

## Research Notes for an Essay on Public Buildings in Canada

The Canadian Public Works Association and the Public Works Historical Society recently published *Building Canada: A History of Public Works* (Norman Ball, ed., Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988) and a parallel French-language edition, *Bâtir un pays : Histoire des travaux publics au Canada* (Montréal: Editions du Boréal, 1988). The project engaged the efforts of many scholars and professionals, particularly in engineering history, covering topics from bridges to city-building. Each of the book's fourteen contributions was meant to include a brief bibliographical essay on its major sources in order to encourage further research and publication. For reasons of space and incompleteness, the final work did not include those essays (and in our own contribution we had moved important information into the bibliographical essay that otherwise would have gone into footnotes). Accordingly, we offer below the reference sources for our chapter on "Public Buildings" (pp. 262-285).

Given the amorphous and potentially vast nature of the subject, our chapter merely touched the surface of a huge but scattered body of published and unpublished research. The bibliographic note that follows is the barest of introductions to the subject, but the excellent works it cites will be invaluable to anyone venturing to study building types that might fall under the heading of public or governmental architecture. We are well aware of the credit we owe those (many of them SSAC members, past and present) whose previous work helped in compiling our own survey, and acknowledge our debt with gratitude.

**THERE HAS BEEN NO COMPREHENSIVE STUDY** in Canada of public architecture, though there is no lack of material on the topic. However, much of this work is based on small regions, towns, or individual buildings. Though these are generally of high quality, they do not permit conclusions to be drawn easily for the country as a whole. There is of course no single reference that can cover such a wide variety of types that "public buildings" may include. Only in studies of particular types within the wide variety of public buildings have there been useful conclusions about the larger provincial or national phenomena that influenced architectural developments.

The single best source for references on specific public-building types is the Historic Sites and Monuments Board (HSMB) of Canada's series of research papers. These papers were produced by staff of the Canadian Inventory of Historic Building (CIHB) and others at Environment Canada's National Park Service offices in Ottawa and across the country. They are excellent products of diligent research, offering contextual information together with details of specific cases. Most have not been published, but Carter (1983) and de Caraffe (1987) have compiled synoptic overviews of the most public of all these types – court houses and town halls – for the period up to the 1930s.

CIHB research papers for individual structures invariably contain excellent background information for the type the individual building represents. Representative examples of these are cited below; see especially Anick, Mills, and Johnson and Wright for background pieces on more unusual types of public buildings. The most comprehensive collection of research on federal buildings may be found in the papers of the Federal Heritage Buildings Review office, prepared by CIHB staff, but these seldom contain the broader contextual information found in HSMB papers.

Firestone, Currie, and Buckley offer useful insights into the economic engine that propelled in its turn the political machines that built public buildings (and all other public works). They distill the historical statistics that permit an understanding of the broad relationship between public and private developments, but they make heavy reading. Archibald and Ooram speak to the organization and execution of projects by the federal Department of Public Works; they particularly

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*by Mark Fram and Jean Simonton*

illuminate the production process and the respective contributions of the growing professional specializations in architecture and engineering. Regrettably, similar accounts of provincial or municipal activities are not so easily accessible, but annual reports and legislative papers provide some valuable primary data for persistent researchers.

There are now growing numbers of regional and topical studies. Each province has the history of its legislature recorded in some generally available form. MacRae and Adamson have surveyed both court houses and town halls for Ontario. But most research work, even outside government, tends to focus on the individual building rather

than the type. Such treatments appear in academic journals of architecture, geography, history, or regional studies (for example, Bodnar, Holdsworth, Johnson and Maitland [1985], and Fort-Menares).

Chattopadhyay provides a rare linkage between historical and relatively modern public buildings, and offers the only systematic review of the city hall construction activity in Canada in the 1950s and 1960s; in at least two cases, Edmonton and Ottawa, the "new" city halls of that era documented in his work have been threatened in recent years with replacement by "new new" halls.

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