

Research and Evaluation Report



(Town of Halton Hills 2024)

Stewart's Castle

10295 10 Side Road, Scotch Block, Town of Halton Hills

October 2024

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1.0 Property Description

10295 10 Side Road, Scotch Block	
Municipality	Town of Halton Hills
County or Region	Regional Municipality of Halton
Legal Description	PT LT 11, CON 5 ESQ, AS IN 248579; HALTON HILLS/ESQUESING
Construction Date	c.1856
Original Use	Residential
Current Use	Residential
Architect/Building/Designer	James Stewart
Architectural Style	Georgian
Additions/Alterations	Late 19th-century addition to rear
Heritage Status	Listed on the Town’s Heritage Register
Recorder(s)	Austin Foster; Laura Loney
Report Date	October 2024

2.0 Background

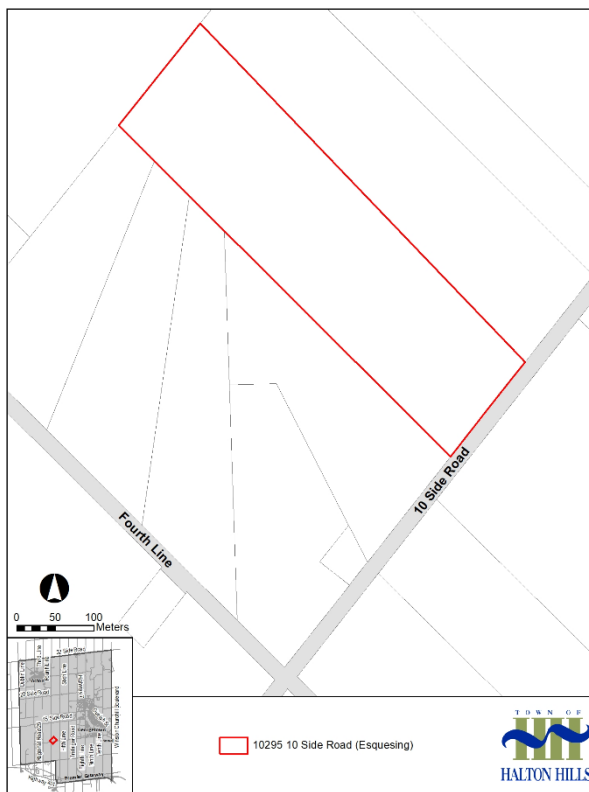


Figure 1: Subject Property identified on Location Map



Figure 2: Subject Property identified in Aerial Photograph

This research and evaluation report describes the history, context, and physical characteristics of the property at 10295 10 Side Road in Scotch Block, 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*.

2.1 Historical Background

Indigenous History Background

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 poverty 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.¹

¹ 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.

gardens. The total value of his farm was \$18,000, with \$400 in farm implements and machinery and \$925 in livestock.

James Stewart died on April 19, 1865. According to his will, the western half of Lot 11, Concession 5, was bequeathed to his daughters, Mary Stewart and Janet McKechnie. His widow, Janet, was allotted \$30 per year from land revenue, along with one cow, two sheep, the carriage and cutter, and a horse and harness. The brick house and orchard were left to Mary Stewart, on the condition that Janet would be allowed to live there for the remainder of her life, and that the land would be rented out to farmers until Mary married, at which point her husband would take over farming. The first tenant farmer was Adam Sproat in 1866. Additionally, twelve acres east of the brick house were reserved for Janet and her future husband to build a home, although this was never realized.

Widow Janet Stewart attempted to claim the eastern half of Lot 11, Concession 5; however, 50 acres of this portion were designated in James Stewart's will for his daughter Margaret (1834-1918), from his first marriage to Elizabeth. Margaret had married the farmer James Henderson Laidlaw (1831-1864) in 1859. The remaining 50 acres of the eastern half were to be sold by the will's executors to settle James' remaining debts.

Robert Stewart (1828-1918), James and Elizabeth's son, along with Janet Stewart, James' widow, contested the will, each making claims to more land than they had been allotted. In the winter of 1867, they sued the executors and trustees of James Stewart's will, with Robert alleging that the instructions within the will were obtained through "fraudulent misrepresentation and collusion."

The lawsuit resulted in a decree in Chancery in September 1868, which affirmed the distribution of ownership rights to the heirs and assigns as stipulated in James Stewart's will. The executors were named trustees of the eastern half of the property, which was transferred to Margaret Laidlaw and later sold to James Leslie in October of that year. A similar decree was issued for the western half of the property, with Mary Stewart and Janet McKechnie inheriting it in 1868. They retained ownership until 1896, with Mary Stewart listed as the owner in the 1877 *Illustrated Atlas of the County of Halton*. While Janet McKechnie retained co-ownership of the property, she relocated to her husband James McKechnie's (1849-1881) family farm at Lot 10, Concession 5 after their marriage around 1868.

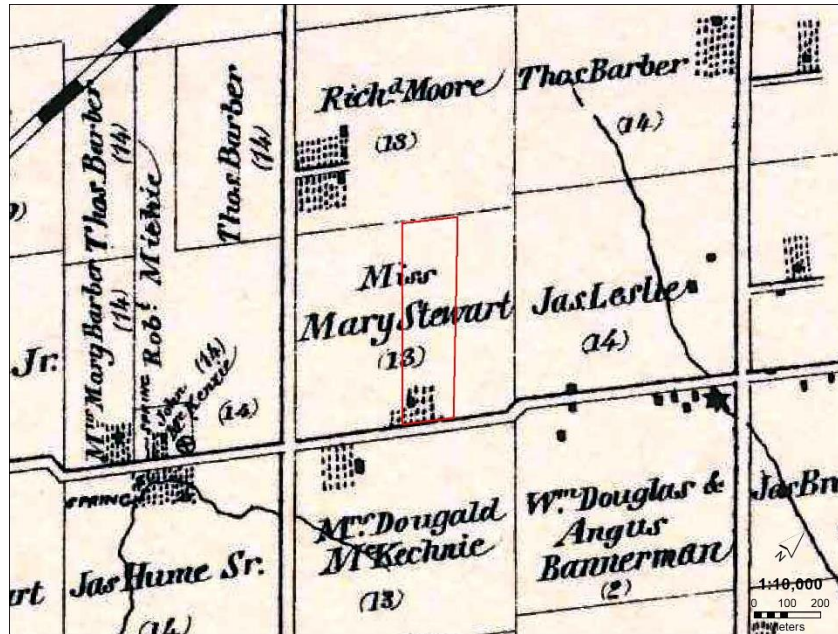


Figure 5: Mary Stewart identified as the owner of the subject property on the 1877 Halton County Atlas

Mary Stewart married farmer William Luxton Snow (1848-1891) in 1880. According to the 1881 census, Mary and William resided on the property with Janet Stewart, Mary's mother. In 1883, Mary and William had their first and only daughter, Mary Ellen Snow (1883-1903), who died of tuberculosis at the age of 20. Janet Stewart died in 1890, and William Snow died shortly thereafter at the age of 42 in 1891. The subsequent 1891 census records Mary as the head of the household, a widowed farmer, living with her seven-year-old daughter.

The Huffman Family

In 1896, the property was transferred from Mary Snow and Janet McKechnie to John Robert Huffman (1859-1923), a Dutch Presbyterian farmer who owned the property until 1907. According to the 1901 census, John lived on the property with his twin brother Gideon Wesley Huffman (1859-1935) and sister Isabel "Isley" Huffman (1874-1900), and Gideon's wife and children. John never married and continued to live and work on the subject property after selling it to his brother in 1907. In October 1923, John Robert Huffman was crushed beneath one of his brother's horses, suffering severe injuries to his head and ribs. He was found by his nephew, Gordon Huffman, and immediately taken to Guelph General Hospital where he died of a cerebral hemorrhage. His death was reported in the *Acton Free Press* on November 1, 1923.

Farmer Gideon Wesley Huffman purchased the subject property from his brother in 1907 and maintained ownership until his death in 1935. Gideon was an active member of the Boston Presbyterian Church and a prominent Liberal. He lived on the property with his wife, Annie McDonald (1872-1947), and their five children: Hazel (1898-1923), Donald (1899-1925), Pearl (1901-1979), Edith (1904-1988), and Allan (1905-1982). The 1931 census describes the house on the subject property as a twelve-room brick home valued at \$2000.

Gideon Huffman's death was announced in both the *Acton Free Press* on January 31, 1935, and the *Georgetown Herald* on January 30, 1935. Ownership of the subject property subsequently transferred to his wife, Annie McDonald Huffman, who owned it until 1951. Pearl Huffman then inherited the property and owned it until 1954 when she sold it to Daniel McCallum.

The subject property was described in 1951 as "The West Half of Lot Number Eleven in the Fifth Concession of the Township of Esquesing, the County of Halton, containing one hundred acres. The soil is a deep sandy clay loam. On the premises, there is said to be erected a two-storey solid brick house with 12 rooms, a frame barn 40x60, a frame horse stable on a stone foundation 30x64, a cow shed 24x60, a stone pig pen, and a frame driving shed" (*Georgetown Herald*, October 24, 1951, p. 9).

Tony Seynuck and Anthony Gas and Oil Exploration Company

In 1954, Tony Seynuck (1892-1967) purchased the subject property from McCallum with the intention of surveying gas and oil reserves. Originally from Ukraine, Seynuck immigrated to Canada from Romania in 1913 and had settled in Acton by 1919. He married Mary Woziak (1894-1973) in 1922 and opened a restaurant and ice cream store on Mill Street in Acton which he operated until 1928. Seynuck ventured into oil and gas exploration in 1930, forming the Suburban Gas and Oil Company. By 1940, he rebranded his enterprise to the Seynuck Valley Oil Company. Seynuck ran these companies from his Acton home at 151 Mill Street East.

In 1952 Seynuck discovered a significant natural gas deposit near Speyside, prompting him to acquire more property in the area for further exploration. In July of 1954, Seynuck found natural gas near Crewson's Corners, and in October, even more gas was discovered six miles south of Acton, near Speyside. Oil was later found in the same area. Residents gathered at both sites at night to watch the blue flame from the gas wells. Seynuck transported the equipment from McDonald's farm, located east of Highway 25 near Speyside, to Crewson's Corners and spent \$12,000 drilling at the site northwest of Acton. This find occurred at a depth of 2,100 feet, and Seynuck speculated that there was enough gas to "supply all of Ontario." In February of 1955, the third well in the Speyside area yielded 100,000 cubic feet. These discoveries led Seynuck to rebrand his company as Anthony Gas and Oil Explorations Limited in 1955. With this rebranding, he registered the company as a public entity, attracting local investors. The subject property was registered to Anthony Gas in 1955 and drilled for natural gas extraction for the rest of the decade.

Seynuck's company successfully extracted and sold gas throughout Southern Ontario throughout the 1950s and 1960s. However, his unexpected death in 1967 led to the company's liquidation and in August 1967, the property was sold to H. Morgan Self. In May 1968, Self auctioned off the farm equipment and much of the furniture and hardware from the Stewart House. He divided the property and subsequently sold the 25 acres that included the Stewart House, to the Howitt family in that same year.



Figure 6: Inauguration of natural gas in Georgetown (1956) (EHS p382f)

The Howitt Family

Richard "Dick" Howitt was a prominent local lawyer and politician. He graduated from the University of Western Ontario with a degree in History and English in the mid-1950s before attending law school at Osgoode Hall in Toronto. After being called to the bar in 1964, he pursued further legal studies in England. Returning to Canada, he worked for a Toronto law firm until 1973 when he established his own practice in Georgetown. Howitt specialized in real estate, corporate, and estate law, including wills and powers of attorney.

In addition to his legal career, Howitt was deeply involved in local politics and community service. Elected as a Councilor of Esquesing in 1970, he was appointed to the county planning board in 1971 and served as a regional councilor in 1975. In 1977, Howitt was appointed Queen's Counsel, a prestigious recognition of his contributions to the legal profession. He was also elected chairman of the Halton Hills Library Board in 1978 and served as an Public School Board trustee in 1982. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Howitt was active with the Halton Conservation Authority, and the Halton Regional Board of Education, where he was elected as a trustee in 1985. Dick Howitt and Carol Howitt owned the property from 1968 until 1998, when they sold it to their daughter.



Figure 7: Richard "Dick" Howitt, c. 1970. (MHS 4534)



Figure 8: Richard "Dick" Howitt, c. 1985. (MHS 2779)



Figure 9: The subject property at 10295 10 Side Road c.1990s (EHS 18311).



Figure 10: The subject property at 10295 10 Side Road c.1990s (EHS 18312).

2.2 Property & Architectural Description

The subject property is located at 10295 10 Side Road in the Town of Halton Hills. It is situated on a rectangular 24-acre lot that extends northwest from 10 Side Road, running parallel to Fourth Line. The property features a two-storey Georgian farmhouse and a barn, both set within an agricultural landscape. Access to the dwelling is provided by an unpaved driveway from 10 Side Road. The legal description of the property is PT LT 11, CON 5 ESQ, AS IN 248579; HALTON HILLS/ESQUESING.



Figure 11: Aerial Photograph of 10295 10 Side Road (Town of Halton Hills, 2024)

The extant building on the subject property is a two-storey Georgian residence constructed on a rectangular plan using local, hand-pressed red-brick laid in a Flemish bond pattern. The front (southeast) elevation exhibits typical characteristics of Georgian and Georgian Revival architecture, featuring a highly symmetrical design with graduated fenestration and a hipped roof. The front elevation is divided into five symmetrical bays. Red-brick chimneys are located at either end of the building, rising above the roofline and flanking this elevation.



Figure 12: 10295 10 Side Road Front (southeast) Elevation (Town of Halton Hills 2024)

The first storey of the front (southeast) elevation features four rectangular window openings, with two symmetrically situated on either side of the central entrance featuring flatheaded window openings with limestone lintels and sills. The central entrance is similarly capped with a limestone lintel and flanked by sidelight windows. The fenestration follows a graduated pattern, with five windows on the second floor that are slightly shorter than those on the first floor, featuring flatheaded window openings with limestone lintels and sills. The middle window on the second floor is centered above the first-storey entrance. A series of white wooden modillions run along the cornice.



Figure 13: 10295 10 Side Road Entrance (Town of Halton Hills 2024)



Figure 14: 10295 10 Side Road Windows (Town of Halton Hills 2024)



Figure 15: 10295 10 Side Road Side (southwest) Elevation (Town of Halton Hills 2024)



Figure 16: 10295 10 Side Road Side (southwest) Elevation (Town of Halton Hills 2024)

The side (southwest) elevation of the dwelling is divided into three sections, with a late nineteenth century addition creating an H-plan configuration. The structure is segmented into three distinct parts: the right wing (southernmost), the center block, and the left wing (northernmost). The center block is recessed between the two projecting wings.

The right wing, which is the original section of the residence, is bisected by a centrally located chimney. On the first floor, a single rectangular window opening with a limestone sill and lintel is positioned on the southwest half of the wall. The second-floor features two symmetrical windows with limestone sills and lintels; however, the southeasternmost window has been infilled with brick. Classical detailing is visible in the wooden modillions that adorn each corner of the cornice.

The center block features a covered porch, accessed by a flight of stairs leading to the side entrance of the home, emphasizing the formal entryway. Above the porch, second-floor windows from both wings align, facing each other over the porch roof.

The ground floor of the left wing includes a single window opening with a limestone lintel, centrally positioned within the wall. The second floor originally mirrored this design, with a corresponding window directly above, but this upper window has since been infilled with brick. Despite the modifications, the overall proportions of the original structure and each wing remain highly symmetrical, particularly with the balanced placement of the central chimney in the right wing.



Figure 17: 10295 10 Side Road Side (southwest) Elevation (Town of Halton Hills 2024)



Figure 18: 10295 10 Side Road Side (southwest) Elevation including nineteenth century addition (Town of Halton Hills 2024)



Figure 19: Agricultural fields looking east from subject property (Town of Halton Hills 2024)



Figure 20: Looking northeast from the subject property (Town of Halton Hills 2024)



Figure 21: Looking southwest from the subject property (Town of Halton Hills 2023)



Figure 22: Agricultural fields looking northeast from subject property (Town of Halton Hills 2024)

2.3 Architectural Style & Comparative Analysis

Georgian residential architecture was prevalent in Ontario from the late-eighteenth century through the mid-nineteenth century, particularly between 1780 and 1860. This style, rooted in classical proportions and symmetry, was brought to Canada by British settlers and United Empire Loyalists, and became a dominant architectural expression in early colonial settlements.

According to John Blumenson's *Ontario Architecture: A Guide to Styles and Building Terms, 1784 to the Present*, typical features characteristic of the Georgian style in Ontario include:

- Symmetrical Facades: The front elevation is highly symmetrical, often centered around a prominent entrance with neo-classical detailing;

- Hipped or Gabled Roofs: Georgian homes typically feature hipped roofs, though gabled roofs are also common;
- Graduated Fenestration: Windows are symmetrically arranged, with larger windows on the ground floor and smaller ones above, often featuring multi-paned sash windows;
- Brick or Stone Construction: Georgian homes are commonly constructed of brick or stone, with bricks often laid in a Flemish bond pattern;
- Classical Detailing: Features such as modillions under the eaves, limestone lintels above windows and doors, cornice with modillion blocks, moulded window surrounds, pedimented porticos; and,
- Chimneys: Symmetrically placed chimneys are a hallmark of Georgian architecture, often located at the center of side elevations.

The property at 10295 10 Side Road is a rare example of a two-storey Georgian rural home within the Town of Halton Hills and is an excellent example of Georgian architecture in the community, exhibiting many of the style's defining characteristics. The two-storey Georgian home features a symmetrical front elevation with graduated fenestration, typical of the Georgian style. The hipped roof, limestone lintels and sills, and white modillions along the cornice further emphasize the classical detailing of the period. The use of locally sourced and fired red brick in the construction is representative of the traditional building materials associated with Georgian architecture in Ontario.

There are currently several properties on the Town's Heritage Register identified as Georgian style, dating from the early to mid-nineteenth century. Within the Halton Hills area, properties such as 504 (Figure 24) and 510 Main Street (Figure 25) in Glen Williams are comparable in terms of form, materials, and design. However, the property's long-standing role as a rural residence and its connection to the early settlement history of the Scotch Block, distinguishes it from other Georgian-style buildings in the region.



Figure 23: A Georgian Residence at 504 Main Street, Glen Williams. (Town of Halton Hills 2024)



Figure 24: A Georgian Residence at 510 Main Street, Glen Williams. (Google Street View 2023)

Though some alterations have occurred, such as the infilling of certain windows on the side elevation, and an addition to the rear elevation, the property has retained its architectural integrity. It has remained in its original location for over 170 years, continuing to serve as a residence, and stands as a

significant example of Georgian architecture within an agricultural landscape. This enduring presence, combined with its well-preserved Georgian features, solidifies the property's importance in the architectural and historical narrative of Halton Hills.

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.

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

The property at 10295 10 Side Road is a representative example of Georgian architecture, characterized by its symmetry, classical proportions, graduated fenestration, and classical detailing. The two-storey Georgian farmhouse, constructed with locally sourced and fired redbrick, features a symmetrical front facade, a hallmark of the Georgian style. The graduated fenestration, limestone lintels and sills, and white wooden modillions under the eaves emphasize the classical detailing typical of Georgian architecture. The central doorway, flanked by sidelights and capped with a limestone lintel serves as the focal point of the front elevation, aligning with the second-floor window openings, reinforcing the symmetry and balance inherent to Georgian design. The residence on the subject property is an excellent rare surviving example of a rural Georgian home in Halton Hills.

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

The property at 10295 10 Side Road holds historical and associative value due to its multi-generational connection with the Stewart family, prominent figures in the early settlement of the Scotch Block in Esquesing Township. James Stewart, a Scottish immigrant who contributed to the establishment of Scotch Block as a community for Scottish settlers, acquired the property in 1844. The Stewart family was responsible for contributing to the areas social, agricultural, and economic development, using the property to establish a sawmill and several farmsteads.

The property was later owned by several of Stewart’s descendants, who became prominent figures in Scotch Block. Subsequent owners, such as the Huffman, Seynuck, and Howitt families, further contribute to the property's historical significance. While living in Scotch Block, Gideon Huffman was an active member of the Boston Presbyterian Church, and an outspoken Liberal. Tony Seynuck successfully established Anthony Gas and Oil Exportations Limited, extracting and selling gas throughout Southern Ontario through the 1950s and 1960s, contributing to the Region's industrial growth in the mid-

twentieth century. Richard Howitt was involved in local politics serving as a Halton Regional Councillor, while also acting as a member of the Halton Conservation Authority, and a trustee of the Halton Regional Board of Education.

The property's association with the Stewart family and its role in the broader narrative of the Scotch Block's development solidify its historical and associative value. The dwelling on the subject property is one of the oldest extant residential buildings in the Town.

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

The property at 10295 10 Side Road holds significant contextual value as it serves to define and maintain the early nineteenth century agricultural character of Scotch Block. The Georgian farmhouse, set within a pastoral landscape, visually anchors the historical rural identity of Scotch Block and the surrounding community, reflecting the agricultural roots that have shaped the local community for generations. The farmhouse’s traditional design and construction methods embody the area's historical development, serving as a tangible link to early settlers who established the Scotch Block. Having remained in its original location for over 170 years, the property remains physically and visually connected to its surroundings. 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 10295 10 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 10295 10 Side Road are identified as follows:

- The location, setting, and agricultural context of the property at 10295 10 Side Road in the Town of Halton Hills;
- The scale, form, and massing of the two-storey Georgian farmhouse, including its symmetrical front elevation;
- The materials used in the construction, including locally sourced and fired redbrick, and limestone;
- The front (southeast) elevation, including:
 - The symmetrical design divided into five bays with graduated fenestration, including two rectangular window openings on either side of the central entrance and five vertically aligned rectangular window openings on the second storey;
 - Limestone windowsills and lintels;
 - Central entrance set within a flatheaded opening, flanked by sidelights and capped with a limestone lintel;
 - Hipped roof with wooden modillions along the cornice;
 - Symmetrically placed chimneys flanking the front elevation;
- The side (southwest) elevation, including:
 - Rectangular double-hung sash windows with limestone sills and lintels, symmetrically placed on either side of the centrally located chimney on the right wing; and,

- Wooden modillions along the cornice.

The rear elevation, and side (northeast) elevation, and interiors have not been identified as heritage attributes of the property as part of this report. The northeast side elevation and rear elevation are currently unobservable and inaccessible from the public right of way. However, further investigation may provide an opportunity to identify additional heritage attributes.

5.0 Sources

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