

Statement of Significance

12800 Yonge Street – Mitchell-Durham House

The Mitchell-Durham House at 12800 Yonge 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 Mitchell-Durham House at 12800 Yonge Street is a 1 ½ storey frame structure built in the California Bungalow style with an asymmetrical front-gabled roof and a stucco and cobblestone exterior. The property is located on the west side of Yonge Street, south of Estate Garden Drive, and within the hamlet of Oak Ridges.

Design and Physical Value

The Mitchell-Durham House at 12800 Yonge Street, built circa 1924, has physical and design value because it is a representative example of the Arts and Crafts style, and more specifically, of the California Bungalow style. The Mitchell-Durham House consists of a 1 ½ storey frame and cobblestone structure with a rear addition. Architectural features that contribute to the California Bungalow style include its 1 ½ storey massing, asymmetrical but balanced front façade, stucco and cobblestone exterior, medium-pitched front gable roof with exposed rafters at the eaves, two cobblestone chimneys, wooden and cobblestone front porch, and decorative half-timbering.

Historical and Associative Value

The Mitchell-Durham House has historical and associative value for its association with both the Mitchell and Durham families. The Mitchells and the Durhams, who were prominent Oak Ridges families, were related by marriage and lived on opposite sides of Yonge Street. John H. C. Durham, founder of the Toronto-based Fire Insurance Company and Whitchurch Township school trustee, built the subject structure around 1924 and ran the Craigmere Estate on the opposite side of Yonge Street. The Mitchell-Durham family have been associated with the subject property since 1912, when the Mitchells acquired the property as part of their Oak Ridges farm.

Contextual Value

The Mitchell-Durham House has contextual value because its scale, form, and siting on Yonge Street are important in defining and maintaining the distinct 19th and early 20th century rural character of Oak Ridges.

The Mitchell-Durham House has further contextual value because it is historically and visually linked to its surroundings in the hamlet of Oak Ridges, and more specifically, as part of a grouping of properties and buildings once owned by the Mitchell-Durham family in the immediate vicinity, including the J.H.C. Durham Cobblestone Cottage (circa 1915) at 12761 Yonge Street. The property is also historically and visually linked to various

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natural features in the surrounding area, including Mitchell Pond to the northwest, Bond Lake to the southwest, and the marshlands and East Humber River tributary at the rear of the property.

Heritage Attributes

Design and Physical Value

The heritage attributes that contribute to the value of the property as a representative example of the California Bungalow style are:

- The scale, form, and massing of the 1 ½ storey building;
- The medium-pitched asymmetrical front gable roof with two cobblestone chimneys, and exposed rafters at the eaves;
- The frame construction with stucco and cobblestone exterior;
- The asymmetrical, yet balanced, composition of the front (east) façade with three bays on the top storey;
- The wood and cobblestone front porch, accessed by cobblestone stairs (*note that the porch enclosure is likely not original, and is not considered a heritage attribute);
- The windows, including:
 - Flat-headed window openings with wood surrounds and/or stone sills on the north, south, and east elevations;
 - The gabled dormer on the north façade, and the shed-roofed dormer on the south façade; and
 - Historical three-over-one hung window units on the front (east) elevation; and
- The decorative half-timbering.

Historical and Associative Value

The heritage attributes that contribute to the value of the property for its association with the Mitchell-Durham families are:

- The building's scale, siting, and orientation on the west side of Yonge Street; and
- The building's California Bungalow architectural style and material palette.

Contextual Value

The heritage attributes that contribute to the value of the property for defining and maintaining the 19th and early 20th century rural character of Oak Ridges, and for visual and historical links to its surroundings are:

- The building's scale, siting, and orientation on the west side of Yonge Street; and
- The building's California Bungalow architectural style and material palette.

Note: the building's rear (west) addition is not considered to possess significant heritage attributes.