

Ottawa, Ontario
Marshall Building
14 Metcalfe Street

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Marshall Building was constructed in 1881-82 as a commercial venture to designs by William Hodgson, designer of several Ottawa commercial buildings. The building was acquired by the Molson Bank in 1898 and by the Bank of Montreal in 1925. It was expropriated by the federal government in 1973 and leased to the National Capital Commission in 1982. The National Capital Commission Visitor Tourist Information Centre now occupies the building. Public Works Canada is the custodial department.

See FHBRO Building Report 88-47.

Reason for Designation

The Marshall Building was designated Recognized because of its association with the commercial development of Ottawa's "uppertown," particularly Banker's Row, and for its architectural design.

The Marshall Building is a good example of late-nineteenth century speculative construction. Although not owned by a bank nor designed to be a bank, it is associated with the banking industry and the development of "uppertown" as the financial centre of Ottawa due to its location on Banker's Row and its several early banking tenants - first the Union Bank of Lower Canada then Molson's Bank -- and later ownership by the Bank of Montreal.

This is an important example of late nineteenth century Italianate-Romanesque commercial architecture that retains much of its exterior and some of its interior features. The materials of which the street elevation is constructed exhibit great variety and interest, effectively complementing the overall design. The standards of workmanship are very good.

The Marshall Building is a good example of the work of William Hodgson. It is an important component of the Metcalfe Street streetscape in both design and scale.

Character Defining Features

The heritage value of the Marshall Building resides in its importance as an example of a late nineteenth century commercial building, the visual quality of the street façade, its decorative treatment and its contribution to the Metcalfe Street streetscape.

Ottawa, Ontario
Marshall Building (Continued)

The Marshall Building is an elegant and highly ornamented four-storey commercial office block. Designed with a heavy emphasis on the street elevation, the Metcalfe Street façade is an eclectic mix of Italianate (multi-coloured brick voussoirs, label mouldings and keystones) and Renaissance Revival (wide monumental arches, entry portals, rounded arches and gables) styles embellished with Gothic Revival details (flowered motifs and decorative plaques). Despite the range of stylistic features, the result is a well proportioned, successfully integrated design which has a high degree of historic integrity. As removal or addition of any element or detail would undermine the quality of the building it should be protected "as-is."

A rich chromatic effect was achieved by the effective use of materials - brickwork, terra-cotta, and sheet metals. Due to their complexity, appropriate specialists should be consulted prior to any future work on the building.

Paint colours that are inconsistent with the architecture of the building have been applied to the cornice and other areas. Any future repainting should be preceded by investigations to identify surfaces to be painted and appropriate colours.

The Marshall Building structure consists of load-bearing masonry walls with a frame of cast-iron columns and timber beams. As a part of the original fabric of the building these elements should be retained.

Few interior finishes and detail have survived the several renovations the building has undergone. Investigations should be carried out to identify and record surviving remnants.

The building was designed to have two doorways, each located in a portal located either side of the principal ground floor window. One of the doorways has been relocated from its portal to the north wall of the building. Relocation of this doorway back to the north portal would restore the building's original pattern of access.

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