

CORPORATION OF THE TOWN
OF ALMONTE
BY-LAW NUMBER 26 - 1978

A BY-LAW TO DESIGNATE THE
PROPERTY KNOWN MUNICIPALLY
AS 77 Mill Street, Almonte,
Ontario, AS BEING OF ARCHITECTURAL
AND HISTORICAL VALUE OR INTEREST.

WHEREAS section 29 of The Ontario Heritage Act, 1974 authorizes the Council of a municipality to enact by-laws to designate real property, including all buildings and structures thereon, to be of architectural or historic value or interest; and

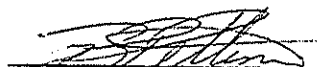
WHEREAS the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Almonte has caused to be served on the owners of the lands and premises known as 77 Mill Street in the Town of Almonte and upon the Ontario Heritage Foundation, notice of intention to so designate the aforesaid real property and has caused such notice of intention to be published in the same newspaper having general circulation in the municipality once for each of three consecutive weeks; and

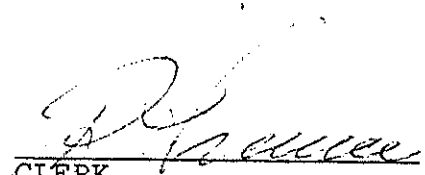
WHEREAS no notice of objection to the proposed designation has been served on the clerk of the municipality;

THEREFORE the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Almonte enacts as follows:

- 1) There is designated as being of architectural and historical value or interest the real property known as the Old Post Office Building at 77 Mill Street in the Town of Almonte, and being Part Lot A, Mill Street, Plan 6262.
- 2) The municipal solicitor is hereby authorized to cause a copy of this by-law to be registered against the property described in the proper land registry office.
- 3) The Clerk is hereby authorized to cause a copy of this by-law to be served on the owner of the aforesaid property and on the Ontario Heritage Foundation and to cause notice of the passing of this by-law to be published in the same newspaper having general circulation in the municipality once for each of three consecutive weeks.

READ A FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD TIME AND PASSED THIS 12th day of December, 1978.


MAYOR


CLERK

OLD POST OFFICE, Almonte, Ontario

Location: 77 Mill Street, Almonte, Lanark County,
Ontario
Town Lot Letter A (westerly 1/5 A.)(part of)

Present Owner: Colleagues-in-Contact,
(a management training, communication
and publication advisory enterprise)
Mr. Norman Rebin, Secretary-Treasurer,
7 Pilgrim Ave.,
Aylmer, P.Q.

Present Occupant: unoccupied

Present Use: This building is presently undergoing
interior renovation for future use as
offices and boutiques.

Statement of
Significance: The former Post Office building is a
good surviving example of the public
buildings designed by Thomas Fuller
during his appointment as Dominion
Architect (1881-1897). Fuller was also
earlier responsible for the design of
the first Canadian Parliament Buildings
(destroyed by fire) and the Langevin
Block, both erected in Ottawa. Further-
more, the old Post Office expresses a
strong "Ottawa Valley" quality in its
use of stone drawn primarily from
quarries within Lanark County (Beckwith
and Perth stone). The stone is reflected
in other buildings along Mill Street,
particularly the Pinecraft Co. furniture
factory, and the situation of these two
major buildings tends to draw the whole
streetscape together. The loss of either
would substantially alter any impressions
of Almonte.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: The lot was acquired by the Crown in Sept. 1888 from Helen Henrietta Coates for the sum of \$6250. not including buildings to be removed. It was held by the Crown and the building used as a post office/customs house until 1968 when it was sold by the Crown Assets Disposal Corporation and a new post office was built.
2. Date of erection: 1889-90
3. Architect: Thomas Fuller (Dominion Architect, 1881-97)
Contractor: Robert Cameron
Clerk of the Works: Andrew Bell

4. Alterations and additions: There is no record of any extensive changes to the exterior with the exception of the addition of a clock tower c. 1910 and a sand-blasting of the facade c. 1972. The interior has undergone some cosmetic change but nothing structural.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure

C. Sources of Information

1. Old Views:

- North Lanark Historical Society Photographic Collection
- i) Main Street, Kelly's Hotel c. 1900
 - ii) post cards - 'Photographic Views of Almonte, Ont.', view of Post Office, c. 1915

2. Bibliography:

Books:

Greenhill, Ralph et. al.. Ontario Towns. Toronto, 1974.

Magazines and Periodicals:

Bell, Andrew, "Building Stones of Eastern Ontario," Canadian Architect and Builder, IX (March, 1896). 43.

"Thomas Fuller", Canadian Architect and Builder, XI (Oct., 1898). 169.

"Almonte", The Saturday Globe, XLVIII, Sept. 24, 1892. 1-4.

Archival:

Public Archives of Canada, Dept. of Public Works, RG 11, Correspondence, 1888-92

Estimates, 1889, 1890, 1891

Orders-in-Council, 1888, 1890

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The building is a good example of the small scale public architecture as it was designed by Thomas Fuller and others in the late 19th c..
2. Condition of fabric: The exterior is in good condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The main building is rectangular being approx. 50' wide (3 bays) by 25' deep (2 bays). It is 2½ storeys high with basement. There is also a one storey annex, small and hexagonally-shaped, overlooking Little Bridge Street.

2. Foundations: The foundations are constructed of Beckwith white sandstone.
3. Wall construction, finish and colour: The walls are squared rubble stone, the so-called Perth stone which is a yellowish colour, mottled with purple. The contrasting trim (corners and string courses) is Nova Scotia red sandstone.
4. Structural system and framing: masonry load-bearing walls
5. Porches: none
6. Chimneys: One large, tall chimney to the back of the building
7. Openings:
 - a) Doorways and doors: There are two main doorways, both on Mill Street, one in each of the end bays. Both wooden, double leaf doors have eight panels with a fan transom overhead under a radiating stone arch which is topped by an identifying inscription chiselled into the stone. In the westerly bay the inscription reads:
 POST OFFICE CUSTOMS
 INLAND REVENUE
 this over the door through which one enters the second floor offices. In the easterly bay, the inscription reads simply:
 POST OFFICE
 and is an entrance-way to the ground floor. There are also two diagonally planked plain doors leading, respectively, into the annex and into the basement.
 - b) Windows: The main window on the ground floor of the Mill St. elevation is a triple, four-over-one light sash under an arched, radiating stone pattern. As to the end elevation, the main ground floor window opening is a pair of smaller, one-over-one ^{light} sash windows bounded by a rounded stone arch which encloses a checkerboard design and a small 'POST OFFICE' inscription. The nine second floor windows are all four light sash under a mullioned transom, each sill resting on a block of the checkerboard design. Of these, there are two paired in the gable bay of both the major elevations and they are bounded by a radially patterned stone arch which is in turn enclosed by a thick band of stone.

- b) Windows (cont'd):
In the gable, top ½ storey of both major elevations there is a triad of smaller one-over-one sash windows capped by a nail-head pattern in the stone of the upper triangle of the gable.

8. Roof:

- a) Shape, covering: The mansard roof is topped with a small railing and is constructed of corrugated iron.
- b) Dormers: There are two dormers on the Mill St. elevation, each having a steeply pitched hipped roof ending in a finial and enclosing a casement window. Overlooking Little Bridge Street are three similarly styled dormers with the exception that the central one is larger and is flanked by a radiating design, moulded in iron.
- c) Clock Tower: There is an operative, four-faced clock with chiming mechanism roofed with copper and helm-shaped.

C. Description of Interior: not done

D. Site:

- a) General setting and orientation: The building occupies a very commanding situation with its major elevation looking south, south-west and the end elevation dominating the triangle formed by the intersection of Mill and Little Bridge Streets and standing at the head of Mill Street, the business section of Almonte.
- b) Outbuildings: none

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

Compiled by M. Christine Castle, architectural researcher, under the auspices of the Almonte Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee and the Ontario Heritage Foundation, July, 1976.

THE ALMONTE POST OFFICE

~~A~~ On June 11, 1889, construction began on a post office for Almonte on a prominent triangular site at the intersection of Mill and Little Bridge Streets. The contract, worth \$21,182.00, was given to Robert Cameron of Almonte. The building was designed by Thomas Fuller, Chief Architect of the Department of Public Works, and work on the building was supervised directly by his office. Late in 1890 the heating contract was let, and during 1891 the building was fitted-up and occupied by the Post Office and Customs. Postal fittings were rearranged in 1907; in 1914 a small addition in "bay window form" designed by David Ewart in the Fuller manner provided a new mail entrance and additional working space. At the same time, apparently, the clock tower was built. Drawings for the tower date to 1912, but there is no evidence of a separate contract having been let. At any rate, in 1915 the workings of the clock, made by W.F. Evans and Sons in England, arrived and were installed. In 1923 some changes were made in the screen-line and electrical wiring of the building. Since then no alterations have been important enough to record.

The building was initially used as a Post Office and Customs Examining Warehouse. At a later date it also housed Internal Revenue officials.

In November, 1968, the building and land were sold, for \$4,500. to Mr. Edward J. Hayes, who failed to take possession. In 1971 the property was resold^K for the same price to Mr. Morris Mintz, who subsequently sold the building to a Mr. ^{Robin}Rayburn, the present owner. (?) The building has received minor repairs and "restoration", but has not been occupied since the Post Office left.

Source: Gregory Utas, M. Arch., Architectural Historian,
Public Works Canada

The building is presently basically sound, although, being unoccupied, it is prone to rapid decay. The exterior is still essentially as it was in 1914; interior woodwork has been refinished to natural colours, and the post office screen has, of course, been removed. Otherwise, most internal finishes remain.

The Almonte Post Office is a stone Romanesque pile, of modest size in fact, but large in presence and impact. Due to its triangular site it presents its main facades obliquely to the view down the main shopping street. This point of view emphasizes the romantic angularity of the roof form, suitably capped by the truncated pyramidal clock tower. Other points of view reveal the moulded, cascading massing produced by Fuller's characteristic additive planning approach. The plan begins with a central rectangular 2-1/2 storey mass with two gabled faces at right angles, to which is added a two-storey lean-to stair tower, and an apsidal wing which housed the Customs Examining Warehouse. Later, David Ewart added another apsidal projection, parallel to the first, which filled the triangular outline of the lot. The main facade is basically symmetrical with a central gabled bay flanked on either side by bays which contain the main entrances, out of level due to the sloping street. The other gabled facade is a repetition of the central bay of the main facade, except for the tympanum of the large round-headed arch in the ground floor, which is filled rather than glazed. The surface of the building is highly textured rock-face sandstone with ornamental window heads and Fuller's characteristic diaper work in the apices of the gables. Materials are Beckwith limestone to the plinth, sandstone quarried in the Rideau Lakes area above, with red Nova Scotia sandstone trim.

* Thomas Fuller was the most distinguished Chief Architect the Department of Public Works has had. His works are nationally important, and command even a ^{large} modicum of international interest. He is best known for his first major work in Canada, the original Centre Block. After this project he went to the United States, where he earned some notoriety in the Albany State Capitol project. In 1881 he returned to Canada to become Chief Architect, and during his sixteen-year tenure produced many fine public buildings, of which the largest, but in many ways least characteristic, was the Langevin Block in Ottawa. *

* The Almonte Post Office shows all of the best features of Fuller's typical small post offices. It is splendidly sited, unquestionably a necessary monument, giving identity to its area, and dominating the central town without overpowering it. It is a solid, dignified structure, symbolizing the best qualities of governments, and symbolizing the Federal Government specifically by its allusions, admittedly vague, to the architecture of Parliament Hill. Purely as architecture, it reveals the confident hand of a master architect in its rhythmical modulations of mass and ornament, and in its careful attention to detail. *

* The Almonte Post Office ranks high as an example of the work of Thomas Fuller. * Christopher Thomas, who is now finishing a major study of Thomas Fuller, and is consequently in a position to judge, feels that the Almonte Post Office is among the best two or three Fuller post offices surviving. He feels that it may well be the best sited of the lot. * Thus, Almonte has a monument of national significance. *

‡ The importance of the Post Office to the town of Almonte can be even more forcefully argued. The building gives a strong visual focus to downtown.‡ The lucidity of the central area hangs on the visual availability of the Post Office and its clock tower. Thus, the building is a necessary, even essential, monument in Almonte. The citizens of Almonte seem to recognize this; for instance, the building has been featured in the Almonte Gazette at least four times in the last two years, two of those times on successive Heritage Days. There can be little doubt that one way or another this building must be preserved for the future enjoyment of the citizens of Almonte.

‡ The Department of Public Works no longer owns a Fuller Post Office. In fact, except for the Langevin Block, the Department seems not to own any Fuller buildings.‡ The loss so recently of such a fine example as the Almonte Post Office is, within the context of the Department's new-found heritage concerns, very unfortunate. That in disposing of the building, D.P.W. made no attempt to ensure its future preservation should cause additional discomfiture. D.P.W. had one "Golden Age": the tenure of Thomas Fuller as Chief Architect. The failure to preserve an adequate sample of the best products of this Golden Age is a curious denial by the Department of its own history, a denial, in fact, of the rightful pride this Department could take in its very large contributions to the early development of Canada. If the Department could find a way to involve itself in the rehabilitation of the Almonte Post Office it would be making a splendid gesture both to its own history and to its responsibility for the architectural heritage and environmental quality of the towns it serves.