

## Heritage Research Report



**'The Oakville Basket Company Flywheel'**

**June 2011**

## HERITAGE RESEARCH REPORT STATUS SHEET

Street Address: Cornwall Road at Old Mill Road

Roll Number: 2401030010062100000

Short Legal Description: PT LT 14, CON 3, SDS, PARTS 1 AND 3, 20R13457; OAKVILLE. T/W 806347

Names of Owners: Town of Oakville

Owners' Mailing Address: 1225 Trafalgar Road  
Oakville, ON L6J 5A6

Heritage Type: Built Structure

Designation Type: Ontario Heritage Act – Part IV

Designation Brief Completion Date: June 2011

Heritage Committee Application Approval Date: July 26, 2011

Designation Brief Completed by: Susan Schappert, Heritage Planner

Council Date: August 8, 2011

Sources Consulted: Oakville and the Sixteen  
Oakville: A Small Town  
Conservation Assessment and  
Recommendations for Oakville Basket  
Company Flywheel  
Oakville Historical Society  
Oakville Trails  
Oakville Images  
Beautiful Oakville

## **STATEMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE OR INTEREST**

The subject property has been researched and evaluated in order to determine its cultural heritage significance according to Ontario Regulation 9/06. This Regulation, defined in the *Ontario Heritage Act*, outlines several criteria for determining whether a property is of cultural heritage value or interest. In order for a property to be designated under section 29 of the *Ontario Heritage Act* it must meet one or more of these criteria, which are outlined below. By using these criteria, staff can determine if the property's cultural heritage value or interest merits designation under the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

1. The property has design value or physical value because it,
  - i. is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method,  
**The subject artifact is a representative example of early 20<sup>th</sup> century steam engines.**
  - ii. displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit  
**The property does not exhibit a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit.**
  - iii. demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement  
**The subject artifact is an example of the "Wheelock" stationary steam engine, named for the inventor of the Wheelock valve that made steam engines more efficient.**
  
2. The property has historical value or associative value because it,
  - i. has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community,  
**The subject artifact is associated the Oakville Basket Company, one of the most important early industries of Oakville. The Oakville Basket Company was formed as a response to the need for local fruit and vegetable baskets for transportation of Oakville strawberries, stone fruits and other produce at a time when Oakville was the largest producer of strawberries in the Dominion.**
  - ii. yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture, or  
**The structure yields information about the importance of agriculture in early Oakville and the associated industries that developed as a result.**
  - iii. demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community.  
**The subject artifact was manufactured by the Galt firm Goldie & McCulloch Co. Ltd., a company that produced steam engines for factories across Ontario.**
  
3. The property has contextual value because it,
  - i. is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area,  
**The contextual value of the subject artifact has been altered as it has been removed from its original surroundings and use inside a factory. However, the placement of the subject artifact in its current parkette located close to the factory (which no longer exists) serves as a physical reminder of Oakville's industrial heritage.**

- ii. is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings, or  
**The subject artifact is visually linked to its current parkette surroundings, as the landscape is designed in a wheel shape to reflect the heritage artifact within.**
- iii. is a landmark.  
**The subject artifact is a landmark on Cornwall Road, as it is located at the entrance of a public parkette and is a significant addition to the landscape.**

## **1. Design Value or Physical Value**

The Oakville Basket Company Flywheel has physical value as a steam engine remnant and industrial artifact that represents a period of industrial and agricultural productivity in Oakville. The Flywheel structure consists of remnant pieces from the steam engine that powered the machinery at the Oakville Basket Company factory.

The flywheel is attached to a frame that is itself attached to the crank and cylinder. A piston within the cylinder is attached by a cross head to a connecting rod and bearing to the frame. The steam engine remnant is mounted on a concrete pad in a parkette not far from the historic location of the Oakville Basket Company factory.

## **2. Historical Value or Associative Value**

This Oakville Basket Company Flywheel is a steam engine remnant which has strong historical value through its association with the Oakville Basket Company, an important industry in historic Oakville, and its connections to the agricultural productivity of early Oakville.

The Oakville Basket Company was established as a response to the need for baskets for Oakville's fruit farming industry, which was one of the largest local industries between 1865 and 1930. Due to the suitability of Oakville's climate and soil conditions, fruit farming was practiced on both a small and large scale by Oakville farmers. Oakville was particularly known for its strawberries, but also produced other berries, stone fruits and vegetables. In order to sell and ship the produce from Oakville's farms and orchards, baskets in various sizes and shapes were required.

The unofficial start to the business came when John A. Chisholm began making fruit baskets in his shed at his farm on Division Street over the four months of the winter season.<sup>1</sup> In 1871, this seasonal manufacturing company employed 4 men and 8 boys and turned out 300,000 baskets.<sup>2</sup> John's sons, William Biggar Chisholm and Charles Petit Chisholm, purchased the former Victoria Brewery (located on the Sixteen Mile Creek, north of Division Street, now known as MacDonald Road) in 1874 and converted the building into a basket factory.<sup>3</sup> By

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<sup>1</sup> Oakville and the Sixteen, Hazel Chisholm Mathews, p. 388

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 389

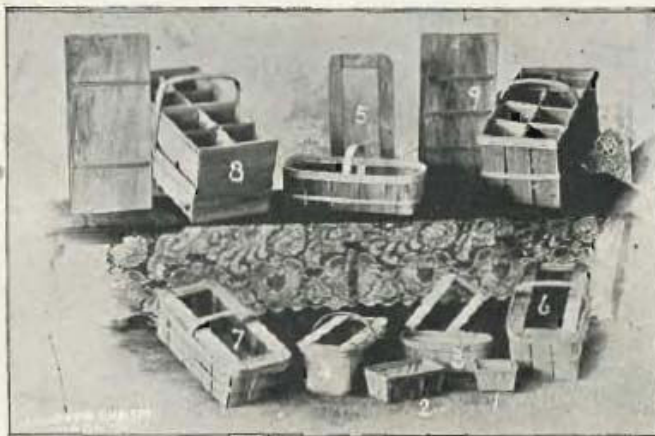
<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 389

1877 production of fruit baskets had jumped to almost 750,000.<sup>4</sup> The business was taken over by Pharis Doty & Son in 1890 and then purchased by a joint-stock company in 1892 who named the business 'the Oakville Basket Company'.<sup>5</sup>

In 1893 the factory was destroyed by a fire, later proved to be deliberately set by a mentally disturbed individual. The factory was rebuilt and new machinery installed, including a peeler, lathes and an earlier Goldie & McCulloch steam engine.<sup>6</sup> With the new equipment, the Oakville Basket Company could produce 250,000 baskets per day.<sup>7</sup>

The factory suffered another disastrous fire in 1920 and was then relocated to a site further north on the Sixteen Mile Creek along Dundas Street (now Trafalgar Road), just south of the railway tracks.<sup>8</sup>

This 15 ft flywheel and associated steam engine remnants are now the only remaining elements of the Oakville Basket Company factory. They were part of the Jerome Wheelock Steam Engine that was installed in the factory in 1932, although the engine was originally built by the Galt firm of Goldie & McCulloch around 1896 for other uses and was re-conditioned for installation in the Oakville Basket Company factory. The wheel weighs over 20 tons (40,000 pounds) and produced enough energy (75 horse power) to run the entire plant's operation.



A FEW OF THE LINES MANUFACTURED BY THE  
OAKVILLE BASKET COMPANY.

**Figure 1 – Products from the Oakville Basket Company**

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 390

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 390

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 390

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 390

<sup>8</sup> Oakville: A Small Town, Frances Robin Ahern, p. 35



Figure 2 – Oakville Basket Company, circa 1890s

### 3. Contextual Value

The Oakville Basket Company Flywheel is located in a parkette along the Oakville Heritage Trails System on Cornwall Road at the intersection of Old Mill Road. It was brought to the parkette in 2002 and set onto 3 custom made reinforced concrete pedestals. The parkette itself has been designed in the shape of a wheel (see Figure 3 for aerial view) to compliment the heritage character of the flywheel. At the centre of the parkette is an information kiosk, which is surrounded by gardens.

Originally housed within an enclosed industrial space and used in production, the Oakville Basket Company Flywheel has been outdoors for several decades. While the flywheel has been removed from its original context and use, the flywheel in its current incarnation as a landmark monument serves as a reminder to the community of an industry which helped to form the town of Oakville.

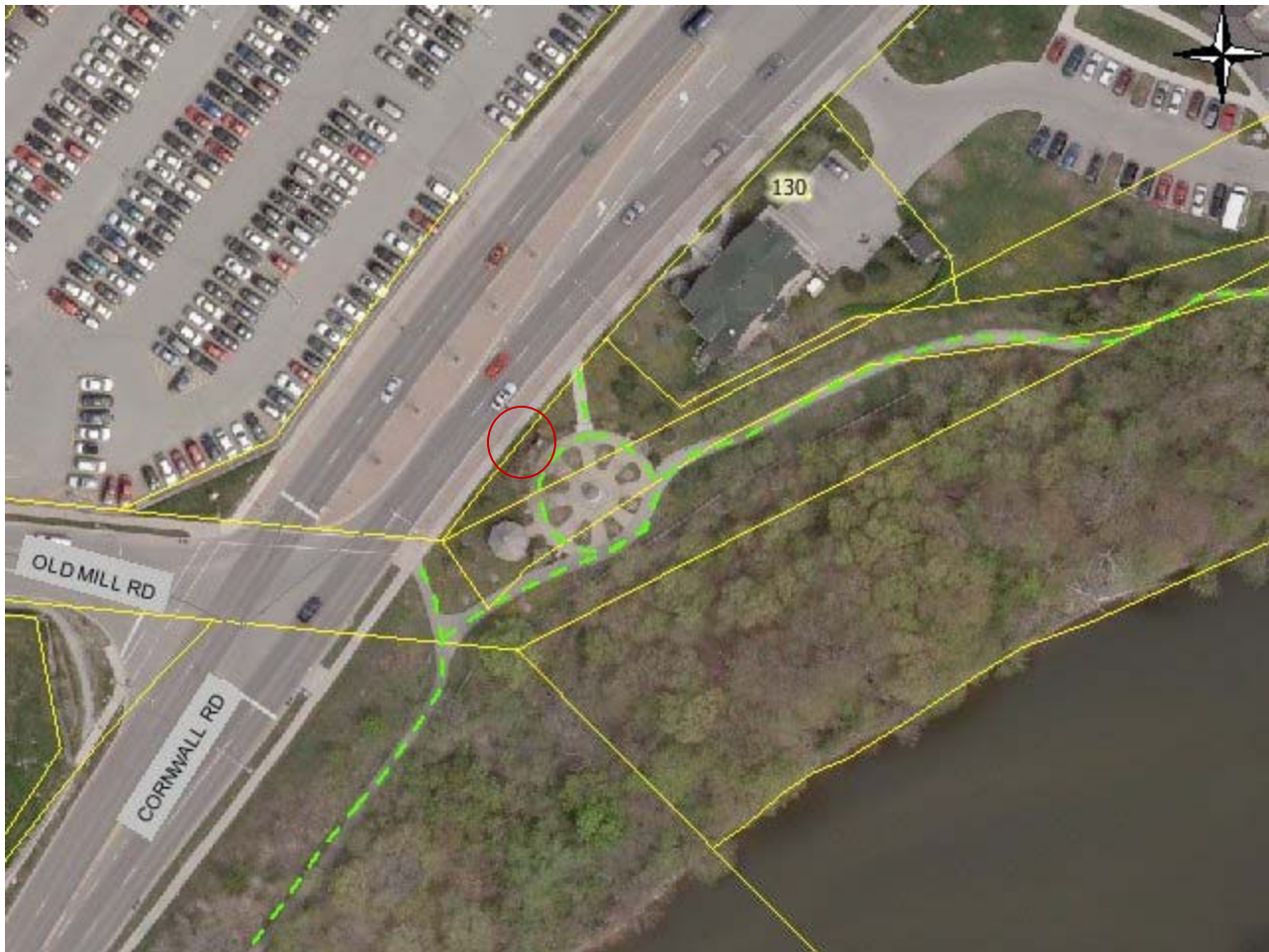


Figure 3 – Oakville Basket Company Flywheel circled in red

## **SUMMARY OF HERITAGE ATTRIBUTES**

The Reasons for Designation include the following heritage attributes. These attributes apply to the Oakville Basket Company Flywheel artifact and its immediate surroundings:

Key attributes of the Oakville Basket Company Flywheel that reflect the cultural heritage value of the artifact include its remaining original components:

- Flywheel
- Dash pots
- Piston
- Cylinder
- Cross-head
- Connecting rod
- Crank
- Frame

- Bearing

Key attributes of the landscape that reflect the cultural heritage value of the property are:

- The location of the Oakville Basket Company Flywheel in parkette close to the location of the Oakville Basket Company factory, which no longer exists.

## **PHOTOS OF PROPERTY**



Figure 4 – South elevation





Figure 5 – East elevation



Figure 6 – North elevation



Figure 7 – West elevation



Figure 8 – Old Mill Parkette