

# Historic Context Statement

February 2021

## Waterdown Village Historic Context Statement

The Village of Waterdown, incorporated in 1878, is a significant historic settlement area in the community of Flamborough in the City of Hamilton. Located in the former Township of East Flamborough, Waterdown’s early Euro-Canadian settlement was influenced by the construction of the military road, known as Dundas Street, and the area’s natural topography.

The area now known as Waterdown was first developed in the early-nineteenth century as a thriving industrial and agricultural area. It functioned as an important transportation centre for the flow of people and goods by providing a gentle route up the Escarpment, acting as a hub for early stage coach routes and connecting to water transport at Brown’s Wharf (now LaSalle Park in the City of Burlington). The village continues to play an important role in the interconnected Greater Toronto Hamilton Area, resulting in significant volumes of pass-through traffic. Though many of Waterdown’s residents no longer work in the village, many of the commercial, residential industrial and institutional buildings on which the village was founded remain, as does its historic character and charm.

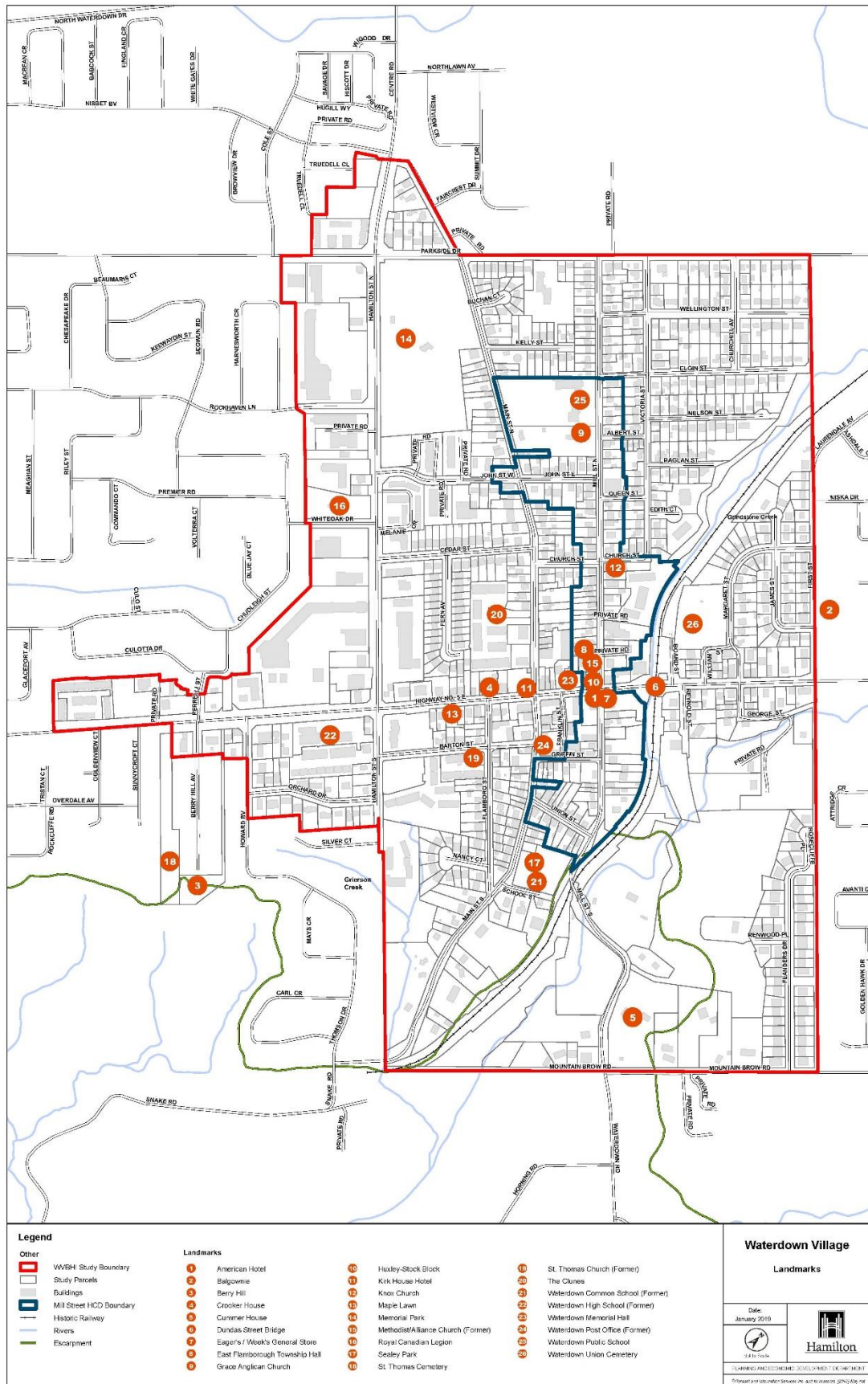
Village residents have continued to demonstrate their commitment and interest in conserving their collective history through the adaptive reuse and preservation of historic structures, an active and involved historical society and local heritage advocacy group, and the creation of the heritage conservation district in the core of Waterdown.

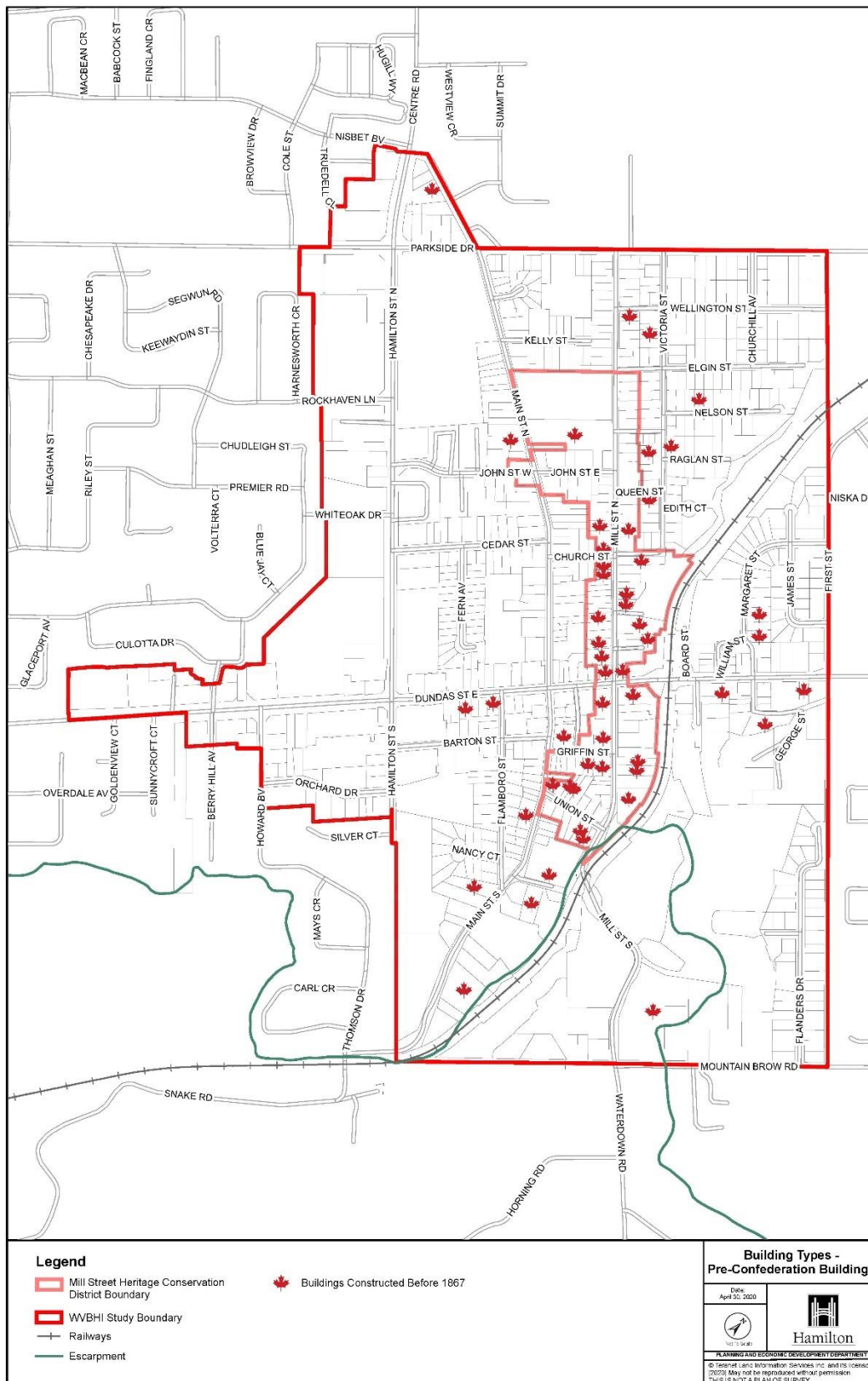
## Heritage Attributes

The tangible attributes that help contribute to, and define, the historic character of the Village of Waterdown include the:

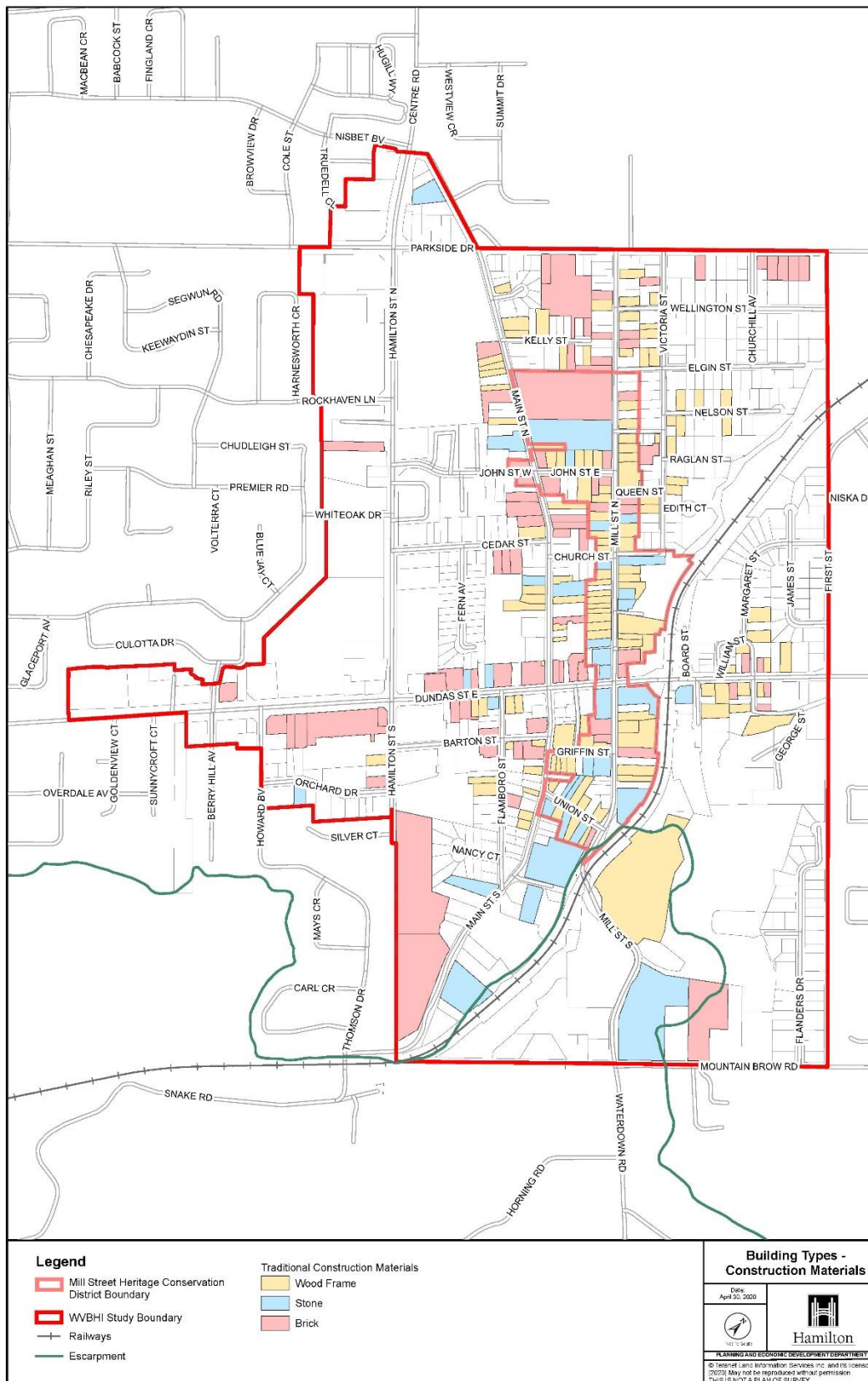
- Natural topography of the Escarpment and its relation to the river valley and Grindstone Creek, including the Great Falls, the Upper Falls and Spring Creek, which provided power for the industrial development of the village;
- Human intervention of the natural topography and water ways, including the realignment of Grindstone Creek for the railway, the creation of dams and raceways for the mill sites;
- Mature tree canopy consisting of historic trees that remain from the early Euro-Canadian settlement period and early-twentieth century plantings;
- Dundas Street corridor, laid out by Lieutenant John Graves Simcoe as an early military road;
- Historic transportation corridors that responded to the natural topography of the area, such as Mill Street and Main Street;

- Historic alignment of the railway and its bridges;
- Early surveys and residential areas, such as the Griffin Survey, McMonnies and Stock Survey, Creen Survey, Kelly Survey and Vinegar Hill, and their lotting patterns (see map on **page 20**);
- Village landmark buildings and spaces that have an important role in the village’s history (see map on **page 3**);
- Waterdown Memorial Hall and Waterdown Memorial Park, commemorating the role of Waterdown residents in the First and Second World Wars, respectively, and their impact;
- Eclectic mix of historic nineteenth and early-twentieth century buildings reflecting the evolution of the village, including:
  - A significant concentration of pre-Confederation buildings (see map on **page 4**);
  - Vernacular workers cottages associated with the village’s early development;
  - Residential buildings influenced by, and representative of, architectural styles such as the Ontario Cottage, Ontario Farm House, Georgian, Regency, Romanesque Revival, Gothic Revival, Italianate, Queen Anne Revival, Second Empire, Edwardian Classicism, Craftsman and Cottage Bungalow, and early-twentieth century Period Revivals (Tudor, Colonial, Neo-Gothic, Cape Cod);
  - Original or historic accessory structures and coach houses;
  - Commercial buildings in the village core, such as the intersections of Dundas at Mill and Dundas at Main Streets;
  - Remaining historic industrial buildings from the nineteenth century;
  - Remaining historic institutional buildings from the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, including churches, schools and township buildings;
  - The use of traditional construction materials, such as stone, brick, and wood, and traditional cladding materials such as historic stucco - pebble dash and rough cast - and wood siding - clapboard and board-and-batten (see map on **page 5**); and,
- Contemporary natural and recreational areas, including Smokey Hollow and the Bruce Trail.









## Historical Overview



Figure 1: Waterdown circa 1905, entering Smokey Hollow from the southwest (Flamborough Archives, BW 2166, Will Reid Collection)

The Village of Waterdown is located within the physiographic region known as the Niagara Escarpment, at a point where the escarpment meets the Norfolk Sand Plain and the Horseshoe Moraine. The Niagara Escarpment has greatly influenced land use in Southern Ontario, its rocky outcroppings limiting agricultural opportunities in certain areas and concentrating the construction of roads, railways, and urban settlements into the escarpment's few breaks and valleys. For settlers, the escarpment served as an important source of building material such as cut stone, lime, and shale, and its numerous streams and waterfalls facilitated early industry, including eight former mill sites in the village along what is now known as the Grindstone Creek.

The Indigenous history of the area is embodied in its natural topography, water features, the remaining historic transportation corridors that were based off of early trail routes, and the archaeological resources and sites that have been identified and commemorated, as well as those that have yet to be discovered. The record of registered archaeological sites indicate that the Waterdown area has been inhabited by Indigenous peoples for thousands of years, beginning by at least 7,500 B.C.E. (before the common era).

Euro-Canadian settlement of Waterdown Village is represented by the surviving built heritage and street and lotting patterns, including a significant concentration of pre-Confederation buildings, a variety of historical housing types and other historical buildings built for industrial, institutional and commercial uses.



## Indigenous Presence (7,500 BCE – Late-17th Century)

There are various understandings of Indigenous presence and stewardship of land in the Waterdown area over time. The area encompassing the former Township of East Flamborough and the Village of Waterdown has attracted human settlement since long before their formal establishment. Historical information indicates that the original inhabitants of the Waterdown area included the Neutral Nation, a powerful chiefdom which traded extensively throughout present-day Ontario and New York. The Grindstone Creek runs south through Waterdown towards Hamilton Harbour (formerly Macassa Bay) and was central to an extensive trail network traveled by the Neutral People, which abounded with food and resources such as sugar maple and salmon. These trails, the origins of contemporary roads such as Snake Road and Old Waterdown Road, led the Neutrals from the base of the escarpment to their settlements north and west of present-day Waterdown.



*Figure 2: Snake Road, date? (Flamborough Archives, BW 1920, Will Reid Collection)*

The seventeenth century was dominated by the Beaver Wars, conflicts between various Indigenous Nations precipitated by the French and English's hunger for fur (particularly beaver pelts). Although alliances could change, generally the Indigenous Nations of the northern Great Lakes fought with the French, while the Haudenosaunee Confederacy had a strong relationship with the Dutch and British. As the population of fur-bearing animals diminished, Nations began encroaching on each others' territory. The Neutral Nation were caught in the middle of the conflict and collapsed by 1650. Only a few Neutral villages remained in the area afterwards and their inhabitants ultimately joined other nations.

The same fate befell the Wendat Hurons, who lived in other parts of present-day southern Ontario. Allied to the French, the Wendat were pushed off their lands by the Haudenosaunee Confederacy who were supplied with muskets by the Dutch and English. Other Indigenous groups to the north, the Anishinaabe and the Algonquian Nations, defended themselves from attacks and eventually succeeded in expelling the Haudenosaunee from what is now southern Ontario by 1700. The Mississaugas, an Anishinaabe nation who inhabited the lands east of the Neutrals, established settlement in the area following the Beaver Wars and were the predominant Indigenous group at the time of arrival by European settlers. In the late-seventeenth century, the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee nations established peace with the “Dish with One Spoon” Wampum promising that the two nations would share the bounty of the land (the dish) together (using one spoon). The lands on which Waterdown is located remain the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy today.



Figure 3: Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt reproduction (utoronto.ca)

*Heritage attributes related to this period include:*

- Snake Road
- Grindstone Creek (formerly known as Limestone Creek)
- Spring Creek
- Grierson Creek
- Great Falls (formerly known as Waterdown Falls and Palmers Falls)
- Arnold Falls (formerly known as Spring Creek Falls)
- Niagara Escarpment
- Registered archaeological sites with Indigenous affinities, including AiGx-373 (Archaic Period) and AiHc-277 (Pre-Contact Period)
- Areas of archaeological potential

*Note: There are 13 other registered sites within 250 metres of the study area ranging from (Archaic to Woodland and Pre-Contact Periods)*

***There are no extant built resources related to this era in Waterdown's history.***



## Military Influence and Euro-Canadian Settlement (1700s – 1810s)

Beginning in the 1780s, Euro-Canadian settlement in the area superseded that of Indigenous populations. The American War for Independence greatly influenced settlement in the Flamborough and Waterdown area. Following the establishment of the United States of America in 1783, approximately 30,000 British Loyalists were displaced and sought refuge in Britain’s remaining North American colonies. In response to this demand for settlement lands, fifteen land surrender treaties were negotiated between the Crown and the Anishinaabe peoples living in present day Southern Ontario between 1783 and 1812. The colonial government interpreted these treaties as giving them authority to survey and eventually distribute lands to Loyalists and other European settlers.

In 1788, to further facilitate the surveying of new settlement lands, the western extent of Quebec’s District of Montreal was subdivided into four districts: Lunenburg, Mecklenburg, Nassau and Hesse. The area which would become East Flamborough, and subsequently the Village of Waterdown, was situated within the District of Nassau. In 1791, a portion of Quebec, including the new districts, was separated to establish the Province of Upper Canada.

Newly appointed Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe (1752-1806) named Augustus Jones (1757-1836) Provincial Land Surveyor and directed him to travel west from the Niagara River to survey and lay out Townships. In 1792 Treaty No. 3, the Between the Lakes Purchase (**Figure 4**), was negotiated between the Crown and the Mississaugas, giving Upper Canada access to a vast swath of land between Lake Erie and Lake Ontario.

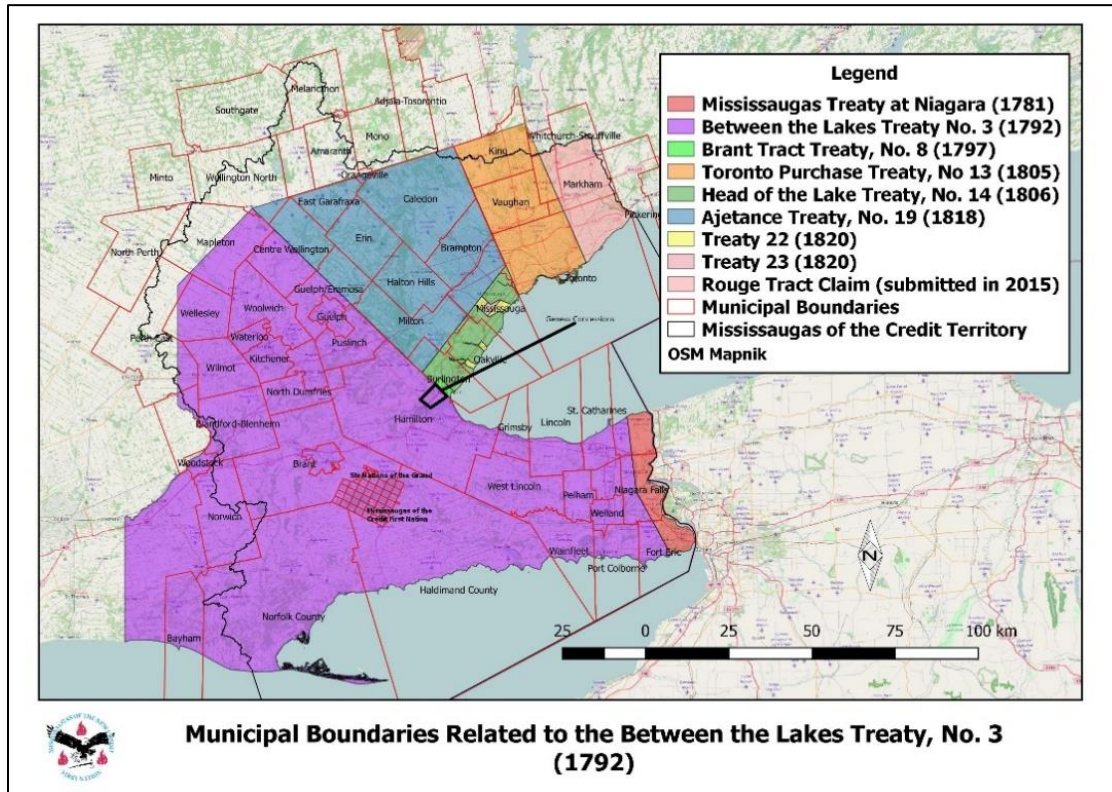


Figure 4: Between the Lakes Treaty No. 3 (1792) with present-day municipal boundaries (Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, [www.mncfn.ca](http://www.mncfn.ca))



The final component of Jones' initial survey was the Township of Geneva, four concessions along the broken front of Lake Geneva, now known as Burlington Bay. Geneva's concessions were surveyed from the "Indian Point", a line which divided the lands to the west purchased by the crown, and the lands to the east still claimed by the Mississaugas. Initially set out for refugees of the French Revolution, an additional ten concessions were surveyed to the north of Geneva and amalgamated with the Township and the lands surrounding the Town of Dundas to form the Township of Flamborough in 1793.

Construction began in 1793 on a highway commissioned by Lt. Governor John Simcoe, which initially ran westward from Burlington Bay to Joseph Brant's village on the Grand River (**Figure 5**). Subsequently, the previously established Land Board began accepting applications for property grants in Flamborough, awarding land mostly to members of the military and government officials who typically remained absentee landlords. In 1796, Lieutenant Alexander McDonnell was awarded approximately 3,000 acres including Lots 6 and 7 of Concession 3, the location of the original village core of Waterdown. Following boundary realignments and territorial renaming within Upper Canada between 1793 and 1798, the Township of Flamborough was split into the Townships of East and West Flamborough in 1798.

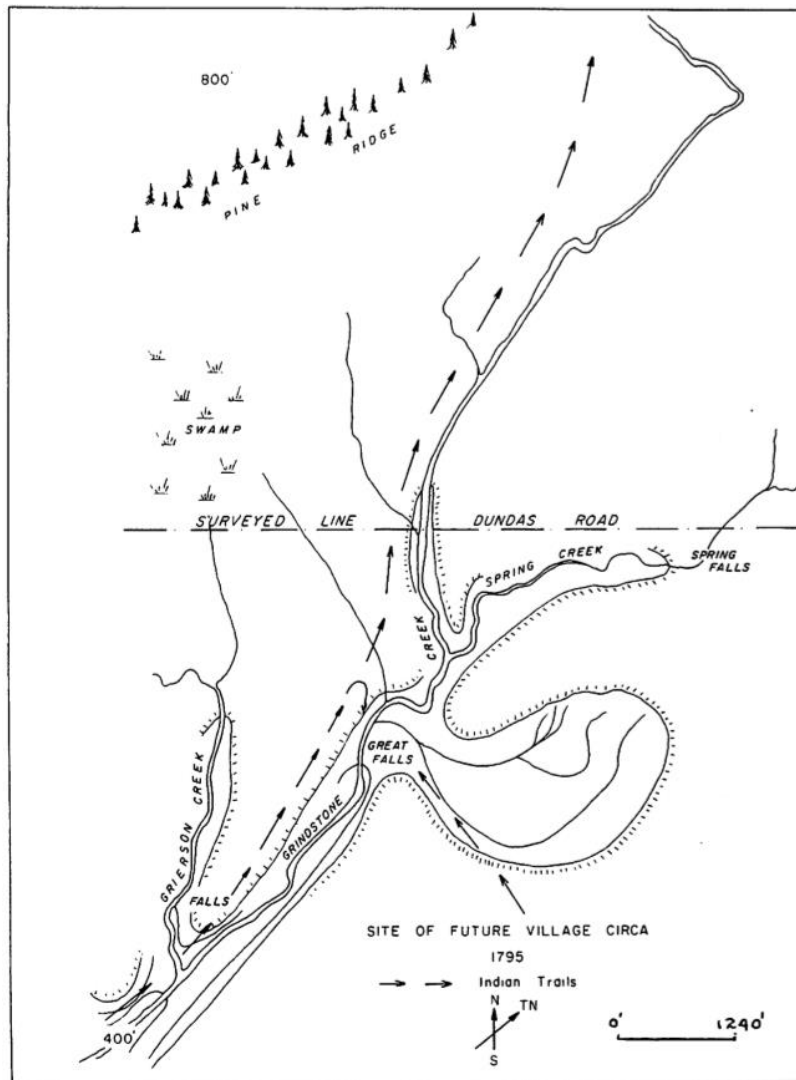


Figure 5: "Site of Future Village Area Circa 1795", showing supposed location of Indigenous trails (Donkin Thesis, page 31)

McDonnell's land went undeveloped and 800 acres were acquired by Alexander Brown (1776-1852), a retired official of the North West Fur Company, in 1805 who then established the area's first sawmill above the Great Falls at Smokey Hollow and the Grindstone Creek (**Figure 6**). That same year, Treaty No. 14, the Head of the Lake Treaty (**Figure 4**), was negotiated and the Crown acquired Mississauga lands east of East Flamborough, allowing for the easterly expansion of Lt. Governor Simcoe's highway, which would become Provincial Highway 5 and Dundas Street in Waterdown. While previously difficult to access and largely untouched, the road and potential for water power made settlement in East Flamborough appealing to many early Euro-Canadian settlers. Alexander Brown was responsible for early amenities constructed in the area following the War of 1812, including construction of the first school on the southwest corner of Mill and Dundas Streets (non-extant, where the American House is now) and establishing a stone quarry on his property at the head of the Grierson Creek near the southeast corner of Barton and Hamilton Streets, both circa 1815.



Figure 6: Map of the valley, properties, roads and mills south of Dundas Street circa 1800-1820 (Woods, p 24)

*Important milestones from this period include:*

- 1669 - French explorer Robert de la Salle travels through Flamborough
- 1700 – Anishinaabe and Algonquin Nations defend attacks by Iroquois, expel the nation from Southern Ontario
- 1760 – British conquest of New France
- 1763 – Royal Proclamation
- 1764 – Treaty of Niagara (Wampum at Niagara)
- 1775-1783 – American Revolutionary War
- 1791 – Upper and Lower Canada are formed
- 1792 – Between the Great Lakes Treaty (No. 3)
- 1793-1795 – Township Survey by Augustus Jones
- 1796 – Crown Grant of Lots 6 and 7, Concession 3 to Alexander McDonnell
- 1790s-1800s – Small pox and measles kill more than 1/3 of Mississauga of the Credit First Nation
- 1800 – Flamborough is divided into East and West
- 1805 - Mississauga Purchase, opened up the eastern portion of Dundas Street
- 1805 – McDonnell's Crown Land regranted to Alexander Brown – Brown builds sawmill on Grindstone near the Great Falls (Note: Brown would later build a second mill site at the Nelson Street Site in the 1830s)
- 1806 – Second phase of Dundas Street Construction
- 1812-1814 – War of 1812
- 1815 – Pledge of the Crown Wampum (Haudenosaunnee)
- 1815 – First School built by Alexander Brown (where American House now stands)
- 1815 – A stone quarry is in operation on Brown's property at the head of the Grierson Creek (near the southeast corner of Barton and Hamilton Streets)

*Heritage attributes related to this period include:*

- Dundas Street
- Mill Street
- Township Survey boundaries defining historic village area (Concession 3, Lots 6 and 7)
- Physiography of historic quarrying activity at Barton and Hamilton Streets

***There are no extant built resources related to this era in Waterdown's development.***

## Mill Development and Village Establishment (1820s – 1860s)

The 1820s brought the first division of Brown’s property when he sold 42 acres of Lot 7, including the creek and the stone quarry, to his brother-in-law James Grierson (1760-1848). In 1823, Brown sold the remaining portion of his property in Lot 7 to Ebenezer Culver Griffin (1800-1847), shifting his interest to merchandizing by building Brown’s Wharf (**Figure 10**) to the south at Port Flamboro (now LaSalle Park) and constructing a new stone house to the east of the village along Spring Creek with his wife Merren Grierson (1779-1863). The route from Mill Street in the village to Waterdown Road to Brown’s Wharf was a key transportation corridor during this time. Research indicates that stagecoach routes were established along the Governor’s Road by the 1820s and that the route passing through Waterdown that connected Ancaster to York (Toronto) was in place by the late-1820s. Dundas and Mill would have been the main crossroads of the settlement area, which most likely prompted the construction of the American Hotel on its southeast corner in 1824 (**Figure 11**).

Ebenezer Culver Griffin and his family are largely credited with establishing much of the Village of Waterdown. Ebenezer Griffin started a number of early businesses in the area, including a store at the corner of Mill and Dundas Street (**Figure 12**), a flour mill above the Great Falls (**Figure 13**), and a carding mill on Mill Street South. In the 1830s, Griffin had a village plan prepared and began to sell off lots. He also sold his mill operations at the Great Falls and received a grant to Concession 3, Lot 6.

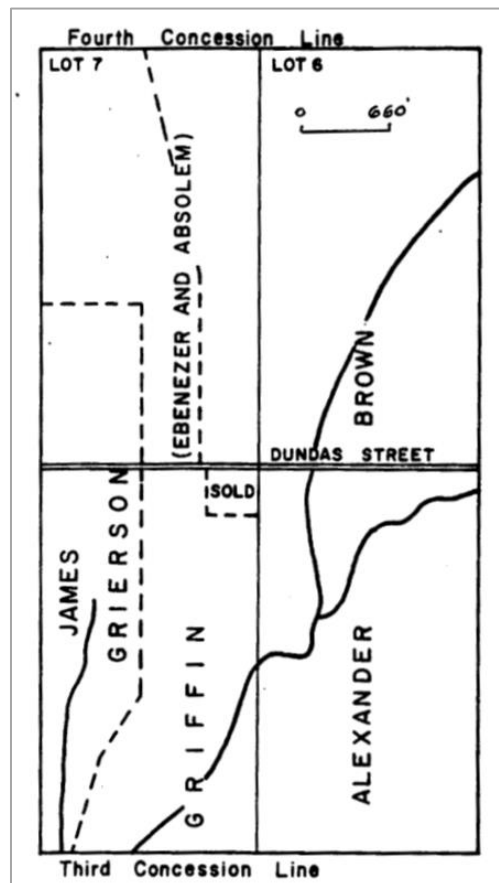


Figure 7: Land Ownership 1835 (Donkin Thesis, Map 5)

Settlement had begun along Dundas Street, particularly along what is known as Vinegar Hill (**Figure 14**), one of the oldest residential neighbourhoods of the village. This area is at the eastern entrance to Waterdown and is believed to be named after the smell from the fermentation of apples to create vinegar, which took place along this stretch of road where orchards were believed to have been prevalent. Following the establishment of Canada East and Canada West in 1841, the first assessment rolls for Flamboro East were drawn up. According to the records, the majority of the almost fifty households in the village were located in the Vinegar Hill area, which explains the creation of Union Cemetery (**Figure 15**) in this area.

Following Ebenezer Griffin's death in 1847, John Cummer bought the rights the Smokey Hollow (later the site of the Howland Flour Mill – **Figure 20**) and the remainder of Griffin's land was divided amongst his heirs and his estate was finally settled in 1856, shaping the character of the lands south of Dundas and what would become Main Street South (**Figure 9**).

The mid-nineteenth century saw the creation of many prominent institutional buildings in the village that still stand today, including the Methodist Church (**Figure 16**), the Waterdown Common School (**Figure 17**), the East Flamborough Township Hall (**Figure 16**), Knox Church, and the Anglican Church (**Figure 18**). The street network and regional connections also grew. Main Street (also known historically as Ransom Street, Snake Road and Gravel Road) was a well-travelled route before its allotment as a street. This route was impassable in bad weather until J.K. Griffin's construction of a toll road in its place providing the first direct connection from Carlisle to Hamilton. Griffin's home overlooking the road still stands (**Figure 19**). This road was used into the early-twentieth century as a stage coach route from Hamilton to Waterdown, Carlisle, Kilbride, Mountsberg and Milton.

The McMonies and Stock Survey, registered in 1856, was one of the earliest and largest surveys in the village after Griffin's (**Figure 8**). Much of the survey's original lotting pattern remains, generally laid out in blocks of uniform back-to-back rectangular lots that were 1 chain (66 feet) wide by 2.2 chains (145.2) feet deep, defining the character of the historic core of the village.

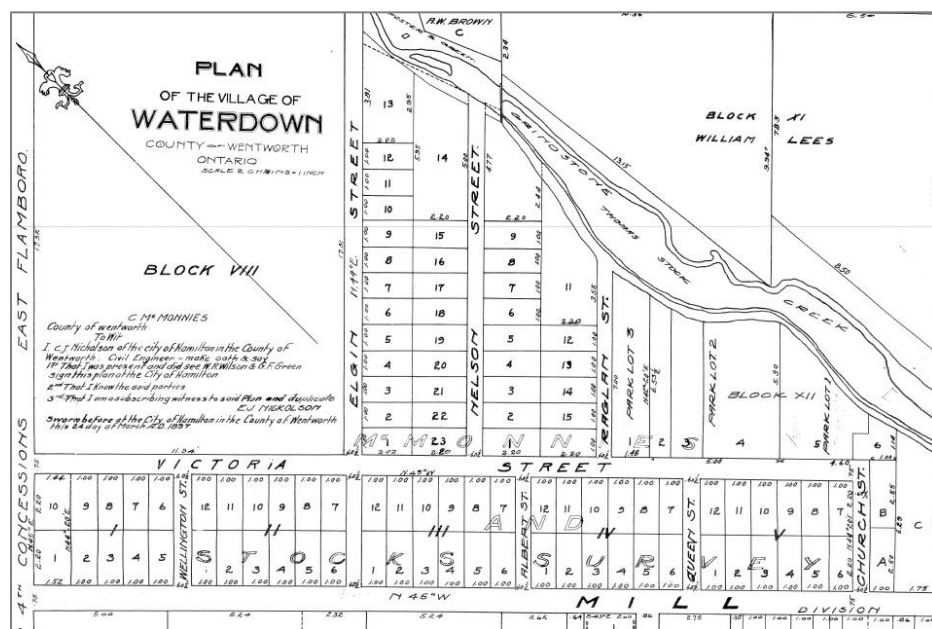


Figure 8: McMonies and Stock Survey, showing the lotting pattern along Mill, Victoria, Elgin, Nelson and Raglan Streets, as drawn in Registered Plan 355 from 1897



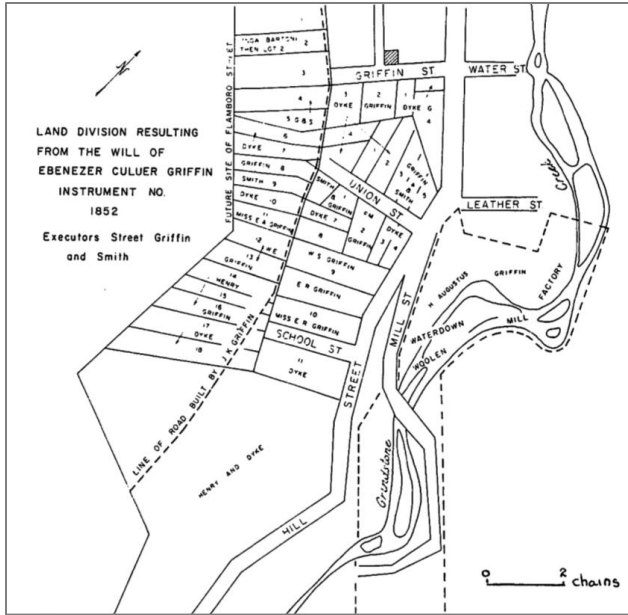


Figure 9: Land Division Resulting from the Will of Ebenezer Culver Griffin, 1852 (Donkin Thesis, Map 12)



Figure 10: Brown's Wharf circa 1920 (Flamborough Archives, LP 6)



Figure 11: Horse-drawn wagon in front of the North American Hotel, unknown date (Flamborough Archives)



Figure 12: American Hotel (right) and the General (Eager) Store (left) at the corner of Mill and Dundas Streets circa 1904 (Flamborough Archives, BW071, Will Reid Collection)



Figure 13: Winter scene of the mill site at the Great Falls (now known as Smokey Hollow), circa 1900s (Flamborough Archives, BW414, Will Reid Collection)



Figure 14: Vinegar Hill, looking west down Dundas Street to the bridge over Grindstone Creek, circa 1907 (Flamborough Archives, BW 2810)





Figure 15: Looking east at Union Cemetery over Grindstone Creek, pre-1911 (Flamborough Archives, BW2401, Will Reid Collection)



Figure 18: Grace Anglican Church circa 1908 (Flamborough Archives, BW238)



Figure 16: Methodist Church (left) and East Flamborough Township Hall (right) on Mill Street North circa 1915-1920 (Flamborough Archives, BW406)



Figure 19: J.K. Griffin Home circa 1977 (Flamborough Archives, BW579)



Figure 17: Waterdown Common School circa 1903 (Flamborough Archives, BW258)

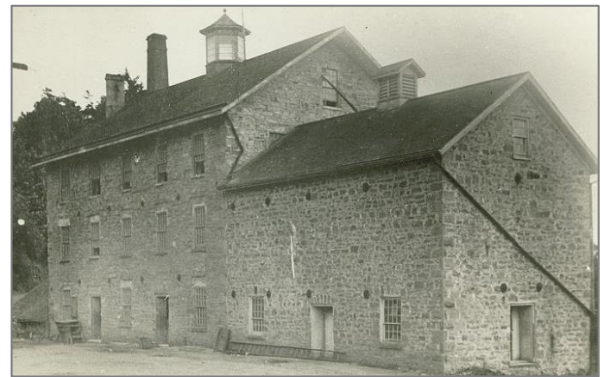


Figure 20: Howland Flour Mill, established 1858, later Robertson's mill, pictured circa 1905 (Flamborough Archives, BW181)

By the end of the industrial boom, eight mill sites had been established in the village boundary along the Grindstone Creek, including: **Smokey Hollow**, established by Brown and subsequently owned by Ebenezer Griffin, Cummer and then Howland; **McNairn Corner** where Griffin also established a carding mill in late 1820s; **Upper Mill** north of Dundas where Griffin built a sawmill in the early 1830s; **Nelson Street**, established by Brown in 1832; **Dundas Street**, south of where Leander Hooper first built his dam and turning mill; **Water Street**, where carpenter Levi Hawk established his turning mill; and, **Leather Street**, established as a tannery by Henry Graham.

The establishment of new stagecoach routes played a significant role in the area’s development. Stagecoach routes brought travelers and travelers brought business leading to the need for more businesses to support the accommodation (hotels) and supply needs (general stores) of visitors to the village. Hotels, in particular, were needed for travelers to rest at stagecoach stations with as many as six in operation at one time during the heyday of the stagecoach routes (1860s-1870s). During the 1860s, these hotels included the American Hotel, Crown Inn, Royal Hotel, Boadicea House, and the Union Hotel.

*Important milestones from this period include:*

- 1820 – The first division of Lot 7 took place and Brown sold 42 acres to James Grierson, including the creek and stone quarry
- 1823 – Ebenezer Culver Griffin purchases over half of Alexander Brown’s property, including the lower portion of Grindstone Creek and the Great Falls
- 1824 – Griffin builds a store at southeast corner of Dundas and Mill Streets (which would later become Eager’s Store then Week’s Store)
- American Hotel is built
- 1827-28 – Griffin builds a mill at the Great Falls and also builds a mill at the McNairn Corner mill site
- 1829 - Stagecoach service through Waterdown begins, connecting Ancaster to York (Toronto)
- 1830 – Union Cemetery opens (First annual meeting of the cemetery company doesn’t take place until 1878)
- 1830s – Brown’s Wharf is established
- 1830-1831 – Griffin Village Survey is drawn (but not registered until 1854)
- 1832-3 – Griffin builds a sawmill north of Dundas Bridge; Brown builds a mill at the Nelson Street site
- 1838 – Methodist Church built on Mill Street North (wood-frame)
- 1840 – First Post Office is established
- 1844 – Dr. John Murray, Waterdown’s first doctor, began practicing
- 1847 – Ebenezer Culver Griffin dies and John Cummer buys the rights to Smokey Hollow
- 1852 - St. Thomas Catholic Church and Cemetery opens
- 1853 - Waterdown Public and Continuation School built (now the Scouts Hall in Sealey Park); J.K. Griffin enhances Snake Road and Main Street and institutes a toll gate at Valley Inn, which becomes an important stage coach route; Knox Church built (original stone portion)
- 1856 – East Flamborough Township Hall constructed; E.C. Griffin Estate settled, lands divided for heirs; McMonies and Stock Survey registered
- 1858 – Howland Flour Mill established in Smokey Hollow
- 1860 – Anglican Church built on Mill Street North
- 1865 - Hugh Carson & Sons quarry and construction business established; Griffin store at Mill and Dundas Streets sold to Joseph Culloden Eager; Wood-frame Methodist church on Mill Street North replaced with stone building
- 1867 – Confederation of Canada; Stone mill building constructed on Mill Street North at the Upper Mill site (later the Nicholson & Stetler Jam Factory)

*Heritage attributes related to this period include:*

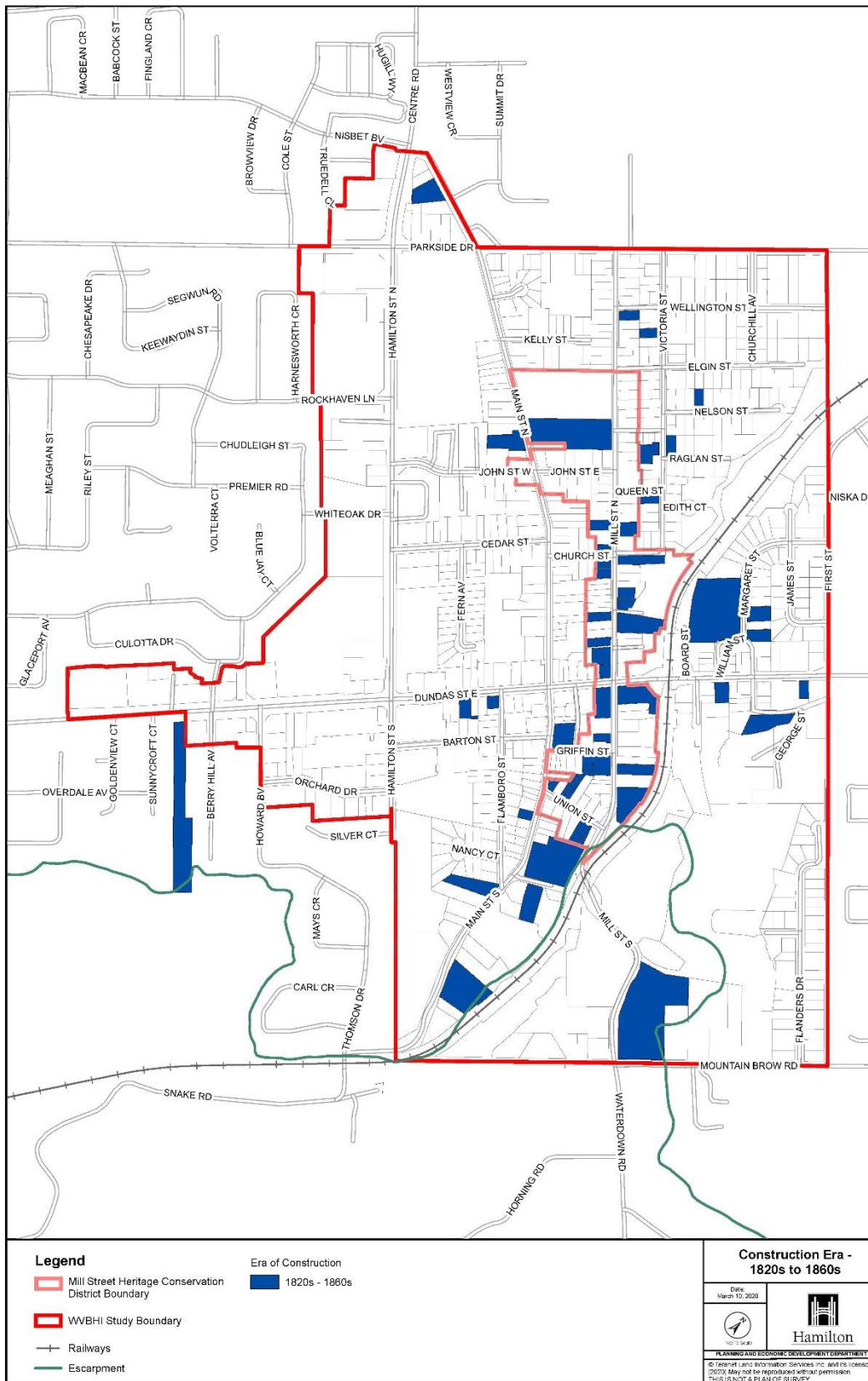
- *Survey and residential areas and their lotting patterns, including Vinegar Hill, the Griffin Survey (1830-1), the McMonies and Stock Survey (1856) and the Kelly Survey (1856) (see **page 20**)*
- *Extant transportation corridors constructed during this period, including:*
  - *Board Street, Franklin Street, John Street (between Main and Mill Streets), Main Street (expanded and enhanced), Margaret Street, Mill Street (expanded), Reynold Street, Union Street*
- *Extant buildings constructed during this period, including:*
  - *Pre-Confederation buildings*
  - *Buildings of stone construction connected to early limestone quarrying*
  - *Landmark institutional, commercial and industrial buildings: American House (1824), Eager-Weeks General Store (1824), Methodist Church (1838), Post Office (1846), Reid’s Harness Shop (1850), Common School (1853), Knox Church (1855), East Flamborough Township Hall (1856), Former Methodist Parsonage (1857), Former New Connexion Methodist Church (1859), Anglican Church (1860), Huxley-Stock Building (1860), Stone Mill Building (circa 1867)*
  - *Early settler homes: Magill House (1840), Read Baker House (1840), J.K. Griffin House (1844), Griffin Stone Cottage (1845), Cummer House (1846), Maplebank (1850), Terryberry Cottage (1850), Watson House (1850), Walnut Shade (1850), Robson Cottage (1850), Carson House (1850), Cummer Stone Row (1851), Green House (1860), Raycroft Cottage (1860), Reid House (1860), Cook-Green House (1865), Philip House (1867)*
- *Historic cemeteries that opened during this period, including Union Cemetery (1830) and the St. Thomas Cemetery (1852)*
- *Areas of archaeological potential with Euro-Canadian affinities, including:*
  - *Early mill sites along the Grindstone, including the Dundas Street Mill Site, Leather Street Mill Site, McNairn Corner Mill Site, Nelson Street Mill Site, Smokey Hollow Mill Site, Upper Mill Site, Victoria Mill Site and Water Street Mill Site*
  - *Non-extant transportation corridors including Leather Street, Spring Street, Water Street*
- *Registered archaeological site AiGx-306 of the former Brown homestead (located in Souharrisen Natural Area outside of village boundaries). The ruins of the former Brown homestead are now commemorated in the Souharrisen Natural Area.*

***51 properties from this era make up 6% of Waterdown’s extant built resources.***

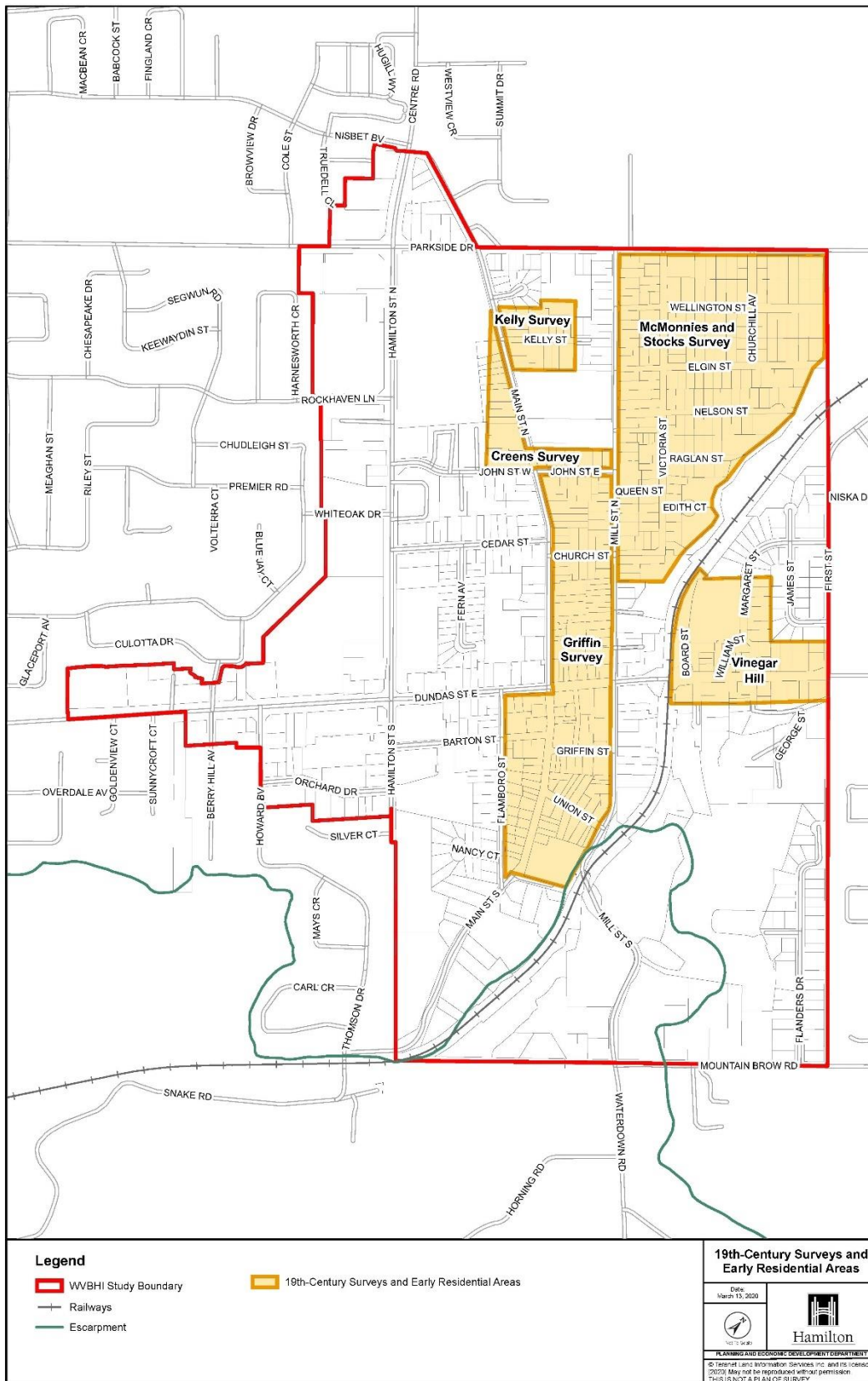
***35 are already protected under the Ontario Heritage Act by registration or designation.***

***17 are recommended for listing on the Municipal Heritage Register.***

***7 are recommended for designation under the Ontario Heritage Act.***







## Village Incorporation and Stability (1870s – 1900s)

By the late-nineteenth century the mills were well-established, and Smokey Hollow was the industrial heart of Waterdown (**Figure 21**). The village’s commercial core grew along Dundas Street between Mill and Main Streets, focusing on goods and services for villagers and local farmers, with the intersection of Main and Dundas Streets becoming the key intersection (**Figure 22**). The Village of Waterdown was incorporated in 1878 after community members petitioned to be incorporated as a separate political entity from the Township of East Flamborough. The first election was held in the former Bell House building on Dundas Street in the heart of the village (**Figure 23**). Charles Sealey - a farmer, a store and sawmill owner and owner of the Glenlee Park / Farm property (formerly the Grierson property at the western edge of the village) - was elected the first Reeve of Waterdown. Shortly afterwards, Sealey constructed his house, known as “Chestnut Grove” (**Figure 24**) on Dundas, believed to be named after the large number of horse chestnut trees that used to stand behind the house. Waterdown’s first telephone was installed as part of the Hamilton-Toronto long distance line circa 1882 in J.T. Stock’s general store on the northwest corner of Mill and Dundas Streets (**Figure 28**).

The second half of the nineteenth century saw a number of German speaking families arrive in Waterdown to find employment in the mills and factories, such as the Klodt, Metzger, Burkholder, Hasselfeldt, Kink and Slater families. Many settled in the north east corner of the village on Nelson and Raglan Streets close to the Nelson Street mill site, creating a small enclave that became known as Deutsche Town. They erected modest one-and-one-half storey worker cottages, built close to the streets, together with a German Evangelical Church on nearby Mill Street North.

As the village continued to develop its western limits shifted, changing from a farming area to residential, and several grand brick homes were constructed along Dundas Street, including the Carson House (**Figure 25**) and the Crooker House (**Figure 26**), as well as the southern corners of John and Main Streets. Houses in the village had well-tended gardens, fences separating front lawns from dirt roads, some of which had wooden sidewalks and street trees. Some of the previously-established hotels had since closed, and new ones opened, most notably the Kirk House Hotel (**Figure 27**), established by Patrick Kirk (1843-1894) circa 1888. The prominent brick hotel at Main and Dundas Streets is believed to have been built on the site of an earlier 1860s wood-frame hotel, known as the Right House Hotel, owned and run by William Heisse.

Waterdown’s industrial sites experienced highs and lows during this period, including the loss of Read Baker’s rake factory at the Leather Street mill site to fire in 1885 and the establishment of Ferdinand Slater’s Lumber Mill at the Upper Mill Site that same year. By the early 1890s this industrial area contained over seventeen buildings, including the two stone mills of W.P. Howland, three houses and nine outbuildings.

Dr. John Owen McGregor (1850-1928) was a former village doctor, later elected Reeve in 1895, who moved to the village in 1885 and built his residence and office on Main Street North, a building which is believed to have been constructed by remodelling the former St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church manse. Later known as “The Clunes”, the McGregor property was one of the largest private open spaces in the village and was the site of many public events and garden parties. In the 1890s, Frederick W. Crooker (1862-1927), son of successful merchant and druggist William Crooker, established a general store at the northeast corner of Main and Dundas Streets in what became known as the Crooker Building, an

impressive structure that was considered the finest and largest mercantile building in the village (**Figure 22**). Other important milestones from this period include: the first Flamborough and Waterdown Agricultural Society Fair held in 1882; registration of Plan 355 of the Village of Waterdown in 1887, which formalized Griffin’s early village survey and combined it with the McMonies and Stock Survey; the establishment of the Waterdown Women’s Institute in 1897; and, expansion of the Knox Church in 1901.



*Figure 21: Smokey Hollow circa 1870 (Flamborough Archives, BW1679)*



*Figure 22: Looking north up Main Street past Dundas circa 1900; (L to R) Kirk House Crooker Building (Flamborough Archives, BW745)*





Figure 23: Former Bell House building on Dundas Street circa 1900 (Flamborough Archives, BW230)

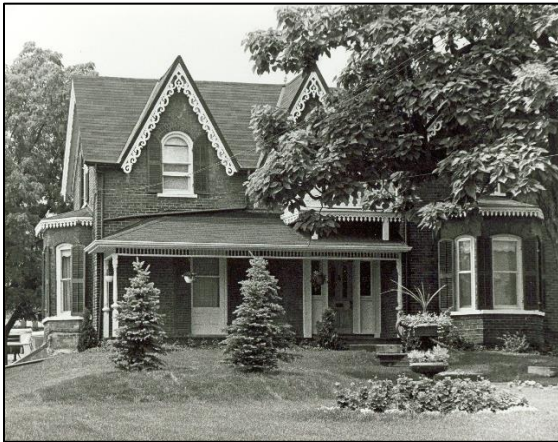


Figure 24: Chestnut Grove circa 1977 (Flamborough Archives, BW 461)



Figure 25: 288 Dundas Street East (Carson House) in the late-nineteenth century (Facebook, Posted by J. Vance, Oct 21, 2018)



Figure 26: Crooker House circa 1966 (Flamborough Archives, BW568)



Figure 27: The Kirk Hotel, Waterdown, circa 1920 (Flamborough Archives, BW 746)



Figure 28: Reid, Saddle and Harness Store circa 1900, previously Stock's Store (Flamborough Archives, BW 126)

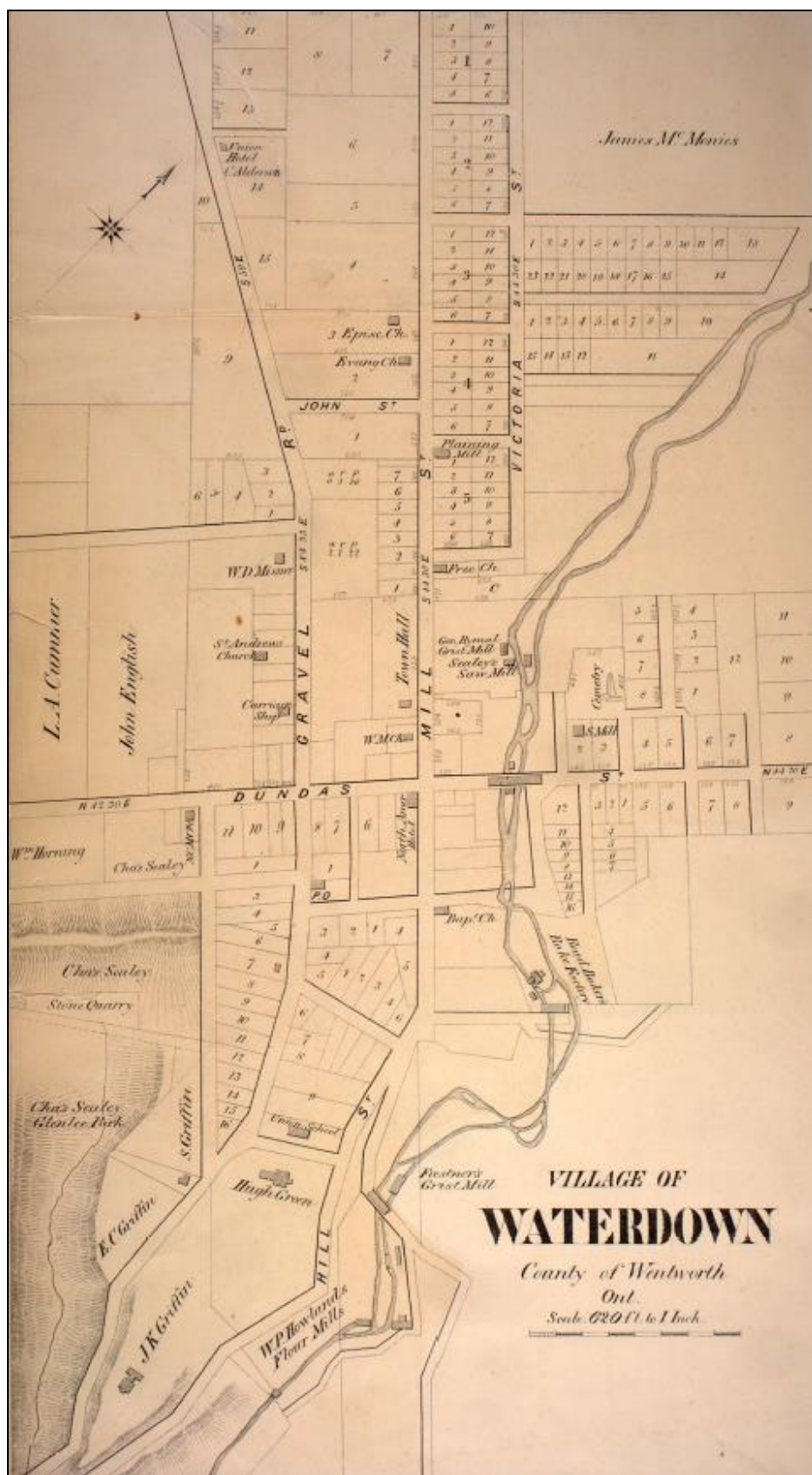


Figure 29: Village of Waterdown, Wentworth County Atlas Map, 1875



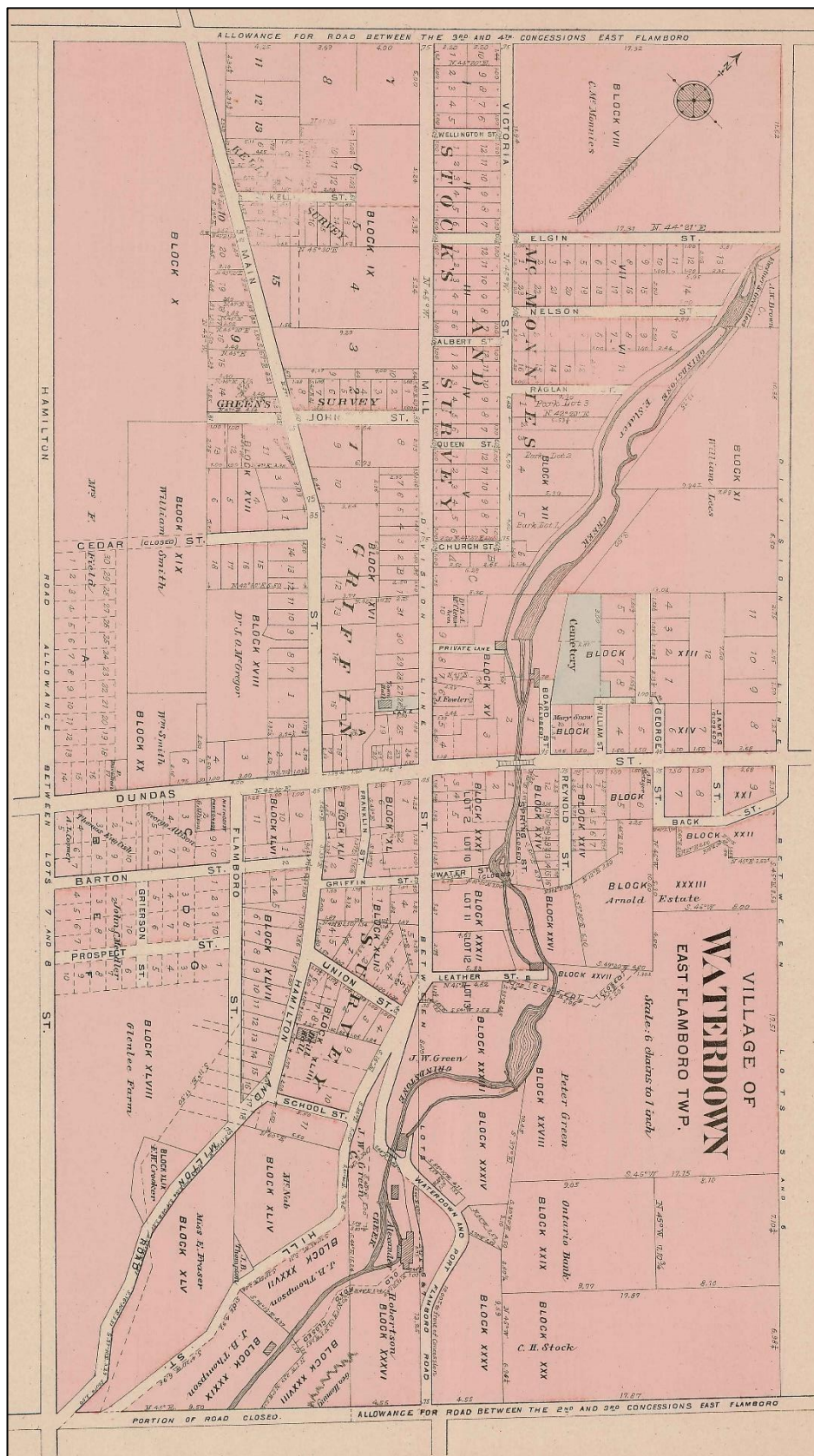


Figure 30: Village of Waterdown, Imperial Atlas, 1903

*Important milestones from this period include:*

- 1870 – Sealy House built (just west of village boundary, now on Orchard Drive)
- 1871 – Eager House built
- 1875 – Forstner’s Mill established at the Upper Mill site (later the Slater Lumber Mill)
- 1878 - Incorporation of the Village of Waterdown; First election held in the former Bell House
- 1879 – Charles Sealey elected first Reeve of Waterdown
- 1880 – Charles Sealey moves into Chestnut Grove
- 1882 – First telephone exchange installed in Stock’s General Store; First Flamborough and Waterdown Agricultural Society Fair
- 1885 – Leather Street mill site (Read Baker’s rake factory) burns down; Dr. John Owen McGregor moves to Waterdown, builds his office and residence on Main Street North; Carson House built; Ferdinand Slater purchases the Upper Mill site, establishes Slater’s Lumber Mill
- 1886 – Crooker House built
- 1887 - Plan 355 for the Village of Waterdown registered, which combined the Griffin and McMonnies and Stock surveys
- 1888 - Kirk House Hotel is established
- 1897 – Waterdown Women’s Institute established
- 1900 – Dam below Dundas Street destroyed by a spring flood (never rebuilt)
- 1901 – Knox Church expansion (brick)

*Heritage attributes related to this period include:*

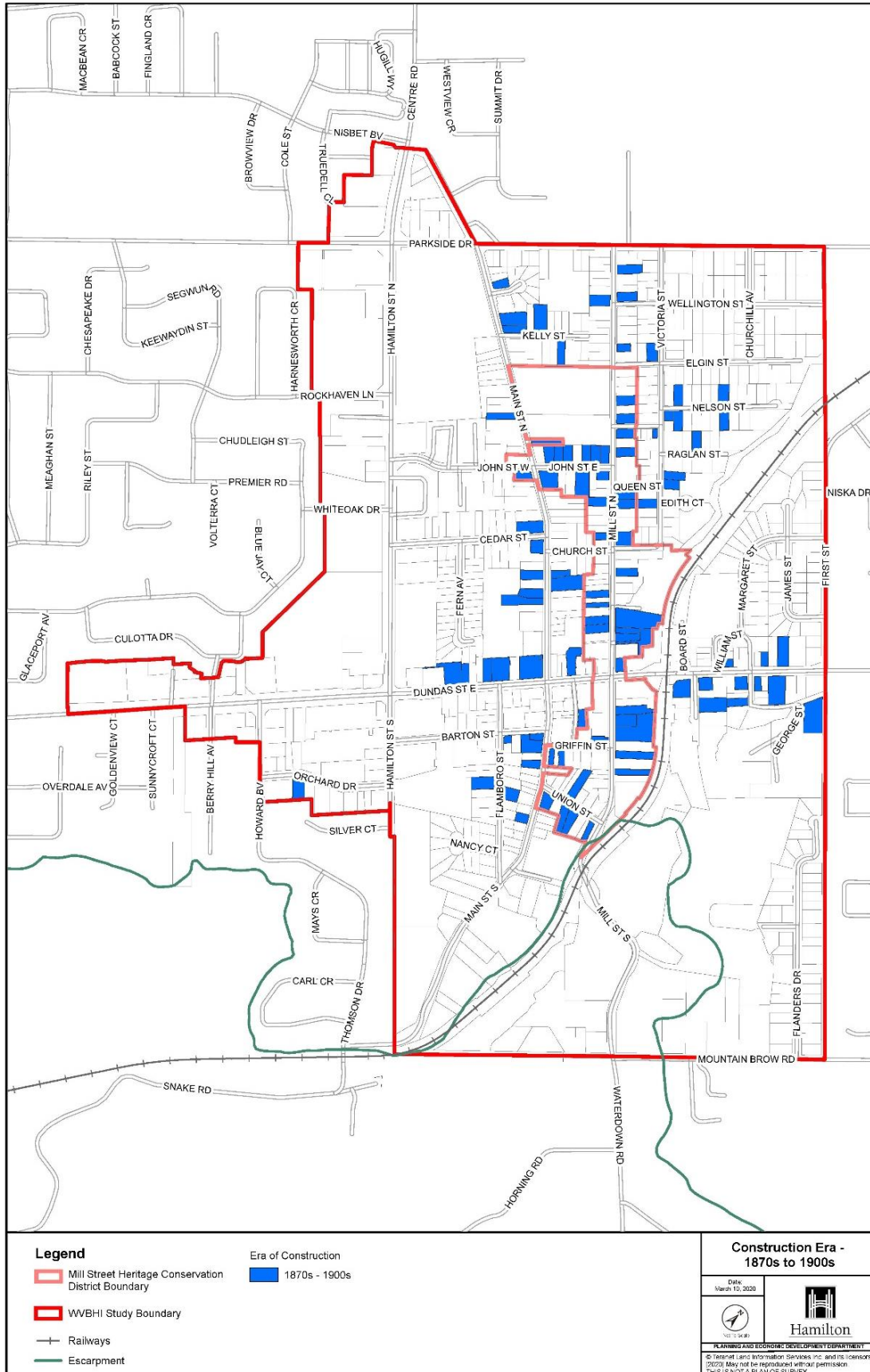
- Boundary of incorporated village (1878)
- Survey areas and their lotting patterns, including the Creen Survey (1870)
- Extant buildings constructed during this period, including:
  - Landmark residential and institutional buildings: Sealey House (1870), Eager House (1871), Chestnut Grove (1880), Carson House (1885), McGregor House (1885), Crooker House (1886), Kirk Hotel (1888), Griffin Farm House (1890), Knox Church expansion (1901)
  - Vernacular residences, including those influenced by, and representative of, architectural styles such as the Ontario Cottage and Ontario Farm House (see **pages 28 and 29**)
- Extant transportation corridors constructed during this period, including:
  - Albert Street, Barton Street, Cedar Street, Church Street, Elgin Street, Flamboro Street, Griffin Street, Kelly Street, Nelson Street, Queen Street, Raglan Street, School Street, Victoria Street, Wellington Street
- Areas of archaeological potential with Euro-Canadian affinities, including:
  - Non-extant transportation corridors including: Hill Street

**98 properties from this era make up 12% of Waterdown’s extant built resources.**

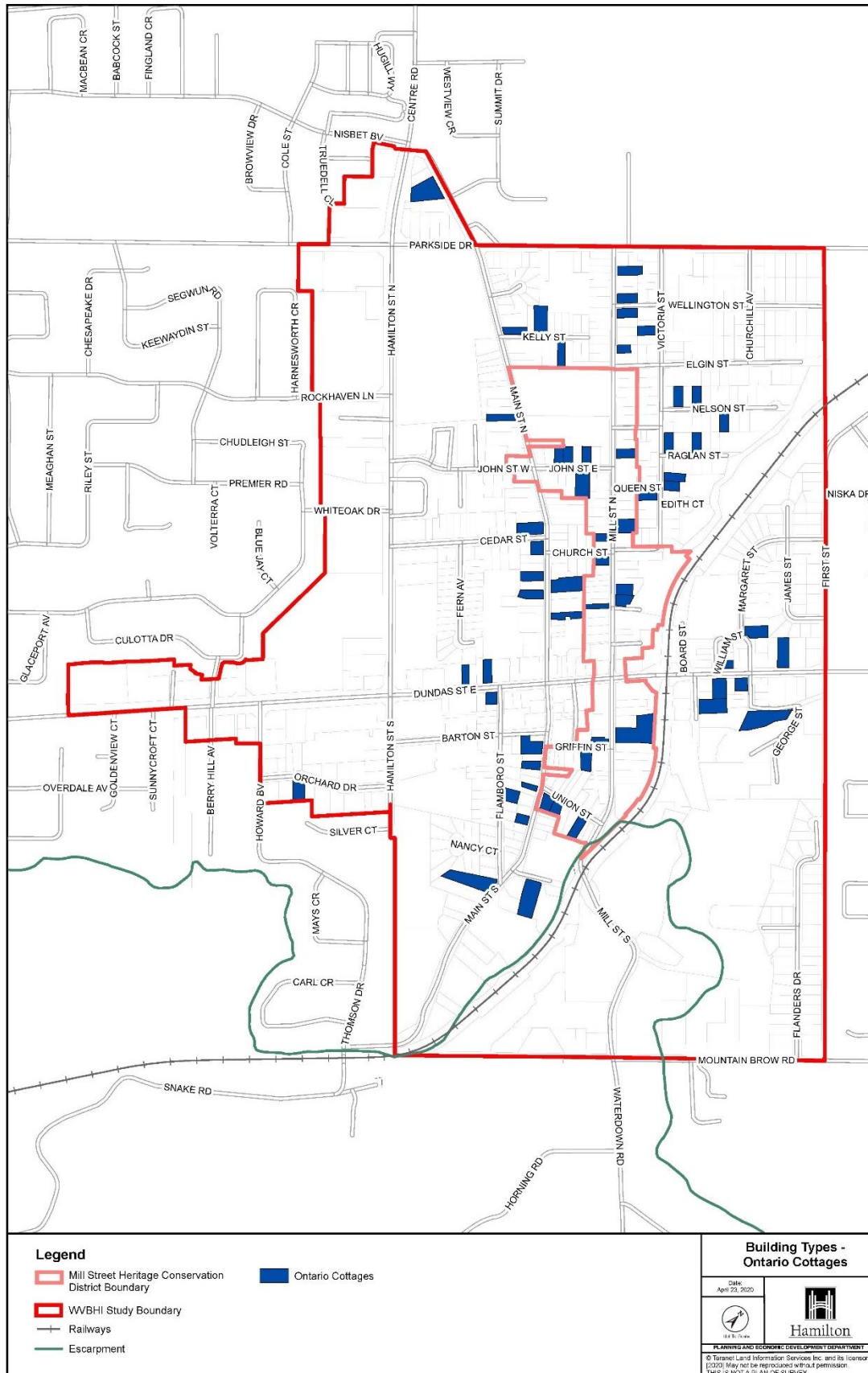
**49 are already protected under the Ontario Heritage Act by registration or designation.**

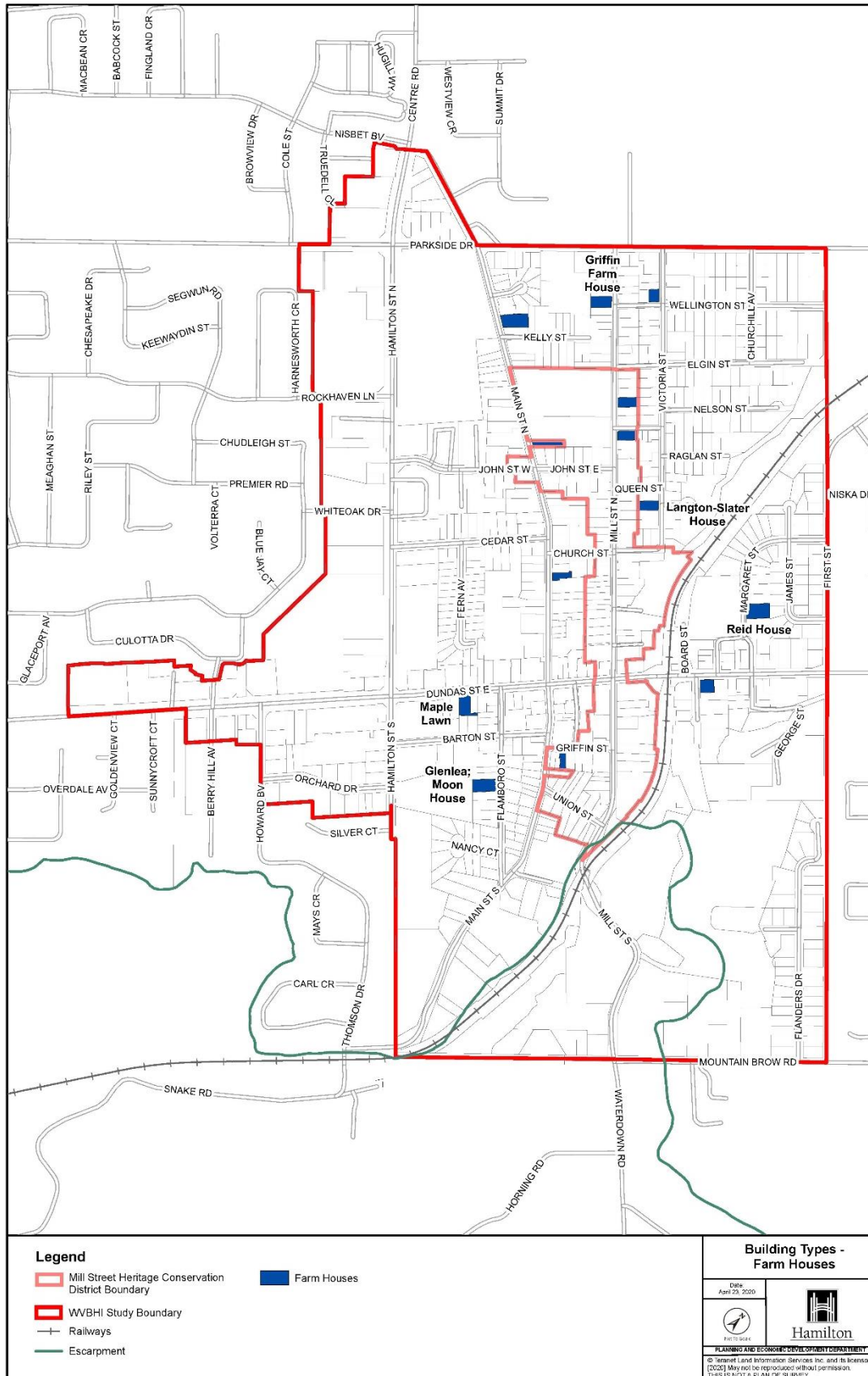
**43 are recommended for listing on the Municipal Heritage Register.**

**4 are recommended for designation under the Ontario Heritage Act.**









## A Time of Unrest and Great Change (1910s – 1940s)

The early-twentieth century was a time of significant change in the village. By 1900, many industrial mills were non-existent, mainly due to fire, flood and drought (**Figure 31**). Notable is the 1910 fire that destroyed Robertson Mill (formerly Howland’s Mill) in Smokey Hollow (**Figure 35**). The remaining mills relied on steam power due to the diminished water supply from the Grindstone Creek.



Figure 31: View of Smokey Hollow from Sealey Park showing construction of the railway and burned-out mills, circa 1912 (Flamborough Archives, BW 2461)

This period was defined by its two world wars, major fires in the heart of the village, significant public infrastructure investment and the beginning of post-war subdivision development. Electricity was first introduced in Waterdown in 1911. Around the same time, the Canadian Pacific Railway corridor was constructed between (circa 1911-1912), connecting the northern part of East Flamborough to Hamilton for passenger and commercial travel. The railway routing took advantage of the natural path of Grindstone Creek through and down the escarpment and with it came significant changes to the character of the river valley, including rerouting of the river and the elimination of most of the evidence of the former mills and mill raceways (**Figure 32**, **Figure 33**).



Figure 32: Railway under construction by Canadian Pacific Railway north of Dundas Street Bridge circa 1911 (Flamborough Archives, BW 94, Will Reid Collection)



Figure 33: Passenger Train at Waterdown South Railway Station, circa 1920 (Flamborough Archives, BW 1095)



Waterdown residents made a considerable contribution during World War I (1914-1918) for its population; 108 people in total with a higher than national average of women enlisting. During this time the 129th Battalion Waterdown Training Group used the Drill Shed on the former Common School grounds, now part of Sealey Park (**Figure 36**). Nearing the end of the First World War in 1918, the Waterdown Review also printed its first issue. The Waterdown Women’s Institute spearheaded the construction of Memorial Hall in 1922 to honour those many villagers who served their country in World War I (**Figure 37**). The hall was officially dedicated at a Memorial Service on January 14, 1923.

By the early 1920s the Waterdown Public and Continuation School (Common School) was overcrowded and a new school was needed in Waterdown. Built on a property on Mill Street North that was previously used as a fairground (**Figure 38**), the new school opened in 1921 as the Waterdown and East Flamborough Union School Section No. 3, later renamed to Mary Hopkins School in honour of the first teacher in Waterdown (**Figure 39**). A new high school was built a few years later. The Waterdown High School, located on the southwest corner of Dundas and Hamilton Streets, opened in 1928 (**Figure 40**).

The village experienced a handful of damaging fires in the early-twentieth century (1906, 1915, 1918), but none as impactful as the Great Fire of 1922, so named because it is the biggest fire in Waterdown’s history. It began the afternoon of May 23, 1922 at Davies’ heading mill when sparks from a boiler landed in the sawdust that covered the floor. The heading mill only lost its roof but the adjacent roller rink (constructed entirely of dry wood) was completely demolished. The wind caused the fire to make a series of jumps along Dundas Street that would result in the destruction of eleven businesses and three private houses (**Figure 34**). The Waterdown fire department tried to gain control of the fire but were unable to do so. As a result, the Hamilton Fire Department was called in. Following the Great Fire, a waterworks system was installed in the village in 1926 and a water tower built on Main Street North in 1928. Waterdown received its first fire truck in 1932.



Figure 34: The aftermath of the Great Fire in 1922, looking southeast from the Kirk House roof (Flamborough Archives, BW 2165)



By 1929, the new Public School and High School had opened and the former Common School building was partially-demolished after a fire. What was left of the Common School was located on lands owned by William Oscar Sealey, one of Wentworth County's most prominent citizens who served as a Reeve in East Flamborough, was a member of Wentworth County Council, and, in 1908, was elected to the Dominion Parliament as a Liberal Candidate where he served until 1911. In 1931, William Oscar Sealey officially presented Sealey Park to the village, named in honour of his father Charles, first Reeve of Waterdown.



Figure 35: Robertson's Flour Mill the morning after it burned down in 1910 in Smokey Hollow (Flamborough Archives, BW 182, Will Reid Collection)



Figure 38: Waterdown Public School under construction in 1921 (Flamborough Archives, BW 186, C. A. Newell Collection)



Figure 36: 129th Battalion Waterdown Training Group on the old Common School grounds, circa 1915-1916 (Flamborough Archives, BW 2365)

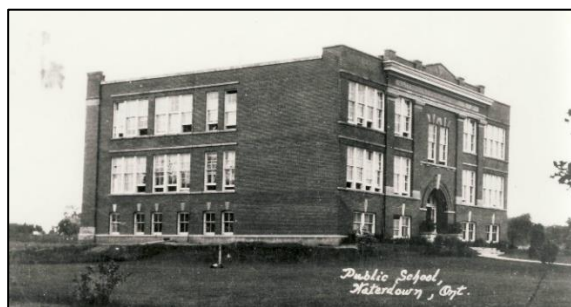


Figure 39: Waterdown Public School on Mill Street North, circa 1950 (Flamborough Archives, BW 1745)



Figure 37: Memorial Hall, no date (Flamborough Archives)



Figure 40: Waterdown High School, circa 1928 (Flamborough Archives, BW 879)

The village grew conservatively during the 1930s, influenced by wartime austerity, with some infilling of homes and larger estate properties severed and subdivided for more modest housing. Following World War II (1939-1945), the village saw its first significant residential intensification effort with the registration of the Waterdown Heights Subdivision in 1945 (**Figure 41**). The subdivision was surveyed on the former McMonies property in the northeast corner of the village and consisted of generous standardized lots for modest post-war homes and street names paying homage to the British, including Churchill Avenue and Wellington Street (**Figure 42**).

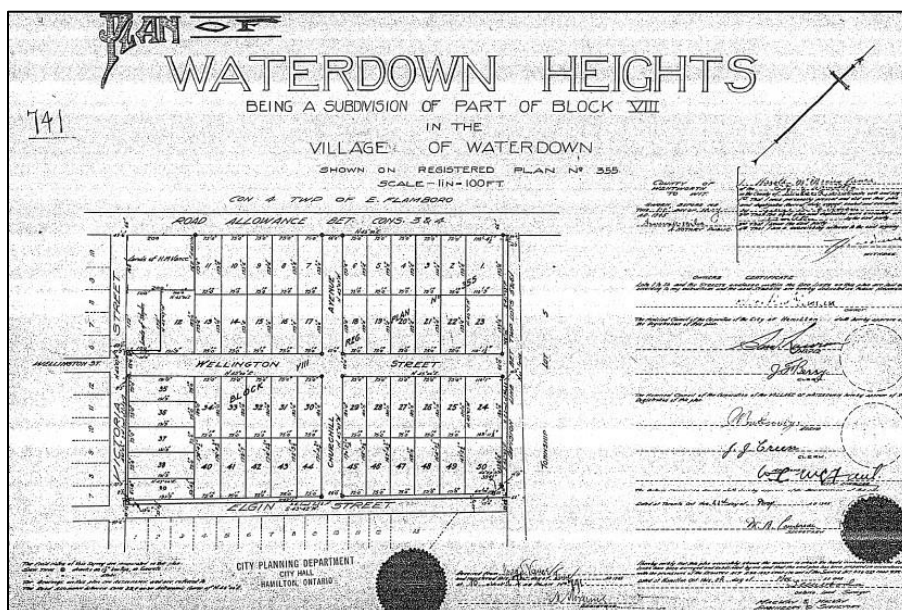


Figure 41: Plan of Waterdown Heights, Registered Plan 355 (City of Hamilton)



Figure 42: Photograph of Wellington Street from the 1951 Hamilton Spectator article "Waterdown Being Rapidly Built Up With New Homes" (Hamilton Public Library, Special Collections Image 32022189119932)

The decade ended with the village honouring those who lost their lives in World War II. Memorial Park began as a former sand and gravel quarry. The Waterdown Amateur Athletic Association, Waterdown Women's Institute and the Waterdown Board of Trade purchased the property and, joined by the Flamboro & Waterdown Agricultural Society, created Memorial Park. The Park was formally dedicated on August 18th, 1949. In 1950, the Canadian Pacific Railway discontinued passenger service to the Waterdown South Station.



*Figure 43: Work starting on Memorial Park, circa 1946 (Flamborough Archives, BW 2405)*

*Important milestones from this period include:*

- 1904 - Baptist Church burns down
- 1910 – Robertson’s Flour Mill (formerly the Howland Flour Mill) burns down
- 1911 - Electricity is turned on
- 1911-1912 – Canadian Pacific Railway corridor built through Waterdown, connecting the northern part of East Flamborough to Hamilton for passenger and commercial travel
- 1914 – St. Thomas Roman Catholic Church built
- 1914-1918 – World War I
- 1918 – Waterdown Review prints its first issue on May 17th, 1918
- 1921 – Waterdown Public School (now known as Mary Hopkins School) is built on Mill Street North; Hugh Carson & Sons quarry and construction business taken over by son Frederick Carson and renamed Fred Carson & Sons, focusing on construction
- 1922 – Waterdown Memorial Hall built; The Great Fire
- 1923 – Dundas Street paved
- 1924 – Weeks family takes over Eager’s General Store
- 1926 – Waterworks system installed
- 1928 - Water tower constructed on Main Street North
- 1928 - Waterdown High School opens at Dundas and Hamilton Streets
- 1931 – Sealey Park established by W.O. Sealey, remnants of former Common School conserved
- 1932 - Waterdown receives its first fire truck
- 1939-1945 – World War II
- 1945 – Waterdown Heights Subdivision is registered
- 1949 - Memorial Park dedicated on August 18, 1949 as a tribute to those who lost their lives in World War II
- 1950 – Canadian Pacific Railway discontinues passenger service to South Waterdown Station



*Heritage attributes related to this period include:*

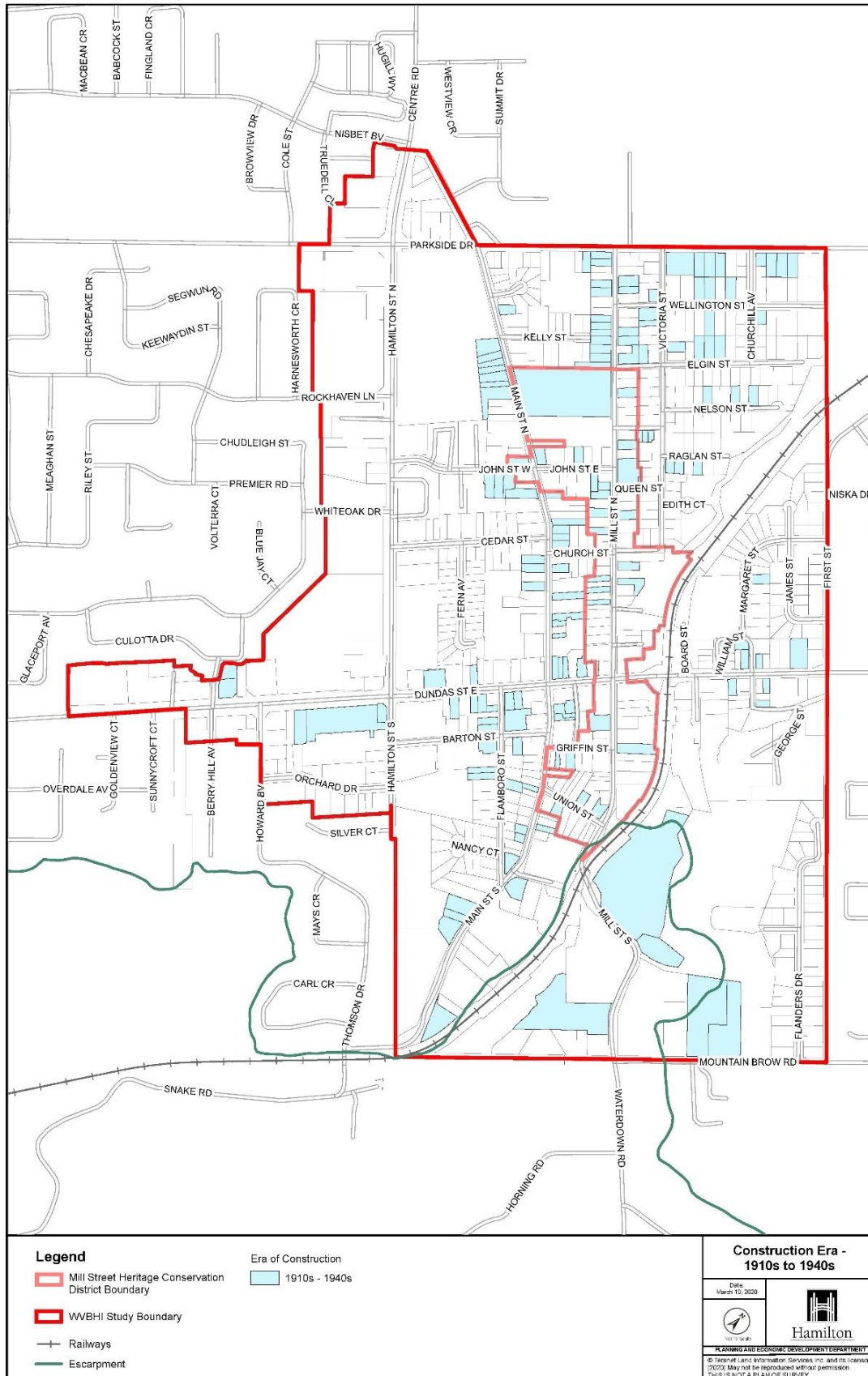
- *Waterdown Heights Subdivision (1945), including its streets, lotting patterns and extant homes*
- *Extant buildings constructed during this period, including:*
  - *Landmark institutional buildings: St. Thomas Roman Catholic Church (1914), Waterdown Public School (1921), Waterdown Memorial Hall (1922), Waterdown High School (1928)*
  - *Buildings constructed during World War I or World War II (see **page 37**)*
  - *Vernacular residences, including those influenced by, and representative of, early-twentieth century, wartime and post-war architectural styles*
- *Extant public spaces constructed during this period, including:*
  - *Sealey Park (1931)*
  - *Waterdown Memorial Park (1949)*
- *Extant transportation corridors and features constructed during this period, including:*
  - *Canadian Pacific Railway corridor (1911-1912)*
  - *Remnants of the 1916 spur line bridge over the Grindstone Creek (behind Edith Court)*
- *Areas of archaeological potential with Euro-Canadian affinities, including:*
  - *Site of former Drill Shed in Sealey Park*
  - *Site of the former Vance House / Waterdown South Train Station*

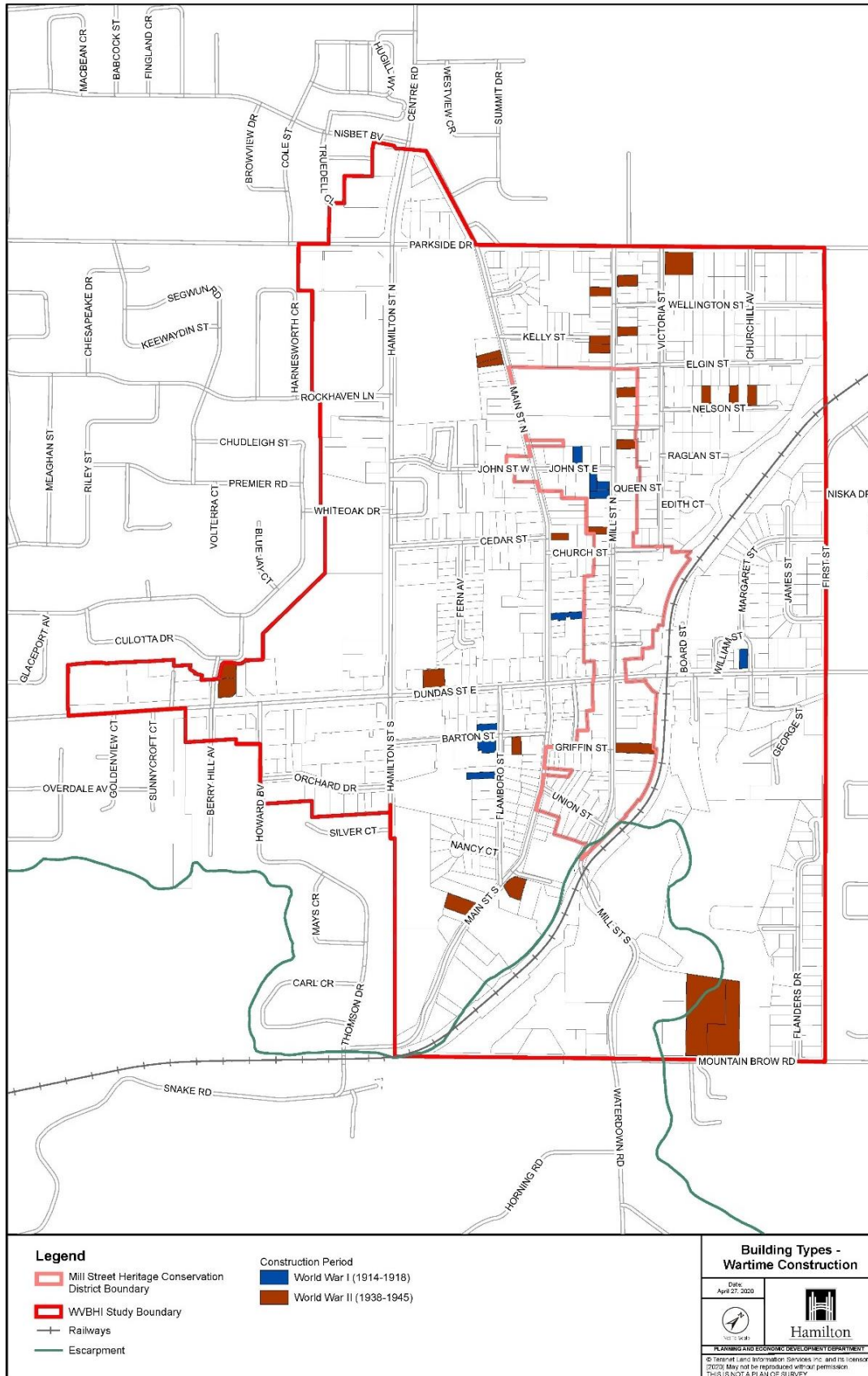
***151 properties from this era make up 19% of Waterdown's extant built resources.***

***29 are already protected under the Ontario Heritage Act by registration or designation.***

***95 are recommended for listing on the Municipal Heritage Register.***

***0 are recommended for designation under the Ontario Heritage Act.***







## Residential Intensification (1950s – 1960s)

The construction of homes in the Waterdown Heights Subdivision continued into the 1950s. By the 1960s, the village’s identity was very different than it was before the Second World War. Following Waterdown Heights, a number of larger properties and estates began to be subdivided across the village, including Hawksview Gardens (1952), Waterdown Gardens (1954) and Margaret Gardens (1958). In 1956, a building housing a municipal office and fire hall was built at Barton and Main Streets (**Figure 44**, **Figure 45**).

Residential growth in the mid-twentieth century came hand-in-hand with the rise of the automobile. Soon the stretch of Dundas Street (Highway 5) through Waterdown was slated for expansion, which was vehemently fought by residents at the time. By 1962 the Waterdown South train station closed altogether. The former station was burned down by arson a few years later. Auto-centric development came to the village with the construction of the Village Plaza strip mall on Hamilton Street in 1964. The seven-storey residential building at 100 John Street West was the first high rise constructed in the village and marked the start of its changing character following a 1966 by-law permitting apartments up to 10 storeys and the introduction of sanitary sewer systems in 1967. The mid-twentieth century also saw the introduction of significant community organizations and amenities in the village, including the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 551 in 1954 (**Figure 46**) and the Bruce Trail (1965).



Figure 44: Municipal Office and Fire Hall Building from Barton Street, 1956 (Flamborough Archives, BW 1858)



Figure 45: Municipal Office and Fire Hall from Main Street South, 1956 (Flamborough Archives, BW 1859)



Figure 46: Legion parade band on Dundas Street, 1957 (Flamborough Archives, BW 1842)

*Important milestones from this period include:*

- 1951 - St. Thomas Roman Catholic Public School opens
- 1952 - Hawksview Gardens Subdivision registered
- 1954 – Waterdown Gardens Subdivision registered; Royal Canadian Legion Branch 551 started
- 1955-56 – Dundas Bridge Work
- 1956 - Municipal Office and Fire Hall building built at Barton and Main Streets
- 1956 – Legion Hall built on Hamilton Street North
- 1958 – Margaret Gardens Subdivision registered
- 1961 – Highway 5 Expansion fought by residents
- 1962 - Berry Hill Court Survey registered
- 1962 – South Waterdown Canadian Pacific Railway Station closes
- 1964 - The Village Plaza on Hamilton Street North is built
- 1965 – Bruce Trail first runs through Waterdown
- 1966 – Old Waterdown South Station burns down; Kirk Family sells the Kirk House Hotel
- 1967 – Sanitary system begins to be installed in Waterdown
- 1968 – First high rise built / John Street West subdivision registered

*Heritage attributes related to this period include:*

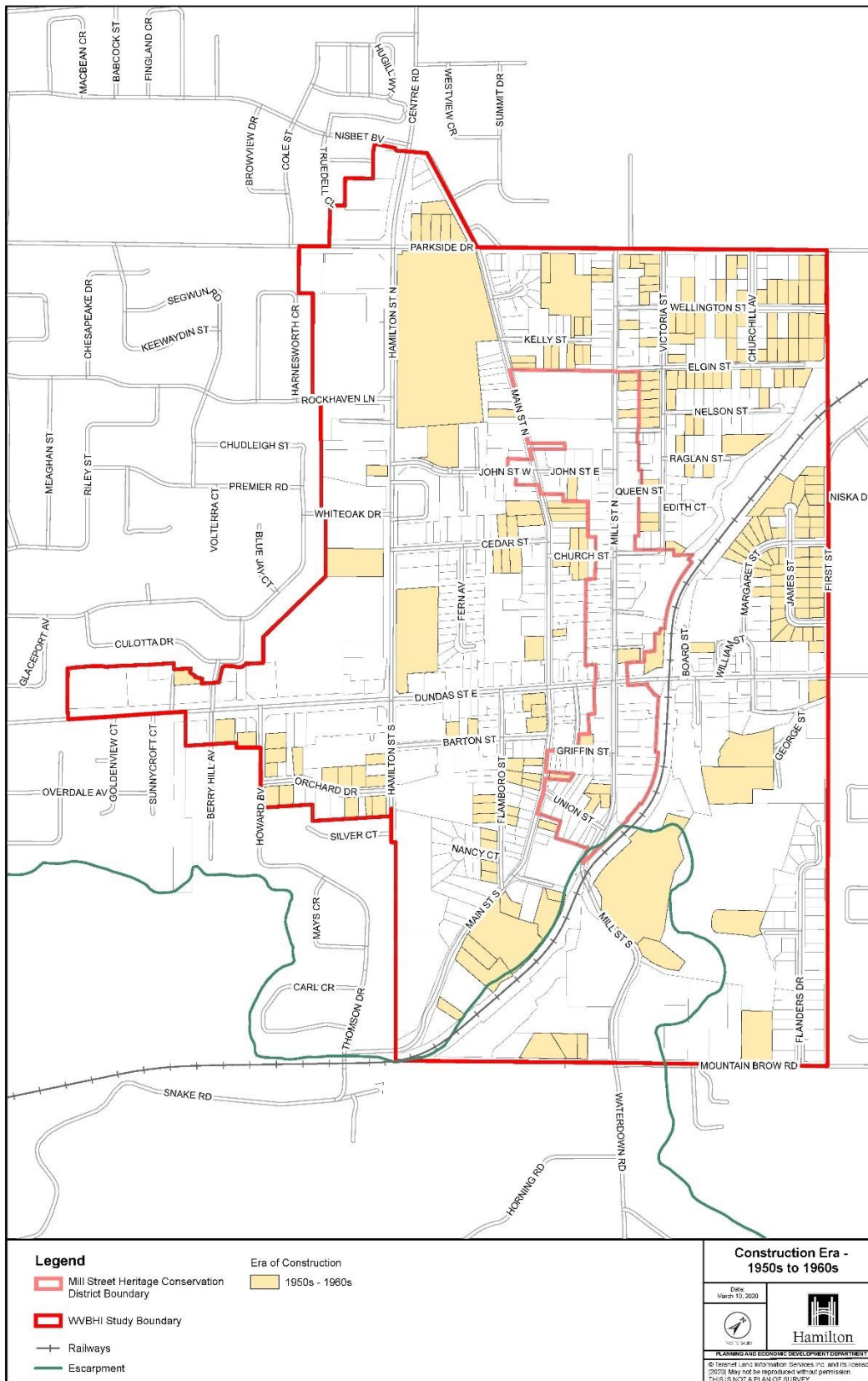
- Extant buildings constructed during this period, including:
  - Homes built in the Waterdown Heights Subdivision (1945)
  - Municipal Office and Fire Hall Building (1956)
  - Vernacular residences, including those influenced by, and representative of, post-war and mid-century architectural styles
- Bruce Trail route

**233 properties from this era make up 29% of Waterdown's extant built resources.**

**9 are already protected under the Ontario Heritage Act by registration or designation.**

**54 are recommended for listing on the Municipal Heritage Register.**

**0 are recommended for designation under the Ontario Heritage Act.**





## Development, Amalgamation and Identity (1970s – 2010s)

Following the construction of Waterdown’s first high-rise building in 1968, two additional towers constructed in the complex on John Street West, known as Waterdown Towers. The Waterdown Towers project also included the construction of a quarter-mile of John Street West to Hamilton Street, which was previously unopened. Three other buildings were constructed during this high-rise boom, including Braeburn Apartments at 1 Hamilton Street South (1971), 2 Edith Court (1974) and 4 Edith Court (1976). The high-rise trend was curbed a few short years after it began when amendments were passed to restrict new apartment buildings to certain areas in the village and limited building heights to 35 feet along Dundas Street from Hamilton Street to the bridge east of Mill Street. Planners had predicted that if developers had taken advantage of the high rise apartment permissions in the zoning, the village population would have tripled in size.

In 1974, Waterdown was amalgamated with East and West Flamborough and Beverly Township to form the Township of Flamborough in the Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth. The year before in 1973 the Waterdown-East Flamborough Heritage Society was founded to ensure that the local history of the community would not be lost after amalgamation (**Figure 48**). In 1985 the Township of Flamborough became the Town of Flamborough.

In the late-twentieth century residential intensification continued in the remaining underdeveloped land in the village, including Buchan Court (1975), Melanie Crescent town home complex (1977) and Renwood Park (1981). During this time the Heritage Society and Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee (LACAC) worked diligently to protect many of the village’s significant heritage properties under the *Ontario Heritage Act*, including the designation of the Mill Street Heritage Conservation District in 1996.

In 2001, Waterdown became a part of the new City of Hamilton when six municipalities, Hamilton, Dundas, Ancaster, Flamborough, Glanbrook and Stoney Creek, were amalgamated.



Figure 47: New water tower under construction, c. 1977  
(Flamborough Archives, BW 1508)

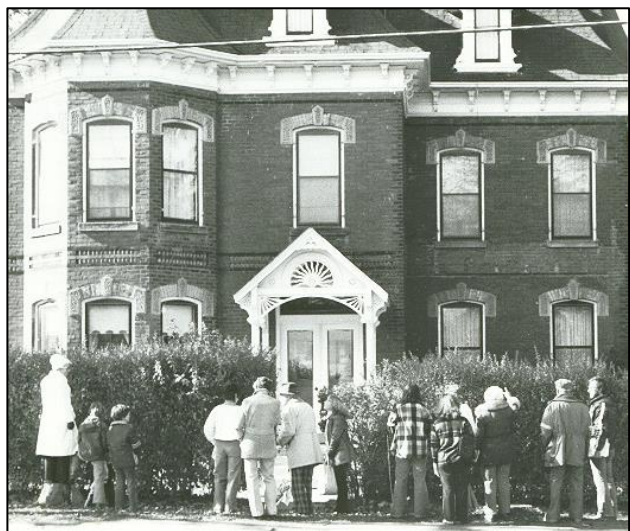


Figure 48: Historic Waterdown walking tour outside of the Crooker House, 1979 (Flamborough Archives, BW 122)

*Important milestones from this period include:*

- 1970 – Glenlea Survey registered
- 1971 – Edith Court Subdivision registered; Braeburn Apartments built at Hamilton and Dundas Streets
- 1972 – Waterdown passes zoning to limit new high rise development
- 1973 – East Flamborough - Waterdown Heritage Society formed
- 1974 – Township of Flamborough established
- 1975 – Buchan Court Subdivision registered
- 1976 – New Royal Canadian Legion Branch 551 constructed on Hamilton Street North
- 1977 - New water tower constructed off Main Street North (at Kelly Street)
- 1977 – Melanie Crescent town home complex constructed
- 1981 – Renwood Park Subdivision registered
- 1985 - Township of Flamborough becomes the Town of Flamborough
- 1992 – Dundas Street reconstruction; Fire Station 24 built on Parkside Drive
- 1995 – Royal Coachman established in the former Kirk House Hotel
- 1996 - Mill Street Heritage Conservation District established
- 2001 – Town of Flamborough amalgamated into new City of Hamilton

*Heritage attributes related to this period include:*

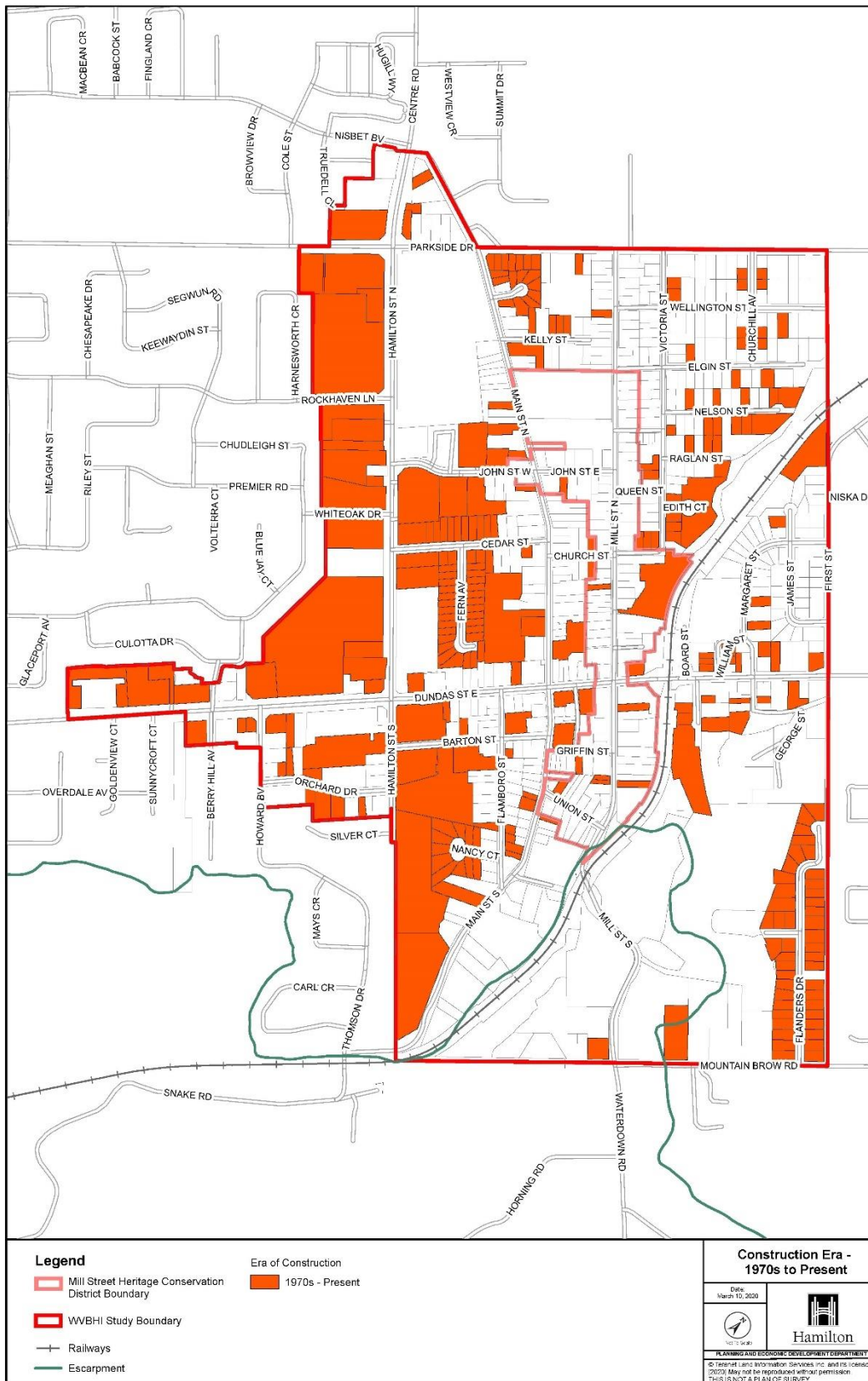
- *Mill Street Heritage Conservation District boundary*
- *Water Tower (1983)*
- *Legion Building (1976)*

***278 properties from this era make up 34% of Waterdown's extant built resources.***

***10 are already protected under the Ontario Heritage Act by registration or designation.***

***2 are recommended for listing on the Municipal Heritage Register.***

***0 are recommended for designation under the Ontario Heritage Act.***





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Diane Woods  
Jonathan Vance  
Garth Wetherall  
Sylvia Wray