

Construction of the ONEC Boathouse.

The Ottawa Canoe Club was organized in 1883. In 1885 it built a floating clubhouse on the Ottawa River at the foot of St. Patrick Street.

In 1894 it built a larger clubhouse on in Governor's Bay just to the north of Rideau Hall. When it built the second clubhouse several members of the club incorporated a company, the Ottawa Canoe Club House Company Ltd., presumably to raise funds and own the clubhouse. See photo below.

The second clubhouse was on leased land although the history of the lease is a bit murky. Sometime after the Ottawa Canoe Club House Company was incorporated, the Ottawa Canoe Club assigned it a lease dated 1 May 1894 from Thomas Keefer and his wife, Annie Keefer. Where the leased property was is not clear although it seems likely that the land was in Governor's Bay.

On 4 March 1899 the OCC signed a lease to land held by the Board of Park Management of City of Ottawa. The lease was to start on 1 May 1904, the anniversary of the lease held from Thomas Keefer, and it may be that Keefer had sold the land to the city.

An article in the Ottawa Citizen in 1908 indicated that the Ottawa Canoe Club and the New Edinburgh Canoe Club had been discussing amalgamation. The plan had been to pool the OCC's \$3000 and 300 members with the New Edinburgh Club's \$800 and membership; the plan apparently foundered on a disagreement for the name of the new club. The article quoted denials that the OCC was "down and out". At the time the New Edinburgh Club did not have a boathouse but was very successful in local races: it was affiliated with the OAAC.

By 1911 the OCC was outgrowing the second clubhouse and asked the Ottawa Improvement Commission (OIC) if it would provide a site, on the basis of a 25 year lease at a nominal rental, for a new club house at "Bronson's Wharf" (which is the site of the current boathouse.) The OCC planned to build a new club house devoted to aquatic sports, including swimming and power boating, at an anticipated cost of \$12,000 to \$15,000. The club offered to give up its existing lease from the City of Ottawa; this was something which the OIC wanted although I do not know why. Initially the OIC appeared to favour the OCC application.

In 1913 the New Edinburgh Canoe Club applied to the OIC for a site on the Ottawa River below Bronson's Wharf. The New Edinburgh Canoe Club had split off from the OCC about 1904. The OIC responded that it would only grant one site and suggested that the two clubs amalgamate. After some initial resistance to the suggestion (mostly arguments over the name of the combined club) the two clubs agreed to combine as the Ottawa New Edinburgh Canoe Club.

In 1913 the OIC informed the OCC that it would not be possible to give the club a site because the Department of Justice had given a legal opinion that the OIC could not sell or lease lands intended for park purposes.

There may have been a change to this opinion because on 23 March 1914 the clubs issued a prospectus announcing that the Ottawa Canoe Club and the New Edinburgh Canoe Club intended to amalgamate as the Ottawa-New Edinburgh Canoe Club. The combined clubs would build a club house near Bronson's Wharf at a cost of \$20,000 on a site which the OIC had agreed to provide. The building would be built on concrete piers with a steel frame and would contain a ball room 70' by 40', a kitchen, dining room, locker rooms, etc., and racks for two hundred canoes and skiffs and accommodation for about forty motor boats. It was planned to finish the building so that it could be used in the winter. The club also planned to establish tennis courts on adjacent land. A finance committee had been formed and it was intended to raise \$10,000 by 1 May. If this could not be done the plan to amalgamate the two clubs would be abandoned and they would continue to operate separately.

On 24 April 1914, the Ottawa Citizen announced that \$10,000 had been subscribed and that the clubs would proceed with the amalgamation. In September ONECC prepared an application to the Ontario Minister of Lands, Forests, and Mines to purchase a water lot of 379, 831 square feet abutting on land owned by the OIC in Gloucester. The application stated the club's intention to build a clubhouse and noted that \$15,000 had been subscribed and asked for the grant of a water lot as a mortgage would be required for about \$6,000.

Because the OIC owned the riparian rights to the lot which ONECC wished to acquire, its support was required in the application. The Board of the OIC decided that it would be better if the OIC acquired the water lot itself and then leased it to ONECC. The OIC applied to the Ontario Minister of Lands, Forests, and Mines for a grant of the water lot. It also applied to the federal Minister of Finance for an order in council authorizing it to purchase the water lot. An order in council was issued on 16 December 1914 and letters patent conveying the water lot¹ to the OIC were issued on 7 January 1915.

At a meeting of the OIC on 1 February 1915 ONECC's plans for the new clubhouse were reviewed and were considered satisfactory. The meeting also considered terms for a lease for the property. A lease was prepared and was probably signed on 18 March 1915. The lease was between the Ottawa Improvement Commission and the Ottawa-New Edinburgh Club House Company, Limited. It provided a legal description of the water lot; it did not cover any land on shore. It ran for 21 years at a rate of \$1 per year. The lessee was responsible for all charges, taxes, rates and assessments on the premises. The lessor had the right to enter the premises at all reasonable times to examine the condition of the premises. The lessee was not to assign the premises without permission. The land was to be used only for club purposes. The lessee was not to erect any building, other than the proposed clubhouse, without prior approval of the lessor. The lease could be extended for a 21 year period.

Because the Ottawa River was a navigable waterway the construction of a building on it was subject to review by the federal government. On 10 February 1915 the Ottawa New Edinburgh Clubhouse Company, Limited, gave notice in the Canada Gazette that it had deposited plans of the proposed boathouse with the Minister of the Department of Public Works and would apply for their approval under Section 7 of the Navigable Waters Protection Act, RCS Ch.115. (I have not found out whether this application was proceeded with.)

As part of the agreement, the lease to the land on which the second clubhouse was built appears to have been surrendered at this time.

The outbreak of the First World War in August 1914 had effectively ended ONECC's fundraising campaign but in 1915 it did begin construction of the building. Piles were driven into the riverbed, steel girders were erected and the frame of the building was put up on the water lot leased from the OIC. Membership dropped during the war and did not revive for several years. As well, the cost of construction was very high after the war and no effort was made to complete the building although the steel structure was kept painted.

In the fall of 1922 the old clubhouse in Governor's Bay burned and plans were made to complete the building on the new site. The club president estimated that it would cost \$28,000 to complete the buildings. Fund raising was resumed and in 1923 the existing clubhouse was built on the steel frame which had been put in place in 1915. In 1929 the steel base, exposed to ice since it had been installed, was condemned and a concrete wall or foundation, 12 feet high and three feet thick at the base was built at a cost of \$12,000 to protect the steel. In 1931 the footbridge to shore was replaced by a \$5000 structure of British Columbia fir on concrete pillars. A photo of the clubhouse before the concrete wall was installed is available at the Library and Archives Canada website; it is reproduced below..

The new clubhouse was built in expectation that the club would expand its membership by attracting tennis members. In negotiating the lease for the water lot, ONECC had discussed with the OIC the provision of clay tennis courts adjacent to the club. In May 1915 the club formally asked that the OIC consider an application for land for the courts. The Secretary of OIC replied that as the club house was unlikely to be ready for occupation during the season the Board had not dealt with the request.

In 1923 while it was building the new clubhouse, ONECC renewed its request that land be made available for tennis courts. In making its case it was able to obtain statements from individuals involved in the negotiations to acquire the water lot in 1913-1914, that the OIC had verbally agreed that tennis courts would be made available. The OIC replied that it could do nothing in 1923 but would ask for funds in the estimates for 1924. In 1924 the Commission stated that it required a legal opinion from the Department of Justice as to whether it could grant lands to clubs. Presumably the opinion was favourable as in 1925 the club was able to build 10 tennis courts on land provided by the OIC. Two additional courts were acquired by 1931. Tennis brought new life to the club; membership which had never been more than 300 climbed to 800 by 1931.

The lease to the water lot was renewed in 1936 for 21 years. In 1956 it was renewed again but only for a five year term.

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Sources:

Library Archives Canada, RG34, Vol.222, File 102-D(1) Federal District Commission. ,
Ottawa New Edinburgh Canoe Club

LAC, MG28, I29, Ottawa Canoe Club, 1894. Letters Patent of Incorporation, May, 1894.

Ottawa Citizen, 11 June 1908, p.5. "With the Paddlers. Good News for the Ottawas'

Ottawa Citizen, 1 Dec. 1909, p.19. "Has Hundreds of Paddlers"

Ottawa Citizen, 13 May 1931. p25. "Come to the May Fair of the Ottawa-new Edinburgh
Canoe Club – Rockcliffe"

Canada Gazette, 10 April 1915, p.3201.

Library Archives Canada, MG28, I29, Ottawa Canoe Club, 1894



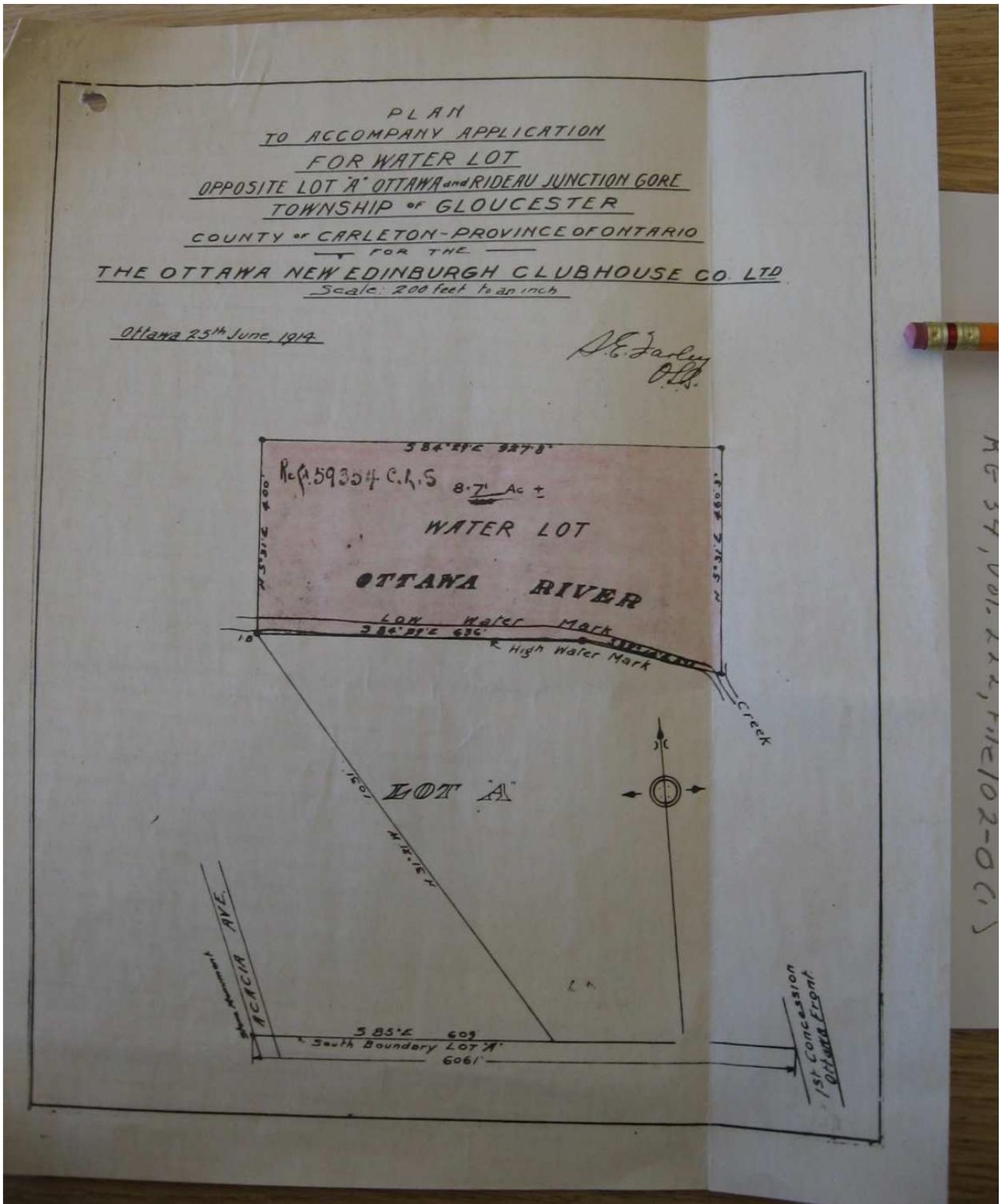
Ottawa Canoe Club Boathouse 1894 Credit: Topley Studio / Library and Archives
Canada / PA-027419



View from Mr. Matthew's house looking towards *Ottawa Canoe Club* and Driveway [Rockcliffe, Ont.] [1920's]. Credit: Canada. Dept. of Interior / Library and Archives Canada / PA-034250



Boathouse with concrete foundation, diving tower and bridge, about 1931.
Source: Ottawa Citizen, 14 May 1931, p.35.



Plan of Water Lot.

ⁱ The Appraisal Journal (Volume 45, No. 1, P. 70) defines water lot as "an area of land either contiguous or attached to dry land, or it may be entirely separated from dry land;

and is usually covered with water, but not necessarily at low tide. It may be partially filled".

Simply put, a water lot is "land" covered by water at some time. The depth of the water covering the land can be an important factor in determining the highest and best use or proposed use.

Historically, like upland properties, submerged lands within navigable waters are under the jurisdiction of respective provincial crown agencies or, in some instances, a federal crown agency. A water lot is established when a patent describing the land is created by the provincial or federal Crown usually through the issuance of an Order-in-Council. The appropriate land title or land registry office will then create an abstract of title for the water lot area. The abstract of title is a chronological statement of the instruments and events under which a person is entitled to property. Public Works and Government Services Canada Website, <http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/biens-property/vltn/1c6-eng.html>.