

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

SUMMARY

The Bate Building was built in 1859 by Sparks and Cleverley, builders, to the designs of Stent and Laver, Ottawa architects. It was recognized because it is one of the best examples of the development of the community and because its setting reinforces the present character of the area.

HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS

This building is one of 19 buildings located on the north side of Sparks Street between Elgin and Bank streets, an area which has been, since the 1880s at least, the core of Ottawa's central business district. Born in England, Henry and his brother Charles T. Bate arrived in Ottawa in 1854 and established what was soon to become the city's largest retail grocery business, Bate and Company. The Bate building, which combined retail premises and residence and originally extended through to Wellington Street, stood as evidence of how a single enterprise, carefully managed, could form the basis of a considerable fortune and business empire. By the late nineteenth century the Bate family (now headed by Henry) owned the original grocery business and an extensive import operation/ Like many successful entrepreneurs, the Bates left the day-to-day running of the business to junior family members while involving themselves in politics and community affairs. Henry Bate was appointed the first chairman of the Ottawa Improvement Commission upon its founding in 1898, and was knighted in 1910 for his civic and philanthropic activities.

ARCHITECTURE

This building appears to be the oldest structure still standing on Sparks Street. In 1904 the third storey was removed and an incompatible four-storey addition was added. The 1904 addition appears to be the earliest example in Ottawa of a highrise office building of more than five storeys. Its three-part composition with tall arched windows forming the centrepiece was a common device of the period, while its elaborate spandrels and strongly projecting cornice gave it a measure of individuality.

ENVIRONMENT

During the nineteenth century, this was a well-known retail store, but after its conversion to office use, and particularly after the removal of the Bate grocery store, its design was not sufficiently striking to receive much public attention.

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