INTRODUCTION

The Sault Ste. Marie Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee (LACAC) is comprised of members interested in heritage conservation with expertise in a number of related fields such as local history and architecture. The members are appointed by Council and recommend to Council significant properties of historical and/or architectural value for designation under the Ontario Heritage Act.

The Sault Ste. Marie LACAC has examined the properties at 875 Queen Street, known as the former Forest Insect Laboratory and at 64 Church Street, known as the former Ontario Provincial Air Service hangars. A map indicating the properties to be designated has been included. Due to its current condition the area north of the fire wall in the 1924 -25 hangar which contained office space, the carpentry shop and the engine shop, shall not be included as part of this designation. (Appendix #3) After completing research into their historical and architectural significance LACAC recommends to Council that these properties be designated under the Ontario Heritage Act. LACAC has consulted with the current owner, Mr. Jack Purvis, and the owner has indicated that he has no objection to the designation of these properties. (Appendix #1)

An information sheet outlining the designation process has also been included in this report.

**ONTARIO PROVINCIAL AIR SERVICE HANGARS (1924-25, 1947)**
**64 CHURCH STREET**

LOCATION

The Ontario Provincial Air Service hangars are located on the north shore of the St. Mary's River with the south elevation parallel to the river. The hangars are bounded by Pim Street on the west, Queen Street on the north and Church Street on the east. The 1924-25 hangar was originally bounded on the west by Luscombe Avenue until the construction of the 1947 addition. (Appendix #2, #3 & #4)

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION & SIGNIFICANCE

The 1924 -25 and 1947 hangars are of steel frame construction with brick infill. The 1924 -25 hangar features a low pitched gable roof supported by a system of riveted steel trusses. The truss roof span is reputedly the first of its kind being the largest span of beam used up to this time (West, page 59 - 60). The design of the hangar is a departure from the small timber frame structures that were constructed during the First World War (Cuming Appendix 6.1). The interior of the hangar represents the development of a large specialized industrial design which provided large unencumbered spaces which would permit the maneuvering of various size aircraft for their storage and maintenance after being brought out of the river. Large multi-paned windows contained in two stories between piers provide lighting for the interior. (Appendix #5) This design of window is repeated with the 1947 addition. Towards the northern end of the roof is a small hipped roof observation structure. All elevations are comprised of bays of continuous painted red-brick facade with each bay divided by near full length brick piers. The widows have the original metal frames with each window comprised of 3 units of 20 lights on each of the two floors.

The east and west elevations are comprised of 14 bays with 3 bays being incorporated into the 1947 hangar on the west elevation and visible only from the interior. Both the north and south elevations are comprised of 4 bays. The bays on the north elevation are separated by 3 brick piers. The windows of the central east bay of the northern elevation have 2 units of 20 individual lights with an offset entranceway with windows above. The facade originally featured the OPAS insignia but it is now painted over. (Appendix # 7) On the northern elevation there is still a remnant of the original landscaping for the entrance to the office portion of the hangar with a sandstone retaining wall along the west side of what was Luscombe Avenue and the south edge of the 1947 Forest Insect Laboratory. A sandstone pillar topped with a decorative light fixture remains at the corner of the property however a similar pillar which was located at the Church Street entrance was removed during the construction of the Laboratory. (Appendix #8)

The south elevation of the 1924-25 hangar has four bays which are separated by three vertical steel columns set on tracks. Each bay features a rolled slatted metal door that permits the doors to be hoisted above the lintel. The vertical columns can retract to the sides to virtually open the whole front of the facade. This style of door is shown to be a feature of the original design. The red brick of the facade has been painted white although it bears the OPAS insignia. The timber slipway which was constructed from the waters edge to the hangar entrance was replaced by a concrete slipway in 1939 and a second concrete slipway was added likely in 1947. (Appendix #9, #10)

The 1947 L- shaped addition enclosed part of the 1925 hangar, incorporating the front and part of the west elevation of the 1924-25 hanger into its structure. The front or south elevation of the 1947 hangar is comprised of four large bays separated by brick piers. Each bay features a horizontal sliding door each with twelve sub-bays.

On the east elevation five bays divided by full length brick piers were added to the 1924 - 25 hangar. The windows are multi - paned with metal frames on two storeys, similar to those of the 1924 - 25 hangar. The west elevation is non-continuous and is comprised of seven bays with a new two storey entrance to the Canadian Bushplane Heritage Centre. To the north of the addition a single storey receiving area has been constructed. (Appendix #11)

Despite additions over the years and some modifications of windows and entranceways the integrity of the hangars remain largely intact.

1924 -5 Hangar:

- original riveted steel roof trusses and supporting columns
- original design of four roll up doors with retractable columns with the OPAS crest appearing above the doors
- original clay tiles on the inside of the hangar
- some original landscaping with sandstone retaining wall and pillar with ornamental light fixture

1947 Hangar

- original steel trusses and supporting columns
- four sliding doors
- multi - paned windows

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The historical significance of the hangars lie with their " association with significant provincial government initiatives in the development of the Ontario Provincial Air Service, the establishment of the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests, forest fire detection and prevention techniques, aerial forest surveys, planting and management." (Cuming, page 13) In recognition of the importance of the forestry industry to Ontario's economy the province shifted its emphasis from overseeing the exploitation of this resource to its management. In 1920, the Department of Lands and Forests was created and in the same year the department undertook four test flights to James Bay to conduct forest surveys. These successful flights were piloted by W. Roy Maxwell, an ex R.F.C. Flying instructor who would become the first director of the Ontario Provincial Air Service when it was established in 1924. It was Roy Maxwell who chose Sault Ste. Marie as the headquarters for the air service's operations. In his report, Maxwell listed among his reasons for choosing Sault Ste. Marie: the city's proximity to the air service's summer bases in Sioux Lookout and Sudbury which would minimize the amount of cross country flying, the early opening of the St. Mary's River which allowed personnel to ready the planes in the water sooner than at other locations, the connection of the city to railway and water shipping links for obtaining supplies and the size of the city which afforded personnel amenities not found in smaller communities. As well, Maxwell noticed that the red glow of the Union Carbide plant in Sault Ste. Marie Michigan was a highly visible beacon for returning pilots.

Construction on the hangar was begun in 1924 and was completed in 1925. Throughout the following decades the air service played an important role in the management of the forests and the opening of northern Ontario. The Ontario Provincial Air Service's role included forest fire detection and suppression, aerial surveys of timber and wildlife, insect collection for researchers and the transportation of tree seedlings for reforestation work. The Air Service also provided mercy flights and essential transportation for all government departments. The air service is also recognized for its pioneering work in the development of air to ground communications and the use of aircraft in direct fire suppression by dropping water from the aircraft. During WW II the air service even built its own planes in Sault Ste. Marie due to the wartime shortage.

As the needs of the province grew the complex at Sault Ste. Marie expanded to include a new hangar in 1947. The site was in use until 1991 when it was vacated by the Fire and Aviation Division of the Ministry of Natural Resources.

CONCLUSION

The hangars at 69 Church Street have been identified by several reports as being of historical and architectural significance. The 1987 Sault Ste. Marie Heritage Study prepared for the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines and the City of Sault Ste. Marie identifies the site as "very important as early aviation centre and especially so because of most components being intact and original" (A- 189). This is reiterated by the Heritage Assessment of the Former Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources Complex prepared on behalf of the Ontario Realty Corporation in October, 2000. This reports concludes that the hangars are "of heritage significance and worthy of considered conservation, planning and management activities." (Cuming , page 21 ) The report suggests that LACAC "designate the property under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act to protect the features it deems merit protection." (Cuming, page 21)

The Sault Ste. Marie LACAC after careful review recommends that the property at 69 Church Street, known as the Ontario Provincial Air Service Hangar be designated under the Ontario Heritage Act. Due to its current condition the area north of the fire wall in the 1924 -25 hangar which contained office space, the carpentry shop and the engine shop, shall not be included as part of this designation. The reasons for designation are:

- The hangars represent unique structures for their architectural design with the 1924-25 hangar serving as a prototype for subsequent hangars. The 1924-25 hangar is also recognized for its innovative engineering technology with its use of large span steel beam trusses which remain intact.
- The hangars retain unique architectural elements in their original state which include the 1924 - 25 hangar, the original roll up doors with retractable columns with the OPAS crest appearing above , the clay tiles on the inside of the building, as well as some original landscaping with a sandstone retaining wall and pillar with ornamental light fixture and in the 1947 hangar the original steel trusses and supporting columns, four sliding doors and the remaining multi-paned windows
- The hangars are of historical significance due to their association with the Ontario Provincial Air Service which is of provincial significance because of its pioneering activities in the development and use of aircraft for the detection and suppression of forest fires as well as other aspects of forest management which took place at the hangar.
- The hangars are landmark buildings that have been prominent features on the Sault Ste. Marie waterfront since their construction. The forest management activities centred around the Ministry of Natural Resources complex have earned Sault Ste. Marie an international reputation in forest management.

**FOREST INSECT LABORATORY, 875 QUEEN STREET**

LOCATION

The former Forestry Insect Laboratory is located at 875 Queen Street. The front of the building is parallel to the south side of Queen Street and is bounded on the east by Church Street, the west formerly by Luscombe Street now the parking lot of an office building and to the south by the OPAS 1924 hangar. (Appendix #4 & #12 )

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION & SIGNIFICANCE

Toronto architect, Ernest Davidson was engaged in May of 1944 to design the Forest Insect Laboratory. On December 5, 1944, the contract was let to build it on the site of the former Sault Ste. Marie Lawn Bowling and Tennis Courts. (Appendix #13, # 14, #15) Stylistically the building is Art Moderne with its sweeping horizontal lines and flat roof with rounded copper cornice. The continuous copper facia above the windows and stone sill course below contribute to the buildings streamlined effect which is characteristic of the Art Moderne style which was popular in the 1930's and 1940's. The repetition of the horizontal banded features on all the elevations including the 1958 addition to the south of the original structure provides a pleasing unifying effect to the building. (Appendix # 17 & # 18)

"The front or north elevation of the 1945 building faces Queen Street features an asymmetrical arrangement of bays accommodating the main entranceway, located off - centre to the east in the main body of the building, and a series of large windows, divided either by round columnar pilasters of limestone or by brick panels the recessed entranceway features three bays divided by two limestone columns with a substantial stone surround. The central bay provides for a double door with single doors are located in the flanking bays, each of which are surmounted by a transom The recessed entranceway joins the main body of the building to the west with a rounded corner and is covered by a protective, projecting, round cornered canopy with copper facia. The copper facia extends across the entire length of the principal facade immediately above the window openings. Above the facia and entranceway the Ontario Coat of Arms, carved in Indiana limestone, is set into the brickwork. Originally the building's name was set out in projecting metal letters as FOREST INSECT LABORATORY and extended westwards from the coat of arms to the last window bay. The name has been removed but a shadow image is just discernible. A narrow copper cornice caps the building facade. East of the entranceway a projecting extension from the main body of the building features two bays with window openings slightly smaller than the western counterparts…"(Cuming, Appendix - Inventory Form For Building Structures)

Despite the replacement of the doors and multi- pane windows with thermal pane window in the 1980's, the removal of the FOREST INSECT LABORATORY lettering and the addition of a wheelchair accessible ramp on the north and east elevation, the overall streamlined effect of the Art Moderne style is maintained.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

" At its completion it was considered the finest building of its kind in North America." (Lambert, page 229)

The Forest Insect Laboratory was the result of a research agreement between the Federal Department of Agriculture and the Ontario Department of lands and Forests in 1945. Under this agreement Ontario promised to build and maintain the laboratory while the federal government would provide the staff and equipment. This research program was initiated as the result of the infestation of the Spruce Bud Worm which was endangering the Ontario forests and the forest industry. In 1949 the Canada Forestry Act was passed " to promote cooperation between the federal government, provincial governments and industry in the conservation of Canada's forests." (Lambert, page 542) After several years of negotiation the research agreement originally made in 1945 was formalized in 1952.

This joint venture was aimed at research which would control forest insects and diseases. The laboratory in Sault Ste. Marie pioneered research into eradicating destructive forest insects such as the Spruce Bud Worm, Red-headed Sawfly and the White Pine Weevil which were endangering the reforestation efforts of the Department of Lands and Forests. The insect identification centre established at the laboratory was the first of its kind and Canada and earned an international reputation for its work. (Appendix # 19)

In 1966 the federal government discontinued the shared - cost agreement, however the building remained occupied by the Ministry of Natural Resources until 1995.

CONCLUSION

The study Heritage Assessment of the Former Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources Complex , prepared on behalf of the Ontario Realty Corporation in October, 2000, concludes that the " the former Forest Insect Laboratory (1945) is of historical significance for its association with the provincial and national forest industry and reforestation initiatives, development of national scientific research program into insect infestations and forest management generally" (Cuming, Page 2) and is of architectural significance as a good example of the Art Moderne style (Cuming , Appendix - Evaluation Work Sheet for Buildings and Structures). The report suggests that LACAC "designate the property under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act to protect the features it deems merit protection." (Cuming, page. 3)

The Sault Ste. Marie LACAC after careful review recommends that the property at 875 Queen Street, formerly known as the Forest Insect Laboratory be designated under the Ontario Heritage Act as the structure:

- is one of the few remaining examples of Art Moderne architecture in Sault Ste. Marie and is excellent example of the Art Moderne style which is characterized by an overall streamlined affect which is achieved by the use of rounded corners, flat roof and the use of continuous horizontal elements with the copper facia above the windows and the stone sill course.
- is of historical significance for its association with the pioneering research program into the control of forest insect infestations which was jointly carried out by the federal and provincial governments as well as the development of reforestation and forest management techniques which has earned Sault Ste. Marie international recognition.

Appendix 2

Bibliography


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