

STATEMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

ADDRESS: 91 Thornhill Woods Drive

LEGAL: Lot 11, Concession 2

OVERVIEW

The cultural heritage value of the property known as 91 Thornhill Woods Drive 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: Johnathan Baker House

Date Built: 1853

Style: Georgian

Condition: Good

Name: Baker Cottage

Date Built: 1857

Style: Georgian

Condition: Good

ARCHITECTURAL VALUE

The two structures located at 91 Thornhill Woods Drive previously belonged to the Baker Family. The brick building is known as the Jonathan Baker House, and while the wooden structure is known as the Baker Cottage.

The Baker House

The Baker House is a red brick structure built in the Georgian style. Georgian style is referred to the timeframe during the reign of first four King Georges of England. Georgian structures are considered to be sturdy and secure, and the characteristics of the style include simplicity, lack of ornamentation, and symmetry. The resource *Ontario Architecture: A Guide to Styles and Building Terms 1784 to the Present*, describes the façade of Georgian buildings as having balanced arrangement of doors and windows. The materials used to construct a building was often dependent on available resources, which would then lend to the vernacular applications of the style. This can include brick, stone, or wood.

Constructed the 1853, the 2-storey the former residence was built using bricks that were made on the farm. Documentation has indicated that the Johnathan Baker House is one of earliest brick structures that remain in Vaughan. The front elevation has a verandah (with simple posts) that spans the width of the façade, and there are two entrances to the building. The front elevation also contains two windows on the lower level: one on either side of the two entrance doorways. Documentation has indicated that the reasoning for the two doors at the entrance was due to one of the doors replacing a window. In addition, both side elevations have two windows on the first level of the house, and two upper-level windows which are located in the gables. There are two symmetrically placed chimneys, which are located at either end of the roof.

Various resources have indicated that rear additions have been made to the building at different time frames. While the previous iterations of the building additions are no longer present, the existing addition to the building occurred in 2002. The current built addition is located at the rear of the building and was constructed using red brick veneer.

The Baker Cottage

The Baker Cottage is a wooden structure, also built in the Georgian style. Constructed in 1857, the 1-1/2 storey structure is approximately 22 feet by 24 feet. The main façade has a centrally placed doorway, with a window on both sides of the door. There is a porch, with simple posts, that spans the width of the front façade. The side elevations have two multi-paned sash windows on the ground level, and there are two multi-paned sash windows located in the upper level. Atop the building is a low-pitched side-gable roof.

The Baker Cottage was constructed using the horizontal plank construction building technique. Also known as plank-on-plank construction, it was considered a unique building method. *Building with Wood* describes this approach as an early building technique that required large amounts of wood and nails. In addition to the increased number of materials needed, the technique was time consuming, and required more hand labour.

In 2005 a project was approved to renovate and convert the building into a public washroom facility. The goal of the project was to renovate the structure to its exterior appearance from the 1971 Building Inventory photo, which has been completed.

HISTORICAL/ASSOCIATIVE VALUE

The subject property located at 91 Thornhill Woods has a long association with the Baker family. The Baker family were early settlers in Vaughan, who arrived from Sommerset, Pennsylvania in the early 1800's. Jonathan Baker Senior (1792-1860) purchased the 200 acres of Lot 11, Concession 2 in 1816. He worked hard to clear the land and develop the farm. Some of the earliest buildings on the farm included a log house, a log smoke house, and a log barn, which was built in 1822. Johnathan Baker Sr. was also responsible for planting the orchard that contained a variety of apples. As the farm developed over time, it began to resemble the arrangement of buildings that were in Pennsylvania. This helps with the understanding about the knowledge and customs that the Bakers brought with them from Pennsylvania, and how they adapted to life in a new country. Moreover, years later the log house was replaced with the brick house in 1853. The 1853 brick house is the same building that is now located at 91 Thornhill Woods Drive, which is known as the Johnathan Baker House. The bricks used to build the house were made on the farm.

Johnathan Baker Sr. married Elizabeth Cober, who was the daughter of another early settler, Nicholas Cober. While Johnathan Baker Sr. and Elizabeth did not have children, Johnathan Baker Junior (nephew of Johnathan Baker Sr.), began helping on the farm around 1847. When Johnathan Baker Sr. passed away in 1860, he left the farm to his nephew. Johnathan Baker Jr. (1831-1916) married Mary Heise, and together they had eight children. The names of their children were Peter, Elizabeth, Nancy, Susannah, George, Mary Anne, Jesse, and Eve. The 1853 brick house was adapted to accommodate Jonathan Baker Jr.'s family, and his widowed aunt Elizabeth. The interior of the house was divided to create separate living quarters for Elizabeth, and a window at the front of the house was replaced with a new entrance doorway to the corresponding new section of the home. Jonathan Baker Jr. also added a driving shed to the property in 1860.

The farm continued to remain in the Baker family, with the passing of the farm from Johnathan Baker Jr. to his son Jesse Baker (1867-1947) He is shown occupying the lot on the 1918 map. Jesse Baker married Sophia Smith, and they had four children: Issac, Bertie, Abraham, and Amos. During the ownership of Jesse Baker, a henhouse and pig pen was added 1898. This helps to give insight into the operations of the Baker farm.

Issac Baker (1897-1991), son of Jesse Baker, was also an active member in the community. By the age of 20 he became involved with crafting leather. Moreover, he had an interest in horses, and was known for his harness craftsmanship. He developed a leather shop on the farm in 1930, in

which he made boots and saddles, in addition to the harnesses. He also made gun holsters for the Metro Police. Issac Baker's involvement in the community allows for the understanding of services that were provided to the locals, and the wider public.

The farm later passed on to Amos Baker (1907-1993), who was the son of Jesse Baker, and the grandson of Johnathan Baker Junior. Amos was married to Edna Reaman, and together they had four children: Paul, Martha, Mary-Anne, and Elizabeth. Amos contributed additional elements to the farm. In 1946 he added a machine workshop, and in 1954 he added a cattle shed.

The Baker family was known for having one of the largest hardwood bushes in Vaughan. They had kept about 100 acres uncleared, which had a mixture of white pine and hard sugar maple trees. Of the uncleared 100 acres, 80 acres of woodlot was kept on the east side, while 20 acres of woodlot was left along the west side. In the recounting of the Baker family history, *Our Family's History of Making Maple Syrup*, it was noted that the eastern woodlot was the best for the making maple syrup. The Bakers utilized the maple trees in the woodlot for the retrieval of sap for the making of maple syrup, maple sugar, and maple taffy. A 1960 *Liberal* article explained that the Baker's syrup season would occur in the last two weeks in March, and the first two weeks in April. Resources have indicated that maple syrup was made annually except for one year in the 1870's. Due to their long involvement in the production maple syrup, the Baker's respected contributors to the maple syrup industry. An October 1967 *Liberal* article reveals that the first annual convention of the Ontario Maple Syrup Association had occurred on September 28th, where 150 maple sugar producers had been in attendance. In addition, Amos Baker was chosen as Maple Sugar "Man of the Year" by the association. The following day, fifty of the members visited Amos Bakers Sugar Bush. This award helps to highlight Amos Bakers position within the industry, and by extension the legacy of the Baker family, through years of maple syrup production.

The Baker farm and its production of maple products attracted great interest not only from locals, but also the wider public. The Bakers would host various groups at the farm to demonstrate tree tapping in the sugar bush woodlot, and visitors would also purchase maple products. They would receive up to ten buses of visitors per day, and among the common visitor groups were school children of all ages. A 1964 *Liberal* article discusses the international visitors that came to the site. These groups would include exchange teachers from commonwealth countries, students that were part of the International House through the University of Toronto, nurses and students from Caribbean Universities, as well as university professors and their associated groups. The article also notes that the Baker's did not charge for this service, as they felt that it was important to showcase part of the country's culture and share the information of the Canadian product. This helps to showcase how the Bakers were not only engaged within their local community, but also their involvement with the wider public through the sharing of their knowledge of maple syrup production.

After over 180 years of being owned by the Baker family, the property was sold in 1997. The buildings on the farm were dismantled or moved to other locations. The Baker Cottage (previously 8640 Bathurst), and Jonathan Baker House (previously 1150 Maple Sugar Lane) were sold to the City of Vaughan in 2001. Aerial photos indicate that by 2002 the buildings had been moved to their current location at 91 Thornhill Woods Drive (Sugarbush Heritage Park), near the entrance to the Sugar Baker Bush Woodlot. Each structure has been adapted to serve new purposes. The Baker cottage was converted into a public washroom, while the Johnathan Baker House has been used for events, and rented to various user groups.

CONTEXTUAL VALUE

The two structures located at 91 Thornhill Woods Drive holds contextual value through their historical connection to the area. The buildings were moved from their original location and are

now located near the entrance to the Sugar Baker Bush Woodlot. Although the structures are no longer in the exact location they were originally built, they still remain within Lot 11 of Concession 2, where they were historically situated.

The Jonathan Baker House was originally located at 1150 Maple Sugar Lane. Although the Listing of Structures of Historical Significance states the previous location of the Baker Cottage as being also located at 1150 Maple Sugar Lane, documentation has indicated that the structure was located at 8640 Bathurst Street. The connection of both structures to the Baker family reflects the hard work and dedication in establishing themselves in a new country. The Baker homestead remained in the family for over 180 years, and the longstanding ownership by the same family creates a significant historical link to the local community. The Baker family also produced maple syrup products, which created great interest locally and from the wider public. The placement of the structures near the entrance to the Sugar Baker Bush Woodlot further highlights the historical connection between the woodlot and the Baker family. It is here that the merit of both structures lies, just as much as in the architectural value.

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE ATTRIBUTES

Architectural Value – Johnathan Baker House

- Red brick structure
- Built in the Georgian architectural style
- Side-gable roof
- Verandah, with posts
- Sash windows
- Symmetrical chimneys

Architectural Value – Baker Cottage

- Plank-on-Plank construction
- Built in the Georgian architectural style
- Side gable, low-pitched roof
- Central doorway, with windows on either side
- Verandah, with posts

Historical Value

- The Lot is associated with Baker family, who were early settlers from Sommerset, Pennsylvania
- Jonathan Baker Sr. purchased the lot in 1816, and the property remained in the family for over 180 years
- The Bakers produced maple syrup products which served the community and wider public; including international visitors

Contextual Value

- Structure is historically linked to the Lot and Concession it was built upon
- Longstanding ownership by the same family creates a significant historical link to the local community

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