
Stan Loten
holes. The drill hall was divided by toilets into two squares. A sign in between the toilets said WELCOME TO CANADA in seven languages. I told the nearest standing official that I was a Canadian. He told me, in German, to sit down."

John Bell has, however, succeeded in conveying the social particularity of Halifax, strikingly anticipated in the cover painting, Elizabeth Nutt's streetscape Winter, George St., Halifax, N.S. (1935). Welcome to Halifax: A Literary Portrait.

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In my first year of Architecture at the University of Toronto I had to write a critique of a building. Rashly, I chose University College and unwisely neglected to condemn it with vigour. In the mid-fifties, eclecticism was not in favour and only the most vivid scholar could gain a serious hearing. Redlining was not in the heart of the book. Chapter Three of these, Charles Fowler's scheme of 1829, was very conservative, dry and academic in character, planned on a grand scale, but utterly disregarding any consideration of local site conditions. He supplied an alternative, and equally gaunt gothic idiom for the same rigidly symmetrical quadrangles. His pavilion layout echoes Jefferson's earlier University of Virginia, but with none of the latter's muscular body, inventive detail and subtle adjustment to terrain. A later version of Fowler's classically-costumed proposition was developed by Thomas Young in the late 30s, and one residential unit of this scheme was actually built.

Chapter Four deals with the evolution of Cumberland and Storm's design for University College more or less as we know it today. Interestingly, to judge from preliminary schemes discussed in this chapter, decisions regarding materials were side-stepped until the design had reached a high level of resolution. The vigorous Romanesque of this design was greatly influenced by Governor Head, Chancellor Langton, and senior faculty; it was not merely Cumberland's personal project. Nor can it be discounted as mere pastiche. The design was innovative, unprecedented, and demanding. More than thirty sheets of drawings were prepared for the south front alone, and drawing dates show that many details were revised repeatedly up to the last possible minute. In the end, construction began in haste and secrecy to forestall compromising the high standards envisaged.

Chapters Three, Four, and Five, by architectural historian and College Archivist, Douglas Richardson, make up the heart of the book. Chapter Three reviews ambitious Neoclassic projects commissioned prior to the 1850s, presenting this work in numerous drawings never previously published. The first of these, Charles Fowler's scheme of 1829, was very conservative, dry and academic in character, planned on a grand scale, but utterly disregarding any consideration of local site conditions. He supplied an alternative, and equally gaunt gothic idiom for the same rigidly symmetrical quadrangles. His pavilion layout echoes Jefferson's earlier University of Virginia, but with none of the latter's muscular body, inventive detail and subtle adjustment to terrain. A later version of Fowler's classically-costumed proposition was developed by Thomas Young in the late 30s, and one residential unit of this scheme was actually built. In archive photos it looks strangely anachronistic, like the later Classical Revival of the 1920s.

Chapter Four deals with the evolution of Cumberland and Storm's design for University College more or less as we know it today. Interestingly, to judge from preliminary schemes discussed in this chapter, decisions regarding materials were side-stepped until the design had reached a high level of resolution. The vigorous Romanesque of this design was greatly influenced by Governor Head, Chancellor Langton, and senior faculty; it was not merely Cumberland's personal project. Nor can it be discounted as mere pastiche. The design was innovative, unprecedented, and demanding. More than thirty sheets of drawings were prepared for the south front alone, and drawing dates show that many details were revised repeatedly up to the last possible minute. In the end, construction began in haste and secrecy to forestall compromising the high standards envisaged. Subtitled "A Manly, Noble Structure," Chapter Five provides a critical account of architectural substance, ideas and issues active in the design. These include such things as the unprecedented richness and variety of detailing, the lavish use of brilliant colour in windows and floor tiles. These respond to late 19th century Ruskinian ideals, and were contentious issues at the time, not so inevitably part and parcel of a Romanesque stylistic option as we frequently assume. Elaboration in Storm's design was driven by the Ruskinian command that "even the smallest detail should have a meaning or serve a purpose." Ironically, this ideal underlay mid-20th-century modernism which completely rejected these very
same details as both meaningless and useless, and caused me so much grief in
my first year.

When completed, University College was
received by the public of Toronto with an
enthusiasm that no modern work has
come anywhere near equalling. Not even
Revell's City Hall gained quite the same
level of public adulation. University Col-
lege was declared "perfect," "the finest
structure in Canada," and "the finest ... in the New World." Today, we long for
such acceptance of innovative work, but
rarely get it. Yet Storm ardently followed
the Puginian theory that "every building
that is treated naturally, without disguise
or concealment, cannot fail to look well”—
another mainstay of orthodox modern­
ism. Somehow, 20th-century pursuit of
this ideal has taken serious architecture
so far away from cultural norms that the
most ambitious work appeals to a small
minority.

I rather suspect that both our rejection of
eclecticism and our superficial return to it
in Postmodernism are strongly in-
fluenced by a general lack of apprecia­
tion for the professionalism, dedication,
and competence of the best nineteenth
century architects. Richardson's account
of University College well exemplifies the
task of the critic: he provides access to
the substance of the architecture, ideas
and issues at levels not accessible to
most observers. Reading Chapter Five,
one can not see how the best 20th-cen­
tury architects are clearly superior to
Cumberland and Storm, either in the han­
dling of technical details or in the under­
standing of and dedication to
architectural ideals.

Richardson's treatment of University Col­
lege enables us to understand this well
loved building much better, both as an
outstanding contribution to our discipline,
and as a major event in the urban history
of Toronto; certainly not as merely the
work of an "easy going pasticheur." The
book is a handsome, well-designed
volume, profusely illustrated in colour as
well as black and white, and a real bar­
gain. University College, as it stands
today, comes through in many fine
photographs by John C. Wilson.
Richardson's craftsman-like prose reads
smoothly, like a well-told tale, or a fond
reminiscence. After all, it is the content
that counts, in writing as in building.

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Pp. x, 245. Illustrations.*

Conservation Today accompanied a
major exhibition of the same name,
launched in the spring of 1989 by the
Royal Fine Art Commission at the Royal
Academy of Arts, London. The author
(and Deputy Director of the exhibition),
David Pearce, had played a significant
role in the conservation of Britain's ar­
chitectural heritage as a co-founder and
Vice Chairman of SAVE Britain's Heritage
and as Secretary of the Society for the
Protection of Ancient Buildings.

The book is primarily a collection of case
studies of the projects illustrated in the ex­
hibition, but it is prefaced by a discussion
of their legal, political and historical con­
text. Together, this constitutes a thorough
and well-documented history of heritage
conservation in Britain since 1975.

In his introduction, Pearce identifies the
mid-1970s as a time of fundamental
change in attitude toward architectural
conservation and cites 1975, European
Architectural Heritage Year (EAHY), as a
milestone in this early development.
EAHY caught the imagination of a public
disappointed with the results of post-war
planning and housing policies, and it
showed "a gentler way forward" which in­
corporated the preservation of historic
buildings, conservation and adaptive re­
use. Since that time, groups such as
SAVE Britain's Heritage have cam­
paigned to change legislation as well as
attitudes. There is increasing awareness
that monies spent on heritage more than
pay for themselves in terms of tourism,
job creation and other stimuli to the
economy. There has been a shift in em­
phasis away from high style to "the
charm of the nearly ordinary," and a cor­
responding fashion for nostalgia has
evolved. There is also an increasing inter­
est in conservation as a means of
preserving and documenting social his­
tory. Changes in public opinion have
been reflected in changing governmental
and corporate attitudes, and the results—
some successful and some not—are il­
ustrated in the case studies which
comprise the main body of the book.

Conservation Today is quite pointedly not
addressed to a specifically professional
audience but, according to the author, to
any and all who have an interest in protect­
ing and maintaining the built environment.
His stated aim is to reinforce the current
general approval of the retention and re­
use of old buildings and to "remove ... the
remaining sense of mystery about the
shaping and reshaping of the familiar en­
vironment." His audience, while broadly
based, is nonetheless geographically quite
specific. Pearce details the history of ar­
chitectural conservation and adaptive re­
use in Britain and illustrates it with
home-grown examples. There is no at­
tempt to place this information in an inter­
national context, yet it can easily be
appreciated for the context it provides the
Canadian reader who is involved