

STATEMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE

LEGAL DESCRIPTION

ADDRESS: 246 Wigwoss Drive

LEGAL: Lot 6, Concession 7

OVERVIEW

The cultural heritage value of the property known as 246 Wigwoss 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.

Project Name: Seneca Heights

Date Built: 1950's

Condition: Good

ARCHITECTURAL/PHYSICAL VALUE

The structure located at 246 Wigwoss Drive is an example of the Canadian regional variant of the 1950s modernist style. Designed by noted Canadian architect Jerome Markson, it speaks to the evolving living ideals during post war time-period. *A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles describes Modernism*, as it relates to architecture, describes it as a break from the past and traditional forms, a lack of applied ornamentation, interested in new building materials, where spaces were designed efficiently to consider their function. Mid-century modern homes are known to be designed to complement nature and the environment that they are situated within. This can be emphasized through the use of large windows and openings that access to the outdoors. Flat or angular shapes of the rooflines are also common. Multiple elements of these modern architecture characteristics can be seen at 246 Wigwoss Drive.

The structure is the M-1 model from the Seneca Heights brochure, which also contains an inner courtyard and roof cutout. While a 2005 *Globe and Mail* article states there have been some alterations, the structure is still 1-storey, displays a sloping roof, and minimalist exterior details. There are multiple rectangular windows on the west-facing façade, which not only permits light but also gives the feeling of the bringing nature from the outdoors, inwards. These various elements work together to represent the 1950's modern architectural style.

HISTORICAL/ASSOCIATIVE VALUE

Several elements contribute to the historical significance of the subject property. The structure is located within the Woodbridge community, which has gone through notable changes that allow for a better understanding of the development of the property over time. An 1878 map illustrates John Abell as being located on the north-west portion of Lot 6, Concession 7. Moreover, *A History of Vaughan Township* discusses John Abell as an industrialist who was an important contributor to the development of Woodbridge. Not only was he credited as creating the lathe which was used to make the first steam engine ever be used in Vaughan Township, but his agricultural implement factory, Woodbridge Agricultural Works, was a major contributor to the economic prosperity of the Woodbridge community. The number of employees went from 20 in 1862, to 200 by 1874. He was rewarded for his endeavours. *A History of Vaughan Township* also indicates that in "1880 and 1881 his

Triumph Traction Steam Engine was given the gold medal at tests in Toronto, and in 1886 he won the diploma and medal at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London, England.” These awards help to showcase his impact beyond the Woodbridge community. John Abell was also involved in the community and served as president of the Woodbridge Agricultural Society from 1860–1886.

Woodbridge experienced a growth in population at the end of the Second World War. An increase in immigration saw the Woodbridge population rise to 3000 by the late 1950's. As a result, there was also a growth in suburban housing developments to accommodate the needs for more homes. In addition, during the timeframe of 1951 and 1956 ten subdivisions were created. The post-war time-period also ushered in economic growth, progress in technology, and modern approaches to architecture. The combination of the development of infrastructure (highways, and the subway), and the automobile allowed for new opportunities for where people could live and work. Furthermore, the Seneca Heights Development could be seen as a response to the need for more homes, as well as a reflection of the growing interest in modern design and living.

The structure is associated with Jerome Markson, as he was responsible for its design. Moreover, Jerome Markson was a celebrated Canadian architect who received the 2022 RAIC Gold Medal. The award is given by The Royal Architectural Institute of Canada and is the highest honour in recognition of a significant and lasting contribution to Canadian architecture. 246 Wigwoss Drive is an example of his ideas and approach to designing homes for families during the post-war time-period.

Markson took an individualistic approach to his works and was open to the possibilities to address the unique needs of each project. This approach is made evident in his involvement in the Seneca Heights development, which contained a mixture of architect-designed custom homes, and six builder plans that home buyers could select from. 246 Wigwoss Drive is a representative example of the M-1 model home, which was an option within the Seneca Heights brochure; three of builder plans were designed by Markson, while the other three were designed by his former teacher Michael Bach. In comparison to other developments outside of Toronto, the aim was attracting upscale buyers. It was important to Jerome Markson to have the builder plans be just as interesting as the private commissions, while also making them affordable. As the homes were designed with families in mind, consideration was also given to spaces for children. The plans for the home would showcase their play areas labeled, as he felt it was important that children had their own dedicated space within the planning of the home. This approach allows for an understanding of the consideration given to function of the home by the family, just as much as aesthetics and design.

CONTEXTUAL VALUE

246 Wigwoss Drive has contextual value as a remaining example within the Seneca Heights subdivision development. Dating back to the 1950's, visible from the road on corner lot, and noted for its location on a wooded lot, the property is historically, physically, and visually linked to its surroundings. The structure is also a reflection of the growth of modern architecture during post-war time-period.

When describing the site, the brochure for the development states, “Seneca Heights offers large lots nestled on high tableland among magnetic first growth oaks and maples.” The architect Jerome Markson, used the combination of materials, the rooflines, and the configuration of the individual large lots to inform the character of the houses and create a sense of distinction between the properties. Moreover, while there have been alterations over the years, the structure maintains its low form, and placement on the lot; which allows it to feel incorporated within the natural elements of its surroundings. In a *Globe and Mail* article, Jerome Markson comments on the transition from the street to the home, and how a person could, “leave the street, go through a semi-private area outside, and then get in the house...it’s kind of an enveloping transitional thing.” This allows for an understanding about the arrangement of the property, and the movements that would be taken by the residents of the home.

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE ATTRIBUTES

Architectural Value

- 1-storey structure
- Slopped roof; with cut-out feature
- Inner courtyard
- Rectangular windows on the west facing façade

Historical Value

- The structure is associated and design by Jerome Markson, who received the 2022 RAIC Gold Medal
- The development the Seneca Heights neighbourhood
- Response to the changes and developments that were occurring after the second world War, and a need for more homes due to an increase in population

Contextual Value

- Structure is historically linked to the Lot and Concession it was built upon
- One of the remaining examples of the Seneca Heights subdivision development
- The building is visible from the road
- Consideration is given to the topography, and function of the home
- Reflection of the post-war modern period

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