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Dedicated to Preserving Our Built Heritage

President's Message

by Louise Coates

Two historic buildings are of great concern to heritage sympathizers right now: Jeanne d'Arc on Sussex Drive, and Wallis House at Rideau and Charlotte. Both are federally-owned buildings.

The corner of Rideau and Charlotte Streets has been an eyesore since the department of National Defence moved out of Wallis House in October, 1990. Since then, the 19th century gem has been "progressively demaintained" – allowed to deteriorate through a refusal to heat or keep up the building.

The federal government (Wallis is owned by DND and managed by Public Works), is asking a cool \$4 million for Wallis and its land, a high price considering the economy and glut of office space in Ottawa. One has to ask why the federal government – forget the private sector! -- is so eager to be rid of our heritage. Wallis' 14 foot ceilings and elegant demeanor have established its reputation in architectural circles.

This fall, two non-profit housing groups, City Living and Centretown Citizens of Ottawa Corporation, together with architect Barry Padolsky, presented detailed plans to convert Wallis into apartments. Wallis House conversion project leader, Richard Sanders, organized a public meeting with community leaders and residents Oct. 19 to urge them to lobby the federal government to lower its price. The fate of Wallis hinges on provincial support

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Wallis House – Past and Present

by Morley Verdier, Wallis House Historian

The severe typhus epidemic of 1847, brought on by the arrival of Irish Catholic immigrants carrying ship fever, prompted the Protestant community to begin raising funds in 1849 for a Protestant general hospital. Catholics were served by Hotel-Dieu Hospital, operated by the Sisters of Charity under Sister Elisabeth Bruyère.

On September 19, 1850, the corner stone for The County of Carleton Protestant General Hospital was laid; it opened in May, 1851, on the open area to the east of where Wallis House

was danger of contaminating hospital patients because many buried were small pox victims. As a result, the cemeteries were moved to what would become Beechwood Cemetery in 1872.

Epidemics of ship fever, typhoid, cholera, yellow fever, malaria, and small pox scourged Ottawa and overwhelmed the tiny stone hospital. A replacement hospital was designed by Robert Surtees (later Ottawa City Engineer) in the Queen Anne style, and on May 16, 1873, the construction of Wallis House was begun. The corner stone

was laid by the Governor General Earl Dufferin with full Masonic ceremonies. It opened in 1875 with 75 beds and was one of the most modern of its time, with high ceilings and segregated wards separated by long corridors. The earlier structure was used as an isolation ward for contagious diseases. It was demolished in 1907.

The new County of Carleton Protestant General Hospital was supported by subscriptions from the Protestant churches of the region with donations of sheets, blankets, linen gowns, coal, firewood, and food often being received. Ottawa's population quickly outgrew the hospital's capacity and in 1898 a major extension was built to the east, as was a wing extending to Rideau Street.

Medical services began to congregate in the area, with the Lady Stanley Institute for Trained Nurses being founded in 1890 to provide staff. Maternity cases were transferred



Wallis House

now stands. The two-storey stone structure opened with ten beds and two employees — a steward and a matron (his wife) to tend to the sick.

The land to the north of the hospital (now MacDonald Park) was purchased in 1844 by the four main religious denominations -- Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Wesleyan Methodist, and Episcopalian -- for use as cemeteries. By 1870 they were full and there

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for the housing proposal, and a federal decision to save the building and lower its economic expectations.

Jeanne d'Arc, owned by the National Capital Commission, will soon be "renovated", according to an NCC call for developers' plans. The five buildings that compose Jeanne d'Arc date from 1846; the NCC wants to demolish most of their contents and build upscale offices and stores. The only requirement placed on developers is that the facades on Sussex and York are saved.

The heart of the problem with the treatment of these two sites is a federal policy that says empty federally-owned buildings should be rented out at market value. On the other hand, its Federal Heritage Buildings Review Office (FHBRO) says heritage properties should be saved. How can these policies work together? If an empty heritage building has to bring in market value rents that compare with state-of-the-art office tower space, it can't stay heritage, it has to be "modernized", that is, rebuilt. The policy of market value for heritage properties is one of the key issues in federal heritage preservation today.

If federal, provincial and municipal governments re-used the buildings they owned, as is done in the U.S., and didn't insist on building new office towers, our heritage would survive. Why is Wallis empty and the Daly demolished while federal departments move into spots such as Place de Ville? Who isn't happy the former county courthouse has been converted into a complex for the performing arts? Recycling heritage properties is not only smart, it makes for a charming and colourful pastiche of styles in a city, a blend of streetscapes with something for everyone. Please, write or call your local politicians and press for an end to market value for heritage buildings and a move towards recycling.

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as of 1894 to Rideau Street's Ottawa Maternity Hospital, to the east of Wallis House near the Rideau River. The Ottawa Protestant Children's home -- the present Turkish Embassy -- was located on Wurtemberg. A children's ward was organized by the May Court Club in 1905 and funded by bazaars and other public fundraising events.

A third storey was added to the hospital's east wing in 1912 and large sun rooms constructed at the ends of the wards on Rideau Street. The last major epidemic to strike Ottawa was typhoid fever in 1912; so many patients were admitted that tents had to be set up on the grounds where the first hospital once stood. By 1920, Ottawa's medical requirements outgrew the city's facilities and the County of Carleton Protestant Hospital and St. Luke's Hospital were amalgamated to form the Civic Hospital, which moved to a new building on Carling Avenue in 1924.

The Wallis House site was purchased in 1925 by the Archdiocese of Ottawa and the building was converted into Major and Minor Seminaries. The Minor Seminary provided eight years of classical schooling for young men, leading to a Baccalaureate of Arts. Students could then complete four years in the Major Seminary and graduate as priests. The Archdiocese separated the seminaries in 1943 and moved them to other sites in Ottawa.

The Navy bought the facility the same year and converted it into barracks for the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service (WRENS), whose personnel worked in various Ottawa locations on administrative duties. The building at this time was covered in vines and provided an ideal home for spiders, a fact not lost on the ladies stationed there who had to sweep the ceilings daily.

The Navy named the building "Wallis House" after Lieutenant Provo William Parry Wallis. Wallis was born in Halifax in 1791 and distinguished himself in the naval engagement between HMS Shannon and USS Chesapeake,

which took place off Boston Harbour, June 1st, 1813. Lieutenant Wallis assumed command of the Shannon after Captain Phillips Vowes Bere Broke was killed; the Shannon was victorious, and Wallis brought both vessels into Halifax Harbour. Lieutenant Wallis was subsequently knighted and advanced to the rank of Admiral of the Fleet in 1877. He died at the age of 102.

The barracks were used by the WRENS until 1945 when they were abandoned in the demobilization. They were then occupied by vagrants and squatters. An acute housing shortage after the war resulted in action by the Veterans' Housing League which occupied a number of vacant military buildings. In 1946, Wallis House and other buildings were leased by the Federal Emergency Shelter Corporation to the City of Ottawa for rental housing. Wallis House was converted into 46 apartments and initially housed 47 families with 136 children. The dilapidated structure was vacated in 1950.

The Korean War resulted in a new role for Wallis House and 13 Personnel Depot moved in to undertake recruiting for the conflict. A year later 113 Manning Depot (M) and the militia district's 1 Cadre moved in. In 1954, additional militia units arrived -- 3 Divisional Signals Regiment RCSC, 130 Transport Company RCASC, 3 Ordnance Company RCOC, 10 Medical Company RCAMC, and 54 Dental unit RCDC. The logistics units were amalgamated in 1965 to form the Ottawa Service Battalion and the Communications Unit was redesignated the 763 Communications Unit.

The 28 Service Battalion and 763 Communications Regiment and their affiliated Cadet Corps finally left Wallis House in October, 1990, moving to the Walkley Road - Major E.J.G. Holland, VC Armoury.

With the departure of the militia, Wallis House is awaiting a new role in the service of the city and the community.

Mr. Verdier was once stationed in Wallis House; he has done extensive research on the building.

Tax Reassessments: A Three-Point Solution for Heritage Buildings

by Marc Denhez (Heritage Ottawa's legal consultant)

For decades, experts argued that downtown locations were traditionally under-assessed for property tax purposes, and fringe locations over-assessed. When Ontario bit the bullet in the 1980s and determined to abide by "Market Value Assessment," the corollary was that downtown assessments would be in for a rough ride. Add to that the boom in the Byward Market over the last decade, and many people were bracing for large tax increases for many of Ottawa's heritage buildings.

Nonetheless, tax increases of over 100% in many cases, still caught numerous heritage property owners off

guard. Heritage Ottawa has responded with a proposal for a three-point program to bring tax increases down to a less punitive level.

First, public authorities should double-check whether their assessment of designated heritage properties is legally correct. Courts have long held that heritage buildings are supposed to be assessed according to their existing use, not according to an upgraded conjectural use following alterations. That existing use would usually lead to a lower tax bill, compared with an assessors' idea of what an altered "highest and best use" might be.

The second point is more substantive. It calls on local officials to explore the feasibility of acknowledging that among designated heritage buildings, a part of the property (e.g. the facade) is now under public control and should be taxed as such. Real estate under public control (e.g. via easement etc.) is usually taxed at a lower rate.

The third point calls on Ottawa to follow the example of other municipalities (Edmonton, Saskatoon, Yellowknife, even Perth) and provide a "heritage grant" to owners equal to the tax increases resulting from the restoration of their property. Under that system, the owner's taxes do go up — but, there is a set-off, as the grant brings the tax bill back to its original level. In practice, no money changes hands; the tax bill just stays at its current level for a few years. Other municipalities across North America have concluded that this is one of the easiest incentives to administer and these "grants" cost nothing to the city's cash flow.

The question which now faces Ottawa is whether this city will simply ignore heritage and wait for it to be hammered by the tax man, or take the positive measures that have been used by its counterparts.

Au fil des événements: Le Pavillon Aberdeen

par Gérard Robard

Au début de juillet cette année les conseillers municipaux de la ville d'Ottawa se prononçaient à une large majorité pour la restauration du Pavillon Aberdeen.

Ce vote n'est pas le fruit du hasard. Il est dû à tous ceux et celles qui ont participé au débat sur l'avenir de ce Pavillon depuis des décennies. Ce travail d'équipe à tous les niveaux a permis de sensibiliser la population et par ricochet les décideurs qui nous représentent.

Nous tenons donc à remercier tous les membres qui ont contribué à la conclusion heureuse de ce dossier.

La ville d'Ottawa a maintenant mandaté un architecte -- M. Julian Smith -- qui entreprend la sélection des contracteurs pour la réalisation des divers travaux. La fin de ceux-ci est prévue pour mars 1993 et la réouverture du Pavillon pour mars 1994.

Est-ce que notre action se termine ici pour autant?

Si le Pavillon a été sauvé en théorie nous devons malgré tout rester vigilant. En effet, à la question d'un journaliste qui demandait au conseiller Jim Watson si ceci serait le dernier vote, il répondait ainsi: "Until the last nail is in

the building and the last piece of sod is down, it's never going to be over."

Heritage Ottawa à ce stade de l'évolution du dossier doit prendre deux mesures:

- continuer la sensibilisation du public vis-à-vis le Pavillon
- suivre le processus d'avancement du dossier dans les dédales du circuit administratif pour s'assurer que le dossier reste prioritaire.

Si vous songez à des actions allant vers une sensibilisation du public vis-à-vis ce sujet, nous vous invitons à téléphoner à notre bureau (230-8841) ou à Gérard Robard (236-9332).

Since joining the board last fall, Gérard Robard led the charge for Heritage Ottawa in the Cattle Castle debacle. In July the City approved a scaled-down \$5.3 million plan that will see structural and exterior restoration of the structure, to be done by heritage architect Julian Smith.

The unheated interior will be used by the community for seasonal activities. The Horticulture Building will be left standing, while the Coliseum annex will be demolished. A park will be established along Holmwood Ave. The plan was developed by Capital Ward Councillor Jim Watson and Alta Vista Councillor Peter Hume. It will be funded by \$3 million in federal and provincial grants. Work is to begin in the spring of 1993.

Chambers Update

A \$30 million redevelopment plan for the Chambers Buildings at Elgin and Sparks Streets has been approved by the City of Ottawa Planning Committee. It includes a "preservation" approach to restoring the exterior and renovating the interior of the Chambers Buildings, as well as construction of a 14-storey office tower and underground garage by developer Perez Corp. and Standard Life Insurance. Work is to start in December of this year and finish in mid-1994.

The new building will need city and NCC Design Committee approval, as well as that of FHBRO, but work on the restoration project has begun.

Canada's Official Residences

by Francois Leblanc

(Mr. Leblanc is the National Capital Commission's
new Chief Architect)

Did you know that the government of Canada owns and operates seven official residences, six of which are in the National Capital Region? Did you know that all official residences, including some of their outbuildings, are included in the Federal Heritage Buildings Register, a status that requires their protection and preservation for future generations? Did you know that the National Capital Commission is responsible for the maintenance and restoration of the six official residences located in the National Capital Region?

Some of the official residences are well known, others less so. Essentially, their role is to provide a worthy setting for state functions and official hospitality offered by those who hold the highest public offices in the land. Often the public perception of these residences is quite different; they are regarded as mere perquisites of high office, or fringe benefits. They are not. Every Governor General and Prime Minister has to live where they do for protocol and security reasons. Permit me to introduce you to these unique properties, significant elements of our Canadian heritage.

Rideau Hall

Rideau Hall in Ottawa was built in 1838 for a local industrialist, Thomas McKay. In 1864, it was leased as a temporary residence for the Governor General, and then purchased as such in 1868. There are 88 acres of grounds, and a main building with 175 rooms that cover 95,000 sq. ft. There are an additional 24 outbuildings.

About 5,000 sq. ft. of main building is used exclusively by the Governor General; the remaining 90,000 sq. ft. is used for state, service and administrative purposes.

24 Sussex Drive

The Prime Minister's official residence, known as 24 Sussex Drive, was built between 1866 and 1868 by Joseph Merrill Currier, a lumber manufacturer and member of the first Dominion Parliament. In 1902, it was sold to another lumber manufacturer, William Cameron Edwards. It was subsequently acquired by the federal government in 1943. Between 1949 and 1951 the house was remodeled to make it more suitable for its role as the official residence of the Prime Minister.

24 Sussex comprises four acres of grounds, one main building with 34 rooms covering approximately 12,000 sq. ft., and four outbuildings.

Harrington Lake Residence

Well known these days because of the constitutional talks, the Harrington Lake residence on Lac Mousseau in Gatineau Park was built in 1925 for Colonel Cameron Macpherson Edwards, an Ottawa lumber baron. The government acquired the property in 1951 as part of the federal program to develop Gatineau Park. In 1959, it became the official summer residence of the Prime Minister.

Harrington Lake comprises 13 acres of grounds, one main building with 16 rooms covering approximately 8,300 sq. ft., and eight outbuildings.

Stornoway

Stornoway comprises a little over one acre of grounds, one main building with 34 rooms covering approximately 9,500 square feet, and one outbuilding.

The Farm at Kingsmere

Once part of the summer residence of Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, the Farm at Kingsmere in the Mackenzie King Estate in Gatineau Park, was bequeathed to the people of Canada upon his death in 1950. It is now the residence of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

It comprises more than four acres, one main building with 11 rooms covering approximately 5,000 square feet, and five outbuildings.

7 Rideau Gate

The residence known as 7 Rideau Gate was built in 1861-1862 for Henry Osgoode Burritt, the owner of the Rideau Falls Milling Company. In 1966, the Government purchased it to serve as the guest house for the steady stream of distinguished visitors to Canada during the Centennial and it continues to serve this function to this day.

Rideau Gate is comprised of half an acre and one main building with 30 rooms covering approximately 8,500 sq. ft.. It is a short walking distance from 24 Sussex and Rideau Hall.

The Citadel

Located in Quebec City, the Citadel is also an official residence of the Governor General.