

ROSAMOND NO. 1 MILL

Location : Ramsay Street, Coleman's Island, Almonte, part of n.e. 1/2 of Lot No. 16, Concession 9, Township of Ramsay

Present owner :

Present occupant :

Present use : Proposed residential

Statement of Significance: (See short statement.)

1. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners:

James Rosamond emigrated from Ireland in 1832. Both he and Bennett, his son, began securing property in the n.e. 1/2 of Lot No. 16 as early as 1857. Of a number of individual sales, the most important include James Rosamond's 1861 purchase of part of Smith Coleman's property on the Island, where the Mill is today situated, and the sale by John Heney in 1866 of most of the remaining Island land to Bennett Rosamond et al. for \$3200.

In 1862, James Rosamond had entrusted his two sons, Bennett and William, with the operation of his woollen manufacturing business which included the factory then standing on lower Mill Street. Thus the 'B. & W. Rosamond Woollen Co.' was responsible for the construction of both the 'Pinecraft' building (No. 2 Mill), an addition to their father's mill, and the Rosamond No. 1 Mill's main building (1866).

In 1870, a joint stock company was formed which included many of the community's leading lights and which assumed the 'Rosamond Woollen Co.' name; Mr. Bennett Rosamond remained President while his younger brother, James Junior, became Secretary. All family property was eventually transferred to 'The Rosamond Woollen Co.', so that the Company retained possession of the Mill long after the principle members of the Rosamond family were deceased.

There was a transition period to ownership by Zephyr Textiles in the mid-20th Century. In 1975 the story of the Rosamond Mills closed with the official absorption into Zephyr Textiles at the price of \$232,000.

In 1978 Zephyr Textiles sold the Mill to Collie Woollen Mills who continued its operation as a textile mill until 1986.

In 1986, an agreement to purchase was signed with R. W. Burkart Investments Corp. for the purpose of conversion of the property to residential use.

2. Date of erection : Main building - 1866

3. Architect/engineer: Andrew Bell

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Property:

The Mill employed 200 men, women and children in 1866 when it began operation, more than all other Almonte mills combined. As early as 1879 it was considered a 'model mill' and by 1892 had attained the status of largest mill of its kind in British North America.

Important persons associated with the complex in the 19th Century include the founder, James Rosamond, and his sons Bennett and William. Bennett was elected President of the Canadian Manufacturers Association in 1890 and became a member of Parliament for Lanark County North in 1892.

II ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character:

This complex is one of the great surviving manufactories of its time, certainly comparable to the Gooderham & Worts Brewery in Toronto built c. 1860. In the placements of the buildings and in the construction of such, one can see not only the mill architecture of the period but also the attitude held toward the art of manufacturin

2. Condition:

Originally very well constructed, the complex is now in only fair condition. There has been relatively little maintenance of roof systems and masonry in recent years.

B. Description of Buildings:

1. Main Building:

Constructed in 1866, this building is the core of the complex. Considered without additions, it is 137' (13 bays) long by 58' deep, six storeys tall. In the centre bay of both east and west elevations the wall juts out the depth of one bay to create on the west side an elevator shaft and on the east side a stairwell.

The walls are a whitish squared rubble stone finished with darker stone quoins. The windows are well-proportioned with evenly divided lights. Surviving storm sash have 32 panes; interior sash are 4-over-4 with upper units pivoting.

On the outer wall of the stairwell wall is the inscription '1866', the date of erection. A cupola once adorned the top of the stairwell. The earlier version was domed with pillars and a bell. The second cupola, with steeply hipped roof was not removed until 1965. It has, unfortunately, not been replaced.

The roof is a very low pitched gable.

1a. South addition:

This section was added in 1880. It measures 56' long (11 bays) by 58' deep. Only four storeys in height, it is otherwise similar to the main block in construction. Its original low gabled roof with belvedere skylight was later flattened and cinder blocks used to build up the slope.

1b. North addition:

This four-storey, 7-bay long extension was built between 1877 and 1888. It was made by filling in the space between the main building and the dye house, removing the dye house roof (on the east end) and adding a fourth storey. Again, the outward construction is similar to the style of the main block.

2. Boiler House and Machine Shop:

The original boiler house of 1866 was built with rubble stone and was one storey tall. It has been substantially changed with an amalgamation first into the body of the machine shop in 1880 and later into the main structure in the mid-20th Century. The large factory chimney of 1867, 7 storeys tall, rises from this building. The aforementioned machine shop, added 1880, is 82' long and 24' wide. A two-storey structure, its first floor is rubble stone while the second is brick.

3. Dye House and Laboratory:

The present dye house now situated at the north end of the complex is a relatively new addition, 2 storeys high and constructed of concrete block. Beside the dye house is the present laboratory, also recent and constructed of concrete block.

4. Warehouse and Office Block:

The warehouse, 130' long and 45' wide, 2 storeys high, is another rubble stone building built about 1872. To the south it reveals a virtually blank wall, while on the north elevation that are 12 bays. The windows are simple 16-over-16 light, double-hung sash. The roof is shingled, very low gable with overhanging eaves, simply bracketed.

The office, added about 1904, is the 'piece de resistance' of the complex. A two-storey, squared rubble stone structure, it shares a party wall and connecting passageways with the warehouse. It is 26' (3 bays) wide by 44' (4 bays) deep.

The first floor openings, both windows and doors, have segmental arches with radiating voussoirs and keystone done in a contrasting dressed and polished red sandstone. The window and door surrounds and sills are quoined with the same material. The windows of the first floor are one-over-one, double-hung sash with transom. The transom is decorated in stained glass done in an 'art nouveau' floral design. The door, a glazed oak, three-panel, has a similarly patterned transom with 'THE ROSAMOND WOOLLEN CO.' emblazoned across it. The roof is flat with boxed cornice and decorated frieze of the same polished red stone.

C. Site:

1. Setting and orientation:

The mill complex occupies the north-west corner of Coleman's Island and is situated on the east bank of the main channel of the Mississippi River.

At one time, the property was beautifully landscaped, but little of this remains today. The dramatic natural setting, however, which is intimately connected with the industrial use of the site, still survives.

2. Outbuildings:

To the western side of the complex are lumber shed, coal shed, wagon shed and water tower. All are wooden structures, many of them quite early.

3. Environmental impact:

Due to its size and its dramatic setting, the No. 1 Mill has always been a major element in establishing the character of Almonte as an industrial town of quality and visual interest. That influence is still important today, with the historical significance of the property adding another dimension to its purely physical impact.