

BOOK REVIEWS

LA VILLE DE QUÉBEC, 1800-1850: UN INVENTAIRE DE CARTES ET PLANS

Edward H. Dahl, Hélène Espeset, Marc Lafrance and Thierry Ruddell
National Museums of Canada, Mercury Series, 1975

In the course of their work, architectural historians draw on research material from a variety of disciplines. In the case of *La Ville de Québec, 1800-1850: un inventaire de cartes et plans*, that discipline is urban history. Four historians — Edward Dahl, Hélène Espeset, Marc Lafrance and Thierry Ruddell — have patiently catalogued hundreds of maps and plans depicting Quebec City between 1800 and 1850. For the first time in Canada, an attempt has been made to make public a systematic catalogue of the wealth of Quebec maps and plans that belong to the National Map Collection of the Public Archives of Canada. For those of us in the field of Quebec studies who have searched through archival labyrinths in pursuit of relevant cartographic material, this recent publication comes as a welcome relief.

On first opening *La Ville de Québec, 1800-1850: un inventaire de cartes et plans*, the researcher must not be discouraged by the complex organisation of the material. The brief introductory section, in which the authors explain their methodology is followed by a study on the evolution of Quebec City during the first half of the nineteenth century. After an explanation of the format of the entries, a chronological catalogue of the three hundred and fifteen maps from the National Map Collection begins. Following the catalogue entries, the authors have provided a summary list of Quebec plans of this period located in the various archives in Quebec City. The publication terminates with a name/subjet index of the principal catalogue entries.

Although the overall structure of the book is somewhat complicated, the individual catalogue entries are clear and easily accessible. Each map or plan, listed in chronological order, is identified by a catalogue number. After presenting the date, title and technical data, the authors give a detailed description that includes proper and place names, and special features shown on the map or plan. This description is, of course, an invaluable aid to the architectural historian who can see at a glance whether the property that concerns his study falls within the geographical limits of any particular map or plan. In addition, the systematic listing of all proper names, easily found through the index, is an extra finding aid for locating appropriate material. After the description, the authors insert any additional information that might elucidate the sujet in a short section called *remarque*.

For the architectural historian, these plans and maps can be instrumental in establishing the date of a given building. Take, for example, the military hospital that once stood behind the officers' quarters in St. Louis Street: No. 47, *Plan of the Premises belonging to the late Chief Justice Elmsley Quebec 1811*, shows the ground plan of the hospital "proposed to be built for the use of the troops", p. 95; No. 57, *A Plan of Works, 1816* makes reference to "l'hôpital de la garnison", p. 103. This allows us to establish a construction date between 1811 and 1816.

In addition to their use as dating aids, these maps and plans often contain information of a more specifically architectural nature. For example, the ground plan of a building often appears as part of the map. The illustration of a detail of No. 31, p. 81, reveals clearly the curved apse and small transepts of the Jesuit Church as well as the circular plan of the market hall that stood in the Upper Town Market.

In rare cases, cartographic material will yield even more information. In the plan of Judge Bowen's house on Mount Carmel Street, No. 73, p. 116, the anonymous cartographer not only shows the disposition of the different rooms and staircases within the house, but also sketches a façade elevation of this fine example of British neo-classic architecture. Without such a drawing, the physical reality of the house would be much more imprecise. Long since demolished, it was known to us chiefly through the 1817 building contract between Judge Bowen and the builders.

With so much original information available in these maps and plans, one can only wish that each one had been illustrated in *La Ville de Québec, 1800-1850: un inventaire de cartes et plans*. Yet we should be grateful that over fifty maps and plans have been reproduced throughout the text and that the quality and legibility of each is reasonably good.

While the inventory of maps and plans is obviously the central focus of this publication, the study of the evolution of Quebec City during these years should not be ignored. Well-documented and clearly written, this brief study provides valuable background for the period by examining the physical and socio-economic aspects of Québec between 1800 and 1850.

This publication is part of the National Museum of Man's Mercury Series, a series designed for the rapid dissemination of information. As a result, some of the usual editorial procedures have been bypassed with the inevitable increase in minor errors. In the case of *La Ville de Québec, 1800-1850: un inventaire de cartes et plans*, the instances of grammatical error, inconsistent spelling and inaccurate transcription is irritatingly frequent. While not detracting from the undeniable value of the book, these errors do distract the reader.

La Ville de Québec, 1800-1850: un inventaire de cartes et plans is a research tool that will undoubtedly facilitate the task of the architectural historian. Edward Dahl, Hélène Espesset, Marc Lafrance and Thierry Ruddell are to be congratulated on this significant contribution to the field of Quebec studies.

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ONTARIO TOWNS

Ralph Greenhill, Ken Macpherson,
Douglas Richardson,
Oberon Press, 1974

Ontario Towns like *Rural Ontario* (Toronto:1969) is most easily categorized as a book of photographs. But unlike many of the recent studies of Canada or its architecture which present a body of plates loosely strung together by a descriptive or hyperbolic text, Ralph Greenhill's photographs for *Ontario Towns* and the text by Greenhill, Douglas Richardson and Ken Macpherson present a consistent image. It is an image of the wide range of vernacular building in Ontario — churches, public, commercial and residential buildings, and town planning — such has not been available before for Ontario or any other province.

Many an architectural photographer or historian is able to grasp the immediately interesting element in a given building. The important factor in a study of this type is the avoidance of the all-inclusive approach — the weak link in the historian's temperament — in favour of the spare, rational grouping such as characterizes *Ontario Towns*. There is no doubt that the book may lack the