



Heritage Ottawa NEWSLETTER

Dedicated to Preserving Our Built Heritage

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ANDREX find your place
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Landscape, art and architecture: Cornelia Hahn Oberlander at the National Gallery of Canada

By Ian Ferguson



Photo: by and courtesy of Julie Oberlander

Cornelia Oberlander in 2016 at the Taiga Garden below the National Gallery of Canada

The remarkable landscaping of the properties surrounding the National Gallery of Canada (NGC) tends to be taken for granted by visitors, but is in fact an outstanding achievement, inspired by Canada's northern landscape itself. These spaces were designed by renowned Canadian landscape architect Cornelia Hahn Oberlander, who passed away in 2021 at the age of ninety-nine.

Cornelia Hahn was born in Germany in 1921, but with her family, escaped the Nazi persecution in Germany in 1938. In the USA, she studied landscape architecture at the Harvard Graduate School of Design – one of its first women graduates. Her professors included Walter Gropius, founder of the Bauhaus School, who promoted a modernist vision of architecture and design to improve

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

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Cornelia Hahn Oberlander, continued...

society. She moved to Vancouver with her husband Peter Oberlander in 1953.

Oberlander's connection with the new NGC building project began in 1983 when she received an unexpected call inviting her to meet architect Moshe Safdie, who was designing the new gallery on Sussex Drive. She was offered a job in the landscaping and continued to collaborate with Safdie during construction of the current building from 1983 to 1988. Her trees and shrubs have matured over the past 35 years, transforming the grounds in line with her design. Three sides of the gallery are treated with three different concepts of landscaping.

The Taiga Garden

Derived from Russian, *taiga* refers to the moist subarctic coniferous forest that begins where the tundra ends. This garden is located beneath the broad, windowed southeastern face of the gallery. Oberlander biographer Susan Herrington has observed that the Taiga Garden constituted a radical form of landscape art at that time, especially for a capital city where parks inclined towards formal lawns and flower beds. The garden is noted for its severe northern beauty. The shapes and colours of the Taiga Garden complement Safdie's glass facade without masking or competing with it, and preserve its outward views towards Major's Hill.



The red sumacs at the south side of the Taiga Garden recall A.Y. Jackson's Terre Sauvage (1913), an influential work for Oberlander's concept.

Photo: Ian Ferguson

Minimalist Garden

Adjacent to the walkway on the northeast side of the Gallery, Oberlander created the Minimalist Courtyard, an enclosed orchard garden, with stairs, ramps and openings. Inside the courtyard, staggered rows of crab apple trees display the seriality characteristic

of many Minimalist works. The spectacular magenta blossoms on the mature trees in spring, and the bright foliage and vines in the fall illustrate Oberlander's strategic use of colour. In recent years, Oberlander gave her support for the installation of a temporary "Tavern at the Gallery" with full protection of the trees.



Photo: Ian Ferguson

The Minimalist Courtyard in splendid fall colours. In the foreground, Ms. Nesta Scott, a friend of the author.



Photo: Ian Ferguson, taken in 2021.

The crab-apple trees in the Minimalist Courtyard in springtime, now obscured by the temporary outdoor tavern-restaurant.

Pin Oak Allée

Oberlander's Pin Oak Allée on the east side of the Minimalist Garden draws visitors toward Kiweki Point (formerly Nepean Point) and the Op Art Path. The title of this latter work refers to an international art movement involving abstraction and illusion. Within Canada, it was particularly embraced by artists in Vancouver, where Oberlander lived. When viewed from its higher reaches, the gravelled, zigzag path provides an illusion of interlocking chevrons of increasing scale. This monumental work can be seen as a form of land art. When the Gallery decided to add outdoor sculptures to its grounds, Oberlander was consulted on the best siting for Roxy Paine's *One Hundred Foot Line*, which has been strategically placed on the slope of Nepean Point to optimize indoor and outdoor viewpoints.

Oberlander believed in sustainability and the power of landscape architecture to evoke some of the greatest works of art in the gallery's collection.

Ian Ferguson is a member of the board of Heritage Ottawa and a docent at the National Gallery of Canada. He is preparing a walking tour of the Oberlander gardens for Heritage Ottawa that will be offered this coming summer.

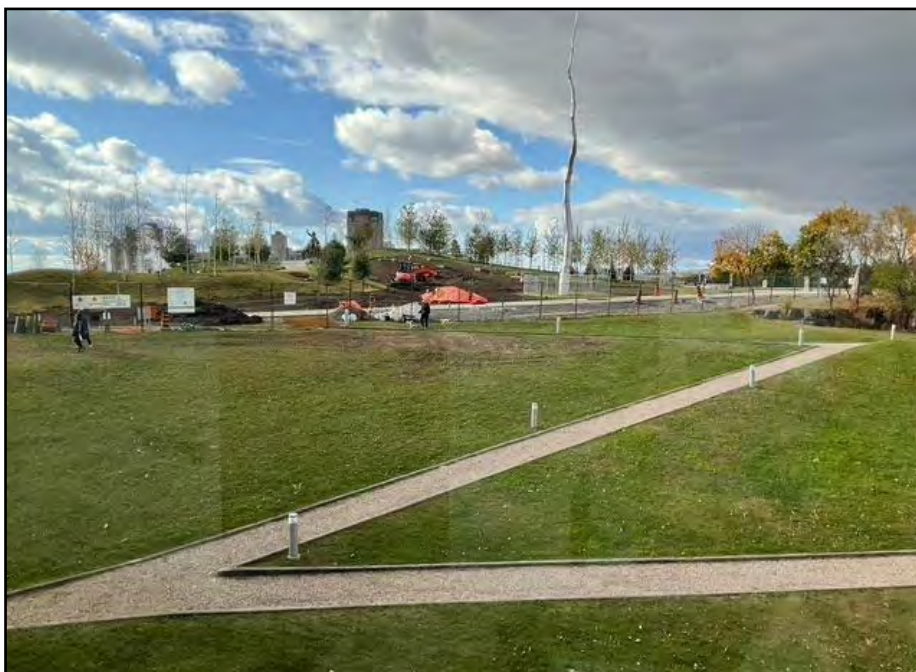


Photo: Ian Ferguson

The zigzag path climbing Kiweki Point to the One Hundred Foot Line, as work continues on the redesign of the the point in 2023. Taken from indoors

ADVOCACY

Heritage Demolition by Neglect: Where do we go from here?

By David Flemming

Heritage Ottawa has been actively fighting against demolition by neglect of heritage buildings for more than two decades and will continue to do so.

In November 2002, we pressured the City into charging Groupe Lépine for the supposed “collapse” and quick removal of two buildings that they were bound to preserve in Nicholas-Waller-Laurier triangle. Although the financial settlement of \$250,000 negotiated by the City was totally inadequate, we were instrumental in having the City use the entire amount for the expansion of heritage conservation districts in Sandy Hill.

In December 2007, we stressed the need for a heritage preservation protocol that would permit timely attention to neglected properties designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

This initiated the 2009 approval of a *Heritage Demolition by Neglect Report* based on our recommendations followed by a 2013 *Strategy to Address Vacant Buildings*.

The creation of the Mayor’s Heritage Matters Task Force in 2016 helped to monitor heritage buildings at risk with the creation of a Heritage Watch List which led to faster enforcement of matters under Building Code and Property Standards By-law Services. The Task Force, chaired by the Mayor, included senior members of City departments that normally deal with these matters. Representatives of Heritage Ottawa, Capital Heritage

Connexion and the Built Heritage Sub-Committee also participated in these meetings.

Under the auspices of the Task Force, the City conducted a *Property Standards By-law Review* (2017), began work on compiling a *Heritage Register*, abolished tax breaks to owners of vacant buildings and developed a regular inspection protocol for properties on the Heritage Watch List. Heritage Planning staff were instructed to study best-practices of other municipalities in offering financial incentives for owners to preserve heritage buildings which resulted in the establishment of the Heritage Community Improvement Plan grant program and a substantial increase in funding for Heritage Improvement Grants.

Despite these achievements, it is but a modest beginning. At least a dozen properties have been dropped from the Watch List because the property is being preserved and/or redeveloped (more than the number that have been lost) through community action and City intervention. But this is an ongoing process that will require community vigilance and strong advocacy. Ideally, in cases of demolition by neglect, in the most egregious cases the City should expropriate properties and seek new owners to develop them as outlined in our December 2007 letter to the Mayor and Councillors. Extreme measures such as this require “political will” and support and

we are not there yet! Currently, the best we can hope for is that the City will undertake repairs to preserve properties and charge the cost back to the owner.

Early this year we learned that the Mayor’s Heritage Matters Task Force will be disbanded! As noted above, many of the good things that have happened over the past seven years have emerged from the Task Force’s deliberations and recommendations.

On August 9, Heritage Ottawa representatives met with the Mayor to discuss heritage matters at which time we strongly advised the continuation of the Task Force providing him with our reasons for doing so. He promised to get back to us but we have yet to receive a reply. We are following up on the matter. We urge members to write to Mayor Sutcliffe and their councillor supporting the continuation of the Task Force. The recent Council decision to permit the demolition of the home at 1 Maple Lane (see facing article in this edition) which had been sorely neglected by its owners for nearly a decade, demonstrates the need to be vigilant if we wish to preserve the gains made over the past 17 years.

In the meantime, the City is mired in dealing with the consequences of Ontario’s Bill 23. If demolition by neglect is to be countered, the onus will be on us to bring egregious examples to the attention of City officials and the Built Heritage Committee. The latter should be an ally but unless there is public (voter) support, the Councillors will not be receptive.

David Flemming is Chair of the Heritage Ottawa Advocacy Committee.

Rockcliffe Park – Keeping Watch on Heritage Properties

By Susan d’Aquino and Michele Hayman

Of the 33 properties currently on Ottawa’s Heritage Watch List, a startling ten are in Rockcliffe Park, and there are others in our village that should be added.

Recently, we have been shattered by the demolition of two of the ten on the list – one was approved by City council, the other done without permission. Both give evidence of the inadequacy of the City as watchdog of properties at risk. And they expose a City council unwilling to take the step that would help to prevent owners from profiting from their neglect – namely, to require that any replacement building be limited in scale to that of the demolished building. These recent cases are stark reminders that some property owners, while knowing that they live in a heritage

conservation district, nonetheless through inattention or calculation, allow properties to decay.

The first to go, a house dating from 1925, 1 Maple Lane/1112 Lisgar Road, is a duplex across from Rideau Hall and one of the important Grade I heritage properties in Rockcliffe. Owned for the last seven years by Roca Homes, it was left derelict as it had been for years before. Engineering reports recently concluded that the house was impossible to salvage.

When the plan to demolish and rebuild came before the Built Heritage Committee (BHC), the Rockcliffe Park Residents Association (RPRA) submitted that the intent of our Heritage Plan must be strictly respected, and this position was

strongly supported by Heritage Ottawa. In contrast, City heritage staff supported the applicant.

Thanks to BHC committee-member Carolyn Quinn, staff were directed to pursue revisions that would reduce the massing on the site in order to increase the soft landscape setting – the key character-defining element of Rockcliffe Park. The proposed footprint was reduced by a mere 13 square metres or 3%, leaving the final footprint 60% larger than that of the existing building on the site.

Interestingly, four of the ten Rockcliffe properties on the Watch List are owned by foreign embassies – Uganda, Iraq, Bulgaria, and Ivory Coast. Generally, we owe a lot to foreign embassies who over the years have borne the expense of beautifully maintaining many of our grandest old heritage properties. But clearly there are exceptions.

The second recent case – at 235 Mariposa Avenue – involves the demolition of a vacant and neglected house, but this time without the City’s authorization. Owned as an official residence by the High Commission of Uganda, the property was granted a building permit in July 2022 for some alterations, including the demolition and reconstruction of the garage. Observing that major demolition work was underway in late October 2023, we alerted the city with photos. A building inspector visited the site twice and concluded that the work – focussed only initially on the garage – was in line with permits. The next day we provided further photos showing that the whole house was now being demolished. A belated “order to comply” was issued on November 2 – but by then, demolition was substantially complete.



Photos: R. Belliveau

Current state of 235 Mariposa Avenue

Continued on page 10

Field Trip to Prescott and Brockville

By David Jeanes



The Fulford Place mansion, seen from the Italianate gardens with their triton fountain.

workshops, station and ferry landing of the Bytown and Prescott Railway.

On the coach, our guide, David Jeanes, described historic sites of interest, including the Port of Johnstown, the Battle of the Windmill national historic site, the town of Prescott, the Maitland tower, and the former Grenville Christian College.

In Brockville we passed the Mental Health Centre, Town Hall, Courthouse, Thomas Fuller Post Office, Tall Ships Landing, and Armoury. Participants had 90-minutes free-time in Brockville with numerous lunch suggestions, including takeout, pubs, coffee shops and restaurants.

After a three-year COVID hiatus, Heritage Ottawa undertook its annual field trip last September 30th, with a visit to Prescott's Fort Wellington National Historic Site of Canada (NHSC), Brockville's historic 1860 Railway Tunnel and the Fulford Place NHSC.

Forty-four people signed up for the tour, 88% of capacity, and they rated the outing a great success.

The weather was good and we had Fort Wellington and Fulford Place to ourselves, as it was past the summer season and both places were specially opened for us. Parks Canada assigned a uniformed soldier volunteer to show us around Fort Wellington. The stockade fort, blockhouse museum and outbuildings are well-presented and the preserved remains of a naval gunboat are on display. The fort overlooks the St. Lawrence River and the former waterfront site of the



Inside the Brockville Railway tunnel.

Photo: John Zvona

The Brockville railway tunnel is Canada's oldest and is now the city's biggest tourist attraction. It forms part of a walking trail from Blockhouse Island on the waterfront to the north edge of town. After a talk by Brian Porter, chair of the Brockville tunnel committee, about efforts to fundraise and restore the tunnel, people had the chance to walk through the half-kilometre, gently-sloping, stone-lined and rock-face tunnel to the north end.

Fulford Place is the 1901 former home of millionaire George T. Fulford, who made his fortune selling therapeutic "pink pills for pale people". The Ontario Heritage Trust provided three expert docents, so we divided into groups to tour the beautiful mansion and the gardens designed by the office of Frederick Law Olmstead, and restored in the early 2000s. The interior furniture and artworks are preserved as they were when the family left the house to the Trust in 1987.



Fort Wellington at Prescott, watching over the St. Lawrence River across from the USA.

During the drive, David related the history of the 1855 Bytown and Prescott Railway and the

1860 Brockville and Ottawa Railway, which was connected to the federal capital in 1870. These two railways were the first practical year-round links from Ottawa to the outside world, with an important role in industrial and commercial development and even in its choice as capital of Canada. Both connected to the east-west lines of the Grand Trunk and Canadian Pacific.

Thanks to Carolyn Quinn and John Zvonar for helping to coordinate the tour, to John for the photography, to Parks Canada, Ontario Heritage Trust and Brockville Tunnel Committee for their assistance and expert guides, and to 417 Bus Line and their conscientious driver.

David Jeanes and John Zvonar are both directors of Heritage Ottawa.

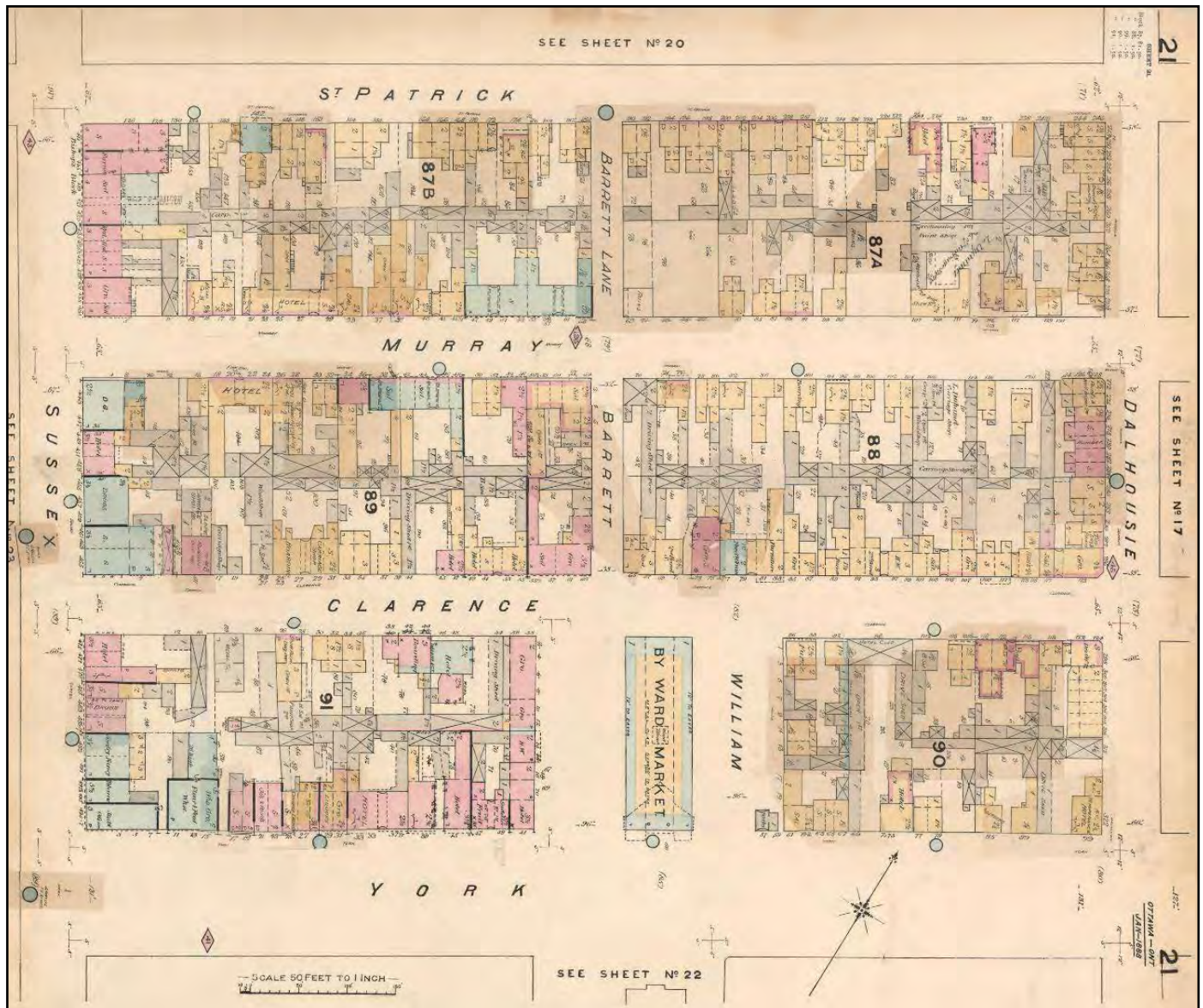
Photos: John Zvonar



Our field trip leader, David Jeanes, left, and Brockville tunnel committee chair, Brian Porter.

Researching Heritage Properties in Ottawa

By Lauren Luchenski



Page from Fire Insurance Plan 1901

The Heritage Planning Branch at the City of Ottawa undertakes a great deal of historical research as part of the process to designate heritage properties in Ottawa. Designation allows a property to be protected under the *Ontario Heritage Act* individually (like the Aberdeen Pavilion) or as a Heritage Conservation District (for example, the ByWard Market).

In response to recent provincial legislative changes, the Branch hired three historical researchers in 2023 to research properties on the City's Heritage Register. The Heritage Register is a list of properties in Ottawa that may hold cultural heritage value, but have not yet been formally designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act*. Currently, the City's Heritage Planning team is working to evaluate and prioritize

properties from the Heritage Register for designation before the end of 2024.

In doing this, the City's researchers look for a range of information on a property's history, architecture, and context: who was the building's original owner? when was the building constructed? why was it built? who built or designed the building? does it reflect a particular

Courtesy of City of Ottawa

architectural style? what does this building tell us about the community or area where it is located?

These questions can be tracked through in a wealth of historic records.

Municipal Fire Insurance Plans are large-scale building atlases that were created for several Canadian cities from the late 1800s to mid-1900s and provide information about the composition of buildings, originally used for assessing fire risk. They can illustrate a building's form, material and openings, as well as property lines and historic addresses. When comparing a building across the available plans, one can track changes to the building's footprint or alterations over time, and even discover a building's construction date.

For information on past owners and occupants of a historic building, check out **Ottawa's City Directories**. From the mid-1880s until the 1990s, City Directories were published every year in large cities across Canada. These directories, functioning somewhat like early phone books,

list by resident or business name or by address. An individual's occupation and address are listed in City Directories, making it possible to track who lived at a particular property over its history. Some of Ottawa's City Directories can be found online, or by visiting the Ottawa Public Library Main Branch on Metcalfe Street.

Once some basic details are known about the property, **historic newspaper records** can add colour to a property's history. The City of Ottawa Archives provides access to several archival newspapers including *The Ottawa Journal*, *The Ottawa Citizen*, and *Le Droit*. Newspaper articles often reported on events, people, or activities that occurred at a specific property.

The City of Ottawa Archives and Library and Archives Canada offer expansive online searchable databases. By searching keywords about a property, one can find photos, maps, assessment rolls, building plans or City Council minutes that may pertain to that property. You could also make a trip to the archives in Ottawa and

speaking to an archivist in person.

Land Registry records, Building Permit records, and Registered Plans can also provide useful information about a building's development.

As well, countless community groups, historical societies and local historians are integral to supporting the work of the Heritage Planning Branch by sharing stories and information they have collected about their communities.

Researching historic properties is often a long, winding road. However, it is a highly rewarding journey – it allows us to learn about Ottawa's history, and its past and present forms.

To research your own property or others in your neighbourhood, check out the City of Ottawa's step-by-step guide on property research: *Tracing the History of Your Ottawa Property*. For more information about the designation process visit: ottawa.ca/builtheritage.

Lauren Luchenski is Built Heritage Research Coordinator at the City of Ottawa.



Heritage Ottawa thanks **Perfect Books** and **Flora Hall Brewing** for supporting the publication of this Newsletter.

Patrimoine Ottawa remercie sincèrement **Perfect Books** et **Flora Hall Brewing** de leur appui à la publication de ce bulletin.

Le Musée régional de l'Outaouais

Par Claude Charbonneau

Musée de territoire, le Musée régional de l'Outaouais désire établir ses quartiers généraux à Gatineau dans un lieu significatif pour l'ensemble de l'histoire de l'Outaouais.

Situé à l'ouest du Québec, l'Outaouais s'étire le long de la rivière des Outaouais, de Montebello à l'Île-aux-Allumettes, touchant aux frontières de l'Abitibi et des Laurentides. Il se caractérise par la diversité de sa composition sociale, culturelle et historique. Sa longue histoire est souvent méconnue.

Pour la faire connaître, le Musée régional de l'Outaouais se veut un lieu de cohésion pour une région aux identités multiples en faisant apprécier la complexité des interactions sociales et culturelles au fil des siècles. Il vise également à être au cœur des enjeux de citoyenneté et du vivre ensemble. Il cherche aussi à être une maison commune intégrée au territoire et à favoriser son développement culturel, social et économique. Le musée se veut un espace conversationnel où les paroles se démultiplient et s'enrichissent mutuellement. Il définit sa mission en ayant en son cœur un rôle de médiateur avec ses publics, et de rassembleur avec les partenaires du milieu qu'il dessert.

Un tel musée-réseau sera une infrastructure muséale territoriale représentative de la singularité de l'Outaouais. Les multiples facettes de son patrimoine se retrouvent dans les petits musées, les centres d'interprétation et les sites historiques de la région. À Gatineau, tête de pont, le Musée servira à l'ensemble de l'Outaouais en présentant des expositions permanentes et



Bâtiment 6 pour l'entreposage et l'expédition des produits. Les trains peuvent y entrer.

temporaires et en offrant une programmation diversifiée ainsi qu'un centre de conservation des artefacts de tous.

Au fil du temps, le lieu d'établissement de ce musée a fait l'objet de nombreux débats et discussions. Aujourd'hui, un lieu fait l'unanimité : les anciennes usines E.B. Eddy, complexe industriel d'importance nationale classé en partie immeuble patrimonial.

L'esprit de ce lieu est lié à l'histoire de l'Outaouais. Pendant des millénaires, sur le territoire traditionnel des Anishinabe, de nombreuses communautés des Premiers Peuples ont porté aux chutes de la Chaudière. Les explorateurs, les commerçants et engagés du commerce des fourrures, les missionnaires, les colons et les militaires ont suivi leurs traces. Au XIXe siècle, sur ce lieu de portage ancien où les Autochtones pratiquaient des offrandes spirituelles,

s'élèvent des bâtiments industriels dont ceux de la E.B. Eddy. Principal employeur de la rive québécoise de l'Outaouais, cette compagnie a été le moteur entraînant la présence de nombreuses autres industries. La diversité des activités industrielles attire non seulement des résidents permanents, des agriculteurs et des bûcherons pour les chantiers forestiers, mais également des familles, des ouvriers, des constructeurs, des marchands et des professionnels de tout acabit.

Ce site est aujourd'hui propriété Zibi-Dreams. Ce promoteur souhaite inclure des espaces culturels dans son méga complexe immobilier et commercial. Il pourrait bien inclure le Musée régional de l'Outaouais. Restez à l'affut!

Claude Charbonneau est un architecte en conservation à la retraite. Il est membre du conseil d'administration du musée régional de l'Outaouais.

Photo : Claude Charbonneau

HO Director, Allison Margot Smith, Honoured by the *Ontario Heritage Society*

Heritage Ottawa proudly congratulates our colleague Allison Margot Smith for receiving the *Ontario Heritage Society President's Award* in recognition of her exemplary contributions to the preservation and dissemination of Ontario's rich history. Allison has produced ten significant documentary films which include studies of key figures in Canadian history as well as films on regional history.

In recent years, Allison has developed films portraying the history of the Township of Rideau Lakes, and is a member of the township's Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee. Her 2021 film *Fettercairn: WWI*



Allison Margot Smith

on *Indian Lake*, which documents the treatment of returning soldiers suffering from PTSD, received favourable recognition by author Tim Cook of the Canadian War Museum.

The award acknowledges Allison's outstanding achievements in historical research, documentary filmmaking and community engagement, "setting a high standard in the field of public history in Ontario."

Allison Smith has been a director on the board of Heritage Ottawa since 2020, is a member of the HO *Newsletter* editorial committee, and has contributed several articles to this publication.

Rockcliffe Park – Keeping Watch on Heritage Properties, continued...



1 Maple Lane awaiting demolition.

Speaking with the contractor on site – Elite Dream Construction – we were told that the demolition was due to a "misunderstanding". In a letter to the city, the Ugandan High Commissioner pointed to their

consultant and contractor saying that there was an "oversight in missing the technical aspects related to the preservation of said building".

We find ourselves asking how there could be a "misunderstanding" or "oversight" of such drastic proportions given the site visits by the city inspector?

Only one month after the illegal demolition, an application for a new residence on the site was submitted to the city. The proposed new residence would be significantly greater in mass (over 60%) and height (2.8 metres taller) than the demolished residence. The RPR will strongly oppose the application, which is at odds with several provisions of our Heritage Plan.

What hard lessons are to be learned from these latest assaults on the city's heritage?

We believe that the City must design and implement a stronger and better-staffed inspection process for properties at risk. It must demonstrate the authority and will to take serious remedial action and to impose meaningful fines to protect these properties. It must impose strict limits on the scale and design of replacement buildings.

*Note: All names cited in this article were sourced from public documents.

Susan d'Aquino is Chair of the Heritage Outreach Committee, Rockcliffe Park. Michele Hayman is Vice President, RPR Heritage Committee.

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Application deadline: March 10, 2024

Questions? Email us at info@heritageottawa.org

Patrimoine Ottawa cherche des personnes engagées et énergiques pour siéger à notre conseil d'administration bénévole.

Les membres du conseil sont élus pour un mandat d'un an, qui

peut être renouvelé. Visitez www.patrimoineottawa.org pour en savoir plus sur l'appel de candidatures et comment postuler.

**Date limite pour les candidatures :
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Des questions? Envoyez-nous un courriel à info@patrimoineottawa.org

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