

policies were privately discussed and given official shape; where diplomatic correspondence was channeled and handled; where Orders-in-Council and statutory legislation received their imprimatur..

The history of this ninety-odd year old building predates by two years actual Canadian Confederation. It was Queen Victoria who chose Ottawa, previously known as Bytown, as the seat of Government of United Canada (Upper and Lower Canada). Her decision was made known to the Government of the day by a despatch of the Secretary for the Colonies, dated December 31, 1857, and was brought to the knowledge of the two Houses on March 16, 1858. Certain foreign newspapers were of the opinion that the choice was an excellent one. If an enemy country decided to attack Canada, they suggested, it would be difficult for its soldiers to occupy the Capital, since in attempting to find it, they would lose their way in the forests. Parliament ratified the decision of Queen Victoria by a vote of 64 to 59.

The site of the Capital having been chosen, the Governor General suggested, as the location of the government buildings, a plot of land until then known as Barracks Hill, or sometimes Fortification Hill, overlooking the long vistas of the Ottawa River, at times filled with great log-rafts and alive with picturesque lumbermen; and on May 17, 1859, the Department of Public Works invited architects to draw up and submit plans for the necessary parliamentary and administrative buildings. A sum of 200 pounds was offered for the winning plan. Sixteen plans for the parliament buildings, and