



Heritage Ottawa NEWSLETTER

Dedicated to Preserving Our Built Heritage

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The Gloucester Street Convent of the *Congrégation de Notre-Dame* (1872-1965)

By Ken Elder

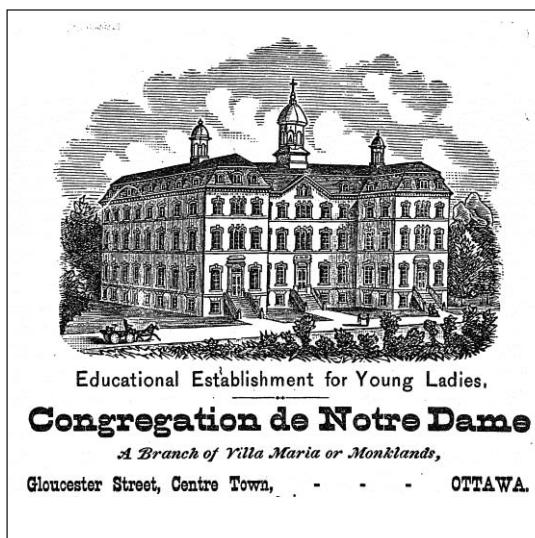
Editor's note

This is the first in a series of articles prepared for publication by heritage architect and Heritage Ottawa Board Member Ken Elder. The original commissioning publication was unable to publish these articles due to changing priorities.

Heritage Ottawa is pleased to offer these well-researched and carefully prepared studies of Ottawa heritage buildings in two formats. Full-length articles will appear on our web site shortly after an abridged version is published in the Heritage Ottawa Newsletter.

At a time when everything south of Gloucester Street in the upper town section of Ottawa was largely open fields, the sisters of the *Congrégation de Notre-Dame* purchased eight lots in the block bounded by Elgin, Gloucester, Metcalfe and Nepean Streets and hired James R. Bowes, an Ottawa architect, to design a combined convent and school for young ladies.

The *Congrégation de Notre-Dame*, an educational order of the Roman Catholic Church founded in Montreal in 1653 by Marguerite Bourgeoys, had operated a boarding school for girls in Ottawa since 1868. The school was established at the invitation of



Detail, Advertisement. Artist conception of Congrégation de Notre Dame Convent

Rev. Father J. F. Guillard, pastor of Saint-Joseph Church, and Rev. Father John Joseph Collins, pastor of Saint Patrick's parish. For over 100 years the sisters offered education in French and in English in downtown Ottawa.

In 1872, the Sisters left the former Royal Victoria Hotel for their new permanent convent, an imposing five storey stone structure on Gloucester Street. The design for the new *Congrégation de Notre-Dame* convent was prepared by architect James R. Bowes (1851-1892). An artist's conception of the proposed 'H' plan building was utilized for many years in advertisements, but never fully realized.

The *Free Press* of September 9, 1874 includes a description of this first construction phase:

"This is known as the centre building, having been designed to receive a wing on either side; it is 50 x 55 feet, five stories high, and the situation is in a most eligible and healthy locality. The dormitory is the full dimensions of the building, and the ceiling is 14 feet high, the ventilation being very good. It also contains a study-room, 50 x 50, for the junior classes, also class rooms, community rooms, and a music hall 50 x 55 feet."

Congrégation de Notre-Dame...

Construction of the Eastern Wing was begun in the summer of 1874 and the grey stone structure was formally opened in late 1874 by the Governor General of Canada, Lord Dufferin and Lady Dufferin. The Apostolic Delegate to Canada gave his blessing to the new school, which was to have far-reaching influence on educational standards.

At this point there were eleven teachers in the Institution and about 150 pupils. The course of studies comprised the usual elementary branches of an English and French education including Ancient and Modern History, Literature, Botany, use of Globes and Astronomy, Zoology, Natural History, Chemistry, Arithmetic, Book-keeping, Algebra and Geometry.

The large public or examination hall on the second floor of the new wing was inaugurated with a grand literary and musical entertainment on March 15, 1875 and on August 20, 1875, the chapel on the ground floor was blessed by Monseigneur Duhamel. A special course of plain sewing, dress cutting, dress-making and house keeping was commenced and successfully realized during the first academic year.

Between 1909 and 1926 four neighbouring brick residences of some distinction were purchased and adapted for school purposes. In 1909, the Sisters acquired the 2 1/2 storey brick residence of Warren R. Soper built in 1889-1890, designed by Montreal architect John James Browne (1837-1893) in the Richardsonian Romanesque style. With its pinnacled corner tower, projecting entrance bay



Photo: (Topley Studio/Library and Archives Canada/PA-027091)

Couvent de Notre-Dame, 34-38 Gloucester Street from north west, April, 1886

and deeply recessed windows it was an impressive mansion. The interior, with its wood paneled walls, moulded plaster ceilings, decorative glass windows and ornamental fireplaces was rich in Victorian detail.

In 1923 the Sisters purchased the property adjoining the convent on the corner of Metcalfe and Gloucester Streets. The two buildings on the property, one a combined residence and store, the other a residence in the Queen Anne Revival style designed by James R. Bowes (1852-1892). Primary classes (English and French) were opened in these two buildings.

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

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In 1925 construction began on a 4 storey High School wing, west of the 1872-1875 main building. The fire-proof building, incorporating the latest advances in hygiene and ventilation, accommodated classrooms, laboratories, gymnasiums, dormitories, bedrooms, and rooms reserved for

the Sisters. Classes in the new building began in September, 1925. Construction of the High School Wing, close to the western boundary of the property, likely entailed the demolition of the 1 1/2 storey residence/store at 52 Gloucester Street. The 56 Gloucester Street building was adapted for courses in "enseignement ménager" or home economics.

In 1926 the Sisters acquired the 2 1/2 storey mansard roofed brick house at 27 Nepean Street east of the Convent property. The house was built for Harry F. Shaw, a carpenter, in 1890-1891. The Queen Anne Revival style building had the characteristic picturesque, irregular massing, projecting bay windows, tall chimneys, dormer windows, and two-storey verandah. The spacious and well lighted rooms were renovated and adapted for Commercial courses.

In November 1959 the City of Ottawa was advised that property for a new modern school building had been secured in the Alta Vista area and that the Notre Dame Convent property on Gloucester Street was being offered for sale. Ottawa was not interested in purchasing the Convent although several uses for the site were proposed, including a theatre, and the Eastern Ontario Institute of Technology.

The formal closing of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame Convent took place on February 20, 1965 with 1000 former students present. Favorite antiques – a



Postcard. Congregation de Notre Dame Gloucester St. Ottawa. Published by H. Richards, Montreal, c. 1926. Completed High School wing at right.

splendid round walnut table from the ante-room, chandeliers from the convent chapel and reception room, striking religious paintings and icons – treasured by the Congrégation through the years, were taken to the Heron Road complex. Moving day was scheduled for August, 1965.

The Congrégation de Notre-Dame

Convent on Gloucester Street fell to the wrecker's hammer in 1967. The official opening of the new Notre Dame and St. Patrick's High Schools took place on June 4, 1967.

Bell Canada purchased the block bounded by Elgin, Nepean, Metcalfe and Gloucester streets. Approval was granted for a 10-storey, 150-foot



Place Bell Canada from Metcalfe Street looking north east, 2010

Photo: K. Elder

building. However on May 1, 1969, Bell Canada informed City Hall that it proposed to have Olympia & York erect a 25-storey, 232-foot tower (of which Bell Canada would lease 8 floors) designed by Bregman + Hamann Architects of Toronto. The building, completed in August 1971, had 27 floors and took the name 'Place Bell Canada'.

What is so striking about the loss of the *Congrégation de Notre-Dame* Convent on Gloucester Street in 1967 is the calm acceptance of this tragic loss of architectural heritage and all the memories it evoked, reaching back to 1872. An article in the Ottawa Journal in February, 1965, "Move To New Headquarters Ceremonies to Mark Convent Closing", acknowledges that the closing "will mark the end of an era in the educational history of Ottawa", but says nothing about the loss of this tangible reminder of what went before.

Supporting the 'Next Generation' of heritage professionals

For several years Heritage Ottawa has sponsored heritage students from the Ottawa area colleges and universities to attend the Ontario Heritage Conference. Participation at the conference provides students with a valuable opportunity to meet heritage experts, expand their knowledge of the heritage field and network with other young heritage professionals.

The Architectural Conservancy of Ontario (ACO), Community Heritage Ontario, and the Frontenac Heritage Foundation co-sponsored this year's conference in Kingston Ontario May 31-June 3.

Kayla Jonas, ACO NextGen Co-Chair wrote to Heritage Ottawa:

"Not only were there 25 students, which accounted for nearly 10% of attendance, there were also 20 young professionals under 30. This level of attendance by the younger generation was recognized at the Friday night dinner. Speaker Dr. Randall Mason asked everyone in the room under 30 to raise their hands. Much to his surprise a large number of hands were raised. His response was 'You are doing better here than we are in the States'. Your generous support contributed to that landmark moment."

An article in *The Ottawa Citizen*, the same month, "1,000 say farewell to Notre Dame Convent", opens with the paragraph:

"Progress beckoned at the imposing door of Notre Dame Convent Saturday afternoon as 1,000 students past and present reunited for a nostalgic farewell to the 91 year old Ottawa Institution."

The emphasis on progress is typical of the period when the field of Heritage Conservation was in its infancy. A lot of hope was obviously placed in the greatly expanded facilities that would be provided by the new \$400,000,000 Alta Vista complex.

The irony is that because of financial pressures, both St. Patrick's and Notre Dame High Schools were shut down just 8 years after opening, in August, 1973, and the property sold to the Government of Canada. ♦

Student attendees were able to enjoy all the sessions of the conference and attend a specially organized pub night, a networking event which brought together different heritage generations in a relaxed atmosphere.

Carly Brecht, one of the students chosen for this year's Heritage Ottawa sponsorship found the Conference's sessions devoted to young professionals of particular value:

[T]he "Young Professional Forum" lead by Amy Barnes, Kayla Jonas and Nancy Oakley...was probably the most useful session seeing as how it was designed to help students like me find careers in the heritage field. There was an extremely wide range of advice and topics discussed which included everything from volunteering, to design charettes, to mentoring programs and countless other heritage resources. It was really interesting to hear stories of public opinions, conflict of interest versus what is usually just a perception of a conflict of interest, and the overlap between sustainability and heritage. I also enjoyed meeting all the other students studying other aspects of heritage. ♦

From the President....



Here it is August already and I hope all of you have had a glorious summer and are looking forward to a busy Fall. Certainly Heritage Ottawa is!

We had an excellent turnout at the May AGM to hear Ken Elder's wonderful talk on his historic post card collection. At the AGM we announced our slate of directors, and we are delighted to welcome Frank Oakes, Laurie Brady, Linda Dicaire and Katherine Spencer-Ross to our board. Good to have you!

We are having a busy walking tour season; for details, see the reminder in this issue or check our website: http://heritageottawa.org/en/heritage_ottawa%20%80%99s_2012_walking_tours. Coming up in September is our new Lecture Series. The organisation of the Lecture program is being coordinated this year by Katherine Spencer-Ross and Linda Dicaire, two of our new board members, who have a fresh take on our lecture program. Check out the insert in this *Newsletter* and pin it to your bulletin board!

The City is proposing to revamp its advisory committees. These committees are composed of concerned citizens who provide advice to Council on a broad range of issues. The City established 15 such committees at the time of amalgamation in 2001, and a little trimming and rationalising is in order. Some of the proposals such as having a Councillor on each of the surviving five committees are positive changes.

But recommended changes to two of the committees could adversely affect how heritage will be managed in this City for some time to come. The proposed replacement of the Ottawa Built Heritage Advisory Committee (OBHAC) with a new Built Heritage Sub-Committee of Planning Committee consisting of four Councillors and three citizen members will take Council representation beyond the realm of Councillor-participation and into Councillor-control. This is tantamount to the politicians telling the politicians what they want to hear, and cutting off an important source of citizen input to heritage planning in this city. Why overload

this new sub-committee with councillors to the detriment of citizen-input? Councillors already get their say at Planning Committee and full Council.

Currently, OBHAC consists of citizens appointed to make recommendations to Planning Committee concerning proposed interventions to designated and listed heritage buildings. This committee has done excellent work over the last several years and has provided wise, expert advice to Planning Committee, despite the fact that there have been no new appointments in a very long time. OBHAC listens to public delegations, and this is an important opportunity for both proponents of change and concerned citizens to present their perspectives.

Heritage Ottawa will be making a presentation to the Joint Meeting of the Finance and Economic Development Committee and the Governance Renewal Sub-Committee on August 30, 2012, urging Council to right the balance on this important committee.

Additionally, proposed changes to the existing Arts, Heritage and Culture Advisory Committee are problematic. The plan to fold Recreation and Leisure into this committee, making for a massive portfolio of disparate interests provides for too few members to handle the work, and only four two-hour meetings per year. Arts, Culture and Heritage, and Leisure and Recreation each deserve their own voice and enough time and members to do the job.

Advocacy issues continue: Heritage Ottawa has made representations on your behalf concerning proposed interventions to the National Capital Commission system of Parkways (widening the Aviation Parkway to accommodate truck traffic; possible location of the LRT on the Ottawa River Parkway); proposed widening of Sussex Street involving the demolition of several houses in the Lowertown West Heritage Conservation District; proposed demolition of a house at 187 Lansdowne Road North and other issues. We'll try to keep you up to date on developments on these issues in the *Newsletter* and on the website.

Enjoy the rest of our lovely summer, and we look forward to seeing you on our walking tours and at the lectures.

Leslie Maitland
President, Heritage Ottawa

Celebrating Forty Years of the World Heritage Convention

The World Heritage Convention turns forty this year!

By Nancy Oakley

Adopted in 1972, Canada ratified the *Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* in 1976, and today there are 189 State Parties signed to the Convention. The World Heritage Committee, made up of twenty-one rotating members, meets every year to review the state of conservation of World Heritage Sites, and to add others to the List.

This year's Session of the World Heritage Committee met in St. Petersburg, Russia, in June. The Committee voted to inscribe twenty-six sites on the World Heritage List, including Canada's newest World Heritage Site: Grand Pré. A cultural landscape located on the Bay of Fundy in Nova Scotia, Grand Pré is associated with the agricultural development and subsequent deportation of the Acadians, the subject of the Longfellow poem, *Evangeline*.

Canada sat on the Committee on four separate occasions and hosted the Committee at Banff in 1990 and Quebec City in 2008. Canadian heritage professionals have also actively contributed to the development of international conservation theory and practice, most notably the work of the late Herb Stovel in the drafting of the 1994 *Nara Document on Authenticity*.

World Heritage Sites are identified as having 'outstanding universal value', with significance so great as to transcend national boundaries. State Parties that possess World Heritage Sites are obligated to safeguard them, recognizing that they are the caretakers, not owners, of this heritage. Today, almost one thousand sites have been inscribed on the World Heritage List, from Macchu Picchu in Peru, to Ayers Rock in Australia. Sixteen Canadian properties have been inscribed, including seven cultural sites and nine natural sites.



The World Heritage Committee Session in Paris, 2011

Photo: Nancy Oakley

As caretakers of these universally significant places, World Heritage designation presents new challenges and opportunities to the State Parties who manage these sites. While World Heritage status essentially guarantees an influx of visitors, many sites struggle to achieve the right balance between tourism and conservation. Some sites inscribed on the list lack the tools to ensure their effective management, such as a Statement of Outstanding Universal Significance or management plans.

The inscription of Grand Pré as a World Heritage Site comes at a time when the ability of the federal government to provide adequate protection and conservation of its World Heritage Sites has been called into question. Severe budget cutbacks at National Parks and Historic Sites across the country have seen their staffing levels and operational hours dramatically reduced. The Rideau Canal, declared a World Heritage Site in 2007, has seen staff cuts of 50%, leaving only lock operator positions still staffed. Heritage Ottawa understands that these positions will be cut to part-time by next season.

As the World Heritage Convention looks ahead to another forty years, we take the opportunity to reflect on past successes and current conservation challenges. Perhaps our government needs a reminder of its commitment to both Canadians and the international community about protecting and conserving our global heritage. ♦

Biographical Note: Nancy Oakley is a Board Member and the Heritage Keeper Program Coordinator for Heritage Ottawa. She is a graduate student in the Heritage Conservation program at Carleton University's School of Canadian Studies.

[Editor's note: for more information about the Rideau Canal see the Save Our Rideau web site: <http://www.rideau-info.com/canal/save/index.html>]

Reminder

Heritage Ottawa's Walking Tour Season Continues

A full list of the autumn 2012 program, including the names of guides and a short description of each walk, is available on the Heritage Ottawa website: http://heritageottawa.org/en/walking_tour_series All walks begin at 2:00 p.m., at the meeting points indicated and last one hour and a half, rain or shine. **Tour prices:** Heritage Ottawa members \$5.00, non-members \$10.00.

September 9

Cumberland Village (*new), led by Dorothy-Jane Smith and Jean François Beaulieu, local historians and Cumberland Township Historical Society executive members

Meet: Maple Hall, 2552 Old Montreal Road, Cumberland

September 16

Clemow Avenue Driveway: Ottawa's Forgotten Architectural Gem (*new), led by Andrew Elliott, writer, archivist and architectural historian

Meet: Patterson Creek Pavilion near Linden Terrace and Queen Elizabeth Driveway

September 23

Lowertown East, led by David Jeanes, urban activist

Meet: École Secondaire de La Salle, Old St. Patrick and Beausoleil



Tour guide Leo Doyle explains the evolution of Old Ottawa South

Photo: Brian Glenn

October 7

New Edinburgh, led by Katherine Arkay, and Janet Uren, writer, both owners of designated heritage houses in New Edinburgh

Meet: Fraser Schoolhouse, 62 John Street, near Sussex

October 14

Lowertown West, led by Hagit Hadaya, architectural historian

Meet: Bytown Museum, on the Rideau Canal 'neath Parliament Hill

October 21

Sandy Hill, led by Judy Deegan, resident and heritage activist

Meet: Laurier House, 335 Laurier Ave E. at Chapel



Colonel By Day 2012 – David Flemming and David Jeanes greet visitors at the Heritage Ottawa Display

Photo: Teresa Doré

Stuart Lazear Retirement

Past President David Flemming presents Heritage Ottawa Honourary Life Member, Stuart Lazear with a Heritage Ottawa Meritorious Service Award for his contribution to the preservation of Ottawa's built heritage. Stuart retired in June after a 23 year career as Senior Heritage Planner with the City of Ottawa.



Photo: Christienne Uchiyama

End of a long journey – Clemow Estate East Heritage Conservation District plaque unveiled

The unveiling of the plaque on June 19 2012 marked the successful end of over 8 years of work. The Glebe Community Association's Heritage Committee worked with the City of Ottawa to establish this HCD in the Glebe neighbourhood. (see article by John Mcleod, *Heritage Ottawa Newsletter*, Fall 2011)

This event also marked the centennial of Central Park, the tranquil green space created from a dry creek bed that sits on either side of Clemow Avenue.

Words of congratulations from Mayor Jim Watson,



Heritage Ottawa President Leslie Maitland and fellow speakers John Leaning, Mayor Jim Watson and Councillor David Chernushenko

Capital Ward Councillor David Chernushenko, Heritage Ottawa president Leslie Maitland and city heritage planner Lesley Collins were well-received.

Glebe Resident John Leaning also spoke about why the area needed protection. The formal unveiling was followed by a short walking tour that took people through the park, past some of the historic homes in area, and ended with a look at the restoration of former architect W.E. Noffke's house at 20 Clemow Avenue where refreshments were served. ♦



Mayor Watson unveils the plaque, assisted by Councillor Chernushenko and Glebe resident and historian John Leaning

Upcoming Events

Culture Days September 29, 12 – 4 pm

Heritage Ottawa/Patrimoine Ottawa is participating in this Canada-wide event for the first time this year. Please join us!



Photo: David B. Flemming

Arts Court, 2 Daly Avenue

We're opening our office at Arts Court, 2 Daly Avenue at the corner of Nicholas Street so visitors can see what we do; we will also exhibit images of many of Ottawa's heritage buildings in the hallway near the office. Each hour, our volunteers will

lead a 20-minute walking tour to view 20 designated heritage buildings in a four-block area around Arts Court.

Historical Society of Ottawa lectures

Routhier Community Centre
172 Gigues Avenue (near Cumberland St.)
September 28 2012, 1:00 pm

Glenn Wright
Beechwood Cemetery: Formation History

October 26 2012

David Jeanes
Benjamin Batson: Pioneer Ottawa Lumberman

Heritage Ottawa's Eighth Annual Bob and Mary Anne Phillips Memorial Lecture

With award-winning biographer and historian Charlotte Gray

Wednesday February 6, 2013

Watch for further information on our web site or in the next *Newsletter*.