

The Corporation of the Town of Aurora

By-law Number XXXX-22

Being a By-law to designate a property to be of cultural heritage value or interest (34 Berczy Street “T. Sisman Shoe Factory”).

Whereas under subsection 29(1) of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. O.18, as amended (the “Act”), the council of a municipality may, by by-law, designate a property within the municipality to be of cultural heritage value or interest;

And whereas on April 26, 2022, the Council of The Corporation of the Town of Aurora (the “Town”) approved the recommendations contained in Report No. PDS22-013 to designate the property municipally known as 34 Berczy Street, as described on the attached Schedule “A” (the “Property”) to be of cultural heritage value or interest;

And whereas the Town Clerk caused notice of the intention to designate the Property to be served on the owner of the Property and the Ontario Heritage Trust and published in a newspaper having general circulation in the municipality;

And whereas a notice of objection was served within thirty days after the date of publication of the notice of intention under subsection 29(5) of the Act;

And whereas under subsection 29(8) of the Act, if a notice of objection is served within the 30-day period under subsection 29(5) of the Act but the council decides not to withdraw the notice of intention to designate the property, the council may pass a by-law designating the property;

And whereas the Council of the Town deems it necessary and expedient to enact a by-law to designate the Property to be of cultural heritage value or interest;

Now therefore the Council of The Corporation of the Town of Aurora hereby enacts as follows:

1. The Property, as described on the attached Schedule “A” be and is hereby designated to be of cultural heritage value or interest.
2. A statement explaining the cultural heritage value or interest of the Property and a description of the heritage attributes of the Property are set out on the attached Schedule “B”.
3. The Town Clerk shall serve a copy of this by-law on the owner of the Property and the Ontario Heritage Trust and publish notice of this by-law in a newspaper having general circulation in the municipality.
4. A copy of this by-law shall be registered against the Property in the appropriate Land Registry Office.

Enacted by Town of Aurora Council this 12th day of July, 2022.

Tom Mrakas, Mayor

Michael de Rond, Town Clerk

Schedule "A"

Description of Property

All and singular those certain parcels or tracts of land and premises situate, lying and being in the Town of Aurora, in the Regional Municipality of York, municipally known as 34 Berczy Street, and being composed of 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), including the primary building thereon.

Schedule "B"

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