

Archive Project will be able to accommodate personal visits from government departments, film makers, private researchers, school projects, and individuals doing genealogical research. Request for copies of *Our Metis Heritage . . . A Portrayal*, priced at \$10 including postage, should be directed to Bunny Yanik, History Co-ordinator, P.O. Box 1463, Yellowknife, N.W.T., X0E 1H0.

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Territories

Canadian Inventory of Historic Building

In the 1960s, as Canadian conservationist became increasingly concerned with the preservation of their architectural heritage, the need for a systematic survey of surviving structures became apparent. The findings of pilot projects such as those carried out in the Rideau Corridor and in Nova Scotia, during which thousands of eighteenth and nineteenth century buildings were recorded, emphasized the fact that relatively little was known about the patterns and extent of early Canadian building. The result was the introduction of a national survey of early structures called the *Canadian Inventory of Historic Building* (CIHB).



A small court house erected in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, 1853, is one of many included in a major CIHB study of court houses in Canada. (CIHB)

Sampling historic building resources in every part of the country, *Inventory* teams examined and photographed pre-1880 buildings in the east and pre-1914 in the west. Between 1970 and 1976, the external characteristics of 169,000 buildings were recorded and computerized, making the *Inventory* an incomparable source of information on Canada's built environment for conservationists, restoration architects, planners and historians of Canadian architecture and building technology. The visual record (now consisting of over a million photographs) is rapidly becoming an historical source in itself, depicting almost daily demolition of the heritage.

Phase 1 of the *Canadian Inventory of Historic Building* records three main classes of information: building components, construction (methods and materials) and building function. It was designed for implementation by students and amateurs who had no special technical knowledge. A set of ten record sheets illustrating a variety of characteristics, number coded for the computer, provides the standard basis for data collection. The recorder is required to make visual appraisal of the building in order to identify such features as massing of units, wall design, roof shape and trim. Non-visual assessment is made for such elements as building dates and use. Identification photographs of each facade and principal details complete the brief personality profile of the building.

Uses of the computerized inventory are as diverse as the possible combinations of information retrieval. A basic print-out for an individual structure provides the heritage home-owner or local historical group with the survey record or external description of a building in reference to a set of alternatives. For the architectural historian, the isolation of certain building components such as roof shape, special windows, door trim and porches may indicate the location and variations of stylistic types in Canada, retrieval of material categories such as stone coursing and texture can show patterns of building technology, the contrast between original and present building uses indicate the changing patterns in urban development and land use, and the CIHB recording form itself serves as a useful, illustrated guide for researchers inexperienced in building terminology. Perhaps most important, through the broad range of information it has collected, the *Inventory* has become a unique single reference source for the comparative assessment of early Canadian construction in both national and regional contexts.

Like other primary sources the *Canadian Inventory of Historic Building* has its limitations. It is a sample survey only and does not cover all buildings in the country. Non-visual information such as the date of construction of a particular building is an on-the-spot assessment by recorders and cannot be considered accurate unless supplemented by

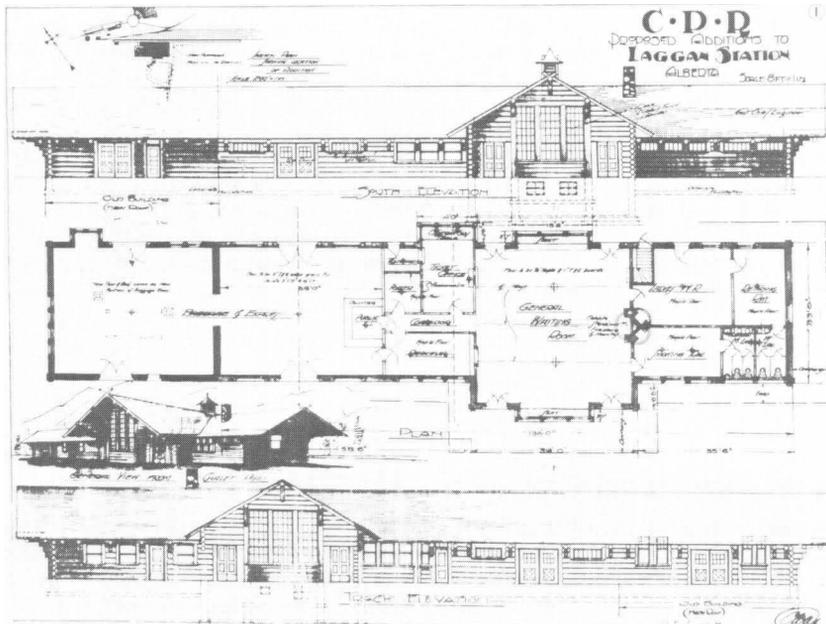


House erected in Belleville, Ontario, in the 1870s shows the contemporary use of the 'Second Empire Style' in Canada — the subject of a forthcoming CIHB publication. (CIHB)

further research. A margin of error also occurs in the actual recording not only because non-professional judgement is involved, but also because the compact nature of the recording form sometimes makes it impossible to fit visual characteristics to available categorization.

Experience over several years with problems of precise definition and description of building use and components has produced revisions in the recording form and training manual for the fourth phase of the *Inventory* intended to update eastern Canadian recording to 1914. Refinements in the recording form cannot, however, compensate completely for deficiencies inherent in the external study of a building. For example, structural questions are answered with the greatest degree of accuracy only when wall construction is also the external wall material and is therefore exposed, whereas other types such as plank wall construction, with brick, clapboard or shiplap veneer are virtually impossible to detect. It should be emphasized, then, that although unparalleled as a starting point for the study of Canadian architecture, Phase 1 of the CIHB is a research tool which, like any other primary source, must be used in conjunction with other resources.

Second and third phases of the *Inventory* have been developed to provide more intensive visual and documentary information of buildings selected from the national survey. In Phase 2 the interiors of about 2,000 buildings have been systematically photographed to include hall, rooms, basement and attics, details of windows, doors, floors, ceilings, fireplace and fixtures with floor plans drawn to key the photographs. A system to code and store this material is presently being designed to facilitate future retrieval and study. Phase 3 has involved background research on about 1,500 buildings. These building reports cover aspects of construction, occupancy and alterations drawn from a variety of historical sources. They are currently being released in the Manuscript Report Series of National Historic Parks and Sites and will be available at the national and provincial archives in Canada.



Drawings prepared in 1909 for an addition to the railway station in Laggan, Alberta. The original station was constructed between 1885-1887 and moved to Heritage Park, Calgary, in 1976. (CIHB)

The architectural and historical research staff of the CIHB annually prepares about 25 research papers on buildings under consideration for national commemoration by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. Wider studies are also conducted into the history of functional types of buildings such as court houses and town halls, the definition of Canadian architectural style and the analysis of Canadian construction technology.

In order to complete these short and long term projects CHIB's architectural historians and analysts must draw from a number of locations including local, municipal, provincial and federal offices, museums and archives and from records held by private companies and citizens. The principal sources required for building research already available from these repositories include municipal and county records, building contracts and specifications, Public Works and/or Chief Architects' records in federal and provincial governments, business and private papers of architects and contractors, magazines, newspapers, city directories and visual documentation including building plans and elevations, maps, both historical and modern, photographs, prints, birds' eye views and fire insurance atlases.

While these sources are far from exhaustive (or exhausted), Canadian archives must radically increase their acquisition of other material if the future needs of architectural research are to be met. Besides ferreting out papers of architects, builders, contractors and craftsmen, archives should establish contact with existing companies and individuals to emphasize the value of record preservation. The "how to" world of historical trade journals, building supply catalogues, construction pamphlets, architectural pattern books and carpenters', engineers' and mechanics' handbooks also deserves further attention by archivists. More private letters, diaries, trade bills and account books dealing with buildings under construction should be preserved. Finally, visual records on which architectural studies so greatly depend must be expanded to include private as well as government building plans, and aerial photographs, the latter including demolition as well as construction views.

Undoubtedly the greatest archival challenge for Canadian architectural studies will be to increase access to and use of resources so diverse in nature and geographic location. CHIB and the National Architectural Archives of the Public Archives of Canada have taken an important first step in the co-ordinating of their architectural collections by jointly devising a survey form for a national catalogue of architectural records. Further activities could usefully take the form of the designation and identification of other archives specializing in architectural subject areas. Standardization of indexing procedures is another measure which would remove impediments to research. Given its mandate to provide sources for a national perspective on Canadian building, the CHIB sees the co-ordination and expansion of archival resources as a first priority for promoting architectural scholarship.

Research Staff
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An Architectural Chronicle, 1829-1964

From basement, garage and barn, fire-singed, torn, caked in dirt and ravaged by dampness and insects, a most remarkable collection of records has finally reached archival haven. On 9 March 1979, the Archives of Ontario took formal possession of over ten thousand architectural drawings, designed by fifty-five architects over one hundred and thirty-five years and representing some twelve hundred buildings — mostly in Toronto and in southern Ontario.