MUNICIPALITY OF PORT HOPE

HERITAGE DESIGNATION

Address: 46 Molson Street

Known as: Molson Mill

Architectural Style: Vernacular

Date Built: Circa 1851

Date Designated: July 20, 1987 TO By-Law No. 49/87, SCHEDULE B-2

Lot Description: CON 2 PT LOT 5



Architectural Description

46 Molson Street is a typical heavy timber frame gristmill in the functional tradition.The Molson Mill is of post and beam construction rising three and a half stories above a foundation comprised of river rock. The gable roof is finished in original style cedar shingles. It is historically important as an example of an early industrial structure.

Historical Abstract

The Molson name is synonymous with brewing and distilleries in Canada, being one of the oldest manufacturing enterprises dating back to the eighteenth century. The Montreal based family also owned steamships, railways, and the Molson Bank, which would later merge with the Bank of Montreal in 1925. Based in Montreal, Thomas Molson, son of the founder, John Molson, wanted to expand into Upper Canada. He applied to York for a permit to build a brewery, but was rejected due to local competition.

In 1851, Port Hope was the next largest port in Upper Canada, so Thomas Molson purchased property about a mile from the business part of town near Cavan and Jocelyn Streets on the Ganaraska River. The purchase included a brewery, Crawford's distillery, a flour mill, a sawmill, a stave factory, a millpond and as well as a wharf and warehouse on the lake. Molson steamships were used to transport malt barley in large quantities. During the Molson tenure in Port Hope, more barley was exported from the town than any other port. Robert Orr managed the mills reporting to Thomas Molson daily. He resided in the nearby Molson Mill House (285 Hope Street North).

The Molson Mill was used as the flour mill for it is known that the flour mill was in a "a fine four storey frame building" containing "six runs of stones and is capable of turning out ready for shipment 300 barrels of flour a day" as reported in the local newspaper in 1853. The article also reported that the saw mill turned out 6000 feet of lumber a day, and there was also on the premises an excellent stave factory for the manufacturing of flour barrel staves capable of making 7000 staves a day. The mills also included a lath and picket factory, and a planing machine.

The Molson Mill ceased operation as a mill in the late nineteenth century. The Mill House was transformed for other use in 1924 when purchased by Canadian artist J.W. Beatty. Beatty, an associate of members of the Group of Seven, was born in Toronto in 1869 and studied painting in the early 1900's. He became a faculty member of the Ontario College of Art in 1912. The Mill House was used as a summer school for art students. During this period, a large multi-paned window was created in the north wall (northern light was considered the optimum light for painting). Part of the second floor was removed and the third floor was converted to dormitory use. Upon the death of J.W. Beatty in 1941, the art school was closed. The Mill House has since been restored and once again has been used for a summer visual arts program.

The Molson Mill is one of the few examples surviving of an early industrial structure important not only for its architectural significance but its historic connection to the Molson name, and the contribution that Port Hope made to the manufacturing dynasty during the nineteenth century.



The Molson Mill and Mill House in the background (285 Hope Street North).



Architectural Detail

The large multi-paned window was added to the north wall in the 1920's when the Mill House was used as a summer arts school.