

Ottawa, Ontario
Bronson Company Office
150 Middle Street, Victoria Island

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Bronson Company Office building on Victoria Island was built circa 1880. Its designer is unknown. The custodial department is the National Capital Commission. See FHBRO Building Report 90-225.

Reason for Designation

The Bronson Company Office was designated Recognized for its historical associations and architectural design, and also for its environmental significance.

The building is the only remaining office at the Chaudière associated with both the forest products industries and the development of hydroelectricity. The Bronson family was one of the most prominent of the forest products and utility magnate dynasties in the Ottawa Valley, and, as the administrative focus of their wide-ranging domain, the Bronson Company Office was an integral component of the highly diverse industrial operations at the Chaudière. This building is particularly associated with E.H. Bronson, whose activities as an industrialist and a provincial politician included forest conservation, diversification of the Chaudière industrial infrastructure, and attempts to create a private utilities monopoly in Ottawa.

The setting of the Bronson Company Office has changed dramatically since its construction, but the building continues as a reminder of the former bustling and constricted character of this industrial site.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Bronson Company Office resides in its massing, proportions, construction materials and details, in its surviving interior layout and finishes, and in its relationship with its site.

The Bronson Company Office is an L-shaped, gable-roofed one-and-one-half-storey structure which has a form and scale characteristic of late 19th century residential architecture. A prominent chimney, moulded cornice, window openings with segmental and semicircular heads, and wood sash windows contribute to its domestic character. Masonry detailing includes stone sills, window hood moulds and voussoirs, and the elaborate corbelled chimney cap. These features are integral to the character of the building, and should be retained and repaired using appropriate conservation techniques.

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Despite the building's domestic appearance, the desire to achieve a fire-resistant administration building shows in several features of the construction and planning. The solid brick superstructure erected on a coursed masonry foundation, the two-storey brick vaults which dictate the floor plan on both levels, the heavy steel doors to the vaults and the diagonally-laid metal roof tiles illustrate a careful reconciliation of fire-resistant materials and features with effective office design. These features should be respected, as should remaining interior elements such as oak window and door surrounds, original mantelpieces and high ceilings. Any development of the interior should retain and incorporate these elements.

The adjacent stone warehouse and office annex, executed in coursed rubble masonry with voussoured flat-arches over openings, is connected to the Bronson Company Office building by a modest addition. This enclosed connecting link now contains the principal entrance. The original main entrance on Middle Street has been boarded over and a projecting wooden vestibule has been added to the Mill Street entrance. If possible, original patterns of access should be reinstated, as should entrances that have been boarded up. The removal of recent additions of a lean-to character would improve the integrity of the ensemble.

Site development should respect the domestic scale of the structures, and be compatible with the industrial character of the setting.

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