



Building our community

The Credit River's meandering current through Halton Hills, sometimes becoming a spirited flow in spring, gives little inkling of how the river was also the motivation for the development of industry and commerce in our town. The river served as a power supply for, not one, but a number, of businesses and factories that were important for the evolution of our community.

Along the Credit itself, the Barber (c. 1850 paper), Beaumont (c. 1870 knitting) and Williams Mills (c. 1825 saw; c. 1871 flour; c. 1893 electricity) were all at one time going concerns. These, along with the countless firms that sprang-up adjacent to Silver Creek, ensured a need for employees to come and work in the area. Local housing and provision of public services to support these workers was a further impetus for the creation of the town we know today.

The recent reissuing of Reinhard Filter's book on the Barber Dynamo is a reminder of the river's role in the development of our community. At the end of the 19th century, this "miracle of the age" proved to be a North American first when power generated from the river was transmitted more than 2.5 kilometres to supply the burgeoning factory. Not only creating opportunity for industry, power produced by the river led to the creation of comforts for the residents with electric lights illuminating Main Street in Georgetown before the end of the century.

Heritage river designation

Currently, there is an effort to have the Credit River designated as a Canadian Heritage River. The Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS) was established in 1984 by the federal, provincial and territorial governments. This was to conserve and protect the best examples of Canada's river heritage, to give them national recognition, and to encourage the public to enjoy and appreciate them.

In 1986, the French River became the first Canadian Heritage River to be designated. There are currently 41 Canadian Heritage Rivers (37 designated, and another four nominated) across Canada, with more being added each year. A designation is a formal proclamation that a river has a recognized set of natural and/or cultural values of Canadian importance. Designation also means that the provincial or territorial government and stakeholders are committed, through a plan or strategy, to maintain these values over the long term. A designation carries no regulatory or legal requirements or restrictions but recognizes and honours important Canadian rivers, giving them a national and international profile.

A Canadian Heritage River designation usually results in increased monitoring and better co-ordinated river management. Working together, stakeholders and governments can enhance environmental and cultural protection, improve recreational opportunities, encourage research and education, and support broad-based stewardship. As well,

many Canadian Heritage River communities identify the greatest benefit are the new relationships created between individuals and organizations which are formed through the designation process.

Designation process

Establishing a Canadian Heritage River is a two-step process, nomination and designation. To be considered, a river must have outstanding natural, cultural and/or recreational values, a high level of public support, and it must be demonstrated that sufficient measures will be put in place to ensure that those values will be maintained. Based on these criteria, the responsible government decides whether or not to pursue the nomination of a specific river. Once nominated, a 15-member national board made up of private citizens and senior officials from government departments reviews the nomination.

A nominated river becomes designated once a management plan, or heritage strategy, that ensures the river will be managed to conserve its outstanding natural, cultural and/or recreational values, is lodged with



the board by the government that made the nomination. Production of a management plan or heritage strategy is based on public consultation and consensus. All protective actions on Canadian Heritage Rivers depend on existing laws and regulations, and respect the rights of Aboriginal peoples, communities, private landowners, and other stakeholders.

To maintain the Canadian Heritage River status, an annual report outlining accomplishments is submitted to the Canadian Heritage Rivers board. Every 10 years, a more detailed report assessing the changes to and integrity of those features and values for which the river was designated is completed.

Considering the Credit River's role in shaping our community along with its abundant natural and recreational value, a Canadian Heritage River designation seems more than appropriate. To learn more about the campaign and to get involved, visit www.creditourriver.ca

