

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

SUMMARY

The Dover Building (formerly the A.J. Stephens Building) was built in 1896. The contractor is unknown and the architect was probably King Arnoldi, of Ottawa. It was Recognized because of its very good design and craftsmanship as well as its setting which reinforces the character of the area. It forms a unit with its neighbours, the Slater (1 77-1 79 Sparks) and the Brouse (181-1 83 Sparks) buildings.

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. The Ottawa shoe and boot merchant A.J. Stephens opened a shop in the city in 1868. He had been located in rental premises at 102 Sparks Street until he bought a part-lot from the Slaters in 1896. Once his new building was completed, he rented the upper storeys to a variety of professionals and opened his own shop, specializing in both European and American products, on the ground floor. To the rear of his store, he also operated a shoe manufactory. Stephens ended his operations in the 1920s and rented the ground floor to Plaunt Hardware. In 1944 the building was purchased by an Ottawa sporting good merchant, Joseph Dover, who operated a retail hardware and sporting goods business until 1981. The Dover Building reflects the commercial development of Sparks Street westward to Bank in the late nineteenth century, as well as the persistence of the three-storey commercial block during this period.

ARCHITECTURE

This is a late Victorian commercial building with a distinctive division of the facade into horizontal and vertical elements. The ground storey was entirely recast by PWC in 1982-83, but the upper storeys are apparently intact. The facade is divided by brick pilasters into three parts. The side bays consist of round-headed windows with sandstone keys separated by carved sandstone panels with a sandstone beltcourse above the upper window. The centre features a pressed metal oriel with classically inspired decoration and a romanesque arched window above. The entire assemblage is completed by corbelling leading to an elaborate projecting cornice of pressed metal. Buildings of this period tended to have larger expanses of glass, more extensive use of mechanically produced elements and greater variety in facade detailing, and in these regards, the A.J. Stephen Building is a typical example of commercial building of its period.

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ENVIRONMENT

This is a relatively low structure on a block on which much taller and more recent buildings predominate. The quality of its design and of DPW's rehabilitation gives the building an attractive appearance which the city of Ottawa recognized by awarding the building a certificate of merit in 1983.

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