

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

25 Highland Avenue - Fonthill Cemetery Mausoleum

Roll No.: 273203000508800

Legal Description: CON 8 PT LOT 1 PT LOT 2 PLAN 25 PT

Date of Construction: 1923-1925

Architectural Influences: Classical Revival

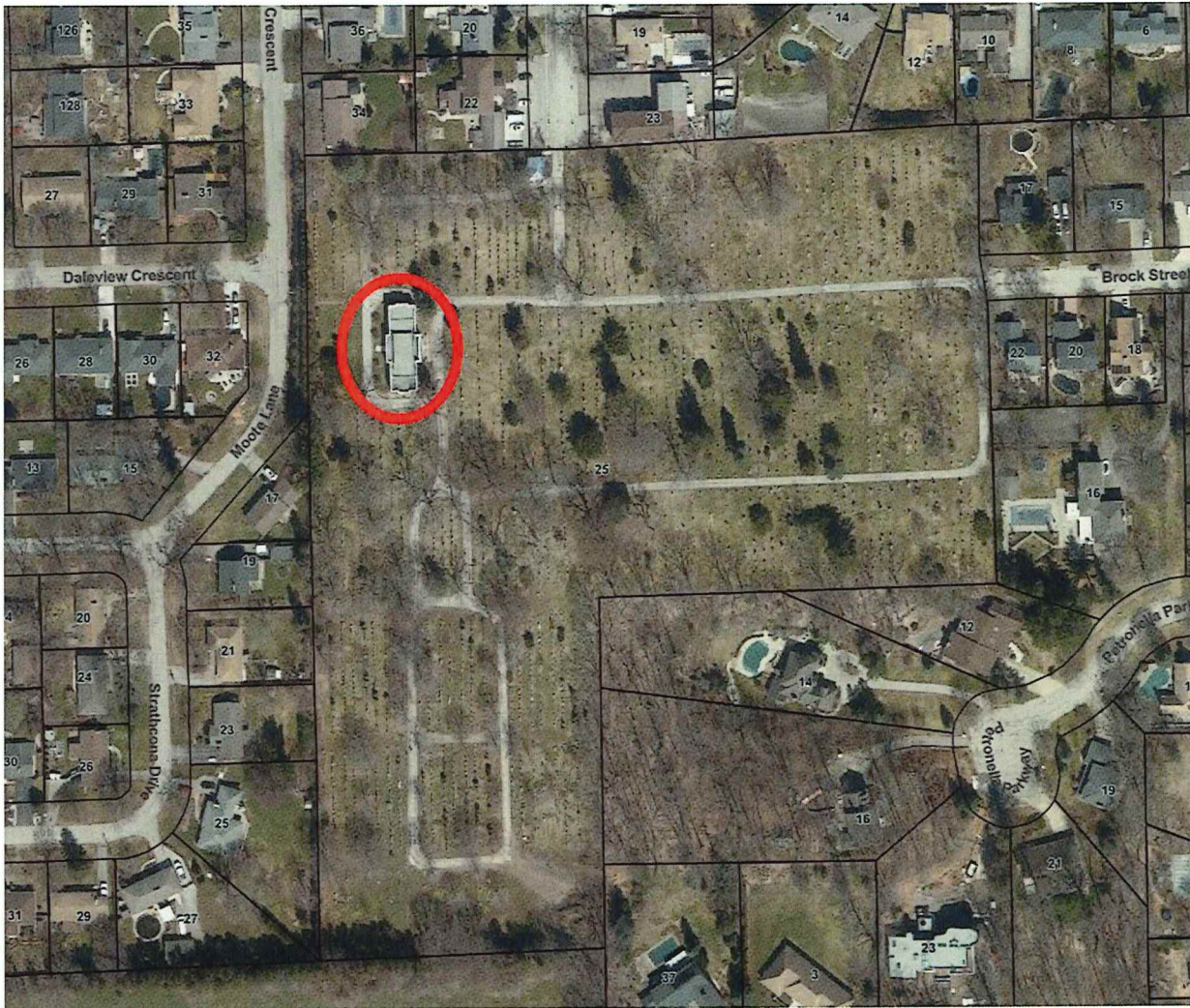
Historical Associations: Canada Mausoleums Ltd.

Heritage Evaluation Grade: A



Description of Property

The mausoleum and the 11.5-acre cemetery that surrounds it are tucked between Pelham's residential neighbourhoods, about 10 minutes southwest of downtown Fonthill. The mausoleum itself is located on the west side of the property, closest to Moote Lane and Daleview Crescent, but its car-accessible routes are from Highland Avenue on the north side of the cemetery and Brock Street on the east side.



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Design or Physical Value

The Mausoleum stands on land originally owned by the Brown Family, who began using it for burials in 1802 and is an excellent example of the classic Revival style in Pelham. The Town of Pelham assumed ownership of the cemetery in 1923, establishing the Fonthill Cemetery in tandem with plans to establish the mausoleum.

The mausoleum was constructed between 1923 and 1925 and is an excellent example of a mid-20th century memorial structure exhibiting refined craftsmanship and thoughtful architectural composition. Its cruciform layout, centered around a central chapel flanked by symmetrical wings, reflects a deliberate and symbolic spatial arrangement commonly associated with spiritual and commemorative architecture.

The structure's Indiana Limestone exterior contributes to its dignified presence and enduring quality, while the ornate brass and glass doors lend a sense of formality and craftsmanship, enhancing its ceremonial character.

The entranceway, defined by a pair of stone pillars supporting a classical lintel and accessed via a formal stairway, creates a strong and processional focal point that underscores the importance of the building's threshold.

Attention to detail is evident in the decorative stonework, most notably on the capitals of the entrance pillars and in the intricate masonry around the doorway, reflecting the high level of workmanship typical of the period.

The building also features 70 granite-clad columbaria, each constructed with aluminum niche cores, arranged in a manner that complements the building's design and reinforces the cemetery's role as a dignified place of remembrance. The thoughtful siting of the building within the cemetery context further enhances its solemn and contemplative character, integrating architecture and landscape in a manner consistent with commemorative design traditions.

Historical or Associative Value

The Mausoleum has historical value as 1 of 19 mausoleum projects completed by Canada Mausoleums Ltd. Constructed between 1923 and 1925 it was built during a time in the early 20th century when mausoleum construction started being seen as a business opportunity. Founded by Oscar

Trano in 1919, the company completed 19 projects across Canada over 12 years, with most of its mausoleums built with a near-identical design by the architectural firm Ralston and Cameron, and with stained glass designed by James Blomfield. Canada Mausoleums would offer to build a mausoleum in a community cemetery and sell the crypts within it to the wealthier residents in the town. In exchange, the town would have a beautiful landmark built in their cemetery at no cost to them.

However, Canada Mausoleums Ltd. faced skepticism and controversy. Some municipalities, including Montreal, labeled the company as "fraudsters," accusing it of promoting mausoleum construction as "free" while leaving municipal governments with the expensive cost of perpetuity and maintenance, all while keeping any profits from crypt sales for itself.

The 'mausoleum industry' lost popularity in the early 1930's, in large part due to the Great Depression. Canada Mausoleums Ltd. relied on debentures from unsold crypts to sustain profitability, but as the Great Depression made crypts unaffordable the company suffered significant financial losses, reaching \$18,000 in 1935. This ultimately led to the company's bankruptcy in 1936, resulting in the forfeiture of the mausoleums to their respective municipalities.

The Fonthill Cemetery Mausoleum remained an active burial site throughout the early and mid-20th century. Though some crypts remain unfilled, all are owned, and the mausoleum remains closed to the public unless an appointment is requested.

Due to its monumental presence as the cemetery's centrepiece, the crypts within the mausoleum were often acquired by the most affluent residents of Pelham and nearby communities at the time. It is worth noting that many of these people are related to Welland as Pelham was a township within Welland County until 1922. Notable burials include:

Marshal Vaughan: The first mayor of Welland, from 1917 until 1918.

Arthur Damude: A politician who held the position of Reeve of Fonthill from 1923 to 1929, before becoming a member of the House of Commons of Canada from 1935 until his death in 1941, representing the Welland riding.

Sherman Ross Allen: A former chairman of the Welland Parks Board, he became the first president of the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association in 1946.

John Franklin Gross: A politician and lawyer who represented Welland in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for two terms and later served as the city's solicitor from 1913 until his passing in 1928.

John Hugh Crow: A highly respected merchant as well as a 'civic father' of Welland, involved in various roles of its administration as it grew from a village to a city. Known as "Welland's Grand Old Man".

William H. Gainer: Served on Thorold Council in 1879 until becoming the Reeve of Thorold in 1889. Additionally, he was the President of the Welland County Agricultural Society for two years.

William E. Kilman: Served as an elder of the North Pelham Presbyterian Church for 41 years.

Eva Annie McClellan: A Superintendent of the Welland County Home for the Aged.

Frederick George Hutton: A known Sanitary Inspector and Veterinarian from Welland.

Contextual Value

The mausoleum holds contextual value as a landmark building within the cemetery, serving as a visual and symbolic focal point in the broader commemorative landscape. Its prominent siting, architectural scale, and formal design distinguish it from surrounding structures and landscape features, reinforcing its role as the centrepiece of the cemetery.

The building's orientation and location further emphasize its importance within the overall cemetery plan. Its cruciform form and stately materials provide a striking contrast to the simplicity of individual grave markers and columbaria, anchoring the visual hierarchy of the site.

As the most architecturally substantial and visually commanding structure on the property, the mausoleum has become a point of orientation and identity within the cemetery, contributing to the site's character and to the collective memory of the community it serves.

Description of Heritage Attributes

Key exterior elements that contribute to the heritage value as an excellent example of the Classical Revival style in Pelham include its:

- Siting within the cemetery;
- Cruciform layout with a central chapel and wings on each side;
- Indiana Limestone exterior;
- Ornate brass and glass doors;
- Entranceway framed by two pillars supporting a lintel, as well as its stairway;
- Decorative stonework, most evidently seen on the pillars' capitals and the detailing around the entranceway;
- 70 columbaria with granite exteriors and aluminum niche cores

Key interior elements that contribute to the heritage value as an excellent example of the Classical Revival style in Pelham include its:

- 275 crypts with personalized engravings;
- Stained-glass panels of coniferous trees with the inscriptions "The Morning Breaks and the Shadows Flee" on the north side and "Fast Falls the Eventide" on the south; and
- Geometric tiled floor

Sources

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Dorothy J. Smith, "Taking Care of Business: Canadian Community Mausoleums and the Commercialization of Death, 1912 to 1936", 2015
Find a Grave Memorial ID 209508770, "Marshal Vaughan", Added 2020
The Globe and Mail, "Asthma Fatal to Welland M.P. / A.B. Damude Is Widely Mourned in Peninsula", September 16, 1941
Welland Tribune, "Prominent Wellander, S. R. Allen Dies at 70", February 17, 1964
The Welland Evening Tribune, "John Franklin Gross", January 28, 1928
Welland Public Library Newspaper Collection, "John Crow Dies Two Days After 87th Birthday", November 24, 1943
Welland Telegraph, "William H. Gainer", February 9, 1905
The Standard, "W.E. Kilman Passed Away at Ridgeville", January 30, 1948
The Welland Evening Tribune, "Eva Annie McClellan", January 18, 1965
The Welland-Port Colborne Evening Tribune, "Frederick George Hutton", April 4, 1938

Additional Photographs of the Fonthill Mausoleum

