

Heritage Research and Evaluation Report



12261 Yonge St – Frank Legge House

Circa 1916

Part of Lot 61 Concession 1, Whitchurch Township

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

History

Contextual History

The Frank Legge House at 12261 Yonge Street is a circa 1916 frame structure with brick veneer located in former Whitchurch Township. 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. 12261 Yonge Street is located on Lot 61 Concession 1 in the former hamlet of Jefferson in Whitchurch Township, which was established along Yonge Street in the late nineteenth century. At the time of the subject building's construction, Jefferson was located north of the Village of Richmond Hill and was a small community surrounded by agricultural and natural land. The subject structure was built for Frank Legge, a longtime resident and member of Jefferson's

prominent Legge family. Over the course of its lifetime, the subject property has been referred to as Lot 61 Concession 1, 12261 Yonge Street, and Oak Manor.

12261 Yonge Street

The first owner of the subject property was Ambrose de Farcy, who was granted the south half of Lot 61 Concession 1 in Whitchurch Township from the Crown in 1806. De Farcy sold the entire property, totaling 95 acres, to Laurent Quetton St. George in 1815. Both de Farcy and Quetton St. George were exiled French aristocrats, who fled to Upper Canada via England after the French Revolution. Eventually, the property was acquired by Robert Baldwin, who sold the full 95 acres to Martin MacLeod in 1846.¹ The 1860 Tremaine Map shows that Captain Martin MacLeod owned four adjoining lots on both the east and west side of Yonge Street at the time,² where he built his estate, Drynoch, on the west side of Yonge Street on Lot 61 Concession 1 in King Township.³ The subject property was located on the northeast portion of MacLeod's estate.

In 1861, Elizabeth Bartlett, Captain MacLeod's eldest daughter, acquired the south half of Lot 61. Elizabeth and her husband, Reverend Thomas Bartlett, lived in Welland County and it is unknown what the land was used for at this time.⁴ In 1872, the western 50 acres of the property, including what is now the subject property, was sold to Frederick Paige. Paige died shortly after the purchase, and the property was left to his wife, Joanna Paige. The 1878 Miles & Co. Map confirms that Mrs. Paige was the owner of the southwestern quarter of Lot 61, and no structures are shown on the subject property at the time.⁵ After Paige's death in 1895, the property was auctioned off⁶ to Robert and Elliot Forbes, two brothers and farmers⁷ who lived in Jefferson. In 1912, the property was sold to William Henry ("Harry") Legge, a farmer who also owned parts of the adjoining Lots 62 and 63 in Whitchurch Township.

In 1916, Harry Legge sold a parcel of land fronting Yonge Street to his half-brother, Francis A. ("Frank") Legge, who built the subject structure at 12261 Yonge Street.⁸ According to Su Murdoch Historical Consulting, the structure was likely built around 1916. By 1917, Legge was already living on the property. According to tax assessment rolls, the property's value in 1917 was \$200 for the lot and \$1200 for the buildings, indicating that a sizeable structure was already present on the site.⁹ According to an oral history by Frank Legge's granddaughter, Molly, the property also originally had a chicken house and a vegetable garden.¹⁰

¹ *Ontario Land Registry Historical Books*. York Region: Lot 61, Concession 1, Whitchurch Township.

² Tremaine, George R. "Tremaine's Map of York County." Canada West, Toronto 1860.

³ Abdi, Diana. "A Brief History of Jefferson." Town of Richmond Hill LACAC, 1991.

⁴ Murdoch, Su. "Francis A. Legge Residence." Su Murdoch Historical Consulting, 1996.

⁵ 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.

⁶ "Parcel 1." *The Liberal*, April 11, 1895.

⁷ Murdoch, Su. "Francis A. Legge Residence." Su Murdoch Historical Consulting, 1996.

⁸ *Ontario Land Registry Historical Books*. York Region: Lot 61, Concession 1, Whitchurch Township.

⁹ Murdoch, Su. "Francis A. Legge Residence." Su Murdoch Historical Consulting, 1996.

¹⁰ Ibid.

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In 1936, Frank's wife Elizabeth was added as a joint tenant on the subject property and in 1946 the Legges acquired an additional strip of land to the north of their property from Gladys Hill, daughter of the late William Henry Legge. Elizabeth and Frank died in 1950 and 1955, respectively, and their children Claudia Davis and Homer Legge sold the subject property to Bernice Lambert and Irma Walfish in 1961. Subsequent owners of the property included Norse Developments Ltd. in 1966, Lena Lescelles in 1967, Robert Gibson in 1969, and Up in the Country Holdings Ltd. in 1977.¹¹ Tenants at the subject property since the 1950s included the first York Region Ontario Provincial Police station, Anthem Records offices, various shops, and upstairs residential tenants.¹²

Frank Legge & the Legge Family

Frank Legge, member of the prominent Legge family of Jefferson, built the subject structure around 1916 and was one of its notable residents from 1917 to the 1950s.

The Legge family were active in the Jefferson community since the nineteenth century. In 1842, James and Elizabeth Legge immigrated to Canada from England and raised nine children. One of their sons, James Legge Jr., became a prominent Jefferson resident, helping build the local St. John's Anglican Church. In 1860, James Jr. married Elizabeth Brown, and the pair had three children. After Elizabeth's death, James Jr. remarried Matilda Brown, a woman from Kingston whose guardian was Sir John A. MacDonald. James and Matilda had nine children, one of whom was Francis ("Frank") A. Legge, the builder of the subject property.¹³

Frank Legge was born on August 16th, 1870. According to directories and voters' lists, Frank was a tenant farmer on Lot 63 Concession 1 in Whitchurch Township starting in approximately 1893.¹⁴ Hundreds of acres on Lots 63 and 62 on Concession 1 were owned and farmed by Thomas, James, and William Legge.

Sometime before 1916, Frank married Elizabeth Palmer (b. 1872), and the couple had two children, Claudia and Homer Legge.¹⁵ In 1916, Frank purchased a parcel on Lot 61 from his brother, William Legge, and built the subject structure.¹⁶ The 2 ½-storey building was built in the Edwardian Classicism style and stands in Jefferson hamlet facing Yonge Street. During the Legge family's occupancy, the property was in a rural location and had a chicken coop and a garden.¹⁷

Tax assessment rolls also show that Frank remained a tenant farmer on Lots 62 and 63 after 1916, but by 1936 had switched careers and worked as a road construction foreman. The Legge family resided at 12261 Yonge Street until after the deaths of

¹¹ *Ontario Land Registry Historical Books*. York Region: Lot 61, Concession 1, Whitchurch Township.

¹² Murdoch, Su. "Francis A. Legge Residence." Su Murdoch Historical Consulting, 1996.

¹³ Abdi, Diana. "A Brief History of Jefferson." Town of Richmond Hill LACAC, 1991.

¹⁴ *Voters' list of the township of Whitchurch*. Newmarket Ontario, 1916.; *The Union Publishing Co.'s (of Ingersoll) farmers' and business directory for the counties of Ontario, Peel and York, 1893, 1894, 1896: Vol. I*). Ingersoll: Union Publishing Company, 1893, 1894, 1896.

¹⁵ Murdoch, Su. "Francis A. Legge Residence." Su Murdoch Historical Consulting, 1996.

¹⁶ *Ontario Land Registry Historical Books*. York Region: Lot 61, Concession 1, Whitchurch Township.

¹⁷ Murdoch, Su. "Francis A. Legge Residence." Su Murdoch Historical Consulting, 1996.

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Frank and Elizabeth Legge in the 1950s.¹⁸ In the 1990s, the property and its history briefly received public attention because an upstairs tenant believed the house was haunted by Frank's son, Homer.¹⁹

Frank Legge and the Legge family are remembered for their contributions to the Jefferson community in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. James Legge Jr. helped build the St. John's Anglican Church in Jefferson, which spurred family involvement in the church for generations. His son, William Henry Legge, was a farmer, president of the Richmond Hill Agricultural Society and of the Lake Wilcox Brick Company, and a shareholder of the Summit Golf and Country Club. William's brother, Frank Legge, built the subject property, was a school board trustee, and was heavily involved in the St. John's Anglican church community in Jefferson.²⁰

The Legge family is also associated with the Thomas Legge House at 22 Thomas Legge Crescent (circa 1890), the James Carscadden House at 37 Chao Crescent (circa 1845), and the William Legge House/Jefferson Post Office at 11666 Yonge Street (circa 1890).

Anthem Records

Around 1978, Anthem Records opened their offices at 12261 Yonge Street, then nicknamed Oak Manor. Anthem Records rented the property from the late 1970s to early 1980s and, during their tenure, the subject property was used as recording studios for several chart-topping Canadian artists.²¹

Anthem Records were significant in the Canadian music industry. Formed in 1977 and strongly associated with legendary Canadian rock group, Rush, Anthem Records strove to give Canadian artists who had difficulties signing with companies in Toronto or Montreal greater control over their music production.²² Artists who recorded at Anthem's Jefferson office included Rush, Ian Thomas Band,²³ B.B. Gabor,²⁴ and Bob and Doug McKenzie.²⁵

Architecture

The Frank Legge House, built circa 1916, is a representative example of the Edwardian Classicism architectural style, which was popular in the early twentieth century and is typified by simple, balanced massing with Classical detailing. The Frank Legge House is

¹⁸ Abdi, Diana. "A Brief History of Jefferson." Town of Richmond Hill LACAC, 1991.

¹⁹ Murdoch, Su. "Francis A. Legge Residence." Su Murdoch Historical Consulting, 1996.

²⁰ Abdi, Diana. "A Brief History of Jefferson." Town of Richmond Hill LACAC, 1991; Murdoch, Su. "Francis A. Legge Residence." Su Murdoch Historical Consulting, 1996.

²¹ "Oak Ridges makes it big, eh?" *Toronto Star*, January 19 1982.

²² Weller, Dave. "Rush and Anthem Records." Rush and anthem records, 2002.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20110808165953/http://www.wellers.demon.co.uk/Rush%20and%20Anthem%20Records.htm>.

²³ "Question Please?" *Toronto Star*, September 28 1978.

²⁴ "Gabor goes public with punk cabaret." *Toronto Star*, February 12 1980.

²⁵ "Oak Ridges makes it big, eh?" *Toronto Star*, January 19 1982.

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an example of the Edwardian Classicism style because of its symmetrical and balanced five-bay façade, side-gabled roof with shed-roofed dormers and return eaves, pedimented portico on Tuscan columns, and raised brick quoins on its corners.

The Frank Legge House is a 2 ½ storey frame structure with red brick veneer and a medium-pitched side gable roof. The structure has a T-shaped footprint with rear (east) and side (south) wings, and all of the structure's wings are believed to have been built around 1916. The structure is built into a hill, and the foundation on the rear and side elevations is exposed. The roof of the main house also features two red brick chimneys, placed near the north and south gable ends.

The front (west) façade of the building is symmetrical with five bays. At grade, there is a centered front door flanked by two window openings on each side. On the second storey, there are five windows. The front façade also features two shed-roofed dormer windows, which are covered up with vinyl siding.

Over the doorway on the front (west) façade, there is a pedimented one-storey portico with Tuscan columns. The front doorway is set within a classical doorcase with sidelights and a fanlight; the sidelights and fanlight are, however, currently inset with vinyl siding.

The house's windows are flat headed with radiating brick and stone voussoirs and stone sills and contain modern vinyl replacement units. In the gable on the north and south sides of the dwelling, there are also two quarter-circle attic openings with wooden fan-shaped units and brick and stone voussoirs and stone sills.

There is also a two storey, flat-roofed frame sunroom wing on the side (south) facade. This south wing features a series flat-headed windows with wooden surrounds or stone sills on the first and second storeys. On the side (south) façade, there is an entrance at grade flanked by two flat-headed rectangular windows with stone sills on either side.

To the rear of the property, there is a 1 ½ storey red brick garage with a front gable roof and red brick quoins. Like the house, the garage has a window and door openings with radiating brick and stone voussoirs and stone sills.

Context

The Frank Legge House at 12261 Yonge Street is located at the northeast corner of Yonge Street and Stouffville Road, within the former hamlet of Jefferson. The house's scale and prominent corner location atop a small hill make it a visual anchor in the surrounding context. Jefferson was an agricultural community that was established in the mid-nineteenth century and was centered along Yonge Street, just south of Oak Ridges. At the time of its construction, the subject property was surrounded by agricultural and forested land, which was then developed in the late-20th and early-21st centuries.

The subject property's immediate surrounding context includes a mix of uses and building forms. Immediate east and north of the subject property, there is a small mid-

20th-century residential subdivision. The west side of Yonge Street features 21st-century commercial plazas with surface parking, west of which there is a large 21st century residential subdivision. There is agricultural and forested land directly south of the subject property, while more agricultural land and Bond Lake are located further to the north.

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.

Built circa 1916, the Frank Legge House at 12261 Yonge Street has design and physical value because it is a representative example of the Edwardian Classicism architectural style. The Frank Legge House consists of a main structure with rear and side wings. Architectural features that contribute to the Edwardian Classicism style include the building's red brick cladding, medium-pitched side gable roof with shed-roofed dormers and return eaves, red brick chimneys, pedimented portico on Tuscan columns surrounding a front doorway, rectangular window openings with flat-headed brick and stone voussoirs and stone sills, quarter-circle attic window openings with brick and stone voussoirs and stone sills, raised brick quoins, and the frame flat-roofed south sunroom wing with flat-arched rectangular windows with wood surrounds and stone sills.

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 subject property at 12261 Yonge Street has historical and associative value for its association with Frank Legge, who built the subject property around 1916 and resided

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there until the 1950s. The prominent Legge family were farmers and early settlers in the hamlet of Jefferson beginning the mid-nineteenth century, helped establish the St. John's Anglican Church, and owned hundreds of acres of farmland in the area. Frank Legge built the subject building, lived there with his family for over forty years, and was active in the Jefferson community with his work as a school board trustee and with the St. John's Anglican Church.

The subject property also has associative value for its association with Anthem Records, who rented the building as recording space from 1978 to the early 1980s. Anthem Records is significant to Canadian music history because it was created in part to give Canadian artists greater control of their music production, and for its strong association with the popular Canadian rock band, Rush.

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.

N/A

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

The subject property at 12261 Yonge Street has contextual value for its visual and historic links to the surrounding hamlet of Jefferson. The Frank Legge House was built around 1916, when it was surrounded by agricultural and forested land. Although the surrounding context experienced commercial and residential development in the late-20th and early-21st centuries, the property retains its visual connection to agricultural and forested land to the south. As well, the property has longstanding historic links to the hamlet of Jefferson. The Legge family, who built the subject building, helped develop the hamlet, was part of its church community, and owned hundreds of acres of farmland in the community during the 19th century.

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

N/A

Maps and Photographs



Figure 1 Undated mid-twentieth century photograph of the Frank Legge House at 12261 Yonge Street. Note the building's 2 ½ storey massing, symmetrical five bay composition, flat-headed windows with brick and stone voussoirs, raised brick quoins, and south sunroom. (Source: Su Murdoch Historical Consulting)



Figure 2 1951 topographic map showing the approximate location of the Frank Legge House at 12261 Yonge Street (in red). Note the area's sparse development concentrated on either side of Yonge Street. (Source: Department of Energy, Mines, and Resources)



Figure 3 1982 drawing depicting the Frank Legge House at 12261 Yonge Street, then nicknamed Oak Manor. Note the structure's 2 ½ storey massing, symmetrical five bay composition, flat-headed windows with brick and stone voussoirs, raised brick quoins, and south sunroom. (Source: Su Murdoch Historical Consulting)



Figure 4 Current photograph of the Frank Legge House at 12261 Yonge Street facing east, showing the building's principal (west) elevation. Note the structure's 2 ½ storey massing, symmetrical five bay composition, flat-headed windows with brick and stone voussoirs, raised brick quoins, and south sunroom. (Source: HUD, 2024)



Figure 5 Current photograph of the Frank Legge House at 12261 Yonge Street facing southeast, showing the building's north and west elevations. Note the quarter-circle attic window openings with stone sills and brick and stone voussoirs on the side (north) elevation. (Source: HUD, 2024)



Figure 6 Current photograph of the Frank Legge House at 12261 Yonge Street facing northeast, showing the building's south sunroom. Note the sunroom's flat-headed windows with wooden surrounds or stone sills and brick and stone voussoirs. (Source: HUD, 2024)



Figure 7 Current photograph of the Frank Legge House at 12261 Yonge Street facing north, showing the building's rear (east) wing. Note the rear wing's 2 ½ storey massing, symmetrical composition, flat-headed windows with brick and stone voussoirs, quarter-circle attic windows with brick and stone voussoirs, and raised brick quoins. (Source: HUD, 2024)



Figure 8 Current photograph of the Frank Legge House at 12261 Yonge Street facing east. Note the surrounding context, including the sparse residential development and thick vegetation. (Source: HUD, 2024)

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