

# ***DESIGNATION REPORT***



***No 10 Building – Oshawa Airport  
(No 420 Wing R.C.A.F. Association)  
1000 Stevenson Road North  
Oshawa***

**Prepared by Heritage Oshawa  
October, 2003**

based on research  
by  
Su Murdoch Historical Consulting

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## **Statement of Heritage Attributes**

No 10 Building–Oshawa Airport (No 420 Wing R.C.A.F. Association), located at 1000 Stevenson Road North in the City of Oshawa, is recommended for designation pursuant to Part 4 of the Ontario Heritage Act as a property of cultural heritage value and interest containing the following heritage attributes:

## **Historical Attributes**

### ***Summary***

The participation of local flying clubs in the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan was key to the training of about 73,000 Canadians during the Second War and the eventual success of the Allied Forces. The buildings constructed in 1941 to open an airport and accommodate the No. 20 Elementary Flying Training School (E.F.T.S.), represent Oshawa's participation in this aspect of the war effort. No. 10 Building, now occupied by No. 420 Wing R.C.A.F. Association, is one of the original buildings dating to the first period of construction activity in the winter of 1940-1941. No.10 building should be maintained as part of a grouping of original buildings that survive on site, notably No. 11 Building, the canteen, and Nos. 1 and 2 hangars.

### ***Historical Background***

On September 3, 1939, Britain and France declared war on Germany. Canada followed on September 10 and immediately began preparing for its role as a member of the Allied Forces. On December 17, 1939, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand signed an agreement to participate in the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan to train pilots, navigators, gunners, bomb aimers, flight engineer, air crew, ground crew and support staff. Over

the next five years approximately 131,553 airmen were trained and graduated to Wings standard.<sup>1</sup> According to David J. Broughton in his 1994 *History of Oshawa Airport*:

Flying clubs across Canada were asked to train pilots to the R.C.A.F. [Royal Canadian Air Force] standard to support Canada's need for pilots for wartime requirements. Contracts were offered to all active Canadian Flying Clubs. Each would form a company under the Dominion Companies Act, and would provide their own capital for entering into a training contract with the Crown. An agreement was signed December 17<sup>th</sup>, 1939, with R.A.F. delegates on behalf of Great Britain, and then the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) became a reality in Canada.

Oshawa businessman Alexander G. Storie, president and general manager of Fittings Ltd., assisted by George Hart, Haydon McDonald, Samuel Trees, and T.K. Creighton, organized the Ontario County Flying Training School. The Brantford and Kingston Flying Clubs added \$5000 each to the fundraising campaign headed by Robson Leather Co. Ltd. owner, Charles Robson. The three clubs established No. 20 Elementary Flying Training School (E.F.T.S.) under the model of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. Robson became the first manager of the School.

The obvious drawback to the success of the E.F.T.S. was the lack of airport facilities in the Oshawa area. That changed in 1940. Earth movers arrived in the Fall of 1940 to demolish the existing farm buildings and level two hills and a cultivated field. Several new structures were standing even before March 20, 1941, when the federal government finalized the expropriation for airport use of Lot 15, Concession 3, East Whitby Township. Other expropriations and purchases followed, until the site reached its current 490.95 acres. In 1941, the Oshawa airport was north and west of the town.

Civil engineers and labourers rapidly planned and constructed hangars, runways, barracks, roadways, and the infrastructure required to open the airport and No. 20 E.F.T. School. The first plane arrived in June 1941. Twelve months later, the opening ceremony was officiated by the Duke of Kent. Alexander Storie was appointed E.F.T.S. President.

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<sup>1</sup> From information on a plaque at the airport site erected by the City of Oshawa in 1992.

During the war period, about 2500<sup>2</sup> student pilots completed the basic flying training course at Oshawa. Every six weeks, two classes graduated sixty students each. Large H-shaped barracks were built over several years to accommodate the enlisted and other personnel. According to Broughton:

The student pilots were housed on the property in bunk houses which were situated on the south west side of the field, not far south from where the control tower is now. There was also a swimming pool, a bowling alley, and a hospital of the airport grounds. The base employed about four hundred civilians, seventy of them instructors, with between seventy-eight and eighty-four aircraft in operation.

The efficiency of the Ontario County Flying Training School was acknowledged by several awards, including the Cock of the Walk trophy awarded to Oshawa in 1944 as “the best training station in Canada.”<sup>3</sup> November 1944 saw the last graduating class of pilots at Oshawa. Following Germany’s surrender in May 1945:

The airport became a storage base and clearing house for the War Assets Corporation and the Royal Canadian Flying Clubs Association . . . . The R.C.A.F. closed the airport in the spring of 1945, and turned the operation over to the Department of Transport. The buildings and aircraft were declared war surplus by the government. (Broughton, p.3)

## ***Postwar Activities***

On February 18, 1944, the Directorate of No. 20 E.F.T.S. received a charter or special Letters Patent as a Flying Club. With the war still unsettled, there was no initiative to organize the Club until the Spring of 1945. A gathering at the Hotel Genosha in downtown Oshawa led to the August 16, 1945, formation of a management committee for the Oshawa branch of the Royal Canadian Flying Clubs Association.

Haydon McDonald (chairperson), W.O. (Bill) Hart, E.G. Storie, K.D. Smith and George Hurren (who became manager of the Flying Club and the airport) immediately negotiated with the

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<sup>2</sup> The estimate of 2400-2500 is recorded on the plaque erected in 1992 by the City of Oshawa.

federal government for the lease of several airport buildings. The annual rent was one dollar plus maintenance, taxes and insurance. Among the buildings leased by the Club were the Recreational Hall, No. 1 Hanger, and No. 10 Building (subject building). In spite of setbacks, by August 31, 1945, “the business of flying on a club basis began,” and on September 15 the Ontario County Flying Club opened. From its opening until January 1, 1947, the Club had the financial and physical responsibility for all airport plant and operations.

Several commercial operations leased (or eventually bought) other buildings on site. In late 1945, Weston Aircraft opened an aircraft maintenance shop in the south half of Hanger No.1. When bought in 1947 by Photographic Survey, the name was changed (in 1948) to Field Aviation. It operated at Oshawa until 1960 when it relocated to Toronto airport (Malton, now Pearson International). Bob Kashower, owner of Kashower Aviation, bought war surplus aircraft and had Weston convert them for civilian use. Bob lived in a trailer on site and had his office at the top of the control tower building from 1946 to 1950.

Following extensive negotiations with the federal government, in 1947, the Town of Oshawa took over the management of the airport. Also that year, Air Cadet flying training began under the sponsorship of the Air Cadet League (with the financial support of the Department of National Defense.) The Oshawa Air Cadets chose the name Chadburn Squadron in recognition of the decorated Canadian fighter pilot and young R.C.A.F. Wing Commander, Lloyd V. Chadburn. An array of other private and corporate endeavours at the Oshawa airport are documented in David J. Broughton’s 1994 *History of Oshawa Airport* (See Appendix).

In April 1949, No. 420 Wing of the Royal Canadian Air Force Association was organized, holding its first meeting in November.<sup>4</sup> Like other Wing Associations, their mandate as volunteers was to ensure a strong Air Force and assist with other aviation matters such as airports and Air Cadet training. The directors of the Flying Club gave No. 420 Wing permission to use the south half of No. 10 Building for their monthly meetings.

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<sup>3</sup> There is a (disputed) tradition that the noted actor, Richard Burton, flew at Oshawa during the war.

<sup>4</sup> Dates are recalled by Bill Cox.

## ***Current Status***

Today, there is no Armed Forces presence at the airport site. The Flying Club closed about 1998. The airport is divided into north and south fields, with separated access. Generally, the level of air traffic activity is related to the production needs of General Motors Oshawa. The location has been popular for commercial filmmaking and an aeronautical, military, and industrial museum was opened recently in a building to the rear of No. 10. A war surplus Sabre aircraft is the focal point of a park that contains plaques and other relics commemorating the site history. With the possible exception of the hangars, the buildings seem to be in stable condition.

## Architectural Attributes

### *Architectural Background*

Under pressure to open the airport and Flying School as part of the war effort, buildings at the Oshawa site were erected quickly. The initial construction activities in 1940-1941 were followed by a second phase from September 1943 into 1944. The buildings were intended to serve a specific purpose for a life span of about twenty years. All were of frame construction and primarily clad in wood shingle siding, painted dark green. The roofs had cedar shingles. The window types included 6x6 pane, double hung wood sashes; wood casements with multiple small panes; and narrow openings in the upper wall section. According to Bill Cox in 2002,<sup>5</sup> the original configuration of the site included the following structures:

- guard house
- pump house
- water tower (original and a second built later)
- administration building
- No. 10 Building
- No. 11 Building (workshop)
- canteen
- incinerators
- gun butt
- airmen's mess
- H-shaped, two storey barracks
- No. 1 hangar
- control tower
- swimming pool
- house for the chief of Works and Bricks
- hospital
- officer's mess
- recreational hall with a bowling alley
- garage
- parade square
- tarmac

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<sup>5</sup> Bill Cox first arrived at the airport in May 1941, at age sixteen. He left in the summer of 1943, retraining at the end of the war to work for Field Aviation. He later opened a business, W.G. Cox Aviation Supplies Ltd., still based at the airport in 2002.

Second phase buildings included additional barracks, Link Trainer (aircraft flight simulator) building, No. 2 hangar with a concrete foundation pad prepared to double the size. Other buildings were constructed later by the military on an as-needed basis.

The recreational hall was sold and demolished in 1965 and is now the site of W.G. Cox Aviation Supplies Ltd. The administration building was moved out in two sections. One was sent to Port Perry to use as a hospital; the other served for several years as the Oshawa Recreation Centre at Rotary Park. All the other key buildings have been demolished or removed. No. 10, No. 11 (to the north of No. 10), the canteen (to the rear of No. 10), and No. 1 hangar are the only remaining buildings that date to the first period of construction. No. 2 hangar was built about 1943-44.

### ***No 10 Building***

No. 10 Building is one of the original structures erected in 1940-41. The south half briefly housed the Stores or supplies, then was converted to the N.C.O. (non-commissioned officers) mess. The north half was the ground maintenance or “Works and Bricks” building.

The building was leased from the federal government in 1945 by the Flying Club. In 1949, No. 420 R.C.A.F. Wing Association rented the south half. Bob Kelly, who owned Mechanical Advertising (a manufacturer of large electric timer clocks used in hockey arenas) was in the north half from 1948 to about 1954. The north half was then leased to Field Aviation until 1960. About 1961, No. 420 Wing leased the entire building.

No. 10 Building is a long, rectangular, single storey, frame structure with a medium pitched gable roof. A rear section that extends the roofline, interrupting the original gable, was added about 1967. The original cedar shingle roofing material has been replaced with asphalt shingles. The walls are now clad in dark green, textured metal siding that covers the original cedar

shingles still underneath. An example of the original shingle siding type is on the 1941 canteen building standing in 2002 to the rear of No. 10. It has a modest entryway enclosure.

Bill Cox recalled that the south end of the building had casement style windows measuring about 3'x4' with multiple small panes.<sup>6</sup> The north half had small window openings at the eaves level only. All the windows have been replaced.

The interior truncated ceiling with perimeter timber braces is said to be original to the N.C.O. mess. The beaded pine wainscoting or paneling is also original. When the east wall was removed to incorporate the 1967 addition, some of the beaded pine was re-used throughout the interior. The fireplace location and some of its components, as well as the narrow, hardwood flooring, likely date to the 1940s. The interior was heated with a Fireman stove at each end, possibly until a steam heating plant was built to supply the airport site.

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<sup>6</sup> Bill Cox has one of the windows at his cottage.

## **Summary of Significant Heritage Attributes**

### ***Historical Significance***

The participation of local flying clubs in the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan was key to the training of about 73,000 Canadians during the Second War and the eventual success of the Allied Forces. The buildings constructed in 1941 to open an airport and accommodate the No. 20 Elementary Flying Training School (E.F.T.S.), represent Oshawa's participation in this aspect of the war effort. No. 10 Building, now occupied by No. 420 Wing R.C.A.F. Association, is one of the original buildings dating to the first period of construction activity in the winter of 1940-1941.

### ***Significant Architectural Attributes***

- Long, rectangular, single storey, frame structure with medium pitched gable roof.
- Original cedar shingles underneath metal siding.
- Interior truncated ceiling with perimeter timber braces.
- Beaded pine wainscoting or paneling.
- Narrow, hardwood flooring.

### ***Contextual Attributes***

No.10 building should be maintained as part of a grouping of original buildings that survive on site, notably No. 11 Building, the canteen, and Nos. 1 and 2 hangars.

## Sources

Conveyances Abstract. *Durham Land Registrar's Office*

Broughton, David J. "The History of Oshawa Airport." *Flying News*, June 27, 1994.

"History made at airport: Organization wants special designation for airport." *Oshawa This Week*, December 3, 1997.

Airport Files. *Oshawa Community Archives*

Telephone conversation with Robert Stuart. April 2002.

Interview and site tour with W.G. (Bill) Cox. May 2002

## **Appendix 'A'**

### ***Photographs***



**Photograph No 1**

**West Façade**



**Photograph No 2**

**South Facade**



**Photograph No 3**

**South and east facades showing rear addition**



**Photograph No 4**  
**North and west facades**



**Photograph No 5**  
**North and west facades**