

structurally modern building and then giving it an historical skin.

The Central Post Office was not completed in time for the visit of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth to Ottawa in May 1939, although all stages of the Confederation Square redevelopment had been slated for completion by that time. Bunting hid the unfinished building when George VI unveiled the National War Memorial on 21 May, 1939. The outbreak of war in September 1939 led to the War Department moving into the building which was however opened as the home of the Post Office by Mackenzie King in December 1939.

1. National Capital Planning Service, Plan for the National Capital (Ottawa, 1950), 147.
2. Public Archives. Department of Public Works Registry File. Record Group 11. vol. 4156, file no. 12503-3-A, pg. 589380.
3. Archives, Public Works, vol. 4156, file no. 12503-3-A.
4. Harold Kalman and Joan Mackie, The Architecture of W.E. Noffke (Ottawa, 1976).
5. Harold Kalman, The Railway Hotels and the Development of the Chateau Style in Canada (Victoria, 1968), 24.
6. Kalman, Railway, 25.
7. Archives, Public Works, vol. 4156, file no. 12503-3-A.
8. Archives, Public Works, vol. 4156, file no. 12503-3-A. The total cost of the Central Post Office was \$1,041,965.
9. Department of Public Works, Report of the Deputy Minister of Public Works (Ottawa, 1938-39), 42.

## PARK PLANNING IN OTTAWA

Sally Coutts, Ottawa

The notion that Ottawa should become a glittering capital city was first put forward by Sir Wilfrid Laurier in 1893. He reiterated this point when he entered Ottawa as Prime Minister in August 1896. During his speech that day in Cartier Square he stated:

I have said that Ottawa ought to be the Washington of the North; I have not forgotten these words and will try and live by them. It is part of any nation to be proud of its capital...it is my purpose to make Ottawa a capital of which every Canadian shall be proud. 1

The first federal step towards creating a "Washington of the North" came in the summer of 1899, when An Act Respecting the City of Ottawa was introduced into the House of Commons. This act provided for an annual grant of \$60,000 to the city of Ottawa. The grant was to be administered by the Governor-General in Council and was to be used for "the purpose of improving and beautifying the City of Ottawa, by the acquisition and maintenance and improvement of public squares, and the improvement of the streets and thoroughfares of the said city." 2 The Honourable Henry Fielding (Finance) supported the expenditure saying:

We make this proposal upon the ground that the capital city of Canada has claims upon the Government and upon Parliament such as cannot be advanced by another city. 3

The Act was assented to on August 5, 1899 and the Commissioners chosen shortly thereafter.

The Ottawa Improvement Commission was made up of four men, three appointed by the Governor-General and one by the city. The first members were, Henry N. Bate, Joseph Riopelle, C.R. Cunningham and Thomas Payment. Henry N. Bate was a longtime Ottawa resident who with his brother ran a wholesale grocery business. He was a director of many companies including the Bank of Ottawa and, most important to his appointment, a life long Liberal and member of the Reform Club. 4 He was one of the members of the Liberal party who welcomed Wilfrid Laurier into Ottawa in 1896 and escorted him to Cartier Square. The Ottawa Improvement Commission was

his first public appointment. The other members of the Commission included Joseph Riopelle a timber merchant, C.R. Cunningham and Thomas Payment, the Mayor of Ottawa. The OIC held its first meeting in December 1899. 5 They began work with no plan, and had only a vague idea of what they wanted to accomplish outside of their general wish "to beautify Ottawa".

By 1902, the Commission realized that they could not continue their piece-meal approach to the planning of parks and took it upon themselves to hire a landscape architect, Frederick G. Todd of Montreal to draw up a comprehensive scheme for the beautification of Ottawa. At that time Todd was one of a very few Canadian landscape architects. He seems to have been awarded the Ottawa contract on the strength of a letter sent in to the OIC announcing his practice.

Todd's plan was presented to the OIC in 1903. The scheme only applied to parks and parkways and so cannot be considered a true City Beautiful plan. However it embodied City Beautiful principles insofar as it included sweeping parkways with impressive views that connected the parks, which themselves were centred on fountains and cut up by pleasant curved streets.

The plan was general in nature, the idea behind it being that Todd would be retained as a consultant and would aid in the design every time the money became available to enact another piece of it. The plan was divided into five sections: large natural parks or reserves, suburban parks, boulevards and parkways, waterways parks, (Bathing) and city parks and squares (Playgrounds). Within each category he outlined his general plan. These included, the Gatineau Valley Reserve, the Meach Lake Reserve in the first category, Rockliffe Park, Chaudiere Park, Rideau Park, the Experimental Farm and the Hull park in the second. Rideau Hall Boulevard, the Rideau Canal Parkway (Driveway), the Victoria Parkway, the Chaudiere, Rideau River and Gati-eau Parkways in the third category. In the fourth category - waterways, he included no specific sites, but expressed the general hope that bathing facilities be developed since it was such a popular and healthy pastime. In the fifth category he included the improvement of small squares already in existence. and suggested more playgrounds for children. 6

Within a few years, the body that hired a landscape architect to draw up a large, comprehensive planning scheme "having due regard to the future health and happiness of its inhabitants, and to the fact that Ottawa is the Capital of the Dominion of Canada" 7 had become nothing more than a city parks branch, administered by an organization independent of the city. This is not to say that the OIC failed in the task originally set out for them; they did not. However, their plans, which did much to change the face of Ottawa and could have done more were never fully enacted because of lack of funds. Outside of the OIC's attempts to plan parks and parklands there was little or no evidence of any planning or the desire for any planning in Ottawa for a number of years.

Endnotes:

1 Ottawa Daily Citizen, August 6, 1896, p.7.

2 Canada House of Commons Debates, August 2, 1899, p.9186.

3 Ibid.

4 \_\_\_\_\_, The Canadian Who's Who, Vol.1 Toronto: The Musson Book Co. Printed for The Times of London.

5 Ottawa Improvement Commission. Letter Book December 30, 1899.

6 Todd, F.G. Preliminary Report to the Ottawa Improvement Commission, 1903.

7 Op.cit. Todd, Introduction.