

11 Victoria Avenue North, Town of Lindsay (Sylvester House)

Heritage Designation Evaluation

Lindsay

PT LT 14 N/S PEEL ST, 15 N/S PEEL ST PL TOWN PLOT AS IN R175362;

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. Staff have determined that 11 Victoria Avenue North 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 unique example of a late Victorian Gothic Revival-style residential property constructed in an urban context. The property was, and remains, one of the largest and more ornate of Lindsay's late Victorian mansions and includes a variety of architectural features typical of this architectural style. These include the asymmetrical massing, brick coursing, pointed arches, ornate entrance porch, and distinctive corner tower with gable peaks.

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

The property displays a typical degree of craftsmanship and artistic merit for a residential 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 historical associations with Richard Sylvester, its first owner. Sylvester was the founder and owner of the Sylvester Manufacturing Company, an extremely successful Lindsay business that manufactured and sold farm equipment across Canada and abroad in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Sylvester was an active developer of new machinery and technology and, of particular note, was the Sylvester Auto-Thresher, an early precursor to the modern combine.

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 role of Lindsay as both a manufacturing and agricultural centre in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century through its association with the Sylvester Manufacturing Company which manufactured farming equipment.

iii. demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to the community:
The designer and builder of this property 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 is important in maintaining the historic residential area of the neighbourhood to the north of Kent Street West. This area includes a wide array of residential properties constructed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and has maintained its primarily residential character. The property, constructed in the late 1880s, is a contributing feature to this wider historic landscape.

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

The property is historically and visually linked to its surroundings as part of the wider historic residential development of the area north of Kent Street West which retains a wide variety of historic residential properties. The subject property is also historically linked to the adjacent Victoria Park which originally formed part of this property and was donated by its original owner, Richard Sylvester, as a park to the Town of Lindsay.

iii. is a landmark.

The property is a specific landmark in Lindsay as the former Sylvester House. It is a highly distinctive residential property and located in close proximity to downtown Lindsay making it both well-known and widely recognized in the community.

Design and Physical Value

11 Victoria Avenue North has design and physical value as a unique example of a late Victorian residential property in Lindsay erected in the High Victorian Gothic style. Constructed in the late 1880s, the property is one of the largest and most ornate surviving examples of this type of domestic architecture in Lindsay. The property is demonstrative of the ornate and eclectic High Victorian architectural style that was regularly employed in domestic design in the latter decades of the nineteenth century that drew on the Gothic Revival style to create ornate and decorative buildings. The subject property includes a range of eclectic architectural elements, including the asymmetrical massing, brick coursing, pointed arches, ornate entrance porch, and distinctive corner tower with gable peaks, that speak to its origins within this stylistic type.

The beginnings of the Gothic Revival style came in the second half of the eighteenth century in English architecture. As part of the Romantic movement, which sought to push back at rationalism and reintroduce emotion and a glorification of the domestic past, there was an increased interest in the medieval past as architects and their clients sought to break from the rational Classical forms of the Enlightenment and began to look more to the Middle Ages for inspiration. This shift, which occurred not just in architecture but also art, music, and literature, emphasized aesthetic experience, but also pushed back at modern social changes including urbanization and industrialization as it looked to the past for authentic modes of cultural expression.

The application of Romantic principles to architecture was underpinned by aesthetic theory, specifically that of the picturesque. The picturesque took its cues from the natural world and rejected formal symmetry and precision in favour of asymmetry, variety and irregularity. The picturesque was understood as a counter balance to the two other primary aesthetic expressions: the sublime, which was viewed as the terrifying, awesome, and vast, and the beautiful, characterized by beauty, smoothness and regularity. In contrast to these, the picturesque was the counterbalance between the two, irregular without being extreme and gentle without being highly rationalized. The picturesque was more frequently expressed through landscape painting depicting pastoral scenes and ruins, but the aesthetic theory was well-embedded in other types of visual expression. In architecture in the English-speaking world, the picturesque was strongly associated with what were seen as rustic and natural forms, specifically medieval and Tudor-era architecture which was seen as embodying a naturalistic built form and traditional artistic expression.

The Gothic Revival emerged in relation to these two broader trends in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century thought as a medieval revival style. The earliest example of medieval forms integrated into architecture of this period came in domestic architecture, with early examples such as Inverary Castle in

Argyle (1746) and Strawberry Hill House in Twickenham (1749) applying medieval decorative features onto heavy eighteenth century forms. The trend continued throughout the Georgian period, even as Classical forms retained their predominance.

The style rose to province in the 1840s with its wholesale adoption as the preferred mode of design for ecclesiastical architecture. The Romantic view of the medieval past had, by this period, spread to theological circles where the question of what architectural style was most appropriate for Christian worship was hotly debated. However, under the direction of architects such as A.W.N. Pugin, church architecture firmly turned to medieval style as it was seen being distinctly Christian and overwhelming more suited to the promotion of belief than Classical forms. Although a specific ecclesiastical style for church architecture developed separate from domestic design, its application to ecclesiastical forms helped cement its popularity from the 1840s throughout the middle decades of the nineteenth century; in church design, this style was used well into the twentieth century as the preferred style for the majority of new Christian worship spaces. Although originating in Europe, the style quickly spread to North America, and other parts of the world, with the expansion of colonial empires and the patterns of immigration throughout the nineteenth century.

In parallel, domestic Gothic Revival architecture also flourished in the middle decades of the nineteenth century with the increased awareness of the style and a strong preference for Romantic architecture throughout this period. Domestic Gothic Revival shared many of the same theoretical bases of its ecclesiastical counterpart, such as its Romantic underpinnings and allegiance to pre-Renaissance stylistic forms, but was visually different; whereas ecclesiastical Gothic generally hewed closely to historic precedent and tended to replicate medieval forms more closely, domestic Gothic was a freer interpretation of medieval architecture, mixing architectural forms and decorative elements to create pleasing and eclectic compositions that sat comfortably within the broader picturesque aesthetic.

One of the largest influences in the spread of the Gothic Revival style in domestic architecture was the pattern book. Although pattern books existed from at least the eighteenth century, the most influential of these with regard to domestic Gothic architecture was Scottish landscape architect J.C. Loudon's 1833 text, *Encyclopedia of Cottage, Farm and Villa Architecture* which provided patterns for domestic architecture in a range of popular architectural styles of the late Regency era. Loudon was, however, particularly influenced by the picturesque and included a large number of designs in early Gothic Revival styles and included an range of features that would become firmly associated with domestic Gothic design including: asymmetrical massing, steeply pitched roofs, decorative bargeboard, finials, bay windows, double and stacked

chimneys, decorative window hoods, and pointed and rounded arches in doors and windows.

Louden's text was particularly influential in North America which, in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, was undergoing a period of substantial growth with increased immigration and the expansion of non-indigenous settler communities away from the areas of late eighteenth century settlement. Other influential texts, such as *Cottage Residences* (1842) and *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850) by American architect and theorist Andrew Jackson Downing, contributed to its spread throughout North America.

The first Gothic Revival houses appeared in Ontario in the 1830s. Most of these early Gothic Revival houses were large estates, but, by the middle of the nineteenth century, the style gained substantial popularity as the go-to style for small and mid-sized farmhouses as farmers looked to pattern books and architectural precedent from their country of origin to design their new homes; while most settlers originally constructed small log cabins as their first dwelling, these were usually quickly replaced with larger and more permanent homes, overwhelmingly in the domestic Gothic style. The style was even promoted by the publication *The Canadian Farmer* as the most appropriate architectural style for farmhouses and this periodical even provided elevations and designs for farmers to copy throughout the 1860s. The majority of Gothic Revival domestic buildings were erected in rural areas, but this did not preclude their adoption in urban areas as well.

By the time the style reached its peak in the 1860s, the core elements of the style in Ontario had been established. IN rural areas, they were generally constructed on rectangular or L-shaped plan with a gable roof and the front façade featuring one or more steeply pitched gables and a wide verandah. The massing and layout of the front elevation of the property largely depended on its size. The smallest examples, known as Ontario Gothic cottages, were rectangular in massing with a single central gable while large examples often employed an L-shaped or other asymmetrical plan and often incorporated additional gables and elements such as bay windows. While the majority of windows were rectangular sash windows, most Gothic homes also contained a feature window or windows with pointed or rounded arches. The other primary decorative motif was generally in the form of decorative bargeboard along the gables of the house with pierced or applied moulding in a variety of motifs and often incorporating a finial or drop finial at the peak of the gables. Ornate woodwork of this type was also incorporated into verandahs for additional visual interest. However, the style was, at its core, a very flexible style, accommodating buildings of a range of different sizes and varying degrees of decoration. It was also very well-suited to the use of brick in which this style was increasing executed throughout the second half of the

nineteenth century as brick became cheaper to purchase and could be adapted to the decorative requirements of the Gothic style through the use of polychromatic brickwork which was introduced to the style around 1850.

The adaptation of the Gothic style in urban area, however, differed from its rural counterparts. Some of the smaller prototypes, particularly Ontario Gothic cottages, were readily employed in urban areas as housing for working and middle class families as they were practical designs that could be easily translated to smaller lots in an urban setting. However, the Gothic style was also readily applied to the larger mansions of the wealthy where its ornate decorative features and eclectic elements. In these larger villa style homes, Gothic design elements were often combined with features from other popular architectural style, particularly as the century wore on and the Italianate and Queen Anne style gained popularity amongst wealthy urban clientele. It should be noted that pattern books, including both those by Loudon and Downing, included designs for large villas using Gothic features, sometimes in combination with features from other stylistic types, although many of these examples were assumed to be in rural estate setting and necessarily had to be adapted for the denser urban fabric. Some of these features included towers, extensively decorated verandahs and porches, decorative brackets and wide cornices, combined with more typical Gothic features including pointed arches and steep gables. With their highly ornate adaptations of this style, wealthy businessmen, professionals, and government officials developed the Gothic Revival into a style for lavish urban mansions by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, alongside its older rural counterpart.

11 Victoria Avenue North was constructed in this wider architectural context and is a unique and very large example of this architectural type in Lindsay. Erected in the late 1880s, it is also a late example of this style which was decreasing in popularity throughout the 1880s and 1890s. The property is very ornate, although some of its features have been lost, and reflects the adaptation of the style to an urban setting where the building is arranged on a relatively compact footprint but with a three storey height and significant massing demonstrating the substantial size of the property and the wealth of its original owner.

The house is constructed on a basic rectangular plan with protruding bays on three of the four elevations along with a octagonal corner tower; this corner tower is not common in Gothic domestic architecture but was likely drawn from the Queen Anne style, popular in the 1880s, where towers were a common feature in large residential structures. Constructed in buff brick, the core of the house has a hipped roof, which is not always typical of Gothic design, but this is punctuated by the steeply pitched gables of the bays and dormer windows which also use steep gables. The tower is particularly distinctive, and is one of the main defining features of the house, and features

gable peaks on five sides, complete with elaborate bargeboard, drop finials, and iron cresting.

The house is elaborately decorated and was more so when it was originally constructed. One of the house's more recognizable features is the entrance porch on the east side of the house which is heavily decorated with brackets, a central gable, and trefoil motifs, all typical of Gothic Revival architecture. A wide verandah with a corresponding upper storey balcony and extensive decorative woodwork was also present on the south elevation of the house but has since been removed. Additional decorative elements drawn from the Gothic Revival style include: the pointed brick arches above the first and second storey windows; the dark stone banding on the first and second storeys of the house; dogtooth brick coursing; lancet windows on the third storey of the house with carved wooden insets; decorative brackets; drop finials; and pierced bargeboard. In addition, the house has retained its nineteenth century polychromatic roof which features geometric motifs in contrasting greys, a common feature in large examples of late nineteenth century architecture.

Although the property displays architectural features that were very typical of Gothic Revival architecture in urban contexts in the second half of the nineteenth century, it remains a unique building in Lindsay for its high level of decoration and its size. There are few other examples of Gothic Revival domestic buildings in Lindsay of this size as most Gothic houses were constructed in the rural context, and those that were built in the town were generally much smaller. Other large mansions of Lindsay's late nineteenth century elite are mostly located to the north of this property in the Bond Street area, but none are architecturally similar to this property. Its high level of decorative detail is distinctive within the town and the building itself is a unique structure within the town that does not have many comparator properties within the community.

Historical and Associative Value

11 Victoria Avenue North has historical and associative value through its direct historical connections with Richard Sylvester, its first owner and an extremely influential and successful businessman in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Lindsay. Sylvester, who lived in the property with his family from the late 1880s when it was constructed to his death in 1919, was the founder and owner of the Sylvester Manufacturing Company, a large Lindsay employer that developed and made farm equipment. They were early manufacturers of important turn of the century agricultural equipment, including twine binders, seed drills, and cultivators. Sylvester is also notable as the creator of the Sylvester Auto-Thresher, an early self-propelled precursor to the modern combine.

Richard Sylvester was born in Enniskillen in Durham County in 1845, the oldest child to Henry Sylvester and Elizabeth Fee who settled on Lot 16 in Concession 7 of Darlington Township, just to the southeast of Enniskillen, in about 1832. From the early 1870s, both he and his brother Robert worked in the carriage works of Robert McLaughlin in Enniskillen; McLaughlin would move his carriage works to Oshawa in 1877 and would eventually become the McLaughlin Motor Car Company, one of the Canadian precursors to General Motors. By 1878, Richard had set up his own business, Sylvester Agricultural Works, in Enniskillen which was included in the 1878 Northumberland and Durham Counties Atlas. The atlas recorded a large number of products that were made at the facility, including seeders, straw cutters, grain crushers, fanning mills, sulky horse rakes, stump machines, and ploughs. In the 1881 census, he is listed as a manufacturer in Darlington Township, alongside his wife Elizabeth Touchburn who he married in 1870 and their four children; two more children would be born in 1883 and 1885.

In 1882, work began on the new Sylvester Works in Lindsay, after a fire in the Enniskillen plant. It is not known why Sylvester chose to move his business to Lindsay but the new facility was quickly in operation and the Sylvester family moved to Lindsay. It is not known where the family first lived when they came to the town but, by 1887, Sylvester purchased the subject property and the house was likely erected soon after; two mortgages were taken out on the property in 1888 and it can be assumed that this indicated the erection of the house. Richard and Elizabeth Sylvester raised their children here from this date and continued to live in the house until 1919 when Richard died at the age of 74 in October 1919. Elizabeth Sylvester and two of her sons, Richard Milburn and Karl Sylvester, continued to own the property until 1946.

From its construction in 1882 throughout the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth, the Sylvester Manufacturing Company – later known as the Sylvester Brothers Manufacturing Company when Robert Sylvester joined his older brother as a partner – became one of Lindsay’s largest manufacturers and a major local employer. In 1882, the two-storey plant on the southwest corner of Kent Street West and Victoria Avenue began production on single and gang ploughs and by the following year, reapers, mowers and hay rakes were added to production. In 1884, the factory underwent additional construction to double in size to a large quadrangle, supported financially by the Town of Lindsay.

Sylvester’s business quickly grew. Lindsay’s status as a local commercial centre for the large agricultural community throughout southern Victoria County provided him with a ready made market and a significant number of his products were sold locally. By the late nineteenth century, the southern townships in the County – Emily, Ops, Mariposa, Verulam, Fenelon and Eldon – were major agricultural producers and farming was the primary economic

driver throughout the township's rural area. Farmers wanted, and needed, agricultural implements and Sylvester's factory provided these key tools in agricultural production. However, Lindsay was also a much larger regional hub and well served by the railway; by the end of the nineteenth century, Lindsay had no fewer than seven railway lines radiating from the town, consolidated under the banner of the Midland Railway which absorbed most the local, regional lines by the 1880s and made Lindsay its operational headquarters in 1887. This significant railway capacity allowed Lindsay and its major industries to rapidly and easily export their product from the town, servicing regional, national and often international markets.

When he began, Sylvester started with around 100 employees, a number which grew to 200 just four years later. In April 1886, the *Canadian Post* offered a profile of the company, noting its rapid growth and the warm reception its products had received from local farmers, and noting that:

The supposition that the farmer is a poor man is seen to be a groundless one when it is shown that there were manufactured at the works and sold in 1885-1886 - 200 Minnesota Chief cord binders, 80 Triumph reapers, 125 mowers, 450 hay rakes, 300 gang plows, and 2 furrow plows, 400 one-horse cultivators, 100 fanning mills, 50 root crushers, 75 straw cutters and 50 grain crushers.¹

By the late 1880s, Sylvester was not just serving the local market but actively exporting his product out of province to western Canada where demand for agricultural implements was high with the rapid expansion of non-indigenous settlement throughout the Prairies and the construction of the transcontinental railway through the early 1880s facilitated the transport of goods. He had also built a significant market in eastern Ontario as well as in the agricultural region around and immediately adjacent to southern Victoria County, including farms in Durham, Ontario and Northumberland Counties.

The development of new agricultural technology throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century had significant and lasting economic and demographic impacts on rural, agricultural populations and the tools manufactured in Sylvester's factory and the evolving conditions in the surrounding townships in southern Victoria County are illustrative of the changing nature of agriculture throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Alongside the rapid industrialization of cities, the nineteenth and early twentieth saw the increased mechanization of farming spurred, in large part, by industrialized implement manufacturing.

¹ "The Sylvester Works," *Canadian Post* (April 30, 1886), 1.

Prior to the nineteenth century, the vast majority of agricultural labour was done by hand, with assistance from oxen and horses and rudimentary tools such as wooden plows, flails, and sickles. Much of this technology was made by local craftspeople, such as blacksmiths. However, by the late eighteenth century, technology for improving agricultural production and mechanizing certain aspects of planting and harvesting was beginning to emerge, such as the development of the grain cradle scythe in the 1790s and the patenting of the iron plow in 1797. The nineteenth century saw increasing developments in farm technology, aided by increased industrial manufacturing capability, as new products quickly came onto the market intended to make farming easier and more efficient. The majority of this technology was aimed at crop cultivation, particularly wheat and other grains which were extremely important agricultural products throughout the nineteenth century and were also the most labour intensive farming activities; the successful cultivation of grain prior the late eighteenth century, for example, required preparing fields with a hoe or rudimentary plow, seeding by hand, scything, gathering the grain into stooks, and threshing with a flail, a massively labour intensive activity that required large teams to harvest even small farms. New technology, such as mechanical reapers, binders, threshing machines, seed drills, and steel plows, could all be pulled by horses and allowed farmers to farm more land, more efficiently and with less labour. The earliest of these new devices emerged in the 1830s, but continued to evolve throughout the nineteenth century. In Victoria County, which was not settled by non-Indigenous people until the second quarter of the nineteenth century, most of this technology did not appear until after 1850 when there were more localized manufacturers, farmers had the financial resources to purchase it, and there was enough land cleared and under cultivation that mechanized equipment was useable.

Agricultural mechanization had a number of extremely important impacts, economically and demographically. From an economic standpoint, it allowed farming to become a viable, largescale business. Farmers had always sold their excess products – including produce, meat and dairy – to the local, and sometimes regional markets. However, new equipment allowed for much larger production and farmers went from selling excess products in the nearest community to feeding into a large agricultural export market that profoundly impacted the economy of agricultural communities and brought growth and prosperity. This was particularly the case for grain production but similar growth was also seen in other agricultural products. Demographically, the advent and evolution of new equipment also had an impact on local populations. As technology became more efficient, fewer people were needed to do agricultural work, particularly with regard to planting and harvesting grain crops. This was particularly the case in the late nineteenth century, when rapid developments in machinery such as mechanized binders and threshers drastically decreased the number of workers required to complete these

historically labour intensive task. In Ontario, and elsewhere, the rise of this equipment corresponded with a gradual decrease in the province's overall rural population partially, although not entirely, correlated with a decreased need for agricultural labour. The changes in agriculture are reflected in the changes in population in Victoria County in relation to its agricultural production between the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth century, where even as the rural population decreased, the crop production increased, particularly with regard to key grain crops including wheat, barley and oats.

Manufacturers like Sylvester were key to the change as they provided industrialized production to new equipment, much of which could not be easily made by local craftspeople. Over the course of its life, the Sylvester plant produced a wide variety of farm implements as identified above. Of these, several became closely associated with the plant, in part because of Sylvester's penchant for invention and improvement. The first of these was the Minnesota Chief Cord Binder, later renamed the Sylvester Brothers Light Twine Binder. The first self-tie binder, which were used to cut grain such as wheat and bind it into bundles, was developed in the 1850s, but binders, also often known as reaper-binders, developed rapidly as a preferred method of grain harvesting throughout the 1870s and 1880s as the machines for them were perfected by inventors such as Wisconsin's John Appleby who developed the twine binder mechanism in the early 1870s, and developed into horse drawn implements. They had a number of advantages over older harvesting methods, namely that they could both cut and tie bundles of grain and required fewer people to complete a harvest and were a significant improvement on older reapers, or on hand reaping which was extremely labour intensive but still practiced in the nineteenth century. Their invention was a major landmark in the mechanization of farming, allowing for a faster and more efficient harvest and the ability to harvest more land quickly and with a smaller workforce. Binders were used as the primary method for grain harvesting until the 1930s when they were generally replaced by combines.

In the final decades of the nineteenth century, Canada had grown to be a significant grain producer and these machines were in high demand. The primary crops in southern Kawartha Lakes in the closing years of the century, at the time that Sylvester was building his business in Lindsay, were oats, barley and wheat – in that order – alongside mixed root vegetables and grain binders were extremely important tools for increasing the ability of farmers to produce and harvest grain for sale. Throughout this period, annual yields increased, as did the number of acres farmed as farming became more efficient, in no small part to the development of better equipment.

Sylvester's binder was extremely well-received and his tinkering with the general design of the binder resulted in a better and lighter binder by the end of the 1880s that made it easier to use and requiring smaller teams of horses. It

was readily adopted in and around Victoria County and exported to western Canada where grain was quickly becoming the primary agricultural product in most parts of the Prairies. In 1886, Sylvester published an advertisement for the machine with a range of glowing testimonials in favour of the machine from farmers across southern Victoria County and the surrounding area which heartily recommended the machine and identified its selling features, namely its good cutting and ease of use. Lawrence Fallen, who farmed Lot 10, Concession 5 in Ops Township, for example, wrote:

I have much pleasure in giving you a recommended for the Minnesota Chief Binder, which I purchased from you this harvest. I am highly pleased with the working of the machine in every particular. Some of my grain was badly lodged but your Binder took it up, cut it and bound it in a first-class manner. I have used and seen several different machines, but I must confess that your machine excelled all other I have ever seen work. I cut 75 acres with two horses, and one of them a colt; they were driven by my boy who is only 13 years old. The levers are within easy reach of the driver, and the Binder is complete in every-respect and very light draught. I can highly recommend it to all farmers wanted a Binder as the best machine in the market.²

The binder was an extremely important product for Sylvester and the firm continued to produce and develop a variety of evolving technology for agricultural production, with sales in 1902 reaching approximately \$300,000. A substantial amount of his business was in western Canada where the Tudhope-Anderson Company of Orillia, another farm implement manufacturer, acted as a distributor; Tudhope Anderson would eventually take over large parts of Sylvester's business when the Lindsay company began to struggle financially in the early 1910s. In 1905, an agent was appointed in the United Kingdom, selling primarily cultivators and hoe drills.

By the early twentieth century, Sylvester was developing a new machine, the Sylvester Auto-Thresher. This machine, powered by a gas engine, was an early form of combine and indicative of continuing shifts in agricultural technology in the early twentieth century. As with reaping, the process of threshing grain was a labour-intensive process throughout much of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. After grain had been reaped and bound into sheaves, either by hand or using a binder, it was left in the field in stooks until a threshing machine and associated crew could come to process it. The first threshing machines were developed in the late eighteenth century and gradually refined

² Sylvester Brothers' Manufacturing advertisement, Kawartha Lakes Public Library digital collection.

throughout the 1800s. The earliest of these were hand fed and powered either by hand or using horses. By the turn of the century, threshing machines were often steam powered, moved by large teams of horses, and operated by crews of men. These crews, which could consist of up to thirty men alongside a large team of horses, were vital to the harvest which, on many turn of the century farms in western Canada, could be up to 200 or 300 acres of grain.

Steam-powered threshers were an extremely important invention in the growth of modern agriculture but had a number of distinct disadvantages. They required large teams of men and horses to operate and were very large and difficult to move around. They were also expensive, meaning that most farmers did not have their own machinery and had to wait for the threshing crew to come around. Steam threshers also could not operate when it was windy as the danger of a spark from the steam engine was a significant threat to a field of dry wheat sheaves.

Sylvester began to manufacturer gasoline engines in 1902, one of the earliest Canadian companies to do so, and by 1904, had begun development on a new threshing machine, powered by gasoline, that could be driven through fields under its own power and could also thresh grain as it moved. Sylvester intended it as a replacement for steam threshers and priced it at \$3000, far below the cost of a steam thresher and with a much lower operational cost, as it dispensed with the need for horses and could be operated by a team of six men or fewer, driving the machine and feeding it with grain.

The first auto-thresher, as it was known, was tested on the Manitoba Experimental Farm in Brandon in September 1906 to glowing praise. The *Lindsay Weekly Post* reported on the trial and provided an excerpt of correspondence from Professor N. Wolverton of the Experimental Farm who stated:

The machine moved with regularity and ease among the stooks, even where the land was quite rolling and at all times was under perfect control. In very heavy grain, six men, four on the ground and two on the side platforms where required to feed the machine. It took the grain as fast as an ordinary separator or the same size would and did thorough good work...Taking into consideration that all the machinery is new, I consider the trial eminently satisfactory and that this new combination will be a great boom to the western farmer.³

Sylvester continued to develop his thresher over at least two more models and it was first listed in the company's catalogue in 1907. At least two were sold to

³ "Sylvester Auto-Thresher in the West," *Lindsay Weekly Post* (October 12, 1906), 6.

clients in westerns Canada in 1908 with hopes of continued growth. The machines also evolved such that they could be used as a tractor for plowing or running a binder if the separator was removed and other equipment hitched to it. Sylvester, and others familiar with the machine, saw it as an extremely useful tools for farmers and with significant potential in the Canadian Prairies where the larger size of farms than those in Ontario and other eastern province required greater efficiency to effectively harvest. With its need for fewer hands and ability to run without horses, it was anticipated that the machine would be a cheaper alternative for harvesting and allow farmers to thresh their grain more efficiently and keep a higher percentage of their profits.

It is not known how many of Sylvester's machines were produced or sold. There were versions used on both farms around Lindsay and those in both Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Models were exhibited at agricultural fairs in both Winnipeg and Brandon in 1908 to much fanfare and an example was later shown at the Canadian National Exhibition in 1914. However, by this time, the machine essentially disappeared from public view as Sylvester faced financial challenges surrounding manufacturing the machines which had taken significant capital to develop. Requests for financing were not successful and it appears that the machines ceased to be manufactured after 1914, although it was widely recognized as extremely innovative and ahead of its time; combines, the descendant of this piece of equipment, would not emerge for another twenty-five years. It was also around this time that Tudhope-Anderson took over much of Sylvester's implement manufacturing business and shifted much of the manufacture of items such as plows and cultivators to Orillia as Sylvester faced some more general challenges with finances.

Despite these challenges, the Sylvester Manufacturing Company continued to operate on Kent Street until the second half of the twentieth century. Although Richard Sylvester died in 1919, with his brother predeceasing him in 1914, two of Richard's sons, Richard Milburn and Karl Sylvester, continued the business but, by 1920, had switched production to the almost exclusive production of motorized railway cars, handcars and other railway equipment, primarily used for track maintenance. They are also recorded in trade publications as producing engines, boilers, and radiators, likely connected primarily with their railway equipment business. Their railway equipment was used extensively across Canada throughout the first half of the twentieth century; by the 1940s, it was estimated that around ninety percent of chain and sprocket drive railcars in Canada were manufactured by Sylvester's in Lindsay.

In addition to his significant contributions to manufacturing and the economic development of Lindsay throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Sylvester was also a community minded man. The property on which his factory was located had been the original home of the Lindsay Agricultural Fair grounds and the site of the town's original drill hall. Perhaps in

compensation for this loss, soon after the construction of his factory, Sylvester donated the land to the south of his home to the Town of Lindsay as a public park, which would eventually house Victoria Park and the Lindsay Armoury, constructed in 1913. Sylvester also promoted various activities amongst his employees, including the highly accomplished company baseball team and the Sylvester Brass Band. Sylvester himself was a musician and served in the Victoria and Haliburton Militia as part of its band. The Sylvester Brass Band was widely recognized as one of the top brass bands in Ontario and, in 1908, became the 45th Military Regimental Band associated with the 45th Victoria Regiment, of which Robert Sylvester served as commanding officer from 1903 to 1912.

Overall, Richard Sylvester, alongside his son and brothers, played a significant role in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Lindsay and the subject property speaks to their presence in the community throughout this period. The Sylvester Manufacturing Company was an important Lindsay employer beginning in the 1880s, but also an important technological innovator that speaks to wider changes in agricultural technological and its mechanization throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century that are were applicable to southern Victoria County.

Contextual Value

11 Victoria Avenue North has contextual value as a contributing feature to the historic residential neighbourhood to the north of Kent Street West. The area in which the subject property is located contains a wide variety of late nineteenth and early twentieth century residential properties, beginning at Peel Street and continuing north. These properties are representative of the historic development of Lindsay during this period and together form a cohesive historic residential landscape. The property is also directly connected to its neighbour to the south, Victoria Park and the Lindsay Armoury, which were originally connected to this property. The property is a local landmark as one of Lindsay's most recognizable late nineteenth century mansions and for its prominent location adjacent to Victoria Park.

The area to the north of Kent Street West developed as a residential area in the second half of the nineteenth century. Kent Street West had been established as the commercial core of the town by the 1840s, but most of Lindsay's earliest residential development was concentrated near the Scugog River and the town's original mill site. However, by the 1850s, when Lindsay was incorporated as a town, the residential growth to the north of Kent Street West began to increase as the town population expanded and new homes were required. The 1875 Bird's Eye View Map shows the town at the beginning of the century's last quarter; the area around the subject property - which was not yet constructed - shows a smattering of homes and the beginnings of residential growth on the blocks between Kent Street West and Colborne

Street West and to the west of Victoria Avenue North. By the turn of the century, the area was mostly built out with a wide range of late Victorian single detached homes of different sizes and styles. Additional homes would be added throughout the first decades of the twentieth century, increasing the density of the area and filling hitherto vacant lots.

In the present, that historic landscape has remained with homes to the north, west, and east of the subject property in a variety of late nineteenth and early twentieth century styles, with some more modern infill. Although constructed in different sizes and styles, the neighbourhood is cohesive in the consistent presence of historic single detached homes, most of which date from around 1870 to 1930, the period in which the subject property was constructed and in which the surrounding neighbourhood underwent significant growth and its primary period of build out. Although the subject property is by far the largest residential structure in this neighbourhood, it supports its character by virtue of its period of construction and its architectural style which harmonizes with the late nineteenth and early twentieth century styles present in the area and help support the character of the area as a mature historic neighbourhood with a range of single detached residential properties.

The property is also historically connected to Victoria Park and the Lindsay Armoury which are located directly to the south of the property, on the south side of Peel Street and extending for a full block south to Kent Street West. When Sylvester originally came to Lindsay, the property he purchased for his factory was the home of the local drill hall and agricultural fair grounds. Although not serving the same purpose, Sylvester soon after donated the lands that are now Victoria Park to the town as a public outdoor space and would later donate the land on which the Armoury was built to the federal government for this purpose. Sylvester, a militia man himself, provided this land to assist with the civic improvement of the town and these two City assets are specifically linked to the subject property through Sylvester himself and his contributions to Lindsay in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The three historic resources – the park, the armoury and the house – together speak to Sylvester's role in the community and have a specific historical relationship to each other.

In addition to its role as part of the broader historic landscape as this part of Lindsay, the property is a local historic landmark. Prominently situated at the northwest corner of the intersection of Peel Street and Victoria Avenue North, the property can be seen from both of these streets, as well as from Victoria Park, the Armoury and Kent Street West to the south. Its size and distinctive architecture make it well known in the community; at one point, it was known

as “the show home of Lindsay.”⁴ It is one of the most well-known residential properties in the community, both for its architecture and its well-known occupant.

⁴ “Remember the Original Sylvester Manufacturing Company When It Was Lindsay’s Pioneer Industry?” undated newspaper clipping, LACAC files, City of Kawartha Lakes Archives.

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

11 Victoria Avenue North has design and physical value as a unique example of a late Victoria residential property in Lindsay erected in the High Victorian Gothic style. Constructed in the late 1880s, the property is one of the largest and most ornate surviving examples of this type of domestic architecture in Lindsay. The property is demonstrative of the ornate and eclectic High Victorian architectural style that was regularly employed in domestic design in the latter decades of the nineteenth century that drew on the Gothic Revival style to create ornate and decorative buildings. The subject property includes a range of eclectic architectural elements, including the asymmetrical massing, brick coursing, pointed arches, ornate entrance porch, and distinctive corner tower with gable peaks, that speak to its origins within this stylistic type.

Historical and Associative Value

11 Victoria Avenue North has historical and associative value through its direct historical connections with Richard Sylvester, its first owner and an extremely influential and successful businessman in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Lindsay. Sylvester, who lived in the property with his family from the late 1880s when it was constructed to his death in 1919, was the founder and owner of the Sylvester Manufacturing Company, a large Lindsay employer that developed and made farm equipment. They were early manufacturers of important turn of the century agricultural equipment, including twine binders, seed drills, and cultivators. Sylvester is also notable as the creator of the Sylvester Auto-Thresher, an early self-propelled precursor to the modern combine.

Contextual Value

11 Victoria Avenue North has contextual value as a contributing feature to the historic residential neighbourhood to the north of Kent Street West. The area in which the subject property is located contains a wide variety of late nineteenth and early twentieth century residential properties, beginning at Peel Street and continuing north. These properties are representative of the historic development of Lindsay during this period and together form a cohesive historic residential landscape. The property is also directly connected to its neighbour to the south, Victoria Park and the Lindsay Armoury, which were originally connected to this property. The property is a local landmark as one

of Lindsay's most recognizable late nineteenth century mansions and for its prominent location adjacent to Victoria Park.

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 of the property support its value as a unique example of late Victorian Gothic Revival residential architecture in Lindsay.

- Three storey buff brick construction
- Hipped roof including:
 - Polychromatic slate shingles
 - Soffits
 - Fascia
- Bays with gable roofs
- Octagonal corner tower including:
 - Octagonal roof
 - Peaked gables
 - Decorative woodwork
 - Iron cresting
- Fenestration including:
 - Sash windows
 - Third storey lancet windows with decorative woodwork
 - Bay window
 - Dormers with decorative woodworks
- Contrasting coursing
- Decorative brickwork including:
 - Dogtooth coursing
 - Pointed window hoods
 - Radiating voussoirs with keystones
- Rusticated foundation
- Entrance porch
- Decorative bargeboard
- Brackets
- Drop finials
- Chimneys
- Mature trees

Historical and Associative Attributes

The historical and associative attributes of the property support its relationship to Lindsay businessman Richard Sylvester and his family.

- Relationship to Richard Sylvester
- Relationship to Victoria Park and the Lindsay Armoury

Contextual Attributes

The contextual attributes of the property support its value as a contributing feature of the mature historic neighbourhood north of Kent Street West and as a local landmark.

- Location at the intersection of Peel Street and Victoria Avenue North
- Views of the property from Victoria Avenue North, Peel Street, Victoria Park, the Lindsay Armoury and Kent Street West
- Views of Victoria Avenue North, Peel Street, Victoria Park, the Lindsay Armoury and Kent Street West from the property

Images



Sylvester House, n.d.







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