

Nepean, Ontario
Silver Spring Farm
3502 Richmond Road

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Silver Spring Farm, an important example of 19th Century rural architecture, consists of a central farmhouse, a cluster of barns, and an associated landscaped setting. Not included in this designation are two adjacent modern dormitories. The farmhouse was built in 1867 for the Bearman brothers, prosperous second-generation Irish settlers in the Ottawa Valley who were involved in politics and local affairs. The frame barns appear to date from the late 19th or early 20th Century. In the 1960s, the property was modified to support a residential and work program, a usage which has continued into the 21st century. See FHBRO Report 88-183.

Reasons for Designation

The Silver Spring Farm farmhouse has been designated Classified and the barn complex designated Recognized because of their architectural significance and their importance in establishing the rural character of the area.

The farmhouse, known as the Moffatt House after a recent owner, is a striking and well-preserved example of the Gothic Revival style in a rural setting. Employed prolifically from 1840 to 1870 in eastern North America, the Gothic Revival style is here highlighted by grand scale, good proportions and exceptional stonework. The barn complex, comprising four attached barns in a "U" shape, reflects the interest in scientific design of farm buildings at the turn of the century. The barns are marked by unusually well-proportioned roofs and consistent detailing.

The house and barns are set in gardens, lawns and orchard, with an evergreen windbreak and open fields beyond. The property plays an essential role in establishing and maintaining the rural and agricultural quality of the Greenbelt environment within a larger urban area of increasing density.

Character-defining Elements

The heritage character of the Silver Spring Farm is defined by the exteriors of the Moffatt House and the barns, and by the associated landscaped setting.

The Moffatt House reflects the picturesque composition characteristic of the Gothic Revival style, here achieved by irregular massing, steep roofs and high-pitched gables, and related decorative elements such as the vergeboards and finials. In every elevation of the house, these features contribute to the picturesque silhouette. The decorative labelling, or drip mould, above the windows is also typically Gothic and enhances the quality of the fenestration. The dressed limestone was quarried from the nearby Graham property, and the stonework is of consistently high quality and detail throughout.

Silver Spring Farm (Continued)

The house exterior has survived with its original form, materials, and detailing remarkably intact. Careful conservation is essential, with qualified conservators employed to ensure that original fabric is maintained and that appropriate materials and techniques are used in any programs of repointing, repair or refinishing. No additions or alterations to the exterior should be contemplated, other than the possible removal, if appropriate, of previous additions such as the garage or exterior fire escape. If replacement of finishes such as the asphalt shingle roof are required, consideration could be given to reinstatement of an earlier historic finish, based on accurate historical research. Any program of repainting should repeat the existing colours or recover an earlier colour scheme based on historic paint colour analysis.

The barns also retain their historic form, materials, and detailing. Similar care should be taken to ensure that these are preserved through a regular program of preventive maintenance, and periodic repair or restoration as required using qualified conservators. The attractive design of the dairy barn and horse barn, set at right angles to the larger hay barn, is due in part to their well-proportioned gambrel roofs, with gentle slopes and slight flare at the eaves. The "U" shape is also significant as a historical record of adaptation to the sometimes severe Canadian climate.

The landscaped setting has been modified to accommodate the current use of the property. However, it retains the basic features of its rural past, and contributed strongly to the heritage character of the property. Every effort should be made to maintain the existing relationship between the house, the barns, and the grounds. The historical evolution of the grounds should be carefully documented, and used as a basis for any future modifications or upgrading.

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