessed by a driveway that extended south from Major Mackenzie Drive West. Although the resolution is poor, this building does not appear to be present on the 1942 aerial photograph. However, it is clearly visible on the 1970 aerial image. The concrete block foundation suggests a mid-20th century date of construction,

although it may have been built just prior to 1970.

By the 1980s the driveway was shifted approximately 130 metres to the east and was parallel with the road, although a portion still extended to the outbuildings.

### Phase 3: 1988 to 2013

The most recent phases of development in the property include the following:

#### **Outbuilding 2**

Despite its historic design, this structure must have been erected after 1988 since it does not appear on the aerial photography from that year but is found on the 2002 aerial photograph. An assessment of its interior reveals it was built in new lumber, so is unlikely to have been moved from another property.

The patio adjoining the rear wing and Joshua Oliver House was laid after 2002 and prior to 2007, as based on the aerial imagery.

The second storey wood frame addition of Joshua Oliver House was built in 2013 and remains in an unfinished state.

The barn had been demolished by 2002 and shortly afterward the lot was subdivided for a residential subdivision. In 2013 the adjacent development was complete and the only the small portion surrounding the stone house remained of Joshua Oliver's original 100 acres.

The 2016 CHIA also included the following thoughts regarding the house's original description as a "Regency Cottage"

*In the Vaughan Heritage Inventory, Joshua Oliver House is described as a 'Regency Cottage', an architectural style description often attributed to Marion MacCrae, and which has since been accepted in guidance such as the OHF's Manual of Principles and Practice for Architectural Conservation. As defined by MacCrae, the Regency cottage often involved square plans, symmetrical fenestration and placement of chimneys, low hipped roofs, large and numerous windows, and open verandahs. Many of these features are seen on Joshua Oliver House.*

*However, defining an architecture based on the 'Regency' – the period between 1811 and 1820 when the Prince of Wales served as regent while his father King George III suffered from the periods of mental illness – is problematic. As Janet Wright has shown, the recognizable elements of the form appear in Canada as early as the late 18th century, and its popularity extends into the 1840s, or early Victorian period. A more encompassing definition proposed for this architecture is 'Picturesque,' which in Canada may incorporate eastern exoticism (such as the verandah of the east Indian bungalow), Corps of Royal Engineers building practice, and Georgian symmetry.*

*It also includes an importance placed on the setting or surrounding landscape of the*

*built form, and how this was manipulated with gardens or vegetation. The prevalence of this house type in Ontario has led to it to also be called the 'Ontario cottage', although since it is found across eastern Canada, a more encompassing term is the 'Picturesque cottage orné'. This latter term is used for this report."*

Cultural Heritage staff has reviewed this description and finds that it is helpful discussion in delineating both the physical attributes of the property, but also the associative aspects in considering the level of craftsmanship of the Porter brothers, and how they used local stone to create a house that was stylish, well made and enduring almost 200 years later and after a fire.

#### Phase 4 – 2013-2022

During this phase, the property was largely unoccupied as the property was undergoing the Zoning By-Law Amendment application, the Ontario Land Title (OLT) appeals process and the subsequent Site Plan application.

On May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022 the subject property suffered a significant fire in the oldest section of the house. Much of the wood components of the property were destroyed. However, the stone walls, window openings, doorways and overall layout remain.

In the 2016 CHIA report, the following physical elements of the property were identified as being contributing heritage elements of the property to be preserved after its conversion to a 2-unit dwelling:

- One-storey original structure built in the Picturesque Cottage Orné style;
- Coursed rubble construction of the Cottage Orné;
- Large quoin stones forming the corners of the Cottage Orné;
- Unusual tall fenestration of the Cottage Orné possibly representing the location of former entrances;
- Hewn log framing visible on the interior of the Cottage Orné

As the hewn log framing has been significantly damaged by the fire, Cultural Heritage staff recommends its removal from the list of physical attributes.

#### **HISTORICAL/ASSOCIATIVE VALUE**

As is stated above, the construction of the cottage was begun in 1837 by the Porter brothers. At this time, only one of their names had been confirmed: David Porter. The construction of the stone house was interrupted by the arrest and incarceration of David Porter for his minor role in the 1837 uprising at Montgomery's Tavern.

David Porter was born in 1795 in Upper Canada. According to his interviews in prison in the Kingston Penitentiary, he had spent all his life in Canada and York County, excepting the 19 months he had been taken prisoner by the American troops. When he was 17, he had fought with the Incorporated Militia and was captured by American forces. When he was released, he had returned to his family in Canada, near Toronto.

A few years after the war, he married Nancy Pratts in 1818 and a fellow former veteran Jarius Ashley and Conrad Pratts were recorded as bondsman for the marriage bond. The couple settled down in Vaughan and did have a farm on lot 19, Concession 4, prior to building the house on Lot 20, Concession 3.

A 2015 published document "*Penitentiary Patriots*" features several interviews with the men who were arrested for their role in the 1837 Rebellion. It was compiled and organized by Brian Latham and Linda Corupe, and David Porter's interview is one of them. Although he was not the only man from Vaughan who was arrested (Thomas Watts was as well), he is the one who has this built legacy left behind.

In his interview, David Porter was asked what his role was and he described is as:

*"I was about two miles from home and met 15 or 16 men, several of whom asked me to go with them to collect arms. I went to one house and I took two guns. From thence, I went home and the party went towards Toronto. All this was the day previous to the Battle at Montgomery's. I never was more in the Rebellion than what I have stated."*

*Futher excerpts provide the following information:*

**Q:** *Under who were you acting and under what circumstances were you apprehended?*

**Porter:** *I was apprehended in consequence of the owners of the two guns having procured a warrant against me. I was never under the orders of any leader.*

**Q.** *Where were you apprehended?*

**Porter:** *Near to my own house.*

**Q.** *What is your present opinion of the late transactions in which you with others were engaged?*

**Porter:** *My opinion is that more than one half who, although they were dissatisfied, were not disposed to have the colonies severed from the British Government.*

**Q.** *What particular grievances had you to complain of?*

**Porter:** *I felt dissatisfied that after having petitioned the Governor three times in the years 1815 and 1816 for my pay for services during the war, I did not even get an answer to either of my petitions.*

The paper also reveals that David's wife Nancy had travelled to Kingston to petition for his pardon (a journey over 270 km). There were several documents that were attached to his particular case, both detailing his failing health but also letters of confirmation of his 1812 service and imprisonment from Lt. Thomas Humberstone, Capt. D.Bridgford, Lt. R. Burn, Miles Langstaff, and Joseph Harrison. Further there were several letters giving character witnesses of him from the following: Robert Campbell, John S. Bridgford, R. Bridgford, Washington Peck, Wm. Pollock, Hugh McLean, John Velie, Malcolm MacKinson, Alexander MacLean, Archibald McDonald, Neil McDonnell, Alexander Beaton, Jacob Bennett, John Frank, Donald Leitch, Duncan Thorburn, James Wilkie, David Smillie, Hugh Black, Archibald McLean, Thomas Harris,

James Brigson, James McCallum, James Murphy and George Harrison. Some of these names may be familiar, as they are from some of the other settler families of Vaughan Township.

His wife's efforts were successful and David Porter, aged 42 years, was pardoned and discharged from the Penitentiary on November 1, 1838. He was described as "5 feet, 9 inches tall, and had a sallow complexion." Although Porter's role was minor, his involvement sheds light on the social classes and geographic setting of those who took part in the insurgency. After the 1837 Rebellion, there were several reforms as well as legislation, such as the Baldwin Act in 1849 that led to local government and representation and thus had a lasting effect on the Township, the Region and Ontario. This property represents a family that played a small part in that movement.

Following his release, the Porters returned home to Vaughan Township, but Nancy Pratts died in 1840. Perhaps this is what prompted David Porter to sell the property in 1842 and relocate south to Toronto. While it is noted that he did re-marry a woman named Martha Hill, he did not live very many years later and died in the 1849 cholera epidemic in Toronto. He was buried in the Potter's Field Cemetery in Toronto, near Bloor and Yonge Street.

It does not appear that the Porter family lived long on the property, as *Ontario Land Titles* shows David Porter and his wife selling the property to a William Houlton in 1842 and the property changed hands a few more times before being sold by John Partridge to Joshua Oliver in early 1845. The property was to remain in the Oliver family for the next 100 years.

After 1842, the property changed hands once or twice more before it was finally purchased in 1845 by Joshua Oliver. Oliver, a farmer who had immigrated to Upper Canada from England with his wife Anne. From this time on, the property was strongly associated with the Oliver family and the house became known as "The Oliver House". Joshua and Anne's son Thomas Oliver later took over the farm and Joshua built a new home nearby. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Oliver family were a prominent and active family in Maple and maintained the farm until after World War Two.

In 1853, the property was bisected by a railway right-of-way for the Ontario, Simcoe, & Huron Railway that took out a chunk of the existing orchard during its construction. Shortly afterwards, Joshua Oliver sold the section on the west side of the rail, and the 1860 'Tremaine Map' for York County illustrates the east half of the property as belonging to Joshua Oliver and the west half owned by J. Noble.

On the 1860 map, Oliver's property is also depicted with a structure – presumably the stone house that stands today – fronting onto what is now Major Mackenzie Drive West. The southern portion of Noble's west half is shown as belonging to Oliver in the 1870s, indicating that by that date Oliver maintained a majority of the 100-acre parcel. Joshua and Anne's son Thomas Oliver later took over the farm and Joshua built a new home nearby. The Oliver family farmed the property until 1945 when a Mr. Hamilton acquired the property, who later sold it to Willis Maclachlan.

The Oliver family farmed the property until 1945 when a Mr. Hamilton acquired the property,

who later sold it to Wills MacLachlan in 1946. It appears to have stayed in the MacLachlan family as in 1978, the property was passed to a Patricia MacLachlan and Peter White, who remained on the family lands until circa 2003/4.

## **CONTEXTUAL VALUE**

While recent property severance and additions to the second storey have significantly altered the agricultural context and the scale and mass of the dwelling, reappraisal of the site has confirmed that contextual heritage value remains.

The coursed rubble and large quoin stone construction survives intact as a representative of early building techniques in southern Ontario. A railway right-of-way that cuts through the original 100-acre property has been a part of the property's landscape since the 1850s.

It has contextual value as a visible reminder of Vaughan's agricultural history, and the use of local materials as part of local settlement and construction as a surviving stone residence from the 1830's. It's location and setback from across Major Mackenzie and facing across the roadway towards Maple Station is a visual relationship that has existed for well over 100 years.

## **SUMMARY OF CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE**

### **Architectural/Physical**

- One-storey original structure built in the Picturesque Cottage Orné style;
- Coursed rubble construction of the Cottage Orné;
- Large quoin stones forming the corners of the Cottage Orné;
- Unusual tall fenestration of the Cottage Orné possibly representing the location of former entrances;

### **Historical/Associative**

- The 1837 uprising at Montgomery's Tavern
- The Oliver family – a significant settler family of Maple, who farmed in the community for 100 years

### **Contextual**

- Contextual value as a visible reminder of Vaughan's agricultural history, and the use of local materials as part of local settlement and construction as a surviving stone residence from the 1830's and a representative of early building techniques in southern Ontario.
- A railway right-of-way that cuts through the original 100-acre property has been a part of the property's landscape since the 1850s.
- It's location and setback from across Major Mackenzie and facing across the roadway towards Maple Station is a visual relationship that has existed for well over 100 years.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY & RESOURCES**

City of Vaughan Archives

City of Vaughan – Cultural Heritage Division – Property Files

A History of Vaughan Township (1971) by G. Elmore Reamen, ISBN 0969220715

History of Toronto and County of York, Ontario 1885

### **Website/Media:**

The Liberal Newspaper – OurOntario.ca

Find a Grave, Government of Canada Census Collection (1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891)

<https://recherche-collection-search.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/Census/Index>

<https://torontofamilyhistory.org/projects/3rd-york-militia-veterans>

Ancestry.com: Marriages, 1826-1940 [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010.

“*BEAUTIFYING THE COUNTRYSIDE: Rural and Vernacular Gothic in Late Nineteenth-Century Ontario*”

[https://dalspace.library.dal.ca/bitstream/handle/10222/65242/vol38\\_no1\\_29\\_36.pdf](https://dalspace.library.dal.ca/bitstream/handle/10222/65242/vol38_no1_29_36.pdf)

“*Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada: The Late Nineteenth-century Stone Farmhouses of John Thompson Crellin*” by Karen Elisabeth Armstrong,

<https://www.erudit.org/en/journals/jssac/2018-v43-n2-jssac04441/1058037ar.pdf>

Government of Canada – Census Research <https://recherche-collection-search.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/Census/Index>

Penitentiary Patriots <https://lindacorupe.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/PENITENTIARY-PATRIOTS.Upload.pdf>

<https://lindacorupe.com/>

Ontario Land Titles <https://www.onland.ca/ui/>

Toronto Family History – 1837 Rebels in the Home District <https://torontofamilyhistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/1837-Rebellion-September-2021-2.pdf>