

Ottawa, Ontario
Ottawa Hydro Generating Station No. 2
Mill Street, Amelia Island

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Ottawa Hydro Generating Station No. 2 was constructed in 1891, and underwent a major structural and mechanical refitting in 1908-09. The building is located on Amelia Island, which is part of the islands, water channels and falls known collectively as the Chaudière. The building is owned by the National Capital Commission. See FHBRO Building Report 91-1 79.

Reasons for Designation

The Ottawa Hydro Generating Station No. 2 was designated Classified because of its historical associations, both national and local, its functional design and its environmental value.

Station No. 2 is associated with several significant aspects of the evolution of hydro-electric power in Canada. As the oldest identified hydro-electric facility in Canada still in operation, the building is associated with the pioneer phase of hydro-electric generation in this country. The major refitting of Station No. 2 in 1908-09 with hallmark generating components of the era, makes the plant a noteworthy example of the second, or core period of hydro-electric development in Canada. Its continuing operation has necessitated ongoing technological modernization, thereby enabling the station to present a more comprehensive picture of the evolution of hydro-electric power generation in Canada.

Station No. 2 is an early example of the industrial diversification of the Chaudière in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when the area moved away from its traditional dependence on the lumber industry and became a major centre both for the generation of electricity and for the production of pulp and paper. Station No. 2 is directly connected with E.H. Bronson's power utilities empire. Station No. 2 was the first purpose-built power generating station constructed by Bronson and the plant figures as both an early and a late example of Bronson's 20 year quest to monopolize local utilities.

The building consists of three distinct sections, each housing specific functions and equipment. Station No. 2 contains some of the oldest operational hydro-electric equipment in Canada and retains the functional arrangement of a hydro-electric station. The additive nature of the structure is of interest; its industrial complexity and additive changes provide an intriguing visual expression of the built industrial history. The horizontal shaft power units, supported on pillow block bearings, are among the oldest operating units extant in Canada and represent an early phase in the technological evolution of hydro-electric

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equipment. The installation of equipment from a later phase of development in hydro-electric technology in this building also makes this installation unique. The three power conversion units and associated equipment, from the fly ball governors to the control panels located in this power house, represent a very significant cultural resource.

Station No. 2, along with the remaining structures of the Chaudière, form a harmonious industrial precinct. The rubble masonry construction and traditional mill form of the station are repeated in several nearby buildings, while the limestone of these buildings is seen in rock outcroppings such as those lining the lower reaches of the Bronson Channel. In a similar manner, the exposed and well-aged concrete of the station's sluice gates, tail race and shoreline retaining walls are echoed in the ruins of the former Bronson Pulp Mill directly to the south. Even the additive nature of the brick wing is echoed by the Bronson Company Office complex immediately to the north on Victoria Island. Structures such as Station No. 2 make a substantial contribution to the residual industrial quality of Victoria and Amelia Islands.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Ottawa Hydro Generating Station No. 2 resides in its massing, materials, additive nature, functional layout and machinery for power generation of the three distinct sections of the station. The heritage character also resides in the relationship of the building to the site and surrounding complex.

Station No. 2 consists of the stone generator hall, the concrete penstock housing for the turbines, and the brick wing.

The generator hall was built in the tradition of 19th century stone mills of central Canada. Typical features include the long rectangular form, the strict vertical and horizontal regularity of the wall openings, the combination of rubble masonry with more finely worked fenestration surrounds, and the near absence of decoration. While the integrity of the original form has been affected by the raising of the walls, by the removal of the characteristic pitched gable roof and by the closure of some windows, the changes reflect the evolution of the power station. Evidence of these changes, such as the presence of chimney caps protruding through the wall plane, the sloping dentilated brick cornice above which rises a brick transmission cables penthouse, should be respected in future work. The principal entrance to the station and the original pattern of window openings should be maintained.

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The penstock, a low concrete platform which abuts the south wall of the generator hall, and the brick wing at the southwest corner of the building highlight the additive nature of Station No. 2. All elements which illustrate the evolution of the station should be respected.

The functional layout and components of Station No. 2 contribute to the heritage significance of the building. An identification and analysis of the existing equipment should be undertaken before any alteration or removal of the existing functional components. If feasible, the historically significant elements should be maintained in operation.

The site relationships of Station No. 2 to other surrounding industrial buildings and structures should be maintained.

1993.08.20