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Kingston, Ontario
St. Helen's Complex
440/462 King Street West

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The St. Helen's complex consists of four buildings (St. Helen's, Stone Gables, Red Cross Lodge, and Grant House) and the associated grounds. Established in the 1830's as a residential "picturesque villa" and adjoining brewery establishment, the estate served as a military hospital during WWI. It was acquired by the Department of Militia and Defense through expropriation in 1918. The buildings were extended during and after WWII for use by the Department of National Defense. The properties were transferred to Correctional Services Canada in 1968 and now accommodate the regional headquarters offices. Correctional Services Canada is the custodian of the property. See FHBRO Building Reports 83-83 and 87-113.

Reason for Designation

The St. Helen's complex was designated Classified because of its important historical associations, the quality of its architectural design and workmanship both interior and exterior, and the quality of its environment. Historically the property was comprised of two principal components, residential and industrial. These are now functionally integrated under the common use as CSC offices but evidence of their previous identity is apparent.

The property is an excellent example of the early 19th century movement of residential areas beyond town limits to country retreats and an expression of the refined Regency outlook on life. These period traits were all expressed in the "picturesque" design of St. Helen's, the Red Cross Lodge, and the grounds.

The property is associated with Themes Kirkpatrick and James Morton, both prominent figures in the early history of Kingston and Upper Canada.

The Grant House (Building #10) represents the property's industrial past and still clearly relates architecturally and functionally to the masonry brewery buildings on the adjacent city-owned property as well as to the St. Helen's buildings.

The FHBRO also noted the landscape and setting as being good examples from the gardenesque period which, despite some alteration and evolution, retain ample evidence of the same design ethic that was expressed in the architecture of the two surviving original villa buildings.

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Character Defining Elements

The Complex:

The heritage character of the St. Helen's complex resides principally in the St. Helen's residence, the grounds, and the designed inter-relationship between them. The Red Cross Lodge and Grant House (Buildings #3 and #10) and the stone and iron fence along the north edge of the property are important contributors to this character through their aesthetic design and their constant functional inter-relationship over time. Stone Gables, a later addition to the complex, is designed and sited so that it does not detract from the character of the property. Several other later additions to the property, both structures and parking areas, are poorly sited and of incompatible design. Their removal or relocation should be considered.

The original grounds design was a fine example of the gardenesque, of which there are few surviving examples in Canada. A survey of surviving landscape features is encouraged to determine which vistas and relationships were important to the design and to identify surviving original features and design patterns. Such a survey would guide future site development such as the siting of parking, new structures, and other infrastructure and ensure that new work is in keeping with the Regency gardenesque character of the grounds and a suitable complement to the architecture.

St. Helen's:

This building was designated Classified. The heritage character of the residence resides in its status as one of the finest examples of Picturesque Regency architecture in Canada. Despite some alterations, the exterior of the building retains all of the visual quality of the style. The designed relationship between the building and its grounds remains clear.

The early additions and alterations to the building were considered by the FHBRO to be of high quality and to have been undertaken in the spirit of the original design. They should be retained. The later office wing off the south elevation is incompatible in form, massing, materials, and quality of construction. Considering the architectural importance of St. Helen's, removal of this addition should be considered when major renovation work is required.

The layout of the building is a textbook example of residential planning in the Regency period. Symmetry, the duality of public and private spaces, and the relationship between family and service areas is deliberate and clear. Siting is also classic. The

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building is positioned on a rise, and situated to give the rear, private, area the best vistas and the southerly exposure.

Despite minor alterations and subdivision of the interior spaces and details of the building, the interior remains a clear statement of the social and residential planning ideals of the period.

Because of this building's extraordinary value and relative intactness, extreme care should be taken in its future management.

The Red Cross Lodge (Building #3):

This building was designated Recognized. Its heritage value resides in its close functional, historical, and architectural design relationship with the St. Helen's residence. It is the sole surviving outbuilding of the original Kirkpatrick estate. Its pilastered walls, stuccoed surfaces, semi-circular arched windows, and hipped roof reflect the same classical simplicity of the main building.

Like St. Helen's, this building has been altered and additions constructed. The earliest of these, particularly that of Newlands in 1918, was executed with a high degree of sensitivity. The two later wings, at the east and west, are of incompatible materials, fenestration, and construction quality. Their removal would be considered an enhancement of the property. The interior of the building has been heavily altered. The temptation to "restore" the interior without adequate evidence of its previous state should be resisted. Instead, any proposal for rehabilitation should be of a compatible, contemporary design. The separate historical relationship between the elegant grounds of St. Helen's and the more functional grounds of this building could be clarified.

The Grant House (Building #10):

This building was designated Recognized. Its heritage value resides in its association with early industrial development in Upper Canada, particularly the Morton Brewery. It is also a very good example of neo-classical vernacular architecture. Although a part of the St. Helen's complex both functionally and historically, the FHBRO noted this building's important visual and architectural relationship with the complex of buildings on the adjoining city-owned land, the original Morton Brewery. Future development should consider this important relationship.

Despite additions and renovations to its interior, this building is practically intact, the plan and many original details being concealed by the later work. Future work on the

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building should endeavor to continue to protect these features.

An enclosed porch of incompatible design obscures the fanlight and side-lights of the front entranceway. Its removal would be an improvement. The two-storey frame addition dating from the WWII period is less obtrusive than the additions to the other buildings on the property. However, removal of it and the extensive parking area before the building would enhance the property. Reinstatement of the garden space to the north would give this building context and setting.

Stone Gables:

The building was designated Recognized. Its heritage value resides in its Tudor Revival architectural design, currently intact in all its details, and its environment.

The design of the interior, the selection of materials, and the level of craftsmanship

displayed in the paneling, millwork, and glazing, is of a high standard and is fully consistent with the building style. These aspects of the ground floor and the main stair should be protected. The other floors are to a lesser standard. Future development in these areas should respect the residential character of the building.

The building was carefully integrated into the 19th century landscape of Morton Wood. Future landscape development that maintains the existing visual continuity of the northern grounds between St. Helen's and Stone Gables would be appropriate. They should remain undivided. What remains of the south grounds is generally intact, but the relationship with the lake has been lost. Modest, scaled development, if screened from St. Helen's, could occur in this area.

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