

Mystery Photo – April 2017



The Mystery Photo was one of numerous beehive kilns on the site of National Fireproofing Company of Canada's plant, later NATCO Clay & Tile, founded in 1910 and demolished in 1995. The company was also known as Halton Ceramics.

The plant was located on Unsworth Avenue, just south of the railway tracks, in Aldershot.

Established on lands bought from the Hendrie Farm, Natco became the first plant in Canada to manufacture structural clay tiles from local clays and shales. Originally 140 acres, 45 were sold to George Filman, a local market gardener and real estate agent.

Local clays and shale found on company property was crushed, ground into a fine powder, water added, and pastes were extruded through a die to give the required shape and size. The shapes were then dried to remove the water and finally fired in a kiln to a temperature of 1800°F.

Many well known local families in the Aldershot and Burlington district were employees of Natco. The factory was in operation from 1910 until 1980.

According to the report "The Ceramic Industry of Ontario" published in 1930, the plant had a capacity of 120 tons a day and operated all year round. "One of the outstanding jobs in which this plant's tiles was used is in the Parliament Buildings at Ottawa."

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The following is the description in the 1994 LACAC (forerunner of Heritage Burlington) application for designation:

“The 8 down-draft kilns are 32 feet inside diameter and have a capacity of 110 tons each. Their long working life proves the high quality of their construction with curved roofs of very good design and superior iron banding. The “beehive” kilns and the 200 foot chimney are familiar landmark structures and serve as reminders of the early development in Aldershot of a valuable industry....”

There was much correspondence back and forth regarding saving some of the site. The latest (November 1995) document I find in the file is a report by the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario. In that report they state “the 2 surviving brick kilns are important examples of their typePreservation of at least one such kiln in Burlington would conserve some part of the viable ceramics industry which was once so important to this area.” The estimated cost to restore that one kiln was \$125,000.

There is no further documentation in our files.

In 2017 there is no longer a physical reminder of the National Fireproofing Company of Canada’s site.

J.Downey 26 Mar 2017



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