

Municipality of Chatham-Kent

Community Development

Planning Services

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Anthony Jas
Planner I, Planning Services

Date: July 9, 2019

Subject: Ontario Heritage Act - Intention to Designate
8800 Talbot Trail, Community of Harwich

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

1. The Intention to Designate the property known as 8800 Talbot Trail, described as Part of Lot 9, Concession 4, West Communication Road, in the Community of Harwich, under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* for its cultural heritage value or interest, be approved.

Background

Located at 8800 Talbot Trail, the Sicklesteel-Newkirk Inn is one of the most historically important residential structures extant in Chatham-Kent.

Our inheritance of architecture and cultural landscapes is an irreplaceable asset and resource. In Ontario, the task of conserving these important assets is primarily a municipal responsibility. The *Ontario Heritage Act* provides a framework within which municipalities can act to identify and conserve properties of historical and/or architectural significance. Council has established the Municipal Heritage Committee to advise Council on heritage matters.

At its March 20, 2019 meeting, the Municipal Heritage Committee passed a motion recommending that the property known as The Sicklesteel-Newkirk Inn, located at 8800 Talbot Trail, in the Community of Harwich be designated under Part IV of the Act for its cultural heritage value or interest.

The owner of this property supports designation of their property under the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

The Sicklesteel-Newkirk Inn

The Sicklesteel-Newkirk Inn is a rare surviving example of an early 19th Century Ontario inn and tavern. It has tremendous associative and architectural value. It was established on a property that was originally owned by the Sicklesteels. The Sicklesteels were a family of Hessian descent who immigrated to Kent County in the 1790s following the American Revolution. In the 1840s, David Sicklesteel, son of the original settler, built a large multi-room structure on Lot 9, Concession 1, Chatham Township. The structure was close to Longwood's Road and served as an inn and tavern from the 1840s until the 1870s.

In the late 1800s, the Newkirks, another early Kent County pioneer family, acquired the farm and inn and the main inn structure was used as a family home. In 1968, an addition was constructed on the east side of the house. As with the earlier renovations, the addition is externally hard to identify. The addition perfectly replicates the former carrying through with the same window casements and glazing, moldings, and Greek Revival trim. The addition included a modern finished basement and a second set of stairs and a large fireplace.

In 2013, the property changed ownership again. The new owners determined that the main house could not be feasibly renovated to meet their requirements. Their intent was to demolish the original structure and build a similar looking house in its place. However, they did offer the house to anyone who would relocate the structure.



Figure 1 - Sicklesteel-Newkirk Inn, 9722 Longwoods Road, Spring 2015

In November 2015, Mr. Don Thompson, a local farmer and heritage enthusiast, undertook one of the most ambitious building relocation projects in Chatham-Kent's history when the Sicklesteel-Newkirk Inn was moved from 9722 Longwood's Road, east of Chatham, over the Thames River and Highway 401 to a new location at 8800 Talbot

Trail just east of Cedar Springs. To facilitate the move, the kitchen wing was removed, as was the roof. Otherwise, the 25-metre long structure was moved intact.



Figure 2 - Sicklesteel-Newkirk Inn on the move, Nov 17, 2015

The house was set on a new foundation with a full basement under the whole structure. A new and larger kitchen wing was constructed complete with a cook hearth and bake oven. Bathrooms and other non-period elements in the earliest portion of the inn were removed. Hardwood flooring was taken up to reveal the original wide tulip poplar flooring. The roof, chimneys, fireplaces, exterior portico and porches have all been restored and the large windows in the 1960s addition have been replaced with period sized versions with appropriate glazing patterns.



Figure 3 - Sicklesteel-Newkirk Inn, 8800 Talbot Trail, Spring 2019

The sensitive and thoughtful alterations and additions to the house in the 1930s and 1960s are a testament to the respect the Newkirk family had, over several generations, to a property that they recognized as important in the development of Southern Ontario. As well, the most recent project to relocate and save one of Chatham-Kent's most historic properties is now, in itself, part of the historic significance of the structure.

Comments

The Designation Report is attached as Appendix A. The report contains a statement explaining the cultural heritage value or interest of the property, as defined by one or more of the Criteria under *Ontario Regulation 9/06*, and a description of the heritage attributes of the property.

Council has two options regarding the designation process, which are as follows:

- 1) Proceed with the designation - Notice of Intention to Designate is then served. If there are no objection(s), the final request to designate comes back to Council. Should there be an objection(s), there is an appeal process to the Conservation Review Board before the final request comes back to Council for final decision.
- 2) Not to proceed with the designation - the property is not designated.

Areas of Strategic Focus and Critical Success Factors

The recommendation in this report supports the following areas of strategic focus:

- Economic Prosperity:
Chatham-Kent is an innovative and thriving community with a diversified economy
- A Healthy and Safe Community:
Chatham-Kent is a healthy and safe community with sustainable population growth
- People and Culture:
Chatham-Kent is recognized as a culturally vibrant, dynamic, and creative community
- Environmental Sustainability:
Chatham-Kent is a community that is environmentally sustainable and promotes stewardship of our natural resources

The recommendation in this report supports the following critical success factors:

- Financial Sustainability:
The Corporation of the Municipality of Chatham-Kent is financially sustainable
- Open, Transparent and Effective Governance:
The Corporation of the Municipality of Chatham-Kent is open, transparent and effectively governed with efficient and bold, visionary leadership
- Has the potential to support all areas of strategic focus & critical success factors
- Neutral issues (does not support negatively or positively)

Consultation

The Municipal Heritage Committee was consulted in accordance with Section 29(2) of the Act. The property owner was consulted as part of the Committee's evaluation process and supports the recommended heritage designation.

Financial Implications

Designation under the Act is an eligibility requirement of the Heritage Property Tax Relief Program. If the property owner meets all of the eligibility requirements of the program, they may be entitled to a prescribed level of tax relief starting with the 2019 tax year.

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Attachment: Appendix A – Designation Report: 8800 Talbot Trail, Community of Harwich

c. Municipal Heritage Committee

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Designation Report

The Sicklesteel-Newkirk Inn 8800 Talbot Trail Harwich Township

Preamble:

The Sicklesteel-Newkirk inn/house is one of the three most historically important residential structures extant in Chatham-Kent and a rare survivor of an early 19th century Ontario inn and tavern. As will be elaborated on in the following designation report, it has tremendous associative and architectural value.

The property was originally owned by the Sicklesteels, a family of Hessian descent who immigrated to Kent County in the 1790s following the American Revolution. In the 1840s, David Sicklesteel, son of the original settler, built a large multi-room structure on Lot 9, Concession 1, Chatham Township. The structure was close to Longwoods Road and served as an inn and tavern from the 1840s until the 1870s.

In the late 1800s, the farm and inn were acquired by the Newkirks, another early Kent County pioneer family and the main structure was then used as a family home. There are recollections of the house having a brick exterior. The structure is of post & beam construction so, at most, this would have been a brick facia. It is unlikely that it was built this way originally but it may have been “updated” with a brick facia, as many early frame homes were, at some point in the later 1800s. In the 1930s, the house was moved back from Longwoods Road closer to the Thames River to create more of an estate setting. Several outbuildings were constructed around the same time including a garage and boat house.

The move corresponded with several renovations including the replacement of many of the original six over six windows with new sashes made in the same pattern but with slightly thicker mullions. A portico was also constructed over the front entrance and a porch was constructed on the south and west side. These may have replaced original features of the same design that necessitated removal to facilitate the re-location. The house was also re-sided with yellow poplar (tulip) clapboard. If the house had been given a brick veneer at some point, this would have to have been removed before moving the house. In all likelihood, given the apparent historic interest taken in other aspects of the renovation, it was decided to return the house to its original siding material.

The exterior renovations, including windows, portico, and porch, were done with an impeccable sense of period style and construction and look absolutely “right”. At the same time, new panelling and build-in cupboards were constructed in the dining room, a new mantle was installed in the former tap room, bathrooms were added and walls were removed between two small bedrooms on the second floor to create a larger bedroom and bathroom. Much, if not all of

the house was re-plastered. Throughout these renovations, however, the original floor plan was largely retained as was the staircase, baseboard trim, most interior doors, and kitchen wainscot. In 1968, an addition was constructed on the east side of the house. As with the earlier renovations, the addition is externally hard to identify. Only a seam in the siding where old clapboard meets new and a large picture window on the south side gave the addition away. The addition perfectly replicates the former carrying through with the same window casements and glazing, moldings, and Greek Revival trim. The addition included a modern finished basement and a second set of stairs and a large fireplace.

Early inns, although built on the Georgian form, are often asymmetrical. In other words, the façade is not balanced with a central front entranceway. This was because the basic plan with dining room and parlour flanking a central hall was thrown off by the addition of the tap room or tavern section (and the need for additional sleeping quarters on the second floor). The Sickelsteel-Newkirk house follows this pattern although the addition from the 1960s at the opposite end from the tap room makes the house more balanced and this may have been intentional.

In 2013, the Newkirk property was sold and the new owners felt that the main house could not be feasibly renovated to meet their requirements. Their intent was to demolish the original structure and build a similar looking house in its place. They did, however, offer the house to anyone who would re-locate the structure. In November 2015, local farmer and heritage enthusiast Mr. Don Thompson undertook one of the most ambitious building relocation projects in Chatham-Kent's history when the Sickelsteel-Newkirk house was moved from Longwoods Road east of Chatham, over the Thames River and Highway 401 to a new location on the Talbot Trail just east of Cedar Springs. To facilitate the move, the kitchen wing was removed as was the roof. Otherwise, the 25 meter long structure was moved intact.

The house was set on a new foundation with a full basement under the whole structure. A new and larger kitchen wing was constructed complete with a cook hearth and bake oven. Bathrooms and other non-period elements in the earliest portion of the inn were removed and later hardwood flooring was taken up to reveal the original wide tulip poplar flooring. The roof, chimneys, fireplaces, exterior portico and porches have all been restored and the large windows in the 1960s addition have been replaced with period sized versions with appropriate glazing patterns.

In conclusion, the Sickelsteel-Newkirk house is an incredibly well preserved and rare survivor of an inn and tavern. The interior was never opulent; the structure, after all, was built as an inn. The interior and exterior are, however, very well preserved with many original features still in situ. The sensitive and thoughtful alterations and additions to the house in the 1930s and 60s are a testament to the respect the Newkirk family had, over several generations, to a property that they recognized as important in the development of Southern Ontario. At a time when the importance of heritage preservation was not recognized as it is today, and when many important early structures were badly altered or destroyed, the Newkirks demonstrated that they were far ahead of their time. As well, the most recent ambitious project to relocate and save one of Chatham-Kent's most historic properties is now, in itself, part of the historic significance of the structure.

The architectural component of the following Designation Report is restricted to the main block of the building (the original inn and the 1960s addition) but does not include the new kitchen wing. Inclusion of this will need to be the subject of Committee discussion.

The Sicklesteel-Newkirk house is one of the best known structures in Chatham-Kent and is featured prominently in Margaret McBurney and Mary Byers' seminal book *Tavern In The Town; Early Inns and Taverns of Ontario*.

Designation Report

The Sicklesteel-Newkirk Inn 8800 Talbot Trail Harwich Township

Description of Property

The Sicklesteel-Newkirk property is located at 8800 Talbot Trail in the former township of Harwich in the Municipality of Chatham-Kent, legally described as *Part Lot 9, Concession 4, Harwich Township, Chatham-Kent (Now designated as Parts 4 and 5, according to Reference Plan 24R709, Subject to 367575)*. The property consists of a c.1840 Greek Revival frame house originally constructed as an inn and tavern.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

Historical/Associative (OHA Reg. 9/06):

The structure has been associated with two families that played a significant role in the development of Chatham-Kent.

George Sicklesteel (Sichelstils) came to North America from Uhlfeld, Neustadt Bavaria to fight in the American Revolution. In the late 18th century, the Prince of Hesse and other German States including Bavaria contracted out their fighting forces in order to raise money to fund their governments. The British Government hired 30,000 Germans (1/4 of the British fighting force), to fight combat actions in the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783). They wore their traditional uniforms and fought under the command of German officers and saw action in virtually every major engagement of the war. They became known, by the Americans, as Hessian Mercenaries. After the war, some 5000 German soldiers remained in North America, many of whom received land grants in Upper Canada from the British Government. George Sicklesteel was one of these land recipients being acknowledged as *the first real settler on the Chatham Township river front* c. 1794*.

George Sicklesteel and his wife Margaretha Binsenscham had five children, four of whom were among the first born to white settlers in Kent County. David, born in 1802, took over the family farm and constructed a large frame structure that he operated as an inn around 1840. At the west end of the structure was a tavern/tap room, the entrance to which was on the south/river side and according to legend, *was large enough for a customer to ride his horse through and the bar was high enough to look over but too high for a horse to jump***. In the 1860s, the building became known as the Caledonia Inn, perhaps corresponding to David's second marriage to a Scottish woman and his religious conversion from Church of England to the Free Church of Scotland. By 1867 the structure was still operating as an inn but a sawmill, operated by David Sicklesteel Jr., known as a lumber merchant, had also been established on the property. The inn is discussed and pictured in the seminal book "Tavern in the Town; Early Inns and Taverns of Ontario" by Margaret McBurney and Mary Byers who describe the Caledonia as an "impressive inn" and "a

simple but well-proportioned building of singular beauty”. Although we often think of inns as lodgings for weary travellers, they were also temporary residences for new immigrant families who needed accommodation while they waited for their lands to be surveyed or for their first houses to be constructed. Many Chatham and Harwich township families’ first home in Kent County was very likely David Sicklesteel’s inn.

In the 1880s, David Sicklesteel had moved to Harwich Township and the property passed to the Newkirk family. The Newkirks were also one of Kent County’s earliest pioneer families. The original Newkirk settler, Samuel, a United Empire Loyalist, received a land grant west of Chatham in recognition of his service with Butler’s Rangers during the American Revolution. Family history indicates that he may have descended from Gerret Cornelisse van Nieuwkirk who settled in New York in the late 1600s. His son, James, served in the Kent Militia during the War of 1812. By the 1880s, Newkirks were established on both sides of the Thames in Dover and Raleigh Townships and one descendant ultimately acquired the Sickleteel property in Chatham Township. James Reuben Newkirk (1873-1949) moved the old inn further south away from Longwoods Road and closer to the Thames River on the same property in the 1930s.

Following James’ death in 1949, the property was occupied by Garnet and Muriel Newkirk. Garnet Newkirk was an important figure in 20th century Chatham and Kent County politics. He served in the RCAF during World War II and was a long serving mayor of Chatham from the 1950s to the 1970s. He ran as a liberal in the 1964 provincial election, being defeated by Darcy McKeough. Among his many posts, he was president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario in 1970 and chair of the Rondeau Provincial Park Advisory Committee from 1974-78. The property remained in the Newkirk family until 2013.

In 2013, the Newkirk property was sold and the inn was threatened with demolition. In November 2015, local farmer and heritage enthusiast Mr. Don Thompson undertook one of the most ambitious building relocation projects in Chatham-Kent’s history when the 25 meter long Sickelsteel-Newkirk house was moved 20 kilometers from Longwoods Road east of Chatham, over the Thames River and Highway 401 to a new location on the Talbot Trail just east of Cedar Springs. The most recent ambitious project to relocate and save one of Chatham-Kent’s most historic properties is now, in itself, part of the historic significance of the structure.

Design/Physical (OHA Reg. 9/06):

The Sicklesteel/Newkirk property consists of an excellent and well preserved example of a mid-19th century clapboard sided post and beam inn and tavern built in the Greek Revival style with a seven bay façade.

Contextual (OHA Reg. 9/06):

The Sicklesteel/Newkirk House, in its new location, has become a landmark along the Talbot Trail.

Description of Heritage Attributes/Character Defining Elements:

Exterior; Main Structure:

- Footprint of the main section of the inn*
- Roofline and pitch
- Inset brick chimneys (2)
- Clapboard siding
- Wide frieze board
- Moulded eave returns on gable ends
- Beaded corner posts
- Wide board plinth
- Window placement, main section*
- Window casements and sills throughout main section*
- Six over six pane wooden window sash throughout main section*
- Cross & bible pattern front door with moulded and raised panels
- Front door casement
- Flanking 8 pane sidelights with moulded mullions surmounting a moulded inset wooden raised panel
- Nine pane transom light with moulded mullions
- Front door sill
- Portico over front door including roofline, moulded Greek Revival return eaves, supporting pillars, frieze board and clapboard.
- Tongue and groove wood portico ceiling and decking
- West/rear porch including roofline, moulded return eaves, frieze board, clapboard, round and rectangular support pillars, and tongue and groove decking.
- Rear (tap room) door casement and sill

Interior; Main Structure

- Original staircase, spindles, banister, newel post, original section.*
- Interior 4 panel doors in main section, first and second floor.
- Baseboards throughout original section**
- Floor plan, original section**
- Panelled wall under staircase
- Tulip (Yellow Poplar) flooring in original section** of inn
- Plaster inscription on north wall, dining room.

*Note:

**“Main section” refers to the 25m x 8m main block of the structure but excluding the new kitchen wing.

***“Original section” refers to the section of the main block of the inn built in c. 1840 and excluding the western addition constructed in the 1960s.

Contextual:

Key elements of the Sicklesteel/Newkirk property that support its contextual significance are:

- Placement in the relation to the Talbot Trail.

Sources:

- **Margaret McBurney, Mary Byers *Tavern In The Town; Early Inns and Taverns of Ontario*
- Victor Lauriston, *Romantic Kent; The Story Of A County 1626-1952*, 1952
- *Victor Lauriston, *Pioneer Days On The Thames*, Kentiana, Kent Historical Society, 1939
- Fred Coyne Hamil *The Valley of the Lower Thames 1640-1850*, University of Toronto Press, 1973