

Clarifying Facts About Timmsdale House, 622 Foss Road Property & the MHAC

There has been a lot of community and media interest recently about the property at 202 Highway 20 West (known as the Timmsdale House), the property at 662 Foss Road, and the Town's former Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee (MHAC). The facts are as follows:

202 Highway 20 West – Timmsdale House

- In July 2016, Council received a request to designate the property at 202 Highway 20 West (known as the Timmsdale House) as a heritage site. The request came from residents and nearby neighbours of the property, not the current or potential owners (neither of whom wanted or supported a heritage designation).
- The inventory of possible properties of cultural heritage value provided to the Town by the MHAC did not include the Timmsdale House and noted it had no cultural heritage value as it was considered to be a modern house.
- The Town received a professional engineering report by Shoalts Engineering (see attached) that indicated it would be a "monumental task" and cost at least \$2.2 million to repair the building.
- Council agreed unanimously with the MHAC comments, the Shoalts Engineering report and professional staff recommendations to not designate the property under the Ontario Heritage Act.
- Council directed staff to work with the new owners to preserve architectural features or elements of the home that can be integrated with the redevelopment of the property.
- Efforts will be made to forward the documentation and photographic records of the Timmsdale House to the Pelham Historical Society and the Welland Museum.
- "Council will continue to honour Pelham's unique and diverse history," said Mayor Dave Augustyn. "Conservation of our cultural heritage resources, like the Fenwick Flag Pole and Old Pelham Town Hall, are important to our community because they inform our future."

662 Foss Road

- The inventory of possible properties of cultural heritage value provided to the Town by the MHAC did not include this property and there was no information regarding it.

Additional Information About the Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee (MHAC)

- A Heritage Register lists all properties that have been designated under the Ontario Heritage Act. The Town currently has a Register that lists five designated properties.
- A Heritage Register **may** also include properties that are not designated under the Ontario Heritage Act, but that Council believes to be of cultural heritage value or interest.
- A municipality is not required to have a Heritage Committee under the Ontario Heritage Act.
- The Pelham MHAC was first formed in 2010 and its members were appointed by Council and included the Town's Planning Director and a Councillor as ex-officio members.
- The MHAC worked on identifying potential properties with cultural heritage value for an inventory. This inventory was never presented to Council for approval.
- Council acknowledged the work of the MHAC and recognized that it was unreasonable for a volunteer committee to complete the inventory. In February 2015, Council decided that the MHAC should take a pause and directed staff to hire a consultant to complete this work.
- In June 2016, the Town followed through on this commitment to hire a qualified individual to continue the work of completing a heritage inventory of non-designated properties.
- It is anticipated that this inventory of non-designated properties will be presented to Council and the public during the Fall of 2016.
- After Council approves the inventory of non-designated properties, it will consider re-establishing a Heritage Advisory Committee.

For more information, please contact:

Dave Augustyn, Mayor
905-892-2607 ext. 317

Darren Ottaway, CAO
905-892-2607 ext. 318

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Condition Assessment and Recommendations for
Timmsdale, 202 Highway 20 West, Fonthill

At the request of Roman Grocholsky of Royal Lepage Real Estate, 637 Niagara St. in Welland, Mark Shoalts, P.Eng, CAHP, conducted two site reviews and a limited amount of research into the age and associations of the single family dwelling known as Timmsdale to assess its structural adequacy, its condition, and to put a Class D or Indicative budget together for its possible restoration. Research into the heritage significance of the building was not included in the scope of work however the date of construction is within living memory of many people and as a consequence there is a relatively good body of information readily accessible for this purpose. No previous reports on the building were provided to the author or were believed to exist. A copy of what are believed to be the original plans of the building were provided to the author by the present owner.

This report emphasizes the present structural and physical condition and the feasibility of bringing the existing building up to current, or at least acceptable, standards. Given the large size of the building and the high quality of its original construction, this report accepts as a basic premise that restoration materials and methods must be of comparable quality to the originals.



Timmsdale, 2016

Executive Summary

The existing single family dwelling at 202 Highway 20 West in Fontheil is visibly deteriorated both inside and out, and has serious building envelope issues that are directly related to and/or causing many of the immediately apparent major problems. It is in need of substantial repairs, in large part because it has had minimal maintenance and essentially no professional repairs for some three decades. The structure is basically sound, with only minor areas of concern. The roof and rainwater management system have reached or exceeded their practical service life and are in need of immediate replacement. The windows require immediate and extensive repair and restoration. The exterior stone veneer is in relatively good condition but requires some maintenance to prevent future problems.

The interior of the building has experience deterioration as a direct result of the roofing and window issues and is in need of major plaster and finishing repairs. Before these can be done, the exterior envelope must be restored and a major project of mechanical and electrical upgrading must be carried out. In conjunction with this work, removal and mitigation of hazardous substances must be performed. The 1940s mechanical and electrical systems are essentially obsolete and must be replaced, however the masonry and concrete construction of the complete building structure including interior partitions and floors renders the task gargantuan. The wiring and plumbing have failed in numerous locations and require replacement, which necessitates extensive destructive interference with existing finishes. The house will require essentially 100% interior refinishing subsequent to the building system replacement.

Building Description

Timmsdale is a large home built in a vernacular interpretation of an English country manor house with vaguely Tudor styling. John Blumenson states in [Ontario Architecture: Period Revivals](#) in contrast to the Colonial Revivals are inspired not by North American models but by European precedents, primarily English and French. Most often the English version is loosely modelled after rural cottages and country manor houses of the Tudor period with the occasional high-style Gothic feature, in particular the characteristic Tudor arch. In addition some Period Revival designs may be marked by a striking combination of Medieval forms with Classical elements reflecting the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, when Renaissance features began to "modernize" the Gothic. This eclectic blend has often been referred to by the appellation "Jacobethan." The inclusive term "Period Revival" refers to those twentieth century designs that reflect in one way or another this transitional era from the late Gothic or Tudor to the Jacobean periods. Timmsdale has the requisite steep roof pitches, minimal overhangs, dormers, and flat Tudor arched entrance door. Two dormers on the main elevation commit the common modern error of being a device to break the roof line without having an actual purpose as a dormer; the windows below them do not reach even to the eave height. The exterior of Timmsdale is composed of Queenston limestone walls laid in random rock-faced ashlar with broken coursing and range. There is a small amount of dressed Queenston detail, specifically the Tudor-arched entrance surround, the corbel base for an oriel window above it, and the window sills and chimney caps. The windows are mainly diamond-paned clear leaded glass in steel sash and frames with a small shield in the centre of each light. There are rectangular transoms on almost all of the windows. The steel frames are in wood jambs with a small exterior brick moulding and sill. The house has minimal overhangs with a small plain wood fascia and a small shingle mould on the gable ends. The roof is Vermont slate in a combination of three colours: semi-weathering green, semi-weathering black, & unfading purple. The gutters are painted galvanized steel with large decorative leader heads on the conductor pipes. There is a glass conservatory on the rear of the house in the best English tradition.

The building is solidly constructed with a poured concrete basement, floors of concrete and structural clay tile, exterior walls of structural clay tile and stone veneer, and interior partitions and bearing walls of clay tile finished in plaster or wood paneling. The roof is the single element of wood framing in the building. The interior of the house is also a vernacular interpretation of a formal English manor with extensive use of wood panelling and plaster mouldings in many rooms. Most of the wood panelling and trims are oak, except the dining room which is walnut. Floors are finished with wood, tile, carpet, and terrazzo, with some painted concrete floors in service areas of the basement. The basement contains extensive service facilities ranging from the mechanical systems and equipment to a laundry, a vault, several refrigerated cold storage rooms for various purposes, a full basement under the three car garage, a cistern, and a large finished games room.

The stone gateposts at the entrance to the estate proclaim "Timmsdale" and "1942", however the architectural floor plans for the house provided by the present owner are dated March 1942 – 1944, the elevations are dated March 1942, and the hot water heating system

drawings (by a different draftsman) are dated April 7, 1942. It is likely that the project began in 1942 but was not completed until 1944. The elevation drawings are the earliest and have significant differences from the building as it was constructed, however there are some differences in the floor plans as well. The plans are not professionally drawn and the design is not academically correct to any one period and contains a naive combination of some elements. Because the house was built by and for a local builder of some knowledge and experience, it is a reasonable assumption that they are the only plans for the house. They were produced by someone with familiarity with drafting and design but they are not the product of a trained architect or draftsman. However, the work was a design-build project for the personal dwelling of someone well experienced in construction and it is to be expected that the design was modified before and/or during construction without a rigorous paper trail. There is a paucity of detail in the plans which also supports this notion since construction by a third party would have required much more information even considering the standard drawings of the time period.

Building Condition

Exterior

The exterior of Timmsdale has a number of serious building envelope deficiencies that require immediate remediation. The roof has numerous areas of serious, long-term leakage and the slates generally are in poor condition exhibiting breakage and improper repairs. The condition and age of the slates is such that replacement is the only practical option.



The galvanized steel flashings have rusted badly and require replacement as well. The galvanized steel eavestroughs are missing in many areas and non-functional in most locations where they remain. They have rusted completely through in many areas, and the leader heads and conductor pipes are in comparable condition. A complete new system of gutters and downpipes must be installed, including proper connections to adequate drainage at grade. At present the few pipes that actually conduct water to grade discharge much of it into concrete window wells and ultimately into the basement.

The stone masonry on the exterior of Timmsdale is in good condition for the most part. There are some areas of concern arising from missing eavestroughs or conductors however at present these can be corrected with repointing once the roofing and drainage issues have been solved. Overall the Queenston limestone is in excellent condition and the mortar joints and pointing are acceptable for the majority of the walls. The wood fascia and mouldings are in poor to very poor condition. Paint is deteriorated or completely absent from many surfaces. The exterior trims require extensive repairs and proper preparation and painting. The trims on the dormers on the garage wing are in particularly poor condition and are in need of immediate repairs. The windows throughout the building are in need of maintenance, repairs, and painting. The steel window frames and sash are in reasonably good condition in that they are solid and intact, however they have rusted to the point that removal of the glazing, stripping of all the paint, and proper preparation and painting with an epoxy system are required before the glazing is reinstated. The leaded diamond lights are in reasonably good condition, however there are some broken panes and there are a number of deflected or bulging lights. They need to be repaired and all of the lead comes examined for deterioration or loss of seal to the glass. The glass must be reset in putty as necessary. Many of the wood window jambs and sills have rotted to the point that they require replacement. In localized areas, epoxy repairs may be carried out but replacement is the only solution for many of the openings.



Most of the windows have interior wood storm panels; hinged where the steel sash are operable and fixed where they are not. For the most part the interior sash and frames are in good condition, requiring only scraping and painting. The weatherstripping on all windows requires repair or replacement.

The conservatory on the south side of the building is a single-glazed building with a combination of steel and wood window frames, aluminum roof battens, and a cast iron gutter system. The windows in the side walls open with a traditional green-house style hardware system that operates all sash simultaneously. The roof glass is a light blue tinted cathedral glass to reduce the summer time heat gain. The complete glazed enclosure sits on a masonry kneewall with the same Queenston limestone exterior finish as the rest of the house. The only access to the conservatory is through a connecting door into the house, there is no exterior entrance. The paint finish on the conservatory

framing ranges from poor to non-existent. The complete conservatory glazing system requires dismantling, rehabilitation, and reglazing. There is a concrete cistern below the floor of the conservatory, the condition of which was not observed.



Interior

The interior of Timmsdale is impressive at first glance, with its grand entrance, rich finishes, and intentionally grand views and sight lines.



The first impression is soon replaced by concern for the poor condition of much of the space and the obvious urgency for repairs. The roof and wall leaks have resulted in major deterioration of plaster surfaces and mouldings in particular. The masonry construction of the building is the only thing that has saved some areas from serious structural decay and/or failure. There is only one serious issue of deterioration leading to a structural failure evident to a visual inspection: there is a long, straight crack in the east-west direction in the ceiling and wall of a second floor bedroom, just inside a south-facing gable. It apparently follows the line of a joist within the structural tile and reinforced concrete floor system, and likely indicates the result of a chronic water leakage problem and possibly the effect of frost on the saturated masonry. A rigid structural system such



as this house has is prone to propagation and telegraphing of cracks through longer distances than a more flexible system such as wood or steel framing would exhibit. One other structural concern is an opening in a masonry wall that was created by the present owners. The opening was cut through structural clay tile however no lintel or supporting frame was introduced. The location is in a relatively vulnerable position, and could possibly lead to further cracking of the wall.

The basement level of the house exhibits the result of many years of leakage and poor drainage and ventilation. Deterioration of finishes throughout is a serious concern, however the basement level must have a hazardous substances survey before any work can be carried out. The presence of mould is a certainty, and there is a high likelihood that asbestos and lead-based paints are present. While it cannot be determined without laboratory testing, much of the insulation on the heating system boilers and pipes appears to contain asbestos. The plaster could also contain asbestos, and it is very likely that the paint, much of which is peeling and falling off, contains lead. There is a vault in the rear of the house which has contained oil tanks, testing for any leakage is mandatory. There are a number of older refrigeration systems on some walk-in coolers in the



basement. These systems would have used refrigerant gases that are now banned, and they must be decommissioned and emptied properly. There are old fluorescent light fixtures requiring removal and disposal, the ballasts of which likely contain pcbs. The condition of the basement is such that a thorough stripping out and replacement of all finishes, mechanical, and electrical equipment is required to bring the building into a reasonable state for occupancy. Throughout most of the house, the mechanical and electrical systems must be replaced. The wiring is substandard with a lack of proper grounding to most outlets, and insufficient distribution of lighting and power for modern needs. The plumbing system is obsolete. Galvanized water lines and cast iron drains have failed throughout the house and must be replaced. Other than in the basement, essentially all of the original wiring, plumbing, and heating pipes were concealed within the masonry walls and concrete floor systems, rendering it impossible to access and repair without doing major damage to finishes. This is self-evident when one observes replacement work done previously within the building: surface-mounted pipes for water supply and drains, and a network of extension cords. The heating system drawings from 1942 state that all lines are to be concealed within walls, which was a good aesthetic decision at the time that resulted in a major difficulty for repair and replacement in the future. Because all interior partitions and walls are masonry and all floors are masonry and concrete with plaster ceilings directly applied, running plumbing and electrical lines requires extensive destruction of the finishes and expensive reinstatement. The only mitigating factor is that so many of the finishes are in such poor condition already that a complete interior refinishing is required anyway.



On the second floor there are several areas of complete failure of interior finishes from chronic, long-term roof leakage. Throughout the first and second floors there are a number of completely deteriorated sections of plaster mouldings. These mouldings were run in place by skilled plasterers using templates and gauges and they must be repaired and replaced by the same methods. Removal of the remaining mouldings and replacement with wood, synthetic, or precast plaster may seem to be an alternative, however the removal would be a larger project than the repair and replacement. Removal would also cause major damage to the remaining surfaces. After the replacement of the mechanical and electrical systems, the plaster throughout the house on both walls and ceilings must be repaired and a complete redecorating of the house is required. The only exceptions to the redecorating requirement are the wood-panelled rooms: foyer, library, and dining room. Flooring throughout much of the house requires replacement as well.



Repair and Restoration budget

Building element	cost
Slate roof, related flashings, eavestroughs and downspouts:	\$ 200,000.00
Windows and exterior doors:	\$ 195,000.00
Conservatory glazing:	\$ 40,000.00
Masonry repair, repointing, and cleaning:	\$ 140,000.00
Hazardous materials survey, removal, and disposal:	\$ 80,000.00
Cut and patch for electrical and mechanical:	\$ 130,000.00
Plaster moulding restoration:	\$ 80,000.00
Interior finishes, walls and ceilings:	\$ 240,000.00
Interior finishes, floors:	\$ 100,000.00
Mechanical:	\$ 300,000.00
Electrical:	\$ 240,000.00
Trades budget:	\$ 1,745,000.00
Design cost:	\$ 120,000.00
General contractor overhead and profit:	\$ 174,500.00
Contingency:	\$ 200,000.00
Total budget for restoration:	\$ 2,239,500.00

Conclusions

Timmsdale is an iconic residence in Fonthill. It is a large mansion, built to impress in a prominent location. Although not professionally or academically designed, it was built by a knowledgeable person with first quality materials intended to last lifetimes. Unfortunately, even the most durable materials require routine maintenance and repairs and Timmsdale has had neither. Deterioration accelerates once it gets started and in several locations in the building it has had disastrous effects. The building can be restored to its former glory, however it is a monumental task, requiring careful design and a substantial budget.



Mark Shoalts, P.Eng., CAHP
Shoalts Engineering
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