

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

90 Old Mill Road (Sheave Tower)

Description of Historic Place

The property known municipally as 90 Old Mill Road is located on the north side of Old Mill Road between Dickie Settlement Road and Meadowcreek Lane. The property is an irregularly shaped lot that is heavily wooded and is bisected by Blair Creek. A 31-foot wooden structure, known as the Sheave Tower, is located in the centre of the lot along the creek. The Sheave Tower was built in 1876 and once harnessed water power to operate the Carlisle Grist Mill at 91 Old Mill Road.

Summary of Cultural Heritage Value

The property 90 Old Mill Road exhibits physical/design value, historical/associative value, and contextual value.

The Sheave Tower was built by Allan Bowman in 1876. The building is a unique example of Carpenter Gothic architecture, evidenced by its wood construction, tall built form with gabled cedar shake roof, and distinctive lancet windows. It was built as an auxiliary milling structure to house a water-powered turbine that helped grind grain at the nearby grist mill (Carlisle Mill), approximately 300 feet south. As the only remaining structure of its kind in Ontario, it functions as a physical representation of Blair's milling history and the early industrial and agricultural development of the area.

The Sheave Tower displays a high degree of craftsmanship as well as technical achievement in building construction. Although elements have been replaced over the years, many original features remain. It was constructed with timber framing, still visible on the interior of the tower, with its exterior clad with vertical wood siding. The tower stands approximately 31 feet in height and is approximately 12 feet square at the base, giving the tower a pyramidal form. Three of four tower walls sit upon the millrace or sluiceway house, with the southern wall spanning the former water channel. It includes a wood-framed lean-to extension on the south elevation. The tower is believed to be the first water wheel operation in the area to use mill race water twice, one of the last remaining wooden sheave towers in Ontario, and one of the only extant examples in the province of early mechanical power transfer technology.

The property at 90 Old Mill Road has historical or associative value in its connections to several pioneering settlers in Blair including Samuel D. Betzner, Joseph Bowman, Samuel B. Bowman, Allan Bowman, and Florence Dickson. In 1830 Joseph Bowman

built a dam and sawmill on what became known as Bowman Creek (later Blair Creek). In 1846, Samuel B. Bowman built a four-storey flour mill on the south side of the wagon track (now Old Mill Road). In 1876, Allan Bowman built a small dam and the Sheave Tower downstream from the mill to draw energy from the creek and transfer it via large sheave wheels and a cable system to the Carlisle Mill. In 1906, the Sheave Tower property was severed from the Carlisle Mill property and sold to Florence Dickson. By 1954, the Sheave Tower was retired after having been idle and no longer connected to the mill.

Contextually, the property is located along Old Mill Road in a rural setting with Blair Creek running north-south through the lot. The property contributes to this character through a landscape of mature trees, small pedestrian bridge, and the remnant Mill Pond which is located south of the Sheave Tower. The Sheave Tower is accessed and connected to Old Mill Road via a gravel pedestrian trail.

Description of Heritage Attributes

The character-defining heritage attributes of the property include the following:

- The Sheave Tower, consisting of the following features:
 - Siting of the tower in its historic location on Blair Creek;
 - Rectangular plan of the structure with lean-to addition;
 - All four elevations composed of vertical wood siding stained in an oxblood historic colour;
 - Gothic lancet windows;
 - Jettied upper section on the west wall and section of the east wall where the sheave wheel and housing were originally located;
 - Timber-framing including all evidence of exposed timber on the interior;
 - Sluiceway extending from the south elevation underneath lean-to addition;
 - Foundation forming the wingwalls and walls of the sluiceway; and,
 - Roof and roofline composed of cedar shake shingling.

The physical elements above contribute to the cultural heritage value of the property as physical representations of the unique character of the Sheave Tower.

- The landscape of the property:

- Mature trees contributing to the rural, naturalized setting of the property;
and,
- Blair Creek which winds across the lot and the remnant Mill Pond south of
the Sheave Tower.

The landscape elements above contribute to the cultural heritage value of the property as representations of its contextual value.