

# CULTURAL HERITAGE EVALUATION REPORT 359 KENT STREET, OTTAWA

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report (CHER) evaluates the cultural heritage values of the property at 359 Kent St. in the City of Ottawa, Ontario. The property was listed on the City’s Heritage Register as a property of potential cultural heritage interest subsequent to the completion in 2020 of the Centretown Heritage Inventory (ERA Architects).

The former Legion House, the national headquarters of the Royal Canadian Legion between 1956 and 2005 at 359 Kent Street is a five and one-half storey, steel structure clad in Indiana Limestone and brick. The two and one-half storey portion of the building was completed in November 1956, and three additional storeys were added by circa 1960. The assessment of 359 Kent follows the criteria for the identification and evaluation of properties for their cultural heritage value or interest contained in *Ontario Regulation 9/06: Criteria for Determining Cultural Heritage Value or Interest under the Ontario Heritage Act (O.Reg. 9/06)*. The process included background research, and evaluation of the cultural heritage values – design, history, and context - of the property.

The historical research of the property was primarily obtained from sources that are available on the internet, and through the City of Ottawa Archives. The author is aware that additional historical information is available - i.e., newspaper articles of the period. However, the consultant believes that the information collected, reviewed, and analyzed is sufficient to undertake an evaluation based on the criteria in O. Reg 9/06. See Section 5.0 Sources / Chronology.

**Building Name and Address:** Legion House, 359 Kent Street (465 Gilmour Street)

**Construction Date:** 1956-60

**Alterations:** Entrance shifted to Kent Street circa 1995; Interior Rehabilitation and entrance alterations Lundy Construction 2006 Regional Realty

**Original Owner:** Royal Canadian Legion

## 2.0 CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE/ INTEREST

### 2.1 Design or Physical Value

#### Architecture

Is the property a rare, unique, representative, or early example of a style, type, expression, material, or construction method? YES **NO**

The initial 2 ½-storey building fronting onto Gilmore Street is well designed, fits contextually into the streetscape. With the additional 3-stories and the shift of the entrance to Kent Street the overall expression becomes muddled.

The former Legion House, the national headquarters of the Royal Canadian Legion between 1956 and 2005 at 359 Kent Street is a five and one-half storey, steel structure clad in Indiana Limestone and brick. The two and one-half storey portion of the building was completed in November 1956, and three additional storeys were added by circa 1960. The building is rectangular in plan with the original entrance from Gilmour at the corner of Kent that is reflected in the massing of the vertical circulation elements. A one-storey bay window is located to the north of entrance corner bay that functioned as a publicly accessible space within the building.

The modernist international style office building was completed between 1956 and circa 1960 as the national headquarters of the Royal Canadian Legion. The building is a structural steel building clad in Indiana Limestone on the two principal facades fronting onto Kent and Gilmour, with brick cladding on the secondary facades. The massing and form reflects the functional aspects of the building with the vertical circulation massed at the corner entrance extending five storeys with a one storey bay-window along Kent expressing the publicly accessible spaces within the building. The basement of the building is assumed to have housed the printing facilities for the Legionary Magazine and the strip windows reflect the location of the offices within the complex. Stylistic elements include the lack of ornamentation, the dominance of the horizontal elements in the design specifically the strip windows.

The Legion House is a Modern style office building influenced by the International style. The Modern style was popular in Canada in the post war period. While there are many variations of the Modern style, the unifying characteristic is a complete break from the more decorative and detailed architectural styles popular in the first half of the 20th century. The Legion House embodies modern office building design through its rectilinear composition and restrained façades.

The International style first appeared in Canada in the 1920s and 1930s and was often used in office buildings and manufacturing facilities. The style is characterized by rectilinear forms, plane surfaces that have been stripped of applied decoration, open interior spaces, and a visually weightless quality formed by cantilevered construction and horizontal strip windows alternating with masonry spandrel panels. The Modern style is characterized by glass, steel and aluminium, concrete, stone, and brick finishes.

The south façade featured the building's primary entrance when constructed, a recessed alcove with a cantilevered roof leading into a stairwell lit by a two-storey window on the west facade. The façade features a windowless masonry clad wall extending through two-storeys forming the corner entrance bay with alternating strip windows and masonry clad spandrel panels extending the length of the facade. The three-storey addition features a three-storey window in the entrance bay with alternating strip windows and spandrel panels. The west façade is similar in design featuring a two-storey window lighting the stair well leading to a large bay window lighting the publicly accessible spaces within the

building. The only articulation of the façade occurs on the west elevation that served to highlight the publicly accessible areas within the building. The three-storey addition features a windowless masonry clad entrance bay with strip windows alternating with masonry clad spandrel panels extending the length of the building.

The secondary north and east façades are similar in design to the south and west facades with the substitution of brick to clad the spandrel panels.

### Craftsmanship/Artistic Merit

Does the property display a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit? YES **NO**

The Legion House is an example of a Modern style office building influenced by the International style and demonstrates a moderate degree of craftsmanship in its use of materials specifically the Indiana limestone finishes.

### Technical/Scientific Merit

Does the property demonstrate a high degree of technical or scientific achievement? YES **NO**

The Legion House does not demonstrate a high degree of technical or scientific achievement.



*Figure 1: November 1956 photo of the recently completed national headquarters of the Royal Canadian Legion. The entrance was originally off Gilmour Street (right) with a two- and one-half storey glazed window denoting the vertical circulation with a one-storey bay window to the left denoting the publicly accessible portions of the building. Source: Ottawa Archives November 1956*



*Figure 2: August 1958 Legionary Magazine Dominion Secretary's Column Header. The building design was completed in its current form by August 1958 to the design of John L. Kingston Architect whose office was located in the building in November 1956. The three-*

*storey addition was completed by 1960. (Ottawa Citizen, November 14, 1956). Note the entrance remained off Gilmour Street. Source: Legionary Magazine, August 1958, pg. 33*



Figure 3: Contemporary view of the building looking north on Kent Street. The entrance to the building had been shifted to Kent Street prior to 1995 when a new national headquarters had been completed in Kanata. Source: Taggart Realty.

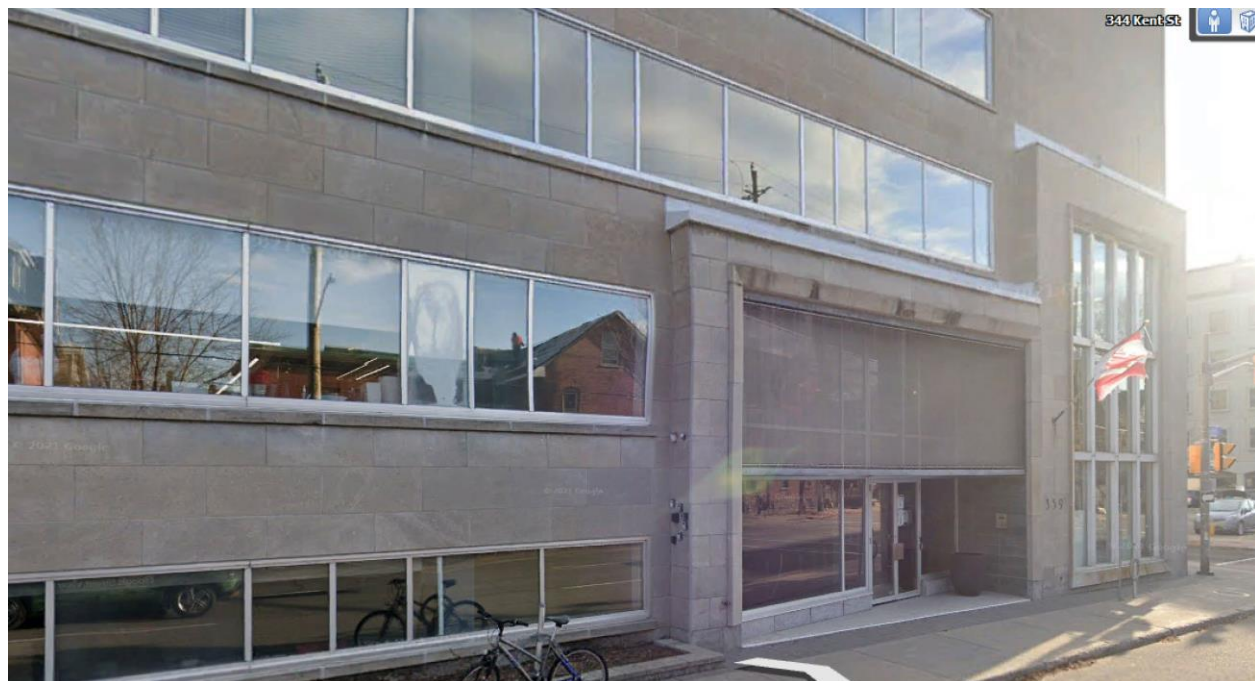


Figure 4: Google street view image of the entrance off Kent Street. The strip windows below what was a bay window were removed and a new glazed aluminium entrance installed prior to 1995. Source Google Earth

## 2.2 Historical and Associative Value

### Historical Associations

Does the property have direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization, or institution that is significant to a community? **YES** NO



*Figure 5: Laying of a cornerstone dedicating the new national headquarters of the Royal Canadian Legion in May 1956. The dedication reads 'dedicated to those how have served in our armed forces'. Source: Ottawa Archives CA038363*

### Organization/Activity

The Legion House has direct associations with the Royal Canadian Legion serving as the national headquarters between 1956 and 2005 when a new national headquarters was completed in Kanata.

The headquarters was dedicated in May 1956 to 'those who have served in our armed forces' with the installation of a corner stone.

The Legion House has a direct association with the delivery of post-war expansion of government programs available to support veterans and Legion members. Veterans Land Act enacted in 1953 to assist veterans in obtaining housing. Children of War Dead Educational Assistance Act enacted in 1953 to support the families of veterans.

The Legion House has a direct association with the post-war building boom in the city and the need to house office workers.

The Legion House was the first national headquarters of the Royal Canadian Legion completed in 1956. The Legion advocated and lobbied for Legion members to the federal government to improve living conditions and provide assistance to their families. The national headquarters was responsible for the

printing and distribution of the Legionary Magazine and the coordination of the Legion branches distributed throughout the country.

The official opening was marked by a ceremony on November 9, 1956, attended by His Excellency Vincent Massey, Governor General of Canada who was the Grand Patron the Canadian Legion.

**Person**

The Legion House has a direct association with John Lyndhurst Kingston (1885-1962) the architect of record for the building. Born in Ottawa he graduated from the Dept. of Architecture at McGill University in 1910. In 1919 after returning from Boston he opened his own office and subsequently in 1923 he formed a partnership with Clarence J. Burritt that ended in 1925 when Kingston moved to New York City. During this period, he collaborated with W.C. Clark on the publication of "The Skyscraper - A Study in the Economic Height of Modern Office Buildings", released in 1930 by the American Institute of Steel Construction. He returned to Ottawa in 1933 and continued to practice through to the late 1950s with the completion of the Legion House when he was in his seventies. Buildings attributed to Kingston are limited in scope two of which were designed in the 1923 – 25 when he was in partnership with C. J. Burritt and a school completed in 1949 for the Township of Nepean Board of Education is the only other building attributed to Kingston. (Biographical Dictionary of Canadian Architects)

The Legion House was designed by John Kingston architect and J. L. Richards and Associates were the engineering firm of record. The contractor for the building was Dibblee Construction Company Ltd.

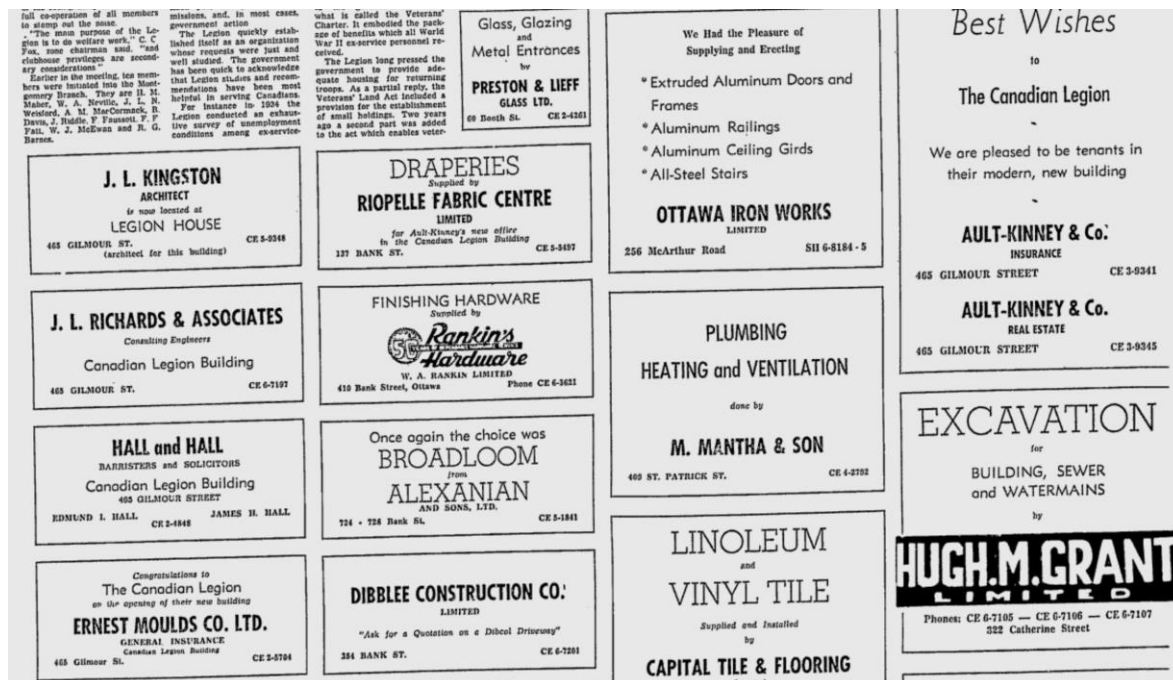
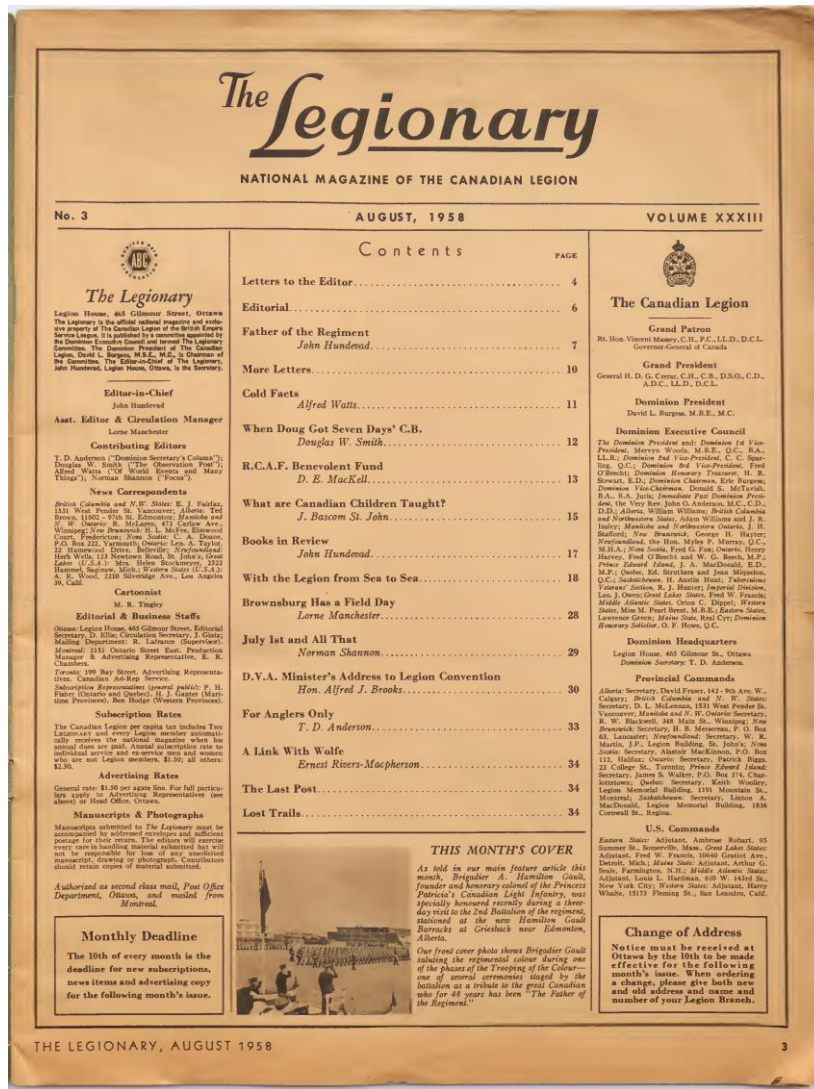


Figure 6: Ottawa Citizen November 14, 1956, pg. 44 with a list of companies and suppliers involved in the construction of the Legion House. Source: Ottawa Citizen November 14, 1956, pg. 44



**Community History**

Does the property yield, or have the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture? YES **NO**



There is extensive information regarding the Legion and its contribution to the Community. However the building offers little potential.

A number of books have been published on the history of the Royal Canadian Legion including: Bowering, Clifford H. *Service: The Story of the Canadian Legion, 1925-1960*. Ottawa: Dominion Command Canadian Legion, 1960; and Hale, James. *Branching out: The story of the Royal Canadian Legion*. Ottawa, Royal Canadian Legion, 1995.

The Legionary Magazine published monthly by the Royal Canadian Legion and distributed nationally to all branches and members provides additional information that yields and contributes to an understanding of the legion community.

Figure 7: Table of contents of the Legionary Magazine August 1958 illustrating the type of articles in the magazine. Source: Internet Archive.org.

**Representative Work**

Does the property demonstrate or reflect the work or ideas of an architect, artist, building, designer, or theorist who is significant to a community? Yes **No**

The Legion House is an example of the work of John Lyndhurst Kingston (1885-1962) the architect of record for the building. It is hard to determine if it is a good example of his work given that there are

few comparables. He worked in Ottawa between 1920-25 and from 1933 until his death 1962. He was 70 years old when he undertook the Legion commission. The list of buildings attributed to him is very limited.

Born in Ottawa he graduated from the Dept. of Architecture at McGill University in 1910. In 1919 after returning from Boston he opened his own office and subsequently in 1923 he formed a partnership with Clarence J. Burritt that ended in 1925 when Kingston moved to New York City.

During this period, he collaborated with W.C. Clark on the publication of "The Skyscraper - A Study in the Economic Height of Modern Office Buildings", released in 1930 by the American Institute of Steel Construction. He returned to Ottawa in 1933 and continued to practice through to the late 1950s with the completion of the Legion House when he was in his seventies. Buildings attributed to Kingston are limited in scope two of which were designed in the 1923 – 25 when he was in partnership with C. J. Burritt and a school completed in 1949 for the Township of Nepean Board of Education is the only other building attributed to Kingston. (Biographical Dictionary of Canadian Architects)

## 2.3 Contextual Value

### Community Character

Is the property important in defining, maintaining, or supporting the character of the area? **YES**

NO

The original 2 ½- storey building had contextual value as part of a streetscape. With the additional height it became the first example of intensification in this part of Centretown and marked the beginning of Ottawa's large-scale renewal.

Legion House is located on the western edge of the Centretown Heritage Conservation District in the Centretown neighbourhood on the north-east corner of Kent and Gilmour. The building sits in a block dominated by detached two and three storey residences constructed between circa 1880 through 1920. The construction of the office building in 1956 disrupted the residential form with the demolition of a number of detached heritage properties along Gilmour to provide parking for employees. The original two and one-half storey building was compatible with the two and three storey residential streetscapes on Kent and Gilmour. The building was set to the lot lines on Gilmour and Kent suggesting the beginning of a streetscape. The three-storey addition constructed on top of the original two-storey building was the beginning of the 1960s urban renewal in this area of Centretown along Kent Street and led to increased building heights within the block and the demolition of the detached residences.

### Context

Is the property physically, functionally, visually, or historically linked to its surroundings? **YES**

NO

Legion House has contextual value for its location in Centretown reflecting its role as a national headquarters located close to the federal government. This area of Centretown was predominately a residential neighbourhood with a variety of architectural styles from the 1880s through the 1920s. In the 1960s, land values in Centretown escalated creating a competitive market for office, retail commercial, parking, and high-density residential uses. On the east side of Kent, older residential buildings were demolished to make way for large office and apartment buildings and surface parking lots.



*Figure 8: 1965 aerial view of the block bound by MacLaren to the north, Bank to the east, Gilmour to the south, and Kent to the west. Kent Street had been converted to a one-way street by 1965 and the detached residential form within the block was largely intact. Legion House arrowed. Source: Geoottawa*



Figure 9: 2019 aerial view of the block bound by MacLaren to the north, Bank to the east, Gilmour to the south, and Kent to the west. Legion House arrowed. Source: Geoottawa

### Landmark

Is the property a landmark? YES **NO**

Although it is five- and one-half stories in height and is located on Kent Street in an area developed with low to mid-rise residential and office buildings. Views to the Legion House are primarily from Kent and Gilmour Streets. The building cannot be considered a landmark.



Figure 10: Contemporary view of the Legion House looking north on Kent. Source: Regional Realty

## 3.0 Summary and Conclusions

### 3.1 DESIGN OR PHYSICAL VALUE

#### 1.1 Architecture

Is the property a rare, unique, representative, or early example of a style, type, expression, material, or construction method? YES **NO**

#### 3.1.2 Craftsmanship/Artistic Merit

Does the property display a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit? YES **NO**

#### 3.1.3 Technical/Scientific Merit

Does the property demonstrate a high degree of technical or scientific achievement? YES **NO**

### 3.2 HISTORICAL AND ASSOCIATIVE VALUE

#### 3.2.1 Historical Associations

Does the property have direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization, or institution that is significant

to a community?	YES	NO
<b>3.2.2 Community History</b>		
Does the property yield, or have the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture?	YES	NO
<b>3.2.3 Representative Work</b>		
Does the property demonstrate or reflect the work or ideas of an architect, artist, building, designer, or theorist who is significant to a community?	YES	NO
<b>3.3 CONTEXTUAL VALUE</b>		
<b>3.3.1 Community Character</b>		
Is the property important in defining, maintaining, or supporting the character of the area?	YES	NO
<b>3.3.2 Context</b>		
Is the property physically, functionally, visually, or historically linked to its surroundings?	YES	NO
<b>3.3.3 Landmark</b>		
Is the property a landmark?	YES	NO

In Summary, of the nine categories only three are assessed to be positive, two referencing contextual values and one under Historical Values. All three of the rating under the Architectural Values scored negative in part because of the lack of comparables but more so due to the later modifications that compromised the design intent.

According to Ontario Regulation 09/06, a property may be designated under Section 29 of the *Ontario Heritage Act* if it meets one or more of the above criteria for designation. The property at 359 Kent Street narrowly meets that criteria, however, it is not a strong candidate for designation. The heritage values embodied in this building as a representative example of international style have been modified with the addition of 3-floors and lessened its design clarity. Other examples of Ottawa's era of intensification are well represented in other buildings and are included on the City of Ottawa Heritage Register. It is the authors opinion that there is insufficient value based on the criteria to support this building being designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act.

## 4.0 Bibliography

The following sources were consulted:

- Centretown Heritage Conservation District Study 1997;
- Centretown Heritage Inventory Project Draft ERA Architects, 2020;

- HSF 359 Kent Street, 1995;
- Legionary Magazine, August 1958;
- Ottawa Citizen, November 14. 1956;
- Hale, James. *Branching out: The story of the Royal Canadian Legion*. Ottawa, Royal Canadian Legion, 1995.
- Geottawa, Aerials 1965, 2019;
- Ottawa Archives, 3 photographs: CA038363 Cornerstone Laying May 11, 1956; CA038428 Wind Damage May 14, 1956; and CA041616 New Legion Building, November 9, 1956;
- Ottawa Construction News, The Royal Canadian Legion Dominion Command's New Legion House Will Be a Building to Remember December 2005;
- Biographical Dictionary of Canadian Architects. John Lyndhurst Kingston; and,
- Lundy Construction, 2006 Interior Rehabilitation Summary.

## 5.0 Authors Qualifications

Commonwealth Historic Resource Management is a consulting firm that offers a range of services related to conservation, planning, research, design, and interpretation for historical and cultural resources.

John J. Stewart, B.L.A., O.A.L.A., C.S.L.A., CAHP, a principal of Commonwealth is a specialist in the planning and design of cultural resources, building conservation, and commercial area revitalization. A graduate of the University of Guelph, he received additional training at Cornell University (USA) and Oxford University (UK) and holds a diploma in the Conservation of Monuments from Parks Canada, where he worked as Head, Restoration Services Landscape Section. Before Commonwealth's formation, Stewart served for four years as the first director of Heritage Canada's Main Street Program.

Stewart is a founding member of the Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals. He has served as the Canadian representative of the Historic Landscapes and Gardens Committee of ICOMOS and the International Federation of Landscape Architects. Stewart is a panel member with the Ottawa Urban design Review Panel and a board member of Algonquin College Heritage Carpentry Program.

**Ian Hunter** is a specialist in the research and assessment of cultural heritage resources and building conservation. Experience in the heritage conservation field extends over 30 years primarily working for Commonwealth Historic Resource Management.

**Emma Doedens**, researcher with the City of Ottawa's Heritage Branch