

The Bonavista Peninsula Heritage Inventory

Dale Gilbert Jarvis

In the autumn of 1995, the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador took a bold step in the documentation of Newfoundland's built heritage with the launch of the Bonavista Peninsula Heritage Inventory Project.

Established in 1985 to stimulate an understanding of and an appreciation for the architectural heritage of the province, the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador provides a means for recognizing this heritage and supports and contributes to the preservation, maintenance and restoration of buildings and other structures as Registered Heritage Structures. This pilot project was designed as a preliminary inventory of the area's heritage structures to identify and categorize the built heritage of the region, and was the first architectural inventory of its kind in the province. The mandate was to identify and examine all the pre-1920

structures on the peninsula and to collect data on the buildings and their architectural attributes. All buildings were of interest -- residences, stores, sheds, stages, shops, outbuildings, hotels, workshops, schools, churches, halls, and lodge buildings. The project saw over three hundred structures photographed, analysed and catalogued. In July of 1996, the survey area was expanded to include the communities of Random Island, Trinity Bay, and the southernmost end of the peninsula.

The Bonavista Peninsula, located on the northeast coast of Newfoundland between Trinity Bay and Bonavista Bay, is steeped in history. The namesake community of the peninsula, Bonavista, was sighted by John Cabot in 1497, and its history has been tied to the fishing industry ever since. By 1677 the community was the second most populous settlement on the island. Bonavista at one time rivalled St. John's as the fishing capital of North America, a title also competed for by the community of Trinity on the eastern side of the peninsula. Discovered by Gaspar Corte Real in 1500, Trinity was permanently settled by the end of the seventeenth century, with many of its inhabitants emigrants of Dorset, England. Both communities have managed to preserve a great deal of their built heritage, a richness that is representative of the peninsula's economy before the collapse of the fishery.

In documenting the architectural heritage of the area, many aspects of building construction were addressed. Of particular interest was information on the date of construction, the architect, the builder, the name and occupation of the original and subsequent owners, the use made of the building, the major construction materials used, and whether or not alterations have been made to the structure. And while the survey was directed at the exterior, the building's structure, roofing, windows and trim work, significant interior details such as wall finishes, ceilings, flooring or stairs were also noted.

Already the collected data is yielding important information on the building traditions of the area. In Bonavista there seems to have been the development of a late Victorian local style, typified by a steep gable roof with double front peak dormers, heavy raincaps, roundels in the gable ends, and distinctive wood panel doors with



Kelly Residence, built 1910-20. Edward Fitzgerald, architect/builder. King's Cove, Bonavista Bay. PHOTO: DALE JARVIS



Bonavista Lighthouse, built 1841-43. Trinity House, England, architects. John Saunders, builder. Bonavista. PHOTO: DALE JARVIS

blue and red coloured glass inserts. This style of building is thought to derive from the work of a local builder, Ronald Strathie, and dates from 1900 into the 1920s. These Bonavista houses, also seen in the nearby community of Maberly, are infrequent in other settlements along the peninsula. Late Victorian vernacular housing on the rest of the peninsula is more consistent with patterns seen elsewhere in the province, with very low pitch roofs predominating.

The inventory has revealed that, on the peninsula, local traditions have had strong impacts on building styles in some communities. The settlements of Old Bonaventure and New Bonaventure, Trinity Bay, for example, have excellent examples of curved roof houses also from this period. In the communities of Random Island, early nineteenth century steep gable roofs without dormers continued to be built well into the twentieth century, possibly due to the local abundance of slate. In other areas of the peninsula, the introduction of commercial roofing felt at the turn of the century facilitated the emergence of low pitch roofing. The numerous slate quarries in operation on or near Random Island during this period ensured a cheap local source of traditional roofing material and the cultural survival of older roof construction strategies.

The Bonavista Peninsula Heritage Inventory and subsequent surveys will determine the most significant surviving examples of Newfoundland's unique and striking architecture. To date, the BPHI is the only inventory of its kind for the province. Other programs, such as the Canadian Inventory of Historic Buildings, have prepared reports on selected buildings but no comparable comprehensive regional survey has been attempted. As such, this pilot project was designed to

serve as a basis for a province-wide inventory and for preparing a strategy for the preservation of Newfoundland's architectural heritage, an integral part of the mandate of the Heritage Foundation.

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The Canadian Heritage of Québec: A Foundation Dedicated to Heritage

François Varin

The Canadian Heritage of Québec is a non-profit organization whose mandate is to preserve and develop historical sites and properties of great interest to Québec.

Under the leadership of its founder, Colin J.G. Molson, who is a passionate supporter of Québec's heritage, a group of like-minded Montrealers created a foundation in 1960 in order to carry out targeted conservation and preservation activities.

Since then, the foundation has added other outstanding sites to Mr. Molson's acquisitions and carried out numerous conservation projects and activities, funded in large part by private donors.

Today, the network has more than 25 sites in Québec, offering a great variety of incomparably rich architecture. The originality of Canadian Heritage of Québec lies in its guiding principle which is to preserve the nature and quality of the sites acquired, while ensuring that any action taken is consistent with the architectural and historical development of each site.

Whether at the stately *Moulin des Éboulements*, the Molson-Beattie House in Tadoussac, the Wexford Manor at Cap-Mont-Joli in Percé, the Éthier house built by the American painter Frederick James on Cap-à-Canon in Percé, the seigneurial Manor of the Fraser Family in Rivière-du-Loup, or Hurtubise House in Montréal, visitors are charmed by the authenticity and integrity of the sites and recognize the merit of The Canadian Heritage of Québec in its crusade to preserve a large part of Québec's collective memory.

This year, the foundation has joined forces with the *Société de sauvegarde du patrimoine du Grand Portage* as well as with the *Ministère de la Culture et des Communications*, to undertake the restoration of the Fraser Manor in Rivière-du-Loup. This property was acquired from the Fraser family in 1979 and was registered as a historic site in 1994. It will be used for exhibitions interpreting the history of the city and surrounding region, and will also serve as a tourist and cultural centre. The Manor will be officially opened in June, 1997. ■

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