

## **STATEMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE**

### **LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

ADDRESS: 8795 Keele Street

LEGAL: Lot 12, Concession 3

### **OVERVIEW**

The cultural heritage value of the property known as 8795 Keele Street meets the criteria set out by the *Ontario Heritage Act* under Province of Ontario Regulation 9/06 for the categories of historical/associative, design/physical and contextual value.

Name: Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

Date Built: 1860

Style: Gothic Revival Condition: Good

### **ARCHITECTURAL VALUE**

The subject property located at 8795 Keele Street consists of a church, known as the Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church. Constructed in 1860, the structure is a representation of the Gothic Revival architectural style. While the Gothic Revival style was initially used for religious buildings when it first arrived in Canada, it would also be adapted to other types of buildings including homes, schools, and government buildings. Identifiable characteristics of the style include the use of pointed arches for windows, decorative elements, and steeply pitched roof.

The red brick church is symmetrically arranged and has a small tower at the top. The front elevation of the church faces onto Keele Street and has a centrally placed main door with an arched opening. There are two windows on either side of the main door; the windows on the upper level have pointed arches, while the windows directly below are square. There is also an arched window in the front gable. The windows on the north and south facing elevations are balanced and evenly spaced. On each side of the building there are three pointed arched windows on the upper level, and three-square windows placed below each. The church cost \$1,485.90 to build, and there is a date stone above the entrance with the inscription "Zion E. L. Church A.D. 1860," which commemorates the year the church was built.

### **HISTORICAL/ASSOCIATIVE VALUE**

The subject property located at 8795 Keele Street has a long connection to the Keffer family. Jacob Keffer, his brother Michael Keffer, and Jacob Fischer (Fisher) arrived in Vaughan Township from Sommerset, Pennsylvania in 1806. In addition, they are responsible for founding the Zion Lutheran Church. With the forming of the congregation dating back to 1806, the church would become known as one of the oldest Lutheran churches in Ontario. Jacob Keffer settled on lot 12 of concession 3 and deeded a portion of the western half of lot 12 to the church trustees for church buildings and cemetery on August 10, 1811. Prior to the construction of a dedicated church building for the congregation, church services were held in a local schoolhouse.

There were periods of time where the church was without a pastor. Jacob Keffer stepped up to serve as a "lay reader" who educated the children in the catechism and would continue to do so until a pastor was found. The teaching of children was deemed an important element of the church and would remain an important aspect of the churches programming. The 165<sup>th</sup> Anniversary booklet discusses the history of the church. It makes reference to records which date back to the 1850's which indicate that not only were there regular Sunday School, but participation was also open to all, even those who were not of the Lutheran faith. There were also strawberry socials, picnics, sleigh rides, and Christmas concerts. Children and young people were known to walk great distances just to attend. This helps to showcase the building of community that existed

amongst the younger congregation.

In the early years of the development of the church, efforts were made to secure a pastor. Three brothers, John, Jacob, and Valentine Fischer, journeyed back to Pennsylvania in January 1819 to make the request on behalf of the church. As a result of this venture, Reverend Johann Dietrich Petersen accepted the position, and arrived on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1819. Soon after his arrival, plans were made for the building of a church. The cornerstone of the log church was laid on July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1819, and the structure was completed later that year. Rev. Petersen would continue in his position until his retirement in 1829.

After Reverend Petersen's time with the church came to an end, there were issues once again securing a pastor. An appeal for help was made to the Anglican Bishop of York (Toronto), John Strachan, by the Vaughan, Markham, and Unionville Lutheran congregations. Reverend Phillip Mayerhoffer, an Anglican minister, was sent to fill the position. It was agreed that Rev. Mayerhoffer would serve the Lutheran churches in both Vaughan and Markham. It was also decided that if within ten years a Lutheran pastor was not found the churches would become Anglican. The political and religious tensions leading up to the 1837 Rebellion led to issues within the church. Jacob Keffer was a Liberal, while his brother Michael Keffer and Rev. Mayerhoffer were Conservative. This led to a split in the congregation in December 1837, when Rev. Mayerhoffer and those who agreed with his views were locked out of the church. Michael Keffer would later give land on the west half of his lot (located at Lot 10, Concession 3) for a church. This church would become the existing St. Stephen's Anglican Church in Maple.

By 1838 the church was once again without a pastor, and this vacancy would continue until 1850. This led to Adam Keffer (son of Jacob Keffer) making two trips to Pennsylvania to the Pittsburgh Synod in order to ask for a Lutheran pastor for the church. Unfortunately, after the first trip in 1849 a pastor was not sent. Adam Keffer made a second journey in 1850 at sixty years old. Both trips were an estimated 1,250 miles. The second journey proved to be a success, as Reverend Charles Frederick Diel arrived on November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1850 to fulfill the role as pastor. Rev. Diehl would be responsible for introducing services in English along with German and remained part of the church until 1853.

In 1854, Rev. Jeremiah Fishburn became the next pastor, and would remain with the church for the next twenty-five years. He became known as a church builder after being involved with the building of several churches. Some include the churches in Kleinburg (1855), Toronto (on Bond Street, 1857), and Unionville (1862). The current brick structure at 8795 Keele Street, was built during his time with the church. The building committee for the Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church consisted of John Campbell, Jacob Shunk, Joseph Snider, Henry Keffer, and Reverend Fishburn. By 1860 the brick church was built, at a cost of \$1,485.90. In 1861, the Zion church was the location where the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Canada (The Canada Synod of the Lutheran Church) was established. Additionally, Rev. Fishburn would serve as the president for eleven years. The involvement of Rev. Fishburn showcases his significance not just within the local Vaughan community, but the wider Lutheran community as well.

By 1929 the stained-glass windows were installed, and they commemorate the lives of various families whose names are included at the bottom of the glass. The church suffered a fire in 1950, and as a result was reopened in the spring of 1951. In 1956 an addition was made to the back of the church, which contained a kitchen, washrooms, office, and furnace room. The addition allowed for more events to be held at the church, as the parsonage (sold in 1950) was previously where most events were held.

Over the years events have taken place to celebrate the long history of the church. The 130<sup>th</sup>

anniversary marking the founding of the congregation took place on July 19<sup>th</sup>, and a memorial cairn to honour Adam Keffer was unveiled during the celebrations. The decision to honour Adam Keffer signifies the lasting impact and appreciation of his efforts to secure a pastor for the church. In 1961 a plaque, located just north of the church, was unveiled to honour the settlers who formed the congregation. The plaque was unveiled by the great granddaughter of Jacob Keffer, Margaret Keffer.

Over time, the church congregation size became affected by various changes and developments that were occurring. *A History of Vaughan Township Churches* discusses how the train marshalling yard site in the previous residential area, as well as the new Lutheran churches in Richmond Hill and Thornhill in the 1960's were contributing factors. It could be understood that the combination of transformation in land use, and the formation of other Lutheran churches influenced where people lived and attended church. Although these changes have occurred, the church continues to remain open and has an active congregation.

### **CONTEXTUAL VALUE**

Located on the east side of 8795 Keele Street, the subject property is historically linked to its setting, and is a longstanding feature in the area. The existing structure is a representation of the lands once owned by the Keffer family. In addition, the Zion Evangelical church is one of the oldest Lutheran churches in Ontario and is visible from the road. While the area surrounding the church has transitioned to becoming more industrial over the years, the function of the church as a place of worship, a place for religious education, as well as bringing people together to create a community within the Vaughan area has remained. It is here that the merit of the structure lies, just as much as in the architectural value.

### **SUMMARY OF HERITAGE ATTRIBUTES**

#### **Architectural Value**

- Red brick
- Steep roof
- Pointed arched windows
- Stained glass window
- Arched entrance

#### **Historical Value**

- One of the oldest Lutheran churches in Ontario
- One of the oldest church congregations in Vaughan
- Associated with the Keffer family
- Jacob Keffer deeded part of the lot for the church
- Adam Keffer made two journeys to Pennsylvania to ask for a pastor for the church

#### **Contextual Value**

- Structure is historically linked to the Lot and Concession it was built upon

### **SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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