

90-294

Ottawa, Ontario

Ottawa Electric Railway Company Steam Plant

Middle Street, Victoria Island

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Ottawa Electric Railway Company Steam Plant was constructed in 1914-15. The designer is unknown. The custodial department is the National Capital Commission. See FHBRO Building Report 90-294.

Reason for Designation

The Steam Plant building was designated Recognized for its environmental and architectural significance, and also for historical reasons.

The Ottawa Electric Railway Company (OER) Steam Plant is associated with industrial diversification of the area around the Chaudière Falls, the development of electric streetcar infrastructures, and early 20th century hydro-electric generation in Canada. The Steam Plant is one of only a few remaining buildings of the extensive OER structures from this period in Ottawa's history. The immediate context of the Steam Plant has been changed by the demolition of an adjacent hydro plant and the removal of industrial buildings on the opposite site of Middle Street, and the removal of the chimney stacks has somewhat diminished its status as a landmark. However the building is an important residual of what was once a bustling industrial complex.

The plant supplied auxiliary electric power for Ottawa's streetcar system, and is the only extant example of a thermal electric generator at the Chaudière Falls. The building is a good example of this industrial type. Three sixty-foot-tall brick chimney stacks were demolished in the 1960s, but the characteristic stepped massing and elongated multi-paned windows remain.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Steam Plant building resides in its massing, construction materials, fenestration and details, and in its site relationships.

The OER Steam Plant is composed of a one-storey and two-storey block constructed of solid red brick. Its two-tiered form and its fenestration pattern are characteristic of hydro-electric power generating facilities constructed during the early 20th century. The small brick addition to the west is an early addition.

Masonry work is simple and utilitarian, with stone sills, segmentally-arched and flat-arched openings, and a narrow corbelled cornice. The building has experienced

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some structural distress and brick spalling, and its repair should be undertaken in consultation with a masonry conservation professional.

The multi-pane pivot-operation sash windows are original, and generally intact; these windows are an important component of the building's industrial character and should be retained and repaired. The pattern of openings should be respected, and openings that have been blocked or altered should be reinstated based on historical research and physical and photographic evidence to restore the integrity of the building.

The interior planning of the Steam Plant reflects the functional requirement for two principal volumes to accommodate boilers and engines, while the small addition to the west was originally an electrical room. The effect of large unencumbered spaces should be maintained, as should any features which testify to the building's early industrial use.

The building's setting has undergone change but it continues to play an important role in the varied landscape of industrial buildings, dramatic geological formations and natural and manmade water courses that characterize Victoria Island and the Chaudière as a whole. Development should respect traditional relationships between the building and its setting, and with adjacent structures.

1997.02.05

For further guidance, please refer to the *FHBRO Code of Practice*.