

# Commemorative Expectations The Mixed-Economy Model of the Maud Lewis Painted House Preservation, 1970-1998

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Article abstract

*This article examines the contested commemoration of the self-taught Digby County painter Maud Lewis (1903-1970) by focusing specifically on the fate of her Marshalltown home. Following Lewis's death in 1970, the "painted house" became a site of contest between the local community, government stakeholders, and corporate interests. The eventual installation of the house at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia in Halifax demonstrates that the corporate influence on the AGNS and the history of neoliberal development in Nova Scotia filled the gap in federal and provincial arts funding that would have once provided assistance for such community-level initiatives as the Marshalltown conservation of the painted house.*

# Commemorative Expectations: The Mixed-Economy Model of the Maud Lewis Painted House Preservation, 1970-1998

ERIN MORTON

*Cet article examine la commémoration disputée de la peintre autodidacte Maud Lewis (1903-1970), du comté de Digby, en s'intéressant spécifiquement au sort de sa maison de Marshalltown. Après la mort de Lewis en 1970, la « maison peinte » fit l'objet d'un différend entre la population locale, les intervenants gouvernementaux et des entreprises privées. L'installation subséquente de la maison au Musée des beaux-arts de la Nouvelle-Écosse à Halifax démontre que l'influence des entreprises sur le Musée et l'histoire de l'essor du néolibéralisme en Nouvelle-Écosse ont comblé les lacunes du financement provincial et fédéral des arts qui, autrefois, aurait procuré une aide financière à des initiatives communautaires telles que la préservation de la maison peinte de Marshalltown.*

*This article examines the contested commemoration of the self-taught Digby County painter Maud Lewis (1903-1970) by focusing specifically on the fate of her Marshalltown home. Following Lewis's death in 1970, the "painted house" became a site of contest between the local community, government stakeholders, and corporate interests. The eventual installation of the house at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia in Halifax demonstrates that the corporate influence on the AGNS and the history of neoliberal development in Nova Scotia filled the gap in federal and provincial arts funding that would have once provided assistance for such community-level initiatives as the Marshalltown conservation of the painted house.*

FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF THE SELF-TAUGHT Digby County painter Maud Lewis in 1970, a series of debates erupted around the ways in which her artwork should be commemorated locally and in the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia's (AGNS) permanent collection in Halifax. While these debates concerned the first permanent installation of Lewis's work in a public museum, they also arose from the attention Lewis received in national public history channels such as the National Film Board and the CBC throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Specifically, they concerned not only the level of government, corporate, and community sponsorship that installations of her work would receive, but also the extent to which the provincial gallery should be involved in settling Lewis's private estate after her husband Everett's death in 1979. And, while the AGNS had built its institutional image around the category of folk art in Nova Scotia by then, when it came to Maud Lewis the gallery focused

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**Figure 1: View of the Lewis house with decorated painted exterior and interior, as installed at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax, c. 2013.**

Source: AGNS.

primarily on determining the commemorative fate of the her Marshalltown home rather than on the panel board paintings that made her famous in middle- and upper-class private collecting circles in urban Halifax and the United States.<sup>1</sup> Throughout

<sup>1</sup> The reasons for this are complex but arise from the fact that the AGNS largely built its folk art collection through the holdings of a private US-based collector named Christopher Huntington, who relocated to Nova Scotia in the early 1970s. Huntington began collecting the work of self-taught

the 1950s and 1960s, Maud Lewis had painted the house, inside and out, with the same characteristic elements of her panel board paintings that showcase the flora and fauna of Digby County (see Figure 1). These decorative motifs led the former AGNS director, Bernard Riordon, to describe the Lewis house as “a living artwork in itself” – one that would ultimately necessitate the involvement of the provincial gallery in order to preserve and display it on professional museum terms.<sup>2</sup> The AGNS, however, was not the only interested party. Local public history makers in Marshalltown also understood the significance of her life and her house as a cultural and economic legacy.<sup>3</sup> The commemoration of Lewis’s life and art, therefore, became a contest among community, government, and, indeed, corporate interests to shape what she had meant for her locale and her province.

In the late 1990s the AGNS first began promoting Maud Lewis as “Canada’s best loved folk artist,” building on widely circulated public interpretations of her work in newspaper and magazine articles, on television, and in documentary films decades earlier – interpretations that helped ensure that her work is now highly regarded in artistic and public history circles alike.<sup>4</sup> The history of the painted house’s contested

artists in Nova Scotia around this time, and after Maud Lewis had already passed away. Since he tended to collect directly from artists Huntington did not amass a large collection of her work during this period, although he would later purchase several Lewis paintings. The AGNS is now the most active collector of Lewis’s paintings, and her work remains underrepresented in other public art gallery collections in Canada – if it is there at all. For more on the relationship between Huntington and the AGNS’s folk art collection, see Erin Morton, *Historical Presenting: The Place of Folk Art in Late Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, forthcoming). This article has benefitted from the readings and suggestions of several people. I would like to begin by thanking the three anonymous reviewers of this article, whose feedback has improved my arguments significantly. Thanks are also due to the careful eyes of my colleagues at the University of New Brunswick and St. Thomas University, including Jennifer Andrews, Michael Boudreau, and David Frank for their help with earlier versions of this text. I am likewise indebted to readings by Bill Parenteau and Timothy Pearson, which helped to shape this article in its final form.

2 Bernard Riordon, quoted in Lisa Courtney, “Maude Lewis House Becomes Cultural Artifact,” *The Picaro* (Mount Saint Vincent University student newspaper, Halifax, 1 November 1984), Maud Lewis Painted House Society – Historical/General, AGNS.

3 The term “public history makers” here refers to recent historiographic literature that historians Ian McKay and Robin Bates summarize as critiquing the transnational development of public history as “a politics of the past – inventing traditions, imposing interpretations that suited the ruling order, marginalizing alternative accounts, and highlighting the continuous national traditions that supposedly shaped every citizen.” See McKay and Bates, *In the Province of History: The Making of the Public Past in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010), 21. Some recent titles on these debates over public history in the Canadian context include Alan Gordon, *Making Public Pasts: The Contested Terrain of Montreal’s Public Memories, 1891-1930* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001); H.V. Nelles, *The Art of Nation-Building: Pageantry and Spectacle at Quebec’s Tercentenary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); and Ronald Rudin, *Remembering and Forgetting in Acadie: A Historian’s Journey through Public Memory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009).

4 Bernard Riordon, “Director’s Report,” in *Art Gallery of Nova Scotia Annual Report, 1998-1999* (Halifax: AGNS, 1999), 4. For more on the development of Lewis’s folk artist persona in and beyond Nova Scotia prior to the AGNS’s capitalization of her image in the 1990s, see Erin Morton, “Ordinary Affects: Folk Art, Maud Lewis, and the Social Aesthetics of the Everyday,” *Journal of Canadian Art History/Annales d’histoire de l’art canadien* 34, no. 2 (2013): 81-107. This is a special issue on the Canadian Women’s Art History Initiative, guest edited by Kristina Huneault and Janice Anderson.

commemoration in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, however, is less well known. Examining the AGNS's involvement in the painted house's restoration and preservation reveals the parameters within which folk art itself became an important artistic category in museum circles at this time.<sup>5</sup> This development in Nova Scotia can be traced back to the AGNS's inaugural exhibition in 1976, *Folk Art of Nova Scotia*, which displayed a selection of works – among them paintings by Maud and Everett Lewis – drawn from private collectors in the province.<sup>6</sup> While this exhibit focused exclusively on contemporary self-taught artists working in Nova Scotia, situating them in a way that curators described as “outside the mainstream of contemporary art,” it also followed broader trends in art museum displays of the period across North America, which inserted the work of self-taught producers into a milieu generally reserved for academically trained artists.<sup>7</sup> In Canada, for example, the well-known curator and art historian J. Russell Harper mounted an expansive exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada in 1973 entitled *People's Art: Naïve Art in Canada*. In gathering together examples of self-taught regional cultural expression – Harper decidedly understood Canadian “regions” as those places located outside of urban central Canada – *People's Art* established the precedent that works drawn from what Harper called “the social and cultural panorama of ordinary men” were also viable museum objects for elite art audiences.<sup>8</sup> In the United States, prominent exhibitions such as the Brooklyn Museum's 1976 *Folk Sculpture USA* included what *Artforum* critic Amy Goldin referred to as “pretty, fanciful and old-timey work, but many large scale, emotionally intense pieces.”<sup>9</sup> Importantly, much like *Folk Art of Nova Scotia*, *Folk Sculpture USA* was explicitly designed “to show that folk tradition is not exclusively of the past or the world of antiques.”<sup>10</sup>

5 It is important to mention Ian McKay's seminal text *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994) here in order to situate my discussion of folk art within an established historiography of hegemonic cultural producers' construction of Nova Scotians as a simpler, more idyllic people. While McKay concludes this study in the late 1970s and early 1980s, this research suggests that the dissemination of folk ideology continued well into the 21st century. See also the special forum on *The Quest of the Folk* in *Acadiensis* XXVI, no. 1 (Autumn 2005): 132-57.

6 The provincial government of Nova Scotia formalized the AGNS as an institution with the *Art Gallery of Nova Scotia Act* on 9 December 1975. Prior to this the gallery was known as the Nova Scotia Museum of Fine Arts, even though it had no permanent exhibition space or formal organizational structure. It existed as a volunteer society, which was established under a provincial government charter on 16 April 1908 and which maintained a small permanent collection of artworks.

7 Marie Elwood, “Introduction,” in *Folk Art of Nova Scotia* (Halifax: AGNS, 1976), 10.

8 J. Russell Harper, *A People's Art: Primitive, Naïve, Provincial and Folk Painting in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 42. For more on this seminal exhibition and on the late 20th-century use of the folk art category in Canadian museum circles, see Erin Morton, “Bordering the Vernacular: J. Russell Harper and the Pursuit of a ‘People's Art,’” *Journal of Canadian Art History/Annales d'histoire de l'art canadien* 34, no. 1 (2013): 84-125.

9 Amy Goldin, “Problems in Folk Art,” *Artforum* 14, no. 6 (June 1976): 48, quoted in Julia Ardery, *The Temptation: Edgar Tolson and the Genesis of Twentieth-Century Folk Art* (Durham, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 216.

10 “The Aims of This Exhibition,” Exhibitions: “Folk Sculpture U.S.A.,” 1976, untitled typescript, Records of the Department of Painting and Sculpture, Brooklyn Museum Archives, quoted in Ardery, *Temptation*, 216.

Lewis, like many artists labeled “folk” by art museums such as the AGNS, had an active career in her local community as a cultural producer long before she was supposedly “discovered” by art world experts. In Lewis’s case, the folk art category was a way for public history makers to narrate her role as a cultural producer who worked outside of established art world systems of exchange. Beginning in the late 1950s, Lewis sold small panel board paintings to Digby County residents, Halifax-based and US art collectors, and tourist passersby alike from her Marshalltown home and as a door-to-door peddler with husband Everett. Her reputation expanded in 1964, when CBC radio conducted an interview with her for the program *Trans-Canada Matinee*. In 1965, Toronto’s *Star Weekly* magazine published a feature article on Lewis that included several reproductions of her artwork as well as photographs of the Lewises in their Marshalltown home. CBC television produced a piece on Lewis for the series *Telescope* later that same year, which explored Maud and Everett’s life in Marshalltown as a means to contextualize the rural subject matter of her paintings. By the time Maud Lewis died in 1970, she enjoyed moderate public recognition through these public history avenues and with private art collectors far and wide even if the recognition of her work in a public art museum was still years away.<sup>11</sup>

This article suggests that it took the economic crisis of the 1970s and 1980s to elevate folk art to the status of museum object in Nova Scotia.<sup>12</sup> Specifically, the impact of neoliberal economic restructuring created the conditions necessary to solidify folk art as a cultural concept since focusing on the cultural output of rural life in various North American regions advanced the notion that these areas were traditional, poor, isolated, and community-bound and thus failing to keep pace with post-Keynesian capitalist modernity.<sup>13</sup> The increased liberalization of transnational capital had a profound effect on the cultural sector in Nova Scotia, as it did elsewhere. Folk art provided a way to understand the material and ideological consequences of a rapidly changing late-capitalist landscape that witnessed deregulation and privatization on a grand scale. Museums’ folding in of the self-taught – those producers commonly understood as possessing “creativity without credentials” in sociologist Gary Alan Fine’s words – thus largely amounted to an exercise in cultural expediency shaped by crisis.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the neoliberal era’s ushering in of a second “museum age” beginning at the end of the 20th century made

11 For more on Maud Lewis’s coverage by the CBC, as well as on the gendered dynamic of Everett and Maud’s treatment in public history circles, see Morton, “Ordinary Affects,” 89-92.

12 The genesis of folk art in Nova Scotia has a much longer history, however, even if it was one that most often existed outside the art gallery setting. See McKay’s first chapter of *The Quest of the Folk*, “The Idea of the Folk,” 3-42, for more on the emergence of folkloric discourse in modern culture and in terms of its particular emergence in Nova Scotia during the early 20th century.

13 Rebecca Overmyer-Velázquez, *Folkloric Poverty: Neoliberal Multiculturalism in Mexico* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 7.

14 Gary Alan Fine, *Everyday Genius: Self-Taught Art and the Culture of Authenticity* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 55. For more on the concept of the transnational use of culture as an expedient resource in economic, social, and political development under neoliberalism, see George Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003).

folk art a particularly useful category. The first “museum age” (1840-1920) saw the public museum become an established institution of liberal capitalist modernity through architectural references to classical temples, encyclopedic renderings of collections touted as universal representations of culture, racialized/gendered/class-based categorizations of “high” versus “low” culture, and reliance on private and public funding for the advancement of its prestige. The second “museum age,” by contrast, defined itself by detaching the museum’s institutional ties to the universities that originally helped to shape it and by focusing on the combining of intellectual pursuits with the economic benefits of culture, often by tapping into corporate sponsorship in more direct ways. In addition, as museums scrambled to survive government funding cuts throughout the late 1990s, the global art market had itself followed a larger market pattern by reaching a precipice in the 1980s and collapsing on itself just as the dot.com busts that also marked this era of corporate capitalism.<sup>15</sup>

The relationship between folk art and neoliberalism in Nova Scotia was therefore both particular to the province and reflective of the advancement of neoliberal states across North America more generally, as they became less embedded in national systems of capitalist accumulation. This new approach, in short, moved away from the Keynesian “compromise” between capital and labour, where states interceded in industrial policy through welfare systems and by determining standards for wage labour, and towards a form of “flexible” capitalist accumulation that depended on forced privatization, the restoration of power to economic elites, and a commitment to the ideals of personal freedom.<sup>16</sup> At the museum level this meant that art museums across Canada became more dependent on corporate funding than they had in the past, even if the funding of public cultural institutions in this country has always represented a mixed-economy model that has combined private and public sponsorship since the early 20th century.<sup>17</sup> And, while it predates the neoliberal era, folk art was a novel object category for a neoliberalizing museum such as the AGNS to make use of since it appealed to many of the cultural tenets of neoliberal ideology itself, among them self-sufficiency, the reduction of professionalized work practice, and the branding of art in the service of the economy.

The AGNS’s negotiation for the Lewises’ painted house between 1970 and 1998

15 While the neoliberal era of museum building has been well documented, I base my assessment here of the museum’s transition into the neoliberal age on Ruth B. Phillips’s important article “Re-Placing Objects: Historical Practices for the Second Museum Age,” *Canadian Historical Review* 86, no. 1 (March 2005): 83-110. For more on the neoliberal age of museum building in particular, see Kirsty Robertson, “Titanium Motherships of the New Economy: Museums, Neoliberalism and Resistance,” in *Imagining Resistance: Visual Culture and Activism in Canada*, eds. J. Keri Cronin and Kirsty Robertson (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), 97-213 (esp. 201). See also Julian Stallabrass, *Art Incorporated: The Story of Contemporary Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

16 David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 9-20 (esp. 12).

17 For more on the history of public and private sponsorship of cultural institutions in Canada, see Jeffrey Brison, *Rockefeller, Carnegie, and Canada: American Philanthropy and the Arts and Letters in Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005).

demonstrates the extent to which the folk art category provided an expedient solution to the withdrawal of government funding to cultural projects in favour of increasing private capital for the funding of museum initiatives. The irony here is that although rural societies in Nova Scotia have long been understood as “distinctly un-modern, characterized by the dominance of age-old traditions and culture” – to borrow historian Daniel Samson’s phrase – in fact many small landholders such as the Lewises were engaged in an “occupational pluralism” that included diverse forms of labour.<sup>18</sup> Rural households such as that of the Lewises thus participated in capitalist modernity through both formal and informal economies in the mid-to-late 20th century, even if debates over the painted house suggest that community, government, and corporate stakeholders all felt they could better determine the couple’s material culture legacy in the long term. The Lewises were therefore active agents in capitalist exchange, despite the fact that they held a tenuous position as small property owners whose livelihood depended on the informal production and sale of goods such as panel board paintings. However, both the AGNS and local public history makers in Digby County framed the Lewises as subjects who sat along minor nodal points of folk art’s capitalist circulation in Nova Scotia, rather than at its points of origin or its destination. These stakeholders, in other words, understood the Lewises as victims of capitalist expansion who were remnants of a past way of life, which created a context in which such stakeholders could also justify their management of the couple’s legacy both before and after their deaths.

After the Lewises passed away, the local community, government institutions, and private corporations all continued to make demands on the Lewises’ labour in their negotiations over the fate of the painted house as a public history, artistic, and tourist site. Indeed, debates over the painted house’s fate began even before Everett died in 1979, despite the fact that he maintained legal ownership of the residence until his death. After Maud passed away in 1970, Everett seemed determined to maintain his home’s status as both living artwork and tourist destination for visitors to Digby County. He not only produced saleable panel paintings in a manner similar to his wife throughout the 1970s, exploring comparable scenes of farm life and animals, but he also added painted decorative additions to the exterior of his house. For example, after a local restaurant owner purchased the Lewises’ painted storm door for display in her business, which Maud had decorated with a tulip bouquet and a yellow butterfly in the late 1950s (Figure 2), with three flying songbirds in the early 1960s (Figure 3), and with a hummingbird, two bees, and an orange butterfly in the mid-1960s (Figure 4), Everett replaced it with a door that he adorned with an image of a horse posed in front of an evergreen tree.<sup>19</sup> Although

18 Daniel Samson, “Introduction: Situating the Rural in Atlantic Canada,” in *Contested Countryside: Rural Workers and Modern Society in Atlantic Canada, 1800-1950*, ed. Daniel Samson (Fredericton and Halifax: Acadiensis Press and the Gorsebrook Research Institute, 1994), 15. I am grateful to my colleague David Frank for suggesting this reading of the Lewises’ labour.

19 Laurie Hamilton, *Painted House of Maud Lewis: Conserving a Folk Art Treasure* (Fredericton and Halifax: Goose Lane Editions and AGNS, 2001), 29-30, 48.





**Figure 2: Maud Lewis on her front step, beside the storm door with tulip bouquet and yellow butterfly, 1956.**

Source: Livia Adelaar (photographer), in Hamilton, *Painted House of Maud Lewis*, 29.



**Figure 3: Maud Lewis in doorway beside storm door with songbird additions, 1961.**

Source: Cora Greenaway (photographer), in Hamilton, *Painted House of Maud Lewis*, 30.



**Figure 4: Maud Lewis beside storm door with hummingbird and bumblebee additions, 1965.**

Source: © Bob Brooks (photographer).

the exact timing of Everett's addition of the second storm door remains unclear, stills from Diane Beaudry's documentary film *Maud Lewis: World Without Shadows* indicate that by 1976, the replacement had been made, along with a newly painted roof and gables and a dotting of twelve evergreen trees across the front shingles.<sup>20</sup> Some time before his death in 1979, Everett added additional evergreens to the shingles and nailed one of his panel paintings of an oxen team and horses to the storm door, possibly to signal to passersby that such items were for sale inside (Figure 5). While Everett not surprisingly sought to maintain his legal rights to the

20 See image reproduced on the cover of this issue of *Acadiensis*.



**Figure 5: Everett Lewis on the front stoop with painted roof and gables, evergreen shingles, and storm door with horse, evergreen, and oxen panel painting, c. 1976-1978.**

Source: Cora Greenaway (photographer), in Hamilton, *Painted House of Maud Lewis*, 48.

property and continued to work as an artist until the end of his life, he also clearly understood the value of the painted house as both a signpost for tourists looking to purchase folk art and an important material resource for his own creative expression.

Neither Everett's painted additions to the house, nor his taking-up of souvenir art for the tourist trade after Maud's passing, went unnoticed by local people. Some feared that he was damaging the cultural integrity of Maud's painted legacy and, worse, selling off some of its most valuable elements, including the original storm door, which ended up for sale at Manuge Galleries in Halifax.<sup>21</sup> The local press, in turn, made much of the fact that "Everett's work had been acclaimed by some critics as superior to his wife's."<sup>22</sup> Apprehensions that Everett was taking economic advantage of, and even resented, Maud's cultural accolades were pervasive and often centred on suspicions that he would not be able to set up the proper avenues to maintain her legacy. A 1978 Digby *Mirror* article, for example, detailed "folk artist" Fred Trask's thoughts on the cultural importance of maintaining the Lewis homestead. Trask suggested "that an arrangement could be made so that Everett Lewis could live in the tiny house as long as he wished and after he was through with it, it would revert to some organization who would maintain it as a monument to the art work of both husband and wife."<sup>23</sup> A year later, the *Mirror* reported that the Nova Scotia government had been planning for the AGNS to "take over the house and property to guarantee its preservation. Such a plan would have also ensured Everett Lewis of extra income and the knowledge his property would be preserved."<sup>24</sup> Although the AGNS never seriously considered incorporating Everett's artistic legacy into its treatment of the painted house, he did influence the narrative of its preservation since, as late as 1996, stakeholders framed Everett as continuously resisting government efforts to preserve it. Digby-based writer Lance Woolaver wrote in his biography of Maud Lewis that Everett "made it clear to many visitors, it was his house. However, as she left her mark so visibly on the structure, it had become known as the Maud Lewis House. Everett's solution was to sell the door and repaint the house."<sup>25</sup> There is a certain irony here: while Everett was criticized for refusing to relinquish his property rights in exchange for the financial compensation, he was also commonly accused of seeking compensation by peddling Maud's artwork. Moreover, the decision to obscure Everett from the exhibitionary narrative of the painted house not only indicates that his artistic production was not as valued

21 Bruce Grant, "Maude Lewis Painted House Society in Need of Public Support to Restore Historic Home," *Chronicle Herald/Mail Star*, *Mayflower* weekly supplement (Halifax), 2 January 1981, p. 2M, Maud Lewis Painted House Society – Historical/General, AGNS; Hamilton, *Painted House of Maud Lewis*, 29; 1982 Budget: Capital and Operation, p. 2, Maud Lewis Painted House Society, AGNS.

22 Mike Ingraham, "Future Doubtful for Artist's House," *The Mirror* (Digby County and Annapolis Valley), 7 February 1979, Maud Lewis Painted House Society – Historical/General, AGNS.

23 Fred Trask, quoted in "Wants Tribute to Maude Lewis," *The Mirror*, 8 February 1978, Maud Lewis Painted House Society – Historical/General, AGNS.

24 Ingraham, "Future Doubtful for Artist's House," *The Mirror*, 7 February 1979, Maud Lewis Painted House Society – Historical/General, AGNS.

25 Lance Woolaver, *The Illuminated Life of Maud Lewis* (Halifax: AGNS and Nimbus Publishing, 1996), 82.

as Maud's at the AGNS, but also suggests that his story did not meet the same commemorative expectations for folk art as did his wife's.

Despite this, Everett did have a particular association with the local community in Marshalltown that also affected the way in which painted house enthusiasts would come to frame the restoration project. Immediately following Everett's death on 1 January 1979 a group of concerned local residents, comprised of Isaac Butler, Mrs. Butler,<sup>26</sup> Kathleen MacNeil, B. Lloyd MacNeil, Eva Richard, Paul Richard, and René A.J. Richard, formed the non-profit Maud Lewis Painted House Society, which they incorporated under the Small Societies Act.<sup>27</sup> This suggests that, at least in the beginning, local motivations for preserving the painted house were not primarily motivated by profit, even if they did employ a profit-driven strategy to finance its restoration. The society charged itself with negotiating the future of the painted house with its owner, Barry Jennings, who inherited the house and was also a spokesperson for the Lewises' remaining heirs, his wife being one of Everett's only living relatives.<sup>28</sup> The society's ultimate aim was to "preserve, restore and eventually open to the public the small one room home,"<sup>29</sup> while also possibly converting the adjacent Digby County "Poor House" building, where Everett grew up and later worked as a groundkeeper until it closed in 1963, into "a center for the painted house site, that would be used as well for the promotion of art, with particular emphases on the growing arts and crafts industry in the area" and "as a museum of social history of the area."<sup>30</sup> The Poor House (or Alms House as it was also called) was well-known in the local community as the "'dumping ground' for single mothers, children, the mentally ill, or anyone else who could not survive independently in the community," even if one groundskeeper prior to Everett noted that he "fed half of Digby County."<sup>31</sup> A 1980 society report commissioned by its members on the condition of the painted house outlined plans for the group to raise the necessary funds to restore the Lewis home, which had deteriorated significantly after a year without being heated, and to preserve it onsite as part of a new community "folk life" museum in Marshalltown.

The society argued that keeping Lewis's legacy in situ was crucial, since, as the 1980 report suggested, "folk art is an extremely provincial subject usually centred in a community where the artist works and lives." The report went on to delineate

26 Over the course of my research on the Maud Lewis Painted House Society, I have not been able to identify Mrs. Butler's first name, nor the family name of her birth.

27 "Maud Lewis Painted House Society Formed," *Digby Courier*, 8 March 1970, Maud Lewis Marshalltown Cairn, AGNS.

28 J. Alan Gaudet, "Report on the Maude Lewis Painted House prepared for *The Maude Lewis Painted House Society*" (unpublished report, February 1980), p. 21, Maud Lewis Painted House Society – Historical/General, AGNS.

29 Jim Vibert, "Group Trying to Preserve Home," *Chronicle Herald* (Halifax), 29 March 1979, Maud Lewis Painted House Society – Historical/General, AGNS; Allison Bishop (Nova Scotia Department of Tourism and Culture) to Bernard Riordon, 25 October 1993, Maud Lewis Painted House Society – Historical/General, AGNS.

30 Gaudet, "Report on the Maude Lewis Painted House," 5.

31 "Alms House, 1891, Marshalltown, Digby County, Nova Scotia," *Digby County: A Journey Through Time*, Community Memories Project, Virtual Museum of Canada, [http://museevirtuel-virtualmuseum.ca/sgc-cms/histoires\\_de\\_chez\\_nous-community\\_memories/pm\\_v2.php?id=story\\_line&lg=English&fi=0&ex=00000443&si=8537&pos=1](http://museevirtuel-virtualmuseum.ca/sgc-cms/histoires_de_chez_nous-community_memories/pm_v2.php?id=story_line&lg=English&fi=0&ex=00000443&si=8537&pos=1).

the history of the Lewis home, explaining that after living in the Poor House as a young man, Everett was eventually “able to better himself and attain the position of caretaker of the house and grounds.” This employment enabled Everett to purchase a small building on the Poor House property as his private residence, which no doubt helped to shed his reputation as someone who could not “survive independently.” He then moved the house onto an adjacent plot of land “through a community effort that included eighteen yoke of oxen.” This event, as interpreted in the society report, was “an expression of the attitude of the neighbors in respect to the Lewises, almost a theatrical co-operation with touches of humor,” which suggests that society members understood Maud and Everett’s plight as novel amongst the local community.<sup>32</sup> The fact that Maud came to decorate the house in what the AGNS and other public history makers have characterized as her signature folk art style provided a way to trace the Lewises’ “folk ways” from the settlement roots of Digby County. The society used the elaborately painted Lewis home and the nearby Poor House to situate the Lewises as historically significant remnants of Digby County’s folk settler past, which also served to mark them fictitiously as outliers of a local society keeping pace with modernization. In the end, Everett would remain on the periphery of the story, while Maud would come to represent the triumph of folk art history at the AGNS.

The broader significance of the 1980 Maud Lewis Painted House Society report lies in its demonstration of local residents’ efforts to establish the Lewis home as a community museum dedicated to local folk life in Marshalltown years before the provincial government intervened in its exhibitionary fate on behalf of the AGNS. The members of the society understood that, more than a modern day painted artwork, the house as a significant legacy of “pre-loyalist and loyalist settlers [whose] . . . culture left a mark on the people of the area and on Maude and Everrette.” The report presented the painted house as an indication of the Lewises’ community status as “inheritors of strong secular culture that included folkways, religion and material culture.” The report, accordingly, positioned the painted house – along with the property’s surrounding outbuildings, some of which are visible in a 1965 photograph of the Lewis home (Figure 6) – as perpetuating “the tradition of vernacular architecture” and “significant in terms of the folklife of this area. Like the now lost fishing staves and outbuildings of the Newfoundland outports.” The document maintains “this type of outbuilding in all of its roughness was once part of every farm.” The society members’ efforts to preserve the painted house suggest that they understood the importance of maintaining the original property as a whole since the outbuildings surrounding it displayed “patterns of workmanship somewhat unique to this area,” which distinguished the site as a culturally significant locale around which to build an interpretative museum in Marshalltown.<sup>33</sup> Further, this report indicates a suspicion on behalf of society members that the house might become an object of museological interest outside of the local community. In 1981 Halifax’s *Chronicle Herald* summarized the society’s concern, noting “If the society can’t stimulate support for the project, . . . the house may eventually wind up as a

32 Gaudet, “Report on the Maude Lewis Painted House,” 1, 3, 4.

33 Gaudet, “Report on the Maude Lewis Painted House,” 5-7.



**Figure 6: Lewis home, Marshalltown, Digby County, 1965.**

Source: © Bob Brooks (photographer).

museum piece in Halifax or Ottawa. This, . . . [the society fears], would be a historical tragedy.” The Maud Lewis Painted House Society, therefore, envisioned turning the Lewis home into “a folk cultural museum,” one that would speak to the local community’s “eye for their own past that recoils at beautified versions [of] their history that are completely lacking in the portail [*sic*] of fact and hardships.”<sup>34</sup>

Yet rather than interpret the painted house within the socio-economic marginalization that affected rural residents such as the Lewises throughout Nova Scotia in the latter half of the 20th century, the society decided to use the site to represent the material culture and vernacular living traditions of Marshalltown as distinct from those of urban Halifax. It was this distinctiveness that merited a locally run interpretative museum dedicated to folk culture. The reasons for this focus on a local museum project for the painted house were no doubt two-fold. The society members, on the one hand, apparently recognized the site’s past importance as a tourist destination, where visitors to Digby County called on the Lewises in search of an authentic painted souvenir of their experience in rural Nova Scotia. On the other hand, the society also made a genuine attempt to recognize the historical specificities of rural living through the Lewises’ lives as rural residents who negotiated precarious economic conditions with ingenuity. For example, the report

34 Grant, “Maude Lewis Painted House Society in Need of Public Support to Restore Historic Home,” pp. 2M and 8M, Maud Lewis Painted House Society – Historical/General, AGNS.

commented extensively on the Lewises' daily existence in the painted house, noting that even by 1979 it "was still not equipped [*sic*] with electricity or plumbing, in spite of the fact that it was on a major highway and in a neighbourhood that has had access to electricity for a considerable length of time." The report further documented such objects as a box affixed to the exterior of the house that the Lewises used to store food in the shade and a "push pole" that Everett employed in the manual harvesting of sea kelp, which, in addition to Maud's paintings, the society argued added to the "significance of the site in terms of the early folk life of the area." Tracing the history of distinct folk living in Digby County through the Lewis home in ways that were also consistent with the development of a broader heritage industry in the 1970s confirmed to the society's members that "the hinterland-metropolis split was evident in much more recent time and that among loyalist areas this had a corresponding attitude that met innovation [*sic*] from the metropolis with a great deal of doubt. Everette and Maude's life-style bear witness to this." The Lewises being the apparent inheritors of Marshalltown's rural folk life, their supposed resilience against the impact of modernization helped to create what the society report described as "a very strong and distinctive culture quite separate from that of the Halifax metropolis" – one that could only be framed by interpreting the painted house in its local context.<sup>35</sup> While this suggests that society members understood the metropolis as a site of capitalist expansion and the countryside as a place that operated outside of it, it also points to the fact that the Lewises' lifestyle was not commonly understood as the result of the socio-economic marginalization that increased in rural areas such as Marshalltown under neoliberal policymaking.

Society members were nevertheless concerned about the implications of interpreting the Lewis home without the assistance of trained museum and history professionals, who could advise them on the most effective strategies for heritage management.<sup>36</sup> By drawing on the work of heritage enthusiasts outside of Nova Scotia, the society confirmed that it should take a "hard line about outsiders looking in the project" because of the painted house's particularly local significance. For example, the society report reproduced Howard Wight Marshall's critique of community-initiated "folk" history museums in his 1977 article "Folklife and the Rise of American Folk Museums":

Museums which deal with local history, living history, and folklife materials call up the memory of a time when many contemporary Americans think everything was fine. American history museums and folk museums have often projected an image that visitors take to be democratic and representative but which are generally full of biases reflecting attitudes and stereotypes of noble pioneers and valiant immigrants. Many museum-goers are attracted by the imaginary or mythological past, or by a vision of history coming from family sagn [*sic* – sang], memorates, local legend cycles, and

35 Grant, "Maude Lewis Painted House Society in Need of Public Support to Restore Historic Home," pp. 2M, 6-8M, Maud Lewis Painted House Society – Historical/General, AGNS.

36 Grant, "Maude Lewis Painted House Society in Need of Public Support to Restore Historic Home," p. 6M, Maud Lewis Painted House Society – Historical/General, AGNS.



the folk memory. Many museums capitalize on waves of nostalgia (such as the Bicentennial fervor) by building programs aimed at public sentiments for the good old days. The trends for arts and crafts and pioneer lifestyles coincide with revivalistic museum programs. *These nativistic programs and public moods are usually healthy, as they invigorate and revive local awarenesses of regionality, ethnicity, genealogy, and the individual's fit in the larger historical record. On the other hand, local museums can misrepresent real history and fortify wrong notions about how the oldtimers worked and lived.*<sup>37</sup>

The Maud Lewis Painted House Society report, indeed, suggested a reluctance to romanticize the Lewises' life in Marshalltown since local community members no doubt recognized the economic difficulties and social stigma the couple would have encountered living in and around the Poor House, a narrative framework that society members indicated only trained experts could help them execute onsite.

There were certainly compelling reasons to involve museum professionals outside of Digby County to restore the Lewises' painted house. In 1979, immediately following Everett's death, AGNS director Bernard Riordon wrote to society member Paul Richard to "indicate concern over the preservation of the Maud Lewis House" and stress "the urgency of taking immediate measures to prevent the house from any further deterioration." Initially, Riordon supported the society's quest to maintain the house onsite. At a 27 May 1981 society meeting, Riordon stated that the "restoration of the Lewis property on the present site was of the utmost importance," and that a "more aggressive approach to fund raising and awareness" was necessary in order to develop a five-year plan to establish a community museum in Marshalltown.<sup>38</sup> And in a 1981 newspaper report, Riordon cautioned that the AGNS's overall exhibitionary goal was "to preserve things in their local areas" unless "they should be in danger of destruction."<sup>39</sup> In the end, government and corporate monies directed towards the AGNS bridged the gap where community efforts to raise sufficient funds to restore the property fell short.

The Maud Lewis Painted House Society was able to purchase the Lewis home from the heir to Everett's estate, Barry Jennings, for \$11,000, with a \$5,000 acquisitions grant from the Department of Culture, Recreation, and Fitness and a \$6,000 mortgage.<sup>40</sup> The society made an additional \$100 down payment to acquire Maud Lewis's original painted storm door from Manuge Galleries "in order that it might not leave the local area," resulting in a \$4,700 outstanding balance for the

37 Howard Wight Marshall, "Folklife and the Rise of American Folk Museums," *Journal of American Folklore* 90, no. 358 (October-December 1977): 392 (italics indicate passage that appeared in the society report).

38 Bernard Riordon to Paul Richard, 12 October 1979, Maud Lewis Painted House Society – Historical/General, AGNS.

39 Riordon, quoted in Grant, "Maude Lewis Painted House Society in Need of Public Support to Restore Historic Home," p. 2M, Maud Lewis Painted House Society – Historical/General, AGNS.

40 Maud Lewis Painted House Society 1982 Budget: Capital and Operation, p. 2, Maud Lewis Painted House Society – Historical/General, AGNS.

remainder of the object's purchase price.<sup>41</sup> In 1982, Paul Richard wrote to the Nova Scotia Museum with a request for an operations grant to supplement the \$100,000 the society had by then raised from private donations of its over 500 members and an initial \$5,000 provincial government contribution to Marshalltown preservation project.<sup>42</sup> Richard's budget included the cost of conservation and restoration work to the house (\$5,000); the installation of a security system and fence (\$10,000); the development of a mobile community centre, a craft studio, and a "Museum to Poor Relief in Nineteenth-Century Nova Scotia" (\$90,000); the establishment of a permanent gallery, a museum, and an interpretive centre (\$14,000); the production of postcards and prints of Lewis paintings for commercial sale (\$5,000); the marketing of such items as well as of the arts and crafts made at the site (\$12,000); and the alleviation of the society's outstanding debt incurred through preserving and staffing the site to date (\$10,800).<sup>43</sup> On March 5, 1982, Nova Scotia Museum Director J.L. Martin responded to reject the nearly \$150,000 budget request, citing overall financial restraints in developing community museum projects.<sup>44</sup> Ultimately, the society's efforts to gather the financial resources necessary to begin developing the painted house site as a community museum failed, leaving the organization in a precarious, debt-ridden situation that it could not maintain for long.

As a result of the society's financial troubles, the provincial government officially purchased the Lewis estate for the AGNS at the cost of \$10,000 in 1984, with the stipulation that the house would undergo professional conservation and display at the AGNS. The house was promptly moved from its original site, in a badly deteriorating state since it had been left unheated for about a year, and to a government storage locker in a suburb of Halifax. While leaving the house onsite in Marshalltown would have no doubt led to its complete ruin, relocating it immediately presented another problem: the gallery did not have a building large enough in which to exhibit the painted house. The cultural preservation of the painted house at the AGNS in Halifax was, therefore, a challenge that required Riordon to look for new community and government funding sources. Installing the house permanently at the AGNS necessitated financing a massive conservation effort to restore the rapidly deteriorating structure and to expand the gallery's spatial capacity. In pursuit of the first objective, Riordon recommended to the Department of Tourism and Culture that they immediately appoint an architectural conservator to assess the painted house. He further argued that the department needed to finance the house's move from the storage building to a location where proper conservation could commence in order to ensure the house's eventual relocation and installation

41 Maud Lewis Painted House Society, 1982 Budget: Capital and Operation, p. 2, Maud Lewis Painted House Society – Historical/General, AGNS; Frank Perry, "Maud Dowley Lewis Painting Display," *Digby Courier*, undated newspaper clipping.

42 Paul Richard to Richard Willcox (Nova Scotia Museum), c. 1982, Maud Lewis Painted House Society – Historical/General, AGNS; Bruce Cochran (Minister of Culture, Recreation and Fitness) to Paul Richard, 26 October 1979, Halifax, Maud Lewis Painted House Society – Historical/General, AGNS.

43 Maud Lewis Painted House Society 1832 Budget: Capital and Operation, pp. 1-2, Maud Lewis Painted House Society – Historical/General, AGNS.

44 J.L. Martin (Nova Scotia Museum) to Paul Richard (Maud Lewis Painted House Society), 2 March 1982, Maud Lewis Painted House Society – Historical/General, AGNS.

at the AGNS. At this stage, Riordon made it clear that he thought proposals should be drafted to secure private funding from corporations and foundations to finance the house's restoration, especially in the absence of provincial government support for a new building that could accommodate such a large installation. A workable compromise to accomplish the second objective, he suggested, would be that the province commit to exhibition space in Halifax's Provincial Building, a locale adjacent to the AGNS's location in the Dominion Building, then home to several provincial government offices. Finally, Riordon reiterated to the department that regular contact had to be maintained between the Maud Lewis Painted House Society and the AGNS as an agent of the provincial government "to ensure community involvement in the project."<sup>45</sup> The approach, which would seek out community, government, and corporate stakeholders to invest in the painted house's restoration, encapsulated the mixed-economy model that came to define this era of culture making transnationally, both for community organizations such as the society and for larger cultural institutions such as the AGNS.<sup>46</sup> Yet even if both the society and the AGNS sought to finance the painted house restoration through private capital, they did ultimately see the particulars of their common goal differently. The society and the AGNS also shared an understanding of the neoliberal logic of the day, in which commodifying such things as culture, history, and heritage – and extracting from them ideas of originality, authenticity, and individuality – amounted to "putting a price on things that were never actually produced as commodities," according to geographer David Harvey.<sup>47</sup>

The case of the painted house, and the negotiations among community, government, and corporate stakeholders that emerged around the right to safeguard its cultural legacy, are crucial to positioning Maud Lewis as a folk artist, particularly since doing so necessitates separating her and Everett from their liberal capitalist subjectivity as small property owners and producers.<sup>48</sup> As Riordon explained to the *Digby Courier* in 1998, the AGNS's work to preserve the Lewises' legacy was "not just about the art." The crucial work of cultural preservation was also about satisfying the expectations of stakeholders invested in using Maud Lewis's legacy to regenerate cultural tourism in Nova Scotia. As Riordon put it in a 1995 interview with the *Digby Courier*, "I think in addition to being a very important cultural industry – [Maud Lewis's folk art] can certainly help the economy – it can create greater awareness of our cultural identity and about the importance of art in the lives of people."<sup>49</sup> As the

45 Riordon, quoted in Grant, "Maude Lewis Painted House Society in Need of Public Support to Restore Historic Home," p. 2M, Maud Lewis Painted House Society – Historical/General, AGNS.

46 Yúdice, *Expediency of Culture*, 17.

47 Harvey, *Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 166.

48 For an overview of the political philosophy of liberalism in the Canadian context, and in particular the right to property ownership, see Michel Ducharme and Jean-François Constant, "Introduction: A Project of Rule Called Canada – The Liberal Order Framework and History Practice," in *Liberalism and Hegemony: Debating the Canadian Liberal Revolution*, ed. Michel Ducharme and Jean-François Constant (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 3-34, and Ian McKay, "The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History," reproduced from the *Canadian Historical Review* 81, no. 4 (December 2000): 617-45, in Ducharme and Constant, *Liberalism and Hegemony*, 35-63.

49 Bernard Riordon, quoted in Tracey Durkee, "Out from the Shadows: Shining a Light on Maud Lewis' Life, Paintings," *Digby Courier*, 1 November 1995.

AGNS gradually took control of Lewis's property and imagery, there was a simple redirection in tourist traffic from Digby County to the AGNS in Halifax as visitors flocked to the new site to visit the Lewis home and purchase a Lewis reproduction in the gift shop. At the same time, a more complex negotiation of what the folk art category meant for Nova Scotia's provincial art gallery developed as corporate sponsors took an interest at the end of the 20th century.

Of course, the AGNS's neoliberal approach to the painted house's restoration did not emerge in isolation; it was highly dependent on embedded forms of late-capitalist economics that guided cultural exercises away from established community models and towards potential corporate alternatives that could shape the final product in significant ways. The neoliberal model of culture making, which, as anthropologist David Guss notes, ensures "that special corporate and political interests dominate the means of cultural production" more and more, also creates a situation in which "popular culture, and its corollary folklore, [are] rapidly devoured by a market hungry for new products and consumers and a central government in need of unifying symbols."<sup>50</sup> This situation was no less true in Nova Scotia than it was elsewhere during the 1980s and 1990s, a period defined by worldwide failures in government-led economic development and the ultimate reduction of state regulation in favour of the privatization of former state-run services, including those located in the cultural sector.<sup>51</sup> For the AGNS, such realities meant a political-economic context in which increased corporate investment narrowed the gap created by now-scarce government resources and which resulted in greater private control over the local community's expectations for the commemoration of Maud Lewis and the establishment of her legacy. Indeed, this reality facilitated the launching of Maud Lewis as a cultural icon for Nova Scotia at this moment, even if she was an artist well known in the cultural imaginary decades earlier, because it became clear that folk art was a profitable cultural form for the AGNS to cultivate.

This was especially apparent in 1991, when a corporate advertising firm called Saga Communications contacted Riordon regarding "a potential development opportunity" that would "support folk art in Atlantic Canada." Writing on behalf of a client "whose identity will remain confidential throughout our conversations" (later identified as Scotiabank), Melanie Jollymore of Saga described the client's mandate as "regional" in nature and expressed the desire "to learn . . . how my client could best/most effectively benefit [from] folk art, as well as how it could gain maximum public relations benefits from this support." She further insisted that her corporate client had "to learn more about the mechanics of the art community, the definition of folk art, and the various available ways to assist [with funding] (i.e. foundations, funds, trusts, sponsorships of exhibitions or collections, etc.)." Jollymore noted that her client was particularly interested in relating its sponsorship "to folk art as an art form in Atlantic Canada."<sup>52</sup> She followed up her initial correspondence with the AGNS by communicating Scotiabank's particular interest

50 David Guss, *The Festive State: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism as Cultural Performance* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 14, 6.

51 Yúdice, *Expediency of Culture*, 94.

52 Melanie Jollymore (Saga Communications) to Jean Addison (AGNS), 13 June 1991, Maud Lewis Painted House Society – Historical/General, AGNS.

in “the scope and possibilities inherent in the Maud Lewis house restoration project in terms of corporate sponsorship.”<sup>53</sup> Riordon responded to Saga, explaining that the AGNS was in negotiations with the provincial government to secure additional gallery space and that the house “could be a focal point of a featured display of paintings and painted objects by Maud Lewis.” In short, Riordon believed that the painted house, along with its painted household artifacts, had the potential to create “a special display of art works” that would “allow a very interesting part of our cultural heritage to be preserved. At the same time, it would give the public an opportunity to see an important art collection. The realization of this project,” he urged Jollymore, “has great potential to attract people to Nova Scotia and to the Gallery. Maude Lewis painted rural Nova Scotia as she saw and remembered it and brought joy to thousands of people.”<sup>54</sup> Riordon went on to propose the idea of forming “a folk art foundation,” which he saw as “an important vehicle to provide funds for the promotion of folk art and the development of activities to encourage greater appreciation and understanding of this visual art expression.”<sup>55</sup>

The chief advantages for the corporate partner, as Riordon saw it, came in the form of naming rights for the folk art trust as well as in providing its name and logo on all AGNS printed and promotional materials. The Lewis house was, after all, a “potential major tourist attraction and community resource,” which would no doubt generate “high profile recognition.”<sup>56</sup> In his early negotiations with Scotiabank, Riordon not only secured the enlargement of the physical gallery space, but also \$225,000 from Scotiabank for a touring retrospective exhibition of her work called “The Illuminated Life of Maud Lewis” as well as a \$500,000 endowment from the Craig Foundation for the Visual and Performing Arts.<sup>57</sup> This expanded the potential channels of revenue for the gallery through the corporate sponsorship of the folk art category more generally. While the AGNS would continue to receive support from Nova Scotia’s Department of Tourism and Culture, as well as a \$20,000 grant from the federal Department of Canadian Heritage towards the painted house relocation and restoration, securing such corporate and private partners was essential for providing monies towards a larger folk art endowment, which could be used to advance the gallery as a whole.<sup>58</sup> Scotiabank in particular was central to the AGNS’s overall neoliberalization, since it used folk art to transform its corporate identity from a

53 Melanie Jollymore (Saga Communications) to Bernard Riordon, 25 June 1991, Maud Lewis Painted House Society – Historical/General, AGNS.

54 Bernard Riordon to Melanie Jollymore (Saga Communications), 17 July 1991, Maud Lewis Painted House Society – Historical/General, AGNS.

55 Bernard Riordon to Melanie Jollymore (Saga Communications), 24 July 1991, Maud Lewis Painted House Society – Historical/General, AGNS.

56 Bernard Riordon to Melanie Jollymore (Saga Communications), 24 July 1991, Maud Lewis Painted House Society – Historical/General, AGNS.

57 Marilyn Smulders, “Bank Funds Maud Lewis Gallery,” *Daily News* (Halifax), 5 June 1997, Maud Lewis Marshalltown Cairn, AGNS. Scotiabank is the Bank of Nova Scotia’s more common designation. While the bank has utilized both designations interchangeably since 1906, the “Scotiabank” corporate wordmark came into regular use in 1974. See Joseph Schull and J. Douglas Gibson, *The Scotiabank Story: A History of the Bank of Nova Scotia, 1832-1982* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1982), 343.

58 “A Letter from the AGNS,” *Maud Lewis News* 1, no. 1 (August 1996), n.p., Maud Lewis News, AGNS.

purely transnational financial institution to that of a regional bank.<sup>59</sup> The background of this transformation emerged first in the 1970s, when a developing transnational neoliberal corporate context determined the particulars of Scotiabank's continued global expansion. Specifically, as rising oil revenues from Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) generated an expanded need for international banking, Scotiabank grew into Canada's second-largest-grossing bank in terms of its international assets.<sup>60</sup> As Scotiabank became an increasingly important player in the globalizing neoliberal economy, many of its media campaigns strove to establish the corporation beyond its regional image as Nova Scotia's "neighbourhood bank" – highlighting its more than 30 corporate branches worldwide (Figure 7). Scotiabank's corporate partnership with the AGNS during the 1990s emerged under a similar rhetoric, in which the bank branded itself as an international company with a concern for the local community from which it originated. Scotiabank's creation of a corporate identity based on this multilocal context illustrates cultural studies scholar George Yúdice's observation that "rather than homogenization, a global corporation [now] . . . wants local relevance, in every locality."<sup>61</sup>

In 1993 Riordon used the momentum that had been built with Scotiabank to embark on a strategic planning process that included a proposal for the AGNS Phase II Expansion, an endeavour that promised to expand the gallery's exhibition space in Halifax's Dominion Building on Hollis Street by connecting it to the adjacent Provincial Building.<sup>62</sup> Part of the logic for securing this new building was to make good on the plans he had outlined to Saga Communications – namely, to install the Lewises' Digby County house in a way that would showcase it as a centrepiece exhibition by securing corporate support to fill the gap left by limited government sponsorship. As the resulting 1994 AGNS Strategic Plan report confirmed, the painted house had become "a key asset in the future of the Gallery." Indeed, the AGNS's new focus on corporate partnership resulted in a strategic planning process that saw the gallery embark on a community-corporate model that would soon define the nature of the painted house restoration itself. More than a strategy of "reaching out" to rural constituencies outside of the greater Halifax region, then, the strategic plan also articulated the AGNS expansion project alongside a larger goal: securing financial support for the institution beyond Nova Scotia's provincial government and federal arts granting programs, which the gallery framed as central to advancing the Lewis legacy in particular. The strategic plan made clear that the AGNS aimed to explore new funding avenues by seeking out corporate sponsorship: "Sponsorship giving had its glory days in the 1980s. Companies are now assessing much more carefully than they ever did in the past the real marketing benefits for sponsoring this or that special cause or event."<sup>63</sup>

59 James Frost argues that the relocation of the bank's headquarters from Halifax to Toronto in 1900 effectively "nationalized" the flow of capital from the Maritimes to central Canada. See Frost, "The 'Nationalization' of the Bank of Nova Scotia, 1880–1910," *Acadiensis* XII, no. 1 (Autumn 1982): 21.

60 Schull and Gibson, *Scotiabank Story*, 306–7.

61 Yúdice, *Expediency of Culture*, 209.

62 In the current AGNS configuration, the original Dominion Building is now known as Gallery North and the adjoining Provincial Building as Gallery South.

63 AGNS, *Strategic Plan: Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, 1994–2000* (Halifax: AGNS, 1994), 23, 38.



**Figure 7: Scotiabank advertisement, early 1970s.**

Source: Courtesy of Scotiabank Public and Corporate Affairs.

By the 1990s, galleries such as the AGNS and transnational corporations such as Scotiabank aligned their goals to tackle the difficult and contested work of culture making. Within this neoliberal model of cultural development, the AGNS now saw the advancement of folk art as a regional cultural resource with global appeal rather than as a material heritage that required local input to interpret. While it was certainly not an exceptional circumstance for a provincial gallery to tap into corporate sponsorship at this time, and while artists and activists had been protesting the private sector influence on museums from the late 1960s to the mid-1980s, the Scotiabank partnership with Maud Lewis at the AGNS does support at least two specific suggestions about the neoliberal model of culture making in Nova Scotia.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Gregory Sholette, "Speaking Clown to Power: Can We Resist the Historic Compromise of Neoliberal Art?" in *Imagining Resistance: Visual Culture and Activism in Canada*, ed. J. Keri Cronin and Kirsty Robertson (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), 37.

First, it points to the fact that the AGNS was probably more susceptible to corporate influence than were more established art museums in Canada simply because its founding in 1975 meant that it was only getting off the ground as a cultural institution at a time when the previously relied-upon federal funding sources had largely dried up in the cultural sector in favour of increased privatization. Second, the AGNS needed to build its permanent collection not only in an era of a recession in the art market, which affected the availability of artworks globally, but also in an age after conceptual art, which meant that most artists were working in decidedly immaterial – and therefore somewhat unmarketable – forms.<sup>65</sup> The concept of folk art worked outside of this situation, since it remained a material object category at a time when conceptual mediums such as performance, video, and installation art were dominating curatorial practice in public art museums. Aesthetically, the folk art category also conjured up a familiar, if flexible, oppositional relationship to artistic modernism during the last four decades of the 20th century depending on the ways in which public history makers chose to frame it. Folk art could be isolationist and innovative, centuries-old and contemporary, affordable and priceless, as public history makers defined the category conversely as operating in tandem with modernism and as remaining distinct from it. This appealed to collectors and curators who had knowledge of artistic modernism and who could locate rural Nova Scotia cultural producers in binary interaction with it – that is, as lay producers who provided a site of cultural authenticity that could inspire professional modernist artists. The AGNS's corporate relationship with folk art through Scotiabank therefore helps to nuance the more generalized discussions of the museum's neoliberalization in the late 20th century, because the particulars of both the folk art category and the painted house's relocation speak to the larger story of the relationship between public art galleries, the state, and the private sector.

The movement of the painted house from Marshalltown also garnered interest province-wide in ways that few art museum projects had done in Nova Scotia, and public involvement remained important for the AGNS to encourage if the project was to be successful. Riordon expressed concern about the house's absence from Marshalltown, noting to the reinvigorated Maud Lewis Painted House Society membership as late as 1996 that "at this juncture, it is critical to have a specific presence on the site as a result of actions taken by area citizens to have the House return to the original site."<sup>66</sup> Yet as he had pointed out in his 1990 letter to the Department of Tourism and Culture, "the funds have not been forthcoming to meet this obligation. In my view this should be a priority and taken care of as soon as possible." The "bigger issue" for the AGNS, though, as Riordon put it frankly at the time, was that the painted house was by then "in a bad state of deterioration," one that he feared would "only get worse if a plan for its restoration . . . not [be] put in place immediately."<sup>67</sup> There was

65 For more on the particulars of the art market boom and bust from the 1980s to the early 2000s, see Julian Stallabrass, *Contemporary Art: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

66 Stallabrass, *Contemporary Art*.

67 Bernard Riordon to Susan Lowery (Head, Visual Arts, Cultural Affairs Division, Department of Tourism and Culture), 12 September 1990, Maud Lewis Painted House Society – Historical/General, AGNS.



simultaneously a renewed community concern about what would become of the painted house, especially since the house had remained in storage and away from public eyes after its 1984 removal; this resulted in little public conversation about its commemorative fate. In 1988, however, Christine Ross Hopper of Market House Gallery in Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia, contacted the AGNS regarding the development of a local history exhibition at the Upper Clements Family Theme Park. “Naturally,” Ross Hopper explained to Riordon, “part of the local history relates to the ‘Folk’ element, such as hooked mats, quilts and folk decorated objects – of which . . . Maud Lewis is the greatest local (and provincial example). There is a desire on the part of the consultants,” she further noted, “to have the Maud Lewis house returned to the area and for it to become the centerpiece of a particular ‘Folk’ area of the Park.”<sup>68</sup> Likewise, in 1993, Allison Bishop of Nova Scotia’s Department of Tourism and Culture wrote to the AGNS regarding Barry Jennings’s desire to repurchase the Lewis home from the provincial government. According to Bishop, Jennings, who originally sold the painted house and its allotment of land to the Maud Lewis Painted House Society, claimed that the “reason for the proposed allocation is to bring the property back into the family. When the property was purchased by the province in 1983 [*sic*], and the house removed, the intention, as you know,” Bishop explained to Riordon, “was to place a cairn on the site. However, the history of this is that the budget process has denied funding requests for this purpose on several occasions and no action has been taken.”<sup>69</sup> A fifth-grade school class at Kings County Academy in Kentville, Nova Scotia, also took up the campaign for the restoration of the Lewis house, in this case supporting its permanent exhibition at the AGNS. “We don’t think it would hurt to put a 10 x 12 house up in a huge gallery like that,” wrote student Guilianna Renderos, for example. “We have measured her house on our classroom floor and it doesn’t even take up a quarter of a quarter of our room.”<sup>70</sup> To be sure, while the AGNS was in the midst of negotiating corporate support for the painted house restoration, the community investment in commemorating Lewis’s legacy was far from dissipating.

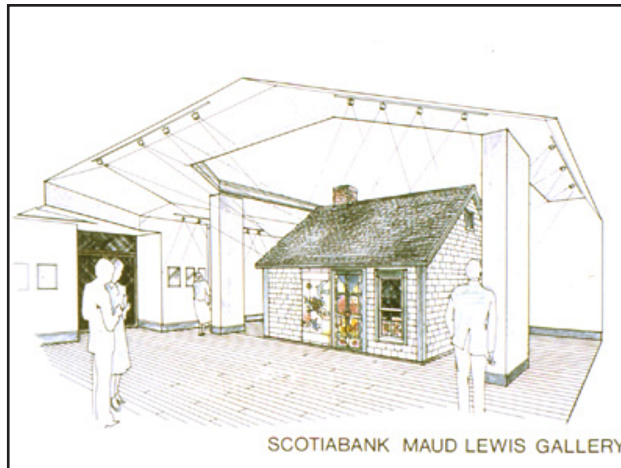
In September 1996 the AGNS secured plans to remove the Lewis house from storage and install it temporarily in the Sunnyside Mall in Bedford, just outside of Halifax, in order both to showcase the scientific process of restoration and to generate donations for the overall conservation campaign – which, as an AGNS promotional flyer indicated, could be made “at any Scotiabank branch in Nova Scotia.”<sup>71</sup> In the meantime, the AGNS secured an additional \$175,000 donation from Scotiabank for the temporary touring exhibition “The Illuminated Life of Maud Lewis” and in support of what would become known as the Scotiabank Maud Lewis Gallery (Figure 8). “We had such a success with the art exhibition (of Lewis’s work). Everybody seemed to enjoy it – people from all walks of life,” Scotiabank’s Atlantic Canada senior vice-president Jack Keith told Halifax’s *Daily News* in 1997. “We just

68 Christine Ross Hopper (Market House Gallery) to Bernard Riordon, 10 April 1988, Maud Lewis Painted House Society – Historical/General, AGNS.

69 Allison Bishop (Nova Scotia Department of Tourism and Culture) to Bernard Riordon, 25 October 1993, Maud Lewis Painted House Society – Historical/General, AGNS.

70 Guilianna Renderos to Ms. Stevens (AGNS), 5 October 1994, Maud Lewis Painted House Society – Historical/General, AGNS.

71 “Maud Lewis House Conservation Campaign” (promotional pamphlet, 1996), miscellaneous Maud Lewis Exhibition files, AGNS.



**Figure 8: Sketch depicting the planned installation of Lewis's house in the AGNS's Gallery South.**

Source: AGNS.

thought we should be the bank to do this. We want to be associated with this great lady."<sup>72</sup> The AGNS officially opened the newly constructed Scotiabank Maud Lewis Gallery in June 1998, which was executed as part of the AGNS's overall \$2.5-million expansion project and supported by Scotiabank's \$175,000 donation. This Scotiabank investment paid for conservation of the by-then badly deteriorated painted house, with the help of other private and government funders.<sup>73</sup> Nevertheless, Scotiabank continued to receive top billing in terms of its overall sponsorship of the AGNS's Maud Lewis initiatives. "If you don't stop it, Bernie, you'll be in my vault next," Scotiabank's Jack Keith jested to Riordon in an interview with the *Halifax Chronicle Herald*.<sup>74</sup>

After the AGNS conservation team dismantled, stabilized, and reinstalled the painted house, and conserved the painted objects within it, the Lewises' former home became a permanent part of the AGNS collection while it also found a lasting association with Scotiabank as a corporate sponsor of all things Maud Lewis. Financed by Scotiabank, the new installation included a selection of Lewis paintings and a virtual exhibition that provides an overview of the conservation techniques used to preserve Lewis's house together with a visual timeline of the restoration project (Figure 9).<sup>75</sup>

72 Jack Keith, quoted in Marilyn Smulders, "Bank Funds Maud Lewis Gallery," *The Daily News* (Halifax), 5 June 1997, p. 41, miscellaneous Maud Lewis Exhibition files, "Maud Lewis House Conservation Campaign," AGNS.

73 "Scotiabank Endows Maud Lewis Gallery," undated AGNS press release, Arts and Communication, AGNS.

74 Jack Keith, quoted in Elissa Barnard, "Bank Donates \$175,000 toward Maud Lewis Gallery," *Chronicle Herald*, 5 June 1997, miscellaneous Maud Lewis Exhibition files, "Maud Lewis House Conservation Campaign," AGNS.

75 AGNS, "Maud Lewis Interactive Tour," [http://www.artgalleryofnovascotia.ca/ml\\_interactive/home\\_frameset.html](http://www.artgalleryofnovascotia.ca/ml_interactive/home_frameset.html).



**Figure 9: Installation view of the fully restored Maud Lewis House, 4 June 1998, Scotiabank Maud Lewis Gallery, AGNS, Halifax.**

Source: AGNS.

Riordon believed that the Scotiabank-sponsored touring exhibition “The Illuminated Life of Maud Lewis,” which opened at the AGNS in 1997 and went on to tour across Canada, had the potential to launch Lewis as “the Anne of Green Gables of Nova Scotia in terms of tourism and cultural industry” by generating increased national interest in the painted house’s permanent installation in Halifax.<sup>76</sup> Soon, however, Riordon’s concentration was directed less towards developing Maud Lewis’s national appeal or to reaching out to corporate sponsors as it was to making good on a promise to commemorate her legacy locally in Marshalltown. Much like the painted house itself, however, there was a great deal of debate over what the memorial to Lewis should encompass. Maud Lewis Painted House Society minutes record that a local stonemason initially offered “to build a cairn from fieldrock already in the area,” while “other interested community people have been cutting and clearing the site” on which a cairn might rest.<sup>77</sup> In newspaper letters and editorials, other local residents continued to call for the house to be returned to its original site. Jean MacPherson, for example, wrote to the *Chronicle Herald* in advance of the painted house’s installation in Halifax to insist that the society

<sup>76</sup> Riordon, quoted in Brian Medel, “Marketers to Paint Maud Lewis as Local Anne of Green Gables,” *Chronicle Herald*, 14 June 1996.

<sup>77</sup> “Maud Lewis Painted House Society Minutes,” 4 October 1996, n.p., Maud Lewis Marshalltown Cairn, AGNS.

“restore [the Lewises’] tiny home with dignity and love, not only as a tourist attraction but as a memorial to her.”<sup>78</sup> Likewise, in 1997, Lance Woolaver, Lewis’s biographer, told the *Digby Courier* that he would “write municipal warden David Irvine asking for Municipal Council support of a campaign to have the famous painted house returned to where Maud and Everett lived in Marshalltown.”<sup>79</sup> He further noted that the Digby area “has really not received much benefit from the Maud Lewis publicity and I’m starting a campaign to have the house returned to its original spot. . . . Other communities in Nova Scotia, like Parrsboro and Lunenburg are greatly benefitting commercially from the Maud Lewis revival and the interest in folk art. Digby ought to be the very centre.”<sup>80</sup>

The cairn that was eventually erected on the original site of the painted house in Marshalltown emerged as a personal mnemonic device for community members who had intimate knowledge of Lewis’s life. At the 6 October 1996 society meeting, architect Brian MacKay-Lyons proposed an idea for a memorial structure based on “his childhood association with Maud and his life long interest in folk art. . . . The concept was a 3-D frame version of the house, the outline being the same size and shape as the original Maud Lewis house” (Figure 10). MacKay-Lyons also “suggested that at some time in the future, a variation would be to have a sculpture of Maud in her chair in the window” – a further nod to the community’s claim to Lewis’s everyday life in Marshalltown. When the replica of the Lewis home was erected in 1996, Riordon heralded it as “a modern, symbolic steel ‘house’” (Figure 11)<sup>81</sup> and noted that it was the result of “a community effort that reaches beyond the borders of Digby County to embrace the whole province.”<sup>82</sup> No longer visiting Lewis at her home in Digby County, tourists could now visit the memorial cairn in rural surrounds and the original painted house in the comfort of an urban gallery setting that boasted a permanent homage to an artist, as Riordon put it, whose “door was always open to passersby.”<sup>83</sup>

Not all reactions were as positive. One particularly critical letter to the editor of the *Digby Courier*, written by Bette Saunders of Toronto, described the cairn as “a monstrosity and a complete insult to Ms. Lewis. . . . While the structure may be dimensionally correct, as a memorial it should be destroyed. . . . The memorial makes it appear she lived in a steel cage. . . . It is a waste of money. . . . Whoever is responsible should be ashamed!”<sup>84</sup> Kenneth Connell, then president of the Maud

78 Jean MacPherson, “Keep Memory Alive” (letter to the editor), *Chronicle Herald*, 29 May 1996, Maud Lewis Marshalltown Cairn, AGNS.

79 Gordon Mount, “Digby Missing out on Craze for Maud,” *Digby Courier*, 19 November 1997, Maud Lewis Marshalltown Cairn, AGNS.

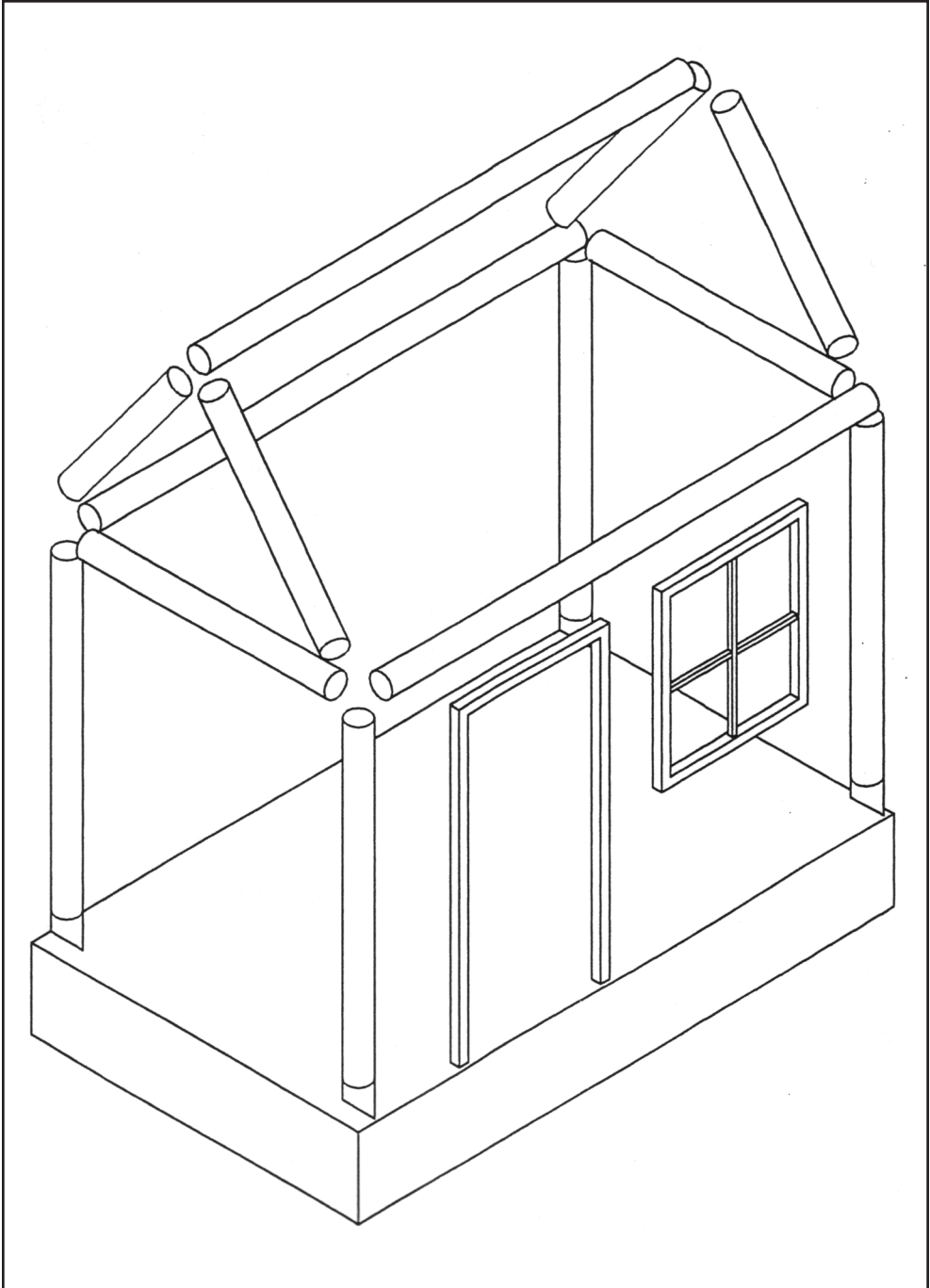
80 Woolaver, quoted in Mount, “Digby Missing out on Craze for Maud,” *Digby Courier*, 19 November 1997, Maud Lewis Marshalltown Cairn, AGNS.

81 “Maud Lewis Painted House Society Minutes,” 4 October 1996, n.p., Maud Lewis Marshalltown Cairn, AGNS.

82 Riordon, quoted in “Maud Lewis Painted House Society Minutes,” 4 October 1996.

83 Bernard Riordon, “Foreword,” in Hamilton, *Painted House of Maud Lewis*, xii.

84 Betty Saunders, “Tourist Finds Memorial a ‘Monstrosity’” (letter to the editor), *Digby Courier*, 1 April 1998, Maud Lewis Memorial, AGNS. It should be noted that Saunders goes on to specify that the memorial “makes it appear as if the black community lives in cages,” which implies that she assumed Lewis to be of African-Canadian descent.



**Figure 10: Brian MacKay-Lyons, sketch of Maud Lewis memorial sculpture, 1996.**

Source: Maud Lewis Marshalltown Cairn, "Maud Lewis Painted House Society Minutes," 4 October 1996, AGNS.



**Figure 11: Brian MacKay-Lyons’s memorial cairn on the site of Lewis’s Marshalltown house, 2013.**

Source: AGNS.

Lewis Painted House Society, was quick to respond that the memorial “enjoyed tremendous support from a vast number of community-minded persons throughout Digby town and municipality, and from throughout Nova Scotia, across Canada and from the United States.” He went on to analyze the memorial sculpture as a stark contrast to the painted house, which represented “a simple magical life of days gone by in her art, all the while suffering the debilitating effects of illness.” In short, Connell wrote, the memorial structure “depicts aptly the greyness of Maud’s life in a most solemn manner. During the evening hours in season, the illuminated memorial casts its awesome rays for both locals and visitors to ponder, as does Maud’s art.”<sup>85</sup> In the end, the cairn captured precisely the community-corporate paradox of Lewis’s commemorative legacy for Digby County residents: without direct access to the painted house itself, as Nova Scotia’s Department of Education and Culture Director of Cultural Affairs Allison Bishop put it, they looked to the sculpture to “treat the artist’s reputation with dignity.”<sup>86</sup>

85 Kenneth Connell, “Memorial Depicts Simplicity of Maud’s Life” (letter to the editor), *Digby Courier*, 8 April 1998, Maud Lewis Memorial, AGNS.

86 Allison Bishop (Department of Education and Culture) to John F. MacLean (Department of Supply and Services), 18 December 1995, Maud Lewis Marshalltown Cairn, AGNS.

Yet while Connell's defense of the cairn against an isolated letter from a Toronto visitor should not be read as representing widespread community dissent over its design – in fact, it could just as easily indicate its success as a memorial – it is important to contextualize its interpretation against architect MacKay-Lyons's vision for vernacular architecture in Nova Scotia. Described by one author as “a native son of Nova Scotia” who likes to “anchor his buildings in local stories” to evoke a “timeless culture” and an “imaginary ideal,” his architectural ambitions certainly subscribe to the same ideology that motivated the painted house's restoration.<sup>87</sup> Indeed, MacKay-Lyons's modernist treatment of a house that came to represent Maud Lewis's vernacular life in a public gallery setting underlines the contradiction within the folk art category itself: the mythology of the homebound folk artist selling works to travelling tourists and collectors, whose ignorance of such art world movements as modernism also serves to authenticate the work as folk art in the first place. In this case, MacKay-Lyons's well-documented expeditions throughout Nova Scotia to salvage the building culture of the province – where he isolates historical structures such as lighthouses, barns, and farmhouses, relocates them to and restores them on his property in Lunenburg County, and uses them to create “an architecture that is bound to the landscape in the best sense of the vernacular” – directly parallel the relocation of the painted house to Halifax.<sup>88</sup>

Even with the involvement of a high-profile architect, the Marshalltown memorial was nevertheless the component in Maud Lewis's commemoration most neglected by the corporate sponsorship with Scotiabank. While Lewis's “living artwork” continued to breathe life into the newly expanded Scotiabank Maud Lewis Gallery in Halifax, efforts to promote the cairn on the ground in Marshalltown stagnated.<sup>89</sup> Most of the financial backing for the memorial project in the end came through MacKay-Lyons and the efforts of the Maud Lewis Painted House Society, which received donations from multiple sponsors across the province and hosted a telethon on Digby's local access cable television that raised \$5,226 towards the initiative.<sup>90</sup> Both community donors and the AGNS (with Scotiabank's help) contributed over \$31,946.60 towards the Marshalltown memorial.<sup>91</sup> Nevertheless, Scotiabank continued to direct the commemorative expectations of the memorial project through the AGNS. Despite the fact that the installation plans for the cairn included a template to ensure that a tour bus could effectively turn around on the property, which suggests a prepping for tourist traffic, Scotiabank's Atlantic Canada senior vice-president Jack Keith phoned the AGNS to complain that “it was difficult to know/recognize the site” from the

87 Christine Macy, “Ghost Stories,” in Brian MacKay-Lyons, *Ghost: Building and Architectural Vision* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008), 15. This book by MacKay-Lyons and various contributors documents his restoration and relocation work in Nova Scotia as well as his broader projects through the Ghost International Architecture Laboratory, which he founded at Dalhousie University in 1994.

88 Karl Habermann, “Expedition to the Coast of Nova Scotia,” in MacKay-Lyons, *Ghost*, 63.

89 Riordon, quoted in Courtney, “Maude Lewis House Becomes Cultural Artifact,” p. 14, Maud Lewis Painted House Society – Historical/General, AGNS.

90 “Maud Lewis Telethon Raises \$5,226,” *Chronicle Herald*, 15 May 1997, n.p., Maud Lewis Marshalltown Cairn, AGNS.

91 “Art Gallery of Nova Scotia Appeals Analysis – Maud Lewis Appeal,” 16 June 1997, Maud Lewis Marshalltown Cairn, AGNS.

highway.<sup>92</sup> As late as 2007, the president of the Gilbert Cove & District Historical Society Jim Lovett wrote to the AGNS's new director, Jeffrey Spalding, to have a "frank discussion . . . about the Maud Lewis Memorial in Marshalltown." Again, memories of time spent in the Lewises' original home dictated the nature of the conversation as Lovett recalled his own visit during the 1960s "surveying the scene and conversing with Maud. This wonderful lady was working at her table by the door with paints in sardine cans while Everett mused about by the old stove. . . . The vision of that rich, colourful and cheerful experience fleeting from my mind as I confronted the reality of this hulk of industrial steel that so aptly conveyed sombre reality."<sup>93</sup>

As the contested nature of Lewis's commemoration remained long after the painted house's restoration or the installation of the Marshalltown cairn, her lasting legacy in Nova Scotia, it would seem, would continue to be a source of controversy. The particulars of this controversy can be used to make a number of suggestions about folk art in Nova Scotia during the developing neoliberal era of late 20th century. The first is that the economic crisis of the 1970s and 1980s resulted in a discrediting and dismantling of the postwar welfare state and transformed small-time self-taught artists such as Lewis into ideals of independent individualism. This partially explains the sudden popularity of folk art amongst wealthy art patrons and galleries at this time. More than this, though, rural self-taught artists in particular became emblems of poverty against the neoliberal restructuring of global capitalist systems during this period, since rural communities were often the most marginalized by these changes. The inclusion of folk art in art galleries, then, was also about conducting a kind of rescue archaeology in order to salvage a rural way of life that public history makers understood to be in crisis in the last few decades of the 20th century. In this regard, the inclusion of folk art in galleries had little to do with the artists themselves (except in terms of the institutional co-opting of virtually free and entirely unregulated labour) and everything to do with new corporate funding models for galleries in which folk art appealed to private interests. It is also clear that transnational corporations have much to gain from their public relations campaigns in the sponsorship of art and culture ventures. A press release, entitled "Scotiabank's commitment to the Arts," makes the corporate desire for this association quite clear: "At Scotiabank we believe very strongly in supporting the communities where we live and work, and support initiatives and causes that are important to our employees and customers."<sup>94</sup>

Not surprisingly, then, in its attempt to bolster its corporate identification as a regional bank in Nova Scotia, Scotiabank branded itself with the antimodern notion

92 Brenda Garagan (AGNS) to Bernard Riordon, 4 June 1997, Maud Lewis Painted House Society – Historical/General, AGNS.

93 Jim Lovett (Gilbert Cove & District Historical Society) to Jeffrey Spalding (Art Gallery of Nova Scotia), 28 February 2007, Maud Lewis Painted House Society – Historical/General, AGNS. It should be noted that in the past year, the AGNS has added a large coloured sign with a photograph of Maud Lewis on it to mark the site off the highway.

94 The press release also outlines many of Scotiabank's corresponding sponsorship projects, including the Scotiabank Group Fine Art Collection, which purchases contemporary artwork from around the world; the Scotiabank Giller Prize, the largest cash prize awarded for fiction in Canada; and the Sobey Art Award, which gives \$50,000 annually to its recipient visual artist. See Scotiabank, "Scotiabank's Commitment to the Arts," press release, 2008, [www.toronto.ca/special\\_events/nuitblanche/pdf/snb08\\_scotiabankfactsheet.pdf](http://www.toronto.ca/special_events/nuitblanche/pdf/snb08_scotiabankfactsheet.pdf).



of regionality that public history makers long associated with Lewis's work. This was clearly articulated by Scotiabank Chairman and CEO Peter C. Godsoe's sponsorship message in Lance Woolaver's 1996 biography of Lewis: "When Maud Lewis sat in her tiny Digby, Nova Scotia, house, in front of an empty canvas, little did she know that her work would touch the hearts of thousands of people across Canada and around the world. For, in Maud's art, there is a silent yet colourful celebration of the simple, magical life that many yearn for today."<sup>95</sup> In the end, MacKay-Lyons's modernist-style memorial cairn to Lewis was ironically out of place with the vision of her life that Scotiabank articulated. If anything, it represented the paradox of folk art's relationship to the art world that so marked the contested commemoration of the painted house in the first place. Yet in the age of neoliberal museum development, the AGNS's commodification of Lewis's art as a timeless memorial to the conflicted responses to late-capitalist change negotiated such contradictions with ease. The provincial gallery not only determined the ongoing significance of this rural, self-taught artist's place in artistic circles in Nova Scotia. It also capitalized significantly on the life of Lewis as a cultural labourer, whose work has continued to provide a valuable cultural resource to an ideologically structured public domain where the corporately financed institutional ownership of her visual identity made – and continues to make – ongoing community claims to her legacy impossible.

95 Peter Godsoe, "Sponsor's Message," in Woolaver, *Illuminated Life of Maud Lewis*, n.p.