Heritage by Design
Previous titles in this series
Canadian Settlements—Perspectives
The Parasites Outnumber the Hosts
People Do It All the Time
Hindsight on the Future
Canadian Settlement and Environmental Planning
An Urban/Economic Development Strategy
for the Atlantic Region

Other titles to follow

Sources
Grieve, Christopher Murray. “In a Cave by the Sea” by Hugh MacDiarmid. By permission of Christopher Murray Grieve.
some evidence. Despite our being surrounded by the built environment, little attention is paid to it. The results of extensive design seem to be perceived as boring, effete, and of interest only to a few. Architecture makes its appearance only in the real estate section of the newspapers. As one of America's few architectural and urban design critics put it, calling the section "real estate" is like calling the entertainment section "tickets". The other section in which the issue makes an occasional appearance is the entertainment section—this is even more difficult to understand. Until the environment is considered newsworthy, the actions undertaken on its behalf are, along with related economic, political, and social issues, likely to remain a source of mystery and of only occasional concern to most of the public. There is a need to provide a platform for broader public debate of our environmental heritage, and this will come about only when it ceases to be invisible in the eyes of the press and broadcasting industries.

Urban Prospects

Heritage by Design

Penina Coopersmith
with Richard C. Hall

The Ministry of State for Urban Affairs
1976
hundred expended blue stamps might even entitle him to pile his two gold stamps atop one another. There might also be green stamps for trees, purple for recreation, et cetera. In fact, all the planner's land-use colours could be issued as stamps, and the developer who held only a limited amount of property would have to find ways of integrating all these uses on one parcel of land. Imagine, trees, schools, working, shopping, and living accommodation all on one site!

In addition, a variety of other, more simply stated but equally dramatic programs might be undertaken to accomplish similar ends. Out of the idea of planning fixes might come suggestions or even planning legislation aimed at creating agreed upon vocabularies of architectural styles, of materials, of building heights over limited or broad areas of our cities. When only local materials could be used, every region had a distinctive look. Just because any material can be transported to anywhere doesn't mean it has to be. Maybe mirror glass should be rationed? Highly specific guidelines as to fenestration, scale, and related design issues have been employed to good effect since the Middle Ages. These place certain limitations on design freedom, but the payoff is in the outcome—Europe's public squares for instance—and there is still tremendous freedom with respect to other aspects of building design. It would be wise to construct models of neighbourhoods in which new construction was planned and to examine carefully how the new will influence the old—not only in terms of sunlight, shadow, and microclimate, but in terms of proportion, accessibility, colour, et cetera.

Finally, there is lack of media coverage of most environmental issues. This is singularly ironic. Our ability to appreciate city scapes—such as those of Venice, Paris, old Québec, San Francisco—is largely a function of their having been seen, seen by many eyes, at different times and in different lights. What we see and record is our only basis for comparison; we cannot know how well we have done nor where we have failed unless there is
much like the nineteenth-century carpetbagger and is accorded about as much respect. His architect, though not as anonymous, is generally shielded by a mouthful of meaningless letters—the name of his firm. Removal of anonymity alone will not render the developer more popular, but perhaps two aims could be accomplished at once. Suppose that when a building was constructed the builder was required to pay an amenity tax. This would be unlike existing taxes, which go generally to provide servicing which is necessary only because of the building's existence. Rather, these would take a concrete form. A small builder, for instance, might be required to plant a stand of trees at a specified location—not necessarily on the site of his own building, although that might also be required. A slightly larger builder might have to provide a playground, and so on—the cost of the amenity would be rated against the cost of the building. Now, the nature of the playground, or whatever, would not be specified. This would be left to the developer. But it would be made clear that this generous taxpayer would have to be identified as the donor of this either excellent or wretched facility. Thus the developer could decide whether to play the part of hero or villain. The idea would be that if the environment is going to be changed by building in it, it must be changed for the better, and that if the developer is going profit by this intervention, then so should everyone else—not only the users of his building, but the community as a whole.

We must ensure that what we want and need to build is what gets built. At the moment, it is exceedingly popular to build office space despite the fact that in many cities there is a glut of office space and large amounts of it has gone unrented. While a change in tax structure might dampen the popularity of this pointless construction, why not make the point more clearly? Perhaps we should institute a trading stamp system for developers whereby expenditure of fifty blue stamps (housing) would entitle the spender to one gold stamp (an office block). One

Contents

1 Heritage Begins at Home 7
2 Heritage in the Cupboard 16
3 Heritage out of the Cupboard: Preservation 22
4 Heritage in the Everyday World: Conservation 31
5 Heritage Marks Time 40
Sources 51
create, some means must be found for its implementation. The procedures and the processes employed must themselves reflect the priorities we have selected and the nature of the environment we want to inhabit. Techniques must be created not only for integrating the new and old aspects of the built world, but for integrating the social and physical aspects of all planning and development. Before proceeding to physical planning, policies must exist for public involvement. Problem solving must take precedence over master planning. Needs must be determined and conflicts over whose needs should take priority must be resolved. The function of planning must cease to be the production of reports, and must be instead an attempt to secure changes that help people and communities to realize their aspirations and capabilities. Planning must be de-mystified. A number of procedures might aid or accompany this de-mystification. Integration of new and old is made more difficult by the variety of technological possibilities now available. Careful consideration must be given to the ways it can be successfully achieved; this has rarely been done. We rarely use even so simple a device as the holding of design competitions; these would at least provide alternatives from which to choose.

We must go beyond paying lip service to ideals and look for innovative ways to implement them. In the absence of a true desire to foster good growth on the part of those most responsible for development—developers, planners, politicians—unique achievements in integration will remain unique, legislation will be found to have expedient loopholes, and the best of planning and design guidelines will be circumvented. All developers, whether represented by the church, the state or private entrepreneurs have always built for profit. Yet it was once possible for them to concern themselves also with matters of design, graciousness, comfort, and style. To build well, to spend one's money even extravagantly to do so, was a mark of status; it conferred both fame and immortality. Today, the developer is

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veniences of excessive distances between the places we must get to in order to work, play, or sleep, and of excessive exposure to the elements as though we were still pioneers. There is a vast wilderness, but not at our doorsteps. Our heavy reliance on the car, and the vast amounts we spend on central heating, belie the passing of the pioneer spirit and its supposed willingness to suffer inconveniences—we suffer inconveniences, but not willingly, and mostly they are of our own creation. This is silly.

We continuously knock what is old as obsolete, and then knock it down. Yet when new construction is criticized as being sterile, characterless, and drab, we explain that this is because it is new and hasn’t yet acquired the patina of age, the character contributed by human use. Now we generally build so that demolition will never be an issue since decay will precede it. It is also generally forgotten that the character of many old places is a function of their initial design, not merely of their age. At the same time, we criticize everything new over-hastily, without giving it time to gain acceptance.

We seem to want to do everything perfectly and yet, at the same time, we place excessive value on originality. We refuse to accept the value of things that already work, out of fear of being imitators, and thereby refuse to acknowledge precedent. In so doing, we learn neither from previous success nor failure, and are at least as likely to create perfect failures as perfect successes—neither are likely to be truly original since precedents aren’t even examined. It is repugnant to the average citizen to be told that his town looks like many others, since it implies that the same may be said of him. Yet by everything we do, and fail to do, we are increasingly creating places that look precisely like many others. People must be encouraged, possibly even forced to sit down, look at the alternatives, select what they like from here, and elsewhere, and then proceed to invent what exists nowhere else.

Third, having developed an image of what we want to retain and to

1 Heritage Begins at Home

*History is the record of what one age finds worthy of note in another.*

—Josef Bruckhardt

*History is bunk.*

—Henry Ford

When I first explored the issue of heritage two years ago, it was generally considered to serve two purposes: to occupy little old ladies in their twilight years and to be shoved down the throats of deserving school children. To be sure, there was some interest from other sectors of the community, much of it generated by the 1967 Centennial celebration. Architectural historians, such as Eric Arthur and Anthony Adamson, had written in the field; there were numerous museums across the country; in several cities, citizen groups had rallied to the cause of one old building or another; and the creation of an official holiday in February to be known as “Heritage Day” was being contemplated (it still is). However, the interest that was expressed involved a fairly small number of people who were concerned about a fairly limited number of buildings or artifacts. There was, for instance, virtually no legislation giving protection to heritage sites anywhere in Canada (although this too was being considered). The Canadian heritage conservation record compared to that of almost any other country in the world was abysmal. The average Canadian would have been hard pressed to find any connection between concern for heritage and his daily life.
Since then, several trends have meshed, giving a new life to the heritage issue. Some of these had been evident previously; others emerged with startling clarity. I don’t wish to suggest that there has been a thorough revolution—there hasn’t. Although legislation concerning heritage preservation and conservation, for instance, now exists in every province, it is weak—very weak. However, the frequency with which the issue is raised and the number of people who are raising it are steadily increasing. So, too, are the number of activities, projects, and programs undertaken in its name. Plans are being made on its behalf. What happened?

In the fall of 1973, an earth- and consciousness-shaking event occurred: the start of the so-called “energy crisis". A slew of new words entered our vocabulary, the most popular of which was “re-cycling". Everything was found to be re-cyclable: garbage, buildings, automobiles; and billboards even proclaimed, “Let Jesus Recycle Your Soul".

Of course, predictions of an eventual fuel shortage had been made before, but in terms of public policy and public expectations, the words of such Cassandras were about as well-heeded as would be those of religious zealots carrying placards reading, “The End is Nigh—Repent". Then, too, there had been concern expressed in some quarters about the long-term implications of our excessive dependence on oil, especially regarding its greatest guzzler, the car. The highways required destroyed neighbourhoods at one end and farmland at the other; they invited urban sprawl and endless strip development; they were over-subscribed before a ceremonial opening date was determined; and the traffic jam was as much a symbol of Canadian life as the Mountie. While not held in as low regard as the doomsdayers, critics of the self-perpetuating car-highway-suburb syndrome were generally acknowledged to be snooty academics or worrywarts, and millions gaily abandoned themselves to the

Second, we must begin to develop a sense of what our future settlements will look like, how they will work and feel. With over 75 percent of Canadians living in urban environments, this implies defining a specifically Canadian city-sense. It is not a question of pandering to hypernationalistic tendencies, nor of merely continuing endlessly the standard procedures for urban planning. Rather, it requires agreement on priorities and the application of a little common sense to our expectations of the environment’s ability to fulfill our needs. Given our climate, for instance, it is ridiculous that so many built areas resemble Los Angeles. Before further decisions are taken about issues such as transportation, density, lot lines et cetera, the degree to which they should be aimed at achieving priorities, such as winter comfort, must be determined. Does the idea of waiting twenty minutes for a bus at Portage and Main in mid-January really appeal to you?

Another priority which has received similarly insignificant attention is the ambience we want in our environment. We have tended to emphasize efficiency and the practical aspects of shelter and circulation so that consideration of the potential emotional responses to a place is never included as a priority. No one seems to have considered that comfort, joy, delightfulness, curiosity, relaxation, surprise should be aimed at, rather than merely accepted as accidents, or as something to be stuck on afterwards in the form of street furniture, a few scrubby plantings or an occasional kiosk. Pleasure, as the intention of design, is a thing of the past, and is to be found almost exclusively in older areas or buildings.

In order to establish priorities for the future, priorities that will influence standard planning resolutions, numerous myths, practices, procedures, and habits will have to be overcome, superceded, or altered. We have sustained the myth of a vast Canadian wilderness for too long. It has led us to believe that there is plenty of space for everything and everyone. It has also led us to believe that there is some virtue in suffering the incon-
daily strangulation, suffocation, and frustration of the trip between work and home.

The oil crisis wasn't the only factor involved in the growing clamour over environmental wastefulness and deterioration: it was simply the catalyst that combined numerous voices in the night. By 1973, environmental issues were an acceptable topic of conversation, inflation was rampant, and the stack of studies criticizing high-rise living could have reached the top of the CN tower. Rumblings against developers' "speculate and destroy" missions were perceptible if not widespread.

After the fall of 1973, the ranks of re-cycling, rehabilitation, and renovation advocates swelled; they chorused in city halls, ratepayers' organizations, and planning boards across the country. Their demand was for the inclusion of a modicum of common sense in future development schemes: for slower growth; for greater attention to existing structures and neighbourhoods; and for the introduction of alternatives to the methods and motives employed over the previous thirty years in developing the built environment. The peg on which many hung their hats was heritage.

In short, there has been an alteration in the way people perceive the world and its priorities. But the real changes in plans and procedures can be more readily ascribed to external circumstances than to an awakening of environmental sensibility. Construction (and with it, demolition) has certainly slowed, but primarily because of the economic climate rather than changes in the hearts of developers or in the plans which permit them to operate. Mass transit facilities are being expanded as is their use. Town centres are being developed in suburban areas to drain away some of the core's commuterized congestion, and housing is being proposed in core areas. Still, when the City of Toronto tried to limit growth with a height limit on new downtown development while it gave itself time to think about the form

The way we treat our heritage, whether by demolition, disastrous alteration, mummified preservation, token conservation, or imaginative use, is going to indicate the way we treat what is built anew. There is no way that we can be sensitive to our heritage and the environment it creates, and be totally insensitive to what we create for the future. The converse, insensitivity to the past projected into insensitive treatment of the future, has become widely apparent.
future growth should take, it was slapped down by the province's watchdog, the Ontario Municipal Board, which rejected the proposed by-law.

*When you've seen one tree, you've seen them all.*
—Spiro Agnew (or was it Ronald Reagan?)

*We're going to save a similar old bank downtown, isn't one old bank enough to preserve?*
—Alderman Pickett's response to a query about retention of a bank in Toronto

Shortly before the emergence of this concern for redefining priorities and re-shaping plans, a prophetic and important battle took place in one of Toronto's turn-of-the-century neighbourhoods, the Annex. The area, adjacent to the University of Toronto, was comprised largely of middle-class professionals and students who rather liked the overall ambience of their old rambling houses and quiet, tree-lined streets. They were determined to stop its imminent destruction as the result of construction of an expressway right through its centre. Not only would the houses in the path of the expressway be demolished, they argued, but the barrier thrown up by the highway plus the noise and dirt of its traffic would destroy the "neighbourhoodliness" of those that were left standing. They pointed out that there was already a housing shortage in downtown Toronto. The expressway's construction would exacerbate it. Furthermore, they claimed, the expressway would only increase downtown congestion by making the core area more accessible, thereby increasing the desirability of further suburban development and so on. They marshalled all their forces to protect an environment that they knew to be eminently inhabitable. At some point, someone realized yet another weighty argument could be added to the defence of the Annex. Its houses, in addition to being comfortable, were truly representative of a distinctive period of Canadian architectural history, and many of them had housed buildings and areas, but of positive steps towards their improvement. City plans, such as the Halifax one that requires retention of "view planes" to the sea from vantage points across the city, are one means of ensuring a consistent and symbolically significant image of the city and its role to be maintained and enhanced. Were municipalities to select additional heritage features for similar protection, a great many avenues would be opened, permitting heritage to influence new development, and to thereby reinforce our awareness of it. Heritage sites, such as buildings, districts, or monuments could serve as planning "fixes", just as rivers, mountains, and other natural features do now. These "fixes" would serve as focal points for future construction both in visual terms, and in terms of the activities allowed to develop around them, based on the individual nature of the points selected.

Different cities are now toying with various means of re-pedestrianizing their cores by regulating traffic flow. Some have widened sidewalks, others created malls, others improved transportation. All of these create new functions for, and ways of using, city streets.

Other forms of enhancement are also being undertaken: wire burial, provision of street amenities, new plantings, community clean-ups, self-help and research programs, infilling schemes and so on, all of which permit greater enjoyment of the existing environment, protect it, and provide a basis for demanding similar features and amenities when new construction occurs. Thus far, however, few communities have utilized more than a few of these methods over more than a small portion of their total area. Generally, where anything has been done, it has been in the oldest sections of older communities. There is no reason why similar undertakings could not occur in all towns and cities. The crucial point is to find ways of supporting and expanding those elements of the physical and social environment that are agreed to be appealing.
municipalities develop their own criteria for what constitutes heritage, based on the perceptions and requirements of their respective communities; must permit alteration in capital tax depreciation allowances on heritage buildings so that owners are not penalized for their retention and rewarded for their demolition; must seek ways to undertake practices such as the sale of air rights above heritage districts and buildings to encourage both retention and maintenance; and must place the onus of proof of lack of heritage value on those seeking demolition (i.e., the basic assumption behind the issuance of demolition permits must be that they are the exception, rather than the rule). Ways must also be sought to ensure the protection of the residents of heritage buildings and areas so that conservation does not become synonymous with middle-class encroachment on working-class neighbourhoods, as is already the case in some cities.

Of course, legislation is not enough. Demolition permits are sought for at least six of England’s listed buildings every day and many are demolished—a special salute to European Heritage Year. Still, without various forms of legislation to protect conservation areas, there is no hope for their retention. The shift in public attitudes that has made concern for heritage a pressing issue must be supported by government action. As long as tax depreciation allowances render twenty-year-old structures financially obsolete, they will be demolished rather than retained; as long as programs such as the Neighbourhood Improvement Program are permitted to strangulate in their own red tape, public action and community conservation will be impossible; as long as nothing is done to encourage planners to stretch their imaginations, or developers theirs, the likelihood of our leaving an inheritance to future generations is dim. There is little chance of much conservation activity as long as economic considerations are permitted to outweigh all other concerns combined.

Enhancement must consist not only of basic maintenance of people of importance in Canada’s cultural and political history. The cry to save the Annex became the cry to save the Historic Annex. Ultimately, the area was saved by the cancellation of the expressway, and is now commonly referred to as the “Historic Annex”.

Several questions emerge from this case: were the Annex residents simply lucky to be living in an area which could be called “historic” because of its architecture and association with famous people? That is, in a period when concern about heritage is gaining importance, as now seems to be the case, are these the criteria by which claims to heritage value should be determined? Or is it possible that the “historic” consideration was appended to a host of other concerns which also involve ques-
tions of heritage? Is it possible that ambience, amenity, community cohesion, and even the possibility of being within walking distance of one's place of work (as many Annex residents are) are as much a part of concern for heritage as the old standbys of architectural value or the after-glow of fame? When a couple of blocks of ramshackle houses are about to be torn down and the community screams bloody-murder-of-our-heritage, is that legitimate? Or is it merely a matter of some people standing in the way of progress, selfishly not wanting to be dispersed to the ends of the world; or taking another tack, is it possible to support the demands of a community to retain its stability, cohesion, and identity, and not regard it as a question of heritage? Is the concern now beginning to be manifest for the environment fundamentally a concern for heritage as well? What is "heritage" anyway?

Those who are not aware of the past are doomed to live in the future.

All the life of the past works to sustain life of the present and of the future.

Is heritage dead?

A limited view of what constitutes heritage considers only the architectural and/or historical merits of a site or building. Its advocates want to know who built a building, whether this person was important, whether the structure is representative of a period or style, or is in some other way unique. They want to know whether an important person lived in it, or a memorable event occurred within its walls. Determination of importance, representativeness, and uniqueness must, in this approach, be left to specialists—to historians of various sorts. This viewpoint does not suggest that buildings, unimportant historically or architecturally, should be torn down. It simply implies that their retention has nothing to do with heritage.

A more expansive view of heritage begins by acknowledging that heritage is everything present at the time of one's birth, that we are now more aware of the impact that actions taken at one point will have on the consequences of those taken at another. We should be conscious of the need to step more lightly, rather than tread heavily across the globe, as though humanity was solely a swarm of mindless combat boots.

In order to develop the resources of the past to meet future needs, a means must be found that will enable us to gather the living world into our consciousness, that will aim at preventing the demolition of consciousness itself, that will halt the tide of commercial and industrial growth that has systematically destroyed the known environment, as though the unholy trinity of profit, production, and growth is the synergic equivalent of consciousness and spiritual well-being. There is need of a new partnership between attitude and technique. Attitudes, in fact, have been changing as indicated by a vociferous expression of environmental concerns in recent years. Thus far, techniques adapted to deal with these concerns have been few.

It would be foolish and fundamentally destructive to outline fully the process by which a more comprehensive means of conservation of the environment might take place, even if space allowed; the idea that every activity and every contingency can be planned for is perhaps the most essential error that has been made in respect to environmental management (erroneously called planning when "plotting" would have been more exact). Nonetheless, there are a few things that could put us on something resembling the right track.

First, conservation must include deciding what we like about what's left from the past—both distant and recent—and formulating means for its retention and enhancement. The former will be possible only when there is truly protective legislation across the country. (For a summary of what currently exists, is lacking, and is needed, see Heritage Canada's quarterly publication for Fall 1975.) Suffice it to say that future legislation must eventually allow municipalities to control the issuance of demolition permits; must ensure that
5 Heritage Marks Time

Why should we do anything for posterity? What has posterity ever done for us?

—Boyle Roche

It is clear that we can no longer sit back and let the environment take care of itself, the built or the natural environment. The ability to plan and build unselfconsciously, and to do so in an economic and expedient way with local materials, and have it all come out right, comfortable, and attractive, appealing to everyone and accommodating the existing environmental and social fabric has, for the time being at least, been lost. For one thing, the lifestyle of “construction” in the last thirty to fifty years militated against this natural ability, destroying our sense of priority and proportion in the service of unbounded profit and automotive ascendancy. And in any case, technological innovation, the new logistics of methods and materials, and changed circumstances in terms of population and urbanization, all render the possibility of a simple “return” to a more natural mode of environmental intervention impossible. There is no way that the technologies deployed in recent years can simply be dropped as though they had never existed; to attempt to do so reminds one of Tolstoy’s fable about endeavouring to know God by standing in a corner and not thinking about white elephants.

Technological innovation can and must be employed to serve a greater, rather than a lesser number of environmental needs.

which is inherited from all the earth’s previous tenants. It includes the good and the bad; the beauty and the ugliness; the problems and solutions—tangible and intangible; the things that work and those that don’t; the best of knowledge, science, art, and literature, and the worst. What is done with all this stuff during one’s earthly tenure—additions, deletions, improvements, refinements—is the next generation’s heritage, their inheritance. “Heritage” from this viewpoint is just a fancy word for inheritance. This all-encompassing view does not provide a basis for deciding what of all this heritage should be retained, destroyed, or left to rot. It accepts that not all heritage is good, but allows for the fact that what one generation may abhor, another may accept, delight in, or demand. It creates an image of heritage as a constantly changing process: the creation, accumulation, or destruction of the artifacts of history. It suggests that whether we consciously consider heritage or not, we are in any case creating it.

Starting with a broader view of what constitutes heritage allows us to ask a greater number of questions about a place: do people enjoy it, do people need it, is it still useful, can it be improved? These become the criteria for judging heritage value, and they can be defined by the people who live there and who stroll by; choice is no longer the specialist’s prerogative. There is no obligation to preserve places on the basis of their importance or their enjoyability; rather, a dimension is added to all our interventions in the built environment, reminding us that “we are not the fifth act of the human drama, but only one of its scenes”.

Illusions of mediocrity

Canadians often bemoan a lack of cultural identity, and the fact that this is a conscious feeling, often discussed in public, confirms it. The very act of feeling this way becomes part of the identity.

In the individual, as Freud said, the received identity is made up of one’s personal history—we are what we were. In society it is an
awareness of the presence of the past, of national heritage. Canadians, not knowing of a “rose red city half as old as time” in the Rockies nor of a Taj Mahal in Halifax, assume there is none to be found. A sense of place, of the genius of the place, grows out of seeing it and experiencing it. In Canada, the thing that is seen—practically to the exclusion of everything else—and considered most Canadian, is the wildscape. Outsiders imagine a Canada exclusively consisting of Mounties, and we insist on being insulted by this foreign myopia. Why? Is Venice not pigeons and gondoliers? By the same token, Venice is much more than a city of pigeons and gondoliers.

The first Canadian cities were smaller and closer to the countryside—the pioneer landscape yet to be conquered. Because Canada is still largely open space, the frontier responses have been carried into the urban setting. We see more of the landscape than ourselves. We can’t see our own “core” and in the core of our cities there are few vantage points, few focal points, few squares, or open spaces in which to sit and look and take pleasure in seeing. This is a perversely funless situation. The inner core is introverted and sees itself only in the windows of shops, and there is limited recreational fun in this. It takes many eyes to see—collective eyes—and historical eyes; many acknowledge the sights in cities abroad, but little is done to be seen here. Not seeing the attractive potential of cities, not thinking of them as attractive, is to make them seem ugly and so we rebuild them in this likeness. Not seeing our own potential (that which has been torn down or not built or is ignored), we destroy the possibility of having a heritage.

Not being aware of beauty is not to say there isn’t any. The part beauty has played in our mechanistic culture has been overlooked. The view of nature as a scheming violator of man’s hoard is just as subjective as that of deity working through metaphors of rejuvenation and fertility. Europe’s growth over the past thousand years has been compressed in Canada into one hundred years—and the traditional distinctions. A very lenient eye indeed is required to substantiate this pastoral vision. Where is the craftsmanship, the rapport with nature, the green-fingered sage of the earth, the bees of yesterday, the horses, the endless golden hours of peace and reflection? Farming is a business and its proprietors live very much as people in the city do, mechanically articulate, inside a protective urban gloss. Much of rural Canada is as urban and “interior” as fragments of the city.

The rural dream is a spiritual ornament—an ideal that one day may be realized. But today, in the country and in the town, the priceless piece of Canadiana stands beside the ersatz in whose recesses one may find the imprint of another stubborn dream—nations of opulence and splendour, of status and power, half translated, half synthetic.

A dream fully translated might lead us back to ourselves; it will certainly enable us to unify our experience by keeping it in one place, in sight, at home. Could we not preserve and retrieve what we think of as a finer and more innocent sensibility from the past, the best and most useful of other people’s things: Georgian squares into squares, parkways into parks, paseos into passageways, the pisoir at Clochmerle into a public convenience, parks into villages, St. Peter’s into Nathan Phillips Square?
past lying around (however fine they may be), there must be enough of them in the environment to become part of the person. Without roots, the past cannot be transcended. To build in the future, as we know we must, and to do so in an appreciably better way than we have done, as we also know we must, the past must be present in all we do; we can only get to the future through experience. Experience is the technology for getting into the future as whole beings.

The Mobile Dream Home

The desire to become whole again, to unify one’s experience, expresses itself as a spiritual homesickness and the idea of self, or home, is carried round in a daydream. The commuter lives “elsewhere”, and this commuting between roles, situations drained of personal meaning, between radically different hierarchies, fragments the identity. Dividing and ruling these alienated parts of the corporate image is a task that turns morality into expediency, ethics into business ethics and, since loyalty to one entails betrayal of another, friends into acquaintances.

What is this dream of home made of? It is a rural dream, friendly neighbourhood stuff, homespun and as non-intellectual as earlier pastoral dreams were amoral. It is tied loosely to a conception of other and truer orders of reality—the land, the sky, family, hunting, fishing, sailing, fraternity, conviviality, manly work on the farm and the woods, women’s work around the house, meaningful existence, and everlasting domestic bliss. It has all the lost innocence and sentimentality of the best nostalgia, of the lost vernacular. Its ache and pathos and its dreamy charm—life as a hobby—are forever kept in ennobling soft focus by the beetling vision of the city and by the distance from the self.

Take a trip to the country, to the rural “home”, and this vision in the mind’s eye almost prevents you from seeing just how urban it really is, just how like the city. The city follows, always, and although it is a great emancipator at its best, it is first a great leveller of

former’s long history of destruction into fifteen years of Canadian demolition. We have reached a point where, if some decisions are not taken soon about the shape of the environment, we will no longer be in a position to make a choice.
2 Heritage in the Cupboard

I like museums. I like to look out of their windows.

—Gertrude Stein

The urge to collect seems always to have been with us—one of the things we inherited from the apes. For example, stashes of colourful crystals were found in the caves where Pithecanthropus dwelt. The mere ownership of objects gives them a special, personal value, and if they have been collected before by others, their value is increased. Marks of previous ownership render previous owners more real, as is the case with heirlooms, rings, antiques, etc. Status seems also to have played some part—the collection confers as well as denotes wealth. Perhaps, too, there is some thrill in having what used to be someone else’s but now is not—possession by a sanctioned sort of theft. The existential thrill of “I’m alive: its other owners are long dead”. Whatever the psychological basis of the collecting urge, it is clear that the uses of collections, as well as of the objects they contain, have changed their meaning.

Some civilizations buried the dead with their possessions—you had to take it with you because there was no distinction between one life and the next; objects were not separable from their owners, their futures were one and the same. Other civilizations conceived of an all-providing heaven, permitting most possessions to stay with the living. In every civilization, some objects were set aside for religious purposes, their use labelled “adventure playgrounds”; and above all, no dirt, no “clean dirt”. Everything is overplanned, and the solution to our few remaining problems is more planning—a few added “features” like remote-controlled, roll-up windows or tail fins and a bit of “heritage” stuck on, time and weather (i.e. economic climate) permitting. Even the way change is introduced seems to lack something. When an old slum in Florence was to be demolished in the late nineteenth century, it was festively decked out as an Arab quarter and celebrations were held. Change itself has become mournful, symbolized by boarded-up windows and “No Trespassing” signs.

. . . there are not two worlds
A world of nature, and a world of human consciousness
standing over against one another, but one
world of nature
Whereof human consciousness
is an evolution.

—Hugh MacDiarmid

This is our landfall and our host,
our only possible home.
In this companionship,
everything we are must be,
here, in this geometry where everything is.

—Richard Hall

It is not simply that people are re-discovering their need to retain familiar objects, to be stimulated by variety, to be able to enjoy again some of the values and attitudes of their predeces- sors, or even to gain some sense of continuity with the past, although these certainly have been overlooked and cannot be any longer. The function of the past is more fundamental than this. It is necessary for survival and adaptability. Indeed our ability to adapt is dependent on a sense of continuity. Continuity cannot be established merely by having a few leftovers from the
want, tyranny, and hunger for all mankind, freedom to make the heavenly city.

But something went wrong. Technology, or rather, the limited, purely mechanistic technology that has been employed, has been seen not to be the "philosopher’s stone". In large-scale terms, there is the fact that as many people are starving today as were one hundred years ago—even as a percentage of the world’s total population; and on an individual basis, that with all our labour-saving devices, our gadgets, women spend the same amount of time doing housework as they did fifty years ago. It is not that technology, even our mechanistic variety, is no good or "evil", as some would have it, it is just that it's only part of the picture, one aspect of the environment.

"Form follows function" it was said. And so our cities and their buildings became supremely functional. But what are the functions of the human animal? To sleep, work, eat, and drink? Now it is suggested that function is comprised of several levels, of which mechanical use and structural possibilities are but two; a further level consists of a subtle symbolic or semantic function to which people can attach their myths and aspirations. One big myth—that of the machine—replaced the myriad little myths. As Lewis Mumford has said: "This century of city building has confused a machine-using society with a vision of society itself as a machine."

In total dedication to the machine, we ignored too many of the things which are beyond its scope, tried to become machines ourselves, and so became adept at performing the very functions of which the machine is most capable: localizing the focus of operations, compartmentalizing responsibility, and translating input slavishly. City and suburb reflect the assembly line: a piece for working, a piece for sleeping, a piece for shopping, and if you’re lucky, you can find a crevice in between for dreaming. "Everything" is planned for. No surprises: we must see films like "Jaws" for thrills; no adventures, except in carefully fenced and restricted, their value magical; often they came to embody the religion and so were worshipped. In Jewish tradition, there is a special set of dishes in every household used exclusively on holy days, a sort of family sanctuary, kept in the cupboard.

In classical times, collections served a variety of purposes. Holy objects for religious rituals; painting and statuary to celebrate beauty and excellence; the booty of war, captured collections of the enemy which commemorated victory while displaying the notions of beauty that prevailed in another society; and objects from the natural world, kept not only for the elegance of their forms, but for the acquisition of knowledge. (A Greek named Xenophon, for instance, utilized his collection of fossils in the development of his geological theories.)

Throughout the Middle Ages, the Church was the major repository of culture and knowledge, and it was in churches that vast collections of sacred and secular objects were stored and exhibited, and on churches that ornamental skills were lavished. They were the show places of contemporary art.

Modern institutions which endeavour to structure, record, refine, and display art and artifacts can trace their origins to fifteenth-century Italy. During the Renaissance, collections (which they called the museum) of great families, such as the Medici, were made available to the public. Removed from the vaults where they were at first kept, they were placed in special rooms of their own. As the past was unearthed and the bounty grew, even these overflowed, and specially designed arcaded loggias called galleria were constructed. The functions of collections changed as they became more numerous. No longer were they strictly products of contemporary culture or bounty from one conquered; they were, as well, guides to earlier civilizations. Scholars were invited to come, study, teach, and to publish descriptive inventories. The uses of these collections were no longer vested solely in the pleasure derived from their contemplation, nor in the proof of wealth their possession offered.
Knowledge and enlightenment were their chief uses, but of course, in those days, the acquisition of knowledge was considered a pleasure.

In the ensuing centuries, the advance of museums went hand-in-hand with the use and proliferation of universities. These were a function of an increasing determination on the part of scholars to catalogue and structure human knowledge, and accompanied the enormous, economic expansion and exploration of the early, modern period. Virtually all institutions of higher learning maintained museums for the use of their students. Oxford, for instance, opened one in 1683. The Sloan collection, nucleus of the British Museum, was opened to the public in 1759, but still it served only a small, educated elite. It set a significant precedent, however, in being the first museum to receive funding from a government.

What may well have been the world’s greatest opening took place in Paris under the auspices of the first republic in 1793. The Louvre, filled not only with its own collection but with those confiscated from the fallen aristocracy, opened its doors to the people. The touch of class, the sensation of owning and being able to enjoy at one’s leisure the artistic wealth of a magnificent civilization, had become available to the ordinary person. It was like being king for a day, without needing to worry about losing your head.

Throughout these years the collections of museums reflected the growing scientific knowledge of the world. If any aspect could be said to have set these collections off from our contemporary ones, it was in the field of the study of man himself. The trinkets and artifacts brought back from the new world were regarded as we might look at a collection of objects made by martians; they were enormously fascinating, even pretty, but the creatures who made them were completely alien. There was no sense of their being fellow humans with similar needs and desires—had it been possible, they themselves, would have been ignore large chunks of the world, or the fact of its total interrelatedness will not work; the “chunks” will re-emerge.

The need for their re-emergence may first appear as a vague unease. This may be attributed to something other than its real cause—as people become racists when their livelihood is threatened. Or it may be over-compensated for, as in the recent proliferation of “far-out” religious cults in this non-religious age. Or, wanting to deny the situation’s problematical nature, people may embrace wholeheartedly the very thing which gave rise to it—as our solution to overcrowded highways has been to build more highways.

Heritage was once what people’s views of the world were all about. While they were conscious of it—“our fathers built that town”, “...cleared that forest”, or whatever—it was not something separate from the routines or activities of their own lives. The issue of a thing having “heritage value” or not, never arose. The thing was either good, or it was not; it worked or did not; needed repair or did not. Re-cycling was common practice—“make do and mend”—and was not labelled as such. In societies where change was acceptable, as in Europe, changes, including improvements, were made as the need arose. The population increased; urbanization and the economic, social, political, and scientific developments of the past two centuries which are now seen as “revolutions” were only occasionally perceived as such at the time. It is the total effect, the difference between life in 1776 and 1976, which makes them appear so startling. When technological innovation permitted the building, first of high structures (elevators, steel frame construction), and then of cars and highways (which were called, and were in fact, parkways) these, too, were accepted as logical changes and improvements. They overcame previous limitations, and were the contribution of one generation to the next. It was felt that human beings had at last developed the means for accomplishing the things of which they had always dreamed: freedom from
their historic value. And it is not even on the basis of loss of the built object, the house, that they are disturbed. It is that their lives are being attacked—their homes are being destroyed along with their houses. Current environmental concerns have a similar basis: it is not that one scenic view, one forest, or even a type of forest is threatened with destruction, but the entire planet, the earth. Homes are the places people inhabit, in which they grow, move, live, love, and laugh, not simply where they sleep, eat, and wash. The connection has been made between the smaller individual home and the larger human one, but the place in between, and especially its built components, does not yet seem to have been fitted into the picture.

And what was blurred becomes quite ordered then,
out of the chaos comes a whole street
with a church, an inn, and houses, people too,
and the light curves all around them with the shape
of a woman in her vulnerable hope
bent over a cradle, tucking sheet and shawl
into an order which is loved and real.

—Iain Crichton-Smith

It is these in-between places that must be made habitable. The only means by which people can imagine a habitable future is by using what they know—that is, by looking to the past. We decide what to do on the basis of what we have experienced previously—consciously and unconsciously—we are what we were, and will be both.

Yet what can be seen to be happening is a thoroughgoing attempt to obliterate all traces of the past, to make cities without memories. This cannot be done. The past cannot be taken out of the world of objects, activities, thoughts, or feelings, be put aside and labelled. We cannot unlink ourselves from objects and activities, our pasts from our presents, or these from our futures. We are “in” our own experiments inextricably. Attempting to exhibited in the cases along with their artifacts. The ancients were viewed in a similar fashion, their reality still confused with their myths. Ancient Greece and Egypt were seen as places where gods might very well have walked the earth and immortality was a living fact.

Much happened in the eighteenth century to change this view, and to provide men with a way of taking a mundane interest in the ancient world and in its own origins. An Italian by the name of Vico wrote a book in the 1720s in which he examined the “history of the race considered as an individual”. Primitive men, he said, had been like children who view the adult world with fascination, seeing it as one in which all is known and anything is possible. The myths they used to explain the world were projections of an imagination like our own, and if we look for the key inside ourselves, and learn how to read them correctly, they can supply us with a previously inaccessible record of the development of societies. That key has been sought ever since. From Frazer to Levi-Strauss, myths have provided the basis for self-understanding.

The time had arrived when even inventors and original thinkers could be seen as “products of their times”. This kind of interpretation is one of the most influential contributions of the period. It altered entirely the nature of history: man’s past was changed—not simply re-written, but re-made. Nothing was as contemporaries had seen it. Their very artifacts came to serve a new purpose. It has been only from the archeological digs of the past two hundred years that we have acquired any idea of the way ancient man lived. From these has been learned the nature of their daily lives, in contrast to the myths that were passed down.

Museums, as holders of these objects, became important as places of study. They even served as laboratories until the late nineteenth century, when these became separate entities. As collections expanded, and knowledge with them, both became
increasingly specialized: museums for art, history, science, industry, natural history, coins, stamps, nations, municipalities, and so on, proliferated. In Canada there were 37 museums in 1903; 185 in 1953; and 1100 in 1974. The world's past and its treasures could be studied and preserved within their walls.

However, perhaps we've over-saturated ourselves with museums. If you asked the average person what word he associated with "museums", it would probably be "dusty". Certainly museum staffs have done all that their funds permit to make their institutions lively and inviting, but let's face it—apart from a few, genuinely interested patrons, assorted scholars, teachers with children, and parents with children, most of us go to museums, if at all, because we think we ought to.

The fault lies not with museums, but with what we have come to expect of them. There was a time when museums collected items which the ordinary person would otherwise never have seen—amulets from ancient Egypt, say. Now, more people are likely to have seen the objects in their original setting—even ancient amulets. Secondly, because the museum is a place where the past can be stored, we have tended to stuff it full of pieces of the past. There is even one woman in a little town in the U.S. who goes out every year, buys several hundred dollars worth of merchandise from the shelves of local stores, and donates it to her local museum. A museum so full of things, things we have—or could have—around us, surely loses some of its interest. Thirdly, as a place of original research, the museum has lost a large chunk of its original function. Scientists—especially natural scientists—once thought that the best way to learn about a subject was to collect as many examples of it as possible in one place for careful comparison and examination. It is now known that thorough studies can only be conducted in the natural setting of a particular specimen.

Much the same thing can be said of the museum's ability to preserve our own heritage. Not only are there limits to what the voirs of labour that supplied new industries, and in time they supplied the new ideas and creative energies that sustained the industries. Farming itself, it is believed, was devised in a crude, early settlement which had a non-agricultural economic base. By accident, it was found that wild grain that had been gathered and stored would grow and could be planted. Thus nature, as a renewable resource, was first discovered and exploited by the technology of farming that had come forth from a settlement. Cities are thus the sources of the technology that sustains us and sustains as well the exploitation of renewable resources, which in their turn sustain an unlimited future, if their use is wisely controlled. Indeed, would it not be more fitting to simply look on the environment in toto, including the built environment, as a resource? Certainly, it is the source of human resourcefulness, in addition to being the home of most of mankind.

Few people whose houses are on the verge of being demolished would make a case for their retention based solely on
Conservation is generally identified with such activities as renovation, rehabilitation, and the currently popular “recycling” of buildings, all of which are aimed at finding a continued use for a building by repairing it, bringing it up to current, building code standards, or altering it to meet present-day needs. It is likely to have broader application than preservation because it is concerned with usability as well as form and “historicity”, and as we all know, there are many more useful buildings around than there are historically or architecturally significant ones. Just how broad this application may be has yet to be determined.

Conservation is a function of the human being’s ability to imagine the future. It has long been identified with the positive utilization of natural resources in a manner that will ensure their perpetual availability at a later date. It is good husbandry: replacing the nutrients that crops remove from the soil in order that the soil may continue to grow crops. Fishing, to which similar methods of conservation can be applied, is only now being recognized as one resource to which they should be applied. The possibility of conservation is not enough to ensure its institution; there must be a conscious need for it as well and we must be ready to perceive this need. Where there’s a way there isn’t necessarily a will.

Piece by piece, individual elements of the environment have been added to the list of resources for which some sort of conservation activity is required. To soil and timber have been added streams, the ocean, flood plains, et cetera. The publication of Silent Spring made the general public aware of food chains and the interdependence of different forms of life. Yet recognition of man’s habitat, the city, as a component of the total environment, and of the need to find suitable conservation methods that would render it as “fertile” as the farm, has not occurred.

Cities are essential to human growth. Towns grew up as reser-
museum can hold, but there is a limit to what it should hold. Despite the proliferation of private collections of everything from ashtrays to zippers, there are many objects which might serve us better were they left in their natural settings. At some point, we seem to have come to believe that, because the museum preserves pieces of the past, we must necessarily put everything from the past into it, and that, simply because the museum preserves valuable pieces of the past, everything of value is already in the museum. This belief relieves our consciences of any further need for concern: history is safe.
3 Heritage Out of the Cupboard: Preservation

Historic restoration fulfills a need...of making the environment visually convincing...and allows generation to be joined to generation...so that a consistent urbanism can be created.

—Walter L. Creese

Most often the Roman Forum is thought of as a time-worn ruin, or as a symbol of a city sacked by ignorant Goths and Vandals. But it was not the invading hordes who were the perpetrators of Ancient Rome's vandalism. Actually, it was the Romans themselves who “vandalized” Rome by using its ancient monuments as stone quarries. The developers of the late Empire claimed that use of the monuments' already-cut stone and their convenient location near building sites was more economical than using stone that had to be cut and quarried elsewhere. They also considered that the costs of maintaining these old structures rendered them obsolete and expendable.

Between that time and the fairly recent past, the problem of protecting buildings that were deemed to be a significant part of a nation's heritage did not arise. Many centuries passed before the Roman circumstances of rapid urbanization with its pressures on scarce resources were to re-emerge. There were many changes in the intervening years as European society slowly altered, laying the foundations of the modern world; but until about 1850 none of these seriously affected traditional patterns of building. Throughout the interim, the methods of build-

4 Heritage in the Everyday World: Conservation

Technology has a role that is biological in the strict sense of the word: it has every right to be included in the scheme of nature. From this point of view, there ceases to be any distinction between the artificial and the natural, between technology and life, since all organisms are the result of invention...

—Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

The terms “preservation” and “conservation” were once virtually synonymous—one could conserve or preserve fruits, it made no difference. The two are now distinct. Preservation has come to mean saving, keeping as is, intact. It invokes images of pickling, stabilizing, isolating, of removing something from use so that it will not deteriorate. Conservation, meanwhile, has acquired a more dynamic connotation that comes from its use in physics, i.e., that energy, mass, and matter in an isolated system remain constant even while changes and reactions of all kinds take place within it; it is use without loss.

Preservation of heritage has focussed largely on saving things from destruction, protecting them by removing them from ordinary use. It is a negative act, in the planning sense, implying strict, inflexible control. Even though a few buildings in the everyday world have been preserved, it has been more a matter of permitting a look-but-don’t-touch object to “museify” the world outside the museum than of using these few buildings to affect the rest of the everyday environment.
The Polished Surface

*Harlem is vicious
  modernism. Bang Clash.
  Vicious the way it’s made.
  Can you stand such beauty?
  So violent and transforming.*

—LeRoi Jones

*I wander thro’ each charter’d street,
  Near where the charter’d Thames does flow,
  And mark in every face I meet
  Marks of weakness, marks of woe.*

—William Blake

*I was fortunate enough to find that one can go day after day to meet
  a piece of built up space as one would go to meet a live personality.*

—Boris Pasternak

ing—the materials used, the stylistic concerns, if not the styles themselves—were so similar across most of the western world that the demise of one structure invariably led to something fairly similar being put in its place. Today’s economic pressures were not, and could not be, operative: in the absence of the ability to build beyond a height limited by the technology of the time, there was rarely anything to be gained by removing a structure and replacing it with a new one. Buildings were designed to last, to immortalize the wealthy, and to shelter the poor for as long as their fabric would hold. Most towns and cities grew by expansion rather than replacement.

Threats to tradition were rarely man-made. Fire, flood, and earthquake were the major causes of wholesale urban demolition. Disasters, such as London’s great fire, created circumstances in which desired changes in the urban fabric could be made. When London was rebuilt in the early 1670s, although its street patterns and even building locations were similar to those that had evolved before the fire, streets were widened in order to accommodate the expected traffic increases of a rapidly expanding trade centre. But, although use was made of the opportunity provided by the unsought destruction of the city, it would not have occurred to anyone at the time that the buildings should have been intentionally torn down simply to widen the streets.

By the early nineteenth century, however, change occurred rapidly. To say cities were overcrowded would be an understatement. In many parts of industrial cities, people lived, fourteen, fifteen, and even more, to a room; life expectancy hovered around twenty years; horses relieved themselves where they pleased; few streets were paved; many had open sewers, many more had none at all; the air was filled with coal dust; and a pervasive stench existed throughout.

Thus began urban renewal, slum clearances, the flight to the suburbs. In virtually every major European city, “cosmetic” re-
construction forged ahead, carved from demolished slums. The complaints of those displaced by Haussmann's "soulless" but creative boulevards were not heard.

Given the events of recent years, one might expect that it was out of this wholesale demolition that the preservation movement arose. Although its inception was a product of this period, preservation was not a response to urban alterations. On the contrary, whatever the problems of those displaced by wholesale renewal, the net effect on the look and feel of the city was considered an improvement: filthy and festering habitations had been removed and replaced by magnificent boulevards, lined with well-designed buildings of a scale complementary to the existing cityscape.

Rather, it was destruction of the countryside that triggered a response. The railroad crisscrossed the land, linking raw materials to manufacturer and manufacturer to markets, and everywhere, the city followed: suburban sub-divisions of tacky, ill-built houses, industrial towns and intermediary service centres, slap-dash products of get-rich-quick speculators. The countryside was being devoured: the fear that it would disappear altogether was the moving force behind the preservation movement's birth.

In the U.S., preservation began as a way of symbolizing reunification after the Civil War; a group restored the decaying Mount Vernon home of George Washington, preserving both it and Washington's memory, and in this, post-war concord. This was a new kind of museum, the product of a symbolic gesture. Its function was not primarily to display beauty, excellence, or interesting artifacts, but to re-create a total image of the life of a man who lived in a period which had already disappeared.

Meanwhile, in Sweden, urbanism and industry had completely altered even agricultural life. The clothing, implements, methods, and habits of the rural world that had prevailed for centuries were disappearing. Out of the fear that it would be lost

Surrounded by these examples of architecturally successful and historically significant buildings, we would have grown to expect them, and would have been less likely to accept less worthy substitutes when we built anew. At some point, this limited view, had it been implemented, would have helped to establish an environment which paid tribute to a broader view of heritage.

Unfortunately, that point, if it ever existed, is long past—not only in Canada, of course, but virtually everywhere. The current clamour for heritage in the environment is not solely for a few superb examples of "exemplary" design, it encompasses a broad range of building types, of ways of doing and feeling about the past and the future. It is an expression of the psychological and aesthetic needs of a society which, for all its wealth, feels a deep-seated lack of roots. We live in a world where change is so rapid that there is no time to consider a building's long-term value; it is gone before it could acquire the character age lends, or the myths use provides; we have no consistent or agreed-upon architectural or historical vocabulary: one man's dream is another's vandalism. While we quibble, Rome burns. Before long, every building will be new, built in our lifetime, with no real history, no character, no life.

It isn't that we shouldn't begin to attempt to take the steps a limited view implies, but we should recognize that it is only one aspect of the role heritage can play in our lives and environment. The limited view is itself an expanded expression of the ways in which people throughout history have regarded their past.

_The first hope of a painter who really feels hopeful about painting is the hope that the painting will move, that it will live outside its frame_.

—Gertrude Stein
and forgotten, an area was set aside at Skansen near Stockholm where life of the past could be recreated in a setting which, as accurately as possible, depicted the details of life in a pre-industrial age—the first living museum.

In each of these cases, preservation activity was a response to the threat of irretrievable loss of the past.

*The loss we endure through [throwing away landmarks] is not merely sentimental. What we lose is our funded experience. Just as the best school of architecture is the masterly building, so the only effective repository of architectural ideas and architectural beauty is a standing one.*

*Architecture’s masterpieces cannot be stored away like paintings and reproduced centuries later like poetry or music. The art lives on in used buildings; they alone can carry it. Without them we are perpetual juveniles, starting over and over, a people without a memory.*

—*Editorial which appeared in Architectural Forum*

Such loss was only possible in an age that altered everything totally. Previously, great men had come almost invariably from great families, whose great houses were generally maintained after their deaths by sons who might themselves become great. The landscape had always changed, but it had changed slowly and nothing had previously threatened its very existence. Farming, too, had changed over the centuries, but the distinction between country and city life, between country folk and city folk, had always been a big one. Now agriculture, too, was becoming industrialized, its practitioners veritable urbanites.

From these early examples, the preservation movement grew. On the one hand, there are the numerous living museums of which Canada boasts dozens. These attempts to re-create a “slice of time” of an earlier period are immensely popular, perhaps because they provide entertainment as well as education. They were innovative in having taken the museum out into the world,
and are as likely to depict the lives of ordinary people as of the
extraordinary. Their aim of "total re-creation" is only imper-
fectly met, of course. One could mention the absence of slaves at
Williamsburg, or of mud anywhere, but their chief inability is
that they cannot demonstrate the very aspect of life which first
gave rise to their development: change.

Well, one wearies of the Public Gardens; one wants
A vacation where trees and clouds and animals pay no notice,
Away from the labelled elms, the tame tea-roses.

—Sylvia Plath

There also grew a concern for elements of the past in the
everyday environment: those which can remain in their natural
setting without "museumification". In England, the National
Trust was one product of the early concern for the preservation
of the countryside. Now the third largest landowner in Britain, it
holds large chunks of England’s coastline and other parts of the
countryside, as well as numerous buildings. It has gone to great
lengths to acquire the most architecturally splendid and histori-
cally noteworthy elements of Britain’s past. It has devised legisla-
tion which alters the tax structure applied to old buildings and
the death duties of those who wish to donate their property to its
collection. It has saved dozens of old buildings that would
otherwise have been demolished, turned some into museums,
and put others to new everyday uses. Only the limits of funding
prevent it from doing more to save the best and the brightest
fragments of British heritage.

Canada was late to start this kind of activity. Only in recent
years has there been public or legislative support for preserva-
tion, and the latter is of little assistance. It has been difficult here
to appreciate that our history, short as it may be, compared to
that of most other places, nonetheless provides us with a past—a
heritage. There is a fundamental human need for a visible sense
of the past; of the past, not necessarily an ancient past. The aspect
of preservation that has always received attention first is that
concerned with the best aspects of the past. It is to this that
preservationists turn their attention, and it is in terms of the
"best" that they have tended to define heritage.

...if a man pulled his house to pieces, with the desire of understand-
ing it, all he would have before him would be heaps of bricks
and stones and tiles. He would not be able to discover therein, the
silence, the shadows, the privacy they bestowed. Nor would he see
what service this mass of bricks, stones and tiles could render him,
nor that they lacked the heart and soul... For in mere stone, the
heart and soul of man have no place.

—Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

The fact that much of the best has already been lost is blamed
on inadequate organization, insufficient funds, poor legislative
protection, and public apathy. Now that there has been a change
of attitude, now that heritage has become a publicly supported
cause, all of this can change: in our new-found wisdom we will
decide which places are worthy of protection; we will pass legisla-
tion to protect them; and when funds are required, they will be
forthcoming because there is public interest in preservation. I
can hardly wait.

If we lived in a world that changed more slowly, that had a
common vocabulary of historical and architectural values, then
preservation of this sort would be both possible and sufficient.
When a building had sat around for a while, say a generation or
so, it could be examined, its worth evaluated, and its protection
ensured. If we lived in this sort of a world, however, we would
not need to go to such lengths, stirring up a public fuss, devising
and implementing protective acts; the ways and beliefs of such a
world would themselves ensure protection.

If concern for heritage had come earlier, we could have kept
around us a greater number of the best and the brightest. They
would account for a larger proportion of our built environment.