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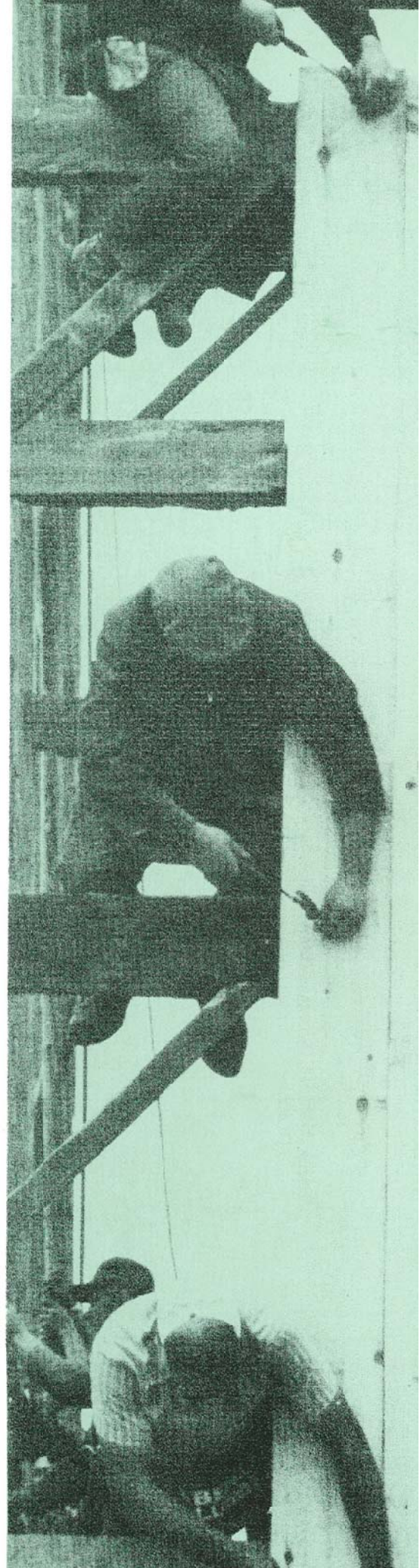
C A N A D A

BULLETIN

MOMENTUM 1998

COMMUNITY
INITIATIVES: A VITAL
RESOURCE FOR
HERITAGE

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Timber slide at Chaudière Falls, c. 1890. Photo: National Archives of Canada

THE VICTORIA/CHAUDIÈRE ISLANDS DISTRICT IN CANADA'S CAPITAL

The Role of Community Initiatives in the Preservation of Industrial Cultural Landscapes

BY MARK BRANDT

INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE

The national and international value of our industrial heritage is poorly understood in Canada. Some recognition of value usually occurs after industrial heritage resources have been seriously threatened or demolished. The risk is that by the time the general public understands and embraces this value, there will be precious little industrial heritage left. The economic, but also political, involvement of all levels of government in cultural preservation has changed radically

(primarily diminished) in the recent past, and may continue to do so in the near future.

The expansion of public comprehension and associated resulting action, by way of community initiatives, will therefore be required in the coming years to conserve the remaining industrial heritage landscape. Community initiatives, combined with private sector investment and public/private partnerships of specific, purpose-designed projects, will be the principle en-

gines of renewal and preservation throughout the next decade.

This article discusses the contemporary evolution of a significant Canadian industrial landscape, recent redevelopment plans, and issues relating to the preservation of the heritage character of the site.

UNIQUE INDUSTRIAL WATERFRONT DISTRICT

Industrial heritage sites are extremely rare in the National Capital Region, partially due to planning

policies of the past, such as "beautification schemes" by the former Ottawa Improvement Commission and others. These brought about wholesale clearance of industrial areas in the region despite their integral role in the founding and development of the city and indeed, of the country.

The preservation of the heritage aspects of the Victoria and Chaudière Islands and Falls will depend upon community support and initiatives, in conjunction with private investment and public/private partnerships, despite its obvious historical significance and the unique role of the Federal government in the Capital. The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada has observed the industrial heritage significance of the site in a comprehensive study of historic industrial sites across Canada.¹ The National Archives of Canada as well as those of the National Capital Commission (NCC), the E.B.Eddy Company and others, retain numerous testaments to the historic significance of this site from Aboriginal times through to the lumbering/industrial period of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These documents include photographs, plans, maps and writings which, among other things, portray the important national and international roles played by notable industrialists, including E.B.Eddy, J.R.Booth, Bronson, Thompson, Willson, Ahearn, Soper and others, on the lands and waters of this district.

CHALLENGES

In terms of its life as an urban place, the Victoria & Chaudière district, today, is at a major crossroads. Much of the area is derelict or largely unused, yet important components of the former industrial glory remain in situ. The property owners, including the federal government, power companies, and the E.B.Eddy Company, continue to use the area in low-density/land-

value ways which do not harmonize with its central location in the shadow of the Peace Tower, straddling two major Central Business Districts. While it is desirable that industrial uses (and First Nations uses) continue to grace the site, it is important that they now co-exist with general public, commercial and interpretive uses, if the resources for heritage fabric conservation, and a new vitality, are to be realized.

Despite a resurgence in historic conservation, rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of industrial (particularly waterfront) sites across the country, Victoria/Chaudière remains in a state of disintegration. This is due to a number of reasons, such as multiple land owners; the lack of public knowledge about the site's historic significance, hidden beauty and current state; and the fact that it simultaneously has no political constituency (no voters reside here) and many political "masters."

Clearly, if the local and national economies continue to improve, there will be pressure to develop on this real estate, potentially putting the historic fabric at risk. Conversely, should economic stagnation occur, the likely result is continued decrepitude, also putting the historic fabric at risk.

In an ideal world, the district's various stakeholders would collaborate to protect the historic fabric of the district, through promotion of heritage-sensitive re-development and adaptive re-use, and through direct preservation of the remaining historically significant landscape, structures and artifacts. In reality, this is a major challenge for many reasons, including: the First Nations' preferences and priorities for the site (they currently maintain a "friendly occupation" of a portion of Victoria Island as part of a land claim dispute) are not clear at this time; and E.B.Eddy has been recently taken over by the multi-national Domtar

and their intentions for the site are not yet confirmed.

VISION FOR PRESERVATION AND REDEVELOPMENT

The NCC has, in fact, taken a leading interest in the site over many years and, in 1990 they commissioned a comprehensive, long-term master plan, "The Islands - Urban Design and Development Concept" by Thompson Brandt Architects et al. The study is intended to act as a catalyst to the debate on the future of the 45 acre site comprising Victoria, Chaudière, Albert and Amelia Islands, the Falls and Ring Dam, and the Devil's Hole area on the Hull mainland. It recommends the preservation of 29 structures and sites within the district and a mixed-use, public/private joint redevelopment process in harmony with the district's character. The design opens up public access to the site's history and natural splendour, while transforming it into a public urban oasis, which would include a "Walk of Waters" and splendid views to Parliament, downtown, and the historic Ottawa River & Chaudière Falls. Adaptive reuse and infill development would in turn be attracted to this singularly desirable location, bringing the vitality of arts and cultural facilities, offices, workshops, light industry and commercial opportunities for cafes, theme retail and destination/tourism interests. Direct connections to national institutions and commerce in the downtown core, and the imminent, extensive residential/commercial development of the adjacent Lebreton Flats would be further enhanced by improved pedestrian, bicycle and water access. Museological and interpretive facilities would round out the mixed-use experience. The potential for Ottawa's two leading economic generators, tourism and advanced technology, is huge.

GETTING IT TOGETHER

This plan now forms the basis of the Commission's "official plan" intentions for the site ("Vision for the Core Area of Canada's Capital Region," June, 1998). However, the

¹ *Manufacturing Locations in Canada: The Identification and Evaluation of Significant Multiple-Industry Complexes, prepared for the HSMBC, November, 1990*

NCC (the owner/steward of most of Victoria & Amelia but virtually none of the rest of the site) has stated that it will not expropriate, only negotiate, for the property. This leaves the fate of the site largely in the hands of the pivotal player, Domtar, who may choose to "re-engineer" the Eddy facilities, in light of similar, more modern operations in other locations, or stay on site to take advantage of Eddy's traditional free hydro power at this facility.

The NCC is now in a position to evaluate public input, assess and then flesh out the plan in its current overall context and commence discussions with potential partners and stakeholders. In these days of government austerity, it is likely the NCC's coffers will need additional funds for a viable partnership with private investors, via support from the Federal government for infrastructure upgrading. Interestingly, the Federal government has invested substantially in waterfront redevelopment projects across the country over the last two decades. These include Vancouver's Granville Island (which has many similarities to the Victoria/Chaudière plan and is a financial success for its investors); Winnipeg's The Forks, Halifax's Historic Properties; Harbourfront in Toronto and the Old Port of Montréal, to name a few. But Ottawa is a different kettle of political fish. There is an avoidance of any political perception (correct or, as in this case, incorrect) of "feathering their own nest."

So, ironically, in order to preserve this nationally significant historic cultural landscape, it falls, at least in part, to local community initiative to fight for a "fair share" and create both the Federal political will needed for the NCC to move forward and the directed interest of business to partner into the project.

INITIATIVES SO FAR

To date, there has been a fair amount of local initiative but it has yet to bear fruit:

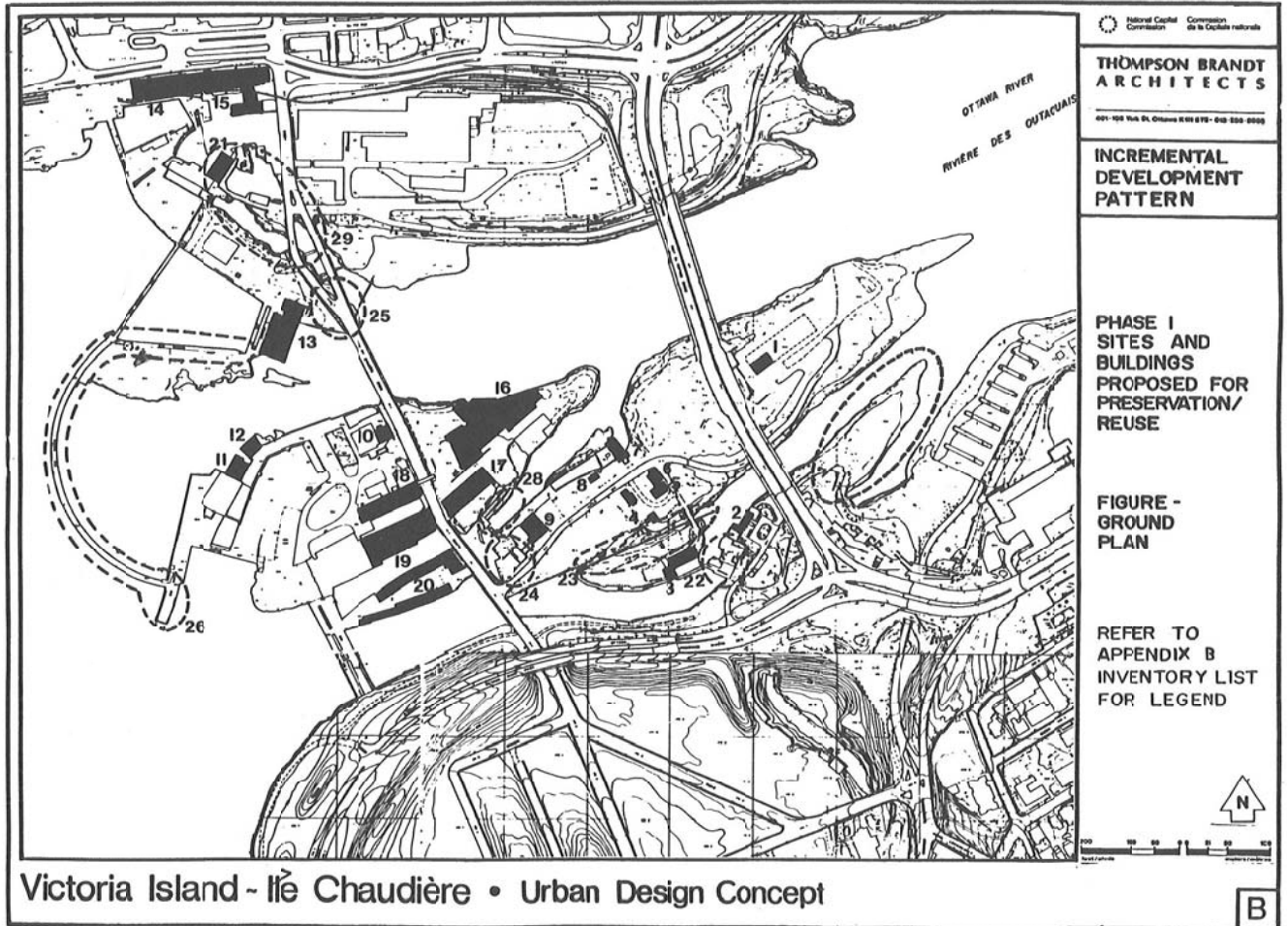
1. After months of study, Ottawa's Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee (LACAC) recommended to City Council, and Council agreed, to recognize the site's significance by having City Staff initiate a stakeholder's working group to decide on a course of action for heritage protection. But, five months later, in October, 1998, staff simply wrote a letter explaining they would defer to the NCC.
2. Ottawa 2000, the local Millennium Project Committee, requested and received a proposal for the site from Thompson Brandt Architects for a project called, "Rendez-vous Victoria/Chaudière: The Future of Our Past." Approved by the group's Heritage and Legacy Committee, the project was reviewed by the Board, a group of "blue-chip" local leaders, who appointed the former Regional Government Chairman as a special emissary/ champion. This Millennium proposal is intended to be a small "kick-start" to the long-term development and has three main components:
 - a) A "Walk of Waters" (consolidated version), which would provide pathway access and interpretive & leisure programs;
 - b) Enhancement of public awareness of the historic significance and potential of the site through exhibits, videos and education kits;
 - c) Designation, recording and initial preservation work for the historic fabric of the district's heritage sites, structures and artifacts.
3. Thompson Brandt Architects were asked to present an introduction to the heritage and preservation/reuse possibilities of the Islands to the Heritage Conservation Program of Public Works and Government Services Canada (who provide services jointly to Canadian Heritage and Environment Canada). Since then, there has been preliminary local interest in applying to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada for a designation for the district. Ironically, Ezra Butler Eddy (significant person) and the Portage Trail to the west (a site of national heritage significance with respect to the voyageur period, which it shares with Victoria/Chaudière) were both approved for Board designation in the 1950's, but the prime historic site at the Falls is not. For the Board designation review, however, there must be approval from the property owners and E.B. Eddy Company has thus far declined interest.
4. Local advocacy group Heritage Ottawa has embraced the site and set their final walking tour of the summer fund-raising season within the Islands site and its history, which was extremely popular with the public.

WATERFRONT REVITALIZATION NOW MAINSTREAM

Waterfront revitalization projects are now "mainstream" across the country and around the world. They make higher and better use of land that is evolving or becoming derelict. They create business opportunities, provide employment, contribute greatly to the life of their communities, clean up valuable shorelines, and become popular attractions for locals and tourists alike. Perhaps most significantly, due to dwindling resources, they provide opportunities for historic industrial preservation and interpretation. The business community is just now waking to these facts and, in the Capital Region, they are starting to look at the Victoria & Chaudière site's potential.

It is still unclear if any part of this proposal can move forward for the year 2000.

3. Thompson Brandt Architects were asked to present an introduction to the heritage and preservation/reuse possibilities of the Islands to the Heritage Conservation Program of Public Works and Government Serv-



Victoria-Chaudière Heritage Resources

From Thompson Brandt Architects, et al, "The Islands-Urban Design and Development Concept," for the National Capital Commission, 1990.

Proposed Restoration and Re-use

The following buildings and sites are recommended for preservation (total or partial), and adaptive re-use. They have been selected for historic, cultural and natural significance and also to help foster and maintain the urban design concept proposed.

Further study of feasibility and suitability is required. Immediate preventative maintenance to stem the tide of deterioration and to save costs over the long term is urgently recommended. Refer to illustration above for locations of these building and sites.

Buildings

1. Carbide Mill and Ruins (circa 1900)
2. Thompson Perkins Mill (1842)
3. No. 2 Generating Station – Ottawa Hydro (1891)
4. Original Generating Plant (circa 1880)
5. Bronson Warehouse (circa 1880)
6. Bronson Office (1880)
7. No. 4 Generating Station – Ottawa Hydro (1900)
8. Ottawa Electric Commission Workshop (1800's)
9. Originally Ottawa Electric Railway Stem Plant, (1914)
10. Originally J.R. Booth Power House No. 2 (partial) (1909)
11. J.R. Booth No. 1 Power House (circa 1880)
12. E.B. Eddy Box Shop (circa 1880)
13. Hydro-Québec Power House No. 2 (1912)
14. E.B. Eddy Mill "B" and Depot No. 4 (1869, 1892)
15. Eddy Paper Machine Building (partial – circa 1890)
16. Booth Board Mill Complex (partial – circa 1912 onward)
17. Booth Broundwork Pulp Mill #1 (1900-1904)
18. Eddy Steam Plant and Stack (former Booth Boiler Room 1906 – partial)

19. South Chaudière Paper Machines 9,10,11 Building Complex (partial – circa 1912)
20. Booth Buildings on Albert Island (office, stables, blacksmith and wagon shops – circa 1900)
21. Eddy Hull Powerhouse (1913)

Remains and Sites

22. Bronson Pulp Mill Ruins (1912)
23. Amelia Island Timber Slide (1836)
24. Ottawa Electric Railway Hydro Plant Ruins (1891)
25. Site of original Union Bridge (1828)
26. Entire Ring Dam construction and Falls site (1910)
27. Entire site of Richmond Landing
28. Underwater ruins of original damming system
29. Entire Devils Hole site

Also, the existing canals throughout the site should be maintained and integrated into the overall site re-development plans.

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