

**Ottawa House**  
**38 – 40 Cumberland Street South**

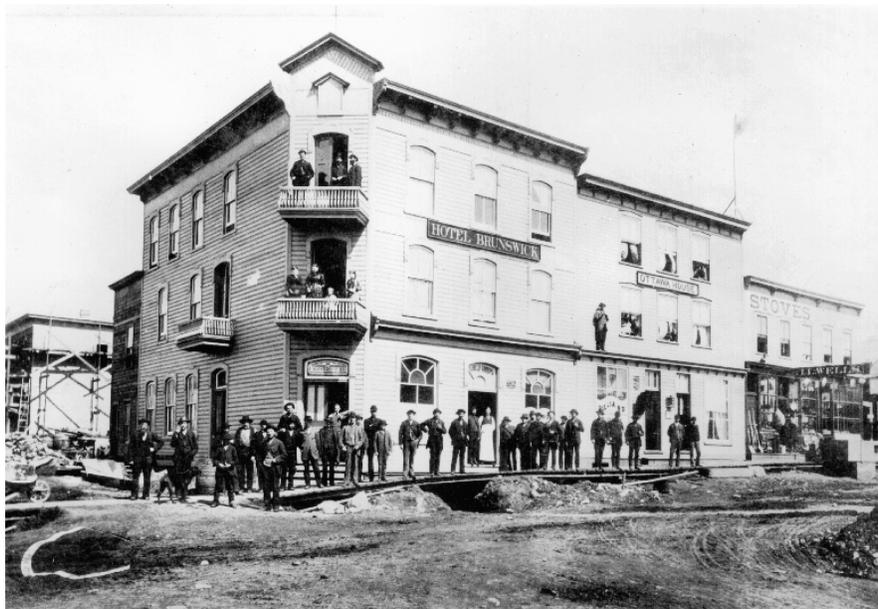


photo courtesy of:  
Thunder Bay Museum

**Year Built:** 1888

**Architect:** Unknown

**Style:** Business block

**Notable Features:** Wooden cornice at the roofline

Decorative brick brackets which visually extend the cornice

Rectangular areas of patterned brickwork between the windows

**Date of Designation:** February 10<sup>th</sup>, 1987

**By-Law No.:** 35 – 1987

**Description:**

It is not often in the relatively young area of Thunder Bay that a hundred-year old building should be referred to as “new,” but such is the case of the former Ottawa Hotel, which stands at the corner of Cumberland and Lincoln Streets. The original Ottawa house was constructed in the same location and built entirely of wood in 1884. This proved to be the site’s downfall, as a fire razed the building to the ground, along with the Hotel Brunswick, in 1886. Only the Ottawa House was rebuilt (in 1888), and it seems the contractor was unwilling to risk another disaster, as the ‘new’ Ottawa House was made of brick. The owners of the property at this time were the Guerard brothers.

One of the brothers operated the hotel for many years, until his death in 1901. The building was then purchased by his sister, Georgina and her husband Harry Servais, who had addition added to the southern end in 1901. The hotel was advertised as having “50 rooms, baths, a steam furnace, electric light, a large, well arranged bar and immense

patronage.” Apparently the manager of the hotel, a Mr. McLean, was “without fault;” he was always “courteous and a gentleman to all.” The hotel was updated periodically, notably so in 1910 when the proprietress invested over \$80,000 into the building.

The Ottawa House underwent several name changes over the next few years. In 1915 it was called the Devon Block by its’ new owners, the Drury’s of Kenora. The name was changed again in 1949 by Mr. George Frederick Taylor who dubbed the building Melbourne Block after his hometown of Melbourne, England.

The building has since the mid-century variously housed numerous commercial tenants, including McFarlane’s and Taylor’s Men’s Wear, the Devon Café and the Army and Navy Store. Peter Stevens acquired the property in the early 1980’s and expressed interest in the building’s history. He applied for government grants to financially aid him restore the site to its early 20<sup>th</sup> century appearance and was successful in having the building formally designated as a Heritage Site in 1987.



**The Ottawa House 1996**

### **Architecture:**

The former Ottawa House hotel is a distinctive three-storey business block constructed of red brick. Photographs of 1884 show two wooden hotels on this site, the Hotel Brunswick and the Ottawa House. After a fire in 1886, only the Ottawa was rebuilt (in 1888). In 1901 an addition extended the building to the corner of Lincoln Street acknowledged by the truncated corner. A shallow vertical buttress marks the division between the two portions, but the architectural detailing is carefully matched.

Originally, the ground-floor windows repeated the arches of the third floor and small balconies projected from the second and third floor central windows. It continued in use as a hotel until c. 1925.

Notable architectural features include the wooden cornice at the roof-line, the decorative brick brackets between the windows, the splayed brick which forms an arch between the pairs of windows and the single window on the third-floor windows, and the brick voussoirs above the second-storey windows. The ornamental brick work displayed on the façade is a fine example of the turn-of-the-century craftsmanship.

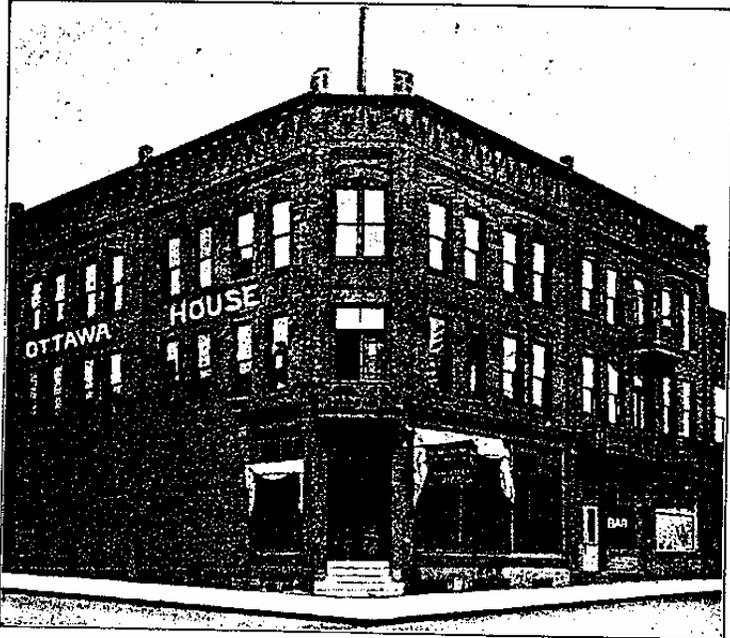
Much work was done to renovate and restore the building in the late 1980's. Architects Kuch and Stephenson drew up the restoration plans for the Stevens Brothers, who owned the building in 1887. The existing windows were replaced with new sashes, the building was repainted and the brickwork was cleaned. The original balconies were reconstructed, as well as the storefront windows, doors and canopies. The extensive work was partially financed by a grant for \$70,000 from the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture, as well as an interest-free loan from the Ministry of Housing.

MRS. SERVAIS, Proprietress  
A. J. McLEAN, Manager

# Hotel Ottawa

Rates \$1.00, \$1.50 and upwards  
Cumberland Street

This hotel is one of the pioneer houses of Port Arthur, and is situated in the centre of the business district. It contains 50 rooms, has baths, steam furnace, electric light, a large, well arranged bar, which has an immense patronage. The house has been undergoing many important changes during the past winter months, making it a beautiful modern house. It is clean, well kept, and enjoys the reputation of setting as fine a table as can be found in the Province. It employs one of the best cooks that can be found. The table is bounteously supplied with all manner of tempting viands, well served.



The building is a credit to the city. Its proprietress has about \$80,000 invested in it already. It is a three storey structure, built on a prominent corner, in an attractive style of architecture.

Its manager, Mr. McLean, is without fault in his management of the house, being courteous to all, and always a gentleman.

Mrs. Servais, his sister, proprietress, has the supervision of the kitchen, dining room and bed rooms, which are kept faultlessly neat and clean.

Ottawa House Advertisement; Circa 1910