

## **Reasons for Designation: 2770 Sheffield Place**

### Legal Description

2770 Sheffield Place is a two-storey brick home sited on a farm property formerly in Westminster Township at Concession 1, North Part Lot 9 and Part Lot 8, and Broken Front Concession, Part Lots 8, 9, and part of an unopened road allowance. Following a severance and the subdivision of the property, the residence is now located at Lot 20, in the City of London, at the municipal address of 2770 Sheffield Place (formerly 1603 Hamilton Road.)

### Statement of Cultural Heritage Interest

The house at 1603 Hamilton Road is highly significant because of its architectural style, its mode of construction, its historical associations with James Williams Jr. and its setting overlooking the Thames River. The siting of the building represents an effort, unusual among area farmers, to create a homestead that had the picturesque qualities of a country estate.

### Historical Reasons

The house is documented in the 1871 assessment roll as a brick house under construction on the site. It was built by James Williams Jr., who appears to be the first resident on the property. The lot, Lot 9 of Concession 1 in Westminster Township, was granted in 1820 to John Doyl of Burford. In 1822 Doyl sold the 200 acres to John O'Neil, a "Gentleman" resident of London, after which it passed through several hands until James Williams Jr. began buying it in segments. Williams completed the purchase in 1868.

James Williams Jr. and his father played significant roles in the early days of London as they are reputed to have built the second home in the village soon after Peter McGregor erected his cabin. The name of James Williams (father and son) was linked to several land purchases in what is now downtown London between 1829 and 1851. In 1851, James Williams Jr. began a lengthy process to purchase the land at Lot 9, Concession 1, Westminster Township. As he started the purchase, records listed Williams as a blacksmith but by the time he had completed the purchase, he had forsaken his craft for a career as a farmer. Williams died in 1895 leaving parts of the Westminster Township farm to each of his five children. In 1897, the northern part of the farm and the house were purchased by Thomas Brown who rented out the house and farm. The house has been owned by four more owners since the turn of the century with the most recent owners Joe and Thelma Scott, who owned it and farmed there from 1966 until 2006.

### Architectural Reasons

The house is a two-storey brick building. It is described as transitional with restrained Italianate features. It is built of unusually long, London clay bricks, predominantly buff in colour although not consistent in shading, which appear to have been produced by a hand-moulded soft mud method and fired in a relatively primitive kiln.

The house has a stone foundation and, while the stone is not laid in courses, the surfaces have been given a shallow rock-faced cut that lends them a relatively refined and finished appearance.

Several features identify the Italianate style:

- the shallow hipped roof with broad eaves
- the symmetrically placed paired brackets supporting the eaves, each with a double scroll design
- the segmental arches heading the window and door openings

The Italianate features “sit lightly” on the underlying Georgian structure with:

- a generously proportioned, two-storey rectangular block with a symmetrical three-bay façade and a centre entranceway on the north side
- the windows on the west side are also symmetrically positioned, two on each floor
- the windows and doors on the east side are similarly symmetrical
- the segmental arches over doors and windows are shallow so that the upper arch formed by the voussoirs over the windows is only slightly more than one course deep
- the sidelights and transom of the entranceway recall a classical prototype
- the mouldings of the exterior paneling feature traditional Greek curves

### Contextual Reasons

The siting of the house is an intrinsic component of its architectural and historical importance. It sits on a rise facing the Thames River, positioned to take advantage of its site with a pleasing view of the river and to appear both picturesque and dignified in its setting. The open vista between the house and the river should be preserved as part of the context.