



THESE WALLS CAN TALK: STORIES FROM HINTONBURG'S BUILT HERITAGE

HERITAGE OTTAWA LECTURE PRESENTATION, OCTOBER 15, 2025

Some Background on Hintonburg

This document, prepared by the **Hintonburg History and Heritage Committee**, presents some highlights of the evolution of today's vibrant and thriving neighbourhood of Hintonburg.

In the mid 1800s, Hintonburg was just a hamlet, mainly scrub and wasteland with some farms and country estates, only one of which remains — the Armstrong House at 35 Armstrong Street.

Irish immigrants and French Canadians began moving into the hamlet to work at the saw mills on the Ottawa River and the nearby railways — the Canada Central Rail along present day Scott Street and the Grand Trunk Railway along what is now the Queensway. The workers built small two-story wood houses, close together, on farms and country estates that had been subdivided north and south of what was then Richmond Road.

Richmond Road (now Wellington Street West) was one of the first transportation routes out of Ottawa. A toll road ran from Hintonburg to Bell's Corners and tolls were collected to maintain this paved road. The toll keeper's house on Wellington Street still stands and has recently been designated a heritage property.

Rapid growth of the hamlet occurred with the arrival in 1891 of the Ottawa Electric Railway, which ran along Richmond Road and up Holland Avenue to the Central Experimental Farm. The street car enabled public servants and others to easily commute to and from downtown.

The 1891 Census reported a total of 275 houses, most of wood construction with a few made of brick. Occupations included the building trades, labourers, mill hands, agriculture workers, lumbermen and a few civil servants and 'professional gentlemen'.

Incorporation and Annexation

Named for Joseph Hinton, a community leader who had secured a post office for the hamlet, Hintonburg was incorporated as a village in 1893. The town hall, a fire station, churches, schools, a tavern and a variety of stores soon followed.

The years after the Great Fire of 1901 that destroyed almost all of Hull and large portions of Ottawa saw a considerable growth spurt for the Village. About 2,000 Francophones moved to Hintonburg, drawn to the bilingual blue-collar neighbourhood and its Catholic parish. The original Saint-François d'Assise church, built in 1891, was replaced by the present large church to meet the needs of the growing parish: 500 parishioners prior to the fire increased to 2,080 by 1907.

In 1907, the Village was annexed to the City of Ottawa and the section of Richmond Road that ran through Hintonburg was renamed Wellington Street to distinguish the new city section of the road from the Nepean Township section further west. Wellington Street continued to evolve as a traditional main street with a wide variety of retail stores and services as well as homes and buildings, including residential houses and apartment units above stores.

Local Industries

Hintonburg was regarded as Ottawa's first 'industrial suburb' as industries were drawn to the availability of land and the proximity to railways. The industries ranged from a wire cloth factory to a bread company whose buildings still stand. Other industries, such as a stove factory, furniture factory, flour mill and grain elevator have disappeared.

Schools were built or enlarged including École Sacré Coeur, Devonshire, Connaught and St. Conrad's. The Salvation Army Grace hospital was erected in 1922 and birthed 3,000 babies a year. The Bethany Hope Center was built next door in 1924 for unwed mothers.

The History and Heritage Committee of the Hintonburg Community Association continues to research and share histories of heritage properties in Hintonburg. We offer tours of historic Hintonburg, host Hintonburg Histories Evenings, and develop content for the Hintonburg Histories Historypin project.

Learn more about Hintonburg Histories and the Historypin project here: historypin.org