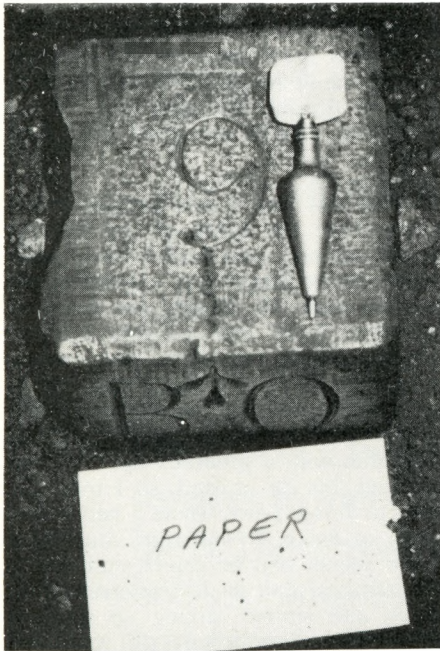


# Surveys of The Past

BY CHARLES FAIRHALL

## THE RESCUE OF OTTAWA'S SURVEY FABRIC



Monument  
Rideau and King Edward Streets

**T**HE HISTORY of the City of Ottawa is inextricably interwoven with that of the Rideau Canal. It was the building of the Canal that gave Ottawa its "raison d'être".

In 1826, Col. John By arrived in what is now Hull, P.Q., and accompanied Lord Dalhousie on an inspection trip of the Ottawa River, at which time a decision was made as to where the entrance of the proposed Rideau Canal was to be. Several Township lots had been purchased by Lord Dalhousie for the use of the Government and land that was not required for the Canal was to be divided up into building lots to form the nucleus of a new village to be called "Bytown".

The land lying east of the Canal, later known as "Lower Town", was a large swamp, which was drained in 1837 in order that the area might be settled.

Over the next 20 years, various streets and lots were surveyed, and in 1843, a Vesting Act was passed which gave the Ordnance the right to sell all those lands not required for Military or Canal purposes.

Sometime prior to 1859, the original plan of Lower Town was destroyed in a fire and in 1859, John Stoughton Dennis, P.L.S., was commissioned to survey and prepare a new plan. The work was completed in 1859 and the plan approved in 1861. An Act of the Legislature of the Province of Canada was passed in 1861 to confirm the survey and plans prepared by J. S. Dennis. The plan was not registered until 1894 as Plan No. 42482. Many of the street intersections were defined by stone monuments, 10" square, numbered and marked with the symbol "B O" on the side near the top. The J. S. Dennis plan also showed offsets from the work lines to certain existing buildings.

Over the years, many of these stones were destroyed or covered over by sidewalks and surveyors were obliged to resort to old offset marks cut on the sidewalks or building offsets related to the stones to resurrect the street lines. These methods were adequate in a time when relatively few new developments took place, but in the last decade, the Lower Town area has undergone significant changes. Old sidewalks were replaced, buildings razed and new ones erected in their stead, streets were re-aligned, very many of the remaining older buildings underwent alterations and few facades were installed. The result has been the erosion of the original survey fabric and confusion as to the true location of the street lines.

Because our firm was involved in extensive survey work in the area for the National Capital Commission, one of our senior surveyors, Mr. Ewart Bowlby, C.S.T., (to whom I am greatly indebted for the background of this article), began to carry out extensive research of old survey records of the area which convinced him that certain of these supposedly extant boundary stones might still be buried beneath the City sidewalks. His hypothesis proved to be correct when the Ottawa Hydro had occasion to break out the sidewalk at the corner of King Edward Avenue and St. Patrick Street to install a new underground chamber and Mr. Bowlby availed himself of the opportunity to search for the boundary stone, which he found in excellent condition.

Unfortunately, its location differed by several feet from the point generally accepted for the street intersection, based on plan dimensions from other survey

marks. The result was that several old buildings, which were thought to encroach over the property line, were now found to be clear of the line.

Mr. Bowlby then compiled a list of likely boundary stone sites and we approached the City of Ottawa Survey Department to enlist their help. Unfortunately, they had no money in their budget to cover the cost of this project, so we then turned to the Survey Branch of the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton. Mr. Peter Dewhurst, O.L.S., expressed an interest in this undertaking and obtained permission to carry out an investigation.

Between December 1981 and September 1982, R.M.O.C. survey crews searched for boundary stones in 22 locations; sidewalks were broken out where necessary. Seven stones were discovered and permanent accesses were constructed at five of these by maintenance crews of the Operations Branch of the City of Ottawa.

Due to the proximity of two of the stones to existing house foundations, handholes, or manholes, were impossible to construct and the stones were re-buried.

All of the boundary stones appear to be in excellent to good condition and in their original locations; three were tilted slightly. The cut square stones varied in size from 8" to 10" on a side. The tops of the stones were from 8" to 4½' below ground or sidewalk level.

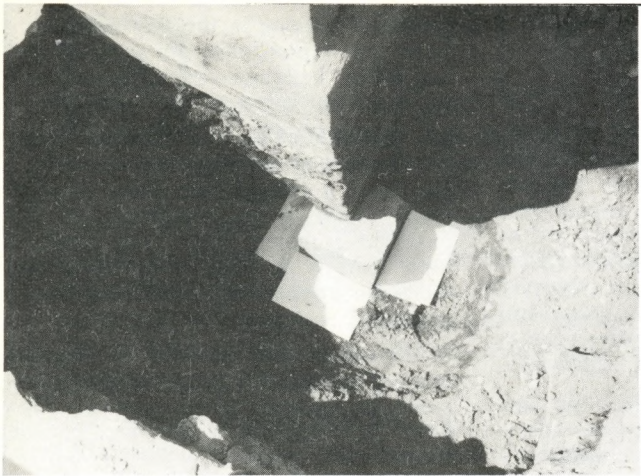
Two of the stones have numbers carved in the top and one has a cut cross scribed in the approximate centre of the top of the stone. The cross appears to have been added at a later date.

The R.M.O.C. prepared a detailed report giving a description, location, co-ordinate values of each corner of the stone and some excellent photographs of the excavations and manholes. No attempt was made by them to prescribe which point of the stone is to be used. This problem remains to be solved.

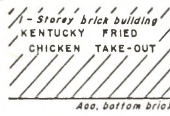
Our research indicates some of the earlier surveyors, e.g., C. A. Biggar, H. O. Wood and Wm. Ogilvie, favoured using the edge of the stone at the point of the broad arrow. Later surveyors have used one corner of the stone, and still others have taken the centre.

To date, we have exhausted all possible sources of information, e.g., Federal, Provincial and City Archives, but no field notes or survey instructions have been found to shed any light on this matter. If any of our readers have similar experiences and wish to share their opinion, we would very much like to hear from them. ●

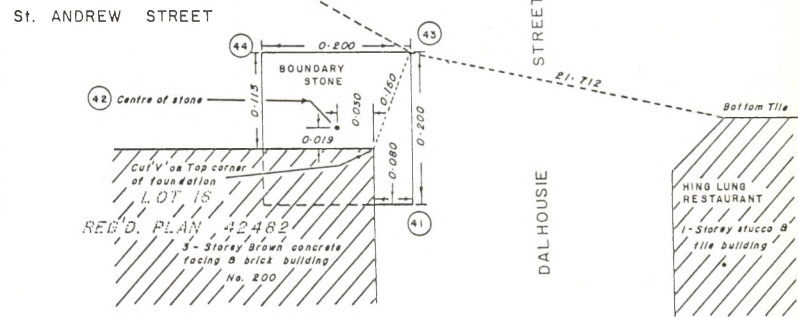




Dalhousie and St. Andrew



LIST of CO-ORDINATES		
Station	Northing	Easting
41	5 032 547.302	367 844.331
42	5 032 547.326	367 844.190
43	5 032 547.462	367 844.215
44	5 032 547.344	367 844.058



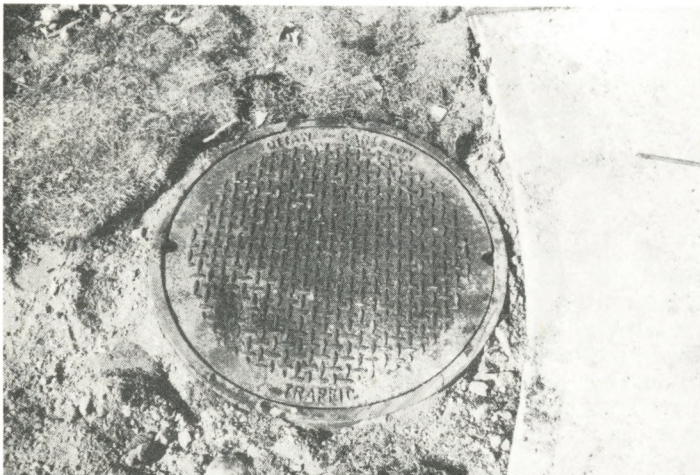
Dalhousie and St. Andrew — Location sketch



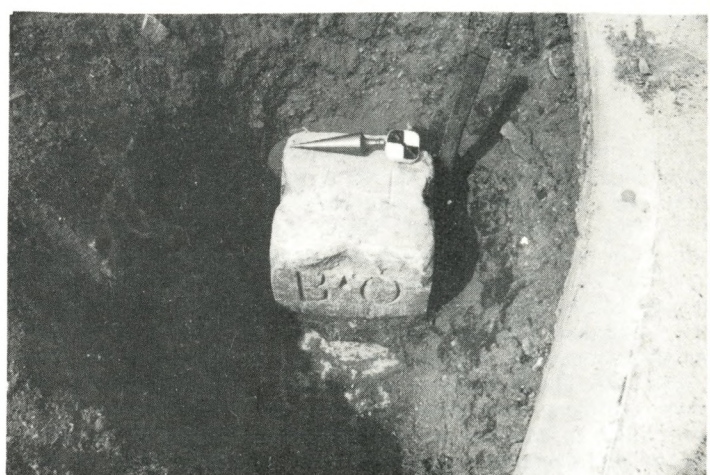
York and Cumberland — before



York and Cumberland — after



Bruyere and King Edward — before



Bruyere and King Edward — after