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Rec'd
Sept. 4/03

REGISTERED MAIL

IN THE MATTER OF THE ONTARIO HERITAGE ACT, R.S.O.
1990, CHAPTER O.18;

AND IN THE MATTER OF THE LAND AND PREMISES IN PART LOT 14,
CONCESSION 3, KNOWN MUNICIPALLY AS 9064 WOODBINE AVENUE,
TOWN OF MARKHAM, IN THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO.

NOTICE OF INTENTION TO DESIGNATE

TO: Ontario Heritage Foundation
10 Adelaide Street East
Toronto, ON M5C 1J3
Attn: Catherine Axford, Chairman's Executive Assistant

TAKE NOTICE THAT the Council of The Corporation of the Town
of Markham intends to designate the property, including land and
building, known municipally as 9064 Woodbine Avenue, Markham,
as a property of architectural and/or historic interest or value under
Part 1V of The Ontario Heritage Act, R.S.O. 1990, Chapter O.18.

A Statement of the Reasons for the Proposed Designation of
Buttonville Mill House, is attached.

NOTICE OF OBJECTION to the designation may be served on the
Town Clerk within thirty (30) days, or before 4:30 p.m. on the 9th
day of October 2003.

Sheila Birrell, Town Clerk
The Town of Markham
101 Town Centre Boulevard
Markham, ON L3R 9W3

September 9, 2003

RC ✓

DESIGNATION REPORT



THE BUTTONVILLE MILL HOUSE
circa 1840; remodelled circa 1905

9064 Woodbine Avenue
Part Lot 14, Concession 3

Prepared for: Heritage Markham

Prepared by: George W. J. Duncan
July, 2003

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE ATTRIBUTES

The Buttonville Mill House is recommended for designation under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act as a property of cultural heritage value and interest containing the following heritage attributes:

Historical Attributes

The Buttonville Mill House is the last visible remnant of the Venice Mill and the Willcocks and Baldwin family's involvement in the establishment of the hamlet of Buttonville.

The property upon which the Mill House stands was originally a part of the Berczy Settlement. Francis Schmidt received the patent for the 200 acres of Lot 14, Concession 3, from the Crown in 1803. In 1804, he sold the east 100 acres to William Willcocks, a key figure in the early history of the Town of York.

William Willcocks (1735-1813), originally from Cork, Ireland, came to Upper Canada in 1792. As the cousin of Peter Russell, Administrator of Upper Canada from 1796 to 1799, Willcocks was well connected to the Town of York's elite, and became a magistrate, a judge of the Home District Court and the Surrogate Court, and York's first Postmaster. He acquired a prestigious front lot in York and amassed considerable additional land holdings in Upper Canada, including this property in Markham Township. He also had a lease from the Crown on the 200 acres of Lot 15, Concession 3, the property directly to the north, from 1804.

A sawmill was established on the Willcocks property, known as "Millbrook," at an early date. Some sources say 1806; others give the date as 1811 or 1812. The sawmill was located on the south bank of the Rouge River and operated by Captain John Large, a family friend from Ireland. Interestingly, the Dictionary of Canadian Biography contains this curious description of William Willcocks' involvement with the property: "In his old age he lived with the Baldwins, but spent much time at his property at Millbrook 'involved in useless schemes at mill building,' according to his son-in-law." Willcocks died in 1813. His will (dated 1811) makes reference to the sawmill and house in Markham.

Willcocks willed the property to his grandsons, Robert Baldwin (1804-1858) and Henry Baldwin (died 1820). Their father, Dr. William Warren Baldwin (1775-1844) administered the estate until 1825, when Robert came of age. Lot 15, formerly leased by William Willcocks, was patented by Robert Baldwin in 1839. John Large's involvement with the Millbrook property and sawmill continued to at least 1837.

Members of the Baldwin family were significant figures in the early political development of both the Province and Canada as a whole, related to William Willcocks through marriage and connections in Ireland. William Warren Baldwin was the first civilian medical doctor in the Town of York as well as a lawyer and a self-taught

architect. He married Phoebe Willcocks, a daughter of William Willcocks. Politically, William Warren Baldwin was a well-known Reformer and served in the Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada from 1820 to 1824 and from 1828 to 1830. From 1841 to 1843, Baldwin was a member of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada, then the Legislative Council of Canada from 1843 to 1844. He lived at the family's well-known estate, "Spadina," building a house of his own design there in 1818.

William and Phoebe's son, Robert Baldwin, who lived at "Spadina" in the latter years of his life, was a prominent lawyer in York (later Toronto) and a leading moderate Reformer, following in the footsteps of his father. He had a distinguished political career, and his commitment to the establishment of representative and responsible government in early Canada has earned him the epithet of "father of responsible government."

The Baldwins did not live on their Markham Township property, but developed a farm, industrial operations, and a series of village lots for income. The presence of the Rouge River on the eastern portion of the property provided the opportunity to establish a mill pond and an incentive to create industrial development. It is said that the family took refuge here during the hostilities of the War of 1812, when the American forces occupied the Town of York in 1814. The hamlet of Millbrook (renamed Buttonville in 1851 when the Post Office was established) grew up around the Baldwin industries.

The Venice Grist Mill was built on the north side of the Rouge River, possibly as early as 1837. Other sources give the date as 1840 or 1842. Since the mill is mentioned in Baldwin family correspondence dated April 11, 1840, it was certainly standing by then. The lumber to build the substantial 3 storey structure is believed to have come from the sawmill across the river. It was possibly at this time that the Mill House was constructed to replace an earlier dwelling, as part of the Baldwin family's programme of improvements to the property.

The sawmill continued to operate into the mid 19th century, as it is shown on Tremaine's map of 1860. By the time the grist mill was built, the property was owned by Robert Baldwin, who was likely involved with its establishment. His father, William Warren Baldwin, was still living and may very well have continued his connection with the property and the enterprises on it. Given William Warren Baldwin's talents as a self-taught architect, it is reasonable to speculate that he may have been the designer of both the grist mill and the mill house.

History does not record exactly when John Large ceased to be involved with the Baldwin property and the mills located there. His name does not appear in Brown's directory of 1846-47. The census of 1851 indicates that Nicholas Shepherd was the operator of the Venice Grist Mill at that time. His name appears again, with a slightly different spelling (Sheppard), in the 1861 census. At that time, his occupation was given as both "miller" and "farmer." In the 1851 census, the Mill House is described as a one storey frame dwelling. In the 1861 census, it is described as a 1 ½ storey frame dwelling. This anomaly does not necessarily indicate a change in the building. Unless a house was a full

two storeys, some census enumerators recorded them as one storey, even if they were 1 ½ storey structures.

The Honourable Robert Baldwin died in 1858. Tremaine's map of 1860 shows the properties on Lot 14 and Lot 15 in the name of the "Estate of the Late Hon. Robert Baldwin." His son, William Willcocks Baldwin, inherited the property in 1859. In 1860, Robert Baldwin (possibly a son of William Willcocks Baldwin and grandson of Robert Baldwin) became the owner.

In 1861, Robert Baldwin and his wife sold the mill and 10 acres to Henry Brown, who was listed as the proprietor in Mitchell's directory of 1866. The 183 acre Mill Farm was sold to William Nichols in 1866, who sold to Robert Black two years later. William Hood purchased the farm in 1879, beginning a long history of ownership by the Hood family.

In 1866, the Venice Grist Mill was sold to James Wilkinson of Barrie, Ontario. During this period, the capacity of the mill was reported as being 50 barrels of flour per day, as well as the grist produced. Robert Bonnard's name is given as the operator of the mill in both Nason's and Bradstreet's directories of 1871. In 1881, the mill was being run by James Stirling, according to the census returns.

George Wilkinson was listed on the property in a directory of 1892. His father willed him the mill in 1893, and in 1896, Wilkinson and his wife sold the mill to Archibald McFayden for \$1,750 plus the trade of a fruit farm at Jordon (Niagara area). By this time, the grist mill was equipped with a turbine rather than a mill wheel. McFayden didn't hold onto the mill for long, selling to C. F. Nason in 1897.

The Stephenson family were the last owners to operate the Venice Grist Mill. Frank and Luella (Hamilton) Stephenson purchased the property in 1899, running the mill and operating a market garden there. The produce was sold at the St. Lawrence Market in Toronto. The Stepheons remodelled the Mill House to its current form, adding a full second storey and bricking the exterior. When the mill pond dam washed out in 1920, it was not rebuilt. Thus the days of the Buttonville mill pond and the old mill came to a close. The frame portion of the mill was dismantled in 1924, and reconstructed by John Burr somewhere in Richmond Hill.

In 1968, the Buttonville Golf and Country Club was established adjacent to the mill property, on land purchased from the Hood farm and Della Stephenson, a daughter of Frank and Luella Stephenson. Later, the Mill House and site of the Venice Grist Mill were added to the holdings of the golf course.

Aubrey Stephenson, a nephew of Frank Stephenson, bought the mill in 1933, and built a small feed mill on the site of the old grist mill, using what remained of the old foundation. This business operated until 1974. The building was later renovated with a mansard roof, and was demolished in 1993.

Architectural Attributes

Architectural Description:

The Mill House is a two storey, brick and frame dwelling with a T-shaped plan. The red brick veneered front portion is nearly cubic in plan, and has a full-width open verandah. The stem of the "T" is frame and one storey in height, with a rectangular plan. A one storey frame addition, dating from 1990, extends west from the rear wall of the wing.

The front portion of the house rests on a raised fieldstone foundation that provides basement space, as indicated by the presence of basement windows.

The front portion of the house has a medium pitched, pyramidal hipped roof with deep, projecting boxed eaves. A hipped dormer with a pair of windows with narrow 4-light sash over larger, square single-light sash is located on the front slope.

The front (east) façade is three bay, with a center door flanked by a window on either side. On the second floor, there are three windows aligned with the openings below. Windows on this and the other walls of the main block are wood, one over one sash style with lugsills. The heads of the window openings are flat with angled voussoirs.

The front verandah has a shed roof with closed eaves, and rests on wooden Tuscan columns resting on brick pedestals that are capped with concrete or stone slabs. A simple wooden balustrade encloses the verandah. The area below the deck is closed in with wooden lattice panels.

The side walls are two bay, with two window openings on each level. On the south wall is an oriel window with canted sidewalls that appears to have a flat roof. Below the sash are paneled aprons.

Stylistic Analysis:

There is a local tradition that the Mill House in its current form was built around a much earlier frame dwelling. Information recorded in the Markham Inventory of Heritage Buildings states that "The present house encases a previous center-gable, 1 ½ storey frame dwelling of the 1850's. The brick exterior was added between 1899 and 1905."

An historical photograph in the collection of a local historian, labeled as "Della Stephenson's house prior to bricking and raising the roof. House circa 1840. Photo circa 1900." The image is of a 1 ½ storey frame dwelling with a three-bay front and low-pitched gable roof, without a centre gable feature. A front door with sidelights is centred on the façade and there is a full-width front verandah. In form, this house could date anywhere from the 1820s to the 1840s. This photo does not quite match the description in the Inventory. Perhaps there are photographs in other collections that show the house with a centre gable as a later development of the building.

With the Willcocks sawmill in operation as early as 1806, and a resident sawyer, there would have been some type of dwelling on the property in association with the mill. Some secondary sources mention a log house on the site as early as 1807; William Willcocks' will, dated 1811, mentions a house but does not describe it as being log or frame. The first descriptive reference to the nature of the Mill House appears in the 1851 census, where it is described as a one storey frame building.

The presence of the sawmill suggests that lumber to construct a frame house was readily available, so there may have been a frame house here (rather than a log one) from a very early date. Alternatively, a more substantial frame house may have been an improvement that accompanied the building of the Venice Grist Mill by Robert Baldwin in the 1837-1840 period. A physical examination of the interior of the Mill House may yield further evidence of a date of construction for the earliest stage of the building's development.

In its present form, the Mill House is a good example of an American Foursquare style dwelling, a classic form-follows function design commonly built in North America from the 1900s to the 1950s. It was a new style that reflected a simplified approach to home building that followed the often complex and heavily ornamented eclectic styles of the late Victorian period. American architectural historians credit Frank Lloyd Wright and the Prairie School for originating this popular house form. The Foursquare was often seen in pattern book architecture in the early decades of the last century, finished in frame or brick cladding.

The Foursquare design features an efficient use of space in a compact, two storey, cubic form, particularly suited to urban lots but often used in rural settings. In Southern Ontario, the Foursquare is most often seen in red brick. Full-width front verandahs supported on Classical columns resting on brick pedestals were almost universally used on the Foursquare, reflecting the popularity of the Edwardian Classical style in the early 20th century.

The three bay front of the Mill House, with its centre door, is atypical of the Foursquare style, which most often has a side hall plan that allows for a hall containing a staircase, with a parlour and dining room to one side, and a kitchen across the rear. In the case of the Mill House, the placement of the centre door and its flanking windows reflects the fact that this is a renovations of the earlier, frame house.

Contextual Attributes

The Mill House stands on its original site and orientation. In its location on the banks of the Rouge River, overlooking the site of the Venice Grist Mill, it is an important reminder of the Willcocks-Baldwin development of Millbrook and two long-standing local industries. The Mill House is one of a number of historical buildings within the Buttonville hamlet and Heritage Conservation District Study Area, and may be the oldest remaining structure in the area and one of the oldest in the Town of Markham.

Significant Heritage Attributes

1. The cubic, 2 storey red brick main block;
2. The frame, gable-roofed 1 storey rear wing (excluding the 1990 extension);
3. The pyramidal hipped roof with the hipped roof front dormer and its 4 over 1 wood sash windows;
4. The full-width front verandah, with its wooden Tuscan columns, brick pedestals with stone or concrete caps, wooden balustrade and latticework panels;
5. The three bay front, with its centre door;
6. The wooden 1 over 1 sash windows on all sides of the building;
7. The centre front door opening;
8. The south oriel window with its canted sides and panelled aprons.



IDENTIFICATION

Property: The Buttonville Mill House

Municipal Address: 9064 Woodbine Avenue

Legal Description: Part East ½ Lot 14, Concession 3

Owner: Markham Golf and Country Club

Inventory Number: C5-12

Assessment Roll Number: 132-476-00

Date of Construction: c.1840; enlarged and remodeled c.1905

Architectural Style: American Foursquare

Type of Structure: Residence

Number of Storeys: 2

Exterior Wall Material: Red brick