7.3 BELFOUNTAIN AND THE CREDIT RIVER GORGE

Note: All lot references are west of Hurontario Street unless otherwise noted.

7.3.1 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

This Candidate CHL is an organically evolved landscape as defined in the Town of Caledon: Criteria for the Identification of Cultural Heritage Landscapes combining settlements, both existing and disappeared; former milling and quarrying sites; railway heritage, recreational sites and natural sites with strong cultural associations all within the context of the Credit River gorge.

The area under consideration extends from southeast of the actual forks of the east and west branches of the Credit River, (where the Grange Sideroad meets the eastward ‘jog’ of McLaren Road) to include the westward bulge of the Escarpment along the West Branch of the Credit as far as Belfountain and north along the river valley to the falls just south of the village of Cataract.

It is considered an excellent candidate CHL as it clearly ‘embodies and/or is associated’ with a number of Caledon’s major historic themes. The themes with which it is most closely associated are those of Early Industry though Transportation, Recreation and Nature Conservation are also very important. More specifically the area is deeply connected to a wide range of water powered and water based industries including grist and saw mills, woolen mills, bottling plants and hydro plants; as well as quarrying, lime burning and their association with the railway.

7.3.2 INVENTORY

1. Physiographic Description

The candidate CHL is primarily a dramatic river gorge from where the credit River leaves the upper plateau through a deep notch in the dolostone/sandstone Escarpment bedrock (the falls at Cataract) to its confluence with the West Branch of the Credit River at the Forks of the Credit at the base of the defined exposed Escarpment face, which has come to be known...
as ‘Devil’s Pulpit.’ The West Branch likewise descends through a gulch at Belfountain prior to joining the main stream of the Credit River at the Forks. The gorge, ‘the Forks’ and ‘Devil’s Pulpit’ are all very significant natural features of the area.

2. Processes

Land Uses and Activities

Surveyed in 1819-1820 by Samuel Rykman to the new ‘double-front’ lot system, the steep, rugged terrain in this area meant that farming was difficult, and that the concession roads could not be put through as shown on the idealized survey plan. However, the Credit River afforded great potential for waterpower. Mill seats became the nodes around which the communities grew. Early settlement occurred c.1825 at Belfountain with William Frank’s saw mill established around that time. Frank then dammed the West Credit River to establish a grist mill. William Frank was related to the Archibald Frank family who were among the group of Rockside Pioneers that settled in the south-west corner of the Township immediately following its survey and opening.

Frank’s mill was purchased by ‘Grize’ McCurdy who constructed a sawmill adjacent to it. The settlement that grew around the mills became known as McCurdy Mills. By 1860 a tannery, two other sawmills and another flour mill were established in the area of the village, encouraging local settlement of the associated work force. Initially cherrywood (for furniture) and white pine were the focus of lumbering and processing. By the early 1840’s a general store was opened and the first tavern established at what is now the corner of Main and Bush streets. In 1844, William MacDonald, grandson of John MacDonald the Rockside Pioneers ‘Patriarch’, established a blacksmith shop to the rear of the tavern. About mid-century a cooper named Peter McNaughton sought to advertise his trade by constructing his house to a barrel, or tub-like shape using cooperage methods, i.e., barrel staves and steel bands. This oddity became a landmark and gave rise to the nickname of ‘Tubtown’ for the village. However, by the time of the issuing of the Tremaine Map (1859) it had become known as Belfountain.

In 1818, a rumour led to gold being sought in the, then, wilderness of the Caledon Hills. William Grant, an emigrant from Renfrewshire, Scotland, as were many of the Rockside Pioneers who settled to the south, stopping at the falls at the north branch of the Credit near Belfountain & Credit Gorge, Tremaine Map 1859

Town of Caledon Cultural Heritage Landscapes Inventory
the current village of Cataract, noted that the water tasted brackish. Assuming that a salt deposit must be located nearby he convinced his employer, Matthew Crooks, to purchase the property for its salt mine potential. Eventually a saw mill was erected and a tiny settlement known as Gleniffer developed.

Gleniffer failed to thrive and the village site was abandoned until purchased by Richard Church in 1858. Church eventually established a saw mill, grist mill and woolen mill at the cataract. He also developed plans for a village to be called Church’s Falls (later Cataract). The mill pond for these operations became known as Cataract Lake. The sawmill, originally a wooden structure, burned in 1881 and was later rebuilt by the Wheeler Bros. as a three storey stone grist mill with stone quarried from directly beneath the falls (apparently the concavity is still visible). This mill burned again in 1885 and was purchased by John Deagle who rebuilt it to five storeys. When Deagle’s grist milling operation floundered financially he experimented with generating electricity, eventually powering the first farm to be electrically lit in Ontario (Lot 15, Concession 5, Caledon). Deagle converted the mill fully into a hydro plant and formed The Cataract Electric Co. Ltd. He himself designed a new generator for the plant in order to meet the demands of his new clientele.

The demise of water powered hydro generation from the Deagle plant c.1930 (Deagle had actually sold by that time) is directly indicative of the denigration of the river. In 1915 the average water flow was gauged by Deagle at 35 to 40 cu. ft. per sec. Fifteen years later spring runoffs of as much as 5,000 cu. ft. per sec. were rushing over the falls but the summertime head was down to 5 cu. ft. per sec. during some periods, too little for the constant generation of electricity. The actual closing of the plant in 1947 by Ontario Hydro led eventually to the dynamiting of the dam at ‘Cataract Lake’ and the disappearance of this man-made feature, which had become a part of area life. The ruins of Deagle’s mill are the most visible remnant of the historic period of water-powered milling on this section of the Credit River and of Deagle’s pioneering work in hydro-electric generation.

Many springs flow from the Escarpment, and J.J. McLaughlin established a bottling plant by one just south of Cataract in 1911, shipping the water to Toronto as ‘White Mountain Spring Water’. He later developed a beverage that was to become Canada Dry Ginger Ale. Crystal Springs now takes much of its water from the same source.

The Whirlpool (Medina) sandstone at the Forks of the Credit was first noted in a geological survey report of 1863. While some quarrying and use of the stone had been undertaken locally for some time (e.g., the building of ‘McLaren’s Castle’ completed in 1864), it was only with the advent of the railway and its connections to urban markets, particularly Toronto and Hamilton, that an industry became viable. Providing this link between aggregate resource and market was stated as one of the key objectives for the organization of the Credit Valley Railway (CVR) in 1872. The railway came through the area in 1879.

A station was built at the Forks of the Credit at the northern end of the longest curved timber trestle in Ontario at that time (1,146 feet long and 85 feet high), spanning the Credit River. Concern over its strength in the face of heavy use led almost immediately to an effort to reinforce it with a gravel embankment.
In 1883 the CVR was purchased by the CPR, which, at that time, operated 16 quarry sidings between Inglewood and Cataract (none remain today.) The need to move stone from the quarries to the railway sidings led to the development of a diverse arterial network which included roads, tramways, inclines and an aerial tramway.

With the rail link in place, Credit Valley sandstone was shipped throughout southern Ontario but primarily to Toronto and Hamilton. Queen’s Park and the old Toronto City Hall are two significant examples of the many important buildings completed in this material. Four varieties of ‘dimension’ sandstone were available from the Forks’ quarries: a grey with occasional brown spots; a uniform grey stone of particularly high quality; a brownstone which varied from chocolate to deep brown depending on the quarry with occasional deposits of a pinkish brown stone (particularly prized) and a piebald mix of white and brown stone.

The village of Belfountain, already a stable entity as a local service centre when large scale quarrying began, came into prominence during this period, becoming home to the skilled stoncutters and quarry managers. Forks of the Credit had been laid out as a village and is shown as Adjuda on the 1859 Tremaine Map, although sparsely inhabited at that time. A sawmill had been constructed at the Forks of the Credit (Price’s Mill) c.1850. However, the onset of quarrying turned the village into a ‘boomtown’, and led to the development of its neighbour, Brimstone, located further north on the east branch of the river. Both were essentially company towns.

The Forks of the Credit village (shown on the 1877 County Atlas map as Credit Forks) was developed, and Brimstone laid out, by the major quarry operator, Kenneth Chisholm. Chisholm had purchased most of the E ½ of Lot 9, Con. 4 from Richard Church in 1873 for quarry development, and was a promoter of the CVR. At one time Forks of the Credit had 33 houses, a store, a brick school with Mechanic’s Institute, a workmen’s hall and hotel. Folklore has it that Brimstone earned its name through the volatility of its inhabitants.
For twenty years some of the finest and most distinctive building stone to be used in Ontario came from the area, but by 1900 the accessible and economically viable deposits had been worked out. With the end of large scale quarrying, Brimstone and Forks of the Credit began to fade away, while Belfountain retracted to its pre-1880 size.

Burning lime for the production of lime mortar on an industrial scale was a secondary industry of the quarrying operations as the limestone ‘cap’ layers had to be removed to reach the desired sandstone. Fifteen draw kilns were built about 1896 near the east end of the railway trestle, but a down draft problem with the monumental central chimney caused it to be closed within a few years of commencing operation.

Sporadic attempts were made by various companies to establish a brick and clay works in the area of the Forks in the early decades of the 20th century, including a brickyard located on what is now the Caledon Ski Hills property.

While water powered industries and quarrying waned in the late 19th century, people continued to be drawn to the area by its scenic beauty and recreational opportunities. In 1877 the County Atlas was already describing the ‘Devil’s Pulpit’ as “quite the locality for pic-nics”. The developers of the Credit Valley Railway were aware of the scenic potential of the route along the Escarpment for their passenger traffic, despite the technical challenges it posed.

In 1908 Charles Mack, the inventor of the cushion back rubber stamp among other things, bought the property which forms the core of what is now managed as the Belfountain Conservation Area.

Mack landscaped the property with emphasis on picturesque effects, such as a miniature Niagara Falls and a suspension bridge as well as stone walls and walkways completed by a local mason, Sam Brock. In 1915 Mack Park was opened to the public.

By 1930, when A.J. Casson painted a view of the Forks of the Credit and Big Hill Quarry, the extraction activities had already been much softened by the regeneration of vegetation.

In 1950 the Caledon Ski Club began operation, one of the earliest ski hills in Ontario. The Bruce Trail, with now almost 40 years of ‘formal’ use in the area, is an important cultural route through the Candidate CHL. Using vestiges of earlier roads and paths, it is the best access to many of the key cultural ruins and artifacts as well as long standing scenic lookouts such as the Devil’s Pulpit. The Trail extends through the Forks of the Credit Provincial Park which was established on the east bank of the river, extending...
north from Forks of the Credit Road. The park’s trail system explores a diverse landscape that includes the Credit River gorge and Cataract Falls, and other geological features that were deposited or carved out by retreating glaciers, including kame hills and kettle lakes.

The natural features of the Niagara Escarpment and Credit River valley together with the Bruce Trail, the transformation of Mack’s Park in Belfountain into the Belfountain Conservation Area, and the establishment of Forks of the Credit Provincial Park, have cumulatively recreated a sense of a quasi-natural preserve in an area which was once so industrialized.

**Patterns of Spatial Organization**

The branched course of the Credit River and the stone spine of the Escarpment have been the key determinants of the form of settlement and cultural development within this Candidate area. While the land survey imposed its abstract gridiron on the landscape, the concession roads and sideroads could not all be put through as surveyed. Fourth Line (Mississauga), Third Line (Creditview), 2nd Line (McLaren) and the sideroad now known as Escarpment Sideroad had to be adapted, or give way, to the physical reality of the land. Waterfalls on both branches of the Credit River gave rise to mill seats, which in turn formed the basis for settlements, including further industrial enterprises.

McCurdy’s Mills developed into Belfountain, situated between the original road to the mill (River Road) which paralleled the river, the oxbow in the river and the northwest jog of the 4th Line (Mississauga Rd.) which became Main Street within the village. Within that area a relatively regular arrangement of village lots was laid out by survey in 1846 (registered 1853) with a grid of internal streets. Bush Street was developed as the link from the village westward into Erin, and the Forks Road, originally providing access to the mills at the confluence of the Credit branches (Price’s Mills c.1850) from 2nd Line entered the village from the east at what is now Scott Street. Commercial development focused on the north-south section of Main Street and the eastern portion of Bush Street. The village’s larger residences are found on these streets, while more modest cottages, originally workers cottages for the mills and quarries, were located on the back streets and the Forks Road. With few exceptions (Drury House), buildings are set quite close to the streets.

From earliest times a path extended along the Credit River to the Forks and, as industries such as Church’s Mills developed at, and below, the waterfall, it became a road. Dominion Road, as it came to be called, was moved from the west to the east side of the river in 1879.
so that the Credit Valley Railway could follow this ‘path of least resistance’. It became particularly important during the height of the quarrying of building stone, linking the villages of Forks of the Credit and Brimstone with the quarries. For a period of about thirty years the Forks of the Credit and Brimstone had the lay-out and service essentials of any typical hamlet of that period. However, with the closing of the quarries, Brimstone virtually disappeared and only a small number of buildings survived at the Forks. The Dominion Road was almost destroyed in the great flood of 1912 and fell into disuse.

The sheer nature of the Escarpment face above the river around Cataract separated the developing village from its water-powered industries in the valley. With the gradual decline of these industries and the closing of the building stone quarries, the valley area began to revert to its natural state, with the east side now encompassed in the Forks of the Credit Provincial Park, and the steep hill(s) on the west side, part of the property of the Caledon Ski Club.

3. Elements

Circulation Networks

The road and rail system through this area has always been unique due to the topography. The idealized straight roads of the ‘grid’ system could not work through here and access depended on ‘given roads’ (or sections thereof) as roadways had to snake around the river and sheer cliffs. Ferries and bridges have always been an important part of the system. The Credit River itself, though certainly a major transportation route in prehistoric times, was not easily navigable through much of its length, particularly for upstream travel.

A large part of the historic road network described in the previous section remains intact and still reflects the anomalies dictated by the rugged landscape. However, Scott Street originally formed a portion of Forks of the Credit Road rather than the curving and less precipitous current orientation coming in to Belfountain. As noted above, the Dominion Road was a key road through the valley during the height of its industrial period, linking the village of Forks of
the Credit with Brimstone and ultimately with Cataract. Almost destroyed in the great flood of 1912, it fell into disuse. The present day Dominion Road follows the southern section of the original road and continues northward as the Dominion Trail, a footpath within Forks of the Credit Provincial Park. Typically, the main roads through the area are now paved, but are not more than two lanes wide with a one lane bridge where 4th Line crosses the Credit River. The verdant valley vegetation extends down to the roadway at many locations giving a sense of enclosure.

Bridges have always been central to the efficacy of the road network through the area. Though most are now relatively new reinforced concrete spans, one early concrete shallow arch single-lane bridge c.1930 remains along McLaren Road (see above) with the original paneled treatment of the concrete railing. As well, earlier abutments remain at many locations.

The coming of the CVR was extremely important for industry, growth of communities, speed and ease of transportation. The train still occasionally passes through the valley and the tracks follow their historic route. While the railway bridge over the Credit River is now a steel trestle, it occupies the same position as the original wooden curved trestle, sections of which are still buried in the embankments. Two branches of the CVR at one time met at the junction in Cataract. The west branch is now the Cataract to Elora Trail.

The Bruce Trail and its branch trails now form an important recreational network of footpaths through the area. As discussed above, one trail follows the former Dominion Road and others utilize, in sections, the old cart tracks to former quarries.

**Boundary Demarcations**

There are a wide range of boundary demarcations within the Candidate area. Many of the residential properties are set well back off the road and only the lane is evident. Fencing is typically quite subtle, simple wire fences, which give the impression of unbounded greenery to the road’s edge. However, particularly around the Forks, fencing includes ‘No Trespassing – Private Property’ signage and, in at least one location, barbed wire.

Within Belfountain, some wood picket fences remain, with wood post and rail and modern wood fence styles also present. Generally, property boundaries are treated informally with driveways, and occasionally shrubbery, denoting property divisions.
Vegetation Related to Land Use

Forks of the Credit

Just south and west of Belfountain is the confluence of the east and west branches of the Credit River. This area is one of the most documented scenic spots in Ontario, and has been the subject of photographs and paintings for generations. This area is protected within the Forks of the Credit Provincial Park, which extends northwards toward the village of Cataract and includes the gorge where the Credit River drops over a steep edge of the Niagara Escarpment as the Cataract Falls. Hiking trails and a viewing platform are provided at the falls, with an excellent view down into the gorge and out over the valley. The park’s natural environment also includes small kettle lakes created by melting glaciers, as well as woodlands and regenerating former agricultural fields.

Several Escarpment outcroppings are visible around the Forks of the Credit, with the most prominent being the Devil’s Pulpit, which rises 100 metres above the Credit River Valley. Here, the Bruce Trail descends steeply down steps cut into the Escarpment face along what would have been the road allowance for the 3rd Line (Creditview Road), had the terrain not been so challenging.

In spite of incursions from quarrying and more recent residential development and recreation activities, the less accessible areas of the Niagara Escarpment remain relatively unchanged from historic times, with remnant areas of old growth forest, characterized by gnarled white cedar, remaining on the cliff face. As farms and quarries are abandoned within the Credit River valley and along the Escarpment ridge, woodlands are returning through natural succession to the original lowland and upland forest cover. In recent decades residential development has flourished throughout this area, with varying degrees of incursion into the surrounding natural areas. Many homes are nestled inconspicuously into a forest setting, while others have established manicured landscapes that are visually intrusive in an area renowned for its natural beauty and sensitive habitats.

Buildings, Structures and Objects

Note that * denotes designation under the Ontario Heritage Act.

Many types of built heritage survive within the Candidate Area. The core of Belfountain is composed of largely 19th century building stock as well as 20th century infill which, being typically frame and modest in scale, is generally sympathetic with that of the earlier period. Through the remainder of the area there are many structures, ruins and artifacts which are evocative of the fervent industrial activity in the valley.
Belfountain

*17426 Old Main Street, Mississauga Road (McTaggart – Douglas House and Store)

Known for many years as the Wayside Inn, this frame 1 ½ storey, clapboarded structure appears to have been built c.1850. Possibly built in two sections, it combines a front gabled north wing (with remarkably intact early shopfront) and a residential centre-gabled section within its ‘L’ plan. A verandah extends from the longitudinally orientated section and was originally open with scrollwork between the columns. The original segmentally arched windows and corbelled brick chimneys are still in place. It was operated by Peter McTaggart in the mid-1850s as a store as well as an inn.

Belfountain Village Store
NW corner of Bush and Main streets

The large side-gabled dichromatic brick structure has been in continuous use as a general store since its construction in 1888 (according to the date stone). Window openings are segmentally arched with buff brick voussoirs and a stone keystone. Quoins and a patterned string course are also accented with buff brick. It occupies the site of the earlier Glover’s Tavern.

673 Bush Street
(Bush Residence)

This 1 ½ storey frame house with steep centre gable was the home of Thomas Jefferson Bush, the first post master of the Village. Said, by a local historian, to have been constructed c.1870s to replace an earlier house, the main entrance of the residence is pilastered and has a rectangular transom with entablature above. Bush operated the post office on this property.
699 Bush Street (Drury Residence)

Fine side gabled, 1 ½ storey 3 bay c.1860 residential property set well back from the road, surrounded by mature trees and shrubbery. The façade features a main entrance with sidelights and transom and a full length verandah. Unfortunately, the chimney has been clad in siding.

*17241 Old Main Street (Mississauga Rd.)
(Brock Residence)

This 1 ½ storey frame structure with gabled roof and verandah on the south elevation was built by Robert Western Brock c.1840 and was the first residence on Main Street. Brock was a cabinet and casket maker who, in the course of his long life, took on many roles within the community. The house was the subject of a pen and ink drawing by C.W. Jeffreys in 1933, which shows extensive gingerbread and a finial at the gable and a ‘bell cast’ front verandah.

Along River Road (formerly Mill Street) and Forks of the Credit Road, as well as along the side streets, there are many small frame cottages which look as if they may have had their origin in worker’s housing for the quarries and mills.

Mack’s Park (Belfountain Conservation Area)

Within the village of Belfountain is a Conversation Area owned and managed by Credit Valley Conservation. To the locals this area has always been known as Mack’s Park –with its origins first as a private retreat and summer home to a prominent Toronto businessman, Charles W. Mack, and later the village recreation area. Originally from Nova Scotia, Mack obtained the property in 1908, and built a summer home and pleasure grounds in the style of the English romantic landscape, with rustic park structures and formal park elements integrated as works of art within the natural landscape setting. The river was dammed to create a pond and waterfall, complete with a swinging bridge over the gorge.
Although now demolished, Mack also built a rustic log frame home in the woods, and called it "Lucke-neuf". The stone pillars and steps that led to the house are still intact, along with remnants of other decorative and historic stonework, including a fountain with a bell motif, and a cave accentuated by a decorative stone entranceway and ventilation shafts. The park continues to be popular for picnicking, and walking trails allow visitors to explore the wooded valley and Niagara Escarpment talus slopes, which are home to rare plant species, including ferns and orchids.

This well managed park is a jewel within the Belfountain Candidate CHL, and is in its self a significant cultural heritage landscape.

**Industrial Heritage within the Valley**

In the period of extensive milling and quarrying in and around this section of the river valley, many associated structures, some quite unique and specialized, were to be found. However today, for the most part, only ruins, vestiges, indications and artifacts remain as an intriguing testament to that period.

**Deagle’s Mill**

Ruins of a number of mills and evidence of former industrial activity can be found within the Forks of the Credit Provincial Park, but the most dramatic and also most significant are the remaining stone walls of Deagle’s Mill which became one of the earliest hydro generating plants in Ontario. The ‘Ruins Trail’ within the Park is dedicated to it.

A full survey of former industrial sites within the area has yet to be taken. However, a Heritage Assessment of what are now the Willoughby and Cox properties (the former owned by the Ontario Heritage Foundation (OHF) and the latter by the Credit River Conservation Authority) in the area of Forks of the Credit Road (Lot 9, Concession 4), undertaken in 1988 for the Ontario Heritage Foundation by Historica Research Limited, provides a sense of the wealth of material which remains.
Willoughby Property

- Stone dam, mid 19th century, apparently associated with provision of water power and unique stone penstock. Millpond still evident but silted over
- Concrete dam (downstream from stone dam) still relatively sound, but center section (possibly stop logs) is missing. Associated pond filled with stones
- Remains of railway line (siding) to serve quarries with associated retaining walls and stone abutments for a bridge which extended over a small ravine
- Remains of ‘quarry access road’ connecting Forks of Credit Railway Station to working quarries.
- Windmill, possibly related to area farm

Cox Property

- Remains of aerial tramway
- Earthworks and worked sandstone face of Quarry #1
- Foot path from Quarry to access road
- Trail from access road along side of the valley wall
- Evidence of ‘Crownest’ Quarry with smooth stone face exposed
- Remains of ‘Hillis Quarry’ with very high working face
- Evidence of limestone quarry with limestone removed to level of sandstone. Evidence of Quarry #2 and Quarry #3

Adjacent Features

- Evidence of the ’Big Hill’ Quarry with sandstone outcrop, pond and large waste stone dump. Large horizontal tube boiler on property and other terminal of aerial tramway
- Large limestone kiln in woods by CVR railway trestle
- Garbage dump associated with former CVR Station
Former Village of Forks of the Credit

- A frame house at the bridge over the west branch of the Credit River appears to date from the era of Forks of the Credit
- The former brick school/Mechanics’ Institute has been converted into a house
- The former general store, now a residence, is still present on the south side of Forks of the Credit Road, at the bottom of the switchback

Other

- Sections of the Forks of the Credit Provincial Park Trail System, formerly the alignment of the west branch of the CVR
- The CVR Trestle, though not the original wooden, curved trestle, occupies the same site and its embankments are formed around sections of the original timber trestle
- Concrete shallow arch single lane bridge along McLaren Road
Settlement Clusters

The heritage core of the village of Belfountain as described in the preceding section.

Archaeological Sites

There are no archaeological sites currently registered within the Candidate area, though four sites are known to be in relatively close proximity. There has been no systematic archaeological field survey done of this area which essentially accounts for the lack of sites. Indeed, using the typical criteria for predicting the potential for pre-historic sites (proximity to water etc.) the area has High Potential. Specifically the areas around the actual Forks and Devil’s Pulpit have extremely high potential. As well, the historic evolution of the area and the many remaining heritage structures, ruins and artifacts suggests a high potential for archaeological sites and finds from the Euro-Canadian settlement and industrial period.

4. Site Context

The Escarpment is a singular feature within the context of the relatively flat farm land surrounding it, and most dramatically when viewed from the Peel Plain. Within the context of the Caledon section of the Escarpment, the portion included within the Candidate area, embracing the deep gorge and the Forks, is particularly striking and unique. However, between Mississauga Road and the valley north of Forks of the Credit extensive modern gravel extraction has disturbed the natural landscape.

The dramatic views - to Devil’s Pulpit from the east, to the Forks from above, to the trestle from the road below, into the gorge at Cataract - all remain intact, though the view is a lot ‘greener’ than in the 19th century.

7.3.3 EVALUATION

To be identified as a CHL an area must clearly embody both heritage significance and integrity.

Significance

Significance Criteria

While any landscape upon which humankind has left its imprint is a cultural landscape, only those cultural landscapes that have a deep connection with the history of the jurisdiction can be identified as cultural heritage landscapes. To be considered significant from a heritage perspective it must be demonstrated through the Inventory Report that the Candidate CHL meets one or more of the following criteria:

A. Is associated with events that made significant contributions to the broad patterns of area history, i.e., strong association with central themes.
B. Is closely associated with the lives of individuals and/or families who are considered significant to the history of the area.

C. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a particular settlement pattern or lifeway whether derived from ethnic background, imposed by the landscape, was the practice of a specific historic period or a combination of the above.

D. Manifests a particularly close and harmonious long-standing relationship between the natural and domestic landscape.

E. Has yielded or is likely to yield information important to prehistory or history.

F. Is strongly associated with the cultural and/or spiritual traditions of First Nations or any other ethnic and/or religious group.

Integrity

A CHL must be able to be justified as a distinct area of contiguous heritage integrity. Its key individual elements, which constitute the cultural heritage landscape and the way in which their interweaving makes a unique ‘place,’ must still clearly reflect the historic period and/or organic evolution from which the heritage significance derives.

Conclusions

Based on the preceding examination, the Belfountain and Credit River Gorge Candidate CHL strongly fulfills Criteria A, C and D. The early industries within the area grew and metamorphosed, with the assistance of the railway, to the point where their impact, e.g. the shipping of building stone and the pioneer development of hydro-electric power, had an impact well beyond the immediate area. As well, the unique topography and nature of the Credit River through this area has always promoted recreational use, which, over the last 50 years with the Bruce Trail and associated initiatives, has become most important.

In broad terms the key elements of the area– natural landmarks, settlements, rail lines and roads - remain in historic relationship to each other.

The dramatic quality and scale of the natural features have always ‘defined’ this area, even (it seems from historic photos) during the valley’s industrial period, and continue to do so today. These elements are reasonably well protected through the interests and policies of the Niagara Escarpment Plan, the Forks of the Credit Provincial Park, the Credit Valley Conservation Authority and the Ontario Heritage Foundation.

The railway through the valley and the trestle over the Forks occupies the same general location/relationship with the other
site elements as it did in the ‘historic period’. The current railway trestle is steel and the span shorter than the original, but the ‘story’ of the train through this landscape can still be readily understood.

The current condition of the abandoned quarries and associated artifacts is not known at this time. The quarries and evidence of roads, trails, tramways and waste piles will remain features in the landscape, though overgrown, but the iron artifacts will disappear without conscious protection/conservation.

Despite the inevitability of change over such a broad area, the Candidate CHL exhibits overall integrity, particularly in the relationship of key elements, i.e. the themes of which the area is representative and from which the area derives its significance can be understood and appreciated.

### 7.3.4 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The development of mills at the waterfalls of the West Branch and the East Branch of the Credit River gave rise to the early establishment of saw and grist mills in the area. At Belfountain this led to steady growth from 1825, the development of a sawmill and, subsequently, additional mills and water-powered industries, as well as stores and a tavern for the increasing population. The village itself was laid out between Mill Street (River Road) and an oxbow in the river to the west by 1850. With the establishment of significant quarrying operations in the area in the third quarter of the 19th century, it expanded and was generally the social and commercial hub of the region. Cataract, though founded earlier, only became viable with Richard Church’s purchase of the mill at the Falls and his expansion of that operation which led to the laying out of a village at the top of the bank. It was at the location of Church’s Mills that John Deagle rebuilt the Wheeler brothers stone grist mill and eventually established the first hydro generating plant in the area.

In the 1870s the cities of southern Ontario, particularly Toronto, required building stone. The Escarpment yielded a variety of stone types suitable for uses that ranged from fine buildings to curbs. This demand and the coming of the CVR through the area at this time facilitated a quarrying ‘boom’ along the Escarpment that saw the development of two villages in the area, Forks of the Credit and Brimstone, that were largely occupied by quarry workers. When the economically accessible deposits were used up these hamlets gradually reverted to ‘ghost towns’.

The demise of local resource based industry in the valley led to the regeneration of the natural flora, renewed appreciation of its natural beauty and a major increase in the recreational use of the area.

The history of land use in the Candidate area over the last century reflects the significant general change in value perception (as well as economic viability) from resource extraction to environmental regeneration/protection for health, beauty and sustainable tourism, as exemplified by the Niagara Escarpment Plan and the Bruce Trail.
Character-defining Elements:

*Note that * denotes designation under the Ontario Heritage Act.*

BC-1 Ruins of Deagle’s mill/hydro operation, including all evidence of industrial operation
BC-2 ‘Cataracts’ at the Village of Cataract
BC-3 The Dominion Trail
BC-4 Caledon Ski Club, 17431 Mississauga Road
BC-5 The curving nature of the roads and the ‘jogs’ along Mississauga Road
BC-6 673 Bush Street, Bush Residence
BC-7 699 Bush Street, Drury Residence
BC-8 758 Bush Street, Belfountain Village Store
BC-9 The historic core of the village of Belfountain
BC-10 *17426 Old Main Street (Mississauga Rd) McTaggart – Douglas House and Store
BC-11 Mill dams ruins at the Forks
BC-12 *17241 Old Main Street (Mississauga Rd), Brock Residence
BC-13 Mack’s Park (Belfountain Conservation Area), 10 Credit Street
BC-14 Evidence of the quarrying operations for building stone
BC-15 The Bruce Trail
BC-16 Willoughby Property, Forks of the Credit Road (W ½ Lot 9, Con. 4)
BC-17 Cox Property, Forks of the Credit Road (E ½ Lot 9, Con. 4)
BC-18 Evidence of the quarrying operations for building stone
BC-19 The Credit River Gorge
BC-20 Former CVR Tracks and Trestle above the Forks, Forks of the Credit Road
BC-21 Confluence of both river branches at the Forks of the Credit
BC-22 The ‘Devil’s Pulpit’
BC-23 Single-lane c.1930 concrete bridge along McLaren Road
BC-24 The curving nature of the roads and the ‘jogs’ along McLaren Road
BC-25 ‘Cataracts’ at Belfountain
BC-26 Small frame cottages along River Road and Forks of the Credit Road
BC-27 (Former) Forks of the Credit Village
BC-28 Lime Kilns
BC-29 1 Chisolm Street, Former Schoolhouse

It is thus recommended that this Candidate CHL referred to as Belfountain and the Credit River Gorge be identified as a CHL.
7.3.5 **BOUNDARIES**

The proposed Belfountain and the Credit River Gorge CHL boundary is described thus: Along the East Branch of the Credit River from just below the village of Cataract to the Forks extending from the former C.P.R. track in the west to the line of the old Dominion Road in the east; extending eastward at the Forks to McLaren Road and thence south to the Grange Sideroad. Also: extending west from the Forks of the Credit Road to encompass the village of Belfountain, including Bush Street to its intersection with Shaw’s Creek Road; thence back eastward following Main Street but, where it turns into Mississauga Road, continue along the western edge of the Escarpment southeast to Grange Sideroad.

Refer to **Figure 9 Belfountain and the Credit River Gorge** for detailed delineation of boundaries.
Character Defining Elements
- Built
- Landscape
- Streetscape
- CHL Boundary
- Road
- Trail
- Lakes / Ponds
- Rivers / Streams
- Active Railway
- Former Railway
- Property Boundary (2006)