MUNICIPALITY OF PORT HOPE

HERITAGE DESIGNATION

Address: 114 Toronto Road

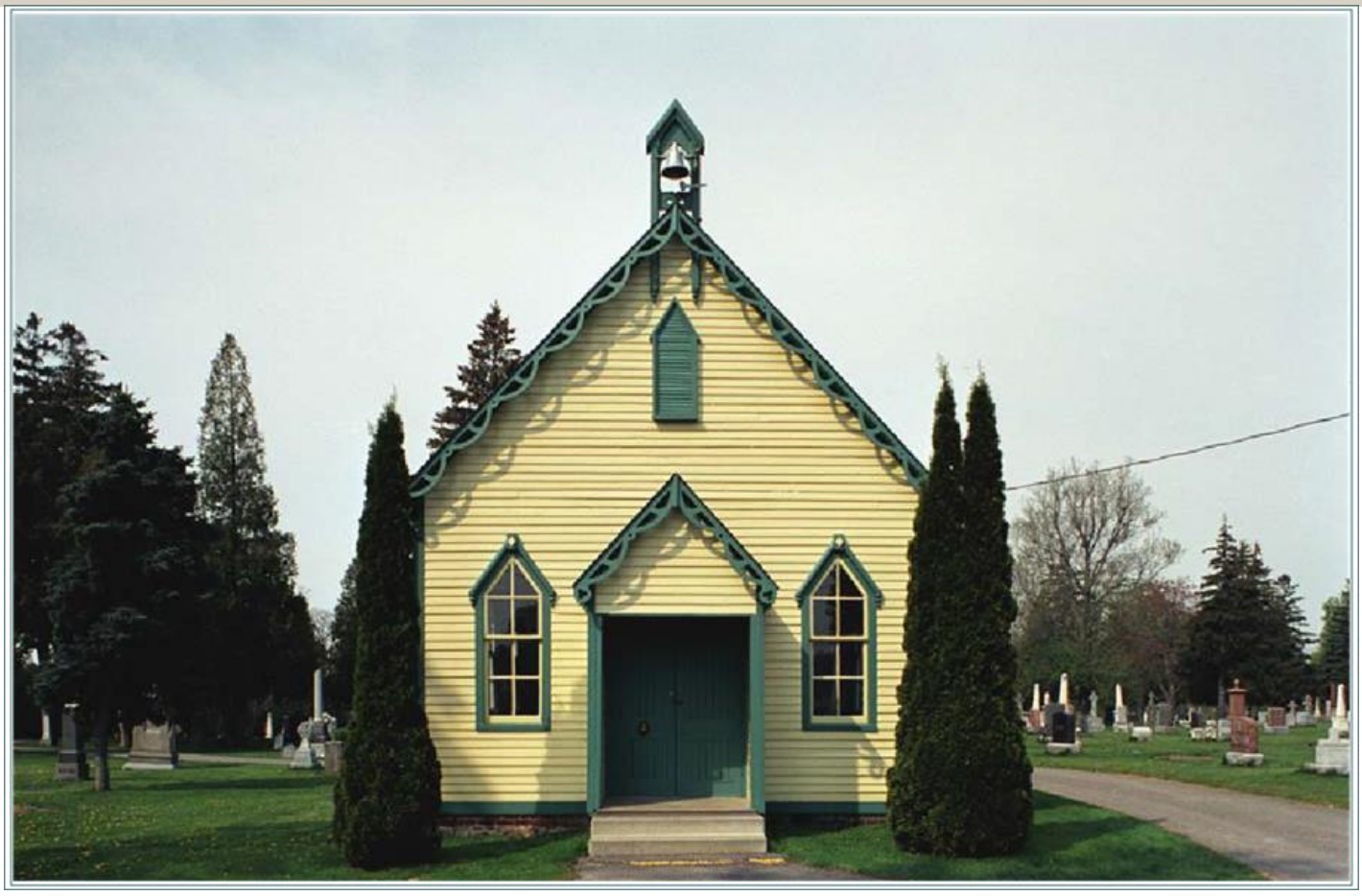
Known as: Union Cemetery Chapel

Architectural Style: Gothic Revival

Date Built: Circa 1891

Date Designated: February 11, 1986 to By-Law No. 3054, SCHEDULE B

Lot Description: CON 1, PART LOT 10



Architectural Description

The Union Cemetery Chapel is representative of the many small cemetery chapels that were built in Upper Canada from the 1870's onward. The chapel incorporates a number of Gothic Revival details including the symmetrical façade, long thin pointed arch windows, steeply pitched gable roof, and matching hood over the entrance door. The shape of a pointed arch louvred vent located in the gable peak is repeated in the tiny bell cote perched on the roof and held in place by two exposed braced posts. Decorative bargeboard completes the Gothic inspired detailing.

Historical Abstract

The Union Cemetery Chapel was constructed in 1891 by James Guest Williams (1819-1910) or as he was known "Yankee" Williams, a Port Hope philanthropist. Built as a memorial to his wife Patience, who died in 1880 at the age of sixty, the chapel served as the mortuary chapel in Union Cemetery.

Mr. Williams was originally from Cloughjordan, a small village in north Tipperary, Ireland. He was known for his keen business ability and by 1875, Mr. Williams had purchased the Thomas Clarke House (115 Dorset Street West) and added the east wing containing the drawing room and two upstairs bedrooms.

The chapel was built for committal services that took place during the winter when bodies could not be buried. It was designed with a room under the chapel where bodies could be stored during the winter. The chapel consisted of a main floor with a raised dais and pulpit where a minister could say a final prayer before committal. The coffin would be lowered through an opening in the floor to the concrete vault below. The vault was large enough to store up to sixty bodies.

The earliest burying ground in Port Hope was on the east side of the Park Hill. When St. Mark's (formerly St. John's) (51 King Street) was built, the lot to the north of the church was used as a cemetery. Later the Presbyterians and Methodists established their own cemeteries. The Presbyterian cemetery was located to the rear and north of the church on Baldwin Street (the Pioneer Cemetery now on Bruton Street). The Methodists established a cemetery on Bedford Street west of the corner of Pine and Bedford. The Catholics maintained a cemetery near their church.

It was apparent that the churchyards of each denomination would not provide adequate burial ground for future burials within the town limits. Both St. John's and St. Mary's had acquired land on Toronto Road for use as a cemetery. It was proposed that land be acquired between St. Mary's and St. John's in order to create a Union Cemetery. The Union Cemetery Company was formed to oversee operation of the combined cemeteries. Once the Union Cemetery was established in 1874, the Town Council passed a by-law prohibiting any further burials within the town limits.



Architectural Detail

The Union Cemetery Chapel with a view of one of the Tempest Gates donated by the Tempest sisters who resided on Pine Street (78 Pine Street South).