

Research and Evaluation Report



(Town of Halton Hills 2024)

Gibraltar Schoolhouse

11999 Fifth Line, Limehouse, Town of Halton Hills

January 2025

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1.0 Property Description

11999 Fifth Line, Limehouse	
Municipality	Town of Halton Hills
County or Region	Regional Municipality of Halton
Legal Description	PT LT 21, CON 6 ESQ, PART 1, 20R9187 TOWN OF HALTON HILLS
Construction Date	c.1864
Original Use	Institutional
Current Use	Residential
Architect/Building/Designer	Trustees of S.S. No. 9
Architectural Style	Vernacular Ontario Rural Schoolhouse
Additions/Alterations	Addition of Second Storey (c.1875)
Heritage Status	Listed on the Town’s Heritage Register
Recorder(s)	Caylee MacPherson with Laura Loney
Report Date	January 2025

2.0 Background

This research and evaluation report describes the history, context, and physical characteristics of the property at 11999 Fifth Line, Limehouse, 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*.

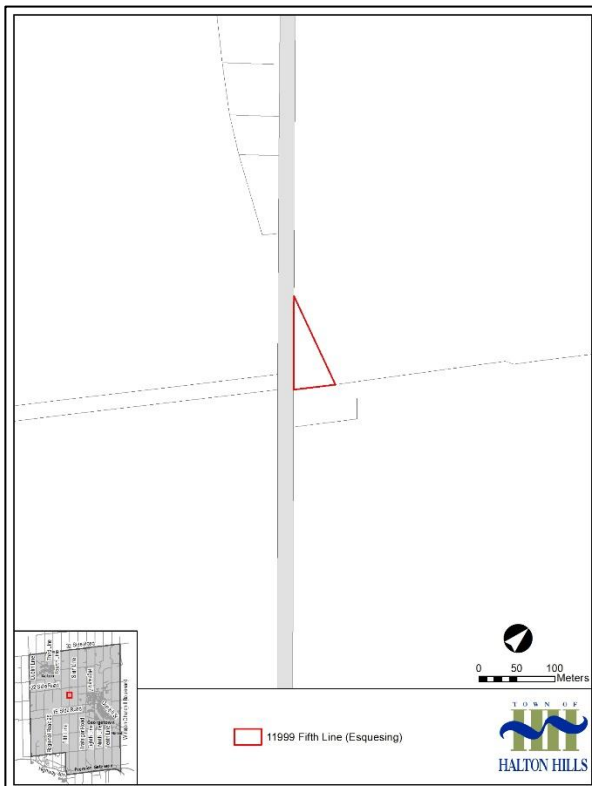


Figure 1: Location Map – 11999 Fifth Line

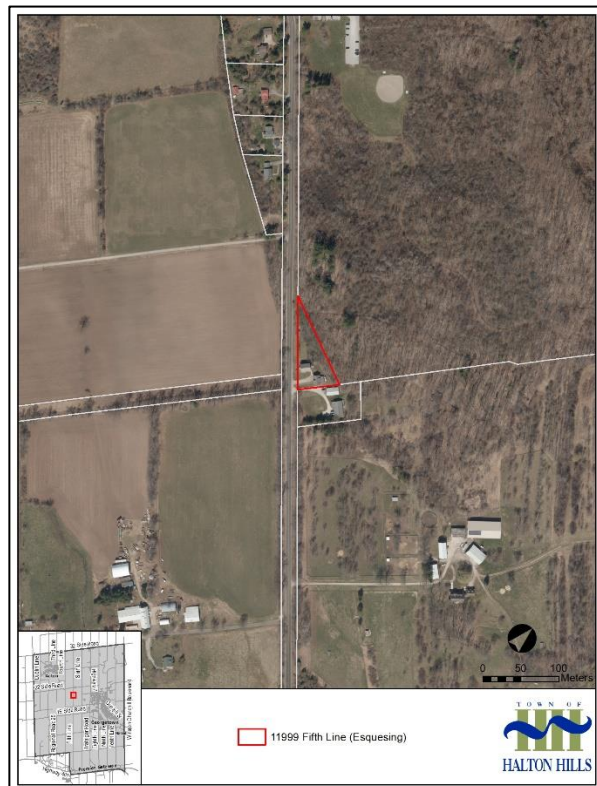


Figure 2: Aerial Photograph – 11999 Fifth Line

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 Nation¹.

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.

Early European Settlement

In 1819, Mary M. Stull (née Lampman) (1797-1878) made a petition to the Crown for land, and by 1828, the Crown granted Stull 200 acres of land at Concession 6, Lot 21 in Esquesing. In 1841, Mary's husband, Adam Stull (1793-1859) sold 50 acres to James Glendinning. During the same year, the property was sold to Joshua Freeman in 1850, who later sold the property to Samuel Freeman in 1856. In 1863, Edward Bescoy purchased the subject property, selling it to the Trustees of S.S. No. 9 a year later in 1864.



Figure 3: Subject property identified on the 1819 Patent Plan

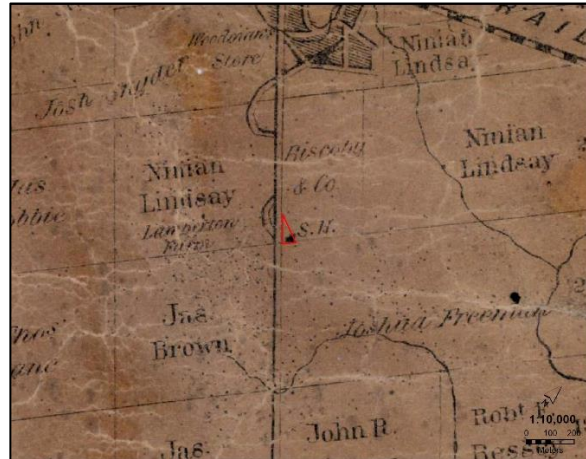


Figure 4: Subject property identified on Tremaine's 1858 Map of the County of Halton, Canada West

Trustees of S.S. No. 9 School

The original Limehouse school was located at Concession 6, Lot 18, and consisted of a c.1845 log schoolhouse. After the log building was no longer needed by the local school section, the former schoolhouse remained on Fifth Line at Lot 18, Con. 6; this building was demolished in the late-19th century by Wes. Bessey who used the materials to construct a frame dwelling on Queen Street in Georgetown.

Many townships in Ontario, including Esquesing Township, were divided into school sections through the *Common School Act* in 1846. These school sections were typically 5-8 square kilometres. The *Common School Act* also regulated the election of trustees, rates levied to support schools, the construction of new schools, teacher examination and licensing, curriculum and government grants.

Gibraltar School was constructed between 1862-1864 and originally consisted of a one-storey, one-room schoolhouse. As time went on, the school population began to grow, warranting more room for the rising number of pupils. During this time, many schoolhouses saw growth in school populations due to the introduction of the *Ontario School Act* (the "Act"). Introduced in 1871, the Act was championed by Egerton Ryerson, who strongly believed in the idea of taxes supporting schools and increasing their accessibility to more children. The Act 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. With the changes made by

the Act, there was a need to construct new one- and two-room schoolhouses to accommodate the growing student populations. In response, many communities took advantage of these government grants to build and operate new schools. Additionally, Limehouse was experiencing growth around this time, warranting more room for new pupils.



Figure 5: Gibraltar Schoolhouse identified on 1877 *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of Halton*



Figure 6: Students and Miss. Bella Gordon (centre) posing for a class photograph, c.1895 (EHS 21868)

By 1875, a second storey was added to the existing school to accommodate the student population. Both rooms at the first and second storeys were used until the 1890s, when the upper storey fell into disuse. During this time, the teacher, Miss Bella Gordon, taught around 60 pupils spanning across 10 grades in the lower room.



Figure 7: Exterior of Gibraltar Schoolhouse, c.1909 (EHS 21866)



Figure 8: Exterior of Gibraltar Schoolhouse, c.1909 (EHS 19964)

Gibraltar School likely accommodated students aged 6 to 17 and often had a single teacher who worked concurrently with students of different education levels. There was no limit to the number of pupils a single teacher could handle, given they had room to accommodate them.



Figure 9: Subject property identified on the 1909 *National Topographic Survey*



Figure 10: Annotated class photograph outside of Gibraltar Schoolhouse, c.1913 (Limehouse Tweedsmuir, Book 2, p.56)

During the school's earlier days, box stoves heated the schoolhouse but were later replaced by furnaces. In 1950, an oil furnace was installed in the basement after a fire erupted in the woodshed. In 1937, hydro was installed in the schoolhouse, with a forced air system following shortly after. Accessing water was always a challenge, and for many years, older students had to carry drinking water from the nearest farm. In later years, a natural spring nearby was used as a source for water.



Figure 11: Exterior of Gibraltar Schoolhouse, c.1920 (EHS 21867)

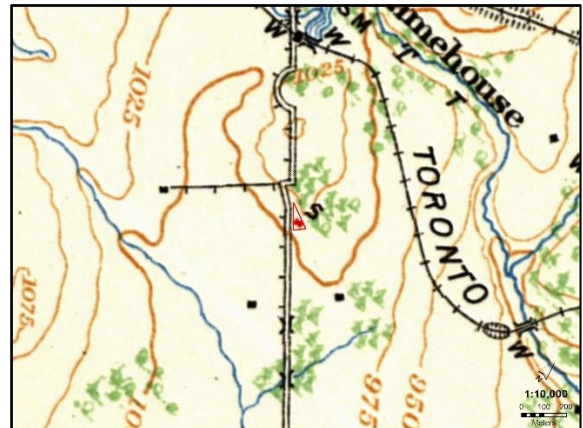


Figure 12: Subject property identified on the 1922 *National Topographic Survey*

In 1934, music classes were taught using an old organ, later replaced by a piano in 1936. Music teachers included Mrs. Gowdy (1934-1940), Mrs. Robertson (1940-1942), Jean Ruddell (1945-1952), and Mrs. Kidney (1955).



Figure 13: Pupils gathered at Gibraltar Schoolhouse, c.1931 (Limehouse Tweedsmuir, Book 2, pg. 2)



Figure 14: Gibraltar Schoolhouse class photograph, c.1931 (Limehouse Tweedsmuir, Book 2, pg. 2)

In 1954, when the student population reached 45, the upper storey was repaired and reopened by the Board Trustees at the time. However, one-room schoolhouses throughout the Town were continuously growing, and could no longer accommodate the number of students.



Figure 15: Gibraltar Schoolhouse class photograph, c.1942 (Limehouse Tweedsmuir, Book 2, pg. 1)



Figure 16: Exterior of Gibraltar Schoolhouse, c.1944 (EHS 11520)



Figure 17: Class photograph outside of Gibraltar Schoolhouse, c.1948 (EHS 20802)



Figure 18: Student Ted Wilson pumps water at Gibraltar, c.1948 (EHS 20794)



Figure 19: Subject property identified on 1952 aerial photography



Figure 20: Lower-classroom group photograph, c.1959 (Limehouse Tweedsmuir, Book 2, p.55)

In 1961, Esquesing Township Council approved the plans for the new Limehouse School at a cost of \$120,000 (the equivalent to \$1.23 million today). The new school was intended to accommodate 190 pupils from Bannockburn, Blue Mountain, and Gibraltar.



Figure 21: Upper-classroom group photograph, c.1959 (Limehouse Tweedsmuir, Book 2, p.54)

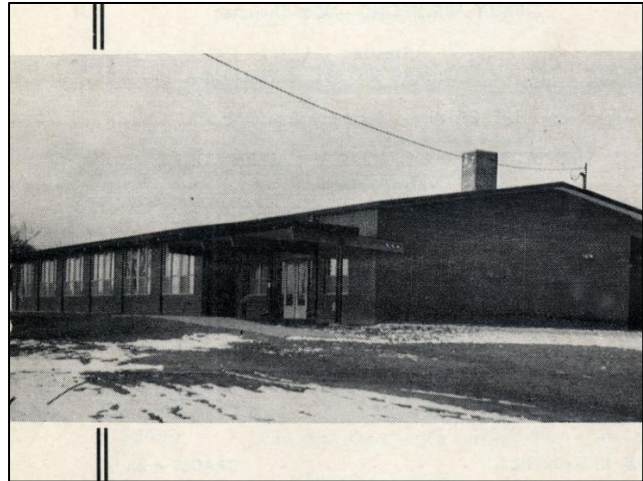


Figure 22: Photograph of the new Limehouse Public School, c.1962 (Limehouse Tweedsmuir, Book 2, p.19)

The first teacher recorded at Gibraltar School was Miss. Bella Gordon in 1890, and she began at a salary of \$500.00. Salaries for teachers ranged from \$150 in the early 1900s to \$1,000 in the 1930s. Once the Great Depression hit, the salaries gradually decreased. However, the salaries eventually reached \$4,100 by the late 1950s.

Many former Gibraltar pupils achieved secondary and post-secondary educations following their attendance at the school, including Reverend John McColl, and Dr. James Lindsay. Reverend John McColl attended Gibraltar in 1860 and later attended Waterloo School. Reverend McColl graduated from the University of Toronto in 1870, and the Theological Seminary of Princeton, New Jersey, in 1873. Afterwards, Reverend McColl worked in congregations in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York State. In June 1916, Reverend John McColl returned to Georgetown.

Dr. James Lindsay was born in Limehouse and remained in the community before leaving to study medicine. After graduating, Lindsay later moved to Guelph to work as a physician and a surgeon. Once Dr. Lindsay retired, he returned to the old Lindsay family homestead in Limehouse and resided on the property until his death. He was an active member with the Presbyterian Church.

1960s to Present

In September 1962, a new modern six-room school was constructed along 22 Side Road in Limehouse. The school included more classrooms, a principal's office, staff room, and a boiler room. It was constructed using cement block and brick construction and was developed on the community's former baseball field.

After the new Limehouse School opened, Gibraltar Schoolhouse was subsequently shut down. During the following year in April 1963, an advertisement was posted in the *Acton Free Press* for the sale of the school. By December 1963, Harry Brown purchased the property from the board of Esquesing School Area No. 1 for \$3,000 (approx. \$29,670 today). In addition to Gibraltar, Harry Brown also purchased the former Waterloo School for \$3,010 (approx. \$29,770 today).

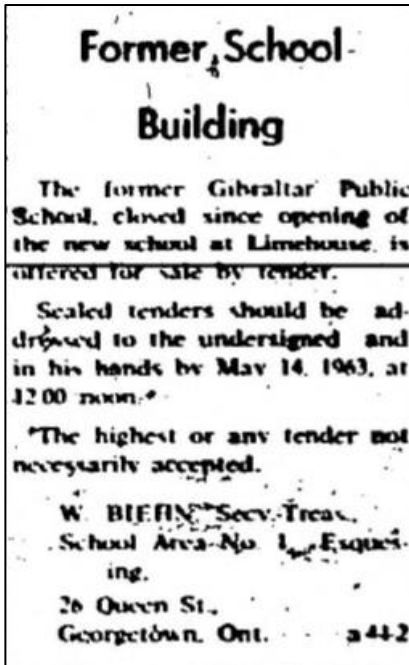


Figure 23: Notice of sale for Gibraltar School (Acton Free Press, April 25, 1963, p. 7)



Figure 24: Gibraltar boarded up after closing and the opening of Limehouse, c.1962 (EHS 10318)

In 2013, Harry Brown sold the property to Upper Canada Development. By 2015, Upper Canada Development sold the property to its present owner who has undertaken significant conservation work on the extant building.



Figure 25: Subject property identified on 1974 aerial photography

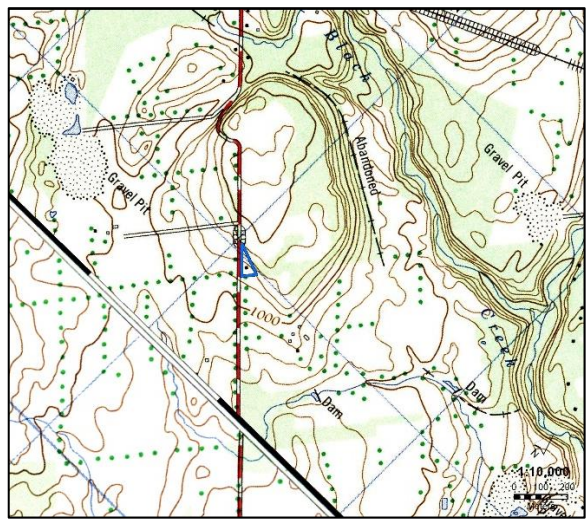


Figure 26: Subject property identified on the 1974 National Topographic Survey



Figure 27: Subject property identified on 2002 aerial photography



Figure 28: Subject property identified on 2017 aerial photography

2.2 Property & Architectural Description

The subject property is a rectangular-shaped parcel located along the northeast side of Fifth Line in the community of Limehouse within the Town of Halton Hills. The property features a two-storey limestone schoolhouse with a gable roof, multiple flatheaded window openings with stone sills and lintels, and rectangular cut staggered stone quoins on each corner. The property can be accessed by vehicle via a gravel driveway fronting Fifth Line.



Figure 29: Subject property identified on 2023 aerial photography

The front (southwest) elevation features a one-storey vestibule with a gable roof, flatheaded window with a stone sill and lintel, as well as a flatheaded doorway. Along the first and second storeys are four flatheaded window openings with stone sills and lintels. Directly above the gable peak is a contemporary stone chimney.



Figure 30: Front (southwest) elevation of the subject dwelling (Town of Halton Hills 2024)



Figure 31: Partial front (southwest) and side (southeast) elevations of the subject dwelling (Town of Halton Hills 2024)

Along the side (northwest) elevation at the first storey are three flatheaded window openings, and at the second storey are two flathead window openings, all with stone sills and lintels.



Figure 32: Side (northwest) elevations of the subject dwelling (Town of Halton Hills 2024)



Figure 33: Side (southeast) elevation of the subject dwelling (Town of Halton Hills 2024)

Towards the other side (southeast) elevation are three flatheaded window openings on the first and second storeys with stone sills and lintels. The southeast elevation also features cellar doors, which were added later in the early-twentieth century. Along the rear of the property is a contemporary accessory structure constructed of stone. There was previously a wooden shed behind the school, however, it burned down in the 1950s.



Figure 34: Rear accessory structure (Town of Halton Hills 2024)

The rear elevation could not be assessed as part of this report, as it is hidden from the public right of way.

2.3 Architectural Style & Comparative Analysis

The existing building at 11999 Fifth Line is a representative early example of a vernacular late 19th century rural Ontario schoolhouse. In its original form, Gibraltar School would have resembled a rural one-room schoolhouse.

The one-room schoolhouse was designed for sixty-four pupils and was intended to accommodate a small rural village or hamlet. Many of these designs were based on publications such as the *“The School House; Its Architecture, External and Internal Arrangements”* published by the Department of Public Instruction for Upper Canada in 1857, or *“Cheap Country School Houses”* published by the *Canadian Farmer* in 1866.

These resources provided architectural plans for grammar, intermediate, and primary schools, along with recommendations for school site layouts and construction methods. Rural schoolhouse designs often featured a gable roof, semi-circular window openings, a central semi-circular door opening with transom, date stone, as well as a cupola and bell directly above the gable peak. Materials recommended included brick, frame, and stone.

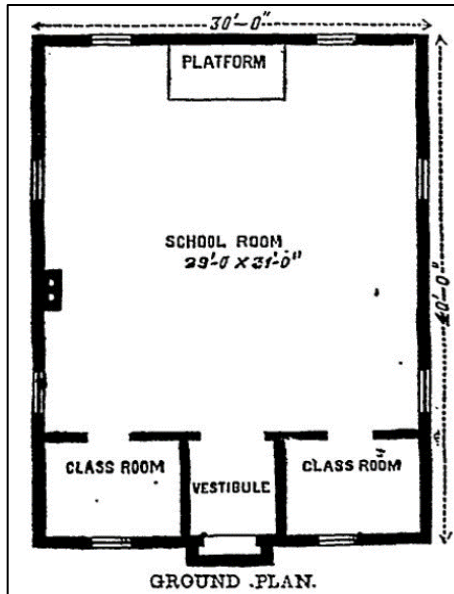


Figure 35: Prospective one-room schoolhouse floorplan (*The Canada Farmer*, Vol. 3, no. 12, p.189)



Figure 36: Prospective one-room schoolhouse design (*The School House, Its Architecture, External and Internal Arrangements*, p. 44)

One-room schoolhouses were typically first constructed of logs, but were later built with 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.

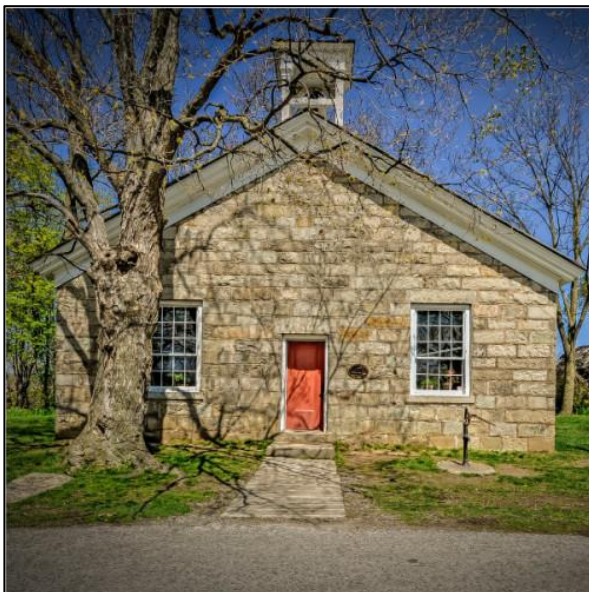


Figure 37: A c.1859 one-room rural schoolhouse located in Jordan, Ontario (Lincoln Museum & Cultural Centre)



Figure 38: Former Pinegrove School located along Fifth Line (Google Streetview 2022)

Prior to the construction of the upper storey, it is likely that Gibraltar School resembled the massing and design of the schoolhouses in Figures 37 and 38. However, after the second storey was constructed, the

schoolhouse exhibited a rare two-storey design that, although some examples remain, is quite unusual for rural Ontario schoolhouses, as many other examples throughout the Region of Halton were often one- to one-and-a-half storeys in massing.



Figure 39: Photograph of S.S. No. 1 Bosanquet Union School in Lambton County, Ontario, in the late-nineteenth century (Lambton County Museum)

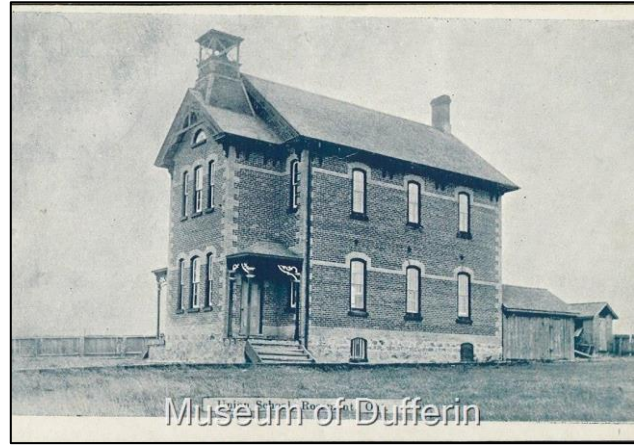


Figure 40: Postcard of S.S. No. 17 Rosemont Union School in Rosemont, Ontario, c. 1910 (Museum of Dufferin P-2937)

In Ontario, these larger rural schools, often referred to as “Union School Sections” or “Union Schools”, were situated on the border of two or more school sections. With the need to service a larger student population, the design of Union Schools deviated from the traditional one-room rural schoolhouse.

However, many differences exist between Gibraltar School, and the schools in Figure 39 and 40. Bosanquet and Rosemont Schools feature schoolhouse characteristics noted by Shannon Kyles of *Ontario Architecture*, such as brick construction with multiple radiating voussoir window openings, cupolas and bells, brick chimneys towards the rear, and datestones. Rosemont School features a more intricate design, with decorative dichromatic brickwork and wooden bargeboard beneath the front gable peak.

In comparison to both Bosanquet and Rosemont Schools, Gibraltar School features a more plain and modest school design, with a front vestibule, stone construction, and multiple flatheaded windows along the side elevations. However, the building lacks certain characteristics typical to schoolhouses, such as a cupola and bell, and datestone. Typically, cupolas and bells were only added to a building if there were sufficient funds for such details.

Despite missing these defining features, the building remains a unique and rare example of a late-nineteenth century, two-storey vernacular schoolhouse in the Town of Halton Hills and the Region of Halton.

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 11999 Fifth Line has physical and design value and is a rare, unique, and representative example of a late-nineteenth century vernacular Ontario rural schoolhouse in the community of Limehouse within the Town of Halton Hills. The two-storey school was constructed in 1864, and features stone construction, multiple flatheaded window openings along the side elevations, and a front vestibule. The schoolhouse was originally one-storey, but a second storey was introduced in 1875. The existing building remains a representative example of a rare, two-storey limestone schoolhouse that is unique in the community of Limehouse and in the Town of 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	X
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 11999 Fifth Line has historical and associative value due to its associations with the early educational system in the community of Limehouse. The student population began to grow with the establishment of *Common School Act* and the *Ontario School Act*, which introduced rates levied to support and construct new schools and later abolished the former fees for public schools and made attendance compulsory for children ages 7 to 12. In response, many communities took advantage of these government grants to build and operate new schools. Additionally, as Limehouse began to thrive as a community, there was a need to construct another classroom for incoming pupils.

The property also has associations with Reverend John McColl. Reverend John McColl attended Gibraltar in 1860 and later attended Waterloo School. Reverend McColl graduated from the University of Toronto in 1870, and the Theological Seminary of Princeton, New Jersey, in 1873. Additionally, the property has associations with Dr. James Lindsay, who was born in Limehouse and remained in the community before leaving to study medicine. After graduating, Lindsay later moved to Guelph to work as a physician and a surgeon. Once Dr. Lindsay retired, he returned to the old Lindsay family homestead in Limehouse and resided on the property until his death. He was an active member with the Presbyterian Church.

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	X

The property at 11999 Fifth Line has contextual value as it is important in defining, maintaining, and supporting the rural character of the community of Limehouse. The former Gibraltar Schoolhouse is physically, visually, and historically linked to its surroundings as an early schoolhouse that accommodated pupils from Limehouse, from the 1860s to the 1960s. Gibraltar Schoolhouse is the only

schoolhouse located in Limehouse and is well-known to local residents as a point of reference and a local landmark.

4.0 Summary

Following research and evaluation according to Ontario Regulation 9/06, it has been determined that the property at 11999 Fifth Line 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 11999 Fifth Line are identified as follows:

- The setback, location, and orientation of the schoolhouse along Fifth Line in the community of Limehouse within the Town of Halton Hills;
- The scale, form, and massing of the c.1864 two-storey stone schoolhouse with gable roof and staggered stone quoins;
- Materials, including the stone construction, sills, lintels and detailing;
- On the front (southwest) elevation:
 - o The central vestibule with a gable roof, flatheaded window opening with limestone sill and lintel, and the flatheaded doorway with limestone lintel;
 - o Multiple flatheaded window openings with limestone sills and lintels; and,
- On the side (northwest and southeast) elevations:
 - o Multiple flatheaded window openings with limestone sills and lintels.

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

5.0 Sources

Primary Sources

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