

First Annual Bob and Mary Anne Phillips Memorial Lecture, Feb. 22, 2006

Opening Remarks by Stuart Lazear

Thank you, David, for the honour of speaking about Bob and Mary Anne Phillips at this inaugural lecture in their honour.

In 1980, Mary Anne Phillips wrote an article for the Heritage Ottawa newsletter reminiscing about the beginnings of the organization thirteen years earlier. She began the article with “We live outside the City now, so I can’t do much for Heritage Ottawa except love it.”

This sentence speaks volumes about the personality of one of the founders of this organization and the ongoing bond between the Phillips family and Heritage Ottawa. It also explains why there should be, and is, an ongoing tribute to that family through tonight’s memorial lecture.

“Reader- if you seek his monument look around you.” This epitaph in St. Paul’s Cathedral honouring its architect, Sir Christopher Wren, was adapted by Bob Phillips in 1990 when writing about the many accomplishments of his wife Mary Anne. These words are worth repeating again, but this time with reference to the accomplishments of both Bob and Mary Anne Phillips. The monuments to their memories are, however, more than just the bricks and mortar of many preservation battles, but the legacies they have left in the organizations, friends and family represented in this room.

Bricks and mortar are what preservation battles are about and Bob and Mary Anne, in the late 1960’s and throughout the 1970’s, through their efforts in the Heritage Committee of a Capital for Canadians and later Heritage Ottawa worked to save...the Billings House... Fraser School House.... Nicholas Street Court House and Gaol...Archbishop’s Palace.... Sunnyside Fire Hall.... Teacher’s College [Ottawa Normal School].... Pretoria Bridge.... Armstrong House.... the East Block of Parliament ... and yes even the Union Station.

One of the very important early battles was the fight to save the Rideau Street Convent. It was very interesting to see that last week the building that replaced the Rideau Street Convent was itself demolished...very quickly in fact and with little fanfare. The chapel, however, lives on in the heart of the National Gallery thanks to the efforts of Mary Anne, Bob, Martin Weil and others.

Thirty years later the preservation story has not ended for all of these sites, but they are far safer now than they were then thanks to the efforts of the Phillips family and the ongoing vigilance of Heritage Ottawa.

The 1972 to 1975 period was a busy one in the evolution of local, provincial and national organizations and policies related to the preservation movement. Bob and Mary Anne had a hand in all of them.

1972... in Ottawa...the Mayor's Committee on Heritage was established. Bob and Mary Anne were both part of the committee executive.

1973... The Heritage Canada Foundation was established with Bob Phillips as the first Executive Director.

1974... Bob and Mary Anne were both part of the executive of Heritage Ottawa. Bob was, in fact, the first President of Heritage Ottawa, something which was celebrated by Heritage Ottawa in 1978 when he was presented with a Certificate of Recognition.

Although Heritage Ottawa was officially incorporated in 1975 Bob and Mary Anne were both active in the Heritage Committee of the Capital for Canadians which came before.

1975...The *Ontario Heritage Act* was passed and Bob participated in commenting on the legislation.

I would like to end with a quote from John Kenneth Galbraith.

“Preservationists are the only people in the world who are invariably confirmed in their wisdom after the fact.”

Bob and Mary Anne Phillips have proven themselves exceedingly wise. Let us hope we can follow their example.