

HERITAGE SURVEY AND EVALUATION FORM

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Building Name and Address: 1824 Farwel St., Vars, ON K0A 3H0

Construction Date: c. 1910

Original Owner: Traders Bank of Canada



CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE/ INTEREST

	Yes	No
Design Value	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Historical Value	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contextual Value	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

A property may be designated under Section 29 of the *Ontario Heritage Act* if it meets one or more of the above criteria. Ontario Regulation 09/06

Design or Physical Value

Architecture

Is the property a rare, unique, representative, or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method? YES NO

1824 Farwel Street, Vars, is a good example of a village commercial building. It is situated on a small village lot, close to the right-of-way. It was built as a bank and converted to a single detached residence in the late 1950s.

The building is a two-storey structure, constructed with the former banking area on the main floor and an apartment for the bank manager on the second floor. It is clad in red brick veneer with a flat roof sloping toward the rear, a side hall plan and parged foundation. The eaves are generally flush, with the exception of a projecting portion across the front façade. Here, a dropped plain cornice and sign bearing the name "The Traders Bank of Canada" (and, following the 1912 acquisition of the Traders Bank by the Royal Bank of Canada, "The Royal Bank of Canada") once existed. Faded brick below the projecting eaves indicates the former location of this sign. The concrete porch is decorated with a simple wrought-iron railing that was a later addition.

The three-bay front façade features evenly-spaced window and door openings with segmental arches, brick voussoirs and stone sills. The entrance bay features a wide door with transom.

The west façade of the building features a single window opening with a flat arch, likely added after the building was constructed, and the east façade features

three evenly-spaced windows on both the main and second floors. The openings are a uniform size and have segmental arches, brick voussoirs and stone sills. A small screened entry porch is situated at the rear of the east façade.



1824 Farwel Street, c. 1934. (Source: RBC Corporate Archive)

The building is also a good representative example of other Traders Bank of Canada buildings that were built in other villages in Ontario. There are at least four other known Traders Bank branches in Ontario dating from the first half of the 20th century with similar footprints and façades.

The Traders Bank of Canada built branches across Ontario, including in Chapleau, Embrun, Massey and Burgessville, all of which were a similar form and style to the Vars branch. The branches were all acquired by the Royal Bank of Canada in 1912. The Chapleau and Embrun branch buildings have been demolished, and the Burgessville and Massey branches have been re-clad and heavily altered.



1824 Farwel Street, c. 1934. (Source: RBC Corporate Archive)

When completed, the Traders Bank branch in Chapleau was nearly identical to the Vars branch, with the exception of flat-arch openings and the door at the right side of the front façade. Like the Vars branch, it featured a dropped cornice below which the bank sign was mounted, three second-floor and two main-floor window openings, a side hall plan and a grouping of three windows on the second floor side façade.



Chapleau, ON bird's-eye view with Royal Bank of Canada building highlighted, c. 1913.
(Source: Vince Crichton historical photograph collection, Chapleau Public Library)

The Burgessville branch also featured a side hall plan and the same arrangement of window and door openings on the front façade. Like the Chapleau branch, the main door was located on the right side of the front façade

and all openings had flat arches. The bank sign was hung across the front façade between the main and upper floors.



Burgessville, ON branch of the Traders Bank of Canada, c. early 20th century.
(Source: Norwich and District Museum & Archives)

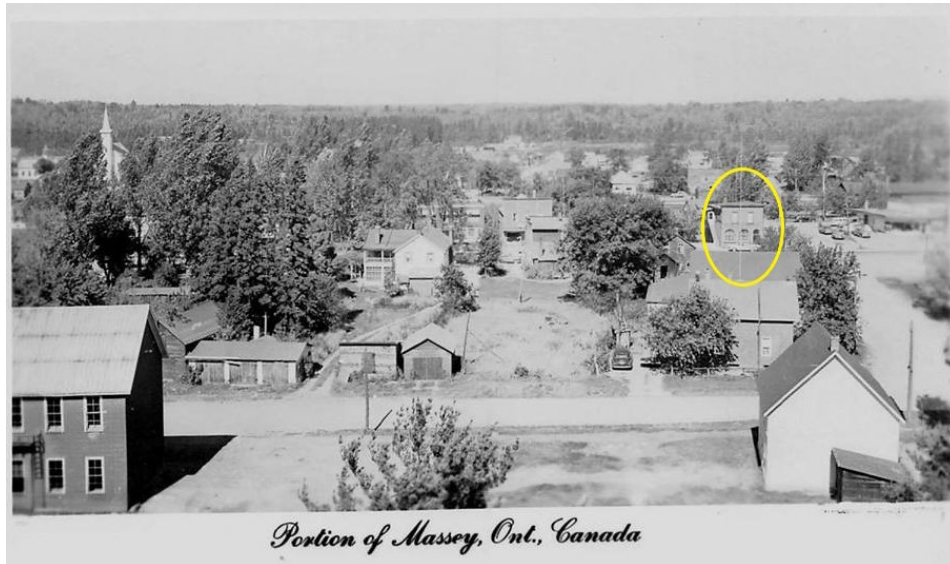
The branch in the village of Embrun, near Vars, featured segmental-arch openings, door on the left side of the front façade and the bank sign mounted directly below the cornice. The front façade had a single large main-floor window rather than a pair of windows, and two second-floor windows rather than three.



Embrun, ON branch of The Royal Bank of Canada, c. 1912. (Source: RBC Corporate Archive)

The branch in Massey also featured elements similar to those of the Vars branch, including segmental arch openings on the second floor and two large main-floor

windows. Unlike the Vars branch, the Massey branch had only two second-floor windows on the front façade, the main floor windows featured semi-circular arches and the staircase leading to the second-floor manager's apartment was on the exterior of the building.



Massey, ON bird's-eye view with Traders Bank building highlighted, date unknown.
(Source: Massey Area Museum)



Sauble Street, Massey, ON with Royal Bank of Canada, c. early 1900s.
(Source: Virtual Museum of Canada, Hugh Cummings Photography Collection – Then & Now)

Craftsmanship/Artistic Merit

Does the property display a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit?

YES NO

The building is one of only five brick buildings in the village of Vars, and the only remaining purpose-built brick commercial building in the village.

Technical/Scientific Merit

Does the property demonstrate a high degree of technical or scientific achievement?

YES NO

Historical and Associative Value

Date of Construction: c. 1910

Historical Associations

Does the property have direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity organization or institution that is significant to a community?

YES NO

The Traders Bank of Canada primarily served agricultural communities, predominantly in Ontario. Most of the branches were located in villages and towns in southwestern Ontario, with a few other branches near Ottawa and in smaller mining communities in northern Ontario. Most branch buildings were located on the main street and occasionally, in some larger towns, occupied a prominent corner lot and/or were often part of a row, or block, of commercial buildings. In smaller villages, the branch buildings were usually detached and some, including the Vars branch, were located off the main commercial street.

In 1912, there were 104 branches across Ontario, making the Traders Bank the largest in the province based on number of branches. Despite these numbers, the bank was not as successful as others in the province because it had fewer commercial accounts and served primarily rural clients. In September 1912 the Traders Bank of Canada was acquired by the Royal Bank of Canada.

Community History

Does the property yield, or have the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture? YES NO

Like many villages throughout the province, Vars and its commercial centre developed, grew, and declined in tandem with the railway.

In 1881-1882, the Canada Atlantic Railway (later the Grand Trunk Railway and Canadian National Railway) laid tracks southwest of the small community of Bearbrook. Shortly thereafter, the post office village of Bearbrook Station was established around the junction of the railway and a forced road that ran between the community of Russell and the Ottawa River. A hotel, sawmill, church, cheese factory and several stores arrived shortly thereafter, and the growing settlement was renamed Vars to avoid confusion with the village of Bearbrook further north along the forced road. Lovell's Gazetteer of the Dominion of Canada reported that, by 1908, the village had four churches, a sash and door factory and a telegraph office.

The forced road was named Bearbrook Road (now Buckland Road) and established as the main commercial street, with John Street (now Farwel Street), running east from it, parallel to the railway line.



Buckland Road, Vars, looking north from the railway crossing, c. 1913. (Source: private collection)

In June 1910, Joseph and Elizabeth Fraser, who operated the general store at the corner of Farwel Street and Suprenant Walk (formerly Center Street), severed and sold a 35 foot-by-75 foot portion of their property on the north side of Lot 2, John Street, to the Traders Bank of Canada for \$125. The bank building was constructed shortly thereafter between the Methodist church to the west and Joseph Fraser's store and post office to the east. It may have been the only brick commercial building in the village. It became a branch of The Royal Bank of Canada in September 1912.



Farwel Street, Vars, looking west from the road in front of Joseph Fraser's store, c. 1909. The Traders Bank was constructed on the lot to the left of the Methodist Church (demolished c. 1940s). (Source: private collection)

Vernon's 1916-17 directory of Russell County directory noted that Vars had a population of 200. The occupations of the residents listed in the directory reflect the prosperity of the village at the time—two clergymen, three general storekeepers (one of whom was also the postmaster), three bakers, two agents, and a butcher, blacksmith, shoemaker, doctor, engineer, surveyor, hotelier, miller, tinsmith and banker.

By the 1920s, staff from the Royal Bank in Vars travelled to Navan twice per week to offer banking services to residents until a branch opened there.

As road transportation improved between Vars and Ottawa and automobile ownership increased, railway travel decreased. As residents found work in

Ottawa and thus had easier access to the shops and services offered there, the stores and services in Vars saw less business. Stores, the post office and the public school eventually closed.

By the mid-1950s the eastbound train to Montreal only made one stop in the morning, and the westbound train to Ottawa only stopped once in the late evening, a sharp decline from the early 20th century when the train stopped in Vars four times a day. The train soon ceased to stop in Vars altogether, and the station building was relocated to Cumberland in 1976 as the first building of the new Cumberland Heritage Village.

The Vars branch of the Royal Bank closed in the 1950s, and residents of Vars travelled to Navan to do their banking.

Representative Work

Does the property demonstrate or reflect the work or ideas of an architect, artist, building, designer or theorist who is significant to a community? YES NO

Many banks in 20th century Canada had staff architects, or always worked with the same architect. Given the similarities between the banks built by the Traders Bank in rural Ontario, it is probable that the same architect designed all of them or that a standard plan was used.

The Chapleau branch is attributed to F.S. Baker, president of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada from 1910-1912. He worked for the architectural firm Carrière and Hastings who designed the Traders Bank of Canada head office in Toronto, completed in 1906.

Given the similarities between the Chapleau and Vars buildings, it is possible that the plans for the Chapleau branch were used in Vars, or that the Vars branch was also designed by F.S. Baker.

Contextual Value



Aerial view of Vars, showing location of 1824 Farwel Street, 2017. (Source: geoOttawa)



Looking east along Farwel Street toward Suprenant Walk, 2019. (Source: Google)



Looking west along Farwel Street toward Buckland Road, 2019. (Source: Google)

Community Character

Is the property important in defining, maintaining, or supporting the character of the area? YES NO

Vars was established as a village as a direct result of the Canada Atlantic Railway's construction of a line to Ottawa. The village grew rapidly around the railway station and by the first half of the 20th century it was a busy, self-sufficient rural community.

Post-war highway improvements, the removal of passenger train service from Vars and an increase in automobile ownership resulted in more residents commuting into Ottawa for work, shops and services. Businesses in rural villages, especially those that became obsolete as a result of the automobile, were no longer essential. By the beginning of the 21st century, the only businesses remaining in Vars were convenience stores, and most commercial buildings had been demolished.

1824 Farwel is one of a number of former retail and service buildings in Vars that, though converted to residential use, reflect the former prosperity of the village and delineate its historic commercial area.

Context

Is the property physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings? YES NO

Farwel Street runs east from Buckland Road, the original commercial main street of Vars that grew along the 19th century forced road between Russell and the Ottawa River. Farwel Street runs parallel to the railway corridor around which the community grew.

In addition to the bank, a doctor's residence, Methodist church, sawmill and general store were also located on Farwel Street. The general store at the corner of Farwel Street and Suprenant Walk operated until the early 21st century and marked the eastern end of the commercial area that once existed along the street.

Two other general stores, now converted to residences, were located at the northeast and southeast corner of Farwel Street and Buckland Road. Though the stores and bank are no longer in operation and all have been converted to residential use, they are still identifiable as former commercial buildings and clearly indicate where the main commercial centre of the village once existed.

Infill along the street is minimal and the streetscape continues to reflect that of a historic village.

Landmark

Is the property a landmark? YES NO

Sources

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