

Historical Significance

Green Block, 1 Water Street, situated on the northwest corner of Main and Water Streets, on part of Lot # 1, has served the community of Penetanguishene as a merchantile building since it's presumable erection in the 1840's.

The building acquired it's name "Green Block" because it was painted green by Alfred Andrew Thompson, the man who built it.

After working for Andrew Mitchell Sr. in a fur trading post, A. A. Thompson built the Green Block to start his own business. Thompson carried on an extensive general merchantile business. He ultimately acquired the extensive fur trade operation from Mr. Mitchell. The fur business attracted annual buyers from Montreal, New York, London, Berlin and Australia. Accumulations of furs were generally offered in bulks and sold by tender to the highest bidder. As late as 1881 the proceeds of A. A. Thompson's fur sales totalled from \$12,000 to \$20,000 per annum.

The furs were supplied by Indians who came from as far as Thunder Bay (Fort William). At one time the shoreline of Penetanguishene Bay extended almost to the rear of Green Block. The Indians were able to dock their canoes not far from the rear of the building. Today it has been filled in, so that the shoreline is farther out than it was in those earlier days.

As well as being a fur trading post the A. A. Thompson store became noted as the only market and center where farmers from miles around could get cash for their produce of butter, eggs and vegetable etc. to pay their taxes.

Around 1884 William M. Thompson, son of A. A. Thompson, took over the business from his father and ran a Dry Goods, Grocery and Provision store in the Green Block.

Green Block, as before mentioned, has served the town of Penetanguishene as a commercial building from its beginning and still serves the same purpose today.

It is not known when, but after Wm. M. Thompson a Mr. Clements, who married one of Wm. M. Thompson's daughters, ran a grocery, clothing and general provisions store to approximately 1944 in Green Block.

In or around 1944 a Mr. Meads bought the Green Block and ran a clothing and grocery store in the building for about fifteen years. Since this time (approximately 1959) Jason Department Store has occupied the lower floor of Green Block.

Although the top floor of Green Block is vacant today, it was primarily used as office spaces when it was owned by A. A. Thompson, Wm. M. Thompson, Mr. Clements, and Mr. Meads.

Today the well known Green Block, which is no longer painted green, is owned by Mr. Mead's daughter, Mrs. Larry MacDonald of Penetanguishene.

Green Block

Architectural Description

This two story brick merchantile building is said to have been "built in the 1840's"¹, when the A. A. Thompson business was established. Design features seem to conflict with the 1840's date as some features like the windows and the trim or molding over the window head-surround give evidence from being used in the 1870's.

This flemish bond brick building, which has been painted over several times, is symmetrical as sets of windows are an equidistant on the front (south) and east facades.

A rectangular building (approx. 50 x 30 feet) the longest side, also the front, faces Water Street with the shorter side facing Main Street. A single storey house, which had been added at a later date is attached to the west side of Green Block. Since this single story house has been added on and is not part of the origianl design we will not be describing it as it is not relevant to us for this building.

The lower floor of Green Block, which is now rented by Jasons Department Store, has an immitation dressed log front. Eight large store windows allows the passerby to see into the store. The two main doors of the store are recessed in from the exterior wall. On either side of the doors two ^{the} of windows are set on an angle forming a funnel effect to the door. The other windows are flush with the exterior wall exposing the display area.

The top floor facade is the most interesting as unique design features are exposed to our view. There are six windows on the front facade. Three are spaced at an equidistant in each half of the front facade. In each set of windows, a single double hung window has two double hung windows on each side of it. Over all of the windows is a half round fixed window. All the windows have a cut stone lugsill and a brick surroundhead. A trim, made of either wood or concrete, surrounds the building at the same level of the top of the double hung windows. There are arches over the two double hung windows and in the shape of an ogee around the single double hung window. This trim is over the surround head of the windows and is around the whole building.

The top roof trim material is undetermined to be either terra cotta or made of wood. The many layers of paint make this feature undistinguishable. However the brick work just under the roof trim is interesting to note as a series of corbel worked brick do not coincide with the symmetry of the building. These corbel brick designs do not seem to have any purpose today, but, if you look at 1907 photo of Green Block you can see that the corbelled brick looked as if they were used as an extra support base for the uniquely designed features that once rested on the top of the building.

1. Quote from Julien Beausoleil, Manager of Jasons Dept. Store.