

James Wilson House

c. 1870

3998 Line 9

Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report

October 2026

Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury Municipal Heritage Committee

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report, or CHER, is to determine if the subject property merits designation under Part IV, section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act (OHA). A Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report provides an overview of the property based on primary and secondary research and visual inspection of the property. Please note that all visual inspections of the property were taken from the public right of way and no site visits were made. It also includes an evaluation against the prescribed criteria of Ontario Regulation 9/06, including design/physical value, historical/associative value, and contextual value. This CHER also includes a draft Statement of Significance and identification of heritage attributes.

The designation of heritage properties is legislated by the OHA and is supported at a provincial level by the Provincial Policy Statement (2024). The conservation of cultural heritage resources is also supported by the County of Simcoe Official Plan, and the 2023 Official Plan for the Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury.

Based on the contents of this report, the property located at 3998 Line 9 meets the criteria for designation under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act.

Property Name	James Wilson House
Municipal Address	3998 Line 9
Legal Description	South Part of Lot 4, Concession 9
Property Size	22.48 hectares
Date of Construction	1870
Heritage Recognition	Listed on Municipal List of Heritage Properties
Lead Researcher	Thomas Dysart, MCIP, RPP, CAHP Senior Planner, Town of BWG

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SUBJECT PROPERTY

The subject property is located on the north side of Line 9, west of Sideroad 5 and legally described as being south part of Lot 4, Concession 9 and is municipally addressed as 3998 Line 9



Figure 1: Subject Property (2025)

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Design and Physical Value

The building at the subject property has characteristics of the Gothic Revival Architecture Style as well as elements of an Ontario Vernacular style.

Gothic Revival

The Gothic Revival architectural style (1840-1990) was the pre-eminent Canadian style during the Victorian period. It was influenced by European interests in Medieval Gothic History. It is often described as an “exuberant” or “flamboyant” style, as it reflected the prosperity and growth of many villages and towns during the mid-to-late 1800’s. Gothic Revival Architectural style is characterized by: steeply pitched gable roofs (typically found with dormers to break up the horizontal lines), elaborately carved gingerbread , such as bargeboard, diocramatic brickwork, wooden porch/verandah, use of brick and different brick accents to highlight door/window surrounds and quoins (corners).

In Ontario, the magazine, Canada Farmer, published plans and elevations for a “small gothic cottage” that lead to the popularity of the architectural style. The plan and elevations appeared in the February 1864 issue.

Ontario Vernacular

The Vernacular architectural styles makes use of local forms and material. The vernacular style can very from region to region. The Ontario Vernacular style is known for its largely conservative and simple rectangular design. Most of the Ontario Vernacular homes are either one to one and half or two stories, constructed of either rubble, brick or stucco. The architectural style is also known for gable roofs and end chimney designs with irregular window placement. Ontario Vernacular architectural styles can also borrow from other architectural styles, particularly the Georgian or Gothic Revival Architectural style.

The subject property is an excellent example of 19th Century gothic revival architecture. The three bay façade with gable end roofs, is very reminiscent of a simply designed farm house that dots the Ontario streetscapes.

The home has a steep central gable, with symmetrical massing, with the front door, centered to the building, flanked by two windows, reinforcing the symmetrical design of the home. The property may also feature many elements of the Gothic Revival/ Ontario Vernacular architectural style.

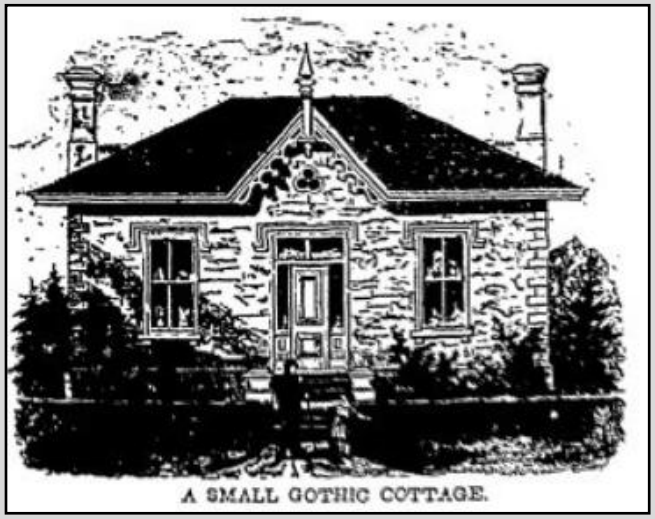


Figure 3: A small gothic cottage

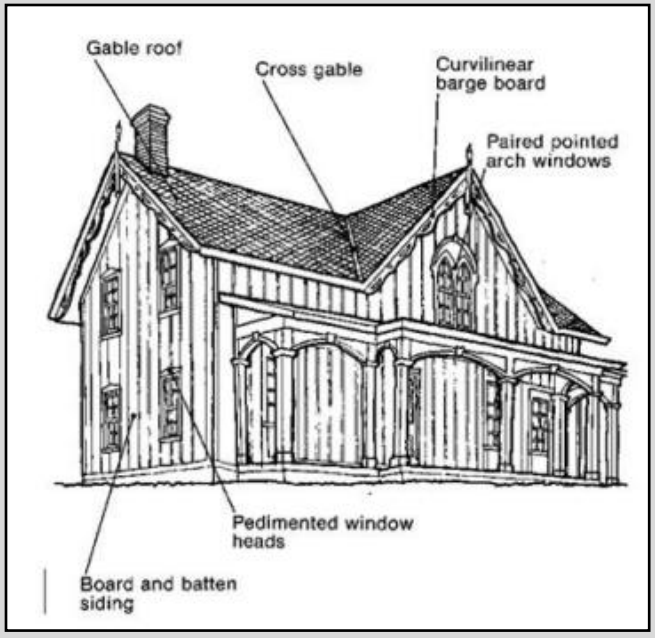


Figure 4: Typical elements of a dwelling in gothic revival architecture design

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Historical and Associative Value

Pre Contact History

The subject property is in the traditional territory of the Anishinaabek Nation, which includes Ojibwe, Odawa and Potawatomi Nation, collectively known as the Three Fires Confederacy and that the Huron-Wendat, Chippewa and Haudenosaunee Nations have also been associated with lands. The subject lands were part of the Lake Simcoe-Nottawasgaa Treaty No.18 of 1818, where in exchange for 1,592,000 acres, the Chippewas were paid a yearly sum of 1200 pounds.

Land Ownership

The original patent in which the subject property is located was once owned by David Collins, who was granted the lands from the Crown for n 1837. The lands (South Half of 100 Acres) were then sold to several early West Gwillimbury families.

Nature of Instrument	Instrument Date	Grantor	Grantee	Notes
Patent	March 1837	Crown	David Collins	S ½ of 100 Acres
B&S	June 1837	David Collins	William Fisher	$25
B&S	October 1837	William Fisher	Issac Roberts	$250
B&S	October 1838	Issac Roberts	Issac Proctor(?)	
B&S	April 1845	Issac Proctor	Erasmus Carter	
Quick Claims	March 1865	Elizabeth Carter	Richard Carter	S/E ¼ of 50 Acres
B&S	March 1869	Richard Carter	James Wilson	$2600

Given the age of the home, the home is most likely associated with James Wilson

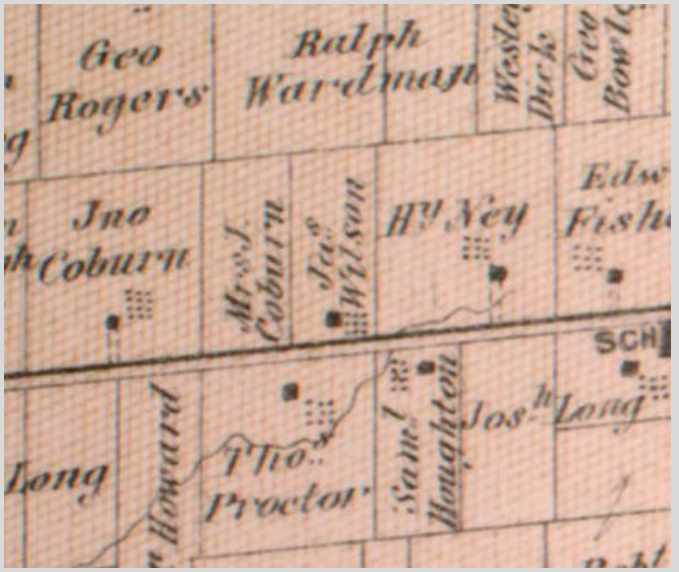


Figure 5: Map of West Gwillimbury (1860)

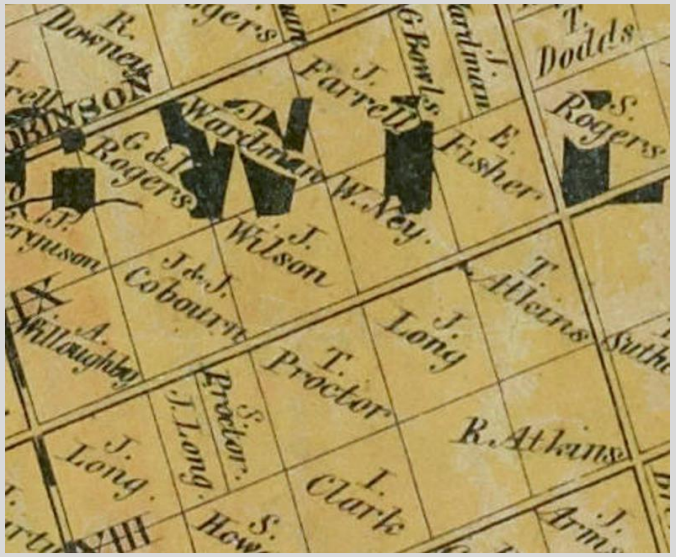


Figure 6: Map of West Gwillimbury (1871)

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Historical and Associative Value

James Wilson

Given the age of the home, the home is most likely associated with James Wilson. James Wilson was born 1827 to Ireland. Parents and siblings are unknown. James moved to Canada in 1858, and soon married Agnes Robinson (daughter of Gilbert and Mary Robinson). James and Agnes went on to have 9 children:

- William b. 1863
- Mary Jane b. 1865
- Gilbert b. 1866
- William b. 1868
- John b.1870
- Robert b.1872
- Thomas b. 1874
- Henry b.1875
- Margaret b.1878

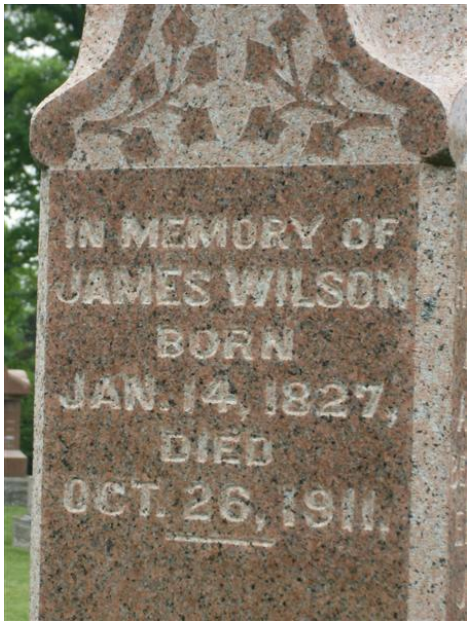


Figure 7: Final resting place of James Wilson

In the 1871 Census, James (43) is listed as being a Farmer. Governor Simcoe Slept Here states, that prior becoming a Farmer, James Wilson was a teacher. James was also instrumental in bringing a school to the community of Fisher's Corners. James Wilson, along with Thomas Atkins and Thomas Fisher sat on the Board that brought a new school to Fishers Corner. In 1881, James (53) and Agnes (39) are listed as living with Mary (15), Gilbert (14), William (12), John (10), Robert (8), Thomas (6), Henry (5) and Margaret (2).By 1901, James (73) is a widow, with Agnes having died in 1898 at the age of 57. James died in 1911 at the age of 84. He and Agnes are buried at the Bond Head United Church Cemetery.

Three of Wilson's sons became ordained ministers: Gilbert, William and Robert. While Henry and his wife, Sophie "Effie" Banting, took over the farming operation on Line 9.



Figure 8: Agnes Robinson, wife of James Wilson

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Contextual Value

The subject property is situated in a rural area of the Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury. The property is an excellent example of an early 19th century Ontario farmstead. The property remains linked to its surroundings physically, visually and historically. The property is linked to a number of historic West Gwillimbury families that have contributed to the development of Bradford West Gwillimbury

EVALUATION UNDER ONTARIO REGULATION 9/06

	Ontario Regulation 9/06 Criteria	Evaluation	Criteria met (Y/N)
i	is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method;	The property is an example of an early 19th century residential building designed in the Gothic Revival and Ontario Vernacular architectural style.	Y
ii	displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit;		N
Iii	demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement.		N
iv	has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community;	The property has direct associations with the Wilson family. James Wilson was a school teacher, farmer and contributed to the local community.	Y
v	yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture;		N
vi	demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community.		N
Vii	is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area;	The property is historically linked to its surrounding area, being a 19th century rural property and supporting the agrarian routes of the community.	Y
viii	is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings;		N
ix	is a landmark.		N

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

Wilson House c. 1870

The subject property has been researched and evaluated to determine its cultural heritage significance according to Ontario Regulation 9/06. This Regulation, defined in the *Ontario Heritage Act*, outlines several criteria for determining whether a property is of cultural heritage value or interest. For a property to be designated under section 29 of the *Ontario Heritage Act,* it must meet two or more of these criteria, which are outlined below. By using these criteria, staff can determine if the property's cultural heritage value or interest merits designation under the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

Description of Property

The property at 3998 Line 9 is located on the North side of Line 9. The property contains a Gothic Revival c.1800s residential dwelling. Due to its association with an early settler family of West Gwillimbury, it is known as the Wilson House.
Its legal address is:
3998 Line 9; South Part of Line 3, Concession 9

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

Design/ Physical Value

The Wilson House has design and physical value as representative example of a Gothic Revival c.1800s property. The house was built around 1800 and has the following characteristics: one and half storeys with three bays, with a steeply pointed central gable and a gable roof.

Historical/ Associative Value

The Wilson House has historic/associative value for its direct association with the James Wilson, Town Treasurer and School Teacher. The Wilson family were an early settler family in the Bradford/West Gwillimbury community. The family were involved in education and politics, which contributed to the growth and development of the Town.

Contextual Value

The Wilson House has contextual value because it defines and supports and maintains the character of the agrarian routes of the community.

Description of Heritage Attributes

Key heritage attributes of the Wilson House that exemplify its heritage value as a Gothic Revival c.1800s house as it relates to the property include:

- Two-storey house with three bays
- Side gable roof with steeply pointed central gable
- Appearance of bargeboard Detail under central gable
- Appearance of finial detail on central gable
- Central door with triangular pediment
- Variety of rectangular window openings, including rounded window opening in the central bay

SOURCES

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We Grew Up In or Live in Bradford West Gwillimbury Facebook Group. Facebook.com

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https://www.ourstoriesinnisfil.ca/islandora/object/ourstories%3A2649948

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