

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

SUMMARY

This building (formerly the Montreal Telegraph Building) was built in 1870-71 by John Kelly, contractor, to the designs of King Arnoldi, an Ottawa architect. It was Recognized because it is one of the best examples of the development of the community, because of its very good craftsmanship, its reinforcing influence on the present character of the area and its landmark value.

HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS

This building is one of 19 buildings located on the north side of Sparks Street between Elgin and Bank streets, an area which has been, since the 1880s at least, the core of Ottawa's central business district. The Montreal Telegraph Building was completed in 1871 as a rental property. Its first tenant was the Merchants' Bank of Canada. Both companies were part of the financial empire of the prominent Montreal entrepreneur, Hugh Allen. The construction of the bank's Ottawa headquarters by the Montreal Telegraph Company, reflects this interrelationship among Allan's companies. Founded in 1852, the MTC operated Canada's most important telegraphing system. The building was owned by the MTC until 1954, when it was sold to its long-time tenant, the Canadian National Railways.

ARCHITECTURE

As originally constructed, this building had a multitude of functions, for it combined the traditional bank with manager's residence above with commercial rental space - all within a coherent architectural design which is a mélange of architectural detailing of various historical periods reflecting the eclecticism used for the Second Empire Style in Canada. Like many architects of the period, Arnoldi drew from a variety of stylistic sources. He designed an eclectic elevation which was composed differently at each level. The ground storey originally consisted of six bays along Sparks Street and five along Metcalfe, featuring arched windows with radiating voussoirs decorated with keystones in the form of carved heads. The ground floor now consists of three bays along Sparks Street and two on Metcalfe, all separated by sandstone piers of Renaissance Revival design with raised pedestals. The keystones have been replaced by oval-shaped carved coats of arms. The corners are clasped with masonry piers of various motifs. A strong belt course separates this from the first floor, which features roughly dressed stone walls with smoothly dressed surrounds connected by an intermediate and carved heads as keystones. A narrow belt course leads to the recessive second storey, with its smaller arched windows, smooth stone surrounds without keystones, and heavy dentilled cornice. This was originally capped by a

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mansard roof pierced by eyebrow windows and decorated with iron cresting, but the cornice and mansard have been removed and an incompatible storey covered with aluminum siding was constructed in its place.

ENVIRONMENT

Because of its prominent location, sophisticated design and use by several important corporations, 93 Sparks Street appears to be a building which has been familiar to many people in Ottawa over the years. Its present tenants are a craft shop whose reputation extends beyond the region.

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