

## **HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT**

The Sir John Johnson House is located near the Raisin River in Williamstown, Glengarry County, Ontario. Originally part of a grist and sawmill complex built by Sir John Johnson sometime between 1784 and 1792, the Sir John Johnson House contained the millwright's office and residence. There are two major additions to the original building -- a two storey addition on the west made about 1825, and a larger Gothic Revival addition to the east dating from the 1850s. The Sir John Johnson House was commemorated by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada in 1961 and purchased by Parks Canada in 1971. Since that time it has been winterized and re-roofed. The Williamstown branch of the Seaway Valleys Libraries currently leases the Gothic Revival portion of the building, while the rest remains vacant. The Environment Canada Parks Service is custodian of the building. See FHBRO Building Report 88-79.

### **Reason for Designation**

The Sir John Johnson House in Williamstown has been designated a Recognized Federal Heritage Property. It was constructed as an investment property by Sir John Johnson, a prominent United Empire Loyalist from New York State who was given extensive responsibility for the distribution of land and settlement of Loyalists after the American Revolution. In the course of his duties Johnson acquired considerable land for himself, land like this property in Williamstown.

Johnson developed this mill site as a nucleus to encourage the settlement of Loyalists and Scottish immigrants in the Williamstown district. He brought millwrights from Montreal to construct and man his sawmill. Among the buildings they built was the original house on this property -- of modified pièce-sur-pièce construction. The building is an outstanding example of a refined log building, and one of the earliest surviving examples of the technique popular in the St. Lawrence Valley brought to eastern Ontario by its first settlers.

The site of this building contains several ruins which permit its early role as part of a mill complex to be readily identified. Today the Sir John Johnson House is still surrounded by considerable property which continues to provide it with a compatible semi-rural setting. It sits high on the brow of a hill isolated from the surrounding suburbs. The hill itself is a prominent feature of Williamstown.

### **Character Defining Elements**

The heritage value of the Sir John Johnson House resides in the composition,

.../2

this structure must be protected against damage or further intrusion as a first priority. Its integrity must be supported and maintained in future work.

The integration of this early building into a more substantial farmhouse is an important part of its history, and should be protected. The configuration and integrity of the materials and massing of the entire building should be maintained with an awareness that proper maintenance for the entire complex is the best form of protection.

The site and character of the setting of the building should be protected as an integral property. Land severance or further development would weaken the character of the property. Both the size and rural nature of this property are essential to secure a sympathetic setting for the building and maintain a strong rural image in the town.

The ruins of earlier mill buildings on the site should also be identified, protected, and respected in future planning. They provide an essential functional and historical link between the house and the mill complex which once surrounded it.

1992.03.02