

# DARLING FOUNDRY

## 745 OTTAWA STREET



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### THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

In the late 19th century, the heyday of the metalworking industry in Montreal, the area known as the Faubourg des Récollets, bordered today by Notre-Dame and McGill streets, the Lachine Canal and the Bonaventure Expressway, was a thriving industrial quarter with a growing number of warehouses and foundries. With industrial operations bringing their share of unsanitary conditions, residents began slowly abandoning the neighbourhood. By the end of the 20th century, it was the industries that left one by one, leaving many buildings vacant. Several were demolished to make way for vast parking lots.

Standing in ghostly witness to the industrial history of Montreal and its sprawling working-class neighbourhoods, the Faubourg des Récollets near the turn of the millennium was still a derelict neighbourhood, its buildings slowly dying and awaiting the swing of the wrecking ball. The Darling Foundry was among them.

### THE SITE

In 1880, when the metalworking industry was flourishing in the neighbourhood, the Darling brothers settled there and began construction. The first building was erected (architect unknown) at the corner of Queen and Ottawa streets. The complex included four buildings: the second building by architect J.R. Gardiner in 1888; the third building in 1909; the fourth building by the engineering firm T. Pringle & Son in 1918).

Each building had its own specific purpose: a warehouse, a showroom, an iron works and an assembly plant. An immense complex totalling over 9290 square metres. In its heyday, in the early 20th century, the Darling Foundry was the second largest foundry in Montreal. The foundry shut down in 1991 and the building remained vacant for 10 years.

The foundry building, erected in 1918, was remarkable mainly for its concrete structure. Concrete, which had only been in use for a few years, made it possible to design solid structures with large open interior spaces (columns were no longer needed to support floors and ceilings). With this material, industries could create large spaces to support the weight of heavy machinery. Concrete also accommodated large windows, allowing light to penetrate into the interiors.

### VALUES

#### Historical value

- The Darling Foundry is a symbol of Montreal's industrial history, and an important testament to the heritage value of buildings of this kind.
- The Darling Foundry played a key role in the metalworking industry in the Faubourg des Récollets.

# FONDERIE DARLING

## VALUES

### Architectural value

- An example of industrial architecture at the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Industries and technologies grew rapidly during this period, bringing new construction materials and techniques.
- The Foundry was built by the engineering firm T. Pringle & Son, founded in 1892 by Thomas Pringle, who was known for his engineering prowess.

## KEY FEATURES

- Its location in the industrial neighbourhood of Faubourg des Récollets.
- The foundry's furnace, with its ventilation ducts leading outside.
- Its large light-filled volumes punctuated with big windows.
- Its concrete structure and large windows made of concrete and iron.
- The use of brick for the side wall and main façade.
- The lettering painted on the main facade: Darling Brothers Foundry.

## INTERVENTION

It was to address the challenge of this surfeit of vacant buildings that French artist Caroline Andrieux arrived in Montreal in the mid-1990s. The organization *Quartier Éphémère* was created to bring temporary artistic projects to vacant spaces. Its objective is to maintain these spaces and bring them back to life while awaiting a new permanent vocation for these buildings.



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In 1997, *Quartier Éphémère* pursued its mission with the event *Panique au Faubourg* in order to demonstrate the potential of the Darling Foundry when the building was slated for demolition. The organization therefore asked the owner, the City of Montreal, to grant a one-year reprieve in which to develop a project for the site. Ultimately, the group managed to mobilize enough partners and resources to renovate the Darling Foundry, make it its headquarters in 2006 and turn it into a hub for creativity and artists' residencies.

## IMPACT

The foundation of *Quartier Éphémère* made it possible to repurpose the Darling Foundry, prevent its demolition and breathe new life into the site by giving it a new vocation. The now fully repurposed Darling Foundry offers 3,500 m<sup>2</sup> of space dedicated to the visual arts, a unique complex in Montreal and an exceptional vehicle for cultural promotion in Montreal, Quebec, the rest of Canada and around the world.

## SOURCES

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