



Heritage Ottawa NEWSLETTER

Dedicated to Preserving Our Built Heritage

March 2021 Volume 48, No. 1

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Centre Block Rehabilitation Project: Reno of the Century

By Carolyn Quinn

The Centre Block rehabilitation project is being called the “renovation of the century.” Years in planning with a decade-long schedule to implement in place, the massive-scale \$665 million fixer-upper aims to bring the building into the

21st century by blending heritage conservation with modernization.

Rob Wright, Assistant Deputy Minister with Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) who is heading up the project, hosted an



Tour participants climbed three levels of scaffolding to get up close and personal with the stunning plaster ceiling covered in gold foil above the Senate Chamber.

Photos: Heritage Ottawa

Heritage Ottawa is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of Ottawa's built heritage.

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President's Message

By Richard Belliveau

In previous messages I have talked about how Heritage Ottawa has not only coped but adapted, and introduced new ways of doing things through the pandemic year. Now we are considering what we will have to do to ensure the organization is up to the task over the next few years.

Instead of a general in-person retreat of the Board of Directors, we recently conducted a two-part “visioning” exercise. This entailed, first, zoomed individuals discussion sessions by each of the program committees, followed by a meeting of committee chairs with the executive committee, where we sought to identify our key objectives and the governance issues facing Heritage Ottawa.

Organizational Sustainability

The main challenge we face is organizational sustainability; that term has been adopted as the theme to inspire how we plan for a healthy future, based on the experience and achievements of recent years.

What does this mean in practical terms? It means that we must assess carefully what the organization can or cannot do with the financial and human resources we have. Relying on the aid of an administrative officer, we must ensure that we manage efficiently what we undertake to do. We have to seek new sources of financial support as part of convincing the City we deserve even larger grants. We

have to refresh our leadership, our membership and our partnerships.

A consequence of these imperatives is that you will be hearing from us about a more sustained campaign money from our members, supporters and sponsors.

An Exciting Adventure

Heritage Ottawa has been on an exciting adventure these past few years, with our rich program of neighbourhood walking tours, our varied agenda of lectures, our insistent and generally effective program of advocacy on behalf of endangered heritage properties, and our wonderful website and social media links. Not to leave out this colourful Newsletter. In this context, sustainability means as well that each area of activity should support our overall mission and specific objectives.

It works only with the support of our membership. So, keep us energized all round with your participation, with your donations, and with your feedback (tell us how we are doing) on the issues, local history and where the organization should be going – and how we can get there. Above all, keep your membership fresh when it comes up for renewal. It is the only way to keep Heritage Ottawa strong.

*Richard Belliveau
President, Heritage Ottawa*

Reno of the Century continued...



Photos: Heritage Ottawa

Excavation underway for the new underground Visitor Welcome Center, December 15, 2020

eye-popping group tour of the site last December. Wright described the recent restorations of the West Block, the Government Conference Centre (now the Senate of Canada Building) and the former Bank of Montreal Building on Wellington Street as “training for the heritage Olympics.” Centre Block is the main event.

Designed by visionary architect John A. Pearson, the Neo-Gothic,

Beaux-Arts style building replaced the original Centre Block that burned to the ground in 1916. Assisted by gifted craftsmen such as sculptor Cléophas Soucy, his brother wood carver Elzéar and ironwork master Paul Beau, Pearson oversaw every detail of the building's construction.

Phil White, Canada's Dominion Sculptor, describes the resulting structure as “one of the most

distinctive government buildings in the world because there's nothing formulaic about it. Each artisan left his personal stamp on it.”

Pearson's sculpture program intentionally left hundreds of stone blocks uncarved so they could be sculpted over the years to portray Canadian history as it evolves. Phil White is Canada's fifth Dominion Sculptor.

It is this national treasure that must be carefully protected during a complex rehabilitation project based on two main strategies: sustainability and universal accessibility. Extensive contemporary interventions include seismic upgrading and asbestos removal, overhauling mechanical and electrical systems, and restoring some 22,000 heritage elements, half on site and half carefully removed and restored elsewhere.

Work is well underway. The first phase of the project begun in 2019 focuses on excavation, demolition and abatement work. Some 5,000 truckloads of bedrock have already been excavated from the front terrace area stretching the length of the building. A new four-level underground and fully accessible Visitor Welcome Centre is under construction. It will be the first new building on Parliament Hill in more than 100 years.

The sweeping sandstone retaining wall and grand stairs, designed in the 1870s by renowned American architect Calvert Vaux, that form an integral part of the heritage landscape had to be dismantled. In order to reinstate these features precisely, each stone was numbered and catalogued before being removed to storage. Concerns about the infringement of the Visitor Welcome Centre on the landscape were taken to heart by the architects who have

designed a sensitive option that minimizes impacts on the lawn and heritage features. An entrance is tucked on each side of the stairs with gentle sloping ramps that lead off the central walkway.

Inside the building, the upper floors have been stripped down to bare bricks and iron beams. Some 2.5 million kilograms of asbestos-containing material has been taken out. Where conservators have removed thousands of moveable heritage assets, each item has been surveyed, scanned, restored and stored, some offsite, others in specially designed cases within

“one of the most distinctive government buildings in the world because there’s nothing formulaic about it. Each artisan left his personal stamp on it.”

– Phil White, Canada’s Dominion Sculptor

the building. Features such as wainscotting are protected under fire-rated hoarding material. Floors are similarly covered.

Climbing the scaffolding into the upper reaches of the House of

Commons, Senate Chamber, and the Confederation Hall Rotunda is nothing short of awe-inspiring. Ornate sculptures and carvings are at eye level. The Senate Chamber’s stunning hand-stencilled suspended plaster ceiling hovered over our heads. It is to be restored on site while the intricately painted linen-covered ceiling in the House of Commons is removed and carefully rolled for restoration elsewhere.

As well as solving complicated conservation challenges, the Centre Block project is attempting to turn the most iconic heritage building in the country into a modern functioning facility as seamlessly as possible.

“All the recognizable heritage elements will be there,” says Rob Wright. “But it’s going to operate as a modern facility—carbon-neutral, universally accessible, better acoustics, speech privacy, with a digital backbone.”

That’s a tall order. It will require critical decisions that will have an impact on how the building functions for the next hundred years.

Decision-Making Challenges

With MPs moved into temporary quarters in the West Block in 2018 and the Centre Block project well underway behind boarding, questions began to emerge about the lack of transparency. How are decisions being made without cost estimates and why is the public being kept in the dark?

One of the challenges has been coordinating the number of players involved. PSPC is leading the project, but it also involves Treasury Board, the National Capital Commission, the Library of Parliament, Parliamentary Protective Services, the Commons, the

Senate, and CENTRUS, the joint venture partnership providing all engineering and design management services (WSP Canada, HOK Architects, Architecture49, and DFS architecture & design).

Some design options and associated costs were finalized last year and presented to the Long Term Vision Plan (LTVP) Working Group, a sub-committee of the House’s Board of Internal Economy. The Board approved the LTVP’s recommendation to proceed with the smaller Visitor Welcome Centre option at a cost saving of over \$100 million. This decision was also supported by an Independent Design Review Panel made up of professionals from across the country assembled by the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada to provide feedback and help refine schematic designs.

Similarly, after reviewing plans and costs to changes inside the Centre Block last December, the LTVP recommended and received Board approval of the expansion of the government and opposition lobbies vertically across two floors and into parts of an adjacent courtyard; the



One of two enormous cast-iron chandeliers in the Senate Chamber being dismantled for rehabilitation work.

reduction of seating capacity in the galleries from 553 to 296 to meet national building code requirements for accessibility; the enclosure of the west courtyard with a glass ceiling providing public access to galleries while improving the building’s energy performance; the restoration of the glass light-well above the House of Commons Foyer, closed off decades ago; and the addition of three floors above the Hall of Honour.

Member of Parliament Bruce Stanton, chair of the LTVP Working Group, is committed to keeping parliamentarians abreast of what’s going on. Last November the group reviewed several means by which MPs could become more involved and informed on the pace of work and where their direct input could be sought before interior formats and designs are finalized. The group will soon be meeting with its counterpart, which is being constituted on the Senate side.

PSPC is doing more to bring the project into the public realm with an informative website offering details and progress updates with images and videos, and by inviting the media to tour the site and report on the work.

Still, it is a massive breathtaking project and the federal government should be shedding more light on it. A bureaucratic tendency to confidentiality is unlikely to open the project up to the public in a more comprehensive way. That impetus will have to come from Bruce Stanton and his Working Group and other MPs. It is a wonderful opportunity to invite Canadians into their Parliament, the home of our democracy, to share the splendours within and how the building is evolving for future generations.

Carolyn Quinn is a member of the Heritage Ottawa board and Vice-chair of the City’s Built Heritage Sub-committee.



The intricate details of the stone carvings came to life when viewed at eye level.



Moses Chamberlain Edey and the Aberdeen Pavilion

By Allison Margot Smith

There is a special connection between Heritage Ottawa and the late 19th- and early 20th-century architect, Moses Chamberlain Edey. He designed the Aberdeen Pavilion at Lansdowne Park in Ottawa – affectionately known as the “Cattle Castle.” This enchanting building forms the centrepiece of Heritage Ottawa’s logo, designed by Jan Soetermans using architectural drawings in collaboration with John Arnold. Our logo can be seen on the front page of this newsletter.

Moses Edey was a pragmatic man. His great-nephew, the Reverend William Edey McDowell recently recounted a delightful story that reflects the sort of man Moses Edey was. According to Reverend McDowell, Moses Edey once gave a dozen silver forks to his niece, Maynie Campbell, née Edey, as a wedding present. He told her that she should use them on an everyday basis. That, if they were good, they would “stand up.” If they did not, they were not worth saving.

Moses Edey was born in 1845, in the former community of Wyman, near Shawville, Canada East (now Quebec). He was the second child of Richard Edey and Mary Prentiss Wyman who operated a 200-acre farm. Richard Edey also worked as a lumberman and, according to Moses Edey’s great-granddaughter, Gail Cameron Watters, he was also a self-taught veterinarian.

Moses Edey’s paternal grandparents were among the “Late Loyalists” who came to Canada in the early 1800s, and settled in what is now the Pontiac region of Quebec. They joined the early followers of Philemon Wright from the



Moses Chamberlain Edey, 1869.

New England states. The community founded by Wright at the confluence of the Gatineau and Ottawa Rivers is now the city of Gatineau. Moses Edey’s grandparents established their farm further up the Ottawa River.

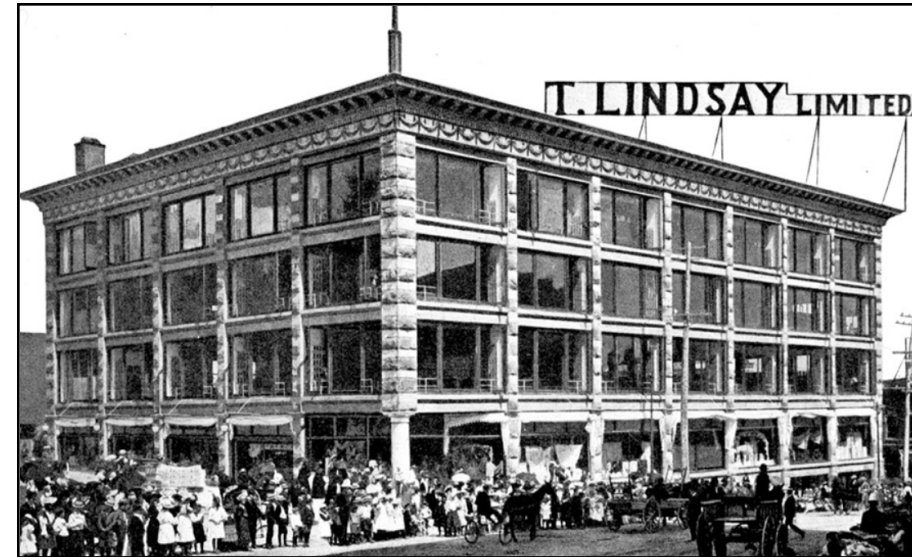


Aberdeen Pavilion, 1903.

As a teenager, Moses Edey showed talent as an artist, creating a portfolio of beautiful drawings of classical faces, plants, and domestic and wild animals. Indeed, his brother, with whom he shared a bedroom, complained that Moses had so many easels and drawing tools, there was hardly room for a bed.

At age seventeen, he went to work in Arnprior, and then in Ottawa, as a carriage-maker. He apprenticed in architectural design, as well as carriage design and construction. At twenty, he moved to Toronto where he studied architecture under William Tutin Thomas who was the designer of St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, in Ottawa, as well as Ottawa Collegiate Institute (now Lisgar Collegiate Institute). He also studied for a period of time under architect Z.D. Stearns in Moravia, New York.

Photo: Daly Building, Postcard, Ken Elder Collection



The T. Lindsay Building – aka The Daly Building, Approx. 1905.

In 1872, Edey married Mary Whillans, of Ottawa, and they had two daughters. He opened a woodworking business with A. Sparks where they designed and crafted interior woodwork in many prominent Ottawa homes, including the Bate House in Sandy Hill.

Edey studied at the Ottawa School of Arts and Science in the 1880s, and during that time, he won numerous medals for his architectural drawings, designs, plaster and clay models, and metalwork.

In 1892, his name was listed in a publication, entitled “*Prominent Men in Canada, a Collection of Persons Distinguished in Professional and Political Life and in the Commerce and Industry of Canada.*” Around this time, he dedicated himself to architecture, and his buildings began to appear in the region.

Through his career, Edey’s designs were reminiscent of a variety of architectural styles. His design for the former Daly Building, which was evocative of the Chicago School, was accepted and the building opened in 1905. His design for Centretown United Church (which, at the time,

was Stewarton Presbyterian Church) suggested a Gothic Revival style. This latter structure was completed a year after the Daly Building.

What came to be known later as the *Daly Building* opened as the *T. Lindsay Department Store*. Located at the corner of Rideau Street and Mackenzie Avenue, it was Ottawa’s first department store. Like other Chicago School buildings – now often referred to as ‘Commercial Style’ – this building was well-suited for a department store, with its large, three-part, plate-glass windows. Initially, it had a decorative cornice, but this was later removed. After years of alterations, additions, changes of use and neglect, as well as considerable local debate, it was regrettably demolished in 1991.

Edey’s design for the Aberdeen Pavilion was in the late-Victorian style, in keeping with other grand exhibition halls of the time, including the Crystal Palace in London, England. Built in 1898, at a cost of \$75,000, it housed agricultural fairs and showcased new innovations. The Pavilion was designated a Canadian National Historic Site in 1983, and listed on the Canadian Register in

2005, as the only large-scale, 19th century exhibition space remaining in Canada.

Edey’s design work was much in demand throughout his career. In 1988, an Ottawa Valley heritage group, Renfrew Heritage, described his designs as having “a flair for the unusual,” saying that they incorporated “huge windows with fanlights, pilasters, plinths, pediments, heavily-bracketed cornice[s] plus floral-patterned and striated keystone.”

Through his career, Edey was a mentor to a number of young men who later became well-known architects. These included his student, W.E. Noffke, who later designed the Main Post Office at Sparks and Elgin Streets. He also mentored his former draftsman, Francis Conroy Sullivan, who studied under Frank Lloyd Wright and later designed the Horticultural Building at Lansdowne Park. The city of Ottawa and the Ottawa Valley are dotted with buildings and homes designed by these three architects.

According to Gail Watters, Edey was remembered by *her* father as a dignified man and a great favourite with his grandchildren. He taught them how to draw. But, in these final years of his life, it was horses that he and his grandchildren drew, not buildings.

Edey died in Ottawa in 1919, but several of his delightful buildings, such as the Aberdeen Pavilion, remain to remind us of his talent. Given Edey’s family heritage in farming, it is fitting that we remember him with this grand agricultural building.

Allison Margot Smith is an historian and historical documentary filmmaker. She is a member of the Board of Heritage Ottawa.

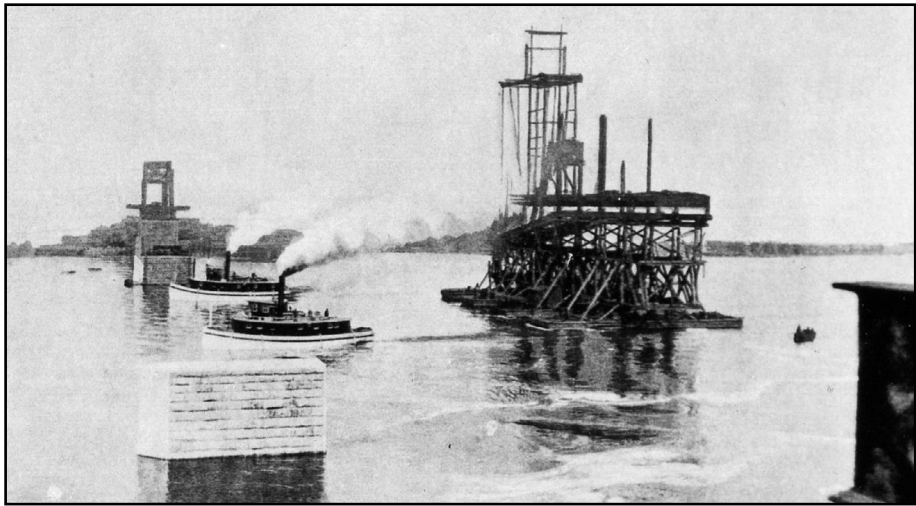
Photo: Topley Studio, Library and Archives Canada

The Alexandra or Interprovincial Bridge

By David Jeanes

An interprovincial bridge at Nepean Point was first proposed by J.R. Booth when his Canada Atlantic Railway reached Rideau Street in 1896. However, it was Horace J. Beemer, another railway entrepreneur, president of two Ottawa area railways and contractor in 1880 for stonework of the Prince of Wales Bridge, who arranged financing and construction of the bridge. The federal government contributed a \$112,500 subsidy, Ontario \$50,000 and the City of Ottawa \$150,000, on condition that the bridge include roadways as well as the railway. When opened in 1901, the bridge had a railway, two pedestrian walkways and two road decks, with streetcar tracks for the Hull Electric Railway to reach Dufferin Bridge.

Dominion Bridge of Lachine, Quebec, erected the pin-connected steel trusses in 10 months in 1900. Twelve years earlier they had built one of Canada's first cantilever bridges at Lachine for the Canadian Pacific Railway and a conventional multi-span bridge at Coteau for Booth's Canada Atlantic Railway, both crossing the St. Lawrence. In 1916 Dominion Bridge would complete the Quebec Bridge, the world's longest cantilever span. They became



Building unsupported across the river.

a major Ottawa player for the steel framework of bridges, hotels, high-rise offices and exhibition buildings with a fabrication plant in Eastview (now Vanier).

Cantilever bridges were introduced in the United States in 1877 and Canada in 1883, to span gorges and rivers that were too deep, wide or fast-flowing for temporary falsework during construction. Ottawa additionally had a mountain of accumulated sawdust at mid-river, requiring a very wide spacing of the main piers. Six piers were constructed of concrete and limestone in 1898 and 1899, using the novel technique of concrete that set under water. The deepest pier was in

68 feet of water and the government stopped construction for six months until the concrete was proved sound. With its limestone cap, this pier was 99 feet high.

The pin-connected steel bridge had one short truss and five truss sections of nearly identical 247-foot length. Three sections were assembled on floating scows for temporary support, beginning on the Hull side, where steel could be delivered by rail. The partly-assembled third section was floated across the river in April 1900 and placed on the piers at Nepean Point. The last two sections were built unsupported, using the cantilever technique in which the shore span balances the river span. When joined at mid-river, it was the world's fourth longest cantilever span at 555 feet 9 inches, after bridges in Scotland, the United States and Hungary.

The name "Alexandra" was proposed by Ottawa mayor W.D. Morris in 1901, when Queen Alexandra's son, the Duke of Cornwall and York, (later King George V), visited Ottawa. Horace Beemer put "Royal

Alexandra" in lights on the bridge, but the "Royal" designation had not been approved and there was no official naming ceremony, even though the royal party did cross the bridge. Beemer intended the lighted name to be switched on remotely by the Duke when he unveiled Queen Victoria's statue; the lights can be seen in photographs of this event. So it continued to be known as the "Interprovincial" but also as the "Alexandra" Bridge.

The bridge carried Canadian Pacific transcontinental trains between Montreal and Vancouver from 1902 to 1966 and Hull Electric Railway streetcars from 1901 to 1946, when a major fire at E.B. Eddy damaged the Hull end of the Bridge. The National Capital Commission acquired the bridge from the C.P.R. after the 1966 closure of Union Station. The rails were replaced by a roadway and one road deck became a pedestrian and cycling boardwalk. The Canadian Society for Civil Engineering designated it a National Historic Civil Engineering Site in 1995. A celebration on 21 April 2001 of the centenary of the first train saw an STO bus with destination sign "Interprovincial 100" bring dignitaries from Gatineau to join politicians, engineers and railway heritage groups for a celebration at the Ottawa end of the bridge.

Concerns about the condition of the bridge led to a major rehabilitation in 2009-2011 and replacement of the central road deck. More work is under way at present to repair corroded steelwork, piers and pedestrian-cycling deck. The bridge has an iconic presence in views of the Ottawa River, Parliamentary Precinct, Rideau Canal World Heritage Site, Nepean Point and Canadian Museum of History. It is an integral part of Confederation Boulevard. Although it carries only 9% of cross-river road traffic, it is the



Completed Interprovincial Bridge.

busiest Ottawa-Gatineau pedestrian and cycling link.

In May 2020 the federal government revealed plans to replace the iconic 120-year old Alexandra/ Interprovincial Bridge. A serious flaw discovered during inspection required an unplanned closure of the bridge to vehicles in May for urgent repairs and further such closures have followed. Although the bridge could be safely maintained for six to ten years, a 75-year rehabilitation was not considered cost effective, compared

to replacement by a new bridge. Public Services and Procurement Canada and the National Capital Commission began stakeholder and public consultations in October and November. Discussions about demolition and replacement are continuing and a working group has been formed, including interested individuals, community associations and Heritage Ottawa.

David Jeanes is a member of the Board of Heritage Ottawa, and a past President of the organization.



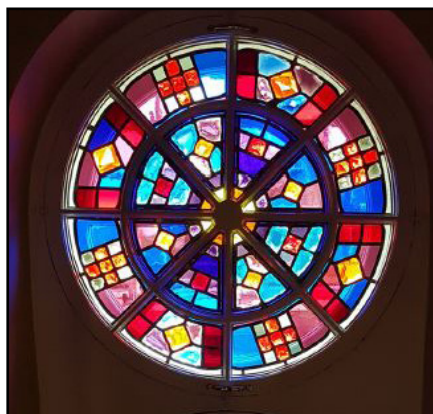
Alexandra Bridge, September 1900.

City of Ottawa Heritage Grants

Ashley Kotarba

Since the 1980s, the City of Ottawa has offered a heritage grant program for building restoration. The program is a matching grant to assist property owners of designated heritage resources with restoration projects. This includes properties designated under Part IV and Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. While it is incumbent on all property owners to maintain their buildings, heritage property owners are also required to maintain heritage attributes of their buildings. The City recognizes that this often carries a higher price tag. Hiring skilled tradespeople to repair ornate wooden porches or rehabilitate wooden windows is often at a premium. For many property owners of heritage buildings, the grant program makes these restoration and rehabilitation projects more feasible.

The City's grant program has always been a success and is often over-subscribed. In 2019, with the help of Heritage Ottawa, City staff were successful in their request to Council to double the annual budget from \$150,000 to \$300,000. This allows



Rehabilitation of the stained glass windows at the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (formerly the Monastère du Précieux Sang) at 774 Echo Drive.

for more money for each project, and also gives larger sums to large-scale properties such as churches, apartment buildings and institutional buildings. These large-scale buildings are now eligible to receive up to \$25,000 in funding. This higher sum helps to offset the cost of – for example – large multi-year window restoration projects, or undertaking stone repointing and rehabilitation on large façades.

We see a wide variety of projects of many sizes through the grant program, including window restoration, porch rehabilitation and masonry repointing. While about 85% of the grants are given to residential projects, each year we receive a handful of submissions from corporations. These include condo corporations and businesses operating in heritage structures, many of which are buildings that have been adaptively re-used.

Despite COVID-19, the restoration world seems to be thriving! Heritage staff at the City have seen an increase in heritage permit applications, the same goes for the heritage grant program. Property owners are as keen as ever to embark on restoration projects. As well, last year we were able to provide emergency funding to a brick wall that collapsed in Lowertown, and contributed to the funding of the restoration of the beautiful stained glass windows at the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada.

With the 2021 grant submissions now closed, heritage staff at the City encourage owners of heritage properties to start thinking about restoration projects they may wish to undertake in 2022. Applications are accepted between January and the end of February each year for projects to be completed that same calendar year. Property owners of small-scale buildings can receive a matching grant up to \$10,000, while large-scale buildings can receive up to \$25,000. Heritage Staff at the City of Ottawa can provide guidance on types of eligible projects. For more information about the program, eligibility, submission requirements and contact details, please visit: Ottawa.ca/heritagegrants

Ashley Kotarba is a heritage planner with the City of Ottawa.



Rehabilitation of the front porch at the Bingham-McKellar House at 635 Richmond Road.



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Rideau Street Convent Chapel: Conservation and Memory

By Leslie Maitland

Were you involved in the fight to save the Rideau Street Convent Chapel? Were you involved in the reassembly of the Chapel inside the National Gallery of Canada? Or do you have reminiscences of the Chapel that you would be willing to share? Heritage Ottawa would like to hear from you.

Heritage Ottawa recently hosted the 2021 Bob and Mary Anne Phillips Memorial Lecture on February 17, 2021. The topic was “Saving the Rideau Convent Chapel,” by Heritage Ottawa board member, Leslie Maitland.

The Rideau Chapel was part of the Sisters of Charity convent, located on Rideau Street in downtown Ottawa. The Sisters of Charity opened a convent in Ottawa – then still called Bytown – in 1845, to care for those in need, and to provide a bilingual, faith-based education to Roman Catholic girls. The convent property grew over the years to include an infirmary and an orphanage. A purpose-built chapel was not created until 1888, to designs by Père Georges Bouillon, a talented amateur architect. The unusual design of the Chapel rests with the extraordinarily lovely wooden fan vaults (see image). Unfortunately, barely a century later, the nuns found themselves forced to move. The whole of the convent property was purchased in 1972, and a demolition permit was granted to open the site to redevelopment. Herculean efforts by heritage activists, such as Mary Anne Phillips, made it possible to save the Chapel. It was disassembled, piece by piece, and stored in a warehouse for over ten years.

When plans were put forward for a permanent home for the National Gallery collection, it seemed only logical that this precious jewel of a room would be reassembled inside.

While construction of the new gallery proceeded, restoration of the pieces of the chapel began. Finally, the Chapel was installed in its new home.

The February 17 lecture was a study of the Chapel, how it came to be, and its long road through disassembly and then reassembly inside the National Gallery of Canada. The lecture was also an appeal to those many people who participated in saving the Chapel from destruction, or who participated in its reassembly inside the National Gallery of Canada.

Each generation adds its own stories and histories to the past, and each generation's imprint is valuable and should be acknowledged. If you are interested, you can contribute your

stories through info@heritageottawa.org. We hope to publish as many of these stories as possible on an ongoing basis in the *Newsletter*.

There are two recent publications on the chapel to watch out for. One is by Harold Kalman, “The Reassembly of the Rideau Street Convent Chapel in Ottawa,” *Bulletin of the Association for Preservation Technology*, Vol 52 (number not yet determined) 2021. A shorter version was published in the recent festschrift dedicated to Luc Noppen: Harold Kalman, ‘The Reassembly of the Rideau Street Convent Chapel,’ in Lucie Morisset, ed., *L'architecture de l'identité / The Architecture of Identity*, Montréal: DelBusso Éditeur, 2020, 274-287. Both pieces credit those who planned, designed, and installed the Chapel.

*Leslie Maitland, Board member,
Heritage Ottawa*



The Rideau Chapel.

Photos: Parks Canada