

Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report

Teskey House



Teskey House
492 River Road, Appleton, ON
Prepared by: Sally Coutts
30 April 2026

contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3	CRITERION 6	12
INTRODUCTION	4	6.1 Description and Response	
CRITERION 1	5	CRITERION 7	13
1.1 Description and Response		7.1 Description and Response	
1.2 Supporting Details		7.2 Supporting Details	
CRITERION 2	9	CRITERION 8	13
2.1 Description and Response		8.1 Description and Response	
4.2 Supporting Details		8.2 Supporting Details	
CRITERION 3	9	CRITERION 9	14
3.1 Description and Response		9.1 Description and Response	
CRITERION 4	10	BIBLIOGRAPHY	15
4.1 Description and Response			
4.2 Supporting Details			
CRITERION 5	11		
5.1 Description and Response			
5.2 Supporting Details			

Executive Summary

The Teskey House, 492 River Road, is an early 19th century stone house located facing the Mississippi River in the small hamlet of Appleton.¹ The main house was built in 1837 with the Kitchen and Carriage House added in 1842- 1844. Its first occupants were Joseph and Margaret (nee Cuthbert) Teskey. Joseph Teskey (born 1799) arrived in Canada in 1823 with his parents and siblings on the “Hebe” as part of the Peter Robinson migration from Ireland. The Teskey family was one of the Irish Palatine families that took part in the Peter Robinson settlement. The Palatines had immigrated from the Rhineland in Germany to Ireland in the early 18th century seeking a better life.

Joseph and his brothers, John and Robert, obtained land close together and established mills on the river near Appleton that were expanded or replaced over the decades. By the 1880s, the town had two churches, four mills, three stores and boasted a population of 300.²

The Teskey House was constructed of limestone, quarried nearby. It is a vernacular interpretation of Georgian Classicism, a style that dominated domestic architecture in Upper Canada during the first half of the 19th century. Georgian Classicism was inspired by the architecture of classical antiquity and is regular and symmetrical in its expression. High style buildings in the style feature decorative details inspired by Greek and Roman buildings such as decorative parapets, blind arcades, symmetrical front facades, porticos and columns. Simpler residential Georgian buildings have rectangular plans, symmetrical façades, side gable roofs and centrally placed entrance doors with fanlights and sidelights.

As an excellent example of a Georgian House, built by Joseph Teskey, an Irish Palatine, whose family had emigrated to Upper Canada from Ireland as part of the Peter Robinson migration, the property has cultural heritage value for its design, historical and contextual values. It meets seven of the nine criteria for designation under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*.



Fig. 1 Teskey House, View from River Road, Credit: Sally Coutts

¹ The Teskey House does not seem to have been given a name when it was constructed, however it was subsequently given Burnbank and Stoneacre. Sheila Stewart in a note to author Courtney Bond stated that the house did not seem to have had a name in the 19th century. For clarity, the house will be referred to as the Teskey House in this document. Source: Mississippi Mills heritage files, “Teskey House,” Copy of letter, Sheila Stuart.

² Brown, Jack, *Historical Sketches of Appleton, A Lanark County Village* (1973: Riverside Press), p. 9

Introduction

The Teskey House is located on a large lot on River Road in the hamlet of Appleton, facing the Mississippi River. Appleton is a small, primarily residential, community that runs along the banks of the river.

Once a busy mill town, its mills had ceased operation by the latter part of the 20th century and it is now a residential community.

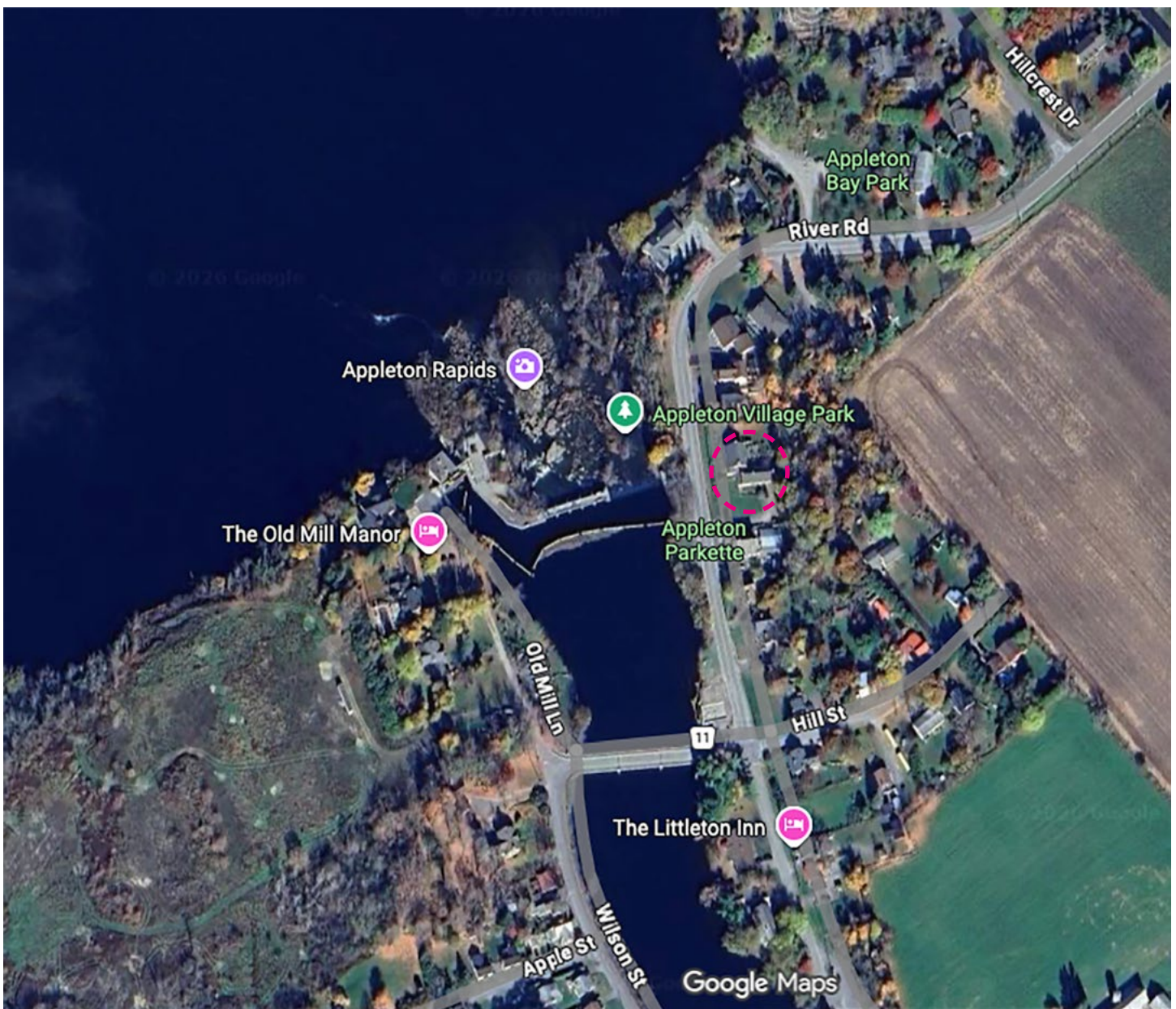


Fig. 2 Aerial View of Teskey House, Appleton, ON, Google Maps, 2026

Criterion 1

1.1 | Description and Response

Criterion 1	
Description	Property Meets Criterion
<p>The property has design value or physical value because it is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method.</p>	<p>Yes</p>
Response to Criterion	
<p>The property is valued for its cultural significance as a prime example of Georgian Classicism. This style, rooted in classical traditions, became widespread in Upper Canada between 1800 and 1850, largely due to settlers from the British Isles and Ireland who chose it as it reflected the architecture of their countries of origin and Loyalists who brought it with them from the United States. ³</p> <p>Georgian houses incorporated decorative features, floor plans, and elevations influenced by ancient Greek and Roman architecture. In Upper Canada, these houses generally had rectangular layouts and symmetrical façades. Typical design elements included side gable roofs and central hallways, with entrances often highlighted by fanlights and sidelights. ⁴</p> <p>The basic layout and proportions of Georgian architecture were versatile, and were found in structures ranging from simple log buildings and wood frame structures to substantial brick and stone houses. These stone houses were constructed to meet the needs and aspirations of the emerging middle and upper classes, demonstrating the enduring appeal and adaptability of Georgian design.</p>	



Fig. 3 The Teskey House in the 19th century. Treillage, the delicate wood trim on the verandah, was popular at the time, Credit: Teskey papers, North Lanark Museum



Fig. 4 The Teskey House in the mid 20th century, Credit: Teskey papers, North Lanark Museum

³ Kalman, Harold, *A History of Canadian Architecture*, (Oxford University Press, 1994), Volume 1, Chapter 4, “Classicism in Upper Canada,” p. 146

⁴ Kalman, Harold, *A History of Canadian Architecture*, (Oxford University Press, 1994), Volume 1, Chapter 4, “Classicism in Upper Canada,” pp. 139 – 171. Features of Georgian Classicism and residential architecture are discussed in this section of the book.

1.2 | Supporting Details

Description of Building

Located on River Road in Appleton beside the former United Church, the Teskey House faces the Mississippi River and is set back from River Road by a front yard with flower gardens. Its picturesque setting enhances its value and contributes to the character of the village.

The house is comprised of two sections that formed an “ell;” the original three bay 1837 house and an 1844 addition that consists of the kitchen, carriage house and servants’ quarters above. Initially separate, the two structures were eventually linked by a small hall. This unusual plan was featured in [The Ancestral Roof, the Domestic Architecture of Upper Canada.](#)⁵

The 1837 section features a three-bay front façade with a centre hall plan, twelve over twelve sash windows on the ground floor and six over six in the gable ends, a side gable roof and a large verandah, and the 1844 addition has a front gable roof, six over six windows and a large, three-bay carriage house.⁶

Attributes

- Medium pitched, side gabled roof one and a half storey, rough cut stone structure with a verandah on three sides that forms an “ell” with a front gabled, one and a half storey structure with a steeper roof, a front verandah and three arched carriageway entrances to the rear



Fig. 5 Teskey House River Road façade, Credit: Sally Coutts

⁵ MacRae, Marion and Adamson, Arthur, [The Ancestral Roof, the Domestic Architecture of Upper Canada,](#) (Clark, Irwin, 1963), p. 233

⁶ There is some discussion regarding the building’s construction date. Some sources say the house was constructed in 1837 and the kitchen wing in 1842 or 1844, while others have the entire structure built in 1844. Joseph Teskey purchased the property in 1836, so the 1837 date is not unlikely, particularly as he married Margaret Cuthbert in January 1838. The kitchen/ carriage house wing is built of different stone with different windows, which indicates it was built separately. Further research may confirm actual construction dates, but this document will use 1837 and 1842 -1844.

Main House, 1837

- Constructed of irregularly sized rough-cut limestone quarried locally and laid in uneven courses
- Centre hall plan with two reception rooms and two main rooms on main floor
- Stone voussoirs above main door and the windows
- Three-bay front façade with centrally placed door flanked by 12 over 12 windows
- Neoclassical doorway featuring fanlight with tracery, flanked by divided sidelights
- Verandah on three sides
- Stone chimneys at either end of the roof

- Rectangular six over six windows with stone voussoirs, white sills on front façade, small square six pane windows under eaves
- Features a carriage shed with three arched openings (one enclosed) and a large open space above, originally used as a dormitory for farm workers

Setting

- The large side yard, located to the north of the house
- The retaining wall and fence

Architectural Style

Georgian Classical buildings dominated the domestic architecture of Upper Canada in the early decades of the 19th century. There were two main sources of the type – the Loyalists who arrived in the late 18th and early 19th century and emigrants from Britain and Ireland where the style was popular.⁷ Often associated with the houses of the upper classes, simpler

1844 Addition

- Front gabled, three bay structure with a front verandah
- Constructed of larger, darker, more rectangular blocks of limestone than the 1837 section, laid in roughly even courses
- Front gable roof with three chimneys



Fig. 6 Teskey House, Main House, Credit: Sally Coultts



Fig. 7 Teskey House, Addition River Road façade, Credit: Sally Coultts

⁷ Op. cit, footnotes 3 and 4

vernacular buildings with elements of the style were built throughout Upper Canada as the land was settled. Many were built as families prospered and replaced their original log dwellings or moved to a new location when they had become established. In eastern Ontario, these houses were frequently built of stone and featured three or five bay front facades, twelve over twelve windows, and doors with fanlights and side lights. Examples in the area include Maplelawn, constructed in 1831-1834 in Nepean Township, and Inge Va and the McMartin House in Perth.

The Teskey House is a good example of a house built in the Georgian tradition. When it was constructed in 1837, Joseph Teskey had been in Ramsay Township since 1823. Georgian Classical houses were common in Ireland where he came from and it is not surprising he chose to model his new house after a style he would have known in Ireland. The stone for the original house and the later kitchen wing was quarried nearby and the building was likely constructed by local labourers with some experience in the construction of stone houses and knowledge of the simple, centre hall plan.

In 1969 the “Ottawa Journal” featured the house in its series of historic home houses by Gladys Blair. The article quotes long-time owner of the house, Sheila Stewart, who credits the property’s construction to Mr. McRorie of Richmond. This is possible, as a stone mason named McRorie is reputed to have worked on the construction of Parliament Buildings in the 1850s. In addition, there were a number of Scottish stone masons who had worked on the construction of the Rideau Canal after its completion in 1827.⁸

The house has an unusual “ell” shaped plan, created in 1844 when a wing was built perpendicular to the original 1837 house. This wing housed the kitchen, and servants' quarters, in addition to the distinctive three door carriage house. Some sources attribute the distinctive design to Joseph Teskey’s wife, Margaret Cuthbert, who wanted the wing to separate the family from the servants.⁹

The Teskey House is one of eastern Ontario’s noteworthy Georgian Houses. It is in excellent condition and is well-known in the area.

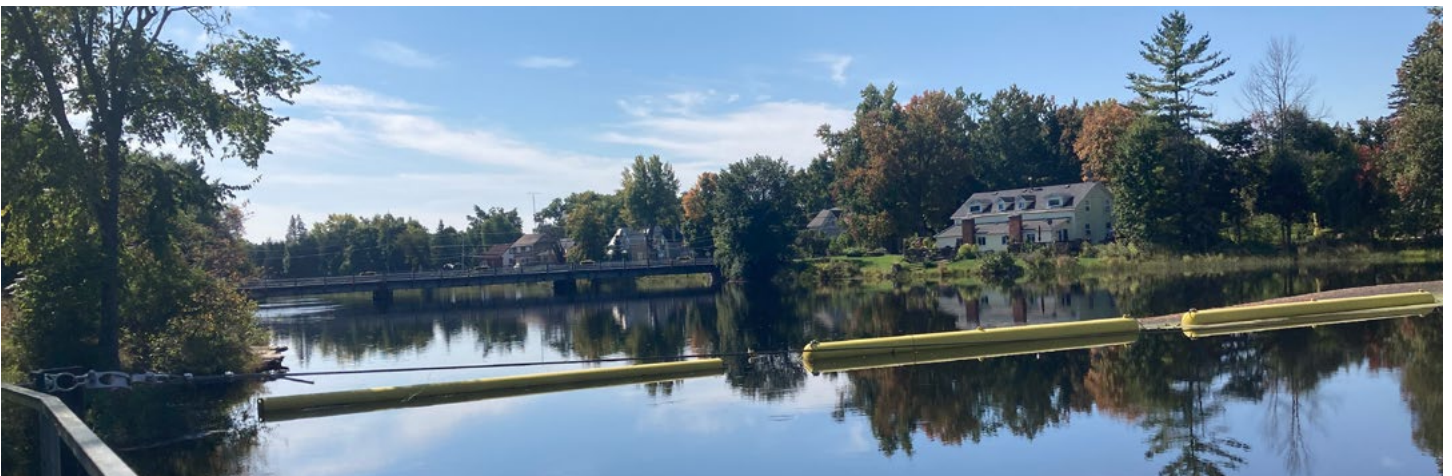


Fig. 8 View South-West from River Road, Credit: Sally Coutts

⁸ Blair, Gladys, “Burnbank,” *Ottawa Journal*, 27 December 1969, plus “Joseph Teskey House,” Heritage File, Municipality of Mississippi Mills, p. 2. This document refers to a Scottish stonemason, but does not name him.

⁹ Ibid. There are a number of sources for this assertion, none of which cite the source of this assertion. It is likely that they are all quoting one unnamed source. See also, “Joseph Teskey House,” Heritage File, Municipality of Mississippi Mills, p. 2

Criterion 2

2.1 | Description and Response

Criterion 2	
Description	Property Meets Criterion
The property has design value or physical value because it displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit.	Yes
Response to Criterion	
The Teskey House has design value as an elegant example of Georgian Classical architecture in Canada. Constructed by local craftsmen in 1837 and 1844, its multi-paned windows, front door with sidelights and an elliptical fanlight are sophisticated elements of the style. Although the stone masonry does not display a high degree of craftsmanship, the fanlight and sidelights are excellent examples of local craftsmanship.	

2.2 | Supporting Details

The doorway with fanlight is an excellent example of the type of neo-classical fanlights found in Upper Canada in the 1830s and 1840s and shows a high level of craftsmanship.

Criterion 3

3.1 | Description and Response

Criterion 3	
Description	Property Meets Criterion
The property has design value or physical value because it demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement.	No
Response to Criterion	
The heritage consultant has reviewed other 1830s stone buildings in eastern Ontario and the character and construction methods of the building and concluded that as an example of a small stone structure constructed by local labourers, the property does not display a high degree of technical or scientific achievement	



Fig. 9 Teskey House, Main House's Front Door, Credit: Sally Coutts

Criterion 4

4.1 | Description and Response

Criterion 4	
Description	Property Meets Criterion
The property has historical value or associative value because it has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community.	Yes
Response to Criterion	
The Teskey House has cultural heritage value because of its associations with the Irish Palatines and the Peter Robinson emigration scheme of 1823. It was built in 1837 and 1844 by Joseph Teskey, an Irish Palatine who had emigrated from Ireland with his parents as part of the first sponsored emigration organized by Peter Robinson. Robinson organized two settlements of southern Irish immigrants in the 1820s, one to Shipman’s Mills (Almonte) in 1823 and the other to the Newcastle District, near present-day Peterborough in 1825. A total of about 500 arrived in the area from Ireland in the autumn of 1823. These settlers played a prominent role in the early history of Ramsay Township.	

4.2 | Supporting Details

The Teskey House has cultural heritage significance due to its association with Joseph Teskey, a member of an Irish Palatine family that had moved to Upper Canada as part of the Peter Robinson emigration scheme in 1823. It also has value as an early dwelling built by one of the founders of Appleton.

Palatines and the Peter Robinson Settlers

The Irish Palatines originally came from the Rhineland region of Germany. Following a period marked by conflict, famine, and religious persecution beginning with the Thirty Years’ War in 1618, many left the area in 1709 in search of a better life. While some emigrated to the American colonies, approximately 3,000 settled in Ireland. Their relocation from Germany was supported by British landlords seeking to increase the Protestant tenant population. Over the next hundred years, Palatine families experienced improved circumstances, partly due to favorable treatment from local Protestant landlords, such as preferred land rental rates.¹⁰

Despite this relative prosperity, some Palatine families decided to participate in the organized emigration scheme from Ireland led by Peter Robinson (b. 1785), who was a member of a prominent family in Upper Canada. In 1823 he was given charge of settling a group of 568 Irish immigrants by the British Colonial office who were going to Shipman’s Mills (now Almonte).¹¹ The state-sponsored emigration initiative aimed to provide poor relief in the counties of Cork and Tipperary, as many participants, especially Roman Catholics, faced hardship resulting from famine, high food prices, discrimination and evictions of tenant farmers. The Colonial Office hoped that conditions in Ireland would improve through de-population and encouraged the emigration scheme.

Emigrants received free transportation to Upper Canada, supplies for the journey and the following year, as well as basic tools and utensils. Upon arrival in Ramsay Township, settlers received an assortment

¹⁰ Bennett, Carol, *Peter Robinson’s Settlers, 1823 – 1825* (Juniper Books, 1987), p. 162

¹¹ Cameron, Wendy, “Robinson, Peter,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Volume VII (1826-1850)*, https://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/robinson_peter_7E.html

of tools and household goods, rations, medicine and a cow, and each male settler received 70 acres of land.

The Teskey family, headed by Joseph’s father John and his wife Anne, left County Cork in Ireland on the “Hebe,” the ship that transported members of the first Peter Robinson emigration scheme.¹² The family group consisted of eight children, including the eldest, Joseph and his brothers John and Robert, who were in their twenties when they left Ireland. The three brothers received adjacent parcels of land by the falls at what became Appleton and were able to support other family members in the years following their arrival.

The majority of emigrants aboard the “Hebe” were Roman Catholics who had struggled to sustain themselves on small rented parcels of land in Ireland. In contrast, the Teskey Family and other Palatines who emigrated at the same time, were Protestant tenant farmers and comparatively well-off when they left Ireland. Upon arrival, the Palatines achieved greater success than many other Peter Robinson settlers, owing to their skills and resources. It is estimated that only approximately twelve Protestant Palatine families emigrated from Ireland on the “Hebe.”¹³ Many of the initial Peter Robinson settlers faced challenges; of the original 500 individuals who arrived in 1823, only 414 remained by 1825.

Criterion 5

5.1 | Description and Response

Criterion 5	
Description	Property Meets Criterion
The property has historical or associative value because it yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture.	Yes
Response to Criterion	
The Teskey House has historical and associative value because of its links with the Teskey Family who settled the land that became Appleton in 1823 after their arrival in Upper Canada as part of the Peter Robinson emigration scheme.	

5.2 | Supporting Details

Joseph Teskey, emigrated from Ireland with his family in 1823. The oldest son of the family of John Teskey and his wife Anne, he and his two brothers, John and Robert were granted land adjacent to one another, and to the falls that they would eventually harness. Taking advantage of the natural assets of the land by 1824, Joseph had begun the construction of the first mill at their falls, a grist mill. His brother, Robert Teskey built a saw mill across the river at about the same time. Both mills attracted workers and the town began to grow slowly.

Because of the role the Teskey family played in the development of the town, it was referred to as Teskeyville

¹² “Stoneacre,” the Joseph Teskey House, Mississippi Mills

¹³ Brown, Howard Morton, *Lanark Legacy, Nineteenth Century Glimpses of an Ontario County*, (Lanark County, 1984), p. 128

until its first post office opened in 1857, when the town became Appleton. Another brother Albert, owned the general store and post office. By that time, there were about 75 people in the village.¹⁴ Later in the 19th century members of the Teskey family opened a woollen mill (1863) and a flour mill (1853) and by the 1880s, the population was about 300, and included blacksmiths, wagon makers, a tanner and hoteliers.¹⁵

By the end of the 20th century there were no more mills in Appleton, and one of the only reminders of the critical role and long association of the Teskey family with the village is the stone house at 492 River Road.

Criterion 6

6.1 | Description and Response

Criterion 6	
Description	Property Meets Criterion
The property has historical value or associative value because it demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community.	No
Response to Criterion	
The architect of the Teskey House is unknown, and it is probable it was built by a local contractor and masons.	



Fig. 10 The first mills in Appleton. Credit: The Mills of Appleton, North Lanark Regional Museum

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 128

¹⁵ Brown, Jack, Historical Sketches of Appleton, a Lanark Village (Riverside Press, 1973), pp. 9-10

Criterion 7

7.1 | Description and Response

Criterion 7	
Description	Property Meets Criterion
The property has contextual value because it is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area.	Yes
Response to Criterion	
The Teskey House has contextual value as it helps define the character of the small village of Appleton. The house is prominently located on attractive grounds on River Road, the main access road. It overlooks the former mill sites that once dominated the village and serves as a reminder of the wealth and prosperity of the village in the 19th century.	

7.2 | Supporting Details

Appleton is a small, picturesque village located on the Mississippi River, south of Almonte, that stretches along both its banks. Formerly the site of woollen mills, the village is defined by its mix of historic and more recent housing, its setting along the river and its tranquil character. The Teskey House, with its attractive setting, unique architecture and large grounds establishes the character of Appleton for travellers entering the village and crossing the bridge.

Criterion 8

8.1 | Description and Response

Criterion 8	
Description	Property Meets Criterion
The property has contextual value because it is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings.	Yes
Response to Criterion	
The Teskey House has cultural heritage value as it is physically linked to its surroundings, overlooking the Mississippi River and the former site of Joseph Teskey's grist mill. Joseph Teskey opened Appleton's first mill, a grist mill, in 1824 soon after his arrival in Upper Canada. While the mill no longer exists, the house's proximity to its original site reflects his role as both an employer and a leader in the small community.	

8.2 | Supporting Details

The Teskey House is located on River Road which passes through the village roughly parallel to the Mississippi in Ramsay Township. It overlooked its owner's grist mill on the falls of the Mississippi River, and is across the river from another Teskey brother, Robert's house.

Criterion 9

9.1 | Description and Response

Criterion 9	
Description	Property Meets Criterion
The property has contextual value because it is a landmark	Yes
Response to Criterion	
<p>The Teskey House stands on a large lot along River Road in Appleton, facing the Mississippi River, beside the former United Church. Its prominent location, unique architecture, unusual “ell” shape and attractive fenced front garden make it a notable local landmark.</p>	



Fig. 11 View from Country Road 11, Former United Church and Teskey House on the right, Credit: Google Street View 2023

Bibliography

Appleton Women's Institute, "Tweedsmuir Community History" – Book 1

Bennett, Carol, Peter Robinson's Settlers, 1823 – 1825, (Juniper Books, 1987)

Blair, Gladys, "Burnbank," Ottawa Journal, 27 December 1969, plus Joseph Teskey House," Heritage File, Municipality of Mississippi Mills, p. 2.

Brown, Jack, Historical Sketches of Appleton (Riverside Press, 1973)

Cameron, Wendy "ROBINSON, PETER," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 7, University of Toronto/ Université Laval, 2003–, accessed April 26, 2026, https://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/robinson_peter_7E.html.

Humphreys, Barbara, The Architectural Heritage of the Rideau Corridor (Canadian Historic Sites: Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History – No. 10, 1974)

Irish Palatines.org, <https://www.irishpalatines.org/index.html>

Irish Palatine Special Interest Group, "Who are the Irish Palatines?," Ontario Ancestors – the Ontario Genealogical Society

Macrae, Marion and Adamson, Anthony, The Ancestral Roof, Domestic Architecture of Upper Canada (Clark, Irwin and Company, 1963)

Municipality of Mississippi Mills, Teskey House Heritage Files

North Lanark Regional Museum, "The Mills of Appleton: The Legacy," Virtual Museums of Canada.

Teskey Family Genealogy Page, <https://www.teskey.org>

Irish Palatines.org, <https://www.irishpalatines.org/index.html>