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Architectural History in Canada

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The Monumental and the Mundane: Architectural History in Canada

BUILDINGS OR ARCHITECTURE? Since 1943, when art historian Nikolaus Pevsner described a bicycle shed as a building while claiming the Lincoln Cathedral to be a work of architecture, the field of architectural history has been divided.[1] As well, there are a growing number of historians interested in both types of architecture who try to use the methods associated with vernacular architecture studies to explore any architecture, however monumental or mundane. In general, historians of high-style architecture tend to study architect-designed buildings and to draw on the traditional methods of art history. Vernacularists, on the other hand, typically explore more generic places and employ methods associated with geography, folklore, material culture and anthropology. Yet vernacular architecture is extremely difficult to define, and a central question for its increasing number of students is whether "vernacular" is intrinsic either to the subject at hand (favoured topics have been housing, rural architecture, industrial archaeology) or to the approaches developed to understand such places (usually involving alternative sources).[2] Indeed, scholars of vernacular architecture around the globe have spent a lot of time and ink in attempts to define their field of inquiry, whereas high-style architectural historians have felt little inclination to describe what they do as it is still considered the more mainstream branch of architectural history.

The high-style and vernacular camps are well represented by the two main professional organizations in architectural history as it has evolved in North America. The Society of Architectural Historians (SAH) is a 3,000-member professional association founded in 1940 and dedicated to "furthering the study, enjoyment, and preservation of architecture and its related arts". The more intimate (about 900 members) Vernacular Architecture Forum (VAF) was founded in 1980. In many ways a breakaway group from the SAH, the VAF emphasizes fieldwork in its publications, prizes and annual conferences. In a conscious reversal of the usual academic conference format, for example, the VAF annual meetings offer participants two days of intense field trips followed by a single day of academic papers.

A perusal of the journals published by the two organizations, the quarterly *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* and *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, a bi-annual selection of revised conference papers, gives an additional perspective on the two organizations. Although both associations claim to be international, their conference venues, publications and prizes reveal their mostly American-based interests. Many architectural historians belong to both groups, and

1 Nikolaus Pevsner, *An Outline of European Architecture* ([1943] London, 1978).

2 See Dell Upton, "The Power of Things: Recent Studies in American Vernacular Architecture", *American Quarterly,* 35, 3 (1983), pp. 262-79, "Ordinary Buildings: A Bibliographical Essay on American Vernacular Architecture", *American Studies International,* 19, 2 (Winter 1981), pp. 57-75, "Architectural History or Landscape History?", *Journal of Architectural History,* 44, 4 (August 1991), pp. 195-9, "Outside the Academy: A Century of Vernacular Architecture Studies, 1890-1990", in Elisabeth Blair MacDougall, ed., *The Architectural Historian in America* (Washington, 1990), pp. 199-213.

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both organizations have small contingents of Canadian members (in 1999 there were 87 Canadian SAH members and 22 members of VAF). Both organizations offer members informative newsletters, which include lists of grants, exhibitions, job openings and extremely useful bibliographies.

In Canada, the only professional organization devoted to architectural history is the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada (SSAC), founded in 1974. The association publishes the *Bulletin of the SSAC* and typically sponsors a special session devoted to Canadian topics during the annual conference of the SAH. Its own annual meeting is small by comparison, attracting about 60 or so participants from across the country. In general, Canadian scholars interested in the vernacular have tended to publish in journals which are not architectural per se: *Canadian Folklore canadien* (special issue on vernacular architecture), *Material History Review* (special issue on domestic spaces), *Urban History Review* (two special issues on housing) and journals with a regional focus, such as *Acadiensis*.[3] There are also occasional pieces on Canadian architectural history in the professional magazines: *The Canadian Architect*, *ARQ: Architecture-Québec* and the Montreal-based national student journal, *The Fifth Column*.

Interest in the field of architectural history among Canadians in general has been augmented considerably by the establishment of the Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) in Montreal, especially since the opening of its state-of-the-art museum and study centre in 1989. Despite its name, the Canadian Centre for Architecture is devoted to international architecture. One of the five broadly defined themes for its exhibitions, however, is "The Building of Canada". The CCA is also a major employer of architectural historians in Canada, competing with universities and government agencies for top graduates in the field. And its well-stocked library (frequently counted among the best architecture libraries in the world) and its archives have provided important resources for architectural research in Canada and abroad. The CCA's main focus is on monuments and on the careers of famous architects rather than on vernacular architecture. This is not surprising given the institution's mandate as a museum.[4]

The tension between the high-style and vernacular camps in Canada, similar to the fragmenting of other fields in the humanities, mostly comes down to disciplinary roots. Until very recently, most architectural historians in Canada were educated in art history departments rather than in professional schools of architecture. In fact, until 1998 there was no Ph.D. in Architecture offered by a Canadian university. Many architectural historians were schooled in France, Britain or the United States, or

3 See *Canadian Folklore canadien,* 17, 2 (1995), *Material History Review*, 44 (Fall 1996) and *Urban History Review*, XX, 2 (March 1997) and XXVI, 2 (March 1998). See also Susan Buggey, "Building Halifax, 1841-1871", *Acadiensis,* X, 1 (Autumn 1980), pp. 90-102 and Peter Ennals, "Of Data Sets and Mindsets – A Critical Review of Recent Writing on Canadian Architectural History", *Acadiensis,* XVI, 2 (Spring 1987), pp. 129-37.

4 An interesting exception to this emphasis, however, was in the Canadian Centre for Architecture exhibition and catalogue, "Opening the Gates of Eighteenth Century Montreal" which offered an extraordinary glimpse into 18th-century land use through state-of-the-art interactive technology. This innovative research based mainly on notarial records was carried out for several years following the initial exhibition by the Montréal Research Group. Good introductions to the Centre's collections and facilities are Larry Richards, ed., *Centre Canadien d'Architecture/Canadian Centre for Architecture: Buildings and Gardens* (Montreal, 1989) and the special issue of *RACAR (Revue d'art*

studied architecture only as it related to art.[5]

Since art historians, again speaking in the most general terms, tend to see the development of architecture as parallel to the history of painting and sculpture, art-historical approaches to architecture have thus focused on the great building programmes: the cathedrals rather than the parish churches, the corporate headquarters over the branch offices and the seigneurial manor over habitant dwellings. In Canada, public building programmes have received an extraordinary amount of scholarly attention, perhaps due to the relative accessibility of primary sources on the government's building activities, particularly at the National Archives of Canada, and the considerable architectural research supported by government bodies, such as Parks Canada.[6]

Carolyn A. Young, *The Glory of Ottawa: Canada's First Parliament Buildings* (Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995) and Janet Wright, *Crown Assets: The Architecture of the Department of Public Works, 1867-1967* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1997) demonstrate this trend. *The Glory of Ottawa* is an art-historical analysis of the famous 1859 design competition for Ottawa's Parliament Buildings. The book goes beyond a formal evaluation of the entries, however, and includes a fascinating look at the considerable corruption and plagiarism that occurred. *Crown Assets*, on the other hand, is more of a survey of government construction over a century, including post offices, federal office buildings, customs houses, military buildings, hospitals and other building types. *Crown Assets* is chronologically ordered and lavishly illustrated with photographs and original drawings. The central premise of the book, and an idea that it shares with *The Glory of Ottawa*, is that federal architecture is a lens through which the nation's architectural output can be read. Since it includes material on both monumental and ordinary government buildings, *Crown Assets* will be of interest to both high-style and vernacular architecture historians and will be extremely useful for teaching courses in Canadian architecture.

Generally speaking, art historians are also very interested in the role of the work (in this case the building) in the career of the artist (in this case the architect). For Canadian architectural history, this has meant an extraordinary emphasis on the lives of architects, especially those of the 19th century who are now appreciated as the "pioneers" of the profession. Wendy Mitchinson has described the consequences of physician-centred studies for her field in a review essay in *Acadiensis*, suggesting that such an approach limited medical history to "a case study of progress".[7] The same can be said of Canadian architectural history's focus on the "great" architects and their apparent innovations.

canadienne/Canadian Art Review), 16, 2 (1989). See also the catalogue from its inaugural exhibition, Eve Blau and Edward Kaufman, eds., *Architecture and Its Image* (Montreal, 1989).

5 A review of architectural education appears in *The Canadian Architect* (May 1998), pp. 24-9.

6 The Federal Heritage Building Review Office (FHBRO) was established in 1982 within the National Historic Sites Directorate of Parks Canada to evaluate and maintain significant federal buildings. By 1996, the FHBRO had evaluated 4,900 buildings. See acknowledgements in Wright, *Crown Assets*, p. vii.

7 Wendy Mitchinson, "Canadian Medical History: Diagnosis and Prognosis", *Acadiensis,* XII, 1 (Autumn 1982), p. 125.

Good examples of this biographical genre are plentiful. Toronto architect Robert Hill's ambitious project to produce "The Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada, 1800-1950" has undoubtedly inspired some of this work. Hill is extremely generous with the vast amount of primary source documentation he has collected over the past 15 years or so. Nearly every monograph on a Canadian architect begins with an acknowledgement of his help.[8]

A second source of inspiration for many Canadian scholars is probably Kelly Crossman's *Architecture in Transition: From Art to Practice, 1885-1906* (Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), a relatively well-balanced account of the development of the profession in Canada. Drawn mostly from accounts that appeared in the sole architectural journal of the time, *Canadian Architect and Builder*, as well as from documents related to professional associations in Quebec and Ontario, the book focuses on three central debates – around professionalism, nationalism and technology – in these crucial decades of transition, rather than on the lives of individual architects (although the hero-architects of Toronto and Montreal appear throughout). The overall argument in *Architecture in Transition* is that the architectural profession changed from "a skill rooted in the artistic traditions of western Europe to a profession dependent on the techniques of science and managerial theories of modern business" (p. 4). Crossman's focus on Toronto and Montreal results in Western Canada being treated superficially and with Atlantic Canada barely being mentioned.

Interest in contemporary Canadian architects considered to have achieved "world-class" status, most notably Arthur Erickson and Moshe Safdie, has been growing. Erickson has been the subject of several monographs as well as his own autobiography.[9] And Safdie is a one-man industry. He has written at least eight books about his own work and is the subject of a recent prize-winning monograph and CD-ROM, *Moshe Safdie: Buildings and Projects, 1967-1992* (Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), edited by Irena Zantovska Murray. The book is an interesting survey of the first 25 years of Safdie's practice, since he first burst onto the architectural scene with his revolutionary design for Habitat '67. The volume is also a fascinating case study of the organization of a late 20th-century architect's archive. In 1990 Safdie donated an enormous collection of architectural documentation (more than 100,000 drawings) to McGill University's Canadian Architecture Collection, a major archive of the nation's architecture, founded by John Bland in the 1970s.[10] Following the introductory essay by Bland and another on Safdie in Israel by Robert Oxman, the book is mostly a reference guide to the 115 projects which comprise his work in this quarter-century. Each design project is portrayed briefly in one to two pages, illustrated with a few sketches and photographs and described in terms of its documentation within the archive. For example, one of

8 See Geoffrey Simmins, *Fred Cumberland: Building the Victorian Dream* (Toronto, 1997), Angela Carr, *Toronto Architect Edmund Burke: Redefining Canadian Architecture* (Montreal, 1995) and Isabelle Gournay, ed., *Ernest Cormier and the Université de Montréal* (Montréal, 1990).

9 See, for example, Arthur Erickson, *The Architecture of Arthur Erickson* (Montreal, 1975).

10 Bland was among the first to teach Canadian architectural history in a professional school. His slide collection and course material, "Building Canada", are available on-line at <http://blackader.library.mcgill.ca/cac/bland/building>. Other major archives include the Canadian Centre for Architecture and the Canadian Architectural Archives at the University of Calgary. A

Safdie's best known projects, the National Gallery of Canada, has been documented through more than 4,300 drawings, 33 models and 103 photos. In fact, 69 per cent of the drawings of the National Gallery project in the Canadian Architecture Collection pertain to the construction phase of that building. *Moshe Safdie: Buildings and Projects* is thus an invaluable guide to students and researchers studying particular projects. It is also a compelling case study for archivists struggling with the sheer quantity of material produced by contemporary architects. The casual reader, however, interested in Safdie's work, modernism, contemporary practice or a host of other topics, may find the reference information less relevant.

No doubt the current generation of up and coming superstars, such as John and Patricia Patkau of Vancouver, Toronto's Brigitte Shim, Dan Hanganu of Montreal and Brian MacKay-Lyons of Halifax will inspire new books about their work too. The Patkaus and MacKay-Lyons have already been featured in the stunning series "Documents in Canadian Architecture", published by TUNS Press. *Patkau Architects: Selected Projects, 1983-1993* (Halifax, TUNS Press, 1994) and *Brian MacKay-Lyons: Selected Projects, 1986-1997* (Halifax, TUNS Press, 1998) both emphasize the evolution of a firm's or an architect's work, documenting individual projects in photographs as well as including the plans, sections, elevations, perspectives and details of the buildings. Such publications are devoured by architectural students, who often look for inspiration for their own studio projects in innovative contemporary practices. In this regard, the working methods of both the Patkau office and MacKay-Lyons are particularly accessible to students, since these architects have looked in imaginative ways to the vernacular traditions of their respective regions for inspiration. MacKay-Lyons begins his essay in *Brian MacKay-Lyons*, in fact, with Pevsner's famous quote, expressing his concern over the limits of such a definition: "As a young student of architecture, I became suspicious of Pevsner's definition of architecture – it leaves much unexplained" (p. 15).

This focus by Canadian architectural historians on the careers of architects has had an impact on exhibitions as much as on book publishing. Two recent shows mounted by the Canadian Centre for Architecture illuminate exciting chapters in the history of the Canadian architectural profession. "Montréal Métropole/Montreal Metropolis" (Canadian Centre for Architecture, 1998) curated by Isabelle Gournay and France Vanlaethem, which ran from March to May 1998 and appeared subsequently at the National Gallery of Canada, looked at the architectural scene in Montreal from 1880 to 1930 through the work of famous designers and the evolution of modern building types. An earlier exhibition, "The New Spirit", curated by Rhordi Windsor Liscombe, highlighted the development of "Modernism" in Vancouver.[11] In both exhibitions, Canadian architects appeared as great arbiters of modern culture, innovators of technology and skilled business persons.

This emphasis on the lives of "great" architects has also been affected, in no small way, by the ambivalent relationship between the field of architectural history and the architectural profession in Canada. Among the chief "consumers" of architectural

recent publication from the Canadian Architectural Archives is *Twelve Modern Houses, 1945-1985* by Graham Livesey, Michael McMordie and Geoffrey Simmins (Calgary, 1995).

11 See Isabelle Gournay and France Vanlaethem, dirs./eds., *Montréal Métropole (*Montréal, 1998)/ *Montreal Metropolis*, 1880-1930 (Toronto, 1998) and Rhordi Windsor Liscombe, ed., *The New Spirit: Modern Architecture in Vancouver, 1938-1963* (Montreal and Vancouver, 1997).

history in Canada (outside departments of art history) are the country's ten schools of architecture. These professional programmes, whose curricula are determined in part by provincial architectural associations and a North American accreditation board, have had to grapple with whether the history of architecture should be taught by architects who have often had an amateurish interest in the field or by art historians who usually have little hands-on experience with buildings. As a result, there often is no clear answer to the perennial questions concerning what students of architecture should study – the great monuments of the past or the ways in which ordinary places reflect cultural interests. These questions are not new but, in fact, were central to architectural education before the founding of Canada's first professional programme at the University of Toronto in 1890.

Two important aspects of Canadian vernacular architecture studies were pioneered by an architect turned historian earlier this century – an emphasis on rigorous fieldwork and the appreciation of regional identities in Canadian architecture. Ramsay Traquair, director of the School of Architecture at McGill University from 1913 to 1939, took generations of architecture students out in the field in order to record the architecture of New France. Many of these drawings of houses and churches were published in Traquair's pioneering book, *The Old Architecture of Quebec* (1947).[12]

Few other Canadian architects have embraced the value of painstaking fieldwork in the tradition of Traquair. Eric Arthur's life-long study of Ontario architecture is probably the only contender. Arthur's classic *Toronto: No Mean City* (1964), revised and expanded by Stephen A. Otto 22 years later (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1986), is still the best architectural history of Canada's largest city. Arthur traces the architectural evolution of the metropolis from a network of ancient trails to the burgeoning modern city of 1900. Nostalgic for buildings destroyed in the name of "progress", the tone of *Toronto: No Mean City* is both romantic and didactic. And two of the book's three appendices, brief biographical entries on architects, builders and contractors, will endure as one of the most useful reference works in the field, to be eclipsed only by Robert Hill's much-anticipated dictionary.

More recently, the onus to explain our everyday landscapes, particularly rural places, has fallen on geographers and folklorists, rather than on architects or even architectural historians. Thomas F. McIlwraith's *Looking for Old Ontario: Two Centuries of Landscape Change* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1997) is among the best of these. In addition to presenting a passionate argument against seeing Canada's most populous province as dull, the book is a four-part introductory geography lesson on how to read the landscape, inspired by the likes of J.B. Jackson and William G. Hoskins. Landscapes can reveal lives. Changes to structures disclose phases of development between a building's conception and the present. McIlwraith asserts that fields, houses and fences can be understood as large-scale artifacts of material culture. The book also includes good specific local information. Among the many fascinating topics covered by McIlwraith are, for example, the provincial system of land survey and place naming, the variety of Ontario fence types and Ontarians' penchant for building in brick. The reader gets a sense that the author has really experienced every place he writes about – an essential aspect of vernacular

12 Ramsay Traquair, *The Old Architecture of Québec: A Study of the Buildings Erected in New France From the Earliest Explorers to the Middle of the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto, 1947).

architecture studies – by the fact that he himself took most of the photos which he uses to illustrate his points. However, both rural and urban historians may be disappointed by the scope of McIlwraith's study. He purposely has left out discussions of major cities and collapses rural Ontario into 40 counties.

Peter Ennals and Deryck Holdsworth, *Homeplace: The Making of the Canadian Dwelling over Three Centuries* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1998) is destined to become a classic in the literature on the Canadian house. A much-expanded version of their 1981 *Acadiensis* article, "Vernacular Architecture and the Cultural Landscape of the Maritime Provinces", the book looks at the development of ordinary housing across the country during the eras of mercantile and industrial capitalism. In addition to surveying the complex history of domestic architecture across Canada to about 1930, a major intention of *Homeplace* is to quarrel with the categories of traditional architectural history. Geographers by education, Ennals and Holdsworth are clearly frustrated with the exclusivity of a discipline which, well into the 1970s, privileged the designs of architects over buildings by "regular folk". As interpreters of the broader "cultural landscape", Ennals and Holdsworth are far more interested in ordinary dwellings than mansions and have thus attempted to produce what they describe as a more "balanced approach to the study of housing form in Canada" (p. 13).[13]

The authors spend considerable time establishing a sophisticated theoretical context for their bottom-up approach, which relies heavily on the work of American and British folklorists and geographers, especially Henry Glassie and Ronald Brunskill. And they argue at length for the conceptual division of Canadian homes into four distinct types: polite, folk, vernacular and gang. Whereas most scholars of ordinary buildings would lump "folk" and "vernacular" together, Ennals and Holdsworth argue that vernacular should occupy a middle ground between polite (academic, high-style) and folk (local materials, oral traditions). The basic argument is that from the 1650s to the 1920s there has been a general dwindling of the folk tradition and an escalation of so-called vernacular forms in Canada. In their survey of Canadian houses to illustrate this thesis, Ennals and Holdsworth emphasize social and economic factors in housing, rather than formal or aesthetic ones. And not surprisingly, *Homeplace* focuses on houses of Atlantic Canada.

The sheer diversity of the Canadian built environment has made attempts to synthesize the various architectural traditions extremely difficult. However, the authors of some survey texts have made a valiant effort to do so. Alan Gowans, *Building Canada: An Architectural History of Canadian Life*, the 1964 revised version of his 1958 *Looking at Architecture*, is a good example. One of my personal favourites is his *Images of American Living* (1964), one of the few surveys which attempts to look at North American architecture and includes everything from furniture to city plans.[14]

Harold Kalman's two-volume *A History of Canadian Architecture* (Toronto,

13 See also Peter Ward, *A History of Domestic Space: Privacy and the Canadian Home* (Vancouver, 1999).

14 Alan Gowans, *Looking at Canadian Architecture* (Toronto, 1958), *Building Canada: An Architectural History of Canadian Life* (Toronto, 1966) and *Images of American Living: Four Centuries of Architecture and Furniture as Cultural Expression* (Philadelphia, 1964).

Oxford University Press, 1994), which won the prestigious Sir John A. Macdonald Prize from the Canadian Historical Association in 1995, is the first comprehensive survey since Gowans's pioneering books. Useful as a text for teaching or as a reference tool, Kalman's volumes are less compelling than other surveys of a nation's building activities as he falls back on well-worn chronological and stylistic categories, especially in the chapters on the 19th century.[15] A preservationist by profession, Kalman traces the history of Canadian buildings from the Iroquoian longhouse to the post-modernism of the 1980s in two volumes, with more than 900 pages of text and nearly 900 illustrations. He argues that there are distinctly Canadian features to our architecture. Builders' houses, for example, are less likely to be brightly coloured here than in the United States. He also argues that natural forms and local materials have been more respected in Canada than in other places. Given the importance to our economy, Kalman sees the resource towns that developed near the sites of forest and mineral extraction as a particularly Canadian form. In general, he suggests that Canadians have simplified models adapted from other places and that we have excelled in the architectural resolution of social issues. These are welcome assertions in a field that has seen few commentators as broadly conversant with the country's architecture as Kalman.[16]

The general tendency towards regionalism in Canadian architectural studies has perhaps been most pronounced in the literature on Quebec architecture, whose authors have contributed to both the vernacular and art-historical literature. Two new books are particularly notable in this regard: Marc Grignon, *Loing du Soleil: Architectural Practice in Quebec City during the French Regime* (New York, Peter Lang, 1997) and Claude Bergeron and Geoffrey Simmins, *L'abbaye de Saint-Benoit-du-Lac et ses batisseurs* (Québec, Les presses de l'université Laval, 1997). *Loing du Soleil* looks at the dynamic relations of builders and clients in the capital of New France in 1661-1715. A revised version of the author's dissertation at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, this book is a thorough study of the various sources on three major building projects: Notre-Dame cathedral, the Recollet monastery and the Ursuline convent. A fourth chapter looks at the production of urban houses by three architect-builders. Essentially a guided tour of the complicated documents associated with the production of architecture at this time, *Loing du Soleil* lacks an overarching argument. The material impact of social tensions between architect and client, the pressure to use architecture as an expression of prestige and the social role of architecture as cultural mediator are interesting sub-themes in the book, but these are never fully explored. Overall, *Loing du Soleil* remains a better thesis than a book.

Bergeron and Simmins, *L'abbaye de Saint-Benoit-du-Lac et ses batisseurs* is a more concentrated study of a single institution's architectural development – the abbey of Saint-Benoit near Magog in Quebec's Eastern Townships. As such, it is typical of the second most popular genre of study in the field after the architect's

15 Dell Upton's *Architecture of the United States* (New York, 1998) is especially good at combining high-style and vernacular subjects. Upton organizes his survey around innovative and pivotal themes in America's architectural development.

16 I wrote a more detailed review of Kalman for the *Canadian Historical Review,* 78, 3 (September 1997), pp. 525-8. See also Harold Kalman, *A Concise History of Canadian Architecture* (Toronto, 2000).

biography, the detailed monograph on an individual building. These are frequently institutional histories, and more often than not they serve to call attention to a building that has received little scholarly attention, or that, in the case of Saint-Benoit, is difficult to understand in terms of mainstream architectural development. J. Philip McAleer, *A Pictorial History of St. Paul's Anglican Church, Halifax, Nova Scotia* (Halifax, Resource Centre Publications, 1993) is another example of this same type. McAleer's sources, however, as his title indicates, are visual rather than written. Indeed, the book is organized chronologically through 47 engravings, paintings, watercolours and photographs, which present "snapshots" of the 250-year-old building. These are enriched by elaborate notes drawn from an impressive array of primary source documents.

The literature on Ontario, generally speaking, sees more emphasis on architectural biography as well as architectural "heritage", illustrated by the extraordinary number of books dealing with the buildings of bygone times sometimes illustrated with romantic photographs and drawings. The literature on the Prairies stands out for its growing emphasis on the architectural traditions of ethnic groups, especially Mennonites and Ukrainians. Noteworthy too is Donald Wetherell and Irene Kmet, *Homes in Alberta*, which is among the most sophisticated studies of regional housing in the country.[17] Liscombe, Kalman and Holdsworth have contributed a number of important concentrated studies on the architecture of British Columbia, which contribute to our understanding of both monumental and ordinary environments.

The literature on Atlantic Canada does not necessarily reflect these national trends; it is much stronger on the vernacular side of things. This is probably due to both the architectural traditions of the region (rural, folksy, anti-urban, picturesque) noted by Ian McKay in *The Quest of the Folk*, as well as to the relative scarcity of architects in Eastern Canada. In 1991, for example, only 335 of Canada's 7,567 registered architects lived in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland.[18] This emphasis on the study of ordinary places may also have something to do with the relative strength of academic programmes which focus on folklore. Following the revolutionary example set by American folklorist Henry Glassie, publications such as Gerald Pocius, *A Place to Belong: Community Order and Everyday Space in Calvert, Newfoundland* (Athens, University of Georgia Press and Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991) provides an intimate portrait of small communities. Richard MacKinnon's work belongs to this same school.[19] Also, the popularity and preservation of Louisbourg, Lunenburg and other picturesque spots in Atlantic Canada as tourist destinations have resulted in an abundance of publications documenting and interpreting these sites.

Mary K. MacLeod and James O. St. Clair, *No Place Like Home* (Sydney, University College of Cape Breton Press, 1992) and *Pride of Place: The Life and*

17 Donald Wetherell and Irene Kmet, *Homes in Alberta: Building, Trends and Design, 1870-1967* (Edmonton, 1991).

18 See Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimoderism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal and Kingston, 1994). Statistical data is drawn from Annmarie Adams and Peta Tancred, *Designing Women: Gender and the Architectectural Profession* (Toronto, 2000).

19 MacKinnon's introduction in *Canadian Folklore canadien*, 17, 2 (1995), pp. 5-7, 8-11, notes the critical relation between folklore and vernacular architecture.

Times of Cape Breton Heritage Houses (Sydney, University College of Cape Breton Press, 1994) are typical of books published on the houses of Atlantic Canada (in this case Cape Breton), which tend to emphasize the intimate connection between the architectural forms and the lives of inhabitants. Like the literature on neighbouring New England, the fact that houses in this region have stayed in families for generations has had a significant impact on both the preservation and the interpretation of domestic spaces. In most of these cases, architecture acts as a mere illustration to social and family history, rather than as a tool of historical analysis. Mary Byers and Margaret McBurney, *Atlantic Hearth* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1994) is part guidebook and part genealogy and is also a good representative of this genre.[20]

A third type of book which is quite prevalent among Canadian architectural histories is the documentation of an individual "style", especially those of the 19th century. As noted by Peter Ennals, the fact that the Canadian Inventory of Historic Buildings (CIHB) describes and categorizes structures according to "style" has perhaps encouraged the proliferation of style-based studies. These privilege architectural form, and hence can be described as formalist. This type, represented in Ennals's account by the monographs from Parks Canada's Studies in Archaeology, Architecture and History, is considered quite old-fashioned, even reactionary, by today's academic standards.

Gregg Finley and Lynn Wigginton, *On Earth as it is in Heaven* (Fredericton, Goose Lane, 1995), a study of Gothic Revival church architecture in New Brunswick, is a focused exploration of a style through a single building type in one province. John Medley built 100 churches in his tenure as Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Fredericton (which included all of New Brunswick) from 1845 to 1892 and "Gothicized" countless others. Finley and Wigginton's large format book is a cultural history of Medley's influence, but with a heavy dose of contemporary Christian fervour. "The arch points to heaven; it captures the inspiration of the pilgrim seeking to embrace the wonder of the divine mystery, to experience something of heaven on earth", explain the authors in the first chapter. Then they proceed to criticize the existing literature on Gothic Revival architecture as too "secular".

The numerous illustrations in the book are equally problematic. There are no photographs or measured drawings, which might allow the reader to comprehend the scale, spatial arrangements, method of construction, systems of circulation and other features of the churches. *On Earth as it is in Heaven* relies exclusively on the paintings and drawings of artist Lynn Wigginton. While these rather romantic images make for an attractive tome, they offer little in terms of objective architectural information. Both the text and the images in this way "celebrate" more than analyze Medley's churches. And even beyond the singular perspective offered by the paintings is the fact that *On Earth as it is in Heaven* relies on comparative illustrations as evidence of stylistic change. Wigginton presents windows, doorways and porches, for example, from diverse buildings, completely divorced from their surroundings, in

20 Similar studies have been done on Prince Edward Island building types and styles. See H.M. Scott Smith, *A Light in the Field: Lighthouses, Fishery Buildings, Barns and Mills of Prince Edward Island* (Fredericton, 1997), *The Historic Churches of Prince Edward Island* (Toronto, 1986) and *The Historic Houses of Prince Edward Island* (Erin, Ontario, 1990).

order to show change over time. This technique privileges form over context and scale and has thus fallen from favour. It was the foundation of Banister Fletcher's *History of Architecture on the Comparative Method*, first published in 1896. Perhaps the most useful aspect of the book, in terms of an academic study, is the list of 99 surviving "Medleyan" churches, which may encourage readers to visit the buildings and find out for themselves the information missing in the paintings. Another contribution of the book is its attempt to understand Canadian Gothic Revival architecture in the context of the broader international movement of ecclesiological reform, which has spawned a rich literature in the last decade.

In conclusion, there are only a handful of books which embrace the "big picture" of the Canadian architectural scene. Perhaps because of this scarcity, courses in Canadian architecture are extremely difficult to teach. In art history departments, generally speaking, the built environment is lumped in with painting and sculpture. The emphasis in these courses is on stylistic conformity and the sheer "beauty" of Canadian architecture. In schools of architecture, even the Canadian survey is often relegated to the status of an elective, often taught by interested architects, rather than professional architectural historians. Specialized seminars in Canadian subjects, as one finds on American topics at American universities, are virtually unheard of. This may change as more and more Canadians stay here to undertake their graduate studies. One thing is certain. At the turn of the millennium, the bicycle sheds and cathedrals of Canada remain worlds apart.

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