Bill No. B-1

The Corporation of the City of Hamilton

BY-LAW NO. 84- 67

To Designate:

THE PROPERTY KNOWN AS "THE FEDERAL/SUN LIFE BUILDING" LOCATED AT MUNICIPAL NO. 42 JAMES STREET SOUTH

As Property of:

HISTORIC AND ARCHITECTURAL VALUE AND INTEREST

WHEREAS the Council of the City of Hamilton did give notice of its intention to designate the property mentioned in section 1 of this by-law in accordance with subsection 29(3) of The Ontario Heritage Act, R.S.O. 1980, Chapter 337;

AND WHEREAS the Conservation Review Board made a report as required by the said Act;

AND WHEREAS it is desired to designate the property mentioned in section 1 of this by-law in accordance with clause 29(14)(a) of the said Act.

NOW THEREFORE the Council of The Corporation of the City of Hamilton enacts as follows:

1. The property known as "THE FEDERAL/SUN LIFE BUILDING", located at Municipal No. 42 James Street South and more particularly described in schedule "A" hereto annexed, is hereby designated as property of historic and architectural value and interest.

2. The City Solicitor is hereby authorized and directed to cause a copy of this by-law, together with reasons for the designation set out in schedule "B", to be registered against the property affected in the proper registry office.

3. The City Clerk is hereby authorized and directed,

(i) to cause a copy of this by-law, together with reasons for the designation to be served on the owners and The Ontario Heritage Foundation by personal service or by registered mail;

(ii) to publish a notice of this by-law in a newspaper having general circulation in the Municipality of the City of Hamilton for three consecutive weeks.

PASSED this 27th day of March A.D. 1984.

City Clerk

Mayor

(1983) 14 R.P.R.C. 6, June 28

SCHEDULE "A"

To

By-law No. 84- 67

THE FEDERAL/SUN LIFE BUILDING

42 James Street South,
Hamilton, Ontario

ALL AND SINGULAR that certain parcel or tract of land and premises situate, lying and being in the City of Hamilton, in the Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth, being parts of Lots 43 and 44 in Peter Hunter Hamilton Survey and situated on the Northwest corner of James and Main Streets in the said City of Hamilton, which may be more particularly described as follows, that is to say:

COMMENCING at the Northwest corner of James and Main Streets aforesaid;

THENCE North along the westerly margin of James Street a distance of 72 feet more or less to the land formerly belonging to The Canada Life Assurance Company.

THENCE westward along the southerly boundary of said land parallel to Main Street, 90 feet 2 inches more or less to the easterly margin of an alleyway described as the New Alley WHICH SAID NEW ALLEY is described as being part of Lot Number 43 in Peter Hunter Hamilton Survey, more particularly described as follows:

COMMENCING at a point on the North side of Main Street, which said point is distant 90 feet, 2 inches westerly from the westerly limit of James Street;

THENCE northerly, parallel to the said westerly limit of James Street 72 feet more or less to the lands formerly belonging to The Canada Life Assurance Company;

THENCE westerly along the southerly boundary of said lands and parallel with Main Street, 12 feet;

THENCE southerly following the westerly margin of said New Alley to Main Street, 72 feet more or less;

THENCE easterly along the North limit of Main Street, 12 feet more or less to the place of beginning, in certain indenture dated the ninth day of May, 1889, and made between

Edward Martin, Charles Matthew Counsell, Henry McLaren, The Honourable James Turner and the wives of the said respective parties and registered on the first day of June, 1889, as Number 43577;

THENCE Southerly following the Easterly margin of said alley to Main Street, seventy-two feet more or less;

THENCE easterly along the northerly margin of Main Street 90 feet 2 inches more or less to the point of beginning.

TOGETHER WITH the benefit of all the covenants and agreements made by The Canada Life Assurance Company, their successors or assigns, by a certain indenture dated the first day of March, 1875 and registered on the thirtieth day of June, 1876 as Number 15168, and particularly the agreement therein contained restricting the erection of buildings and fences upon certain lands therein described then belonging to The Canada Life Assurance Company;

AND TOGETHER WITH the right to use the said New Alley being part of said Lot 43 in common with the other parties to the said Indenture dated May 9, 1889, their heirs and assigns, to the extent and in the way and manner and upon the conditions set forth in the said last mentioned indenture.

The hereinbefore described property being Municipal Number 42 James Street South, Hamilton, Ontario.

SCHEDULE "B"

To

By-law No. 84- 67

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION

THE FEDERAL/SUN LIFE BUILDING

42 James Street South,
Hamilton, Ontario

In 1905-06, the Federal Life Assurance Company expanded its home office with the construction of a new eight-storey facility on the northwest corner of James and Main Streets. Designed by Montreal architects Finley and Spence, this imposing and dignified edifice injected a new degree of monumentality and stature to the city's major intersection, that was continued in the later Mercantile Bank and Bank of Montreal.

Typical of the early twentieth-century office blocks, the architectural design is derivative of old-world models, in this case Florentine palaces, but freely re-interpreted to suit the needs of an office building. A contemporary architectural journal admired the Federal Life design as "the proper way to escape monotomy of book-renaissance and give our buildings both the touch of the individual designer and the touch of our own generation".

There is little to indicate on the exterior that this building made history as Hamilton's first modern steel skeleton construction. Concealed behind a facade of granite and terra cotta is the load-bearing skeletal framework which splayed at the top for the over-hanging eaves. Now gone, this original, over-sized cornice, constructed of pressed metal and embellished with enormous brackets and mouldings, once provided a dramatic terminus to the building and a bold definition to the corner. Likewise, the two ground floors of rusticated granite with central doorway have been altered, leaving only the upper walls, windows, string courses, and wreathed circular windows of the original design in tact.

Historically, the Federal Life Assurance Company is significant as one of a few major financial institutions to originate in Hamilton. Begun in 1882, the company had developed into a 28 million dollar business by the time Sun Life Assurance Company purchased it in 1915. As Sun Life's divisional headquarters from 1915 to 1976, 42 James Street South played an important role in the city's financial activity. In addition, the spacious, two-storey public room on the top floor served as the U.S. Consulate from 1928 to its closing in 1953.

In summary, the Federal/Sun Life building is considered to be of local significance. Today, Hamilton has only a few reminders left of an era when office buildings were once designed in an elaborate manner, and when a number of institutions still had their headquarters in the city.