***Ottawa Public Law Tour – Track 3 Nepean Point***

**Transcription of podcast**

Track 3: Nepean Point. You are standing on Nepean Point, one of the best lookouts over the sweep of official Ottawa. The statue is of Samuel de Champlain, the famous sixteenth-century explorer who founded Quebec City in 1608, and explored the Ottawa River for the French crown. The statue commemorates the three-hundredth anniversary of his second voyage up the river, and is built where Champlain apparently made his solar observation during his 1615 expedition. Unlike the sculptor, Champlain knew how to use an astrolabe. He presumably didn’t hold it upside-down like he is in the statue.

But now look around you. To the north and east and west, you look down on the sweep of the Ottawa River. This is a border river now, demarcating Quebec and Ontario, but it has also been a highway. It is still an ecological marvel and remains a recreational jewel. The river sweeps along a distance of over 1200 kilometres, starting far up in the Laurentian Highlands and flowing down to the St. Lawrence near Montreal. Along its long course, the river has many moods, from broad lake-like features to rushing rapids. It is this river, formed in the Ice Age, that carved the Ottawa Valley. It is this river that was the primary transportation route for hundreds of years into the western interior. It was the route for the fur traders and was a major artery in the lumber trade in the nineteenth century. It is rich in indigenous, and then colonial, history and lore.

In the distance, as you look to the west, you see the residue of that industrial history, in the now somewhat derelict industrial paper-making facilities on the Quebec side, abutting up against the sinuous elegance of the Canadian Museum of History, opened in 1989 and designed by famous architect Douglas Cardinal. This post-industrial landscape is now at long last on the cusp of change, as new and exciting proposals to revitalize the area, and especially the islands you may see in the far western distance, are being developed.

Exactly what shape these changes will take is uncertain. The river and those islands continue to have spiritual and historical significance for the Algonquin First Nation. This is, after all, unceded Algonquin land, and the shape of things to come will be determined in part by those Aboriginal rights that the Constitution Act of 1982 wisely recognized and affirmed. But perhaps in a few years the spectacular falls that are just beyond your view to the north and now surrounded by industrial facilities and hydro-generating infrastructure will be accessible again. Before 1908, those falls, the Chaudière Falls, were once a premiere tourist attraction, and before that, a sacred indigenous site. Hopefully this legacy may be restored sometime while you are a student at law school.

The river is also an ecological treasure, and its proper environmental stewardship an important issue, one that requires cooperation not just between municipalities, but also two provinces and the federal government – a public law issue if there ever was one. And for those with a taste for adventure, you may choose to journey upriver, during the best flow times, and take advantage of some of the world’s best whitewater rafting. You can also look back to the direction from which you came and view the majestic, gothic pile that is our Parliament building, including the famous Library of Parliament closest to you. And you can also see the gorge you passed through and down which the Rideau Canal runs, and also then the Chateau Laurier.

When you have finished admiring the view, descend from Nepean Point, this time across the grassy lawn to the zigzaggy sidewalk that leads to the passage between the Gallery buildings and then follow the walkway out to Sussex Drive. Press pause at this point, and restart when you get to Sussex.

Sussex Drive is one of Ottawa’s and Canada’s most famous streets. If you follow it south in the direction of the US Embassy, it will take you back through the outskirts of the ByWard Market to the Canal where it meets the old Union Station and the Chateau Laurier. Start going in this southerly direction now, but as you do so, continue to listen. We won’t be going very far south, just back to the intersection where the Peacekeeper Memorial is, and if you reach that intersection before I give you further directions, please continue to listen and pause at the intersection.

At some point during your studies, you should go north along Sussex for those longer jaunts, bike rides, and runs. If you do that, you will follow Sussex past the squat, forbidding headquarters of the Foreign Affairs Department, and then across the Rideau River. You might pause before you do so and wander in the greenspace on both sides of the Rideau where it meets the Ottawa River. You will soon appreciate why Colonel By built his canal. The Rideau cascades into the Ottawa in an impressive waterfall, the Rideau Falls. And in this greenspace that surrounds the falls you will also find some interesting memorials.

If you continue further down Sussex into the neighborhood known as New Edinburgh, you will pass the French Embassy, the South African High Commission, and then at a traffic circle, you will be at 24 Sussex, on the north side of the road. This is the prime minister’s official residence. And on the south side of Sussex you see the gates into Rideau Hall, the official residence of the Governor General. At some point, you must visit these sites, and especially the more accessible Rideau Hall. Not just Rideau Hall, the building, but also the fabulous and extensive grounds. Here you may find people playing cricket, and occasionally, people being sworn in as Canadian citizens. If you walk to the front of Rideau Hall, you may recognize it from television broadcasts of the prime minister visiting the governor general to ask for dissolutions of Parliament, triggering new elections. The prime minister has also visited to obtain prorogations, or temporary suspensions of Parliament, including the famous and controversial prorogation of Parliament obtained by Prime Minister Stephen Harper in 2008, in circumstances that generated a small industry of constitutional law scholarship.

If you do eventually do this extended tour, you can exit Rideau Hall’s grounds along the gates on its southwestern edge leading to McKay Street, and then wander through the New Edinburgh neighborhood. Here, some of your professors live, at least the ones who presumably have larger tolerances for mortgages than I do. If you continue to travel southwest through this quaint neighborhood, you will eventually come back to the Rideau River. You will find a multi-use recreational bike and pedestrian path running along the river from Sussex along the way to the far, far south, near where professors like me, with mortgages paid off live. If you want, you can follow this attractive route south to the Montreal Street Bridge, crossing back into the Sandy Hill neighborhood, where you can jig and jag your way back to Laurier Avenue. Very soon you will be able to continue even further down this river pathway to the new pedestrian footbridge and cross it directly into Strathcona Park in Sandy Hill.

But that is all for another day, because on this tour we are now journeying into Quebec. So progress past the large, spooky-looking spider statue adjoining the National Gallery, a statue called *Maman*. Cross the intersection where the Peacekeeper Memorial is until you again are on the pinkish walkway running along the northern edge of Major’s Hill Park. This time, retrace your steps along this pathway leading downslope and towards the Alexandra Bridge. Keep going across that bridge along the funky wood plank pedestrian walkway abutting the bridge, admiring the river views, and pass into Quebec. Pause this podcast and restart at Track 4 when you reach the end of the bridge.

<end of Track 3>