

CITY OF ST. THOMAS

BY-LAW NO. 30-2002

A by-law to designate the BX Interlocking Tower
in the City of St. Thomas,
as a building of historic and architectural value.

WHEREAS pursuant to the Ontario Heritage Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. 18, the Council of a municipality may by by-law designate a property including buildings and structures thereon to be of historic or architectural value or interest;

AND WHEREAS notice of intention to designate the property being Part 1, Reference Plan 11R-5642, 1994 Survey, St. Thomas, Ontario, has been duly published and served, and no notice of objection has been received to such designation;

NOW THEREFORE THE COUNCIL OF THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF ST. THOMAS, ENACTS AS FOLLOWS:

1. There is hereby designated as being of historic and architectural value or interest the property known as Part 1, Reference Plan 11R-5642 in the City of St. Thomas, all of which is described in Schedule "A" attached hereto, for the reasons set out in Schedule "B" attached hereto.
2. The City Clerk is hereby authorized to cause a copy of the by-law to be registered upon the title to the property described in the aforementioned Schedule "A" in the proper Land Registry Office.
3. The City Clerk is hereby authorized to cause a copy of this by-law to be served upon the owner of the aforesaid property and upon the Ontario Heritage Foundation and to cause notice of this by-law to be published in the St. Thomas Times-Journal.
4. This by-law comes into force on the day it is finally passed.

READ a First and Second time this 11th day of March, 2002.

READ a Third time and finally passed this 11th day of March, 2002.

Peter J. Leack, City Clerk

Peter Ostojic, Mayor

SCHEDULE "B"

History

The Canadian Southern Railway's BX Tower sits on the east side of Moore Street on the North Limit of the railroad right of way on property acquired in 1888 from L. Campbell and wife, being part of Lots 94 & 95 of Plan 19. The original tower was erected in response to an accident on July 14, 1887. This accident was a collision between a Canada Southern freight train and a Grand Trunk Excursion returning from Port Stanley. The engineer of the northbound train received a semaphore signal to stop but the air brakes failed. The handbrakes were applied but failed to stop the train which collided with the CASO train and burst two cars carrying crude oil. The resulting fire engulfed the nearby buildings up to one square block. A half-hour later a third oil car exploded killing firefighter, Herman Ponsford, who was fighting the fire from the roof of the Elliot and Reath livery stable near the Dake House which was also on fire. Fourteen people died as a result of the collision and explosion and sixty-eight others were injured mainly as the result of the explosion.

The existing building is believed to have been constructed after 1902 and is presently being restored to its post 1913 configuration by a group of volunteers.

Architecture

The building is constructed of brick and a slate roof in what can best be described as turn of the century industrial. The exceptional feature of its construction is the windows on all four sides of the building which allow the operator of the switching equipment in the building an unobstructed view of the track in all directions from a seated position. The tower is 35 feet by 19 feet and is of pressed red brick and red mortar. The foundation is of poured concrete. The windows on the second floor are 62" by 36" and are in groups of four. Two groups on the north and south sides while the east and west have only one group per side. The most westerly window on the north side is replaced by a door reached by an outside staircase. The lower windows are 62" by 38". There are two of these on each side. The upper windows are recessed into the building by four receding courses of brick. The soffit exceeds the building by approximately four feet and is made from tongue and groove lumber. The tower is at mile 115.43 CN CASO

Reasons for Designation

This building deserves designation as part of the railroad complex along with the CASO Station and railroad shops; however the most compelling reason is the technology contained in and around the structure. This is known as the "Interlocker System", which in its time was considered a major improvement in Railway Safety Technology. This system was designed in England and the St. Thomas installation is one of the earliest installations in North America.

The Interlocker System requires switches, signals, and derailleurs to be thrown from a central location (BX Tower) in correct sequences. The system would not allow an incorrect series of switches to be thrown. The switches are operated by a series of rods, running through sets of rollers. This mechanism which remains in close proximity of the Tower should also be part of the designation. The tower controlled movement of Canada Southern, Michigan Central, New York Central, and London and Port Stanley trains as well as equipment from the Grand Trunk, Air Line, Wabash, Canadian National, Pere Marquette, and Chesapeake and Ohio Railways.