

# Research and Evaluation Report



(HouseSigma 2021)

## **Ligny School House**

7593 5 Side Road, Scotch Block, Town of Halton Hills

August 2024

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## 1.0 Property Description

<b>7593 5 Side Road</b>	
<b>Municipality</b>	Town of Halton Hills
<b>County or Region</b>	Regional Municipality of Halton
<b>Legal Description</b>	PT LT 6, CON 2 ESQ, PART 3, 20R9814; HALTON HILLS/ESQUESING
<b>Construction Date</b>	c.1874
<b>Original Use</b>	Institutional
<b>Current Use</b>	Residential
<b>Architect/Building/Designer</b>	Trustees of S.S. No. 1
<b>Architectural Style</b>	One-room Ontario Rural Schoolhouse
<b>Additions/Alterations</b>	Vinyl siding; Window openings
<b>Heritage Status</b>	Listed on the Town’s Heritage Register
<b>Recorder(s)</b>	Caylee MacPherson with Laura Loney
<b>Report Date</b>	August 2024

## 2.0 Background

This research and evaluation report describes the history, context, and physical characteristics of the property at 7593 5 Side Road in Esquesing Township, Halton Hills, Ontario (Figure 1 and Figure 2). The report includes an evaluation of the property’s cultural heritage value as prescribed by the *Ontario Heritage Act*.



Figure 1: Location Map - 7593 5 Side Road

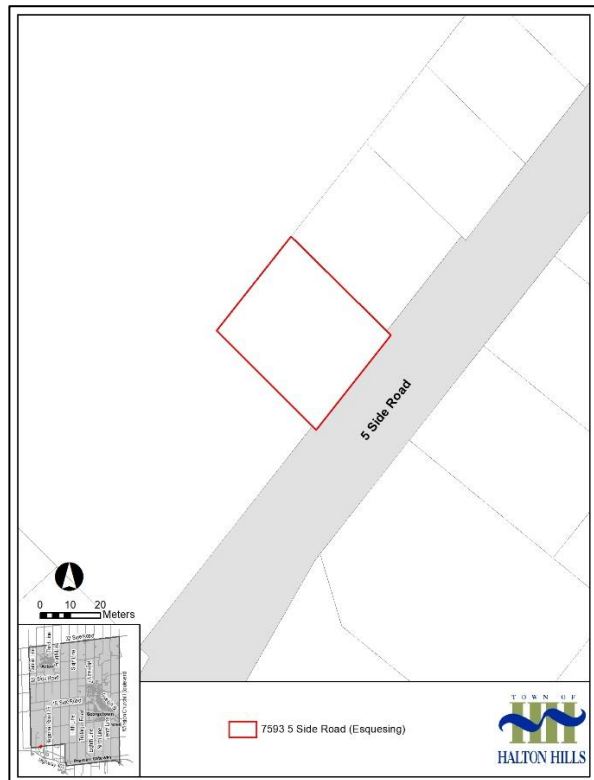


Figure 2: Aerial Photograph - 7593 5 Side Road

## 2.1 Historical Background

### *Indigenous History*

The enduring history of First Nation Peoples in Halton Hills can be traced back through time immemorial before contact with Europeans in the 1600s. Prior to the arrival of European settlers, the Credit River was central to Indigenous ways of life, supporting settlements, fisheries, horticulture, transportation, and trade. Iroquoian-speaking peoples, ancestors of the Wendat, occupied the Credit River Valley for hundreds of years until the mid-1600s, establishing semi-permanent villages. There are numerous archaeological sites in Halton Hills dating from this period, ranging from village sites to burial grounds, which reveal a rich cultural heritage.

The Wendat were displaced by the Haudenosaunee around 1649-50 amid the conflicts that arose between European colonial powers and their First Nation allies. The Mississaugas (part of the Anishinaabe Nation) arrived in southern Ontario in the 1690s, settling in two groups along the north shore of Lake Ontario and Lake Erie. The western group, occupying the area between Toronto and Lake Erie, became known as the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. Until the early 19th century, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation followed a seasonal cycle of movement and resource harvesting along the Credit River (Missinnihe, meaning “trusting creek”), and other rivers. In the winter months, extended family groups hunted in the Halton Hills area, travelling south towards the mouth of the river in the spring for the salmon run. The Mississaugas’ fisheries and traditional economies were diminished because of increased Euro-colonial settlement, leading to a state of impoverishment and dramatic population decline.

In 1818, the British Crown negotiated the purchase of 648,000 acres of land from the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, including present-day Halton Hills, under the Ajetance Treaty (No. 19), named after Chief Ajetance. This left the Mississaugas with three small reserves on the Lake Ontario shoreline. The legitimacy of early land “surrenders” to the Crown is questionable when considering the Mississaugas’ traditional understanding of property ownership. Unlike the British, the Mississaugas understood land in spiritual terms, and did not share the idea that access to land and resources could be given up permanently

In 1986, the Mississaugas initiated a claim against the Government of Canada over the 1805 Toronto Purchase. On June 8, 2010, the parties involved reached a final compensatory agreement. It resulted in a cash payment of \$145 million to the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> This brief overview of Pre-Treaty Indigenous Territory within the land now known as Halton Hills is taken from the Town of Halton Hills’ 2023 *Cultural Heritage Strategy*. This document includes additional recommendations relating to Truth and Reconciliation in Heritage Planning as part of the Town's commitment to advancing Truth and Reconciliation.



### Early European Settlement: 1832 – 1874

In 1832, Robert Turnbull was granted 100 acres in Lot 6, Concession 2. The property was then sold to Alexander Duff in 1834 and was eventually willed to Thomas Duff in 1859. Shortly thereafter, the property was purchased by Thomas Aitken in 1863. By 1870, Thomas Chisholm oversaw ownership of the property. With the demand for a new location for the Ligny Schoolhouse, Thomas Chisholm sold 50 acres to the Trustees of S.S. No. 1 Log for £65 in 1874.



Figure 3: Subject property identified on the 1822 Patent Plan

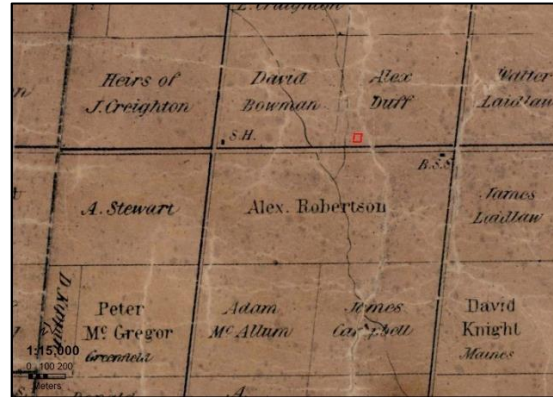


Figure 4: Subject property identified on Tremaine's 1858 Map of the County of Halton, Canada West

### Trustees of S.S. No. 1 School

S.S. No. 1 Ligny School ("Ligny School") was located on several different properties prior to being located on 5 Side Road. Initially, Ligny School was located on Alex Robertson's farm on Lot 5, Concession 2, in 1820, and was constructed using logs and mud. In the early years of Ligny School, *Halton's Scotch Block* recounts that pupils often had to watch for black bears while travelling to school.

In 1840, the school moved to a frame schoolhouse along First Line as enrollment gradually increased and funding became available with United Canada's *Common School Act* in 1841, which permitted the allocation of £50,000 annually to local elementary schools in Upper and Lower Canada, based on enrollment rates.



Figure 5: Subject property identified on the 1877 Esquesing Township Map



Figure 6: Ligny School and students, c.1879 (*Halton's Scotch Block*)

In 1874, Esquesing Township loaned the Ligny Trustees \$711 and the Ligny School was relocated to its present location on Campbellville Road, where it was re-shingled, re-papered, re-framed, and repainted.

The name “Ligny” was chosen by one of the first schoolteachers, Robert Little (1835-1885), and refers to the Battle of Ligny. This naming was in line with other former local schools, such as “Quatre Bras” and “Waterloo”, which were also named after infamous European Battles. It is unknown why Robert Little referenced this battle, but many suspect it to be hinted towards a history lesson.

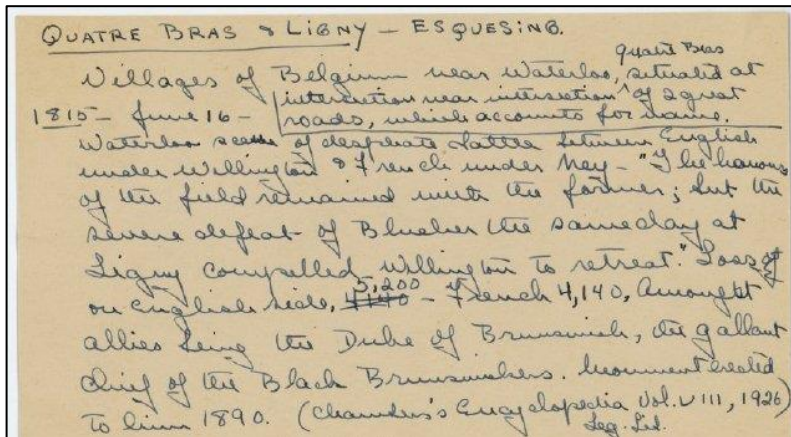


Figure 7: Handwritten notes on Quatre Bras and Ligny school districts in Esquesing, referencing the military history associated with each name, c. 1926 (Oakville Historical Society; 1979.13.3E)

The new schoolhouse was likely re-constructed due to the introduction of the *Ontario School Act* (1871) (the “Act”). Introduced in 1871, the Act was championed by Egerton Ryerson, who strongly believed in the idea of having schools supported by taxes, and having schools become more accessible to children.

This legislation abolished the former fees for public schools and made attendance compulsory for children ages 7 to 12. Children within this age range had to attend school for a minimum of four months annually. In addition to these changes, each county was assigned a superintendent to oversee the school systems, each school became fully public, and a structured curriculum was introduced.



Figure 8: Ligny School group, c. 1890 (Milton Historical Society 4792)



Figure 9: Pupils gathered at Ligny School, c. 1895 (Halton's Scotch Block)



With the changes made by the *Ontario School Act* (1871), there was a need to construct new one- and two-room schoolhouses to accommodate the growing student populations. Many counties took advantage of these government grants to build and operate new schools. In Halton, five new schools were constructed in Esquesing, School Sections 2, 6, and 11, during 1873.



Figure 10: Ligny School class photograph, c. 1908 (Milton Historical Society 1299)

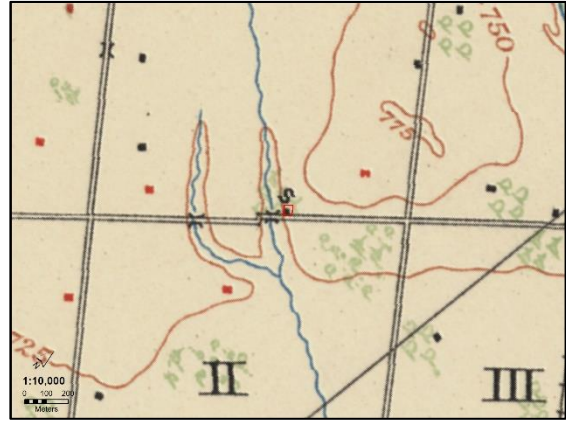


Figure 11: Subject property identified on the 1909 National Topographic Survey

Ligny School was a one-room schoolhouse and was also known as a “Common School”. Typically, Common Schools accommodated students aged 6 to 17, and often had a single teacher who worked concurrently with students of different education levels.



Figure 12: Subject property identified on the 1918 National Topographic Survey



Figure 13: Ligny School class photograph, c. 1920 (Milton Historical Society 1300)

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Ligny School experienced many changes, including the introduction of a water well in the early 1900s, and the construction of an iron fence in 1918. The curriculum also saw changes, with the commencement of piano lessons in 1919. By 1935, the Scotch Block Women’s Institute oversaw all music lessons for students. By the end of 1938, the Trustees approved the installation of electric lighting in the school.

In 1934, a reunion was held welcoming more than 500 former alumni, along with former teachers and residents of the section. The reunion consisted of activities, story telling and sharing, as well as speeches from the Chairman.



Figure 14: Former students and teachers gathered at the Ligny School reunion in August 1934 (Halton's Scotch Block)

During the 1940s, there were frequent discussions on building consolidated schools, which were intended to host students from multiple schoolhouses. With the “baby boom” population following WWII, many schoolhouses began to experience overcrowding.

The dramatic increase in the school-aged population led to increased investment into public education, which included constructing larger consolidated schools, and hiring more teachers. Additionally, since many families began to move into cities, and buses and personal vehicles were gaining popularity, many students no longer walked to the local schools in their districts.



Figure 15: Article covering the Ligny School Reunion (*Canadian Champion*, p. 2, August 30, 1934)



Figure 16: Subject property identified on the 1938 National Topographic Map





Figure 17: Ligny School class photo, c. 1938 (Milton Historical Society 6801)



Figure 18: Subject property identified on the 1942 National Topographic Map



Figure 19: Ligny School, c. 1944 (EHS11515)



Figure 20: Subject property identified on 1954 aerial photography

In 1962, all township schools were joined with the Esquesing Area Board, resulting in the closure of Ligny School, along with Quatre Bras, Hornby and Pinegrove. To accommodate students from each school section, pupils were transferred to the newly constructed Pineview School in 1963. The Halton Board of Education took responsibility for all county schools in 1969.



Figure 21: Last class of Ligny School, c. 1963 (Halton's Scotch Block)



Figure 22: Construction of Pineview School, c. 1963 (EHS06426)

Many notable alumni have attended and worked at Ligny School, going on to work in law, medicine, and politics, including Dr. William Scott (1826-1900) (physician), William Laidlaw (b. 1834) (lawyer), Duncan McGibbon (1841-1920) (judge), Dr. David Robertson (1841-1912) (physician and politician), Dr. Alexander Robertson (1848-1918) (physician), and George Elliot (1902-1965) (politician).

Ligny also saw many teachers over the years, however, the most notable one is likely Robert Little. After immigrating to Canada from England in 1852, Robert created a reputation as a successful teacher, teaching at Waterloo, Quatre Bras, and Ligny Schools, eventually becoming the Principal of Acton Public School in 1863. Shortly after, Robert became the Inspector of Public Schools for the County in 1871.

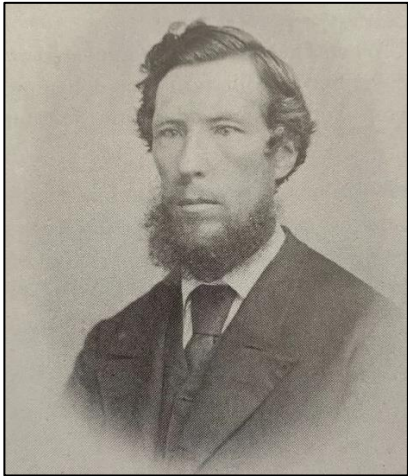


Figure 23: Photograph of Robert Little, date unknown (Halton's Scotch Block)



Figure 24: Photograph of Dr. David Robertson, c. 1870s (Milton Area Biographies, Vol. 1)

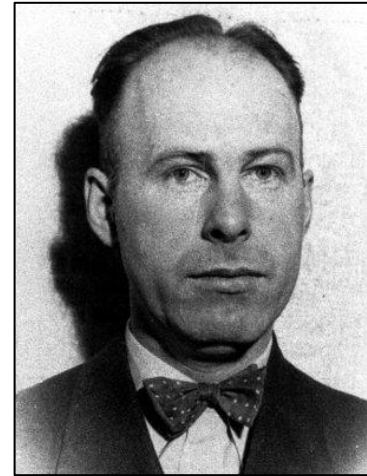


Figure 25: Photograph of George Elliot, c. 1940 (Milton Historical Society 5948)

### *Scotch Block Women's Institute*

Following the closure of Ligny School, the property was auctioned off and purchased by the Scotch Block Women's Institute in 1963 for \$3,000 and renamed "Ligny Hall". The hall was retrofitted with a kitchen and included banquet tables and chairs to host community events.

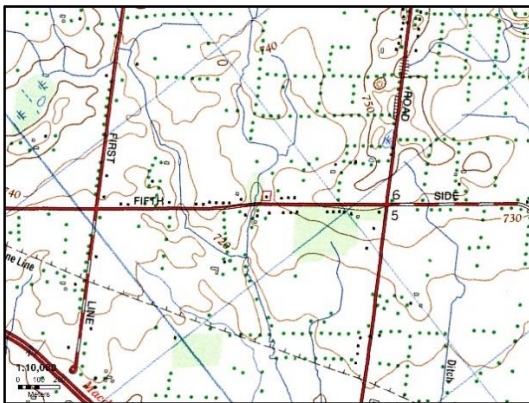


Figure 26: Subject property identified on the 1974 National Topographic Survey



Figure 27: Scotch Block Women's Institute, c. 1986 (EHS18302)



Due to maintenance fees, and declining membership, the Women's Institute sold the property to Margaret Elizabeth and Anna May Poloni in 1989 for \$179,000.

*1990s to Present*

After the Poloni family purchased the extant building, it was converted into a private residence. In 1994, the property was purchased by Beverly and Philip Milne. Within the same year, the property was purchased by Robert James Lamb.



Figure 28: Former Ligny School House, c. 1995 (EHS12526)

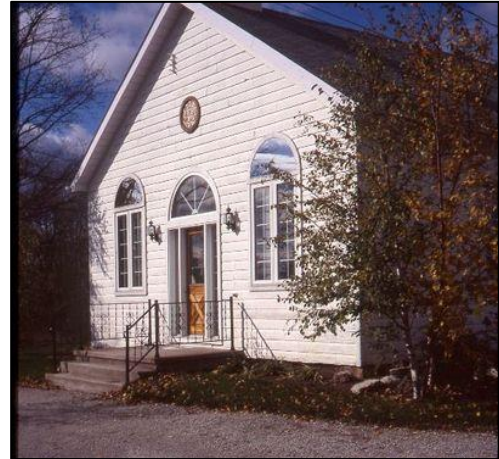


Figure 29: Former Ligny School House, c. 1995 (EHS18649)

Several years later, Thomas Bjelic and Andrea Fleming purchased the property in 1998, and resided on 5 Side Road until 2021, when the property was sold to its present owners.



Figure 30: Subject property identified on 2007 aerial photography



Figure 31: Subject property identified on 2023 aerial photography

## 2.2 Property & Architectural Description

The subject property is a square-shaped parcel located along the northwest side of 5 Side Road in the community of Scotch Block within the Town of Halton Hills. The property features an existing one-and-a-half storey frame dwelling with vinyl red siding, a gable roof, belfry, as well as an addition and accessory structure along the rear (northwest) elevation. The property can be accessed by vehicle via an asphalt driveway fronting 5 Side Road.



Figure 32: Front (southeast) elevation of the subject dwelling (HouseSigma 2021)



Figure 33: Front (southeast) elevation of the subject dwelling (HouseSigma 2021)

The front elevation features a symmetrical façade with two flatheaded window openings with vinyl window shutters on either side of the central entrance. The doorway features a semi-circular opening flanked by sidelights and a transom.



Figure 34: Looking southwest towards the subject property along 5 Side Road (Town of Halton Hills 2024)



Figure 35: Looking southwest towards the subject property along 5 Side Road (Google Streetview 2022)





Figure 36: View of the subject property facing northeast towards 5 Side Road (Town of Halton Hills 2024)

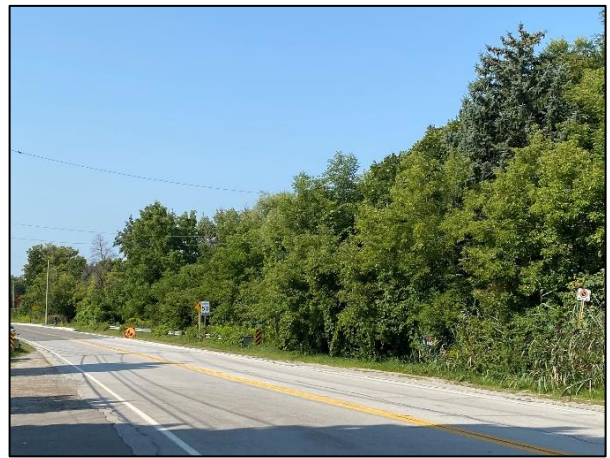


Figure 37: View of the subject property facing southwest towards 5 Side Road (Town of Halton Hills 2024)

Along the second storey is a gable roof, with wooden shingles and a wooden date sign directly beneath the gable peak, which reads: “Ligny S.S. No.1 1874”. Directly above the roofline is a belfry, with a bell remaining.



Figure 38: Side (northeast) elevation of the subject dwelling (HouseSigma 2021)



Figure 39: Side (southeast) elevation of the subject dwelling (HouseSigma 2021)

On the side (northeast) elevation are three flatheaded window openings. Adjacent to this elevation is a contemporary detached one-storey accessory structure. On the other side (southwest) elevation are three flatheaded window openings, along with a semi-circular window opening. Additionally, the side (southwest) elevation features an entrance to a storm cellar.





Figure 40: Partial side (northeast) elevation of the subject dwelling (Town of Halton Hills 2024)



Figure 41: Accessory structure adjacent to subject dwelling (Town of Halton Hills 2024)

Towards the rear elevation is a contemporary one-storey addition with a flat-headed entryway containing a sliding door, flanked by two floor-to-ceiling windows, and transoms. Along the side (northeast) elevation of the addition is a flatheaded entryway. Above the addition roof peak is a stone chimney.



Figure 42: Partial rear (northwest) elevation of the subject dwelling (HouseSigma 2021)



Figure 43: Rear elevation of the subject dwelling (HouseSigma 2021)



### 2.3 Architectural Style & Comparative Analysis

The existing building at 7593 5 Side Road is a representative early example of a late 19<sup>th</sup> century rural Ontario schoolhouse. In 1857, the Department of Public Instruction for Upper Canada published "*The School House; Its Architecture, External and Internal Arrangements*", which provided architectural plans for grammar, intermediate, and primary schools, along with recommendations for school site layouts and construction methods. Similarly, in 1866, the *Canadian Farmer* published an article, "*Cheap Country School Houses*", providing architectural floorplans and construction methods for rural schoolhouses.

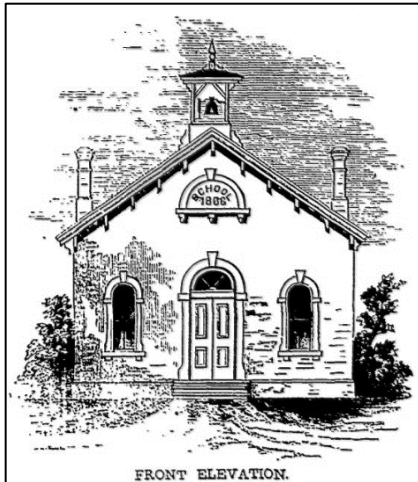


Figure 44: Prospective one-room schoolhouse design (*The Canada Farmer*, Vol. 3, no. 12, p.189)

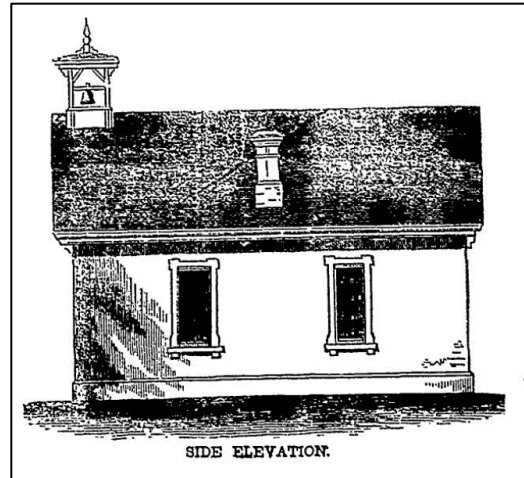


Figure 45: Prospective one-room schoolhouse design (*The Canada Farmer*, Vol. 3, no. 12, p.189)

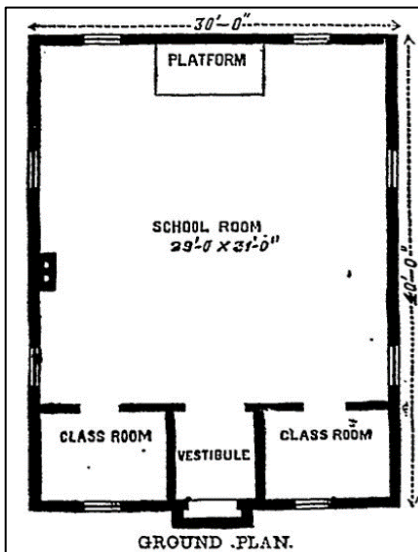


Figure 46: Prospective one-room schoolhouse floorplan (*The Canada Farmer*, Vol. 3, no. 12, p.189)



Figure 47: Prospective one-room schoolhouse design (*The School House, Its Architecture, External and Internal Arrangements*, p. 44)

Each rural schoolhouse design featured a gable roof, semi-circular window openings, a central semi-circular door opening with transom, date stone, as well as a belfry and bell directly above the gable peak. Materials recommended included brick, frame, and stone. The one-room schoolhouse was designed for sixty-four pupils and was intended to accommodate a small rural village or hamlet.

One-room schoolhouses were first made of logs, but gradually transitioned to materials such as brick, frame and occasionally stone. These schoolhouses were built as needed as the number of students increased in each school district. Typically, the interior consisted of an open room with all desks facing a platform and blackboard, with book closets on either side of the teacher's desk. To provide warmth, a stove was often placed inside, either located at the front or middle of the room.

Based on Shannon Kyles of *Architecture Ontario*, buildings constructed in this architectural style feature elements such as, but not limited to:

- One-and-a-half storey massing featuring brick, stone, or frame construction;
- One-room floorplan layout;
- Gable roof with a belfry and bell;
- Central entrance with a transom, along with a vestibule;
- Two windows along the front elevations, with multiple windows along the side elevations; and,
- Date stone indicating the date of construction.

Features extant within the existing building include the frame construction, gable roof with a belfry and bell, central entrance with two windows along the front elevation, multiple windows along the side elevations, and a date sign indicating the date of construction.



Figure 48: Former Hornby School along Steeles Avenue (Google Streetview, 2021)



Figure 49: Former Pinegrove School located along Fifth Line (Google Streetview, 2022)

Similar examples of the one-room schoolhouse exist in the Region of Halton, including the former Hornby School in Halton Hills (Figure 49) and Pinegrove School in Milton (Figure 50). Both Hornby and Pinegrove Schools were closed concurrently with Ligny School in 1962, following the opening of Pineview School. Hornby School features a symmetrical dichromatic brick façade with two window openings, one-and-a-half storey massing, a gable roof, date stone, and a central entrance. Pinegrove School consists of

a more vernacular one-room schoolhouse design, with one-and-a-half storey massing, stone construction, two window openings with radiating voussoirs, a central entrance, a gable roof, date stone, along with a belfry and bell.

In comparison to both Hornby and Pinegrove School, Ligny School is a rare example of a frame construction one-room schoolhouse in the community and is the only remaining example in the Town of Halton Hills.

While the window and door openings have been modified, the exterior colour has changed, and a rear addition has been incorporated, the existing building remains a representative example of a one-room schoolhouse.

### 3.0 Description of Heritage Attributes and Evaluation Checklist

The following evaluation checklist applies to Ontario Regulation 9/06 made under the *Ontario Heritage Act*: Criteria for Determining Cultural Heritage Value or Interest. The criteria are prescribed for municipal designation of Heritage Properties under Part IV, Section 29 of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. The evaluation tables utilize an 'X' to signify applicable criteria and 'N/A' to signify criteria that are not applicable for this property.

<b>Design or Physical Value</b>	
Is rare, unique, representative, or early example of a style, type, expression, material, or construction method	<b>X</b>
Displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit	<b>N/A</b>
Demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement	<b>N/A</b>

The property at 7593 5 Side Road has physical and design value as a representative and rare example of an Ontario rural one-room schoolhouse in the community of Scotch Block within the Town of Halton Hills. The one-and-a-half storey schoolhouse is the oldest and only frame schoolhouse in Halton Hills and features a gable roof with a belfry and bell, central entrance with two windows along the front elevation, multiple windows along the side elevations, and a date sign indicating the date of construction (c. 1874). The design features influence from *The School House; Its Architecture, External and Internal Arrangements* and the *Canadian Farmer*, which published architectural plans and construction methods for grammar, intermediate, and primary schools in Canada.

While the window and door openings have been modified, and a rear addition was incorporated, the building maintains the form, massing, and layout of a one-room schoolhouse.

<b>Historical or Associative Value</b>	
Has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization, or institution that is significant to a community	<b>X</b>
Yields, or has potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture	<b>X</b>
Demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer, or theorist who is significant to a community	<b>N/A</b>

The property at 7593 5 Side Road has historical and associative value due to its associations with the early educational system in the community of Scotch Block, the growth of the student population

resulting from the *Ontario School Act*, and the rural development of the surrounding area. The property also yields information regarding the early settler growth of Scotch Block and provides more information regarding the early development of the educational system in Ontario.

<b>Contextual Value</b>	
Is important in defining, maintaining, or supporting the character of an area	<b>X</b>
Is physically, functionally, visually, or historically linked to its surroundings	<b>X</b>
Is a landmark	<b>N/A</b>

The property at 7593 5 Side Road has contextual value as it is important in defining, maintaining, and supporting the rural character of the area along 5 Side Road. The former Ligny Schoolhouse is physically, visually, and historically linked to its surroundings as an early schoolhouse that serviced the local school section. Due to the vegetation along the front (southeast) elevation, the schoolhouse remains slightly visible to the public right of way. Thus, the property has not been identified as a landmark.

#### **4.0 Summary**

Following research and evaluation according to Ontario Regulation 9/06, it has been determined that the property at 7593 5 Side Road has physical and design, historical and associative, and contextual value and therefore meets Ontario Regulation 9/06 criteria for determining cultural heritage value or interest.

The heritage attributes of the property at 7593 5 Side Road are identified as follows:

- The setback, location, and orientation of the schoolhouse along 5 Side Road in the Township of Esquesing within the Town of Halton Hills;
- The scale, form, and massing of one-and-a-half storey frame schoolhouse with gable roof;
- On the front (south) elevation:
  - o Date sign located directly beneath the gable peak, inscribed with “Ligny S.S. No.1 1874”;
  - o Central entryway flanked by transoms;
  - o Two window openings; and,
- On the side elevations:
  - o Evenly spaced window openings along each side elevation, modified from segmentally arched openings to flatheaded openings.

The rear elevation, rear addition, accessory structure, and interiors were not investigated as part of this report.



## 5.0 Sources

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