

**NOTICE OF INTENTION  
TO DESIGNATE A BUILDING OF  
CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE OR INTEREST**

TAKE NOTICE THAT the Council of The Corporation of the Town of Aurora (the "Town") intends to designate the following property as a property of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest pursuant to the provisions of Section 29 of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. O.18, as amended (the "Ontario Heritage Act"). A brief statement of reasons is included.

34 Berczy Street  
T. Sisman Shoe Factory  
Lot 7 W/S Berczy St and Part of Lot 8 W/S Berczy Street, Plan 68  
Town of Aurora, Regional Municipality of York, being part of PIN 03650-0157  
(LT)

**Description of Property**

The property municipally known as 34 Berczy Street is located on the west side of Berczy Street, south of Wellington Street East and east of Yonge Street, contains a two-storey building which was formerly part of the T. Sisman Shoe Factory.

The subject properties were historically part of the Geographic Township of Whitchurch (presently Aurora). In 1805, Ebenezer Britton acquired all 190 acres of lands in LOT 80 EYS from the Crown. In 1836, John Mosley purchased 79 acres of lands on the western portion of lands adjacent to the hamlet of Machell's Corners. In 1854, Mosley subdivided his lands into built lots which created the Southeast Old Aurora neighbourhood bounded by Wellington Street to the north, Berczy Street to the east, Metcalfe Street to the south and Yonge Street to the west.

**Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest**

The Cultural Heritage Value of 34 Berczy Street primarily derives from the historical or associative value due its direct association with the T. Sisman Shoe Factory and its notable contributions to Aurora's history.

**Physical Design Value**

In 1901, The "Underhill & Sisman Shoe Manufacturing Company" moved to Aurora, ON from Markham, ON, acquired 34 & 38 Berczy Street from the Spence family, and contracted George Thomas Browning, a local architect and builder, to construct the shoe factory building at 34 Berczy Street. The company completed construction of a 2-storey factory on the site (later to be known as "Factory No. 2") within the same year. In 1903, an addition was erected to its south to accommodate a broiler house.

The original stone and brick building underwent an extensive renovation and was converted from a single-use industrial factory to a multi-unit building and has now been covered with cream-coloured stucco. The building is rectangular in shape with a flat roof. The main entrance is located on the east facing wall with

three vertical bay windows. Three more entrances into various offices are located at the south elevation. The fenestration is articulated on all elevations with two rows of arched windows. The west half of the north elevation has a simple top cornice with dentils.

Currently, the building has very limited visual references to the Sisman Shoe Factory complex. The building remained vacant for several years until it was purchased by the Newell family who undertook extensive interior and exterior renovations to the building. Further renovations were completed to the building in 2002 to accommodate new offices. Today, the buildings resemble something more akin to a multi-unit suburban commercial building.

### **Historical/ Associative Value**

The Cultural Heritage Value of 34 Berczy Street primarily derives from the historical or associative value due its direct association with the T. Sisman Shoe Factory and its notable contributions to Aurora's history.

Thomas Sisman, founder of T. Sisman Shoe Company lived in a two-storey house between the two factory buildings. The Aurora Museum notes that the property was regarded for its landscaping and was admired locally for its broad lawns and flower gardens. The house was constructed prior to 1911. In 1933, Thomas Sisman died at the age of 83, leaving the members of the Sisman and Linton families to manage the company. In 1950, the Sisman residence was demolished, and a new one-storey block concrete building was constructed in its place in 1951, referred to as Factory No.4 of the complex (38 Berczy Street).

The "Underhill & Sisman Shoe Manufacturing Company" moved from Markham, ON to Aurora, ON in 1901. Aurora Council voted to provide a bonus of \$10,000 for land and buildings, free water rates for 10 years, and free municipal taxes (except for school taxes) for 10 years. The agreement also stated that Underhill and Sisman must have at least 70 employees residing in the corporation. Following this agreement, Markham took the Town of Aurora to court for passing such an agreement. The Court of Appeal allowed Markham's appeal and the judgement was reversed. The Town attempted to take the case to the Supreme Court of Canada, whereby the appeal was refused and the Town was ordered to pay the costs of \$300 to Markham. Subsequently, By-law #192 and 193 was passed by the Province of Ontario on June 12, 1903 to approve the agreement.

In 1910, the Underhill-Sisman partnership dissolved. "Underhill Ltd." continued its operation and the "T. Sisman Shoe Company" constructed a new building at 111 Mosley Street. The new factory on Mosley Street became the principal production facility and was known as Factory No.1 of the complex. In 1912, an addition to the factory at 111 Mosley Street was constructed. Around this time, Underhill Ltd. left Aurora for Barrie, where the company had previously established another plant.

Starting in the 1960s, the Canadian shoe industry saw rising competition from import products. In 1966 Kinney Shoes, an American company, purchased Sismans. In 1976, Kinney Shoes announced the closure of the T. Sisman Shoe Company as it could not compete with inexpensive imports from abroad. A group of local businessmen purchased the company and re-opened it under the name

of "Sismans of Canada Limited". Factory No.1 at 103 Mosley Street was demolished between 1978 and 1988. The Sisman name finally disappeared from Aurora's industrial rolls when the company went into receivership and was closed in 1985.

The T. Sisman Shoe Factory manufactured various shoes and boots including for fashion, work, sport, and specialized in steel-toe safety shoes, army and police type shoes, and oxfords to keep up with import pressures. Starting in 1940, the company received the first in a series of contracts from the federal government to manufacture shoes for the war effort.

The T. Sisman Shoe Factory was one of the Town's largest employers, with surrounding dwellings constructed to house its workers. By March of 1902, the plant employed nearly 100 and produced 600 pairs of shoes daily.

### **Contextual Value**

The property has contextual value as it is physically and functionally associated with the early industrial landscape associated with the Aurora Train Station, which facilitated the shipment of Sisman shoes and boots across Canada and beyond.

### **Description of Heritage Attributes**

Important to the preservation of the property are the original key attributes that express its value, which include the following exterior elements:

#### **Exterior Elements**

- Stone Foundation
- Corbelled Parapets of both end walls
- Window Fenestration on north and south elevations

DETAILED REASONS FOR THE PROPOSED DESIGNATION CAN BE OBTAINED BY CONTACTING THE UNDERSIGNED.

Pursuant to Section 29(5) of the Ontario Heritage Act, any person may, before 4:30 p.m. on the **June 11, 2022**, (within 30 days of the publication of this notice) send by registered mail or deliver to the Town Clerk, Notice of Objection to the proposed designation, together with a statement setting out the reasons for the objection and all relevant facts. If a Notice of Objection is received, the Council of the Town shall consider the objection and make a decision whether or not to withdraw the Notice to designate the property, within 90 days after the end of the 30-day period.

Further information respecting the proposed designation(s) is available from the Town Clerk's Office upon request.

DATED at Aurora this May 12, 2022

Michael de Rond, Town Clerk, Town of Aurora, 100 John West Way, Box 1000, Aurora, ON, L4G 6J1