

Ontario Regulation 9/06 Assessment

156-158 Rideau Street

May 2024

Prepared by: Heritage Staff



Executive Summary

Constructed circa 1918, the property at 156-158 Rideau Street is a two-storey vernacular commercial building with influences of the Art Deco style. The building at 156-158 Rideau Street housed several typical main street businesses, including a dance hall, a men's dry good store, and a furniture store. Today, the building at 156-158 Rideau Street continues to reflect Rideau Street's history as a commercial main street in Ottawa.

The property is part of a large grouping of early commercial buildings on Rideau Street, which together have functioned as a commercial corridor on a main street in Lowertown since their construction in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Today, the building

continues to support retail and commercial activity on one of Ottawa's historic main streets.

The property has cultural heritage value for its design, associative and contextual values. It meets three of the nine criteria for designation under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

Criterion 1	
The property has design value or physical value because it is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method.	Yes
The building at 156-158 Rideau Street is representative example of an early 20th century commercial building with elements of the Art Deco style on a main street in Ottawa. The building has typical characteristics of an early 20th century commercial building, including its two-storey massing, flat roof, and brick cladding. The building at 156-158 Rideau Street also exhibits elements of the Art Deco style through its geometric and linear decorative detailing, and its colourful brick. The Art Deco style came to Canada after World War I and was a popular choice for commercial buildings throughout the early to mid-twentieth century.	

Supporting Details

Description of Building

- The building located at 156-158 Rideau Street is a two-storey brown brick mixed-use building, constructed c.1918.
- The ground floor at 156-158 Rideau is a storefront with two entrances.
- Above the ground floor, the building is clad in dichromatic brown brick, and features a symmetrical façade with five window bays of evenly spaced segmentally arched windows.
- The window openings are separated by brick pier buttresses and topped with three rows of decorative brickwork.
- The end bays contain matching arched parapets decorated with stone diamond-shaped medallions.
- The building is an example of a vernacular style commercial building with art deco influences, including its linear and geometric detailing.

Description of Architectural Style

The building at 156-158 Rideau Street has design value as a representative example of an early commercial building on Rideau Street. As was typical for nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial buildings in Ottawa, the building at 156-158 Rideau Street features brick cladding and a large storefront with display windows.

The building at 156-158 Rideau Street exhibits some Art Deco style detailing. Art Deco designs were inspired by traditional design motifs but stylized to be more modern.¹ Typical characteristics of the Art Deco style include vertical accents, a series of setbacks or stepped profiles, colourful tiles, as well as cornices and parapets.²

The building at 156-158 Rideau Street applies some of these Art Deco characteristics, particularly in its geometric decorative brick detailing in the parapets, and through the

¹ "Art Deco (1910-1940)," *OntarioArchitecture.com*, accessed April 2024.

² John Blumenson, "Art Deco (1925-1940)," *Ontario Architecture: A Guide to Styles and Building Terms 1784 to the Present* (Canada: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1990), 193.

linear effects creating through the pier buttresses. The building's dichromatic brick also references Art Deco's preference for colour.

The building at 156-158 Rideau Street features segmentally-arched window openings rather than the straight or angular windows of the Art Deco style. The building's arched windows reference the Italianate and Romanesque Revival style of neighbouring buildings, such as 149 Rideau Street and 152 Rideau Street.



156-158 Rideau Street, *City of Ottawa*, 2024.

National and Local Context

The Art Deco style came to Canada after World War I and reached its height in Ontario in the 1920s.³ The Art Deco style was the product of the twentieth century's celebration of new technologies—such as electricity and gas-powered vehicles. The style expanded beyond architecture to art, fashion, and music.⁴

As the Art Deco style was known to signify high fashion and wealth, and as such, the style was a popular choice for commercial and public use buildings.⁵ Some of Canada's

³ "Art Deco (1910-1940)," *OntarioArchitecture.com*, accessed April 2024.

⁴ "'From the Supreme Court to 'Puckingham Place': Art Deco in Canadian Culture," *Canada's Historic Places*, Parks Canada, accessed April 2024.

⁵ Shannon Ricketts, Leslie Maitland, and Jacqueline Hucker, "The Art Deco Style," *A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles – Second Edition* (Canada: Broadview Press, 2004), 177.

most recognized buildings use the Art Deco Style, including the Supreme Court of Canada on Wellington Street in Ottawa and Maple Leaf Gardens National Historic Site of Canada in Toronto.

In Ottawa, the Art Deco style can be found in building's of national significance, as well as in commerical and public use buildings on Wellington Street, Sparks Street, and in the downtown core.



Supreme Court of Canada, 301 Wellington Street. *Wikipedia*, accessed April 2024.



109 Bank Street, designated under Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. *Google Maps*, accessed April 2024.



62 Sparks Street, designated under Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. *Google Maps*, accessed April 2024.



325 Rideau Street is another example of a vernacular commercial building (theatre) on Rideau Street. *Google Maps*, accessed April 2024.

Criterion 2

The property has design value or physical value because it displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit.	No
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Heritage staff have reviewed the original plans and drawings for the subject building, compared the building to others of similar age or typology, and consulted relevant secondary sources including newspaper articles and architectural history books. Staff's review concluded that the property does not display a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit.

Criterion 3

The property has design value or physical value because it demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement.	No
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Heritage staff have compared the building to others of similar age or typology, and consulted relevant secondary sources including newspaper articles and architectural history books. Staff's review concluded that this property exemplifies typical construction methods for buildings of its type. The property does not meet this criterion.

Criterion 4

The property has historical value or associative value because it has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community.	No
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While this property reflects the general theme of nineteenth century commerce on Rideau Street, it does not have a strong direct association an event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community. The property does not meet this criterion.

Criterion 5

The property has historical or associative value because it yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture.	No
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Based on research conducted by Heritage Staff, the property does not yield information that contributes to the understanding of a community or culture. The property does not meet this criterion.

Criterion 6

The property has historical value or associative value because it demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community.	No
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Research conducted did not reveal that this property is representative of the work of a known or significant architect, builder, designer or theorist. The property does not meet this criterion.

Criterion 7	
The property has contextual value because it is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area.	Yes
The building at 156-158 Rideau Street has contextual value as it is important in supporting and maintaining the character of Rideau Street—which has functioned as a commercial main street in Ottawa since the nineteenth century. Throughout the twentieth century, most of Rideau Street between Sussex Drive and Cumberland Street was occupied by commercial spaces. The building at 156-158 Rideau Street housed several typical main street businesses, including a dance hall, a men’s dry good store, and a furniture store. Today, the building at 156-158 Rideau Street continues to reflect Rideau Street’s history as a commercial main street in Ottawa.	

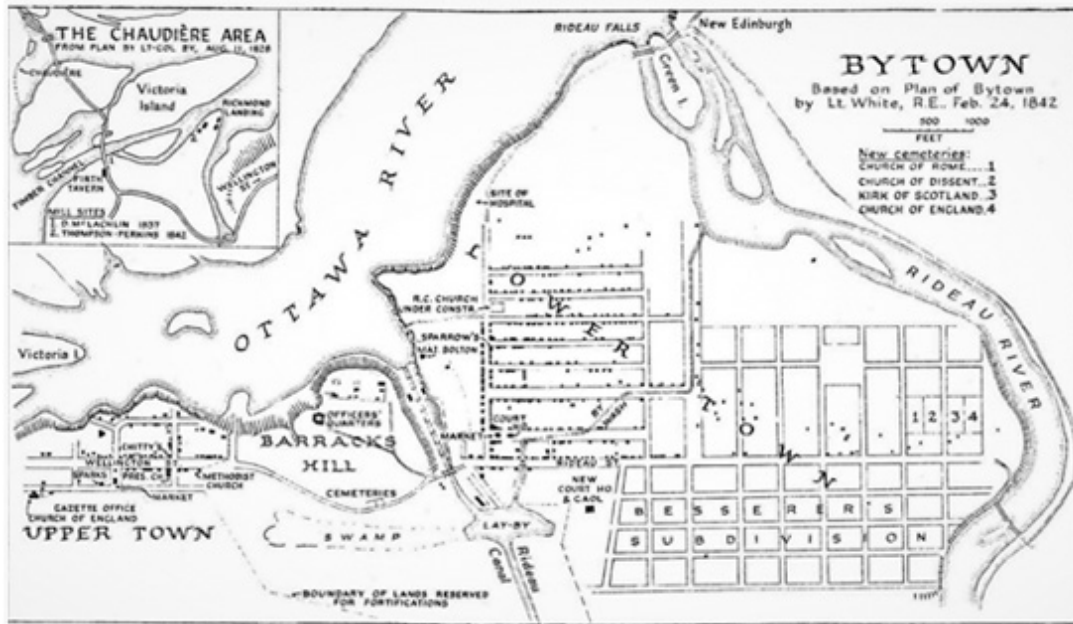
Supporting Details

The building at 156-158 Rideau Street has functions as a commercial building on Rideau Street since its construction in c. 1918. The building is important in maintaining and supporting the character of Rideau Street—which has functioned as a commercial main street in Ottawa’s Lowertown since the 19th century.

History of Lowertown

Rideau Street is located in Lowertown, on the edge of the ByWard Market, in Ottawa’s downtown core. The ByWard Market and Lowertown are two of the earliest settlement areas in the city. Together, they are bounded by the Rideau Canal and Sussex Drive to the west, the Rideau Street commercial corridor to the south, also encompassing the Rideau Centre to Mackenzie King Bridge, and finally the Rideau River, meandering from the Ottawa River, collectively acting as both the eastern and northern boundary of the neighbourhood.

In 1826, lead by Colonel By and Thomas McKay, the entrance of the Rideau Canal was determined, and as such, the birth of Bytown. The street grid in the ByWard and Lowertown areas derives from the distribution of land in 1827 when Colonel John By laid out Bytown. Bytown was originally comprised of and divided into Lower Town and Upper Town. Upper Town was predominately occupied by English Protestants, many who worked as officers for the military, whereas Lower Town became home for many tradesman and canal workers.



Map of Bytown, 1842, showing historic Lower Town and Upper Town. *The Historical Society of Ottawa*, accessed 2023.

A critical aspect of the economic and industrial development of both the ByWard and Lowertown neighbourhoods was the opening of the Rideau Canal in 1832. The Rideau Canal was constructed between 1826 and 1832 as part of a military strategy to establish an alternative route to the St. Lawrence River transportation corridor. Although built with the intent to protect Canada from American invasion, military control was relinquished as the threat subsided and the canal became predominately used for transportation of civilians, commercial goods, and natural resources; thereby increasing trade and spurring economic growth, and subsequently leading to the development of the area.

The construction of the railway through Ottawa's downtown core in 1854, and the expansions of Ottawa after the city was chosen as the national capital in 1857, also contributed to development. The construction of the Parliament Buildings just west of Sussex Drive in the 1860s resulted in an influx of public servants in the area, which gave way to the rise of commerce in the area specifically on Rideau Street and in the ByWard Market. Lowertown was an arrival point for many cultural groups including Irish, French Canadians and Ottawa's earliest Jewish community. Many of these new arrivals worked on the construction of the canal, while the Jewish community became prominent local shopkeepers, running businesses relating to food, clothing, second-hand goods, shoe repair, tailors, etc.

History of Rideau Street as a Commercial Main Street

Originally established as a corduroy road by Colonel John By in 1827, Rideau Street was the main route from Ottawa to Montreal.⁶ Rideau Street was originally intended to be a residential street due to its large lanes and lots. While Rideau Street east of King Edward Street remained a primarily residential street well into the 20th century, the west end of Rideau Street became a busy commercial street due to its proximity to transportation, services, the ByWard Market, and Parliament Hill.⁷

Further facilitating Lowertown's expansion was the construction of Ottawa's first large hospital, The Carleton Protestant General Hospital (now Wallis House, 589 Rideau Street), at the east end of Rideau Street in 1875.⁸ The 1891 construction of streetcar lines along Dalhousie, Rideau, and George Streets as well as Sussex Drive also greatly contributed to the expansion of residential and commercial development in the area, which was becoming home to an increasing number of public servants and the middle class. The rise of the middle class in Lowertown contributed to the success of large commercial stores on Rideau Street.

Since its construction in c.1918, the building at 156-158 Rideau Street housed various local businesses including a dance hall and a billiards hall, as well as a men's dry good store, and a furniture store. Overtime, the ground floor has been modified to suit the needs of different tenants, but the building's continued mixed-used expression makes it an essential component of Rideau Street's traditional main street character.

Today, the first storey of 156-158 Rideau Street continues to be used a commercial space. The building at 156-158 Rideau Street maintains and supports the character of Rideau Street as a historic and current commercial main street.

⁶ City of Ottawa Planning and Growth Management. "Uptown Rideau Street Community Design Plan," *City of Ottawa*, 2015, page 26.

⁷ City of Ottawa Planning and Growth Management. "Uptown Rideau Street Community Design Plan," *City of Ottawa*, 2015, page 26.

⁸ City of Ottawa Planning and Growth Management. "Uptown Rideau Street Community Design Plan," *City of Ottawa*, 2015, page 26.



Sussex Drive and Rideau Street, 1875.

Credit: Topley Studio Fonds/Library and Archives Canada/PA-012527



Storefronts on Rideau Street, 1878.

Credit: William James Topley/Library and Archives Canada/PA-027441

Criterion 8	
The property has contextual value because it is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings.	Yes
The building at 156-158 Rideau Street is historically, functionally, and visually linked to the surrounding commercial area. This building, together with others nearby like 149 and 152 Rideau Street, have historically functioned as part of a commercial in Lowertown since their construction in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These buildings are visually linked to each other in terms of form, massing, cladding, and type, with common features such as flat roofs, brick facades, and commercial space at grade. Today, this building continues to support retail and commercial activity on one of Ottawa's historic main streets.	

Supporting Details

Today, Rideau Street functions as an important main commercial street in downtown Ottawa, with the Rideau Centre sitting at the heart of Lowertown. The Rideau Centre, which has frontage on Rideau Street, is a modern commercial landmark in Ottawa and is integrated into the historic commercial streetscape of Rideau Street. The building at 156-158 Rideau Street has consistently functioned as a commercial space within a hub of commercial activity in Lowertown. Thus, the property is functionally and historically linked to its surroundings.

From Sussex Drive to Cumberland Street, both the north and south sides of Rideau Street are characterized by the presence of commercial buildings. The building at 149 Rideau Street is part of a large grouping of remaining early commercial buildings on Rideau Street.

Some of the earliest commercial buildings on Rideau Street are situated on the block between Sussex Drive and Dalhousie Street. These properties include the Featherstone Building at 103-105 Rideau Street, constructed in 1869, which originally operated as a drugstore; 101 Rideau Street, constructed in 1871, originally used as a bookstore and later a dry goods store; and The Atwood building at 97-99 Rideau Street, constructed in 1908, originally an apartment building.⁹ All of these properties are designated under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

⁹ "The Atwood, 101 Rideau Street, and The Featherstone Building," *Heritage Ottawa*.



Facades of 97-99, 101, and 103-105 Rideau Street. *Heritage Ottawa*, accessed 2023.

Throughout the twentieth century, most of the block of Rideau Street between Sussex and Mosgrove Streets was occupied by large commercial spaces. In 1914, McKerracher-Wanless Limited, a large menswear store, opened at 41 Rideau Street in the Plaza Building on the northeast corner of Rideau Street and Sussex Drive. In 1945, the store became Henry "Macks" Limited, also a menswear store, before it moved to 151 Rideau Street in 1967. In 1949, the Woolworth's Department Store opened at 47 Rideau Street between the Macks in the Plaza Building and Freiman's at 73 Rideau Street. The Freiman's department store existed at 73 Rideau Street in some capacity from 1902 to 1974. The building at 73 Rideau Street has been the Hudson's Bay Company since 1974 and was integrated into the Rideau Centre in the 1980s.



41, 47, and 73 Rideau Street in 1957. Copyright: Andrew Newton Photographers Limited, *City of Ottawa Archives*, MG393-NP-48822-001, Item CA043955.

Other notable department stores on Rideau Street include The Charles Ogilvy Limited Department Store, which opened in 1907 on the south side of Rideau Street at the corner of Rideau and Nicholas Streets. Its façade is incorporated into the Rideau Centre today.¹⁰ In 1922, the J.A. Larocque Department Store opened at 169 Rideau, and is now called Mercury Court.¹¹

¹⁰ "Charles Ogilvy Limited Department Store," *Heritage Ottawa*, accessed January 2024.

¹¹ Robert Vineberg, "Remembering "The Store": a brief history of Larocque's Department Store," *Lowertown Echo de la Basse-ville*, November 5, 2020. Accessed December 2023.



Rideau Street and Nicholas Street, looking west and showing streetcars and Ogilvy's department store.

Credit: Topley Studio Fonds/Library and Archives Canada/PA-012905.

The building at 156-158 Rideau Street is situated on the north side of Rideau Street, just west of the intersection of Rideau and Nicholas Streets. The building shares a streetscape with 152 Rideau Street, which has operated as a mixed-use building since its construction in c.1885.

The building is surrounded by other historic storefronts on Rideau Street including 152 Rideau Street, which is directly adjoined to 156-158 Rideau Street, and has operated as a commercial building since its construction circa 1898. On the north side of Rideau Street across from 156-158 Rideau Street, 149 Rideau Street, has operated as a commercial building since its construction in c.1875, and 155 Rideau Street, known as the Clegg-Feller Building, is one of the oldest examples of commercial architecture in Ottawa and is designated under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*.¹² These buildings are visually linked with each other due to their similar stylings featuring a two- to three-storey massing, brick-cladding, flat roofs, and ground level storefront with mixed-use space above. Today, each of these building's main storeys continue to function as a

¹² "Clegg-Feller Building|Windsor Smoke Shop," *Heritage Ottawa*, accessed March 2024.

commercial space and supports retail and commercial activity on one of Ottawa’s historic main streets.



152 and 156 Rideau Street, on the south side of Rideau Street. *City of Ottawa, 2024.*



149 and 155 Rideau Street, on the north side of Rideau Street across from 152 and 156 Rideau Street. Mercury Court is pictured in the background. *Google Maps*, accessed 2024.

Criterion 9	
The property has contextual value because it is a landmark	No
The property is not considered a landmark on Rideau Street, nor is it commonly referenced for the purposes of wayfinding.	

Sources

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