MUNICIPALITY OF PORT HOPE

HERITAGE DESIGNATION

Address: 46 Cavan Street

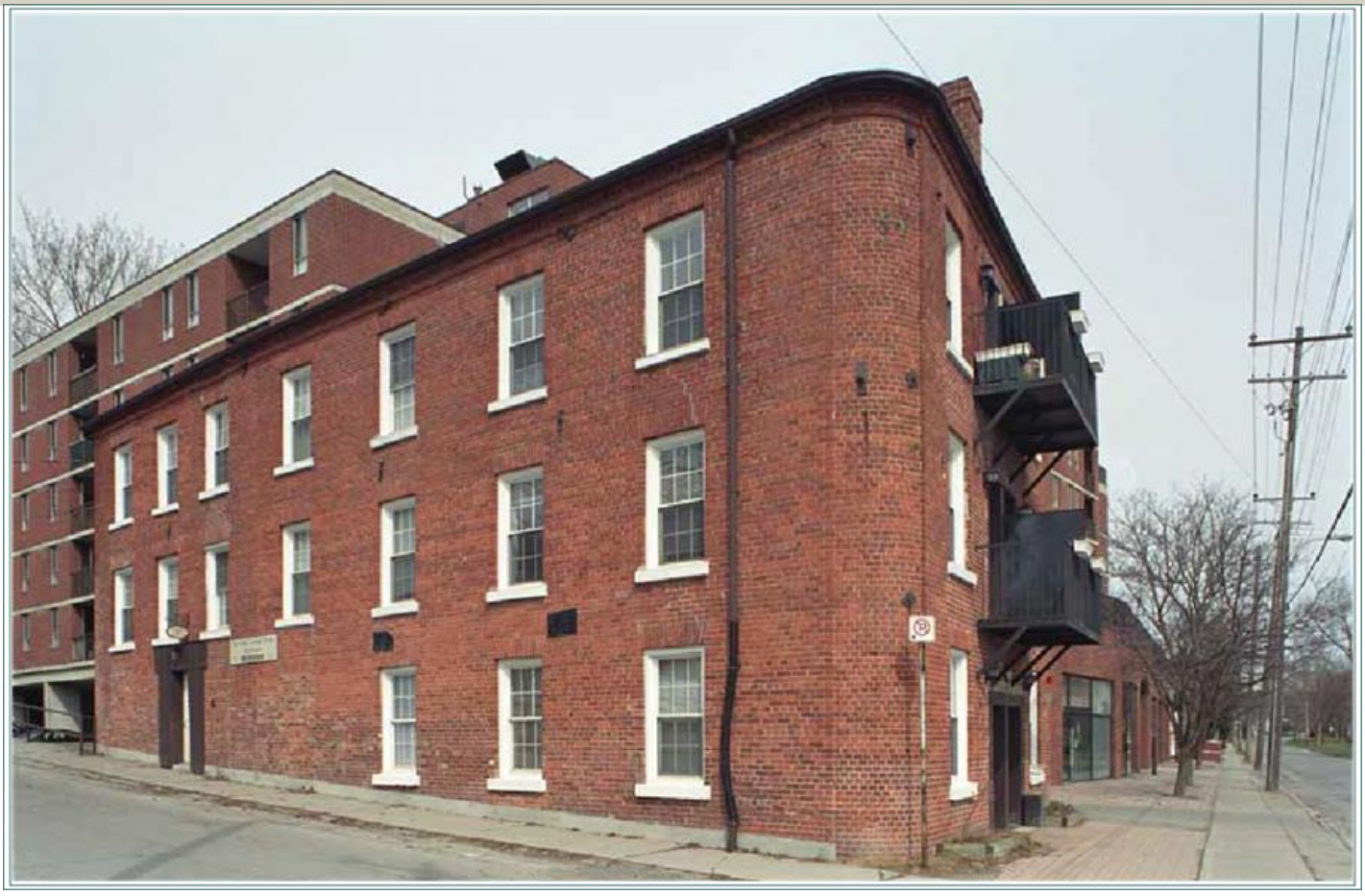
Known as: Chalk Carriage Works

Architectural Style: Vernacular

Date Built: Circa 1842

Date Designated: February 27, 1989 to By-Law No. 21/89, SCHEDULE B-3

Lot Description: PLAN STEWART TOWN PLOT PT LOT 70



Architectural Description

Abutting the intersection of Cavan and South Streets, the Chalk Works is one of the few buildings that remain from Port Hope's industrial heyday. The brick structure stands three storeys high with a gable roof (hipped on the Cavan Street front), and regularly spaced windows. Iron tie-rods add structural stability. Of special note is the rounded corner in header bond, a device seen in several other local commercial buildings.

The building retains enough of its early character to be worthy of designation but has suffered from neglect, and subsequent misguided "improvements". The windows have with contemporary glass with fake "snap-in" muntins that detract from the character of the building. The masonry has been sandblasted and parts of the walls, especially the rear elevation, are showing serious decay that requires immediate attention.

Repointing has not always been completed with authenticity in mind, and the replacement doors and balcony, including the porch door directly above, are not necessarily sympathetic to the early character.

Historical Abstract

Robert Chalk (1820-1890), an English immigrant born in Biddeford, Devonshire, England, settled in Port Hope in 1842 at the age of 22, and established a wagon and carriage-making business. Chalk Carriage Works was located on Cavan Street on the steep hill where South and Cavan Street meet, a hill that was sometimes referred to as Chalk's Hill. Many of Port Hope's early industries were located on Cavan Street near the Ganaraska River.

The Chalk Carriage Works manufactured lumber wagons, cutters and carriages and provided blacksmithing as well. The business produced a large number of vehicles and had a reputation for fine workmanship using well-seasoned timber that was strongly ironed. Business directories of the day stated, "every description of vehicle made by R.C. is warranted good".

The carriage making shop was divided into three storeys: the ground floor was the showroom and woodworking department; the second floor was the painting department; the third floor was for trimming. A second floor porch, where the painted carriages were left to dry, has been removed but is evident in archival photos.

The machinery was propelled by horsepower and employed six hands in the early years growing to thirty-five men during the busiest years. Robert's son Thomas carried on with the business after Robert retired shortly before his death in 1890. The Chalk family was in the carriage making trade from 1842 until 1931, and was one of the oldest carriage businesses in Upper Canada.

In recent years, the building stood idle for a time, and then was converted into apartments. A huge apartment block was built around it, but it survives as a reminder of Port Hope's industrial past.



Architectural Detail

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