

19 Jason Road: Elm Bank (circa 1834)Description

The property at 19 Jason Road is worthy of designation under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* for its cultural heritage value or interest, and meets the criteria for municipal designation prescribed by the Province of Ontario under the categories of design, historical and contextual value. Located on the south side of Jason Road in the area southeast of Islington Avenue and Albion Road in Etobicoke, the 1½-storey house form building and the adjoining residential structure at 23 Jason Road (completed prior to 1820) are together known as “Elm Bank.” Historical records indicate that the building at 19 Jason Road was constructed circa 1834 for John Grubb. The property is listed on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value**Design or Physical Value:**

Elm Bank (circa 1834) is a rare surviving example of a Regency Cottage in Toronto. The Regency style is named for the future King George IV, who reigned as the Prince Regent from 1811 to 1820 when he commissioned the Royal Pavilion in Brighton, England. This remarkable palace, which incorporated elements from Colonial dwellings in India and China, was interpreted in more modest residential buildings in Upper Canada (Ontario). The typical Regency Cottage featured a low profile, shallow-pitched hipped roof with tall chimneys, oversized French-style windows and verandah, all designed to extend the building physically and visually into the surrounding landscape. The Georgian organization with a symmetrical façade, central entrance and paired window openings was retained, with trim reflecting early 19th century Classical styling.

Other examples of the Regency Cottage in Toronto, including Colborne Lodge (John Howard House, 1837) at 11 Colborne Lodge Drive, Drumsnab (William Cayley House, circa 1830) at 5 Drumsnab Road, and the Martin Snider (or Snyder) House (circa 1830) at 744 Duplex Avenue, have been altered with the addition of upper stories and wings. The Thomas Snider House at 519 Glengrove Avenue West and the William Moore House at 171 Old Forest Hill Road, both 1835, are intact Regency Cottages, but exhibit brick construction. All of the above-noted houses are recognized on the City’s heritage inventory and most are designated under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. Elm Bank (circa 1834) bears all of the hallmarks of a representative Regency Cottage, and is particularly distinguished by its stone construction using material from the banks of the Humber River, which it overlooks.

Historical or Associative Value:

John Grubb, who commissioned Elm Bank (circa 1834), is historically significant for his contributions to the development of Etobicoke. A Scottish immigrant who arrived in Canada in 1831, Grubb acquired property along the West Branch of the Humber River where he established two farms named “Brae Burn” and “Elm Bank.” Grubb was involved in the subdivision of his lands for the creation of a village around the intersection of present-day Islington Avenue and Albion Road, which was originally called St. Andrew and later renamed Thistletown. Grubb headed several companies that constructed plank roads in the district, including sections of present-day Weston Road and Albion Road, and served as an area magistrate on the Home District Council. His descendants retain Elm Bank to present day.

Contextual Value:

The properties at 19 and 23 Jason Road contain two adjoining stone houses, together known as Elm Bank, which are landmarks in the community for their physical appearance and positions on a rise of land above the West Branch of the Humber River. On the opposite (north) side of Jason Road, the house form building at #32 is purported to rest on the foundations of the barn associated with Elm Bank, while its neighbour at #34 is a former outbuilding, converted to a residence. The latter properties are listed on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties and form a residential enclave in the Thistletown neighbourhood.

North of the Elm Bank properties, Thistletown contains the Franklin Carmichael Art Centre at 34 Riverdale Drive, which is another Etobicoke landmark recognized on the City’s heritage inventory. The unusual log-clad house form building was constructed in 1934 as the residence of Dr. Agnes Ann Curtin, one of the first female medical doctors who graduated from the University of Toronto and an accomplished artist associated with the Group of Seven. Like Elm Bank, the property at 34 Riverdale Drive overlooks the West Branch of the Humber River from its setting at the east end of a city park.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of Elm Bank (circa 1834) at 19 Jason Road related to its cultural heritage value as a rare surviving example of a Regency Cottage with stone construction are found on the exterior walls and roof, consisting of:

- The 1½-storey rectangular plan, with the principal façade looking south toward the West Branch of the Humber River
- The materials, consisting of ledgestone construction (from the Humber River valley), with stucco cladding on the south façade
- The low-pitched hip roof with large shed-roofed dormers on the south and north ends, which replaced the original gabled dormers on all four slopes and a central gable peak on the south façade (according to a historical sketch in the Grubb family records)

- The principal (south façade), which is symmetrically organized in five bays, with the main entrance centered between pairs of tall casement windows, all with flat-headed surrounds and multi-paned transoms
- The open verandah, extending the full length of the south façade, which is a reconstruction of the original based on a historical rendering
- The flat-headed window openings on the remaining elevations