

Statement of Significance

55 Richmond Street – Maple Villa

The Maple Villa at 55 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. The subject property has been found to meet Ontario Regulation 9/06 criteria 1, 4, and 7.

Description of Property

The Maple Villa at 55 Richmond Street is a 1 ½-storey residential structure with a T-shaped footprint and an evolved architectural style that incorporates both Classic Ontario and craftsman elements. The property is located on the north side of Richmond Street, west of Yonge Street, and within the historic Richmond Hill village core.

Design and Physical Value

Maple Villa at 55 Richmond Street, built circa 1837 and renovated circa the 1870s and 1920s, has design and physical value as a rare and unique example of an evolved architectural style that incorporates the Classic Ontario style with later craftsman elements. Maple Villa consists of a 1 ½ storey frame structure with red insulbrick cladding and a rear addition. Architectural features that are representative of the Classic Ontario style include the building's 1 ½ storey massing, frame construction, medium-sloped side gable roof with front gable adorned with pierced vergeboarding and turned spindles, the balanced three-bay composition of the front façade, and the central doorway. Architectural features that are representative of the craftsman style include the building's bay window with three-over-one window units and the porch with front gable roof and square posts.

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

Maple Villa at 55 Richmond Street has historical and associative value for its associations with Benjamin Davidson and the Davidson family, who lived on the property from 1837 to 1882. Davidson, an early settler in Richmond Hill, likely built Maple Villa around 1837 and conducted significant renovations on its exterior in the 1870s. Davidson was an active member of the Richmond Hill community, engaging in its early economic and civic activity. Davidson was a millwright from about 1851-1871, operated a small farm on his Richmond Street property, and was appointed Pathmaster on the township council in 1863 and Overseer of Streets, Sidewalks, and Highways on the Richmond Hill village council in 1873, 1874, and 1875. Davidson was also an active member of the Richmond Hill Temperance Society.

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Maple Villa at 55 Richmond Street also has historical and associative value for its association with George and Elmore Reaman, longtime owners and residents of the property from 1907 to 1926. George Reaman, a farmer from Vaughan township, was an active contributor in the Richmond Hill community since he moved to the village in 1907, participating in the Temperance Society and in the United Church. Reaman also conducted exterior renovations on Maple Villa circa 1920s. Today, Reaman Street in Richmond Hill is named after George Reaman. George's son, Elmore, was a prolific writer whose book, *A History of Vaughan Township*, contributes to the understanding of Vaughan and Richmond Hill history.

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

Contextual Value

Built circa 1837, Maple Villa has contextual value because its scale, form, and Classic Ontario architectural style are important in defining and maintaining the predominantly fine-grained 19th and early 20th century residential character of Richmond Street. The property also contributes to the historic character of Richmond Hill's village core more broadly, which is typified by fine-grained commercial and institutional built form concentrated to Yonge Street, and fine-grained residential built form located on side streets east and west of Yonge Street.

Therefore, the subject property meets Ont. Reg. 9/06 Criterion 7: The property has contextual value because it is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area.

Heritage Attributes

Design and Physical Value

The heritage attributes that contribute to the value of the property as a rare and unique example of an evolved architectural style that incorporates the Classic Ontario style with later craftsman elements are:

- The scale, form, and massing of the 1 ½-storey historical front (south) portion of the building, featuring a rectangular footprint;
- The medium-pitched side gable roof with steeply-pitched front gable featuring wooden pierced vergeboard with turned spindlework;
- The frame construction;
- The asymmetrical, yet balanced composition of the main (south) façade, with three bays at grade and one bay on the second storey;
- The window and door openings, including:
 - The flat-headed windows with stone sills and wood surrounds on the south, east, and west facades;

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- The rectangular shed-roofed bay window with three-over-one window units on the main (south) elevation façade; and
- The principal flat-headed doorway on the main (south) façade.
- The one-storey porch on the main (south) façade, including:
 - The front gable roof;
 - The square posts;
 - The scalloping along the fascia; and
 - The sign inscribed with “Maple Villa”.

Historical and Associative Value

The heritage attributes that contribute to the value of the property for its associations with Benjamin Davidson and the Davidson family are:

- The building’s scale, siting, and orientation on the north side of Richmond Street; and
- The building’s 19th century Classic Ontario architectural elements.

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

- The building’s scale, siting, and orientation on the north side of Richmond Street; and
- The building’s early 20th century craftsman architectural elements.

Contextual Value

The heritage attributes that contribute to the value of the property for defining and maintaining the fine-grained 19th and early-20th century residential streetscape on Richmond Street are:

- The building’s scale, siting, and orientation on the north side of Richmond Street; and
- The building’s late 19th and early 20th century architectural expression and material palette.

Note: the building’s rear (north) addition is not considered to possess heritage attributes.