

Heritage Research and Evaluation Report



13561 Leslie Street - Forester House

C. 1870s

Part of Lot 9, Concession 3, Whitchurch Township

Prepared by: Heritage & Urban Design, Planning & Building Services, 2024

History

Contextual History

The Forester House is a circa 1870s frame structure with brick veneer located in former Whitchurch Township in Richmond Hill. Prior to colonization and settlement, the land was inhabited by the Anishnaabe, Haudenosaunee, and the Huron Wendat First Nations. Following the Toronto Purchase in 1787, the area was subdivided into townships, concessions, and lots. 13561 Leslie Street is located within Lot 9 on Concession 3 in the former hamlet of White Rose in Whitchurch Township, which developed around the Lloyd flour mill in the mid-1800s, and which gradually diminished and disappeared after the mill closed in 1903. The subject property remained part of the Township of Whitchurch until the creation of the Regional Municipality of York in 1971, when it became part of Richmond Hill.

13561 Leslie Street

The first owner of Lot 9, Concession 3 of Whitchurch Township was John Stegman, who was granted 200 acres of land from the Crown in 1801. David Stegman then acquired the full 200 acres sometime between 1801 and 1823, and later resold the property to John Cummings in 1823. In 1824, Cummings sold the property to Alexander McDonnell, who sold it again to Thomas McCausland in 1831. In 1835, the property was divided into two 100 acre lots; the west half, which contains the subject property at 13561 Leslie Street, was acquired by Clayton Webb before being sold to Samuel Baker in 1840. Baker resold the lot in the same year to Samuel Siddons Jr.¹

Archival records confirm Siddons' location on the west part of Lot 9, Concession 3. Tax assessment rolls from 1851 to 1867,² as well as directories for 1846 to 1866,³ place Siddons on the subject property. The 1861 census specifies that Siddons was a farmer, and the subject property was likely used for agricultural purposes.⁴

In 1850, Siddons sold the northwest corner of Lot 9 to the trustees of School Section No. 6 to build a schoolhouse.⁵ In 1869, Siddons sold the rest of the 99-acre property to John Smith. Archival sources show that Smith rented his property to a tenant farmer,⁶ William Galloway.⁷ According to the 1871 census, Galloway was a tenant on Lot 9, Concession 3, farming 99 acres of land. The census also gives insight into Galloway's agricultural production. Galloway grew a variety of produce, including barley, oats, peas, potatoes, apples, and hay crop, and raised horses, swine, and cattle. Galloway's farm also produced butter.⁸

In 1879, Smith sold the subject property to John Forester. It is unlikely that John Forester ever resided on or farmed the subject property. The Forester family owned property on the opposite (east) side of Leslie Street,⁹ and starting in approximately 1884, the subject property was farmed by Forester's son, Thomas. Thomas Forester is listed as a householder on Lot 9 in York County directories from 1884 to 1898.¹⁰

¹ *Ontario Land Registry Historical Books*. York Region: Lots 9 and 10, Concession 3, Whitchurch Township.

² *Assessment roll for the township of Whitchurch*. Whitchurch Township, 1851-1867.

³ *Brown's Toronto city and home district directory: 1846-7*. Toronto: George Brown, 1846; *Roswell's city of Toronto and county of York directory for 1850-1*. Toronto: Henry Roswell, 1850; *Mitchell & Co's general directory for the city of Toronto and gazetteer of the counties of York and Peel for 1866*. Toronto: Mitchell & Co., 1866.

⁴ *Census of Canada West*, 1861.

⁵ "Plan Reunion at White Rose P. School." *Stouffville Tribune*, September 2 1965.

⁶ *Nason's east and west ridings of the county of York, or, Townships of Etobicoke, Markham, Scarborough, Vaughan & York directory*. Toronto: James Randle Nason, 1871.

⁷ Galloway is listed as renting a 99 acre property on lot 9 concession 3. Lot 9 is 200 acres large and was split into multiple parcels. John Smith owned 99 acres, John Stickley owned 50 acres, and James Lloyd owned 50 acres. Therefore, the only landowner Galloway could have rented 99 acres on lot 9 from was John Smith, who owned the subject property.

⁸ *Census of Canada*, 1871.

⁹ *County of York Gazetteer and Directory: First Edition (1881)*. Toronto: W.H. Irwin & Co., 1881.

¹⁰ *The Union Publishing Co.'s (of Ingersoll) farmers' and business directory for the counties of Ontario, Peel and York*. Ingersoll: Union Publishing Company, 1884-5, 1887, 1880, 1890, 1892, 1893, 1896, 1898.

Page 3

Following John Forester's death, the subject property was willed to Thomas,¹¹ and ownership officially transferred to Thomas between 1898 and 1900.¹² Census records from 1881, 1891, and 1901 confirm that Thomas Forester was a farmer on Lot 9, Concession 3 of Whitchurch Township.¹³

In 1904, a railway was built through the 3rd concession, cutting through Forester's farm.¹⁴ In 1905 and 1908, Forester formally sold the railway land to the James Bay and Canadian Northern Ontario Railway Companies, respectively.¹⁵

In 1921, Thomas Forester sold the subject property to Henry Arnold, subject to mortgage payments. In the same year, Arnold sold the property to George Lane, who sold it again to John Walker. In 1923, Walker sold the property to Marshall B. Nicholson. In 1925, the property ownership reverted to Thomas Forester due to foreclosure. It is not known who lived or farmed on the subject property between 1921 and 1925. However, according to the 1921 census, Thomas Forester had retired from farming and rented a wooden¹⁶ six-roomed house, and it is possible that he sold off his farmland while remaining in the house.¹⁷ Regardless, it appears that the Forester family moved back into the subject building after Thomas Forester foreclosed on the mortgage in 1925. In the 1931 census, Thomas Forester is listed as living in a brick veneer, six-roomed house he owned, a description matching the subject building at 13561 Leslie Street.¹⁸

In 1937, the subject property was transferred to Forester's daughter, Jessie Edna Smith, who lived on the property with her family.¹⁹ In 1955, Smith sold the west half of Lot 9 to Alexander, Mary, and Isobel Lawson and Amy Brough. Subsequent owners of 13561 Leslie Street include the Toronto Dominion Bank in 1958, Cortleigh Investments in 1961, and Clifford Sifton in 1962.

The exact construction date of the subject building is not known, but it is believed to have been built circa the 1870s. Archival sources offer multiple descriptions of structures on the subject property. In 1860, one structure fronting Concession Road 3 (now known as Leslie Street) is shown on the Tremaine map.²⁰ In 1861, Samuel Siddons is described as living in a two-storey frame structure.²¹ In 1878, John Smith is shown on the Miles & Co. map as owning two structures on Lot 9 fronting the

¹¹ *Ontario Land Registry Historical Books*. York Region: Lots 9 and 10, Concession 3, Whitchurch Township.

¹² *The Union Publishing Co.'s (of Ingersoll) farmers' and business directory for the counties of Ontario, Peel and York*. Ingersoll: Union Publishing Company, 1890.

¹³ *Census of Canada*, 1881, 1891, 1901.

¹⁴ "The James Bay Railway." *The Liberal*, September 22 1904.

¹⁵ *Ontario Land Registry Historical Books*. York Region: Lots 9 and 10, Concession 3, Whitchurch Township.

¹⁶ As the subject building is a frame structure with brick veneer, "wooden" is an apt description.

¹⁷ *Census of Canada*, 1921.

¹⁸ *Census of Canada*, 1931.

¹⁹ "Gormley Since 1800." *Stouffville Tribune*, September 1 1949.

²⁰ Tremaine, George R. "Tremaine's Map of York County", Canada West, Toronto 1860.

²¹ *Census of Canada West*, 1861.

Page 4

roadway.²² In the 1891 census, Thomas Forester is listed as living in a brick 1 ½ storey house with 11 rooms.²³ In the 1901 census, he is listed as living in a brick six-room house,²⁴ and in the 1931 census, a brick veneer six room house.²⁵ In 1951, topographical imagery shows that there was only one dwelling remaining on the property, indicating that one of the two structures pictured in the 1878 map was demolished.²⁶

As well, according to tax assessment rolls, the property value remained steady between 1851 and 1869 and between 1877 and 1899. This indicates that a new structure was not built on this property during these times. There is one major jump in property value between 1875 and 1876, when the property value jumped from \$3300 to \$4300.²⁷ There are no tax assessment rolls available before 1851, between 1870 and 1874, or after 1899.

The subject building was likely built circa the 1870s. Firstly, it is possible that one of the structures present on the 1878 Miles & Co. map is the subject building. Samuel Siddons likely built the original two-storey frame structure and then sold the property to John Smith, who built the present structure on the property sometime before 1878. The original structure would not have been demolished during construction to provide housing in the interim, which would explain why there are two structures pictured on the 1878 map. Secondly, based on tax assessment rolls, the second structure was either built between 1870-1874 – when there are no available tax assessments - or in 1875-76, when the property value spikes. Thirdly, it is most likely that the subject building was built before 1891, as Thomas Forester's dwelling at the time matches the subject building's physical description. Therefore, the most likely date of construction is between 1870 and 1876.

Forester Family

The Forester family were early settlers in the White Rose community, and they owned, farmed, and lived at 13561 Leslie Street from 1879 to 1955. During their 60-year tenure, five generations of Foresters have been associated with the property.

The Foresters were an agricultural family who largely settled in the White Rose and Gormley communities in the 19th century. The earliest Forester to settle in the area was George Forester, who emigrated from England around 1818 and first settled in Lachine, Quebec before moving to concession 3 lot 30 in Markham Township. His son, John, married Sarah Frisby and farmed 550 acres of land in Whitchurch Township, across the street from the subject property.²⁸

²² Illustrated historical atlas of the county of York and the township of West Gwillimbury & town of Bradford in the county of Simcoe, Ont. Toronto : Miles & Co., 1878.

²³ *Census of Canada*, 1891.

²⁴ *Census of Canada*, 1901.

²⁵ *Census of Canada*, 1931.

²⁶ *Maps of the National Topographic System of Canada, Markham (West), Ontario*. Ottawa: Department of Energy, Mines, and Resources, Surveys and Mapping Branch, 1951.

²⁷ *Assessment roll for the township of Whitchurch*. Whitchurch Township, 1851-1899.

²⁸ "Gormley Since 1800." *Stouffville Tribune*, September 1 1949.

John Forester purchased the subject property in 1879, and it was rented and farmed by his son, Thomas, starting in the early 1880s.²⁹ In 1891, Thomas married Elizabeth Schell,³⁰ and they had a son and a daughter. Thomas remained a farmer for most of his life, retiring sometime between 1916 and 1921.³¹ Thomas died in 1935 and Elizabeth died in 1937.³² After the Forester's deaths, their daughter, Edna Smith, acquired the property and lived on it with her husband, daughter, and two grandchildren.³³

The Forester family left a mark on the small White Rose community. For one, they were active members in the area's Methodist circles.³⁴ As well, the Forester family is associated with other historic properties in the former White Rose and Gormley hamlets, including the Forster Phylis Rawlinson Log House at 11715 Leslie Street (circa 1830s, designated) and the John Forrester House at 188 Gormley Road West (1909, designated), and the John Forrester House at 13560 Leslie Street (circa 1880s, demolished).

Architecture

The Forester House, built circa 1870s, is a representative example of the Gothic Revival Cottage style, sometimes also referred to as the Carpenter Gothic style. The Forester House is an example of the Gothic Revival Cottage style because of its 1 ½ storey massing, side-gabled roof with a central gable on its front elevation, vergeboarding, finial, lancet arch window, and bellcast front porch. The Gothic Revival Cottage style is a vernacular architectural style that developed in Ontario starting in the 1850s, making the subject dwelling a strong representative example of rural Ontario architecture.³⁵

The Forester House consists of an original structure, built circa 1870s, a rear addition built before 1970,³⁶ and a south (side) addition built between 2021 and 2024.³⁷ The building fronts Leslie Street and is set back from the road. The original part of the building is a 1 ½ storey frame structure with painted brick veneer and medium-pitched side gable roof with a steeply-pitched front gable ("peak"). On the north elevation, there is an exterior brick chimney. The building has an irregular building footprint.

The front (west) façade facing Leslie Street has a symmetrical, balanced composition with three bays at grade and one bay at the second storey. At grade, there are two rectangular, flat-headed windows with stone sills and brick voussoirs flanking a rectangular, flat-headed doorway. On the second storey, there is a lancet arch window with a stone sill and brick voussoir. While the window and door openings are likely

²⁹ "Gormley Since 1800." *Stouffville Tribune*, September 1 1949.

³⁰ *Schedule B – Marriages*. Ontario Marriage Records, 1891.

³¹ *Voters' list of the township of Whitchurch*. Newmarket Ontario, 1916.; *Census of Canada*, 1921.

³² "Edna Josie Forester Smith (1893-1970) - Find a..." Find a Grave, n.d.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/216174675/edna-josie-smith#view-photo=218944425>.

³³ "Gormley Since 1800." *Stouffville Tribune*, September 1 1949.

³⁴ Barkey, Jean. *Whitchurch Township*. Toronto: Stoddart, 1993.

³⁵ Kalman, Harold. *History of Canadian architecture*. Vol. 1. Oxford University Press, 1996.

³⁶ "13561 Leslie Street." York Maps, 1970. <https://arcg.is/1O8e4P>

³⁷ "13561 Leslie Street." Google maps. Accessed February 2024.

Page 6

original, the window units are not original to the structure. In the peak, there is wooden finial and vergeboarding.

On the front (west) façade, there is a one-storey porch with wooden trim featuring elliptical arches and drops and a bellcast roof. The porch spans the entirety of the front façade. The porch rail is not original to the structure.

On the side (north) façade, there are four rectangular, flat-headed windows with stone sills and brick voussoirs flanking an exterior brick chimney.

On the side (south) elevation, there is a one-storey addition with a front gable roof.

On the rear (east) elevation, there is a two-storey addition with a front gable roof.

Context

The Forester House is located on the east side of Leslie Street, south of Bloomington Road, and within the Oak Ridges Moraine. The house retains its original location, orientation, and context within the large rural property at 13561 Leslie Street. While the surrounding rural community of White Rose diminished in the early 20th century, the surrounding context still expresses a predominantly agricultural character, with sparse development clustered around waterways, fertile lands, and timber resources.

The subject property's surrounding context includes agricultural lands on the west side of Leslie Street and the north side of Bloomington Road, and the creek and historic railroad running through the east side of the property.

Compliance with Ontario Regulation 9/06 – Criteria for Determining Cultural Heritage Value or Interest:

The following evaluation applies Ontario Regulation 9/06, the prescribed provincial *Criteria for Determining Cultural Heritage Value or Interest* under Part IV, Section 29 of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. There are a total of nine criteria under O. Reg. 9/06. A property may be designated under Section 29 of the Act if it meets two or more of the provincial criteria for determining whether it is of cultural heritage value or interest.

Criteria applicable to the property are outlined below, along with explanatory text.

1. The property has design value or physical value because it is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method.

The Forester House at 13561 Leslie Street, built circa the 1870s, has design and physical value because it is a representative example of the Gothic Revival Cottage architectural style. The Forester House consists of a 1 ½ storey frame structure with painted brick veneer with rear and side additions. Architectural features that contribute to the building's representative Gothic Revival Cottage style include its frame construction with brick veneer, its medium-sloped side gable roof with front gable adorned with wooden vergeboarding and finial, the three-bay symmetrical composition of the front façade, the flat-headed windows with stone sills and brick voussoirs on the

Page 7

front and side facades, the flat-arched doorway at grade, the lancet-arch window with stone sill and brick voussoir on the second storey, and the one-storey porch on the front façade with a bellcast roof and wooden trim, featuring elliptical arches and drops.

2. The property has design value or physical value because it displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit.

N/A

3. The property has design value or physical value because it demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement.

N/A

4. The property has historical value or associative value because it has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community.

The Forester House has historical and associative value for its direct association with the prominent Forester family, who lived and farmed on the subject property from 1879 to 1955. The Forester family were early settlers with roots in the area dating back to 1830, owned and farmed multiple properties and hundreds of acres in the area, and were engaged in the White Rose Methodist community. The Forester family is also associated with nearby heritage properties including the Forster Phylis Rawlinson Log House at 11715 Leslie Street (circa 1830s, designated), the John Forrester House at 188 Gormley Road West (1909, designated). and the John Forrester House at 13560 Leslie Street (circa 1880s, demolished).

5. The property has historical value or associative value because it yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture.

N/A

6. The property has historical value or associative value because it demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community.

N/A

7. The property has contextual value because it is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area.

The Forester House has contextual value because it is one of a number of nineteenth century farmhouses that help define the historical agricultural character of the hamlet of White Rose in Whitchurch Township.

8. The property has contextual value because it is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings.

Page 8

The Forester House has contextual value because it is physically, visually, and historically linked to its surroundings. The property retains its physical and visual link to the surrounding agricultural landscape, including the rural landscape to the north, west, and south, and the creek and historic railroad running on the east side of the property. The Forester House is a remaining physical example of the White Rose rural community, which diminished and disappeared in the early twentieth century.

9. The property has contextual value because it is a landmark.

N/A

Maps and Photographs

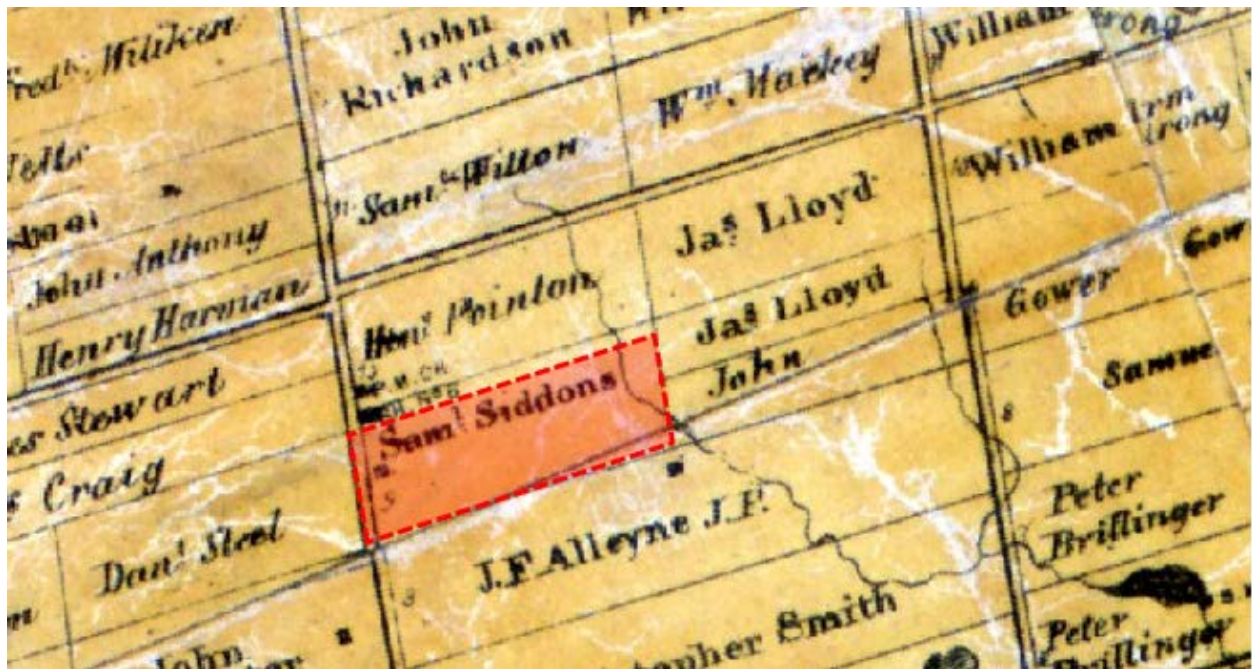


Figure 1 Detail of the 1860 Tremaine Map showing the approximate location of the subject property at 13561 Leslie Street (in red). Lot 9 concession 3 was owned by the Siddons family from 1840-1869. Note the single structure shown on the property at this time. (Source: University of Toronto Ontario Historical County Maps Project)

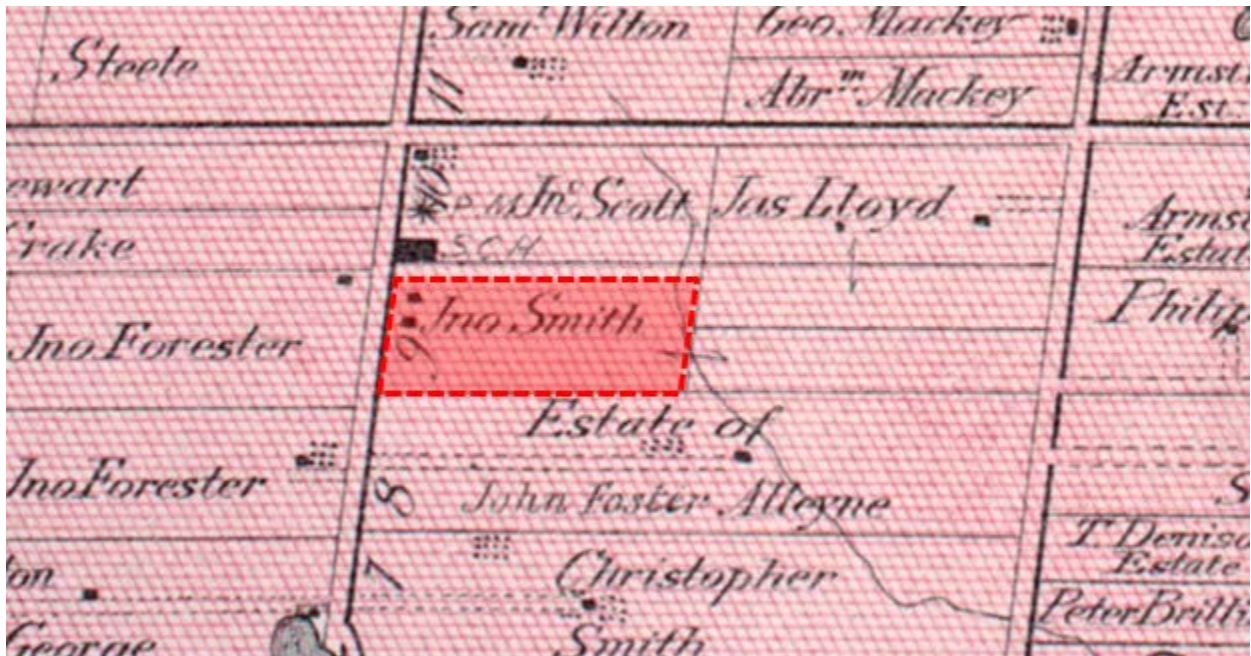


Figure 2 Detail of the 1878 Miles & Co Map showing the approximate location of the subject property at 13561 Leslie Street (in red). Lot 9 concession 3 was owned by John Smith from 1869-1879. Note the two structures shown on the property. (Source: McGill University Canadian Country Atlas Digital Project)

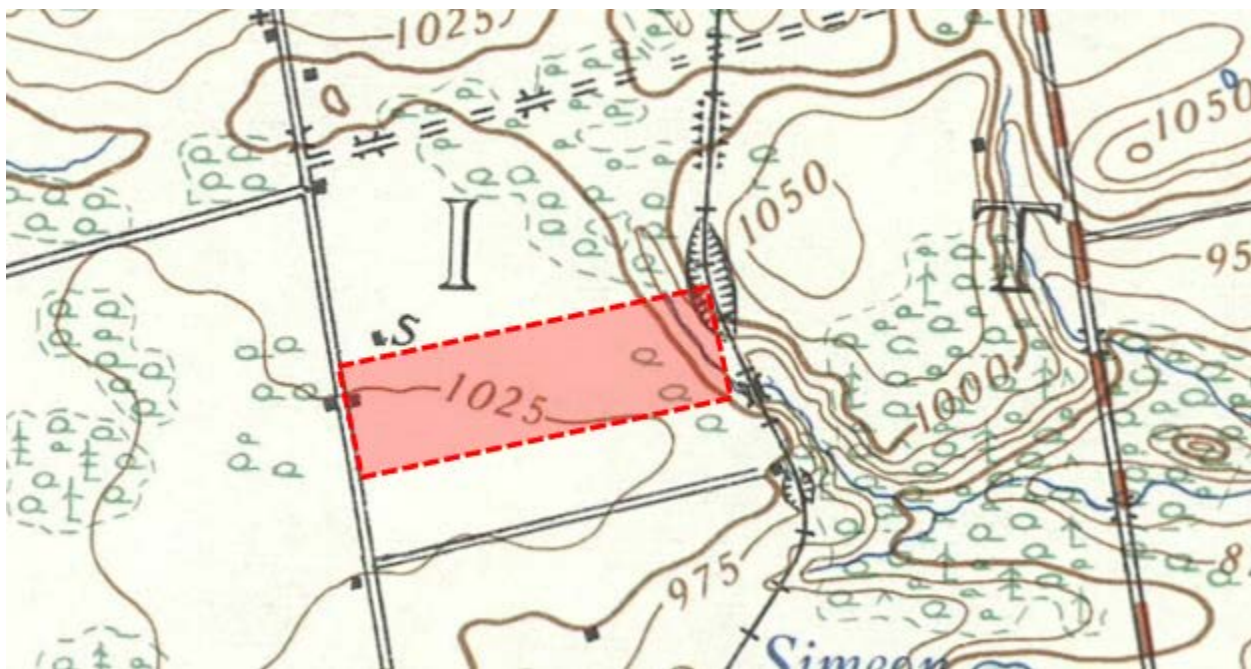


Figure 3 Detail of the 1951 Topographic Map showing the approximate location of the subject property at 13561 Leslie Street (in red). Note the single structure shown on the property. (Source: Department of Energy, Mines, and Resources)



Figure 4 1984 photograph of the Forester House, taken from Leslie Street looking east. Note the structure's symmetrical front façade, lancet arch window, vergeboarding, finial, and porch with bellcast roof and elliptical drops. (Source: Richmond Hill Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee)



Figure 5 Current photograph of the Forester House looking northeast, showing the principal (west) and south elevations. Note the building's 1 ½ storey massing, side gable roof with front gable, and wooden porch with bellcast roof. (Source: HUD 2024)



Figure 6 Current photograph looking east, showing the principal (west) elevation of 13561 Leslie Street. Note the structure's vergeboarding, finial, and lancet arch window. (Source: HUD 2024)



Figure 7 Current photograph looking northeast, showing the subject property's rural context on Leslie Street. Note the sparse development, natural environment, and agricultural character. (Source: HUD 2024)

Sources

Archival Sources

“13561 Leslie Street.” Google maps. Accessed February 2024.

“13561 Leslie Street.” York Maps, 1970. <https://arcg.is/1O8e4P>

Assessment roll for the township of Whitchurch. Whitchurch Township, 1851-1899.

Brown's Toronto city and home district directory: 1846-7. Toronto: George Brown, 1846.

Census of Upper Canada, 1842, 1851, 1861.

Census of Canada, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901, 1911, 1921, 1931.

County of York Gazetteer and Directory: First Edition. Toronto: W.H. Irwin & Co., 1870-1881.

“Edna Josie Forester Smith (1893-1970) - Find a...” Find a Grave, n.d.
<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/216174675/edna-josie-smith#view-photo=218944425>

“Gormley Since 1800.” *Stouffville Tribune*, September 1 1949.

Illustrated historical atlas of the county of York and the township of West Gwillimbury & town of Bradford in the county of Simcoe, Ont. Toronto : Miles & Co., 1878.

Lovell's Business And Professional Directory of the Province of Ontario, for 1882, Alphabetically arranged as to Places, Names, Business and Professions, with a Classified Business Directory of the City of Montreal. Toronto: John Lovell, 1882.

Maps of the National Topographic System of Canada, Markham (West), Ontario. Ottawa: Department of Energy, Mines, and Resources, Surveys and Mapping Branch, 1951.

Mitchell & Co's general directory for the city of Toronto and gazetteer of the counties of York and Peel for 1866. Toronto: Mitchell & Co., 1866.

Nason's east and west ridings of the county of York, or, Townships of Etobicoke, Markham, Scarboro, Vaughan & York directory. Toronto: James Randle Nason, 1871.

Ontario Land Registry Historical Books. York Region: Lots 9 and 10, Concession 3, Whitchurch Township.

“Plan Reunion at White Rose P. School.” *Stouffville Tribune*, September 2 1965.

Roswell's city of Toronto and county of York directory for 1850-1. Toronto: Henry Roswell, 1850.

“The James Bay Railway.” *The Liberal*, September 22 1904.

The Union Publishing Co.'s (of Ingersoll) farmers' and business directory for the counties of Ontario, Peel and York. Ingersoll: Union Publishing Company, 1884-5, 1887, 1880, 1890, 1892, 1893, 1896, 1898, 1900.

Tremaine, George R. “Tremaine’s Map of York County” Canada West, Toronto 1860.

Voters’ list of the township of Whitchurch. Newmarket Ontario, 1916.

Secondary Sources

Barkey, Jean. *Whitchurch Township.* Toronto: Stoddart, 1993.

Kalman, Harold. *History of Canadian architecture.* Vol. 1. Oxford University Press, 1996.

Richmond Hill Local Architectural Advisory Committee (LACAC). “Heritage Building Summary – 13561 Leslie Street.” Richmond Hill Public Library, Local History and Genealogy Collection, date unknown.

Stamp, Robert M. *Early Days in Richmond Hill: A History of the Community to 1930.* Richmond Hill: Richmond Hill Public Library Board, 1991.