

National Historic Park

LOUIS S. ST. LAURENT



MASTER PLAN



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National Historic Park

LOUIS-S. ST-LAURENT

MASTER PLAN



FOREWORD

The master plan for the Louis-S. St-Laurent National Historic Park is a guide for the preservation, development and management of the park and its resources.

The preparation of this master plan is the result of the combined efforts of a number of people working out of Parks Canada's Head Office in Ottawa, the Regional Office in Québec City, and finally the Park itself. The general public has also been consulted.

This document briefly outlines the resources of the site, provides a short account of the life and work of Louis-S. St-Laurent and states the objectives, themes and guiding principles underlying the future preservation and development of this site dedicated to the memory of the Right Honourable Louis-S. St-Laurent, Prime Minister of Canada from 1948 to 1957.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Roberts", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John Roberts
Minister of the Environment

**Master Plan
Louis-S. St-Laurent
National Historic Park**

1981

Recommendation


Approval



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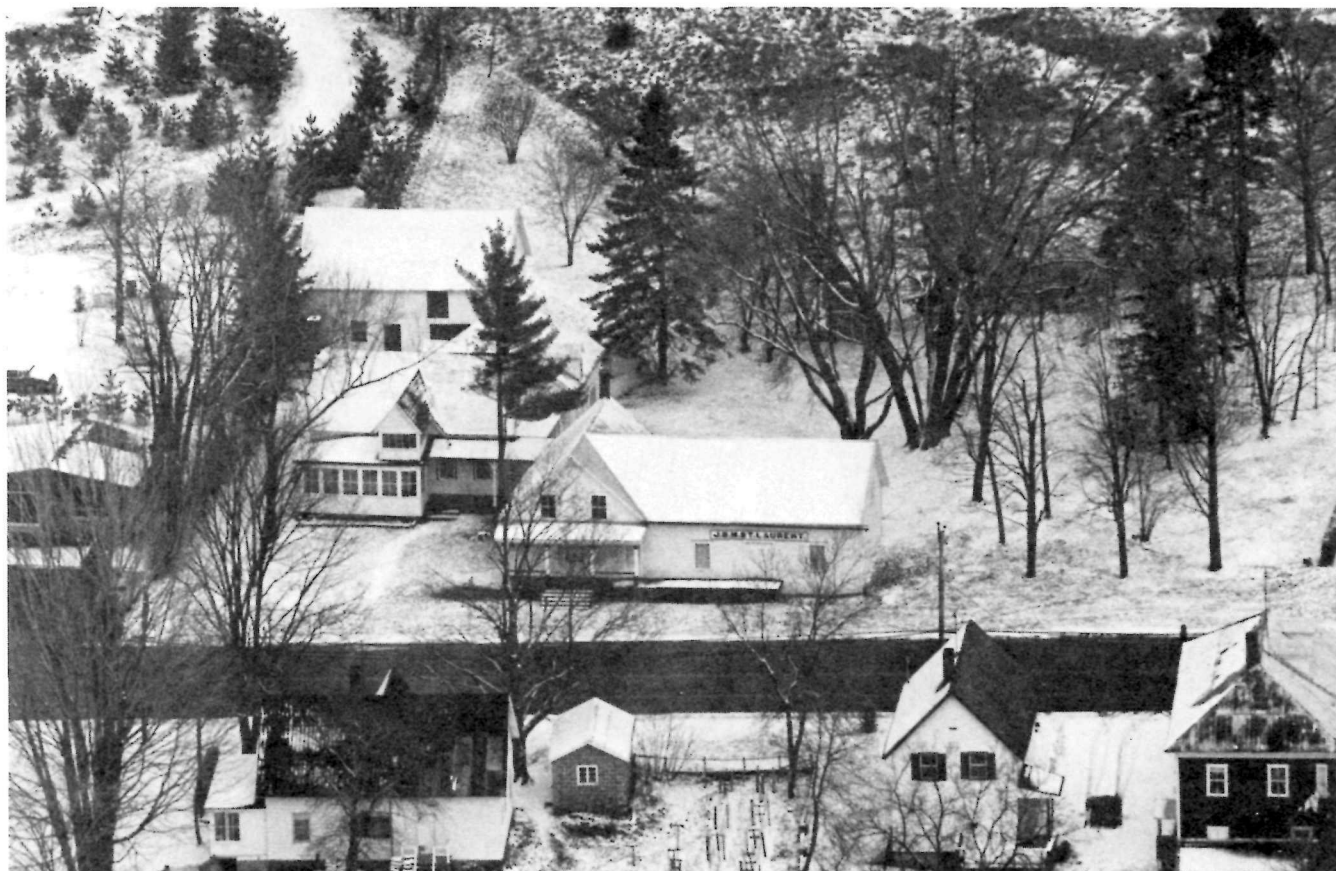
Introduction

Introduction

The Louis-S. St-Laurent National Historic Park

Located in Compton in the Eastern Townships region of Quebec, some twenty-five kilometres south-east of Sherbrooke, the Louis-S. St-Laurent National Historic Park harbours both the house in which the former Prime Minister of Canada Louis-S. St-Laurent lived and the milieu in which he spent his youth.

In the fall of 1973, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada declared that because of his major contribution to Canadian political life, Louis-S. St-Laurent ought to be recognized as “a figure of national historic importance.” The Board further stated that the St-Laurent homestead in Compton represented “*the finest monument for commemorating this great man.*” In 1974, when the Federal Government accepted the St-Laurent estate’s offer of the Compton property, Ottawa stated its intention to integrate it into the system of national historic parks and sites for the benefit of present and future generations of Canadians.



THE ST-LAURENT HOMESTEAD IN THE HEART OF THE VILLAGE OF COMPTON, NOVEMBER 1979.

Source: Parks Canada

The Master Plan

The research done by Parks Canada over the past few years has provided a wider appreciation of Louis-S. St-Laurent and his background. In 1979, a restoration concept was proposed for the preservation and development of the St-Laurent property in combination with an interpretation concept for presenting the public with a program of displays thematically linked to both the statesman's career and the Compton milieu in which he grew up.

In June 1980, an interim master plan* incorporating these concepts was submitted to the people of Compton and several groups and organizations active in cultural, social, educational and tourist affairs in the southern Eastern Townships area as part of a consultation program. The comments, suggestions and recommendations received from representatives of the local community in this process helped to give the project team a better understanding of the public's expectations with regard to the development of the park and to produce some tangible improvements in the initial project.**

The product of a group effort by the various teams associated with this project, the present master plan for the Louis S. St-Laurent National Historic Park is essentially the same as the previous document with a few additional details on the restoration of the buildings, the interpretation program and the visitor services.

* Parks Canada, *Louis-S. St-Laurent National Historic Site, Development Concept*, Québec City, May 1980, 24 pages (bilingual).

** Parks Canada, *Louis-S. St-Laurent National Historic Site, Report on the Public Consultation Program*, Québec City, December 1980, 40 pages (bilingual).

Parks Canada Policy

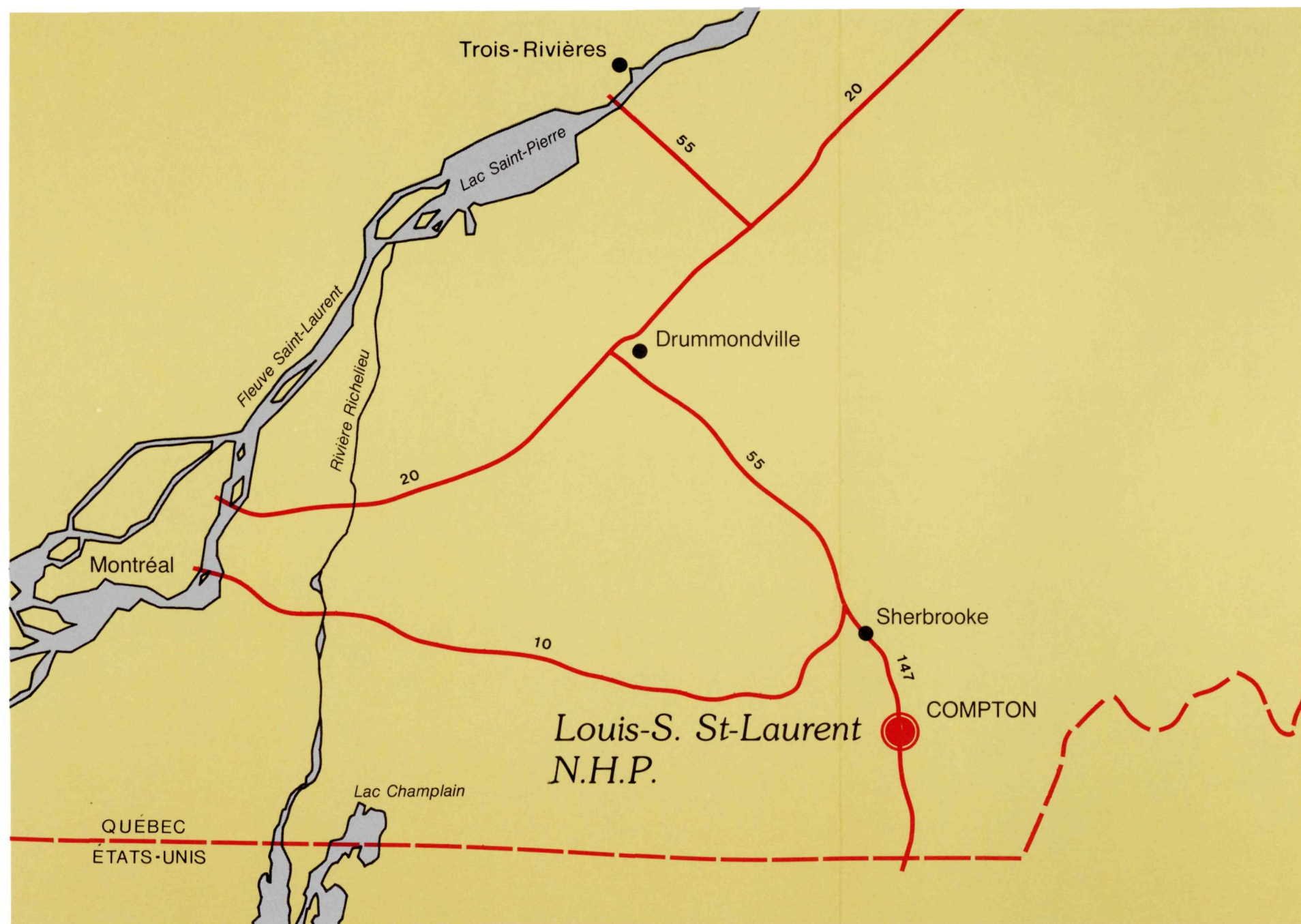
Parks Canada Policy lays down certain guiding principles for the creation, development and operation of Canada's national historic parks.

These principles underlie this master plan, and the development of the St-Laurent homestead has been designed to accord with the fundamental objectives of every national historic park as stated in Parks Canada Policy:

*To protect for all time historic resources at places associated with persons, places and events of national historic significance in a system of national historic parks; and to encourage public understanding of this historical heritage so as to leave it unimpaired for future generations.**

* Parks Canada, *Parks Canada Policy*, Ottawa, p. 28, 1979.

**The Louis-S. St-Laurent
National Historic Park:
Location**



Louis-S St. Laurent National Historic Park

LOCATION



**The Right Honourable
Louis-S. St-Laurent:
1882-1973**



LOUIS-S. ST-LAURENT, PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA, 1952.
Source: Newton, Ottawa

**The Right Honourable
Louis-S. St-Laurent: 1882-1973**

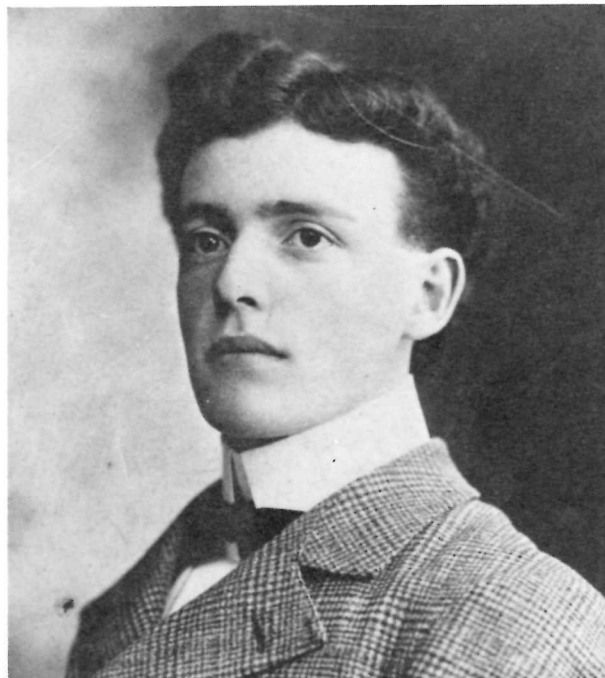
Louis-S. St-Laurent was born on 1 February 1882 in the St-Laurent family home in Compton. He was to spend his childhood and part of his youth in that house. His father, Jean-Baptiste Moïse St-Laurent, who had married one of the village schoolteachers, Mary Ann Broderick, had been operating a general store in Compton since 1878. The couple had seven children all of whom, except for one who died at an early age, were raised in the country's two official languages and educated according to the very strict precepts of the Catholic faith.

At that time, the inhabitants of the village of Compton numbered approximately six hundred and were divided into two linguistic groups and three religious denominations. Seventy percent of the population was of English-speaking stock, a proportion which gave little or no indication of the transformations that would take place at the beginning of the twentieth century.*

Louis-S. St-Laurent began his academic career at the village elementary school, after which, he entered the Sherbrooke Seminary in 1896. He proceeded to study law at Laval University and was called to the Bar in 1905. Once his studies were over, Louis-S. St-Laurent began to practice law in Québec City and soon made his debut in the courts.

The young lawyer quickly gained recognition as an eminent Canadian jurist, renowned not so much for his eloquence as for his thorough knowledge and mastery of law. His fluent command of the two languages, acquired during his formative years at home, also proved an important asset to the success of his career.

His clientele soon included several large firms, many of which also invited him to sit on their board of directors. Since the Government of Québec and the Federal Government frequently called upon his services, he leaned increasingly towards constitutional law and very swiftly became a recognized authority in that field. In the course of his long legal career, Louis-S. St-Laurent pleaded more than sixty times before the Supreme Court of Canada and more than twenty times before the Privy Council in London.



* Bellavance, Marcel, *Un village en mutation, Compton de 1880 à 1920*, Manuscript Report Number 279, (1977), Parcs Canada, Québec.

And yet, his legal profession did not prevent him from occupying other positions, such as teaching law for more than twenty-five years at Laval University. In 1930, he was elected president of the Canadian Bar Association, a position he held for two consecutive terms. During the Second World War, at sixty years of age, he undertook a second career at the invitation of the then Prime Minister of Canada, William Lyon Mackenzie King. Ernest Lapointe, King's Québec lieutenant, had recently died, and St-Laurent was approached about succeeding him in Ottawa. First, he stood for election in Québec-Est, a riding long represented in Ottawa by Sir Wilfrid Laurier and later by Ernest Lapointe.

St-Laurent was thus to win his first political victory and went on to serve successively in the King government as Minister of Justice (1942-1946) and Secretary of State for External Affairs (1946-1948). In August 1948, at the National Congress in Ottawa, Louis-S. St-Laurent was elected head of the Liberal Party of Canada and, in November of the same year, he was sworn in as Prime Minister. As of that date, the political career of Louis-S. St-Laurent became intimately linked to the period of post-war development. His personal mark, however, was most evident in a few particular areas of interest.



LOUIS-S. ST-LAURENT AT THE INAUGURATION OF WORK ON THE ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY IN 1954.

From left to right, Mr St-Laurent, Thomas E. Dewey, Governor of New York State, and Leslie M. Frost, Premier of Ontario.

Source: La Presse, Montréal

At home, Mr St-Laurent devoted particular attention to shaping the “personality” of Canada. During his term in office, appeals to the Privy Council in London were abolished, the power to amend the Constitution with respect to sections falling under Federal jurisdiction was returned to Ottawa, the Massey-Lévesque Commission on Culture in Canada was created, the first governor-general of Canadian origin was appointed, and Newfoundland’s entry into Confederation was negotiated.

In foreign policy, Louis-S. St-Laurent’s years in office marked the consecration of ideas he and his right hand at External Affairs, Lester B. Pearson, stood for. As a member of King’s government, Louis-S. St-Laurent had begun to influence the old leader to accept that Canada should take a more active role on the international scene, a stance King’s isolationist tendencies had long opposed. Once in power, Mr St-Laurent invited Lester B.

Pearson to join his Cabinet. Their close collaboration opened Canada’s way to the international forefront.

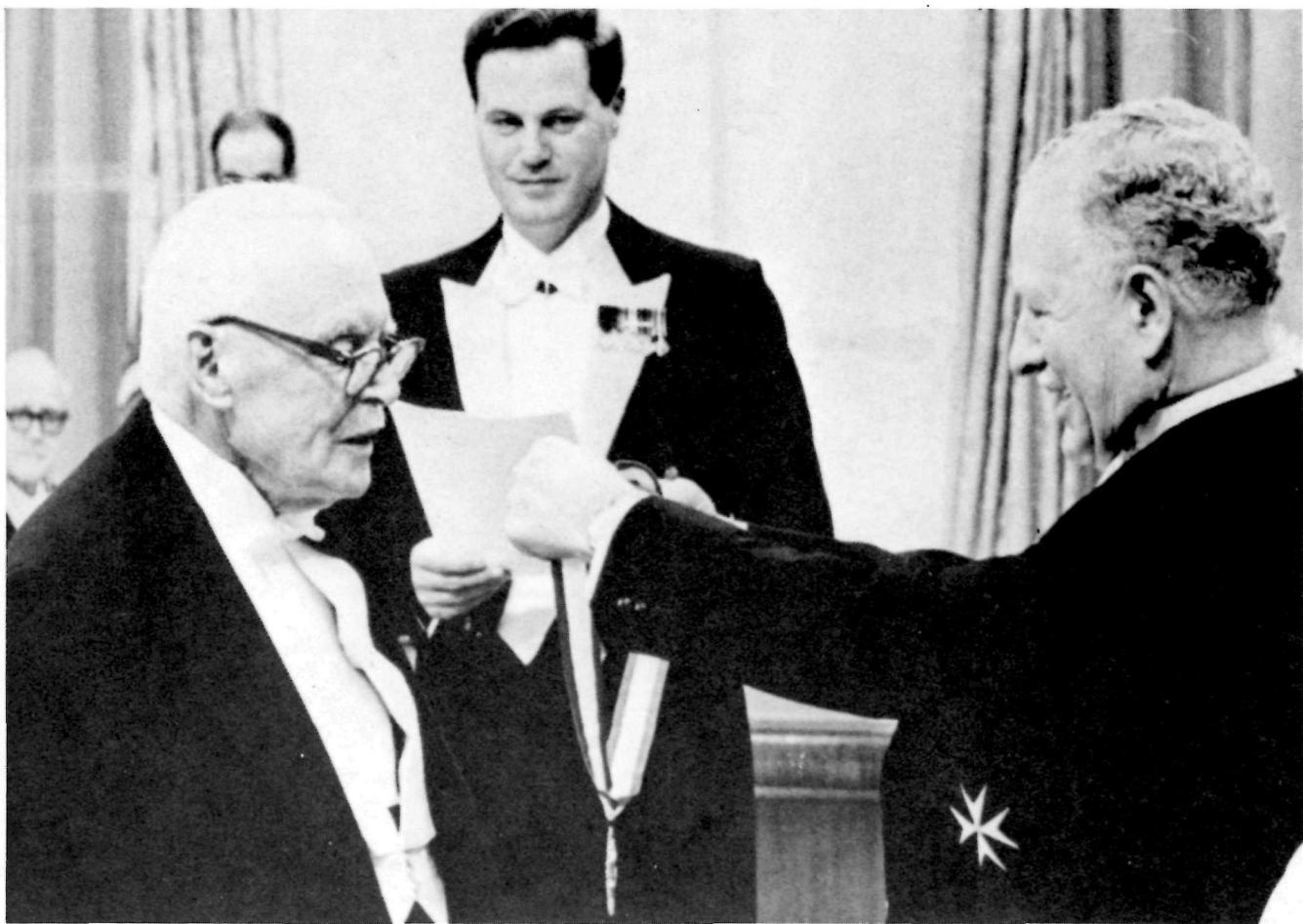
Strongly influenced by a long practice of commercial and corporate law, Louis-S. St-Laurent was not particularly innovative in the area of social policy. Today he is remembered more as an able manager than as a reformer since he left the main structures of political and economic power intact.

In 1957, the Liberals were defeated by the conservatives who formed a minority government under John Diefenbaker. In September of that same year, Louis-S. St-Laurent retired from active politics and was succeeded as party leader by Lester B. Pearson. Mr. St-Laurent gradually resumed his law practice and was invited to sit on the boards of several large companies. He died in Québec City on 25 July 1973 at the age of 91 and was buried in Compton.



LOUIS-S. ST-LAURENT WELCOMING BRITISH PRIME MINISTER SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL ON HIS VISIT TO CANADA IN JUNE 1954.

Source: Capital Press Service



LOUIS-S. ST-LAURENT BEING INDUCTED INTO THE ORDER OF CANADA IN 1967.
SOURCE: Le Soleil, Québec City

**The St-Laurent
Homestead**

The St-Laurent Homestead

The St-Laurent homestead located in the heart of the village of Compton on Highway 147 covers an area of 0.46 hectares. The property stands out as much for the architectural unity of its three buildings as for the way they blend in with the landscaping and the natural features of the site. The property may be divided into two zones: the domestic, private area which includes the family residence, a shed and most of the grounds; and the commercial, public area with the general store and its adjoining warehouse.

The Family Residence

The original wood-frame house, a storey and half high, dates back to the first half of the nineteenth century. Today, the building has two carefully planned, well-lit sections which provide a feeling of space and comfort. The main section (11 × 8 meters) stands approximately 10 meters from the road. The rear part, which was added on in two stages towards the end of the last century, is kitty-corner to the original part and of almost identical dimensions.

The outside walls are sided with clapboard and painted white. The gabled roof has three dormer windows; the largest of these was extended and closed off around 1910. It now forms part of the housefront including a covered veranda, a good portion of which was turned into a sun porch (between 1915 and 1933). The house has fifteen rooms representing a total living area of 232 square meters.



THE ST-LAURENT HOMESTEAD EARLY IN THE CENTURY.

The General Store and Adjoining Warehouse

The general store, built around 1866, is a simple structure with a veranda running across the front-facing gable end. It is one and a half storeys high and stands close the edge of the main street. The outside walls are similar to those of the house and, on the inside, the store seems hardly to have changed over the years. Many of the original shop fittings, such as shelves, counters, secretary, clock and central stove, remain unchanged and still evoke the shop atmosphere. The second floor was also used, among other things as a meeting room for gatherings of the "Independent Order of Foresters" of which Jean-Baptiste Moïse St-Laurent was the secretary.

The warehouse adjoining the store was built by J.-B. M. St-Laurent between 1903 and 1908. The shopkeeper used both the ground and second floors to store merchandise purchased in bulk quantities. As with all buildings of this type, the warehouse was a simple construction without foundations or finished interior.

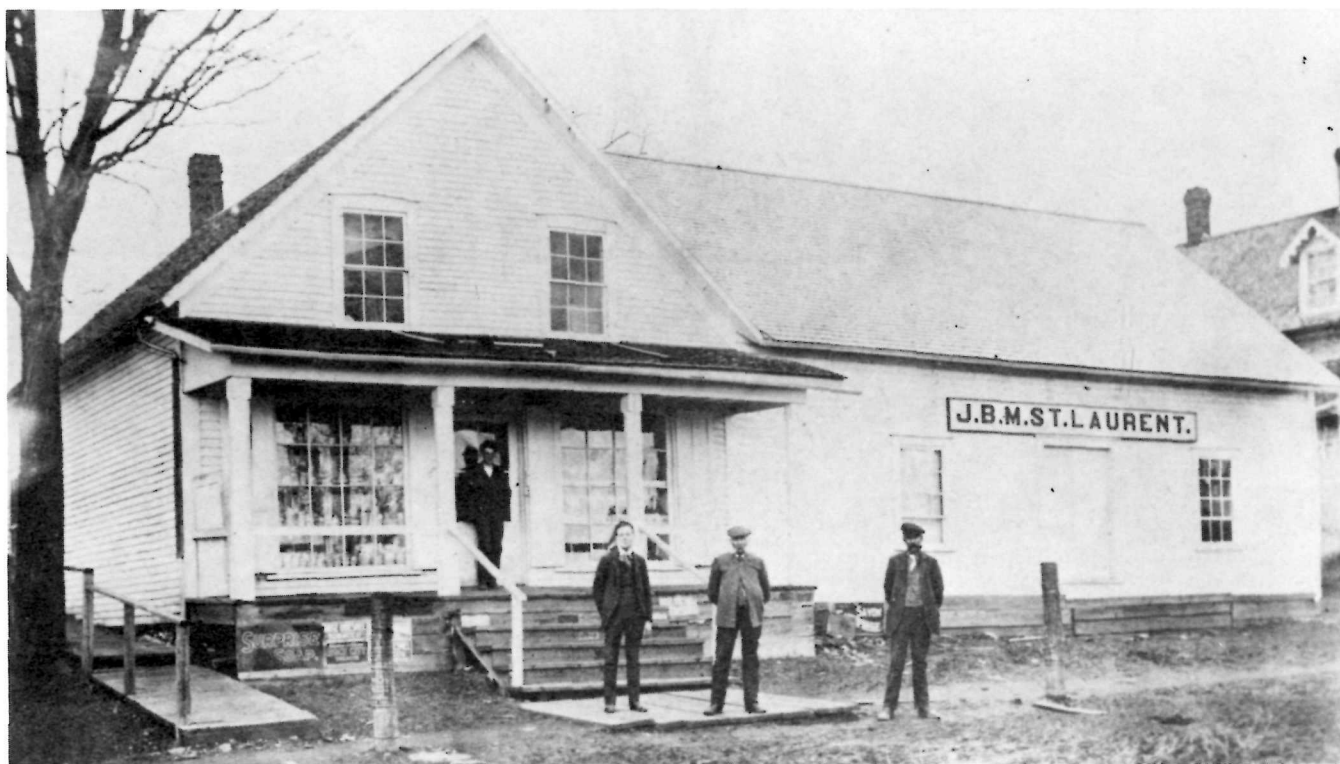
The Shed

The shed standing in back of the house is a two-level structure which was used as a coach-house and stable. It is also gable-roofed and sided with clapboard.

The Grounds

The slightly hilly, irregularly shaped grounds harbour a wide variety of plant life. Many ornamental plants grow in the flower beds close to the buildings. Decorative rock gardens have also been blended into the landscape. Most of the grounds are grass-covered except for the rock gardens, the foundations of an old neighboring house and an orchard situated on a gentle slope at the back of the house. The entire property is shaded by many trees and shrubs.

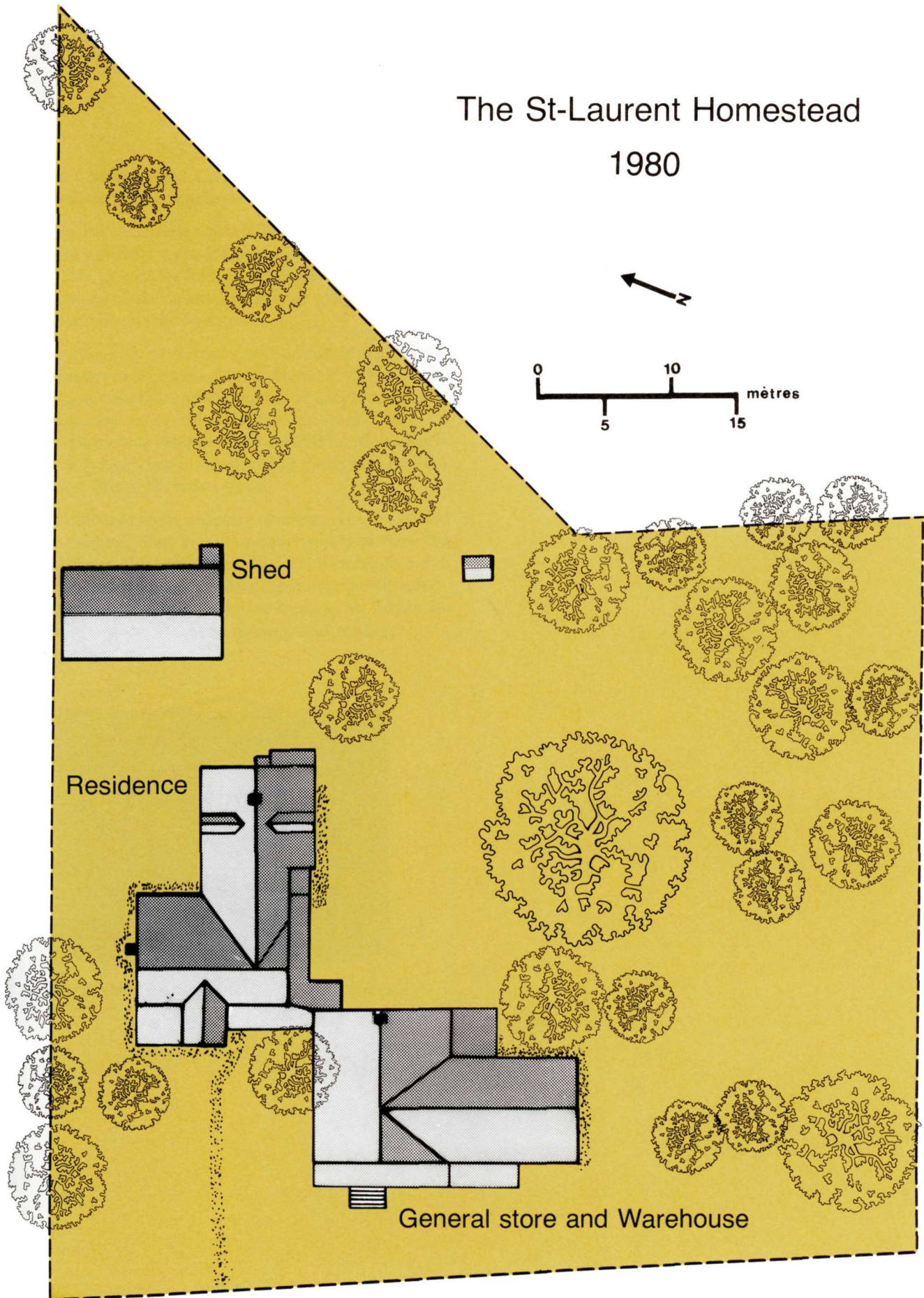
Some of the various outdoor furnishings that once adorned the St-Laurent property still remain and are quite well preserved: a stone path and patio, a stone table and bench, a shelter with a garden swing, a tiny shed . . .



THE GENERAL STORE AND WAREHOUSE CIRCA 1910.
In the middle, Jean-Baptiste Moïse St-Laurent, Louis' father.

The St-Laurent Homestead

1980



The “St-Laurent Collection”: Furniture and Various Objects

When Parks Canada acquired the property, the contents of the buildings were immediately removed into suitable storage facilities where they were to undergo functional classification and specific studies in relation to the interpretation program.

The inventory of furniture and household objects is considerable, containing more than 3,000 items, most in good condition, spanning the St-Laurent family's occupancy of the site from the time when Louis' parents took up residence there in 1881 until the death of the house's last occupant, their daughter Lora, the former Prime Minister's sister.

The contents of the collection therefore cover a period of a century. They include a wide variety of utilitarian and ornamental objects of the kind formerly found in village houses, but few personal belongings of Louis-S. St-Laurent: a leather briefcase bearing his initials, his lawyer's gown, inscribed plaques and medals, souvenirs . . .



LEATHER BRIEFCASE WITH LOUIS-S. ST-LAURENT INITIALS.

The general store, operated successively by Louis' father, his brother and his nephew, yielded several pieces of furniture (secretary, display cases, benches, chairs . . .) and various objects used or sold in the store; an inventory of the store dating from 1880 was found as well as several ledgers which provide a picture of the evolution of the business over the years (products and goods sold, prices, etc.).

The collection of furniture and household objects from the Compton property to some extent reflects the milieu in which Louis-S. St-Laurent spent his childhood and youth. The St-Laurents seem to have shown considerable attachment to their furniture and possessions, many of which have been preserved to this day.

Development Concept

Development Concept

The Objectives

Parks Canada has determined certain objectives for the development of the Louis-S. St-Laurent National Historic Park, taking the following factors into consideration: Parks Canada Policy, the former Prime Minister's historical significance, the inclusion of the St-Laurent homestead in Canada's system of national historic parks and sites and the regional context. The objectives are as follows:

- to commemorate Louis-S. St-Laurent by interpreting the site's underlying themes for its visitors;
- to preserve and restore the St-Laurent homestead to accommodate the interpretation program;
- to contribute to the development of regional and national heritage;
- to participate in the flourishing socio-cultural life of the region.

The concept

To meet the stated objectives, two distinct aspects were considered at the time the development plan for the Louis-S. St-Laurent National Historic Park was elaborated. These included the restoration of the homestead and the creation of an interpretation program to be centered both on Louis-S. St-Laurent's career and on the Compton milieu in which he grew up.

Restoration of the Homestead

The historic value and the objectives of the project led Parks Canada to classify the St-Laurent homestead as a "documentary" site, where efforts are directed at commemorating a place, an event or an *authentic* figure, rather than recreating the more or less fictional setting of a typical milieu at a given period in time. In this light, the following two options for developing the homestead were studied:

- the restoration of the entire property exactly as it was when Louis-S. St-Laurent lived there (1882-1900); and,
- the preservation and restoration of the existing property for interpretative purposes.

Three factors led Parks Canada to favor the second option:

- the main objective of this historic site is to commemorate the life and work of Louis-S. St-Laurent and not to reconstruct the milieu in which he grew up;
- all *documentary* sites are based on authenticity. However, there is little historical data available for an exact restoration of the homestead and there is very little furniture dating from that particular period (1882-1900). However, there does exist an interesting collection of furniture and objects which were found in the various buildings and which bear witness to the evolution of the site from the end of the nineteenth century to the present day;
- the second option would allow for interpretive displays on Louis-S. St-Laurent to be presented inside the restored buildings which form part of the homestead.

Given these factors, the St-Laurent homestead will not be fully restored as it was at the turn of the century; however, the character and atmosphere of the site will be respected wherever possible.

The exterior of the house, general store and warehouse will be reinforced and repaired, but the outward appearance of these buildings will remain more or less the same as it is today. The façade of the house will, however, be modified by the removal of two additions (the glassed-in veranda and the second-floor sunroom which extends off one of the dormer windows) since these considerably alter the architectural style of the residence.

The shed, however, is in such an unsound condition that the original structure cannot be preserved for its new intended use.* It will be torn down and replaced by an externally accurate replica of the old combined coach-house and stable building.

The interior of the three buildings will be suitably restored to accommodate the interpretation equipment and displays as well as the necessary services (reception, administration, sanitary facilities . . .). The present floorplans will be retained, and the interior decoration scheme will be designed to harmonize with both the interpretative displays and the furniture to be returned to the original setting. (See "Displays and Refurnishing".)

The grounds will be left exactly as they are, except for the provision of a few rest areas for visitors.

* See "Interpretation Concept" and "Services".

The Interpretation Program

- Interpretation

At Canada's more than fifty national historic parks and sites, interpretation is a key activity, assuming a definite cultural and social function. Interpretation is essentially a process of communication designed to explain or give meaning for visitor to persons, places or events from the past through appropriate experiences, objects and media. It should not be viewed as simply a means of providing historical information, but rather as a dynamic tool aimed at stimulating the visitor's interest, at arousing his curiosity, at making him conscious of the past, and thereby encouraging him to learn more about his country's history.

- Interpretation at the Louis-S. St-Laurent National Historic Park: Objectives and Approach

The primary objective of interpretation at the Louis-S. St-Laurent National Historic Park is to present Louis-S. St-Laurent, the jurist and statesman, and to describe as objectively as possible his active contribution to Canadian politics. The historic significance of the site (the family home and general store) as the milieu in which the former Prime Minister grew up will complement this objective.

While the national character of this new historic park will attract visitors from all across Canada and elsewhere, the interpretation program will accord special attention to the population of the southern Eastern Townships area, which is rightly viewed as the park's privileged "clientele".

In this context, the interpretation program and its related activities will be geared to provide each category of visitor (school groups, families, adults, senior citizens . . .) with a multifaceted message presented through a variety of suitable means.

- Interpretation themes

Two themes, one dominant, the other secondary, will be interpreted at the Louis-S. St-Laurent National Historic Park. The main theme, *Louis-S. St-Laurent: two careers, one course*, comprises three distinct sub-themes.

The first stage of the interpretation will describe *Mr St-Laurent's political attitudes and ideas* and how they were influenced by his upbringing, his education and his law practice. Next, the visitor will be introduced to *the setting of his political career* (Canada between 1941 and 1957), including the principal economic, political and social events which marked the period (the creation of the St. Lawrence Seaway, Newfoundland's entry into Confederation, the creation of the UN and NATO, etc). The final sub-theme will evoke *the role Louis-S. St-Laurent played on the national and international scenes during the years 1941 to 1947*. His achievements as Justice Minister and as Secretary of State for External Affairs will be reviewed successively, and the overview will end with a look at St-Laurent in the role of Prime Minister between 1948 and 1957. At this point, the main accomplishments of his government in the area of domestic affairs, his role on the international scene and his work as a constitutionalist will be outlined.

The secondary theme revolves around *the milieu where Louis St-Laurent spent his childhood and his youth*. The physical environment of the homestead will be described, after which the theme will be centered on the family and, in particular, on Louis, the young schoolboy. The general store, which has remained virtually unchanged in the past hundred years, will be suitably refurnished to evoke a turn-of-the-century atmosphere. The visitor will learn about J.-B. M. St-Laurent's occupation as keeper of a general store in a rural area and about the business and activities carried on in such an establishment. Lastly, the village of Compton and its connection with the evolution of the Eastern Townships will be examined.

All the interpretation themes will be divided into various units situated inside the family residence, the general store and the warehouse.

- Displays and Refurnishing

Given the objectives, resources and approaches previously described, two distinct means of interpretation are planned for developing the site's themes and communicating them to visitors: displays and refurnishing.

The displays make use of graphics, illustrations, artifacts and texts to present the principal events, the various concepts and the links connecting people and things. In short, they are a compilation and dissemination of the results of the research.

The advantage of displays is that an orderly linking of events and phenomena is presented by means of tridimensional modules and historical objects, which are transformed through the displays from mere documents on the past to teaching aids for communicating a historical message to the visitor.

The displays are to become the predominant medium of interpretation at the Louis-S. St-Laurent National Historic Park. The former Primer Minister's political career will be the subject of a permanent display mounted in the warehouse adjoining the store; devolving from historical, pedagogical and psychological considerations, this permanent display will possess undeniable aesthetic qualities.

Since both the family residence and the general store have changed very little in the course of their existence, furniture and various objects that belonged to these buildings can be put back in place. While the principle of respecting the evolution of the buildings rules out a complete period refurnishing, the appropriate atmosphere can be recreated in some important rooms.

Once incorporated in the displays, the furniture and objects of the St-Laurent collection will doubtless have their true cultural significance. More clearly defining the milieu in which Louis-S. St-Laurent was born and raised, they will distinguish the site from neighbouring buildings and help the visitor to understand the succeeding life styles led there.

Services

To complement the interpretation units, a small documentation area and a multipurpose room will be established in the rebuilt shed. At the documentation area the visitor wishing to find out more about Louis-S. St-Laurent and his milieu will be able to consult, on his own, enlarged photographs in poster form, photographs albums, research reports, copies of newspapers from the times, etc.

The shed will also house the park's sanitary facilities and administrative offices.

As the St.-Laurent property is relatively small, no parking will be provided on it. Parks Canada intends instead to negotiate an agreement with municipal or private partners to ensure the availability of parking for visitors within a reasonable distance of the park.

**Plan of the interprétation units
proposed for the ground floor
of the family residence**

RESIDENCE

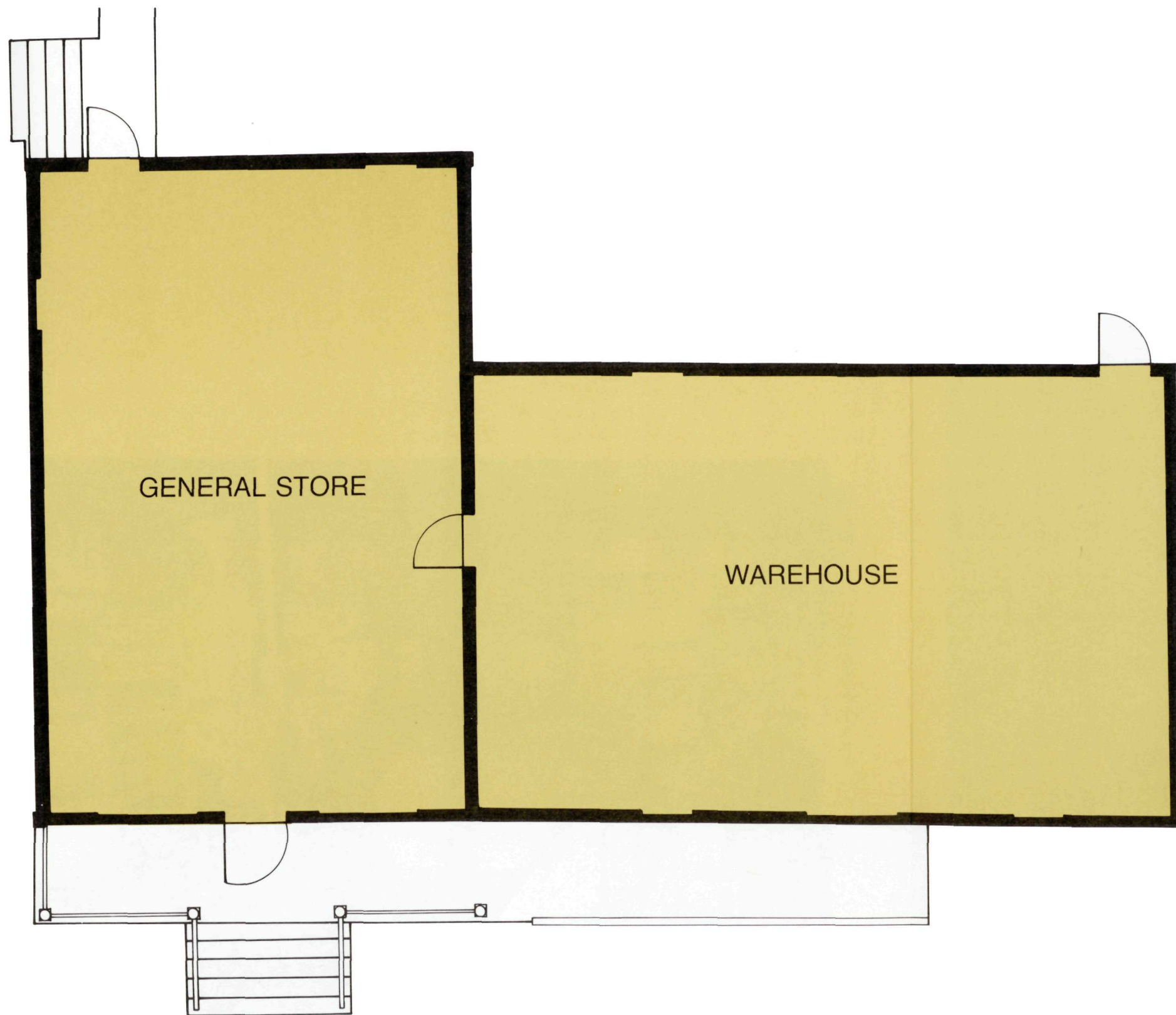


Plan of the interpretation units proposed for the ground floor of the family residence.

INTERPRETATION UNITS	THEMES
entrance	<i>the Louis-S. St-Laurent birthplace</i>
living room	<i>the St-Laurent family</i>
bedroom	<i>Mary Ann Broderick, mother of Louis-S. St-Laurent</i>
family room	<i>Louis' youth and education</i>
dining room	<i>evolution of the St-Laurent home</i>
kitchen and storage room	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Compton in 1896</i>• <i>a village in permutation (1900-1910)</i>
summer kitchen and wood storage	<i>the Eastern townships</i>



**Plan of the interpretation units
proposed for inside the general
store and the warehouse**



Plan of the interprétation units proposed
for inside the general store
and the warehouse.

INTERPRETATION
UNITS

THEMES

general store

*Jean-Baptiste-Moïse St-Laurent,
general merchant*

warehouse

*Louis-S. St-Laurent:
two careers, one course*





THE INTERIOR OF THE GENERAL STORE CIRCA 1910-1915.
Seated behind the desk, Jean-Baptiste Moïse St-Laurent; behind the counter, Maurice St-Laurent, Louis' brother.

Conclusion

At the present stage of the programming, the Louis-S. St-Laurent National Historic Park should open its doors to the public in the summer of 1982. Like the Woodside House (W.L. Mackenzie King), the Bellevue House (Sir John A. Macdonald) or Laurier House (Sir Wilfrid Laurier), the Louis-S. St-Laurent National Historic Park will enable Canadians of all ages to become better acquainted with one of Canada's former Prime Ministers, a son of Compton who, at the age of a well-earned retirement, was to devote yet another fifteen years to serving his country.

**Research Work and
Conceptual Studies
Carried out by
Parks Canada**

**Research Work and
Conceptual Studies
Carried out by Parks Canada***

Historical Research

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Parcs Canada, Québec Region, *Compton in Retrospect*, 1981.

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Parcs Canada, Région du Québec, *Maison Louis-S. St-Laurent, Compton Rapport d'entretien préventif*, Jean-Claude Tardif, architecte, Sherbrooke, 1978, 26 p.

Parcs Canada, Région du Québec, *Maison Louis-S. St-Laurent, Compton Rapport d'étude du concept de restauration*, Jean-Claude Tardif, architecte, Sherbrooke, 1978, 87 p.

Parcs Canada, Région du Québec, *Maison Louis-S. St-Laurent, Compton Relevé « Rapport photos »*, Jean-Claude Tardif, architecte, Sherbrooke, 1978, 106 p.

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* All the works and studies mentioned here have been prepared as part of the Louis-S. St-Laurent National Historic Park development project. Most of these works will be available for consultation in the small documentation centre to be set up inside the new shed.

Published by authority of
the Minister of the Environment
Minister of Supply and
Services Canada 1981
QS-F126-000-BB-A1

Catalogue no. R64-105/5-1981
ISBN 0-662-51511-0

Canada