

Heritage Research and Evaluation Report



11644 Leslie Street – Horner House

Circa 1860s

Part of Lot 32 Concession 2, Markham Township

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

History

Contextual History

The Horner House is a circa 1860s frame structure originally located in former Markham Township, and now situated within the boundaries of the City of 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. 11644 Leslie Street is located on the west side of Leslie Street within what was formerly Lot 32 of Concession 2 in Markham Township. At the time of the subject building's construction,

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northern Leslie Street near 19th Avenue was a predominantly rural area, surrounded by natural and agricultural landscapes, and the subject property was one of numerous farms in the area. The subject building was built circa the 1860s for the Horner family, who lived and farmed on the property until 1921.

11644 Leslie Street

The first owner of Lot 32 Concession 2 in Markham Township was William Berczy, who was granted 200 acres of land from the Crown in September 1804. By October of the same year, he resold the property to the Honourable William Allen, who sold the entirety of Lot 32 to Emanuel Horner in 1833.¹ Archival records confirm Emanuel Horner's location on the subject property – according to the 1837 and 1846-7 directories, Emanuel is listed on Lot 32 Concession 2.²

In 1849, Emanuel Horner sold the southeast quarter of his lot, totaling 50 acres, to his son Jacob Horner.³ According to archival documentation, Jacob Horner lived and worked on the subject lot. Records such as the 1863 and 1864 tax assessments, the 1866-1896 directories, and the 1896 voters' list all show that Jacob resided on 50 acres of land on the east half of Lot 32 Concession 2.⁴

Jacob Horner resided on Lot 32 Concession 2 until his death in 1896. The following year, the subject property changed hands several times in quick succession; the property was sold via auction to John F. Clifford in August 1897, before being resold in October 1897 to Maurice Brent. In December 1897, the property sold to Samuel Horner,⁵ Jacob's brother who lived on a 50-acre property immediately north of the subject property at the time.⁶ According to the 1901 census, Samuel Horner's family now owned and farmed a grand total of 100 acres on Lot 32 Concession 2.⁷ In 1911, the southeast quarter of Lot 32, totaling 50 acres, was acquired by Samuel's daughter, Mary,⁸ who lived on the property with her mother.⁹

¹ *Ontario Land Registry Historical Books*. York Region: Lot 32, Concession 2, Markham Township.

² *The City of Toronto and the home district commercial directory and register, with almanack and calendar for 1837*. Toronto, 1837; *Brown's Toronto city and home district directory: 1846-7*. Toronto: George Brown, 1846.

³ *Ontario Land Registry Historical Books*. York Region: Lot 32, Concession 2, Markham Township.

⁴ *Assessment roll for the township of Markham, 2 concession*. Markham Township, 1863, 1864; *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; *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; *The Union Publishing Co.'s (of Ingersoll) farmers' and business directory for the counties of Ontario, Peel and York*. Ingersoll: Union Publishing Company, 1884, 1887, 1880, 1890, 1892, 1893, 1896.

⁵ *Ontario Land Registry Historical Books*. York Region: Lot 32, Concession 2, Markham Township.

⁶ *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.

⁷ *Census of Canada, 1901*.

⁸ *Ontario Land Registry Historical Books*. York Region: Lot 32, Concession 2, Markham Township.

⁹ *Census of Canada, 1911*.

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In 1913, property ownership was transferred to the Imperial Trust Company, followed by Mary E. Hilts, an extended member of the Horner family, in 1914. In 1921, the property was sold to Elmer and Mildred Horner. Subsequent owners of the subject property include George Forester in 1921, Angus and Margaret Goodwin in 1922, and Isaac Hughes in 1923.¹⁰

Historic sources indicate that Jacob Horner built the subject house sometime in the 1860s. Archival documentation shows the evolution of structures on Jacob's quarter of Lot 32 Concession 2. According to the 1860 Tremaine map, there was no structure present on Jacob Horner's property at this time.¹¹ The 1861 census indicates that there was a one-storey frame structure present on the property the very next year.¹² By 1871, however, there were two dwelling houses listed on Jacob Horner's property, and according to the 1878 Miles & Co Map, there were three (Figure 1).¹³ Having multiple structures on a rural lot was not unheard of in the nineteenth century, and newspaper sources indicate that Jacob Horner's son lived on the subject property with his own family,¹⁴ implying that dwellings were likely divided amongst the families. Later archival documentation only references one structure. According to the 1891 census, Jacob Horner lived in a 1 ½ storey 6-room house, a description matching the subject building.¹⁵

The subject building is the only remaining dwelling house on the southeast corner of Lot 32 Concession 2, and it is not known when the other dwellings were demolished. However, based on architectural features, the subject building is likely the second dwelling house built on the subject property, constructed in the period between the 1861 and 1871 censuses. The subject building is an example of the Gothic Revival style, which gained popularity as a domestic architectural style in rural Ontario in the 1860s, particularly after the mid- and late- 1860s.¹⁶ Based on archival documentation and observation of architectural features, the subject building was built circa the 1860s.

Jacob Horner and the Horner family

The Horner family owned, lived, and farmed on the subject property from 1833 to 1921. The Horner family was a large and prominent family of Pennsylvania German origin in Markham Township. In addition to building the subject house, they also ran a Cider Manufactory on the subject property and were active members of the Brethren in Christ congregation in Markham Township.

Daniel Horner I, who settled in York Country in 1806, was one of many Pennsylvania German immigrants who came to Markham Township in the early nineteenth century.

¹⁰ *Ontario Land Registry Historical Books*. York Region: Lot 32, Concession 2, Markham Township

¹¹ Tremaine, George R. "Tremaine's Map of York County." Canada West, Toronto 1860.

¹² *Census of Canada West*, 1861.

¹³ *Census of Canada*, 1871.

¹⁴ "Small Pox in Markham & Whitchurch." *York Herald*, March 11 1880.

¹⁵ *Census of Canada*, 1891.

¹⁶ Mace, Jessica. "Beautifying the Countryside: Rural and Vernacular Gothic in Late Nineteenth-Century Ontario." *Thematic Dossier* 38, no. 1 (2013).

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There was a large migration of Pennsylvania German settlers around 1796-1812 because of the American Revolutionary War. During this time, York County had only recently been divided into lots and concessions, and land was heavily-treed and not ready for farming. Unlike other early nineteenth century settlers, such as those migrating from England, Pennsylvania German settlers had prior experience with clearing land and setting up agricultural properties, having set up similar settlements in the United States in the eighteenth century. As a result, Pennsylvania German settlers set up a number of early rural communities in Markham Township and were an integral part of the township's first wave of development in the 19th century.

The Horners were a family of the Tunker faith and were members of the first congregation of the Brethren in Christ in Heise Hill (a small settlement of Pennsylvania Germans located just east of the subject property) in 1808.¹⁷ The Horner family is also credited with building the first steam sawmill in Markham Township.¹⁸

The subject property was purchased by Emanuel Horner in 1833. In 1849, the southeast quarter of the lot was acquired by Emanuel's son, Jacob, who lived on the lot from 1849 until his death in 1896. Under Jacob Horner's ownership, the subject property was a lively centre for agricultural and food production. Jacob built two dwelling houses, including the subject building, on the property in the 1860s, whose inhabitants included Jacob Horner and his wife, Esther, their children, their son John's own wife and children, an adopted boy named Clifford, and various labourers.¹⁹

The Horner family ran a farm and a cider manufactory on the subject property, and census records describe the farm's agricultural production over time. According to the 1861 census, 30 acres of the property were under cultivation, 9 under crops, 3 under pasture, 1 under orchards, and the remaining 7 acres were wooded. The 1861 census also shows that the farm produced peas, oats, and spring wheat.²⁰

The 1871 census shows that Jacob's farming operations expanded throughout the 1860s. The Horner family now produced wheat, barley, oats, peas, potatoes, apples, maple sugar, butter, wool, and cloth, and the farm included 2 horses, 3 cows, 1 horned cattle, and 12 swine. Census records also show that the family's cider manufactory was established sometime before 1871. According to the 1871 census, the Horners produced 600 barrels of cider using 6000 bushels of apples in 1870.²¹ The Cider Manufactory operated on the property until at least 1878.²²

Tragedy struck the Horners in 1880 when a wave of smallpox made its way through the family. The illness infected 28 people and killed 4, and newspaper sources show that

¹⁷ "Families of Richmond Hill, E-K." *Richmond Hill Public Library, Mary-Lou Griffin Local History Room*, date unknown.

¹⁸ Reaman, George Elmore. *The Trail of the Black Walnut*. McClelland & Stewart, 1957.

¹⁹ "Small Pox in Markham & Whitchurch." *York Herald*, March 11 1880.

²⁰ *Census of Canada West*, 1861.

²¹ *Census of Canada*, 1871.

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.

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the subject property was the centre of the epidemic.²³ Fatalities included Jacob Horner's wife, Esther, and their son, John.²⁴

Jacob Horner died of heart disease at his home in 1896 at the age of 68 years.²⁵ After his death, the subject property, as well as its farm stock, implements, and furniture, went to auction.²⁶

Today, several sites in Richmond Hill are associated with the Horner family, including the Willow Grove Horner-Elliot House at 40 Frank Endean Road (circa 1840), the Horner Cemetery at 9950 Leslie Street (circa 1825), and the Jacob Horner House at 32 Love Court (previously 9940 Leslie Street, circa 1840).

Architecture

The Horner House, built circa the 1860s, is a representative example of the Gothic Revival Cottage style, also referred to as the Carpenter Gothic style. The Gothic Revival Cottage style is a vernacular architectural style that has its roots in Medieval Europe, which spread to Canada in the mid-nineteenth century, and which gained popularity as a domestic architectural style in rural Ontario in the 1860s. The style was economical and simple, and dwellings normally included simple, symmetrical plans²⁷ with some Gothic elements such as lancet arches, steeply pitched gable roofs, tall massing, and elaborate millwork.²⁸ The Horner House is an example of the Gothic Revival Cottage style because of features including its symmetrical façade, side gable roof with a steep-pitched front gable, and second-floor doorway with a lancet-arched transom.

The Horner House has a T-shaped footprint consisting of a circa 1860s structure and a one-storey shed-roofed rear addition built before 1970.²⁹ The building fronts Leslie Street and is set back from the road. The historic part of the building is a 1 ½ storey frame structure with a board and batten exterior and features a medium-pitched side gable roof with a steep-pitched front gable ("peak"). There is a brick chimney on the

²³ Note that there are some discrepancies in how newspapers describe Jacob Horner's property. While most archival documentation, including land registry records, tax assessments, directories, censuses, and select newspaper sources describe Horner's residence on Lot 32 Concession 2 in Markham Township, some newspaper articles claim Horner lived on Lot 32 Concession 3. This appears to be a misprint, as the overwhelming majority of archival documentation describes Horner's residence on Lot 32 Concession 2.

²⁴ "Small Pox in Markham & Whitchurch." *York Herald*, March 11 1880; "Small pox in Markham." *York Herald*, February 12 1880.

²⁵ *County of York Death Certificates*. 1896. Accessed via Family Search; "Deaths." *The Liberal*, July 16 1896.

²⁶ "Sale register." *The Liberal*, October 1 1896; "Notice to creditors." *The Liberal*, August 13 1896.

²⁷ Mace, Jessica. "Beautifying the Countryside: Rural and Vernacular Gothic in Late Nineteenth-Century Ontario." *Thematic Dossier* 38, no. 1 (2013).

²⁸ "Architectural Style." Ontario Heritage Trust. Accessed June 12, 2024.

<https://www.heritagetrust.on.ca/places-of-worship/places-of-worship-database/architecture/architectural-style>.

²⁹ "York Maps Historical Imagery - 1970." *York Region*, 2024.

south elevation. Archival photographs show that the current board and batten exterior is not original to the building (Figure 2).

The front (east) façade facing Leslie Street has a symmetrical and balanced composition with three bays at grade and one bay at the top storey. At grade, there are two windows flanking a flat-headed doorway. Within the gable peak on the top storey, there is a round-headed door opening with paired lancet-arched transom lights. Each transom contains etched glass. The paneled door is wooden and features a mixture of flat-headed and rounded lights. According to archival photography, there was a balcony accessed by the top storey doorway that was demolished between 1984 and 2008.³⁰

On the east and south elevations, there are flat-headed window openings with vinyl window units. The window units on the front (east) elevation also feature vinyl shutters.

Context

The Horner House at 11644 Leslie Street is located on the west side of Leslie Street, north of 19th Avenue, and within a largely rural landscape on northern Leslie Street. The house is set back from the street and is surrounded by thick vegetation. The rural area along northern Leslie Street north of Nineteenth Avenue developed in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and the rural character of the surrounding context has been retained despite some nearby 20th and 21st century development. The subject property's immediate surrounding context includes large, sparse rural lots with deep setbacks, active farmland, parkland, and forested land. The east side of Leslie Street features the Phyllis Rawlinson Park and sparse 20th and 21st century development. To the north, south, east, and west of the subject property, there are large rural lots. As well, a Rouge River tributary flows through the rear of the property. Immediately west of the subject property is the Acavia Forest, west of which there is a CN rail line and a 21st century subdivision.

Nearby structures that contribute to the 19th and early 20th century rural northern Leslie Street character north of Nineteenth Avenue include the John Nigh House at 1610 Nineteenth Avenue (circa 1860), the Willow Creek House at 1690 Nineteenth Avenue (circa 1910), the Forster Phyllis Rawlinson Log House at 11715 Leslie Street (circa 1830), and the Doner House at 12119 Leslie Street (circa 1855).

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

³⁰ Richmond Hill Local Architectural Advisory Committee (LACAC). "Heritage Building Summary – 11644 Leslie Street." Richmond Hill Public Library, Local History and Genealogy Collection, date unknown; "11644 Leslie Street, Richmond Hill." Google maps. Accessed June 12, 2024.

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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 Horner House at 11644 Leslie Street, built circa the 1860s, has design and physical value as a representative example of the Gothic Revival Cottage style. The Horner House consists of a 1 ½ storey frame structure with a board and batten exterior and a rear addition. Architectural features that contribute to the Gothic Revival Cottage style include the building's 1 ½ storey massing, frame construction, medium-sloped side gable roof with a steep-pitched front gable, the symmetrical three-bay composition of the front façade, and the lancet-arched transoms over the second storey doorway.

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 Horner House at 11644 Leslie Street has historical and associative value for its associations with Jacob Horner and the Horner family. The Horners, who were of Pennsylvania German origin, were early settlers in Markham Township and were active members of their community, joining the first congregation of the Brethren in Christ in 1808. The Horner family were also longtime residents of the subject property – they lived and farmed on the lot from 1833 to 1921, ran a Cider Manufactory, and built the subject building in the 1860s. The Horner family is also associated with the Willow Grove Horner-Elliot House at 40 Frank Endean Road (circa 1840), the Horner Cemetery at 9950 Leslie Street (circa 1825), and the Jacob Horner House at 32 Love Court (previously 9940 Leslie Street, circa 1840).

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.

The Horner House at 11644 Leslie Street has historical and associative value because it yields information that contributes to an understanding of Pennsylvania German settlers in Markham Township, who settled York County following the American

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Revolutionary War and who formed early agricultural communities in the Township. The subject property was the residence and farmland of the Horners, a family of the Brethren in Christ (Tunker) faith who came to Markham Township from Pennsylvania in 1806. The Horners were early settlers in the area who built the subject dwelling circa the 1860s and farmed the subject property from 1833 to 1921.

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 Horner House at 11644 Leslie Street has contextual value as one of a number of 19th and early 20th century farmhouses that help define and maintain the historical agricultural character of northern Leslie Street.

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

The Horner House at 11644 Leslie Street has contextual value for its visual and historic links to the 19th and early 20th century rural landscape on northern Leslie Street north of Nineteenth Avenue. The Horner House was built on the subject property circa the 1860s and has been surrounded by agricultural and forested land since the time of its construction. As such, the subject property retains significant visual and historic link to its surroundings, including the large rural lots with deep setbacks to the north, south, east, and west of the property, and natural features, including the Rouge River tributary and Acavia Forest to the west.

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

N/A

Maps and Photographs

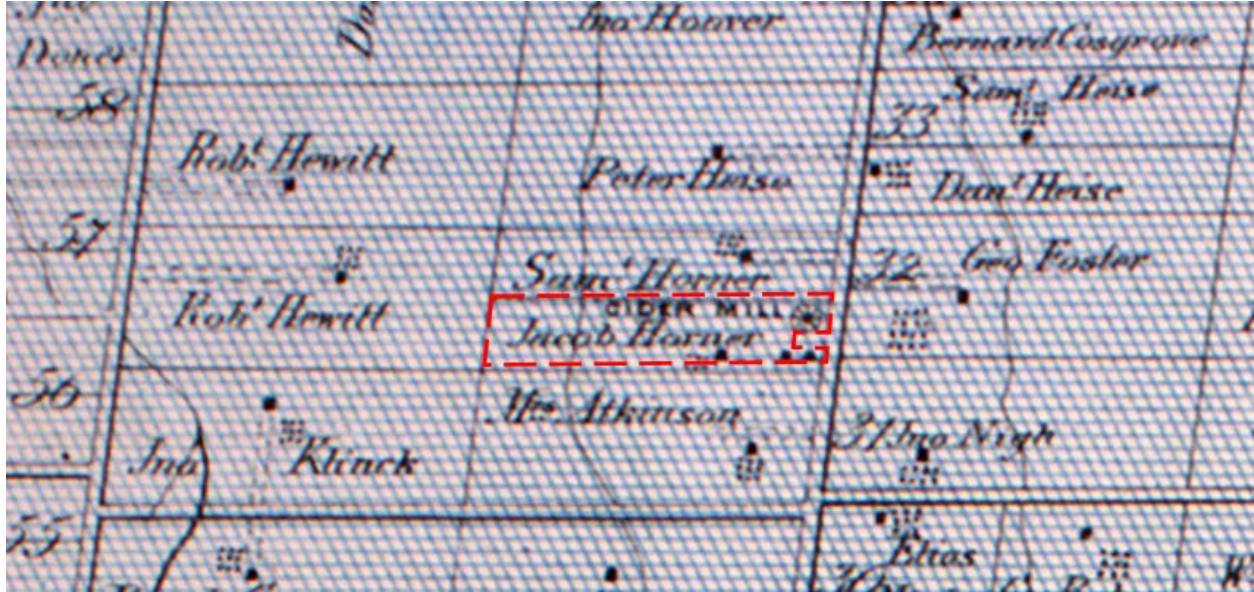


Figure 1 1878 Miles and Co. Map showing the approximate location of the Horner House at 11644 Leslie Street (in red). Note the multiple dwellings and Cider Mill present on the subject property. (Source: Richmond Hill Public Library)

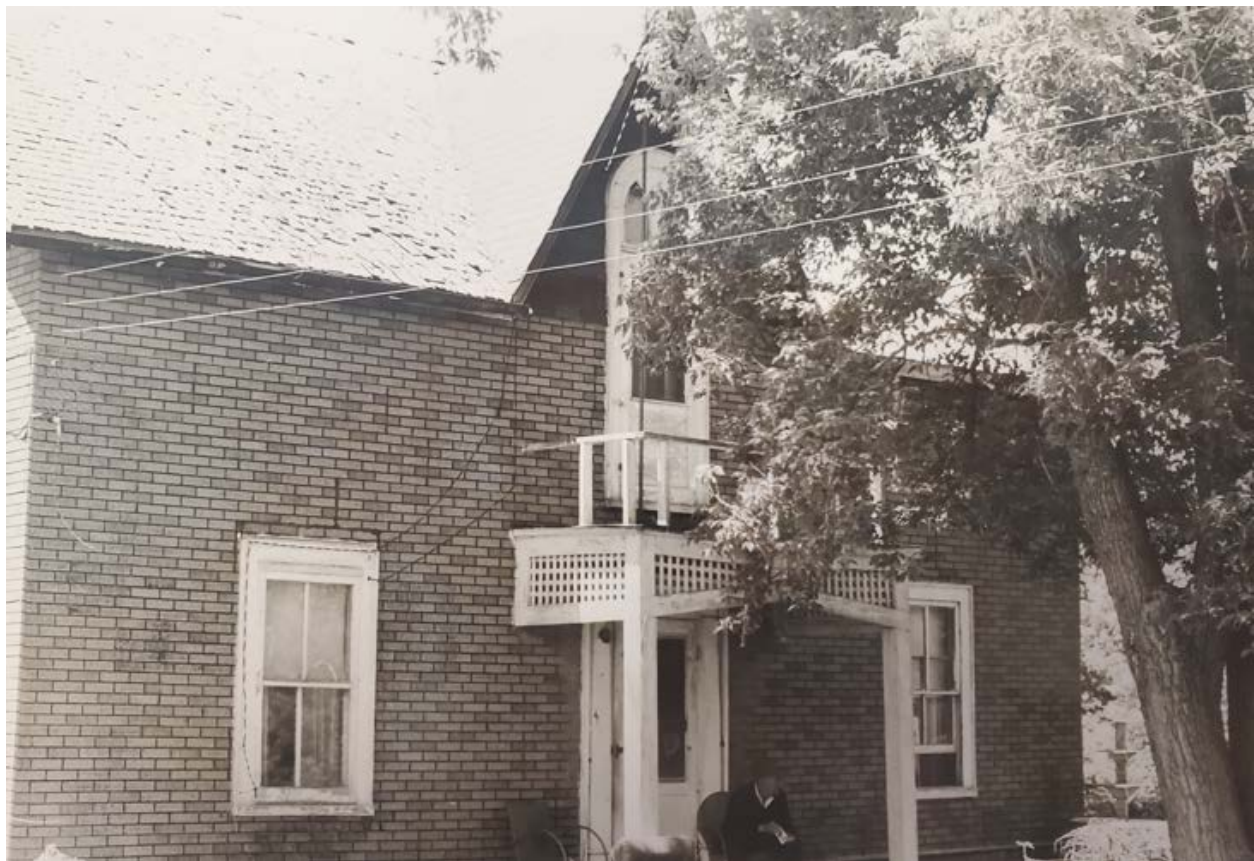


Figure 2 Circa 1970s photograph of the Horner House at 11644 Leslie Street, showing the building's front (east) elevation. Note the building's 1 ½ storey massing, side gable roof with front gable, symmetrical front façade, and top-storey rounded doorway with paired lancet arch transoms. Also note the building's insul-brick exterior and balcony, which have since been removed. (Source: LACAC)



Figure 3 1984 photograph of the Horner House at 11644 Leslie Street, showing the building's front (east) elevation. Note the building's 1 ½ storey massing, side gable roof with front gable, symmetrical front façade, and top-storey rounded doorway with paired lancet arch transoms. Also note the building's balcony and paneled front door with round-arched lites and classical door surround, which have since been removed. (Source: LACAC)



Figure 4 Current photograph of the Horner House at 11644 Leslie Street, showing the building's front (east) elevation. Note the building's 1 ½ storey massing, side gable roof with front gable, symmetrical front façade, and top-storey rounded doorway with paired lancet arch transoms. (Source: HUD 2024)



Figure 5 Current photograph of the Horner House at 11644 Leslie Street facing west. Note the surrounding context, including the sparse development and thick vegetation. (Source: HUD 2024)

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