

# Chapter 2

## Cultural Heritage Values

This section describes the outstanding cultural heritage features of the Ottawa River upon which this nomination is based. The description is organized according to the five heritage themes of the *Cultural Framework for Canadian Heritage Rivers, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2000*.

### 2.1 Description of Cultural Heritage Values

#### 2.1.1 Resource Harvesting

The Ottawa River corridor provides evidence of thousands of years of prehistoric Aboriginal occupation and land use, and 400 years of Aboriginal and European history related to exploration, the fur trade and settlement.

##### Fishing

The earliest evidence of peoples living in the Upper Ottawa Valley was about 6000 years ago with the Shield Archaic Peoples, who fished and hunted small mammals. Evidence of “*Aboriginal pre-historic fishing*” includes archaeological sites associated with the Shield Archaic as well as later camp remains along the river at strategic fishing places.

“*Historic domestic fishing*” is recorded by Champlain and other early explorers, who relied on the abundance of fish and game along the Ottawa River in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries to fuel their journeys upriver, as did the settlers during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

##### Shoreline Resource Harvesting

Shoreline resource harvesting related to the “*trapping of fur bearing animals*” is particularly significant in terms of the cultural heritage of the Ottawa River. Aboriginal Peoples along the Ottawa River were already engaged in the trapping of beaver and other fur-bearing animals when Europeans arrived in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century and set in motion a large-scale network of fur trapping and trading fuelled by the European fashion craze for beaver hats. First Nations Peoples trapped beaver and brought pelts downriver to trade with the

**Figure 2.1 Encampment of Voyageurs, Ontario, 1870**



Source : Anne Frances Hopkins Library and Archives  
Canada/ACC. No. R3266-277 Peter Winkworth Collection  
of Canadians

French. The *voyageur* era began when the French started travelling up the Ottawa River to the country's interior to meet the First Nations Peoples and obtain furs, which were brought back to Montreal.

In the 1670s, the British began competing with the French for furs with the founding of the Hudson's Bay Company. The fur trade continued full force until the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when overharvesting of beaver and changes in fashion forced fur trading posts to close. Today, trapping is still a traditional activity along the Ottawa River. The impact of the fur trade on the culture, settlement, economy and ecology of the Ottawa River valley cannot be overstated.

The earliest instance of "*hunting of birds and land animals*" along the Ottawa River may have been the Plano peoples who came to the region in pursuit of caribou.

Resources in the form of "*mines and quarries in bed or banks of river*" were also harvested by late Pre-Contact Aboriginal Peoples who mined flint/chert for stone tools and ochre for red paint. The Ottawa Valley is rich in ceramic-bearing archaeological sites, attesting to a long-established Ottawa Valley ceramic tradition. During the historic period, local stone quarries enabled the construction of landmark buildings along the river, such as the sandstone used to face the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa.

## Extraction of Water

The waters of the Ottawa River have been an important resource over time, sustaining settlement and land use along the valley. "*Direct drive power generation*" in the form of early mills along the Ottawa enabled hydraulic power generation and the sawing of lumber at key sites; remains of these mills still exist along the river. Philemon Wright's early gristmill and sawmill at Chaudière Falls was at the centre of a blossoming agricultural settlement that eventually became the National Capital Region of Ottawa-Hull. Water powered electricity enabled Pembroke to light its streets before any other city in Canada.

Many of the pulp and paper plants along the river that replaced these mills have become Ottawa River icons representing "*industrial water extraction*", including the ubiquitous E.B. Eddy Manufacturing Company, whose industrial complex still exists. Hydroelectric power generation first developed to meet the energy needs of these pulp and paper plants in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and today can be considered as a part of the Ottawa's significant cultural heritage because of its role in the early development of hydroelectricity on a national scale. Settlement and economic development of both Quebec and Ontario are intertwined with hydroelectricity generation on the Ottawa River.

Water is extracted from the Ottawa River for municipal drinking water systems. Water is also extracted for industrial purposes including nuclear reactor cooling at Chalk River Laboratories.

### 2.1.2 Water Transport

The Ottawa River has acted as a major trade and transportation route for thousands of years. The confluence of the Gatineau and the Rideau with the Ottawa River makes the area around the

**Figure 2.2 Steamer "Anne Sisson"**



Source: Ottawa River Heritage Designation Committee

City of Ottawa particularly well situated for gaining water access to a vast region. The Ottawa River was once one of North America's most important trade routes, providing a route from the St. Lawrence River to the Great Lakes via the Rideau River, access to central and western North America via the Mattawa and French Rivers, and access to James Bay from the St. Lawrence via the Montreal River.

### Commercial Transportation

"Pre-historic trade" was vigorous and extensive along the Ottawa River. Archaeological sites throughout the area, such as those near Pembroke, attest to wide trade networks, including tools made from native copper from western Lake Superior. Sites at the mouth of the Gatineau River show continued contacts with far regions with the presence of exotic raw materials from as far away as the tip of Labrador. Late Pre-Contact Peoples living in the river valley, ancestors of today's Northern Algonquin Peoples, were known for their use of emblematic birch bark canoes for transportation and trade.

French explorers and fur-trading voyageurs relied almost exclusively on the birchbark canoe. Voyageurs developed a larger canoe adapted to fit their needs, the 11 metre-long *canots de maître* used on the Ottawa River. Settlement along the river necessitated even larger craft, paving the way for the appearance of flat-bottomed *batteaux*, followed by Durham boats. Pembroke's famous Pointer Boat facilitated the lumbering industry on the

**Figure 2.3 The First Lumber Raft Down the Ottawa River**



Source: Charles William Jeffreys Library and Archives Canada/IC-073702

#### *The Log Driver's Song*

*There's a valley I know  
Where the tall timbers grow  
Where the Ottawa River flows swiftly along  
In the Spring if you go  
Where the headwaters flow  
You will hear this old log drivers' song*

*Yo-hip hip-ho  
Keep the logs on the go  
Keep them rolling and twisting  
And send the spray high  
Yo-hip hip-ho  
Through the rapids below  
Where the Ottawa River flows by  
- Mac Beattie, Ottawa Valley musician*

Ottawa for years. The routes, portages, descriptions, images and remaining examples of these craft show the presence of "historic human-powered freight."

A thriving steamship transportation industry that appeared on the Ottawa River during the 19<sup>th</sup> century exemplifies "powered commercial freight." Steamboats provided passenger service between Montreal and Lake Timiskaming; they also provided mail service, towed lumber barges, and transported dignitaries. Steamboat travel provided the only link with the remote communities of the Upper Ottawa River, and the steam-driven paddleboat was a common sight on the Ottawa River from the 1820s until the 1920s. Shipwrecks of sidewheelers that succumbed to fire line the bottom of the river. Models of Ottawa River steamships are housed in the museum of the Argenteuil County Historical Society at Carillon.

*“Surface bulk transportation”* in the form of floating logs was exemplary along the Ottawa River and its tributaries. The Wright family built the first timber slide in Canada at Chaudière Falls in 1829. By the 1880s, there were 83 separate works on the Ottawa and its major tributaries; the Ottawa River system included the greatest amount of infrastructure to facilitate the passage of logs (CHRS 2000). The logs were used for construction of warships by Britain in its war against France. Sawn lumber floated in rafts went on to build the cities of Boston, New York and Chicago. The Ottawa River lumber transportation industry therefore contributed to the development of Canada as an emerging nation.

### **Transportation Services**

During the mid to late 1700s, *“fur trading posts”* were developed as *“transportation services”* by the French and later the British along the Ottawa River, often near tributaries, and all along the river. These *“forts”* included Fort Témiscamingue, first built between 1679 and 1685. It went on to become the largest trading post on the Ottawa built by the French, operating for 200 years, after which the Hudson’s Bay Company took over the site. It is currently a National Historic Site. Other French forts were established at Oka, Carillon, Long Sault, Petite-Nation, Rivière du Lièvre, Coulonge, Allumette Lake, at the Dumoine River, Rapides-des-Joachims, and at the Mattawa Forks. The British established posts on the Lièvre, and at Maniwaki, with a Hudson’s Bay Company post at Fort Coulonge and Allumette Lake.

Further facilitating the fur trade and subsequent commerce were *“navigational improvements,”* beginning with Aboriginal portages to circumvent rapids, enlarged and enhanced by the French. Traces of one of these portages are commemorated at Brébeuf Park in Gatineau. The Ottawa River’s first proper canals were built for military purposes between 1819 and 1834 in case of an American blockade of the St. Lawrence, although they were never used as such. These included canals at Grenville, Carillon and Saint-Anne-de-Bellevue. In the 1830s and 1840s, the Ottawa-Rideau military canals system dominated the import trade of the Canadian interior, and in the 1870s the Ottawa River canals were enlarged to accommodate commercial steamships. Prior to the completion of the canal system on the St. Lawrence River, transport goods destined for the Great Lakes were shipped via the Ottawa River and Rideau Canal. The lower lock on the original Carillon canal is visible and restored at Carillon Canal National Historic Site. Although some of these original canals have been submerged by a large dam and reservoir at Carillon, others are still visible.

During the steamboating era on the Ottawa River, *“shipyards”* and *“facilities for loading and provisioning passengers”* were integral to industry, and exemplified by the some 41 wharves of Prescott and Russell that also served as ferry landings. Some of these have become marinas, and others are submerged ruins. The Symmes Hotel in Aylmer, Quebec, was a busy wharf and hotel for travellers and merchandise travelling northwest on the Ottawa River; today this building is a designated historic monument and regional history museum, the Musée de l’Auberge Symmes. In addition, twinned towns on either side of a portage evolved, such as Portage and Havelock (Bryson). In the Lake Timiskaming area, Hilliardton and Pearson’s Landing were originally landing communities.

## Exploration and Surveying

The Ottawa River was the pathway for much of the early European exploration of North America and was truly a gateway to the continent. The Ottawa River has made a remarkable contribution to Canadian heritage by enabling this exploration and as such, by witnessing key, distinct periods of national history. Exploration occurred within the context of European colonization and a search for faster trading routes with the Orient.

Documented routes of illustrious figures in Canadian and North American history serve as examples of “*exploration and surveying*” along the Ottawa River. The first Europeans to travel up the Ottawa River were the “*French explorers*” as part of an effort to benefit from the riches of the New World. Champlain, Brûlé and Vignau mapped and named many of the features of the Ottawa River in the early 1600s, and what probably was Champlain’s astrolabe was found near Cobden.<sup>1</sup> Champlain was originally commissioned by the King of France to establish a colony in North America and continue the search for a passage to the Orient. Nicollet, Radisson, La Vérendrye, Dulhut and De Troyes travelled west along the Ottawa River to further explore and lay the groundwork for the fur trade. Jolliet began his mapping and exploration of the Mississippi with a trip up the Ottawa River. “*British explorers*” travelled up the Ottawa, including Franklin and Mackenzie in search of the fabled Northwest Passage. Surveying of the river and its banks continued in order to plan settlements, such as Wright’s survey of the land around Chaudière Falls.

Navigational improvements encouraged and facilitated “*migration and settlement*” of the Ottawa Valley. Steamboat companies vied for the “*immigrant*” trade to Upper Canada via the Ottawa River, carrying up to 400 immigrants per trip. New settlers needed goods, supplies and equipment.

### 2.1.3 Riparian Settlement

#### Siting of Dwellings

Archaeological evidence of Aboriginal campsites evokes “*shoreline seasonal dwellings*” along the Ottawa River, including sites at the mouths of all the rivers flowing into the Ottawa; examples include the Gatineau, South Nation, Rideau, Madawaska, Coulonge, Noire and Mattawa. The dropping water levels of the Ottawa River over the centuries allow enhanced access to archaeological sites of previous human occupation.

European settlement related to agriculture resulted in “*riverside homesteads and farms*” that appeared in the early 1800s and are exemplified by the land grants that resulted in Scottish homestead farms being built on the Ottawa in today’s Renfrew County. “*Permanent riverside dwellings*” were established by

**Figure 2.4 Champlain in a Canoe**



Source: John Henry de Rinzy/Library and Archives Canada/C-013320

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<sup>1</sup> The anniversaries of Champlain’s historic voyages up the Ottawa and elsewhere in eastern Canada will be commemorated in upcoming years, including 2008 and 2013.

distinguished and wealthier settlers, such as Pinhey's homestead at Horaceville or Louis-Joseph Papineau's manor at Montebello, also a National Historic Site. Hotels serving ferry landings also still exist, such as Symmes Landing. Villages with stone quarries, such as Portage, resulted in lasting, imposing architecture. Ontario's first courthouse is a stone building in L'Orignal dating from 1825.

Settlement patterns in the Ottawa Valley reflect French, British and American influences, resulting in *"dispersed dwellings in settlement patterns."* Seigneuries granted to noblemen of New France were subdivided into lots for farming, each with equal access to the Ottawa River, resulting in characteristic long, narrow lots. The British awarded land grants for farming, resulting in a British pattern of farms laid out in grids. Philemon Wright drew inspiration from his native Massachusetts when he began agricultural settlements with villages such as Wrightsville (today's Hull) around a central gathering area.

### **River-based Communities**

*"Permanent shoreline Aboriginal settlements"* were present along the Ottawa River. A 17<sup>th</sup> century village on Morrison Island near Pembroke was permanent, although probably not occupied in the coldest winter months when families retreated inland for hunting and trapping. Early fur trading posts reflect the first European buildings along the Ottawa River, often simple log constructions. These later developed into *"fortification-based communities,"* such as Ville-Marie, originally Fort Témiscamingue, in operation by 1720, and today a National Historic Site. Fort-William, Portage-du-Fort, Fort-Coulonge, Rapides-des-Joachims and Oka are further examples of communities that began as fur trading posts. Fort-William is a designated Historic Site of Quebec.

Forestry drew European immigrants to the Ottawa River in droves, resulting in *"river industry-based communities"* that cropped up around sawmills, shanties or log driving sites, including Deux-Rivieres and Des Joachims. French Canadian woodsmen and farmers dominated the labour force until intense Irish immigration in the 1820s. Descendants of Irish, French Canadian, Scottish, German and Polish immigrants produced a unique Ottawa Valley culture that is expressed in language, music and dance. Construction of the Rideau Canal attracted specialized workers and resulted in Bytown, which then became Ottawa, the Nation's Capital.

#### *Les Raftsmen*

*Où sont allés tous les raftmanns?*

*Dedans Bytown sont arrêtés*

*Bing sur le ring*

*Laissez passer les raftmanns*

*Bing sur le ring, bing bang*

*Dedans Bytown sont arrêtés*

*Dans les chantiers ils sont montés*

*Des provisions ont apporté*

*Sur l'Outaouais s'ont dirigés...*

- Traditional Ottawa Valley loggers' song, from *Alouette* by Mariou Barbeau (1946).

*"River crossing-based communities"* have developed along the Ottawa River at ferry and bridge crossings, although in most cases, the ferry or bridge was created to serve existing communities on either side of the river. Examples include the Union Bridge, built in 1828 once a community began in Wrightsville (today Ottawa) developed with the construction of the Rideau Canal. The ferry linking Carillon with Pointe-Fortune developed because the community in Pointe Fortune had many links with St. Andrew East, today Saint-André-d'Argenteuil.

### **River-influenced Transportation**

Before bridges were constructed over the river, *"ferries"* were used to cross the river, such as between Ottawa and Hull in the late 1800s; many of these cross-river ferry services still exist.

Notable “road bridges” and “rail bridges” exist across the Ottawa River, including the Royal Alexandra Interprovincial Bridge, a steel truss cantilever bridge that was the longest in Canada (and fourth longest in the world) when it was built in 1898-1900. Also of note is the currently unused Prince of Wales Bridge that formerly connected with the CPR line; built in 1880, it is a multi-span truss bridge. The Portage

**Figure 2.5 Under Dufferin Bridge**



Source: Bibliothèque Canadienne

Bridge in Ottawa offers views of historic Chaudière Falls, and the Champlain Bridge, the Ottawa River’s longest bridge, is named in honour of Champlain’s portages on this stretch of the river.

“River influenced roads and railways” include Highway 17, which initially was built to link wharves and steamboating stopover communities. A no-longer existing railway linking Montreal with Ottawa on the Ontario side, the Montreal and Atlantic Railway, bought up by Canadian Pacific, followed the river by passing through Hawkesbury. The first railway linking Montreal with Hull in 1879 followed the north shore of the Ottawa River. A major railway line in the Pontiac, known as the Push, Pull, and Jerk, followed the Ottawa River’s north shore. Témiscaming, Quebec, has

converted its 1927 CPR railway station into a rail museum.

## 2.1.4 Culture and Recreation

### Spiritual Associations

The Ottawa River plays an integral role in Algonquin spirituality. A historic Algonquin creation story features a Beaver who creates a series of dams that became the Ottawa’s rapids and portages, ending with the Calumet rapids. Aboriginal “sacred spiritual sites” associated with the Ottawa River include the Oiseau Rock site with its canoe-themed pictographs as well as Victoria Island in Ottawa, considered to be both a sacred and historic Algonquin site. Point-au-Baptême across from Oiseau Rock owes its name to the voyageur initiation ritual practiced there. Churches built along and facing the river to serve riverside settler populations represent “ritual and ceremonial structures and sites.” Significant “Aboriginal burial places” exist along the river, including a 5000-year-old burial site sprinkled with red ochre at Morrison Island. The most significant “European burial place” along the Ottawa is Beechwood cemetery, also a National Historic Site. Among the graves of famous politicians such as Sir Robert Borden are the final resting places of John Rudolphus Booth and others whose lives are intertwined with the history of the Ottawa River. St. James cemetery is the most significant in Gatineau, where Philemon Wright and his family rest, as well as John Scott, the first mayor of Bytown.

### Cultural Expression

Numerous “riverside museums” tell the layered story of the Ottawa River, including the Champlain Trail Museum and Pioneer Village. Several of these are also National Historic Sites of Canada, including

Carillon Barracks, Manoir Papineau and Fort Témiscamingue. In addition, numerous National Historic Plaques, Ontario Heritage Foundation Plaques and Ontario Living Legacy Kiosks commemorate events and people associated with the Ottawa River.<sup>2</sup>

“Culturally associated sites” include Morrison Island, strategic stronghold of the Kichessipirini during the fur trade, and the Mattawa Forks, where voyageurs turned west along the Mattawa River from the Ottawa on their way to the Great Lakes. The built heritage of the Ottawa River reflects the well-known characters on a national scale who lived here. Former homes of lumber barons have today become embassies in Ottawa. Pembroke also counts among its built heritage several former homes of lumber barons. Booth’s house, built in 1909, still stands in Ottawa. Papineau’s castle-like home still stands at Montebello.

“River-based cultural landscapes” along the Ottawa River include the cultural differences between New France seigneurial-based land plots, the British grid system and the New England village model found on different stretches of the river.

“Architectural responses to river locations” is exemplified by the Museum of Civilization in Hull, built on the river with a wave-like architecture reflecting the Ottawa River shoreline, terraces and rapids. The Parliament buildings on Parliament Hill were located to overlook the river. The new Canadian War Museum was designed to rise from the Ottawa River and point to the peace Tower at Parliament Hill. Louis-Joseph Papineau chose to build his manor on a point looking out over the Ottawa River for the wonderful view, but also so it would be seen by travellers along the river. The Macdonnell-Williamson House in Pointe-Fortune was built at the top of a cliff along the river for the peaceful setting, exceptional view and convenient transportation. Carillon’s military barracks, today the Argenteuil Museum, were also built close to the river for rapid transportation by soldiers.

### Early Recreation

Residents have used the Ottawa River as a source of recreation since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, particularly through “recreational boating.” Nearby Algonquin Park has provided inspirational canoe-based recreation to Canadians since 1893, including artist and Group of Seven colleague Tom Thompson.

By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, a growing number of tourists experienced the Ottawa River by steamboat. Scenic steamboat excursions up the Ottawa featured the dramatic Oiseau Rock, and the full 3-day trip from Montreal to Mattawa was considered to be one of the most exciting and picturesque in North America at the time. Steamboats were often luxurious, carrying the social elite, dignitaries and

Figure 2.6 Historic Plaque on the Ottawa River



Source: Courtesy of Nancy Hiscock, Ripplon Museum

<sup>2</sup> Please refer to Appendices B and C for a list of plaques. There are 12 Ontario Living Legacy kiosks along the Ottawa River: Voyageur, Hawkesbury, Alfred/Lefavre, Westboro, Fitzroy, Arnprior, Pembroke, Petawawa, Deep River, Mattawa, Haileybury and New Liskeard.



politicians; the christening of these steamers was a social event attracting the “beauty and fashion of the town.”

During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, dignitaries visiting Ottawa ran the timber chutes at Chaudière Falls. “Angling” and “land-based touring” were also popular along the Ottawa. “Organized recreation facilities and clubs” include Caledonia Springs, once Canada’s largest hot springs with its nearby Grand Hotel. Pembroke is still known as “Hockey Town Canada”, a sport made popular on the frozen tributaries of the Ottawa River. The Ottawa Rowing Club, founded in 1867, is Canada’s oldest. Grand Fairs and racing at New Liskeard’s beach became famous throughout northern Ontario.

**Figure 2.7 Camping in the Old Days**



Source: W. J. Bolton/Canada. Department of Manpower and Immigration/Library and Archives

## 2.1.5 Jurisdictional Use

### Conflict and Military Associations

While defending themselves, seeking control over trade or establishing settlements, people along the Ottawa River were occasionally involved in conflict or warfare. “Aboriginal internecine conflict” is exemplified by ongoing warfare between Iroquois and the Algonquin and Hurons in the 17<sup>th</sup> century as they sought control over the trading of beaver pelts. “Aboriginal/European conflict” occurred along the Ottawa when the Iroquois ambushed Dollard des Ormeaux’s men near Carillon in 1660.

Conflict within Europeans occurred with the attack by New France of British Hudson’s Bay trading posts during the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. This is exemplified by Chevalier de Troyes’ extraordinary expedition up the Ottawa River in 1686, featuring a dangerous early spring voyage and a successful campaign to seize the English-held Forts Monsipi, Rupert and Albany. Although no further “military expeditions” were undertaken on the Ottawa River, British colonial authorities designed a series of military canals along the river in case of an American blockade of the St. Lawrence, as threatened during the War of 1812.

### Boundaries

The Ottawa River has served as the “interprovincial boundary” between Ontario and Quebec since the Constitutional Act of 1867. An earlier Act in 1791 dividing Upper and Lower Canada followed the Ottawa River’s course. Jurisdiction over the river has been complex as a result. Shared hydroelectric rights are one such example; since the first hydroelectric dam in 1907, numerous agencies, utilities and companies have had regulatory rights to the river. A rare boundary marker still exists at Pointe-Fortune at the historic border between Upper and Lower Canada, dating from 1791.

*Looking at any map, part of the Ottawa River is shown as a boundary between the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec. It is not looked upon as a boundary to the people who have lived, worked, travelled, and played along its waters and shores.*

- Jackie Ryan Patterson, Ottawa River resident

Historic “land use boundaries” include the century-old military base Petawawa, and the First Nations reserves along the river established in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The Ottawa River also serves as an example

of “*trans-boundary rivers*”: during the era of steamboat travel, the Ottawa provided a pathway between Quebec and Ontario in its lower stretches.

### **Environmental Regulation**

The Ottawa River has had a long history of both “*flood control*” and “*improvements to water management*” in the form of canals and dams to facilitate transport, generate hydroelectricity and regulate flow, with the earliest dams built in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.