



Raising the Dead Reconstruction Within the Canadian Parks Service

Shannon Ricketts

In 1846 the English conservationist John Ruskin wrote, "It is impossible, as impossible as to raise the dead, to restore anything that has ever been great or beautiful in architecture."¹ This may seem an extreme statement—and so it is—but it represents the inception of the philosophy which has informed much of our present attitude toward conservation. Ruskin was one of the most uncompromising in a long line of writers and architects who preached maintenance over restoration (or reconstruction) and a fitting humility

in dealing with historic buildings. Even before Ruskin's impassioned statement, French archaeologist A.N. Didron (1839) set down a dictum which has since become so familiar that present-day conservationists sometimes think it is a recent statement: "It is better to preserve than to restore and better to restore than to reconstruct."²

This hierarchy of values was formally recognized in the code of ethics concerning treatment of historic architecture produced by UNESCO in 1964 and known as the Venice Charter.³ Since the 1960s, conservationists in various countries have devised national charters based on this principle. One of these is the Appleton Charter, formulated by the English-speaking branch of ICOMOS

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Reconstruction— Controversy on Both Sides of the Border

Barry Mackintosh

As I noted in a 1990 issue of CRM (Vol. 13, No. 1), reconstruction has probably aroused more controversy over the years than any other cultural resource management activity of the National Park Service (NPS). In March 1992, I was invited to a workshop on reconstruction conducted by the Canadian Parks Service (CPS) to discuss the NPS experience with this activity. It was readily apparent that the controversy is not limited to our side of the border.

As I listened to the other presentations, I was struck by the close parallels in reconstruction philosophy, policy, and practice between our Canadian counterparts and ourselves. In the CPS as in the NPS, professional reluctance has often been pitted against and overcome by public and political pressures for enhanced interpretation and tourism. Both park services face challenges of maintaining log and earthen reconstructions whose originals were never designed for permanence and of dealing with reconstructions deficient in accuracy. Within both services there are broad differences of opinion among CRM professionals, interpreters, and managers on the value and appropriateness of reconstruction.

Two of the papers I found most illuminating are reproduced in this issue. Although CRM's American readers may find some of the names and places unfamiliar, they will readily recognize the plot. Readers may also be provoked by some of their insights and conclusions—the best reason of all to imbibe what follows.

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Reconstruction Workshop

The Canadian Parks Service (CPS), like its U.S. counterpart, is responsible for the administration of a number of nationally significant historic sites as well as the national parks and national marine parks. There are now some 750 national historic sites in Canada, and the part of the national historic sites system administered by CPS is still expanding—it currently comprises 114 sites ranging from pre-European native sites to 20th-century commercial and industrial establishments.

And, as in the U.S., several of those sites contain, or consist entirely of, structures that are not original but are reconstructed, often on the foundations of otherwise vanished buildings. Although the number of reconstructions is not great—19 sites are involved all told—reconstruction as a presentation (i.e., interpretation—ed.) device is widely considered to loom large in the popular perception of what historic sites are or should be. The ethics and value of this approach have been debated on both sides of the border for as long as our respective services have been in business.

Since the 1960s, CPS archaeologists, architects, historians, and engineers have worked together on reconstruction projects and have realized that whatever approach to conservation and presentation is taken, it has to be in an interdisciplinary team.

In March 1992 a workshop was held in Hull, Quebec, to examine the subject of reconstructions within the context of the new Cultural Resource Management Policy that CPS issued in 1990. The workshop brought together representatives from several disciplines and from all levels of the CPS organization: headquarters, regions, and the field. In three days of sessions, participants examined the reconstructions existing in the CPS system through case studies, identified known and anticipated problems and issues, and looked at how these would be addressed in the context of the CRM Policy. The workshop identified a number of follow-up actions that are now being pursued.

The following papers were presented at the reconstruction workshop. Other papers from the workshop will be included in future issues of CRM. CPS will be publishing the complete workshop proceedings later this year.

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Canada in 1983.⁴ This philosophy also forms the backbone of the Levels of Intervention System used by many heritage professionals within the Canadian Parks Service. This set of guidelines subdivides conservation into two categories: at the level of minimum intervention is preservation (or protection), which consists of interim protection and stabilization; more radical intervention is defined as development (or enhancement). The latter includes period restoration or rehabilitation and, at the maximum level of intervention (i.e., replacement), means either period reconstruction or contemporary redevelopment. The recently proposed CPS Cultural Resource Management Policy is also based on the concept of a "continuum of strategies," but has placed reconstruction within the category of presentation. This clearly stated distinction between conservation and presentation is fairly recent and reflects the accumulated experience of CPS over the greater part of a century.

According to the CPS Policy, the general objective for the Service is "to fulfill national and international responsibilities in assigned areas of heritage recognition and conservation; and to commemorate, protect and present both directly and indirectly, places which are significant examples of Canada's cultural and natural heritage in ways that encourage public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the heritage in a sustainable manner." Within this apparently bland statement lie the seeds of a dilemma—namely, the directives both to protect and to present significant examples of our cultural heritage. While physical remnants may be best protected by simply guarding them against natural and human interference (i.e., the natural ravages of time), this does little to explain or to present those remnants within a cultural or historical context. In other words, how can the sometimes competing demands of conservation and presentation be weighted given limited resources? Amongst myriad methods of interpretation, reconstruction has been, and remains, one of the most popular, especially in the view of the general public for whose benefit heritage professionals are charged with the protection and presentation of cultural remnants.

Seen in its historical perspective in Canada, reconstruction was driven by a desire to enhance the presentation of a site and/or remnants of a cultural resource. In many ways, each reconstruction can be seen as a product of its time, reflecting changing attitudes toward interpretation and to conservation. If CPS accepts this view, then do reconstructions themselves have a heritage character or value which should be protected? Or, as presentation tools, are they to be compared with the story line whose accuracy should be enhanced as new information becomes available? If, to paraphrase John Ruskin, it is as impossible to restore a building as to raise the dead, then to reconstruct is even more hopeless. Nevertheless, however imperfect such re-creations may be as historical documents, they have served an interpretive purpose. In addition, they have acquired a new level of meaning as documents of their own time.

This paper will trace the practice of reconstruction as carried out by the CPS over the course of this century

and will attempt to place it in the context of related activities by other organizations, both national and international, at similar points in time. By following this historical development, I hope to clarify how CPS has reached its present philosophy regarding conservation and presentation and to test its reconstructions against Ruskin's maxim.

The first known act of conscious historical reconstruction in Canada was the rebuilding of three gates in the walls at Québec City by Lord Dufferin in 1875. Outraged by the city's desire to pull down part of the walls in order to improve transportation routes, Governor General Lord Dufferin hired Irish architect William Lynn to apply his specialty in "picturesque medieval military construction" in rebuilding gates which would maintain the flavour of the originals while allowing the desired improvement in street access.⁵ It has been suggested that Lord Dufferin was influenced by French architect Viollet-le-Duc's conservation of the walled city of Carcassonne in southwest France earlier in the century.⁶ The rebuilding of the Québec gates was an anomaly in Canada and was more representative of the views of Lord Dufferin than those of Canadians of the time. Nor was this reconstruction project intended to re-create a vanished resource in a historically accurate manner. Rather it was expressive of the romantic views and picturesque tastes of the era. This very early occurrence of reconstruction was not repeated until much later in the 20th century.

The Era of the Military Site: The 1920s–1940s

The first stage of reconstruction history in Canada really occurred in the 1920s and 1930s and coincided with a growing momentum in the architectural conservation movement. At that time, Canadian conservationists were encouraged by developments in the United States, where historic sites were receiving attention from both the private sector and the federal government. In Canada, private sector sponsors were not involved to the same extent, and the public looked to governments at both the provincial and the federal levels to ensure the preservation of the nation's heritage. Quebec passed heritage legislation as early as 1922, and in 1925 British Columbia enacted laws to protect Indian artifacts. Academic interest in the nation's architectural heritage was reflected in the schools of architecture at McGill and at the University of Toronto, where students were directed in the production of measured drawings of historic architecture. In Nova Scotia, A.W. Wallace produced similar records of that province's early buildings. Enthusiasts formed action groups such as the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario.

While interest in historic buildings and sites continued to grow in the 1930s, the economy was in shambles. Following the precedent of U.S. President Roosevelt's New Deal, the Canadian federal government passed the Public Works Construction Act in 1934 to provide funding for the erection of public buildings across the country. Through this program the Parks Branch was able to finance construction work at various historic sites, including the Prince of Wales Martello Tower in Halifax, Fort Anne [Nova Scotia], Fort Prince of Wales [Manitoba], and Fort Langley [British Columbia]. Depression relief funds also were made available at a



provincial level and in Ontario resulted in such projects as the reconstructions at Fort George and Fort Henry as well as the restoration of Fort York.

In most cases it was local historical organizations which had provided the initial impetus to commemorate, preserve, and ultimately, to interpret. This was so in the Niagara area, where local enthusiasts had been encouraging governments at all levels to develop historic sites, particularly those which would commemorate the War of 1812. During the 1930s the Ontario government, through the Niagara Parks Commission, sponsored four reconstructions—Fort Erie, the William Lyon Mackenzie House at Queenston, Navy Hall at Niagara-on-the-Lake, and Fort George.⁷ The reasons for the Ontario government becoming so highly involved in historic sites at this time are a complex mix of altruism and pragmatism.

First, as has been mentioned, these sites had been the focus of local preservation efforts for some time. Second, the great popular success of Colonial Williamsburg, opened in 1933, and the even earlier reconstruction of Fort Ticonderoga on Lake Champlain, re-created through archival and archaeological evidence in 1907, provided examples of the happy conjuncture of patriotism and capitalism. Closer to home, the 1930s reconstruction of Fort Niagara on the American side of the Niagara River underscored the neglected condition of the historic sites on the Canadian shore.⁸ For politicians like the dynamic Minister of Ontario's Department of Highways, T.B. McQuesten, Williamsburg and some of the reconstructions carried out by the American National Park Service provided examples of how a lagging economy could be primed. Relief funds provided salaries for a small army of crash workers who would create a local attraction capable of drawing badly needed tourist dollars to a depressed area.

Third, the gradual professionalization of the discipline of history was beginning to bear fruit in the increasing numbers of trained historians and archaeologists, and in the improved organization and collections of archives and research libraries. Confidence in the ability to recover verifiable facts concerning historic sites encouraged policy makers to attempt reconstructions. Ironically, these same officials sometimes became cavalier in their impatient assessments that "close enough was good enough" in the creation of historical replicas.

In the case of Fort George, the hiring of a lone historian, Ronald Way, fell far short of the team of historians and archaeologists working at a site like Williamsburg and set up an impossible tension between the time-consuming pursuit of historical data and the immediate demands of a large work force which had to be kept busy. Additionally, the architect-in-charge, William Lyon Somerville, while well known for his revival-style homes for wealthy patrons in Toronto, had no previous experience in reconstructing historical sites. Inevitably, the needs of the present won out over those of the past. Later, Niagara Parks historian Ronald Way, while acknowledging that the Fort George reconstructions were based largely on a concept of typical building types and, therefore, could not be defended from the point of view of historical accuracy,⁹ went to some lengths to defend the concept of reconstruction as the visual teaching of history. This is a sentiment still shared by defenders of reconstruction today.



Courtyard, Port Royal Habitation, Nova Scotia. Canadian Government Travel Bureau photo, CTB 3-218.

At the same time, a parallel project was being undertaken in Nova Scotia. What is now known as the Habitation of Port Royal had long been supported as a potential national historic site by the local Annapolis Royal Historical Association. During the 1920s, wealthy American summer residents, aware of re-created sites in the United States, became active in raising money and supporting research with the aim of constructing replicas of the original buildings on the site. It was declared a national historic site in 1924, and in 1938 the Dominion government acquired land comprising the original site and its immediate surroundings.¹⁰ The American Associates of Port Royal paid the salary of an American archaeologist who excavated the site (an improvement over the total lack of archaeological investigation at Fort George) while others, including the site's American patroness Harriet Taber Richardson and Canadians C.W. Jeffreys, Marius Barbeau, Sylvan Brosseau, and Ramsay Traquair, carried out historical and architectural research.

In the end, many of the conclusions about the original structures were reached by making leaps of judgment across considerable gaps in available archaeological and historical data. Reconstruction work was carried out under the direction of the Surveys and Engineering Branch of the Department of the Interior using local craftsmen who, like those at Fort George, imitated the techniques of the past in a general way without having site-specific documentation. The supervising architect was K.D. Harris, the same Department of the Interior architect who had rehabilitated the Officers' Quarters at nearby Fort Anne in 1934–35 (a national historic park since 1917). In that case the objectives had been to remodel a late-18th-century building and to make it fireproof. To these ends the Officers' Quarters were, according to Harris, "reconstructed." Historical veracity was not, in this case, the guiding motive. In fact, the exterior was "greatly improved in appearance by the introduction of moulded cornices and Georgian entrances with columns and pedimented roofs" and the walls were clad in a clever cement version of wooden clapboarding.¹¹

Even when historical fact was the goal, the truth was

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often elusive. In the cases of both Fort George and the Habitation of Port Royal, many of the conclusions about the original structures were incorrect. Consequently, the reconstructed buildings were built according to false assumptions. The results, while evoking an aura of history and providing a believable backdrop for popular interpretive schemes of the living museum type, were ultimately misleading. Contemporary critics were painfully aware of these dangers. Brigadier General E.A. Cruikshank, along with other members of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, were generally opposed to such reconstructions. Cruikshank clearly stated that "in my opinion these attempts to reconstruct buildings which have entirely disappeared and are only known from vague descriptions or plans of doubtful authenticity with modern materials and workmen of the present time are absurd and a mere waste of money."¹²

Nevertheless, outdoor museums—whether consisting of a "restored" house like the Barnum House in Grafton, Ontario, purchased and restored by the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario in the 1930s, an assemblage of buildings moved from other sites in order to create an impression of a coherent historical community like the first (1891) outdoor museum in Skansen (a Stockholm suburb), Sweden, and the later Henry Ford Greenfield Village at Dearborn, Michigan, or elaborately reconstructed sites like Fort George and Port Royal—were (and continue to be) enormously popular with the public. More widespread use of automobiles by the 1930s encouraged this trend in cultural tourism which continues to grow today. Such sites blend education and entertainment. Disneyland is, perhaps, an expression of this trend carried to its extreme at a site which frankly forsakes the educational component and creates a confectionary version of a mythical main street representing an indulgently interpreted middle-American past.

In fact, in the years before World War II the Parks Branch was both philosophically and fiscally cautious regarding reconstructions. In 1920 the HSMBC recommended the preservation of six historically significant forts—Prince of Wales Fort at Churchill, Manitoba; the Fortress of Louisbourg and Forts Beauséjour, Gaspereaux, and Piziquid (Edward) in the Maritimes; and Fort Pelly in Saskatchewan. None of these was fully reconstructed. In the case of the old Hudson's Bay fort at Churchill, development became possible with the availability of Public Works Construction Act funds in 1934.¹³ From 1934 to 1937, repair work was carried out on the exterior walls, which were largely reassembled. To some extent, this happy circumstance was undoubtedly largely a result of fiscal restraint and the fort's remote location rather than consciously applied conservation standards.

Nevertheless, it is Parks historian C.J. Taylor's opinion that the Parks Branch was aware of conservation philosophy and generally agreed with Ruskin's dictum that restoration "means the most total destruction which a building can suffer."¹⁴ In 1920 James Harkin, Parks Branch Commissioner, stated as Parks policy: "If there is nothing but a pile of stones, it is not considered good

policy to erect a fort on the lines of the original one."¹⁵ Not all Board members agreed with this view, however. Already it was evident from developments to the south that beneficial economic results could be achieved by the reconstruction of historic sites as tourist destinations. Maritime province members were very interested in developing sites with tourism potential, as were politicians anxious to assist in the economic development of the areas they represented.

Local pressure also played a determining role in the development of both Louisbourg and Fort Beauséjour. The latter was designated a national historic site in 1928, and initial work included cleaning up of the grounds and repair work to the gateway, the mess room, and the powder magazine with the aim of stabilizing the remains until a policy for the site's development was decided on by the Branch.¹⁶ In fact, the development of this site was decided largely by New Brunswick Board member Dr. J.C. Webster, who directed the erection of commemorative cairns and signage to guide visitors, as well as the clearing of trenches and acquisition of appropriate ordnance. Interventions to the existing ruins were modest and consisted of some archaeological digging and the building up of an exterior wall to a height of about 10 feet. Much of Webster's energy was taken up in the consolidation of land associated with the fort and in the establishment of a museum. This was made possible in 1934 by including the construction of a museum at Fort Beauséjour in the Public Works Construction Act allocations. From 1936, when the Fort Beauséjour Museum was opened, attention became focussed on improving its exhibits rather than on further development of the ruins.

A similar course of development occurred at the Fortress of Louisbourg. Declared a national historic site in 1928, it was initially allocated \$23,000 for development.¹⁷ At Louisbourg, wealthy entrepreneur and history enthusiast J.S. McLennan paralleled the role of Webster at Fort Beauséjour. McLennan, however, was more ambitious and believed that the reconstruction of Louisbourg was both possible and desirable.¹⁸ He is reported to have been very impressed with American reconstructions at Fort Ticonderoga and at Valley Forge. Despite the views of the Parks Branch and British town planner Thomas Adams whom the Branch sent to evaluate the site in 1923 and who advised against reconstruction, the development plan submitted to the HSMBC in 1930 reflected McLennan's point of view and called for reconstruction of part of the King's Bastion and the West Gate, along with limited restoration of other parts of the ruins as well as the construction of a museum. Budgetary restraints ensured that work progressed relatively slowly and, while repair work was carried out on the casemates and some excavating of buildings was accomplished, reconstruction work was limited to the partial rebuilding of the walls of some four structures.

As at Fort Beauséjour, the museum, completed in 1936, became the operational and interpretive focus of the site until reconstruction work resumed in the 1960s. The device of the historical museum also was used at Fort Anne, Fort Chambly [Quebec], Fort Malden [Ontario], and Fort Langley. At sites where remains were fragmentary and potentially mysterious to the average visitor, the museum display became the didactic focus and a much less expensive means of interpretation than reconstruc-



tion. It is interesting to compare the attitudes of this period to those of later years which resulted in a much more ambitious reconstruction project. During the 1920s and 1930s, while opinions were split over the issue of reconstruction, even proponents like Webster envisioned only a modest project. There seems to have been a belief that the real value in a site like Louisbourg was to inspire Canadians with the drama of their own history and, to this end, the wild site and romantic ruins evoked a suitable setting for this Canadian version of the fate of Ozymandius. Quebec politician Henri Bourassa reportedly likened a visit to the site to "passing through the ruins of Pompeii."¹⁹

The Era of the Outdoor Museum: The 1950s–1960s

With World War II, activity declined until the 1950s, by which time an improved economy and more highly developed cultural agencies brought a renewed vigour to the heritage field at both the provincial and federal levels. These postwar years ushered in a new era in reconstruction. The concept of the outdoor museum gained immense popularity during the postwar period. The earliest identified example in Canada was an individual effort, Earle Moore's Canadiana Village in Quebec, which started with one relocated building in 1946 and gradually was added to, creating a nucleus of structures evoking life in a pre-industrial rural Quebec.²⁰

In Ontario during the 1950s and early 1960s, several local groups established their own "pioneer villages." Perhaps reacting to a rapidly changing environment which included an increased rate of urbanization and a concomitant building boom, as well as a wave of immigration which brought new citizens who often did not share an awareness of Canada's earlier history, community organizations strove to save examples of the country's rural past. While Upper Canada Village was the most sophisticated and best-known such site, Black Creek, Doon, Fanshawe, Westfield, and Century pioneer villages also drew appreciative audiences. The best known is Upper Canada Village, conceived when it became obvious that the planned St. Lawrence Seaway would result in the flooding of numbers of historic buildings. Representative examples were removed from their threatened sites and relocated to the new "village" where they were restored and, in some cases, substantially reconstructed.

At a pragmatic level, these developments were made possible by increased levels of affluence and leisure among the general population who could access these sites by automobile and who were anxious that their children develop an appreciation of their past. By the mid-1960s, this trend was reinforced by patriotic responses to the celebration of Canada's centennial. Perhaps the most ambitious heritage project in Ontario in the 1960s was the reconstruction of Sainte-Marie I near Penetanguishene. The scope of such provincial projects reflects the growth and development of provincial heritage agencies by the 1960s.

In the West the image of the idyllic pioneer village was traded for that of the 19th-century trading post and fort. During the 1940s the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) created an early and interesting version of a reconstructed historic fort at Fort Walsh, Saskatchewan.



Fort Walsh, Maple Creek, Saskatchewan. CPS photo.

Located on the site of a late-19th-century North West Mounted Police (NWMP) post, the re-created fort comprised 10 log buildings intended to evoke those at the original fort while satisfying the functional requirements of a contemporary horse-breeding station.²¹ Largely the brainchild of RCMP Commissioner Stuart Taylor Wood, the fort was intended to preserve the force's traditions and did not accommodate tourists until the 1960s, when the RCMP enhanced the historic atmosphere in order to open the site to visitors in honour of the Canadian centennial. By this time the RCMP were planning to relocate the horse-breeding station and hoped that the National Historic Parks Branch would take over the site.

The RCMP figured large in the memory of the old West. In Alberta the first reconstructed historic site was the NWMP post at Fort Macleod. Rebuilt by a group of local enthusiasts in 1957, it preceded other reconstructed forts at Lethbridge, Red Deer, Calgary, and Edmonton. In Saskatchewan, Fort Walsh was followed, in 1967, by a provincial historic park at the former RCMP post at Wood Mountain. The park's museum was housed in a reconstructed barracks building. Similarly in British Columbia, the former RCMP post at Fort Steele was made a provincial historic park in the 1960s and developed with reconstructed buildings. The gold-rush town of Barkerville was also partially rebuilt and developed as a tourist venue. By the late 1960s, the idea of "heritage parks" was leading the development of many historic sites in the West as outdoor museums there reflected the historic and ethnic flavour of a relatively recent past.

At the federal level, the Massey Commission on the Arts, which published its report in 1952, was influential in broadening the HSMBC's commemorative scope and, during the immediate postwar years, the National Historic Parks Branch responded to its national mandate by attempting to develop at least one major heritage site in each region;²² hence the establishment of a historic park (developed with reconstructions) at Fort Langley, British Columbia, the acquisition of Fort Battleford and the Batoche rectory in Saskatchewan, the acquisition of Woodside in Ontario—former Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King's childhood home, which was reconstructed initially by local enthusiasts before being further developed by the federal government, the

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restoration of the former Canadian Arsenals (now Artillery Park) in Québec City, as well as the Halifax Citadel in Nova Scotia and Signal Hill in St. John's, Newfoundland. By the 1960s the elaborately interpreted historic site was considered *de rigeur*. The living or outdoor museum concept had replaced the by-now outmoded regional museum collections as the preferred mode of interpretation at the sites.

This emphasis on the acquisition and development of historic sites was criticized by some outsiders, however. Organizations like the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario and the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, which were not so much interested in the commemoration of historical events or persons as they were concerned with the preservation of the Canadian architectural heritage, pointed out the need for programs to ensure the survival of representative examples of Canada's domestic architecture in particular. At this point the seeds sown by such early proponents of architectural conservation as Ramsay Traquair, Eric Arthur, and A.W. Wallace began to flower. While the 1920s had seen the beginnings of an appreciation of architecture for both its aesthetic value and as a form of historical evidence, this attitude was confined to a few connoisseurs until the postwar years when the intellectual atmosphere encouraged ideas such as art for art's sake and a recognition of intrinsic values in art and architecture. Movements such as abstractionism in the art world and the parallel modernist mode in architecture focussed attention on more purely aesthetic values. Once one begins to view buildings as unique historical documents or as artistic products, the concept of replicating them becomes as suspect as forging archival manuscripts or artworks. This is what Ruskin and Morris appreciated in the 19th century and what was becoming more obvious to greater numbers of both heritage professionals and laymen by the 1950s and 1960s.

Clearly, distinctions between commemoration, interpretation, and conservation were critical to heritage policies at all levels. At the federal level there had always been members of the HSMBC and staff within the Parks Branch who were aware of the pitfalls inherent in confusing these issues. More often than not, the acquisition and development of heavily restored or reconstructed sites had been as much the result of political realities as it had been a reflection of directives from the Board or preferences within the Branch. Nor was it likely, given the popularity of reconstructions, that pressure to replicate historic structures would disappear. The success of reconstruction as an interpretive vehicle and the established association between elaborately developed historic sites and potential tourism earnings combined with more purely patriotic sentiments to ensure the continued desirability of reconstructions. In fact, many of the megaprojects pursued by the Branch during the 1960s relied heavily on reconstruction.

The very scale of these projects reflects their importance beyond the Parks Branch. The restoration of the Halifax Citadel, the reconstruction of the Fortress of Louisbourg, the development of Lower Fort Garry and

that of the Yukon boomtown of Dawson all implied a substantial contribution to regional economic development at a ministerial level. For its part, the Parks Branch increased its professional capabilities to ensure that development would take place within controlled guidelines and with the fullest possible archaeological, historical, and architectural information. Nevertheless, at Louisbourg in the 1960s we again meet the now-established heritage consultant Ronald Way, who reports that the tensions between pragmatic project delivery and historical research were as vexing here as they had been 30 years earlier at Fort George.²³ Once again, pragmatism won out over professional ideals. This is not to say that the standards of historical veracity had not risen. Yet, despite the enormous investment of time, expertise, and money that went into Louisbourg, Ruskin's conviction of the impossibility of re-creating the past was born out.

The birth of Dawson as a national historic site reveals a similar pattern. A federal policy of northern economic development during the late 1950s included a scheme for tourism at Dawson hinging on a theatre festival to be held in the Palace Grand Theatre. Once again, time was of the essence and, given the decayed condition of the structure—an example of boomtown vernacular architecture erected without a great deal of concern for longevity—the Branch recommended that the building be demolished and reconstructed to meet contemporary fire and safety standards.²⁴ As at Louisbourg, in order to build a replica, original fabric had to be destroyed.

The Intellectualization of Interpretation:

The 1970s–1980s

It is in the 1970s that we see a considerable shift in Parks' treatment of historic sites coincident with the maturation of its organizational capacities. The 1970s began the third stage in the history of reconstruction in Canada. By this time a fairly large staff of specialists was on hand and regionalization had resulted in a pool of professionals in close proximity to the sites. Canadian heritage professionals were also linked by national and international organizations which kept them abreast of the latest theories and practices in their fields. By 1964 the Venice Charter had been drawn up, establishing internationally accepted methods of conservation and maintenance. According to this document, "all reconstruction work should ... be ruled out a priori."²⁵ In 1976 Canada, via the Canadian Parks Service, became a signator to the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (the World Heritage Convention). By doing so, the federal government committed itself to safeguarding world heritage sites within Canada and implied that the highest possible standards of conservation would be followed.²⁶

Reconstruction survived, but with significant differences. The first historic site in Canada to be entered on the World Heritage list is that of the first-known European settlement in North America at L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland. Discovered by Norwegian archaeologist Helge Ingstad in 1960, it became a national historic site in 1968. Because of its significance internationally, an international research advisory committee was formed in 1970. This committee of experts from Scandinavia, Iceland, and Canada was responsible for



research and conservation at the site. Remains were carefully excavated, stabilized, and reburied for protection until later in the 1970s when Parks pursued further archaeological excavations and built replicas of the original sod houses. The difference was that, this time, the reconstructions were not built on top of the archaeological remains but at some remove in order to ensure that the remains were undisturbed.

Two of the most innovative reconstructions were carried out by Parks Canada at national historic sites in Quebec. Fort Chambly had been in federal hands for many years when Parks decided to carry out a major development of the site. It has been suggested that the volumetric reconstruction carried out at Chambly in 1982 was inspired by a similar restoration process at the Castle of Visegrad in Hungary.²⁷ There, contemporary materials had been used to create the broad outline of the original structure without trying to second guess what period details for which there was no historical data might have looked like. Under the direction of Parks, a private architectural firm was awarded a contract to do much the same thing at Chambly. It was felt that this sort of treatment avoided historical romanticism and potential falsification, while rescuing the ruins from further deterioration in a manner which lent itself to public interpretation. In this way both conservation and interpretation could be achieved legitimately.

Another approach to volumetric reconstruction has been implemented at the Forges du Saint-Maurice. This site had been acquired by the provincial government in the 1960s. Some archaeological investigation and stabilization had taken place by the time that Parks took it over in 1973. After several years of research and evaluation, a complex development plan was formulated in 1981 which made use of a variety of interpretive methods. These, implemented over a period of several years, include a volumetric reconstruction of the blast furnace complex which uses a three-dimensional space frame to express the industrial processes which took place within the original structures.²⁸ The ruins and underground spaces are enclosed but visible to the public, while the transparent frame traces the shapes of the major components of the complex aboveground. More literal replicas of significant machinery have also been built using contemporary materials and placed at historical locations. Although volumetric reconstruction is a technique which has been utilized at other historic sites, perhaps the best known of which is the Benjamin Franklin house in Philadelphia, the approach used at the Forges is much more complex in its attempt to illustrate a process rather than the simple outline of a building.

A second major project produced a historical reconstitution of La Grande Maison (1990) which, like Fort Chambly, visually suggests the original building on the exterior while providing a modern interior used as an interpretive centre. The latter responds to an expressed public wish for a more traditional reconstruction. Great care has been taken to protect archaeological remains and to distinguish between original and re-created structures.

This last project brings the outline of reconstruction at CPS sites up to the present. Reconstruction has always been a hotly debated procedure. While purists like Ruskin would have none of it, many others have accepted it under certain terms. These historically focussed on

the degree of accuracy with which original buildings were replicated. More recently, issues such as unity of style (should a building be reconstituted to reflect only one era in its longer history) and the need for visible distinctions between original and new fabric have become determining factors in the manner in which reconstructions are carried out.

Several things become clear from tracing the history of reconstruction. One is the ongoing popularity of reconstruction as an interpretive tool both with the public and with politicians. Secondly, there is a traceable economic influence threading its way through this history. Put simply, more ambitious projects are generally undertaken when large amounts of money are available. Barring another Public Works Construction Act for the 1990s, our present atmosphere of fiscal restraint may result in a more conservative approach in the immediate future. It becomes even more essential, therefore, that decisions are based on the pre-eminence of the historical artifact and on our responsibility to our history. If reconstructions are to be funded, they must argue their worth with this in mind.



The Saint-Jean Gate, Québec City. CPS photo.

Meanwhile, what value are we to place on our reconstructed sites? If you agree that this brief history has illustrated the difficulty of "raising the dead," then we must look to values other than historical accuracy in these resources. While reconstructions may still perform a valuable interpretive function as visual aids, their intrinsic value only emerges after a close visual analysis. Visually, this history shows that reconstructions reflect the spirit of their time as surely as does contemporary architecture. For instance, Viollet-le-Duc practised what has come to be called romantic reconstruction, creating evocations of a medieval past not dissimilar in appearance to early Gothic Revival architecture. In Canada the reconstructed gates at Québec City are examples of this phenomenon. Later, North American reconstructions from the 1920s and 1930s tend to look disconcertingly like the Colonial Revival designs of their time. The symbiotic relationship between reconstructions and revival-style architecture of this period is currently receiving much academic attention. Our present fascination with volumetric reconstruction and reconstitution (see the Forges du Saint-Maurice) mirrors the trend in Post-

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Officers' Quarters, Fort Anne, Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia. CPS photo.

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Modern architecture to create visual metaphors of the past. Like contemporary architecture, volumetric reconstructions are sometimes criticized for an overly cerebral wit which can undermine content.

Rather than dismissal as flawed creations akin to Dr. Frankenstein's monster, then, reconstructions deserve recognition as valid expressions of their own time and as historic documents in their own right. Given their demonstrated intrinsic value, reconstructions become candidates for preservation in much the same way that other "historic" structures do, and we must be aware of our custodial responsibility to them. Perhaps we are witnessing the inception of the fourth stage in the history of reconstruction in Canada—the era of reconstruction reconsidered.

¹John Ruskin, "The Lamp of Memory" in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1849), n.p.

²A.N. Didron, *Bulletin Archéologique*, Vol. 1 (1839), n.p.

³Quoted by William J. Murtagh in *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in America* (New York: Sterling Pub., 1990), p. 18.

⁴The charter states, "intervention within the built environment may occur at many levels (from preservation to redevelopment), at many scales (from individual building elements to entire sites), and will be characterized by one or more activities, ranging from maintenance to addition." *The Appleton Charter for the Protection and Enhancement of the Built Environment* (Ottawa: ICOMOS Canada, 1983), n.p.

⁵Christina Cameron, Charles Baillargé, Architect and Engineer (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), p. 116.

⁶Quebec [Province]. *La commission des bien culturels du Québec, Les chemins de la mémoire: Monuments et sites historiques du Québec* (Québec: Les publications du Québec, 1990), p. 3.

⁷Ronald Way, *Ontario's Niagara Parks; A History* (Hamilton: Niagara Parks Commission, 1946), p. 267.

⁸Edward T. Williams, *An Interpretation of Old Fort Niagara* (Niagara Falls, N.Y.: The Old Fort Niagara Association, 1929), pp. 66–68.



Volumetric reconstruction of the blast furnace complex, Forges du Saint-Maurice, Quebec. CPS photo.

⁹Ronald Way, "The Reconstruction of Fort George, 1936–1940," manuscript on file, Architectural History Branch, National Historic Sites Directorate, Canadian Parks Service, Hull, Quebec, 1973.

¹⁰Charles W. Jeffreys, "The Reconstruction of the Port Royal Habitation of 1605–13," *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Dec. 1939), p. 371.

¹¹Margaret Coleman, "Officers' Quarters, Fort Anne National Historic Park," FHBRO Report 88–56, manuscript on file, Canadian Inventory of Historic Building, Architectural History Branch, National Historic Sites Directorate, Canadian Parks Service, Hull, Quebec [1988], p. 8.

¹²C.J. Taylor, *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Canada's National Historic Parks and Sites* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), p. 116.

¹³Canada. National Archives, RG 84, Vol. 1131, FPW-2, Vol. 6, pt. 2.

¹⁴John Ruskin, *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, p. 179.

¹⁵Quoted in C.J. Taylor, *Negotiating the Past*, p. 80.

¹⁶Barbara Schmeisser, "The Creation and Development of Fort Beauséjour National Historic Park," manuscript on file, Canadian Inventory of Historic Building, Architectural History Branch, National Historic Sites Directorate, Canadian Parks Service, Hull, Quebec, 1979, n.p.

¹⁷Shannon Ricketts, "Museum and Caretaker's House, Fortress of Louisbourg National Park, Nova Scotia," FHBRO Report 90–304, manuscript on file, Canadian Inventory of Historic Building, Architectural History Branch, National Historic Sites Directorate, Canadian Parks Service, Hull, Quebec [1990].

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¹⁸A.J.B. Johnston, "Preserving History: The Commemoration of 18th Century Louisbourg, 1895-1940," *Acadiensis*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Spring 1983), p. 65.

¹⁹Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 78.

²⁰Mabel Ringereide, "Canadiana Village," *Canadian Collector*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (July/Aug. 1976), p. 24.

²¹James De Jonge, "Ten Buildings, Fort Walsh National Historic Park, Saskatchewan," FHBRO Report 88-68, manuscript on file, Canadian Inventory of Historic Building, Architectural History Branch, National Historic Sites Directorate, Canadian Parks Service, Hull, Quebec [1988].

²²C.J. Taylor, *Negotiating the Past*, p. 145.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 179.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 173.

²⁵ICOMOS Canada, *Preserving Our Heritage: Catalogue of Charters and Other Guides* (Québec: International Symposium on World Heritage Towns, 1991), p. 14.

²⁶Marc Denhez, "The Heritage Untreaty," *Canadian Heritage*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Feb/Mar. 1987), p. 2.

²⁷George Galt, "The Battle for Fort Chambly," *Canadian Heritage*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Feb/Mar. 1984), p. 13.

²⁸Francois Leblanc, "Les Forges du Saint-Maurice ... We've seen this before. No, not really. Have a closer look...", *APT Bulletin*, Vol. 18, Nos. 1 & 2 (1986), p. 13.

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