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OCT 10 1996

By-Law No. 1269

CULTURAL PROGRAMS  
HERITAGE UNIT

**A BY-LAW TO DESIGNATE THE HIGGINSON TOWER TO BE OF ARCHITECTURAL VALUE.**

**WHEREAS:** pursuant to The Ontario Heritage Act, R.S.O. 1990, Chapter O. 18 the Council of a Municipality may by By-Law designate a property including buildings and structures thereon to be of historic or architectural value or interest;

**AND WHEREAS:** notice of intention to so designate the property known as The Higginson Tower has been duly published and served and no notice of objection to such designation has been filed;

**THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL OF THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF VANKLEEK HILL ENACTS AS FOLLOWS;**

1. There is designated as being of architectural value or interest the real property at 44 Home Avenue, more particularly described in Schedule "A" hereto, for the reasons set out in Schedule "B" hereto.
2. The Municipal Clerk is authorized to cause a copy of this By-Law to be registered upon the title of the property described in Schedule "A" hereto in the proper Land Registry Office.
3. The Municipal Clerk is authorized to cause a copy of this By-Law to be served upon the owner of the aforesaid property and upon the Ontario Heritage Foundation and to cause notice of this By-Law to be published in the Review, and to enter the description of the aforesaid property, the names and addresses of it's registered owner, and short reasons for it's designation in the Register of all properties designated under The Ontario Heritage Act R.S.O. 1990.
4. This By-Law comes into force on the day it is passed.

**BY-LAW GIVEN A FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD READING  
AND DULY PASSED THIS 23 DAY OF September 1996.**

  
MAYOR

  
CLERK

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## SCHEDULE "A"

To By-Law No. 1269

**ALL AND SINGULAR** that certain parcel or tract of land and premises situate lying and being in the Town of Vankleek Hill, in the County of Prescott and being composed of all that portion of Part 1 as shown on Plan 46R-2415, being part of Lots 65, 66 and 67, south side of Higginson Street, as shown on Registered Plan No. 35, containing an area of 0.823 acres, more or less and lying south of a line described as follows:

**BEARINGS** shown herein are astronomic, derived from the bearing of N21degrees 38'E of the easterly limit of said Part 1 as shown on Plan 46R-2415.

**COMMENCING** at the northeasterly corner of Part 2 as shown on Plan 46R-5581, being distant 122.19 feet measured northerly, along the easterly limits of Part 1 and 2, as shown on said Plan 46R-5581, from the southeasterly corner of said Lot 67;

**THENCE** N69 degrees 47'30"W, along the northerly limit of said Part 2, a distance of 100.00 feet to the northwesterly thereof;

**THENCE** continuing N69 degrees 47'30"W a distance of 325.72 feet more or less to a point in the westerly limit of said Part 1, Plan 46R-2415, said point being distant 66.32 feet more or less measured northerly along said westerly limit of Part 1 from the southwesterly corner thereof;

**EXCEPTING** thereout and therefrom Part 2 as shown on said Plan 46R-5581.

## SCHEDULE "B"

To By-Law No. 1269

### Statement of Reason for Designation:

1. The Higginson Observation Tower is recommended for designation under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act on the basis of its architectural and historical significance. The Higginson Observation Tower represents the many positive contributions made by Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Higginson, an Irish emigrant from County Antrim, Ireland who left for Canada in 1819 and settled in Vankleek Hill in 1829. The Higginson Observation Tower was first constructed by Mr. Thomas Higginson (1794-1884) as a windmill in c. 1830 to serve in the grinding of wheat and corn so as to further the commercial development of Vankleek Hill and the immediate district. When this project failed due to lack of consistent wind power, Mr. Thomas Higginson, (commissioned lieutenant in the 2nd Prescott Regiment on April 23, 1839) is credited with transforming this windmill into the "first private observatory in Eastern Ontario." Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Higginson contributed to the social, educational and spiritual development of Vankleek Hill and district during the early stages of community formation. He was the second postmaster for Vankleek Hill; the first was Neil Stewart who served when the post office was established in 1827. Together, Neil Stewart and Thomas Higginson were the first to represent the district of West Hawkesbury c. 1844 on a newly established district council. "He was Superintendent of Schools for Prescott and Russell, many years, Agent for the Bank of Upper Canada for the transmission of the proceeds of sales of public lands, a member of the County Council... In 1856 the construction of St. John's Anglican Church was completed on land owned by Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Higginson. Prior to the construction completion, Lieutenant-Colonel Higginson was involved in the establishment of a Sunday School that served Vankleek Hill. The first issue of the weekly news publication THE ECONOMIST in Vankleek Hill in 1858 (edited by Rupert Mears Wells, later Speaker of the Provincial Legislature) contained articles and poetry by Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Higginson. From the diaries of Thomas Tweed Higginson, his nephew, comes "March 24, 1858: ECONOMIST issued today. Very creditable to V.K.H. Uncle Thomas a contributor." On March 31 another reference is made, "Had a long talk on the 17th article with Uncle Thomas." Lieutenant-Colonel Higginson

was founder of the Mechanic's Institute in Vankleek Hill in 1857 and its first president. According to diary entries by Thomas Tweed Higginson, for March 30, 1859, "Uncle Thomas preparing a lecture to be delivered before the Mechanic's Institute: The Change of the Earth's Surface." In 1866 in answer to a government call to defend against the Fenian Raid, the Prescott Militia mustered at lieutenant-Colonel Higginson's in Vankleek Hill on March 9, 1866 to proceed to Cornwall - a Fenian Raid anticipated." It is suggested that the Higginson Observation Tower may have carried out a defensive role during the Fenian Raids as it later carried the term of "look-out" tower.

2. The Higginson Observation Tower is symbolic of the evolution of 19th century teaching, learning, and civic duty in Vankleek Hill and district. Colonel William Higginson (1822-1905), son of Thomas, "was appointed Capt. Of the first Company of the 18th Batt. of Prescott Volunteer Militia about 1861, commissioned Major 24th July 1863, and Lieut.-Col. 15th February, 1867." In 1866, Major William Higginson was given command of the volunteer Prescott Militia mustered at Vankleek Hill in anticipation of the Fenian Raids. Colonel William Higginson was a "highway surveyor for the Township of West Hawkesbury in 1879 and 1880. He was elected reeve of this township for 1890 and 1891. Colonel Higginson took an active part in having electric light introduced into the village of Vankleek Hill in the 1890s. According to the diary of his cousin Thomas Tweed Higginson for November 19, 1891: "Vankleek Hill was lit by electricity last night. Great rejoicing." William took an interest in local schooling "and made no little effort to have the High School equipped with a telescope and a good supply of philosophical apparatus." The new CPR railway station north of Vankleek Hill was located on land given by Colonel Higginson.
3. Architecturally, this building denotes the basic and simple traits of structure / materials and techniques of the era. The original windmill was constructed of stone masonry of local vernacular round field stones, limestone and lime mortar. The construction techniques of the time prescribed the basic masonry wall and beam structure that was to be used. The spiralling masonry laying technique - mixing layers of limestone and round field stones - was particular to the stone mason who executed the work. The tower remains are the last known physical record of this type of construction application in the immediate region. Both the precision of this masonry construction and the original project time period (c.1830 - c.1840) suggest the possible participation of military engineer.

Hand-cut wood beams were used for the floor supports (beams / joist) overlaid with thick pine boards on two interior levels. The conical shape of the exterior walls - 30" at the base / 24" at the top - is typical of basic structural hierarchy / distribution of loads and aesthetics in their simplest form. The interior space (11'6" diameter) displays precision workmanship as does the upper mill stone which today lays against the north wall. Once the observation portion was contemplated, the cone roof of the windmill was truncated to accommodate the construction of a 2 ½ storey wood structure bringing the height to the deck to +/- 52'0". Manufactured materials of the time were used to construct the structure. The frame was composed of wood stud and bearing plates. The exterior cladding was ¾" tongue & groove pine boards covered in small sheets of preformed punched-out tin. A number of single pane windows about 5'0" in height by 2'0" in width display a sensitivity to the overall shape, aesthetic, and end use of a look-out and / or observation tower.

The tower imparts the sense of civic duty, enterprise, and perseverance that Thomas Higginson was committed to, and later imparted to his family so as to encourage the social, commercial, political and spiritual development of Vankleek Hill and the immediate district as a viable community. This quality of civic duty and enterprise carried over into the 20th century and permeated the character of the Town of Vankleek Hill.