

## V. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

As per O.Reg. 9/06 of the *OHA*, Lock 25 of the Second Welland Canal can be seen to possess as many as seven of the heritage value criteria identified for eligibility for designation under part IV of the *OHA*.<sup>55</sup>

### I. DESCRIPTION OF HISTORIC PLACE

The historical value of Lock 25 lies principally in its association with the Second Welland Canal and thus its role in facilitating marine trade between Lakes Ontario and Erie, not only in the Niagara region but throughout the entire Great Lakes waterway system. It is located in reclaimed First and Second Welland Canals lands, which since 1976 belong to the Battle of Beaverdams Park in Thorold, Ontario. The partially excavated remains include portions of the two parallel lock walls and their flared ends. Lock 25 along with 16 other locks of the Second Canal was constructed from limestone quarried nearby between 1841 and 1845. Designed to replace the unsuitable wooden locks of the First Welland Canal, the locks were constructed of dressed cut, dolomitic limestone and back-filled with rubble. Only the capstones of Lock 25's chamber walls and gate ends are visible while the remainder of the lock remains below the surface. Each of the visible lock walls is approximately 46m long and are separated by the 8m wide chamber. The flared gate ends at both ends of the two walls are also exposed although only one of these ends retains all its original wrought iron gate hinge hardware.

The exposed stonework has been used as seating for the bandshell structure opposite to the west since 1979.

Even after marine traffic was being directed from the Second Canal to the Third Canal (to the east) in the 1870s and 80s, the former canal remained an active and iconic part of the townscape of the historic downtown core of Thorold. Here, the Old Canal served marine traffic until the early twentieth century and also provided power for adjacent industries until the late 1940s.

The Lock remains are part of the built heritage and cultural landscape of downtown Thorold, as a reminder of the various Welland Canals' impact on the historic character of the community. It is located in close proximity to other existing built heritage assets (designated and listed) associated with former canal lands and historic commercial activity. Its location in the Battle of Beaverdams Park since 1976 means that the Lock is now also adjacent to an assemblage of other Welland Canal heritage assets, those relocated from the historic 1813 battlefield site and other commemorative memorials.

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<sup>55</sup> <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/060009>

## II. ARCHITECTURAL VALUE

Lock 25 possesses important architectural value for being the only Second Welland Canal mountain lock in Thorold that remains visible today, having been excavated after the entire channel was in-filled in the late 1950s. Heritage value resides in the surviving physical attributes that demonstrate the Lock's engineering and functional design. The dolomitic limestone came from what today is Walker's Quarry – that in the early 1840s had been opened by John Brown and Samuel Zimmerman.

Other character-defining attributes of the Lock relating to the operation of the mid-nineteenth century Second Welland Canal include its massing and form, craftsmanship, finished capstones, and wrought iron gate hinges (integrated into the stone masonry).

*In this way, Lock 25 fulfils two of the following O.Reg. 9/06 criteria for architectural value:*

- 1. The property has design value or physical value because it is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method.*
- 2. The property has design value or physical value because it displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit.*

## III. HISTORICAL OR ASSOCIATIVE VALUE

Lock 25 has a high degree of historical and associative heritage value for its expression of and relationship with (but not limited to) the following:

- Its close proximity to the location of Lock 35 of the First Welland Canal (1824–29)
- The decision by the new Government of the Province of Canada in 1841 that the Welland Canal could play a vital role in improving and standardizing commercial and industrial transportation infrastructures as part of its nascent nation building activities
- The input of the Scottish-born Thorold contractor John Brown in the construction of many of the Second Welland Canal locks using limestone extracted from his and Samuel Zimmerman's quarry (now Walker's), and his establishment of what would become the internationally renowned Cement Mill that was located along the path of the First Welland Canal at Lock 35, immediately adjacent to Lock 25. Brown operated the mill until 1876 and thereafter by John Battle and sons until the early twentieth century
- Its association with the War of 1812's Battle of Beaverdams (1813), the battlefield site commemorative assets of which were moved to central Thorold in 1976.

*In this way, Lock 25 fulfils two of the following O.Reg. 9/06 criteria for historical or associative heritage value:*

- 4. The property has historical value or associative value because it has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community.*

5. *The property has historical value or associative value because it yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture.*

#### IV. CONTEXTUAL VALUE

Lock 25 has important contextual value for its association with Thorold's Second Welland Canal lands that – in the Town – were completely buried in the late 1950s and 60s. Evidence of the presence of this waterway system is evident in the swale-like topography of central Thorold.

Other contextual features include the Lock's adjacency to various designated, listed and non-listed heritage properties, sites and memorials (see section IV above) located within a 500-metre radius.

The exposed Lock demonstrates how industrial heritage can be revitalized and incorporated into the cultural heritage landscape. Its presence within a park celebrating a pivotal War of 1812 event further serves to emphasize the role two otherwise incongruous expressions of heritage value have had in the City of Thorold as well as the region and nation as a whole since the mid-nineteenth century. As such the exposed remnants of the Lock fulfil the goal of establishing relevance for the current and future communities through establishing a link with the past (place) that can serve to support contemporary aspirations and ideals (identity).

*In this way, Lock 25 fulfils all three of the following O.Reg. 9/06 criteria for contextual heritage value:*

7. *The property has contextual value because it is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area.*
8. *The property has contextual value because it is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings.*
9. *The property has contextual value because it is a landmark.*