



Heritage Ottawa NEWSLETTER

Dedicated to Preserving Our Built Heritage

August 2025 Volume 51, No. 3

2025
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Converting a Whole Church: A Happy Example of Adaptive Re-use in New Edinburgh

By Richard Belliveau



Photos: Carolyn Quinn, Heritage Ottawa

The interior of the former Church of Saint David after its conversion into the Northgrave's open-concept living room in 1996.

More than fifty years ago, Brian Northgrave and his family bought an historic church in the New Edinburgh neighbourhood of

Ottawa, and proceeded to convert it into their home. Now, after years of hard work on the old church, located at 13 Crichton Street, Brian and his wife

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

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A Happy Example of Adaptive Re-use continued...



The former Church of Saint David at 13 Crichton Street in New Edinburgh.

Marie-Rose are preparing to move out and sell their heritage property.

The story of the conversion of this church is an inspiring example of the preservation of an abandoned heritage property and the salutary role of adaptive re-purposing.

At the time, Brian was a young officer in Canada's Trade Commissioner Service—which eventually was to be incorporated into a new Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT); External Affairs, the other department, was about to move into spanking new headquarters at the Lester B. Pearson Building on Sussex Drive. In 1972, Brian and his then wife Valerie—just returned from an overseas assignment in Pakistan—thought that the New Edinburgh neighbourhood would be a good place to relocate with their young family. But even then, housing prices in the neighbourhood were a bit high for his salary level.

The Church of Saint David was “Reformed Episcopal,” built in 1889 by a congregation who broke away from the more high-church Saint Bartholomew's Anglican parish. The church was built to hold about 300 worshippers, but over the decades the congregation had shrunk and the parish was closed in 1952. Since that date, the church building had been rented to the Church of Latter Day Saints for about ten years and then to a German-speaking Pentecostal group until 1970, when it was put on the market.

The Northgraves saw the possibilities for converting the church to a residential structure, even with a leaking roof that would cost at least \$10,000 in addition to the purchase price. Nonetheless, the old church offered them a unique opportunity to acquire a large space in an ideal location in New Edinburgh at a price lower than that of a standard family home in the area. While none of the

conservative chartered banks would finance them, in the end they had no problem securing a mortgage from the CS-Coop.

After fixing the leaky roof, the first big project was to dispose of the original pine pews. Brian organized a pew-removal event with a number of young colleagues from External Affairs and the TCS, myself included. I was rewarded with a two-seater pew. A carpenter friend of Brian's created a beautiful dining-room table using the wood of a couple of the pews, and that table is still in use by the Northgraves these fifty years later.

The building had a sound stone foundation and high-ceilinged lower level once used as the parish hall, with good plumbing and fixtures. Converting the basement area into a livable four-room apartment was the most practical approach. The upper area, or former nave, connected with an inner staircase, was generally left as open space. The old vinyl floor was torn up and replaced with beautiful Gatineau pine boards. This space proved appealing to a later tenant, a cultural attaché from the French embassy, who used the upper hall for large receptions. Alas, he had not counted on the difficulty of heating a large space on a cold Canadian winter evening, and the guests at a dinner party had to wear their warm outdoor clothing at the table.

Brian was posted to Washington in 1979 and then cross-posted to Brussels, and during that time the church was rented to a woman of the Bahai faith and the upper space was used as a Bahai meeting house for a number of years.

By 1996, Brian and his second wife, Marie-Rose, proposed selling the church, but there were no takers. Instead, they decided to redesign

the building into two units: they converted the upper level into a separate living space which they would use as their principal residence while renting out the basement apartment.

Brian's brother, Paul Northgrave, an architect, prepared a series of structural designs to accomplish this transformation, and the detailed work was overseen by Doug Bretzleff, an accomplished renovations builder/engineer. The conversion involved the hanging of ducts for heating and air-conditioning, creating a complete open-concept kitchen, enclosing the corner spaces to create two bedrooms, two bathrooms and an office, as well as installing a natural gas fireplace/furnace in the main hall.

The recasing of the lovely stained-glass windows was a challenge as the original leading was disintegrating, and risked falling to pieces with removal. Serendipitously, Doug Bretzleff's father was then working

on a pair of small-church renovations in the Shawville area, and was able to engineer a procedure for the removal, restoration and re-installation of the original windows. The ten gothic-style windows along the side and front of the building were rehung to open into the building, while a second face of glazing provided a protective exterior window.

Brian recalls sardonically the hassles with City officials to obtain a building permit to sever the building into two residences. The bureaucracy required 35 copies of their plans for circulation to all the officials who needed to be consulted, and they encountered delays due to inspections and committee meeting schedules and other such obstacles. The final cost of the building permit alone was an estimated ten thousand dollars.

In later years, however, when important work on the bell tower roof needed to be redone, the owners



Marie-Rose and Brian Northgrave at their dining-room table, hand-crafted using wood from the original church pews.

benefited from a grant under the City of Ottawa's Heritage Property Small Grant Program. Their property, though not individually designated, qualified because it is located in the New Edinburgh Heritage Conservation District. This grant was especially useful as the tower had to be reshingled with specialized shingles.

Despite the hurdles on all sides, Brian and Marie-Rose were thrilled with the result, and have lived comfortably

in their reconfigured church for over twenty-five years. They love the spaciousness of the living area; the height of the walls permitted them to bring back a few oversize pieces of antique furniture from their last post in Uruguay, where Brian was serving as Canada's ambassador.

Since the first paragraph of this article was written, the Northgraves' beloved church has been sold. Although they will soon be moving into a smaller space, they will

remain in the neighbourhood. The adventure of renovating and preserving an historic property in New Edinburgh has been a labour of love, and is an example of what can be achieved in a heritage property with dedication and imagination. The community is grateful.

Richard Belliveau is a retired foreign service officer, and past president of Heritage Ottawa.

ON THE BLOCK: HERITAGE OTTAWA'S GRAND ONLINE AUCTION IS BACK!

Napoleon's bicorne gathering dust on the hatstand? Is that Edo Period tea set taking up valuable counter space? Or maybe the Modigliani clashes with the new paint scheme.

Not to despair.

Heritage Ottawa is all about decluttering. And our second Grand Online Auction happening March 8–14, 2026, is the best way to divest those surplus treasures while supporting HO's vital advocacy work on behalf of at-risk heritage buildings and landscapes, as well as our robust community education program that includes public lectures, walking tours, publications, workshops and much, much more.

We're on the hunt for unique new or gently used items—fine art, vintage clothing, silverware, jewellery, heritage and architecture books, gold fillings (not so much), and the like. Donations can also take the form of theatre, movie, or sports-event tickets, gift certificates, travel vouchers, restaurant meals, in-kind services, cottage stays, or even coffee and conversation with some of Ottawa's best and brightest.

Our 2024 auction was a tremendous success, raising more than \$17,000, and showcasing the generosity of local individuals and businesses. Impressive as our initial effort was, we're gearing up to exceed that total in 2026, and bang the gavel on \$20,000 or more.

To make it happen, we need your donations to fill the auction catalogue. Please contact the Auction Working Group at info@heritageottawa.com

Thanks for your support!

Preserving the Past Before It's Too Late: Addressing Demolition by Neglect in Ottawa

By Lesley Collins



Photos: City of Ottawa

City staff undertaking site inspections at 127 York Street as part of Heritage Watch List initiative.

Our heritage buildings and places are non-renewable resources, they tell stories and provide residents with physical reminders of the past. Demolition by neglect has the potential to result in the loss of these important places and their stories. The City of Ottawa and many other municipalities are

dealing with demolition by neglect caused by a variety of reasons: owners who are willfully neglecting their properties with the intention of demolishing, properties that are vacant and subject to vandalism or fire, and owners who may not be able to afford the ongoing costs of rehabilitation.

The City's dedicated work on demolition by neglect of heritage properties goes back to 2013, when updates to the City's Property Standards By-law were introduced to specifically address maintenance and conservation of heritage properties and vacant heritage properties. In 2016, the Heritage Watch List (HWL) was created as a tool to monitor vacant and at-risk heritage properties city-wide. The HWL is maintained by a team of City staff in Heritage Planning, Building Code Services and By-law and Regulatory Services who monitor and undertake regular enforcement on non-compliant properties.

City staff recognize and share the frustration on the part of the heritage community on issues of demolition by neglect and are striving to fully implement existing tools and develop new initiatives to bolster our efforts. Some recent initiatives include:

1. Proactive Engineering Assessments

In November and December 2024, Heritage Planning hired John G. Cooke and Associates Ltd. to conduct high level engineering assessments of ten Watch List properties. City staff spent two days with the engineer visiting the sites. After the site visits, enforcement actions were taken on all properties including Notices of Violation for issues like graffiti and the issuance of Orders that required the property owners to provide detailed condition assessments. From the City's perspective this was a very successful exercise and is something we will continue to undertake in the future.



Rehabilitated property at 460 Wilbrod Street, recently removed from the Heritage Watch List.

2. Developing a closer working relationship with Global Affairs Canada

Of the 47 properties on the Heritage Watch List, 11 are either diplomatic properties or are owned by foreign governments. This can make enforcement more difficult for the City. Given these challenges, the City team reached out to Global Affairs Canada to coordinate an information sharing meeting and discussion. The City shared a list of properties and the challenges associated with them and Global Affairs Canada staff offered assistance in making connections with property owners. The group agreed to continue to meet in smaller groups and to work together on an information package that could

be shared with foreign diplomatic missions regarding heritage designation and the importance of maintaining their properties.

3. At-Risk Heritage Building Workshop

In March 2025, City staff, with input from Heritage Ottawa, held an in-person workshop at City Hall focused on issues related to demolition by neglect. The event was attended by Heritage Ottawa members, representatives of community associations with Heritage Conservation Districts, and the Chair, Vice Chair and members of Built Heritage Committee. The goal of the session was to have an open and collaborative discussion about the challenges of demolition by neglect, identifying the gaps

in the current system and coming up with new ideas to incentivize development of our vacant heritage buildings. Staff received rich, thoughtful and constructive feedback from community members. Some of the ideas included exploring opportunities for new incentives such as zoning and tax incentives as well as new disincentives like expanding the vacant unit tax to non-residential properties.

We are currently working through the ideas generated during the workshop to determine their feasibility. After this analysis is complete, staff will re-engage with the community and develop an action plan to further bolster our efforts and help property owners see the benefits and immense potential associated with conserving and developing heritage properties in Ottawa.

Despite the ongoing challenges outlined in this article, there are glimmers of hope resulting from the City and heritage community's dedicated work on this issue including the recent initiation of construction at Somerset House, 352 Somerset Street West which has been sitting vacant and deteriorating since 2007. The new development will include 14 new housing units with commercial units on the ground floor and rehabilitation of the remaining portion of the building. Efforts to address demolition by neglect involve collaboration at the City and engagement and participation from the heritage community. We are optimistic that by maintaining this collective effort we will be able to address the issue of demolition by neglect in our city.

Lesley Collins, MCIP, RPP, CAHP, is the program manager, Heritage Planning Branch, City of Ottawa

Celebrating Rockcliffe Park: A National Historic Site

By Susan d'Aquino Peterson

Friday, May 30, was a beautiful sunny day. That morning about 250 Rockcliffe Park residents, past and present, and dignitaries – gathered in the Jubilee Garden for a ceremony marking the designation of Rockcliffe Park as a National Historic Site. A plaque was unveiled describing this honour. There are only 33 other districts in Canada that have been recognized in this way.

Elder Irvin Sarazin of the Algonquins of Ontario gave a welcome and moving prayer that started the ceremony. Member of Parliament, Mona Fortier, spoke for the Government of Canada, noting that Rockcliffe's curving roads, green spaces, and well-preserved historic homes reflect a 19th century vision of harmony between architecture and landscape that continues to shape its character today.

Noting that Rockcliffe Park was first laid out as a community in 1864, Scott Heatherington, president of the Rockcliffe Park Residents Association, offered thanks to generation after generation of residents whose care has allowed the district to survive and flourish. He also thanked the many countries that beautifully maintain grand old historic residences for their heads of mission, several of whom joined the ceremony.

He concluded with a call to all three levels of government to strengthen protection of Canada's heritage and heritage communities – as they tell diverse and important stories of our history.

Martha Edmond, author of a beautiful book on the history of Rockcliffe Park, told Rockcliffe's



The commemorative plaque, admired by (left to right) Martha Edmond, Brian Dickson, Scott Heatherington, Susan Peterson, Si Taylor.

story and spoke to the reasons that the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada had decided that it merited its designation.

She noted that it recognizes the role of Thomas Coltrin Keefer, a visionary civil engineer who in 1864 first conceived of a new type of community. It was carved out of the large estate owned by his father-in-law, Thomas McKay, who amassed a fortune from work on the Rideau Canal. Keefer had a groundbreaking vision for this rocky, hilly land, considered unsuitable for little else than grazing cattle. He created a park for private residences, its streets differing from the typical gridiron plans of the day. It was characterized by sensitivity to local topography, large lots and careful siting and scaling of homes so they would not dominate the parkland setting.

In Martha's words this was "not simply a real estate development - it was designed for people rather than profit." Prospective buyers were faced with restrictions while guaranteed a lifestyle of "living in nature."

The restrictions "legitimized the idea that private owners would surrender some of their individual property rights for the common good."

The city councillor, Rawlson King, wrapped things up by speaking on behalf of the City of Ottawa, including greetings from Mayor Sutcliffe. The mayor expressed his "deep respect and gratitude to everyone in the village who has worked to preserve Rockcliffe's unique character and heritage," adding that this "is a proud moment for all of us." Councillor King spoke eloquently of being "surrounded by living history" that "represents something quintessentially Canadian". Noting that Rockcliffe Park has been "home to those who have shaped our national story," he said: "As we celebrate this National Historic Site designation, we commit to preserving not just the buildings and landscapes, but the spirit of this place – a community that embodies the best of Canadian values: respect for nature, thoughtful development, and service to our nation."

It's worth noting that on June 25, city council voted in favour of significant negative changes to Rockcliffe Park's Secondary Plan – ostensibly in pursuit of provincially ordained intensification. Ignoring the fact that Ontario requires that "protected heritage property shall be conserved," and disregarding a compromise proposed by Councillor King, it appears that city council in reality holds heritage protection in low regard.

Susan Peterson d'Aquino is Chair, Heritage Outreach Committee, Rockcliffe Park Residents Association

Photo: Tom d'Aquino

Tim Murray: Hail and Farewell

By Andrew Waldron

Tim Murray passed away on June 27, 2025. A remarkable architect and planner, he was one of a pioneering generation of modernist architects in Ottawa after the Second World War. With his brother Patrick, the Murrays designed and built major works in Ottawa, Toronto and in their homeland of Ireland.

Born in Dublin, the Murrays experienced their early years in the Irish Free State. Tim and his brother Pat studied architecture and planning at University College in Dublin and

completed their studies at Liverpool in the early 1950s, likely listening to the lectures of Colin Rowe. As with many Liverpool graduates, Tim chose to emigrate in 1957 to a growing Canada. His first work was in the Department of Public Works, but he quickly moved on to private practice with another young architect to arrive in Ottawa – George Bemi. The new firm completed some of the city’s finest modern churches.

Once his brother Pat arrived, the two established T.V. Murray Associates in

1961, eventually to become Murray & Murray Associates. They went on to design notable projects in Ottawa including, the Notre Dame Convent and St. Patrick’s High School on Heron Road (also known as the Federal Study Centre), buildings and planning at Algonquin College, the University of Ottawa (Hamelin Hall) and Carleton University (Duntun Tower and Robertson Hall). They also designed many commercial malls across the city. In total, they worked on over 1,000 projects in Canada, in Ireland and the UK, in the USA, in Australia and in Malawi.

The firm’s work echoed New Brutalist ideas, particularly enclosed spaces, monumental forms and subtle natural lighting. The firm’s design for the Federal Study Centre, Morisset Library at the University of Ottawa, the Japanese Embassy or the exceptional Ottawa-Carleton Courthouse reflect the inwardness, solidity and indirect lighting that were hallmarks of their designs.

Murray’s ecclesiastical and educational works were bold and adventurous. St. Basil’s Roman Catholic Church (1959), with George Bemi and St. Maurice Catholic Church (1965) in Nepean reflect a modern architectural veracity of changing doctrine within the Catholic church. Works by sculptor Gerald Trottier were seamlessly integrated into their spaces. Exposed concrete, uniform massing and modern clerestories recognized simultaneously both tradition and modernism.

Tim retired from the firm in 2003. He lost his partner and brother in 2010. The firm was eventually acquired by the IBI Group (now Arcadis). He remained active in Ottawa’s architectural community, often meeting with his peers. He endowed the Murray & Murray



Robertson Building, Carleton University



Japanese Embassy, Ottawa

Competition at Carleton University in 2003, which challenges architecture students to develop and present architectural ideas through hand-drawn or hybrid drawings.

Andrew Waldron, Executive Director, Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals

2025 Ottawa Regional Heritage Fair

Paul Bennett

Heritage Ottawa is delighted to announce that Michael Mashologu of Ottawa’s Glashan Middle School was the winner of Heritage Ottawa’s award at the 2025 Ottawa Regional Heritage Fair.

Michael’s engaging project was entitled “How Did the Construction of the Rideau Canal Affect Ottawa and Its Environment?” He had clearly done a lot of research and wore a colourful British “red coat” costume for the event, adding to the authenticity of his presentation.

The Ottawa Regional Heritage Fair was held on April 29 at the Canadian War Museum in Lebreton Flats. The fair is open to students from grades 4 to 10 in the English and French Ottawa-Carleton public and Catholic



Paul Bennett, Heritage Ottawa and Michael Mashologu

school boards, private schools, Pikwakanagan Education Services and home-schooled children.

Heritage Ottawa’s annual award is given to a research project about a recognized historic place in the City of Ottawa, which is of local, provincial, and/or

national significance. It is accompanied by a generous \$100 cash prize.

Five volunteers from Heritage Ottawa participated as judges at the fair this year, including Katherine Spencer Ross, Johanne Fortier, Stuart Lazear, Jennifer Fink and Paul Bennett.

Heritage Ottawa was impressed with the number of the projects focused on built -and landscape- heritage subjects. These included not only the Rideau Canal but also the Chateau Lafayette and the federal Post Office and Customs building.

For more information, visit the Ottawa Regional Heritage Fair website.

Paul Bennett is a member of the Heritage Ottawa board



Duntun Tower, Carleton University

Photos: Chris Warden, Trace Architecture, Ottawa

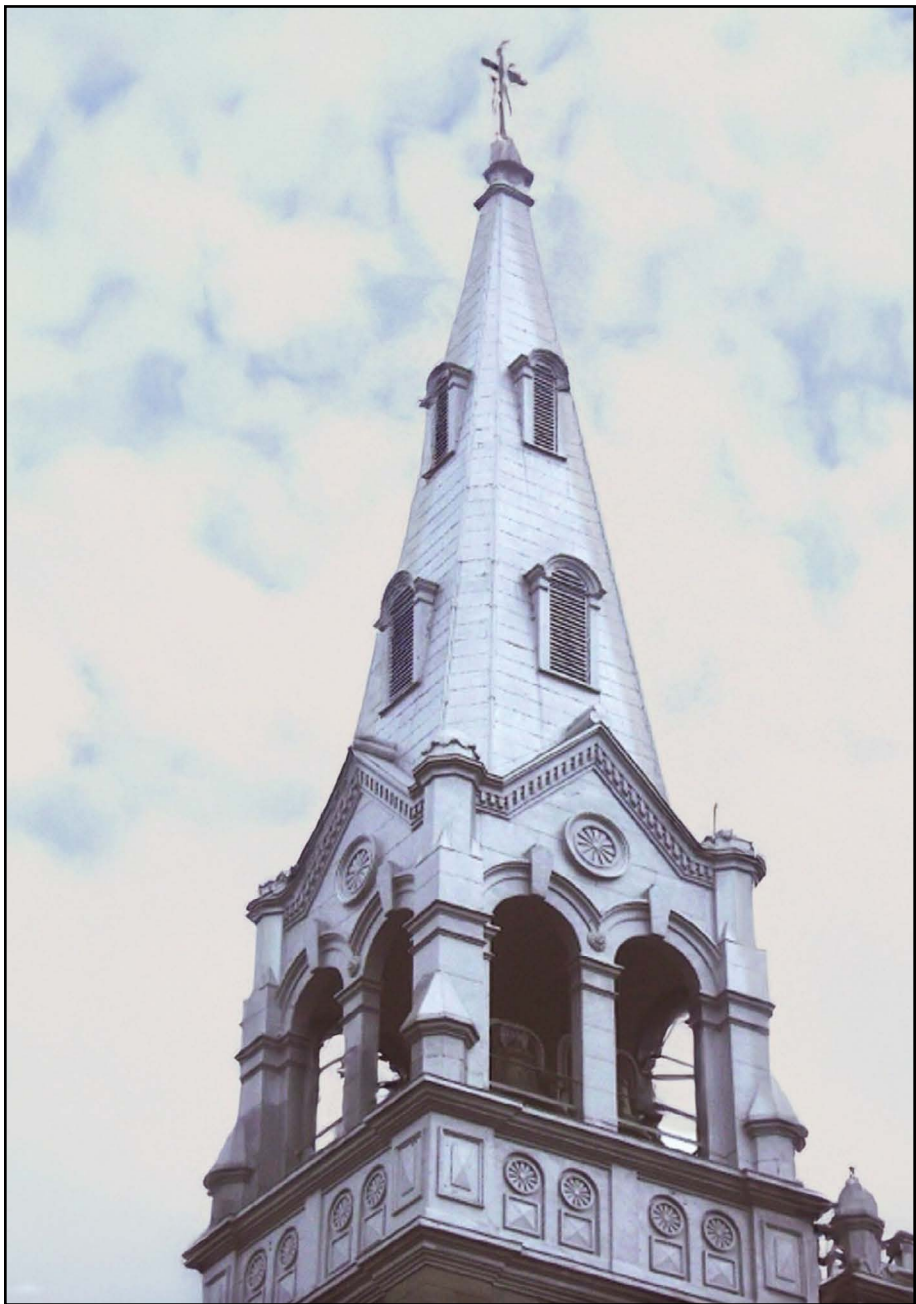
Photo: Paul Bennett

The Bells of Saint-François d'Assise Church

By Gilles Maurice Leclerc

September 20th 2025 will mark the 100th anniversary of the blessing of the five bells of Saint-François d'Assise church in Hintonburg. The Ottawa City Council voted to have it designated as a heritage building under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* by City Council on May 28th 2025, and included in this heritage building's noteworthy features are its bells set in the larger of the church's two steeples. Unfortunately, the bells have been silent over the last five years due to water infiltration. The parish is currently trying to fix these leaks to get the bells ringing again as soon as possible.

Bells have been part of all great civilizations. Saint Paulin (353-431) introduced them for worship as a way of calling worshipers to assemble and as a symbol of Christ's return. Originally, bell makers would set up shop near churches and cathedrals to cast new bells. They would decorate these with figures of saints, hence the French name "Saintiers" attributed to them. With the arrival of railways in the 19th century, bell makers chose to set up foundries to execute their work. The bells of Saint-François d'Assise, like many other Canadian churches, were made by *Fonderies Les Fils de Georges Paccard* (1796), situated in Annecy-le-Vieux, France. *Le Droit* announced that they had arrived at the port of Montreal from Marseille (*Le Droit*, 28 August 1915, p. 10/BANQ). It is assumed that they made their way to Ottawa by train. The procession from the train station to the church must have been something to see. Unfortunately, there are no photos of this event in the church's archives.



Larger steeple

The bells were blessed in a grand ceremony that occurred at 3:00 p.m. on September 20th 1925. It was presided over by then Ottawa Archbishop Joseph-Médard Émard (1853-1927) before a large gathering. Each bell was 'baptized', and given

a name; see the chart below. A photo below shows them set up in the church. It was certainly a considerable operation to get them there as the largest bell, *Sacré-Coeur*, weighs in at 7,218 pounds, making it the largest church bell in the

Photos courtesy: Paroisse St-François d'Assise Parish



The bells in the church, Sept. 1925

Archdiocese of Ottawa-Cornwall. Of course, the largest bells in the Capital are in the Peace Tower and they too, ironically, are presently silent due to ongoing work on the Centre Block of the Parliament Buildings.

Here is information on each of the bells:

the bells manually (lots of fun!) but it wasn't long before it was decided to have them restored professionally and just in time for the pilgrimage of Pope St. John Paul II to Ottawa in 1984.

During that work it was discovered that one of the braces supporting the

BELL	NOTE	WEIGHT	DIAMETER
Sacré-Coeur	B flat	7,218 pounds	5'10"
Immaculée-Conception	D	3,533 pounds	4'5"
Joseph	F	2,046 pounds	3'9"
François-Antoine	G	1,489 pounds	3'4"
Louis-Élisabeth	B flat	872 pounds	2'10"

After a period of non-use in the 1970s, it was decided to reactivate the bells. The booklet printed when the bells were blessed in 1925 was re-issued to draw interest in such a venture. Finally, Gilles Leclerc, the current organist of the parish, along with friends installed ropes to ring

largest bell had broken hence causing an unbalanced rocking of the three-and-a-half-ton 'Sacré-Coeur' when it was activated. And when it did ring, one standing in the church noted that the sacristy door, about 150 feet away, would slightly vibrate despite the fact that the church's walls are made of

TAX SEASON IS COMING! CAN HERITAGE OTTAWA HELP?

Are you considering donating securities, mutual fund shares or life insurance to Heritage Ottawa? This is an efficient way to give charitably since capital gains tax does not apply. Help us make this easier for you in time for the 2025 tax season. Attend our webinar on November 6, 2025, from 7-8:30 pm.

Our guest speaker will be Douglas Lai, an accomplished Wealth Advisor and Portfolio Manager at ScotiaMcLeod. He has established himself as a trusted professional whose expertise spans retirement planning, philanthropic and gifting strategies, estate planning, and insurance solutions, tailored to help clients achieve long-term financial security.

Admission is free but please register on our website at www.heritageottawa.org (click the link on the homepage)



Inscriptions appear on each of the bells



Decorations on some of the bells

30-inch thick concrete. Not good. To correct this, the two largest bells were set to no longer swing; instead they would henceforth be struck by a side clapper. Much better.

When in use, the bells announced daily masses, weddings, funerals, and the Angelus (a Marian daily prayer recited at 12 noon), as well as other events. For instance, when the Ottawa Tamarack's marathon paths swung by the church, the parish would ring the bells to support the runners on their way. And at the request of the Royal Canadian Legion, churches across Canada were invited to ring their bells. The great bell, Sacré-Coeur, at Saint-François d'Assise, was struck 100 times at sunset on November 11th 2018 to commemorate the historical 100th

anniversary of the end of the First World War in 1918.

It is touching to hear, especially during the Doors Open Ottawa events the parish has taken part in over the last seven years or so, just how much the neighborhood enjoyed and still misses hearing the bells. Some have even suggested raising funds to have them reactivated. This work will likely be included in the major fundraising drive the parish is hoping to launch in the fall of 2025.

Gilles Maurice Leclerc has been organist of Saint-François d'Assise parish since 1977. He is currently head of the parish's fundraising drive. He can be reached at gilles.leclerc7@sympatico.ca.

Heritage Ottawa Needs YOU!

Volunteers are the heart and soul of Heritage Ottawa.

Do you enjoy local history, architecture or design? If yes, we encourage you to join Heritage Ottawa and to get involved.

Volunteers are needed to help with:

Newsletter

- People interested in researching/drafting articles on built heritage resources or issues for our Newsletter, website or social media.

Walking tours

- Coordinators and Assistant Coordinators to help our volunteer tour guides ensure the safety of participants.
- People interested in researching/developing new walking tours.

Fundraising/Sponsorships

- We are looking for people that want to engage in fundraising appeals (donations, sponsorships) and seek items for auctions.

Volunteer recruitment, retention and recognition

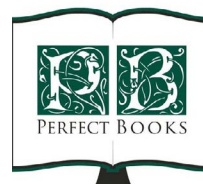
- Someone to oversee this critical function
- Someone to research and write volunteer profiles and award nominations

For more information and/or to express an interest, please contact us at info@heritageottawa.org

See www.heritageottawa.org



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