

STATEMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE OR INTEREST

HERITAGE VALUE

Known municipally as 146 Forfar Street West, the property is located in the heart of Caledonia, on the south side banks of the Grand River within a short distance from the downtown core. It is bordered by the Grand River to the north, Forfar Street to the south, an open park area to the east, and the millrace to the west.

The Property provides a panoramic view of surrounding landscapes and the Grand River (a Canadian Heritage River). The Old Mill Property is significant as it reminds residents and visitors of Caledonia's early development related to the heyday of river navigation and transportation by rail and road.

The Old Mill Property has historical and associative value for its connections to James Little.

James Little immigrated to Upper Canada from Ireland in 1823 and worked as a contractor on the Welland Canal. In 1833, Little was employed by William Hamilton Merritt to work on the Grand River Navigation Company where he worked in construction, surveyed the river for dam and lock sites and managed the company from 1835 to 1840.

James Little built what was then known as the "Little Mills", on the south side of the Grand River ca 1850, in the small village known then as "Sunnyside" and in 1857 began to process wheat into flour. Little, an entrepreneur and local postmaster, owned and managed the Mill for a few years before selling it to J.B. Holden and John Scott in 1861. The mill was renamed Balmoral Mills and later Grand River Mills when Messrs. McQuarrie, Thorburn & Munroe took ownership in the 1870s. McQuarrie, Thorburn & Munroe also owned the Caledonia Mills located on the opposite bank of the River. The company was highly respected as millers and grain dealers, and Caledonia was considered one of the best markets for grain in the country.

The Property also has associative value for its connections to Ranald McKinnon, considered by many to be the founder of Caledonia. Ranald McKinnon arrived in the area in 1835 to work on the fifth dam, lock and canal. The Caledonia dam was the last to be built; it extended across the River and produced 300 H.P. providing power to a saw mill, woolen mill and two grist mills.

Contextually, the Old Mill Property has value because it is important in defining, maintaining and supporting the character of the area; it is physically, functionally, visually and historically linked to its surroundings. In particular, the Old Mill Property retains its relationship to the former Caledonia Mill - the last mill to be in operation along the Grand River using waterpower - which stood on the site from 1850 to 2017; the site is an important connection to the early commercial and industrial history of Caledonia.

Remnants of the concrete flume (located to the west of the mill) which brought water into the mill site are still visible. Also visible are two concrete barriers which jut out into the River; which would have been directly below the original mill structure. These structures were used to divert water and manage flow and support the old foundation wall on either side of the raceway opening.

The Old Mill Property has been a favourite spot for locals, tourists, photographers and artists alike to enjoy the scenic views of the Grand River and enjoy the simple pleasures of walking, hiking, cycling, and birdwatching.

Character Defining Elements

Character defining elements that contribute to the heritage value of the Old Caledonia Mill Property include:

- The setting of the Property on the south side banks of the Grand River
- The panoramic views of the Grand River
- Elements related to former headrace including concrete walls
- Key views including:
 - The Caledonia Dam – The original had been constructed of logs requiring yearly repairs from spring ice damage. It received a cement apron in the 1920's, for it still served the purpose of supplying power to the Caledonia Milling Company. The Caledonia Dam was replaced in 1980

and is located just downstream from the original; it incorporates fish ladders to facilitate migration of fish up the Grand River.

- The Railway Bridge – the original structure was once a wooden trestle, converted to iron in 1886 and later to the solid deck bridge still in use today.
- The “island” located in the middle of the Grand River which is home to waterfowl and other birds.
- Caledonia Bridge: The only nine span, concrete bridge in Canada and perhaps North America. Built in 1927.
- Natural vegetation, trees, rocks on the lower level of the river bank to the northwest corner of the Property.
- Elements relating to its use as a mill including the flume and the concrete buttresses.
- North side: Remnants of Lock 5 are still visible during periods of low water level.