

Canal Bldgs: Workshop
Sault Ste. Marie

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

SUMMARY

The Office Building was built in 1895-96 by J. and R. Miller, contractors from Ingersoll, Ontario to designs prepared by the Department of Railways and Canals signed by J.B. Spence, chief Draftsman. It was Recognized because of its very good aesthetic design, its very good craftsmanship and its reinforcing influence on the present character of the area.

HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS

Since the days of the fur trade, Canada's transportation system has operated on an east-west axis. The St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes provided Canada's original "highway" stretching from the Atlantic into the heart of the continent. Later, canals and railroads were built to improve communication and travel but the basic east-west axis was maintained. The development of the transportation network across the country is one of the dominant themes of Canadian history. Construction of the Sault Ste. Marie Canal did not begin until 1889. The first ship passed through the locks at the Sault in September 1895, and most of the canal buildings were completed by 1896. The complex of buildings illustrates the crucial years when Sault Ste. Marie was transformed from a small community into a modern industrial centre.

ARCHITECTURE

The Workshop is a red sandstone building that exhibits a classical sense of proportion and symmetry. The main portion of the building is a two storey, gable roofed structure and there is a small one storey gable roofed structure abutting it. The sandstone used for construction was quarried from the canal excavation and laid in random courses. Unlike the other stone buildings on the site, the building is not trimmed in limestone, perhaps because of its utilitarian function. The south facade of the structure features evenly spaced, segmental arch windows and double doors on both stories. The east facade of both the two storey and the one storey structure are also symmetrical. The building has not been altered since construction and maintains its original utilitarian appearance and function.

ENVIRONMENT

The integrity of the relationship between the complex of buildings at the Sault Ste. Marie Canal and its associated landscape has remained virtually unchanged since the buildings were constructed. Located on St. Mary's Island, which the canal bisects, they are set apart from the town of Sault Ste. Marie. The landscaping and beautification of

the site have always been a prime concern and, because of this, the canal grounds have long been a favoured public part for the inhabitants of Sault Ste. Marie. The present use of the Sault Ste. Marie Canal for recreational purposes contributes to the character of the shore line across the bay, just as its former use as a busy commercial canal complemented use of the shore as a centre of transportation.

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