

Statement of Significance

90 Centre Street East – William Graham House

The William Graham House at 90 Centre Street East is recommended for designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act as a property of cultural heritage value or interest, as described in the following Statement of Significance.

Description of Property:

The William Graham House at 90 Centre Street East is a 2 ½-storey frame building with a rectangular plan and hipped roof located on the south side of Centre Street East, between Church Street South and Pugsley Avenue. The property is located within the historic village of Richmond Hill.

Design and Physical Value:

Dating to 1910, the William Graham House at 90 Centre Street East is a representative example of Edwardian Foursquare residential architecture in Richmond Hill. The building has retained many of its original architectural details expressing the Edwardian Foursquare style, including its simple rectangular plan and massing, hipped roof with a dentiled cornice and central dormer, wooden clapboard cladding, the balanced two-bay composition of the front facade, flat-headed windows and doors, and the raised main entrance sheltered by a shed-roofed front porch with bell-cast pent eaves supported by a dentiled cornice and tapered Tuscan columns on buff-brick bases.

Historical and Associative Value:

The William Graham House at 90 Centre Street East has historical value for its direct association with significant Richmond Hill developer and builder William Graham, who built the subject building as his first home in 1910 and resided there with his family until 1916. William H. Graham started his own contracting and building company in Richmond Hill in 1910, and bought a substantial amount of vacant land on Centre Street East and Church Street South during the 1910s and 1920s, which he subdivided, developed, and then resold to accommodate the village's rapid growth resulting from the booming flower industry during this time. During his relatively short time as a land developer and builder in the boom years of Richmond Hill's flower industry of the 1910s and 1920s, he constructed many public buildings, as well as around 30 homes in the village. As a testament to the influence that Graham had on the growing village in the early 20th century, the William H. Graham Parkette now stands at 43 Church Street South.

The William Graham House also has historical value because its Edwardian Foursquare design reflects the work of prolific Richmond Hill builder William Graham during a period of rapid growth in the village as a result of the booming flower industry during the 1910s and 1920s. Residential and institutional buildings constructed by Graham generally reflect the restrained Edwardian Classicism and Foursquare architectural styles popular in the early 20th century, and have made an enduring impact on the built form character of Richmond Hill village, particularly on residential streets

Page 2

that were largely built out in the 1910s and 1920s, including Centre Street East, Church Street South, Roseview Avenue, and Arnold Crescent.

Contextual Value:

The William Graham House at 90 Centre Street East has contextual value because its scale, form, and Edwardian Foursquare architectural style are important in defining and maintaining the cohesive, fine-grained early-20th century residential character of the surrounding streetscape on Centre Street East, as well as that of the surrounding residential area east of Yonge Street and north of Major Mackenzie Drive, which was largely developed in the early 20th century.

Heritage Attributes:

Design and Physical Value

The heritage attributes that contribute to the value of the property as a representative example of Edwardian Foursquare residential architecture in Richmond Hill are:

- The scale, form and massing of the 2 ½-storey building with a rectangular plan;
- The medium-pitched hipped roof on a dentiled cornice;
- The building's exterior materials, including the concrete foundation, and wooden clapboard siding and corner boards;
- The balanced two-bay composition of the building's front (north) elevation;
- The windows, including:
 - Flat-headed windows with wood surrounds;
 - The hip-roofed dormer window on the building's principal (north) elevation;
- The raised main entrance on the north elevation with a flat-headed door with wood surround;
- The front porch spanning the width of the north elevation, including:
 - The shed-roof with bell-cast pent eaves;
 - The plain architrave and dentiled cornice;
 - The tapered Tuscan columns on buff-brick bases; and
 - The wooden railings with square balusters.

Historical and Associative Value

The heritage attributes that contribute to the value of the property for its associations with significant Richmond Hill builder William Graham are:

- The house's Edwardian Foursquare architectural style and modest material palette, which reflect the work of builder William Graham, and his limited means at the beginning of his career as a developer and builder.

Contextual Value

The heritage attributes that contribute to the contextual value of the property as part of a fine-grained cohesive early-20th century residential streetscape on Centre Street East are:

- The house's scale, siting, and orientation on the south side of Centre Street East; and
- The house's material palette and architectural detailing in the Edwardian Foursquare style, which contribute to early 20th century character of Centre Street East and the broader residential area east of Yonge Street and north of Major Mackenzie Drive.

Note: the house's later rear (south) addition is not considered to possess heritage attributes.