

FHBRO Number 90-21

Lachine, Quebec

Warehouse and Office (Building No. 1)

Lachine Canal

Building No. 1 was constructed in 1925 according to plans probably prepared by an engineer from the Department of Railways and Canals. A concrete extension with an imposing chimney seems to have been erected on the southern facade during the same period. Building No. 1 was designed to serve as a warehouse and office and, in 1951, an office was installed therein for the maintenance superintendent. In 1956, the office space was moved to the second floor. Today, the building still serves the same functions. The Department of Canadian Heritage is the custodian department. See FHBRO Building Report 90-21.

Reasons for Designation

Building No. 1 was designated Recognized for its architectural and environmental significance. This building, like the Machine Shop located nearby, evokes the period of urbanization on the shores of the Lachine Canal and attests to the important role played by the canal in the economic development of Canada.

The building's architectural interest resides in its aesthetic and functional design. Its industrial architecture uses a simple but effective vocabulary which relies on a skilful combination of concrete and steel. The distribution of the openings and the configuration of the interior space reflect the highly utilitarian nature of this design. In addition, a comparative study of the construction techniques used for the Machine Shop and the Warehouse illustrate the technological advances in the use of concrete between 1909 and 1925.

Building No. 1 and the adjacent buildings form a coherent whole which constitutes a cultural landscape and merits preservation.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage value of the building resides in the type of construction, its volume, the rhythm of the facades and their window openings, as well as its central location in the first industrial area of the Lachine Canal.

This structure can be described as a concrete shell reinforced by a steel framework. Concrete, in the form of purlins supported on "I" beams, is even used for the roof structure. On the inside, the concrete columns support the floor of the second storey as

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well as the roof. This system, in which the envelope and the structure are integrated, is a good example of the use of concrete in an industrial architecture context and merits conservation.

In order to break up this volume, which otherwise would have had a monolithic appearance, the designer chose to use pilasters which define eight bays on the side elevations and three on the gable walls. Aside from a few exceptions due to subsequent modifications, each of the bays on the long sides is pierced by a window on the ground floor and another on the second storey. The original entrances are located on the north gable wall. The rhythm of the facades is therefore created by the arrangement of the many openings framed by pilasters. If the current functions of the building permit, it would be desirable to restore the original composition by reintroducing the openings that were blocked up over time.

Noteworthy characteristic features of the building facades include the metal windows, the pilasters, the cornice and the parging covering the concrete. The multi-pane windows are equipped with a central pivoting section. They are typical of industrial architecture and help to provide light and adequate ventilation of the interior spaces. Each pilaster rests on a small plinth and is crowned by an unadorned capital. A cornice connects these capitals to each other while circling the four facades. All these elements are part of the architectural vocabulary of the Warehouse and must be preserved and maintained. If the windows damaged by corrosion cannot be repaired, replacement by identical units is the recommended approach. Regular maintenance of the concrete and repair of the parging covering it should ensure the survival of the envelope.

The functional design of the building is very simple and is based on a peripheral horizontal and vertical circulation through an overhead hoist. In order to preserve the original configuration of the building, it is not recommended to subdivide the large spaces typical of this type of building.

The site on which Building No. 1 is located still has an industrial character today despite various changes, the most important of which is the construction of the nearby Bonaventure highway. It is important that no effort be made to change this environment. The functional aspect of the site must continue to be evident in order to highlight the original function of the building.

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For further guidance, please refer to the *FHBRO Code of Practice*.

Translation
