15 Balsam Lake Drive, Geographic Township of Bexley (St. Thomas Anglican Church and Cemetery Cultural Heritage Landscape)

Heritage Designation Evaluation

Geographic Township of Bexley
PT LT 8, 7 CON N PORTAGE RD BEXLEY BEING PARTS 3 AND 4, 57R2197, ;
S/T INTEREST IN R143084; KAWARTHA LAKES
2023

Kawartha Lakes

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

The subject property has been researched and evaluated in order to determine its cultural heritage significance under Ontario Regulation 9/06 of the Ontario Heritage Act R.S.O. 1990. A property is eligible for designation if it has physical, historical, associative or contextual value and meets any two of the nine criteria set out under Regulation 9/06 of the Act. A heritage evaluation of the property has determined that 15 Balsam Lake Drive has cultural heritage value or interest and merits designation under the Ontario Heritage Act.

1. The property has design value or physical value because it:

i. is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material, or construction method:

The property contains a representative example of a late nineteenth century rural Gothic Revival church. Consistent with the adaptation of the style in North America, particularly as constructed by Anglican congregations, the church employs the key characteristics of a Gothic Revival church of this type, including lancet windows, a steeply pitched roof, and a chancel.

The property is also representative of an evolved continuing cemetery landscape. The property includes an active municipal cemetery as well as the church associated with it where burials have occurred since the end of the nineteenth century. Taken together, these elements form a representative example of a cemetery landscape in rural Ontario which includes both historic and ongoing burials.

ii. displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit:

The property displays a typical degree of craftsmanship for a church and cemetery of this type and age.

iii. demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement:

There are no specific technical or scientific achievements associated with this property.

2. The property has historical or associative value because it:

i. has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization, or institution that is significant to the community:

The property has direct associations with the development of the Anglican Church in Bexley Township in the second half of the nineteenth century as the church serving the Anglican population of this area of the township from 1885 to 2015. The property also has direct associations with local resident and prominent businessman George Laidlaw and his family who were significant local residents in the township from the 1860s onward.

ii. yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture:

The property yields information regarding the development of Anglicanism in Bexley Township in the second half of the nineteenth century. It also yields information regarding the role and prominence of the Laidlaw family in Bexley Township.

iii. demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to the community:

The builder and designer of the building are not known.

3. The property has contextual value because it:

i. is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area:

The property supports the historic rural character of the western portion of Bexley Township as one of the primary institutional structures serving the population around the north shore of Balsam Lake and Victoria Road. It forms part of a wider landscape of dispersed rural settlement including a range of residential, agricultural, commercial and institutional structures dating from the late nineteenth century.

ii. is physically, functionally, visually, or historically linked to its surroundings:

The property is historically linked to its surroundings as part of the rural development of western Bexley Township in the late nineteenth century. The property is located in an area which includes a wide array of historic properties related to the historic development of the township and is linked to them as part of the late nineteenth century development.

It is also historically linked to the former Laidlaw Estate, to which it is immediately adjacent, as the primary institutional structure associated with the estate, although it did not form part of the Laidlaw landholdings. Taken together with the other extant structures related to the Laidlaw family, it forms part of a wider landscape which speaks to the presence and activities of George Laidlaw and his descendants in the local area.

iii. is a landmark.

The property is a well-known and recognized local landmark, visible from both Portage Road and Balsam Lake Drive. It is known in the local community as the former Anglican church as well as the location of an active municipal cemetery.

Design and Physical Value

15 Balsam Lake Drive has design and physical value both due to the church located on the property which is a representative example of a late nineteenth century rural Gothic Revival church and as an evolved cultural heritage landscape representative of rural cemetery development dating from the late nineteenth century. The church is constructed in the Gothic Revival style, which was popular for church architecture at this time, and includes a number of key features of this style as employed in rural structures including its lancet windows with leaded, coloured and stained glass, the entrance porch, the steeply pitched roof and chancel. As a cultural heritage landscape, the property is representative of a rural church cemetery from the late nineteenth century where the burial pattern evolved organically around the place of worship. The cemetery at this property remains active and the landscape is a continuously evolving one.

The Gothic Revival developed as an architectural style in England in the middle of the nineteenth century and was originally developed as a style for ecclesiastical architecture, although it did eventually expand to include other building types, notable houses and institutional buildings. In its early ecclesiastical form, it was explicitly intended to recreate the architectural forms of the Middle Ages in the present day. While medieval-inspired forms and elements had been integrated into both domestic and ecclesiastical architecture as early as the late nineteenth century as part of a wider trends towards eclecticism and historicism in architecture, the 1840s brought new discussion regarding its appropriate use in ecclesiastical buildings, in particular for Anglican churches as both the predominate and established church in Britain. Thinkers such as architect and writing A.W.N. Pugin, among others, posited that Gothic architecture was the most appropriate style for church building because it developed during a period when the Church, and Christianity more generally, was a predominate force in people's lives. As a result, Gothic architecture was seen to embody the beliefs and morals of Christianity and many viewed it as the best, if not the only, style for church architecture.

With this view in mind, a template for the ideal Christian church developed in the 1840s: one based on rural parish churches from the Middle Ages in England which included a number of key features such as a steeply pitched gable roof, lancet windows, an entrance porch or tower, a distinct chancel, and stone construction. Additional features inspired by medieval architecture were also often added, including, but not limited to, buttresses, stained glass, brackets, ornamental ironwork, tracery and belfries. This very specific model was intended to be replicated in new church construction in order to better express the Christian beliefs through its architectural fabric. By the middle of the nineteenth century, it was widely adopted by Anglican congregations and

was gaining traction amongst other denominations, particularly Roman Catholics, but also the dissenting churches.

In England, and Britain more generally, the medieval model was fairly straightforward to reproduce although, by the mid-century, architects and builders had begun to experiment with its form, particularly with regard to the use of brick as a construction material, which was now mass produced and widely available, and the layout and plan of churches in urban and industrial areas which required different massing and relationship to their surroundings that rural parish churches. Where the real challenge came was outside of the United Kingdom in Britain's rapidly expanding empire. The rise of the Gothic Revival as a predominant ecclesiastical architectural style came at a time when Britain was expanding its imperial ambitions in exponentials ways and with that imperial expansion also came the expansion of Christianity, both through its transplantation through immigration where new communities were established by white settlers and through evangelization where missionaries attempted, through various levels of coercion, to convert the inhabitants of Britain's new colonies to Christianity. The use of Gothic Revival architecture in both of these colonial contexts was seen as the correct architectural approach for building new churches but both of these endeavours faced a significant challenge in this regard, namely how to adopt a geographically specific style to areas of the globe where climate, available building materials and financial resources made that difficult, if not impossible.

As a result of this challenge, the Gothic Revival, as employed for ecclesiastical architecture, adapted and grew in the second half of the nineteenth century to a much more flexible style that attempted to take into account the complexities of building this architectural style outside of Britain. This evolution was due, in a large part, to architects working in colonial contexts, although architects and thinkers in Britain also assisted in this regard, attempting to meet the challenge of transplanting Christianity, through its architecture, abroad. Two main shifts took place. The first was the acceptance of material other than stone as acceptable construction materials, a shift that was also taking place in Britain with the increasing use of brick in urban areas. The second was the recognition of the essential elements of the style and its simplification to suit situations where high degrees of decorative details were not feasible; the base elements of the style were reduced to pointed arches – expressed primarily through lancet windows, steeply pitched gable roofs, and the often vague and difficult to interpret principle of verticality, which effectively meant that the eye was drawn upwards, as to the heavens, when looking at a piece of architecture.

These ideas had made their way to Canada by the mid-century, both with architects and with architecturally-minded clergy, mostly from the Church of England, who arrived in the new colony. Adaptation of the style to Canada in

this early period, for both settler congregations and for the increasing number of missions to indigenous people, meant primarily the use of wood as the primary construction material and the use of minimal decorative detail with focus placed on the use of lancet windows and doors, steeply pitched roofs and board and batten as an exterior cladding to emphasize the vertical lines of the building. Gradually, additional details were added to these wooden churches such as decorative bargeboard and finials, entrance porches, belfries and towers. By the mid-1850s, a proliferation of Gothic Revival churches had emerged in communities and rural areas across Canada, most of them constructed in wood.

Throughout the second half of the century, Gothic Revival continued to be the dominate architectural style for churches across English-speaking Canada; the style was also used by French-speaking communities, but there was greater variation. It had also spread beyond the Anglican Church, and was readily used by Catholic and other Protestant congregations. The style also continued to evolve as the colony, later country, continued to grow and develop. With the growth of urban areas and towns, the style continued to mature in Canada, with architects adopting new construction materials, stone and brick, and increasing the use of medieval decorative elements; in many ways, the urbanization and industrialization of Canada brought Gothic Revival architecture closer to its preindustrial rural English roots. By the end of the century, cities and towns across Canada had a proliferation of Gothic Revival churches, representing a range of denominations, mostly built from stone and brick and using a variety of decorative elements derived from medieval architecture. The spread of the style was further accentuated by the growth of pattern books in the mid- to late-nineteenth century which provided examples of Gothic churches to builders and congregations where a skilled architect knowledgeable about the nuances of the style was not necessarily involved in the process. It had become the default architectural style for church building across the country by the end of the century and this is reflected in the contemporary architectural fabric.

Gothic Revival was also the dominant ecclesiastical architectural form in rural Canada, but its evolution throughout the century was less pronounced. With a much smaller population and fewer financial and material resources, rural congregations generally constructed smaller, less ornate versions of the Gothic style, more similar to the early pioneer Gothic churches from the 1840s and 1850s; sometimes these early churches continued to serve local communities and were never replaced. By the second half of the century, the availability of pattern books was also a significant boon to rural communities who invariably did not have an architect to help design their local church and relied on local builders to plan and execute the structure. These books included churches in a variety of sizes and complexity and congregations could choose the type of

design they were interested in, or could simply take elements seen in patterns and apply them to their structure. While rural churches across Ontario and Canada more generally took on a range of sizes, complexities and stylistic details, most took on a familiar form: a rectangular plan with lancet windows and a gable roof, with a range of decorative details, from decorative bargeboard to entrance porches to polychromatic brick, applied to that basic form executed in stone, wood or brick, creating a recognizable archetype of the country church.

The church located at 15 Balsam Lake Drive, also known as St. Thomas Anglican Church, was constructed in 1861 in Oakwood. While the population of Oakwood was booming at this time, there was no local resident clergy to provide services for an Anglican Church and, in 1882, the church was sold to the Anglican congregation around the north shore of Balsam Lake and moved to its present location at some point between 1882 and 1885 when it was consecrated. It is believed to have been moved across the ice on Balsam Lake in winter and reassembled. Movement of buildings in this way was reasonably common in the nineteenth century. By this time, the Gothic Revival was well-established as the predominant architectural style for churches across English-speaking Canada and was the natural stylistic choice for this building. The influence of the Gothic Revival is clear on this structure which includes groups of lancet windows on both the side elevations and chancel, a lancet door on the entrance porch, and a steeply pitched gable roof. The majority of the windows on the church are of leaded glass without pictorial representations, with the exception of the main eastern window which includes an image of Christ holding a lamb in the middle panel, and a baptismal font and chalice on the flanking panels; this is typical of many small rural churches which generally focussed their efforts and funds on providing stained glass for the chancel windows. The interior of the building also demonstrates the use of the Gothic style, namely in its chancel arch, as well as the liturgical furniture included in the church, such as the altar, chancel rail, pulpit and pews, which integrate Gothic Revival forms such as pointed arches. Many liturgical items from the interior of the building were removed when the church was closed in 2015 and, although it no longer operates as a church, the liturgical practices from its former use as a place of worship are still clearly evident in the building's interior. The exterior is clad in contemporary siding which replaced older, wooden siding, although what that siding was in unknown. The building itself is constructed in wood, which remained popular in rural building for the entirety of the second half of the nineteenth century, particularly in forested regions.

One of the notable features of this building is its distinct chancel, a feature that is not always found on rural churches and is more closely associated with Anglican and Catholic buildings, than their Protestant counterparts. In the early days of the Gothic Revival, one of the major features emphasised by early

thinkers was the inclusion of a distinct architectural chancel. This was a break from the past several centuries of church building where chancels had often been eliminated; the reason for their elimination had been as a result of changes in liturgical patterns, namely in Protestant churches were the altar had been brought forward so the minister could stand behind it facing the congregation and the location of the choir had been moved, in a shift away from prevailing Catholic worship norms which included an altar at the back of the chancel and the priest facing it and away from the congregation. However, changes in Anglican liturgical practice around the 1840s which re-examined and reintegrated a number of historical liturgical forms had advocated again for the chancel to be reinstated, although the altar generally remained in a location so that the priest could stand behind it. One of the major intentions of this was to move the choir back into the chancel, although this only generally happened in larger churches. However, the addition of the chancel became a relatively standard feature in Anglican churches in the second half of the nineteenth century and differentiates from many of its contemporary churches. Similarly, St. Thomas' also points east, another medieval custom revived by the Gothic Revival where churches were to be oriented to the east so that the congregation pray towards Jerusalem. This custom was ignored by many church builders in North America who were more concerned regarding the practicalities of orienting churches in relation to the lot size, orientation and conditions, but it was practiced more widely by both Catholic and Anglican congregations. When the church was moved to this location, it was oriented to the east in accordance with this practice which persisted throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. Its orientation at its original location is unknown.

In addition to the church, the subject property also contains a cemetery dating from the late nineteenth century which developed in conjunction with the church and, taken together, form a representative example of a nineteenth century rural church cemetery landscape. The cemetery, and its relationship to the church, are demonstrative in trends in cemetery design and development in rural Ontario during the second half of the nineteenth century from a time when burial had become more regularized outside of the pioneer period.

Death and dying were a regular part of life in nineteenth century Ontario and burial sites an integral aspect of the landscape where funerary rites and customs could be observed. Cemeteries and burial grounds were organic and natural parts of the everyday landscapes of nineteenth century communities and served a vital purpose in local community culture. The first settlers created their own cemeteries, often on their own property to bury their decreased family members. While death and burial at this time was still heavily associated with religion, primarily, in Ontario at this time, Christianity, the majority of early settlers did not have access to a local church and graveyard because, during

the period of early settlement, they simply did not exist. Mortality amongst early settlers was high and family cemeteries were often the only place to bury the dead, particularly when there were no other families in the immediate vicinity. When these communal facilities were available was widely dependant on when an area was settled and how many people lived there; while some areas in Ontario, particularly near Lake Ontario and Lake Erie had organized cemeteries dating back to the late eighteenth century, family burials were still taking place in some remote and rural areas at the turn of the twentieth century.

With additional settlement, but often still not church, a communal cemetery was often founded by a group of a local families, many of whom were often of the same denomination and culture, due to settlement patterns across the province where settlers of similar origins tended to cluster together. Land for this communal cemetery was usually donated by a local settler; small pioneer cemeteries of this type are regular features across the rural Ontario landscape, with some evolving over the years into larger cemeteries, either associated with a church or as a non-denominational burying ground, but many were no longer used as communities continued to grow and develop.

However, when a church was constructed, generally the cemetery was established in the churchyard; this was not always the case, but burying the dead in the churchyard was a longstanding Christian practice in Britain and Europe and it was continued when settlers came to Ontario. The interrelationship between rites and rituals that took place within the church and in the burying ground made their close proximity practical and necessary. It also separated out burials along denominational lines. As a result, the church and associated cemetery landscape became a well-recognized and typical feature across Ontario's rural and urban landscape.

By the mid-nineteenth century, however, ideas surrounding cemetery development were evolving, particularly in urban areas where churchyard cemeteries were filling up and increases in population meant that burials needed additional regulation both to ensure that there was somewhere for people to be buried and to ensure that burials were hygienic, sanitary and were not having negative impact on local communities. As a result, a new template for cemetery construction emerged. These new cemeteries, often known as garden cemeteries, were non-denominational and not located in close proximity to a church; in fact, most were located right at the outer edge of the settlement are which with they were associated. They were explicitly designed, sometimes by landscape architects, to create a pleasant and rural pastoral experience with landscaped areas, large trees, maintained gardens, and elaborate monuments and gravestones. The goal was to create a beautiful park-like surrounding for burial and reflection, in contrast to often irregular and unmaintained church burial grounds, and these spaces usually doubled as

parkland in urban areas. Many of these were owned and operated by independent, non-profit cemetery companies, although others were established by local municipalities.

Despite the growth of non-denominational cemeteries during this period, by the turn of the century, the vast majority of cemeteries in Ontario were still associated with a church, and most of these were in a churchyard or directly adjacent to it, reinforcing the very direct connection between burial and religion which was still very strongly felt by communities across the province. This was particularly the case in rural areas where churches had the land to continue this practice. While these types of cemeteries were established in some small towns and rural communities, including in Kawartha Lakes, they were not the norm in rural areas. However, trends from the garden cemetery movement were often integrated in church yard cemeteries to beautify and enhance them, such as the maintenance of large trees, the creation of paths and gardens, and the retention of open space within the cemetery.

The cemetery at 15 Balsam Lake Drive clearly falls within this late nineteenth century churchyard cemetery typology and is highly representative of a church cemetery in rural Ontario from this period. The cemetery was established after the church was constructed and grew up around it, but, unlike many earlier cemeteries, the pattern of grave markers was regularized within the lawn around the building, drawing on contemporary design patterns draw from the garden cemetery movement. In addition to its location in a rural area of Kawartha Lakes, the cemetery exhibits the naturalistic aesthetic preferred in cemetery design at this time through the retention of large, mature trees on the lot, wide spaces between rows of graves and manicured lawn. Taken along with the church, the cemetery forms a cohesive and complete cultural heritage landscape which demonstrates and reflects patterns in nineteenth century church construction and cemetery design in rural Ontario.

Historical and Associative Value

15 Balsam Lake Drive has historical and associative value as the former Anglican Church serving the area around the north shore of Balsam Lake and Victoria Road. The church, which was constructed in 1861 in Oakwood, was moved from Oakwood between 1882 and 1885 to this location and operated as an Anglican church from 1885 to 2015. The property also has significant historical associations with prominent local resident George Laidlaw, the Scottish businessman who built his fortune in both the grain and railway businesses in the mid-nineteenth century and also acquired substantial holdings in Bexley Township beginning in the 1860s. It yields information regarding the both the development of the Anglican Church in Bexley

Township in the second half of the nineteenth century and the role of the Laidlaw family in the development of the area during this period.

Bexley Township was first surveyed in 1831 and limited settlement followed soon after, primarily near the north shore of Balsam Lake where the church is located. Settlement was slow, however, likely due to the poor quality of the soil and the difficulty in accessing the township throughout much of the mid-nineteenth century; by the 1871 census, fewer than 500 people lived in the township. More substantial settlement did not take off in the area until the early 1870s and the arrival of the Toronto and Nipissing Railway in 1872. The railway began construction in Toronto in 1871 with the intention of eventually creating a railway link to Lake Nipissing; the line made it as far as Coboconk, running roughly east-west across Bexley Township, north of Balsam Lake, with stops at Victoria Road, Corson's Siding and in Coboconk. Although it never reached its final destination, the railway had significant implications for Bexley Township: it allowed for settlers to more easily and quickly enter into the township and it heralded a period of economic and population growth throughout the 1870s and 1880s. During this time, new settlements were formed and consolidated and the infrastructure and services available in the township increased to respond to new demand. This includes the establishment of new churches, as religion was at the heart of pioneer life and one of the primary institutions in the villages and hamlets throughout northern Victoria County.

Many of the settlers in the township were English, Irish and Scottish Protestants and the growth of religion and the construction of new churches in the township in the late nineteenth century mirrored this demographic pattern. By the turn of the century, Methodism was the largest religious group in Bexley Township. The 1911 census demonstrates the religious affiliations of the population with 317 local residents identifying as Methodists, compared to 195 Anglicans, 121 Presbyterians, and 110 Catholics. This was consistent with population growth and development throughout the second half of the nineteenth century where Methodists were consistently the largest religious group in the township, followed by Anglicans.

The secondary place of Anglicans within the townships Christian denominations can be seen in the buildings constructed for the denominations. For a snapshot of the religious buildings near the end of the century, the 1892 Ontario Gazetteer and Directory shows four Methodist churches in the township at Bexley Corners, Victoria Road, Coboconk and Corson's Siding, one Presbyterian church in Coboconk, one Catholic church in Victoria Road, and two Anglican churches in Coboconk and Victoria Road; the latter of these is the subject property. Despite its role as the established church, the Anglican Church was not the primary denomination in the township and was primary attended by settlers of English origin, who both arrived in fewer numbers and

later than their fellow settlers of Scottish and Irish descent. Neither of the two Anglican churches were constructed until the mid-1880s, substantially later than their Methodist counterparts some of which were initially constructed in the 1860s, and this reflects the demographic development of the township.

The subject property was identified as the Anglican church in Victoria Road as it served the area surrounding it which included the settlement of Victoria Road which is located in close proximity to the church; it was in fact, known for many years, as St. Thomas Victoria Road. When the first Anglican services for the residents of this area is not known, but at some point in the second half of the century, services were held at Lytle's Corners, near the intersection of the Portage and Victoria colonization Roads. These services were later moved to the town hall in Victoria Road; by the early 1870s, the hamlet was booming with the arrival of the Toronto and Nipissing Railway and the growth of the lumber industry locally.

A dedicated church was not able to be built until land was acquired for it and this did not occur until the early 1880s. The land for the church was donated to the Synod of Toronto in 1882 by Henry James Scott. Why land for the church was not acquired in Victoria Road itself is not known. Scott had acquired the land, known as Lot 8 North Portage Road, in 1873 and had sold the majority of it to the Toronto distillery Gooderham and Worts, which owned large amounts of land in Bexley Township in the late nineteenth century to produce cordwood for their operations. The final portion was deeded to the Church for $1 for the erection of a place of worship. Despite this known origin of the land, it is widely believed that the land was donated by George Laidlaw, who owned the majority of the land around the church and also purchased the balance of lot surrounding the church from Gooderham and Worts in 1883. However, although Laidlaw did not donate the land, the church nevertheless is strongly associated locally with the Laidlaw family who were significant and prominent residents of Bexley Township in the second half of the nineteenth century. Locally, this church is heavily associated with the Laidlaw family, an association which continued to the present day.

George Laidlaw first acquired land in Bexley Township in the early 1870s, but his fortune was made elsewhere. Laidlaw as born in Scotland in 1828 and emigrated to Canada in 1855 where he established himself in Toronto as a wheat buyer for Gooderham and Worts, eventually establishing his own grain buying firm. However, Laidlaw's primary influence in nineteenth century Ontario was not through his grain operations, but rather through his role as a railway developer. Through his business, Laidlaw became aware of the deficiencies of the current railway system throughout southern Ontario, then Upper Canada, in the mid-nineteenth century; in essence, the monopoly of the Grand Trunk Railway and poor water and road transport links made the majority of rural Ontario in accessible for commercial ventures. These

shortcomings made both freight and passenger transports expensive and inefficient across the province and, as businessman who relied on the movement of grain from rural areas to Toronto, Laidlaw was poised to benefit from changes in the railway system.

As a result, Laidlaw became and enthusiastic promoter of local and regional railways constructed using narrow gauge, as opposed to standard gauge used by the Grand Trunk system. Narrow gauge, he reasoned, would be cheaper and quicker to lay tracks for and could result in easier expansion into remote areas of the province. He was enthusiastically backed by other Toronto businesses, including Gooderham and Worts, who saw his proposal as a boon for their businesses and for the growth of Toronto as a major metropolitan centre with a strong commercial and industrial base. By the late 1860s, Laidlaw had proposed two new railways to reach from Toronto into rural central Ontario: the Toronto, Grey and Bruce Railway Company and the Toronto and Nipissing Railway Company. Both were granted charters in 1868 and built throughout the late 1860s and early 1870s, with the former eventually terminating at Teeswater and the later at Coboconk. Three other main railway schemes were also developed by Laidlaw. The Credit Valley Railway was intended to run west from Toronto to St. Thomas with branches throughout the Credit River Valley, and, although it was eventually built, was never the success Laidlaw envisaged. The Victoria Railway, built from Lindsay to Haliburton in the mid-1870s, had substantially more success and provided a vital link between Lindsay, by then a significant railway hub, the northern townships of Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton County throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. His final scheme was the creation of an integrated network that linked the regional networks with Quebec City, Montreal and Ottawa to rival the Grand Trunk; this system was eventually built, as the Canadian Pacific Railway in southern Ontario, but Laidlaw was not involved in its execution.

Throughout his career as a railway developer, Laidlaw was also involved in purchasing land in Bexley Township. In about 1871, he acquired the first of a number of parcels of land along the north shore of Balsam Lake directly adjacent to the land through which the Toronto and Nipissing Railway would run two years later when it reached Coboconk in 1873. Land in this area was also purchased by Gooderham and Worts and cordwood for transport on the line was harvested from all of these properties. Throughout the next several decades, he gradually added to his landholdings which totally thousands of acres throughout the township. The property was used as a summer home for Laidlaw and his family until his retirement around 1880 when he moved permanently to the Balsam Lake property, known as the Fort Ranch. Here he effectively became a gentleman farmer, establishing a significant ranching operation for which he imported pure bread sheep and cattle from Scotland,

Jersey and Guernsey. Laidlaw resided on his estate until his death in 1889 and had become known as the Laid of Bexley for his large landholdings and substantial involvement in the Bexley agricultural community. The ranch was continued by his sons, particularly Colonel George E. Laidlaw who continued to reside on and run the estate and his family remained in the area. In June 1889, just before his death, the *Lindsay Watchman-Warder* wrote:

> Back in the township of Bexley, county of Victoria, bordering on Balsam Lake, the Laird of Bexley has his seat. Rich in land possessed by many horned cattle, respected by neighbours, visited occasionally by his old cronies, George Laidlaw is passing the remainder of his days in patriarchal and pastoral simplicity...[with] four hundred prime bullocks fattening up on the grassy fields and woodlands that make up the 2000 acres of the Laidlaw dominion.[1]

Laidlaw's stature in the township was well established by the mid-1880s, and that included his status as a primary congregant at St. Thomas' Church. His exact involvement in the church is not fully understood, but it is known that the family attended the church, with a pew set aside for the Laidlaws and it is believed that George Laidlaw had made some significant contribution to the church and its operations.

Prior to the closure of the church, a plaque dedicated to George Laidlaw and his wife Ann Middleton (1834-1886) was place at the end of the dedicated Laidlaw pew; the plaque was removed with the closure of the church and is now in the possession of the Laidlaw family. It was assumed locally that the plaque was erected due to a contribution by George Laidlaw to the construction of the church, namely the donation of the land. However, as records indicate that Laidlaw did not donate the land, any contributions were likely financial and logistical; it is highly likely that Laidlaw had a hand in the transport and reconstruction of the building. It would have had to pass through his property, which by the time the building arrived surrounded the church lot, and it is highly likely that Laidlaw was involved in someway in its reconstruction. It is also possible that he contributed financially to the construction and operation of the church. What is clear is that Laidlaw was involved in the church, and his family continued to attend the church and participate in church life after his death; this has been verified both by surviving family members and other plaques located in the church, including one to his daughter Annie Charity Ballantyne Laidlaw (1867-1928) and her husband Alexander Alcorn McDonald (1867-1958) for service in the church. It is interesting to note, however, that Laidlaw himself was not an Anglican, as

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[1] "The Laird of Bexley," *Lindsay Watchman-Warder,* June 20, 1889, 4.

census and other records clearly indicate that he was a Presbyterian. His wife, however, was an Anglican and their evident involvement in the church may have been at her influence. Their children are variously identified with the two denominations, but what is clear that, whatever their denominational affiliation, the Laidlaws attended St. Thomas' Church when they were present at the Fort Ranch.

Through this association, the property yields information regarding the Laidlaw family in Bexley Township, particularly with regard to their associations and activities outside of railway building and farming. George Laidlaw and his family, both his children and later descendants, are extremely well-known in the local area, but are generally associated with their businesses activities in the township. Their association with this church provides additional information regarding their role the local church and relationship to the wider Balsam Lake community separately from their business ventures and George's substantial involvement in the development of the Toronto and Nipissing Railway and the development of the Fort Ranch.

Contextual Value

15 Balsam Lake Drive has contextual value as part of the historic landscape along the north shore of Balsam Lake, specifically as a surviving part of the landscape of the Laidlaw Estate, although it was not originally owned by the Laidlaw family. It forms part of the wider historic rural landscape of Bexley Township which is widespread across a substantial rural area. The property is also located at the intersection of Balsam Lake Drive and Portage Road and is a well-known and highly visible local landmark.

The area in which the subject property is located is a disbursed rural area with limited historic settlement and church and cemetery are historically linked to the wider area as part of the development of western Bexley Township in late nineteenth century. In the nineteenth century, the area included a number of key resources: agricultural properties, woodlots used as part of the lumber industry, and limited hamlet settlement in Victoria Road. These features were dispersed over a large geographic area in keeping with the poor agricultural conditions and settlement patterns found in the township. Heritage resources of a similar age related to the settlement of this portion of the township are extant in the surrounding area and, taken together, form a dispersed grouping of interrelated cultural heritage resources. These included a number of historic farms in the immediate vicinity of the church and cemetery, as well as the more concentrated settlement at Victoria Road which includes residential, commercial, institutional and engineering-related structures. The church and cemetery help maintain the historic rural character of this area as a primary historic institutional property which has survived from the late nineteenth century.

The property is also historically linked to the Laidlaw Estate and currently forms a part of the cultural heritage landscape along Balsam Lake Drive associated with the Laidlaw family. The former Laidlaw lands include the majority of Lot 8 North Portage Road, with the exception of the church land and the properties surrounding it. While the estate has since been divided up and portions sold to owners outside the Laidlaw family, a number of cultural heritage features from the estate are still extant and together form the cultural heritage landscape of the Laidlaw Estate and its associated lands. This landscape speaks to the presence and activities of the Laidlaw family along Balsam Lake from the mid-nineteenth century onward. In particular, these include the dry stone walls on both sides Balsam Lake Drive, a number of extant historic buildings, and natural features includes field and forested areas. Although it did not form part of the Laidlaw landholdings, the church forms part of this landscape as the place of worship closely associated and immediately with the estate and speaks to the activities of the Laidlaw family, outside of their immediate business interests, at the end of the nineteenth century.

The property is also a local landmark as a former Anglican church serving the surrounding area and as an active cemetery for the local community. The church and cemetery were operated by the Anglican Church from 1885 to 2015 and have a high degree of significance for community members who attended the church or whose family members are buried in the cemetery. The cemetery continues to be operated by the City of Kawartha Lakes. Both the cemetery and church are well-known locally and their status together as a local landmark is enhanced by the prominent location of the property near the intersection of Portage Road and Balsam Lake Drive. The property is visible from both roadways and provides a landmark on the route between Coboconk and Kirkfield on Portage Road.

Summary of Reasons for Designation

The short statement of reasons for designation and the description of the heritage attributes of the property, along with all other components of the Heritage Designation Brief, constitution the Reasons for Designation required under the Ontario Heritage Act.

Short Statement of Reasons for Designation

Design and Physical Value

15 Balsam Lake Drive contains a representative example of a late nineteenth century rural Gothic Revival church. Consistent with the adaptation of the style in North America, the church employs the key characteristics of a Gothic Revival church of this type, particularly as constructed by Anglican congregations, including lancet windows, a steeply pitched gable roof, and a chancel. The church was constructed in 1861 in Oakwood and later moved to this location. The property is also representative of an evolved continuing cemetery landscape. The property includes an active municipal cemetery as well as the church associated with it where burials have occurred since the end of the nineteenth century. Taken together, these elements form a representative example of a cemetery landscape in rural Ontario which includes both historic and ongoing burials.

Historical and Associative Value

The property has historical and associative value for its association with both the development of the Anglican Church in Bexley Township in the late nineteenth century and its relationship to businessman and railway magnate George Laidlaw. The church is one of two Anglican churches constructed in Bexley Township in the nineteenth century and speak to the demographics of the township during this period. The church and cemetery were constructed on lands directly adjacent to the Laidlaw Estate, purchased by George Laidlaw who made his fortune in grain trade and the railway before retiring to his estate on Balsam Lake. The church was attended by the Laidlaw family from its opening in 1885 and its directly associated with this prominent local family.

Contextual Value

15 Balsam Lake Drive has contextual value in its role as part of the wider historical landscape demonstrating the late nineteenth century development of Bexley Township, as well as part of the extant landscape of the former Laidlaw Estate. As one of the primary institutional properties in the local area, the church and cemetery maintain and support the historic character of the surrounding rural region which contains a range of historic residential, agricultural and commercial properties. Similarly, the property is related to the adjacent Laidlaw Estate, which contains a range of historic resources as the institutional structure associated with it. It is also a local landmark as the

former local Anglican church and cemetery and for its prominent position near the intersection of Portage Road and Balsam Lake Drive.

Summary of Heritage Attributes to be Designated

The Reasons for Designation include the following heritage attributes and apply to all elevations, unless otherwise specified, and the roof including: all façades, entrances, windows, chimneys, and trim, together with construction materials of wood, brick, stone, stucco, concrete, plaster parging, metal, glazing, their related building techniques and landscape features.

Design and Physical Attributes

The design and physical attributes support the value of the church as a representative example of a rural Gothic Revival church constructed in the late nineteenth century for an Anglican congregation as well as its value as an evolved cultural heritage landscape including both the church and active cemetery.

- One-storey construction
- Gable roof
- Rounded chancel
- Entrance porch including:
    - Lancet door
- Fenestration including:
    - Grouped and single lancet windows
    - Leaded and coloured glass
    - Stained glass
- Clapboard-style cladding
- Cemetery
- Location of church in the centre of the cemetery grounds
- Burials dating back to 1895
- Headstones and markers in a range of historic and contemporary styles
- Mature trees
- Chancel arch and step
- Barrel vault
- Altar rail
- Pulpit with lancet motifs
- Pews with lancet motifs

Historical and Associative Attributes

The historical and associative attributes support the direct associations of the church and cemetery with prominent local resident George Laidlaw as well as the development of religion in Bexley Township in the second half of the nineteenth century.

- Association with George Laidlaw
- Association with the Anglican church in Bexley Township
- Orientation of the church towards the east

Contextual Attributes

The contextual attributes support the value of the property as a local landmark and its historic relationship with the Laidlaw Estate.

- Location near the intersection of Portage Road and Balsam Lake Drive
- Relationship of the church to properties and structures associated with the Laidlaw Estate including, but not limited to, the Laidlaw dry stone wall and the Fort Cottage
- Views of the property from Balsam Lake Drive and Portage Road
- Views of the surrounding rural landscape from the church and cemetery

Images

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