

# CONSTRUCTING BUILDINGS AND HISTORIES: HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY DEPARTMENT STORES, 1910-1930

The Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), the quintessential British commercial institution, commissioned a series of four monumental department stores across Western Canada in the 1910s and 1920s. Massive buildings rose in Calgary, Vancouver, Victoria, and Winnipeg, each dominating its downtown environment. The company's forceful presence was established by an architectural vocabulary of elegant Corinthian columns and classical detailing; the first three stores were clad in a distinctive cream-coloured terra cotta (figure 1). These stores were intended to represent the company as the continuing agent of civilization in the young, rapidly changing Dominion.

The subject of HBC architecture has received limited scholarly attention in Canada, except as an aspect of archaeological and sociological research at fur trade post sites.<sup>1</sup> This paper is thus an initial contribution to the architectural and social history of Hudson's Bay Company department stores. Particular use has been made of the rich and relatively untapped collection of primary documents at the Hudson's Bay Company Archives in Winnipeg, specifically the extensive official correspondence between the London Board and the company's personnel in Canada. With these records it has been possible to document the chronology, intentions, and important issues associated with the company's ambitious building programme.<sup>2</sup>

This building programme spanned three significant periods in Canadian history: Western Canada's great boom period of immigration, settlement, and urbanization (1900-13); the Great War; and the postwar period of nationalism and independence.<sup>3</sup> The company itself underwent a corporate makeover during this period: in 1910-14 the London Board was reorganized and a Canadian committee, which became increasingly influential in decision making, was established. The relationship between the London Board and the Canadian management was not so much an outright battle, as portrayed by popular historian Peter C. Newman, as a continuous and complex realignment of power structures and a mediation of dictates and desires.<sup>4</sup>

From this complex corporate interaction sprang increasingly intense and well-organized public relations strategies. The venerable company began to make new advances into the competitive department store field, and set out to create a particular image of itself for its largely urban employees and clientele. The stores themselves were to be clad in a standardized style—the Edwardian Classicism popular in Britain at the time—which emphasized the HBC's history as the official representative of the British Empire across the hinterlands. In reaction to changing social attitudes in Canada after the First World War, the company began to downplay its Imperial role. Instead, it began to stress, by means of various semi-fixed architectural features such as display windows, art galleries, and museums set up inside their new department stores, its historical role in the Canadian fur trade and in the settlement of specific sites.

These initiatives were being pursued at a time when the HBC's central importance to Canadian social and political life had long since receded into a glorious, mythologized past in the face of shifting economic bases and competition in all its fields of endeavour. Historian Peter Geller has explored this phenomenon as it was manifested in the HBC's publication *The Beaver* and other company-produced histories of the 1920s-1940s, noting especially the emphasis on fur trade lore and native relations



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Figure 1. Perspective rendering of the Calgary Hudson's Bay Store, Burke, Horwood & White, architects, 1912. (Archives of Ontario, J.C.B. and E. Horwood Collection, AO 1876)



- 1 See, for instance, Heinz W. Pyszczuk, "The Architecture of the Western Canadian Fur Trade: A Cultural-Historical Perspective," *SSAC Bulletin* 17, no. 2 (June 1992): 32-41, and Gregory G. Monks, "Architectural Symbolism and Non-Verbal Communication at Upper Fort Garry," *Historical Archaeology* 26, no. 2 (1992): 37-57. HBC department stores are briefly dealt with in broad histories such as John William Ferry, *A History of the Department Store* (New York: Macmillan, 1960) and in company-sponsored publications such as *The Beaver*.
- 2 A variety of information regarding the building of the department stores, particularly the Minutes of the London Board of Governors and the Winnipeg-based Canadian Committee, is not yet microfilmed and is therefore inaccessible from remote locations. While the correspondence files which have been microfilmed do not include the arguments and discussions involved in the decision-making process, they do present the decisions, and often peripheral indications of the considered alternatives.
- 3 General Canadian historical sources include Robert Bothwell, Ian Drummond, and John English, *Canada 1900-45* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), and Craig Brown, ed., *The Illustrated History of Canada* (Toronto: Lester, 1991).
- 4 The sensationalist history by Peter C. Newman, *Merchant Princes* (Toronto: Penguin, 1991), specifically chapter 13, can be contrasted with the detailed analyses by David Monod, "Bay Days: The Managerial Revolution and the Hudson's Bay Company Department Stores 1912-1939," *Historical Papers / Communications Historiques* (1986): 173-96, and by Arthur J. Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).
- 5 Peter Geller, "The 'True North' in Pictures? Photographic Representation in the Hudson's Bay Company's *The Beaver Magazine*, 1920-1945," *Archivaria* 36 (Autumn 1993): 166-88. See also his M.A. thesis, "Constructing Corporate Images of the Fur Trade: The Hudson's Bay Company, Public Relations and *The Beaver Magazine*, 1920-45," University of Winnipeg/University of Manitoba, 1990.
- 6 Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: University Press, 1983), 1-14.
- 7 Peter C. Newman, "The Kingdom of the Bay," *Maclean's*, 15 May 1995, 39.
- 8 Ray, 3-18 and passim. As Ray points out (p. 13), "a man trained in the fur trade ... was poorly equipped or little inclined to take the initiative in retailing and government contracting."
- 9 Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba (hereafter HBCA), A5/141b/f. 59-61.

at a time when the HBC's fur division was faltering and the company was facing criticism for its native policy.<sup>5</sup> As the centrist power of the company decreased within Canada, the representation of its centrality became increasingly important to the HBC, and fur trade traditions, myths, and rituals were invented to instill loyalty in its urban customers and employees.

In the introduction to a book of essays on the modern utilization of history, the social historian E.J. Hobsbawm states that

it is the contrast between the constant change and innovation of the modern world and the attempt to structure at least some parts of social life within it as unchanging and variant, that makes the "invention of tradition" so interesting for historians.<sup>6</sup>

As a merchandiser, the HBC wanted its buildings to stay abreast of modern fashions while maintaining the company's historical status through its empathy with traditional Anglo-Canadian values. Peter C. Newman, writing on the HBC's 325th anniversary celebrations in May 1995, concluded that "today, the HBC has been reduced to little more than a chain of middle-class department stores with a fancy crest."<sup>7</sup> This was essentially true three-quarters of a century ago, too—though the crest, and the histories appropriated by the department stores, then had more representational value to a populace which still perceived itself as civilizing a rugged land.

The company had begun to open what it hesitantly termed "saleshops" in the second half of the 19th century. Some of these developed out of fur trade posts as a district was settled or a demand was created by other industries; others were established in places the HBC speculated would be profitable, though in which it had no previous presence. Once established, these shops expanded at a very cautious pace in comparison to the exploding economies in many Western communities. The HBC did finally begin to expand its saleshops to meet the demands of a greatly increased population, but the company missed the boom period of 1900-1913 because of the cumbersome necessity of obtaining its conservative Board's approval for any action.

In the decades after deeding Rupert's Land to the federal government in 1869 the HBC experimented with various forms of organization to deal with its diversifying business. It was difficult to manage the disparate interests amidst disagreements over the proper course the company should take; many stockholders believed that widespread agricultural settlement and urbanization marked the end of the fur trade, and therefore the end of the HBC.<sup>8</sup> In 1909, prompted by continual prodding by the company's Canadian commissioner and others, the HBC requested that Sir Richard Burbidge, director of Harrod's department store in London, tour the West to assess the company's potential.<sup>9</sup> HBC operations were subsequently reorganized into three divisions: fur, land, and retail, the latter chaired by Sir Richard. His son, Herbert, was appointed Stores Commissioner in Canada to oversee expansion of the retail business. The younger Burbidge at once began purchasing strategic sites in the major Western



Canadian cities, and had Toronto architects Burke, Horwood & White prepare plans for the new stores.<sup>10</sup> Some of the shareholders were extremely reluctant to approve capital outlays for large stores in what they saw as small, provincial cities, but these naysayers were outvoted.<sup>11</sup> Finally, the company embarked on a building programme which would see the erection of grand emporiums in Calgary, Vancouver, Victoria, and Winnipeg between 1912 and 1926.

The company evidently recognized both the financial and representational potential that palatial-looking stores could offer. As the Board noted in 1918, the classical cladding was

adopted ... as the style of architecture to be employed in the chain ... throughout the West, so that travellers who had seen one store would be able to recognize the others at a glance.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, the style of the buildings was not accidental, nor the whim of the architects: the architects' role was substantially driven by the intentions of the Board, which envisioned a standard style that would become emblematic of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Furthermore, the Board would have been fully aware of the symbolic value of cladding its department stores in classical motifs (figure 2). Classical architecture resonated throughout the British Empire, epitomized by the architectural style and artefactitious contents of important cultural institutions such as the British Museum. From early in its existence, the HBC saw itself—and was seen by others—as the agent of Empire in the hinterlands of Canada. Chartered by royal assent in 1670, ruled by princes and nobles, and flying the ensign of the Royal Navy, the company ventured to bring law and order to the colony and to supply it with the products of British civilization. Well into the 20th century, shareholders were often knights and aristocrats; the Governor from 1889 to 1914 was Donald Smith, later Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal, as thoroughly an Imperialist as one could find, and risen from the ranks of the HBC itself.<sup>13</sup> The popular image of the company at this time was indeed identified with the British Empire, which was no handicap with a generally sympathetic press. For instance, Toronto's *Saturday Night* magazine noted with approval in 1911 that the HBC "was evidently a royal institution from the beginning," and that it "went a long way, we are told, towards winning Canada for the British Crown."<sup>14</sup>

In an attempt to take advantage of these popular sympathies, the HBC actively promoted its role as representative of the Empire. Appropriately, the first of the new stores was opened in Calgary amidst British-style pomp and circumstance (figure 3), the building elevated to the status of a vital cultural institution. On 18 August 1913 a carriage with four white horses, escorted by the 15th Light Horse, transported Herbert Burbidge, the mayor, and Alberta's Lieutenant-Governor to the new store. After suitable speeches and a rousing rendition of "God Save the King," the Lieutenant-Governor unlocked the doors with a golden key. In the afternoon a banquet was held in the store's "Elizabethan" restaurant (decorated with portraits of the HBC governors), at

Figure 2 (left). Detail of the terra cotta cladding of the Calgary HBC department store showing the classical motifs. (D. Monteyne, 1995)

Figure 3 (right). Lieutenant-Governor G.H.V. Bulyea taking a golden key from John Coles of the London Committee at the opening ceremony for the Calgary HBC store, 1913. (Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, HBCA 1987/363-C-213/8)

10 H.E. Burbidge was appointed in October 1910. The Calgary land was purchased in February 1911; Winnipeg (Portage Avenue) in March 1911; Victoria in 1911; Vancouver in 1911-12. HBCA, A12/S509/2/f. 3; S543/2/f. 57; S539/1a/f. 40; S537/4/f. 106.

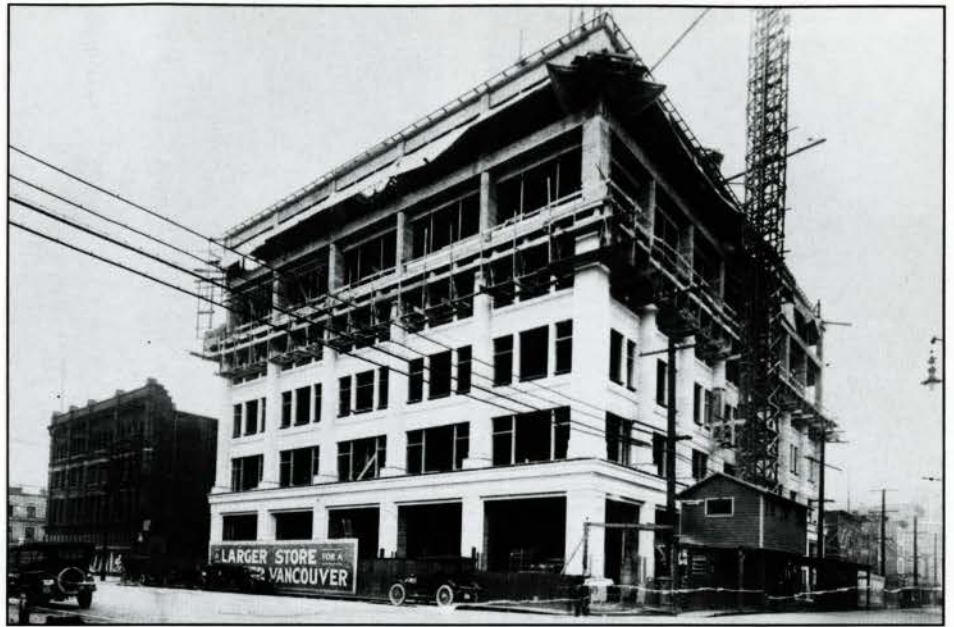
11 HBCA, A12/S509/2/f. 9-38; A12/S413/1b/f.1-5 (extracts from proceedings at a General Court of the HBC).

12 HBCA, A12/S543/2/f. 138. The style had been adopted by March 1912 (HBCA, A12/S509/3/f. 2). It should be noted that, during the same period, the Canadian railways, those other instruments of Empire, also adopted for their depots emblematic, classical styles to represent consistency and broad-ranging power to settlers, citizens, and travellers.

13 Newman, *Merchant Princes*, 3-227, discusses Smith and his long career with the HBC. See also Newman, *Company of Adventurers* (Toronto: Penguin, 1986), 222-23, 227-29, for the connection between the company and the Navy. The HBC was incorporated with Prince Rupert as governor, and was subsequently ruled by many illustrious governors and stockholders.

14 *Saturday Night*, 18 February 1911, 21. See also Beckles Willson, *The Great Company* (Toronto: Copp, Clark, 1899). With a foreword by Lord Strathcona, this canonical work approved by the HBC provides an Anglo-centric view of the company's history. This book was still being used by the company as a historical source in 1919 for captions on its annual calendar. HBCA, A12/SMISC/413/f. 1-2. Bothwell et al. *Canada 1900-45*, 117, note that newspaper opinion before the war was simply "Britain is best."

**Figure 4. The first phase of the Vancouver HBC store under construction at the corner of Georgia and Seymour streets, 1914. (Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, HBCA 1987/363-V-110/1)**



which 300 prominent guests toasted the company and its distinguished history. Even the metropolitan London *Times* reported on the grand opening, stating that the ceremony enforced the company's reputation as "universal providers in the chief centres of Canada."<sup>15</sup>

By contrast, the Vancouver store opening was rather understated. Though slated to be built at the same time as the Calgary store, the Vancouver building, as well as the one in Victoria, was still under construction when war broke out in Europe. The London Board ordered severe wartime cutbacks for all its Canadian operations, and construction was stopped completely.<sup>16</sup> However, the local economies of Canada were affected by the war in a less severe manner than those of Great Britain, and eventually Vancouver's first phase was allowed to be finished (**figure 4**); the store was opened in 1916 with just two weeks of accompanying advertisements, and no ceremony in deference to the sombre nature of the times.

Based on the success of the Vancouver project, Burbidge urged the Board to complete the Victoria store to retain the confidence of the citizens. Familiar with the difficult situation in Britain, the Board was reluctant to waste valuable wartime labour. Burbidge argued that the shortage was not as acute in Canada, and that Canadians might not see construction of a civilian project as an unpatriotic gesture. The people of Victoria, in fact, were dismayed that such a consequential addition to the city was being delayed, and the mayor and the provincial MLA cabled the London Board to solicit the building's completion. The Board agreed to finish the shell of the building, but did not occupy it until 1921<sup>17</sup> (see **cover**).

From these examples it can be seen that by the end of the war the London Board had lost the ability to determine appropriate local policy, or to mediate the representation of the HBC to a distant and changing Canadian population. While the Board still retained the power to make decisions about the company and to provide an impetus for Imperial history, the Canadian Committee steadily gained influence through the 1920s and assumed many of the tasks of representation, focusing on local histories which had meaning for a Western Canadian audience.

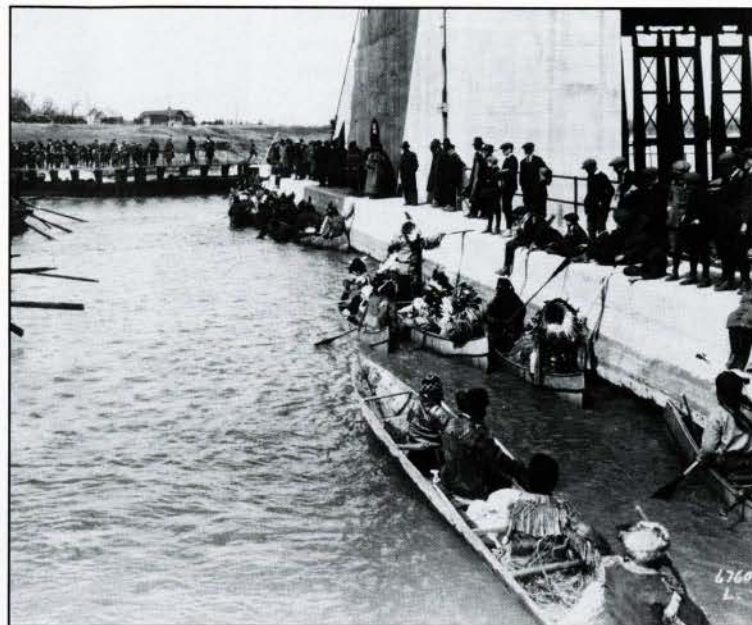
Canada asserted itself as an autonomous nation during and after the First World War, and Imperial allegiances were no longer automatic. Public opinion had begun a transformation, influenced by several important factors: the Dominion had made a vital contribution to the war effort and was an independent participant at the Versailles treaty talks; the United States was slowly replacing Britain as the largest foreign investor in Canada; and the massive immigration of the boom period had altered the demographics of Canada so that less of the population was of British origin.<sup>18</sup> The HBC was forced to recognize that second-generation Canadians and non-Anglo immigrants had no particular allegiance to the company and its role in the Empire, and that it had to deal with stiff competition in all divisions. Indeed, the company's business in Canada had suffered during the war: the sale of land had dwindled; the

15 London *Times*, 19 August 1913. The opening was also gushingly described by H.E. Burbidge in a letter to the Board (HBCA, A12/S509/3/f. 22-25). All the stores were intended to look like the Vancouver version; the Calgary store has flat columns because Burbidge ordered the iron work contract before plans were finalized, for which he was severely reprimanded. HBCA, A12/S509/3/f. 2.

16 HBCA, A12/S539/1a/f. 112. Ray, 96-100, describes the cuts enforced by the HBC in the fur trade, which adversely affected its reputation with the natives and trappers and allowed North American fur markets to gain ascendancy. For the legal proceedings affecting the Vancouver store see HBCA, A12/S537/2a/f. 18ff.

17 HBCA, A12/S539/1a-1b; *The Beaver*, October 1921. Of concern also was the weather damage that might have accrued to the exposed skeleton and unused materials if the building's skin remained unfinished. The HBC was by no means in financial difficulties during the war, as it landed a substantial supply shipping contract for the French government and other Allies, fully described in Newman, *Merchant Princes*, 367-70. Still, for reasons of economy, the Board decided the Victoria store would be two storeys shorter than the others.

18 The U.S.A. replaced Britain as largest foreign investor in 1926 (Brown, 427). Bothwell *et al*, 40, 58, report well over two million immigrants from 1901 to 1913, from a wide variety of backgrounds. There were, of course, concerted attempts at Anglicization, but the larger ethnic groups (following the lead of the Québécois) gained political maturity in Canada over the 1917 conscription debate, when Prime Minister Borden worried that an election based on this issue "would be lost to a combination of farmers, French Canadians, 'foreigners,' and 'slackers.'"



fur trade was neglected by the Board, while the Americans eclipsed Canadians in the disrupted European fur markets; and the stores were unprofitable, hit hard by the postwar recession.<sup>19</sup>

It was at this critical point, in May 1920, that the company chose to commemorate its past by staging a magnificent 250th anniversary celebration. This multimedia spectacle visited each city that had a major HBC store, and included copious newspaper articles and advertisements, pageantry and parades celebrating the fur trade, and historical store window displays. The Board initiated this anniversary project and prepared the costumes and props for travelling store window displays, which included a scene of Charles II signing the charter in 1670, and a re-creation of the first London fur sale of 1671 (figure 5).<sup>20</sup> The obvious British slant to these manifestations was in contrast to the pageants staged by the Canadian personnel, which emphasized interaction with the natives, Canadian transportation networks, and the geographic imprint left by the company. It was intended that these Canadian historical vignettes would appeal to the culturally diverse population of postwar Canada.

In the Winnipeg fur trade pageant, groups of "Hudson's Bay Indians" from across the country and HBC personnel costumed as voyageurs and traders formed a procession of canoes and York boats. They paddled the traditional route down the Red River through Winnipeg (figure 6), disembarking at the HBC's Lower Fort Garry where speeches were made and a peace pipe was smoked. The First Nations participants presumably represented both the contemporary and historical trading partners of the company: contemporary because they were actual trappers and traders; historical since they were dressed by the company in stereotypical "Indian" costumes. The event was heavily promoted, and the company arranged for free streetcar service to the fort, 18 km north of Winnipeg. Their stores also distributed free to the public a "talking" children's book on the history of the company, the recording "interrupted by the blood-curdling whoops of Indian braves, the cry of wild beasts, and the clamour of today's big cities, which have grown up from mere Hudson's Bay Forts of the past."<sup>21</sup> In addition to the historic scenes, store windows displayed the product lines traditionally stocked for the company's fur trade, but now also available in the department stores—its famed point blankets, Fort Garry tea, and Imperial mix tobacco. Evidently, in the rhetoric of these various events, the HBC was attempting to evoke a continuity between the fur trade of the past and its contemporary commercial operations.

Thus, the buildings were used both as vehicles for company history—which was displayed and distributed as a commodity for public consumption—and as components in a representational strategy that linked the stores to the HBC's historic forts. The 250th anniversary celebrations set a precedent for yearly "anniversary" sales, and the HBC assumed the role of an authority on both pageantry and history for local commemorative events (*The Beaver* magazine pondered this in 1922: "Why is the advertising department looked upon as an encyclopedia for Canadian history and kindred sub-

Figure 5 (left). HBC store advertisement from the 250th anniversary promotion. (*Manitoba Free Press*, 4 May 1920, p. 15)

Figure 6 (right). Canoe procession from Winnipeg to Lower Fort Garry, passing through Lockport, part of the HBC's 250th anniversary pageant, May 1920. (L.B. Foote, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Foote 860)

<sup>19</sup> Monod, 176-82, states that the stores division lost money from its inception until the 1930s. On the state of the fur trade, see Ray, 100-112.

<sup>20</sup> My knowledge of the 250th anniversary celebrations comes largely from the extensive reports and advertisements in the *Manitoba Free Press*, 1-7 May 1920, and *The Beaver*, October and November 1920. In addition, Geller, "Constructing Corporate Images," 1-29, includes an excellent analysis, concentrating on the construction of native relations in the pageant. Geller's thesis revolves around the development of *The Beaver* magazine as a representational tool of the HBC.

<sup>21</sup> HBC advertisement, *Manitoba Free Press*, 1 May 1920, 11.

<sup>22</sup> *The Beaver*, April 1922, 30. A browse through the pages of *The Beaver* of the 1920s will provide ample evidence of historical and modern interest in the fur trade.



Figure 7 (left). The Tyndall stone-clad Winnipeg HBC department store, E. Barott, architect, 1925-26. In the distance is the Manitoba Legislative Building, F.W. Simon, architect, 1912-20. (D. Monteyne, 1995)



Figure 8 (right). Cover of *The Beaver* (June 1928) showing the Winnipeg HBC store with its urban context carefully deleted.

This concentration on specific aspects of the fur trade and the geographic development of Canadian sites would be the hallmark of subsequent initiatives such as *The Beaver*, begun in September 1920, and other public relations gambits of the 1920s. It is interesting that the shift in representational themes coincided with a period in which the power of the Canadian Committee was being consolidated. After the forced resignation of Burbidge during the 1920 recession, the Committee took responsibility for the stores division, installing Canadian personnel in a new organizational system.<sup>23</sup>

These changes in theme were expressed in the architectural features and strategic representations of the new department stores. The exterior style had been ordained for the four buildings; three had already been built by 1916, and for consistency the fourth would maintain the classical precedent. One important difference among the standard store exteriors, though, is that the Winnipeg store of 1925-26 (figure 7) was clad in local Tyndall limestone rather than the usual terra cotta (from England or California). The HBC emphasized this patronage of Manitoba industry and labour. At the same time, *The Beaver* reported that the site of the new store had in the past “formed a portion of the Company’s Fort Garry reserve.” In other words, the modern store physically superseded the dismantled fort at the precise location that “Old Colony creek ... crossed the Portage trail,”<sup>24</sup> thus creating a link between the company’s and community’s historic development. *The Beaver* went on to make a connection between what it perceived as the past and present lawmakers of the province, comparing the company and its forts to the Manitoba Legislative Building (1912-20), which symbolically shares the ceremonial axis of Memorial Boulevard with the HBC store. The HBC consciously promoted the legacy of the forts: an illustration on the cover of the June 1928 issue of *The Beaver* (figure 8) shows the Winnipeg building with its urban context carefully deleted, standing in stalwart isolation with flags flying, dominating its surrounding territory like the forts of old.

Store interiors are susceptible to frequent renovation, to attune them to contemporary marketing needs. In 1922 the HBC organized a history museum to be located in the old Winnipeg store, the artifacts collected and donated by company personnel. With sections dealing with “Land and Settlement,” “Animals,” “Indians,” and other topics, the museum purported to be a record of life in the Canadian hinterlands.<sup>25</sup> An enlarged version of this museum was transferred to the new Winnipeg emporium when it was completed in 1926; old canoes and cannons contrasted with the modern fixtures and commodities of the department store (figure 9). Furthermore, the banks of elevators in the new store were overarched by vast murals depicting scenes from the fur trade, such as the unloading of boats at York Factory. The other major HBC stores followed suit, opening branch museums. It was the norm for department stores to offer special services or set up attractions to entice customers, but museums were unusual, and the content of the HBC’s projects was entirely its own.<sup>26</sup> For instance, an art gallery in the Vancouver store exhibited the works of painters whose images

23 Monod, 178-82. The Canadian Advisory Committee was formed in 1912, renamed the Canadian Committee in 1923 when it moved into new offices in Hudson’s Bay House, Winnipeg, and given power over all administrative decisions affecting operations in Canada in 1931.

24 *The Beaver*, March 1926, 56.

25 *The Beaver*, February 1922, 15, and July 1922, 16. Note that this was in the old store, which suffered greatly from a lack of selling space. The HBC hired a consultant from the Victoria Memorial Museum, Ottawa, for two weeks to aid in object classification and arrangement.

26 The exact dates when museums opened in the stores other than Winnipeg have thus far proved elusive. A very good history of American department stores is Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1986); see also Ferry, *A History of the Department Store*.



Figure 9. A historical exhibit in the HBC's Winnipeg store, c. 1939. (Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, HBCA 1987/363-H-23/90)

celebrated the history of Canada and the company's role therein.<sup>27</sup> In addition, the opulent restaurants—a regular feature of large department stores—took the names and decor of British historical periods, and displayed oil paintings portraying important moments in company history.

THE REPRESENTATIONAL PROGRAM PURSUED BY THE COMPANY during the 1910s and 1920s could not be controlled by one group within the changing organization. The interplay of different thematic histories—Imperial and Canadian—reflected parallel shifts in the structure of the company, and in popular attitudes of Canadian society. Above all, the HBC desired to instill loyalty among the changing Canadian public, and attempted to construct a history of the company with which the populace could identify. Hobsbawm states that “invented traditions reintroduced ... status into a world of contract, superior and inferior into a world of legal equals.”<sup>28</sup> The company intended its sense of tradition and its history as a cultural authority to set it apart from its competition. By working and shopping in the HBC department stores, people could associate themselves with powerful histories of colonialism and frontierism evoked by the style, sites, interior arrangements, and events found in and staged within the buildings. Thus, the HBC's architectural program of the 1910s and 1920s entailed the construction of both buildings and histories, as the representational strategies of the company were played out in the forms and interior formations of its department stores.

27 For example, catalogues from the exhibitions of the painter John Innes at the HBC gallery reveal his penchant for didactic, historical subject matter: his titles include “The Epic of Western Canada,” 1928, and “From Trail to Rail: The Epic of Transportation,” 1930.

28 Hobsbawm, 10. Further research could be pursued in relation to the department store buildings of the HBC's Western competitors, such as Eaton's in Winnipeg (1905) or Woodward's in Vancouver (1908 and later), both of which are relatively unornamented red brick Chicago Style buildings.

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