

IDENTIFICATIONBUILDING

- City/Prov: OTTAWA, Ont.  
 - Name: VIP Residence  
 - Address: 7 Rideau Gate  
 - Owner: NCC

FHBRO(NCR)

- Meeting: NCR 86-04  
 - Date: 11 JUL 86  
 - BER No.: 85-68  
 - Date: 22 JUL 1986

HERITAGE CHARACTER- Designation: RECOGNIZEDSUMMARY

Seven Rideau Gate, the official guest house of the Canadian Government, was built in 1861-62. Both the architect and the builder are unknown. It was Recognized because it is a convenient example of Ottawa's development and because its setting reinforces the present character of the area.

HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS

Until it was expropriated by the Government in 1966 the building belonged to five successive business families in Ottawa. The impulse to move away from the city centre by members of the elite occurred in other Canadian cities in the mid-nineteenth century. Ottawa's elite were following this trend when they moved to the area at the junction of the Rideau and Ottawa Rivers. This movement to the east of the city heralded the 1864 development of Rockcliffe Park into lots for villas. In the 1920s and 1930s many new houses were built, particularly in Rockcliffe Park and the neighbourhood became the most fashionable in Ottawa. The conversion of 24 Sussex Drive into the prime minister's official residence in 1949, 5 Rideau Gate into the South African Embassy in 1944, the purchase of Earncliffe for the British High Commission in 1930, the construction of the French Embassy in 1936-39 and the purchase of Seven Rideau Gate in 1966 have together created an enclave of official residences and embassies at the east end of what is now the ceremonial route.

ARCHITECTURE

Seven Rideau Gate is a two storey roughcut stone structure with a truncated hipped roof. It was typical of picturesque villas and cottages constructed in the 1840s and 1850s in Ontario and Quebec. This type of house was becoming less popular as the century advanced but was occasionally built into the 1860s. The building has undergone extensive changes since its construction including the removal of its verandahs and the addition of a garage in 1934. A sunroom and a two storey wing added in 1947 were well executed and care was taken to match the local stone and fenestration of the original portion of the building. In 1966 the Department of Public Works purchased the building. There have been few external changes since that time. Seven Rideau Gate is a pleasing, although completely typical, example of domestic architecture built for the wealthy from the 1920s until the 1950s. Features such as the sunroom, symmetrically placed shuttered windows and the classically inspired doorway can be found on many Canadian houses of the day.

ENVIRONMENT

Rideau Gate is a short street that faces the entrance and fence of Rideau Hall and runs into Sussex Drive opposite the gates to 24 Sussex Drive. The houses on the street, although constructed at different times and of differing materials, present a harmonious streetscape. Seven Rideau Gate is an integral part of this cluster of official and private residences between New Edinburgh and Rockcliffe Park and reinforces the elegant quality of this area of Ottawa.