

Wawanosh Monument

Designation Report



(Photo provided by Madison Bifano)

Location: Northwest corner of 96 Great Northern Road and Willoughby intersection.

Researched and Submitted by: Maddy Bifano

History of the Wawanosh Home

“While Reverend Wilson did accept girls at Shingwauk, only a few came that first year and none thereafter. In reality, there was little space for female students at this Boys’ Home.

To accommodate girls, a separate residential school building was established on a 15-acre site 5 km away, just north of the village centre. It was named the Wawanosh Home for Girls. Construction of this grand two-storey stone building commenced in spring 1877 and the first ten girls arrived that fall, before work was completed. The building fund was depleted in 1878, prompting new subscriptions for funding. As the federal Government was now more involved in native affairs (following passage of the recent Indian Act of 1876), it agreed to make an annual grant to the Wawanosh Home, provided enrolment was not less than fifteen. The Home was officially opened on August 19th, 1879 with 14 girls in residence.

In his quest to expand and streamline school facilities, Reverend Wilson soon realized that the isolated Wawanosh Home with its limited enrolment should be sold off. He formulated plans in the late 1880s to move the girls to larger facilities at the main Shingwauk site on the St. Mary’s River. There was little support for this school expansion program, probably due to the recession in the 1890s. Reverend Wilson resigned as Principal in March 1893, owing to ill health and frustration over not being able to consolidate the Boys and Girls Homes. This task would be achieved by others, a few years later.” - *Anglican Church of Canada - Truth and Reconciliation - Shingwauk IRS* - <https://www.anglican.ca/tr/histories/shingwauk/>

“The Wawanosh School for girls was opened in 1879 at a site not far from the Shingwauk school in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. An 1883 study showed that eighty-three per cent of the girls who had attended the school had either died or left the Wawanosh Home in less than five years. When a new addition was built for the girls in 1900 it was discovered that there was no way to heat it. In 1900 the girl’s school moved to the Shingwauk site. In 1935, the two schools were merged to create the Shingwauk Residential School, which was housed in a new building.” - *National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation* - <https://memorial.nctr.ca/?p=1342>

Chief Wawanosh

Chief Wawanosh (other known names: Joshua Wawanosh, Joshua Waywaynosh) was born along the shores of Lake Superior in the 1780s¹, but moved south and settled on

¹ Jean Turnbull Elford. "Chief Wawanosh and the Treaty of 1827". *Sarnia Historical Society*

Lake Huron in the Sarnia/Walpole Island region². The name for the school was likely chosen due to the time Rev. E. F. Wilson spent in the Walpole Island area. He fought in the War of 1812, and became chief shortly after the fact. "One of the chiefs for St. Clair Regional Band was Joshua Wawanosh. Wawanosh had a remarkable and checkered career as a leader of the St. Clair Chippewas. He became a chief shortly after the war of 1812 in part because of his military service on behalf of the Crown in the war of 1812. By the mid-1820s, Crown officials and other Chippewa chiefs recognized Wawanosh as the Head Chief."³ During his time as head chief, Wawanosh maintained 4 reserves of land for his people, all in what is now Lambton County. He remained monolingual in Ojibwe his whole life, and died in 1871⁴.

Photos of Wawanosh IRS



A drawing of the Wawanosh home done by E.F. Wilson. *Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre, 2011-16/001(015)*

² Lisa Philips Valentine; Allan K. McDougall. "Wawanosh's Box". *University of Western Ontario*.

³ "The Cheppewas of Sarnia Band vs. Queen et. al" *Court of Appeal for Ontario*.

⁴ Peter S. Schmalz (1991). *The Ojibwa of Southern Ontario*. University of Toronto Press.



Photograph of the building after it was sold and repurposed by the Children's Aid Society, ca.1940. *Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre, 2010-021/001(163)*

Description of Property

The Wawanosh monument is a small monument made of local sandstone dedicated to Rebecca and George Hardeman the first matron and superintendent of the Wawanosh home. The monument is located at the intersection of Great Northern Road and Willoughby Street by the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 25 and was built and dedicated in 1967 by the Tarentorus Women's Institute.

Statement of Cultural Value or Interest

The monument is constructed of local sandstone which has been considered historically significant for other heritage properties. The cultural context of the monument is more important than the monument itself. The monument commemorates the location of the former Wawanosh Indian Residential School, which was constructed by Reverend E.F. Wilson in 1879 and was named after Chief Wawanosh a prominent Chippewa chief and veteran of the War of 1812. The Wawanosh Home was the first iteration of a girl's residential school in the area and was built to accommodate Aboriginal girls due to a lack of space for female students at Shingwauk Residential School.

The Wawanosh Home experienced difficulties with funding both prior to opening due to a lack of funds delaying construction, which began in 1877, for two years and a low enrolment after opening. The school would be moved to the site of the Shingwauk School in 1900 and the two schools were officially merged in 1935 with the construction of a new building. A report in 1883 found that 83% of girls that had attended the Wawanosh Home had died or left the Home within five years.

The residential school remained there until 1901 when the girls were moved to the Shingwauk Residential School site on Queen Street. The school The Wawanosh home was demolished in 1965.

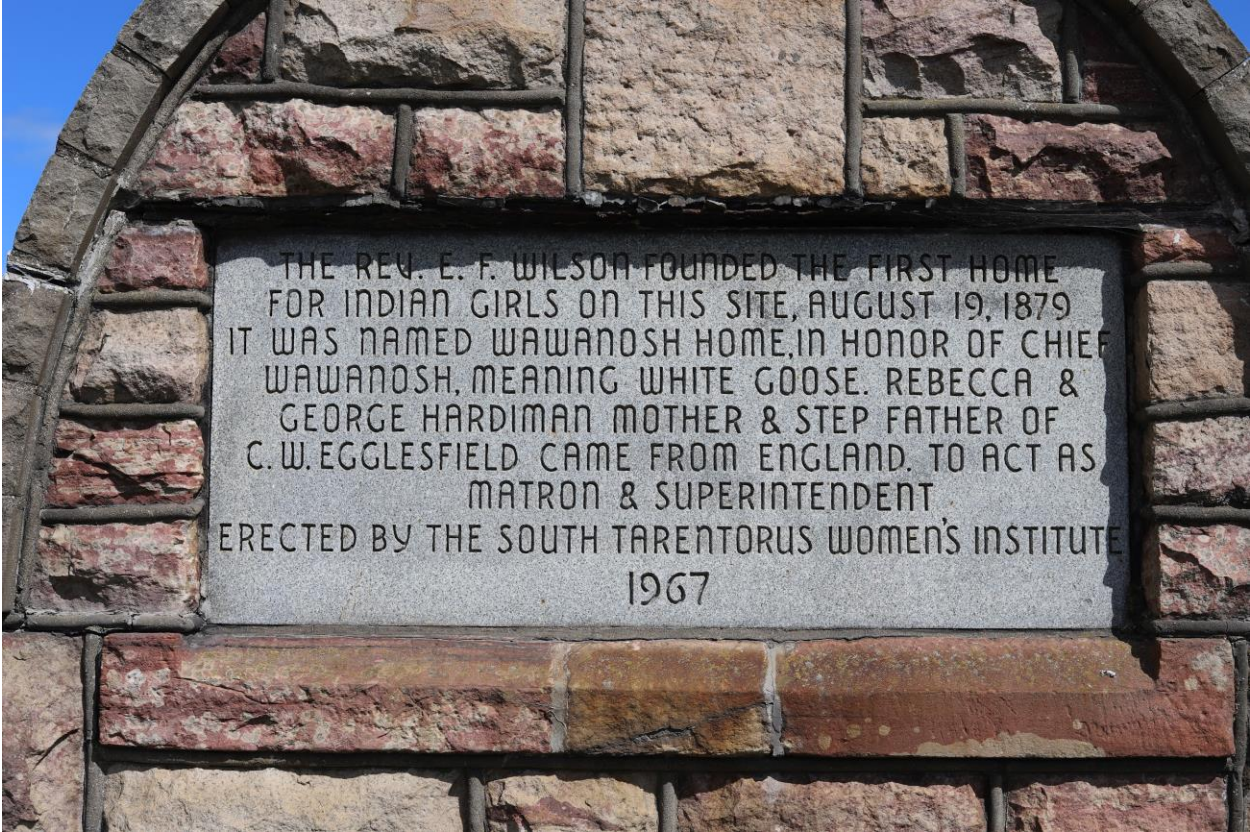
The Wawanosh Home was part of the Residential School System, which operated in Canada from the early 1800s until 1996, and aimed to assimilate Indigenous children into Euro-Canadian culture. The Residential School System has been acknowledged as a National Historic Event by the Government of Canada.

The monument serves as a reminder of what once stood on the site, and of the legacy of the Residential School system in Sault Ste. Marie and Canada. Designating the monument as a heritage property would fall under the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action 79, which calls for the commemoration of Residential School sites and history and working with Indigenous organizations to recognize what has happened.

Description of Heritage Attributes

Key attributes that express the value of the monument as a reminder of the Residential School system and its connection to Sault Ste. Marie's history include:

- The monument serves as a reminder of what once stood on the site, and of the legacy of the Residential School system in Sault Ste. Marie and Canada.
- It is constructed of local sandstone similar to other historical monuments and plaques in Sault Ste. Marie and is designed to be aesthetically pleasing and is in fairly good condition
- The monument mentions both the first matron and superintendent of the school and the fact that the Wawanosh Home was one of the first all-girls residential schools in Canada.



THE REV. E. F. WILSON FOUNDED THE FIRST HOME
FOR INDIAN GIRLS ON THIS SITE, AUGUST 19, 1879
IT WAS NAMED WAWANOSH HOME, IN HONOR OF CHIEF
WAWANOSH, MEANING WHITE GOOSE. REBECCA &
GEORGE HARDIMAN MOTHER & STEP FATHER OF
C. W. EGGLESFIELD CAME FROM ENGLAND. TO ACT AS
MATRON & SUPERINTENDENT
ERECTED BY THE SOUTH TARENTORUS WOMEN'S INSTITUTE
1967