

23 JUNE 1980

Designation Recommendation
and Description for

Robert Shepherd Grist Mill

A. REASONS FOR DESIGNATION
UNDER THE ONTARIO HERITAGE ACT, 1974

The Robert Shepherd Grist Mill is recommended for designation for both historical and architectural reasons. The mill site constitutes one of the oldest areas in Brockville, since early industry was located on the waterfront and Buell's Creek. While other nineteenth century buildings remain in the area, Shepherd's is the last mill building left in use from the nine that once utilized the water power from Buell's Creek.

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B. Historical Background

By 1784 the first settlers began to occupy this area. Two of the first were William Buell and Daniel Jones Senior. They were to receive land grants that would eventually comprise a large portion of what would become Brockville. Their land abutted one another, with Jones acquiring the area around Buell's Creek, which had a small water falls at its mouth. Sometime before 1800 Buell and Jones dammed the stream and built a primitive saw mill. Shortly after, Jones also built a grist mill to the north, at the Back Pond.

In 1820 Daniel Jones Sr. died, leaving the mill properties to his sons Daniel and David. In 1828 Daniel Jr. acquired sole ownership of the two properties. In 1836 he sold them to Robert Shepherd and John Reid.

In 1842 Reid sold his interests in the mill site at the mouth of the creek, while at the same time Shepherd sold his interests in the mill site at the Back Pond.

In approximately 1852 Shepherd decided to add a grist mill. It is possible that he might have been the builder, since he was a stone mason by trade. Also his three brothers and father, from Augusta Township, were well known masons and builders.

After 1879, when Shepherd died, his milling business began to die out. The building however was rented by another miller for a few years.

In 1883 the C.P.R. ran a spur line around the west end of the town to the waterfront. To accomplish this, a large portion of the Shepherd property had to be acquired and the mill pond drained. It was probably about this time that the saw mill was demolished

The mill building was left vacant until 1893 when the Samuel Rogers Oil Co. bought the eastern part of the property for a coal oil depot.

The site was later owned by other oil companies until finally in 1911 Imperial Oil bought the property. They had been leasing the site since 1906 when they established their business here.

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND CONT'D

It was about 1906 when the oil company erected the first two oil storage tanks on the site. Also at this time the creek was built up with stone retaining walls. The brick stable and frame wagon shed were also probably built about this time. Later, a marine hook-up, a tank car loading facility and two more storage tanks were added.

In 1970 it was decided to replace the above ground tanks with buried storage tanks, plus remove the marine hook-up and tank car facility.

In 1978 the City of Brockville purchased the property.

c. Architectural Description

The building is located on a site which contains a total of approximately 37,000 sq. ft. with frontage on Water St. and St. Paul St.. The mill building itself fronts onto Water St. at the foot of JohnSt. which was once named Mill St. The property is presently used by the Imperial Oil Co., Ltd. as an oil storage depot.

Buell's Creek runs through the property, dividing it into two separate parcels of land. From its mouth to just west of St. Paul St., the creek is lined with stone. This was added sometime around the turn of the century and was possibly used as a fire break.

The main structure on the site is a two storey random coursed limestone building measuring approximately 55' x 37'. It has a basement and an attic, giving a total of approximately 5,000 sq.ft. of usable space. In addition, there are two one storey additions on the east side of the building, measuring 14' x 25' and 8' x 13'. On the north elevation there are two of the original 12/12 pane windows on the second floor. On the west side of the building a loading dock is attached. Underneath this loading dock can be seen part of the eighteen foot wide arch, which once had water flowing through it.

Also, in the basement part of the extra timber framing can be

THE LACK OF BROCKVILLE

Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee

-4-

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION CONT'D

seen that was required to support the two millstones..

Shepherd's mill is a good example of early industrial architecture where the basic design principle is the form is determined by function, not aesthetics. The heavy post and beam construction on the inside of the building allowed for free movement. It also allowed for the transfer of loads from machinery and vibration to the stone walls. The thick masonry walls on bedrock carried the large stresses involved with water power transmission and grist milling.

E. Recommendation

The Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee recommends that the Robert Shepherd Grist Mill be designated under the Ontario Heritage Act, 1974.

The importance of the property is that it constitutes one of the oldest areas in Brockville, since early industry was located on the waterfront and Buell's Creek.

The committee is particularly concerned with preserving the building's architectural character. This includes the stone arch and the timber framing in the basement. Also, the stone retaining walls of the creek should be included.

It is however, understood that in order to retain the building's usefulness certain alterations and renovations may be required from time to time.

Our committee would wish to examine any proposals affecting the building's appearance such as signs, painting, alterations to door and window openings plus, any reconstruction of the roof; also, the repair and maintenance of the creek walls.