

STATEMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE

OVERVIEW

The cultural heritage value of the property known as 3740 King Vaughan Road 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 Smelser-Watson House
Date Built: 1849-1859
Location: Northeastern corner of the King Vaughan Road and Weston Road intersection, on the north side of King Vaughan Road
Condition: good



DESCRIPTION

Municipal Address: 3740 King Vaughan Road
Legal Description: Part of Lot 1 Concession 5 King as in R621284
Brief description: 1-1/2 storey, brick-clad structure built in the Victorian style located on the north side of King Vaughan Road.

SUMMARY OF CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE

Physical/Design Value

Contributing

- Late Victorian house, 1 ½ Storey
- Steeply pitched and cross gabled roof with masonry chimney
- Elaborate dichromatic orange/red brick cladding with buff brick motifs, quoining, stringcourses, and voussoirs
- Spindle-work bargeboard trim
- Arched window openings
- Projecting bay window
- Asymmetrical plan

Historical/Associative Value

- Connection to significant archaeological resources both of early settler and indigenous peoples
- Connection to specific historic settler families such as the Smelser family and the Watson family
- Connection to late 19th and 20th century farming practices
- Connection to early Ontario settlers and architectural styles

Contextual Value

- The subject property is contextually linked to Vaughan's/King's agricultural history from initial settlement and land clearing, early 19th farming practices.
- The structure is historically linked to the Lot and Concession it was built upon
- The structure has contextual value as a landmark, sitting on the northeastern corner of the King Vaughan Road and Weston Road intersection
- The structure has contextual value as it is historically linked to the unincorporated historic village of Laskay

DESIGN OR PHYSICAL VALUE

Built between 1849 and 1859, the Smelser-Watson House has design and physical value as a well-maintained representative example of Victorian architecture in Vaughan. This style building first emerged in Ontario in the 1840s, encompassing buildings constructed in brick, stone, and timber using an eclectic mixture of Classical and Gothic motifs.

The Smelser-Watson House at 3740 King Vaughan Road is a 1 ½ -storey, red/orange brick building with an asymmetrical plan. The house is oriented to the east and features a cross gabled roof with steeply pitched west and south gable ends that feature decorative spindle-work bargeboard trim.

The subject building is clad in red/orange brick laid in a stretcher bond, with decorative masonry detailing in buff-brick visible on its west, south, and east elevations. This dichromatic buff-brick detailing¹ includes quoining, radiating voussoirs, decorative banding, and lozenge patterning in the steeply pitched gables, common decorations of the late Victorian Style.²

The building features flat and arched windows, with radiating buff-brick voussoirs, and lugsills. The gothic arched windows on the second-storey are single hung and feature a two-over-two configuration. The first storey of the building's west elevation also features a mansard roofed projecting bay, another common attribute of the Gothic and Victorian style.³

HISTORICAL / ASSOCIATIVE VALUE ARCHAEOLOGICAL

The northern, eastern, and part of the southern edges of the property have documented potential for archaeological findings.⁴

3740 King Vaughan Road

This property boasts a particularly intriguing history as prior to 1971 it was situated within King Township, where much of its social and cultural heritage originates. Now part of the City of Vaughan, the city assumes stewardship of this significant piece of history. Given the proximity of the townships, there may also be overlap in family names and land ownership.

The subject property at 3740 King Vaughan Road originated as part of the 200-acre Lot 1, Concession 5, in the King Township. It was patented from the Crown in 1802 by Chloe McDonnell. Land Registry records indicate that it was then sold by Elijah Williams, likely a spouse or relative of Chloe McDonnell, to John Smelser for \$400 in 1828.⁵

¹ "The use of dichromatic brickwork (bricks of two colours) for the decoration of buildings was fashionable in Ontario in the last century. The fashion frequently involved the use of buff or yellow bricks at the corners and around window and door openings of red brick buildings and arranged in decorative designs in the walls. Examples are given of various decorative features used in dichromatic brickwork, including diamonds, zigzags, bands and crosses." *Notes on Dichromatic Brickwork in Ontario*, Richie, T, *Association for Preservation Technology Bulletin*, 11, 2, pp. 60-75, 1979 <https://nrc-publications.canada.ca/fra/voir/td/?id=b4862dc4-0c6f-4c3b-a927-62921480f466#:~:text=The%20use%20of%20dichromatic%20brickwork,Ontario%20in%20the%20last%20century.>

² Late Victorian, *Ontario Architectural Style Guide*, University of Waterloo, 2009

³ *Ontario Architectural Style Guide*, University of Waterloo, 2009

⁴ Arc-GIS, City of Vaughan

⁵ Ontario Land Registry Abstract/Parcel Register Book. York Region, Concession 5, Lot 1, King Township

Smelser Family (1828-1859)

John Smelser

John Smelser was a German settler, born at sea in 1791, who came to Canada with his parents when he was quite young. His mother died at sea, and his father died shortly after his arrival in Canada. Upon the death of John's father, he was bound out as an apprentice but ran away from his master and settled in the United States for a short period of time. He returned to Canada, joined the British Army and fought of the war of 1812 in which he was presented with a medal for his bravery and fidelity.⁶ Upon the conclusion of the war John purchased a bush farm in Vaughan Township, which he cleared and cultivated. In 1814, John traveled back to Pennsylvania and married Miss Mary A. Puteraugh.⁷ Upon his return to York County, John purchased all 200-acres of Lot 1, Concession 5 of King Township in 1828.⁸ Many children were born to John and Mary: John in 1817, Isaac in 1819, Henry in 1822 and Joseph in 1835. Kate, Mary Ann, Catherine (Katie), Peter, Daniel, and another son named John were all born after 1835.

In 1833 John Smelser also purchased Lot 2 on Concession 5 from the Canada Company, amassing quite a large estate.⁹ The 1846 Tax Assessment Roll associates John Smelser with 200-acres on Lot 1 Concession 5 and 100-acres on Lot 2 Concession 5. In 1849, John Smelser sold 2 acres of his farm on Lot 1 Concession 5, the subject property, to his son Henry for \$100. The property at the time was considered the "southwest part of Lot 1 Concession 5."¹⁰

Throughout his life John was exceedingly prosperous. When John Smelser died in 1859 at the age of 68, the rest of his large estate was divided amongst his children as follows; Henry received part Lots 1, and 2; Joseph received the west part of Lot 2; and John received the west part of Lot 1, approximately 82-acres each.¹¹ John Smelser is currently buried in the Zion Evangelical Lutheran Cemetery in Vaughan, Ontario.¹²

Henry Smelser

Archival sources indicate that Henry Smelser, born in 1822, was not as physically fit as his siblings, many of whom worked as farmers. Instead, Henry was trained as an auctioneer, an occupation in which he conducted considerable business in York County.¹³ Henry often took out ads in the local newspapers to advertise his auctions and was a very active member in the local community.¹⁴ In 1849, Henry purchased the 2-acre subject property from his father for \$100.¹⁵

The first evidence of a house or dwelling on the subject property appears on the 1878 Tremaine Map of York County. However, archival records indicate that the brick homestead and a barn were constructed by Henry Smelser sometime after 1849 prior to its appearance in the 1878 Tremaine map.¹⁶ Additionally, Henry sold the subject 2-acre property to Joseph Watson in 1859

⁶ Smelser Family file, King Township Archives, Local History and Genealogy Collection, date Unknown.

⁷ Smelser Family Tree, Ancestry- Library Edition; www.ancestry.ca (Vaughan Public Libraries)

⁸ Mulvany, C.P., G.M. Adam, and C.B. Robinson. *History of Toronto and County of York, Ontario: Biographical Notices*. History of Toronto and County of York, Ontario. C.B. Robinson, 1885.

⁹ Smelser family file, King Township Archives, Local History and Genealogy Collection, date Unknown.

¹⁰ Ontario Land Registry Abstract/Parcel Register Book. York Region, Concession 5, Lot 1, King Township

¹¹ Smelser Family file, King Township Archives, Local History and Genealogy Collection, date Unknown.

¹² "John Smelser (Unknown-1859) - Find a Grave" Find a Grave.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/65971559/john-smelser?_gl=1%2A19r9u2t%2A_gcl_au%2AMTgwOTY2MDMwNS4xNzlyMjU2NTcw.

¹³ Smelser Family file, King Township Archives, Local History and Genealogy Collection, date Unknown.

¹⁴ *Licensed Auctioneers*, York Herald, August 7, 1861

¹⁵ Ontario Land Registry Abstract/Parcel Register Book. York Region, Concession 5, Lot 1, King Township

¹⁶ Smelser Family file, King Township Archives, Local History and Genealogy Collection, date Unknown.

for \$700. This \$600 increase in price from Henry's purchase in 1849 further suggests construction of the subject dwelling on the property sometime between 1849 and 1859.

Henry Smelser married Susan Wallace of Vaughan Township in 1862.¹⁷ In 1873, Henry was critically injured when struck by a barn door on his own farm, likely a separate property inherited from his father, and died a few months later. Henry left behind his wife and two children, John Albert (John Wallace) Smelser and Mary Agnes Smelser. Mrs. Smelser stayed on one of the family farms for a year after her husbands' death. In 1875, she bought a house in Laskay, a thriving rural community in King Township, and rented out the farmland inherited by Henry from his father.¹⁸ Henry and Susan are currently buried in the King City Cemetery, King, Ontario.¹⁹

Joseph Watson (1859-1919)

According to the Wesleyan Methodist Baptismal Register, Joseph Watson was born in Vaughan township around 1835.²⁰ At the age of 16 he was apprenticed to the trade of a blacksmith, which he continued to follow and was exceedingly prosperous. In 1859, he purchased and settled 2-acres from Henry Smelser. In the same year, Joseph also married Sophia Robinson of Vaughan Township. Joseph and Sophia had four children, two of whom, John and Annie, later resided in Laskay.²¹ Archival sources also indicate that Joseph added an addition to the rear of the house.²² In 1899, Joseph married again to Caroline M. Harris.²³

Tax assessment records identify Joseph Watson as the freeholder of the 2-acre property on Lot 1 Concession 5 from 1860 until the 1910s.²⁴ These records, indicate that Joseph Watson was a practicing blacksmith until the early 1900s. By 1910, at the age of 74, Joseph is listed as a 'gentleman' in tax assessment records, suggesting his retirement around this time. It is believed that his blacksmith shop was located on the property north of the house and faced concession 6.²⁵

Furthermore, Joseph kept one to two cattle, hogs, and a single horse throughout this time as well, suggesting agricultural use of the subject property.²⁶ Census records also support these findings, and list Joseph Watson as a resident of King Township and a practicing member of the Methodist Church from 1861 to 1911.²⁷

Joseph Watson died of liver cancer in 1917 at the age of 82.²⁸ Following his death, a notice in the Aurora Banner from March 8, 1918, describes an estate auction at Joseph Watson's 2-acre

¹⁷ Marriage Registers, Ancestry- Library Edition; www.ancestry.ca (Vaughan Public Libraries)

¹⁸ Smelzer Family file, King Township Archives, Local History and Genealogy Collection, date Unknown.

¹⁹ "Henry Smelser - Find a Grave Memorial." Find a Grave.

https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/204572994/henry-smelser?_gl=1%2A16luepz%2A_gcl_au%2AMTgwOTY2MDMwNS4xNzlyMjU2NTcw%2A_ga%2ANzk1MDM4NzY2LjE3MjlyNTY1NzY.%2A_ga_4QT8FMEX30%2AMTcyMjI3NTg3NS42LjEuMTcyMjI3NjEzMS42MC4wLjA.%2A_ga_LMK6K2LSJH%2AMTcyMjI3NTg3NS41LjEuMTcyMjI3NjEzMS4wLjAuMA..

²⁰ Ancestry- Library Edition; www.ancestry.ca (Vaughan Public Libraries)

²¹ Laskay, Farm History part 1 of 4, "Tweedsmuir History." King Township Public Library (KTPL), www.kinglibrary.ca/discover-our-collections/digital-local-history/tweedsmuir-history.

²² Ibid

²³ Marriage Registers, Ancestry- Library Edition; www.ancestry.ca (Vaughan Public Libraries)

²⁴ 1860-1910 Tax Assessment Rolls, King Township Archives

²⁵ Laskay, Farm History part 1 of 4, "Tweedsmuir History." King Township Public Library (KTPL), www.kinglibrary.ca/discover-our-collections/digital-local-history/tweedsmuir-history.

²⁶ 1860-1910 Tax Assessment Rolls, King Township Archives

²⁷ 1851-1911 Census of Canada, Ancestry- Library Edition; www.ancestry.ca (Vaughan Public Libraries)

²⁸ Deaths and Deaths Overseas, Ancestry- Library Edition; www.ancestry.ca (Vaughan Public Libraries)

property, incorrectly labeled as Lot 1, Concession 6.²⁹ The notice describes the property as a brick house on a 2-acre lot, referring to the subject dwelling.³⁰

The subject property remained in the Watson family until about 1919, when it was sold to Charles Kerr who then sold it in 1922 to Sinclair A. Levack, who used it as a summer home until his death in 1953.³¹ When electricity was first brought to the area, the house and barn were wired. Since that time, the house has been modernized to present day standards, but its architectural integrity has been preserved, maintaining its status as a representative example of Victorian design.³²

CONTEXTUAL VALUE

Though this property was not part of Vaughan Township until 1971, it carries similar history and context to those which were always part of Vaughan Township. This structure, which has retained its original location, form, orientation, and massing, serves as a fine example of Victorian architecture, defining, supporting, and maintaining the fine-grained late-19th and early-20th century agricultural/rural character of both King Vaughan and Weston Roads to the south and west of the subject property.

The Smelser-Watson House at 3740 King Vaughan Road also has contextual value because it is physically, functionally, visually, and historically linked to its surroundings. The subject property is located within an area that has a definable rural character, surrounded by remnant farmhouses/farmsteads in close proximity, contributing to a distinctive sense of place. The subject property also features substantial side yards to the north and the east of the dwelling. These yards, featuring open green space, mature trees, and agricultural related outbuildings and barns, further contribute to the historic character of the surrounding context.

The property has a long-standing relation to agricultural history and practices of the area and is linked to one particular family name (Smelser) who had a significant presence in the early history of Vaughan and King Townships.

Furthermore, the Smelser-Watson House also has contextual value as a landmark. Sitting on the northeastern corner of King Vaughan Road and Weston Road, and easily visible from the public realm, archival sources indicate reference to this structure as a direction or destination, identifying it as the *“House and barn on part lot 1 and 2 on the site where the barn and house stand west of highway 400.”*³³

²⁹ Several archival sources mistakenly associate Joseph Watson with Lot 1 Concession 6, however a review of the Ontario Land Titles for this property as well as Tax Assessment Rolls quickly dismisses this and confirms the history of the property as recounted in this Statement.

³⁰ *Friday March 15*, Aurora Banner, March 8, 1918

³¹ Ontario Land Registry Abstract/Parcel Register Book. York Region, Concession 5, Lot 1, King Township

³² Laskay, Farm History part 1 of 4, “Tweedsmuir History.” King Township Public Library (KTPL), www.kinglibrary.ca/discover-our-collections/digital-local-history/tweedsmuir-history.

³³ Smelzer Family file, King Township Archives, Local History and Genealogy Collection, date Unknown.