

NEWSLETTER

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MARCH 1982 Vol. 10 No. 3 Diane Holmes, President Jennifer Roddick, Editor

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This year the Annual General Meeting will be held Thursday, May 27th at 8:00 p.m. in the Director's Boardroom of the National Archives, 395 Wellington Street, Ottawa.

Following the meeting and election of officers will be a talk by Sandra Gwyn, local author and historian.

APRIL TOUR

The Programmes Committee is pleased to invite Heritage Ottawa members to tour Rideau Hall, April 26th.

Two times have been arranged for the guided tours, 3:30 p.m. and 4:15 p.m., which are limited to 50 participants each.

Reservations may be made, no later than April 16th, by phoning Stella Kirk, Tuesday or Thursday mornings at 745-0551. Please specify which tour time you prefer.

RIDEAU HALL: A BRIEF HISTORY

In the fall of 1826, Col. John By contracted Thomas MacKay, a Scottish mason, to construct the stone arches for what was soon to be known as Union Bridge, so named because it united Upper and Lower Canada as a means to transport building materials from Hull to the canal site.

Due to his success, Col. By named MacKay as prime contractor for building the eight entrance locks to the Rideau Canal, as well as the Hartwell locks, locks at Hogs Back and the locks and magnificent curved dam at Jones Falls.

In 1832, on completion of the Canal, MacKay encouraged his workmen to remain in Canada and settle in the Village of New Edinburgh where he owned mills beside Rideau Falls. He also owned 1100 acres of bushland in what is now Rockcliffe Park.

In 1838 he completed construction of his manor house, an eleven-room residence built mainly of local limestone.

The original house measured 75 by 47 feet and was two storeys high - a mansion in the old English style. In appearance and style it eclipsed anything in the area. Townsmen dubbed it "MacKay's Castle in the Bush".

In 1865 the government rented the mansion and surrounding 77 acres for \$4,000 a year. It was re-named Rideau Hall and was intended for the exclusive use of the Governors-General of Canada.

It was enlarged to include a large stone wing, the conservatory, a cottage for the Governor-General's private secretary and a lodge. Additions to the grounds were also made.

In 1868, the government purchased the property plus 11 acres from MacKay's estate for \$82,000. A vinery, carriage houses and stables were added. The grounds were fenced, roads repaired and gardens planted.

During the Dufferin years (1872-1878) a ballroom was created. The chapel and organ date from Lord Aberdeen's tenure (1893-1898). The façade was rebuilt and the entrance hall paved with marble for the Duke of Connaught in 1911.

The Oval Drawingroom on the second floor, forming part of the Royal Suite, is considered to be one of the finest in Canada. The house also reputedly has the world's largest carved stone Coat of Arms over the entranceway.

In summer, visitors are permitted to tour the grounds; tours of Rideau Hall itself however must be booked many months in advance.

Vera Campbell

"BYTOWN ON THE RIDEAU"

"Bytown on the Rideau" is the title of a series of seminars organized by Sheila Sloan, Heritage Ottawa Director, and produced co-operatively by Heritage Ottawa, Carleton University and The Citizen.

The Series commences April 14th and continues through May 26th. Total cost for the Series is only \$15 per person or \$10 for Senior Citizens.

Details of the Seminars plus a registration form are attached.

Registrations are limited and may be made by mailing your cheque or money order together with the registration form to: "Bytown on the Rideau", Heritage Ottawa, c/o 38 Promenade Beausoleil, Ottawa K1N 9E8.

THE PRESERVATION OF INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE

The following was submitted to The Newsletter from Edwin Welch former resident of Ottawa and active preservationist.

So far, heritage preservation in Canada seems to have been confined almost entirely to examples of domestic and rural architecture. Little has been done to preserve the equally important industrial remains. The reason is quite clear. The buildings which we try to preserve are usually attractive houses in urban or rural residential areas; the industrial remains are normally in non-residential areas rarely visited by the historian or architect. There can be no public outcry about the destruction of important industrial sites until they are identified and some assessment of their importance has been made. Yet ten years hence when we wish to see the mill as well as the millowner's attractive house we shall bitterly regret this philistine attitude.

As far as I know, the City of Ottawa and its neighbouring municipalities have yet to designate one industrial building or site as being of heritage value. This is incredible when the quantity and importance of the industrial sites in the area are considered. Perhaps the three most important, both historically and architecturally, are the Rideau Falls, Lees Avenue and the Chaudière Falls. The Rideau Falls area was an important industrial site for over a century. Almost every type of local industrial activity took place there at one time or another. Today there is only a disused hydro-electric

station which has somehow escaped both the bulldozer and the scrap metal merchant. At Lees Avenue a gasworks and a railway depot of considerable size have completely disappeared. A section of decaying metal fence marks one edge of the site. Nearby, Hurdman's Bridge, which is an early example of the use of concrete, is slowly falling into the river. Only the Chaudière Falls area, neglected and unvisited, has managed to keep a reasonable proportion of its buildings. This is particularly fortunate because such buildings as the waterworks (still in use) and the carbide works (a mere shell) have an historic importance which is national rather than local. Elsewhere on the site are hydro-electric stations, a pulp mill and the remains of the first Chaudière bridge which should also be preserved.

A little has already been done at the Chaudière. A plaque to Thomas Keefer has been placed on his waterworks and the Regional Municipality is considering extensive repairs to the building. The National Capital Commission has repaired two buildings on the site and leased them for appropriate uses. Other buildings still await restoration and the provision of better access to the area. In Europe areas similar to the Chaudière have been developed as industrial open-air museums and attract many tourists. In Ottawa, the bulldozer and the vandal are jointly destroying an important segment of the City's history.

Can nothing be done to stop them?

Edwin Welch

Editor's note: we invite comments and answers to Mr. Welch's letter.