

Heritage campaign keeps watch on progress

By Jill Pound-Corner

In one Canadian city alone, historic buildings were being demolished at the rate of one every two days. The stone residence of Ottawa's first settler had been bulldozed to make room for the Trade and Commerce Building. The home of Canada's Supreme Court, one of the four original buildings on Parliament Hill, had been torn down to permit a larger parking lot. Parliament's West Block had been gutted and refurbished. The Goulden Hotel, a building of charm and significance, had been demolished and succeeded first by a service station, then by a parking lot. The demolition of Ottawa's grand 19th-century railroad station was only stopped because of the outcry from Ottawa's residents.

While change is both desirable and necessary, the Canadian Parliament decided in the spring of 1973 that balance has to be found between progress and preservation. To serve this end, it authorized C\$12 million (about £4.5 million) endowment of a national preservation organisation, Heritage Canada. Proposed by the government and approved by Parliament, it then became a largely autonomous publicly-owned body.

Matters came to a head in the Canadian capital in a massive campaign to save a convent on Rideau Street, by history-minded citizens.

The convent, a complex of buildings occupying a full city block, was 120 years old. Matthew Revere had built the first part in the 1850s as Revere House, a hotel

with resplendent lobby and grand salons. In 1869 the Sisters of Charity (the Grey Nuns) moved in and it became a school, with the first pupils the daughters of cabinet ministers and Members of Parliament in the new Confederation. From time to time buildings were added, including in 1888 a chapel which was designed by a Father Bouillon. Using the materials of the age, iron pillars and plaster, he captured the Gothic magnificence of Henry VII's chapel in Westminster Abbey. The fan-vaulted ceiling gleaming in gold trefoil and turquoise blue was particularly beautiful.

In the spring of 1971 the sisters applied for the property to be rezoned as commercial and it was bought by a developer who had a high-rise office building in mind. At this point the history-minded citizens began battle, and it appeared for a short time that they would be successful. The developers agreed to keep the old buildings and convert them into a forty-shop area to be called a Mews. The chapel would remain a chapel and the rest of the two-storey complex would be made a shopping mall, shops connected by a wooden promenade. The *Ottawa Citizen* wrote: "Modern commerce will meet historic Bytown, oom-pah music from a beer garden will mingle in the courtyard with violin music from an elegant restaurant..." Unfortunately the developer miscalculated the cost of renovation to be a mere half million instead of a million and a half dollars.

A Heritage Committee, the National Capital Commission and Mayor Pierre Benoit negotiated with the developer to try and find some solution. They failed, with the exception of the chapel, which was dismantled and stored away. The chapel ceiling will be incorporated in a new building for the National Gallery of Canada.

It was, as Mr. R. A. J. Phillips, Executive Director of Heritage Canada, said later, "A classic example of losing the battle and winning the war." The National preservation organisation, Heritage Canada, was endowed by Parliament and people throughout Canada saw the need to form their own groups to watch over their own local heritage. Heritage Canada spearheads a permanent campaign, using some money to buy where it can, although it realises this is impossible in every case. In other cases they try to persuade other agencies and individuals to buy historic buildings and "natural landscapes" and convert them to practical use which will preserve their characteristics. As Mr. Phillips puts it: "Because of the Canadian spread of population, a lot of groups are working in isolation. With no outside support they tend to re-invent the wheel. One of the purposes of Heritage Canada is to make one community of all people concerned with heritage conservation — to serve as a central reference, and, frankly, a kind of lobby." ♦

Inmates approve of co-ed prison

Canada's first co-ed prison, in Prince George, British Columbia, has made interesting progress since its inauguration earlier this year. *The Globe and Mail*, Toronto, published the following progress report by Steve Whipp of the *Prince George Citizen*.

Holding hands and stealing kisses could get you seven days behind bars at the Prince George Regional Correctional

Centre if you happen to be one of the 12 women or one of the 170 men serving time at British Columbia's first co-ed prison.

The regional prison in Prince George, about 500 miles north of Vancouver, was the province's first jail to house male and female inmates two months ago in a common area.

"We have only had a few instances of

holding hands and kissing. They are only human. It's going to happen and we can't police it that strictly. When it does happen they are put in the confinement of their (cell) unit and taken off their programme for seven days," says Arno Brenner, senior correctional officer.

The men say they wish more hours in the day could be spent with the women.

"We hardly get to see them, but I guess