

Parks Canada's Architectural Styles Series

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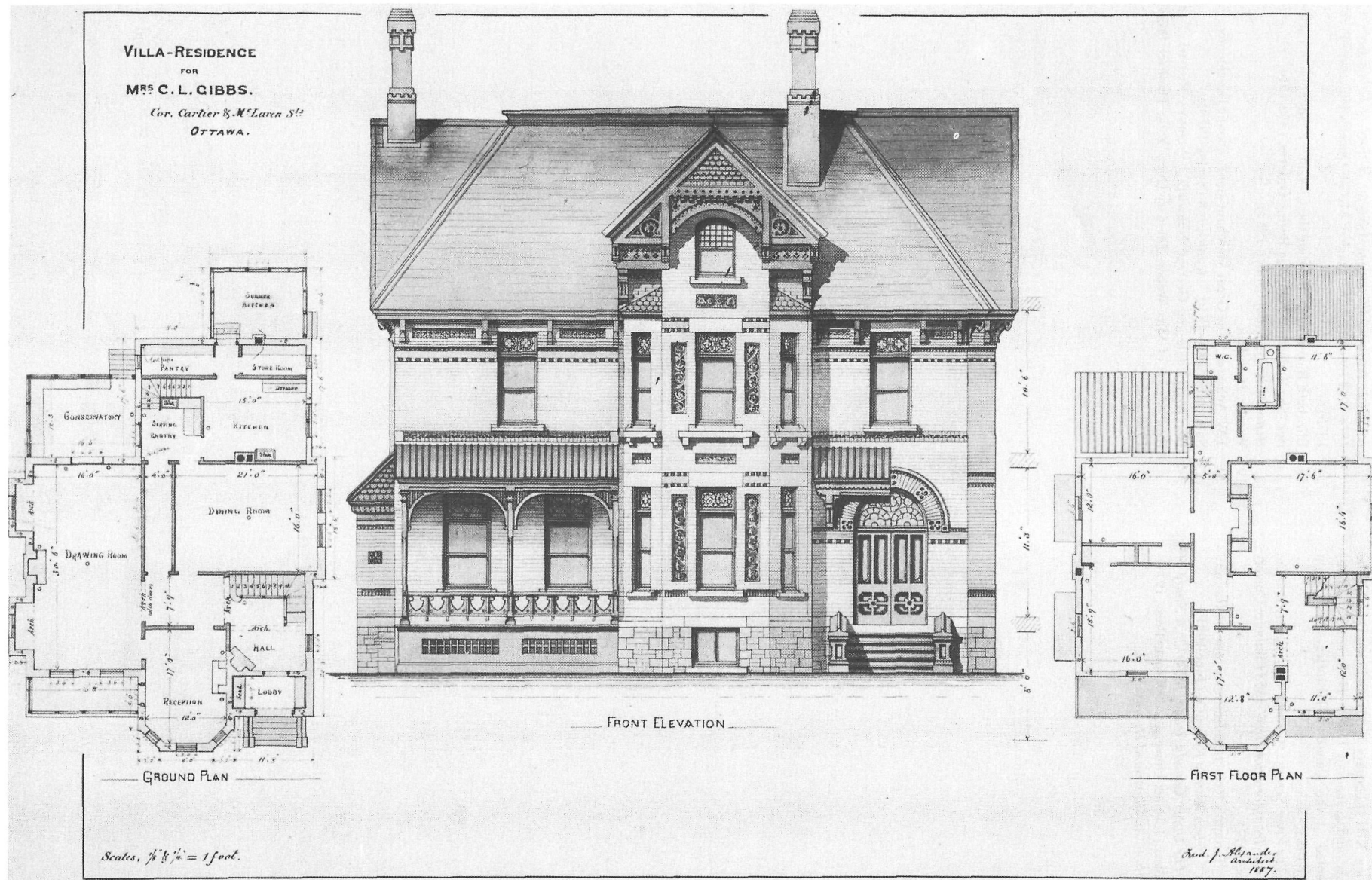
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Fred J. Alexander. Villa — Residence for Mrs. C.L. Gibbs, corner of Cartier & McLaren Streets, Ottawa, 1887.

SOURCE: National Map Collection, Public Archives of Canada. NMC77803/8.

Parks Canada's Architectural Styles Series

Natalie Luckyj

Cameron, Christina and Janet Wright. *Second Empire Style in Canadian Architecture*. Canadian Historic Sites: Occasional Papers in Archeology and History, No. 24, 1980. Pp. 247. 119 black and white plates; 1 colour cover plate. \$10.00 (Can), \$12.00 (US).

Brosseau, Mathilde. *Gothic Revival in Canadian Architecture*. Canadian Historic Sites: Occasional Papers in Archeology and History No. 25, 1980. Pp. 208. 124 black and white plates; 1 colour cover plate. \$10.00 (Can), \$12.00 (US).

Clerk, Nathalie. *Palladian Style in Canadian Architecture*. Parks Canada: Studies in Archeology, Architecture and History, 1984. Pp. 154. 101 black and white plates; 1 colour cover plate. \$8.25 (Can), \$9.90 (US).

Maitland, Leslie. *Neoclassical Architecture in Canada*. Parks Canada: Studies in Archeology, Architecture and History, 1984. Pp. 150. 113 black and white plates; 1 colour cover plate. \$7.95 (Can), \$9.55 (US).

Wright, Janet. *Architecture of the Picturesque in Canada*. Parks Canada: Studies in Archeology, Architecture and History, 1984. Pp. 183. 119 black and white plates; 1 colour cover plate. \$9.95 (Can), \$11.95 (US).

In recent years active preservation and restoration of Canada's architectural heritage has moved beyond a concentration on isolated buildings and led to such substantial and successful renewal and reconstruction projects as the Historic Properties in Halifax, the Warehouse District in Winnipeg, Granville Island in Vancouver, Louisbourg in Nova Scotia, Lowertown in Quebec City, and the mainstreet programs in Port Hope and Perth, Ontario. Indeed, as the desire to redevelop and reactivate heritage areas in both

NOTE: Parks Canada has prepared sets of slides to accompany these publications. Both the slide sets and the publications are also available in French.

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urban and rural communities across Canada becomes more widespread, so too does the necessity to make a wider public more knowledgeable and sensitive to architectural forms of the past. These five volumes under review — and the anticipated ones on the Queen Anne and the Beaux-Arts Styles — not only provide a useful framework for heritage preservation and restoration projects, but also, significantly mark the first time that the vast resources of the Canadian Inventory of Historic Building (CIHB) — consisting of photographic and written documentation on some 200,000 heritage buildings across Canada — have been made accessible to a larger public. Researched and written by the staff of the CIHB, these publications are based upon internal manuscripts originally used as an aid for members of the National Historic Sites and Monuments Board in their designation of heritage buildings. A basic knowledge of architectural terminology is presumed throughout the series. And since no glossary of terms is provided, the average educated reader may well have to resort to his or her own pocket dictionary of architectural terms in order to fully comprehend the text.

The first volume in the series, featuring the Second Empire style, (popularized in Canada between 1870 and 1880), serves to establish the format for all succeeding volumes. The introduction discusses the origin of the term "Second Empire," with specific reference to the period of Napoleon III in France, pointing out that it did not come into general usage in architectural history writings until after World War II; contemporary writers drew upon a broad range of descriptive epithets such as "Renaissance," "Italian Renaissance," "free classic," and "in the modern French style of architecture."

A brief survey of the style cites specific examples of Second Empire buildings in England, France and America. A short review of the political, social and economic factors in Canada in the 1870s and 1880s follows. Particular emphasis is given to the role of the Department of Public Works, whose designs for federal buildings, such as post offices, offered a real opportunity for a nationwide dissemination of the style. Buildings are categorized according to type (commercial, public, and domestic) and grouped according to geographic regions (Ontario, Quebec, the Atlantic Provinces and the West) in a systematic, logical manner. The mansard roof is selected as the single most identifiable feature of the style.

The judicious selection of a singular example, the Montreal City Hall (1872-8) to illustrate additional features of

the style, as seen in Canada, provides any reader with a standard against which other buildings in the same style can be measured.

The decision to look beyond the basic CIHB collection data and to include drawings, watercolours and historical photographs, of demolished or destroyed buildings is a wise one. Such additional documentation allows the authors to bring into their discussion the earliest example of the style, William Hay's Toronto General Hospital (1854-78) illustrated here by a print published in the *Anglo-American Magazine* of 1854. Discussions on the use of the mansard roof in Quebec in the 18th century and the "mansardization" of the new main building of Laval University in 1875-76, the limited use (with the exception of Winnipeg) of the style on the Prairies, and the distinctive adaptation of the style in the Atlantic provinces provides a basis from which to consider the complex reasons behind the stylistic variants and the patterns of the dissemination of the style across Canada.

The design of this volume clearly distinguishes the main text from the illustrations and from their accompanying legend texts. It provides a catalogue of images which, if carefully studied, could lead to still further independent discoveries by a reader. The design is a problem only when the reader wishes to locate specific illustrations cited in the main text. A list of illustrations and an extensive bibliography complete this first volume.

Gothic Revival in Canadian Architecture follows a similar format. The discussion begins with the characterization of the Gothic Revival style under four major divisions: the Romantic, the Rationalistic-Ecclesiastical, the High Victorian and the Beaux-Arts. The basic categories of religious, public and domestic are also maintained. Although no exemplary building of the style is featured throughout the text, comparisons are made between regional manifestations of the style and the national style represented by the Parliament Buildings. Unlike the previous volume, the author states clearly that there will be an attempt to test the hypothesis of whether or not architectural style varies according to climate, building materials, indigenous traditions, etc. And while one can certainly concur that the testing of such a hypothesis is fundamental to any real understanding of Canadian architecture, the author, because of the complexity of the issues and the limitations of any survey, necessarily falls short of her goal. However, the reader is provided with a series of provocative questions that undoubtedly will lead to further study of Gothic Revival architecture in Canada. The inclusion of numerous drawings, prints and 19th century photographs to illustrate no-longer-existing buildings continues the comprehensive approach introduced in the first volume. However, the presentation suffers from the lack of ground-plans and elevation drawings so necessary to a fuller understanding of buildings as architecture in the absence of direct experience of the building. Nevertheless, this is an

ambitious volume which successfully presents the complexity and diversity of the Gothic-Revival style in Canada spanning the period from the 1830s to the early years of the twentieth century.

The two subsequent volumes on *Neoclassical Architecture in Canada*, and *Architecture of the Picturesque in Canada* retain the basic approach of documenting individual buildings, but the modified format integrating the main text, illustrations and legend texts offers difficulties for the reader. And while the layout avoids sending the reader in search of the appropriate illustrations, it does not differentiate between the main text and the extended legend texts. All too often, especially notable in the Neoclassical volume, the result is an incomprehensible sequence of texts and illustrations that reflects negatively on both the coherence and the substance of the author's discussion. The main text includes discussion of neo-classical theory (for example, the writings of Abbé Laugier), a short introduction to the major classical monuments of both Greece and Rome, with diagrams of a classical entablature and the Greek and Roman orders, and a summary of the impact of the neoclassical theories and neoclassical buildings of Andrea Palladio, Sir John Soane, William Chambers, and other European and American architects on the practice of architecture in Canada. The effective use of a comparison of the Parthenon (5th century BC) and Kingston City Hall (1843-44) to differentiate the classical source from the neoclassical is one feature of this ambitious volume, which succeeds despite the ineffective design.

Architecture of the Picturesque in Canada is the only other volume to make use of the same unsatisfactory arrangement of texts and illustrations. It is the sole volume in the series, published thus far, to deal not with a specific style but rather with a broad aesthetic ideal. Derived from a concept of nature and landscape painting developed in 18th century Britain, the Picturesque uses architecture as only one of many components to create a built and natural environment. As well, it is the only volume limited solely to a discussion of domestic housing, although the published title gives no indication of this limitation. The original manuscript title *Domestic Architecture of the Picturesque in Canada: Villas and Cottages for Persons of Genteel Life and Moderate Fortune* is more descriptive of the content. This volume is written in clear, understandable prose. It offers a wealth of visual documentation and extensive quotations from contemporary sources. The chronological survey concentrating on Upper Canada, Lower Canada and the Atlantic provinces, is enhanced by carefully selected illustrations that serve to reinforce the importance of the setting of "Picturesque" villas and cottages. The historical photographs of John Howard's Colborne Lodge (1836) in Toronto; the watercolours of no longer existent homes such as Stamford Park, Niagara Falls (1822-26); and a judicious choice of recent CIHB photographs of Hale's Cottages, in Kingston (1841),

with suggestive glimpses of the garden setting, point clearly to the need to go beyond the limitations of the CIHB documentation, rich as it is.

The Palladian Style in Canadian Architecture is, in this reviewer's mind, the most accomplished of the series thus far. In format it follows the more successful design of the Second Empire and Gothic Revival volumes with the main text separated from the illustrations and assorted legend texts. And like the other volumes it incorporates diverse sources: watercolours, historical photographs, prints, plans and elevations from pattern books, as well as cogently-selected quotations from European and American architects and theorists.

The style is discussed in the context of settlement patterns, accessibility of printed material and regional reference. The author achieves a higher degree of clarity and coherence by carefully defining her terminology and by rigorously adhering to it. For example, the inherent ambiguity of the term "Georgian" which describes both architectural style and historical period is avoided by the introduction of the term "British Classicism" to characterize the general architectural style. "Palladianism" can now be limited to a

particular and readily identifiable influence with British Classicism.

By a skillful use of literary devices, such as rhetorical questions, the reader is thoughtfully engaged in the discovery of the manifestations of the Palladian style in Canada: not a single example exists west of Ontario; religious and public buildings show a predilection to conform more faithfully to the canon of the style; domestic housing offers a more liberal and inventive interpretation and so forth. The selection of illustrations adds substantially to the systematic organization of the text by encouraging the reader to make comparisons not mentioned by the author.

While the specific merits of individual volumes and the apparent lack of a consistent editorial philosophy may be debated, these publications mark a watershed in the research and writing of Canadian architectural history. Comprehensive, contextual, analytic, each study suggests numerous directions for future research. Ultimately the realization of this potential will depend not only on the response from architectural historians but also urban historians, town planners, geographers, restoration architects and others who are concerned with the relationship between building, environment and society.