

FHBRO HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT FORMER ATHA SCHOOL HOUSE, PICKERING, ON

FHBRO Number: **05-017**
DFRP Number: **09820**
Resource Name: **Former Atha School House**
Address: **555 Concession 8 Road, Pickering, Ontario**
FHBRO Status: **“Recognized” Federal Heritage Building**
Construction: **1864**
Designer: **Unknown**
Original Function: **Schoolhouse**
Current Function: **Vacant**
Modifications: **Basement dug under school to accommodate a coal furnace (1930); chimney added to the east side of the front elevation; original rooftop bell-tower removed; added frame and aluminium siding addition at rear elevation; northern-most of three arched windows on eastern elevation converted to a door; two door openings made through south wall to give access to addition; interior space has been partitioned to serve as a residence.**
Custodian: **Transport Canada**

Description of Historic Place

The former Atha School House consists of a well-built, one-storey, rectangular red brick building with a broad gable roof featuring a drop pendant at the apex of the roofline. The building also features two doors on the front gable-end elevation (one for each gender), an oval date stone between the doors, raised yellow brick quoins at the corners, and symmetrical rows of large multi-paned windows with stone sills and yellow brick arches on both side elevations.

The former Atha School House is located in the midst of rural Pickering Township, on the south side of the 8th concession road, west of the hamlet of Atha. The designation is confined to the footprint of the building.

Heritage Value

The former Atha School House is a “Recognized” Federal Heritage Building because of its historical associations, and its architectural and environmental values:

Historical value:

The former Atha School House is a very good example of the historical theme of the development of a publicly funded system of education in Ontario, following the Common School Acts of 1846 and 1850. The former Atha School House is also a very good example of a public institutional presence in Pickering Township, illustrating a significant phase of cultural development for the community in both recognizing the importance of education and supporting its funding through taxation.

Architectural value:

The former Atha School House is a typical, small, red brick schoolhouse and is a good example of early rural school architecture resulting from the provincial standards for appropriate rural school design in the 19th

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century. Constructed of very good quality materials and craftsmanship, the former Atha School House is also a good example of the simple and adaptable functional design of the open, well-lit, one room layout of schoolhouses from this period.

Environmental value:

The former Atha School House is compatible with the present character of the surrounding agricultural landscape and late 1960s housing development. As the last marker of a former hamlet, the former Atha School House is evocative of a bygone era and is well known as such in Pickering Township.

Character-Defining Elements

The following character-defining elements of the former Atha School House should be respected:

Its role as an illustration of the historical theme of the development of a publicly funded system of education in Ontario, following the Common School Acts of 1846 and 1850 is reflected in:

- its simple and attractive aesthetic design, scale, and solid, well-built appearance which illustrate the influence of the provincial education department's efforts in the 1850s to encourage "modern" school design and is evidence of local support for formal publicly supported education.

Its good aesthetic design, which is an example of early and well designed rural school architecture, its good functional design, and its very good quality materials and craftsmanship as manifested in:

- the clean, simple lines and pure massing composed of a one-storey, rectangular brick block capped with a broad gable roof;
- the pattern of openings with two doors on the front elevation (one for each gender) and symmetrical rows of windows on each side elevation;
- the simple and adaptable design of the open, one-room layout with two small cloakrooms (one for each gender) adjacent to the front entrance doors;
- the effective provision of natural light by means of the large windows lining both sides of the former classroom;
- the highly competent brickwork which provides the character of permanence generally associated with institutional buildings;
- the intact wood doors and windows, with their round-headed upper panelling and/or transoms; and,
- the simple decorative program consisting of contrasting brickwork for the quoins and the round arches above the windows and doors, stone windowsills, an oval date stone between the front doors, and a wooden pendant at the peak of the gable on the front façade.

The manner in which the building is compatible with the present character of the area of the surrounding agricultural landscape and late 1960s housing development and its landmark value as evidenced in:

- its small scale, simple form and massing, and the choice of materials used for its construction; and,
- its familiarity to the community as a former schoolhouse and public building.

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For guidance on interventions, please refer to the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*. For further information contact FHBRO.

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