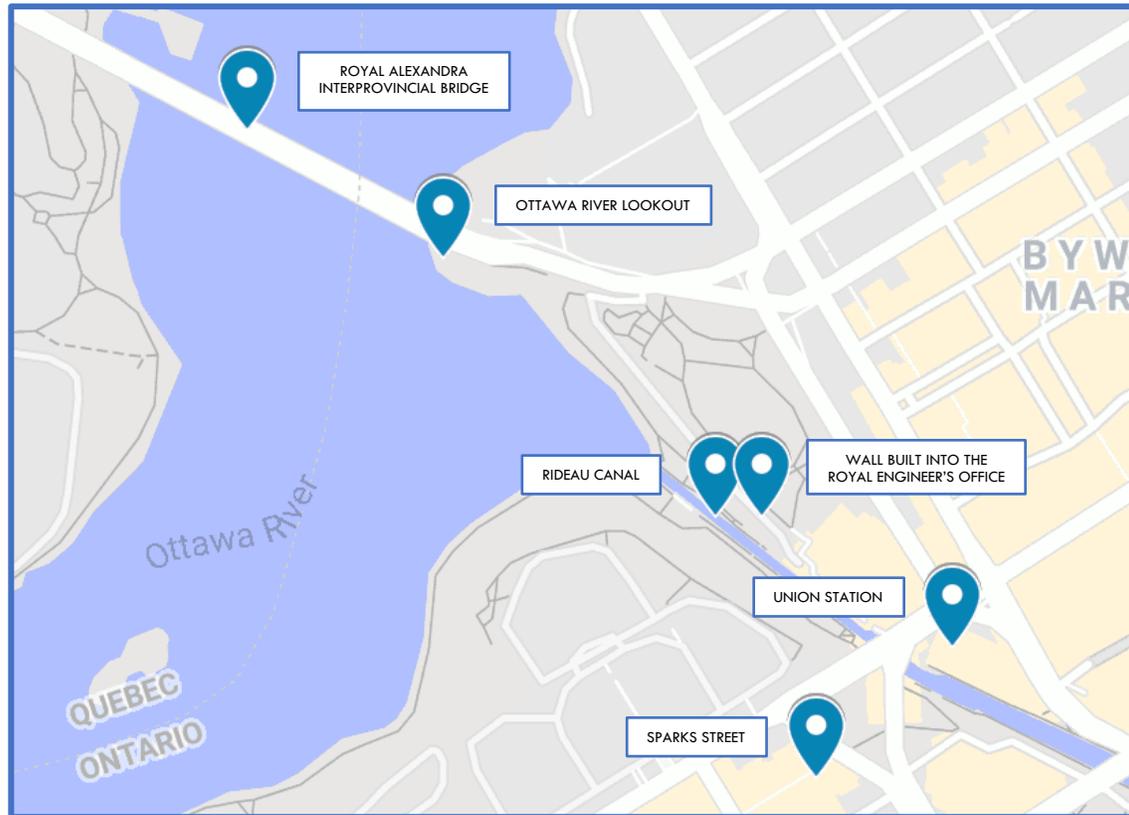
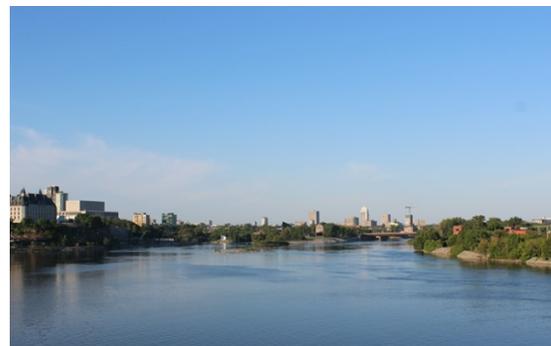


City History Hunt: Trains & Transport



Ottawa River Lookout

For decades, the Ottawa River was at the heart of the area's transportation. The Odawa people used the river to travel by canoe for travel, trade and fishing. It was also the waterway traveled by European explorers and later used for the fur trade. Today, the Ottawa River is appreciated by both those on the water and along the shores. The river provides a new perspective of some of Ottawa's most iconic buildings, including the Parliament buildings, the National Gallery of Canada, and the Royal Canadian Mint.





Royal Alexandra Interprovincial Bridge

The Royal Alexandra Interprovincial Bridge was constructed from 1898-1900 by the Canadian Pacific Railway to connect Gatineau and Ottawa. Originally named the Interprovincial Bridge due to its position linking the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, the name was changed during Queen Alexandra's son's visit in 1901. Her son would later become King George V.



The first train crossed the bridge on December 12, 1900. The bridge had lanes for the Canadian Pacific Railway, the local electric trolley service, and a lane for carriages. Trolleys stopped crossing the bridge due to a damaging fire in 1946. Late in the 1950s, foot traffic and vehicles were allowed on the bridge. The last passenger train crossed the tracks of the Alexandra Bridge in 1966 when the bridge was designated for vehicle and foot traffic only.

Rideau Canal

The Rideau Canal was built between 1826 and 1832 as a safe passage route to the Great Lakes. This became a vital means of transportation before trains became popular in Ottawa. The canal was built large enough to accommodate steamships that were gaining in popularity at the time of construction. The Rideau Canal is comprised of a mixture of man-made and natural waterways, operated almost fully manually by Parks Canada. Originally intended for military defense, the Rideau Canal has been instrumental in Ottawa's trade and leisure industries since its completion. It is still in operation from May to September.



Wall built into Royal Engineer's Office

In 1901, tracks were built on a wall parallel to the Ottawa Locks section of the Rideau Canal to connect the Royal Alexandra Interprovincial Bridge and the Central Depot. The wall ran through the Royal Engineers Office from the construction of the Rideau Canal, eventually leading to its destruction due to the train's vibrations. The tracks were built by Ottawa, Northern and Western Railway (ONW), which later became Canadian Pacific Railway, and included three tracks. The inner track was used by ONW, while the two outer tracks were used by the Hull Electric Railway. These tracks redirected many trains from the station in LeBreton Flatts to the new station between Lowertown and Uppertown.



Figure 1: An illustration of the wall with the railway tracks built into the Royal Engineer's Office (Parks Canada, Ottawa Locks Walking Tour)

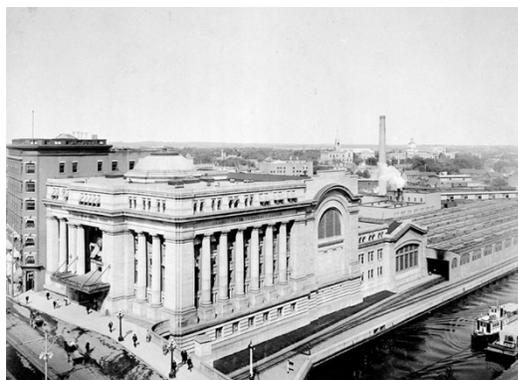


Figure 2: Grand Trunk Station (Canada. Dept. of Mines & Technical Surveys / Library and Archives Canada / C-005243)

Union Station (Senate of Canada)

Many rail companies went through Ottawa by the 1880s, many having their own station in the city. In 1895, J. R. Booth built the Central Railway Depot hoping to centralize the various rail companies to one station however, he ultimately used it exclusively for his own company, the Canada Atlantic Railway. In 1904, the Grand Trunk Railway bought Booth's company, allowing them to build a new station that would begin serving all rail companies in 1912. This building was known as the Grand Trunk Central Station and later as Union Station. The Chateau Laurier located across the street from the station opened on the same day in June and was built with a connecting tunnel to the train station. Union Station remained operational until 1966 when a new station was built. Shortly after, the building faced the possibility of being demolished, only saved by strong opposition from Ottawa citizens. It currently houses the Senate of Canada.

Sparks Street

Although it is now only a pedestrian street, throughout history Sparks street has been bustling with activity and various modes of transport. The young city saw Sparks street being used to transport citizens throughout all four seasons, using horse-drawn streetcars in the summer, sleighs in the winter and wheeled omnibuses in the fall and spring. The first public transportation in Ottawa ran along Sparks street beginning on August 15, 1866, offering horse-drawn trams driven by both a designated driver and passengers. Sparks street welcomed electric streetcars in 1890 when the Ottawa Electric Railway Street Company was granted permission to operate. The Ottawa Electric Railway Street Company merged with the Ottawa City Passenger Railway Company in 1893 to become the Ottawa Electric Railway Company, whose offices were located at 56 Sparks Street.



Figure 3: An omnibus along Sparks street (City of Ottawa Archives)



Tag us in photos of your history hunt!
@bytownmuseum

