

Statement of Significance

165 Richmond Street – James Freek House

The James Freek House at 165 Richmond Street 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 James Freek House at 165 Richmond Street is a 1 ½-storey brick building with an L-shaped plan and side-gabled roof located on the north side of Richmond Street, west of Elmdale Court. The property is located within the boundaries of historic village of Richmond Hill.

Design and Physical Value

Dating to circa 1860, the James Freek House at 165 Richmond Street has design and physical value as a rare and unique example of mid-19th century residential architecture that combines elements of both the Georgian and Victorian architectural styles. Elements representative of the Georgian architectural tradition include the balanced form and composition of the historical front (south) portion of the house, the saltbox roof with gabled dormers, buff brick cladding, segmental-arched windows with brick voussoirs and stone sills, and classical doorcase. Elements representative of the Victorian architectural tradition include the bellcast veranda with treillage on the house's front (south) elevation.

Historical and Associative Value

The James Freek House has historical value for its direct associations with James Freek and his family. James Freek, who was the owner of a brick manufacturing operation in Richmond Hill, a municipal fence viewer, and a farmer, built the subject dwelling around 1860 and lived there until he left Richmond Hill for Barrie in 1902. A family of local business leaders, employers, and active citizens, the Freeks were significant members of the community who contributed to the economic and physical development of Richmond Hill in the 19th century. The subject dwelling is constructed of buff bricks manufactured at the nearby Freek brickyard on Trench Street.

Contextual Value

The James Freek House has contextual value because its scale, form, and unique mix of 19th-century Georgian and Victorian architectural styles are important in defining and maintaining the predominantly fine-grained 19th and early-20th century residential character of the surrounding streetscape on Richmond Street, and the historical character of Richmond Hill's village core more broadly.

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The James Freek House has further contextual value for being functionally and historically linked to its surroundings on the north side of Richmond Street, east of Trench Street. The Freek family were early brick manufacturers in Richmond Hill, and owned a brickyard at the northeast corner of Trench and Richmond Streets, in close proximity to the subject property. The brickyard operated from the early- to mid-19th century and produced bricks used in construction throughout Richmond Hill. As the structure was built to house a major brick manufacturing family, its historical proximity to Richmond Hill's former industrial areas gives context to the development of the village.

Heritage Attributes

Design and Physical Value

The heritage attributes that contribute to the value of the property as a rare and unique example of mid-19th century residential architecture that combines elements of both the Georgian and Victorian architectural styles are:

- The scale, form and massing of the 1 ½-storey historical front (south) portion of the building, featuring a rectangular plan;
- The saltbox roof with two gabled dormers on the front (south) elevation;
- The building's exterior materials, including:
 - The soft-mixed buff brick cladding in running bond with tooled pointing;
 - The three-course pink-brick water table above the foundation;
 - Buff-brick window voussoirs; and
 - Stone window sills;
- The segmental-arched window openings with brick voussoirs and stone sills;
- The balanced three-bay composition of the building's front (south) elevation;
- The principal entrance on the house's front (south) elevation, featuring:
 - The classical doorcase; and
 - The bellcast-roofed full-façade verandah on decorative trelliage supports.

Historical and Associative Value

Heritage attributes contributing to the historical value of the property for its associations with James Freek, the Freek family, and the business success of the local Freek brick manufacturing operations include:

- The house's scale, siting, and orientation on the north side of Richmond Street, in close proximity to the Freek brickyard at Richmond and Trench Streets;
- The house's Georgian and Victorian stylistic elements, which reflect the Freek's construction and use of the property as their home from around 1860 to 1902; and
- The brick of the historical front (south) portion of the house, manufactured at the nearby Freek brickyard.

Contextual Value

The heritage attributes that contribute to the contextual value of the property as part of a fine-grained 19th and early-20th century residential streetscape on Richmond Street are:

- The house's scale, siting, and orientation on the north side of Richmond Street; and
- The house's material palette and 19th-century architectural expression, which contribute to the historical character of Richmond Street and Richmond Hill's Village Core more broadly.

The heritage attributes that contribute to the value of the property for its functional and historical links to its surroundings are:

- The property's scale, siting, and orientation on the north side of Richmond Street, in close proximity to the Freek brickyard at Richmond and Trench Streets;
- The brick of the historical front (south) portion of the house, manufactured at the nearby Freek brickyard.

Note: that the house's later rear (north) additions are not considered to possess any significant heritage attributes.