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# Fort Edmonton Mall: Heritage, Community and Commerce

by

Karen L. Wall

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Faculty of Physical Education and Sport Studies

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## ABSTRACT

Critiques of heritage production typically concern current practices of representing or reconstructing the past. As a point of departure, this study examines the socio-cultural context of heritage construction in twentieth-century Canada and Alberta. Case studies are drawn from constructed spaces in the city of Edmonton which raise questions of the discourses and historical contexts of local heritage development.

As reconstructed history, geographically isolated and grounded in principles of traditional museology, Fort Edmonton Park represents a didactic cultural emphasis which has been consistently accompanied by the discourse of tourism and marketing. The Old Strathcona Heritage Conservation District is a dramatized space, an economic revitalization project which began as an episode of community resistance to urban development. The West Edmonton Mall study extends themes of enclosure, civic identity, commerce and aesthetics into an examination of the nature of urban consumer space in the present era.

These spaces are approached, first, in terms of their various claims to represent local cultural identity in successive contexts of community and urban growth. Cultural ideologies intersect with social, political and economic agendas in the selective construction of time (past and present) and space (urban streetscapes and heritage zones.) Overall, this study concerns ways in which forms of public space take on social force and legitimacy. In all cases, questions arise of the extent and implications of the privatisation of public space.

While the common focus of analysis is the contemporary social construction of meaning and of corresponding public space, the central point of reference remains the theory and practice of mediating the past (and thus the present) sense of place and time. The conclusion suggests that in the context of a heritage of commerce, consumerism and retail culture, the present identity of the city as a node in a global market of consumption and tourism may be represented as well by shopping malls as by period reconstructions of commercial districts.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| AR | Alberta Report |
| AHRF | Alberta Historic Resources Foundation |
| EB | Edmonton Bulletin |
| CEA | City of Edmonton Archives |
| CMA | Canadian Museums Association |
| FEHF | Fort Edmonton Historical Foundation |
| EJ | Edmonton Journal |
| HCF | Heritage Canada Foundation |
| G&M | Globe and Mail |
| HSA | Historical Society of Alberta |
| HSMBC | Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada |
| NAPOTA | Northern Alberta Pioneers and Old Timers Association |
| OSF | Old Strathcona Foundation |
| PAA | Provincial Archives of Alberta |
| RCE | Rotary Club of Edmonton |
| WEM | West Edmonton Mall |

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My students in the Canadian Studies Program here have also helped me to clarify and explain related issues and interests.

Finally, the focus of this study on the city of Edmonton derives from years of encounters with local people to numerous to name whose enthusiasm, activism, and contribution to the community constitute the real "invisible city" which inspires it. Thanks to friends and extended family, and especially to Cliff Vallentgoed and Ramona Litwinowich, who share my space.

**DEDICATION**

For my parents:
my mother, Jane Wall
and to the memory of my father
John Wall
1931-1998

# Introduction: Ghost Towns and Invisible Cities

## A. Vanishing points: varieties of urban experience

The academic inquiry into heritage production often begins with curiosity about current practices of revisiting the past. Beginning in this field of research, the present study arrived in the city of Edmonton with questions concerning the production of public space under the rubric of cultural identity in the context of the growth of a community in the twentieth century. As an account of a city moving through time, this is necessarily an account of processes of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction. In the city that succeeded the fort on the river, these processes have been compressed into a relatively short span of time. Physical construction of buildings and streets has been paralleled by frameworks of myth, legend and marketing schemes: selected aspects and meanings, of what it was, is now and could become. In sum, both the utilitarian forms of the prairie city, and its invisible, imagined and rhetorical versions have been ephemeral in nature, addressed to both insiders and outsiders.

The elusive quality of local identity, though, is suited to Edmonton's historical role as a node in the wider network of communications upon which the Canadian development of the northwest depended. Those who came to stay often did so more or less by accidents of economic opportunity. Beginning as a military and trading post, it became for a time a supply depot for the Klondyke, later an agricultural service centre, and later still the "Gateway to the North" and the petroleum industry, though never the metropolis of developers' dreams. We usually encounter the "ghost town" as an abandoned townsite surviving past its role in local development, shelter for workers or entrepreneurs and now for tourists. At several points in its history, the town of Edmonton could well have vanished to this point. Today, surviving its long history as a point of departure for elsewhere, still literally and metaphorically on the margins of urban North America, Edmonton might be seen as a kind of a ghost town haunted by invisible cities.

To the driver approaching on the highway, the city appears on the horizon against dry, bright skies or dense prairie thunderheads as a sudden jumble of pale stone, random as a mirage. Even in the centre of town, the river in its shallow bed seems more substantial than the sketchy towers high on its banks like flotsam. In fact, the material city has been ephemeral, buildings vanishing and replaced according to a rapid succession of economic investment, architectural style, political expediency, population shifts and so on. The speed of this change has contributed to the sense of living in a ghost town, its residents haunted with past forms persisting in layers of memory and conversation. This haunting is mediated, of course, by the technologies of historical preservation, recording and sometimes reproducing fragments of what has vanished along with what has been imagined or desired.

As shared public space, to some extent always serving as symbol, the city is a form imported to the region in the context of European-Canadian ideals and metaphors which, in material form, served to link a new society to older, more enduring places and institutions. Nevertheless, such processes have always, to some extent, involved the political and economic struggle for participation in the construction of meanings and forms of living, working and leisure space. How these cultural, economic and political agendas inform each other is a central issue in the present study.

In another sense of the term "ghost town" or "invisible city," certain people (or possibilities, or forms) are excluded from public space, and particularly from significant or controlled space: from the official story. In Edmonton today, socio-economic boundaries are strongly echoed in the characters of specific physical zones. The sense that a "dual" or "analogous" city is developing in a very material way points to the increasing lack of visibility of the socially marginal in public discourse as in public space. This is seen, for instance, in processes such as the enclosing of public space (and the middle class) in private property development such as malls and pedways, abandoning the open streets and city centre to the less advantaged.[1]

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[1] T. Boddy, "Underground and overhead: building the analogous city", Michael Sorkin, Ed. *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space.* Hill and Wang, New York 1992; Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. *Ideas: Vaticans of Commerce.* CBC Transcripts, Montreal 1989; *EJ*, "Edmonton's Red Zones" June 17 1998.

Finally, the "invisible city" is that web of communications networks, traffic and information movement linking the various local interest with the international flow of commerce and culture.[2] Edmonton holds many of the above trends in common with other North American cities, trends which have attracted alternative visions of city planning, some motivated by social ideals and most underwritten by market studies. In local heritage conservation or restoration areas, for instance, we see a much broader intersection of socio-cultural and business interests in mass urban consumer culture.

In accordance with international trends, Edmonton has in recent years exhibited a contradictory discursive polarization of "culture" and "economics" along with their conflation in the development of cultural industries. Accompanying the political emphasis on economic revitalization we have seen the reinforcing of institutionalized poverty and urban decay. We have (relatively) well-funded material heritage conservation areas alongside with deteriorating shopping and residential districts. In a local culture based on the retail trade, elites continue to demonize mall culture while others attempt to impose the social order of the mall on public streets. These tensions and contradictions are evident in most mid-size cities attempting to sustain local economies while competing for resources on an international level. This study traces some of the forms they have taken in the local context.

Ideals concerning heritage, marketing and the nature of community life have informed local planning for most of the period of this study, beginning around the turn of the twentieth century. Each of the case studies considered below examines patterns of the city's selective construction of time (past and present) and space (urban streetscapes and heritage zones.) Of central interest are the processes of constructing meanings around place and materials according to certain abstract aesthetic and didactic principles.

The point of departure is the field of heritage, which in dramatizing space and time mediates various categories of knowledge and practice. Heritage zones or sites dramatize space and time, serving as mediation between historical information and contemporary audiences. They are public spaces which generate and attract a range of interests including those of the state, business and the community. This interaction, in turn, generates complex levels of meaning and discursive strategies. Examining this discourse as a starting point, this study focuses on the contents (images, objects, texts) and contexts (production, consumption, ideologies and practices) involved in the production of contemporary urban space. Case studies consider heritage zones and retail malls in terms of the conceptual oppositions they sustain while sharing common ground as spaces of consumption and leisure.

**B. Outline of the work**

The next chapter introduces some pertinent theoretical and historical background, and Chapter Two outlines the development of heritage industries in Canada and in Alberta. The present complex of heritage sites and museums in Alberta largely dates from conservation and heritage movements beginning around the turn of the last century. This period marks the establishment of the European museum institution in North America. Beginning in eastern Canada, heritage conservation movements also coincided with a Euro-North American concern for urban reform (aesthetic, social and cultural). This is also the period of western Canadian agricultural immigration and industrial development. Alberta became a province and Edmonton, after merging with the twin settlement of Strathcona, became the capital city.

Local histories have been marked by rapid demographic change, political volatility, and a dominantly utilitarian approach to architecture which has served a resource-based economy marked by cycles of boom and bust. The momentum of change has not allowed for much of the material past to remain. The relatively recent Euro-Canadian history here means that there is little consensus as to what constitutes a popularly significant heritage object. Perceptions and images of the province have succeeded each other rapidly as well, making problematic the defining of historical character and thus of identity.

Following the accounts of this context, the main focus of the case studies is on the post-war period of heritage development in Alberta, and related phenomena extending to the present day.The following chapters examine two heritage constructions in Edmonton in terms of their chronology,

---

[2] L. Koltun, *City Blocks, City Spaces: Historical Photographs of Canada's Urban Growth, 19850-1900.* Public Archives of Canada, Minister of supply and Services Canada 1980. See pi. 46, 69.

concepts and mandates, and interest groups. These studies of Fort Edmonton and Old Strathcona exhibit parallels in accounts of both their original construction and their reconstruction as heritage zones which speak of cultural and material history in terms of commerce. Key functions and motifs are shared, to varying extent and degree, with West Edmonton Mall. The latter may be seen as antithetical to heritage spaces, but in terms of its precedents, function and structure it can be viewed as the logical counterpart or successor to preserved versions of a community founded on economic trade and development.

Fort Edmonton Park is a reconstruction of the last version of the Hudson's Bay Company trading post and military fort, surrounded by buildings either salvaged or reconstructed from later periods in the city's history. A piece of the past contained in the present, in its spatial location in the river valley it is also surrounded by but apart from the city. The next study of the Old Strathcona district in south Edmonton is an everyday commercial and leisure zone distinguished by architectural preservation of heritage features. Old Strathcona's preservation and development has been marked by far more controversy than has Fort Edmonton, mainly due to its position as an everyday part of the surrounding community and a focus for debates about the use of public space, and the value of historic preservation.

In these accounts, the theme emerges of ongoing tension between actors and ideologies representing the production of heritage sites for commercial profit, and those representing the preservation of heritage for cultural or social reasons. The production of these Edmonton heritage districts has occurred mainly in the economic context of, first, post-war and oil-boom era prosperity followed by a recession and reduction of public funding.

Nevertheless, both sites have been favourably compared to the overtly commercial development of West Edmonton Mall. Geographically it lies on the outskirts of the city, at a historical and physical remove from the "heart" of Edmonton. The location itself could stand for the fact that Edmonton itself occupies a position of geographic, cultural and social marginality in the perceptions of both outsiders and locals. Despite its critics, promoters and supporters have argued that WEM is, in fact, the economic and social centre of the city. The final study here evaluates the Mall as an environment which has a mingled content of local and imported motifs, in a context of global consumer culture--which also supports phenomena such as Fort Edmonton and Old Strathcona. The local context of heritage tourism and the promotion of identity is inseparable from modern urban culture, here developing over time in a context of utilitarian economic and political growth.

Of interest here are three categories of urban space. First are didactic institutions, including museums, educational exhibits, and other types of cultural storehouses whose target audience is the social collective. Second are environments which are dramatized according to specific principles, as in historicized developments which may also purvey knowledge but whose primary commodity is individual leisure experience. Finally, we consider everyday consumer spaces such as shopping malls, in which the meanings of commodities draw upon a range of cultural discourses appealing, again, on the individual level. The characteristics of didactic, dramatized and consumer spaces are not, of course, divided by any fixed boundaries. Heritage space, in particular, combines all these varieties of experience.

The production of urban space in the city of Edmonton is necessarily viewed in the larger context of tensions between local culture and global markets. The history of mass consumer culture provides the background for analysis of related issues including the social construction of meaning as coordinated by material objects. Related analysis here is grounded in cultural and media history, in anthropological/sociological literature concerning material culture and communication, and in critical analyses of the culture industries in the twentieth century. The common denominator is the social construction of meaning in public space. At heart, this is a study of ways in which social myth mediates categories of knowledge and practice in contemporary urban space.

# Chapter 1: Retailing Time: the 'Language of Goods' as Narratives of Progress

> "An authentic record of Canadiana...the spirit of Canada...the dress of the people, the furnishing of their homes..."
>
> (Eaton's of Canada 1959, souvenir catalogue)

## A. Heritage, cultural capital and the public sphere

The commodity is one of those concepts whose malleability yields an apparently endless harvest of theoretical packaging. The more specific commodity complex of heritage has itself generated an entire literature of marketing, production methodology, interpretation and critique. What does it mean to say that heritage is a commodity? First, it is both cultural and economic resource for communities. For instance, civic, provincial and federal agencies all promote the restoration of urban commercial streets for reasons of local economic revitalization. But the necessity to compete for audiences, such as tourists, with other leisure options, means that the historical content must also be appealing as ambiance to outsiders. Relevant are issues of popular participation in decisions about public space. The interaction of heritage with tourism, especially, means that these include opposing perceptions of inauthentic versus authentic local forms and meanings.

For example, the commercializing of streetscapes and the development of "sympathetic" housing additions to original neighbourhoods is often as threatening as outright destruction. As an Ontario preservationist puts it, now that tourism development has "ruined the old town, they're going to build another one, a replica of what we were here." In this and similar cases, as Brian Rusted describes it, the "contemporary obsession with heritage has replaced tradition with surface, made the present look of the place a vertiginous parody of the past where nothing is what it seems." Environmental change and multiple histories easily give way "to a seductive, monolithic narrative imposed from outside the community." Old Strathcona, for instance, has been defended as a heroic conservation of a threatened community. But it has also been criticized as an instance of what Trevor Boddy has called "the ersatz phenomena of historic districts and festivals which present a diorama of [history's] most superficial ideas."[3]

The variety of possible interpretations of shared experience informs the living culture of a place. Culture serves as a medium of the complex interaction of local (or popular) expression, political participation and agency, and social r

egulation. It includes not only the conscious systems of ideas and beliefs but, as Raymond Williams expressed it, the interrelation of dominant and residual forms of expression. The processes of moderating and reconciling all of the levels of culture was a growing concern of post-WWII Canadian governments.[4]

Themes of the decline of the public sphere, lost in an epoch of consumerism, mass culture and the intrusion of the state into industry and private life, are part of a critical tradition which Bruce Robbins summarizes as proposing a unified, once-existing, now lost "public"--more a phantasmagoria than an agora. It has, however, been a powerful discursive term for both the left and the right. Ewen and Ewen, for instance, describe how the marketplace evolved from a rooted economy of self-sufficiency to an institution of apparent stability and aesthetic allure which began to reorganize the structure and meaning

---

[3] B. Rusted, "Framing a house, photography and the performance of heritage", *Canadian Folklore Canadien* 17(2) 1995, 149; Trevor Boddy "Prairie architecture", *Canadian Heritage* #37, Oct-Nov.1992:126.

[4] R. Williams,*Culture*, London: Fontana 1981; *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford University Press 1977;*The Long Revolution*, London: Chatto & Windus 1961. See also H.A. Innis, *The Bias of Communication*, University of Toronto Press 1951, for his discussion of the survival of "time-biased" modes of communication within the present "space-biased" order; also T. Bennett, "Putting policy into cultural studies", in L. Grossberg, C.Nelson, and P. Treichler (eds.), *Cultural Studies*, London/New York: Routledge, 1992, 26; J. McGuigan, *Culture and the Public Sphere*, London/New York: Routledge 1996, 7-15; commonly, consultation processes amount to a drama of contested ideas about development (private) and community (public) interests, with elite practices employing a rhetoric of participation: J. Grant, *The Drama of Democracy: Contention and Dispute in Community Planning*. Toronto: University of Toronto 1994. 22-26.

of need.[5] Because heritage preservation overwhelmingly involves architectural objects, it has been a focus of community involvement in land use hearings and related exercises as seen most recently in Old Strathcona.

For earlier social reform groups (such as the original supporters of the Fort Edmonton reconstruction), the "public" sphere represented social welfare, to be defended against both private business interests and those of philistine governments. This reaction was part of a widespread response to capitalist modernization as it was perceived to undermine traditional ways of life: the private sphere as the smoke-breathing dragon devouring the innocents gathered in the village square. Today, the ideal of local, indigenous or authentic (public) culture is threatened by monsters which include the mass media, commodification, fragmented societies and divisive identity politics, and the rise and spread of the market. All, to some extent, have been condemned for the depoliticization of economic and social life.

North American concerns about mass culture have included those motivated by bourgeois social reform movements, cultural conservatism, and critical theory. The relationship between culture and democracy has long been a dialectic between mass media, for instance, as a means of developing a populist consciousness and aesthetics, and as an instance of the capitalist manipulation and control of media.[6]

But the dichotomy of public/private, or culture/economics, is increasingly difficult to sustain. The public sphere involves issues of aesthetics and symbolic communication as well as of market-oriented development, all of which potentially have political meanings. "Cultural politics" are significant in the public sphere, disputes concerning standards and values are in turn influenced by economic and political factors, and material change is accompanied by discursive shifts which affect cultural institutions.[7] The fact is, meanings (in public space, in popular culture) are located and created in unpredictable ways which call into question rigid distinctions of value between, say, a day at Fort Edmonton Park and a day at West Edmonton Mall.

### *Commodities and the "language of goods"*

At this point we can inquire as to the terms in which commodities, or material goods, are associated with social meanings. The connotations of consumption have been critically aligned with positive economic meanings and with negative social ones. Materialist critiques attempt to locate the connections between material production and the way in which ways of life and thought are shaped. In the marxian tradition, for instance, consumer society has been defined as as "a historically defined social relationship in which people's needs are increasingly encompassed by the production and distribution of goods and services." Consumerism both exploits and orders society by containing potential political change within commercial idioms, which amount to a cultural "language of goods." As commodities become a kind of social language, traditional uses of objects give way to fashion-influenced patterns of

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[5] S. Ewen and E. Ewen. *Channels of Desire: Mass Images and the Shaping of American Consciousness.* McGraw-Hill, New York 1982, 51.; Bruce Robbins, "Introduction: the public as phantom", in B. Robbins (ed), *The Phantom Public Sphere*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1993, viii; Robbins connects the critical concept of the lost "public" with an "attempt to haunt us with the Spirit of the Past", an awe-inspiring authoritative survival of a better age.

[6] James Curran defines a central role for the media as "assisting the equitable negotiation or arbitration of competing interests through democratic processes", J. Curran, "Rethinking the media as a public sphere", P. Dahlgren and C.Sparks (Eds), *Communciation and Citizenship: Journalism and the Public Sphere in the New Media Age*, London/New York: Routledge 1991, 30.

[7] Robbins 1993, viii-xiii. The concept of the public sphere is contested as one of collective decision-making and popular participation, for instance, because it omits feminist critiques of the way in which this domain has functioned as that of male wage-earners and politicians, with a lack of power in the traditionally female sphere of the private as the domestic. Robbins discusses also J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public sphere*, Cambridge: MIT Press 1989; W. Lippmann, *The Phantom Public*, New York: Macmillan 1927; J. Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, Chicago: Gateway 1946; Habermas excludes an account of the workings of power in that the public sphere for him is where citizens prepare to demand legitimacy of authority, but this is too easily reduced to a process of expression for its own sake (xxi.) See also McGuigan 1996, 1-7.

consumer choice. Objects, in other words, are not meaningful through "sacred" use or context but through the imperatives of capitalism.[8]

Despite the foundational value of these perspectives for the present study, it is also necessary to note that material culture is not reducible to ideology. Benjamin, for instance, saw commodities themselves as legitimate objects of multiple interpretation. Current writers on popular culture and "lifestyle" who challenge the politically-charged negative view of consumer culture, stress the construction or at least the negotiation of meanings through objects and places. These views emphasize the importance of taking a more active view of audience/consumer participation in the development of culture, both material forms and value systems.[9]

Yi-Fu Tuan suggests that human relationships, and personality itself, actually requires material objects for sustenance, anchorage and the expression of human emotion. In Chaney's view, because consumer goods are valuable "resources for signifying...identity" they are significant as a dramatic resource, offering "opportunities for displaying taste, expressing social affiliations and articulating values and attitudes."[10] Commodity culture, then, involves a system of social meaning coordinated by mass-produced signs, images, ideas, and things. Competence in manipulating this "language of goods" involves making distinctions, shaped and guided by (widely or narrowly) shared standards, experiences and information. The operations of what we call taste, comprising aesthetic views and practices, are to great

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[8] S. Ewen & E. Ewen, definition of consumer society in *Channels of Desire: Mass Images and the Shaping of American Consciousness.* New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co. 1982, 51; Chaney, ibid. 71, 157-8. Chandra Mukerji, *From Graven Images: Patterns of Modern Materialism.* New York: Columbia University Press 1983 places the development of consumer society in early modern European commercial capitalism. Grant McCracken, in*Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988, goes further back, to credit Elizabeth I with exploiting the "hegemonic power of things", initiating a consumer revolution involving personal consumption and display as tools of social mobility. Chaney argues that, while there are similarities in consumerism between early-modern culture and that of modernity, a key difference was the presence in modernity of the "dramatic form of a mass market." (*Fictions of Collective Life*,7-8). Veblen emphasized the cultural and communicative aspects of the economy of conspicuous consumption; Weber's work draws connections between materialism and mass culture, in terms of asceticism and hedonism. He describes the ways in which Protestantism stressed the amassing of capital by maintaining a modest lifestyle, as opposed to flamboyant displays of wealth through conspicuous consumption. Mukerji departs from this opposition, however, and describes both rationalism (asceticism) and hedonism as part of a continuum of materialism. The hedonist amasses consumer goods mainly as a display of wealth, while the ascetic rationalist acquires capital goods as investments. In both cases capital goods represent economic calculation. Although motivations of each may differ, both approaches share the attempt to make sense and meaning of materialism, by making wealth (economic exchange) itself a more active part of social and cultural life. Goods and commodities were most often a combination of aesthetic form and practical resource (Mukerji, 5-6).

[9] Chaney, *Fictions of Collective Life*,, 20, and *Lifestyles*, Routledge, London and New York: 1996, 74-5, 156-7; Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* . Ed. H. Arendt, trans. H. Zohn. New York: Schocken Books 1969; also "N [Theoretics of Knowledge; Theory of Progress]", Trans. L. Hafrey and R. Sieburth, *The Philosophical Forum* XV, Nos. 1-2 1983-84, 1-40; see Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*,, Cambridge: MIT Press 1990; Mukerji 11-15; B. Lancaster, *The Department Store: A Social History.* Leicester University Press, London 1995, 164-7, is representative in recommending inserting an account of Gramscian hegemony into the critical approaches, giving an account of agency within the constant circulation of values, objects, ideas, and images in consumer society. While resources for creating these meanings will be more available to privileged or elite groups, this circulation can and does occur across class divisions. Kenneth Walsh notes that heritage does not appeal primarily (for instance) to the dissillusioned labourer wishing to escape the dislocations of the present. Its largest audience is the professional and managerial class, to whom the past is "another country" to tour as part of normal leisure practices, rather than an enlightening or didactic experience in community understanding (K. Walsh,*The Representation of the Past: Museums and Heritage in the Postmodern World.* London/New York: Routledge 1992.). See also J. Fiske, "Cultural studies and the culture of everyday life," L. Grossberg, C.Nelson, and P. Treichler (eds.), *Cultural Studies*, London/New York: Routledge 1991. M. de Certeau,*The Practice of Everyday Life.* New York: Columbia University Press 1988. J. Williamson, "Notes from Storyville North: circling the mall" and J. Delaney, "Ritual space in the Canadian Museum of Civilization: consuming Canadian identity", both in Shields, R.(Ed.) *Lifestyle Shopping: The Subject of Consumption.* Routledge: London and New York, 1992.

[10] Yi-Fu Tuan, "Space and place: humanistic perception", C. Beard, R.J. Chorley and D.R. Stoddart (Eds.), *Progress in Geography*, London: Edward Arnold 1974, 241-242.

extent guided by "discourse specialists" such as advertisers, magazines, designers--and museum-related institutions including heritage promoters.

The anthropological/ sociological literature emphasizes these cultural aspects of production and trade: exchange, consumption and material display are collective social rituals, communication events which "fix" shared public meanings. In industrialized society with mass communication processes, writes Chaney, these processes have "involved messages or representations being formulated in ways that make them available for marketing." Mail-order catalogues, for example, are part of western Canadian cultural (not just retail) history, circulating metropolitan images and standards to rural consumers.

***Postmodern cultural capital***

In sum, goods play a central role in mediating and conveying moral values, human emotions and social priorities. The social implications--the point where perceived community or cultural interests engage those of economics or politics--concern the fact that the construction of meanings in association with certain things requires access to symbolic or cultural capital.

To return briefly to the anthropological concept of "symbolic capital", or knowledge of the criteria of discrimination within the "world of goods." In Bourdieu's work, access to "cultural capital" is a means of social power over knowledge as related to consumption. Culture organizes hierarchical patterns of distinction in taste, which correspond to those of status or class. Mass consumer culture, for instance, constructs different aesthetic standards according to target audiences. Access is determined not directly by income level but by a complex of taste, style, education and social status. Social power, then, depends on access to cultural as well as economic capital.[11]

Featherstone also cites Bourdieu's concept of the "petite bourgeoisie" in arguing that our present concept of lifestyle can be best understood in relation to the concern of this group with the imagery and information of consumer culture. Acting as cultural intermediaries, they provide symbolic goods and services and invest in cultural and educational capital. Numerous and socially mobile, they are attracted to naive aristocratic goals of style, refinement and distinction to legitimate the group's particular dispositions.

In post-modern consumer culture, however, Featherstone perceives a loss of fixed social status group; the profusion of images and information destabilizes hierarchy. Does this mean that "signifying culture" and categories of taste are no longer applicable as coordinates of meaning? As Featherstone notes, the meanings and uses of consumer goods are still complex. It is important to examine the production of these meanings within a structured social space where various groups compete for legitimation. Bourdieu's key insight, according to Harvey, is that the symbolic power to impose the principles of the construction of reality is a major dimension of political power, as knowledge becomes integral to social reproduction.[12]

In the historical context of heritage activism in twentieth-century Edmonton, the description of the social class which Bourdieu calls the petite bourgeoisie appears to be an apt one. The postmodern collapse of meaning amid chaotically proliferating elements of urban culture has not been a central feature of everyday life here, although related concerns have informed certain anxieties concerning development since the period of modernity. And the sense that postmodernity is distinguished by a confusing recombination of previously stable elements is difficult to relate to a place which has long been

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[11]Chaney 1996, 54; Lancaster 163-7; Mukerji, 9-14, notes that the historical development of an international trade economy, involving a vast system of cultural innovation and exchange, represented a revolution in communications as well as in commerce. As the modern trade system--a marketplace providing a vast quantity and variety of goods--became a central organizing force in social life, the working and middle classes gained expanded access to goods. Various objects developed cultural significance among much larger groups of people. Sussman has noted a shift from nineteenth-century Protestant ethics of production and consumption to one of secular consumption in the twentieth, accompanied by a shift in emphasis from the concept of self as "character" to that of personality and self-expression; W.I. Sussman, "Ritual fairs", *Chicago History* Vol. 12. No.3, Fall 1983, 4-9. Also see Karen Halttunen, "From parlor to living room", in S.J.Bronner (Ed), *Consuming Visions: Accumulation and Display of Goods in America 1880-1920.* W.W. Norton & Co., New York 1989.

[12] M. Featherstone, *Lifestyle and Consumer Culture*, London: SAGE 1991, 82-84; D. Harvey, *The Urban Experience*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 1989, 269-274, and D. Harvey, "The geopolitics of capitalism", Gregory and Urry (Eds.), *Social Relations and Spatial Structures*, London: Methuen 1985..

characterized by "creative destruction", imported forms and utilitarian obsolescence of the build landscape. Nevertheless, the perception of a need for cultural conservation and stability has been expressed, primarily by interests defined above as the petite bourgeoisie.

In Edmonton, as elsewhere, the past (however recent) "has become a synchronic warehouse of cultural scenarios...to which recourse can be had as appropriate..." Appadurai, like other commentators on postmodernity, notes the result that past and present appear as variations on each other: the past is just another foreign country to visit. The apparent "substitutability" of whole periods for others is part of the cultural style of advanced capitalism, and so is tied to larger global forces.[13]

While this is generally true, the original relevance or meanings of motifs in a particular collage will depend on audience: for outsiders, the jumble of architectural forms may be chaotic or generic, while for insiders each component is an icon of local history. Again, therefore, designed or preserved environments must be considered in context as parts of a wider process always, to some extent, unpredictable.

Stephen Greenblatt, for instance, proposes a crucial connection between mimesis and capitalism, defining "mimetic capital" as a stock of images and their mediating devices such as books and museums. As their circulation achieves global scale, disparate imagery and objects come into juxtaposition, generating copies and new, unexpected forms. Commodified or popular versions of high cultural images, for instance, are available through the mass mediation of museum collections, including via retail in gift shops which unite qualities of the traditional museum and of department stores and expositions. Whatever their context, the purchase of such items can, among other things, display an aesthetic disposition which links individuals to "legitimate culture."[14]

Finally, the circulation of goods and meanings is a process of negotiation through social discourse and hegemonic power relations; the economic patterns of consumption involve the acquisition and use of knowledge in everyday life. Chaney notes that we need to find specific ways in which discourse may be said to "constitute and develop" its object. Featherstone recommends a dual focus on specific aspects of, first, the cultural dimension of the economy (how goods are communicators) and, second, on the economy of cultural goods (the market principles which shape this process.)[15]
Theories of consumerism which stress claims of inauthentic values and false consciousness themselves tend to imagine a more essential way of life which precedes or opposess the "dramaturgy of display."[16]

The latter theme is particularly evident in the discourse on heritage activities, especially where imaginative assumptions of a lost golden age of community are combined with aesthetic or scholarly ones about public architectural resources. At this point we can go on to discuss ways in which commodities, or consumer objects, are part of the institutional history of public display space.

**B. Windows on meaning: museums and consumer space**

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[13] See James Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society.* Boston: Unwin Hyman 1989..; B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* Verso. London: 1983.

[14] S. Greenblatt, *Marvellous Possessions: the Wonder of the New World.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991; Chaney 59-62; Greenblatt's discussion implies also the effect of such images upon entering into non-traditional contexts, which alters their meaning. An example would be the use of African motifs by European artists in the early twentieth century, motifs which were adopted in other formats from theatre to fashion design.

[15] Featherstone, ibid.; Chaney (1996, 99-101) notes critiques of the Douglas model for its confusion between the literal and figurative use of goods; that is, between their character as material possessions and the pattern of social relations and rituals which make sense of them. Addictive materialism occurs when goods are more than props in the performance of self, but become an extension of the self. Mechling, for instance, notes that Douglas' account omits most of the affective dimension of goods.

[16] Citations, Chaney, *Fictions*, 154-9, 165; discussion of anthropological perspectives, see M. Douglas and Baron Isherwood, *The World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption.* New York: W.W.Norton 1979; Jay Mechling, "The collecting self and American youth movements", in Bronner (Ed.) 1989, 278-282; A. Pred, "Interfusions: consumption, identity and the practices and power relations of everyday life", *Environment and Planning A*, 28 (1) 1996, 11-24; see also Grant McCracken, *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988; Lancaster 167, C. Mukerji, *From Graven Images: Patterns of Modern Materialism.* New York: Columbia University Press. 1983, 11.

Consumer spaces include those which are either directly or indirectly linked to economic exchange and supporting institutions of consumerism. The development of the public museum in the context of mass production and consumption is part of this history. Both retail and museum spaces have actively interpreted the relationship between democracy, taste and the abundance of consumer goods. The following discussion outlines ways in which the museum has contributed to the development of a "language of goods" in public space.

Common to the museum (or historic village) and the shopping mall (or retail district) is the object on display as either artifact or novelty. In either case, the object functions as a "concrete abstraction" standing in for some feature of the social system. At the industrial expositions or world's fairs, also goods were efficiently connected with social meanings. Ideals of democratic experience, for instance, included equal access to goods. A 1901 fair, for instance, included a "Fountain of Plenty" in a "Court of Abundance."In providing this affirmation of wealth, the expositions were also, as Barton says, symbols of the state's "grand prescriptive program of community-building." Twentieth century fairs celebrated ideas of peace and social cooperation through new communications technologies and the consolidation of business and politics.[17]

Public museums had also developed rapidly after 1851, with social elites making a strong connection between public education and a population suited to democratic life and industrial production. Lewis Mumford called the public museum a "landmark in popular culture" as a "product of the economy of limitless acquisition." In the museum, display became a "means of public education" rather than private gratification.[18] The strong theme of elite obligation to raise common standards of knowledge and taste accompanied this development, and upon this and related grounds museums have long claimed the right to public support.

Links have long existed between the museum's focus on narrative display and the legitimation of consumer objects. The museum program of rational, educational leisure was, in industrial society, not a detached principle but one inevitably connected with material culture. Exhibition promoter Henry Cole connected museum culture and commerce in an 1874 statement that "[s]cience and art are the lifeblood of successful production."Like the industrial expositions, museums made tangible the doctrines of progress, a materially-oriented "aesthetic of utopia." American curator George B. Goode declared that the museum was no longer "a chance assemblage of curiosities" but rather an ordered series of objects consciously selected "with reference to their value [for research and] public enlightenment."[19]

Rhetorically, though, museums (on the principle of "to see is to know") distinguished themselves from other sites of leisure and spectacle by contrasting their role of public service to those which used objects as components of commercial entertainment. Yet, as social institutions, museums were not isolated from the sphere of commerce. For one thing, they exhibited models of beauty meant to be promulgated in domestic life through the purchase of appropriate commodities. Around the turn of the century, European and North American art schools, universities and museums all taught skills of commodity design and cultural interpretation--for example, classical motifs which could be adaptable to mass production.

In our own time, it has become common to criticize the museum as a hegemonic instrument of the civilizing process. Foucault's term "cultural technologies" refers to hardware, institutions and organizations which produce particular configurations of knowledge and power. Bennett calls the public museum "a machine for making...history socially intelligible." It shapes popular dispositions through exhibition and display which misrepresent the past and reinforces inequitable social relations. More

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[17] In the nineteenth century, progress was linked to the ideals of liberal capitalist democracy which could free "human labour and imagination...from the bonds of a society based on legally privileged groups." M. Barton, "The Victorian jeremiad: critics of accumulation and display", 67-71 in Bronner 1989; also S.J. Bronner, "Reading consumer culture", 38-9 in Bronner 1989; Benjamin 1969; see Buck-Morss, 322-323, M. Levin (Ed), *When the Eiffel Tower Was New: French Visions of Progress at the Centennial of the Revolution*, University of Massachussetts Press 1989, 26, 20.

[18] L. Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations and Its Prospects.* London: Penguin Books 1991, 434-435; see also D. Worts, "In search of meaning: reflective practice and museums", *Museum Quarterly* 18.4 (1990).

[19] W. Leach, "Strategists of display and the production of desire", in Bronner (Ed) 1989, 100; central to this philosophy was the belief that modern manufacturing would be the vehicle of worthwhile object lessons, and craft labour was accordingly devalued.

overtly, though, the museum only conserves and reflects the society which supports it. For this to have political implications, the "excluded" classes must contest these dominant versions through a pragmatic cultural politics.[20]
Without wishing to remove the dimension of agency, or invoke false consciousness, thought, it would appear that the majority of the public is still concerned more with access to the goods which ameliorate everyday life than with the implications which lie behind consumerism.

Whatever their venue, educational programs were socially stratified, with the middle class as patrons and promoters for whom high culture was a way to associate themselves with aristocratic power and prestige. In this tradition, popular taste had to be managed, because esthetic appreciation was considered to have direct effects on social behaviour. For the working classes, public institutions were to provide not only moral elevation but, as environments, surrogates for comfortable living and working conditions.[21]

Critics of the social implications of material society exhibited a growing ambivalence toward accumulation and display, developing a moral critique concerning the real inequality of consumption. Critics promoted an increasing suspicion of "artificiality" and the consumer idealization of surface over substance. Partly in response, privileged classes developed a less conspicuous form of display which also served as a form of cultural capital, characterized by self-restraint, eventually known as "good taste"[22] and, again, expressed primarily through patterns of consumption. Culture, then, has been a useful instrument of political control and economic advancement; public exhibition spaces were precursors of mass consumer culture and popular spectacle.

As sources of public funding diminished, museums have entered more directly into competition with commercial venues. However, the underlying conceptual division between commerce and culture has been sustained. The connection between retail and museum sites has been characterized in part by a history of mutual influence, an exchange of functions and features across "cultural" and "commercial" divisions. The development of shared meanings in connection with commodities was a long process supported by a range of social and discursive frameworks. These include the North American department store and retail complex. Over the twentieth century, mass culture has vastly expanded the scale of commodity marketing, cultural education and leisure entertainment; by the 1950s (the beginning of a key period of museum and cultural development in Canada), mass consumption was a central social phenomenon.[23]

### *Spaces of consumption: retail stores*

One everyday aspect of mass consumption in North American cities (perhaps particularly so in the Canadian west) has been the claim of the retail store, like the heritage construction, to represent not only appropriate cultural standards but community identities. These claims persist and are amplified by the development of the shopping mall in mid-century as focal points of expanding urban communities. However, if a retail space can shape a sense of community, it does so within specific constraints of meaning and behaviour.

"Capitalist spatiality" articulates specific conjunctures of domestic and public life in physical landscapes appropriate to its functioning. For instance, people isolated in suburban homes find an experience of community in a centralized retail mall. Because this economy involves endless change in

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[20] Various critics taking this point of view are noted in Chapter 2; Canadian public museums have recently been challenged on related grounds of cultural, racial, gender or other misrepresentation, with the Provincial Museum of Alberta's controversial aboriginal galleries providing the example closest to home. See H. Devine, "The Syncrude Canada Aboriginal Peoples Gallery", *Alberta Museums Review*, Vol. 24, No. 1 1998, 58-62.

[21] S.H. Hurtado, "The promotion of the visual arts in Britain, 1835-1860", *Canadian Journal of History/Annales canadiennes d'histoire* XXVIII, April 1993, 39-80; M.R. Levin, "The city as a museum of technology", *History and Technology* 1993, Vol. 10, 27-36; Schroeder-Gudehus, Brigitte. "Patrons and publics: museums as historical artefacts", *History and Technology*, 1993, Vol. 10, pp. 1-3.

[22] S.J. Bronner, "Reading consumer culture", in Bronner 1989, 14.

[23] A prerequisite for full consumer culture was the availability of goods across international markets; Chaney, *Lifestyles*, 15-17 &*Fictions of Collective Life*, 160-61

style and surfaces (of commodities, including certain spaces), this landscape is subsequently destroyed in favour of new ones.[24]

The display process developed by the museum, public expositions, and shopping arcades, was exploited most successfully thereafter by the large urban department stores. The following discussion draws attention to the role played by commercial forms in the development of an urban "fantasy" or dream world culture in which shopping became a leisure pursuit, and commerce and culture began to blend in everyday public space. Department stores in the late nineteenth century became "symbolic homes for new consumer relationships" and centres of hedonistic luxury. However, they were also places of cultural innovation: as Chaney describes it, new forms of leisure were dramatised, a new form of public anonymity developed, and the marketing of style developed as spectacle.[25]

Writers past and present have compared the department store (and later the mall) to the cathedral, or palace, but within which the needs of secular material life could be met. Like the cathedral, though, the department store also had the important function of providing a kind of "dreamspace"--the "language of goods" was a language of dream or fairy tale. Such a space could be considered comparable to sacred edifices in the sense that it too offered a sense of escape from the limits of everyday life. Benjamin described modern "dream cities" as public space which involved surreal juxtapositions of old streets with new spectacles and surfaces in arcades which were the "ur-shopping mall", dramatised public space.[26]

Benjamin called the industrial expositions the major models for large department stores and the modern entertainment industry: public festivals of "pilgrimage to the fetish Commodity", phantasmagoria of distraction. As the twentieth century began, according to Bronner, the "consuming orientation toward objects in the creation of 'higher civilization'" had already been set in place. The rhetoric of accumulation and the social concern for appearances of things were apparent in phenomena from "a novel to the...goods in a store display to the layout of a community...texts [which] espoused ways of thinking and acting..."[27]

Pre-war stores shared the museum's academic tastes and formality in materials such as dark wood cases, marble and gilt, and a sense of compression of the world into cluttered interiors. Advertising reinforced the store's connotations of genteel superiority to the street outside with its old marketplaces and peddlars. Spaces of light and air represented an alternative to the crowded, congested conditions of everyday working and domestic life. Display was both syncretic--incorporating all available myths and traditions--and surrealist, investing things and spaces with a sense of dramatized life and transformation. But by the turn of the century, department stores had become central among commercial environments and by the 1930s had fully exploited concepts of collection and display originated by the museum.[28]

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[24] D. Harvey 1978, 124; see E. Soja *Postmodern Geographies: the Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory.* London/New York: Verso 1989, 102; J. Berland, "Angels dancing: cultural technologies and the production of space", Grossberg, Nelson & Treichler 1992, 45; F. Jameson, "Postmodernism and Utopia", *Utopia Post Utopia: Configurations of Nature and Culture in Recent Sculpture and Photography.* MIT Press, Cambridge. 1988.

[25] Chaney, *Fictions of Collective Life.*

[26] The arcades were built with new techniques of glass and steel construction, but their interiors were encrusted with elaborate decoration and neoclassical motifs borrowed from traditional, sacred public space. Art here, wrote Benjamin, was in the service of the salesman. Understanding the role of the arcades in public life involved "giving up the ingrained habit of thinking in terms of the subjective fantasy of art versus the objective material forms of reality."See Benjamin's "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century", 1969.; Buck-Morss 1987, 145, 342; Chaney, *Fictions of Collective Life,* 160-1. See also R.H. Williams, *Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth century France.* Berkeley CA 1982. 1982.

[27] S.J. Bronner, "Object lessons: the work of ethnological museums and collections", Bronner 1989, 83; and see J. Lears, "Beyond Veblen: rethinking the commodity aesthetic", Bronner 1989; W. Benjamin, *Reflections*, Schocken Books 1978; Buck-Morss.

[28] See Ewen and Ewen, 68-70; N. Harris. "Museums, merchandising and popular taste: the struggle for influence", in I.M.G. Quimby, Ed. *Material Culture and the Study of American Life.* New York: W.W. Norton, 1978, 140-74. The original Wanamaker's had been influenced by the sense of space and illumination, as well as the departmental arrangement, of the 1876 Centennial Exhibition. Spread throughout the domain of popular entertainment and consumption--department stores, hotels, museums, fairs--between the 1880s and 1920s, new standards and materials including glass, light and colour served to counter existing Protestant-dominated social standards of asceticism and severity. Leach 1989, 100-107, 118; L.F. Baum, the creator of the Oz books, founded the magazine "Show Window" in 1907. He developed the first literature of commercial display, typically directing retailers to "animate" goods by

Retail-oriented leisure also inherited and expanded upon the museum and exposition mandate to shape the social imagination concerning material culture. However, curator Stuart Culin noted that both the department store and the museum were places "where the normal relationships of things become transformed and obscured."[29] To varying extents expositions and museums were "educational" diversions; department stores were less idealistic but still employed similar techniques and rhetorics in part to attract audiences accustomed to the museum context, and by extension to legitimate their own public role.

For example,department stores had adapted and improved on the museum reconstruction of historical domestic dioramas, constructing "merchandise pictures"complete with theatrical lighting in display pavilions and model showrooms. In New York, Wanamaker's department store even constructed an exhibit of a twenty-two room private home complete with period furniture displays. Although museums had pioneered such constructions, Wanamaker claimed, in museums "most everything looks like junk... because there is no care or thought in the display."[30]

Stores also associated themselves with global metropolitan culture, as had museums. In Philadelphia, Wanamaker's built a near-life sized replica of a Parisian street for those who could not afford to go to Paris itself. (References to Paris, common in the literature on early expositions and department stores, are evident in the rhetoric of West Edmonton Mall today.) Wannamaker's also reproduced the facades of Rheims and Chartres Cathedrals in its stores, in order to instill in the public a love of beauty.[31]

By the 1920s, a powerful institutional circuit existed in what Harris calls the triptych of exposition, museum and department store. All were institutional influences on public knowledge of art and objects, a complex where merchandising ideas were given aesthetic shape and circulation. Links between stores and museums were consciously fostered in the public mind. Curator Stewart Culin, for instance, arranged Brooklyn Museum exhibits to coincide with shop window displays of related domestic objects. Such programs of coordinated display and decorative strategies "helped forge a new commercial aesthetic" that would dominate the urban visual space."[32] In Canada, similar programs linked institutions such as the National Gallery and Eaton's stores.

But in comparison to the department store, by the early decades of the twentieth century, public museums were perceived in somewhat negative terms by consumers. Unlike retail commodities, for instance, precious objects in museums were inaccessible. Museums also tended to ignore the client-centred commercial approach, which "maximised physical comfort and exploited the dramatic possibilities" of display space. The museum appeared elitist; the president of the Metropolitan Museum of Art admitted that department stores had far more influence on art and public taste.

As museums lost credibility in didactic as well as spectacular terms, the department stores took on a larger role in public education, both "moral" and aesthetic. In the 1930s and 1940s, North American stores (conscious of their distance from European culture) offered activities, classes and lectures coordinating store displays with domestic arts, design and decorating. Other community services included operating concert halls in the stores, and at Eaton's, scholarships for education and research. To attract other groups, educational window displays presented pedestrians with spectacles such as an elaborate 1891 diorama of Peary's North Pole expedition in miniature, complete with northern lights. The store's 1919 Jubilee year pageants equated progress in civilization with progress in production and retail.[33]

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immersion in colour and light.

[29] Bronner 1989a, 222; Harris 1978, 142-5.

[30] Harris 154, 167; also M. Crawford, "The world in a shopping mall", in M. Sorkin, Ed. *Variations on a Theme Park: the New American City and the End of Public Space.* New York: Hill and Wang 1992.; Leach 1989, 120. After World War I, commercial display techniques further raised public expectations and surpassed the influence of the museum in shaping public taste. Expositions, too, departed from an emphasis on the gener**Error!**

[31] Ewen and Ewen 1982, 69; Leach 1989, 126-7.

[32] Leach 1989, 129-130; also, Harris 1989, 130; Chaney 23. Culin wished to establish the Brooklyn Museum as a forum to help place modern urban life in anthropological and historical context. The museum offered its collections of artifacts as sources for commercial design motifs.

[33] Benjamin 1968; see Levin 1989.; T. Eaton Co., *Golden Jubilee 1869-1919*, Toronto & Winnipeg 1919, 221. For an analysis of forms such as the diorama, tableau, miniature and related representations, see Stewart, S. *On Longing:*

In the early decades of the century, Eaton's "Efficiency Department" operated a staff lecture series to improve their expertise in fashion, textiles and interior decoration. Later these lectures were offered to the public. The store's Shopping Service supplied a "Second Self" to women who could not shop in person. Shoppers were "women of good taste" who would choose appropriate commodities in departments of house decoration, fashion and domestic goods. Eaton's advertised that its Special Attractions were intended to "exhibit merchandise, popularize ideas, introduce some new mode or...service" in displays designed to be of "real worth--educative, entertaining or simply charming."[34]

In "the cause of sane and artistic home-making" in Toronto (and in conjunction with new spring furnishing displays) Eaton's held a series of lectures by Frank Parsons of New York on colour, interior design and historic period rooms. Concurrent lessons were held in home arts and crafts. On special anniversaries, in-store displays recreated historic production methods with costumed interpreters and period rooms full of "picturesque relics", explained by "entertaining and educative" films.[35]

In the 1940s, the National Gallery mounted exhibits in Eaton's to educate the public in the precepts of good modern design. The store's Fine Art Galleries in the 1950s continued to "lend a colourful glow to store merchandising", providing "interest and educational value to the community through successive years of artistic appreciation." For the Alberta Jubilee in 1955, Eaton's contributed to historical displays in rural areas. In Fort McLeod, two rooms were furnished by Eaton's in the "typical" styles of 1905 and 1955. Associated travelling museum exhibits also showed reconstructions of period interiors for the edification of the public.[36]

During the 1950s and 1960s, Eaton's offered interior decoration counselling services to help customers plan and furnish their homes. The Toronto store's "House of Trends Decorating Service" furnished model homes and apartments to demonstrate new styles, and all stores with furnishing departments maintained furnished rooms in "authentic period and modern styles." In 1959, a promotional pamphlet stated that, in colourful illustrations and fine pageants, "windows and store displays keep pace with fashion...the changing needs and interests of the public [and] with significant events in the current scene."[37]

During this period, Eaton's also introduced Information Centres with interpreters and aides for non-English speaking immigrant shoppers.[38] The large retail institutions until at least mid-century did succeed, through these and many other initiatives, in developing strong consumer loyalty and, further, a historical and imaginative link between stores and the communities they served. In part this was a result of historical coincidence in development, perhaps especially so in western Canada, but it was consciously fostered by department stores themselves through a combination of "public service" promotions and advertising, and through their claims to contribution to local economic development.

As a "fusion of economic and cultural values", both department stores and museums were "staging grounds for the making and confirming of new relations between goods and people." All of them, in various ways, taught the consumer to distinguish between goods in terms of style and value. More specifically, people learned to distinguish between kinds of value: material as opposed to abstract, pragmatic as opposed to social, and utilitarian as opposed to communicative.[39] The retail sphere, then, has acted as a crucible of fusion between economic and cultural values in the twentieth century. Department stores developed as symbolic sites for consumerism in metropolitan centres.

Designed space--didactic, dramatized and/or consumer space--is in a sense both commodity, or object (a constructed streetscape, for instance) and container of objects. According to Rob Shields, certain practices produce "spaces of consumption," built forms which articulate the meanings of a certain site by

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*Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection.* The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London. 1984.

[34] T. Eaton Co. 1919, 123, 198-212.

[35] Ibid. 218-20.

[36] Eaton's of Canada. *The Story of a Store (Serving the Nation)* 1959, 38; Government of Alberta. *Eleventh Annual Report*.. Edmonton 1955,11.

[37] Eaton's of Canada 1959, 37-38. In order not to offend public sensibilities, though, show windows (except for ones with religious significance) were closed on Sundays.

[38] Ibid., 33.

[39] Harris 164

contributing to its "qualitative reality" as a place where certain events and actions are expected. While objects and spaces are not materialized ideology determining behaviour, they do carry influence due to the fact that they are both (direct) physical and (indirect) symbolic constraints.[40]

After World War II, mass media advertising reinforced the status of retail in public communication, as, unlike the museum, it could offer not only novelty and stimulation but efficiency in introducing and interpreting new goods and services.This was necessary for several reasons which, in the frontier context with which this study is initially concerned, included the social construction of meaning in new environments.

### *Frontier shopping*

In turn of the century North America, the rapid acceleration from an agrarian economy to industrial capitalism meant a new abundance of commodities, countering the popular frontier myth of home-based production. In western Canada, particularly, agrarian development occurred in an established context of industrial capitalism and mass production. Everywhere, however, rural people demonstrated their ties to civilization by the portage and possession of "eastern" things. Urban middle class families decorated their homes to mimic shop window displays. Leisure and access to goods were becoming the focus of individual success and fulfilment, and the domestic sphere a major medium of status-related display, as least for the middle class. As the retail complex developed, artifact displays engendered evolving standards which equated new with improved, and valued convenience, diversity and abundance over self-reliance, homogeneity and managed scarcity. Accumulation and display were attractive for a society that had "traded in its mythology of pioneer scarcity for the prospect of material abundance." Progress was defined materially, as an abundance of goods, a comfortable life.[41]

The use of the "period room" display of domestic objects and setting demonstrates the connection between museums, expositions and retail stores. Next to displays of new furnishings and related products, North American expositions typically featured an "educational" reconstruction of the rustic pioneer-era home. These demonstrate, on the one hand, the development of a conceptual division between the promised perfection and good taste of consumer culture, and the obsolete modes of production and daily life it had replaced. On the other hand, these rooms were redolent with domestic harmony and the charm of organic materials. Positive attitudes toward progress and convenience were accompanied by a nostalgia which involved the rejection of urban-based consumerism in favour of older exchange systems in rooted communities.[42]

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[40] J.Delaney, "Ritual space in the Canadian Museum of Civilization : consuming Canadian identity", in R. Shields (Ed.), *Lifestyle Shopping: the Subject of Consumption*, London/New York: Routledge 1992, 136-7; see R. Shields "Social spatialization and the built environment: the West Edmonton Mall", *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 7(2) 1989, 147-64.

[41] T. Schlereth, "Country stores, county fairs and mail-order catalogues: consumption in rural America", in Bronner 1989, 348; in the process, believes Schlereth collectivity gave way to individuality; Harris notes that the idea of abundance also extends to valuing surplus time, in the form of leisure hours. The tradition of consumption was exacerbated in both countries, though later in Canada, by an expanded population base, and the establishment of effective transportation and communications networks. See Leach 1989 100-101 & Bronner 1989b.

[42] Lears 1989, 83-5; see J-C. Agnew, "A house of fiction: domestic interiors and the commodity aesthetic", 32, & K. Halttunen, "From parlor to living room", both in Bronner 1989, 156, 187; see also Ewen and Ewen 1982; R.H. Williams, *Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth century France*. Berkeley CA 1982; W.I. Sussman, "Ritual fairs", *Chicago History* Vol. 12. No.3, Fall 1983, 4-9. Agnew discusses the development of literature on interior decoration, cf. Elsie de Wolfe, *The House in Good Taste*, New York: Century Co. 1913; F.A. Parsons, *Interior Decoration: Its Principles and Practice*, Garden City: Doubleday, Page 1915; C. Cook, *The House Beautiful*, New York: Scribner, Armstrong 1878. Edith Wharton and Oscar Wilde were others who wrote and lectured on the principles of interior decoration. Sussman (1983) suggests the replacement of the nineteenth-century concept of self as "character" with the twentieth-century concept of "personality". The cult of personality contributed to establishing the meaning of domestic things; the terms "taste" and "consumer culture" coincide in meaning during this period. In the decorating discourse of 1900-1930, "personality" came to be seen as a "display in which the personal properties of the self mingled with the stage properties of the immediate surroundings." The transition to modern culture, according to Sussman, involved a middle-class consumer shift from moral concerns and self-restraint to emotional foci on self-expression. Of great influence in this development was the mass media, and in particular the periodicals in which the "authentic self became a constructed objet d'art, carefully framed by its material surroundings."

Periodicals which explained and demonstrated fashion ideologies in home furnishing were a way to control the flux of meaning around commodities, always pervaded by a tension between simplicity and extravagance, artifice and authenticity. In similar ways, the mail-order catalogues of North American department stores served the rural consumer's utilitarian needs, but also provided a medium through which to extend the range of consumer ideologies and systems of taste. A discursive combination of persuasive and explanatory text with attractive visuals, these catalogues had a central role in the "commercialization of the countryside" between 1880 and 1920. Like fairs and retail outlets, they were change agents in shaping consumer ideas, popularizing a range of goods while drawing distinctions between high-style artifacts and mass-produced objects and nurturing urban standards. Like other "information goods," catalogues reinforced the social changes which accompanied the shift from informal community to individualized consumption.[43]

In the Canadian west of the late nineteenth century, catalogues were one of the few "display windows" of international metropolitan style available to rural people. Stores like Eaton's had offices in New York and Paris at the turn of the century in order to claim authority in the latest fashion modes in a "vast, vivid array [of] smart, artistic, luxurious, quaint, dainty and original things." In 1886, Johnstone Walker's first "dry goods, furniture and household objects" store in Edmonton advertised a "varied assortment of splendid English goods at prices hitherto unknown in the North West."[44]

Eaton's claimed that citizens of the country, from the "parka-clad Eskimo... thumbing through his Eaton catalogue, to the sophisticated shoppers of the great cities", were united by confidence in Eaton's business principles. According to the promoters, the catalogue was not only a "huge store window" but also a "vocabulary guide" for new Canadians. The catalogue, in fact, was promoted as an important historical tool, reinforcing the association of the store with the history of the nation. The catalogue provided an "authentic... record of Canadiana" back to 1884, revealing "the spirit of Canada: the dress of the people, the furnishing of their homes, their cultural, social and recreational interests."[45]

Since the 1920s, mass advertising media continued to embody the reconciliation of "vernacular demands for a better life" with capitalist priorities. With the failure of traditional cultural bonds and ways of life, most urban people were receptive to a proliferation of commercial sites and images, which began to be experienced as points of stability in a changing world. Advertising exploited the economic potential of consumer markets by creating the imagery and aesthetic of social-democratic life.[46] Mass leisure industries shared the structural characteristics of other consumer goods: a metropolitan, standardized production through elite institutions, combined with privatized and domestic consumption.[47]

Features of exhibition common to museums, department stores, mail-order catalogues and (later) shopping malls, as well as in small rural stores and county fairs, serve to reinforce each other. Agricultural fairs, for instance, included department stores' exhibits of "living material culture" in "modern home interiors": three-dimensional, staged versions of domestic commodities seen in catalogue pictures. But these models of modern urban living were complemented by exhibits of modern farm machinery, were viewed in the context of celebrating traditional production in cooking and canning contests, husking bees and displays of produce.[48]

Nevertheless, the "virtual" home scenes, constructed as containers for an array of domestic commodities, did communicate metropolitan standards of domestic life. They did this both through the denotation of convenience and aesthetics in claims for the products, and through the connotation of progress and distance from the past in contrast to the display surroundings. For instance, country stores were often informal community museums, filling windows with collections of "old timer" curiosities to attract interest and patronage.

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[43] Schlereth 1989, 372.

[44] T. Eaton Co. 1919, 270; Johnstone Walker Ltd. *The Story of Johnstone Walker 1886-1961*. Edmonton, 1961, 3.

[45] Eaton's of Canada 1959, 4, 33. Today, store catalogues are primary sources for historical research, period restoration and museum display.

[46] Ewen and Ewen 1982, 34-57; an example is the promotion of the shopping mall as social centre, discussed below.

[47] Quote, A. Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America*, New York: Hill & Wang 1982, 133, cited Bronner 1989b, 32; Harris 150-1, 167; Leach 131; Chaney states that divisions of taste tend to fall into these categories (type of good) rather than those of class (45, 57); Chaney, *Fictions of Collective Life*, 160-61.

[48] Schlereth, 360-363.

This was true in turn of the century Edmonton, an era of civic efforts to promote the town as a modern, civilized metropolis. As discussed in Chapter 3, above, the Fort Edmonton buildings were contrasted to the new Legislature when it was built. Similar images are still seen in the Park's promotional materials, and one of Peter Newman's books on the HBC contains a typical photograph of the reconstruction in the river valley with the modern city above it in the distance.[49]

This practice has a long history in the area. In the displays windows and newspaper ads of local merchants beginning in the late nineteenth century, artifacts of local identity and history were played as an obsolete backdrop for imported manufactured objects. Urban notions of "taste" and education through display were present early on. Some public displays were educational or cultural in nature, reflecting local history and pride but discussed in the terms of metropolitan standards of "taste." Reports of women's group activities and exhibitions invariably praised the tasteful arrangement of flowers, paintings or produce. Even the curling rink was "decorated with mottoes, evergreens...in a very tasteful manner" for a political meeting. The Edmonton Bulletin also described an 1897 Old Timers Association display of pioneer life as "tasteful, elaborate and appropriate", with toboggans, stuffed animals and trapping artifacts placed "artistically" on the walls. Such items were often borrowed from local merchants' collections of prairie flora and fauna.[50]

Even such collections of local nature and history may demonstrate the influence of metropolitan culture. Collecting natural specimens was a popular pastime among the European and North American middle class in this period, and such items commonly represented colonial life in metropolitan exhibitions. The Canadian entry to the 1851 exhibition in London was considered to be a "pictorial success" in its simplicity: an arrangement of maple sugar, fur, sleighs and plants, along with a modern fire engine. A reporter noted the mixture of utilitarian, indigenous concerns with signs of English civilization in this display.[51]

*Bulletin* advertisements and features of this period demonstrate similar concerns among consumers of domestic goods, in the proliferation of references to home furnishing and decoration. To begin with, the Edmonton Planing Mills produced a variety of style choices in doors, mouldings and custom window frames. Larue & Picard claimed that people "contemplating ...changes and those furnishing new houses" found the shop's carpets, linens and curtains available "in very desirable patterns." Macdonald's pharmacy sold wallpaper advertised in association with the Statue of Liberty "enlightening the world." Another business suggested that the fashionable custom for Christmas was "to give a piece of Furniture" from their warerooms, "full of so many things that will help to make your home comfortable and attractive..." An ad featuring a sportsman hit with a baseball read, "[d]id it ever strike you...that a little good [paint]...judiciously distributed around hour home would add about a thousand per cent to the 'homelikeness' of that home?"[52]

Aesthetic references, usually supporting the sense that Edmonton's business standards were up to the minute as well, were prevalent in reportage on store development and design. Stores and public venues were conscious of the need to appeal to public convenience and sensibilities. But metropolitan standards were also highly visible in store design and appearance. A report on a new store front mentioned the weight, freight costs and shipping arrangements of the requisite plate glass windows from Winnipeg. In April 1996 the *Bulletin* reported on a verandah construction in front of one store, and approved of the "attractive" new signage at another new business. In June, the paper called Macdonald's store "perhaps the most tastefully fixed store in town", especially once its interior appearance was "considerably improved" with the addition of large mirrors. The Imperial Bank and the Alberta Hotel both announced renovations, new paint and decoration in 1896. The Edmonton Hardware Co. moved to a new store

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[49] P.C. Newman, *Empire of the Bay*, Toronto: Madison Press Books 1989, 204.

[50] *EB*, June 8 1896, 1; *EB* Aug 19 1896; *EB*, February 22 1897, 1; *EB*, April 27 1896, 1.

[51] A. Briggs, *Victorian Things*, London: BT Batsford 1988; see also Carl Berger, *Science, God and Nature in Victorian Canada*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1983; Peter Broks, "Science, the press and empire: 'Pearson's' publications 1890-1914", J.M. McKenzie (Ed.), *Imperialism and the Natural World*, Manchester University Press 1990; Mitchell, Timothy. *Colonizing Egypt*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge NY 1988.

[52] *EB*: June 1 1896, 1; May 26 1896; June 20 1898, 2; Dec 28 1896, 1; July 7 1898, 4.

"splendidly fitted with adjustable shelves and...fixtures." Larue & Picard had their shop front redecorated in the fall of that year.[53]

In keeping with this boosting of the evolution of the commercial landscape, the *Bulletin* liked to print stories contrasting the present business culture to that of a few decades before. One of these featured the memoirs of an 1858 visitor to the HBC fort, where there was "no selection" and one was simply handed the first object in stock no matter what the size--and without wrapping paper as well.Again, advertising typically emphasized the provision of goods on a scale comparable to that of metropolitan stores. McDougall's new wholesale warehouse added an upper floor of dry goods and musical instruments to their grocery section below, providing "the whole range of commodities necessary for food, clothing or home amusement." Shoppers were advised to examine the display windows where they would find crockery representing "one of the finest stocks in the west..."[54]

Advertising typically framed local goods with reference to those of the old country, as when smoked white fish were suggested as substitutes for Finnan Haddies by Clarke's Grocery. Clarke's also appealed to British tradition when it announced the display of a "large assortment of fireworks in our window for the celebration of the Queen's Birthday" in 1896. D.W. Macdonald advertised that he bought his supplies "in the Eastern markets" and would handle no cheap goods. The superintendent of experimental farms for the Dominion visited from London in the fall of 1896 in order to take photographs and samples of local grain from "prosperous looking homesteads and farm scenes" to be displayed together at the Imperial Institute. A local photographer, meanwhile, offered to produce and send prints of travellers in their Klondyke outfits to their home addresses.[55]

While local merchants did contribute in various ways to the town's cultural and social life, they did not neglect more direct applications to business matters. In the developing town, merchants were often the only ones with means and space to provide certain public services, although merchants managed to combine these efforts with commercial promotion. The Smith & Co. store attracted clientele in association with its providing the location of the first public library on its premises. Commercial buildings were typical meeting places for sports clubs as well as for business groups. In February 1897, Larue & Picard's grocery window showed a model of the proposed railway bridge from Strathcona to Edmonton, made entirely of bars of soap, with a "tart...nailed to the apex." Larue & Picard often mounted "non-commercial" displays in their windows, designed to appeal to specific local audiences. A St. Patrick's Day decoration was judged as very "tasteful...pretty and artistic." Rayner's jewellery store window exhibited the prizes which would be offered for upcoming Dominion Day sports in the summer of 1896.[56]

At this point, we can see the outlines of the modern history of the status of the object in consumer society. The object is the point shared by the complex of institutions including museums, expositions and retail spaces including department stores and shopping malls. To understand the status and meaning of the object--which may include retail commodities, sacred works of art or historical artifacts, buildings or whole "display districts", it is necessary to consider the cultural context of each. As an influential model for later forms of public display space, museums have excelled in creating what Harris calls the "association of honorific and attention-getting devices."[57]

In a culture of spirituality, the object's aura derives from its "honorific" association with sacred concerns. In a culture of consumerism, the aura of the commodity may still be considered as "sacred" for its implicit connection with a society of material wealth, or abundance. In both cases, the object is presented through ritual or dramatic display to compel attention.

In other words, the socio-cultural meanings of a museum object--perhaps an association with significant historical events--is enhanced for the viewer through a context of dramatic, often not directly related, elements. Another way of saying this is that the "sacred" or didactic elements of the object are given "secular" relevance or impact as entertainment. As a result of the association, the quality of each element tends to enhance that of the other. In a similar analysis, Margaret Crawford discusses the principle of "adjacent attraction," which suggests that glamorous spaces and images exchange attributes

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[53] *EB*, April 30 1896, 1; June 1 1896, 1; July 23, 1896, 1.; June 4 1896, 1; Dec 10 1896, 1; Sept 24 1896, 1.

[54] *EB*, Oct 8 1896, 1; June 15 1896, 1.

[55] *EB*, Apr 28 1896, 1; May 26 1896, 3; June 1 1896, 1; Sept 24 1896, 1; June 16 1898, 2.

[56] *EB*, April 28 1896, 1; February 25 1897, 1 June 19 1896, 1.

[57] Harris 171.

with commodities. Enhanced or glamourized space (display window, period room, or theme mall) also indirectly commodifies non-saleable objects, activities and images by presenting them within a commodified world. An exchange of attributes occurs.[58]

The issue of the identification of a community--or place, history, and culture--with commercial institutions replacing the traditional cathedral of the European community--is the subject of the next section.

### *The store and the community*

As suggested above, the development of Canada as a nation around the turn of the century coincided with the spread of mass production and distribution systems and the growth of consumer culture. Retail outlets and empires grew with the cities they occupied. Unlike museums, expositions and fairs, the department stores ultimately transformed the commercial landscape and real estate markets, and were significant features of their urban settings. As department stores in the large cities prospered and expanded, their promoters typically associated them with local civic identity, and even with the provincial or national spirit. An Eaton's publication of 1959 reviewed the store's history in these terms. It suggested that sometimes "a store is more than merely a retail outlet. It can become part of the nation in which it prospers" and to whose national growth it contributes.[59]

The Hudson's Bay Company has the best claim to being Canada's first retail store, and Peter Newman has called it "the company that became a nation" with reference to the framework of transport routes and trading posts it established in advance of European settlement in the West. For most of its retail history, as the trading posts "evolved into department stores", the HBC drew for imagery on its historic and mythic links to the frontier. The urban retail business, though, was firmly based on British standards of large department stores such as Harrod's. By the era of transition from "adventurers" to major retailing empire, concludes Newman, the HBC no longer had any "sense of privilege or feeling for history."[60]

The HBC had major department stores in Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton and Victoria by the First World War. These stores were lavishly appointed, often with the Company crest in exterior relief, and historic murals such as the one in Winnipeg "depicting the glorious past of the HBC [to remind] shoppers that this was not just *any* department store." The Hollywood historical adventure film *Hudson's Bay*, released in 1941, was promoted in store displays and advertising, arranged to coincide with displays of goods such as Hudson's Bay blankets.[61]

The HBC has exploited the anniversaries of its charter for publicity purposes. In 1920, on the 250th birthday, the company staged an elaborate pageant in Winnipeg. Their assets at the time included eleven major department stores and 300 fur-trading posts, as well as 2.5 million acres of agricultural prairie land. The spectacle staged at Lower Fort Garry attracted native peoples from all over the west and "the atmosphere of earlier and more picturesque days hovered about the Old Stone Fort", in contrast to the city a few miles away. The "shadowy forms of the old Indians", remarked an old Company veteran, illustrated the passage of the fort into antiquity. Eaton's also linked itself to the developing west when it associated its new store in Winnipeg with the "hope and promise of the virile young country itself" with its various productive industries. The store windows helped to make this point when they displayed a "Pageant of Western Progress" showing the earlier roles of "Indians, trappers and pioneer settlers" in the growth of the region.[62]

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[58] Crawford, 14-15. See also Benjamin's discussion of aura in "The work of art in an age of mechanical reproduction", *Illuminations* . Ed. H. Arendt, trans. H. Zohn. New York: Schocken Books 1969; Bronner, 1989a, 219.

[59] William Morris wrote from Toronto in the late 1860s about the town's "very enchanting appearance", where "a snug little shanty" often adjoined "some huge store" of several stories. T. Eaton Co. 1919, & Eaton's of Canada 1959, 4, 33.The present discussion concentrates on Eaton's, since for most of its history it was the model and chief influence for other retailers in Canada, and dominated the numbers of shopping centre department stores.

[60] Newman 1989, 157-176, 205, & P. Newman, *Merchant Princes*,Toronto: Penguin Books Canada 1991, 257, 268. Fort Edmonton, as noted in Chapter 3 above, was one of the most successful posts. In 1914, the retail chain's profit for the first time surpassed that of the fur department.

[61] Newman 1989, 193-201.

[62] Newman 1991, 271-272; T. Eaton Co 1919, 180-2. The 325th HBC anniversary was marked primarily by an advertising campaign linking history and the present urban stores, and including a series of comic books, "Tales of

During the period of transition from downtown shopping to suburban shopping mall culture, the major department store was often cited as an emblem or spirit of the city. To a local citizen, a downtown store often "feels like a fixture of the city itself...it feels like it received a charter on the same day the city did....when the store dies, it feels like the city is dying too." There is a feeling of commitment which is connected to "a sense of history". As Eaton's has done done on a national level, western Canadian stores promoted their community-linked status as local or provincial institution. Johnstone Walker, by 1926 already claiming (debatable) status as Edmonton's oldest store, published a 1961 history of the "rich pioneer background" of a company "that has grown side by side with this flourishing City." Woodward's associated itself with its city if origin as well: "[t]he fortunes of the Store and the fortunes of Vancouver have always followed a parallel course..." and "will and must continue on the path of progress with British Columbia."[63]

Essentially similar claims, with national connotations, have been made concerning the present day fortunes of the Hudson's Bay Company. When the Bay sold its northern stores and fur auction houses in 1987, many of the company's employees were "saddened and angry" that "[a] priceless heritage"--the "jewels in [the] crown"--were "gone forever." A former managing director attributed the company's loss to "a nonpardonable combination of commercial incompetence and callous disregard for its unique history." In this view, the Bay was not only abandoning the North but severing good relations with native peoples and "discarding the heart of its historic name: the Company of Adventurers." Going further, he compared the move to the unthinkable one of selling the Mounties to Pinkerton's detective agency. In the late 1960s, more cries of the break with history were sounded as the Company turned over York Factory to the federal government as a national historic site, and allowed it to deteriorate over the next decades.[64]

During the 1950s, the HBC debated whether to establish branch stores in the new suburban shopping centres. The position of management, that sales in malls would only reduce the downtown stores core business, illustrates the significance carried by these institutions. But the decision was costly for the company, as other retailers became the anchor tenants of profitable shopping centres.

Woodwards' first shopping centre store in Vancouver opened only after the HBC refused an offer to be the anchor store. Others, such as Eaton's, continued to expand into and profit by the malls. Nostalgic for the old department stores, one writer suggests that a mall, by contrast, seems expendable, replacable, ephemeral within the community. The retail business, however, was able to adapt its rhetoric of community and tradition to fit the new circumstances. Woodward's aligned its progress again with that of Vancouver itself, calling the opening of Park Royal an important historical event for the city. The company associated the shopping centre with the "modernization" of the city and, specifically, the construction of "modern" stores. Woodward's called its 1955 Westmount Shopping Centre opening "the event of the year" in Edmonton on the basis that it later "became the central feature..." of the neighbourhood.[65] Even if we discount the company's bias, today it is true that Edmonton shopping centres do function as the central identifying feature of city neighbourhoods.

Newman concludes that the HBC's decline as a commercial empire was largely due to its refusal to exploit these and other business opportunities. For instance, missed opportunities included investing in a transcontinental railway, which ironically followed the transportation arteries pioneered by the Company. And as a retail operation, the company ignored shopping centre sites across western Canada in favour of "the minuature versions of Harrods it had built in provincial capitals...masonry mausoleums...as

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the Bay" in which the Company took a prominent role in key Canadian events;

[63] Bob Greene, "The age of the suburban shopping mall", *EJ* Sept 29 1985, B6; Johnstone Walker Ltd. *The Story of Johnstone Walker 1886-1961*. Edmonton, n.p. 1961, 12; Douglas E. Harker, *The City and the Store*, Woodward's Ltd. 1958, n.p; these sentiments were characteristic of reactions when Woodward's went out of business and more recently when Eaton's itself has been threatened with bankruptcy

[64] Newman 1989, 197-198. The nature of the Company's relations with native peoples is debatable; in another work, Newman describes the perception of the Company as an agent of Inuit assimilation in the mid-twentieth century, through retail of new hardware, merchandise and junk food (Newman 1991, 252-253.) By 1982, historian Arthur Ray commented that unless the public took an interest in its preservation, York Factory would vanish altogether (Ibid. 324-5.)

[65] *EJ*, "Two complete family shopping centres" (advertisement), July 3 1957, 11; Newman 1991, 304-5; the Bay entered the suburbs only in 1960 with the purchase of the Morgan's company stores, and the first western mall stores did not appear until the late 1960s; ibid, 322-4; B. Greene, *EJ* 1985, B6; D.E. Harker,*The City and the Store*, Woodward's Ltd. 1958.

obsolete as trans-Atlantic ocean liners." The HBC appears to have rested in the faith that the Company was "too old, too big and too important ever to disappear."[66]

For over half a century, then, retail merchants had allied themselves with public perceptions of tradition, balanced with ideals of progress and civic modernity. Increasing urbanization and suburban development through the 1950s saw the beginning of retail decentralization and multiple-store shopping. By the late 1950s, a continued status and presence meant department stores' location in shopping centres. Although Johnstone Walker had "tastefully redecorated" and modernized the downtown store in 1953, it also soon opened a branch store in a shopping centre in rapidly expanding south Edmonton. Major department stores became visible mainly as "anchor tenants" at malls.[67]

## C. Critiques of heritage

### *The problem of collective memory*

The discussion above outlines some fundamentals of urban culture in Edmonton, in terms of historical traditions, aesthetics and meanings of public space. In the present, we encounter this history mainly in its preserved or restored, interpreted forms, as heritage zones. As meanings in the original contexts were visually coordinated by certain features of objects and spaces, so are their meanings in the present. This section introduces ways in which urban sites are both object and display case of heritage. Tensions between public dimensions and private interests make heritage development problematic in ways explored further below and in the following chapters.

First, one of the rationales of a heritage site is to somehow embody local "collective" (that is, community) memory. This implies a degree of authenticity, of local meaning and experience. But, however integrated into daily life, the heritage site is part of museum culture, which as noted above has usually privileged established origin, scholarship and expert valuation over oral histories and individual memory. Museum practice favours a potentially contradictory combination of interpretive realism and narrative bias; the impact of commercialism and the mass media has undermined the museum's public role; and the element of nostalgia is easily experienced as a retreat from the present, thus of local experience in process. The objections to established museum practice are, among other things, related to ideological interpretation and power over the dissemination of knowledge, as in cases where elements of the past appear to justify the present social order.[68]

There are also problems of the imposed limits to interpreting the life or even the space of a community, since this heritage potentially includes elements outside a feasible mandate, but also because to be really authentic, it would have to exhibit features of its own construction as a feature of the present day culture. For instance, if a future museum of Edmonton included a model of the twentieth-century city, it would have to also include a model of Fort Edmonton Park. In other words, the reconstruction of the past would represent the reconstruction of the more distant past, ultimately part of the future's sense of its roots. In any case, we can safely say that the issues of heritage construction are complex and require management. The question of interest here is the source and nature of that management.

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[66] Newman 1991, 425-6.

[67] Johnstone Walker Ltd. 1961, 12; Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. *Ideas: Vaticans of Commerce.* CBC Transcripts, Montreal 1989, 2, 19. R. Chalmers, "If you build it they will come", *EJ* Sept 15 1991, E3; the malls' popularity is also largely explained by the Canadian climate. Recently, the Canadian department store sector recovered from a long slump, more than doubling sales over previous years, in part by adapting mall retail techniques. The Retail Council of Canada described a "reinvention" of department stores which were no longer "all things to all people." Stores have adapted to market changes by "emphasizing...higher margin products and...soft goods, fashion, cosmetics...there are a lot of retail rivals and margins are very low, especially so in...Edmonton and Calgary." The changes are part of the long shift in consumption patterns in this century, in which the shopping mall has played a major role (Mairi MacLean, "Department store skid halted in '97", *EJ*, Feb 10 1998, F1).

[68] Nineteenth-century museology presented North American geography and native peoples as evidence proving, by contrast, the worth of European civilization and the benefits to all concerned of colonial expansion. Paradoxically, they also highlighted its decadence, a decline to which the new Eden was preferable. R. Lumley, *The Museum Time Machine*, London: Comedia 1988. See Jim McGuigan, *Culture and the Public Sphere*, London/New York: Routledge 1996, 126-9. See also R. Hewison, *The Heritage Industry*, London: Methuen 1987; D. Horne, *The Great Museum: the Re-presentation of History.* London: Pluto 1984.

Problems of "cultural citizenship" are even more complicated amid development of a global economy. Local culture is embedded in international communications networks and in retail and entertainment culture. Even on a civic level, decision makers consider heritage, for example, in the light of strategies for urban regeneration (economic revitalization) schemes. For economic interests, heritage is a "product" legitimated by its attraction for tourists and other audiences. However, heritage development is neither the property of cultural interests or of economic ones, but of their intersection as cultural industries.

***The culture industries: invented tradition?***

Critics have described the "culture industries" as a form of production legitimating a current (inequitable) political agenda: producers of target audiences of consumers for whom real structural conditions are obscured by a barrage of simplified images and narratives. For example, obsolete industrial sites such as coal mines, as designated tourist spots, concentrate on aspects of labour which can be associated with a vanished past rather than with labour conditions in the present.[69]

This sort of bias, obviously, would jeopardize the claim of heritage developments to be a source of meaningful collective identity and continuity. As constrained by cultural industries, the producers of authentic (folk-popular) culture would become disempowered consumers of mass culture. Associated problems for urban heritage spaces--part of everyday urban life--involve the relationship of such industries to social power and social change. A related issue is the social role of consumers in consumer environments. Oppositions such as those of educational culture versus market capitalism are breaking down in state-subsidized cultural sectors, making it even more difficult to separate commercialism from "public culture."[70]

For these kinds of reasons, critics have condemned heritage developments for diverting public debate from the real problems of social welfare states and economies in crisis. Robert Hewison, for one, believes that the heritage industry "...draws a screen between ourselves and the past" which undermines our capacity for creative change in the present.[71] Modern nations are in part constructed by symbolic processes creating the impression of stability and authority, and nationalism is a powerful force in this consensus. Public support for heritage depends upon the dominant political interests, aided by their access to mass media systems which support what Hobsbawm called the "invention of tradition."[72]

An overriding concern of official culture is to create a "living past" effective enough to evoke a certain public response to a shared notion of history. In Canada, the state has been the main generater of heritage culture, in the interests of constructing national identity and unity. These elements are particularly important to construct in a nation where their nature and even their presence is routinely challenged.

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[69]Adorno and Horkheimer coined the term culture industry to mark what they perceived as the industrialization of leisure forms and activities, transforming them into commodities designed to retail as entertainment. In the process, distinctions between authentic and inauthentic, or life and art, work and leisure, vanished; the analysis, by contrast, emphasized the contradiction between the idea of culture and of capitalist industrial production. Cultural tourism represents, in many ways, a paradigm of "culture industry" as it fuses apparently contradictory elements. See T. Adorno and M. Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, (trans. J. Cumming), New York: Continuum, 1986.

[70] See McGuigan 1996, 126. On the one hand, we have claims that the audience consists of active "shoppers", making new meanings out of consumption patterns. On the other hand, this model of sovereign consumption is closs to the uncritical free-market ideology of consumer choice, disregarding the real effects of power structures.

[71] Hewison 1987, 10; P. Wright, *On Living in an Old Country. The National Past in Contemporary Britain.* London: Verso 1985; also see A. Wilson, *The Culture of Nature: North American Landscape from Disney to the Exxon Valdez.* Between the Lines, Toronto 1990.

[72]See Anderson 1983; Since the era of what Anderson calls "print capitalism," mass media networks have been attributed the power to foster an"imagined community" connected across a unified field of national exchange. The paradox here is that sentiments of tradition, the local, of difference are made possible by media systems which are also implicated in the destruction of tradition; see Hobsbawm and Ranger (Eds), *The Invention of Tradition.* New York: Columbia University Press 1983; M. Folch-Serra, "David Harvey and his critics: the clash with disenchanted women and 'postmodern discontents,'" *The Canadian Geographer/Le Geographe canadien* 37, no 2 (1993) 176-84"; A. Appadurai, "Disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy", B. Robbins (Ed), *The Phantom Public Sphere*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1993, 269-289.

In variations of these views, heritage programs are an elite medium. However, as the history of local events shows, heritage conservation movements have occurred in the context of the struggle for equitable social reform, and in resistance to the destruction of communities. While their ultimate effects are consistently shaped by the priorities of state and economy, conservation movements have consistently served as a medium for statements about the nature of community and urban life. Therefore it is important to evaluate heritage development as a process, without falling into the narrower discourse of its evaluation as final "product."

As noted above, the public sphere itself is multiple and fragmented, without clear binary distinctions between, for instance, the "culture industries" and "the people" (the producers and consumers of culture.) While Wright, for instance, sees the mystification of the past as a dominant political instrument, he admits that heritage also has a popular basis in everyday consciousness.

Raphael Samuel, dismissing "heritage-baiters" as elitists, also defends heritage as a set of practices and representations not limited to commercial or conservative interests. Urban regeneration schemes, whatever their motivations, have won wide popular approval. The dismissal of heritage phenomena exhibits in part the ongoing tension between elitist and popular culture which is evident in the history of museums and other leisure spaces. The strong value assumptions still tied to values of "rational recreation" versus mass entertainment are evident in the Edmonton developments discussed below. Samuel concludes that it is possible to consider the popular or mythic dimensions of heritage without judging them by the same criteria as productions claiming authoritative (authentic) historical knowledge.[73]

Finally, Ian McKay notes that the critique of "invented tradition" is useful if we recall that all traditions are historically constructed; distinctions between authentic and invented tradition are largely artificial. Williams described tradition as an active and continuous process of selection and reselection--not an object, but a hegemonic system of valuations, selections and omissions shaped by class, gender and ethnicity, by unstated assumptions and the workings of the market. In the 1920s and 1930s, for instance, antimodernism emerged as a way of conceptualizing collective and individual identity at a time of profound soci-economic crisis. The production of the "Folk" in Nova Scotia involved the transformation of local crafts production, organized for sale to tourists: not so much a hoax as a part of a larger pattern of cultural redescription. It is more useful to inquire into why certain traditions take on great force and meaning in a society, than to simply reject them on the grounds that they are socially constructed.[74]

Heritage, in sum, has been defined by one administrator as "anything you want": a commodity with adjustable content and packaging, a renewable image or surface standing for timeless endurance. However, these processes are important as evidence of the human relation to the past, if not of that past itself. The studies in the following chapters, accordingly, concern the ways in which community is imagined, rather than any defining emphasis on the truth or invention of collective histories. It is not as important that we locate or define an essential, unchanging point of commonality as it is that we develop the ability to critically evaluate the processes involved in interpreting community. Representations of the past need not be dismissed outright; we can pose critical questions about their functional relevance and the interests which they serve.

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[73] Hewison 1987 10; Wright 1994.

[74] See I. McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia*. McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal and Kingston 1994. 40-42; "Tartanism triumphant: the construction of Scottishness in Nova Scotia, 1933-1954", *Acadiensis*, XXI, 2 (Spring 1992), 5-47; "Twilight at Peggy's Cove: towards a genealogy of 'maritimicity' in Nova Scotia", *Border/lines*, Summer 1988. Hobsbawm (1983) defined invented tradition as a set of ritual/symbolic practices, governed by tacitly accepted rules which seek to install values and norms and imply a continuity with an appropriate historic past. But invented traditions are active responses to new situations, which refer to rather than continue old ones, or which establish their own connections to the past by repetition in public contexts. The functions of invented tradition include social cohesion, legitimation, and socialization.

# Chapter 2. "Available elements": the Selective Construction of Heritage in Canada and Alberta

Any culture includes available elements of its past, but their place in the contemporary cultural process is profoundly variable (Raymond Williams 1977, 122.)

## A: Building a National Past

The past is itself an artifact, a container with multiple labelled drawers. Early nineteenth century Romantics looked to selected histories for alternatives to industrial landscapes and social change. Later western public museum culture developed in part through the centralized, standard mass media. The significance of a shared cultural legacy was reinforced at a popular level by sentimental, idealized images of a lost rural tradition. Victorian-era western society developed a sense of separation from its own, objectified, past. The secular religion of national identity, represented by shared notions of history, was also disseminated on a mass scale. As mass culture became a reference point for everyday understanding of experience, identifiable motifs of this history could serve as icons of community.

The post-WWII reconstruction of European cities demonstrated rationales of restoring the loci of national or cultural identities. The less dramatic North American loss of traditional environments exhibits similar elements of longing for continuity in place and time. Public demands for a tangible heritage have shaped our expectations of an orderly past amid the present.[1]

For the majority of Canadians today, museums and historic sites are the most accessible representations of history, and preserved or constructed heritage sites such as pioneer villages or urban streetscapes are their most popular form. This is evident especially in western Canada, where such constructions are the most common evidence of European settlement history. What are the values involved in the popularity of settlement-era memorials? How does their development reflect the relationship between elite cultural programs and political priorities, and popular sentiments?

Cultural nationalist Northrop Frye wrote that heritage preservation is central to the connection between the past and our present identity. The state becomes an active principle of cultural development when this connection appears to be significant on economic, political or social terms. Although heritage culture may be therefore be rationalized on an emotional level, the development of specific sites must contribute to goals such as economic diversification and marketable civic identity. Since the state is the primary agency for heritage in industrial nations, related phenomena are subject to interpretation as evidence of the government's legitimacy. Through heritage support, the state is associated with civil spheres such as social life, religion and the arts, establishing ceremonies and activities which will appear naturally identified with the current order. This chapter discusses the development of heritage industries in Canada and Alberta over the twentieth century. The next section provides an overview of the social and political context of heritage preservation of the built environment.

### *Ritual, site and identity, 1890s-WWI*

Given the concentration of official agencies on European immigration and settlement, the temporal scope of Canadian heritage conservation is relatively brief. Since the late nineteenth century, Canadian museums and related sites and facilities have been run by federal goverment departments including those of mining, education, tourism, university affairs, culture and recreation.[2] Public interest

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[1] See P. Anderson, *The Printed Image and the Transformation of Popular Culture, 1790-1860.* Clarendon Press, Oxford 1991; Wright 1985. Paradoxically, it was the improvement in material conditions which allowed Victorians a distance from, and hence idealization of, historical experience.The reconstruction of Warsaw's Old Town, destroyed systematically by German squadrons, embodied a spontaneous protest against the forces which had deliberately set out to destroy Poland as a historic nation. Sources used in reconstruction included photographs, sketches and paintings of the city made by people for whom documentation became "a weapon of ideological warfare". See Chamberlin, E. R. *Preserving the Past.* J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, London. 1979, 6-11; also D. Lowenthal,*The Past is a Foreign Country.* Cambridge University Press 1985, 369.

[2] D. Crowdis, "Development of Canadian museums, *Conference Proceedings, 2001: The Museum and the Canadian Public*" Canadian Museums Association. Ottawa 1977, 7-9. National collections at first concentrated on natural

and involvement in historical conservation remained minimal until the post-WWII period, and awareness of heritage as a legitimate cultural activity developed primarily after 1950.

The museum movement in Canada began in the 1840s with informal exhibitions and the 1842 opening of Gesner's Museum in New Brunswick. The Geological Survey of Canada founded the National Museum in the 1850s, primarily to house natural history collections. By 1903 there were 21 known Canadian museums with collections ranging from art to natural history to pioneer artifacts.[3] But since at least the late nineteenth century, historical preservationists in Canada were also concentrating on preserving significant sites, buildings and monuments. A post-Confederation nationalism coincided here with a contemporary association of public education, cultural preservation and social reform in a rapidly expanding, increasingly heterogeneous society.

Prior to World War I, the national government and the middle classes sought to foster the growth of nationalism across the country. Initially, celebrations and invented pageantry outlined the basics of shared sense of the nation's history. Beginning around 1895, ideals of the national image were also given material form in art and sculpture installed in public space, such as hotels, banks and civic buildings. Most of the imagery evoked a historical distance between the past and the present through tableaux of progress, from native life and the fur trade to the industrial machinery and cities of modernity appropriate to an established Dominion. Images of material progress and industrial cityscapes lent an elevated status to the new Dominion. Background contrast was provided by images of inactive Native spectators, tethered to the landscape, peering out of the past at the new Canadians sweeping past them into an unfolding future.

Murals were especially effective because of their contexts in monumental buildings, especially hotels, the symbols of tourism and territorial expansion. A 1912 mural in a Winnipeg hotel, for example, memorializes the vanished peoples and hunting grounds displaced by agricultural immigration and the conquest of nature. Since the nineteenth century, expositions and world's fairs have also tended to capture popular or folk culture within the bounds of tradition, as separate from the technology, science and industrial progress of modern life.[4]

The first citizens' group in Canada to make a specific case for maintaining a relic of the nation's history was concerned with the deterioration of Fort Anne at Annapolis Royale. They approached the federal government in 1893. They were, informally at first, granted a small annual allowance for maintenance of the fort. By 1917, the National Parks Branch of the Department of the Interior had acquired Fort Anne and Fort Howe in New Brunswick as national parks on the basis of their historical interest.[5]

The most significant prewar heritage project, however, was the elaborate celebration of the 1908 tercentenary of Champlain's founding of Quebec City, promoted at the time as a "natural shrine" for Canadians. In this context, the Royal Society of Canada sponsored the 1907 formation of the Historical Landmarks Association (later the Canadian Historical Association) to encourage the preservation of historic sites in Canada.[6]

Following WWI, in the context of a renewed sense of Canadian nationalism and the vanishing past of the country, preservationist movements intensified. Activists in the Atlantic provinces, Quebec and Ontario lobbied for preserving military and trading forts as well as traditional Loyalist and French sites. Concerned with potential political controversy concerning government attention to such sites, Arthur Meighen, Minister of the Interior, asked Cabinet to appoint an advisory board.

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history, initially created by explorers, geologists and anthropologists mostly sponsored by the Dominion government.

[3] C.E. and G.M. Guthe. *The Canadian Museum Movement*, Canadian Museums Association, 1958, 1-3.

[4] M. McKay, "Canadian historical murals 1895-1939: material progress, morality and the 'disappearance' of native people" in *The Journal of Canadian Art History/ Annales d'histoire de l'art canadien*, Vol. XV/1 1992, 63-72; J.Friesen, "Introduction: heritage futures", *Prairie Forum* , 15(2) 1990. At Expo 86, for instance, folklife and Native exhibits were located at the edges of the site, which centrally celebrated communications technologies. Expo 67's presentation of a brave new world of the North excluded the displaced Inuit. See Wilson 1990 163-166.

[5] B. Magner, "Why they save what they save", *Canadian Heritage*, May-June 1985, 15-19; C. Taylor, "Some early problems with the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada", *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 64 No.1, 1983, 5.

[6] Taylor, 5; Magner 1985, 15-19.

The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada was formed in 1919 to advise the government concerning the selection, official recognition and interpretation of sites. The HSMBC was composed mainly of private citizens and amateur historians appointed by the government, while the Department of the Interior kept authority for funding and implementing policy. The role of the HSMBC was advisory, its decisions non-binding, and not supported by any legislation until 1953.

Meanwhile, the Board established descriptive categories of historic sites of "national significance." Acting according to the contemporary belief that "a common history could unite...a disparate and polycultural population"[7], the Board tended to stress the interpretation of Canada as a British dominion. The military and trading forts continued to be promoted. These were seen as the most manifest symbols of nationhood, but they were also the simplest sites to handle, as federal responsibility for them could be directly transferred from the Department of Militia to that of the Interior. Until 1949, the federal government's main historical promotion activity was erecting plaques on stone cairns to draw public attention to the history of certain sites.[8]

The ordering of public imagery to establish a distance between past and present is evident also in the contemporary construction of public buildings which were consciously planned as icons of progress over pioneer-era history. The Alberta Legislature's architecture and location both intended to provide a deliberate contrast with the outmoded log construction of the adjacent Fort Edmonton, torn down as an eyesore in 1915.[9] For reasons which are partly practical and partly ideological, Canadian heritage sites and museums still typically memorialize selected events and peoples in the context of the pre-history of the present.

Meanwhile, cultural preservationists who focused on the built environment responded to a perceived loss of certain social values in the context of material progress. Middle-class reform movements saw the rational, humanist development of urban space as necessary to appropriate social order. Women's organizations proposed solutions to "abuses of industrial capitalism, congestion and disorder of cities [and disorder associated with] new immigrants...." in terms of adult education, scientific management and social control.[10] Emily Murphy, head of the Edmonton Women's Canadian Club in 1912, described their task as "educating into useful and loyal citizens the foreign peoples who are daily trekking across this land."[11]

Rational leisure pursuits were envisioned as part of this education, lest (as Mrs. Thomas Edison lamented in 1925, "the descendants of the pioneers who mastered the plains [be] conquered by the wilderness of leisure..."[12] So-called maternal feminists supported historical preservation as one way to maintain an environment imparting a sense of appropriate cultural history in the new nation. It was a complex in which the positive values of material, cultural, moral and social conservatism could be directly associated with practical work for material preservation of the built and natural environment.

In Alberta, both the Liberal government and the public were sympathetic to women's concerns, including suffrage and civic improvement. In 1924, Nellie McClung recalled the optimistic sense of the day that women's "love of conservatism, love of beauty..." would "regenerate the world." Instead, she believed, the dispersal of feminist energies and interests had meant the loss of many opportunities for women to influence urban development through their organizations.[13]

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[7] C. Les Usher, *Financing of Historical Resources in Alberta: a Study. Vol. II.* Alberta Culture, Edmonton. 1981, 24.

[8] Usher 1981; Taylor 1983.

[9] Boddy 1980 131; M. Payne, "Edmontonians and the Legislature", B. Hesketh and F. Swyripa (Eds.), *Edmonton: the Life of a City.*, Edmonton: NeWest 1995.

[10] L. Kealey, "Introduction" in L. Kealey, ed. *A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada, 1880s-1920s.* The Women's Press, Toronto, 1979, pp. 1-14. See also R. P. Coulter, "Patrolling the passions of youth", Hesketh and Swyripa (Eds.) 1995.

[11] Merifield, R.R. *Speaking of Canada: the Centennial History of the Canadian Clubs.* McClelland & Stewart, Toronto 1993, 56.

[12] M. Corman and H. Weir, "An interview with Mrs. Thomas Edison", *Collier's Weekly*, July 188-August 1 1925.

[13] N. McClung. *More Leaves From Lantern Lane.* Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1937, 19; V. Strong-Boag. "Ever the crusader: Nellie McClung", *Rethinking Canada: the Promise of Women's History*, 311-14.

### *Before and after Massey: 1920s-1960s*

More directly focused heritage programs achieved impetus in part as a post-war sense of loss due to material and human destruction. During the 1920s, most of the national structure of historical sites agencies was established. The federal government added only one more fort until 1940, when 6 were designated; by 1983, the total had rised to fifteen.[14]

The museum movement in Canada, also dominated by historical themes, had resulted in 119 museums by 1932. Over half of these were connected with community church and school organizations. Lord Tweedsmuir suggested in 1940 that women's groups in Canada begin to collect historical material in scrapbooks, projects which were indeed carried out across the country.[15] By the 1950s, "civic-minded" service groups such as the IODE, Women's Institutes and UEL were strong players in the promotion of community interest in local history. [16] The museum and heritage preservation efforts received their most significant impetus following the findings and recommendations of the Massey-Levesque commission as the decade opened.

By the 1950s Canada had developed a strong tradition of government intervention in the economy. The 1951 report of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Social Sciences (Massey-Levesque) began the expansion of the federal government's role in the cultural and intellectual life of Canadians. This social climate encouraged political decisions to provide federal government funds for historic sites. Government action on the recommendations of the Massey-Levesque Commission included increased financial support for museums, as well as universities and the arts. Canada had lacked the level of private and philanthropic support that had stimulated the development of American and British museums. After 1951, Canadian museums tended to develop as public institutions on the national and provincial level and as public, tax supported museums on the municipal level.

The Massey (or Massey-Levesque) Report found most museums to be insufficiently funded, with a "widespread public indifference to their inadequacy..." in part due to the failure of museums to attract the public support necessary to demand government funding. With respect to historical sites, the report recommended that the government's involvement extend beyond plaques and promotion to an effective preservation program. In response, in 1953 the government passed the Historic Sites and Monuments Act, which gave the HSMBC significantly more responsibility for historical preservation.[17]

A 1957 Canadian Museums Association report counted 262 museums in the country, most of which operated on a combination of public and private support. Due to a lack of adequate funding and experience, and their outdated obsession with collection over interpretation, these museums lacked much general appeal. Their obsolete and alienating agenda undermined their potential for an active role in the community. Collections needed to be made relevant to people "engaged in the competitive activities of our modern society." Making it clear that this competition was economic in nature, the report insisted that museums become more businesslike, practice "salesmanship" of their assets and become "show windows" retailing public education and information in order to have an impact on local life. Canadian museums must overcome their "paralytic modesty" and use public relations media to attract public support (and thus funding.)[18]

Twenty years later, a curator criticized the business model as overlooking the potential for real public support, through participation. In the context of the mass media, all objects tend to take on commercial commodity meanings. Collection and display become less relevant to museums than the possession of an interpretive monopoly on the product of culture. Since people have the right to define,

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[14] Magner 1985, 16.

[15] D. Meikle. "The growing interest in local history", *Globe and Mail*, December 8, 1979, A6; e.g., the PAA's collections of scrapbooks and accounts of projects by these groups are a substantial source of information about heritage in Alberta and in Canada.

[16] Guthe and Guthe 1958, 4-21.

[17] Quote: Canada. *Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Social Sciences*, Ottawa 1951; cited Guthe & Guthe 1958, 27; Usher 1981, 13-14, 20; Magner 1985. The Department of NANR, which implemented the Act, also administered the Canadian Historic Sites Division (later the National Historic Parks and sites Branch). The latter was established in 1955 with a mandate to "develop, interpret, operate and maintain historic parks and sites." A number of amendments in the following years gave Parks Canada responsibility for the agency.

[18] Guthe and Guthe 1958, 27-35.

value and create cultural objects of their own regions and communities, the museum's role should more properly be one of aiding and enabling people to own and portray their own history.[19] This emphasis on public participation, described often as the "democratization" of museums, later developed into a main tenet of new museology.

During the 1960s, isolated heritage groups dedicated themselves to specific preservation projects and issues. But prior to 1972, federal involvement in heritage "could be characterized as negligible committment rather than wilful neglect."[20] Centennial-era nationalism, especially following Expo 67, had effects on preservation and commemoration interests similar to those noted earlier in the century. Both public and government attention to heritage resulted in an "astounding growth" of both institutions and sites. Increased public interest led to higher government grants and museum budgets. After Massey-Levesque, then, museums in Canada became accepted as part of a legitimate and even necessary aspect of national culture by taxpayers and governments alike. Increasing involvement by governments, instituting centralized standards of training and administration across the country, accompanied the rapid growth in numbers of museums.[21]

### *The 1970s: public mobilization*

By the early 1970s, the general public was increasingly in sympathy with preservationists as they saw the traditional urban environment threatened by the rebuilding and development which had accompanied post-war economic prosperity. New national organizations formed to mobilize the growing support for architectural preservation. Most often cited were a combination of aesthetic arguments; claims that buildings were "living history" lessons; that their destruction was a danger to the local sense of community; and that economically it was both cheaper and more labour intensive to restore rather than rebuild.[22]

Federal government agencies recognized this social climate in part by establishing the 1972 National Museums Policy with an emphasis on democratization and decentralization. In 1973, the Heritage Canada Foundation was endowed by the federal government. Independent of the federal Historic Sites Branch, the HCF was to lobby for better legislation, to promote public education and to coordinate the efforts of scattered grassroots and community organizations. Its own stated mandate was not to freeze places in time but to foster conditions of "rational change."[23]

By this, the HCF meant to balance the conservation of environments with the demand for development. The foundation, in other words, staked out a middle ground between passion (culturally and historically defined) and reason (defined as pragmatic economic development.) In 1974, a federal report continued inquiry into the public role of museums. But two years later, the Trudeau government cut related spending, marking a shift toward today's primary concern with operations and maintenance of existing facilities. Nevertheless, since 1976 Canadian heritage activities have been encouraged by international organizations for heritage preservation.[24]

In a world defined (at least by intellectuals) as one of cultural discontinuity, mass media and alienation, the declining federal funding to Canadian institutions represented a national crisis. The 1974 report had declared that in a "culturally rough" country, the public looks to museums to provide a sense of

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[19] E. Teborsky. "New methods, new audiences, new services, new public demands", *Conference Proceedings, 2001: The Museum and the Canadian Public*, Canadian Museums Association. Ottawa 1977, 41-43.

[20] Canada. *Report of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee* . Department of Communications, Ottawa 1982, 106.

[21] Crowdis 1977, 7-9; Canada 1982, 106.

[22] J. Dalibard. "Heritage fights back", *Canadian Heritage* No.38, December 1982, iii; P. Berton, *Canadian Heritage* No.38, December 1982, i.

[23] J. Dalibard, "The community is the curator", *Canadian Heritage*, February-March 1986a, Vol. 12 No.1, 2-3, and Dalibard 1982, op.cit. In part, the policy provided for museum inventories, travelling displays and accessible catalogues, and programs for funding research and training in non-profit institutions throughout Canada.

[24] For example, the International Convention for the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage. The World Heritage List included seven Canadian sites by 1982, Magner 19; Canada 1982, 106; B. Dixon, A. Courtney and R. Bailey. *Museums and the Canadian Public*. Secretary of State, Ottawa 1974.

continuity with and relationship to the past. Contributors to a 1977 Canadian Museums Association conference warned that adequate public funding would only follow public perception of the role of museums to preserve our cultural independence and regional identities. Further, they believed, museum democratization and decentralization must continue in order to enable a truly nationwide participation in the culture of society.[25]

Museum professionals of the late 1970s, in short, were in agreement concerning the necessity of the institution to establish its relevance to audiences. The issues then included the definition of those audiences, as well as the definition of the appropriate balance of the museum as both an educational and leisure facility. The museum might be an information centre, rather than a dusty collection of objects--or a leisure diversion, without relying on "son of Expo" design to draw crowds. However, a public accustomed to the standards of commercial displays, exposition-style entertainments and high-tech communication would have higher expectations of museum design and of the experience of "virtual history" itself.[26]

The latter suggestions have proved especially prescient, as museums of the 1990s compete for crowd-pleasing electronic and mechanical spectacles with historic or scientific themes. This trend is necessarily somewhat less obvious in historic sites which reconstruct a "low-tech" past. Such sites instead concern themselves with authenticity or at least detail in their presentation and construction, so that the attraction lies in the achievement of the setting rather than anything that might occur there. Audience expectations were introduced in the rationale for reconstructing the 1875 Fort Calgary in the city in 1990. The citizens' fundraising group insisted on achieving more than "merely an image of the past" through artifacts, photos and information in the existing interpretive centre. In "the days of Disneyland and Fantasyland", said a spokesperson, people kept asking, "where is the Fort?"[27]

### *1980s-1990s: Heritage politics*

As of the early 1980s, the federal government was responsible for national collections and sites owned by the Crown, and also provided funding and program assistance to non-federal heritage organizations across Canada. At least 52 federal organizations had a role in heritage areas, principally the Department of Communications and Environment Canada. However, federal designation itself (unlike provincial designation) offered no restrictions on property use, or other form of protection, without acquisition of the property by the Crown.[28]

The 1982 *Report of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee* cited the inadequacy of this system as one of the central problems facing Canadian heritage resources, which it called "a distinct and vital component of Canadian culture." The rationale behind the Massey-Levesque Commission had been that "the Canadian people should know as much as possible about their country, its history and traditions, and about their national life and common acheivements." Despite the subsequent expansion of Canadian heritage activities, since 1976 there had been no increase in the real value of related funds, and the HCF endowment had diminished. Since the work of conserving, cataloguing and displaying heritage resources had been significantly eroded, the Report recommended that the government "make a substantial committment at once to the preservation of our heritage..." This would include establishing more effective legislation and heritage agencies.[29]

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[25] B. Dixon, "The museum and the Canadian public", *Conference Proceedings, 2001: The Museum and the Canadian Public*. Ottawa: Canadian Museums Association (CMA) 1977, 11-12; B. Ostry, "Great expectations?", CMA 1977, 57-59; Hugh Pryce-Jones, "New public demands", CMA 1977, 39-40.

[26] CMA 1977

[27] B. Hutchinson, "Refortifying Calgary's past", *Alberta Report*, Vol. 17, No.26, June 11, 1990, 20-21.

[28] The Department of Communications funded the National Museums of Canada branch, promoting facilities (or "custodial institutions", displays and exhibitions.) Parks Canada, under the Minister of the Environment, continued to support the HSMBC's recommendations for recognition of *in situ* historic resources. Canada 1982, 108; see also J. Dalibard, "Why we need a national heritage review", *Canadian Heritage*, Vol.12, No.4,Oct.-Nov. 1986b, 39-43.

[29] Heritage included everything from documents, folk tales, buildings, rural and urban features and collections. The Report distinguished between two types of heritage resources: "movable heritage" was administered by archives and museums, while other institutions were concerned with "fixed heritage", such as natural sites and the built environment. Canada 1982, ibid., 105-106.

In its concluding remarks, the Report recommended a balance of government financial and administrative assistance with a concern for liaison with nongovernment bodies. While the document insisted on the continuing relevance of "national" sites such as the built environment of the Capital area, it also stressed the need for the involvement of regional and local groups and volunteers in cultural heritage. Further democratization and popularization were needed. Recommendations also urged the promotion of "programs designed to increase interest in heritage resources" in the public--to "heighten and widen their enjoyment" as well as the nobler objective to serve as "the sources of all our judgments...our intellectual and spiritual vitality and our ability to adapt and renew."[30]

In 1985, museum professionals again cited their commitment to values of public accessibility and the individual's right to "determine, develop and assert a coherent understanding of his or her heritage."' The 1986 Task Force on National Museums reiterated previous complaints concerning the government's focus on collecting artifacts, rather than on public access and cost. The HCF commented that even Tourism Canada had failed to grasp the importance of heritage and traditions to tourists.[31] Contemporary priorities were placed on the administration rather than the conserving and interpreting of heritage.

The continuing emphasis on attracting public involvement was reflected in the growth of open-air museums, especially rural pioneer village types. Over 100 of these opened between 1967 and 1985. The director of the new Canadian Museum of Civilization cited the popularity of these constructed historic environments as the main inspiration for the streetscape design of the Canadian history wing.[32]

Jill Delaney cites the CMC as a a problematic site of "collective identity" and authority in the consumption of a prescribed national identity. The streetscapes are of an "archetypal, mythological and sentimental character" which symbolize a carefully constructed vision of Canada's history. As a "space of consumption" the History Hall is comparable to both a museum gift shop and a shopping mall. Director George MacDonald describes how the CMC, in a shift in the traditional role of the national museum, combines entertainment and consumption methods with traditional display and programming methods. His approval of the Disney World model for museums has raised controversy among Canadian historians and museologists who prefer the constitution of museums as institutions of academic research and public education.In fact, MacDonald promotes the ability of the museum to reaffirm Canada as a unique nation-state, through the presentation of "ritual space" in which visitors are initiated into the national identity.[33]

Delaney points out that MacDonald's claims for the museum as an immersion in national identity were prefigured in a federal government document concerning the current imperative for museums to become market-oriented. According to a tourism master plan of 1987, cultural management now demanded economic justification for their tax-based funding, translated as attracting audiences. Cultural tourists, it claimed, "become transformed" by visiting a symbolically significant site "where people who occupy a certain position in a society must have been." To be legitimate as a source of cultural capital, then, the museum must be perceived as the authority on cultural citizenship.[34] As Delaney says, ritual, site and identity are directly connected here. These endure as powerful associations from earlier in the century.

MacDonald's presentation of the CMC as a democratic institution is challenged by the character of the History Hall as a place for passive immersion rather than critical interpretation. Nevertheless, there appears to be a pervasive public demand for "total immersion in nostalgic evocation", characterized by a

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[30] Ibid., 139.

[31] Quote in Dalibard 1986a, 3; also Dalibard 1986b, 39-43.

[32] Mainly in Ontario (37), Alberta (14) and British Columbia (8). G. MacDonald. "Streets are in at this museum", *Canadian Heritage*, Vol. 10, No.5, December 1984-January 1985, 30-49.

[33] The museum's gift shops, for instance, act as a medium of cultural knowledge and identity through the distribution of artifacts as a symbol of contact with "Canadian culture." See J. Delaney, "Ritual space in the Canadian Museum of Civilization: consuming Canadian identity", in Shields 1992, 136-146. Delaney contends that visitors may subvert the ideological or didactic intentions of the museum by approaching it primarily as a place of entertainment, rather than an interactive display of information. In this way, visitors can and do resist the narrative format and exhibit directions; see also J. Baudrillard, "Simulacra and simulations" in M. Poster (ed.), *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, Stanford University Press, 1988, 170.

[34] R. Kelly, *Draft Tourism Master Plan*, for the Canadian Museum of Civilization (Kelly Consultants Ltd), Hull, Canada: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1987, 22; cited Delaney 1992, 143.

passion for physical objects and details "quite astonishing in its inclusiveness" and "satisfied ultimately only by total environments."[35]

The effect is even more valued as the world outside the museum loses more period buildings and objects through modernization. As public interest stimulates consumer demand for replicas, the nostalgia industry is further nourished. In response, museums have modernized and dramatized their settings and contents with the use of commercial methods appealing to a heterogeneous clientele. Alberta's Provincial Museum, for instance, has significantly raised attendance rates with a recent policy of importing interactive, high-tech events appealing mainly to families (read: children). The museum manager comments, "Museums used to lecture people. Now we feel our job is to draw them into a subject and entertain them and if they learn something in the process, good."[36]

Through the 1980s, Canadian historic sites received a ten-fold increase in visitors. With the economic recession of the 1990s came government funding reductions. Gate fees were introduced, sites deteriorated, and visitor numbers began to decline. So did the physical condition of sites. Environment Canada's director of national historic sites commented in 1991 that, "[a]t a time of national crisis, when Canada needs unifying symbols, we're losing part of our past and part of our collective memory."[37] Designated sites at national and provincial levels are primarily historic districts, parks and cemeteries. The National Capital Commission explicitly included cultural landscapes in its 1992 heritage policy, but without implementation policies. The primary facility for managing the cultural landscape in Canada is still the municipal planning process and bylaws.[38]

**B. Alberta: A heritage of heritage**

The development and settlement of the Canadian northwest as an agrarian resource base coincided with the expansion of mass media networks across the continent, including those of the tourist industry and the political promotion of national identity. The wide circulation of promotional imagery of the west lay a foundation for the later development of the heritage industry. The painters, photographers and surveyors of the latter nineteenth century were aware that they were producing the iconography of history. Later image-makers were even more conscious of their purpose. National policies of multiculturalism and cultural preservation have coincided in Alberta with an emphasis on the preservation of material heritage.

Although the political and economic relevance of heritage-oriented policies have been increasingly questioned in recent years, the public presence of heritage, in the form of objects, buildings and districts, has become naturalized as part of the everyday environment and the tourist landscape. Perhaps because of this presence, or because Alberta's European history is so comparatively recent, access to the past seems more possible or direct than it might elsewhere. But in a region where material progress has meant "creative destruction" of superseded forms, historical environments must be constructed or invented as much as restored or salvaged.

As one observer put it, "heritage" is a word now used "with abandon" in Alberta, in the names of everything from car dealerships to motels and daycares.[39] The term is an elastic one which can include everything that either is or wishes to be perceived as rooted in local place and history--and thus to have some claim on citizen loyalty--however paradoxically and temporarily. Even the use of the term "heritage

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[35]Harris 171.

[36]The show is sponsored by Edmonton utility companies who include displays of their own conservation efforts. Corporate sponsorship is a growing feature of contemporary museum production, as in the PMA's new Syncrude Gallery of Aboriginal Culture and recent permanent exhibits at the Royal Tyrrell Museum of Paleontology. (B. Mah, "Junk provides heaps of learning", *EJ*, January 28 1998, B1.)

[37] Although the operating budget for heritage sites increased by almost $10 million between 1986 and 1990, most of it had been used to establish new sites in 1988-89 and to pay salaries. In 1991, of the 110 national historic sites administered by Environment Canada, 55% were classed as threatened, and 40% as in poor condition. Although the federal government announced an environmental Green Plan including heritage site funds, sites across the country continue to deteriorate; P. Gorrie, "Canada's decaying historic sites costing us our past, officials say", *Toronto Star*, December 17, 1991, A1; *Vancouver Sun*, "Historic sites need funding", December 27, 1991, A9.

[38] Buggey, S. "Canadian cultural landscapes: an overview", *Impact*, Vo. 4, No. 4, June 1992.

[39] T. Cowan, "How they're saving Alberta's past", *Canadian Heritage*, Vol.10, No.3, August-September 1984, 13-16.

site" (or zone, or district) by official agencies in the province, as in the country, is so general as to arguably include everything natural and man-made that is older than last week. To understand how the terms of heritage came into common use in a province where "conservative" usually implies the opposite of cultural conservation, it helps to begin with the Euro-North American context of heritage awareness at the turn of the century.

### *From pioneers to bureaucrats: 1890s-1950s*

In the late nineteenth century, community organizations in the town of Edmonton were already conscious of a comfortable distance from the pioneer past. The Old Timers Association typically constructed displays of earlier life at their public events by way of "doing honor to the old times; which few of them would wish to see again." The *Bulletin* of February 1897, for instance, describes a hall elaborately decorated with animal furs and heads, pictures of hunters and old Fort Edmonton, a shanty set up with a canoe, traps and snowshoes, and other artifacts.Two decades later, organizations for the recovery of history in Canada were still interested mainly in pioneer life commemoration (still a dominant ethos of community self-expression in the prairies.) This tradition involves the embellishing of a secure sense of place with romantic nostalgia for rural tools, costume and custom. It emphasizes relatively few aspects of urban, social or intellectual history.[40]

Early in the 1920s, westerners took exception to the federal Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada's practice of "interpreting the history of a heterogeneous country from a homogeneous national view point." The Board's credibility was compromised by the fact that Ontario sites were over-represented and western sites absent from the official list. In 1922, a western representative was finally appointed to the Board, and the following year two more prairie Forts were designated.[41]

The Board's main interest in Western sites, however, continued to be their relevance to national history, and numerous challenges to their interpretations continued through the 1930s and 1940s. The 1885 rebellion sites, for instance, were noted on cairn plaques, but their wording drew protests from local people. Even the Massey-Levesque Report of 1951 pointed out the Board's bias in presenting the 1885 struggle's outcome as the victory of "civilization" over the "hinterland." Further, while the west was still under-represented in federal designations, HSMBC's continued focus on only forts and posts was a distortion of history.[42]

Regional desires for autonomy in heritage administration were part of a more general sense of cultural maturity in Alberta, especially with economic development after WWII. In fact, culture and economics were linked from the beginning. In 1946, the Department of Economic Affairs became responsible for administering Alberta's Cultural Development Act, intended to foster "the "encouragement, expansion, coordination and development of different aspects of the cultural life of the province." The Department set out its mandate in terms of the desirable balance between economic concerns and cultural life. In a Christian, democratic society, it was seen as "fundamental" that individuals should have freedom and scope for personal expression, because "while the political and economic spheres of social life may provide the roots, the stem and the foliage, it is in the cultural sphere that the flower of human endeavour can blossom."[43]

The Department further cautioned that culture, which reflects the "soul of a nation" could not be directly organized because the "satisfaction [of] spiritual hunger" must be a free and open endeavour. However, the leisure time of citizens was subject to commercial exploitation by the powerful forces of a "money-dominated economy" which concentrated attention on the acquisition of material things. The province's citizens needed to "bring...economic and cultural life...into proper relationship." Fortunately, the province exhibited "almost unlimited scope for [cultural] development."[44]

In its 1946 Annual Report, administrators noted that Alberta was past its pioneer days and emerging "as a social entitity" with a developing economy and communications facilities. The "long

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[40] *EB.*, February 22 1897, 1; Friesen 1990, 194.

[41] Taylor, 3.

[42] Ibid., 11-20.

[43] Alberta. Department of Economic Affairs. *First Annual Report.* 1946, 12.

[44] Alberta 1946, 12-13. At this point, culture was defined as four areas: libraries, music, drama and visual arts.

suppressed desires for cultural experience" and the "finer things of life", including quality leisure time, needed attention. Emphasizing the leadership role of the local people themselves in "enriching the cultural life of their communities," government policy stated that "direction cannot be imposed in matters of cultural significance. Growth must be natural and proceed from the community level."[45]

"Heritage" was not mentioned in the department's mandate, but among other committees a Museum Branch undertook to pursue local collections for future storage and display. Likely candidates included the artifacts of an amateur "Indian lore" enthusiast. However, a record year for tourism in 1947 (for which the Department's Travel Bureau took credit) highlighted the economic and publicity benefits of the province's scenery and other attractions. The tourist numbers kept rising, and by 1952 the government had an established program to educate Albertans as to their role in the industry. For instance, domestic advertising campaigns urged citizens to make improvements in services (an early version of the suggestion that citizens, as tourist attractions, should smile.) Promotional scenic films circulated outside the province.[46]

The theme of educating citizens to meet the standards of international tourism and culture was evident in other areas. The Department characterized its Cultural Activities Branch as a "clearing house" for everything concerning libraries, art, drama, music, handicrafts and tourism. Touring performance groups and exhibits educated rural people and publicized the province elsewhere. For example, the Visual Arts Branch took a "vigorous interest in...developing handcaft programs" during the 1950s. Students in regional centres, guided by instructors sent out from central training facilities, one year produced "some 500 items of which an astonishingly high proportion was of commercial quality." Cultural festivals in local communities were credited with stimulating further efforts, reinforced by a department newsletter called "Leisure" and booklets on crafts methods.[47]

At this point we should recall Williams' account of selective tradition. McKay draws on this in his description of specific ways in which socioeconomic factors influence the manifestation of collective identity. Government agencies in the maritime provinces had also been involved in organizing the production of craftspeople for sale to tourists. Traditional practices, such as hooking rugs, were adapted with invented motifs and colours to fit tourist expectations of local culture.[48]

There is little doubt that the equally centralized development of handcraft programs in Alberta was directly related to the commercial tourist market, which continued to expand. The Cultural Activities Branch added a Recreation Board offering arts and crafts classes, and "vendors of tourist items" were referred to local craft production. Crafts and tourist destinations were also promoted in both art museums and commercial venues. By 1955, the Publicity Bureau had a show window in the Jasper Avenue branch of the Royal Bank.[49]

Education, in the form of specialized production training, and entertainment, in the form of tourism, were therefore linked early in the province's development of cultural industries. The Department of Economic Affairs had a wide mandate. In 1954 (although it declined responsibility for the inclement weather and coal mine closures) it described a successful year furthering the "industrial, economic, cultural and social development of the people." [50]

### *The Golden Jubilee: a new focus on heritage*

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[45] Alberta. Department of Economic Affairs. *First Annual Report.* 1946, 12; Alberta. Department of Economic Affairs. *Second Annual Report.* 1946, 18.

[46] Between 1947 and 1949, visitor numbers increased from 752,000 to 994,019. Alberta 1946, 18; Alberta. Department of Economic Affairs. *Third Annual Report.* 1947, 3-4; Alberta. Department of Economic Affairs. *Fifth Annual Report*, 1949, 8; *Eighth Annual Report*, 1952, 42. The Music, Drama and Visual Arts Boards all made presentations to the Massey Commission in 1949.

[47] Alberta. Dept. Economic Affairs. *Fifth Annual Report*, 1949, 9-10.

[48] I. McKay 1994, see Ch. 1.

[49] Alberta. Dept. Economic Affairs, *Tenth Annual Report.* 1954, 11-13; Alberta. Dept. Economic Affairs, *Eleventh Annual Report.* 1955, 40; *EJ,* October 1, 1956, 18.

[50] Meikle 1979, A6.

For Canada, the public attention to the Massey Commission Report, and later the nationalist spirit of the Centennial year, fueled the growth of awareness of culture and heritage in the country. Alberta's 1955 Golden Jubilee was a comparable occasion for articulating and celebrating identity on a regional level, and had similar results. The provincial government's involvement with heritage concerns was focused by its promotion of Jubilee commemorations, which contributed to the region's awareness of and pride in local history. Vincent Massey, marking the concurrent Saskatchewan celebrations, remarked that Jubilees were a period "when time stood still...a year of freedom from the burden of time." Whatever the Governor General may have meant by this biblical reference, Smith comments that "the chief characteristic of any such celebration is to search the past for points of reference to the present." Different states and institutions succeed to different extents as creative agents to provide or sustain a sense of the past.[51]

In Alberta, the Jubilee helped to distinguish the past as separate to the present, more than it did to establish continuity over time amid the escalating material change in the province. During that year, Economic Affairs erected 12 historical site markers on Alberta highways. Jubilee Caravans were travelling museums; historical displays were developed in community tourist information buildings. In Fort McLeod, two period rooms were furnished by the T. Eaton Co., drawing attention to contrasts in the "typical" styles of 1905 and 1955. Two years later, the town completed a replica of the original fort.[52]

By 1957, there were thirty-one museums in the prairie provinces, over half of them historically-oriented houses, forts, pioneer villages and other "living museums." Alberta's share was founded and operated by citizens, service groups and interested amateurs, with some provincial and civic government support to collections including those of the Legislature Building and the University. Local interest in heritage was growing, resulting in more public attention to historic sites and artifacts such as local pioneer photographer Ernest Brown's collection of historical photographs.[53]

As features of the old capital city were replaced during post-war construction and industry growth, public sentiment also supported preservation of material history. When the last of the original wooden paving blocks on city streets were removed with the Kingsway street railway in 1957, one was saved for "an honored position in the City Archives." The movement to restore Fort Edmonton gathered force in this period, amid increasing pressure on Economic Affairs minister A.R. Patrick for heritage legislation. A 1960 bill to protect "historical, archaeological, ethnic and meteoric sites and objects" led to the establishment of the Historical and Archaeological Advisory Board. In 1964 the provincial government acknowledged the principle of *in situ* structural preservation and legislated for the designation of sites as historical objects.[54]

In the 1960s, Alberta heritage efforts focused on site development, but suffered from inadequate funding for diffused activities, and a lack of either centralized government administration or private commercial involvement. The provincial government marked the Centennial year by establishing the Provincial Museum of Alberta to focus on collections and display. The post-Expo Canadian sense of cultural vitality coincided with the rapid growth of Alberta's oil economy and consequent environmental destruction due to new urban development. During the next decade, provincial agencies developed quickly.[55]

### *The Good Old Days: heritage development in the 1970s*

In 1971, the first annual report of the new Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation (later Alberta Culture) made no mention of historical resources. However, a 1972 Cultural Heritage conference prefigured a new direction. Later that year, Alberta's Cultural Development Act established a Cultural Heritage Policy which recognized that the interaction of many cultures produces "a distinct and new

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[51] D.E. Smith, "Celebrations and history on the prairies", *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol.17, No.3 (Fall 1982) discusses differences between the 1955 celebrations in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

[52] Alberta. Dept. Economic Affairs. 1955; *EJ*, July 2 1957, 32.

[53] Alberta. Dept. Economic Affairs 1954, 13.

[54] *EJ*, July 3 1957, 23; *EJ*, "Protection sought for historic sites", Dec. 16, 1960, 6. The Historical Advisory Committee, established in 1963; Provincial Parks Act, 1964.

[55] Usher 1981, 23.

culture" in which diversity "shall be a binding tie of unity..." In the interests of Alberta's "evolving" pride and identity, the policy promised to preserve the "cultural wealth of our past" including the rites, arts, music and social ways of native peoples and immigrants. Carrying on the work of Economic Affairs, the new department would also stimulate and promote Alberta's "living arts."[56]

By 1973, the new department could boast about the federal government's recognition of Alberta's lead in recognizing cultural heritage resources. But by this, the Cultural Heritage Division meant primarily human resources, "the pioneer people, the good people from which the generous, self-reliant mosaic that is Alberta today...has sprung." A "museumobile" was planned to take "the wonderful world of the past" to rural communities, while urban museums such as the new PMA mounted popular ethno-cultural performances.[57]

It became necessary to establish a separate mechanism for sites and structures. In 1972, Alberta was the only province without legislation specifically protecting historical resources. A contemporary report suggested that "[w]e've got just enough of a past now for it to be appropriate to take steps to protect it" and recommended legislation to protect sites, administred by a specific government agency. The Alberta Heritage Act (amended as the Alberta Historic Resources Act in 1975) was passed in 1973.[58]

The Act radically expanded heritage programs, giving the government a strong mandate to preserve, develop and interpret historic resources (widely defined as "paleontological, archaeological, prehistorical, historical, cultural, natural, scientific and aesthetic" in nature.) Among other things, the legislation established the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, the provincial version of the HCF, to raise funds and "promote public awareness" of Alberta history. As a Crown agency, the AHRF offered tax deductions and other incentives to, in its words, "involve Albertans directly with its programs and projects." However, its mechanisms also predisposed it toward a pragmatic emphasis on criteria of buildings' re-use rather than any intrinsic or acquired historic significance.[59]

In 1974, the provincial government designated almost $300,000 for the new Historic Sites Service to document, preserve, restore and interpret selected heritage sites. Almost all its contemporary work concerned transportation routes, Hudson's Bay Company posts and NWMP forts, in which it perpetuated the longstanding federal focus on these aspects of western history. However, 1975's "explosion of cultural activities" in Alberta included recognition of thousands of new sites, and new programs such as the writing of local histories. A museum grants program, with emphasis on "volunteerism", supported community institutions and heritage villages. Local interest among "the rich resource which is our people" was considered essential to justify the investment of tax dollars. But according to CYR Minister Horst Schmid, the grant programs had succeeded in greatly expanding heritage development in areas where until recently "hardly anyone was interested in the preservation of that old churn, bed, cradle or coal oil lamp." AHRF chair Grant MacEwen had already publicized the Foundation's role in fostering public participation in "proclaiming, capturing or restoring the heritage of our past."[60]

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[56] Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation. *Annual Report*. Edmonton, 1971; Statutes of the Province of Alberta, *Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation Act*, 1971, c.23, 95-97; Statutes of the Province of Alberta, *Cultural Development Act*, RSA 70, c.82, 1972, c27; *Alberta Hansard*, November 14, 1972, 74-15.

[57] *Alberta Hansard*, March 19 1973, 23-990.

[58] Environmental Conservation Authority, *The Conservation of Historical and Archaeological Resources in Alberta: Report and Recommendations*. Edmonton 1972; D. Harvey. "The fight to preserve our past", *EJ* May 17 1972, 73; *Alberta Hansard*, March 21 1973, 25-1105 and March 23, 1973, 27-1225 (capital grant structures for recreation were also part of the mandate of the CYR); Statutes of the Province of Alberta, *Alberta Heritage Act*, RSA 70, c13. 1973; Usher 1981, 23.

[59] Usher 1981, 25; in 1997, Historic Sites Services and Archaeological Survey (est. 1973) are administered by the Historic Resource Division of Alberta Community Development, which succeeded Alberta Culture. Alberta Historical Resource Foundation. *News and Views*. Vol. 6, #2, Fall 1983, 2-3; see also Vol.1, #1, Autumn 1977; M. Rasmussen,"The heritage boom: evolution of historical resource conservation in Alberta", *Prairie Forum* Vol. 15 No. 2 Fall 1990.245-9.; T. Cowan, "How they're saving Alberta's past", *Canadian Heritage*, Vol.10, No.3, August-September 1984, 13-16.

[60] Quotes, CYR Minister Horst Schmid, see *Alberta Hansard*, June 18 1975, 809; To questions of the government's ongoing financial commitment, Shmid suggested a hierarchy of funding priorities for sites deemed to be of provincial interest, down to those of mainly local significance; Davies 1974; K. Russell, ed. *Guidelines for the Rehabilitation of*

The 1973 Alberta Historical Resources Act had intended to prevent the loss of cultural heritage buildings, but preservationists had long pointed out its lack of effect, especially visible in the developing capital city. In the early 1970s, local journalists, politicians and heritage groups protested the rapid loss of Edmonton's historic public buildings. The Edmonton Historical Board contrasted the Chamber of Commerce's view of history as "something that's finished" with the growing interest in heritage among everyday people who had previously "not a historical notion in their heads." A *Journal* editorial warned that Alberta "has a sad record of allowing buildings rich in architectural and historical value to fall before the wrecking ball or to undergo 'modernization'..." In a healthy economy, the province could afford to be generous since "[n]o one need fear for Alberta's future. But we are guilty...of covering our tracks out of the past."[61]

A 1979 amendment allowed municipal, as well as provincial, designation of historic buildings and sites. However, while it was the most effective legislation in Canada on paper, in practice it was constrained by disincentives such as the municipal obligation to compensate owners of designated properties for loss of financial value. Without sufficient funding, the Historic Sites Service program of renovating buildings for re-use was severely restricted. Although Premier Lougheed promised more funding, the new Alberta Culture minister doubted that it was possible to legislate interest in the past. Echoing the longstanding perception that public interest was the best preservation tool, she stated that impetus must come more directly from genuine community interest in the "colourful, lusty and full of adventure" past of the province.[62]

However, while Alberta communities did appear to take a genuine interest in heritage, it was mostly directed to local family history rather than the preservation of public sites and buildings. Between 1975 and 1970, 200 local history books had been compiled, mainly in rural areas. Urban experience was more varied and the *Journal* called the 1970s as a renaissance of economic and cultural life in a city whose values it defined in terms of a heritage of work, thrift, community and nature.[63]

### *Negotiating control: 1980s-1990s*

The 1980 celebrations of Alberta's 75th anniversary were a $75 million campaign for the travel industry, but like previous festivals it did focus public awareness on heritage sites. Over a hundred buildings had been designated in Edmonton during the 1970s "heritage boom," and, according to the *Journal*, far more people were now concerned with "links to the past." Although preservation programs continued into the 1980s, Historic Sites Services director Frits Pannekoek cautioned that sustained speed was necessary. As Alberta developed and expanded economically, heritage sites would enable "new people" to the region to understand the past, in order to become part of the social fabric.[64]

The prosperous Alberta economy and an associated "development psychology" were still incentives for urban property owners and developers to destroy old buildings. Non-governmental special interest groups included the Societies for the Preservation of Architectural Resources, in Edmonton and Calgary, the Old Strathcona Foundation, and the Fort Edmonton Historical Foundation. Others were consultants and community members. Critics of the government included historians such as R.D. Francis, who questioned the accuracy of research and interpretation, as well as the criteria of site designation: intrinsic historical importance, public pressure, or regional politics?[65]

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*Designated Historic Resources*, 2nd ed. The Alberta Association of Architects/Alberta Community Development, 1993, 4-6; later sites included buildings, railways, and cemeteries, and installing historical "point of interest" signs on roadsides; MacEwen quote, B. Shiels,"Involving people in preserving history", *Calgary Herald* Jan 25 1979, A8.

[61] Cowan 1984, 13-16; J. Davies, "Fight on to preserve city's history", *EJ* April 22 1974, 45; *EJ* "Heritage sites", September 23, 1974, 4.

[62] R. Collins, "Historic sites rest easier thanks to law", *Calgary Herald*, April 19 1989, B6; P.Morton, "Lougheed promises more support for heritage", *Calgary Herald*, May 22 1979, B2.

[63] *EJ* "Old Edmonton", October 6 1979, A4; Meikle 1979, A6. a government prize was awarded each year to a regional history book. Such projects were aided by access to new and cheaper, more efficient printing technologies as much as by the nostalgia of the era for a pioneer past.

[64] J. Fyfe, "The Old Strathcona Foundation", *News and Views*, Vol.3, #2, Fall 1980, 3; *EJ*, "Historic role for old college", March 5, 1980, D2.

[65] Usher, ix, 27-32.

Provincial heritage agencies became the most important players in conservation by the late 1980s, through legislation which gave them jurisdiction over minicipal governments and property. But federal agencies still had authority over nationally-designated sites in Alberta, and were perceived by local heritage players as competitors rather than partners. The role of municipal governments was also problematic, with no clear definition of their responsibilities. Tax disputes and public apathy amid a developing recession compounded the problems.[66]

A range of interests participated in planning for downtown redevelopment in the early 1980s, including real estate and construction industries, the Old Strathcona Foundation and government heritage officers, and the Alberta Association of Architects. A 1981 committee report recommended economic measures such as property evaluation standards and tax relief incentives. It also defined criteria of heritage designation including architectural content and urban context. The latter category recognized "character areas" (discussed further below) where the effect of a group of heritage buildings was more important than the qualities of individual structures.[67]

By 1992, Alberta's heritage machine included citizen, community, government and other interest groups. Boniface and Fowler write that almost every spot on the province's map seems to be "interpreted" historically. Listing 47 "museum-like" attractions cited by a 1990 issue of *Alberta Past*, they make the point that the collections and sites do not just "contain" the province's history, but that

> [w]ith a range...like that, they *are* the history of Alberta, particularly when you think of the effort that has gone into creating them in pioneer country, and the pride with which they are presented to hoped-for 'Partners in Alberta's Heritage.' The impression is, however, that they would still be there, collecting...even if no tourist arrived; for, re-packaged though they may have been for the purposes of encouraging tourism, their true inspiration, function and future lie in their local communities in a multi-ethnic state. Though by definition museums contain surviving fragments from earlier times, these museums...are really saying, not 'This is what we were', but 'This is who we are'."[68]

These comments illustrate, not only the range and vigour of heritage constructions in Alberta, but the involvement of citizens and communities. Pride and economic motivations work together in these projects. The process of creating them, however, is the real "exhibit" or phenomenon of local culture in the present, and heritage relics tend to remain as more or less inert content. They are local stations in the wider landscape of tourism in which heritage attractions continue to be economically viable.

Friesen stresses that heritage agencies' offers of public involvement have not met their potential, for many reasons including the continued necessity for government funding and, overall, a low level of community interest on the prairies. As tourism requires heritage, and the unique sense of place, to be a marketable commodity, a communities can feel that their control over local image and experience is jeopardized and they become spectators of their own collective memory.[69]

## C. The Alberta heritage market

### *Heritage as commerce*

The most compelling argument for the protection of historic sites has become their attraction for tourists. Since the 1970s, Alberta governments have funded a major system of museums, interpretive centres and historic sites, justified by their economic impact. Between 1977 and 1982, Alberta tourism revenues doubled; in 1985, at $2.3 billion, they were the fourth highest in Canada. Historic and cultural sites alone accounted for almost one quarter of tourist spending both in the province and the country as a

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[66] Dalibard 1986b, 48; Usher 95.

[67] Edmonton Historical Board, Historic Sites Selection Committee. *Evaluation of the Heritage List in the Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan Bylaw*. Edmonton 1981.

[68] P. Boniface & P.J. Fowler. *Heritage and Tourism in 'the Global Village*, Routledge, London 1993, 120; Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism, *Alberta Past*, 1990; Involved in a 1991 study were 135 community museums, 2 civic history parks, 6 historic sites, and 38 archives. Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism, Historic Resources Division. *The Economic Impact of Provincial Heritage Facilities in Alberta*. Edmonton, March 1992, 15.

[69] Friesen 1990.

whole. With more recent recessions, tourism offers diversification of the resource economy. Historic resource managers have shifted from a stress on research to a push for facility development and paying customers. Sites were marketed as experiences, "intended to make history live, sending visitors back in time.." Visitors of the 1980s demanded a more "cosmopolitan" mix of culture, history, entertainment, and shopping.[70]

A Historic Sites report on tourism reminded the government that costs must also be calculated in terms of the original mandate of heritage stewardship. Local communities also supported regional museums for their "obvious social and educational benefits" for citizens. However, the study also noted that heritage facilities had generated a significant service sector, with revenues equivalent to capital costs in a relatively short period. Visitors to historic sites spent $20 million per year between 1988 and 1992. Although historic sites were "not simply entertainment", however, culture had to cooperate with local economic priorities and compete with other attractions in leisure markets. [71]

### *Commerce as heritage*

In keeping with local European cultural history, Western Canadian memorials to history tend to glorify a sober, hardworking daily life which valorizes entrepreneurship, land domestication and property acquisition. Urban as well as rural historic sites are predominantly characterized by architectural preservation representing these values. Historic districts tend to be the shopping-area streets, disposing the visible memory of the past toward "European monuments" to commerce and administration. Even rural communities in Alberta were constructed as service centres, commercial outlets and exchanges in the railroad and the grain economy.[72]

There are practical reasons, therefore, for the focus on business and retail history. On the prairies, other structures such as dwellings of the settlement period, for instance, were for the most part intended to be ephemeral and are long deteriorated. Outside towns and cities, rural historic sites are usually located at impractical distances from tourist centres. Nevertheless, the absence as much as the presence of impressive urban edifices and European civic forms is important to the sense of place, and the very lack of monuments to "high culture" point to the priorities of local people over time which are evident in the vernacular landscape. For the majority of agricultural settlers, for instance, the production of folk culture and non-economic activity was deferred for generations with the urban leisure time to pursue such practices.[73]

A 1993 study of architectural resources in Alberta emphasized the importance of storefronts to establishing the character of historic commercial neighbourhoods. As the first point of contact between customer and merchant, storefronts tend to change often and thus a particular appearance, display technique or technology use can signal a precise era. Because storefronts have been particularly susceptible to change and modernization, they are usually the main focus of period restoration work.[74]

Preservationists also claim that the public's attraction to everyday historic shopping districts demonstrates the heritage movement's (non-elitist) response to basic human needs. One writer suggests that the deepest preference of society is not for large public buildings but for homes, entertainment places like theatres, and gathering places such as restaurants. Old-fashioned gables and peaked roofs are found not only on authentic historic buildings but on new supermarkets and office towers.[75]

The commercial context of heritage as leisure environment underpins much of the preservation rationale for urban districts, whether in cities or smaller centres. During the 1970s, the Alberta and

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[70] A. Elash, "Alberta tourism tackiness" *Alberta Report* Vol.12 No.20, May 6 1985, 5-6; *Canadian Heritage*, "A mixed blessing", May 1982, 25; Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism, Historic Resources Division. *The Economic Impact of Provincial Heritage Facilities in Alberta*. Edmonton, March 1992, 5. Between 1980 and 1992, the province established 14 new sites at a total cost of $110 million.

[71] Ibid. 4-5, 24.

[72] Friesen 1990; J.C. Lehr, "Preservation of the ethnic landscape in western Canada", *Prairie Forum* Vol. 15 No. 2 Fall 1990, 270.

[73] Lehr 1990, 269; see also Buggey 1992.

[74] Russell 1992, 37.

[75] H. Kalman, "The lesson of conservation", *Canadian Heritage* #38, Dec. 1982, 32.

Saskatchewan governments established programs to encourage the presence of farmers' markets in various communities. A meeting of producers and consumers would, in theory, enable people to rediscover the tradition of early western settlers' dependence of such markets in garrison and government towns. In the present, they could also compete with the monopoly of supermarkets, most of which were not locally-based. Restored historic shopping environments, such as the Old Strathcona district, are regularly promoted as an "alternative to downtown and mall shopping."[76]

Commerce is the content as well as the present context of Alberta's most visible urban heritage sites. One of the premises of this study is that the distinction between commerce and culture is not an adequate criterion of evaluating the meaning of local cultural heritage, at least in terms of the built environment. The cultural landscape of Edmonton developed in the first place around facilities of trade and commerce. Trevor Boddy has called military and trading posts like Fort Edmonton "the first prairie urban spaces." Communicating a "mercantile and government presence" beyond their immediate functions, they were symbols of civilization imposing orderly meaning on the wilderness. Since then, the local legacy of a volatile resource-based economy has meant that old symbolic forms are regularly exchanged for new with each era. Order and meaning are then distributed to appropriate symbols of past and present. Remnants of the past tend to be found only where they are "laundered into 'heritage parks' or boutiques..." Boddy concludes that "the ghosts of our urban past challenge our synthetic newness." Because each episode of material progress has meant creative destruction of prior forms, reconstructions rather than restorations of communities tend to dominate in Alberta.[77]

It is important to remember that the character and purpose of heritage zones and reconstructed environments in the Edmonton area represent more than a bowdlerized departure from a simpler, purer life of mythic pioneer meanings. The commercial content of heritage zones--the focus on retail districts, for example--does reflect the economic imperatives of their development for a leisure market. But they also reflect the history of the development of the area as a centre of trade and commerce in a national and international network. Trading posts, markets and shops have always been a characteristic setting of local culture. The next two sections outline the history of the reconstruction or restoration of two such settings within present city boundaries: the HBC's Fort Edmonton, and the south side Old Strathcona district.

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[76] L. Beisenthal. "To market, to market", *Canadian Heritage* May 1982, 34-36; Fyfe 1980,3.
[77] Boddy 1982, 26; Lehr 1990.

# Chapter 3: "Slivers of the true Fort": the Journey to Fort Edmonton Park

This way to the Klondyke!...Many Parties Outfitting Here. Thousands of Dollars Being Spent in Edmonton for Supplies. (*Alberta Plaindealer*, Aug 12 1897).

[P]emmican and dried meat has long been a stranger at the table...its place taken by substantives more in keeping with the onward march of civilization.

(Advertisement for the Edmonton Hotel, *Edmonton Bulletin*, Aug 25 1904)

## A. Introduction: Salvage and simulation

Fort Edmonton has long been a meeting place, initially for travellers over the land and water, and in this century, also for travellers in time. In successive periods of its history, Fort Edmonton has served as military and trading post, relic, symbol of community, tourist attraction and virtual history park. This chapter considers the development of Fort Edmonton Park in terms of its socio-cultural context and ways in which its meanings have been shaped by the aesthetics, discourse and political economy of "heritage."

From Edwardian-era concerns for salvage and public education, concepts of building reconstruction evolved, later expanding to the reproducing of "living history" in a comprehensive theme park. National, provincial and local support for cultural heritage developed in mid-century, as did public awareness and the interest of community groups and tourism promoters. Civic support in the 1960s and 1970s was shaped by the combination of boom-era prosperity with an affirmation of local pride and identity. Contemporary modernization involved destruction of historic architecture, resulting in the expansion of the museum with the addition of obsolete buildings. Fort Edmonton Park was a magnet for symbolic meanings of historical progress and lost origins, while also offering a site of refuge for certain features of that history.

During the 1980s and 1990s, governments moved from supporting cultural tourism development to promoting the need for commercial independence in museums. The main concern of the 1990s has been, in the words of its director,"adding meaning" to visitor activities, making the Park significant in terms other than those of entertainment. The question here is, who adds the meaning, to what end and in what terms? As in the context of formal museums, issues of the power to define cultural identity are inherent in open air reconstructions and other "historicized spaces" which represent local community experience.

Reconstructed urban settings, including Fort Edmonton as a prior version of the city which encloses it, offer a virtual past enveloping the visitor in a lost, but (or therefore) "authentic" experience. In Alberta, as elsewhere, this experience is a selective one. Our represented settlement history highlights the transcendence of historical periods of trade and agrarian or industrial development. Themes of domestic life and labour predominate, and reconstructed episodes of industrial and agricultural history present a tale of tasks accomplished and treasure achieved, progress resulting in the happy ending of our own era. This account of Fort Edmonton Park's development follows a discussion of the "virtual place and time" as part of the history of museology.

Today's museum spectacles and simulacra are part of a long history of the reproduction of place (real, but distant in time or place) for the purposes of mass education and entertainment. For nineteenth-century tourists, for instance, the photographic or three-dimensional reproduction of places served to market them as potential destinations. Expositions and theatrical productions recreated significant distant events such as the building of canals, merging drama with realist spectacle.[1]

The reconstructed or "virtual" place remains a powerful and profitable form of leisure attraction and tourist advertisement. Mass media from direct advertising and promotional documentaries to on-site

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[1] Expositions in Paris in 1867 and Vienna in 1873, and contemporary theatres, displayed models of canals and tunnels with life-size boats and trains. Briggs 1988; see also L. Jordanova, "Objects of knowledge: a historical perspective on museums" Peter Vergo, ed. *The New Museology*. Reaktion Books, London 1989; D.S.L. Cardwell, *Technology, Science and History*, London: Neinemann 1972; P. Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: the Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs 1851-1939*. Manchester University Press 1988; S. Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: the Wonder of the New World*. Oxford: Clarendon Press 1991.

interpretive programming are even more influential sources of visitor preparation for both the site and its "period."[2] The success of the open-air village-type museum has influenced the planning of formal, enclosed establishments such as the Canadian Museum of Civilization. According to director George Macdonald, visitors are immersed in a historical "envelope" as "literally a part of the historical picture." Assuming that a primarily visual experience can set up a sense of personal empathy and ownership, Macdonald claims that this would extend to the everyday sphere by affirming that historical preservation is "everyone's responsibility." Echoing this theme, Fort Edmonton Park director Merriott has said that the central role of "living history" is not to entertain but to "make history part of everyone's consciousness."[3]

Fort Edmonton Park, situated within the city, is a leisure site whose concerns with historical authenticity are effectively merged with its appeal on other grounds. Some of these are suggested in the account which follows. The entity of "Fort Edmonton" has been a mobile focus of community meaning, symbolism, and promotion.

## B. From frontier relic to "Alberta shrine"

### *Early conservation concepts*

The last of several sites of the Hudsons Bay Company post known as Fort Edmonton was demolished in 1915, shortly after the completion of the nearby Legislature Buildings. The action was protested by local citizens and community groups such as the Women's Canadian Club (WCC) which had argued to preserve the Fort since 1912. This early interest in historic preservation was characteristic of many of the new middle-class organizations dedicated to cultural and social improvement.

The Canadian Clubs, particularly, had a mandate to foster patriotism through promoting public awareness of Canada's history and culture.[4] For the women's clubs, these goals were reinforced with other reformist ideals characteristic of the period's maternal feminism. Edmonton's Local Council of Women, for instance, were particularly interested in the developing City Beautiful movement, believing that heritage preservation was important to an aesthetic and meaningful environment which, in turn, was a mechanism to foster public morality. In 1911 and 1912, WCC president Emily Murphy urged women to enter the public sphere of community issues and to endorse projects such as the preservation of local historical relics from the negative effects of progress.[5]

One of the first, and most enduring, of the club's projects was the campaign to save Fort Edmonton from demolition, and failing that, to restore or reconstruct it. Early in 1913, and again in 1915, the WCC requested the Premier to preserve the Fort intact as a reminder of the city's history, in the form of "a free museum not only for the people of the province" but for future visitors.[6]

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[2] At the 1915 Panama Pacific Exhibition, the San Francisco Railroad presented "a carefully orchestrated wilderness" which included a model of the Grand Canyon. Riding in miniature parlor cars along the rim of this model, people saw views of its most distinctive points complete with actual rocks and plants. Following the Exhibition, numbers of tourists to the actual site increased dramatically. Seven miles from the Grand Canyon today, a small settlement with an enormous IMAX theatre shows the film version of the canyon on a wraparound screen six stories high. A.H. Hyde, *An American Vision: Far Western Landscape and National Culture, 1820-1920.* New York University Press, New York London. 1990, 378; L. Zonn "Tusayan, the traveler and the IMAX theatre: an introduction to place images in media", L. Zonn, Ed., *Place Images in Media: Portrayal, Experience and Meaning.* Rowman and Littlefield 1-2.

[3] G. Macdonald, "Streets are in at this museum", *Canadian Heritage* December 1984-January 1985, 33; T. Merriott, "Fort Edmonton Park", unpublished paper delivered at Edmonton Bicentennial Conference, Edmonton, May 1995.

[4] The Edmonton Club was established in 1906; at a meeting of the Local Council of Women in 1911, a Women's Canadian Club (WCC) chapter was formed.

[5] McClung 1955; PAA 67.280/3; Merifield 1993; PAA 78.32/1; Women's Canadian Club of Edmonton, Minutes. Edmonton Alberta, 1912-1917, October 1913, PAA 70.480/2.

[6] The 1912 meeting's motion to petition the Alberta Legislature emphasized the need "to preserve and restore Fort Edmonton" and "other things pertaining to Canadian history" which might otherwise "be lost entirely", important "...not only for the people of the province but for the world who will in the future visit this city." WCC, "Minutes", November 20, 1912, PAA 78.32/1; PAA 78.32/1; Strong, M. 1957, "Efforts made by the WCC of Edmonton to preserve Fort Edmonton", unpublished manuscript, PAA 78.32/37; PAA 78.32/1; Strong 1957; Grant, Mabel L., Letter to the Editor", *EJ* Mar 21/60; see also Secord 70.480/2.

When it finally demolished the Fort (primarily on grounds of aesthetic and political concerns for its new, modern image), the government assured the outraged that the wood was to be stored for future reconstruction. The WCC, not content to wait for this second coming, began plans for a shrine to its memory. Commissioned plans for a miniature model were set aside during WWI and later forgotten and lost. By the time the next war began, the provincial government had admitted that the original timbers were lost, probably to the 1937 Coronation bonfires.[7]

During the 1920s, North American women continued to pursue the ideals of public cultural education. The Edmonton WCC promoted the restoration of Fort Edmonton on its last site until the 1930s. The 1927 HSMBC installation of a memorial plaque at the first (1774-5) site, near Fort Saskatchewan, was attended by representatives of the federal and provincial government, and of the Hudson's Bay Company, but not by the WCC.[8]

### *Post-war: constructing form and meaning*

The WWII destruction of European historic sites contributed to a general rise in the North American public awareness of preservation issues and preservationist movements, supported in Canada by a post-war economic boom.[9] In Edmonton, the era was marked by the development of the oil industry, with the promise of economic prosperity and increased international status for the province and its capital city. During the 1950s, renewed arguments for local historic preservation began to stress the connection between museums, cultural maturity and modern urban identity.

Preservationists took up where the war had interrupted them, most stressing the need to establish a sense of historical pride among Canadians. Journalist J.H. Woods, in a 1940s speech, had noted the shift from a tendency to "deplore the fact that our children, living in a new country, have no traditions..." toward recognition that "this country is actually full of a noble and magnificent history..." of which the "magnificent history of Edmonton...is a story of fortitude second to none." The 1957 Edmonton LCW warned that a rich historical background of tradition, folklore, and the courageous stories of the early settlers "is being lost to the present and...future generations for lack of knowledge." Meanwhile, the National Council of Women began to collect women's historical documents. "So much in Canada seems to have been destroyed. We seem to have...a utilitarian approach to the past..."[10] The campaign for Fort Edmonton, endlessly involving the struggle over its appropriate form and meanings, was renewed in this context.

As previously noted, Boddy defines the forts as the first prairie urban spaces, points where strictly utilitarian buildings were supplanted by architecture designed for the "conscious accretion of meaning..." Imposing visual symbols of civilization in their rigid rectangles, exaggerated corners, and pallisades, they communicated a European-derived presence to the region.[11]

After Alberta became a province in 1905, the siting of the new Legislature was in part intended to contrast modern civic architecture with that of the superseded, primitive trade era and territory status.

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[7]Architect Edward Underwood drew up the plans and submitted them to the WCC in 1917, but the model remained on paper. See Strong 1957; Underwood 78.32/37; Secord 70.480/2; B. Beal, "Timbers in Ellerslie barn part of old Fort Edmonton", *Edmonton Journal* Jan 17 1982, B1-2.1982; Payne 1995; T. Stone, *Alberta History Along the Highway*, Red Deer College Press 1996; *EJ* October 13, 1915. Some of the wood had been salvaged for farm buildings in the area and would be returned to the reconstruction site fifty years later.

[8]Alberta sent two delegates to the 1925 National Conference of Women in Washington. McClung, N. 1955; PAA 67.280/3; accounts of the plaque ceremoney, see W.E. Edmonds, *Edmonton Past and Present: A Brief History*. Edmonton: Douglas Printing Co. 1943; Grant 1960; PAA 70.480/2. In March of 1963, the Director of the Alberta Travel Bureau requested the HSMBC, through Secord, to replace the deteriorating (and erroneous) Dominion cairn plaque. E.S. Bryant to R.Y. Secord, March 19, 1963; R.Y. Secord to J.D. Herbert, HSMBC, March 29, 1963, PAA 70.480/2.

[9] Merriott 1995.

[10] J.H. Woods (Col.), Speech to IODE Convention [1940s], PAA 70.480/2; Local Council of Women, Resolution, 1960. PAA 70.480/2; *EJ*, "In 49th year, Council gets gavel", January 16, 1957, p. 31; *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, Nov. 21,916, S4, p.51, PAA 67.280/3.

[11]Boddy 1982, 25.

But, as suggested above, the positive symbolic value of Fort Edmonton as a reminder of the city's history was open to changing interpretation, as indicated in the government's 1915 decision to demolish rather than to reconstruct the remaining buildings.

Promoters of the 1950s, on the other hand, argued that Fort Edmonton embodied both the "noble traditions" of the fur trade and the subsequent "progressive character" of the city.[12] Since only the memory and last site of the vanished fort were available, proposed commemorative projects could take almost any form. Organizations for the development of local history museums suggested old Fort Edmonton both as a model for museum exhibit and as full-size housing for other exhibits. These would be "invaluable tourist attractions." MLA Cornelia Wood suggested an "Alberta shrine" for showing historic photographs.[13]

In 1953, the provincial government offered NAPOTA the the old site of Fort Edmonton for a building in which to display historic relics. But by the mid-1950s, most interested citizens, scholars, business people, service clubs, organizations and agencies had focused on the Fort's reconstruction as the significant goal. The *Journal* noted that the upcoming 1954 Jubilee of the province would be a fitting occasion to realize it, as a reminder of how far we had come.[14] In this cultural context, the government of Alberta proved more responsive to calls about Fort Edmonton from local organizations than they had in earlier decades.

Since the late 1940s, the Historical Society of Alberta (HSA), and the Northern Alberta Pioneers and Old Timers Association (NAPOTA) had pressed the offices of the Mayor and the Premier to rebuild Fort Edmonton. In 1949, the provincial government had expressed interest, and the federal government recommended reconstruction on the last original site. In 1953 G.H. Macdonald produced a set of plans for the reconstruction,[15] followed by no action. Four years later, local women's clubs again protested that the pioneer heritage of the area was being lost for lack of a provincial museum and historical preservation program. The WCC commissioned a miniature commemorative model, after campaigning for the Fort's preservation or reconstruction since 1911. When in January 1957 the provincial government began studies of historic preservation policy, the *Journal* attributed its inspiration, not to the long campaigns by local women's groups, but to the HSA's "initiation" of a Fort Edmonton project in 1948.[16]

The national context was also influential in this period. The 1951 Massey Commission report had strongly influenced Canadian cultural development for decades to come. Its recommendations in favour of museums, and other mechanisms to foster historical awareness in citizens, informed general public consciousness of conservation issues. In 1958, the city opened a temporary Civic Museum which housed various relics of local history, and in 1959 appointed a Museum Committee to coordinate a more permanent solution. During their period of study, committee chair J.G. MacGregor appealed to the HSMBC to recognize the national significance of the Fort as an education in "true history", as well as a tourist attraction, and described the chaotic array of interested parties.[17] The 1959 Museum Committee

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[12] Woods, J.H. PAA 70.480/2

[13] *EJ*, "Alberta shrine proposed on Fort Edmonton site" March 1, 1951; *EJ* February 16, 1949; Secord, November 16, 1962, PAA 70.480/2; *EJ* June 19, 1980, E2; as of 1951, the Ernest Brown collection of local pioneer-era images had recently been acquired by the province; as of 1998, funding was still unavailable to complete the cataloguing and preservation of the collection.

[14] EJ, "Alberta museum action likely", December 1, 1956, CEA.

[15] PAA 78.32/37; Federal interests were represented by the HSMBC and the Department of Mines and Resources :Memo, Sept. 12, 1949, PAA 70.480/2; Manning, E.C. Feb. 15, 1949, PAA 70.480/2; Secord, R.Y November 16, 1962, *EJ* March 22, 1960, S3, p.33; PAA 80.160/126.

[16] *EJ*, January 29, 1957, PAA 78.32/37.; included in the 1957 WCC submission to the province were copies of club documents from 1912-1917 detailing their efforts. The WCC and other groups such as the Local Council of Woman continued to pass similar resolutions at intervals until the early 1960s, demanding that the province preserve its history before it was lost forever. *EJ* May 13, 1957, CEA; Historical Committee of WCC, Memo, PAA 78.32/37; *EJ* January 15, 1957, p. 31; PAA 67.280/3; Grant 1960; WCC, "Joint Centennial Luncheon" 1967, PAA 78.32/37; M.N. Lindsay to Hon. A.R.Patrick, May 13 1957, PAA 78.32/37).McCallum, Jean, to R.Y. Secord, May 12, 1960, PAA 70.480/2; Secord, R.Y. to Hon. A.R. Patrick, November 17 1962, PAA 70.480/2; *EJ* Jan 22, 1958, p.3.

[17] *EJ*, "City's historical exhibit opened", Aug 13 1958, CEA.; J.G. MacGregor to J.K Smith, Nov. 5 1958; J.G. MacGregor to A. Hamilton, Nov 14 1958, PAA &0.480/2; J.G. MacGregor, "Rebuilding old Fort Edmonton as a

report emphasized the progress in "the cultural development of the Edmonton area" and the associated public support for expenditure on museums. Edmonton, though the "cultural centre" of the prairies, was deficient in cultural and tourist attractions. This was remediable because, though "all responsible citizens" of the west were only now coming to value historic preservation, the relatively short duration of that history would make the task of museums relatively simple. For instance, local pioneers were still available to consult and donate objects. The report called for the reconstruction of the Fort as a museum, or at least the construction of a permanent museum elsewhere.[18]

The Historical Society of Alberta stated that the restoration would appeal to most citizens of the Canadian West, due to the historical importance of Fort Edmonton as part of a chain "that comprised the first Trans-Canada Highway." In 1962, Richard Secord predicted the project's "major interest to our senior citizens" and others for whom it "would provide a lasting reminder of the significant role played by the Fort in Canadian history."[19]

When a Historical Exhibits Building opened in Edmonton in the fall of 1960, the Journal reported that high attendance and donations left "no doubt about public interest in this region's history" and in approval of city support for Fort Edmonton. Local conservation efforts of the 1960s and 1970s included community histories, amateur painting, popular movements, private museums and collections which eventually were acquired by public museums. Popular culture of the 1970s reflected heritage awareness in consumer novelties. A ad for re-prints of Eaton's 1927 catalogue typically combines an appeal to both diversion and education, promising to capture the tastes and "consumer wants" of the past, offering not only entertainment but historical information.[20]

In Edmonton, local groups endorsed the museum committee's report and beginning in the late 1950s the *Journal* published editorials and letters indicating a rising level of interest in historic preservation. The temporary Civic Block museum had proved popular but was already overcrowded, evidence, according to observers, "that Edmonton citizens cherish the belief that the city's history should be preserved in an abiding form."[21] Prof. M.H. Long, for one, pointed out that the province and the city themselves were to blame for the loss of the original Fort; the Hudson's Bay Company had at least put up monuments. Another writer suggested that "nowadays...people are more aware of the history of their country than they were 15 years ago." A WCC member emphasized Fort Edmonton's national importance, quoting Joseph Howe's patriotic recommendation of"perpetual reference to the sacrifices and glories of the past."[22]

By 1960, "Fort Edmonton", remembered, imagined and foretold, had become a malleable symbol of the community. Without actual relics to haunt, its stubborn ghosts took the form of persistent local voices claiming its connection to local character and frontier values: to a noble history supporting a progressive city with the cultural and social maturity to preserve its relics and monuments. From its first appearance in letters requesting salvation and recognition, to commemoration on a stone cairn, in forgotten blueprints and scale model, through a varying focus on its buildings, relics, artifacts and records, to its eventual reconstruction as a simulated environment, the project was been fertile ground for the local imagination.

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national historic park", Feb. 9, 1959, PAA 70.480/2; Mrs. L. Dodge to Hon. A.R. Patrick, July 3, 1961, PAA 70.480/2. J.G. MacGregor, Edmonton Museum Committee Report, March 1, 1959, PAA 70.480/2.

[18] J.G. MacGregor, Edmonton Museum Committee Report, March 1, 1959, PAA 70.480/2. The 1959 G.H. MacDonald book on the history and structure of Fort Edmonton was recommended as a source, and a site west of the High Level Bridge suggested in place of the impractical Legislature site.

[19] HSA, Edmonton, Memo April 12, 1960, PAA 70.480/2. R.Y. Secord to A.R. Patrick, November 17, 1962, PAA 70.480/2; HSA, ibid.

[20] *EJ* [Editorial, September 1960], PAA 67.280/3; G.Morash, "Heritage village almost reality", *EJ* [1972] in PAA 78.32/37; C. Volkart, "The rush to preserve our past", *EJ* October 20, 1972, PAA 78.32/37; PAA 78.32/37 (WCC Scrapbook, c. 1974).

[21] *EJ*, "Museum over-crowded already" June 19, 1959, CEA; *EJ*, "Fort Edmonton museum supported", July 23, 1959, CEA; M.L. Grant, "Fort Edmonton" (Letter to the Editor), *EJ* Mar 21/60., PAA 70.480/2.

[22] M.H. Long, "Letter to the Editor", *EJ*, August 22, 1959, CEA; *EJ*, "Plan needed to restore Fort", Mar 7 1960; M.L.Grant, "Fort Edmonton", *EJ* Mar 21/60., PAA 70.480/2; Grant, M.L. to R.Y. Secord, March 16 1960, PAA 70.480/2.

On this level, its history supports themes of temporal continuity and sacred elements of folk traditions nourished by a particular place. These themes, appropriately, survived in variants throughout the various periods of the memorial's development.

However, its spatial realization was more directly subject to the interests and preferences of local politicians, cultural activists and service clubs. While its sacred meanings remained more or less fixed through time, it was also an instrument of changing social and political interests. Like other such heritage projects, its actual construction and administration must be seen in the context of contemporary secular priorities. Following the renewal of civic, provincial and federal interest during the 1950s, debates of the next decade primarily concerned the actual form of the memorial, the role of interested players, the related issue of its funding and, as a central issue in all of these categories, its site.

### *1960-65: location, location, location*

At this point, the involvement of the federal government became both an impetus and an obstacle to the project. Local businessman Richard Secord, himself a descendant of a prominent fur merchant, was the Alberta representative of the HSMBC and the head of its Furt Trade Committee. The city's museum committee report was in his hands when, in November 1959, the HSMBC endorsed the partial reconstruction of Fort Edmonton as a site of "national historic importance" and requested that Secord make a supporting report on the history of fur trade operations there.[23]

Public debate immediately centred on the question of a choice of site for the potential reconstruction. Historian Hugh Dempsey objected to the proposed Legislature site, as well as any other site on the grounds that the latter would be inauthentic. He suggested an exhibit model instead, and envisioned interpretive flower beds marking the footprints of the vanished buildings.[24] Similar ideas of metonymic models and displays, and aesthetic metaphorical referents were, as noted above, alternatives which had been proposed at intervals for decades. At this point, a demand for nothing less than reconstruction had gained strong momentum. Fort Edmonton (both structure and administration) was supported with reference to, and eventually modelled on, other historical reconstructions in the United States and in Canada.[25] Dempsey's objection to such a reconstruction was reiterated by local critics whose reservations were also based on the choice of site. The issue was soon exacerbated by controversy over the role of the federal government in the decision concerning an Alberta site.

In March 1960, the *Journal* printed Secord's reply to critics that the HSMBC declaration of the national historic importance of Fort Edmonton included, as a matter of course, the land upon which it had stood. S.A. Dickson, a local history professor, was featured in a *Journal* photo essay arguing for the Legislature site. Dickson was also a member of NAPOTA, the HSA, the Edmonton Museum Committee and the Archives and Landmarks Committee.[26] His status and role reflects those of elite groups including influential business people such as Secord, and underlines the fact that the issue of site had strong implications for the financial and administrative control of the project.

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[23] Account of events forwarded by Secord, R.Y, to Premier E.C. Manning, Sept 27, 1962, 70.480/2. The information, like that concerning the design of the original fort, proved to be not easily available; correspondence between R.Y. Secord, Clifford Wilson, Glenbow Foundation Museologist, and an HBC archivist in London, England, February-March 1960, PAA 70.480/2. In February 1960, the Minister of NANR accepted the recommendations of the HSMBC that Fort Edmonton be "declared of national historic importance." D.J. Theissen, Assistant to the Minister of NANR, to M.G. MacGregor, February 15, 1960, PAA 70.480/2; Secord, R.Y., to J.D. Herbert, Chief, National Historic Sites Division, February 29, 1960, PAA 40.480/2.

[24] H. Dempsey, to R.Y. Secord, February 29, 1969, PAA 70.480/2.

[25] A WCC member cited Port Royal's "Habitation" as an example of what could be accomplished. Other influences included Black Creek Pioneer Village in Ontario, Fortress Louisbourg in Nova Scotia, and in the west, Fort Garry and Fort Langley, and Rocky Mountain House and Calgary's Heritage Park in Alberta. M.L.Grant, "Fort Edmonton" (Letter to the Editor), *EJ* Mar 21/60., PAA 70.480/2; M.L. Grant to R.Y. Secord, March 16 1960, PAA 70.480/2: K.G. Higgs, Metro Toronto and Region Conservation Foundation, to John Jantzen, Superintendent, Parks and Recreation Department, City of Edmonton, October 20, 1966, PAA 87.160/126.

[26] *EJ*, "Doubtful proposal at best", February 27, 1960, PAA 70.280/2; Secord, R.Y., Letter to the editor, *EJ* March 1, 1960, PAA 70.480/2; *EJ*, "Old Fort Edmonton had checkered life", March 11, 1960, S3, p33.

The HSMBC soon defended the federal policy to reject the reconstruction of historic buildings on inauthentic sites: in other words, any site other than their original one. Endorsing this position, the HSA, the city Chamber of Commerce, and the *Journal* all called for immediate action in light of the upcoming national Centennial and the Fort's potential as a "major educational and tourist attraction" for (as the *Journal* put it) "the history-conscious tourist of these times." These were exemplified by Americans and growing numbers of Canadians who could not be satisfied with only Alberta's nature parks. In order to be competitive, Alberta must develop its "unique assets" of "the concrete evidence [and] the rich materials of history..." The year ended with the introduction of a bill to protect historic sites and objects and to establish an administrative Historical and Archaelogical Advisory board.[27]

At this point, we find increasing definitions of Fort Edmonton as an "asset" to the area in practical terms of tourist revenue, as well as in more abstract ways. Evolving from original concerns with historical conservation, and amid an ongoing value placed on authenticity, the most dominant, or at least persuasive, voices of the mid-century period supported the project on economic grounds. The appeal to tourism neatly combined both "sacred" and "secular" (or cultural and economic) interests in the reconstruction of the Fort. Following on a long tradition of local concern for history, the HSMBC would provide funding for a project on the authentic site, a project then approved by the city in anticipation of tourism, a developing industry in which history was a civic (and regional) asset in the competition for image, status and a marketable identity.

In early 1960, all of this appeared to depend on the approval of reconstruction on the Legislature site. Alternatives proposed included the site of an old native camping ground in Victoria Park and one west of the High Level Bridge. Alberta's Minister of Industry and Development, A.R. Patrick rejected the bridge site and the use of the Legislature area, which would involve the strongly contested loss of the Bowling Green--an objection predictably dismissed as trivial by Fort promoters. WCC and HSMBC members suggested other sites. City commissioners rejected these as impractical and re-emphasized the federal requirement that a restoration of the final version of the fort had to be on its actual (final) site in order to qualify for financial aid. Without a firm decision as to site, Patrick could make no formal proposals to the Premier on the subject.[28]

However, local governments of the day were inclined to support the development of heritage projects and the activities of groups such as NAPOTA. The HSMBC Fur Trade Committee approved Alberta's historical commemoration activities, and its policy of acquiring title to sites of historic importance.[29] The city and the HSMBC, meanwhile, dedicated the Emily Murphy picnic shelter complete with a plaque designating her (like Fort Edmonton) as of "national historic importance." The city also co-

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[27] In contrast to its February editorial, later that in 1960 the *Journal* called the Fort Edmonton restoration a project of "both historical and practical" importance. American tourists "have become highly conscious of historical sites and monuments, and keenly interested in them...Canadian tourists are following suit." *EJ*, "History attracts today's tourists", April 18, 1960, CEA, and *EJ*, "Protection sought for historic sites", December 16, 1960, p.6; see also J.D. Herbert, HSMBC, to Msgr. d'Eschambault, April 6, 1960; Secord, R.Y. to H.G. Ward, HSA, April 13, 1960; Secord, R.Y. to G.L. Kyle, Archivist, City of Edmonton, April 11, 1960; HSA to R.Y. Secord, April 12, 1960; City of Edmonton Chamber of Commerce, April 13, 1960: PAA 70.480/2.

[28] The third historical location of the Fort, in the river valley, was owned by the city, was "small and neat", as well as documented and authentic. Both it and another near the Low Level Bridge were rejected by the city at the end of 1960 (the third location had been abandoned in the first place because of river flooding.). Secord, R.Y to Mabel Grant, WCC, October 28, 1960; Grant, M. to R.Y. Secord, November 3, 1960; Grant, M. to E. Roper, November 11, 1960; PAA 70.480/2; *EJ*, "Fort site suggested east of power plant--history buff tells why" [1960], 78.32/37; J.D. Herbert to G.H. Mac Donald, copy to R.Y. Secord November 14, 1960; PAA 70.480/2; EJ, "Say neither Fort site practical", Nov. 28/60, City of Edmonton Archives; Walter Dinsdale, Minister NANR, to Marcel Lambert, MP, February 3, 1961; Marcel Lamber to R. Y. Secord, February 10, 1961, PAA 70.480/2; Falconer, J.F., Chair ALM Committee, to City Commissioners, May 3, 1960; Mayor Elmer Roper asked whether the federal department would authorize a reconstruction not on the original site. E. Roper to J.F. Falconer, May 6, 1960, PAA 70.480/2. Patrick predicted an "explosion" from retired civil servants. WCC to R.Y. Secord, October 19, 1960, PAA 70.480/2.; Dickson, S.A. to R.Y. Secord May 20, 1960, PAA 70.480/2.

[29] Dickson, S.A. to R.Y. Secord May 20, 1960; R.Y. Secord to H.G. Ward, HSA, September 15, 1960; both, 70.480/2.

sponsored historical exhibits and fielded demands for a permanent museum of the fur trade and settlement eras.[30]

Through late 1960 and early 1961, Secord continued to press for action to coordinate diverse interests in order to develop a practical proposal on the reconstruction. City agencies and local organizations encouraged each other to pressure the provincial government on the matter.[31] The *Journal* repeatedly reminded readers that this was a matter of provincial, not just local concern, and that it was time for Centennial projects to commence, preferably including a Fort reconstruction at the Legislature site. As reflected in letters to the editor, Edmontonians were ambivalent for various reasons. One found no "artistic value" in the Fort's appearance, which would spoil the landscaping and further threaten the valley green belt. Another objected that more "federal handouts" should be rejected in favour of an entirely civic or private enterprise in the reconstruction.[32] On several levels, then, and to varying extents, this period was characterized by the suspicion of central powers becoming involved in local matters.

The matter was complicated by the fact that federal policy for financial assistance involved obtaining title to commemorative sites, and the Alberta government preferred to retain title to its Legislature grounds. Alternatively, the HSMBC could waive its claim to land title and assist only the construction (to its satisfaction, of course), with provincial and civic governments thereafter responsible for maintenance.[33] Making a virtue of the fact that the federal government would now fund only a partial reconstruction on the original site, Secord informed Premier Manning that this ensured that the proposed design would not be "cumbersome" or "detract from the...aesthetics" of the landscaping. He also reminded the provincial government of the longstanding interest of federal, regional and local community leaders over the years.[34] Nevertheless, the project stalled, with the various interests unable to reach a satisfactory compromise on site, form, extent, administration and function of a reconstruction. The Alberta Cabinet's final rejection of the plan for reconstruction on the Legislature grounds came in 1966; thereafter, the project was controlled by civic agencies and community groups, primarily the Rotary Clubs of Edmonton.[35]

### *1966-1969: Renewed momentum*

The Centennial period in Canada marked a renewal and redirection of the Fort Edmonton project, though at first it seemed likely to survive only in fragments and reflections of the original. The *Journal* , for instance, recommended a Fort Edmonton design motif for the new museum building announced by the province. And, fifty years after they first became involved, the WCC settled for

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[30] *EJ*, "Two plaques honour famed city woman", August 29, 1960, S3, p.21; *EJ*, "Historical exhibit building opens, August 31, 1960, p. 51; *EJ*, "Exhibit building opened", September 2, 1960, p. 29.

[31] In June, the city and the province held preliminary discussions and the issue was referred by city council to its finance committee. R.Y Secord to G. L. Kyle, April 28, 1961; J.H. Reed, ALM, to ALM members, and memo to City Clerk, May 9, 1961, PAA 70.480/2; *EJ*, "City, province hold discussions on Fort", June 29, 1969, PAA 78.32/37.

[32] *EJ*, "Fort restoration before council", June 29, 1961, PAA 78.32/37; Park Lover, "Fort restoration", *EJ* [1961]; Gregg, Arthur E., "Restoration of Fort", *EJ* [1961], both PAA 78.32/37; *EJ*, "Disagreement on Fort Edmonton", November 10 1961, CEA.

[33] Historic Sites and Monuments Act Section 3 (b); in 1963, the federal government confirmed its willingness to waive claim to land title on this basis: R.Y. Secord to Deputy Minister, NANR, Ernest Cote, July 4, 1963; E. Cote to R.Y. Secord [July 1963], PAA 70.480/2; R.Y. Secord to E. Cote, Deputy Minister NANR, July 4, 1963; E. Cote to R.Y. Secord, August 13, 1963; Arthur Laing, Dept. NANR, to Ambrose Holowach, Alberta Provincial Secretary, August 20, 1963; PAA 70.480/2.

[34] Including the HSMBC, the WCC and LCW, the Chamber of Commerce, the HSA, and NAPOTA: R.Y. Secord to Hon. Walter Dinsdale, Minister NANR, September 11, 1962; W. Dinsdale to R.Y. Secord, September 19, 1962; R.Y. Secord to Hon. E.C. Manning, September 27 1962; R.Y. Secord to A.R. Patrick, Minister of Industry and Development Alberta, November 17, 1962; PAA 70.480/2.

[35] P.B. Howard, Deputy Provincial Secretary, to R.Y. Secord, HSMBC, May 16, 1966, PAA 70.480/2; R.Y. Secord to W.C. Mattie, Historic Sites Officer, Provincial Museums and Archives Branch, Government of Alberta. October 6 1966, PAA 70.480/2.

commissioning a scale model of the Fort, unveiled by Lt-Gov Grant McEwan in the Centennial year and donated to the new museum.[36]

In 1966, however, the history of the present memorial began with the Rotary Club's resolution to establish Fort Edmonton Park as a Centennial project. The city's Parks and Recreation department cooperated, and approved a river valley site at which a dedication ceremony took place on July 9 1967. The Rotarians attributed the new momentum in part to the many involved groups who shared, as they put it, a sense that time was running out.[37]

Now that questions of administration, control and site appeared to be resolved, the issue of historic authenticity and worth regained rhetorical force. The *Journal* questioned the Park's proposed purchase of an amateur historian's collection of antiquated buildings, which had been refused by the Glenbow in Calgary. Cautioning that "today, creating a museum is a major science in itself...", the editorial rejected standards of amateur enthusiasm in favour of "hard-headed professional advice on museum science."[38]

As an example of how not to do it, a report on the Fort Edmonton exhibit at Expo 67's Pioneerland described "a brand new authentic pioneer main street. Although the material used to build the structures is new, it looks old. There are restaurants and saloons staffed by the kind of person most often seen in television Westerns."[39]

By contrast, acting Mayor Angus McGuigan called for a park true to its Edmonton context, "based on authenticity and not fantasy." Unlike an amusement park (however popular), the "grandiose" Fort Edmonton project aspired to be the "most thorough and authentic recreation of a city's history..." (As of 1968, the elaborate master plan for Fort Edmonton Park included a reconstructed Fort Edmonton, an Indian village, and other displays of Edmonton's past, present and future.) Whatever its final form, it would not be a tourist trap" slapped together "without research", according to Edmonton's director of historic development. MacGregor's 1959 report had also stressed that the Fort Edmonton story "would be true history and not some fabrication designed for tourist consumption."[40]

Accordingly, the Rotarians applied themselves to historical research, but concentrated mainly on raising funds and soliciting partners among other local service clubs. They also served as a nerve centre for middle-class community networks, and the Park would attract funding in part on the basis of associated publicity and prestige. H.G. Ward, for example, was Rotarian President, Historical Society of Alberta member and served on the Edmonton Historical Board during the period of the Fort Edmonton Park project. Richard Secord's family is represented on FEP's 1885 Street by a reconstruction of the period's R. Secord fur business. In 1961, Secord and John McDougall had announced plans for a public museum to honor their merchant ancestors by displaying the families' "paintings, sculpture, relics, books and any other objects possessing aesthetic, historic or scientific value."[41] Though never realized, the plan (concurrent with Secord's efforts regarding Fort Edmonton) demonstrates the connection of individual and elite interests with projects serving the larger community's sense of history.

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[36]EJ, "Fort Edmonton Museum", June 32, 1964, 78.32/37; PAA 78.32/37; C.Carson, "Old Fort Model nearing reality", *EJ* [January 1967], PAA 78.32/37; WCC, "Joint Centennial Luncheon", January 24, 1967; R.D. Harrison, Director PMA to Mrs. J.J. Lynch, President WCC, February 7, 1967, PAA 78.32/37.

[37] H.G. Ward to M. E. Wolfe, Chair Fort Edmonton Park Committee, Rotary Club, July 13 1966; M.E. Wolfe to B. Dean, Publisher *EJ*, June 24 1966; V.M. Dantzer to H.G. Ward, September 30 1966; K.G. Higgs to J.Jantzen, Parks and Recreation Department, City of Edmonton; all, PAA 87.160/126; Fort Edmonton Park Historical Foundation, Annual Report 1978, p.2. M.E. Wolfe, Report to the Rotary Club, June 1 1967, PAA 87.160/126; PAA 67.161.

[38] *EJ*, "Buy Pioneer? What for?", Nov30, 1966, CEA. The city later bought the buildings for Fort Edmonton. M. E. Wolfe, June 1, 1967, Report to Rotary Club, PAA 87.160/126.

[39] *EJ*, "Fort Edmonton proves big hit", April 15, 1967, p.15 .

[40]J.G. Macgregor, Chair, Edmonton Museum Committee. *Report*, March 1, 1959; J.G. MacGregor, "Rebuilding Old Fort Edmonton As A National Historic Park", February 9, 1959, PAA 70.480/2.; *EJ*, "Heritage Park will recall city history", May 27 1966; James Finlay in *EJ*, "Fort Edmonton dedicated Sunday", July 10, 1967, CEA; development plan, see Project Planning Associates Ltd. *Fort Edmonton Park: Proposed Master Plan for the City of Edmonton, Alberta*. Toronto, September 1, 1968, PAA 87.160/127; H.S. Ragan, Fort Edmonton Park Committee, *Report* to Rotary Club, June 20 1968, PAA 87.160/126; E. Roche, "Cash shortage may halt work on fort", *EJ* [1972], PAA 78.32/37. In June 1968, the city decided to choose yet another site for the park.

[41] *EJ* "Plan museum in honor of two city pioneers", June 20 1961.

In 1980 (a month after a wildcat strike at the park over FEHF's hiring of non-union carpenters), the FEHF celebrated its own history, calling the reconstruction a "monument to the founders of a city." Those honoured included selected promoters and administrators of the project itself. Women's clubs, which had initiated the idea of preservation and reconstruction for decades before other groups became interested, were not mentioned.[42]

Feeling that the Fort's development was too slow and in danger of control by the city, at the end of 1969 the project leaders established the Fort Edmonton Historical Foundation (FEHF) to coordinate the project and to raise funds. The city was to be ultimately responsible for administration and promotion. According to terms established in 1977, the FEHF and the city would share responsibility to develop a "living museum concept." Control officially passed from the city to FEHF in 1982, but Parks and Recreation remained involved.[43]

### *The 1970s: the "romance of history"*

The goals of good taste and authenticity were expensive ones and the Rotarians were pragmatic fundraisers. The club attracted substantial Hudson's Bay Company support with reminders of the latter's upcoming 300th anniversary and promises of future commercial opportunities in the Park.[44] Fort Edmonton Park opened in October 1970 with HBC-financed trading buildings and Rotary funding for the pallisades. The University of Alberta Students Union immediately objected to the glorification of the HBC, which they accused of a history of exploiting and displacing native peoples (many of whom, incidentally, had participated in the construction and opening ceremonies of the Park.) HBC director J.R. Murray, in response, insisted upon recognition of the "romance of the history his company has with the development of western Canada."[45]

Fundraising, and the "romance of history", continued to be central themes. During the 1970s, for example, the FEHF extended "opportunities for citizen participation" to volunteers who raised funds while dressed in voyageur costume. Publicity efforts also included historically-correct entertainments and tours. The expense of establishing a major leisure site vastly increased by the insistence on historically authentic and thus time-consuming, labour-intensive construction methods. Promotional reports detailed the "faithful adherence not only to the appearance of the original structure" but also the re-creation of the actual building process, materials, methods and tools (including hand-forged hardware and river mud.)[46]

By 1972, Fort Edmonton Park's romance with history had cost over $1 million, and only federal, provincial, and civic funding allowed construction to continue until the park opened to the public in 1974. The city dedicated $100,000 of a provincial recreation development grant to Fort Edmonton in the name of historical conservation and, implicit in the terms of the grant, its potential as a tourist and leisure

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[42] Edmonton Parks and Recreation, "Edmonton House", n.d., c. 1970s, CEA; *EJ*, "Fort Edmonton .....remembered", June 19, 1980, E2.; R. Sibley, "City tradesmen walk out at Fort Edmonton Park", *EJ* May 16 1980, B2. While resentments later arose concerning the recognition of donors, these were mainly related to the placement of plaques on the Pallisade walls rather than to the names on them.

[43] FEHF, *Annual Report*, Edmonton 1978; *EJ*, "Fort Edmonton now run by board", June 14, 1982, B3; M.E. Wolfe to H.G. Ward, Jan 10, 1968; Ludford, R. to I. McBride, President Rotary Club, March 15, 1968; Ragan, H.S., Memo, to Rotary Club, 78.160/126; FEHF, *Annual Report*, Edmonton 1978. Clubs including the Lions, the WCC and IODE cooperated in raising community and corporate support for various parts of the planned park. See FEHF, Annual Report, 1978. By mid-1969, Fort Edmonton Park had cost $16,617.00; PAA 87.160/126; Davies, Jim, "Fight on to preserve city's history", *EJ*, April 22, 1967, p. 45. The Provincial Museum of Alberta approved the use of the 1953 G.H. Macdonald plans for use in the reconstruction. Advice came from those familiar with the construction of pioneer villages in eastern Canada and the United States.

[44] Ragan, H.S. to Rotary Club, March 20 1969; Ragan to H.L. Spelliscy, Mgr., HBC, Edmonton April 2 1969; H.L. Spelliscy to H.S. Ragan, September 4 1969; PAA 78.160/126.

[45] V. Martin, "Whooping it up at Fort Edmonton official opening", *EJ* Oct 14, 1970; *EJ*, "Program allows extension in building Fort Edmonton" [1972], PAA 78.32/37.

[46] Sources are listed as mid-1800s HBC notes of the Fort's construction. Edmonton Parks and Recreation, "Edmonton House", n.d., c. 1970s, CEA.

facility.[47] As time went on, it became obvious that the park as envisioned originally--"Disneyland Edmonton" as the *Globe & Mail* saw it--would require much greater resources than had been realized. Despite these and other objections, the 1988 city council approved the $17 million master plan.[48]

The next phases included the development of urban streetscapes outside the palisades. Community groups of this period contributed through projects such as restoring pioneer-era churches and residences, which vanished from Edmonton streets and reappeared at the Park over the next decade. The most numerous buildings of the new streetscapes, however, were reconstructed stores. Both the 1885 and 1905 sections of the Park are shopping districts lined with display windows, advertisements and merchant's signage. Following the example of the Bay, businesses surviving into the next century sponsored their own memorials. References to the city's present-day shopping mall culture helped to put these projects in context. Opening a greenhouse replica in 1986, FEHF promised that Fort Edmonton Park would soon be a bigger attraction than West Edmonton Mall. The Reed family sponsored the 1989 reconstruction of their original 1905 china and gift shop, which was inevitably termed by a reporter a "mega-mall" of its time. [49]

As discussed above, concepts over the years included a miniature model, a commemorative plaque or park with rustic signs, a restoration or reconstruction of one building, and a full-scale restoration of a "living community" of the past. All of these schemes depended on documentation and models, not only of the original Fort Edmonton, but of other similar museums.

Although nothing remained of the Fort, there were many photographs available, as well as detailed plans. The original Rotarian concept was a recreation of the Factor's residence (or Big House). In 1968, the Public Archives in Ottawa yielded a hundred pages of information about the Fort's design. Macdonald's 1953 "Plan of Proposed Rebuilt Fort Edmonton," based on the 1846 design, was eventually replaced with one of the Fort around 1850. The latter was considered to be more interesting historically, smaller and so more feasible, and it contained the Big House. Since the WCC had already commissioned a miniature model of the Fort based on this plan, its use would also avoid confusion in the public mind.[50]

Planners also consulted expert advice and successful pioneer village museums. Concern was not only directed to historical authenticity, as the first director, Merrill Wolfe, directed his attention to building methods and display techniques which would "assure a forceful impact upon the visitor." The 1968 Master Plan detailed a logical sequence from primeval wilderness to twentieth-century civilization, with chronological eras isolated by buffer zones in order to promote credibility in the depiction of successive periods of dominance by "Indian, Fort and Capital."[51]

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[47] M.E. Wolfe, President FEPF, to Board of Directors, Rotary Club of Edmonton, February 1 1974; Alberta, Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation. *The Recreation Development Act.* December 14, 1973. Horst Shmid, Minister. PAA 87.160/126. As detailed in Chapter 2, above, in 1972 Alberta was the only province without legislation to protect historical and archaeological resources; at the end of 1973, the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation (later Alberta Culture) passed the Recreation Development Act to encourage and protect the leisure activities of citizens and the development of public facilities.

[48] In 1972, FEHF obtained a grant from Ottawa's Local Initiatives Program, and another in 1974 through the city's access to provincial funds for recreation-oriented projects. FEP officially opened to the public in 1974. J. Koenig, "Fort furnished--right down to the dishes", *EJ* May 11, 1974, p. 81; Alberta's 1973 Recreation Development Act (see Ch. 2, above) provided for grants to municipalities and community organizations for projects including historical development. In 1974, the Foundation was four years old, with 68 members and 50 supporters.Wolfe, M.E., President FEHF, to Rotary Club Board of Directors, February 1, 1974; FEHF, *Annual Report* 1978; A. Liimatainen, "A critical assessment of Fort Edmonton", *EJ*, June 11, 1975, 5; ; K. Engman, "Fort Edmonton plan gets OK", *EJ* November 17, 1988, B6; by March 1983, Fort Edmonton Park had cost $5.3 million. W. Thorsell, "Edmonton should find own way", *EJ* March 22 1983, A6.

[49] P. Robertson, *EJ*, October 15, 1975, p. 20; S. Williams, "Pioneer church being revived", *EJ* May 26, 1984: D5; C. Bartlett, "A slice of Alberta's past making a big move", Aug. 8, 1992, E2; J. MacDonald, "Reed's mega-mall of 1905", *EJ* Nov. 26, 1989, B2; M. Montieth, "Greenhouse replica eyed as tourist draw", *EJ*, June 23, 1986, B2.

[50] J.G. MacGregor, EMC Report. March 1, 1959. PAA 70.480/2; Correspondence between M.E. Wolfe, B.A. McCorquodale, Head Curator PMA, and W.H. MacDonald, October 1966, PAA 87.160/126.

[51] M.E. Wolfe, Report, Fort Edmonton Park Committee, Rotary Club, June 1 1967, PAA 87.160/126; Memo from H.G. Ward, President, Rotary Club, to M.E. Wolfe, Fort Edmonton Park Committee, July 13, 1966, PAA 87.160/126.; Project Planning Associates Limited 1968 (PAA 87.160/127.)

## C. The Fort and the Community

### *Players and power struggles*

As conceived by the WCC in 1913, Fort Edmonton would be preserved as "a free museum" of artifact collections accessible for public education. The 1968 Master Plan also envisioned the Park as an educational site, but also stressed its role in the tourist industry of the future, profiting from projected rises in income and leisure time.[52] The WCC's mandate had been to win public support for conservation. By the time FEP was being established, it was obvious that public support would have to come in the form of direct participation in fund-raising, to supplement revenue from indirect public (government) support. Planners warned that a viable operation would "hinge to a great degree on early success to stimulate public interest and support." If funding was delayed, "[f]ortunately, forts are of a nature that they can be partially built, or open ended, and still be interesting and attractive [to the public]."[53]

Although the Rotarians had originally earmarked $40,000 to reconstruct the Big House, upon receipt of the Master Plan the group committed the sum to "whatever portion [it] could buy." In March 1969, the provincial government informally promised $225,000 toward the construction of the Big House. Over the years, civic support included contributions of land with grounds services, logs from trees cut in freeway development in the valley, and funds for building acquisition, administration and operation. Funds for construction and furnishings were to come from private donations.[54]

The Rotary (and later the FEHF) wish to prevent the takeover and control of the park by the city reflects the self-perception of the Club, like that of other service organizations, to represent the interests of the community in a more direct way than did civic government. The stated purpose of the FEHF was to "focalize" local interest in a "historically correct" Fort Edmonton which would "achieve its proper place in the community by being a complete representation of the life of the settlers as it was at that time."[55]

In other words, the project's directors viewed their role as constructing a sturdy bridge between past and present, enhancing the everyday sense of history as part of community life. This sense of connection and public value, of course, was also crucial to fundraising efforts. The average citizen was unlikely to contribute directly to any one institution or interest group, whether it be city council or Rotary Club. The FEHF, therefore, was established as the "widest possible representation" and an "effective vehicle for public participation" in fund raising whereby to promote "the public's awareness of the City's unique history."[56]

The Foundation fulfilled "the private sector's need to be known as responsible corporate citizens...", and corporations were the single most important generator of direct fiscal support. Local sponsors of buildings, for instance, included the HBC and Sunwapta Broadcasting. Two-thirds of the funds raised, though, came from public citizens. Volunteer programs included the Voyageur program, based on the hierarchy of the old fur trade, which allowed its members to wear colourful sashes and contribute funds to the Park; the Friends of Fort Edmonton ("mainly housewives and retired persons" who gave tours and the like); and the Fort Edmonton Refurbishers, senior citizens who donated handicraft

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[52] WCC, Minutes, Annual Meeting, February 13, 1913, PAA 78.31/1; Project Planning Associates Ltd 1968 (PAA 87.160/127.)

[53] Project Planning Associates Ltd., 1968; M.E. Wolfe, *Report of the Fort Edmonton Park Committee*, RC, n.d. [1968], PAA 87.160/126.

[54] M.E. Wolfe, *Report of the Fort Edmonton Park Committee*, RCE, n.d. [1968]., PAA 87.160/126.; PAA 87.160/126. Other local Rotary Clubs added sums which eventually reached about $60,000. In March 1969, estimates of the future cost for the entire project: about half a million dollars. Costs to June 30, 1969, were $16,617. H.S. Ragan, Fort Edmonton Park Committee, RCE, to President and Board of Directors, RC, March 20, 1969, PAA 87.160/126; Liimatainen 1973, 5; M.E. Wolfe, *Report*, Fort Edmonton Park Committee, RCE, June 1, 1967, PAA 87.160/126.

[55] Memo, H.S. Ragan, Fort Edmonton Park Committee, RCE, n.d. [1968], PAA 87.160/126; R. Ludford to I. McBride, President, RC, March 15 1968, PAA 87.160/126.

[56] Ragan, ibid., PAA 87.160/126. By 1974, the FEPF had 68 (volunteer) members and 500 official supporters. Through the private sector, including businesses and service clubs funds matched by provincial grants, the FEHF had raised $500,000 by 1973, and over half of a total expenditure of $4 million on the park by 1978.

display items. The FEHF saw the Park evolving as "a true community museum project" and although participation seems to have been somewhat limited in nature, the programs appear to have been popular.[57]

In a 1977 agreement between the City and FEHF, Parks and Recreation became responsible for the operation and development (including administration, acquisition, preservation, restoration, display, advertising and public relations) "of the park as a major [municipal and regional] museum facility." To FEHF would fall fundraising and advising. Conflicts arose by the following year. The Foundation attributed the museum's "remarkable reputation for authenticity" to its own administrative structure which encouraged "public participation and flexible decision-making." Parks and Recreation was now undermining this with the constraints of bureaucracy and inadequate marketing and promotional efforts. Major financial responsibility for development continued to fall on city council into the 1980s.[58]

In the early 1970s, the Rotarians themselves were accused of serving the interests of influential donors rather than of any overall plan. The practice of recognizing only major contributions in the palisade plaques was an aesthetic as well as political irritation. Historical accuracy suffered due to lack of research, collection and construction funds. Metal staples attached treated hides to window frames. No full-time professional could be hired. The scope of the project was questioned by critics. One journalist (later a film-maker using the Fort as a set) called the projected attempt to portray the entire past and future of Edmonton "too ambitious for a city of this size." A limited reconstruction, perhaps of the Fort only "would have a more authentic appeal than an underfinanced Disneyland approach..."[59]

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[57]FEHF. *Annual Report*. Edmonton, 1978, pp.1-7. As of 1978, 975 Voyageur members had pledged over $200,000.

[58] FEHF.*The Doors Never Close: the Alberta Hotel. A Proposal.* Edmonton, April 1981; FEHF, *Annual Report*. Edmonton, 1978, 11-14. The 1981 proposal to purchase the Alberta Hotel requested funds to include $75,000 from a Major Cultural/Recreation Facility Grant, a loan arranged by the City, and a further $2 million from the City itself.

[59] The Fort's policy: anything visible must be authentic. While warehouses were full of donated artifacts, few existed of the actual Fort era of the mid-1850s. Liimatainen 1973, 5.

### *The economics of time travel*

Expert advisers stressed that Alberta, and especially Edmonton, should develop historic sites, museums and other tourist attractions. American tourists were especially interested in the old west, reported MacGregor, at the same time complaining of the prairie tendency to admire only things American. Although Fort Edmonton was of national significance, the eastern Canadian example of reverence for such historic sites had not been followed in Alberta except for a few places with links to American history.[60]

In 1960, the *Journal* and the Chamber of Commerce both endorsed what the former called the "exceptional" potential of Fort Edmonton to compete for tourist business, warning that unless the city "display the richness of this region's history we shall fall behind in the fierce competition for the tourist trade..."[61] According to the 1968 Master Plan, communities and governments of the last half century had grown in awareness of "the social and educational importance" of conserving our history. And in terms of annual revenues, educational "living history" projects similar to Fort Edmonton had met with "success and public support beyond their fondest dreams." In terms of competition, the Park would also be a tourism "counterweight to the Calgary Stampede."[62]

Provisions were made for food outlets in the commercial districts. FEHF used 1979 Travel Alberta visitor projections to supported a proposal that the city acquire Jasper Avenue's defunct Alberta Hotel to function as a full restaurant at the Park. It was a step closer to the 1970 vision of full consumer services as an important feature of a living park "with stores selling merchandise of the period..." The HBC store manager (the contemporary equivalent of the fur trade era's Factor Rowand) was invited to be the only commercial firm in the Park's "living" stores to actually sell products of the period.[63]

### *The boundaries of "living history"*

Intertwined with the political and financial debate around the Fort's site was a strong theme of aesthetic concern for its integration into the existing urban setting. The Whitemud Park location was selected as "pastoral background" more historically correct than the Legislature location had now become.[64]

Historical accuracy continued to be central to the concerns of the Park, but at different times the value of that accuracy was defined in different terms. The "living history" format itself is based on a model widely associated with authenticity, partly because the format offers a comprehensive, empathic view accessible to visitors. Practitioners and supporters of the format have also routinely connected this accessibility to a visitor experience which is "inherently educational." The FEHF, for instance, called authenticity crucial to "educational and cultural impact." This fertile rhetorical branch is consistently grafted to that of political and economic necessity: the Foundation's 1978 annual report insisted that only such authenticity (though expensive to the city) would satisfy taxpayers and patrons.[65]

Park director Merriott defines "living history" as the re-enactment of vernacular life in "real time" rather than (edited) cinema time. In other words, the visitor will distinguish the representation of

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[60] J.G. Macgregor, Chair, Edmonton Museum Committee. *Report*, March 1, 1959; J.G. MacGregor, "Rebuilding Old Fort Edmonton As A National Historic Park", February 9, 1959, PAA 70.480/2.

[61] *EJ* [Editorial, September 1960], PAA 67.280/3; Edmonton Chamber of Commerce Tourist Committee, press release, april 13, 1960, PAA 87.160/126.

[62] Project Planning Associates Limited. *Fort Edmonton Park: Proposed Master Plan for the City of Edmonton, Alberta.* Toronto, September 1 1968. PAA 87.160/126.

[63] RCE, "The Westerner--special edition", [newsletter, n.d., c. 1970], PAA 87.160/126; FEHF, *The Doors Never Close: The Alberta Hotel, a Proposal.* Edmonton, April 1981; in September 1969, the Bay announced a $30,000 donation to provide the Trading Buildings in the Fort. These, along with the "Rotary Palisades", were dedicated on October 13, 1970. Correspondence, H.S. Ragan, Fort Edmonton Park Committee, RCE, to Harold I. Spelliscy, HBC, April 2, 1969; Spelliscy to Ragan, September 4, 1969; RCE, "The Westerner (Special Edition)" [club newsletter, n.d., c. 1969] PAA 87.160/126.

[64] M.E. Wolfe, *Report*, Fort Edmonton Park Committee, RC, [1968], PAA 87.160/126; see H.Dempsey to R.Y. Secord, February 19, 1960, PAA 70.480/2.

[65] FEHF. *Annual Report.* Edmonton, 1978, p.1.

the past as real, because as direct experience the museum setting parallells his or her own sense of how time behaves in everyday life, as contrasted to the manipulated, fictional conventions of film and television. Therefore, the Park asks the visitor to make a distinction between everyday reality and its unreal representation, and to place the museum in the first category. Merriott defines the objective of all museums as the establishment of difference between the past and present; the Park captures the spirit of the past by bridging this difference and making it accessible.

The museum, then, constructs the plot tensions, the rules of the narrative, and offers a resolution--much as does cinema. In the evolutionary narrative of Fort Edmonton Park, Merriott notes, different eras are cued by changes in detail. When enough "elements which may be documentary" are combined, the result is a suspension of disbelief. This could be a description of cinema experience. Visitors to the Park ask "Why was this townsite abandoned?"[66] (And movie-goers weep as the ship sinks.) It remains to add that to associate "reality" with everyday experience as distinguished from media consumption (or other entertainments) ignores the fact that, for the majority, film and television are part of everyday leisure experience--as are other simulated urban environments.

How do living history museums construct the past? Everyday life is normally presented as the performance of tasks in specific domestic or work settings. Although, according to Merriott, credibility is established by the presence of real buildings, the streetscapes are still primarily a visual experience. Other observers have noted that the typical visitor to prairie sites takes the greatest interest in obsolete agrarian or crafts skills, rather than in viewing valuable artifacts or displays. The intellectual and visual knowledge of the agrarian past, for instance, makes real sense in a functioning farm building--its earthen floor, odors, fire smoke and smaller proportions. Performers trained in obsolete skills and knowledge including labour processes, handcrafts and machinery operation, are effectively preserving a way of life in process.[67]

A 1970s FEP pamphlet emphasizes the sensory (implying participant) approach to history, somewhat curiously beginning "...feel the excitement in the air" while you "...[s]mell hides being tanned...taste some bread...feel the luxurious surroundings of 1905 Street." A 1984 ad for "Back to Basics Courses" read, "Tired of coping with the age of technology? ...Adult courses at Fort Edmonton Park take you back in time to a bygone era where you'll find satisfaction in seeing a piece of beauty take shape."[68]

The distinction between today and the "bygone era" rests here on the implication that "technology" involves alienation, confusion and meaningless or abstract production, in contrast to what is, after all, only a different technological context. Options, for instance, included instruction in blacksmithing. What is really being offered is not an escape from technology but into the use of technology which demands physicality, tangible products and an investment of time. In the present, these are normally available (at least to the middle-class customer typical of cultural tourism) in leisure contexts such as sport, crafts and vacations. All of these are valuable in the sense that they are small escapes from everyday life--as is Fort Edmonton Park.

The site does, in fact, compensates for present day urban life in the sense that it is a quiet, pastoral setting which, like Venice, appeals in its lack of automobile traffic. And it does offer a multi-sensory complex of texture, sight, sound, smell, and taste. However, over the past couple of decades these particular objects of perception have become commonplace consumer options in both domestic and public spaces. For most city people today it is debatable whether a visit to Fort Edmonton Park is associated with history, or simply offers an accessible and temporary visit to an idealized version of a familiar country.

However, this experience depends on enclosure in the space, on a suspension of belief in the outside world, a tourist-directed expereince. In everyday terms, the physical separation of designated enclaves from modern life is a problem. Although the comparative quiet and serenity of our preserved past is one of the Fort's main selling points, adjacent residents have long complained about whistle noise from the replica steam railroad. What is charmingly evocative in controlled doses becomes one more nuisance

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[66] All quotes attributed to Tim Merriott in this section are from T. Merriott, "Fort Edmonton Park", unpublished paper delivered at Edmonton Bicentennial Conference, Edmonton, May 1995; here Merriott quotes Jay Anderson's description of the historic site or village as "both the time machine and its destination," the visitor is its main anachronism, existing both in the present and the "past" (J. Anderson, *Time Machines: the World of Living History.* Nashville: American Association for State and Local History 1985.)

[67] E.R. Chamberlin, *Preserving the Past.* J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, London 1979, 174.

[68] City of Edmonton Parks and Recreation, "Fort Edmonton Park" n.d., c.1970s; *Edmonton Examiner*, March 19, 1984, both, CEA.

when it crosses the boundaries of the past into everyday life. Another irritation, amplified rock music from special events fundraisers on the grounds, was especially irksome in contradicting the mandate and character of the park.[69] By allowing present "technology" in, the Park subverted its own conceptual, as well as physical, boundaries.

As the Park developed, critics questioned its "creeping inaccuracies", haphazard vision and lack of coordination, and mediocre compromises. Credibility suffered. In January 1982, with a "major historical find" of original Fort timbers in the walls of a barn, the director of Historic Sites Services suggested that the FEHF raise funds by selling slivers of the "true fort Edmonton" as holy historic relics.[70]

Historically relevant events included the journeys of replica York boats, harvest fairs with cooking contests, and a re-enactment of an 1885 Alberta Mounted Rifles demonstration. But as the park developed, references to tourism and leisure potential increasingly took precedence over issues of museum-quality restoration and authenticity. Theme parties and events with modern appeal were instituted, such as the Halloween "spooktacular" in the "haunted" historic houses. Occasional period melodramas and musicals (one based on a 1936 Hollywood film about "Canada") were performed at the site, and it served as at least one film set.[71]

Many viewed historic authenticity as secondary to the Park's main function as a refuge from the present. In 1986 *Journal* editor Stephen Hume saw the park as a "more alive" and attractive version of the city, especially in contrast to the dying (though recently "improved") downtown area. Fort Edmonton promoted itself with comparable appeals, offering "...the Jasper Avenue your great-grandparents knew..."[72]

Hume's comment raises the question of exactly whose great-grandparents knew Jasper Avenue, and for those who did, how they experienced it. Promoters of a reconstructed Fort Edmonton had argued for its potential as a symbol of local civic identity and pride among local people who (according to interested parties) wished "to see some visible presence of Edmonton's colourful past erected in the City before it was too late."[73] In its own museum Edmonton could "demonstrate the individuality of the community...in an intimate and authentic manner..." which would have emotional appeal to local citizens as a site which "was once the heart" of what had become a great city.[74]

On historical grounds, perhaps, Fort Edmonton Park appealed most to the middle-class member of long resident families whose lives were actually represented by its relics and buildings. These included, of course, the families of many of the community groups which drove the project. The actual turn-of-the-century mud road that was Jasper Avenue must have appeared to many non-Anglo Saxon immigrants as an unwelcoming alternative to oppression and poverty in Europe, and to native people as a symbol of oppression at home. For at least some of the late twentieth-century descendants and most of the tourists, its replica was a refuge from the consequences of modern progress and prosperity.

Merriott suggests that if "history is part of everyday life, visitors cannot be indifferent to it, "[75] an emphasis on the potential of museums for interaction with audiences. Museologists link a range of sensory experience to a condition of empathy, not with the sign but with its signified: the real history behind the museum version of it. Here we might recall the roots of the Fort Edmonton project in the turn of the

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[69] *EJ*, "Park locomotive grave nuisance", August 29, 1978, B2; M. Sadava, "Rio Terrace may sue over park noise", *EJ* May 10 1991, B4; *EJ*, "Problems in Fort Edmonton aired", August 7 1991, B3; N. McKinnon, "Neighbours demand silence from Fort", *EJ* August 22, 1991, B2.

[70] HSS director F. Pannekoek cited in Beal 1982, B1; Liimatainen 1975, 5; Engman 1988, B6; by March 1983, Fort Edmonton Park had cost $5.3 million, Thorsell 1983.

[71] *EJ*, July 9, 1992, B1; G. Morash, "Cooks renew culinary warfare", *EJ* September 4, 1991, C2; L. Nicholls, "Romance, racism, and Rose Marie", *EJ* June 23, 1991, C2.

[72] S.Hume, "History lessons, granite obsessions", *EJ* Sept. 14 1986, A6; City of Edmonton Parks and Recreation, "Fort Edmonton Park" [1970s] CEA.

[73] M.E. Wolfe to Basil Dean, June 24, 1966; M.E. Wolfe, Memo June 1 1967; both, PAA 87.160/126.

[74] J.G. MacGregor, Edmonton Museum Committee. *Report*, March 1, 1959. PAA 70.480/2.

[75] WCC, Edmonton, *Constitution* (1911), stated purpose: to foster patriotism, promoting the study of the institutions, history, arts, literature and resources of Canada, and to "unite Canadians in such work..." The WCC did promote a public awareness of Canadian history through various projects. During the period of their initial efforts regarding Fort Edmonton, the Club petitioned the government to support the ailing Pauline Johnson in recognition of her work. In February 1912, a luncheon speaker addressed the topic "Reminiscences of early days of Edmonton." PAA 78.31/1.

century conviction that national unity, cultural maturity and patriotism all depended on citizen awareness of, and participation in, Canadian history. Most of the public interest in Fort Edmonton, however, appears to have been contained in groups dedicated to community service, those dedicated to architectural or historical preservation, and those with more pragmatic interests in civic promotion and tourism.

During a period of accelerated urban re-development beginning in the 1950s and accellerating for over two decades, concerned groups studied the loss of local architectural landmarks in Edmonton's civic centre. In 1960, the province established an advisory board to protect "historical, archeological, ethnic and meteoric sites and objects."[76] The 1968 FEP Master Plan advised salvaging city buildings in order to "enhance...authenticity" while decreasing reconstruction costs. Accordingly, the park acquired buildings which would "complement the museum's conceptual theme" of period streetscapes. In 1995, S.P.A.R.E. president Rod Grey called Fort Edmonton Park an acceptable, though not ideal, option for preserving our history. "I don't think you should have to go to a special area in the middle of nowhere just to see some of these buildings. I kind of think of it as a zoo for buildings."[77]

Here Grey raises the issue of boundaries again, of the construction of enclaves to conserve history (or any cultural phenomena) from the destruction of progress, or simply from change. The FEHF proposal to move the Alberta Hotel to the Park illustrates the way in which such an enclave functions as a conceptual instrument to contain the effects of change. In the proposal, the rescued hotel would not just recall the historic appearance of the original Jasper Avenue, but would guarantee that the essence of the site--and, by extension, the city and its people--endured. It would "still occupy pride of place in Edmonton, continuing to serve the public as it has for the past three-quarters of a century."[78] The idea that the building's significance would be unchanged even after moved from its original context demonstrates the sense that that context had itself lost its significance, its "pride of place" and role in public service.

In the global industry of tourism, the world is filled with places appealing in terms of the sense that they are "elsewhere," as the heritage construction is in but not apparently of the present. Its sites are found, renewed, fixed from the world of loss and transience.

### D. Conclusion: "A Fort no longer except in name..."

Fort Edmonton is a fort no longer except in name...stores stand utterly exposed and a large population...live distant from the fort. ...the grade on the south side of the river opposite the fort [should be repaired] to facilitate passage of troops and supplies.

(*Edmonton Bulletin* Spring 1885)

Themes of form and function are most significant to the history of Fort Edmonton Park's production. Evolving concepts of development concerned, first, its appropriate physical form: memorial, model, restoration, reconstruction, and theme park. Questions of design and site were implicated in those of form. Its most enduring intended function has been the symbolic communication of the city's identity through the material preservation of a relic of its past, with the added one of refuge from its present. For most of the Park's existence, the functions of education and heritage have been balanced with those of leisure, entertainment and tourism. Questions of function and form also include those of aesthetics: what aspects of "the past" appeal to different interests and audiences?

Authenticity here would seem to be more significant to the producers of the museum than to most of its consumers. However, these producers rhetorically link public support to the value of authenticity, a value which has been in fact more closely attached to conditions of government financial support. The relationship of authenticity to commercial appeal has varied in nature over the history of Fort Edmonton

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[76] *EJ*, "Protection sought for historic sites", Dec. 16, 1960, 6.; *EJ*, "City landmarks disappear", Oct. 23, 1967, p. 31.

[77] SPARE: Society to Preserve Architectural Resources in Edmonton; R. Mauthe, "Preserving old buildings in place: an alternative to moving or demolition", *Edmonton Examiner*, CEA, [1995]. Other structures moved to the park included structures such as signage and lighting fixtures; in 1992, city council granted funds to a citizens' group planning to save the obsolete 109th St. railway bridge for reconstruction at the park. M. Gold, "Bridge eludes wrecker", *EJ* Nov. 5, 1992, B3.

[78] FEHF, *The Doors Never Close: the Alberta Hotel*. Edmonton, April 1981.

Park, depending on motivations, players, finances and local politics. The recurring concern for authenticity is important because, to varying degree, it contains the discourse of meaning. Can a museum, however "alive", impart a credible sense of everyday life? To whom is authenticity of detail important: the producers or the consumers? And for what reasons do producers seek authenticity?

In the latter question we come to the issue of motivation and power relationships in the production of public space, and the tension between interests which are seen to be primarily economic, and those which seem to be primarily cultural. Fort Edmonton's history must be seen in the context of developments in the city around it, and in turn in the context of inter-urban competition and the changing role of the museum form itself as one of many types of North American leisure environments.

In terms popular among museologists, Merriott warns that we must take seriously the museum's potential to animate an authentic past and to safeguard against mythologized history.[79] But as narrative, image and tradition, myth is the animation of the past in ways that make sense to the present: it is an unscientific but not inauthentic form of knowledge. Heritage sites also involve the visitor in an imaginary "temporal community" composed of the real and the possible. They are always a combination of the original (preserved relics or landscapes), the mimetic--direct copies based on evidence such as photos--and the analogic, parallel phenomenon which is possibly though not verifiably "true." It is this combination which characterizes heritage culture.

Culture, according to Raymond Williams, is a system of communicating, experiencing and reproducing a social order. It does this by constructing meaning through certain symbols, "practices and institutions..." Among these is the complex of phenomena, ideas and beliefs we call "heritage"--a medium of symbolic communication about the present as much as about the past. Williams later described culture as a "lived social process" which includes not only dominant but residual forms of expression: those which were once dominant (such as craft processes, discussed above). Residual knowledge is not so much irrelevant as altered in meaning through current dominant processes of interpretation, inclusion and exclusion.[80]

The construction of "living history" as reconstructed cultural heritage, separated from but iconifying everyday life, illustrates Williams' concept of the residual "enclave" of knowledge persisting into the present. As Williams demonstrated, such enclaves cannot be separated from the social processes which preserve or produce them. It is necessary to examine how "residual" elements are actually interpreted for specific current purposes.

Relph suggests that "museumified" history, as in pioneer villages, dissipates the authentic sense of place, leaving a placeless, inauthentic object which is interchangable, standardized and thus predictable for the tourist industry. The key difference between a genuine, living community and its tourist-oriented interpretation is that the latter is a commodity marketed to a consumer. The former, by contrast, is a dynamic, changing complex in which knowledge of history has resonance in association with everyday experience. While mediated experience is to be distinguished from direct (authentic) contact with place and culture, Relph stresses that both are part of everyday life. The problem, as Williams' discussion of selective interpretation implies, is that we are left with a *partial* experience which has been pre-screened by interested or biased others.[81]

Only selected aspects of the complex are subject to evaluation as significant, "authentic" or not, and these aspects tend to be those which are easily framed and immobilized, such as certain artifacts or processes. The value of authenticity, however, then extends by implication to the entire production or setting, and in this way a museum space over time becomes itself mythologized or "sacred." The status of objects as institutionalized artifacts supports the distinction of the institution as expert and above the materialistic concerns of amateurs, theme park operators and antique shops. This distinction is validated, in turn, by political agencies which lend the authentic object further status as ideological symbols, and

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[79] Merriott 1995.

[80] R.Williams, *Culture*, London: Fontana, 1981, 13; Williams 1989, 103, 123. See also H. A. Innis, *Bias of Communication*, University of Toronto Press 1951, discussion of the survival of "time-biased" modes of communication within the present "space-biased" order.

[81] E. Relph, *Place and Placelessness*. Pion Ltd., London. 1976 81-7, 93-146. Museums and governments, of course, do not simply validate or designate authenticity according to the relationship of an object to an existing, transcendent standard. They also set that standard, though its specific form is subject to a sense of current social taste and sensibilities.

lend heritage institutions financial support. Although "living history" and outdoor villages have been offered as alternatives to traditional museums, the essential practices remain the same.[82]

Harvey, as well as Shields, notes that questions of authenticity have been part of the culture of commerce and tourism for centuries. Only comparatively recently has this become part of a more widespread concern for making sense of the modern industrialized, commodified, complex world. Museums have always presented objects in relation to theme, but today the theme is much more part of museum marketing through "a shorthand stylization" of person, place and thing,"symbol and archetype."[83] In this, the heritage site represents a continuity with dominant media forms (such as the museum) rather than a continuity with historical experience or collective consciousness.

As Bennett points out, the sense that museum constructions can provide "interactive" experience is naive since the exhibition format always involves distances: those between the objects (including buildings) and their original settings, and those between producer and consumer. The democratic rhetoric of public participation here dates back, again, to the latter nineteenth century when the museum institution provided "object lessons" meant to allow people to inform their everyday lives and work through chosen models. Historical environments encourage the visitor to step out of the role of distanced spectator. But however realistic, an encapsulated fragment of urban or rural history presents a version of a memory of the spectacle of public life, where little critical interpretation is encouraged, or perhaps possible.[84]

Over the period of Fort Edmonton Park's development, audiences have become far more sophisticated about cultural tourism and the production of public spectacle. At the same time, the increasing presence of mass media forms in everyday life makes mediation interesting in itself rather than in its role as a producer of suspect facades. There is always a distance between reality and representation but the connotations of this distance are different for different audiences. The status of authenticity in cultural representation is always problematic. Authentic historical objects are always material forms of abstract suggestions, serving both to normalize and to "sacralize" a manipulated interpretation of the present and future.[85]

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[82]In the traditional museum, didactic verbal and visual communication is authoritative, partly due to their compatibility with the philosophies, conventions, and available technologies of communication, such as display equipment. In such a setting, imagined or subjective elements of presentation tend to be considered supplemental to knowledge.

[83] M. J. King, "The theme park experience: what museums can learn from Mickey Mouse", in E. Cornish (Ed.), *The Futurist*, November/December 1991, 24; see also J. Cypher and E. Higgs, "Packaged tours: themed experience and nature presentation in parks and museums", *Alberta Museums Review*, Summer 1997, Vol.23, #2, 28-30; Harvey 1989; Shields 1990; J. Baudrillard "The ecstasy of communication", *Postmodern Culture*, London: Pluto Press, 126-134; Featherstone 1992. Theorists of popular culture and spectacle, similarly, place questions of authenticity in the realm of mass communications which destabilize the relationship between signifier and signified, leading to a sense of a less than "authentic"--because more mediated--environment.

[84] T. Bennett, "Museums and 'the people'", in R. Lumley (ed.), *The Museum Time Machine*, 1988, London: Routledge, 63-86; see also T. Bennett, "The exhibitionary complex", *New Formations* 4 (Spring) 1988, 73-102; cited Delaney 1992, 141-143.

[85] Recent critiques of the museum as institution have criticized its object-oriented, rationalized display mode whose connoted associations serve to privilege status quo. Meltzer notes that museums are an instance of reifying--making real--a certain authoritative concept of reality, such as the dependence of prosperity on scientific progress. The nineteenth-century museum, for instance, objectively displayed exotic tribal objects in cases within a much broader narrative of comparative European progress, confirmed and detailed in everyday popular culture and mass media. J.Duncan and D.Ley (Eds.), *Place/Culture/Representation*. Routledge: London and New York. 1993; Jordanova 1989; S. Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London 1984; M. McLoughlin, "Of boundaries and borders: First Nations' history in museums", *Canadian Journal of Communication*, Vol. 18 (1993) 365-385; Delaney; Wright 1985; see D.J. Meltzer, "Ideology and Material Culture", in R.A. Gould and M.B. Shiffer (Eds.), *Modern Material Culture: the Archaeology of Us*. New York: Academic Press 1981, 114-124.
An object may no longer have use-value, or direct, unmediated social relevance. It may instead have exchange-value, which, as in the case of antiques, is directly related to its distance from its original social context (how old is it? how common was it?) An object is now a "real" artifact as well as being, say, a real butter-churn, but its evaluation--which of these realities is significant at the moment--depends on its position in economic or cultural discourse, that is, whether it occupies a market or museum context. The further a historic artifact travels from its original context of

Fort Edmonton is one of many pioneer village reconstructions which invoke a lost "golden age" of community life (and whose originals symbolized the idealized future of a western agrarian utopia.) This ideal dimension, whether interpreted as past or future, serves as cultural context for material forms and processes. In our own time, the heritage park presents an idyllic scenography in which a social utopia was realized, but whose time has past, taking with it endless physical labour but leaving behind its dreams and accomplishments. As memorial, a museum space like Fort Edmonton Park is a somewhat worn container of a myth which still has strong cultural force.

Donald Horne emphasizes that a "shared reality," like that of small-town history, is always in part an abstract ideal or impression. In reconstructing the past, our representations also necessarily contain what Horne calls "aspects of previously declared dreams."[86] Such sites, then, are not lies but rather a partial, representative image of a social reality. A "historyland" can offer the euphoric sensation of simultaneous experience of the present and past. Part of the viewing pleasure lies in recognizing the ways in which the fantasy world is a citation of the "real" one. The town squares, classical buildings, train stations and market places of historicized streetscapes are idealized forms guaranteed to meet the expectations of visitors who normally live without such features.[87] Their commodity is a sense of human scale, an amenable sensory context, evident in both the rationales for Fort Edmonton and for Old Strathcona: alternatives to the alienating development of the modern city.

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use, the more its economic or spectacular value increases, which further removes or protects the object from use value.

[86] Horne, 251. Horne also observes that the truth of the age may be represented most accurately by something that did not survive, but we react to displayed stereotypes as though we were seeing manifestations of a distinct collective consciousness (Ibid. 26-28).

[87] Ibid; Wilson, 176-180.

# Chapter. 4. "The thing that shines": Packaging Community in Old Strathcona

L'homme y passe a travers des forets de symboles/ Qui l'observent avec des regard familiers.
(C. Baudelaire, cited Benjamin 1968, 189.)

## A: Marketing Urban Preserves: Strategies and Containers

Restored urban heritage districts, like living history parks, normally propose the experience of direct contact with a selected "original" context. Authenticity is the element of heritage production which promises the most direct possible continuity of (or connection with) history. Fort Edmonton's resonance of artificiality with authenticity (which involves the element of sense of place) in many ways also characterizes everyday urban space. It involves a tension between a participatory sense of community voice and a sense of disempowerment in control over public space. Implied is a lack of choice of available social roles: active production or passive consumption.

Issues of community participation in the construction of local history are pertinent outside the museum space because of their social implications for the mediation of knowledge and the control of public space. Is genuine public participation in cultural production possible in a context of the institutionalized administration and marketing of that culture to consumers? Berland, for one, calls consumption inseparable "from...tangible processes of economic and political transformation..." which limit its potential to foster agency or social empowerment.[1] Like Fort Edmonton Park, the development of the Old Strathcona heritage district of Edmonton was initiated through citizen concerns for historic preservation. Action to protect the area, though beginning several decades later than the Fort Edmonton project, was also given impetus by the perception of urban change at a pace likely to destroy local environments and social patterns. But Fort Edmonton Park developed in the river valley as a leisure destination, dedicated to representing "living history" at certain points in time. Old Strathcona was, from the start, imagined as a reconciliation of existing structures with urban progress in terms of economic and cultural revitalization in the area.

Communities which employ historic conservation as either preservation or revitalization strategy face difficult issues rooted in the longstanding sense of opposition between culture and commerce. In Alberta, conflicts of value systems and community aspirations are almost guaranteed, as state heritage interests associate themselves with concepts of "community development" (with historic preservation as an implicit, but not guaranteed feature.) The historicized urban district, such as the restored shopping street, is also a zone of everyday life for its residents. However, this commodified public space is aimed toward an audience of "outsiders", a constructed point of view in which the past appears most attractive and accessible. Conflicts of interest occur between local communities, tourism agencies, historic preservationists and cultural administrators. It would seem that the community has the highest stake in the development of the district. However, questions of the wider public interest in heritage, not to say economic revitalization, often compete with the interests of locals. Are heritage assets a benefit or a burden in terms of everyday life?

The commercializing of existing streetscapes can be as threatening to locals as outright destruction, replacing tradition with an emphasis on surface so that the present is a parody of the past. Natural change over time and the memory of diverse events give way to an imposed, homogenized or simplified narrative of the olden days. The preservation of Old Strathcona has been defended, but also been criticized as ersatz history and superficial diorama.[2] Nevertheless, it is not that easy to draw a clear line between some "authentic" essential past and the artificial, replicated version of it for outsiders. The photographic sources of historal reference for reconstruction, for instance, are often available precisely because a place which grew as a trading centre has long been of interest to outsiders and tourists.[3] This is

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[1] J. Berland, "Angels dancing: cultural technologies and the production of space", L. Grossberg, C. Nelson & P.A. Treichler, *Cultural Studies*, New York/London: Routledge 1992, 43; see also pp. 40-42. Although Berland refers primarily to the consumption of popular music, the status of other spaces of consumption as mass mediated entertainment also makes her remarks relevant to the present discussion.

[2] B. Rusted, "Framing a house, photography and the performance of heritage", *Canadian Folklore Canadien* 17(2) 1995, 149.

[3] Ibid.

true, for instance, of turn-of-the-century Edmonton, partly restored as Fort Edmonton Park, and to the railway town of South Edmonton, which has been restored as the Old Strathcona Heritage Preservation District.

The issue of "community" is significant here because the dynamics of development in the case of Old Strathcona have exhibited conflicts of interest attributed by both sides to various (mis)conceptions of its capacity to represent local citizens. Can the population of Old Strathcona, as a defined area of the city of Edmonton, be accurately called a community? That is, can we cite the development of the area as a conservation district as a genuine community initiative, or not?[4]

The development of Old Strathcona as a meeting place of "insiders" and "outsiders" places this everyday city street into the category of constructed tourist space. These ambiguities and potential conflicts of category are not specific to the area. The Old Strathcona Historical Preservation District should be seen in the context of the wider movement toward community participation in heritage, primarily in pragmatic projects such as the re-use rather than destruction or relocation of historic buildings. These examples of "new museology" include Canada's Main Street projects, and related urban and rural ecomuseums. Closely tied to economic diversification or revitalization, such developments intend to salvage decaying urban communities through the exploitation of their tourism and consumer potential.[5] The traditional museum strategy of enclosure from the present is absent. For instance, the most immediately obvious difference between the district and Fort Edmonton is that the latter is sealed off from automobile traffic while Old Strathcona is, as it has always been, a steady conduit for commuters and consumers.

Main Street programs balance aesthetic and utilitarian principles by restoring "period" urban streetscapes as a showcase for the present-day economy. As a cultural landscape, the "museumified" district is also heir to the museum's longstanding status as a public institution. The collection of several features in a heritage district is intended to help sustain a sense of place and community. As a technique, the approach also lends individual components heightened significance, important in western Canada where architectural content is usually of less consequence than is vernacular context.

The Main Street programme has found it necessary to sustain public interest and improvement efforts with financial contributions and focused education designed to help people view their everyday environment as a historic resource: common heritage for insiders and educational entertainment for outsiders. The programs usually attempt to establish historical period without creating a "theme village," an alternative to the generic "olden days" as well as to the effects of actual history. [6]

**B. Historical development of the district**

***Urban renewal: the 1970s***

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[4] The community is generally defined as a social group identified with a common geographical habitat; it implies common interests, cooperation, interaction and a sense of belonging. These are, incidentally, often cited as characteristic values of the prairie pioneer culture, including that of the original town of Strathcona, or South Edmonton.

[5] Defined as a "[g]eographic area, including both cultural and natural resources...that has been influenced by or reflects human activity or was the background for an event or person significant in human history" which warrants "preservation of the historic appearance of the landscape" and provides the context of understanding for the present. H.C.Miller,"Rural landscape", *Cultural Resource Management Bulletin*, vol. 10, No. 6, December 1987, 1.

[6] S. Buggey. "Canadian cultural landscapes: an overview", *Impact*, Vo. 4, No. 4, June 1992. 1992; D.D. Paterson & L.J. Colby. *Heritage Landscapes in British Columbia: A Guide to Their Identification, Documentation and Preservation.* University of British Columbia Landscape Architecture Program 1989, 15; T.Ward, "Focus on the Alberta Main street programme: Vermilion", *Alberta Past*, Winter 1993, 10. W. Jamieson, "Creating historic districts: new challenges for historic preservation in Western Canada", *Prairie Forum* Vol. 15 No. 2 Fall 1990, 222-3; see also Lehr 1990, 274. According to one of its promoters, the new museology is summed up by three documents: the 1972 National Museums Policy document, *Democratization and Decentralization*, the 1982 Applebaum-Hebert Report, and the *Consultation 85* Report. J. Dalibard, "The community is the curator", *Canadian Heritage*, Vol.12, #1, February-March 1986, 2-3. See also H. Stovel, "Storefront evolution",16-18, and J.J. Stewart, "A strategy for Main Streets", both in*CH*#40, May-June 1983, 4-7.

This section traces the Old Strathcona development from the 1970s to the 1990s. Controversies over the administration, purposes and directions of the district characterize this history, to an extent much greater (or perhaps more concentrated) than that of Fort Edmonton Park. This historical outline is followed by a more specific examination of the pertinent discourse of public relations, aesthetic and commerce over the 1980s and 1990s.

Following its amalgamation with Edmonton in 1912, the south side community of Strathcona had slowly deteriorated as a commercial area while the downtown area became the new focus of activity. In 1971 the City of Edmonton, anticipating increased traffic into the city centre due to the economic expansion of the period, announced plans for a new freeway through the Old Strathcona district.[7] The CPR tracks were a point of congestion for residents, commuters and shoppers on Whyte Avenue. The proposed freeway on this land was one solution to the traffic problem on the street, which carried cars from the east and south to the bridges into downtown. Martin notes, then, that it was historical, geographical and economic forces which combined to establish the form of Whyte Avenue as a commercial ribbon.[8]

Stephen Martin's 1974 study noted that the downtown business core still held commercial dominance in the city, countering the North American trend of commercial decentralization. However, suburban malls represented new merchandising methods which were gradually eliminating older forms of commerce such as the small local shop. Martin's study suggests that certain intersections on Whyte Avenue also functioned as nodes of activity, or effective "nucleated shopping centres."[9]

In the 1960s, the street was a mixture of general retail, and personal and community services. Personal services such as restaurants, hotels, barbers and shoe repair shops amounted to 15 percent of total shops, with shops selling drugs, books, stationery, bicycles, gifts and music equipment the largest group at almost 17 percent. Hardware, furniture and domestic goods accounted for 8 percent of retail space. In the early 1970s, however, all categories saw a decline in numbers except for the apparel and accessories shops; specialty goods stores actually increased in number. The area was "increasing its attractiveness for retail stores serving a specialized market."[10]

At this time, Whyte Avenue, along with other areas such as Stony Plain road, was a "commercial ribbon" which had once been a town centre with a linear organization of retail establishments arranged to serve the street car lines. With the shift to automobile transport, and, in the Whyte Avenue area, the increasing density of population as apartment buildings rose, demanded a...different set of relationships between commercial and residential uses." Vacancy rates were low despite the fact that few new businesses had opened in the previous years, and commercial interests looked to the older buildings between 103 and 105 Streets for redevelopment.

These notions were complicated by the fact that the Strathcona Historical Society was actively engaged in historical preservation efforts concerning these buildings. Partly in response to "modernization" threats, and partly reacting to the freeway plan, citizens' groups formed in protest. In 1973, several of these groups established a body to preserve and promote the architectural heritage of the area. The area still served mainly local residents, however, and those within close driving distance.[11]

In April of that year, city council considered the Strathcona Historical Group's proposal, supported in principle by the Edmonton Historical Board, to designate the area as the Old Strathcona Heritage Conservation Area. The area, according to the proposal, was "a small prairie town, complete in almost every detail, standing where the pioneers built it...many of the elements associated with the end of the steel in 1891 remain intact."[12] The proposed preservation zone would ensure that all buildings remain compatible in style and scale with historical buildings of the conservation era.

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[7] Old Strathcona Foundation, *Old Strathcona Foundation Summary: A Community Revitalization Success*. Edmonton, 1994; P. Cashman, "Retaining the charm of Old Strathcona", *EJ*, March 26, 1990.

[8] S.P. Martin. "Selected aspects of the functional relationship between consumers and commercial ribbons: a case study of Whyte Avenue, Edmonton", M.A. Thesis, Dept. of Geography, University of Alberta 1974, 61-62.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., 79-81, 113, 138.

[11] Old Strathcona Foundation [Summary] 1994; Cashman 1990; Martin 1974, 56-61.

[12] [Strathcona Historical Group]. *Strathcona: The Asset of Heritage. A Plan for the Future* [1974 Report to Edmonton City Council], 9.

Largely due to the association of the area with the railway's "end of steel", the new Heritage Canada Foundation also expressed its support for what would become its first project. Heritage Canada and the Devonian Foundation would each provide $100,000 per year for five years. The proposal (like that for Fort Edmonton Park) also called for voluntary contributions from "historical-minded, public-spirited" citizens and businesses. Participation by the province was anticipated on the basis of the 1973 Alberta Heritage Act, which provided the relevant mechanism to designate heritage sites or monuments. However, the Act was not meant to apply to an entire urban area, and provincial building code regulations prohibited such historical features as outside staircases.[13]

The proposal described the benefits to the city in terms of the area's potential to "preserve links with the pioneers", attract tourists and to "preserve the qualities of variety and diversity which are among the best safeguards against the decay of inner-city districts."[14] Thus while the central goal was to preserve the local historical character by controlling the development of roadways and office buildings, the emphasis was on producing an "economically-viable" community rather than a museum.

The proposal had several points which appealed to the city planning department. The area typified strip commercial development, which the city was trying to minimize. Nearby shopping malls on the south side had accelerated the street's business deterioration. Meanwhile, property taxes of up to 40% of rental costs meant that owners could not afford to maintain buildings, which were held mainly for anticipated redevelopment profits. The Old Strathcona group cited a market survey which reported Whyte Avenue's potential as a "character shopping subcentre", geared toward tourist and specialty boutique shopping. This "impulse type of retail" would generate higher profit margins. Like a shopping mall, the area would mix service and retail shops but extend rather than compete with the downtown.[15]

The city agreed that the program would stimulate private investment and retail rehabilitation along Whyte Avenue, with a catalytic effect on the whole area. It also moved to protect the district from the negative effects of development, prohibited where it would "impair or detract from the preservation of the historical character of Old Strathcona." In 1976 ,Edmonton City Council, in an agreement made with the Old Strathcona Foundation and Heritage Canada, granted the district $50,000 per year for the next ten years.[16]

The Old Strathcona Foundation (OSF) was also established in 1974 as a non-profit society with a mandate to establish and administer a historic conservation area "within the boundaries of the Town of Strathcona as it existed prior to amalgamation with the City of Edmonton...preserving the buildings and relics and portraying the community of that era..." To that end, the OSF was to promote research, study and publicity, as well as dealing with regulations and real estate.[17] Membership was drawn from interested groups including the public school boards, the University and business associations, the Alberta Heritage Foundation, Heritage Canada, and private citizens' groups and organizations.

### *Shifting ground: the 1980s*

During the province's 1980 anniversary year, with public attention being drawn to areas of historic significance, the OSF called the district an example of the successful conservation and re-use of historic buildings. Two years later, OSF director Trevor Boddy prescribed Old Strathcona as a model for "adaptive reuse" and recycling of old buildings--a pragmatic, more economical alternative to new construction in Edmonton following the end of the 1970s building boom.[18]

In 1981, the OSF received the Heritage Canada Award of Honour for its work in saving the Gainer Block, reconstructing the Dominion Hotel, and restoring the Princess Theatre (donated to OSF by the Devonian Foundation in 1977). Part of the funding for the Foundation's work came from the city

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[13] Ibid. 5-9, 15.

[14] Ibid. 9. Vancouver's Gastown district was cited as a successful western precedent.

[15] Ibid. 46-47

[16] See the Development Control Resolution, City of Edmonton 1974. Ibid. 20; also, *EJ* June 9, 1985, A3.

[17] [Strathcona Historical Group 1974] ibid 31.

[18] *News and Views*, Vol.3, No.2, Fall 1980. In the Old Strathcona area as a whole, 600 buildings are estimated to date from 1914 or earlier; 25 of these are in the core area near Whyte Avenue; see also H. Sullivan, "Old buildings worth recycling--architect", *EJ* Aug. 29, 1982, F8.

grant, plus $25,000 in donations; the rest of the $433,000 in revenue came from real estate deals and rentals, and the Princess Theatre business.[19]

Calling it the "price of heritage", in 1981 the city granted the OSF $81,000 in addition to its usual yearly contribution. Council cited the foundation's problems paying for the Ritchie Mill, and other projects.[20] In 1982, though, the city warned that its grant commitment to Old Strathcona would end, as planned, in 1986. And in 1980, the province had contributed the last of its guaranteed allotments, totaling $1 million over five years. Civic funding was renewed in 1986, but ended ten years later.

Disputes and controversy, both internal and external, followed the establishment of the conservation area and of the Old Strathcona Foundation itself. As early as 1975, for instance, a new city council had disputed provisions of land use made in the 1974 agreement between the city and OSF.[21]

In November of 1981, a group of Strathcona Community League members--representing the Urban Reform Group Edmonton--took over the majority of the positions on the board of the Old Strathcona Foundation. In February of 1982, city aldermen questioned the shift of the OSF away from its 1973 mandate to restore and preserve the area, toward functioning as a political pressure group with members also sitting on City Council. Critics objected to the OSF's $67,000 loan to the Strathcona Community League just prior to submitting its yearly budget for council approval. The HCF representative on the board resigned, protesting that the loan was typical of the board's new, narrow political focus. Others agreed that OSF funds should be used to preserve historical buildings, not to finance new community halls. While the URGE members classified their takeover as "democracy in action", others pointed out that, in practice, participation was limited to a only few interested parties. Special interests--usually those of "middle-class, business oriented bureaucrats"--would be promoted under the banner of working for the public good of the area.[22]

One of the problems was that the original OSF had grown out of a community sense of threat, and a collective enthusiasm for urban preservation, but in the long term had not remained representative of the many residents and interest groups in Old Strathcona. From 1974 to 1980, for instance, the involvement of the business community diminished. Most Whyte Avenue businessmen had expected a program of redevelopment which would make Whyte Avenue a second "downtown" area updated by shopping centres with a quaint ambiance. At first, the OSF bought and renovated a few buildings, but suspicion of the board's motives grew in the early 1980s. Inevitably, it was accused of "wasting taxpayers' money". By 1982, only two members of the board came from local businesses; by contrast, eleven members represented political interest groups. No long-term bureaucratic structure served to stabilize the foundation and its projects; members came and went according to various commitments.[23]

Related debates concerned the OSF purchase of and management of specific properties. City councilors questioned, among other things, the financial wisdom in the OSF's plan to buy the Princess Theatre. Nevertheless, in 1982 city council approved $425,000 investment. By its own account, the OSF had "rescued" the theatre from commercial cinema interests which had owned it in the 1970s, and re-opened it as a repertory house. When the OSF's city funding ended in the mid-1990s, the now-unprofitable Princess was sold to private interests. The Old Strathcona Post Office, designated a provincial historic resource in 1985, was sold that year for $250,000 to a developer who anticipated spending a total of $3 million on necessary renovations. Though the exterior would be left intact, the interior became a multi-venue "entertainment centre" with restaurants and shops.[24] Perhaps because an indoor mall was an

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[19] J. Vlieg, "Scona foundation rocked by takeover", *EJ*, Jan. 27 1982, B11. The loan was later accepted as legal according to OSF bylaws.

[20] A. Ascher, "The Ritchie millstone", *Alberta Report*, Vol.12, No.7, Feb. 4, 1985, 9-10.

[21] O. Elliott, "Old Strathcona's future threatened", *EJ* September 19 1975, 30.

[22] Vlieg 1982, B11; R. Barstow, "$67,000 loan sparks call for city probe", *EJ* February 17 1982; O. Elliott, "League 'takeover' means we've come full circle", *EJ*, February 18 1982, A6; *EJ*, "Scona loan called legal", March 17, 1982, H3.

[23] O. Elliott, "Strathcona revitalization needs bureaucrats", *EJ* May 20, 1982, A4; D.Staples, "Strathcona--fine past and finer future", *EJ*, January 16, 1986, B5.

[24] *EJ*, "Council lets foundation buy Princess Theatre", March 9 1982, B1; Les Faulkner, "The Princess presence", *The Strathcona Plaindealer*, Vol.29, No.2, Winter 1994, 6-7.; *EJ*, June 9 1985, A3.

unappealing alternative to the "non-mall" street ambiance, the establishment was never fully tenanted or popular with either locals or tourists.

Those who questioned the foundation's business sense and operating procedures wondered whether it deserved to receive funding from taxpayers at all. In the post-boom climate of 1985, the OSF's funding problems arose in great part from its prior heavy financial investment in real estate. When city council approved a grant of $131,000 in June 1985 to sustain OSF operations, the foundation owned approximately $3.4 million worth of local real estate which it could not sell due to both market conditions and its preservation mandate. To the surprise of very few, at the end of the original ten-year agreement in 1986 the city announced new funding for OSF of $50,000 to $100,000 over the next five to ten years.[25]

The OSF also accepted the owner's donation (with restoration funds) of the provincially designated 1893 Ritchie Mill, and began a costly restoration of its exterior that year. Partly due to the provincial heritage restrictions on exterior alteration, and partly to its physical condition, this "millstone" would eventually cost the OSF (that is, mainly city taxpayers) over $1 million. *Alberta Report's* called it an instance of the unacceptably high price of heritage projects. Many others found it an "eyesore", historic or not. The last business manager of the mill said it provided good service while it lasted, but called restoration plans "ridiculous."[26]

As part of a new ten-year agreement in 1986, the city agreed to purchase the mill from the OSF and took over a major building lease. The OSF would, in turn, shift its attention back to the commercial and residential areas of Old Strathcona. In 1990, the OSF president announced that the organization had survived the both the recession and an inappropriately "gung-ho historical preservation policy" which had led to the impractical acquisition of the Ritchie Mill.[27]

By 1989, internal factions were again in conflict in the district, following the traditional divisions between heritage promoters and business-oriented developers. To some extent, the neighbourhood's success and growing maturity meant that, where the OSF was once the only effective voice in its redevelopment, more interest groups now had a voice. These included the Fringe Theatre organization, the Farmer's Market, the Merchant's Association and the Society for the Preservation of Architectural Resources in Edmonton (SPARE).[28]

However, these organizations tended to have specific, narrow objectives. Director Don Belanger, who had worked in Heritage Canada's Main Street programs in other towns, insisted that OSF was still important as the only organization really concerned with the "heritage interests" of the area as a whole. This was especially important as Old Strathcona's popularity drew increasing development and tourist interests. In this context, the OSF's main goals were to facilitate local improvements, develop promotional events, encourage "sensitive" development (and to restore the McIntyre Fountain). A recent OSF success in compromise had been the reduction in size of the proposed three-story sign for the new McDonald's outlet; the building was also restyled to include bricks and shingles.[29]

### *Community voices: the 1990s*

A new controversy emerged in the fall of 1990. The former railway lands, 2.4 hectares in a corridor running north along 103 St across Whyte Avenue to the river bank, were proposed for residential redevelopment. Interested parties included the Edmonton Jazz Society, whose club stood on the property, as well as merchants to whom more housing meant more customers, and local residents who wanted to retain the corridor for its view and open space. The central issue was the amount and intensity of development in the area, combined with the usual funding disputes.[30]

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[25] R. Sibley, "Scona foundation's financial future poor", *EJ* May 19, 1982, A2; Paula Arab, "Rebuilding of Scona block under study", *EJ*, June 9 1985, A3.; Staples 1986, B5.

[26] A.Ascher, "The Ritchie millstone", *Alberta Report*, Vol.12, No.7, 9-10, Feb. 4, 1985.; V. Killeen, "Mill gets new lease on life", *EJ* May 9 1982, B1; *EJ*, June 9 1985, A3.

[27] *EJ*, "City council agrees to buy Ritchie Mill from local group", Nov. 25 1987, B4; Cashman 1990.

[28] A.Kellogg, "Factions face off in Old Strathcona", *EJ*, Nov. 19 1989, C13.

[29] Ibid.

[30] S. McKeen, "Hearing date set for Old Strathcona Plan", *EJ* Sept. 19 1990, B2; D. Howell, "Old Strathcona's future tied to development of rail lands", *EJ*, Oct. 15, 1990, B3.

At a public hearing in October, residents rejected the plan for apartment buildings which would raise the population of the area by almost two hundred. Their alternative proposal, to turn the land into a park, was $1.7 million more costly. Alderman Ron Hayter, echoing the complaints of other council members, noted that Edmonton citizens had already pumped millions of dollars into Old Strathcona. But the community's position, that "Old Strathcona is a unique historical environment to serve all of Edmonton" was effectively endorsed by city council at the end of the month. The area was zoned for parkland, over Alderman Judy Bethel's objections that the decision was unfair and inequitable, since it would siphon even more funds from other projects. In 1995, the area became End of Steel Park, at a cost of $250,000.[31]

The OSF turned its attention to convincing city council to renew a funding program which amounted to one-third of the OSF annual revenues. An area like this, said a board member, "is analogous to a ship--you're either bailing or it's sinking." Presented with a 1991 request to approve projected funding for the next five years, at approximately $500,000, the city warned the organization to cut costs and move toward self-sufficiency. Aldermen representing other areas of the city were again protesting that their historic neighbourhoods, too, could benefit from city funds and revitalization. Old Strathcona had, in their opinions, absorbed enough Edmonton taxpayers' dollars over the years. Brian Mason suggested that the OSF's aims had been achieved and it should be weaned off city grants--perhaps by creating a business revitalization zone with local surtaxes.[32]

The Foundation responded with a defense of its unique role as cultural heritage defender. Ignoring the longstanding internal dissent from business people, the OSF protested that any change would "destroy the cooperative community effort the foundation represents." While promoting merchandising, it would mean reducing historically-oriented activities, not only building improvements and development issues, but street dances, parades and beautifications. At this point, the OSF public relations budget stood at approximately $60,000, but critics doubted the relevance of its programming to its mandate of historical preservation. In 1995, for instance, the 10th annual Canada Day Silly Summer Parade on Whyte Avenue adopted a Star Trek-inspired "Tenth Generation" theme.[33] (Presumably no local geographical or historical theme was sufficiently silly.)

More serious accusations OSF's complacency concerning its mandate to protect historic buildings. When a 1991 fire damaged a pre-WWI bank and adjoining building, leaving them with unscathed storefronts, the owner demolished everything and raised a "new, fake-old structure". The OSF, taken by surprise, was silent on the demolitions which, wrote John Geiger, brought White Avenue one step closer to Main Street USA, "the Disneyland model of historic preservation." In fact, the OSF had itself demolished the Dominion Hotel (saying it was "beyond salvaging") and replaced it with an imitation which "inexplicably...boasts a heritage designation by Alberta Culture."[34]

Although the provincial and civic governments had themselves drawn fire over the years for various decisions concerning heritage sites, Whyte Avenue's very visible public presence exaggerated such issues in the public eye. Suggestions of incompetence and financial irresponsibility in a economic climate of restraint were particularly irritating when associated with a "cultural" organization.

The OSF protested that most buildings have no civic protection, and many are imperiled by city tax policies which penalize landlords who renovate and improve properties. No agency in Canada, he continued, funds improvements and maintenance for heritage buildings. These protests were somewhat contradicted by the fact that in the same period the Foundation received approval of an Alberta Historic Resources Foundation grant toward rebuilding the 1909 Sheppard Block as an "intricate part of the streetscape."[35]

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[31] M. Sadava, "Old Strathcona view may turn out to be costly", *EJ*, Oct. 24 1990, B3 and "Historic Old Strathcona will be saving its face", *EJ*, Oct. 31 1990, B16; *The Old Strathcona Foundation Newsletter*, Vol. 16, No. 3, May-June 1995.

[32] P. Arab, "Old Strathcona ready to chop events if city cuts its funding", *EJ*, May 30 1991, B3.

[33] Cashman 1990; D. Belanger, Editorial, *The Old Strathcona Foundation Newsletter*, Vol. 16, No.3, May-June 1995.

[34] J. Geiger, "Historical group too complecent [sic]", *EJ*, August 24, 1991, A8.

[35] R. Sibley, "Scona foundation's financial future poor", *EJ* May 19, 1982, A2; Geiger, ibid.

From 1986 to 1994, the OSF's annual operating expenditures ranged between $200,000 and $300,000. A total of $4 million had been invested in Public Area Improvements and 25 jobs created in various programs. The OSF had also won the 1992 Canadian Parks Service Heritage Award, developed an interpretive plan and operated a tourist information centre. The city of Edmonton had contributed a total of $900,000 in annual grants, which ended after the 1994-5 season. [36] After the loss of city funding, the OSF made cutbacks in most of its programs, including educational publishing and programming.[37]

## C. The Anti-Mall: Public Relations, Aesthetics and Commerce

### *Festival style, cappuccino conflicts*

After dealing with several years of conflict and criticism, the OSF had re-focused its activities on its public relations function in the 1980s. The farmers' market expanded, street dances and parades became regular activities. In the summer of 1982, Alberta Culture's Historic Sites Service began a program of walking tours of Old Strathcona, mixing information about specific buildings and architectural styles with jokes and anecdotes about life in the past.[38] In the early 1990s, this program was operated and expanded by the OSF as the Strolling History Players Walking Tours.

The architectural character of the area was maintained in part through financial incentives to renovate for property owners. The OSF granted funds under its Building Front Improvement Plan to rehabilitate even those decaying structures without particular historic or aesthetic value. Although it did not overtly dictate following a theme of historic appearances, new buildings in the area tend to display "hints and references from the past". These include tongue-and-groove wooden siding, and the raised facades of early western main streets.[39]

A program of street beautification has also resulted in widened brick sidewalks and "old fashioned" accessories. Spokespersons emphasized the tasteful aesthetic values of the plans, saying for example that "we could...add some things, without being too ornate. We didn't want to make the sidewalk the thing that shines. We wanted each thing to fit in with what was there."[40]

During the province's 1980 anniversary year, the OSF promoted the district as an excellent alternative to downtown and mall shopping. The emphasis on retail shopping increased during the decade. In 1986, OSF director of programs Elaine Warick stressed the low-key "flavour" of the area in terms of its difference to West Edmonton Mall. Old Strathcona was "not a glitz affair at all..." but grows because of its history; those involved "want a lasting thing." Warick elaborated:

> People come down here for an experience and they get it. If you've been to West Edmonton Mall why go downtown? You're going to have the same kinds of shops...so if you want something different, come here. You're going to find something really neat while you're shopping that you won't find anywhere else...[41]

In keeping with these comments, a 1987 advertising feature promoted sales in the area in honour of the new sidewalks in "Edmonton's prettiest, most historic, shopping area", and incidentally, one of Alberta's "greatest heritage assets"--"a wonderfully quaint and functional community steeped in tradition." The advertisement recounted the history of the OSF, whereby "[d]edicated citizens" had "saved history".

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[36] OSF, *Old Strathcona Foundation Summary: A Community Revitalization Success*, Edmonton 1994.

[37] D. Ellis, "Publications Committee Report", *Old Strathcona Foundation 1995 Annual Report*. Edmonton, November 14, 1995; , including its publishing and communications activities, replacing the historically-oriented *Strathcona Plaindealer* with a short public relations news sheet on the OSF's present activities. The *Plaindealer* was a revival of an original Strathcona newspaper and featured articles about local history, memoirs and other information about the area.

[38] C. Mullen, "Jokes and bug repellent part of job for history tour guide", *EJ*, Aug. 22 1982, B7.

[39] M. Tougas, "Old Strathcona buildings given facelift", *EJ* Sept 12 1987, G1.

[40] Staples 1986, B5.

[41] Ibid.; see *News and Views*, Vol.3, No.2, Fall 1980. In the Old Strathcona area as a whole, 600 buildings are estimated to date from 1914 or earlier; 25 of these are in the core area near Whyte Avenue.

honouring the "streetscape character" of Strathcona circa 1917. Local merchants were participating in the celebratory mark-downs and discounts.[42]

The following year, local merchants agreed that Old Strathcona had "become a destination" for shoppers as its character shifted from that of an "architectural curiosity"--a "visual success"--to become a strong commercial draw. (Retailing patterns had also shifted. For instance, Chapman Bros. had sold work wear for decades but now stocked trendy urban casual wear for students and young professionals.) The president of the Old Strathcona Village Market Association credited the "atmosphere" while others noted the "old fashioned" service. The demonization of shopping malls continued. Operating a mall lease in a corporate-planned environment, said one retailer, is like "working for Hitler!" Old Strathcona, on the other hand, had diverse and independent businesses not centrally planned by the OSF. Also, theatres, cinema, a jazz club and small museums enlivened the area.[43]

As the 1990s began, OSF President P.J. Duggan warned that its rising popularity made the area too expensive for owner-operated stores. Without these shops, "people might as well go to Heritage Mall or Southgate" which were "dominated by chain stores." Betty Taylor, president of the Old Strathcona Merchants' Association, said, "for us to become like West Edmonton Mall, I don't think that would go here." One of the best protections for Old Strathcona, said a store owner, was that people don't want to shop at chains anymore but preferred the "hands-on atmosphere" of independents. Meanwhile, many merchants argued for the right to mount mall-standard modern signs and advertising to attract customers.[44]

But the OSF promotional machinery ran on infusions of historical verbiage, as when a 1993 pamphlet reiterated the dedication to "ensuring preservation of the historic integrity" of "one of the most popular historical areas to visit because of its living blend of history,...shops and...restaurants," an "historic streetscape" to be developed with the cooperation of business and residents.[45] Fortunately, the concerns of historical preservation and specialized merchandising usually coincided.

At the end of 1988, merchants and shoppers together lamented the fact that the city's real estate department was trying to sell the "surplus" bus barns on 83rd Avenue. An interested developer planned to evict the farmers' market which had occupied the space for several years. In a familiar argument, the market was defended as "a great [neighbourhood] meeting place" as opposed to the projected "mini-West Edmonton Mall" which would replace it. Critics found it ironic that the city was also planning a "cultural futures program" to create festivals and other events, while abandoning an existing, ongoing cultural event and the people who depended on it. A vegetable merchant said at the time, "Culture is people. You can't manufacture culture."[46]

Food writer Judy Schultz called the market a central attraction of Old Strathcona. It went along with its "funny architecture...and small town personality" which seemed immune to the "souvenir-stand mentality" of other redeveloped areas. Instead, Schultz wrote in the late 1980s, it was a place to find good food and beverages. OSF programs director Elaine Warick praised the fact that "you can just stroll around...and have cappuccino." Allison Kydd's editorial in a 1994 issue of the OSF periodical *The Strathcona Plaindealer* took pains to draw historical associations between the "increasing number of cheer-dispensaries on Whyte Avenue" in 1994 and a nearby brewery in operation from 1894-1975.[47]

Attention to the attraction of food and drink was prescient, as during the 1990s Whyte Avenue became a fountainhead of designer beverages in the city (although the virtue of historical tradition wore thin as social problems increased with the number of alcohol retailers.) Kevin Robins notes that the fashionable new emphasis on art, culture, consumption and "a cappuccino lifestyle" appears to reflect "the

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[42] OSF, "Old Strathcona stores move outside for sidewalk sale", *EJ*, May 1 1987, B4-5.

[43] R. Chalmers, "Stores thumb noses at malls", *EJ*, March 12 1988.

[44] Cashman 1990; Ron Chalmers, "Chain stores would fail, Old Strathcona retailers say", *EJ*, June 23 1991a, B2.

[45] OSF. *Old Strathcona*. Edmonton, 1993

[46] L. Shorten, "Strathcona market sold out?" *EJ*, December 11 1988, A1.

[47] J. Schultz, "A taste of Old Strathcona", *EJ* August 16, 1989, C1-2; Staples, ibid; A. Kydd, Editorial, also E. Cooke, "Creating a unique brew", both in *The Strathcona Plaindealer*, Vol. XIX, No. 2, Winter 1994, 2. Debates and disputes as to the further development of the area circled around an ambivalence toward the profitable bars and clubs which also, however, brought late-night rowdiness and parking problems to local residents. *Journal* coverage of these debates and attempts to resolve them continues into the summer of 1998.

image of exactly the same social group that stands behind the wider political programme of post-fordism." This group has consumption zones insulated from disadvantaged areas.[48] Related social and geographic divisions are evident here as Old Strathcona merchants and residents accelerate campaigns to control access to the area. These efforts at physical exclusion actually parallel the discursive efforts, described above, whereby local interests have distinguished themselves from other versions of mainstream retail culture. The picture of the "historical streetscape" is framed by a definite set of social ane rhetorical boundaries.

In 1990, P.J. Duggan defended the OSF-led banning of motorcycle parking in front of the Commercial Hotel (one of the aforementioned "cheer dispensaries") near the Princess Theatre. The Foundation, in the opinion of observers, now addressed itself to protecting, not architecture or the local community, but the "delicate sensibilities of Saturday shoppers and cinema-goers." The OSF leader dismissed local journalists and citizens who had argued that bikers had rights and defended them, as Duggan put it, "against moms and dads. One wonders what values they espouse?"[49]

Such euphemistic statements of class, taste and the appropriate use of public space were increasingly entering a discourse already marked by factional disputes about the district's direction and management. Efforts included moves to ban panhandling and loitering, especially by the sort of person who had frequented Whyte Avenue for several pre-OSF decades. The presence of "inner-city" people, according to many merchants, tended to drive off customers to the many boutiques and coffee shops on the street. Aesthetic preferences concerning street decor, food, and commodities were smoothly extended to define the type of citizen who fit into the constructed picture.[50]

### *In the public interest: assessing the project*

The Foundation has promoted itself as "a valuable factor" in coordinating developers, the city and the community for projects and programs. During the 1995 opening of End of Steel Park on the previously disputed railway lands, the OSF End of Steel Committee emphasized its belief that the preservation of the "beautiful vista" northwards would benefit all the city, not just those who already lived in the area (and who had worked hard to limit the opportunities of others to do the same). Edmonton's Parks and Recreation Department, provincial grants programs and private donators had contributed to the OSF's development of the park. As well as interpreting the history of the railway, it commemorated previous OSF members and residents of the area. Ordinary citizens could also commemorate themselves in advance by purchasing a nameplate to be installed in the park as part of fund raising efforts.[51]

During the early 1990s, for instance, the foundation had worked to develop the Old Strathcona Area Community Council, which meets regularly with ten sectors of the community to discuss local concerns. One of these has been problems associated with "the increased pressures placed on the area by the commercial sector." A Whyte Avenue Landuse Study was initiated in 1995 in order to study possible changes to an Area Redevelopment Plan due to these concerns. The Foundation stressed its new focus on local community services, a business plan and fund raising schemes to "involve partners that can help to foster the social and community environment in Old Strathcona." It also attributed to its direct actions to "meet the neighbourhood's needs" the fact that the area had become "a better place to live and a more vibrant community."[52]

Most local observers agreed that a marginal area of the city had been transformed into a showplace in less than two decades, although the specific character of this showplace remained

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[48] K. Robins, "Prisoners of the city: whatever could a postmodern city be?" in E. Carder, J. Donald and J. Squires (Eds.), *Space and Place: Theories of Identity and Location*. London: Laurence and Wishart 1993, 321, 323.

[49] "Does Strathcona Foundation need a leader like this?", *EJ* July 25 1990, D15.

[50] In the course of field research in 1998, I encountered two instances in as many days when low-income vendors of a tabloid on poverty issues were told to leave because the city street was now "private property" due the nature of its use: in Old Strathcona, by shoppers and clothing vendors, and in the downtown civic square, by an arts festival vending district.

[51] A. Martyn, "End of Steel Committee Report", *Old Strathcona Foundation 1995 Annual Report*. Edmonton, November 14, 1995.

[52] OSF. *Old Strathcona*. Edmonton, 1993; D. Belanger, "Looking back on 1995", *Old Strathcona Foundation 1995 Annual Report*. Edmonton, November 14, 1995, 2.

controversial. OSF's president argued that "[i]t took a long time for this area to gel, for this vision to be acceptable to the many and the passionate concern of the few."[53] During this period, the foundation re-evaluated its priorities and its mandate, planning an aggressive public relations campaign to answer ongoing questions from the public about what the OSF actually does.

Underlying resentments concerning the city's investment in Old Strathcona had been voiced in city council by representatives of other districts during the 1980s. In 1997, controversies concerning the commercial success of the area were again evident. In June, the city was considering closing the downtown Farmers' Market as part of a money-saving proposal. Customers responded that the market was part of the downtown area's "cultural heritage," a place of old-fashioned service and small town familiarity. Financial savings, in their view, did not justify selling the market. The social dislocation involved was as large a factor for customers as the better pricing and atmosphere, and easier parking, than the trendy Strathcona "upscale yuppie market...where they charge twice as much for the same thing." In comparison, the downtown market "seems to be real and down-to-earth..."[54]

The downtown market was thus defended as a "yuppie-free alternative to Old Strathcona" in terms of tradition, authenticity and nostalgia--much the same terms in which Old Strathcona itself had been promoted as an alternative to shopping mall consumer culture.

Later that year, the focus of arguments about public use shifted to Whyte Avenue itself. In October, the Whyte Avenue Land Use Planning proposal was drafted after three years of study, in response to "growing concern about the changing nature of the area and in hopes of maintaining its unique, small-town appeal." The popularity of the area meant that it had developed a complex, diverse street life complete with urban problems such as loitering and higher crime rates. Most concerned, of course, were local residents and merchants, as opposed to day visitors and tourists. Most of the problems addressed by the proposal appeared to centre around problems connected with the many bars in the area. However, the proposal's plans for video and police surveillance of the street was also meant to discourage of panhandlers and homeless youth. A program to control street life included proposed education for visitors in refusing panhandlers or illegal vendors.[55]

In response, panhandlers and buskers on Whyte Avenue defended their presence as part of the street's "unique culture." Merchants also supported the presence of "a lot of very eclectic people [who] live and shop here." Most felt that the problem was not buskers or panhandlers but "the violence and drunkenness that spills onto the streets after the bars close."[56]

The draft proposal also referred to cultural heritage and architecture. Ideas included "increasing [the] awareness of [the] area's heritage" and imposing building restrictions for commercial properties to "preserve historical resources." Aesthetic goals included the elimination of graffiti and handbills or posters. Some suggested making Whyte Avenue a pedestrian mall, and lengthening store opening hours, in recognition of its character as a "unique shopping area."[57]

Controversy about the proposal developed with calls for compassion for youth on Whyte Avenue panhandling affluent customers, many of whom are genuinely homeless and have little recourse to poorly-funded shelters.

Others noted that the Land Use Plan's proposals threatened to stifle a "bustling and prosperous street scene" envied by other neighbourhoods. Young people, wrote the Journal's Liane Faulder, are "a fact of big city life", among others without whom the street "would be dominated by suburban dwellers...pushing their giant-wheeled baby carts." The ongoing sanitization of Whyte Avenue has already resulted in old buildings being "replaced with new buildings designed to look like old buildings." Chain restaurants and faux-traditional pubs have replaced local institutions. Plans for erasing graffiti and posters exhibit more of the same "small-town" mentality.[58]

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[53] Cashman, ibid.

[54] J. MacDonald. "Downtown market a magnet, patrons say", *EJ*, June 22 1997, B3.

[55] B. Bouw. "The great Whyte hope", *EJ*, October 16 1997, A1

[56] M. MacKinnon. "Panhandlers pan plan", *EJ*, October 16 1997, A1.

[57] Bouw 1997, A1.

[58] M. MacKinnon. "Everything's not all right on Whyte", *EJ*, October 17 1997, B1.; L. Faulder. "Whyte Avenue cleanup looks like a sterilization", *EJ*, October 17 1997, B1.

Journal editorials also criticized the Land Use Plan's apparent objective "to turn a wildly successful, hip area--the only strip in Edmonton with anything resembling a street life--into a 'safe', but sterile, outdoor mall." While concerns about rowdiness were legitimate, the sensible response should be development controls restricting the number of drinking establishments. The proposed land-use plan, sweeping the street clean of the bustle of street life, would result in the "outdoor answer to West Edmonton Mall's Europa boulevard--complete with historic storefronts." The editorial of October 17 noted that sensible cleanup measures, for instance, always went too far. Eliminating handbills and posters, for instance, attack "a spontaneous and unregulated public discourse...we don't want any of that, do we?" The writer made the point that surveillance cameras on public streets, as opposed to private businesses, amounted to a greater threat than any monitored activity.[59]

Defenders of the Whyte Avenue plan downplayed the issues of surveillance and control, suggesting that cameras might be limited to a park where teenagers gather, and that buskers and panhandlers would not be arrested but simply confied to a designated location. A November 3 *Journal* editorial reiterated objections on the basis that Old Strathcona was not a privately-owned "shopping mall, with everything monitored and controlled", but public property. The local area "belong[s] every bit as much to those kids or buskers as it does to cinnamon candle merchants." Far more worthwhile would be to address real issues such as limits on the number of seats in bars.[60]

Toward the end of 1997 and early in the new year, the attention of journalists and developers was caught by the 124th Street area in Glenora. Economic Development Edmonton imagined it as "another Whyte Avenue"; a columnist found it less popular or developed, thus preferable. The implication here that Glenora is a less manipulated, planned environment is also evident in a local merchant's definition of the area as a pleasant shopping district without the "clutter of parking meters, the traffic congestion, the bars and the panhandlers" unique to Whyte Avenue.[61]

These perceptions parallel the 1970-era descriptions of the ways in which Whyte Avenue was preferable to the downtown core. Development of the historical preservation/resurrection district was supposed to be a long-term alternative. Urban regeneration schemes include dimensions of material renewal, civic boosterism and social ordering. In associated policy, "culture" can mean anything from crafts production to mass market shopping as a creative pursuit. Ironically, a restored street like Whyte Avenue is, in effect, one of many landscapes of "creative destruction": physical environments (with associated ideas and representations) which organize consumption activity in appropriate ways.[62]

**D. Conclusion: The Starbuckification of Strathcona**

In assessing the role of Old Strathcona in the present city of Edmonton, then, can we see it as primarily a zone of commerce or of community preservation? Has a global commercial culture been "imposed" upon some more authentic version of European settlement heritage? Will the presence of new chain stores like Chapters and Starbuck's mean the end of local ambiance as we know it?

The integration of commercial concerns with community social life and heritage--of conservation with economic renewal--is, in itself, not necessarily an "inauthentic" or exploitative phenomenon. It should be seen in terms of the function and social role (never completely described by cultural rhetoric and rationale) of heritage conservation districts. Who, exactly, is concerned about historical preservation in the city? Who prefers leisure environments such as Old Strathcona?

Observer Harold Kalman admits that, outside the middle class, people appear to have little attachment to antiquated style in architecture or objects; however, he defends the work of heritage aestheticians as in the long-term public interest.[63] Whatever the truth of this opinion, we can conclude

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[59] *EJ* "Don't turn Whyte into 'White' Avenue", October 17 1997, A18.

[60] *EJ*, "Whyte Avenue plan still too authoritarian", Editorial, November 3 1997, A8.

[61] B. J. Mole, "Leave 124th Street as it is now", *EJ* Jan. 17 1998 A155.

[62] McGuigan 1996, 95-6; Zukin.

[63] H. Kalman. "Can they all be wrong?", *CH* #4, May-June 1983; here Kalman echoes an elitist position developed most influentially in federal and provincial cultural policy documents and related initiatives into at least the 1970s. See also J.J. Stewart, "A strategy for Main Streets", *CH* #40, May-June 1983, 4-7; J.Dalibard, "The community is the curator", *CH* Vol.12, #1, 1986, 2-3. The Main Street program also uses the language (both rhetoric and metaphor) of

that we do tend to characterize and identify people through the social activities of consumption. The criteria of taste reflect differences of access to cultural capital through "symbolic mastery" of codified knowledge. Institutions of cultural legitimization and categorization produce knowledge and meanings which contribute to the overall value of an object. The vocabulary of taste and value have "become the common sense of a widely-shared cultural competence" in our society.[64]

And urban consumer spaces are a type of cultural or symbolic capital,where the exchange of material goods is associated with the exchange of signs, or meanings. Space, like commodities, is both physically real and the embodiment of certain abstract qualities (as Old Strathcona, for instance, carries messages of the past and of its present social assumptions.) As a medium of the global economic order, urban space is a source of social power at once under consolidated control but also fragmented according to social distinctions. Therefore, as Harvey says, the city is an arena of conflict.[65]

### *The urban experience*

Accounts of the Old Strathcona project correspond in significant ways to aspects of what David Harvey describes as the postmodern urban experience. Harvey designates 1972 as a point at which urban spectacle became an instrument of bourgeois community unification. In Edmonton, the 1970s were the period when a booming oil economy brought rapid material development, characterized by the demolition of the traditional urban landscape. In response, heritage conservation movements gained public support and political credibility, Fort Edmonton was reconstructed, and the gentrification of Old Strathcona began.

After the 1970s, complex new global patterns of production, employment and spending emerged. In response to external economic pressures, cities differentiate themselves as "products", through stylistic variations intended to attract capital and market location. The quality of each place becomes contingent upon its position in the system of circulation; cities must become prime commodities of location. Material space becomes a "concrete abstraction," a representation that appears to have meanings beyond its referent. As the political-economic and cultural-aesthetic dimensions integrate, imagery and style become critical in retailing.

But, when interpreted as resource for "unique" local spectacle, culture mainly supplies a set range of references and meanings to (rather than reflect local experience) contribute to the production of a marketable image for outsiders or investors. Ephemeral cultural or intellectual associations are marketable as ambiance. For example, whereas Edmontonians have always patronized bars and taverns, in Old Strathcona they visit pubs, or as they call themselves, "authentic public houses." The phrase assumes a vague familiarity with the pub tradition, without being too specific about precise references. In this context, "authentic" could mean a reasonable copy of the set of a television program or a postcard. Patron expectations are confirmed with expected stylistic details and ambiance: they know what "authentic" means, and it does not imply the transport of timbers and brasses across the ocean (although it has happened.) The location of a new pub in an official historic district reinforces its rhetorical claim to local authenticity (and the right to set high prices for designer beverages.)

Meanwhile, the Strathcona Hotel's utilitarian tavern offers a genuine continuity with (affordable) historic local drinking experience in the area. No explanatory or promotional labels of authenticity are needed for a local "insider" clientele. To return to the more general analysis of urban space, economic

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the retail context: it "capitalizes" on collective memory and resources through display techniques, although the wares displayed may be authentic artifacts.

[64] It is difficult to classify objects primarily as symbolic (consumer) or economic (capital) goods, or to separate use from exchange value, or objectivity (what is it good for) from subjectivity (what does it mean to me). Chaney 1993, 151-2. See also Chaney 1996; J. Frow, "The concept of the popular", *New Formations*, No. 18, Winter 1992, 25-38, 33. Elite groups, for instance, still appear to operate cultural restraints against a "middle-class" display of wealth.

[65] H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Tr. D. Nicholson-Smith, Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1991, 26-32, 306-8; Harvey, 175-185; also see D. Harvey, "The geopolitics of capitalism", D.Gregory and J.Urry (Eds.), *Social Relations and Spatial Structures*, London: Methuen 1985; F. Inglis, *Popular Culture and Political Power*. Harvester Wheatsheaf, New York London 1988; M.Keith and S. Pile, Eds. *Place and the Politics of Identity*. Routledge, London 1993; D. Massey, "Politics and space/time", Keith & Pile 1993; N. Smith and C. Katz, "Grounding metaphor: towards a spatialized politics", Keith & Pile 1993.

production geared to rapidly changing markets tends to exaggerate differences between zones of prosperity and poverty. Specialized consumer outlets appear, geared to either the luxury market or to efficient distribution of practical goods. The resulting urban environment primarily articulates the interests and tastes of the professional class.

Harvey reiterates that distinctive spatial practices, with certain cultural and ideological features, arise out of particular material circumstances. While the preservation of buildings from demolition is a sort of resistance to the imperatives of global capital, he notes that in practice the recuperation of history and community is most often a selling point for real estate. Policies of historic preservation and mall development alike are given impetus by tax advantages. In this situation, there is little to choose between development schemes except rhetorics and aesthetic qualities appealing to certain consumer groups. A vital resource of a city's competitive success, then, is its cultural or symbolic capital, based in knowledge and information, and its capacity to communicate this effectively. Wealth and power will rest, in turn, with those controlling these resources. Aesthetic detail and commodity type, as in Old Strathcona, communicate standards of inclusion and exclusion, reinforced by security measures and surveillance.[66]

Castells proposes that as the information society concentrates wealth and power, a "dual city" emerges. Class divisions widen between the professional middle class and others, between the "cosmopolitanism of elites" and the "tribalism of local communities."[67] This opposition has been evident in the competing rhetorics of 1970s Edmonton's urban boosters and business developers, and the claims of those defending the community barricades. In the case of areas whose claim to symbolic authority rests on their associations with historical significance, it is those who credibly represent knowledge of that history who can claim power. As is evident in the cases of both Fort Edmonton and Old Strathcona, upon their success in gaining local control, the "tribe" develops its own elites with its own standards of urban taste.

### *Patrolling the boundaries*

Whether their character is primarily cultural/historical, or economic/modern (aesthetically, muted versus shiny: bricks versus metal and glass), urban renewal programs in North America and Europe have resulted in the widespread privatisation of public space, as in the transformation of streets to "streetscapes" by business interests. This "retail revolution" has escalated rent rates to a level unaffordable to long term merchants and residents, marginalising utilitarian shopping areas and housing. Cultural policy making increasingly becomes a feature of the partnership of private business and local governments, and favours aesthetics designed to appeal to outsiders in order to promote the city's image and to attract business to aesthetic environments.[68]

The opposition between authentic community and the interests of capitalist development rests upon the assumed contrast of everyday, lived space specific to a certain people in a certain area, with an abstract, rationalized economic space organized for the convenience of others. The historicized community--a commodified space--in itself represents this contradiction, by combining the content and appearances of the first kind of space within the context of the second. Therefore, the clash of interests in the case of Old Strathcona--what it actually was, is, and should be--should be of no surprise. The local meanings of such projects are unpredictable, as is the course of their evolution. Outside the protective boundaries of the museum wall or pallisade, the sense of wonder (of time travel) is difficult to sustain or to justify.

Historic preservation districts are controlled versions of urban life, incorporating representative details and structures into new settings and purposes. Urban history appears as attractive and accessible. As in Old Strathcona, these gentrification developments are typically steered by organizations working at arm's length from governments, and reflect the tastes of the educated middle classes for a "cannibalised notion of traditional style." Although such details mimic a traditional urban diversity and vitality, this

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[66] D. Harvey, *The Urban Experience* 237-277; see also M. Castells "European cities, the information society and the global economy", *New Left Review*, 1994, 204; those who are excluded are often present in forms of nostalgic representation and simulations of chaotic street life; this process is also evident in the next case study of West Edmonton Mall. See Crawford 1992, 23-27, Williamson 1992.

[67] Castells 1994. McGuigan 1996, 104-7. The European model emphasizes the revitalization of public space by fostering cultural employment, civic identity and a neutral territory of mixed developments.

[68] See Castells, ibid., and Ken Worpole, *Towns for People*, Milton Keynes, Open University Press 1992, 16-17.

group's zones of consumption are insulated from less controlled areas.[69] In Edmonton, balancing the (too developed) suburbs and sterile downtown business core, along with its (under-developed) adjacent slums, we have a symbolic capital of (just right) controlled time and space.

In considering the development histories of Fort Edmonton Park and Old Strathcona in the city of Edmonton, we have traced certain themes. These include the opposition of past and present, of urban and rural, authentic and contrived (i.e., commercial.) Following the development of Edmonton from frontier post to modern city, Fort Edmonton Park appeared to be a panacea to the sterility and alienation--the reality as opposed to the ideal of modernity. Shopping malls in suburbs, contemporaneous in development with the 1950s and 1960s Fort Edmonton projects, were also supposed to be alternatives to downtown. As malls came to be blamed for the deterioration of traditional neighbourhoods and social patterns, though, and museums accused of elitism, the development of Whyte Avenue was proposed as alternative to historical simulacra, urban blight, and mall culture. Both the village and the street are forms of the traditional townscape, and both are viewed as sacred in comparison to the enclosed shopping mall or the urban core.

Recently, this perception has been challenged by those who deplore the character of Whyte Avenue as itself a glorified mall and amusement park. It is perceived as a variation themes of global-scale economic threats to the survival of diversity in local place, identity and culture. Nevertheless, the historic village, the preserved area and the "beautified" and be-malled downtown core, whatever their relation to each other, share the high ground in that they have all been promoted as more authentic, indigenous alternatives to West Edmonton Mall.

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[69] S. Zukin ; see McGuigan 1996, 98-99; Robins 1993, 321-323. Boddy T. "Underground and overhead: building the analogous city", Michael Sorkin, Ed. *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space.* Hill and Wang, New York 1992, 147, notes that what these productions avoid is as important as what they omit.

# Chapter 5. "A world apart": Western Fort to West End Mall

It is a world apart, a world free of the mundane struggles with weather and boredom.
(*Los Angeles Times* , cited Wiebe 1989).

## A. Introduction: Vaticans of Commerce

### *"The Wonder of It All"*

West Edmonton Mall is the "ultimate symbol for the shopping centre industry in Canada" and, in broader terms, a paradigm of the "vaticans of commerce" often blamed for the creative destruction of traditional city life. The Mall appears at first to be an anomaly, a huge development in North America's most northern metropolitan city, with a population of about 700,000. It combines tokens of local history with imported and invented forms such as an American street, a European urban facade, and fantasy-based hotel rooms. Despite its critics, it has proved its popular appeal both locally and internationally, helping to establish Edmonton--"the most malled city in Canada"--on the world map. The appeal of fantasy consumer spaces is summed up in the perception that people are willing to travel thousands of miles, not to shop but, according to a Mall executive, to "see something very unusual that they've never seen before."[1]

As McLuhan suggested, each new form of mass medium contains the previous one. For instance, as cinema incorporated the forms and conventions of stage drama, television incorporated the movies into a new format. To consider consumer spaces as mass media, in comparable ways West Edmonton Mall is less an opposed form than one which incorporates features and assumptions of Fort Edmonton Park and Old Strathcona. In the last two chapters, we touched on issues of the convergence of cultural history with the development of commercial environments. Here we return to the discussion of consumerism and the construction of public taste, considering the Mall in its combined function as museum, theme park, streetscape and community centre.

So far, the question common to this discussion could be framed as: what do museums, retail stores, commercial districts, and modern mega-malls have in common? A suggested answer: influential processes in the shaping of cultural or symbolic capital through similar techniques of display, discourse and the control of public space. Can West Edmonton Mall, like the historical park and the historicized streetscape, be taken seriously as representative of key aspects of popular culture, local community history, and contemporary public space in the city?

Tracy Davis offers a clue in the statement that WEM's historical prototypes lie in the context of leisure, not just architecture and commerce.[2] Different forms of consumer space influence each other in the competition for audiences. Museums and historical theme parks share certain entertainment formats; gentrified streets and malls employ historic motifs. For example, whereas restored retail districts are supposed to be alternatives to malls, the streetscape garnish of paving stones, lanterns, and heritage hardware are often anachronistic or imported forms shared with the same malls. Heritage districts, as we have seen in Old Strathcona, also borrow mall retailing strategies such as the coordination of merchants' retailing strategies and display techniques, an emphasis on novelty and diversity, and the use of street furniture and covered sidewalks.

There are, of course, differences in intent and arrangement of these elements. But, whether a Main Street is contrived by Disney, mall developers or preservationists, Wilson notes that it showcases certain social relations in its production and public appeal. As a more or less seamless combination of fantasy and commercial realism, time travel and habitation (ideology materialized in the form of myth) the constructed environment itself is the main commodity. He views heritage-oriented emphasis on encyclopedic salvage as a version of wider North American consumerism. As embodied frontier community myth, a theme park shop or historic commercial district simply adds a new level of value to

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[1] CBC 1989, 13-14. The Mindbender is a notorious rollercoaster at WEM. Brian Fawcett refers to these giant retailers as "plague malls", *The Disbeliever's Dictionary*, Toronto: Somerville House 1997. "The wonder of It All" is a WEM advertising slogan.

[2] T.Davis, "Theatrical antecedents of the mall that ate downtown", *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 24 (4), Spring 1991, 14.

the commodities it contains.[3] The next section provides historical context for the development of West Edmonton Mall as a space for "lifestyle shopping."

### *Shopping malls: community and urban development*

As detailed in the introductory chapter above, the display process developed by the museum, public expositions, and shopping arcades,was exploited by the large urban department stores. Commercial display forms played an important role in the development of an urban "dream world" of commerce and culture. Shopping malls extended and reinforced the ways in which department stores dramatised leisure and developed the spectacular marketing of style.[4]

The enclosed shopping mall came to Canada from America in 1950; the present mall form dates from the 1960s-1980s. Over the past two decades Canada has become preeminent in developing and marketing the major innovations in the mall form. Fifty years ago, no enclosed shopping malls existed in Canada. By 1974 shopping centres were important businesses in the country. By 1989, there were 3,000 malls. Today, neighbourhood, community and regional malls account for 53% of all consumer purchases in Canada and the USA. By the end of the century it is estimated that two-thirds of of all retail activity in this country will take place inside a shopping mall.[5] The swift rise of the shopping mall in Canadian communities stands as a marker of wider social and economic changes which transformed other aspects of everyday life from mid-century onward.

After WWII, the federal government created the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, which subsidized private developers to buy up public lands upon which to create suburban housing. The planned, open shopping centres in these districts at first included mainly supermarkets and local businesses. In Edmonton, as elsewhere, the social and business role of the downtown core waned with the construction of suburbs and with rapid expansion of economies and populations. Edmonton's metropolitan-area population grew by 92% during the 1950s alone. These changes were visible in terms of daily life in the city. After the post-war oil boom in Alberta, for instance, automobile ownership rose, but rapid urban development made downtown parking a problem in Edmonton. [6]

Today, regional malls are highly visible, accessible "nodes...which shape our daily behaviour and our perceptions of the city" as they do urban planning.[7] Edmonton's Planning Department has defined regional shopping centres as "a group of [architecturally unified] commercial establishments" which function "as a unit" related to the trade area which it serves. These convenient "units" have become one of the most important elements in the design of new neighbourhoods.[8]

Malls themselves have long promoted this role as neighbourhood and regional focal points with community-oriented public relations programs. The first shopping centre in Edmonton held special events and fairs which promoted a visit there as a family leisure opportunity. Westmount Shoppers Park ran 1957 newspaper ads reading, "Here's FUN with your shopping...Come as you are...we're casual here!" The attraction was a display of Canadian army life by the Mobile Display Team of Western Command Headquarters in Edmonton. On display were weapons and equipment, along with films showing their use, and "stirring martial music." The ad included reminders associating the war performance of Canadian

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[3] For Wilson, such controlled spectacle replaces the reality of diverse street life, the potential for recognizing real historical transformations. A. Wilson, *The Culture of Nature: North American Landscape from Disney to the Exxon Valdez*. Between the Lines, Toronto 1990 180-190; see U. Eco, *Trevels in Hyperreality*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1986 43-46.

[4] Chaney 1993.

[5] CBC 1989, 1, 10-18; W.S. Kowinski, *The Malling of America: An Inside Look at the Great Consumer Paradise*. New York: William Morrow & Co., 1985, 60; for related discussions of North American suburban development in this period, see Harris 169; J. Simmons, "The regional mall in Canada", *The Canadian Geographer* v.35, Fall 1991, 232.

[6] P.J. Smith, "Planning for residential growth since the 1940s", B. Hesketh and F. Swyripa (Eds.), *Edmonton: the Life of a City*, Edmonton: NeWest, 1995, 243-255.

[7] For related discussions of North American suburban development in this period, see Harris 1978, 169; CBC 1989, 1; Simmons 1991 232.

[8] Martin 1974, 37.

troops from Edmonton with national and local pride.[9] It is possible to discern a sub-text of the Allied war effort saving western civilization for the development of commercial retail architecture.

However, public response to the mall form's cumulative impact on local communities has tended to divide along views of malls either as economic boon or as social and cultural bomb. Typical protests have been led in part by concerns that communities have some say in local planning and development. Several provinces in central and eastern Canada have introduced (mainly ineffective) restrictions to curb the rapid growth of mall size and numbers. In western Canada, though, regulation (as in the case of West Edmonton Mall) has been "next to nonexistent. Shopping centre construction was seen as a good thing, and aside from a few well intended downtown renewal programs, merchants in the cities were left to fend on their own."[10]

Downtown renewal programs, however, also tended to take the form of malls, which further eroded local character and tradition. The development of Winnipeg's Portage Place according to an imported, generic design has been seen as a failure of local civic government to address creative options concerning the decaying inner city. The publicly-funded development corporation, in this view, became apologists for a private firm because it "lacked the imagination, conviction and fortitude to create a uniquely 'made-in-Winnipeg' solution" and let an "expert-for-hire" usurp "their own sacred task." [11]This account is fairly typical of the emotional rhetoric surrounding issues of commercial development in older areas of western Canadian cities.

John Sewell noted in 1989 that few politicians in Canada actually wanted to protect existing shopping districts, although it was clear that suburban shopping malls would "kill" the downtown. Developers worked for access to the political process and became experts at lobbying city councils. Politicians favoured malls because voters and business investors did. The development of the shopping mall fits well into a national market characterized by high corporate concentration and efficient national distribution systems, controlled by only a few major retail firms.[12]

Malls are also effective agents of business rationalization and, by extension, social control. They are highly standardized and rationalized systems for determining location, designing spaces and controlling customers. Restrictive leases control the mix of shops, decor and price range in such a way that, as Margaret Crawford puts it, "apparent diversity masks a fundamental homogeneity." Marketing profiles determine subjective features of consumers such as value systems, leisure preferences, aspirations, "identity" and cultural backgrounds, as well as objective indicators such as income levels.[13] This system is not a departure from but an elaboration of earlier techniques used by museums, expositions and department stores to effectively rationalize their displays and sales of goods to the new mass audiences.

The centrality of shopping centres in today's western Canadian urban culture, then, is rooted in the history of consumer society. Jeffrey Hopkins proposes that, where "consumerism is the dominant lifestyle and material consumption is a popular life objective, shopping malls--the dominant forum for commerce--become the principal forum for consumption." Hopkins also attributes the centrality of the retail structure to its traditional social and recreational role as communal meeting place, whether in the market, the shopping centre or the mega-mall. The combination of the marketplace role in the dominant cultural context of consumerism would then account for much of the significance of the shopping mall in North American cities. The introduction of leisure and entertainment to malls such as West Edmonton are not a departure but a confirmation of a traditional social role.[14]

***Agora / Phantasmagoria***

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[9] *EJ*, July 3, 1957, 14.

[10] CBC 1989, 7. In the first nine months of 1956, commercial construction in Edmonton increased by $10 million over the previous year, with twenty-five new commercial projects authorized in September alone. Home construction in the city was also at its highest level, at almost $30 million.

[11] J. Lowe, "Playing safe with downtown redevelopment", *City Magazine*, Winter 1987/88, vol.9, no. 4, 10-14: 13.

[12] CBC 1989 1, 8, 18; Kowinski 1985, 60; D.B. Johnson, "Structural features of West Edmonton Mall, *The Canadian Geographer* v.35, Fall 1991, 259.

[13] Crawford 1992, 9-10.

[14] J. Hopkins, "West Edmonton Mall as a centre for social interaction", *Canadian Geographer*, v. 35 Fall 1991. 1991, 269-270.

Hopkins' linkage of commercial "meeting places" places is valid, and he makes the distinction between marketplace, which emphasized mainly community life, and mall, which primarily promotes consumption. He omits, however, the shopping mall's underlying connections to other social institutions which do not primarily emphasize commerce. The museum is also a public place, but gift shops nonwithstanding, it functions first as a theatre of cultural history and identity and second as commercial retailer. Shopping malls draw upon the museum and exposition tradition of gazing at objects, wandering in artificial spaces and experiencing a kind of "phantasmagoria" of abundance which does not necessarily involve economic transactions. As a structure controlled to impart positive images of chronological civilization, museums also correspond to the mall's highly controlled spatial contexts and social order. As "text", both the museum and the mall support a social orientation toward, for example, the doctrines of material progress.

All of these features, however, serve as indirect links back to the central ethos of consumption. The museum as institution today, with the necessary emphasis on marketing and fundraising, appears to stand between the marketplace and the mall in terms of its combined status as public space, educator, entertainer and retailer. Jill Delaney compares the shopping mall directly to both a museum gift shop and museum exhibits which constitute "spaces of consumption" of history and culture.[15] Although I think the term "consumption" has been over-used as a metaphor to link shopping and cultural spectatorship, the idea of consumer spaces is pertinent to the discussion of the mall as an environment which does represent both commerce and culture.

Rob Shields develops this term with reference to West Edmonton Mall. In his view, materialized "spatial practices" become built forms which "articulate" the meanings and uses of a certain site. These spatial practices contribute to the site's "qualitative reality" as a place where certain events and actions are expected. So, although spaces are formed largely through social action, built spaces in turn influence subsequent action within them.[16] As spaces of multiple use, combining public and private characteristics, the design of malls is the subject of the next section.

The spatial dimension of popular culture, as suggested above, has received much critical attention in recent years. Berland states that pop culture "represents a mediation between technologies, economics, spaces, and listeners." The entertainment media tend toward the spatial extention of administration and the centralization of economic structure, It perpetuates and legitimates monopolistic production relations, and political and economic territory is expanded in what James Carey calls "pervasive recentralization." Each new media, moreover, strengthens one type of interaction at the expense of others, and accordingly tends to affect the configuration of space.[17]

The design of malls has contributed in great part to their character as social spaces. With a more limited variety of goods available to mall customers, retailers concentrated on dramatic innovations in overall design. For instance, Johnstone Walker's 1957 mall outlet was advertised as "a store that's as modern as tomorrow" with its use of colour and light and its "tasteful displays."[18] The reference to modern style and a dramatic interior environment of light and air was typical of store promotions in this period: retail continued to ally itself with material progress and innovation.

As a pre-planned, centralized and unified entity, a mall is an enclosed reality which is, above all, a controlled environment with its own separate reality. Kowinski compares it to other "magic" spaces, spectacular worlds of history and myth. Examples are cities lost in space or time, walled, or undersea--or, more prosaically, the movie set. The mall shares the cues of fantasy with the theatrical space: lighting, extraordinary spaces and events, all of which function to eliminate external reference points and to create a space unconnected to surrounding place or time. Kowinski calls the shopping mall "a sort of

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[15] J. Delaney, "Ritual space in the Canadian Museum of Civilization : consuming Canadian identity", in R. Shields (Ed.), *Lifestyle Shopping: the Subject of Consumption*, London/New York: Routledge 1992, 136-7.

[16] See R. Shields, "Social spatialization and the built environment: the West Edmonton Mall", *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 7(2) 1989, 147-64; cited Delaney 1992.

[17] Berland 1992, 39-41; see J. Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*. Boston: Unwin Hyman 1989., 33.

[18] Johnstone Walker, 1961, 12; see Harris 1978, 169.

psychological bomb shelter", cut off from the world of international tension and and focussed inward as a "real dreamscape", "an underground...but...a very bright underground."[19]

The traditional mall's physical layout is reminiscent of the main street of a small town, bordered by stores. The absence of cars and the small, bounded scale creates a feeling of safety contributing to the nostalgic sense of small town life. Any artificiality only enhances the visual experience of visitors culturally prepared by the visually-anchored, two dimensional "world" of television. The convergence of marketing and entertainment (of malls and theme parks) points up that both are controlled and packaged public spaces, passive pedestrian experiences for which the audience is already primed by television.[20]

Not only are mass media images reference points (or content) for the urban imagination, actual spaces can serve to embody those of media narratives which are glamourous as technologies (or context.) Kowinski calls television and the shopping mall "analogous in the sense that they are both high on fantasy and low on content." Television uses images, shorthand to suggest feelings and associations such as those of the small town, as does the mall. And the content of television, at the time of the growth of suburbia and mass consumerism in North america, was a certain style of safe suburban life organized around domestic settings and objects. The shopping mall delivered these products in networks analogous to television networks. [21]

Derrick de Kerckhove extends the analogy, comparing the mall and television in terms of the controlled dramatic setting. Pedestrian routes, like camera sightlines are controlls and limited. Both generate a sense of possibilities for action, but the consumer is in fact the subject of a show of fantasy life in which he or she plays a certain predetermined part. (Architect Hemingway states that the shopper moves from experience to experience like flipping television channels.) Others have compared the experience of the mall to that of watching television, but with all the channels on at once. Davis compares the Mall (like Disneyland) to a film montage: a succession of unusual scenes pulls the visitor inward as if toward some resolution of inarticulate narrative.[22]

Ewen and Ewen stress the way in which commercial imagery appears to codify "objective" truth and authority while at the same time conveying transcendance and fantasy. An example is the "language of dream" attributed to the cinema, and other visual technologies of "visionary escape. At the time of the official opening in 1985, a store owner described the Mall's attractions in terms of the ability to enter a consumer fantasy. "Everybody has been watching MTV and looking at magazines so now they'll be able to go out and touch these things for real." In terms of a convenient shopping centre, it seemed to make no sense, but as embodied fantasy the Mall was a success.[23]

As malls of the 1960s were glamourized, retreating further from everyday life into recreational functions, specialty shops and fast food outlets, the mall became a cocoon-like community social centre. Exterior windows, visible in 1957 photographs of the JW mall store, would be soon eliminated in mall design, with several effects reinforcing the sense of the mall as a dreamworld. Crawford views the inward-oriented malls, with their forbidding exteriors and paradisical interiors, as a safe, clean and compressed (or virtual) version of the life of the street (with important differences).[24]

A West Edmonton Mall executive has said that the mall is a "smaller city than the city of Edmonton...very alive and very vibrant." Don Hill suggests that the mall is not necessarily a new version of existing or essential public space. Its model of a contained city, or town square with Main Street, is not drawn from reality or memory but from the mass media--television and the movies. Both the mall and television could be said to represent a kind of community in which thousands can share the same experience. However, de Kerckhove calls it a theoretical versus practical community. The fact that everyone is shopping, or watching, at once does not require any real investment of personal or political

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[19] Kowinski 1985, 62; also in CBC 1989, 1.

[20] Kowinski 1985, 67-73; Crawford 1992, 16.

[21] CBC 1989, 17.

[22] Davis 1991, 13; see P. Hemingway, "The joy of kitsch", *Canadian Architect* 31: March 1986, 32-5.

[23] Ewen and Ewen 1982. The combination of truth and fantasy in such images is discussed above with reference to interior design publications.; *EJ*, "What do you think of WEM?", Sept 29 1985, B6.

[24] Crawford 1992., 18-22. During this period, practical commercial functions once available in neighbourhood shopping centres were displaced to peripheral strip malls or warehouse districts.

commitment.[25] Issues of public space and social control are discussed further below, after an introduction to West Edmonton Mall, which of all its kind is most often compared to a community in itself.

**B. Why this? Why now? Why here?**

***Development: the 1970s***

The Mall's first decade coincided with a continuing decline in department stores across North America, and a trend toward shopping in small stores and boutiques. As noted in the introduction, historian Michael Bliss calls West Edmonton Mall the "ultimate symbol for the shopping centre industry in Canada."[26] Architect Peter Hemingway points out the incongruity of the entire complex in relation to its urban setting, where the mall "dominates its surroundings in the same way Notre Dame dominates a large part of Paris" but without any sense of architectural context or scale. Wiebe and Wiebe also find that the mall "looms above the houses of suburban Edmonton as the Cathedral dominates Chartres..."[27] Why, then, did its developers see fit to locate the Mall where it is?

The Mall's success is, unsurprisingly, strongly linked to the existing local economic context. The development of the mall in the late 1970s to early 1980s occurred in the context of an economic recession which was intensified by the effect on the region of the National Energy Program. Most malls of this size have most potential in a depressed area with a local government desperate to raise employment with a megaproject. Edmonton's lack of corporate head offices, according to Christopher Leo, also qualifies it as a "backwater". The perception that Edmonton occupies an inferior position in the western Canadian urban hierarchy has provoked the business community to "seize control of the local state to impelement a program of capitulation to corporate demands, regardless of their cost to the community."[28]

Leo details the complex relationship of the global economy and local political culture in this history. The results of Edmonton's goal to establish a system of control over the character of downtown development were directly related to economic circumstances. In 1991, the area was still in decline following the establishment of West Edmonton Mall, and decentralizing suburban developments. The original Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan of the early 1980s was developed with a wide range of local participation in plans to make the city more attractive, including allowances for a human-scale streetscape with access to sunlight, while encouraging economic development.

In 1984, however, the plan was challenged by business associations and developers who claimed that the "changing economic climate in the city..forces the reevaluation" of the plan, which could threaten Edmonton's attractiveness for development capital. Design principles were effectively abandoned in favour of a new bylaw which supported freedom for developers at the expense of protection for the streetscape. Although there was a provision to encourage the preservation of heritage buildings, for instance, the accompanying regulations actually relax the constraints on developers using these structures.[29]

Leo views this history as part of a "wider pattern of weakening the state and strengthening the business community in hope of attracting investment to the central city." Edmonton's changed development strategy is related to a local political culture which appears to be "a contradictory mixture of love for Edmonton, ambition to make it 'great' in some ill-specified sense, and nagging inferiority over its

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[25] CBC 1989, 17-18. See Berland 1992: television as a cultural technology of "mobile privatization", comparable in the present discussion with mall as spatial technology. The suggestion that television versions of traditional urban life are a significant source for the planning trend known as "new urbanism" is illustrated by the use of the first such planned community as a film set representing a television set for *The Truman Show* (1998); also by Disney's construction of the town of Celebration according to this aesthetic. The element of centralized control over aesthetic details is the common factor; see discussion on Old Strathcona, above.

[26] CBC 10-14; R. Chalmers, "If you build it they will come", *EJ* Sept 15 1991, E3.

[27] R. Wiebe & C. Wiebe, "Mall", *Alberta*, v.2 (1) 1989, 86.

[28] C. Leo, "The urban economy and the power of the local state", F. Frisken, Ed. *The Changing Canadian Metropolis: A Public Policy Perspective*, Vol. 2. Berkeley: University of California Press; Toronto: Canadian Urban Institute 1994, 694.

[29] Leo 671; see Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan Bylaw #6477, Edmonton 1985.

relatively slow growth." This psychology has made the city fertile ground for the promises and threats of developers.[30]

Other aspects of local geography, culture and demography also play a role in WEM's success in Edmonton. The mall's attractions "extend its geographical reach beyond Edmonton" because, as its managers and retailers know, "Canadians will travel great distances to shop". They advertise in several prairie cities, believing that "long winter drives are not frightening to people from Saskatchewan."[31] Wiebe notes that Edmonton serves an arctic hinterland one-third the size of Europe; the Mall makes it possible for northern natives to experience a little of the globe's variety. One U.K. travel writer termed it "the social centre of Alberta." Even most of those who live in Edmonton itself are still so far distant from exotic locales that they cannot afford to travel to the original places replicated in the mall. And the local population, with low housing costs and no provincial sales taxes, has relatively high discretionary income. In fact, Edmonton has been termed the shopping centre capital of Canada, in great part due to the presence of WEM.[32]

### *Mall space and experience*

Leisure environments share certain characteristics of expositions and marketplaces which combine commercial and leisure space. The visitor moves through an arrangement of views and perspectives with multiple foci, theatrical "sets" which are realizations of imagined pictures of history and geography. As rational recreation, such spaces organize, make comprehensible and dramatize a number of elements of everyday life. This section discusses the ways in which the Mall's design and operation achieve this function.

The original inspiration for the Mall was the model of the "festival market" of small speciality shops at Vancouver's Granville Island. Mall executives called this form, enclosed and inflated at WEM an international model: because "food, fashion and fun" are "superficial", they "can be transferred to any country without offending the indigenous culture..." Further, they believed, every city should have a WEM "with retail, entertainment, sports and culture--the four components of a normal life."[33] The Mall, intended to "serve as a community, social, entertainment, and recreation centre" provides education in nature and society, as well as escape from locality, and displays commodities as does a world's fair. Local referents are mainly limited to reminders of the city's wealth, as in a statue dedicated to oil extraction.

In fact, what WEM embodied was not so much an escape from normal life as an enhancement of the mundane. In essence, the Mall offered an exotic, holiday setting for ordinary shops and necessary shopping chores. This presence of the extraordinary interwoven with the familiar has been a feature of successful "spaces of consumption" since the development of the expositions and arcades in the nineteenth century. The content of "reality" within a glamourized, "state of the art" context is also a feature of virtual reality technologies.

Tracy Davis places the Mall in the context of popular culture, with antecendents in historical theatrical entertainment, in tension with current technological amusements. Davis, like others, notes the Mall's simultaneous use of ancient marketplace traditions and the civic square, the eclecticism of the

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[30] Leo 1994, 674-6.

[31] R. Chalmers. "Prairie neighbours are true Mall patrons", *EJ* Sept 15 1991c, E2; CBC 1989, 10-14.

[32] The highest market for Fantasyland hotel clientele is from Edmonton itself, and next highest from rural Alberta: Wiebe & Wiebe 1989, 88; Chalmers 1991c, E2; D. Staples, "The Mall", *EJ*, Sept 15 1991, E2; CBC 1989, 14; D. Thorne, "Shop till you drop? Alberta's number one", *EJ*, July 1 1989, A1. the Mall's claim for 20 million tourists a year has been disputed by business professor Adam Finn, who estimates only 5.4 million tourists. Statistics Canada concluded in 1989 that Albertans had increased their consumer spending during the previous year at a rate that more than doubled the national average. StatsCan reported that "Alberta led the nation" in department store sales in 1997 with 14% increases (M. MacLean, "Department store skid halted in '97", *EJ*, Feb 10 1998, F1.)

[33] The developers' 1991 proposal for a mall in Germany included plans for a science museum, an industrial museum and a concert hall; R. Chalmers, "If you build it they will come", *EJ* Sept 15 1991b, E3; WEM itself has been called the 8th wonder of the world and has appeared a logical site for popular museums; *EJ*, "Pyramid of the twentieth century", June 18 1990; *EJ*, "Unbelievable museum eyes WEM", May 9 1990 B2 (Ironically, Ripley's Believe It Or Not Museum was especially interested in the Alberta location because the province is apparently a fertile source of locally-produced "world's smallest"-type novelties).

juxtaposed elements of fantasy, nature and commerce. But of more interest here is the way in which the Mall actually evokes an "aura of familiarity...by drawing on hundreds of years of theatrical and paratheatrical traditions." While the Mall may reject local demography, climate and geography, in a way characteristic of trends toward global consumer spaces, it still represents the "cultural legacy of centuries of popular recreation..."[34]

According to Davis, the Mall contains a tension between conventional entertainments and mass technological fantasies, and so negotiates past and present, "Muslim opulence and Calvinist practicality"--hyper-reality and the mundane. Its precedents are to be found not in the history of architecture but the history of leisure. Paratheatrical elements have been incorporated into urban arcades and exchanges since the eighteenth century. Animals, waxworks and performances, panoramic paintings and art exhibitions have all contributed to the principle of combining commercial space with leisure pursuits. In this, the Mall is part of the tradition of expositions, which spawned a new leisure industry of rational recreation. European seaside resorts also glassed in various amusements including midway machinery and theatres in the nineteenth century. Like these phenomena, WEM is mass recreation which limits participants according to economic means, "encouraging socioeconomic distinctions in the entertainments" which parallel the variance between shopping areas of the Mall.[35]

And like the museums and historical theme parks which set up an interactive paradigm of the past, the Mall may be seen as a paradigmatic "museum of the present." Both sorts of leisure space share themes of consumer materialism--so reflecting rather than escaping from the surrounding suburban landscape. The Marriott Corporation has described the theme park as a complex "oriented to a particular subject or historical area, combining...costuming and architecture with entertainment and merchandise to create a fantasy-provoking atmosphere." Rather than any sense of disorientation or unease, the visitor to theme park, museum, or mall finds a "humanization and comprehensible organization of a number of bizarre elements" which are randomly distributed in real urban life.[36]

Janice Williamson describes the Mall as a maze, as Delaney does the Canadian Museum of Civilization. Similar to accounts of the museum, also, is Williamson's suggestion of the diversity of experience available in malls for the visitor, apart from the fixed architecture and economic motivations. The Mall is a "world-within-a-world fantasy", a cultural bricolage of the real and the imagined, current and historical images from various eras, all within a private enterprise marketing facility. Margaret Crawford also begins her account of the Mall as a machine for fantasy and spectacle. She describes its juxtapositions of real (dolphins) and fake (ocean), present, past and future, near and far, history and nature--an illegible kaleidoscope of images. The mall's claim to contain attractions from the entire world (including Disneyland) invokes the aura of global abundance and variety over what is, in fact, a collection of mundane chain stores and products replicated all over North America. The Mall represents a component of "a self-adjusting system of merchandising and development that has conquered the world by displaying standardized units in an extensive network."[37]

One developer calls the mall a laboratory for the industry in that it "virtually contains in one place almost every idea someone's come up with, and many of which they came up with themselves." Others suggest that the Mall risks ennui in visitors precisely because of the huge barrage of "silly themes...in a small amount of space....[and the] incongruity...a miniature golf course..." topped with a photographically-accurate recreation of a Parisian street facade. In fact, one of the owners announced that "you don't have to go to New York or Paris or Disneyland or Hawaii any more. We have it all here for you

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[34] Davis 1991, 4. Schivelbusch draws connections between the development of theatrical space and of the control of the street during periods of industrialization in Europe: W. Schivelbusch, *Disenchanted Night: the Industrialisation of Light in the Nineteenth Century*. Tr. A. Davis. Oxford/New York: Berg 1988, 81-134.

[35] Davis 1991 7, 10.

[36] Ibid. 12.

[37] Williamson 1992, 220; rather than viewing interpretive practices as distancing devices between audience and object, Williamson cautions that "the only communicable aspect of human experience is an interpretation", including the interpretation of the critic herself; Crawford 1992, 6.

in one place...!" Nader Ghermezian even claimed that "we have more components than Disneyland. And each is the largest in the world...it's a world within a world."[38]

Visitors also commonly view the Mall as "a Canadian Disneyland." Hemingway recalls that Disney was the first "commercial surrealist designer" to exploit the common "Arabian Nights" fantasy, suggests that it is the combination or collision of elements which creates a successful attraction in the Mall. The Wiebes' suspicion that the mall is "design-and-plan-less" except to cram in as many stores as possible is confirmed by Peter Hemingway's account of his conversation with Nader Ghermezian. Unlike the conventional mall development, WEM has no overall retail policy or mix, but its practice of simply filling outlets with as many tenants as possible results in an air of a Persian bazaar, reinforced by the fact that its corridors are full of constant activity and movement.[39]

The repeated comparison of the Mall to the bazaar recalls similar commentary about the seminal expositions of western Europe, particularly the response to the Crystal Palace of 1851. This (and later) expositions were planned around the didactic strategy of presenting the new and unfamiliar (objects, people, ideas) in the context of everyday assumptions and concepts, such as ideas about the work of imperial agencies. As precursor to later forms such as the department store and shopping mall, the educative function of the exposition meant it was a "bazaar for seeing, not selling."[40]

As noted in Chapter 1, other expositions in Europe and North America went on to emphasize the construction of wondrous environments as components of the more pragmatic demonstration of objects. Like West Edmonton Mall today, expositions built townscapes complete with model railroads, and displayed life size models of well-known ships and other engineering feats. Paris in 1867 and Vienna in 1873 displayed models of achievements such as canals and tunnels with life-size boats and trains. Such spectacles resonated with other aspects of popular culture such as theatre and the print image media which also used objects as icons of the desirable and exemplary.[41] In this developing culture, consumers learned to see the values of technological progress, urban order and systematization, mass production as linked, and linked in a dazzling combination of spectacle and holiday in which strange juxtapositions--mundane shopping and the wonders of civilization--appeared normal.

The limited validity of comparisons of the Mall to a bazaar, exhibition or amusement park is apparent to those actually entering it. The lack of exhibition-standard didactic effort or intellectual order is particularly obvious to those visiting with a purpose, such as obtaining some item or carrying out an errand; mundane domestic, everyday tasks become painful hurdles for many. The same features which are supposed to produce a sense of carnival fantasy for tourists also, perhaps, clash uncomfortably with the reality of most for whom shopping is not a leisure option but a constrained necessity. On a physiological level, of course, the vast distances, confusing visual and auditory barrage, and the sheer monotony of repeated shop formats are exhausting. Despite the Mall's claim to endless novelty, the actual experience is more in the nature of being trapped in repeating re-runs of a documentary on someone else's vacation: the bazaar without any of the smells, unusual tastes, conversations or encounters.

Hopkins notes that the Mall's tourism aspect means that the usual mall regulations on cameras and loitering are somewhat relaxed, promoting a limited (and controlled) atmosphere of the carnival. The visual fantasy is extended through the use of another Disneyland discovery: the attraction of the midway's vicarious danger in the midst of "the mundane business of shopping" or sightseeing. Hemingway claims that the product of the extensive Canadian social security system is a society in danger only of being bored to death.[42]

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[38] Staples 1991, E1-2.; CBC 1989, 11-12; also in Wiebe & Wiebe 1989, 81-2. Davis suggests that the Mall's various foreign references provide the original form of the panoramic "journey" in which viewers walked through a painting of historical or geographical sites, realizations of pictures serving as travelogues (1991, 9).

[39] Hemingway 1986, 35; Wiebe & Wiebe, 86.

[40] A. Briggs, *Victorian Things*. London: BT Batsford 1988.

[41] Briggs 1988; D.S.L. Cardwell, *Technology, Science and History*, London: Neinemann 1972; B. Sinclair, "Technology on its toes: late Victorian ballets, pageants and industrial exhibitions", Cutliffe and Post (Eds.) 1989; P. Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: the Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs 1851-1939*. Manchester University Press 1988; Greenblatt 1991; see also Schivelbusch 1988, ("The Stage") for an account of lighting technologies in the comparable construction of theatrical space.

[42] Hopkins 1991, 271; Hemingway 1986, 35.

Similarly, Wiebe asks, in a society "dominated by every possible insurance and state-sponsored security will we ever find some adventure...a safe fantasy?" Hence the attraction of, as the *Los Angeles Times* put it, "a world apart, a world free of the mundane struggles with weather and boredom." The Wiebes also point out that in Edmonton winter is long but energy is cheap, the immigrant owners recognized that "what better attraction could there be for selling things than to build a kind of perpetual Persian bazaar...in tropical surroundings where weather does not exist?"[43]

The entertainment amenities of West Edmonton Mall were primarily meant to ameliorate the intrinsic boredom of endless shopping itself. As time passed, the architecture appeared more and more "tacky" and the structure of "inspired vulgarity" looked deteriorated by the early 1990s. The attraction of novelty quickly fades; in 1995, the mall began a long-term "attractions re-theming project." At the same time, developers view the place as proof that leisure and shopping fit together, and new malls typically include a major entertainment component.[44]

If embodied fantasy is a preferred model of public space, and if the embodied fantasy of the Mall functions as the current social centre, does this mean that the public sphere is a midway facade as well? And if so, who is selling the tickets? The next section takes a closer look at the connections drawn between the mall, public space and community history.

**C. Utopia, nostalgia and the Mall**

As discussed above, American architect Victor Gruen developed the first fully enclosed mall in 1956, intended as a pedestrian-focussed community centre with a mix of public and private functions under one roof. The idea is part of a long tradition of utopian social planning. Benjamin noted the similarity of the Fourierist "phalanstery" form to that of the arcades. The "mall" form of the socialist Phalanstery was meant to encourage social intercourse rather than consumption, and to allow for unexpected, unplanned uses. By the 1980s, town planners were designing "state-sponsored social-democratic malls", "seamless alternative worlds" combining government and community facilities and retail spaces. As it turned out, only the retail component of Gruen's mixed-use centres was developed; shopping malls became machines of commerce. Gruen later objected to the fact that regional shopping centres led to the deterioration of established central business districts, long the heart of communities.[45]

Although it is WEM which is usually cited as the shopping mall embodiment of Disneyland's fantasy and abundance, Kowinski points to Disney's "Main Street USA" as the central image of any mall. Like any main street, the park's and the mall's main corridor is bordered by retail outlets and punctuated by pedestrian squares or markets. Analysts have suggested that, in function as well as style, a regional shopping centre is a new main street, replacing the downtown. However, it is an idealized version of the small town environment, an image originally intended for suburbia. The mall's scale and pristine enclosure was "consciously designed to evoke feelings that one associates with the idea of small town." The mall's size, disorienting lighting and sounds tend to work against this effect, and of course the economic and social aspects of shopkeeping are also different in that mall outlets mean less autonomy for the owner. In turn, this means less choice for the consumer since malls are dominated by centrally-controlled retail chains.[46]

In the enclosed, crowded and intricate spaces of leisure environments such as theme parks, visitors find escape from, but also a paradigmatic experience of, consumer culture. The experience of enclosure in the space--for example, in the shopping mall--hides the replication of the outer world and its relationships to it. As the division between exterior and interior life became sharper, and as malls take on

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[43] Wiebe & Wiebe 1989, 82-88. Davis (1991) also compares the Mall to a Persian bazaar.

[44] Staples 1991, E1-2; *The Examiner*, "New WEM exhibit gives hands on look at sea life", January 30, 1998; CBC 1989, 12. In the US, for instance, versions of theme parks such as Disneyland and Knott's Berry Farm are included in mall development plans.

[45] See Crawford 1992, 6, 11; Benjamin 1969; R. Barthes, *Sade Fourier Loyola*. New York: Hill & Wang 1976, 86; CBC 1989, 3-4.

[46] CBC 1989, 5-7.

more of the role of social leisure space, the conceptual boundaries between private property and public space in the mall become more blurred.[47]

The shopping mall has been compared to the Greek agora which combined market place and community centre, as well as entertainment, in an urban setting. Unlike the public place of the agora, however, the mall is operated by private interests. Crawford points out that, while the mall offers a sanitized version of streetlife, its social controls demonstrate "a profound distrust of the street as a public arena."[48]

This sense of struggle for control of the street has long been evident in modern urban societies. Schivelbusch notes that the state institutionalisation of public street lighting was roughly contemporaneous with its monopoly on army and police services. Although France's revolution was characterized in part by the smashing of lanterns, over time the control of light and weapons was ambivalently accepted by the public, in return for the promise of stability and security. In the late nineteenth century, electric streetlights were first installed in shopping districts while the residential areas remained in dim gaslight. Later, uniform town lighting was motivated by democratic ideals, but also ones of controlling morality by eliminating shadowy areas of illicit commerce. Raymond Williams describes how new twentieth-century technologies, such as media of home entertainment, were distinguished from the previous, more public oriented ones of railroad and streetlamp. As discussed above, the marketing of mass commodities has exhibited a rhetorical and design emphasis on domesticity.[49]

A 1987 task force report found that designing shopping places as "quite consciously the town square" was of benefit not to traditional patterns of discourse among citizens, but to commerce. The task force was prompted by incidents in Ontario malls in which security guards and police moved to evict people handing out political pamphlets. Around the same time, an Edmonton mall wishing to institute Sunday opening for all its tenants was involved in controversy over contract restrictions which prevented store owners from applying for, or even suggesting, bylaw restrictions on business hours.[50] In 1997, a similar issue arose after a protester was active in West Edmonton Mall.

The key, as suggested above, is that the malls are privately owned, publicly used indoor urban environments. The problem is that malls, indoor pedways or undergrounds and other enclose complexes are not just extending but, as Hopkins observes, "usurping the role of the town square, public park and the sidewalk as public forums for daily social interaction." Whereas Main Street or the village square had been a place of communication on issues of public concern for citizens, the mall takes the role of curtailing free speech and mobility. Their control by owners is seen as the key ingredient of a "safe" environment. Hopkins suggests that, far from resenting them, most people approve of restrictions which will exclude "the homeless, or someone trying to organize store staff, protesters, or people handing out political literature."[51]

Malls have also been criticized on occasions when security has expelled those who were "not intended to be there....teenagers or vagrants or prostitutes" (or people perceived to be in a related category) and some people of colour. Don Hill connects such control efforts with nineteenth-century European arcade building, a retreat from public environments perceived to be hostile for the middle class. The issue today is that malls so dominate our public spaces, that we find in them "the kinds of people and

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[47] See Crawford 1992.

[48] Broadcaster Don Hill has pointed to the precedent of the enclosure movement in England, which turned tracts of public land into private property run by business interests and urban investment capital: CBC 1989; Crawford 1992, 22.

[49] A process described by Williams as "mobile privatization." Schivelbusch describes how the mid-eighteenth century French state imposed order through the centralized control of urban signage, lighting and pavement design; in London, the public perceived a link between the lack of effective policing and the archaic state of its street lighting. The emphasis in England and North America was upon the protection of private property with mechanical security devices, rather than on police surveillance of public spaces: Schivelbusch 1988, 81-134.

[50] CBC 1989, 5-7; the industry objected to the pending legislation to open up malls, on the grounds that such a move would kill a main feature of their success; A. Ogle, "Life among shopping mall tribes of Edmonton", *EJ*, June 3 1990, A1-2; *EJ*, "Mall rules may violate free speech–Crawford", Jan 14, 1986, B1.

[51] Hopkins 1991, 268-9; Ogle 1990, A1-2; CBC 1989, 9.

activities that you would find in real public space." In other words, shopping malls are the new downtown, no longer isolated in suburbia, and activity once expected on the streets has moved into the malls.[52]

Over the past decade, West Edmonton Mall has demonstrated the rising level of crime, violence and other problems once associated with the city core. As soon as the Mall opened, there were social problems, and soon signs of physical and cosmetic deterioration. In 1982, the *Journal* reported on the strong (problematic) presence of a youth subculture. Ten years later, the paper ran another series of reports about "two hundred rebellious teenagers" who find "freedom in the graffiti-cluttered labyrinth" of the Mall, and whose subcultural "anti-establishment stance [gave] them an identity separate from the thousands of shoppers and tourists.."[53]

The initiation of a city police beat patrol in 1987 followed the conclusion that officers spent more time on an average call there than in any other area of the city. Hopkins sees another instance of confusion between the public and the private in the Mall, since police are publically funded--their presence a sign of public space--but in fact have strictly limited powers in comparison to the security guards who are in legal terms "servants of the land owner."[54]

The youth subculture in the Mall is only one aspect of its diverse population, but other groups are specifically identified in terms of their consumer identities rather than their subversion of consumer space. "Enclaves", which function like neighbourhoods in a city, are targeted to specific economic groups. Park Lane and Europa Boulevard contain high-end boutiques for apparel, jewellery, gifts and restaurants. (In this, as well as in its architectural flavour, it is comparable to Old Strathcona, which as we have seen promotes itself as an alternative to the Mall.) The West Entrance area has low-end outlets similar to those in downtown fringe areas in need of revitalization (as was Old Strathcona in the 1960s.)

The size of the mall thus works against the ruling paradigm of interior control. WEM is so large that "it's like the downtown of a city. There are always sort of little skid rows and areas...No one wants to go there."[55] (The threat of non-consuming subcultures influencing the middle-class ambience of Old Strathcona is articulated in similar terms. The dread of retailers and mall developers: no one wants to go there.)

Hopkins puts the megamall in the larger context of consumer society and geo-legal issues of public space. Retailers have typically designed their space in ways that have both promoted and inhibited social interaction and congregation. But today, the scale of this control has changed, along with the intensity with which indoor space is used by the public. The megamall has set a precedent for the "social life of emerging indoor urban environments." As a "mega social centre", the Mall continues the role of the marketplace, but with differences which raise larger geographical, legal, political and social issues concerning how we organize our society and interact on a daily basis. Issues of the enclosure of cities include the contradictions between public and private space, which raise questions of, among other things, freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association guaranteed in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.[56]

The design, functions and cultural precedents of the Mall have been linked by Davis to forms of theatre. Grant uses a similar reference, proposing a model of dramaturgy to discuss the processes of controlling public space through urban planning. In this account, the global economy and culture pressures cities toward conformity and limits the relevance of local history, community and identity. Meanwhile, the national, provincial and civic levels of government also contribute certain values and structures to the patterns of local planning, usually those supporting the primacy of free enterprise and

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[52] CBC 1989, 9.

[53] J. Brown, "Mall series raises many questions", *EJ* June 1 1992, A8; *EJ*,, "WEM's labyrinth of corridors man's home for two months", Feb 8 1992, C3; *EJ*, "Teens hit man with bats after chasing him from WEM", March 4. 1992, B1; "WEM boosts its security after beating", Mar 5 1992, B1; "Don't carry an attitude into mall teen warns", Mar 8 1992, C3; "In the mall all night and all day", May 24 1992, F1; "Rats rule behind WEM's glitz", May 24 1992, A1.

[54] Hopkins 1991, 271; surveys have in fact shown common public confusion over whether WEM is considered to be public space or not.

[55] Johnson 1991, 259; CBC 1989, 10, 15; see *EJ* January and December 1997, January 1998.

[56] Hopkins 1991, 269.

economic expansion. These may then be contested by local interests and citizen groups; all players may claim to embody the true "spirit of city past" or present in their aspirations.[57]

### *Community spirits and the Mall: a lack of ghosts?*

The discussion so far, both in this chapter and the last, has made reference to the recurring comparison of Old Strathcona to West Edmonton Mall. These comparisons are typically phrased in somewhat emotional terms, with Old Strathcona painted as a bastion of architectural and cultural integrity as opposed to the foreign interloper Mall with its suspect handfuls of empty treats, come to exploit the innocent ("solid, sensible and hockey-loving") citizens of the North. In the next section, we will reconsider WEM's potential claims to represent the city in other terms, as an environment which has local and imported history as its content.

Local writer Myrna Kostash declares herself "repulsed [by the] pleasuredome" which is demolishing Edmonton's "sense of self, its downtown, its links with the past." Citizens are being "mesmerized by fakery" as the Mall attempts to replicate New Orleans, Europe and Disneyland with little or no feel for Edmonton, and "no organic connection with our community." [58]

Davis suggests that if WEM was a locally owned and conceived edifice, "it would reflect the ethnic composition of Edmonton, incorporate native Canadian peoples' cultures as more than...souvenirs for sale...and it would not generate so much antagonism in its host city." Considering the nature of other local public spaces, including those discussed in previous chapters, it is difficult to agree with this suggestion. (Another problem is that WEM is not in fact a placeless fantasy, but exhibits a "universalism" which is in fact a feature of American culture, long normalized as common North American culture.)

Janice Williamson states more realistically that WEM tends to "both reveal and obscure" the reality of everyday life in Edmonton. Differences of class, race and gender, central to Edmonton's character and history, are omitted in the mall's evocation both of the local and of the exotic. Women (other than shoppers) and visible minorities (other than workers) appear only in simulations, and native Canadians remain in the downtown core from which commerce--and significant social life--has been displaced by the Mall.[59]

It is true, as Wiebe and Wiebe notice, that the comprehensive array of attractions and displays at WEM include little evidence of any history at all aside from the replica of the *Santa Maria* and a midway-type Medieval Dungeon displaying torture instruments "to show how good our lifestyle is today."[60] To this one could add nostalgic versions of New Orleans' nightclub district and a statue or two of oil rig workers. The Mall did add a (non-human) fragment of Canada in 1998's new Pacific Coast exhibit, containing a Giant Pacific octopus which is (naturally) one of the largest in the world and an "interactive" sea life tide pool which mimics the natural intertidal zone cycle. This and other exhibits, though, mainly attest to the fact that the Ghermezians "have ransacked the world for recreatable exotica."[61]

WEM does have its historical moments, incorporating statues of local industrial and agricultural heritage at points in the mall. But, and more spectacularly, it comprises several imported and invented traditions such as an American street and a European urban facade, as well as several historically-based theme hotel rooms. Geographically it lies on the outskirts of the city, at a historical and physical remove from the "heart" of Edmonton (status claimed by both Fort Edmonton and Old Strathcona at times).

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[57] Grant, 22-26.

[58] Davis 1991; Leo 1994, 12-13; Kostash cited in S. McKeen, "Living with the Mall", *EJ* Sept 15 1991a, A1; see *EJ*, "labour council opposes tax deal for Fantasyland", January 5 1985, B1; *EJ*, "Mall a hot spot", March 14 1985, C3; *EJ*, "Mall putting city on map", May 2 1985, D6.

[59] Williamson, op.cit., 221; in a comparable discussion, Delaney has elaborated on the way in which the CMC's reconstructions manipulate a sense of history, obscuring certain episodes and competing narratives. Similarly, accounts of aboriginal cultures and contemporary arts are separated from the CMC's History Hall. Delaney 1992, op.cit.

[60] Wiebe & Wiebe 1989, 84.

[61] Ibid.; *The Examiner*, "New WEM exhibit gives hands on look at sea life", January 30, 1998.

The Mall may be a manifestation of global economic culture (and so, supposedly, divorced from local culture.)[62] Nevertheless, as Williamson writes, WEM's array of representations are "symptoms of Canada's heritage and habit of rummaging through the cultural baggage of Europe and the USA for signs of its own authenticity". The design and architecture of the mall also embody "stories which open up the historical present and past of Edmonton and the Western frontier" and the politics of the local, and of location itself. WEM represents, rather than an anomaly, the logical development of a city which refers for its origins and character back to, first, a fur-trading enterprise and later a commercial service centre for the railway which ended at the town of Strathcona in the period chosen for restoration. It is also worth noting in this context that, like the Mall itself, Fort Edmonton factor Rowand's "Big House" was decorated in a style described by Paul Kane as of "the most startling, barbaric gaudiness."[63]

Williamson reads the mall in terms of Canadian frontier colonial attitudes. Edmonton's history "provides antecedents for large-scale commercial structures", beginning with the establishment here in 1795 of fur trade centres by the Hudson Bay and North West Companies. Boddy, also, calls the prairie military and trading forts the first prairie urban spaces, communicating "mercantile and government presence" beyond their immediate military role of defense. Fort Edmonton factor John Rowand's "Big House" was built on the river bank where the Legislature now stands. Like the original stockade, Williamson sees the Mall's exterior walls as a protective skin around a "virtually autonomous" world populated by shopper/traders and surrounded by transient visitors. What is missing are the native peoples who historically occupied the site, traded at the Fort and camped outside its walls. (The mall does provide parking for tourist RVs during the summer.)[64]

Ironically, considering claims of such symbols to publicize local urban identity or image, although it contains the most famous mall in the world Edmonton itself occupies a marginal geographic, cultural and social position in the perceptions of outsiders. Hemingway, like Williamson, perceives a cultural, as well as architectural paradox in the location of the Mall, remarking that "McLuhan and Venturi come to life in the most unlikely venue--solid, sensible, hockey-loving Edmonton."[65]

Hemingway's comment is a good illustration of the gap between insider and outsider perceptions of a city's character. Edmontonians (including, for a time, Marshall McLuhan himself) have long demonstrated a predeliction for fantasy and carnival, developing Canadian models of music fests, theatrical events and mid-winter spectacles, sustaining a summer Klondike festival of dubious historical accuracy, operating a waterfall from a historic railway bridge, and accepting a civic landscape of glass pyramids. The city also occupies a relatively stable position in voting traditions, balanced somewhat to the left of the prevailing political trends in the province.

In terms of cultural context, then, West Edmonton Mall's appeal as fantasy land is not unprecedented. As commercial construction, it is an elaboration of existing consumer patterns. WEM represents, in fact, the logical development of a city which refers for its origins and character back to, first, a fur-trading enterprise representing an outpost of western European civilization, and later a

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[62] Like other malls, it relies largely on American-based development capital, retailers and chains. The survival of Canadian retail traditions are not a high priority. Even shifts in the content of stores, as well as in their relative prosperity and location, respond to international market conditions.The construction of Canada's second-largest mall, by a partnership of Canadian and American developers , begins this year and will take advantage of the trade laws to retail at least 70% American clothing, shoes and accessories. The preponderance of speciality, clothing and boutique outlets is a feature of shopping districts like Old Strathcona as much as it is of malls. As Eaton's closed 21 stores by early 1998, it also eliminated furniture, appliance and electronic departments in surviving outlets, ending a long tradition of trade in domestic goods. Competitors including the Bay also reduced stock in "hard goods" and turned more to clothing and accessories to improve sales. This shift reflects not customer preference or need, but trade conditions; as under NAFTA custom duties are removed from these goods, and with free markets, says a retailing consultant, "we'll see a flood of...retailers bringing goods up from New York because they don't have to pay duties." M. Strauss, "Eaton's to close stores, cut jobs", *G&M* Jan 30 1998, B1; L. Zehr, "Cambridge, Mills plan mega-mall", *G&M* Jan 31 1998, B1.

[63] Williamson 1992, 216, 220; Kane's account cited in Newman 1989, 174.

[64] Williamson 1992, 222-3; *EJ*, "Campers a happy lot in mall's asphalt jungle", July 13 1992, A1; Boddy 1982, Oct.-Nov. #37, 25.

[65] Williamson 1992; Hemingway 1986, 33-34.

commercial outlet for goods imported via the railway and the agricultural industry (as represented by Strathcona's preserved station and popular produce market.)

Other assessments of WEM's economic and cultural impact tend to place it closer to the psychic centre of current Edmonton culture. Its context is a global culture of tourism and consumerism which also support phenomena such as Fort Edmonton and Old Strathcona. As part of this complex, the Mall may actually prefigure the direction of the rest of the city in terms of urban space. West Edmonton Mall has become more than a shopping or entertainment centre; for some it amounts to a vision of the future, a working model of urban existence. In fact, the Mall played writer Steven King's "city of the future" in a mid-1980s movie.[66] This vision has transferred to the downtown of the city, which which its pedways and skyways resembles in some ways the futuristic city of popular culture, but more prosaically "resembles a gigantic interconnected shopping centre."

As zoning restrictions and land prices have increased in Canada, mall developers profited from promises to revitalize city cores. The first of these developments, built during the 1970s, was Eaton Centre in Toronto, inspired by European urban arcades. With its success, it appeared even more clear that the mall's role in the community was that of Main Street. In Edmonton, downtown mall development has had a much stronger impact. The original streetscape "where you can walk down the street for blocks and go from one shop to another" has vanished from the city. Don Hill suggests that there are now "two Edmontons": one out in the uncertain, open air, and the other the climate-controlled city-state of WEM, which lacks only residential space.[67]

The Mall has had a definite, though controversial, impact on Edmonton's downtown commercial district. Denis Johnson points to WEM as "unquestionable evidence" that downtown primacy, in terms of size, can be challenged by a mega mall. Unlike the case in American cities of this size, though, malls in Edmonton have not destroyed the downtown area. Johnson believes that the Mall has actually been a catalyst for downtown Edmonton's renewal.[68] From another perspective, though, the downtown complex looks like an extension of rather than an alternative to the Mall.
During the recession of the early 1980s, the city invested $15.3 million in downtown "beautification" and tax concessions for developers, including (or even especially) the Ghermezians themselves. Pedways were built to provide "indoor, mall-like comfort during winter." Despite claims that business had increased by 25% between 1986 and 1991, the downtown complex is actually half-empty; the city lost $11 million on the Ghermezians' Eaton Centre project. Councillor Brian Mason commented that downtown had become a developer's, rather than a shopper's paradise.[69]

Echoing complaints from some city councillors during this period, the Old Strathcona Foundation's P.J. Duggan suggested that some of the money the city had poured into the Mall could have ended up in other neighbourhood revitalization projects like Old Strathcona. The area has been promoted precisely as an alternative to mall culture, which Duggan claimed has had a positive "subtle effect" on retail on Whyte Avenue as shoppers, he said "[destered] the sterile atmosphere of shopping centres." Expressing a typical sentiment, city councillor Brian Mason declared that he preferred the more "'human' atmosphere of old fashioned street shopping, like in Strathcona" to WEM "which he called crass consumerism at its worst."[70]

By the end of 1997, the *Financial Post* reported a general North American trend toward the abandonment of the malls and a return of shoppers to the streets.[71] However, a return to street shopping does not mean a return to old fashioned consumer practices. It is, essentially, a turn to another style of the same activity, and represents more a shift in asthetics than a rejection of the mall form. Over the last few

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[66] CBC 1989, 17; *Alberta Report*, "Mayhem at the mall", August 5 1985, 50; *EJ*, "Mall lands $30m movie", July 20 1985, A1.

[67] CBC 1989, 8, 17. But, as Hill notes, a model of mall living has existed already since the mid-1970s in the HUB building at the University of Alberta. The development was inspired, like Eaton Centre, by the European arcades, and like downtown pedestrian systems also serves the function of linking campus buildings in a protected climate. See also: Alberta. Historic Sites Services, "Walking Tour of the University of Alberta", Edmonton, n.d.

[68] Johnson 1991, 250; S. McKeen, "Thriving in the shadow of the monster", *EJ* Sept 15 1991b, E2

[69] McKeen 1991a and 1991b; see Ch, 4, above.

[70] McKeen, ibid.

[71] *Financial Post*, "Taking it to the streets", Vol. 10 No.44, Nov 1 1997, 20.

years, for instance, Whyte Avenue has continued to look more and more like a mall with its chain stores and food outlets. The superstore bookseller Chapters announced a new outlet on Whyte Avenue in early 1998, along with another store--probably in West Edmonton Mall.[72]

Hemingway sees the WEM as an embodied clash between urban western tastes and ideals of public space, and those of the middle eastern marketplace. However, the mall may exhibit certain features of the latter with its unplanned juxtapositions and haphazard growth, but omits other aspects such as relative autonomy of the merchant and a subtle culture of client negotiation. WEM's history has consistently featured controversies and investigations of its finances and its special claim to consideration for development concessions by the city. The owners and developers have, from the start, claimed special treatment on the basis of its role as a tourist attraction benefiting the economy of the entire region.[73]

In 1987 the news of a $5 million grant to WEM's Fantasyland created a "furore." Mayor Laurence Decore, commenting on the "huge tax concessions" won by the Ghermezians, says that they "just don't know the meaning of the word 'no.'" Almost ten years later, the same theme appeared in questions about the involvement of the Alberta Treasury Branch in financing the Mall.[74] This approach is not actually novel, but has its precedent in the claims of large urban stores, and later malls, to embody not only the socio-cultural spirit of a city but its commercial soul as well. Early in Toronto's history, for instance, dry goods stores were considered to be "of such vital importance to the sum total of our commercial wealth [and to] the development and welfare of every other branch of trade as to demand special recognition." By the 1970s, however, in contrast to the United States, one retailer observed that "the relationship between a healthy retail industry and the economic well-being of the community almost completely escapes the thinking of the average Canadian politician."[75] (The relationship between commerce and community identity did not escape the thinking of the FLQ during the 1960s, when their manifesto read in part, "[w]e are terrorized by the capitalist Roman church...[and] by the publicity of the grand masters of consumption like Eaton, Simpson, Morgan, Steinberg and General Motors." The department stores received bomb threats during this period, and 1969 riots in downtown Montreal targeted hundreds of retail display windows.)[76]

**D. Conclusion: the Mall as popular culture**

West Edmonton Mall has been called everything from "a grand dream of capitalism" to "the destruction of the world." Travel writer Jan Morris describes the mall as "[e]ntirely indoors, mostly artificial, very derivative, it is the very declaration of contemporary capitalism, the world-conquering ideology of our time. It is beyond nationality..." To some extent, it is also beyond criticism, she says, when you consider its success in attracting the hordes of people eagerly entering its "shameless enclaves." In order to seriously examine local phenomena, including shopping malls, it is necessary to avoid "highbrow" attitudes about cultural worth, both in terms of the city (and the mall) themselves and of work

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[72] D. Howell, "A new Chapters on Whyte", *EJ*, Feb 10 1998, F1; independent bookseller Laurie Greenwood said that "a huge market of readers...will not go to a chain store. They don't like the atmosphere." The Old Strathcona Business Association believed on the other hand, that Chapters' advertising would draw more people to the area as a whole.

[73] Hemingway 1986, 35; *EJ* "Mall asks $60 m for tourist package", Feb 12 1986, B2; *EJ* "Tourism role merits special deals tenants say", June 28 1991, G2; *EJ*, "Records show Triple 5 still owes city $8m", July 5 1991, B3; *EJ*, "West Edmonton Mall vital to local tourism", August 19 1992, D3; these articles are a small fraction of related coverage since 1985.

[74] Decore quote in Weibe & Weibe 1989, 82; see also M. Drohan, "Fantasyland furore", *Macleans* 100, No. 45, Nov 8 1987, 5; P. Verburg, "Mega-mall or mega-bust? Controversy erupts as the Ghermezian empire shudders", *Alberta Report* 21 No 16, Apr 4 1994, 15-16; B. Hutchinson, "Trouble in big mall country", *Canadian Business* 67 No.9, Sept 1994, 68-71, 74; P. Verburg, "Who's minding the store? did ATB guarantee #350 million to WEM?", *AR* 22 No 31, July 17 1995a, 7-8; P. Verburg, "Time's up for Triple Five", *AR* 21 No. 38, Sept 5 1994b, 19.

[75] Bryant 1977, 81-2.

[76] Ibid., 161-163.

about them. As Jeffrey Hopkins concludes, referring to Robert Venturi's study of popular culture, we can learn as much about our society from West Edmonton Mall as we can from Las Vegas.[77]

Architect Geralt Blomeuer has called the Mall mainly a testament to the myth-building power of its owners. The myth of WEM's modern, cutting-edge facilities has survived several deaths associated with various attractions, and other negative aspects are similarly ignored by visitors, if not by journalists and social observers. We are forced to notice the mall's ultimate lack of control over accidental death--by midway accident or assault--only occasionally.[78]

In 1990, a Canadian Association of Geographers conference considered the Mall. Edward Jackson suggested that WEM is the quintessential mall because of the range and number of its stores and its fostering of shopping as a leisure activity. In this, the mall may itself have changed consumer behaviour. Shopping is now widely considered to involve much expenditure in time as well as money, and to be associated with "things that are wanted rather than needed."[79]

Other scholars found that that people go there for social and recreational reasons not necessarily including shopping and that, in fact, more and more of our leisure activities occur in similar enclosed spaces. WEM offers none of the usual consumer goods for tourists such as geographically unique products or exclusive fashions. Its appeal, like that of Mount Everest, lies in its scale and mythology. The Mall, according to Richard Butler, "sells itself...giving people glimpses or tastes of other locations, albeit in a very contrived and homogenized fashion."[80]

Kowinski admits that the malls have had some positive effects and expressed certain positive needs, constructing community spaces and employing many people. However, John Sewell insists that we should also satisfy broader public interests by allowing "lots of interesting human things to happen on those public streets...parades or demonstrations or beggars or [buskers.]" The mall still is accessible to most people, and continue to attract crowds. Don Hill suggests that, gaudy and aesthetically offensive though they may be, "the enclosed shopping centre is the major cultural artifact of this generation...our modern cathedrals", suburban city-states run by private interests working exactly as planned.[81]

Whatever else they may be, malls are embodiments of the values of popular consumer culture. The values of that culture, according to Chaney, point to new forms of dramatisation for public space. But most of our forms of popular culture encourages individuals to dramatise mundane experience by accentuating illusion and fantasy, exacerbated by the enormous extension in the range and scope of dramatic entertainment. Hopkins' survey of Emontonians in the early 1990s suggested that, in general, city residents perceive the Mall "favorably but skeptically." Despite typical protests from certain demographic groups (note Kostash, above), only two percent of those surveyed could claim never to have been there. The manager of the Hilton Hotel, on the other hand, cites the Mall's contribution to civic identity and tourism, especially since the city no longer has hockey star Wayne Gretzky. Other business people call Edmonton uncomfortable with success.[82] This, by the way, is a familiar local strategy to marginalize alternative public views by associating them with unsuccessful economic groups.

Like Morris, Hopkins, and Williamson, Peter Hemingway defends the taste of thousands of visitors to WEM. Though the Mall is "vulgar and crass" it seems to strike a chord with visitors. Like Disneyland, it takes the Barnum and Bailey approach rather than following the attempts of architects and critics, who tend to favour "spartan interiors" to "raise the level of public taste to parallel...that of the early Zen masters" in its simplicity. He attributes this gap to a difference in visual referents. The visions

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[77] Morris cited in Staples 1991, E1; J. Hopkins 1991, 277.

[78] Staples, ibid.; *EJ*, "Mega mall is kitsch, architect", Feb 19, 1988, B6; *EJ*."Abnormal and outlandish, it's a mall with sheer gall", Feb 22 1987, B1; Wiebe & Wiebe 1989, 89.

[79] Ogle 1990; Staples 1991.

[80] Staples, ibid.; also see*The Canadian Geographer*, v.365 Fall 1991; *EJ*, "Mega mall is kitsch, architect", Feb 19, 1988, B6; *EJ*."Abnormal and outlandish, it's a mall with sheer gall", Feb 22 1987, B1.

[81] CBC 1989, 20. The Wiebes, however, object that, unlike cathedrals, malls "have no architecture to entertain the mind."

[82] Chaney 1993, 163; Ogle 1991; McKeen 1991a; (Mayor Jan Reimer, though, was uncomfortable about the history of city tax and zoning concessions to the mall but admitted that overall it was a positive element of the city); see *EJ*, "labour council opposes tax deal for Fantasyland", January 5 1985, B1; *EJ*, "Mall a hot spot", March 14 1985, C3; *EJ*, "Mall putting city on map", May 2 1985, D6.

of architects are a "direct outcome of [their] visual literacy" familiar with historical building styles. The average shopper, however, draws on a repertoire of fantasy images including "Arthurian castles, Wild West shootouts, pirate and space ships." To the objection that the responsibility of the architect is "to educate clients", Hemingway replies that "that may be acceptable when they want to be educated, but when they do not, it is surely a form of aggression to force our subjective imagery on them." In the "dream world" of the mall, people find "no stern patriarchal figure waving an admonishing finger at our mindless descent into vulgarity."[83]

Ewen and Ewen suggest that shopping centres and malls have been built along the basic patterns of modern life. They involve a sense of progress, of a break from the past, and a physical location of consumer culture dependent on mass imagery, economy and communications. Amid these patterns, we live in a visual space dominated by the imagery of commerce and a society organized around the purchase. The source of creative power becomes the object world, in which we invest the subjective power of personality. While the object world itself may offer realms of possibility and creativity, this is limited by the consumer tendency to passivity and conformity. Therefore consumption become the dominant social relationship, making it harder to create real community.[84]

In a way, a mall's agglomeration of the forms and functions of modern living make it seem possible that the unified world of premodern times could be reconstituted through consumption. Social planning of urban centres has been a recurring theme. By the late twentieth century, it often seems that no sphere of our lives--culture, leisure, politics-- is immune to commodification. Commodities, as discussed in previous chapters, define life styles in the sense that a distinct set of objects can be used to communicate social status and identity. The mall, says Crawford, is a central institution which operates in the realm of meaning between the objective appearances of retail and the unstable subjectivities of the consumer. The mall does not create "false needs" but more accurately conflates material and symbolic aspects of life because its barrage of visual and auditory effects isolate us in a "weightless realm" where commodities are the only substance.[85]

Today, notes Crawford, almost "any large building or historic area is a candidate for reconfiguration into a mall", all conveying the same "imperative to consume." Both malls and theme parks appropriate "place" in a specialized environment. This is echoed in the revitalization of "main streets" where the "implied connection between unexpected settings and familiar products reinvigorates the shopping experience."[86]

According to what Crawford calls the principle of adjacent attraction in consumer culture, the mall format has come to lend glamour to the urban setting as a whole. Urban spaces are transformed into malls, for instance, by declaring them pedestrian zones. A tenant mix develops to suit the area's unifying theme, attracting supporting businesses such as restaurants and bars. Here, too, luxury shops displace everyday outlets. Gentrified areas which emphasize a historical small town character tend to develop a separate commercial identity that nevertheless coexists with and balances that of nearby large shopping malls.

In short, suggests Crawford, "hotels, office buildings, cultural centres and museums virtually duplicate the layouts and formats of shopping malls" in their enormous internal spaces, dramatic presentations and requent opportunities for purchasing objects connected to them. The museum now represents the commodification of history, technology and art. The principle of adjacent attraction "is now operating at a society level, imposing an exchange of attributes between the museum and the shopping mall, between commerce and culture."[87]

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[83] Hemingway 1986, 34-35; this is a typical set of allusions with refernce to the Mall which is often criticized in terms comparable to those used with reference to prostitutes elsewhere in the city. At first seen as "brash, dolled-up", "shocking" downtown and "enticing" tourists, in more recent years it is described somewhat like an aging and less threatening, deteriorating "tart": see McKeen 1991a, whose terms are typical of a wide range of commentary from journalism to academic analysis; also Hopkins 1991, 277; *EJ*, "WEM's glitter is fading", Oct 25 1989, D10; Williamson (1992) discusses representations of the prostitute within the Mall.

[84] Ewen and Ewen 1982, 73-77; Crawford 1992, 22.

[85] Kowinski 1985; Crawford 1992, 14, 10-11.

[86] Ibid. 16.

[87] Ibid. 27-30.

The criticism of heritage tourist spaces tend to echo that of other mass media: their emphasis on the visual spectacle, the evasion of intellectual engagement and tactility, and the manipulation of evidence for the sake of narrative effect. Shopping malls tend not be be subject to the same expectations, however. More overtly commercial leisure-oriented fantasy spaces can be associated with fictive narrative productions without arousing much concern. Despite these cultural difference in reception, though, heritage sites are to history as docudrama is to the broadcast news; neither type of production directly witnesses, or mediates, the event itself, but constructs the audience as witness through an engagement with primary records. It is, therefore, less useful to attempt a definitive separation of fantasy from fact, or fiction from documentary, than it is to examine the way in which certain productions acquire social force and meaning according to how they balance claims to the truth and to artistic imagination.

## CONCLUSION: Lost and 'Distressed' in Urban Space

[E]very image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns, threatens to disappear irretrievably...Historical materialism wishes to retain that image of the past which unexpectedly appears...at a moment of danger...In every era the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it. (Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the philosophy of history" (1968, 255.)

Any city functions at some level as a vast display or museum case. It retains a varied collection of cultural specimens, in its own records and monuments as well as in its power to draw on distant resources. But this capacity for inclusion also means that the city becomes an agent of selection, like the museum, as to what will be remembered, assembled, interpreted. The city becomes a combination of the diffuse, abstract networks in space, and the local place.[88] As encountered in the course of this study, local issues around the construction of public space include the relative values of local history and the global marketplace. But at the level of heritage production there are recurrent questions about the nature of historical experience as object of memory, discourse and communication.

These questions are posed in terms of authenticity, which has aesthetic implications concerning taste and surfaces, and deeper levels concerning the legitimacy and social meaning of selective cultural knowledge. Surfaces of a streetscape, for example, may be simply artificially "distressed" to satisfy requirements of heritage appearances; meanwhile, aspects of social history or ideas--the life lived within urban facades--may be quite lost to the present. To evaluate the worth of, and the relationship between, "historicized" spaces and other urban constructions, we have to consider specific local context.

The velocity and opportunism of settlement in the Canadian West meant that the sense of our history has from the start had somewhat of the quality of a dream or docu-drama. In terms of the mass media, the region has been repeatedly portrayed as a hybrid of the real and the fantastic by benefit of the contemporaneously evolving mass media. The local sense of place and time has evolved as much in terms of myth as in terms of objective record.[89] Today, the historic district as diorama is a bounded "set" to which we are acculturated not only by historical information but by other mediated ways of seeing and experiencing place. The difference, perhaps, is that the mediated nature of historic sites tends to be obscured, or naturalized because of the lack of formal frame or museum case.

Typically, critics of reconstructed pioneer villages and restored forts view these as the "museumification" of history, a montage of genuine relics and imagined facades.[90] Preservation of salvaged objects from a single period "frozen in time" tends to make the past unlike the present, which is an intermingling of artifacts from different eras. But to some extent, in Western Canada rapid, successive episodes of construction and destruction have left recognizably distinct historical enclaves. Heritage here usually means that of European agricultural settlement, which is only two or three generations old, so that this past has been still accessible within living memory during the past several decades of heritage space development. Sources are likely to draw upon oral histories and contemporary photographs as well as distanced or elite interpretation. Therefore, a local potential for accessible and accurate representations does exist to varying extents in heritage projects.

In the present, however, although government heritage agencies do provide programs of community participation in local developments, these sites and collections are also currently being administered through even more standardized and centralized information processes. In part this is due to a lack of regional staff due to the retreat of governments from responsibility for cultural industries, and a related emphasis on economic efficiency. More privatization of heritage industries is likely as the current provincial government dismantles the apparatus with which they have established Alberta's cultural

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[88] L. Mumford. *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations and Its Prospects.* London: Penguin Books 1991, 639; see also M. Levin, "The city as a museum of technology", *History and Technology* 1993, Vol. 10, pp. 27-36.

[89] E.g., R. Rees, *Land of Earth and Sky: Landscape Painting of Western Canada.* Western Producer Prairie Books, Saskatoon Saskatchewan 1984; R.D. Francis,*Images of the West: Responses to the Canadian Prairies, 1860-1960.* Western Producer Prairie Books, Saskatoon Saskatchewan 1989.

[90] E. Relph, *Place and Placelessness.* Pion Ltd., London. 1976 93-146; see D. Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country,* Cambridge University Press 1985.

heritage programs and landscapes. The public is urged to replace public programs with volunteerism and entrepreneurship, dignified with the labels of democratic participation and community empowerment. These notions neatly align with the fact that Alberta's museum spaces are overwhelmingly concerned with the vernacular experience, and thus appear to be completely accessible to popular common sense as to procedures.

Here one is torn between promoting the wisdom of folk memory and popular taste, and recognizing the loss of material history due to structural processes for which everyday citizens have been inadequately prepared. And in fact, there is comparatively little evidence of this kind of public interest. While Albertans may not be excited by bureaucratic monuments, neither is the realm of vernacular, ordinary history of a few decades past so distant that it is compelling for the majority. Also, although the representation of "high culture" may not be foregrounded, in many areas of the province heritage falls under the traditional regional suspicion of elites, governments, and urban-based "improvers" of all descriptions. Local support for heritage projects, at this point, seems to relate mainly to their relevance to economic survival.

In any case, issues remain concerning the mediated production (or conservation) of a local sense of place in a context of mediated experience. Just as the modern consciousness of "heritage" itself was in part a response to economic upheaval and social displacement in the industrial era, at present it seems likely that a culture of museum scholarship mixed with various levels of citizen interest will give way to one of a service industry dedicated primarily to tourism. This has implications for other areas involving the participation of citizens in local cultural production. Tourism generally sets up a distance between the producers and the consumers of historical knowledge. The problem develops when primary control over interpretations of places is subject to economic and political agendas which are not in the general public interest.

Why, in this social context, is it worth looking at the relationship between heritage, consumer society and public space? A relevant issue beyond the local context is that of the construction of sociocultural meaning through a relationship between people, ideas and objects. Historically, such processes have been claimed both by elite institutions of knowledge and by the marketplace. Museologists today still see their responsibility as one of "facilitating a process of human growth...[occurring] when people interact in a meaningful way with [symbolic] objects..." representing collective values, beliefs and behaviours." On a political level, culture is held to be part of a complex of public service responsibilities including democratic participation in a market economy.[91]

Commonly, for instance, national exhibits are meant to impress the world with the stability and progress of a state and its distribution of social wealth. An expository and visible promise of material abundance and security, as in expositions and department stores, tends to eliminate any calls for structural reorganization. The rational, scholarly discourse of heritage preservation legitimates it as a social activity with common meaning above and beyond its immediate economic benefits such as those of tourism. Such legitimation would tend to obscure any public nervousness about the possible desperation of government agencies pouring funds into developing tourist and leisure attractions as the local economy destabilizes.

Heritage projects in Alberta first developed in a context of nationalism and, more specifically, of regional pride and civic promotion. This is especially true of early interests, as characterized by the Fort Edmonton project beginning at the turn of the century. In Edmonton, the rationales, philosophies, and mandates for heritage construction have reflected the secular economic context (associated with commercial interests and mass culture) while their content has remained consistently focused on the social benefits--the "sacred" aspects--of historical preservation.

The theme of cultural preservation and stewardship, aimed toward citizen education and participation in local history, has persisted in later contexts such as in the efforts to revitalize the Old Strathcona area beginning in the early 1970s. It is also apparent in opposition to West Edmonton Mall and the consumer landscape in general. However, in all these cases,the necessary financial and political support derived from the perception of economic benefit and, more or less directly related, the wish to project a certain image of the province and its capital city in the present.[92]

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[91] McGuigan 1996, 133-5; Worts 1990, 9.

[92] Emphasis on citizen participation, community resource development, and popular or local culture has emerged in practices termed, variously, "the new museology", the eco-museum, and so on; an example is the Main Street program discussed above. See J. Balan, *A Development Strategy for the Proposed Ukrainian Settlement block*

Fort Edmonton Park is often cited as an alternative to the present version of the city, and as an authentic, educational record of local history. Its buildings are artifacts preserved inside and out as performance locales for reproduced historical activities. The Old Strathcona district around Whyte Avenue, is also promoted as an alternative to the present downtown area, but with significant differences. It too is promoted as authentic, and its development has also been driven by citizen action by preservationists, with the cooperation of civic, provincial and federal agencies. But in contrast to Fort Edmonton's version of "living history", it emphasizes its position in the everyday life of the community. Historic buildings are adapted for re-use, mainly for leisure pursuits, in an ambiance characteristic of the turn of the century. Promoters highlight the commercial nature of the district as an attraction and shopping as a leisure activity.

This tension has been most overt in the discursive opposition of both sites to others (sometimes each other) which are held up as being less sacred, or at least less relevant or desirable, to the community as a whole. Consistently, such perceptions of difference (and value) are phrased as a difference in shopping options and environments. The emphasis of both Fort Edmonton and Old Strathcona on retail structures is not questioned as a driving force in the representation of heritage as a cultural activity here. Shopping is a central activity in both places, as it is in West Edmonton Mall, despite differing emphases. All of these sites, in short, participate in the spheres of commodity circulation and display, and more broadly in the context of developing urban public space in twentieth century North America.

As noted above, it is not unusual to find WEM described in terms of monumental architecture such as the cathedral. In the sense that such buildings refer to the dominant ethos and direction of societies, and serve as community gathering places, it is an apt comparison. As Gilbert Stetler reminds us, local urban social life here never was represented by public spaces such as town squares or commons. For us, the public realm is the realm of consumption. In itself, this is not necessarily negative, but the Mall (as a "vatican of commerce") is a fitting metaphor for a powerful and disturbing trend in today's city-building: the privatisation of public space.[93] The source of critical study, or alarm, is not primarily the commodified nature of "heritage" or leisure, but control over both metaphorical and material aspects of public space conceived as commodity.

As commodified space, a heritage zone contains a contradiction between its formal context of enduring, continuity and its consumer content of novelty and commodity circulation. In fact, the historic surface is simply one which is currently preferable; the "sense of place" associated with it is the real "product." Ironically, the charming historic surfaces of restored prairie Main Streets are still, as they were when they were built, facades for a society dedicated to expanding commercial trade and development. In Edmonton, the establishment of a strong position in global business networks has been a local tradition since the days of the fur trading Fort. Rather than serving as a counterpoint to the negative effects of capitalism, then, the preservation of aesthetic commercial surfaces is one more feature of its public face.

The appropriate balance between cultural, economic and political agenda is a recurring subject of concern. Ideally, public participation in the process is part of the construction of social meaning around events and actions. Boht heritage and retail processes in Edmonton, for instance, have drawn upon the paradigm of the construction of socio-cultural meaning through ordering the relationships between people, places, things, and ideas. However, in the current context of mass consumerism, notions of public participation in cultural matters most practically tend to come down to issues of choice or market access. Whatever else they may achieve, cultural institutions in this context participate in the construction of consumer choice, or the meanings of goods.

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*Ecomuseum in East Central Alberta.* Alberta Culture & Multiculturalism, Historic Sites and Archives Service/ CIUS, University of Alberta. March 1992. Canadian promoters of the ecomuseum form include Jaques Dalibard, various publications cited above, and Peter Heron; of special interest are the aboriginal cultural centres run by a number of communities, which reflect and adapt aspects of the ecomuseum philosophy; see M. McLoughlin, "Of boundaries and borders: First Nations' history in museums", *Canadian Journal of Communication*, Vol. 18 (1993) 365-385, N. Fuller, "The museum as a vehicle for community empowerment: the Ak-Chin Indian Community Ecomuseum Project" in I. Karp, C. M. Kreamer and S. D. Lavine, Eds. *Museums and Communities: the Politics of Public Culture.* Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington and London 1992. See also P. Vergo (Ed), *The New Museology,* Reaktion Books, London 1989.

[93] G. Stetler, "What kind of a city is Edmonton?", B. Hesketh and F. Swyripa (Eds.), *Edmonton: the Life of a City.*, Edmonton: NeWest 1995.

The history of museum institutions, for instance, illustrates the connection between them and the formation of "public taste." Harris asks: if the museum's public appeal is most important, how does it differ from any commercial institution? is real education lost in a setting which stresses no hierarchy in quality or value of cultural objects? is the museum now another "asylum ...for...memory baths and gallery-going rituals, a quantified, certified, collective encounter"? What are the costs of relevance, drama and popularity?[94]

Despite the validity of these questions for museology, in the everyday context invented traditions and myth enter the cultural process in unpredictable ways. The content of heritage may remain frozen in time, but the presence of heritage sites in the landscape will take on new meanings over time. The Alberta heritage landscape stands as an indicator of local identity through its significance as cultural activity in the present, rather than through simply the intrinsic significance of the preserved and invented past. As well, it seems unnecessary to evaluate different kinds of public space by the same standards--to expect didactic, sacred values to necessarily accompany historical motifs, for instance. Heritage constructions can, and do, serve as citations of the "lost public world", or of alternatives to present ways of living and doing things, in ways which do not require complete authenticity or faithfulness to real lived experience. Particularly in a period when multiple images and interpretations of our world (past and present) surround us, fine distinctions concerning reality are difficult to sustain or predict.

The interaction of history, object-centred display, and public space in the popular "pioneer village" has served as cultural preparation for the urban "heritage environment." Alberta's historic environments and sites have a long history of attempting to balance the appeal of both education and entertainment. As an authentic past, in terms of specific place and local experience, the promise of the heritage site is contradicted by the audience expectation of it as a leisure space, a mass medium, like others.

The dominant mass media of any period serve in some ways as cultural preparation for emergent kinds of (mediated) experience. McLuhan suggested that any understanding of social and cultural change is impossible without a knowlege of the way media work as environments. Further complicating this, the ubiquity of the mass visual media in everyday life has influenced the cultural sense of boundaries between reality and fiction. Briefly, it is a common claim that the presence of the mass visual media in everyday life has blurred our sense of the difference between ordinary or extraordinary phenomena. As mass media, constructed sites including theme parks, museums, retail and leisure spaces all balance elements of realism and imaginative dramatization.[95]

In this sense, West Edmonton Mall combines aspects of electronic mass media experience and of symbolic public spaces such as heritage zones. The difference between restored heritage areas, historic "theme parks", and shopping malls is one of scope and emphasis. The ways in which urban spaces work to satisfy or to frustrate expectations of those who use them are potentially more interesting than judgements of historical accuracy or aesthetic revulsion. More important than incontrovertible judgments about authenticity is a society's ability to tell the difference between memory and common experience, and the selective representation of community for commercial or political purposes.

Despite their limitations as models for public participation in community history, spaces such as Fort Edmonton and Old Strathcona do offer intervals of compensation for current urban life. The status and authenticity of a historic object, building, or environment is not so much a question of the "real" meaning as of the currently primary meaning. It is a question of the relationship between the residual and the dominant meaning, not a choice between them.[96]

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[94]Harris 1978, 173.

[95] Entertainment and news media have been characterized as stressing discrete units of information, instantanaeity, and pastiches of image and sound. One of the corollaries of these general tendencies is that audiences comprehend and come to expect meaning to be generated in the same way--as a continuously changing cycle of enhanced experience--in other types and places of activity. Television sustains only vague and changing distinctions between fact and fiction, partly due to ever-changing programming, juxtapositions of the commercial and the cultural, the news and the drama.

[96] McCannell called tourism a search for, rather than flight from, authentic experience. There is no fixed boundary between the commercial, staged version of culture and the backstage where real production occurs, because constructed versions of the "backstage" are also produced for inquiring minds. D. MacCannell, *The Tourist: a New*

Cultural media, including spatial practices, have been rhetorically employed as instruments of ritual contact and global community, while serving as instruments of private wealth. This does not necessarily mean that mass media and global culture is a threat to some distinct local character, since nations and cultures have always been subject to migration and change. Metropolitan elements have always been "indigenized" in the local context. Fears of global homogenization have also served state strategies of distraction from its own priorities. The difference, perhaps, is that we articulate and spotlight this process, which has become more obvious as it has accelerated. But at some level, popular cultural imagination is still linked to representations of the past and "forms of collective interpretation" such as dramatisations of collective identity. But while leisure and popular cultures may overlap in the same activities, leisure is distinguished by its marketing aspect.[97] Heritage sites and districts combine entertainment and education about history in ways amenable to tourism. Their social context is not primarily local history but the present urban consumer environment of spectacle, display and fantasy.

The question of a division between real and artificial spaces, with relevance to the historic theme park, the restored shopping district and the mega-mall are most usefully analyzed, not as authentic or fake, but as points on the continuum of authenticity and artificiality. Together, they are a dynamic of remembered, recovered and reconstructed (or invented) history. The notion of a collective community with a homogeneous zeal for history, must be questioned, as must the idea of "collective" memory itself, especially in a society dominated by diverse immigrant peoples. On the other hand, this does not rule out the potential for episodes of collective vision and creative alternatives to cities "carved in stone." Each of the projects which became Fort Edmonton Park and the Old Strathcona district--and, in different but not incompatible terms, WEM as well--began in the desire of citizens and communities to take some control over remembering, imagining and constructing the kind of city in which they wished to live.

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*Theory of the Leisure Class.* London: Macmillan 1976; see also J. Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies.* SAGE, London 1990.

[97] Chaney 1993, 163-4.

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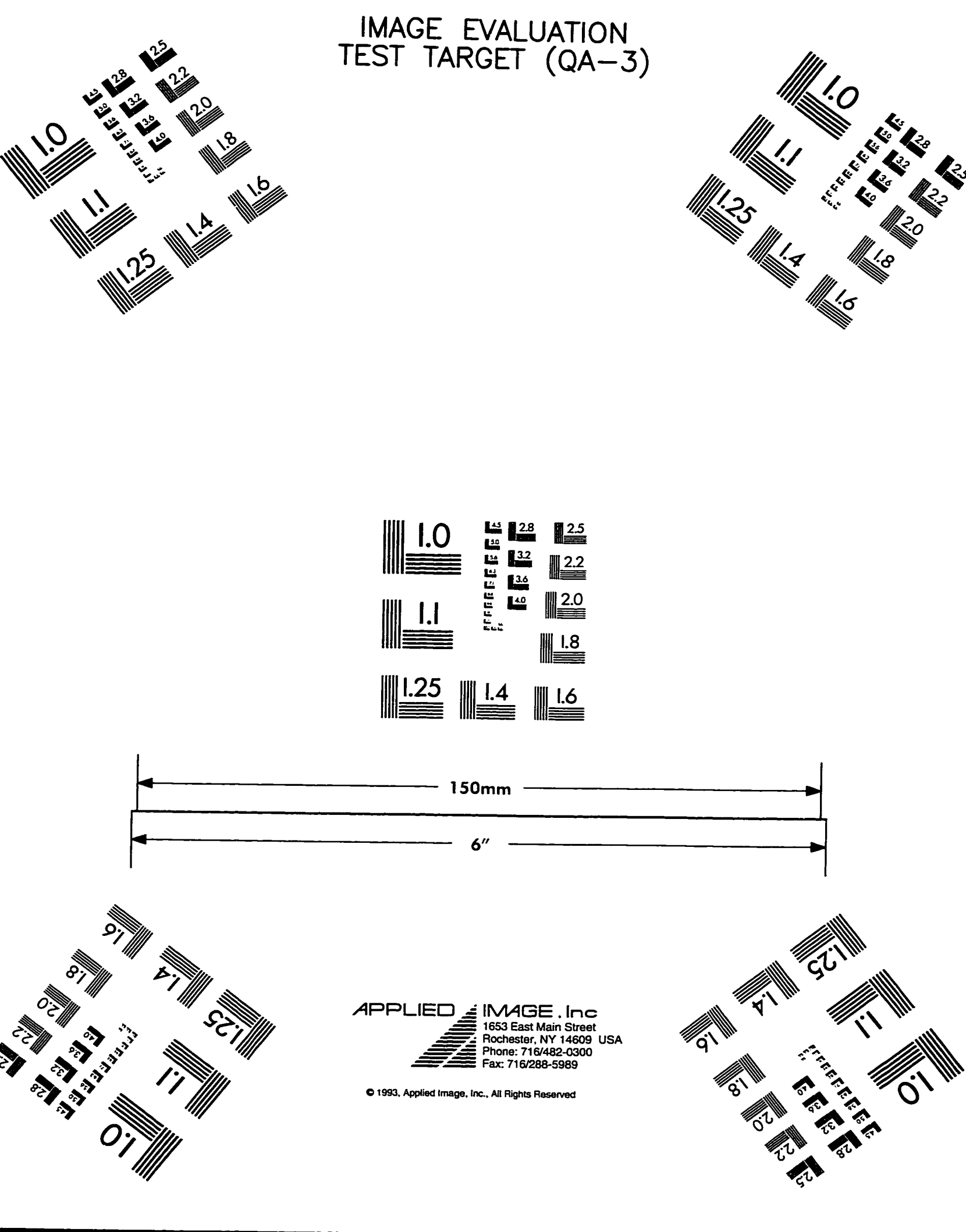
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