

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

comprehensive detail demanded by students, and similarly questions may be raised as to why certain buildings of importance were left out. However, it would be hard if not impossible to find a building or a plate that did not carry its full weight in the evocation of the character of the Ontario town.

The plates in *Ontario Towns* are preceded by an illustrated essay as an explanatory introduction and interpretation. (It is one of the important contributions of the three architecturally oriented books with which Greenhill has been involved: *The Face of Toronto* (Toronto: 1960), *Rural Ontario* and *Ontario Towns*, that each has included a text which makes a permanent contribution to Canadian architectural history. Such is not always the case with similar books!) To call this essay an introduction would be a great mistake, for though it is intimately related to the plates, it can and does stand by itself. This essay is broadly based upon precedent and the international influences on Ontario architecture, but it never becomes involved in essentially decorative erudition. Douglas Richardson (as the immediate author of the text) has remained true to the calculated image of the photographs and has at the same time provided much of the explication essential for an understanding of this image.

George Baird, in his study of Ralph Greenhill's photography in *City Magazine* Vol. I, No. 4 (May-June 1975), has summed up the basic character of the plates in this book as a study in archetypes. This is undoubtedly true, but Baird goes on to come to much the same conclusions as an earlier reviewer of the book, who expressed the opinion that the plate of the Huron County Jail at Goderich does not "illustrate" the building properly. Although Baird qualifies his opinion of the plate with an intuitive insight into the quality of the photographs, he too concludes that Greenhill chose to stress the image of the public

space in front of the building at the expense of the building itself. But it is just this quality of public space and the relationship of the passer-by to the building that it signifies, that is the defining element in the book and a crucial factor in the creation of the "archetype". Where an aerial view of the building, a conventional long shot or a closely cropped detail of the door surround would perhaps have more satisfactorily illustrated the building as "architecture", such a view would not have expressed the relationship of the pedestrian of the town to the overshadowing mass of the wall. The view of the Lennox and Addington Court House, illustrates the building in a conventional sense, and in addition sets the monumentality of the great portico within the townscape and gives it a local identity by framing the view in the trees that are its natural counterpart in the townscape.

Though people rarely, if ever, appear in the photographs, there is as George Baird points out, an awareness of the "domestication" of the landscape, of the "clear evidence of the presence of others, who are only for a moment absent — an open window, a chair on a porch, a swept walk." This sense of buildings in a landscape and of the people who created the architecture of the towns for their own immediate use explains the importance of both residential and religious buildings among the plates. It also strengthens the case for preservation, that is clearly an essential concern for the authors. The contrast between Plate 98 of the Groves Block in Fergus and the corner as it exists today after the demolition of most of the building, and the substitution for it, by the Royal Bank, of a prize example of debased modern corporate architecture, would be horrifying anywhere. But it is heart-wrenching in a book devoted to the representation in historical and photographic terms of the place of people and their aspirations in architecture.

There are no aspirations in a building such as that put up by the Royal Bank; there is only arrogance and the assumption that corporate convenience and profit are the only determinates in architecture.

The basic orientation of the plates in *Ontario Towns* is complemented by the premises of Douglas Richardson's introduction. He has sought to place the architecture of Ontario in both an historical and an international context. But he has steered clear of the type of source-mongering and value-by-association that plagues much architectural history, admitting instead the importance of published secondary sources in the architecture of a fundamentally "colonial" society. It is not impossible that Canadian architects and builders may have known European, and particularly British, monuments directly. (John Howard's adaptation of the staccato composition of Wilkin's National Gallery for the Lunatic Asylum of 1846 in Toronto is a good example.) But however romantic such connections may be there is no denying the importance of printed source material in Ontario architecture — ranging from the glories of Isaac Ware and Asher Benjamin to the rather more prosaic, if more important, *Canada Farmer* and the *Journal of Education for Upper Canada*.

What Richardson has managed to convey is the lasting value of local architecture without descending to the sentimentality that is all too common in the coffee table format book on architecture. There is no need to employ tricks to draw attention to our architecture or to be blinkered to enjoy it. This type of historical approach is the exact counterpart to the strongly Neo-classical character of Ralph Greenhill's photographs which in their sparseness never indulge in the photographic tricks of the picturesque to lend specious charm to a building. As George Baird has pointed out, there are only two plates showing buildings from

a strongly picturesque point of view. But in each case — Christ Church, Lakefield and All Saints, Whitby — the churches were originally conceived from a liturgical and architectural point of view that is essentially picturesque and romantic. The buildings are thus accepted in photographic terms for what they are themselves, rather than being forced into a strait-jacket of preconceptions. And it is this acceptance of local architecture on its own terms that makes *Ontario Towns* an important contribution to the art of photography in Canada and to Canadian architectural history.

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