

Statement of Significance

159 Mill Street – Thomas Smith House

The Thomas Smith House at 159 Mill 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. The subject property has been found to meet Ontario Regulation 9/06 criteria 1, 4, and 8.

Description of Property

The Thomas Smith House at 159 Mill Street is a one-storey residential structure in the Ontario Cottage architectural style with an irregular footprint and hipped roof. The property is located on the north side of Mill Street, west of Yonge Street, and within the historic Richmond Hill village core.

Design and Physical Value

The Thomas Smith House at 159 Mill Street, built circa the 1850s, has physical and design value as a rare surviving example of the Ontario Cottage style in Richmond Hill. The Thomas Smith House consists of a one-storey frame structure and a rear addition. Architectural features that contribute to the Ontario Cottage style include its modest one-storey massing, its low, medium-pitched hipped roof with wide eaves, and its symmetrical three bay front façade with a centered doorway.

Therefore, the subject property meets Ont. Reg. 9/06 Criterion 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.

Historical and Associative Value

The Thomas Smith House at 159 Mill Street has historical and associative value for its association with Thomas Smith, who lived on the property between 1852 and 1867. Smith was an early settler in the Richmond Hill community and contributed to its development by building the subject house in the 1850s. Smith was a sawmiller by trade and was elected Pathmaster in Vaughan township in 1861 and 1863. He also ran a small farm during his tenure at the subject property.

The Thomas Smith House at 159 Mill Street also has historical and associative value for its association with the Keall-Empringham family, who owned, lived at, and ran a farm at the subject property from 1881 to 1912. The Keall-Empringham's longstanding agricultural activity is indicative and representative of nineteenth and early twentieth century life on Mill Street, then located on the outskirts of early Richmond Hill village.

Therefore, the subject property meets Ont. Reg. 9/06 Criterion 4: The property has historical value or associative value because it has direct associations with a theme,

Page 2

event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community.

Contextual Value

The Thomas Smith House at 159 Mill Street has contextual value because it is functionally and historically linked to its surroundings on Mill Street. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, Mill Street was located on the outskirts of Richmond Hill village and featured residential buildings mixed with industrial and agricultural properties. The Thomas Smith House has historic and functional links to Mill Street because of its longtime use as a farm. As well, the house has links to Mill Street's industrial past as the house was built for Thomas Smith, who worked at the nearby sawmill on the Upper East Don River.

Therefore, the subject property meets Ont. Reg. 9/06 Criterion 8: The property has contextual value because it is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings.

Heritage Attributes

Design and Physical Value

The heritage attributes that contribute to the value of the property as a rare surviving representative example of the Ontario Cottage architectural style in Richmond Hill are:

- The scale, form, and massing of the one-storey historical front (south) portion of the building, featuring a rectangular plan;
- The medium-pitched hipped roof with deep eaves;
- The frame construction;
- The appearance of clapboard siding;
- The symmetrical three-bay composition of the main (south) façade; and
- The window and door openings, including:
 - The centered flat-headed doorway with paneled half-sidelights;
 - The flat-headed window openings with wooden surrounds; and
 - The appearance of 12-over-12 hung window units.

Historical and Associative Value

The heritage attributes that contribute to the value of the property for its associations with Thomas Smith are:

- The building's scale, siting, and orientation on the north side of Mill Street; and
- The building's mid-19th century Ontario Cottage architectural style.

Page 3

The heritage attributes that contribute to the value of the property for its associations with the Keall-Empringham family are:

- The building's scale, siting, and orientation on the north side of Mill Street.

Contextual Value

The heritage attributes that contribute to the value of the property for its functional and historic links to Mill Street's nineteenth and early twentieth century agricultural and industrial past are:

- The building's scale, siting, and orientation on the north side of Mill Street; and
- The building's mid-19th century architectural expression and material palette.

Note: the building's rear (north) addition and barn are not considered to possess heritage attributes.