

In 1999 the City of Ottawa designated the boathouse at 501 Rockcliffe Driveway to be of historic and architectural value or interest under the Ontario Heritage Act, R.S.O. 1990, C. O18.

STATEMENT OF REASON FOR DESIGNATION

The Ottawa New Edinburgh Club is recommended for designation under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act because it is a rare example of boathouse architecture and has played an important role in the history of aquatic sports in Ottawa. The Ottawa New Edinburgh Club is one of the four remaining boathouses of this type in Canada from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Canoeing was a popular sport in 19th century Canada and The Ottawa Canoe Club, founded in 1883, was the first canoe club in the nation's capital. It soon developed a distinguished reputation, winning many trophies and attracting prominent patrons and members, such as the Marquis of Lorne, Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Thomas Ahearn. Clubs of this kind were popular in the years before widespread car ownership as they allowed their members to pursue healthy outdoor activities with like-minded individuals without leaving the city.

The Club's original Boathouse was located near the foot of the Rideau Canal. In 1894, the club moved several kilometres downstream into a newly-built facility. In 1914, the Club merged with the New Edinburgh Club, becoming the Ottawa New Edinburgh Club and decided to move to the present location because it included land suitable for tennis courts. Financial setbacks and the outbreak of the First World War prevented completion of a new building and construction of the tennis courts until 1923.

Local architect C.P. Meredith designed the Ottawa New Edinburgh Club. It sits above the water upon a steel frame sunk into the riverbed and is joined to the shore by a foot bridge. The building itself is a two-and-a-half storey, rectangular wood frame structure with a truncated gable roof punctuated by shed-roofed dormer windows. The main entrance is in a centrally placed pavilion facing the shore. A large verandah, originally open but now covered by a shed roof on three sides and open on its long facade facing the Ottawa River, encircles the second floor. Regularly spaced, multi-paned French doors open onto the verandah. A central gable, bisected by a chimney pierces the roof Ottawa River façade. Below the verandah there is a long gallery with regularly spaced doors that allow access to the indoor boat storage area.

Stylistically, the Boathouse is reminiscent of the simple unembellished architecture prevalent at the time for summer cottages clubs and resorts with certain special features associated with boat clubs such as the steel pilings and the walkway connecting the building to the shore. Buildings of this type are always constructed of wood and feature wide verandahs plentiful windows and simple undecorated facades well-suited to their recreational function.

The interior of the building is not included in this designation.