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## Making Ourselves at Home: Representation, Preservation & Interpretation at Canada's House Museums

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Supervisor: Dr. Bridget Elliott, *The University of Western Ontario*

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Art and Visual Culture

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**REPRESENTATION, PRESERVATION & INTERPRETATION AT CANADA'S HOUSE  
MUSEUMS**

**(THESIS FORMAT: Monograph)**

by

**Stephanie Karen Radu**

**Graduate Program in Art & Visual Culture**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy**

**The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada**

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## ABSTRACT

Historic house museums are a common, if often overlooked, feature of the Canadian heritage landscape. As national historic sites, and community museums, they address cultural, social, historical and political facets of the past. Pursuing the idea of the house/museum hybrid, this study examines the house museum as a distinct museological type. Chapter One defines house museums both in relation and opposition to encyclopedic, folk, decorative and collection museums, period rooms, model and heritage homes and other sites of living history. It reviews architectural, commemorative and preservation histories to outline the conditions that encouraged their development from the West coast (British Columbia) to the East (Nova Scotia). Chapter Two argues that house museums are part of a broader network of home representations. It demonstrates that they are representations of the domestic environments of the past, which are also responsible for generating and preserving photographs, models, floor plans, blueprints, paintings, prints and drawings of private interiors, imagined dwellings and residential architectures. Case studies are used to show that house museums are constructed, saved, explained, validated, funded and marketed through a range of home representations. Chapter Three looks at multisensory exhibits, interactive displays and participative programs at house museums across Canada to highlight the tensions between conservation concerns and the quality of visitor experiences at these sites. It investigates how house museums have reacted to the tenets of a new museology and an Experience Economy, which emphasize participative involvement, active learning and immersive experience, often at the expense of conservation. Chapter Four acknowledges that many historic homes have been refashioned as birthplace museums and shrines for individual legacies. It interrogates the relationship between house museums and their key interpretive figures by examining discourses and histories that position individuals and their

homes as integrated subjects. Moreover, it contends that house museums structured around a single historical figure tend to be exclusionary, and reductive of complex narratives. As a whole, the thesis considers the topics of representation, preservation and interpretation to remark upon the function and future of house museums in Canada.

**KEYWORDS:** House museums, historic homes, Canada, representation, preservation, interpretation



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## PREFACE

In 1952, Katherine Hale took her readers on a journey to some of Canada's most notable historic houses, including mission homes, country estates, seigniorial manors and factors' houses. In *Historic Houses of Canada*, she spoke of the routes that she followed, the cities she visited and the scenic landscapes surrounding her chosen destinations. Excerpts about religious missions, battles and conquests were interspersed with her descriptions of the homes and their owners. Hale interpreted historic houses as markers of early moments in Canada's history. Her book produces an image of a vast nation dotted with historic homes that speak of settlement, cultural pride, personal taste and the passage of time.<sup>1</sup> Sadly, it is still one of very few texts to position these houses within a national network of related structures.

This dissertation looks back to the work of Hale, as much as it considers the influence of new discourses on the role of museums, the value of heritage and the meanings of home. It investigates the historic house museum as a distinct genre within the typology of museological institutions, specifically addressing the issues of representation, preservation and interpretation in relation to restored and museumified homes across Canada.<sup>2</sup> By now readers may be wondering why, following Hale, I too have focused on Canadian examples?

In 1998, a new branch of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) was introduced, which would concentrate on house museums as a "specific category of museum."<sup>3</sup> DEMHIST, an abbreviated form of the French term "demeures historiques," is an international committee that focuses on a multiplicity of areas related to the management

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<sup>1</sup> Katherine Hale, *Historic Houses of Canada*, with drawings by Dorothy Stevens (Toronto, ON: The Ryerson Press, 1952), n.p.

<sup>2</sup> Scott Magelssen has explained "interpretation" as "the industry term for museum programming in the form of educational interaction between museum staff and museum visitors" (Scott Magelssen, *Living History Museums: Undoing History through Performance* (Lanham, MD; Plymouth, UK: Scarecrow Press Inc., 2007), xxii).

<sup>3</sup> "Editorial," *Museum International* 53, 2 (April/June 2001), 3.

and conservation of house museums: organization, interpretation, conservation, education, communication and security. The proceedings from past DEMHIST conferences document restoration projects in Switzerland and Italy, changing interpretive programs in Brazil and the effects of war on cultural heritage in Croatia. Such scholars as Linda Young have commented on American house museums that commemorate politicians and heroes, and their British counterparts, which memorialize well-known authors. At today's professional forums, national characteristics that distinguish the house museums of one country (or region) from another continue to be emphasized. If Hale saw a country spotted with historic homes, these international conferences paint a picture of an entire globe dappled with house museums.

My research has shown that until recently DEMHIST, which has been arguably the most productive organization related to house museum scholarship and planning expertise, has had virtually no ties to Canada. Although Canadians are involved with ICOM, through ICOM Canada, they have been palpably absent from DEMHIST conferences and meetings. Prior to 2012, no mention of a single Canadian house museum could be found in any of the published proceedings, to my knowledge. Such observations signal that questions about the character and function of Canadian house museums have largely remained unanswered. A recent UAAC conference revealed that there are a number of Canadian scholars working on house museums. Many, however, are investigating international case studies (i.e. The Plantin Moretus House, Fontainebleau, Casa Azul) or are scrutinizing a limited number of houses (usually between one and three that are in close proximity to one another). None have explored the subject on a national scale. This project, therefore, began as a reaction to a perceived lack of information on Canada's museum-homes.

The general structure of this dissertation developed around a major comprehensive list that focused on the professionalization of house museums; their relationships to such



spaces as tourist centres, period rooms and folk museums; and key interpretive and management concerns. In this initial research phase, I consulted practical texts from the museum field and historical sources about the evolution of display homes. These were complemented by critical works, which treated the house as a theoretical construct and addressed such topics as interiority, domesticity, comfort and refuge. Art-historical studies introduced issues of representation and the gendering of home, as well as historical simulation and immersion.

The second phase of the project involved using Canadian examples to apply, test and refine ideas formulated during the first phase of research. Between December 2011 and October 2012, I conducted twenty-five site visits at house museums in eastern and central Canada. During the month of February 2013, I scheduled trips to six house museums in the province of Alberta, exploring an additional eight houses in British Columbia in May.<sup>4</sup> For these site visits, I employed traditional field methods such as observation, site analysis, note taking and document accumulation. I recorded the houses' spaces, plumbed their archives and took the guided tours designed for visitors. I also met with curators, volunteers and board members—those most familiar with the houses' histories—who shared their insights about the financial challenges and operational routines at their museums. My appreciation for Canada's past, its hidden archival resources and its current cultural landscape grew exponentially as a result of these encounters.

Making use of the information gathered at these museums required a post-visit phase of summarization, analysis and interpretation. At this time, I also worked with Western Research to formulate a letter of information, a consent form and an ethics protocol form,

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<sup>4</sup> These trips would not have been possible without the financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Department of Visual Arts and the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the University of Western Ontario.

authorizing a series of interviews with museum professionals, artists and heritage administrators across the country. In the end, the arguments and findings of this thesis are heavily based on primary research—on archival sources and first-hand analyses of over forty house museums across the country and thirteen houses internationally (See Appendix 1).

One of the primary objectives of this project has been to define the house museum in relation to comparable sites. Chapter One explores the key characteristics of house museums while acknowledging what they share with their institutional peers (display modes, mandates, educational strategies, approaches to visitor engagement, etc.) It questions how house museums fuse domestic environments with museological equipment to preserve histories of home, contextualize historical housewares and interpret domestic cultures. The second half of this introductory chapter describes how preservation discourses, civic celebrations and expanded historical topographies motivated Canadians to safeguard historic houses as repositories of their material culture and sites of national historical significance. As a whole, Chapter One delineates the forces and values that undergirded the house museum's formation and sets the scene for the more issue-focused chapters that follow.

My second objective has been to situate museumified historic houses alongside other representations of home—to demonstrate that house museums are informed by, and contribute to, the network of domestic depictions in art, the mass media, home design and architectural documents. Chapter Two argues that house museums are representations of homes of the past. Their interiors, architectures and promotional imagery are placed in conversation with the paintings, models, drawings and photographs that they directly inspire and house. This chapter, therefore, looks at the artistic output of Canadian artists, craftspeople and model-makers, which intersects with the study of house museums and home.

Thirdly, I aim to examine the ways that house museums balance conservation efforts and visitor experiences. My research looks at the ways house museums use participative elements to engage visitors. It identifies how—in performing household chores, carrying out period-appropriate tasks (i.e. tying slings, making candles, using Victorian kitchen implements and spinning wool), playing popular historical games, sharing experiences related to the sites’ interpretive messages and donning period garb—visitors become active interpreters of Canadian heritage. I review shifts in ideas about the commercialization of heritage, visitor engagement and authenticity to explain changes in the way that Canadian house museums are structured and experienced. Chapter Three considers how house museums have struggled to reconcile their obligations to their collections and their visitors when museums, in general, are being urged to offer more interactive, immersive and multi-sensory experiences.

The last chapter of the dissertation reconsiders the relationship between house museums and their key interpretive figures by examining discourses and histories that position individuals and their homes as integrated subjects. I first refer to the precedent of British country houses, where owners served important roles as trustees and guides to the public. By looking at how these owners showcased and interpreted their homes, I begin with an explanation of how individual characters and their reputations were constructed in earlier home displays. These analyses support the argument that house museums often focus on biographical details and prominent individuals because of the long-standing belief that domestic dwellings provide insight into the inhabitant’s character, taste and status. I will comment on the way historic house museums in Canada frame and construct the identities of their figureheads in ways that tend to reinforce exclusionary strains of scholarship.

Each house museum discussed in this study is an intricate site, deserving of analyses that could span the length of several theses. As Linda Young has indicated, house museums comprise: “real estate, physical fabric, arranged or decorated settings, items of furnishing, household equipment and fittings; not to mention the load of human associations past and present, often including the extended family of occupants and sometimes including residents.”<sup>5</sup> When I use a house museum as a case study for a particular issue, it must be remembered that in another room, at a different moment or through an alternative lens, the house may furnish different readings. A house museum is never just one thing and, from chapter to chapter, it is possible to come to contrasting understandings of even a single site. I have been amazed at how Canada’s house museums have kept me thinking, guessing and searching and I do not wish to provide an unfairly reductive view of them.

Altogether, I hope that the research presented here will serve as a helpful resource for house museum professionals in Canada and that it will reach individuals who are interested in the topics of historical representation, conservation and house-museum museology. There are a number of impressive manuscripts that detail the histories and collections of individual house museums and their founders. Most of these have been in-house publications written by teams within the house museums described. I envision this document as a complement to these rich, if institutionally specific, texts. I expect that the breadth of this dissertation’s purview will be what sets it apart and what allows it to advance the study of Canadian arts and culture both in Canada and abroad.

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<sup>5</sup> Linda Young, “Is There a Museum in the House? Historic Houses as a Species of Museum,” *Museum Management and Curatorship* 22, 1 (2007), 60.

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**CHAPTER ONE****I. RECAPTURING THE DOMESTIC PAST****The Characteristics and Origins of House Museums in Canada**

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**I.I. The House/Museum Hybrid: Two Preliminary Examples***Hockey, Haliburton and His House*

In the spring of 2011, Haliburton House Museum (Windsor, NS), the former home of Thomas Chandler Haliburton, began to share its space with the Windsor Hockey Heritage Centre. Rooms that were initially restored to represent the warming kitchen, old library, master bedroom, dressing room and sitting room were dismantled to accommodate exhibitions that marked Windsor as hockey's birthplace. Moveable artifacts were removed from these rooms while immovable elements were left in situ and integrated with the new exhibits. Ice skate blades were installed in the nooks and crannies of the house [Fig. 1.1]. Controversial iconography related to the story of the Windsor Swastikas hockey team was discretely placed in a closet, behind closed doors [Fig. 1.2]. Jerseys were hung on hangers where Haliburton would have stored his own garments, and large items of furniture were repurposed as exhibition stands [Fig. 1.3]; a loveseat was covered in team photographs and hockey sticks [Fig. 1.4].

When all was said and done, the house museum environment did little to complement the exhibition of hockey gear, sport history and fan paraphernalia. Archival photographs appeared out of place propped against items of furniture. Plexiglass vitrines seemed incongruous alongside decorative window coverings and the stove in the museum's Hot Stove Room seemed displaced in a room refitted to speak about Windsor's first ice rink

and the sport of hurley.<sup>6</sup> This mishmash, while confusing, is productive for thinking through the way homes are made to function as museums. It showcases, rather than conceals, a kind of creative curatorship that attends to the limitations and spatial offerings of the house. In many of Canada's house museums, the manipulation of domestic contents for the purposes of museological display is more difficult to detect. In the case of Haliburton House, however, the artifacts of the hockey exhibition singularly fail to blend into their domestic surroundings and, in the process, draw attention to the way house museology adapts domestic wares, furnishings and spaces. In this instance the pretense of a home gives way to an understanding of the house museum's hybrid nature.



Figure 1.1: Ice skates on display at the hockey exhibition at Haliburton House Museum (Photo by author, 4 October 2012).



Figure 1.2: Early twentieth-century memorabilia related to the Windsor Swastikas hockey team at Haliburton House Museum (Photo by author, 4 October 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Curious juxtapositions and awkward pairings disrupted the sense of a clear interpretive trajectory and, likely, left more than a few visitors wondering about the hockey exhibition's presence in the historic house (Haliburton, a politician and well-known author, has no apparent connection to the sport). To a certain extent, however, the exhibition's new location encouraged creative interpretation; new narratives were applied to the domestic contents to incorporate them within the exhibition framework. For example, the stove that could not be removed from the Hot Stove Room was recontextualized. The house museum's website rationalizes the stove's presence alongside other hockey-related artifacts by saying that: "In winter, for early hockey enthusiasts, it served as a place for drying out the cold hockey clothes after a game on the ice along with lovely discussion of the afternoon's events" (Windsor Hockey Heritage Society, "Hot Stove Room," *The Birthplace of Hockey* webpage, <http://www.birthplaceofhockey.com/museum/hot-stove-room/> (accessed 26 June 2013)). These new interpretations drew attention to otherwise unaddressed topics (i.e. the way leisure activities intersect with the routines and comforts of home).



Figure 1.3: One of the displays in the hockey exhibition, showing the hanging jerseys at Haliburton House Museum. Note the domestic furnishings interspersed with plexiglass vitrines along the left wall (Photo by author, 4 October 2012).



Figure 1.4: A display in the hockey exhibition, showing a loveseat covered in archival photographs. The image provides a sense of how pieces from the house museum's collection became entangled with those of the hockey collection (Photo by author, 4 October 2012).

### *The Museum in the Manoir*

A visit to the Manoir Mauvide-Genest (Île d'Orléans, QU), in 2012, revealed the scene captured in Figure 1.5 [Fig. 1.5]. The photograph presents the multi-functional space of the Manoir's eighteenth-century kitchen. Wood beams support the roof and pewter dishes are laid out on the table. Pots, pans and cooking utensils rest or hang near the hearth. Wood furnishings are organized throughout the room. The staged environment is more homely than institutional. In juxtaposition with Haliburton House Museum's hockey displays, it is more convincingly domestic. Nevertheless, when viewing this scene, one cannot help but notice the luminous red "S" that hangs behind the door leading to the dining room. Even when partially obscured, the "Sortie" or "Exit" sign beckons as a modern addition and provides the first hint of the house's public status.

A closer look reveals what the scene tries to deny: the historic house has been museumified. The contents on the fireside table are interspersed with "Please don't touch" signs, and a clear, thin wire has been used to tie wooden utensils together, preventing their

removal from the museum [Fig. 1.6]. These elements are not immediately noticeable from a distance and, therefore, do not disrupt the domestic staging. The wall-mounted utensil rack also bears subtle evidence of the house's museumification. The accession number on its right-hand side is a reminder that objects on display have been catalogued and are part of the museum's collection [Fig. 1.7]. Unlike your average housewares, a house museum's artifacts are usually linked to catalogued information about their provenance and condition. Features of this kind (catalogue numbers, signs and fish wire) mark the house's status as a museum because they recall the *institution's* obligation to organize collections and protect them from harmful handling and theft. Still, the photograph of the Manoir illustrates how discretely placed museological elements in a house museum can be, how easily they can “dissolve into an overall, harmonious image” of the represented house.<sup>7</sup>



Figure 1.5: A view of the kitchen at Manoir Mauvide-Genest (Photo by author, 9 October 2012).

<sup>7</sup> Stephan Bann, “A Way of Life: Thoughts on the Identity of the House Museum,” in *Historic House Museums Speak to the Public: Spectacular Exhibits vs. a Philological Interpretation of History: Acts of the International Conference of DEMHIST ICOM's International Committee for Historic Houses Genova, 1-4 November 2000*, ed. Rosanna Pavoni (Milan: Museo Bagatti Valsecchi and DEMHIST, 2001), 22.





Figure 1.6: Utensils tied together with fishwire on a table in the Manoir Mauvide-Genest kitchen (Photo by author, 9 October 2012).



Figure 1.7: An accession number written on a utensil hanger in the Manoir Mauvide-Genest kitchen (Photo by author, 9 October 2012).

The examples of Haliburton House Museum and the Manoir Mauvide-Genest help introduce the problem of defining the house museum. From the outset it should be emphasized that house museums are neither completely homes nor solely museums. Instead, they are individually formed and conceived as fusions of the two.

### **I.II. Part I: The House Museum – A Museological Type**

The house museum is a specific type of museum, characterized by a unity of grounds and outbuildings, an architectural shell and its domestic contents. It has many definitions and the bounds of its museum category are frequently under debate. Depending on the literature consulted, the subject will take into account single-family dwellings, castles, cottages, vernacular lodgings and ancestral homes. The house museum is said to have grown out of the tradition of the British Aristocracy's display homes, the modern museum age and the living history movement. Yet, the house museum does not directly correspond to either the private residence (opened with the inhabitant still dwelling there) or the typical public museum with its monumental architecture and white-walled galleries. The Australian

historian, Linda Young, has argued that Sir John Soane's Museum in London, England was the first house museum because Soane required that, when his collection became the property of the nation, "the house's layout and furnishings be maintained 'as nearly as circumstances w[ould] permit'."<sup>8</sup> Sir John Soane's Museum represents a public collection resolutely shaped by its domestic vessel. Focusing on Soane's legacy, Young puts forth a definition of the house museum that has been adopted in the current study: "it is a dwelling, museumized and presented as a dwelling."<sup>9</sup>

Young's definition stresses that which our careful examination of the Manoir kitchen reveals: the house museum is *not* a home.<sup>10</sup> More accurately, it is a hybrid institution that, as Rosanna Pavoni has argued, "captures the conservational and educational qualities of museums and also the communicative, cognitive and emotional connotations of the house."<sup>11</sup> House museums emphasize differences between their two core institutions even as they remind us of a long history of relatively close contact between them. Pavoni recalls that during the second half of the nineteenth century "houses began to look like museums with their large collections and inhospitable displays," "museums of applied art mimicked homes" and "period rooms looked more like rooms still being lived in."<sup>12</sup> As fusions of house (private) and museum (public), house museums are distinguished from other museological

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<sup>8</sup> Linda Young, "Is There a Museum in the House? Historic Houses as a Species of Museum," *Museum Management and Curatorship* 22, 1 (2007), 60.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. Young goes on to clarify that "[i]f the significance of the site is constituted by its domestic purpose, the interpretive aim is to express some aspect of domestic culture, and the management regime complies or aims to comply with professional standards, then a house can be called a house museum" (Ibid.).

<sup>10</sup> It may serve as a home for its resident caretakers and curators, but even in such cases it is not strictly a home.

<sup>11</sup> Rosanna Pavoni, "Towards a Definition and Typology of Historic House Museums," *Museum International* 53, 2 (April/June 2001), 16. The preservation impetus is one that defines the house museum in contrast to the private dwelling. As Caron Lipman has pointed out, many people understand their tenancy in their homes in the short duration. They expect that another family will move in. They see themselves as owners in the moment and seldom think of preparing the house to last forever (Caron Lipman and Catherine Nash, "Living with the Past at Home?: Domestic Prehabitation and Inheritance," paper for *Home Time: Temporalities of Domestic Life I*. Royal Geographical Society and Institute of British Geographers Annual International Conference (London, UK, August 2013), n.p.).

<sup>12</sup> Pavoni, "Towards a Definition," 16.

spaces. Yet, even if we accept that this basic house/museum binary is at their core, Pavoni's explanation rightly suggests that there are more complexities and institutional relationships to be explored.

This chapter argues that house museums are not only positioned *between* home and museum; they are also situated *amongst* period room displays, decorative arts museums, commercial showcases (such as model homes and room displays), dollhouses, domestic-themed environments such as haunted houses and stage sets, folk museums, living history museums and heritage attractions, which reconstruct the past for pedagogical and/or entertainment purposes. As Tony Bennett has shown, museums have long defined themselves in contrast to such competitors as fairs, circuses, menageries, amusement parks and festivals.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, existing scholarship on house museums acknowledges their connections to a range of institutional peers, and discourages dichotomous thinking as simplistic. After examining the main qualities of house museums and their institutional counterparts, the second half of the chapter offers a brief history of the events, individuals, anxieties and ideologies that influenced the rise of house museums in Canada. It explains the “when,” “why” and “how” of their development on Canadian soil.

As fusions of home and museum, house museums are constantly in dialogue with a range of institutions that share similar concerns and museologies. These related institutions—whether they be privately-owned homes, heritage reconstructions or nationally-recognized museums—help us to better understand the way house museums function. Insofar as they have influenced representation, interpretation and preservation at house museums, they are introduced here to set up later chapters. Moreover, by charting all that

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<sup>13</sup> Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum. History, Theory, Politics* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1995), n.p.

house museums have inherited from their peers we will come to further appreciate what makes this genre of museum distinct.

***Private Display Homes and Houses of the Past***

In her efforts to establish historic houses as a species of museum, Young has referred to the house museum's "formative/deformative relationship to the English country house."<sup>14</sup> The stately homes of Britain are often regarded as antecedents of house museums. During the eighteenth century, educated travellers (mostly of the nobility and the gentry) visited the aristocracy's luxurious residences and the impressive collections they contained. Given that the collections housed at wealthy country estates were apt to inspire admiration for the taste of their connoisseur-owners, they functioned much like those installed in princely galleries.<sup>15</sup> And like their royal counterparts, the country houses of the aristocracy were still quite difficult to access. Private invitations and letters of introduction were often needed to secure visits; only the highest classes had the means to travel, and the owners of the residences still relished a "degree of domestic privacy."<sup>16</sup> It was only over the course of the late nineteenth century that such houses became more accessible.

During what Peter Mandler has described as the "age of mass country-house visiting," the aristocracy made their grounds available to a newly mobile mass of tourists who were eager to enjoy picnics or leisurely strolls on the manicured estates.<sup>17</sup> The sprawling residences, while privately owned, were opened to the public at a time when the social elite sensed growing antagonism towards their ranks on the part of the middle and lower classes. Typically, servants would show guests through the impressive halls and collections while families were away. As these visits became increasingly common, more than a few aristocratic

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<sup>14</sup> Young, "Is There a Museum," 59.

<sup>15</sup> Peter Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 8.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 71. Mandler suggests that this "age" occurred between the mid-1800s and the 1880s (*Ibid.*).

hosts and hostesses found their privacy compromised. Visitors were caught peeking into family quarters and tour groups interrupted domestic routines, not to mention the peace and quiet of home life. As owners began to realize their homes were popular public attractions, some began to reorganize their residences and establish regulations for viewing. They specified opening hours and regular tours times and even moved their living quarters to sections of their house that would not be disturbed, arranging rooms strictly for display in other wings.

As Mandler points out, these individuals gradually adopted a business-like approach to the management of their estates as attractions. They began selling admission tickets, logging visitor numbers, offering souvenirs and circulating promotional materials. Country houses became featured in the early tourist industry's guidebooks and noticeboards were used to attract tourists.<sup>18</sup> As the owners of country estates increasingly made spectacular displays within their historic family dwellings, and prepared their private spaces for mass visitation, they pioneered display and visitor management strategies that would later prove useful for house museums in Canada, as well as other countries.

As the age of country house visitation came to an end, a later generation of hosts—who inherited the roles that their fathers and grandfathers had played as custodians of culture—found the burdens and costs of maintaining their grand estates to be crippling. As their structures crumbled and wings were closed, the homes lost some of their glamour and pride of ownership dwindled. The growing sentiment that these ancestral homes should be viewed as part of a national heritage, rather than personal property, also weakened their owners' sense of responsibility to the public. Many stately home owners increasingly rejected the idea that they owed the public access to their private dwellings as they bolted their doors

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<sup>18</sup> Mandler, *The Fall and Rise*, 75, 249.

to prove the contrary.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, however, as large numbers of country estates were purchased and managed as sites of national heritage, they paved the way for other homes to be treated as part of a collective past.

Many house museums resemble country estates in maintaining strong connections to the past. Just as country estates became “historic shrines,” where visitors could marvel at timeworn architectures and see, firsthand, unrivalled collections of artifacts, Canada’s house museums represent bygone periods, architecturally and decoratively. However, as Young points out, the former were passed down through generations of family members in a way that was not as common in younger Commonwealth countries. Exploring the relationship between house museums and nineteenth-century country estates reminds us that Canada was able to look to Europe, especially Britain, for precedents that would guide its own treatment of historic buildings.<sup>20</sup> Still, despite such efforts, the country estate could not be replicated in Canada. One key difference is that while historic house museums recreate life in the past, the stately homes of the nineteenth century typically provided windows onto the contemporary lives of a more affluent class.<sup>21</sup> Today, even though many of England’s stately homes represent past periods, they are distinguished from house museums because they are retained as private residences.<sup>22</sup>

Closer to home, house museums have strong ties with heritage houses—those age-old residences often described as century homes or marked by heritage plaques.<sup>23</sup> Home

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 247.

<sup>20</sup> Below, this chapter discusses the influence of the Arts and Crafts Movement on the preservation movement in Canada.

<sup>21</sup> Annette Carruthers, “House Museums and Domestic Life Displays in Scotland,” *Scottish Economic and Social History* 23, 2 (2003), 90.

<sup>22</sup> This claimed difference predominates even though a number of country estates are owned and managed by public organizations and trusts.

<sup>23</sup> This category of homes is as tricky to define as house museums. Most towns and cities have heritage associations, which formulate their own definition of heritage homes. They clarify what kind of sites will receive designations and which will be protected from demolition or unauthorized renovations. Canadian communities

historians have documented the stories of heritage houses, informing their readers of the connections between people, their lives, communities and dwellings.<sup>24</sup> Texts such as Pat Lotz's *Affairs with Old Houses: Personal Stories about Preserving Heritage Houses in Nova Scotia* (1999) and Eve Lazarus's *At Home with History: The Untold Secrets of Greater Vancouver's Heritage Homes* (2007) have been instrumental in perpetuating the idea that houses, especially those still standing, are "central fixture[s]" of Canada's social and cultural histories.<sup>25</sup>

Recounting people's reminiscences of life in their former family dwellings, authors like Lotz and Lazarus, and their fellow local historians, place value upon the built structures of the past. Through their research, they deter future attempts to dismantle or demolish what have been referred to as "orphan houses" or "bulldozer bait."<sup>26</sup> One of the most important things that Lazarus emphasizes is the key role of amateur historian homeowners (as opposed to academic professionals) in preserving heritage homes. Attracted to the traces and left-behind ephemera of earlier inhabitants, generations of homeowners have become preoccupied with saving houses that they view as narrative instruments and intriguing markers of community and individual pasts.<sup>27</sup>

The stories Lazarus unearths position the houses of the greater Vancouver area as sites of mysteries, ghost stories, bootleggings, prostitution and other sensational crimes. Houses of the city's most famous residents—brewers, captains, corrupt policemen,

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often establish which historic properties receive special treatment according to the specificities of their planning acts, provincial heritage acts and building codes.

<sup>24</sup> Eve Lazarus, *At Home with History: The Untold Secrets of Greater Vancouver's Heritage Homes* (Vancouver, BC: Anvil Press, 2007), 9. The term "home historians" is borrowed from Lazarus.

<sup>25</sup> Lazarus, *At Home with History*, 9. As a result, many communities across the country offer heritage home tours to capitalize on the charm of the historic dwellings and curiosity about their typically-inaccessible interiors.

<sup>26</sup> Lazarus, *At Home with History*, 11. James Johnstone has framed "orphan houses" as "mostly small and neglected" homes "destined for demolition" (Ibid.). Jim Wolf uses the term "bulldozer bait" to describe the "threatened heritage bungalows" of the working-class pioneers of Burnaby, noting that they were more likely to be demolished than the architect-designed mansions of the wealthy (Ibid.).

<sup>27</sup> As Lazarus indicates, generations of homeowners have become interested in the stories houses have to tell because of a "scratch on a wall, initials carved in the basement, or a decades-old electricity bill that fell out from behind the furnace" (Lazarus, *At Home with History*, 9).

influential politicians, CPR executives and well-known writers—help introduce figures who are commemorated in the city’s street names, landmarks and institutions. Through Lazarus’s heritage houses, the reader also learns more about early immigration, the class structure of the city’s neighbourhoods, World War I, poverty and crime during the Depression, internment camps and racial discrimination. Because many of the homes Lazarus mentions are not open to the public, however, it is only through her research and publications that these biographies and stories become officially linked to the houses [Fig. 1.8].

House museums are founded on a similar sense of the home’s storytelling potential. The historic, or heritage, home is the primary artifact of the house museum.<sup>28</sup> Its frames, walls and spaces speak of the past and deceased persons in ways that purpose-built museums cannot. Think, for example, of the graffiti on the window sills at Craigdarroch Castle (Victoria, BC), which includes sentiments, names and dates left by students during the years when Craigdarroch served as Victoria College. These markings do not belong to the Castle’s original design, or even its first inhabitants. They are material evidence of a later moment in the house’s history. The individuals who left the marks may be long gone, but their carvings, which are inseparable from the home, recall their stories [Fig. 1.9]. Figures like Lazarus and Lotz ensure the survival of these heritage home histories, so that they may become spatially and materially available in museum form. For those historic dwellings that are not saved, the research of these authors may be the only evidence of their existence.

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<sup>28</sup> John Hughes, the Executive Director at Craigdarroch Castle, has emphasized that the museum building must accommodate visitors as well as shelter collections of artifacts even though it is an artifact itself (Interview with John Hughes, Executive Director of Craigdarroch Castle, December 2013).



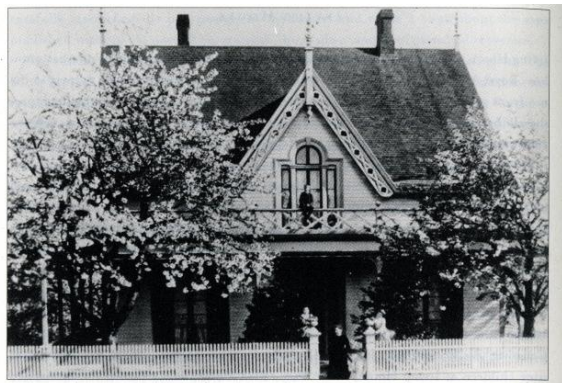


Figure 1.8: Even after they transition into public institutions, house museums are featured in texts on heritage homes. This figure shows “Irving House, Circa 1880” (Photographer unknown, courtesy of the New Westminster Public Library, Photo 254. As pictured in Eve Lazarus’s, *At Home with History*, 150). Irving House is discussed in Lazarus’s text and is currently managed as a house museum in New Westminster, BC. The image shows the home prior to its museumification.



Figure 1.9: Graffiti on the wooden windowsills at Craigdarroch Castle. They remind us that the architectural frame of the historic home is the house museum’s primary artifact (Photo by author, 17 May 2013).

By considering the close connections between house museums and their privately-owned counterparts—stately and heritage homes—we come to appreciate that house museums are cultural institutions involved in reinforcing ideas about the endurance of the family and the romance of home. As Gwendolyn Wright has observed, the home stands as both a strong ideal and a seemingly uncontroversial object. It is a site that represents a “cultural norm” and “obscures innumerable conflicts” as it evokes fantasies and memories (longing and nostalgia).<sup>29</sup> Heritage homes seem especially caught up in fanciful tales of the past, while stately homes remain associated with the “antiquity and longevity of families on the landscape.”<sup>30</sup> In the following chapters I will return to these types of homes to shed light on the ways house museums have been pictured (Chapter Two) and regarded as vehicles for biography (Chapter Four). Chapter Four offers further comparisons between the house museum and the nineteenth-century country estate by exploring the way both have been

<sup>29</sup> Gwendolyn Wright, “Prescribing the Model Home,” *Social Research* 58, 1 (Spring 1991), 213-214.

<sup>30</sup> Christa M. Beranek, “Founding Narratives: Revolutionary Stories at Historic Houses,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 17, 2 (March 2011), 108.

interpreted in relation to primary interpretive figures (namely their owners). For now, I wish to turn to another of the house museum's peers—the collection museum.

***Collection Museums: Reacting against the Encyclopedic Museum***

Anne Higonnet studies what she calls “collection museums,” formed in the years between the revolutions of the mid-nineteenth century and the Second World War.<sup>31</sup> Collection museums of this period were institutions conceived by founders determined to see their personal collections of art preserved and made accessible to the public. They were, according to Higonnet, formed in reaction to what Carol Duncan and Allan Wallach have referred to as the “universal survey museum” (or national encyclopedic museum).<sup>32</sup> Higonnet points out that “[a]s fast as encyclopedic museums were funded, objections to their classifications and scale began to be voiced.”<sup>33</sup> Survey museums housed expansive collections and were leaders in the development of professional standards. Nevertheless, they were criticised for being cavernous, stale and impersonal and were compared to mausoleums by their detractors.<sup>34</sup>

In contrast, the founders of collection museums such as The Frick Collection, Dumbarton Oaks, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum and the Wallace Collection envisioned their museums as sites where art objects could be experienced in more intimate, welcoming settings, and amongst other domestic and cultural objects.<sup>35</sup> To offset the encyclopedic museum's most-criticized qualities, the founders of collection museums turned

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<sup>31</sup> Anne Higonnet, *A Museum of One's Own. Private Collecting, Public Gift* (Pittsburgh, PA: Periscope Publishing, Ltd., 2009), xiii.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 5, 9.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii. Again, museum types are defined through juxtaposition and differentiation. Alluding to the obviousness of the relationship between these museum types, Higonnet asks: “Who couldn't understand that all of them reacted against the exhausting expanses and clinically sorted galleries of the great national and municipal museum behemoths?” (*Ibid.*).

to the idea of home.<sup>36</sup> They could no longer use the outdated model of the curiosity cabinet as an alternative to the survey museum. Therefore, the rooms in which they situated their art collections often mimicked those of the domestic environment: parlours, libraries, kitchens and the like.<sup>37</sup> The home represented a scale that was not as intimidating. It felt more personal and less formal.<sup>38</sup>

Even today we see houses adapted to institutional purposes because they are tied to ideas of comfort, refuge, safety and inner contemplation. The Canadian Music Centre repurposed a historic dwelling to found Chalmers House (Toronto, ON), a more intimate concert venue than the standard concert hall. Haddon House Bed and Breakfast (Burnaby, BC) is advertised as a cozier getaway location than a five-star hotel.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, house museums and collection museums are considered more welcoming environments than their counterparts because their smaller scale and home-like feel enables them to respond to calls for more intimate engagements with the past.

If Higonnet's collection museums prompted their visitors to step back in time, if they "memorialized...personal taste[s]" and "functioned as alter-egos," they are like house museums in these respects.<sup>40</sup> House museums often preserve impressive collections of art, housewares, furniture, textiles and decorative items in situ, as collection museums do. They aim to transport visitors to the past and commemorate their founders or famous inhabitants. Higonnet points out that collectors often "embedded images of themselves somewhere in their installations" and that their domestically-staged collections were treated as opportunities

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<sup>36</sup> Higonnet, *A Museum of One's Own*, 9.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii.

<sup>39</sup> "Haddon House," *Haddon House Bed and Breakfast* website, <http://www.haddonhouse.ca/> (accessed 2 July 2014).

<sup>40</sup> Higonnet, *A Museum of One's Own*, xiii, xiv.

for self-presentation.<sup>41</sup> She even refers to collection museums as museum self-portraits.

Legacy formation through the preservation of intact domestic environments is also a subject of interest in the study of house museums, as Chapter Four will demonstrate.

Collection museums are compared to studio, teaching and contemporary art museums in Higonnet's text. All are positioned as reactions to the encyclopedic museum.

Yet, it is house museums that present the most difficulty for the author, who works hard to differentiate them from collection museums:

In another category altogether are house museums, which are not reactions against encyclopedic museums because they are not, fundamentally, art museums at all.<sup>42</sup> A house museum is generally either the preserved home of a famous person or a house with historically significant architecture or furnishings from a certain period.<sup>43</sup>

She emphasizes that houses that contain collection museums were constructed and designed, from the start, as museums.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, it is difficult to know the intentions of the inhabitants of historic homes, especially if they did not take the time to put them to paper, or communicate them to others. It is quite possible that individuals who moved into, or bought, historic homes anticipated that they might become house museums. Collection museums are said to be more about the collections than the residences, even though Higonnet stresses that

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., xiv.

<sup>42</sup> House museums are not interchangeable with art museums for Higonnet. In Canada, some sites showcase great works of art by known and respected Canadian artists. The majority of artworks that hang on their walls and decorate their mantles, however, would not typically be regarded as examples of high art. Unlike the art museum, the house museum may not emphasize art in distinction from its other contents. The works of amateur painters hang on the same walls as artworks by well-known artists. Needlework completed by the women of the houses is displayed beside framed works of respected portraitists. The most exceptional pieces can remain unnoticed, blending in amongst the other decorative and mundane objects. Luxton House exhibits drawings by Carl Rungius, Mount Uniacke maintains a sketch made by John Elliott Woolford and Banting House displays numerous paintings completed by Frederick Banting under the tutelage of A. Y. Jackson.<sup>42</sup> Other museums possess artworks by artists of unknown or not-apparent repute. A series of watercolour sketches of wrecked vessels and Sable Island by the physician-artist Dr. John Bernard Gilpin line the upstairs hallway of the Admiral Digby Museum. If art historians have become frustrated with the canon, and the regulated narratives it generates within major museums, then Canada's historic house museums provide a glimpse of art that has not been framed by the professional discourses and expert tastes in the same way. They often offer a sense of the artists that were recognized within certain localities, even those not incorporated into the canon of Canadian art.

<sup>43</sup> Higonnet, *A Museum of One's Own*, 19.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., xiv.

the unity of the two is a defining characteristic. Such an assertion raises questions about so-called collector house museums and their relation to collection museums. Furthermore, it makes one wonder whether house museums that focus their interpretive programs on their collections or contained artworks are more akin to the museums Higonnet describes. Like Young, Higonnet tackles the example of Sir John Soane's museum, admitting that it "is at once a collection museum, a teaching museum, a studio museum, and a house museum."<sup>45</sup> To preserve the category of the collection museum, in light of this exception, she suggests that after the 1830s, when multifaceted museums of Soane's kind were not as common, collection museums became more clearly-defined as a museum type. Yet, I would argue that even today, it is difficult to determine what distinguishes collection museums from house museums. They hover together "in a porous zone between domestic and professional domains."<sup>46</sup> Both have been contrasted with more mainstream museums and are characterized by domesticity and a unity of grounds, architectural frames and contents.

According to Higonnet, the Western world's most impressive museum collections were often formed by wealthy collectors actively selecting and detaching objects from their original contexts. To demonstrate her point, she cites Isabella Stewart Gardner in the U.S.A. and the Wallace family in Britain but makes no mention of any Canadian collector who contributed to the formation of his or her country's most prestigious museums, or felt inclined to produce a domestic showcase. In fact, there are Canadian house museums which began as collectors' houses and contained items relocated from commercial establishments, faraway lands and former residences. For example, in 1928, the avid art collector, Dr. Charles VanDyke Corless, sought out and purchased Annandale House (Tillsonburg, ON). Dubbing the house "Coniston Place," in relation to work he had undertaken in Coniston, Ontario, he

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., xiv-xv.

used the house to “showcase his collection,” preserving many of the Tillsons original designs.<sup>47</sup>

Like the founders of collection museums, those who prepared their homes to become house museums often insisted their collections be maintained intact within the framework of the domestic abode. For instance, the contents of Laurier House (Ottawa, ON) were mostly acquired by its former owners, Sir Wilfred and Lady Laurier and William Lyon Mackenzie King. The museum was established around a fully-formed collection of domestic objects, which supported the home lives of two families (albeit at different times) and represented the deeds and acquaintances of the Prime Ministers. Collections of books, artworks, handicrafts, photographs, furnishings and the like, compiled over two lifetimes, have been maintained together. King had inherited the home by Lady Laurier’s bequest after her husband passed away. He resided in the 10 000 square-foot home, now at 335 Laurier Ave East And, from 1923 until 1950.<sup>48</sup> When King gave the house to the nation he had already devised plans to see it preserved as a museum. A history enthusiast, he ensured that his will protected the house’s contents, its various arrangements and public status.<sup>49</sup> Another example is Point Ellice House (Victoria, BC), the former home of the O’Reilly family which was conceived as a house museum before it became officially recognized as such. Well before her death, Inez O’Reilly had begun the process of museumifying her family’s home. When the family could no longer maintain the property, the house and all its contents were handed over to the province. Little has been done to disturb the house since this transferral.

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<sup>47</sup> Annandale Book Committee, *Annandale: The Aesthetic Experience* (Tillsonburg, ON: Tillsonburg District Historical Museum Society, 2000), 47. Van Corless’s collection was auctioned and stayed in Annandale only until his daughter’s death (Guided tour, Annandale House, May 2014).

<sup>48</sup> Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada plaque, Laurier House, September 2012.

<sup>49</sup> Higonnet suggests: “At the core of each [collection museum], however, are two crucial qualities: the personal character of the art collection and its even more personal installation” (Higonnet, *A Museum of One’s Own*, 17). For more on the wills that their founders produced and the donation of their collections to the public in the form of museums see Higonnet, 175-180.

Such Canadian cases resonate with Higonnet's main case studies. She observes that Richard Wallace's wife, Amélie Julie Castelnau (1819-1897), specified in her will that the collection at Hertford House was to be preserved intact, "never added to, never subtracted from, never loaned" and recounts that the Duc d'Aumale (1822-1897), founder of the Musée Condé, similarly "stipulated...that [his] collection remain ... exactly as he had installed it."<sup>50</sup> On the basis of these examples, Higonnet ultimately explains that "[i]f a collector installed a personal collection in a museum, and donated it to the public on the condition that something essential about the collection and the installation be preserved, for me it is a collection museum."<sup>51</sup> House museums, like Laurier and Point Ellice House, with their largely intact collections of diverse artifacts and artworks, arranged in surroundings that accord with the wishes of their previous owners, would seem to fit Higonnet's criteria, although she would likely question whether O'Reilly and King were "collectors" in the same way that Aumale and Wallace, or even Dr. Charles VanDyke Corless, were.<sup>52</sup>

There is yet another similarity between the collection museum and house museum that deserves attention. Higonnet asserts that the collection museum produced an "artificial domesticity"—that the effect of home was "only an effect."<sup>53</sup> As we will see, her claim that "[p]ersonal museums are not real homes" does not necessarily separate them from house museums.<sup>54</sup> For even the latter cease to be true homes once the vision of a museum takes

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<sup>50</sup> Higonnet, *A Museum of One's Own*, 10, 11. Similarly, house museums like Laurier House and Point Ellice House can make some of the most impressive claims for authenticity. However, because their value often rests on the preservation of the whole site, they are somewhat restricted in their ability to inspire return visits or change displays. They seldom have the option to clear out historically-intact spaces to make room for modern facilities, temporary exhibitions or seasonal programs. It is these types of houses that tend to have the narrowest collections policies as well. Maintaining such huge numbers of original artifacts is a formidable task and leaves limited room for the collection to expand in new directions. Little can be thrown away or de-accessioned and few items can be accurately moved and displayed in other rooms of the house.

<sup>51</sup> Higonnet, *A Museum of One's Own*, 18.

<sup>52</sup> Higonnet seems to focus more on knowledgeable collectors of "high" art as opposed to collections of the personal effects of important historical figures.

<sup>53</sup> Higonnet, *A Museum of One's Own*, xiv.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

hold.<sup>55</sup> To better understand how house museums produce and protect the impression of home, one might return to the concept of “creative curatorship,” which came up in the introductory analysis of Haliburton House Museum.

Annette Carruthers has argued that collection policies and interpretation at house museums in Scotland have “been influenced by two cultures of curatorship,” one connected to the decorative arts and concerned with design and style, and the other rooted in social history with a focus on local artifacts, their possession and use.<sup>56</sup> According to their allegiances, house museum curators borrow display modes, preservation methods and educational strategies from other museological institutions and heritage sites. However, in their efforts to re-form historic homes as museums, and with an interest in maintaining the atmosphere of the private abode, they have also developed specific approaches for this “distinct species of museum.”<sup>57</sup> One of the defining features of house museum curation, as reflected in Canadian examples, is the use of the homes’ original features.

As historic homes become reshaped; by the “museum idea,” the amalgamation of house and museum produces strange crossbreeds—objects that seem neither entirely domestic nor strictly museological.<sup>58</sup> Dining room tables, piano tops and tea wagons are modified and fashioned into object vitrines in the Luxton and Moore houses (Banff, AB) [Figs. 1.10-1.12]. Here, the domestic furnishings of the early 1900s are fused with museological equipment.<sup>59</sup> Throughout Craigdarroch Castle the upward-glancing visitor notices a series of special exit-light fixtures [Fig. 1.13]. The Castle is a public institution, and is required to post emergency exit signs like the ones in the Manoir Mauvide-Genest. While

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<sup>55</sup> Recall that Young sees the house museum as a museumified home *presented as* a dwelling.

<sup>56</sup> Carruthers, “House Museums and Domestic Life Displays,” 92.

<sup>57</sup> Young, “Is There a Museum,” 59.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Bookcases at the Uniacke Estate Museum Park are covered with plexiglass panes to prevent visitors from pulling the historic texts from their shelves. Dresser drawers and fine china cabinets are fitted with plexiglass covers to enable exploration of the contents without subjecting the artifacts to the threat of damage or theft.



these red, illuminated letters tend to be sorely out of place in the historic house museum, the lights at Craigdarroch were designed to “blend in” even as they satisfied safety codes. They signify the “museum” made more “domestic.” They are the “domestic” imprinted with the “museum,” and as custom creations they demonstrate the house museum’s intolerance of standard museological equipment in its domain.<sup>60</sup>



Figure 1.10: The encased dining room table at the Luxton Home (Banff, AB) (Photo by author, 19 February 2013).



Figure 1.11: A tea wagon at the Luxton Home (Banff, AB) fitted with a plexiglass top (Photo by author, 19 February 2013).



Figure 1.12: A desk fused with a plexi top at Moore House (Photo by author, 20 February 2013).



Figure 1.13: An example of the custom-made exit signs at Craigdarroch Castle (Victoria, BC) (Photo by author, 17 May 2013).

<sup>60</sup> Similarly, at the Manoir Mauvide-Genest, stanchions are formed by tying ropes from one chair back to the next. Using items of furniture that are already in the space, and part of the domestic set-up, the curators bypass the need for modern stanchions.

Restricted by intransigent health and safety requirements, and answerable to the standards of the museological profession, house museum curators often work creatively to maintain the homey feel of historic houses.<sup>61</sup> These examples suggest that house museums generate unique, discrete museum elements according to their own needs and identities. The side-tables turned into vitrines and domestic light fixtures re-envisioned as exit signs encapsulate the hybrid nature of the house museum and call attention to the fact that the transformation of a house into a museum-home involves numerous transformations on a smaller scale. The result of these manipulations is that the house museum is no more a home than the collection museum.

To say that the house museum is a museumized dwelling is also to emphasize that the houses have been re-formed with the public in mind. No longer the residences of single families or inhabitants, they are equipped to help visitors navigate their unfamiliar structures and spaces. Within Canada's house museums, one finds rooms labelled for identification. For example, the bedroom at the Admiral Digby Museum (Digby, NS) is identified by a sign, to assist those consulting a printed floor plan [Fig. 1.14].<sup>62</sup> In a similar vein, way-markers guide visitors to entrances, washrooms and exits, or through predetermined routes [Fig. 1.15].<sup>63</sup> Industrial runners indicate prescribed walking paths at sites such as the Château Ramezay in Montreal. Door stops are used to prop entries open and encourage flow through Trethewey

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<sup>61</sup> The creative curation that takes place at house museums often develops as a result of a lack of resources, limited space and a desire to showcase the houses collections in new ways. At its best it shows familiarity with a house and its founding community; a strong awareness of period styles in relation to geographic, economic and cultural specificities; and a talent for atmospheric recreation. At its worst it suggests that no one even remotely aware of the curatorial profession had any input on the arrangements.

<sup>62</sup> As Carruthers suggests, at house museums "[i]nterpretation...is complicated" because "[t]he labels and information panels which might be available in a museum are inappropriate in a house" (Carruthers, "House Museums and Domestic Life Displays," 91). They, very simply, destroy the "feeling of being a guest in a normal room" (Ibid.).

<sup>63</sup> See Figure 1.15 and note the text that points to the designated entrance on the pavement around Craighdaroch Castle. These markings are visible near every alternate entrance to the house but since they are featured on the ground they are not captured in the average tourist photograph of the site. They help preserve the historic look of the Castle's façade.

House (Abbotsford, BC) and Bellevue House (Kingston, ON). At Banting House National Historic Site of Canada (London, ON) doors have been taken off their hinges to allow visitors to conveniently move through the museum. Visitors to Craigdarroch Castle and Eldon House (London, ON) are warned of sudden dips or elevations in floor levels by coloured caution tape or signs [Figs. 1.16 & 1.17]. A home's actual inhabitants, who are familiar with its spatial changes, would subconsciously know how to maneuver them without tripping or falling.<sup>64</sup> The museumified home is, apparently, more hazardously traversed. This is because the home is a private domain while the house museum is visited as a public attraction. The transition from private to public alters the fabric and feel of the home.

Across Canada, more often than not, historic houses-turned-museums are structurally and spatially altered to meet accessibility requisitions and ethical guidelines that direct museum practice today. As the houses are made safe and accessible—and displays are designed and installed—elements of the former homes are lost or altered. For example, when Lougheed House was restored and transformed into a public heritage centre “[b]uilding and safety code compliance and provision for public access created intrusions into the historic integrity of the house.”<sup>65</sup> Ventilation, heating and plumbing in the home were redone. The need for fire stairs and supplementary exits necessitated the construction of a modern addition at the southwestern corner of the house. Wheelchair ramps, a group entrance and an elevator ensured that all three storeys were reachable by the masses. Additional washrooms and coatrooms were added as conveniences for a visiting public and a modern kitchen was installed beside the dining room and conservatory so that Lougheed House

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<sup>64</sup> It is important to remember that some house museums still have on-site, resident caretakers who inhabit the historic structures, if not the display spaces. House museum guides are often familiar with the sounds, spaces and features of the house as inhabitants might have been.

<sup>65</sup> “The History of the House 2000. Transformation,” museum didactic, Lougheed House, February 2013.

could also serve as a restaurant and wedding venue for hire.<sup>66</sup> Fireproofing left an original window in Lougheed's study completely blacked out. Such necessary alterations sometimes result in scenes or details that are not in keeping with the domestic feel.<sup>67</sup>



Figure 1.14: A sign locating the bedroom at Admiral Digby Museum (Photo by author, 5 October 2012).



Figure 1.15: A stenciled directional sign at one of the side entrances to Craigdarroch Castle (Photo by author, 17 May 2013).



Figure 1.16: Yellow paint marking a change in elevation at Eldon House (Photo by author, 24 September 2013).



Figure 1.17: Caution tape and triangles indicating a step at Craigdarroch Castle (Photo by author, 17 May 2013).

<sup>66</sup> Jennifer Cook Bobrovitz and Trudy Cowan, *Lougheed House. More than a Century of Stories* (Calgary, AB: Lougheed House, 2006), 32.

<sup>67</sup> The blacked out window begs an explanation, which diverts back to the *museum's* obligations.

### *The Logic of the Home and the Museum*

In the process of establishing historic house museums, museum methods reorder domestic spaces and anachronistic, non-domestic objects are integrated into the home environment. To frame the point more explicitly, the logics of the house and museum inform the way objects are arranged and scenes are set inside the house museum. Consider a few additional examples of the way a house museum's contents can end up awkwardly caught between the two. Modern museum additions have been visually aged at Bellevue House National Historic Site of Canada. The guestbook in the main entrance of the house shows signatures and comments written on dimpled and browned pages [Fig. 1.18]. An instructive sign that reads "Please pull handle to ring doorbell. S.V.P tirer la poignée pour sonner" has been typed on a discoloured piece of paper with "damaged" edges [Fig. 1.19]. Evidently, an attempt has been made to blend these pieces into the space, to have them repeat the logic of the historic interior. The typed texts, however, follow the opposing logic of the museum. The clean black words, evenly spaced in both of Canada's official languages, do not correspond with the faded look of the papers. They are of the age of computers and printers and indicate the site's commitment to twenty-first-century standards of museum display. In the modern Canadian public museum, hand-written didactics and identification labels or penned directional signs and promotional materials are obsolete. Yet a handwritten passage on a sheet of old paper seems truer to the times represented in the historic house, which may contain other old documents such as ledgers, family Bibles and personal letters. The guestbook and sign, however, are easily distinguishable from these archival texts, hovering between the home and museum—the represented past and the present.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Simulations and camouflaged museological additions that miss the mark of fitting into the environment, and amidst the collections, disturb to the critic of the house museum [Fig. 1.20].



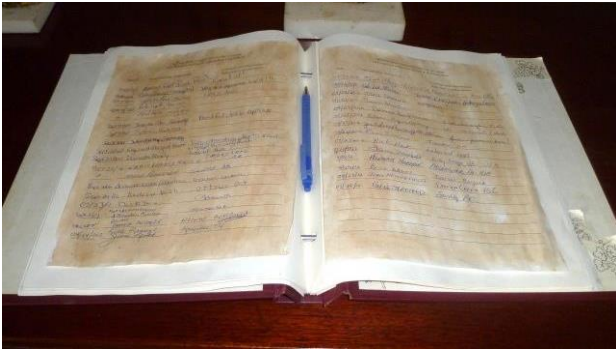


Figure 1.18: The guestbook at Bellevue House National Historic Site of Canada (NHSC) (Photo by author, 29 September 2012).



Figure 1.19: A sign at the entrance to Bellevue House, designed to look more historical (Photo by author, 29 September 2012).



Figure 1.20: A didactic at Uniacke Estate Museum Park, Mount Uniacke, NS (Photo by author, 8 October 2012).

Similarly, objects foreign to the domestic environment, which are brought in to illustrate narratives central to a museum's mandates, are often installed according to the traditions of domestic display. Portraits of nineteenth-century monarchs are hung between the first and second floors of the Admiral Digby Museum, on the walls of the staircase. The ascending arrangement of photographs resembles neither the density of traditional salon hangings nor the sparse arrangement of more modern galleries [Fig. 1.21]. Rather, it recalls those seen within private residences, where grouped displays of formal portraits often indicate family membership.<sup>69</sup> The stairwell does not feature the portraits of past inhabitants. Kings and queens take their place even though, as David Halle has indicated, non-kin

<sup>69</sup> Gillian Rose, "Family Photographs and Domestic Spacings: A Case Study," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 28, 1 (March 2003), 12.

photographs are unusual in the home.<sup>70</sup> The exhibited portraits pay tribute to the monarchs that reigned over Canada, thus reminding visitors of the country's status as a constitutional monarchy.<sup>71</sup> The familiar domestic hanging brings non-domestic elements and their associated grand historical narratives into accordance with the domestic environment.

While house museum curators disguise the museological as the domestic and stage the present as the past, the house museum experience remains one that involves gradually becoming caught up in the illusion before abruptly being jolted out of it by a loose end or a glaring museological interruption. Canada's house museums are filled with anachronistic electrical outlets, floor-board heaters or didactics, paintings fastened just below original picture rails and beer bottles forgotten in the wake of exclusive events [Fig. 1.22].



Figure 1.21: A display lining the staircase wall at Admiral Digby Museum (Photo by author, 5 October 2012).



Figure 1.22: A beer bottle left behind on the mantelpiece at Château Dufresne (Montreal, QC) (Photo by author, 10 October 2012).

### *House Museums in the Neighbourhood*

If house museums retain their affiliations with other private dwellings by mimicking their types of display and forcing museological additions to masquerade as the domestic, they also do so through sheer physical proximity to other homes. In neighbourhoods like

<sup>70</sup> David Halle, "Portraits and Family Photographs: From the Promotion to the Submersion of Self," in *Inside Culture: Art and Class in the American Home* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 104.

<sup>71</sup> "A Self Guided Tour of the Admiral Digby Museum," museum brochure, Admiral Digby Museum, October 2012.

Vancouver’s West End, and historic towns such as Annapolis Royal, house museums can be found nestled within residential surroundings. They are situated amongst the private homes that line their blocks or are hidden by parked cars or trees along narrow streets. When such historic houses are opened to the public, effort is required to make the buildings seem welcoming and accessible to passersby. It is challenging to make their museum-status apparent outside of the house. For this reason many cities and towns post directions to their historic sites using heritage trail markers or street-side signs [Figs. 1.23-1.25]. Large signs with a museum’s name, its opening hours and the logos of its sponsors and affiliates are often conspicuously placed at the roadside, on the walls of the museum or at prominent entrances. Still, the staff at more than a few house museums report that visitors say: “We’ve lived in this city forever and never knew the museum was here!” or “We didn’t know that the house was open to the public.” So disarmingly domestic, house museums become the hidden gems of Canada’s communities.<sup>72</sup>



Figure 1.23: A sign for Joseph



Figure 1.24: A sign along Water



Figure 1.25: A blue, heritage posting

<sup>72</sup> The historic features of the structures and grounds of Canada’s house museums make them evocative of even greater visions of the past that incorporate surrounding land-, street- or townscapes. As the last built remnants of earlier centuries, the residential structures are reminders of the past in the midst of ultra-modern downtown cores, revitalized neighbourhoods and corporate zones. They mark former town boundaries, recall land division laws and represent the (architectural and social) features of historic neighbourhoods. Lougheed House, for example, indicates just how large the city of Calgary has become. The house that once stood outside the city is completely absorbed within it, surrounded by high rise apartment buildings and parking lots. If they are not found cradled and camouflaged in residential areas, house museums function as spectres of the past in Canada’s metropolitan centres.



Schneider Haus (Kitchener, ON) at the intersection of Ottawa St. and King St. (Photo by author, 23 September 2012).	Street near Speed River, pointing the way to McCrae House (Guelph, ON) (Photo by author, 15 September 2012).	indicating directions to Rutherford House (Edmonton, AB) (Photo by author, 23 February 2013).
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Sometimes the camouflage provided by the house museum’s surroundings trumps the posted signage designating it as a museum. Historic Lower Saint George Street in Annapolis Royal, which is itself a national historic district, is lined with Loyalist-era buildings. Some are now bed and breakfasts or shops; others remain private residences. Multiple signs and arrows point the way to O’Dell House Museum, which faces the water at 136 St. George. Still, a sign on the door at 178 St. George, which reads “This is NOT The O’dell House Museum. It’s 7 doors down [*sic*],” suggests that the residents of this nearby dwelling have grown tired of directing tourists from their doorstep to the museum down the road.

Rutherford House (Edmonton, AB) has had a similar struggle. As a house museum on the campus of the University of Alberta, it is situated amongst a number of historic homes that now serve as administrative buildings or department headquarters. Even though there are a number of signs leading up to the house, and a scattering of didactic panels in the garden that explain it is open to the public, the museum seldom benefits from the constant flow of students and University employees across campus. Evidently, they assume the house is the private home of the University’s president or simply another departmental or administrative university building, all of which are normally closed to visitors.

Paradoxically, as the house museum works to produce the impression of a home, it must also emphasize its status as a museum. It is for this reason that house museums sometimes sacrifice historical accuracy in order to attract audiences. In 1915, Alexander Cameron Rutherford’s house would not have a sign out front that read “Experience the

Rutherford tradition.” Judge Haliburton’s house would not have had a panel with admission prices listed in English and French on the path leading to its entrance.<sup>73</sup>

Like universal survey museums, house museums are influenced by regulations and ethics generated by the museum profession. They share an “institutional commitment to unique objects and authenticated traces.”<sup>74</sup> They seek out designations and funding by following the same ethical guidelines and target similar audiences. House museums borrow strategies of behavioural control and crowd manipulation, and adopt curatorial approaches put in practice at modern public museums. In this respect, they rely on trickled-down knowledge about preservation practices and promotional methods.

### ***Local Museums and Microhistories***

There is, however, often a difference in purview. Where universal survey museums attempt to represent all cultures, times and places—providing a picture of the world as it is known in the present—house museums tend to be more closely connected to their locality.<sup>75</sup> Canada’s house museums, like other community museums, display local culture and officialise local stories. Within smaller communities, those that commemorate important historical figures or architectural trends frequently double as local museums. Without the resources or support to construct large-scale galleries or archives, these communities call upon their house museums to protect public collections (even those unrelated to the domestic structure or home life) and share broader histories involving their towns or regions.

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<sup>73</sup> A second sign indicated that the site was also the “Windsor Hockey Heritage Centre.” The house is set off the road. The long drive up a gravel path provides visitors with a glimpse of the house on its elevation and the walking trails around the undulating grounds (Haliburton had been mining Gypsum on his property, leaving large cavities throughout) (Guided tour, Haliburton House Museum, October 2012). A sign on an external door reads, “Please use front door” and admission prices are again posted near the entrance: Adult 3.60, Child (5 and under) Free, Child/youth (6-17) 2.55, Senior 2.55, Family 7.95, Nova Scotia Museum Pass 43/single adult, 85/family (also listed in French) (Museum sign, Haliburton House Museum, October 2012).

<sup>74</sup> Mark B. Sandberg, *Living Pictures, Missing Persons: Mannequins, Museums and Modernity* (Princeton, NJ; Oxford, Oxon.: Princeton University Press, 2003), 7.

<sup>75</sup> Some attend to national narratives or provincial pasts while others speak more to the histories and cultures of small communities.

These kinds of house museums curate exhibitions about local celebrities, the industries that employed local citizens and the events that shaped their communities' pasts.

At the Admiral Digby Museum, rooms contain items related to the importance of fishing and boating (marine culture) in the Digby area. Types of fish are identified on the walls, memorable ships are commemorated by their models and processes for shucking scallops are explained on picture boards [Fig. 1.26]. The portraits in the parlour do not refer to individuals who lived in the house over the generations. Rather they depict people from the community such as William Henry Prime, Lewis A. MacDonald and the Honorable Angus Morrison Gidney. In the hallway, panels of photographs show community events, volunteer get-togethers and visitors exploring the museum.

Heritage House Museum (Smiths Falls, ON) functions, similarly, as a community museum. It is not focused on the commemoration of a historically-significant individual or the illustration of a particular design philosophy. Its collection is largely formed through donations made by members of the Smiths Falls area.<sup>76</sup> The top floor of the south wing serves as an exhibition gallery for such temporary exhibitions as “The Legend of Frost & Wood. Outstanding in their field” [Fig. 1.27] The Frost & Wood Company was an agricultural manufacturing company formed in 1839 and a central part of the community until it closed its doors in 1955.<sup>77</sup> The exhibition explains that when the factory was demolished in the 1960s the town was left with “no lasting memorial to the great agricultural industry.”<sup>78</sup> Displays included images of the employees, National Film Board footage

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<sup>76</sup> A text in the museum reads: “Heritage House Museum functions as a historic house depicting upper middle class life circa 1865-1875 and as a local museum featuring a permanent collection of Smiths Falls artifacts, travelling exhibits and art shows” (“... ‘a very neat residence...,’” museum didactic, Heritage House Museum, October 2012). The Heritage House Museum is the only museum in the town belonging to Smiths Falls, most belong to a board or Parks Canada.

<sup>77</sup> Kara Fraser, “The Legacy of Frost & Wood: Outstanding in Their Field,” *Cocksbutt Quarterly* (Spring 2012), 9.

<sup>78</sup> “Summary,” *The Legacy of Frost & Wood: Outstanding in their Field*. Heritage House Museum, Smiths Falls, Ontario, Virtual Museum Exhibition, Heritage House Museum, October 2012. A computer in the exhibition made the

capturing the Company's activities and Frost & Wood implements. It spoke to the workers' contributions to war efforts during WWII. Kara Fraser, the Community Memories Coordinator for Heritage House Museum, explained in an article from the *Cockshutt Quarterly* that:

[T]he staff at the Heritage House Museum...set out to record, preserve, and conserve remnants of the Frost & Wood Company before they were gone forever...with [*The Legacy of Frost & Wood. Outstanding in their field*], the story of a company that was the heart and soul of Smiths Falls for so many years will be told.<sup>79</sup>

Interviews with former employees and members of the town were recorded and made accessible, while the exhibition was meant to call up additional community memories.

Heritage House Museum is a local history museum that simulates domestic environments of Smiths Falls' past and generates exhibitions that pertain directly to the town and its citizens.

Microhistories are the house museum's specialty.



Figure 1.26: The Marine Room at Admiral Digby Museum (Photo by author, 5 October 2012).



Figure 1.27: A display from the "Frost & Wood" exhibition at Heritage House Museum (Photo by author, 1 October 2012).

virtual exhibition available to the visitor to the visitor to Heritage House Museum. The exhibition is still accessible through [http://www.museevirtuel-virtualmuseum.ca/Search.do?R=VE\\_2259&lang=en&ex=on](http://www.museevirtuel-virtualmuseum.ca/Search.do?R=VE_2259&lang=en&ex=on) (accessed 9 July 2014).

<sup>79</sup> Fraser, "The Legacy of Frost & Wood," 6.

Higonnet's discussion of the way collection museums evolved in relation to encyclopedic museums raises similar questions about the house museum's affiliations with its larger institutional partners. Higonnet argues that:

The distinctions between encyclopedic museums and collection museums are particularly evident because the two sorts of institutions often exist side by side: the Wallace Collection and the National Gallery or British Museum in London; the Musée Condé and the Louvre in Paris; the Gardner Museum and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston...<sup>80</sup>

Many of Canada's house museums are part of museum networks operated by the provinces or Parks Canada. They share resources and collaborate on projects with other museums in their provinces and communities. Interpretive guides may move between sites, as in the case of the Shand and Haliburton house museums, or affiliated museums may rely on the same conservation professionals; in eastern Ontario a circuit of federal museums rely on a single conservationist for the care of their artifacts. Some houses have connections to the country's public health organizations. Banting House, for example, is owned by the London and District Branch of the Canadian Diabetes Association and Point Ellice House was once operated by the Capital Mental Health Association. Helmcken House and Luxton House are operated through the Royal BC Museum and the Whyte Museum respectively. The Maison Chevalier's (Quebec City, QC) evacuation plans feature the logo of the Musée de la civilisation, located nearby.

These different kinds of institutional affiliations are helpful because they provide house museums with various opportunities and resources. House museums piggy-back on larger attractions such as Casa Loma or the AGO, which draw crowds nearby. However, such affiliations can also be restrictive when it comes to across-the-board fundraising policies, budget allocations and at-a-distance, non-specialized management. Paying attention

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<sup>80</sup> Higonnet, *A Museum of One's Own*, 9.

to such partnerships not only helps us to understand the ways that house museums have ensured their continuity, by garnering support and securing funding from various sources, but also helps us identify the bodies that influence Canadian house museums' current operational approaches and futures. We can talk about house museums as a particular type of museum but we cannot talk about them in isolation from other institutions.

***A Decorative Arts Museum turned House Museum: The Château Dufresne***

Historic houses in Canada have also served as sites for founding museums and their collections, forging lasting connections with what have grown into some of Canada's most prestigious cultural institutions. I offer one example, which also highlights a relationship between the house museum and decorative arts museums. The Beaux-Arts-style, double mansion, built by Oscar (1875-1936) and Marius (1883-1945) Dufresne between 1914 and 1917, served as the Musée d'art contemporain in Montreal from 1963 until 1968.<sup>81</sup> The Musée d'art contemporain is now located just over five and a half kilometers away from the mansion, in the Quartier des Spectacles at the Place des Arts. The mansion, now known as Château Dufresne, stands opposite the 1976 Olympic Stadium and across from the Botanical Gardens in Montreal.<sup>82</sup> After its use as a residence, and prior to being re-fashioned into a museum of contemporary art, the Fathers of Sainte Croix re-purposed the house as a school (from 1948 until 1957).<sup>83</sup> Once the Musée d'art contemporain vacated the house it was left unoccupied and neglected for a span of eight years—destined to become a museum again.<sup>84</sup>

By 1976, David and Liliane MacDonald Stewart had amassed a collection—including ceramics, jewellery, glassware, textiles and furniture—that showcased Canada's twentieth-

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<sup>81</sup> *Le Château Dufresne, Musée des Arts Décoratifs de Montréal: the first ten years, 1979-1989*, foreword by Mrs. David M. Stewart (Montreal, QC: Le Château Dufresne, Musée des Arts Décoratifs de Montréal, 1990), 9. See the image of the Château Dufresne in *Le Château*, 15. For more information on how the Chateau functioned as a joint residence and the organization of the two apartments see *Le Château*, 9.

<sup>82</sup> Luc D'Iberville-Moreau, "History of the Museum," in *Le Château*, 9.

<sup>83</sup> *Le Château*, 9.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

century design histories.<sup>85</sup> The couple had identified the historic mansion as a suitable site for their collections and set about its restoration.<sup>86</sup> The furniture that had adorned the apartments of Marius Dufresne was purchased from Mrs. Marius Dufresne's estate in that year. Coming together as a collection displayed amongst domestic finery, it was declared a historical monument and officially opened as The Musée des arts décoratifs de Montréal (MADM) in 1979.<sup>87</sup>

Neither a house nor a collection museum, the château became recognized as the “first decorative art museum devoted entirely to the twentieth century” in Canada. It was thought that by the 1990s it had become “one of the most important design collections in North America.”<sup>88</sup> The MADM organized exhibitions about innovative furniture design, creative textiles, such designers as Eva Zeisel and Edward Colonna, renderings by Eszter Harastzy, the furniture and interiors of Marcel Breuer and the collections of Liliane and David Stewart.<sup>89</sup> It was felt that “the Musée des arts décoratifs de Montréal ... should be a critical force in the design world, providing popular access to the designed environment.”<sup>90</sup> Undoubtedly, the historic domestic setting complimented this aim and added depth to the design objects within the collection. Like Higonnet's collection museums, the Dufresne's mansion was never utilized as a home while under the ownership of the Stewarts.

Ultimately, the museum of decorative arts outgrew the domestic confines of the Château and was relocated in a newer, specially-designed building. In 2000, the Stewarts'

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<sup>85</sup> Especially during the 1980s, Stewart focused his collecting on the decorative arts of the period between 1935 and 1965 (*Le Château*, 9). In 1980, David felt “[i]nstitutions had not yet made a serious, concentrated effort to collect decorative arts from the period after 1935” (*Ibid.*, 13).

<sup>86</sup> *Le Château*, 3. As the text recounts, “[a] very large portion of the building materials was prefabricated and ordered from catalogues received from Canadian and American companies. Marius Dufresne was his own architect. The original structure contained forty rooms on four levels. The vertical organization of the house was simple and clear” (*Ibid.*, 9).

<sup>87</sup> *Le Château*, 9.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* Note that Penny Sparke was a consultant related to The Musée des arts décoratifs de Montréal in its first ten years.

<sup>89</sup> *Le Château*, 19-20.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

collection of over 5 500 works was donated to the MMFA.<sup>91</sup> Since then, Château Dufresne has been restored as a historic home with period interiors representing the daily life of the famous brothers. Château Dufresne represents one example of a private home repurposed at various moments as a museum of contemporary art, decorative arts museum and house museum.<sup>92</sup>

Indeed, there has been a great deal of cross-over between the decorative arts museum and the house museum. The former often provide training grounds for future house museum curators and collections managers. Internationally, this is true. Peter Thornton, for example, who was the Keeper of the Department of Furniture and Woodwork at the Victoria and Albert Museum, and published texts such as *Authentic Décor: The Domestic Interior 1620-1920*, ultimately became the curator of the Sir John Soane Museum. Figures like Thornton apply expertise acquired at larger institutions (which also care for domestic furnishings) within house museums.<sup>93</sup>

Curators at decorative arts and design museums have often recreated historic interiors in the form of period rooms. These “exhibited rooms” typically represent an established style or distinct period and are “arranged with minimal objects and without inhabitants, often with the fourth wall removed.”<sup>94</sup> As Jeremy Aynsley indicates, “[t]raditionally, the ‘period room’ has been associated with the conventions of presenting ensembles of furniture, fittings and decorative schemes within the context of a museum.”<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> “The Liliane and David M. Stewart Collection,” *Montreal Museum of Fine Art* website, <http://www.mbam.qc.ca/en/collections/art-decoratifs-design#/collections/art-decoratifs-design/a-propos> (accessed 11 June 2013).

<sup>92</sup> Board of Montréal Museum Directors, “The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts Will Devote the Liliane and David M. Stewart Pavilion to Decorative Arts and Design,” *Board of Montréal Museum Directors* website (8 November 2010), <http://museesmontreal.org/main.php?l=e&d=1&i=30&t=news> (accessed 11 June 2013).

<sup>93</sup> Jeremy Aynsley, “The Modern Period Room – A Contradiction in Terms?” in *The Modern Period Room. The Construction of the Exhibited Interior, 1870 to 1950*, eds. Trevor Keeble, Brenda Martin and Penny Sparke (New York, NY Routledge, 2006), 11.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.



The apparatus could be found at “the great exhibitions and department stores, on the pages of magazines, as well as at specialist design and home exhibitions.”<sup>96</sup> If the collection museum and house museum maintain collections in their original settings, and preserve personal installations, the period room was also formed as a “frozen moment.”<sup>97</sup> The only difference being that it seldom acknowledged how “occupants customised and adapted an architect’s [or designer’s] work.”<sup>98</sup> Decorative arts museums were charged with the preservation of interior design and reconstructed interiors according to an artist’s or architect’s intentions, as conveyed in blueprints or drawings.<sup>99</sup> House museums will make use of the period-room set up in order to communicate histories of style; however, very few remark upon design elements, architectural features or stylistic trends without also commenting on social histories.

If encyclopedic museums were criticised for being tiresome and formal, the period room within larger museums was reproved for producing displays that did not accurately convey the realities of life at home.<sup>100</sup> According to Julius Bryant, between the 1980s and the first decade of the twenty-first century European and North American “museums ... suffered a crisis in confidence in their period rooms.”<sup>101</sup> Many were dismantled and repurposed in the wake of critiques that they were unhistorical. However, as historic interiors began garnering new scholarly and public attention in the early 2000s, a number of museums reopened their period rooms. In most cases, it was not simply a matter of reinstalling the displays as they were before. Bryant notes that these re-openings spawned considerable

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Studies of period rooms suggest that “museological conventions include[d] respect for the architect’s original intentions and his ‘authorship’” (Aynsley, “The Modern Period Room,” 12).

<sup>100</sup> Aynsley, “The Modern Period Room,” 13. Aynsley phrases it as follows: “[t]he priorities of decorative arts and design scholarship in art museums tend to separate the room from its use and afterlife” (Ibid., 18).

<sup>101</sup> Julius Bryant, “Museum Period Rooms for the Twenty-First Century: Salvaging Ambition,” *Museum Management and Curatorship* 24, 1 (March 2009), 73.

rethinking. The remodeled rooms responded to earlier attacks on their veracity and incorporated new technologies and museological precepts. Lingering doubts from earlier decades resurfaced, and radical new ideas were tested and evaluated, bringing the period room into the new millennium. Given that house museums have long been implicated in evaluations of the period room, they too faced a flurry of denunciations and redesigns. Chapter Three addresses, in more detail, how the precepts of a new museology have affected historic interior displays.

***The House Museum as Compensatory Project: Giving Displaced Objects Scenic Homes***

Keeping in mind that period rooms represent the transposition of “the fabric of an interior from its original setting to [a] new context” in a museum, I want to turn to an exhibition installed at O’Dell House Museum (Annapolis Royal, NS), entitled “From a Humble Block of Wood. The Carvings of Bud Hamm.” O’Dell House Museum acquired a collection of wood carvings by folk artist Eugene “Bud” Hamm in 2010.<sup>102</sup> Select pieces from this collection were compiled as an exhibition and displayed in one of the museum’s upstairs rooms. The artist’s engravings hung from the mouldings and in the windows; they filled the mantel and covered tabletops [Figs. 1.28-1.29]. In the far right corner of the gallery sat a green-upholstered and paint-splattered armchair, referred to as “Bud’s Chair” [Fig. 1.30]. On the chair rested a pillow, a hat and a picture of the object at its former residence.<sup>103</sup>

Many of the items in this exhibition—the furniture as well as the artworks—were taken from the unusual home of Bud and Gertrude Hamm in Clarence, Nova Scotia. Owlhoot, as the artist’s home was called, “fascinated” and “amused” the curator of the museum, who used the highly-decorated domestic interior as inspiration for the exhibition at

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<sup>102</sup> Ryan Scranton, “The Handwriting is Not Yet on the Wall,” *Rediscovering Canada* (Spring 2012), 18.

<sup>103</sup> Hamm’s work had no direct link to the O’Dell House; however, the curator of the museum accepted the deceased artist’s work into the collection after having been approached by representatives of his estate.

O'Dell House [Fig. 1.31].<sup>104</sup> Images of the house, its plaster-relief walls and cabinetry were integrated into the display, as were descriptions written by the artist about his home:

The joy of having a home built by my own planning and energy has been a great source of pleasure. Within its walls I have known the deep appreciation of some of the world's best music and singing. There has been delightful female companionship, the time and energy to carve a collection of wood and plaster carvings...All of this perhaps has amounted to little in the scheme of things, but it has given me much enjoyment.<sup>105</sup>

The decoratively heterogeneous arrangement of the exhibition deviated from accepted museum display strategies, which usually concentrate on isolating objects for visual appreciation. Instead, they recalled the atmosphere of the artist's home, making Owlhoot a central component of the show.



Figure 1.28: Carvings hung against a wall in O'Dell House Museum's gallery. The display is part of the exhibition, "From a Humble Block of Wood. The Carvings of Bud Hamm" (Photo by the author, 5 October 2012).



Figure 1.29: A different installation shot of the exhibition, "From a Humble Block of Wood," at O'Dell House Museum (Photo by author, 5 October 2012).

<sup>104</sup> "Curator's Note," *From a Humble Block of Wood. The Carvings of Bud Hamm*, museum didactic, O'Dell House Museum, October 2012.

<sup>105</sup> Eugene L. (Bud) Hamm, *Owlhoot* (25 November 2001), reproduced in *From a Humble Block of Wood. The Carvings of Bud Hamm*, museum display, O'Dell House Museum, October 2012.



Figure 1.30: Bud's chair (Photo by author, 5 October 2012).



Figure 1.31: Photographs of Owlhoot and Bud Hamm displayed in the exhibition, "From a Humble Block of Wood" (Scranton, "The Handwriting," 18, 20).

O'Dell House Museum's exhibition of Hamm's work helps us understand the way house museums, like decorative arts museums, have "acquired rooms saved from structures about to be demolished."<sup>106</sup> Owlhoot was not saved, even though it would have been an inspiring place to encounter "the full creative enthusiasm" of the artist.<sup>107</sup> In this example, no single room is replicated. Rather the gallery recreates the feel of the folk artist's home in the confines of a historic house that also retells the story of its own construction, inhabitation and museumification through restored domestic spaces.

We should take two points away from this exhibition if we are interested in the nature of the house museum. First, the house museum is a scenic museum, much like the folk museums and early wax museums that Mark Sandberg discusses in his book *Living Pictures, Missing Persons: Mannequins, Museums and Modernity* (2003). Bud's chair is not simply brought in and displayed as a pure museum specimen. It is topped with a pillow and a hat,

<sup>106</sup> Aynsley, "The Modern Period Room," 9.

<sup>107</sup> Scranton, "The Handwriting," 20.

becoming part of a group of objects—a tableau that gestures to the way the chair was used.<sup>108</sup> Indeed, even in the picture of the chair at Owlhoot the pillow rests on its seat. Sandberg argues that, in the nineteenth century, “[t]he growing popularity of the natural history museum’s ‘life group,’ the wax museum’s tableau, and the folk-ethnographic museum’s genre scene demonstrate[d] the common interest in a compensatory project of *mise-en-scène*.”<sup>109</sup> The Bud Hamm exhibition suggests that house museums have continued the tradition of creating surround-style, whole-room displays to add depth of meaning to their objects and immerse visitors in the culture of the past.<sup>110</sup> Owlhoot can still be experienced at O’Dell House Museum. More importantly, the exhibition makes it possible to view the carvings alongside stories of an even greater domestic design venture.

House museums favour period-room displays because they, too, are based on the idea of “living, contextualized scenes.”<sup>111</sup> When objects take their places in house museums, they are animated, or prepared for the “stage.” Glasses are lined with red-coloured cellophane, appearing as if they were filled with wine. Billiard tables are arranged as though the game is set to begin any moment and books lay open waiting for their readers to resume their pastime. These activations suggest that the objects are in use, that the house is inhabited. They provide visitors with the feeling of having “direct physical access to previously distant times and spaces” and suggest, as folk museums have been apt to, that the

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<sup>108</sup> In the first chapter of Sandberg’s book, Sandberg describes a historical exhibition at the Grand Café in Oslo. In the corner of the restaurant, a table and chair is reserved for the deceased playwright, Henrik Ibsen. Sandberg uses this display to explain how an empty, “well-worn” chair becomes an evocative placeholder, a spatial effigy (Sandberg, *Living Pictures*, 1). The hat that sits on Bud’s chair at the O’Dell House Museum bestows upon it all the impact and resonance of Sandberg’s missing person effigy. “Effigy practice” involves making a body appear present as an empty space surrounded by evocative traces (Ibid., 4). House museums tend to be quite familiar with the practice, preferring to use mannequins only for costume display and not as signifiers of former inhabitants.

<sup>109</sup> Sandberg, *Living Pictures*, 8.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 13, 15. Scandinavian folk museums “while perhaps not inventing the idea of theme space and immersive spectatorship, certainly helped to establish it as a dominant mode of twentieth century visual culture” (Ibid., 8).

<sup>111</sup> Sandberg, *Living Pictures*, 8.

past is still accessible.<sup>112</sup> House museums are, therefore, linked to a “larger cultural fascination with ‘living pictures’.”<sup>113</sup> The house museum’s connection to the living history museum is, thus, an important one to track. It will be explored in more detail in Chapter Three.<sup>114</sup>

The second point to be made follows up on Sandberg’s remark that the *mise-en-scène* constituted a compensatory project. He states that nineteenth-century scenic museums gave “displaced objects and bodies a new kind of scenic home.”<sup>115</sup> Folklorists in Scandinavia and ethnographers in other parts of Europe had begun collecting vernacular objects and cultural pieces pertaining to life in the country.<sup>116</sup> Annette Carruthers has indicated that many of Scotland’s early collections of domestic objects were compiled because of “the realisation that much of the evidence of the lives of ‘ordinary people’... was in danger of disappearing.”<sup>117</sup> She argues that “in the beginning the main idea was simply to preserve objects and transfer them to a museum setting and the notion did not arise of saving a small house and its contents complete.”<sup>118</sup> Nevertheless, it was these accumulations of domestic cultural objects that ultimately validated the restorations of historic homes as proper storehouses.

The house museums of Canada are intimately tied to these types of collections. They represent examples of how household items, which have survived the destructive passage of time, have been reunited with their former domestic confines or relocated to other period

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>114</sup> In the United States, outdoor museums like Colonial Williamsburg popularized the belief that three-dimensional environments were ideal for the interpretation of the past. The establishment of Colonial Williamsburg inspired the formation of many historic sites and living museums in both the U.S. and Canada (Jay Anderson, “Living History,” (Fall 1982) in *A Living History Reader: Museums*, ed. Jay Anderson (Nashville, TN: American Association for State and Local History, 1991), 5).

<sup>115</sup> Sandberg, *Living Pictures*, 8.

<sup>116</sup> Young, “Is There a Museum,” 61; Carruthers, “House Museums and Domestic Life Displays,” 89.

<sup>117</sup> Carruthers, “House Museums and Domestic Life Displays,” 88. Carruthers’s research intersects with that of Sandberg, who describes the importance of Artur Hazelius’ early collections of folk culture.

<sup>118</sup> Carruthers, “House Museums and Domestic Life Displays,” 89.

homes. A number of Canada's house museums have become storehouses for domestic belongings from many different contexts. Carruthers suggests that house museums have been "a focus for donations, providing enthusiasts with a suitable repository for mementos and associated items."<sup>119</sup> This seems also to be true of Canada's house museums. O'Dell House provides a new "scenic home" for Bud's chair and carvings as well as the other period furnishings that fill its first-floor rooms. The Maison Chevalier's period-room exhibits are comprised of furnishings, garments and knick-knacks on loan from the Musée de la civilisation, an institution that likely feels that its pieces of a domestic origin are better suited to displays in the former residence. We might therefore assert, as Carruthers does, that house museums "perform a useful function as magnets for objects which would otherwise be scattered and might be lost" (or relegated to the shelves of a storage facility).<sup>120</sup> Where a community strives to remain connected to the material remnants of its domestic past, a house museum serves as a site for storage and preservation.

### ***The Model Home: A Peer in the Commercial Realm***

If *Living Pictures, Missing Persons* helps us to conceptualize the house museum as a scenic museum, akin to the wax museums and folk museums of the modern period, Sandberg also asks us to acknowledge the house museum's relationship with the model home. In "The Interactivity of the Model Home" (2010), he explores the historical emergence of the model home and argues it occurred simultaneously with the development of the visitors' familiarity with imaginative and immersive spectatorship. He describes how IKEA commercials have made fun of an "overly eager mode of consumer participation" that

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

sees consumers going “too far” in making a domestic showroom his or her own.<sup>121</sup> They exaggerate the idea of the test-run or trial by depicting a married couple engaged in a domestic dispute and a teenager admitting her pregnancy to her parents in the display interiors of a public store.<sup>122</sup> Imaginative participation is not enough where “fantasies of immersion” can be acted out.<sup>123</sup> Sandberg indicates that these display rooms of the commercial realm, much like the stately homes discussed above, have been instrumental in teaching visitors how to engage with exhibited interiors. The commercials are humorous because viewers share an understanding of the implicit rule: items on display are not meant for routine inhabitation. One is not “*really*” meant to make “oneself at home in IKEA’s surround-style simulated interiors” any more than they are expected to do so at house museums. Chapter Three touches on the way house museums, like commercial displays, rely on an internalized sense of boundary.

### **I.III. Related and Different**

The house museum captures an inquisitive visitor who wonders what lies up the stairs, beneath the house, or behind the wallpaper and drywall. It is about mysteries and discoveries, peering into the private lives of others and stepping into the past. The house museum’s curiosities are its sock stretchers, privies, “Daisy Washers,” bed warmers, stereopticons, hair wreaths and oil lamps. As much as the house museum resembles its institutional peers, it is different from them.

The house museum is a genre that borrows management strategies from the owners of grand country estates in Britain, it relies on the heritage home’s ability to cultivate interest in aging dwellings and shares with the collection museum a preoccupation with recreating the

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<sup>121</sup> Mark B. Sandberg, “The Interactivity of the Model Home,” in *History of Participatory Media: Politics and Publics, 1750-2000*, ed. Anders Ekström, Solveig Jülich, Frans Lundgren, and Per Wisselgren (New York, NY: Routledge, 2010), 63.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*



feel of home. House museums borrow home-making techniques from private and consumer realms. They make use of traditions of display made familiar in the period rooms of decorative arts museums and spectatorial alignments established at department stores and furniture showcases. Yet, they have been contrasted as more intimate, less austere and less formal than traditional survey museums. They are typically designed to look lived in and suggest changeability, highlighting atmospheric elements (like working fireplaces). They encourage visitors to perform small gestures, like ringing the doorbell, to make them feel more at home. In promoting appreciation for the inner workings of home and providing detailed information about families and residential architectures they differ from collection museums, which focus on collections of art. The house museum's hand-written signs, hybrid vitrines, sewn cloth barriers and scrapbooks suggest that within these hybrid institutions a museology that fuses the logic of house and museum reigns. In all the ways that house museums differ from kindred sites, they provide an alternative model for understanding historical events and social pasts.

#### **I.IV. Part II: They Didn't Come Out of Nowhere**

The first half of this chapter explored the nature and function of the house museum, through basic definitions, case study analyses and comparisons with other institutions and sites of domestic culture. The following sections address how Canadian house museums developed under the triangulated influences of preservation discourses, centennial funding and expanded historical topographies. Explaining the social, political and ideological climate that motivated their creation in Canada, they also describe the more specific processes involved in transforming the country's historic houses into public museums. Case studies present individualized stories of historic houses' transitions from private dwellings to house museums, and are used to outline the conversion rationales, stabilization efforts, overall

restoration approaches and initial interpretive plans of select museums. Founding figures, including Judge Joseph-Camille Pouliot, the Honorable A.S. MacMillan and James Knight Nesbitt, who initiated restorative projects at the Manoir Mauvide-Genest, Haliburton House and Craigdarroch Castle, respectively, are discussed.<sup>124</sup> In other cases, the missions and intentions of public heritage organizations, historical foundations, provincial and federal governments and volunteer associations that oversaw the houses' passages into museumhood are examined. These stories of reclamation, restoration and conversion are central to the institutions' histories and are, therefore, a logical place to begin a study of this kind. They also provide explicit examples of the way broader historical and cultural shifts influenced the development of house museums in the country.

### ***Foundations in the Preservation Movement***

Concerns over the fragility and impermanence of heritage have habitually incited the preservation of historic buildings, and the establishment of house museums, in Canada. Although heritage is a concept difficult to define, it has often been thought of as a reaction to processes of modernization.<sup>125</sup> More specifically, scholars such as David Lowenthal have declared that the preservation ethos developed during the modern period. He explains:

Instances of preservation can be documented from time immemorial, to be sure, and certain remnants...are habitually treasured. But to retain a substantial portion of the past is signally a latter-day goal. Only with the nineteenth-century did European nations closely identify themselves with their material heritage, and only in the twentieth have they launched major programmes to protect it.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> There is no question that such individuals played authorial roles in house museums' early stages. Chapter Four, however, will argue that house museums should not be interpreted as evidence of single biographies. They do not exist solely because of an individual's efforts, however outstanding.

<sup>125</sup> However, it should be noted that David C. Harvey takes issue with the "frequently cited notion that heritage is somehow inexorably connected to 'modernity'" (David C. Harvey, "The History of Heritage," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity*, ed. Brian Graham and Peter Howard (Aldershot, UK.; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2008), 19).

<sup>126</sup> David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 385.

The preservation crusades, according to Lowenthal, were brought on by anxieties that the past was fading from existence. As memories and material traces disappeared, a distance or “remoteness” between the self and the cultures, people and places of earlier times became more poignantly felt.<sup>127</sup> Lowenthal argues that conservation was inspired by “[t]raditional patterns of life disrupted, monuments vandalized, [and] art treasures pillaged”<sup>128</sup> By preserving physical remains, we feel able to “compensate” for such (mental and physical) erosions.<sup>129</sup>

During the nineteenth century, when the old monuments of Europe were being torn down—their fragments sold by scavengers for profit—concerns about the loss of the past became more pronounced. Countries lamented the loss of ancient artifacts to buyers and collectors in neighbouring states. Preservation societies were established to ensure that more relics were not exported in the same way. Lowenthal quotes an art historian’s observation about the Mellon Collection of British paintings at Yale: “our so-called heritage never means more to us than when we see it inherited by someone else.”<sup>130</sup> As the taste for remnants of the past grew it also spread geographically.

These same perceptions have also been responsible for the production of national, cultural and historical museums. As Andreas Huyssen points out, “[i]t is not the sense of secure traditions that marks the beginning of the museum, but rather their loss combined with a multi-layered desire for (re)construction.”<sup>131</sup> He asserts that “the museum emerged as the paradigmatic institution that collects, salvages, and preserves that which has fallen to the

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., xxv, 53.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 394.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 393.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 394.

<sup>131</sup> Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking of Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (London, UK; New York, NY: Routledge, 1995), 15.

ravages of modernization.”<sup>132</sup> In DEMHIST ’s conference proceedings from 2000, these ideas are directly applied to house museums:

[T]he early development of the house museum in this period is a measure of the deep-rooted sense of dispossession of the past produced by the French Revolution, and to the extent it has the character of a recuperative strategy. It is not only a question of making one’s home again, after the turbulent period has past, but of making one’s home in history, or of making history one’s home.<sup>133</sup>

While the French Revolution may have inspired the establishment of house museums in France, and while we can argue that, as a general rule, the processes of modernization were a catalyst for the preservation movement, we require a clearer picture of the factors and circumstances that produced Canada’s house museums.

Few of the earliest residential structures in Canada, constructed by European settlers, survived into the nineteenth century to be preserved as museums. Between 1784 and 1867 (when the Dominion of Canada was formed) the country remained mostly wilderness, and settlers constructed rudimentary shelters and simple log houses as a basic need.<sup>134</sup> In the words of Marion Macrae and Anthony Adamson, these were “not the most architecturally

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid. There is something ironic about this comment when it is considered alongside the fact that these museums commemorate progressive individuals.

<sup>133</sup> Bann, “A Way of Life,” 23. The revolutions cited here, like the industrial revolution and later wars, introduced rapid change, making the past seem irretrievable (Lowenthal, *The Past*, 394). Tremendous changes of this kind have prompted people to take solace in the past, to seek continuity with the past in the present. If the preservation movement grew out of awareness that the past was threatened, house museums seemed to offer a way to hold onto quickly disappearing ways of life. Linda Young maintains that “[s]aving houses by turning them into museums overcomes demons from development profiteering and urban blight, to the destruction or disrespect of art” (Young, “Is there a Museum,” 59).

<sup>134</sup> Marion Macrae and Anthony Adamson, *The Ancestral Roof. Domestic Architecture of Upper Canada* (Toronto, ON; Vancouver, BC: Clarke, Irwin & Company Ltd., 1963), “The first word,” n.p. The First Nations groups that predated European contact preserved their heritages through oral tradition handed down by elders, as narratives reproduced on hides or bark, in the form of petroglyphs and through customary ceremonies, including potlachs. Missionaries, governmental efforts and the *Indian Act*, dramatically disrupted these peoples’ efforts to preserve their heritage and culture. Most of their dwellings were designed to be transient and were therefore seldom preserved in the form of historic sites. Those that might have survived to become stand-alone house museums were torn from their land and reconstructed in museums throughout the country (Recall Preface). Today, these groups continue the fight to reclaim their cultural property from collections with colonial origins and to recover from the attempted annihilation of their customs by taking control of their own cultural representations.

profound” shelters.<sup>135</sup> Broadly speaking, “[t]he settlers did not regard [them] as being in any sense architectural. Log construction remained in their eyes a temporary expedient.”<sup>136</sup>

William C. Wonders has suggested that “[b]ecause of their association with the frontier, log dwellings for most Canadians have been regarded as primitive, early settlement features, to be superseded by more modern efficient structures.”<sup>137</sup> Having erected a preliminary home, settlers would often begin planning their “ultimate home,” sizing up their land for the most suitable location and dreaming of the polite buildings they had left behind and hoped to inhabit in the future. At this stage, the settlers of the young country had little sense of (or perhaps concern for) what structures would define their nation or would be considered worthy of preservation in the following centuries. Macrae and Adamson state: “That anyone would ever consider log houses admirable to the point of wishing to preserve them was inconceivable to the eighteenth-century mind.”<sup>138</sup> Preoccupied with ensuring their livelihoods on the frontier, and largely insensitive to what they perceived as their temporary built environment, the preservation of early residences and establishment of house museums were not amongst the colonists’ first priorities.

Peter Ennals and Deryck W. Holdsworth, the co-authors of *Homeplace: The Making of the Canadian Dwelling over Three Centuries* (1998), indicate that it was only near the end of the nineteenth century that houses comparable to the “high-style” residences of Britain and the

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<sup>135</sup> Macrae and Adamson, *The Ancestral Roof*, “The first word,” n.p.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>137</sup> William Wonders, “Log Dwellings in Canadian Folk Architecture,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 69, 2 (June 1979), 187. Wonders suggests that “because of their perishable nature and frequent replacement by other materials later, log structures of any antiquity are not that numerous” (*Ibid.*, 195).

<sup>138</sup> Macrae and Adamson, *The Ancestral Roof*, 4. Perhaps subsequent generations of Canadians felt towards their first structures, as their American counterparts did about their Colonial buildings, viewing them as “mere holdovers from a benighted past, grotesque products of the nation’s aesthetic immaturity” (W. Barksdale Maynard, “Best, Lowliest Style! The Early-Nineteenth Century Rediscovery of American Colonial Architecture,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 59, 3 (September 2000), 338).

United States began to accumulate on the Canadian landscape.<sup>139</sup> It was to the detriment of many pioneer houses that historic preservation became a concern in Canada only as early as 1875. If in the first decades of the 1600s fire made ruins of many log dwellings, during the middle of the eighteenth-century, the “War of Conquest” (1754-1763) claimed as casualties numerous Acadian properties.<sup>140</sup> The passage of time was not the only force responsible for the destruction and disappearance of early colonial dwellings. Loyalist houses in the Maritimes, and residences of the French regime in Quebec, that were constructed during the 1700s with some of the earliest dating as far back as the first decade of the eighteenth century, remained unprotected and under-valued for centuries after their construction. The majority of homes that were to become house museums in Canada were built during the 1800s and even these were neglected for decades before their recuperation.

The impulse to protect historic residences came to Canada from Europe. The Gothic Revival drew attention to the way architectures emblemized national identities and values. In response to Strasburg Cathedral, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) had asserted that Gothic architecture encapsulated the German spirit. As the popularity of the Gothic style reached its height and architects continued to strip historic structures of their accretions, adding Gothic elements to buildings that had no genuine Gothic roots, a number of preservation societies developed throughout Europe in reaction to such “zealous ‘restorations’.”<sup>141</sup> In *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (first published 1849), Ruskin implores “Do not let us talk then of restoration. The thing is a Lie from beginning to end...Take

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<sup>139</sup> Peter Ennals and Deryck W. Holdsworth, *Homeplace: The Making of the Canadian Dwelling over Three Centuries* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 40. The authors indicate that “[t]he first impetus for the high style in Canada undoubtedly was from the intendants, governors, and senior colonial officials as well as other members of the colonial oligarchy” (Ibid., 24). The homes of government officials were “administrative settings as well as private dwellings” and were situated amongst other monumental architectures in Quebec City (Ibid.).

<sup>140</sup> Wonders, “Log Dwellings,” 194.

<sup>141</sup> “History of the SPAB,” *The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings* website, <http://www.spab.org.uk/what-is-spab-/history-of-the-spab/> (accessed 10 March 2014).

proper care of your monuments, and you will not need to restore them.”<sup>142</sup> With great emphasis he states, “*We have no right whatever to touch them. They are not ours. They belong partly to those who built them, and partly to all the generations of mankind who are to follow us. The dead have still their right in them.*”<sup>143</sup> In 1877, William Morris, Philip Webb and other members of the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood founded the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings to oppose the aggressive restorations occurring throughout Victorian England. They sought to see buildings preserved “in the state that they had naturally arrived at over time by keeping them as untouched as possible but by protecting them from further decay.”<sup>144</sup> These debates about the appropriate treatment of historic structures promoted the development of conservation practices and ethics through the first half of the twentieth century. Ultimately, they ushered in the “Conservation, not Restoration” mentality that still guides the profession today.<sup>145</sup>

It was during this time, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, that Governor General Lord Dufferin initiated concern for the historic sites of Canada by advocating the restoration of Quebec City’s old fortification walls.<sup>146</sup> At the start of the 1870s, plans for city improvements—put forth by the city engineer Charles Baillairgé (1826-1906)—envisioned a more efficiently traversable and modern cityscape. The redevelopments, which were conceived in the interest of tourism, would have initiated

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<sup>142</sup> John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (London, UK: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1849), 180-181.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>144</sup> Andrea Elizabeth Donovan, *William Morris and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008), 8. The formation of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in 1877 suggests that architecture started to be viewed as historical evidence. Kelly Crossman insists that its central principle was “to treat our ancient buildings as monuments of a bygone art, created by bygone manners, that modern art cannot meddle with without destroying” (Kelly Crossman, *Architecture in Transition: From Art to Practice, 1885-1906* (Kingston, ON; Montreal, QU: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1987), 125).

<sup>145</sup> Randolph Starn, “Authenticity and Historic Preservation: Towards an Authentic History,” *History of the Human Sciences* 15, 1 (February 2002), 3.

<sup>146</sup> Gordon Fulton, “Heritage Conservation,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (7 February 2006), last updated 16 December 2013, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/heritage-conservation/> (accessed 16 April 2014).

the demolition of a number of the city's gates and walls.<sup>147</sup> Baillairgé was considered a progressive in his approach, and according to Christina Cameron, “fell squarely into the anti-heritage camp, showing little sensitivity for the romantic and sentimental values associated with landmarks and historic buildings.”<sup>148</sup> His proposal, however, was reproved by historians such as James Macpherson Lemoine who saw the improvements as “vandalism.”<sup>149</sup>

Dufferin arrived in Canada in 1872 and became quickly enamoured with the city's “dramatic topography.”<sup>150</sup> Upon hearing of the threats to the fortifications, he drew up a new proposal, one that involved “preserving [Quebec's] old walls and gates, its picturesque appearance and its ancient character.”<sup>151</sup> He shared his “romantic vision” of a walled city with his architect William Lynn.<sup>152</sup> This example also suggests that, in Canada, factions formed around philosophies of preservation which had originally been articulated in Europe. The Dufferin Improvements would represent a compromise between the camps of Baillairgé and Lemoine. Nevertheless, Dufferin and Lynn borrowed more from the tradition of restoration in the manner of Eugene-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc than from the tempered, non-interventionist or Anti-Scrape philosophies of John Ruskin and the Arts and Crafts movement. The pair had little concern for original materials or authenticated design. They reconstructed the gates that had been lost in “pseudo-historical styles.”<sup>153</sup> Still, Dufferin's interventions represent an early concern for the old structures of Quebec, one that would

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<sup>147</sup> Christina Cameron, *Charles Baillairgé: Architect and Engineer* (Kingston, ON; Montreal, QU: McGill-Queens University Press, 1989), 115. This provides a sense of the challenge Canada faced. They were quite invested in European theories of the past, and swept up in the culture of revivalism paired with nationalism, however, they were at a very different stage of national and architectural development.

<sup>148</sup> Cameron, *Charles Baillairgé*, 115.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 116. Lemoine was born in Canada and was involved in the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec in the 1870s. He had already published a number of texts on Quebec's past.

<sup>150</sup> Cameron, *Charles Baillairgé*, 116.

<sup>151</sup> Crossman, *Architecture in Transition*, 110-111.

<sup>152</sup> Lynn had a “*specialité* for picturesque mediaeval military construction” according to Dufferin (Dufferin in Cameron, *Charles Baillairgé*, 116).

<sup>153</sup> Cameron, *Charles Baillairgé*, 117; Crossman, *Architecture in Transition*, 111.



soon extend to include vernacular dwellings. In 1893, in the wake of early campaigns for the restoration of traditional architectures, the Château de Ramezay in Montreal was saved from destruction. Shortly after, calls for the preservation of vernacular buildings could be heard ever more clearly.<sup>154</sup> The widespread study of vernacular buildings followed during the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>155</sup>

It was not only European visitors and Quebec's historians who sought to protect Canada's early buildings. In fact, the architects of the country were instrumental in asserting the importance of maintaining examples of traditional architectural styles. The Gothic Revival belonged to Europe and, beginning with the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, the United States became caught up in its own colonial revival, celebrating the vernacular structures of the colonial period.<sup>156</sup> At the end the nineteenth century the architectural profession voiced the opinion that Canada needed to hone in on a distinctive Canadian style, one not completely derivative of British and American designs. Had the country's climate, history and experiences of everyday life produced distinctly Canadian forms of architecture? Influential architects such as George Reid and S. Henbest Capper, instructors at the Ontario College of Art and McGill University respectively, who were greatly influenced by Arts and Crafts theories, evidently thought so. They asserted that studying the architecture of the past would help architects (and students of the day) pinpoint the characteristics of a national architecture and plot an architectural history (or tradition) from which they could work.<sup>157</sup> Percy Erskine Nobbs (1875-1964), the Scottish-born

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<sup>154</sup> Crossman, *Architecture in Transition*, 116.

<sup>155</sup> Crossman speculates that a serious body of scholarship only began to develop around 1907 or 1908 (Crossman, *Architecture in Transition*, 116).

<sup>156</sup> Maynard, "Best, Lowliest Style!" 338.

<sup>157</sup> Crossman, *Architecture in Transition*, 123-124. By the start of the twentieth century Canadian architects, whether influenced by national pride in their growing country or Arts and Crafts principles, felt it essential to distinguish themselves from their American competition. The nationalist tendencies of the Arts and Crafts

architect with Arts and Crafts sympathies who took up Capper's position at McGill, applauded "[t]he stone houses of Quebec and Nova Scotia and the clap-board houses of New England" which he felt "showed real evolution of style."<sup>158</sup> Heralding the excellence of these styles, Nobbs generated appreciation for vernacular architectures and inspired further scholarly work on traditional Canadian building.<sup>159</sup> Indeed, Canada's historic houses had a role to play in helping these architects and others of this era identify the styles and building methods of the past. Research, drawings and studies of these structures were all dependent upon their survival. Many of the country's house museums therefore owe their existence to the architectural profession's efforts to see a distinctly Canadian architectural style manifested on the landscape.<sup>160</sup>

***Judge Pouliot's Manor: An Ancestral Home and Architectural Specimen circa the 1920s***

To understand how this climate relates to the history of house museums in Canada, one might consider the example of the Manoir Mauvide-Genest, a house museum near Quebec City. During the 1920s, Marius Barbeau (1883-1969), anthropologist, collector and scholar of folk culture, visited the Île d'Orléans.<sup>161</sup> He worked at The National Museum of Canada (NMC), known today as the Canadian Museum of History, from 1911 until 1949.<sup>162</sup> During his tenure at this institution, he amassed a number of photographs, which captured

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movement "found expression in Canadian architecture, especially after 1900 when Arts and Crafts societies were founded in cities across the country, including Victoria, Toronto, and Montreal" (Ibid., 119).

<sup>158</sup> Crossman, *Architecture in Transition*, 124; Nobbs in Crossman, *Architecture in Transition*, 130.

<sup>159</sup> Crossman, *Architecture in Transition*, 130.

<sup>160</sup> Fulton, "Heritage Conservation," <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/heritage-conservation/>. With the gestation of the Royal Society of Canada's Committee for the Preservation of Scenic and Historic Places in Canada (1900), the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (1919) and the Commission des biens culturels du Québec (1922), restoration efforts were better supported.

<sup>161</sup> "Marius Barbeau," *Canadian Museum of Civilization*, <http://www.civilization.ca/cmhc/exhibitions/tresors/barbeau/mbp0202e.shtml> (accessed 8 April 2013). Also see Lynda Jessup, Andrew Nurse, and Gordon Ernest Smith, *Around and About Marius Barbeau: Modelling Twentieth-Century Culture* (Ottawa, ON: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2008).

<sup>162</sup> "Marius Barbeau," <http://www.civilization.ca/cmhc/exhibitions/tresors/barbeau/mbp0202e.shtml>.

Canada's sculptors and painters as well as agricultural work, fisheries and shipbuilding processes. He also focused on domestic industries and the architecture of French Canada and Ontario.<sup>163</sup> In 1925, while on the Île d'Orléans, Barbeau took the Manoir Mauvide-Genest as his photographic subject (Figs. 1.32 & 1.33). As these images show, and as didactics in the Manor recall, "the old seigniorial residence was in a truly lamentable state" during the mid-1920s.<sup>164</sup> "Aware of the irreplaceable value of the manor," which had been the home of Jean Mauvide (1701-1782) a seigneur on the island, Barbeau tried to convince the government to restore it.<sup>165</sup> These discussions were to no avail and, in July of 1926, Judge Joseph-Camille Pouliot (1865-1935) bought the manoir, which had once been the residence of his grandmother, Marie-Angélique Genest.<sup>166</sup>



Figure 1.32: Marius Barbeau, "Manoir Mauvide located at Saint-Jean, Île d'Orléans, property of Hubert Turcotte." 1925 (Fonds Marius Barbeau, The Canadian Museum of History, MCH/CMH ARCHIVES: Historical Photos 65723).



Figure 1.33: Marius Barbeau, "Manoir Mauvide located at Saint-Jean, Île d'Orléans, property of Hubert Turcotte." 1925 (Fonds Marius Barbeau, The Canadian Museum of History, MCH/CMH ARCHIVES: Historical Photos 65724).

Pouliot's enthusiasm for architectural structures tied to the histories of Quebec is evidenced in his own writings. *Historical Reminder. Quebec and The Isle of Orleans*, published in 1927, introduces such sites as the Château Frontenac, Notre Dame presbytery and Quebec citadel, as well as additional architectural structures (i.e. churches, hospitals and convents),

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> "Saving the Manor from Oblivion," museum didactic, Manoir Mauvide-Genest, October 2012. On a tour of Manor I was told that, before Pouliot purchased the house, it was being used as a barn.

<sup>165</sup> "Saving the Manor from Oblivion" museum didactic.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

monuments and natural attractions (i.e. Montmorency Falls). In this text, Pouliot mentions a selection of historic homes including the Lessard house at St. Joachim, the Kent house, the Robert Gagnon house and the ancestral house of the Pouliot family. The Manoir Mauvide-Genest is featured in a section devoted to St. Jean on the Isle of Orleans:

Among the numerous and ancient stone buildings seen at St. Jean, there is one more imposing and larger than others, which retains the attention of the tourist: *The manoir*. Situated beside the road, near the river, on the outskirts of the village, this two storey stone house with small window panes, pointed gables, of feudal aspect, measuring seventy-five feet in length and twenty-five in width, was once a seigniorial residence. It was successively the Manorial house [of] the Mauvide Genest, the François-Marc and Hubert Turcotte families.<sup>167</sup>

Pouliot explains that “[b]y a happy coincidence, the manoir-Genest became recently the property of a descendant of the family.”<sup>168</sup> He conveys that this descendant “wished to perform a filial and patriotic act, by restoring its antique aspect and preserve to posterity this ancient manor, as a valuable souvenir of the French regime.”<sup>169</sup> What Pouliot does not say is that he is the unnamed descendant.

The publication reveals a great deal about Pouliot’s view that architectural preservation and restoration are crucial steps in documenting and communicating Quebec’s histories. Undoubtedly, his perspectives on these issues were formed through the influence of figures such as Capper and Hobbs. The author’s patriotism, and his commitment to sharing Quebec’s historical treasures with broader audiences, are made evident in a series of songs that follow the main text, including “O Canada!”, written by Judge Routhier, and “Notre Vieille Maison”, a French song written by Alphonse Désilets in 1927 and dedicated to Mr. Justice Camille Pouliot.<sup>170</sup> When Pouliot writes about the fire that destroyed Baie St.

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<sup>167</sup> J. Camille Pouliot, *Historical Reminder. Quebec and The Isle of Orleans* (Quebec, QU: L'Action Sociale Ltée, 1927), 192. Pouliot likely refers to the house simply as “the manoir” because the residents of the island referred to the Manoir Mauvide-Genest in that way long after the death of Jean Mauvide.

<sup>168</sup> Pouliot, *Historical Reminder*, 194.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 217-218, 223.

Paul Manor in 1926 he recalls the “disappearance of a valuable relic of the french regime (*sic*).”<sup>171</sup> Even more revealing are his later remarks about the possibility of its restoration:

It is rumored that the Government intends to rebuild this antique Seignorial Manor and preserve for posterity the many historical reminiscences connected with it. Let us hope that the plan will be carried out, and that the Madeleine de Verchères Manor, burned recently in a fire at Ste-Anne de la Pérade, will also arise from its ashes. Both will remind future generations of the admirable deeds accomplished in the first ages of the colony. A people that recalls past feats of heroism and glory, honours and ennobles itself.<sup>172</sup>

Pouliot was a judge and an amateur historian when he took on the project of restoring the Manoir Mauvide-Genest.<sup>173</sup> Although earlier owners had left the house’s main structure and external appearance largely unchanged, Pouliot oversaw major renovations during the late 1920s and added a chapel in 1929.

Some thirty-four years earlier it was Baillaigé who had insisted, regarding the old buildings of Quebec: “let us not despise them, but so improve and embellish them and adapt them to modern notions, that in the new production we shall have, if not a national, at least a local style of architecture.”<sup>174</sup> The historic house of the 1880s held little appeal if not modernized for this progressive architect:

[A]ll the comforts of hot-water heating, electric lighting, and sanitary plumbing of handsome make, with the elegancies of hardwood finish, tiling, stained glass work, etc. are generally looked for. The effect of all this is that the old house of seventy or eighty years ago is looked upon with little favour.<sup>175</sup>

Pouliot apparently had similar ideas in the 1920s. A panel titled, “Restoration of the Manor. The Work Begins,” recounts Pouliot’s purchase of the house, his vision for it and his relationship with the architect Lorenzo Auger. It tells readers that Pouliot sought more to

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>173</sup> One of the posts on the museum’s grounds mentions Pouliot and includes a photographic reproduction that depicts the manor in 1926. Photography by Marie Prevotat. Archives of the Musée de la civilisation.

<sup>174</sup> Charles Baillaigé, “Notes on Quebec Architecture,” *CAB* 6, 1 (1893), 10 in Crossman, *Architecture in Transition*, 116.

<sup>175</sup> Charles Baillaigé, in “Architecture in Canada,” *CAB* 1, 1 (1888), 3 in Crossman, *Architecture in Transition*, 115.

rehabilitate the house as a summer home than to painstakingly restore the house to its former state. The panel explains that Pouliot “wanted to equip his home with the latest conveniences, including bathrooms and electricity.”<sup>176</sup> Following the three-year restoration, Pouliot began treating the summer home as a “folk museum,” filling it with old weapons, antique furniture, tools, porcelain pieces and other curios.<sup>177</sup> Pouliot catalogued the 2000 plus objects in his collection and displayed them for his guests, happily explaining their use and mode of functioning.<sup>178</sup>

It can be argued that Pouliot’s enthusiasm for the manor and its histories, a project born out of his broader interest in the architecturally-illustrated histories of his province, was piqued by the country’s jubilee. Into the early twentieth century Canadians used grand anniversary celebrations to chart their progress. These occasions are important to any history of historical preservation in Canada because they “focus[ed] the public imagination on the significance of past events.”<sup>179</sup> In 1927, Canadians commemorated the nation’s sixtieth anniversary at a three-day “historical pageant.”<sup>180</sup> A correspondent of *The New York Times* reported on the event:

Canada’s romantic and colorful history, from the days when the first explorers found her shores to the present far-flung Dominion of modern civilization and whirring industries, passed in review this evening before most of dignitaries of her Government and some 75, 000 applauding spectators.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> “Restoration of the Manor,” museum didactic, Manoir Mauvide-Genest, October 2012. At the back of the book are a collection of half-page and full-page advertisements. One such advertisement features contact information for L. Auger, “architect.” (Pouliot, *Historical Reminder*, n.p.) Lorenzo Auger, the architect featured in Pouliot’s book, was hired to carry out the Judge’s project.

<sup>177</sup> “A Duty to Remember,” *The Legacy of J. –Camille Pouliot* exhibition didactic, Manoir Mauvide-Genest, October 2012.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Terry McDonald and Mélanie Méthot, “That Impulse that Bids a People to Honour its Past: The Nature and Purpose of Centennial Celebrations,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 12, 4 (July 2006), 308.

<sup>180</sup> “All Canada Joins in Great Jubilee: Historical Pageant Marks the Opening of Three-Day Celebration of 60th Anniversary,” *New York Times*, 2 July 1927, 22.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

Pouliot, who had been a close friend of Wilfrid Laurier's, was well-connected to Canada's political elite and likely took part in these celebrations of European settlement, the "development of the Dominion" and the Fathers of Confederation.<sup>182</sup>

The attendees not only rejoiced in colonial narratives of the past; they shared visions for Canada's future. On the occasion of this the diamond jubilee, King George sent a telegram to the Governor General which congratulated Canadians on their achievements and spoke of the "task" they had "before them...of developing the heritage which their fathers have left them."<sup>183</sup> The message being: celebrate the past and be sure to deliver it into the future. It was a call for "responsible stewardship"—for Canadians to conserve, to manage "valued resources in such a way that they [would be] passed on to succeeding generations unimpaired."<sup>184</sup> Today, Pouliot's text reveals that house museums were often products of a glorifying historical approach. He talks of the heroism of the French settlers and the bravery and gallantry of the French-Canadians who fought off attacks from American forces and "Iroquois Indians" (referred to as the "sworn enemies of the white race and the missionaries"<sup>185</sup>), and foiled attempted invasions by Admiral Phipps in 1690 and Admiral Walker in 1711.<sup>186</sup> The Manoir was saved as a testament to Quebec's past, Pouliot's family history and his sense of a patriotism tied to architectural preservation. Indeed, many historic houses were saved by individuals who aspired to see the homes of their ancestors protected for the future.

The 1920s and 1930s saw an explosion of interest in heritage and Canada's early architecture. The country witnessed the establishment of early outdoor museums, in

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Fulton, "Heritage Conservation," <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/heritage-conservation/>.

<sup>185</sup> Pouliot, *Historical Reminder*, 11.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 12.

response to Colonial Williamsburg's popularity, and a number of historic houses became sites of commemoration for significant persons and events.<sup>187</sup> Casa Loma (Toronto, ON), the former home of Sir Henry Pellatt, was transformed into a tourist attraction, Mary Prescott purchased her great grandfather's home in Port Williams and began restoring it and prolific collectors continued to view historic homes as suitable store-places for their prized pieces. The make-work projects of the Depression-era reflected a growing fascination with heritage reconstructions.<sup>188</sup> The progress of these decades is thanks to the advocacy of architects, policy-makers, history enthusiasts and community organizations of the start of the twentieth century. Their efforts ensured that the historic houses of Western Canada fared better on their paths to becoming house museums than their counterparts in other parts of the country.<sup>189</sup>

***Haliburton's House: House Museums and their Tourist Potential, ca. the 1940s***

By the early 1940s, the town of Windsor, Nova Scotia had caught on to the idea of the house museum's potential as a tourist attraction. A clipping from the *Hants Journal* newspaper (now displayed at Haliburton House Museum) explains the motives for the town's restoration of the house of Thomas Chandler Haliburton, a famous author and politician from the region:

As Minister of Highways Hon. A.S. MacMacMillan, Member for Hants, is vitally interested in the tourist traffic to Nova Scotia [sic]. To stimulate that traffic, and to preserve to Nova Scotians a memory of our own glorious past as an earnest of what can still be accomplished, Mr. MacMillan convinced his colleagues that the Haliburton home, "Clifton" should be secured as a place of historic interest [sic].<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Fulton, "Heritage Conservation," <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/heritage-conservation/>.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Construction dates of house museums in British Columbia and Alberta typically fall between the late 1890s and the first two decades of the twentieth centuries.

<sup>190</sup> "The Haliburton Memorial Museum" *Hants Journal* (Wednesday 8 January 1941), n.p.



As the text suggests, A.S. MacMillan was a key figure in the development of Haliburton House Museum. In addition to the *Hants Journal* page, he is acknowledged through a selection of images, plaques and documents at the museum.<sup>191</sup> Much as Pouliot is remembered for his role in the preservation of the Manoir Mauvide-Genest, MacMillan was chiefly responsible for saving Haliburton's house. He also mobilized the people of Windsor to donate items from Haliburton's time, which could be used to furnish the museum. At the opening ceremonies he gave an address that commented on the site's importance. The artifacts, photographs and texts that explain his involvement and vision identify the conditions and attitudes that encouraged the museumification of homes across Canada during this era.

The above quote indicates that Haliburton House Museum was the project of a civil servant interested in the status of his province. MacMillan was tasked with bringing tourists to Nova Scotia and probably stood to benefit from any initiative that cultivated greater pride in the province. He invested in heritage while in pursuit of this goal. Approximately twenty years earlier, Pouliot's motivations were rooted in his sense of family pride and his passion for Quebec's architecture. Even if MacMillan had no interest in architecture or ancestral ties to Haliburton's home, it seems both men regarded historic homes as instruments for the preservation of provincial pasts. If these case studies indicate a shift in the ways house museums were established between the 1920s and 1940s, they do so by emphasizing that Pouliot restored the Manoir with no immediate intention of turning it into a public museum. He began with the idea of restoring a house for private use and ultimately decided to fill it

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<sup>191</sup> A plaque positioned on the house's front stairs was "erected by the citizens of Windsor...in appreciation of the work of Hon. A.S. MacMillan Minister of Highways and Public Works and member for Hants County under whose personal direction the property was restored" (4 July 1940) (Museum plaque, Haliburton House Museum, October 2012). It will be argued in Chapter Four that although these artifacts, plaques and images exist in Haliburton House the main focus of the house's interpretation centres on the key interpretive figure of Judge Thomas Chandler Haliburton (1796-1865). The focus on the former owner of the house means the museum's history is sidelined in lieu of the history of the man.

with his own collections of folk art and artifacts. In contrast, MacMillan embarked on the project in an official capacity as the Minister of Highways and envisioned the historic home of a famous author as a public site.

During the Second World War, the largest historic homes—which had transitioned from private single-family dwellings to boarding houses, schools or office buildings after the Depression—were repurposed as military hospitals or barracks to serve the country’s wartime needs.<sup>192</sup> As one didactic in Lougheed House states, the home became a barracks for the Canadian Women’s Army Corps (CWAC) and “[h]utments’ were constructed in the backyard for additional space” [Figs. 1.34 & 1.35].<sup>193</sup> When the war ended, the barracks at Lougheed House were closed and it began to function as a YWCA residence for ex-servicewomen. These homes could become house museums in later years, at least in part, because they survived the difficult years of the Depression and War by being repurposed. These transitions thus constitute part of the house museums’ stories.

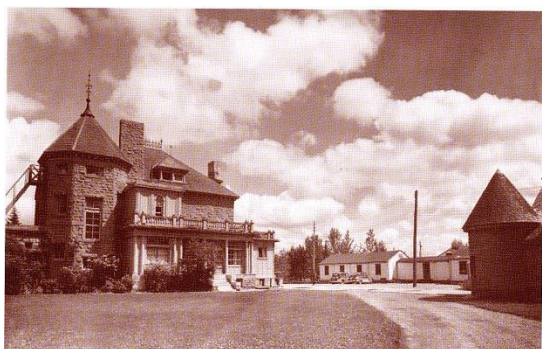


Figure 1.34: Lougheed House pictured from the West after the Lougheed Barracks had closed. At the right are the WWII military hutments in the backyard (Bobrovitz and Cowan, *Lougheed House*, 5. Image archived as 1999.5.2, Lougheed House Collection).



Figure 1.35: A reproduced photograph of a CWAC Christmas party in the drawing room at Lougheed Barracks, 1944 (Bobrovitz and Cowan, *Lougheed House*, 15. Image archived as NA-5473-1, Glenbow Archives).

<sup>192</sup> Annandale House (Tillsonburg, ON), for example, served as a boarding house for many years before VanDyke Corless’s tenure. Prescott House was redesigned as a tenement building before being recuperated by Mary Prescott. Here we encounter another similarity between country estates and the house museums of Canada. Peter Mandler indicates that giant residences like Strawberry Hill and Maxstoke Castle were given institutional uses (colleges, hotels, flats, hostels, etc.) between the 1900 and 1930, when England has lost interest in its historic homes (Mandler, *The Fall and Rise*, 246).

<sup>193</sup> “Canadian Women’s Army Corps, Lougheed Barracks and YWCA Residence 1941-1947,” museum didactic, Lougheed House, February 2013.

***“Strategic Wackiness”: Nesbitt’s Fight for Craigdarroch (1946-1967)***

Craigdarroch Castle offers another example of the fight to preserve historic homes in Canada during the middle of the twentieth century. Between 1919 and 1967 it was used as a public building, repurposed (as Lougheed House was) many times over. Initially, it was modified to serve as a 110-bed military hospital for World War I veterans. From 1921 until 1946 it housed the classrooms, offices and library of Victoria College. Like Haliburton House, Craigdarroch’s potential as a tourist attraction became evident between the 1930s and 1940s. Terry Reksten reports that “[a]s early as the 1930’s [bus] drivers had begun to detour from the leafy gardens and wooden mansions of Rockland Avenue to climb the hill to the castle’s sandstone magnificence.”<sup>194</sup> She also notes that, at this time, the information given to tourists was by no means standardized or completely accurate.<sup>195</sup> By 1945 the College had outgrown the Castle because its enrolment spiked following the Second World War. When the College relocated, The Victoria School Board moved their offices into the Castle. It remained the school board headquarters from 1946 until 1967 [Fig. 1.36].<sup>196</sup> This change of ownership in no way diminished draw that the building had amongst visitors to Victoria.

Again Reksten explains the situation:

[V]isitors found their way to the castle with no help at all from the school board. The building was not officially open to the public, but even though there were no brochures and no sign posts pointing the way, tourists were drawn to Craigdarroch, their curiosity piqued by the sight of what appeared to be a mysterious fairy tale castle standing high on a hill above the city.<sup>197</sup>

It was at this time that the city began to understand the site’s value. By 1956, articles in the *Colonist* and *Victoria Times* proposed that the Castle be managed as a tourist

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<sup>194</sup> Terry Reksten, *Craigdarroch. The Story of Dunsmuir Castle* (Victoria, BC: Orca Book Publishers, 1987), 94.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

attraction.<sup>198</sup> These directives were likely sparked by awareness, in the provincial capital, of British Columbia's upcoming centennial (1958).<sup>199</sup>

Here we meet the figure who is Pouliot and MacMillan's equivalent, a "hero of historical preservation" that reached mythic proportions in his struggle to secure Craigdarroch's legacy: James Knight Nesbitt.<sup>200</sup> Nesbitt came from a family of pioneers. He worked as a columnist for the *British Colonist* and published widely-read articles on the old families of Victoria. He wrote a number of texts on the historic sites of British Columbia and the history of Victoria (Flynn Bros., 1987), compiled an "Album of Victoria Old Homes and Families" (Hebden Print, 1956) and published a text on Victoria's centennial celebrations (1962). Nesbitt's grandfather, Samuel Nesbitt, had built a "castle" beside Craigdarroch in 1873. The home, "Erin Hall" was commonly referred to as "Cracker Castle."<sup>201</sup> Interested in the fate of the Dunsmuir's Castle, James Nesbitt formed The Society for the Preservation & Maintenance of Craigdarroch Castle (The Castle Society) in 1959. The Society had the distinct aim of seeing the building restored and transformed into a museum. Reksten gives us a sense of Nesbitt's larger-than-life character by stating that "[i]t was fortunate that during those years of indecision, a *castle champion*, impatient with civic dithering, stepped forward. James Knight Nesbitt would save the day."<sup>202</sup>

When Reksten refers to the "years of indecision" she recalls the fact that from the time the city established the Castle's potential as a tourist site until the early eighties there was a great deal of uncertainty about the house's future. By 1968 the School Board had also gone in search of larger facilities. In the following year, the City of Victoria decided to co-

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Reksten suggests that it was not until the middle of the fifties that "Victorians began to puzzle over how best to spend the money flowing their way" for the celebrations (Reksten, *Craigdarroch*, 94).

<sup>200</sup> This term is Nelle Oosterom's (Nelle Oosterom, "Heroes of historical preservation," *Canada's History* 91, 3 (June/July 2011), n.p.).

<sup>201</sup> Reksten, *Craigdarroch*, 95.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

lease the Castle to the Victoria Conservatory of Music and The Castle Society.<sup>203</sup> Between 1968 and 1979, then, Craigdarroch Castle was used as both a music school and a public museum [Fig. 1.37].<sup>204</sup> It was only when the music school left the Castle, to escape the interruptions caused by the Society's public tours, that The Castle Society (renamed The Craigdarroch Castle Historical Museum Society in 1981) became the sole occupant of the house.



Figure 1.36: Greater Victoria School District administrative employees outside Craigdarroch, 1967 (Image courtesy of Bruce Davies. Reproduced from “The Second Bedroom. A Snapshot in Time,” museum didactic, Craigdarroch Castle).



Figure 1.37: James Hunter (*left*), a Conservatory cello instructor, outside Craigdarroch when it was still being used as The Victoria Conservatory of Music (Reksten, *Craigdarroch*, 101).

As in the 1940s, when Haliburton House's opening was featured in the *Hants Journal*, Craigdarroch's history indicates that historic homes of Canada continued to be reported on in the popular press during the fifties. Early in the decade, national newspapers informed their Canadian and American readers that Mackenzie King's homes in Woodside, Ontario and Kingsmere Park were both being made into national historic sites.<sup>205</sup> These projects, undertaken on Canadian soil, were likened to those at “Hyde Park, where the estate and

<sup>203</sup> “A Short History of Craigdarroch Castle,” *Craigdarroch Castle* website, <http://thecastle.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Introduction-to-The-Castle.pdf> (accessed 21 September 2013).

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*; “Conservation and Restoration,” *Craigdarroch Castle* website, <http://thecastle.ca/about-the-castle/restoration/> (accessed 21 September 2013).

<sup>205</sup> Charles J. Lazarus, “Canadian Shrines: Two Estates of Late Mackenzie King To Be Preserved as Historic Sites,” *New York Times*, 25 November 1951, 159.

memorabilia of the late Franklin D. Roosevelt [we]re open to the public” and to the “rebuilding of the White House in Washington.”<sup>206</sup> It would not have been surprising to see the future of Craigdarroch debated through Victoria’s news outlets in 1956 and 1957.

The example of Craigdarroch also highlights the role that centennials played in motivating the restoration and museumification of historic houses across Canada. The Castle Society may have been formed in response to enthusiasm that erupted during the 1958 provincial celebrations, but its campaign for Craigdarroch’s transformation into a house museum was likely buttressed by the coming national centennial. Even during the fifties preparations for the country’s 1967 birthday celebration influenced the heritage landscape.

#### ***Anniversary Celebrations: Cake, Parades and Historic Houses***

There is no question that the historical enterprise and preservation movement in Canada were further fuelled in anticipation of the 1967 centennial. Funds for the development and improvement of heritage sites, national museums and community cultural projects were more widely available during the years leading up to the anniversary celebrations.<sup>207</sup> Public enthusiasm, matched by government expenditures, resulted in an estimate of “568 recreational centres, 538 parks, 442 community halls, 188 municipal buildings, 144 libraries, museum and art galleries, as well as seventy theatres.”<sup>208</sup> To these, J.M. Bumsted adds “one UFO landing pad, and one statue of a leprechaun riding a turtle.”<sup>209</sup> Figures such as John Fisher, and other members of the Centennial Commission, trekked

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> J.M. Bumsted, “The Birthday Party,” *Beaver* 76, 2 (April/May 1996), America: History & Life, EBSCOhost, n.p. Accessed 20 May 2014.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid. According to Bumsted’s sources, the cost of the celebrations was calculated at fifty-six million dollars by the end of March in 1967 (Ibid.).

across the country promoting the occasion.<sup>210</sup> National pride mounted as the centennial year approached and appreciation for the country's past was cultivated.

Architectural historians and preservationists found themselves speaking to newly-sympathetic audiences. In *The Ancestral Roof* (1963), Macrae and Adamson wrote that houses of architectural merit were being pulled down, burned and altered. They warned that Canada's "architectural heritage [wa]s vanishing and not slowly."<sup>211</sup> However concerned they were about the structures of the past, and however inclined they might have been to exaggerate the situation to foster support for their cause, they observed with optimism that small municipalities and historical societies were working to save and maintain local buildings across the country at this time.<sup>212</sup> Gordon Fulton of Parks Canada has indicated that "[g]rass-roots community activism has powered much of the heritage conservation movements" in Canada.<sup>213</sup> House Museums like the Admiral Digby Museum, the Randall House Museum (Wolfville, NS), Ross House Museum (Winnipeg, MB) and Lougheed House, to mention only a few, were formed by historical societies.

These developments suggest that the deteriorating and forsaken historic buildings of eras past became cause for alarm as the anniversary approached. During the sixties, communities became more protective of their traditional buildings and historic districts.<sup>214</sup> Heaven forbid that all the country's architectural treasures would disappear before the

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<sup>210</sup> Bumsted, "The Birthday Party," n.p.

<sup>211</sup> Macrae and Adamson, *The Ancestral Roof*, "The first word," n.p.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Fulton, "Heritage Conservation," <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/heritage-conservation>. Throughout the 1970s it produced such organizations as the Lunenburg, NS, Heritage Society (1972), H ritage Montr al (1975) and the Society for the Protection of Architectural Resources in Edmonton (1979). Fulton also served and the project manager for the Working Group on Conservation Standards and Guidelines and was therefore instrumental in formulating the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada* (2003), a document which laid out how heritage properties and national historic sites were to be treated and cared for by Parks Canada (Ibid.).

<sup>214</sup> Wonders writes in 1979: "In recent years there has been a resurgence of interest in log structures in Canada. Partly this is due to the rediscovery of Canadian history which was associated especially with the Confederation Centennial Year, 1967" (Wonders, "Log Dwellings," 188).

centennial arrived. Writing the history of Roedde House Museum (Vancouver, BC), Janet Bingham recounts that it was during this time that “Vancouver citizens were beginning to demonstrate their pride in the City’s past by taking part in a severe uphill battle over the preservation of Gastown, their oldest and most historic area, with buildings going back to 1886 or earlier.”<sup>215</sup> The preservation and commemoration of the past was no longer an individual pursuit or a marginal interest. It became a popular enterprise.

Centennial celebrations began on the evening of 31 December 1966 under the Prime Ministership of Lester B. Pearson. The anniversary recalled a time of anglophone and francophone discord, hesitant confederation and tense relations with outlying provinces—a period when the confederacy’s affiliations with the United States and Britain were as uncertain as the future of its citizens.<sup>216</sup> Canadians celebrated these beginnings and the survival of their nation. According to Bumsted they looked back and realized:

[t]he nation had weathered a century of continued political and constitutional crises, a series of debilitating economic depressions, two bloody international wars, and a series of profound sociocultural and technological changes...it ha[d] prospered and developed into a rich and stable industrial nation.<sup>217</sup>

These sentiments and events inculcated Canadians with a love of country and an enthusiasm for culture, which lingered years after.

Many house museums were established, or received funds to update or re-interpret themselves, during the time of the centennial.<sup>218</sup> For example, the first floor of Churchill House—formerly known as The Cedars in the town of Hantsport, Nova Scotia—was restored in 1966, and a modern addition was added to Mackenzie House in 1967. These were both undertaken as Canadian centennial projects. Point Ellice

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<sup>215</sup> Janet Bingham, *More Than a House – The Story of Roedde House and Barclay Heritage Square*, foreword by Pierre Berton (Vancouver, BC: Roedde House Preservation Society, 1996), 1.

<sup>216</sup> Bumsted, “The Birthday Party,” n.p.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> It is also interesting to discover that many of the historic homes in this country were originally built approximately one hundred years before they were inaugurated as house museums.



House was opened to the public in 1967, McCrae House became a museum in 1968 and the O'Dell House Museum welcomed its first visitors in 1969.

Terry McDonald and Mélanie Méthot provide a sense of why these houses received such attention and support throughout this period. Having explored the motivations behind centennial celebrations, they note that the “New World”:

found both an ideological reason for indulging in them and a practical reason for supporting them. In a continent where the great majority of people were recent arrivals and lacked the historical certainties of their European forebearers, centennials took on a new significance and magnitude in that they did indeed remind citizens of the achievements and triumphs of the recent past, particularly in nation building.<sup>219</sup>

If centennials in North America were meant to foster patriotism and national unity, house museums became ensnared in those ambitions.<sup>220</sup> Like the Canadian flag introduced in 1965, and the anthem approved by Parliament in 1967, these house museums became new (or refurbished) symbols of Canada’s splendour. The first half of the twentieth century had slowly laid the groundwork for house museums to adopt this symbolic role. The 1920s had introduced the idea that architecture could fortify national identities, and through the 1950s it was claimed that buildings could inspire national pride even if they could not claim to be the birthplace or former residence of an important historical figure.<sup>221</sup> In the 1960s, at a time of mass immigration to Canada and “restiveness in Québec,” Canada’s house museums were founded and recognized as expressions of patriotism. They glorified the country’s “founders,” forward-thinking industrialists and tenacious settlers and marked sites where ground-breaking technologies were tested, important treaties were signed and

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<sup>219</sup> McDonald and Méthot, “That Impulse that Bids,” 317.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 315.

<sup>221</sup> Fulton explains, the “Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences (1951) advocated broadening the scope of heritage to include architecture itself. Until that time, buildings and sites were generally not thought to have heritage value unless associated with great historical figures or events; architectural values were infrequently acknowledged” (Fulton, “Heritage Conservation,” <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/heritage-conservation/>). This recommendation led to the “Historic Sites and Monuments Act” (1953) (*Ibid.*).

neighbourhoods were developed.<sup>222</sup> Narrating the lives of such individuals and recounting the impact of notable events, they were called upon to sow the seeds of national pride amongst the discontented and newly-recognized citizens of Canada.<sup>223</sup>

It should not be forgotten that house museums were also used to carve out provincial identities. This is all too evident in the examples discussed above: the Manor in Quebec, Haliburton House Museum in Nova Scotia and Craigdarroch in British Columbia. Taking tours of the painted houses on the East Coast and the museumified California bungalows in the West, visitors are reminded that at the same time as national unity was being preached, Canada's provinces were busy remembering their own pasts and celebrating what made them distinctive. Given the size of Canada and the pronounced cultural differences from province to province (and between global cities and small towns) it is not surprising that smaller-scale anniversaries inspired the recuperation of histories and heritage sites that reflected the ideals and identities of these geographic regions. Lougheed House was "dedicated to the people of Alberta" in 2005 when the province celebrated its "100<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a proud member of Canadian Confederation."<sup>224</sup> Whether on a national, provincial or municipal level, house museums grew out of a climate defined by citizenship, celebration and cake.

### ***Main Street Canada Programme***

The decade following the centennial saw Canada committed to international efforts to conserve natural heritage and protect cultural properties. It signed the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (the World Heritage

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<sup>222</sup> Bumsted, "The Birthday Party," n.p.

<sup>223</sup> McDonald and Méthot, "The Impulse that Bids," 316-317.

<sup>224</sup> A significant portion of the restoration of the house was funded through the Alberta 2005 Centennial Legacies Grant Program (Bobrovitz and Cowan, *Lougheed House*, 18). The house, which now sits in Calgary's inner city in an area known as "The Beltline," used to be a focal point of the "bald prairie southwest of the small frontier town" (Ibid., 27). It is a site used to articulate stories that define the province's early years (Ibid., 4).

Convention) in 1976. As a State Party of the Convention, Canada “pledge[d] to care for World Heritage Sites in [its] territory and to avoid deliberate measures that could damage World Heritage Sites in other countries.”<sup>225</sup> On the home front, Heritage Canada had been established in 1973. The small scale surveys of historic structures, undertaken in the sixties, had revealed the need for a more systematic record of the nation’s surviving buildings, giving rise to the Canadian Inventory of Historic Buildings (CIHB). Teams, formed by the CIHB, photographed and recorded information about Eastern Canada’s pre-1880 buildings and the West Coast’s pre-1914 structures. The images and research pertaining to 169 000 buildings were digitized between 1970 and 1976 “making the *Inventory* an incomparable source of information on Canada’s built environment for conservationalists, restoration architects, planners and historians of Canadian architecture and building technology.”<sup>226</sup> Arguably, one of the most important initiatives for the rehabilitation of the nation’s historic structures, to come out of the seventies, was the Main Street Canada programme.

The Main Street programme began in 1979 and was intended to help communities preserve their heritage and revitalize their downtown centres.<sup>227</sup> According to Pierre Berton, the programme was about “the glory of the past”; it advocated the maintenance of “structures that our fathers and their fathers erected” as “symbol[s] of stability” and “visual reminder[s] of another time.”<sup>228</sup> Main Street sprung from the belief that historic architectures and designs kept people in touch with their roots (and communities close to their pasts).<sup>229</sup> It was bolstered by a strong sense, among governments and investors, that historic resources

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<sup>225</sup> Parks Canada, “The UNESCO World Heritage Convention,” *Parks Canada*, last modified 1 August 2012, <http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/progs/spm-whs/page02.aspx> (accessed 06 March 2014).

<sup>226</sup> “Canadian Inventory of Historic Buildings,” Communications, *Archivaria* 8 (Summer 1979), 157.

<sup>227</sup> Heritage Canada Foundation (HCF) for Saskatchewan Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport, “The Main Street Program: Past and Present,” (March 2009), <http://www.pcs.gov.sk.ca/MSPProgramHCF> (accessed 11 March 2013), iii.

<sup>228</sup> Pierre Berton, “Reviving Main Street,” in HCF, “The Main Street Program,” iii.

<sup>229</sup> Richard V. Francaviglia, *Main Street Revisited: Time, Space, and Image Building in Small-town America* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 1996), 179.

could be harnessed to facilitate economic growth: generate jobs, attract investment, draw tourists and retain residents.<sup>230</sup> Fulton recalls that it was at this time that “segments of corporate Canada began to recognize that there could be social, civic and indeed financial value in heritage conservation.”<sup>231</sup> Increasingly, businesses sought to repurpose heritage buildings as office spaces and reception centres.

Some of the earliest Main Street projects were undertaken in the early 1980s in Bridgetown and Windsor in the province of Nova Scotia, Cambridge and Perth in Ontario, Moose Jaw in Saskatchewan, Fort McLeod in Alberta and in Nelson, British Columbia.<sup>232</sup> In 1985, the Department of Industry, Science and Technology (the Department of Regional Industrial Expansion or DRIE at that time) provided five million dollars in support of the programme.<sup>233</sup> Over seventy communities across the country saw their revitalization projects financially backed.<sup>234</sup> Communities such as Lacombe, Alberta; Brockville, Ontario and Victoria, British Columbia, all of which boast a house museum or two, were added to the tally of communities supported through this initiative.<sup>235</sup> Towns and cities that benefitted from the programme “boast a greater degree of built heritage integrity and authenticity” today because the movement made them aware of their historic resources.<sup>236</sup>

The overview provided here offers only a limited sense of the factors that influenced the development of Canada’s house museums. Yet, the histories that it tracks—the preservationist leanings, personal aspirations and celebratory moods that it cites—are

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<sup>230</sup> HCF, “The Main Street Program,” 3.

<sup>231</sup> Fulton, “Heritage Conservation,” <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/heritage-conservation>.

<sup>232</sup> HCF, “The Main Street Program,” 4.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-6.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, n.p. It seems that although the Main Street program supported communities in their attempts to preserve houses of the past, its legacy no longer protects house museums. It may still mean that condo hunters are willing to pay inflated prices for factory lofts or that legal firms will opt to set up their downtown offices in rehabilitated historic buildings, but house museums are seldom now considered engines of economic development. They are more frequently thought of as old cabooses that require more coal to haul than they are worth.

reflected in the stories and spirit of today's house museums. We continue to support house museums within the contexts of historic downtowns and visit such sites on civic anniversaries, eating cake on their lawns as we feed our appetites for nostalgic reminiscences. As the stories above suggest, tracking the founding narratives of house museums means piecing together the histories of the preservation and heritage movements, and that of the discipline of architecture in Canada. Many aspects of these histories have yet to be fully studied and it is significant that house museums often possess the missing historical pieces. The chapters that follow further speak to the defining characteristics of the house museum, its histories. Attending to the topics of representation, preservation and interpretation, they bring the discussion, initiated here, into the twenty-first century.

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**CHAPTER TWO**  
**HERE A HOME, THERE A HOME...**  
**House Museums and the Network of Home Representations**

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**II.I. The House Museum as Representation**

In the first few years of this millennium, the Royal College of Art, the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Bedford Centre for the History of Women formed The Centre for the Study of the Domestic Interior, with the intention of generating discussion and research around representations of home interiors.<sup>237</sup> A publication that arose from the Centre's work, *Imagined Interiors: Representing the Domestic Interior since the Renaissance* (2006), surveyed representations dating from the fifteenth century until 2006. By looking across mediums and disciplines, initiatives like *Imagined Interiors* attempt to delineate the changing place of house and home as artistic subjects. Its editors and contributors scrutinized paintings, drawings and photographs of the domestic interior, and looked at the home as it appears on television, in film and on the pages of personal diaries. The introduction to the volume indicates, "[t] here has long been a fascination with the domestic arrangements and artefacts of the past."<sup>238</sup> As much as this "fascination" has given rise to a range of home images and "texts," it has also been responsible for the establishment and the continued existence of house museums. Even though house museums are inherently part of a network of home representations, studies like *Imagined Interiors* often neglect to address them.

Despite this oversight, *Imagined Interiors* begins with some essential points about the study of representations of home. First, it declares as a basic premise of many of its investigations that "conventions of representation can tell us about attitudes to the interior at

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<sup>237</sup> Jeremy Aynsley and Charlotte Grant, "Introduction," in *Imagined Interiors: Representing the Domestic Interior since the Renaissance*, ed. Jeremy Aynsley and Charlotte Grant, with assistance from Harriet McKay (London: V & A Pub.; New York: Distributed in North America by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2006), 10.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*

a given moment.”<sup>239</sup> I would suggest that although this methodological stance can underlie any project that investigates house museums, it should also be insisted that past attitudes and visions of home influence representations made during successive eras. Second, the authors of *Imagined Interiors* acknowledge that because representations reflect both realities and ideals they cannot be “read unproblematically as accurate records.”<sup>240</sup> This raises questions about what can actually be learnt about historic dwellings and their inhabitants’ lives from paintings, sketches and photographs. While the first statement asserts the value of examining representations, the second cautions those undertaking such projects to be aware of the ways representations simplify, idealize and otherwise skew understandings of the past. These axioms, applied to research on the domestic interior, echo those expressed in writings about the representation of history.

In an article entitled “Historiography and Historiophoty” (1988), Hayden White contrasts two different types of historical representation. He emphasizes that visual media (i.e. photographic and filmic) and written documents must be “read” differently, because they represent historical phenomena in different ways. Although he argues that visual imagery and written histories can be used to complement one another, resulting in more accurate accounts of the past, White’s juxtaposition of the two is meant to demonstrate that historical novels and texts can be as tainted by fiction as historical films. In no uncertain terms, he states, “[n]o history, visual or verbal, ‘mirrors’ all or even the greater part of the events or scenes of which it purports to be an account” and “[e]very written history is a product of processes of condensation, displacement, symbolization, and qualification.”<sup>241</sup> It

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>241</sup> Hayden White, “AHR Forum: Historiography and Historiophoty,” *Screening the Past*, <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/screeningthepast/reruns/rr0499/hwrr6c.htm> (accessed 22 February 2011).

is not always apparent that the processes mentioned by White have taken place or are underway. Understanding their effects requires critical study.<sup>242</sup>

Studies like White's carry weight amongst those specifically interested in period rooms and house museums, which are now understood as representations of both imagined spaces and real homes of the past. Trevor Keeble and the contributing authors of *The Modern Period Room: The Construction of the Exhibited Interior, 1870-1950* (2006) deliberately call attention to the issue of representation. Keeble discusses period rooms as "representational device[s]," noting that when set side by side, in serial arrangements, they showcase stylistic movements, illustrate the growth of domestic interiors and communicate the passage of time.<sup>243</sup> Paul Overy similarly emphasizes this point in his chapter, "The Restoration of Modern Life. Interwar Houses on Show in the Netherlands," when he writes:

I want to keep the idea of representation in the foreground throughout this chapter, to emphasise the fact that exhibited interiors, or period rooms, are representations of interiors that existed in the past. They are not those rooms or houses themselves, however much they may resemble them, or the photographs by which they are so often known.<sup>244</sup>

Importantly, Overy draws a connection between the exhibited interior and surviving photographs, noting that *both* are intimately related to the former home that is their referent.

Stephan Bann remarks specifically on this issue of representation, in relation to house museums, in DEMHIST's conference proceedings from 2000:

In contrast to museums in general, and indeed houses in general, the house museum exists as a representation: that is to say, the objects and the milieu

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<sup>242</sup> A parallel set of assertions can be found in the realm of heritage and tourism studies. For example, David Brett insists that it is important we discuss heritage sites as "historicized self-presentations," caught between "analyzed data and imagined representations" (David Brett, *The Construction of Heritage* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), 2, 4). He advocates this approach because it acknowledges their "mediat[ed] and ideological character" (Ibid., 4).

<sup>243</sup> Trevor Keeble, "Introduction," in *The Modern Period Room: The Construction of the Exhibited Interior, 1870-1950*, ed. Trevor Keeble, Brenda Martin and Penny Sparke (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), 1.

<sup>244</sup> Paul Overy, "The Restoration of Modern Life. Interwar Houses on Show in the Netherlands," in *The Modern Period Room: The Construction of the Exhibited Interior, 1870-1950*, ed. Trevor Keeble, Brenda Martin and Penny Sparke (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), 74.



together form a scenography which is unified and coherent, and derives from the conscious intentions of the author.<sup>245</sup>

The representational nature of the house museum is stressed here, to counteract a long history of criticisms regarding the inaccuracy and illusionistic deception of period-room-style displays. As one author accuses: “Fiction is portrayed as reality in these ‘theatres of memory’ that are house museums.”<sup>246</sup> More nuanced analyses inevitably point out that house museums are part memory and part imagination, both reality and its representation.<sup>247</sup> Nevertheless, ethically, disclaimers and admissions like those formulated by Overy and Bann are now considered part of responsible restoration and interpretation. Like house museum professionals, these scholars are keenly aware that audiences are susceptible to believe in the “factualness” of the period room. The museum’s authority combined with the perception that period rooms are devoid of curatorial manipulation mean that visitors may often confuse the “real” and the re-presented.<sup>248</sup>

This prolonged proem emphasizes that house museums *are* representations of home. Consulting discourses from the disciplines of art, history and heritage studies—which address historical re-presentation, the ethics of display and typologies of exhibited interiors—helps us understand the challenges and rewards involved in studying them as such. Secondly, as the case of *Imagined Interiors* reveals, house museums are often overlooked in studies that survey representations of home and thus are not positioned within a network of home imagings, which includes paintings, engravings, photographs and installations of home (i.e. kindred domestic displays in the store windows of nineteenth-century emporia and at

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<sup>245</sup> Stephan Bann, “A Way of Life: Thoughts on the Identity of the House Museum,” in *Historic House Museums Speak to the Public: Spectacular Exhibits vs. a Philological Interpretation of History: Acts of the International Conference of DEMHIST ICOM’s International Committee for Historic Houses Genova, 1-4 November 2000*, ed. Rosanna Pavoni (Milan: Museo Bagatti Valsecchi and DEMHIST, 2001), 20.

<sup>246</sup> Monica Risnicoff de Gorgas, “Reality as illusion, the historic houses that become museums,” *Museum International* 53, 2 (April/June 2001), 14.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>248</sup> Keeble, “Introduction,” 1.

world expositions). This is an unfortunate situation given that house museums contain an extraordinary amount of information on the representations of home that they collect and display. Overy provides a way forward by reminding us that historic residences, the house museum as a representation and (documentary, artistic or commercial) images of homes are intimately and inextricably connected. Mapping these relationships encourages more complex understandings of the way the past informs the present, life influences art and museological domestic spaces relate to images of home.

## **II.II. Everywhere a Home: Congregated Visions of Residential Architectures and Domestic Interiors**

Taking stock of the many images of home that can be found within house museums affirms the genre's embeddedness in the broader network of home representations. A visit to any number of house museums in Canada reveals that they are not only representations in themselves; they are sites where images of home abound [Fig. 2.1]. The very acts of interpretation and restoration at these sites are dependent upon a range of domestic images. Their collections and exhibits comprise homes represented in a variety of mediums. This chapter shows that house museums are *constructed, saved, explained, validated, funded and marketed* through representations of home. Through a series of case studies it reveals that investigations of these images and objects uncover histories pertaining to homemaking practices in Canada, such as the unmaking of Home during the Depression era and the centrality of domestic dwellings in Canadian art and craft.

If photographs, models, floor plans, blueprints, paintings, prints and drawings depicting domestic interiors and residential architectures proliferate inside Canada's house museums, as well as on their grounds, in their archives, at their gift shops and on their promotional materials, the locations of these images and objects signpost their intended

purposes. The following sections of this chapter, therefore, will attend to these home representations in groupings based on their placement and their medium.



Figure 2.1: Logos from Mackin House Museum, Spadina Museum, Roedde House Museum, Scott Manor House, Craigdarroch Castle, Château Ramezay, Luxton House, Shand House Museum and Luxton House [top left to bottom right]. These stylized depictions of the houses' exteriors suggest that their facades are striking and memorable, making them well-suited to the goal of branding the house museum. Outside the museums, spotting their garden paths, adorning gift shop bags and official letterhead, these miniature images multiply and are disseminated, and in many cases constitute the first encountered image of their respective house museums (Compiled by author from respective house museum websites and printed promotions).

### II.III. Representing Time, Documenting Change and Picturing the Lived-In Home: Photographs in House Museums

Photographs are tasked with important roles in house museums, especially when it comes to visualizing the history of a house. Generally located near the elements that they capture, photos of the houses' facades, gardens and lawns are found outside, while images of the interiors are displayed inside.<sup>249</sup> A visitor approaching Bellevue House (Kingston, ON), the Moore Residence (Banff, AB) or Emily Carr House (Victoria, BC) will encounter historical photographs of these dwellings before they enter the respective museums. Descriptive signs usually welcome visitors, and introduce them to key points about a site's historical significance or past inhabitants. Black-and-white images on these signs are typically dated to provide evidence of the building's longevity. A reproduction photograph of Bellevue's grounds circa 1890 is positioned along the shaded path leading to Bellevue House

<sup>249</sup> However, exceptions are made when signs are intended to provide potential museum-goers with glimpses of what lies inside.

as “evidence for the location of the orchard” [Fig. 2.2]. Secured at the corners, the image is designed to look as though it had been taped into an album rather than reproduced on a sign. Initially taken from a similar standpoint, the picture prepares the visitor for their first glance of the villa. It ties the contemporary experience of the house with a historical experience. Similarly, an image of the Moore Residence, clambered by greenery and dated to 1942, acts as a point of comparison for the modest structure behind it [Fig. 2.3]. These images *present* the past and add a past to the extant structures.



Figure 2.2: A historic image of Bellevue House reproduced on the path through the orchard (Photo by author, 29 September 2012. Inset image archived as NAC C-10746/ANC C-10746).

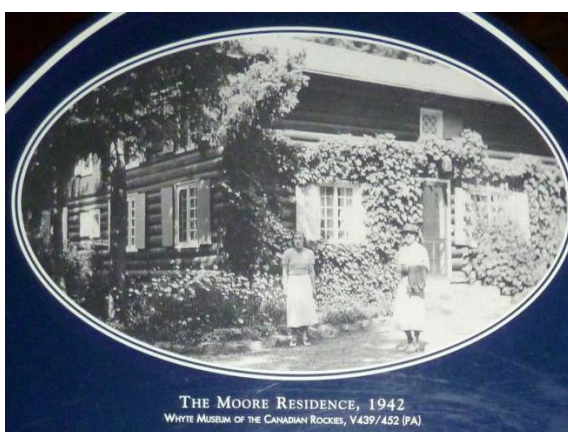


Figure 2.3: A picture of Moore Residence dated to 1942. This picture is positioned directly in front of the House (Photo by author, 20 February 2013. Inset image archived as V439/452 (PA), Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies).

### ***Stopping the Clock: Photographs of Home and the Period Room Display***

Like photographs, house museums are in the business of stopping the clock. When a historic home is transformed into a house museum a restoration period, sometimes called an interpretive period or period of focus, is commonly identified. Administrators ask: What specific time will the house represent as a museum—the mid-1800s, the early twentieth century or a more specific date such as 1887? When does one stop the clock? Or, if a house has stood for over one hundred years, how far back do you reverse the clock? Once these questions have been answered, and a feasible period has been determined, the house is ostensibly “set back.” Displays of the permanent collections, architectural features and

decorative finishes are (re)made to reflect the selected time frame. Layers of wallpaper are stripped down, windows are covered up, additions are deconstructed, paint is reapplied and furniture is re-arranged until the house appears as it might have at a given moment. This date ultimately dictates which aspects of the house are maintained and restored and which are deemed anachronistic, covered over, put into storage or expunged from the house. It also necessitates the minimization of intrusive “modern anomalies” such as fire detectors and extinguishers, stanchions, sprinklers and environmental monitors.<sup>250</sup> The effect of these temporal adjustments is the presentation of the historic house as though it remains exactly as it had been left by its previous occupants—as *a plausible picture of the past*.<sup>251</sup>

Prescriptions that see historic domestic interiors stripped of the “vicissitudes” of modernization can be traced back to early house museum curators. In her analysis of house museums and domestic life displays in Scotland, Annette Carruthers states that although many of the first houses to be opened to the public were shown as they had been left:

curators and advisers trained in the history of architecture and decoration inevitably began to highlight areas of interest to themselves. The next step was the rearrangement of rooms to try to give the public a clearer picture of the style and decoration of the past by removing the overlay of later periods.<sup>252</sup>

Jeremy Aynsley lays out a similar argument in his study of period rooms, stating that “[t]he priorities of decorative arts and design scholarship in art museums” separate domestic interiors from their “use” and “afterlife.”<sup>253</sup> These scholars echo one another in asserting that restored and exhibited interiors were thought to better reflect histories of style precisely

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<sup>250</sup> Colin MacGregor Stevens, “Chapter 12 – The Time Period Portrayed – 1887,” *New Westminster Museum and Archives Reference Manual for Irving House Guides* (October 2011), 105. New Westminster Museum and Archives, Document CNW 58490, File 01.0105.02.

<sup>251</sup> An imperative (and unfortunate result) of this approach is the erasure of accretions that followed and histories that otherwise would have echoed through the old structures.

<sup>252</sup> Annette Carruthers, “House Museums and Domestic Life Displays in Scotland,” *Scottish Economic and Social History* 23, 2 (2003), 90.

<sup>253</sup> Jeremy Aynsley, “The Modern Period Room – A Contradiction in Terms?” in *The Modern Period Room. The Construction of the Exhibited Interior, 1870 to 1950*, ed. Trevor Keeble, Brenda Martin and Penny Sparke (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), 18.

because they showed no depth of time. These were not interiors designed to feel like social spaces or lived in homes. They were concentrated and intentionally-educational depictions of design philosophies or movements, abstract concepts or architectural ideas.<sup>254</sup> Today, clearly-stated periods of interpretation continue to attract those who are concerned about accuracy or who feel a carefully-chosen temporal bracket produces a more focused story.<sup>255</sup>

The following four sections explain the diverse ways that historical photographs of the home are deployed in house museums. We begin by focusing on the basic relationship between the photographically-captured historic home and the house-museum period room. When a home has been restored to a single period—one that has been recorded previously though photographic images—photos are used to inspire respect for the restorative efforts or the room’s historical likeness. Situated on the walls of the rooms they depict, or on stands at stanchions that divide the visitor and the restored domestic space, these photos reinforce the validity and historical accuracy of what has been restored (“What a convincing restoration!”) or they confirm the authenticity of what has remained (“Look at how much has survived!”). Therefore, historic photographs that correspond to period-room displays produce a sense of continuity (duration) and/or a perceived stoppage of time (simultaneity).<sup>256</sup>

Considering the relationship between the photographed historic interior and the house museum’s room displays highlights similarities between the photographic medium and historic preservation. Photography stops time “through the operation of the shutter

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<sup>254</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>255</sup> Chapter Twelve of Irving House’s 2011 revised Reference Manual centres on the date portrayed in the museum. It begins with the statement: “If we claim a certain time period then NOTHING should be newer than that period...A visitor should be able to TRUST that what they see is authentic” (Stevens, “Chapter 12,” 104).

<sup>256</sup> Henri Bergson, “Duration and Simultaneity: Concerning the Nature of Time,” in *Key Writings*, ed. Keith Ansell Pearson and John Mullarkey (London, UK; New York, NY: Continuum, 2002), 211. Ultimately, the experience of simultaneity or duration may depend on whether the visitor feels transported back in time or as if they are viewing the past from a moment in the present.

mechanism and the chemistry of the darkroom.”<sup>257</sup> The house museum accomplishes the same through historical preservation or extensive restoration and staging. At the time of their making, the historic photographs displayed at house museums froze the movement, vibrancy and transience of a private home. In the house museum, the routines of daily life are often brought to a halt as pantries remain stocked, fireplaces are left cold and laundry ceases to be washed and folded. Photography is a medium that Dick Hebdige suggests is “bound up with death and resurrection,” and Raphael Samuel circumscribes country houses and house museums within what he refers to as “resurrectionism”—the manic preservation and “recovery of the national past.”<sup>258</sup> Both the house museum, and its contained photographs of home, purport (and resolve) to be windows onto a real domestic past. They are physical or pictorial spaces through which we encounter the home environments of earlier ages. And, whether or not it is admitted, they both quote “an irrecoverable text.”<sup>259</sup>

Staging the house museum tableau and photographically capturing a fleeting moment of domestic life are both forms of picture making. Static room displays mimic the instantaneous moments captured in photographs and transform lively living spaces into coherent images of the domestic interior.<sup>260</sup> At Heritage House Museum (Smiths Falls, ON) an imagined baker is always in the midst of making apple pies [Fig. 2.4]. Ready for the oven, a pie rests beside a rolling pin, a flour-dusted tin and ingredients such as apples and eggs. A recipe book is propped open beside a bowl containing an already mixed batter. This scene, or what Joanna Lowry terms a “posed moment,” activates the rest of the items in the kitchen

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<sup>257</sup> Joanna Lowry, “Modern Time: Revisiting the Tableau,” in *Time and Photography*, ed. Jan Baetens, Alexander Streitberger and Hilde Van Gelder (Leuven, BE: Leuven University Press, 2010), 47.

<sup>258</sup> Dick Hebdige, “A Report on the Western Front: Postmodernism and the ‘Politics’ of Style,” in *Cultural Reproduction*, ed. Chris Jenks (London, UK; New York, NY: Routledge, 1993), 100; Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London, UK; New York, NY: Verso, 1994), 139.

<sup>259</sup> Hebdige, “A Report,” 100.

<sup>260</sup> Of course, there are many examples that could be put forward to show that house museums in Canada have gone to extraordinary measures to revivify their static exhibitions. These will be given more attention in the next chapter.



[Fig. 2.5].<sup>261</sup> As a domestic task in progress, it suggests the chimney oven will soon be used to bake the pastry, the dry sink will be retrieved from the wall and filled with water to wash the dishes and the kitchen table will be cleared after the baking has been completed. The Heritage House Museum's baking vignette enlivens the objects in the static display to produce the sense of a working kitchen. A photograph that pictures the contents of the house museum in use may also have this effect.<sup>262</sup>



Figure 2.4: The baking vignette at Heritage House Museum (Photo by author, 1 October 2012).



Figure 2.5: The summer kitchen at Heritage House Museum (Photo by author, 1 October 2012).

### *Animating Emptied Halls*

Not all rooms in a house museum replicate the look of a displayed photographic counterpart; sometimes photos are called upon to promote alternative understandings of museum spaces. A panel in the Lougheed House drawing room (Calgary, AB) shows an image of the space in 1925, furnished and unoccupied [Figs. 2.6 & 2.7].<sup>263</sup> Pictures hang at various intervals along the walls. Chairs are stationed around decorated tables, filled cabinets and a well-adorned mantel. In contrast to the interior depicted in this archival image, the museum's drawing room is largely unfurnished [Fig. 2.8]. Senator Lougheed died in 1925, at

<sup>261</sup> Lowry, "Modern Time," 52.

<sup>262</sup> This mid-activity vignette may suggest that the baking will continue just as a photograph of a moment of domestic life might inspire projections about what happened next. These continuations are just imaginatively conceived.

<sup>263</sup> The house's rooms were documented in 1925 to settle the estate of Mr. Lougheed.



a time when Alberta's economy was suffering from drought and a drop in property values. During the Depression, the City of Calgary seized 15 mansions from families charged with the non-payment of taxes, and in 1934 the Lougheed's house was repossessed. In 1938, as the City decided what to do with the house and the land, the family retrieved items they wished to keep. In August of that year, possessions left behind by the Lougheeds were auctioned to clear the house. Therefore, when The Lougheed House Conservation Society (LHCS) began its restoration of the sandstone mansion in 2000, its members realized there were few original furnishings to work with.<sup>264</sup>

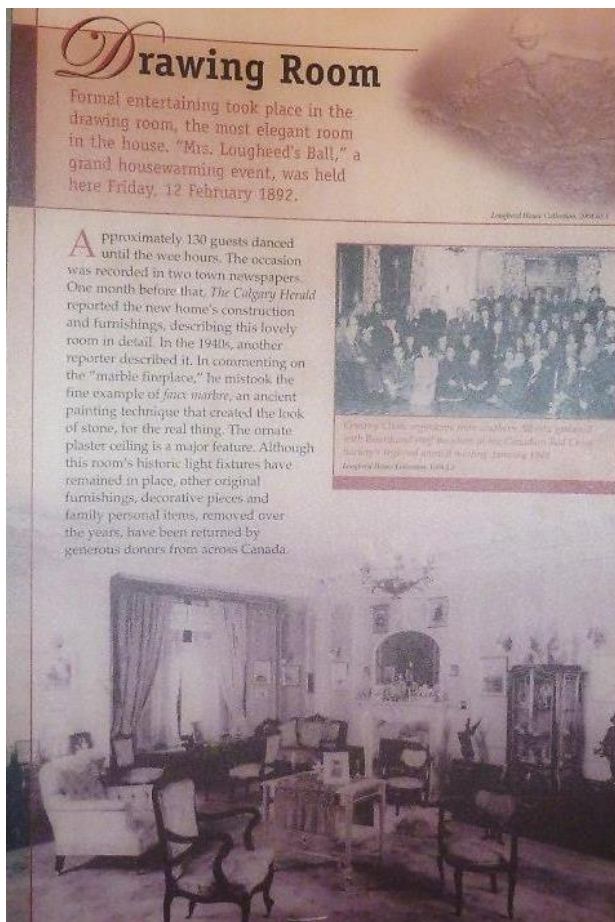


Figure 2.6: A didactic panel in the drawing room of Lougheed House (Photo by author, 13 February 2013).



Figure 2.7: A photograph of the drawing room at Lougheed House in 1925 (Bobrovitz and Cowan, *Lougheed House*, 22. Image archived as NA-3232-8, Glenbow Archives).



Figure 2.8: The drawing room at Lougheed House (Photo by author, 13 February 2013).

<sup>264</sup> Jennifer Cook Bobrovitz and Trudy Cowan, *Lougheed House. More than a Century of Stories* (Calgary, AB: Lougheed House, 2006), 13-14.

Generally speaking, house museum administrators recognize that an empty dwelling holds little appeal for the average visitor and ineffectively represents the lifestyles of its former residents.<sup>265</sup> The image on the drawing room panel, and its accompanying text, brings the emptied room to life and allows visitors to imagine how people would have used and inhabited the space (i.e. the didactic mentions the parties that were held there).<sup>266</sup> The text describes noteworthy features—the plaster ceilings, the historical light fixtures and the *faux marbre* fireplace—which still survive. These elements can be compared in the photograph and the space of the museum.

These photographic inventories do not only represent what the house once was. They also indicate what it could be again, given support. Since its formation in 1995, the LHCS has struggled to retrieve lost furnishings for their restorations. Lists of items that the Society still wishes to acquire are posted throughout the house. Each item on these lists is given an estimated cost (i.e. “1 music- cabinet 1000.00, 1 fireplace fender set 5000.00, 40 ft. picture rail 6000.00”).<sup>267</sup> Visitors (potential donors) are informed that any contributions the LHCS receives will be used to finish the rooms. Loughheed House offers a striking example of the way images of historic interiors are used to garner financial resources for the recreation of previously disrupted domestic environments. Its didactics also indicate that these images serve interpretive functions.

### ***“Snapshots in Time”***

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<sup>265</sup> Daniela Ball, “Two Important Swiss Castles: Lenzburg and Hallwyl,” *Historic House Museums Speak to the Public: Spectacular Exhibits vs. a Philological Interpretation of History: Acts of the International Conference of DEMHIST ICOM's International Committee for Historic Houses Genova, 1-4 November 2000*, ed. Rosanna Pavoni (Milan: Museo Bagatti Valsecchi and DEMHIST, 2001), 16.

<sup>266</sup> “Drawing Room,” museum didactic, Loughheed House, February 2013. The LHCS can reference inventory images of Loughheed House produced in 1925, and many other Canadian house museums plumb their archives for family photographs depicting life in the home. However, Canada has a number of historic houses-turned-museums that were constructed before photography existed as a documentary option. The presentation of these homes and their remnants may bring about the need for artistic renderings (paintings, drawings, computer-generated images, etc.). Examples of these will be discussed below.

<sup>267</sup> “Loughheed House Mission Room,” museum posting, Loughheed House, February 2013.

Historic homes are three-dimensional, multi-layered spaces that are palimpsests and treasure troves of intersecting stories. Over the course of their lives, they house generations of tenants and guests, and witness the unfolding of any number of historic events. Structurally, they endure dramatic changes—additions, upgrades and alterations of all sorts. Their interiors are filled with household objects and furnishings wrenched from different eras and geographic contexts. Many of the historic homes that now serve as museums also had institutional lives. That is, for years they may have operated as boarding houses, hotels, hospitals, schools and/or offices. Essentially, these aged residences are bound to a collection of figures, institutions, cultures and events that are regarded as important fragments of national, provincial and local pasts. Telling the whole story of a historic home can, therefore, be a formidable task.

Craigdarroch Castle, perched above Victoria, British Columbia, is a historic site with a highly complex backstory. It was originally built by the Dunsmuir family between 1887 and 1890. When Mrs. Joan Dunsmuir passed away, her children sold the house to the developer, Griffith Hughes, who in turn handed it over to the Cameron family through a lottery.<sup>268</sup> Thomas A. Cameron inhabited the Castle until his passing in 1917. Shortly after his death, the house was taken from his brother by the Bank of Montreal to settle his debts. The Castle ceased to function as a private home following Cameron's tenancy.<sup>269</sup> The interpretive stance, thematic outlines and officialised storylines laid out in the museum's Presentation and Interpretation Plan indicate an interpretive programme that spans this entire timeline as well as the complete institutional history of the Castle [Fig. 2.9].<sup>270</sup> The Castle's administrators

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<sup>268</sup> "Short History of Craigdarroch Castle, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada," museum brochure, Craigdarroch Castle, May 2013.

<sup>269</sup> "The Military Hospital Era," *Craigdarroch Castle* website, <http://thecastle.ca/about-the-castle/military-hospital/> (accessed 21 September 2013).

<sup>270</sup> Craigdarroch Castle and Commonwealth Historic Resource Management Limited, "Part 3: Presentation Plan," *Craigdarroch Castle, Historic House Museum Master Plan, Phase One: Presentation and Interpretation* (Vancouver,

acknowledge that when covering all of these interlocking stories it becomes easy to “lose” the visitor. With this in mind, the Society has worked to improve an interpretative programme that makes the “whole” story available and comprehensible.<sup>271</sup>

Dunsmuir 1	Dunsmuir 2	Castle Cameron	Veterans' Hospital	Victoria College	School Board	Conservatory of Music	Museum

- The impact of the subdivision of the Craigdarroch estate on the neighbourhood generally
- How the subdivison marked the end of the Island's first colonial phase and the names associated with that phase (e.g. Dunsmuir, Crease, Douglas)

Dunsmuir 1	Dunsmuir 2	Castle Cameron	Veterans' Hospital	Victoria College	School Board	Conservatory of Music	Museum

- The entry into World War I of Canada, still seen by many as a colony, and her emergence as a nation. The rather gruesome idea that nationhood was 'purchased' with the death and severe injury of many thousands of young men
- The bitterness of many veterans and how their wartime experiences changed their attitudes towards Empire and authority

Dunsmuir 1	Dunsmuir 2	Castle Cameron	Veterans' Hospital	Victoria College	School Board	Conservatory of Music	Museum

- The establishment of various institutions, including Victoria College and the Conservatory of Music, as part of the process of 'colonization'. The dependence of those institutions on the approval and support of Eastern or European organizations reflects their colonial status
- The status of Victoria College and the Conservatory of Music as local or provincial institutions

Dunsmuir 1	Dunsmuir 2	Castle Cameron	Veterans' Hospital	Victoria College	School Board	Conservatory of Music	Museum

- The reasons James Nesbitt established the Craigdarroch Castle Historical Museum Society, and his own connections to Victoria's early colonial elite
- Nesbitt's supporters and the reasons they wanted the Castle preserved
- The importance ascribed to the Dunsmuir story as a narrative of colonial success and a 'rags-to-riches' success story
- The designation of Craigdarroch Castle as a National Historic Site

Figure 2.9: A segment from Craigdarroch Castle's interpretive plan, showing the themes that coordinate with different chronological segments of the house's past (Craigdarroch Castle and Commonwealth Historic Resource Management Limited, "Part 2: Thematic Outline and Storyline," *Craigdarroch Castle, Historic House Museum Master Plan. Phase One: Presentation and Interpretation* (Vancouver, BC; Perth, ON: Commonwealth Historic Resource Management Limited, n.d.), 14).

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BC; Perth, ON: Commonwealth Historic Resource Management Limited, n.d.), 2. Recall the more detailed history of the Castle as an institution in Chapter One.

<sup>271</sup> The Presentation and Interpretation Plan suggests that the museum should focus on answering the following questions for visitors: Who has lived in and used Craigdarroch Castle?; What became of them?; What stories does Craigdarroch Castle have to tell?; How has the building been changed to accommodate its users over time?; etc. ("Part 3: Presentation Plan," 5). These questions do not foster straightforward answers. Rather, they require a diachronic awareness of the Castle. The thematic outlines are therefore developed with reference to the Castle at different periods: Dunsmuir 1, Dunsmuir 2, Castle Cameron, Veteran's Hospital, Victoria College, School Board, Conservatory of Music, Museum. These episodes are strung together into a storyline—"a narrative that is used as the basis for communicating stories to the visitors" (Ibid., 1). The "storyline uses the thematic outline and the chronology to organize the interpretive program into a recognizable narrative divided into 'chapters' and set within time periods" ("Part 2: Thematic Outline and Storyline," 20).

The past, present and future of Craigdarroch Castle are scripted and visualized using images of the home and its most recognizable features (the stained glass windows, wood staircase, etc.). Within the rooms of the museum, horizontally-oriented didactics narrate the Dunsmuir story and feature the heading “Dunsmuir’s At Home.” One example shows an image of the Dunsmuir women seated in the drawing room with their musical instruments [Fig. 2.10]. The explanatory text states that the room was lavishly decorated and spacious so that the family could receive and entertain guests.<sup>272</sup> This image aligns with the current staging of the drawing room and suggests how the room would have been used by the family. Vertically-oriented postings include so-called “snapshots in time,” which are designed to help visitors make sense of the ways the house was used following the Dunsmuir’s tenancy. A second panel, therefore, shows a picture of the drawing room as an office during the Victoria School District era [Fig. 2.11]. The photo description reads: “1954: Desks and cabinets filled this room. An electrical plug from this era survives in the floor to your right.”<sup>273</sup> The restored drawing room, which interprets the Dunsmuir era, makes it difficult to picture the way it would have appeared as an office space [Figs 2.12]. Yet, remnants of this time, such as the outlet, still remain. The snapshots make the visitor more attentive to traces from earlier eras, raising questions about later use that otherwise may not have been broached.

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<sup>272</sup> “Dunsmuir’s At Home, The Drawing Room,” museum didactic, Craigdarroch Castle, May 2013.

<sup>273</sup> “The Drawing Room. A Snapshot in Time,” museum didactic, Craigdarroch Castle, May 2013. The panel also reads: “This room’s vast size made it useful for the various institutions that used Craigdarroch after Mrs. Dunsmuir’s death” a recreation room for hospital patients between 1919 and 1921, a classroom and dance room between 1921 and 1946 and an office for the Greater Victoria School District (Ibid.) [pictured].



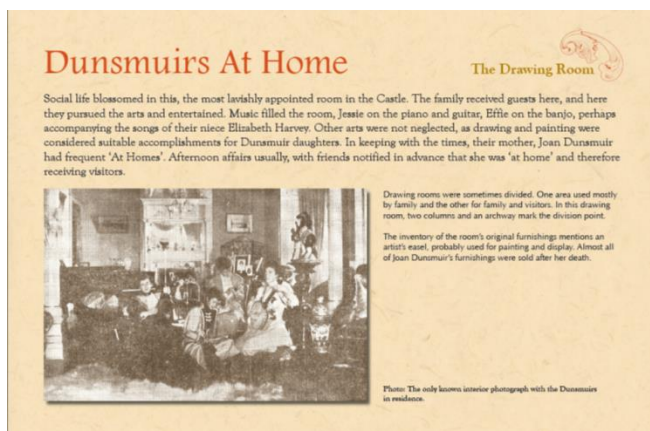


Figure 2.10: An interpretive panel at Craigdarroch Castle which includes an image of the Dunsmuirs in the drawing room (Image courtesy of Bruce Davies. Inset image "Dunsmuir daughters and granddaughter in the Drawing Room circa 1895," archived as BCA D-1487, Provincial Archives of British Columbia).



Figure 2.12: A contemporary image of the drawing room at Craigdarroch Castle ("Photo Galleries," *Craigdarroch Castle* website, [http://thecastle.ca/wp-content/themes/thecastle/images/gallery-img14\\_1.jpg](http://thecastle.ca/wp-content/themes/thecastle/images/gallery-img14_1.jpg) (accessed 26 May 2014), © Andrew Annuar).

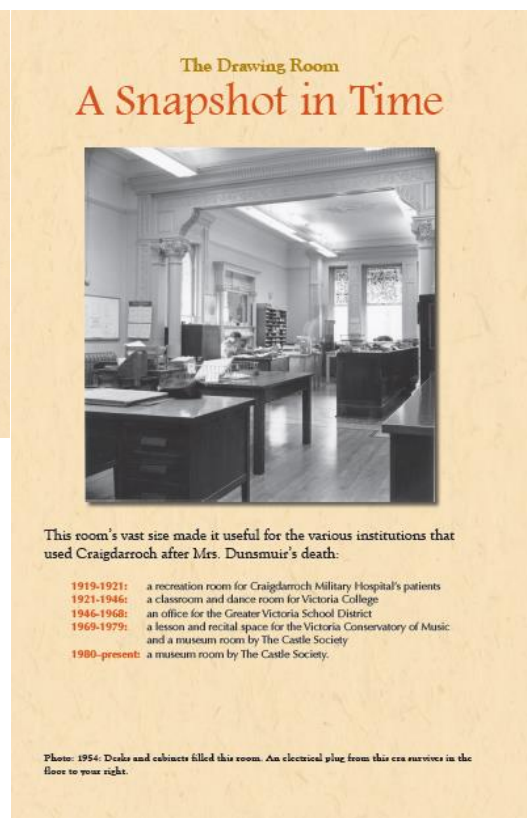


Figure 2.11: A snapshot in time showing the drawing room of Craigdarroch Castle as an office space in 1954 (Image courtesy of Bruce Davies. Inset image "Drawing Room during the School Board years," archived as VCA PR-58, City of Victoria Archives).

This second group of photographs are aptly named "snapshots in time" given that they earmark different temporalities. Photography has been theorized as a practice deeply concerned with the passage of time and the concept of temporality.<sup>274</sup> Through these

<sup>274</sup> Chitra Ramalingam, "Fixing Transience: Photography and other images of time in 1830s London," in *Time and Photography*, ed. Jan Baetens, Alexander Streitberger and Hilde Van Gelder (Leuven, BE: Leuven University Press, 2010), 4; Lowry, "Modern Time," 47. In *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes referred to cameras as "clocks for seeing" (Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1981), 15).

“snapshot” didactics, time is highly structured and schematized. Patricia Holland’s description of family collections sheds light on the way they relate to the storyline of the Castle: “Their disconnected points offer glimpses of many possible pasts, and yet, in our longing for narratives, for a way of telling the past that will make sense in the present we know, we strive to organise these traces, to fill the gaps.”<sup>275</sup> The individual photographs represent specific time periods that can then be strung together into a linear history of the house to produce a sense of duration.<sup>276</sup> Through this well-rehearsed arrangement of dates and strategically placed images, the Castle staff streamlines and simplifies a complex interpretive program. The historic photographs are used to stretch “domestic space through a relation with people, places and times that are not in the home at the moment of looking” to borrow the words of Gillian Rose.<sup>277</sup> Together, they make an understanding of the space across different periods possible. They embellish the posed moment of the room to generate a fuller narrative of the Dunsmuir’s former home.<sup>278</sup>

In a home strictly presented as it would have looked, there are no added “snapshots in time” and no explicit references to later ages. As has been explained, house museums that deliberately inspire what Daniel Robbins refers to as “stopped clock” readings obscure or reverse evidence of later periods. The examples in this section demonstrated that photographs are used to counteract the stasis and interpretive reduction that characterizes the period room or surround-style simulated interior. At Lougheed House, historic

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<sup>275</sup> Jo Spence and Patricia Holland, eds., *Family Snaps: The Meanings of Domestic Photography* (London, UK: Virago, 1991), 1.

<sup>276</sup> G.E. Bakker, *Photography and Time* (University of Groningen, 2007), <http://www.gerbenbakker.com/wordpress/wp-content/pdf/Phototime.pdf> (accessed 9 July 2013), 6. This is one area where the museumification of the house becomes apparent. Such chronological arrangements recall the way large-scale survey museums plot dated objects from their collections along timelines in order to represent time in its long duration and reinforce evolutionary narratives. Whether their exhibitions explain the “civilization” of man, the history of art, the formation of gemstones or the creation of the solar system, the visitor is meant to feel the rush of time from a distant past to the contemporary moment.

<sup>277</sup> Gillian Rose, “Family Photograph and Domestic Spacings: A Case Study,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 28, 1 (March 2003), 15.

<sup>278</sup> Lowry, “Modern Time,” 52.

photographs that were made to inventory an estate are appropriated by the house museum to project how the rooms will look once returned to their former glory. They are imaginative prompts which allow visitors to envision unfurnished rooms as they were. As interpretive aids, these images are also necessary because they bring the rooms to life where the funds are not available for complete restorations. The family photographs of the Dunsmuirs at home add new dimensions to the drawing room at Craigdarroch Castle, while the “snapshots” show that the domestic set up represents only a fraction of the house’s past. They bring episodes of the house’s life into conversation with the recreated rooms.

### ***Finding the Studs: Restoration Photo-narratives***

A house museum may also exhibit a series of photographs or photo albums that visualizes its restoration story. These pictures contribute to a more complete picture of the house’s past by showing the home in a state not represented or recalled by its finished period rooms. As Eric Laurier suggests, the “dominant constructional logics” of heritage such as replication and restoration result in products that do not admit of the “processes which created [them].”<sup>279</sup> An expertly replicated seventeenth-century chair does not announce itself as a replica, and a carefully restored domestic space does not appear as a restoration. Where restorers are tasked with erasing the effects of time (rot, decay, scars), photographs become, as Laurier puts it, “an archive of rot.”<sup>280</sup> One such exhibit at Roedde House Museum (Vancouver, BC) displays photographic albums that document the degree of damage that the house had sustained [Fig. 2.13]. Wallpapers are shown stained, slashed and peeling away from the walls. Floorboards appear to have gone missing and the finishes of the house show water damage and cracks. Light bulbs hang devoid of any fixtures or shades and floors look

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<sup>279</sup> Eric Laurier, “Replication and Restoration: Ways of Making Maritime Heritage,” *Journal of Material Culture* 3, 1 (1998), 22, 25.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.



scuffed and dusty. These images provide a starting point for the restoration; additional photographs in the display show the house at various stages of its recuperation [Fig. 2.14].<sup>281</sup>



Figure 2.13: An exhibit at Roedde House Museum that includes three restoration photo albums (Photo by author, 19 May 2013).

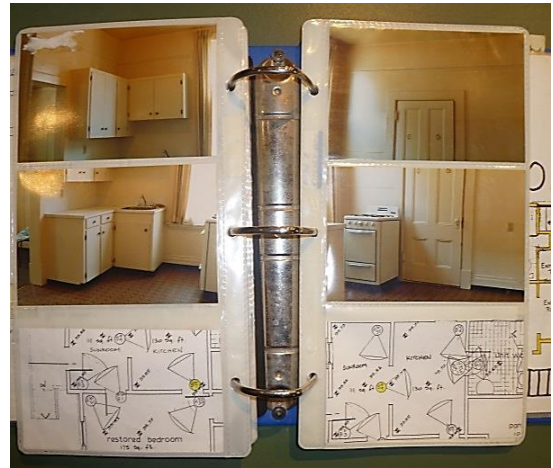


Figure 2.14: A close up of an album from the Roedde House Museum's restoration exhibit (Photo by author, 19 May 2013).

It is essential that these markers of “rot” are perceptible in exhibitions that make restoration an interpretive focus. This is because, as Cesari Brandi suggests, “restoration...cannot presume that time is reversible or that history can be abolished” if it is to be “a legitimate operation.”<sup>282</sup> Laurier phrases it another way: “constant comparisons are made...between the past and the present, replication happens in the juxtaposition of these two senses of time.”<sup>283</sup> Photographic records and photo-narratives commonly register “befores” and “afters” to add scope to the dramatic reconstructions or restorations.<sup>284</sup> They reveal that, despite appearances, the historic house has not remained exactly as it had been. If this pretence remains in place than the whole history of its restoration is negated. The whole reality of its decay and its salvation is obscured behind the guise of changelessness and proclaimed authenticity.

<sup>281</sup> These pictures of the rooms at Roedde House are paired with hand-drawn segments of the floor plan, which mark the positions from which each photograph was taken.

<sup>282</sup> Cesare Brandi cited in Salvador Muñoz-Viñas, *Contemporary Theory of Conservation* (Oxford, OX; Burlington, MA: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann, 2005), 68.

<sup>283</sup> Laurier, “Replication and Restoration,” 17.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

Within the house museum these images are meant to illustrate the work of restoration rather than explain the way the house was inhabited. Acting as records of labour, photographs like those displayed at Roedde House Museum ensure that the visitor comes into contact with the work behind the construction of the “image.”<sup>285</sup> They emphasize and demystify the processes that produce the house museum representation and explain the techniques that are used to bring houses back to life. The visitor is caught between rooms in a state of complete restoration and images that show the house stripped down, hollowed out and reconstructed. From this standpoint, he or she is able to appreciate the ways that processes of construction, gradual deterioration and renovation alter the physical forms of historic houses. Showing evidence of restoration, explaining it as a step-by-step process and making it an educational exercise at a house museum means the illusion that the house has not changed cannot be sustained. The exhibition is one that makes processes that reverse the effects of time subjects for interpretation.<sup>286</sup>

Professional standards of the museum field provide an impetus for using these kinds of images. Internationally-established ethical codes list “documentation” among the museum’s stewardship roles. The CMA advises that Canadian museums document their collections, which are held in trust for the public. It is stipulated that primary records should identify and describe artifacts, refer to their provenances, detail their conditions and plan for their future care.<sup>287</sup> In addition, secondary records should track any changes to the objects brought on by environmental factors, restorative procedures or handling and use. In essence,

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<sup>285</sup> Ibid., 26. I am referring here to the image of the home of the past.

<sup>286</sup> ICOM suggests that “[a]ll conservation procedures should be documented and as reversible as possible, and all alterations should be clearly distinguishable from the original object or specimen” (“Collection Conservation and Restoration,” International Council of Museums (ICOM) Code of Ethics, [http://icom.museum/fileadmin/user\\_upload/pdf/Codes/code2006\\_eng.pdf](http://icom.museum/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/Codes/code2006_eng.pdf) (accessed 10 February 2012), 6). This raises issues for a genre of museums based on the unity of the whole domestic environment.

<sup>287</sup> “B. 6 Documentation” “2.20 Documentation of Collections,” Canadian Museums Association’s Ethics Guidelines (2006), [www.museums.ca/filestorage/ethicsguidelines.pdf](http://www.museums.ca/filestorage/ethicsguidelines.pdf) (accessed 10 February 2012); ICOM, Code of Ethics, 5.

all major events in the museum life of these objects should be addressed in the records. As Chapter One explained, the structure of the historic home is the house museum's primary artifact. It follows that changes to its appearance and layout should be tracked. Whenever a historic property is restored, best practices stipulate that the work be documented. If something goes wrong in the future, if further restoration needs to be undertaken or if the staff of today is forced to answer for the decisions of yesterday, these documents can be consulted or cited. Therefore, many house museums maintain collections of photographs that capture the processes of reconstruction and restoration. As museum documents, these photographs are often stored in the archives. However, because these collections of images resemble personal renovation albums and conjure up the spectre of home-reno culture, they also make intriguing museum displays.

Unlike family photos, which centre in on individuals and feature interiors as mere backdrops, personal renovation albums or remodelling portfolios focus on the house itself. Workers and family members may not even be present within the frames of these images. Restoration photo-narratives provide evidence of accomplishment and are detailed reminders of progress made. Kept handy for reference purposes and "show-and-tell," they help homeowners establish where the studs are before installing a shelving unit; they recall when a particular improvement was made or help explain work conducted on the house to potential buyers or interested guests. These records of the home, in the home, also exist within the house museum. They offer insights about the house-museum-in-the-making and educate the museum's visitors about historic restoration. Like Craigdarroch Castle's "snapshots" they provide glimpses of the house at different moments, adding new layers of interpretation.

Ambush renovation programs and home improvement television, which provide DIY advice for handy homeowners, have framed stories of home renovation as entertainment. A description of the reality show, *Renovation Realities*, states:

Home renovation looks so easy on TV. We see a project move quickly and smoothly from start to finish – and the results are always beautiful. But somewhere between “before” and “after” there are always at least a few speed bumps – and one great story. Budgets skyrocket, tempers flare, relationships suffer.<sup>288</sup>

These are the types of narratives that are also formed and explored using renovation photographs at house museums. Audiences already understand the dramas involved in restorations gone awry and are curious, if not well informed, about the techniques, tools and tricks of the trade. To the visitor, then, these photographic collections are interesting because they show the effort that goes into reclaiming a historic house as a museum. The nuts and bolts of such renovation projects engage groups of visitors already familiar with DIY culture and home television.

House museums can sometimes function as “poster children” for the restoration industry. On programs, like “This Old House,” they are regularly featured as sites that guide builders and designers in their work. During Episode 18 of Season 28 (aired 2009), the TOH team is in the process of rehabilitating an old brownstone townhouse in Manhattan. The host of the show meets up with Charles Lockwood, an architectural historian, to take a brief tour of Merchant’s House Museum.<sup>289</sup> The museum’s chandeliers, medallions, ceremonial

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<sup>288</sup> “Renovation Realities,” *DIY Network: Home Improvement Television* website (Shaw Media Inc., 2014), <http://www.diy.ca/Shows> (accessed 27 September 2013).

<sup>289</sup> “New York City House,” *This Old House*, Season 28, Episode 18 (2009), <http://www.thisoldhouse.com/toh/tv/video/0,,20618962,00.html> (accessed 25 May 2014). In Season 23, Episode 23 (aired March 2004), the team’s project house was located in Bermuda. The host of the show met with the curator of the Verdmont House Museum, Hugh Davidson, to discuss how domestic interiors had typically been decorated and used in the area. Verdmont is a flagship property of the Bermuda National Trust’s (BNT) efforts to preserve historic homes throughout Bermuda. The host of This Old House draws a parallel between their efforts and those of the BNT (“The Bermuda House,” *This Old House*, Season 23, Episode 23 (14 March 2004), <http://www.thisoldhouse.com/toh/tv/video/0,,20733462,00.html> (accessed 25 May 2014)).

arches and ironwork, as well as the traditional layout of the former Tredwell-family dwelling, are points of discussion. Remarking upon similarities and differences between the upgraded brownstones of the East Village and the preserved Tredwell House, the show suggests that “side trips” to house museums can offer valuable inspiration while in the midst of renovation projects.

Guides and house museum staff across Canada report that heritage home owners will often visit house museums to identify the proper fittings for their period residences. Deeply concerned with getting the “look” right they will seek out advice, focus on the details of the historic home (its hinges and cabinet handles) and request referrals for work still to be done.<sup>290</sup> At Emily Carr House (Victoria, BC) a panel describing the museum’s energy upgrade asserts the importance of repairing, retrofitting or otherwise rehabilitating old buildings to encourage their preservation. The logos of the two Vancouver Island-based companies (David Coulson Design and Vintage Woodworks), who made the “period-sensitive adaptations” possible, are posted on the bottom of the panel. The museum provides those looking to improve the energy efficiency of their historic homes, while protecting their character-defining elements, with recommendations to these companies.<sup>291</sup> Understanding house museums within the context of the broader world of renovation culture helps us see restoration photographs at the house museum as resources for home renovators.

### ***Photo Albums: Domestic Photography, Family Histories and the House Museum***

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<sup>290</sup> Caron Lipman and Catherine Nash, “Living with the Past at Home’: Domestic Prehabitation and Inheritance,” paper for *Home Time: Temporalities of Domestic Life I*. Royal Geographical Society and Institute of British Geographers Annual International Conference (London, UK, August 2013), n.p.

<sup>291</sup> If a company can handle the restoration of a designated historic property, they prove themselves qualified to restore a privately-owned heritage home. The website for the Oak Grove Restoration Company (Laytonsville, Maryland) includes project profiles for the McFaddin Ward House (Beaumont, TX), Dodona Manor (Leesburg, VA) and Montpelier Mansion (Orange, VA) (“Project Profiles,” *Oak Grove Restoration Company* website (2011), [http://www.oakgroverestoration.com/Project\\_Profiles.html](http://www.oakgroverestoration.com/Project_Profiles.html) (accessed 27 May 2014)).

When compiling historical photographs for display, many house museums refer to the photo album aesthetic. This is not only true in relation to restoration photographs; it also applies to the presentation of family lines through the medium of the family photo album. Generations of the McCrae family are pictured in the “McCrae family album,” which visitors are encouraged to look through during their visit to McCrae House (Guelph, ON) [Figs. 2.15 & 2.16]. The typed family tree, on the front cover, frames the album as a museum prop rather than an authentic family artifact. At Bellevue House National Historic Site of Canada photographs of the members of John A. Macdonald’s family are composed on top of coloured and designed papers. They are identified and described in hand-writing, making the album seem like a scrapbook. Near the back of the album, colour photographs depict the site’s current staff and typed labels replace the hand-written notations. These photographic albums were neither made nor owned by the families. They offer a convenient way to package and present collections of photographs that help the house museums tell their stories and interpret family histories.

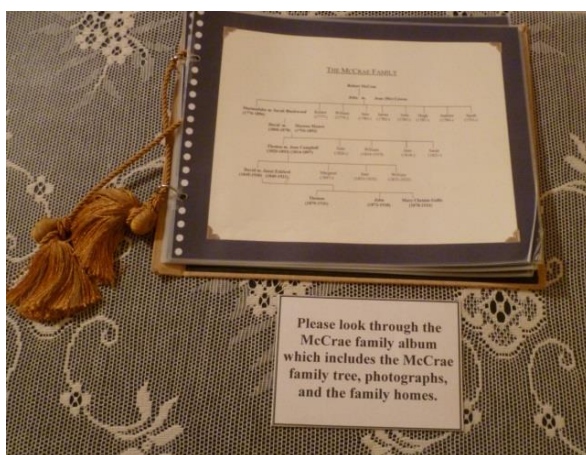


Figure 2.15: The McCrae family album at McCrae House. The sign below the book reads: “Please look through the McCrae family album which includes the McCrae family tree, photographs, and the family home” (Photo by author, 15 September 2012).



Figure 2.16: Photographs of Mrs. Massey (*top left*), the Robert Fyfe family (*bottom left*), Corp. C. Cokburn (*centre*), J.E. Eckford (*top right*) and Mr. and Mrs. Inglis (*bottom right*) inside the McCrae family album (Photo by author, 15 September 2012).

As objects associated with family, the home and the past (especially since the introduction of digital photography) photo albums seem well suited to the house museum environment. They may also signal attempts to capitalize on an unprecedented interest in family histories. Personal or family photographs have historically been disregarded by art critics, historians and art historians, given little aesthetic value because they depicted the banalities of everyday lives, pictured “unimportant” individuals and were attributed to amateur photographers. This has changed, however, as genealogy and family history have experienced a resurgence with the introduction of the internet, online archival databases and roots tourism. North American museums have taken up the task of fostering intergenerational-history-sharing by sponsoring various oral history projects and programmes like the Canadian Museum of Civilization’s *Family Treasures* (initiated 1990). They even offer workshops on resources and methodologies for tracking familial histories.<sup>292</sup> Not surprisingly house museums are sites that also preserve and disseminate resources for family history research. Admiral Digby Museum, Michener House Museum and O’Dell House Museum maintain community records (birth, death, immigration and marriage documents) and function as libraries or archives for genealogical research.

Local and personal heritages—which bring intimate and personal memories of the past into direct confrontation with official, institutional histories—are valued for making accounts of the past more democratic and inclusive. In the postmodern age, micro-histories have received more attention as confidence in historical and cultural metanarratives has waned. Holland clearly explains how this has influenced the reevaluation of personal

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<sup>292</sup> Exhibitions like “Close to Home: An American Album” (12 October 2004 to 16 January 2005), organized by the J. Paul Getty Museum, have celebrated the tradition of the family photo album by displaying collections of family snapshots that capture intimate and personal memories. Exploring the meanings behind these sometimes banal photographs and tying in workshops on the preservation of family artifacts, the show inspired reflection on the topics of personal history and genealogy. For more on this exhibition see [http://www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/close\\_to\\_home/index.html](http://www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/close_to_home/index.html) or the exhibition catalogue introduced by D. J. Waldie.

photographic collections: “[i]n the last twenty years there has been a revival of history from below, a history of everyday life and everyday consciousness. In this context domestic pictures have gained a new currency, contributing to a different sense of the past and different ways of exploring the past.”<sup>293</sup> Within the house museum the images of the McCrae family are viewed as significant components of a family history and are elaborated in relation to discussions about domestic life and the McCrae House. The house museum provides a befitting context for the interpretation of photographs linked to the home and private life in the past.

There are of course challenges involved in making more personal histories the subject of interpretation at public institutions. At Prescott House and Gardens Museum (Port Williams, NS) photographs of the home and the family are compiled together in an album laid out for the visitor’s perusal. Pictures show Mary Prescott set against the backdrop of her private abode, enjoying tea with friends and entertaining guests [Figs. 2.17-2.19]. These images, of a more personal nature, are contrasted with those that show the house, its exterior and grounds in different seasons, as well as an array of uninhabited interiors and rooms prior to restoration [Fig. 2.20]. The album pictures the people and the place of a domestic life. Labels in the album draw attention to items in the home. They identify family members by their first names and guests, more formerly, by their titles and last names. Many of the images are accompanied by their original descriptions in italics: “*John accompanies Bron and Sheila to get milk, Bubbles sniffs at the basket*” [Fig. 2.18]. Holland points out that family photography is a private medium.<sup>294</sup> The visitor to the house museum, therefore, may have

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<sup>293</sup> Spence and Holland, *Family Snaps*, 12.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid., 2. If we are willing to acknowledge that house museums represent a nostalgic domesticity, then photo albums are also part of this equation. According to Holland, family albums are cloaked in a “deceptive innocence” (Ibid., 1). They provide a brighter, less-complicated picture of the past, where individual images represent only the “picture-perfect” moments, happy occasions and charming groups of smiling kin. These compilations of cloying photos “construct their own versions of family history, in negotiation with the ideal”



difficulty decoding the meanings and memories that the photographs unlocked for their original owners. For example, they may not understand the relationship between Bron and Sheila or know that Bubbles was the family dog. The descriptions do not provide enough information to permit the photographs to share the Prescott's personal stories with a broader public. Without the transference of additional information, these photographs risk being coopted to tell different stories.



Figure 2.17: "Front entrance of house before repairs," an image on display at Prescott House and Gardens Museum (Photo by author, 6 October 2012).



Figure 2.18: "John accompanies Bron and Sheila to get milk, Bubbles sniffs at the basket," an image on display at Prescott House and Gardens Museum (Photo by author, 6 October 2012).



Figure 2.19: A photograph of Mary Prescott entertaining guests, which is on display at Prescott House and Gardens Museum (Photo by author, 6



Figure 2.20: A historical photograph of Mary Prescott's library, now on display at Prescott House and Gardens Museum (Photo by author, 6 October 2012).

(Ibid., 7). They contain few remembrances of "[d]ifficult individuals like divorced spouses and nonconforming siblings" and rarely picture "[s]ickness, disease and disability" (Ibid.). Family "[p]roblems are suppressed, if only for the split second that the shutter is open" (Ibid.). Photo albums are complicit with house museum narratives that emphasize family dramas. They reinforce ideological messages about the family as an enduring and happy social formation. Where the house museum makes the dark details of family conflicts and fallouts a part of its tours, they are reminders that the uncomplicated images accumulated in albums are as much about remembering as they are about forgetting. In this arrangement, the house museum is a place where family secrets can be uncovered and the less-than-satisfying side of family life is given a voice.

October 2012).

When personal photographs are displayed within the public realm of the house museum, their personal meanings can recede while their social meanings are promulgated to construct a social history or a narrative of ethnological significance.<sup>295</sup> For example, the Prescotts' photographs could be used to speak to the genre of home photography, which was ushered in at the start of the 1900s with the development of the hand-held Kodak camera.<sup>296</sup> Or, they may be used to explain a way of life in Nova Scotia more broadly. Home photographs and family snapshots have the potential to infuse public museums with personal and family histories, however, that potential may be left unrealized. Even within house museums, these fragments of micro-histories may become framed within official historical narratives. Although the albums produced by house museums may not resonate at the same level as family albums, they reference personal photo collections as sources of information on the homes of the past.

To summarize, photographic representations of home both generate and mirror period-room displays at house museums. In certain cases, they add historical credibility to the artifice that is the recreation of the period interior. More importantly, they address the weaknesses and shortcomings of this mode of display. By depicting the preparation of meals, the celebration of special occasions or child-care activities in the home, they bring static displays to life. Where lived-in environments have been supplanted by rooms communicating stylistic moments, photographs and their accompanying didactics explain the functions of rooms and objects that are no longer in use. The period room is a spatial

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<sup>295</sup> Spence and Holland, *Family Snaps*, 3. The authors indicate that “[a]n ‘outside’ interpretation, an assessment of someone else’s album, moves into a different realm: of social history, ethnology or a history of photography” (Ibid.).

<sup>296</sup> Liz Wells, *Photography: A Critical Introduction* (London, UK; New York, NY: Psychology Press, 2004), 115. Wells explains “[t]his was the beginning of an era when the ‘amateur’ photographer is likely to be a woman, interested in ‘home portraits’, records of family life and much else beside. The new technology of the day was bringing a revolution in ways of perceiving the immediate domestic world...” (Ibid.).

representation of time, an instant that is paired with photographic instantaneities to reconstruct a consciousness of the house's history in its long duration.<sup>297</sup> Furthermore, collections of images plucked from personal or family albums refer to more personal experiences of these historical homes. They present opportunities for research into unofficial histories, if they are not simply commandeered as props within the domestic scene. These photographs—whether produced as parts of estate inventories, compiled in personal albums or used to document key moments in the museum's past—speak volumes about where images of home come from. Mobilized within the house museum, they also provide insights into how we expect representations of home to perform today.

#### **II.IV. Models and Dollhouses: Educational Architectures and Home-play**

“House portrait models” or model homes are used in house museums to explain architectural features, commemorate special dates, delineate floor-plan modifications, advise contractors and explain domestic life. Like the photographs described above, they are records and planning tools that can be deployed for educational and interpretive purposes. Model makers have responded to the Italianate architecture of Bellevue House, the grandeur of Château Ramezay, the quaintness of McCrae House and the symmetry of Château Dufresne [Figs. 2.21 & 2.22]. Some of the models resemble those made by architects to test a design's feasibility or to market the look of a building. Such physical prototypes and miniature structures are used in the world of architecture to obtain permits, fundraise for building projects and communicate design ideas. Others are recreational models that were made by craft modellers and obtained by collectors. These can be impressively-detailed and faithful copies of the real homes in which they are housed. They are testaments to their makers' skill and familiarity with outdated forms of making (or adapted forms of production

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<sup>297</sup> Bakker, *Photography and Time*, 6.

suited to the creation of the miniature).<sup>298</sup> Alternatively, some maquettes stand quite apart from their referents as idealized architectural interpretations.



Figure 2.21: A model of Bellevue House displayed in the visitor centre. The didactic above provides no information about the model or its origins (Photo by author, 29 September 2012).



Figure 2.22: A model of Château Dufresne exhibited just beyond the reception desk (Photo by author, 10 October 2012).

Many of the models that end up at house museums were not originally produced to become part of a museum collection or display. Some were donated by their makers, who felt the house museum an appropriate location for their final products, and others spent years in the private homes of previous owners before finding their way into public exhibits. Within museums, some of these models can be found in curious locations. A flimsy-looking model of Rutherford House is located on a shelving unit on the way to the washrooms, just outside the gift shop [Fig. 2.23]. This rather odd location implies that the staff recognized it should be kept but were unable to find it an appropriate place. There are, nevertheless, many examples of models made especially for house museums. Whether they arrive purposively, accidentally, by request or bequest, it is significant that such model houses are accepted and showcased at house museums. Looking at these kinds of models, sheds light on several

<sup>298</sup> The making of the model, or remaking of the home, can quite closely mimic the original construction of the historic house.

important issues, including the way homes are built and altered, house museums are maintained and representations of home are crafted.

A model of Craigdarroch Castle was commissioned to help the members of The Craigdarroch Castle Historical Museum Society explain construction and restoration plans to its contractors. It has since been repurposed to serve as a donation box within the museum, and is displayed beside a sign entitled “We need your support,” which describes the cost of the site’s maintenance, restoration and conservation as “staggering” [Fig. 2.24].<sup>299</sup> The model visualizes the cause, which the visitor is called to support. It, therefore, functions much like the photographs paired with the LHCS’s listings at Loughheed House. At McCrae House, a model encased in a plexiglass vitrine, rotates on its stand to provide visitors with a 360 degree view of the house in miniature [Fig. 2.25]. The reduced scale provides a more complete picture of the building’s structure and proportions than can be grasped by walking around the actual home, now surrounded by gardens. The text at McCrae House explains that the model maker, Leo Richards, approached the museum about his interest in replicating the historic house. After Richards completed his model, it became part of the museum’s education collection.<sup>300</sup> These examples reveal that model homes are planning and educational tools for the house museum.

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<sup>299</sup> “We Need Your Support,” museum didactic, Craigdarroch Castle, May 2013.

<sup>300</sup> “Model of McCrae House now part of Education Collection,” museum didactic, McCrae House, September 2012.



Figure 2.23: A model of Rutherford House, inconspicuously placed near the gift shop (Photo by author, 23 February 2013).



Figure 2.25: The model of McCrae House made by Leo Richards (Photo by author, 15 September 2012).



Figure 2.24: The model at Craigdarroch Castle surrounded by plexiglass and now used to collect donations (Photo by author, 17 May 2013).

By commissioning such models, house museums also become sites for information about model making and its techniques. A didactic at McCrae House explains that Richards spent 3 months on the project:

With nothing more than photographs and an excellent eye for detail, he drafted the plans, cut out thousands of pieces of wood, including 3,800 for the shingles and produced this finely crafted tiny house. The tools of his trade included a knife, scissors, masking tape, glue, paint and a utility knife, not to mention patience. He used recycled wood from orange crates and his biggest challenge was developing the techniques for creating the stone façade (individually cut pieces of wood, painted to appear like stone).<sup>301</sup>

Models and dollhouses at Heritage House Museum and Mackin House Museum are, likewise, paired with articles that recount the steps and ordeals of their construction. *The Record News's*

<sup>301</sup> Ibid.



article about Spencer Pincott's model of Heritage House Museum indicates that the replica was built from wood donated by Rideau Lumber and took several hundred hours to produce [Fig. 2.26].<sup>302</sup> More importantly, it stresses that the production of models often depends on other representations of home. Where Richards notes that he relied on photographs to produce a scaled-down model of the McCrae cottage, Pincott "had access to the blue prints used in the original remodelling of Heritage House."<sup>303</sup> We have already discussed how historical photographs have influenced the creation of period-room displays. Here, photographs influence the look of the models, and blue prints are renderings of home that are consequently relied upon to produce other three-dimensional representations (i.e. Heritage House and its replica).<sup>304</sup>

Elsewhere models have been used to show the evolution of a house's structure over time. At Haliburton House Museum a series of dated, miniature mock-ups of the house and grounds uses different colours of wood (basswood and mahogany) to illustrate structural changes that preceded the current layouts [Figs. 2.27 & 2.28]. The display is described in an introduction, which states that "[a]n accurate interpretation of a house involves many complex issues, but one of the most challenging is to show how a house has changed over its

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<sup>302</sup> Chris Van Wingerden, "It *is* a small world after all!" *The Record News*, 16 April 1997, 2.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid. Printed excerpts about the models demonstrate how house museums become sites for the multiplication of representations of home. The panel about Richards' model includes a photograph of the model-maker holding his model outside McCrae House. Van Wingerden's article, which has been photocopied and posted atop the model in Heritage House Museum's activity room, includes several images of the replica and its rooms. Pincott's representation is captured in photographs that are reproduced in an article, which promotes the house museum that the representation is based on.

<sup>304</sup> It is not surprising that while focusing on models we encounter other, more "geometric" or pragmatic, representations of home such as floor plans and blueprints. Dated blueprints, like series of dated models or photographs, show when houses were enlarged, how rooms were re-purposed and when grounds were expanded or sold off. Floor plans are customarily used in house museums to mark fire escape routes and help visitors navigate the spaces of an unfamiliar interior. Some house museums in Canada are composed of over forty rooms, making such maps necessary, especially where guided tours are not offered. Like the models, these plans make it possible to see the house as a whole, to identify where one stands in relation to the rest of the house. Self-guided tour documents, such as those provided at Château Ramezay and Lougheed House, mark routes that ensure the visitor will see all the exhibition rooms and absorb the narrative in the proper sequence. These function somewhat differently than the evacuation floor plans that are commonly posted on walls, although they may look similar at times.

lifetime, developing from concept to maturity in the present.”<sup>305</sup> The project coordinator, Allen Penney, relied on photographs, drawings and the preserved building, to date these changes and craft his series of miniature homes.<sup>306</sup> The simplified and scaled down miniatures enable visitors to understand facets of the domestic dwelling that are not always immediately apparent when viewing the extant house. Just as it is difficult to think about a house’s longevity and its progress through time when restorations obscure traces of its past (think of the Dunsmuir’s drawing room at Craighdarroch Castle), it is nearly impossible for the house museum visitor to date additions and alterations to the house without the assistance of supplementary illustrations (like the Castle’s “snapshots”).

House museums, like the historical photographs and built-models discussed here, are representations of homes of the past. They are created through references to other home representations (blueprints, photos, models) and conversely serve as a source of information in the production of their copies. The examples above detail a symbiotic relationship between the house museum and other home representations.

House museums also display miniature homes that are not based on their own structures or interiors. These often play a special role in connecting the house museum to broader patterns of home design and construction. A model at Maison Chevalier, made by Raynald Bilodeau, is described as a structure that “represents the interior furnishings of a Québec home in the second half of the nineteenth century” [Fig. 2.29].<sup>307</sup> It is part of the exhibition, *A Sense of the Past*, which invites the museum-goer to discover a series of staged

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<sup>305</sup> Allen Penney, “Introduction.” *Clifton. The Thomas Chandler Haliburton House, Windsor, Nova Scotia* (19 May 2005), museum didactic, Haliburton House Museum, October 2012.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid.

<sup>307</sup> Museum didactic, Maison Chevalier, October 2012. The model belongs to the Musée de la civilisation and was a gift of Raynald Bilodeau (no. 2006-422).



“nineteenth century working class and bourgeois interiors.”<sup>308</sup> Unlike the Craigdarroch model, Richards’ cottage and Penney’s maquettes, it focuses more on the interior than on an architectural style or a house’s overall dimensions. Bilodeau has included wallpapers, floor coverings and decorative trim. The viewer is able to see into the model house in much the same way that they look beyond the stanchions into the various rooms that make up the exhibition. The presence of this model in the museum indicates that the Maison Chevalier has been incorporated into a larger narrative about living in Québec in the 1800s. The museum is not simply about a single home or family. It is a museum of domestic life.



Figure 2.26: Spencer Pincott’s model of Heritage House Museum (Photo by author, 1 October 2012). The photocopied article is present on the model’s roof and two paintings of the house are positioned above it.

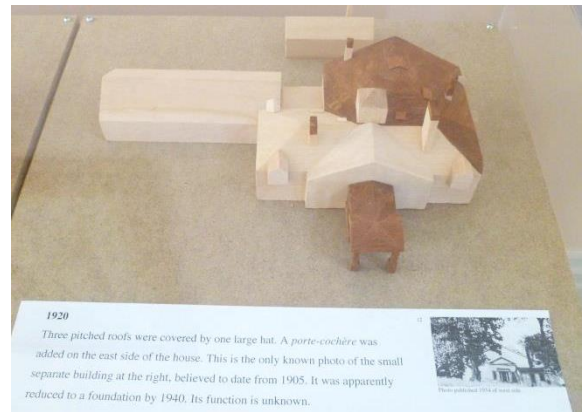


Figure 2.27: Detail of Allen Penney’s display at Haliburton House Museum. Notice the photograph reproduced beneath the maquette (Photo by author, 4 October 2012).



Figure 2.28: A display showing the way Haliburton House’s structure and grounds have changed over the years, Haliburton House Museum (Photo by author, 4 October 2012).



Figure 2.29: A model home made by Raynald Bilodeau at Maison Chevalier (Photo by author, 2 October 2012).

<sup>308</sup> “Découvrez, à l’étage, des intérieurs populaires et bourgeois du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle,” museum didactic, Maison Chevalier, October 2012.

Likewise, a model in the former home of Peter and Catharine Whyte ties the Whyte Museum's heritage home to a series of early log dwellings in Banff, which were seasonal accommodations for backcountry skiers and wilderness enthusiasts in the Rocky Mountain region during the 1930s. The miniature log cabin represents Skoki Ski Lodge, which was founded by Clifford Whyte and Cyril Paris, and maintained by The Ski Club of the Canadian Rockies [Fig. 2.30].<sup>309</sup> At its inception the Lodge was a "single-storey cabin constructed with unscribed spruce logs with saddle-notched corners."<sup>310</sup> Designed and erected by local builder Earl Spencer, it was expanded through mid-1930s by Jim Boyce, the Lodge's manager and a builder, purveyor and guide.<sup>311</sup> Today, the lodge stands as an early example of Rustic Design.<sup>312</sup>

The log cabin model is dated to the early 1930s and was made by Charlie Hunter from photographs that he had acquired through Jim Boyce.<sup>313</sup> Boyce was the model's original owner and was responsible for passing it on to Catharine Whyte.<sup>314</sup> The model must have had sentimental value for the Whytes who were both avid skiers with a personal connection to the Lodge.<sup>315</sup> In the winter of 1932 Peter, Cliff's younger brother, and Catharine took over

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<sup>309</sup> It is perhaps more well-known, today, as the remote getaway location visited by Kate Middleton and Prince William for their honeymoon in 2011 (Rebecca English, "A Throne Fit for a King! William and Kate Get Their Own Loo and Bath with Fake Bronze Claw Feet for Romantic Night at Mountain Lodge." *Mail Online*, 8 July 2011, accessed 29 June 2013, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2012644/Kate-Middleton-Prince-William-bathroom-fake-bronze-claw-feet.html>).

<sup>310</sup> "National Historic Sites in the Mountain National Parks, Skoki Ski Lodge National Historic Site of Canada," *Parks Canada* webpage (2009), [http://www.pc.gc.ca/docs/v-g/pm-mp/lhn-nhs/skoki\\_e.asp](http://www.pc.gc.ca/docs/v-g/pm-mp/lhn-nhs/skoki_e.asp) (accessed 29 June 2013).

<sup>311</sup> "Skoki Ski Lodge National Historic Site of Canada," *Historicplaces.ca*, <http://lieuxpatrimoniaux.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=2030> (accessed 29 June 2013).

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.* In 1992, Skoki Ski lodge was designated as a National Historic Site because of its design and its association "with tourism development and outdoor recreation in the national park." (*Ibid.*)

<sup>313</sup> "Photo #10" excerpt from museum guidebook for the heritage homes, catalogued as 101.01.0008, Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, 2013.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.* For more on the history of Skoki see [http://www.pc.gc.ca/docs/v-g/pm-mp/lhn-nhs/skoki\\_e.asp](http://www.pc.gc.ca/docs/v-g/pm-mp/lhn-nhs/skoki_e.asp).

<sup>315</sup> The Whyte Museum's webpage reports that "Pete had been an active ski jumper in his youth, and Catherine was quite outdoors oriented" ("Heritage Homes. The Whyte Home" *Our Collections. Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies* website, <http://www.whyte.org/collections/homes/whyte.html> (accessed 29 June 2013)). The couple was accustomed to spending the warm spring and summer months in the Rockies.

management of the Skoki Lodge. They oversaw the establishment during that winter and between February and April of the following year.<sup>316</sup>

The miniature cabin not only speaks to the Whytes' affiliation with early ski tourism in Alberta. It also connects the Whyte Home at the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies to the larger Rustic Design tradition. In fact, in 1927, four years before the Lodge was opened to the public, Peter and Catharine had approached Earl Spencer with designs for their own log home-studio [Fig. 2.31].<sup>317</sup> While Spencer was busy building their home, the Whytes had ventured to the Skoki region for an extended ski trip.<sup>318</sup> Their home represents the log building tradition, which makes use of local materials, horizontal construction patterns and simple room configurations. Like the Lodge, its main floor is designed with a kitchen, dining room and sitting room while the bedroom is situated above. In addition to sharing similar rustic interiors, both dwellings are supported by round logs, exhibit exterior stone chimneys and receive natural light through small, multi-light windows.<sup>319</sup> The model of Skoki Ski Lodge, therefore, finds a suitable home in the studio-cabin turned heritage home museum. It whispers of the personal relationships that the Whytes maintained with guides and builders like Jim Boyce and Earl Spencer and points to a style that defined residential architecture in early Banff. The rustically designed cabin is part of the "visual identity of the mountain parks" in Alberta, and the Whyte House demonstrates that the style was embraced by Banff's early inhabitants.<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> "Heritage Homes." <http://www.whyte.org/collections/homes/whyte.html>. After a tragic ski accident resulted in the death of a British mathematician R.E.A.C. Paley, the Whytes relinquished their role to Boyce (Ibid.).

<sup>317</sup> "Heritage Homes." <http://www.whyte.org/collections/homes/whyte.html>.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> "Skoki Ski Lodge," <http://lieuxpatrimoniaux.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=2030>.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid. The models at Maison Chevalier and the Whyte house say something more about house museums as centres for the study of home and authorities on the histories of residential architecture in Canada. They also provide further support for the claims made in Chapter One about how domestic artifacts have come to rest at house museums (recall Carruthers).



Figure 2.30: Log cabin model of Skoki Lodge, c. 1930, by Charlie Hunter (Photo by author, 19 February 2013).



Figure 2.31: The Whyte Home (Banff, AB), owned by the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies (“Whyte Residence,” *Banff Lodging Company* website, <http://www.bestofbanff.com/ourbanff/heritage.php?location=36> (accessed 11 July 2014)). It is the former home of Peter and Catherine Whyte.

Miniature wooden models inevitably call forth their close relative, the dollhouse.

Dollhouses are representations of home that, according to Susan Broomhall, have roots in both “[c]hild’s play and elite display.”<sup>321</sup> Their predecessors included miniature homes found in Egyptian tombs and European baby houses of the sixteenth century.<sup>322</sup> For the young children and wealthy women who owned early modern dollhouses, the miniature homes provided an escape from “everyday domestic tasks” through “a utopic, controlled version of the household space and its domesticity.”<sup>323</sup> As playthings, dollhouses can be spaces of imagination as well as improvisation, offering opportunities to explore alternative modes of domestic inhabitation. They are, however, paradoxical objects. The Norwegian playwright Henrik Johan Ibsen (1828-1906) famously focused his critical statement on marriage and the family home around the dollhouse motif. Early dollhouses were valuable objects that were often lorded over by the adults of the house, who strove to keep the fine miniature interiors away from the careless, grubby hands of children. The miniature homes, with their tiny

<sup>321</sup> Susan Broomhall, “Imagined Domesticities in Early Modern Dutch Dollhouses,” *Parergon* 24, 2 (2007), 50.

<sup>322</sup> Frances Armstrong, “The Dollhouse as Ludic Space, 1690-1920,” *Children’s Literature* 24 (1996), 24.

<sup>323</sup> Broomhall, “Imagined Domesticities,” 64-65.

pieces of furniture and inanimate inhabitants were forums easily controlled. For these reasons, the dollhouse has been viewed as a symbol of female repression and restriction tied to notions of imposition, compliance and training.

While some dollhouses were built as toys for house-play others were more like commissioned artworks for wealthy collectors. Certain dollhouses were designed to instruct children on the organization of household spaces—to show the layout of the house and individual rooms (living rooms, bedroom, etc.). These were educative rather than ludic objects.<sup>324</sup> As Broomhall writes, a dollhouse “could serve as a useful tool to demonstrate household duties and proper domestic order to young children”<sup>325</sup> An attentive student could come to appreciate the amount of work required to tend to a fully-furnished and lavishly-adorned set of interiors and could role-play future responsibilities.

Much like the house museum, the dollhouse has been regarded with some mistrust as a historical record of private, domestic life. Broomhall points out that “[d]ollhouses have...drawn scholarly attention from art historians, who are interested in what the cabinets may indicate about contemporary tastes and trends in domestic furnishing and clothing.”<sup>326</sup> Yet, like other representations of home, dollhouses mimic real residences and interior design trends at the same time as they give form to romantic ideas. Their associations with fancy and imagination, however, have meant that “[s]uch artefacts have rarely been considered a source for historic perceptions of households and family in scholarly analyses.”<sup>327</sup> Broomhall stresses that there is always a question of reliability based on the awareness that representations of home (factual and utopic) inform one another. In line with the arguments presented earlier in this chapter, she observes that:

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<sup>324</sup> Armstrong, “The Dollhouse,” n.p. I am borrowing Armstrong’s term here.

<sup>325</sup> Broomhall, “Imagined Domesticities,” 50.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

Dutch dollhouses have been not infrequently cited as evidence to suggest the interior furnishings of early modern Dutch houses. Art historian Nanette Salomon has critiqued a similar trend in the perception of Dutch domestic painting for, as she argues, these works, and Jan Steen's vision of 'domesticity' particularly 'were far from disinterested and accidental reflections of contemporary mores'...For both dollhouses and paintings, visual immediacy has often been dangerously beguiling to scholars of the Golden Age.<sup>328</sup>

Where a dollhouse might be used to interpret an interior of the past, a historic home or a painting may have provided hints to dollhouse makers in the process of furnishing miniature interiors. If following this series of influences leads Broomhall to "question whether dollhouses can be read so neatly as historical mirrors providing descriptive evidence of upper-class homes," then what can be said about house museums as sites where the interiors of the past are shown "as they were"?<sup>329</sup> Dollhouses according to James E. Bryan are "representations of human environments wherein lives may be imagined, possession held, and existence shaped in ways perhaps unavailable in full scale."<sup>330</sup> It could also be argued that the house museum is precisely the place where these things occur in relation to full-scale homes.

Dollhouses have a place in the house museum because they are representations that fit with the broader themes of homemaking and home (dis)play. They also bring to the surface the same kinds of representational issues, paradoxes and practices that define the house museum. Recording the histories of dollhouses has typically fallen to museum curators and art historians. It is, according to Broomhall, "in this context" that "published literature has debated appropriate preservation as well as display techniques for the surviving houses."<sup>331</sup> House museum professionals can become

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<sup>328</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid.

<sup>330</sup> James E. Bryan III, *Material Culture in Miniature: Historic Dollhouses Reconsidered* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2003), 2, in Broomhall, "Imagined Domesticities," 49.

<sup>331</sup> Broomhall, "Imagined Domesticities," 48.

active contributors to the development of these bodies of literature. Tracking their dollhouses' provenances is a starting point.

Little is known about the dollhouse at Mackin House Museum (Coquitlam, BC) or the conditions which led to its acquisition. Produced by Frank Owen Shannon (1923-1995) between 1984 and 1990, as a sixtieth birthday gift for his wife Doris, the so-called "Dower House" had never been on display to the public prior to August of 2004.<sup>332</sup> After being taken into the house museum's collection, it was put on show in what is now the boarder's room, as an exhibit somewhat disconnected from the period rooms in the rest of the house. It has since been re-positioned as the centrepiece of an exhibition of toys dating from circa 1890 to 1950 [Fig. 2.32].

Dower House is displayed on a table in the toy exhibit alongside a copy of *American Miniaturist* magazine. The magazine includes an article that explains Frank's relationship with the dollhouse as its maker and Doris's relationship with the piece as its heritor [Fig. 2.33]. The author of the feature in *American Miniaturist* commends Frank's dedicated craftsmanship and details the rooms of his six-foot-long creation.<sup>333</sup> She dubs Frank a "hobby builder," describing him as a man who frequently kept himself entertained by designing and making furniture for his "real size" home.<sup>334</sup> The reader is told that, as Frank aged, and "[c]onstruction using heavy materials" became "difficult," he turned to the dollhouse.<sup>335</sup> These comments position the dollhouse as a by-product and extension of his DIY work on a grander scale. Frank's story offers

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<sup>332</sup> Dower House plaque, Mackin House Museum, May 2013; Bonnie Morrison, "Frank leaves his wife with legacy of love," in conversation with Doris Shannon, *American Miniaturist* 16 (August 2004), 10. It was around this time that plans for the dollhouse to "take up full-time residence at the City of Vancouver's Museum" emerged (Morrison, "Frank leaves," 14). I found no record of why it came to Mackin House Museum instead.

<sup>333</sup> "Frank built all the furnishings in the same manner that full-size counterparts would have been constructed and all drawers are in working order" (Morrison, "Frank leaves," 13).

<sup>334</sup> Morrison, "Frank leaves," 10.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*



information about dollhouse making just as texts at McCrae House and Heritage House Museum speak of Richard's and Pincott's approaches to model making, and the pictures at Craigdarroch Castle and Prescott House and Gardens initiate discussions about the “ins” and “outs” of domestic photography.



Figure 2.32: Dower House at Mackin House Museum (Photo by author, 21 May 2013). Notice the copy of *American Miniaturist* on the dollhouse table.



Figure 2.33: A page from the *American Miniaturist* article on the Dower House (Photo by author, 21 May 2013).

If Dower House and the Shannon home are affiliated as the projects of a hobby builder, they are also brought into conversation in through segments that explain the way the dollhouse was installed by Doris. The article mentions that Mrs. Shannon displayed her gift in between her living and dining rooms to encourage viewing from all four sides. The dollhouse was a display piece within the family home. It can be similarly circled in its current placement in the house museum [Fig. 2.34].<sup>336</sup> Displaying the *American Miniaturist* magazine with the Dower House affirms Broomhall's assertion that “[d]ollhouses existed in the textual and visual, as well as material, realm.”<sup>337</sup> As a text that describes, historicizes and pictures the dollhouse, it

<sup>336</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>337</sup> Broomhall, “Imagined Domesticities,” 63-64.



brings information about the makers, patrons and collectors of the object into the learning spaces of the museum.<sup>338</sup> It highlights the connection between the dollhouse, as a representation of home, and the Shannon's real, lived-in dwelling within the space of the house museum.

Studying dollhouses within house museums reveals correlations between the way house museums are preserved and managed and dollhouses are cared for by their owners. Dollhouse owners like house museum curators rethink interior arrangements, improvise their own narratives, introduce new furnishings and preserve the house for future generations of users. These toys and collector's pieces reflect certain individualities and social stations just as house museums reflect the ideological positions of their former owners or the curatorial stances of their administrators.<sup>339</sup> Like house museums, dollhouse interiors are subject to change, although this change might not occur as regularly as in an actual home. Some owners freeze their dollhouses at a particular moment, as if establishing a period of focus. Furthermore, many modern "dollhouses were meticulously inventoried."<sup>340</sup> Broomhall refers to one owner by the name of Sara Rothé whose "notebooks listed the contents of her houses as she commissioned, added or moved objects between rooms."<sup>341</sup> If dollhouses provided training grounds for young women, and designated the home as a place of their making and

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<sup>338</sup> As a point of comparison, Myrtleville House Museum (Brantford, ON) contains a dollhouse that belonged to Anne Good (1831-1918) [Fig. 2.35]. It is set beside a table that exhibits miniature furniture and dishware. In the printed tour guide little is said about how the house was made. Rather, the young girl's playhouse is briefly connected to the Good's historic house by virtue of its age: "The dollhouse is as old as Myrtleville House itself. It was purchased in 1837 in Montreal, and was given to Anne on her fifth birthday by her Father, Allen" ("Exploring Upstairs: A written tour of the second story of Myrtleville House Museum," guidebook, Myrtleville House Museum, September 2012). If, through its connection with the *American Miniaturist's* article, Dower House makes museum-goers think of the production and display of miniature homes, the Good's dollhouse is related to consumption. Within the context of a family home, which emphasizes the Good's lineage using family trees and dated portraits, the dollhouse's status as an heirloom also becomes a potential topic for discussion. Family traditions often saw fine dollhouses handed down from mother to daughter or grandmother to granddaughter (Armstrong, "The Dollhouse," 26).

<sup>339</sup> Armstrong, "The Dollhouse," 24.

<sup>340</sup> Broomhall, "Imagined Domesticities," 65.

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.*

responsibility, it is neither surprising nor coincidental that it was women who first became involved in the establishment and custodianship of early house museums in countries like the United States.<sup>342</sup>



Figure 2.34: The Dower House as the centrepiece of the toy exhibition at Mackin House Museum (Photo by author, 21 May 2013).



Figure 2.35: Anne Good's dollhouse, Myrtleville House Museum (Photo by author, 14 September 2012).

Dollhouses and model homes connect homes rendered by the museum field with those constructed by hobbyists, furnished by imaginative children, guarded by collectors and modelled within the field of architecture. Within the house museum, these miniature houses offer a complex vision that both mimics and deconstructs the museumified house beyond it. A dollhouse that is situated in a private home as a display object or toy is always understood and activated in relation to the actual home that surrounds it. Similarly, a reading of the dollhouse may change in the context of a house museum. These representations of home are rich sources for the exploration of ideas about a) the dollhouse as a family heirloom and a feature of the family home, b) the potentialities for play in or instruction through material houses, c) the maintenance, rearrangement and narrativization of home environments and d) the reliability of home representations for scholars of the domestic past. It is up to the house

<sup>342</sup> More examples of the roles women played in establishing house museums are discussed in Chapter Four.

museum to cultivate these possibilities—to help visitors and academics draw knowledge from their forms.

## II.V. Faraway Homes and Imagined Interiors

Canada's house museums include depictions of faraway homes and imagined interiors, as well as representations bearing their own likeness and tracking their own pasts. Pictures or diagrams of homes with similar and contrasting architectural styles are used to explain the exterior features and regional trademarks that make specific house museums worthy of preservation [Fig. 2.36].<sup>343</sup> Sometimes an artist's depiction of an interior is showcased because it encompasses the spirit or feel of the type of room which has been recast as a museum exhibit [Figs. 2.37 & 2.38].<sup>344</sup> Sketches and photographs of a family's first home may be displayed in a house museum (a museumified later home) because it facilitates discussion about the family's changing fortunes or a decision to relocate.

The homes of R.J. Uniacke, Robert Dunsmuir, William Irving and Joshua Bates, which have all become museums, are thought to have been modelled on other residences. Mount Uniacke is compared to Mount Uniacke in Cork, Ireland, which belonged to the Uniacke family as early as 1703 and was consumed by fire in 1923. This family seat is pictured in the dining room at Uniacke Estate Museum Park [Fig. 2.39]. Below the image of

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<sup>343</sup> The visitor centre at Bellevue House displays an image of Roselawn House, a residence built in the Georgian Style just shortly after Bellevue was constructed as an Italianate Villa by Charles Hales (Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada plaque, Roselawn, [http://www.ontarioplaques.com/Plaques/Plaque\\_Frontenac35.html](http://www.ontarioplaques.com/Plaques/Plaque_Frontenac35.html) (accessed 10 July 2013)) [Fig. 2.36]. At the time of Bellevue's construction the Italianate style, which developed out of the Picturesque movement, was thought strange in Kingston, ON. At the site, the characteristics of the Italianate villa (variety of form, oblique and uneven lines, asymmetry, etc.) are listed just below an image of Bellevue House. The contrasting qualities of the Georgian Style (purity of forms, subtle colouration, balance, symmetry, etc.) are summarized beneath the image of Roselawn. These two residences, both erected in Kingston around the same time, are juxtaposed to show how "out of place" Bellevue would have appeared to the city's residents (Visitors-centre display, Bellevue House, September 2012).

<sup>344</sup> For example, at the Maison Chevalier a common room circa 1800-1850 is reconstructed using artifacts from the collection of the Musée de la civilisation [Fig. 2.37]. On the partially cutaway fourth wall of this period room is a reproduction of a painting by Cornelius Krieghoff, *Canadian Habitants Playing at Cards* [Fig. 2.38]. This artwork shows "A lively common room," a recreational space filled with family and friends. The painting brings the scene of the common room to life. This type of set up shows that house museums draw on representations of home from various Canadian institutions to augment their staged scenes. This makes house museums exceptionally valuable to the study of images of home in our country.

Uniacke's family abode is a reproduction of an artwork depicting the townhouse that he owned in Halifax (built ca. 1790s) before moving to the estate.<sup>345</sup> The house museum at Uniacke Estate Museum Park is therefore connected to its predecessors. The representations of Uniacke's earlier homes remind visitors that historic homes in Canada reflect the influence of European and American domestic architectures. The comparison between the trans-Atlantic Mount Uniackes highlights the attempts made by European settlers to see the comforts of "Old World" homes re-established in the "New World." Crucial to an understanding of the historic homes across Canada are investigations of the European interiors and architectures that constitute their precedents.

A grand symbol of Robert Dunsmuir's accumulated wealth and his influence in British Columbia, Craigdarroch Castle is thought of as an early Canadian version of a "bonanza castle."<sup>346</sup> Bonanza castles were expansive homes "built for men who became wealthy because of the industrial transformation of North America."<sup>347</sup> During the 1880s Robert Dunsmuir had become involved in discussions about funding an island line of the railroad that would extend tracks from Esquimalt to Nanaimo.<sup>348</sup> The conditions of British Columbia's entry into Confederation included the joining of the new province and its recently consolidated Island community with the rest of Canada via a transcontinental railway. By 1874 plans had changed. Vancouver Island would see only the establishment of an island line and its residents felt the terms of their union had been broken. In 1881 and 1882 Dunsmuir drafted contracts and secured financing for the Esquimalt and Nanaimo

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<sup>345</sup> In its guidebook, Irving House is compared to a similar house that the family owned in Portland, Oregon, as well as to the Gothic Revival Yeo House (built in 1865 in Prince Edward Island).

<sup>346</sup> Terry Reksten, *The Dunsmuir Saga* (Vancouver, BC; Toronto, ON: Douglas & McIntyre, 1991), 19.

<sup>347</sup> "About Craigdarroch Castle," *Craigdarroch Castle* website, <http://thecastle.ca/about-the-castle/> (accessed 23 September 2013).

<sup>348</sup> Reksten, *The Dunsmuir Saga*, 56.

Railway. He reached out to the surviving members of the “Big Four”—the American railway tycoons Charles Crocker, Leland Stanford and Collis P. Huntington (Mark Hopkins passed away in 1878).<sup>349</sup> The men were convinced to invest in Dunsmuir’s railroad, which could be linked to an American line that would run through Washington and Oregon in the future.<sup>350</sup>

Dunsmuir’s business partners were the richest men in California. They used their personal fortunes to grow the cities of the American West and to construct extravagant mansions atop San Francisco’s Nob Hill.<sup>351</sup> Terry Reksten comments that during the 1870s the four men “had scrambled to outdo each other, competing for the best building sites...and then endeavouring to build houses of uniquely eyestopping extravagance and grandeur.”<sup>352</sup> Dunsmuir had been exposed to these residences and, through the construction of Craigdarroch Castle, seemed to take part in what Reksten refers to as a “house as monument” battle.<sup>353</sup> In selecting a 28-acre plot of land overlooking the city of Victoria and with views of the Strait of Juan de Fuca and the Olympic Mountains, the location of the Dunsmuir home would rival that of the “Big Four’s.”<sup>354</sup> Mark Hopkins’ mansion with its mixture of architectural styles is pictured on a panel in Craigdarroch Castle that speaks to the topic of “Land Acquisition” [Fig. 2.40]. The Castle’s Presentation Plan indicates the desire for the Dunsmuir’s former home to be contextualized alongside “[c]omparable houses on the West Coast, in the USA, in Scotland, and elsewhere.”<sup>355</sup> Photographs of these homes that provided models for Dunsmuir are therefore featured in the exhibition spaces.

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<sup>349</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid.

<sup>351</sup> “Land Acquisition,” museum panel, Craigdarroch Castle, May 2013; Reksten, *The Dunsmuir Saga*, 19.

<sup>352</sup> Reksten, *The Dunsmuir Saga*, 19.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid.

<sup>354</sup> “Land Acquisition” museum panel.

<sup>355</sup> “Part 2: Thematic Outline and Storyline,” 9.



Figure 2.36: Segments of a panel contrasting the forms of an Italianate Villa and a Georgian Style home at Bellevue House NHSC (Photo by author, 29 September 2012). Bellevue House represents the Italianate and Roselawn House illustrates the Georgian Style.



Figure 2.37: The common room at Maison Chevalier. The display is part of the *A Sense of the Past* exhibition (Photo by author, 2 October 2012).



Figure 2.38: Cornelius Krieghoff's *French Canadian Habitants Playing at Cards* (1848), a painting reproduced in the Maison Chevalier because it depicts life in the common room ("Collections," *National Gallery of Canada* website, <http://www.gallery.ca/en/see/collections/artwork.php?mkey=38584> (accessed 11 July 2014). Image archived as 30821, National Gallery of Canada).



Figure 2.39: A panel at Uniacke Estate Museum Park showing Mount Uniacke in Cork (*above*) and the townhouse of R.J. Uniacke in Halifax (*below*) (Photo by author, 8 October 2012).



Figure 2.40: Mark Hopkins' residence in San Francisco as shown in a display image at Craighdarroch Castle (Photo by author, 17 May 2013). Historical image also reproduced in Reksten, *Craighdarroch*, 20).

The family homes that were built after Craigdarroch, bearing similar features, are also pictured at the museum. The visitor learns about Fairview, Robert Dunsmuir's first home in Victoria, but they are also told about Mount Adelaide, the home of Henry and Mary Croft, which Mary's mother, Joan Dunsmuir, held the mortgage on; Ashnola, the home of another of the Dunsmuir daughters, Emily, and her husband Northing Snowden; James Dunsmuir's Departure Bay home, his Queen Anne mansion, Burleith (Victoria B.C.), the medieval-inspired Hatley Park, designed by Samuel Maclure for James; and Dunsmuir House, built in 1898 in California by Alexander Dunsmuir. The house museum is, therefore, part of a network of representations, which includes images of the homes that they were modelled after as well as those they inspired. When we think of Craigdarroch Castle in relation to Fairview and the homes of the Dunsmuir children we are reminded of how people and their collections of domestic belongings move from home to home. The house museum becomes more firmly positioned in relation to other homes because they are visually present.<sup>356</sup>

The examples of Mount Uniacke in Cork and San Francisco's bonanza castles show that architects in Canada were often aware of the types of houses in Europe and the United States. For the most part, builders got their ideas from such houses, although on occasion they would refer to visual models provided in popular periodicals. A number of Canada's house museums were constructed according to plans found in these kinds of texts. Their original owners selected the appearance and features of their homes from the illustrated pages of such publications. In the kitchen at Shand House Museum, a copy of *Shoppell's*

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<sup>356</sup> House museum archives are also frequently rich repositories of representations of home. They contain newspaper clippings, local feature articles, compendiums of hefty history books, glossy magazines and small-run, in-house publications produced by the house museum staff over the years. These documents—along with old guidebooks, tour information and planning documents—include the types of drawings, photographs and diagrams that are found in the house museum's exhibits. The reproduced images of the house-museum-display often find their originals in these archives.

*Modern Houses* from 1887 is displayed to draw attention to the way these images of home influenced Canadians' visions of their own dwellings [Fig. 2.41].

In the 1880s, R.W. Shoppell had turned to periodical publications for the dissemination of his home designs. The “illustrated architectural quarterly” was first published in January of 1886.<sup>357</sup> The focus of pages within these architectural pattern books and plan catalogues were the perspective views of the house designs, elaborated by additional insets, frames or detailed background scenes [Fig. 2.42].<sup>358</sup> These prints were accompanied by simple floor plans that were usually positioned beneath the perspective drawing and design number, and amidst text describing the design's room sizes, required materials, basic costs and optional special features costs (for things like heaters, sliding doors, etc.).<sup>359</sup> Customers could purchase the plans and, according to their particular wishes and the materials locally at hand, work with the builders to modify the house design.

These representations of home refer to a pivotal moment in the history of residential architecture. Design catalogues allowed architects to inform the tastes of a middle class who would not have otherwise been willing (or able) to pay for the services of professional architects. And, they gave middle-class consumers an economical way of ordering and building their own homes.<sup>360</sup> These publications facilitated the development (and dramatically influenced the look) of many suburbs and cities in Canada and North America from the mid-1800s into the first decades of the twentieth century. Like Shand House Museum, a number of house museums in the provinces of British Columbia and Ontario therefore speak to the

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<sup>357</sup> James L. Garvin, “Mail-Order House Plans and American Victorian Architecture,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 16, 4 (Winter 1981), 316.

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*, 309.

<sup>359</sup> Mary N. Woods, *From Craft to Profession: The Practice of Architecture in Nineteenth-century America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 84.

<sup>360</sup> Although the Tillsons wealth surpassed that of the average middle-class family in Ontario during the late nineteenth century, they selected a design from a catalogue like Shoppell's and built Annandale House using materials and labourers from E.D. Tillson's companies.



processes of purchasing and constructing mail-order homes from the images and plans disseminated by Shoppell's, Eaton's and Sears Roebuck.<sup>361</sup>



Figure 2.41: A copy of Shoppell's on display at Shand House Museum (Photo by author, 4 October 2012).

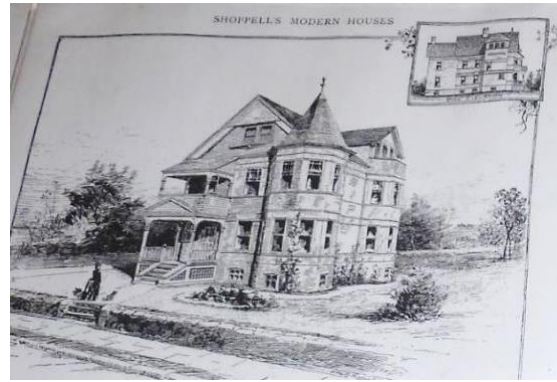


Figure 2.42: Design No. 458 Perspective View (Photo by the author, 4 October 2012. Inset image from *Shoppell's Modern Houses*, edited by Donald J. Berg (1887), 15, Shand House Museum Collection, 728.309034 S55).

If Canada's historic homes were fashioned according to the designs in catalogues, the look and style of the catalogue illustration has continued to inform the way historic residences are pictured by Canadian artists. I offer three examples from the gift shops at Irving House (New Westminster, BC) and Annandale House (Tillsonburg, ON) to illustrate this argument.<sup>362</sup> The visitor who departs from Irving House's museum gift shop with a copy of *Irving House: A Family History* (1988)—a short illustrated text including information about the Irving family—is sure to notice the cover illustration reproduced from a drawing by Bob Sheridan [Fig. 2.43]. Sheridan rendered many of British Columbia's historic wooden

<sup>361</sup> Early twentieth century housing in Vancouver is defined by the relative variety represented in these catalogues and shows examples of the standardization resulting from identical house designs.

<sup>362</sup> Renderings of the home are available for purchase in many house museum gift shops. At Craigdarroch Castle, architectural drawings are reproduced on magnets, photographs of the floodlit mansion are made into place mats or reproduced on decals, key chains, decks of cards, notepads, thimbles and shot glasses. A colouring book, written and illustrated by Steve Roper, playfully represents a crooked and angular castle with flatly-rendered panes and recesses suited to basic colouring. Whether these souvenirs end up in the kitchen, the rec room or the sewing room, they are meant to find a new home in the residences of the visitors. The display shelves of the gift shops convincingly further the claim that within house museums representations of home multiply.

buildings in pen and ink during the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>363</sup> He represents Irving House from an angle, with paths leading to its entrance and yard, and a hedge lining the front of the property. This composition resembles that of “Design No. 458” in Shoppell’s catalogue, even though the houses differ architecturally [Fig. 2.42]. Resembling Sheridan’s artwork is a series of pen and ink prints by Dave Simpson, which are also available for purchase at Irving House’s gift shop. Simpson depicts historic homes from the areas surrounding the house museum: the house at 131 – 8<sup>th</sup> Street in New Westminster (built by Hugh Galbraith circa 1884), the J.R. Gilley residence (built in 1907) and the former home of Marion Sutherland at 1009 Cornwall Street (built by Alex Matheson sometime before 1895) [Fig. 2.44].<sup>364</sup>

Stylistically, these pieces recall Sheridan’s drawing. The example included here shows a home flanked by only a few quickly-sketched trees. Compositionally, Sheridan’s hedge is replaced by a stone wall. The limited foregrounds and backgrounds ensure that the houses remain the focal points. Similarly, in Ross Logan’s depiction of Annandale House, which has been reproduced on card sets and as prints, the historic home is set on a shallow expanse of grass with a spattering of trees [Fig. 2.45]. The fence that runs behind the house counters the house’s vertical configuration, much like the horizontal hedges and stone wall in the preceding images. In their composition and use of line these representations resemble the perspective views of houses in Shoppell’s catalogues.

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<sup>363</sup> Bob Sheridan, “The Beginning of a Journey in Art,” *Bob Sheridan AFCA* webpage, <https://artists.ca/gallery/sheridan.html> (accessed 8 June 2014).

<sup>364</sup> Of the homes depicted, the ones that survive are within a two and a half kilometers radius of Irving House, making them especially easy to visit. On the reverse of these prints, the artist includes the residences’ addresses, the approximate date of their erection and the builders’ names as well as the names of noteworthy inhabitants. Finding Simpson’s drawings in the gift shop reiterates the link between heritage houses and the house museums discussed in Chapter One.



Figure 2.43: Bob Sheridan's cover sketch of Irving House (Archie Miller and Valerie Francis, *Irving House: A Family History* (New Westminster, BC: Irving House Historic Centre, 1988), cover). The picture was originally created in 1982.



Figure 2.44: Dave Simpson's pen and ink print of 131-8<sup>th</sup> Street, New Westminster, BC (Original scanned by author). This is only one piece of the series that was on sale.



Figure 2.45: A gift card featuring Ross Logan's depiction of Annandale House (Original scanned by author).

## II.VI. Artists' Depictions: Before and After Museumification

Gaston Bachelard argues, in *The Poetics of Space*, that the imaging consciousness or productive imagination is an origin for many domestic reveries, poetic visions of home and poetic images of home.<sup>365</sup> The drawings of Bob Sheridan, Dave Simpson and Ross Logan offer only a few examples of the way historic houses in Canada have functioned as sources of cultural inspiration. For hundreds of years, Canadian landscape painters and amateur

<sup>365</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas, foreword by Étienne Gilson, (New York, NY: Orion Press, 1964), n.p.

artists have been inspired by the impressive, imposing homes of figures like Richard John Uniacke and Jean Mauvide. Artworks depicting these early Canadian estates illustrate how artistic traditions in Canada have distended and influenced the network of images of home over the last three centuries.

To begin with, consider two sketches of Mount Uniacke by Scottish-born artist and architect, John Elliott Woolford (1778-1866) [Figs 2.46 & 2.47]. Both works are introduced by the curator of *Lord Dalhousie. Patron and Collector* (National Gallery of Canada, 2008), René Villeneuve, in the exhibition's catalogue:

Woolford made two sketches of the estate in the summer of 1817. For the first view, in order to capture the property's atmosphere, he positioned himself at the edge of the road as it enters the clearing where the buildings are located. The stone wall forms a sinuous line that directs our gaze to a chapel, a great two-storey house, a carriage house, and an octagonal stable that stand in front of a hill at the centre of the composition. ... The second sketch provides a clearer picture of the estate's layout. Working from the edge of Martha's Lake, the artist has left the wilderness in the background to focus on the boathouse and the face of the house that gives onto the garden and grounds, which are reflected in the lake that occupies the entire foreground.<sup>366</sup>

The drawings described by Villeneuve were generated at the behest of George Ramsay, the ninth Earl of Dalhousie. Woolford came to Canada from Europe in 1816 to act as the official draughtsman to the Earl, who had recently been named the Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia.<sup>367</sup>

Lord Dalhousie travelled extensively through Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, surveying the land under his authority, and kept journal accounts of the towns, structures and natural features that he passed. Commenting on these official travels, and his rationale for bringing Woolford along, Ramsay wrote: "It is impossible to describe [the country] otherwise than by pencil, and I am glad I have brought my draftsman Woolford with me. He

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<sup>366</sup> René Villeneuve, *Lord Dalhousie. Patron and Collector* (Ottawa, ON: National Gallery of Canada, 2008), 115.

<sup>367</sup> Marie Elwood, "John Elliott Woolford," *Canadian Encyclopedia* (25 May 2008), last updated 16 December 2013, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/john-elliott-woolford> (accessed 11 June 2013).

shall be kept hard at work during my rambles in Canada, so that hereafter I may refer to his sketches for the beauties of the Country.”<sup>368</sup> On their first expeditions Woolford generated two sketchbooks (dated 1817 and 1818) that presented the artist’s impressions of the Maritime landscape and its architectural features.<sup>369</sup> Together, Woolford and Dalhousie furnished an image of Eastern Canada during the early years following European settlement.



Figure 2.46: John Elliott Woolford, *Mount Uniacke*, 1817. Monochrome watercolour over graphite on ivory wove paper (Villeneuve, *Lord Dalhousie*, 116. Image archived as 78.45.59, History Collection, Nova Scotia Museum, Halifax).



Figure 2.47: John Elliott Woolford, *View of Uniacke Estate*, 1817. Wash drawing (“Woolford Prints,” *Uniacke Estate Museum Park* website, <http://uniacke.novascotia.ca/about-uniacke-estate/woolford-prints> (accessed 29 March 2014)).

Lord Dalhousie frequently remarked upon estates he visited while on his voyages. Villeneuve notes that the first of these the Governor would have “encountered... was unquestionably the closest thing to a contemporary British manor to be found in Nova Scotia: Mount Uniacke, the home of Richard John Uniacke, boasting some 4,450 hectares of land around a grand Palladian villa completed in 1815.”<sup>370</sup> Dalhousie describes the estate as follows:

Mount Uniacke is the only Gentleman’s seat on the road, finished last year, has a very comfortable neat appearance...situated on the margin of a fine Lake &

<sup>368</sup> Lord Dalhousie in Villeneuve, *Lord Dalhousie*, 18.

<sup>369</sup> Villeneuve, *Lord Dalhousie*, 19; Loren R. Lerner and Mary F. Williamson, *Art and Architecture in Canada: A Bibliography and Guide to the Literature* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 38. A trip to Niagara Falls prompted the production of a third sketchbook in 1819. Two others, containing imagery from Quebec and Ontario, documented Lord Dalhousie’s travels after he took on the role of governor general in 1820 (Villeneuve, *Lord Dalhousie*, 19; Elwood, “John Elliott Woolford,” <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/john-elliott-woolford>).

<sup>370</sup> Villeneuve, *Lord Dalhousie*, 114.

surrounded by the woody wilderness mixed up with great granite rocks, is a very gentlemanlike, & may in time be a pretty place, but at present has little to recommend it, except the new comfortable house and the cordial hospitality of its Proprietor.<sup>371</sup>

The Earl's comments evoke a home in a "pretty," if somewhat rugged, setting. He suggests potential for the site at the same time as he notes that there is work to be done. Villeneuve attributes Dalhousie's interest in the development of these Canadian estates to his station in Scotland:

As a landed property owner in Scotland – the burden of expenses for construction work at Dalhousie Castle had prompted him to accept the North American posting – Lord Dalhousie was naturally curious about anything in the New World resembling a Scottish or English estate. This led the artists around him to take an interest, and to paint landscapes in which such properties appear.<sup>372</sup>

Dalhousie Castle stood against the backdrop of the Moorfoot hills and the hills of Lammermoor, caught between two streams in rural Midlothian. The castle dates back to the thirteenth century, though its main structure was built in the middle of the fifteenth century. It was expanded as a baronial mansion until the 1900s by the Ramsay family. Given its rural surrounding, Dalhousie Castle may very well have been a point of reference, a standard in Dalhousie's mind, for the newly built Canadian estate.<sup>373</sup> Dalhousie Castle can be found in artworks from 1802 by Alexander Nasmyth, a painter with whom Woolford reportedly studied.<sup>374</sup> Woolford did his own rendition of the castle around the same time and, later in his career, continued to draw the castle from multiple perspectives.<sup>375</sup>

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<sup>371</sup> Lord Dalhousie in Villeneuve, *Lord Dalhousie*, 114.

<sup>372</sup> Villeneuve, *Lord Dalhousie*, 114.

<sup>373</sup> "Dalhousie Castle. The history of this remarkable venue," *Dalhousie Castle* webpage, <http://www.dalhousiecastle.co.uk/index.php/home/history/> (accessed 15 September 2013).

<sup>374</sup> Villeneuve, *Lord Dalhousie*, 47.

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid.*, 48, 50. See John Elliott Woolford, *Dalhousie Castle*, n.d. Toronto Public Library (902.I.34) (Fig. 9, Villeneuve, *Lord Dalhousie*, 49).

Woolford actually painted more than a few residences that Lord Dalhousie occupied over the years, including a property that he rented near Windsor and Government House.<sup>376</sup> After Dalhousie had settled in Halifax, he commissioned images of the latter, “a recently built, stately Palladian residence boasting refined architecture, vast receiving rooms, and even a ballroom, making it similar to English country houses of that era.”<sup>377</sup> Woolford completed two wash sketches of the Lieutenant Governor’s house, one of the front façade and one of the back in 1818. These were later translated into watercolour paintings.<sup>378</sup> The artworks indicate that the drawings of Mount Uniacke are reflective of the artist’s and patron’s broader mutual interest in European estates and the documentation and depiction of their Canadian counterparts.

Grand estates and farms, beyond Lord Dalhousie’s own residences, featured prominently in Woolford’s works well before he journeyed to Canada. His attraction to these types of properties probably had more to do with his inclination towards picturesque landscape than with “Dalhousie’s dual preoccupations: land settlement and agricultural development.”<sup>379</sup> After working for Lord Dalhousie during his Egyptian campaign (1800-1803) Woolford returned to Edinburgh and, for approximately a decade, had taken up the profession of a landscape painter (ca. 1803 to 1813).<sup>380</sup> Reviewing pieces displayed by Woolford at the exhibitions of the Society of Artists indicates that he painted many images of grand homes on estate lands in the early 1800s. *View near Ammondale, Mid-Calder* from 1807 features the estate of Henry Erskine. A painting completed two years later shows *Dun*

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<sup>376</sup> See John Elliott Woolford, *View Near Windsor (The Grove)*, 1817 (Fig. 83 in Villeneuve, *Lord Dalhousie*, 117).

<sup>377</sup> Villeneuve, *Lord Dalhousie*, 19.

<sup>378</sup> Ibid. See especially John Elliott Woolford, *Government House from the N.E.*, 1819 and John Elliott Woolford, *Government House from the S.W.*, 1819 (Figs. 25 and 26 in Villeneuve, *Lord Dalhousie*, 55).

<sup>379</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>380</sup> Ibid., 46, 47.



*Erske, near Edinburgh* (1809).<sup>381</sup> Villeneuve observes that “[t]he titles of the works...confirm a preference for the landscape genre and a keen interest in depicting nature in its most striking forms, as well as, occasionally, grand estates.”<sup>382</sup> In Europe, country estates were consciously developed according to the notion of the picturesque and were, therefore, ideal subjects for the painter of picturesque landscapes. It seems that Canada’s landscape—sparsely spotted with hints of life and solitary standing dwellings—satisfied Woolford’s taste for scenes of nature barely touched by humankind.<sup>383</sup> Consequently, images of the Canadian home and the fledgling nation were formed using a manner of picture-making imported from Europe.

Acknowledging Woolford’s proficiency with the visual vocabulary of the picturesque suggests that the drawings of Mount Uniacke depict the Palladian mansion as the landscape painter would have seen it: imbued with romance and idealism.<sup>384</sup> Picturesque painters viewed the world as if it were a picture. Their fanciful scenes were often based on remote, romantic views of quaint cottages, chimeric ruins, farms and estates as well as the houses of the poor.<sup>385</sup> Homes were elements used to humanize nature because the wilderness, with no “signs of habitation,” was “thought too savage.”<sup>386</sup> In finished works like *View on the Road from Windsor to Horton by Avon Bridge at Gaspereau River* (c. 1817) Woolford depicts a well-tended and flourishing family farm nearly enveloped by the surrounding hills and forests of Nova Scotia [Fig. 2.48]. Woolford looks at the house from afar and romanticizes it, framing the final painting with added trees and severed trunks. The composition and viewpoint is such that the farmhouse seems less like a living space and more a part of the land on which it

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<sup>381</sup> Ibid., 49. See John Elliott Woolford, *View near Ammondale, Mid-Calder, 1807*. Toronto Public Library (902.I.31) (Fig. 8 in Villeneuve, *Lord Dalhousie*, 49).

<sup>382</sup> Villeneuve, *Lord Dalhousie*, 50.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>384</sup> This is a vocabulary which house museum curators also draw on, sometimes consciously and other times unknowingly.

<sup>385</sup> Philippa Tristram, *Living Space in Fact and Fiction* (London, UK; New York, NY: Routledge, 1989), 73.

<sup>386</sup> Brett, *The Construction of Heritage*, 42.



stands. Like so many of Woolford's paintings it suggests that the artist and his patron were primarily concerned with the visual appearance of the dwelling rather than living conditions or labour on the farm.

Images of a house nestled in the woods or on a vast expanse of uncultivated land provided "a sense of arrival" for a wanderer/traveller.<sup>387</sup> They were also attractive to a class of English gentlemen who had harboured dreams of escape from the city and from their great houses of obligation and protocol.<sup>388</sup> The painted farmhouse then is not an actual dwelling or a marker of what life was really like for farming families. It is, as Philippa Tristram would argue, simply a part of the "master's vista."<sup>389</sup> Compositions like those in *View on the Road from Windsor to Horton by Avon Bridge at Gaspereau River* and *Killcups on River Kentycook, Township of Douglas* probably would have appealed to Lord Dalhousie as idealized reminders of his travels through the province's interior and emblems of Canada's serene, pastoral countryside.

Canada's early homes were "touched up" and removed from hardship and social realities by artists like Woolford and their patrons. In *Living Space in Fact and Fiction* (1989) Philippa Tristram explains that the picturesque aesthetic was mostly complicit with this kind of project. It caused England's elite to "fall in love" with rustic, rural shelters and cheerful retreats.<sup>390</sup> David Brett refers to it as a "positive visual ideology"—one used to herald the "virtues of honest labour and national pride" and ignore "lawlessness and poverty."<sup>391</sup> As a consequence of this tradition the estates and homes at house museums may also be shaped to reflect the picturesque aesthetic and compositional forms from landscape painting. The views that were once taken up by artists may be kept clear even as the trees and shrubbery

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<sup>387</sup> Tristram, *Living Space*, 1.

<sup>388</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>389</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>391</sup> Brett, *The Construction of Heritage*, 40-42.

grow to obscure them. As Gran explains, it is well accepted within the tourist industry that making images is part of making heritage sites.<sup>392</sup> History can lapse into sentiment as principles of the picturesque are applied to reconstructions of the past.<sup>393</sup> After all, the virtues of honest labour and national pride are espoused in Canada's house museums as well. If the picturesque is an appealing aesthetic used to construct heritage scenes, is the house museum that invests in it predisposed to smooth over conflict in its spaces?<sup>394</sup>

Woolford's drawings of Martha's Lake and Uniacke's estate remain on display at Uniacke Estate Museum Park. A reproduction of the second image is featured on a didactic at the centre of the estate and in front of the barn. Below this reproduction is an image of a painting executed by an unknown artist at "the same spot as Woolford some time after train service started in 1858" [Fig. 2.49].<sup>395</sup> This suggests a continuance between, for example, William Gilpin's *Observations on the River Wye* (1782) and Woolford's drawings of Canada. Like Gilpin, Woolford prompted city dwellers, other artists and tourists in pursuit of the picturesque to venture to sites he recorded in his topographical renderings and sketchbooks—to tread out to the rural countryside.<sup>396</sup> Artists eagerly sought out the scenes sketched by more well-known artists to test or demonstrate their skills. Tourists unsatisfied with the vicarious tourism that postcards and travelogues offered travelled to see enchanted sites with their own eyes. The reproduced images of these artists were, therefore, important

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<sup>392</sup> Anne-Britt Gran, "Staging Places as Brands: Visiting Illusions, Images and Imaginations," in *Re-investing Authenticity: Tourism, Place and Emotions*, ed. Britta Timm Knudsen and Anne Marit Waade (Bristol, UK: Channel View Publications, 2010), 26. This is a process I want to reconstruct in each of my case studies and subject to critical scrutiny.

<sup>393</sup> Brett, *The Construction of Heritage*, 40.

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>395</sup> The second image is catalogued as NSM N-21402. Woolford's image is catalogued as NSM N-8160. For other paintings of Mount Uniacke see: "Woolford's Surveys: The Roads from Halifax to Windsor and Truro, 1817-18," *Nova Scotia Archives*, <http://www.novascotia.ca/nsarm/virtual/woolford/archives.asp?ID=35> and <http://www.novascotia.ca/nsarm/virtual/woolford/archives.asp?ID=36> (accessed 29 May 2014).

<sup>396</sup> Brett, *The Construction of Heritage*, 41, 43.

fosterers of early tourism.<sup>397</sup> Villeneuve speculates that Woolford’s paintings of Government House and Province House were meant to “extol the city’s two most important buildings—its crown jewels.”<sup>398</sup> His drawings also designated dwellings like Mount Uniacke as architectural gems, painting stations, regional landmarks and tourist attractions before they became museums or plaqued heritage sites.<sup>399</sup> Today’s house museums are therefore very much a part of the early histories of tourism, art and patronage in our country. We shall also see that the picturesque has had a lasting effect on the way historic homes are imaged and marketed; picturesque scenes are still used to draw visitors to house museums.

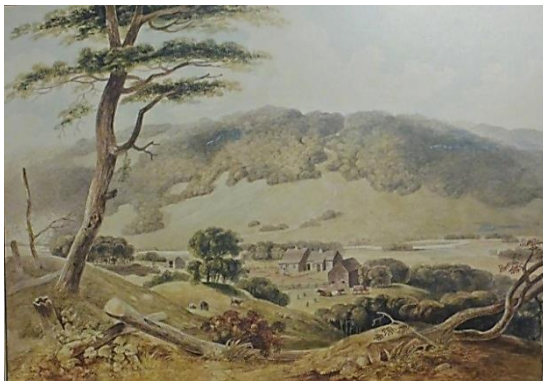


Figure 2.48: John Elliott Woolford, *View on the Road from Windsor to Horton by Avon Bridge at Gaspereau River*, c. 1817. Watercolour over graphite with white gouache on ivory wove paper, mounted on mounting board (Villeneuve, *Lord Dalhousie*, 53. Image archived as 79.146.3, History Collection, Nova Scotia Museum, Halifax).



Figure 2.49: “Building an Estate,” museum didactic, Uniacke Estate Museum Park (Photo by author, 8 October 2012).

It was not only those who made treks across the country for official business that captured its most notable residences in paint and graphite. In fact, the homes’ inhabitants were some of the most vulnerable to their charms. Tenants were easily inspired to picture their domestic surroundings. Point Ellice House, which interprets the lives of the O’Reilly family, showcases two paintings by Kathleen O’Reilly of her family home. The first is hung in Kathleen’s bedroom, a room where the visitor is told the unmarried daughter passed her

<sup>397</sup> Ibid., 43-44.

<sup>398</sup> Villeneuve, *Lord Dalhousie*, 53.

<sup>399</sup> Brett, *The Construction of Heritage*, 45.

time embroidering, reading and painting.<sup>400</sup> Amidst needlework slipper patterns and other samplers, the painting confirms that Kathleen was “accomplished in the womanly arts.”<sup>401</sup> The second, a watercolour of the house with protective awnings, is located in the drawing room [Fig. 2.50].<sup>402</sup> Like Emily Carr, Josephine Crease, Samuel Maclure and Katharine Maltwood, Kathleen was a committed member of the Island Arts Club founded in 1909. Known in the 1930s as the Island Arts and Craft Society, and renamed The Victoria Sketch Club in 1952, the group defined Victoria’s local art scene from the nineteen teens through to the middle of the twentieth century.<sup>403</sup>

Kathleen’s choice of subject matter may reflect the Club’s influence. As part of their annual docket, the Club taught “outdoor drawing skills” and encouraged its members to draw subjects from their local surroundings.<sup>404</sup> Because the club was composed of mostly upper-class individuals with British familial roots, it has been suggested, that its members shared “an appreciation of romantic and picturesque English landscape art as epitomized by J.M.W Turner and J. Constable, as well as the work of topographic artists, mainly military draftsmen, working before photography was widely used to record the landscape.”<sup>405</sup>

Kathleen, however, also communicated an enduring fondness for her life at Point Ellice House, which may explain why she returned to her private residence as a subject for her paintings. She wrote in a letter to her father, “I did not want to be married, I love being here with you all, and I don’t believe any one has ever had a happier house and life than I have”

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<sup>400</sup> John Adams, *Point Ellice House. A Victorian Household* (Victoria, BC: Point Ellice Preservation Society, 2009), 20.

<sup>401</sup> Ibid. “The ability to paint and sketch was part of a wealthy and cultured person’s education, and the pursuit of the arts was considered to be a genteel amateur pastime” (Caroline Riedel, *Rebels and Realists: 100 Years of the Victoria Sketch Club*, exhibition catalogue (Issuu), 8, <http://issuu.com/crieds/docs/sketchclub3> (accessed 11 June 2013)).

<sup>402</sup> Adams, *Point Ellice House*, 2.

<sup>403</sup> *The Victoria Sketch Club* website, [http://www.victoriasketchclub.ca/group.php?c\\_no=44](http://www.victoriasketchclub.ca/group.php?c_no=44). (accessed 12 June 2013).

<sup>404</sup> Ibid.

<sup>405</sup> Riedel, *Rebels and Realists*, 8.

[Fig. 2.51]<sup>406</sup> It is likely that both the Club’s practices (and collective preferences) and Kathleen’s own adoration for her home made Point Ellice House a motif in her works.

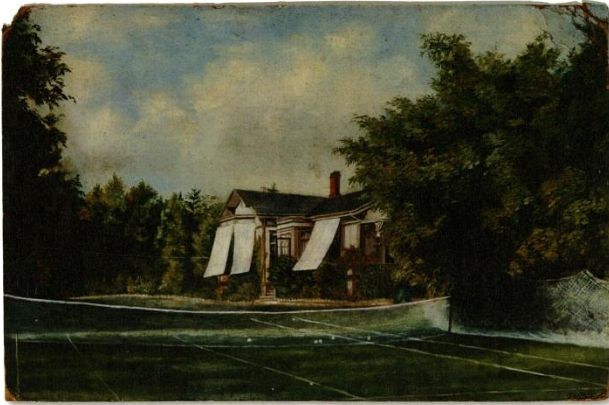


Figure 2.50: Kathleen O’Reilly, *Watercolour of the House* (Adams, *Point Ellice House*, 3).



Figure 2.51: Kathleen on the west lawn at Point Ellice House (Adams, *Point Ellice House*, 11).

A house that, throughout its lifetime, has been documented in paintings, photographs and blueprints is a more likely candidate for restoration. This is partially because restorers and planning committees regard the images as reliable resources that can be used to return the homes to their previous appearances with a certain degree of historical accuracy. It is also true because re-presented homes are occasionally associated with reputable artists. The Friends of Bellevue show an awareness of this in their strategy for protecting and restoring the home of Robert Reynolds in Amherstburg, Ontario. Belle Vue was built for Reynolds, the deputy Assistant Commissary General of the garrison at Fort Malden, between 1816 and 1819. Although the site has provincial and federal designation it has been left to deteriorate at the hands of arsonists and squatters. The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada’s plaque from 1959 mentions Robert and the house’s architectural features, calling it “one of the finest examples of Palladian architecture in Canada.”<sup>407</sup> The provincial plaque added in 1962, however, focuses on the figure of Catherine Reynolds, one of Robert’s sisters. This later emphasis on the figure of Catherine,

<sup>406</sup> Adams, *Point Ellice House*, 20.

<sup>407</sup> “Belle Vue,” Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada plaque, Belle Vue, December 2011.

raises questions about how her relationship to Belle Vue might rally more support for The Friends' cause.

The Friends recount that Robert's sisters "occupied their time as artists, working in pencil, crayon, sepia wash and water-colour."<sup>408</sup> Their "[p]aintings include[d] scenes along the Detroit River and the north shore of Lake Erie."<sup>409</sup> Binding the merit of these artworks to the merit of their own objectives, The Friends state that Catherine's is "considered to be among the earliest work by an English artist in the province."<sup>410</sup> She painted watercolours of Amherstburg in the style of the English school of landscape painting, as well as a number of residences, including Chief Joseph's Brant's House, Bellevue and the Commandant's Cottage [Figs. 2.52 & 2.53].<sup>411</sup> Her artworks can be found at the Detroit Institute of Arts, The McCord Museum and François Baby House, Windsor's community museum.<sup>412</sup> The implicit message is that if she is worthy remembrance, and her works deserve recognition, than Belle Vue should be maintained as a site connected to her artistic development.

Through Reynold's painting Belle Vue is already a part of a national, provincial and local cultural history, one authorized by museums, marked by official plaques and endorsed by the community. It is perhaps thought that in emphasizing the deteriorating house's relation to these images it will become more difficult for the powers-that-be to ignore the Friends of Bellevue's requests for assistance. As Brett asserts, "[c]ertain kinds of scenery, certain buildings, human figures in landscape are valued according to their prior appearance

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<sup>408</sup> "History," *Friends of Bellevue* website, <http://bellevueamherstburg.com/history2.htm> (accessed 27 July 2013).

<sup>409</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>410</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>411</sup> Dennis Carter-Edwards, *Fort Malden: A Structural Narrative History, 1796-1976* (Ottawa, ON: Parks Canada, 1980), Reference # (MIKAN 179215). This publication provides salient architectural information on buildings in the Amherstburg area (the site of this watercolour).

<sup>412</sup> Suzanne Bilek, "Catherine Reynolds. English and Anonymous," in *Great Female Artists of Detroit* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2012), 127; "Reynolds, Catherine," *Canadian Women Artists History Initiative* (2007), last updated 11 July 2012, [http://cwahi.concordia.ca/sources/artists/displayArtist.php?ID\\_artist=76](http://cwahi.concordia.ca/sources/artists/displayArtist.php?ID_artist=76) (accessed 8 June 2014).

in painting.”<sup>413</sup> Catherine’s depiction of Belle Vue is prominently featured on the Friends of Bellevue’s webpage and when the Friends finally received support from council to establish a working group on the house’s restoration, all mention of Robert had disappeared.<sup>414</sup>



Figure 2.52: “A country seat in Upper Canada on a summer’s day in 1820.” Belle Vue, Amherstburg, from the water-colour by Catherine Reynolds in the Detroit Institute of Arts (Marion Macrae and Anthony Adamson, *The Ancestral Roof. Domestic Architecture of Upper Canada* (Toronto, ON; Vancouver, BC: Clarke, Irwin & Company Ltd., 1963), 41). Also reproduced at “History (continued),” *Belle Vue Cultural Foundation* website, <http://bellevueamherstburg.com/history2.htm> (accessed 6 June 2014).



Figure 2.53: Catherine Reynolds, “Commandant’s Cottage, Amherstburg,” after 1815. Watercolour (Image archived as CAIN No. 264726, National Archives of Canada).

Woolford’s, O’Reilly’s and Reynolds’ artworks suggest that images of home were produced by both itinerants and dwellers.<sup>415</sup> Woolford’s depictions of Mount Uniacke established the site as an east-coast attraction. Painters, photographers and tourists visited the residence before it became a museum. They recorded the house as part of a scene and themselves as witnesses of the rural beauty. The resulting images played a part, however small, in facilitating the preservation of the house and its transformation into a house museum. They recommended the home as a site of interest, stirred curiosity about life within

<sup>413</sup> Brett, *The Construction of Heritage*, 40.

<sup>414</sup> Karen Fallon, “Friends of Bellevue Get Green Light for Working Group,” *Amherstburg Rivertown Times*, 22 March 2011, accessed 8 June 2014, <http://www.rivertowntimes.com/?p=484>. Note that the Friends of Bellevue have since been renamed The Belle Vue Cultural Foundation.

<sup>415</sup> Of course, it is important to note that it is the homes of the well-to-do elite that are being represented here. The upper and middle classes were segments of society that could afford photographic supplies and that were trained to paint. Visiting dignitaries like Lord Dalhousie would have, for the most part, stayed at accommodations that reflected their social standings. It is also these impressive homes that were among the first to be deemed worthy of preservation as house museums before the vernacular turn.

it and supplied the site with a constant influx of visitors. Kathleen O'Reilly's and Catherine Reynold's paintings capture the women's homes from the perspective of long-time inhabitants rather than that of a passing traveller/documenter.<sup>416</sup> O'Reilly's paintings adorned the house when it was occupied by her family and remain in situ to serve that purpose within the museum. Reynold's paintings are housed within other museum collections as the Friends of Bellevue fight to see her home restored.

Contemporary artists and hobbyists continue to generate paintings, photographs and drawings of Canada's historic houses. Their renderings can be found on the greeting cards, or so-called art cards, at house museum gift shops throughout the country. A case in point is a painting of the former Roedde-family home, produced by Canadian artist Drew Burnham and featured on cards at Roedde House Museum [Fig. 2.54]. A watercolour of "Tarry-a-while" cottage painted by the Banff artist Bernard (Bern) Remy Smith is reproduced as a souvenir of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies (which owns the cottage and the Luxton, Moore and Whyte homes). Victoria-born artist Peter Robertson has also made his high realism picture of Craigdarroch Castle's tower and porte cochere available in an art card format for Castle visitors [Fig. 2.55].<sup>417</sup>

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<sup>416</sup> A home is viewed differently by its inhabitants when it is taken up as an artistic subject. An artist must become more attuned to the play of light and shadow, the effects of the seasons, the habitual movements of other residents, the growth of the grounds and the house's surroundings. These are all realizations and experiences of the historic house that a visitor may come to through these works. They provide ways of passing on experiences of the house.

<sup>417</sup> Works like Robertson's usually reference the picturesque aesthetic with their setting suns, framing foliage and expansive grounds meeting blue skies. Made in 2012, this is a work of the imagination. Craigdarroch is, as Reksten describes it, "[a] dream-castle, a fantasy of soaring chimneys, towers and turrets, steeply-pitched red-tiled roofs and exquisitely crafted stained glass windows..." (Terry Reksten, *Craigdarroch. The Story of Dunsmuir Castle* (Victoria, BC: Orca Book Publishers, 1987), vii.). This is the vision of Craigdarroch that Robertson latches onto and makes available to the gift shop customer. Earlier in the chapter it was mentioned that house museums display model houses and share information about the model makers and the process of model making. Paintings and drawings completed by Woolford and O'Reilly serve as portals to further details about the lives and careers of Canadian artists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. On the back of Robertson's cards is biographical and contact information about the artist. The house museum therefore serves as an interface between contemporary Canadian artists and the public as well.





Figure 2.54: An art card featuring Drew Burnham's painting of Roedde House (Original scanned by author).

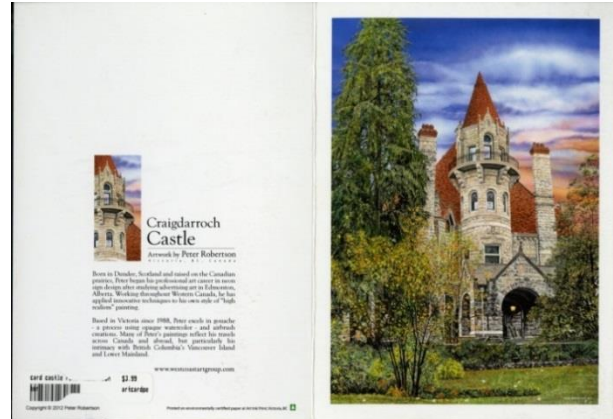


Figure 2.55: A greeting card which reproduces Peter Robertson's painting (2012) of Craigdarroch Castle (Original scanned by author).

Referring to the house museum as an artistic destination, the staff at Point Ellice House reports that local artists appreciate the scenery their property offers. Artists regularly come by the house to paint and sometimes gift their creations to the museum (like the model-makers discussed above). One such offering is displayed in the House's visitor centre and recalls the paintings by Kathleen O'Reilly preserved in the house [Fig. 2.56]. Similarly, these kinds of artworks adorn the office spaces at Banting House, the reception area at Annandale House and the verandah at Emily Carr House [Fig. 2.57].<sup>418</sup> Despite preconceptions and appearances, these paintings are not trivial cultural products or mere decorations. They vividly voice the continuation of the house museum as a central node in the network of representations of home.<sup>419</sup>

<sup>418</sup> A framed print of Banting House made by Ed Roche (1981) hangs in one of the administrative offices at Banting House NHSC. Annandale House displays pictures of the Tillsons home produced by Ross Logan, Mary Farkas, Mary Rose Sanderson and William Fortune. Some of these artworks were gifted to the museum after the "Wildly Inspired" art show, while others were painted and made into prints as fundraisers for the site (Guided tour, Annandale House, May 2014). The depictions of Emily Carr House in the tea room were produced by Robert Amos, a former art critic featured in *The Colonist*.

<sup>419</sup> House museums are also busy cultivating the next generation of Canadian artists, using their facades as creative inspiration. When Roedde House Museum hosts school visits the classes are sometimes assigned to draw the house. Teachers are asked to send the student works back to the house museum staff. One of the drawings is then selected to be printed on a postcard to be sold at the museum and on the museum's website. These types of assignments pair learning with representing. This tradition means that, year after year, leagues of schoolchildren are prompted to practice their drawing skills by picturing the architecture of Roedde House.



Figure 2.56: A painting of Point Ellice House, which was produced by a contemporary artist and now hangs in the reception centre at Point Ellice House (Photo by author, 18 May 2013).



Figure 2.57: A reproduction of the drawing made by Ed Roche, “Banting House, London, Ontario” (1981). The artwork now hangs in the offices at the site (Photo by author, 13 September 2013). This image is also reproduced on art cards in the gift shop and as the museum’s logo.

## II.VII. The Idyll: Simplified Scenes and Promotional Promises

People don’t usually think about images that aren’t there...And some images don’t exist anywhere.<sup>420</sup>

James Loewen explores the lies that are woven into the American landscape through monuments, historic sites and museums. He questions the level of criticality that house museums bring to their own narratives, claiming that they:

do not take their own history seriously enough to bother to tell it like it was. Instead of telling visitors what happened to the people who lived and worked there, guides prattle on about what guests ate and the silverware they used...[they] tell charming but inconsequential and ultimately boring anecdotes rather than talk about the historic events that happened there.<sup>421</sup>

Canadian house museums are sometimes guilty of this. Unsure about how to properly shape controversial or unsavoury aspects of their pasts for a mass audience, they focus on the games played by the family, the contents of the gardens, the education the gentleman of the house received or the artworks they purchased.<sup>422</sup> The “artifact tour” can be a remarkably

<sup>420</sup> James Loewen, *Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong* (New York, NY: New Press, 1999), 18.

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>422</sup> *Ibid.*

perfunctory experience, where guides or tour booklets point to curious domestic instruments of the past, or outstanding ornaments bought from all corners of the globe, while avoiding mention of the social, political and economic realities that formed the dwellings and permeated the households.

Loewen's criticisms highlight how the staged interior can become a simplified and sanitized representation of home. If he argues that such sites present "blemish-free heroes," it is also possible for the restored historic interior to be presented as a blemish-free environment.<sup>423</sup> Like a picturesque landscape with lush trees, hardy workers, herds of roaming cattle and clear-water streams, it is a charming scene, an idyll—a dining room table laden with a delectable feast, a hefty pile of wood stationed beside a decorated hearth, a nursery bursting with toys and knitted blankets. The house museum can be the epitome of quaint and blessed domesticity.

Loewen does not feel the danger of these mis-tellings lies in the fact that people are likely to believe everything was perfect "way back when." He notes that nostalgia can "paint" the past in a more favourable light, but argues that people realize life was characterized by hardship, inequality, suffering and inconvenience in earlier eras. More worrying for him is the fact that idealistic representations tend to produce passive visitors who simply respond with exclamations like "oh, how nice!" rather than with critical questions.<sup>424</sup> If the museum or site does not establish itself on a critical intention or create interpretive programmes with that aim, how can it expect visitors to walk in wearing their critical-thinking hats? If, overall, heritage is nostalgic and reassuring, then sentimentalized family albums, picturesque paintings of unspoiled homes and dainty dollhouses fit neatly into the already uncomplicated environment of

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<sup>423</sup> Ibid., 18. This will be elaborated more in Chapter Four.

<sup>424</sup> Loewen, *Lies Across America*, 18.

the house museum. Alternatively, armed with a critical method and an understanding of the way representations reinterpret and re-present the past, these images and objects can be used to productively assess and deconstruct the house museum.<sup>425</sup>

The house museum's promotional materials also often exhibit what Bachelard would call "images of *felicitous space*," "eulogized" visions of home or topophilic representations.<sup>426</sup> At train stations, tourist bureaus, airports and heritage sites across Canada, travellers encounter racks chockablock with brochures, coupon books and maps directing them to local attractions. Racks cards (named according to their placement at such locations) and pamphlets are traditional forms of printed promotional materials used to publicize house museums. Their standard combination of image and text is intended to inform prospective visitors about the site's offerings and location. While these ephemera communicate factual information, they also carry romanticized pictures that frame house museums as respites from urban noise, fast-paced modernization and an uncertain future. Here, a single case study will be scrutinized to establish the way carefully-conceived images of the historic-domestic environment become powerful promotional devices and to note the continuation of idealizing tendencies brought on by the picturesque movements.

### ***The Untouched Rural Escape: Manoir Mauvide-Genest***

The cover of the brochure for Manoir Mauvide-Genest on the Île d'Orléans shows a picture of the house's façade, taken by Joanne Paradis [Fig. 2.58]. The Manor's white external walls, dark shutters and chapel are visible across an expanse of grass and through the boughs of framing trees [Fig. 2.59]. This photograph depicts the house in an environment that no longer resembles its surroundings; Manoir Mauvide-Genest faces the main road that lines the

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<sup>425</sup> Brett, *The Construction of Heritage*, 39.

<sup>426</sup> Bachelard, *The Poetics*, xxxv.

island and is now immediately surrounded by concrete and crushed stone. The exterior does not differ drastically from its appearance in Paradis' photograph, nevertheless, the image in the brochure generates a feeling that the museum is not able to replicate. This promotional image recalls a kind of representation of home that sees it hidden away in a natural setting, undisturbed and welcoming. The interior lights are on. Leaves on the ground suggest a crisp fall day and the home becomes a symbol of warmth and comfort—a retreat. The picture speaks to the cultivation of the domestic ideal not through painstaking descriptions of actual interiors but through visual emphasis on the home as a place of retirement. The pamphlet presents a well-known and cherished vision of home, one that Stefan Muthesius describes as idyllically seeking “refuge in nature,” in withdrawing into secluded shelters that become sites of contemplation and escape.<sup>427</sup>

The rural or natural setting is therefore of paramount importance to the construction of this value-laden depiction of home. The expansive and somber landscape is contrasted with the glowing, protected interior. The inside gains its qualities—its atmosphere—through well-known tropes that juxtapose it with the outside. This promotional pamphlet then may not represent the current reality of the house museum. Devoid of the signs, plaques and parking lots that make it the museum it is today, the photograph supports the idea that the historic home has not been fitted with the typical trappings of a museum. It does, however, convey what the site is about. The house museum rests upon the idea of the home as a warm, welcoming reprieve, embedded in a romanticized and known past rather than unpleasant realities or uncertain futures. Perhaps the brochure is a successful promotional tool because it enables visitors to envision themselves entering the sought-after idyllic home depicted in Paradis' photograph rather than the contemporary museum.

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<sup>427</sup> Stefan Muthesius, *The Poetic Home: Designing the 19th-century Domestic Interior* (London, UK: Thames & Hudson, 2009), 161.

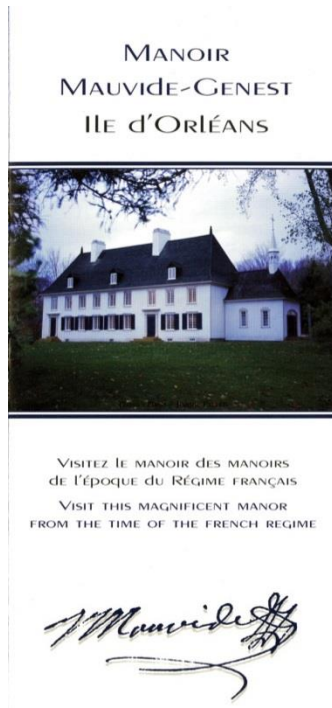


Figure 2.58: [Left]: “Manoir Mauvide-Genest, Ile d’Orléans,” cover of museum pamphlet, circulated in 2012 (Scanned by author).

Figure 2.59: [Above]: Detail of the pamphlet showing Joanne Paradis’ photograph of the Manoir Mauvide-Genest (Scanned by author).

Richard V. Francaviglia identifies another possible reason why modern touches may have been omitted or cropped from the scene. He introduces the idea of imagistic preservation:

“historic landscapes...are preserved in many ways. A continuum exists from actual preservation to visually preserved landscapes rendered photographically or artistically. Among the most interesting small-town landscapes are those that are “imagically preserved,” such as the Main Street scenes that appear as murals on the sides of buildings...the side of the building becomes a window into the past.”<sup>428</sup>

A number of promotional pamphlets from house museums across the country include historic photographs of the houses (i.e. Michener House, Luxton Home). Paradis’ photograph, like its peers, preserves the house in a “past” moment and signals a turn away from modernity.<sup>429</sup> Therefore, in this single promotional photograph the visitor may read the

<sup>428</sup> Richard V. Francaviglia, *Main Street Revisited: Time, Space, and Image Building in Small-town America* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 1996), 180-181.

<sup>429</sup> Aynsley, “The Modern Period Room,” 14. Period rooms, too, “functioned on what might be seen as the flip-side of modernity....the overall conception was historicist and deeply traditional. Aesthetically and

Manoir Mauvide-Genest as a site that: i) firmly takes up the ideal of the home set in the rural idyll, ii) is committed to the preservation of the past (though likely a romanticized past) and iii) resists the whirl of modern progress or adaptation (signified by the road, museum signs, etc.). Marketing house museums through these types of images is about using the compelling motif of the home and its associations to comfort, care and solitude, to highlight the institutions' most enduringly desirable characteristics. Like Woolford and his contemporaries, the producers of promotional images romanticize the home and, in so doing, draw visitors to Canada's historic homes and house museums. The house museum is a series of staged scenes of private interiors, family life and domestic routines, and the pictures that it generates are often tinged with nostalgia, simplified for easy interpretation and reminiscent of views taken in by an idealizing eye.

## **II.VIII. Conclusion**

Representations of home multiply in Canada's house museums, forming visual archives that serve practical museal purposes while affirming a persistent fascination with the spaces of inhabitation. Depictions of the country's historic homes are routinely tied to the practices of restoration and record-keeping. Together, photographs, models and paintings of home make it possible to study Canada's built heritage—to envision and explain how the dwellings of previous generations were constructed, used and altered. Because domestic environments are changeable, layered spaces—and because period rooms often represent single staged moments—images that chart home histories are regarded as important artifacts. Prominently featured in museum displays, they have become central to the interpretive programs and educational aims of the house museum. By studying how representations of

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culturally, these rooms indicated a turn away from modernity towards the historical idyll of the age of refinement" (Ibid.).

home are deployed and reinscribed in the context of the museum, we achieve a better sense of house museums as institutions dedicated to the explication of the home.



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**CHAPTER THREE**  
**TO CONSERVE AND PROTECT**  
**Asset Management or the Prioritization of Visitor Experiences**

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While Chapter One chronicled the origins of the house museum in Canada, and Chapter Two explored its place amongst other representations of home, Chapter Three investigates a dilemma at the intersection of the house museum's conservation and display imperatives. Having already examined the preservation movement's role in the formation of Canada's house museums, this study now turns to a discussion of how preservation practices, theories and ethics—which have long guided house museum professionals—are challenged by the tenets of a new museology and an Experience Economy. Where conservationists have advocated limitations to the visitor experience, and encouraged distance between museum-goers and prized artifacts in museum-homes, museum scholars and economists at the turn of the twenty-first century emphasized participatory involvement, active learning and immersive experience. Multisensory exhibits, interactive displays and participative programs at house museum across Canada will be a point of focus, used to highlight the tension between concerns about conservation and the quality of visitor experiences at these sites.

**III.I. House Museums and the Conservation Impetus**

House museums are sites of heritage conservation (referred to as “heritage preservation” in the United States). As community museums and national historic sites, they are charged with caring for collections and historic structures on behalf of current and future publics. Their staffs are bound by the obligations and ethics of this public service. In *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, Gordon Fulton defines conservation as “protection from any agent (be

it environmental or human) that threatens to destroy heritage.”<sup>430</sup> Conserving historic houses and their contents against *environmental* threats is, in itself, a costly and time consuming process. Nevertheless, it is considered to be of the utmost importance: if a museum cannot offer a stable environment, the long-term maintenance of its collection becomes nearly impossible.<sup>431</sup> The material components and environmental states of the house museum require constant supervision and physical attention to guard against damage caused by insects, excessive cleaning, less-than-ideal temperature or humidity levels and high degrees of light exposure. Signs of these conservation efforts are visible in their spaces in the form of hygrometers, insect traps, ultra violet filters and protective plastic or glass casings. As Fulton’s definition suggests, in addition to mitigating environmental imperilsments house museums must also give thought to *human* threats.

### ***The Burden of Visitation***

Where house museum mandates and missions commonly include commitments to the task of conservation, they also often pledge to assure public access to protected heritages. They are storehouses of history *and* public attractions, making both conservation and display vital functions. These two pursuits, however, are often at odds.<sup>432</sup> Conservators and house

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<sup>430</sup> Gordon Fulton, “Heritage Conservation,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (7 February 2006), last updated 16 December 2013, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/heritage-conservation/> (accessed 16 April 2014).

<sup>431</sup> Gary Edson, “Ethics and Preventive Conservation,” in *Museum Ethics*, ed. Gary Edson (London, UK; New York, NY: Routledge, 1997), 196.

<sup>432</sup> Referring to the broader field of museums, Edson’s text explains: “Once a museum acquires an object, it is assigned a “special” status. If the object is to survive, ways must be found for preventing or slowing its deterioration. An ideal way to protect an object is to keep it in a controlled environment away from the potentially harmful conditions of being on exhibition. However, a museum has an obligation to exhibit the objects it possesses for the benefit of the public. Does the ethical responsibility for preservation outweigh the obligation to exhibit sensitive objects?” (Edson, “Ethics and Preventive Conservation,” 197). A document from Irving House’s archives summarizes the dilemma for house museums: “With any historic site that is open to the public, the building and the artifacts in the building are exposed to damage. With greater access to rooms and ability to touch and handle the building (walls; paint; artifacts; carpets; etc. etc.) greater damage will occur to the very resources that curators and managers are charged with preserving... Careful planning [for] visitor access in a restored house is imperative to ensure the maximum amount of access with the best conservation and preservation possible of both the house and artifacts. This consideration must be kept in mind at all times when making restoration, exhibit, presentation and interpretation decisions” (Stuart Stark & Associates, *Irving House*).

museum administrators are especially aware of the burdens of visitation. Consider, as they do, the threats that visitors pose to historic houses. Regular admittance through a house's door ushers in levels of dirt and dust that the average household need not contend with.<sup>433</sup>

The main entrances to Craigdarroch Castle and Irving House bear the marks of visitation [Figs. 3.1 & 3.2]. As visitors walk through the house's rooms they wear and weaken the carpets and floorboards along their path [Fig. 3.3 & 3.4]. Brushing against the wall coverings to let other visitors pass, they tarnish the wallpaper and painted finishes. If they reach out to touch texturally-tempting exhibits, the dirt and oils of their hands compromise the stability of the artifacts. Even careful handling by the museum staff can result in accidentally broken items. The flash of the visitor's camera endangers the vibrant colours of artworks and embrittles textiles. Opening the house to the public also makes display pieces vulnerable to theft and light exposure.<sup>434</sup> Without question, visitation is often counter-productive to conservation efforts.




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*Historic Finishes and Features Report. A Plan for Conservation and Restoration* (March 2010), 39. Archival document, New Westminster Archives (accessed 24 May 2013).

<sup>433</sup> Michener House Museum, in the small town of Lacombe, Alberta, recorded over 4000 visitors in 2012 while a well-known house, like Craigdarroch Castle (Victoria, BC), can welcome in excess of 100 000 visitors per year ("2012 Visitor Statistic Overview," archival document, Michener House Museum (accessed 21 February 2013); "What goes on at the Castle?" *Craigdarroch Castle* website, <http://thecastle.ca/events-programs/> (accessed 16 April 2014)).

<sup>434</sup> On the topic of antitheft devices and their importance at Canadian house museums see the following article: Katherine Dedyne, "Manager's Sleuthing Tracks Down China Stolen from Historic Point Ellice House in Victoria," *Times Colonist*, 11 April 2013, accessed 1 March 2014, <http://www.timescolonist.com/manager-sleuthing-tracks-down-china-stolen-from-historic-point-ellice-house-in-victoria-1.108348>.

Figure 3.1: The door at Craigdarroch Castle's visitor entrance, showing the worn wood on the interior (Photo by author, 17 May 2013).



Figure 3.2: The doorbell at Irving House, which has marked the door's finish as a result of repeated use (Photo by author, 24 May 2013).



Figure 3.3: A floor at Casa Loma, showing damage on the visitor's side of the stanchions (Photo by author, 4 January 2012).

### *Limiting the Damage*

Responding to these so-called human threats, many house museums become resistant to visitation. In 2001, the curator of Pierre Loti's House (Rochefort, France) wrote of the house museum as a “[v]ictim of its own success.”<sup>435</sup> Recounting how renewed interest in Loti's life and works brought an unprecedented number of visitors to the house, she explained that the crowds began to “imperil the security of the objects, and produce wear in the passages and on the objects in their immediate vicinity.”<sup>436</sup> The building's integrity suffered because of vibrations and markings produced by mass visitation. As the house degraded, the administrators at the site began to worry over its future.<sup>437</sup>

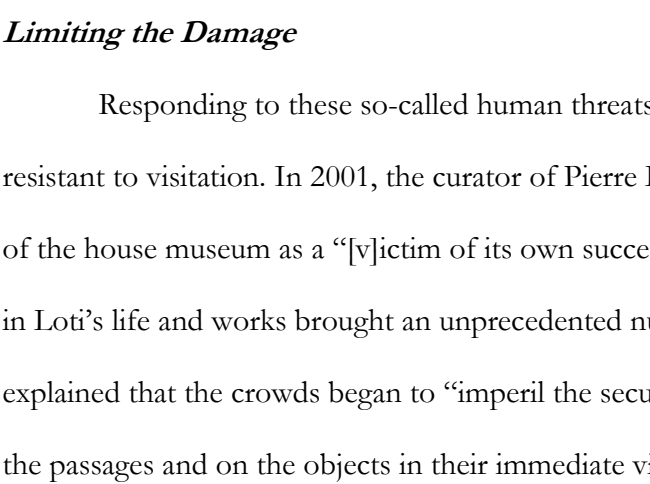
In 1995, it was decided that tour group sizes would be limited; access to the house became more restricted in the interest of preservation. And again in 1997, in the face of

<sup>435</sup> Gaby Scaon, “Pierre Loti's House: The Balancing Act between Exhibition and Conservation,” *Museum International* 53, 2 (April/June 2001), 52.

<sup>436</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>437</sup> *Ibid.*

Figure 3.4: The floor in Banting's bedroom at Banting House Museum shows a high-traffic zone (Photo by author, 31 January 2014).



concerning reports on the “collections and sanitary status of the house,” conservators urged “stricter visiting conditions.”<sup>438</sup> The municipality increased admission prices in attempt to control visitor numbers.<sup>439</sup> Insofar as the restrictions prevented overcrowding, they improved the visitor experience. Nevertheless, the changes also meant that guests without reservations were sometimes denied entry, even if they had travelled long distances to see the house.<sup>440</sup> The curator described the challenge as a “continuous balancing act between the satisfaction of our visitors and the conservation of the house.”<sup>441</sup> Indeed, the “balancing act” of Loti’s House is familiar to many Canadian house museums.

In an article from the same year (2001), Giovanni Pinna explained that international visitors to state-owned museums in Italy were disappointed to find that the cultural assets or Italian *beni culturali* ranked higher than they did. The museums seemed to care little about the visitor experience: “There was nowhere to sit down and rest or take refreshments, there were no bookshops or boutiques...short opening hours, lack of services [and] impolite staff” dispirited eager tourists.<sup>442</sup> Further exploring attitudes towards the museum public and the tasks of stewardship, Pinna declared that state museums “tolerated” being open to the public “as a minimum concession” and citizens were “often regarded as a dangerous source of potential damage to valuable objects.”<sup>443</sup> For Pinna, the museum’s role in conserving and caring for the country’s cultural assets determined the way visitors were treated.<sup>444</sup> In countries such as Italy—where physical asset-objects have taken precedence over visitors’

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<sup>438</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>439</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>440</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>441</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>442</sup> Giovanni Pinna, “Heritage and ‘Cultural Assets,’” *Museum International* 53, 2 (April/June 2001), 62.

<sup>443</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>444</sup> Zahava D. Doering suggests that visitors are treated as “strangers” rather than “guests” or “clients” “when the museum maintains that its primary responsibility is to the *collection* and not to the public” (Zahava D. Doering, “Strangers, Guests, or Clients? Visitor Experiences in Museums,” *Curator: The Museum Journal* 42, 2 (April 1999), 74).

relationships to, or use of, cultural heritage—museums function more as “storehouses” than sites of cultural activity and “public enjoyment.”<sup>445</sup>

Studies of this kind suggest that museums oscillate between restriction and access. Texts that focus on strategies for conservation often position museum artifacts as the victims of clumsy or careless visitors. Those advocating for the visitor argue that the museum’s protective elements disrupt the experience of the site, and that proximity and access to materials of the past are essential. To an extent, these discourses delineate an “either/or” scenario, which pits people-centred museums against object-centred ones. As in France and Italy, house museums in Canada find that their approaches to conservation directly affect the way visitors perceive and experience their houses.

In posting limited weekly or seasonal opening hours, or refusing admittance except at fixed tour times, house museums must be careful not to appear determined to shut visitors out. The example of Fulford Place in Brockville is a case in point. An Edwardian mansion owned by the Ontario Heritage Trust, Fulford is only open for tours at one o’clock in the afternoon during the weeks of the fall and winter seasons. When visitors reach the site they must page the office from a side door. If they arrive before the scheduled time they are likely to be turned away by a voice over the intercom, and asked to return at the tour’s commencement. Fulford consists of over thirty five rooms yet its guided tour is only an hour long and visitors are not permitted to stray from the group to explore on their own terms. This set-up produces an unfriendly “get-in/get-out” atmosphere. As a rule, and in contrast to Fulford, most house museums in Canada attempt to cultivate a visitor-friendly feel even as they acknowledge that attracting audiences means subjecting historic materials to a range of human threats.

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<sup>445</sup> Pinna, “Heritage,” 63-64.



House museums that remain mostly open to visitors rely on protective elements. Display pieces are guarded from dust, oils of handling and light damage by Perspex cases. Objects that are tempting to touch or use—such as telephones, books and chairs—are fitted with prohibitive signs, ropes or ribbons [Figs. 3.5-3.8]. Stanchions distance the public from delicate historical artifacts by demarcating visitor spaces from spaces of display [Figs. 3.9 & 3.10]. Industrial runners are laid over high-traffic routes and room-perimeter alarms, surveillance cameras and fish wire are used to dissuade thieves. These barriers and cases do not go unnoticed by the visitor. Because they limit spatial exploration and interaction with artifacts they can become a source of disappointment or frustration.



Figure 3.5: A telephone at Loughheed House fitted with a “Please Do Not Touch” sign (Photo by author, 13 February 2013).



Figure 3.6: The family Bible at Michener House Museum positioned just behind a “Do Not Touch” sign (Photo by author, 21 February 2013).



Figure 3.7: A do not touch sign on a table at



Figure 3.8: A chair at Michener House

Admiral Digby Museum (Photo by author, 5 October 2012).

Museum, showing two methods of restricting the use of chairs in historic interiors—signs and stagings that make the seat of the chair unavailable (Photo by author, 21 February 2013).



Figure 3.9: The bed at Moore House with a stanchion and sign (Photo by author, 20 February 2013).



Figure 3.10: A bedroom at Mount Uniacke. Notice the grey rug of the visitor space and the bare hardwood floors of the exhibition space (Photo by author, 8 October 2012).

### III.II. A Crisis in Confidence: Rethinking Historic House Museums for the Twenty-First Century

In 2002, Gerald George proclaimed that house museums had become redundant. They all offered the same “do-not-touch” environments and relied on old pedagogical methods. While there was an overabundance of nineteenth-century examples, house museums showcasing twentieth-century environments were almost non-existent.<sup>446</sup> Linda Young corroborated these observations in 2007 by stating that, although historic house museums are diverse in kind, they have often been regarded as constraining, boring and static.<sup>447</sup> Scholars like George and Young were invested in identifying the weaknesses and strengths of house museums. They sought to explain how the sites could capitalize on their atmospheres and artifacts to draw in visitors and keep them engaged. George reasoned that older models and methods had become entrenched because professionalism and granting

<sup>446</sup> Gerald George, “Historic House Museum Malaise: A Conference Considers What’s Wrong,” *History News* 57, 4 (2002), <http://download.aaslh.org/historic+house/kykuit1report.pdf> (accessed 7 June 2014).

<sup>447</sup> Linda Young, “Welcome to our House: Satisfying Visitors to the Historic House Museum,” in *Museum Marketing: Competing in the Global Marketplace*, ed. Ruth Rentschler and Anne-Marie Hede (Amsterdam; Boston, MA; London, UK: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2007), 134.



agencies “encourage[d] conformativity” and engendered “formulaic results.”<sup>448</sup> He suggested that house museums needed to exploit their capacity for provoking fantasies, entertaining visitors and educating the public by establishing partnerships and rethinking their interpretive programs.<sup>449</sup> Young argued that house museums were made ineffectual by their lack of resources and their obligations to maintain (read “conserve”) onerous buildings not designed for mass visitation. She encouraged house museum professionals to cultivate their gardens, tell stories of the houses’ destruction, bring in animals, increase retail efforts and host retro fairs and seasonal events.<sup>450</sup> George and Young agreed that traditional models had become suffocating and that new, workable strategies were needed. The solutions they presented suggest that house museums were generally being advised to offer new, personalized and hands-on experiences. These advisements likely stemmed from updated views on experience, immersion, authenticity and visitor involvement. Importantly, they suggested trouble for the house museum that prized conservation over the visitor experience.

### III.III. The Issue of Experiences

#### *The Experience Economy and the New Museology*

If we are to look at how a new museology came to prioritize the visitor experience, it is significant to note that the very idea of experiences gained currency with B. Joseph Pine and James H. Gilmore’s *The Experience Economy* (1999).<sup>451</sup> Explaining the death-by-commodification of the agrarian, industrial and service economies, it argued that at the start of the twenty-first century people preferred to spend money on memorable, staged

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<sup>448</sup> George, “Historic House Museum Malaise,” <http://download.aaslh.org/historic+house/kykuit1report.pdf>.

<sup>449</sup> Note that George makes no mention of refocusing on conservation in these prescriptions.

<sup>450</sup> Young, “Welcome to our House,” 138-139.

<sup>451</sup> B. Joseph Pine and James H. Gilmore, *The Experience Economy* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1999), n.p.

experiences rather than on commodities, goods or services.<sup>452</sup> Pine and Gilmore argued that, in an Experience Economy, it was not enough to simply entertain audiences or to provide them with appealing images to look at. Companies, according to the authors, had to take up the role of experience stagers; they would gain economic value by offering differentiated experiences and by allowing guests to participate and become immersed in themed environments.

Significantly, in this new economy customers have been prioritized. As Pine and Gilmore assessed the commercial realm they asserted that “[e]very business competing for the future is customer-centric, customer-driven, customer-focused, customer-yadda-yadda-yadda.”<sup>453</sup> They urged manufacturers in this economy to concentrate “on the individual’s use of the good” rather than how their goods performed. In abiding by this advice the focus of these companies was to “shift to the user.”<sup>454</sup> Unlike commodities or goods, experiences are personal; they cannot be had by others and they are kept *within* the customer in the form of memories rather than *by* the customer “at arms-length.”<sup>455</sup> Successfully staged experiential offerings, therefore, should be engaging and memorable, allowing companies to connect with their customers. Since the nineties, this formula, used to help *companies* connect with their *customers*, has come to inform the way *museums* connect with their *visitors*.<sup>456</sup>

Pine and Gilmore’s ideas have infiltrated the study of museums through such writers as Neil and Philip Kotler, Wendy Kolter, Martin Hall and Tiina Roppola. Where Tony

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<sup>452</sup> Pine and Gilmore indicate that services were delivered, goods were made, commodities were extracted and experiences are staged. House museums are based on the idea of staging the domestic lives of the past.

<sup>453</sup> Pine and Gilmore, *The Experience Economy*, ix.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid., 15. Where the industrial economy made goods for anonymous “users” and the service economy viewed its “buyers” as clients, the Experience Economy caters to “guests” (Ibid., 6).

<sup>455</sup> Pine and Gilmore, *The Experience Economy*, 12.

<sup>456</sup> In fact, George and Young’s assertions that audiences might gravitate more to house museums that encourage participation, inspire personal involvement and offer “behind-the-scenes” tours suggest that Pine and Gilmore’s philosophies had reached the ears of house museum professionals by the start of the twenty-first century. If the house museum offered experiences, and was to compete with other experience stagers, then the standard visitor experience was in need of enrichment.

Bennett compared the museum to the fair, menagerie, amusement park, international exhibition and circus, Martin Hall compares it to other themed environments such as Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge and Epcot's World Showcase. His article reviews Bennett's formulation of the modern museum as a civilizing institution of the exhibitionary complex, which he ultimately argues is no longer valid. Citing a number of ways that the postmodern age differs from the modern era, he advises "not stretching the exhibitionary complex beyond the historical context for which it was formulated."<sup>457</sup> Rather, making reference to Pine and Gilmore's work, and to the characteristics of a new economic and social order, he proposes that museums should now be thought of as part of an *experiential* complex.<sup>458</sup>

In contrasting Bennett's museum with the museum of the late-twentieth and twenty-first centuries, one of the key differences that Hall addresses involves the degree of control (and manipulation) or freedom (and participation) that the museum allows its visitors:

[T]he exhibitionary complex seeks to change the individual's worldview and behavior through institutions of order and control. In contrast, I suggest, museums in the experience economy start not with institutions but with the individual, offering to those who can afford to participate the fantasy of a customized world, the opportunity to be who they want to be through the technologies of simulation.<sup>459</sup>

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<sup>457</sup> Martin Hall, "The Reappearance of the Authentic," in *Museum Frictions*, ed. Ivan Karp, Corinne A. Kratz, Lynn Szewaja and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto (Durham, NC; London, UK: Duke University Press, 2006), 76.

<sup>458</sup> *Ibid.*, 77. The steps taken by scholars, such as Hall, to pair the museum with the economists' work seem to correspond with the increasing commercialization of the museum. If Pine and Gilmore proclaim "Experiences are profitable!" and Hall is urging "Museums take note!" it is likely that Hall understands the museum's need to compete with other attractions of the leisure landscape for tourist dollars. It is also somewhat limiting to say that museums became part of the experiential complex as a result of the changes of the last quarter of the twentieth century since the living history movement associated living history museums with experiences in the 1960s (although these ideas did not gain academic consideration until the 1980s). See the "Living History..." heading below. Claims by researchers, like Richard Crowest, who state that "heritage sites are often trailing behind commercial organisations that have already capitalised on the popular appeal of the 'experience'..." are not completely accurate when viewed in light of this tradition (Richard Crowest, *Making Sense: Multi-sensory and Visitor Experience* (University of Surrey, MA Thesis, 1999), <http://www.corvidae.co.uk/research/Making-sense.pdf>, 6). It should also be pointed out that Bennett seems more aware of this tradition than Hall. His analysis of Beamish in section four "Museums and 'The People'," is particularly indicative of this.

<sup>459</sup> Hall, "The Reappearance," 81.

The dictates of a new museology place less emphasis on collections and more on visitor experience. In the second half of the twentieth century, at a time when the value of museums became measured according to its audience numbers (and visitor studies began providing institutions with demographic statistics and detailed responses from their audiences) priorities shifted. The visitor replaced the collection “at the centre of museum work and of museum policies.”<sup>460</sup> If Pine and Gilmore are right, that the commercial realm prioritizes its customers and focuses on product use, it also appears that museum management has become more audience-driven and flexible about the direct interaction with artifacts.

Tiina Roppola’s text from 2012 provides a more in-depth examination of museum experiences than is available through Hall’s article. She delineates what it means for museums to focus on staging and offering experiences. Referring to the work of John H. Falk and Lynn D. Dierking (2000), she asserts that “a ‘revolution’ in museology” has meant that museums are no longer viewed “simply as providing spaces for displaying objects but as environments for experience.”<sup>461</sup> Exhibition design, according to Roppola, is now akin to “holistic experience making.”<sup>462</sup> This re-conceptualization of the museum has not only influenced exhibition design. It has also impacted a) the museum-visitor relationship and b) the visitor’s relationship with museum objects. When a museum capitalizes on the term “experience,” it evokes ideas about transaction or exchange between the museum and its visitor as well as “encounters with objects” in the form of use or physical contact, or through

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<sup>460</sup> Daniel Jacobi, “Dialogism in Museums,” *The Dialogic Museum and the Visitor Experience* ICOFOM 40, Taipei and Kaoshiung (23-26 October 2011), 17; Tiina Roppola, *Designing for the Museum Visitor Experience* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), 19; This has also come up in Fiona R. Cameron and Sarah Mengler, “Cosmopolitics, Border Crossings and the Complex Museum,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 18, 6 (November 2012): 637-653.

<sup>461</sup> Roppola, *Designing for*, 38.

<sup>462</sup> *Ibid.*, 38-39.

interpretive media.<sup>463</sup> In these ways, experience suggests something other than contemplative gazing. It implies an active and involved visitor.<sup>464</sup>

### ***Visitor Spaces, Museum Conveniences and the Visitor Experience***

If house museums adopt Pine and Gilmore's business model they come under great pressure to focus on their customers/guests (visitors) and consider the ways their audiences can make use of museum spaces and collections. Canadian house museums show signs of an increasing visitor focus through the establishment of visitor spaces like those described by Pinna. In Pinna's analysis, Italy's commitment to the conservation of its cultural assets was reflected in the lack of sitting areas, cafes and boutiques at its museums. He compared non-visitor oriented museums (which displayed catalogued objects without explanatory texts) to the post-1993 museums with "[r]estaurants, bookshops and sales outlets" that catered to the visitor.<sup>465</sup> In his article, the provision of these visitor spaces equated to a consideration of the public's needs on the part of the museum.

At Bellevue House (Kingston, ON) and Point Ellice House (Victoria, BC) visitor centres receive, welcome and introduce visitors to the sites [Fig. 3.11].<sup>466</sup> Laurier House and

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<sup>463</sup> Ibid., 39. For a more critical take on the museum's attempts to attract visitors by offering direct encounters with objects refer to the discussion of *The Onion's* article, "Struggling Museum Now Allowing Patrons to Touch Paintings" (2009), in this dissertation's conclusion.

<sup>464</sup> Roppola, *Designing for*, 38-39. Roppola explains through Neil Kolter's work: "Experiencing connotes active engagement (direct observation of or participation in an event), immediacy (knowing something through sensory stimuli), individuality (something that is lived through), and intense, memorable, or unusual encounters' (Kolter 1999, 32)" (Ibid., 41). It should be obvious that Kolter works closely with Pine and Gilmore's ideas. Roppola also notes that, as a concept, "experience" can be unaligned with learning or can be used to transcend the "opposition between education and entertainment" (Ibid., 41). Many scholars have argued the importance of pushing beyond the dichotomy that frames spectacle and pedagogy as oppositional. Museums in North America have long tried to both educate and entertain their visitors and Pine and Gilmore's study also seems to do away with the purist division. Entertainment and education constitute only two of their four realms of experience. Experiences can be educational or entertaining but they are richest and the most engaging when they fuse the educational, esthetic, entertaining and escapist.

<sup>465</sup> Pinna, *Heritage*, 64. In 1993, Italy adopted the Ronchey laws, which prompted a "veritable revolution...in the Italian museum system" as well as in the management of 'cultural assets' (Ibid.).

<sup>466</sup> In 2012, Craigdarroch Castle and Laurier House were still in the planning stage of adding such centres to their sites. Visitor centres are sometimes constructed to maintain the separation between the museum's modern facilities or visitor spaces and the "historical" elements and environments. Constructed outside the house, they

Craigdarroch Castle both have plans to construct similar centres in the future. Other house museums across the country make room in their historic structures for modern visitor conveniences such as public washrooms, accessibility elevators and coat closets or racks. Hutchison House (Peterborough, ON) and Myrtleville House Museum have raised money to incorporate modern kitchens and/or laundry facilities to support their programs and refreshment-centred events, which draw large crowds to the sites annually. Others have made room for reading rooms and research centres that are open to publics interested in local heritage, genealogical research and historical figures. A look at house museums such as Rutherford House and Lougheed House, in 2012, showed that both had gift shops on site (The Whatnot Gift Shop and Treasures Gift Shop) and played host to the Arbour Room and The Restaurant, respectively [Figs. 3.12-3.14].<sup>467</sup>

These enhancements of the visitor experience have an obvious profit motive.<sup>468</sup>

While various amenities ensure the comfort of visitors, and reassure them of their welcome, retail and dining spaces have been incorporated as revenue-producing. Dining facilities enable house museums to compete with other venues to host weddings, conferences and

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protect the historic buildings from being modified to accommodate modern conveniences. They are additions that help preserve the structures' historic integrity.

<sup>467</sup> Without question, these facilities add different experiential dimensions to the house museum visit and can be used to attract audiences that would not otherwise take notice of the site. Tour the home *and* have lunch in the historic environment. Explore the historic interiors *and* shop at the boutique of speciality items or local crafts.

<sup>468</sup> Resistance to the application of Pine and Gilmore's ideas to house museums likely comes from those who have long criticized the commercialization of the public museum. In 1988, Madhu Suri Prakash and Sivitz Shaman argued that museums should not allow "commercial manipulation" to win out over "cultural education," that they should remain a realm immunized from commercial motivations and attitudes (Madhu Suri Prakash and Sanford Sivitz Shaman, "Museum Programs: Public Escapism or Education for Public Responsibility?" *Art Education* 41, 4 (July, 1988), 20). Harkening back to solidly-formed ideas about the modern and progressive-era museum as educational institutions, they bemoan museums that mimic showplaces, playgrounds and department stores and function as "centers for consumption and entertainment" (Ibid.). Some argue that "[i]n order to thrive, museums might have to adopt commercial or consumerist concepts" where others worry that "[c]ommercer will swallow museums if educators try to copy the norms of business for immediate financial reward" (Cristina Russo, "Selling Memories: The Line Between Museum Education and Consumerism," *Sci-Ed*, 7 January 2013, accessed 21 March 2014, <http://blogs.plos.org/scied/2013/01/07/selling-memories/>). While dichotomous thinking about education and entertainment, play and pedagogy, amusement and instruction persists in various circles, in the postmodern era it is often asserted that museums need not commit themselves to one side of the binary at the expense of the other (Roppola, *Designing for*, 40).

other such meetings. Some of the refreshments are included in regular admission prices and validate a hike in the cost. At other times, the house museum gains additional profit by tempting their visitors to dine and shop on-site. This is not unlike other attractions, such as the CN Tower, which advertise add-ons (i.e. access to other platforms) and package the attraction with unique dining experiences (i.e. meals at the 360 Restaurant). This is the Experience Economy at work in the historic house museums of Canada. Art, architecture and history are fused with food, retail pleasures and nature and become photogenic backgrounds for social and celebratory events. The house museum offers experientialized goods and cultural/consumer experiences that visitors are willing to pay for.



Figure 3.11: A view of Bellevue House's visitor centre. (Photo by author, 29 September 2012).



Figure 3.12: The Restaurant at Loughheed House (Photo by author, 13 February 2013).



Figure 3.13: The gift shop at Rutherford House (Photo by author, 23 February 2013).



Figure 3.14: Heritage House Museum's gift shop (Photo by author, 1 October 2012).

Unfortunately, these additions seldom support conservation aims. Restaurants and tea rooms often necessitate a strict and supervised division between the dining areas and the

restored interiors. Food attracts pests and spills damage artifacts.<sup>469</sup> Making room for modern amenities often means altering the original structures—widening doors, constructing additions or forsaking exhibition areas. That is, attending to the visitor can compromise the historical integrity of the house by requiring its modification rather than its preservation.

The extension of Pine and Gilmore’s arguments to the world of museums has implications for the visitor experience as well as the museum’s sense of its obligation to its collections. Although a commercial realm that produces experiences through simulation and illusions does not need to address the topic of conservation in the same way, if museums are going to provide such experiences they must consider the potential costs to their artifacts.<sup>470</sup> Museums that inhabit historical architectures must be even more cautious than those contained in purpose-built contemporary frames. Embracing such ideas may prove harmful to the commemorated structures. Considering their application to house museums in particular, it should be acknowledged that preparing a designated historical environment for interaction and enhanced experiences is a very different task than constructing a simulated environment with the same aim.

Management teams at house museums across Canada are aware that they put their collections at risk by experientializing their spaces.<sup>471</sup> Nevertheless, making money can be a matter of life or death. Many are not sustainable strictly through grant monies or governmental budgets. They rely on their “feet through the door” earnings as well as income generated through programmes and events. As governments at all levels make cuts, house

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<sup>469</sup> These ideas will be explored in more detail below.

<sup>470</sup> Such considerations seem to take place in the application of the ideas more frequently than in the formulation of them. That is, in the museums rather than the scholarship. Mark Sandberg suggests that at natural history, folk-ethnographic and open-air museums “there is an allegiance to the object and original space” (Mark B. Sandberg, *Living Pictures, Missing Persons: Mannequins, Museums and Modernity* (Princeton, NJ; Oxford, Oxon.: Princeton University Press, 2003), 7). Has their allegiance changed?

<sup>471</sup> For example, the staff at Roedde House Museum (Vancouver, BC) has drawn streams of visitors to the site by hosting small-scale productions/plays such as DEBTS (17 Oct. to 3 Nov. 2012). Unfortunately, in making space for the actors, crews and audiences the house and its contents become stressed.



museums are being prompted to look at and adopt business models that generate profit and support sustainability. In such a climate, this community of small museums does not lightly disregard advice about approaches for financial gain. While some house museums—because of a vibrant location, devoted community following or modest endowment—might not feel the effects of a few unsatisfied visitors, a positive visitor experience is generally considered a requirement for survival. There are cases where ignoring the wants of the contemporary consumer or museum visitor would mean the closure of a historic house museum and the deterioration of its contained collections. A house museum in this predicament need only choose between the destruction of its artifacts by use or by the neglect that results from a lack of financial means.

If Canadian house museums have incorporated more visitor spaces, they have also opened more of their historic rooms to the public's exploration. Spaces inaccessible to the visitor, rooms closed off for conservation or safety reasons, can be construed as denied experiences. Without seeing the interiors—greeted only by rope barriers or sealed doors—the visitor is left to wonder which aspects of the complete experience are being missed. What lies in the loft of the Whyte House? What do the “Employees Only” areas of Laurier House look like? What views can be appreciated from Roedde House's rotunda? Many house museums in Canada struggle with limitations of space (especially in relation to storage and staff facilities) making non-exhibition areas necessary. Nevertheless, the unsatisfied curiosity provoked by these closed-off zones can foster disappointment amongst visitors. This is especially true in an age when museums increasingly offer “behind-the-scenes” and “after-hours” tours.

Tired of the formal rooms of the main floor tour, which frequently served public functions, visitors want to see attics, cellars, crawl spaces and secret passages, as well as the

dwelling's foundations and innards (pipes, wiring, etc.). Places never thought to be of interest are now considered essential parts of the visitor's tour of a historic house. Visitors at Casa Loma want to climb the dark, narrow and hidden stairwells, to take in the echoing space of the unfinished pool, the moist feel of the potting shed and the dingy underground passageways. Tourists want to marvel at the dusty knick knacks and tidbits in the attic at Shand House Museum and go inside the privy at Bellevue House. Viewing the modern technologies at work in the "engine room" at Prescott House, visitors are given an unusual perspective of the house [Fig. 3.15]. Pine and Gilmore have urged businesses to understand the "dramatic nature" of their "enterprise" and to consider their employees as actors and workspaces as stages. At Craigdarroch Castle, the registrar's office is fitted with a glass-paned door to allow visitors to observe the activities of the house museum staff [Fig. 3.16]. The Experience Economy requires that house museums open up completely, that they use the different spaces of the domestic environment to offer a multiplicity of experiences and stage the work of operating the historic site as theatre.



Figure 3.15: In the basement at Prescott House & Gardens Museum (Photo by the author, 6 October 2012).



Figure 3.16: Craigdarroch Castle. On the right is the glass door of the registrar's office. The sign on the glass explains that the room was once Elizabeth Georgina Harvey's bedroom: "Today, this bedroom is the museum registrar's office... Objects are measured, studied, photographed, cleaned and sometimes repaired here" (Photo by author, 17 May 2013).

### ***Spatial Experiences: Immersion and Inhabitation at the Historic House Museum***

In their chapter “Work is Theater,” Pine and Gilmore also advise experience staggers to “consider the *sequence, progression, and duration* of events.”<sup>472</sup> Museums, borrowing strategies from other ritual architectures, have long arranged their spaces and contents according to ideologically significant sequences.<sup>473</sup> Reflecting these traditions of defining experiences through spatial design, when devising presentation plans and narrative trajectories, house museum teams pay particular attention to the way a house’s interior spaces will be traversed by visitors. The levels of access afforded, and prescribed walking paths, are often planned before room arrangements are finalized and domestic scenes are set. A Presentation Plan devised for Craigdarroch Castle illustrates three different levels of access [Fig. 3.17]. The first constrains visitors within a bubble, the second gives visitors unimpeded access (to move throughout a room) and the third lays out a through-route that takes visitors from one door to the next. Barriers are often used to guide the visitors’ movements along the preferred routes and control these levels of access.

The possibilities offered by different styles of barriers receive considerable attention at the time of a house’s transition into a museum, as well as during later re-stagings. Curators and administrators recognize that differences in style translate into differences in experience, and that certain barrier types are more or less in the service of conservation aims. Shorter barriers are not as visually intrusive and are less likely to be toppled by visitors or whirling backpacks. Those that are taller may be more dissuasive, but are more visually disruptive of the scenes. Perspex half- and full-door panes may be favoured for providing uninterrupted

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<sup>472</sup> Pine and Gilmore, *The Experience Economy*, 104.

<sup>473</sup> Writing about the visitor experience at universal survey museum in the 1980s, Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach argued that the “totality of art and architectural form organize[d] the visitor’s experience as a script organizes a performance” (Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach, “The Universal Survey Museum,” *Art History* 3 (December 1980), 450). The museum visitor was spatially prompted to internalize the museum’s messages through ritual walking.

room views of completely closed off spaces while polished wooden rails may agree more with the house's interior finishes. Stanchions are, in fact, condensers of the central dilemma of this chapter. Viewed through the conservationist's lens they are necessary for ensuring the safety of a house museum's contents and interior finishes. For the house museum visitor, they limit experiential (and participative) possibilities and interrupt transportation to the re-presented past.

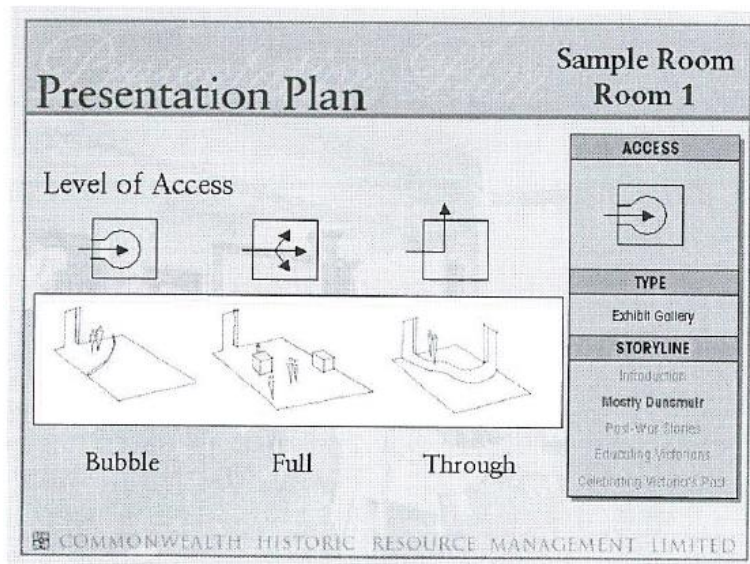


Figure 3.17: "Level of Access," Sample Room, Room 1. (Craigdarroch Castle and Commonwealth Historic Resource Management Limited, "Part 3: Presentation Plan," *Craigdarroch Castle, Historic House Museum Master Plan, Phase One: Presentation and Interpretation* (Vancouver, BC; Perth, ON: Commonwealth Historic Resource Management Limited, n.d.), 8).

As policers of spatial freedoms, stanchions define visitors' relationships to the spaces of the historic-house-turned-museum. By demarcating the spaces of representation from those of the visitor, doorframe obstructions ostensibly flatten historical spaces into two dimensions depictions. The house-museum experience becomes based on a long-distance visual absorption of representations from a constant orientation.<sup>474</sup> In *The Experience Economy*,

<sup>474</sup> In this, it is much like the "optic" and "striated" space of Deleuze's traditional theatre, which Magelssen describes as encouraging long distance vision and a constancy of orientation (Scott Magelssen, *Living History Museums: Undoing History through Performance* (Lanham, MD; Plymouth, UK: Scarecrow Press Inc. 2007), 104).

absorption—defined as “occupying a person’s attention by bringing the experience into the mind”—is thought of in contrast to immersion, which is defined as “becoming physically (or virtually) a part of the experience itself.”<sup>475</sup> Immersion, which involves being enveloped in an experience, is interrupted by house museum barriers.<sup>476</sup> When visitors stand behind stanchions and look into traditionally restored rooms that are protected in this way, they are kept from physically becoming a part of the scenes and interacting with the contents of the house.

In her study of museum experiences, Roppola compares period rooms to dioramas to describe how experiences can be staged by “encompassing the visitor within the exhibit rather than restricting viewing to a cordoned-off distance.”<sup>477</sup> Theorists of immersive spectatorship have suggested that immersion produces more captivating and personal experiences than modes of 2D spectatorship.<sup>478</sup> For example, exploring the ways “media of illusion and immersion” have attempted to integrate images and observers, Oliver Grau has

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Also recall here that Pine and Gilmore feel it is no longer enough to provide customers with appealing images to look at.

<sup>475</sup> Pine and Gilmore, *The Experience Economy*, 46. The spectrum between absorption and immersion is “[t]he second dimension of experience,” which “describes the kind of *connection*, or *environmental relationship*, that unites customers with the event or performance” (Ibid.) They argue that “if the experience ‘goes into’ guests, as when watching TV, then they are absorbing the experience. If, on the other hand, guests ‘go into’ the experience, as when playing a virtual game, then they are immersed in the experience” (Ibid., 45-46). Mark Sandberg considers these different types of spectatorship in relation to folk and wax museums, as well as model home displays, in “The Interactivity of the Model Home,” *History of Participatory Media: Politics and Publics, 1750-2000*, eds. Anders Ekström, Solveig Jülich, Frans Lundgren and Per Wisselgren (New York, NY: Routledge, 2010): 63-80.

<sup>476</sup> Alison Griffiths defines immersion as “the sensation of entering a space that immediately identifies itself as somehow separate from the world and that eschews conventional modes of spectatorship in favor of a more bodily participation in the experience, including allowing the spectator to move freely around the viewing space” (Alison Griffiths, *Shivers Down Your Spine: Cinema, Museums, and the Immersive View* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2008), 2).

<sup>477</sup> Roppola, *Designing for*, 32.

<sup>478</sup> When house museums revive photographed interiors, and situate visitors to their period rooms behind barriers, they offer an experience that seems much like staring at a two-dimensional picture plane. To make this point, Jeremy Aynsley states that the “experience of looking on to a naturalist setting of an unpeopled room is not totally removed from viewing its representation on the published page” (Jeremy Aynsley, “The Modern Period Room – A Contradiction in Terms?” in *The Modern Period Room. The Construction of the Exhibited Interior, 1870 to 1950*, eds. Trevor Keeble, Brenda Martin and Penny Sparke (New York, NY Routledge, 2006), 14.) In both cases, there is a frame, an experience of perspectival space and a sense that one cannot step into the domestic scene. Here, the explicit connectivity of the house museum and representations of home, discussed in Chapter Two becomes obvious.

argued that immersion is “characterized by diminishing critical distance to what is shown and increasing emotional involvement.”<sup>479</sup> In *Shivers Down Your Spine: Cinema, Museums, and the Immersive View* (2008) Alison Griffiths’ has suggested that through mobility and interaction audiences begin to feel “present” in a scene. The traditions of immersion, illusion and interactivity that recall such 360 degree image spaces as fresco rooms, planetariums, panoramas, cathedrals and IMAX theatres are now becoming useful for studies on new mediums of illusion (computer-based, virtual). They have also augmented the ideas of *The Experience Economy* and have helped us better understand the way (historical) spaces can be experienced in the absence of barriers. All this to say that we might want consider the house museum as an image space within the “context of an art-historical analysis of the concept of immersion” to better understand which experiences stanchions enable and which they restrict.<sup>480</sup>

Pine and Gilmore argue that the richest experiences are positioned somewhere between absorption and immersion. Stanchions are capable of thwarting both kinds of engagement. As modern, museological elements they often disrupt the illusion and experience of being transported into a domestic space of the past, thereby preventing absorption or imaginative engagement altogether. For this reason alone, some house museum curators have sided with visitors. Noting that barriers disrupt the charm and homey feel of their houses, they admit their aversion to the stanchions and confess wanting to see them extirpated from the historic environments.

House museums, especially on those on the West coast of Canada, have eliminated such boundaries in order to reduce the distance (psychological and spatial) between

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<sup>479</sup> Griffiths, *Shivers Down Your Spine*, 3; Oliver Grau, *Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 8, 13.

<sup>480</sup> Grau, *Virtual Art*, 3.

observers and the material culture of the country's past. In their view, when the stanchions are removed, visitors become a part of the expanded image, and the historical period becomes more immediate. Janet Bingham, describing the origins and objectives of Roedde House Museum (Vancouver, BC), explains:

Back in the 1960s...I realized there was no authentic Victorian or Edwardian home maintained just for the purpose of allowing the public to climb the wooden front steps, twist the vintage door bell and stand, filled with wonder, inside the front hall and parlour. Nowhere was it possible to be surrounded by real 1890s furniture solidly placed under twelve-foot ceilings. There was no opportunity, at that time, to experience a glimmer of the past amongst gilt-framed portraits, the draperies and bric-a-brac of an old Vancouver house.<sup>481</sup>

By evoking an experience where a visitor to a historic home is surrounded by the domestic environment and participates in it (twisting the doorbell), Bingham adopts the vocabulary of immersion, which was a core intention for the establishment of the Roedde House Museum. Indeed, this language of immersion has become part of promotional strategies at Canada's house museums. A rack card for Fulford Place (Brockville, ON) invites visitors to "[w]alk the same halls as royalty," to "explore the grand Fulford mansion" and "immerse [themselves] in Ontario's rich heritage."<sup>482</sup> A similar pamphlet urges: "Immerse yourself in the 1920s at Spadina Museum."<sup>483</sup> Images staged and selected for promotional brochures, museum webpages and travel guides promise immersive experiences even at house museums ridden with stanchions and "do-not-touch" signs.<sup>484</sup>

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<sup>481</sup> Janet Bingham, *More Than a House – The Story of Roedde House and Barclay Heritage Square*, foreword by Pierre Berton (Vancouver, BC: Roedde House Preservation Society, 1996), 1.

<sup>482</sup> "Fulford Place. A National Historic Site," promotional rack card, Fulford Place, October 2012.

<sup>483</sup> "Events," Spadina Museum, Explore Toronto's Historic Sites, Arts and Culture, *Toronto* webpage, <http://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=e09d19f8602a0410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD> (accessed 25 January 2014).

<sup>484</sup> For example, a brochure for Myrtleville House Museum includes images of the dining room and parlour that show no trace of the stanchions that are in place during a visit to the site [Figure 3.33]. Such images prefigure the house museum as an unrestricted space and prompt potential visitors to envision themselves sitting on the period furniture or strolling close to the artifacts to attend to details. These imagined engagements within the house do not align with the actual experience. Visitors to Myrtleville are not provided with open-access to its rooms. Such official images demonstrate that house museums sometimes deliberately hide the museological facets of their exhibits suggesting instead that visitors will enjoy an unadulterated, private, domestic space.

### III.IV. Living History: Immersion, Multisensory Historical Environments and Visitor Engagement before Pine and Gilmore

Immersion in a historical period or scene is not only about being in a historic (or restored) space. Visitors and consumers are more wholly immersed, more convincingly transported to the past by a total environment (or what Pine and Gilmore call a ‘complete production’) that involves sounds, smells, textures and tastes that complement the visual surroundings and spatial engagements. According to Roppola, museums design experiential exhibits by “situating visitors within space-surround environments” and through “sound, light and audio-visual components” that “complement authentic artifacts in a reconstructed space.”<sup>485</sup> Multisensory enhancements heighten feelings of immersion.<sup>486</sup>

Decades before the publication of Pine and Gilmore’s text, living history and outdoor museums were already preoccupied by ideas of immersion, visitor participation and role-playing, especially in relation to (simulated) multi-sensory historical environments. Jay Anderson asserts that living history museums evolved in distinction from the cabinet of curiosities, formal exhibits (which relied on categorization for interpretation) and interpretive exhibits including heritage villages, period rooms and dioramas (which focused on displaying objects in context).<sup>487</sup> An early spokesperson for the living history movement, he insisted on the living museum as a variant of these:

Preserve a western ghost town and you have an interpretive exhibit. But set it in motion with the addition of well-trained interpreters who go around doing what the townsfolk originally did—tend bars, shoe horses, file claims, ride around town, and so on and you have a living museum, a life size diorama you can actually enter. Once inside, you can use all your senses: see the horses, smell the

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<sup>485</sup> Roppola, *Designing for*, 32.

<sup>486</sup> Pine and Gilmore, *The Experience Economy*, 12; Grau argues that “[t]otal immersion is achieved only through the synaesthesia of these effects, for not only does the sound enhance the immersed state, it also encourages the visitors to destroy the image part of the immersion” (Grau, *Virtual Art*, 240).

<sup>487</sup> Jay Anderson, “Living History,” (Fall 1982) in *A Living History Reader: Museums*, ed. Jay Anderson (Nashville, TN: American Association for State and Local History, 1991), 6.



wood smoke, touch the quilt, hear the cow bells, taste the gingerbread, and on and on.<sup>488</sup>

The living history museum was animated, peopled, enterable and multisensory. In Anderson's description living history sites sound much like the staged, themed offerings so popular in the Experience Economy.

House museums—which qualified as living history museums so far as they were historic sites where “an attempt by people to simulate life in another time” was made—were included in these conversations.<sup>489</sup> In 1967, with the probable intention of inspiring house museums to adopt the methods and stances of the living history movement, James Deetz contrasted the freedoms and experiences offered at Plimoth Plantation (Plymouth, Massachusetts) with the “moribund” period-room display in his article “The Changing Historic House Museum. Can it Live?” Like Anderson, he emphasized the living history museum's sensory richness and its immersive qualities:

There is totally open access to all exhibits: visitors may crawl into bed or sit on a chair: they may chase the chickens or use the implements in the house. Nothing is labeled because people did not have explanatory signs in their houses in the seventeenth century. It has been discovered that the public, once liberated from a strictly visual response to the exhibits, responds *to an appeal to all the senses*. The smells at Plimoth are rich, varied, and not always nice. There is an abundance of sounds since the livestock often wanders around free, in many instances going in and out of the houses...The aim is nonprogrammatic interpretation, *immersion* into total understanding of seventeenth-century village life.<sup>490</sup> (My emphases)

This example discounts the period room which, Deetz implies, includes no traces of former occupants, accepts no dirt and makes no room for experiencing (or understanding) the

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<sup>488</sup> Ibid.

<sup>489</sup> Ibid., 3. Magelssen defines living history museums as “those institutions...that practice costumed interpretation within reconstructed or restored sites and that depict a particular time in history for educational purposes. These attractions are sites to which tourists travel in order to engage in what is advertised as a different temporal space, to interact with a simulation of a past time as part of an educational or recreational enterprise” (Magelssen, *Living History Museums*, xxi).

<sup>490</sup> James Deetz, “The Changing Historical House Museum: Can it Live?” in *A Living History Reader: Museums*, ed. Jay Anderson (Nashville, TN: American Association for State and Local History, 1991), 15.

discomforts of life in the past.<sup>491</sup> Deetz requires depth from living history museums, stating that “[t]o be ‘live,’ a museum is not simply operating, with someone spinning in the corner, or splitting shingles in the yard. To function properly and successfully, a live museum should convey the sense of a different reality—the reality of another time.”<sup>492</sup> A total experience of life in the past, according to Anderson and Deetz—offers more than a spectacular view; it must engage the senses and activate the visitor.

While Anderson and Deetz speak mostly of the establishment of living history in the United States it is clear that the movement had also found followers in Canada. As the superintendent of Louisbourg, a National Historic Site of Canada in Nova Scotia, John Fortier wrote extensively about what he called the “animation” of historical environments.<sup>493</sup> He held that immediacy encouraged involvement at animated sites such as living history museums. Participation facilitated personal connections to the past and displays that engaged the senses supported learning.<sup>494</sup>

Expounding the strengths of the living history approach, Fortier and his American colleagues were careful to mention the potential threats of immersive and multisensory exhibit design. Arguing that living history constituted a move “away from the museum’s preoccupation with the fine arts and conservation and toward the imperative: ‘Do your own thing’” Fortier indicated that such a move would “be hard on the very objects the museum

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<sup>491</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>492</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>493</sup> John Fortier, “Thoughts on the Re-Creation and Interpretation of Historical Environments,” (1978) in *A Living History Reader: Museums*, ed. Jay Anderson (Nashville, TN: American Association for State and Local History, 1991), 18. Williamsburg, for Fortier, provided a model for many subsequent living history museums. See also “Louisbourg—Canada Brings the Past to Life,” *Boston Globe* (19 April 1970), A28.

<sup>494</sup> Fortier, “Thoughts on the Re-Creation,” 18. Also in the 1960s, James Montagnes’ article stated “Old military drills have been resurrected by the Fort Henry Guard dressed in red-and-blue uniforms of 150 years ago. Once the visitor has crossed the drawbridge of the fort, the atmosphere of the 1800’s is recreated, even to the smell of black powder used in old-fashioned firearms” (James Montagnes, “Canadians Share Historic Events with American Neighbors: Restored Sites Wait for Visitors,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 18 July 1963, 5).

wishes to display.”<sup>495</sup> In his mind, “[a]ntiques w[ould] not survive the use, or lack of attention, that results from ongoing animation. Sooner, rather than later, they w[ould] have to be replaced by reproductions.”<sup>496</sup> Deetz, similarly warned that a living history program placed “great physical strain on artifacts, far above their limit to withstand.”<sup>497</sup> These scholars, foreshadowed the risks that *The Experience Economy*’s tenets would pose for historic sites charged with the preservation of the material culture of the past.

Anderson indicates that, in the early years, living history programs were dismissed as “‘antiquarian’ or ‘pots and pans’” histories. Their work was said to be of “‘limited interest or value to the larger field.’”<sup>498</sup> In hindsight, designers and critics of living history sites contemplated the impact of wrap-around historical displays and heralded the appeal of holistic experiences long before the Pine and Gilmore’s monograph appeared. However, it is a sphere that receives no direct mention in *The Experience Economy*. In the service of today’s museums, positioned in an Experience Economy or experiential complex, living history museums tested claims about the value of multisensory learning and delineated the tension between experience and conservation. Their trials and errors are of value to a museum world and heritage sector now focused on visitor experiences.

### **III.V. A Multisensory Mindset: Museums and Homes**

The broader museum field has slowly taken an interest the theories and applications of the multisensory experience. Influenced by proclamations about the educational value of hands-on learning and concrete experiences, ever more exhibits include interactive, multisensory components.<sup>499</sup> Educators have insisted that comprehension and recall are

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<sup>495</sup> Fortier, “Thoughts on the Re-Creation,” 19.

<sup>496</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>497</sup> Deetz, “The Changing,” 16.

<sup>498</sup> Anderson, “Living History,” 10.

<sup>499</sup> Roppola, however, reminds us that there are still questions about how much audiences learn through different types of interactive exhibits. Not all interactive displays are successfully help visitors grasp the

improved when multiple senses are engaged and museums have reported on the effectiveness of their sensory additions:

A survey of visitors to the Imperial War Museum's Trench Experience examines their reactions to the smell used in the exhibit. The results indicate that the smell is overwhelmingly regarded as adding to the visitor's experience of the exhibit and aiding their understanding of the subject matter. Those who find the smell unpleasant are shown to regard it as more realistic, and as making the exhibit more memorable and worthy of a repeat visit.<sup>500</sup>

In an ICOFOM (International Committee for Museology) publication from 2011, Daniel Jacobi stated that “[i]n practical curatorial terms, the museum visitor experience in the last two decades has been characterised by a turning away from the relatively simple construction of conditions for the visitor’s aloof gaze on artefacts” and an extension “of the visitor experience to one of often intense interaction.”<sup>501</sup> Museums have incorporated extra-visual components to exhibitions to improve their popularity and make them newly attractive. Multisensory exhibits have developed in response to prescriptions from the commercial realm in the form of the Experience Economy. They are also associated with the proliferation of new technologies and demands made by the visually-impaired for alternate experiences.

In Canada, Concordia has played a leading role in cultivating research on the senses in the museum environment. Through The Concordia Sensoria Research Team (CONCERT) projects such as “The Sensory Museum: Its History and Reinvention” have been spearheaded to establish how “[n]ew developments in museum practice are disrupting

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museum’s messages or remember the lessons taught (Roppola, *Designing for*, 22). House museums do emphasize the hands-on appeal of their displays. In an “Education Programs” pamphlet, Hutchison House Museum states its commitment to “Dynamic, curriculum based, hands-on learning for all ages” and reiterates that “Teachers know that hands-on experiential learning is a key to unlocking young minds” (Hutchison House Museum, “Education Programs” pamphlet, Hutchison House Museum, September 2012).

<sup>500</sup> Crowest, *Making Sense*, 2.

<sup>501</sup> Jacobi, “Dialogism,” 17.

conventional notions of the museum as a silent and still site of purely visual display.”<sup>502</sup> If Roppola sees a revolution in museology concerning the concept of experience, David Howes aims to track a parallel “sensory renaissance” in museums from the late twentieth century onwards.<sup>503</sup> Attempts to revalue the non-visual senses have resulted in greater awareness of the role that the senses can play in interpretation.

Even though it seems that museum professionals have only recently begun to pay attention to the multisensory aspects of museum visits, and even though museum scholars are still in the process of honing in on the evocative and immersive potentialities of multisensory exhibits, house museums have long held prescriptions for extravisual enhancements. Likely because of the genre’s long-standing ties to the realms of living and popular history, house museums heard the calls for complete sensorial experiences well before they filtered into academic texts. Additionally, attempts to replicate a home environment often converge with questions about the recreation of multisensory aspects of the home. The home was a multisensory space even when the museum was sterile and decidedly visual.

Homes are places brought to life by their sights, smells, noises, tastes and textures. The scent of detergent in the laundry room, food in the kitchen, smoke in the drawing room or wood near the fireplace—like the sounds of clocks ticking, floorboards creaking, music playing and voices chattering—constitute part of the domestic atmosphere and the experience that visitors come to the house museum for. The experiences of how people lived in the past are thought to be most convincing and impactful when the house museum is staged with attention to the multisensory nature of the home. Just as visitors want to clear

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<sup>502</sup> “The Sensory Museum: Its History and Reinvention,” *Senses. The Concordia Sensoria Research Team (CONSERT)* website, Montreal, QU: Concordia University, <http://www.david-howes.com/senses/SensoryMuseum.htm> (accessed 18 Jan 2014).

<sup>503</sup> *Ibid.*

the stanchions to move through rooms and hallways, to know the spaces as their owners might have, they also want to sit in the chairs, play the instruments, open the drapes, answer the phones, ring the doorbells and stretch out on the beds. They want to bring the house back to life, to know what it would have been like to inhabit the house and use its contents. Marista Leishman of the National Trust for Scotland has pointed out that although “culturally we are programmed to seeing at the expense of touching and feeling and smelling” it is “misleading” to suggest “that seeing is the complete experience.”<sup>504</sup> She emphasizes that when house museum visitors are forced to look at environments and objects that were “not meant to be looked at exclusively” they become “nudged by boredom.”<sup>505</sup> Engaging in minor multisensory interactions is part of the “whole experience” of the historic domestic environment. To return us to the way such attitudes intersect with conservation concerns, the following segments address how house museums in Canada have produced multisensory exhibits that are also sensitive to preserving their artifacts.

### ***Touching/Feeling: Hands-on at House Museums***

In the sensuously-textured space of the historic domestic interior, tangible material remnants seem to offer closer connections to the past.<sup>506</sup> Unfamiliarity with outdated domestic objects inspire members of younger generations to come to *know by touching*, while older generations, who recall having similar items in their households, wish to *remember through handling* once more. For the visitor who wishes to animate the house and experience it as alive, or the guest who wants to interact with household instruments to better understand

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<sup>504</sup> Marista Leishman in Crowest, *Making Sense*, 4.

<sup>505</sup> Ibid.

<sup>506</sup> Shannon Jackson, “Performance at Hull-House: Museum, Microfiche, and Historiography,” in *Essays in Performance and History*, ed. Della Pollock (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 280.

the ways they were used, touching seems essential [Fig. 3.18].<sup>507</sup> Restrictions against handling seem to hinder exploration. Therefore, when a visitor is told they can pull open dresser drawers they can feel the texture of a drawer's handle and peek at contents that would otherwise be hidden. Touch is a form of engagement that may resonate at many levels in the house museum by producing additional multisensory stimuli. For example, pressing a doorbell might ring a bell, touching a piano might play a note or picking up a phone might introduce a dial tone.<sup>508</sup> These manual interactions were all parts of domestic life according to the house museum tours—and are rooted in touch.



Figure 3.18: An interactive component at Myrtleville House Museum, which invites the visitors to handle the kitchen utensils (Photo by author, 14 September 2012).

In comparison to sites like Michener House Museum or the Moore House, Mackin House Museum (Coquitlam, BC) is a “do touch” environment. Mackin House assumes the status of an interactive museum—a site of living heritage. It cites amongst its key objectives a

<sup>507</sup> At Myrtleville House Museum housewares in the pantry are paired with signs that prompt visitors to try them. Having handled the objects, the visitor is expected to go away with a better sense of how the artifacts were once used.

<sup>508</sup> In Point Ellice House a sign reads, “[t]his bell is a newcomer to Point Ellice House, but works just like the old ones. You are welcome to ring it, though it just might bring one of the servants” (Museum didactic, Point Ellice House, May 2013). The text suggests that sounds produced through manual interactions with household objects served real purposes when the house was inhabited as a home. No actual servants come at the sound of the bell during the tours of today.

desire to offer its visitors an enjoyable and immersive experience. Upon entering the museum, visitors are ushered into the sitting room where they may settle on couches and chairs topped with plush pillows. These furnishings are arranged in front of the fire, which gives off heat into the room, and beside an open record player that still plays music. A vase of flowers stands on a central table and a dish of potpourri sits on a table between two of the chairs. The piano is free of barriers and do-not-touch signs. In short, Mackin House has all the features of a multisensory environment. As a living museum it offers visitors experiences of warmth, comfort and intimacy that are often lost in the stanchion-ridden, pseudo-living house museum with its artificial food, synthetic flowers and cold fireplaces.

The spaces of Mackin House Museum include few signs of restriction and guides encourage visitors to touch and interact with the house's displays.<sup>509</sup> Because most of its furnishings are period pieces, and did not generally belong to the Mackin family, the museum has more of a license to invite use; period pieces can be expensive but they are not as impossible to replace as objects claiming specific connections to a site or its owner. House museum professionals maintain that it is less admissible for museums with collections of tier one artifacts to subject their pieces to touching (recall the remarks made by Fortier and Deetz). Curators and site managers, therefore, have devised ways to negotiate the claimed advantages of hands-on engagements with responsibilities to their collections. At Eldon House, a sample of embossed wallpaper is offered to visitors tempted by the textured wall coverings [Fig. 3.19]. The sample enables touch without putting the originally hung wallpaper

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<sup>509</sup> Guides at "hands-on" museums express that many visitors are hesitant to handle museums objects. Special invitations can be voiced during tours, posted near displays or located in self-guided tour brochures. The tour pamphlet for Rutherford House prompts: "Try it yourself! There are some old-fashioned toys in this room, including a ball and cup, some spinning tops and a Jacob's ladder. Try them out. Can you make them work?" (Tour pamphlet, Rutherford House, February 2013). Given that visitors are not allowed to sit on most display chairs at Craigdarroch Castle, a framed sign in a sitting room reads "The wicker chairs in this room are for your use. Please enjoy!" At the end of their visits, visitors often express surprise at having been able to engage with the displays in such an immediate fashion.



at risk. A display in the vaults of the Château Ramezay includes a grouping of clothed mannequins that stand back from the stanchions and away from the visitor. Separate samples of the fabrics used to make the costumes hang over the barriers for the visitors to feel. This approach helps the museum maintain its costumes while allowing visitors to appreciate and closely examine the textures of the clothes. At Roedde House Museum, white gloves rest throughout the period rooms and are utilized in instances where visitors ask (or guides choose) to handle more delicate items on their tours [Fig. 3.20]. Visitors have the opportunity to feel the size, shape and texture of objects through the museological membrane that is the gloves. Indeed, the museum is always mediating our relationship to the past and its remnants.



Figure 3.19: A fragment of wallpaper at Eldon House that visitors are permitted to touch (Photo by author, 24 September 2013).



Figure 3.20: White gloves worn by visitors and guides of Roedde House Museum to protect artifacts while they are being handled (Photo by author, 19 May 2013).

House museums that do not make their artifacts accessible to curious fingers sometimes attempt to explain these restrictions—to petition their visitors’ understanding regarding the limitations of their sites.<sup>510</sup> Not all visitors comprehend why their desires and

<sup>510</sup> Signs posted in the entrance vestibules at Haliburton House Museum and Shand House Museum in Windsor, Nova Scotia read: “To ensure the preservation of our collection for future generations, we kindly ask that visitors not handle any artifacts or sit on the furniture” (Museum sign, Shand House Museum, October

actions can generate conservation concerns. At McCrae House a sign entitled “Why We Ask You Not to Touch” asserts that “Every hand, no matter how clean it is, has natural oils that can harm an artifact. These oils leave fingerprints and dirt that can cause immediate and long term damage” [Fig. 3.21]. In addition, the sign rationalizes the “do-not-touch” environment by referencing the museum’s obligations: “As a museum, we are entrusted by the public with the safekeeping of our history and its future.” The visitor is reassured that they are not missing an experience that privileged others enjoy: “Even museum employees handle artifacts as little as possible and make sure to wear white cotton gloves when they do.” Still, the setup of McCrae House is such that it can be altered if these measures interfere with the visitor experience. A second sign explains why the lights in the museum are kept low but tells the visitor that “If the lights are too dim for you to read, please let the attendant know and they will adjust the lights for your visit” [Fig. 3.22]. Such signs advocate for the preservation of the museum’s collection and mediate between the visitor and the restrictive historic interior. Like the stanchions, signs and cases of the house museum, they make the tension between visitor experience and conservation concerns apparent.

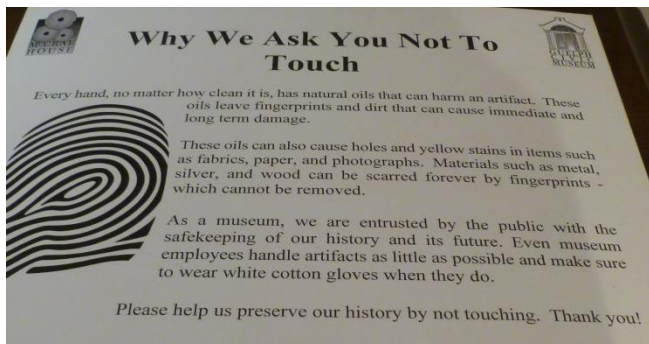


Figure 3.21: The sign at McCrae House that explains why visitors are asked not to touch (Photo by author, 15 September 2012).



Figure 3.22: A sign at McCrae House that clarifies why the lights in the exhibition spaces are dim (Photo by author, 15 September 2012).

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2012). These do less explaining than the signs at McCrae House and function more as behavioural cues for visitors.

At Mackin House the privilege of touching cannot be extended to every artifact. For example, consider the reading materials situated beside a chair in the sitting room [Fig. 3.23]. Located where they might have been during the house's time as a private residence, visitors are invited to interact with the furniture and texts simultaneously, making the experience of dwelling in the past seem more complete. In offering this experience, and keeping the reading materials in situ, the museum has fitted the historical documents with plastic covers that protect them from the oils of handling and the possibility of transferred dirt or grime. The *Five Roses Cook Book* (1915) and a historical copy of the *Coquitlam Star* (1912) are likewise protected so that these household ephemera can remain in context [Figs. 3.24 & 3.25]. Irreplaceable items are almost always equipped with signs, surrounded by vitrines, encased in plexi coverings or locked within display cases. Even living museums, which aim to be hands-on spaces, have conservation concerns that are reflected in their interiors and affect the visitor experience.



Figure 3.23: Protected reading materials on display at Mackin House Museum (Photo by Author, 21 May 2013).



Figure 3.24: A copy of the *Coquitlam Star* from 1912 on display at Mackin House Museum (Photo by author, 21 May 2013).



Figure 3.25: *Five Roses Cook Book* covered by plastic in the kitchen of Mackin House Museum (Photo by author, 21 May 2013).

### ***Smelling/Tasting: Food-Based Activities and Events***

House museums are often cleansed of actual foodstuffs for conservation reasons. Like their museological peers, they post “no food or drink” signs alongside those that

prohibit flash photography and touching. While food considerably raises the risk of pest problems for the historic buildings, it is recognized as an important feature of many room displays and exhibits. Root cellars, ice boxes, pantries, kitchens and table sets seem bare without food items. When such spaces are reconstructed, artificial foods and emptied food packages (such as cereal boxes or cookie canisters) frequently become part of the scenes [Figs. 3.26 & 3.27].<sup>511</sup> Food furnishes discussions about the home's connection to the farm field and the garden, its proximity to stores, seasonal changes, hosted social events and historical menus. As much as food is at the crux of understanding the home as an area of activity and provision it is also at the centre of experiencing it as a multi-sensory and lively space. Its smells, tastes and textures define the feel and comforts of home: "There is nothing like a home cooked meal!" They can serve as olfactory and taste-based prompts for reminiscences. Replica foods do not generate the smells, tastes or memories of the foods they mimic, and poorly-produced pieces can draw attention to the artifice of the stagings.



Figure 3.26: A set of fake breakfast foods on a serving dish at Craigdarroch Castle (Photo by author, 17 May 2013).



Figure 3.27: Artificial foods in the display kitchen at Irving House (Photo by author, 24 May 2013).

Joseph Schneider Haus (Kitchener, Ontario), a vernacular house of the early nineteenth century, was converted into a living history museum and opened to the public in

<sup>511</sup> The further these items are from the visitor's examining eyes and hands, the less likely it is that they appear artificial enough to disrupt the illusion of the house.



1981. The house and its contents are used, cared for and interpreted by a group of costumed interpreters. These individuals perform both interactive and task-based activities, interfacing with visitors as well as functioning as part of the historic scenes. They plant and harvest the kitchen garden, use the furniture, bake foods according to recipes of the interpretive period, knit, wash dishes and keep the stove burning. They also provide guests with opportunities to handle artifacts and reproductions, try on period clothing such as hats and shawls and observe daily chores conducted at the site.

An online promotional invitation emphasizes the multi-sensory and interactive possibilities of the house:

Spend some time at Joseph Schneider Haus! The heart-shaped latch at the kitchen door extends the first gesture of welcome. Then the warmth of the stove draws you in as it has friends and strangers alike for years. Friendly staff in period dress complete the scene that recaptures the long tradition of Schneider hospitality. It's all here for you to enjoy. Climb up to the attic...Descend to the cellar where the odour of sauerkraut and vinegar mingle with the sweet smell of apples... Relax...take your time. Help the staff with one of the myriad of seasonal tasks they are engaged in or just draw up a chair for some tea and a chat.<sup>512</sup>

As this excerpt indicates, visitors can opt to learn period-appropriate methods for making bread, cookies and other foods—smelling and tasting the products of their labour in the process.<sup>513</sup> Where these senses are not bound with a participatory activity, they become special complements to the visual displays and living history performances around them.<sup>514</sup> A winter program titled “Visiting with the Schneiders!” (2014) prompts visitors to “Drop by

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<sup>512</sup> “Joseph Schneider Haus,” Museums, *Region of Waterloo* website, [http://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/discovering theregion/josephschneiderhaus.asp](http://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/discovering%20theregion/josephschneiderhaus.asp) (accessed 12 January 2014). Reposted at “Day 3: Kitchener,” Heritage and Culinary Itinerary, *Explore Waterloo Region* website, <http://explorewaterlooregion.com/heritage-culinary> (accessed 21 April 2014).

<sup>513</sup> The Château Ramezay has, in the past, engaged groups of children in the task of baking bread in the vaults. Hutchison House Museum (Peterborough, ON) uses the hearth to make foodstuffs such as Welsh cakes and Campbell House Museum invites visitors to help make traditional baked goods over the fire.

<sup>514</sup> The upstairs rooms at Joseph Schneider Haus provide the visitor with fewer freedoms and interactive opportunities. Stanchions bar entrance into the sewing room and bedrooms. Where interpreters are not going about their tasks and supervising visitors on the second floor, stanchions become responsible for restricting unwanted behaviours.

for a visit. Experience the smells and tastes of hot cider and cookies still warm from the Schneider's oven."<sup>515</sup> The annual open house promises samples of "Stollen, Lebkuchen, Pfeffernusse and other seasonal treats."<sup>516</sup> If the emphasis on exploration, relaxation and cordialness frames the museum as an unthreatening site of leisure and enjoyment, the emphasis on smell and taste reassures the potential visitor of the liveliness of the history on offer.

House museums that hesitate to incorporate food into their regular museum program may offer special-event dining experiences to capitalize on visitors' desires for this kind of multisensory experience. Campbell House Museum, located near Toronto's entertainment district, hosts dinner theatre events in conjunction with the city's annual celebrations of its local cuisine, *Winterlicious*.<sup>517</sup> Backus Page House Museum (Wallacetown, ON) coordinates an 1850s Christmas dinner, enticing foodies with the promise of an authentic, historical meal:

Be a part of unique dining experience that occurs within the museum for 14 people. Enjoy dinner by candle and firelight, just as it would have been in the 1850s. Not only that, the servers are costumed to complete the experience. This meal is multi-course and involves authenticated recipes.<sup>518</sup>

These types of productions appeal to those craving more immersive or theatrical engagements with the past. The historic interior serves as a setting for a distinct dining experience while the costumed servers, atmospheric lighting and authentic dishes render the experience complete. Catering to only fourteen people, the Backus Page Museum's festive feast seems both more intimate and exclusive than the average restaurant meal, and, as an isolated event, it presents less risk to the collections. These programs attend to the historic

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<sup>515</sup> "Joseph Schneider Haus," <http://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/discoveringtheregion/josephschneiderhaus.asp>.

<sup>516</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>517</sup> The 2013 event was titled "In the Kitchen: Historic Menu, History-Inspired Theatre!"

<sup>518</sup> "Current Events for 2013 and 2014," *Backus Page House Museum* website, <http://www.backuspagehouse.ca/Events.html> (accessed 12 January 2014).

house's capacities and cater to the visitor's cravings for distinctive and highly memorable staged experiences, while striking a balance between conservation and visitation.

***Hearing: Audio Tracks, Historical Instruments and Musical Demonstrations***

Many of Canada's house museums possess musical artifacts, whether instruments, audio players, recorded music or sheet music. They are sometimes regarded as sites for organological investigation or the study of musical heritage. Internationally, the Handel House Museum and other museums, which were formerly the homes of famous musicians and composers, are quite deliberate in their attempts to fill historic homes with songs and melodies from their interpretive periods. Recordings are played, performances are held and audio stations are set up for the visitor. Musical instruments at house museums are used to inform visitors about European craftsmanship, entertainment in the home or the place of music at the core of religious devotion and ceremony. In Canada, this is the case as well. The organ at Michener House Museum provides an interpretive link to the masses that took place at the Methodist Church next to the home-parsonage, and Luxton House displays the Uxbridge Palace Grand upright piano purchased by David and Annie McDougall from circa 1892 [Fig. 3.28]. European models, such as Broadwood and Kirkman pianos, are showcased at Point Ellice House, Heritage House Museum and Irving House amongst others.

It is often a point of pride that the historical instruments in a house museum's care are still in working condition. At Laurier House visitors listen to a musical demonstration played by a pianola (or player piano). The pianos at Rutherford House and Mackin House Museum are regularly used by guides or visitors familiar with the instruments. At Roedde House Museum the cylinder phonograph still plays marches and ballads for visitors [Fig. 3.29]. Through these performances and demonstrations the historical instruments not only contribute to the visual representation of the historic house; they add an atmospheric audio

element that can be authentic to the experience of the space and powerfully reminiscent of the past. Some house museums struggle against their surrounding environments to block out the sounds of contemporary society, aware that these can disrupt their ability to transport visitors to the “past”. For example, the property, on which Point Ellice House sits, backs onto the scenic and historic Gorge waterway. The front entrance, unfortunately, faces a recycling/garbage depot. From the gardens, across the narrow street, can be heard the noise of piling aluminum and the loading of wood scraps into dump trucks. The hum of heavy machinery does little to recreate the environment of the O’Reilly’s yard. Part of preserving the experience of the historic house involves preserving the feel of its surroundings.<sup>519</sup> This type of preservation is often far beyond the control of house museum administrators.

There are preservation issues at the root of authentic audio demonstrations and performances as well. Even though many house museum guides reiterate that, in the interest of preservation, it is beneficial for historical instruments to be occasionally played, some of the instruments on display are too fragile to be used during every visit. An “Edison phonograph and disks” (circa 1909) are prominently featured objects in the recreated Victorian parlour of the Admiral Digby Museum [Fig. 3.30]. The disks are usually tucked away in their cases and are only occasionally removed to explain the phonograph’s sound production. An audio component replicates the sounds of this instrument in the space: a compact disc player hidden behind a couch plays a series of audio tracks—musical pieces and clips of an older man telling jokes and laughing. These are recordings of the seventy three phonograph disks that belong to the house’s collection. The sounds are muffled by the noise of the road that runs outside the front of the house. However difficult to decipher, the

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<sup>519</sup> As Fortier warned in the 1960s, “having created a historical environment, you will have the ongoing problem of preserving it from modern intrusion—the sights, sounds, and obvious signs of vehicles, service facilities, maintenance crews, or neighbors...” (Fortier, “Thoughts on the Re-Creation,” 21).



looped audio has a particular sound quality; it complements the visually-composed environment in its production of an atmosphere of a past time. To play the phonograph during every visitor's visit would surely lead to its destruction.



Figure 3.28: The organ at Michener House Museum (Photo by author, 21 February 2013).



Figure 3.29: Instruments at Roedde House Museum that are still played for visitors (Photo by author, 19 May 2013).



Figure 3.30: The phonograph in the parlour of the Admiral Digby Museum (Photo by author, 5 October 2012).

### III.VI. Visitor Involvement: Role-Playing, Dress-Up and Participatory Exhibits

If the visitor's absorption or immersion in the re-presented domestic past is achieved through the recreation of a total, multisensory environment, and is encouraged by permitting spatial and sensorial participation, feelings of involvement and envelopment are also enhanced through other kinds of participatory elements. The revolution in thinking that replaced the notion of a passive visitor with that of the active participant, in the fields of museology and heritage and tourism studies, is partly responsible for the amplification of calls for more participatory exhibits and activities. For Pine and Gilmore, activating the visitor is important to the production of memorable consumer experiences. In their schematization of four "experience realms," including "Entertainment," "Educational," "Esthetic" and "Escapist," a second central line representing the spectrum between passive and active participation runs perpendicular to the absorption/immersion axis. According to Pine and Gilmore, it is at the centre of these intersecting lines that businesses were to

position their offerings to successfully generate highly-valued and rich experiences.<sup>520</sup> It is also important to recall that in Roppola's assessment of the museum realm, the term "experience" presupposes a new relationship between the museum and its visitor, one defined by transaction rather than a one-way transmission of information.

An emerging body of research on the active, embodied and performative aspects of museum visitation and heritage tourism has encouraged house museums to reconsider the experiences they already offer. In the 1960s, long before Pine and Gilmore cited the theatre as a model for businesses, the living-history movement looked to historical pageants and theatre as its predecessors.<sup>521</sup> Contemporary scholars such as Scott Magelssen have continued to stress this lineage, attempting to insert "living history museums into a genealogy of performance."<sup>522</sup> Magelssen has asserted that "[l]iving history is a form of theatre" where "[p]articipants use performance to create a world, tell a story, entertain, and teach lessons, regardless of whether they are playing 'characters' or speaking in the third person."<sup>523</sup> In support of this statement, he refers to the work of Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett: "Heritage'... endows the dead and the dying with a second life, an *afterlife*, through the instrumentalities of exhibition and performance. It is in this sense that heritage productions are 'resurrection theatre.'<sup>524</sup> In the twenty-first century, studies conducted by performance scholars, like Magelssen, continue to intersect with museum studies. They differ from earlier

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<sup>520</sup> Pine and Gilmore, *The Experience Economy*, 30.

<sup>521</sup> Anderson has suggested that "[l]iving history is related to other creative and symbolic forms, especially drama, ritual, pageantry, and play. It is obviously theatrical with its use of costume (period clothing), props (artifacts), sets (historic sites), role playing (identifying with historical characters), and the designation of time and space as special and somehow not part of our ordinary everyday world" (Anderson, "Living History," 3); Living history, according to John Fortier, developed out of the tradition of historical pageants and the "demonstrations of historical activities" hosted in the first half of the 1900s. (Fortier, "Thoughts on the Re-Creation," 19). One must not confuse studies of the performances of re-enactors and staff with those of visitor performances.

<sup>522</sup> Magelssen, *Living History Museums*, xv.

<sup>523</sup> *Ibid.*, xii.

<sup>524</sup> *Ibid.*, xxi.

works in this area by advocating investigations of visitor performances in addition to analyses of the narrative performances of trained (museum) interpreters and reenactors.<sup>525</sup>

During the early 2000s, pioneering scholars such as Gaynor Bagnall, who tested the idea of visitor performativity at Wigan Pier and the Museum of Science and Industry in England, attempted to do away with the proverbial uncritical visitor or casual viewer in the sphere of heritage studies. Bagnall argued that visitors remained active by attending to their senses, using their imagination, recalling memories and identifying with characters emotionally.<sup>526</sup> They *experienced* heritage as something more than prepared images to be looked at. These studies on active visitation opened up new questions about visitor experiences.

Even as recently as 2011, Martin Selby lamented that “[d]espite the proliferation of research on cultural heritage tourism since the mid 1980s, there have been relatively few experiential studies.”<sup>527</sup> David Brett and the contributors to Ashgate’s *Culture, Heritage and Representation: Perspectives on Visuality and the Past* (2011) explained that heritage scholars have remained fixated on questions about visuality and historical re(-)presentation.<sup>528</sup> Over the last two decades, thanks to the influence of dramaturgy and phenomenology, representational studies have been counterpoised by non-representational studies that emphasize performativity and embodied engagement.<sup>529</sup> In comparison to third-person interpretation,

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<sup>525</sup> Jackson, “Performance at Hull-House,” 272. Unlike Anderson’s excerpt from 1982, which focuses on the performances of the interpreters, Deetz’s description of the living history museum (1967) highlights the visitor involvement.

<sup>526</sup> Gaynor Bagnall, “Performance and Performativity at Heritage Sites,” *Museum and Society* 1, 2 (2003), 93.

<sup>527</sup> Martin Selby, “People-Place-Past: The Visitor Experience of Cultural Heritage,” in *Culture, Heritage and Representation: Perspectives on Visuality and the Past*, ed. Emma Waterton and Steve Watson (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 39. In this statement, Selby seems to echo the way Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach spoke about the lack of attention paid to the museum experience in the 1980s. Also see Selby’s take on “Performing” at heritage sites, which begins on page 43.

<sup>528</sup> Selby, “People-Place-Past,” 43.

<sup>529</sup> It is hardly a coincidence that these two areas of study receive mention. Phenomenology, after all, is referred to as the “philosophy of human experience” (Selby, “People-Place-Past,” 39) and, as has been stated, dramaturgy proved influential for experiential studies like Pine and Gilmore’s.

second-person interpretation has been used to refer “to ‘hands-on’ activities and programming offered by living history museums in which visitors may try out various practices such as weaving, cooking, or musket loading and can imagine that they are interpreting the past through physical means.”<sup>530</sup> Studies like Bagnall’s and Selby’s are important for moving beyond the visual terrains of heritage offerings, and the spectatorial aspects of the visitor experience, by emphasizing the complexities of active visitation.<sup>531</sup>

### ***Château Ramezay’s “In the Time of Smallpox”***

A temporary exhibition hosted by Château Ramezay, “In the Time of Smallpox. Physicians, Surgeons and Apothecaries in New France” (*Au temps de la petite vérole. Médecins, chirurgiens et apothicaires en Nouvelle-France*), provides an example of the ways that participatory activities inspire visitors to become involved in exhibitions, and feel the implication of information presented, at house museums.<sup>532</sup> Two hanging white curtains imprinted with the words “*Attention petite vérole. Warning smallpox*” marked the entrance to the exhibition. After parting the curtains and entering the gallery visitors were invited to “Take a number!” which would correspond to one of ten historical figures depicted on a board above the ticket dispenser [Fig. 3.31]. The museum visitor was instructed to “Walk in the shoes of this individual as he or she navigate[d] the ‘health system’ in New France through the exhibition’s various interactive games.” In room nine of the museum, for example, visitors were told that “Each character desperately need[ed] a surgeon.” The “*Governor de Ramezay* has been suffering from pain in the lower abdomen.” Below, a display case contained a surgical knife, lithotome, trocar, catheter and other medical instruments. The visitor was asked to guess which of the instruments the surgeon would use on each character. In front of the case, the

<sup>530</sup> Magelssen, *Living History Museums*, xxiv.

<sup>531</sup> Selby, “People-Place-Past,” 39. Urry’s *Tourist Gaze* (1990; 2002) “conceptualize[d] the visual nature of the visitor experience” and left scholar’s trying to understand the extra-visual aspects of visitation and spectatorship (Ibid.).

<sup>532</sup> This exhibition was curated by André Delisle and coordinated by Christine Brisson.

object names were reproduced on wooden tops that could be lifted to reveal the answers [Fig. 3.32]: “The catheter was used for draining, as in the cases of *Governor de Ramezay* and *Monsieur Gamelin*.” Hanging on the walls beside objects were paintings and medical diagrams that depicted similar medical implements and the administration of treatments. In the basement of the house the visitors found themselves at the “apothecary.” They were told to “try and heal [their] character by concocting the appropriate remedy with the elements at hand,” including such plants as St. John’s wort, papaver, pockwood and rhubarb. At the end of the exhibition a panel (like the one that introduced visitors to the ten characters at the start of the exhibition) explained the fates of each of the figures.



Figure 3.31: An installation photograph of the “In the Time of Smallpox” exhibition at Château Ramezay (Photo by author, 3 September 2012).



Figure 3.32: A display from “In the Time of Smallpox” at the Château Ramezay (Photo by author, 3 September 2012).

Such an interactive approach assumes that, when visitors identify with given characters, an exhibition’s information seems both more relevant and immediately important. Curiosity may prompt visitors to flip up a number of the blocks to find out what instrument or plant was used to treat them (their character). Assigned different fates, they are prompted to reflect on how their characters fared in comparison to others. Thus the larger history of smallpox is made more personal as the house museum visitor adopts a role and becomes more immersed in the unfolding story of the exhibition and more attuned to the significance

of the objects on display. This is also why house museums with even minor connections to a particular family will often interpret life in the house in relation to particular family members and the ways they were known to use the house.

***Period Activities: The Interactive and Intangible***

Second-person interpretation, or the involvement of visitors in period activities, is one of the most common approaches to visitor engagement in house museums. As time passes, increasingly smaller segments of Canada's population remember how household instruments of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were made, used, cleaned, stored or repaired. House museums preserve this kind of domestic know-how. Tour guides conduct demonstrations and teach visitors skills seldom practiced today.<sup>533</sup> Interpreters at living history museums, such as Joseph Schneider Haus, are experienced blacksmiths, gardeners and textile makers. They play an essential role in bringing visitors into contact with traditions, cultural practices and those intangible aspects of culture not addressed by static displays and textual explanations. House museum guides often have a repertoire of activities for engaging their visitor(s). Site visits in 2012 and 2013 indicated that Canada's house museums prompted audience-groups to perform household chores, carry out period-appropriate tasks (i.e. tying slings, making candles, using Victorian kitchen implements and spinning wool), play popular historical games and don period garb.<sup>534</sup> Presumably, the goal has been to

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<sup>533</sup> During the Progressive Era in the United States, as factory labour seemed to be distancing its citizens from skills such as "metallurgy, woodworking, pottery and textile manufacture," the Hull-House Settlement of Chicago and Jane Addams' labour museum tasked older immigrants with sharing their knowledge of these crafts with the younger generations (Jackson, "Performance at Hull-House," 264).

<sup>534</sup> Rutherford House's brochure "Experience Alberta's History!" indicates that the museum "offer[s] a variety of opportunities to experience history with hands-on activities for all ages. Enjoy the smell and taste of freshly baked cookies, play old-fashioned games and create a traditional craft" ("Experience Alberta's History!" museum brochure, Rutherford House Museum, February 2013); Knitting needles and yarn sit on a chair in Hazel's room at the House paired with a sign that prompts visitors, "Try your hand at knitting! Ask one of our interpreters for tips" (Museum didactic, Rutherford House Museum, February 2013).



involve visitors in “the ceremonies of heritage” and inspire them to become active interpreters of Canada’s past [Fig. 3.33].<sup>535</sup>

*Myrtleville House Museum*  
educates a community through its  
collections, programs and events that  
preserve and celebrate a family's history.

*Step Into History*

Step into Myrtleville House and enter a time when hardy settlers devoted their lives to the development of Brant County and the Canadian nation. Constructed in 1837, this ten room Georgian homestead was home to Allen and Eliza Good, who had emigrated from Ireland with their three children. The family would grow to include ten children and for the next 140 years, Myrtleville House would continue to be home to four consecutive generations of the family. Throughout these years the family would be renowned for their contributions to Canadian farming, education and public life.

In the 1850's the Good farm encompassed approximately 600 acres. Today, Myrtleville House Museum is situated on 5 1/2 acres surrounded by the growing city of Brantford. Visitors can view the family's extensive furnishings, early agricultural and woodworking tools, and family heirlooms, some of which date back to the late 1700's. The property also includes gardens, a workshop with a blacksmith forge, and a reconstructed ice house, smoke house and bake oven.

Our fundamental values include:

- Mind activating
- Unique Canadian history
- Special events
- Educational for all
- Unparalleled legacy
- Myrtleville House Museum

Figure 3.33: Myrtleville House Museum pamphlet (inside pages), in circulation 2012 (Original scanned by author).

<sup>535</sup> Hall, “The Reappearance,” 83. In addition to the images discussed in footnote 487, the promotional pamphlet for Myrtleville House Museum provides three romantic vignettes of living history complete with costumes. A woman leans over her dough, surrounded by mixing bowls and ingredients in the kitchen. Two male figures cut into a log with a two-man crosscut saw observed by a young boy. A girl standing beside a laundry basket reaches over a tub of water to grasp a washboard. These images suggest activity at the site; specifically, activities related to life in the past. The saw is an artifact that refers to a moment before the chainsaw when human power was required to section a log. Washboards have been replaced by washing machines in most North American homes. In short, they represent tasks that require tools and techniques that are unknown to a younger generation. This is communicated through the figures of the two observing children. The ultimate draw of these promotional pictures is that they associate the house museum with “pre-industrial, craft-like activities” that seem true to a bygone age. They are strong promotional devices because the activities take place in different parts of Myrtleville House Museum: the yard, the shed and the kitchen. They incorporate a range of household tools that have become some of the chief artifacts in the house museum. They suggest that Myrtleville House Museum functions as a site where visitors can learn techniques by watching and perhaps participating. Appealing to visitors already receptive to the idea of engaging in historical simulation and observing craft/chore demonstrations, such images are highly staged. All signs of physical effort and dirt is effaced from such laborious tasks. Everyone depicted looks relaxed and clean. While living history and historical reenactment can be pursued to answer scholarly questions, and solve ethnographic mysteries about life in the past, for many museum goers it is associated with recreation and enjoyable learning. Who wants to visit a museum on the weekend only to find themselves doing back-breaking work?

Performing period chores and practicing historical crafting skills falls under the rubric of ‘learning by doing.’ How better to learn about processes such as canning, cooking and dehydrating foods than by partaking in them? And, in an age when museums advocate ‘learning by accident,’ and recite the belief that a spoonful of sugar makes the medicine go down, these mostly non-strenuous interactions seem appropriate. If by the nineteen thirties museum education had “acquired...negative connotations...implying obligatory, formal, fact-laden information transfer,” performative/participatory lessons had a “playful-interactive credo” that aligned them more with leisure than with demanding or difficult teaching.<sup>536</sup> “Old-fashioned” games such as ‘feely socks’ and carpet bools are played at Bellevue House and Rutherford House. In 2013, Gibson House (Toronto, ON) promoted their “Hands-On History @ Gibson House” event as a fun party experience:

Take your party guests on an adventure into the past! Create the perfect party by selecting from a wide range of hands-on activities including: baking over the open hearth, playing with 19<sup>th</sup>-century toys, making handkerchief dolls, churning butter and ice cream, and preparing wool for the spinning wheel.<sup>537</sup>

Programs of this kind reinforce Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s claim that “while the persistence in old life ways may not be economically viable...the valorization of those life ways as heritage (and integration of heritage into economies of cultural tourism) is economically viable.”<sup>538</sup> Pine and Gilmore would likely agree.

As interest in intangible heritage increases, these performances, re-enactments and period-specific activities take on new significance.<sup>539</sup> In a 2012 issue of the *International Journal*

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<sup>536</sup> George E. Hein, “Museum Education,” in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon Macdonald (Chichester, UK; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 340; Jacobi, “Dialogism,” 17.

<sup>537</sup> “Birthday Parties,” *Gibson House and Zion Schoolhouse*. Facebook page. [https://www.facebook.com/gibsonzion/app\\_2374336051](https://www.facebook.com/gibsonzion/app_2374336051) (accessed 16 February 2014).

<sup>538</sup> Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “Intangible Heritage as a Metacultural Production,” *Museum International* 56 (2004), 61; Marilena Alivizatou, “Debating Heritage Authenticity: *Kastom* and Development at the Vanuatu Cultural Centre,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 18, 2 (March 2012), 126.

<sup>539</sup> In 2013, UNESCO included a number of new entries onto its intangible heritage list (Washoku cooking methods; a Christian festival in Limousin, France; horseback shrimp fishing; Mongolian calligraphy; etc.).



of *Heritage Studies*, Marilena Alivizatou wrote that the *World Heritage Convention* had “been criticised for a lack of any reference to aspects of cultural heritage that [we]re not embodied in monuments and sites, but rather f[ou]nd expression in living culture, performance and the human body (Munjeri 2004, 2009).”<sup>540</sup> The intangible is defined in contrast to tangible under the rubric of UNESCO’s definition of the term cultural heritage. Intangible heritage encompasses oral traditions, performing arts, traditional skills, rituals, customs and the like. If *practices* of the past—ancient wine-making methods, dances, culinary practices and ceremonial rituals—are now regarded as worthy of protection and preservation, like material artifacts and monuments, then the house museum has more to think about than physical collections when considering its role in conservation.

It is increasingly recognized that “distinct expressions and practices” are “vulnerable to various modern threats such as abandonment, commodification or folklorisation” and require protection through “institutional preservation (see UNESCO 2004).”<sup>541</sup> Partaking in domestic chores and activities at house museums can involve using actual period pieces and historical methods to make products in the present. In this sense, these activations are responsible for putting the house’s contents (objects) back to work, as well as bringing practices of the past back to life.<sup>542</sup> Still, it is not common practice to sacrifice an authentic object to conserve a historic practice. At Myrtleville House Museum, when visitors engage in the experience of spinning wool, they do not actually put at risk the tools required for that task; they make use of uncostly replicas. Through this experience, nonetheless, the visitor

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<sup>540</sup> Alivizatou, “Debating Heritage,” 125. Non-representational approaches attend to non-material facets of culture, thereby reflecting the attention now being paid to intangible heritage on the world stage.

<sup>541</sup> Alivizatou, “Debating Heritage,” 126.

<sup>542</sup> House museums are also encouraged to offer handicraft workshops and retain partnerships with craftspeople/folk artists because of increasing awareness of the importance of intangible/immaterial heritage. Joseph Schneider Haus hosts the “Heart & Hand Festival,” which is promoted as “The Festival that brings Traditional Arts to Life!”

becomes part of the house museum's effort to perpetuate the memory and knowledge of rapidly disappearing ways of making.<sup>543</sup>

“Conservation versus visitor-experience” debates do not play out in the same way for immaterial heritages as they do for material or physical collections. Still, to conserve the knowledges and practices of the domestic past means guarding against sanitation, romanticization and nostalgia. The house museum, here, is in charge of the conservation of authentic practices rather than authentic artifacts. While the visitor may be spinning wool in the context of the historic home they are doing so without the pressure of needing to produce clothes for their families. They will not feel blisters forming on their hands from working the garden or cook in the uncomfortable heat of the summer kitchen. In this respect, the house museum's demonstrations or period-activities are less than historically accurate, even if the method of production follows the proper steps. Engaging in these activities—using old recipes, preparing food from scratch, using wood burning-stoves and producing traditional crafts—the visitor is apt, through the influence of nostalgia and the museum's idealizing displays, to recall a simpler time and find renewed appreciation for passed-down traditions, manual labour and well-built appliances. These playful and deproblematized activities have been accused of distracting visitors from the unpleasantness of the past and from darker, more controversial histories. As Shannon Jackson suggests, it is

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<sup>543</sup> This is certainly not to say that the incorporation of these activities is new. Shannon Jackson's research shows that the “Labor Museum's idealization of primitive labor practice...found legitimation in the arts and crafts movement” (Jackson, “Performance at Hull-House,” 269). She suggests that “middle-class followers of William Morris and John Ruskin used theories of the Craftman's Ideal to distance themselves from the ravages of industrialization. Whether to motivate a different ideal of employment or to inspire new home decoration ideas, the image of the preindustrial artisan and his idealized relationship with nature, was nostalgically invoked to unalienate the factory laborer” (Ibid.). Jackson's analysis also highlights the ways “political and economic realities of an immigrant” can be “displaced by a romanticized emphasis on cultural production” within museums (Ibid., 287).

the “idealized and selective visions of the past” which “substitute...lost and complete realities” that make individuals “long to partake of it.”<sup>544</sup>

***Leaving Room for Participation: The Example of Craigdarroch Castle’s Dance Hall***

Fundamentally dialectical, the museum serves both as burial chamber of the past—with all that entails in terms of decay, erosion, forgetting—and as site of possible resurrections, however mediated and contaminated, in the eyes of the beholder.

—Andreas

Huyssen <sup>545</sup>

It is clear that certain house museums are amenable to visitor participation, or insist on it, while others encourage passive consumption. Even before Bagnall’s article was published, Elizabeth Gray Buck had considered how house museums allowed visitors to take on active roles within their spaces. In her analysis of the Musée Gustav Moreau (1998), Gray Buck explained that research into national survey museums largely buttressed arguments about over-determined museum experiences, standardized object-viewer arrangements and compliant visitors. There has been a wide-reaching effort across many disciplines (theatre, gender studies, art history, etc.) to recapture what Gray Buck calls the “complexities of spectatorship.”<sup>546</sup> Her statements about the viewer/reader derive from a comparison of standpoints established by Marie-Hélène Huet and Donald Presiozi. In reinforcing Huet’s views, she epitomizes the revisionist conception of spectatorship: “the spectator is capable of moving beyond this role, to exceed the prescribed text, to actively challenge, alter, rearrange, and rehearse the script offered to him/her.”<sup>547</sup> She uses the Musée Gustav Moreau to explain that by leaving scripts unfinished, or contradicting the familiar museum paradigm, house museums can make space for visitor performances. I witnessed a fascinating example

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<sup>544</sup> Jackson, “Performance at Hull-House,” 280. Conservation of historical practices and processes in their factualness and context can therefore make for an uncomfortable or unpleasant visitor experience.

<sup>545</sup> Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (London, UK; New York, NY: Routledge, 1995), 15.

<sup>546</sup> Elizabeth Gray Buck, “Museum Author-ity and Performance: The Musée Gustave Moreau,” in *Exceptional Spaces: Essays in Performance and History*, ed. Della Pollock (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 305.

<sup>547</sup> *Ibid.*

of how Canadian house museums have left room for visitor performance during a visit to Craighdarroch Castle in the spring of 2013.

Visitors to Craighdarroch Castle see the front of the house first in accordance with the museum's circulation plan, ascending through the floors of the Castle. They view the back of the house on the second half of the tour, descending through the floors before exiting through the kitchen/gift shop. This plan positions the fourth-floor dance hall in the middle of the self-guided tour [Fig. 3.34]. It is entered from the front of the house and leads visitors over to the back half of house. It is a relatively large, open space that provides access to the viewing tower and the water tank. Its floors are mostly covered by large area rugs. Decorative banners adorn the space as if the Dunsmuir family were preparing to host an event and a number of pictures hang on the walls above the wooden wainscoting [Fig. 3.35]. In a few of the rooms' alcoves mannequins dressed in fine clothing seem to be conversing as if at a party [Fig. 3.36]. These scenes are separated by stanchions from the main areas. Waltz music from the dance program of the Dunsmuir era plays in the background as ambient voices add dialogue to the soundscape. Chairs along the room's perimeter bare no prohibitive signs; they invite visitors to sit and spend some time taking in the multisensory environment of the imaginary event.

The decorations and sounds of the fourth-floor rooms work together to produce an atmosphere reminiscent of the high society dances hosted at Craighdarroch during the Dunsmuir's time.<sup>548</sup> This space is both an immersive and interactive in its attempts to engage the Castle audience. One of the dance hall pianos, stationed near the east room of the dance hall, is equipped with a sign that reads ““This 1879 Steinway piano is reserved for the visitor

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<sup>548</sup> A didactic in the room likewise attempts to elaborate the scene “This large room was the scene of several high society dances during the Dunsmuir years. The British Columbia Home Journal described an 1894 ball at Craighdarroch as ‘the event of the season’ with over 80 people attending. Richardson’s full orchestra provided the music. Refreshments were probably served in the billiard or dining room, or perhaps in both places” (“Dunsmuir At Home. The Dance Hall,” museum didactic, Craighdarroch Castle, May 2013).

who has musical training and can play music that will be enjoyed by others in the Castle.

Thank you for considering the age of the piano, it cannot take abuse” [Fig. 3.37] During my visit, a student from a school group touring through the Castle sat at the piano to play a few songs. A group of her peers observed her playing while the rest of the visitors in the room indirectly took in the music as they viewed the exhibits.<sup>549</sup>

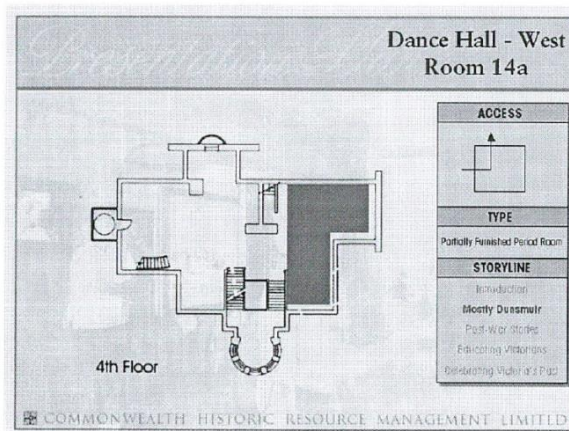


Figure 3.34: A floor plan of Craigdarroch Castle's fourth-floor dance hall (“Part 3: Presentation Plan,” 31).



Figure 3.35: Craigdarroch Castle's dance hall decorations and didactics (Photo by author, 17 May 2013).



Figure 3.36: A peripheral display in the dance hall (Photo by author, 17 May 2013).



Figure 3.37: The piano in the dance hall with the invitation to play (Photo by author, 17 May 2013).

Where the visitors are invited to become immersed in the sounds of the dance hall through the Waltz music, they are also given the opportunity to actively take part in producing an environment, an experience for others. If playing the historical instruments is

<sup>549</sup> Captured as a video clip (P1110364.MOV).

thought of as “reviving the dead hand,” playing old compositions breathes new life into these “silent blueprints of musical performance.”<sup>550</sup>

By inviting one visitor to play music, the museum prompts the musician’s peers to participate in the space (and historical environment) in other ways. A young man invited one of his classmates to dance with him. As the pair performed patterned steps, many smiling onlookers took in the scene with cameras in hand. It was as if the pianist’s interaction with the historical instrument (and the resultant music) made those around her more eager to participate. The open space of the dance hall made the pair’s action seem more conceivable. Although their performance was ostensibly spontaneous, by leaving the space open, the museum’s administrators had made room for visitors to use the space in this way.

Authors like Bagnall and Gray Buck do not negate the idea that the modern museum’s structured spaces, fixed orientations and carefully-formulated narratives hinge on tractable viewers. Their work does suggest, however, that house museums and other heritage sites have acted as hubs for research on active and critical modes of spectatorship. In moving away from the “traditional house museum experience” and engaging visitors in period tasks and interpretive activities, house museums encourage these modified views of visitor engagement. As I have tried to argue by emphasizing their connection to the realm of living history, to an extent that varied in individual cases, this tradition of embodied spectatorship was always part of their identity.

### ***Dialogic House Museums***

Where the smallpox exhibition at the Château Ramezay encourages visitor involvement through character identification and Craigdarroch Castle’s piano and dance hall solicit physical participation, a number of other house museums attempt to engage the active

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<sup>550</sup> Marco Katz, “Hearing Through Our Eyes: Musical Archives and Authentic Performance,” *Popular Museum and Society* 31, 4 (October 2008), 511, 512.

museum-goer in dialogue. The authority of museums waned during the twentieth century in the wake of decolonisation, the spread of civil rights, feminism and other social and political movements that deconstructed modern metanarratives and advocated for the cultural representation of marginalized groups and previously unheard voices.<sup>551</sup> As museums have responded to pluralism and sought to become more inclusive, dialogism has garnered support as “a most useful approach for museums as they...reinvent themselves in a world where cultural authority is regarded with suspicion.”<sup>552</sup> If object- or conservation-focused museums ignore the visiting public, a number of Canadian house museums attempt to engage them in direct dialogue. Engaging the visitor is part of offering a meaningful experience. And, as Roppola has pointed out, the visitor is active in the experiential museum.

The house museum may address its visitor through educational Q & As. Often positioned alongside specific artifacts in the house, questions seeking quick answers seem more inviting than long text panels. A hair wreath displayed above the piano at Mackin House Museum is paired with two magnified images of itself. Along one of the frames is a paper that asks: “Can you guess what this artifact is?” A label on the second image instructs the addressee to turn the card over and find the answer [Fig. 3.38]. In Myrtleville House Museum’s pantry the larger text of a sign positioned in front of three jars of food reads “What am I?” while the smaller text below explains that “After a while, it can be tricky to tell what preserves used to be. Try guessing...The answers are on the bottoms of the jars.” These can be read as rather simple and prescriptive forms of interaction. Although the visitor is made more active in the process of guessing the answer, and however successful the

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<sup>551</sup> Jennifer Harris, “Dialogism and the Visitor Experience,” *The Dialogic Museum and the Visitor Experience* ICOFOM 40, Taipei and Kaoshiung (23-26 October 2011), 9.

<sup>552</sup> Ibid.

format is in making a game out of the so-called “artifact tour,” the questions are of little consequence and their answers are supplied by the museum.

Sharon MacDonald has concluded that “[m]ore progressive, “constructivist” approaches to interactivity,” have tended to “avoid the mechanistic ‘right-answer’ model” and have aimed “instead to allow for visitors’ own, variable, input.”<sup>553</sup> Jennifer Harris concurs by observing that museums are increasingly choosing to go beyond basic questions by “asking visitors to leave permanent responses to exhibitions.”<sup>554</sup> According to Harris this has the effect of expanding the visit “from a private experience to one of public interaction.”<sup>555</sup> Beyond just writing guestbook remarks, visitors “are solicited [and] questioned” and invited to take part in “the conception or even the story line of the exhibition.”<sup>556</sup> At McCrae House and Banting House Museum visitors are asked to share experiences relating to the sites’ interpretive messages. A panel at McCrae House exhorts, “Share your memories with us” and asks “Did you, or someone you know, serve your country during a period of war? What are some of the stories you remember? See staff for file card and pencil.” Responses are posted nearby as part of the exhibit, telling the stories of loss and commenting on topics such as death, remembrance and honour. Many also express a desire for peace. Participation of this kind is thought to increase a visitor’s engagement with the museum material and presents little threat to the collection (note that McCrae House specifically provides pencils to write with instead of pens). The products of these participatory exhibits can become new artifacts that require conservation within the museum. For example, letters written by visitors to Banting House at the writing station are kept and

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<sup>553</sup> Sharon Macdonald, *A Companion to Museum Studies* (Chichester, UK; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 321.

<sup>554</sup> Harris, “Dialogism and the Visitor Experience,” 9.

<sup>555</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>556</sup> Jacobi, “Dialogism,” 17.



archived; on occasion they are shared online, recited at events and incorporated into temporary exhibitions [Fig. 3.39].<sup>557</sup>



Figure 3.38: Mackin House Museum's hair wreath display (Photo by author, 21 May 2013).

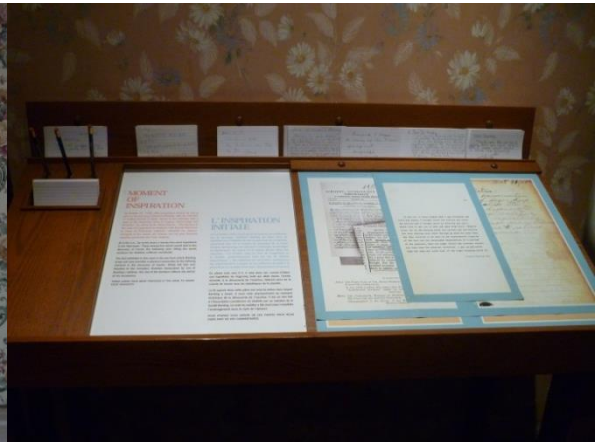


Figure 3.39: The writing station at Banting House NHSC (Photo by author, 21 September 2012).

### *Technology and Participation*

The development of new technologies in the twenty-first century has also opened up new possibilities for interactive exhibits and has returned house museum administrators to the topic of participation. As Carol Vogel predicts, “[t]alk to anyone involved with museum technology and the conversation inevitably boils down to one universal word: engagement.”<sup>558</sup> Touchscreen exhibits provide additional information in a format that allows visitors to pursue areas of interest and pass by information that does not appeal to them. At the Sinclair Inn visitors may scroll through images and videos of various features of the former Skene and Soullard homes, acquiring information about the floors, walls, doors and ceilings and interior architectural refinements at similar historic structures. Banting House’s newest gallery incorporates a small video screen which, depending on the visitor’s choice, plays video clips about Banting, Novo Nordisk, the production of insulin and figures who

<sup>557</sup> Heritage has always been contentious and there have always been instances when visitors and audiences have “talked back” to the officialised past through sanctioned and unsanctioned statements, complaints or responses.

<sup>558</sup> Carol Vogel, “The Spirit of Sharing,” *Art & Design*, *New York Times*, 16 March 2011, accessed 27 January 2013, [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/17/arts/design/museums-pursue-engagement-with-social-media.html?pagewanted=all&\\_moc.semityn.www](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/17/arts/design/museums-pursue-engagement-with-social-media.html?pagewanted=all&_moc.semityn.www).

have been diagnosed with diabetes over the course of history. These exhibits, by way of their interactivity, seem to escape the sphere of serious learning just as video presentation rooms at the Manoir Mauvide-Genest, Laurier House and Emily Carr House align themselves with leisure time spent watching television and movies.

In the late 1980s, museums responded to the idea that variety is responsible for keeping the interest of the museum goer. “Additional insights into designing for the museum visitor experience” continue to egress from the “emerging realm of theory” referred to as multimodality.<sup>559</sup> Digital projections, multimedia boards, videos and acoustic guides are thought to invigorate and complement static period-room exhibitions at house museums [Fig. 3.40].<sup>560</sup>

Commenting on the museum world, Vogel also suggests that “[a]s visitors bring their hand-held devices to visits, the potential for interactivity...intensifies.”<sup>561</sup> The Executive Director of Craigdarroch Castle, comments explicitly on the opportunities hand-held devices present, suggesting that they have a direct influence on the visitor experience at house museums:

In many ways the profusion of devices has improved visitor experience as people can capture important moments in greater detail with smartphones and tablets. We see an opportunity here and are beginning to deliver more content to these devices. I feel that the digital realm is an opportunity to provide more user generated content by allowing people to access additional information if they want it. Our staff feels it's strange to see a visitor take a twenty-minute tour with a camera stuck to their eye and docents can sometimes feel left out when visitors are more engaged with a device than a person. What we have to remember is that experiences vary from country to country and for these individuals this is

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<sup>559</sup> Roppola, *Designing for*, 39.

<sup>560</sup> Daniela Ball, “Two Important Swiss Castles: Lenzburg and Hallwyl,” *Historic House Museums Speak to the Public: Spectacular Exhibits vs. a Philological Interpretation of History: Acts of the International Conference of DEMHIST ICOM's International Committee for Historic Houses Genova, 1-4 November 2000*, ed. Rosanna Pavoni (Milan: Museo Bagatti Valsecchi and DEMHIST, 2001), 16.

<sup>561</sup> Vogel, “The Spirit of Sharing,” [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/17/arts/design/museums-pursue-engagement-with-social-media.html?pagewanted=all&\\_moc.semityn.www](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/17/arts/design/museums-pursue-engagement-with-social-media.html?pagewanted=all&_moc.semityn.www). For more on these issues in museum scholarship see the recent publication: *Conversations with Visitors. Social Media in Museums. Selected Essays* (Cambridge, MA; Edinburgh, UK: MuseumEtc Ltd., 2012), n.p.

their preferred method of seeing another culture.<sup>562</sup>

The Admiral Digby Museum has likewise harnessed mobile devices to add new content to their exhibitions. It encourages visitor involvement by posting Quick-Response (QR) codes throughout its exhibition spaces and period rooms [Fig. 3.41]. Connecting to the museum's WiFi, the visitor uses their smart phones to capture the bar codes and is directed to URLs or video links that communicate further lessons about the nearby displays or add depth to the museum messages. These technologies have the potential to change the nature of the tension between conservation and interaction as well. For example, new imaging technologies allow visitors to move through virtual representations of closed off historic spaces and digitally (if not manually) manipulate objects in house museum collections.<sup>563</sup>



Figure 3.40: An audio guide panel at Casa Loma (Toronto, ON) (Photo by Author, 4 January 2012).



Figure 3.41: A QR code posted on a wall at the Admiral Digby Museum (Digby, NS) (Photo by author, 5 October 2012).

### III.VII. Conclusions: Learning How to Partake of the Past while Preserving for the Future

On the whole, if Canadian house museums were to turn away from conservation they would betray the very impulse to which they owe their existence and purpose. Their management approaches have long been tied to the ideas of authenticity, and their mandates

<sup>562</sup> Interview with John Hughes, Executive Director, Craigdarroch Castle, December 2013.

<sup>563</sup> At the Sinclair Inn the unrestored upstairs rooms are recreated on a TV screen in the exhibition space. Consider also the augmented reality technologies being tested at the Maison Chevalier.

demand commitment to conservation. Most were founded when historic preservation was a societal priority and, as Gordon Fulton has hinted, their success “will continue to depend on the efforts of individuals, groups, agencies and governments to *increase* the value we place on our heritage, and to thereby move a conservation ethic *deeper* into the mainstream of Canadian life” (my emphasis).<sup>564</sup> Economic models such as the one that Pine and Gilmore set forth in *The Experience Economy* seem to provide house museums with solid twenty-first century advice about how to use immersive environments, stage multisensory experiences and reframe work as theatre to engage audiences and generate a profit. Indeed, their prescriptions seemed to mirror George and Young’s recommendations for house museums in the early 2000s. Nevertheless, the worlds of business and simulation are often overlook the delicacy involved in preserving an ever-disappearing past. Even though restored historic homes seem ideal venues for multisensory and immersive exhibits, the range of desired experiences is difficult to accommodate, especially when a site is simultaneously charged with caring for its historic artifacts and structures.

A new museology has continued to stress the importance of designing for the visitor experience, and has thus re-framed the strengths and weaknesses of the house museum. Today, a piano placed behind stanchions seems like a missed opportunity. Cold fireplaces, chairs with ribbons, in-door stanchions and static “do not touch” exhibitions seem outmoded. They ostensibly make visitors feel unwelcome and distanced (rather than immersed and engaged) and disrupt the idea and experience of the being in a historic home. That said, the lack of care and consideration for the conservation of collections and historic structures promoted by models like Pine and Gilmore’s make it easy to forget the need for a balanced approach. By revisiting the tenets of the living history movement, which considered

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<sup>564</sup> Fulton, “Heritage Conservation,” <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/heritage-conservation/>.

the value of experiential offerings as well as their potential consequences, house museums might find better examples of how to balance the tasks of conservation with the calls for participatory and immersive experiences.

There is no question that house museums want to offer their visitors rich experiences. Their caretakers want us to stay longer, purchase more and dwell in their historic environs. Nevertheless, they are deeply aware of the perils that display, use and visitation pose for our shared cultural heritage. A more nuanced criticality demonstrates that conservation and visitor experience are not always opposed. While some house museums in this country have remained strongly committed to the conservation of their original cultural resources others have begun to prioritize visitor experience by introducing new interactive and immersive components. Most, however, are still struggling to strike a balance between the two halves of portmanteaus like “edutainment” and “infotainment.”<sup>565</sup>

As new perspectives on historical education, living history, intangible heritage and participative visitation continue to evolve, and older expectations about authenticity and the role of the visitor diminish, house museums have placed more value on immersive experiences and active involvement. Still, we must be careful to note that a) exploiting cultural sites and their tourist potential does not always improve visiting conditions; b) if all cultural institutions turn to similar modes of engagement they risk replicating the same experience in boring ways, and c) not all house museum visitors wish to take advantage of multisensory and participatory opportunities. Many are content to just look, instead of

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<sup>565</sup> Writing about modern museums, Mark Sandberg has observed that “[t]heir loyalties [we]re split between older models of collection, preservation & authentication, on the one hand and the promise of unlimited access and visual availability, on the other” (Sandberg, *Living Pictures*, 11). This is also true of the house museum of the postmodern era.

touching artifacts which they might accidentally ruin.<sup>566</sup> As Roppola reminds us, at a time when interactive exhibition design has a mainstream following, it is easy to forget that participatory activities can demand too much of peoples' time, energy and attention. Lastly, within the context of the new museology we must constantly be on the lookout for the misapplication of participatory approaches. Activities that promise fun and engage visitors in non-strenuous or uncritical interactive pursuits can sometimes gloss over and obscure the hardships and injustices that define the country's past. House museums that remain caught between ideas about guardianship and visitor experience present us with a dilemma that vexes the museum profession as a whole.

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<sup>566</sup> The staff at one house museum I visited estimated that about thirty percent of visitors would rather just look than actually touch the objects in the museum. It often takes time for museum-goers to enjoy the freedoms proffered; many will need to reconfirm their permissions "Can I really?"

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**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**AFTER TENURE**  
**Homeowners to Interpretive Figures**

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I trace the lives such scenes enshrine  
 Give past exemplars present room  
 And their experience count as mine<sup>567</sup>

**IV.I. “Every Hearth Has a Ghost”: The House Museum and Its Key Interpretive Figure<sup>568</sup>**

Stephan Bann has asserted that “[m]useums in general usually have a founder, or first curator, or a collector whose legacy remains dominant.”<sup>569</sup> Think of the MoMA’s Alfred Barr, the Kunstkamera’s Peter the Great or the Museum of Science and Industry’s Julius Rosenwald. Putting forth the idea of the museum self-portrait, Anne Higonnet has asserted that “at the heart of every collection museum is its founder.”<sup>570</sup> In Chapter One, figures like Joseph-Camille Pouliot, A.S. MacMillan and James Nesbitt exemplified preservationists closely tied to the homes that they protected and rehabilitated. Many of this country’s historic houses stand as testaments to an individual’s sense of patriotic duty or family pride—to a personal belief in the importance of built heritages or a strong attachment to one’s homes and collections. They are preserved as birthplace museums, windows onto the lives of important public figures and shrines for individual legacies. As a result, somewhat like other museum types, house museums are frequently structured around a single historical figure. Even those that purport to interpret the lives of many family members, or multiple

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<sup>567</sup> Thomas Hardy, “On an invitation to the United States,” in *Poems of the Past and the Present*, 2nd ed. (London, UK; New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1902), 66.

<sup>568</sup> Thomas Hardy, “Starlings on the Roof,” in *Satires of Circumstance, Lyrics and Reveries* (London, UK: Macmillan, 1914), 186.

<sup>569</sup> Stephan Bann, “A Way of Life: Thoughts on the Identity of the House Museum,” in *Historic House Museums Speak to the Public: Spectacular Exhibits vs. a Philological Interpretation of History: Acts of the International Conference of DEMHIST ICOM’s International Committee for Historic Houses Genova, 1-4 November 2000*, ed. Rosanna Pavoni (Milan: Museo Bagatti Valsecchi and DEMHIST, 2001), 20.

<sup>570</sup> Anne Higonnet, *A Museum of One’s Own. Private Collecting, Public Gift* (Pittsburgh, PA: Periscope Publishing, Ltd., 2009), 123.

generations of inhabitants, usually establish what will be referred to throughout this chapter as a primary (or key) interpretive figure.

This chapter interrogates the relationship between house museums and their key interpretive figures by, first, examining discourses and histories that position individuals and their homes as integrated subjects. It considers the way historic house museums frame, construct and mythologize the identities of their figureheads, giving priority to the life, voice and image of a primary personality. The long-standing, and widely-supported, belief in the domestic environment as a reflection of its owner's or inhabitant's morality, taste, personality or historical importance has influenced the way house museums memorialize former residents and communicate biographical narratives. At Canada's house museums, historic houses and particular personages are brought together for the purposes of historical explication, commemoration and remembrance. The critical deconstruction of these tendencies is a crucial step in helping us rethink what many have condemned as the house museum's exclusive and elitist agenda.

### ***Hero Houses, Personality Museums***

House museums that centre on individuals (rather than groups, events or styles) are known by many names. They have been termed "hero houses," "personality museums," "biographical house museums" or "Great Man museums" by scholars working across various disciplines. In a glossary of terms pertaining to house museums in Italy, Rosanna Pavoni explains personality houses as the "houses of writers, artists, musicians, politicians, military heroes, entrepreneurs...in other words people who were either internationally famous or who locally personify the values and qualities of the community to which they



belong.”<sup>571</sup> Along similar lines, Charlotte Smith has defined the Great Man museum as a kind of house museum that “celebrate[s] the lives of individuals.”<sup>572</sup> This type, according to Smith, is well established in the United States where it is often juxtaposed to the Social History house, Collector’s house and Aesthetic house.<sup>573</sup> The American Great Man museum dates back to the end of the nineteenth century when nationalism was cultivated through the affirmation of heroes such as George Washington. In Smith’s own words: “A principle component of civil religion is hero worship; initially Founding Fathers, later Civil War heroes and United States presidents provided the focus for such attention. These heroes...were central to the creation and continuing success of Great Man house museums.”<sup>574</sup> Smith asserts that Great Man houses are founded on the idea that a hero’s spirit still resides in the “relic of his mortal life”—that is, his home.<sup>575</sup>

Turning to Britain, in 2002 Julius Bryant ruminated on the country’s eighty-nine surviving personality houses.<sup>576</sup> He defined personality museums as “houses open to the public that have been saved primarily to commemorate an historical figure who was born or lived there.”<sup>577</sup> Although he does not make use of Smith’s phrase, “civil religion,” he gestures to the way that hero house museums come to resemble places of worship:

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<sup>571</sup> Rosanna Pavoni, *House Museums in Italy*, trans. Erika G. Young (Rome: Gangemi Editore, 2010), 11. Pavoni separates the figure of the collector from this grouping by adding the category of “Collector’s Houses” (Ibid.).

<sup>572</sup> Charlotte Smith, “The House Enshrined: How Great Man House Museums Shaped Civic Consciousness,” in *Historic House Museums as Witnesses of National and Local Identities: Acts of the Third Annual DEMHIST Conference, Amsterdam, 14-16 October 2002*, ed. Rosanna Pavoni (n.p.: DEMHIST, 2003), 138.

<sup>573</sup> Linda Young, “A Woman’s Place is in the House...Museum: Interpreting Women’s Histories in House Museums,” *Open Museum Journal* 5 (July 2002), 6. The capitalizations here follow Smith’s own in “The House Enshrined.”

<sup>574</sup> Smith, “The House Enshrined,” 138.

<sup>575</sup> Ibid.; Charlotte H. F. Smith, “Evolving Notions of Authenticity and Interpretation at House Museums in the United States,” in *New Forms of Management for Historic House Museums? Acts of the Second Annual DEMHIST Conference, Barcelona 2-5 July 2001*, ed. Rosanna Pavoni (Milan: English Heritage, ICOM-Italy, Museo della Scienza e della Tecnica, Milan and DEMHIST, 2002), 60.

<sup>576</sup> Julius Bryant, “Houses for Heroes: the Rise of the Personality Museum in Britain, 1840-2002,” in *Historic House Museums as Witnesses of National and Local Identities: Acts of the Third Annual DEMHIST Conference, Amsterdam, 14-16 October 2002*, ed. Rosanna Pavoni (n.p.: DEMHIST, 2003), 56-57.

<sup>577</sup> Ibid., 53.

The social phenomenon of the personality museum also may be seen as characteristic of Protestant countries, as an alternative to a Catholic town's veneration of its patron saint and protector, providing similar opportunities for canonization and pilgrimage to shrines full of relics illustrative of exemplary lives, for veneration and emulation. It reflects the nineteenth century's cult of the individual...<sup>578</sup>

While Pavoni, Smith and Bryant stress the pervasiveness of the hero house in North America and Europe, we can see that this tradition has spread across the globe when we look to other countries such as Barbados, Brazil, France and Scotland.<sup>579</sup>

Of course, the types of figures venerated vary according to the nation's identity and prevailing ideologies. In Canada, examples such as Laurier House (Ottawa, ON) and Bellevue House (Kingston, ON) focus on former Prime Ministers Wilfrid Laurier, William Lyon Mackenzie King and John A. MacDonald. Others, such as Prescott House and Gardens Museum (Port Williams, NS), Fulford Place (Brockville, ON) and Château Dufresne (Montreal, QU) represent innovators, industrialists and businessmen such as Charles Prescott, Sir Frederick G. Banting and the brothers, Oscar and Marius Dufresne. Emily Carr House (Victoria, BC), Whyte House (Banff, AB) and Haliburton House Museum (Windsor, NS) commemorate the country's artists and writers while Rutherford House (Edmonton, AB), Michener House Museum (Lacombe, AB) and Daly House Museum (Brandon, MA) explore the lives of political figures.<sup>580</sup>

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<sup>578</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>579</sup> Frans van Burkom points out that in Holland the uptake of these kinds of house museums has been slower: "Even the category of Dutch 'national celebrities' (authors, painters, actors, well-known musicians or composers, top executives, captains of industry and politicians) rarely had their homes turned into museums" (Frans van Burkom, "A House in Holland...Identity in the Future," in *Historic House Museums as Witnesses of National and Local Identities: Acts of the Third Annual DEMHIST Conference, Amsterdam, 14-16 October 2002*, ed. Rosanna Pavoni (n.p.: DEMHIST, 2003), 33). Van Burkom attributes this difference to the cultural belief that "[i]mmortality was assumed through one's work, not through one's possessions, which were felt to be much too personal" (Ibid.). The biographical tradition in the Netherlands had also been stilted by the feeling that "showing an interest in someone's private way of thinking, or private life, was considered indiscreet and 'not done'" (Ibid., 34).

<sup>580</sup> Patterns within the genre suggest that house museums are malleable to national interests and can be used to that frame and image a particular national identity through the commemoration of certain individuals. Smaller

At the outset it is important to state that this chapter does not strictly focus on personality or hero houses in Canada. Rather it looks more broadly at the way house museums across different regions and categories distinguish and interpret key Canadian figures. Classification structures—which suggest that hero houses are distinct from those that specifically interpret collections, designs or historical events—obscure the realization that non-hero museums also identify persons for special attention or as nodes of interpretive authority. For example, collection houses may interpret their collectors, design houses their designers and historic houses the main characters of a historic drama. As Linda Young asserts, “traces of the Great Man type frequently underlie other house museums.”<sup>581</sup> The pages that follow explain that, by drawing typological lines in the sand, we lose a sense of just how common the key interpretive figure is as a principle component of the house museum. If there are problems with this mode of presentation, we must be cautious not to invest in categorizations that cause us to underestimate its ambit.

#### **IV.II. An Interpretive Tradition: Aristocratic Hosts and Britain’s Stately Homes**

As houses of the British aristocracy were opened to the public, from the eighteenth century onwards, myths of cloistered lords, tasteful collectors and beneficent estate owners were cultivated. Chapter One positioned stately homes as predecessors of contemporary house museums.<sup>582</sup> They are further discussed in this chapter because they provide early examples of the way owners’ personalities became integral parts of publicly-accessible domestic attractions. They highlight the ways homes have been staged to reinforce particular versions of their owners’ identities and speak to the practice of constructing domestic museum experiences around a host-guest dynamic.

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community groups have also adopted the model of the hero house to perpetuate the memory of their local figures.

<sup>581</sup> Young, “A Woman’s Place,” 7.

<sup>582</sup> Review Chapter One’s discussion of the stately homes, which draws on key aspects of Peter Mandler’s study *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), n.p.

The owners of Britain's stately homes served important roles as trustees, and guides to the public, from the eighteenth century until the middle of the twentieth century. In the seventeenth hundreds, these sprawling residences were viewed as symbols of family pride as well as individual taste.<sup>583</sup> They proved stature, sophistication and affluence. Their grounds, gardens, architectural features, rooms and collections were designed to show a small group of worthy visitors that the owner was capable of tasteful discriminations and had an eye for fashion. As Peter Mandler suggests these homes carried "the very message of the owner's status, not as part of a historically rooted organic community, but as a somewhat lonely possessor and modernizer."<sup>584</sup> This, it seems, also rang true in the nineteenth century.

An event from *Pride and Prejudice*, visualized in Joe Wright's film from 2005, captures just how central these figures were to English country home tours at the turn of the nineteenth century. In the film, Austen's protagonist, Elizabeth Bennet, travels with the Gardiners through Derbyshire. Mr. Gardiner expresses his desire to visit Pemberley (Mr. Darcy's country estate) and when Lizzie hesitates she is accused of holding Mr. Darcy's wealth against him. While envy and a dislike of the aristocracy was often experienced by guests of inferior social status, who visited such splendid country estates, the viewer knows that Lizzie's explanation is dishonest; she is simply trying to avoid running into Mr. Darcy after refusing his proposal and mistaking him for a scoundrel. Hence Lizzie tries to keep away from Pemberley until she learns that the family will not to be in residence during their visit. In the film, Mrs. Gardiner assures Lizzie that they will not encounter the master: "these great men are never at home."<sup>585</sup> In this way, Austen and Wright offer a fictional portrayal of

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<sup>583</sup> Mandler, *The Fall and Rise*, 246.

<sup>584</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>585</sup> *Pride and Prejudice*, directed by Joe Wright (Universal City, CA: Focus Features, 2005), DVD.

the actual lives of leisured classes, who often travelled to see the private homes of the wealthy during such fair-weather tours of the countryside.

In Wright's adaptation, Darcy's fictional residence is represented by Chatsworth House, a stately home situated in Derbyshire. Lizzie and the Gardiners take a tour of Pemberley estate and stroll through the sculpture gallery guided by the housekeeper, Mrs. Reynolds, who praises her master's generous spirit and describes his many favourable qualities.<sup>586</sup> By the time that Lizzie encounters a bust of Mr. Darcy, the viewer suspects that the home, its grounds and contents have shown him to advantage [Figs. 4.1 & 4.2].<sup>587</sup> As a reflection of Mr. Darcy, the visit to Pemberley proves reassuring. The tour continues and Elizabeth gets lost, happening upon a more private, unscripted domestic scene of Miss Darcy playing the piano and Mr. Darcy returning home. Caught peering at them, Lizzie rushes out of the house knowing that she has seen more than any tour would allow. She leaves in possession of more knowledge about Mr. Darcy's demeanor and his convictions, having seen various material manifestations of his taste and judgement in the form of his possessions and domestic surroundings, not to mention the man himself at home.

As antagonism towards the privileged classes grew, and the middle of the century approached, aristocratic landowners opened their homes to the masses in order to appear less exclusive. They took on the part of benevolent and admirable hosts, amidst escalating class tensions, in order to be "left unmolested in enjoyment of many of their past privileges."<sup>588</sup> Visitors were invited to play the converse role of the guests. During the peak of country home visitation, the owner-hosts also became exhibits.<sup>589</sup> Travellers were often

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<sup>586</sup> In Austen's novel they encounter miniatures rather than sculptures.

<sup>587</sup> "Pride and Prejudice," *Chatsworth* webpage, <http://www.chatsworth.org/visiting/filming-at-chatsworth/pride-and-prejudice> (accessed 12 May 2014).

<sup>588</sup> Mandler, *The Fall and Rise*, 82. Mandler focuses on this host/guest relationship in his second chapter.

<sup>589</sup> Mandler, *The Fall and Rise*, 76.

drawn to the country estates by their curiosity about the “lives...of the rich and famous.”<sup>590</sup>

This curiosity is also an impulse at the root of many house museum visits today. Visitors still hope to peer into the private realm of others and continue to be awed by the homes and lifestyles of the super-rich.



Figure 4.1: A still from Wright's *Pride and Prejudice* (2005), showing Elizabeth Bennet (Keira Knightley) admiring a bust of Mr. Darcy at Pemberley (*Pride & Prejudice* blog, <http://prideandprejudice05.blogspot.ca/2010/05/sign-online-petition-to-save-mr-darcys.html> (accessed 10 July 2014)).



Figure 4.2: The bust created by Nick Dutton (2004), as a prop for the film, which still resides at Chatsworth House (*Pride & Prejudice* blog, <http://prideandprejudice05.blogspot.ca/2010/05/sign-online-petition-to-save-mr-darcys.html> (accessed 10 July 2014)).

By the 1920s and 1930s, only a few owners continued to cultivate their personas through the public display of their inherited properties [Fig. 4.3]. The sixth Earl of Warwick maintained his home as a set and viewed himself as a star.<sup>591</sup> Lord Montague staged a photograph of himself preparing his home, Beaulieu, for its public debut in 1952. The picture, which captured him scrubbing the floor, appeared in the press and emphasized his dedication to the public service [Fig. 4.4].<sup>592</sup> The Duke of Bedford became the face of Woburn Abbey as he provided those at its gates with his autograph, gave personal tours to sightseers and allowed “media coverage of his family life” during the 1950s and 1960s [Fig.

<sup>590</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>591</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>592</sup> Ibid., 374.

4.5].<sup>593</sup> These men remodelled their homes and themselves for public eyes with the help of the press.<sup>594</sup> Their faces became firmly identified with their houses.



Figure 4.3: Lord Curzon acting as a guide of Tattershall Castle earlier in the twentieth century (Mandler, *The Fall and Rise*, 186).



Figure 4.4: The staged photograph of Lord Montagu preparing Beaulieu for the public (Mandler, *The Fall and Rise*, 374).



Figure 4.5: The Duke of Bedford showing visitors around Woburn Abbey in 1958 (Mandler, *The Fall and Rise*, 375).

What remains to be addressed is why, for so many centuries, homes have been understood as reflections of the self.<sup>595</sup> What encouraged owners to form their identities through the home, and why have guests accepted that the home reveals so much about its inhabitant? Through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the design reform movement, and theories of subjective interiority developed by cultural critics such as Gaston Bachelard and Walter Benjamin, encouraged ideas about the mutuality of home and inhabitant.<sup>596</sup> These significant currents of thought are cursorily sketched below, to acknowledge the part they play in framing the home and its residents as symbiotically defined subjects.

#### IV.III. The Mutuality of Home and Inhabitant<sup>597</sup>

<sup>593</sup> Ibid., 375.

<sup>594</sup> These figures might have followed the lead of well-known writers who, according to Elizabeth Emery, also relied “on the narrative opportunities provided by the illustrated periodical press—and particularly photo-interviews, which allowed them to take reporters on guided pictorial tours of their homes” to “recast home life as a reflection of their work” (Elizabeth Emery, *Photojournalism and the Origins of the French Writer House Museum (1881-1914): Privacy, Publicity and Personality* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2012), 8).

<sup>595</sup> Gwendolyn Wright, “Prescribing the Model Home,” *Social Research* 58, 1 (Spring 1991), 215.

<sup>596</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. Maria Jolas and foreword by Étienne Gilson (New York, NY: Orion Press, 1964), n.p.; Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1999), n.p.

<sup>597</sup> This phrasing follows that in Nuala Hancock’s conclusion to *Charleston and Monk’s House: The Intimate House Museums of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press Ltd., 2012), 171.

***Possession Portraits, Subjective Interiors, Impressionable Surfaces***

Deborah Cohen explains that during the nineteenth century in Britain, as a result of a shift from evangelicalism to incarnationist theology, people became more closely identified with their possessions. Where evangelicals taught that luxury, love of possessions and the display of wealth led one away from God and into sin, design reformers of the post-atonement age reconciled religion and consumption through the “moralization of possessions.”<sup>598</sup> They passed on to the wider population the belief that “what one owned, bought, and treasured helped shape...something of the moral make-up of a person.”<sup>599</sup> It followed that, if the objects integrated into the home reflected the morality, taste and refinement of their owners, they could be scrutinized by others as hints of wrong-doing or moral uprightness.<sup>600</sup> As these ideas, about how interiors could be read, gradually spread to the masses, more attention was paid to the households of others. Motivated to take part in the exercises of domestic show-and-tell, generations of home-dwellers have envisioned the home as a place to protect and, in some cases, aggrandize their reputation. Interior decorating texts affirmed the status of the home as a place of personal expression towards the end of the nineteenth century.

Theories of subjective interiority, developed during the nineteenth century, also considered the domestic environment a space for self-definition and self-representation. They stipulated that the home was linked to consecrated beliefs, personal values and gendered identities. Therefore, it encapsulated (or projected) elements of the individual’s heart and mind—their inner being—which included their thoughts, imaginings and

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<sup>598</sup> Deborah Cohen, *Household Gods: The British and their Possessions* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 19.

<sup>599</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>600</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.



aspirations. The interplay between the home's structure and its interior was equated to the relationship between an individual's body and his or her psychic interiority.<sup>601</sup>

Walter Benjamin's later thoughts on the interior's relationship to the private individual were expressed in *The Arcades Project*, written between 1927 and 1940. He imagined an inhabitant surrounded by objects and "moulded into" an interior that maintained impressions and preserved traces not easily erased. The symbolically expressive objects in the home betrayed the inhabitant's confidences to any "detective" who could gradually piece together a story or picture of the missing person.<sup>602</sup> In Benjamin's words, the interior was "the origin of the detective story, which inquires into these traces and follows these tracks."<sup>603</sup> It is through Benjamin's formulations, that the home becomes an obvious starting point for those seeking further information about private individuals.

### ***A Literary Symbiosis: Characters and Dwellings***

To explain that we also learn about characters through their environments in the sphere of literature, Charlotte Grant references the words of Madame Merle, from Henry James' *The Portrait of a Lady* (1880-1881), in her article on the interior in British fiction.<sup>604</sup> Having befriended the young Isabel Archer (James' protagonist), Madame Merle declares "that [e]very human being has his shell...and one's house, one's furniture, one's garments, the books one reads...these things are all expressive" of the self.<sup>605</sup> Conspiring to benefit

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<sup>601</sup> Jeremy Aynsley and Charlotte Grant, "Introduction," in *Imagined Interiors: Representing the Domestic Interior since the Renaissance*, ed. Jeremy Aynsley and Charlotte Grant with assistance from Harriet McKay (London: V & A Pub.; New York: Distributed in North America by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2006), 14. For more on the term "interior" and its etymology from 1490-1820 read Aynsley and Grant, *Imagined Interiors*, 137.

<sup>602</sup> Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 20, 220. In contrast, the house museum is a public presentation of histories. Even its "private" spaces are designed for public view, limiting the likeliness of unconscious disclosures.

<sup>603</sup> Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 20.

<sup>604</sup> Charlotte Grant, "'One's Self, and One's House, One's Furniture': From Object to Interior in British Fiction, 1720-1900," in *Imagined Interiors: Representing the Domestic Interior since the Renaissance*, ed. Jeremy Aynsley and Charlotte Grant with assistance from Harriet McKay (London: V & A Pub.; New York: Distributed in North America by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2006), 134-153.

<sup>605</sup> Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady* (Rockville, MD: Serenity Publishers, 2009), 180; Philippa Tristram, *Living Space in Fact and Fiction* (London, UK; New York, NY: Routledge, 1989), 237.

from Isabel's inherited fortune, she lures Miss Archer into an unhappy marriage with the "indolent" Mr. Osmond by way of his interior.<sup>606</sup> If Madame Merle's recommendation of Gilbert Osmond inspires Isabel's initial, favourable impression of the man, her first glimpse of his home—a grave stockade—foreshadows the young woman's loss of her independence. It is not coincidental that literary forms, like the novel, became instrumental vehicles for imagining the domestic interior. According to Philippa Tristram, the home and novel are interconnected because "the eighteenth century, which saw the rise of the novel, was also the great age of the English house."<sup>607</sup> Novelists fell in love with the grand estates and vernacular structures that dotted the countryside, and took to describing their interiors and exteriors in poetic detail. The atmospheric qualities of houses that were so artfully described sometimes doubled as intimations of a character.<sup>608</sup> As protagonists were invited into their friends' or foes' private abodes, they observed mementoes and souvenirs, furnishings and artworks that told readers something of the homeowner's backstory or personality. In these texts, visits to family homes proved "indicators of past experiences" and childhood upbringing; homes aged with their owners and anthropomorphized places mimicked characters' actual bodies.<sup>609</sup>

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<sup>606</sup> James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, 209.

<sup>607</sup> Tristram, *Living Space*, 2.

<sup>608</sup> Tristram, *Living Space*, 118. A dark and dusty dwelling might signal a villain or a reclusive, potentially-dangerous character, whereas a warm and welcoming home usually identifies friendly characters. Think of the disorderly comfort offered by Isabel's childhood home in *The Portrait of a Lady*, the warmth and welcome of the Touchetts' Gardencourt and the modernized, and mostly agreeable, interiors of Lockleigh. This is also exaggerated in the movies; recall of the beast's castle in *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), The Burrow (the Weasley's family home) in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (2002) or the judge's mansion in *Nothing but Trouble* (1991). Benjamin Critton argues that evil characters are frequently associated with modern architectures in films such as *Diamonds are Forever* (1971) and *Blade Runner* (1982) (Aaron Britt, "Evil People in Modern Homes," in conversation with Benjamin Critton, *Dwell*, 21 October 2010, accessed 9 July 2014, <http://www.dwell.com/interviews/article/evil-people-modern-homes>).

<sup>609</sup> In James' novel, when Ralph is first trying to get to know Isabel, she is described as an edifice: "He surveyed the edifice from the outside and admired it greatly; he looked in at the window and received an impression of proportions equally fair. But he felt that he saw it only by glimpses and that he had not yet stood under the roof. The door was fastened, and though he had keys in his pocket he had a conviction that none of them would fit" (James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, 68). James seems to reference ideas of subjective interiority by comparing the inaccessible interior of a structure to the impenetrable mind/soul of Ralph's cousin.

Psychology was also transposed onto interiors by Gothic novelists, such as Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823) at the end of the eighteenth century, and in psychological novels from the last decades of the nineteenth century and early years of the twentieth century—for example, in Edith Wharton’s *House of Mirth* (1905).<sup>610</sup> The private interiors that they described mimicked the moods of their inhabitants and were tied to the internal mental states of major protagonists. For instance, in Wharton’s novel, Lawrence Selden’s flat is a domestic retreat and a place of intimacy that compels Lily Bart to confront and disclose her inner self. But, just as the reader is led to believe Lily will reveal her sentiments to Selden, she rethinks the impulse, finding herself questioning the period’s “dominant discourses of privacy and subjectivity.”<sup>611</sup> Changeable interiors were gauges of a character’s emotions.<sup>612</sup>

The literary works, critical theories and design reform manifestos of the last centuries show a persistent view of the special relationship between individuals, or characters, and their dwellings. All and all, for Tristram “[i]t is not surprising that houses and interiors should come to express so much about their occupants in novels, when they are so often designed in life to do just that.”<sup>613</sup> Similarly, it is not shocking that these ideas have found followers in the administration, study and visitation of house museums. Nevertheless, however wide-reaching these ideas are, however popular they have become, their application to the house museum should not be taken for granted. In fact, I will argue that we should not assume that they are applicable to the house museum at all.

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<sup>610</sup> Grant, “One’s Self, and One’s House,” 148; Melissa Valiska Gregory, “From Melodrama to Monologue: Henry James and Domestic Terror,” *The Henry James Review* 25, 2 (Spring 2004), 147. Psychological novels, or *roman d’analyse*, have been defined as “fiction in which the internal moods, thought processes, and behavioral traits of character are more important than the external action of plot and incident” (Paul Schellinger, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Novel* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1998), 1057). At this time, writers and artists alike became inspired by the idea and image of the solitary self as human psychology was dramatized on the stage in the form of dramatic monologues (Gregory, “From Melodrama to Monologue,” 147-148).

<sup>611</sup> William E. Moddelmog, “Disowning ‘Personality’: Privacy and Subjectivity in *The House of Mirth*,” *American Literature* 70, 2 (June 1998), 339.

<sup>612</sup> Grant, “One’s Self, and One’s House,” 136.

<sup>613</sup> Tristram, *Living Space*, 237.

***Bachelard Didn't Study House Museums... (Neither did Heidegger)***

Thus far, it has been argued that houses and their inhabitants are considered mutually-defined subjects through the related acts of designing and interpreting, imprinting and detecting as well as writing and reading. If houses have long been *designed* by homeowners and *read* by guests as statements about their inhabitants, they have also been at the centre of character formation and character analysis in literature. There are both careful composers of the domestic milieu and diligent readers of interiors. The one side of this exchange involves the production of a home with the intent of communicating something of the individual or self (sending/producing). The other requires a decoding of the messages conveyed within that space in relation to the individual (receiving/consuming). In the case of the house museum, we will see that these roles are taken up by curators and visitors. The former compose the home to reflect the individual and the latter accept the proposition that the house provides an access route to the person of interest.

In a recently published text, *Charleston and Monk's House: The Intimate House Museums of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell* (2012), Nuala Hancock perpetuates the idea that house museums are “rich in biographical potentiality.”<sup>614</sup> She argues that the houses, now house museums, of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell make “the lives” of the artists “more physically actualised, more sensuously emplaced, more imaginatively interiorised, more emotionally textured, more lyrically felt.”<sup>615</sup> Noting that house museums “have the potential to be multi-vocal in their presentation,” she prizes them as “tantalisingly ambivalent instruments of biographical disclosure” and focuses on “The House as a Container of

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<sup>614</sup> She specifically says that they “are unexpectedly rich in biographical potentiality” (Hancock, *Charleston and Monk's House*, 171). How this is “unexpected,” by Hancock or any scholar of the home, is beyond me considering the traditions that have already been traced and that receive attention in Hancock’s text.

<sup>615</sup> Hancock, *Charleston and Monk's House*, 106.

Biography.”<sup>616</sup> In her first chapter, Hancock gestures to the classificatory structures that see the hero house compared to other house museum types, thus showing her familiarity with a range of house museum scholars. Posing the question, “What biographical clues are narrated through the topographical configurations, the very morphology of the museum house?” she turns to “thinkers and writers from diverse fields” that have investigated the “idea of an expressive reciprocity between house and occupant.”<sup>617</sup> Thinking through the work of Benjamin, she sees Bell “sedimented into the surfaces of her painted house.”<sup>618</sup> She then turns to summarize the theories of Heidegger and Bachelard, as she sees them pertaining to studies on the house museum. For Heidegger, dwelling and being are coterminous as intimate spaces can expose the ways an individual *is* in the world.<sup>619</sup> In a phenomenological vein, Bachelard puts forth the notion that the home houses the psyche and that the exploration of intimate spaces support psychoanalysis through topoanalysis. Hancock sees “the notion of double accommodation” at the heart of both of these theories “as the psyche is housed within the spaces of the body, so the body is accommodated in the spaces of the house.”<sup>620</sup> She positions her text as a twenty-first century extension of this theoretical work, all of which continues to foster belief in the biographical potentiality of the home.

Indeed, it has been the “intellectual ambition” of personality museums to become “study centre[s],” relating to the lives of their former residents.<sup>621</sup> As Charles Rice asserts, investigations of Benjamin’s interior lead to the “discovery of a dead body.”<sup>622</sup> In the case of the house museum, this is usually the deceased and highly-venerated key interpretive figure.

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<sup>616</sup> Ibid., 108, 15.

<sup>617</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>618</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>619</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>620</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>621</sup> Bryant does note that this ambition has “faded in favour of preservation as the hero’s home, showing personal possessions and lifestyle” (Bryant, “Houses for Heroes,” 54).

<sup>622</sup> Charles Rice, *The Emergence of the Interior: Architecture, Modernity, Domesticity* (London, UK; New York, NY: Routledge, 2007), 9.

The scholar, curator and visitor search for such Benjaminian traces that are re-envisioned as historical evidence.<sup>623</sup> From my perspective, if Hancock makes one mistake, it is that she seems to forget that the *home* as described and theorized by Heidegger and Bachelard is not that of the *house museum*. Somehow her text seems to make Isabel Archers of us all—too inexperienced in our analyses of homes to recognize the deceptive domestic stagings of the Gilbert Osmonds we inevitably encounter in both our real and fictional worlds. Even Benjamin noted that the interior was a place of illusions.<sup>624</sup> Such illusions, I would contend, can prove especially misleading in the study of house museums.

We have already established in Chapters One and Two, that the house museum is *not* a home. It is a representation, a public display, and is distanced from the activities and lives that once animated it. To assist researchers, house museum professionals and other “detectives” of these period interiors do their best to preserve evidence, even in cases where homes have been abandoned and stripped of their past lives. Yet, as any good museum professional knows, traces of the past are seldom as resilient as we would like. The impressions of inhabitation cannot last forever in a home without constant care.<sup>625</sup> For how long does the home hold onto the “psychic contents of the past”?<sup>626</sup> Does time dull the sense of home as an intimate space reflective of an individual’s “insideness”? What of the curatorial alterations to the space and its domestic arrangements? How do these get in the way of scholarly studies of the house as evidence? Even if the home harbours memories and biographical clues, how capable are we of reading these fragments of another’s personal past?

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<sup>623</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>624</sup> Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 19, 212. Around the 1830s, according to Levasseur, romanticism in literature also affected architecture and the look of houses and furniture making. The nineteenth-century interior “disguises itself, puts on costumes” says Benjamin. It is “stimulus to intoxication and dream” (Ibid., 216).

<sup>625</sup> Rice also offers an important warning: “historical studies of the interior...have tended to confuse the constricted, mortified inhabitant with its counterpart, the private individual who is supposed to ‘live on’ through history” (Rice, *The Emergence of the Interior*, 10).

<sup>626</sup> Hancock, *Charleston and Monk’s House*, 17.

These are questions sidelined by Hancock, who so readily accepts the established tradition of analysing homes for traces of their former owners.

Work that decodes the house for a hint of the inhabitant *does not* authorize the instrumentalization of house museums for biographical research. It does explain why the pairing has enjoyed such a prolonged existence in the house museum. Given how ingrained pairings of home and inhabitant have become, we must be especially sensitive to the problems that can arise when they become the marrow of interpretive programmes at Canada's house museums. The remainder of the chapter focuses on these problems. To begin with, we need to focus on the relationship between biography and history as it is one that authorizes biographies to function as frameworks for house museum narratives.

#### **IV.IV. (Political) Biography at Home: Individualizing House Museums**

##### ***From Cradle to Grave: "Private Interiors" and Public Narratives***

Returning to a Canadian corpus, it is important to note that the way we have "done" history as a country has supported the establishment of house museums around the stories of "historically important" people.<sup>627</sup> Chapter One indicated that many house museums were either formed or redesigned at the time of centennial celebrations. J.M. Bumsted explains that history, as a discipline, "had particular biases" during that time: "It tended to concentrate on larger historical units, such as nations...It was extremely fond of political biography. Most importantly, it tended to think progressively in terms of growth and development, rather than of collapse and disintegration."<sup>628</sup> It therefore makes sense that

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<sup>627</sup> If Canada's centennial theme, "Terre des Hommes" ("Man and his World" or "Land of Man," with its seventeen elements that included "Man the explorer," "Man in the community," "Man the creator," "Man the provider" and others), did not make it abundantly clear, the singularized and individualized man has been positioned at the centre of the nation's history and the core aspects of human existence (study, sociality, creativity and work). The consequences of this receive more attention below.

<sup>628</sup> J.M. Bumsted, "The Birthday Party," *Beaver* 76, 2 (April/May 1996), America: History & Life, EBSCOhost, n.p. Accessed 20 May 2014.

political figures and progressive industrialists were some of the first to be featured at house museums. The flow of money in the years leading up to the centennial reinforces Bumsted's claims. In 1958, Alvin Hamilton, the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources for the Diefenbaker government, was preoccupied with the task of planning and promoting the Canadian centennial. As part of this project, he corresponded "with leading Canadian academics" and acquired major support from the Canada Centennial Commission, to produce the Dictionary of Canadian Biography or the "DCB"—an extensive biographical record now linked to the centennial and the celebration of Canada's past.<sup>629</sup> The compilation prompted "major biographical re-evaluations of most of the Fathers of Confederation" and the parallel sponsorship and publication of the *Biographical Dictionary of Senators and Members of the House of Commons, 1867-1967*.<sup>630</sup> It is significant to note these biographical studies and histories were recovered and written just as a number of house museums were being restored and opened to the public as commemorative sites for these "great men."

Heroes of a nation's past, like significant old buildings, tend to be rescued from the precipice of erasure at times when they seem to be fading from memory. Communities are seen to reaffirm their pride in Canada by commemorating the achievements of their own pioneers, leaders and champions during events like the centennial.<sup>631</sup> Through these processes, nationhood is reaffirmed around the image of a few distinguished individuals who have come to embody patriotic virtues. There is much support for the idea that we can understand and track historical change by delving into the lives of key individuals. It follows that if the histories that they unlock are worth preserving and communicating to future generations, one way to concretize these biographical details is through the objects that the

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<sup>629</sup> Ibid.

<sup>630</sup> Ibid.

<sup>631</sup> Concepts such as celebrity, leadership and hero worship are therefore at the centre of studies about the significance of the key interpretive figure.



individuals owned and kept in their surroundings. America's first house museums were founded on this principle. The legislative committee in charge of the fate of Hasbrouck House (Poughkeepsie, NY) stated:

If our love of country is excited when we read the biography of our revolutionary heroes, or the history of revolutionary events, how much more still the flames of patriotism burn in our bosoms when we tread the ground where was shed the blood of our fathers, or when we move among the stones where were conceived and consummated their noble achievements.<sup>632</sup>

Where the house is expected to reveal something of the private individual, the house museum has been used to frame the official biographies of national heroes.

According to Lucy Riall political biography is “usually dedicated to the study of powerful men with a public reputation.”<sup>633</sup> As one might expect, house museums are attractive to audiences already familiar with such noteworthy figures because they ostensibly provide access to the more private dimensions of their exemplary lives.<sup>634</sup> At Rutherford House the life of Alexander Cameron Rutherford (1857-1941) is presented in the form of a “cradle-to-grave narration.”<sup>635</sup> Following the tradition of political biography, the guides speak of Rutherford's education at Woodstock College and his marriage to a woman from a prominent Ottawa family. They recite how Rutherford noticed a market for lawyers in Edmonton and smartly decided to move to Western Canada as it grew. Rutherford's roles as the first premier of Alberta, the Minister of Education, the Minister of Railways and, later, chancellor of the University of Alberta are also highlighted. These official narratives are supplemented by anecdotes about Rutherford clearing the dining room table to play ping pong, or lying couch cushions on the floor and charging his children for tickets to board the

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<sup>632</sup> Legislative committee in Smith, “The House Enshrined,” 139.

<sup>633</sup> Lucy Riall, “The Shallow End of History? The Substance and Future of Political Biography,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 40, 3 (Winter 2010), 376.

<sup>634</sup> It is also worth noting that many of Canada's house museums are interpreted as Victorian homes. The height of political biography was during the nineteenth-century (Riall, “The Shallow End,” 375).

<sup>635</sup> A Lloyd Moote's phrase in Riall, “The Shallow End,” 377.

“train.” A stream of dates and accolades are humanized within the person-centred house museum, where intimate tales that speak volumes of an individual’s personality, their temperament or values are shared [Figs 4.6 & 4.7].

In Chapter One the house museum was characterized as a fusion of public and private. Rutherford House, and some of the case studies that follow, testify that the key interpretive figure is introduced as both public figure and private individual. Although, the facts of their public life tend to be taken from official biographies and represented by public items incorporated into the home, the house is also expected to reveal and contextualize more personal stories.<sup>636</sup> Still, we do well to remind ourselves that term “hero house” connotes a space where men like Rutherford are glorified and honoured. While objects, statements and images may coalesce to produce a more comprehensive image of these historically-significant individuals, the biographies sanctioned in house museums are, more often than not, selective and deliberately non-contentious.<sup>637</sup>

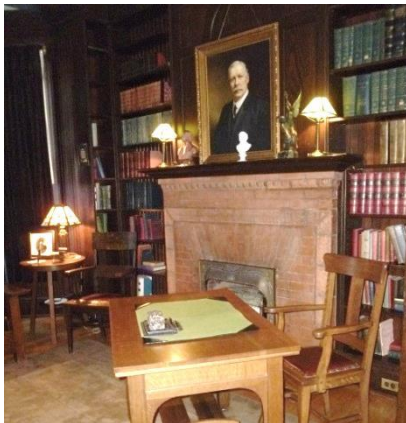


Figure 4.6: Rutherford’s study with a portrait of him on the mantle (Photo by author, 23 February 2013).

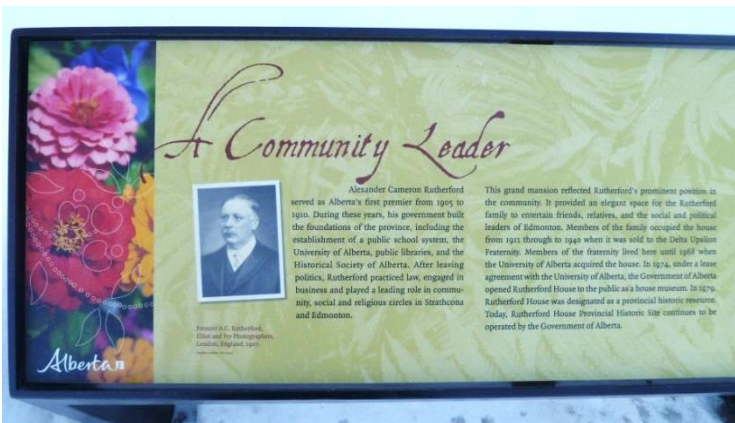


Figure 4.7: An interpretive panel on the grounds of the museum referring to Rutherford as “A Community Leader” (Photo by author, 23 February 2013).

<sup>636</sup> When I say “public items” I mean, for example, competition trophies, certificates of achievement/honor, official photographs, medals, etc.

<sup>637</sup> Glenn J. Lockwood, *Joshua Bates. The Hidden Tragedy of the Smith Falls Heritage House* (Smiths Falls: Heritage House Museum, 1985), ix; James W. Loewen, *Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong* (New York, NY: New Press, 1999), 17.

Jeremy Popkin warns that biographers tended to be over-complimentary during the nineteenth century, endeavouring not to offend or pry and trying to avoid controversy. In contrast, during the twentieth-century, biographers tended “to emphasize a subject’s flaws,” revealing his/her inner demons or naughty secrets.<sup>638</sup> Not surprisingly, the skeletons uncovered by the later writers are seldom referenced on house museums’ guided tours. In either case, whether sanitized or sensationalized, the biographies upon which house museums are built can be misleading accounts of the individual, his or her actions and/or related histories. To make use of these personal narratives requires a critical understanding of biography as a genre and a willingness to check, and potentially challenge, biographical claims to ensure their reliability.

In the winter of 2010 the *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* published a special issue on the relationship between biography and history.<sup>639</sup> It contained a preface and an article by Robert I. Rotberg, which began: “Biography is history, depends on history, and strengthens and enriches history. In turn, all history is biography.”<sup>640</sup> In 2011, Barbara Caine described a postmodern “biographical turn,” explaining that biographies are seen as “contingent narrative[s],” which counteract or add complexity to now-rejected metanarratives.<sup>641</sup> These viewpoints have encouraged a number of scholars to re-evaluate the rationales for, and re-state the values of, investing in biographical research. Historians in Rotberg’s camp generally feel that larger events and “[s]ocial forces are important, but they act on and through individuals.”<sup>642</sup> That is:

Wars are started and prosecuted by women and men, not by invisible forces...Corporate achievements and economic panics are human-made and

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<sup>638</sup> Barbara Caine, *Biography and History* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 1, 2.

<sup>639</sup> Robert I. Rotberg, “Preface: Biography and History,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 40, 3 (Winter 2010), vii.

<sup>640</sup> Robert I. Rotberg, “Biography and History: Mutual Evidentiary and Interdisciplinary Considerations,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 40, 3 (Winter 2010), 305.

<sup>641</sup> Jeremy D. Popkin, “Biography and History,” Review. *Biography* 34, 2 (2011), 329-330.

<sup>642</sup> Rotberg, “Biography and History,” 305.

human-resolved...Scientific and political advances result from individual achievement set within a collaborative context...<sup>643</sup>

Rotberg's position is perhaps more temperately stated by Jeremy D. Popkin in his review of Caine's text: "Even as historians have rejected the notion that 'great men' make history, they have increasingly embraced the idea that individual life stories could illustrate the circumstances that shaped the lives of people in the past."<sup>644</sup> By extension, these recent publications provide cautious support for biographical house museums on the condition that they move past the glorification of a group of esteemed individuals. The following section looks at the way historic designations intersect with the commemoration of key personages at historic sites such as house museums.

### ***Plaques and Persons of the System of National Historic Sites of Canada***

The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC) plays a key role in determining which heritages are represented on the Canadian landscape and, in turn, which histories are recalled by Canadians and foreign visitors. It recommends for designation *places*, *people* and *events* of national significance to the Minister of Canadian Heritage.<sup>645</sup> The sites that constitute this officially selected network are signposted by the HSMBC's trademark burgundy plaques with golden text and borders, French and English translations and the stamp of the Royal Coat of Arms of Canada. Between 1911 and 1999, the federal government "designated more than 800 sites, 500 persons and 300 events."<sup>646</sup> Already this suggests that individuals are deemed central components of Canada's national past and are recorded and commemorated as such.

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<sup>643</sup> Ibid.

<sup>644</sup> Popkin, "Biography and History," 330.

<sup>645</sup> Parks Canada, *National Historic Sites of Canada System Plan*, foreword by Sheila Copps (n.p.: Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, 2000), 2.

<sup>646</sup> Ibid.

The structure of this plaquing system means that house museums can be aligned with figures or personalities in two ways. First, if an individual has already been designated as a *person* of national historic significance, their former house may be selected as a location for the commemorative plaque. Persons of national historical significance are defined by the Board as “[p]eople who have made an outstanding and lasting contribution to Canadian history.”<sup>647</sup> While most individuals can only be “considered for designation 25 years after their death,” Canadian Prime Ministers are exceptionally “eligible for commemoration immediately after death.”<sup>648</sup> These sites can also meet the HSMBC’s commemoration criteria by being a *place* “explicitly and meaningfully associated or identified with persons who are deemed to be of national historic significance.”<sup>649</sup> As a result, museums like Craigdarroch Castle are doubly commemorated; they incorporate both the place and person plaques [Figs. 4.8-4.10]. Craigdarroch is tied to Robert Dunsmuir on his plaque (home to the man) and Mr. Dunsmuir is connected to Craigdarroch on a second plaque (man to his home). The pairing is twice set in stone. In addition to these textual affiliations, the very presence of Dunsmuir’s plaque at the Castle confirms the appropriateness of interpreting his character at the home that he built (but never lived in).<sup>650</sup>

The thematic framework of the most recent system plan shows that certain subthemes recognized by the HSMBC (labour, social movements, learning and the arts, and politics and political processes) are represented more by people than events or sites [Fig. 4.11]. Others are designated by sites more than individuals (i.e. architecture and design, settlement, military and defense, government institutions and hunting and gathering). The diagram highlights the there is an uneven distribution of different types of individuals on the

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<sup>647</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>648</sup> Ibid.

<sup>649</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>650</sup> Joan Dunsmuir inhabited the Castle from 1890 until her death in 1908, a great deal longer than her husband, yet is not mentioned on either plaque.

heritage landscape. There are more commemorated under the subtheme “Labour” than “Hunting and Gathering,” more persons designated for their involvement in “Science” than “Philosophy and Spirituality.” Canada’s house museums are, in actuality, spread throughout the listings of themes pertaining to Canada’s national historic sites. And, person-centred museums must be careful not to become representative of only certain kinds of people.<sup>651</sup>

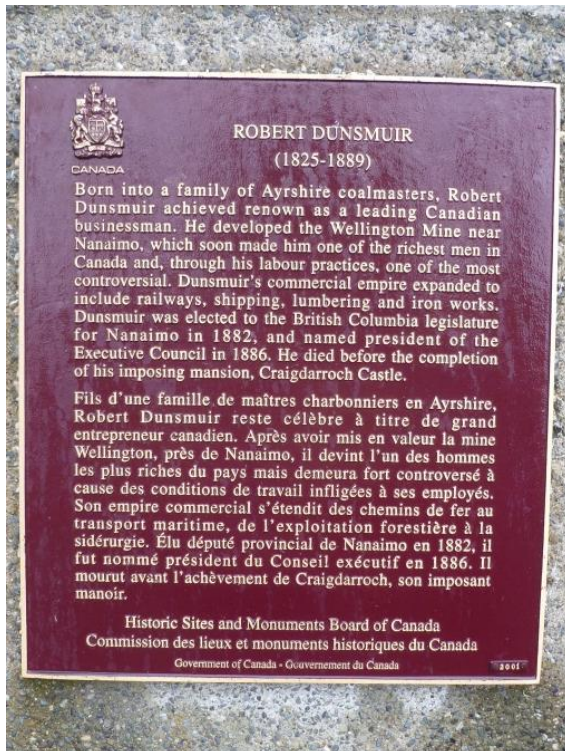


Figure 4.8: The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada plaque dedicated to Robert Dunsmuir. It finishes, “He died before the completion of his imposing mansion, Craigdarroch Castle” (Photo by author, 17 May 2013).

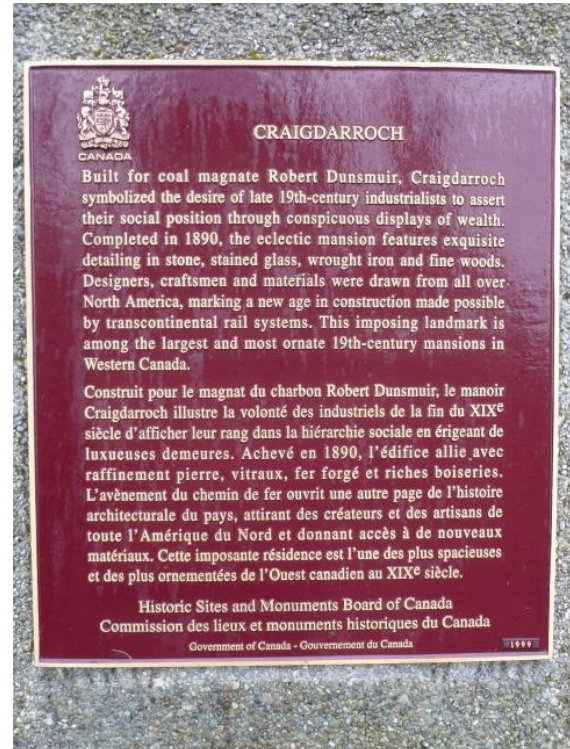


Figure 4.9: The Historic Sites and Monument Board of Canada plaque for Craigdarroch Castle, including mention of Robert Dunsmuir in the first line of text (Photo by author, 17 May 2013).

<sup>651</sup> It should also be recognized that, like the classificatory categories that house museum scholars have laid out, these designation structures can misrepresent the number of house museums that pay tribute to primary interpretive figures. A house that is designated as a historic site because of its architectural and design importance may still be interpreted around the story of a person. To offer a set of examples, Joseph Schneider Haus (Kitchener, ON) and Manoir Mauvide-Genest (Île d'Orléans, QU) are both listed as sites that explore stories of settlement under the heading “Peopling the Land.” The former recalls the migration of the Pennsylvania-German Mennonites to Upper Canada and positions Kitchener as an early hub of German culture. Similarly, the manoir offers a place for the stories of early settler families by explaining the seigneurial system in what was referred to as New France. Even though these sites have been designated because of their associations with *events* and *places* important to the themes of settlement and migration, their commemorative plaques make note of Joseph Schneider and Jean Mauvide as key interpretive figures.





Figure 4.10: The plaques at Craigdarroch Castle commemorating Robert Dunsmuir (person) and Craigdarroch (place). Dunsmuir’s plaque is on the left (Photo by author, 17 May 2013).

FIGURE 3 — THE SYSTEM OF NATIONAL HISTORIC SITES OF CANADA, 1919–1999

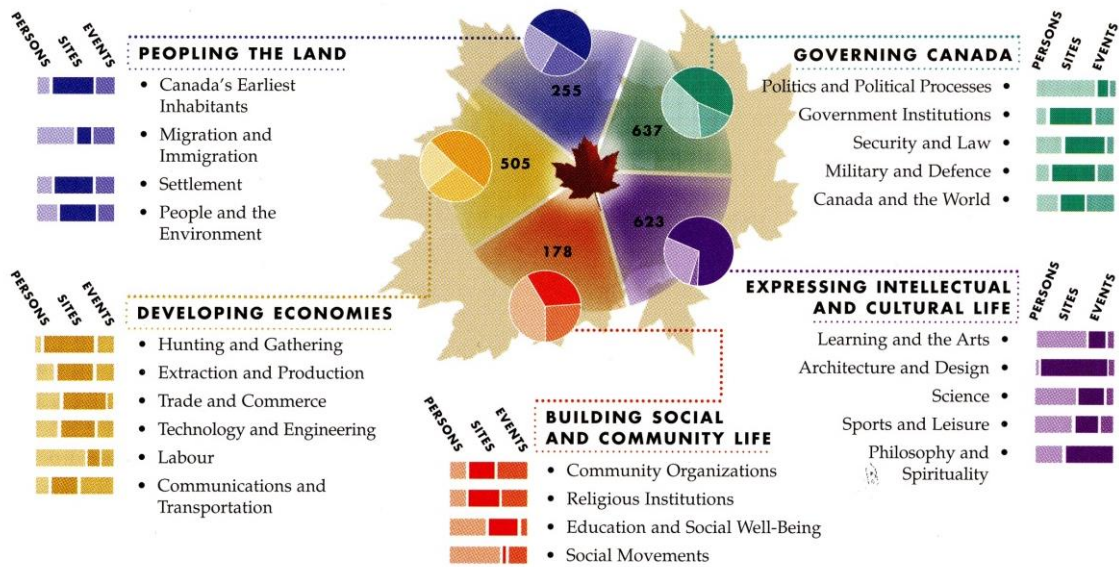


Figure 4.11: “Figure 3 – The System of National Historic Sites of Canada 1919-1999” (Parks Canada, “Using the Thematic Framework,” *National Historic Sites of Canada System Plan*, foreword by Sheila Copps (n.p.: Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, 2000), 26).

Understanding the structure of the system plan, sites seeking designation may emphasize their links to potential (or existing) figures of historic significance, to better their chances of being named recognized by the HSMBC. Groups that campaign to preserve

historic homes often emphasize the broader regional or national importance of former inhabitant(s) to validate and secure support for their endeavours (recall the example of Belle Vue and Catherin Reynolds from Chapter Two). As Charlotte Smith points out, the hero status of a figure has provided sufficient rationale for houses to be converted into museums at least since the time of Washington. These figures lend importance to threatened or disregarded houses and may expedite their regeneration.<sup>652</sup> This account of the structure of the HSMBC also reveals that historic houses can be tied to their key interpretive figures well before they are opened to the public as museums.

When historic houses are introduced to the public and discussed in the media, their ties to their would-be interpretive figures are often foregrounded. In 1951, the *New York Times* reported to its readers that Mackenzie King's homes in Woodside and Kingsmere Park would be turned into national historic sites or "Canadian Shrines."<sup>653</sup> The author of the article indicated that the homes were being recreated to "provid[e] a source of historical and personal data on Mr. King and the role he played in shaping his country's destiny."<sup>654</sup> At opening ceremonies, when house museums welcome their first audiences, the key interpretive figure is visually represented, if not physically present, and becomes the subject of speeches and the cause of applause. When the Haliburton Memorial Museum (now the Haliburton House Museum) first opened in July of 1940, a portrait of Thomas Chandler Haliburton, which had been commissioned from the artist Sir Edmund Wyly Grier for the opening, was prominently displayed in front of the house [Fig. 4.12].<sup>655</sup>

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<sup>652</sup> Smith, "The House Enshrined," 142. Houses have, time and again, been rescued because of the "perceived need of the public to identify a place where worship of their hero might take place" (ibid).

<sup>653</sup> Charles J. Lazarus, "Canadian Shrines: Two Estates of Late Mackenzie King To Be Preserved as Historic Sites," *New York Times*, 25 Nov. 1951, 159.

<sup>654</sup> Ibid.

<sup>655</sup> "Haliburton House Museum. 1940," museum didactic, Haliburton House Museum, October 2012.



Michener House Museum in Lacombe, Alberta (a small town located north of Red Deer) is the restored birthplace of Daniel Roland Michener (1900-1991), who acted as the Governor General of Canada from 1967 until 1974.<sup>656</sup> The house was built around 1894 as a Methodist parsonage and became the home of Reverend Edward Michener and Mrs. Mary Roland Michener in 1899.<sup>657</sup> It was restored to the date of Michener's birth through the efforts of the Maski-Pitooon Historical Society (now The Lacombe and District Historical Society) and the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation during the early 1980s.<sup>658</sup> After a drawn-out fundraising campaign and restoration, Society held a dedication ceremony to open the house museum in May of 1984. The *Cornerstone* reported that "more than 300 people turned out to pay tribute" to one of Lacombe's "pioneer sons."<sup>659</sup> Roland Michener was present as a "guest of honor" to cut the ceremonial ribbon and provide press tours of his restored birthplace.<sup>660</sup> His participation in these activities provided ample opportunity for the press to capture photographs of the former Governor General in the home and on its porch [Fig. 4.13]. These were later reproduced in the newspapers and newsletters of Lacombe.<sup>661</sup> Opening ceremonies and published accounts of the events that take place at house museums often become opportunities to re-iterate the connections between the houses and their former owners.<sup>662</sup>

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<sup>656</sup> *The Michener House News* 1, 1 (June 1998). Historical newsletter from Michener House archives.

<sup>657</sup> "Michener House is opened by the former Governor-General of Canada," *Cornerstone* (Summer 1984), 10. Michener House archives.

<sup>658</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>659</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>660</sup> *Ibid.* More detailed information about Michener House Museum appears later in the chapter under the heading, "Given Voice and Rank: Primary Interpretive Figures at Michener House Museum, Banting House NHSC and Emily Carr House."

<sup>661</sup> "Michener House Opens," *Today's Heritage* (Summer 1984), 1. Michener House archives; "Michener House is opened," 10.

<sup>662</sup> Just as the press discussed Britain's country estates and estate owners together during the middle of the twentieth century, the connections between house museums and their notable inhabitants have been solidified in Canadian newsprint.



Figure 4.12: The opening of Haliburton Memorial Museum in July 1940 as depicted in a display image at Haliburton House Museum. (Photo by author, 4 October 2012. Historical photo also reproduced in Garth Vaughan, *Historic Windsor* (Nimbus Publishing, 2006)). Notice the portrait of Haliburton at the centre of the picture.



Figure 4.13: An image published in the *Cornerstone* following the opening of the Michener House Museum in 1984 (“Michener. House is opened,” 10). Michener is shown addressing the crowd.

Taking a moment to summarize our arguments so far, we can conclude that literature, film, home design reformers and twentieth century theorists have all asserted the mutual imbrication of home and inhabitant. These different fields have developed discourses promoting house museums as sites reflective of their former owners and residents. Primed by such discourses, scholars and hero-worshippers visit house museums in quest of further biographical information and more intimate connections with revered figures. If celebrations of Canada’s history have produced written biographies that national designation programs have set in stone, it is hardly surprising that house museums are organized to contain these accounts. The following few examples offer a more nuanced picture of the way key interpretive figures are set up within Canada’s house museums.

#### **IV.V. Given Voice and Rank: Primary Interpretive Figures at Michener House Museum, Banting House NHSC and Emily Carr House**

At hero house museums, provenanced items are often relied upon to authentically tie historic houses to their commemorative figures.<sup>663</sup> Brought together in exhibits and room displays, these items materially plot the main components of the interpretive figure’s

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<sup>663</sup> Smith, “Evolving Notions,” 60.

biography. Many of the objects in the permanent collection at Michener House Museum belonged to, were worn, used or interpreted by Michener himself.<sup>664</sup> Display cases contain mementos that Michener was given, crests from Hertford College where he studied law and a silver case that he received while Chairman of the Board of Metropolitan Trust Co. [Fig. 4.14]. These objects are interpreted alongside his jumpsuit, a football and a bronzed pair of runners—pieces that point to the Governor General’s athleticism, an attribute for which he became well-known [Fig. 4.15]. One of Michener’s suits, a hat and three ties are arranged in the restored bedroom. Didactics, posted throughout the museum, address his schooldays and the roles that he played as a corporate lawyer, Speaker of the House of Commons and Governor General of Canada [Figs. 4.16 & 4.17].<sup>665</sup> The museum’s texts, along with the collected minutiae of Michener’s life, attempt to recapture his story in its entirety.



Figure 4.14: A display case at Michener House Museum showing some of Michener belongings (Photo by author, 21 February 2013).



Figure 4.15: A photograph showing Michener’s jumpsuit and shoes (*left*). Hung on the back wall are the comics depicting Michener’s athleticism (Photo by author, 21 February 2013).

<sup>664</sup> Interview with Marie Peron, Executive Director, Michener House Museum, November 2013. During the 1980s, he helped the Historical Society obtain, for the museum, significant pieces which had belonged to his family. He donated a number of personal belongings, official photographs, plaques, certificates, Christmas cards, outfits, paintings (completed by his mother) and other objects (Ibid).

<sup>665</sup> As this example demonstrates, not all of the pieces in hero house museums are of a personal or private nature. Most of the figures featured at house museums were well-known to the public at certain points during their lives and are mentioned in newspapers, tabloids and the pages of history books. Therefore, when house museums seek authentic objects pertaining to the lives of these individuals, they usually collect public and private artifacts and documents.

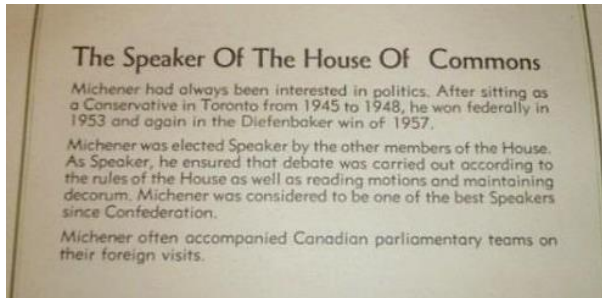


Figure 4.16: “The Speaker of the House of Commons” museum didactic, Michener House Museum. It describes Michener’s involvement in politics at the municipal and federal levels as well (Photo by author, 21 February 2013).

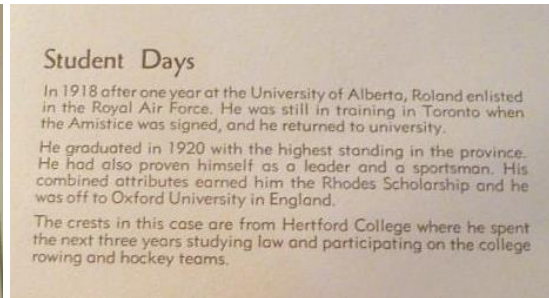


Figure 4.17: A didactic that speaks of Roland Michener’s “Student Days” at the University of Alberta, his graduation, and the scholarship that sent him to Oxford, Michener House Museum (Photo by author, 21 February 2013).

The centrality of the primary interpretive figure is reinforced within the spaces of the museum, through the multiplication of his image in photographs, sculptures, official portraits and the like. A series of comics, from the time when Michener served as Governor General, shows him racing visibly-winded competitors, swinging on ropes and accepting first-place medals [background Fig. 4.15]. He is pictured in numerous photographs with friends, family and colleagues as well as notable political and royal leaders. These photographs evidence meetings or relationships with others. He is also depicted in a bronze bust by Ssu-Tu Jie, which presents Michener as “an unmistakably important” person [Fig. 4.18].<sup>666</sup> Jie’s bust is positioned in front of a photographic portrait, allowing the visitor to compare the likeness of the sculpture to the supposedly “more objective” photograph. It is propped on a plinth that stands beside a headless mannequin dressed in an outfit that Michener once wore [Fig. 4.15]. The alignment of body and head symbolizes the way objects within house museums come together to provide a fuller image of an individual.

Downstairs, the trend continues. A full-size cardboard cut-out of the former governor general stands next to the staircase that ascends to the second floor [Fig. 4.19]. With hand extended, as if about to cordially shake hands with the visitor, this effigy suggests

<sup>666</sup> David Halle, “Portraits and Family Photographs: From the Promotion of the Submersion of Self,” in *Inside Culture: Art and Class in the American Home* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 87.

that the house museum's interpretive figure takes on the role of host, as did the owners of Britain's country estates. Michener's ownership of the house is made manifest in the form of portraits that fill it;<sup>667</sup> the multiplication of his image ensures that the home is read in constant relation to him.



Figure 4.18: The bust of Michener positioned just in front of an official portrait (Photo by author, 21 February 2013).



Figure 4.19: A full-size cut out of Roland Michener on the main floor of Michener House Museum. The main entrance is on the left just beyond the stairs (Photo by author, 21 February 2013).

A similar set up can be observed at Banting House—a home where Frederick G. Banting established his medical practice following WWI and recorded a 25-word hypothesis that would lead to the discovery of insulin. In 1981, the house at 442 Adelaide Street in London, Ontario was purchased by the London and District Branch of the Canadian Diabetes Association (CDA) and was transformed into CDA offices. At this time, artifacts relating to Banting's life and his accomplishments were already being collected in anticipation of converting the space into a museum. In 1984, the so-called birthplace of insulin was opened to the public.<sup>668</sup> Now a National Historic Site of Canada (NHSC), the house displays the bedframe that Banting would have slept on, the desk where he worked and a collection

<sup>667</sup> Even if this is an illusion of ownership it reasserts ideologies like possessive ownership by ignoring the current holder of the house, the Lacombe and District Historical Society.

<sup>668</sup> In the 1920s, around the time that Dr. Banting was co-awarded the Nobel Prize, the house was already known in the *London Free Press* and, internationally, in the *Detroit Free Press* as the “Birthplace of Insulin.”



of his paintings and carvings completed during the 1920s and 1930s. These represent his domestic life and hobbies. A large-scale photograph of the man greets visitors as they enter into the house and a bust of Banting is on display in the first of the museum's galleries [Figs. 4.20 & 4.21]. Images of Banting in military uniform, assisting in a surgery and as a Nobel Prize nominee in Physiology or Medicine, on the 27 August 1923 cover of *Time* magazine, offer different insights into the life of key interpretative figure. Banting's military cross is encased beneath a panel that speaks to his service as a military surgeon during the First World War. Reproduced newspaper articles track his work for the National Research Council of Canada and the ceremonies that were held in his honour after a plane crash took his life. Essentially, as in the case of Michener House Museum and Rutherford House Museum, a cradle-to-grave story weaves its way around material objects, museological displays and recreated domestic spaces.<sup>669</sup>



Figure 4.20: A photograph of Banting that hangs in the front entrance of the house (Photo by author, 13 June 2014).



Figure 4.21: A bronze bust of Banting (*right*) produced by John Miecznikowski and displayed in the Seneshen gallery (Photo by author, 13 June 2014).

<sup>669</sup> A recent exhibition in the museum's rotating gallery showcased three different comics (published between the 1940s and 2000s) that pictured Banting's biography. The cradle-to-grave narratives of the comic strips and magazines mimicked the stories told in Banting House. The Metro News' coverage of the show referred to Banting as "London's Comic Book Hero" (Mike Donachie, "Sir Frederick Banting is London's Comic Book Hero," *Metro*, 2 May 2014, accessed 10 June 2014, [metronews.ca/news/London/1021460/sir-frederick-banting-is-londons-comic-book-hero/](http://metronews.ca/news/London/1021460/sir-frederick-banting-is-londons-comic-book-hero/)).

If, during the nineteenth century, it was the servants' responsibility to praise their masters before visitors to the country estates, in house museums this task usually falls to the guides, who often rehearse the sanctioned biographies of the designated individuals. Yet, just as Lord Curzon, Lord Montagu and the Duke of Bedford gave tours of their expansive homes (just as Daniel Touchett was "delighted" to share the history of Gardencourt and Mr. Osmond acted as a "cicerone" of his own piazza), figures like Michener are often regarded as the best guides to their interiors.<sup>670</sup> At Michener House Museum, the bed and a clock in the kitchen are interpreted according to his accounts of the objects [Figs. 4.22 & 4.23]. That is, excerpts from letters written by Michener to the president of the Lacombe and District Historical Society (in November of 1972 and April of 1987) are displayed on the bed's footboard and atop the timepiece. Didactics of this sort give voice to the house museum's person of focus.

At Bellevue House National Historic Site of Canada quotes from historical letters written by John A. Macdonald are reproduced on didactics in the master bedroom and Isabella's room [Figs. 4.24 & 4.25]. Where Michener's words contextualize particular objects, MacDonald's words address the spaces of Bellevue: "The Master Bedroom. 'I leave the house every morning about nine o'clock and...usually return home about six in the evening...'" and "Isabella's Room. Isabella 'now begins to feel the advantage of the complete quiet and seclusion of the house...'"<sup>671</sup> Isabella does not comment on her own space at Bellevue. Only in the nursery do we hear her voice: "Nursery. 'Baby is asleep beside me...my very soul is bound up in him. God pardon me if I sin in this. But did I not purchase him

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<sup>670</sup> James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, 22, 213.

<sup>671</sup> These quotes are from letters written by Macdonald to Margaret Greene, his sister in law, on 3 December 1848 and 28 August 1848 respectively.

dearly?”<sup>672</sup> These historical quotations, whether taken from journals or private letters, prompt us to see the house through the eyes of the key interpretive figure. They carry the seal of historical accuracy and impressions of domestic familiarity.

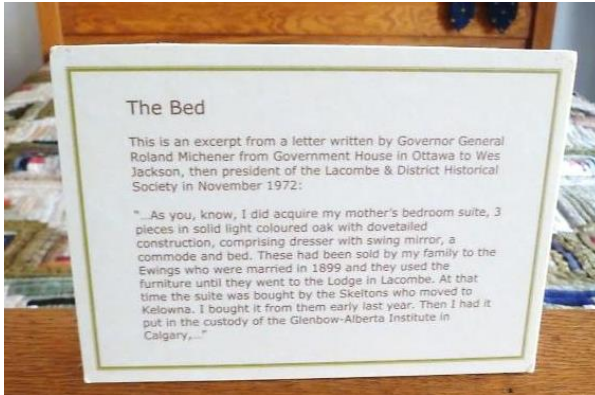


Figure 4.22: A text positioned on the bed at Michener House Museum including a quote from Michener about the object (Photo by author, 21 February 2013).

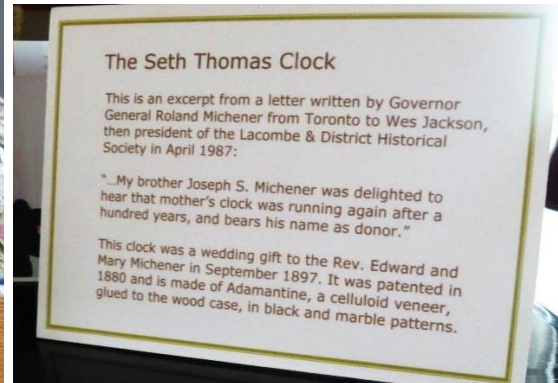


Figure 4.23: Another didactic from Michener House Museum describing “The Seth Thomas Clock” in the main floor kitchen (Photo by author, 21 February 2013).



Figure 4.24: A text panel at the stanchion of the master bedroom that includes a quote from a letter written by John A. Macdonald (Photo by author, 29 September 2012).



Figure 4.25: The didactic for Isabella's Room at Bellevue House. John's words introduce the room (Photo by author, 29 September 2012).

### ***Carr's “Dear Old House”: Pilgrimage Site and Period Interior***

Emily Carr House provides a productive point of comparison for the houses discussed above, not only because it focuses on a female figure but also because, like Charleston and Monk's House, it belongs to a subcategory of person-centred museums

<sup>672</sup> This quotation was from a letter written in 1848 by Isabella Macdonald and sent to her sister, Margaret Greene. The Macdonalds words, cited here, were taken directly from didactics at Bellevue House, 2013.



commemorating artists and writers. Earlier in the chapter we discussed the way that literature has reinforced the symbiosis of home and occupant, and I cited the work of Elizabeth Emery who has argued that the home, in the case of artists and writers, is especially important as a place of work and creative inspiration. Emery has asserted that heightened interest in “writers’ private lives was, in part, a logical response to those Romantic-era authors such as Sir Walter Scott, Balzac, Hugo, and Alexander Dumas, whose home decoration was widely described by visitors as an extension of their literary production.”<sup>673</sup> This viewpoint established writers’ houses as essential to the study and appreciation of their works, and encouraged their preservation and display as house museums or literary pilgrimage sites.<sup>674</sup> Aside from homes of their making, the childhood homes of writers have also garnered attention. They are credited with having influenced writers’ later imaginings, character formulations and views of the world, and are, thus, perceived as propitious places for discovering more about these acclaimed literary figures.<sup>675</sup>

Emily Carr is commemorated at a number of landmarks and institutions in the province of British Columbia.<sup>676</sup> Each of these sites offers a different version of her story. The main focus of Emily Carr House is Carr’s paintings, writings and life [Fig. 4.26]. Her biography winds through the rooms on the house’s main floor, intertwined with period objects and excerpts from her books, especially *The Book of Small* [Fig. 4.27]. A collection of tier 1 artifacts including Carr-family books and letters, the lock from the house’s front door, window sash fasteners and other everyday ephemera are safeguarded in the People’s Gallery [Fig. 4.28]. And while these select pieces bring the “pilgrim” closer to the things that

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<sup>673</sup> Emery, *Photojournalism*, 2.

<sup>674</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>675</sup> *Ibid.*, 1, 2.

<sup>676</sup> Consider, for example, Emily Carr University, Emily Carr Memorial Galleries and Barbara Paterson’s statue of the artist located along Victoria’s waterfront.

surrounded Emily during her life, over the span of almost 60 years a majority of the components of Carr's former home have been dispersed, lost or removed.<sup>677</sup>

Carr house remained in the family until 1936 when Emily's sister Elizabeth passed away. In 1938, it was sold and Emily, who had already moved away to her own residence, was forced to say goodbye to the childhood home that so inspired and shaped her. She wrote of clearing the house: "sorting the little last things...Finished seems to be written on everything, on our babyhood and girlhood and womanhood...Dreams have been born there and have flown out of the windows again...I wish the dear old house could fold up and fly away."<sup>678</sup> A large portion of the visitors to Carr's former home are less interested in stories of domestic life in nineteenth-century Victoria than they are in Emily in particular. The house works to keep her memory and spirit alive and has a certain cachet amongst her followers because writings like *The Book of Small* brought audiences into Carr's inner sanctum. Despite the property's legitimate ties to Emily, however, Carr House cannot claim to be a completely authentic, idiosyncratic, artistic environment. It is not Carr's own creation in the same way that Sir John Soane's Museum is a monomaniacal masterpiece or the Musée Gustav Moreau is a carefully formed image of its artist-creator. The majority of its rooms display period pieces rather than artifacts tied directly to its interpretive figure [Fig. 4.29].

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<sup>677</sup> Like at Banting House and Michener House, the objects with a direct connection to the key interpretive figure represent only a portion of the items on display.

<sup>678</sup> "Welcome to Emily Carr House," guided tour handout, Emily Carr House, May 2013. Until the late 1960s the building housed boarders and offices before becoming a National Historic Site. It was not until the late 1990s that the home was opened as a museum and interpretive centre.

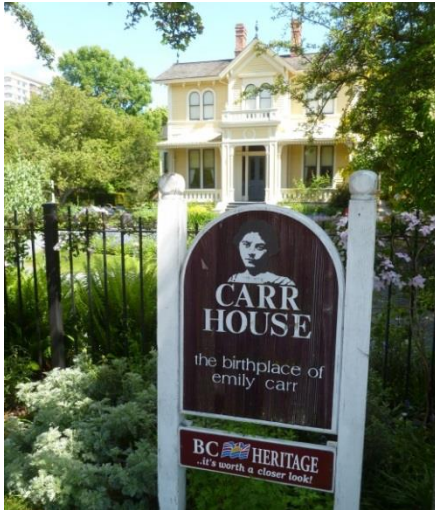


Figure 4.26: A sign featuring Carr's image and referring to the house as Carr's birthplace (Photo by author, 16 May 2013).



Figure 4.27: One of a number of quotes from *The Book of Small* used to bring Carr's accounts of home life into the space (Photo by author, 16 May 2013).



Figure 4.28: The People's Gallery, displaying primary artifacts pertaining to Carr's life and her family ("Gallery," *Emily Carr House* website, <https://www.emilycarr.com/gallery/?album=all&gallery=1> (accessed 10 June 2014)).



Figure 4.29: A period interior at Emily Carr House (Photo by author, 16 May 2013).

### ***Political, Medical and Cultural Histories in Support of Contemporary Causes: Making an Individual Home Relevant to Many***

The key interpretive figures at house museums in Canada do not reside in history to remind us only of key moments of our pasts or ways of life that have disappeared. The individuals always mark something, or are used to mobilize ideologies or individuals in the present. Emily Carr House commemorates a well-known Canadian who is still regarded and celebrated as a model in her field. It remains a pilgrimage site for the artists and writers of

today. Banting House is similar to its NHSC peer in this and continues to be an important destination for those affected by diabetes, or engaged in medical research. The work of these individuals remains relevant to their Canadian context and to portions of contemporary society.

Both sites aspire to push past the details of individual lives—to be more than historical sites—to be actively engaged in the present with the fields occupied by their former owners. Although Banting House commemorates the discovery of insulin it also raises awareness about diabetes and its management and reaches out to a community of people (estimated at 366 million people worldwide) of all ages, ethnicities and classes currently affected by the illness.<sup>679</sup> It gives voice to those with diabetes, addresses current research and devises programs that bring it into partnerships with other public health organizations. A number of Banting House's exhibits and programs parallel the supportive, educative and advocacy roles taken on by the Canadian Diabetes Association and demonstrate that house museums can be used to address present-day public health concerns.

Similarly, Emily Carr House continues to support the arts and contemporary artists, as Carr did during her lifetime, by hosting contemporary exhibitions within its period interiors.<sup>680</sup> The curator of Emily Carr House is adamant that, although Carr is the interpretive “star of the show,” the house should not be simply a shrine to a long dead artist. It should not merely shape and preserve her legacy through a stale reiteration of the mythology of her life, her historical importance and her contributions to Canadian culture.

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<sup>679</sup> International Diabetes Federation, “Diabetes,” *International Diabetes Federation* website, <http://www.idf.org/diabetesatlas/5e/diabetes> (accessed 22 November 2013). For more on this see Stephanie Karen Radu, “The House Museum & Public Health Concerns: Representing & Supporting the Diabetes Community at Banting House National Historic Site of Canada,” *Places for Reflection. Museums as connectors of cultures, times, people and social groups.* DEMHIST, GLASS, ICDAD, and ICFA Session, ICOM General Conference, Rio de Janeiro/Brazil, 12-16 August 2013.

<sup>680</sup> The art exhibits might be seen by some as diluting a “pure Carr experience”. They do not have to be about enhancing her reputation and can even be critical of Carr.

Throughout the year the house hosts exhibitions of contemporary artworks, poetry readings and musical events. In 2014, for example, it will exhibit the work of Victoria artist, Dennis Shields, and welcome the author, Christina Johnson-Dean, to give a talk on Edythe Hembroff-Schleicher (1906-1994) a writer, researcher and feminist who was Carr's sketching partner.<sup>681</sup> Emily Carr House is a National Historic Site that aims to offer a living experience, a meeting place and space for encountering the art of today. The site is driven by the impulse to make the house something more than a biographical container. In this way, it expands upon the model of the hero house. It brings a community of people who respect and identify with Carr together to take part in a cultural scene that features emerging artists.

It can be a complicated task to identify, precisely, at what point these homes loosen their connections to the private individual to act as public museums. Sometimes a very close focus on the individual obscures our ability to see the home's broader social significance. This seems true in the case of Michener House Museum. Michener House Museum is maintains the town of Lacombe's archival records and collections of material artifacts as a community museum. It accepts items of local historical significance from the town's citizens, businesses and community organizations to incorporate into its collection. Making use of these materials, the house's main-floor exhibits provide information about the Church, the Manse, domestic life and religion in Lacombe circa 1900.<sup>682</sup> There is no clear divide between the rooms that interpret Michener's life and the more community-oriented displays. Recall that Michener's cut-out stands amidst the period furnishings downstairs. The installations of the of community collections look much like the recreation of the other rooms which are restored with genuine Michener-family possessions. An official poster in the upstairs bedroom featuring Michener encourages visitors to "take a few minutes to have the helpful

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<sup>681</sup> "Events," *Emily Carr House* website, <https://www.emilycarr.com/events/> (accessed 10 June 2014).

<sup>682</sup> Interview with Marie Peron.

staff research your family history” thus emphasizing tying local lives to that of the Governor General.<sup>683</sup>

The Executive Director of Michener House Museum and Archives has explained that Michener was proud to call Lacombe home and the town’s citizens were eager to celebrate the hero as their own:

While Roland Michener did not live in the house or in Lacombe for much time, he did maintain a strong relationship with the community over the course of his life. The community would have parades when he visited and children [would have] the day off from school to participate in the parade and community celebrations that would take place. In the memory of the community, Roland Michener holds a very special place. Many residents had the pleasure of meeting him in person during his various visits which left a very strong and positive impression of him in the region. He is a source of national pride and the house museum is a place that celebrates that while informing people of his legacy and the overall history of the house.”<sup>684</sup>

By binding their community to the former Governor General, Lacombe’s local history is made relevant to a national audience. A call for support from within the museum’s archives indicates that the Society was well-aware of this from the start: “The committee feels that this building will prove an invaluable asset to the town in future years. It’s [sic] drawing potential as a tourist attraction will extend across Canada.”<sup>685</sup> When the house’s restoration ground to a halt in the late 1970s an article appeared in *The Lacombe Globe* which urged that Michener be commemorated before people became too “hard pressed to remember Michener’s importance to Canada and Lacombe.”<sup>686</sup> The author was concerned that Lacombe’s opportunity to secure their

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<sup>683</sup> “Lacombe – Birthplace of The Right Honourable Roland Michener,” museum didactic, Michener House Museum, February 2013.

<sup>684</sup> Interview with Marie Peron.

<sup>685</sup> “We’re Nearly Finished...,” clipping from Michener House archives.

<sup>686</sup> “Let’s Go,” *The Lacombe Globe* (16 August 1978), 4. Michener House archives.

claim to a personage of national importance would slip away when he insists that “the time has come to get on with it”—the restoration/commemoration project.<sup>687</sup>

The focus on Michener and the emphasis on the house as his birthplace, however, makes it difficult to see the institution as a community museum. It is likely that the Society set out to commemorate Michener without expecting that the house museum would become the sole custodian of the small community’s history. Apparently, there are plans in place for the construction of a new museum behind the house, which would provide the community and the Society with more space. In their current surroundings, the contents of the house cannot adequately separate themselves from the story of Roland Michener enough to be read as period pieces related to life in Lacombe during the early twentieth century. It will be interesting to see whether the concurrent exposure to Michener’s biography and the community histories will persist after the new museum is established.

Much has been done to individualise the houses discussed in this section, despite considerable challenges. Traces of the individuals faded long ago: their possessions had been moved, the décor that surrounded them in their private moments had been covered over and their rooms became adapted to different purposes. When their doors were opened to the public, these lost clues were replaced by constructed images, and official biographies were scripted into interpretive plans. Portraits, busts, full-sized cut-outs and sculptures were aligned with personal artifacts and quotations taken from unpublished letters and journals. Tales recounting the key interpretive figures’ intimate moments in their houses were authorized by the museum’s administrators and shared by its interpreters. Given voice and rank in the house museum, key interpretive figures become guides, exhibits, hosts and

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<sup>687</sup> Ibid.

authors of their own domestic environments.<sup>688</sup> Still, the point must be made that these houses do not inherently speak of their former owners' lives, private ruminations and personal interactions—they do so only through museological manipulation.

#### **IV.VI. Forgotten Men and the Captains of Industry**

Already the systems and examples explored in this chapter indicate that certain types of people qualify as apposite interpretive figures. There are ideal characters and forgotten ones. In his history of Heritage House Museum (Smiths Falls, ON), entitled *Joshua Bates. The Hidden Tragedy of the Smith Falls Heritage House* (1985), Glenn J. Lockwood devotes a segment to “The Forgotten Man.” He argues that key personages related to the histories of house museums may be overlooked or deliberately forgotten because they do not qualify as models of industry or progress. In the case of Heritage House Museum Lockwood reveals that Joshua Bates was, at one time, consigned to oblivion. A prominent merchant and mill owner during the middle of the nineteenth century, Bates had invested in the railway and lost his fortune and his home. During the late 1970s, when the house was being restored—attracting a great deal of public attention—Bates was notably absent, leaving many to wonder who had built the house in the first place. Today, visitors touring the museum encounter few traces of him. Lockwood hypothesizes that it is because Bates' life ended in “financial failure.”<sup>689</sup> Using Heritage House Museum as an example, the author alleges that “Canadian history does not address the destroyed vision of industrial progress.”<sup>690</sup> It perpetuates beliefs in societal advancement and productive enterprise.

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<sup>688</sup> Mandler, *The Fall and Rise*, 80. House museums continue to make use of the structuring relationship that positions the former owner or inhabitant as the host and the house-museum visitor as his or her guest. While the absence of the hosts (admissible given most are now-deceased) might seem to complicate on this reading, visitors to Britain's stately homes expected them to be open to the public particularly when the owners were away. About half of the houses opened to the public were “left to servants and tourists,” as Mandler mentions (Ibid.). And, even if the hosts aren't physically present they are evoked through their representational likenesses.

<sup>689</sup> Lockwood, *Joshua Bates*, ix.

<sup>690</sup> Ibid., x.



Canada's early celebrations of its history positioned political and industrial nation-builders in the limelight. Historic homes such as Annandale House, Irving House, Casa Loma and Fulford Place focus on the stories of business visionaries—men who developed and controlled industries in their towns, provinces or country. These include, respectively, E.D. Tillson (mill owner and innovator), William Irving (pioneer of the steamboat industry and leading citizen in New Westminster), Henry Pellatt (stockbroker and founder of Toronto Electric Light Company) and Senator George Taylor Fulford (pharmaceutical magnate and alderman).<sup>691</sup> These men are examples of what have been called the “captains of industry”—individuals who encapsulate hard work, ambition and economic success and frequently serve as the interpretive foci of Canada's house museums.<sup>692</sup> Their stories, which do not directly involve contact with stunted progress and failed industry, are preferred to Bates’.

House museums devoted to these captains of industry are always, to a certain degree, complicit with capitalist thinking that is concerned with personal possession, private enterprise and individual gain. It is through them that we start to see that a model which makes use of a key interpretive figure is often based on exclusion. This selective focus can cause the unintentional displacement of others' stories or enable the deliberate effacement of

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<sup>691</sup> Even though these houses have been designated by different levels of government their stories line up with the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada's theme of “Developing Economies”—a theme which highlights primary resource industries, production technologies and the business leaders of the past (Parks Canada, *National Historic Sites*, 30).

<sup>692</sup> Lockwood, *Joshua Bates*, 1. Janet Bingham recounts that when the members of the Vancouver Historical Society proposed the restoration of a historic home in the west side of Vancouver “[t]he acceptance of historic Roedde House in the early 1980s as a building suitable for restoration was largely due to the story of the Roeddes themselves. As courageous and resourceful immigrants they epitomized the intrepid spirit of Vancouver's early pioneers. Gustav and Matilda Roedde had travelled from their respective homelands, taken many risks in settling in unknown surroundings, and provided Vancouver with a success story—one of enterprise and hard work resulting in the establishment of the city's first bookbinding business (Janet Bingham, *More Than a House – The Story of Roedde House and Barclay Heritage Square*, foreword by Pierre Berton (Vancouver: Roedde House Preservation Society, 1996), 6). The Roeddes are peers of the captains of industry listed above. Terry Reksten has similarly nominated Robert Dunsmuir to the ranks by stating that “Dunsmuir had risen from near-poverty to become a capitalist icon, a coal-baron and railway-tycoon, a millionaire who had entered politics to make the province safe for his various enterprises (Terry Reksten, *Craigdarroch. The Story of Dunsmuir Castle* (Victoria, BC: Orca Book Publishers, 1987), 5). The Dunsmuir family were at the apex of the colonial, coal mining society after immigrating to Vancouver Island.

alternative narratives. The program at Annandale includes a section titled “About E.D. Tillson,” which begins:

E.D. Tillson was Tillsonburg’s first mayor, and an innovator. He...would eventually build himself a business empire that included a pea and barley mill, a saw mill, and a door and sash factory...The business that attracted the most attention for him, however, was his oatmeal mill. E.D. Tillson developed a cleaner, better way of making oatmeal called pan drying, and Tillson’s Pan Dried Oats were widely sold and known around the world.

At the time of Annandale’s construction Tillson was the town’s wealthiest man and was responsible for employing a significant portion of the townspeople.<sup>693</sup> Not surprisingly, this position is attributed to his “hard work,” “determination” and a “logical and aggressive approach to business.”<sup>694</sup> Even after he retired and left the mills to his children E.D. looked to modernize enterprise by embracing new technologies. When he began establishing Annandale Farm it was reported that it was his “constant endeavor to improve and go forward and...to find better methods in farming and breeding.”<sup>695</sup>

Aside the praise for E.D. there is no similar section dedicated to Mary Ann Tillson, his wife and a figure who very much influenced Annandale’s design aesthetic. Her contribution is significantly downplayed as she does not appear on the museum’s flyer or the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada plaque. In both instances, E.D. is introduced as the home’s owner and the town’s mayor. Her name is distanced from the decisions that influenced the creation of the interior and the commendation that Annandale inspires amongst visitors today. Even though the guide suggests that Mary Ann attended a lecture by Oscar Wilde in 1882, which inspired her to integrate Aesthetic principles into the

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<sup>693</sup> The story emphasizes that “the man who started with little” went on to form “an empire (Annandale Book Committee, *Annandale: The Aesthetic Experience* (Tillsonburg, ON: Tillsonburg District Historical Museum Society, 2000), 10) Little is made of the fact that Tillson grew up with all the privilege and opportunity in a town founded by his father.

<sup>694</sup> Annandale Book Committee, *Annandale*, 7, 9. Word choice is significant here. They are logical in contrast to the illogical, aggressive in contrast to the passive, those traditionally specified male characteristics in opposition to prescribed feminine qualities.

<sup>695</sup> The Farmers Advocate (December 1898) in Annandale Book Committee, *Annandale*, 15.

home, a book by the Annandale Book Committee (2000) declares that it was “the Tillsons’ decision to embrace...the Aesthetic Art Movement.”<sup>696</sup> During Wilde’s lecture “the Tillsons would be introduced to this new approach to interior decoration.”<sup>697</sup> Mary Ann’s input is therefore credited to “the Tillson’s” while her husband’s contributions to the country are his own. Moreover, her influence over the domain is squelched while the scale of E.D.’s achievements is exaggerated at the expense of her historical legacy. In essence, she is positioned under the patria potestas of the paterfamilias.

Contrary to the suggestions of these manipulations Mary Ann has an important place in the story of Annandale. First, Annandale was named to commemorate her Scottish roots. Second, her marriage to E.D. provided the “additional capital” that allowed him to expand his business and wrest the sawmill away from his business partners.<sup>698</sup> Even though the national plaque ostensibly designates Annandale as an exceptional example of the Aesthetic Movement in Canada, it is E.D.’s innovations and his rise to riches constitute the central storyline within the home.<sup>699</sup> Sites like Annandale are useful in introducing us to an ideology that positions such men in direct relation to their homes whilst sidelining their wives, workers and other tenants: possessive individualism.

#### **IV. VII. The Individual, Ownership and the Home**

##### ***Possessive Individualism, Domestic Individualism***

The bent of these narratives owes much to the tradition of possessive individualism, tracked by the Canadian political theorist Crawford B. Macpherson (1911-1987). Macpherson looks back to the seventeenth century, to the political philosophers of the Age of Enlightenment such as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, to trace a conception of the

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<sup>696</sup> Annandale Book Committee, *Annandale*, 19.

<sup>697</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>698</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>699</sup> This seems even less appropriate when we are reminded that Annandale Farm was built after he retired, leaving his companies to his children.

individual that, to this day, affects our understanding of the political subject and his or her place within democratic society. Possessive individualism sees the individual as “the proprietor of his own person or capacities” as “neither as a moral whole, nor as part of a larger social whole, but as an owner of himself.”<sup>700</sup> If the home is symbolic of a man’s inner or private self then homeownership constitutes self-ownership. Essentially, it is an ideology that prizes individual freedom; freedom is achieved through private and exclusive ownership, therefore, both are constitutive of individuality.<sup>701</sup>

If possessive individualism stipulates that “[t]o be an individual is to be...an owner of one’s own person and capacities, but also of what one acquires through the use of one’s capacities,” then applying the theory to house museums means that sites like Annandale House and Casa Loma frame Tillson’s and Pellatt’s individuality precisely because they emphasize the men’s ownership of land and residence.<sup>702</sup> According to the official narratives, which highlight the gentlemen’s ownership of their businesses (Tillson’s sole possession of his mill and Sir Henry Pellatt’s position as a full partner of Pellatt and Pellatt), these purchases were made possible by the use of *their* “capacities.” The practices of interpreting the house museum for the public and writing histories of the house museum’s key characters are both influenced by Macpherson’s idea of an individual formed through ownership.

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<sup>700</sup> See also Peter Lindsay, “Possessive Individualism at 50: Retrieving Macpherson's Lost Legacy,” *The Good Society* 21, 1 (2012): 132-150.

<sup>701</sup> One can already see how this becomes exclusionary. When Lockwood argues that Whig historians prefer progressive over conservative narratives, and focus in on individual initiative or successful enterprise while hiding instances of “retarded development,” he like Macpherson gestures to the possessive individualism of the Enlightenment era as a precursor to the Whig tradition in Canada (Lockwood, *Joshua Bates*, x; Joseph H. Carens, ed. *Democracy and Possessive Individualism. The Intellectual Legacy of C.B. Macpherson* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), 6).

<sup>702</sup> Carens, *Democracy*, 2. A significant portion of the plaques at house museums state that they were formerly *owned* by “Mr. Man.”

Gillian Brown extends the work of Macpherson and explores the “domestic dimensions of individualism and the individualistic functions of domesticity.”<sup>703</sup> She figures the nineteenth-century American home as a “private space in which a ‘masculine selfhood’ grounded in possessive individualism could exist.”<sup>704</sup> The home made possible the formulation and theorization of an inner self separate from the market and society at large. In Brown’s own words “nineteenth-century American individualism takes on its peculiarly ‘individualistic’ properties as domesticity inflects it with values of interiority, privacy and psychology.”<sup>705</sup> Even though the house is thought of as a woman’s sphere (in opposition to the public sphere dominated by men), it is symbolic of *his* interiority. That is, as human interiority was attached to the home, the home became the husband’s inner world, his “tutissimum refugium,” and the public sphere became his outer world.<sup>706</sup> Brown applies Macpherson directly to the issue of the home and the private interior while paying more careful attention to the particular implications of his work in relation to the gendered dynamics of the domestic realm. She draws her reader’s attention to the exclusivity of the mutually-defining relationship between house and owner.<sup>707</sup>

Macpherson’s and Brown’s works are useful within this discussion of house museums because they explain why figures that owned or erected historic homes are given preference as key interpretive figures. They recall the history through which “processes of ownership and production” have sustained the self, and “materials” and “properties” have

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<sup>703</sup> Gillian Brown, *Domestic Individualism: Imagining Self in Nineteenth-century America* (Berkeley, CA; Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1990), 1.

<sup>704</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>705</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>706</sup> EL Godkin, “The Rights of the Citizen: IV. To His Own Reputation,” *Scribner’s Magazine* (July 1890), 65. in Moddlemog, “Disowning ‘Personality,’” 341.

<sup>707</sup> The domestic sphere: “This domain is at once the separate sphere of women and the correlative to, as well as the basis of, men’s individuality” (Brown, *Domestic Individualism*, 4)— this “delimited individualism” “excludes as it encompasses women (*Ibid.*, 4-5).

become “features of the self.”<sup>708</sup> Broadly speaking, if a given house and its contents become the basis of *his* domestic individualism, a space that protects and reflects *his* inner self (*his* thoughts and *his* feelings), how easy it must be to preserve it as a museum to *his* life and good deeds. In certain versions of Annandale’s history Mary Ann cannot even claim her productive work let alone a significant place in the story of the house. Even if she was responsible for decorating and managing her family residence, the results of *her* daily labour affect *his* reputation and constitute hints about *his* personality. Without being remembered as proprietors of their own capacities and the outcomes of their work, historical figures like Mary Ann Tillson cannot stake a claim to the titles of “independent owner” or “free individual” (let alone “key interpretive figure”).

When a historic home is intended to commemorate a notable female figure, these ideas about ownership can produce somewhat confusing interpretations. Little surprise accompanies the knowledge that, before the current curator and her family took over its operation, Emily Carr House was referred to as Richard Carr House.<sup>709</sup> Many early documents mention the dwelling by this initial name because, after all, Emily’s father would have been the documented proprietor. The province reinforced the label likely because of the information that was retained in the archives, the structures that undergirded the designation process and the biases of the NHSC board in charge of commemorating the home. Fundamentally, tradition established the appellation, “Richard Carr House,” as historic or historically accurate. Prior to the name change, Emily was interpreted in the house with the rest of Richard Carr’s family. The renaming and shift in focus for the museum required a gentle transition. First, a decision was made to shorten the title to “Carr House”

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<sup>708</sup> Brown, *Domestic Individualism*, 2.

<sup>709</sup> Discussions with Jan Ross, curator at Emily Carr House, May 2013.

and then, after some time, Emily's name was added.<sup>710</sup> It is essential to track these skirmishes rather than disregard them. Scholars, policy makers and designation committees benefit from being able to note the ways that change has come about and to recount instances where the mold has been broken. If women could not identify with the heroes of industry (or did not see themselves in the political figures remembered at house museums) then places like Emily Carr House may offer a first opportunity to commune with an interpretive figure at such sites. It suggests that although the interpretive model of "man and his home" has often failed the women of history by denying their individuality and minimizing the importance of their contributions, there is a push to move beyond traditions that focus on individuals strictly on the terms of legal ownership and personal possession.

***The Unpossessing Unrecognized: Women's Histories and Historic Home Preservation***

Women who owned their homes have had to vie for the position of primary interpretive figure in Canadian house museums. Prescott House and Gardens Museum, historically known as Acacia Grove, was "built in the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century for Charles R. Prescott, a retired merchant, sometimes legislator and noted pioneer in the apple industry of Nova Scotia"—this according to the site's HSMBC plaque, which sits between the parking lot and the entrance to the house [Fig. 4.30].<sup>711</sup> Charles Ramage Prescott's (1772-1859) story is yet another tale of a businessman-turned-politician who enhanced the economy of his province (admittedly, the horticultural twist is somewhat unique). It is preserved as the house's commemorative message and predominant significance. The mandate and mission of the museum is:

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<sup>710</sup> Discussions with Jan Ross.

<sup>711</sup> Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada plaque, Prescott House and Gardens Museum, October 2012.

To introduce Charles Prescott, merchant and politician, and his home as one of the finest examples of Georgian architecture in the province.

To highlight Prescott's role in the early development of the apple industry in the Annapolis Valley in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

To explain the development of the apple industry and its role in the local and provincial economy from the 19<sup>th</sup> century into the modern period.

To tell the stories associated with the house, the people who lived in it and their visitors.

These four points emphasize Prescott's biography, his accomplishments and his importance to the province's history [Fig. 4.31]. Paired with the plaque's statement, they position Charles as the museum's primary interpretive figure.

Acacia Grove was sold by the Prescott family following Charles' death in 1859. It was held by the Kaye family for approximately four decades before being used for tenement housing.<sup>712</sup> In 1930, Mary Allison Prescott visited the Georgian-style house that once belonged to her great grandfather, noting that it had fallen into disarray. At this time, Mary was approaching her retirement and perhaps thought of the restoration as a worthwhile and exciting project.<sup>713</sup> The following year she offered 1850 dollars for the house and, having acquired it, brought in a contractor and began the restoration work.<sup>714</sup> Margrete Kristiansen, an interpreter at Prescott House and Gardens Museum, has pointed out that the museum is "fortunate to have an essay/journal by Mary telling of her efforts, trials [and] tribulations and the costs of her initial restoration."<sup>715</sup> The museum has also documented a number of oral histories shared by visitors who had helped Mary with the restoration of the house.<sup>716</sup>

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<sup>712</sup> Guided tour, Prescott House and Gardens Museum, October 2012.

<sup>713</sup> Interview with Margrete Kristiansen, Historical Interpreter at Prescott House and Gardens Museum, November 2013.

<sup>714</sup> Margrete states, "I have not seen anything explicit about [Mary's] motivations for restoring the house, however..., it can be inferred that Mary was saddened and perhaps a little disgusted at the state the house was in when she saw it in 1930 (Interview with Margrete Kristiansen). She also recalls that "Mary was...friends with John Templeman Coolidge and his [second] wife Mary Abigail Parsons who had purchased and restored the Governor Wentworth's mansion in New Hampshire (See, <http://www.nhstateparks.com/coolidge.html>). We do not know if Mary ever visited their summer home, but know she was acquainted with them while in Montreal. Perhaps they also inspired her to take on her project?" (Interview with Margrete Kristiansen)

<sup>715</sup> Interview with Margrete Kristiansen.

<sup>716</sup> Ibid.



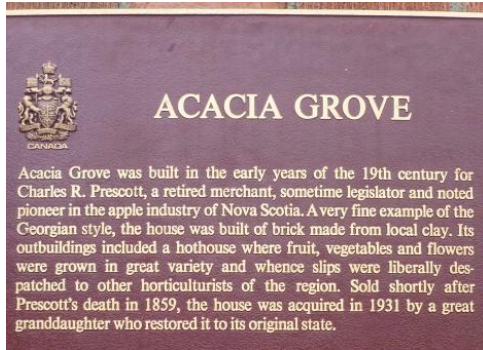


Figure 4.30: The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada plaque at Prescott House and Gardens Museum (Photo by author, 6 October 2012).



Figure 4.31: A screenshot of the Prescott House and Gardens Museum webpage, listing the four points of its mandate and mission (“Mandate and Mission,” *Prescott House Museum* website, <http://prescotthouse.novascotia.ca/about-prescott-house/mandate-and-mission> (accessed 10 July 2014)). Notice that the tabs on the left link to pages on Charles and Nova Scotia apples but not Mary.

Prescott House belonged to Mary from 1931 until 1969 when she passed away. She never married nor had children. Instead, she worked as a nurse and lived at home with her sisters Agnes and Louise into her old age. Her story is one that is not as familiar on the heritage landscape. There is little about her life that is available to the public beyond the house, yet she is barely mentioned in the official discourses at the site.<sup>717</sup> Nevertheless, Mary’s story is important to the house that she restored.

A visitor may stroll through Prescott House on a guided tour that is designed to hit all the key points about Charles and the apple industry. They may admire the painted dishes and mantle clock that he owned, glance at his portrait in the dining room or hear about how the structure of the house suited his routines and business activities [Fig. 4.32]. The reality is, however, that the visitor will not see as much of Charles in the house as she or he will hear about him. The contents of the house from Charles’ time were auctioned off at his death. Of

<sup>717</sup> On the plaque she is not mentioned by name but is referred to as “a great granddaughter” of Charles’. Also noteworthy is that she is not named in the museum’s mandate.

the approximately 2000 books in the house only about 6 in the library belonged to him. Delving further, one discovers that the interiors do not replicate their appearance during Charles' tenure. For example, what is now the library was Charles' kitchen and the curtains that hang in the room were made by Mary [Figs. 4.33 & 4.34]. The sofa and ottoman were given to her by her cousin and Aunt Minnie, respectively. In fact, the most of the furnishings on display in the house museum belonged to Mary, were brought from her work or were gifted to her [Fig. 4.35].<sup>718</sup> Although Charles is at the centre of the interpretive program, when the furnishings, design elements or room layouts are discussed the narrative swiftly and necessarily shifts to Mary. So why is Mary not identified as the key interpretive figure? Why is a home that is not furnished to the time of Charles used to praise his legacy? If house museums often inject a desired individual's biography into homes through period restoration and targeted collecting practices, why does the interpretive program not align with the existing material environment at Prescott House?



Figure 4.32: A painted portrait of Charles in the dining room at Prescott House (Photo by author, 6 October 2012).

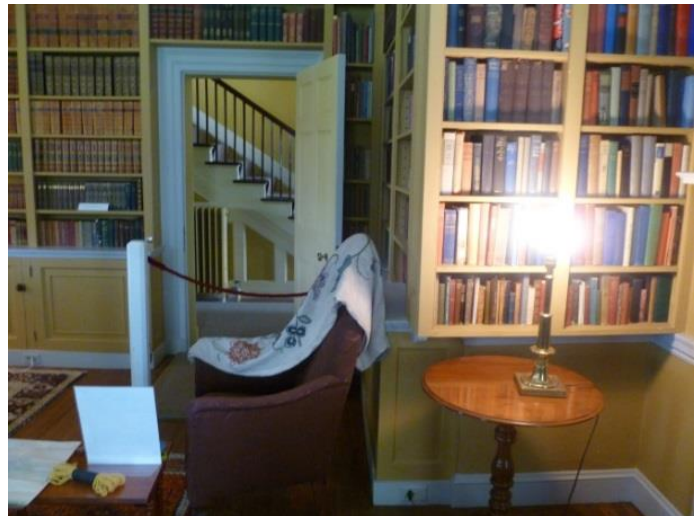


Figure 4.33: An image of the library at Prescott House (Photo by author, 6 October 2012).

<sup>718</sup> The rooms on the first floor are painted in colours from Mary's time. The sun porch was added to the house during Mary's lifetime and the staircase leading to the second floor is adorned with items that she collected. They would not have been in Charles' home. Even the master bedroom was restored to the period of Mary's residence.



Figure 4.34: A photograph on display at Prescott House & Gardens Museum, showing the library as it looked during Mary's tenure. This room would have been a kitchen during Charles' time (Photo by author, 6 October 2012).



Figure 4.35: The parlour at Prescott House Museum with a wheelchair that Mary probably acquired through her work (Photo by author, 6 October 2012).

Patricia West voices some concern about the normalization of the male key interpretive figure at house museums. She has convincingly argued that “traditional interpretations focusing on the public achievements of patriarchs have become so familiar as to seem politically neutral.”<sup>719</sup> There is a growing body of scholarship (of which West's work is a part) that seeks to uncover women's histories in relation to museum-homes. Writers such as C.M. Beranek argue that women in the United States, like Mary Barrett, Elizabeth Clarke and Sarah Clarke, guarded dwellings to memorialize their (distant) relatives—the patriots and military men of their families.<sup>720</sup> They were instrumental in preparing the homes for display and visitation—labelling family artifacts, adding windows into named rooms and arranging furnishings to enable flow through the houses. And, their research projects and the accounts of the sites, which they documented and recorded, track histories that were not accessible through their countries' museums. It is their stories of the houses that provided the

<sup>719</sup> Patricia West, “Uncovering and Interpreting Women's History at Historic House Museums,” in *Restoring Women's History Through Historic Preservation*, ed. Gail Lee Dubrow and Jennifer B. Goodman (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 2003), 83.

<sup>720</sup> The Clarks lived in and preserved Hancock-Clarke House, dedicated to the figures of Reverend John Hancock and Reverend Jonas Hancock, until their deaths (Beranek, “Founding Narratives,” 104). Mary Barrett preserved Barrett Farm in recognition of the life of James Barrett (Ibid. 104, 107).

foundation for the house museums' apologues.<sup>721</sup> Sadly, unjustifiably, “[t]hey ...are not a prominent part of the sites’ narratives either currently or in the stories they told.”<sup>722</sup> They largely dismissed their own tenancy and efforts as unworthy of public attention.

Mary may not be the house’s original owner and she may not have lived at Prescott House for as long as Charles. She may never have acted in the service of the province as a politician or an entrepreneur (although we cannot know this in the absence of a complete biography). She did however play a role in preserving a provincial history that involved her forefathers. After seventy years she brought the house back to the family and searched to bring a number of Charles’ possessions back into its spaces.<sup>723</sup> Consulting auction records, she tracked down the dishes and clock as well as Queen-Anne-style chairs that had been Charles’. In this chapter’s analyses of Michener House Museum, Banting House and Emily Carr House it was found that sometimes little of the primary interpretive figure remains in the home. When these structures are redesigned as museums the individuals are brought back into the house as it were. Mary, in a sense, brings Charles back into the house as house museum curators bring back key interpretive figures. With the aid of her paternal aunt, Minnie, Mary restored a dilapidated house, thus avoiding demolition and taking the first steps towards seeing it become a museum dedicated to her great grandfather. The second step was taken in the late 1960s, when she decided that the province would have the house if none of her family members wanted to keep it. Prescott House formally became a property of the province’s in 1971.

Prescott House provides an example where a historic dwelling is caught between two characters. It is used to officially recall Charles but it raises the spectre of Mary’s role in

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<sup>721</sup> Laurel Thatcher Ulrich in Beranek, “Founding Narratives,” 109.

<sup>722</sup> Beranek, “Founding Narratives,” 109-110.

<sup>723</sup> Interview with Margrete Kristiansen.

restoring it and ensuring its preservation. This case study demonstrates that the narratives that are given preference in house museums are not predetermined by what survives the passage of time or by precedents regarding ownership. Historic houses like Prescott House can materially speak to the lives of a number of people. *We choose* which stories we want to tell. There is no clear reason why Mary should not be foregrounded in the museum's official mandates and designations.

There is no question that many historic homes in Canada reflect the passions, concerns, styles and personalities of notable women (those who shared a home with their husbands and children as well as those who purchased, decorated and ran their own homes). Digging further into the histories of Canada's house museums one commonly hears of unmarried daughters or aunts living in the homes of their fathers and brothers, taking over the residences, caring for them and living out their lives together before preparing the domiciles for public display or use. If in the United States they are indebted to figures like Mary Barrett and the Clarke sisters, individuals such as Gwendolyn Shand and Eleanor Luxton deserve recognition for preserving Canada's built heritage and first telling the stories of their homes.

Shand, a pioneering social worker and Hants County historian, prepared her family home to become a provincial museum. She had lived in the dwelling for twenty years after her mother passed away. Every item it contained was listed in her will and she arranged for money to be leftover for upkeep. Shand House Museum (Windsor, NS) opened three years following Gwendolyn's death, in 1985, as one of the sites in the Nova Scotia Museum network. Eleanor Luxton was similarly devoted to seeing her family home preserved in perpetuity. She lived in the Banff home of her parents, Georgina and Norman Luxton, until her death in 1995 [Fig. 4.36]. The brochure for Luxton Home notes that Eleanor was

“[d]eeply interested in history” [Fig. 4.37]. Indeed this interest specifically applied to the history of the town of Banff, which was intimately tied up with the history of her family. Georgina McDougall Luxton (1872-1965) was the granddaughter of some of the first pioneer missionaries in Alberta and the daughter of the Morley trading post’s manager. She was raised on the first settlement that sprang up in the southern part of the province, which stationed her near the Methodist Mission to the Stoney (Nakoda) people. Throughout her life, Georgina established close ties to the Stoney community. Norman (1876-1962) was a publisher and businessman who became known as Mr. Banff because of his involvement in Banff’s early development. He had been the owner of the *Crag and Canyon* newspaper and the King Edward Hotel and Livery and the founder of the Sign and Goat Curio store. Fascinated by these accomplishments, Eleanor had “edited her father’s diaries of his Pacific Crossing” and “wrote a comprehensive history of Banff.” In the later years of her life, which were spent at Luxton House, she worked “on a biography of her pioneer grandmother, Annie McDougall.”<sup>724</sup> To further preserve the memory of her prominent family, and ensure the future of the Luxton homes and its gardens (which were her mother’s passion), Eleanor established the Eleanor Luxton Historical Foundation before her death [Fig. 4.38].<sup>725</sup>

The house museums through which Canada remembers its heroes are in some cases only in existence because women preserved and prepared them for this function. Figures like Mary Prescott, Gwendolyn Shand and Eleanor Luxton took leadership roles in commemorating the past at historic sites and in domestic settings. Other figures who merit further investigation include Eugénie Lemieux, who acted as the archivist of the Manoir Mauvide-Genest after J.- Camille Pouliot’s death, and Inez O’Reilly, a woman who played a

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<sup>724</sup> “Banff History Lives in the Luxton Story,” Luxton Home brochure designed by Jacquie Morris [Figure 4.37].

<sup>725</sup> Ibid.



most important role in transforming Point Ellice House into a museum.<sup>726</sup> The details of their efforts and motivations define the foundational stories of Canada's house museums and require more attention and prominence therein.<sup>727</sup>



Figure 4.36: “Eleanor Luxton in Luxton Yard, ca. 1912” (Image archived in “Luxton Resource Binder,” Whyte



Figure 4.38: Luxton House (Photo by author, 19 February 2013).

<sup>726</sup> In Chapter One, I shared the story of J.-Camille Pouliot, whose vision and commitment saved the Manoir Mauvide-Genest from falling into complete disrepair. In a temporary exhibition entitled “The Legacy of J.-Camille Pouliot,” we learn that after his death his wife Eugénie and her daughter-in-law Louise “looked after the house and welcomed the growing number of visitors” (“Continuity and Discontinuity 1936-1972,” museum didactic, Manoir Mauvide-Genest, October 2012). Ultimately “[t]o meet the demand, the manor was converted into a permanent museum... Eugénie “had kept the spirit of the manor alive... she deserved a great deal of credit... she adorned the pages of the *Livre d’or*, invitations, thank-you notes and letters of all kinds... Keenly interested in Canadian history herself, she created and marketed a card game called *Qui sait? Who knows?* in 1908 and published a book about Cartier’s voyages to the New World...” (Ibid.). Inez O’Reilly clearly invested in the idea of the home as a space for display, opening her home to the public while still in residence with her family. As Point Ellice House’s manager of operations recounted: when Inez married John, the grandson of Peter O’Reilly “she immediately set her [sights] to open the house as a museum” (Interview with Michaela Gatien, Operations Manager at Point Ellice House, 2013). The family was forced to inhabit only a portion of the house “[s]o that she could stage the rest of the house and show it to the public” (Ibid.). Doors were equipped with viewing windows. The couple invested both time and money in maintaining and museumifying the house. Ultimately, the cost of upkeep forced the O’Reillys to pass their home over to the provincial government as a museum (Ibid.).

<sup>727</sup> An article from P.P. Miller’s *Reclaiming the Past: Landmarks and Women’s History* (1992) explains that part of the reason why these women’s contributions have not been sufficiently acknowledged is that “at most sites... the interpretive focus is on events that took place on the property, not the activities that took place to save it” (B.J. Howe, “Women and Architecture,” in *Reclaiming the Past: Landmarks of Women’s History*, ed. P.P. Miller (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), 27-28; Beranek, “Founding Narratives,” 109-110). The suggestion is that by focusing on the topic of historic preservation we might be able to reclaim women’s history. Patricia West’s *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America’s House Museums* (1999) signified great progress on this front as a study of women’s involvement in the early house museum movement. And, in 2003 Gail Lee Dubrow and Jennifer B. Goodman published their research on the efforts that have been made “to restore women’s history through historic preservation” in the United States (Gail Lee Dubrow and Jennifer B. Goodman, eds. *Restoring Women’s History through Historic Preservation* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 3.). In an article recently published article, Andrea Terry brings these studies to bear on Canadian examples, asserting that women’s cultural custodianship in house museums has been downplayed because their professional work has not been properly recognized or valued as such (Andrea Terry, “Gender, Canadian Nationhood and ‘Keeping House’: The Cultural Bureaucratization of Dundurn Castle in Hamilton, Ontario,” *Gender & History* 25, 1 (April 2013): 47-64). Preservation narratives might allow house museums to better spotlight women’s stories and experiences than histories of ownership and patriarchal succession.

Museum of the Canadian Rockies Archives & Library).



Figure 4.37: A fragment from The Eleanor Luxton Historical Foundation pamphlet, “Banff History Lives in the Luxton Story,” showing Norman, Georgina and Eleanor (Pamphlet scanned by author). This is one of the few houses that give about equal attention to three interpretive figures.

If we are eager to see change reflected on the heritage landscape we must recognize that already-designated house museums can be obstructionists when it comes to shifting away from political biography—a form of scholarship known by Riall for its stubborn endurance.<sup>728</sup> Scholarship may point to mechanisms that have erased the stories of women from the commemorative landscape, and it does well to uncover the biases of history and biography, but these changes in attitude need to be reflected in the actual spaces where the public interacts with the past and historic people. Figures like Emily Carr have been fitted into the role of key interpretive figure just as women artists have been slotted into the art-historical canon. Taking a lead from Griselda Pollock’s landmark text, *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art’s Histories* (1999), which asked whether the canon of Old Masters should be abandoned, replaced or amended, house museums need to more fully address whether the model of the hero house or the person-centred house can be recuperated, or whether it is too exclusionary and laden with traditional values to be salvaged. The more daunting task would be to figure out how the houses that do abide by

<sup>728</sup> Riall, “The Shallow End,” 382. Riall conveys that “[i]ndeed, what is most striking about the field of specifically political biography is that this genre, which documents the public lives and reputations of Great (or Bad), predominantly male, political leaders, has remained unaltered by the broader, paradigmatic shifts in historical explanation that have challenged every aspect of its approach. The corresponding rise of a different, “new biography” has left the old biography largely intact” (Ibid.).



the older model make the advisable adjustments with so few resources and so small a workforce?

We productively address one of the house museum’s weaknesses by considering who is ignored when possessive individualism becomes a foundation for public history sites. Through his exploration of the theoretical roots of possessive individualism Macpherson offers “a critique of class domination, private property, and economic inequality,” according to Carens.<sup>729</sup> He criticizes it for making free and equal individuals only out of owners of property. Again, Carens distills Macpherson’s critique and elucidates the relationship between men like Dunsmuir and Tillson and other potential interpretive figures such as their workers, family members, neighbours and partners:

In reality, they are subordinate to the owners of capital, who are able to use the power that ownership brings to control those without capital and to extract benefits from them...The possessive individualist version of democracy denies and conceals the oppression and class domination inherent in a society based on private—and unequal—property.<sup>730</sup>

I would argue that house museums cannot take up this critical project if they remain embedded in a possessive individualist ideology. Following sections of this chapter will also argue that unless possessive individualism gives way to something resembling cooperative individualism the roles of others may continue to go on unacknowledged.

#### **IV. VIII. Who if not the Progressive Gentleman? Secondary Figures in Secondary Positions**

If house museums have clearly defined persons of focus, they also beget tiers of secondary interpretive figures. Barbara Caine’s text, when applied to house museums, suggests that if exhibits encourage “an intense focus on a single individual” they set up an “artificial isolation,” forcing all other figures to “become secondary to the main figure under

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<sup>729</sup> Carens, *Democracy*, 6. For criticism of Macpherson see James Tully.

<sup>730</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

discussion.”<sup>731</sup> Wives and children are the groups most often slotted into these positions because they shared their domestic environments with the key interpretive individuals and defined their private lives. In many cases the members of the family are treated as markers of important moments in the key figure’s life—his marriage or the birth of his children, for example. They help explain when his businesses were passed on to the next generation and how he became connected with other families (in-laws, etc.). Children, servants and guests of the house commonly receive more attention in the spaces where they might have been most active. The walls of a child’s bedroom, for example, may delimit a sphere of the museum dedicated to the elaboration of his or her story. For a better understanding of how these rooms are treated, consider the maid’s room at Trethewey House, Sir Sanford Fleming’s room at Hutchison House, Sissel’s or Hazel’s room at Rutherford House and Gwendolyn Shand’s room at Shand House. These secondary figures essentially become the key interpretive figures of rooms under the roofs of houses devoted to the legacies of others.

The houses’ strongest advocates, those most devoted to the causes of their preservation and operation, also frequently receive recognition within their respective museums. Chapter One demonstrated that influential curators, directors and preservationists occupy central roles in the institutional histories of the country’s house museums. As these sites grow, the stories of their establishment become viewed as part of their history, and the supporters who ensured their stability become materially or didactically identified in the spaces. This phenomenon also directs us to acknowledge the way house museum curators have become the appointed surrogates for their key interpretive figures.

The curator of Emily Carr House has expressed that, in taking on the role of “mistress of the house,” she sometimes feels herself a placeholder for Emily. Visitors

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<sup>731</sup> Caine, *Biography and History*, 61.

approach her in their attempts to commune with the well-known author and artist. On various occasions this role has been formalized. For example, she has accepted three posthumous degrees on Carr's behalf. These steadfast and committed figures have become the public faces of "their" sites. They are the spokespersons for the houses, hosting and speaking at most events, representing the houses' interests on city councils and at board meetings, appearing in newspaper and magazine features. In keeping up with the demands of their positions, they become closely affiliated with the sites. Still, figures like long-time curator of Banting House, Grant Maltman, frequently question "who am I" to speak on Banting's behalf or to accept awards in his stead; by what means do I become the privileged interpreter of his house and his life? From an outside perspective these questions may actually prompt a very straightforward answer. House museum curators have dedicated two, three, sometimes four decades of their own lives safeguarding the legacies of individuals like Carr and Sir Frederick Banting, and in some respects have continued their work. If we acknowledge that Canada's historic houses need not function as biographical shrines to their owners, than we might also come to know something of these crusaders of historic preservation and interpretation.

It is important to consider who is presented and pictured in Canada's house museums. When multiple family members or former residents are featured, one must always pay attention to the sizes of their portraits, the portion of the house in which they are featured, the placements of their pictures in hierarchical arrangements and the way they are introduced into the storyline. Is a figure described only according to his or her relationship to another more prominent individual? These differences make the distinction between primary and secondary figures.

Secondary individuals can be presented in the house museum, even interpreted at length in the guide or on the tour. They are, however, always relatively obscure or diminished in comparison to the key interpretive figure. They are treated more superficially; their image appears less often, their biography has more holes and is linked to fewer illustrative artifacts. Secondary figures, therefore, often appear as accessories in the stories of others' lives. Given less depth and less individuality, it is consequently more difficult for visitors to feel connected to them.

#### **IV.IX. Social History and New Figures of Focus**

The social history movement represented a watershed moment in the way histories were written and conveyed on the commemorative landscape. Between the 1940s and 1970s increased attention was paid to the issue of social justice. Communism had inspired considerations of the role of working classes and social movements inspired collective action in advocating for the rights of women, African Americans, immigrants and other marginalized groups. Influenced by these broader societal currents, historians began to focus on new subjects, embrace new methods and consult a new range of resources.<sup>732</sup> This shift in historical thought and practice presented an opportunity for house museums and other cultural-historical sites to address their biases and exclusions. The democratization of memory generated new characters for house museums. It introduced preservationists, historians, heritage professionals, and curators to new heroes and other non-heroic narratives, which many audiences and scholars had been waiting to see in Canadian museums. Social history placed an emphasis on labourers from varied ranks, different racial groups and women as previously ignored engines of history. Scholars and heritage bodies became less interested in trumpeting the accomplishments of elite heroes, bringing to the

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<sup>732</sup> Michael J. Austin, ed., *Social Justice and Social Work: Rediscovering a Core Value of the Profession* (London, UK; Los Angeles; New Delhi; Singapore; Washington, DC: Sage, 2014), 59-60.

surface (and the published page) new stories about women's involvement in historic preservation, the significance of cultural sites belonging to Canada's ethnic communities and the lives of servants and workers.<sup>733</sup> A number of these stories have already reached the public at historic sites and house museums.

Canada adapted to this historiographical trend by becoming more conscious of the importance of preserving buildings and collecting material objects that could be used to express the lives of individuals and communities of different classes, ethnicities and genders—those not given attention before. The spaces most connected to the stories of the servants, which in many cases had been cleared to make room for offices, gift shops or modern facilities, were restored and reclaimed for interpretation. The maid's room at Rutherford House (Edmonton, AB) was, at one time, an office for a professor of the University of Alberta. Later it functioned as a change room and office for the interpreters of the house. Around 1999 The Friends of Rutherford House Society put together a fundraising campaign to restore the space as the maid's room. Similarly, although Eldon House was donated to the City of London (Ontario) in 1960, “[t]he funds for th[e] re-creation of the Eldon House servants' quarters were provided by the Friends of the Historical Museums” in 1997 (Museum plaque, Eldon House, 2013). Spaces that had never been restored, because they were considered to be uninteresting to visitors at the times of the house museums' restorations, were reconsidered in the light of social history's preoccupations. Audio tours began to feature the voices of the household help and children of the house. Instead of speaking about how a single individual or family lived out their lives, many house museums chose to communicate broader messages about what life was like for a particular class, in a specific region, for a group of professionals or in a specific decade. Not surprisingly these

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<sup>733</sup> Riall, “The Shallow End,” 379. The social history movement also impacted the rooms that were opened to visitors at Canada's house museum.

developments presented problems for the traditional person-centred museum and “great man” house museums. As monuments to the country’s heroes, they seemed incapable of speaking to the range of surfacing histories. The age of social history ushered in a group of social history houses, which aimed to be more “representative of a collective past”: “Rather than focusing on the deeds of one heroic individual, they memorialize the achievements of largely anonymous groups.”<sup>734</sup>

Rotberg admits that one of the difficulties in writing histories through biographical tales is that “only in a minority of cases can historians (and biographers) discern what unnamed individuals in their vast number did, or did not do, to shape the currents of past eras.”<sup>735</sup> In Canada, the biographies of wealthy industrialists tend to obscure the realization that little information exists on their workers, servants and families. As Gaby Porter observes, “less advantaged, affluent, and articulate groups – such as unskilled and casual workers, unemployed people, migrants, and travellers—are underrepresented or omitted from social and industrial museums.”<sup>736</sup> These are certainly groups underrepresented at house museums, which tend to memorialize the upper- or middle-class educated individual, the landowner and employer as well as the pioneer who lived in his home for the majority of his life.<sup>737</sup> Porter’s ignored groups become the silent masses that populate the communities and workforces of the notable individuals in person-centred house museums. The key interpretive figure and the HSMBC’s persons of historical significance have faces, names and

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<sup>734</sup> Smith, “Evolving Notions,” 62. Certainly, museums like Banting House straddle these two categories.

<sup>735</sup> Rotberg, “Biography and History,” 306. Possessive individualism seems complicit with this weakness in biography by focussing on the free individual at the core of democratic society rather than classes or groups.

<sup>736</sup> Gaby Porter, “Putting your House in Order: Representations of Women and Domestic Life,” in *The Museum Time-machine: Putting Cultures on Display* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1988), 103.

<sup>737</sup> Their imposing domestic structures on expanses of land situated far away from towns and townspeople reinforced the fact that their owners were an elite class distanced from the masses by wealth, prestige and education. During the Napoleonic era, in the midst of war, the British aristocracy was “eager to be seen as the natural military and political leaders of a united, constitutional and Protestant nation” (Mandler, *The Fall and Rise*, 15). Their estates functioned as signs of power and therefore aligned with their preferred image (Ibid.). This would change as the people’s relationship to the aristocracy shifted in the middle of the nineteenth century.

properties; they are figures that towns or cities claim as their own and remember with pride. Their memories and legacies are sanitized, guarded, and recited. In contrast, the kind of historical information that would help us see the masses as individuals was never documented or has been erased, buried or lost. As a counterweight to the person-centred house, Mackin House Museum (Coquitlam, BC) gives precedence to its community history and in the process asks whether such a reorientation can draw attention to new narratives.<sup>738</sup>

***Under One Roof: Mackin, Maillardville and the Mill Workers***

Many of British Columbia's first houses were built by contract workers that immigrated to the province to work at its mines and mills. The company-home-turned-house-museum is a curious hybrid that speaks to the experience of building a dwelling on the boss's land and having one's place of work as a neighbour. Furthermore, it comments on the place of these companies in the histories of homebuilding in Canada.<sup>739</sup> Promising workers land and lumber to build their houses, companies sought to draw skilled labourers to their worksites and populate surrounding areas. The example of Mackin House Museum shows that these sites lend themselves to discussions that move beyond individual biographies towards social histories.<sup>740</sup>

The Ross McLaren Company was the first to construct a mill on the Fraser River. In 1889, as the mill was being built, a company townsite called "Millside" started to take

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<sup>738</sup> The author thanks Stefani Klaric for introducing her to this site of interest.

<sup>739</sup> I thank Prof. Bridget Elliott for pointing out that these "company" towns relate to the coal-mining towns of Springfield, Nova Scotia; Cumberland, British Columbia; Sudbury, Ontario and Thetford Mines, Quebec. Given that Canada is a resource-based economy with isolated mining and forestry ventures, Canada has hundreds of these kinds of towns. Resources on this topic include Oliver J. Dinius and Angela Vergara, eds., *Company Towns in the Americas: Landscape, Power, and Working-class Communities* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011); Neil White, *Company Towns. Corporate Order and Community* (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 2012) and Linda Carlson, *Company Towns of the Pacific Northwest* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003).

<sup>740</sup> For more information on Housing and the Industrial Worker see Peter Ennals and Deryck W. Holdsworth, *Homeplace: The Making of the Canadian Dwelling over Three Centuries* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 213-227, which addresses the houses of the cannery town, coal and steel town, mobile lumber camp and housing for railroad workers and factory workers.

form.<sup>741</sup> The shack town that surrounded the mill housed the Chinese, Japanese and East Indian labourers employed at the mill, and a town started to grow up around company property.<sup>742</sup> After struggling to keep the mill running, the Company abandoned the site in 1893 leaving its workers without jobs.<sup>743</sup> In 1903, under new management and with greater governmental support, the mill was reopened by Fraser River Sawmill Ltd.<sup>744</sup> The row houses and communal buildings that were constructed over many years to house, entertain and retain workers hired to operate the mill were the origins of Maillardville, British Columbia.<sup>745</sup>

In 1907, Millside was renamed Fraser Mills. The following year, the president of the company announced that more houses, offices, and a residence at the top of the hill for Mr. W.S. Roger, the mill manager, were being constructed.<sup>746</sup> By 1908 the employees' houses at the townsite numbered approximately twenty [Fig. 4.39].<sup>747</sup> Living in these homes, fostered a constant awareness of the close ties between house and workplace. As one panel reads: "people set their watches by the Fraser Mills steam whistle that could sometimes be heard as far away as six miles."<sup>748</sup> Management would also have had a sense of this connectivity. The Fraser Lumber Mill and its townsite was self-sufficient when it came to electricity and Williams has suggested that the managers' homes, if not the employees' homes, were

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<sup>741</sup> A.G. (Tony) Paré, *The Mansions on the Hill* (Coquitlam, BC: A.G. Paré, 1994), 4; "Canadian Western Lumber Co. Ltd. Fraser River Mills," interpretive panel in Heritage Square at the site of Mackin House Museum, May 2013.

<sup>742</sup> Jerry Lembcke, "The International Woodworkers of America in British Columbia, 1942-1951," *Labour / Le Travailleur* (1980), 116. <http://journals.hil.unb.ca/index.php/LLT/article/download/2534/2937> (accessed 27 November 2013); "Clustered close to the mill, and meriting a starker description, were a "colony of bunk houses, Hindu homes, Japanese houses and separate quarters for the white men."" (Stewart in M. Jeanne Meyers Williams, *Ethnicity and Class Conflict at Maillardville/ Fraser Mills: The Strike of 1931*, M.A. thesis, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC (1982), 6).

<sup>743</sup> "Canadian Western Lumber Co. Ltd.," panel.

<sup>744</sup> Paré, *The Mansions*, 7.

<sup>745</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>746</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>747</sup> *Ibid.*; Williams, *Ethnicity and Class*, 5. See photograph in Paré, *The Mansions*, 10.

<sup>748</sup> "Canadian Western Lumber Co. Ltd.," panel. See also Tamara Harven: "Family Time and Industrial Time," *Journal of Urban History* (1975): 365-389.



supplied with electricity when there was leftover from the mill.<sup>749</sup> Mr. Roger would have a mansard-roofed house that recalled an architectural styling of seventeenth-century in France. Since the time of Roger's residence the building took on the name "Ryan House." It is now known as the Place des Arts in the Heritage Square [Fig. 4.40].<sup>750</sup> Mackin House was built across the way in 1909 as a company residence for The Fraser Mills Company's second in command, the general sale's manager. It was restored and transformed into Mackin House Museum as part of the Maillardville Heritage Square Project, in 1993 [Fig. 4.41].<sup>751</sup> These two "mansions" were reserved as "prestige housing" for the upper echelon of the company's management team.<sup>752</sup> They stood at the gateway to the mill and constituted "the 'Nob Hill' of the Fraser Mill's Townsite."<sup>753</sup> For men like Mackin and Roger a promotion usually meant a change of residence. Mackin would move to Roger's home once he advanced beyond the role of sale's manager, leaving Mackin House empty for the next family to move up through the chain of command.

By 1910 the mill was renamed the Canadian Western Lumber Co. Ltd. and had begun to strategically recruit French-Canadians from logging communities in Quebec and Ontario. This whitewashing of the workforce occurred across the province in the early 1900s. Williams notes that "[o]riental labour...had become a thorny issue in British Columbia by 1908" and there were "violently racist currents running through...society during the period."<sup>754</sup> This meant that a number of Asian and East Indian workers who had hoped to reclaim their jobs were displaced. As skilled francophone workers flooded off the

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<sup>749</sup> Williams, *Ethnicity and Class*, 5; Mackin House may have had sporadic electricity and this story therefore becomes part of the tour, the experience of the house.

<sup>750</sup> "A Brief History of the Mackin House," *Mackin House Museum* website, [http://www.coquitlamheritage.ca/?page\\_id=2](http://www.coquitlamheritage.ca/?page_id=2) (accessed 11 June 2013).

<sup>751</sup> Paré, *The Mansions*, 22.

<sup>752</sup> *Ibid.*, 14, 19.

<sup>753</sup> *Ibid.*, 14. Recall, here, how the country estates of the aristocracy, set apart from the towns, symbolized their higher stature.

<sup>754</sup> Williams, *Ethnicity and Class*, 7.

trains into Millside between 1909 and 1910, the site expanded [Fig. 4.42].<sup>755</sup> A.G. Paré notes that row houses played a part in drawing the labourers to the west coast: “In order to entice whole families to move to Fraser Mills, the owners of the mill promised that along with steady employment, they would also provide, at a nominal monthly payable fee, land and lumber to build their homes.”<sup>756</sup> By the end of June in 1910 there were about 943 people and 95 company houses on the Fraser Mills townsite.<sup>757</sup> These vernacular homes do not survive as house museums like the more-elaborate Mackin House.



Figure 4.39: The row houses at Millside, Fraser Mills townsite. This photograph is reproduced as a display image in Mackin House Museum (Photo by author, 21 May 2013).



Figure 4.40: The Place des Arts in the Maillardville Heritage Square (Photo by author, 21 May 2013).



Figure 4.41: Mackin House Museum (Photo by author, 21 May 2013).



Figure 4.42: Millside ca. 1923 (“Entrance of Canadian Western Lumber,” *Encyclopedia of French Cultural Heritage in North America*, [http://www.ameriquefrancaise.org/en/article-681/Maillardville,\\_a\\_francophone\\_community\\_in\\_British\\_Columbia.html](http://www.ameriquefrancaise.org/en/article-681/Maillardville,_a_francophone_community_in_British_Columbia.html) (accessed 5 December 2013)).

<sup>755</sup> Paré, *The Mansions*, 10-11.

<sup>756</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>757</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

The row houses and shacks built by the workers are no longer visible on the landscape in ways that represent the lives of the immigrant populations and families recruited from Rockland and Hull in 1909.<sup>758</sup> They cannot speak to the experiences of the workers, their private lives on the company grounds, their relationships to the homes that they constructed to keep their families close by and comfortable or the need to leave the company homes in the midst of labour protests. It might be assumed that Mackin House Museum, like many other house museums across Canada, speaks to the historic importance of its namesake and first occupant but, instead, because of its close ties to the company and the townsite, it has become a heritage museum charged with recounting the growth of the community around the mill and facilitating discussions about the company, its workers and domestic cultures.<sup>759</sup>

That said, most of the interpretive panels around the Square praise the contributions of the French-Canadian workers and include little mention of those from Asia and India, perpetuating the discrimination of the company's later hiring practices. The French-Canadians brought to the mill were usually positioned higher up in the company than labourers from other countries. They held office jobs and management stations and were thought to be more active in the development of the community. Some might justify the focus of the interpretative panels on the basis that Mackin House was built in 1909 and has been restored to 1910 so it belongs to the era of the French-Canadian influx. Still the historical racial and class divides change the connotations of adopting the manager's house as the community museum.<sup>760</sup> Without sensitive interpretation the house could seem to prize

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<sup>758</sup> Ibid., 9. Paré reports that the men were recruited from Rockland, Ontario and Hull, Quebec because the mill owners were adamant that "they would not hire Orientals" (Ibid.).

<sup>759</sup> "A Brief History" *Mackin House Museum* website.

<sup>760</sup> In the second half of the twentieth century, the owners of Britain's aristocratic estates began to embrace their roles as trustees of a common heritage. Rather than being viewed as private homes, connected to the social status of their owners or families, country estates were reconsidered as structures significant to the

the histories of the white immigrants while perpetuating the exclusions of ethnic communities.

Events that followed the years of Francophone recruitment also impact the way Mackin House Museum, a manager's house, can be used to speak about the lives of the mill workers. The Fraser Mills sawmill was the location of the 1931 Woodworkers Strike. The protest was prompted when the Canadian Western Lumber Company tried to reduce the wages of its employees.<sup>761</sup> For two and a half months the resident-worker community protested management's actions.<sup>762</sup> In the end neither side felt the victor. Martial law had been declared and the RCMP was called in to manage the situation. As Canadian workers "faced a series of assaults on their wages and working conditions" they would move from townsites like Millside, preferring not to have their windows facing their workplaces.<sup>763</sup> Maillardville's history is tied up in the history of the labour movement and working classes efforts to establish industrial unions following the Depression.<sup>764</sup> Since the 1980s working-class histories have garnered attention. While much has been written on their relationship to industry and organized labour movements the focus has more recently shifted to their material conditions and private lives.<sup>765</sup> By focusing on the period of 1910 Mackin House Museum avoids dealing with the contentious 1931 strike but, in the process, misses the

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expression of national identity, explanation of class relations, and study of architectural history and leisure. The example of the British country estates emphasizes how the private property of an elite can be recast as a national asset, much like princely collections were turned into public museums. Their history prompts us inquire about how Canada's house museums place upper-class culture in the bounds of national culture, how they demarcate class divisions and speak of historical and current class tensions.

<sup>761</sup> Williams, *Ethnicity and Class*, Preface.

<sup>762</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>763</sup> *Ibid.*, Abstract; Tour of Mackin House Museum, 2013.

<sup>764</sup> Lembecke, "The International Woodworkers," 119, 118.

<sup>765</sup> Williams, *Ethnicity and Class*, Preface. Annette Carruthers points out that, in Scotland, organizations like the National Trust of Scotland, which oversee the maintenance of grand country estates and birthplace museums, have faced "problems in trying to represent a wider range of the population because of the lesser chance of survival of their houses" (Carruthers, "House Museums and Domestic Life Displays, 88) Most early display homes and house museums belonged to a social elite. And, while the age of social history raised questions about the homes that had not been preserved or museumified, spotlighting the house museum as a representationally-exclusive form in the process, many of the homes that had belonged to the lower and working classes had already disappeared.

opportunity to tackle the kind of class interactions that are too often missing from the person-centred museum and a selective city history.

Given that Mackin House was emptied of Mackin's possessions when he moved and that Mackin House Museum has been established as the community museum it made little sense for the house museum to detail the life of Mr. Mackin rather than speaking of the origins of the town. The home can refer to some of the experiences of the workers as a company home (i.e. borrowing electricity from the mill) and it further develops such stories in the boarder's room by discussing how arriving workers would have to find accommodations at other people's houses, the club house or the hotel before their own home was built. Still, it is a home that is caught between management and workers—between French-Canadians immigrants and displaced multi-ethnic workers. If it were to directly comment on the class struggles at Fraser Mills would Mackin House Museum disrupt the claims for capitalism made at sites like Annandale Farm? And how, in addressing the events of 1931, might it trade an image of history made by great men for that of a group of working-class families as active agents in the historical process? Part of the burden that the museum carries is that it has to be everything for everyone in the community. It collects objects pertaining to the history of the community first and foremost as laid out in its collections policy. The museum has a strong social history bent, addressing women's work like knitting, spinning and housework in an upstairs bedroom. The visitor is therefore introduced to a much broader tour than that which would cover the stories of the family alone. No one individual reaches the level of the primary interpretive figure.

This example brings up more perplexing questions than the somewhat tired sounding: "what can a house tell us about its owner?" Even as Benjamin asserted that the interior holds traces of the individual he wrote that "The interior [wa]s not just the universe of the private

individual.”<sup>766</sup> So, how is public meaning made from a private dwelling? How can a house museum interpret the lives of the unnamed and undistinguished masses that also profoundly shaped Canadian culture and history? The materials, coverings and objects contained within Mackin House ensure that it does not resemble the worker’s homes. How does a “prestige” house, a domestic display, become the site of a community history that centres around a mill? Does this predicament mirror that of the British country estates that became representative of British national heritage? If one’s man’s home tells us about his class, tastes and his lifestyle then how could it possibly provide accurate insights into the lives of his workers? How can a home speak to multiple class experiences? If Mackin House Museum contained primary artifacts related to the life of Henry Mackin rather than a collection of local history objects could it still be used to address Maillardville’s histories? Or, would those community histories be dislodged by the intense personal connection? Could we look at Mackin’s chair or his eye glasses and speak of Maillardville as we look at Banting’s bed and talk about diabetes or at Carr’s paintings and talk about Canada? Do we invest so much in the idea that the home is about the individual that it loses its ties to society, the workplace, a broader public? If we want to argue that house museums are not appropriate places for exploring the lives of people other than their former owners then must they stick to the exploration of personal or familial histories? If we cannot see within house museums stories of workers, servants and other family members then we must acknowledge the house museum as a type of institution that will forever unevenly represent the histories and peoples of Canada.

***Time for Change: No More Tired Tales of Heroic Males***

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<sup>766</sup> Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 20.

The National Historic Sites of Canada's System Plan from 2000 signalled a marked shift with respect to the commemoration of historic sites in Canada. It identified a change of focus for Parks Canada, based on the flaws of earlier systems, with the aim of "Enhancing the System":

When it was established, early in the twentieth century, the system reflected the contemporary preoccupation with "great men and events" credited with establishing the nation. Mid century saw a shift of that focus to political and economic history. As we enter the new millennium, an emphasis on social history had underscored the achievements and experiences of everyday Canadians.<sup>767</sup>

In the document's foreword the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Sheila Copps, promised that the new system would "build on the strong foundation of our past and address the imperative for constant improvement to the system to ensure that it truly reflects the diversity of our nation and fully represents the manifold of our history." She "charged the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada to do more to mark the historic achievements of Canada's Aboriginal peoples, women and ethnocultural communities," saying "We can, and indeed must, do better."<sup>768</sup> The current study optimistically and necessarily includes the country's house museums in Ms. Copps' "we." By addressing histories that have yet to be satisfactorily represented at large-scale survey museums or other designated landmarks, house museums can establish themselves as valuable sites of cultural and public history.<sup>769</sup>

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<sup>767</sup> Parks Canada, *National Historic Sites*, 5.

<sup>768</sup> *Ibid.*, Foreword.

<sup>769</sup> The necessary shift in designation procedures is underway. It must be acknowledged that moments of awareness and consequent shifts in the direction of the commemorative boards in Canada directly affect the fates and futures of house museums. When Banting House applied for designation as a National Historic Site of Canada in the 1990s its application was turned down twice because the NHSC committees were in the process of addressing perceived imbalances in the system. Banting had already been commemorated on a plaque in Toronto. Did they really want to add another house dedicated to a great (white) man to the roster? When our attentions are diverted down one path we sometimes lift our heads to discover that for the last fifty years we forgot to also commemorate another grouping of figures, events or places.

The narrative potential of objects in house museums should not be underestimated when it comes to such discussions. Some artifacts and images, when given due attention, can momentarily if not more definitively pull focus away from the individual and make room for others. At Trethewey House this is achieved by a plaque that commemorates the role played by the Tretheweys in supporting the construction of a Sikh temple, or Gurdwara [Fig. 4.43]. This display piece is the linchpin of a discussion that begins with the oldest standing Sikh temple in Canada and incorporates the histories of Indo Canadians into the house museum. The Tretheweys owned the Abbotsford Lumber Company, the largest employer of Sikhs in the city during the early 1900s.<sup>770</sup> In 1911, the family provided free lumber to the Indo-Canadian community, led by Sunder Singh, to build a temple. This gesture was not entirely unlike the Canadian Western Lumber Company's attempts to attract and retain trained workers by offering of land and lumber for the homes at Millside. The community rallied together to purchase land and construct the temple that would be their spiritual headquarters as well as the centre of their social lives in Canada [Fig. 4.44]. Just as Mackin House Museum takes up the stories of mill workers in the prestige housing of the sales manager, Trethewey House highlights the story of the Sikh temple and the lives of immigrant-workers to introduce class and cultural difference into the home of a wealthy industrialist.

Christina Reid, the collections manager at Trethewey House, speaks to the importance of the Sikh temple story within the house museum tour:

We strive to make each visitor feel that there is something in the House or in Abbotsford's history that has relevance to their lives or interest[s]...Our mandate is to interpret the history of Abbotsford. Today approximately 20% of the citizens of Abby are [S]ikh or of [S]ikh origin. They would not be here if their ancestors hadn't been actively recruited by the Trethewey brothers. The mill would not have been able to run without them...Mainstream Canadians and tourists are unaware of the importance of Sikh immigrants to Canadian history,

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<sup>770</sup> "Indo Canadian History: History – Old Sikh Temple," *MSA Museum Society* website, <http://www.msamuseum.ca/abbotsford-history/indo-canadian-history/> (accessed 25 November 2013).



and again, the temple is a great way to bring up why they came and why they stayed.<sup>771</sup>

This quote brings to light the importance of designating objects of focus that add different voices and stories to the historic interior and small-scale museum. The Sikh temple plaque is an artifact whose interpretation lends further detail to the story of Mr. Trethewey while reaching out to grasp onto another cultural group. It frames Trethewey as a savvy businessman and speaks to his relationship with his workers (as a good hero house does) while also representing the Sikh community and their ambitions, which are underrepresented on the heritage landscape as well as in other house museums in Canada. A single artifact that belonged to the owner of the house is harnessed to make the house museum more inclusive and more relevant to its surrounding audience.<sup>772</sup>



Figure 4.43: The award given to Trethewey to recognize the Company's support of the Gurdwara project. It is now displayed on the mantle at Trethewey House (Photo by author, 23 May 2013).



Figure 4.44: The Abbotsford Sikh temple, 1977. ("Abbotsford Sikh Temple," *Sikhi Wiki* webpage, [http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Abbotsford,\\_Sikh\\_Temple](http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Abbotsford,_Sikh_Temple) (accessed 5 December 2013).

## IV. X. Conclusion

[T]he unwritten histories of countless lives are evoked by the mark on a wall, the wear on a newel post, the gleam of a drawer handle worn smooth by hands long buried. Worn thresholds...could tell a multitude of tales.<sup>773</sup>

<sup>771</sup> Interview with Christina Reid, Collections Manager, MSA Museum Society and Trethewey House Heritage Site, October 2013.

<sup>772</sup> It should also be noted that this example of Mr. Trethewey's benevolence is highlighted while the workers' strike is not emphasized at Mackin House Museum. Contrasting these examples prompts us to consider how we tell stories which undermine and challenge our privileged classes and their "leadership."

<sup>773</sup> Tristram, *Living Space*, 119.

Ultimately, this chapter has traced the tendency of centring the house museum on a key interpretive figure in order to critique it. It has suggested that to interpret house museums as biographical evidence or time capsules of their former inhabitants is an outdated and overused approach—one that, unfortunately, still seems prevalent in the scholarly publications and research. This approach leads to worrying exclusions in relation to the built heritage and histories of the country.

Person-centred house museums have the potential to be touching and meaningful places for audiences eager to commune with (thank, draw inspiration from, or simply learn about) the individuals who resided there. Devoting themselves to the memory of singular individuals, house museums can amass unrivalled collections pertaining to their primary interpretive figures, enabling their curators and collections managers to become veritable experts on their lives. Through these developments, person-centred house museums offer their visitors a level of access to the lives of well-known figures in ways that other sites cannot. It is not the aim of this chapter to argue we should dismantle Canada's hero houses or their interpretive programs. Instead my goal has been to demonstrate where this structure has become problematic—where it has shored up narrow interpretations, exclusions and untenable assumptions.

The house museum is produced in ways that make its relationship with its former owners very different from a private home's relationship to its tenant. Many person-centred house museums were empty shells before being restored and re-envisioned as memorials to their namesakes. Artifacts of the individuals' lives are often assembled strictly for the purpose of producing a shrine to a notable figure and may never have existed in, or been on display at, their homes. The interpretive scripts in these homes can sometimes enable the domestic scenes produced and maintained by the museum's administrators to pass for

authentically marked interiors that lay bare the private individual. Given the processes of tenant turnover, the passage of time and the alterations of historic spaces to accommodate visitors the belief in the symbiosis of home and subject can be completely unfounded in house museums. The person-centred house museum is therefore often built upon, and rationalized according to, a false premise.

Studies and interpretations that perpetuate ideas about the mutuality of the home and subject in relation to the house museum ignore or purposely hide these manipulations of the house. Benjamin submits a warning in *The Arcades Project*: a “conception of history” that sees the “course of the world [a]s an endless series of facts congealed in the form of things...minimizes the fact that such riches owe not only their existence but also their transmission to a constant effort of society—an effort, moreover, by which these riches are strangely altered.”<sup>774</sup> Claims that house museums are unmediated reflections of their former inhabitants are often unsound. If house museums are not true reflections of their former inhabitants, if they are curatorial contrivances or replicas with no authentic ties to the personages represented, then why do we choose to commemorate individuals within them? Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the house museums of this country to consider whether claims about the mutuality of the subject and house can be used to rationalize person-centred house museums, which in the face of historiographic shifts have come under attack.<sup>775</sup>

This chapter has introduced disciplinary beliefs, ideologies, histories, traditions in heritage interpretation and structures like the HSMBC plaquing programme that encourage us to see key interpretive figures as natural and necessary facets of house museums. The house/subject pairing is too often used as an apparatus to reassert the appropriateness of

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<sup>774</sup> Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 14.

<sup>775</sup> Can we continue to rely on the false premise to avoid questions about the appropriateness of the hero house or person-centred house if it means that the house museum comes to seem oblivious of or resistant to the aims of the social history movement as a result?

studying and interpreting primarily the lives of the singular owner at house museums. It mutes the voices of others who could speak through the houses and their contents. The issue of property and possessive individualism precipitate the acknowledgement and individuation of the masters of the house, leaving women in the background of the interpretive program. They have also limited our attention to the histories of other ethnic and racial groups. Non-propertied classes, African-Canadians and Native Americans are rarely the key interpretive figures at house museums in this country.

Either it is claimed that the house museum cannot be expected to represent these people—leaving their histories to be marked and appreciated at different types of sites—or room is made for the house museum to memorialize more than its former owner and to look beyond the tired tales of national heroes. To claim the first would be a death sentence for the Canadian house museum by suggesting that it is only capable of representing the memories of a certain class, race and gender. It would mean saying that house museums are inherently exclusionary and cannot be redeemed for other purposes. The latter project would require that house museums address the restrictive and privileging ideologies that underlie the person-centred museum and rewrite and redesign their interpretive programs with the aims of inclusion and diversity in mind. Supporting the later option, this study argues that if house museums are exclusive—if they focus on the propertied elite, abbreviate histories involving women and fail to represent ethnic groups—it is not because these individuals had no part of the nation's past or no connection to the historic houses that have been preserved. It is because the stories of many have been subsumed by the story of one. It is because the continuance of patriarchal traditions, individualistic ideologies, literary formulas and entrenched commemorative strategies has produced house museums that do not reflect the country's diversity.

## CONCLUSION

### *Is Anyone Keeping Track?*

I cannot count the number of times over the last four years that I have been asked what my PhD project is about. Indeed, I have had many opportunities to explain my research corpus and to discuss the topic of house museums in Canada. Some audiences were easily won over by enthusiastic explications of the merits and challenges of these small museums, while others likely wished I had not responded to their polite questions by going on-and-on about my findings. I am curious about this statistic only because it seems that even the most disinterested individuals referred me to house museums that they had visited in the past, or knew of in their communities. A friend from Kitchener asked if I had been to Castle Kilbride, a colleague insisted that I visit the Bethune Memorial House and an elderly family member attempted to recall a house museum he had visited on a road trip decades ago. These tantalizing discussions left me with a list of recommended trips that I could only dream of making, as well as a defined sense of the most captivating and memorable aspects of the country's house museums. More importantly, they verified that Canadians know where these small museums exist, even if they have little concept of how many of them punctuate the national landscape.

I would argue that this lack of awareness also extends into the realms of academia and museum practice. Texts like Beth Good Latzer's *Myrtleville: A Canadian Farm and Family* (1976), Terry Reksten's *Craigdarroch. The Story of Dunsmuir Castle* (1987), Janet Bingham's *More Than a House* (1996) and Susan MacFarlane Burke's *This Old Haus* (2008) are testaments to the richness of particular historical dwellings and their collections. Published over the last four decades, by individuals deeply invested in the specific histories and features of these sites, they play a crucial role in recording and explaining the significance of house museums

in different provinces, cities and neighbourhoods. There is no question that, without access to these resources, a project of this scale would not be possible. Still, the broader histories, which cull such disparate house museums together, are not well known or documented. Individual house histories multiply, yet we are left without an authoritative account of how house museums function in Canada, why they were established and through what influences they developed. We should aspire to see the research of Latzer, Reksten, Bingham and MacFarlane amalgamated and contextualized by a study of house museums on a national scale.

House museum professionals also tend to be rather isolated from one another. While I recognize that historic house museums managed by Parks Canada are part of a very specific network of sites, and that many house museums are affiliated with larger institutions in their communities, such connections can prevent them from reaching out to colleagues at other house museums. Thus by bringing together a body of literature that specifically attends to the struggles of representing, preserving and interpreting historic dwellings, I aim to reawaken these professionals to the value of studying similar sites with respect to the viability of new models and experimental practices. Above all, I wish to see the house museums of Canada engage in conversation with one another. I believe that because this document addresses a very broad range of examples from across the country, it has the potential to initiate such productive exchanges.

### ***The House Museum in the Past and the Past in the Future***

As much as this study has sketched a basic history of house museums in Canada, it has also delineated the way they have responded to new theoretical works, updated professional guidelines and met twenty-first-century visitor expectations and community needs. Its chapters remind us that house museums do not represent a dead culture from the

past but are actively changing and growing. Describing Canada's house museums today means that tomorrow we will be able to look back and understand the different stages of their growth. Future generations of scholars interested in the domestic past, house museums and home cultures will not share our present predicament of lamenting the fact that no monograph adequately addresses the topic of house museums in this country.

As we approach the sesquicentennial anniversary of Confederation, we realize new opportunities to celebrate Canada's past and recall its histories. Planning for this year-long event is already underway as federal reports outline ideas for encouraging participation in the festivities and communities across the country (Calgary, Montreal, Stratford and Hamilton) appoint ad hoc committees and task forces to prepare for Canada's 150<sup>th</sup>. If the precedent of 1967 is any indication of what to expect in 2017, house museums will likely to be called on to host public events, cultivate national pride, communicate stories of the past and declare the importance of passing the torch on to the next generation. As the spirit of this occasion encourages Canadians to delve more deeply into their pasts, house museums will offer indications of who we were and who we aspire to become.

When we discuss the potential of the house museum, and spark conversations about how they might be improved in the future, we are obliged to think realistically about the limitations imposed by underfunding, administrative regulations and reductions in staff. The collections manager at Trethewey House in Abbotsford, British Columbia has explained that the "greatest difficulty" faced by these museums "has to do with funding as opposed to historical discrepancies...and what have you."<sup>776</sup> If the sesquicentennial were to benefit the house museums of this country as much as the celebrations 50 years ago did, it will be an exciting time to monitor their development.

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<sup>776</sup> Interview with Christina Reid, Collections Manager, Trethewey House, October 2013.

### *A Current Topic and Present-Day Issues*

Instead of revisiting arguments made over the course of the thesis, I have instead opted to conclude with a few ideas about how to move forward from this research. Chapter One compared house museums to related institutions, historic sites and home displays and traced the mutual imbrication of these places and installations. It argued, for example, that we learn about house museums by studying period rooms and vice versa. If Mark Sandberg's investigation of folk museum tableaux proved productive for analyses of the domestic displays at IKEA—and our own considerations of promotional materials at house museums showed the marketability of idealised representations of home—than this thesis offers insights beneficial to our twenty-first century interrogations of the home in the realms of visual and commercial culture.

In May 2014, I encountered a video that chronicled Restoration Hardware's (RH) redesign of The Historic Museum of Natural History in Boston.<sup>777</sup> RH rehabilitated the old museum as a display gallery for its "luxury brand" of home furnishings. All the components of RH's designer interiors—light fixtures, mirrors, furnishings, artworks and pillows—were brought together in partial room installations. These assembled rooms lent a hospitable air to the otherwise sophisticated commercial environment and lofty museum architecture. Gary Friedman, the company's Chairman and CEO, commented on the undertaking by saying:

We believe the furniture had to harmonize with the architecture, and when you have that harmony everything becomes magical...and the team just came up with some incredible, incredible installations. And that's what we said...we said, look, this was a museum, you know, a museum is not about merchandizing, a museum is about installations; it's about inspiration. It's going to be about... scene, furniture and lighting and accessories...maybe the way you'd never see [th]em in a home.<sup>778</sup>

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<sup>777</sup> "RH Boston: The Gallery at the Historic Museum of Natural History," video, *Restoration Hardware* website, <http://www.restorationhardware.com/content/page.jsp?id=boston&link=RHBoston-> (accessed 10 June 2014)

<sup>778</sup> Gary Friedman, "RH Boston: The Gallery at the Historic Museum of Natural History," (2:34-3:14).



First, it is interesting to note that the museum inspires Friedman to focus on installations for the store. His quote suggests that RH's project is rooted in a perceived connection between the staging of museum exhibits, commercial displays and home interiors. The room arrangements had to feel impressive, yet not too commercial or sterile in ways that would prevent customers from seeing them transposed into their own homes. The house museum, which is a dwelling transformed into a public institution and presented as a private home, helps us to understand how RH installs its domestic products within a series of home displays in a former museum. The very premise of RH's "gallery" makes sense to the student of the house museum who is familiar with the language of restoration, the installation of period room displays and the cultivation of the atmosphere of home. The home/museum hybrid persists in our culture in multiple forms and this recent example suggests that we must pay increasing attention to the place and nature of the home/museum/retail space (as well as other hybrid forms).

While Chapter One described the formation of house museums up until the period of the Main Street Programme (1970s), it is important to recognize that, even now, new museum homes are being established. For this reason, it is not enough to think about how we update and preserve the museums of previous generations. We must also be aware of the kinds of house museums that characterise "today," exploring how they extend (or deviate) from past examples and indicate new directions. In April 2012, Orhan Pamuk, a novelist from Turkey, created the Museum of Innocence—a house museum in Istanbul based on the one described in his novel of the same name (2008). In March of 2014, Pamuk's thoughts on small museums in the age of "mega-institutions" were published in the *New York Times*,

initiating fresh interest in the museumized dwellings of Europe.<sup>779</sup> Trying to pinpoint the charm of the house museum, he compared the “newly reopened” Rijksmuseum to the “small and equally innovative” Anne Frank House.<sup>780</sup> He explained that he had been inspired by “[t]hose inventive museum-makers who spent the last years of their lives turning their homes into museums” and described a number of examples, including the Gustave Moreau Museum (Paris), Bagatti Valsecchi Museum (Milan) and Rockox House Museum (Antwerp).<sup>781</sup> Pamuk’s account suggests that these famed precedents encouraged him to create his fictional museum in full form. The newest members of the house museum category provide us with opportunities to explore how the model of the house museum has been re-envisioned for the twenty-first century, and how today’s generations relate to and value small museums. They also suggest that house museums are being formed around fictional pasts, imagined archives and an ever expanding cast of characters.<sup>782</sup>

Chapter Two laid the groundwork for thinking about house museums in relation to other representations of home. It insisted that house museums do not exist without being fully embedded in the larger network of home images delineated by the authors of *Imagined Interiors*. If Canada’s house museums safeguard rare and historically meaningful images of home for later generations and future research, they also motivate the production of home representations in the present. Their exceptional architectures continue to lure artists and craftspeople, just as their evocative spaces excite camera-toting tourists and inspire interior designers. The powerful potential of the resulting representations must be taken up as a topic

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<sup>779</sup> Orhan Pamuk, “Small Museums,” Travel, *New York Times Style Magazine*, 20 March 2014, accessed 8 April 2014, [http://tmagazine.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/03/20/small-museums/?\\_php=true&\\_type=blogs&emc=eta1&\\_r=0](http://tmagazine.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/03/20/small-museums/?_php=true&_type=blogs&emc=eta1&_r=0).

<sup>780</sup> Ibid.

<sup>781</sup> Ibid.

<sup>782</sup> Think of the Sherlock Holmes Museum in London, England. Consider also L.M. Montgomery’s Cavendish National Historic Site, which was designated in 2004 and incorporated both the Green Gables farmhouse and Montgomery’s Cavendish home. Green Gables is known as the setting of Montgomery’s *Anne of Green Gables* (1908) and became a national historic site in 1985.

within the study of house museums. First, as house museums continue to embrace the idea of becoming exhibition venues for contemporary artists, there is room to think about how house museums relate to contemporary works that investigate the home (i.e. pieces by Heather Benning, Sean Cordeiro and Claire Healy, Jasmine Valentina, the Camettes, Mark Riegelman and Jenny Chapman).<sup>783</sup> Second, if the representations of home contained in Canada's house museums furnish a more critical view of the house museum as a re-presentation—if they speak volumes about domestic life in the past and cultural production in Canada—then we need to learn how to fully mobilize these objects and images for a visiting public not academically trained in the arts, history or museums studies.

Fundamentally, Chapter Two suggests that we need to become more familiar with the collections maintained in Canada's house museums. They are ours to discover and their administrators want nothing more than to welcome us “home.”

Chapter Three focused on the way house museums have struggled to balance conservation and visitor engagement in an Experience Economy and a new age of museology. It suggested that restrictive barriers and “do not touch” environments prevent visitors from feeling immersed in the past and connected to the museum's narratives. An article published in October of 2009 by *The Onion* (an online news source that publishes satirical new stories) suggests that we are still in midst of grappling with the consequences of the recent shift from object-centred to visitor-centred museum practices. It questioned whether museums might be going too far, and sacrificing too much, in their attempts to provide visitors with direct access to their collections. The news report joked, in a way that rings true, that although the Metropolitan Museum of Art “represents a profound

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<sup>783</sup> Bridget Elliott, ed. *Breaking and Entering: The House Cut, Spliced and Haunted*. Montreal: McGill-University Press, forthcoming (2015).

achievement, most people remain completely indifferent to” it.<sup>784</sup> To deal with the loss of public interest, *The Onion* states that the Met “launched a new initiative” to “give visitors a chance to experience [the] timeless works of art up close and personal.”<sup>785</sup> This solution would not seem absurd in the museum field today, where the emphasis remains on visitor engagement and access. However, the farce becomes more evident as the article explains the way one visitor acquired a newfound appreciation for the Met’s collection as a result of its recently “relaxed rules”:

Gerard Schmidt, a retired banker who lives near the Met, said he had never much cared for museums until he was given a chance to manhandle one of Monet’s *Water Lilies*. “At first it just looked like a picture of a bunch of lily pads, but then I started scraping at it with my pocket knife and the whole painting just spoke to me,” Schmidt said. “For the first time, I finally understood what Monet was trying to get across in her work.”<sup>786</sup>

Schmidt describes a moment of revelation, even though he departs the museum thinking Monet is a woman. As a humorous take on new approaches that extend visitors’ “tactile privileges,” this article pushes the dilemma addressed in Chapter Three to an extreme. In so doing, it suggests that we may need to re-evaluate the direction in which Canadian museums are headed. Obviously, the Guggenheim will not be allowing its visitors to “swing from its Calder mobile[s]” anytime soon.<sup>787</sup> Nevertheless, it might be the time to ask questions like those implicitly posed by *The Onion*: why is it not enough that our museums are “curating exhibits that bring meaning and context to complex cultural heritage”? Why must they do more than “preserv[e] works of art that capture the spirit of transcendence unique to humankind”?<sup>788</sup>

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<sup>784</sup> “Struggling Museum Now Allowing Patrons to Touch Paintings,” Art, *The Onion* 45, 41 (5 October 2009), <http://www.theonion.com/articles/struggling-museum-now-allowing-patrons-to-touch-pa,2821/> (accessed 20 March 2014).

<sup>785</sup> Ibid.

<sup>786</sup> Ibid.

<sup>787</sup> Ibid.

<sup>788</sup> Ibid.

Chapter Four asserted that the formulas of home and homeowner, house and master, individual and “his” empathetic surroundings, have produced person-centred house museums that focus on Canada’s political forefathers, pioneering industrialists and inspiring artists. These key interpretive figures have become firmly attached to their historic homes through years of brand-building, promotional repetition and institutionalized narrative consistency.<sup>789</sup> The question before us now is how does the house museum discard its key interpretive figure or its reputation as a type of museum that sees history and identity in the figure of a single heroic male figure? How do we formulate new, more inclusive, ways of interpreting these historic homes? We are assisted in these undertakings by expanding our horizons of influence and not simply looking at how other house museums or community museums are doing things. Inspiration may also come from paying attention to the ways people make use of their houses, or by exploring how artists and architects manipulate ideas of home and their forms. Furthermore, we need to take note of homes that we encounter that somehow surprise, unsettle or provoke us. The audience, the public, the avid house-museum visitor must also be prepared for this change. They must be taught to expect something new and be encouraged to engage with spaces, displays and relationships that they are unaccustomed to. By acclimatizing those who know and love house museums to change, we retain a body of attendants while reaching out to potential audiences who have not identified with the genre as it is known and exists today.

It is important to remember that the house is not limited to the story of a single inhabitant. It can be injected with new ideas and enlivened by new forms of interpretation. The genre has to remain experimental, curious and flexible. Normalized ideas of what constitutes a house museum, and what these institutions look like, have meant that different

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<sup>789</sup> Christa M. Beranek, “Founding Narratives: Revolutionary Stories at Historic Houses,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 17, 2 (March 2011), 104-105.

cultures' experiences and concepts of home have not been registered within the genre. For example, homes that were more transient, that were rebuilt in ever-changing forms, or not designed to withstand the passage of hundreds of years have not been presented as house museums. As a result, the stories of migrant workers, boarders and domestic servants have been less frequently discussed. This is not to say that these types of homes and narratives have no place in Canada's house museums. At many of the country's house museums more can be done to mine the subjects of class, race and ethnicity.

In this study, the restored or exhibited homes of First Nations peoples in Canada were not taken up as a point of focus. The most conspicuous examples of these are found at provincial and archaeological museums and are not designed or commonly designated as house museums. The Royal British Columbia Museum displays the house of Jonathan Hunt, Chief Kwakwabalasami, to interpret the way Kwakwaka'wakw houses of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were built, ornamented and inhabited.<sup>790</sup> It showcases "Kekuli" or pit houses—winter homes constructed by the Secwepemc who have long lived in the southern part of the province.<sup>791</sup> The Glenbow Museum opened the exhibit, "Nitsitapiisinni. Our Way of Life," in 2001 in its Blackfoot Gallery. A reconstruction of a typical "one-room house" speaks of the difficulties of life on the reservation, and is contrasted with the tipi, which also functioned as a one-room dwelling for the Nitsitapii (even after being forced off their traditional lands). The Museum of Ontario Archaeology encourages its visitors to discover a recreated longhouse on the site of a 500-year-old Neutral Iroquois Village and in Williams Lake, British Columbia tourists encounter the culture of the Secwepemc Nation at Xatsúll Heritage Village. We must remember that, like the exhibits at the RBC and the

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<sup>790</sup> "First Peoples Galleries, Jonathan Hunt House," *Royal BC Museum* website, <http://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/first-peoples/> (accessed 20 June 2014).

<sup>791</sup> "First Peoples Galleries, Archaeology," *Royal BC Museum* website, <http://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/first-peoples/> (accessed 20 June 2014).

Glenbow Museum, heritage villages of this kind—complete with palisades, wigwams, sweat lodges, longhouses, fire pits and drying racks—are formed through displacement and are, therefore, not often recognized as “house museums.”

If a defining characteristic of the house museum is that it is a historical residence preserved *in situ*, then exceeding the house museum rubric is a necessary move for future studies of Canada’s house museums. The forced dislocation of First Nations groups from their homes and lands *is* a part of the history of house museums in Canada. Moving forward then, it is important that scholarship not repeat the omissions of the landscape. If these homes are maintained and managed only within the context of Canada’s larger museums, evidence of Native inhabitation during the long pre-contact period is stripped from the land. Such maneuvers have present-day implications (i.e. undermining current land claims) as much as they impact Canadians’ interpretations of the past.

Scholars like Moira Simpson have begun to take notice of Indigenous forms of domestic display in their studies of the postcolonial museum; yet, these sites and institutions, which resemble the house museum, are virtually absent from the body of research on house museums (certainly from what I consulted). We have not yet considered how what we call “house museums” compare to what have been termed “treasure houses,” “keeping houses,” “meeting houses,” “custom houses” and “spirit houses” in other cultures. The Native peoples of the Eastern Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Australia have designed and used such sites as cultural storehouses and spaces for ceremonies and community discussions.<sup>792</sup> They differ, in ways, from Canada’s house museums but also share some similarities in function and display. If the house museum is part of a culturally-exclusive category, then by studying them alongside related cultural models we may arrive at more

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<sup>792</sup> Moira G. Simpson, “From Treasure House to Museum...and Back,” in *Making Representations. Museum in the Post-Colonial Era*, rev. ed. (London, UK; New York, NY: Routledge, 2001), 113-114.

diverse histories. Perhaps, what Canadian scholars can contribute to the literature on house museums is a sense of how this genre of museums intersects with First Nations cultures, and either aids or impedes their efforts to preserve their customs and cultural artifacts.

The research represented in this project has brought me to these particular suggestions belatedly. For my part, I have aimed to highlight the ways house museums propagate the language of territory, tie selfhood to landownership and narrate deproblematized stories of settlement and colonization. Without focusing on a single ethnic, cultural or social group, I make the broader argument, in Chapter Four, that house museums must step away from the model of the key interpretive figure to more fully reflect the diversity of the country and the scope of its history. Domestic life in Canada is, and always has been, culturally varied, and it is my hope that when an authoritative text on house museums in Canada surfaces it will make reference to the homes of First Nations groups, even as they escape the traditional house museum category.

My analyses of Canada's house museums has awakened me to the importance of looking at homes that stand outside the house museum genre as it is typically defined, and taking note of interventions that have challenged house museums to become sites of conversation and collaboration. The workers' residences at the Britannia Heritage Shipyard on Steveston's waterfront (British Columbia) are buildings that represent the lives of Japanese immigrants and First Nations workers that lived communally and seasonally in bunkhouses and duplexes. The Sinclair Inn chooses no master or mistress but focuses on the materiality of house construction, alteration and destruction. These types of homes are classified as sites of industrial heritage or museums of construction techniques but are not regarded as house museums. They are therefore unbounded by the standard narrative structure, and provide indications of the multiple directions in which house museums may



move. Indeed Canada's house museums could explore diverse styles of domestic dwelling rooted in cultural and class differences as well as locational specificities. Interventions by guest curators (such as Sally Breen and Tania Doropoulos's "Ten(d)ancy"(2007) and Jamelie Hassan's "Trespassers & Captives" (1999)) have brought attention to colonial, imperialist and Indigenous narratives at museums like Elizabeth Bay House and Eldon House. These alternative sites and interventions suggest what we already know: that the house is a very complex subject. It should be explored and studied from different perspectives, contemplated through many lenses, and appreciated for its multiple meanings.

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Bibliographic note: In addition to the resources listed above, I consulted a number of house museum promotional documents (pamphlets, posters, etc.). Museum didactics, and other on-site postings (plaques, labels, etc.), are not listed here. They are, however, referenced in footnotes in the main body of the dissertation. Information gathered on guided tours or during interviews is also earmarked within the chapters' citations.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX I:

#### SITE VISIT ITINERARY Compiled 27 AUGUST, 2014

COUNTRY	VISIT DATE
-Name, City	
CANADA	
<i>Alberta</i>	
-Lougheed House, Calgary	Feb. 13, 2013
-Whyte House, Banff	Feb. 19, 2013
-Luxton House, Banff	Feb. 19, 2013
-Moore House, Banff	Feb. 20, 2013
-Michener House Museum, Lacombe	Feb. 21, 2013
-Rutherford House, Edmonton	Feb. 23, 2013
<i>British Columbia</i>	
-Craigdarroch Castle, Victoria	May 15, 2013
	May 17, 2013
-Emily Carr House, Victoria	May 16, 2013
-Point Ellice House, Victoria	May 18, 2013
-Roedde House Museum, Vancouver	May 19, 2013
	May 22, 2013
-Mackin House Museum, Coquitlam	May 21, 2013
-Trethewey House & MSA Museum Society, Abbotsford	May 23, 2013
-Irving House Museum, New Westminster	May 24, 2013
-London Heritage Farm, Steveston	May 25, 2013
<i>New Brunswick</i>	
-Steeves House Museum, Hillsborough	July 28, 2014
<i>Nova Scotia</i>	
-Shand House Museum, Windsor	Oct. 04, 2012
-Haliburton House Museum, Windsor	Oct. 04, 2012
-Admiral Digby Museum, Digby	Oct. 05, 2012
-O'Dell House Museum, Annapolis Royal	Oct. 05, 2012
-Sinclair Inn, Annapolis Royal	Oct. 05, 2012
-Prescott House and Gardens Museum, Pt. Williams	Oct. 06, 2012
-Uniacke Estate Museum Park, East Hants	Oct. 08, 2012
<i>Ontario</i>	
-Bellevue, Amherstburg	Dec. 28, 2011
-Casa Loma, Toronto	Jan. 04, 2012
-Annandale House, Tillsonburg	May 07, 2012
-Spadina Museum, Toronto	May 15, 2012
-Ridge House Museum, Ridgetown	Sept. 10, 2012
-Myrtleville House Museum, Brantford	Sept. 14, 2012

-Hutchison House, Peterborough	Sept. 14, 2012
-McCrae House, Guelph	Sept. 15, 2012
-Banting House Museum, London	Sept. 21, 2012
-Joseph Schneider Haus, Kitchener	Sept. 25, 2012
-Bellevue House, Kingston	Sept. 29, 2012
-Laurier House, Ottawa	Sept. 30, 2012
-Heritage House Museum, Smith Falls	Oct. 01, 2012
-Fulford Place, Brockville	Oct. 11, 2012
-Eldon House, London	Sept. 24, 2013
-Backus-Page House Museum, Wallacetown	July 02, 2014
-Uncle Tom's Cabin Historic Site, Dresden	July 02, 2014

### ***Prince Edward Island***

-Beaconsfield Historic House, Charlottetown	July 30, 2014
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### ***Quebec***

-Château Ramezay, Montreal	Sept. 03, 2012
-Maison Chevalier, Quebec City	Oct. 02, 2012
-Manoir Mauvide-Genest, Île d'Orléans	Oct. 09, 2012
-Château Dufresne, Montreal	Oct. 10, 2012

### SCOTLAND

-John Knox House, Edinburgh	Apr. 14, 2012
-Edinburgh Castle, Edinburgh	Apr. 14, 2012
-Holyroodhouse Palace, Edinburgh	Apr. 16, 2012

### ITALY

-Casa Museo di Palazzo Sorbello, Perugia	Apr. 18, 2012
-Villa San Martinello	Apr. 21, 2012
-Villa del Colle del Cardinale, Colle Umberto	Apr. 21, 2012

### BRAZIL

-Museu da Mare, Rio de Janeiro	Aug. 13, 2013
-Museu do Acude, Alto da Boa Vista	Aug. 13, 2013
-Museu Chacara do Ceu, Santa Teresa	Aug. 13, 2013
-Fundacao Eva Klabin, Lagoa	Aug. 14, 2013
-Museu Casa de Rui Barbosa, Botafogo	Aug. 14, 2013

### ENGLAND

-Sir John Soane's Museum, London	Aug. 28, 2013
-Handel House Museum, London	Aug. 28, 2013
-Freud Museum, London	Aug. 30, 2013

### **TOTAL:**

58

## APPENDIX II:



Research Ethics

## Use of Human Participants - Ethics Approval Notice

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Bridget Elliott  
**File Number:** 103685  
**Review Level:** Full Board  
**Approved Local Adult Participants:** 2  
**Approved Local Minor Participants:** 0  
**Protocol Title:** Making Ourselves at Home: Representation, Preservation and Interpretation at Canada's House Museums  
**Department & Institution:** Arts and Humanities\Visual Arts ,Western University  
**Sponsor:** Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

**Ethics Approval Date:** August 02, 2013 **Expiry Date:** August 31, 2014

## Documents Reviewed &amp; Approved &amp; Documents Received for Information:

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Other	To accompany section 2.1. of the NMREB form.	2013/03/27
Western University Protocol		2013/03/28
	References Document (No amendments suggested in Recommendation Document)	2013/07/26
Instruments	Attachment 4: Interview Questions - New Instrument - Master document including questions for 30 interviewees.	2013/07/26
Instruments	Attachment 3: Consent Form (Word document with tracked changes as suggested on the Recommendations Document)	2013/07/26
Instruments	Attachment 2: Letter of Information (Word document with tracked changes as per the Recommendations Document)	2013/07/26
Recruitment Items	Attachment 1: Recruitment Letter (No recommendations for amendment)	2013/07/26

This is to notify you that The University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects (NMREB) which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario has granted approval to the above named research study on the approval date noted above.

This approval shall remain valid until the expiry date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the NMREB's periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information.

Members of the NMREB who are named as investigators in research studies, or declare a conflict of interest, do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on, such studies when they are presented to the NMREB.

The Chair of the NMREB is Dr. Riley Hinson. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 0000941.



Ethics Officer to Contact for Further Information

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grace Kelly	<input type="checkbox"/> Vikki Tran	<input type="checkbox"/> Shantel Walcott
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## CURRICULUM VITAE

**STEPHANIE KAREN RADU**

### EDUCATION

**University of Western Ontario / Ph.D.**  
Art and Visual Culture  
Expected August 2014

**University of Western Ontario / Master of Arts**  
Art History  
2010

**University of Guelph / Bachelor of Arts (Hons.)**  
Studio Art and Art History  
2008

### HONOURS AND AWARDS

2013	Lynne-Lionel Scott Scholarship in Canadian Studies in the Faculty of Arts & Humanities
2011-2014	Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Grant J. -A. Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship – Doctoral Award
2011-2012	Ontario Graduate Scholarship, Doctoral (declined)
2009-2010	Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Grant J. -A. Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship – Master's Award
2009-2010	Ontario Graduate Scholarship, Master's (declined)
2009, 2012, 2013	Graduate Research Travel Grant, University of Western Ontario
2009	Graduate Student Teaching Award (nominee)
2008-2011	Western Graduate Research Scholarship
2004-2008	Canadian Intercollegiate Sport Award, Academic All-Canadian
2004-2008	Dean's Honour Roll, University of Guelph
2004	University of Guelph Entrance Scholarship

### RESEARCH

#### Selected Publications

“Dissembled Houses and Domestic Belongings: Ideas of Home in the Works of Sean Cordeiro and Claire Healy.” In *Breaking and Entering: The House Cut, Spliced and Haunted*, edited by Bridget Elliott. Montreal: McGill-University Press. Forthcoming.

“Ropes, Stanchions and “Do Not Touch” Signs: The Erasure of Museological Elements in Historic House Museums.” In *Casa Museo, famiglie proprietarie e loro collezioni d'arte. Esperienze a confronto. Atti del Convegno. Annali della Fondazione Ranieri di Sorbello 2*, 361-376. Bologna: Pendragon, 2014.

“Exhibiting, Digitizing and Narrating Mobility and Displacement. A Cross-Media Reading of *Journeys: How Travelling Fruit, Ideas and Buildings Rearrange our Environment*.” In *Museums, Marginality and the Mainstream*, managing editor Jeffrey Barbeau, 100-114. Kingston, ON; London, ON: Issuu, 2012.

“Dismantling Frontiers. Cross-Referencing the Material Culture of Europe and the Great Lakes Region, ca. 1000-1500 CE.” In *Mapping Medievalism at the Canadian Frontier*, edited by Kathryn Brush, 80-95. London: Museum London & McIntosh Gallery, 2010.

### **Selected Conferences**

“Tampering with Time in the House/Museum.” Home Time: Temporalities of Domestic Life. Panel organized by the Centre for Studies of Home. Royal Geographical Society / Institute of British Geographers Annual Conference. London, England, August 28-30, 2013.

“The House Museum & Public Health Concerns: Representing and Supporting the Diabetes Community at Banting House National Historic Site of Canada.” Places for Reflection. Museums as Connectors of Cultures, Times, People and Social Groups. DEMHIST, GLASS, ICDAD and ICFA session, ICOM General Conference. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, August 12-17, 2013.

“Ropes, Stanchions and “Do Not Touch” Signs: The Erasure of Museological Elements in Historic House Museums.” House Museums, The Owners and Their Art Collections. Comparing Experiences. Uguccione Ranieri di Sorbello Foundation with DEMHIST-ICOM. Perugia, Italy, April 18-20, 2012.

### **Invited Talks**

“The House Turned Museum.” Guest Lecture. VAH 3387F: Modernism and Interior Design (Histories of Ornamental Art) (Prof. B. Elliott) University of Western Ontario, Department of Visual Arts, London, Canada, September 25, 2013.

“Welcome to the Past: Canada’s Historic House Museums.” Retiring with Strong Minds: Society & Culture / Strong Bones, Strong Minds, Strong Muscles Session. Windermere on the Mount, London, Canada, April 5, 2013.

## **RELATED WORK EXPERIENCE**

### **Courses Taught**

Winter 2014 Histories of Collecting, Museums and Heritage Studies – VAH 3386G, University of Western Ontario, Department of Visual Arts

Winter 2013 Histories of Collecting, Museums and Heritage Studies - VAH 3386G, University of Western Ontario, Department of Visual Arts

Fall 2011 Special Topics: Pigging Out: A Survey of Food Art and its History - VAH 3392F, University of Western Ontario, Department of Visual Arts

Winter 2011 Introduction to Gallery Practices - VAH/S 3384, University of Western Ontario, Department of Visual Arts

Winter 2010 Art Now! - VAH/S 2275, University of Western Ontario, Department of Visual Arts

### **Certificates**

2012 Western Certificate in University Teaching and Learning, The Western Graduate Student Training Program & The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, University of Western Ontario