

8048 Twiss Road _ Dennis Hunter House



Legal Description:

Part Lot 1, Con. 2, former Nassagaweya Township, Town of Milton, Regional Municipality of Halton.

Description of Property

The Dennis Hunter House is a two-and-a-half-storey, smooth red brick house that is a good example of late Victorian architecture transitioning into an Edwardian architectural style. The bricks used for this house are from the local brickworks.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

Its cultural heritage value lies in its historical and architectural significance. Frank McNiven, who served as Councillor and Reeve, governor of the Halton County Jail, the area's Police Chief, and Town of Milton assessor, owned this house from 1920 to 1946..

Historical Value

Historically, the house was built in 1900 by Dennis Hunter. He was the son of the pioneer James Hunter, who came to Canada from County Antrim, Northern Ireland. In 1837, he bought this 100-acre farm at Lot 1, Con 2 in the former Township of Nassagaweya. Dennis acquired the property from his father, James, in 1886 and passed it on to his son, Daniel. Daniel sold the property to Frank McNiven in 1920.

The house was constructed in 1900, shortly after the closure of the short-lived Terra Cotta Brick Company in Campbellville. As such, the red terra cotta bricks would have come from the other local brickworks in Milton Heights. These high-quality bricks are found on many buildings that were built in Milton during the late nineteenth/early twentieth century, and this building is a good representative example of their use.

This property is of historic value because of its direct association with Frank McNiven, who owned the property from 1920 to 1946. The McNivens were a prominent family from the Kilbride area. McNiven Road is named in their honour. Frank served on numerous local boards and councils. He served on the Nassagaweya Township Council and was Reeve in 1928. While owning the property, Frank and his wife, Ruby, moved to Milton in 1936 and were appointed Governor and Matron of the Halton County Jail. Frank also served as Police Chief of Milton, Assessor for the

Town, and the Chair of the Town's first Planning Board. Frank is included in the Milton Historical Society's "Milton Area Biographies". More information on Frank can be found in the Milton Historical Society's "Milton Area Biographies".

Physical or Design Value

Physically, the farmhouse is a two-and-a-half-storey smooth red brick house with a field stone foundation that is covered by a cement render. The house has a box-like form, wide projecting eaves. The inclusion of two expansive ground-floor windows reflects the influence of the burgeoning Edwardian Classicism style that became popular in the early twentieth century. The asymmetrical form, front gable dormer and decorative detailing reflect the Romanesque Revival period, being a popular style in Ontario during the latter half of the Victorian era from 1880 to 1900.

Its principal facade includes a hipped roof projecting wing that faces southeast towards Conservation Road (formerly known as Steeles Avenue). This wing has a central gable dormer window with an arched "Romanesque" window and returned eaves. A wide ground-floor window breaks the symmetry of the projecting wing. Originally, the house included decorative gingerbread detailing around the gable window and wooden brackets below the eaves. The front entrance is recessed and includes a modern wood porch. The northeast facade facing Twiss Road is bisected by a tall exterior chimney that once was likely to have included a corbelled chimney cap. Symmetrical windows are placed at the second-floor level; however, at the ground floor level, a wide window exists on one side of the chimney with a small arched "Romanesque" window on the other. Four asymmetrical windows exist on the north-west facing facade with one cellar window below. The rear (or southwest-facing) facade includes one narrow window and a modern vinyl-sided single-storey addition. A second tall interior chimney with a corbelled chimney cap protrudes through the rear hipped roof slope.

All the windows include voussoirs, and all but the window in the front gable dormer include rusticated limestone sills. The inclusion of an arched window on the ground floor level is an unusual feature in Milton. It is likely to reflect the influence of the Romanesque Revival. A brick water table runs around the exterior of the property. The original single-leaf four-panel wooden entrance door with plain transom remains. It retains its original "wavy" glass, decorative wood trim detailing around the glass panel and its original highly decorative hinges.

Internally, the house retains much of its original details, including its original staircases (two between the ground and second floor and a steep attic stair), panel doors, door hardware, high baseboards and ornate window and door casings. Whilst these reflect the highly decorative detailing that was popular in the Victoria era, they are beginning to include some simpler "geometric" forms that became increasingly popular in the Edwardian period. Of note in this regard are the "chunky" newel posts of the front staircase,

Character Defining Elements/Heritage Attributes:

Important to the preservation of the property are the following character defining elements/heritage attributes:

- The original massing of the two and a half storey smooth brick house with a projecting front bay and central gable dormer above.
- Low hip roof with wide projecting eaves
- Smooth red brick exterior cladding and brick water table
- Gable dormer with arched window and returned eaves
- Placement of windows and door openings
- Plain red brick voussoirs above window and door openings with rusticated limestone window sills

- Single leaf four-panel wooden front entrance door with original "wavy" glass insert, decorative trims and rectangular transom
- Two single-flue red brick chimneys
- Historical home of Frank McNiven, who served as Councillor and Reeve, governor of the Halton County Jail, the area's Police Chief, and Town of Milton assessor.