

**THE CORPORATION
OF THE
TOWN OF NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE**

BY-LAW NO. 3809-04
(137 Four Mile Creek Road)
(Roll No. 26-27-020-025-028)

A BY-LAW TO DESIGNATE THE PROPERTY KNOWN MUNICIPALLY AS THE SECORD MILL, 137 FOUR MILE CREEK ROAD, IN THE TOWN OF NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE, IN THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO, AS BEING OF CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE OR INTEREST.

WHEREAS Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act, R.S.O. 1990, Chapter 0.18, authorizes the Council of a municipality to enact by-laws to designate real property, including all buildings and structures thereon, to be of cultural heritage value or interest;

AND WHEREAS the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake has caused to be served on the owner of the lands and premises known as the Secord Mill at 137 Four Mile Creek Road, in the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake in the Province of Ontario and upon the Ontario Heritage Foundation, notice of intention to so designate the aforesaid real property and has caused such notice of intention to be published in a newspaper having general circulation in the municipality;

AND WHEREAS the reasons for designation are set out in Schedule 'B' hereto;

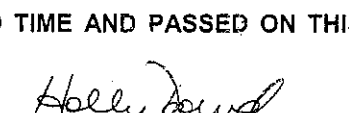
AND WHEREAS no notice of objection to the proposed designation has been served on the clerk of the municipality.

THEREFORE the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake enacts as follows:

1. There is designated as being of cultural heritage value or interest the real property known as the Secord Mill at 137 Four Mile Creek Road in the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake in the Province of Ontario, more particularly described in Schedule 'A' hereto.
2. The municipal solicitor is hereby authorized to cause a copy of this By-law to be registered against the property described in Schedule 'A' hereto.
3. The Clerk is hereby authorized to cause copy of this By-law to be served on the owners of the aforesaid property and on the Ontario Heritage Foundation and to cause notice of the passing of this By-law to be published in a newspaper having general circulation.

**READ A FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD TIME AND PASSED ON THIS
8TH DAY OF MARCH, 2004.**


LORD MAYOR GARY BURROUGHS


TOWN CLERK HOLLY DOWD

Legal Property Identifier(s) and/or Other Information

DESCRIPTION:

COMMENCING at a survey monument marking the north east angle of Deposited Plan 456, for the said former County of Lincoln;

THENCE south 7 degrees 29 minutes 15 seconds west following the eastern limit of said Deposited Plan, 181.92 feet to a survey monument marking the south east angle of said Deposited Plan, said monument being also in the eastern limit of Deposited Plan 400 for the said former County;

THENCE South 8 degrees 48 minutes east following the eastern limit of said Deposited Plan 400, 47.12 feet to a survey monument marking the southeast angle of said Deposited Plan 400;

THENCE North 84 degrees 02 minutes east, 123.67 feet;

THENCE North 9 degrees 53 minutes east, 115.45 feet;

THENCE North 51 degrees 29 minutes west, 161.02 feet more or less, to the point of commencement.

As described in Instrument No. 368290.

SCHEDULE "A"

Part of Township Lot 91, Niagara Township, Formerly PCL 7, as in RO584102, formerly in the Township of Niagara, now in the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, Regional Municipality of Niagara

PIN #46374-0102 (R)

SCHEDULE 'B'

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION

The Secord Mill, 1782-83 – Part Lot 91, Niagara Township, Niagara-on-the-Lake

The Secord Mill is recommended for designation for its cultural heritage value and interest.

The building represents a unique aspect of the earliest history of the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake and Province of Ontario and is one of the first King's Mills built in Upper Canada. It is also significant for its association with such prominent citizens of Niagara as David Secord Jr. and Sr., who were early settlers in the area, arriving with Lieutenant-Colonel John Butler in the early 1780's. Both Davids fought in the War of 1812-14. David Brass, a celebrated millwright, designed the workings of the mill building and engineered the system that brought water power to the structure. John Murray was Lieutenant General of His Majesty's Service. He and his family owned the property for over 40 years. James Counter Woodruff was a prominent resident of St. Davids. Ife Stevens was a noted local character and Joe DiMaggio and Marilyn Monroe were international celebrities who dined at the Old Mill Inn in the 1950's.

Architecturally the building represents an extremely early and singular example of an industrial building in Niagara. In form and function it is a rare North American example of an early English farm-style or "custom" flour mill with two runs of stones. The building was never updated to an "automated" merchant mill. It is probably the one of the first "King's Mills" built in Upper Canada and the only one to survive.

Site

The building occupies an irregularly shaped lot fronting 229.04 feet on the east side of Four Mile Creek Road between York Road and Stamford Townline Road.

Historical Background

The building stands on land that was part of 300 acres (Lots 90, 91, 92) granted by the Crown in May 1798 to Peter Secord who had actually settled on the land nearly 20 years earlier. Peter, who moved to Long Point in 1796, sold his crown grant to David Secord Junior, who, two months later, sold the lot to his father, David Secord Senior. Both David Sr. and David Jr. would eventually participate as British officers in the War of 1812-14 and would survive the Battles of Queenston Heights and Lundy's Lane.

In the summer of 1806, David Secord Sr. sold two of the 100 acre lots to his brother Stephen, who was a miller. David retained lot 90, the St. Davids Village lot. Prior to this sale, the two brothers operated two mills, one on lot 90 and one on lot 91. Stephen Secord died in 1808 and left his 200 acre 'Homestead' farm in trust to his wife, Hannah Deforest, until his youngest son became 21, at which time it was to be divided in equal shares among his six sons.

After the War of 1812-14, Hannah claimed 500 pounds for a house burned by the Americans, but made no claim for the mill. David Secord's claim, however, included one grist mill made of stone and timber. It is very possible that Hannah's mill on lot 91 escaped major damage because it was outside the village boundary.

In 1833, Hannah Secord sold the 200 acre farm to John Murray of Stamford who was then Lieutenant General for His Majesty's Service. At the time of the sale, Hannah's youngest son, Samuel Robertson, was operating the mill and Instrument #1427 clearly identifies two operating mills on lots 90 and 91. John Murray and his heirs owned the property for the next 40 years.

Between 1850 and 1879, the estate was farmed by tenant farmers including David Williams, Joseph Van Every and Neil Black. The mill was also leased, possibly to James Counter Woodruff who employed George Ellis as miller in 1861 and Anthony Barbeau in 1865. Woodruff's widow took over the mill at his death in 1866, employing Barbeau and by 1871, Ed Willox, as millers. Eliza Woodruff controlled the mill until 1889, when she assigned her lease to Sarah G. Black, whose husband farmed the surrounding land into the 1890's.

Two eye witness accounts by Hudson Usher and Otto Hanniwell take note of the Black family mill, which operated from 1899 to c.1910, when it became obsolete. This mill was clearly distinguished from the huge four storey stone mill built in 1818 by William and Richard Woodruff.

Sarah Black died in 1915, leaving the property to her daughter. The property passed through the Black family until John Alexander Black constructed a refreshment stand on the front of what later became the Old Mill Inn. Shortly before World War II, 'Ife' Stevens bought the inn and operated it until his death in the 1950's. The restaurant continued to operate under various owners until c.1972, when it closed. During that period the inn gained quite a reputation as a gathering spot and as a source of alcohol during the prohibition era. The restaurant hosted some illustrious clientele over the years, including Joe DiMaggio and Marilyn Monroe who ate there often while Ms. Monroe was filming the movie *Niagara* in the 1950's.

After the inn closed the mill continued to deteriorate and was in imminent danger of being demolished. It was purchase in 1989 by the current owners, Mr. and Mrs. Bannister, who renovated the building, turning it into their home but preserving the post and beam frame, the two storey stone foundation and a good proportion of the mill furnishings in the stone basement.

Architectural Description

Old photographs show the mill as a simple gabled 1 ½ storey clapboarded structure of timber frame construction over a double height stone basement set into a hill projecting into the Four Mile Creek valley in an easterly direction. The building is a simple form in the functional tradition apparently typical of 18th century grist mills.

The present exterior finish has largely disguised the original by covering up the old structure, although the scale and general configuration of the mill is clearly visible. Modern additions include a double car garage to the north from which the building can be entered, a rear ground floor addition off the east end and a veranda on the south side.

The true nature of the building is reflected on the interior. The major members of the timber superstructure are still visible inside the house. The stone basement level contains the most interesting structural detail of the old mill including the supporting frame for the double run of stones at the east end. The structural timberwork is massive and of very fine broad-axed white oak timber framed with traditional timber connections of mortise, tenons, trunnels and diagonal braces. The framing to the main floor is in substantial pit-sawn joists closely spaced, with an old floor deck above.

History of the Mill Construction and Analysis of the Mill Works

In June 1782, Lieutenant Colonel John Butler wrote to British headquarters in Quebec stating that "Peter and James Seacord" propose to build grist and saw mills and to pay for the stones and iron work. Lieutenant-Colonel Butler felt there was a great need for a flour mill in the area because, at that time, all flour was being sent from Quebec by boat, arriving in Niagara in deplorable condition. In July 1782, approval was granted for construction of mills in Niagara on condition that they would be paid for and owned by the British government.

Sergeant David Brass (an "American genius" millwright according to Colonel Ross of Cataraqui) of Butler's Rangers, was promoted to Lieutenant and designated "principal workman" on the mills in the fall of 1782. A number of men, including the Secord brothers, went to work felling trees and squaring timbers. The Secords had been assigned as millwrights for their own mills and the saw/grist mill at Palatine Hill occupied by Daniel Servos.

In February 1783, Lieutenant Brass reported that the trees required for timbers and lumber for the Secord mills had been cut, squared and delivered to the construction sites. The cast iron gears, wheels and shafts promised to be sent up in the spring did not arrive because the ensuing peace treaty with the Americans caused considerable confusion. As a result, all public works at the upper military posts were ordered to be halted. Numerous letters from Lieutenant-Colonel Butler and other officials at Fort Niagara finally clarified that the intent of these orders excluded the mills and the millstones and iron work finally arrived in the fall of 1783.

The bottom storey of the mill was back filled with earth and rubble in the 1960's. None of the dynamic power train (wheels, shafts, gears etc.) has survived. In the existing basement, however, the massive white oak hurst or husk frame that held the millstones and buffered the surround building against vibrations remains in pristine condition. Refinements in design, plus the grinding controls, are clear indications of skilled craftsmen under the guidance of a master millwright.

The hurst frame is the most important structural feature in any grist mill and supported the mill stones on the floor above at street level. In most English mills it was built with extra heavy timbers, often exhibiting finer craftsmanship than the actual building that protected it. The millstone platforms were framed separately from the mill building itself so that the millstones could be independently leveled, power maximized and the surrounding building not weakened by the vibrations created by the waterwheel, gear train and millstones.

From examining hursts in other English mills, it is probable that some components of the frame are buried in the cellar below. This part of the mill, often called the wheel pit, housed the vertical pit gear which turned on the horizontal axletree connected through a window in the wall to the waterwheel outside.

An archival photograph of the mill in the Niagara Historical Society Museum, confirms that both stone storeys were identical in height and the east wall, now completely buried, was pierced through the bottom level with a square window for an axletree. The outline of the water wheel is also visible on the exterior of the stone wall. This photograph and measurements taken on the site suggest the total height of the wall was 19 feet.

Water power to the mill was the Four Mile Creek. In 1782, when the creek flowed into the area now partly occupied by Log Cabin Trailers, it was impounded by an earthen dam call a "weir". The weir diverted water from the main channel of the creek into a mill race which ran northerly along the west side of Four Mile Creek Road until it reached a point opposite the mill where it crossed the road and probably flowed in an open wooden box flume to a wooden waterwheel mounted outside the east wall of the building.

After spilling from the bottom bucket of the wheel, the water would have flowed away from the mill in a ditch called a tail race. At that point it entered a mill pond created by a weir immediately downstream on Lot 90. This was actually the water that powered the second Secord mill downstream on Lot 90.

Conclusion

The building at 137 Four Mile Creek Road started life as an English farm-style or "custom" flour mill with two runs of stones. It fulfilled that function for the next 127 years, never converting to an "automated" merchant mill.

The hand hewn timber framing, double height stone cellar and massive oak hurst frame constitute original structural parts of an English grist mill built, along with a saw mill, on the Peter Secord farm in 1782-83. This was the first flour mill built in Ontario and was, at the time of construction, a state of the art English watermill. The grist and saw mills on the Secord property were the first "King's Mills" built in Upper Canada and were built under the seigneurial rights of "bannalite" of the Province of Quebec. The Secord Mill may be the only surviving 18th century "banal" mill in Ontario.

The Secord mills were built with many large cast iron components, reflecting state of the art English industrial technology in 1783. The massive oak hurst frame in the basement of the house supported the main vertical drive shaft, gearing and millstones and survives as an extremely rare artifact in itself.

The wooden ground floor complete with circular openings for the two runs of millstones sitting on the wooden hurst below, have survived without any signs of burning. There are no scorch marks on any part of the hurst or the stonework. Other mills along Four Mile Creek were burned in the War of 1812-14 and were rebuilt incorporating the labour saving grain innovations of Oliver Evans, made popular around 1795. There are no traces of such modifications in the subject mill, suggesting that it predates them.

Designation

This designation applies to the lands and more particularly to the interior timber frame structure, hurst frame and other original structural and mill members in the existing basement and the two storey stone foundation of the mill building.