

Ottawa, Ontario
Laurier House
335 Laurier Ave. East

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

Laurier House was the home of two of Canada's early twentieth century prime ministers, Sir Wilfrid Laurier and MacKenzie King. Built in 1878 as a private residence, this building was purchased by the Liberal Party of Canada and donated to Laurier. The House was later owned by MacKenzie King. It provided both men with residential and reception quarters throughout their terms as party leaders. Both men made changes to the appearance of the building. The verandah was altered in 1901 and 1913, and the roof and interior were changed in 1922.

After the establishment of 24 Sussex Drive as the official residence of the Prime Minister of Canada, Laurier House was given to the federal government by MacKenzie King. Since that time the Public Archives of Canada has sponsored its operation as a museum. It was declared a National Historic Site in 1957-58 and was designated as a heritage site of local importance under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act by the City of Ottawa. It is owned by Environment Canada, Canadian Parks Service. See FHBRO Building Report 87-44.

Reason for Designation

Laurier House was designated Classified because of its long and close association with two Canadian prime ministers, Sir Wilfrid Laurier (1896-1919) and Mackenzie King (1923-1950). Both King and Laurier used the building as a residence and for reception during their years as Prime Ministers and leaders of the opposition. In this capacity Laurier House played an important role in national affairs.

Laurier House is a good example of Second Empire design in its form, materials, and craftsmanship.

Laurier House and its residential setting are an important element in the character of the Sandy Hill neighbourhood.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of Laurier House resides in its Second Empire design, the features of the building related to its occupation by two prime ministers, and its environmental qualities.

It is expressed in the overall Second Empire styling of the building, its mansard roof, semi-circular dormers, projecting bays, solid bulk and asymmetrical massing. It is also
.../2

-2-

Ottawa, Ontario
Laurier House (Continued)

expressed in the varied selection and fine details of the materials of which it is built. In both design and material use, this building presents a substantial though restrained

example of its late 19th century/early 20th century period. Future activities and maintenance should respect not only the character of these components but also the modest and restrained nature of their expression.

The configuration of the building should remain relatively the same as it was during the time period when it was inhabited by Laurier and King. Although minor improvements such as re-painting to highlight the entrance could be undertaken, no major modifications should be made.

The interior has retained a remarkably high degree of integrity since its occupancy by Laurier and King. It should be maintained to retain the details and layout of the period. The third storey office and library alterations made by Mackenzie King should be respected, as should the residential and reception features of the house common to both prime ministers.

In terms of design, the Lester B. Pearson exhibit creates an aesthetic discord within the building. It also lacks the historical association with the building that Laurier and King had. Its relocation, if required, to another site would be appropriate.

Compatible future uses for the building might include not only its present role as a museum, but facilities for official entertainment.

The Laurier House site would be enhanced by landscaping to reflect the spacious twentieth century residential garden which once surrounded it, visually open to the sidewalk and with large trees.

The gracious ambience and stature of this residence can only be successfully maintained in a low scale, compatible, preferably residential setting. For this reason, every attempt should be made to ensure the neighbourhood surrounding the building remains sympathetic.

1990.05.03