

Canal Bldgs: Office Bldg
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 Office Building is a late example of the Second empire Style and has the mansard roof and central pavilion typical of that style. The building is a two storey structure of red sandstone laid in random courses and has limestone quoins, window and door surrounds. Originally there was wrought iron creating around the roof and dormer windows in the mansard, but these features, also typical of the Second empire, have disappeared. The handsome stone construction and sturdy appearance of the Office Building ensure that it still plays a prominent role within the complex of buildings associated with the Sault Ste. Marie Canal.

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 complimented use of the shore as a centre of transportation.