

Statement of Significance

1591 Elgin Mills Road East – Peter Heise House

The Peter Heise House at 1591 Elgin Mills Road East 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, 5, and 8.

Description of Property

The Peter Heise House is a 1½-storey fieldstone and brick dwelling located east of Leslie Street on the south side of Elgin Mills Road East.

Design and Physical Value

Dating to 1852, the Peter Heise House at 1591 Elgin Mills Road East has physical value as a rare representative example of mid-19th-century German-Georgian stone farmhouse architecture in former Markham Township. There are only three known remaining examples of this architectural expression in Richmond Hill, including the subject dwelling, the Henricks-Brodie House at 9481 Leslie Street (c. 1834), and the John Hilts House at 16 Bawden Drive (c. 1840), all of which were built by Pennsylvania German agricultural settlers in the mid-19th century. Building features representative of this architectural style and type include, but are not limited to: the 1½-storey massing and rectangular footprint of the main wing; the low-pitched side-gabled roof with wide return eaves; the fieldstone construction with buff brick quoining and banding; the asymmetrical four-bay composition of the north and south elevations; flat-headed window openings with stone sills and buff brick quoining and voussoirs; classical doorcases with sidelights and paneled wooden doors on the north and south elevations; the roof-ridge chimney; and the bellcast-roofed verandah on tapered wooden posts on the rear (south) elevation.

The Peter Heise House is also a rare example of a double-fronted residential building typology.

Therefore, the subject property meets O. 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 Peter Heise House at 1591 Elgin Mills Road East has historical and associative value because it yields information that contributes to an understanding of early-19th-century Pennsylvania German settlers in Upper Canada, who immigrated en masse to York County following the American Revolutionary War and who formed early agricultural and religious communities in Markham Township. Pennsylvania German settlers had their own distinct cultural traditions, many of which are reflected in the subject dwelling's location in proximity to surface water and a grove of black walnut trees, and German-Georgian architectural expression.

Page 2

The subject property was the residence and farm of one branch of the Heise family, a family originally of the Brethren in Christ (Tunker) faith who came to Markham Township from Pennsylvania around 1804. John Heise bought the subject property from the Clergy Reserve Board in 1830, and his son Peter built the existing fieldstone dwelling in the German-Georgian style in 1852.

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

Contextual Value

The Peter Heise House at 1591 Elgin Mills Road East has contextual value for being historically linked to its surroundings as part of the 19th-century Heise family farmstead once located on Lot 25, Concession 3 in Markham Township. The existing fieldstone house was intentionally built in this location by the Heise family in 1852 due to the site's proximity to surface water and limestone-rich soils indicated by the presence of black walnut trees. As such, the subject dwelling retains long-standing and significant historical links to its surroundings. For instance, remaining landscape features of the original Heise farm include: the original farm lane running south from Elgin Mills Road East; the Leslie Street Tributary of the Rouge River located immediately east of the house; and the heavily treed valley lands to the east featuring several black walnut trees.

Therefore, the subject property meets O. 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

Heritage attributes contributing to the value of the property as a rare representative example of 19th-century German-Georgian stone farmhouse architecture and a rare example of a double-fronted house are:

- The scale, form and 1 ½-storey massing of the house with a rectangular plan;
- The low-pitched side-gabled roof with wide return eaves, and a plain cornice below the eaves on the north and south elevations;
- The house's fieldstone construction with buff brick detailing including:
 - Large, squared stone cladding on the north and south elevations and variegated stone cladding on the side (east and west) elevations;
 - Buff brick quoining at all four corners of the building and around window and door openings; and

Page 3

- Buff brick recessed sawtooth stringcourses below the eaves on the north and south elevations;
- The asymmetrical four-bay composition of the north and south elevations, with an off-centre doorway flanked by one bay to the east and two bay to the west;
- The flat-headed window openings with stone sills and buff brick quoining and voussoirs;
- The flat-headed classical doorcases on the north and south elevations with sidelights and six-paneled wooden doors, surrounded by buff brick quoining and voussoirs; and
- The bellcast-roofed verandah on tapered octagonal wooden posts on the south elevation.

Historical and Associative Value

Heritage attributes that contribute to the value of the property for yielding information that contributes to an understanding of early-19th-century Pennsylvania German settlers in Markham Township are:

- The house's German-Georgian architectural expression and stone construction, which reflect the cultural traditions of Pennsylvania German settlers; and
- The house's location on the west bank of the Leslie Street Tributary of the Rouge River; and
- The four mature black walnut trees located southeast of the house.

Contextual Value

Heritage attributes contributing to the contextual value of the property for historical links to its surroundings as part of the 19th-century Heise family farmstead are:

- The house's scale, siting and orientation south of Elgin Mills Road East, on the west bank of the Leslie Street Tributary of the Rouge River;
- The house's German-Georgian architectural expression and stone construction;
- The original farm lane running from Elgin Mills Road East to the house; and
- The four mature black walnut trees located southeast of the house.

Note: the early-20th-century front porch on the north elevation and the one-storey frame summer kitchen addition on the south elevation are not considered to possess heritage attributes.