

479 Eldon Road, Geographic Township of Mariposa (Little Britain Continuation School)

Heritage Designation Evaluation

Mariposa Township

LT 20 W/S KING ST AND N/S MILL ST PL 79; PT S1/2 LT 15 CON 5 MARIPOSA;
PT LT 19 W/S KING ST AND N/S MILL ST PL 79 AS IN R372169; KAWARTHA
LAKES
2024



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 479 Eldon Road 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 is a representative example of an early twentieth century consolidation school. Constructed in 1929, it employs the restrained Classical features of early twentieth century school design and is representative of new rural consolidation schools erected during this period.

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

The property displays a typical degree of craftsmanship for a building of this type.

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 history of education in Little Britain and in Mariposa Township more generally as both the public and continuation school for the hamlet and surrounding rural area.

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 history of education in rural Mariposa Township, specifically with regard to the development of secondary education in rural communities in Ontario around the turn of the twentieth century.

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 school 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 helps maintain the character of the area as a rural hamlet in its role as a former rural school. It supports the overall character of the hamlet as one of its core institutional building that form the complete landscape of the hamlet area.

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

The property is historically linked to its surroundings as part of the historic development of Little Britain from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century as part of a collection of diverse historic buildings from the pre-World War Two period that form the hamlet around the intersection of Eldon Road and Little Britain Road.

iii. is a landmark.

The property is a landmark as the former local school which operated from 1929 to 1972. It is located prominently at the north entrance to the hamlet along Eldon Road and is a well-known structure in the community and surrounding rural area.

Design and Physical Value

479 Eldon Road has design and physical value as a representative example of an early twentieth century. Constructed in the Beaux-Arts style, it originally demonstrated the key architectural features associated with this style, including large banks of windows, a rusticated foundation and symmetrical massing alongside more unique features, such as its crenelated tower. The building has been extensively modified since its original date of construction, but nevertheless still retains some of its features, as well as its massing, that is typical of new school construction in the first decades of the twentieth century. It is also unique as a surviving example of a rural continuation school as it is the sole example of this type of early twentieth century school in Mariposa Township.

School architecture evolved substantially throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century, as communities across Ontario grew and developed. This was the case in Little Britain as it was in other growing communities throughout the province. Many early school buildings were not purpose-built structures and classes often took place in residential structures or churches; it is likely that this was the case in Little Britain as it is known that a school section was established here at least two years before a formal school was built. However, as communities became more established, purpose-built structures were quickly erected, often in frame or log and highly utilitarian in design. They were built to serve a pressing need – provision of space for educating children – and lacked any sort of specialized facilities or decorative architectural elements. These early schools were usually constructed by community members without any external input from architects or provincial education officials. The first public school in Little Britain was built around 1846 to the north of the settlement on Lot 16, Concession 7 and situated in a log building.

By the second half of the century, school architecture had evolved rapidly, particularly in urban communities where there were funds to invest in new school buildings where industrialization and increasing in population were bringing new prosperity to many communities across the province. Financial security and additional resources, as well as a desire to emanate prosperity and permanence through a rush of civic enthusiasm, led to the construction of a range of new schools in up-to-date architectural styles.

The shift from utilitarian to more architectural design was assisted by two factors: the increasing number of architects in nineteenth century Ontario and the proliferation of pattern books across the province. On one hand, the increasing number of architects in the province in the second half of the nineteenth century, both those who immigrated to the province and those born there, meant that professional design expertise was increasingly available for school design and communities and local school boards hired architects to

design their schools in the latest styles. This was particularly the case in urban areas where more architects were located and where the new schools being constructed in the second half of the nineteenth century were larger than their rural counterparts which were usually one room. Pattern books, on the other hand, provided both knowledge and information to communities where the services of architects were not available, a particular boon for rural and remote communities, but also helped disseminate wider ideas related to technical aspects of design. The importance of pattern books for the development of school architecture in Ontario was much the same as for domestic and institutional architecture, where booms in pattern book availability also assisted in the wide spread of popular nineteenth century architectural styles across the province.

Increasingly, the provincial government was also becoming involved in school construction and design. Ontario's Department of Education was formed in 1876 out of the earlier Department of Public Instruction and, as the government body in charge of education across the province, was active in providing and promoting school design. As the education system across the province became more regularized, so too did the variety of rules, regulations and guidance provided to schools and school boards across Ontario, including regarding architecture. While local schools were not obligated to use the designs provided by the government, they were increasingly required to conform to a variety of regulations regarding school construction and safety and the pattern provided in these texts adhered to the standards set by the Department. These texts generally included a range of guidelines on different aspects of school, as well as example school designs and architectural details that local schools could incorporate into new construction.

One of the major developments in school design in the late nineteenth century was with regard to ideas around the integration of provisions related to health safety into educational architecture. The late nineteenth century had seen the rise of the social reform movement which looked to the health of children as one of its primary challenges, particularly in urban areas where the proliferation of slums and poor quality housing meant that many children were living in abject poverty with little or no access to running water or sanitary systems. Although children in poverty were a primary point of interest for this movement, the importance of children's health was a universal concern. Increased understanding of communicable disease and the impact of the environment on health meant that a variety of strategies and initiatives were developed to address this concern. Reformers of this period saw physical infrastructure as an important indicator and promotor of health through the provision of clean air and comfortable temperatures. Children who lived in warm homes with good air circulation had better health and would grow up into better and more productive members of society. So too it was with schools where comfortable temperatures in both winter and summer and fresh

air circulating throughout the buildings was seen to translate into a better atmosphere for learning and increased educational attainment. The extension of this emphasis on health was on increased sanitation through the provision of clean, preferably indoor, bathrooms and running water. Light was also a factor to increase the ability of students to see and read well and to promote good ocular health; indoor electrical lighting was developing around the turn of the century, but was not widely used under the 1920s meaning that light needed to come from the outdoors through substantial windows in classrooms with high ceilings. This new emphasis on health-related matters translated directly into architectural design choices, such as large windows, bigger classrooms, and provisions for central heating and plumbing. As a result, schools of this period were complex architectural forms with significant mechanical systems and the design of buildings needed to evolve to reflect and support these physical, as opposed to aesthetic concerns. By the time the subject property was constructed in 1929, these ideas were well integrated into dialogue regarding school design and their use was nearly universal across new schools being designed and built both in Ontario and across North America.

While the health and well-being of children drove design choices around issues such as lighting and plumbing, safety was also a concern, particularly with regard to fire safety. Although concern around fire safety had been taken into account in school design since the late nineteenth century, one of the major drivers in developments in fire safety, in particular, was the 1908 fire at Lake View School in Collinwood, Ohio, a suburb of Cleveland, where 172 children were killed, in large part, due to the architectural design of the building where small exits and hallways and limited point of egress made escaping from the building extremely difficult and a flammable wooden structure made the fire move quickly through the multi-storey late nineteenth century building. This was not the only school fire in turn of the century North America, but certainly one of the most devastating and well-publicized and its tragic outcome put concerns around safety once again to the fore. As a result, an increased awareness of fire safety and the importance of architectural measures to prevent fires from spreading and allowing children to quickly exit school buildings was quickly integrated to educational architectural design, in part by choice but also by new fire safety regulations for public buildings implemented in jurisdictions across North America throughout the next several decades. This awareness translated into certain very specific design features such as the integration of large hallways and unobstructed exits, the increased use of concrete as a fire barrier, particularly between floors, and a move away from wood stoves as heat methods and towards centralized heating using alternative fuel sources. For urban or village schools, where there was more than one classroom, multiple stories and a large number of students, the need for considering architectural and physical issues with regard to fire safety was

an even greater consideration due to the increased complexity of disaster response in a large structure.

Despite a substantial emphasis on practical elements, school design also evolved aesthetically in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, generally reflecting the prevalent design trends and popular styles of the day. Although this was also the case in rural areas with one and two-roomed school houses, it was at its most dramatic in urban areas, and larger village and hamlets, where larger buildings and bigger budgets gave substantial scope for architectural experimentation and the integration of a range of design features. In communities such as Little Britain, which were growing into important settlements but were not large urban centres, school architecture was still designed to use the most up-to-date trends and features of the day, but often pared back to reflect the size and financial means of the community.

The Beaux-Arts style dominated Canadian school architecture throughout the early decades of the twentieth century. This style, which originated in France in the early nineteenth century, used an eclectic mix of exaggerated Classical forms on generally symmetrically massed structures to create a dynamic, expressive architectural form. While European examples of this style tended to be highly decorative, the adaptation of the Beaux Arts in North America, where it enjoyed a period of popularity from about 1880 to 1920, was more subdued and focused instead on the use of a range of eclectically combined Classical stylistic motifs, heavy masonry and subtle polychromy. This style was used almost exclusively on public buildings, including government buildings, certain types of commercial buildings such as banks, institutional structures like theatres, and schools. This coincided with a period preference for Classical forms in architecture across building types, such as the Edwardian Classical style which evolved from and often overlapped stylistically with Beaux-Arts architecture but was also used in residential structures.

In school architecture, a number of key features emerged within the Beaux-Arts type. These schools were usually multiple storeys and composed with symmetrical massing, but often on H- or U-shaped plans, with a central hall and entrance, although they often included entrances on both the front and side elevations. Almost exclusively constructed in brick, they integrated a range of decorative elements that included a number of eclectic and exaggerated Classical elements, such as cornices along the roofline, columns and pilasters, pediments and substantial entrance surrounds. Most noticeably, they were characterized by large banks of tall sash windows; this feature derived from ideas surrounding ventilation and lighting, not from the Beaux-Arts style more broadly, but quickly became associated with Beaux-Arts school design because of its prevalence across these types of structures. These features were most typically found in urban schools, such as those built in Lindsay in the early 1910s, but the larger multi-storey structures of this type

could often be found in smaller communities, when continuation schools were established or when the community was a central hub for a much larger rural area. Both of these situations were the case in Little Britain, which served as one of the main settlement centres Mariposa Township and because the school, constructed in 1929, also served as a continuation school, with secondary classes offered beginning in 1924 in the school that preceded the subject property.

The present school evolved from a series of structures which themselves are demonstrative of the evolution of school architecture throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The school was, in fact, the fifth to serve Little Britain. The first two structures, erected in 1846 and 1854, were log buildings to the north of the hamlet and little is known about what they looked like. These structures were replaced by a new school within the bounds of Little Britain itself, along the west side of what is now Eldon Road, erected in 1867. This new school was built in a typical Victorian style and representative of small town and rural schools built throughout the 1860s and 1870s in Ontario; while still utilitarian in its design, it began to incorporate new design elements into its red brick exterior, including buff brick quoins and window surrounds alongside a decorative belfry above the enclosed entrance porch. The school was enlarged twice: in 1868, just a year after it was built, and again in 1877 to accommodate a rapidly growing school aged population in Little Britain.

By 1913, the old school was no longer fit for purpose and the local authorities decided that it was time for a new school. This school, the immediate predecessor to the subject property, was opened in February 1914 to much fanfare in the local community and was reported on at length in local newspapers, including the *Watchman-Warder*. This was the first Beaux-Arts school erected in Little Britain and adhered tightly to its principles with large windows, spacious classrooms and up-to-date ventilation and sanitary systems. Aesthetically, the school was almost an identical copy of the school erected in Oakwood the previous year, incorporating a covered porch with a rounded entrance and a unique hexagonal belfry; it is likely, but not confirmed, that the schools were designed by the same architect, William B. Taylor. The *Watchman-Warder* noted of this new school that:

...the school section deserved the greatest praise for what it has accomplished, and Little Britain people would serve as an example in the school line, and as before stated that school were always an index to the standard of the intelligence of a community and the value of the impress of the Little Britain school on the public could not be over estimated. Every school facility has been supplied. The ventilation especially was above reproach. Anything

towards the building of splendid physiques should be received with open arms and adopted.¹

Unfortunately, this school quickly became insufficient for the needs of the community. In 1924, continuation classes were introduced to Little Britain and accommodated within this school, which only had two classrooms on the main floor. The continuation students were initially accommodated in the basement, but because the closest continuation school at this time was in Woodville, the Little Britain continuation classes attracted many students from outside of the school section and the building was quickly overcrowded. By 1927, plans were underway to build an addition to the school but, in March 1928, fire swept through the 1914 structure and it was destroyed. As a result, a new school – the subject property – was built and formally opened in February 1929.

As with its predecessor, the new school was constructed in the Beaux-Arts style, but with a larger footprint and its own unique features. On the interior, it included four classrooms on the main floor – two for the public school and two for the continuation school – alongside cloakrooms, a staffroom for each male and female staff, and a library. The basement was also fully finished with washrooms, a recreation room, and a chemistry lab. The exterior featured large banks of windows to illuminate the classrooms on both the main storey and the basement, alongside a rusticated foundation, polychromatic decorative brickwork on the side elevations, a wide cornice, and parapet gables. Its most distinctive feature was its central entrance which took the form of a crenelated tower with double doors and a large plaque with the name of the school: “S.S. No. 8 Mariposa Public and Continuation School.” This school was typical of a Beaux-Arts school erected at this time with an extensive focus on health and safety elements as indicated, particularly, by its large windows for light and ventilation, as well as its large central entrance and corresponding side entrances for fire safety.

Unfortunately, the school has been extensively modified since its original construction. The crenellation on the tower was removed by the 1940s, and other elements were modified after the closure and sale of the school in 1972. It has since been turned into apartment buildings and physical modifications have been made for that purpose. The main modification has been the removal of the large banks of windows and replacement with smaller units. The parapet gables have also been removed and cornice modified. Nevertheless, key elements of the building remain and make it recognizable as a school building from this era, namely its central entrance tower, the original signage, and rusticated foundation and polychromatic brickwork on the side elevations. Despite these changes, it remains demonstrative of school architecture during this period and some of the key design considerations that were made when it

¹ “Opening of Splendid New School at Little Britain,” *Watchman-Warder*, February 12, 1914, 9.

was built in the early decades of the twentieth century when the features it employed were common in school design.

The school is also unique as an example of a continuation school from the early twentieth century. Continuation schools were extremely common in rural Ontario throughout the twentieth century; these were schools that combined both public and secondary school classes into a single building in order to offer secondary classes to rural students who were not able to travel or stay in a larger centre where there was a dedicated high school. These classes were not offered in all schools in rural areas and, while these types of facilities were common in rural Ontario as a whole, there are typically few examples in individual townships where often only one or two public schools would be converted to include space for continuation studies; until the 1950s, most students did not complete four or five years of high school and these facilities were not intended to offer a full high school experience to every student who completed a public school education. Generally, a public school in a larger hamlet or village was converted to also offer continuation classes which could involve using existing classrooms, adding an addition or building a new school.

Mariposa Township had nineteenth public school sections, and by extension public schools, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century of which three – School Sections 2 (Manilla), 8 (Little Britain), and 12 (Oakwood) – were based in the township's larger hamlets; some students from the northern part of the township attended school in Woodville but these were not considered Mariposa schools, as were several other union schools located outside of the township's borders in Eldon, Ops, Reach, and Brock Townships. It was also these three school sections that, at various points in time, offered secondary classes. Both Manilla and Oakwood had, up until the 1870s and 1880s respectively, grammar schools that offered basic secondary education. However, by the turn of the century, there were no secondary facilities in Mariposa Township and students had to travel to Lindsay or, in the south and west portions of the township, Cannington or Port Perry for high school. When continuation classes became more widespread in the early twentieth century, there was only one facility that offered them in Mariposa: the school at Little Britain that was, after the 1928 fire, replaced with the subject property. It remained the only location in the township for continuation classes until the abolition of continuation classes instead of a former high school education in 1954. Continuation classes were also offered in Woodville, in the school that remains both extant and operational as an elementary school, but within the bounds of Mariposa Township, the subject property was and remains the only continuation school in the historic township and is an important example of these types of school that operated throughout rural Ontario throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

Historical and Associative Value

479 Eldon Road has historical and associative value as the former school for the hamlet of Little Britain. It was constructed to serve Mariposa School Section 8, which included the community, in 1929 to replace an older school and was the last of several generations of schools in and around Little Britain to serve local children. It also served as a continuation, or secondary, school for Little Britain and surrounding area at a time when most secondary education was offered in larger communities, such as Lindsay, and demonstrates the evolving nature of education in Ontario in the early twentieth century as the province sought to bridge the service gap between urban and rural communities. As a surviving historic school in the township, it yields information regarding the history of education in both Little Britain and in Mariposa Township more generally. It operated as a school from 1929 to 1972 and has direct associations with the historic and development of education in the community as a settlement serving a wider rural agricultural area.

Education evolved substantially through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries both in what was then Victoria County and across Ontario. Formal education in Ontario, then Upper Canada, reached back to the late eighteenth century with the passage of the Schools Act in 1799 which established the ability to create schools and requirements for teacher certification. In this early period, most schools were fee-paying or associated with religious organizations, or both, meaning that education was very much not universally accessible to children across the province. The first tuition free, non-denominational school, known as a common school, opened in Niagara in 1804, but the requirement to pay tuition for schooling remained for much of the first half of the nineteenth century, and participation in education remained low because of it. Most students in the early century were from upper and upper middle class backgrounds, located in urban areas and attending fee-paying schools. While rural schools did exist, they were few in number and not consistent in their operation or education. Most often in rural areas, local children would be educated either by their parents or by a local person running a small school teaching basic literacy and numeracy from their home.

Nevertheless, the provincial government increasingly took interest in ensuring that education was provided to communities across the province. The early eighteenth century saw a significant growth in population in the province, including more families, in part due to the influx of United Empire Loyalists in the late eighteenth century, in combination with migration from Britain and Ireland. By 1816, the Common Schools Act had been passed which created school boards and enabled local communities to build schools and hire teachers through local trustees, effectively enabling the development of local, municipally-led education efforts with rules and standards enforced by the province. 1841 saw the passage of the Education Act which created a

provincial superintendent to oversee education across Ontario and to allow municipalities to collect taxes from the parents of school aged children to help support schools, in addition to both government grants and tuition. In 1846, a new version of the Common Schools Act was passed which allowed municipalities to tax their entire tax base to fund school and, crucially, to make schools free, although fees were still allowed to be charged. By 1871, the School Act was passed, mandating universal free education and, by extension, compulsory attendance now that fees were no longer an issue.

By the middle of the century, access to education was vastly improved across the province, including in rural areas and villages, as a result of these changes made at the provincial level and the growing recognition that the education of children across the province was an important area of concern for the provincial government. While, in general, urban students had greater access to educational opportunities, and particularly secondary schooling and higher education, the government recognized that the majority of Ontario's population was located in its villages and rural hinterlands and the standards, regulations and funding structures in place in urban areas were also in place in rural areas.

Despite these advances, providing schooling in rural areas was not easy. The reality of the rural agricultural economy meant that children were needed to assist their parents with farming, particularly at certain times of years and their attendance was not guaranteed. Large areas with low population density made for school sections with very large catchment areas where getting to school could be challenging for many students. Teachers were not always willing to come to rural areas, although the ability to attract teachers increased as local children came up through the system and some trained to become teachers themselves. Rural schools also generally combined all grades into one or at most two classes due to the small number of children who attended them, giving rise to the ubiquitous one room school house associated with nineteenth century schooling and making the experience of going to school very different for urban and rural children. This was also the case in villages such as Little Britain which, despite its growing importance as a local population centre throughout the nineteenth century, was still very much a rural community with a substantial reliance on the rural agricultural economy and significant links – in society, family and business – to the surrounding rural area. Nevertheless, rural education developed and grew throughout the nineteenth century, and by the early 1900s, the majority of children were attending public schools in or near to their own communities.

The school in Little Britain developed against this background. Educational instruction began in Mariposa Township soon after the settlement of the township. The township was surveyed in 1820 with the first settlers arriving in the late 1820s. Larger migrations to the township, comprised primarily of

Scottish and second generation Canadians from more southerly townships and counties, occurred throughout the 1830s and it was during this time that small settlements began forming, including Little Britain which grew up around the water powered grist mill on Mariposa Brook, erected by William Ray in 1837. Early schools were soon established; most of these were informal instruction occurring in people's homes and very little is known about them or how they operated. It is believed that the earliest informal schools were operated in Oakwood and at Taylor's Corners. In accordance with provincial direction, school sections in Mariposa Township were established by the District of Colborne Council in 1842; powers regarding education would later be transferred to Victoria County, after its creation as the United Counties of Peterborough and Victoria in 1854, and the local township council and the Local Superintendent of Schools in Mariposa. School sections were gradually formed throughout the 1840s and 1850s, but periodically rearranged throughout the following decades in response to changing demographic patterns throughout the township. In these early years, attendance was very low with only 21 of 429 children between the ages of five and 16 attending school in 1842; by 1850, enrollment had grown with just under 40% of children regularly attending school and by the 1860s, average school attendance in Mariposa ranged anywhere from 21% to 45% of the school aged population, depending on the school section. Enrollment rose throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, with the growth in educational services provided throughout the township, with the requirement for compulsory attendance after 1871, and an increasing population throughout the township, peaking at just over 5,300 residents in 1871.

Mariposa School Section 8, which included Little Britain, was formed in 1844 and, the following year, had 65 students enrolled, the largest school section in the township. Little Britain had grown up from the late 1830s into one of the three major settlements in Mariposa Township, alongside Manilla and Oakwood, the latter of which was located just five kilometres to the north. By 1858, the population had grown to around 100 people, with, as reported in the 1858 Directory of the Counties of Peterborough and Victoria, "a saw mill and carding and fulling mill, a very good store, two waggon shops, two shoe shops, a tavern, two carpenters' shops, two blacksmith, &c., and a number of private dwellings."² The community, its businesses and services also served a large rural hinterland that included a range of agricultural properties as well as smaller hamlets such as Mariposa Station and Valentia.

The subject property is the fifth school to be constructed for this school section, after a series of moves and reconstructions for the local school. The first school for this section was built in 1846 and was a log building located to

² *Directory of the United Counties of Peterborough and Victoria for 1858* (Peterborough: T&R White, 1858), 41.

the north of Little Britain on Lot 16, Concession 7. By 1854, it was decided to move the school further south to be closer to the community and a second log structure was erected on Lot 15, Concession 6, which was still not within the bounds of the village but closer to it. Nothing is known about these two older structures. By 1867, it was decided to build a new school within the boundaries of the hamlet which continued to grow throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and had a large school aged population; this move had been under discussion for several years in the local area and a new school was finally constructed in town that year for a cost of \$950. This school was a single room red brick schoolhouse built in the Victorian style, with a gable roof, small belfry and buff brick quoins and window surroundings, typical of rural school architecture during the 1860s and 1870s. However, this school was not large enough for the growing population of the village or surrounding area and two additions were quickly added, the first in 1868 just a year after the school was constructed and the second in 1877. The rapid growth of the school population was slowed, however, shortly after, with the creation of school section 19 to the north and west of Little Britain and the erection of a new school at Mariposa Station.

In 1914, the 1867 school itself was replaced with a new building on the same site. The early twentieth century was a time of reconstruction for many schools both locally and across Ontario. At this time, many Victorian schools had reached the end of their life, either because they were too small or because they were falling apart. In rural areas, in particular, many mid-nineteenth century schools had not aged well as they had often been built on a tight budget and needed substantial upgrades; some schools were even seen as being dangerous with small windows and woodstoves for heating. The early twentieth century was also a period of reconsideration as to what school architecture should do and how its design impacted pupil achievement. Alongside the very practical need to have a building where students could gather and learn, new ideas around comfort, adequate heating, lighting and ventilation, sanitation, and fire safety began to inform design and drive school boards to build new schools with larger windows, better construction, central heating and indoor plumbing. In Oakwood, a new school had been constructed in 1913 to replace an older school of a similar age and Little Britain followed suit the following year with a school of an almost identical design in the Beaux-Arts style. Although it is not confirmed, it is possible that both schools were designed by the same architect, William B. Taylor who has been confirmed as the architect of the Oakwood school. When the school was opened in February 1914, Dr. A.E. Vrooman of Little Britain, M.P.P. for Victoria West and former Reeve of Mariposa Township, was reported as stating in his speech that “I have gone up and come down and gone around and inspected the building

and I must congratulate the people of the section on it being the best school I have yet seen.”³

The biggest change in education in Little Britain came in 1924 with the beginnings of continuation classes at the school. Continuation classes were developed in response to a very specific need in rural communities: the need for accessible secondary education for rural students who were not able to travel to urban high schools but still wanted to pursue further education beyond the public school level.

Ontario’s first secondary classes were offered as part of private grammar schools as early as 1807. Primarily catering to the sons of the upper classes, these schools were unregulated and intended to provide a classical education to prepare young men for adult lives in upper class occupations. By the early 1850s, these schools had been regulated and local municipalities allowed to establish and offer secondary education through grammar schools. These grammar schools were quickly initiated by local communities as they provided a number of important outcomes, namely the ability of students to attend university and, perhaps more importantly, a training ground for new teachers for the common schools themselves.

In 1871, the Schools Act, in addition to providing important direction with regard to elementary education, also provided new parameters for secondary classes. Now known as high schools, or collegiate institutes for larger facilities, they now formally operated as coeducational facilities to include girls in access to higher education and also expanded their curriculum to offer not just a Classical education, but an increased number of subjects, such as science and gym, not traditionally emphasized in the grammar school system. Additional rationalization of the curriculum throughout the school years was also undertaken at this time to ensure that students were prepared to pass through the various levels of education and to ensure that duplication did not occur between the elementary and secondary levels.

New high schools were quickly established. Some of these were grammar schools that were converted to high schools with the new curriculum. Others were brand-new institutions, such as Lindsay Collegiate Institute which opened in 1889 and later became what is now known as LCVI. Most of these new high schools were established in urban areas and had new and increased facilities to accommodate more pupils and additional subject with the intention of creating better and more access to secondary education.

However, one of the most significant challenges in providing secondary education on a more universal basis was with regard to the provision of services for rural students. In the era before bussing allowed for rural students

³ “Opening of Splendid New School at Little Britain,” *Watchman-Warder*, February 12, 1914, 9.

to be transported daily to larger centres, participating in secondary education was not realistic for many rural teenagers who did not necessarily have the means to travel to or stay in larger communities to attend high school. However, as education became more formalized throughout the first half of the twentieth century, secondary education became increasingly important for job opportunities as adults. As a result, the province began to allow what were known as continuation schools, that is public schools that offered additional classes at the secondary level, allowing students to continue past elementary grades without having to travel large distances. Continuation schools could not offer all of the facilities or classes that a high school could, but they provided an important educational pathway for rural teenagers. The province first allowed rural boards to offer these classes beginning in 1896 and they were not abolished until the 1950s. After the building of the new school in 1929, the *Lindsay Daily Post* made clear the importance of these new secondary classes for rural students, stating:

Continuation schools are taking a more and more important place in our educational system and according to the plans of the Hon. Mr. Ferguson [Premier George H. Ferguson], it is destined to be even more important in the future, taking the place in many sections of the high school, while the high school is to take on some of the aspects of a junior university. In view of this attitude by the powers-that-be in Queen's Park and the fact that such schools have already proved their value the building of a modern school in Little Britain is a matter of interest to the whole community. Of course the building of these schools in various parts of the country had meant a loss of pupils to the Lindsay Collegiate Institute, but it is a loss that will be made up if the university work plan goes through and it has meant an opportunity for higher education for many who would not otherwise have had the chance. Such schools as this well-appointed new one at Little Britain will mean better educated farming community in years to come and will do much to break down the cleavage between urban and rural people, a cleavage that exists for a more or less degree no matter how many statements to the contrary.⁴

From 1858 to 1889, students living in and around Little Britain wishing a secondary education attended the grammar and later high school in Oakwood. The establishment of a grammar school was approved in 1858 and operated in the upper storey of the common school, built the previous year. It was a fee paying school, with a tuition charge of \$4 per quarter and allowing students

⁴ "A Fine Effort," *Lindsay Daily Post*, February 20, 1929, 2.

from both in and outside of the Oakwood School Section, School Section 12. When grammar schools were transformed into high schools in 1871, the Oakwood school became a high school and moved into a new building in 1876. The Oakwood High School District, as it was known, encompassed all of Mariposa Township, as well as Woodville, and at its peak in the mid-1880s, had 100 students enrolled. However, the need for a new school to accommodate the pupils and the lack of financial ability to do so led to the dissolution of the Oakwood High School in 1889. From this point onward, students who were able to do so travelled to Lindsay to attend high school in the newly opened Lindsay Collegiate Institute.

For students in Little Britain, travel to Lindsay was a significant endeavour and the need for continuation classes closer to home was acute. At the same time, Lindsay Collegiate Institute, as it was then known, had become significantly overcrowded, as students were attending both from Lindsay itself – a growing town – and from the surrounding rural area where secondary classes were not available. An addition was built onto the high school between 1922 and 1923 to increase the ability of the structure to house the student population, but the issue of students travelling into Lindsay from rural areas remained and the support – both financial and political – was there for larger villages outside of Lindsay to establish continuation classes locally. Importantly, the provincial government had abolished fees for high school education in 1921, making access substantial more accessible from a financial standpoint. As a result, continuation classes were quickly added to schools throughout the county. For example, continuation classes were offered in Woodville from 1922 and attracted students from across the school sections of northern Mariposa and southern Eldon Townships.

The first continuation classes were held in Little Britain in 1924. They were held in the basement of the 1913 public school and, despite the less than ideal setting, were well subscribed from students both within School Section 8 and outside of it. The continuation classes soon grew to serve most of the southern part of Mariposa Township, while the continuation classes for students in the northern part of the township were held in Woodville at the new school erected there in 1923. As a result of this interest, the school board quickly realized that they needed to expand the 1913 school to provide additional space for secondary instruction and, by 1927, plans were being drawn up for a new addition. However, in May 1928, a fire swept through the school and destroyed it, precipitating the need for a new facility to house both the public and continuation classes.

This new school – the subject property – was formally opened on Saturday, February 16, 1929 with the first classes held on Monday, February 18. The opening of the school was an important event in the village and was reported

on at length in the *Lindsay Daily Post* which provided a summary of the day's events and speakers. The newspaper reported:

On February 16, 1929, a more beautiful rug-brick, five roomed school was formally opened and dedicated to educational work by Mr. G.K. Mill, Inspector of Continuation Schools in Ontario. The pupils of the public school and of the continuation school gathered at 1:30 p.m. at the hall which for nearly a year has served as temporary quarters for the classes. Then headed by the Little Britain Brass Band under the able leadership of Mr. Wilford Hooper, the pupils marked through the village to the new school. The chairman of the board, Mr. Bently Faithful, standing on the steps just outside the door, received the pupils. Mr. Mills, representing the Department of Education of Ontario, stood beside him holding the golden key that was to unlock the door of this educational structure to the rising generations. While the pupils stood at respectful attention, the band played "O Canada" and "The Maple Leaf."

"I now proclaim this school open, and dedicate it to the work of education in this community," said Mr. Mills as he unlocked the front door and allowed the pupils and a crowd of about 400 people to enter... S.S. No. 8 Mariposa now has one of the finest rural schools in the province.⁵

Speeches followed the opening along with a tour before the crowd proceeded for to the community hall a banquet catered by the Little Britain branch of the Women's Institute in honour of the opening of the school, with additional speeches, music and entertainment. Unlike many school openings in Kawartha Lakes at this time, the opening of the school was captured on film, something that was rare in rural Ontario during this period and a testament to its importance in the community. The silent film is believed to have been captured by the Hall family, of whom Dr. George C.R. Hall was a school trustee and local doctor and appears in the film which shows the opening of the front doors, the band, and local students. A copy of this film is held by the Kawartha Lakes Public Library.

For local students, this new school was a key fixture in the community. All students locally attended it as their elementary, or public school. There was also increasing enrollment as secondary education became a more regularized part of formal education and the school flourished in the years leading up to and immediately after the Second World War. In part, this was due to

⁵ "Ceremony to Open School on Saturday," *Lindsay Daily Post*, February 18, 1929, 1.

increased access but also due to new age requirements for compulsory education which gradually rose from age 14, or grade 8, to age 16 or grade 9 or 10, depending on when a child enrolled in school. Most jobs in the mid-century still only required a grade 9 or 10 education and the upper grades were primarily completed by those wishing to enter a professional occupation or attend university. However, the grade 9 and 10 education offered by continuation schools was invaluable to students in the community and they helped to expand the educational opportunities for an entire generation of rural students. By 1948, Ontario had 114 continuation schools across its rural communities, including that in Little Britain to help educate its teenagers.

The 1950s, however, were a period of change for rural schooling. One of the challenges for rural boards and their schools was offering a full spectrum of programming. Even for larger high schools such as LCI, this could be difficult due to financial and space constraints, but for rural schools, both public and continuation, the problem was more acute as one and two-room schoolhouses, in particular, were not suited to offer new subjects appearing in the curriculum such as science that required equipment and space. The prevailing opinion amongst leaders was that the consolidation of rural schools would help provide better economies of scale and more educational opportunities.

The first step towards the consolidation of education facilities was the closure of continuation schools which were abolished in the province in 1954. This step was reflective of widespread changes and discussions occurring at a provincial level regarding the provision of secondary education and the special educational needs of adolescents, particularly through documents such as the "Porter Plan" devised by then-minister of education Dana Porter. As a result, from 1954 onwards, the continuation side of the Little Britain school was no longer operational and secondary students were bussed to Lindsay. This was a trend replicated across Ontario with the consolidation of secondary education in specialized facilities in larger communities.

The 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s brought more changes for rural education across the province in addition to the closure of continuation schools. The combination of an increased school aged population as a result of the baby boom and infrastructure funding in the postwar period resulted in substantial consolidation of schools throughout the province but particularly in rural areas. It was during this period that most one and two room rural schools closed in favour of larger, centralized facilities where there were no longer multi-grade classrooms and where up to date facilities were available; in addition to being able to provide a more comprehensive education, it was also recognized that many older school buildings, particularly those which had not been updated since the late nineteenth century, were not conducive learning environments.

Like other boards across the province, the Mariposa Township School Board, established in 1965, and later the Victoria County School Board, which took over the area in 1969, began the process of closing schools and divesting itself of its building stock through this period as new consolidated schools were constructed to serve larger rural and urban areas in the county. In Mariposa Township, six schools were closed in 1966 and the other eleven closed in 1972 with the construction of the new Mariposa Elementary School, to the north of Little Britain on Eldon Road; only one, at Oakwood, remained open as a specialized school for students with developmental disabilities who had long been excluded from the regular system.

As one of the larger schools in the township, the changes at Little Britain were different than for the smaller one roomed school houses in the more rural areas of the township. With the closure of the first schools in 1966, these students had to be educated somewhere and many of them came to Little Britain where the classrooms formerly used by the continuation school were still vacant. However, this presented a new problem as the Little Britain school went from being underused to overcrowded. When the Victoria County School Board was formed, the discussion with regard to Little Britain was whether to close it or rebuild a new school to house the now very large elementary population. In 1972, however, it was decided that the best proposition, from the Board's perspective, was to permanently close the school in Little Britain in favour of a single consolidated school for the township, although some students from the northern part of the township were bussed to Woodville. Little Britain was, for the first time since 1845, without its own school and remained so until 1995 with the construction of Dr. George Hall Public School on the south side of the hamlet.

Despite its closure and eventual sale, the subject property retains important value in the community as its former public and continuation school. As the last of its pre-World War Two schools to operate, it served the community for over forty years as a community institution and public building. In its role as a local school, it yields information regarding the history of education in Little Britain and specifically the introduction of continuation studies in 1924. This provides important information on the educational experience of rural students in early twentieth century Mariposa Township, and Ontario more broadly, as new educational opportunities were introduced to bridge the service gap between rural and urban communities.

Contextual Value

479 Eldon Road has contextual value as a local landmark and an important part of the hamlet character of Little Britain. In its location at the northern edge of Little Britain, the property is in close proximity to other residential, institutional and commercial structures of a similar age in a variety of architectural styles which, taken together, form a cohesive historic landscape.

The property maintains and supports this hamlet character and is historically linked to its surroundings as part of this development. It is also a landmark as the former local school, a role it served from its construction in 1929 to its closure in 1972.

Little Britain developed around the corner of what is now Eldon Road and Little Britain Road beginning in the late 1830s with the establishment of a grist mill on Mariposa Brook. Soon after a Bible Christian chapel, sawmill and tavern were established and houses were quickly built. The hamlet was originally named Siloam, in reference to the Bible Christian chapel, but later renamed Little Britain in 1855 when the post office was established. A commercial core gradually grew up around the intersection of the two major roadways that remains in place in the present day. The community slowly developed throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century with subdivisions formed in 1871, 1875, 1879 and 1887, although the exodus in population from rural Mariposa Township in the early decades of the twentieth century meant that little new construction was completed from the turn of the century until after the Second World War. As a result, the hamlet retained much of its original building stock and land use patterns with limited modern development. The Fire Insurance Plan of Little Britain, dating from 1910, shows the community prior to the construction of the subject property; the earlier school is not shown on this map as it was located just to the north of the map's limit. When viewed in relation to this map, the land use and built form patterns remain extremely similar to the present sat, with the streets and many of the buildings from that period still extant.

The majority of extant buildings in the core of the hamlet date from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and are constructed in a range of historic architectural styles popular during this period. Most of these structures are single family residential properties, with a number of historic commercial and institutional properties also located in the community. 479 Eldon Road is one of the two historic institutional properties located in the community, alongside the Little Britain United Church; the historic Baptist church, just to the north of the subject property has recently been demolished. Taken alongside the other historic properties in the community, it forms part of this historic hamlet landscape and is historically linked to its surroundings as part of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century development of the community. It supports the historic character of the community in its date of construction, its historic architectural style and location on a large lot within the core of the historic settlement.

The presence of the school as part of a built up area of the township helps define its character as a hamlet within a larger rural area. The concentration of buildings within Little Britain and the presence of both institutional and commercial structures help differentiate the community from its rural

surroundings which follow traditional Ontario agricultural patterns. The school is a contributing feature to this hamlet character and helps reinforce the nature of Little Britain as a built up area within the wider landscape of rural Mariposa Township. It is a key built heritage feature of the hamlet landscape which supports its role as a local population centre in Mariposa, both historically and in the contemporary context.

The property is also a local landmark as its former school. The building operated as a school beginning 1929 and closed in 1972, operating as an educational facility a much longer period than most other rural schools across Kawartha Lakes, most of which closed in the 1960s. As its educational facility, the building is a well-known institutional structure in Little Britain as it was attended by local students within recent memory and students who attended this structure are still living. It is also located in a prominent location in the hamlet along Eldon Road at the north end of the community where it can be seen as motorists and pedestrians drive south into the hamlet, forming a northern border and gateway structure to the community. It is visible along Eldon Road and forms as key part of the village's built form and overall landscape. Its distinctive architecture, namely its central tower, reinforces its landmark status as an architecturally unique building within the community.

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, constitute the Reasons for Designation required under the Ontario Heritage Act.

Short Statement of Reasons for Designation

Design and Physical Value

479 Eldon Road has design and physical value as a representative example of an early twentieth century. Constructed in the Beaux-Arts style, it originally demonstrated the key architectural features associated with this style, including large banks of windows, a rusticated foundation and symmetrical massing alongside more unique features, such as its crenelated tower. The building has been extensively modified since its original date of construction, but nevertheless still retains some of its features, as well as its massing, that is typical of new school construction in the first decades of the twentieth century. It is also unique as a surviving example of a rural continuation school as it is the sole example of this type of early twentieth century school in Mariposa Township.

Historical and Associative Value

479 Eldon Road has historical and associative value as the former school for the hamlet of Little Britain. It was constructed to serve Mariposa School Section 8, which included the community, in 1929 to replace an older school and was the last of several generations of schools in and around Little Britain to serve local children. It also served as a continuation, or secondary, school for Little Britain and surrounding area at a time when most secondary education was offered in larger communities, such as Lindsay, and demonstrates the evolving nature of education in Ontario in the early twentieth century as the province sought to bridge the service gap between urban and rural communities. As a surviving historic school in the township, it yields information regarding the history of education in both Little Britain and in Mariposa Township more generally. It operated as a school from 1929 to 1972 and has direct associations with the historic and development of education in the community as a settlement serving a wider rural agricultural area.

Contextual Value

479 Eldon Road has contextual value as a local landmark and an important part of the hamlet character of Little Britain. In its location at the northern edge of Little Britain, the property is in close proximity to other residential, institutional and commercial structures of a similar age in a variety of architectural styles which, taken together, form a cohesive historic landscape. The property maintains and supports this hamlet character and is historically linked to its surroundings as part of this development. It is also a landmark as

the former local school, a role it served from its construction in 1929 to its closure in 1972.

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 property as an early twentieth century Beaux-Arts school.

- Raised one-storey red brick construction
- Flat roof
- Cornice
- Symmetrical massing
- Central tower
- Central entrance with double doors and transom
- Stairs
- Side entrances with transoms
- Rusticated foundation
- Polychromatic and decorative brickwork
- Fenestration
- “S.S. No. 8 Public and Continuation School” sign
- “Boys” and “Girls” signs

Historical and Associative Attributes

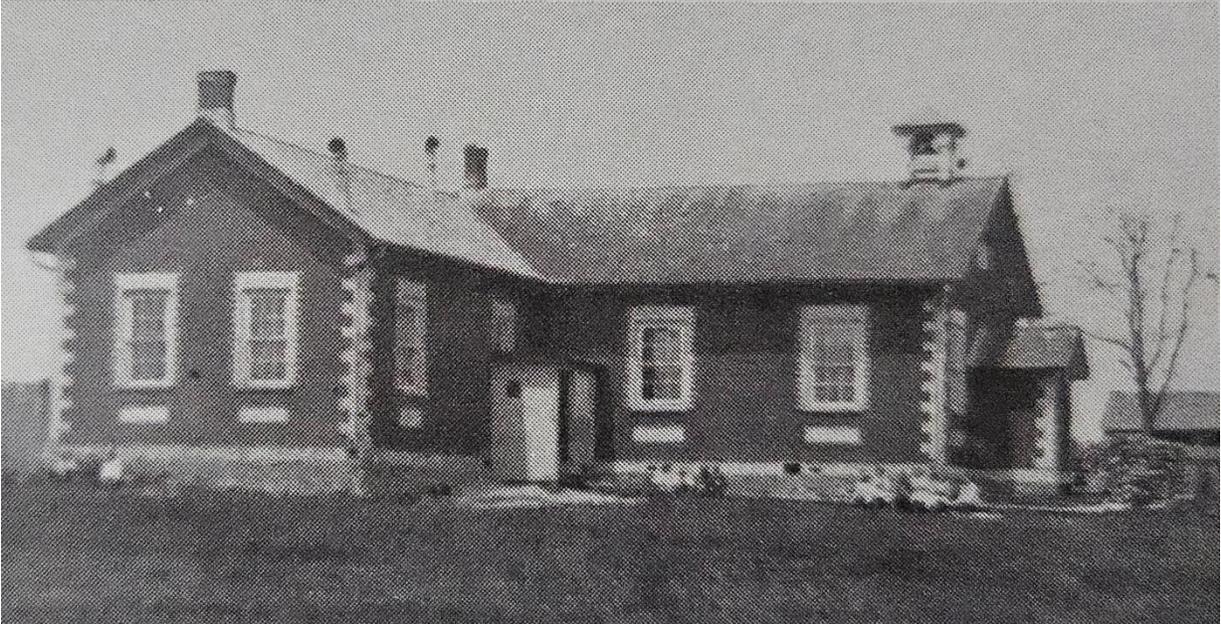
The historical and associative attributes support the value of the property as the former Little Britain Public and Continuation School and in its role in the history of education in Little Britain.

- Former use as a public and continuation school
- Relationship to the history of education in Little Britain
- Signage

Contextual Attributes

- Location at the north side of Little Britain along Eldon Road
- Views of Eldon Road from the property
- Views of the property from Eldon Road

Images



1877 Mariposa S.S. 8 School



1914 Mariposa S.S. 8 School



1929 Public and Continuation School







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