

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

**ProQuest Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600**

UMI[®]

NOTE TO USERS

This reproduction is the best copy available.

UMI[®]

BUILDING ON SOCIAL POWER
PERCY ERSKINE NOBBS, RAMSAY TRAQUAIR, AND THE PROJECT OF CONSTRUCTING
A CANADIAN NATIONAL CULTURE
IN THE EARLY DECADES OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

by

Nicola Justine Spasoff

A thesis submitted to the Department of Art
in conformity with the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Queen's University

Kingston, Ontario, Canada

April, 2002

copyright ©Nicola Justine Spasoff, 2002



**National Library
of Canada**

**Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services**

**395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada**

**Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada**

**Acquisitions et
services bibliographiques**

**395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada**

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-69394-5

Canada

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the contribution of the Scottish-born architects Percy Erskine Nobbs (1875-1964) and Ramsay Traquair (1874-1952), professors in the School of Architecture at McGill University in Montréal, to a nationalist discourse that emerged among the Anglophone intellectual elite in Canada in the early decades of the twentieth century. Beginning with an examination of their backgrounds in the Arts and Crafts Movement and their antimodernist leanings—their conviction that modern society had lost a quality of authenticity found in pre-modern cultures—this thesis examines the ideas underpinning their study of vernacular architecture and their identification of historical architecture in rural Québec as the embodiment of authentic folk culture.

I examine how Nobbs and Traquair used this seemingly traditional culture, which to them existed in the past, to enrich what they saw as their own correspondingly “modern” society. Both were involved with the popularization, institutionalization, and nationalization of Québec traditional culture as the folk history of both English Canada and Québec. A preoccupation of many intellectual elites in the 1920s and 30s, the project had both nationalist and commercial ends. At the same time, both maintained at various times that in the historic architecture of Québec lay the key to developing a distinctly Canadian style. Exploring their ideas about a national architecture in light of their views about race and ethnicity in Canada, I argue that their thoughts about the suitability of particular styles for specific building types served to reassert the cultural authority of the Anglo-Canadian elite in the face of a perceived threat posed by the country’s increasingly numerous non-British population.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am extremely grateful to Lynda Jessup for her always-incisive comments and many suggestions; they have helped to make this dissertation much better than it would have been without her. Not only that, she has lent me stacks of articles, photographs, and books from her collection, for which I am indebted to her.

Many archivists and librarians at various collections cheerfully helped me find what I needed if it was there to be found. In particular, Daniella Rohan's assistance made my time at the Canadian Architecture Collection very productive. I also thank the staff at the National Monuments Record of Scotland and especially at the University of Edinburgh Special Collections, and at the Saskatchewan Archives Board, for particular guidance and enthusiasm.

I am grateful to Annmarie Adams for her time and insights during several conversations at McGill, and also for helping me make contact with several people who had something to tell me about Nobbs or his houses. In that connection, my thanks are due to Pam Miller and Isabelle Gales, and to especially Susan Bronson for sending me a copy of Nobbs's Memoirs. I am grateful to Bill Young for showing us Greenwood; those letters are awfully tempting. Chris Thomas commented on a paper that represented some of my early thoughts on this topic. I also thank Annmarie Adams (again), Gordon Smith, John Osborne, Janice Helland, and Vojtěch Jirat-Wasiutyński, the members of my examining committee, for their insights; I hope I shall eventually have the opportunity to address their thoughtful critiques.

In Edinburgh, I owe my gratitude to a number of people. My understanding of the architectural environment in turn-of-the-century Edinburgh was enriched by my conversations with John Lowrey, Hugh Crawford, and Robert Naismith. I remember afternoon tea in Robert Naismith's flat in Ramsay Garden with particular fondness. Elizabeth Cumming was extremely generous with her knowledge, and kindly supplied me with copies of the few letters from Phoebe Traquair to Nobbs that she has in her possession.

I was fortunate to receive financial support from the Ontario Ministry of Education and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, as well as from Queen's, without all of which the last few years would have been a great deal gloomier. A travel grant from Queen's made my trips to Regina, Edinburgh, and London possible, and a thesis writing bursary helped near the end (although not as near the end as I'd hoped).

The support of my friends has been unstinting. Anne Dymond, Christine O'Malley, Erin Blake and I were all writing together at one time or another, albeit in four or five countries and far too many cities; I'm grateful for their solidarity. Cammie McAtee, in addition to providing support and friendship, gave me a place to lay my head in Montréal on several research trips. Erin Blake did the same in London. Without Maiju and Christopher, I think we would still be packing up our apartment in Baltimore; we're fortunate in their friendship. I thank all of my friends for their forbearance; I've been a terrible correspondent for too many years now.

In the last few months, Maja-Lisa has provided hours of loving child care, not to mention doing much of our grocery shopping and cooking many a meal for us. My heartfelt thanks to her and to David for their support. My parents, and especially my father, have also come from Ottawa on a number of occasions to entertain Torbjörn and give us time to work. I thank them from the bottom of my heart, for that and everything else they've given me.

Torbjörn has already had more dissertation in his almost-three years than most people want in a lifetime. Although his arrival has certainly delayed this moment, he has brought me immeasurable joy. A fair trade; the presence of a small child makes it impossible to forget that there is more to life than a dissertation. To Erik, I hardly know what to say. He has been infinitely supportive. He has provided love and insights, while his own dissertation has had to wait far too long. It's his turn now; I hope I can manage half as well.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	page number
Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
List of Illustrations	v
List of Abbreviations	ix
Introduction	1
Chapter One: The Making of Imperialist Antimodernists	44
Chapter Two: "Simple Things Free from Sham"	75
Chapter Three: "The Most Purely Canadian People of the Dominion"	128
Chapter Four: "Local Needs, Local Materials, and Local Climate"	166
Chapter Five: "Modern Canadian Conditions"	189
Chapter Six: "National and Imperial Tradition"	223
Conclusion: "Tradition, Duly Sifted"	262
Bibliography	307
Illustrations	327
Vita	366

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Sources are given in parenthesis. Where none is listed, the photograph was taken by the author.

Projects listed by Nobbs between 1910 and 1944 are by the firm of Nobbs and Hyde.

Plate #:

- 1.1 Traquair, "Six Cottages to be erected at Bannockburn for the Garden City Association (Scottish Branch)", before 1908. (James Nicoll, ed. *Domestic Architecture in Scotland: Illustrations of Scottish Domestic Work in Recent Years*. Aberdeen: Daily Journal Offices, 1908.)
- 1.2 A House at Skirling, Peebleshire, Scotland, c. 1905-08. (Alex Koch, ed. *Academy Architecture and Architectural Review* 34 [1908]: 71.)
- 1.3 Skirling House, Plan. (*Academy Architecture and Architectural Review*, p. 65.)
- 1.4 Skirling House, View of first floor hall from West. (Photo, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: National Monuments Record of Scotland [RCAHMS], No. C 20106.)
- 1.5 Skirling House, Detail of Ironwork of House Garden Railing. (Photo, RCAHMS.)
- 1.6 Skirling House, Detail of North West Door. (Photo, RCAHMS.)
- 1.7 Skirling House, Detail of Stair Newel. (Photo, RCAHMS.)
- 1.8 Traquair, First Church of Christ, Scientist, Kinnear Road, Edinburgh, 1910-11.
- 1.9 First Church of Christ, Scientist, Detail of Organ.
- 1.10 First Church of Christ, Scientist, Detail of Porch Gate.
- 2.1 Traquair, measured drawings of Ste. Marguerite de l'Ecosse de Blairfindie, 1932. (*The Old Architecture of Québec* [Toronto: Macmillan, 1947], p. 160.)
- 2.2 House near Beaumont, photograph showing utility pole. (*The Old Architecture of Québec*, p. 54.)

- 2.3 A.Y. Jackson and Arthur Lismer sketching the stone tower of the old seigneurial mill, Ste.-Famille, Île d'Orléans, 1925. Note the house in the background. (Contact print of archival photo, Canadian Museum of Civilization [CMC] No. 66130.)
- 2.4 "House of Odilon Desgagné; barn with thatched roof and windmill" (Barbeau's caption), Île-aux-Coudres, 1925. (Contact print of archival photo, CMC No. 66162.)
- 2.5 "Madame Hilaire Demeules, et Mlle Virginie Demeules (the elder), beating flax" (Barbeau's caption), Île-aux-Coudres, 1925. (Contact print of archival photo, CMC No. 66182.)
- 2.6 "M. F.X. Lemelin, with old fashioned utensils, chair dated 1811" (Barbeau's caption), Argenteuil, Île d'Orléans, 1925. (Contact print of archival photo, CMC No. 65686.)
- 5.1 Nobbs, McGill University Union, 1906. (Archival photo, Canadian Architecture Collection, Blackader-Lauterman Library, McGill University [CAC].)
- 5.2 Nobbs, Proposal for a Church at Brandon, Manitoba, 1909. (Watercolour perspective, CAC, 090; 5/1909.)
- 5.3 Nobbs, Church at Brandon, Interior. (Watercolour perspective, CAC.)
- 5.4 Nobbs, Proposal for the Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul, elevation to Sherbrooke Street, Montréal, 1920. (Drawing, CAC, 0115; 1920.)
- 5.5 Nobbs, St. Andrew and St. Paul, West Elevation. (Drawing, CAC.)
- 5.6 Cram, Wentworth and Goodhue, Design for All Saints', Ashmont, 1891. (Douglas Shand-Tucci, *Boston Bohemia 1881-1900*; *Ralph Adams Cram: Life and Architecture* [Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995], p. 116.)
- 5.7 Nobbs, Aspect drawings for sunlight. ("Planning for Sunlight", *Journal of the Town Planning Institute* [April 1922], p. 8.)
- 5.8 Nobbs, Building Scheme for the University of Alberta, 1912. (CAC photo of original watercolour presentation drawing in the University of Alberta Archives.)
- 5.9 Nobbs, Proposal for X-block Community Housing Estate for Montréal, 1936. (Drawing, CAC, [594]; 5/1934-12/1937.)

- 5.10 Nobbs, Proposed New Birks Building, Saskatoon, 1928. (Drawing, CAC, 415; 2/1929-9/1929.)
- 6.1 Nobbs, Colby House, Montréal, 1905. (Watercolour perspective, CAC, 035; 1905-6.)
- 6.2 Nobbs, Todd House, Senneville, Québec, 1911-13. (Watercolour perspective, CAC, 63; 11/1911-7/1912.)
- 6.3 Wiring, Heating, and Drain Plans, showing three floors of Todd House. (Drawing, CAC.)
- 6.4 Nobbs, A.H. Scott House, Dorval, Québec, 1922. (Archival photograph, CAC.)
- 6.5 Plans for Scott House. (Drawing, CAC, 298; 6/1922-9/1923.)
- 6.6 Nobbs, Elmhurst Dairy office building, Nôtre-Dame-de-Grâce, Québec, 1924. (photograph, CAC).
- 6.7 Nobbs, St. Paul's Church, Gaspé, Québec, 1940 (watercolour perspective, CAC, 589; 1/1938-3/1955.)
- 6.8 Nobbs, Proposed Cottage for Dr. Adami, Windermere, B.C., watercolour presentation drawings, 1906. (CAC, 050; 2/1906.)
- 6.9 Nobbs, Colby House, Drawing-room fireplace, archival photograph. (CAC)
- 6.10 Nobbs, Nobbs House, Westmount, Québec, 1914.
- 6.11 Nobbs House, archival photograph showing pencilled-in additions (not executed), undated (CAC).
- 6.12 Nobbs House, carved stone lintel over front door.
- 6.13 Nobbs, Proposal for Belvedere Terrace, Westmount, Québec, 1925. (CAC, 316; 9/1925-2/1927.)
- 6.14 Nobbs, No. 2, Grove Park, Westmount, Québec, 1928-29. (*Studio* 104 [1932]: 89.)
- 6.15 Nobbs, Proposal for Winnipeg City Hall, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1912-13. (CAC, 095; 1912/13.)

- 6.16 Nobbs, Proposal for War Memorial Museum, Regina, Saskatchewan, 1919 (CAC, 170; 9/1919-1/1920.)
- 7.1 Buildings on the future Place Royal, Québec City, before restoration: Hotel Louis XIV. (Richard Handler, "On Having a Culture: Nationalism and the Preservation of Québec's *Patrimoine*" in *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture*, ed. George W. Stocking, Jr. [Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1985], p. 206.)
- 7.2 Buildings on Place Royal, after restoration: The Dumont and Le Picart Houses. (Handler, "On Having a Culture," p. 207.)

ABBREVIATIONS

AIA	American Institute of Architects
ARIBA	Associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects
CAB	<i>Canadian Architect and Builder</i>
CAC	Canadian Architecture Collection (Blackader-Lauterman Library, McGill University)
CMC	Canadian Museum of Civilization
CNR	Canadian National Railway
CPR	Canadian Pacific Railway
CSL	Canada Steamship Lines
FRIBA	Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects
JRAIC	<i>Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada</i>
JRIBA	<i>Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects</i>
LCC	London County Council
MMFA	Montréal Museum of Fine Art
MUA	McGill University Archives
MUP	McGill University Publications
OAA	Ontario Association of Architects
PQAA	Province of Québec Association of Architects
RAIC	Royal Architectural Institute of Canada
RCAHMS	The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: National Monuments Record of Scotland
RIBA	Royal Institute of British Architects
SAB	Saskatchewan Archives Board

INTRODUCTION

THIS DISSERTATION contributes to an understanding of the intellectual and ideological complexity of architectural history, theory and practice in Canada in the first half of the twentieth century. In examining the contribution of certain architectural professionals to an emerging nationalist discourse in this period, I shed light on a number of phenomena that help to reveal the workings of an Anglophone elite culture in early-twentieth century Canada. These include the responses of those elites to modernity, and how, as part of their project of shaping the nation, they reproduced and helped to institutionalize certain social relations in the country.

In this sense, my work is part of a broader phenomenon occurring in art history and across the humanities and social sciences; in common with many others, the discipline of art history has of late been undergoing a period of intense self-criticism, which in turn has fostered increasing interest in the study of art and architecture as expressions of social power. Perhaps most cataclysmically in this connection, the idea of authoritative knowledge itself has been called into question. Although many such critiques are now themselves being challenged, the notion that art history, for example, does not simply describe its object, but rather plays an important rôle in constituting it, has come to be widely accepted.¹

¹See, for example, Donald Preziosi, *Rethinking Art History: Meditations on a Coy Science* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989). Other disciplinary critiques include Hayden White, *Metahistory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), *Tropics of Discourse* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), and *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987); Johannes Fabian, (continued...)

This radical shift in thinking about the construction of bodies of knowledge demands new ways of interpreting how such knowledge is constituted. Through this endeavour, scholars have gained new understandings, not only of objects of study, but also of the investigators who have examined them, with those that concern this dissertation being primarily art and architectural historians and ethnologists. At the same time, art and architectural historians have begun increasingly to study the material production of groups previously excluded by the discipline, though their work may have found a niche in the scholarship of anthropologists, ethnologists, or folklorists. With this expansion of a long-standing canon has come a need to understand the social relations that have historically been inherent in the production of such work, in its collection, and in the act of studying and writing about it. In this connection, an expanding range of categories of analysis, among them class, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality—operating both separately and in complex intersection with one another—have come to provide both new questions and new ways of approaching the old questions. And in addition to their utility in shedding light on the social relations involved in the material production of traditionally-excluded groups, scholars have found these tools useful in adding new insights to the ways the discipline has conventionally interpreted canonic works of art.²

¹(...continued)

Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); and James Clifford and George Marcus, *Writing Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). For a recent critique of White's analysis see Roger Chartier, "Four Questions for Hayden White," in *On the Edge of the Cliff: History, Language, and Practices*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), pp. 28-38.

²For example, see Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, *Feminism and Art History*:
(continued...)

Applying these categories of analysis to artistic production can provide remarkable insights into broader histories—social, cultural, political, religious, or economic—as it does in the following few examples, in which sophisticated investigations of building types expand the breadth of understanding beyond what conventional readings of architecture provide.

Thomas A. Markus, for example, examines the social relations inherent in the new building types that arose in Europe in the century centring on the year 1800.³ He reveals the extent to which relations of power and what he calls relations of bonds (those relations not determined by social forces) were mapped out—the former strengthened and the latter impeded—in three general classes of building: those designed to shape relations between people (such as schools, hospitals, and prisons for the powerless, but also the clubs, assembly rooms and hotels that the rich built for themselves, and the buildings for hygiene that crossed class lines); those designed for the production of knowledge (such as libraries, museums, art galleries, and lecture theatres); and those designed for the production and exchange of goods (mills, shops, and markets).⁴ His analysis provides a new way of understanding these types, and the modern buildings that are their descendants, as spaces designed to reproduce and ensure the continuation of asymmetries

²(...continued)

Questioning the Litany (New York: Harper and Row, 1982) and *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History* (New York: Icon Editions, 1992). These collections include essays that examine the art of women traditionally excluded from the canon, and others that employ the notion of gender in other ways, for example in feminist analyses of works within the canon.

³Thomas A. Markus, *Buildings and Power: Freedom and Control in the Origin of Modern Building Types* (London: Routledge, 1993).

⁴Markus, *Buildings and Power*, p. xx.

of power in society.

Using gender as a category of analysis in the study of architecture can provide insight into the relations between the sexes, and how these relations are played out in the built environment. In her analysis of English domestic architecture in the last decades of the nineteenth century, Annmarie Adams reveals that middle-class women, together with health professionals, played a primary rôle in the shaping of late-Victorian domestic space, even while women's bodies were themselves identified as prime sources of disease and danger.⁵ The late-nineteenth century house, she argues, was not the sheltered and essentially private domestic haven it has conventionally been seen to be, but a battleground on which public debates were waged about health, hygiene, and the position of women in society. At the same time, William D. Moore argues, the new emphasis on the masculine space of the Masonic lodge in the United States in the sixty years beginning with the same period as Adams's study reflected a new uncertainty about the position of males in society, in an era when social changes brought about by transformations in the domains of religion and industry seemed to be threatening traditionally masculine values in the world outside the lodge.⁶

Race and ethnicity also provide a lens through which to achieve a nuanced understanding of the built environment and the societies that build it. Abigail Van Slyck

⁵Annmarie Adams, *Architecture in the Family Way: Doctors, Houses, and Women, 1870-1900* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996).

⁶William D. Moore, "The Masonic Lodge Room, 1870-1930: A Sacred Space of Masculine Spiritual Hierarchy," in *Gender, Class, and Shelter, Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture V*, ed. Elizabeth Collins Cromley and Carter L. Hudgins (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), pp. 26-39.

sheds important light on the development of what architectural historians had conventionally identified as the Spanish Colonial Revival in the Southwestern United States of the turn of the last century by analysing the relationship between the Anglo-Americans who found inspiration in the southwest vernacular and the culture and people they sought to revive.⁷ Predicated as it was on “racial stereotypes and an Anglo sense of racial superiority,” she demonstrates that the “revival” was really, in common with many such projects occurring at the same period, an “*invention* of the Southwest as a fictive landscape that was constructed by Anglo-American newcomers.”⁸ As she notes, Van Slyck bases her conclusions on her observations about the dominant culture in this relationship. Analysis of subordinate cultures can, of course, be equally revealing. To this end, for example, John Michael Vlach investigates the reforms in slave housing effected by slave owners in the decades before the civil war, the same period, he notes, in which the possibility of eventual freedom (except by escape) was being steadily revoked by new laws.⁹ Vlach analyses responses of slaves to the improved domestic conditions provided by plantation owners in a cynical attempt to manufacture contentment among the slave population. He concludes that slaves took advantage of these material reforms to construct stronger social spaces for themselves, with “important, if vulnerable, family ties .

⁷Abigail A. Van Slyck, “Mañana, Mañana: Racial Stereotypes and the Anglo Rediscovery of the Southwest’s Vernacular Architecture, 1890-1920,” in *Gender, Class, and Shelter*, pp. 95-108. See also Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997).

⁸Van Slyck, “Mañana, Mañana,” p. 95.

⁹John Michael Vlach, “‘Snug Li’l House with Flue and Oven’: Nineteenth-Century Reforms in Plantation Slave Housing,” in *Gender, Class, and Shelter*, pp. 118-29.

. . . distinctive art forms, and . . . powerful and long-lasting religious traditions."¹⁰

Not surprisingly, discussions of race and ethnicity have also figured prominently in colonial and post-colonial studies, among them, in the field of architectural history, Thomas R. Metcalf's *An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj*.¹¹ Metcalf examines how architectural forms adapted and developed by the British in India manifested British political authority in the colony, and also how these colonial buildings contributed to the discourse of empire in the later nineteenth century. As Metcalf observes, the British in India began by expressing their domination through the use of architectural forms that drew primarily on European classicism. After the uprising of 1857, however, they began to draw upon India's historical styles in an attempt "to construct for themselves a notion of empire in which they were not mere foreign conquerors . . . but legitimate, almost indigenous rulers, linked directly to the Mughals and hence to India's own past."¹²

Although by the later-nineteenth century it was not Britain, but rather Canadian governments and their architects that were making decisions about official buildings for Canada, such a study is nonetheless relevant to the study of architecture in early-twentieth century Canada. As I discuss in succeeding chapters, many prominent and powerful Anglo-Canadians at the last century's turn had themselves been born and

¹⁰Vlach, "Snug Li'l House," p. 127.

¹¹Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

¹²Metcalf, "Imperial Vision," p. 56.

educated in Britain and were strongly imperialist. The question of how Canada should be shaped as a nation and how its myriad peoples could be assimilated into that “imagined community” was a lively one, and for architects and patrons the choice of style for the Dominion’s architecture was key.¹³ In contrast to India, Canada was a settler colony. By the early-twentieth century, its indigenous population had been reduced to a tiny minority and entirely excluded from power; Aboriginals remained in the position of colonials even after the nation had shaken off that status. Notions of imperialism and Canadian nationalism were inextricably linked in the early part of the twentieth century, and, for some, beyond.¹⁴ Many people sought to express the idea of a strong and independent Canada within a strong empire, and Metcalf’s observations of India ring true for the Canadian case in the first decades of the twentieth century:

[T]he choice between styles did not turn solely, or even primarily, upon aesthetic concerns. . . . Such decisions involved as well larger conceptions of national identity and purpose. Indeed, by providing a vocabulary for the consideration of these questions, the architectural debates themselves defined and helped shape Britain’s sense of itself and of its imperial mission. In India, and in colonies elsewhere, the choice of styles, the arrangement of space within a building, and of course the decision to erect a particular structure, all testified . . . to a vision of empire.¹⁵

For members of the Anglo-Canadian elite a half-century or more later, the choice of architectural style, whether for a bank or a provincial legislature, a church or a house, was

¹³See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983).

¹⁴See R.G. Moyles and Doug Owrham, “‘A Dutiful Imperial Daughter’: Assessing the Future of the New Dominion,” in *Imperial Dreams and Colonial Realities: British View of Canada, 1880-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), pp. 11-35.

¹⁵Metcalf, “Imperial Vision,” pp. 1-2.

crucial to their vision of Canada's emerging identity.

The question of national tradition was integral to such debates. Today, most scholars agree that national tradition is invented: a narrative constructed more or less intentionally to accomplish particular social ends.¹⁶ This notion could not differ more from that of cultural producers in Canada and elsewhere seeking to define national identity at the turn of the last century. They believed that national tradition was as natural as the behaviour of the birds, and rested as deeply in a biological foundation. While it may seem paradoxical to argue that people were busily fabricating that which they believed already existed and needed only to be revealed, understanding their conviction of the naturalness of such traditions is essential to interpreting nationalist discourse of the period.

But where might Canada's nation-builders find what Benedict Anderson calls the "national originality" from which a seemingly natural tradition could be fabricated?¹⁷ Lynda Jessup argues that in Canada, the painters of the Group of Seven were participating in just such a project when they identified some relatively-remote parts of the natural landscape as uniquely Canadian, and themselves as "real" Canadian types, who braved the untouched wilderness to bring authentic images of their own country to Canadians.¹⁸

¹⁶See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, and Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (1983; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [Canto Edition], 1992).

¹⁷Anderson, "Introduction to Part Two: Staging Antimodernism in the Age of High Capitalist Nationalism," in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, ed. Lynda Jessup (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), p. 99.

¹⁸Lynda Jessup, "Bushwackers in the Gallery: Antimodernism and the Group of Seven," in
(continued...)

Jessup contends that this project to reconceptualize the land—a politically-neutral terrain—as a thing expressive of national culture, was an organized and co-operative effort involving a white, predominantly Anglophone elite of cultural, political, and corporate individuals and institutions on provincial and national levels.¹⁹ As Anderson points out, the first decades of the twentieth century saw the “nationalization of violent death, nationalization of the economy, and nationalization of the voting-age citizenry,” and it seems almost inevitable that such a nationalization of culture should have followed.²⁰

Mary Vipond has argued that this nationalization took place on a cultural level through a formalization of the links that bound together the members of an almost-exclusively Anglophone elite in various clubs, organizations, and institutions devoted to mobilizing a new national consciousness in Canada.²¹ As she contends, these intellectual and artistic elites had inevitable ties with the business and political elite of the country.

¹⁵(...continued)

Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity, ed. Jessup (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), pp. 130-52.

¹⁹As a nation-building effort, however, the project was unsuccessful; a number of historians have recently pointed out that the work of the Group of Seven artists and their associate, Tom Thomson, has been celebrated as a truly “Canadian” art largely in Ontario. See Jessup, “Bushwackers in the Gallery” and Ian McKay, “Handicrafts and the Logic of ‘Commercial Antimodernism,’: The Nova Scotia Case,” in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience*; and Ross D. Cameron, “Tom Thomson, Antimodernism, and the Ideal of Manhood,” *Journal of the CHA/Revue de la S.H.C.* 10 (1999): 185-208. That the myth has persisted in Ontario suggests how convincing it was to its narrowly white, Anglophone, middle-class constituency. (See Charles C. Hill, *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation* [Ottawa/Toronto: National Gallery of Canada/McClelland & Stewart, 1995].)

²⁰Anderson, “Staging Antimodernism,” p. 97.

²¹Mary Vipond, “The Nationalist Network: English Canada's Intellectuals and Artists in the 1920s,” in *Interpreting Canada's Past, Volume II: After Confederation*, ed. J.M. Bumsted (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 260-77.

Of the same class and ethnic background, they shared alliances of “[f]amily, marriage, war service, university, clubs, [and] outlook.”²² Thus, the nationalist project was, to a great extent, institutionalized, with various cultural producers sharing connections with corporate and political individuals and institutions with the interest, money, and power to carry out their ideas on an official level.

The work of Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven is but one facet of this nation-building project that has recently been subjected to critical analysis. Many less-familiar figures who participated equally, if not so visibly, are also deserving of examination. The subjects of my study are Percy Erskine Nobbs (1875-1964) and Ramsay Traquair (1874-1952), Scottish-born architects who arrived in Montréal in 1903 and 1912, respectively, to take up the positions of second and third Macdonald Professor of Architecture and Head of the School of Architecture at McGill University.²³ Nobbs and Traquair were important members of the Canadian architecture profession in the first half of the twentieth century, Nobbs as a prominent architect and Traquair primarily as an architectural historian, and both as critics, educators, and public intellectuals.

The teaching of architecture at McGill University was only seven years old when Nobbs arrived in Montréal, the department having been established as a result of the efforts of the Province of Quebec Association of Architects (PQAA) in 1896, as part of a

²²Vipond, “Nationalist Network,” p. 262.

²³For a brief discussion of the influence of these two men on the development of Canadian architecture and planning, see Isabelle Gournay, “The First Leaders of McGill’s School of Architecture: Stewart Henbest Capper, Percy Nobbs, and Ramsay Traquair,” *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* 21, 3 (September 1996): 60-66.

greater move towards the professionalization of architecture in Canada.²⁴ Before this programme was put in place, there were few opportunities for formal architectural training in Canada. In addition to occasional offerings in mostly technical subjects related to architecture at Mechanics' Institutes, art schools, Québec's Ecoles des Arts et Métiers, and other such institutions, a course in architecture was offered at the Ontario School of Practical Science, which had been affiliated with the University of Toronto since 1889.²⁵ Early in the new century, a course in architecture was introduced at the Ecole Polytechnique in Montréal, while the University of Manitoba set up a programme in architecture in 1912.²⁶

The course at McGill University, then, was among the first in the country (and the first offered by a university), and Nobbs and Traquair were instrumental in its formation. When Nobbs arrived, he found only two students and one full-time instructor. At that time, the department of architecture operated within the Faculty of Applied Science, offering a Bachelor of Science in Architectural Engineering, and Nobbs added a second stream that would lead to the degree of Bachelor of Architecture. As a result, McGill's School of Architecture was born. The new course replaced some of the technical courses offered by the Faculty of Applied Science with courses in the Faculty of Arts, and by 1906, with increased enrolment, there were instructors to teach several courses in the history of

²⁴Kelly Crossman, *Architecture in Transition: From Art to Practice, 1885-1906* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), pp. 58-59.

²⁵Crossman, *Architecture in Transition*, pp. 52-53; Geoffrey Simmins, *Ontario Association of Architects: A Centennial History* (Toronto: Ontario Association of Architects, 1989), p. 31.

²⁶Crossman, *Architecture in Transition*, pp. 104-05.

architecture, "Design," "Theory and Evolution of Architectural Form," and "Ornament and Decoration," as well as a range of technical courses.²⁷ This made McGill University's programme the first in Canada, as Kelly Crossman points out, to place considerable emphasis on the design and theory, as well as the science, of architecture.²⁸

In addition to the teaching of architecture as a profession, both Nobbs and Traquair were deeply interested in questions of architectural theory and history. They made substantial contributions, not only to the formation of architectural practice in Canada, but also to the development of the country's architectural history. Perhaps because of the formative rôles they played, and maybe even as a measure of their success in fabricating a convincing national tradition, their work has received little critical examination. "Percy Nobbs was an extraordinary man whose contribution to Canada . . . was profound," writes Norbert Schoenauer. "He was one of the first architects who understood and appreciated Canadian building traditions. . . . He saw a danger in the 'Americanization' of our arts and architecture, and advocated the development of a Canadian design and building tradition, such as our predecessors possessed, but lost during the 19th century." Harold Kalman calls Traquair "one of the first distinguished students of Quebec architecture," and his work, writes Alan Gowans, "did so much to further understanding of the old architecture of Quebec." In his own time, he was heralded by Anglophones and Francophones alike as the person responsible for revealing

²⁷Norbert Schoenauer, "Percy Erskine Nobbs: Teacher and Builder of Architecture," *Fontanus* from the Collections of McGill University IX (1996): 49-50.

²⁸Crossman, *Architecture in Transition*, p. 59.

the richness of a forgotten Québec culture, becoming what France Vanlaethem calls “the champion of a French-Canadian renaissance” who promoted indigenous architectural forms as the only suitable basis for a truly national style of architecture.²⁹ These laudatory comments are not misplaced, but they tell an incomplete story. As I demonstrate, Nobbs’s and Traquair’s ideas about national culture and its built expression—developed and shared with their colleagues among Canada’s elite—demand more critical attention.

The very notion of national identity as any kind of “natural” force is now understood to be flawed, the ideas underpinning its construction often predicated on ethnic stereotypes and a conviction of the superiority of a dominant culture. This study demonstrates how Nobbs’s and Traquair’s efforts to develop a national style in architecture contributed to the visual manifestation of ethnic and class relations in this country. And although a gendered analysis is not my primary focus, I think it is important to note what Kathleen McCarthy has observed in the case of the United States—that, as the first decades of the century saw the realm of culture increasingly organized into official bodies and bureaucratic institutions modelled after business corporations, these new “cultural institutions served as important building blocks in the emergence of a national, male policy-making elite.”³⁰ As she argues, women had traditionally been seen as the

²⁹Schoenauer, “Percy Erskine Nobbs,” p. 55-56; Harold Kalman, *A History of Canadian Architecture*, vol. 1 (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 41; Alan Gowans, *Building Canada: An Architectural History of Canadian Life* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 22; France Vanlaethem, “Beautification versus Modernization,” in *Montreal Metropolis, 1880-1930*, ed. Isabelle Gournay and France Vanlaethem (Montréal and Toronto: Canadian Centre for Architecture and Stoddart Publishing, 1998), p. 148.

³⁰Kathleen D. McCarthy, *Women’s Culture: American Philanthropy and Art, 1830-1930* (continued...)

keepers of culture, but with the founding of these cultural institutions, its guardianship passed officially into the hands of elite males. A similar process was taking place in Canada, with the largely male network of which Nobbs and Traquair were part founding museums and art galleries and giving public lectures. The notion of culture being removed from the hands of women and given over to what had come to seem the more suitable care of men is implicit in these activities, and is occasionally even made explicit, as I show.

Even before the formalization in the 1920s of the links among Canada's intellectual and artistic elites, many cultural producers in early-twentieth century Canada had been concerned with this project of trying to define the nation culturally just as it had quite recently been defined politically. Not surprisingly, the rapidly-evolving nature of the country's ethnic makeup added immensely to the complexity of the task. From the start, the people who were most concerned with the question tended to belong to the elite; usually they were white, well-educated, and British in background, and often recently arrived from what they still considered the Mother Country. Of course, Francophone intellectuals were also engaged with cultural definition, but theirs was for the most part a separate debate, and although it was often constituted in relation to Anglo-Canadian concepts, it was carried out in different fora than that of Anglo-Canadians. For members of the Anglophone elite, for the most part, Canada was fundamentally British and ought to remain that way. They chose various ways of integrating the non-British—especially

³⁰(...continued)
(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. xiii-xiv.

new immigrants and French Canadians—into their story of Canada. Some dealt with the situation by ignoring the presence of those who did not fit their narrow Anglo-Canadian vision while others expanded that vision slightly, seeking to show that the term Anglo-Saxon encompassed a vast range of Northern and Western Europeans in addition to the English.³¹

Since the nineteenth century, people have sought to express national character through building, and architects at the turn of the century were among those concerned with defining Canada. For many of them this preoccupation took the form of trying to develop a style of architecture that would be, at least to their minds, distinctly Canadian. Obviously this required much thought about what elements should contribute to the essential Canadianness they sought to define. Like Nobbs and Traquair, a number of architects were quite eloquent in the trade press and other outlets, where they debated the question of what might make a Canadian architecture possible; their buildings and designs stand as testimony to their ideas about what made Canada.³²

For many of these nationalist intellectuals, national tradition was part and parcel of ethnicity. Attempting to develop new styles that seemed indubitably to belong to their

³¹R.G. Moyles and Doug Owsram, *Imperial Dreams and Colonial Realities: British Views of Canada, 1880-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988). Matthew Frye Jacobson has examined the rise of the term "Anglo-Saxon" in the United States; it became current between the 1840s and the 1920s, the years of the greatest mass of immigration from Europe, as established citizens of mainly British descent sought new racial categories to set themselves and other desirables apart from the masses of southern and eastern Europeans who seemed to be flooding their borders. (*Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998]).

³²See Kelly Crossman, "The National Idea," in *Architecture in Transition*, pp. 109-21.

own lands, architects of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries in many countries drew on local historical architecture and material culture.³³ European architects and theorists earlier in the century had sought to fashion and express national identity through the adoption of “high” historical styles, and in particular through the Classical and Gothic Revivals.³⁴ Towards the end of the century, however, these styles ceased to satisfy. Inspired in part by the Arts and Crafts Movement, people in Europe and North America came to believe that they could achieve their chimeric goal of true national expression only by looking to local forms of vernacular architecture.

The term “vernacular architecture” was used in the later nineteenth century to refer generally to buildings of any age, of a non-monumental character.³⁵ Amongst scholars of the genre in the twentieth century, its sense came to be of “old, rural, handmade structures built in traditional forms and materials for domestic or agricultural use.”³⁶ Implicit in this definition, as Camille Wells observes, is “the notion that vernacular

³³On the uses of vernacular art and architecture in the construction of modern culture and identity in turn-of-the-century Europe, see Nicola Gordon Bowe (ed.), *Art and the National Dream: The Search for Vernacular Expression in Turn-of-the-Century Design* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1993), Barbara Miller Lane, *National Romanticism and Modern Architecture in Germany and the Scandinavian Countries*, *Modern Architecture and Cultural Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), and Amy Fumiko Ogata, *Art Nouveau and the Social Vision of Modern Living: Belgian Artists in a European Context*, *Modern Architecture and Cultural Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

³⁴See Barry Bergdoll, “Nationalism and Stylistic Debates in Architecture,” in *European Architecture 1750-1890* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 139-70.

³⁵*Compact Oxford English Dictionary*, new ed., s.v. “vernacular.”

³⁶Camille Wells, “Old Claims and New Demands: Vernacular Architecture Studies Today,” in *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture II*, ed. Wells (Columbia, MI: University of Missouri Press, 1986), p. 1. As Wells notes, the definition is now much broader.

buildings are the fragile remnants of a preindustrial, agrarian time when life was more cooperative, more humane, and, through manual labor, somehow more noble than the alternatives."³⁷ It is in this sense that such buildings were prized by turn-of-the-century cultural producers, who saw them as the built expression of the true bearers of national culture: the Folk.³⁸

The notion of the Folk has its roots well back in European history, when many intellectuals came to believe that there existed, within their societies, what Ian McKay defines as "a subset of persons set apart. . . characterized by their own distinctive culture and isolated from the modern society around them."³⁹ Peter Burke, observing that the appearance of new terms is often a good indication of the presence of new ideas, notes that the late-eighteenth century saw the advent of a series of words referring to various aspects of what the German writer Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) called popular culture, or "*Kultur des Volkes*" (in contrast to *Kultur der Gelehrten*, or learned culture), for which intellectuals were then showing fresh enthusiasm.⁴⁰ These appeared first in German, with the root "Volk"—such as *Volkslied* (folksong), *Volkssage* (folktale), and

³⁷Wells, "Old Claims and New Demands," p. 1.

³⁸Following Ian McKay, I have chosen to capitalize the word "Folk" in place of repeatedly using quotation marks around it to denote a word that must in this context be read as a relic of the language of a previous time (*The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* [Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994, p. xv). I have adopted the same practice with the word "Primitive."

³⁹McKay, *Quest of the Folk*, p. 9.

⁴⁰Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (np: Maurice Temple Smith, 1978; Aldershot, Hants.: Scolar Press, 1994), p. 8.

Volkskunde (folklore)—and found equivalents in other European languages.⁴¹ Folklore historian Giuseppe Cocchiara sees the beginning of the idea of the Folk well before these words were coined, finding in the Renaissance notion of the “noble savage” the ancestor of the “noble peasant folk” of the nineteenth-century Romantics.⁴² Burke, however, argues that two points set the late-eighteenth century enthusiasm for popular culture apart from its precursors. Most important for my purposes is the new notion that the cultural production, as well as the habits, customs, and other traditions of the people who came to be called the Folk, were expressions of the spirit of the nation to which they belonged.⁴³ For this reason, interest in folk culture was closely related to the rise of nationalism in nineteenth-century Europe.

As McKay explains, the idea of the Folk, having developed among cultural producers in Europe—and particularly in Germany in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries—was taken up with great enthusiasm in Britain and North America later in the century.⁴⁴ There it became “naturalized” to such an extent that a much wider sphere of society adopted the concept, with a large number of the educated middle classes developing an interest in folk culture. But what was their idea of the Folk? Following the

⁴¹Burke, *Popular Culture*, p. 3.

⁴²Giuseppe Cocchiara, *The History of Folklore in Europe* (John N. McDaniel, trans.; Turin: Editore Boringhiere, 1952; Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1981), p. 28. See McKay’s useful discussion of the origins of the concept of the Folk in “The Idea of the Folk,” in which he cites Cocchiara’s argument (*Quest of the Folk*, pp. 3-42).

⁴³Burke, *Popular Culture*, p. 8.

⁴⁴McKay, *Quest of the Folk*, p. 12.

lead taken by the German theorists, the later-nineteenth century defined the Folk as illiterate agrarian dwellers, who had—and this was their most important attribute—remained entirely unmarked by whatever the broader society outside of their communities might be experiencing. This latter point is an essential one, as it emphasizes how thoroughly the concept of the Folk rests on the idea of the modern; each is defined in opposition to the other. As Robin D.G. Kelley elucidates, “‘Folk’ and ‘modern’ are both mutually dependent concepts embedded in unstable historically and socially constituted systems of classification.”⁴⁵ The Folk “them,” therefore, exists only in the context of the modern “us.” Participation in the modern world of capital and industry might not turn the Folk into “us,” but it would remove them from their pleasant categorization as Folk. In the city or the mine, the people often categorized as Folk imbibed too much of the modern, and became labourers—a working class to be feared, avoided or improved—rather than Folk to be admired. As McKay writes, “those deracinated products of the coalfields and cities . . . could not be true Folk, not only because they were creating a literate and political culture, but also because . . . they violated the vital nucleus of the Folk idea: the *essential and unchanging solidarity* of traditional society.”⁴⁶ It was the immutable nature of

⁴⁵Robin D.G. Kelley, “Notes on Deconstructing ‘The Folk,’” in *American Historical Review* 97, 5 (December 1992): 1402.

⁴⁶McKay, *Quest of the Folk*, p. 12. Arjun Appadurai similarly argues that implicit in the term “Native” is the idea that groups called natives represent “their selves and their history, without distortion or residue” on an essential level impossible in societies recognized to have complex histories and diverse societies. More than that, Natives are conceived, not only as representing their places, but as permanently confined to them. (“Putting Hierarchy in Its Place,” in *Rereading Cultural Anthropology*, ed. George E. Marcus (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), p. 35.

the Folk, and their seemingly inviolable connection to the land, that made them such perfect archetypes for those seeking to build national identity at the turn of the century.

But if the Folk represented what Cocchiara describes as the “innermost soul” of society, how could they be put to use for the greater good?⁴⁷ Many intellectuals believed that contact with aspects of folk culture could rejuvenate their own more sophisticated, educated sphere, which had long ago lost the capability for such pure expression. This folk culture initially included songs, stories, and customs such as festivals, but around the mid-nineteenth century, material culture was added to this list, perhaps, as Burke suggests, because it was only at this time that “popular artifacts” began to be perceived as seriously threatened by mass-production.⁴⁸

Indeed, while the 1851 Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations enthralled the majority of fairgoers with the stunning array of modern industrial design unfolding before them in the Crystal Palace, the spectacle there and elsewhere also appalled many, among them William Morris (1834-1896), who was to become a founder of the Arts and Crafts Movement, and the critic and social theorist John Ruskin (1819-1900). Such mass-produced products, they believed, were examples of the bad design and poor quality that resulted when traditional methods of production were replaced by machine work. Worse, such “rag[s] of fashion” for a heedless middle class were manufactured, Morris said, by “thousands of men and women making Nothing with

⁴⁷Cocchiara, *History of Folklore*, p. 8.

⁴⁸Burke, *Popular Culture*, p. 7.

terrible and inhuman toil which deadens the soul and shortens mere animal life itself."⁴⁹

That is, the disappearance of folk methods had resulted in the emergence of a new class of industrial workers, who had lost their roots and their history along with their connection to the land and their traditional ways of doing things. Morris, Ruskin, and other adherents of the Arts and Crafts Movement called for a return to what they saw as the humane conditions of the Mediaeval craft guild, when the designer and craftsperson (usually, they argued, one and the same) had enjoyed both considerable respect and the joy and satisfaction arising from work well done.⁵⁰

But arts and crafts proponents believed that it was not only the workers who would gain from a revival of folk craft and building traditions. The wealthier classes (to which the architects and designers who were part of the movement inevitably belonged) also stood to profit. They could look forward to living in the just society that would result when the aesthetically-bereft products of the industrial revolution were replaced with well-made things of beauty. In addition to the craft products with which Morris's own business was concerned, the Arts and Crafts Movement was spiritual home to a group of architects who sought to refine architectural design by introducing the traditional methods and forms of vernacular architecture. This would also play a rôle in reforming

⁴⁹William Morris, "Art and Socialism: The Aims and Ideals of the English Socialists of To-day" (lecture delivered before the Secular Society of Leicester, 23 January 1884), in *Architecture, Industry, and Wealth: Collected Papers*, ed. Sydney J. Freedberg (New York and London: Garland, 1978), p. 66.

⁵⁰A number of histories exist of the Arts and Crafts Movement. See, for example, Elizabeth Cumming and Wendy Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991) and Peter Davey, *Arts and Crafts Architecture: The Search for Earthly Paradise* (London: The Architectural Press, 1980).

society. Morris, arguing for the reintroduction of the living hall, "which was used from the time of Homer to past the time of Chaucer," argued that there was a strong connection between human nature and house design.⁵¹ The reintroduction of traditional forms, therefore, would naturally infuse society with virtues characteristic of the Folk.

Traditional forms used properly must be local. Morris and others argued strenuously that true architecture could develop only through the use of local forms and local materials. Like the Folk themselves, folk architecture was firmly tied to the land on which it stood. Arts and Crafts architects began, therefore, with the idea that by studying the buildings in the region in which they planned to build, and by adopting forms and materials from them, they could create new buildings that were inherently local and that seemed to have stood there always, as indigenous as the rocks and trees from which their materials were hewn. It was soon realized that this approach, which began as a way of making buildings that were believed to be authentic expressions of regional characteristics, could be applied nationally as well. Inspired by the teachings of the Arts and Crafts Movement, architects in countries new and old across Europe and North America began to look to the local vernacular as a route to creating what they believed would be truly national architectures that would reflect the many virtues of the only truly national people.

But why did so many people at the century's turn feel the need to forge connections with the comfortable premodern virtues they imagined they found in folk

⁵¹Morris, "Art and Socialism," p. 68.

societies? The development of the concept of the Folk was just one way, as McKay puts it, “of thinking about the impact of modernity.”⁵² Conceived as innocent of social, economic or political change, the Folk—or the modern idea of the Folk—offered a place of refuge to those who felt battered by the pace of the advancing world order, that is to say, by modernity, which McKay describes as “the lived experience of [an] unremitting process of rapid change and its social consequences.”⁵³ Many members of the middle class at the turn of the century feared that their modern existence was rendering them weak and effete—“overcivilized,” as T.J. Jackson Lears describes it—and they sought an antidote to their ennui in what they believed were “more intense forms of physical or spiritual existence.”⁵⁴

This feeling of alienation from modern life has come to be known as “antimodernism.” It has manifested itself in many ways, of which two most directly concern this dissertation: the Arts and Crafts Movement’s revival of traditional methods and vernacular forms, and the related enthusiasm for the Folk. Others tried to reconcile

⁵²McKay, *Quest of the Folk*, p. 8.

⁵³Ian McKay (ed.), *The Challenge of Modernity: A Reader on Post-Confederation Canada* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1992), p. x.

⁵⁴Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon, 1981; Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994), p. xv. It is important to note that the “modernism” in the term “antimodernism” refers to modernity, and not the Modernist movement in the arts. It was quite possible, and indeed common, to be an antimodern Modernist. As just one example, Vojtěch Jirat-Wasiutyński has recently examined the antimodernist impulse that drove Vincent van Gogh to retreat in 1888 from “the incapacitating modern city” of Paris to Arles, in the south of France, where he hoped the “revitalizing countryside” would restore him to health as well as provide him with bright colours to nourish his avant-garde painting. (“Van Gogh in the South: Antimodernism and Exoticism in the Arlesian Paintings,” in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience*, p. 177.)

themselves with modernity by diverse means ranging from the contemplative study of so-called Oriental and Primitive cultures to a mainly male cult of strenuousness that incorporated boxing, big game hunting, or wilderness exploration, among other masculinist pursuits.⁵⁵ Physical removal from the sights and sounds of modernity, by living in the countryside or travelling to remote areas, was a favoured recourse. Ironically, as Warren Belasco has demonstrated, escaping modernity by this route became much easier once cars were relatively widely available.⁵⁶ But what is particularly revealing about Belasco's account is the notion that the intended result of an extended car trip was that the modern Odysseus should return, rejuvenated, back to active participation in the complex life that had sent him or her scrambling away. Like most other antimodern escapes, Belasco argues that autocamping was "always dedicated to reviving everyday

⁵⁵Many scholars have explored the relationship between the reaction to modernity and various early-twentieth century cultural phenomena. In addition to those cited elsewhere in this chapter, these include the following: Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995); Jeffrey D. Brison, "Cultural Interventions: American Corporate Philanthropy and the Construction of the Arts and Letters in Canada, 1900-1957" (Ph.D. diss., Queen's University, 1998); Ross D. Cameron, "Tom Thomson, Antimodernism, and the Ideal of Manhood"; Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven: Yale, 1981); Lynda Jessup, "Bushwackers in the Gallery: Antimodernism and the Group of Seven," in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience*; J.A. Mangan and James Walvin (eds.), *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987); and Ning Wang, *Tourism and Modernity: A Sociological Analysis*, Tourism Social Science Series (Amsterdam: Pergamon, 2000).

⁵⁶Warren James Belasco, *Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1979). Belasco explains how it was that the newly-available automobile could be seen as a way of returning to an earlier way of life. As he puts it, "the future conquered the present by coming disguised as the past" in the form of the car (p. 19). When it first arrived on the scene, the freedom of movement allowed by the car was contrasted favourably with the rigid timetables and fixed routes of train travel, and car travel was seen as something more akin to the horse and coach of earlier days, before the arrival of the modernizing train.

commitments."⁵⁷

This notion is key to understanding antimodernism in the early-twentieth century. For most people, it was a means of coping with, or accommodating, modernity, rather than actually rejecting it. Ultimately, although they yearned for the genuine experience they believed might be found in interaction with seemingly pre-modern folk cultures, in struggling with natural or human opponents, or in making objects of beauty with their own hands, most antimodernists remained—and chose to remain—an integral part of their own modern society. By various means, they sought to infuse what they believed was absent into their present, but they never intended to abandon modernity entirely: they used the past to enrich the present, but not to replace it. And for many, antimodernism became an essential means, not only of coping with modernity, but even of conceiving it. As Jessup comments, in an observation crucial to my thesis, many artists in the early parts of the twentieth century used “antimodern constructs in formulating work they saw as responding to, or expressing, modernity.”⁵⁸ That is, the antimodernists’ embrace of such concepts as “Folk, Primitive, Authentic, and Traditional” was an integral aspect of the way they understood and related to the modern.

But even though many architects and others agreed that the basis for the development of a national style in architecture lay in the vernacular, they could not perceive a straightforward path to follow. Canadianness was not as easily defined as

⁵⁷Belasco, *Americans on the Road*, p. 16.

⁵⁸Lynda Jessup, “Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: An Introduction,” in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience*, p. 4.

Englishness or Swedishness, since Canada seemed to be composed of so many different groups and had existed—as Europeans conceived it—for so relatively brief a time. Yet it seemed essential to forge a distinct identity for Canada, and in particular to differentiate the country from the strong culture south of the border.⁵⁰ The question was, whom might they clothe in the mantle of a Canadian Folk? There was no clear answer, but for some Anglo-Canadians, the culture of some of the earliest European-settled areas of rural Québec filled the rôle admirably. Many, among them Nobbs and Traquair, perceived the region as the heart of an ideal community, retaining a traditional way of life unfettered by the debilitating effects of modernity.⁵¹

Although they identified Canada as fundamentally British in character, many members of the intellectual elite at the century's turn sought in rural French Canada what Carole Gerson has called a "culture, folklore and history" that might enrich what seemed to them to be Canada's "relatively barren national image."⁵² And for some architects, the French-Canadian vernacular helped provide an answer to the question of what direction

⁵⁰Ironically, given the cultural threat it seemed to pose to Canada, similar concerns preoccupied intellectuals in the United States: how were a distinctly American culture and—as a very visible part of that culture—architecture to be conceived? Architects in the United States, too, sought answers in the vernacular buildings of several regions. See Wendy Kaplan, "The Vernacular in America, 1890-1920: Ideology and Design," in *Art and the National Dream*, pp. 53-68.

⁵¹For a discussion of the links among antimodernism, Canadian nationalism, and imperialism, see Donald A. Wright, "W.D. Lighthall and David Ross McCord: Antimodernism and English-Canadian Imperialism, 1880s-1918," *Revue d'études canadiennes/Journal of Canadian Studies* 32, 2 (Summer 1997): 134-153.

⁵²Carole Gerson, *A Purer Taste: The Writing and Reading of Fiction in English in Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), p. 110. Quoted in Wright, "Lighthall and McCord," p. 138.

Canadian architecture should be taking. In this study, I demonstrate that the use of specific styles for certain building types resulted in a visible and public linkage of the architectural forms that were associated with the dominant Anglo-Canadian culture to the realm of power, business, and the city. Meanwhile, an architecture of leisure and rural pursuits, based on what many middle-class, turn-of-the-century Anglophones identified as a French-Canadian tradition, created an association of even modern Québec society with a pre-modern way of life, seemingly removed from advancing civilization.

This last observation suggests how thoroughly these people, yearning for the genuine experience they believed might be found in the apparently pre-modern culture of rural Quebec, embraced antimodernism as a means of shaping their experience of modernity to fit their needs. As Lears argues, antimodernism “promoted accommodation to new modes of cultural hegemony while it preserved an eloquent edge of protest.” The application of a wide range of antimodern ideals actually “helped rally the upper bourgeoisie to reassert its dominance” even while its members believed that they were escaping the modern strictures of their own culture.⁵² In the case of this use of architectural forms, the architects’ attraction to what they saw as the purity of French-Canadian folk forms, and their use of them only for the design of buildings associated with the pursuit of leisure and elegant country life—as opposed to those with modern functions connected with business and the city—served to assert Anglo, urban, middle-class cultural authority.

⁵²*No Place of Grace*, p. 301.

It is not surprising that it was in the province of Québec, and particularly in Montréal, that urban intellectuals became most fascinated with what they thought was a traditional French-Canadian society. Montréal in the first decades of the twentieth century was a true national metropolis. Its population, estimated in 1907 at over 405,000, including the suburbs, was nearing those of the larger (though never the very largest) cities south of the border early in the century.^{o3} Reaching a population of one million in 1930, it was the largest city in Canada, and from the mid-nineteenth century to 1931, it grew faster than any other North American city, with progress accelerating particularly around 1890.^{o4} It served a vast hinterland, and was the country's leading centre of banking and business. Thus, to live in Montréal in the early-twentieth century was to live a very urban and modern life indeed. Rapid construction, the growth of modern commerce and business, noisy trains and street cars, the necessary dependence on others for one's daily bread—not to mention water, light and transportation—and a host of other urban experiences must all have resulted in the feeling of "weightlessness" that Lears has identified with city life at the century's turn and beyond.^{o5} No wonder that many middle-class intellectuals should have turned outside the city to seek a connection with an

^{o3}*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed., s.v. "Montreal." Boston had a population of 595,580 according to a state census in 1905, while Baltimore, the eighth largest city in population, had 558,485 in 1910. New Orleans had 339,075 people in 1910, while Buffalo was about the same size as Montréal, with 352,387 in 1900 and 423,715 in 1910. (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed., s.v. "Boston," "Baltimore," "New Orleans," and "Buffalo.")

^{o4}Anthony Sutcliffe, "Montreal Metropolis," in *Montreal Metropolis 1880-1930*, ed. Isabelle Gournay and France Vanlaetham (Montréal/Toronto: Canadian Centre for Architecture/Stoddart Publishing, 1998), p. 21.

^{o5}*No Place of Grace*, pp. 32-47.

imagined pre-modern, such as that represented for many by the rural communities of Québec, whose denizens seemed still to be in control of their own destiny.

The people who so attracted those seeking a genuine folk culture in early-twentieth century Québec were the economically-disadvantaged residents of the rural areas of the lower Saint Lawrence River valley, a group often known as *habitants*. They were the descendants of early colonizers, but specifically of the peasant classes who had come to farm the small divisions of seigneurial land—called *concessions* or *habitations*—rather than of the seigneurial, military, commercial, or priestly classes.⁶⁶ In the early-twentieth century, those who dwelt on farms in the earlier areas of European resettlement in New France, especially on the Île d'Orléans east of Québec City and along the Saint Lawrence River in both directions, were perceived by the city-dwelling middle classes as virtually untouched by the changes that were taking place in the greater society around them. Many, including both Anglophone and Francophone urban dwellers, believed that modernity had gained no toehold among the peasants who had first arrived from France to work the land centuries before, and who, they thought, had little, if any, contact with the outside world. This was a misconception, as I discuss in Chapter Two. By the early-nineteenth century, there was already a daily stage coach between Québec City and Montréal, and it was followed in the 1830s by steamboats and trains.⁶⁷ This early

⁶⁶R. Cole Harris, ed., *Historical Atlas of Canada*, vol. I, *From the Beginning to 1800* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, n.d.), p. 115.

⁶⁷R. Louis Gentilcore, ed., *Historical Atlas of Canada*, vol. II, *The Land Transformed 1800-1891* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), Plate 25.

transportation was slow and inconvenient, particularly for those towns not on major waterways or directly on a rail line, but it did mean that residents of even small villages along the route were afforded contact with other communities. Nonetheless, to those who felt themselves afflicted by modernity in the big cities, and particularly in Montréal, the idea of the *habitants* as genuine Folk in a pre-modern world was a tonic.

Together with Toronto, Montréal was also a major centre of architectural activity in Canada at the turn of the century. The city was home to the prominent Francophone architects of the day and to the *École des Beaux-Arts*, which taught architecture using the methods of the French Academy. It also contained a substantial population of Anglo-Canadian architects, many of them of Scottish origin.⁸⁸ For them, the School of Architecture at McGill University, where Nobbs and Traquair were prominent faculty members for the first four decades or so of the twentieth century, was an important centre. They are ideal subjects for my study because their Arts and Crafts background led them, quite soon after their respective arrivals, to study the architecture they found around them, and to examine the possibilities for using it in the development of a national style of architecture for Canada.

As part of his study of the professionalization of Canadian architectural practice around the turn of the century, Kelly Crossman has examined the quest for a national

⁸⁸On Scottish architects in Montréal see Kelly Crossman, "The Influence of Scotland on Architectural Education in Canada," in *The Education of the Architect*, Proceedings of the 22nd Annual Symposium of the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain, ed. Neil Bingham (London: SAH, 1993), and various essays in Gournay and Vanlaethem (eds.), *Montreal Metropolis*.

style in this period.⁵⁹ He has shown how architects in the later decades of the nineteenth century, in the throes of professionalization and spurred on by the threat of competition in their own country from architects in the United States, had become concerned with developing a national style that would set their work apart from that of American architects and make it the obvious choice for Canadian projects. Members of the newly-professional next generation of architects, to which Nobbs and Traquair belonged, were further inspired by Arts and Crafts theory to seek national expression in their work through a close examination of local buildings. Crossman argues that, although Canadian architects had admired local vernacular styles before, it was Nobbs who first suggested the possibility that they might be used as the basis for a national architecture. His illuminating analysis focusses, however, on other aspects of Nobbs's architectural and aesthetic theory and does not expand further on his approach to the Québec vernacular.

My discussion of the question of a Canadian style draws on Crossman's work but

⁵⁹Crossman, "The National Idea" and "Percy Nobbs and a National Theory," in *Architecture in Transition*, pp. 109-21 and 122-35. Examining another effort to establish a Canadian architectural style, Rhodri Windsor Liscombe has analysed the development of the association of the so-called Château style, beginning in 1892 with the United States architect Bruce Price's Château Frontenac in Québec City, with Canadian cultural identity even into our own time. (Liscombe, "Nationalism or Cultural Imperialism: The Château style in Canada," in *Architectural History: Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain* 36 (1993): 127-144.) Christopher Thomas has examined scholarly and other writings from about 1945 to 1980 on two styles often associated with Canada: the High Victorian Gothic and the Château Style. While recognizing that the Chateau style, in particular, "has been wholeheartedly received as Canadian and has become Canadian by adoption and association," (p. 21) he argues that the historiography that formulates it as a national style has strongly reflected developing ideas about the Canadian nation at the time of its writing. Insofar as these styles could be said to have represented the nation in their own time, he contends, it was a narrow and Anglo-centric conception of Canada. ("Canadian Castles'? The Question of National Styles in Architecture Revisited," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 32, 1 (Spring 1997): 5-27.

focusses more on its relation, for some architects, to the study of folk traditions and particularly to rural Québec culture. It makes an important contribution to Canadian architectural and cultural history precisely because it examines the work of prominent Canadian architects and theorists in the context of the greater nation-building project underway in the period, and examines the relationship—inherent in that whole project—between culture and social power.

My analysis draws heavily on textual sources. Although I discuss some buildings and architectural drawings, my interpretation of them depends on my analysis of the many articles, essays, lectures, course notes and letters written by both Nobbs and Traquair. Indeed, although Nobbs was a prolific architect, Traquair left comparatively little by way of built work, and essentially none in Canada. But he was a popular and influential professor at McGill for many years.⁷⁰ Clearly, his writing about architecture was seen in his own time as a contribution to the discipline as valid as any in wood or stone. For the architectural historian, his writing contributes as much to an analysis of the architecture of his time as any built work, and to exclude it is to overlook an essential route to understanding how architecture works as a part of society. Nobbs's and Traquair's writings are at least as essential as their buildings to understanding the social relations implicit in their efforts to promote a national identity. Through their written oeuvre I attempt to understand how they thought about Canada and the various peoples that

⁷⁰See Howard Shubert *et al*, "An Interview with John Bland," in *John Bland at Eighty: A Tribute*, ed. Irena Murray and Norbert Schoenauer (Montréal: McGill University, 1991), pp. 4-17.

inhabited it. Reading critically in light of their educational biases and the society to which they belonged, I illuminate what it was that made them see this way, and what effect this had on their contribution to the development of Canadian culture.

Recognizing the depth of Nobbs and Traquair's antimodernism is crucial to understanding the way they regarded society. In Chapter One, "The Making of Imperialist Antimodernists," I examine Nobbs's and Traquair's education and background in the antimodernist intellectual climates of Edinburgh and London. Both Nobbs and Traquair were deeply antimodern in their approach to life as well as work. It is essential to establish this point, as their antimodernism profoundly informed the way they designed and thought about architecture, and the way they understood their society and the cultures that comprised it.

Chapter Two, "Simple Things Free from Sham," is concerned with the way Nobbs and Traquair interpreted the Québécois culture they found around them on their arrival in Montréal. An important element of my study is an examination of their ideas about the Folk as participating in anthropological modes of inquiry. Although neither was trained as an anthropologist, nor identified himself as such, Traquair made field trips to rural villages, observing and writing about the residents as well as their built environment. His study of rural culture was akin to the work carried out by anthropologists and ethnologists of the period, and he even collaborated directly with professionals in the field. Together with Group of Seven painters A.Y. Jackson and Arthur Lismer, he spent part of the summer of 1925 gathering evidence on Île d'Orléans with National Museum of

Canada ethnologist C. Marius Barbeau.⁷¹ Traquair collaborated with Barbeau on a number of research projects and co-published several articles with him, and they maintained a correspondence for some twenty years or more. Following a practice common to both architecture and anthropology, both Nobbs and Traquair drew, measured, and photographed buildings and artefacts in their adoptive province. They were enthralled by what they saw as the purity and authenticity of the rural people and their material culture, and they each wrote on multiple occasions that it was here that they hoped to find an antidote for the tired modernity of the urban Canada they themselves inhabited.

In *The Predicament of Culture*, critical anthropologist James Clifford demonstrates that an anthropologist or ethnographer's own culture and preconceived notions inform any analysis of another group, despite all efforts to the contrary.⁷² Thus, an

⁷¹Lawrence Nowry, *Marius Barbeau: Man of Mana* (Toronto: NC Press, 1995), p. 270. Traquair's archive in the Canadian Architecture Collection at McGill University contains ten file folders of Barbeau's work, as well as numerous communications between the two. There is also a file of letters between the two, dating from 1925 to 1945, in the library of the Canadian Museum of Civilization (Information Management Services, Marius Barbeau correspondence, Box B244 f.8, "Traquair, Ramsay"; hereafter CMC, IMS, Barbeau, B244 f.8, "Traquair"). In addition to Barbeau, Traquair carried out his research and publishing in collaboration with several others. Important collaborators were McGill History professor E.R. Adair and Traquair's dear friend Antoine Gordon Neilson, to whose memory he dedicated his book *The Old Architecture of Québec: A Study of the Buildings Erected in New France from the Earliest Explorers to the Middle of the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1947; facsimile edition Montréal: McGill University School of Architecture, 1996). Traquair notes in his preface that Adair, Barbeau, and Neilson "undertook the difficult and tedious work of reading and copying endless church accounts, and of extracting therefrom the architectural material" (p. xvii). On Barbeau, see Andrew Nurse, "Tradition and Modernity: The Cultural Work of Marius Barbeau" (Ph.D. dissertation, Queen's University, 1997).

⁷²James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988).

anthropological study tells us as much about the investigator as it does about the investigated. The relationship of anthropologists to their subjects is almost always that of a dominant culture studying a subordinate one, and this too affects the anthropologist's observations and the use made of them. Both Nobbs and Traquair approached rural Québec culture from the standpoint of what Clifford calls "salvage ethnography." This approach has been pervasive in anthropological studies, but critiques such as Clifford's have called it into question. In its widest sense, it assumes that modernity is constantly threatening to destroy what are understood as traditional societies (in the case of Nobbs and Traquair's work, folk cultures in particular).⁷³ For salvage ethnographers, any outside influence irrevocably alters such cultures, and since immutability and insularity have conventionally been considered to be essential characteristics of folk societies, it follows that any change would be corrupting. As Clifford observes, anthropologists studying what they saw as traditional cultures have until recently generally believed that they are witnessing the very last moments of the culture in its traditional, which is to say its genuine, or authentic, form.⁷⁴ The researchers' very presence would help to bring an end to the cultures they studied, as they brought with them their own foreign and modern influence. A primary activity of anthropologists—to make written records of the cultures they study—thus came to seem to be the essential one of preserving a record of a vanishing

⁷³Clifford, "On Ethnographic Allegory," in *Writing Culture: the Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 112.

⁷⁴Clifford, "On Ethnographic Allegory," p. 112.

culture, salvaging what they could of the culture as they believed it had existed in its true form, before the arrival of an outsider, so that it should not be forgotten and lost forever. As Clifford argues, this idea is a construct that provides a rationale for anthropological practice itself. And as he observes, it assumes that the importance and interest of other societies lies in their past, not in their present or future, and that such societies need observers from outside to represent them in order to save the evidence of what is valuable in their culture.⁷⁵ Like these “salvage, or redemptive” ethnographers, Nobbs and Traquair lamented that what they saw as the old life of rural Québec was dying out under modernity’s inexorable influence, and they emphasized that its material remnants, such as buildings and handcrafts, must be preserved before they too vanished irretrievably, as “every year [saw] the remnant further reduced.”⁷⁶ This could be done by drawing, photographing, and otherwise recording buildings, but also by physically removing objects to safe-keeping in a museum. Correspondence between Traquair and Barbeau after their research trip together in the summer of 1925 indicates that the latter was searching out possible artefacts for collections in Montréal.⁷⁷ Barbeau sent photographs for Traquair’s

⁷⁵Clifford, “On Ethnographic Allegory,” p. 113.

⁷⁶Traquair, *The Old Architecture of the Province of Quebec* (Montréal: McGill University Press Series XIII, no. 1, 1925); reprinted from *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (January-February 1925): 5 (unpaginated).

⁷⁷Traquair mentions that he discussed the possible purchase with “Mr. Morgan,” who must be F. Cleveland Morgan, an influential figure in the formation of the Montréal Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA). Traquair refers to the suitability (or not) of Jobin’s work to “our museums here,” and since he and Morgan were both involved in the Montreal Arts Club and the Acquisitions Committee of the MMFA, as well as with McGill University, the McCord Museum, and numerous other arts organizations in Montréal, he might have been referring to any of several
(continued...)

consideration, but Traquair rejected his offerings as too recent and, in the case of some carved angels by the sculptor Louis Jobin, not only “of a late school” but also “rather influenced by the plaster figures with which they have to compete,”⁷⁸ and therefore, he implicitly suggested, inauthentic. But, he went on, “[i]f you are getting any of the old materials which we saw in the lofts of the churches, crucifixes, candlesticks, the old pulpit at St. Pierre. [sic] These are the things which I should like to have some of here.”

Considering Nobbs's and Traquair's comments about the Folk in light of critical anthropology is an important aspect of my study and provides insights into their architectural work that other scholars have not taken into account.

While several authors have discussed Nobbs's and Traquair's interest in Québec architecture and its influence on their writing and design, my work adds an important facet to understanding it. In their essay in the collection *Architecture, forme urbaine et identité collective*, Lucie K. Morisset and Luc Noppen analyse the different political uses to which historicist architecture has been put in Québec since the late-nineteenth century, while in the same volume, France Vanlaethem examines the process by which the architectural regionalism that arose from Nobbs's and Traquair's work was adopted by

⁷⁷(...continued)

museums. (See Norma Morgan, “F. Cleveland Morgan and the Decorative Arts Collection in the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts” [master's thesis, Concordia University, 1985], Appendix B and *passim*.)

⁷⁸Traquair, letter to Barbeau, 26 October 1925. (CMC, IMS, Barbeau, B244 f.8, “Traquair.”)

Québec nationalists in the 1940s.⁷⁹ While the authors discuss some results of Nobbs and Traquair's work, it is beyond the scope of these essays to analyse the approach the architects took to their Folk subjects. In fact, Nobbs's and Traquair's understanding of French culture and architecture in Canada was strongly influenced by their own pre-conceived notions about that society.

The phenomenon of discontented members of the middle class seeking a genuine culture among the Folk they saw around them occurred in many countries around the century's turn, with architects often using folk architecture as an inspiration for their own work. As Van Slyck demonstrated in her examination of the Spanish colonial and Pueblo architectural revivals around the turn of the century, the approach of these middle class investigators was often predicated on racial and ethnic stereotypes even though they believed themselves to be acting from admiration for their subjects.⁸⁰ This was the case in Québec as well. Nobbs and Traquair considered that they were rediscovering the value of a traditional architecture that had been forgotten, but in fact they exercised a considerable degree of cultural selection by which they embraced the elements of Québec society that fit their notion of it and ignored those that did not.

Such cultural selection in the realm of folklore studies in the twentieth century has most often rested on the notion of authenticity, a concept whose influence Regina Bendix

⁷⁹Luc Noppen and Lucie K. Morisset, "A la recherche d'identités: Usages et propos du recyclage du passé dans l'architecture au Québec" and France Vanlaethem, "Modernité et régionalisme dans l'architecture au Québec: Du nationalisme canadien de Percy E. Nobbs au nationalisme canadien-français des années 1940," in *Architecture, forme urbaine et identité collective*, pp. 103-33 and 157-77.

⁸⁰Van Slyck, "Mañana, Mañana."

has examined at length.⁵¹ She analyses the effect of this idea on the origins of the canons that came to represent such cultural disciplines as art and literary history. The idea that there might be one authentic culture operated as the primary factor in determining what would be included in the “ideal culture” each Academy had set itself the goal of determining. “In formulating the contours of this ideal culture, what lay outside its boundaries had to be inauthentic,” writes Bendix.⁵² “At best, the inauthentic held the status of being unworthy of scholarly attention; at worst, it was decried as an agent spoiling or harming the carefully cultivated noble ideal.” This is an important notion for my study of Nobbs and Traquair. As they were members of an Academy defining Canadian architecture, and, more broadly, Canadian culture, their choices of what to include also, as Bendix’s analysis indicates, necessarily determined what would be excluded.

As McKay, Van Slyck, and others have also shown, the “rediscovery” of a culture can quickly become a reinvention at the hands of people with agendas of their own.⁵³ In the case of Nova Scotia, McKay demonstrates that cultural investigators there privileged what they saw as the traditional culture of the rural areas, suppressing evidence of a burgeoning urban culture and industrial society in order to protect the province’s image as that of a traditional folk culture that would appeal to world-weary tourists. My analysis of

⁵¹Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997).

⁵²Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity*, p. 4.

⁵³See also Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe*.

Traquair's articles on Québec architecture shows that he similarly drew a highly selective picture of the province in his research. He excluded from his investigation all evidence of what he saw as alien—largely English and “modern”—influence on the folk culture he believed he had found. As a result, his papers paint a picture of a pure and monolithic rural Québécois culture largely unaffected by changes occurring in the world around it. For Traquair, this circular picture of French-Canadian culture was the true story, and he believed that in it he had found Canada's Folk. In this light, Richard Handler's study of the efforts of nationalist governments to mould an image of a traditional Québec society that would support their efforts to achieve independence is telling.⁵⁴ These later cultural projects relied similarly on cultural selection and reinvention, and at the same time built on ideas of the Québec Folk developed in part by Traquair, as I discuss.

In Chapter Three I examine Nobbs's and Traquair's ideas about Canadianness. Through various processes of rationalization both identified the rural people of Québec's Saint Lawrence River valley as “the most purely Canadian people of the dominion” (from which phrase the chapter takes its title). This Canadianness was directly related to Nobbs's and Traquair's conception of this group as Folk, and is thus an important link between that and the idea that French-Canadian architecture might provide inspiration for a Canadian architectural style. But both—and especially Traquair—also thought and wrote extensively about the Canadianness of other groups, and both were imperialists concerned with Canada's position in the British Empire. Meanwhile, although they

⁵⁴Handler, *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988).

believed that Québec folk culture held the secret to developing a national style, they acknowledged that regional variations were bound to exist in a country as large as Canada. Understanding their ruminations on these matters is important to interpreting their conclusions—which I discuss in Chapter Six—about how to build an architecture that would express the identity of Canada as they saw it.

In Chapters Four and Five I address Nobbs's and Traquair's respective approaches to the practice of architecture. Although Traquair had essentially given up architectural practice upon arriving in Canada, he wrote at length about the direction he thought architecture should take in his own time, while Nobbs both wrote and designed extensively. Traquair's Arts and Crafts approach may be summed up in his phrase "Local needs, Local materials, and Local climate," which provides his chapter title. Nobbs believed that the exigencies of "Modern Canadian Conditions" required the use of the Arts and Crafts approach in which he had received his training, but he did not entirely reject—though neither did he embrace—some aspects of Modernism.

Their approaches both had the ultimate aim of developing an architecture that would answer the requirements of "National and Imperial Tradition," and I address this question in Chapter Six. This discussion builds upon the arguments in Chapters Two to Five, and in it I demonstrate how Nobbs's and Traquair's ideas about a French-Canadian Folk and other ethnic groups combined with their approaches to architectural design in the quest for a modern Canadian style. As I demonstrate, Nobbs and those who followed him appropriated for their own use elements of historical Québec architecture—associating it as they did with a simplicity and genuineness they believed had

disappeared from modern life—for buildings of types that were themselves connected with rural simplicity and a retreat from modern overcivilization. But while both Nobbs and Traquair repeatedly argued that in the French-Canadian vernacular could be found an answer to the problem of modern Canadian building, in practice it took a back seat to more formal styles and to vernacular architecture of British origin. I argue that, in using the built forms typical of Québec for an architecture of leisure and the country, they underscored the association they themselves had made between Québec society and the virtues of simplicity and purity.

In the conclusion, “Tradition, Duly Sifted,” I place Nobbs’s and Traquair’s work in the context of the development and institutionalization of both Canadian and Québec nationalism, and offer an explanation to the question raised by Vanlaethem as to why conservative Québec nationalist groups in the first part of the century should have found the work of these Anglo-Canadian imperialists so compelling. In addition, I look briefly at the influence their work had on the development of Canadian architectural historiography.

As I show throughout this dissertation, the institutional and intellectual basis of Nobbs’s and Traquair’s lives and work—their Arts and Crafts background and imperial leanings that were grounded in antimodernism—predisposed them to look for a folk culture and, once they believed that they had found it, to use it in a particular way. But while the very specific details of their backgrounds may have been unique, Nobbs and Traquair were part of a larger community of like-minded people. While not themselves rulers, they belonged to the ruling class in early-twentieth century Canada. They were members of

Montréal's Anglo-Canadian elite—consisting largely of rich business families but also expanding to a group of McGill professors—that dominated English-language artistic, cultural and social life in that city in the first half of the twentieth century.⁸⁵ And through their activities as teachers, writers, arts club members, and public intellectuals, they participated in the network of intellectual and artistic elites that, in co-operation with corporate and government interests, concerned itself with the construction of a distinctively national culture into the 1920s and beyond. Thus, they had a degree of influence that went well beyond their McGill classrooms and, conversely, their ideas reflect a sphere much wider than themselves.

⁸⁵Margaret M. Westley, *Remembrance of Grandeur: The Anglo-Protestant Elite of Montréal 1900-1950* (Montréal: Éditions Libre Expression, 1990).

Chapter One THE MAKING OF IMPERIALIST ANTIMODERNISTS

TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY EDINBURGH was an exciting place for a young architect, and it is not surprising that one trained in that milieu would develop sympathies with the arts and crafts approach to building and design. As Percy Nobbs was to write on the occasion of Ramsay Traquair's retirement many years later, "[he] had an inevitable (remember the time and place of his upbringing) intimacy with the arts of crafts and all that pre-Raphaelites and William Morris stood for."¹ Nobbs might as well have been writing of himself, as he and Traquair were educated in similar circumstances and had many friends and acquaintances in common. Their intimate knowledge of arts and crafts theory affected the thought and practice of both. It expressed itself especially in their use of architectural decoration and in their strong interest in the study of vernacular buildings. In England, William Morris and his followers had determined that the only route to good architecture (and they were particularly interested in domestic work) was to study the buildings that had stood for hundreds of years in the district in which a new one was to be built. Following old patterns, architects could design new buildings using materials and forms that had stood the tests of time, weather, and use, and thus seemed to be suited both culturally and physically to their environment. Tied to this respect for the products

¹Nobbs, "Ramsay Traquair, Hon. M.A. (McGill) F.R.I.B.A on his Retirement from the Macdonald Chair in Architecture at McGill University," *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 16 (June 1939): 147. A number of books provide important background on the architectural principles and practice of the arts and crafts movement and the related "Queen Anne." See for example Peter Davey, *Arts and Crafts Architecture: The Search for Earthly Paradise* (London: The Architectural Press, 1980); Mark Girouard, *Sweetness and Light: The "Queen Anne" Movement 1860-1900* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977); and Margaret Richardson, *Architects of the Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Trefoil Books, 1983).

of history, and connected with a loathing for what they saw as the ugly machine-made objects surrounding them at every turn, the proponents of the arts and crafts movement looked to old methods and historic forms in decorative work. Arts and crafts ideals were to become internationally influential, and many movements in architecture and design owe allegiance to the arts and crafts approach. And late in the nineteenth century, when regional and national awareness were increasing all over the European world, and people were seeking to define themselves by their history, the study of vernacular architecture provided a seemingly natural route to the creation of national identity.

Belief in the potential of the arts and crafts approach to build national identity was part of the appeal of the movement to architects and intellectuals in late-nineteenth century Scotland. Edinburgh was home to a large community of architects and craftspeople linked by various artistic and architectural organizations. Many were also connected more informally through common interests, which included art education, the revival of old crafts techniques and forms, the decoration of buildings, the preservation of historic architecture and construction of new buildings designed to harmonize with their surroundings, and the general welfare—architectural, cultural, and social—of their city. The young Nobbs and Traquair had many connections to this group of artistic elites through institutions, mutual friends and acquaintances, future teachers, employers and partners. It is clear that their approaches to architecture and its theory and their interest in folk culture and national identity were formed when they were young men in Edinburgh, and it is easy to trace their intellectual development through their connections

there.²

Nobbs was born on 11 August 1875 in Haddington, near Edinburgh. He spent part of his childhood in St. Petersburg, where he attended school, including (according to one source) the School of Design in 1885 when he was just ten years old.³ Returning to Scotland in the later 1880s, he attended Heriot Watt College and the University of Edinburgh, receiving his Master of Arts in 1896 under Watson Gordon Chair of Fine Art Professor Gerard Baldwin Brown (1849-1932). From 1889 to 1896 he also studied at Edinburgh's School of Applied Art.

Traquair was born a year earlier than Nobbs, the first son of the artist and craftswoman Phoebe Anna Traquair (née Moss), of Irish birth, and Ramsay Heatley Traquair, then curator of Natural History at the Royal Museum of Science and Art in Edinburgh. He attended the University of Edinburgh for a year, and also spent some time at the University of Bonn.⁴ Returning home, he too studied at the School of Applied Art.⁵ His mother was an important artistic influence for him, and they frequently

²Both Robert J. Naismith, who was once a partner of Edinburgh architect Frank Mears, and Hugh Crawford, who now runs Mears's practice commented on the extent, importance and inter-connectedness of this community of like-minded architects in Edinburgh a century ago, noting what a stimulating atmosphere it must have been for those involved. (Conversations with Robert Naismith, 14 February 1998 and Hugh Crawford, 12 February 1998, in Edinburgh.)

³The biographical information in this paragraph is drawn from the British Architectural Library, Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), *Directory of British Architects 1834-1900*, comp. Alison Felstead, Jonathan Franklin, and Leslie Penfield (London: Mansell, 1993), p. 664.

⁴Nobbs, "Ramsay Traquair," p. 147.

⁵Sam McKinstry, *Rowand Anderson: "The Premier Architect of Scotland"* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), pp. 163, 190. McKinstry notes that Traquair's joint winning
(continued...)

collaborated on projects, for example researching Renaissance metalwork to find designs suited to her work.⁹ Ramsay provided a number of designs for chalices, triptych stands and other metalwork for adornment with his mother's enamels.⁷ Phoebe Traquair had close connections with important members of the art community in Edinburgh and elsewhere; in the late 1880s she corresponded with John Ruskin—whose writing about art had been an inspiration to the pioneers of the Arts and Crafts Movement—sending him examples of her work and receiving from him the loan of manuscripts from his collection.⁵ She was to become a major figure in the Edinburgh art world, and from 1887 she taught classes in design at the Edinburgh Social Union in the company of several other well-known artists and architects.⁹ She was also close friends with Percy Nobbs, with whom she corresponded extensively between 1900 and 1920. Her letters reveal that she was an important mentor to him in matters decorative, and also that she in her turn valued his artistic opinion.¹⁰ But as well as this direct connection to her own practice as an artist,

⁵(...continued)

of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Pugin Studentship, along with his National Art Survey Bursary, testify to the high quality of the education offered by the School of Applied Art, of which Traquair was then a student.

⁹Elizabeth Cumming, *Phoebe Anna Traquair, 1852-1936* (Edinburgh: Trustees of the National Galleries of Scotland, 1993), p. 41.

⁷Elizabeth Cumming, "Phoebe Anna Traquair HRSA (1857-1936) and her Contribution to Arts and Crafts in Edinburgh" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1986), pp. 10, 219, 233.

⁵Cumming, *Phoebe Anna Traquair*, p. 16.

⁹Cumming, *Phoebe Anna Traquair*, p. 17.

¹⁰Cumming, "Phoebe Anna Traquair," p. 201 and *passim*. Many of these letters remained in the Nobbs family, and Elizabeth Cumming received copies of a small number from Nobbs's son
(continued...)

Phoebe Traquair provided contact with her wide circle of artistic friends and colleagues in Edinburgh. These included people whose ideas would affect the thinking of both Nobbs and her son. City planner Patrick Geddes, scholar and artist Gerard Baldwin Brown, and architect Robert Lorimer were three of the most important in this connection.

Patrick Geddes (1854-1932) was a biologist-turned-city-planner and proponent of the "Old Edinburgh" movement led by those inspired by the writings of Sir Walter Scott and Robert Louis Stevenson to appreciate and try to restore what they saw as the romance of old Edinburgh.¹¹ Geddes was the most important figure in the old town's turn-of-the-century social and architectural revitalization, and much of his programme involved the rebuilding or removal and replacement (in suitable period styles) of the slums of the old town. Such an architectural revitalization, with the re-introduction of the university community into what had become slums in the nineteenth century, could, he hoped, bring with it a social and cultural revival to a Golden Age such as Edinburgh had known in the eighteenth century.¹² Geddes, as Duncan Macmillan explains, followed the thinking of John Ruskin and others in seeing architecture as "not merely a material

¹²(...continued)

Francis Nobbs when she was at work on her doctoral dissertation. Sadly, Nobbs's letters to Phoebe Traquair seem to have vanished. (Conversation with Elizabeth Cumming, 13 February 1998.) My thanks are due to Dr. Cumming for providing me with copies of the few letters in her possession.

¹¹Miles Glendinning, Ranald MacInnes, and Aonghus MacKechnie, *A History of Scottish Architecture from the Renaissance to the Present Day* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), pp. 348-49. On Geddes see also Philip Boardman, *The Worlds of Patrick Geddes: Biologist, Town Planner, Re-educator, Peace-Warrior* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978) and Hellen Meller, *Patrick Geddes: Social Evolutionist and City Planner* (London: Routledge, 1990).

¹²Meller, *Patrick Geddes*, pp. 75-76.

manifestation of the past, of greater or lesser aesthetic and historical interest, but a vehicle for enshrining and transmitting ideals of social value.”¹³ This idea, whether it came to them through Geddes, Ruskin or others, was to form an important part of both Nobbs's and Traquair's thinking about architecture and culture. In addition, Geddes's work on town planning was extremely influential. Geddes's preoccupation probably encouraged Nobbs to consider the problem too, as Nobbs was later to show great interest in city planning and slum clearance in Montréal and elsewhere.

Perhaps Geddes's most significant project in attempting to reintroduce university life to the Old Town was the purchase and expansion of several existing buildings to make Ramsay Garden, a block containing a mix of university residences and large flats, of which one was Geddes's own.¹⁴ This project brought Nobbs, and particularly Traquair, into Geddes's circle. The building was designed in part by Stewart Henbest Capper (1860-1924), whose pupil Traquair would become before Capper's departure for Montréal to precede Nobbs as Macdonald Professor of Architecture at McGill University. Then, in 1893, the project was taken up by Sydney Mitchell (1856-1930), with whom Traquair was also to work in Edinburgh.¹⁵ These men were among the members of Edinburgh's artistic community who had begun to work with Geddes towards social and artistic reform, and who carried on even after Geddes himself took another direction. The group included a

¹³Duncan Macmillan, “The Busie Humm of Men’: Visions of the City in Scottish Art,” in *The Architecture of Scottish Cities*, ed. Deborah Mays (East Linton, Scotland: Tuckwell Press, 1997), p. 53.

¹⁴Glendinning et al, *Scottish Architecture*, p. 354.

¹⁵Glendinning et al, *Scottish Architecture*, p. 354; Nobbs, “Ramsay Traquair,” p. 147.

number of people who influenced Nobbs's and Traquair's intellectual development. In addition to Capper and Mitchell, these were the architect George Washington Browne, Phoebe Traquair, Gerard Baldwin Brown and his wife, and Robert Lorimer.¹⁰

Baldwin Brown was clearly an important influence on both Nobbs and Traquair, and provided an early connection to arts and crafts principles. Nobbs was to dedicate his 1937 book, *Design: A Treatise on the Discovery of Form*, to him and Sir Robert Lorimer, his first architectural master.¹⁷ As well as a scholar, Baldwin Brown was an artist and craftsman; in fact, he had first intended to make the practice of art his career.¹⁸ From 1887 he supervised all the art classes offered by the Edinburgh Social Union, an organization founded by Geddes in 1885 with the aim of improving the city both through the sponsorship of public art—particularly mural decoration—and by ameliorating the living

¹⁰Cumming, "Phoebe Anna Traquair," p. 74. In 1903 Nobbs replaced Stewart Henbest Capper as Macdonald Professor of Architecture at McGill, while Capper, frustrated by the fact that he was unable to practise architecture in that position, left Montréal for the school of architecture at Manchester. Nobbs had been recommended for the job by his old mentor Baldwin Brown, who was friends with McGill's Principal Peterson and had also recommended Capper. Nine years later Nobbs in his turn was to give up the position of department head in order to give himself more time to practise. He was replaced, yet again on the recommendation of Capper and also no doubt on his own advice, by his old friend Ramsay Traquair, who had been since 1904 lecturer in architecture at the Edinburgh College of Art. (Letter from Traquair to Peterson, in John Bland, "Ramsay Traquair: Biography," in *Ramsay Traquair and his Successors: A Guide to the Archive*, ed. Irena Murray [Montréal: Canadian Architecture Collection and Blackader-Lauterman Library of Architecture and Art, McGill University, 1987], p. 9. The Canadian Architecture Collection will hereafter be known as the CAC.) Surprisingly, Traquair does not mention in this letter that he had worked with Lorimer.

¹⁷Percy Nobbs, *Design: A Treatise on the Discovery of Form* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1937).

¹⁸George Macdonald, "Gerard Baldwin Brown, 1849-1932" (obituary), *Proceedings of the British Academy, 1935* (London: Humphrey Milford, published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 1935), p. 376.

conditions of the poor.¹⁹ Through its three guilds of art, music, and nature, it provided classes to enable people to beautify their lives by the work of their own hands.²⁰ Like Geddes, Baldwin Brown believed that art was primarily a strong reflection of the society that produced it. Thus, as George Macdonald wrote in his obituary in 1935, for Baldwin Brown “[e]poch had succeeded epoch in art, not in virtue of those subtle links of continuity which it is often difficult to discern at all, but in virtue of the successive appearance on the stage of the world of different forms of human society.”²¹ This idea is clearly evident in the thinking of both Nobbs and Traquair. Each associated what he saw as the simple, genuine architecture of rural Québec with the similarly unaffected, pure people who had produced it and, conversely, noted that his own seemingly rootless urban society tended to produce insipid, poorly-constructed buildings that failed at any meaningful expression.

Baldwin Brown and the architect Robert Rowand Anderson (1834-1921) were particularly influential in the founding of the School of Applied Art, which opened in October 1892 with Anderson as honorary director.²² In addition to providing essential training in the crafts to many artists and architects in Edinburgh, the School of Applied

¹⁹Meller, *Patrick Geddes*, p. 75.

²⁰Cumming “Phoebe Anna Traquair,” pp. 41, 65. Cumming argues that by the late 1880s, the Social Union’s priorities were “clearly moving away from philanthropy towards design reform” (*Phoebe Anna Traquair*, p. 17), and indeed from 1887 Baldwin Brown himself offered classes in beaten brass and copper work (“Phoebe Anna Traquair,” pp. 65-67).

²¹Macdonald, “Baldwin Brown,” p. 377.

²²Cumming, “Phoebe Anna Traquair,” p. 82. As noted above, both Nobbs and Traquair studied at the School in the 1890s.

Art gave rise to the National Art Survey of Scotland, an institution that was clearly to have an important influence on Traquair in particular. A year or so after founding the School of Applied Art, Anderson, Baldwin Brown and others decided that three two-year fellowships should be created to fund students to study historical Scottish architecture and design and make drawings of interesting examples.²³ This was to lead directly to the creation of the National Art Survey. Those chosen as bursars of the survey were the best draughtspersons trained by the School of Applied Art, and among them they produced some 1,500 sheets of measured drawings. The drawings were preserved at the school, and Anderson intended that they would comprise a corpus of examples to engrain in the students a sense of traditional Scottish design.²⁴ Traquair himself was an early bursar of the Survey. Presumably inspired by Anderson's example, he was later to establish a similar programme of fellowships in Québec to encourage young architectural students to record the old buildings of that province by means of measured drawings, sketches and photographs, while in his early years in Montréal, Nobbs sponsored a competition to encourage students to draw historic buildings in Québec.²⁵ Anderson's influence on Nobbs and Traquair is also evident in another particularly important area. Speaking as an honorary graduand at the University of Edinburgh in April 1884, Anderson had argued

²³McKinstry, *Rowand Anderson*, p. 144.

²⁴Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, *National Monuments Record of Scotland Jubilee: A Guide to the Collections* (Edinburgh: National Monuments Record of Scotland, 1991).

²⁵"Montreal Junior Architectural Association," in *Canadian Architect and Builder (CAB)* (May 1905): 76.

that architects should use the early Renaissance style of the second half of the fifteenth century, believing that this would “lead to the production of a phase of art that will respond to and be more expressive of the thought and life of the modern world than anything we have yet seen.”²⁶ However, by the mid-1890s or so, and in parallel with the progress of the National Art Survey, he was becoming increasingly preoccupied with the development of a national style in architecture.²⁷ Anderson’s promotion of the Survey had sprung from his desire to develop a uniquely Scottish style based on the country’s historic vernacular buildings. In the same vein, both Nobbs and Traquair were to become interested in recording historic architecture in Québec, and both saw it as a suitable basis on which to build a new national style. As Anglophones newly arrived from Britain, however, their choice required extensive rationalization and cogitation about the relationship between ethnicity and national character.

Both Nobbs and Traquair worked for a time in the office of the Edinburgh architect (later Sir) Robert Stoddart Lorimer (1864-1929), Scotland’s most enthusiastic architectural practitioner along arts and crafts lines. Lorimer was well grounded in late-nineteenth century Edinburgh architectural practice; in 1884 he left university to article with Hew Wardrop of the firm of Wardrop [R. Rowand] Anderson and [George Washington] Browne. Three years later Wardrop died, leaving Lorimer to work with

²⁶Anderson, convocation address, April, 1884, quoted in Cumming, “Phoebe Anna Traquair,” p. 39.

²⁷McKinstry, *Rowand Anderson*, p. 150.

Anderson.²⁸ Lorimer must have become familiar with Anderson's preoccupation with the development of a Scottish national style, and this, in combination with the study of historic Scottish buildings, was to become an important part of his own practice. In 1889 he went to London where, among other pursuits, he worked for a year and a half in the office of Gothic Revival church architect George Frederick Bodley (1827-1907).²⁹ In 1893 he returned to Edinburgh to open his own architectural practice. Lorimer was particularly known for his domestic work and for his castle restorations. His work draws upon the historic architecture of Scotland without ever copying exactly. It was this effect for which Nobbs strove in his own work, and he must have been influenced in this by the time he spent with Lorimer.

Nobbs's nomination papers to become an Associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects (ARIBA) state that he had articulated for four years with Lorimer, starting in 1896;³⁰ architectural historian Peter Savage believes that Traquair was with him by 1898.³¹ It appears that Nobbs was not occupied solely in Lorimer's office, but there is evidence of his presence at intervals.³² Although it was rare for Lorimer's assistants to sign

²⁸Peter Savage, "An Examination of the Work of Sir Robert Lorimer" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1973), pp. 3-4.

²⁹A. Stuart Gray, *Edwardian Architecture: A Biographical Dictionary* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1985; Ware, Herts: Wordsworth Editions, 1988), p. 236.

³⁰Percy Erskine Nobbs, ARIBA nomination papers (RIBA biography file on Nobbs).

³¹Savage, "Robert Lorimer," p. 53. Traquair may have been elsewhere for at least part of this time.

³²Savage states that Nobbs "seems to have been engaged from time to time and on a
(continued...)

their drawings, a drawing for a cottage from 1899 appears to be signed by Nobbs.³³ Savage even suggests that one of Lorimer's houses, "Wayside," might have been designed by either Nobbs or Traquair. And Traquair designed Skirling House in Peebleshire, almost certainly his major domestic project, after Lorimer's proposals for the project had been abandoned as too expensive.³⁴

Both Nobbs and Traquair clearly respected Lorimer. He appears to have been a rather arrogant man and was enormously critical of other architects; he really respected only the work of Bodley and Richard Norman Shaw, although he also admired Sir Edwin Lutyens's Munstead Wood, a house he built in Surrey for the gardener Gertrude Jekyll.³⁵ Although Lorimer had few close friends, he numbered among them Ramsay's mother Phoebe Traquair.³⁶ Peter Savage has suggested that Lorimer may have been wary of those students who showed too much initiative.³⁷ He wrote of Nobbs, "Don't know how he'll end that boy for all his go and ability[.] I don't value his services very highly[;] always feel

³²(...continued)

temporary basis to undertake particular jobs" ("Robert Lorimer," p. 53).

³³Lorimer Office Records, book 2, p.114, item a of 10/5/1899. Cited in Savage, "Robert Lorimer," p. 95, ff. 54. Savage notes that the drawing is signed "P.C. Nobbs," but it seems likely that this is our Nobbs.

³⁴Cumming, "Phoebe Anna Traquair," p. 233.

³⁵Savage, "Robert Lorimer," pp. 18, 73.

³⁶Savage, "Robert Lorimer," pp. 18, 40-41.

³⁷Peter Savage, *Lorimer and the Edinburgh Crafts Designers* (London: Paul Harris, 1980), p. 26.

that there's just as good a chance of his drawings being wrong as right."³⁸ Yet Nobbs was a very fine draughtsman—Lorimer himself thought his Tite Prize design “uncommon good”³⁹—and indeed, in 1902, after a year or so as chief assistant to the architect A. Hessel Tiltman, he employed himself solely as a competition draughtsman for various architects in London.⁴⁰ Interestingly, Nobbs later wrote that it was Lorimer himself who had “visited [Nobbs's] quarters in Chelsea and extorted from [him] an oath that [he] would never draw for anyone” but himself.⁴¹ The fact that Lorimer then arranged for one last draughting job for Nobbs, working for Lorimer's own friend Walter Tapper on the Liverpool Cathedral competition, belies his statement that Nobbs's drawings were as often wrong as right. And Lorimer and Nobbs were to carry on a friendly correspondence, including a number of letters that were purely social, once Nobbs left for Montréal. Lorimer even sent him a sugar basin (which Nobbs initially mistook for a cigarette holder) when Nobbs was married in 1909.⁴² It is clear that both Nobbs and Traquair admired

³⁸Robert Lorimer, letter to R.S. Dods, 20 January 1901, p.5, quoted in Savage, “Robert Lorimer,” p. 143.

³⁹Lorimer, letter to R.S. Dods, 10 March 1900, pp. 3-4, quoted in Savage, “Robert Lorimer,” p. 95 ff 82.

⁴⁰Nobbs's Nomination Papers to become a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects (FRIBA).

⁴¹Nobbs, “Competition Reform,” in *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (JRAIC)* 12 (September 1935): 150.

⁴²CAC Nobbs Collection, Series F 14-7. Oddly, a file in Edinburgh of congratulatory letters on the occasion of Lorimer's knighthood contains none from Nobbs, although there is one from Traquair. It does, however, include one apparently from Nobbs's father, thanking Lorimer for his “kindness to my boys” and noting that “you have doubtless heard how well Percy is getting on in Montreal.” (University of Edinburgh Library Special Collections, Lorimer papers, files

(continued...)

Lorimer professionally and inherited from him (among others) an appreciation for local vernacular architecture and the drive to use it in modern building. Nobbs's obituary of Lorimer suggests those elements of his work that Nobbs himself found most admirable, which are also those to which his own writings suggest that he most fervently aspired. "It was given to him to materialize in building the very essence of the Scottish spirit," writes Nobbs. Lorimer was "the last of the great romantics, with a name to be put beside that of Philip Webb and Norman Shaw. Like these, a revivalist; like these, a modernist."⁴³

In 1900 Nobbs won the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Tite Prize for his design for a free-standing clock tower. This sent him to northern Italy to study the architecture of Milan, Verona, Venice, Ravenna, and Florence, and he was joined there by Ramsay Traquair and by Cecil Burgess, with whom he would later collaborate in Canada.⁴⁴ In Italy Nobbs made drawings and watercolours of decorative work, and with the help of these he later won the RIBA Owen Jones studentship in 1903. Although his time in Italy obviously contributed to Nobbs's architectural education, he believed that practice was essential to teaching. In a letter a few years after he made the trip, he indicated that he was planning to spend the summer working with architect David R.

⁴²(...continued)

Gen.1963/29/various numbers.)

⁴³Nobbs, "The Late Sir Robert Lorimer," in *JRAIC* (October 1929): 352.

⁴⁴Susan Wagg, *Percy Erskine Nobbs: Architect, Artist, Craftsman* (Montréal: McCord Museum/McGill-Queen's University Press, 1982), p. 3; Bland, "Ramsay Traquair," p. 8.

Brown—with whom he designed the Colby house⁴⁵—opining that this would do more for his teaching than returning to Europe, either to take up his Owen Jones Studentship or to work as an architect's assistant in London.⁴⁶

In 1901 Nobbs left Edinburgh for good to join the Fire Brigade section of the London County Council Architect's Office. A letter from him to McGill University principal William Peterson notes that he worked primarily on the LCC headquarters, where he “carried out a lot of complicated alteration work and quantities of fittings.”⁴⁷ No records seem to exist to show whether he might have worked on any other projects with the Architect's Office, and LCC drawings are frequently unsigned except by the supervising architect. However, there is some evidence of his presence there. A report on the LCC Staff Arts Exhibition of 1901 remarks that “it is of course impossible to note every exhibit, but . . . Mr. Percy Nobbs's architectural studies, deserve particular attention.”⁴⁸ It is unclear exactly how long he remained with the LCC. The only other mention of him appears to be in March of 1903, the year he arrived in Montréal, when it was noted that “Mr. P.E. Nobbs, formerly of the Fire Brigade section, [has] gained the Owen Jones

⁴⁵John Bland, “Percy Erskine Nobbs: Biography,” in *Percy Erskine Nobbs and His Associations: a Guide to the Archive*, ed. Irena Murray (Montréal: CAC and Blackader-Lauterman Library of Architecture and Art, McGill University, 1986), p. 18.

⁴⁶Letter to McGill principal William Peterson, April 16th, 1904 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series B.7-3).

⁴⁷Letter to Peterson, 24 November 1903. Peterson Papers. Quoted in Wagg, *Percy Erskine Nobbs*, p. 4.

⁴⁸Charles Aitken, Esq., “Notes on the Exhibits,” in *The London County Council Staff Gazette* II (May 1901): 56-57.

studentship of £100, founded for the encouragement of the study of ornament and coloured decoration”⁴⁹ The LCC certainly provided a progressive atmosphere, and probably helped influence Nobbs’s later interest in city planning and slum clearance, projects with which the LCC Architect’s Office (although not specifically the Fire Brigade section) was heavily concerned. In fact, two arts and crafts architects had come from the LCC Housing Branch to lead the Fire Brigade Branch just before Nobbs began working there.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the Euston Road Fire station, a building that, as architectural historian A. Stuart Gray observes, stands as testimony to the depth of influence of the Arts and Crafts Movement on the architects of the London County Council, was under construction during Nobbs’s tenure there.⁵¹ Like the fire station, many of the LCC’s projects were designed in the “Queen Anne” style perfected by Richard Norman Shaw or reflected some other facet of arts and crafts practice, such as the vernacular-inspired work of such architects as Philip Webb or, later, Edwin Lutyens. As Susan Wagg comments, many of Nobbs’s buildings in Canada clearly suggest that he was aware of the work being done at the other draughting tables in his office in the LCC.⁵²

Perhaps as important as his direct connection with the Architect’s Office, Nobbs’s years in London put him close to the greater artistic community of that city, where he gained even more contact with the current architectural and planning ideas of some of the

⁴⁹*London County Council Staff Gazette* IV, 39 (March 1903): 30.

⁵⁰Wagg, *Percy Erskine Nobbs*, p. 3.

⁵¹Gray, *Edwardian Architecture*, p. 10.

⁵²Wagg, *Percy Erskine Nobbs*, p. 4.

most important people connected with the arts and crafts movement. Many years later he wrote, "I remember well sitting beside [William] Morris (blue linen shirt and all) at a lecture by Walter Crane, and Morris kept gripping my thy [sic] and saying 'Isn't that good?' at every point Crane made; I was lame for a day and black and blue for a week. Morris was a man of strong grip in all matters."⁵³ It may also have been at this time that he made the acquaintanceship of Raymond Unwin (1863-1940), of the garden-city-specializing partnership of Parker and Unwin, with whom he later corresponded from Montréal.

Nobbs was not alone of the two in receiving the benefits of the metropolitan experience around the turn of the century. In 1899 Traquair worked in the office of the London architect Samuel Bridgman Russell (1864-1955), where he too was exposed to the architectural practice of the city. Before going south, he had spent 1897 in the offices of John More Dick Peddie (1853-1921) and Edinburgh Social Union member (later Sir) George Washington Browne (1853-1939).⁵⁴ Browne in particular linked him even more tightly to the centre of Edinburgh architectural practice; after articling with well-known Scottish "Queen Anne" architect J.J. Stevenson, Browne had been chief assistant to Robert Rowand Anderson, with whom Lorimer had himself articulated.⁵⁵ In addition,

⁵³Nobbs, "Latter Day Architecture" (manuscript dated 8 November 1937), p. 5. (McGill University, CAC Nobbs Collection, Series C.10-2). Oddly enough, Morris died in 1896. Either the episode took place on an earlier trip to London, when Nobbs was quite young, or this tale is an example of self-invention.

⁵⁴British Architectural Library, RIBA, *Directory of British Architects*, pp. 923-24.

⁵⁵Gray, *Edwardian Architecture*, p. 126.

Stewart Henbest Capper, who went on to work with Patrick Geddes on his Ramsay Garden project (where he was assisted by Traquair), also articulated first with Browne.⁵⁶ Capper introduced a different note as well; he had trained in the *Atelier Pascal* at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris.⁵⁷ Browne was also the first Scottish winner of the RIBA Pugin Prize, which Traquair won jointly with another architect in 1899.⁵⁸ Traquair must have been in Lorimer's office around that time, leaving it for his year in London and returning to it later, as Lorimer notes in a letter that Traquair was "about to have another go at 'the Pugin.'" ⁵⁹

In 1905 Traquair began his own practice in Edinburgh.⁶⁰ A few years later, when he applied for the position of Chair of Architecture at McGill University, Traquair wrote to Principal Peterson that he had "erected a considerable number of buildings" in and around Edinburgh. Only a few are known today.⁶¹ A design for a row of six inexpensive

⁵⁶Robert J. Naismith, "Dash of Genius on City Skyline," in *The Scotsman*, 23 December, year unknown. (Copy in National Monuments Record of Scotland, artist's file on S. Henbest Capper.)

⁵⁷Naismith states that Capper was in Paris for one year ("Dash of Genius"), however, the RIBA *Directory of British Architects* states that he was there for four years (p. 152). Montréal architect William Sutherland Maxwell (1875-1952) also spent two years in the *Atelier Pascal*, some years later. (Harold Kalman, *A History of Canadian Architecture* vol. 2 [Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994], p. 557.)

⁵⁸McKinstry, *Rowand Anderson*, p. 163.

⁵⁹Lorimer, letter to R.S. Dods, 14 August 1898. Quoted in Savage, "Robert Lorimer," p. 53 ff.

⁶⁰Traquair, letter to William Peterson, 27 December 1912. Quoted in full in Bland, "Ramsay Traquair," p. 9.

⁶¹Traquair, letter to Peterson, 27 December 1912.

cottages to be built at Bannockburn, published in 1908, illustrates that he had taken to heart the arts and crafts teaching of making a new building suited to its site through the use of local materials (fig. 1.1). The row is an example of what Glendinning et al call “the application of the ‘artistic’ simple cottage style to low-density working-class housing,” many examples of which were designed by Lorimer and others beginning in the 1890s.⁰² In this case, the cottages are harled (roughcast or stuccoed) on the outside, and roofed with Scottish pantiles. Even in these humble three-room cottages, with “all fittings and finishings of the simplest type,” Traquair clearly gave his attention to the aesthetics of massing and the appearance of the whole, as befits a row designed for the Garden City Association.⁰³ Although the cottages are extremely simple and very small, their high-peaked roofs and cross-gabled design, with pairs of houses sharing a gable front, makes for an attractive overall picture.

Begun around 1905, Traquair’s work at Skirling House for Phoebe Traquair’s friends Sir Thomas Gibson Carmichael and his wife Mary is even more in the Arts and Crafts mood, and here he was not working under the financial constraints governing the design and construction of the cottages at Bannockburn (figs. 1.2 & 1.3).⁰⁴ As the

⁰²Glendinning et al, *History of Scottish Architecture*, p. 355.

⁰³Illustration caption in James Nicoll, ed., *Illustrations of Scottish Domestic Work in Recent Years* (Aberdeen: Daily Journal Offices, 1908), Plate 65.

⁰⁴Glendinning et al, date the house at 1912 (*Scottish Architecture*, p. 600). It is listed on the Scottish Historic Buildings list as 1905, and was illustrated in Alex Koch, ed. *Academy Architecture and Architectural Review* 34 (1908). It seems likely that 1905 represents the year it was begun, but as Traquair sent pictures of the finished building to Nobbs in a letter in 1909, it was obviously finished by that year (see Note 69).

English arts and crafts architect Philip Webb had done at Standen in Sussex in 1891, he incorporated a farmhouse already standing on the site into his design, retaining the integrity of the structure while designing a house suitable to contemporary living. Although it is fairly large, the house gives the impression of being quite modest, suggesting that it might even be a grouping of smaller cottages joined together. Its Z-shaped plan gives it a cosy appearance, creating as it does two sheltered, two-sided yards within its angles. Its low, stone walls and varied-height roof, punctuated with enlivening dormers and chimneys, must have fit it well for its setting near old cottages and barns (although the Scottish Historic Buildings list suggests that the partially weather-boarded upper floor may show the influence of the south coast of England, rather than of local domestic work). Inside, low-ceilinged corridors on the second floor continue the feeling that the house is an overgrown cottage (fig. 1.4). The extensive ironwork, featuring dragons and other beasts, particularly on the outside doors and in the garden, is highly whimsical (figs. 1.5 & 1.6). The interior includes such details as a charming carved newel post showing a pelican feeding her young in mythical pelican fashion (fig. 1.7), and a multiplicity of chimneypieces, ranging from formal classical designs to cottagey glazed-brick surrounds.

A departure from his domestic work is Traquair's First Church of Christ, Scientist, built in Edinburgh in 1911 (fig. 1.8). It is a low, ground-hugging structure, belonging to the genre of Scottish ecclesiastical revival buildings then current; in this case Traquair used forms from the fifteenth-century Scots neo-Romanesque tradition.⁶⁵ The broad,

⁶⁵Glendinning et al, *Scottish Architecture*, p. 375. See also Fiona Sinclair, *Scotstyle: 150*
(continued...)

square front is flanked on either side by round towers, and the round-arched windows and heavy stonework throughout evoke Romanesque forms. Inside, the wood carving that survives—particularly in the organ—demonstrates once more Traquair’s interest in decorative arts, as does the elegant iron work in the porch doors (figs. 1.9 & 1.10).⁶⁵ All this expresses Traquair’s allegiance to the arts and crafts tradition of using local materials and historic forms in order to make modern buildings harmonize with their settings and with the history of the areas in which they stand, while never attempting to imitate exactly the buildings of an earlier period.

Traquair carried out other commissions during his Edinburgh career, but for the most part they are all but unknown today.⁶⁷ His mother wrote to Nobbs in 1904: “I wish Ramsay had as good prospects [as Nobbs himself], things are slow here, he works hard enough, but to get independent work is another matter,” although five years later she was more positive, asserting that “his own practice promises to go on growing.”⁶⁸ Traquair

⁶⁵(...continued)

Years of Scottish Architecture (Edinburgh: Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland and Scottish Academic Press, 1984), p. 72. Sinclair dates the church at 1910.

⁶⁶The interior of the church was severely modified some years ago, and it now contains offices. The exterior, however, has survived intact.

⁶⁷One exception is the still-extant MacKenzie House, of 1910, in Kinnear Road, Edinburgh. Unfortunately, Traquair’s office papers from Edinburgh do not survive to provide a picture of the work he was doing. Robert Naismith, a one-time colleague of Edinburgh architect Frank Mears, who was a friend and briefly worked with Traquair, recalled that Traquair’s papers were left with Mears when Traquair went to Canada, and were destroyed at the time of a major office overhaul after Mears’s death. (Conversation with Robert Naismith, 14 February 1998.)

⁶⁸Phoebe Traquair, letter to Nobbs, 26 February 1904; Phoebe Traquair, letter to Nobbs, 15 November 1909.

himself wrote to Nobbs the same year that “the practice is flourishing . . . heaps of little and one big job are impending,” including pictures of his work at Skirling House “just to prove that something is doing (or was!).”⁶⁹ By 1920, when Traquair applied to become a RIBA Fellow, his sponsor Robert Lorimer cited Skirling House and the Church of Christ, Scientist in his nomination.

Traquair also worked for a time with his friend (later Sir) Frank Mears (1880-1953). Mears was employed in Traquair's office in 1908,⁷⁰ and the two later collaborated on an extraordinary project to complete the monument on Edinburgh's Calton Hill that had begun as a copy of the Parthenon to commemorate Britain's victory at Waterloo almost a century before.⁷¹ Mears was married to Patrick Geddes's daughter, and worked extensively with Geddes on his plans for the renewal of the old town. It appears that Traquair and Mears maintained contact after the former went to Canada; Edinburgh University Library possesses a copy of Traquair's book, *The Old Architecture of Quebec*, inscribed “To Frank Mears in memory of old days,” and signed and dated 1947. The book was given to the library in 1953, the year Mears died.

Mears had also worked with Sydney Mitchell, an architect Cumming describes as among the most important arts and crafts architects in Edinburgh, and his partner George

⁶⁹Ramsay Traquair, letter to Nobbs, 24 September 1909.

⁷⁰Rebecca M. Bailey, *Scottish Architects' Papers: A Source Book* (Edinburgh: Rutland, 1996), p. 131.

⁷¹I am indebted to John Lowrey for this information, and to Hugh Crawford for showing me the original watercolour design for the Calton Hill project.

Wilson in 1906-07.⁷² Mitchell had spent five years as a pupil in the office of Robert Rowand Anderson (founder of the School of Applied Art and of the National Art Survey) before setting up on his own in 1883.⁷³ In that year Mitchell designed the romantic Well Court, a working-class housing complex that Glendinning et al describe as “a sanitary slum redevelopment of emphatically ‘artistic’ character,” with its garden court, steeply-pitched roofs, and picturesque asymmetrical massing.⁷⁴ This first architectural expression of the Old Edinburgh movement was to help prod Geddes towards his project to revive Edinburgh’s “Golden Age.” It suggested the work of English architect Richard Norman Shaw, while reviving features of historic Scottish architecture that were to be borrowed from this building in its turn for housing projects in the next century.⁷⁵ Three years later, Mitchell celebrated the historic fabric of the old town in his slightly miniaturized model of the High Street in a past time, to be staffed by actors in historic costume at the 1886 Edinburgh International Exhibition.⁷⁶

Punctuating his architectural practice at intervals in the early twentieth century, Traquair spent some time with the British School at Athens. According to his own account in his nomination papers for the FRIBA, he was there from 1906 to 1908. An

⁷²Cumming, “Phoebe Anna Traquair,” pp. 143-44; Bailey, *Scottish Architects’ Papers*, p. 131.

⁷³Glendinning et al, *Scottish Architecture*, p. 304.

⁷⁴Glendinning et al, *Scottish Architecture*, p. 349.

⁷⁵Cumming, “Phoebe Anna Traquair,” p. 144; Glendinning et al, *Scottish Architecture*, p. 349.

⁷⁶Glendinning et al, *Scottish Architecture*, p. 349.

obituary in the RIBA library has him with the British School from 1905 to 1909, and also states that he spent “several years in Turkey chiefly in Constantinople . . . where he worked for the Turkish government and studied Byzantine architecture extensively.”⁷⁷ This is the only reference I have found to any employment with the Turkish government, and indeed such employment seems rather unlikely, although he did contribute extensively to the 1912 volume *Byzantine Churches in Constantinople* by Alexander Van Millingen, a Professor of History at Robert College, Constantinople; he is listed on the title page as an assistant to the author.⁷⁸ According to the *Annual of the British School at Athens* for 1905-06—perhaps the most reliable source of information on this point—he was appointed to an architectural studentship that year, receiving £100 to spend three months studying Byzantine and Frankish architectural remains in Laconia and three more in Constantinople making plans and drawings of Byzantine churches for Van Millingen’s book (a fact that Van Millingen acknowledges in his preface).⁷⁹ Traquair himself comments in a footnote to an article that he had gathered the materials for it in two journeys: one in 1906 as a student of the British School, and the other in 1909 “on behalf

⁷⁷“Association mourns passing of Professor Ramsay Traquair.” Unidentified obituary, RIBA library. (From the familiarity this obituary assumes with Traquair’s retirement place of Guysborough, Nova Scotia, I surmise that it appeared in a Canadian publication.)

⁷⁸Alexander Van Millingen, assisted by Ramsay Traquair, W.S. George and A.E. Henderson, *Byzantine Churches in Constantinople: Their History and Architecture* (London: MacMillan and Co, 1912).

⁷⁹*The Annual of the British School at Athens* XII, Session 1905-06 (London: Macmillan, nd.), p. 485.

of the Byzantine Fund."⁸⁰ In his preface, Van Millingen notes that Traquair wrote the entire chapter on Byzantine architecture, as well as contributing to numerous other sections.⁸¹ Interestingly, Van Millingen also writes that "it is impossible to thank Professor Baldwin Brown, of the University of Edinburgh, enough, for his unfailing kindness whenever I consulted him in connection with my work."⁸² Perhaps it was through Baldwin Brown's influence that Traquair carried out this work in partnership with Van Millingen, and it is even possible that Baldwin Brown helped Traquair acquire the architectural studentship that sent him to Athens.

Traquair's time with the British School at Athens is a significant feature of his early career. It has been more or less ignored, and I believe that it merits a fairly extensive discussion here of the origins of the School in nineteenth-century British Hellenism. Traquair's connection with the British School at Athens suggests that he had an interest in the collecting of other cultures long before he began his work with the architecture of Québec, and perhaps that some of his ideas on cultural preservation were formed at this early stage.

The School was founded in 1884, as a result of pressure from several prominent

⁸⁰Ramsay Traquair, "Laconia. III.—The Churches of Western Mani," *The Annual of the British School at Athens* XV, session 1908-09 (London: Macmillan, nd), pp. 177 ff. Elsewhere it is noted that "a grant was made from [the School's] funds towards the cost of the drawings" for Van Millingen's book, and Traquair is included in the list of students of the Byzantine fund, indicating that this fund was administered by the British School. (G.A. MacMillan "A Short History of the British School at Athens, 1886-1911," *The Annual of the British School at Athens* XVII, Session 1910-1911 [London: Macmillan & co., n.d.], pp. xxxii, 317).

⁸¹Van Millingen, *Byzantine Churches*, p. x.

⁸²Van Millingen, *Byzantine Churches*, p. xi.

British Hellenists.⁵³ One of these was R.C. Jebb, Professor of Greek at the University of Glasgow. In 1878 he had written a letter to *The Times* of London, arguing that there was need for a British school of archaeology at Athens and Rome, to support the same kind of research that he noted was already being carried out by France and Germany. His viewpoint as expressed in the letter shows remarkable similarity to Traquair's later attitude towards French-Canadian culture. He refers to "German explorers, [who] . . . bring temple after temple from its grave" and "recover" such statues as the Hermes by Praxiteles, which "lay under the shed of the little museum by the Cladius."⁵⁴ In other words, Jebb believed that the world needed scholars from England and elsewhere to rescue Greek culture from the state into which the Greeks had allowed it to sink, even though it might already be in a museum. Some years later, in 1883, Jebb was to write a "Plea for a British Institute at Athens," which was published in the *Fortnightly Review*. This was to be the catalyst for the founding of the school, as the Prince of Wales soon convened a meeting attended by a number of important public and political figures in favour of the project.⁵⁵

Hellenism was an important theme in Victorian Britain; as historian Frank M. Turner explains, intellectuals of the nineteenth century tended to look either to the

⁵³T.P. Wiseman, *A Short History of the British School at Rome* (London: British School at Rome, 1990), p. 2.

⁵⁴Quoted in Wiseman, *The British School at Rome*, p. 1.

⁵⁵Macmillan, "British School at Athens," p. ix.

middle ages or to antiquity for the origins of their own culture and civilization.⁵⁶ Those Europeans who had settled on Greek civilization as the most likely origin typically searched for similarities between the Greeks and themselves, finding many and dismissing the unavoidable differences.⁵⁷ Traquair himself referred much later to ancient Greek culture as that “upon which our own is founded.”⁵⁸ Thus, it was natural that scholars should find themselves interested in discovering more about these people whom they saw as their cultural ancestors. Many also believed—contrary to scholarship at the time—that modern Greeks were the same people as those who had developed the classical civilization that had been so enormously influential in western society. Travellers through the nineteenth and into the early twentieth century often went to Greece looking for living embodiments of the figures of Greek sculpture, and believed they found them.⁵⁹ Some early philhellenes, like Lord Byron, were sufficiently enamoured of the ancient Greeks as to be so inspired by their modern descendants’ struggle against Turkish domination that they had gone to help, and perhaps even to die in the effort.

Many in nineteenth-century Britain saw ancient Greek civilization, not as identical to their own, but as what their own should be; for them, it represented the

⁵⁶Frank M. Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. xi. This book provides a useful discussion of the Hellenic impulse in nineteenth-century England.

⁵⁷Turner, *Greek Heritage*, p. 8.

⁵⁸Ramsay Traquair, “The Commonwealth of the Atlantic,” *Atlantic Monthly* 133 (May 1924): 602.

⁵⁹John Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion: Victorians and Edwardians in the South* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 118-120.

strength and virtue that had been sucked out of the decadent society of modern Britain. These people had a tendency to admire the Greeks for the virtues that they felt they themselves had lost, and Turner demonstrates that “this image of Greece and its sculpture as symbolizing an antagonism to the harshness, materialism, and sham of modern life would persist throughout the century.”⁹⁰ The earlier German excavations that had inspired Jebb to call for the creation of a British School at Athens had themselves, as historian Peter Connor argues, been motivated in part by similar “romantic ideals about life, freedom, ancient religion, art, learning, morals, gymnastics and athletics,” and admiration for “the balance of the spiritual (*geistig*) and physical life” that seemed to German visitors to be represented by such sites as Olympia.⁹¹ All this makes it easy to see why Traquair, the budding antimodernist, might have been drawn to Greece on a venture not dissimilar from his French-Canadian project some years later. As Turner puts it, “in contrast to modern culture that was informed by false social values, inhibiting aesthetic rules, and ascetic Christian morality, Greece functioned as a metaphor for a golden age inhabited, if not by prelapsarian human beings, at least by natural children who made use of their imagination to comprehend the world and their reason to restrain their passions against excess.”⁹² Obviously, the Victorians and Edwardians did not see the virtues of ancient Greek culture as identical to those of the middle ages; mediaeval society was

⁹⁰Turner, *Greek Heritage*, p. 36.

⁹¹Peter Connor, “Cast-collecting in the nineteenth century: scholarship, aesthetics, connoisseurship,” in *Rediscovering Hellenism: The Hellenic Inheritance and the English Imagination*, ed. G.W. Clarke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 189.

⁹²Turner, *Greek Heritage*, p. 41.

lauded by many for its pure Christianity, as were many folk cultures. However, the ancient Greeks, while not Christians, did not seem to have suffered from the degradation of religion that many believed plagued the nineteenth century. Even John Ruskin, that champion of the mediaeval past, lauded Greek culture, suggesting to contemporary artists that in Greek art the imagination was given free reign.³³

The establishment of the British School at Athens suggests itself as a part of the imperial project upon which Britain had embarked. Britain, like France and Germany, sent scholars to Greece to identify and preserve its ancient culture, in many cases removing their finds to museums at home.³⁴ Like Traquair in Québec later in the century, many of these scholars seemed to believe that the Greeks were not capable of managing their own heritage, and that they required the assistance of the researchers' own more advanced culture in northern Europe to ensure that it did not remain forever buried and undiscovered. They went with the understanding that they could and should rescue for the enrichment of their own cultures the valuable elements of what they found.

Traquair published his findings in three articles in the *Annual of the British School at Athens*. In Greece, as well as in Constantinople, he studied Byzantine rather than Classical ruins. As he had gone to Greece on an architectural studentship, his articles, like his chapter in Van Millingen's book, concentrate on the description and analysis of

³³Turner, *Greek Heritage*, p. 65.

³⁴Traquair himself was not above removing the odd item; in 1909, the year of his second stint with the British School at Athens, he sent Nobbs and his new wife Mary Cecilia Shepherd a Greek vase as a wedding present. (Letter from Ramsay Traquair to Nobbs, 24 September 1909. CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series B.7-3.)

the architectural forms of the churches and castles he studied rather than on a discussion of the broader political or social history of the time. On occasion, however, he betrays hints of the approach he was later to take; it is clear that he had strong ideas about what was worth studying, and that he believed that some periods simply had not produced work that was worth the trouble. He describes a group of churches as “built in the seventeenth or eighteenth century to judge by their bad masonry and coarse painting. Beyond the evidence they give of the great revival of religious feeling and of church building in these late times, they are of no importance.”⁹⁵ As he was to do later in Québec, Traquair drew a firm connection between the quality of the buildings and the period in which they were made. In this case, he adjudged this group of churches to be of the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries simply because, in his estimation, they were not very good.

Although Nobbs and Traquair did not agree on every particular, they shared a general approach to architecture and the study of culture. The origins of their outlook—their admiration for vernacular forms, their association of the virtues of societies with the architecture they produced, their approach to architectural practice, and their interest in national culture—can all be found rooted in the architectural community of turn-of-the-century Edinburgh and London where they received their training. But the antimodernism that led Edinburgh’s architects and social reformers to try to preserve historic buildings and neighbourhoods, to attempt to rehabilitate the poor by teaching them weaving and metalwork, and to seek cultural and social rejuvenation in the

⁹⁵Ramsay Traquair, “Laconia. III.—The Churches of Western Mani,” p. 194.

architecture and traditions of the Scottish Folk developed a distinctly imperialist lean in the context of another culture. Traquair in Greece, and Nobbs and Traquair in Canada, each brought his imperialist notions of culture to the collection and preservation of another.

The environment in which Nobbs and Traquair spent their formative years had an indelible effect on them, and as late as 1938, when Nobbs wrote his appreciation of Traquair on the latter's retirement (and only a year before he himself was to leave McGill University), Nobbs emphasized the importance of the antimodern aspects of Traquair's education and of his life. Recognizing the depth of their antimodernism is an essential step to interpreting their work as architects and theorists in Canada; in the next chapter, I examine how thoroughly it permeated their approach to the culture of rural Québec, resulting in interpretations that were to help formulate their ideas about a modern architecture for Canada.

Chapter Two “SIMPLE THINGS FREE FROM SHAM”

IN COMMON with intellectuals in many countries at the turn of the twentieth century, Nobbs and Traquair found modern life to be severely deficient. Its shortcomings manifested themselves particularly in what they saw as the poverty of its artistic and architectural endeavours. Nobbs railed against “a civilization where all classes habitually assemble in search of refreshment of soul by watching emotion registered on the fleeting film . . .” and saw “a countryside at our doors where folk are clothed but have no costumes, are housed but have no architecture, and acquire their uncherished household gods through the village store.”¹ Good design seemed to have become lost in a welter of cheap utilitarianism or of historic detail applied meaninglessly and without real knowledge to modern buildings and other objects. Searching for something more genuine, Nobbs and Traquair came to value rural Québec society for what they understood as its pure folk culture, uncorrupted by the modernity that regulated their own lives. If modern Canadian architecture and design could be improved by the infusion of folk values and methods of building, they believed, they might revitalize their own seemingly weak and over-civilized culture, which was almost devoid of genuine modes of expression or real feeling to express. Thus inspired, the two set out to record old buildings in Québec before they vanished—taking their tradition with them—or were modified or restored, which seemed nearly as destructive to their authenticity.

¹Nobbs, “the Arts of Russia” (undated typescript), p. 1. (Canadian Architecture Collection, Blackader-Lauterman Library, McGill University [CAC], Nobbs Collection, Series C.9-1). In this case Nobbs was comparing the current situation in Canada to “the exquisiteness of the apparatus of life of a wealthy peasantry like that of the Ukraine a generation ago” [last three words added later in pen].

Nobbs and Traquair focussed their interest almost exclusively on the areas of earliest European settlement in what is now the province of Québec. The buildings that were the subject of Traquair's studies are (or were) on the Île d'Orléans, an island in the Saint Lawrence River just east of Québec City, in the provincial capital itself, in Montréal, and in towns, villages and the countryside in the Saint Lawrence River valley between the two principal cities and east of Québec City. Nobbs and Traquair believed that in these early-settled areas resided, unspoiled and unchanged, the direct descendants of the *habitants* who had initially arrived from France to farm the land. Like their ancestors, the rural dwellers of these areas seemed to them still to be peasants, who remained cut off from Nobbs and Traquair's own advancing civilization, and were thus set apart from their own modern world.

It is not, of course, the prerogative of the members of the more technologically-advanced parts of society to decide who else is or is not part of the contemporary world; no one can exist in the present and belong to the past. But even if, for Nobbs and Traquair, belonging in the present was predicated on contact with modernity, they misunderstood the situation in rural Québec, which, while certainly rural, was not completely isolated. Even in 1812, one could travel between Montréal and Québec on a daily stage coach, and by 1837 this service had been joined by a daily steamboat.² By that year, the towns and cities from Rivière-du-Loup and points westward all the way to

²Information about coaches and steamboats is derived from R. Louis Gentilcore, ed., *Historical Atlas of Canada, Volume II: The Land Transformed 1800-1891* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), plate 25.

Detroit, with many side routes, had been linked by regular boat and coach services. While it is unlikely that anyone travelled frequently by such ponderous (and very expensive) means, it is clear that communication and transportation among communities were both needed and present; letters, at least, could presumably make the trip with relative ease. Furthermore, railway service was beginning to be put in place as early as 1836.³ Lines linked Québec City southward to various towns in the province, and through them westward to Montréal and further south into the United States, as well as north-east along the south shore of the Saint Lawrence River to Rivière-du-Loup; in the hope of encouraging new industry, small towns began to vie with each other to entice railway companies to build local stations.⁴ Between 1865 and 1882, the railway expanded enormously, with lines running along the north shore of the Saint Lawrence River between Québec City and Montréal, and from Montréal to Ottawa. By 1891, a new line ran north from Québec City to the Lac-Saint-Jean region, and the most heavily-settled areas of Québec and Ontario were well served by trains. By Confederation, most of the area that Traquair studied was less than a day's journey from Ottawa, and not more than two from Toronto or New York City.⁵ This is not to argue that rural Québécois in the nineteenth century regularly went on jaunts to New York to take in the sights, but rather to emphasize Nobbs's and Traquair's misconception that, in the people of the Saint

³Information about train service comes from Gentilcore, *Atlas*, Plate 26.

⁴Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, *The Dream of Nation: A Social and Intellectual History of Québec* (Toronto: Gage, 1983), p. 136.

⁵Gentilcore, *Atlas*, plate 27.

Lawrence River valley, they had found survivals of the pre-industrial age, blissfully unaware of an advancing world around them.

Even in the deeply-antimodernist novel *Maria Chapdelaine*, first published in serial form in 1914 and appearing as a book in 1921, author Louis Hémon acknowledges the broader contact experienced by even the most isolated Québec farming communities.⁶ Set in the remote Lac-Saint-Jean region, the novel includes characters who leave their farms each winter to work in lumber camps, a hired man who helped build the railway line to the region from Québec City, a young man who has left his home there to work in an industrial town of 90, 000 people, only an hour from Boston by train, and Maria's mother, who yearns for her lost life in "the old parishes," where they had lived "only two hours drive [from] the railway."⁷ But Traquair's contented Folk have no desire to leave their close-knit villages for the city, and if they move to a remote district it is to satisfy some atavistic zest for adventure. With no outside contact, they seem outside of advancing time.

Not only did Nobbs and Traquair conflate the original *habitants* with their contemporary descendants, but they were also quite blind to the diversity and complexity of modern Québec society. At least in their writings, they recognized three sectors in Québec society: a rural Folk they thought had survived the centuries; an urban, working-class Francophone population that Traquair ignored and Nobbs, as I discuss in Chapter

⁶Hémon, *Maria Chapdelaine*, trans. W.H. Blake (Toronto: Macmillan, 1938).

⁷Hémon, *Maria Chapdelaine*, p. 30.

Five, abhorred; and their urban, intellectual colleagues. But as I demonstrate repeatedly through quotations from both men, it was in the rural society that they believed they found authentic Québec.

Less than a year after Nobbs's arrival in Canada, his column in the *Canadian Architect and Builder (CAB)* proclaimed that in "seeking to preserve an authentic record of some of the ancient land marks of Montreal," he had already set his young architecture students the task of making measured drawings of some buildings that he considered to be of most interest. The column also notes Nobbs's expectation that his project would influence other architects to do the same elsewhere.⁵ To emphasize his commitment to encouraging the study of local architecture, Nobbs later offered a prize of forty dollars in books on architecture to the best set of drawings of "old and interesting work in the city and neighbourhood of Montreal" to be done by a member of the Province of Quebec Association of Architects (PQAA) Sketching Club, founded in 1905 with Cecil Burgess (with whom Nobbs and Traquair had travelled in Italy) as its president.⁶ For his part, Traquair was later responsible for an extensive programme of recording old houses and churches by measured drawings, sketches and photographs (fig. 2.1). His students carried out building surveys as a part of his classes, and these, together with those by Traquair himself, formed the basis of his very-influential and still-important book of 1947, *The Old*

⁵"Gargoyle II," "Montreal Letter No. II," *CAB* (May 1904): 95-6.

⁶"Montreal Junior Architectural Association," *CAB* (May 1905): 76; France Vanlaethem, "Building the Metropolis," in *Montreal Metropolis 1880-1930*, ed. Isabelle Gournay and France Vanlaethem (Toronto/Montréal: Stoddart/CCA, 1998), p. 140.

*Architecture of the Province of Québec: A Study of Buildings Erected in New France from the Earliest Explorers to the Middle of the Nineteenth Century.*¹⁰

This chapter examines how Nobbs and Traquair thought and wrote about Québec vernacular architecture and those who built it. Both architects consistently refer to the buildings of interest to them as “old.” As the title of his book suggests, Traquair’s interest in Québécois architecture waned at about 1850, and Nobbs similarly drew the line at mid-century. For them, the “old” architecture of Traquair’s title is nearly synonymous with “good” architecture. Although they use the term to refer to buildings earlier than 1840 or 1850, a building erected before that time that showed too much deviation from what they defined as the French-Canadian type would not qualify as “old,” while a few “old” buildings, which to their eyes had managed to evade excessive modern and foreign influence, might even have appeared after 1850. Both generally use the term, then, not simply to denote chronological age, but also in a more charged way to signify the sort of buildings that they identified with a genuine French-Canadian tradition. As Traquair wrote in 1928, “[o]f course there are many houses even in French Quebec . . . whose flimsy construction and vulgar ornamentation witness only too truly to modern progress, but with these we are not concerned. We shall think only of the old things”¹¹

¹⁰Ramsay Traquair, *The Old Architecture of Quebec: A Study of the Buildings Erected in New France from the Earliest Explorers to the Middle of the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1947; facsimile edition Montréal: McGill University School of Architecture, 1996).

¹¹Ramsay Traquair, “The Old Cottages of Quebec: Of Solid, direct Construction, well Adapted to the Climate, and with the Dignity that comes naturally to Simple Things from Sham,” *House Beautiful* 63 (May 1928): 612.

Two major themes broadly underpin their appreciation for this genre of building. In the first place—in line with their arts and crafts training—they admired it for its appropriate response to climate and landscape, its use of locally-available building materials, and its high quality. In contrast, they bemoaned the rapidly-deteriorating quality of work in the building trades in their own time. In a lecture in 1910, Nobbs lamented: “To think that neither for love nor money could such a thoroughly sound piece of work[,] sound in taste & sound in construction[,] be put up to day in any town or village throughout this broad Dominion as can be found, once at least in five miles, on the shore all the way from Mulgrave Straits to Ottawa city, and all dated before 1840.” He went on to contend that “in the ordinary trades . . . this country is rapidly going back to a barbarous standard.” In contrast to work done twenty years and more before, he claimed, he was unable to find anyone in the Montréal of his own day who could make a ceiling that would not crack within three months.¹² (Several decades later, Nobbs had changed his tune radically. In a speech given in 1941 he noted that upon his arrival in 1903 he had found that he “could get things as well and skilfully made in this city as in Edinburgh or London I have found it so ever since and for anything in wood, plaster or metal from a sideboard to a fire dog a fully competent Montreal craftsman can be found if one knows where and how to look for him.”¹³)

¹²Nobbs, “The Architecture of Canada,” *Construction* (October 1910): 59. Also a manuscript “For Winnipeg 21 August 1910” (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.9-5).

¹³Nobbs, untitled speech, 10 March 1941, pp. 3-4 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.10-2).

Besides its characteristics of high quality and suitability, Nobbs and Traquair saw Québec architecture dating from “the days when men yet cared about doing things decently and in order” as representative of a culture that was itself more pure and natural, and more virtuous, than their own.¹⁴ To their minds, its builders had acted by instinct for what was naturally right rather than by training, and the houses and churches were inherently stronger and better than anything made in the twentieth century. As Traquair wrote, “our old farmhouses and our old churches are as real and as alive as the people who live in them and who worship in them, the people who designed them and who built them with their own hands. They are a true expression of French-Canadian life and genius.”¹⁵ Not hesitating to employ the possessive pronoun, Traquair here conflates—even within a single sentence—the people of his own day, who lived and worshipped in the buildings he admired, with those who had designed and built them decades or centuries earlier. Continuing the theme of virtue and purity, he wrote elsewhere that Québec cottages “form a true natural style, simple and lacking perhaps in the graces of skilled ornamentation, but none the less well built, well adapted to their purpose and with the charm which always accompanies direct and honest work.”¹⁶

¹⁴Nobbs, “On the Value of the Study of Old Work,” *CAB* (May 1905): 74.

¹⁵Traquair, “Why we Admire Old Buildings” (undated typescript), p. 3 (McGill University Archives [MUA], Box 2: 35/17/160).

¹⁶Traquair, *The Cottages of Quebec* (Montréal: McGill University Publications [MUP] Series XIII, no. 5, 1926; reprinted, with additions, from *Canadian Homes and Gardens* [January 1926]), p. 14.

Nobbs's and Traquair's unconditional admiration extended even to building practices that they would have reviled in another context. For example, both noted the common occurrence of false chimneys on the gable ends of Québec cottages with central fireplaces. These chimneys are generally made of wood and shingled, and are strictly decorative. As Traquair commented, "A chimney seems to have been regarded as the proper termination for a gable, possibly it was a sign of social standing as indicating a house of many fireplaces." He noted that these chimneys were precursors to the finials that would eventually appear in the same location. "This is the way architecture grows," he concluded.¹⁷ While this is an interesting observation, I doubt that he would have celebrated in the same way a modern example, such as a house for the wealthy in twentieth-century Montréal, that used such mendacious details. It is telling that an arts-and-crafts-trained architect should be so sanguine about architectural features pretending to be what they are not; John Ruskin's notion of truth in architecture is an important precept of arts and crafts theory.¹⁸ Elsewhere, Traquair also seems to condone the making of objects in materials other than those for which their original designs were

¹⁷Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. 59. Nobbs was willing to extend this tolerance to at least one example of industrial design as well, commenting that these "dummy smokestacks" serv[ed] much the same 'aesthetic purpose', if such a thing exists, as the elegantly stumpy little funnels on certain motor driven members of the New York Yacht Club Squadron." ("Canadian Architecture," typescript of lecture read before the RIBA, September 1922, p. 5 [CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.9-6]).

¹⁸Although, as James Lubbock has argued, in his "Lamp of Truth" Ruskin was prepared to make exceptions to a rule that has often been interpreted too rigidly. He did allow for "legitimate appeal to the imagination," which might be exactly the excuse allowed these false chimneys. (James Lubbock, *The Tyranny of Taste: The Politics of Architecture and Design in Britain 1550-1960* [New Haven: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for British Art, 1995], p. 287).

intended—another practice roundly condemned by arts and crafts practitioners.

Discussing the wood carving in one church, he describes it as “[t]echnically . . . a school of plaster design carried out in applied wood carving.”¹⁹ Seemingly, the natural aesthetic sense of folk designers would allow them unerringly to break “rules” of design. In his 1937 book, Nobbs dedicates considerable ink to the importance of “translating” rather than simply “transferring” ornamental form from one medium to another. Following the early-twentieth century aesthetic theory of Benedetto Croce, whose work was very influential on his thinking, he argues that when a craftsperson interprets in a new material a form designed for a different one, the results will inevitably be “either ‘ugly faithful ones, or faithless beauties’, and where ornament and decoration is in question the latter are always to be preferred.”²⁰ The craftsperson must design for each material, accounting for its strengths and weaknesses, and making the most of its beauty. To copy forms faithfully in a new material, argues Nobbs, is futile: at best “an exposition of erudition, or at its worst a confession of fraud, but in either case . . . an admission of creative sterility.”²¹ These were rules that formally-trained architects had to follow in order to ensure good design, but folk builders, with their “natural” sense of design, could successfully take liberties with them.

¹⁹Traquair and C.M. Barbeau, *The Church of Sainte Famille, Island of Orleans, Que.* (Montréal: MUP Series XIII, no. 13, 1926; reprinted from *JRAIC* [May-June 1926]), p. 11.

²⁰*Design: A Treatise on the Discovery of Form* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), p. 195. In addition to an aesthetic theorist, Croce was himself an enthusiastic folklorist (Giuseppe Cocchiara, “Poetics in a State of Crisis,” in *The History of Folklore in Europe*, trans. John N. McDaniel [Turin: Editore Boringhiere, 1952; Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1981], pp. 511-27.)

²¹Nobbs, *Design*, p. 195.

Writing of the early settler architecture of the prairie provinces, Nobbs contended that there, as in Québec, advancing civilization had destroyed a strong folk tradition. Ranting as he often did, he said in a lecture before the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) that “The Galician or Doukhobor settler of Manitoba or Saskatchewan makes himself a typical Ukrainian cottage on his arrival, but when that falls to ruin, his next effort is bereft of all craftsmanship and tradition, and is a pure expression of those gross economies and the brutal conveniences among which the ‘Progressive’ mind breeds its maggoty idealism.”²² Nobbs saw an instinctive architectural tradition on the prairies corrupted by modernity. And as it was in the west, “progress” was destroying a folk tradition in Québec that was admirable both for its formal qualities and for a deeper virtue that its admirers found within it.

In the case of the architecture of early Québec, as this chapter will demonstrate, Nobbs and Traquair related what they saw as its inherent virtue to the mediaeval building tradition they believed had been brought by the first French settlers to come to Canada and only recently lost in the face of increasing industrialization. The idea that the architecture of French Canada was a survival of mediaeval building practice was prevalent in both Nobbs’s and Traquair’s thinking.²³ It is an important notion, because it reflects

²²Nobbs, “Canadian Architecture,” p. 4.

²³For Nobbs, it was perhaps early Renaissance vernacular building that the first settlers had brought, although he was not consistent on this. He wrote that “The early settlers of the Province of Quebec brought with them the building traditions of France at a time when Gothic building methods may be said to have just become extinct.” (“Canadian Architecture,” in *Canada and its Provinces: A History of the Canadian People and their Institutions by One Hundred*

(continued...)

the understanding that—especially for Traquair—not only the architecture but also the culture of the rural Francophone Québécois was the direct inheritor of a vigorous premodern culture. Traquair wrote of the first settlers in the new colony that they “were a simple people. The remote colony . . . did not attract the wealthy or the noble, and it was a peasant folk who came out to colonise New France. But, though simple, they were not in reality uneducated, for they brought with them their traditional knowledge, their ways of life, their legends, their folksongs and their mediaeval methods of building.”²⁴

Similarly, he compared the silver of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France with the “simpler, but more sincere values of the popular art” that had developed in Québec and flourished long after the renaissance tradition had vanished in France.²⁵ In the France of the period, he wrote, one thinks of the silver work of “Le Roi Soleil and Louis XV, a school elegant, perfect in workmanship and intensely artificial.” In Québec, in

²³(...continued)

Associates, ed. Arthur G. Doughty [Toronto: Glasgow, Brook & Co., 1914], p. 667.) Later, however, he also said of “a school of crafts established at St. Joachim, on the north shore of the Saint Lawrence” that, there, “latches, locks and cockspurs were made with distinct signs of Gothic method—the only trace of natural, traditional, unrevived Gothic culture I know of in America.” (“Architecture in Canada” [published lecture given before RIBA on the occasion of the British Empire Exhibition, 21 January 1924], in *JRAIC* [July to September 1924]: 91.) Furthermore, he noted as late as 1939—in an appreciation of Traquair on his retirement—that “happily in the older Architecture of the province of Quebec there is a considerable wealth of the very stuff that would appeal to Professor Traquair—a tradition imbued with all the common-sense directness of method to be found in Mediaeval art.” (“Ramsay Traquair, Hon. M.A. [McGill] F.R.I.B.A. On his Retirement from the Macdonald Chair in Architecture at McGill University,” *JRAIC* [June 1939]: 148).

²⁴Traquair, *Cottages of Quebec*, p.3.

²⁵Traquair, *the Old Silver of Québec* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1940), vii. All quotations about silver are found on this page.

contrast, the “court art [was] simplified, gaining in directness and naïveté what it loses in magnificence.” His preference for simplicity over sophistication extended from this comparison of France with Québec to a comparison of the over-sophisticated with the simple within Québec itself. In general, neither Nobbs nor Traquair found the architecture of Montréal and other cities, even of early periods, to be as attractive as that of the rural areas, although both did single out some urban buildings of note and Traquair included several early examples among his surveys. As he remarked, “Old Quebec is at its best in the cottage, the manor and the parish church. These were the work of the people, unassisted by academic architects, and passed entirely unnoticed at the time of their creation.”²⁵ That is, even amongst the old buildings, he particularly admired the rural vernacular, and especially what he understood as folk architecture. The well-to-do might be too sophisticated and attracted to foreign ideas, and Traquair noted that in the nineteenth century the larger country houses were frequently built “in a different manner from the simpler dwellings of the habitant. Then came a fashion for country houses of an English, or American, classic type. Soon the dullest kind of Italianate or French villa replaced the simple and dignified forms of tradition.”²⁷

These last few quotations from Traquair’s works are telling. As Robin D.G. Kelley points out, such terms as “authentic,” “traditional,” and “Folk” are “not self-evident and

²⁵Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. 93.

²⁷Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. 71.

self-contained analytic categories but subject to the dynamics of class, gender, and race.”²⁸ Just as Nobbs and Traquair saw the denizens of rural Québec in their own time as Folk in opposition to their own modern urban culture, here Traquair uses similarly “mutually constitutive and constituting” language, as Kelley puts it, by identifying the builders of the historical vernacular architecture he admired as “a peasant folk,” “the people,” and *habitants*—poor, simple, anonymous peasants who had come to New France to settle the seigneurial lands—and defining this category against “high” culture, which he identifies with the “wealthy or the noble,” and “academic architects.”²⁹

Discussing the meaning of the term “architect” in New France, Traquair observed that “(t)he most interesting and important architectural work of French Canada was in fact designed by the men who executed it, by whatever name they were known.”³⁰ Certainly formal training was not necessary to good design, and frequently detracted from it. For Traquair, folk building was so inherently *right* that its influence could even remedy the failings of trained architects who did not have a proper natural instinct for building. Traquair blamed the practice of adding new west fronts to existing churches in the later-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries for ruining many fine buildings. He singled out John Ostell, an English architect in Montréal, who may have been responsible for introducing the fashion for Italian Renaissance church fronts and who designed several in

²⁸Robin D.G. Kelley, “Notes on Deconstructing ‘The Folk’,” *American Historical Review* 97, 5 (December 1992): 1408.

²⁹Kelley, “Deconstructing ‘The Folk’,” p. 1402.

³⁰Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. 94.

country parishes. In each case, however, it seems that finances did not allow for the building of the spires, and “a few years later, the village carpenter put up a couple of belfried *flèches* of the old Canadian kind, perhaps a little smarter and curlier but unmistakably Canadian *flèches*; they save the design.”³¹ Once more, it was the untutored Québécois (and there can be no doubt, from this statement and many others, that to Traquair this meant French-*Canadian*) craftsman who made good architecture, having a natural feeling for good design and the forms that were local to the region (which, for Traquair, stood for all that was valuable in Québec). When a foreign, formally-trained architect introduced an alien, sophisticated style, it needed to be corrected by a local builder working in the time-tested vernacular idiom of the area.

Nobbs's and Traquair's ideas about these earlier inhabitants also shaped their attitudes towards the Québécois who were their contemporaries. Influenced by the same antimodernist impulse experienced by people across the industrialized world, Traquair in particular believed that remnants of the past, along with the buildings that represented it, survived virtually unchanged in his own time. He viewed contemporary rural French Canadians—at least those who lived in the early settlements and historic houses—as not very much changed from several hundred years before; to him they were essentially the same simple, unsophisticated people he believed they had always been, and were almost untouched by advancing civilization. Indeed, as he saw it, the *habitants* had been backward and little affected by change even upon their arrival in Canada: “the

³¹Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. 141.

Renaissance reigned in Europe in the seventeenth century, but, although these classic and learned forms might appeal to the cultured, the peasantry still clung to the ways of their forefathers in the building of their houses.”³² When he described French Canadians as “the oldest . . . people of the dominion,” he was suggesting not only that they had been on Canadian soil longer than any other (he was of course referring only to European peoples), but also that they were themselves—even those still living—an ancient people; that is, that they retained the purity, simplicity, firm religious conviction, and other virtues Traquair attributed to the original *habitants*.³³ These were all characteristics that seemed to be lacking in his own society—that of early-twentieth century affluent Anglo-Canadian Montréal and Western, middle-class society in general. Both he and Nobbs also frequently lamented the negative effect of modernity and urbanity upon the rural people of Québec, as they believed that it was corrupting them from their natural way of life on the land. Nobbs deplored the debased state of urban construction by Francophone builders in the Montréal of his time—those who were partaking of modernity—as distinct from the high quality of work done by their rural ancestors. In contrast, he noted the “wholly delightful state of affairs” at Chicoutimi, north of Québec City, which, he contended, could still in his own time more or less “clothe itself with gay attire and house itself in decorated buildings and equip itself with pots and pans, crocks and spoons, stoves and sleighs, and all the apparatus of life without dependence on the trader or the

³²Traquair, *Cottages of Quebec*, p. 3.

³³Traquair, “The Canadian Type,” *Atlantic Monthly* 131 (June 1923): 822.

manufacturer.”³⁴ Outside the cities, it seemed, life in Québec had not much changed since “the days before industrialism laid its sordid hands” on society.³⁵ It was this culture that Nobbs and Traquair celebrated, while they viewed the urban working classes—French Canadian or not—as a debased group incapable of true expression.

This last comment illustrates Nobbs's and Traquair's ignorance of Québec's recent history. Far from remaining static, rural society had undergone considerable change in the previous half century.³⁶ In communities that seemed entirely insular when viewed from the citified halls of McGill University, farming methods and crops were changing in direct response to external demand; the most dramatic shift was a great increase in dairy farming in the second half of the nineteenth century, to supply milk, butter, and cheese to both the domestic and overseas markets.³⁷ Meanwhile, vast numbers of people were leaving their farms and villages altogether, sometimes seasonally but frequently for ever. Historian Susan Mann Trofimenkoff argues that the population had been geographically mobile from the colony's earliest days, when indentured labourers and *voyageurs* had travelled

³⁴Nobbs, “The Arts of Russia,” p. 8.

³⁵Nobbs, “The Architectural Revivals of the XIX Century in England,” typescript of lecture given to the OAA, 15 January 1907 and the PQAA Sketching Club, 23 January 1907, p. 14 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.9-4).

³⁶Historian Peter Gossage has examined the social impact of industrial capitalism in nineteenth-century Québec using a case study of the town of Saint-Hyacinthe. (*Families in Transition: Industry and Population in Nineteenth-Century Saint-Hyacinthe*, Studies on the History of Québec [Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999], p. 3.)

³⁷Gentilcore, *Atlas*, Plates 13 and 40. See also Mann Trofimenkoff, *Dream of Nation*, p. 134.

about to seek their fortunes; in the nineteenth century, most of those on the move were leaving farms.³⁸ As agricultural techniques improved, fewer people were needed to work and some had to find jobs elsewhere. Similarly, dry years and poor crops spelled shortages that drove people away. The traditional practice of dividing a family's land amongst its sons meant that plots became smaller and smaller, to the point that they became untenable. Soil exhaustion and overcrowding forced more and more men and women to leave their land. The provincial government, aided by the church, made a concerted effort to keep them in the province and on the land, promising new roads and railway lines to open fresh areas for settlement.³⁹ Thus encouraged, some took up allotments of land in more remote areas, less hospitable than the fertile Saint Lawrence valley they had left behind them. But as Mann Trofimenkoff notes, although the clergy energetically promulgated the idea that Québec was a fundamentally rural society, their efforts to discourage an exodus from the countryside were in vain. The majority of those who left the farm headed straight for the cities and industry, whether within the province or—in large numbers—in New England.⁴⁰ People knew or guessed the truth, that the best land

³⁸Mann Trofimenkoff discusses at some length the phenomenon of migration from and within Québec, in the chapter "Nobody Meant to Stay," in *The Dream of Nation: A Social and Intellectual History of Quebec* (Toronto: Gage Publishing, 1983), pp. 132-49.

³⁹Mann Trofimenkoff, *Dream of Nation*, p. 135. J.I. Little has examined at length a region that was partly settled by people leaving established farming areas in the nineteenth century, in his book *Crofters and Habitants: Settler Society, Economy, and Culture in a Quebec Township, 1848-1881*, Studies on the History of Québec (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991).

⁴⁰Mann Trofimenkoff, *Dream of Nation*, pp. 135-36.

was already under the plough and a move to a new farm was unlikely to sustain a family, let alone all the families that needed to move. Urban and industrial areas swelled as time went on, belying Nobbs's image of a rural Québec society that was an unchanging, self-contained world, untouched by the "sordid hands" of industrialism. Even of those who remained on their farms, almost everyone must have had friends or family who had made the trek, suggesting that even the most rural areas had increasingly frequent contact with people in cities. Nonetheless, for early-twentieth century intellectuals in the bustling city of Montréal, rural Québec society seemed to shine as a beacon of authentic and uncorrupted tradition on their lacklustre modern culture.

By the time Nobbs arrived in Montréal in 1903, he had been well primed by his education among arts and crafts architects in Britain to look for indigenous forms in architecture, and to use them in his own designs. He soon found a suitable candidate in the local architecture around Montréal, and frequently invoked it as the best example of good Canadian vernacular building. Although it was Traquair who thoroughly developed the study of the architecture and culture of Québec, Nobbs was clearly proud of the fact that he had begun the process; in 1957 he noted that "the revival of interest in Old French architecture in Canada was started by me and handed over to Professor Traquair when he joined our Department. . . ."⁴¹

⁴¹Nobbs, letter to John Bland, 31 October 1957 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series B.7-6). Nobbs, being a prolific architect, gave more of his time to the practice of architecture than did Traquair, who was able to dedicate an immense amount of time and energy to the study of historic Québec architecture.

Of course Nobbs did not immediately find the vernacular tradition he sought, and the architecture of Montréal did not particularly impress him upon his arrival. He did identify “two serviceable types of plain house [which] were evolved in Montréal a short time back,” although he noted at the same time that it was “deplorable to think that the excellent traditions of which they are manifestations have not struck deeper roots.”⁴² He was later to suggest that the city did have “antiquities and old associations” worthy of notice, but that “very few of ourselves seem to care very much about” them.⁴³ The two building types he singled out in this early article—one in grey stone and one in red brick—he

⁴²“Gargoyle” [Nobbs], “Montreal Letter No. 1: Montreal in General,” *CAB* (April 1904): 73.

⁴³“Concordia Salus,” “Montreal Notes,” *CAB* (September 1905): 141. The “Montreal Notes” or “Montreal Letter” column appeared from the time of Nobbs’s arrival in Canada, and is an important source for Nobbs’s ideas about architecture. Initially it was written under the pseudonym “Gargoyle” and minor variations thereon, but in August 1904 the last column written under that *nom de plume* appeared. Beginning in October of that year, they are signed “Concordia Salus,” a pseudonym drawn from Montréal’s coat of arms (Norbert Schoenauer, “Percy Erskine Nobbs: Teacher and Builder of Architecture,” *Fontanus* from the collections of McGill University IX [1996]: 54). Internal evidence in the earlier examples points almost indisputably to their authorship by Nobbs, but this is not so clear of those signed by Concordia Salus. Indeed, in several cases the author refers in the third person to Nobbs in terms that seem inconsistent with one writing of himself. For instance, in January 1905, Nobbs is reported to have given a lecture “in a pleasantly enthusiastic and informal manner” (p. 9), while several months later a criticism of a drawing for Nobbs’s new student union building describes the drawing as a piece of “conscientious draughtsmanship,” but suggests that the design itself is “perhaps a trifle too rigidly confined to a simple outline” (April 1905, p. 61). However, the writing style is Nobbsian, and the opinions expressed are consistent with those of Nobbs. Susan Wagg identifies Nobbs as both “Gargoyle” and “Concordia Salus” (“The McGill Architecture of Percy Erskine Nobbs” [master’s thesis, Concordia University, 1979], p. 158 ff.) and the CAC guide to the Nobbs archive does the same. It is possible that he might have changed his pseudonym because he wished his column to be less strongly associated with him, as the identity of “Gargoyle” must have been clear to all readers. Traquair’s papers in the CAC contain copies of the “Montréal Notes” column by both “Gargoyle” and “Concordia Salus,” perhaps supporting the notion that both were pseudonyms of Nobbs. (CAC, Traquair Collection, Series G.1-4.)

argued, “represent a once live local building tradition at least—the kind of tradition, that is, with which the architect must saturate himself if his work is to be indigenous at all.”⁴⁴ He lamented the fact that local tradition was almost dead in much of England, and that it had never existed at all in many towns and cities west of the Atlantic Ocean. Montréal, he argued, was fortunate to have these local building traditions, but it had all but abandoned them less than half a century before, “since when, chaos!” This first article on the architecture of the city concludes with the comment that “(t)here is a little and a very little good old work in Montreal—a closer study of it would do much to improve the present state of things.” These comments on the architecture of the city that had been his home since the previous September were the first of many he was to publish on the current state of Canadian architecture. Already at this early stage, only nine months after his arrival in Canada, he was exhorting architects to look to local styles in order to build good architecture themselves, and had identified some suitable candidates for study. He had also noted that the difficult climate must be an important determining factor in the design of Canadian buildings, and this was a theme that was to recur repeatedly in his writing.

A year later, on 29 April 1905, Nobbs gave a lecture on the study of vernacular architecture to the PQAA Sketching Club. This talk, published in the *CAB*, was his first major statement in Canada on this subject, and as such is an important expression of his

⁴⁴“Gargoyle,” “Montreal Letter No. 1: Montreal in General,” *CAB* (April 1904): 73.

thinking at this time.⁴⁵ The lecture begins with a diatribe against the word “style,” whose use had come to denote all that was “imitative, irrational, deceptive”; the word “style,” he argued, had come to mean fake. Not for the last time, Nobbs insisted that the simple addition of an Elizabethan chimneypiece or Francois I dormers to an early-twentieth century house would never render it anything other than an early-twentieth century house with Elizabethan or Francois I details. This very practice of borrowing features from any period that took the client’s or the architect’s fancy would only delay the development of a real architecture of its own time. That being said, however, he went on to hurl invective at the vernacular architecture of his day, arguing that in any case the popular enthusiasm for “the styles” did at least suggest that people were in rebellion against the contemporary vernacular’s uniform ugliness. The solution to this problem, as Nobbs was to state repeatedly, was “to study old work in general, and the local old work in particular, for happily there were buildings put up in this province and down the river in the days when men yet cared about doing things decently and in order.” This vernacular, in contrast to the “criminal” badness of the modern, “even at its roughest scorns to emulate what it is not; [and] at its finest is wondrously potent to express purpose and intention and work which at all times is a true reflection of the life to which it ministered.”

T.J. Jackson Lears argues that this very eclecticism to which Nobbs objected so strenuously was both emblematic of and a contributor to “the feeling . . . that the urban

⁴⁵Nobbs, “The Study of Old Work,” pp. 74-75. All quotations in this paragraph are to be found in this article.

environment was somehow artificial and unreal.”⁴⁶ In appealing to the historic legitimacy of forms that had centuries of symbolic weight behind them, he argues, architects “unwittingly undermined [their] power.” Nobbs was always very careful to distinguish between copying styles and drawing inspiration from the lessons of history: the latter was essential; the former, deplorable.

After a general discussion of some advantages of studying (by which, he emphasized, he particularly meant measuring) old work, Nobbs moved on to a specific discussion of the vernacular architecture of Québec, in which, for the first time, he articulated his ideas about the purity and genuineness of the Québec Folk.⁴⁷ Because this is such an important early expression of Nobbs’s views on the Québec vernacular, it is worth quoting him here at length, along with his own substantial quotation from William Morris. Nobbs wrote:

What of the local old work. The beautiful words of William Morris in appreciating the vernacular art of England are as appropriate to the work we find here around us, and I feel sure if he were familiar with the charm and quaintness of the old Québec farms and seignories he would have written something very similar about it [sic].

‘For as was the land, such was the art of it, while folk yet troubled themselves about such things; it strove little to impress people either by pomp or ingenuity; not seldom it fell into commonplace, rarely it rose into majesty. Yet was it never oppressive, never a slave’s nightmare or an insolent boast; and at its best it had an inventiveness, an individuality that grander styles have never overpassed. Its best, too, and that was in its very heart, was given as freely to the yeoman’s house as to the village church;

⁴⁶Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920*, (New York: Pantheon, 1981; Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994), p. 33.

⁴⁷Nobbs, “Study of Old Work,” p. 75. All quotations in this paragraph appear in this essay.

never coarse, though often rude enough, sweet, natural and unaffected, an art of peasants rather than of merchant princes or courtiers, it must be a hard heart I think that does not love it, whether a man has been born among it like ourselves, or has come wondering on its simplicity from all the grandeur over seas.'

Nobbs went on to outline in fair detail how the architects of his own time might use the local traditions they found around them. First, he directed them to the architecture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in which, he argued, might be found "a wholesome antidote to that eclecticism in which we are trained to-day." But although they must not "be led away by [their admiration] into the sincerer forms of flattery" (by which he meant copying), he advised firmly: "when you have good local traditions always use them . . . a touch of local tradition will go a long way towards giving character to a piece of simple work." He recommended that his readers study the work of the architects Edwin Lutyens in England and Robert Lorimer in Scotland. This would

show how local tradition should be applied to modern work wherever there is any to apply. Do not study old ways with a view to imitative faking or artificial reproduction of ancient mannerisms and effects, but to get understanding of the sweet simplicity of natural expression, which is so very much more edifying as an adjunct of life than the affectations and poses and deceptions or sheer ugliness for its own sake so characteristic of vernacular architecture today.

This article is extremely important as a statement of Nobbs's approach to architectural design and the use of vernacular examples. In addition, because it was both a lecture given to a group of (probably mostly young) architects, and later published in the journal that most Canadian architects would have been reading at the time, it provides evidence not only of his own way of thinking, but also of the potential it had to influence

others at the time. Nobbs was quite clear that, while he recommended that architects study the local architecture of the past, they should look upon it as a natural response to prevailing conditions, and learn from it as such.

Two months later the “Montreal Notes” column reiterates the statement of the value of the historic architecture of Québec. The author emphasizes the inherent virtue and purity of the old vernacular, comparing it to what he saw as the vile examples then being perpetrated in the name of architecture. It takes the form of a brief history of building in Québec since European settlement. Noting the beauty of the curved shape formed by a roof flattening out at the eaves (in the bellcast form often found in early Québec houses), he writes of this “most natural economical and excellent arrangement” that it was “a virtue that seems to blossom only in humility, for wherever the first symptoms of pretentiousness show themselves one looks and finds that this peculiar grace is gone.”⁴⁸ He goes on to describe Montréal’s buildings of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—“these pioneers of civilization”—using such terms as “cosy,” “substantial,” and “picturesque,” adding that as “pure architecture” they were vastly superior to “the more recent work that with frantic and pitiful pretentiousness endeavours to make itself up with makeshift features and exasperating garnitures of tin.” He clearly gives credit to the earlier architecture for more than simply higher quality, although the article makes that point too. Instead, he suggests that what he sees as traditional buildings had an inherent strength and virtue not possessed by newer examples. In contrast to the “natural” feeling

⁴⁸“Concordia Salus,” “Montreal Notes,” *CAB* (July 1905): 108.

for the art evinced by folk builders, he painted for his readers a picture of modern architects or builders attempting to compensate for their lack of this natural feeling for design and proportion with superficial details such as the “exasperating garnitures of tin” here vilified. Nobbs often opined that it was in the mid-nineteenth century that architecture in Québec had lost its innate quality, although in this article even the houses from earlier in that century, while they had “a very considerable charm,” are seen to suffer a bit from excessive refinement brought on by a horror of vulgarity. Nonetheless, “the builders of this period handled [the local limestone] with a true instinct.”⁴⁹ This notion of the instinctive use of building materials or forms is particularly important, as it contrasts with the more self-conscious processes of the modern, formally-trained architect.

A photograph of a cottage in Lancashire, England, is included in the article in order to illustrate, the author explains, “how kindred are the effects of true building instincts working far apart and with much difference of detail.”⁵⁰ The article suggests that there is not only inherent virtue, but also an innate similarity, in vernacular buildings of widely different cultures, because their designers work with a “natural” sense that in more “sophisticated” cultures such as Nobbs and Traquair’s own has been lost to the depredations of modernity. Beyond having the requisite walls, roof, and windows, however, the Lancashire cottage does not bear any special resemblance to the Québécois examples discussed in the article. As the article states, there is “much difference of

⁴⁹“Concordia Salus,” “Montreal Notes,” (July 1905): 109.

⁵⁰“Concordia Salus,” “Montreal Notes,” (July 1905): 110.

detail,” and although the proportions are not dissimilar, and the materials more or less the same, neither of these is particularly remarkable. What the buildings have in common, according to the article, is a “kindred effect,” which really means nothing at all. It suggests the existence of a kind of folk spirit in design, perhaps what Traquair identifies as “a genuine feel for beauty,” common to premodern cultures and those that seemed to retain premodern virtues in the modern world.⁵¹ As Lora Carney notes in an essay on the relationship of several Canadian modernists to rural artists without formal training in early-mid-century Québec, this notion that such designers had a “natural” sense for good design was to persist among members of the Anglo-Canadian artistic and intellectual elite. Equating the hooked rugs and homespuns of Québec farm women in 1925 with both children’s art and the idea of the Primitive, Group of Seven member Arthur Lismer wrote: “Primitive, or let us say, simple people feel beauty naturally. Children are like this. It is not acquired. It is not merely taste. It is intuitive.”⁵²

Nobbs had only just argued in his lecture to the PQAA Sketching Club that there had been a time when everyone understood what style meant, and at that time there was no style *per se*—there was only building. It was as “men ceased to regard art as an essential part of life,” he explained, “[that we] lost the power of using art as a means of

⁵¹Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. 1.

⁵²Lismer, “Art a Common Necessity,” in *Canadian Bookman* 7 (October 1925): 159-60. Quoted in Carney, “Modernists and Folk on the Lower St. Lawrence: The Problem of Folk Art,” in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, ed. Lynda Jessup (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), p. 109.

expression.”⁵³ That is, the earlier builders in Québec were designing naturally—almost organically—what later architects needed formal training to understand. This education caused an artificiality and self-consciousness in architecture that had never existed before, and meant that what was designed was no longer “stamped with a truly native character” as the architecture of Québec had been in past times.

A column the very next month deals with some of the domestic architecture then appearing in Montréal, and fulminates against much of it with great vigour.⁵⁴ The most revealing feature of this essay, however, is its treatment of the building methods employed by contemporary urban Québécois. While the column the month before had emphasized the natural instinct expressed by the French-Canadians of olden times in their use of materials, here the author identifies a particularly offensive building practice, “tending to poverty of appearance in the cheaper classes of houses,” as an approach “probably almost peculiar to the French Canadian.” This method, of “building in three-inch plank, sheeting with building felt and then veneering the outer face with brick or stone,” produced a structure so flimsy as to disallow the use of weighty cornices of stone or brick, in whose absence the buildings tended to “a deadly flatness and monotony [of] appearance.” The “very human desire to obtain variety” impelled the builders to apply instead lighter-weight “galvanized cornices and other rubbish.” This is a key assertion, as it draws a distinction between the Québécois of times past (even in Nobbs and Traquair’s

⁵³Nobbs, “Study of Old Work,” p. 74.

⁵⁴“Concordia Salus,” “Montreal Notes,” *CAB* (August 1905): 125. A copy of this column is among Traquair’s papers in the CAC (see note 43).

own time represented by those living in rural areas), whose buildings were genuine examples of folk traditions, and their modern, urban, counterparts, who employed the worst-possible building methods and had entirely lost their once-intuitive building knowledge.

The notion of the corruption of rural values by the city is of course a venerable one; Raymond Williams traces at length the literary theme of rural innocence in contrast to urban vice and corruption, which began in Classical literature and continues to our own day.⁵⁵ Other authors have examined the idea that particularly rural, pure forms of creativity were corrupted when they were taken to the city. Jan Marsh notes, for example, that amongst middle-class collectors of folk songs in late-nineteenth century England, “[i]t was generally believed that folk song only existed in country districts, since the city was degenerate, febrile and committed to the latest fashion in commercial ‘popular songs’.”⁵⁶ Collectors studiously avoided songs relating to urban and industrial regions or occupations, despite the fact that they frequently existed side-by-side with more bucolic ones in the repertoires of rural singers. They belonged too much to the modern world, against which such concepts as “Folk” or “traditional” are defined, and were thus

⁵⁵Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973; London: The Hogarth Press, 1993).

⁵⁶*Back to the Land: The Pastoral Impulse in England, from 1880 to 1914* (London: Quartet Books, 1982), p. 75. See also Ian McKay, “Helen Creighton and the Rise of Folklore,” in *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Nova Scotia* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), pp. 43-151.

abhorrent to anyone collecting folk songs.⁵⁷ Because such categories as Folk exist only in opposition to the modern, and vice versa, admitting elements of the modern into the Folk would break down both categories, a condition that would have been anathema to early-twentieth century moderns seeking solace in the Folk, just as it would to many folklorists later in the century. In the same way, it seemed that French-Canadians in the city had lost the “natural” talent for building exhibited by their rural compatriots, and their connections with the modern world had robbed them of their folk appeal. Lora Carney observes that, some decades later, Canadian modernist painter and art critic John Lyman similarly commented that the work of folk artists was “supported by so little power of conscious thought that any attempt to interfere with its natural processes must dislocate the conditions of creative production.”⁵⁸ The French-speaking builders in the city were perhaps suffering from too much of the “conscious thought” inherent in building for an urban market.

The “Montreal Notes” columns ceased with that of December 1905. This group of essays provides an important introduction to Nobbs’s architectural ideas at this time, and particularly to his early thoughts about the vernacular architecture he had found in Québec, and about the people who had made it. They also give some idea of Ramsay Traquair’s initiation into the subject, as he himself was introduced to it by Nobbs when he arrived in Montréal a decade later; indeed, copies of several of the CAB columns are

⁵⁷See Kelley, “Deconstructing ‘The Folk’”, p. 1402.

⁵⁸Lyman, “Poison in the Well,” in “Art,” *Montrealer* 11 (1 September 1937): 17. Quoted in Carney, “Modernists and Folk,” p. 112.

amongst Traquair's papers in the McGill University Archives. It was he who was to develop and articulate more clearly Nobbs's early ideas about the Folk.

Traquair arrived in Montréal expecting to do as Nobbs had done before him, and continue to design buildings as well as to teach. It did not work out that way, however, and as far as I know he did not build anything after coming to Canada.⁵⁰ Instead, he turned his attention to extensive research on the province's architecture and culture, as well as to the publication of many articles on that and other topics. He became quite enamoured of rural Québec society, celebrating it as a surviving example of simple pre-industrial culture that had been largely wiped out elsewhere in the European-occupied world. Like Nobbs, he saw something more than just high quality work and good design in Québec's historic architecture; it seemed to him to be material evidence of the virtuous people that had created it, and to stand as a model of all that was superior about pre-industrial culture.

Traquair made his first extensive statement about the architecture of French Canada in lectures on the history of architecture in his new rôle as Macdonald Professor of Architecture at McGill University. His lecture notes, dated 1914-15, indicate that his

⁵⁰As noted on Nobbs's drawings for the new Pathological Building at McGill University, Traquair, together with McGill colleague W. Carless, did serve as Associate Architect on that project in 1922-24. (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Pathology building). He also submitted a design to the Canadian Battlefields Memorial Competition (Nobbs, "The Canadian Battlefields Memorial Competition: Notes on the First Stage," *Construction* [June, 1921]: 167). In addition, he acted as consulting architect on at least one restoration project, that of an eighteenth century manor house on Lac St. Louis. ("An Eighteenth Century Manoir is Reclaimed," *Canadian Homes and Gardens* [March 1934]: 34). There may have been other minor projects, but I am unaware of any major ones.

thinking on the subject was influenced from the start by Nobbs, which is not surprising given his recent arrival in Canada. From the beginning, he followed Nobbs in defining the historic buildings in the province of Québec as those dating from 1668 to the mid-nineteenth century, noting that “after 1820 or 30 the type commences to deteriorate and after 1850 the good old traditional quality disappears.”[∞] That is, to him as well as to Nobbs, the later buildings represent not a developing tradition, but rather a degenerating and disappearing one.

One of the things Traquair admired most about early Québec architecture and design was a measure of crudity or roughness that suggested to him that its makers or designers had been working from natural instinct rather than under the influence of schooling in the arts or contact with sophisticated practice from other places. For example, he was greatly impressed by an altar rail in the church of Nôtre Dame de la Jeune Lorette, which, he wrote, “may be crude work, but it is astonishingly good metallic design.”^{e1} He noted that the local wisdom was that the rail was imported from France, but argued that this was unlikely to be the case as the story was

based upon the conviction that Canada had no craftsmen and that every good piece of work must have been imported. But no French workman could have made and no French donor would have presented a piece of work of the combined crudity and effectiveness of this rail. In France it might possibly have been made by some village craftsman, but . . . the

[∞]Traquair, “Canadian Architecture,” unpublished lecture notes, 1914-15 (CAC, Traquair Collection, Series A.1-26).

^{e1}Traquair, “The Huron Mission Church & Treasure of Notre Dame de la Jeune Lorette, Quebec,” typed manuscript, pp. 13-14 (CAC, Traquair Collection, Series I.1-21). Published in *JRAIC* (September and November 1930).

work is Canadian made by a Canadian—possibly a Huron craftsman [under French supervision].

This is an important notion for Traquair: rather than condemning the altar rail for its crudity, he celebrated its roughness as evidence of a natural taste untrammelled by contact with more formal design strictures. For Traquair, it was often with the advent of such contact—in the later-nineteenth century and in his own century—that the quality of the region's architecture and crafts began to deteriorate. This suggests that the rural Folk he had identified could not maintain their culture against what he saw as more sophisticated influence, whether it was that of France or of modernizing Québec.

Traquair and Nobbs both observed that French-Canadian architecture was best preserved in areas where the local inhabitants were poor and had little connection with the architects' own advancing civilization, which in their minds was entirely foreign to *habitant* culture. Of the church of Ste. Jeanne de l'Île Perrot, Traquair noted that it "has lain off the beaten track away from the main line of Canadian prosperity and Canadian development and in this it has found its salvation; it remains today an excellent example of the French Canadian village church, where a fortunate lack of wealth has preserved those simple beauties which the patient care and self-sacrifice of its parishioners have created."² As Ian McKay argues, it was important to investigators of the Folk that their subjects (or, in the case of Nobbs and Traquair, those people living in and around the

²Traquair and E.R. Adair, notes on the church of Ste. Jeanne Françoise de Chantal on the Île Perrot, Québec, no date, p.11 (CAC, Traquair Collection, Series I.1-14). Although the original notes are undated, the report was published in *JRAIC* 9, 5⁶6 (May -June 1932): 124-31, 147-52.

buildings that were their subjects) remained untouched by the researcher's own culture—that is, by what they defined as modern civilization.⁹³ Traquair emphasized that it was the poverty and backwardness of the citizens of Île Perrot that had preserved its church. Had they experienced more connection to the advances of modernity, they would undoubtedly have had the resources and the desire to change and thereby ruin their church in the name of progress. He lamented that in the mission church at Notre Dame de la Jeune Lorette—one of the cases in which alterations had been made—"the bare simplicity, which gave a real dignity to the old church, is gone, replaced by a tawdry elaboration."⁹⁴ Once again, he saw "progress," or, indeed, virtually any change at all, as an alien influence for a rural French Québec that he saw as frozen in time. In the case of the mission church, its influence had ruined the inherent virtue of the building.

This observation is particularly significant in light of a contradiction appearing in much of Nobbs's and especially Traquair's writing. At the same time that they bemoaned the changes that were taking place and condemned them as marking the end of a once-vital culture, Traquair in particular frequently wrote of the rural Québécois who were his own contemporaries as if they had barely changed in hundreds of years. As critical anthropologist Johannes Fabian has demonstrated, anthropologists have often created difference between themselves and their subjects by constructing their subjects as temporally distant from themselves; implicit in Nobbs's and Traquair's deep admiration for

⁹³McKay, *The Quest of the Folk*, p. 9.

⁹⁴Traquair, "Notre Dame de la Jeune Lorette," p. 9.

rural Québec culture was a conviction that even in the twentieth century it was backward and simple, that it existed in a time earlier than their own.⁵⁵ Their use of the word *habitant* is suggestive of the timelessness they ascribed to rural French Canadians. The term had referred initially to peasants who had come to New France several centuries earlier to farm plots on the seigneuries, so it carried for Nobbs and Traquair (as for others in modern Québec) associations of ancient simplicity and other such virtues. In thus denying rural French Canadians coevalness, they suggested that, however admirable they might be, they did not really fit in the modern world. Both Nobbs and Traquair lamented what they saw as the death of a building tradition; Traquair wrote that “we have killed it in the last fifty years and it is a deplorable fact that the Quebec peasant of fifty years ago could unaided build a more beautiful house than we can today with all our advantages.”⁵⁶

But at the same time, as Fabian goes on to discuss, anthropologists have conventionally written of their subjects in an ethnographic present, and both Nobbs and Traquair often referred to the contemporary rural residents of Québec as if they were living lives fundamentally unchanged from those of their ancestors several hundred years before. As Fabian argues, this use of the ethnographic present means that in such accounts, “a custom, a ritual, even an entire system of exchange or a world view are . . . predicated on a group or tribe, or whatever unit the ethnographer happens to choose. . . .

⁵⁵Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

⁵⁶Traquair, “How to Understand Architecture,” speech for the St. James Literary Society, 1920 (MUA, Box 1: 35/17/127).

The present unduly magnifies the claim of a statement to general validity."⁶⁷ In this way, Traquair wrote in *House Beautiful* in 1928: "In this pleasant land the girls still sing the songs of mediaeval France whilst they spin and weave, as their mothers and their grandmothers did before them. Time here has not moved quite so fast as it has in other places."⁶⁸ As late as 1947, he was still describing Québec cottages in the present tense as if life in them had not changed since they had been built as early as the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries. Many of his photographs even show utility poles outside the houses, but he described the lives of the residents much as if he had been reporting the habits of Canada's early settlers (fig. 2.2). "There is room for everything in a Quebec attic," he wrote. "In one corner is the loom on which the blankets and homespuns are woven, in another the girls have cleared a space where they can sit and sew."⁶⁹

He was firm about the interior arrangements of the houses, too, allowing no room for individual taste on the part of the inhabitants. He declared that "the floors are painted yellow and spread with bright catalogue carpets and hooked mats; the walls are hung with religious coloured prints and family photographs. . . ."⁷⁰ His use of the present tense, as Fabian argues, suggests that his observations must hold true for all of the people

⁶⁷Fabian, *Time and the Other*, p. 80.

⁶⁸Traquair, "The Old Cottages of Quebec," typescript of article for *House Beautiful* (May 1928): p. 1 (MUA, Box 2: 35/17/160).

⁶⁹Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. 59.

⁷⁰Traquair, "The Old Cottages of Quebec: Of Solid, Direct Construction, well Adapted to the Climate, and with the Dignity that comes Naturally to Simple Things Free from Sham," *House Beautiful* (May 1928): 650.

of rural Québec: to the tune of ancient French songs, blankets of the same pattern are woven in a corner of every attic, and each floor is painted yellow. The use of such allochronic language intimates that its subjects exist outside of the writer's time, that their culture does not alter along with the researcher's, but rather exists in a static form unrelated to an advancing world around it.

Ironically, the "bright catalogue carpets" Traquair admired had been used only as bed coverings before the end of the nineteenth century. According to Janet McNaughton, it was middle-class handicrafts revivalists, probably following the example of the rag rugs popularized in the Appalachian handicrafts revival a few decades before, who had begun to market them as floor coverings in the first decades of the twentieth century.⁷¹ By the time Traquair came to visit rural Québec houses in the mid-1920s, their use on floors—though recent—had apparently become ubiquitous; for Traquair, it was just one more unchanging tradition of the Folk.

Nobbs was less starry-eyed about the idea of a folk culture in the province by the 1940s, and he wrote in nostalgic terms about Québec culture as he had found it upon arriving in Canada at the beginning of the century. At that time, he wrote, "the habitants were still [here the word "undemoralized" is crossed out, being replaced by] unsophisticated, making quite presentable hooked rugs their own way."⁷² Nobbs's

⁷¹Janet McNaughton, "A Study of the CPR-sponsored Quebec Folk Song and Handicraft Festivals, 1927-1930" (master's thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1982), pp. 213-14.

⁷²Nobbs, untitled manuscript for a speech, 10 March 1941 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.10-2).

antimodernism is evident in both word choices. His final choice, in particular, suggests that for a culture the value of which derives, as he understands it, from naiveté and simplicity, sophistication is the beginning of the end of creativity.

At the same time, such statements as the foregoing raise the issue of the quest for authenticity, and its consequences. Regina Bendix has examined the implications of the emphasis that folklorists have traditionally placed on the value of the authentic in the cultures they study. As she observes, the existence of an authentic demands its opposite, and it is herein that the problem lies. "Identifying some cultures, expressions or artifacts as authentic, genuine, trustworthy, or legitimate simultaneously implies that other manifestations are fake, spurious and even illegitimate," she writes.⁷³ Through this concentration on the authentic, the discipline of folklore—and this applies equally to Traquair's and Nobbs's ideas about the Folk—has celebrated the homogeneous, "thus continually upholding the fallacy that cultural purity rather than hybridity is the norm." Traquair's doctrinaire description of the interior of a Québec house not only places his contemporaries in rural Québec in an indeterminate past, but also suggests that anyone who might have painted her floors blue was not a true *habitant*.

As Andrew Nurse has observed, in the context of such exclusive definitions, "authenticity was not self-evident even to 'the folk'."⁷⁴ He notes that J. Murray Gibbon,

⁷³Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), p. 9.

⁷⁴Andrew Nurse, "Tradition and Modernity: The Cultural Work of Marius Barbeau" (Ph.D. dissertation, Queen's University, 1997), p. 331.

chief publicity agent for the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), wrote to Marius Barbeau in 1926, asking him for photographs of the interiors of traditional French-Canadian houses for help in decorating the CPR's Château Frontenac Hotel. A wing of the hotel had just burnt, and the "Chambre canadienne," intended to replicate a traditional *habitant* room, had been destroyed; Gibbon wanted Barbeau's help in designing an authentic replacement.⁷⁵ Barbeau responded that, although he had many such photographs, it would be better for Gibbon to speak to him about their plans. The photographs did not provide an authentic picture, since "there is usually a great deal of admixture in the decoration of houses, some of the things being old and some others being new."⁷⁶ Unlike Traquair some years later, Barbeau acknowledged that a modern influence had crept into the old Québec houses. As he saw it, they were no longer accurate representations of their own culture, and it required the trained eye of the ethnologist to distinguish between the authentic and the inauthentic in them.

There is no doubt that for Nobbs and Traquair, its perceived backwardness was a positive attribute of rural French Canada. They frequently commented on what they saw as the great sensibility and natural taste of the *habitants*, qualities that were not to be found among the more "sophisticated" city residents. For instance, Traquair opined that "the habitant has a good eye for colour and will produce the most astonishing effects with

⁷⁵Gary Bret Kines, "Chief Man-of-Many-Sides: John Murray Gibbon and his contributions to the development of tourism and the arts in Canada" (master's thesis, Carleton University, 1988), p. 105.

⁷⁶Quoted in Nurse, "Tradition and Modernity," p. 331.

the common house paints of commerce.”⁷⁷ He commented that it was this excellent feeling for colour, and especially the appearance of villages in the snow, that had for some time attracted painters to Québec.⁷⁸ The only unsuccessful combinations he saw were those in which “modest browns or dull yellows have unfortunately been introduced.” His use of the word “introduced” suggests that he saw these unsightly colour combinations as recent manifestations of outside influence, competing with the natural taste of the inhabitants of the houses.

Traquair wrote that the architecture of Québec was “an architecture of parish churches and small houses. It reaches its highest point of artistic beauty in the wood carvings of the churches but, even in the simpler architecture of the houses, it is marked by good workmanship and good taste.”⁷⁹ These sentences suggest a distinction that Traquair himself made which might be defined as between art and craft, or perhaps between “high” or schooled art or architecture and the vernacular. Although he

⁷⁷Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. 61.

⁷⁸As Traquair himself notes, his book was published some time after the tradition of Québec village painting had been established. Painters such as Clarence Gagnon used bright colours for snow and stucco as well as for the painted features of the houses. For example, a painting by Hal Ross Perrigard of the Ferme Saint-Gabriel, at Pointe St. Charles near Montréal (and now hanging in the stable/museum there), depicts it with quite intense blue and green windows, pinkish stucco and a bright red roof. It is not unlikely that Traquair’s impression of the brilliance of Québec houses was influenced by these paintings which emphasized it. Traquair notes in his book that the windows in what he calls the “winter room” are filled with bright blue paper throughout the summer, “which gives a most brilliant effect from the outside as well as preserving the carpets from fading,” in addition, he grudgingly indicates, to discouraging flies. (*Old Architecture of Québec*, p. 59.) Perrigard’s painting, however, is a winter scene.

⁷⁹Traquair, “The Old Architecture of the Province of Quebec,” undated manuscript, possibly for a lecture (MUA, Box 2: 35/17/160).

repeatedly praised the simplicity and naturalness of the houses, often condemning outside influence or excessive sophistication, his appreciation of Québec wood carving was quite different. This he viewed as a higher art form than the vernacular of the houses—as the “one field [in which] the great tradition [of France] came to Canada.”⁸⁰ And although he emphasized that the authentic French-Canadian tradition he identified in both sculpture and architecture had run its course by the middle of the nineteenth century, he tended to interpret foreign influence on architecture at any time as an ill omen presaging its doom. He did not, however, draw the same conclusions for sculpture. Although he insisted that it was independent of the French school from which it arose, and thus formed a genuine Canadian tradition, he did not view the odd instance of formal, foreign education in sculpture as spelling the end of the French-Canadian tradition. Rather the opposite.

Not surprisingly, many of Québec’s sculptors and church architects (who were often the same people) were trained through apprenticeship to established masters. Some, however, left the country to receive formal training elsewhere. Traquair noted that, of the important Baillargé family of “architects, contractors, sculptors and artists,” the elder son, François (1759-1852), travelled to Paris in 1778 and spent several years there studying at the Royal Academy of Statuary, Sculpture and Painting.⁸¹ He thus must have brought not only his formal training, but also the ideas of recent French practice to Québec. The three generations of the Baillargé family were influential and taught many others their

⁸⁰Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. 1.

⁸¹Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, pp. 289, 287.

trade, so this infusion of French art education could not but have influenced Québec practice. Generations later, the sculptor Louis Jobin (1845-1928) also sought training outside the country. After spending several years as an apprentice to François-Xavier Berlinguet (active 1833-64)—who had himself been a pupil of François Baillargé's son François Thomas (1791-1859)—he apprenticed himself to an English sculptor in New York. Surprisingly, although he had received his training from an Englishman in New York and from a Québécois sculptor whose own training descended directly from France, Traquair described Jobin as “a master-sculptor trained in the old traditional school, one of the last of his line.”⁸² Even though he saw him as one of the old school, Traquair had written to Marius Barbeau in 1925 that “such of Jobin’s work as I have seen is of secondary importance from a purely artistic view, tho very interesting as the survival of an old tradition [sic].”⁸³ He amplified in a later letter: “I have never in any of the churches seen any carving later than say 1850 that I would care to have in a museum. It has not the spirit of the older work.”⁸⁴ Even so, it was not until his own time that Traquair saw the Québec sculptural tradition as having died completely. The work of the brothers Ménard and Jean Julien Bourgault (active beginning in the 1930s), he argued, demonstrated that “the talent for wood-sculpture still exists in the Province, but it shows,

⁸²Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. 296.

⁸³Traquair, letter to C. Marius Barbeau, 11 October 1925 (Canadian Museum of Civilization, Information Management Systems, Marius Barbeau correspondence, B 244 f.8, “Traquair, Ramsay” [hereafter CMC, IMS, Barbeau, B244 f.8, “Traquair”).

⁸⁴Traquair, letter to Barbeau, 26 October 1925 (CMC, IMS, Barbeau, B244 f.8, “Traquair”).

too, that the old traditional school is gone. . . . For this new carving does not in any way follow the old models."⁸⁵ Traquair's regret at the death of this tradition is clear, even while he had to admit that the work of the Bourgault brothers was good in its way. Although their working lives began well into the twentieth century, Traquair wished that carvers such as they would continue to "follow the old models." He was unable to view the work of the Bourgault brothers as the latest development in a vital wood-carving tradition, but rather interpreted it as outside of that tradition, which was itself dead.

In the case of architecture, however, outside influence began to herald the end of the French-Canadian tradition much earlier in Traquair's estimation. In the case of the church of Saint Jean, Ile d'Orléans, he wrote of Jobin's teacher that

Berlinguet [who in 1852-53 had lengthened the church and added a new west front, with a spire influenced by the English architect James Gibbs] was the modern scholarly architect taking his inspiration from books and no longer following the old traditions of the Province. . . . In saying that it is no longer traditional we do not necessarily condemn it. But a design of this kind, with its mingled French and English features and its lack of structural connection with the building foreshadows the end of the old French Canadian art.⁸⁶

Although Traquair had described Berlinguet's pupil as "the last of his line" as a traditional sculptor, he saw Berlinguet himself as already heralding the end of the tradition in

⁸⁵Traquair, *The Church of St. John the Baptist, St. Jean Port Joli, Quebec* (Montréal: MUP Series XIII, no. 41, 1939; reprinted from *JRAIC* [February 1939]): 10. Strangely, Traquair had written only eight years earlier that "even to-day there are still carvers of the old school who can turn out a well carved flower swag or a dignified figure in the true spirit of the French Renaissance." ("The Old Architecture of French Canada," in *Queen's Quarterly* [Autumn 1931]: 602). Perhaps he was referring to Louis Jobin, who had died only three years before.

⁸⁶Traquair and Barbeau, *The Church of Saint Jean, Island of Orleans, Quebec* (Montréal: MUP, series XIII, no. 23, 1929; reprinted from *JRAIC* [June 1929]): 4.

architecture by introducing influence from outside. He still commended the building for being “a dignified church” which “stands finely on its site . . . and is a landmark for miles,” and he also admired other buildings of mixed ancestry on occasion. For instance, he wrote that “In Longueuil there stood until recently a very attractive little house of mixed tradition. . . . The front was typical Georgian with a little ‘Venetian’ window over the arched front door and a pedimental gablet in the roof above it. But the windows are the regulation French casement type. It was exactly such a house as one might meet on an English sampler.”⁵⁷ But even in cases in which he admired aesthetically buildings that showed outside influence, he had still to decry the threat to what he called “the Canadian house.”⁵⁸

As Chris Wilson has recently argued in his study of the development of the Santa Fe style in early-twentieth-century New Mexico, the efforts of Folk researchers to create a “formal typology” of their subjects tend towards a narrow definition of these forms.⁵⁹ Traquair sought to define several broad types of his “Canadian House” but tended to subsume variations that appeared within one or the other pattern. As Wilson notes, in a process such as this, “idiosyncrasies that do not easily fit . . . get pushed to the side and ignored.” As in New Mexico, such studies have a profound effect on how later

⁵⁷Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, pp 73-74.

⁵⁸Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. 73.

⁵⁹Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), p. 123.

generations view those styles: “the forms and patterns that surfaced, were described, and named would shape perceptions for years to come.”⁹⁰

As with the wood carving, even if it were built in Québec by a Québécois craftsman, a house or church could not be a part of the French-Canadian tradition if it did not match the appearance of such buildings as defined by Traquair. He could not appreciate that a legitimate vernacular tradition might develop and change without being destroyed, even while he acknowledged that it was inevitable that buildings would change over time. He wrote that “[a] parish church is not the finished design of an architect, built once and for all, not to be altered from its original design. It is a living history of the parish and is still growing.”⁹¹ However, when these changes were too obviously influenced by other cultures or by creeping modernity, they were no longer a part of this natural evolution but instead represented the corruption of a culture. The “first great blow to the old French tradition” came when “in 1824 Notre Dame de Montréal was rebuilt in a bastard American Gothic . . . it died hard; even today traces of it can be found, but we may close our history in the mid-nineteenth century,” he wrote.⁹²

A pair of photographs taken by Barbeau on his trip to parts of rural Québec in the summer of 1925 shows A.Y. Jackson and Arthur Lismer sketching the stone tower of an old Seigneurial mill at Ste.-Famille, on the Île d'Orléans, while a local child (perhaps the

⁹⁰Wilson, *Myth of Santa Fe*, p. 123.

⁹¹Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. 139.

⁹²Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. 2.

son of the tower's owner, M. Poulin) looks on (fig. 2.3). Behind the painters is a house. It may have belonged to the Poulin family, but unlike the ancient mill, it is not given a name. This is significant, as the vast majority of houses in Barbeau's photos from that summer are identified (fig. 2.4). Indeed, this house is barely in the photograph at all; it appears at the very edge of the frame. Being two storeys high, with a rather low-pitched roof, it bears little resemblance to the "Canadian House" Traquair lovingly describes. But although Traquair, too, went to the Île d'Orléans that summer, and must have seen such houses, he ignores completely the presence of buildings that do not conform to his defined type.

In Québec's painting of the early periods Traquair was not in the least interested. Because it was a fine art, he could not look to painting for the charm and authenticity he found in untutored vernacular architecture, but neither could he trace in Québec's church painting of the early periods an inheritance of a great European school, such as he found in its sculpture. In contrast to his celebration of the directness, the honesty, and the true French-Canadian spirit of Québec's architecture and wood sculpture, he found the provinces's school of religious painting simply of low quality. He wrote of paintings in churches that "Many, of course, were brought from France, especially in the wealthier congregations, but many were painted by Canadian artists. . . . Unfortunately these pictures are . . . as works of art, very poor."³ In another study he concluded that the "oldest and best picture in the church" was "probably brought from France." Meanwhile,

³Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. 289.

he dismissed the six other pictures in the building, which he suggested were by Canadian artists (among them François and probably Thomas Ballairgé), stating that “none of them [was] of great importance.” The paintings in another church on the Île d’Orléans, two by Antoine Plamondon and one probably by François Ballairgé, he likewise wrote off as being “of no great interest.”⁵⁴ The Canadian church painting he came closest to admiring was a portrait of a one-time Bishop of Québec. This he damned with faint praise, writing that “although not a masterpiece, yet [it] has more character than most of the church pictures one sees.”⁵⁵ Clearly, although Traquair valued vernacular architecture very highly, the artistic impulses of his Folk were not quite suited to painting, which required more of the very sophistication and learning that he felt detracted so unfortunately where it had been allowed to creep into Québec architecture. As Lora Carney has observed, in 1937 John Lyman similarly found a group of paintings by women whose previous artistic expression had been in designing and making hooked rugs to be wanting as “high” art. In this case, he was searching for the Modern in the work but his conclusion is similar to Traquair’s (the latter largely unarticulated): folk artists are just that; their “natural” abilities do not suit them to the practice of “high” art.⁵⁶ Once more, Kelley’s notion of the “mutually constitutive and constituting” concepts of “Folk,” “traditional,” and “modern,” of

⁵⁴Traquair and Barbeau, *Sainte Famille, Island of Orleans*, p. 13; Traquair and Barbeau, *The Church of St. Francois de Sales, Island of Orleans, Quebec* (Montréal: MUP Series XIII, no. 14, 1926; reprinted from *JRAIC* [September-October 1926]): 13.

⁵⁵Traquair and Barbeau, *The Church of St. Pierre, Island of Orleans, Quebec* (Montréal: MUP Series XIII, no. 22, 1929; reprinted from *JRAIC* [February 1929]): 7.

⁵⁶Carney, “Modernists and Folk,” p. 112.

“popular,” “low,” and “high” cultures, illuminates Traquair’s and Lyman’s problem.⁹⁷ If painting (other than decorative painting) is “high” culture (and, in Lyman’s case, modern to boot), by definition, “Folk” or “traditional” cultures simply cannot excel at it. For the researcher to allow them do so would be to admit that they were part of his own modern world.

In this connection, it is telling that both Nobbs and Traquair identified women, together with conventionally- feminine activities, as the keepers of a traditional culture in the rural Québec of their own day; it is the girls who sing the songs of their mothers and grandmothers as they spin, weave, and sew in Traquair’s dream Québec. Handicrafts and interior decoration, not to mention the domestic space of the “Canadian House” itself, are other signifiers of a surviving traditional culture to which Traquair points, while Nobbs, too, singles out hooked rugs as a sign that rural Québec culture was still undemoralized (or unsophisticated) at the beginning of the century.⁹⁸ Barbeau’s photographs from the 1925 trip to the Île d’Orléans and other rural areas demonstrate how strongly he, too, associated women with the guardianship of traditional Québec culture. Several of his photographs show women actively engaged in traditional handiwork such as spinning, weaving, rug hooking, or, in the case of Madame Hilaire Demeules and Mlle. Virginie Demeules, beating flax (fig. 2.5). Males are associated with the cultural domain in a more passive manner; a few photographs show men with assortments of artifacts and old

⁹⁷Kelley, “Deconstructing ‘The Folk’,” p. 1402.

⁹⁸See notes 68 to 70 and 72.

furniture, often broken. Like the others, Monsieur F.X. Lemelin seems to have dragged his collection of “old fashioned utensils” and a chair, missing a slat or two but dating from over a century previously, out of retirement in the attic or barn for the delectation of Barbeau and his colleagues (fig. 2.6). While most of his photographs of women show them actively working at the very pursuits that, as I discuss in the Conclusion, governments, institutions and individuals were then seeking to “revive” as a way of revitalizing traditional Québec culture, the men more often show off the objects they (or their ancestors) used to use.

Women seemed ideally suited to be cast in this rôle of keepers of Québec culture. Citing several nineteenth- and early-twentieth century examples, Kathleen McCarthy has observed that it has been an enduring myth in American society (and here we may read Canadian as well) that “women are the nation’s cultural custodians, and always have been.”¹⁰⁰ In an article of 1923, Traquair makes a similar observation, noting a consensus among most people that women are “more imaginative and more artistic . . . [and] have a more delicate intuition than men.”¹⁰¹ In his view, however, the facts suggest something very different. Analysing the historical contribution of women to the creative field, he concludes that “[i]n the whole field of art . . . women are inferior to men in imagination, intuition, and the abstract qualities. These qualities are what distinguish all the highest creative art. Lacking them, though women may do good work in the less exacting and

¹⁰⁰Kathleen D. McCarthy, *Women's Culture: American Philanthropy and Art, 1830-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. xi.

¹⁰¹Traquair, “Women and Civilization,” *The Atlantic Monthly* 132 (September 1923): 289.

more practical branches of art, they will go no further. The great artists will always be men. Art is a manly virtue."¹⁰¹ Women might manage, he concedes, to "earn their living in . . . all the less important branches of the graphic arts," but, as he repeats several times in the article, "Creative ability in the fine arts is a manly virtue."¹⁰² Yet he identifies rural Québec culture in his own time with the artistic production and customs of its women, seeing, in the passing of domestic skills from one generation of women to the next, a regeneration of the core values that he saw at the very heart of Québec folk culture.

In contrast, as I have demonstrated, Traquair identified a fine art tradition—practised, of course, by men—in the ecclesiastical sculpture of Québec. But, like traditional architecture (another male domain), it had been superseded by a modern, predominantly English-Canadian fine art, Québec artists, to Traquair's mind, having adopted "foreign" forms and practices as French-Canadian folk culture was surpassed by the advancing world order.¹⁰³ What survived to represent authentic French-Canadian society, then, was not a fine art tradition, but rather a traditional culture, represented by what Traquair saw as the less-creative and therefore more-static craft work associated with women. An essential notion for both Nobbs and Traquair, which Traquair expresses

¹⁰¹Traquair, "Women and Civilization," p. 291.

¹⁰²Traquair, "Women and Civilization," p. 291.

¹⁰³Both Nobbs and Traquair were strongly opposed to the idea of women studying architecture, Traquair stating in 1937 that "women had not the qualities of imagination to make good designers." The first woman student was admitted to the McGill School of Architecture only in 1939, immediately after Traquair's retirement as director. (Annmarie Adams, "'Archiettes' in Training: The Admission of Women to McGill's School of Architecture," *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* 21, 3 [September 1996]: 72.

again in his series of articles in *The Atlantic Monthly*, is that “art has always . . . been a kind of social mirror, reflecting faithfully the civilization which produced it.”¹⁰⁴ Before the mid-nineteenth century, Québec had enjoyed a lively, vigorous, and creative artistic culture, represented by a school of wood carving “in the ‘Grand Manner’, simplified and made human,” and by a “real Canadian architecture, moulded by climate and life and by a genuine feeling for beauty.”¹⁰⁵ By Nobbs and Traquair’s own day, the value of the quaint folk society that remained—represented by the hooked rugs and weaving of its women—was largely as a sort of living history for the nation they envisioned.

Thus, Nobbs and Traquair were able to look upon the people of the farms and small villages of rural Québec as almost completely unaffected by modernity, but as simultaneously corrupted and destroyed by its influence. Although a modern, “sophisticated” Franco-Québec culture might exist in the cities, it was not, as far as they were concerned, materially different from contemporary Anglo-Canadian culture and did not represent the pure Canadian spirit that they saw in the rural residents, whose material culture had “the dignity that comes naturally to simple things free from sham.”¹⁰⁶ To their minds, the people of Québec must either live the centuries-old life of the *habitants*, or be corrupted beyond recognition so that they were no longer the true embodiments of Québec culture that they had been historically.

¹⁰⁴Traquair, “The Cult of the Rebel,” *The Atlantic Monthly* 152 (September 1933): 357.

¹⁰⁵Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. 1.

¹⁰⁶Traquair, “The Old Cottages of Quebec: Of solid, direct Construction . . .,” p. 612 (subtitle).

There is no doubt that Nobbs and Traquair greatly admired rural Québec society and sought to preserve or at least record its architecture as an example for posterity. But by constructing an image of the *habitants* as a simple people unmarked by the advances of modernity, they defined them as backward, as Primitive, as outside the historical time of the “real” world. At the same time, both noted the mid-nineteenth century as the point at which rural Québec architecture began to be strongly affected by outside influences, and this they saw as the point of degeneration. Nobbs wrote that “the architecture of French Quebec has had its ups and downs with more of degeneration than of evolution marking its course during the latter half of the XIXth century.”¹⁰⁷ His use of the word “degeneration,” with its Latin root word meaning “race,” suggests that he perceived French-Canadian architecture to be racially linked to the French-speaking people of Québec, the decline in the quality of their buildings reflecting their own descent as a culture.

In common with many of their middle-class antimodernist colleagues in Europe and North America, Nobbs and Traquair found a group of people that they identified as representative of an ideal folk culture. Because they perceived this culture as static and premodern, and prized it for these characteristics, any alteration or outside influence it experienced threatened to destroy it; no change was permissible. In other words, all that was distinctive about Québec society belonged to the past, even if in some cases it existed

¹⁰⁷Nobbs, “Present Tendencies Affecting Architecture in Canada. Part I: The Inheritance,” *JRAIC* (July 1930): 246.

in the present. And as a Canadian folk tradition—"the natural product of this bit of earth on which we live"—Nobbs and Traquair saw a rural French-Canadian culture that could be mined for nuggets of authenticity. Perhaps, by helping to purify architecture in their own day of what they saw as the false and decadent eclectic styles that had overtaken it, these nuggets might help them to find a truly national way of building, and in so doing, contribute to the project of defining the Canadian nation.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸Nobbs, "Study of Old Work," p. 75.

Chapter Three "THE MOST PURELY CANADIAN PEOPLE OF THE DOMINION"

THIS CHAPTER examines Nobbs's and Traquair's participation in the discourse of nationalism in Canada, and how their thoughts intersected with their ideas about architecture as an organic expression of culture. I demonstrated in the preceding chapter that Nobbs and Traquair perceived the rural population of the Saint Lawrence River valley as representative of a pure folk culture, unfettered by the modernity that seemed to be robbing their own urban culture of both spiritual and physical vigour. But Nobbs and Traquair also saw these rural Québécois as uniquely Canadian, in part precisely because they believed that they belonged to a folk culture. Many scholars and intellectuals of the period espoused the view that, unlike the members of more cosmopolitan society, the Folk truly embodied national spirit. As I demonstrate, the idea that a part of Québec society could be used to provide a folk history for English Canada can be explained in part by their conception that the country had come to its present state through the advances of successive societies, each one succeeding the one before it, even as the one before continued to exist in the present as a remnant of the nation's past. Just as nationalists in European countries sought to revitalize their own modern societies by infusing them with national folk traditions, cultural producers in Canada used Québec traditional culture, seen in this light as a direct predecessor of modern Anglo-Canadian culture, in the same way.

To the imperialist, the practice of extracting from a subordinate culture anything of value to the empire was self-evident. Imperialism played an important rôle in both

Nobbs's and Traquair's thoughts about nationhood. As Edward Said defines it, "imperialism' means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory," and as good Britons at the turn of the last century, it probably never occurred to Nobbs and Traquair to do anything but support the Empire.¹ Today, we might also consider the word "imperialist" to denote one who belongs to a dominant culture and supports the imposition of aspects of that culture upon a subordinate one, often, ostensibly (and paternalistically) for the greater good of the subject group, while simultaneously making use of aspects of the subordinate culture. Nobbs and Traquair were imperialists both in this sense and by the definition the word carried in turn-of-the-century Canada. The notion of imperialism as a concept was relatively new when they arrived in Montréal, and the word itself had come into frequent use only near the end of the nineteenth century.² Imperialism in the Canadian context was long interpreted as an anti-nationalist sentiment, but as Carl Berger demonstrates, it was not at all incompatible with strong Canadian national feeling; indeed, the two sentiments frequently went hand in hand. Imperialism for the turn-of-the-century Canadian meant the effort to achieve "the closer union of the British Empire through economic and military co-operation and through political changes which would give the

¹Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993; New York: Vintage Books, 1994), p. 9.

²Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism 1867-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), p. 3.

dominions influence over imperial policy.”³ Implicit in the imperial impulse also was fear of increasing continentalism, and eventual absorption by the much larger and more powerful United States.⁴ A strengthened Canada and strong ties with the Empire would help to combat increasing American influence.

Nobbs and Traquair belonged to the generation after the people Berger identifies as the prime movers in the imperialist effort, and neither was involved directly with the political workings of the country. Therefore they were not overtly imperialistic in terms of working towards actual political change. As Mary Vipond observes, however, in the 1920s, too, “the differences between nationalism and imperialism were often more of emphasis than of substance,” and imperialism clearly informed Nobbs’s and Traquair’s thinking about Canadian culture and about the route that architecture in their adoptive country should take.⁵

Nobbs’s imperial mission is particularly clear in the early years of his Canadian career. He believed passionately that no genuine, contemporary Canadian style of art and architecture could develop under the conditions then current, and several years after his arrival in Canada he addressed an extensive proposal to the federal government, recommending that the state provide financial aid for art education in order to facilitate

³Berger, *Sense of Power*, p. 3.

⁴Berger, *Sense of Power*, p. 4.

⁵Mary Vipond, “The Nationalist Network: English Canada’s Intellectuals and Artists in the 1920s,” in *Interpreting Canada’s Past, Volume II: After Confederation*, ed. J.M. Bumsted (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 262.

the development of a national art. Among other suggestions, he counselled the government to introduce travelling scholarships to send young architects to see and draw historic architecture in Europe.⁶ Following John Ruskin, Patrick Geddes, Gerard Baldwin Brown and others, he suggested that “the phenomena of Architectural evolution (“the styles”, as the popular phrase expresses it), can best be explained by the ethnographic theory which regards Architecture as history writ large:—as ‘the expression of the age in which it was generated’.” Under these circumstances, he argued, “If national expression . . . is the function of Design, it is surely reasonable to take such precautions as are within our power to see to it that expression shall ring true.”⁷ The report goes on to discuss how the government should go about encouraging architects to develop a school of architecture that would be a true “national expression.” As it was for other imperialists, an important feature of Canadianness for Nobbs was the country’s non-Americanness, and he obviously feared that this was under threat. He argued that “the fusion of our peoples’ tastes and ideals in mere matters of form would be a potent factor for national strength. This has a bearing on the question of U.S. influence in all the appurtenances of daily life in Canada, from tall buildings to personal attire.”⁸ To combat this distressing American influence he suggested that “the National and Democratic arts of Architecture

⁶Nobbs, “Report on Proposals for *State Aid to Art Education in Canada*; and Support of a Plea for the Institution of Travelling Scholarships and Museums,” 4 May 1907 (Canadian Architecture Collection, Blackader-Lauterman Library, McGill University [CAC] Nobbs Collection, Series C.10-1).

⁷Nobbs, “*State Aid to Art Education*,” p. 2.

⁸Nobbs, “*State Aid to Art Education*,” p. 2.

and Design," if preserved in time from "degenerat[ing] into third hand imitations of Parisian academic models" via the influence of the American Beaux-Arts school, "will help, as all true expressions tend to help, our Imperial aspirations"⁹

The report emphasizes the importance of "national and Imperial tradition," and does not really differentiate between the two. Rather, as an antidote to the threatened "infection with [Beaux-Arts] ideals" from the United States, Nobbs suggested that the Canadian government should encourage the study of "the glorious traditions of English and French mediaeval and renaissance architecture [which] are our natural and rightful heritage."¹⁰

Of the two, Nobbs particularly stressed the importance of British models to Canadian architecture. In a 1908 letter to the government minister responsible for architecture, he petitioned for the production of a set of plaster casts of English architectural monuments, to be made available relatively inexpensively for purchase by art museums and schools of design in "the countries of the empire." He pointed out that other countries had such collections, and that their architectural traditions were therefore more easily studied. In the interests of Empire and "memorialising the British government," he suggested that since Melbourne, Australia, was then building a new museum, the governments of Canada, Australia and South Africa should together agree

⁹Nobbs, "State Aid to Art Education," p. 10.

¹⁰Nobbs, "State Aid to Art Education," p. 8.

each to purchase the plaster casts if the British government should make them available.¹¹ Clearly, at this stage, he was emphasizing Canada's Imperial connections as an essential part of its domestic identity. Almost five years later he was still vainly beating that drum. Writing in a letter to the *Spectator* that it was Britain's "Imperial duty" to provide a collection of plaster casts, he suggested that "the value on Imperial grounds of such a collection, illustrating as it would the development of our civilization and culture by objects of art which can be appreciated by all cannot be underestimated."¹²

At about the same time, he wrote in the conditions for the architectural competition to be held for a new legislative building in Regina (and later repeated it in the Winnipeg programme) that while competitors should choose their own style for the edifice, "They are reminded . . . that the Province is politically within the British Empire, and that this fact should be expressed in its Public Buildings."¹³ Nobbs was very much alive to the potential for expressing national ideals in such buildings, as well as through his proposed museum collection. "The British government has systematically, and we believe unwisely, scorned the political use of art," he wrote.¹⁴ Canada, he suggested, should in this respect follow the example of "France and the countries which have borrowed their

¹¹Nobbs, letter to Sidney Fisher, Federal Minister of Agriculture, 3 March 1908 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series c.10-1).

¹²Nobbs, "British Art and the Empire," letter to the *Spectator* (4 January 1913): 17; manuscript dated 12 December 1912, p. 2.

¹³Nobbs, "Conditions of Competition for the Selection of an Architect for the Proposed Government Buildings at Regina, Saskatchewan," 1907.

¹⁴Nobbs, "State Aid to Art Education," p. 11.

bureaucratic systems from her” (and here the United States was undoubtedly prominent in his mind), such countries having “ever been alive to the political and commercial advantages accruing from the encouragement of the arts, and conscious of the significance of their national monuments.” Especially given the increasingly diverse populations of the prairie provinces at this point, this is a significant statement. “The political use of art” should, in this case, be to assert the dominance of Anglo-Canada through the style of the country’s public buildings.

Traquair, too, in several of his *Atlantic Monthly* articles—particularly “The Canadian Type”—emphasized the essential Britishness of Canada, although he was quick to argue that it was also distinctly Canadian, differing from both Britain and the United States. But neither Nobbs nor Traquair had a straightforward vision of Canada as simply British. Instead, as Berger has noted was the case with many imperialists, they were also drawn to the idea of a Québec Folk as an important component of the modern nation, which was itself British. As Berger contends, “some imperialists . . . were attracted to Quebec exactly because of its ‘backwardness.’ They discovered in the province conservative principles, traditional values, and a hostility to capitalism which they themselves admired and shared.” Like Nobbs and Traquair, these people recognized and participated in modern progress and growth, but “a deep undercurrent of suspicion pervaded their attitude toward industrialization and urbanization.”¹⁵

¹⁵Berger, *Sense of Power*, p. 140

Nobbs and Traquair were only two of the many white, well-to-do, English-Canadian imperialists in turn-of-the-century Montréal who, though identifying themselves exclusively with the middle-class Anglophone community, looked to rural Québec for what they saw as a more pure folklore and history to strengthen the flimsy bonds of Canadian nationhood. As Donald Wright observes, the careers of Montréalers W.D. Lighthall (1857-1954) and David Ross McCord (1844-1930) “afford an opportunity to rethink imperialism as, in part, a process of resistance to, and accommodation with, modernity. This process . . . can at once be described as, and explained by, antimodernism.”¹⁰ The juncture between imperialism and antimodernism was clearly an important part of Nobbs’s and Traquair’s intellectual framework too. While they (and particularly Traquair) sought to underline the similarities between the French and English in Canada, for Nobbs and Traquair, as for Lighthall and McCord, the perceived differences were at least as important, and it was not to the Québec of the cities, the boardrooms, the offices, and the factories that they turned.

As I discussed in my introduction, it is a common attribute of folk cultures as perceived by the intellectuals who admire and study them that they are the bearers of culture for the larger societies in which they live. The rural descendants of Québec’s

¹⁰Wright, “W.D. Lighthall and David Ross McCord: Antimodernism and English-Canadian Imperialism, 1880s-1918,” *Revue d’études canadiennes/Journal of Canadian Studies* 32, 2 (Summer 1997): 135. As Wright’s work indicates, Nobbs and Traquair shared other characteristics with Lighthall and McCord, such as their attraction to militarist values. Lighthall, Nobbs, and Traquair were all involved with both the McCord Museum and the Canadian Handicrafts Guild. (Norma Morgan, “F. Cleveland Morgan and the Decorative Arts Collection in the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts [M.A. thesis, Concordia University, 1985], Appendix B.)

original *habitants* fulfilled this rôle in Nobbs's and Traquair's adoptive country: in 1923 Traquair described them as "the oldest and most purely Canadian people of the Dominion."¹⁷ Although at this point he had barely begun to concentrate on the research into Québec culture that was to consume him for several decades, he was already expressing an idea that he would later come to emphasize heavily. As I showed in the last chapter, it was Nobbs's and Traquair's idea that in rural Québec they found a folk society that represented something quite pure, and had remained unspoiled by the conditions of industrialization and the experience of modernity that had, they felt, brought an end to authentic expression in their own culture. As one might expect from people raised and trained in an atmosphere permeated by the ideas of Ruskin, Geddes, and Baldwin Brown, for Nobbs and Traquair, this pure folk culture was characterized particularly by its architecture. And it represented something even more than the survival of authentic culture. It seemed to be uniquely Canadian—just what was needed in a time when, as were intellectual elites in numerous countries, members of what Mary Vipond describes as "the English-Canadian intelligentsia," comprising "creative artists . . . writers, [and] . . . university professors," were organizing themselves into a multiplicity of organizations that sought to advance the arduous process of defining the Canadian nation.¹⁸

The project of defining a national identity is inherently problematic. Nations do not exist naturally; they must be defined and constructed, using many possible

¹⁷Traquair, "The Canadian Type," *Atlantic Monthly* 131 (June 1923): 822.

¹⁸Vipond, "The Nationalist Network," p. 262.

components. As historian David Bell has recently observed, nation-builders themselves have recognized this fact since the beginning of the modern period. Historically, “[e]ven those nationalists who insist on the essential, natural distinctiveness of their particular nation, grounded in the people’s common blood or the physical terrain, nonetheless also invariably define that nation as in some sense unfinished. Action is still urgently required to purge it of impurities . . . or to revive and reawaken essential national qualities that have been forgotten, abandoned, or stolen,” argues Bell.¹⁹ In the case of a newly-constituted country such as Canada, these “essential national qualities” could not just be revived. They had to be “discovered” and invented: redefined as distinctly Canadian. Nation-builders in 1920s Canada were all too aware that a great effort was needed to forge strong bonds for a country only recently emerged from colonial status, in which, as Carl Berger has pointed out, many of the conventional contributors to nationality (“ties of race, religion, and language, as well as . . . a general similarity in political and social institutions”) tended to pull the opposite way.²⁰ Groups identified as folk cultures, though, seemed to many intellectuals to transcend such conflicts; they represented what Giuseppe Cocchiara has called the “innermost soul” of their societies.²¹ This inherent

¹⁹David A. Bell, “The Unbearable Lightness of Being French: Law, Republicanism and National Identity at the End of the Old Regime,” *American Historical Review* 106, 4 (October 2001): 1215-16.

²⁰Berger, “The True North Strong and Free,” in *Interpreting Canada’s Past Volume II: After Confederation* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 164

²¹Giuseppe Cocchiara, *The History of Folklore in Europe* (John N. McDaniel, trans.; Turin: Editore Boringhiera, 1952; Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1981), p. 8.

rootedness might be co-opted to help provide a common identity for a broader culture in need of connections. In the case of Nobbs and Traquair, any differences between Francophone and Anglophone Canada were somehow resolved in the people they defined as a Québec Folk. Despite their historic French origins, such people were rooted in what was by that time, politically, Canadian soil, and their authentic culture might therefore be used to enrich and bind together the entire nation. Nobbs described historic Québec architecture as “ours, the natural product of this bit of earth on which we live.”²² In similar terms, Traquair wrote that “it is our own, it is of the soil.”²³ These buildings had arisen, they seem to suggest, almost spontaneously from the Canadian soil, and were therefore indigenously Canadian by nature.

As culturally-interested intellectuals, Nobbs and Traquair were not alone in their belief that the idea that the Folk might provide Canada with a new national unity. Ian McKay points out that it was a preoccupation of J. Murray Gibbon, of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), who was almost certainly an acquaintance of both Nobbs and Traquair.²⁴ Gibbon saw the revival of traditional needlecraft, for example, as an activity

²²Nobbs, “On the Value of the Study of Old Work,” *CAB* (May 1905): 75.

²³Traquair, “The Education of the Architect,” *Construction* XII, 10 (October 1919): 317.

²⁴McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), p. 157. Gibbon lived in Montréal, and, like both Nobbs and Traquair, was associated with the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, Gibbon becoming its president around 1942. (Janet Elizabeth McNaughton, “A Study of the CPR-Sponsored Quebec Folk Song and Handicraft Festivals, 1927-1930 [master’s thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1982], p. 234.) In addition, Nobbs, Traquair, and Gibbon were all members of Montréal’s Pen and Pencil Club, Nobbs having been elected to

(continued...)

that might strengthen the ties between English- and French-speaking Canadians by taking them back to their Norman roots, and he had similar ideas about folk music.²⁵ “How pleasant it would be,” he wrote in the preface to his 1927 book *Canadian Folk Songs (Old and New)*, “to think that the musical currents which separated in Europe should once more reunite after many hundred years in Canada!”²⁶ Gibbon organized a large number of festivals celebrating folk music, dancing, and handicrafts in Québec and in the western provinces, starting in the 1920s. In addition to their utility in increasing train travel to those destinations, Gibbon had broader cultural goals for his festivals. As Carole Carpenter observes, “[t]he express purposes of such public performances were the celebration of the cultural diversity of Canadians and the promotion of union among them through the mutual appreciation of tradition.”²⁷

Traquair's conviction of the quintessential Canadianness of the Québec Folk is partially explained by a statement he made in 1928. He wrote, “The ‘habitant’ has some claim to be the real Canadian. Ever since his forefathers first colonised the banks of the

²⁴(...continued)

membership in 1906, Gibbon in 1915, and Traquair in 1917. (“List of Members of the Pen and Pencil Club of Montreal since its Foundation,” in *The Pen and Pencil Club, 1890-1959*, by Leo Cox and J. Harry Smith [Montréal: The Pen and Pencil Club, 1959], n.p.)

²⁵McKay, *Quest of the Folk*, p. 157.

²⁶Gibbon, “Preface,” in *Canadian Folk Songs (Old and New)* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1927), xiv. Quoted in Gary Bret Kines, “Chief Man-of-Many-Sides: John Murray Gibbon and his contributions to the development of tourism and the arts in Canada” (master's thesis, Carleton University, 1988), p. 107.

²⁷Carole Henderson Carpenter, *Many Voices: A Study of Folklore Activities in Canada and their Role in Canadian Culture* (Ottawa: National Museum of Man Mercury Series/Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies Paper No. 26, 1979), p. 335.

St. Lawrence in the XVII century he has lived on the land; he has preserved the language and the traditions of his motherland though he has been isolated from Europe to a greater degree and for a longer time than have most of our Canadians. He is the 'habitant' of the real Canada"²⁸ Traquair's notion here of the "real Canada" is an extremely important one. It suggests that, for him, the essence of Canada lay in the rural byways which, it seemed, modern civilization had largely passed by, and where time "ha[d] not moved quite so fast as it ha[d] in other places."²⁹ Elsewhere, engaging in the common British rhetoric analysed by Raymond Williams in which the country is pure and the city is a locus of corruption, he wrote that in Canada "the real type is a countryman."³⁰ If his definition of the real Canada depended upon such antimodernist fantasies it is no wonder that rural French Canadians, who seemed to live such a pastoral life, should figure for Traquair, not only as ideal Folk, but also as ideal Canadians.

Nor were Anglo-Canadians such as Nobbs and Traquair, Lighthall and McCord and their colleagues alone as members of a dominant Anglo-Canadian culture in identifying a minority folk group with the culture of a diverse nation. A similar

²⁸Traquair, "The Old Cottages of Quebec," typescript of article for *House Beautiful* (May 1928), p. 1 (McGill University Archives [MUA], Box 2: 35/17/160); published, in slightly modified form, as "The Old Cottages of Quebec: Of Solid, Direct Construction, well Adapted to the Climate, and with the Dignity that comes Naturally to Simple Things Free from Sham," *House Beautiful* 63 (May 1928): 612-13; 649, 650, 652-4; 656.

²⁹Traquair, "Old Cottages of Quebec," p. 1.

³⁰Traquair, "The Canadian Type," p. 821. In this case, contrarily, the context was "the English-speaking races," who, he argued, "live close to the soil; their types are country-dwellers even in an era of city-dwelling industrialists." See also Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto & Windus Ltd., 1973; London: Hogarth, 1993).

phenomenon occurred in the United States at the same time, when a number of white, Anglophone intellectuals came to see New Mexican pueblo culture as quintessentially American. As Chris Wilson has observed, the opening of the Fine Arts Museum in Santa Fe in 1917—a newly-built edifice that was described by museum patron Frank Springer as having “grown . . . straight from our own soil”—engendered “a spate of national articles . . . describing the Santa Fe-Pueblo style as ‘so directly American,’ ‘a true product of America,’ and ‘a strictly American style of Architecture.’”³¹ Wilson ascribes “this unexpected emphasis on the Americanness of an exotic, non-Anglo-American architecture” to the nativist movement in post-War American culture. Pro-American Americans believed that the architecture of New Mexico was inherently American because it had arisen from the Pueblos, which were indigenous, and from Spanish colonial architecture, which, like that of the French settlers in Canada, was the country’s oldest European architectural tradition.

Yet definitions of concepts such as ethnicity and nationhood are rarely, if ever, monolithic. Nobbs’s and Traquair’s own conceptions of Canada as a nation were fluid, and myriad contradictions are present in their writings on the subject. As far as elite culture was concerned, they recognized and celebrated the dominance of Anglo-Canadians. Frequently they invoked Canada’s Anglo-Saxon inheritance.³² Celebrating

³¹Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), p. 140.

³²“Anglo Saxon” was a very broad term at the beginning of the twentieth century. As Reginald Horsman has demonstrated, it was used in a racial sense by the nineteenth-century (continued...)

the historic architecture of Great Britain, Nobbs commented that it was a source of pride to “our national [Canadian] interest” that “at certain periods Englishmen, Scotsmen and Irishmen had sentiments to express and a power to express them in no sense inferior” to the best of Greece, Rome, Italy or France.³³ A few years earlier he had told the American Institute of Architects that “We [Canadians] are still British. I think we will always be British. We speak a sort of English, and some of us try to build a sort of English too.”³⁴ Nobbs’s statement supports Berger’s contention that, even while they celebrated the value of Québécois culture to Canada, imperialists were united in expecting that Francophone numbers would grow ever smaller and weaker, and that Canada would continue to be ruled by an Anglo-Canadian elite.³⁵

Traquair was, fantastically, prepared to trace “our European culture” back to pre-classical times and claim a direct descent through ancient Rome and Greece from the Minoans, “the oldest continuous civilization in the world,” whose archaeological remains

³²(...continued)

English to refer to those living in England but also, more broadly, for all English-speaking peoples. In the United States by the 1840s, “Anglo Saxon” was used to describe all the white people of that country, but still frequently with an emphasis on Anglo-Teutonic roots. (*Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* [Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1981], pp. 4-5. See also Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Colour: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.)

³³Nobbs, “The Architecture of Canada” (paper read before the Third Annual Assembly, RAIC), *Construction* (October 1910): 57.

³⁴Nobbs, “Address by Prof. Percy E. Nobbs” at the American Institute of Architects banquet, 1907 (stenographer’s report), p. 3. (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.10-1.)

³⁵Berger, *Sense of Power*, pp. 134, 145.

Sir Arthur Evans had recently excavated on the Island of Crete.³⁶ This lineage, of course, included the French as well as the English—included, in fact, essentially all Britons and northern and western Europeans.³⁷ Although, he wrote, the civilizations of Babylon and Egypt, “like those of China and India, were doomed to stagnation The long-lost Cretan seafarer is our own spiritual ancestor. He nourished Greece as Greece has nourished us. European civilization began as the civilization of the Aegean Sea.”³⁸ Significantly, the inheritors of this great Minoan legacy did not include those still living in the Mediterranean region. At one point Traquair opined that Northern France (which he and others noted had been the origin of Canada’s French settlers) “is more akin to southern England than it is to the Midi,” and he distinguished between “Nordic man” and “Mediterranean man.”³⁹ It was perhaps this shared inheritance that helped make rural Québécois such an ideal Folk for Traquair’s Canada. He believed that the French were

³⁶Traquair, “The Civilization of the Seas,” undated manuscript, p. 6. (MUA, Box 1: 35/17/127); “The Commonwealth of the Atlantic,” *Atlantic Monthly* 133 (May 1924): 602.

³⁷ Traquair distinguished between North America’s “Anglo-Saxon stock”—comprising “Germans, French, Norwegians, and Northern Europeans, of substantially the same breed and culture as the English”—and “three quite different kinds of aliens—the Oriental, the Eastern European [which for him included ‘Poles, Lithuanians, Russians, Greeks, Bulgarians, Italians (and) Hungarians’], and the Jew.” He concluded that North America was tending towards caste organization as follows: “the Old Anglo-Saxon American, the Jewish, the Eastern European, the Oriental, and the Negro.” (Traquair, “The Caste System in North America,” *Atlantic Monthly* 131 [March 1923]: 417-20, 422. This article, more than any other of Traquair’s writings, reveals his deep-seated racism.) Berger has noted that it was not uncommon among Canadian imperialists thus to “accommodate the French Canadians into their composite image of the Canadian character far more easily than they were able to accept the strange immigrants from central, eastern, and southern Europe.” (Berger, *Sense of Power*, p. 128.)

³⁸Traquair, “Commonwealth of the Atlantic,” p. 603.

³⁹Traquair, “Commonwealth of the Atlantic,” p. 605.

racially fellow-inheritors of the same great ancestry, but the *habitants'* simple life on the land made them purer specimens for his purposes. Nonetheless, although Nobbs and Traquair frequently identified this discrete segment of Québec's population as cultural representatives of all of Canada, their own perceptions, not surprisingly, changed often, depending on the context in which they were speaking or writing.

Nobbs also made an important early statement of his position on the cultural ancestry of contemporary Canada in 1910, when the new Victoria Memorial Museum was being planned in Ottawa. He petitioned to have one floor of the new museum given over to the arts of design, and made it clear that he saw the material culture of Québec as one of his list of essentials for the development of a modern architecture in Canada. He drew up a proposed plan for the second floor, which would illustrate "The National Traditions or the Arts of Design."⁴⁰ This featured, as broad categories, Classical Art (in which he gave equal space to Greece and Rome on one side and Italian work of the mediaeval to the late Renaissance periods on the other), England (Norman to the late-eighteenth century), France (Romanesque to the late-eighteenth century), Industrial Arts (divided by type, and also including three categories of furniture—Gothic, Louis XIV-XVI and English seventeenth and eighteenth centuries), and Home Industries. This latter category Nobbs divided broadly into three categories: Red Indians (costume, prehistoric arts, weapons,

⁴⁰Nobbs, "Memorandum relative to the Allocation of Floor Space on the Second Storey of the *Victoria Memorial Museum*, at Ottawa, Ontario; for a collection to ILLUSTRATE THE NATIONAL TRADITIONS or THE ARTS OF DESIGN," memorandum to William Pugsley, Federal Minister of Public Works, 2 January 1910 (CAC, Nobbs Archives, Series C.10-1).

utensils, baskets etc.), Recent Settlers (a small area, dedicated to lace and embroidery) and, receiving the most space, French Canadian, which he divided into costume, textiles, early handicrafts, axes etc., leather and fur, and, in the centre, models of buildings.

Nobbs's preoccupation with the importance of museums to the development of art makes it clear that he saw this floor of the museum as a potential study collection for architects and designers. As such, it represents what he saw as the essential elements of Canadian cultural production. The material culture of Québec was predominant in his plan, and the material he chose to include indicates that it was what he saw as Folk production that was most germane to his conception of Canadian art. He did not include the wood carving that Traquair later found so compelling; with the exception of the models of buildings (which were probably all or nearly all vernacular forms, in contrast to the examples in the European sections), he included only those items to be found in the Industrial Arts section of the European collection. No examples of the so-called "high" arts of painting or sculpture were to be exhibited, although the European sections would feature casts of sculpture among the architecture. (It should be noted, however, that Québec sculpture was only recognized by intellectual elites some years later, in the works of National Museum of Canada ethnologist C. Marius Barbeau, Traquair, and others. Nobbs may well have known nothing about it.) Nobbs's proposed plan for the Victoria Memorial Museum is consistent with his perception of Québec society; he focussed on those aspects that represented, for him, the products of a rural folk culture, whose best

efforts at the fine arts did not bear comparison with those of Europe, but whose untutored vernacular production was worthy of study and admiration.

Nobbs's plan illustrates a dichotomy in both his and Traquair's thinking. They identified a Québec folk culture that was truly representative of Canada, but they did not, in common with many artists of the time, see North America's indigenous cultures as a similar wellspring of authentically Canadian culture that might be appropriated for "modern" use.⁴¹ As Lynda Jessup has recently argued, the idea became common in Central Canada in the 1920s, that both Aboriginal and folk art might shape "modern" Canadian art by contributing to it and by providing a "primitive" against which it could be defined as truly "modern." In this discourse, "although neither [group] produced fine art, the work of both served to define it," she states.⁴² But as she notes, even for those who celebrated such arts, "the one was doomed to extinction. The other was revivable."⁴³ Nobbs's museum plan dates from well before the decade of which Jessup writes, but he

⁴¹See, for example Gerta Moray, "Emily Carr and the Traffic in Native Images," in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, ed. Lynda Jessup (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), pp. 71-93 and Ruth B. Phillips, "Performing the Native Woman: Primitivism and Mimicry in Early Twentieth-Century Visual Culture," in the same volume, p. 29.

⁴²Lynda Jessup, "Moving Pictures and Costume Songs at the 1927 'Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art, Native and Modern,'" *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 11, 1 (Spring 2002, forthcoming).

⁴³Jessup, "Moving Pictures." The attitude that Native culture—and with it, Native society—was vanishing, reflects the prevailing perception among mainstream British and British-Canadians. See R.G. Moyles and Doug Owsram, "Specimens of a Dying Race: British Views of the Canadian Indian," in *Imperial Dreams and Colonial Realities: British Views of Canada, 1880-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), pp. 167-185.

never altered his attitude. He viewed indigenous cultural production (which, at least in his Victoria Memorial Museum scheme, he treated monolithically) as of sufficient importance to be exhibited as part of Canada's history, but at no time did he suggest in writing that it might in any way serve as inspiration for the designers of the present, unlike the other components of his putative museum display. He was certainly attracted to Aboriginal cultures for their traditional connotations of masculine activities in the great outdoors. Like Traquair's, his antimodernism extended far beyond his approach to architectural history and practice. It pervaded his personal life, whether he was designing heraldic devices or seeking intense experience in pitting himself against human and natural opponents in the boxing and fencing rings, up to his waist in the icy waters of rushing salmon rivers, or tracking moose for miles in Northern Québec in the dead of winter, in pursuit of ever-larger heads.⁴⁴ He was a founding member of a men's hunting and social club, centred on outdoor experience, which they called "Meno Keosawin." The name, he explained, "signifies 'happy hunting grounds' in some Indian dialect."⁴⁵ Thus, he was happy to use elements of First Nations cultures as he understood them, while for the most part dismissing them as no part of his own contemporary society. The features he admired about Aboriginal societies obviously had more to do with the perception that

⁴⁴Nobbs's antimodern experiences of many kinds are front and centre in his "Memoirs." The Memoirs are unpublished, and I am extremely grateful to Susan Bronson for making me aware of their existence, and for very kindly providing me with a copy from Greenwood. See also Nobbs's correspondence with Bertram Goodhue, his occasional partner and frequent would-be partner in these wilderness forays. [CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series F-14.5).

⁴⁵Nobbs, "-50° at the Meno Keosawin Club," p.1, in "Memoirs."

they were a part of Nature—their struggles to survive as a part of that savage environment associated them with bravery, toughness, and other “masculine” virtues—and not of Culture as it was understood in early-twentieth century Canada.⁴⁶

Like Nobbs, Traquair did not see the indigenous peoples of Canada as real members of society at all, and this may help explain his disinterest in their architecture. He wrote that “We need not spend much time on the American Indian, for he has never been a part of the European culture of North America. He has been segregated and is dying out. . . . he has never been a fellow citizen.”⁴⁷ Shortly after his arrival in Canada he had written of the “arts of the Northern red Indian” that “Interesting though they are they do not directly concern us for our civilization and our art is and will remain European.”⁴⁸ For his part, Nobbs obviously felt that indigenous culture had been

⁴⁶See Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995) for a discussion of the association of Culture with “civilization” and, through civilization’s influence in tempering raw masculinity, with the qualities of “manliness” that distinguished middle-class males such as Nobbs and Traquair from their working-class and non-Western counterparts. See Ross D. Cameron, “Tom Thomson, Antimodernism, and the Ideal of Manhood,” *Journal of the CHA/Revue de la S.H.C.* 10 (1999): 185-208, for a discussion of the way in which such notions of manhood were redefined by members of the Central Canadian Anglophone elite in the early decades of the twentieth century through activities designed to “rejuvenate” the enervated male, chief among them, atavistic contact with Nature.

⁴⁷Traquair, “Caste System,” p. 418.

⁴⁸Traquair, “American Colonial Architecture,” notes for architectural curriculum courses, 1914-15 (CAC Traquair Collection, Series A-1.26).

unfortunately corrupted by European contact, and perhaps for this reason it held for him only the historic interest of something that is finished.⁴⁹

Nobbs and Traquair were closely connected with the circles in which, as Jessup argues, ideas about the utility of both Aboriginal and Folk culture to the definition of “modern” art had become common. Their reticence might be explained in part by the medium in which they worked. As Harold Kalman points out, architectural historians have historically shown but little interest in the study of First Nations architecture in Canada.⁵⁰ Alan Gowans articulated the prevailing attitude, in particularly strong terms, as late as 1966, writing,

“Architecture”, of course, is hardly the word for what we have here. Architecture implies some idea of man organizing and controlling nature to suit his needs; but these Hurons, hacking clumsily away at trees and bark with stone axes and knives, built more like birds piecing a nest together, or beavers piling up dams—not so much shaping architectural forms as adapting themselves to whatever kind of shelter the available materials naturally provided. . . . Not man, but Nature, is in command.⁵¹

Most importantly, Gowans here associates Aboriginal society with nature. Indeed, his direct comparison of the building techniques of the Huron with those of birds and beavers

⁴⁹Nobbs argued that while “the red man” should not be restricted by game laws to the extent that “the white man” was, “ancient Indian privileges should be made contingent on shooting with a bow and arrow, or at least a muzzle loader, and shooting for the family pot only.” As he saw it, indigenous hunters had sufficiently lost their native instincts that free hunting rights would be sure to lead to “extirpation, first of the game, and then of the Indian.” (Nobbs, “Big Game and Common Sense,” *Illustrated Forestry Magazine* [June 1923]: 358.)

⁵⁰Harold Kalman, *A History of Canadian Architecture*, vol. 1 (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 1.

⁵¹Alan Gowans, *Building Canada: An Architectural History of Canadian Life* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 3.

places indigenous peoples squarely in the realm of nature, rather than that of culture, which came to North America only with the early Europeans. This is an idea common in the discourse of four decades previously. One of the great advantages of French society in Canada was that it had been in place so long—and had even been there when the British conquered the French on the continent—that it seemed almost indigenous to Canada, while still remaining European, and, perhaps more conveniently yet, subordinate to the conquering British society. With its recognizable, and still extant, architectural tradition, it provided Nobbs and Traquair with an ideal source for a modern Canadian architecture.

In a 1926 memorandum, inspired no doubt by his field work in co-operation with Marius Barbeau the previous summer, Traquair built on this idea, suggesting that the Victoria Memorial Museum begin to “acquire and . . . eventually exhibit specimens illustrative of architecture and ornamentation in the Quebec field.”⁵² He argued that the museum should do so because “the early French period in Canada was a common meeting ground in the study of architecture and the aboriginal races of Canada, and . . . such material would be a very useful nucleus for a future museum of Canadian art.” This is an interesting notion, as Traquair appears to have been suggesting that early Québec culture

⁵²L.L. Bolton, “Memorandum re proposal from Professor Traquair of McGill University, for cooperation of Federal Government officials with the Department of Architecture of McGill University, in the study of the architecture of the Province of Quebec,” 16 January 1926, p. 5 (MUA Box 2: 35/17/178). This memorandum includes reports of several meetings, including one held at the Dominion Archives on 15 January, from which the above statement is taken. In attendance were, in addition to Traquair, Dr. Doughty, Dominion Archivist; J.B. Harkin, Commissioner of National Parks and W.D. Cromarty of that branch; Diamond Jenness, Acting Chief of the Division of Anthropology and C. Marius Barbeau of that division, both of the Victoria Memorial Museum and the author of the memorandum, L.L. Bolton, Acting Director of the Victoria Memorial Museum and Assistant Deputy Minister, Department of Mines.

was in some way related to indigenous culture, and stood as a half-way point between European and indigenous peoples. Such an interpretation is not unique; it was employed by members of the Group of Seven and by art historians and critics in the 1920s and 30s, who set up a chronology in which, as Jessup observes, "the folk art of rural Québec . . . operated in an intermediary space between aboriginal cultures and the Group of Seven."⁵³ Nature, represented by Aboriginals, was replaced by Culture, represented by European settlers. And as I discuss later in this chapter, many early-twentieth century intellectuals believed that among those Europeans, *habitant* society had remained attached to the land and static while both urban French-speaking settlers and the later-arriving British majority had superseded it. A traditional, rural French-Canadian culture could thus be conceptualized as a part of the history of "modern" Canadian society existing in the present only as a remnant of the past. The same Memorandum that notes Traquair's desire for the national museum to begin collecting examples of the historical material culture of Québec precisely sets out this idea of cultural lineage. The author (L.L. Bolton, who was Acting Director of the Victoria Memorial Museum and Assistant Deputy Minister of the Department of Mines) begins by observing that Barbeau's "original work in Anthropology consisted of studies of the early Indian tribes of Canada. This work led him into a study of French-Canadian folk-lore . . . and a further development of the work was

⁵³Jessup, "Bushwackers in the Gallery: Antimodernism and the Group of Seven," in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience*, ed. Jessup, pp. 141-42.

the study of the arts and handicrafts of the ancient French colony of Québec,” which he had begun in earnest the summer he went to the Île d’Orléans with Traquair.⁵⁴

Traquair’s plea for the museum to begin a collection of “architecture and ornamentation in the Quebec field” was based on his observation that “the valuable material was fast disappearing and that it was imperative in the interest of recording the early development of art in Canada that this should be done at once.”⁵⁵ He made the suggestion at a meeting that had been convened to discuss the possibility that Traquair and the Department of Architecture at McGill University might co-operate formally with various government agencies—the Victoria Memorial Museum (almost certainly through Barbeau), the National Parks Branch of the Department of the Interior, and the Dominion Archives—in collecting information about such historical Québec buildings as interested them, and also in sharing photographs amongst themselves. He noted that it was essential that they try to salvage remnants of “this early Canadian architecture” by collecting specimens for the museum, as they were “being rapidly lost to the country through sale or destruction.”⁵⁶

It is telling that Traquair identified the Victoria Memorial Museum as the rightful place for the objects he hoped to collect, although he categorized such material as ideal to form the basis for “a future museum of Canadian art.” Such an institution already existed;

⁵⁴Bolton, “Memorandum,” p. 1.

⁵⁵Bolton, “Memorandum,” p. 5.

⁵⁶Bolton, “Memorandum,” p. 2.

the National Gallery of Canada was well established by 1926, when he made the suggestion. Yet Traquair evidently saw the museum, not the gallery, as the proper home for such a collection, and Diamond Jenness, Barbeau's colleague in the National Museum of Canada's Division of Anthropology, agreed with him, "express[ing] himself as satisfied that such collection was a legitimate function" for the division.⁵⁷ For Traquair, the material culture of Québec functioned only as a cultural ancestor to the art and architecture of his present. While the latter might have its place in an art gallery, he saw the historical architecture and sculpture of Québec as ethnological specimens rather than as art *per se*.

His view was apparent as well in the autumn of 1925, when Barbeau offered to purchase on Traquair's behalf some sculptural pieces by Louis Jobin (1845-1928), whom the latter was later to describe as "a master-sculptor . . . one of the last of his line."⁵⁸ Traquair wrote back dubiously, noting that "You will understand that in the Art Association & at McGill we have first to consider the purely artistic value of an object, afterwards only its anthropological, or social value. . . . The modern work, so far as I have seen it is inferior in purely artistic value however interesting as the continuation of an

⁵⁷Bolton, "Memorandum," p. 5.

⁵⁸Traquair, *The Old Architecture of Québec:: A Study of the Buildings Erected in New France from the Earliest Explorers to the Middle of the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1947; facsimile edition Montréal: McGill University School of Architecture, 1996) p. 296.

architectural and artistic tradition.”⁵⁰ His recommendations regarding the Victoria Memorial Museum make it clear that even the “early & mid XVIII century carving [and] in a secondary degree the work of the early XIX century,” which he described as “the valuable material for us,” did not have quite enough “purely artistic value” to gain entrance into the art gallery.⁵¹ Later the same month he returned the photograph Barbeau had sent him, with regrets that he had concluded that “Jobin’s material is really not suited to our museums here.”⁵¹ He went on to say that he would try to get one of the little angels Barbeau had offered him “for the McCord Historical Museum, but I do not know yet what the committee will say to including work by a living artist.” Jobin’s work fell into a grey area for Traquair. It was not quite art; rather, because the sculptor belonged both at the end of a long line of traditional wood carvers—a tradition that Traquair believed had died out—and to a culture that Traquair placed squarely in the past, its place was in a historical museum. But because the artist himself was alive, though he represented a dead tradition, it was not clear where his work belonged.

Yet, in their respective plans for a museum collection of Canadian design, both he and Nobbs accorded pride of place as true Canadians to the folk culture they identified in Québec, probably in part for what they saw as its seniority on the northern part of the

⁵⁰Traquair, letter to Barbeau, 11 October 1925 (Canadian Museum of Civilization, Information Management Systems, Marius Barbeau correspondence, B 244.f8, “Traquair, Ramsay” [hereafter CMC, IMS, Barbeau, B244 f.8, “Traquair”).

⁵¹Traquair, letter to Barbeau, 11 October 1925.

⁵¹Traquair, letter to Barbeau, 26 October 1925 (CMC, IMS, Barbeau, B244 f.8, “Traquair”).

continent. Although indigenous peoples obviously had true seniority, they had “never been a part of the European culture of North America,” and represented, for Nobbs and Traquair, a pre-civilization society with little or no relevance to modern culture; it had been superseded by the colonists of New France, who, as Europeans, represented civilization in North America. As I have demonstrated, Nobbs and Traquair tended to conflate the original *habitant* settlers in Québec with their rural descendants. Because they identified in Québec a folk society virtually unchanged since its arrival, this culture—even continuing into Nobbs’s and Traquair’s own day—retained its status as the earliest European culture on Canadian soil.

The next wave of immigrants Nobbs and Traquair recognized comprised English speakers, and as Britons themselves, they might be expected to have identified these people from their home country as quintessential Canadians. But as they saw it, British settlers in Canada had never remained aloof from modernity as they believed a section of Québec society had. As a result, Nobbs and Traquair found no English-Canadian folk culture, and they were looking for a Folk to contain the cultural essence of society. Neither emphasized that the buildings of early English Canada might serve in this way as precedents for a modern national style, even though Nobbs wrote of “that old Georgian manner of building [which] may be called both *natural* and English.”⁶² Arriving in Canada from Britain and the United States predominantly in the late-eighteenth and

⁶²Nobbs, “The English Tradition in Canadian Architecture,” *Architectural Review* 55 (June 1924): 1. The emphasis is his.

early-nineteenth centuries, perhaps these Anglophone settlers had arrived already a bit over-sophisticated by the experience of increasing industrialization in their home countries. Certainly, their arrival followed long after that of the majority of French immigrants, who, both Nobbs and Traquair believed, had brought with them the habits of mediaeval or renaissance France. Traquair, who was so alive to the atavistic charm of the Folk, wrote in that vein exclusively about rural Québécois, and never became fascinated by other ethnic groups in Canada. He had a prime opportunity in Guysborough, Nova Scotia, where he spent his summers and, indeed, where he retired and died, but to my knowledge he did not plunge into the Folk enthusiasm exhibited by many middle-class Nova Scotians in the inter-war period.⁵³ In his single article on the subject, he restricts himself much more specifically to the hooked rugs that are the subject at hand, never attempting, as he did in his Québec articles, to paint a picture of Nova Scotians as Folk.⁵⁴ For Traquair, Canada's Folk were in Québec.

⁵³I do not know exactly when Traquair began spending his summers in Nova Scotia, but he wrote from Guysborough regarding arrangements for his first field trip with Marius Barbeau, commenting in one letter that his departure awaited only some friends who would spend the period of his absence in his house there; the fact that he owned a house in Guysborough suggests that he was already well established there by the mid-nineteen twenties (Traquair, letter to Barbeau, 16 July 1925 [CMC, IMS, Barbeau, B244 f.8, "Traquair"]). He moved there permanently upon his retirement in 1939, a fact he mentioned in a letter to Barbeau several years later. (letter to Barbeau, 23 June 1942). He was, therefore, a resident–first migrant and then permanent (until his death)–of Nova Scotia throughout the period (1927 to 1960) that McKay identifies as the peak of the fascination for the idea of the Folk in that province (*Quest of the Folk*, p. 9). Nobbs also owned a house in Nova Scotia, in the town of Mill Village on the South Shore (*Percy Erskine Nobbs and his Associates: a Guide to the Archive*, edited by Irena Murray [Montréal: Canadian Architecture Collection and Blackader-Lauterman Library of Architecture and Art, 1986], p. 85).

⁵⁴Traquair, "Hooked Rugs in Canada," in *Canadian Geographical Journal* XXVI, 1 (January 1943): 240-254.

This developmental model helps explain both why Nobbs and Traquair did not identify an authentic Anglo-Canadian Folk culture and also why they did not attribute to all Francophone society in Canada the same ancient status. Of the several social groups who originally colonized New France, they saw only the *habitants* as remaining outside of a modernity that was advancing all around them. As Nobbs and Traquair saw it, the rest of Québec—the clerical, seigneurial, military and commercial classes who had also made the Atlantic voyage in the earliest days—had joined the march of modern development and societal change along with the British-Canadians who had superseded them politically. Urban Francophones and all Anglophones thus belonged—with Anglo-Canadian culture dominating—to more or less the same modern society that was Nobbs and Traquair’s world too. For Nobbs, twentieth-century English-Canadians did not provide the folk traditions that might lend authenticity to a modern Canadian architecture; they made use of them. “I have no hesitation,” he wrote, “in attributing to the British immigrant [architect] the sincerest and most inventive efforts to modify traditions to new requirements and local conditions, and incidentally to appreciate the good work done in Canada between 1700 and 1900.”⁵⁵ For Nobbs and Traquair, modern Canada was principally the domain of Anglo-Canadian culture. It was “the unethnized ground on which other cultures [were] ethnicized.”⁵⁶ The small group of people that Nobbs and Traquair identified as a continuation of *habitant* culture, because they were conceived as existing in the past,

⁵⁵Nobbs, “Architecture in Canada,” (talk read before the RIBA, 21 January 1924), p. 13.

⁵⁶Jessup, “Bushwackers in the Gallery,” p. 144.

could thus provide a history, as well as a cultural tradition, for the cultural mainstream –Anglo-Canadians such as Nobbs and Traquair—to which the Canadian present belonged.

Strangely enough, Traquair's French Canadians were more essentially Canadian than English Canadians also as a result of the British conquest of Québec. As Traquair wrote, "the habitant is, indeed, the true Canadian, for he has no other country. One hundred and sixty years ago he was torn from his motherland; since then he has been under the protection of a flag whose traditions are not his: he can know no country but Canada."⁷ That is, Québécois were more Canadian than anyone else because, as a result of the political split that came when the French ceded the colony to England, they were nothing else. English Canadians, for instance, were really still English as well as Canadian, but the French in Canada had no other country that they might call home. Thus, no one could be more Canadian than the Francophone people of Québec. Tellingly, though, Traquair employs the term *habitant* here. This suggests one of two possibilities. Either he conflated all of Québec society with the Folk when it suited him, or he perceived this Folk culture as the only part of Francophone society to live "under the protection" of an *alien* flag. That is, that he associated those parts of Québec society that he saw as partaking in the experience of modernity (people of the urban, the educated, the industrial and the commercial worlds) more strongly with his own, Anglo-Canadian culture than with a rural Québec that really operated as modern Québec's past too.

⁷Traquair, "Canadian Type," p. 823.

Buildings they identified with the British tradition in Canada actually seemed less Canadian to both Nobbs and Traquair than did historic Québec architecture. The latter were, they believed, completely unique—unlike anything that had been built by other colonists in North America. Traquair wrote:

The observant traveller in the Province of Quebec, if he is, as he should be, interested in the growth of national culture and architecture, cannot but be struck by the distinctive character of the older houses and churches which line the main highways and cluster in the villages on both banks of the St. Lawrence. These low, broad, blackroofed, stone houses and steeply gabled churches with their slender needle spires are very different from the wood-framed houses and pillared Palladian churches of Ontario, Nova Scotia or New England. Houses and churches form an architecture distinctive of French Canada and unlike anything else to be found on the American continent. This is a truly Canadian art, the product of French culture isolated in Canada for so long that it has struck roots of its own; it has its own tradition founded upon, yet different from those traditions of Old France from which it sprang.⁸⁸

Nobbs, too, wrote that the architecture of the English-speaking provinces “differs in no material way from the older work of the northern New England States . . . while architecture in Quebec is a thing apart.”⁸⁹ In fact, these buildings might even be more Canadian than American colonial architecture was American, although Traquair acknowledged that it too was distinct from the English Georgian architecture from which it arose. “But in Quebec,” he wrote, “the distinction between the New and the Old World forms is stronger; the architecture of French Quebec is more distinctive of the land

⁸⁸Traquair, “The Old Architecture of French Canada,” in *Queen's Quarterly* (Autumn 1931): 589. (Reprinted Montréal: MUP Series XIII, no. 34, 1932).

⁸⁹Nobbs, “Canadian Architecture,” in *Canada and its Provinces: A History of the Canadian People and their Institutions by One Hundred Associates*, eds. Adam Shortt and Arthur G. Doughty (Toronto: Glasgow, Brook & Co., 1914), p. 671.

in which it has grown than is the American Colonial. It has been more isolated by the accidents of political history and so has struck deeper roots."⁷⁰ This sounds suspiciously like rationalization; Traquair argued that the political separation from France caused by the English conquest made the Québécois more Canadian, but apparently did not see the American Revolution—which might have been expected to have had an even stronger impact since it was instigated by the American people and not thrust upon them—as having a similar effect. Perhaps, not having spent time closely observing the people of New England as he had those of Québec, Traquair was unable to distinguish what he might, indeed, have identified as a rural Folk culture within the more industrial, developed, and cosmopolitan whole. Then, too, in Traquair's conception, the Americans shared the same blood with the English, which made for inalienable ties not susceptible to being sundered by political revolution.

As Traquair noted, Québec architecture was not like that of France either, although French architecture was surely its parent. He wrote that

Although it is founded upon French traditions, and never ceases to be truly French, yet it is very different from the contemporary art of France. This difference gradually became more pronounced until, in the early years of last century, the architecture of French Canada was quite unlike that being done anywhere else in the world. We have in it, in fact, a genuine national Canadian school of Architecture and decoration.⁷¹

⁷⁰Traquair, "Old Architecture of French Canada," p. 590.

⁷¹Traquair, "The Old Arch. Of the Province of Quebec," undated manuscript, p. 3. (MUA, Box 2: 35/17/160).

He even argued that this Canadian design had excelled that of Europe and the United States in one respect. "It is remarkable," he wrote, "that at a time when both Europe and America were sunk in architectural revivals, classic or gothic, when in France the worst phases of churchwarden gothic competed for favour with the dullest of classic temples, these master sculptors of Quebec were faithful to the traditions of the old regime and were developing them in a manner peculiar to Canada."⁷² It was clearly important to both Nobbs and Traquair that they be able to find a school of architecture that was unique to Canada. Traquair wrote that with the traditions they brought with them from France "the Canadian settlers took many liberties. They developed their traditions very freely and so produced a real Canadian architecture, moulded by climate and life and by a genuine feeling for beauty."⁷³ For Traquair, the architecture of Québec was not Canadian simply because it was built in Canada, but because it was built by real Canadians responding to the conditions of life and climate in Canada.

Nobbs, too, saw something specifically Canadian in the Québec architecture of the early periods. Early in his Montréal career he recommended following "good local traditions"—and he was particularly referring to the architecture of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Québec—because they were "founded on sense and experience and national temperament"⁷⁴ The notion that vernacular architecture is "founded on

⁷²Traquair, "Old Architecture of French Canada," p. 605.

⁷³Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. 1.

⁷⁴Nobbs, "On the Value of the Study of Old Work," *CAB* (May 1905): 75.

national temperament” suggests that he saw something in it more than the pragmatic response to weather and climate that is a common feature of all good architecture. Rather it suggests that he saw something inherently Canadian in these buildings, which could lend itself to modern building as well if used judiciously.

The idea of climate as a moulder of architecture is an important one. It is of course only rational (though by no means inevitable) that local weather conditions should be taken into consideration in the design of buildings, and it was an essential part of the arts and crafts approach to architecture. However, the notion of climate as a factor in culture and national character was also popular at this time. The effects of climate were often used in writings about race, to justify the argument that northern peoples were stronger and even more virtuous than those from warmer lands.⁷⁵ Traquair himself used a version of it in the *Atlantic Monthly* to support his contention that the cradles of civilization lay in “Mesopotamia, Egypt and the Eastern Basin of the Mediterranean.”⁷⁶ He argued that in the very far north mere survival was a struggle, while in the tropics “the intense heat and the drenching rains do not tend to produce a race energetic enough to cope with this over luxuriant life. Even civilized man, with all his advantages, finds it impossible to maintain his energy in the tropics.” Surprisingly, Traquair did not explicitly use the justification of climate for explaining what he saw to be the superiority of the

⁷⁵For the Canadian case, see Carl Berger, “The True North Strong and Free,” in *Interpreting Canada's Past Volume II: After Confederation*, ed. J.M. Bumsted (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 157-74. See also Berger, *Sense of Power*, pp. 128-131.

⁷⁶Traquair, “Civilization of the Seas,” p. 2.

modern northern peoples, although, as we have seen, he did decry the immigration of the peoples of eastern and southern Europe.

Climate was also an important part of the arguments of Canadian imperialists, who believed that the cold and storms of Canada contributed to the building of a superior people, who enjoyed greater strength and health, and more strength of character than those of warmer locations.⁷⁷ The argument was made that Canada's harsh weather helped keep less desirable immigrants out, as they were more inclined to settle and cause problems south of the border. But although these ideas seem as if they would have attracted Traquair, he did not express them; when it came to climate and architecture, his comments were quite straightforward. He noted simply that the people of Québec had built "simple buildings, well suited to the lives of the people and to a climate very different from that of Old France."⁷⁸ Nobbs emphasized more the rigorous nature of the Canadian climate, noting that "signs are not wanting of the development of distinct local character. For this we have to thank the vigors [sic] of our climate, of which, not only having weathered, but enjoyed, the last two winters, I make bold to speak although I am of old country origin."⁷⁹ Some years later he commented that "climate, the great solvent in the evolution of all external building forms, will in time disintegrate the immigrant traditions,

⁷⁷See Berger, *Sense of Power*, pp. 128-131.

⁷⁸Traquair, "Why we Admire Old Buildings," undated typescript, p. 1 (MUA, Box 2: 35/17/160).

⁷⁹Nobbs, "Art Education in the British Commonwealth," lecture, Montréal, 1909, p. 9.

as it disintegrates the immigrant's costume and dietary [sic]."⁵⁰ For Nobbs, in common with many imperialists, weather was "that most potent agency for making a distinctive character in men and things"—a force that made stronger all those it did not kill or drive away.⁵¹ It was a great leveller of people, of custom, and of architectural form, and as such would help to lead the way towards a national style.

"Architecture in Canada as elsewhere has thus served her monumental or ethnographic purpose as a true reflection of historic facts and racial instincts," wrote Nobbs in 1914.⁵² But what were these facts and these instincts? Nobbs and Traquair, like many others at the beginning of this century, gave considerable thought to what and who Canada and Canadians really were. Both of them were concerned with how architecture would develop in their own time, and believed that understanding Canada's history and ethnic makeup would lead to the development of a truly national style of architecture. But although they frequently invoked the wholesome value and true Canadianness of rural Québec, its people, and its vernacular architecture, both saw the country as fundamentally British in origin and modern character, and in the end the imperial ideal and the desire to maintain it influenced them more than the actual ethnic constitution of the country. The charm of the Folk in Québec could only take them so far in the modern

⁵⁰Nobbs, "Canadian Architecture," typescript, read before the RIBA, September, 1922, p. 2 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.9-6).

⁵¹Nobbs, *Architecture in Canada*, talk read before the RIBA, 21 January 1924 (London: RIBA, 1924); Berger, *Sense of Power*, pp. 130-31.

⁵²Nobbs, "Canadian Architecture," in *Canada and its Provinces*, p. 665.

context, and although both Nobbs and Traquair interacted with their Francophone Montréal colleagues—indeed, Traquair “was a regular contributor to Québec’s emerging art press”⁸³—urban, cosmopolitan Québec culture held no special attraction for them; they did not see it as materially different from their own. Neither did they recognize the cultural contribution that might be made by Canada’s ethnically diverse populations, of which the non-British contingent was becoming both increasingly varied and more numerous with the passage of time. Their thoughts about Canadian nationality were highly restrictive. As they, with many compatriots, embarked on the project of defining the Canadian nation, these ideas were reflected in writing and speeches, in teaching and, in the case of Nobbs, in architectural design. These activities and their material expression thus served to manifest Nobbs’s and Traquair’s cultural biases and to reassert the dominance of their own social and ethnic group.

⁸³France Vanlaethem, “Beautification versus Modernization,” in *Montreal Metropolis 1880-1930*, eds. Isabelle Gournay and France Vanlaethem (Montréal/Toronto: Canadian Centre for Architecture/Stoddart, 1998), p. 134.

Chapter Four

RAMSAY TRAQUAIR: “LOCAL NEEDS, LOCAL MATERIALS, AND LOCAL CLIMATE”

FOR MUCH of Nobbs's and Traquair's professional lives as builders and educators, architectural Modernism was a force to be reckoned with and a movement that could hardly be ignored. Traquair approached modernism from his arts and crafts background, and found it wanting in fundamental ways.

The first decades of the twentieth century saw the concept of the Modern both celebrated and denounced, as many architects sought to make a break with historic forms and materials in favour of completely new forms of expression. From about 1910, architects in the United States and Europe began to use steel, glass and concrete to build structures that appeared to rely little if at all on historical architectural forms. The movement was eventually to have a powerful influence worldwide, nearly obliterating for a time the historicism that had characterized the architecture of the nineteenth century. However, this new approach did not of course have immediate and universal appeal. Many architects continued to design—and clients continued to demand—buildings that were constructed of traditional materials in familiar forms (at least as far as one could see from the finished building). In the United States the new expression appeared most quickly in certain building types near the beginning of the century, particularly factories and other industrial and commercial buildings. On the other hand, most North American architecture in that period was quite conservative, and public buildings in particular were some of the slowest to appear in the new garb. Dutch architect Hendrik Berlage (1856-1934) expressed surprise at the level of architectural conservatism he observed during his

1911 visit to the United States, noting, as Donald Leslie Johnson and Donald Langmead put it, “the domination of beaux arts ideas, the impropriety of Greek temples and Roman thermae rebuilt for new roles as railway stations, and the artistic ‘barbarism’ perpetuated by architects who doggedly stuck to the revival of historical styles.”¹

In Canada the modern movement was comparatively slow to gain popularity in the realm of architecture. Both architects and clients tended to be somewhat conservative, and, with a few exceptions (again mostly in the commercial and especially the industrial sectors), architectural design marched along without much radical change through the early decades of the century.² This is not to say that Canadian architects were unaware of what was going on in the United States, however, or that they were uninterested in developments there and in Europe. They used the new materials in the structure of their buildings, and if they tended to cover their steel and reinforced concrete with brick and stone, the modern materials were there nonetheless. And they responded to the new ideas in architectural design, sometimes in practice with varying degrees of cautious adaptation, and sometimes in print.

Many believed there should be changes to Canadian architecture, and particularly called for an end to what seemed to be the derivative historicism that had held architectural practice in its thrall for a century or more. Many continued to call for the

¹Donald Leslie Johnson and Donald Langmead, *Makers of 20th Century Modern Architecture: A Bio-Critical Sourcebook* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1997), p. XLIII.

²For a discussion of Canadian responses to Modernism see Harold Kalman, *A History of Canadian Architecture*, vol. 2 (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 749-78.

development of a Canadian style in architecture, although there were varying ideas about how it might be achieved. It is important to realize that a compromise did exist between the enthusiastic adoption of Modernist design and its wholesale rejection. Some architects believed that traditional forms could be adapted to the new materials and contemporary needs to create a modern architecture with roots in the past. Beaux-Arts-trained Canadian architect John Lyle (1872-1945) argued in 1929 that the principles of modernism should be applied to the lessons of historic architecture to create a modern architecture that answered regional requirements. In this respect, he argued, Canadian architects should “follow the Swedish architects who are developing their modern architecture along national Swedish traditional lines.”³ Although both Lyle’s educational background and his built work were utterly different from Traquair’s, his views on this question—at least on paper—are remarkably close to those expressed by Traquair in many of his writings on architecture in the twentieth century.

Throughout his career, Traquair spoke and published extensively on architecture. Although he wrote most voluminously about the history of the Québec vernacular he so admired, he also thought and wrote extensively about modern architecture, both the directions it was taking and the route he thought architects ought to follow. As director of the McGill School of Architecture for many years, Traquair’s ideas and teaching shaped the education of many young Canadian architects from the second decade of the century

³“Address by John M. Lyle, 22 February 1929 at the Art Gallery of Toronto,” *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (April 1929): 135-36; 163, in Geoffrey Simmins (ed.) *Documents in Canadian Architecture* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1992), p. 153.

through 1939, when he retired. His writings on architecture also shed light on his thoughts about society and culture, while these in their turn affected his ideas about building. He was a strong influence on his McGill students; the late Professor Emeritus John Bland, who, as a student at McGill, had studied with Traquair before going on himself to teach in the School of Architecture, observed that,

. . . Traquair had a background in the Arts and Crafts. He was concerned with materials. He was concerned with traditional buildings for particular uses, building with a good construction and good use of materials, building on a site carefully in respect to the conditions of the site and the climate. All these things were very real for Traquair. . . . When Traquair was in Canada, he came with this Arts and Crafts background from Britain. He discovered that the old French Canadian buildings followed these principles, that they were the best that could be produced with the materials at hand, always splendidly sited. He was enthusiastic about that and we caught his enthusiasm.⁴

Traquair began and ended from this arts and crafts position; it had an indelible effect on both his own practice and his teaching, as Bland noted. And it shaped his conception of the direction the search for a Canadian architectural style should take. That he believed there was a need for a national style in architecture is not surprising, as this had been a preoccupation of architects in Canada as in many other countries for some years. Their various approaches to the problem differed widely, ranging from the use of the so-called Château Style, as introduced in the 1890s by the United States architect Bruce Price at the Chateau Frontenac in Québec City, to Lyle's use of wildflowers, beavers, sheaves of wheat, gushing oil wells, and other "natural" Canadian symbols to adorn his Beaux-Arts

⁴Howard Shubert, *et al*, "An Interview with Professor John Bland," in *John Bland at Eighty: A Tribute*, eds. Irena Murray and Norbert Schoenauer (Montréal: McGill University, 1991), p. 7.

banks.⁵ But for Traquair neither of these approaches would suffice, and he looked to arts and crafts principles to point the way.

Traquair was a man of strong opinions on architecture as well as on many other subjects, and he presented them in fora ranging from his own classrooms at McGill University and the architectural press to public lectures and publications in a wide range of periodicals. His few extant buildings in and around the city of Edinburgh point the way that his teaching was to follow. But like Nobbs in practice, Traquair on paper combined his arts and crafts approach with a certain pragmatism that saw value and even, sometimes, beauty in the skyscrapers and commercial buildings of their day.

Traquair's departure for Montréal essentially marks the end of his career as a practising architect. But he certainly intended to remain in practice, and not surprisingly, he strongly expressed his allegiance to the arts and crafts approach from the very beginning of his Canadian career. In 1912, when Nobbs decided to vacate the position of Macdonald Professor of Architecture and wrote to Traquair suggesting that he might apply for the position, the latter was immediately interested. Nobbs had suggested two possible alternatives for the job, these being "A. With outside practice for a period and B. whole time to education work for a permanency." Traquair replied firmly:

B. is fatal to teaching. I am convinced that no man can teach architecture unless he spends some part of his time in practice, in dealing with stone &

⁵See Rhodri Windsor Liscombe, "Nationalism or cultural imperialism? The Château style in Canada," in *Architectural History: Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain* 36 (1993): 127-144 and Geoffrey Hunt, *John M. Lyle: Toward a Canadian Architecture* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1982).

mortar and with actual construction. An architectural teacher is not there to teach archaeology or draughtsmanship but to teach modern architecture. He uses archaeology & draughtsmanship to do so but, unless he has some connection with actual building, he cannot understand modern architecture. I am sure you will agree with me.⁶

Traquair's insistence that one must spend time "dealing with stone & mortar and with actual construction" particularly demonstrates his allegiance to the Arts and Crafts Movement, whose architects believed fervently that the architect or craftsman himself should understand through practical experience the materials and techniques used to realize designs. Some, among them William Morris, went so far as to become expert in the printing, weaving, ironwork or bricklaying necessary to carry out their ideas. To Traquair, it was the lack of this kind of practical knowledge that had led to the decline of architecture to its nineteenth-century depths. He argued that the rise of the continental Grand Tour in the eighteenth century had led to connoisseurs becoming familiar with the aesthetics of architecture only on a scholarly plane; for the first time this knowledge was divorced from a real understanding of the materials and techniques needed to build.⁷ Traquair saw the precepts of the Arts and Crafts Movement as a real solution—at least in part—to the problems he saw in the architecture of his time. (It is pleasing to note that his interest in practical experience was also influential in his teaching. John Bland remembered that in his student days he and four of his colleagues—inspired by a

⁶Traquair, letter to Nobbs, 5 August 1912, pp. 2-3 (Canadian Architecture Collection, Blackader Lauterman Library, McGill University [CAC], Traquair Collection, Series B.7-3).

⁷Traquair, "Social Architecture," manuscript headed "*Forum 1924*," p. 3 (McGill University Archives [MUA], Box 1: 35/17/127).

combination of Traquair's course in ornament and decoration and their own inability to find summer work during the Great Depression—employed themselves for two summers by opening a forge and selling ornamental iron work of their own design and manufacture.⁸⁾

Notwithstanding his early protestations, Traquair seems to have practised little if at all once he arrived in Canada. Indeed, by December of the same year he may already have been backing away from his earlier insistence on continued practice, writing to Principal Peterson that if his application for the job were successful he would “like to regard teaching as my life work with only so much practice as to keep in touch with realities.”⁹ And certainly he lacked the advantage Nobbs had enjoyed early in his Canadian career, of first receiving an important commission from Sir William Macdonald and then carrying out several major projects for McGill University. These may have given Nobbs a leg up among his professional brethren that Traquair, arriving after Nobbs already had a clear advantage in Montréal, did not enjoy, although he appears to have had more actual building experience by then than Nobbs had at the same stage. However, because of his extensive writings on architecture we can gain a good idea of how he thought about many aspects of the field, and he was influential in passing these ideas on through his teaching if not through designing buildings himself.

⁸Shubert, *et al.*, “Interview with John Bland,” p. 6.

⁹Traquair, letter to Principal Peterson, 27 December 1912. Quoted in John Bland, “Ramsay Traquair: Biography,” in *Ramsay Traquair and his Successors: A Guide to the Archive*, ed. Irena Murray (Montréal: CAC, 1987), p. 10.

Like Nobbs, and like many architects of their time, Traquair rejected the idea of the “styles” in architecture. By this they meant the self-conscious use of the specific forms and ornament of a certain place or period in history. In contrast to the seeming irrelevance of such mimicry was the notion of what Traquair called suitability. “Good architecture is not confined to great buildings,” he wrote. “[I]t is not a matter of rich ornament, elaboration or expense. It is a matter of suitability.”¹⁰ This was a virtue that he believed was lacking in most modern architecture, and its absence was a great part of the problem. “No building can be good if it is unsuitable” he wrote. Suitability meant that a building looked as if it had always been in its place, and it belonged there as much as its surroundings. It must also be fitted to its purpose in form, scale, and ornament. Traquair noted that, in contrast to newer examples, much older architecture was characterized by just this virtue. This was particularly the case with the vernacular that he so prized.

For Traquair, vernacular architecture was by definition a local architecture; the buildings he admired had their roots in the materials, techniques, and needs of the areas in which they stood. But the converse was not true; Traquair emphasized that not all local architecture was vernacular. In fact, in his opinion all great art had always been local, “the result of local conditions of life, climate and materials.” Amongst these great arts he numbered the architecture of Classical Greece and of Mediaeval England. On the other hand, it was historic fact that “every cosmopolitan art has been dry, pedantic and

¹⁰Traquair, “Why we Admire Old Buildings,” undated typescript, pp. 1, 2-3 (MUA, Box 2: 35/17/160).

academic.” One of the more recent of these was the work of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, which he characterized as “dull and academic and . . . today quite discredited”¹¹ Traquair saw the international use of the Beaux-Arts approach as yet another example of architecture taken out of its context and wrongly used, and for this he largely blamed the architects of the United States. “Believing that all art centred in Paris,” he wrote, “they studied the living traditions of the Ecole des Beaux Arts, imported them to their native land and practised them as another dead historic ‘style.’”¹² The Beaux-Arts approach, with its emphasis on grand planning but virtual homogeneity of form no matter where the building was to be located or what purpose it was to serve, seemed to Traquair to be completely removed both from modern needs and from tradition. Bland noted that Traquair was asked at one time to compete in a competition to design a broadcasting centre, organized by the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (RAIC). The competition programme provided no information about site conditions or requirements for the building type, but required simply the designing of a grand Beaux-Arts scheme. He was “so astonished with what was required that he wouldn’t have anything to do with the RAIC for a while.”¹³ As in this instance, Traquair was particularly offended by the way that Beaux-Arts architects could apply their principles of planning and design to buildings of all types without reference to the building’s actual function, its location or the needs of its users.

¹¹Traquair, “Why we Admire Old Buildings,” p. 3.

¹²Traquair, “Architecture and Democracy,” *Canadian Bookman* (October 1919): 11.

¹³Shubert, *et al*, “Interview with John Bland,” p. 13.

As early as 1904, when Nobbs was quite newly arrived in Canada, Traquair noted with irritation in a letter to him, "I was looking at Liverpool Cathedral in the Spring—a wonderful thing in its way—acres of site & building on a large scale if you like & that _____ director of the Liverpool Archit. School won't let his students look at it because it is not in the Grand Manner. His fellows design hencoops in the Grand Manner [sic]."¹⁴

Along with the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Traquair condemned as cosmopolitan all classical architecture after that of ancient Greece. Even before leaving Scotland, he had argued that with the coming of the Renaissance the quest for knowledge above all things had replaced the ancient Greek concern with "clear and accurate thought" and the mediaeval love of "life, passion, and mystery."¹⁵ At first, he argued, this new fascination with knowledge had combined with the passion of the middle ages to create the great schools of painting of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. But this gradually gave way to a concern for accuracy and scientific knowledge above all else: "Classicism arose, and all branches of art were wrapt in a meaningless pedantry." This, he believed, led to the weakening of art because "art cannot be based on intellect, but only on emotion." Continuing, he wrote: "we find that the great works of the Classic period are great, not because they copied faithfully the details of Classic work, but because they convey the

¹⁴Traquair, letter to Nobbs, 24 Sept 1909, p.4 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series B.7-3).

¹⁵Traquair, "The Appreciation of Art" (extract of an address delivered at the Royal College of Edinburgh, October 1911), *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects (JRIBA)* XX, 1 (1912): 13.

feelings of eighteenth century artists. St. Paul's Cathedral is a great work of art, not because it Classic, but because it is Wren." Traquair was as vigorously opposed to the exact copying of ancient monuments as he was to the copying of details and forms from them. A particularly bad example of this kind of attempt was Edinburgh's incomplete National Monument, begun in 1920 as an exact copy of the Parthenon on the Calton Hill, and doomed to be no more than "a pseudo-classic building in a foreign style."¹⁰ But the impossibility of accurately copying a building under such completely different circumstances was as bad as the unsuitability of its foreign style. Even if they managed to find the right materials and someone who would be willing and able to complete the sculpture in the proper ancient style, and if they found the money to apply and maintain the brilliant colours, wax and polish needed to keep the building looking good, the Parthenon was a building designed to stand under the brilliant Greek sun, and this modern version could never be suitable in grey Edinburgh. "The Parthenon," wrote

¹⁰Traquair and Frank C. Mears, "Public Monuments," *The Blue Blanket: An Edinburgh Civic Review* (January 1912): 73. Around this time Traquair and Mears produced a remarkable—not to say somewhat bizarre—scheme to complete the monument around the existing twelve columns as a shrine to "men of distinctively modern activities" in such areas as "astronomy, physics, and political freedom" (p. 77). Their plan would have had walls extending the structure to the shape and size originally intended (those of the Parthenon itself), with three exedras on either side. Each of these would represent a specific area of achievement, and monuments to individuals could be placed in the appropriate spaces. Meanwhile, at the columnar (original) end a winged victory was to stand on the prow of a ship at the base of which water stood in a round pool before vanishing briefly under a set of steps leading downwards to an elliptical pool, where it reappeared, resting briefly before meandering its way informally down the length of the monument to its final resting place in a pool at the nether end. (My thanks are due to John Lowrey for telling me of this plan and providing me with a slide of it, and to Hugh Crawford for showing me the original watercolour perspective.)

Traquair and his friend Mears, “was the highest expression of Greek life,” while the National Monument was no more than a dry “expression of antiquarianism.”¹⁷

This unfortunate turn in the practice of architecture was, Traquair believed, still haunting architects in his own day. “One critic tells us that our only hope of progress lies in a faithful study of the buildings of ancient Greece and Rome; a second pins his faith to an equally faithful study of Gothic the architect is expected to be rather a scholarly antiquary than an artist.” He compared architecture to other arts, pointing out how ridiculous it would be to expect poets or painters to compose always in the style of long-dead artists. Yet the architect was expected to produce “alternately that strange quality of ‘correctness’, and that even stranger phenomenon, ‘a new style’. . . .”¹⁸

Traquair believed that the only way his contemporaries might develop an architecture in their own time that would truly reflect its society was to do as people had done naturally in all the greatest periods of the art. In each period of history up to his own time (and he surely meant to include the nineteenth century in this latter category), he argued, there had been only one style of architecture. Like the ancient Greeks, who rather than building in a pure classical Greek style were simply building as best they could, “the XIII century Builder never dreamt that he was building early English. He was building the best and most modern buildings that he could, and we will produce no good

¹⁷Traquair and Mears, “Public Monuments,” p. 74.

¹⁸Traquair, “Appreciation of Art,” p. 14.

architecture until we follow his example."¹⁹ Instead, it seemed, many architects were dedicating their energies (and this had been particularly endemic in the nineteenth century) to copying historic styles in the hopes that what had constituted the great architecture of the past would continue to do so. But Traquair, in common with many others of his time, argued that such a thing was impossible because the citizen of the twentieth century "cannot live and think as did the monk of the XII or the craftsman of the XIV century and our copies in the 'Gothic style' will be but a hash of antiquarian thoughts devoid of humour, enthusiasm or life."²⁰ Although he believed that old buildings should provide inspiration for modern architects, no living spirit of an ancient building could be captured if it were copied in the modern age; no matter how technically good and convincing such copies might be, they were necessarily bad and dead.

Most importantly, however, this did not mean that the twentieth century had nothing to learn from the middle ages or other great periods of the art. On the contrary, Traquair told his architectural history classes that Gothic architecture could provide the answer to the problem of modern architecture if only it were properly used. "What we can learn from Gothic art," he assured them, "is how to think for ourselves."²¹

[W]e can see how the artist seized the requirements of his buildings of his furniture or of his picture and turned these requirements, not as we do into

¹⁹Traquair, "How to Understand Architecture," typescript of lecture for the St. James Literary Society, 1920, p. 7 (MUA, Box 1: 35/17/127).

²⁰Traquair, "Gothic Architecture," course notes, 1914-15 (CAC, Traquair Collection, Series A-1.12).

²¹"Gothic Architecture."

limitations, but into opportunities for beauty. By simply and without question accepting the needs of our time, by solving them in the most scientific spirit of our age and moulding them to the most beautiful forms which knowledge and tradition can suggest to us we will attain a truer *gothic* quality than any which antiquarianism can give.

As he emphasized in this lecture, Traquair believed that learning from time-tested ways of approaching the problems of architecture was the key to truly modern and beautiful buildings for his own day. It must be noted too that Traquair referred in this passage to the use of the most beautiful forms that “knowledge and tradition can suggest.” That is, while slavish copying was destined to lead only to trouble, he believed—unlike the radical architects of his day—that the forms of the past could, and indeed ought to, be used in the proper spirit to produce modern buildings.

Although he disliked much modern building, Traquair's approach to the practice of architecture was always somewhat flexible. He never dismissed all buildings of his own time as unworthy, but rather saw in some building types the direction that he felt modern architecture should take. At the same time, he frequently advocated the use of traditional vernacular forms by modern architects, arguing that all art of any value must stem from tradition. But although he argued that the path to good architecture in his own time lay in building in the most “modern” way possible, there were of course many widely divergent ideas in his time about what constituted the most modern architecture that could be built. As Harold Kalman observes, the word “modern,” to the early-twentieth century Canadian architect, meant architecture that was representative of its time; it bore no necessary relationship to Modernism. “A ‘modern’ architect was therefore one who sought an

appropriate expression of the day . . . and used up-to-date building technology.”²²

Traquair was never a proponent of Modernism, and indeed in the same lecture in which he argued for building the most modern buildings possible, he recommended the historic architecture of Québec to the architects of his own time as “the tradition which we should develop,” noting to his disgust that, instead of following this native tradition, architects were designing “Sham imitations of English half-timber work.”²³ But significantly, he never really presented Québec vernacular as a viable example for public and commercial architecture. Instead, while he suggested that “from it . . . our modern Canadian architecture might well be developed,” he modified his statement by suggesting that this was the case “certainly in domestic and church work.”²⁴

In 1924 Traquair argued, as he had before, that architecture was the most “living” of the arts in North America in his time and that “its living manifestations are in utilitarian buildings.”²⁵ This statement resembles the admiration for the grain silos of the new world expressed first by German architect Walter Gropius (1883-1969) and later by the French Le Corbusier (1887-1965), although it is highly unlikely that Traquair really meant to refer to such very utilitarian buildings as these. Certainly he never built anything on those lines himself, nor did he encourage his students to do so. Far from it;

²²Kalman, *Canadian Architecture*, p. 749.

²³Traquair, “How to Understand Architecture,” p. 9.

²⁴Traquair, “The Education of the Architect,” *Construction* XII, 10 (October 1919): 316.

²⁵Traquair, “Social Architecture,” p. 12.

John Bland recalled that when he went to London in the mid-1930s and enrolled in the Architectural Association School (AA), his McGill training made him “a freak.”²⁶

“Everyone crowded around to see what I was designing and they couldn’t believe it. I had this nineteenth-century attitude Even my lettering—you know we had an antique way of lettering things.”

Nonetheless, in theory at least Traquair’s architectural ideas embraced new materials and modern design. And at some points he was quite specific about the kind of building he meant when he referred to the suitable architecture of his own time. Acknowledging that North Americans of his day had lost the fervent religious beliefs and connection to the land that had led to the development of the vernacular forms he admired so much, he recognized that architecture must express the mores of this new society as it had the old. He argued that “on this continent certain emotions have found outlet in genuine and expressive architecture. We are a commercial people and it is to our commercial buildings that we must look for a true expression of our national character.”²⁷ By this, he went on to explain, he meant the skyscraper, particularly examples in New York City. This form, he argued, was the most real expression of twentieth-century North America to have been built, and was as genuine a response to conditions as a thirteenth-century parish church in Sussex or the rural cottages of Québec were to the societies that built them. True, they were rather different conditions—“the

²⁶Shubert, *et al.*, “Interview with John Bland,” p. 8.

²⁷Traquair, “How to Understand Architecture,” p. 9.

limitations of site, combined with the development of the steel industry, the desire to obtain high rentals and the passion for living in a crowd”—but they had combined towards the development of “the one genuine contribution of America to Architecture.” He even allowed that Cass Gilbert’s 1910-13 Woolworth Building in New York was, possibly uniquely among skyscrapers, “a monument of great beauty.”²⁸

Traquair was not alone in seeing the commercial aspect of early-twentieth century Canada as the dominant trend shaping architectural practice. Writing in 1913, F. Reid argued that “a commercialistic goal” was “uppermost in our mind.”²⁹ In Reid’s case, the resulting “commercialistic architecture,” impelled by a “mercenary spirit,” was an unfortunate trend in contrast to the examples that might still be found in which “love for pure and noble art” was expressed. Traquair made no such explicitly negative judgement, simply noting that commercialism was the spirit of the age and the best architecture should reflect that spirit.

His argument appears problematic. If indeed Traquair felt that his society was populated by “a commercial people,” it is telling that he should still have advocated that architects look to old vernacular (specifically that of Québec, for Canada in any case)—which he associated with all that was not commercial—as proper inspiration for the building of modern churches and domestic buildings. It seems false in the context of the

²⁸Traquair, “How to Understand Architecture,” p. 10; “Architecture and Democracy,” p. 11.

²⁹F. Reid, “Development in Architecture,” in *The Yearbook of Canadian Art* (1913): 277-82, in Simmins, *Documents in Canadian Architecture*, p. 143.

arts and crafts beliefs that Traquair espoused, and is an important notion if we are to understand how he thought about architecture and society. For him, vernacular styles were properly used for domestic and ecclesiastical architecture because there they represented a retreat from the commercialism of society. So although he saw skyscrapers as a true expression of modern society, this was something from which to retreat in the private sphere. This could best be done by building houses and churches in a way that evoked what was for Traquair a simpler past, even though it did not necessarily fit his important criterion of suitability in the context of larger society.

Despite its initial appearance of contradiction, this view is entirely consistent with Traquair's antimodernism. Although he admitted that his own society had lost its religious fervour and the connection to the land that he so admired in earlier cultures (and of course in those contemporary with his own that seemed to him to live in the past), he still sought to symbolize these virtues in the architecture of church and home. The skyscraper might be a true expression of what he saw as the commercial soul of his society—and a true expression was what he sought—but that modern soul was not something he admired. Such architecture was, therefore, a genuine expression of something that itself lacked the authenticity of pre-modern cultures. Furthermore, most buildings being built in his time were not true expressions of society, but rather, weak imitations of earlier styles. It was thus that he was able, even as he acknowledged the genuine expressive qualities of the skyscraper, to write rather longingly that "We admire our old buildings because they are real, and this quality of reality is one which we are

trying to obtain in modern architecture.”³⁰ In other words, most modern architecture lacked the quality of authenticity that Traquair saw in older buildings. Either they were genuine expressions of something that itself lacked authenticity, or they failed entirely at relevant expression. He hoped that this “quality of reality” could in some way be infused into contemporary practice and, indeed, contemporary society.

This idea is not far from the concepts of honesty and truth in architecture espoused in nineteenth-century England by A.W.N. Pugin and later John Ruskin, or from the French architect and theorist E.E. Viollet-le-Duc’s related ideas of the naturalness of structure, all evident in the work of the architects of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Traquair’s own ambivalence towards what we now know as architectural modernism points to a wider difficulty among arts and crafts architects. Although Sir Nikolaus Pevsner identified the Arts and Crafts Movement as the spiritual beginning of the modern movement, its architects were, to varying extents, wedded to tradition in form and material.³¹ They may have led the way away from slavish historicism, but it was by a gentler route than the modernists were to take. Even the most radical of the later generation of arts and crafts architects looked to the stone and stucco, buttresses and bay windows of tradition as reference points. Like Traquair, they argued that one must design the most modern buildings possible in one’s own time, but these buildings never departed very radically from the forms of tradition; it was not from them that the skyscraper was to

³⁰Traquair, “Why we Admire Old Buildings,” p. 3.

³¹Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius* (Faber and Faber, 1936; London: Penguin Books, 1960).

emerge. Traquair himself summed up the arts and crafts approach to architecture in three points:

- 7) Structural treatment. The structure is the architecture.
- 8) Use no ornament that does not contribute to the effect and avoid all meaningless merely archaeological and common-place ornament.
- 9) A building must correspond exactly in its structure and in emotional feeling with its purpose. Its architecture must not conceal that purpose.³²

These points might almost equally well describe the approach of the Modernists. However, Traquair noted in the same article that although these basic principles had been outlined a century before, they had “not yet revolutionised architecture.” He allowed that they had “produced some very charming results in domestic architecture, in furniture and in similar arts, but the monumental building still relies upon old forms.” Perhaps he was not aware of the work then being done by some of the most progressive architects of his time, although this hardly seems likely. For instance, the 1903-06 Larkin administration building in Buffalo, by Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959), had been widely published with both interior and exterior photos and plans from about 1910, while Albert Kahn’s (1869-1942) steel, glass and concrete Ford Plant in Detroit, begun in 1908, was published in the *American Architect & Building News* in 1909.³³ These are just two examples of influential buildings that might be said to follow his three precepts listed above, and there were

³²Traquair, “Free Verse and the Parthenon,” *Canadian Bookman* (April 1919): 23.

³³Johnson and Langmead, *Makers of 20th Century Modern*, captions to plates 2 and 3.

dozens more that Traquair must surely have seen in print. In their complete newness and non-reliance on historical forms, perhaps they seemed excessively radical to Traquair.

Even so, he did not mention the large public buildings in Europe which, while drawing on historical precedent, did so not in the slavish fashion Traquair decried but rather in the spirit he celebrated in domestic architecture. Works such as Berlage's celebrated Amsterdam Stock Exchange (1898-1903) or the Stockholm City Hall—completed to a design by Ragnar Östberg (1866-1945) four years after Traquair's article was published but under construction since 1913—draw on traditional forms and materials in thoroughly new ways. Certainly the most "advanced" architects of this time sought to achieve Traquair's quality of "reality" through something very like his three points listed above, and Traquair at least appeared on occasion to espouse this approach. He suggested that "structure offers a straight though difficult path" through "the forests of antiquity." Structure, he declared, was "the path onwards to a living Architecture."³⁴ Bland recalled that Traquair "prepared his students in such a way that they were not surprised by the emergence of the previously hidden steel or reinforced concrete frames of modern architecture into well proportioned and ornamentally expressive elements of design."³⁵ Notwithstanding such teachings and writings about theory, it is clear from his own work, as well as from the buildings he admired, that Traquair—despite his protestations—was not actually ready to give up historic precedent or even ornament. The

³⁴Traquair, "Architecture and Democracy," p. 12.

³⁵Bland, "Ramsay Traquair," p. 17.

Woolworth building—the example he pointed to as a good, completely modern building—hides its frame beneath external cladding, and is ornamented in the Gothic style.

Fundamentally, Traquair was a traditionalist even while he espoused the cause of the completely modern in architecture and bemoaned the unprogressive building undertaken by the architects of his time. He sought a modern approach—one that would speak to the needs of the modern age—but never modernist form. The arts and crafts principles he must have imbibed from the cradle remained with him his whole life. Although he sought a new way of doing things architectural, for him the path did not lie with modernism. As late as 1938—the year before his retirement—Traquair wrote disparagingly of the appearance “in recent times of a school of modernistic architecture . . . which prides itself upon being ‘functional.’”³⁶ He admitted that it was allegedly founded upon “the principles of all great architecture,” namely “the practical use of modern materials to fulfill modern needs.” He admired it as a revolt against the other two major currents in the architecture of the day: “the ‘monumental’, a cosmopolitan art based on scholarship [and] the ‘period’, based upon a sentimental love of a romantic past.”³⁷ But, like Beaux-Arts architecture before it, modernism failed for Traquair because it was “enthusiastically cosmopolitan” and therefore “quite ungeographical” and unsuited to the conditions of climate and life in most of the places where it appeared.

³⁶Traquair, “Architecture and Geography,” *Atlantic Monthly* 162 (August 1938): 164.

³⁷Traquair, “Architecture and Geography,” p. 165.

So how does all this relate to Traquair's approach to the National Style question? Like most of the other Canadian architects and theorists of his time, he strove to find a path between what by then seemed to be meaningless historicism and modernism. True to his arts and crafts roots, he sought an architecture that was local—"the product of local needs, local materials, and local climate."³⁸ This was the real lesson of history, and if it could be applied in his own time would result in the answer to the problem of Canadian architecture. Most of the buildings of his own time were simply lies. Though he celebrated the skyscraper as the most convincing demonstration yet of an architecture that expressed the commercial soul of the North American people, he found that modern soul to be spiritually bereft. He believed that a true Canadian style for domestic and ecclesiastic work lay in what he saw as the supremely local French-Canadian vernacular, which might act as a tonic to the architecture of his own day. But where did that leave other buildings types such as public architecture? How was the Canadian soul to be expressed in the nation's city halls, government buildings, libraries, universities, and fire halls? Presumably those answers, too, lay in the climate and the local materials and needs. However, as primarily a theorist Traquair never had to decide how the public building would look that was built on such grounds. This he left to Nobbs, whose architecture and theory form the subject of the next chapter.

³⁸Traquair, "Architecture and Geography," p. 165.

Chapter Five
PERCY NOBBS: "MODERN CANADIAN CONDITIONS"

BOTH NOBBS'S buildings and his theory were, like Traquair's, indelibly shaped by his early-learned arts and crafts principles. The picture is, however, somewhat more complex for Nobbs. While Traquair's approach to the practice of architecture did not change substantively throughout his career, Nobbs had cause to reformulate his thoughts to a greater extent. This may be in part because, unlike Traquair, he had a busy career as a practising architect in addition to his work as an academic at McGill University. As an architect, he was tied to the vagaries and economic constraints of the times and his patrons. He could not insist on designing a building his clients could not afford or would have seen as old-fashioned, no matter how much his principles might have demanded it. Like Traquair, he never became a Modernist and was quite unsympathetic to the Modernist approach, but both his buildings and his writings indicate that—not surprisingly given his long career—his thoughts on modern architecture remained less static than those of Traquair. They were, however, always informed by his arts and crafts background. France Vanlaethem calls him "a pivotal figure, one who provided the link—at least theoretically—between tradition and modernity."¹

As a successfully practising architect, Nobbs was probably more influential than Traquair in the Canadian architectural world. His projects were published extensively in the trade press, beginning with early designs in the *Canadian Architect and Builder* (CAB)

¹France Vanlaethem, "Beautification versus Modernization," in *Montréal Metropolis 1880-1930*, ed. Isabelle Gournay and France Vanlaethem (Montréal/Toronto: Canadian Centre for Architecture/Stoddart, 1998), p. 151.

and moving on to *Construction* and the *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (JRAIC), as well as the international architectural press. In addition, while Traquair became concerned largely with the historic architecture of Québec in the 1920s and 30s, Nobbs continued to write extensively about modern building. He was a strongly opinionated writer, and also gave numerous popular lectures; although he frequently apologized at these for being a tedious speaker, the texts of his talks are often very spirited. At some points in his career—particularly in the years shortly after his arrival—his was an extremely influential voice in Canadian architecture, although it seems likely that his friend, Boston Gothic Revival architect Bertram Goodhue, flattered him somewhat when he wrote to him in 1907, “You are evidently the architectural arbitrator of his Majesty’s possessions for the North American Continent, and for my part I couldn’t wish them any better luck. . . . I only wish you held the same position with regard to the architectural world here in the U.S. that you do in Canada.”² Exaggeration or not, it is true that as sometime chair of McGill’s School of Architecture and president of the Province of Québec Association of Architects (PQAA), and as a prolific writer and builder, Nobbs was an obvious choice for laypersons who wanted to consult an expert in the field.

I have already discussed the substance of Nobbs’s earliest Canadian writings about architecture. They emphasized the arts and crafts approach and celebrated some of the vernacular building forms he had observed in Montréal. In November of his first year in

²Bertram Goodhue, letter to Nobbs, 11 June 1907 (Canadian Architecture Collection, Blackader-Lauterman Library, McGill University [CAC], Nobbs Collection, Series F-14.5).

Canada, Nobbs leapt into the Style debate, as Traquair was to do later, with the contention that the whole style question was wrong-headed from the start. "If the building was roofed in last year it must be Edwardian," he wrote, no matter what "style" it was purported to be.³ Like Traquair again, however, he was adamant that architects would never be able to design good buildings in his own time without a thorough understanding of the historic styles that preceded them. Style was to remain a leitmotif in his architectural thought, colouring his approach to the development of architecture in the twentieth century.

Arts-and-craftsman though he was, Nobbs was always wary of accepting wholeheartedly anything labelled Arts and Crafts. Even as early as 1904—shortly after his arrival in Canada—he explained in a lecture that he had named his third-year course "The Building Trades" specifically to avoid using the word "crafts," in part because the term had in the last couple of decades come to denote "a certain amateurishness in the field of art which the ancient craftsmen would have been the last to approve."⁴ The Aesthetic Movement shared family ties with the Arts and Crafts Movement, but many members had become estranged, and it left Nobbs brimming with sarcasm. "The Epicurean sty in which those wallow who eternally do sing 'Art for Art's sake' and base their aesthetic satisfactions on the mere claims of the senses is an unsavoury quag wholly unfitted to be

³Nobbs, "The Styles of Architecture and Style in Architecture," *CAB* (November 1903): 184.

⁴Nobbs, "Opening Lecture of the Department of Architecture, McGill University," *CAB* (October 1904): 163.

considered even as a possible site on which to rear our structure," he wrote.⁵ This movement, he argued, had caused people to view architecture merely in terms of "charm of the senses," or pleasure. This approach ignored the fact that the purpose of architecture was "always expression," and encouraged the design of meaningless buildings which were just pretty. He had a horror of the work of the Glasgow School associated with Charles Rennie Mackintosh and his associates, as well as the continental Art Nouveau that was related to it. "The 'Arts and Crafts Movement' as it has been called, has tended more and more to countenance certain eccentricities in design," he wrote, "which its loudest and most strident supporters have dubbed 'originality'. Having set up a brazen calf in the wilderness so to speak, the cult of the new art (or L'Art Nouveau) has resulted. . . ."⁶ Nearly four decades later, in a denunciation of Modernism, he was to identify its origins in these same reprehensible offshoots of the Arts and Crafts Movement: "in 1894 this movement [Modernism] began in Glasgow and was called 'The Revolt'. In 1908 in Vienna it became 'The Secession' and in Paris 'L'art Nouveau'.⁷ He numbered the schools of architectural thought in the early-twentieth century as two (the Academic—largely the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and its followers—and the non-Academic—the Arts and Crafts Movement) and "purposely ignore(d) the claims of the Secessionists and

⁵Nobbs, "The Architecture of Canada" (paper read before the Third Annual Assembly of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada [RAIC]), *Construction* (October 1910): 56.

⁶Nobbs, "Opening Lecture," p.163.

⁷Nobbs, letter to F. Cyril James, Principal of McGill, 12 March 1940 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series B.7-5).

Art Nouveauists to form the third. Let the heathen rage!"⁸ His genealogy is very similar to that described by Sir Nikolaus Pevsner, who first published his work *Pioneers of the Modern Movement* in 1936.⁹ If Nobbs had read Pevsner, however, he had certainly not imbibed his celebratory tone.

In addition to his general mistrust of some offshoots of the Arts and Crafts Movement, Nobbs was not tied—either in theory or in practice—to a strict interpretation of arts and crafts principles. Unlike such founders of the movement as William Morris, he did not see machines as an enemy as long as what they made was well designed, with an eye to the material to be used. Instead, he pragmatically saw them as a necessary part of building in his time; although he was always happiest with well-executed hand work, he realized that it was rarely economically feasible in the twentieth century. And like the “Queen Anne” architects in England, he did not see Gothic architecture as the only kind worth following.¹⁰ In fact, he was often to point to the classicism of England as the best possible antecedent for Canadian public architecture. This was the route he tended to follow in his own—especially non-domestic—buildings from his start in Canada. But far more important than the application of any particular style was the quality that Traquair called “suitability.” Buildings must not be designed in particular styles just because

⁸Nobbs, “Architecture of Canada,” pp. 57-58.

⁹Later editions include *Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1960).

¹⁰On “Queen Anne” see Marc Girouard, *Sweetness and Light: The “Queen Anne” Movement 1860-1900* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).

tradition suggested it, but rather because they made sense. Nobbs made this point about his plans for new residences at McGill University. "Economically, climatically and historically there are good reasons for laying aside all thought of symbolizing academic life by recourse to mediaeval traditionalism in the case of so modern an institution as McGill. Open courts rather than 'quads' and something of the principles of modern housing are fully compatible with amenities for student life and an expression of the actualities."¹¹ Much earlier, in concert with prominent Toronto architect Frank Darling (1850-1923), he had made a similar pronouncement about the planned buildings for the new University of Alberta. Together they had advised that "climate, materials and tradesmanship alike forbade the use of the mullioned styles of collegiate gothic on the prairie in the twentieth century."¹² As Kelly Crossman has put it, Nobbs saw that "the spirit of Gothic could be applied to any style," without necessarily the use of Gothic forms, and he proceeded accordingly.¹³

These ideas are articulately expressed in his McGill University Union (now the McCord Museum and much changed on the interior), commissioned only a year or so

¹¹Nobbs, letter to A.E. Morgan, Principal of McGill, 18 December 1935 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series A.2-5).

¹²Nobbs, "Construction at the University of Alberta, Edmonton," *CAB* (January 1921): 3. Also quoted in Susan Wagg, *Percy Erskine Nobbs: Architect, Artist, Craftsman* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1982), p. 50.

¹³Kelly Crossman, *Architecture in Transition: From Art to Practice, 1885-1906* (Montréal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1987), p. 134.

after his arrival in Montréal and opened in 1906 (fig. 5.1).¹⁴ Nobbs's first building in Montréal expressed his arts and crafts ideals eloquently, and it was indeed something of a *tour de force* as it was probably the first building ever realized that he designed in its entirety. It was also extremely important to his career, as it gave him—almost immediately upon his arrival in Canada—a chance to show what he could do practically. The patronage of Sir William Macdonald (whose name also graced the academic chair Nobbs held) in this case was key to Nobbs's continued success, as Macdonald was extremely rich and inclined to spend his money on McGill University, with which institution he not surprisingly had considerable influence. As Susan Wagg notes, Nobbs employed the palazzo form used for many London clubs in the nineteenth century, and made famous by Sir Charles Barry in such buildings as the Reform Club.¹⁵ This was of course an ideal form for a club to serve the young men of McGill. Nobbs worked subtly with this basic form, drawing from various periods of English architecture for his fenestration and door case and allowing these simply but elegantly-realized elements to be the building's principal exterior ornament. The interior, too, shows his arts and crafts allegiance, with an elegantly vaulted entrance hall and quiet classical details leading to the richness of carved wood,

¹⁴Nobbs undertook the design of the Union in partnership with the Montréal firm of Hutchison and Wood. In 1909 he resigned his position as chair and Macdonald Professor to become Professor of Design, which would allow more time for architectural practice. This he carried out in a partnership with George Taylor Hyde from 1910 until the latter's death in 1944. Nobbs was the dominant designer of the pair, and I will generally refer to the firm's designs by his name alone although they were executed under the firm name of Nobbs and Hyde. On Nobbs's buildings at McGill University, see Susan Wagg, "The McGill Architecture of Percy Erskine Nobbs" (master's thesis, Concordia University, 1979).

¹⁵Susan Wagg, *Percy Erskine Nobbs*, p. 15.

panelled ceilings, and comfortable furniture designed by the architect. Crossman has described the building as “one of the best examples in Canada of the spirit of the Arts and Crafts.”¹⁶

Early in his Canadian career, Nobbs stated his position on the use of various historical styles as inspiration for the present. In the nineteenth-century Battle of the Styles, he placed the “reconciliation” at about 1875, “the time when English architects of the better sort began with one accord to seek inspiration in English Building Traditions of three distinct periods, for the inspiration for the three main classes of their work:—(1) the XIV century Gothic for church work; (2) the Jacobean and other intermediate styles for domestic purposes, and (3) the Classic of Wren’s school for public buildings.”¹⁷ These, he wrote, were “the terms under which the architects of the Mother country are evolving their three-fold modern art, taking from the great past what is best adapted to their needs” Although he was not tied to these terms, he was often to follow them in his own work.

Following these British masters, Nobbs was willing to use Gothic in the right place. For him, this meant church architecture, and on at least two occasions he did design a church in full-blown Gothic. He questioned the use of the Gothic style for public buildings, arguing that the principle examples in England (the British Houses of

¹⁶Crossman, *Architecture in Transition*, p. 134.

¹⁷Nobbs, “The Architectural Revivals of the XIX Century in England,” manuscript of lecture for the Ontario Association of Architects (OAA), 15 January 1907 and the Province of Quebec Association of Architects (PQAA) sketching club, 23 January 1907, p. 2 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.9-4).

Parliament at Westminster, the Assize courts at Manchester and the London Law courts) were not successful, and that "it is with misgivings that we see the advisability of trying Gothic again at Ottawa . . . especially in view of the necessarily regular and repetitive character of the requirements. Gothic Architecture at 35 cents per foot is hardly likely to be very good at present prices . . ." ¹⁸ His friend Goodhue, who specialized in Gothic, largely for churches, certainly identified Nobbs as a friend of modern Gothic, writing to him at one point that he was looking for a new British draughtsman to work on Gothic detail—"a young and alert man, thoroughly versed in the sort of Gothic that you and I and [Sir Walter] Tapper and the rest of us (a pretty rough classification) like." ¹⁹ This was a rather different Gothic than that practised by some architects of their time, for example American architect Cass Gilbert, who was a competitor in the Saskatchewan Legislative Building competition for which Nobbs composed the programme and acted as chief assessor. Although Goodhue and Gilbert were both at least sometime Gothicists, they did not see eye to eye; Goodhue once referred in exasperation to "the sort of Cass Gilbertian Gothic that seems now to be spreading over this unhappy land." ²⁰ For one thing, Goodhue specialized in the very ecclesiastical architecture for which Nobbs felt Gothic was suited, as well as such buildings as West Point Military Academy where the use of

¹⁸Nobbs, "Architectural Revivals," pp. 7-8.

¹⁹Goodhue, letter to Nobbs, 10 March 1910 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series F.14-5). Tapper had participated in the Liverpool Cathedral competition, and Nobbs had worked on the presentation drawings for the project.

²⁰Goodhue, letter to Nobbs, 3 April 1913 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series F.14-6).

Gothic could, under the right circumstances, also be justified for its historic associations with scholarly pursuits. But for public buildings, such as a seat of government, Gothic did not seem so suitable, and it was even less so for commercial buildings (such as Gilbert's Woolworth Building in New York). Goodhue wrote to Nobbs after the Saskatchewan competition that "I am still glad we didn't give the prize to that soi disant Gothic affair of Gilberts."²¹ Interestingly, Gilbert himself blamed Nobbs entirely for his failure to win the competition. He wrote a letter complaining of the situation to the Saskatchewan authorities. "I have recently learned on excellent authority," he wrote, "that Prof. Nobbs holds such a prejudice against the Gothic style (in which my design was expressed) that under no circumstances would he approve for a modern building a design in such style."²² Under such conditions, his efforts had been a waste of time and money—his and the government's. He argued that Nobbs should have announced this unreasonable personal prejudice in the programme so that Gilbert could "either have declined the invitation, or have worked within a style more likely to meet *his* approval."

Gilbert could not resist the opportunity, a year after the competition, to tell the Premier what a mistake the assessors had made. He wrote a self-aggrandizing letter to Walter Scott telling him of a trip he had made to London, where his "confreres of the Royal Institute of British Architects were good enough to show me some particular attention at a banquet It was very gratifying indeed to find such a cordial spirit on

²¹Goodhue, letter to Nobbs, 30 December 1907 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series F.14-5).

²²Cass Gilbert, letter to F.J. Robinson, Deputy Commissioner of Public Works, Regina, 25 February 1908 (Saskatchewan Archives Board [SAB], DPW 1-60 [2/31]).

the part of the Englishmen and I will long remember their courtesy to me and to our national organization."²³ Having established his credibility on the international scene, he moved on to the main point of his letter. He explained that he had attended a dinner in London at which he had spoken to the partner of one of the assessors (this must have been Ralph Adams Cram, partner to Bertram Goodhue).

He told me that he had seen the Parliament Building designs . . . and offered his congratulations upon my own. He added that he had told his partner that it was his opinion that the jury had made a grave mistake in not selecting my design and that the partner had replied that on reflection he concurred in that opinion. Of course, this was merely an informal conversation but I have no doubt that it reflected the real opinion of the jury. I am confirmed in this by a remark that Mr. Day also made to the effect that the result of the competition was a serious disappointment to him.

It is surprising that, if two of the three jurors really favoured Gilbert's design, it should not have been chosen. It may be that Cram, cornered by the obviously outraged and insulted Gilbert at a social gathering, felt compelled to modify Goodhue's opinions somewhat in conversation with him. Gilbert was clearly not above whining to authority about his plight; his letter to Scott continues by saying "There is no use in thrashing over old straw but still I thought it might interest you in a personal way to know the foregoing. Of course, it would have no bearing on the matter now as it is long since settled. The result as you know was a grave disappointment to me"²⁴ It is true that Nobbs probably did

²³Gilbert, letter to Walter Scott, 10 September 1908 (SAB, microfilm of Walter Scott Papers, R.7-1, reel 28).

²⁴Gilbert, letter to Walter Scott, 10 September 1908 (SAB, microfilm of Walter Scott Papers, R.7-1, reel 28).

not like or approve in principle of Gilbert's design. But even Scott—an enthusiastic supporter of Gilbert—had been initially attracted to Gilbert's work as represented by the Minnesota State Capitol building (1895-1904)²⁵—a building that Harold Kalman has described as a “landmark of the new Beaux-Arts Classicism”²⁶—which could hardly have led him to expect Gilbert's Gothic submission for the Saskatchewan building.

On more than one occasion Nobbs identified Goodhue as the “one great master of modern Gothic in America.”²⁷ He believed, however, that Gothic was not well suited to much of what the Canadian climate had to offer, and even Goodhue's “simplified American Gothic” of the Halifax Cathedral (1907-10) had not survived the climate well; Nobbs himself was called upon to assess its declining condition years after its construction. As assessor of the competition to design the cathedral, he had chosen Goodhue's design—based on the perpendicular Gothic of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries favoured by Gothicists in the United States—over a scheme using the Decorated Gothic of the twelfth to the early-fourteenth centuries that was more common in Canada. Kalman calls it “a decision that marks the acceptance of the American idea of Gothic as a ‘modern’ style” in Canada.²⁸

²⁵Crossman, *Architecture in Transition*, p. 143.

²⁶Harold Kalman, *A History of Canadian Architecture*, vol. 2 (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 555-56.

²⁷Nobbs, “Present Tendencies Affecting Architecture in Canada, Part I: The Inheritance,” *JRAIC* (July 1930): 248.

²⁸Kalman, *Canadian Architecture*, p. 714.

Nobbs himself designed a parish church for Brandon, Manitoba, in a simplified Gothic style in 1909 (figs. 5.2 & 5.3). Intending to use brick with stone trim, he largely avoided the excessive cusps and pinnacles he argued were so unsuited to the Canadian situation, and the drawings shows a building intended to shed the snow and ice that were sure to be its lot. A decade or so later, in 1920, his firm entered a competition for the design of the Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul, on Sherbrooke Street in Montréal (figs. 5.4 & 5.5). This design too is pure Gothic, on a much larger scale than the earlier church for Brandon. It strongly suggests the influence of the church of All Saints', Ashmont, by Cram, Wentworth, and Goodhue some thirty years before (fig. 5.6). (The church had in fact been designed in 1891 just before Goodhue joined the firm, so is largely the work of his senior partner.²⁹) Nobbs added transepts and reversed the design, so that his square tower stands over the altar rather than at the West front (actually the South in this case, facing Sherbrooke Street), and his design includes a number of auxiliary structures not present in All Saints'. However, his use of the low side aisles with their small windows beneath large triple lancets is similar, as is such a detail as the polygonal tourelle on one corner of the tower. Cram's design is restrained and sparsely ornamented, while Nobbs and Hyde's design includes more decorative detail and is less spare in its use of line—adding pinnacles to the buttresses and using stepped gables where Cram's are plain. These very elements seem to contradict one of Nobbs's chief complaints about Gothic in

²⁹Douglass Shand-Tucci, *Boston Bohemia 1881-1900; Ralph Adams Cram: Life and Architecture* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), pp. 116, 131.

the Canadian climate, and perhaps he added them thinking to please the competition assessors. Indeed, he wrote in 1924 that “the spirit of Gothic is preposterously impossible under modern Canadian conditions, but the fact that it is sedulously attempted in the letter calls for sympathy, at least where an experience of the results does not compel regret.”³⁰ Since it appears that his principal proposals for Gothic churches had not been accepted, and therefore remained unbuilt, perhaps he felt safe in making such a proclamation at that point.

Cram and Goodhue had executed one other commission in Canada—a small church at St. Mary’s Windsor, designed for the Walker family of distillers in 1903-04³¹—although Goodhue also asked Nobbs for a reference in their bid to design a church in Winnipeg around the time of the Halifax competition.³² This does not appear to have transpired, but they did correspond about further work; it is clear that Goodhue regarded Nobbs as an architectural kindred spirit even though the latter did not often build in the Gothic style. In the same year he wrote about a possible commission for the firm to design a church at Mt. Kisco, New York. It seemed to be a dream come true for Goodhue, and he described the possibilities in enthusiastic terms. The parish was rich, the local stone rough but beautiful, and the committee all “very fine and very cultivated men” who had not turned a hair at his “wildest suggestions,” such as covering the floor with second-hand

³⁰Nobbs, “The English Tradition in Canada,” *Architectural Review* 55 (June 1924): 238.

³¹Kalman, *Canadian Architecture*, p. 712.

³²Goodhue, letter to Nobbs, 11 June 1907 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series F.14-5).

paving slabs or “the abandonment of any hard and fast equal dimensions for the bays &c.”³³ It is clear that the two men felt they worked in the same spirit, if not the same style, as Nobbs asked Goodhue to take a couple of McGill University students to gain work experience in his office for the summer (which he did), while Goodhue once referred to the importance of getting big contracts “to enable us to do other things in the same careful fashion that you did the ‘Union’ for McGill.”³⁴

For Nobbs, notwithstanding the excellent Gothic work that had been done in the nineteenth century, most particularly for the church of England, the “real fruit” of the Gothic Revival could be seen in “the influence of that movement on the Classic architecture of the last quarter of the century.”³⁵ He held forth at length on how this achievement had occurred, identifying the work of Richard Norman Shaw and others like him as the pinnacle of the process. The newly-learned habit of studying the vernacular manor houses and cottages of old England, he argued, had led nineteenth-century architects to look with new eyes also at “Old English Classic, so that the Wren and Georgian work, no less than the Elizabethan, began to claim attention as a field for inspiration.”³⁶ Trained in the Gothic school, he wrote, architects such as Shaw had gone on to apply lessons learned from the Gothic Revival—such as respect for materials and the

³³Goodhue, letter to Nobbs, 22 May 1907 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series F.14-5).

³⁴Goodhue, letter to Nobbs, 26 February 1907; the same to the same 20 January 1908 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series F.14-5).

³⁵Nobbs, “Architectural Revivals,” p. 10.

³⁶Nobbs, “Architectural Revivals,” p. 14.

value of studying and measuring old work—to classical forms in a way that spoke of “the qualities of national character to which our glorious . . . past has been witness down the years.”³⁷

His analysis bears a striking resemblance to that of English “Queen Anne” architect J.J. Stevenson (1831-1908); indeed, there is every likelihood that Nobbs was familiar with Stevenson’s work. As architectural historian Robert Macleod observes, Stevenson pointed out that the new, classically-inspired “Queen Anne” style was practised principally by architects trained in the Gothic Revival tradition. With the “life and freedom of Gothic in their souls,” declared Stevenson, these men brought to classical architecture “new spirit and new life, and the hope of higher development.”³⁸ Thus, in Nobbs’s words, the Gothic revival had “resulted in the second renaissance of Classicism,” and that was its truest value. In a speech to the American Institute of Architects in 1907, Nobbs told them that they, too, should expect a Gothic revival, “and some horrible things will be perpetrated.”³⁹ But they should take heart, for just as they had in Britain, the United States would emerge from the fray with “a rejuvenated ‘astylar’ free classic. . . . I feel that a Gothic revival here is to be encouraged precisely because it will lead to a

³⁷Nobbs, “Architectural Revivals,” p. 15.

³⁸J.J. Stevenson, “On the Recent Reaction of Taste in English Architecture,” *Builder* (1874): 539-40, quoted in Robert Macleod, *Style and Society: Architectural Ideology in Britain, 1835-1914* (London: RIBA Publications, 1971), p. 29.

³⁹Nobbs, “Extracts from an Address by Professor Percy E. Nobbs to the 41st Annual Dinner of the AIA, Chicago, November 20th, 1907,” *JRAIC* 34, 7 (July 1957): 280; see also the stenographer’s report of the full speech (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.10-1).

broader view of classic architecture.” It was really modern free classical architecture, he believed, that was the inheritor of the great Gothic tradition.

Nobbs's admiration for the classical tradition extended to his strong interest in planning, evident throughout his professional life. He concerned himself with this important architectural issue on many levels, ranging from the careful consideration he gave in his domestic commissions to the layout of rooms to catch sunlight and the best views, through plans for institutions such as McGill and the University of Alberta and for housing estates both for low- and high-income residents, to schemes for the future development of the city of Montréal as a whole; France Vanlaethem describes him as “the architect who played the most progressive role in Quebec’s town-planning movement” in the 1920s.⁴⁰ While this is a broad range, drawing on many traditions, all of these planning interests stemmed from Nobbs's humanist ideas about what would work best for the people who were to live in or use the buildings and communities in whose development he had a part. Although grandeur might play a part where that seemed important, it was never at the expense of utility. He believed in what he called “the gospel according to [English Garden City architect and planner] Sir Raymond [Unwin (1863-1940)]—the planning for life in all its manifestations: the family, the community, the city, the region, the nation, the empire and the family of nations.”⁴¹

⁴⁰Vanlaethem, “Beautification versus Modernization,” p. 145.

⁴¹Nobbs, “Sir Raymond Unwin's Visit to Montreal” (a reprinted letter to the *Montreal Gazette*, 31 October), *JRAIC* (November 1933): 192.

Nobbs's house plans and his schemes for housing estates were, not surprisingly, most strongly influenced by his arts and crafts background and by the Garden City Movement in Britain. He corresponded with Unwin, and the latter came to Montréal and spoke to Nobbs's McGill students and also to city planning groups with which Nobbs was associated. But he also had a special concern that every house should get its share of sunlight and of view (prospect). As far as possible, every room within a house should receive sun at a time appropriate to its use, and this could be accomplished through intelligent consideration of the house's plan with respect to aspect. He noted that tract housing was usually built so that every house had exactly the same layout, which meant that for every well-oriented house there was necessarily one that was terrible and two mediocre. It annoyed him that architects persisted in placing important public rooms towards the street no matter what that meant as regards sun or view, and he developed diagrams showing how the rooms in a house should be oriented to take full advantage of sunlight (fig. 5.7).⁴² This meant that his city house plans were frequently reversed from the ordinary pattern, with the kitchen and other utilitarian spaces facing the street and the more important public rooms facing the back of the house. This layout is particularly common in the many houses he designed for the City of Westmount, where a house on the south side of an east-west street could enjoy both a sunny exposure and a spectacular view down the mountain from its public rooms if the normal plan were reversed. And if

⁴²See Nobbs, "Suburban Community Planning," *Town Planning* (April 1926); reprinted Montréal: McGill University Press (MUP) Series XIII, no. 7, 1926, and "Planning for Sunlight," *Journal of the Town Planning Institute* (April 1922): 6-12 for Nobbs's explanation of these concepts.

some rooms were adjoining, he pointed out, a sunless room could “borrow” sun from one with a south exposure (though this should never be an excuse for including a room with no window at all of its own); there was the “increased possibility of entertaining wandering sunbeams, heavenly visitants, who enter by a window, traverse two rooms and alight to wander across a wall opposite.”⁴³ He even upbraided house owners for overdressing their windows in heavy costumes of velvet and brocade, shutting out half the light they provided. Sounding rather like a nineteenth-century dress reformer, he recommended a minimum of window dressing, such as a “veil of India muslin” to keep out glare where necessary.⁴⁴ All this was planning on a small scale, but was very important to the livability of the houses he designed and is evident in them now. Current owners comment on how well-considered and comfortable their houses are to this day.

Architectural historian Annmarie Adams has examined the approach of Toronto architect Eden Smith (1858/9-1949)—himself having arrived in Canada from England nearly two decades before Nobbs came—to planning, noting that he had similar concerns and that his house plans too were “often inspired more by sun angles than by history.”⁴⁵ Adams observed that Smith’s “turned about” houses were seen as quite radical in their time, and that although his elevations were almost exclusively strongly influenced by English domestic architecture, these plans set his houses apart from the English tradition.

⁴³Nobbs, “Planning for Sunlight,” p. 10.

⁴⁴Nobbs, “Planning for Sunlight,” p. 11.

⁴⁵Annmarie Adams, “Eden Smith and the Canadian Domestic Revival,” *Urban History Review/Revue d’histoire urbaine* XXI, 2 (March 1993): 104.

She argues that “this independent relationship of elevation and plan in Smith’s architecture allowed the houses to be read as both conservative and radical—in other words, as English or Canadian.”⁴⁶ From Nobbs’s side, there seems to be no evidence of communication between himself and Eden Smith (although it seems almost inconceivable that they never met at all), so it is likely that they arrived independently at their planning solutions. Nobbs’s houses for steep Westmount sites seem to respond to what eighteenth-century landscape architects in England called the *genius loci* (or “genius of the place”).

Nobbs’s university plans were of course of a very different type than his housing estates. The first, conceived in his early days in Montréal, was for McGill, which had thus far grown up rather haphazardly on a somewhat confined site. His 1904 plan was not a grandiose one, but rather created interesting and useful spaces centred on already-present buildings, and laid out a sensible scheme for the introduction of new structures.⁴⁷ The 1912 commission to devise a plan for the new University of Alberta provided him with much more scope, as here nothing at all had yet been built and he had a large patch of unsullied land with which to work. He laid out a plan that would incorporate the two buildings then on the drawing board into a grand scheme in which, in carefully orchestrated order, all the buildings a great university might need would eventually find a place (fig. 5.8). A broad central avenue was to divide the campus into two principal sections, with residences and athletic facilities on one side and academic buildings on the

⁴⁶Adams, “Eden Smith,” p. 106.

⁴⁷See Wagg, *Percy Erskine Nobbs*, pp. 45-47.

other, for the equal development of a healthy mind in a healthy body. This vista would terminate in a grand convocation building, which would look over the gorge of the Saskatchewan River and in its turn provide an impressive picture of the campus from the city on the other side. But here again, while the planning is on a grand scale, it has not been allowed to dominate the buildings or their functions. Although the overriding organisation divides the campus into symmetrical sections, within those areas symmetry exists only insofar as it answers the needs of the buildings. Function and suitability were the determining factors in the design.

Nobbs was a proponent of the Grand Manner in city planning, and its influence can be seen in his University of Alberta design. He argued that it was through such an approach, which had first been used in the cities of Ancient Egypt and the Near East, and then more famously in Imperial Rome, that modern cities could be rationally developed. Most recently, Chicago's 1893 World's Columbian Exposition had pointed the way, and he argued that this method, in addition to providing impressive vistas and appropriate sites for buildings, was also the best as regards traffic movement and efficiency. In the long run, it would save money—as he argued it already had in Chicago—but unfortunately in his own day “an alderman in Montreal who talks of town planning and states the cost of the initial studies, loses votes.”⁴⁸

⁴⁸Nobbs, “The Grand Manner, in St. Petersburg and in Chicago,” undated typescript; CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.9-1). Although the lecture is undated, it is clearly post-Russian Revolution, as Nobbs refers in it to the impossibility of using the names Petrograd and Leningrad.

On a city-wide scale, Nobbs devoted considerable energy to the improvement of Montréal through the development of a sensible but also aesthetically-driven plan.⁴⁹ In the 1920s and 30s, he worked on schemes for individual housing estates or smaller groups of houses, and also on larger proposals such as a system of green spaces that would maintain the riversides as parks and beaches accessible to those who could not afford to go far out of town in search of recreation.⁵⁰ He observed that the great cities of the world had parks, particularly noting that Moscow and St. Petersburg had enjoyed them for a century, Boston and Chicago had introduced them around the turn of the century, and England had always had common lands. Montréal, on the other hand, had only an inadequate system of open spaces of which those in poor quarters were “not much better than vacant lots.”⁵¹

Implicit in plans such as this one was, not surprisingly, the idea that the lot of the poor needed to be improved not only for their own benefit, but for that of the more affluent classes as well. Providing jobs and decent housing would cut down the incidence of crime by the lower classes. Nobbs proposed a slum clearance project that would involve improving and relocating housing near the industrial plants that provided jobs for slum inhabitants, the rebuilding effort itself incidentally providing its own jobs in the

⁴⁹For a discussion of Nobbs's town planning activities and participation on various committees see Wagg, *Percy Erskine Nobbs*, pp. 51-57.

⁵⁰Nobbs, “A Metropolitan System of Water Side Parks for Montreal,” 1 November 1934 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.10-2).

⁵¹Nobbs, “Water Side Parks,” p. 4.

construction trades.⁵² But such a project would also bring with it higher rents, with which people might need help: “this means barracking for the 30% who are irredeemable, and assisted housing for the 70% who will respond to environment; and an intricate social machine to sort out the two classes.”⁵³ In 1935 Nobbs was a witness to the House of Commons Special Committee on Housing, and reiterated these sentiments in stronger terms. Cheap, decent housing was essential as it was

the economic way of keeping the working class happy. The extent that our maps show of tb, infantile mortality, juvenile delinquency, hospitalization and all that, is due to people paying too much rent and not having enough money to spend on their food. There is thus a burden created which falls upon government and society. . . . The fact remains that it is cheaper to house these people decently than to let them degenerate. That is really where the savings comes in to the public. It is much cheaper to house them than to maintain them in these slum areas.⁵⁴

Keeping in mind that he was speaking to a doubtless cost-conscious government committee, his approach resembles that of most nineteenth-century housing reformers—such as Patrick Geddes in Edinburgh—who, while they sought to better the lot of the poor, hoped simultaneously to improve for their own benefit the cities in which they lived. Nobbs’s belief in enlightened self-interest in this respect, however, did not extend to private enterprise. He argued that government must take responsibility for providing better housing, as leaving it to private interest would always result in slum development.

⁵²Nobbs, “Address to the Province of Quebec Association of Architects on Town Planning Effort [sic] in Montreal,” 13 February 1934.

⁵³Nobbs, “Town Planning Effort in Montreal,” p. 10.

⁵⁴Nobbs, Statement to the House of Commons Special Committee on Housing, 1935.

He himself worked out several large-scale plans for rehousing the poor, although to his distress none was ever implemented. One, dating from 1936, shows how utilitarian Nobbs could be in the interest of keeping costs down for depression-era working-class housing (fig. 5.9). This is not to say that he did not consider his theories about sunlight and aspect; a large-scale block plan shows that he laid the new community at an angle over the existing street pattern in order to orient the buildings better vis à vis the sun. But beyond that they were sparse indeed; a bird's-eye view of the complex shows rows of identical buildings almost entirely unrelieved by ornament or variation. They are set among trees and green space—somewhat incongruously occupied by several buildings clearly arts-and-crafts-influenced—and share play areas and common spaces, but the housing itself looks quite bleak. Dell Upton notes that in the United States, the inter-war period saw the development of “minimum house” standards, to determine “the smallest possible space in which one could live what middle-class officials believed was a decent life.”⁵⁵ The result was a small square plan, containing four rooms and a bath. Upton observes that even the most pleasant social housing projects often provided dwellings that resembled these minimum standards quite closely, and this is the case in Nobbs's X-block plan, too, where ample community space contrasts with small apartments. As a whole, the complex resembles many of the projects put up in large cities in the United States several decades later to rehouse the urban poor. Similarly, it seems likely that the ideals

⁵⁵Dell Upton, *Architecture in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 237.

underlying Nobbs's scheme—which also drove some of the architects of the American projects originally—might have degenerated with time into a slum as dismal as any it replaced.

Nobbs did not plan such estates only for the working classes: he also designed communities for middle-class tenants on a co-operative basis. Following Unwin's approach, these were laid out so that groups of houses, carefully designed to take full advantage of their surroundings, shared such amenities as playgrounds, tennis courts, and heating plants. Not surprisingly, they were also far less utilitarian, and in them Nobbs's theories regarding the disposition of houses on lots and rooms within houses were brought to bear much more than in the schemes for the working classes. They made efficient use of the land available while providing each family access to more common amenities and space—and all for less money—than was the case in conventional settlements.

Nobbs's concern with suitability to site and climate and also with history made him particularly impatient with the architecture of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and its followers. In 1932 he had cause to express his annoyance with the Beaux-Arts approach directly to Montréal Beaux-Arts architect William Sutherland Maxwell (1875-1952), who had recently chaired the judges' committee in an inter-collegiate architecture competition. Not only had students trained in Beaux-Arts methods walked away with the prizes (in one of the two projects the four entries from the Montréal École des Beaux-Arts won first, second, third, and honourable mention over all the entries from other schools), but Maxwell had added insult to injury with his statement as chair. "The judges," he had

written, “commend the type of programme . . . as they feel that this type allows a play of imagination and a freedom in design which is unhampered by irksome conditions.” Nobbs commented in a letter that “this is a little disconcerting for those who hold that skill in design is largely exhibited in overcoming just these irksome conditions, and that all sound architecture must take into account local conditions, climate, material, method of construction and difficulty of site.”⁵⁶ Far from encouraging the use of imagination, argued Nobbs, this method discouraged creativity in coping with the many “irksome conditions” that were a natural feature of designing real buildings for actual sites. In fact, he believed that the Beaux-Arts approach had long been dead—although some had yet to find it out—arguing that “by the 3rd quarter of last century, French academicism had become recognized as a stifling influence to the detriment of architectural evolution everywhere but in America.”⁵⁷ Ironically, Nobbs’s 1909 redesign of the Department of Architecture’s curriculum had resulted in a structure similar to that in use at the *École des Beaux-Arts*, whose methods and results he was later to condemn so roundly.⁵⁸

Nobbs also took exception to the Beaux-Arts emphasis on the architectural drawing as a thing of value in itself. Rather, from the start of his period at McGill University, he emphasized to his students the value of drawing simply to communicate an

⁵⁶Nobbs, letter to W.S. Maxwell, 1932 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series B.8-1). The others on the adjudicating committee were E.I. Barott, John M. Lyle, W.L. Somerville, A.S. Mathers, and Irene Vautrin.

⁵⁷Nobbs, “The Arts of Russia,” undated typescript, p. 5 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.9-1).

⁵⁸Vanlaethem, “Beautification Versus Modernization,” p. 143.

idea, and also as a useful skill that would allow them to find employment as draughtsmen for the few years after graduation before they were ready to design for themselves. He told them: “we must never regard drawing as an art worth cultivating for its own sake. . . . When we have come to regard our drawings in this light—as damaged paper in no way beautiful, certainly not decorative, but, possibly, a little useful,—then the first step has been reached on the stair which leads to the halls of architectural learning, and not until then.”⁵⁰ In fact, he noted that the careful renderings of the Beaux-Arts school could be immensely deceptive and often did not give a true idea of the building to be built from them. He almost seems to suggest that it is just a little effete to take too strong an interest in the beauty of the drawing at the expense of truthful rendition.

Interestingly, although he disapproved of the Beaux-Arts approach, Nobbs did invoke New York architect Charles Follen McKim’s positive response to his work as a point in his own favour. When McKim had seen the Macdonald Engineering building while it was under construction, Nobbs related years later, the New York architect had said: “With a man of your own to make Buildings like that for you, you need never go elsewhere.” Nobbs noted that he was especially flattered by this response because he and McKim had been trained in such very different schools.⁶⁰ Indeed, he did retain an open mind on the subject to some extent, and went so far as to commend McKim Mead and White’s new Bank of Montréal as “easily the first in architectural merit of all the buildings

⁵⁰Nobbs, “Drawing and Architecture–1,” CAB (October 1903): 168.

⁶⁰Nobbs, letter to A.E. Morgan, 19 December 1935 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series B.7-1).

in the city."⁰¹ Isabelle Gournay notes, however, that the bank is an example of what Nobbs referred to in the case of Montréal's Mount Royal Club, also by McKim Mead and White, as "rarefied classic . . . with all the Beaux Arts claptrap chastely omitted."⁰²

He had admired the building upon first arriving in the city, and of course he later discovered that—like so many important Canadian commissions—the building had been designed by American architects, a subject that caused him considerable frustration and that he was often to address. He began expressing such Canada-boosting sentiments less than a year after his arrival, when he was already commenting that "it is just a little humiliating to the profession here" to have a work such as the new Mount Royal Club "go to New York." True, he admitted, there was no one in Montréal "as great" as McKim, but it was still "a little surprising to find . . . Montrealers['] protective instincts not manifesting themselves" in such situations.⁰³

The great challenge to the Beaux-Arts and to the classical versus Gothic debate in architecture was of course that of Modernism. Nobbs identified the word as a pejorative

⁰¹Nobbs, "Montreal: The Year's Changes in the City," *CAB* (December 1904): 201.

⁰²"Montréal Letter No. III," *CAB* (June 1904): p. 98, quoted in Gournay, "Prestige and Professionalism: The Contribution of American Architects," in *Montréal Metropolis*, p. 130. The building provoked from Nobbs an antimodernist screed the next month, when, in the guise of the ghost of a gargoyle who had come flying to Montréal after his spire "on a minster tower in Yorkshire" had collapsed in a gale, he concluded that, while the building was "very fair and enduring," it was evident that "what the men of Montréal worshipped in the great hall behind the portico that is opposite to the church of Notre Dame is the chief god of the land and that it is therefore right and proper that his temple should far outshine in splendor [sic] and glory any building to the Lord of the old minster." ("Montréal Notes No. IV," *CAB* [July 1904]: 119.)

⁰³Nobbs, "Montreal Letter No. III," *CAB* (June 1904): 98.

term, arguing that “when an aesthete uses a word with an ‘istic’, it means he has some suspicion that the phase he is talking about is spurious There are, in every land, modern architects, the heir to all the ages, but those who profess their modernity too much deserve the ‘istic’.”⁰⁴ He himself preferred an architecture that was modern, but by no means modernist.

Having practised and taught architecture through the time that Modernism in architecture was coming to fruition in Europe and North America, it is to be expected that Nobbs would have had to address the issue at some point, although he was certainly never a whole-hearted supporter. As Kalman has noted, he was typically Canadian in that. Here there “was no inexorable march to modernism, nor an inevitable ‘triumph’ of the moderns over the revivalists.”⁰⁵ Canadian architects in the early-twentieth century were striving to find an architecture that would be both modern and Canadian, but on the whole they “adopted a conservative and evolutionary route to modernism, based on the gentle modification of existing practices,” rather than opting for a wholesale rejection of the past as radical modernists elsewhere were doing. This was Nobbs’s approach. He was certainly not unaware of modernist trends in the world, but he did not see so complete a casting-off of history as a valid route for architecture to take. Writing in 1930, he argued that Canadians might hope for great things from modernism only provided they did not lose their heads over it, “as the good folk in certain parts of Europe, notably in Holland”

⁰⁴Nobbs, “Present Tendencies Affecting Architecture in Canada Part II: Modernity,” *JRAIC* (September 1930): 315.

⁰⁵Kalman, *Architecture in Canada*, p. 705.

had done. Most importantly, it was essential not to forget, as the modernists seemed to be doing, the lessons of the past. Rather, architects should be “natural, simple and unaffected . . . doing things always in old ways, when they are also the best ways.”^{oo} Clearly, most modernists failed to do so. In his 1930 article Nobbs included illustrations of eight modernist buildings in Europe, dismissing each in a brief caption that explained how, in his opinion, it failed the test of common sense in building and the use of materials.^{o7} Like Traquair, he wrote that the tall building had been the one original contribution of the United States to architecture. But even so, one had “yet to be built that is real in design in the sense that Greek Temples and English Parish Churches were real.” Rather, they all “affected the arcaded complexities, the surfaced severities, or the trabeate solemnities of a dozen alien centuries.”^{o8} All in all, architectural modernism was a difficult issue for Nobbs. He believed that a new kind of architecture that did not parrot the past needed to be developed, and that was what the Modernists sought to do. But he could not countenance the idea of the wholesale rejection of past forms, and that was the route the Modernists took. Deeply conservative and attached to the values of history, Nobbs did not want to give them up.

He did not, of course, ignore the changes completely, and nor did he profess to. His later buildings certainly show the influence of Modernism, but his was the

^{oo}Nobbs, “Present Tendencies: Modernity,” p. 314.

^{o7}Nobbs, “Present Tendencies Affecting Architecture In Canada Part III: Adverse Influences,” *JRAIC* (November 1930): 391.

^{o8}Nobbs, “Present Tendencies: Adverse Influences,” p. 392.

“conservative and evolutionary” approach noted by Kalman. His proposed new Birks Building for Saskatoon (fig. 5.10), for instance, perfectly illustrates the use of simpler forms Kalman defines as a typical Canadian response to Modernism, with “flatter wall surfaces, fewer advances and recessions, less ornament, and quieter silhouettes.”⁶⁹ In the case of the 1928 Birks Building, Art Deco influence is clear in the flattened, simplified fluted pilasters and flat decorative panels. Kalman describes such buildings as “passive responses to new architectural currents abroad,” but this suggests that the architects were unaware of what they were doing, which seems highly unlikely. Nobbs was certainly familiar with what was going on in the architectural world—even though he disapproved of much of it—and must have used what he wanted with perfect consciousness. He had a prodigious talent for giving people what they wanted.

There was one moment in particular when Nobbs had no choice but to confront head-on the onward march of Modernism, as it threatened to impinge upon the McGill University School of Architecture with which he had been so long associated. This occurred in 1940 when, Traquair having retired in 1939, a new head needed to be found for the school. Seven possible replacements were considered, and amongst them were several who would have been quite sympathetic to the McGill method.⁷⁰ However, there

⁶⁹Kalman, *Canadian Architecture*, p. 705.

⁷⁰A meeting of the Advisory Committee of the School of Architecture discussed seven possible candidates. These were E.R. Arthur, of Toronto; Lyle F. Boulware, Brooklyn; Serge Chermayeff; Wesley Dougill, Liverpool; R. Gardner-Medwin, London; Milton S. Osborne, Winnipeg; and J.L. Sert, of Barcelona (Minutes of the meeting, held 18 March 1940; CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series B.8-9). Elsewhere it is noted that Lorne Marshall had also applied for the

(continued...)

was also one who threatened to change architecture at McGill University completely, and he caused Nobbs to make a strong statement of his position on Modernism. This was Serge Chermayeff, who was reported at the meeting to be harbouring a desire to come to McGill University in order to revolutionize (North) American architectural practice. It was pointed out that he would entirely change the way architecture was taught at McGill and cause a complete break with the British system that had served them so long. Some argued that this might not be a completely bad thing, as there had been criticism from some quarters of McGill's methods. Nobbs, however, was not among the sanguine. Clearly worried that F. Cyril James, the Principal, was seriously considering Chermayeff, Nobbs wrote to him:

May I suggest your investigating Osborne [of Winnipeg] and Arthur [of Toronto] before going further in this matter? The appointment of either as head of the School would entail no risk to the results of 35 years of constructive effort. The School is not the fossilized institution it has been represented to be in certain quarters.

It is worth bearing in mind that in the two countries where these alleged modernists have had fullest scope, Germany and Russia to wit, this thing is now dead as a door nail.⁷¹

Fortunately for Nobbs, James wrote back that he had shown interest in Chermayeff at the meeting merely "to find out whether the rather sensational publicity that he has attracted

⁷⁰(...continued)

position (F. Cyril James, letter to Nobbs, 14 March 1940; CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series B.7-5).

⁷¹Nobbs, letter to F. Cyril James, Principal of McGill, 12 March 1940 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series B.7-5).

rested on any solid foundation.”⁷² Chermayeff had collaborated with German architect Eric Mendelssohn (1887-1953) after the latter had fled to London in the early 1930s. Together they won one major English competition and a small number of domestic commissions.⁷³ John Bland recalled that although Chermayeff was a good architect, “Nobbs couldn’t bear [him] and I think that was the end of that proposal.”⁷⁴ However, it seems clear from Nobbs’s anxious letter that he had more than a personal antipathy towards Chermayeff. Rather, he was fighting for the retention of the English arts-and-crafts-based system that he had worked so hard to set in place at McGill, and against the coming of radical modernism.

In the end, Nobbs was indisposed, by education and predilection, to accept the Modernist movement. He was a British imperialist and a Canadian nationalist, and these convictions made the idea of an international style that repudiated historical precedent profoundly unattractive to him, just as the Beaux-Arts approach had failed to move him earlier in the century. He was also fundamentally attached to such qualities as ornament—intelligently conceived and impeccably executed—and craft work. Although he did not revile the use of machine technology, he was fundamentally attached to hand work as the best thing when finances allowed, and to machine work that was designed

⁷²James, letter to Nobbs, 14 March 1940 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series B.7-5).

⁷³Donald Leslie Johnson and Donald Langmead, *Makers of 20th Century Modern Architecture: A Bio-Critical Sourcebook* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1997), p. 205. Johnson and Langmead describe Chermayeff as an interior designer.

⁷⁴Shubert et al, “Interview with Professor John Bland,” in *John Bland at Eighty: A Tribute*, eds. Irena Murray and Norbert Schoenauer (Montréal: McGill University, 1991), p. 11.

with an eye to history. He said in 1910 that “the true teaching lies . . . somewhere between the Beaux-Arts and the Arts and Crafts movement,” and this left Canada in a good position to “develop a sound foundation for the future structure of Canadian design.”⁷⁵ Nobbs’s convictions about architectural history, his ideas about a Folk culture in Québec, about Canadian nationalism, and about imperialism all contributed to his opinions about how Canadian architecture should develop, and it is with this that the next chapter is concerned.

⁷⁵Nobbs, “The Architecture of Canada,” p. 58.

Chapter Six "NATIONAL AND IMPERIAL TRADITION"

N OBBS WROTE in 1907 that "Architecture is always at its best when National in spirit rather than personal," and he argued that the federal government should accept more of a rôle in the development of Canadian design by funding museums and travelling scholarships.¹ Enthusiastic Canadian nationalist and imperialist that he was, he made an impassioned plea that the government provide the Canadian people with a route to developing a uniquely Canadian school of art and design, particularly as an alternative to American practice. If the "National and Democratic arts of Architecture and Design" could be "saved in time," he wrote, they would "help . . . our Imperial aspirations."² The importance of the idea was to him more than simply the development of a Canadian style. That would be the vehicle and a key issue in itself, but Nobbs saw this project more broadly as a nation-building one too. He argued that there was not only an aesthetic but also a "political aspect of the 'Americanization' of our Arts where they might just as well be based on national and Imperial tradition." In fact, "the fusion of our peoples' tastes and ideals in mere matters of form would be a potent factor for national strength." Specifically, he argued, this would have an effect on influence from the United States not just in architecture, but "in all the appurtenances of daily life in Canada, from tall

¹Nobbs, "Report on Proposals for *State Aid to Art Education in Canada*; and Support of a Plea for the Institution of Travelling Scholarships and Museums," 4 May 1907, p. 3 (Canadian Architecture Collection, Blackader-Lauterman Library, McGill University [CAC], Nobbs Collection, Series C.1-10).

²Nobbs, "*State Aid to Art Education*," p. 10.

buildings to personal attire.”³ He railed particularly against the creeping influence of the Ecole des Beaux Arts, or Academic School of architecture, so prevalent in the United States.⁴

As Kelly Crossman has shown, the previous generation, spurred on by the professionalization of their discipline and the threat of competition with American architects in their own country, had also been concerned with developing a national style.⁵ At the beginning of the new century economic conditions improved and this, together with “[p]ride in an expanding country, professional self-confidence, [and] arts and crafts theory,” spurred the century’s architects even more towards a preoccupation with national expression in their work.⁶ Nobbs belonged to this new generation, and from an early stage of his Canadian career he had made it clear that he believed that the project of developing a truly national Canadian architecture was vitally important. But more significantly, his report on “State Aid to Art Education” emphasizes that he saw the enterprise as more than just an architectural endeavour. He argued that “a commission on Art, but in a broader sense, is a National necessity rather than a luxury.”⁷ In the Canada-building, empire-boosting spirit of many of his compatriots in early-twentieth

³Nobbs, “*State Aid to Art Education*,” p. 9.

⁴Nobbs, “*State Aid to Art Education*,” p. 3.

⁵Kelly Crossman, “The National Idea,” in *Architecture in Transition: From Art to Practice, 1885-1906* (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1987), pp. 109-121.

⁶Crossman, *Architecture in Transition*, p. 109.

⁷Nobbs, “*State Aid to Art Education*,” p. 18.

century Canada, he saw such an institution as an essential step in protecting the country from undue influence from south of the border, and in preserving Canada's "natural" ties with Britain and the empire. In this report he argued that the government should support travelling scholarships that would allow young architects to travel to Britain (in particular) and examine the many fine examples of architecture and design from its most brilliant periods. Museum collections—in Ottawa and elsewhere—of plaster casts of such monuments would also allow for the study of the art that was really Canada's birthright. Here, there was no question in his mind that it was the British tradition specifically that stood as a shining beacon for those who wished to strengthen Canada's artistic expression. He wrote that "Beauty of form . . . has become a mere memory, half understood by the educated few, instead of the universal code of the race as it once was." The taste for excellent design, well carried out, was "once a national characteristic" and had now been completely lost in modern Canada.⁸ Once more, his use of the words "race" and "national" leaves no doubt as to the nation he means. It was to Britain, rather than to Canada *per se*, that he looked to build Canada's strength. Not surprisingly, this approach of encouraging the study of fine old British models of design was the one Nobbs had learned among his arts and crafts masters in Scotland and England.

In common with most other Canadian Imperialists of his generation, Nobbs was to change his tune in later years. The first world war strengthened the idea of Canada as a vital and independent nation with a rôle to play on the world stage, rather than merely as

⁸Nobbs, "State Aid to Art Education," p. 18.

part of a strong British Empire. In the years after the war, Nobbs modified his emphasis on the importance of the empire in favour of something more specifically Canadian; however, he never ceased to see British culture as the deepest spring from which Canadian ideas should flow.

Some years later, Traquair also identified the United States as the major threat to Canadian culture, although he phrased it in somewhat more positive terms. He argued that "Nationality—and character too—is created by opposition. Canada's nationality was created by the United States and is still kept alive by them. Her independence of Great Britain has been assured for years . . . but her independence of the United States is less certain. She has, no doubt, political independence, but has she economic, or social, or cultural independence?"⁹ Writing after the war, he could see Canada as fully independent of Britain, but the United States remained a cultural threat.

For British arts and crafts architects and designers, the Britishness of the buildings and artefacts that inspired them was very important. Their models were not only fine examples of architecture and design; they were fine *British* examples (with occasional exceptions, occurring especially in the work of designers and decorative artists, and predominantly representing either other folk, or "Oriental" traditions, such as those that inspired ceramics designer William de Morgan). Looking to them would inspire the creation of a truly national art and architecture in their own time, in contrast to continental and other influences that had been prevalent for so long. This was of course

⁹Traquair, "The Canadian Type," *Atlantic Monthly* 131 (June 1923): 825.

inherent in the idea of suitability to place, and architects looked (in theory at least) to the architecture of a specific region for inspiration when they planned a new building in that vicinity. In Edinburgh, both Nobbs and Traquair saw Robert Lorimer base many of his new buildings on the traditional forms of the Scottish countryside, and it is not surprising that they should have adopted a similar approach. Upon arriving in Montréal, both quickly became concerned with the lack of a Canadian national style of architecture, whose absence must have seemed painfully obvious. And both pondered over how such a national style was to be achieved. This chapter will deal chiefly with Nobbs, with contributions from Traquair. As a practising architect, he was directly concerned with the national style issue on a practical level. He wrote extensively, as the preceding chapters demonstrate, but his ideas also took concrete form, and as a builder he was required to commit himself in a highly visible and long-lasting way. Traquair never had to try out his theories in practice, but he did have many ideas about the direction Canadian architecture should take, and he expressed them in more ephemeral form.

The arts and crafts method—looking to local vernacular buildings for inspiration in developing a modern style—was the approach that both Nobbs and Traquair espoused upon arriving at McGill University, but it did not provide answers to all of their problems. It seemed at first to be the obvious solution to the problem of modern architecture in Canada, but Nobbs in particular found it wanting. Wendy Kaplan has noted a similar phenomenon among architects of domestic architecture in the United States:

The British concept of the domestic vernacular had two manifestations in America. One was the doctrine of fidelity to place, which encouraged

designers to look to the American landscape and past. The other was the adaptation of indigenous British Styles themselves—the Gothic, Tudor, and Queen Anne revivals. Although the latter might seem to contradict the insistence upon a uniquely American identity, many Americans believed that the United States was fundamentally English in its cultural traditions. In New England and the mid-Atlantic states, regions where identification with Britain was strongest, architects were especially drawn to British precedent.¹⁰

Kaplan identifies the colonial period as that most attractive to American architects, arguing that it had special significance as “a time when Americans had greater mastery of their environment”¹¹ She observes that Americans tended to idealize the colonial American past in the same way that Morris and his followers did Mediaeval England.

For Traquair (in theory) and Nobbs (in theory and practice), the Canadian answer to the Colonial style was the vernacular architecture of early Québec—specifically what Traquair called the “Canadian house.”¹² They were not the first to identify this genre as worthy of notice. Earlier, Francophone architects, among them Charles Baillargé (1826-1906), had written of its suitability to the climate and landscape, and argued that following these models could lead to the development of a regional style of architecture.¹³

¹⁰Wendy Kaplan, “The Vernacular in America, 1890-1920: Ideology and Design,” in *Art and the National Dream: The Search for Vernacular Expression in Turn-of-the-Century Design*, ed. Nicola Gordon Bowe (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 1993), p. 53.

¹¹Kaplan, “Vernacular in America,” p. 54.

¹²Traquair contrasted the purity of the “Canadian house” with those buildings, beginning in the last years of the eighteenth century, that showed “English or American classic influence.” (*The Old Architecture of Quebec: A Study of the Buildings Erected in New France from the Earliest Explorers to the Middle of the Nineteenth Century* [Toronto: Macmillan, 1947], p. 73).

¹³Crossman, *Architecture in Transition*, pp. 115-16.

But Nobbs and Traquair had the fervency of arts and crafts teachings behind them, and the movement to adopt the forms of old Québec did not gain serious momentum until the first decades of the twentieth century. Nobbs noted a similar phenomenon elsewhere. He wrote that the effect in Russia of the Victorian revival of English Gothic had not been specifically as a Gothic influence, but rather “as an interest in those national traditions which Catherine’s Frenchmen had so blandly brushed aside as barbaric.”¹⁴ This, he argued, was only one example of the continent-wide trend to follow “the English example of reviving a lost indigenous artistic tradition . . . in a spirit of nationalistic protest against the enforced academicism of Paris and her school.”¹⁵ He set out upon his arrival in Canada to do just that—reviving what he perceived to be a lost but valuable tradition that could contribute both suitable form and national associations to the architecture of Canada.

In a strange way, then, the very endeavour of rediscovering (as it seemed) the early architecture of Québec and using it to inspire the work of modern architects was particularly British—stemming as it did from arts and crafts practice—and perhaps therein could Nobbs and Traquair reconcile these two differing sides of their approach. For the architecture of Québec did not provide all the answers to the problem of a Canadian style. In Canada, of course, the idea of identification with Britain was even easier to justify than it was in the case of the United States. Canada was not only “fundamentally English in its

¹⁴Nobbs, “The Arts of Russia,” undated typescript, p. 5 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.9-1).

¹⁵Nobbs, “Arts of Russia,” p. 6.

cultural traditions,” but it was also a part of the British Empire and the use of English architectural styles could be justified on that basis. So Nobbs looked to the British architectural tradition in which he had been trained, and the vast majority of his own buildings reflect that much more strongly than they do the Québec architecture he identified as so truly Canadian. He said in a lecture in 1910, reprinted in *Construction*, that “all things that are English form, I believe, an essential part of the inheritance of this land and people. I make no apology for stating that something of that sentiment should be expressed in many of our Canadian Dining Rooms.”¹⁶ In the manuscript text of the lecture, Nobbs had made this statement even stronger, excluding the word “many” so that it suggested that “our Canadian Dining Rooms” in general should express English sentiment.¹⁷ This is an important assertion as it illuminates Nobbs’s exclusionary definition of Canadianness. At this point, “this land and people” were obviously, for him, fundamentally British. Canada was British and its people were British, notwithstanding the masses of immigrants from northern, southern and eastern Europe, and even (though less welcome) from elsewhere then flooding into the country in response to very specific immigration policies on the part of the government and especially of Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier’s administration around the turn of the century.

¹⁶Nobbs, “The Architecture of Canada” (paper read before the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada [RAIC] Third Annual Assembly), *Construction* (October 1910): 57.

¹⁷Nobbs, “For Winnipeg 21 August 1910,” manuscript (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.9-5).

Even the rural Québec population, which Nobbs lauded as so very Canadian, is left out of this picture of Canada. Recall that in 1905 he had pointed to the value of following the local (Québec) traditions because they were founded, in part, on “national temperament.”¹⁸ In fact, Nobbs did little more than pay lip service to Québec vernacular as an appropriate form to follow in modern architecture; the very year that he wrote the above, he was designing the Colby house, a building that was profoundly British in inspiration, and it was to point the way for the majority of his domestic commissions (fig. 6.1).¹⁹ At one point he even repudiated the Canadian vernacular tradition entirely, writing that “Canadian architecture *with no past to speak of* should be a graft upon English tradition. Same as Canadian literature must be.”²⁰

Among the exceptions in Nobbs’s oeuvre are the J.L Todd House and the A.H. Scott house, and they are perhaps his two best-known domestic commissions. But they are exceptions in that they show far stronger French-Canadian influence than the vast majority of his work. Various scholars’ treatment of them has contributed to a somewhat slanted view of Nobbs’s domestic oeuvre, as they are often given undue emphasis. Susan

¹⁸Nobbs, “On the Value of the Study of Old Work,” *Canadian Architect and Builder* (CAB [May 1905]): 75.

¹⁹This was a house designed in 1905-06 for Dr. Colby, history chair at McGill University. On this house see Susan Wagg, *Percy Erskine Nobbs: Architect, Artist, Craftsman* (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1982), pp. 21-22.

²⁰Nobbs, “The Style Question in Canada,” manuscript, nd. (McGill University Archives [MUA], Box 2: 35/17/140. This manuscript is in the Traquair collection, but I base my attribution on the handwriting combined with the fact that it shares a file folder with a typescript which is certainly by Nobbs). The emphasis is mine.

Wagg, for instance, includes them as two of the four Nobbs houses she discusses in her monograph, while Harold Kalman gives the Todd House similar prominence. Kalman notes of the Todd house that “The use of vernacular forms and materials was, of course, the arts and crafts approach; here Nobbs found satisfactory indigenous Canadian sources, casting only a few glances at Britain . . . in keeping with his ongoing search for an appropriate national expression.”²¹ This is an accurate statement, but it does not give the whole picture since this is one of the very few cases in which Nobbs did find “satisfactory indigenous Canadian sources” for his work. Although the Todd and Scott houses are outstanding examples of Nobbs’s work, they are also outstanding in that they are exceptions to his usual approach, and they should be seen as such. Notwithstanding my criticism of other authors for giving undue prominence to Nobbs’s Québec vernacular-inspired work, I shall also discuss them extensively, because I want to analyse them in light of Nobbs’s thoughts on ethnicity in Canada. I hope that by noting this, I can counteract the idea that his work chiefly reflected the influence of the Québec vernacular.

The substantial Todd house was an early project, designed beginning in 1907 in Senneville, Québec, for Dr. John L. Todd, Professor of Parasitology at McGill University (fig. 6.2). The house cannot be defined as belonging to one historic style, which is as Nobbs would have wished it. This is certainly the kind of approach that Traquair was later to advocate too. He condemned the idea of strict copying of a style, arguing that

²¹Harold Kalman, *A History of Canadian Architecture*, vol. 2 (Toronto: Oxford, 1994), p. 630.

“The historic styles of the past were living products of their age. The modern reproductions are dead and quite uninteresting—more than uninteresting, they are repulsive. . . . But just because we cannot copy the French-Canadian house is no indication that we may not learn a great deal from it. Perhaps we can learn more from it than if we could copy it.”²² The Todd house is a true example of the arts and crafts tradition, in that it responds to its site and the needs of its owners, combining ideas from various sources in an imaginative way. The plan is efficiently laid out along the lines recommended by some later-nineteenth century architects in Britain who condemned the frequent habit—dating from earlier in the century—of placing kitchen and dining room so far from each other that food had to be carried through the main corridor, disturbing the house owners on its journey and arriving depressingly cold at its destination. Nobbs used an asymmetrical T-shaped plan, with the short leg of the T forming a service wing (fig. 6.3). Kitchen, scullery, servants’ hall and storage areas are all here, with a pantry linking the kitchen to the dining room. Above this, and connected by a secondary stairwell, are the servants’ bedrooms and bathroom. On both the ground and second floors (with the exception of the essential connection to the dining room) these areas are connected with the main house through only a single door, which, when shut, would effectively separate the servants’ quarters and work spaces from the rest of the house. The main rooms of the

²²Traquair, “The Old Cottages of Quebec: Of Solid, Direct Construction, Well Adapted to the Climate, and with the Dignity that comes Naturally to Simple Things Free from Sham,” *House Beautiful* 63 (May 1928): 654.

house, except the dining room, face the view over the lake.²³ On the second floor, a suite of two bedrooms, a dressing room, a bathroom and an open-air sleeping porch forms the owners' domain, and could also be shut off from the rest of the bedroom floor. These rooms too face the lake, with two more bedrooms and, of course, the servants' wing at the other side of the house.

This delineation of the house into separate domains of owners and servants is strongly in the English tradition, with the use of a service wing being a common solution. The sleeping porches, on the other hand, date from the American arts and crafts tradition, and were used, not surprisingly, particularly in California where they would have had a considerably longer season of use than the short summers and plentiful mosquitoes of this more northern climate would allow. The Québec influence makes itself felt most strongly in the sharply-angled hipped roofs with dormer windows set low in them, and the use of a central chimney with another at each end (although in this case the latter are not false). Seen from the lake, the footprint of the building is also like the larger of the Québec houses Nobbs admired; as at the Ferme St.-Gabriel they often consisted of a main block with lower wings on either side. As Kalman notes, Nobbs also used casement windows (a form French in origin, and used in Québec) and stretched a porch across the front of the house.²⁴ The latter has a very different feel from the traditional Québec porch, however. Because the house is two-and-a-half storeys rather than one-and-a-half,

²³See Wagg, *Percy Erskine Nobbs*, p. 25.

²⁴Kalman, *Canadian Architecture*, p. 630.

the porch roof is not an extension of the main roof as it was in so many of the province's vernacular examples. Moreover, the shingled outbuilding seen to the right rear of the perspective is firmly in the English tradition, and Nobbs even illustrated it as "A Study in English Domestic Design" in his 1924 article, "The English Tradition in Canadian Architecture."

Nobbs returned to the Québec idiom some years later and more emphatically in his A.H. Scott House in Dorval, Québec, of 1923 (fig. 6.4). This is a much smaller house, and the picturesqueness provided by slight asymmetry and variety of form in the Todd House has given way to a much more restrained treatment, perhaps related, as Wagg argues, to the trend to a more conservative neo-Georgianism that pervaded domestic architecture in particular after the Great War.²⁵ Built on the foundations of an earlier farmhouse, it has an oblong block plan without wings.²⁶ This house reveals its ancestry far more willingly than does the Todd House, and Nobbs himself noted that "in general form it follows the French Canadian tradition."²⁷ The use of materials is highly typical of local historical work, being rough cast for the body of the building with diagonally-set metal shingles on the roof. These shingles were a common feature of old Québec farm houses, on which both Nobbs and Traquair remarked more than once, admiring them particularly as they weathered to "a beautiful golden brown and green colour like the scales on the

²⁵Wagg, *Percy Erskine Nobbs*, p. 28.

²⁶Nobbs, "Tradition and Progress in Canadian Architecture," *Studio* 104 (1932): 84.

²⁷Nobbs, "Tradition and Progress," p. 84.

back of a perch.”²⁸ Traquair designated them “one of the most admirable features of French-Canadian architecture.” But although Nobbs noted that the roof of the Scott house was “laid in the local manner,” he commented that he had substituted galvanized iron shingles for the traditional tin,²⁹ which would have quite a different effect over time. Although the initial impression is strongly of the Québec farmhouse, the Scott house has pronounced classical features, including an ionic-columned entrance porch, heavy quoins on the corners, and a frieze running under the eaves of the slightly bellcast roof. It also has a bay window on the rear façade. In a typical Québec vernacular motif, a row of dormers lights the second floor on either side, and on one side smaller dormers also light the attic storey.

In plan, the house is designed on the same principle as the Todd House: separate areas are provided for servants and owners as far as possible within the confines of a simple block like this (fig. 6.5). (Perhaps servants were housed in the attic storey, which they would have had to reach by a secondary staircase from the bedroom floor; this would not have kept them well segregated in the efficient manner of the service wing in the Todd House.) The plan is very modern as one would expect, and, belying the traditional appearance of the house externally, no hint remains of the two-room division common to the old Québec houses. Instead, the main floor is divided into the several rooms—living room, dining room, hall, servants’ sitting room, kitchen etc.—that were part of more formal

²⁸Traquair, *The Cottages of Quebec* (Montréal: McGill University Press [MUP], 1926), p. 13; reprinted, with additions, from *Canadian Homes and Gardens* (January, 1926).

²⁹Nobbs, “Tradition and Progress,” p. 84.

modern living. The small garage and cottage that Nobbs designed the next year for the Scotts also has a bellcast roof—this time hipped—with low-set dormers and diagonal shingles. In this case, the diminutive residence has a feature very much beloved of the English arts and crafts tradition, but rather degraded here. At one end of the living room is what appears to be an inglenook, allowing the residents to huddle cosily around the wall radiator!

Both the Todd and the Scott houses draw, to varying degrees, on the Québec vernacular tradition and combine it with English elements of planning and form to create (especially in the Todd House) the kind of building Nobbs seemed to be talking about when he called for a modern Canadian style. Neither is slavish in its historicism, and neither sacrifices modern advances in technology or changes in living patterns that required different things from a house. Neither could be mistaken for an old house, but both sit comfortably within the domestic traditions of both Québec and England.

Nobbs was to use the classicized Québécois of the Scott House at least twice more. A couple of years later, in 1924, he designed a small office building for the Elmhurst Dairy in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, Québec (fig. 6.6). This diminutive building, like the Scott House, is oblong in plan and one and a half storeys. Although built of brick and far more plain and utilitarian, it has the same prominent quoins and pedimented porch, in this case enclosed and with corner pilasters. The windows in the dairy building, while shuttered in the local manner (with a whimsical note provided by cutouts of milk bottles in the shutters), are English sashes rather than casements, except those in the dormers. Also in

the Québec style, the dormers are set fairly low in the steeply-pitched roof, which itself curves out at the eave ever so slightly to form a minute bellcast.

The classicized Québécois appeared again as late as 1940, when Nobbs used it for St. Paul's Church, Gaspé, Québec (fig. 6.7). The church has the high, steeply-pitched roof that Traquair was to note was usual in old churches, and in combination with the traditional *flèche*, or sharply-pointed spire, it gives the building a profile immediately evocative of the early churches of the province. Traquair noted the "slender church spires, tin covered and sparkling in the distance" remarked upon by early travellers as a characteristic feature of the Québec landscape, and indeed Nobbs's perspective of the church emphasizes the spire in just this way, silhouetting it against the sky.³⁰ Traquair's description of the typical early Québec church steeple also accurately describes Nobbs's spire of St. Paul's. Traquair notes that the wooden spires traditionally had an octagonal belfry (in this case enclosed with wooden louvres) on a square base set astride the roof, and topped by a "very slender needle spire with a pronounced bellcast."³¹ The early Québec vernacular appearance of St. Paul's stops with the roof and the spire, although it is not uncommon for later churches in the province to show the classical influence evident in this building. As with the Scott House and the Elmhurst Dairy, a classical porch is provided, and in this frame building the corners are marked by wooden pilasters.

³⁰Traquair, *Architecture of Quebec*, p. 135. A 1939 drawing shows the church without the steeple, and with the notation "detail of belfry to be supplied later." Other details remain substantially the same, but the earlier drawing emphasizes how much the spire contributed to the traditional appearance of the church, as defined by Traquair.

³¹Traquair, *Architecture of Quebec*, p. 140.

The windows are not at all in the Québec vernacular tradition, being rows of three or four tall lancets. The details of the building might therefore be described as Gothicized classical Québécois, but it gives the general impression of a “traditional” Québec church.

Two houses, the office of a dairy, and a church, dating from 1911 to 1940: what is it that they have in common? Why did Nobbs choose to draw on the historic architectural forms of Québec for these four, when the majority of his buildings had their roots in Britain? The answer lies, I think, in Nobbs's and Traquair's association of Québec society, and therefore its architecture, with simplicity. Both the Todd House and the Scott House were country dwellings, and although they were not meant for rustic purposes, the notion of the house in the country does suggest a certain retreat from the hurly-burly of modern life. Much in the way that middle-class clients in early-nineteenth century England often commissioned *cottages omées*—country houses which, though they might be very large, were built in the rustic cottage tradition—the Scotts and Todds could enjoy the pleasant associations of traditional values and a simpler life free of the bustle and complexity of the city, called up by the “old Québec” appearance of their houses.

The Elmhurst Dairy is of course a rural building, and with its farming associations the rural Québec style must have seemed quite suitable for it. But it also fits into a tradition—dating from at least the late-eighteenth century—of classicism associated with dairy buildings (in this case it is the dairy office, but the connection is certainly there) in

the Primitive manner. In this case, the Primitive element is provided by the rustic associations of the Québec forms Nobbs used in the building.³²

The church in Gaspé is atypical among Nobbs's original church designs. One United church designed for the town of Arvida, Québec (1927-28) has a hint of the Québécois idiom, although it is less pronounced than at St. Paul's. The reason for this is largely that the design lacks the characteristic tall *flèche*, and has instead a low, open cupola. However, it does have the steeply-pitched, slightly bellcast roof. Two projects for city churches—in Montréal and Brandon, Manitoba (see Chapter Five)—are resoundingly Gothic in style.³³ A 1909 proposal for a Mission church in Montréal is a strange mix, with a wide, low silhouette, diamond-paned windows, and half-timbering in the gable (this must surely be false—a surprising detail for one of Nobbs's arts and crafts sensibilities). Finally, a 1920 proposal for a buttressed, low-walled Presbyterian church in Nôtre-Dame-de-Grace uses, appropriately enough, the stepped-gable Scottish vernacular motif that was a favourite of Lorimer. But St. Paul's is a country church and Nobbs depicted it surrounded by woods and meadows. Not only is it in a French-speaking area, but the rural surroundings must have cried out to Nobbs for a steep roof and a slender spire that would be a landmark in the old way. Once more, the "traditional" associations of the early Québec forms must have seemed most suitable.

³²See Pierre de la Ruffinière du Prey, *Sir John Soane. Catalogues of Architectural Drawings in the Victoria and Albert Museum* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1985), pp. 31, 46.

³³He once wrote that the use of Gothic forms should be restricted to Anglican and Presbyterian churches, which may suggest that he believed the converse as well, to at least some extent ("The Style Question in Canada," manuscript, nd [MUA, Box 2: 35/17/140]).

Nobbs used this Québec vernacular idiom for several other country or small-town houses as well. Among others, a house proposed for Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue gives very much a Québec vernacular impression, especially a version with a hipped roof. Sometimes the vernacular appearance is quite pronounced, while in other buildings it is just an impression created by the use of a very high, steeply-pitched roof or a row of dormer windows, as in a 1928 cottage for Mrs. J. Craven at Hudson (then Como), Québec. Nobbs also used this idiom for a city building—a Clubhouse Recreation Centre for the Town of Mount Royal—again with a hipped roof and dormers. As a centre for retreat and recreation, the Québécois style must have seemed ideal to the architect, as appropriate to the building's function as a place to escape from the quotidian duties and complications of modern life.³⁴

So although Nobbs had written of the early architecture of Québec as a sensible and reasonable example to follow in the design of modern buildings—as a way of achieving a style of architecture that would be both modern and special to Canada—it appears that he associated it almost exclusively with an architecture of leisure and retreat, and of a rural way of life.³⁵ As I discussed in Chapter Four, Traquair also identified French-

³⁴Nobbs, Proposed house for Mr. Jean B. D'Aoust, Ste.-Anne-de-Bellevue, 1944-45 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, project 653); Cottage for Mrs J. Craven, Hudson, 1928 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, project 417); Clubhouse Recreation Centre, Town of Mount Royal, 1944 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, project 654).

³⁵Using the example of the designer Henry van de Velde's rural house, Bloemenwerf, Amy Ogata has demonstrated that a similar process took place in fin-de-siècle Belgium. The antimodern impulse moved the artistic *avant-garde* to celebrate "the myth of an idealized Simple Life of humble work, rural living, and the presence of art as an intrinsic part of everyday life."

(continued...)

Canadian precedents as most suitable for use in domestic and church architecture. Nobbs had written in a 1905 article, “let us study the old work around us because it is ours, the natural product of this bit of earth on which we live. I assure you there are the germs in the local style of a manner, which if rightly developed with loving care, would go far to make a national style possible.”³⁶ This article emphasized the genuineness and wholesomeness of the architecture of the Québec Folk, and it was clearly upon these associations that Nobbs wanted to play in these buildings.

The vast majority of Nobbs's houses are urban, and they do not pay homage to the Québec tradition in the same way. They are equally modern in their treatment of traditional forms, but the traditions on which they draw are almost always British. Many of his rural houses also use a style that owes more to the English tradition than to anything else, and it is clear that it was in this idiom that he felt most comfortable. Less than a year after his arrival in Canada he wrote, “It is extraordinary how little direct Scots and English influence there is in the architecture of Canada. . . .”³⁷ Arguing that Britain was pre-eminent in the areas of domestic architecture and parish churches, he opined, “It is high time that more attention were be stowed upon the[se English examples] by those willing to learn from ‘the old fellows’ what can be learned from no other source.” As I have

³⁵(...continued)

(Ogata, “Artisans and Art Nouveau in Fin-de siècle Belgium: Primitivism and Nostalgia,” in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, ed. Lynda Jessup (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), p. 166.

³⁶Nobbs, “On the Value of the Study of Old Work,” *CAB* (May 1905): 75.

³⁷“The Gargoyle”, “Montreal Letter No. III,” in *CAB* (June 1904): 99.

shown, even those houses that draw on Québec vernacular forms are thoroughly British in their interiors and planning.

Nobbs's earliest country houses are both in an English idiom. He described both as "cottages," and they were clearly not designed for formal living. One, for Dr. Adami at Windermere, British Columbia, was probably meant as a cottage as we use the word today, that is, a house inhabited only temporarily on weekends or for a season (fig. 6.8). In this case, the large, informal two-storey living room with a gallery running around three sides of it, together with the animal skins and heads on the wall, make its function clear. Nobbs sent an illustration of the Adami cottage to Robert Lorimer, who thought it made "an uncommon nice looking little house," although he criticized the gallery arrangement as it would allow servants to eavesdrop.³⁸

Nobbs's house for Dr. Colby was probably his first city house to be built (see fig. 6.1). As I noted above, it was unapologetically English in inspiration, and included such favourite arts and crafts motifs as a tiled fireplace with an inscription ("*Post Tenebras Lux*"), with built-in upholstered seats on either side creating an inglenook-like space (fig. 6.9). The Colby house exemplifies the kind of dwelling Nobbs was tending to build in the early years of the century in its Englishness, its dependence on arts and crafts teachings, and its concern with fine detail and exquisite quality of work. However, it is rather more picturesque than most, with several whimsical features such as a little balcony tucked into

³⁸Robert Lorimer, letter to Nobbs, 16 February 1907 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series F.14-7).

a spare corner and opening off a bedroom, and a charming oriel window over the doorway. The plan shows the approach he was to continue to take; already he was placing the kitchen and other utility areas on the street side, leaving the tremendous view (which he was at pains to indicate in the watercolour perspective) for the dining room, drawing room, library and main bedroom. On steeply-sloping sites such as this one, the servants' sitting room often enjoyed the view as well, being placed in the back half of the basement storey but completely above ground because of the hill.

Nobbs's own house, built in 1914, has a similarly picturesque silhouette, and its entrance front is rather cosy and cottage-like (fig. 6.10). The house is actually quite large, and its rear portion is a spare block, very high on its sloping site, and with many windows to take advantage of the view over Montréal (fig. 6.11). In this house built for himself and his new family, Nobbs indulged in a carved stone lintel with the date and a putto displaying the initial N (fig. 6.12). Wagg notes that the interiors were decorated in the fashion favoured by the early arts and crafts proponents such as Philip Webb and William Morris, including Morris wallpaper and hearth tiles by William de Morgan.³⁹

Nobbs's architectural influences remained overwhelmingly British, and he continued to turn frequently to the vernacular and old English forms that had so attracted the first generation of arts and crafts architects, as in his planned development of Belvedere Terrace in Westmount (fig. 6.13). However, in common with many architects of his time—and as I noted of the Scott House above—he tended to turn increasingly

³⁹Wagg, *Percy Erskine Nobbs*, pp. 23-24.

towards more restrained Georgian examples after the war and beyond. Exceptions are particularly to be found in his country cottages, such as a number that he built in Hudson (Como), a small town near Montréal where his wife had a family house (now Greenwood museum).

The houses he designed in 1928-29 for a development in Grove Park, Westmount, are a good example of this increasing Georgian influence (fig. 6.14). Nobbs illustrated the example at No. 2 Grove Park in his *Studio* article in 1932.⁴⁰ The two-and-a-half-storey symmetrical house is oblong in plan with a porch on one side and an enclosed sunroom on the other. An unidentified photograph in the Nobbs Collection shows another house that may well belong to the same development; it is close kin if not. Again, the treatment is restrained and the earlier, more picturesque, massing and skyline are not present. Rather, quiet classical details adorn the facade and a symmetrical plan has replaced those governed by internal spaces.

By this time, Nobbs had come to believe that Georgian architecture, the first British building tradition to have appeared in Canada, was fundamentally suitable to this country, and he ceased his search for the vernacular forms of a Folk. He wrote in 1924 that "that old Georgian manner of building may be called both *natural* and English."⁴¹ Although this article goes on to state that the English tradition had become so disjointed by the end of the nineteenth century that it was difficult or impossible to follow it in any

⁴⁰Nobbs, "Tradition and Progress," p. 90.

⁴¹Nobbs, "The English Tradition in Canadian Architecture," *Architectural Review* 55 (June 1924): 236. The emphasis is his.

meaningful way and it tended to inspire little more than confusion and bad architecture, it is clear from his practice that he believed that the English tradition continued to be a “natural” style for Canada. More specifically, he acknowledged that by the time of writing “the acceptance of the Georgian models is again in the ascendent.” This, he believed, would help contribute to a truly Canadian style as these Georgian models had “the advantages of the eighteenth century’s amelioration on American soil, of an ultimate origin under sunny skies, and more inestimable still, of a residual deposit in the consciousness of the North Americans having become by now racy of the soil.” In other words, the Georgian forms had become naturalized by their long presence on North American soil. Their “origin under sunny skies” was also very important, and points to a life-long interest of Nobbs, which was the development of architecture with respect to climate.

Building around climate was an idea that Nobbs often proffered as one of the more likely ways that an architecture that was truly Canadian might be developed. One of the things that enraged him most about many transplanted architectural styles was that they had developed under completely different climatic conditions than those they would encounter in their new home. This too was a concern that had been expressed in the architectural press for some years.⁴² Crossman observes that some earlier architects had worried that new materials and prosperity had created a concern for elegance that left

⁴²For a discussion of architects’ concern with climate and architecture in the late-nineteenth century, see Crossman, *Architecture in Transition*, pp. 115-119.

behind the traditional consideration of climate that marked Canada's vernacular architecture. Nobbs, he suggests, was the first really to argue that an architecture based on climate could point the direction to a national style.⁴³ In truth, Nobbs admitted on several occasions that following climate was likely to lead to the development of a number of regional styles rather one truly national one, as "there are many climates in Canada, all rigorous in one way or another."⁴⁴ As early as a few years after his arrival he noted that "from Vancouver to Halifax . . . signs are not wanting of the development of distinct local character," and ascribed this new character to "the vigours of our climate."⁴⁵ This was part of what he admired so much about early Québec architecture—both he and Traquair often contended that it responded perfectly to environmental conditions and therefore could teach many lessons to the architects of their own time. In his scheme for a community housing development at Queen Mary's Gardens in suburban Montréal Nobbs based the design of the houses, as the author of an article on the proposal states, "more or less upon the old French tradition in the Province—a **thoroughly acclimatized style**," although the interiors were of course modern.⁴⁶ Nobbs's watercolours of the houses even

⁴³Crossman, *Architecture in Transition*, p. 130.

⁴⁴Nobbs, "Canadian Architecture," typescript; read before the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), September 1922, p. 2 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.9-6).

⁴⁵Nobbs, "Art Education in the British Commonwealth," typescript, 1909, p. 9 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.9-5).

⁴⁶"A Study in Community Housing Near Montreal," *La Revue Municipale* (December 1927): 33. The emphasis is the author's.

show the roofs—blue-green in colour, and possibly slate—covered in tiles set on an angle in the manner of the ubiquitous Québec tin roof.

Strangely, he admitted that the bellcast roof form so evocative of the rural Québec built landscape was not “thoroughly acclimatized” at all. “Perhaps its grace has been sufficient justification” for its use, he wrote, given that it was a “bad snow form.”⁴⁷ Traquair agreed, noting that “The deep shadow beneath the eaves is of great artistic value, but practically the curving roof tends to hold the snow and to form icicles; it is not a good winter roof. But it was apparently admired, since all but the earliest houses have the bellcast.”⁴⁸ Seemingly, both he and Nobbs were willing to excuse the Québec Folk for adopting an aesthetically-pleasing but impractical form, although in modern building they disapproved sternly of such compromises. As I have noted, Nobbs used this roof on several buildings, albeit in a much-reduced form, thus paying homage to the tradition while avoiding the wintery problems it might cause.

Nobbs himself was only so far willing to concede design to climatic demands. He wrote disparagingly in 1924 of western Europeans who, upon coming to a climate such as Canada’s, ignored the fact that flat or steeply-pitched roofs were the best for dealing with snow—as he was to reiterate often—and instead persisted in “clinging illogically to their prejudice for pitched roofs of slate and tile in climates where sheet metal has every advantage for slopes or only adopt flat roof forms when driven by sheer economic necessity

⁴⁷Nobbs, *Architecture in Canada*, talk read before the RIBA, 21 January 1924 (London: RIBA, 1924).

⁴⁸Traquair, *Cottages of Quebec*, p. 11.

to do so”⁴⁹ Nobbs himself used flat roofs only on some commercial or public buildings, and certainly never, to my knowledge, on domestic projects. Nor was sheet metal a favoured roofing material with him, and his houses have “pitched roofs of slate” and shingle more often than not. His Colby house, built only a couple of years into his Canadian career (see fig. 6.1), has a particularly bad snow roof; the double-gabled form seems designed to trap a large drift of snow in the central valley, and may well have had leakage problems as a result. One near-exception is his own house, which had few snow-catching angles and valleys, but even then he considered adding a pair of dormer windows, together with various other embellishments, to the house after it was built (see fig. 6.11).

Nobbs had a chance at an early stage to express his opinions on the importance of climate to architectural style when the Premier of Saskatchewan, Walter Scott, asked him to serve as chief assessor for the competition to design a legislative building for the new province. As author of the programme and chooser of his co-assessors, Nobbs had a good deal of influence on the resulting design. Part of his directions to the competitors regarding the character of the buildings advised that “climatic and labour conditions and materials available are such as largely to dictate the type of building selected by the Assessors.”⁵⁰ He noted that these climatic conditions included wide extremes of

⁴⁹Nobbs, “English Tradition,” p. 238. See also “Tradition and Progress in Canadian Architecture,” *Studio* 104 (1932): 82, 85.

⁵⁰Nobbs, “Conditions of Competition for the Selection of an Architect for the Proposed Government Buildings at Regina, Saskatchewan,” 1907 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series A.5-3).

temperature, bright northern light, few dull days, little rain and a great deal of wind. It may seem obvious that such factors should be taken into consideration in the design of a building, but Nobbs plainly intended the competing architects to consider them as more than sheerly practical factors. Significantly, he discussed climatic conditions under the subheading “style,” thereby explicitly suggesting that competitors should consider them in that light.

But climate was of course not the only factor Nobbs felt should be taken into consideration in the design of this important public building. As Crossman has noted, it is not known exactly why Scott hit upon Nobbs as his choice for first assessor, but it does point to the latter’s increasing eminence in the field quite shortly after his arrival in Canada.⁵¹ Scott and Nobbs between them selected the seven architectural firms asked to compete for the project: Cass Gilbert from the United States (almost certainly Scott’s choice); Mitchell and Raine from England; Storey and Van Egmond of Regina; Francis Rattenbury, the architect of the new British Columbia legislature; Darling and Pearson from Toronto; and the two firms of Marchand and Haskell and E. and W.S. Maxwell from Montréal. Gilbert wrote several times to Scott, advising him as to the programme and also the composition of the jury panel. Gilbert wrote to Scott that “I do not know Professor Nobbs but I do know Mr. Goodhue slightly and he is known as a man of artistic

⁵¹Crossman, *Architecture in Transition*, p. 143. In agreeing to Scott’s proposals, Nobbs also pointed out that he had recently served as assessor for the Alexandra Hospital and Royal Victoria Nurses Home in Montréal as well as for the new Halifax Cathedral (Nobbs, letter to Walter Scott, 3 November 1906 [CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series A.5-3]). It was almost certainly through this last competition that he had met and become friends with its winner Goodhue, head of the New York office of Cram and Goodhue, which also had an office in Boston.

skill and ability, though not particularly trained in monumental building. While there is distinctly no objection to Mr. Goodhue . . . I believe that in so important and serious a matter as a great public building . . . it be well to also have an expert more familiar with such problems.” He then went on to suggest four possible additions to the panel.⁵² Scott having obviously relayed Gilbert’s concerns to Nobbs, the latter paraphrased them amusingly for Goodhue: “the said Cass complained, I believe, that he does not know who I am and that you are a very artistic person.”⁵³ Goodhue replied with two possible suggestions for a third assessor, of whom one was Frank Miles Day of Philadelphia—also one of Gilbert’s four suggestions and then president of the American Institute of Architects (AIA)—and the other R. Clifton Sturgis of Boston. Day, wrote Goodhue, was Anglo-Celtic in his sympathies. Sturgis was “very distinctly a gentleman and a scholar, and with the same proclivities as the rest of us—in fact, is an awful Anglo-maniac, and wears spats all the time”⁵⁴ Day was asked to serve as third assessor, and thus completed the panel.

Ironically, the disappointed Gilbert probably designed his entry in the Gothic style in a specific response to what he thought was a suggestion in Nobbs’s competition programme. This stated that although the style chosen was left to the discretion of the competing architects, “They are reminded . . . that the Province is politically within the

⁵²Cass Gilbert, letter to Walter Scott, 20 August 1907 (Saskatchewan Archives Board [SAB], microfilm from Walter Scott papers in Saskatoon R.7-1, reel 28).

⁵³Nobbs, letter to Goodhue, 27 September 1907 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series F.14-5).

⁵⁴Goodhue, letter to Nobbs, 18 October 1907 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series F.14-5).

British Empire, and that this fact should be expressed in its Public Buildings.”⁵⁵ Gilbert may well have taken this as a hint that a Gothic building would be well received. Given Canada’s and Britain’s Houses of Parliament, he was certainly justified in this, and Nobbs even suggested frequently in lectures and publications that Gothic had “a peculiar quality of national individuality”⁵⁶ (although Gilbert, never having heard of him, probably had no contact with such statements).⁵⁷ In any case, it certainly seems likely that Gilbert was attempting to distance his design from the American state capitol buildings that had so inspired Scott.

Nobbs had no intention of pointing the competitors towards the Gothic style by this statement. A clue to what he did have in mind may be found in his response to the Alberta government’s request that he provide a critique of the design they were then considering for their own new legislative building. This request occurred while he was in Saskatchewan in connection with the planned Regina building, and Nobbs made the trip from Regina to Edmonton for the purpose, examining the drawings and the proposed site and meeting with the Premier to discuss his views on both. He outlined the substance of

⁵⁵Nobbs, “Conditions of Competition for . . . Regina,” p. 11.

⁵⁶Nobbs, “The Architectural Revivals of the XIX Century in England,” lecture to the OAA, 15 January 1907 and the PQAA Sketching Club, 23 January 1907 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.9-2).

⁵⁷Interestingly, however, Nobbs spoke at the 41st Annual Dinner of the AIA in Chicago in November of 1907, where it seems not unlikely that Gilbert may have heard him. If he was indeed there, and paying attention, he should have been warned not to build in the Gothic style, as Nobbs made a strong statement on that occasion about the unsuitability of Gothic to public buildings, and argued that the main advantage to a Gothic revival was the positive effect it would have on classical architecture.

his remarks to the premier in a letter to the Deputy Minister of Public Works and added, in a footnote, some further enlightening comments. He noted that the premier had blanched at his estimate of what the building as designed would cost, and he offered a suggestion. The design as it stood was, he noted, “an excellently worked out example of the ‘Academic Style’ of work so popular just now in the United States.”⁵⁸ This style, he suggested, was unnecessarily expensive as it offered less usable space relative to halls, stairs, walls and other unusable spaces than other styles did. But a more important drawback to “lay against its stately grandeur” was that it was “thoroughly non British in feeling, the English tradition of classical architecture being far more sincere, freer and bolder and consequently more elastic in treatment.” The design as it stood would not distinguish itself at all as Canadian, being “precisely the class of work to be found in every state in the union and every Republic in South America.” Rather than the Englishness which Nobbs had noted would be ideal for the Saskatchewan building, it quite unsuitably represented “cosmopolitanism and the Latin civilization.” He recommended a switch to the modern Free Classic in favour for English public buildings, and “sometimes called the Anglo Classic or Imperial Style,” which in addition to greater economy offered the “distinctive national character” so important to such a building. As Nobbs makes quite clear in this passage, this national character is once again not specifically Canadian but rather British. In fact, Imperial.

⁵⁸Nobbs, letter to John Stocks, Deputy Minister of Public Works, Alberta, 12 August 1907 (SAB, DPW I-59 2/3). All quotations in this paragraph are drawn from this letter.

Nobbs was to use this style himself on more than one occasion. A competition entry for a new city hall in Winnipeg, designed a few years after the Saskatchewan competition, in 1912-13, has a rusticated lower section with three-storey pilasters separating the windows on the upper levels (fig. 6.15). True to his conviction that notable architectural features should be used to mark important functions within, the four-columned portico stands above the rusticated lower storeys, denoting the council chamber directly behind it on the third floor. The colonnaded drum and dome above emphasizes the building's function even more clearly.

Nobbs's statement regarding the Imperial nature of Saskatchewan inspired his friend Goodhue, who wrote that "your conditions for the Regina competition seem to me 'bully', and the thing that I liked best about them was that they seemed to me to call for a building that should reflect ethnically the people for whose use it is to be built."⁵⁹ The idea that such a building as Nobbs proposed would reflect the ethnicity of Saskatchewan is quite false. Although those of British origin did make up the largest single group of the province's inhabitants, Goodhue's statement completely ignores the vast number of immigrants from other countries then populating the province, and outnumbering the British.⁶⁰ But Nobbs was certainly not alone in his view. Moyles and Owrarn have

⁵⁹Goodhue, letter to Nobbs, 18 October 1907 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series F-14.5).

⁶⁰In 1901 the population of Saskatchewan was 43.9% of British origin, 2.9% French, and 53.2% "other." With the exception of Québec, Saskatchewan had the lowest percentage in the country of people of British origin ("Percentage composition of the Population by Ethnic Origins for Province of Residence, Canada, 1901 and 1971," in *The Canadian Ethnic Mosaic: A Quest for Identity*, ed. Leo Driedger [Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1978], p. 97, table 9).

observed that a vast body of propagandistic literature—produced often, but not always, under the auspices of the Canadian government—depicted the Canadian West as peopled almost exclusively by settlers of British origin. The native population and immigrants from the continent, and particularly Eastern Europe—the immigrating majority by then—were mentioned barely if at all.⁰¹ In an attempt to attract the English to Canada, they presented the West as a little piece of the British Empire, the only difference being that in Canada, large parcels of land were handed out free to those who asked. And at the same time, this was a period of strong anti-foreign (non-British) sentiment. At that very moment, Basil Stewart was writing *The Land of the Maple Leaf*, in which he decried the admission to Canada of “Russians, Poles, Galicians, Hungarians, Doukhobors, Memnonites [sic], Chinese (In British Columbia) and other ‘dagos’”—the very groups whose names may today be found on land claim maps of Saskatchewan.⁰² Nobbs cannot have been ignorant of the increasing presence of this non-British population. Rather, his programme calls quite intentionally for a building that would serve to reassert the dominance of his own Anglo-Canadian culture, which had become a minority in Saskatchewan, and to downplay any possible political or institutional significance of the peoples who outnumbered it.

⁰¹R.G. Moyles and Doug Owsram, “A Farm of One’s Own: The British Emigrant’s View of Western Canada,” in *Imperial Dreams and Colonial Realities: British Views of Canada, 1880-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988).

⁰²Basil Stewart, *The Land of the Maple Leaf* (London: Routledge, 1908), pp. 151-3. Quoted in Moyles and Owsram, *Imperial Dreams*, p. 131.

Goodhue's enthusiastic endorsement also makes a key point about the hierarchy of buildings and of ethnicities. This was a grand public space, a seat of government, and high in the hierarchy of building types. Such an important building demanded, in Nobbs's opinion, an imperial style. Ordinary people would rarely darken its doors, and certainly not daily. That being said, Goodhue's statement that it would "reflect ethnically the people for whose use it is to be built" was in its way probably quite valid, as those who actually used the building first-hand must have been of almost exclusively men of British origin.

As I have noted, Nobbs was at this stage an imperialist who would have seen a style that represented Imperial values as representing Canada equally. In his 1907 address to the AIA in Chicago (at which time he had been in Canada about four years) he admonished his audience thus:

As a Canadian, there is a matter upon which I would like to say a word. . . . We would appreciate your intrusions, more, gentlemen, if in addition to their bigness of idea and masterly technique, your buildings on the other side of the border showed a little more ethnographic sympathy. We are still British. I think we will always be British. We speak a sort of English, and some of us try to build a sort of English too. And I hope you will help us. . . .⁶³

His use of the pronoun "we" is revealingly exclusive. As Canadians, even before multiculturalism became the official cultural policy of the state, "we" were not invariably British and "we" did not necessarily "speak a sort of English." But those who held the

⁶³Nobbs, "Address to the AIA," manuscript dated 1906?, p. 3 (actually 1907; CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.10-1).

reins of power and influence were and did. Men like Nobbs, who had education and comfortable wealth, were British (in origin or by birth) in the vast majority, and it was clearly for and to this group that Nobbs spoke, although he believed that he spoke for a nation.

Nobbs's work with the Saskatchewan and Alberta legislatures took place only a few years after his arrival in Canada. He was later to rethink his position on the value of a style of architecture that would represent the empire. Nearly two decades later he wrote,

the ideal of a British Imperial Architecture as a ubiquitous outward symbol and monument of our political system and cultural heritage has a certain attraction which the writer readily confesses to have experienced, and in some measure to have acted on at a time when his appreciation of that political system and all it implies of elasticity and adaptability was less acute than it is now—a time when his sense of racial cultural heritage was, perhaps, more imminent.^{o4}

At this point, Nobbs wrote that in his opinion, “far more cultural unity (outside the realm of political ideals) exists as between Canada and the United States than between Canada and England. It is probably of far greater significance to us who reside in Canada, that the country is situate[d] on the North American continent, than that it is within the hegemony of the British Empire.”^{o5} In fact, he went on, the strong British traditions in Canadian architecture had for the most part come north across the border rather than west from the Mother Country itself.

^{o4}Nobbs, “English Tradition,” p. 236.

^{o5}Nobbs, “English Tradition,” p. 238.

Nobbs clearly still felt strongly about the importance of developing a Canadian tradition, but like most Imperialists of the early twentieth century he had changed his view of the position of Canada in the world. No longer was it a nation within a strong empire, looking exclusively to Britain. Now Canada stood on its own and related as much to its geographic neighbour. But he was dubious about some features of the architectural practice of this “gaudily barbaric nation,” and a criticism of it in 1930 still strongly reflects both his British bias and his arts and crafts leanings. He wrote,

The common vices of the vernacular architecture of the United States are artificiality, or want of realism, in the matter of spiritual content, and a gross insincerity with respect to materials. . . . Sloppy sentiment, pretence, make-believe, and that lack of the grammatical instinct for construction which characterizes so much of the written and spoken thought of the United States, is abundantly evident in the builded thought also. . . . In a word, [American architecture embodies] all the insincerities which are anathema to the European architectural mind.⁶⁶

Clearly, although he admitted in the same article that the majority of the American influence on Canada had been to the good, Nobbs continued to regard Canada as fundamentally British in its traditions. Traquair too thought that Canada lay “culturally between the United States and England,” although it was over-simplistic to argue that it was a blend of the two.⁶⁷ But although Canada had developed into its own nation by this time, it was the British tradition that underlay it above all else. While he saw certain groups from northern and western Europe as being “substantially the same breed and

⁶⁶Nobbs, “Present Tendencies Affecting Architecture in Canada. Part III. Adverse Influences,” *JRAIC* (November 1930): 388.

⁶⁷Traquair, “Canadian Type,” p. 821.

culture as the English," Traquair, like Nobbs, overlooked the contributions of other ethnic groups, "alien" to the "tradition of American civilization in the North [which was] English."⁸

Nobbs's conviction that the future for Canadian architecture lay in historic Québec was not very long-lasting, and, as I have shown, never extended very far in practice. Traquair, whose interest lay largely in the study of the Québec architectural tradition, continued to maintain that it had important potential for modern Canadian building. Even in 1932 he wrote, "The old French-Canadian craftsman has shown us upon what lines a healthy and a really national architecture can be developed and we shall be wise if we pay attention to what he has left us,"⁹ although elsewhere he admitted that it might be best applied to domestic and church work. Since Traquair's emphasis was not on architectural practice, he was never really forced to confront his theory in brick and stone. It was Nobbs whose theorizing was put to the test, and it is therefore not surprising that his thoughts on the matter remained less constant.

Nobbs did point out on occasion that the exigencies of climate seemed likely to lead to regional architectures rather than a national style. And in 1924, he wrote, "Strenuous efforts are made from time to time in magazine articles, novels, histories and caricatures to elaborate a Canadian type—so far without success, for the all-sufficient

⁸Traquair, "The Caste System in North America," *Atlantic Monthly* 131 (March 1923): 420, 419.

⁹Traquair, "The Old Architecture of French Canada," in *Queen's Quarterly* (Autumn 1931): 608 (reprinted Montréal: MUP No. 34, 1932).

reason that there are many types, all abundantly characteristic, and much water will pass down the Great Lakes before there is assimilation."⁷⁰ All of these types might suggest a need for many architectures. But in truth, it seems more accurate to say that he continued his quest for a national style in the public sphere, while allowing for the existence of many Canadas in the domestic realm. Even so, it is hard to picture what he himself might have done with houses across the country as the vast majority of his commissions were in Québec and, indeed, in Montréal and the vicinity. Fundamentally, his vision of the country was British, and so was the origin of the buildings he designed for it. In common with many other Canadians of their class, Nobbs and Traquair were imperialists and nationalists in the early part of the century, and remained always convinced of the Britishness of Canada even when the imperialist impulse had largely faded after World War I. Also in common with the powerful majority in early-twentieth-century Canada, they had little but scorn for the other ethnic groups who made up by that time a substantial body of the population. Both were attracted to Québec vernacular architecture as a Folk tradition that was fundamentally Canadian and might act as an antidote to the directionless quality from which they felt architecture was suffering in the early part of the century. But both also believed that, for public buildings, the most suitable style would speak to Canada's British origins and traditions. Nobbs's 1919 winning design for a War Memorial Museum for Regina, for which Traquair was one of the two competition assessors, is a fine illustration of this driving force in both of them

⁷⁰Nobbs, *Architecture in Canada*.

(fig. 6.16).⁷¹ Inside, a scroll of honour would list the names of the men and women of Saskatchewan who had died in the war effort, and many of those names would be those of the Métis, Ukrainians, Bulgarians, Poles, Russians, and all the other “alien” groups who made up an important part of Saskatchewan’s population. But the museum (never realized) would, as Goodhue had remarked on Nobbs’s programme for the legislative building whose grounds it was to share, “reflect ethnically the people for whose use it [was] to be built”; that is, it would be fundamentally British in inspiration like the country Nobbs and Traquair believed they inhabited and intended to preserve.

⁷¹“War Memorial Museum, Regina, Saskatchewan,” *Construction* (September 1919): 269.

Conclusion “TRADITION, DULY SIFTED”

WRITING IN 1937, Nobbs asserted that “Tradition, duly sifted, is as potent a force in art to-day as ever it was. There can be no progress without it. It would require a cataclysm, that reduced six continents to a no man’s land, to make a really new beginning possible. One must distinguish between modernistic absurdity and modern genius in design—the one denies the past, the other realizes the present as the step between the past and future.”¹ The sifting of tradition was a major preoccupation for both Nobbs and Traquair throughout their personal and professional lives; from the development of a modern architecture to the design of heraldic devices for the institutions of their day, they were always concerned with the uses of history for present purposes.²

Many seeming contradictions arise among the facets of Nobbs’s and Traquair’s lives. They had comfortable jobs as academics in a large city university, but they spent much of their free time up to their knees in icy salmon streams, enduring winter’s icy blasts in the pursuit of moose, or pounding opponents in the boxing or fencing ring.³

¹Nobbs, *Design: a Treatise on the Discovery of Form* (London: Oxford, 1937), p. 404.

²Both Nobbs and Traquair wrote numerous letters and opinion pieces about questions of heraldry (especially the Canadian flag), and also designed a number of examples, such as Traquair’s design for the McGill University flag and Nobbs’s for the coat of arms, Nobbs’s design for a war memorial for Westmount, Québec, and many other examples by both men. Traquair also employed himself extensively in the 1930s in designing flags for boy scout troops, most of them in and around Montréal, and even wrote a short book on designing scout flags, with information on the rules of heraldry. (*The Design of Scout Flags* [Ottawa: Dominion Headquarters, Boy Scouts Association, 1937].)

³On these strenuous activities, see Nobbs, “Ramsay Traquair, Hon. M.A. (McGill) F.R.I.B.A.: On his Retirement from the Macdonald Chair in Architecture at McGill University,” *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (JRAIC)* 16 (June 1939): 147-48, and also his
(continued...)

Canadian nationalism; British imperialism. A belief in British (or “Anglo-Saxon”) superiority in the world; a fascination with the architecture and culture of Québec. Their ability to design buildings drawing on a host of traditions; their deploration of the seemingly empty eclecticism of the nineteenth century. Their insistence that Canadian architects must develop a new and wholly modern architecture, not reliant on slavish copying of past styles; their fundamental conviction that it was in the buildings of the past that real, genuine architecture lay, with modernism nothing but an empty passing fad.

The notion of antimodernism sheds light on all of these seeming contradictions. Like modern society, architecture in Nobbs and Traquair's time seemed to lack the authenticity and strength of character that they believed had been inherent in the architecture and culture of earlier ages. In their professional lives both sought to regain this moral element in architecture, and it is here that their personal lives and professional concerns came together most strongly. Just as they sought authentic, pure experience through their manly activities, their quest continued into their relationship with architecture. The architecture of their own time seemed to them drained of the same purity and genuineness that modern society had lost. And as with modern society, these

³(...continued)

unpublished “Memoirs” and his extensive correspondence with Bertram Goodhue, with whom Nobbs planned many hunting expeditions and carried out a few. (Canadian Architecture Collection, Blackader-Lauterman Library, McGill University [CAC], Nobbs Collection, Series F.14-5). Traquair also sought a liberation of what he called the “Dramatic Instinct rooted in human nature” through his membership in the Freemasons, an institution which, together with the Roman Catholic Church, was in his mind the only one in North America to “retain any trace of mysticism.” It was no co-incidence that both were men's organizations. (Traquair, “Drama and Life,” *Canadian Bookman* (February 1922): 7; “Women and Civilization,” *The Atlantic Monthly* 132 (September 1923): 294.)

virtues had been sacrificed on the altars of industrialism and progress. To regain these qualities they looked to tradition, duly sifted, both in life and in art. Traquair sought purity in architecture primarily through his concentration on recording Québec folk architecture and material culture, and Nobbs principally through his preoccupation with the search—grounded in the right traditions—for a national style for Canadian architecture. Their approaches merged at myriad points, and each identified a French-Canadian tradition as a starting point for a new Canadian architecture.

Nobbs's and Traquair's understanding of the vernacular architecture of Québec as the pure, unfettered product of a simple folk community grew out of many of their concerns, concerns typical of the British Anglo-Canadian elite of the first half of this century. They saw a French-Canadian culture redolent with the simple virtues of religious fervour, closeness to the land, a "natural" taste for design, and a deep connection to its past, in contrast with the seemingly rootless society in which they found themselves. But as I have discussed, inherent in their approach was a fundamental conviction that rural Québécois were a backward and primitive people barely changed in hundreds of years.

Perhaps surprisingly, this picture of the rural Québécois and their architecture was largely accepted by many in the province's Francophone community; Nobbs's and Traquair's view of the Québec vernacular as the unsullied product of a genuine Folk provided nourishment for the burgeoning Québec nationalist movement. In 1948, Traquair received an honorary doctorate from the Université de Montréal in recognition of the great service he had done Québec in what was described as his "intelligente et

sympathique” work on the study of the old buildings and silver of the province.⁴ Almost a decade and half earlier, Olivier Maurault, who as rector of the university was to confer the degree upon Traquair, had written an article on “La leçon de M. Traquair” in the Québec nationalist publication *L’Action Nationale*.⁵ He wrote in response to a lecture on master sculptors of French Canada that Traquair had given as part of the annual conference of the Association canadienne-française pour l’avancement des sciences (ACFAS) at the university. Maurault noted that, notwithstanding the work of others in the field of Québec historical architecture and design, “the interest that this Scottish, non-Catholic architect takes in our ancient monuments is an inspiration to us all; and the method that he follows in his studies is a magnificent example.”⁶

Traquair’s lecture stirred up a flurry of enthusiasm for his work and for Québec wood carving, with several essays voicing sentiments similar to Maurault’s.⁷ The same month, a writer in *Le Terroir*, the journal of the Société des arts, sciences et lettres de

⁴Olivier Maurault, text used to confer degree upon Traquair (CAC, Traquair Collection, Series L).

⁵Louis Deligny [Olivier Maurault], “La leçon de M. Traquair,” *L’Action Nationale* III, 3 (March 1934): 158-60.

⁶“l’intérêt que porte à nos vieux monuments un architecte écossais et non catholique est un stimulant pour nous tous; et la méthode qu’il suit dans ses études est un magnifique exemple.” (Deligny [Maurault], “M. Traquair,” p. 158.)

⁷See Olivar Asselin, “A propos d’une conférence,” *Le Canada: Journal du matin* 31, 247 (27 January 1934): 2 and Emile Vaillancourt, “M. R. Traquair nous révèle un patrimoine artistique oublié,” *Le Canada* 31, 250 (31 January 1934): 6, 12.

Québec, expressed himself even more strongly on the value of Traquair's contribution.⁸

"We talk ceaselessly about our traditions. We would like to preserve them whole and intact," he began. And yet, he continued, any walk in the countryside around Montréal would show that in the important area of building and architecture, "we are iconoclasts and it is strangers who must reveal to us what we are allowing ourselves to lose; it is strangers who show us the true, inestimable richness of the things that we are demolishing like vandals."⁹ He admonished his readers that they should be aware of the work that people such as Traquair were doing to "open their eyes," and hoped that it would not be long before more such events were held that might encourage "among our elite an organization that would hope to collaborate with those artists and those men of taste who wish our architecture to be inspired by the past."¹⁰ In this remarkable statement, Anger, even more than Maurault, credited Traquair with revealing to Québec the value of its own culture.

Indeed, less than a decade later Traquair, in collaboration with Olivier Maurault and A. Gordon Neilson, published a lengthy article in which they called for the preservation of old buildings, and also of wood sculpture, carved wood panelling,

⁸Paul Anger, "Architecture et . . . bon goût," *Le Terroir* XV, 10-11 (March-April 1934): 12. This article appears to have been reprinted from the Montréal newspaper *Le Devoir*.

⁹"Nous parlons sans cesse de nos traditions. Nous voulons les conserver entières, intactes . . ." But ". . . nous sommes des iconoclastes et ce sont des étrangers qui viennent nous révéler ce que nous laissons perdre; ce sont des étrangers qui nous indiquent la richesse réelle, inestimable, des choses que nous démolissons en vaudales."

¹⁰". . . dans nôtre élite, une organisation qui souhaitera collaborer avec les quelques artistes et les quelques hommes de goût qui veulent que nôtre architecture s'inspire du passé."

furniture, ironwork, silver, and embroidery, with the latter needing to be discovered and brought back to Québec from wherever it had been taken.¹¹ From generation to generation, they lamented, these treasures were inexorably disappearing, whether from sheer neglect or by more active routes such as the spiriting away of antiques by American collectors. This cultural legacy, they argued, equalled in quality, if it did not excel, the best in North America.¹²

France Vanlaetham has provided an important interpretation of Nobbs's and Traquair's work in light of the development of Québec nationalism in the twentieth century.¹³ She argues that Nobbs's and Traquair's enthusiasm for the vernacular, which had given rise to Nobbs's designs in a Québécois idiom and spawned a Québec regionalist movement among a number of his and Traquair's Anglophone ex-students, and others, in the 1920s and 30s, had by the 1940s been taken up by the cause of Québec nationalism.¹⁴ Vanlaetham notes that Claude Bergeron, in his important book *Architectures du XX^e siècle au Québec*, argues that the growing interest in the historic architecture of Québec

¹¹"La Conservation des Monuments Historiques dans la Province de Québec," *Revue Trimestrielle Canadienne* (mars 1941): 1-23.

¹²Traquair et al, "La Conservations des Monuments," p. 1.

¹³France Vanlaethem, "Modernité et régionalisme dans l'architecture au Québec: Du nationalisme canadien de Percy E. Nobbs au nationalisme canadien-français des années 1940," in *Architecture, forme urbaine et identité collective*, ed. Luc Noppen (Sillery, Québec: Septentrion, 1995), pp. 157-77.

¹⁴For a discussion of the contribution of Nobbs's and Traquair's work to the development of Québec architectural regionalism, see Vanlaethem, "Beautification versus Modernization," in *Montreal Metropolis, 1880-1930*, ed. Isabelle Gournay and France Vanlaethem (Montréal/Toronto: Canadian Centre for Architecture/Stoddart Publishing, 1998), p. 148.

paralleled increasing nationalist sentiment in the province.¹⁵ She, however, questions whether it is legitimate to suggest that the Francophone nationalist community should have adopted an enthusiasm—even for French Québec culture—that had begun in the previous century and been nurtured since in the Anglophone halls of McGill University.¹⁶ She concludes that Québec’s traditional architecture was valued at first as representing good architectural principles, but later came to be taken as “the proof and even the guarantee, as much as the language, of French-Canadian cultural identity, and the symbol of its historic legitimacy,” suggesting that this turn in interpretation explains the shift in use and user.¹⁷ But as I have demonstrated, Québec vernacular architecture represented much more for Nobbs and Traquair, too, than an example of the application of “good architectural principles”; very little alteration in interpretation would have been needed to render the work of these Anglophone scholars and architects relevant to Québec nationalists.

Vanlaethem also suggests that Traquair’s motivation for studying the old architecture of Québec is not easy to understand. Once again, viewing his actions in the light of the antimodernist impulse makes it easy to see why he found this vernacular legacy

¹⁵Claude Bergeron, *Architectures du XX^e siècle au Québec* (Québec/Montréal: Musée de la Civilisation/Éditions du Méridien, 1989).

¹⁶Vanlaethem, “Modernité et régionalisme,” pp. 160-61.

¹⁷“... la maison traditionnelle n’est plus l’illustration des bons principes architecturaux, mais la preuve et même le garant, au même titre que la langue, de l’identité culturelle canadienne-française ainsi que la symbole de sa légitimité historique” (“Modernité et régionalisme,” p. 174.)

so compelling, and also why Québec nationalists should have been attracted to his work. Indeed, as I shall discuss, Traquair was only one of many Anglophones to take a strong interest in Québec's traditional culture.

I proposed in Chapter Three that Nobbs and Traquair saw Canada broadly as having been peopled in three principal waves, with representatives of all three still living in their own time. First on the land had been the indigenous population, but for both Nobbs and Traquair, Native culture had no relevance to their own society: "the American Indian . . . has never been a part of the European culture of North America," wrote Traquair.¹⁸ Indigenous society signified Nature to Nobbs and Traquair, and it had been superseded, when the first Europeans came, by Culture. The first representatives of Culture were the French settlers who were the earliest permanent European residents of what is now Canada. As I have discussed at length, Nobbs and Traquair believed that a part of Québec's rural population—the descendants of the *habitants*—had remained outside of society as it developed all around them. As a result, they were left behind by both the urban Québec population—Anglophone and Francophone—and the British immigrants—urban or rural—who succeeded them and became the dominant culture in Canada. Considering the pattern of Canada's population using this developmental model explains how a rural Québec population could have been conceptualized as a revitalizing

¹⁸Traquair, "The Caste System in North America," *Atlantic Monthly* 131 (March 1923): 418.

folk culture for both Nobbs and Traquair's Anglo-Canada and an urban Québec nationalist movement.

Traquair's antimodernist approach to the study of historic Québec architecture admirably fit the agenda of such a Québec nationalist group as *L'Action Française*. This organization, headed by cleric and educator abbé Lionel Groulx, emphasized the importance of maintaining the province's rural agricultural heritage. The Canadian census showed Québec's rural population decreasing even faster than that in the rest of the country at this time. The 1921 census, reported the periodical *L'Action Française*, was extremely disappointing, and the magazine correctly predicted worse for 1931.¹⁹ Groulx and his compatriots saw cities as nests of immorality where the people, weakened by the passing of their traditional memories, lost touch with their past and became soulless beings. Understanding their own history was, in Groulx's opinion, a top priority if the Québec people were to save themselves from immolation by the Anglophone majority. As Mann Trofimenkoff writes, "[h]e insisted that there could be no true patriotism without a knowledge of history; to be proud of one's race, to love it to the point of devotion, one must know it, and that meant, according to Groulx, to know its history."²⁰ It was just this, according to Anger, Maurault and the others, that Traquair was helping them to do.

¹⁹The 1921 census showed both Québec's population and Canada's Francophone population as a whole dropping. In Québec, the rural population was losing ground to the urban at 44% rural and 56% urban, in contrast to the rest of Canada which showed a rural population a fraction over 50%. By 1931, Quebec's rural population had sunk to only 37%. (Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, *Action Française: French Canadian nationalism in the twenties* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975], p. 74.)

²⁰Mann Trofimenkoff, *Action Française*, p. 43.

And he did more than that. In “revealing” the riches of Québec’s art and architecture, Traquair—following Nobbs’s early observations—also helped to define it. It was not only that the two architects chose to study and appreciate the value of the province’s vernacular that made their work so popular with Québec nationalists in the twenties and thirties, but also how they looked at it. Anthropologist Richard Handler has examined the changing ways that rural Québec culture has been perceived and used. In a scenario that came to be accepted by later Québec nationalists, historians and social scientists after World War Two saw New France as a trading society, rather than a more insular agrarian one, with the Conquest being the catalyst for a new rurality that came to characterize French Québec, and persisted into the twentieth century. These scholars argued that by eliminating the French bourgeoisie and wresting political and economic control from the French, the Conquest had forced those remaining to move to remote rural areas and carry on their lives in a newly-established peasant society. Thus isolated, they remained distinct from the conquering society and Québec was able to survive as a nation.²¹ Before World War Two, what Handler and others call clerical-conservative Québec nationalists, such as L’Action Française, saw pre-Conquest New France as the “golden age,” with the people of Québec an innately rural race that would survive only if it managed to resist the change threatened by the encroaching modern world.²² Nobbs’s and Traquair’s interpretation of the authenticity and purity of Québec architecture, with

²¹Richard Handler, *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Québec* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), p. 66.

²²Handler, *Nationalism*, p. 66.

traditions—many still mediaeval—that had been brought directly from Renaissance France and modified for the new country, fit perfectly with the way that conservative nationalist groups such as L'Action Française saw the people of Québec before industrialization and urbanization arrived as threats. Indeed, Traquair saw these premodern virtues essentially intact in the rural Québec even of his own time.

While L'Action Française lamented the loss of the traditional rural way of life and looked to its restoration as a way to maintain and rebuild what it saw as Québec's true identity in the twentieth century, Traquair, for the most part, stubbornly refused to see that modernity was making its mark even in rural areas. He grossly misinterpreted the removal of farmers from the traditional settlement areas into less hospitable territories away from the river valleys and in the north, choosing to see this as yet more evidence of the qualities of a "virile and flourishing race" rather than as the sign of economic necessity that it was.²³ "There seems to be something in the wild life of the woods which appeals particularly to the French temperament," he wrote. "The English settler prefers more open ground; he is perhaps more successful economically. But, far out in the farthest settlements, far from the railroad, in the depths of the woods, you will find a French habitant breaking new ground and fighting with nature face to face."²⁴ In fact, Québec farmers had traditionally divided their land amongst their large families, but as time wore on the lots became too narrow, the soil was exhausted, and this was no longer possible.

²³Traquair, "The Caste System of North America," *Atlantic Monthly* (March 1923): 422.

²⁴Traquair, "The Canadian Type," *Atlantic Monthly* 131 (June 1923): 823.

Younger sons now had to move away, either to urban or industrial areas, or to start new farms in areas that were not yet settled, which did not provide the fertile land of the Saint Lawrence valley. What Traquair read as a love of wilderness and a zest for the fight for survival was unromantic necessity. As long as they could, Québécois families had remained in the much more hospitable and already-cultivated land that their ancestors had first farmed.

A principal cause of depopulation from the traditional farming areas Traquair tried to ignore entirely. Increasing industrialization in the province was causing a rural exodus to the cities. People even went in large numbers to the factory towns of New England. This migration is commemorated in Louis Hémon's novel *Maria Chapdelaine*, in which, after the death in the winter forests of François Paradis, the man she loves, the eponymous heroine must decide between accepting a hard life and the hand of a local man, the stolid Eutrope Gagnon, and leaving her home as the wife of the dashing Lorenzo Surprenant, who has sought his fortune in the United States.²⁵ (In love with neither man, Maria chooses in the final pages of the novel to marry Québec, in the person of Gagnon.) But while *L'Action Française* saw industrialism as both a modernizing and an Americanizing trend, and thus as an assault on Québec identity on two fronts, Traquair essentially refused to recognize it as a force on the rural communities he admired.²⁶

²⁵Louis Hémon, *Maria Chapdelaine*, trans. W.H. Blake (Toronto: Macmillan, 1938). The novel appeared first in French in serial form in 1914, and was published in Montréal in 1916 by J.-A. Lefebvre. Blake's English translation was first published by Macmillan in 1921.

²⁶Mann Trofimenkoff, *L'Action Française*, p. 61.

Québec nationalists of the period argued that traditional culture must be saved before it disappeared entirely, as it represented Québec before its corruption by Anglo society (and all the industrialization, commercialization and modernization that came with it) at the time of the Conquest. Nobbs and Traquair, in identifying and celebrating the architecture of the early periods (specifically, as I have demonstrated, before there was excessive “alien” influence on the folk culture), helped provide one focus of cultural strength for Québec. Luc Noppen and Lucie K. Morisset have identified historicism as a recurring theme with ideological underpinnings in the architecture of the province of Québec since the late-nineteenth century.²⁷ As they demonstrate, the process of looking to the past for the architecture of the present can lead to examples of buildings which, although they may be formally and aesthetically similar, serve very different political functions. They point to Nobbs's and Traquair's use of vernacular Québec architecture as a basis for a modern Canadian architecture, in contrast to later applications of the style by the Québec government and intellectuals as a nation-building tool for the province. Nobbs's and Traquair's impetus was not Québec nationalism, but rather Canadian nationalism, and the salvation of a genuine folk culture that might prove capable of revitalizing architecture and culture for the nation as well as the province. As the articles by people such as Maurault and Anger suggest, their work could fit either bill.

²⁷Luc Noppen and Lucie K. Morisset, “À la recherche d'identités: Usages et propos du recyclage du passé dans l'architecture au Québec,” in *Architecture, forme urbaine et identité collective*, pp. 103-133.

In light of more recent debates about the place of Québec in the Canadian federation, it now seems ironic that research undertaken by Nobbs and Traquair—such as staunch imperialists, Anglophiles, and Canadian nationalists—should have been found to be useful to conservative Québec nationalists in their own identity-building programmes. But when the first half of the twentieth century is viewed through its own antimodern lens, the seeming contradiction is explained. While Nobbs and Traquair saw the vernacular architecture of Québec as a product of a Canadian Folk, for these nationalists it was, not surprisingly, valued for its inherently Québécois quality. But both perceived it in a similar way—as the authentic product of a pure folk culture that represented all that was best but suppressed in their own societies. Both were fundamentally antimodernist projects, which attempted to inject attributes of this uncorrupted folk culture into a sadly weakened modern society, and in so doing to recapture some of the strength and virtue of the old. As Mann Trofimenkoff has observed, “all those characteristics so highly esteemed by the Action Française were in large measure dependent upon a rural way of life: large, religious, independent, healthy, hard-working, frugal, temperate, jovial, and patriotic families only thrived close to the soil. An independent, secure, and distinctive French Canadian society had its roots in the countryside.”²⁸

This last point suggests the importance of Nobbs’s and Traquair’s work in helping to buttress a broad project—encompassing politicians, bureaucrats, and business and cultural elites on both the national and the provincial levels—to popularize and

²⁸Mann Trofimenkoff, *L’Action Française*, p. 69.

institutionalize Québec folk culture for various political, commercial, and cultural ends in the 1920s and 30s.²⁹ Historian Andrew Nurse observes that during this period “one social group, supported by the federal state, selected cultural phenomena which it found particularly meaningful and proclaimed them to be expressive of the authentic essence of the premodern ‘other’ and hence of symbolic significance to the Canadian ‘nation’.”³⁰ But on a provincial level, the same cultural phenomena were being rallied to help provide a distinct identity for Québec. These decades saw increasing attempts by the Québec government and cultural elite to establish folklore as an essential foundation for a modern Québec culture, by supporting research, popularizing it, and encouraging what experts in the field identified as traditional practice.

The province of Québec made its first official efforts to define and preserve a distinct national culture in this same period, beginning with the passing of the Historic or Artistic Monuments Act of 1922.³¹ This act provided for the official designation of objects or monuments considered to be important to Québec’s interest, and therefore needing to be preserved. The law required that once a building or other immovable had

²⁹See Lynda Jessup, “Canadian Artists, Railways, the State and ‘The Business of Becoming a Nation’” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1992), Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), pp. 56-58 and 157-59, and Andrew Nurse, “Tradition and Modernity: The Cultural Work of Marius Barbeau” (Ph.D. dissertation, Queen’s University, 1997).

³⁰Nurse, “Tradition and Modernity,” p. 38.

³¹On the provincial government’s cultural property legislation of 1922 and 1935, see Richard Handler, *Nationalism*, pp. 142-43.

been classified, it could not be removed or altered in any way without the permission of the newly-formed Historic Monuments Commission. In the next decade, a law was devised and enacted specifically to regulate development of the Île d'Orléans, which had become a popular tourist destination. But at the same time that this 1935 Act restricted such obtrusive signs of modernity as excessive numbers of gas stations, restaurants, and billboards, it also allowed for the improvement of roads and the installation of historic markers, these last obviously destined to improve tourism in the district as well as to educate its inhabitants about their cultural inheritance.

These laws mark Québec's first legislated attempts to define and preserve the province's *patrimoine*—here, its material culture—as an essential part of having and maintaining a distinct culture.³² As Handler observes, *patrimoine* has been variously defined to include anything from old buildings, tools and devotional objects to the language, dances and festivals, the land itself, and even clerical conservative historian Lionel Groulx. “To speak of the *patrimoine*,” writes Handler, “is to envision national culture as property, and the nation as a property-owning ‘collective individual.’”³³ That is to say, it is the possession of a heritage, and of the culture that the *patrimoine* represents, that defines Québec as a distinct cultural entity, and thus provides “proof of national existence.”³⁴ But the 1935 legislation also illustrates the great overlap that occurred in

³²Handler, *Nationalism*, pp. 140-42.

³³Handler, *Nationalism*, p. 141.

³⁴Handler, *Nationalism*, p. 142.

the 1920s and 30s between the definition and preservation of culture for the sake of nation-building, and the development of tourism and economic growth that conveniently came along with it. Both the 1922 and the 1935 Acts also demonstrate how strong a parallel existed between the nation-building efforts of Anglo-Canadians and French Québécois, and, on a governmental level, between the federal and provincial governments. As a promoter, in speech, writing, and built form, of the value of Québec vernacular architecture to national culture, Nobbs joined in this discourse. Traquair was a more active participant in this cultural project, and like many others—both Anglophone and Francophone—his work functioned across the borders of tourism and nationalism on both a federal and a provincial level.

Amongst the many cultural producers participating in this project, Traquair's collaborator C. Marius Barbeau was a central figure. Nurse argues that Barbeau's position as a "professional folklore collector" lent scholarly credibility to the songs, stories, practices, and handicrafts then being promoted as "authentic" by various groups and individuals.³⁵ But Barbeau himself later commented that he had asked Traquair and Group of Seven members A.Y. Jackson and Arthur Lismer to accompany him to the Île d'Orléans in the summer of 1925 for their artistic judgement on the worth of the folk art and architecture he found there, which he did not, at that point, feel himself capable of appraising. He commented in 1959 that "[i]t was in associating myself with them that I

³⁵Nurse, "Tradition and Modernity," p. 331.

realized that there was truly a domain of important study there to be cultivated.”³⁶ It is clear that Traquair’s evaluation of the buildings, sculpture and other artifacts he saw on the island helped bolster Barbeau’s assessment of this material culture as evidence of an authentic and valuable folk culture in Québec.³⁷

Barbeau himself began as an anthropologist, and his earlier publications are rather scientific than popular, and aimed at a specialist scholarly audience. As he became interested in the idea of a traditional folk society in Québec, however, he was increasingly aware of the broader potential for his work, and he sought a wider audience. In the 1920s and 30s he began working with a number of individuals and institutions, largely based in English Canada, on the popularization of Québec folklore through various means. In the late 1920s, in co-operation with J. Murray Gibbon, publicity agent for the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), he organized two Canadian Folk Song and Handicraft Festivals, which were held at the CPR’s Château Frontenac in Québec City, as well as several other

³⁶From the National Film Board production *Marius Barbeau et le folklore* (1959). Quoted in Lawrence Nowry, *Marius Barbeau: Man of Mana* (Toronto: NC Press, 1995), p. 275.

³⁷Traquair performed a similar service for F. Cleveland Morgan, an important figure in the founding and development of the Montréal Museum of Fine Art, and particularly its collection of decorative arts. In the early 1930s, Morgan wrote that he was seeking Traquair’s advice before making a purchase for the museum of a silver cross. (Norma Morgan, “F. Cleveland Morgan and the Decorative Arts Collection in the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts [master’s thesis, Concordia University, 1985], p. 130.) Traquair also wrote to Barbeau in 1925 that he had “talked . . . over with Mr. Morgan” the possibility of buying some of Louis Jobin’s work for the Museum, but that they had decided against it. (Traquair, letter to Barbeau, 26 October 1925 [Canadian Museum of Civilization, Information Management Systems, Marius Barbeau correspondence, B 244.f8, “Traquair, Ramsay” (hereafter known as CMC, IMS, Barbeau, B244.f8, “Traquair”)].)

art exhibitions and concerts.³⁸ He later explained that the purpose of such activities was to assist in the development of a national culture that would be truly Canadian because it grew from traditions that were rooted in the country.³⁹ Furthering this goal, he also helped various institutions build collections of Québec material culture, among them the Historic Sites and Monuments Board, the McCord Historical Museum, the Royal Ontario Museum, the University of Toronto, the Art Gallery of Toronto (now Ontario) and the National Gallery of Canada. Beginning in 1925, he began suggesting names of traditional craft workers to the Women's Art Association, so that it might establish a collection of folk arts.⁴⁰

The presence of the railways alongside more traditional cultural institutions in these activities hints at the commercial value of folk studies. Indeed, Barbeau's initial trip to the Île d'Orléans to study material culture was made on a complimentary CNR rail pass, and he secured them also for his collaborators Jackson, Lismer and Traquair.⁴¹ McKay

³⁸On the participation of the railways in the popularization of folk culture for commercial and nationalist ends, see Jessup, "The Business of Becoming a Nation," Carl Morey, "Nationalism and Commerce: Canadian Folk Music in the 1920s," *Canadian Issues* XX (1998): 38-40, and Nurse, "Tradition and Modernity," pp. 16 and 344. Nowry also discusses Barbeau's contribution to the Québec City festivals in *Marius Barbeau*, p. 283.

³⁹Nurse, "Tradition and Modernity," p. 344.

⁴⁰Nurse, "Tradition and Modernity," pp. 16, 323-28. On the Women's Art Association, see Kathleen Dowsett, "The Women's Art Association of Canada and its Designs on Canadian Handicrafts, 1898-1939" (master's thesis, Queen's University, 1998) and Allison Thompson, "A Worthy Place in the Art of our Country: The Women's Art Association of Canada, 1887-1987" (master's thesis, Carleton University, 1989).

⁴¹Jessup, "The Business of Becoming a Nation," p. 49. Barbeau and Traquair corresponded about a pass for the latter in the summer of 1926, too, with Barbeau suggesting that
(continued...)

notes that Gibbon saw a wide appreciation and understanding of folklore in Canada as the most probable route to national unity. But as a promoter with his eye on the bottom line, “tourism, commerce, and ‘the folk’ were inextricably bound together” in his eyes.⁴² He first had the idea for the Québec Folk Song and Handicraft Festivals as a way of filling the CPR’s hotel in the slow season of early summer. As Nowry tells it, when he suggested the idea to Barbeau, he did not mention tourism at all, rather suggesting that such a festival might increase public understanding and appreciation of Québec folk culture, and create a market for traditional crafts.⁴³ Barbeau, however, was not slow to realize the commercial possibilities of his work on the Folk. In the mid-1930s, he published two books, *The Kingdom of Saguenay* and *Quebec: Where Ancient France Lingers*.⁴⁴ The former was supported heavily by Canada Steamship Lines (CSL). As Nurse notes, the book was conceived largely as publicity for CSL, with frequent mention of the joy of travelling by water, and the congeniality of the CSL hotel in the region, the Manoir Richelieu. The book was illustrated with prints and drawings by A.Y. Jackson, Arthur Lismer, André Bieler, Yvonne Housser and others. In return for paying the artists, CSL received

⁴¹(...continued)

Traquair send C.K. Howard, General Tourist Agent of the CNR, some samples of his work to support Barbeau’s request on his behalf. (Letter, Barbeau to Traquair, 26 May 1926 [CMC, iMS, Barbeau, 244.f8, “Traquair”].)

⁴²McKay, *Quest of the Folk*, p. 57-58.

⁴³Nowry, *Marius Barbeau*, p. 283.

⁴⁴Barbeau, *The Kingdom of Saguenay* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1936) and *Quebec: Where Ancient France Lingers* (Toronto: Macmillan, and Québec: Librairie Garneau, 1936).

permission to use the images in its brochures, and also retained the originals for display. Barbeau even changed the details of a folk tale to move the action to a more suitable location.⁴⁵

Quebec: Where Ancient France Lingers was also conceived entirely for the tourist market, and was released just in time for the tourist season of 1936. Barbeau illustrated it with drawings by Marjorie Borden and with photos drawn in part from the publicity collections of the CPR and the CNR. The railways also helped subsidize the illustrations.⁴⁶ As Nurse points out, these books represent a major shift from Barbeau's portrayal of the Québec Folk as a thing of yesterday, accessible now only through its material remnants. Designed to encourage tourism, *The Kingdom of Saguenay* and *Quebec: Where Ancient France Lingers* portray traditional culture as thriving, ready and available to be experienced in all its authenticity in the byways of the land.⁴⁷ "[T]hese 'habitants' are rooted deep in the soil which has yielded all its secrets to them," writes Barbeau in *Quebec*.⁴⁸ Even here, however, he sounds a warning bell at the end of the book. "French culture in Canada rested on twin factors: the vitality of ancestral traditions coupled with isolation. Should either or both fail, we may wonder how long it can endure"⁴⁹

⁴⁵Nurse, "Tradition and Modernity," p. 421-23, 426.

⁴⁶Nurse, "Tradition and Modernity," p. 428.

⁴⁷Nurse, "Tradition and Modernity," p. 441.

⁴⁸Barbeau, *Quebec*, p. 12.

⁴⁹Barbeau, *Quebec*, p. 158.

Without its “language, custom, folk-lore and handicrafts,” he wrote, Québec today would be no more French than Louisiana.⁵⁰ It is in the last part of the book that Barbeau’s antimodern vision of an unspoiled folk fantasy-land available for consumption by the modern world intersects most strongly with nation-building ideas on both the federal and provincial levels. Barbeau writes,

Are the French-Canadians aware of their responsibility towards themselves and of their native ability further to contribute to the growth of art on this continent, as their ancestors have done so remarkably for nearly two hundred years? We may doubt it. . . . In order to move with the times it is not necessary to sacrifice heredity and tradition, as these very elements are fundamental in national growth and modern progress abroad. But French Canada has lost confidence in itself and will not help materially, outside of patriotic speeches, in its own cultural salvation.⁵¹

The final page of the text is decorated with an hourglass, very nearly run through. Barbeau, employee of the National Museum of Canada, suggests that Québec might contribute to culture “on this continent.” But this book, written to encourage tourism and popular interest in folk culture, makes it very clear that he sees the need for the salvation of “language, custom, folk-lore and handicrafts” for the sake of Québec too.

It is here that Traquair and his colleagues come back into the story, in the background of which they have been hovering. As I have shown, Barbeau valued Traquair’s aesthetic judgement, and while he searched a church’s archives, he relied on Traquair’s assessment of the building itself, and its contents. Barbeau’s interpretation of

⁵⁰Barbeau, *Quebec*, p. 164.

⁵¹Barbeau, *Quebec*, p. 172.

the vernacular architectural forms and material culture of Québec seems likely, therefore, to have been heavily influenced by Traquair. Moreover, while Traquair was probably never directly involved in Barbeau's various popularization and tourism projects, he contributed indirectly to such efforts with a number of articles of his own. The majority of his architectural writing appeared in the professional press, with the fruits of his research on Île d'Orléans, and other similar projects, initially appearing in the *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada*. In the late 1920s and early 30s, however, he published a number of articles in such popular magazines as *House Beautiful*, *House and Garden*, and *Canadian Homes and Gardens* in which he, like Barbeau in *The Kingdom of Saguenay* and *Quebec*, moves beyond a more factual account to extol the wonders of an ancient and authentic folk culture.⁵²

In 1932 he published an article of this type in *The Seigneur*, and this one is particularly telling as it emphasizes how intertwined were the various groups and individuals—Francophone and Anglophone, commercial and governmental—participating in this “revival” of folk culture.⁵³ *The Seigneur* was the magazine of the Seignior Club,

⁵²“The Cottages of Quebec,” *Canadian Homes and Gardens* 3, 1 (January 1926): 12-14, 58, 60, 65; “Old Cottages of Quebec,” *House Beautiful* 63 (May 1928): 612-13, 649-50, 652-54, 656. Among Traquair's papers there is also an undated typescript entitled “Cottages and Houses of Quebec” noted to be destined for *House and Garden*. (McGill University Archives [MUA], Box 2: 35/17/160.) In addition, he spoke on the subject of Québec architecture to such groups as the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire (IODE), the Art Association of Montreal, the Montreal Arts Club, the Rotary Club, and others. See “Ramsay Traquair: Lectures,” in *Ramsay Traquair and His Successors: a Guide to the Archive* (Montréal: CAC, 1987), pp. 138-54.

⁵³Traquair, “The Cottages of Quebec,” in *The Seigneur* 3, 7 (December 1932): 24-28. This article appears to be identical to the 1926 article of the same name in *Canadian Homes and*
(continued...)

located at what is now Montebello, on the Ottawa River between Hull and Montréal. The club was located in the former Château Papineau, the residence of the nineteenth-century Québec patriot, Louis-Joseph Papineau. As a lavish English-language booklet of 1930 explains, the Château and some eighty thousand acres of land—most of the original Seigneurie de la Petite Nation—were purchased by the CPR-sponsored Lucerne-in-Quebec community association to become a vast recreational resort.⁵⁴ On the association's board of directors (which also served for the Seignior Club) sat Québec's premier, the Honourable Louis-Alexandre Taschereau, and a number of financial luminaries: L.W. Beatty, chairman and president of the CPR, and the presidents of the Banque Canadienne Nationale, the Bank of Montréal, and the Royal Bank of Canada.

In addition to converting the château to house the club, a vast “Log Lodge—a de luxe rustic hotel” (now the Château Montebello) was under construction. Building lots would also be sold in the immediate vicinity, and those who could afford it (and these lucky people would also become life members of the club) could build vacation houses there, all in a rustic style to match the main lodge. The brochure leaves no doubt at all as to who might form the constituency of this club: “Every recreational desire and need . . . seems to have been anticipated by the creators of this unusual vacation playplace—a

⁵³(...continued)

Gardens.

⁵⁴*Lucerne-in-Quebec* (np: Lucerne-in-Quebec Community Association and the CPR, 1930), no page numbers.

playplace in the midst of the storied Province of Quebec, where congenial Americans, with similar and mutual tastes, ideals and interests, can meet and mingle," it gushes.⁵⁵

The club magazine, *The Seigneur*, "deals with happenings particular to the Club community . . . and reflects also aspects of the life and history typical of this part of Canada."⁵⁶ As befits a magazine for the rich, the pages are replete with advertisements for silver, furs, expensive hotels, and cruises to the West Indies, and as befits a group interested in cultural definition, this issue includes, in addition to Traquair's article on "The Cottages of Quebec," and several on skiing and the new members' cottages being built in the precinct, a book review of *Songs for Canadian Boys*.⁵⁷ The book was intended to introduce "a better type of music" to Canadian boys, and not surprisingly includes many folk songs. Amongst those to receive thanks for their contributions to the notes on the songs are Ramsay Traquair and E.R. Adair, his colleague at McGill University (in the history department) and partner in some of his research on Québec culture. Several of the songs are drawn from the Gibbon's book, *Canadian Folk Songs*, and Gibbon, "who, by his excellent translations, has done so much to popularize the music of French Canada

⁵⁵*Lucerne-in-Quebec*, n.p.

⁵⁶*Seigneur* 3, 7 (December 1932): 1.

⁵⁷*Songs for Canadian Boys*, comp. committee representing the Quebec Provincial Council of the Boy Scouts Association (Toronto: Macmillan, on behalf of the Montreal district council of the Boy Scouts Association, 1932).

among English-speaking Canadians,” also provided the English translations to the French songs in the collection.⁵⁸

It appears that, notwithstanding the club’s obvious Anglophone bias (despite the presence of the premier of Québec on the Board of Directors and an aged and deferential Québécois lodge-keeper at the gate), some Francophones with an interest in nation-building through the popularization of the idea of a traditional culture in Québec also read *The Seigneur*, and may even have been members of the club. The same month that Traquair’s article appeared, he received a letter from Adjutor Rivard, the author of the 1914 book *Chez Nous*, a panegyric on the traditions and objects of the author’s ancestral home.⁵⁹ Rivard’s paternal ancestors had come from France in 1630, and he obviously identified very strongly with the idea of a vanishing traditional culture in rural Québec.⁶⁰ Dedicating *Chez Nous* to his two children, he hoped that the book might assure the

⁵⁸*Songs*, pp. v, ix, x, 29.

⁵⁹Rivard, letter to Traquair, 9 December 1932 (CAC, Traquair Collection, Series B-1.1); Adjutor Rivard, *Chez Nous* (1914; Québec: Librairie Garneau, 1941). Honoured in 1920 by the French Academy, the book was translated as *Chez Nous (Our Old Quebec Home)* by W.H. Blake (who also rendered Hémon’s *Maria Chapdelaine* into English) and illustrated by A.Y. Jackson (New York: George H. Doran and Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1924). Oddly, though the “chez nous” of Rivard’s book is situated on the King’s Highway on Île d’Orléans, he was apparently born in the County of Nicolet, on the south shore across from Trois Rivières (*Canadian Who’s Who* II [1936-37], s.v. “Rivard, Hon. Adjutor”). As Rivard notes in his letter, Traquair actually illustrates the “ancient house of *chez nous* exactly as it still stands, shining white upon the King’s Highway,” in his article, although he calls it the Hébert House (which is not Rivard’s mother’s maiden name). Furthermore, although both Traquair in the article and Rivard in the letter refer to the central chimney with two false chimneys of wood at the gable ends, neither Georges-H. Duquet’s illustrations in the 1941 French edition of Rivard’s book, nor A.Y. Jackson’s in the 1924 English edition—which show two entirely different buildings—includes this feature.

⁶⁰*Canadian Who’s Who* II (1936-37), s.v. “Rivard, Hon. Adjutor.”

survival in their minds of the “ancient memories,” and deepen their love for the people and things of their home.⁰¹ He reports that he had very much enjoyed Traquair’s article, writing: “I beg leave to tell you how deeply I appreciate so accurate and delightful a description of our old country houses, and how sincerely I wish to thank you for it.” Traquair’s descriptions of these houses, he remarks, are accurate “nearly in all the details.” Rivard was a highly educated man, and by the time he wrote this letter he had served as a judge in the Québec Court of Appeals for eleven years, as well as having been a professor in Laval University’s faculty of law since 1918, and receiving numerous honours from various sources. The pages of *Chez Nous* are filled with regret for his lost way of life—for a time when people were strong and honest and hard-working, filled with love of God and respect for the church—and he hoped, through his book and various other activities, to keep this spirit alive that it might nourish the modern world for which he had abandoned it.

In 1930, for example, he attended a lunch given by the CPR at the opening of the handicrafts festival at the Château Frontenac. He later wrote a letter to Gordon Antoine Neilson, Traquair’s dear friend, his “assistant at McGill and [his] companion on many architectural travels,” and an honorary Professor of Religious Art at McGill University.⁰²

⁰¹“J’ai écrit pour vous ces pages, simple et sans autres ornements que les mots de notre vieux parler, mais vraies et qui peut-être assureront dans votre mémoire la survivance de quelques souvenirs anciens. Puissent-elles vous faire aimer plus encore les gens et les choses de CHEZ NOUS!”

⁰²Rivard, letter to Neilson, 16 October 1930 (CAC, Traquair collection, Series C.1-5); Traquair, “Preface,” in *The Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. xviii; John Bland, “Gordon Antoine (continued...)”

The letter reveals that Rivard knew Neilson, and was aware of—and perhaps even a party to—a proposal that Neilson made in 1930, at the request of the Québec Ministry of Lands and Forests, for a project to support the revitalization of handicrafts in rural areas of the province.^{o3} It is probable that Traquair's ideas also lay behind the project, as Neilson refers to “the study that we have made over the past several years of the wooden sculpture, furniture, and ironwork of French Canada” These explorations were certainly made in company with Traquair. The proposal is extremely significant; it suggests that Traquair's ideas (through Neilson, the Québec-born son of an old Québec family on his mother's side) were actively sought by a provincial government striving to

^{o2}(...continued)

Neilson: Biography,” in *Ramsay Traquair and his Successors: A Guide to the Archive* (Montréal: CAC, 1987), p. 39. Dedicating his book to Neilson's memory, Traquair notes that had he lived, “he would have shared in the authorship.” Neilson is variously referred to as “Gordon Antoine” and “Antoine Gordon.” Traquair dedicates the book to “Antoine Gordon” but calls him “Gordon Antoine” in the preface. In the article “La Conservation des Monuments Historiques dans la Province de Québec,” in *Revue Trimestrielle Canadienne* (March 1941): 1-23, co-authored with Traquair and Olivier Maurault, Neilson is “Antoine Gordon,” which I suspect is correct. In his biographical sketch of Neilson, Bland calls him Gordon Antoine, and suggests that he was known as Gordon.

^{o3}Letter to Honoré Mercier, Ministre des Terres et Forêts, Hôtel de Gouvernement, Québec (CAC, Traquair Collection, Series C.1-4). This letter is undated and unfortunately ends abruptly at the bottom of page three, with no signature. Two copies of the letter, with corrections, are in the file of “Historical notes of Gordon A. Neilson” in the CAC, and the evidence of Rivard's letter to Neilson, as well as one from “Maurice” at the Québec Bureau de Publicité du Gouvernement, of 11 October, suggests indubitably that Neilson was the author of this proposal and that its year was 1930. It is clear also that the proposal was solicited, as the letter states that it is written in response to a request for some suggestions on the subject.

combat what is described in the proposal as “rural depopulation and the Americanization of the race,” by encouraging traditional craft skills.⁶⁴

Just the year before, the provincial government had ordered a study of home industries in the province, and found their status severely compromised. As Oscar Beriau, Director General of Handicrafts for the province, later put it, “[f]rom 1890 to 1928, handicrafts in Lower Canada were almost at a standstill.”⁶⁵ But Beriau noted that even then, “the old traditions lived on” in a few regions, and he gave credit to the efforts of the CSL, the CPR, the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, the Cercles des Fermières, and the Ecoles Ménagères, these last three being organizations that had been set up to encourage traditional skills and the domestic production of handicrafts through teaching skills and marketing products.⁶⁶ Encouraged by these vestiges of skill, and alarmed by the apparently changing nature of the countryside and its people, the Ministry of Agriculture set up the *Oeuvre des Arts Domestiques*, a provincial school of handicrafts to teach women and girls such skills as spinning, dyeing, and weaving, which opened on 10 July 1930. Neilson’s letter proposes an *Oeuvre des Artisans Ruraux*, a sort of male equivalent to the female-oriented *Oeuvre des Arts Domestiques*. The proposal emphasizes that to achieve its goal, the government must accomplish three basic tasks: it must encourage a taste for the

⁶⁴“L’étude que nous avons fait depuis nombre d’années de la sculpture sur bois, du mobilier et de ferronnerie du Canada français . . .”; “. . . combattre à la fois cette dépopulation rurale et l’américanisation de la race. . . .”

⁶⁵Oscar A. Beriau, “Domestic Crafts in Quebec,” *Québec* IX, 1 (February 1934): 36.

⁶⁶Beriau, “The Handicraft Renaissance in Québec,” *Canadian Geographical Journal* 7, 3 (September 1933): 146.

“*petits métiers*” among the rural population, provide facilities for people to learn the trades, and sell their products, in both local and distant markets, with the help of advertizing, exhibitions, and official shops.

Neilson's report notes that his and Traquair's studies of historical sculpture, furniture, and ironwork have satisfied them of “the ability and of the natural good taste of our people.”⁶⁷ But just as in the case of efforts to encourage women to take up traditional handicrafts, here, too, they have to struggle against the foreign imports and easy contact with cities and machine-made items that have changed the way of life of “our *habitants*,” spurring them to leave their farms and seek what they see as easier money in the cities and factories. Thus “we must spread as quickly as possible the idea of the moral good and the pecuniary advantages that the practice of the rural arts could provide to our population.”⁶⁸ The organization would “aid powerfully in solving the problem of the desertion of our countryside” by providing *habitants* with an occupation that would provide gainful

⁶⁷“L'étude que nous avons fait . . . nous a convaincu de l'habilité et du bon goût naturel de nos gens.”

⁶⁸“ . . . il faut répandre au plus tôt l'idée du bien moral et des avantages pécuniaires que pourrait procurer a nôtre population la pratique des arts ruraux.” The idea that economic crisis could be assuaged by returning people to the land (or keeping them there), was by no means limited to Québec. Starting in the early 1930s, the Dominion government and every province but Prince Edward Island tried to settle people on then-unfarmed land as a way, it was hoped, to remove them permanently from the relief rolls (L.M. Grayson and Michael Bliss, *The Wretched of Canada: Letters to R.B. Bennett, 1930-1935* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971], pp. xv-xvi).

employment during the seasonally-enforced periods of underemployment on the farms.⁶⁹

Recommending that a Board of Directors co-ordinate the efforts of the proposed organization with those of the newly-founded *Oeuvre des Arts Domestiques* and the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, they note that the directors of the other two bodies had already agreed to participate.⁷⁰ They also propose names (on a separate page) of people who had agreed to serve on an honorary committee and the several sub-committees that would be involved in production, sales, and other administrative duties.⁷¹

The teaching itself would take place during the lean winter months only, the “time of year that the ‘petits metiers’ could truly take their place beside the other farm work, in the life of our *habitant*.” They would establish a studio in a rural area, in which “a master

⁶⁹“ . . . l'oeuvre que nous voulons établir aidera puissamment à résoudre le problème de la désertion de nos campagnes.”

⁷⁰Both Nobbs and Traquair were members of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, with the latter serving on committees starting in the late teens and continuing at least into the early 1930s. He was, therefore, obviously quite familiar with both its work and its personnel. (Morgan, “F. Cleveland Morgan,” pp. 86, 88, and Appendix B.) Nobbs had an early connection with the Guild. In 1906, he assisted it in conducting a competition for “designs for summer cottage rooms furnished with our goods,” among members of the Sketching Club of the Province of Quebec Association of Architects (PQAA). (Canadian Handicrafts Guild, Annual Report for 1907, cited in Morgan, “F. Cleveland Morgan,” p. 42.)

⁷¹Unfortunately, the page of proposed committee members is no longer with the letter. Rivard's letter to Neilson, of 16 October 1930, however, notes that he had spoken with M. Bouchard at the opening lunch of the CPR's “festival des métiers du terroir,” and had asked him, following Neilson's suggestion, to serve on a committee. He writes to Neilson that “[Bouchard] agrees absolutely with your views, is delighted by the felicitous project you imagine, and agrees to be part of the committee.” (“Il adhère absolument aux vues qui sont les vôtres, se réjouit de l'heureuse création que vous rêvez, et accepte de faire partie du comité.”) This is surely Georges Bouchard, a professor at the College of Agriculture at Sainte-Anne-de-la-Pocatière, who interested himself extensively in the idea of a handicraft revival. See *La Renaissance des Arts domestiques* (Québec: L'Action Sociale, 1932) and “The Work of Women on the Farm,” *Québec* VIII, 6 (July 1933): 131-36.

joiner, a master sculptor, and a master blacksmith would execute, helped by students drawn from our countryside, works in wood and iron such as furniture, sculpture, gates, etc. of truly French-Canadian character and tradition.”⁷² Aspiring artisans would serve an apprenticeship in this workshop, developing their “natural” skill and taste with the help of the examples they would see there. The organization would then take responsibility for selling their products, eventually establishing distribution centres in the United States for that purpose. When they were ready, the students would return to their villages, there to become foremen of new studios that the *Oeuvre* would establish in various places. Thus, the teaching of the three masters in the central atelier would gradually filter throughout Québec’s agricultural regions, providing both a sense of pride in tradition and a new economic incentive that might hold the rural people, so closely associated with Québec’s cultural identity, on the farm. Although Neilson’s letter does not specifically mention it, such an endeavour would also, like the *Oeuvre des Arts Domestiques*, help sustain not only Québec’s burgeoning ideas of its own distinct identity built on traditional culture, but also its tourist industry, by training rural people to become Folk again before it was too late. “Our people have retained their skill, their artistic ingenuity, this old French foundation of taste and touch that must be used before they become lost in a total Americanisation of

⁷²“Ces ateliers ne seraient ouvert que pendant l’hiver au temps où le chômage est le plus accentué a la campagne. C’est à ce temps de l’année que ces ‘petits métiers’ pourraient vraiment prendre place dans la vie de nos habitants à coté des autres travaux de la ferme.”; “. . . un atelier où un maître menuisier, un maître sculpteur et un maître forgeron exécuteraient, aidés d’élèves tirés de nos campagnes, des oeuvres en bois et en fer tel que meubles, pièces sculptées, grilles, etc. de caractère et de traditions bien Canadien Français.”

the race,” wrote a representative of the Bureau de Publicité du Gouvernement, in response to Neilson’s proposal. “The value of your plan would be substantial.”⁷³

I am not aware that this proposal was ever implemented. Nonetheless, its very existence indicates that Neilson’s and his partner Traquair’s thoughts about the preservation of culture were actively sought out on an official level, and that Traquair’s research and ideas had broad significance in the process of popularization and institutionalization of the Folk that was taking place in the 1920s and 30s. The proposal is also significant in light of Traquair’s conviction that it was in men that creative ability truly rested, as I discussed in Chapter Two. The United States, he contended (and he noted that Canada was in the same situation), was on the verge of “intellectual death,” because to women had been given the responsibility for “the intellectual and artistic culture of the country, and, if they have failed to produce any culture worth having, it is not their fault. They cannot, and that is all there is to that.”⁷⁴ As I noted in Chapter Two, Traquair did acknowledge that women were capable of the lesser arts, and he admired the handicrafts of the Québec Folk, which the Québec government and other interested bodies were working hard to encourage. This contemporary culture, however, was but a survival of the artistically vibrant society that had existed before the masculine

⁷³“ . . . nos gens ont gardé leur adresse, leur ingéniosité artistique, ce vieux fond français de goût et de doigté qu’il faut utiliser avant qu’il ne se perde dans une américanisatoïn totale de la race. Le mérite de ton oeuvre ne serait pas mince.” (“Maurice,” letter to Neilson, 11 October 1930 [CAC, Traquair Collection, Series C.1-4].) This letter, too, suggests that Neilson had strong connections with the provincial government. Written on official letterhead, it is signed with only a first name and addressed to “Mon cher Gordon.”

⁷⁴Traquair, “Women and Civilization,” p. 296.

arts of sculpture and architecture had been corrupted by modern influence. Traquair and Neilson's idea to start an *Oeuvre des Artisans Ruraux* that would support traditionally male arts suggests that Traquair might have believed that the culture could be particularly strengthened by adding a reinvigorated masculine creativity to the feminine arts already being practised.

Early nationalists were not the only ones to see the value of the "uncorrupted" Québec vernacular building tradition as a nation-building tool, and Handler has illuminated the continuation of this trend. Québec's material culture has remained an important part of its national identity, and the 1960s saw the provincial government determined to restore parts of the old city of Québec to their original, pre-English-conquest appearance. As buildings almost inevitably do, the houses and shops of the old town had accrued multiple additions and revisions over the centuries, so that in the majority of cases any outward sign of the original building had disappeared entirely. This resulted in the virtual rebuilding of areas of the old city, in particular around the newly-named Place Royale, to erase all signs of development that had occurred after the end of the French Régime and create what seemed to be an authentic recreation of the city as it ought to have looked, even where there was little or no evidence for it (figs. 7.1 & 7.2).⁷⁵ Following Traquair's precepts, first propounded by Nobbs, old meant genuine, and

⁷⁵Richard Handler, "On Having a Culture: Nationalism and the Preservation of Quebec's Patrimoine," in *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture*, ed. George Stocking, *History of Anthropology*, vol. 3 (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp. 192-217.

uncorrupted by “alien” influence meant authentic, even if that had to be achieved by removing and rebuilding areas of the city. Here, Nobbs’s and Traquair’s ideas about the purity of tradition were taken to their logical extreme.

In addition to its utility to Québec nationalists, Nobbs’s and Traquair’s work was influential in the development of Canadian architecture and architectural history, particularly as it pertained to the architecture of Québec. Traquair is cited as an influential student of Québec architecture by the authors of both surveys of Canadian architecture that have appeared to date.⁷⁶ Perhaps even more surprisingly, Nobbs’s and Traquair’s view of vernacular architecture—so marked by the beliefs and biases of their time—remained remarkably intact for decades in Canada, among the general public and architectural historians alike. Architectural historian Alan Gowans’s approach to vernacular architecture in his important 1966 book, *Building Canada*, for example, closely mirrored that of Nobbs, Traquair, and their contemporaries. He described folk architecture as “an anonymous product of community life . . . a vernacular expression, like the unaffected speech of the simple folk who created it.”⁷⁷ Such ideas about vernacular architecture have hung on in many contexts. Even as recently as 1994, in his two-volume *History of Canadian Architecture*, Harold Kalman defined a vernacular building as one that

⁷⁶Alan Gowans, *Building Canada: An Architectural History of Canadian Life* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 22 and Harold Kalman, *A History of Canadian Architecture*, vol. 1 (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 41.

⁷⁷Gowans, *Building Canada*, p. 10.

is “not the product of conscious decisions about style or design.”⁷⁸ This suggests, as did much earlier writing on the material products of apparently premodern cultures, that builders or artisans in such societies did not exercise creativity or independent taste, but merely mimicked existing traditions without question. This attitude is partly the result of the fact that the names of the creators of vernacular art or architecture have frequently been lost, which gives rise to the idea that such objects are the product of a culture rather than of a person. Much recent scholarship takes a different view. While acknowledging that vernacular architects usually build within a given tradition, it recognizes that this does not preclude the exercise of independent creative decisions in their designs.⁷⁹ It should be remembered that buildings of a particular type and era often strongly resemble one another. How often are Modernist office towers described as failing to reflect “conscious decisions about style or design”?

Nobbs's and Traquair's preconceived notions, and especially Traquair's research and publications on the subject, strongly influenced the way Québec architecture came to be perceived. In particular, Traquair's “salvage”-oriented approach to his study of the vernacular had a profound effect on the way that it was to be defined and would continue

⁷⁸Kalman, *Canadian Architecture*, p. 42.

⁷⁹See as just one example Arlene Horvath, “Vernacular Expression in Quaker Chester County, Pennsylvania: The Taylor-Parke House and Its Maker,” in *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture II*, ed. Camille Wells (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1986), pp. 150-60.

to be seen for many years.⁸⁰ The idea that external influence spelled the end of an interesting tradition was to persist. As late as the 1960s, McGill School of Architecture professor John Bland (who had been a student of both Nobbs and Traquair) was engaged in “the preparation of plans, elevations and details at consistent scales of as many Quebec buildings up to about 1850” as he could. He noted that, with photos and texts, these could “make a fascinating publication.”⁸¹ Over half a century after Nobbs had first begun to show an interest in Québec vernacular, Bland was still defining the period of interest in Québec architecture as ending with the mid-nineteenth century, when Nobbs and Traquair had declared that outside influence had finished the vernacular tradition.

Indeed, this is probably the area in which their influence has reached the farthest and lasted longest. It is clear that in the 1960s their influence was still strongly felt, although it was Traquair at that point who received the main credit for their observations. Gowans does not mention Nobbs at all in his 1966 survey; for all that he was so influential in his own time, he had apparently been almost forgotten by then, only two years after his death. Traquair appears only once as the author “whose writings did so much to further understanding of the old architecture of Quebec.”⁸² Gowans’s comments about Québec architecture at this point in his career were clearly influenced by the work begun by Nobbs

⁸⁰See James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).

⁸¹John Bland, letter to Michel Gaumond, head of archaeological service, Department of Cultural Affairs, Québec, 19 December 1966 (CAC, Traquair Collection, Series L).

⁸²Gowans, *Building Canada*, p. 22.

and Traquair: “the medieval inheritance survived in Quebec practically unchanged, almost into the twentieth century” wrote Gowans. “The facts speak for themselves.”⁸³

All of this serves to point to the importance of Nobbs’s words that both begin this chapter and end his book *Design*. The present, he wrote, is a step between the past and the future, not a free-standing thing. It would be impossible, without a world-destroying cataclysm, to consider it in any other way. Nobbs’s statement implies that always to look upon the present in the light of the past is the natural approach. But the notion of “tradition, *duly sifted*” is extremely significant. Like others of their generation, Nobbs and Traquair believed that they were finding “natural” antidotes to the artificiality of almost every aspect of their own society. But as Nobbs stated, the tradition must always be first identified and then sifted before it could be used for such purposes. As the essays in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger’s collection, *The Invention of Tradition*, demonstrate and the title suggests, the use of tradition, while usually perceived as a natural and inevitable process, is always dependent on choosing—consciously or unconsciously—a given selection from a body of available material.⁸⁴

As I have shown, Traquair selected carefully from the available evidence when he wrote about a Québec Folk. The process of cultural selection began with his decision to concentrate on the *habitants* as an example of a genuine culture in Canada. Once he had chosen them, he had to decide what elements of their culture he would choose to

⁸³Gowans, *Building Canada*, p. 30.

⁸⁴Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (1983; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [Canto Edition], 1992).

preserve. He believed that he was recording only those features that truly represented their society, but he was actually selecting the elements that conformed to the conclusions that he had already drawn about their culture. Similarly, Nobbs could not simply search out a style that would represent the true Canada without first grappling with the question of just what that Canada was. His attempts to develop a Canadian architectural style depended on careful selection of various historic precedents from times and places that would have political resonance for his idea of Canada. The results could not be inevitable because they were the result of conscious choices. Although the conclusion of such a quest—if it were successful—might come to seem natural, it would always be an invention.

But an invention could be as real as any experience. For the disaffected antimodernists of the early decades of the twentieth century, the reality created by their invention was infinitely more real than the pale, flimsy reflection of authentic experience that the twentieth century seemed to offer them. People such as Nobbs and Traquair were influential in the shaping of Canadian culture at its higher levels because they thought about it extensively, wrote and acted upon the basis of their conclusions, and talked about their ideas to members of Canada's intellectual and financial elite. They each belonged to several arts clubs. Nobbs was a member of the Art Association of Montreal (1916-33) and the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts (1928-39), Traquair of the Montreal Arts Club (starting 1913). Both were active with the McCord Museum and the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, and they were of course members of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada and the Province of Quebec Association of Architects, their

professional organizations, as well as the Royal Institute of British Architects.⁸⁵ Perhaps most important in this connection is Montréal's Pen and Pencil Club, an exclusive men's club of artists and writers of which they were both active members, Nobbs having been elected to membership in 1906 and Traquair in 1917.⁸⁶ In this club, dedicated to "Social enjoyment and Promotion of the Arts and Letters," they met regularly with Canadian cultural luminaries. To name just a few of those who joined in the first decades of the twentieth century, the club included among its members writer Stephen Leacock, J. Murray Gibbon, F. Cleveland Morgan, prominent architects W.S. Maxwell, Ernest Cormier, and David Shennan (who joined only in 1940, and was responsible for designing the Manoir Richelieu, the Hotel Tadoussac, and the Thousand Islands Club for the CSL⁸⁷) and a host of others, almost exclusively Anglophone.⁸⁸ As Mary Vipond has noted, artists

⁸⁵CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series E; "Secondary Works on Ramsay Traquair," in *Ramsay Traquair: A Guide to the Archive*, gen. ed. Irena Murray (Montréal: CAC, 1987), pp. 155-168; Morgan, "F. Cleveland Morgan," Appendix B.

⁸⁶Leo Cox and J. Harry Smith, *The Pen and Pencil Club, 1890-1959* (Montréal: Pen and Pencil Club, 1959), n.p. Aside from their inclusion in the list of members at the end of the booklet, both are mentioned by name for various esoteric contributions (Nobbs for his treatise on bayonet technique, "with gory directions," and Traquair for "discuss[ing] the merits of water in immaculate verse, recit[ing] in dialect, and discours[ing] learnedly on the fourth dimension").

⁸⁷Morgan, "F. Cleveland Morgan," p. 42.

⁸⁸Prominent members from the club's inception in 1890 to the time Nobbs joined—most of whom were presumably still active then—include the painters William Brymner, Robert Harris, and Maurice Cullen, and the railway magnate and painter Sir William Van Horne. The presence of William Henry Drummond, "the poet who interpreted the French-Canadian 'habitant' to English Canada," is less significant than it seems at first, as he died in 1907, only the year after Nobbs joined. (Cox, "Fifty Years of Brush and Pen: A Historical Sketch of the PEN AND PENCIL CLUB of Montreal," in *The Pen and Pencil Club*, n.p.; Charles G.D. Roberts and Arthur L. Tunnel, eds., *A Standard Dictionary of Canadian Biography: The Canadian Who was Who*, vol. 1 [Toronto: (continued...)]

among the 1920s nationalist elite of Canada charged themselves with “the creation of myths and symbols which expressed the Canadian identity and clarified its meaning,” and they organized into such clubs and groups to discuss and make public their ideas.⁸⁹ For Nobbs and Traquair, as for many others involved in trying to construct an identity for Canada in the first half of the twentieth century, these “myths and symbols” were often the product of their antimodernist approach to life and work. Some of their number were quite prominent; Jessup has illuminated the depth of antimodernism in the nation-building rhetoric of the Group of Seven, which, as she observes, has survived nearly intact into our own time.⁹⁰ But like Nobbs and Traquair, many of these myth-makers are now all but forgotten. Nevertheless, although, as Vipond notes, this “nationalist network” may not have concerned itself very much with the direct communication of its ideas to the majority of the Canadian people, its participants did communicate with each other

⁸⁸(...continued)

Trans-Canada Press, 1934], s.v. “Drummond, William Henry [1854-1907].”) The club was extremely exclusive. By 1940 it had elected only 117 people in total to membership, with its numbers increasing most years by only one or two people, rarely more than three or four, and occasionally none at all. (“List of Members,” in Cox and Smith, *Pen and Pencil Club*, n.p.)

⁸⁹Mary Vipond, “The Nationalist Network: English Canada’s Intellectuals and Artists in the 1920s,” in *Interpreting Canada’s Past, Volume II: After Confederation*, ed. J.M. Bumsted (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 271. Norma Morgan’s thesis provides a fascinating insight into the extent to which the membership of Montréal’s various Anglophone art associations and clubs intertwined and overlapped, together with McGill University and its faculty. Not surprisingly, several of the people for whom Nobbs designed houses (including Colby, Adami, and Todd) also appear here and there among the board and committee members. (Morgan, “F. Cleveland Morgon,” Appendix B and *passim*.)

⁹⁰“Bushwackers in the Gallery: Antimodernism and the Group of Seven,” in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, ed. Lynda Jessup (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), pp. 130-152.

through organizations and periodicals and, as members of Canada's elite, were influential in shaping the direction that Canadian high culture would follow.⁹¹

Kathleen McCarthy has demonstrated that it was through just such organizations as these that culture was officially taken into the male domain in this period.⁹² As Traquair wrote in 1923, "[f]or some generations the fine arts have been regarded—particularly in America—as suited to women, and their failure to take a high place in them is the more remarkable."⁹³ It was high time, in his estimation, that men took over all aspects of creativity, and he was not alone in this. Not only fine art—long a male-dominated affair—but also endeavours such as handicrafts, which had been the traditional purview of women, were encouraged and organized, taught, exhibited and marketed under the auspices of such male-dominated or wholly male clubs and institutions as several of those to which Nobbs and Traquair belonged. In addition, then, to their involvement in a nation-building project, McNaughton contends, such "cultural institutions served as important building blocks in the emergence of a national, male policy-making elite."⁹⁴

As McKay has recently argued, the new ideas about nationhood that these artists and intellectuals were formulating never really took hold among the majority of

⁹¹Vipond, "Nationalist Network," p. 272.

⁹²Kathleen D. McCarthy, *Women's Culture: American Philanthropy and Art, 1830-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

⁹³Traquair, "Women and Civilization," p. 293.

⁹⁴McCarthy, *Women's Culture*, p. xiv.

Canadians.⁹⁵ He enumerates three essential deficiencies in the approach of those who sought to forge a national identity. First, they were elitist, and failed to respond to popular taste; second was their “hesitant and partial imagined break with Britain”; and third was their utter failure to construct a truly national vision, to which people in all regions, from all backgrounds, could relate and attach themselves.⁹⁶ These weaknesses are all present in Nobbs’s and Traquair’s attempts to construct a national style in architecture for Canada. Their audience consisted largely of people like themselves, equally out of touch with popular culture, and it is almost inherent in the work of architects that their projects are designed for those with money or power (or, more usually, both). They both continued to look to Britain as the mother country, even when they purported to concentrate wholly on Canadian culture, and finally, despite their nationalist rhetoric, they were distinctly regional in their cultural outlook. Thus, for all their efforts, they failed to establish a consensus about Canadianness or even Canadian architecture. Nonetheless, although they might have been appalled at its eventual consequences, their work did later have a deeper popular effect as it came to inspire the forces of Québec nationalism.

Throughout their lives, at work and play, Nobbs and Traquair sought various means to achieve authentic experience. In their private lives, as I have observed, their efforts took place on a variety of stages, ranging from the fencing ring or the caribou barrens to the elaborate ritual of the Masonic Lodge or the comfortable smoking room of a

⁹⁵“Handicrafts and the Logic of ‘Commercial Antimodernism’: The Nova Scotia Case,” in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience*, p. 117.

⁹⁶McKay, “Handicrafts and Logic of ‘Commercial Antimodernism,’” pp. 117-118.

men's arts club on a Friday night. They sifted what they needed from other traditions and earlier times, and these private concerns spilled over into their public lives too. Seeking authentic experience, they looked for an authentic culture, not just for their own enrichment, but, as they believed, for the good of the nation. As Nobbs put it in 1910, "national traditions" of the past might be used to build "a homogeneous and distinctive taste" among Canadians.⁹⁷ This, in its turn, would be a powerful force for national unity. "Nothing distinguishes nation from nation, or unites the component elements of a people more than the growth of a distinctive taste in matters of design," he wrote.⁹⁸ As I have demonstrated, Nobbs soon came to see the vernacular architecture of Québec as an essential component of Canada's "national traditions"; indeed, it seemed to be the only uniquely Canadian architectural tradition that history could offer, and he and Traquair set out to use it to nourish the "distinctive taste" the country lacked. In common with other cultural producers of their time, they were both very aware of what Nobbs described, with capital letters, as "The Political value of National Art."⁹⁹

We have seen that the private preoccupations of two men were the public commonplaces of a class and a generation. They, like others, spent their lives in the active forging of what they represented as natural links among past, present and future,

⁹⁷Nobbs, "Memorandum relative to the allocation of Floor Space on the Second Storey of the Victoria Memorial Museum, at Ottawa, Ont; for a collection to illustrate the NATIONAL TRADITIONS or THE ART OF DESIGN," p. 3.

⁹⁸Nobbs, "Memorandum," p. 1.

⁹⁹Nobbs, "Memorandum," p. 3.

between tradition and nation. In investigating the active part this group played in building a nation, we see both the creativity and the political intent of their responses to modernity. Ironically, the success of their claim to the authenticity of their cultural constructions long obscured the complexity of the task they set out to achieve.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES: Archival

Canadian Architecture Collection, Blackader-Lauterman Library, McGill University
 Percy Nobbs Collection
 Ramsay Traquair Collection

Canadian Museum of Civilization, Information Management Services, Marius Barbeau
 correspondence, Box B244 f.8, "Traquair, Ramsay."

London Metropolitan Archives, London County Council Papers

McGill University Archives, Ramsay Traquair Papers

National Monuments Record of Scotland, artists file on S. Henbest Capper

Royal Institute of British Architects, biography files on Percy Nobbs and Ramsay Traquair.

Saskatchewan Archives Board, Department of Public Works and Walter Scott Papers

University of Edinburgh Library Special Collections, Robert Lorimer Papers.

PRIMARY SOURCES: Published

NB: For a complete list of the publications of Percy Erskine Nobbs and Ramsay Traquair,
 see their respective Archive Guides under "Secondary Sources" (Irena Murray, editor).

Aitken, Charles. "Notes on the Exhibits." *London County Council Staff Gazette* II (May
 1901): 56-7.

Anger, Paul. "Architecture et . . . bon goût," in *Le Terroir* xv, nos. 10-11, (January 1934):
 12.

The Annual of the British School at Athens XII, Session 1905-06. London: Macmillan, nd.

Asselin, Olivar. "A propos d'une conférence," editorial in *Le Canada: Journal du matin*
 31, no. 247 (27 January 1934) 2.

Barbeau, C. Marius. *The Kingdom of Saguenay*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1936.

- _____. *Quebec: Where Ancient France Lingers*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1936.
- Beriau, Oscar A. "Domestic Crafts in Quebec." *Québec* IX, 1 (February 1934): 36-37.
- _____. "The Handicraft Renaissance in Quebec." *Canadian Geographical Journal* 7, 3 (September 1933): 143-49.
- Bouchard, Georges. *La Renaissance des Arts domestiques*. Québec: L'Action Sociale, 1932.
- _____. "The Work of Women on the Farm." *Québec* VIII, 6 (July 1933): 131-36.
- "Concordia Salus" (Nobbs, P. E.). "Montreal Notes." *Canadian Architect and Builder* (September 1905): 141.
- _____. "Montreal: The Year's Changes to the City." *Canadian Architect and Builder* (December 1904): 201.
- Cox, Leo and J. Harry Smith. *The Pen and Pencil Club, 1890-1959*. Montréal: The Pen and Pencil Club, 1959.
- Deligny, Louis (Olivier Maurault). "La leçon de M. Traquair." *L'Action Nationale* III, 3 (March 1934): 158-160.
- "An Eighteenth Century Manoir is Reclaimed." *Canadian Homes and Gardens* (March 1934): 34-41, 52.
- "Gargoyle" (Nobbs, P.E.). "Montreal Letter No. 1: Montreal in General." *Canadian Architect and Builder* (April 1904): 73.
- "Gargoyle II" (Nobbs, P.E.). "Montreal Letter No. II." *Canadian Architect and Builder* (May 1904): 95-6.
- "The Gargoyle" (Nobbs, P.E.). "Montreal Letter No. III." *Canadian Architect and Builder* (June 1904): 98-99.
- "Ye Gargoyle" (Nobbs, P.E.). "Montreal Notes No. IV." *Canadian Architect and Builder* (July 1904): 119.
- Gibbon, J. Murray. *Canadian Folk Songs (Old and New)*. London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1927.
- Hémon, Louis. *Maria Chapdelaine*, translated by W.H. Blake. Toronto: Macmillan, 1938.

- Koch, Alex, ed. *Academy Architecture and Architecture Review* 34 (1908).
- Lismer, Arthur. "Art a Common Necessity." *Canadian Bookman* 7 (October 1925): 159-60.
- London County Council Staff Gazette* IV (March 1903).
- Lucerne-in-Quebec*. np: Lucerne-in-Quebec Community Association and the CPR, 1930.
- Lyle, John. "Address by John M. Lyle, 22 February 1929 at the Art Gallery of Toronto." *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (April 1929): 135-36, 163.
- Lyman, John. "Poison in the Well," in "Art." *Montrealer* 11 (1 September 1937): 17.
- Morris, William. "Art and Socialism: The Aims and Ideals of the English Socialists of Today" (lecture delivered before the Secular Society of Leicester, 23 January 1884). In *Architecture, Industry, and Wealth: Collected Papers*, edited by Sydney J. Freedberg. New York and London: Garland, 1978.
- Nicoll, James, ed. *Illustrations of Scottish Domestic Work in Recent Years*. Aberdeen: Daily Journal Offices, 1908.
- Nobbs, Percy Erskine. "Architecture in Canada." *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (July to September 1924): 91-95.
- _____. *Architecture in Canada*. Talk read before the RIBA, 21 January 1924. London: Royal Institute of British Architects, 1924.
- _____. "The Architecture of Canada." *Construction* (October 1910): 56-60, 64.
- _____. "Big Game and Common Sense." *Illustrated Forestry Magazine* (June 1923): 358-59.
- _____. "British Art and the Empire." Letter to the *Spectator* (4 January 1913): 17.
- _____. "Canadian Architecture." In *Canada and its Provinces: A History of the Canadian People and their Institutions by One Hundred Associates*, edited by Adam Shortt and Arthur G. Doughty. Toronto: Glasgow, Brook & Co., 1914.
- _____. "Canadian Battlefields Memorial Competition: Notes on the First Stage." *Construction* (June 1921): 161-70.

- _____. "Competition Reform." *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 12 (September 1935): 150-52.
- _____. *Design: A Treatise on the Discovery of Form*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1937.
- _____. "Drawing and Architecture-1." *Canadian Architect and Builder* (October 1903): 168-69.
- _____. "The English Tradition in Canadian Architecture." *Architectural Review* 55 (June 1924): 236-41.
- _____. "Extracts from an Address by Professor Percy E. Nobbs to the 41st Annual Dinner of the AIA, Chicago, November 20th, 1907." *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 34, 7 (July 1957): 280.
- _____. "The Late Sir Robert Lorimer." *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (October 1929): 352.
- _____. "Montreal Junior Architectural Association." *CAB* (May 1905): 76.
- _____. "On the Value of the Study of Old Work." *Canadian Architect and Builder* (May 1905): 74-75.
- _____. "Planning for Sunlight." *Journal of the Town Planning Institute* (April 1922): 6-12.
- _____. "Present Tendencies Affecting Architecture in Canada. Part I: The Inheritance." *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (July 1930): 245-48.
- _____. "Present Tendencies Affecting Architecture in Canada. Part II: Modernity." *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (September 1930): 314-17.
- _____. "Present Tendencies Affecting Architecture In Canada. Part III: Adverse Influences." *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (November 1930): 388-92.
- _____. "Ramsay Traquair, Hon. M.A. (McGill) F.R.I.B.A on his Retirement from the Macdonald Chair in Architecture at McGill University." *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 16 (June 1939): 147-48.

- _____. "Sir Raymond Unwin's Visit to Montreal." Letter reprinted from the *Montreal Gazette*, 31 October. *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (November 1933): 192.
- _____. "The Styles of Architecture and Style in Architecture." *Canadian Architect and Builder* (November 1903): 184-85.
- _____. "Tradition and Progress in Canadian Architecture." *Studio* 104 (1932): 82-91.
- _____. *Suburban Community Planning*. Montréal: McGill University Publications, Series XIII (Arts and Architecture), no. 7. Reprinted from *Town Planning* (April 1926).
- Rivard, Adjutor. *Chez Nous*. 1914; Québec: Librairie Garneau, 1941.
- _____. *Chez Nous (Our Old Quebec Home)*, translated by W.H. Blake. New York: George H. Doran; Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1924.
- Songs For Canadian Boys*, compiled by a committee representing the Québec Provincial Council of the Boy Scouts Association. Toronto: Macmillan, on behalf of the Montréal District Council of the Boy Scouts Association, 1932.
- Stewart, Basil. *The Land of the Maple Leaf*. London: Routledge, 1908.
- "A Study in Community Housing Near Montreal." *La Revue Municipale* (December 1927): 33-35.
- Traquair, Ramsay. "The Appreciation of Art." *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects* xx, 1 (1912): 11-17.
- _____. "Architecture and Democracy." *Canadian Bookman* (October 1919): 11-12.
- _____. "Architecture and Geography." *Atlantic Monthly* 162 (August 1938): 159-65.
- _____. "The Canadian Type." *Atlantic Monthly* 131 (June 1923): 820-26.
- _____. "The Caste System in North America." *Atlantic Monthly* 131 (March 1923): 417-23.
- _____. "The Church of St. John the Baptist, St. Jean Port Joli, Quebec." *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (February 1939): 26-34.
- _____. "The Commonwealth of the Atlantic." *Atlantic Monthly* 133 (May 1924): 602-08.

- _____. "The Cottages of Quebec." *Canadian Homes and Gardens* 3, 1 (January 1926): 13-14, 58, 60, 65.
- _____. "The Cult of the Rebel." *Atlantic Monthly* 152 (September 1933): 357-65.
- _____. *The Design of Scout Flags*. Ottawa: Dominion Headquarters, Boy Scouts Association, 1937.
- _____. "Drama and Life." *Canadian Bookman* (February 1922): 6-7, 9.
- _____. "The Education of the Architect." *Construction* (October 1919): 315-17.
- _____. "Free Verse and the Parthenon." *Canadian Bookman* (April 1919): 23-26.
- _____. "Hooked Rugs in Canada." *Canadian Geographical Journal* 26 (May 1943): 240-54.
- _____. "The Huron Mission Church and Treasure of Notre Dame de Jeune Lorette, Quebec." *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (September-November 1930): 337-45, 415-21.
- _____. "The Ideals of the Community Theatre." *Canadian Bookman* no. 3 (September 1921): 25-28.
- _____. "Laconia. III.—The Churches of Western Mani." *The Annual of the British School at Athens* XV, (Session 1908-09). London: Macmillan, n.d.
- _____. "Laconia. II.—Excavations at Sparta, 1906." *The Annual of the British School at Athens* XII (Session 1905-06). London: Macmillan, n.d.
- _____. "Laconia. I.—Mediaeval Fortresses." *The Annual of the British School at Athens* XII (Session 1905-06). London: Macmillan, n.d.
- _____. "Man's Share in Civilization." *Atlantic Monthly* 134 (October 1924): 502-08.
- _____. "The Old Architecture of French Canada." *Queen's Quarterly* 38 (Autumn 1931): 589-608.
- _____. "The Old Architecture of the Province of Québec.. *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 2, 1 (Jan-Feb 1925): 25-30.

- _____. *The Old Architecture of Québec: A Study of the Buildings Erected in New France from the Earliest Explorers to the Middle of the Nineteenth Century*. Toronto: Macmillan Co, 1947; facsimile edition, McGill University School of Architecture, 1996.
- _____. "The Old Cottages of Québec: Of Solid, direct Construction, well Adapted to the Climate, and with the Dignity that comes naturally to Simple Things free from Sham." *House Beautiful* 63 (May 1928): 612-13, 649-50, 652-53, 656.
- _____. *The Old Silver of Quebec*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1940.
- _____. "A Regiment of Women: A Plea for Equal Treatment." *Atlantic Monthly* 143 (March 1929): 343-51.
- _____. "The Royal Canadian Academy." *Canadian Forum* 1, no.3 (December 1920): 83-85.
- _____. "Women and Civilization." *Atlantic Monthly* 132 (September 1923): 289-96.
- _____. "The Old Architecture of the Province of Québec." *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (January-February 1925): 5 (unpaginated).
- _____. *The Old Architecture of Québec: A Study of the Buildings Erected in New France from the Earliest Explorers to the Middle of the Nineteenth Century*. Toronto: MacMillan, 1947; facsimile edition Montréal: McGill University School of Architecture, 1996.
- Traquair, Ramsay and C. Marius Barbeau. "The Church of Saint Jean, Island of Orleans, Quebec." *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (June 1929): 223-32.
- _____. "The Church of Sainte Famille, Island of Orleans, Que." *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 3, 3 (May-June 1926): 105-18.
- _____. "The Church of St. Pierre, Island of Orleans, Quebec." *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (February 1929): 52-64.
- Traquair, Ramsay, Olivier Maurault and A.G. Neilson. "La Conservation des monuments historiques dans la Province de Québec," *Revue trimestrielle canadienne* 27 (mars 1941): 1-23.
- Traquair, Ramsay and Frank Mears. "Public Monuments." *The Blue Blanket: An Edinburgh Civic Review* (January 1912): 68-80.

Vaillancourt, Emile. "M.R. Traquair nous révèle [sic] un patrimoine artistique oublié," in *Le Canada* 31, 250 (31 janvier 1934): 6 and 12.

Van Millingen, Alexander, assisted by Ramsay Traquair, W.S. George, and A.E. Henderson. *Byzantine Churches in Constantinople: Their History and Architecture*. London: Macmillan and Co., 1912.

"War Memorial Museum, Regina, Saskatchewan." *Construction* (September 1919): 269.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Adams, Annmarie. "'Archi-ettes' in Training: The Admission of Women to McGill's School of Architecture," *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* 21, 3 (September 1996): 72.

_____. *Architecture in the Family Way: Doctors, Houses, and Women, 1870-1900*. Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996.

_____. "Eden Smith and the Canadian Domestic Revival." *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine* XXI, 2 (March 1993).

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso, 1983.

_____. "Introduction to Part Two: Staging Antimodernism in the Age of High Capitalist Nationalism." In *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, edited by Lynda Jessup. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.

Appadurai, Arjun. "Putting Hierarchy in Its Place." In *Rereading Cultural Anthropology*, edited by George E. Marcus. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992.

Bailey, Rebecca M. *Scottish Architects' Papers: A Source Book*. Edinburgh: Rutland, 1996.

Bederman, Gail. *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995.

Belasco, Warren James. *Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1979; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

- Bell, David A. "The Unbearable Lightness of Being French: Law, Republicanism and National Identity at the End of the Old Regime." In *American Historical Review* 106, 4 (October 2001): 1215-35.
- Bendix, Regina. *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997.
- Bergdoll, Barry. *European Architecture 1750-1890*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Berger, Carl. *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970.
- _____. "The True North Strong and Free." In *Interpreting Canada's Past Volume II: After Confederation*, edited by J.M. Bumsted. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Bergeron, Claude. *Architectures du XX^e siècle au Québec*. Québec/Montréal: Musée de la Civilisation/Éditions du Méridien, 1989.
- Bland, John. "Gordon Antoine Neilson: Biography." In *Ramsay Traquair and his Successors: A Guide to the Archive*, edited by Irena Murray. Montréal: Canadian Architecture Collection and Blackader-Lauterman Library of Architecture and Art, McGill University, 1987.
- _____. "Percy Erskine Nobbs: Biography." In *Percy Erskine Nobbs and his Associates: A Guide to the Archive*, edited by Irena Murray. Montréal: Canadian Architecture Collection and Blackader-Lauterman Library of Architecture and Art, McGill University, 1986.
- _____. "Ramsay Traquair: Biography." In *Ramsay Traquair and his Successors: A Guide to the Archive*, edited by Irena Murray. Montréal: Canadian Architecture Collection and Blackader-Lauterman Library of Architecture and Art, McGill University, 1987.
- Boardman, Philip. *The Worlds of Patrick Geddes: Biologist, Town Planner, Re-educator, Peace-Warrior*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978.
- Bowe, Nicola Gordon Bowe, ed. *Art and the National Dream: The Search for Vernacular Expression in Turn-of-the-Century Design*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1993.

- Brison, Jeffrey D. "Cultural Interventions: American Corporate Philanthropy and the Construction of the Arts and Letters in Canada, 1900-1957." Ph.D. diss., Queen's University, 1998.
- British Architectural Library, Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). *Directory of British Architects 1834-1900*. Compiled by Alison Felstead, Jonathan Franklin, and Leslie Penfield. London: Mansell, 1993.
- Broude, Norma and Mary D. Garrard. *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*. New York: Icon Editions, 1992.
- _____. *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany*. New York: Harper and Row, 1982.
- Burke, Peter. *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*. np: Maurice Temple Smith, 1978; Aldershot, Hants.: Scolar Press, 1994.
- Cameron, Ross. D. "Tom Thomson, Antimodernism, and the Ideal of Manhood." *Journal of the CHA/Revue de la S.H.C.* 10 (1999): 185-208.
- Canadian Who's Who* II, 1936-37.
- Carney, Lora. "Modernists and Folk on the Lower St. Lawrence: The Problem of Folk Art." In *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, edited by Lynda Jessup. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.
- Carpenter, Carole Henderson. *Many Voices: A Study of Folklore Activities in Canada and their Role in Canadian Culture*. Ottawa: National Museum of Man Mercury Series/Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies Paper No. 26, 1979.
- Chartier, Roger. "Four Questions for Hayden White," in *On the Edge of the Cliff: History, Language, and Practices*, translated by Lydia G. Cochrane. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.
- Clifford, James. "On Ethnographic Allegory," in *Writing Culture: the Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, edited by Clifford and George E. Marcus. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.
- _____. *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988.

- _____, and George Marcus. *Writing Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.
- Cocchiara, Giuseppe. *The History of Folklore in Europe*, translated by John N. McDaniel. Turin: Editore Boringhieri, 1952; Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1981.
- Compact *Oxford English Dictionary*.
- Connor, Peter. "Cast-collecting in the nineteenth century: scholarship, aesthetics, connoisseurship." In *Rediscovering Hellenism: The Hellenic Inheritance and the English Imagination*, edited by G.W. Clarke. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Crossman, Kelly. *Architecture in Transition: From Art to Practice, 1885-1906*. Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987.
- _____. "The Influence of Scotland on Architectural Education in Canada." In *The Education of the Architect*, Proceedings of the 22nd Annual Symposium of the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain, edited by Neil Bingham. London: SAH, 1993.
- Cumming, Elizabeth. *Phoebe Anna Traquair, 1852-1936*. Edinburgh: Trustees of the National Galleries of Scotland, 1993.
- _____. "Phoebe Anna Traquair HRSA (1857-1936) and her Contribution to Arts and Crafts in Edinburgh." Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1986.
- Cumming, Elizabeth and Wendy Kaplan. *The Arts and Crafts Movement*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1991.
- Davey, Peter. *Arts and Crafts Architecture: The Search for Earthly Paradise*. London: The Architectural Press, 1980.
- Dowsett, Kathleen. "The Women's Art Association of Canada and its Designs on Canadian Handicrafts, 1898-1939." Master's thesis, Queen's University, 1998.
- Driedger, Leo, ed. *The Canadian Ethnic Mosaic: A Quest for Identity*. Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1978.
- du Prey, Pierre de la Ruffinière. *Sir John Soane. Catalogues of Architectural Drawings in the Victoria and Albert Museum*. London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1985.

- Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th edition.
- Fabian, Johannes. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983.
- Gentilcore, R. Louis, ed. *Historical Atlas of Canada, Volume II: The Land Transformed 1800-1891*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993.
- Gerson, Carole. *A Purer Taste: The Writing and Reading of Fiction in English in Nineteenth-Century Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989.
- Girouard, Mark. *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman*. New Haven: Yale, 1981.
- _____. *Sweetness and Light: The "Queen Anne" Movement 1860-1900*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977.
- Glendinning, Miles, Ranald MacInnes, and Aonghus MacKechnie. *A History of Scottish Architecture from the Renaissance to the Present Day*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996.
- Gossage, Peter. *Families in Transition: Industry and Population in Nineteenth-Century Saint-Hyacinthe*. Studies on the History of Québec. Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999.
- Gournay, Isabelle. "The First Leaders of McGill's School of Architecture: Stewart Henbest Capper, Percy Nobbs, and Ramsay Traquair." *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* 21, 3 (September 1996): 60-66.
- _____. "Prestige and Professionalism: The Contribution of American Architects." In *Montreal Metropolis 1880-1930*. Toronto/Montréal: Stoddart/Canadian Centre for Architecture, 1998.
- _____, and France Vanlaethem, editors. *Montreal Metropolis 1880-1930*. Toronto/Montréal: Stoddart/Canadian Centre for Architecture, 1998.
- Gowans, Alan. *Building Canada: An Architectural History of Canadian Life*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1966.
- Gray, A. Stuart. *Edwardian Architecture: A Biographical Dictionary*. London: Gerald Duckworth, 1985; Ware, Herts.: Wordsworth Editions, 1988.

- Handler, Richard. *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988.
- _____. "On Having a Culture: Nationalism and the Preservation of Québec's *Patrimoine*." In *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Museum Culture*, edited by George W. Stocking, Jr. Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1985.
- Harris, R. Cole, ed. *Historical Atlas of Canada, Volume 1: From the Beginning to 1800*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, n.d.
- Hill, Charles C. *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation*. Ottawa/Toronto: National Gallery of Canada/McClelland & Stewart, 1995.
- Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition*. 1983; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Canto Edition), 1992.
- Horsman, Reginald. *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism*. Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1981.
- Hunt, Geoffrey. *John M. Lyle: Toward a Canadian Architecture*. Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1982.
- Jacobson, Matthew Frye. *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.
- Jessup, Lynda. "Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: An Introduction." In *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, edited by Lynda Jessup. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.
- _____. "Bushwackers in the Gallery: Antimodernism and the Group of Seven." In *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, edited by Lynda Jessup. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.
- _____. "Canadian Artists, Railways, the State and 'The Business of Becoming a Nation.'" Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Toronto, 1992.
- _____. "Moving Pictures and Costume Songs at the 1927 'Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art, Native and Modern.'" *Canadian Journal of Film Studies*, 11, 1 (Spring 2002, forthcoming).
- _____, ed. *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.

- Jirat-Wasiutyński, Wojtêch. "Van Gogh in the South: Antimodernism and Exoticism in the Arlesian Paintings." In *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, edited by Lynda Jessup. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.
- Johnson, Donald Leslie and Donald Langmead. *Makers of 20th Century Modern Architecture: A Bio-Critical Sourcebook*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997.
- Kalman, Harold. *A History of Canadian Architecture*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Kaplan, Wendy. "The Vernacular in America, 1890-1920: Ideology and Design." In *Art and the National Dream: The Search for Vernacular Expression in Turn-of-the-Century Design*, edited by Nicola Gordon Bowe. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1993.
- Kelly, Robin D.G. "Notes on Deconstructing 'The Folk.'" *American Historical Review* 97, 5 (December 1992): 1400-08.
- Kines, Gary Bret. "Chief Man-of-Many-Sides: John Murray Gibbon and his contributions to the development of tourism and the arts in Canada." Master's thesis, Carleton University, 1988.
- Lane, Barbara Miller. *National Romanticism and Modern Architecture in Germany and the Scandinavian Countries*. *Modern Architecture and Cultural Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Lears, T.J. Jackson. *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920*. New York: Pantheon, 1981; Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994.
- Liscombe, Rhodri Windsor. "Nationalism or Cultural Imperialism: The Château style in Canada." *Architectural History: Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain* 36 (1993): 127-144.
- Little, J.I. *Crofters and Habitants: Settler Society, Economy, and Culture in a Quebec Township, 1848-1881*. *Studies on the History of Québec*. (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991).
- Lubbock, James. *The Tyranny of Taste: The Politics of Architecture and Design in Britain, 1550-1960*. New Haven: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for British Art, 1995.

- Macdonald, George. "Gerard Baldwin Brown, 1849-1932" (obituary). *Proceedings of the British Academy, 1935*. London: Humphrey Milford, published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 1935.
- Macleod, Robert. *Style and Society: Architectural Ideology in Britain, 1835-1914*. London: RIBA Publications, 1971.
- MacMillan, G.A. "A Short History of the British School at Athens, 1886-1911." *The Annual of the British School at Athens XVII, Session 1910-1911*. London: Macmillan & co., n.d.
- Macmillan, Duncan. "'The Busie Humm of Men': Visions of the City in Scottish Art." In *The Architecture of Scottish Cities*, edited by Deborah Mays. East Linton, Scotland: Tuckwell Press, 1997.
- Mangan, J.A. and James Walvin, eds. *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987.
- Marcus, George E., ed. *Rereading Cultural Anthropology*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989.
- Markus, Thomas A. *Buildings and Power: Freedom and Control in the Origin of Modern Building Types*. London: Routledge, 1993.
- McCarthy, Kathleen D. *Women's Culture: American Philanthropy and Art, 1830-1930*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.
- McKay, Ian McKay, ed. *The Challenge of Modernity: A Reader on Post-Confederation Canada*. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1992.
- _____. "Handicrafts and the Logic of 'Commercial Antimodernism,': The Nova Scotia Case." In *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, edited by Lynda Jessup. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.
- _____. *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia*. Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994.
- McKinstry, Sam. *Rowand Anderson: "The Premier Architect of Scotland."* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991.

- McNaughton, Janet Elizabeth. "A Study of the CPR-Sponsored Québec Folk Song and Handicrafts Festivals, 1927-1930." Master's thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1982.
- Meller, Hellen. *Patrick Geddes: Social Evolutionist and City Planner*. London: Routledge, 1990.
- Metcalf, Thomas R. *An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.
- Moore, William D. "The Masonic Lodge Room, 1870-1930: A Sacred Space of Masculine Spiritual Hierarchy." In *Gender, Class, and Shelter*, edited by Elizabeth Collins Cromley and Carter L. Hudgins. Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture v. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1995.
- Moray, Gerta. "Emily Carr and the Traffic in Native Images." In *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, edited by Lynda Jessup. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.
- Morey, Carl. "Nationalism and Commerce: Canadian Folk Music in the 1920s." *Canadian Issues* XX (1998): 34-44.
- Morgan, Norma. "F. Cleveland Morgan and the Decorative Arts Collection in the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts." Master's thesis, Concordia University, 1985.
- Moyles, R.G. and Doug Owram, *Imperial Dreams and Colonial Realities: British Views of Canada, 1880-1914*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988.
- Murray, Irena, ed. *Percy Erskine Nobbs and his Associates: A Guide to the Archive*. Montréal: Canadian Architecture Collection and Blackader-Lauterman Library of Architecture and Art, McGill University, 1986.
- _____. *Ramsay Traquair and his Successors: A Guide to the Archive*. Montréal: Canadian Architecture collection and Blackader-Lauterman Library of Architecture and Art, McGill University, 1987.
- Naismith, Robert J. "Dash of Genius on City Skyline." *The Scotsman*, 23 December, year unknown.
- Noppen, Luc and Lucie K. Morisset. "A la recherche d'identités: Usages et propos du recyclage du passé dans l'architecture au Québec." In *Architecture, forme urbaine et identité collective*, edited by Luc Noppen. Sillery, QC: Septentrion, 1995.

- Nowry, Lawrence. *Man of Mana: Marius Barbeau*. Toronto: NC Press, 1995.
- Nurse, Andrew. "Tradition and Modernity: The Cultural Work of Marius Barbeau." Ph.D. dissertation, Queen's University, 1997.
- Ogata, Amy. *Art Nouveau and the Social Vision of Modern Living. Modern Architecture and Cultural Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- _____. "Artisans and Art Nouveau in Fin-de-siècle Belgium: Primitivism and Nostalgia." In *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, edited by Lynda Jessup (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).
- Pemble, John. *The Mediterranean Passion: Victorians and Edwardians in the South*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987.
- Pevsner, Nikolaus. *Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius* (Faber and Faber, 1936; London: Penguin Books, 1960).
- Phillips, Ruth B. "Performing the Native Woman: Primitivism and Mimicry in Early Twentieth-Century Visual Culture." In *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, edited by Lynda Jessup. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.
- Preziosi, Donald. *Rethinking Art History: Meditations on a Coy Science*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.
- Richardson, Margaret. *Architects of the Arts and Crafts Movement*. London: Trefoil Books, 1983.
- Roberts, G.D. And Arthur L. Tunnel, eds. *A Standard Dictionary of Canadian Biography: The Canadian Who was Who*, vol 1. Toronto: Trans-Canada Press, 1934.
- Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. *National Monuments Record of Scotland Jubilee: A Guide to the Collections*. Edinburgh: National Monuments Record of Scotland, 1991.
- Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993; New York: Vintage Books, 1994.
- Savage, Peter. "An Examination of the Work of Sir Robert Lorimer." Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1973.

- _____. *Lorimer and the Edinburgh Crafts Designers*. London: Paul Harris, 1980.
- Schoenauer, Norbert. "Percy Erskine Nobbs: Teacher and Builder of Architecture." *Fontanus from the Collections of McGill University IX* (1996): 49-50.
- Shand-Tucci, Douglass. *Boston Bohemia 1881-1900; Ralph Adams Cram: Life and Architecture*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995.
- Shubert, Howard et al. "An Interview with John Bland." In *John Bland at Eighty: A Tribute*, edited by Irena Murray and Norbert Schoenauer. Montréal: McGill University, 1991.
- Simmins, Geoffrey. *Documents in Canadian Architecture* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1992).
- _____. *Ontario Association of Architects: A Centennial History*. Toronto: Ontario Association of Architects, 1989.
- Sinclair, Fiona. *Scotstyle: 150 Years of Scottish Architecture*. Edinburgh: Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland and Scottish Academic Press, 1984.
- Sutcliffe, Anthony, "Montreal Metropolis." In *Montreal Metropolis 1880-1930*, edited by Isabelle Gournay and France Vanlaetham. Montréal/Toronto: Canadian Centre for Architecture/Stoddart Publishing, 1998.
- Thomas, Christopher. "'Canadian Castles'? The Question of National Styles in Architecture Revisited." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 32, 1 (Spring 1997): 5-27.
- Thompson, Allison. "A Worthy Place in the Art of our Country: The Women's Art Association of Canada, 1887-1987." Master's thesis, Carleton University, 1989.
- Trofimenkoff, Susan Mann. *Action Française: French Canadian nationalism in the twenties*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975.
- _____. *The Dream of Nation: A Social and Intellectual History of Québec*. Toronto: Gage, 1983.
- Turner, Frank M. *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.
- Upton, Dell. *Architecture in the United States*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

- Vanlaethem, France. "Beautification versus Modernization." In *Montréal Metropolis 1880-1930*, edited by Isabelle Gournay and France Vanlaethem. Montréal/Toronto: Canadian Centre for Architecture/Stoddart, 1998.
- _____. "Building the Metropolis," in *Montreal Metropolis 1880-1930*, edited by Isabelle Gournay and France Vanlaethem. Toronto/Montréal: Stoddart/Canadian Centre for Architecture, 1998.
- _____. "Modernité et régionalisme dans l'architecture au Québec: Du nationalisme canadien de Percy E. Nobbs au nationalisme canadien-français des années 1940," in *Architecture, forme urbaine et identité collective*, edited by Luc Noppen. Sillery, QC: Septentrion, 1995.
- Van Slyck, Abigail A. "Mañana, Mañana: Racial Stereotypes and the Anglo Rediscovery of the Southwest's Vernacular Architecture, 1890-1920." In *Gender, Class, and Shelter*, edited by Elizabeth Collins Cromley and Carter L. Hudgins. Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, v. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995.
- Vipond, Mary. "The Nationalist Network: English Canada's Intellectuals and Artists in the 1920s." In *Interpreting Canada's Past, Volume II: After Confederation*, edited by J.M. Bumsted. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Vlach, John Michael. "'Snug Li'l House with Flue and Oven': Nineteenth-Century Reforms in Plantation Slave Housing." In *Gender, Class, and Shelter*, edited by Elizabeth Collins Cromley and Carter L. Hudgins. Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, v. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995.
- Wagg, Susan. "The McGill Architecture of Percy Erskine Nobbs. Master's thesis, Concordia University, 1979.
- _____. *Percy Erskine Nobbs: Architect, Artist, Craftsman*. Montréal: McCord Museum/McGill-Queen's University Press, 1982.
- Wang, Ning. *Tourism and Modernity: A Sociological Analysis*. Tourism Social Science Series. Amsterdam: Pergamon, 2000.
- Wells, Camille. "Old Claims and New Demands: Vernacular Architecture Studies Today." In *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture II*, edited by Camille Wells. Columbia, MI: University of Missouri Press, 1986.
- Westley, Margaret M. *Remembrance of Grandeur: The Anglo-Protestant Elite of Montréal 1900-1950*. Montréal: Éditions Libre Expression, 1990.

- White, Hayden. *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987.
- _____. *Metahistory*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973.
- _____. *Tropics of Discourse*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.
- Williams, Raymond. *The Country and the City*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1973; London: Hogarth, 1993.
- Wilson, Chris. *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997.
- Wiseman, T.P. *A Short History of the British School at Rome*. London: British School at Rome, 1990.
- Wright, Donald A. "W.D. Lighthall and David Ross McCord: Antimodernism and English-Canadian Imperialism, 1880s-1918." *Revue d'études canadiennes/Journal of Canadian Studies* 32, 2 (Summer 1997): 134-153.

ILLUSTRATIONS

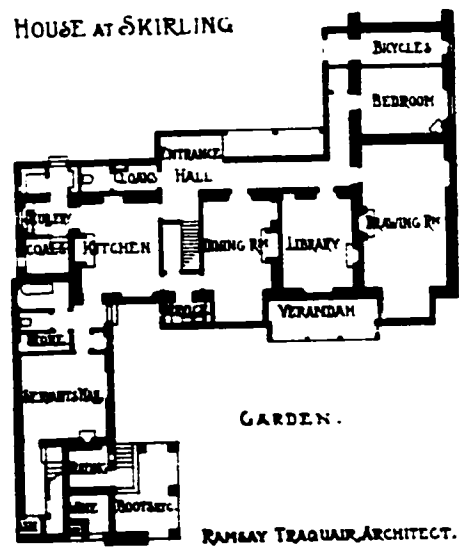
(Full sources are given in the List of Illustrations)



- ..1 Traquair, "Six Cottages to be erected at Bannockburn for the Garden City Association (Scottish Branch)", before 1908.



1.2 A House at Skirling, Peebleshire, Scotland, c. 1905-08.



1.3 Skirling House, Plan.

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

**ProQuest Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600**

UMI[®]

NOTE TO USERS

This reproduction is the best copy available.

UMI[®]

BUILDING ON SOCIAL POWER
PERCY ERSKINE NOBBS, RAMSAY TRAQUAIR, AND THE PROJECT OF CONSTRUCTING
A CANADIAN NATIONAL CULTURE
IN THE EARLY DECADES OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

by

Nicola Justine Spasoff

A thesis submitted to the Department of Art
in conformity with the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Queen's University

Kingston, Ontario, Canada

April, 2002

copyright ©Nicola Justine Spasoff, 2002



**National Library
of Canada**

**Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services**

**395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada**

**Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada**

**Acquisitions et
services bibliographiques**

**395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada**

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-69394-5

Canada

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the contribution of the Scottish-born architects Percy Erskine Nobbs (1875-1964) and Ramsay Traquair (1874-1952), professors in the School of Architecture at McGill University in Montréal, to a nationalist discourse that emerged among the Anglophone intellectual elite in Canada in the early decades of the twentieth century. Beginning with an examination of their backgrounds in the Arts and Crafts Movement and their antimodernist leanings—their conviction that modern society had lost a quality of authenticity found in pre-modern cultures—this thesis examines the ideas underpinning their study of vernacular architecture and their identification of historical architecture in rural Québec as the embodiment of authentic folk culture.

I examine how Nobbs and Traquair used this seemingly traditional culture, which to them existed in the past, to enrich what they saw as their own correspondingly “modern” society. Both were involved with the popularization, institutionalization, and nationalization of Québec traditional culture as the folk history of both English Canada and Québec. A preoccupation of many intellectual elites in the 1920s and 30s, the project had both nationalist and commercial ends. At the same time, both maintained at various times that in the historic architecture of Québec lay the key to developing a distinctly Canadian style. Exploring their ideas about a national architecture in light of their views about race and ethnicity in Canada, I argue that their thoughts about the suitability of particular styles for specific building types served to reassert the cultural authority of the Anglo-Canadian elite in the face of a perceived threat posed by the country’s increasingly numerous non-British population.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am extremely grateful to Lynda Jessup for her always-incisive comments and many suggestions; they have helped to make this dissertation much better than it would have been without her. Not only that, she has lent me stacks of articles, photographs, and books from her collection, for which I am indebted to her.

Many archivists and librarians at various collections cheerfully helped me find what I needed if it was there to be found. In particular, Daniella Rohan's assistance made my time at the Canadian Architecture Collection very productive. I also thank the staff at the National Monuments Record of Scotland and especially at the University of Edinburgh Special Collections, and at the Saskatchewan Archives Board, for particular guidance and enthusiasm.

I am grateful to Annmarie Adams for her time and insights during several conversations at McGill, and also for helping me make contact with several people who had something to tell me about Nobbs or his houses. In that connection, my thanks are due to Pam Miller and Isabelle Gales, and to especially Susan Bronson for sending me a copy of Nobbs's Memoirs. I am grateful to Bill Young for showing us Greenwood; those letters are awfully tempting. Chris Thomas commented on a paper that represented some of my early thoughts on this topic. I also thank Annmarie Adams (again), Gordon Smith, John Osborne, Janice Helland, and Vojtěch Jirat-Wasiutyński, the members of my examining committee, for their insights; I hope I shall eventually have the opportunity to address their thoughtful critiques.

In Edinburgh, I owe my gratitude to a number of people. My understanding of the architectural environment in turn-of-the-century Edinburgh was enriched by my conversations with John Lowrey, Hugh Crawford, and Robert Naismith. I remember afternoon tea in Robert Naismith's flat in Ramsay Garden with particular fondness. Elizabeth Cumming was extremely generous with her knowledge, and kindly supplied me with copies of the few letters from Phoebe Traquair to Nobbs that she has in her possession.

I was fortunate to receive financial support from the Ontario Ministry of Education and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, as well as from Queen's, without all of which the last few years would have been a great deal gloomier. A travel grant from Queen's made my trips to Regina, Edinburgh, and London possible, and a thesis writing bursary helped near the end (although not as near the end as I'd hoped).

The support of my friends has been unstinting. Anne Dymond, Christine O'Malley, Erin Blake and I were all writing together at one time or another, albeit in four or five countries and far too many cities; I'm grateful for their solidarity. Cammie McAtee, in addition to providing support and friendship, gave me a place to lay my head in Montréal on several research trips. Erin Blake did the same in London. Without Maiju and Christopher, I think we would still be packing up our apartment in Baltimore; we're fortunate in their friendship. I thank all of my friends for their forbearance; I've been a terrible correspondent for too many years now.

In the last few months, Maja-Lisa has provided hours of loving child care, not to mention doing much of our grocery shopping and cooking many a meal for us. My heartfelt thanks to her and to David for their support. My parents, and especially my father, have also come from Ottawa on a number of occasions to entertain Torbjörn and give us time to work. I thank them from the bottom of my heart, for that and everything else they've given me.

Torbjörn has already had more dissertation in his almost-three years than most people want in a lifetime. Although his arrival has certainly delayed this moment, he has brought me immeasurable joy. A fair trade; the presence of a small child makes it impossible to forget that there is more to life than a dissertation. To Erik, I hardly know what to say. He has been infinitely supportive. He has provided love and insights, while his own dissertation has had to wait far too long. It's his turn now; I hope I can manage half as well.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	page number
Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
List of Illustrations	v
List of Abbreviations	ix
Introduction	1
Chapter One: The Making of Imperialist Antimodernists	44
Chapter Two: "Simple Things Free from Sham"	75
Chapter Three: "The Most Purely Canadian People of the Dominion"	128
Chapter Four: "Local Needs, Local Materials, and Local Climate"	166
Chapter Five: "Modern Canadian Conditions"	189
Chapter Six: "National and Imperial Tradition"	223
Conclusion: "Tradition, Duly Sifted"	262
Bibliography	307
Illustrations	327
Vita	366

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Sources are given in parenthesis. Where none is listed, the photograph was taken by the author.

Projects listed by Nobbs between 1910 and 1944 are by the firm of Nobbs and Hyde.

Plate #:

- 1.1 Traquair, "Six Cottages to be erected at Bannockburn for the Garden City Association (Scottish Branch)", before 1908. (James Nicoll, ed. *Domestic Architecture in Scotland: Illustrations of Scottish Domestic Work in Recent Years*. Aberdeen: Daily Journal Offices, 1908.)
- 1.2 A House at Skirling, Peebleshire, Scotland, c. 1905-08. (Alex Koch, ed. *Academy Architecture and Architectural Review* 34 [1908]: 71.)
- 1.3 Skirling House, Plan. (*Academy Architecture and Architectural Review*, p. 65.)
- 1.4 Skirling House, View of first floor hall from West. (Photo, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: National Monuments Record of Scotland [RCAHMS], No. C 20106.)
- 1.5 Skirling House, Detail of Ironwork of House Garden Railing. (Photo, RCAHMS.)
- 1.6 Skirling House, Detail of North West Door. (Photo, RCAHMS.)
- 1.7 Skirling House, Detail of Stair Newel. (Photo, RCAHMS.)
- 1.8 Traquair, First Church of Christ, Scientist, Kinnear Road, Edinburgh, 1910-11.
- 1.9 First Church of Christ, Scientist, Detail of Organ.
- 1.10 First Church of Christ, Scientist, Detail of Porch Gate.
- 2.1 Traquair, measured drawings of Ste. Marguerite de l'Ecosse de Blairfindie, 1932. (*The Old Architecture of Québec* [Toronto: Macmillan, 1947], p. 160.)
- 2.2 House near Beaumont, photograph showing utility pole. (*The Old Architecture of Québec*, p. 54.)

- 2.3 A.Y. Jackson and Arthur Lismer sketching the stone tower of the old seigneurial mill, Ste.-Famille, Île d'Orléans, 1925. Note the house in the background. (Contact print of archival photo, Canadian Museum of Civilization [CMC] No. 66130.)
- 2.4 "House of Odilon Desgagné; barn with thatched roof and windmill" (Barbeau's caption), Île-aux-Coudres, 1925. (Contact print of archival photo, CMC No. 66162.)
- 2.5 "Madame Hilaire Demeules, et Mlle Virginie Demeules (the elder), beating flax" (Barbeau's caption), Île-aux-Coudres, 1925. (Contact print of archival photo, CMC No. 66182.)
- 2.6 "M. F.X. Lemelin, with old fashioned utensils, chair dated 1811" (Barbeau's caption), Argenteuil, Île d'Orléans, 1925. (Contact print of archival photo, CMC No. 65686.)
- 5.1 Nobbs, McGill University Union, 1906. (Archival photo, Canadian Architecture Collection, Blackader-Lauterman Library, McGill University [CAC].)
- 5.2 Nobbs, Proposal for a Church at Brandon, Manitoba, 1909. (Watercolour perspective, CAC, 090; 5/1909.)
- 5.3 Nobbs, Church at Brandon, Interior. (Watercolour perspective, CAC.)
- 5.4 Nobbs, Proposal for the Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul, elevation to Sherbrooke Street, Montréal, 1920. (Drawing, CAC, 0115; 1920.)
- 5.5 Nobbs, St. Andrew and St. Paul, West Elevation. (Drawing, CAC.)
- 5.6 Cram, Wentworth and Goodhue, Design for All Saints', Ashmont, 1891. (Douglas Shand-Tucci, *Boston Bohemia 1881-1900*; *Ralph Adams Cram: Life and Architecture* [Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995], p. 116.)
- 5.7 Nobbs, Aspect drawings for sunlight. ("Planning for Sunlight", *Journal of the Town Planning Institute* [April 1922], p. 8.)
- 5.8 Nobbs, Building Scheme for the University of Alberta, 1912. (CAC photo of original watercolour presentation drawing in the University of Alberta Archives.)
- 5.9 Nobbs, Proposal for X-block Community Housing Estate for Montréal, 1936. (Drawing, CAC, [594]; 5/1934-12/1937.)

- 5.10 Nobbs, Proposed New Birks Building, Saskatoon, 1928. (Drawing, CAC, 415; 2/1929-9/1929.)
- 6.1 Nobbs, Colby House, Montréal, 1905. (Watercolour perspective, CAC, 035; 1905-6.)
- 6.2 Nobbs, Todd House, Senneville, Québec, 1911-13. (Watercolour perspective, CAC, 63; 11/1911-7/1912.)
- 6.3 Wiring, Heating, and Drain Plans, showing three floors of Todd House. (Drawing, CAC.)
- 6.4 Nobbs, A.H. Scott House, Dorval, Québec, 1922. (Archival photograph, CAC.)
- 6.5 Plans for Scott House. (Drawing, CAC, 298; 6/1922-9/1923.)
- 6.6 Nobbs, Elmhurst Dairy office building, Nôtre-Dame-de-Grâce, Québec, 1924. (photograph, CAC).
- 6.7 Nobbs, St. Paul's Church, Gaspé, Québec, 1940 (watercolour perspective, CAC, 589; 1/1938-3/1955.)
- 6.8 Nobbs, Proposed Cottage for Dr. Adami, Windermere, B.C., watercolour presentation drawings, 1906. (CAC, 050; 2/1906.)
- 6.9 Nobbs, Colby House, Drawing-room fireplace, archival photograph. (CAC)
- 6.10 Nobbs, Nobbs House, Westmount, Québec, 1914.
- 6.11 Nobbs House, archival photograph showing pencilled-in additions (not executed), undated (CAC).
- 6.12 Nobbs House, carved stone lintel over front door.
- 6.13 Nobbs, Proposal for Belvedere Terrace, Westmount, Québec, 1925. (CAC, 316; 9/1925-2/1927.)
- 6.14 Nobbs, No. 2, Grove Park, Westmount, Québec, 1928-29. (*Studio* 104 [1932]: 89.)
- 6.15 Nobbs, Proposal for Winnipeg City Hall, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1912-13. (CAC, 095; 1912/13.)

- 6.16 Nobbs, Proposal for War Memorial Museum, Regina, Saskatchewan, 1919 (CAC, 170; 9/1919-1/1920.)
- 7.1 Buildings on the future Place Royal, Québec City, before restoration: Hotel Louis XIV. (Richard Handler, "On Having a Culture: Nationalism and the Preservation of Québec's *Patrimoine*" in *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture*, ed. George W. Stocking, Jr. [Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1985], p. 206.)
- 7.2 Buildings on Place Royal, after restoration: The Dumont and Le Picart Houses. (Handler, "On Having a Culture," p. 207.)

ABBREVIATIONS

AIA	American Institute of Architects
ARIBA	Associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects
CAB	<i>Canadian Architect and Builder</i>
CAC	Canadian Architecture Collection (Blackader-Lauterman Library, McGill University)
CMC	Canadian Museum of Civilization
CNR	Canadian National Railway
CPR	Canadian Pacific Railway
CSL	Canada Steamship Lines
FRIBA	Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects
JRAIC	<i>Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada</i>
JRIBA	<i>Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects</i>
LCC	London County Council
MMFA	Montréal Museum of Fine Art
MUA	McGill University Archives
MUP	McGill University Publications
OAA	Ontario Association of Architects
PQAA	Province of Québec Association of Architects
RAIC	Royal Architectural Institute of Canada
RCAHMS	The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: National Monuments Record of Scotland
RIBA	Royal Institute of British Architects
SAB	Saskatchewan Archives Board

INTRODUCTION

THIS DISSERTATION contributes to an understanding of the intellectual and ideological complexity of architectural history, theory and practice in Canada in the first half of the twentieth century. In examining the contribution of certain architectural professionals to an emerging nationalist discourse in this period, I shed light on a number of phenomena that help to reveal the workings of an Anglophone elite culture in early-twentieth century Canada. These include the responses of those elites to modernity, and how, as part of their project of shaping the nation, they reproduced and helped to institutionalize certain social relations in the country.

In this sense, my work is part of a broader phenomenon occurring in art history and across the humanities and social sciences; in common with many others, the discipline of art history has of late been undergoing a period of intense self-criticism, which in turn has fostered increasing interest in the study of art and architecture as expressions of social power. Perhaps most cataclysmically in this connection, the idea of authoritative knowledge itself has been called into question. Although many such critiques are now themselves being challenged, the notion that art history, for example, does not simply describe its object, but rather plays an important rôle in constituting it, has come to be widely accepted.¹

¹See, for example, Donald Preziosi, *Rethinking Art History: Meditations on a Coy Science* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989). Other disciplinary critiques include Hayden White, *Metahistory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), *Tropics of Discourse* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), and *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987); Johannes Fabian, (continued...)

This radical shift in thinking about the construction of bodies of knowledge demands new ways of interpreting how such knowledge is constituted. Through this endeavour, scholars have gained new understandings, not only of objects of study, but also of the investigators who have examined them, with those that concern this dissertation being primarily art and architectural historians and ethnologists. At the same time, art and architectural historians have begun increasingly to study the material production of groups previously excluded by the discipline, though their work may have found a niche in the scholarship of anthropologists, ethnologists, or folklorists. With this expansion of a long-standing canon has come a need to understand the social relations that have historically been inherent in the production of such work, in its collection, and in the act of studying and writing about it. In this connection, an expanding range of categories of analysis, among them class, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality—operating both separately and in complex intersection with one another—have come to provide both new questions and new ways of approaching the old questions. And in addition to their utility in shedding light on the social relations involved in the material production of traditionally-excluded groups, scholars have found these tools useful in adding new insights to the ways the discipline has conventionally interpreted canonic works of art.²

¹(...continued)

Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); and James Clifford and George Marcus, *Writing Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). For a recent critique of White's analysis see Roger Chartier, "Four Questions for Hayden White," in *On the Edge of the Cliff: History, Language, and Practices*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), pp. 28-38.

²For example, see Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, *Feminism and Art History*:
(continued...)

Applying these categories of analysis to artistic production can provide remarkable insights into broader histories—social, cultural, political, religious, or economic—as it does in the following few examples, in which sophisticated investigations of building types expand the breadth of understanding beyond what conventional readings of architecture provide.

Thomas A. Markus, for example, examines the social relations inherent in the new building types that arose in Europe in the century centring on the year 1800.³ He reveals the extent to which relations of power and what he calls relations of bonds (those relations not determined by social forces) were mapped out—the former strengthened and the latter impeded—in three general classes of building: those designed to shape relations between people (such as schools, hospitals, and prisons for the powerless, but also the clubs, assembly rooms and hotels that the rich built for themselves, and the buildings for hygiene that crossed class lines); those designed for the production of knowledge (such as libraries, museums, art galleries, and lecture theatres); and those designed for the production and exchange of goods (mills, shops, and markets).⁴ His analysis provides a new way of understanding these types, and the modern buildings that are their descendants, as spaces designed to reproduce and ensure the continuation of asymmetries

²(...continued)

Questioning the Litany (New York: Harper and Row, 1982) and *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History* (New York: Icon Editions, 1992). These collections include essays that examine the art of women traditionally excluded from the canon, and others that employ the notion of gender in other ways, for example in feminist analyses of works within the canon.

³Thomas A. Markus, *Buildings and Power: Freedom and Control in the Origin of Modern Building Types* (London: Routledge, 1993).

⁴Markus, *Buildings and Power*, p. xx.

of power in society.

Using gender as a category of analysis in the study of architecture can provide insight into the relations between the sexes, and how these relations are played out in the built environment. In her analysis of English domestic architecture in the last decades of the nineteenth century, Annmarie Adams reveals that middle-class women, together with health professionals, played a primary rôle in the shaping of late-Victorian domestic space, even while women's bodies were themselves identified as prime sources of disease and danger.⁵ The late-nineteenth century house, she argues, was not the sheltered and essentially private domestic haven it has conventionally been seen to be, but a battleground on which public debates were waged about health, hygiene, and the position of women in society. At the same time, William D. Moore argues, the new emphasis on the masculine space of the Masonic lodge in the United States in the sixty years beginning with the same period as Adams's study reflected a new uncertainty about the position of males in society, in an era when social changes brought about by transformations in the domains of religion and industry seemed to be threatening traditionally masculine values in the world outside the lodge.⁶

Race and ethnicity also provide a lens through which to achieve a nuanced understanding of the built environment and the societies that build it. Abigail Van Slyck

⁵Annmarie Adams, *Architecture in the Family Way: Doctors, Houses, and Women, 1870-1900* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996).

⁶William D. Moore, "The Masonic Lodge Room, 1870-1930: A Sacred Space of Masculine Spiritual Hierarchy," in *Gender, Class, and Shelter, Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture V*, ed. Elizabeth Collins Cromley and Carter L. Hudgins (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), pp. 26-39.

sheds important light on the development of what architectural historians had conventionally identified as the Spanish Colonial Revival in the Southwestern United States of the turn of the last century by analysing the relationship between the Anglo-Americans who found inspiration in the southwest vernacular and the culture and people they sought to revive.⁷ Predicated as it was on “racial stereotypes and an Anglo sense of racial superiority,” she demonstrates that the “revival” was really, in common with many such projects occurring at the same period, an “*invention* of the Southwest as a fictive landscape that was constructed by Anglo-American newcomers.”⁸ As she notes, Van Slyck bases her conclusions on her observations about the dominant culture in this relationship. Analysis of subordinate cultures can, of course, be equally revealing. To this end, for example, John Michael Vlach investigates the reforms in slave housing effected by slave owners in the decades before the civil war, the same period, he notes, in which the possibility of eventual freedom (except by escape) was being steadily revoked by new laws.⁹ Vlach analyses responses of slaves to the improved domestic conditions provided by plantation owners in a cynical attempt to manufacture contentment among the slave population. He concludes that slaves took advantage of these material reforms to construct stronger social spaces for themselves, with “important, if vulnerable, family ties .

⁷Abigail A. Van Slyck, “Mañana, Mañana: Racial Stereotypes and the Anglo Rediscovery of the Southwest’s Vernacular Architecture, 1890-1920,” in *Gender, Class, and Shelter*, pp. 95-108. See also Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997).

⁸Van Slyck, “Mañana, Mañana,” p. 95.

⁹John Michael Vlach, “‘Snug Li’l House with Flue and Oven’: Nineteenth-Century Reforms in Plantation Slave Housing,” in *Gender, Class, and Shelter*, pp. 118-29.

. . . distinctive art forms, and . . . powerful and long-lasting religious traditions."¹⁰

Not surprisingly, discussions of race and ethnicity have also figured prominently in colonial and post-colonial studies, among them, in the field of architectural history, Thomas R. Metcalf's *An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj*.¹¹ Metcalf examines how architectural forms adapted and developed by the British in India manifested British political authority in the colony, and also how these colonial buildings contributed to the discourse of empire in the later nineteenth century. As Metcalf observes, the British in India began by expressing their domination through the use of architectural forms that drew primarily on European classicism. After the uprising of 1857, however, they began to draw upon India's historical styles in an attempt "to construct for themselves a notion of empire in which they were not mere foreign conquerors . . . but legitimate, almost indigenous rulers, linked directly to the Mughals and hence to India's own past."¹²

Although by the later-nineteenth century it was not Britain, but rather Canadian governments and their architects that were making decisions about official buildings for Canada, such a study is nonetheless relevant to the study of architecture in early-twentieth century Canada. As I discuss in succeeding chapters, many prominent and powerful Anglo-Canadians at the last century's turn had themselves been born and

¹⁰Vlach, "Snug Li'l House," p. 127.

¹¹Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

¹²Metcalf, "Imperial Vision," p. 56.

educated in Britain and were strongly imperialist. The question of how Canada should be shaped as a nation and how its myriad peoples could be assimilated into that “imagined community” was a lively one, and for architects and patrons the choice of style for the Dominion’s architecture was key.¹³ In contrast to India, Canada was a settler colony. By the early-twentieth century, its indigenous population had been reduced to a tiny minority and entirely excluded from power; Aboriginals remained in the position of colonials even after the nation had shaken off that status. Notions of imperialism and Canadian nationalism were inextricably linked in the early part of the twentieth century, and, for some, beyond.¹⁴ Many people sought to express the idea of a strong and independent Canada within a strong empire, and Metcalf’s observations of India ring true for the Canadian case in the first decades of the twentieth century:

[T]he choice between styles did not turn solely, or even primarily, upon aesthetic concerns. . . . Such decisions involved as well larger conceptions of national identity and purpose. Indeed, by providing a vocabulary for the consideration of these questions, the architectural debates themselves defined and helped shape Britain’s sense of itself and of its imperial mission. In India, and in colonies elsewhere, the choice of styles, the arrangement of space within a building, and of course the decision to erect a particular structure, all testified . . . to a vision of empire.¹⁵

For members of the Anglo-Canadian elite a half-century or more later, the choice of architectural style, whether for a bank or a provincial legislature, a church or a house, was

¹³See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983).

¹⁴See R.G. Moyles and Doug Owram, “‘A Dutiful Imperial Daughter’: Assessing the Future of the New Dominion,” in *Imperial Dreams and Colonial Realities: British View of Canada, 1880-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), pp. 11-35.

¹⁵Metcalf, “Imperial Vision,” pp. 1-2.

crucial to their vision of Canada's emerging identity.

The question of national tradition was integral to such debates. Today, most scholars agree that national tradition is invented: a narrative constructed more or less intentionally to accomplish particular social ends.¹⁶ This notion could not differ more from that of cultural producers in Canada and elsewhere seeking to define national identity at the turn of the last century. They believed that national tradition was as natural as the behaviour of the birds, and rested as deeply in a biological foundation. While it may seem paradoxical to argue that people were busily fabricating that which they believed already existed and needed only to be revealed, understanding their conviction of the naturalness of such traditions is essential to interpreting nationalist discourse of the period.

But where might Canada's nation-builders find what Benedict Anderson calls the "national originality" from which a seemingly natural tradition could be fabricated?¹⁷ Lynda Jessup argues that in Canada, the painters of the Group of Seven were participating in just such a project when they identified some relatively-remote parts of the natural landscape as uniquely Canadian, and themselves as "real" Canadian types, who braved the untouched wilderness to bring authentic images of their own country to Canadians.¹⁸

¹⁶See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, and Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (1983; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [Canto Edition], 1992).

¹⁷Anderson, "Introduction to Part Two: Staging Antimodernism in the Age of High Capitalist Nationalism," in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, ed. Lynda Jessup (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), p. 99.

¹⁸Lynda Jessup, "Bushwackers in the Gallery: Antimodernism and the Group of Seven," in
(continued...)

Jessup contends that this project to reconceptualize the land—a politically-neutral terrain—as a thing expressive of national culture, was an organized and co-operative effort involving a white, predominantly Anglophone elite of cultural, political, and corporate individuals and institutions on provincial and national levels.¹⁹ As Anderson points out, the first decades of the twentieth century saw the “nationalization of violent death, nationalization of the economy, and nationalization of the voting-age citizenry,” and it seems almost inevitable that such a nationalization of culture should have followed.²⁰

Mary Vipond has argued that this nationalization took place on a cultural level through a formalization of the links that bound together the members of an almost-exclusively Anglophone elite in various clubs, organizations, and institutions devoted to mobilizing a new national consciousness in Canada.²¹ As she contends, these intellectual and artistic elites had inevitable ties with the business and political elite of the country.

¹⁵(...continued)

Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity, ed. Jessup (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), pp. 130-52.

¹⁹As a nation-building effort, however, the project was unsuccessful; a number of historians have recently pointed out that the work of the Group of Seven artists and their associate, Tom Thomson, has been celebrated as a truly “Canadian” art largely in Ontario. See Jessup, “Bushwackers in the Gallery” and Ian McKay, “Handicrafts and the Logic of ‘Commercial Antimodernism,’: The Nova Scotia Case,” in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience*; and Ross D. Cameron, “Tom Thomson, Antimodernism, and the Ideal of Manhood,” *Journal of the CHA/Revue de la S.H.C.* 10 (1999): 185-208. That the myth has persisted in Ontario suggests how convincing it was to its narrowly white, Anglophone, middle-class constituency. (See Charles C. Hill, *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation* [Ottawa/Toronto: National Gallery of Canada/McClelland & Stewart, 1995].)

²⁰Anderson, “Staging Antimodernism,” p. 97.

²¹Mary Vipond, “The Nationalist Network: English Canada’s Intellectuals and Artists in the 1920s,” in *Interpreting Canada’s Past, Volume II: After Confederation*, ed. J.M. Bumsted (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 260-77.

Of the same class and ethnic background, they shared alliances of “[f]amily, marriage, war service, university, clubs, [and] outlook.”²² Thus, the nationalist project was, to a great extent, institutionalized, with various cultural producers sharing connections with corporate and political individuals and institutions with the interest, money, and power to carry out their ideas on an official level.

The work of Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven is but one facet of this nation-building project that has recently been subjected to critical analysis. Many less-familiar figures who participated equally, if not so visibly, are also deserving of examination. The subjects of my study are Percy Erskine Nobbs (1875-1964) and Ramsay Traquair (1874-1952), Scottish-born architects who arrived in Montréal in 1903 and 1912, respectively, to take up the positions of second and third Macdonald Professor of Architecture and Head of the School of Architecture at McGill University.²³ Nobbs and Traquair were important members of the Canadian architecture profession in the first half of the twentieth century, Nobbs as a prominent architect and Traquair primarily as an architectural historian, and both as critics, educators, and public intellectuals.

The teaching of architecture at McGill University was only seven years old when Nobbs arrived in Montréal, the department having been established as a result of the efforts of the Province of Quebec Association of Architects (PQAA) in 1896, as part of a

²²Vipond, “Nationalist Network,” p. 262.

²³For a brief discussion of the influence of these two men on the development of Canadian architecture and planning, see Isabelle Gournay, “The First Leaders of McGill’s School of Architecture: Stewart Henbest Capper, Percy Nobbs, and Ramsay Traquair,” *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* 21, 3 (September 1996): 60-66.

greater move towards the professionalization of architecture in Canada.²⁴ Before this programme was put in place, there were few opportunities for formal architectural training in Canada. In addition to occasional offerings in mostly technical subjects related to architecture at Mechanics' Institutes, art schools, Québec's Ecoles des Arts et Métiers, and other such institutions, a course in architecture was offered at the Ontario School of Practical Science, which had been affiliated with the University of Toronto since 1889.²⁵ Early in the new century, a course in architecture was introduced at the Ecole Polytechnique in Montréal, while the University of Manitoba set up a programme in architecture in 1912.²⁶

The course at McGill University, then, was among the first in the country (and the first offered by a university), and Nobbs and Traquair were instrumental in its formation. When Nobbs arrived, he found only two students and one full-time instructor. At that time, the department of architecture operated within the Faculty of Applied Science, offering a Bachelor of Science in Architectural Engineering, and Nobbs added a second stream that would lead to the degree of Bachelor of Architecture. As a result, McGill's School of Architecture was born. The new course replaced some of the technical courses offered by the Faculty of Applied Science with courses in the Faculty of Arts, and by 1906, with increased enrolment, there were instructors to teach several courses in the history of

²⁴Kelly Crossman, *Architecture in Transition: From Art to Practice, 1885-1906* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), pp. 58-59.

²⁵Crossman, *Architecture in Transition*, pp. 52-53; Geoffrey Simmins, *Ontario Association of Architects: A Centennial History* (Toronto: Ontario Association of Architects, 1989), p. 31.

²⁶Crossman, *Architecture in Transition*, pp. 104-05.

architecture, "Design," "Theory and Evolution of Architectural Form," and "Ornament and Decoration," as well as a range of technical courses.²⁷ This made McGill University's programme the first in Canada, as Kelly Crossman points out, to place considerable emphasis on the design and theory, as well as the science, of architecture.²⁸

In addition to the teaching of architecture as a profession, both Nobbs and Traquair were deeply interested in questions of architectural theory and history. They made substantial contributions, not only to the formation of architectural practice in Canada, but also to the development of the country's architectural history. Perhaps because of the formative rôles they played, and maybe even as a measure of their success in fabricating a convincing national tradition, their work has received little critical examination. "Percy Nobbs was an extraordinary man whose contribution to Canada . . . was profound," writes Norbert Schoenauer. "He was one of the first architects who understood and appreciated Canadian building traditions. . . . He saw a danger in the 'Americanization' of our arts and architecture, and advocated the development of a Canadian design and building tradition, such as our predecessors possessed, but lost during the 19th century." Harold Kalman calls Traquair "one of the first distinguished students of Quebec architecture," and his work, writes Alan Gowans, "did so much to further understanding of the old architecture of Quebec." In his own time, he was heralded by Anglophones and Francophones alike as the person responsible for revealing

²⁷Norbert Schoenauer, "Percy Erskine Nobbs: Teacher and Builder of Architecture," *Fontanus* from the Collections of McGill University IX (1996): 49-50.

²⁸Crossman, *Architecture in Transition*, p. 59.

the richness of a forgotten Québec culture, becoming what France Vanlaethem calls “the champion of a French-Canadian renaissance” who promoted indigenous architectural forms as the only suitable basis for a truly national style of architecture.²⁹ These laudatory comments are not misplaced, but they tell an incomplete story. As I demonstrate, Nobbs’s and Traquair’s ideas about national culture and its built expression—developed and shared with their colleagues among Canada’s elite—demand more critical attention.

The very notion of national identity as any kind of “natural” force is now understood to be flawed, the ideas underpinning its construction often predicated on ethnic stereotypes and a conviction of the superiority of a dominant culture. This study demonstrates how Nobbs’s and Traquair’s efforts to develop a national style in architecture contributed to the visual manifestation of ethnic and class relations in this country. And although a gendered analysis is not my primary focus, I think it is important to note what Kathleen McCarthy has observed in the case of the United States—that, as the first decades of the century saw the realm of culture increasingly organized into official bodies and bureaucratic institutions modelled after business corporations, these new “cultural institutions served as important building blocks in the emergence of a national, male policy-making elite.”³⁰ As she argues, women had traditionally been seen as the

²⁹Schoenauer, “Percy Erskine Nobbs,” p. 55-56; Harold Kalman, *A History of Canadian Architecture*, vol. 1 (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 41; Alan Gowans, *Building Canada: An Architectural History of Canadian Life* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 22; France Vanlaethem, “Beautification versus Modernization,” in *Montreal Metropolis, 1880-1930*, ed. Isabelle Gournay and France Vanlaethem (Montréal and Toronto: Canadian Centre for Architecture and Stoddart Publishing, 1998), p. 148.

³⁰Kathleen D. McCarthy, *Women’s Culture: American Philanthropy and Art, 1830-1930*
(continued...)

keepers of culture, but with the founding of these cultural institutions, its guardianship passed officially into the hands of elite males. A similar process was taking place in Canada, with the largely male network of which Nobbs and Traquair were part founding museums and art galleries and giving public lectures. The notion of culture being removed from the hands of women and given over to what had come to seem the more suitable care of men is implicit in these activities, and is occasionally even made explicit, as I show.

Even before the formalization in the 1920s of the links among Canada's intellectual and artistic elites, many cultural producers in early-twentieth century Canada had been concerned with this project of trying to define the nation culturally just as it had quite recently been defined politically. Not surprisingly, the rapidly-evolving nature of the country's ethnic makeup added immensely to the complexity of the task. From the start, the people who were most concerned with the question tended to belong to the elite; usually they were white, well-educated, and British in background, and often recently arrived from what they still considered the Mother Country. Of course, Francophone intellectuals were also engaged with cultural definition, but theirs was for the most part a separate debate, and although it was often constituted in relation to Anglo-Canadian concepts, it was carried out in different fora than that of Anglo-Canadians. For members of the Anglophone elite, for the most part, Canada was fundamentally British and ought to remain that way. They chose various ways of integrating the non-British—especially

³⁰(...continued)
(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. xiii-xiv.

new immigrants and French Canadians—into their story of Canada. Some dealt with the situation by ignoring the presence of those who did not fit their narrow Anglo-Canadian vision while others expanded that vision slightly, seeking to show that the term Anglo-Saxon encompassed a vast range of Northern and Western Europeans in addition to the English.³¹

Since the nineteenth century, people have sought to express national character through building, and architects at the turn of the century were among those concerned with defining Canada. For many of them this preoccupation took the form of trying to develop a style of architecture that would be, at least to their minds, distinctly Canadian. Obviously this required much thought about what elements should contribute to the essential Canadianness they sought to define. Like Nobbs and Traquair, a number of architects were quite eloquent in the trade press and other outlets, where they debated the question of what might make a Canadian architecture possible; their buildings and designs stand as testimony to their ideas about what made Canada.³²

For many of these nationalist intellectuals, national tradition was part and parcel of ethnicity. Attempting to develop new styles that seemed indubitably to belong to their

³¹R.G. Moyles and Doug Owram, *Imperial Dreams and Colonial Realities: British Views of Canada, 1880-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988). Matthew Frye Jacobson has examined the rise of the term "Anglo-Saxon" in the United States; it became current between the 1840s and the 1920s, the years of the greatest mass of immigration from Europe, as established citizens of mainly British descent sought new racial categories to set themselves and other desirables apart from the masses of southern and eastern Europeans who seemed to be flooding their borders. (*Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998]).

³²See Kelly Crossman, "The National Idea," in *Architecture in Transition*, pp. 109-21.

own lands, architects of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries in many countries drew on local historical architecture and material culture.³³ European architects and theorists earlier in the century had sought to fashion and express national identity through the adoption of “high” historical styles, and in particular through the Classical and Gothic Revivals.³⁴ Towards the end of the century, however, these styles ceased to satisfy. Inspired in part by the Arts and Crafts Movement, people in Europe and North America came to believe that they could achieve their chimeric goal of true national expression only by looking to local forms of vernacular architecture.

The term “vernacular architecture” was used in the later nineteenth century to refer generally to buildings of any age, of a non-monumental character.³⁵ Amongst scholars of the genre in the twentieth century, its sense came to be of “old, rural, handmade structures built in traditional forms and materials for domestic or agricultural use.”³⁶ Implicit in this definition, as Camille Wells observes, is “the notion that vernacular

³³On the uses of vernacular art and architecture in the construction of modern culture and identity in turn-of-the-century Europe, see Nicola Gordon Bowe (ed.), *Art and the National Dream: The Search for Vernacular Expression in Turn-of-the-Century Design* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1993), Barbara Miller Lane, *National Romanticism and Modern Architecture in Germany and the Scandinavian Countries*, *Modern Architecture and Cultural Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), and Amy Fumiko Ogata, *Art Nouveau and the Social Vision of Modern Living: Belgian Artists in a European Context*, *Modern Architecture and Cultural Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

³⁴See Barry Bergdoll, “Nationalism and Stylistic Debates in Architecture,” in *European Architecture 1750-1890* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 139-70.

³⁵*Compact Oxford English Dictionary*, new ed., s.v. “vernacular.”

³⁶Camille Wells, “Old Claims and New Demands: Vernacular Architecture Studies Today,” in *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture II*, ed. Wells (Columbia, MI: University of Missouri Press, 1986), p. 1. As Wells notes, the definition is now much broader.

buildings are the fragile remnants of a preindustrial, agrarian time when life was more cooperative, more humane, and, through manual labor, somehow more noble than the alternatives."³⁷ It is in this sense that such buildings were prized by turn-of-the-century cultural producers, who saw them as the built expression of the true bearers of national culture: the Folk.³⁸

The notion of the Folk has its roots well back in European history, when many intellectuals came to believe that there existed, within their societies, what Ian McKay defines as "a subset of persons set apart. . . characterized by their own distinctive culture and isolated from the modern society around them."³⁹ Peter Burke, observing that the appearance of new terms is often a good indication of the presence of new ideas, notes that the late-eighteenth century saw the advent of a series of words referring to various aspects of what the German writer Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) called popular culture, or "*Kultur des Volkes*" (in contrast to *Kultur der Gelehrten*, or learned culture), for which intellectuals were then showing fresh enthusiasm.⁴⁰ These appeared first in German, with the root "*Volk*"—such as *Volkslied* (folksong), *Volkssage* (folktale), and

³⁷Wells, "Old Claims and New Demands," p. 1.

³⁸Following Ian McKay, I have chosen to capitalize the word "Folk" in place of repeatedly using quotation marks around it to denote a word that must in this context be read as a relic of the language of a previous time (*The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* [Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994, p. xv). I have adopted the same practice with the word "Primitive."

³⁹McKay, *Quest of the Folk*, p. 9.

⁴⁰Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (np: Maurice Temple Smith, 1978; Aldershot, Hants.: Scolar Press, 1994), p. 8.

Volkskunde (folklore)—and found equivalents in other European languages.⁴¹ Folklore historian Giuseppe Cocchiara sees the beginning of the idea of the Folk well before these words were coined, finding in the Renaissance notion of the “noble savage” the ancestor of the “noble peasant folk” of the nineteenth-century Romantics.⁴² Burke, however, argues that two points set the late-eighteenth century enthusiasm for popular culture apart from its precursors. Most important for my purposes is the new notion that the cultural production, as well as the habits, customs, and other traditions of the people who came to be called the Folk, were expressions of the spirit of the nation to which they belonged.⁴³ For this reason, interest in folk culture was closely related to the rise of nationalism in nineteenth-century Europe.

As McKay explains, the idea of the Folk, having developed among cultural producers in Europe—and particularly in Germany in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries—was taken up with great enthusiasm in Britain and North America later in the century.⁴⁴ There it became “naturalized” to such an extent that a much wider sphere of society adopted the concept, with a large number of the educated middle classes developing an interest in folk culture. But what was their idea of the Folk? Following the

⁴¹Burke, *Popular Culture*, p. 3.

⁴²Giuseppe Cocchiara, *The History of Folklore in Europe* (John N. McDaniel, trans.; Turin: Editore Boringhieri, 1952; Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1981), p. 28. See McKay's useful discussion of the origins of the concept of the Folk in “The Idea of the Folk,” in which he cites Cocchiara's argument (*Quest of the Folk*, pp. 3-42).

⁴³Burke, *Popular Culture*, p. 8.

⁴⁴McKay, *Quest of the Folk*, p. 12.

lead taken by the German theorists, the later-nineteenth century defined the Folk as illiterate agrarian dwellers, who had—and this was their most important attribute—remained entirely unmarked by whatever the broader society outside of their communities might be experiencing. This latter point is an essential one, as it emphasizes how thoroughly the concept of the Folk rests on the idea of the modern; each is defined in opposition to the other. As Robin D.G. Kelley elucidates, “‘Folk’ and ‘modern’ are both mutually dependent concepts embedded in unstable historically and socially constituted systems of classification.”⁴⁵ The Folk “them,” therefore, exists only in the context of the modern “us.” Participation in the modern world of capital and industry might not turn the Folk into “us,” but it would remove them from their pleasant categorization as Folk. In the city or the mine, the people often categorized as Folk imbibed too much of the modern, and became labourers—a working class to be feared, avoided or improved—rather than Folk to be admired. As McKay writes, “those deracinated products of the coalfields and cities . . . could not be true Folk, not only because they were creating a literate and political culture, but also because . . . they violated the vital nucleus of the Folk idea: the *essential and unchanging solidarity* of traditional society.”⁴⁶ It was the immutable nature of

⁴⁵Robin D.G. Kelley, “Notes on Deconstructing ‘The Folk,’” in *American Historical Review* 97, 5 (December 1992): 1402.

⁴⁶McKay, *Quest of the Folk*, p. 12. Arjun Appadurai similarly argues that implicit in the term “Native” is the idea that groups called natives represent “their selves and their history, without distortion or residue” on an essential level impossible in societies recognized to have complex histories and diverse societies. More than that, Natives are conceived, not only as representing their places, but as permanently confined to them. (“Putting Hierarchy in Its Place,” in *Rereading Cultural Anthropology*, ed. George E. Marcus (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), p. 35.

the Folk, and their seemingly inviolable connection to the land, that made them such perfect archetypes for those seeking to build national identity at the turn of the century.

But if the Folk represented what Cocchiara describes as the “innermost soul” of society, how could they be put to use for the greater good?⁴⁷ Many intellectuals believed that contact with aspects of folk culture could rejuvenate their own more sophisticated, educated sphere, which had long ago lost the capability for such pure expression. This folk culture initially included songs, stories, and customs such as festivals, but around the mid-nineteenth century, material culture was added to this list, perhaps, as Burke suggests, because it was only at this time that “popular artifacts” began to be perceived as seriously threatened by mass-production.⁴⁸

Indeed, while the 1851 Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations enthralled the majority of fairgoers with the stunning array of modern industrial design unfolding before them in the Crystal Palace, the spectacle there and elsewhere also appalled many, among them William Morris (1834-1896), who was to become a founder of the Arts and Crafts Movement, and the critic and social theorist John Ruskin (1819-1900). Such mass-produced products, they believed, were examples of the bad design and poor quality that resulted when traditional methods of production were replaced by machine work. Worse, such “rag[s] of fashion” for a heedless middle class were manufactured, Morris said, by “thousands of men and women making Nothing with

⁴⁷Cocchiara, *History of Folklore*, p. 8.

⁴⁸Burke, *Popular Culture*, p. 7.

terrible and inhuman toil which deadens the soul and shortens mere animal life itself."⁴⁹

That is, the disappearance of folk methods had resulted in the emergence of a new class of industrial workers, who had lost their roots and their history along with their connection to the land and their traditional ways of doing things. Morris, Ruskin, and other adherents of the Arts and Crafts Movement called for a return to what they saw as the humane conditions of the Mediaeval craft guild, when the designer and craftsperson (usually, they argued, one and the same) had enjoyed both considerable respect and the joy and satisfaction arising from work well done.⁵⁰

But arts and crafts proponents believed that it was not only the workers who would gain from a revival of folk craft and building traditions. The wealthier classes (to which the architects and designers who were part of the movement inevitably belonged) also stood to profit. They could look forward to living in the just society that would result when the aesthetically-bereft products of the industrial revolution were replaced with well-made things of beauty. In addition to the craft products with which Morris's own business was concerned, the Arts and Crafts Movement was spiritual home to a group of architects who sought to refine architectural design by introducing the traditional methods and forms of vernacular architecture. This would also play a rôle in reforming

⁴⁹William Morris, "Art and Socialism: The Aims and Ideals of the English Socialists of To-day" (lecture delivered before the Secular Society of Leicester, 23 January 1884), in *Architecture, Industry, and Wealth: Collected Papers*, ed. Sydney J. Freedberg (New York and London: Garland, 1978), p. 66.

⁵⁰A number of histories exist of the Arts and Crafts Movement. See, for example, Elizabeth Cumming and Wendy Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991) and Peter Davey, *Arts and Crafts Architecture: The Search for Earthly Paradise* (London: The Architectural Press, 1980).

society. Morris, arguing for the reintroduction of the living hall, “which was used from the time of Homer to past the time of Chaucer,” argued that there was a strong connection between human nature and house design.⁵¹ The reintroduction of traditional forms, therefore, would naturally infuse society with virtues characteristic of the Folk.

Traditional forms used properly must be local. Morris and others argued strenuously that true architecture could develop only through the use of local forms and local materials. Like the Folk themselves, folk architecture was firmly tied to the land on which it stood. Arts and Crafts architects began, therefore, with the idea that by studying the buildings in the region in which they planned to build, and by adopting forms and materials from them, they could create new buildings that were inherently local and that seemed to have stood there always, as indigenous as the rocks and trees from which their materials were hewn. It was soon realized that this approach, which began as a way of making buildings that were believed to be authentic expressions of regional characteristics, could be applied nationally as well. Inspired by the teachings of the Arts and Crafts Movement, architects in countries new and old across Europe and North America began to look to the local vernacular as a route to creating what they believed would be truly national architectures that would reflect the many virtues of the only truly national people.

But why did so many people at the century's turn feel the need to forge connections with the comfortable premodern virtues they imagined they found in folk

⁵¹Morris, “Art and Socialism,” p. 68.

societies? The development of the concept of the Folk was just one way, as McKay puts it, “of thinking about the impact of modernity.”⁵² Conceived as innocent of social, economic or political change, the Folk—or the modern idea of the Folk—offered a place of refuge to those who felt battered by the pace of the advancing world order, that is to say, by modernity, which McKay describes as “the lived experience of [an] unremitting process of rapid change and its social consequences.”⁵³ Many members of the middle class at the turn of the century feared that their modern existence was rendering them weak and effete—“overcivilized,” as T.J. Jackson Lears describes it—and they sought an antidote to their ennui in what they believed were “more intense forms of physical or spiritual existence.”⁵⁴

This feeling of alienation from modern life has come to be known as “antimodernism.” It has manifested itself in many ways, of which two most directly concern this dissertation: the Arts and Crafts Movement’s revival of traditional methods and vernacular forms, and the related enthusiasm for the Folk. Others tried to reconcile

⁵²McKay, *Quest of the Folk*, p. 8.

⁵³Ian McKay (ed.), *The Challenge of Modernity: A Reader on Post-Confederation Canada* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1992), p. x.

⁵⁴Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon, 1981; Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994), p. xv. It is important to note that the “modernism” in the term “antimodernism” refers to modernity, and not the Modernist movement in the arts. It was quite possible, and indeed common, to be an antimodern Modernist. As just one example, Vojtěch Jirat-Wasiutyński has recently examined the antimodernist impulse that drove Vincent van Gogh to retreat in 1888 from “the incapacitating modern city” of Paris to Arles, in the south of France, where he hoped the “revitalizing countryside” would restore him to health as well as provide him with bright colours to nourish his avant-garde painting. (“Van Gogh in the South: Antimodernism and Exoticism in the Arlesian Paintings,” in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience*, p. 177.)

themselves with modernity by diverse means ranging from the contemplative study of so-called Oriental and Primitive cultures to a mainly male cult of strenuousness that incorporated boxing, big game hunting, or wilderness exploration, among other masculinist pursuits.⁵⁵ Physical removal from the sights and sounds of modernity, by living in the countryside or travelling to remote areas, was a favoured recourse. Ironically, as Warren Belasco has demonstrated, escaping modernity by this route became much easier once cars were relatively widely available.⁵⁶ But what is particularly revealing about Belasco's account is the notion that the intended result of an extended car trip was that the modern Odysseus should return, rejuvenated, back to active participation in the complex life that had sent him or her scrambling away. Like most other antimodern escapes, Belasco argues that autocamping was "always dedicated to reviving everyday

⁵⁵Many scholars have explored the relationship between the reaction to modernity and various early-twentieth century cultural phenomena. In addition to those cited elsewhere in this chapter, these include the following: Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995); Jeffrey D. Brison, "Cultural Interventions: American Corporate Philanthropy and the Construction of the Arts and Letters in Canada, 1900-1957" (Ph.D. diss., Queen's University, 1998); Ross D. Cameron, "Tom Thomson, Antimodernism, and the Ideal of Manhood"; Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven: Yale, 1981); Lynda Jessup, "Bushwackers in the Gallery: Antimodernism and the Group of Seven," in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience*; J.A. Mangan and James Walvin (eds.), *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987); and Ning Wang, *Tourism and Modernity: A Sociological Analysis*, Tourism Social Science Series (Amsterdam: Pergamon, 2000).

⁵⁶Warren James Belasco, *Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1979). Belasco explains how it was that the newly-available automobile could be seen as a way of returning to an earlier way of life. As he puts it, "the future conquered the present by coming disguised as the past" in the form of the car (p. 19). When it first arrived on the scene, the freedom of movement allowed by the car was contrasted favourably with the rigid timetables and fixed routes of train travel, and car travel was seen as something more akin to the horse and coach of earlier days, before the arrival of the modernizing train.

commitments.”⁵⁷

This notion is key to understanding antimodernism in the early-twentieth century. For most people, it was a means of coping with, or accommodating, modernity, rather than actually rejecting it. Ultimately, although they yearned for the genuine experience they believed might be found in interaction with seemingly pre-modern folk cultures, in struggling with natural or human opponents, or in making objects of beauty with their own hands, most antimodernists remained—and chose to remain—an integral part of their own modern society. By various means, they sought to infuse what they believed was absent into their present, but they never intended to abandon modernity entirely: they used the past to enrich the present, but not to replace it. And for many, antimodernism became an essential means, not only of coping with modernity, but even of conceiving it. As Jessup comments, in an observation crucial to my thesis, many artists in the early parts of the twentieth century used “antimodern constructs in formulating work they saw as responding to, or expressing, modernity.”⁵⁸ That is, the antimodernists’ embrace of such concepts as “Folk, Primitive, Authentic, and Traditional” was an integral aspect of the way they understood and related to the modern.

But even though many architects and others agreed that the basis for the development of a national style in architecture lay in the vernacular, they could not perceive a straightforward path to follow. Canadianness was not as easily defined as

⁵⁷Belasco, *Americans on the Road*, p. 16.

⁵⁸Lynda Jessup, “Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: An Introduction,” in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience*, p. 4.

Englishness or Swedishness, since Canada seemed to be composed of so many different groups and had existed—as Europeans conceived it—for so relatively brief a time. Yet it seemed essential to forge a distinct identity for Canada, and in particular to differentiate the country from the strong culture south of the border.⁵⁰ The question was, whom might they clothe in the mantle of a Canadian Folk? There was no clear answer, but for some Anglo-Canadians, the culture of some of the earliest European-settled areas of rural Québec filled the rôle admirably. Many, among them Nobbs and Traquair, perceived the region as the heart of an ideal community, retaining a traditional way of life unfettered by the debilitating effects of modernity.⁵¹

Although they identified Canada as fundamentally British in character, many members of the intellectual elite at the century's turn sought in rural French Canada what Carole Gerson has called a "culture, folklore and history" that might enrich what seemed to them to be Canada's "relatively barren national image."⁵¹ And for some architects, the French-Canadian vernacular helped provide an answer to the question of what direction

⁵⁰Ironically, given the cultural threat it seemed to pose to Canada, similar concerns preoccupied intellectuals in the United States: how were a distinctly American culture and—as a very visible part of that culture—architecture to be conceived? Architects in the United States, too, sought answers in the vernacular buildings of several regions. See Wendy Kaplan, "The Vernacular in America, 1890-1920: Ideology and Design," in *Art and the National Dream*, pp. 53-68.

⁵¹For a discussion of the links among antimodernism, Canadian nationalism, and imperialism, see Donald A. Wright, "W.D. Lighthall and David Ross McCord: Antimodernism and English-Canadian Imperialism, 1880s-1918," *Revue d'études canadiennes/Journal of Canadian Studies* 32, 2 (Summer 1997): 134-153.

⁵¹Carole Gerson, *A Purer Taste: The Writing and Reading of Fiction in English in Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), p. 110. Quoted in Wright, "Lighthall and McCord," p. 138.

Canadian architecture should be taking. In this study, I demonstrate that the use of specific styles for certain building types resulted in a visible and public linkage of the architectural forms that were associated with the dominant Anglo-Canadian culture to the realm of power, business, and the city. Meanwhile, an architecture of leisure and rural pursuits, based on what many middle-class, turn-of-the-century Anglophones identified as a French-Canadian tradition, created an association of even modern Québec society with a pre-modern way of life, seemingly removed from advancing civilization.

This last observation suggests how thoroughly these people, yearning for the genuine experience they believed might be found in the apparently pre-modern culture of rural Quebec, embraced antimodernism as a means of shaping their experience of modernity to fit their needs. As Lears argues, antimodernism “promoted accommodation to new modes of cultural hegemony while it preserved an eloquent edge of protest.” The application of a wide range of antimodern ideals actually “helped rally the upper bourgeoisie to reassert its dominance” even while its members believed that they were escaping the modern strictures of their own culture.⁵² In the case of this use of architectural forms, the architects’ attraction to what they saw as the purity of French-Canadian folk forms, and their use of them only for the design of buildings associated with the pursuit of leisure and elegant country life—as opposed to those with modern functions connected with business and the city—served to assert Anglo, urban, middle-class cultural authority.

⁵²*No Place of Grace*, p. 301.

It is not surprising that it was in the province of Québec, and particularly in Montréal, that urban intellectuals became most fascinated with what they thought was a traditional French-Canadian society. Montréal in the first decades of the twentieth century was a true national metropolis. Its population, estimated in 1907 at over 405,000, including the suburbs, was nearing those of the larger (though never the very largest) cities south of the border early in the century.⁶³ Reaching a population of one million in 1930, it was the largest city in Canada, and from the mid-nineteenth century to 1931, it grew faster than any other North American city, with progress accelerating particularly around 1890.⁶⁴ It served a vast hinterland, and was the country's leading centre of banking and business. Thus, to live in Montréal in the early-twentieth century was to live a very urban and modern life indeed. Rapid construction, the growth of modern commerce and business, noisy trains and street cars, the necessary dependence on others for one's daily bread—not to mention water, light and transportation—and a host of other urban experiences must all have resulted in the feeling of "weightlessness" that Lears has identified with city life at the century's turn and beyond.⁶⁵ No wonder that many middle-class intellectuals should have turned outside the city to seek a connection with an

⁶³*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed., s.v. "Montreal." Boston had a population of 595,580 according to a state census in 1905, while Baltimore, the eighth largest city in population, had 558,485 in 1910. New Orleans had 339,075 people in 1910, while Buffalo was about the same size as Montréal, with 352,387 in 1900 and 423,715 in 1910. (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed., s.v. "Boston," "Baltimore," "New Orleans," and "Buffalo.")

⁶⁴Anthony Sutcliffe, "Montreal Metropolis," in *Montreal Metropolis 1880-1930*, ed. Isabelle Gournay and France Vanlaetham (Montréal/Toronto: Canadian Centre for Architecture/Stoddart Publishing, 1998), p. 21.

⁶⁵*No Place of Grace*, pp. 32-47.

imagined pre-modern, such as that represented for many by the rural communities of Québec, whose denizens seemed still to be in control of their own destiny.

The people who so attracted those seeking a genuine folk culture in early-twentieth century Québec were the economically-disadvantaged residents of the rural areas of the lower Saint Lawrence River valley, a group often known as *habitants*. They were the descendants of early colonizers, but specifically of the peasant classes who had come to farm the small divisions of seigneurial land—called *concessions* or *habitations*—rather than of the seigneurial, military, commercial, or priestly classes.⁶⁶ In the early-twentieth century, those who dwelt on farms in the earlier areas of European resettlement in New France, especially on the Île d'Orléans east of Québec City and along the Saint Lawrence River in both directions, were perceived by the city-dwelling middle classes as virtually untouched by the changes that were taking place in the greater society around them. Many, including both Anglophone and Francophone urban dwellers, believed that modernity had gained no toehold among the peasants who had first arrived from France to work the land centuries before, and who, they thought, had little, if any, contact with the outside world. This was a misconception, as I discuss in Chapter Two. By the early-nineteenth century, there was already a daily stage coach between Québec City and Montréal, and it was followed in the 1830s by steamboats and trains.⁶⁷ This early

⁶⁶R. Cole Harris, ed., *Historical Atlas of Canada*, vol. I, *From the Beginning to 1800* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, n.d.), p. 115.

⁶⁷R. Louis Gentilcore, ed., *Historical Atlas of Canada*, vol. II, *The Land Transformed 1800-1891* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), Plate 25.

transportation was slow and inconvenient, particularly for those towns not on major waterways or directly on a rail line, but it did mean that residents of even small villages along the route were afforded contact with other communities. Nonetheless, to those who felt themselves afflicted by modernity in the big cities, and particularly in Montréal, the idea of the *habitants* as genuine Folk in a pre-modern world was a tonic.

Together with Toronto, Montréal was also a major centre of architectural activity in Canada at the turn of the century. The city was home to the prominent Francophone architects of the day and to the *École des Beaux-Arts*, which taught architecture using the methods of the French Academy. It also contained a substantial population of Anglo-Canadian architects, many of them of Scottish origin.⁸ For them, the School of Architecture at McGill University, where Nobbs and Traquair were prominent faculty members for the first four decades or so of the twentieth century, was an important centre. They are ideal subjects for my study because their Arts and Crafts background led them, quite soon after their respective arrivals, to study the architecture they found around them, and to examine the possibilities for using it in the development of a national style of architecture for Canada.

As part of his study of the professionalization of Canadian architectural practice around the turn of the century, Kelly Crossman has examined the quest for a national

⁸On Scottish architects in Montréal see Kelly Crossman, "The Influence of Scotland on Architectural Education in Canada," in *The Education of the Architect*, Proceedings of the 22nd Annual Symposium of the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain, ed. Neil Bingham (London: SAH, 1993), and various essays in Gournay and Vanlaethem (eds.), *Montreal Metropolis*.

style in this period.⁵⁹ He has shown how architects in the later decades of the nineteenth century, in the throes of professionalization and spurred on by the threat of competition in their own country from architects in the United States, had become concerned with developing a national style that would set their work apart from that of American architects and make it the obvious choice for Canadian projects. Members of the newly-professional next generation of architects, to which Nobbs and Traquair belonged, were further inspired by Arts and Crafts theory to seek national expression in their work through a close examination of local buildings. Crossman argues that, although Canadian architects had admired local vernacular styles before, it was Nobbs who first suggested the possibility that they might be used as the basis for a national architecture. His illuminating analysis focusses, however, on other aspects of Nobbs's architectural and aesthetic theory and does not expand further on his approach to the Québec vernacular.

My discussion of the question of a Canadian style draws on Crossman's work but

⁵⁹Crossman, "The National Idea" and "Percy Nobbs and a National Theory," in *Architecture in Transition*, pp. 109-21 and 122-35. Examining another effort to establish a Canadian architectural style, Rhodri Windsor Liscombe has analysed the development of the association of the so-called Château style, beginning in 1892 with the United States architect Bruce Price's Château Frontenac in Québec City, with Canadian cultural identity even into our own time. (Liscombe, "Nationalism or Cultural Imperialism: The Château style in Canada," in *Architectural History: Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain* 36 (1993): 127-144.) Christopher Thomas has examined scholarly and other writings from about 1945 to 1980 on two styles often associated with Canada: the High Victorian Gothic and the Château Style. While recognizing that the Chateau style, in particular, "has been wholeheartedly received as Canadian and has become Canadian by adoption and association," (p. 21) he argues that the historiography that formulates it as a national style has strongly reflected developing ideas about the Canadian nation at the time of its writing. Insofar as these styles could be said to have represented the nation in their own time, he contends, it was a narrow and Anglo-centric conception of Canada. ("Canadian Castles'? The Question of National Styles in Architecture Revisited," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 32, 1 (Spring 1997): 5-27.

focuses more on its relation, for some architects, to the study of folk traditions and particularly to rural Québec culture. It makes an important contribution to Canadian architectural and cultural history precisely because it examines the work of prominent Canadian architects and theorists in the context of the greater nation-building project underway in the period, and examines the relationship—inherent in that whole project—between culture and social power.

My analysis draws heavily on textual sources. Although I discuss some buildings and architectural drawings, my interpretation of them depends on my analysis of the many articles, essays, lectures, course notes and letters written by both Nobbs and Traquair. Indeed, although Nobbs was a prolific architect, Traquair left comparatively little by way of built work, and essentially none in Canada. But he was a popular and influential professor at McGill for many years.⁷⁰ Clearly, his writing about architecture was seen in his own time as a contribution to the discipline as valid as any in wood or stone. For the architectural historian, his writing contributes as much to an analysis of the architecture of his time as any built work, and to exclude it is to overlook an essential route to understanding how architecture works as a part of society. Nobbs's and Traquair's writings are at least as essential as their buildings to understanding the social relations implicit in their efforts to promote a national identity. Through their written oeuvre I attempt to understand how they thought about Canada and the various peoples that

⁷⁰See Howard Shubert *et al*, "An Interview with John Bland," in *John Bland at Eighty: A Tribute*, ed. Irena Murray and Norbert Schoenauer (Montréal: McGill University, 1991), pp. 4-17.

inhabited it. Reading critically in light of their educational biases and the society to which they belonged, I illuminate what it was that made them see this way, and what effect this had on their contribution to the development of Canadian culture.

Recognizing the depth of Nobbs and Traquair's antimodernism is crucial to understanding the way they regarded society. In Chapter One, "The Making of Imperialist Antimodernists," I examine Nobbs's and Traquair's education and background in the antimodernist intellectual climates of Edinburgh and London. Both Nobbs and Traquair were deeply antimodern in their approach to life as well as work. It is essential to establish this point, as their antimodernism profoundly informed the way they designed and thought about architecture, and the way they understood their society and the cultures that comprised it.

Chapter Two, "Simple Things Free from Sham," is concerned with the way Nobbs and Traquair interpreted the Québécois culture they found around them on their arrival in Montréal. An important element of my study is an examination of their ideas about the Folk as participating in anthropological modes of inquiry. Although neither was trained as an anthropologist, nor identified himself as such, Traquair made field trips to rural villages, observing and writing about the residents as well as their built environment. His study of rural culture was akin to the work carried out by anthropologists and ethnologists of the period, and he even collaborated directly with professionals in the field. Together with Group of Seven painters A.Y. Jackson and Arthur Lismer, he spent part of the summer of 1925 gathering evidence on Île d'Orléans with National Museum of

Canada ethnologist C. Marius Barbeau.⁷¹ Traquair collaborated with Barbeau on a number of research projects and co-published several articles with him, and they maintained a correspondence for some twenty years or more. Following a practice common to both architecture and anthropology, both Nobbs and Traquair drew, measured, and photographed buildings and artefacts in their adoptive province. They were enthralled by what they saw as the purity and authenticity of the rural people and their material culture, and they each wrote on multiple occasions that it was here that they hoped to find an antidote for the tired modernity of the urban Canada they themselves inhabited.

In *The Predicament of Culture*, critical anthropologist James Clifford demonstrates that an anthropologist or ethnographer's own culture and preconceived notions inform any analysis of another group, despite all efforts to the contrary.⁷² Thus, an

⁷¹Lawrence Nowry, *Marius Barbeau: Man of Mana* (Toronto: NC Press, 1995), p. 270. Traquair's archive in the Canadian Architecture Collection at McGill University contains ten file folders of Barbeau's work, as well as numerous communications between the two. There is also a file of letters between the two, dating from 1925 to 1945, in the library of the Canadian Museum of Civilization (Information Management Services, Marius Barbeau correspondence, Box B244 f.8, "Traquair, Ramsay"; hereafter CMC, IMS, Barbeau, B244 f.8, "Traquair"). In addition to Barbeau, Traquair carried out his research and publishing in collaboration with several others. Important collaborators were McGill History professor E.R. Adair and Traquair's dear friend Antoine Gordon Neilson, to whose memory he dedicated his book *The Old Architecture of Québec: A Study of the Buildings Erected in New France from the Earliest Explorers to the Middle of the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1947; facsimile edition Montréal: McGill University School of Architecture, 1996). Traquair notes in his preface that Adair, Barbeau, and Neilson "undertook the difficult and tedious work of reading and copying endless church accounts, and of extracting therefrom the architectural material" (p. xvii). On Barbeau, see Andrew Nurse, "Tradition and Modernity: The Cultural Work of Marius Barbeau" (Ph.D. dissertation, Queen's University, 1997).

⁷²James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988).

anthropological study tells us as much about the investigator as it does about the investigated. The relationship of anthropologists to their subjects is almost always that of a dominant culture studying a subordinate one, and this too affects the anthropologist's observations and the use made of them. Both Nobbs and Traquair approached rural Québec culture from the standpoint of what Clifford calls "salvage ethnography." This approach has been pervasive in anthropological studies, but critiques such as Clifford's have called it into question. In its widest sense, it assumes that modernity is constantly threatening to destroy what are understood as traditional societies (in the case of Nobbs and Traquair's work, folk cultures in particular).⁷³ For salvage ethnographers, any outside influence irrevocably alters such cultures, and since immutability and insularity have conventionally been considered to be essential characteristics of folk societies, it follows that any change would be corrupting. As Clifford observes, anthropologists studying what they saw as traditional cultures have until recently generally believed that they are witnessing the very last moments of the culture in its traditional, which is to say its genuine, or authentic, form.⁷⁴ The researchers' very presence would help to bring an end to the cultures they studied, as they brought with them their own foreign and modern influence. A primary activity of anthropologists—to make written records of the cultures they study—thus came to seem to be the essential one of preserving a record of a vanishing

⁷³Clifford, "On Ethnographic Allegory," in *Writing Culture: the Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 112.

⁷⁴Clifford, "On Ethnographic Allegory," p. 112.

culture, salvaging what they could of the culture as they believed it had existed in its true form, before the arrival of an outsider, so that it should not be forgotten and lost forever. As Clifford argues, this idea is a construct that provides a rationale for anthropological practice itself. And as he observes, it assumes that the importance and interest of other societies lies in their past, not in their present or future, and that such societies need observers from outside to represent them in order to save the evidence of what is valuable in their culture.⁷⁵ Like these “salvage, or redemptive” ethnographers, Nobbs and Traquair lamented that what they saw as the old life of rural Québec was dying out under modernity’s inexorable influence, and they emphasized that its material remnants, such as buildings and handcrafts, must be preserved before they too vanished irretrievably, as “every year [saw] the remnant further reduced.”⁷⁶ This could be done by drawing, photographing, and otherwise recording buildings, but also by physically removing objects to safe-keeping in a museum. Correspondence between Traquair and Barbeau after their research trip together in the summer of 1925 indicates that the latter was searching out possible artefacts for collections in Montréal.⁷⁷ Barbeau sent photographs for Traquair’s

⁷⁵Clifford, “On Ethnographic Allegory,” p. 113.

⁷⁶Traquair, *The Old Architecture of the Province of Quebec* (Montréal: McGill University Press Series XIII, no. 1, 1925); reprinted from *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (January-February 1925): 5 (unpaginated).

⁷⁷Traquair mentions that he discussed the possible purchase with “Mr. Morgan,” who must be F. Cleveland Morgan, an influential figure in the formation of the Montréal Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA). Traquair refers to the suitability (or not) of Jobin’s work to “our museums here,” and since he and Morgan were both involved in the Montreal Arts Club and the Acquisitions Committee of the MMFA, as well as with McGill University, the McCord Museum, and numerous other arts organizations in Montréal, he might have been referring to any of several
(continued...)

consideration, but Traquair rejected his offerings as too recent and, in the case of some carved angels by the sculptor Louis Jobin, not only “of a late school” but also “rather influenced by the plaster figures with which they have to compete,”⁷⁸ and therefore, he implicitly suggested, inauthentic. But, he went on, “[i]f you are getting any of the old materials which we saw in the lofts of the churches, crucifixes, candlesticks, the old pulpit at St. Pierre. [sic] These are the things which I should like to have some of here.”

Considering Nobbs's and Traquair's comments about the Folk in light of critical anthropology is an important aspect of my study and provides insights into their architectural work that other scholars have not taken into account.

While several authors have discussed Nobbs's and Traquair's interest in Québec architecture and its influence on their writing and design, my work adds an important facet to understanding it. In their essay in the collection *Architecture, forme urbaine et identité collective*, Lucie K. Morisset and Luc Noppen analyse the different political uses to which historicist architecture has been put in Québec since the late-nineteenth century, while in the same volume, France Vanlaethem examines the process by which the architectural regionalism that arose from Nobbs's and Traquair's work was adopted by

⁷⁷(...continued)

museums. (See Norma Morgan, “F. Cleveland Morgan and the Decorative Arts Collection in the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts” [master's thesis, Concordia University, 1985], Appendix B and *passim*.)

⁷⁸Traquair, letter to Barbeau, 26 October 1925. (CMC, IMS, Barbeau, B244 f.8, “Traquair.”)

Québec nationalists in the 1940s.⁷⁹ While the authors discuss some results of Nobbs and Traquair's work, it is beyond the scope of these essays to analyse the approach the architects took to their Folk subjects. In fact, Nobbs's and Traquair's understanding of French culture and architecture in Canada was strongly influenced by their own pre-conceived notions about that society.

The phenomenon of discontented members of the middle class seeking a genuine culture among the Folk they saw around them occurred in many countries around the century's turn, with architects often using folk architecture as an inspiration for their own work. As Van Slyck demonstrated in her examination of the Spanish colonial and Pueblo architectural revivals around the turn of the century, the approach of these middle class investigators was often predicated on racial and ethnic stereotypes even though they believed themselves to be acting from admiration for their subjects.⁸⁰ This was the case in Québec as well. Nobbs and Traquair considered that they were rediscovering the value of a traditional architecture that had been forgotten, but in fact they exercised a considerable degree of cultural selection by which they embraced the elements of Québec society that fit their notion of it and ignored those that did not.

Such cultural selection in the realm of folklore studies in the twentieth century has most often rested on the notion of authenticity, a concept whose influence Regina Bendix

⁷⁹Luc Noppen and Lucie K. Morisset, "A la recherche d'identités: Usages et propos du recyclage du passé dans l'architecture au Québec" and France Vanlaethem, "Modernité et régionalisme dans l'architecture au Québec: Du nationalisme canadien de Percy E. Nobbs au nationalisme canadien-français des années 1940," in *Architecture, forme urbaine et identité collective*, pp. 103-33 and 157-77.

⁸⁰Van Slyck, "Mañana, Mañana."

has examined at length.⁵¹ She analyses the effect of this idea on the origins of the canons that came to represent such cultural disciplines as art and literary history. The idea that there might be one authentic culture operated as the primary factor in determining what would be included in the “ideal culture” each Academy had set itself the goal of determining. “In formulating the contours of this ideal culture, what lay outside its boundaries had to be inauthentic,” writes Bendix.⁵² “At best, the inauthentic held the status of being unworthy of scholarly attention; at worst, it was decried as an agent spoiling or harming the carefully cultivated noble ideal.” This is an important notion for my study of Nobbs and Traquair. As they were members of an Academy defining Canadian architecture, and, more broadly, Canadian culture, their choices of what to include also, as Bendix’s analysis indicates, necessarily determined what would be excluded.

As McKay, Van Slyck, and others have also shown, the “rediscovery” of a culture can quickly become a reinvention at the hands of people with agendas of their own.⁵³ In the case of Nova Scotia, McKay demonstrates that cultural investigators there privileged what they saw as the traditional culture of the rural areas, suppressing evidence of a burgeoning urban culture and industrial society in order to protect the province’s image as that of a traditional folk culture that would appeal to world-weary tourists. My analysis of

⁵¹Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997).

⁵²Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity*, p. 4.

⁵³See also Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe*.

Traquair's articles on Québec architecture shows that he similarly drew a highly selective picture of the province in his research. He excluded from his investigation all evidence of what he saw as alien—largely English and “modern”—influence on the folk culture he believed he had found. As a result, his papers paint a picture of a pure and monolithic rural Québécois culture largely unaffected by changes occurring in the world around it. For Traquair, this circular picture of French-Canadian culture was the true story, and he believed that in it he had found Canada's Folk. In this light, Richard Handler's study of the efforts of nationalist governments to mould an image of a traditional Québec society that would support their efforts to achieve independence is telling.⁵⁴ These later cultural projects relied similarly on cultural selection and reinvention, and at the same time built on ideas of the Québec Folk developed in part by Traquair, as I discuss.

In Chapter Three I examine Nobbs's and Traquair's ideas about Canadianness. Through various processes of rationalization both identified the rural people of Québec's Saint Lawrence River valley as “the most purely Canadian people of the dominion” (from which phrase the chapter takes its title). This Canadianness was directly related to Nobbs's and Traquair's conception of this group as Folk, and is thus an important link between that and the idea that French-Canadian architecture might provide inspiration for a Canadian architectural style. But both—and especially Traquair—also thought and wrote extensively about the Canadianness of other groups, and both were imperialists concerned with Canada's position in the British Empire. Meanwhile, although they

⁵⁴Handler, *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988).

believed that Québec folk culture held the secret to developing a national style, they acknowledged that regional variations were bound to exist in a country as large as Canada. Understanding their ruminations on these matters is important to interpreting their conclusions—which I discuss in Chapter Six—about how to build an architecture that would express the identity of Canada as they saw it.

In Chapters Four and Five I address Nobbs's and Traquair's respective approaches to the practice of architecture. Although Traquair had essentially given up architectural practice upon arriving in Canada, he wrote at length about the direction he thought architecture should take in his own time, while Nobbs both wrote and designed extensively. Traquair's Arts and Crafts approach may be summed up in his phrase "Local needs, Local materials, and Local climate," which provides his chapter title. Nobbs believed that the exigencies of "Modern Canadian Conditions" required the use of the Arts and Crafts approach in which he had received his training, but he did not entirely reject—though neither did he embrace—some aspects of Modernism.

Their approaches both had the ultimate aim of developing an architecture that would answer the requirements of "National and Imperial Tradition," and I address this question in Chapter Six. This discussion builds upon the arguments in Chapters Two to Five, and in it I demonstrate how Nobbs's and Traquair's ideas about a French-Canadian Folk and other ethnic groups combined with their approaches to architectural design in the quest for a modern Canadian style. As I demonstrate, Nobbs and those who followed him appropriated for their own use elements of historical Québec architecture—associating it as they did with a simplicity and genuineness they believed had

disappeared from modern life—for buildings of types that were themselves connected with rural simplicity and a retreat from modern overcivilization. But while both Nobbs and Traquair repeatedly argued that in the French-Canadian vernacular could be found an answer to the problem of modern Canadian building, in practice it took a back seat to more formal styles and to vernacular architecture of British origin. I argue that, in using the built forms typical of Québec for an architecture of leisure and the country, they underscored the association they themselves had made between Québec society and the virtues of simplicity and purity.

In the conclusion, “Tradition, Duly Sifted,” I place Nobbs’s and Traquair’s work in the context of the development and institutionalization of both Canadian and Québec nationalism, and offer an explanation to the question raised by Vanlaethem as to why conservative Québec nationalist groups in the first part of the century should have found the work of these Anglo-Canadian imperialists so compelling. In addition, I look briefly at the influence their work had on the development of Canadian architectural historiography.

As I show throughout this dissertation, the institutional and intellectual basis of Nobbs’s and Traquair’s lives and work—their Arts and Crafts background and imperial leanings that were grounded in antimodernism—predisposed them to look for a folk culture and, once they believed that they had found it, to use it in a particular way. But while the very specific details of their backgrounds may have been unique, Nobbs and Traquair were part of a larger community of like-minded people. While not themselves rulers, they belonged to the ruling class in early-twentieth century Canada. They were members of

Montréal's Anglo-Canadian elite—consisting largely of rich business families but also expanding to a group of McGill professors—that dominated English-language artistic, cultural and social life in that city in the first half of the twentieth century.⁸⁵ And through their activities as teachers, writers, arts club members, and public intellectuals, they participated in the network of intellectual and artistic elites that, in co-operation with corporate and government interests, concerned itself with the construction of a distinctively national culture into the 1920s and beyond. Thus, they had a degree of influence that went well beyond their McGill classrooms and, conversely, their ideas reflect a sphere much wider than themselves.

⁸⁵Margaret M. Westley, *Remembrance of Grandeur: The Anglo-Protestant Elite of Montréal 1900-1950* (Montréal: Éditions Libre Expression, 1990).

Chapter One THE MAKING OF IMPERIALIST ANTIMODERNISTS

TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY EDINBURGH was an exciting place for a young architect, and it is not surprising that one trained in that milieu would develop sympathies with the arts and crafts approach to building and design. As Percy Nobbs was to write on the occasion of Ramsay Traquair's retirement many years later, "[he] had an inevitable (remember the time and place of his upbringing) intimacy with the arts of crafts and all that pre-Raphaelites and William Morris stood for."¹ Nobbs might as well have been writing of himself, as he and Traquair were educated in similar circumstances and had many friends and acquaintances in common. Their intimate knowledge of arts and crafts theory affected the thought and practice of both. It expressed itself especially in their use of architectural decoration and in their strong interest in the study of vernacular buildings. In England, William Morris and his followers had determined that the only route to good architecture (and they were particularly interested in domestic work) was to study the buildings that had stood for hundreds of years in the district in which a new one was to be built. Following old patterns, architects could design new buildings using materials and forms that had stood the tests of time, weather, and use, and thus seemed to be suited both culturally and physically to their environment. Tied to this respect for the products

¹Nobbs, "Ramsay Traquair, Hon. M.A. (McGill) F.R.I.B.A on his Retirement from the Macdonald Chair in Architecture at McGill University," *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 16 (June 1939): 147. A number of books provide important background on the architectural principles and practice of the arts and crafts movement and the related "Queen Anne." See for example Peter Davey, *Arts and Crafts Architecture: The Search for Earthly Paradise* (London: The Architectural Press, 1980); Mark Girouard, *Sweetness and Light: The "Queen Anne" Movement 1860-1900* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977); and Margaret Richardson, *Architects of the Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Trefoil Books, 1983).

of history, and connected with a loathing for what they saw as the ugly machine-made objects surrounding them at every turn, the proponents of the arts and crafts movement looked to old methods and historic forms in decorative work. Arts and crafts ideals were to become internationally influential, and many movements in architecture and design owe allegiance to the arts and crafts approach. And late in the nineteenth century, when regional and national awareness were increasing all over the European world, and people were seeking to define themselves by their history, the study of vernacular architecture provided a seemingly natural route to the creation of national identity.

Belief in the potential of the arts and crafts approach to build national identity was part of the appeal of the movement to architects and intellectuals in late-nineteenth century Scotland. Edinburgh was home to a large community of architects and craftspeople linked by various artistic and architectural organizations. Many were also connected more informally through common interests, which included art education, the revival of old crafts techniques and forms, the decoration of buildings, the preservation of historic architecture and construction of new buildings designed to harmonize with their surroundings, and the general welfare—architectural, cultural, and social—of their city. The young Nobbs and Traquair had many connections to this group of artistic elites through institutions, mutual friends and acquaintances, future teachers, employers and partners. It is clear that their approaches to architecture and its theory and their interest in folk culture and national identity were formed when they were young men in Edinburgh, and it is easy to trace their intellectual development through their connections

there.²

Nobbs was born on 11 August 1875 in Haddington, near Edinburgh. He spent part of his childhood in St. Petersburg, where he attended school, including (according to one source) the School of Design in 1885 when he was just ten years old.³ Returning to Scotland in the later 1880s, he attended Heriot Watt College and the University of Edinburgh, receiving his Master of Arts in 1896 under Watson Gordon Chair of Fine Art Professor Gerard Baldwin Brown (1849-1932). From 1889 to 1896 he also studied at Edinburgh's School of Applied Art.

Traquair was born a year earlier than Nobbs, the first son of the artist and craftswoman Phoebe Anna Traquair (née Moss), of Irish birth, and Ramsay Heatley Traquair, then curator of Natural History at the Royal Museum of Science and Art in Edinburgh. He attended the University of Edinburgh for a year, and also spent some time at the University of Bonn.⁴ Returning home, he too studied at the School of Applied Art.⁵ His mother was an important artistic influence for him, and they frequently

²Both Robert J. Naismith, who was once a partner of Edinburgh architect Frank Mears, and Hugh Crawford, who now runs Mears's practice commented on the extent, importance and inter-connectedness of this community of like-minded architects in Edinburgh a century ago, noting what a stimulating atmosphere it must have been for those involved. (Conversations with Robert Naismith, 14 February 1998 and Hugh Crawford, 12 February 1998, in Edinburgh.)

³The biographical information in this paragraph is drawn from the British Architectural Library, Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), *Directory of British Architects 1834-1900*, comp. Alison Felstead, Jonathan Franklin, and Leslie Penfield (London: Mansell, 1993), p. 664.

⁴Nobbs, "Ramsay Traquair," p. 147.

⁵Sam McKinstry, *Rowand Anderson: "The Premier Architect of Scotland"* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), pp. 163, 190. McKinstry notes that Traquair's joint winning
(continued...)

collaborated on projects, for example researching Renaissance metalwork to find designs suited to her work.⁶ Ramsay provided a number of designs for chalices, triptych stands and other metalwork for adornment with his mother's enamels.⁷ Phoebe Traquair had close connections with important members of the art community in Edinburgh and elsewhere; in the late 1880s she corresponded with John Ruskin—whose writing about art had been an inspiration to the pioneers of the Arts and Crafts Movement—sending him examples of her work and receiving from him the loan of manuscripts from his collection.⁸ She was to become a major figure in the Edinburgh art world, and from 1887 she taught classes in design at the Edinburgh Social Union in the company of several other well-known artists and architects.⁹ She was also close friends with Percy Nobbs, with whom she corresponded extensively between 1900 and 1920. Her letters reveal that she was an important mentor to him in matters decorative, and also that she in her turn valued his artistic opinion.¹⁰ But as well as this direct connection to her own practice as an artist,

⁶(...continued)

of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Pugin Studentship, along with his National Art Survey Bursary, testify to the high quality of the education offered by the School of Applied Art, of which Traquair was then a student.

⁷Elizabeth Cumming, *Phoebe Anna Traquair, 1852-1936* (Edinburgh: Trustees of the National Galleries of Scotland, 1993), p. 41.

⁸Elizabeth Cumming, "Phoebe Anna Traquair HRSA (1857-1936) and her Contribution to Arts and Crafts in Edinburgh" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1986), pp. 10, 219, 233.

⁹Cumming, *Phoebe Anna Traquair*, p. 16.

¹⁰Cumming, *Phoebe Anna Traquair*, p. 17.

¹⁰Cumming, "Phoebe Anna Traquair," p. 201 and *passim*. Many of these letters remained in the Nobbs family, and Elizabeth Cumming received copies of a small number from Nobbs's son
(continued...)

Phoebe Traquair provided contact with her wide circle of artistic friends and colleagues in Edinburgh. These included people whose ideas would affect the thinking of both Nobbs and her son. City planner Patrick Geddes, scholar and artist Gerard Baldwin Brown, and architect Robert Lorimer were three of the most important in this connection.

Patrick Geddes (1854-1932) was a biologist-turned-city-planner and proponent of the “Old Edinburgh” movement led by those inspired by the writings of Sir Walter Scott and Robert Louis Stevenson to appreciate and try to restore what they saw as the romance of old Edinburgh.¹¹ Geddes was the most important figure in the old town’s turn-of-the-century social and architectural revitalization, and much of his programme involved the rebuilding or removal and replacement (in suitable period styles) of the slums of the old town. Such an architectural revitalization, with the re-introduction of the university community into what had become slums in the nineteenth century, could, he hoped, bring with it a social and cultural revival to a Golden Age such as Edinburgh had known in the eighteenth century.¹² Geddes, as Duncan Macmillan explains, followed the thinking of John Ruskin and others in seeing architecture as “not merely a material

¹⁰(...continued)

Francis Nobbs when she was at work on her doctoral dissertation. Sadly, Nobbs's letters to Phoebe Traquair seem to have vanished. (Conversation with Elizabeth Cumming, 13 February 1998.) My thanks are due to Dr. Cumming for providing me with copies of the few letters in her possession.

¹¹Miles Glendinning, Ranald MacInnes, and Aonghus MacKechnie, *A History of Scottish Architecture from the Renaissance to the Present Day* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), pp. 348-49. On Geddes see also Philip Boardman, *The Worlds of Patrick Geddes: Biologist, Town Planner, Re-educator, Peace-Warrior* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978) and Hellen Meller, *Patrick Geddes: Social Evolutionist and City Planner* (London: Routledge, 1990).

¹²Meller, *Patrick Geddes*, pp. 75-76.

manifestation of the past, of greater or lesser aesthetic and historical interest, but a vehicle for enshrining and transmitting ideals of social value."¹³ This idea, whether it came to them through Geddes, Ruskin or others, was to form an important part of both Nobbs's and Traquair's thinking about architecture and culture. In addition, Geddes's work on town planning was extremely influential. Geddes's preoccupation probably encouraged Nobbs to consider the problem too, as Nobbs was later to show great interest in city planning and slum clearance in Montréal and elsewhere.

Perhaps Geddes's most significant project in attempting to reintroduce university life to the Old Town was the purchase and expansion of several existing buildings to make Ramsay Garden, a block containing a mix of university residences and large flats, of which one was Geddes's own.¹⁴ This project brought Nobbs, and particularly Traquair, into Geddes's circle. The building was designed in part by Stewart Henbest Capper (1860-1924), whose pupil Traquair would become before Capper's departure for Montréal to precede Nobbs as Macdonald Professor of Architecture at McGill University. Then, in 1893, the project was taken up by Sydney Mitchell (1856-1930), with whom Traquair was also to work in Edinburgh.¹⁵ These men were among the members of Edinburgh's artistic community who had begun to work with Geddes towards social and artistic reform, and who carried on even after Geddes himself took another direction. The group included a

¹³Duncan Macmillan, "The Busie Humm of Men': Visions of the City in Scottish Art," in *The Architecture of Scottish Cities*, ed. Deborah Mays (East Linton, Scotland: Tuckwell Press, 1997), p. 53.

¹⁴Glendinning et al, *Scottish Architecture*, p. 354.

¹⁵Glendinning et al, *Scottish Architecture*, p. 354; Nobbs, "Ramsay Traquair," p. 147.

number of people who influenced Nobbs's and Traquair's intellectual development. In addition to Capper and Mitchell, these were the architect George Washington Browne, Phoebe Traquair, Gerard Baldwin Brown and his wife, and Robert Lorimer.¹⁶

Baldwin Brown was clearly an important influence on both Nobbs and Traquair, and provided an early connection to arts and crafts principles. Nobbs was to dedicate his 1937 book, *Design: A Treatise on the Discovery of Form*, to him and Sir Robert Lorimer, his first architectural master.¹⁷ As well as a scholar, Baldwin Brown was an artist and craftsman; in fact, he had first intended to make the practice of art his career.¹⁸ From 1887 he supervised all the art classes offered by the Edinburgh Social Union, an organization founded by Geddes in 1885 with the aim of improving the city both through the sponsorship of public art—particularly mural decoration—and by ameliorating the living

¹⁶Cumming, "Phoebe Anna Traquair," p. 74. In 1903 Nobbs replaced Stewart Henbest Capper as Macdonald Professor of Architecture at McGill, while Capper, frustrated by the fact that he was unable to practise architecture in that position, left Montréal for the school of architecture at Manchester. Nobbs had been recommended for the job by his old mentor Baldwin Brown, who was friends with McGill's Principal Peterson and had also recommended Capper. Nine years later Nobbs in his turn was to give up the position of department head in order to give himself more time to practise. He was replaced, yet again on the recommendation of Capper and also no doubt on his own advice, by his old friend Ramsay Traquair, who had been since 1904 lecturer in architecture at the Edinburgh College of Art. (Letter from Traquair to Peterson, in John Bland, "Ramsay Traquair: Biography," in *Ramsay Traquair and his Successors: A Guide to the Archive*, ed. Irena Murray [Montréal: Canadian Architecture Collection and Blackader-Lauterman Library of Architecture and Art, McGill University, 1987], p. 9. The Canadian Architecture Collection will hereafter be known as the CAC.) Surprisingly, Traquair does not mention in this letter that he had worked with Lorimer.

¹⁷Percy Nobbs, *Design: A Treatise on the Discovery of Form* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1937).

¹⁸George Macdonald, "Gerard Baldwin Brown, 1849-1932" (obituary), *Proceedings of the British Academy, 1935* (London: Humphrey Milford, published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 1935), p. 376.

conditions of the poor.¹⁹ Through its three guilds of art, music, and nature, it provided classes to enable people to beautify their lives by the work of their own hands.²⁰ Like Geddes, Baldwin Brown believed that art was primarily a strong reflection of the society that produced it. Thus, as George Macdonald wrote in his obituary in 1935, for Baldwin Brown “[e]poch had succeeded epoch in art, not in virtue of those subtle links of continuity which it is often difficult to discern at all, but in virtue of the successive appearance on the stage of the world of different forms of human society.”²¹ This idea is clearly evident in the thinking of both Nobbs and Traquair. Each associated what he saw as the simple, genuine architecture of rural Québec with the similarly unaffected, pure people who had produced it and, conversely, noted that his own seemingly rootless urban society tended to produce insipid, poorly-constructed buildings that failed at any meaningful expression.

Baldwin Brown and the architect Robert Rowand Anderson (1834-1921) were particularly influential in the founding of the School of Applied Art, which opened in October 1892 with Anderson as honorary director.²² In addition to providing essential training in the crafts to many artists and architects in Edinburgh, the School of Applied

¹⁹Meller, *Patrick Geddes*, p. 75.

²⁰Cumming “Phoebe Anna Traquair,” pp. 41, 65. Cumming argues that by the late 1880s, the Social Union’s priorities were “clearly moving away from philanthropy towards design reform” (*Phoebe Anna Traquair*, p. 17), and indeed from 1887 Baldwin Brown himself offered classes in beaten brass and copper work (“Phoebe Anna Traquair,” pp. 65-67).

²¹Macdonald, “Baldwin Brown,” p. 377.

²²Cumming, “Phoebe Anna Traquair,” p. 82. As noted above, both Nobbs and Traquair studied at the School in the 1890s.

Art gave rise to the National Art Survey of Scotland, an institution that was clearly to have an important influence on Traquair in particular. A year or so after founding the School of Applied Art, Anderson, Baldwin Brown and others decided that three two-year fellowships should be created to fund students to study historical Scottish architecture and design and make drawings of interesting examples.²³ This was to lead directly to the creation of the National Art Survey. Those chosen as bursars of the survey were the best draughtspersons trained by the School of Applied Art, and among them they produced some 1,500 sheets of measured drawings. The drawings were preserved at the school, and Anderson intended that they would comprise a corpus of examples to engrain in the students a sense of traditional Scottish design.²⁴ Traquair himself was an early bursar of the Survey. Presumably inspired by Anderson's example, he was later to establish a similar programme of fellowships in Québec to encourage young architectural students to record the old buildings of that province by means of measured drawings, sketches and photographs, while in his early years in Montréal, Nobbs sponsored a competition to encourage students to draw historic buildings in Québec.²⁵ Anderson's influence on Nobbs and Traquair is also evident in another particularly important area. Speaking as an honorary graduand at the University of Edinburgh in April 1884, Anderson had argued

²³McKinstry, *Rowand Anderson*, p. 144.

²⁴Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, *National Monuments Record of Scotland Jubilee: A Guide to the Collections* (Edinburgh: National Monuments Record of Scotland, 1991).

²⁵"Montreal Junior Architectural Association," in *Canadian Architect and Builder (CAB)* (May 1905): 76.

that architects should use the early Renaissance style of the second half of the fifteenth century, believing that this would “lead to the production of a phase of art that will respond to and be more expressive of the thought and life of the modern world than anything we have yet seen.”²⁶ However, by the mid-1890s or so, and in parallel with the progress of the National Art Survey, he was becoming increasingly preoccupied with the development of a national style in architecture.²⁷ Anderson’s promotion of the Survey had sprung from his desire to develop a uniquely Scottish style based on the country’s historic vernacular buildings. In the same vein, both Nobbs and Traquair were to become interested in recording historic architecture in Québec, and both saw it as a suitable basis on which to build a new national style. As Anglophones newly arrived from Britain, however, their choice required extensive rationalization and cogitation about the relationship between ethnicity and national character.

Both Nobbs and Traquair worked for a time in the office of the Edinburgh architect (later Sir) Robert Stoddart Lorimer (1864-1929), Scotland’s most enthusiastic architectural practitioner along arts and crafts lines. Lorimer was well grounded in late-nineteenth century Edinburgh architectural practice; in 1884 he left university to article with Hew Wardrop of the firm of Wardrop [R. Rowand] Anderson and [George Washington] Browne. Three years later Wardrop died, leaving Lorimer to work with

²⁶Anderson, convocation address, April, 1884, quoted in Cumming, “Phoebe Anna Traquair,” p. 39.

²⁷McKinstry, *Rowand Anderson*, p. 150.

Anderson.²⁸ Lorimer must have become familiar with Anderson's preoccupation with the development of a Scottish national style, and this, in combination with the study of historic Scottish buildings, was to become an important part of his own practice. In 1889 he went to London where, among other pursuits, he worked for a year and a half in the office of Gothic Revival church architect George Frederick Bodley (1827-1907).²⁹ In 1893 he returned to Edinburgh to open his own architectural practice. Lorimer was particularly known for his domestic work and for his castle restorations. His work draws upon the historic architecture of Scotland without ever copying exactly. It was this effect for which Nobbs strove in his own work, and he must have been influenced in this by the time he spent with Lorimer.

Nobbs's nomination papers to become an Associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects (ARIBA) state that he had articulated for four years with Lorimer, starting in 1896;³⁰ architectural historian Peter Savage believes that Traquair was with him by 1898.³¹ It appears that Nobbs was not occupied solely in Lorimer's office, but there is evidence of his presence at intervals.³² Although it was rare for Lorimer's assistants to sign

²⁸Peter Savage, "An Examination of the Work of Sir Robert Lorimer" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1973), pp. 3-4.

²⁹A. Stuart Gray, *Edwardian Architecture: A Biographical Dictionary* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1985; Ware, Herts: Wordsworth Editions, 1988), p. 236.

³⁰Percy Erskine Nobbs, ARIBA nomination papers (RIBA biography file on Nobbs).

³¹Savage, "Robert Lorimer," p. 53. Traquair may have been elsewhere for at least part of this time.

³²Savage states that Nobbs "seems to have been engaged from time to time and on a
(continued...)

their drawings, a drawing for a cottage from 1899 appears to be signed by Nobbs.³³ Savage even suggests that one of Lorimer's houses, "Wayside," might have been designed by either Nobbs or Traquair. And Traquair designed Skirling House in Peebleshire, almost certainly his major domestic project, after Lorimer's proposals for the project had been abandoned as too expensive.³⁴

Both Nobbs and Traquair clearly respected Lorimer. He appears to have been a rather arrogant man and was enormously critical of other architects; he really respected only the work of Bodley and Richard Norman Shaw, although he also admired Sir Edwin Lutyens's Munstead Wood, a house he built in Surrey for the gardener Gertrude Jekyll.³⁵ Although Lorimer had few close friends, he numbered among them Ramsay's mother Phoebe Traquair.³⁶ Peter Savage has suggested that Lorimer may have been wary of those students who showed too much initiative.³⁷ He wrote of Nobbs, "Don't know how he'll end that boy for all his go and ability[.] I don't value his services very highly[;] always feel

³²(...continued)

temporary basis to undertake particular jobs" ("Robert Lorimer," p. 53).

³³Lorimer Office Records, book 2, p.114, item a of 10/5/1899. Cited in Savage, "Robert Lorimer," p. 95, ff. 54. Savage notes that the drawing is signed "P.C. Nobbs," but it seems likely that this is our Nobbs.

³⁴Cumming, "Phoebe Anna Traquair," p. 233.

³⁵Savage, "Robert Lorimer," pp. 18, 73.

³⁶Savage, "Robert Lorimer," pp. 18, 40-41.

³⁷Peter Savage, *Lorimer and the Edinburgh Crafts Designers* (London: Paul Harris, 1980), p. 26.

that there's just as good a chance of his drawings being wrong as right."³⁸ Yet Nobbs was a very fine draughtsman—Lorimer himself thought his Tite Prize design “uncommon good”³⁹—and indeed, in 1902, after a year or so as chief assistant to the architect A. Hessel Tiltman, he employed himself solely as a competition draughtsman for various architects in London.⁴⁰ Interestingly, Nobbs later wrote that it was Lorimer himself who had “visited [Nobbs’s] quarters in Chelsea and extorted from [him] an oath that [he] would never draw for anyone” but himself.⁴¹ The fact that Lorimer then arranged for one last draughting job for Nobbs, working for Lorimer’s own friend Walter Tapper on the Liverpool Cathedral competition, belies his statement that Nobbs’s drawings were as often wrong as right. And Lorimer and Nobbs were to carry on a friendly correspondence, including a number of letters that were purely social, once Nobbs left for Montréal. Lorimer even sent him a sugar basin (which Nobbs initially mistook for a cigarette holder) when Nobbs was married in 1909.⁴² It is clear that both Nobbs and Traquair admired

³⁸Robert Lorimer, letter to R.S. Dods, 20 January 1901, p.5, quoted in Savage, “Robert Lorimer,” p. 143.

³⁹Lorimer, letter to R.S. Dods, 10 March 1900, pp. 3-4, quoted in Savage, “Robert Lorimer,” p. 95 ff 82.

⁴⁰Nobbs’s Nomination Papers to become a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects (FRIBA).

⁴¹Nobbs, “Competition Reform,” in *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (JRAIC)* 12 (September 1935): 150.

⁴²CAC Nobbs Collection, Series F.14-7. Oddly, a file in Edinburgh of congratulatory letters on the occasion of Lorimer’s knighthood contains none from Nobbs, although there is one from Traquair. It does, however, include one apparently from Nobbs’s father, thanking Lorimer for his “kindness to my boys” and noting that “you have doubtless heard how well Percy is getting on in Montreal.” (University of Edinburgh Library Special Collections, Lorimer papers, files

(continued...)

Lorimer professionally and inherited from him (among others) an appreciation for local vernacular architecture and the drive to use it in modern building. Nobbs's obituary of Lorimer suggests those elements of his work that Nobbs himself found most admirable, which are also those to which his own writings suggest that he most fervently aspired. "It was given to him to materialize in building the very essence of the Scottish spirit," writes Nobbs. Lorimer was "the last of the great romantics, with a name to be put beside that of Philip Webb and Norman Shaw. Like these, a revivalist; like these, a modernist."⁴³

In 1900 Nobbs won the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Tite Prize for his design for a free-standing clock tower. This sent him to northern Italy to study the architecture of Milan, Verona, Venice, Ravenna, and Florence, and he was joined there by Ramsay Traquair and by Cecil Burgess, with whom he would later collaborate in Canada.⁴⁴ In Italy Nobbs made drawings and watercolours of decorative work, and with the help of these he later won the RIBA Owen Jones studentship in 1903. Although his time in Italy obviously contributed to Nobbs's architectural education, he believed that practice was essential to teaching. In a letter a few years after he made the trip, he indicated that he was planning to spend the summer working with architect David R.

⁴²(...continued)
Gen.1963/29/various numbers.)

⁴³Nobbs, "The Late Sir Robert Lorimer," in *JRAIC* (October 1929): 352.

⁴⁴Susan Wagg, *Percy Erskine Nobbs: Architect, Artist, Craftsman* (Montréal: McCord Museum/McGill-Queen's University Press, 1982), p. 3; Bland, "Ramsay Traquair," p. 8.

Brown—with whom he designed the Colby house⁴⁵—opining that this would do more for his teaching than returning to Europe, either to take up his Owen Jones Studentship or to work as an architect's assistant in London.⁴⁶

In 1901 Nobbs left Edinburgh for good to join the Fire Brigade section of the London County Council Architect's Office. A letter from him to McGill University principal William Peterson notes that he worked primarily on the LCC headquarters, where he “carried out a lot of complicated alteration work and quantities of fittings.”⁴⁷ No records seem to exist to show whether he might have worked on any other projects with the Architect's Office, and LCC drawings are frequently unsigned except by the supervising architect. However, there is some evidence of his presence there. A report on the LCC Staff Arts Exhibition of 1901 remarks that “it is of course impossible to note every exhibit, but . . . Mr. Percy Nobbs's architectural studies, deserve particular attention.”⁴⁸ It is unclear exactly how long he remained with the LCC. The only other mention of him appears to be in March of 1903, the year he arrived in Montréal, when it was noted that “Mr. P.E. Nobbs, formerly of the Fire Brigade section, [has] gained the Owen Jones

⁴⁵John Bland, “Percy Erskine Nobbs: Biography,” in *Percy Erskine Nobbs and His Associations: a Guide to the Archive*, ed. Irena Murray (Montréal: CAC and Blackader-Lauterman Library of Architecture and Art, McGill University, 1986), p. 18.

⁴⁶Letter to McGill principal William Peterson, April 16th, 1904 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series B.7-3).

⁴⁷Letter to Peterson, 24 November 1903. Peterson Papers. Quoted in Wagg, *Percy Erskine Nobbs*, p. 4.

⁴⁸Charles Aitken, Esq., “Notes on the Exhibits,” in *The London County Council Staff Gazette* II (May 1901): 56-57.

studentship of £100, founded for the encouragement of the study of ornament and coloured decoration”⁴⁹ The LCC certainly provided a progressive atmosphere, and probably helped influence Nobbs’s later interest in city planning and slum clearance, projects with which the LCC Architect’s Office (although not specifically the Fire Brigade section) was heavily concerned. In fact, two arts and crafts architects had come from the LCC Housing Branch to lead the Fire Brigade Branch just before Nobbs began working there.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the Euston Road Fire station, a building that, as architectural historian A. Stuart Gray observes, stands as testimony to the depth of influence of the Arts and Crafts Movement on the architects of the London County Council, was under construction during Nobbs’s tenure there.⁵¹ Like the fire station, many of the LCC’s projects were designed in the “Queen Anne” style perfected by Richard Norman Shaw or reflected some other facet of arts and crafts practice, such as the vernacular-inspired work of such architects as Philip Webb or, later, Edwin Lutyens. As Susan Wagg comments, many of Nobbs’s buildings in Canada clearly suggest that he was aware of the work being done at the other draughting tables in his office in the LCC.⁵²

Perhaps as important as his direct connection with the Architect’s Office, Nobbs’s years in London put him close to the greater artistic community of that city, where he gained even more contact with the current architectural and planning ideas of some of the

⁴⁹*London County Council Staff Gazette* IV, 39 (March 1903): 30.

⁵⁰Wagg, *Percy Erskine Nobbs*, p. 3.

⁵¹Gray, *Edwardian Architecture*, p. 10.

⁵²Wagg, *Percy Erskine Nobbs*, p. 4.

most important people connected with the arts and crafts movement. Many years later he wrote, "I remember well sitting beside [William] Morris (blue linen shirt and all) at a lecture by Walter Crane, and Morris kept gripping my thy [sic] and saying 'Isn't that good?' at every point Crane made; I was lame for a day and black and blue for a week. Morris was a man of strong grip in all matters."⁵³ It may also have been at this time that he made the acquaintanceship of Raymond Unwin (1863-1940), of the garden-city-specializing partnership of Parker and Unwin, with whom he later corresponded from Montréal.

Nobbs was not alone of the two in receiving the benefits of the metropolitan experience around the turn of the century. In 1899 Traquair worked in the office of the London architect Samuel Bridgman Russell (1864-1955), where he too was exposed to the architectural practice of the city. Before going south, he had spent 1897 in the offices of John More Dick Peddie (1853-1921) and Edinburgh Social Union member (later Sir) George Washington Browne (1853-1939).⁵⁴ Browne in particular linked him even more tightly to the centre of Edinburgh architectural practice; after articling with well-known Scottish "Queen Anne" architect J.J. Stevenson, Browne had been chief assistant to Robert Rowand Anderson, with whom Lorimer had himself articulated.⁵⁵ In addition,

⁵³Nobbs, "Latter Day Architecture" (manuscript dated 8 November 1937), p. 5. (McGill University, CAC Nobbs Collection, Series C.10-2). Oddly enough, Morris died in 1896. Either the episode took place on an earlier trip to London, when Nobbs was quite young, or this tale is an example of self-invention.

⁵⁴British Architectural Library, RIBA, *Directory of British Architects*, pp. 923-24.

⁵⁵Gray, *Edwardian Architecture*, p. 126.

Stewart Henbest Capper, who went on to work with Patrick Geddes on his Ramsay Garden project (where he was assisted by Traquair), also articulated first with Browne.⁵⁶ Capper introduced a different note as well; he had trained in the *Atelier Pascal* at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris.⁵⁷ Browne was also the first Scottish winner of the RIBA Pugin Prize, which Traquair won jointly with another architect in 1899.⁵⁸ Traquair must have been in Lorimer's office around that time, leaving it for his year in London and returning to it later, as Lorimer notes in a letter that Traquair was "about to have another go at 'the Pugin.'" ⁵⁹

In 1905 Traquair began his own practice in Edinburgh.⁶⁰ A few years later, when he applied for the position of Chair of Architecture at McGill University, Traquair wrote to Principal Peterson that he had "erected a considerable number of buildings" in and around Edinburgh. Only a few are known today.⁶¹ A design for a row of six inexpensive

⁵⁶Robert J. Naismith, "Dash of Genius on City Skyline," in *The Scotsman*, 23 December, year unknown. (Copy in National Monuments Record of Scotland, artist's file on S. Henbest Capper.)

⁵⁷Naismith states that Capper was in Paris for one year ("Dash of Genius"), however, the RIBA *Directory of British Architects* states that he was there for four years (p. 152). Montréal architect William Sutherland Maxwell (1875-1952) also spent two years in the *Atelier Pascal*, some years later. (Harold Kalman, *A History of Canadian Architecture* vol. 2 [Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994], p. 557.)

⁵⁸McKinstry, *Rowand Anderson*, p. 163.

⁵⁹Lorimer, letter to R.S. Dods, 14 August 1898. Quoted in Savage, "Robert Lorimer," p. 53 ff.

⁶⁰Traquair, letter to William Peterson, 27 December 1912. Quoted in full in Bland, "Ramsay Traquair," p. 9.

⁶¹Traquair, letter to Peterson, 27 December 1912.

cottages to be built at Bannockburn, published in 1908, illustrates that he had taken to heart the arts and crafts teaching of making a new building suited to its site through the use of local materials (fig. 1.1). The row is an example of what Glendinning et al call “the application of the ‘artistic’ simple cottage style to low-density working-class housing,” many examples of which were designed by Lorimer and others beginning in the 1890s.⁰² In this case, the cottages are harled (roughcast or stuccoed) on the outside, and roofed with Scottish pantiles. Even in these humble three-room cottages, with “all fittings and finishings of the simplest type,” Traquair clearly gave his attention to the aesthetics of massing and the appearance of the whole, as befits a row designed for the Garden City Association.⁰³ Although the cottages are extremely simple and very small, their high-peaked roofs and cross-gabled design, with pairs of houses sharing a gable front, makes for an attractive overall picture.

Begun around 1905, Traquair’s work at Skirling House for Phoebe Traquair’s friends Sir Thomas Gibson Carmichael and his wife Mary is even more in the Arts and Crafts mood, and here he was not working under the financial constraints governing the design and construction of the cottages at Bannockburn (figs. 1.2 & 1.3).⁰⁴ As the

⁰²Glendinning et al, *History of Scottish Architecture*, p. 355.

⁰³Illustration caption in James Nicoll, ed., *Illustrations of Scottish Domestic Work in Recent Years* (Aberdeen: Daily Journal Offices, 1908), Plate 65.

⁰⁴Glendinning et al, date the house at 1912 (*Scottish Architecture*, p. 600). It is listed on the Scottish Historic Buildings list as 1905, and was illustrated in Alex Koch, ed. *Academy Architecture and Architectural Review* 34 (1908). It seems likely that 1905 represents the year it was begun, but as Traquair sent pictures of the finished building to Nobbs in a letter in 1909, it was obviously finished by that year (see Note 69).

English arts and crafts architect Philip Webb had done at Standen in Sussex in 1891, he incorporated a farmhouse already standing on the site into his design, retaining the integrity of the structure while designing a house suitable to contemporary living. Although it is fairly large, the house gives the impression of being quite modest, suggesting that it might even be a grouping of smaller cottages joined together. Its Z-shaped plan gives it a cosy appearance, creating as it does two sheltered, two-sided yards within its angles. Its low, stone walls and varied-height roof, punctuated with enlivening dormers and chimneys, must have fit it well for its setting near old cottages and barns (although the Scottish Historic Buildings list suggests that the partially weather-boarded upper floor may show the influence of the south coast of England, rather than of local domestic work). Inside, low-ceilinged corridors on the second floor continue the feeling that the house is an overgrown cottage (fig. 1.4). The extensive ironwork, featuring dragons and other beasts, particularly on the outside doors and in the garden, is highly whimsical (figs. 1.5 & 1.6). The interior includes such details as a charming carved newel post showing a pelican feeding her young in mythical pelican fashion (fig. 1.7), and a multiplicity of chimneypieces, ranging from formal classical designs to cottagey glazed-brick surrounds.

A departure from his domestic work is Traquair's First Church of Christ, Scientist, built in Edinburgh in 1911 (fig. 1.8). It is a low, ground-hugging structure, belonging to the genre of Scottish ecclesiastical revival buildings then current; in this case Traquair used forms from the fifteenth-century Scots neo-Romanesque tradition.⁶⁵ The broad,

⁶⁵Glendinning et al, *Scottish Architecture*, p. 375. See also Fiona Sinclair, *Scotstyle: 150*
(continued...)

square front is flanked on either side by round towers, and the round-arched windows and heavy stonework throughout evoke Romanesque forms. Inside, the wood carving that survives—particularly in the organ—demonstrates once more Traquair’s interest in decorative arts, as does the elegant iron work in the porch doors (figs. 1.9 & 1.10).⁶⁹ All this expresses Traquair’s allegiance to the arts and crafts tradition of using local materials and historic forms in order to make modern buildings harmonize with their settings and with the history of the areas in which they stand, while never attempting to imitate exactly the buildings of an earlier period.

Traquair carried out other commissions during his Edinburgh career, but for the most part they are all but unknown today.⁶⁷ His mother wrote to Nobbs in 1904: “I wish Ramsay had as good prospects [as Nobbs himself], things are slow here, he works hard enough, but to get independent work is another matter,” although five years later she was more positive, asserting that “his own practice promises to go on growing.”⁶⁸ Traquair

⁶⁵(...continued)

Years of Scottish Architecture (Edinburgh: Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland and Scottish Academic Press, 1984), p. 72. Sinclair dates the church at 1910.

⁶⁶The interior of the church was severely modified some years ago, and it now contains offices. The exterior, however, has survived intact.

⁶⁷One exception is the still-extant MacKenzie House, of 1910, in Kinnear Road, Edinburgh. Unfortunately, Traquair’s office papers from Edinburgh do not survive to provide a picture of the work he was doing. Robert Naismith, a one-time colleague of Edinburgh architect Frank Mears, who was a friend and briefly worked with Traquair, recalled that Traquair’s papers were left with Mears when Traquair went to Canada, and were destroyed at the time of a major office overhaul after Mears’s death. (Conversation with Robert Naismith, 14 February 1998.)

⁶⁸Phoebe Traquair, letter to Nobbs, 26 February 1904; Phoebe Traquair, letter to Nobbs, 15 November 1909.

himself wrote to Nobbs the same year that “the practice is flourishing . . . heaps of little and one big job are impending,” including pictures of his work at Skirling House “just to prove that something is doing (or was!).”⁶⁹ By 1920, when Traquair applied to become a RIBA Fellow, his sponsor Robert Lorimer cited Skirling House and the Church of Christ, Scientist in his nomination.

Traquair also worked for a time with his friend (later Sir) Frank Mears (1880-1953). Mears was employed in Traquair’s office in 1908,⁷⁰ and the two later collaborated on an extraordinary project to complete the monument on Edinburgh’s Calton Hill that had begun as a copy of the Parthenon to commemorate Britain’s victory at Waterloo almost a century before.⁷¹ Mears was married to Patrick Geddes’s daughter, and worked extensively with Geddes on his plans for the renewal of the old town. It appears that Traquair and Mears maintained contact after the former went to Canada; Edinburgh University Library possesses a copy of Traquair’s book, *The Old Architecture of Quebec*, inscribed “To Frank Mears in memory of old days,” and signed and dated 1947. The book was given to the library in 1953, the year Mears died.

Mears had also worked with Sydney Mitchell, an architect Cumming describes as among the most important arts and crafts architects in Edinburgh, and his partner George

⁶⁹Ramsay Traquair, letter to Nobbs, 24 September 1909.

⁷⁰Rebecca M. Bailey, *Scottish Architects’ Papers: A Source Book* (Edinburgh: Rutland, 1996), p. 131.

⁷¹I am indebted to John Lowrey for this information, and to Hugh Crawford for showing me the original watercolour design for the Calton Hill project.

Wilson in 1906-07.⁷² Mitchell had spent five years as a pupil in the office of Robert Rowand Anderson (founder of the School of Applied Art and of the National Art Survey) before setting up on his own in 1883.⁷³ In that year Mitchell designed the romantic Well Court, a working-class housing complex that Glendinning et al describe as “a sanitary slum redevelopment of emphatically ‘artistic’ character,” with its garden court, steeply-pitched roofs, and picturesque asymmetrical massing.⁷⁴ This first architectural expression of the Old Edinburgh movement was to help prod Geddes towards his project to revive Edinburgh’s “Golden Age.” It suggested the work of English architect Richard Norman Shaw, while reviving features of historic Scottish architecture that were to be borrowed from this building in its turn for housing projects in the next century.⁷⁵ Three years later, Mitchell celebrated the historic fabric of the old town in his slightly miniaturized model of the High Street in a past time, to be staffed by actors in historic costume at the 1886 Edinburgh International Exhibition.⁷⁶

Punctuating his architectural practice at intervals in the early twentieth century, Traquair spent some time with the British School at Athens. According to his own account in his nomination papers for the FRIBA, he was there from 1906 to 1908. An

⁷²Cumming, “Phoebe Anna Traquair,” pp. 143-44; Bailey, *Scottish Architects’ Papers*, p. 131.

⁷³Glendinning et al, *Scottish Architecture*, p. 304.

⁷⁴Glendinning et al, *Scottish Architecture*, p. 349.

⁷⁵Cumming, “Phoebe Anna Traquair,” p. 144; Glendinning et al, *Scottish Architecture*, p. 349.

⁷⁶Glendinning et al, *Scottish Architecture*, p. 349.

obituary in the RIBA library has him with the British School from 1905 to 1909, and also states that he spent “several years in Turkey chiefly in Constantinople . . . where he worked for the Turkish government and studied Byzantine architecture extensively.”⁷⁷ This is the only reference I have found to any employment with the Turkish government, and indeed such employment seems rather unlikely, although he did contribute extensively to the 1912 volume *Byzantine Churches in Constantinople* by Alexander Van Millingen, a Professor of History at Robert College, Constantinople; he is listed on the title page as an assistant to the author.⁷⁸ According to the *Annual of the British School at Athens* for 1905-06—perhaps the most reliable source of information on this point—he was appointed to an architectural studentship that year, receiving £100 to spend three months studying Byzantine and Frankish architectural remains in Laconia and three more in Constantinople making plans and drawings of Byzantine churches for Van Millingen’s book (a fact that Van Millingen acknowledges in his preface).⁷⁹ Traquair himself comments in a footnote to an article that he had gathered the materials for it in two journeys: one in 1906 as a student of the British School, and the other in 1909 “on behalf

⁷⁷“Association mourns passing of Professor Ramsay Traquair.” Unidentified obituary, RIBA library. (From the familiarity this obituary assumes with Traquair’s retirement place of Guysborough, Nova Scotia, I surmise that it appeared in a Canadian publication.)

⁷⁸Alexander Van Millingen, assisted by Ramsay Traquair, W.S. George and A.E. Henderson, *Byzantine Churches in Constantinople: Their History and Architecture* (London: MacMillan and Co, 1912).

⁷⁹*The Annual of the British School at Athens* XII, Session 1905-06 (London: Macmillan, nd.), p. 485.

of the Byzantine Fund."⁸⁰ In his preface, Van Millingen notes that Traquair wrote the entire chapter on Byzantine architecture, as well as contributing to numerous other sections.⁸¹ Interestingly, Van Millingen also writes that "it is impossible to thank Professor Baldwin Brown, of the University of Edinburgh, enough, for his unfailing kindness whenever I consulted him in connection with my work."⁸² Perhaps it was through Baldwin Brown's influence that Traquair carried out this work in partnership with Van Millingen, and it is even possible that Baldwin Brown helped Traquair acquire the architectural studentship that sent him to Athens.

Traquair's time with the British School at Athens is a significant feature of his early career. It has been more or less ignored, and I believe that it merits a fairly extensive discussion here of the origins of the School in nineteenth-century British Hellenism. Traquair's connection with the British School at Athens suggests that he had an interest in the collecting of other cultures long before he began his work with the architecture of Québec, and perhaps that some of his ideas on cultural preservation were formed at this early stage.

The School was founded in 1884, as a result of pressure from several prominent

⁸⁰Ramsay Traquair, "Laconia. III.—The Churches of Western Mani," *The Annual of the British School at Athens* XV, session 1908-09 (London: Macmillan, nd), pp. 177 ff. Elsewhere it is noted that "a grant was made from [the School's] funds towards the cost of the drawings" for Van Millingen's book, and Traquair is included in the list of students of the Byzantine fund, indicating that this fund was administered by the British School. (G.A. MacMillan "A Short History of the British School at Athens, 1886-1911," *The Annual of the British School at Athens* XVII, Session 1910-1911 [London: Macmillan & co., n.d.], pp. xxxii, 317).

⁸¹Van Millingen, *Byzantine Churches*, p. x.

⁸²Van Millingen, *Byzantine Churches*, p. xi.

British Hellenists.⁵³ One of these was R.C. Jebb, Professor of Greek at the University of Glasgow. In 1878 he had written a letter to *The Times* of London, arguing that there was need for a British school of archaeology at Athens and Rome, to support the same kind of research that he noted was already being carried out by France and Germany. His viewpoint as expressed in the letter shows remarkable similarity to Traquair's later attitude towards French-Canadian culture. He refers to "German explorers, [who] . . . bring temple after temple from its grave" and "recover" such statues as the Hermes by Praxiteles, which "lay under the shed of the little museum by the Cladius."⁵⁴ In other words, Jebb believed that the world needed scholars from England and elsewhere to rescue Greek culture from the state into which the Greeks had allowed it to sink, even though it might already be in a museum. Some years later, in 1883, Jebb was to write a "Plea for a British Institute at Athens," which was published in the *Fortnightly Review*. This was to be the catalyst for the founding of the school, as the Prince of Wales soon convened a meeting attended by a number of important public and political figures in favour of the project.⁵⁵

Hellenism was an important theme in Victorian Britain; as historian Frank M. Turner explains, intellectuals of the nineteenth century tended to look either to the

⁵³T.P. Wiseman, *A Short History of the British School at Rome* (London: British School at Rome, 1990), p. 2.

⁵⁴Quoted in Wiseman, *The British School at Rome*, p. 1.

⁵⁵Macmillan, "British School at Athens," p. ix.

middle ages or to antiquity for the origins of their own culture and civilization.⁵⁶ Those Europeans who had settled on Greek civilization as the most likely origin typically searched for similarities between the Greeks and themselves, finding many and dismissing the unavoidable differences.⁵⁷ Traquair himself referred much later to ancient Greek culture as that “upon which our own is founded.”⁵⁸ Thus, it was natural that scholars should find themselves interested in discovering more about these people whom they saw as their cultural ancestors. Many also believed—contrary to scholarship at the time—that modern Greeks were the same people as those who had developed the classical civilization that had been so enormously influential in western society. Travellers through the nineteenth and into the early twentieth century often went to Greece looking for living embodiments of the figures of Greek sculpture, and believed they found them.⁵⁹ Some early philhellenes, like Lord Byron, were sufficiently enamoured of the ancient Greeks as to be so inspired by their modern descendants’ struggle against Turkish domination that they had gone to help, and perhaps even to die in the effort.

Many in nineteenth-century Britain saw ancient Greek civilization, not as identical to their own, but as what their own should be; for them, it represented the

⁵⁶Frank M. Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. xi. This book provides a useful discussion of the Hellenic impulse in nineteenth-century England.

⁵⁷Turner, *Greek Heritage*, p. 8.

⁵⁸Ramsay Traquair, “The Commonwealth of the Atlantic,” *Atlantic Monthly* 133 (May 1924): 602.

⁵⁹John Pemble, *The Mediterranean Passion: Victorians and Edwardians in the South* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 118-120.

strength and virtue that had been sucked out of the decadent society of modern Britain. These people had a tendency to admire the Greeks for the virtues that they felt they themselves had lost, and Turner demonstrates that “this image of Greece and its sculpture as symbolizing an antagonism to the harshness, materialism, and sham of modern life would persist throughout the century.”⁹⁰ The earlier German excavations that had inspired Jebb to call for the creation of a British School at Athens had themselves, as historian Peter Connor argues, been motivated in part by similar “romantic ideals about life, freedom, ancient religion, art, learning, morals, gymnastics and athletics,” and admiration for “the balance of the spiritual (*geistig*) and physical life” that seemed to German visitors to be represented by such sites as Olympia.⁹¹ All this makes it easy to see why Traquair, the budding antimodernist, might have been drawn to Greece on a venture not dissimilar from his French-Canadian project some years later. As Turner puts it, “in contrast to modern culture that was informed by false social values, inhibiting aesthetic rules, and ascetic Christian morality, Greece functioned as a metaphor for a golden age inhabited, if not by prelapsarian human beings, at least by natural children who made use of their imagination to comprehend the world and their reason to restrain their passions against excess.”⁹² Obviously, the Victorians and Edwardians did not see the virtues of ancient Greek culture as identical to those of the middle ages; mediaeval society was

⁹⁰Turner, *Greek Heritage*, p. 36.

⁹¹Peter Connor, “Cast-collecting in the nineteenth century: scholarship, aesthetics, connoisseurship,” in *Rediscovering Hellenism: The Hellenic Inheritance and the English Imagination*, ed. G.W. Clarke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 189.

⁹²Turner, *Greek Heritage*, p. 41.

lauded by many for its pure Christianity, as were many folk cultures. However, the ancient Greeks, while not Christians, did not seem to have suffered from the degradation of religion that many believed plagued the nineteenth century. Even John Ruskin, that champion of the mediaeval past, lauded Greek culture, suggesting to contemporary artists that in Greek art the imagination was given free reign.³³

The establishment of the British School at Athens suggests itself as a part of the imperial project upon which Britain had embarked. Britain, like France and Germany, sent scholars to Greece to identify and preserve its ancient culture, in many cases removing their finds to museums at home.³⁴ Like Traquair in Québec later in the century, many of these scholars seemed to believe that the Greeks were not capable of managing their own heritage, and that they required the assistance of the researchers' own more advanced culture in northern Europe to ensure that it did not remain forever buried and undiscovered. They went with the understanding that they could and should rescue for the enrichment of their own cultures the valuable elements of what they found.

Traquair published his findings in three articles in the *Annual of the British School at Athens*. In Greece, as well as in Constantinople, he studied Byzantine rather than Classical ruins. As he had gone to Greece on an architectural studentship, his articles, like his chapter in Van Millingen's book, concentrate on the description and analysis of

³³Turner, *Greek Heritage*, p. 65.

³⁴Traquair himself was not above removing the odd item; in 1909, the year of his second stint with the British School at Athens, he sent Nobbs and his new wife Mary Cecilia Shepherd a Greek vase as a wedding present. (Letter from Ramsay Traquair to Nobbs, 24 September 1909. CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series B.7-3.)

the architectural forms of the churches and castles he studied rather than on a discussion of the broader political or social history of the time. On occasion, however, he betrays hints of the approach he was later to take; it is clear that he had strong ideas about what was worth studying, and that he believed that some periods simply had not produced work that was worth the trouble. He describes a group of churches as “built in the seventeenth or eighteenth century to judge by their bad masonry and coarse painting. Beyond the evidence they give of the great revival of religious feeling and of church building in these late times, they are of no importance.”²⁵ As he was to do later in Québec, Traquair drew a firm connection between the quality of the buildings and the period in which they were made. In this case, he adjudged this group of churches to be of the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries simply because, in his estimation, they were not very good.

Although Nobbs and Traquair did not agree on every particular, they shared a general approach to architecture and the study of culture. The origins of their outlook—their admiration for vernacular forms, their association of the virtues of societies with the architecture they produced, their approach to architectural practice, and their interest in national culture—can all be found rooted in the architectural community of turn-of-the-century Edinburgh and London where they received their training. But the antimodernism that led Edinburgh’s architects and social reformers to try to preserve historic buildings and neighbourhoods, to attempt to rehabilitate the poor by teaching them weaving and metalwork, and to seek cultural and social rejuvenation in the

²⁵Ramsay Traquair, “Laconia. III.—The Churches of Western Mani,” p. 194.

architecture and traditions of the Scottish Folk developed a distinctly imperialist lean in the context of another culture. Traquair in Greece, and Nobbs and Traquair in Canada, each brought his imperialist notions of culture to the collection and preservation of another.

The environment in which Nobbs and Traquair spent their formative years had an indelible effect on them, and as late as 1938, when Nobbs wrote his appreciation of Traquair on the latter's retirement (and only a year before he himself was to leave McGill University), Nobbs emphasized the importance of the antimodern aspects of Traquair's education and of his life. Recognizing the depth of their antimodernism is an essential step to interpreting their work as architects and theorists in Canada; in the next chapter, I examine how thoroughly it permeated their approach to the culture of rural Québec, resulting in interpretations that were to help formulate their ideas about a modern architecture for Canada.

Chapter Two “SIMPLE THINGS FREE FROM SHAM”

IN COMMON with intellectuals in many countries at the turn of the twentieth century, Nobbs and Traquair found modern life to be severely deficient. Its shortcomings manifested themselves particularly in what they saw as the poverty of its artistic and architectural endeavours. Nobbs railed against “a civilization where all classes habitually assemble in search of refreshment of soul by watching emotion registered on the fleeting film . . .” and saw “a countryside at our doors where folk are clothed but have no costumes, are housed but have no architecture, and acquire their uncherished household gods through the village store.”¹ Good design seemed to have become lost in a welter of cheap utilitarianism or of historic detail applied meaninglessly and without real knowledge to modern buildings and other objects. Searching for something more genuine, Nobbs and Traquair came to value rural Québec society for what they understood as its pure folk culture, uncorrupted by the modernity that regulated their own lives. If modern Canadian architecture and design could be improved by the infusion of folk values and methods of building, they believed, they might revitalize their own seemingly weak and over-civilized culture, which was almost devoid of genuine modes of expression or real feeling to express. Thus inspired, the two set out to record old buildings in Québec before they vanished—taking their tradition with them—or were modified or restored, which seemed nearly as destructive to their authenticity.

¹Nobbs, “the Arts of Russia” (undated typescript), p. 1. (Canadian Architecture Collection, Blackader-Lauterman Library, McGill University [CAC], Nobbs Collection, Series C.9-1). In this case Nobbs was comparing the current situation in Canada to “the exquisiteness of the apparatus of life of a wealthy peasantry like that of the Ukraine a generation ago” [last three words added later in pen].

Nobbs and Traquair focussed their interest almost exclusively on the areas of earliest European settlement in what is now the province of Québec. The buildings that were the subject of Traquair's studies are (or were) on the Île d'Orléans, an island in the Saint Lawrence River just east of Québec City, in the provincial capital itself, in Montréal, and in towns, villages and the countryside in the Saint Lawrence River valley between the two principal cities and east of Québec City. Nobbs and Traquair believed that in these early-settled areas resided, unspoiled and unchanged, the direct descendants of the *habitants* who had initially arrived from France to farm the land. Like their ancestors, the rural dwellers of these areas seemed to them still to be peasants, who remained cut off from Nobbs and Traquair's own advancing civilization, and were thus set apart from their own modern world.

It is not, of course, the prerogative of the members of the more technologically-advanced parts of society to decide who else is or is not part of the contemporary world; no one can exist in the present and belong to the past. But even if, for Nobbs and Traquair, belonging in the present was predicated on contact with modernity, they misunderstood the situation in rural Québec, which, while certainly rural, was not completely isolated. Even in 1812, one could travel between Montréal and Québec on a daily stage coach, and by 1837 this service had been joined by a daily steamboat.² By that year, the towns and cities from Rivière-du-Loup and points westward all the way to

²Information about coaches and steamboats is derived from R. Louis Gentilcore, ed., *Historical Atlas of Canada, Volume II: The Land Transformed 1800-1891* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), plate 25.

Detroit, with many side routes, had been linked by regular boat and coach services. While it is unlikely that anyone travelled frequently by such ponderous (and very expensive) means, it is clear that communication and transportation among communities were both needed and present; letters, at least, could presumably make the trip with relative ease. Furthermore, railway service was beginning to be put in place as early as 1836.³ Lines linked Québec City southward to various towns in the province, and through them westward to Montréal and further south into the United States, as well as north-east along the south shore of the Saint Lawrence River to Rivière-du-Loup; in the hope of encouraging new industry, small towns began to vie with each other to entice railway companies to build local stations.⁴ Between 1865 and 1882, the railway expanded enormously, with lines running along the north shore of the Saint Lawrence River between Québec City and Montréal, and from Montréal to Ottawa. By 1891, a new line ran north from Québec City to the Lac-Saint-Jean region, and the most heavily-settled areas of Québec and Ontario were well served by trains. By Confederation, most of the area that Traquair studied was less than a day's journey from Ottawa, and not more than two from Toronto or New York City.⁵ This is not to argue that rural Québécois in the nineteenth century regularly went on jaunts to New York to take in the sights, but rather to emphasize Nobbs's and Traquair's misconception that, in the people of the Saint

³Information about train service comes from Gentilcore, *Atlas*, Plate 26.

⁴Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, *The Dream of Nation: A Social and Intellectual History of Québec* (Toronto: Gage, 1983), p. 136.

⁵Gentilcore, *Atlas*, plate 27.

Lawrence River valley, they had found survivals of the pre-industrial age, blissfully unaware of an advancing world around them.

Even in the deeply-antimodernist novel *Maria Chapdelaine*, first published in serial form in 1914 and appearing as a book in 1921, author Louis Hémon acknowledges the broader contact experienced by even the most isolated Québec farming communities.⁶ Set in the remote Lac-Saint-Jean region, the novel includes characters who leave their farms each winter to work in lumber camps, a hired man who helped build the railway line to the region from Québec City, a young man who has left his home there to work in an industrial town of 90, 000 people, only an hour from Boston by train, and Maria's mother, who yearns for her lost life in "the old parishes," where they had lived "only two hours drive [from] the railway."⁷ But Traquair's contented Folk have no desire to leave their close-knit villages for the city, and if they move to a remote district it is to satisfy some atavistic zest for adventure. With no outside contact, they seem outside of advancing time.

Not only did Nobbs and Traquair conflate the original *habitants* with their contemporary descendants, but they were also quite blind to the diversity and complexity of modern Québec society. At least in their writings, they recognized three sectors in Québec society: a rural Folk they thought had survived the centuries; an urban, working-class Francophone population that Traquair ignored and Nobbs, as I discuss in Chapter

⁶Hémon, *Maria Chapdelaine*, trans. W.H. Blake (Toronto: Macmillan, 1938).

⁷Hémon, *Maria Chapdelaine*, p. 30.

Five, abhorred; and their urban, intellectual colleagues. But as I demonstrate repeatedly through quotations from both men, it was in the rural society that they believed they found authentic Québec.

Less than a year after Nobbs's arrival in Canada, his column in the *Canadian Architect and Builder* (CAB) proclaimed that in "seeking to preserve an authentic record of some of the ancient land marks of Montreal," he had already set his young architecture students the task of making measured drawings of some buildings that he considered to be of most interest. The column also notes Nobbs's expectation that his project would influence other architects to do the same elsewhere.⁵ To emphasize his commitment to encouraging the study of local architecture, Nobbs later offered a prize of forty dollars in books on architecture to the best set of drawings of "old and interesting work in the city and neighbourhood of Montreal" to be done by a member of the Province of Quebec Association of Architects (PQAA) Sketching Club, founded in 1905 with Cecil Burgess (with whom Nobbs and Traquair had travelled in Italy) as its president.⁶ For his part, Traquair was later responsible for an extensive programme of recording old houses and churches by measured drawings, sketches and photographs (fig. 2.1). His students carried out building surveys as a part of his classes, and these, together with those by Traquair himself, formed the basis of his very-influential and still-important book of 1947, *The Old*

⁵"Gargoyle II," "Montreal Letter No. II," CAB (May 1904): 95-6.

⁶"Montreal Junior Architectural Association," CAB (May 1905): 76; France Vanlaethem, "Building the Metropolis," in *Montreal Metropolis 1880-1930*, ed. Isabelle Gournay and France Vanlaethem (Toronto/Montréal: Stoddart/CCA, 1998), p. 140.

*Architecture of the Province of Québec: A Study of Buildings Erected in New France from the Earliest Explorers to the Middle of the Nineteenth Century.*¹⁰

This chapter examines how Nobbs and Traquair thought and wrote about Québec vernacular architecture and those who built it. Both architects consistently refer to the buildings of interest to them as “old.” As the title of his book suggests, Traquair’s interest in Québécois architecture waned at about 1850, and Nobbs similarly drew the line at mid-century. For them, the “old” architecture of Traquair’s title is nearly synonymous with “good” architecture. Although they use the term to refer to buildings earlier than 1840 or 1850, a building erected before that time that showed too much deviation from what they defined as the French-Canadian type would not qualify as “old,” while a few “old” buildings, which to their eyes had managed to evade excessive modern and foreign influence, might even have appeared after 1850. Both generally use the term, then, not simply to denote chronological age, but also in a more charged way to signify the sort of buildings that they identified with a genuine French-Canadian tradition. As Traquair wrote in 1928, “[o]f course there are many houses even in French Quebec . . . whose flimsy construction and vulgar ornamentation witness only too truly to modern progress, but with these we are not concerned. We shall think only of the old things . . .”¹¹

¹⁰Ramsay Traquair, *The Old Architecture of Quebec: A Study of the Buildings Erected in New France from the Earliest Explorers to the Middle of the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1947; facsimile edition Montréal: McGill University School of Architecture, 1996).

¹¹Ramsay Traquair, “The Old Cottages of Quebec: Of Solid, direct Construction, well Adapted to the Climate, and with the Dignity that comes naturally to Simple Things from Sham,” *House Beautiful* 63 (May 1928): 612.

Two major themes broadly underpin their appreciation for this genre of building. In the first place—in line with their arts and crafts training—they admired it for its appropriate response to climate and landscape, its use of locally-available building materials, and its high quality. In contrast, they bemoaned the rapidly-deteriorating quality of work in the building trades in their own time. In a lecture in 1910, Nobbs lamented: “To think that neither for love nor money could such a thoroughly sound piece of work[,] sound in taste & sound in construction[,] be put up to day in any town or village throughout this broad Dominion as can be found, once at least in five miles, on the shore all the way from Mulgrave Straits to Ottawa city, and all dated before 1840.” He went on to contend that “in the ordinary trades . . . this country is rapidly going back to a barbarous standard.” In contrast to work done twenty years and more before, he claimed, he was unable to find anyone in the Montréal of his own day who could make a ceiling that would not crack within three months.¹² (Several decades later, Nobbs had changed his tune radically. In a speech given in 1941 he noted that upon his arrival in 1903 he had found that he “could get things as well and skilfully made in this city as in Edinburgh or London I have found it so ever since and for anything in wood, plaster or metal from a sideboard to a fire dog a fully competent Montreal craftsman can be found if one knows where and how to look for him.”¹³)

¹²Nobbs, “The Architecture of Canada,” *Construction* (October 1910): 59. Also a manuscript “For Winnipeg 21 August 1910” (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.9-5).

¹³Nobbs, untitled speech, 10 March 1941, pp. 3-4 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.10-2).

Besides its characteristics of high quality and suitability, Nobbs and Traquair saw Québec architecture dating from “the days when men yet cared about doing things decently and in order” as representative of a culture that was itself more pure and natural, and more virtuous, than their own.¹⁴ To their minds, its builders had acted by instinct for what was naturally right rather than by training, and the houses and churches were inherently stronger and better than anything made in the twentieth century. As Traquair wrote, “our old farmhouses and our old churches are as real and as alive as the people who live in them and who worship in them, the people who designed them and who built them with their own hands. They are a true expression of French-Canadian life and genius.”¹⁵ Not hesitating to employ the possessive pronoun, Traquair here conflates—even within a single sentence—the people of his own day, who lived and worshipped in the buildings he admired, with those who had designed and built them decades or centuries earlier. Continuing the theme of virtue and purity, he wrote elsewhere that Québec cottages “form a true natural style, simple and lacking perhaps in the graces of skilled ornamentation, but none the less well built, well adapted to their purpose and with the charm which always accompanies direct and honest work.”¹⁶

¹⁴Nobbs, “On the Value of the Study of Old Work,” *CAB* (May 1905): 74.

¹⁵Traquair, “Why we Admire Old Buildings” (undated typescript), p. 3 (McGill University Archives [MUA], Box 2: 35/17/160).

¹⁶Traquair, *The Cottages of Quebec* (Montréal: McGill University Publications [MUP] Series XIII, no. 5, 1926; reprinted, with additions, from *Canadian Homes and Gardens* [January 1926]), p. 14.

Nobbs's and Traquair's unconditional admiration extended even to building practices that they would have reviled in another context. For example, both noted the common occurrence of false chimneys on the gable ends of Québec cottages with central fireplaces. These chimneys are generally made of wood and shingled, and are strictly decorative. As Traquair commented, "A chimney seems to have been regarded as the proper termination for a gable, possibly it was a sign of social standing as indicating a house of many fireplaces." He noted that these chimneys were precursors to the finials that would eventually appear in the same location. "This is the way architecture grows," he concluded.¹⁷ While this is an interesting observation, I doubt that he would have celebrated in the same way a modern example, such as a house for the wealthy in twentieth-century Montréal, that used such mendacious details. It is telling that an arts-and-crafts-trained architect should be so sanguine about architectural features pretending to be what they are not; John Ruskin's notion of truth in architecture is an important precept of arts and crafts theory.¹⁸ Elsewhere, Traquair also seems to condone the making of objects in materials other than those for which their original designs were

¹⁷Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. 59. Nobbs was willing to extend this tolerance to at least one example of industrial design as well, commenting that these "dummy smokestacks" serv[ed] much the same 'aesthetic purpose', if such a thing exists, as the elegantly stumpy little funnels on certain motor driven members of the New York Yacht Club Squadron." ("Canadian Architecture," typescript of lecture read before the RIBA, September 1922, p. 5 [CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.9-6]).

¹⁸Although, as James Lubbock has argued, in his "Lamp of Truth" Ruskin was prepared to make exceptions to a rule that has often been interpreted too rigidly. He did allow for "legitimate appeal to the imagination," which might be exactly the excuse allowed these false chimneys. (James Lubbock, *The Tyranny of Taste: The Politics of Architecture and Design in Britain 1550-1960* [New Haven: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for British Art, 1995], p. 287).

intended—another practice roundly condemned by arts and crafts practitioners.

Discussing the wood carving in one church, he describes it as “[t]echnically . . . a school of plaster design carried out in applied wood carving.”¹⁹ Seemingly, the natural aesthetic sense of folk designers would allow them unerringly to break “rules” of design. In his 1937 book, Nobbs dedicates considerable ink to the importance of “translating” rather than simply “transferring” ornamental form from one medium to another. Following the early-twentieth century aesthetic theory of Benedetto Croce, whose work was very influential on his thinking, he argues that when a craftsperson interprets in a new material a form designed for a different one, the results will inevitably be “either ‘ugly faithful ones, or faithless beauties’, and where ornament and decoration is in question the latter are always to be preferred.”²⁰ The craftsperson must design for each material, accounting for its strengths and weaknesses, and making the most of its beauty. To copy forms faithfully in a new material, argues Nobbs, is futile: at best “an exposition of erudition, or at its worst a confession of fraud, but in either case . . . an admission of creative sterility.”²¹ These were rules that formally-trained architects had to follow in order to ensure good design, but folk builders, with their “natural” sense of design, could successfully take liberties with them.

¹⁹Traquair and C.M. Barbeau, *The Church of Sainte Famille, Island of Orleans, Que.* (Montréal: MUP Series XIII, no. 13, 1926; reprinted from *JRAIC* [May-June 1926]), p. 11.

²⁰*Design: A Treatise on the Discovery of Form* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), p. 195. In addition to an aesthetic theorist, Croce was himself an enthusiastic folklorist (Giuseppe Cocchiara, “Poetics in a State of Crisis,” in *The History of Folklore in Europe*, trans. John N. McDaniel [Turin: Editore Boringhiere, 1952; Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1981], pp. 511-27.)

²¹Nobbs, *Design*, p. 195.

Writing of the early settler architecture of the prairie provinces, Nobbs contended that there, as in Québec, advancing civilization had destroyed a strong folk tradition. Ranting as he often did, he said in a lecture before the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) that “The Galician or Doukhobor settler of Manitoba or Saskatchewan makes himself a typical Ukrainian cottage on his arrival, but when that falls to ruin, his next effort is bereft of all craftsmanship and tradition, and is a pure expression of those gross economies and the brutal conveniences among which the ‘Progressive’ mind breeds its maggoty idealism.”²² Nobbs saw an instinctive architectural tradition on the prairies corrupted by modernity. And as it was in the west, “progress” was destroying a folk tradition in Québec that was admirable both for its formal qualities and for a deeper virtue that its admirers found within it.

In the case of the architecture of early Québec, as this chapter will demonstrate, Nobbs and Traquair related what they saw as its inherent virtue to the mediaeval building tradition they believed had been brought by the first French settlers to come to Canada and only recently lost in the face of increasing industrialization. The idea that the architecture of French Canada was a survival of mediaeval building practice was prevalent in both Nobbs’s and Traquair’s thinking.²³ It is an important notion, because it reflects

²²Nobbs, “Canadian Architecture,” p. 4.

²³For Nobbs, it was perhaps early Renaissance vernacular building that the first settlers had brought, although he was not consistent on this. He wrote that “The early settlers of the Province of Quebec brought with them the building traditions of France at a time when Gothic building methods may be said to have just become extinct.” (“Canadian Architecture,” in *Canada and its Provinces: A History of the Canadian People and their Institutions by One Hundred* (continued...))

the understanding that—especially for Traquair—not only the architecture but also the culture of the rural Francophone Québécois was the direct inheritor of a vigorous premodern culture. Traquair wrote of the first settlers in the new colony that they “were a simple people. The remote colony . . . did not attract the wealthy or the noble, and it was a peasant folk who came out to colonise New France. But, though simple, they were not in reality uneducated, for they brought with them their traditional knowledge, their ways of life, their legends, their folksongs and their mediaeval methods of building.”²⁴

Similarly, he compared the silver of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France with the “simpler, but more sincere values of the popular art” that had developed in Québec and flourished long after the renaissance tradition had vanished in France.²⁵ In the France of the period, he wrote, one thinks of the silver work of “Le Roi Soleil and Louis XV, a school elegant, perfect in workmanship and intensely artificial.” In Québec, in

²³(...continued)

Associates, ed. Arthur G. Doughty [Toronto: Glasgow, Brook & Co., 1914], p. 667.) Later, however, he also said of “a school of crafts established at St. Joachim, on the north shore of the Saint Lawrence” that, there, “latches, locks and cockspurs were made with distinct signs of Gothic method—the only trace of natural, traditional, unrevived Gothic culture I know of in America.” (“Architecture in Canada” [published lecture given before RIBA on the occasion of the British Empire Exhibition, 21 January 1924], in *JRAIC* [July to September 1924]: 91.) Furthermore, he noted as late as 1939—in an appreciation of Traquair on his retirement—that “happily in the older Architecture of the province of Quebec there is a considerable wealth of the very stuff that would appeal to Professor Traquair—a tradition imbued with all the common-sense directness of method to be found in Mediaeval art.” (“Ramsay Traquair, Hon. M.A. [McGill] F.R.I.B.A. On his Retirement from the Macdonald Chair in Architecture at McGill University,” *JRAIC* [June 1939]: 148).

²⁴Traquair, *Cottages of Quebec*, p.3.

²⁵Traquair, *the Old Silver of Québec* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1940), vii. All quotations about silver are found on this page.

contrast, the “court art [was] simplified, gaining in directness and naïveté what it loses in magnificence.” His preference for simplicity over sophistication extended from this comparison of France with Québec to a comparison of the over-sophisticated with the simple within Québec itself. In general, neither Nobbs nor Traquair found the architecture of Montréal and other cities, even of early periods, to be as attractive as that of the rural areas, although both did single out some urban buildings of note and Traquair included several early examples among his surveys. As he remarked, “Old Quebec is at its best in the cottage, the manor and the parish church. These were the work of the people, unassisted by academic architects, and passed entirely unnoticed at the time of their creation.”²⁶ That is, even amongst the old buildings, he particularly admired the rural vernacular, and especially what he understood as folk architecture. The well-to-do might be too sophisticated and attracted to foreign ideas, and Traquair noted that in the nineteenth century the larger country houses were frequently built “in a different manner from the simpler dwellings of the habitant. Then came a fashion for country houses of an English, or American, classic type. Soon the dullest kind of Italianate or French villa replaced the simple and dignified forms of tradition.”²⁷

These last few quotations from Traquair’s works are telling. As Robin D.G. Kelley points out, such terms as “authentic,” “traditional,” and “Folk” are “not self-evident and

²⁶Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. 93.

²⁷Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. 71.

self-contained analytic categories but subject to the dynamics of class, gender, and race.”²⁸ Just as Nobbs and Traquair saw the denizens of rural Québec in their own time as Folk in opposition to their own modern urban culture, here Traquair uses similarly “mutually constitutive and constituting” language, as Kelley puts it, by identifying the builders of the historical vernacular architecture he admired as “a peasant folk,” “the people,” and *habitants*—poor, simple, anonymous peasants who had come to New France to settle the seigneurial lands—and defining this category against “high” culture, which he identifies with the “wealthy or the noble,” and “academic architects.”²⁹

Discussing the meaning of the term “architect” in New France, Traquair observed that “(t)he most interesting and important architectural work of French Canada was in fact designed by the men who executed it, by whatever name they were known.”³⁰ Certainly formal training was not necessary to good design, and frequently detracted from it. For Traquair, folk building was so inherently *right* that its influence could even remedy the failings of trained architects who did not have a proper natural instinct for building. Traquair blamed the practice of adding new west fronts to existing churches in the later-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries for ruining many fine buildings. He singled out John Ostell, an English architect in Montréal, who may have been responsible for introducing the fashion for Italian Renaissance church fronts and who designed several in

²⁸Robin D.G. Kelley, “Notes on Deconstructing ‘The Folk’,” *American Historical Review* 97, 5 (December 1992): 1408.

²⁹Kelley, “Deconstructing ‘The Folk’,” p. 1402.

³⁰Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. 94.

country parishes. In each case, however, it seems that finances did not allow for the building of the spires, and “a few years later, the village carpenter put up a couple of belfried *flèches* of the old Canadian kind, perhaps a little smarter and curlier but unmistakably Canadian *flèches*; they save the design.”³¹ Once more, it was the untutored Québécois (and there can be no doubt, from this statement and many others, that to Traquair this meant French-*Canadian*) craftsman who made good architecture, having a natural feeling for good design and the forms that were local to the region (which, for Traquair, stood for all that was valuable in Québec). When a foreign, formally-trained architect introduced an alien, sophisticated style, it needed to be corrected by a local builder working in the time-tested vernacular idiom of the area.

Nobbs's and Traquair's ideas about these earlier inhabitants also shaped their attitudes towards the Québécois who were their contemporaries. Influenced by the same antimodernist impulse experienced by people across the industrialized world, Traquair in particular believed that remnants of the past, along with the buildings that represented it, survived virtually unchanged in his own time. He viewed contemporary rural French Canadians—at least those who lived in the early settlements and historic houses—as not very much changed from several hundred years before; to him they were essentially the same simple, unsophisticated people he believed they had always been, and were almost untouched by advancing civilization. Indeed, as he saw it, the *habitants* had been backward and little affected by change even upon their arrival in Canada: “the

³¹Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. 141.

Renaissance reigned in Europe in the seventeenth century, but, although these classic and learned forms might appeal to the cultured, the peasantry still clung to the ways of their forefathers in the building of their houses.”³² When he described French Canadians as “the oldest . . . people of the dominion,” he was suggesting not only that they had been on Canadian soil longer than any other (he was of course referring only to European peoples), but also that they were themselves—even those still living—an ancient people; that is, that they retained the purity, simplicity, firm religious conviction, and other virtues Traquair attributed to the original *habitants*.³³ These were all characteristics that seemed to be lacking in his own society—that of early-twentieth century affluent Anglo-Canadian Montréal and Western, middle-class society in general. Both he and Nobbs also frequently lamented the negative effect of modernity and urbanity upon the rural people of Québec, as they believed that it was corrupting them from their natural way of life on the land. Nobbs deplored the debased state of urban construction by Francophone builders in the Montréal of his time—those who were partaking of modernity—as distinct from the high quality of work done by their rural ancestors. In contrast, he noted the “wholly delightful state of affairs” at Chicoutimi, north of Québec City, which, he contended, could still in his own time more or less “clothe itself with gay attire and house itself in decorated buildings and equip itself with pots and pans, crocks and spoons, stoves and sleighs, and all the apparatus of life without dependence on the trader or the

³²Traquair, *Cottages of Quebec*, p. 3.

³³Traquair, “The Canadian Type,” *Atlantic Monthly* 131 (June 1923): 822.

manufacturer.”³⁴ Outside the cities, it seemed, life in Québec had not much changed since “the days before industrialism laid its sordid hands” on society.³⁵ It was this culture that Nobbs and Traquair celebrated, while they viewed the urban working classes—French Canadian or not—as a debased group incapable of true expression.

This last comment illustrates Nobbs’s and Traquair’s ignorance of Québec’s recent history. Far from remaining static, rural society had undergone considerable change in the previous half century.³⁶ In communities that seemed entirely insular when viewed from the citified halls of McGill University, farming methods and crops were changing in direct response to external demand; the most dramatic shift was a great increase in dairy farming in the second half of the nineteenth century, to supply milk, butter, and cheese to both the domestic and overseas markets.³⁷ Meanwhile, vast numbers of people were leaving their farms and villages altogether, sometimes seasonally but frequently for ever. Historian Susan Mann Trofimenkoff argues that the population had been geographically mobile from the colony’s earliest days, when indentured labourers and *voyageurs* had travelled

³⁴Nobbs, “The Arts of Russia,” p. 8.

³⁵Nobbs, “The Architectural Revivals of the XIX Century in England,” typescript of lecture given to the OAA, 15 January 1907 and the PQAA Sketching Club, 23 January 1907, p. 14 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.9-4).

³⁶Historian Peter Gossage has examined the social impact of industrial capitalism in nineteenth-century Québec using a case study of the town of Saint-Hyacinthe. (*Families in Transition: Industry and Population in Nineteenth-Century Saint-Hyacinthe*, Studies on the History of Québec [Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1999], p. 3.)

³⁷Gentilcore, *Atlas*, Plates 13 and 40. See also Mann Trofimenkoff, *Dream of Nation*, p. 134.

about to seek their fortunes; in the nineteenth century, most of those on the move were leaving farms.³⁸ As agricultural techniques improved, fewer people were needed to work and some had to find jobs elsewhere. Similarly, dry years and poor crops spelled shortages that drove people away. The traditional practice of dividing a family's land amongst its sons meant that plots became smaller and smaller, to the point that they became untenable. Soil exhaustion and overcrowding forced more and more men and women to leave their land. The provincial government, aided by the church, made a concerted effort to keep them in the province and on the land, promising new roads and railway lines to open fresh areas for settlement.³⁹ Thus encouraged, some took up allotments of land in more remote areas, less hospitable than the fertile Saint Lawrence valley they had left behind them. But as Mann Trofimenkoff notes, although the clergy energetically promulgated the idea that Québec was a fundamentally rural society, their efforts to discourage an exodus from the countryside were in vain. The majority of those who left the farm headed straight for the cities and industry, whether within the province or—in large numbers—in New England.⁴⁰ People knew or guessed the truth, that the best land

³⁸Mann Trofimenkoff discusses at some length the phenomenon of migration from and within Québec, in the chapter "Nobody Meant to Stay," in *The Dream of Nation: A Social and Intellectual History of Quebec* (Toronto: Gage Publishing, 1983), pp. 132-49.

³⁹Mann Trofimenkoff, *Dream of Nation*, p. 135. J.I. Little has examined at length a region that was partly settled by people leaving established farming areas in the nineteenth century, in his book *Crofters and Habitants: Settler Society, Economy, and Culture in a Quebec Township, 1848-1881*, Studies on the History of Québec (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991).

⁴⁰Mann Trofimenkoff, *Dream of Nation*, pp. 135-36.

was already under the plough and a move to a new farm was unlikely to sustain a family, let alone all the families that needed to move. Urban and industrial areas swelled as time went on, belying Nobbs's image of a rural Québec society that was an unchanging, self-contained world, untouched by the "sordid hands" of industrialism. Even of those who remained on their farms, almost everyone must have had friends or family who had made the trek, suggesting that even the most rural areas had increasingly frequent contact with people in cities. Nonetheless, for early-twentieth century intellectuals in the bustling city of Montréal, rural Québec society seemed to shine as a beacon of authentic and uncorrupted tradition on their lacklustre modern culture.

By the time Nobbs arrived in Montréal in 1903, he had been well primed by his education among arts and crafts architects in Britain to look for indigenous forms in architecture, and to use them in his own designs. He soon found a suitable candidate in the local architecture around Montréal, and frequently invoked it as the best example of good Canadian vernacular building. Although it was Traquair who thoroughly developed the study of the architecture and culture of Québec, Nobbs was clearly proud of the fact that he had begun the process; in 1957 he noted that "the revival of interest in Old French architecture in Canada was started by me and handed over to Professor Traquair when he joined our Department. . . ."⁴¹

⁴¹Nobbs, letter to John Bland, 31 October 1957 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series B.7-6). Nobbs, being a prolific architect, gave more of his time to the practice of architecture than did Traquair, who was able to dedicate an immense amount of time and energy to the study of historic Québec architecture.

Of course Nobbs did not immediately find the vernacular tradition he sought, and the architecture of Montréal did not particularly impress him upon his arrival. He did identify “two serviceable types of plain house [which] were evolved in Montréal a short time back,” although he noted at the same time that it was “deplorable to think that the excellent traditions of which they are manifestations have not struck deeper roots.”⁴² He was later to suggest that the city did have “antiquities and old associations” worthy of notice, but that “very few of ourselves seem to care very much about” them.⁴³ The two building types he singled out in this early article—one in grey stone and one in red brick—he

⁴²“Gargoyle” [Nobbs], “Montreal Letter No. 1: Montreal in General,” *CAB* (April 1904): 73.

⁴³“Concordia Salus,” “Montreal Notes,” *CAB* (September 1905): 141. The “Montreal Notes” or “Montreal Letter” column appeared from the time of Nobbs’s arrival in Canada, and is an important source for Nobbs’s ideas about architecture. Initially it was written under the pseudonym “Gargoyle” and minor variations thereon, but in August 1904 the last column written under that *nom de plume* appeared. Beginning in October of that year, they are signed “Concordia Salus,” a pseudonym drawn from Montréal’s coat of arms (Norbert Schoenauer, “Percy Erskine Nobbs: Teacher and Builder of Architecture,” *Fontanus* from the collections of McGill University IX [1996]: 54). Internal evidence in the earlier examples points almost indisputably to their authorship by Nobbs, but this is not so clear of those signed by Concordia Salus. Indeed, in several cases the author refers in the third person to Nobbs in terms that seem inconsistent with one writing of himself. For instance, in January 1905, Nobbs is reported to have given a lecture “in a pleasantly enthusiastic and informal manner” (p. 9), while several months later a criticism of a drawing for Nobbs’s new student union building describes the drawing as a piece of “conscientious draughtsmanship,” but suggests that the design itself is “perhaps a trifle too rigidly confined to a simple outline” (April 1905, p. 61). However, the writing style is Nobbsian, and the opinions expressed are consistent with those of Nobbs. Susan Wagg identifies Nobbs as both “Gargoyle” and “Concordia Salus” (“The McGill Architecture of Percy Erskine Nobbs” [master’s thesis, Concordia University, 1979], p. 158 ff.) and the CAC guide to the Nobbs archive does the same. It is possible that he might have changed his pseudonym because he wished his column to be less strongly associated with him, as the identity of “Gargoyle” must have been clear to all readers. Traquair’s papers in the CAC contain copies of the “Montréal Notes” column by both “Gargoyle” and “Concordia Salus,” perhaps supporting the notion that both were pseudonyms of Nobbs. (CAC, Traquair Collection, Series G.1-4.)

argued, “represent a once live local building tradition at least—the kind of tradition, that is, with which the architect must saturate himself if his work is to be indigenous at all.”⁴⁴ He lamented the fact that local tradition was almost dead in much of England, and that it had never existed at all in many towns and cities west of the Atlantic Ocean. Montréal, he argued, was fortunate to have these local building traditions, but it had all but abandoned them less than half a century before, “since when, chaos!” This first article on the architecture of the city concludes with the comment that “(t)here is a little and a very little good old work in Montreal—a closer study of it would do much to improve the present state of things.” These comments on the architecture of the city that had been his home since the previous September were the first of many he was to publish on the current state of Canadian architecture. Already at this early stage, only nine months after his arrival in Canada, he was exhorting architects to look to local styles in order to build good architecture themselves, and had identified some suitable candidates for study. He had also noted that the difficult climate must be an important determining factor in the design of Canadian buildings, and this was a theme that was to recur repeatedly in his writing.

A year later, on 29 April 1905, Nobbs gave a lecture on the study of vernacular architecture to the PQAA Sketching Club. This talk, published in the *CAB*, was his first major statement in Canada on this subject, and as such is an important expression of his

⁴⁴“Gargoyle,” “Montreal Letter No. 1: Montreal in General,” *CAB* (April 1904): 73.

thinking at this time.⁴⁵ The lecture begins with a diatribe against the word “style,” whose use had come to denote all that was “imitative, irrational, deceptive”; the word “style,” he argued, had come to mean fake. Not for the last time, Nobbs insisted that the simple addition of an Elizabethan chimneypiece or Francois I dormers to an early-twentieth century house would never render it anything other than an early-twentieth century house with Elizabethan or Francois I details. This very practice of borrowing features from any period that took the client’s or the architect’s fancy would only delay the development of a real architecture of its own time. That being said, however, he went on to hurl invective at the vernacular architecture of his day, arguing that in any case the popular enthusiasm for “the styles” did at least suggest that people were in rebellion against the contemporary vernacular’s uniform ugliness. The solution to this problem, as Nobbs was to state repeatedly, was “to study old work in general, and the local old work in particular, for happily there were buildings put up in this province and down the river in the days when men yet cared about doing things decently and in order.” This vernacular, in contrast to the “criminal” badness of the modern, “even at its roughest scorns to emulate what it is not; [and] at its finest is wondrously potent to express purpose and intention and work which at all times is a true reflection of the life to which it ministered.”

T.J. Jackson Lears argues that this very eclecticism to which Nobbs objected so strenuously was both emblematic of and a contributor to “the feeling . . . that the urban

⁴⁵Nobbs, “The Study of Old Work,” pp. 74-75. All quotations in this paragraph are to be found in this article.

environment was somehow artificial and unreal."⁴⁶ In appealing to the historic legitimacy of forms that had centuries of symbolic weight behind them, he argues, architects "unwittingly undermined [their] power." Nobbs was always very careful to distinguish between copying styles and drawing inspiration from the lessons of history: the latter was essential; the former, deplorable.

After a general discussion of some advantages of studying (by which, he emphasized, he particularly meant measuring) old work, Nobbs moved on to a specific discussion of the vernacular architecture of Québec, in which, for the first time, he articulated his ideas about the purity and genuineness of the Québec Folk.⁴⁷ Because this is such an important early expression of Nobbs's views on the Québec vernacular, it is worth quoting him here at length, along with his own substantial quotation from William Morris. Nobbs wrote:

What of the local old work. The beautiful words of William Morris in appreciating the vernacular art of England are as appropriate to the work we find here around us, and I feel sure if he were familiar with the charm and quaintness of the old Québec farms and seignories he would have written something very similar about it [sic].

'For as was the land, such was the art of it, while folk yet troubled themselves about such things; it strove little to impress people either by pomp or ingenuity; not seldom it fell into commonplace, rarely it rose into majesty. Yet was it never oppressive, never a slave's nightmare or an insolent boast; and at its best it had an inventiveness, an individuality that grander styles have never overpassed. Its best, too, and that was in its very heart, was given as freely to the yeoman's house as to the village church;

⁴⁶Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920*, (New York: Pantheon, 1981; Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994), p. 33.

⁴⁷Nobbs, "Study of Old Work," p. 75. All quotations in this paragraph appear in this essay.

never coarse, though often rude enough, sweet, natural and unaffected, an art of peasants rather than of merchant princes or courtiers, it must be a hard heart I think that does not love it, whether a man has been born among it like ourselves, or has come wonderingly on its simplicity from all the grandeur over seas.'

Nobbs went on to outline in fair detail how the architects of his own time might use the local traditions they found around them. First, he directed them to the architecture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in which, he argued, might be found "a wholesome antidote to that eclecticism in which we are trained to-day." But although they must not "be led away by [their admiration] into the sincerer forms of flattery" (by which he meant copying), he advised firmly: "when you have good local traditions always use them . . . a touch of local tradition will go a long way towards giving character to a piece of simple work." He recommended that his readers study the work of the architects Edwin Lutyens in England and Robert Lorimer in Scotland. This would

show how local tradition should be applied to modern work wherever there is any to apply. Do not study old ways with a view to imitative faking or artificial reproduction of ancient mannerisms and effects, but to get understanding of the sweet simplicity of natural expression, which is so very much more edifying as an adjunct of life than the affectations and poses and deceptions or sheer ugliness for its own sake so characteristic of vernacular architecture today.

This article is extremely important as a statement of Nobbs's approach to architectural design and the use of vernacular examples. In addition, because it was both a lecture given to a group of (probably mostly young) architects, and later published in the journal that most Canadian architects would have been reading at the time, it provides evidence not only of his own way of thinking, but also of the potential it had to influence

others at the time. Nobbs was quite clear that, while he recommended that architects study the local architecture of the past, they should look upon it as a natural response to prevailing conditions, and learn from it as such.

Two months later the “Montreal Notes” column reiterates the statement of the value of the historic architecture of Québec. The author emphasizes the inherent virtue and purity of the old vernacular, comparing it to what he saw as the vile examples then being perpetrated in the name of architecture. It takes the form of a brief history of building in Québec since European settlement. Noting the beauty of the curved shape formed by a roof flattening out at the eaves (in the bellcast form often found in early Québec houses), he writes of this “most natural economical and excellent arrangement” that it was “a virtue that seems to blossom only in humility, for wherever the first symptoms of pretentiousness show themselves one looks and finds that this peculiar grace is gone.”⁴⁸ He goes on to describe Montréal’s buildings of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—“these pioneers of civilization”—using such terms as “cosy,” “substantial,” and “picturesque,” adding that as “pure architecture” they were vastly superior to “the more recent work that with frantic and pitiful pretentiousness endeavours to make itself up with makeshift features and exasperating garnitures of tin.” He clearly gives credit to the earlier architecture for more than simply higher quality, although the article makes that point too. Instead, he suggests that what he sees as traditional buildings had an inherent strength and virtue not possessed by newer examples. In contrast to the “natural” feeling

⁴⁸“Concordia Salus,” “Montreal Notes,” CAB (July 1905): 108.

for the art evinced by folk builders, he painted for his readers a picture of modern architects or builders attempting to compensate for their lack of this natural feeling for design and proportion with superficial details such as the “exasperating garnitures of tin” here vilified. Nobbs often opined that it was in the mid-nineteenth century that architecture in Québec had lost its innate quality, although in this article even the houses from earlier in that century, while they had “a very considerable charm,” are seen to suffer a bit from excessive refinement brought on by a horror of vulgarity. Nonetheless, “the builders of this period handled [the local limestone] with a true instinct.”⁴⁹ This notion of the instinctive use of building materials or forms is particularly important, as it contrasts with the more self-conscious processes of the modern, formally-trained architect.

A photograph of a cottage in Lancashire, England, is included in the article in order to illustrate, the author explains, “how kindred are the effects of true building instincts working far apart and with much difference of detail.”⁵⁰ The article suggests that there is not only inherent virtue, but also an innate similarity, in vernacular buildings of widely different cultures, because their designers work with a “natural” sense that in more “sophisticated” cultures such as Nobbs and Traquair’s own has been lost to the depredations of modernity. Beyond having the requisite walls, roof, and windows, however, the Lancashire cottage does not bear any special resemblance to the Québécois examples discussed in the article. As the article states, there is “much difference of

⁴⁹“Concordia Salus,” “Montreal Notes,” (July 1905): 109.

⁵⁰“Concordia Salus,” “Montreal Notes,” (July 1905): 110.

detail,” and although the proportions are not dissimilar, and the materials more or less the same, neither of these is particularly remarkable. What the buildings have in common, according to the article, is a “kindred effect,” which really means nothing at all. It suggests the existence of a kind of folk spirit in design, perhaps what Traquair identifies as “a genuine feel for beauty,” common to premodern cultures and those that seemed to retain premodern virtues in the modern world.⁵¹ As Lora Carney notes in an essay on the relationship of several Canadian modernists to rural artists without formal training in early-mid-century Québec, this notion that such designers had a “natural” sense for good design was to persist among members of the Anglo-Canadian artistic and intellectual elite. Equating the hooked rugs and homespuns of Québec farm women in 1925 with both children’s art and the idea of the Primitive, Group of Seven member Arthur Lismer wrote: “Primitive, or let us say, simple people feel beauty naturally. Children are like this. It is not acquired. It is not merely taste. It is intuitive.”⁵²

Nobbs had only just argued in his lecture to the PQAA Sketching Club that there had been a time when everyone understood what style meant, and at that time there was no style *per se*—there was only building. It was as “men ceased to regard art as an essential part of life,” he explained, “[that we] lost the power of using art as a means of

⁵¹Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. 1.

⁵²Lismer, “Art a Common Necessity,” in *Canadian Bookman* 7 (October 1925): 159-60. Quoted in Carney, “Modernists and Folk on the Lower St. Lawrence: The Problem of Folk Art,” in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, ed. Lynda Jessup (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), p. 109.

expression.”⁵³ That is, the earlier builders in Québec were designing naturally—almost organically—what later architects needed formal training to understand. This education caused an artificiality and self-consciousness in architecture that had never existed before, and meant that what was designed was no longer “stamped with a truly native character” as the architecture of Québec had been in past times.

A column the very next month deals with some of the domestic architecture then appearing in Montréal, and fulminates against much of it with great vigour.⁵⁴ The most revealing feature of this essay, however, is its treatment of the building methods employed by contemporary urban Québécois. While the column the month before had emphasized the natural instinct expressed by the French-Canadians of olden times in their use of materials, here the author identifies a particularly offensive building practice, “tending to poverty of appearance in the cheaper classes of houses,” as an approach “probably almost peculiar to the French Canadian.” This method, of “building in three-inch plank, sheeting with building felt and then veneering the outer face with brick or stone,” produced a structure so flimsy as to disallow the use of weighty cornices of stone or brick, in whose absence the buildings tended to “a deadly flatness and monotony [of] appearance.” The “very human desire to obtain variety” impelled the builders to apply instead lighter-weight “galvanized cornices and other rubbish.” This is a key assertion, as it draws a distinction between the Québécois of times past (even in Nobbs and Traquair’s

⁵³Nobbs, “Study of Old Work,” p. 74.

⁵⁴“Concordia Salus,” “Montreal Notes,” *CAB* (August 1905): 125. A copy of this column is among Traquair’s papers in the CAC (see note 43).

own time represented by those living in rural areas), whose buildings were genuine examples of folk traditions, and their modern, urban, counterparts, who employed the worst-possible building methods and had entirely lost their once-intuitive building knowledge.

The notion of the corruption of rural values by the city is of course a venerable one; Raymond Williams traces at length the literary theme of rural innocence in contrast to urban vice and corruption, which began in Classical literature and continues to our own day.⁵⁵ Other authors have examined the idea that particularly rural, pure forms of creativity were corrupted when they were taken to the city. Jan Marsh notes, for example, that amongst middle-class collectors of folk songs in late-nineteenth century England, “[i]t was generally believed that folk song only existed in country districts, since the city was degenerate, febrile and committed to the latest fashion in commercial ‘popular songs’.”⁵⁶ Collectors studiously avoided songs relating to urban and industrial regions or occupations, despite the fact that they frequently existed side-by-side with more bucolic ones in the repertoires of rural singers. They belonged too much to the modern world, against which such concepts as “Folk” or “traditional” are defined, and were thus

⁵⁵Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973; London: The Hogarth Press, 1993).

⁵⁶*Back to the Land: The Pastoral Impulse in England, from 1880 to 1914* (London: Quartet Books, 1982), p. 75. See also Ian McKay, “Helen Creighton and the Rise of Folklore,” in *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Nova Scotia* (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), pp. 43-151.

abhorrent to anyone collecting folk songs.⁵⁷ Because such categories as Folk exist only in opposition to the modern, and vice versa, admitting elements of the modern into the Folk would break down both categories, a condition that would have been anathema to early-twentieth century moderns seeking solace in the Folk, just as it would to many folklorists later in the century. In the same way, it seemed that French-Canadians in the city had lost the “natural” talent for building exhibited by their rural compatriots, and their connections with the modern world had robbed them of their folk appeal. Lora Carney observes that, some decades later, Canadian modernist painter and art critic John Lyman similarly commented that the work of folk artists was “supported by so little power of conscious thought that any attempt to interfere with its natural processes must dislocate the conditions of creative production.”⁵⁸ The French-speaking builders in the city were perhaps suffering from too much of the “conscious thought” inherent in building for an urban market.

The “Montreal Notes” columns ceased with that of December 1905. This group of essays provides an important introduction to Nobbs’s architectural ideas at this time, and particularly to his early thoughts about the vernacular architecture he had found in Québec, and about the people who had made it. They also give some idea of Ramsay Traquair’s initiation into the subject, as he himself was introduced to it by Nobbs when he arrived in Montréal a decade later; indeed, copies of several of the *CAB* columns are

⁵⁷See Kelley, “Deconstructing ‘The Folk’”, p. 1402.

⁵⁸Lyman, “Poison in the Well,” in “Art,” *Montrealer* 11 (1 September 1937): 17. Quoted in Carney, “Modernists and Folk,” p. 112.

amongst Traquair's papers in the McGill University Archives. It was he who was to develop and articulate more clearly Nobbs's early ideas about the Folk.

Traquair arrived in Montréal expecting to do as Nobbs had done before him, and continue to design buildings as well as to teach. It did not work out that way, however, and as far as I know he did not build anything after coming to Canada.⁵⁰ Instead, he turned his attention to extensive research on the province's architecture and culture, as well as to the publication of many articles on that and other topics. He became quite enamoured of rural Québec society, celebrating it as a surviving example of simple pre-industrial culture that had been largely wiped out elsewhere in the European-occupied world. Like Nobbs, he saw something more than just high quality work and good design in Québec's historic architecture; it seemed to him to be material evidence of the virtuous people that had created it, and to stand as a model of all that was superior about pre-industrial culture.

Traquair made his first extensive statement about the architecture of French Canada in lectures on the history of architecture in his new rôle as Macdonald Professor of Architecture at McGill University. His lecture notes, dated 1914-15, indicate that his

⁵⁰As noted on Nobbs's drawings for the new Pathological Building at McGill University, Traquair, together with McGill colleague W. Carless, did serve as Associate Architect on that project in 1922-24. (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Pathology building). He also submitted a design to the Canadian Battlefields Memorial Competition (Nobbs, "The Canadian Battlefields Memorial Competition: Notes on the First Stage," *Construction* [June, 1921]: 167). In addition, he acted as consulting architect on at least one restoration project, that of an eighteenth century manor house on Lac St. Louis. ("An Eighteenth Century Manoir is Reclaimed," *Canadian Homes and Gardens* [March 1934]: 34). There may have been other minor projects, but I am unaware of any major ones.

thinking on the subject was influenced from the start by Nobbs, which is not surprising given his recent arrival in Canada. From the beginning, he followed Nobbs in defining the historic buildings in the province of Québec as those dating from 1668 to the mid-nineteenth century, noting that “after 1820 or 30 the type commences to deteriorate and after 1850 the good old traditional quality disappears.”⁸⁰ That is, to him as well as to Nobbs, the later buildings represent not a developing tradition, but rather a degenerating and disappearing one.

One of the things Traquair admired most about early Québec architecture and design was a measure of crudity or roughness that suggested to him that its makers or designers had been working from natural instinct rather than under the influence of schooling in the arts or contact with sophisticated practice from other places. For example, he was greatly impressed by an altar rail in the church of Notre Dame de la Jeune Lorette, which, he wrote, “may be crude work, but it is astonishingly good metallic design.”⁸¹ He noted that the local wisdom was that the rail was imported from France, but argued that this was unlikely to be the case as the story was

based upon the conviction that Canada had no craftsmen and that every good piece of work must have been imported. But no French workman could have made and no French donor would have presented a piece of work of the combined crudity and effectiveness of this rail. In France it might possibly have been made by some village craftsman, but . . . the

⁸⁰Traquair, “Canadian Architecture,” unpublished lecture notes, 1914-15 (CAC, Traquair Collection, Series A.1-26).

⁸¹Traquair, “The Huron Mission Church & Treasure of Notre Dame de la Jeune Lorette, Quebec,” typed manuscript, pp. 13-14 (CAC, Traquair Collection, Series I.1-21). Published in *JRAIC* (September and November 1930).

work is Canadian made by a Canadian—possibly a Huron craftsman [under French supervision].

This is an important notion for Traquair: rather than condemning the altar rail for its crudity, he celebrated its roughness as evidence of a natural taste untrammelled by contact with more formal design strictures. For Traquair, it was often with the advent of such contact—in the later-nineteenth century and in his own century—that the quality of the region’s architecture and crafts began to deteriorate. This suggests that the rural Folk he had identified could not maintain their culture against what he saw as more sophisticated influence, whether it was that of France or of modernizing Québec.

Traquair and Nobbs both observed that French-Canadian architecture was best preserved in areas where the local inhabitants were poor and had little connection with the architects’ own advancing civilization, which in their minds was entirely foreign to *habitant* culture. Of the church of Ste. Jeanne de l’Île Perrot, Traquair noted that it “has lain off the beaten track away from the main line of Canadian prosperity and Canadian development and in this it has found its salvation; it remains today an excellent example of the French Canadian village church, where a fortunate lack of wealth has preserved those simple beauties which the patient care and self-sacrifice of its parishioners have created.”⁶² As Ian McKay argues, it was important to investigators of the Folk that their subjects (or, in the case of Nobbs and Traquair, those people living in and around the

⁶²Traquair and E.R. Adair, notes on the church of Ste. Jeanne Françoise de Chantal on the Île Perrot, Québec, no date, p.11 (CAC, Traquair Collection, Series I.1-14). Although the original notes are undated, the report was published in *JRAIC* 9, 586 (May-June 1932): 124-31, 147-52.

buildings that were their subjects) remained untouched by the researcher's own culture—that is, by what they defined as modern civilization.⁹³ Traquair emphasized that it was the poverty and backwardness of the citizens of Île Perrot that had preserved its church. Had they experienced more connection to the advances of modernity, they would undoubtedly have had the resources and the desire to change and thereby ruin their church in the name of progress. He lamented that in the mission church at Notre Dame de la Jeune Lorette—one of the cases in which alterations had been made—"the bare simplicity, which gave a real dignity to the old church, is gone, replaced by a tawdry elaboration."⁹⁴ Once again, he saw "progress," or, indeed, virtually any change at all, as an alien influence for a rural French Québec that he saw as frozen in time. In the case of the mission church, its influence had ruined the inherent virtue of the building.

This observation is particularly significant in light of a contradiction appearing in much of Nobbs's and especially Traquair's writing. At the same time that they bemoaned the changes that were taking place and condemned them as marking the end of a once-vital culture, Traquair in particular frequently wrote of the rural Québécois who were his own contemporaries as if they had barely changed in hundreds of years. As critical anthropologist Johannes Fabian has demonstrated, anthropologists have often created difference between themselves and their subjects by constructing their subjects as temporally distant from themselves; implicit in Nobbs's and Traquair's deep admiration for

⁹³McKay, *The Quest of the Folk*, p. 9.

⁹⁴Traquair, "Notre Dame de la Jeune Lorette," p. 9.

rural Québec culture was a conviction that even in the twentieth century it was backward and simple, that it existed in a time earlier than their own.⁵⁵ Their use of the word *habitant* is suggestive of the timelessness they ascribed to rural French Canadians. The term had referred initially to peasants who had come to New France several centuries earlier to farm plots on the seigneuries, so it carried for Nobbs and Traquair (as for others in modern Québec) associations of ancient simplicity and other such virtues. In thus denying rural French Canadians coevalness, they suggested that, however admirable they might be, they did not really fit in the modern world. Both Nobbs and Traquair lamented what they saw as the death of a building tradition; Traquair wrote that “we have killed it in the last fifty years and it is a deplorable fact that the Quebec peasant of fifty years ago could unaided build a more beautiful house than we can today with all our advantages.”⁵⁶

But at the same time, as Fabian goes on to discuss, anthropologists have conventionally written of their subjects in an ethnographic present, and both Nobbs and Traquair often referred to the contemporary rural residents of Québec as if they were living lives fundamentally unchanged from those of their ancestors several hundred years before. As Fabian argues, this use of the ethnographic present means that in such accounts, “a custom, a ritual, even an entire system of exchange or a world view are . . . predicated on a group or tribe, or whatever unit the ethnographer happens to choose. . . .

⁵⁵Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

⁵⁶Traquair, “How to Understand Architecture,” speech for the St. James Literary Society, 1920 (MUA, Box 1: 35/17/127).

The present unduly magnifies the claim of a statement to general validity."⁶⁷ In this way, Traquair wrote in *House Beautiful* in 1928: "In this pleasant land the girls still sing the songs of mediaeval France whilst they spin and weave, as their mothers and their grandmothers did before them. Time here has not moved quite so fast as it has in other places."⁶⁸ As late as 1947, he was still describing Québec cottages in the present tense as if life in them had not changed since they had been built as early as the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries. Many of his photographs even show utility poles outside the houses, but he described the lives of the residents much as if he had been reporting the habits of Canada's early settlers (fig. 2.2). "There is room for everything in a Quebec attic," he wrote. "In one corner is the loom on which the blankets and homespuns are woven, in another the girls have cleared a space where they can sit and sew."⁶⁹

He was firm about the interior arrangements of the houses, too, allowing no room for individual taste on the part of the inhabitants. He declared that "the floors are painted yellow and spread with bright catalogue carpets and hooked mats; the walls are hung with religious coloured prints and family photographs. . . ."⁷⁰ His use of the present tense, as Fabian argues, suggests that his observations must hold true for all of the people

⁶⁷Fabian, *Time and the Other*, p. 80.

⁶⁸Traquair, "The Old Cottages of Quebec," typescript of article for *House Beautiful* (May 1928): p. 1 (MUA, Box 2: 35/17/160).

⁶⁹Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. 59.

⁷⁰Traquair, "The Old Cottages of Quebec: Of Solid, Direct Construction, well Adapted to the Climate, and with the Dignity that comes Naturally to Simple Things Free from Sham," *House Beautiful* (May 1928): 650.

of rural Québec: to the tune of ancient French songs, blankets of the same pattern are woven in a corner of every attic, and each floor is painted yellow. The use of such allochronic language intimates that its subjects exist outside of the writer's time, that their culture does not alter along with the researcher's, but rather exists in a static form unrelated to an advancing world around it.

Ironically, the "bright catalogue carpets" Traquair admired had been used only as bed coverings before the end of the nineteenth century. According to Janet McNaughton, it was middle-class handicrafts revivalists, probably following the example of the rag rugs popularized in the Appalachian handicrafts revival a few decades before, who had begun to market them as floor coverings in the first decades of the twentieth century.⁷¹ By the time Traquair came to visit rural Québec houses in the mid-1920s, their use on floors—though recent—had apparently become ubiquitous; for Traquair, it was just one more unchanging tradition of the Folk.

Nobbs was less starry-eyed about the idea of a folk culture in the province by the 1940s, and he wrote in nostalgic terms about Québec culture as he had found it upon arriving in Canada at the beginning of the century. At that time, he wrote, "the habitants were still [here the word "undemoralized" is crossed out, being replaced by] unsophisticated, making quite presentable hooked rugs their own way."⁷² Nobbs's

⁷¹Janet McNaughton, "A Study of the CPR-sponsored Quebec Folk Song and Handicraft Festivals, 1927-1930" (master's thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1982), pp. 213-14.

⁷²Nobbs, untitled manuscript for a speech, 10 March 1941 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.10-2).

antimodernism is evident in both word choices. His final choice, in particular, suggests that for a culture the value of which derives, as he understands it, from naiveté and simplicity, sophistication is the beginning of the end of creativity.

At the same time, such statements as the foregoing raise the issue of the quest for authenticity, and its consequences. Regina Bendix has examined the implications of the emphasis that folklorists have traditionally placed on the value of the authentic in the cultures they study. As she observes, the existence of an authentic demands its opposite, and it is herein that the problem lies. "Identifying some cultures, expressions or artifacts as authentic, genuine, trustworthy, or legitimate simultaneously implies that other manifestations are fake, spurious and even illegitimate," she writes.⁷³ Through this concentration on the authentic, the discipline of folklore—and this applies equally to Traquair's and Nobbs's ideas about the Folk—has celebrated the homogeneous, "thus continually upholding the fallacy that cultural purity rather than hybridity is the norm." Traquair's doctrinaire description of the interior of a Québec house not only places his contemporaries in rural Québec in an indeterminate past, but also suggests that anyone who might have painted her floors blue was not a true *habitant*.

As Andrew Nurse has observed, in the context of such exclusive definitions, "authenticity was not self-evident even to 'the folk'."⁷⁴ He notes that J. Murray Gibbon,

⁷³Bendix, *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), p. 9.

⁷⁴Andrew Nurse, "Tradition and Modernity: The Cultural Work of Marius Barbeau" (Ph.D. dissertation, Queen's University, 1997), p. 331.

chief publicity agent for the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), wrote to Marius Barbeau in 1926, asking him for photographs of the interiors of traditional French-Canadian houses for help in decorating the CPR's Château Frontenac Hotel. A wing of the hotel had just burnt, and the "Chambre canadienne," intended to replicate a traditional *habitant* room, had been destroyed; Gibbon wanted Barbeau's help in designing an authentic replacement.⁷⁵ Barbeau responded that, although he had many such photographs, it would be better for Gibbon to speak to him about their plans. The photographs did not provide an authentic picture, since "there is usually a great deal of admixture in the decoration of houses, some of the things being old and some others being new."⁷⁶ Unlike Traquair some years later, Barbeau acknowledged that a modern influence had crept into the old Québec houses. As he saw it, they were no longer accurate representations of their own culture, and it required the trained eye of the ethnologist to distinguish between the authentic and the inauthentic in them.

There is no doubt that for Nobbs and Traquair, its perceived backwardness was a positive attribute of rural French Canada. They frequently commented on what they saw as the great sensibility and natural taste of the *habitants*, qualities that were not to be found among the more "sophisticated" city residents. For instance, Traquair opined that "the habitant has a good eye for colour and will produce the most astonishing effects with

⁷⁵Gary Bret Kines, "Chief Man-of-Many-Sides: John Murray Gibbon and his contributions to the development of tourism and the arts in Canada" (master's thesis, Carleton University, 1988), p. 105.

⁷⁶Quoted in Nurse, "Tradition and Modernity," p. 331.

the common house paints of commerce.”⁷⁷ He commented that it was this excellent feeling for colour, and especially the appearance of villages in the snow, that had for some time attracted painters to Québec.⁷⁸ The only unsuccessful combinations he saw were those in which “modest browns or dull yellows have unfortunately been introduced.” His use of the word “introduced” suggests that he saw these unsightly colour combinations as recent manifestations of outside influence, competing with the natural taste of the inhabitants of the houses.

Traquair wrote that the architecture of Québec was “an architecture of parish churches and small houses. It reaches its highest point of artistic beauty in the wood carvings of the churches but, even in the simpler architecture of the houses, it is marked by good workmanship and good taste.”⁷⁹ These sentences suggest a distinction that Traquair himself made which might be defined as between art and craft, or perhaps between “high” or schooled art or architecture and the vernacular. Although he

⁷⁷Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. 61.

⁷⁸As Traquair himself notes, his book was published some time after the tradition of Québec village painting had been established. Painters such as Clarence Gagnon used bright colours for snow and stucco as well as for the painted features of the houses. For example, a painting by Hal Ross Perrigard of the Ferme Saint-Gabriel, at Pointe St. Charles near Montréal (and now hanging in the stable/museum there), depicts it with quite intense blue and green windows, pinkish stucco and a bright red roof. It is not unlikely that Traquair’s impression of the brilliance of Québec houses was influenced by these paintings which emphasized it. Traquair notes in his book that the windows in what he calls the “winter room” are filled with bright blue paper throughout the summer, “which gives a most brilliant effect from the outside as well as preserving the carpets from fading,” in addition, he grudgingly indicates, to discouraging flies. (*Old Architecture of Québec*, p. 59.) Perrigard’s painting, however, is a winter scene.

⁷⁹Traquair, “The Old Architecture of the Province of Quebec,” undated manuscript, possibly for a lecture (MUA, Box 2: 35/17/160).

repeatedly praised the simplicity and naturalness of the houses, often condemning outside influence or excessive sophistication, his appreciation of Québec wood carving was quite different. This he viewed as a higher art form than the vernacular of the houses—as the “one field [in which] the great tradition [of France] came to Canada.”⁸⁰ And although he emphasized that the authentic French-Canadian tradition he identified in both sculpture and architecture had run its course by the middle of the nineteenth century, he tended to interpret foreign influence on architecture at any time as an ill omen presaging its doom. He did not, however, draw the same conclusions for sculpture. Although he insisted that it was independent of the French school from which it arose, and thus formed a genuine Canadian tradition, he did not view the odd instance of formal, foreign education in sculpture as spelling the end of the French-Canadian tradition. Rather the opposite.

Not surprisingly, many of Québec’s sculptors and church architects (who were often the same people) were trained through apprenticeship to established masters. Some, however, left the country to receive formal training elsewhere. Traquair noted that, of the important Baillargé family of “architects, contractors, sculptors and artists,” the elder son, François (1759-1852), travelled to Paris in 1778 and spent several years there studying at the Royal Academy of Statuary, Sculpture and Painting.⁸¹ He thus must have brought not only his formal training, but also the ideas of recent French practice to Québec. The three generations of the Baillargé family were influential and taught many others their

⁸⁰Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. 1.

⁸¹Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, pp. 289, 287.

trade, so this infusion of French art education could not but have influenced Québec practice. Generations later, the sculptor Louis Jobin (1845-1928) also sought training outside the country. After spending several years as an apprentice to François-Xavier Berlinguet (active 1833-64)—who had himself been a pupil of François Baillargé's son François Thomas (1791-1859)—he apprenticed himself to an English sculptor in New York. Surprisingly, although he had received his training from an Englishman in New York and from a Québécois sculptor whose own training descended directly from France, Traquair described Jobin as “a master-sculptor trained in the old traditional school, one of the last of his line.”⁸² Even though he saw him as one of the old school, Traquair had written to Marius Barbeau in 1925 that “such of Jobin's work as I have seen is of secondary importance from a purely artistic view, tho very interesting as the survival of an old tradition [sic].”⁸³ He amplified in a later letter: “I have never in any of the churches seen any carving later than say 1850 that I would care to have in a museum. It has not the spirit of the older work.”⁸⁴ Even so, it was not until his own time that Traquair saw the Québec sculptural tradition as having died completely. The work of the brothers Ménard and Jean Julien Bourgault (active beginning in the 1930s), he argued, demonstrated that “the talent for wood-sculpture still exists in the Province, but it shows,

⁸²Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. 296.

⁸³Traquair, letter to C. Marius Barbeau, 11 October 1925 (Canadian Museum of Civilization, Information Management Systems, Marius Barbeau correspondence, B 244 f.8, “Traquair, Ramsay” [hereafter CMC, IMS, Barbeau, B244 f.8, “Traquair”).

⁸⁴Traquair, letter to Barbeau, 26 October 1925 (CMC, IMS, Barbeau, B244 f.8, “Traquair”).

too, that the old traditional school is gone. . . . For this new carving does not in any way follow the old models."⁸⁵ Traquair's regret at the death of this tradition is clear, even while he had to admit that the work of the Bourgault brothers was good in its way. Although their working lives began well into the twentieth century, Traquair wished that carvers such as they would continue to "follow the old models." He was unable to view the work of the Bourgault brothers as the latest development in a vital wood-carving tradition, but rather interpreted it as outside of that tradition, which was itself dead.

In the case of architecture, however, outside influence began to herald the end of the French-Canadian tradition much earlier in Traquair's estimation. In the case of the church of Saint Jean, Ile d'Orléans, he wrote of Jobin's teacher that

Berlinguet [who in 1852-53 had lengthened the church and added a new west front, with a spire influenced by the English architect James Gibbs] was the modern scholarly architect taking his inspiration from books and no longer following the old traditions of the Province. . . . In saying that it is no longer traditional we do not necessarily condemn it. But a design of this kind, with its mingled French and English features and its lack of structural connection with the building foreshadows the end of the old French Canadian art.⁸⁶

Although Traquair had described Berlinguet's pupil as "the last of his line" as a traditional sculptor, he saw Berlinguet himself as already heralding the end of the tradition in

⁸⁵Traquair, *The Church of St. John the Baptist, St. Jean Port Joli, Quebec* (Montréal: MUP Series XIII, no. 41, 1939; reprinted from *JRAIC* [February 1939]): 10. Strangely, Traquair had written only eight years earlier that "even to-day there are still carvers of the old school who can turn out a well carved flower swag or a dignified figure in the true spirit of the French Renaissance." ("The Old Architecture of French Canada," in *Queen's Quarterly* [Autumn 1931]: 602). Perhaps he was referring to Louis Jobin, who had died only three years before.

⁸⁶Traquair and Barbeau, *The Church of Saint Jean, Island of Orleans, Quebec* (Montréal: MUP, series XIII, no. 23, 1929; reprinted from *JRAIC* [June 1929]): 4.

architecture by introducing influence from outside. He still commended the building for being “a dignified church” which “stands finely on its site . . . and is a landmark for miles,” and he also admired other buildings of mixed ancestry on occasion. For instance, he wrote that “In Longueuil there stood until recently a very attractive little house of mixed tradition. . . . The front was typical Georgian with a little ‘Venetian’ window over the arched front door and a pedimental gablet in the roof above it. But the windows are the regulation French casement type. It was exactly such a house as one might meet on an English sampler.”⁸⁷ But even in cases in which he admired aesthetically buildings that showed outside influence, he had still to decry the threat to what he called “the Canadian house.”⁸⁸

As Chris Wilson has recently argued in his study of the development of the Santa Fe style in early-twentieth-century New Mexico, the efforts of Folk researchers to create a “formal typology” of their subjects tend towards a narrow definition of these forms.⁸⁹ Traquair sought to define several broad types of his “Canadian House” but tended to subsume variations that appeared within one or the other pattern. As Wilson notes, in a process such as this, “idiosyncrasies that do not easily fit . . . get pushed to the side and ignored.” As in New Mexico, such studies have a profound effect on how later

⁸⁷Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, pp 73-74.

⁸⁸Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. 73.

⁸⁹Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), p. 123.

generations view those styles: “the forms and patterns that surfaced, were described, and named would shape perceptions for years to come.”⁹⁰

As with the wood carving, even if it were built in Québec by a Québécois craftsman, a house or church could not be a part of the French-Canadian tradition if it did not match the appearance of such buildings as defined by Traquair. He could not appreciate that a legitimate vernacular tradition might develop and change without being destroyed, even while he acknowledged that it was inevitable that buildings would change over time. He wrote that “[a] parish church is not the finished design of an architect, built once and for all, not to be altered from its original design. It is a living history of the parish and is still growing.”⁹¹ However, when these changes were too obviously influenced by other cultures or by creeping modernity, they were no longer a part of this natural evolution but instead represented the corruption of a culture. The “first great blow to the old French tradition” came when “in 1824 Notre Dame de Montréal was rebuilt in a bastard American Gothic . . . it died hard; even today traces of it can be found, but we may close our history in the mid-nineteenth century,” he wrote.⁹²

A pair of photographs taken by Barbeau on his trip to parts of rural Québec in the summer of 1925 shows A.Y. Jackson and Arthur Lismer sketching the stone tower of an old Seigneurial mill at Ste.-Famille, on the Île d'Orléans, while a local child (perhaps the

⁹⁰Wilson, *Myth of Santa Fe*, p. 123.

⁹¹Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. 139.

⁹²Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. 2.

son of the tower's owner, M. Poulin) looks on (fig. 2.3). Behind the painters is a house. It may have belonged to the Poulin family, but unlike the ancient mill, it is not given a name. This is significant, as the vast majority of houses in Barbeau's photos from that summer are identified (fig. 2.4). Indeed, this house is barely in the photograph at all; it appears at the very edge of the frame. Being two storeys high, with a rather low-pitched roof, it bears little resemblance to the "Canadian House" Traquair lovingly describes. But although Traquair, too, went to the Île d'Orléans that summer, and must have seen such houses, he ignores completely the presence of buildings that do not conform to his defined type.

In Québec's painting of the early periods Traquair was not in the least interested. Because it was a fine art, he could not look to painting for the charm and authenticity he found in untutored vernacular architecture, but neither could he trace in Québec's church painting of the early periods an inheritance of a great European school, such as he found in its sculpture. In contrast to his celebration of the directness, the honesty, and the true French-Canadian spirit of Québec's architecture and wood sculpture, he found the provinces's school of religious painting simply of low quality. He wrote of paintings in churches that "Many, of course, were brought from France, especially in the wealthier congregations, but many were painted by Canadian artists. . . . Unfortunately these pictures are . . . as works of art, very poor."³³ In another study he concluded that the "oldest and best picture in the church" was "probably brought from France." Meanwhile,

³³Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. 289.

he dismissed the six other pictures in the building, which he suggested were by Canadian artists (among them François and probably Thomas Ballairgé), stating that “none of them [was] of great importance.” The paintings in another church on the Île d’Orléans, two by Antoine Plamondon and one probably by François Ballairgé, he likewise wrote off as being “of no great interest.”⁵⁴ The Canadian church painting he came closest to admiring was a portrait of a one-time Bishop of Québec. This he damned with faint praise, writing that “although not a masterpiece, yet [it] has more character than most of the church pictures one sees.”⁵⁵ Clearly, although Traquair valued vernacular architecture very highly, the artistic impulses of his Folk were not quite suited to painting, which required more of the very sophistication and learning that he felt detracted so unfortunately where it had been allowed to creep into Québec architecture. As Lora Carney has observed, in 1937 John Lyman similarly found a group of paintings by women whose previous artistic expression had been in designing and making hooked rugs to be wanting as “high” art. In this case, he was searching for the Modern in the work but his conclusion is similar to Traquair’s (the latter largely unarticulated): folk artists are just that; their “natural” abilities do not suit them to the practice of “high” art.⁵⁶ Once more, Kelley’s notion of the “mutually constitutive and constituting” concepts of “Folk,” “traditional,” and “modern,” of

⁵⁴Traquair and Barbeau, *Sainte Famille, Island of Orleans*, p. 13; Traquair and Barbeau, *The Church of St. Francois de Sales, Island of Orleans, Quebec* (Montréal: MUP Series XIII, no. 14, 1926; reprinted from *JRAIC* [September-October 1926]): 13.

⁵⁵Traquair and Barbeau, *The Church of St. Pierre, Island of Orleans, Quebec* (Montréal: MUP Series XIII, no. 22, 1929; reprinted from *JRAIC* [February 1929]): 7.

⁵⁶Carney, “Modernists and Folk,” p. 112.

“popular,” “low,” and “high” cultures, illuminates Traquair’s and Lyman’s problem.⁹⁷ If painting (other than decorative painting) is “high” culture (and, in Lyman’s case, modern to boot), by definition, “Folk” or “traditional” cultures simply cannot excel at it. For the researcher to allow them do so would be to admit that they were part of his own modern world.

In this connection, it is telling that both Nobbs and Traquair identified women, together with conventionally- feminine activities, as the keepers of a traditional culture in the rural Québec of their own day; it is the girls who sing the songs of their mothers and grandmothers as they spin, weave, and sew in Traquair’s dream Québec. Handicrafts and interior decoration, not to mention the domestic space of the “Canadian House” itself, are other signifiers of a surviving traditional culture to which Traquair points, while Nobbs, too, singles out hooked rugs as a sign that rural Québec culture was still undemoralized (or unsophisticated) at the beginning of the century.⁹⁸ Barbeau’s photographs from the 1925 trip to the Île d’Orléans and other rural areas demonstrate how strongly he, too, associated women with the guardianship of traditional Québec culture. Several of his photographs show women actively engaged in traditional handiwork such as spinning, weaving, rug hooking, or, in the case of Madame Hilaire Demeules and Mlle. Virginie Demeules, beating flax (fig. 2.5). Males are associated with the cultural domain in a more passive manner; a few photographs show men with assortments of artifacts and old

⁹⁷Kelley, “Deconstructing ‘The Folk’,” p. 1402.

⁹⁸See notes 68 to 70 and 72.

furniture, often broken. Like the others, Monsieur F.X. Lemelin seems to have dragged his collection of “old fashioned utensils” and a chair, missing a slat or two but dating from over a century previously, out of retirement in the attic or barn for the delectation of Barbeau and his colleagues (fig. 2.6). While most of his photographs of women show them actively working at the very pursuits that, as I discuss in the Conclusion, governments, institutions and individuals were then seeking to “revive” as a way of revitalizing traditional Québec culture, the men more often show off the objects they (or their ancestors) used to use.

Women seemed ideally suited to be cast in this rôle of keepers of Québec culture. Citing several nineteenth- and early-twentieth century examples, Kathleen McCarthy has observed that it has been an enduring myth in American society (and here we may read Canadian as well) that “women are the nation’s cultural custodians, and always have been.”¹⁰⁰ In an article of 1923, Traquair makes a similar observation, noting a consensus among most people that women are “more imaginative and more artistic . . . [and] have a more delicate intuition than men.”¹⁰¹ In his view, however, the facts suggest something very different. Analysing the historical contribution of women to the creative field, he concludes that “[i]n the whole field of art . . . women are inferior to men in imagination, intuition, and the abstract qualities. These qualities are what distinguish all the highest creative art. Lacking them, though women may do good work in the less exacting and

¹⁰⁰Kathleen D. McCarthy, *Women's Culture: American Philanthropy and Art, 1830-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. xi.

¹⁰¹Traquair, “Women and Civilization,” *The Atlantic Monthly* 132 (September 1923): 289.

more practical branches of art, they will go no further. The great artists will always be men. Art is a manly virtue."¹⁰¹ Women might manage, he concedes, to "earn their living in . . . all the less important branches of the graphic arts," but, as he repeats several times in the article, "Creative ability in the fine arts is a manly virtue."¹⁰² Yet he identifies rural Québec culture in his own time with the artistic production and customs of its women, seeing, in the passing of domestic skills from one generation of women to the next, a regeneration of the core values that he saw at the very heart of Québec folk culture.

In contrast, as I have demonstrated, Traquair identified a fine art tradition—practised, of course, by men—in the ecclesiastical sculpture of Québec. But, like traditional architecture (another male domain), it had been superseded by a modern, predominantly English-Canadian fine art, Québec artists, to Traquair's mind, having adopted "foreign" forms and practices as French-Canadian folk culture was surpassed by the advancing world order.¹⁰³ What survived to represent authentic French-Canadian society, then, was not a fine art tradition, but rather a traditional culture, represented by what Traquair saw as the less-creative and therefore more-static craft work associated with women. An essential notion for both Nobbs and Traquair, which Traquair expresses

¹⁰¹Traquair, "Women and Civilization," p. 291.

¹⁰²Traquair, "Women and Civilization," p. 291.

¹⁰³Both Nobbs and Traquair were strongly opposed to the idea of women studying architecture, Traquair stating in 1937 that "women had not the qualities of imagination to make good designers." The first woman student was admitted to the McGill School of Architecture only in 1939, immediately after Traquair's retirement as director. (Annmarie Adams, "'Archiettes' in Training: The Admission of Women to McGill's School of Architecture," *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* 21, 3 [September 1996]: 72.

again in his series of articles in *The Atlantic Monthly*, is that “art has always . . . been a kind of social mirror, reflecting faithfully the civilization which produced it.”¹⁰⁴ Before the mid-nineteenth century, Québec had enjoyed a lively, vigorous, and creative artistic culture, represented by a school of wood carving “in the ‘Grand Manner’, simplified and made human,” and by a “real Canadian architecture, moulded by climate and life and by a genuine feeling for beauty.”¹⁰⁵ By Nobbs and Traquair’s own day, the value of the quaint folk society that remained—represented by the hooked rugs and weaving of its women—was largely as a sort of living history for the nation they envisioned.

Thus, Nobbs and Traquair were able to look upon the people of the farms and small villages of rural Québec as almost completely unaffected by modernity, but as simultaneously corrupted and destroyed by its influence. Although a modern, “sophisticated” Franco-Québec culture might exist in the cities, it was not, as far as they were concerned, materially different from contemporary Anglo-Canadian culture and did not represent the pure Canadian spirit that they saw in the rural residents, whose material culture had “the dignity that comes naturally to simple things free from sham.”¹⁰⁶ To their minds, the people of Québec must either live the centuries-old life of the *habitants*, or be corrupted beyond recognition so that they were no longer the true embodiments of Québec culture that they had been historically.

¹⁰⁴Traquair, “The Cult of the Rebel,” *The Atlantic Monthly* 152 (September 1933): 357.

¹⁰⁵Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. 1.

¹⁰⁶Traquair, “The Old Cottages of Quebec: Of solid, direct Construction . . .,” p. 612 (subtitle).

There is no doubt that Nobbs and Traquair greatly admired rural Québec society and sought to preserve or at least record its architecture as an example for posterity. But by constructing an image of the *habitants* as a simple people unmarked by the advances of modernity, they defined them as backward, as Primitive, as outside the historical time of the “real” world. At the same time, both noted the mid-nineteenth century as the point at which rural Québec architecture began to be strongly affected by outside influences, and this they saw as the point of degeneration. Nobbs wrote that “the architecture of French Quebec has had its ups and downs with more of degeneration than of evolution marking its course during the latter half of the XIXth century.”¹⁰⁷ His use of the word “degeneration,” with its Latin root word meaning “race,” suggests that he perceived French-Canadian architecture to be racially linked to the French-speaking people of Québec, the decline in the quality of their buildings reflecting their own descent as a culture.

In common with many of their middle-class antimodernist colleagues in Europe and North America, Nobbs and Traquair found a group of people that they identified as representative of an ideal folk culture. Because they perceived this culture as static and premodern, and prized it for these characteristics, any alteration or outside influence it experienced threatened to destroy it; no change was permissible. In other words, all that was distinctive about Québec society belonged to the past, even if in some cases it existed

¹⁰⁷Nobbs, “Present Tendencies Affecting Architecture in Canada. Part I: The Inheritance,” *JRAIC* (July 1930): 246.

in the present. And as a Canadian folk tradition—"the natural product of this bit of earth on which we live"—Nobbs and Traquair saw a rural French-Canadian culture that could be mined for nuggets of authenticity. Perhaps, by helping to purify architecture in their own day of what they saw as the false and decadent eclectic styles that had overtaken it, these nuggets might help them to find a truly national way of building, and in so doing, contribute to the project of defining the Canadian nation.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸Nobbs, "Study of Old Work," p. 75.

Chapter Three "THE MOST PURELY CANADIAN PEOPLE OF THE DOMINION"

THIS CHAPTER examines Nobbs's and Traquair's participation in the discourse of nationalism in Canada, and how their thoughts intersected with their ideas about architecture as an organic expression of culture. I demonstrated in the preceding chapter that Nobbs and Traquair perceived the rural population of the Saint Lawrence River valley as representative of a pure folk culture, unfettered by the modernity that seemed to be robbing their own urban culture of both spiritual and physical vigour. But Nobbs and Traquair also saw these rural Québécois as uniquely Canadian, in part precisely because they believed that they belonged to a folk culture. Many scholars and intellectuals of the period espoused the view that, unlike the members of more cosmopolitan society, the Folk truly embodied national spirit. As I demonstrate, the idea that a part of Québec society could be used to provide a folk history for English Canada can be explained in part by their conception that the country had come to its present state through the advances of successive societies, each one succeeding the one before it, even as the one before continued to exist in the present as a remnant of the nation's past. Just as nationalists in European countries sought to revitalize their own modern societies by infusing them with national folk traditions, cultural producers in Canada used Québec traditional culture, seen in this light as a direct predecessor of modern Anglo-Canadian culture, in the same way.

To the imperialist, the practice of extracting from a subordinate culture anything of value to the empire was self-evident. Imperialism played an important rôle in both

Nobbs's and Traquair's thoughts about nationhood. As Edward Said defines it, "imperialism' means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory," and as good Britons at the turn of the last century, it probably never occurred to Nobbs and Traquair to do anything but support the Empire.¹ Today, we might also consider the word "imperialist" to denote one who belongs to a dominant culture and supports the imposition of aspects of that culture upon a subordinate one, often, ostensibly (and paternalistically) for the greater good of the subject group, while simultaneously making use of aspects of the subordinate culture. Nobbs and Traquair were imperialists both in this sense and by the definition the word carried in turn-of-the-century Canada. The notion of imperialism as a concept was relatively new when they arrived in Montréal, and the word itself had come into frequent use only near the end of the nineteenth century.² Imperialism in the Canadian context was long interpreted as an anti-nationalist sentiment, but as Carl Berger demonstrates, it was not at all incompatible with strong Canadian national feeling; indeed, the two sentiments frequently went hand in hand. Imperialism for the turn-of-the-century Canadian meant the effort to achieve "the closer union of the British Empire through economic and military co-operation and through political changes which would give the

¹Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993; New York: Vintage Books, 1994), p. 9.

²Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism 1867-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), p. 3.

dominions influence over imperial policy.”³ Implicit in the imperial impulse also was fear of increasing continentalism, and eventual absorption by the much larger and more powerful United States.⁴ A strengthened Canada and strong ties with the Empire would help to combat increasing American influence.

Nobbs and Traquair belonged to the generation after the people Berger identifies as the prime movers in the imperialist effort, and neither was involved directly with the political workings of the country. Therefore they were not overtly imperialistic in terms of working towards actual political change. As Mary Vipond observes, however, in the 1920s, too, “the differences between nationalism and imperialism were often more of emphasis than of substance,” and imperialism clearly informed Nobbs’s and Traquair’s thinking about Canadian culture and about the route that architecture in their adoptive country should take.⁵

Nobbs’s imperial mission is particularly clear in the early years of his Canadian career. He believed passionately that no genuine, contemporary Canadian style of art and architecture could develop under the conditions then current, and several years after his arrival in Canada he addressed an extensive proposal to the federal government, recommending that the state provide financial aid for art education in order to facilitate

³Berger, *Sense of Power*, p. 3.

⁴Berger, *Sense of Power*, p. 4.

⁵Mary Vipond, “The Nationalist Network: English Canada’s Intellectuals and Artists in the 1920s,” in *Interpreting Canada’s Past, Volume II: After Confederation*, ed. J.M. Bumsted (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 262.

the development of a national art. Among other suggestions, he counselled the government to introduce travelling scholarships to send young architects to see and draw historic architecture in Europe.⁶ Following John Ruskin, Patrick Geddes, Gerard Baldwin Brown and others, he suggested that “the phenomena of Architectural evolution (“the styles”, as the popular phrase expresses it), can best be explained by the ethnographic theory which regards Architecture as history writ large:—as ‘the expression of the age in which it was generated’.” Under these circumstances, he argued, “If national expression . . . is the function of Design, it is surely reasonable to take such precautions as are within our power to see to it that expression shall ring true.”⁷ The report goes on to discuss how the government should go about encouraging architects to develop a school of architecture that would be a true “national expression.” As it was for other imperialists, an important feature of Canadianness for Nobbs was the country’s non-Americanness, and he obviously feared that this was under threat. He argued that “the fusion of our peoples’ tastes and ideals in mere matters of form would be a potent factor for national strength. This has a bearing on the question of U.S. influence in all the appurtenances of daily life in Canada, from tall buildings to personal attire.”⁸ To combat this distressing American influence he suggested that “the National and Democratic arts of Architecture

⁶Nobbs, “Report on Proposals for *State Aid to Art Education in Canada*; and Support of a Plea for the Institution of Travelling Scholarships and Museums,” 4 May 1907 (Canadian Architecture Collection, Blackader-Lauterman Library, McGill University [CAC] Nobbs Collection, Series C.10-1).

⁷Nobbs, “*State Aid to Art Education*,” p. 2.

⁸Nobbs, “*State Aid to Art Education*,” p. 2.

and Design,” if preserved in time from “degenerat[ing] into third hand imitations of Parisian academic models” via the influence of the American Beaux-Arts school, “will help, as all true expressions tend to help, our Imperial aspirations”⁹

The report emphasizes the importance of “national and Imperial tradition,” and does not really differentiate between the two. Rather, as an antidote to the threatened “infection with [Beaux-Arts] ideals” from the United States, Nobbs suggested that the Canadian government should encourage the study of “the glorious traditions of English and French mediaeval and renaissance architecture [which] are our natural and rightful heritage.”¹⁰

Of the two, Nobbs particularly stressed the importance of British models to Canadian architecture. In a 1908 letter to the government minister responsible for architecture, he petitioned for the production of a set of plaster casts of English architectural monuments, to be made available relatively inexpensively for purchase by art museums and schools of design in “the countries of the empire.” He pointed out that other countries had such collections, and that their architectural traditions were therefore more easily studied. In the interests of Empire and “memorialising the British government,” he suggested that since Melbourne, Australia, was then building a new museum, the governments of Canada, Australia and South Africa should together agree

⁹Nobbs, “*State Aid to Art Education*,” p. 10.

¹⁰Nobbs, “*State Aid to Art Education*,” p. 8.

each to purchase the plaster casts if the British government should make them available.¹¹ Clearly, at this stage, he was emphasizing Canada's Imperial connections as an essential part of its domestic identity. Almost five years later he was still vainly beating that drum. Writing in a letter to the *Spectator* that it was Britain's "Imperial duty" to provide a collection of plaster casts, he suggested that "the value on Imperial grounds of such a collection, illustrating as it would the development of our civilization and culture by objects of art which can be appreciated by all cannot be underestimated."¹²

At about the same time, he wrote in the conditions for the architectural competition to be held for a new legislative building in Regina (and later repeated it in the Winnipeg programme) that while competitors should choose their own style for the edifice, "They are reminded . . . that the Province is politically within the British Empire, and that this fact should be expressed in its Public Buildings."¹³ Nobbs was very much alive to the potential for expressing national ideals in such buildings, as well as through his proposed museum collection. "The British government has systematically, and we believe unwisely, scorned the political use of art," he wrote.¹⁴ Canada, he suggested, should in this respect follow the example of "France and the countries which have borrowed their

¹¹Nobbs, letter to Sidney Fisher, Federal Minister of Agriculture, 3 March 1908 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series c.10-1).

¹²Nobbs, "British Art and the Empire," letter to the *Spectator* (4 January 1913): 17; manuscript dated 12 December 1912, p. 2.

¹³Nobbs, "Conditions of Competition for the Selection of an Architect for the Proposed Government Buildings at Regina, Saskatchewan," 1907.

¹⁴Nobbs, "State Aid to Art Education," p. 11.

bureaucratic systems from her" (and here the United States was undoubtedly prominent in his mind), such countries having "ever been alive to the political and commercial advantages accruing from the encouragement of the arts, and conscious of the significance of their national monuments." Especially given the increasingly diverse populations of the prairie provinces at this point, this is a significant statement. "The political use of art" should, in this case, be to assert the dominance of Anglo-Canada through the style of the country's public buildings.

Traquair, too, in several of his *Atlantic Monthly* articles—particularly "The Canadian Type"—emphasized the essential Britishness of Canada, although he was quick to argue that it was also distinctly Canadian, differing from both Britain and the United States. But neither Nobbs nor Traquair had a straightforward vision of Canada as simply British. Instead, as Berger has noted was the case with many imperialists, they were also drawn to the idea of a Québec Folk as an important component of the modern nation, which was itself British. As Berger contends, "some imperialists . . . were attracted to Quebec exactly because of its 'backwardness.' They discovered in the province conservative principles, traditional values, and a hostility to capitalism which they themselves admired and shared." Like Nobbs and Traquair, these people recognized and participated in modern progress and growth, but "a deep undercurrent of suspicion pervaded their attitude toward industrialization and urbanization."¹⁵

¹⁵Berger, *Sense of Power*, p. 140

Nobbs and Traquair were only two of the many white, well-to-do, English-Canadian imperialists in turn-of-the-century Montréal who, though identifying themselves exclusively with the middle-class Anglophone community, looked to rural Québec for what they saw as a more pure folklore and history to strengthen the flimsy bonds of Canadian nationhood. As Donald Wright observes, the careers of Montréalers W.D. Lighthall (1857-1954) and David Ross McCord (1844-1930) “afford an opportunity to rethink imperialism as, in part, a process of resistance to, and accommodation with, modernity. This process . . . can at once be described as, and explained by, antimodernism.”¹⁰ The juncture between imperialism and antimodernism was clearly an important part of Nobbs’s and Traquair’s intellectual framework too. While they (and particularly Traquair) sought to underline the similarities between the French and English in Canada, for Nobbs and Traquair, as for Lighthall and McCord, the perceived differences were at least as important, and it was not to the Québec of the cities, the boardrooms, the offices, and the factories that they turned.

As I discussed in my introduction, it is a common attribute of folk cultures as perceived by the intellectuals who admire and study them that they are the bearers of culture for the larger societies in which they live. The rural descendants of Québec’s

¹⁰Wright, “W.D. Lighthall and David Ross McCord: Antimodernism and English-Canadian Imperialism, 1880s-1918,” *Revue d’études canadiennes/Journal of Canadian Studies* 32, 2 (Summer 1997): 135. As Wright’s work indicates, Nobbs and Traquair shared other characteristics with Lighthall and McCord, such as their attraction to militarist values. Lighthall, Nobbs, and Traquair were all involved with both the McCord Museum and the Canadian Handicrafts Guild. (Norma Morgan, “F. Cleveland Morgan and the Decorative Arts Collection in the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts [M.A. thesis, Concordia University, 1985], Appendix B.)

original *habitants* fulfilled this rôle in Nobbs's and Traquair's adoptive country: in 1923 Traquair described them as "the oldest and most purely Canadian people of the Dominion."¹⁷ Although at this point he had barely begun to concentrate on the research into Québec culture that was to consume him for several decades, he was already expressing an idea that he would later come to emphasize heavily. As I showed in the last chapter, it was Nobbs's and Traquair's idea that in rural Québec they found a folk society that represented something quite pure, and had remained unspoiled by the conditions of industrialization and the experience of modernity that had, they felt, brought an end to authentic expression in their own culture. As one might expect from people raised and trained in an atmosphere permeated by the ideas of Ruskin, Geddes, and Baldwin Brown, for Nobbs and Traquair, this pure folk culture was characterized particularly by its architecture. And it represented something even more than the survival of authentic culture. It seemed to be uniquely Canadian—just what was needed in a time when, as were intellectual elites in numerous countries, members of what Mary Vipond describes as "the English-Canadian intelligentsia," comprising "creative artists . . . writers, [and] . . . university professors," were organizing themselves into a multiplicity of organizations that sought to advance the arduous process of defining the Canadian nation.¹⁸

The project of defining a national identity is inherently problematic. Nations do not exist naturally; they must be defined and constructed, using many possible

¹⁷Traquair, "The Canadian Type," *Atlantic Monthly* 131 (June 1923): 822.

¹⁸Vipond, "The Nationalist Network," p. 262.

components. As historian David Bell has recently observed, nation-builders themselves have recognized this fact since the beginning of the modern period. Historically, “[e]ven those nationalists who insist on the essential, natural distinctiveness of their particular nation, grounded in the people’s common blood or the physical terrain, nonetheless also invariably define that nation as in some sense unfinished. Action is still urgently required to purge it of impurities . . . or to revive and reawaken essential national qualities that have been forgotten, abandoned, or stolen,” argues Bell.¹⁹ In the case of a newly-constituted country such as Canada, these “essential national qualities” could not just be revived. They had to be “discovered” and invented: redefined as distinctly Canadian. Nation-builders in 1920s Canada were all too aware that a great effort was needed to forge strong bonds for a country only recently emerged from colonial status, in which, as Carl Berger has pointed out, many of the conventional contributors to nationality (“ties of race, religion, and language, as well as . . . a general similarity in political and social institutions”) tended to pull the opposite way.²⁰ Groups identified as folk cultures, though, seemed to many intellectuals to transcend such conflicts; they represented what Giuseppe Cocchiara has called the “innermost soul” of their societies.²¹ This inherent

¹⁹David A. Bell, “The Unbearable Lightness of Being French: Law, Republicanism and National Identity at the End of the Old Regime,” *American Historical Review* 106, 4 (October 2001): 1215-16.

²⁰Berger, “The True North Strong and Free,” in *Interpreting Canada’s Past Volume II: After Confederation* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 164

²¹Giuseppe Cocchiara, *The History of Folklore in Europe* (John N. McDaniel, trans.; Turin: Editore Boringhiera, 1952; Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1981), p. 8.

rootedness might be co-opted to help provide a common identity for a broader culture in need of connections. In the case of Nobbs and Traquair, any differences between Francophone and Anglophone Canada were somehow resolved in the people they defined as a Québec Folk. Despite their historic French origins, such people were rooted in what was by that time, politically, Canadian soil, and their authentic culture might therefore be used to enrich and bind together the entire nation. Nobbs described historic Québec architecture as “ours, the natural product of this bit of earth on which we live.”²² In similar terms, Traquair wrote that “it is our own, it is of the soil.”²³ These buildings had arisen, they seem to suggest, almost spontaneously from the Canadian soil, and were therefore indigenously Canadian by nature.

As culturally-interested intellectuals, Nobbs and Traquair were not alone in their belief that the idea that the Folk might provide Canada with a new national unity. Ian McKay points out that it was a preoccupation of J. Murray Gibbon, of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), who was almost certainly an acquaintance of both Nobbs and Traquair.²⁴ Gibbon saw the revival of traditional needlecraft, for example, as an activity

²²Nobbs, “On the Value of the Study of Old Work,” *CAB* (May 1905): 75.

²³Traquair, “The Education of the Architect,” *Construction* XII, 10 (October 1919): 317.

²⁴McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), p. 157. Gibbon lived in Montréal, and, like both Nobbs and Traquair, was associated with the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, Gibbon becoming its president around 1942. (Janet Elizabeth McNaughton, “A Study of the CPR-Sponsored Quebec Folk Song and Handicraft Festivals, 1927-1930 [master’s thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1982], p. 234.) In addition, Nobbs, Traquair, and Gibbon were all members of Montréal’s Pen and Pencil Club, Nobbs having been elected to

(continued...)

that might strengthen the ties between English- and French-speaking Canadians by taking them back to their Norman roots, and he had similar ideas about folk music.²⁵ “How pleasant it would be,” he wrote in the preface to his 1927 book *Canadian Folk Songs (Old and New)*, “to think that the musical currents which separated in Europe should once more reunite after many hundred years in Canada!”²⁶ Gibbon organized a large number of festivals celebrating folk music, dancing, and handicrafts in Québec and in the western provinces, starting in the 1920s. In addition to their utility in increasing train travel to those destinations, Gibbon had broader cultural goals for his festivals. As Carole Carpenter observes, “[t]he express purposes of such public performances were the celebration of the cultural diversity of Canadians and the promotion of union among them through the mutual appreciation of tradition.”²⁷

Traquair’s conviction of the quintessential Canadianness of the Québec Folk is partially explained by a statement he made in 1928. He wrote, “The ‘habitant’ has some claim to be the real Canadian. Ever since his forefathers first colonised the banks of the

²⁴(...continued)

membership in 1906, Gibbon in 1915, and Traquair in 1917. (“List of Members of the Pen and Pencil Club of Montreal since its Foundation,” in *The Pen and Pencil Club, 1890-1959*, by Leo Cox and J. Harry Smith [Montréal: The Pen and Pencil Club, 1959], n.p.)

²⁵McKay, *Quest of the Folk*, p. 157.

²⁶Gibbon, “Preface,” in *Canadian Folk Songs (Old and New)* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1927), xiv. Quoted in Gary Bret Kines, “Chief Man-of-Many-Sides: John Murray Gibbon and his contributions to the development of tourism and the arts in Canada” (master’s thesis, Carleton University, 1988), p. 107.

²⁷Carole Henderson Carpenter, *Many Voices: A Study of Folklore Activities in Canada and their Role in Canadian Culture* (Ottawa: National Museum of Man Mercury Series/Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies Paper No. 26, 1979), p. 335.

St. Lawrence in the XVII century he has lived on the land; he has preserved the language and the traditions of his motherland though he has been isolated from Europe to a greater degree and for a longer time than have most of our Canadians. He is the 'habitant' of the real Canada"²⁸ Traquair's notion here of the "real Canada" is an extremely important one. It suggests that, for him, the essence of Canada lay in the rural byways which, it seemed, modern civilization had largely passed by, and where time "ha[d] not moved quite so fast as it ha[d] in other places."²⁹ Elsewhere, engaging in the common British rhetoric analysed by Raymond Williams in which the country is pure and the city is a locus of corruption, he wrote that in Canada "the real type is a countryman."³⁰ If his definition of the real Canada depended upon such antimodernist fantasies it is no wonder that rural French Canadians, who seemed to live such a pastoral life, should figure for Traquair, not only as ideal Folk, but also as ideal Canadians.

Nor were Anglo-Canadians such as Nobbs and Traquair, Lighthall and McCord and their colleagues alone as members of a dominant Anglo-Canadian culture in identifying a minority folk group with the culture of a diverse nation. A similar

²⁸Traquair, "The Old Cottages of Quebec," typescript of article for *House Beautiful* (May 1928), p. 1 (McGill University Archives [MUA], Box 2: 35/17/160); published, in slightly modified form, as "The Old Cottages of Quebec: Of Solid, Direct Construction, well Adapted to the Climate, and with the Dignity that comes Naturally to Simple Things Free from Sham," *House Beautiful* 63 (May 1928): 612-13; 649, 650, 652-4; 656.

²⁹Traquair, "Old Cottages of Quebec," p. 1.

³⁰Traquair, "The Canadian Type," p. 821. In this case, contrarily, the context was "the English-speaking races," who, he argued, "live close to the soil; their types are country-dwellers even in an era of city-dwelling industrialists." See also Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto & Windus Ltd., 1973; London: Hogarth, 1993).

phenomenon occurred in the United States at the same time, when a number of white, Anglophone intellectuals came to see New Mexican pueblo culture as quintessentially American. As Chris Wilson has observed, the opening of the Fine Arts Museum in Santa Fe in 1917—a newly-built edifice that was described by museum patron Frank Springer as having “grown . . . straight from our own soil”—engendered “a spate of national articles . . . describing the Santa Fe-Pueblo style as ‘so directly American,’ ‘a true product of America,’ and ‘a strictly American style of Architecture.’”³¹ Wilson ascribes “this unexpected emphasis on the Americanness of an exotic, non-Anglo-American architecture” to the nativist movement in post-War American culture. Pro-American Americans believed that the architecture of New Mexico was inherently American because it had arisen from the Pueblos, which were indigenous, and from Spanish colonial architecture, which, like that of the French settlers in Canada, was the country’s oldest European architectural tradition.

Yet definitions of concepts such as ethnicity and nationhood are rarely, if ever, monolithic. Nobbs’s and Traquair’s own conceptions of Canada as a nation were fluid, and myriad contradictions are present in their writings on the subject. As far as elite culture was concerned, they recognized and celebrated the dominance of Anglo-Canadians. Frequently they invoked Canada’s Anglo-Saxon inheritance.³² Celebrating

³¹Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), p. 140.

³²“Anglo Saxon” was a very broad term at the beginning of the twentieth century. As Reginald Horsman has demonstrated, it was used in a racial sense by the nineteenth-century
(continued...)

the historic architecture of Great Britain, Nobbs commented that it was a source of pride to “our national [Canadian] interest” that “at certain periods Englishmen, Scotsmen and Irishmen had sentiments to express and a power to express them in no sense inferior” to the best of Greece, Rome, Italy or France.³³ A few years earlier he had told the American Institute of Architects that “We [Canadians] are still British. I think we will always be British. We speak a sort of English, and some of us try to build a sort of English too.”³⁴ Nobbs’s statement supports Berger’s contention that, even while they celebrated the value of Québécois culture to Canada, imperialists were united in expecting that Francophone numbers would grow ever smaller and weaker, and that Canada would continue to be ruled by an Anglo-Canadian elite.³⁵

Traquair was, fantastically, prepared to trace “our European culture” back to pre-classical times and claim a direct descent through ancient Rome and Greece from the Minoans, “the oldest continuous civilization in the world,” whose archaeological remains

³²(...continued)

English to refer to those living in England but also, more broadly, for all English-speaking peoples. In the United States by the 1840s, “Anglo Saxon” was used to describe all the white people of that country, but still frequently with an emphasis on Anglo-Teutonic roots. (*Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* [Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1981], pp. 4-5. See also Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Colour: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.)

³³Nobbs, “The Architecture of Canada” (paper read before the Third Annual Assembly, RAIC), *Construction* (October 1910): 57.

³⁴Nobbs, “Address by Prof. Percy E. Nobbs” at the American Institute of Architects banquet, 1907 (stenographer’s report), p. 3. (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.10-1.)

³⁵Berger, *Sense of Power*, pp. 134, 145.

Sir Arthur Evans had recently excavated on the Island of Crete.³⁶ This lineage, of course, included the French as well as the English—included, in fact, essentially all Britons and northern and western Europeans.³⁷ Although, he wrote, the civilizations of Babylon and Egypt, “like those of China and India, were doomed to stagnation The long-lost Cretan seafarer is our own spiritual ancestor. He nourished Greece as Greece has nourished us. European civilization began as the civilization of the Aegean Sea.”³⁸ Significantly, the inheritors of this great Minoan legacy did not include those still living in the Mediterranean region. At one point Traquair opined that Northern France (which he and others noted had been the origin of Canada’s French settlers) “is more akin to southern England than it is to the Midi,” and he distinguished between “Nordic man” and “Mediterranean man.”³⁹ It was perhaps this shared inheritance that helped make rural Québécois such an ideal Folk for Traquair’s Canada. He believed that the French were

³⁶Traquair, “The Civilization of the Seas,” undated manuscript, p. 6. (MUA, Box 1: 35/17/127); “The Commonwealth of the Atlantic,” *Atlantic Monthly* 133 (May 1924): 602.

³⁷ Traquair distinguished between North America’s “Anglo-Saxon stock”—comprising “Germans, French, Norwegians, and Northern Europeans, of substantially the same breed and culture as the English”—and “three quite different kinds of aliens—the Oriental, the Eastern European [which for him included ‘Poles, Lithuanians, Russians, Greeks, Bulgarians, Italians (and) Hungarians’], and the Jew.” He concluded that North America was tending towards caste organization as follows: “the Old Anglo-Saxon American, the Jewish, the Eastern European, the Oriental, and the Negro.” (Traquair, “The Caste System in North America,” *Atlantic Monthly* 131 [March 1923]: 417-20, 422. This article, more than any other of Traquair’s writings, reveals his deep-seated racism.) Berger has noted that it was not uncommon among Canadian imperialists thus to “accommodate the French Canadians into their composite image of the Canadian character far more easily than they were able to accept the strange immigrants from central, eastern, and southern Europe.” (Berger, *Sense of Power*, p. 128.)

³⁸Traquair, “Commonwealth of the Atlantic,” p. 603.

³⁹Traquair, “Commonwealth of the Atlantic,” p. 605.

racially fellow-inheritors of the same great ancestry, but the *habitants'* simple life on the land made them purer specimens for his purposes. Nonetheless, although Nobbs and Traquair frequently identified this discrete segment of Québec's population as cultural representatives of all of Canada, their own perceptions, not surprisingly, changed often, depending on the context in which they were speaking or writing.

Nobbs also made an important early statement of his position on the cultural ancestry of contemporary Canada in 1910, when the new Victoria Memorial Museum was being planned in Ottawa. He petitioned to have one floor of the new museum given over to the arts of design, and made it clear that he saw the material culture of Québec as one of his list of essentials for the development of a modern architecture in Canada. He drew up a proposed plan for the second floor, which would illustrate "The National Traditions or the Arts of Design."⁴⁰ This featured, as broad categories, Classical Art (in which he gave equal space to Greece and Rome on one side and Italian work of the mediaeval to the late Renaissance periods on the other), England (Norman to the late-eighteenth century), France (Romanesque to the late-eighteenth century), Industrial Arts (divided by type, and also including three categories of furniture—Gothic, Louis XIV-XVI and English seventeenth and eighteenth centuries), and Home Industries. This latter category Nobbs divided broadly into three categories: Red Indians (costume, prehistoric arts, weapons,

⁴⁰Nobbs, "Memorandum relative to the Allocation of Floor Space on the Second Storey of the *Victoria Memorial Museum*, at Ottawa, Ontario; for a collection to ILLUSTRATE THE NATIONAL TRADITIONS or THE ARTS OF DESIGN," memorandum to William Pugsley, Federal Minister of Public Works, 2 January 1910 (CAC, Nobbs Archives, Series C.10-1).

utensils, baskets etc.), Recent Settlers (a small area, dedicated to lace and embroidery) and, receiving the most space, French Canadian, which he divided into costume, textiles, early handicrafts, axes etc., leather and fur, and, in the centre, models of buildings.

Nobbs's preoccupation with the importance of museums to the development of art makes it clear that he saw this floor of the museum as a potential study collection for architects and designers. As such, it represents what he saw as the essential elements of Canadian cultural production. The material culture of Québec was predominant in his plan, and the material he chose to include indicates that it was what he saw as Folk production that was most germane to his conception of Canadian art. He did not include the wood carving that Traquair later found so compelling; with the exception of the models of buildings (which were probably all or nearly all vernacular forms, in contrast to the examples in the European sections), he included only those items to be found in the Industrial Arts section of the European collection. No examples of the so-called "high" arts of painting or sculpture were to be exhibited, although the European sections would feature casts of sculpture among the architecture. (It should be noted, however, that Québec sculpture was only recognized by intellectual elites some years later, in the works of National Museum of Canada ethnologist C. Marius Barbeau, Traquair, and others. Nobbs may well have known nothing about it.) Nobbs's proposed plan for the Victoria Memorial Museum is consistent with his perception of Québec society; he focussed on those aspects that represented, for him, the products of a rural folk culture, whose best

efforts at the fine arts did not bear comparison with those of Europe, but whose untutored vernacular production was worthy of study and admiration.

Nobbs's plan illustrates a dichotomy in both his and Traquair's thinking. They identified a Québec folk culture that was truly representative of Canada, but they did not, in common with many artists of the time, see North America's indigenous cultures as a similar wellspring of authentically Canadian culture that might be appropriated for "modern" use.⁴¹ As Lynda Jessup has recently argued, the idea became common in Central Canada in the 1920s, that both Aboriginal and folk art might shape "modern" Canadian art by contributing to it and by providing a "primitive" against which it could be defined as truly "modern." In this discourse, "although neither [group] produced fine art, the work of both served to define it," she states.⁴² But as she notes, even for those who celebrated such arts, "the one was doomed to extinction. The other was revivable."⁴³ Nobbs's museum plan dates from well before the decade of which Jessup writes, but he

⁴¹See, for example Gerta Moray, "Emily Carr and the Traffic in Native Images," in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, ed. Lynda Jessup (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), pp. 71-93 and Ruth B. Phillips, "Performing the Native Woman: Primitivism and Mimicry in Early Twentieth-Century Visual Culture," in the same volume, p. 29.

⁴²Lynda Jessup, "Moving Pictures and Costume Songs at the 1927 'Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art, Native and Modern,'" *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 11, 1 (Spring 2002, forthcoming).

⁴³Jessup, "Moving Pictures." The attitude that Native culture—and with it, Native society—was vanishing, reflects the prevailing perception among mainstream British and British-Canadians. See R.G. Moyles and Doug Owsram, "Specimens of a Dying Race: British Views of the Canadian Indian," in *Imperial Dreams and Colonial Realities: British Views of Canada, 1880-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), pp. 167-185.

never altered his attitude. He viewed indigenous cultural production (which, at least in his Victoria Memorial Museum scheme, he treated monolithically) as of sufficient importance to be exhibited as part of Canada's history, but at no time did he suggest in writing that it might in any way serve as inspiration for the designers of the present, unlike the other components of his putative museum display. He was certainly attracted to Aboriginal cultures for their traditional connotations of masculine activities in the great outdoors. Like Traquair's, his antimodernism extended far beyond his approach to architectural history and practice. It pervaded his personal life, whether he was designing heraldic devices or seeking intense experience in pitting himself against human and natural opponents in the boxing and fencing rings, up to his waist in the icy waters of rushing salmon rivers, or tracking moose for miles in Northern Québec in the dead of winter, in pursuit of ever-larger heads.⁴⁴ He was a founding member of a men's hunting and social club, centred on outdoor experience, which they called "Meno Keosawin." The name, he explained, "signifies 'happy hunting grounds' in some Indian dialect."⁴⁵ Thus, he was happy to use elements of First Nations cultures as he understood them, while for the most part dismissing them as no part of his own contemporary society. The features he admired about Aboriginal societies obviously had more to do with the perception that

⁴⁴Nobbs's antimodern experiences of many kinds are front and centre in his "Memoirs." The Memoirs are unpublished, and I am extremely grateful to Susan Bronson for making me aware of their existence, and for very kindly providing me with a copy from Greenwood. See also Nobbs's correspondence with Bertram Goodhue, his occasional partner and frequent would-be partner in these wilderness forays. [CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series F-14.5].

⁴⁵Nobbs, "-50° at the Meno Keosawin Club," p.1, in "Memoirs."

they were a part of Nature—their struggles to survive as a part of that savage environment associated them with bravery, toughness, and other “masculine” virtues—and not of Culture as it was understood in early-twentieth century Canada.⁴⁶

Like Nobbs, Traquair did not see the indigenous peoples of Canada as real members of society at all, and this may help explain his disinterest in their architecture. He wrote that “We need not spend much time on the American Indian, for he has never been a part of the European culture of North America. He has been segregated and is dying out. . . . he has never been a fellow citizen.”⁴⁷ Shortly after his arrival in Canada he had written of the “arts of the Northern red Indian” that “Interesting though they are they do not directly concern us for our civilization and our art is and will remain European.”⁴⁸ For his part, Nobbs obviously felt that indigenous culture had been

⁴⁶See Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995) for a discussion of the association of Culture with “civilization” and, through civilization’s influence in tempering raw masculinity, with the qualities of “manliness” that distinguished middle-class males such as Nobbs and Traquair from their working-class and non-Western counterparts. See Ross D. Cameron, “Tom Thomson, Antimodernism, and the Ideal of Manhood,” *Journal of the CHA/Revue de la S.H.C.* 10 (1999): 185-208, for a discussion of the way in which such notions of manhood were redefined by members of the Central Canadian Anglophone elite in the early decades of the twentieth century through activities designed to “rejuvenate” the enervated male, chief among them, atavistic contact with Nature.

⁴⁷Traquair, “Caste System,” p. 418.

⁴⁸Traquair, “American Colonial Architecture,” notes for architectural curriculum courses, 1914-15 (CAC Traquair Collection, Series A-1.26).

unfortunately corrupted by European contact, and perhaps for this reason it held for him only the historic interest of something that is finished.⁴⁹

Nobbs and Traquair were closely connected with the circles in which, as Jessup argues, ideas about the utility of both Aboriginal and Folk culture to the definition of “modern” art had become common. Their reticence might be explained in part by the medium in which they worked. As Harold Kalman points out, architectural historians have historically shown but little interest in the study of First Nations architecture in Canada.⁵⁰ Alan Gowans articulated the prevailing attitude, in particularly strong terms, as late as 1966, writing,

“Architecture”, of course, is hardly the word for what we have here. Architecture implies some idea of man organizing and controlling nature to suit his needs; but these Hurons, hacking clumsily away at trees and bark with stone axes and knives, built more like birds piecing a nest together, or beavers piling up dams—not so much shaping architectural forms as adapting themselves to whatever kind of shelter the available materials naturally provided. . . . Not man, but Nature, is in command.⁵¹

Most importantly, Gowans here associates Aboriginal society with nature. Indeed, his direct comparison of the building techniques of the Huron with those of birds and beavers

⁴⁹Nobbs argued that while “the red man” should not be restricted by game laws to the extent that “the white man” was, “ancient Indian privileges should be made contingent on shooting with a bow and arrow, or at least a muzzle loader, and shooting for the family pot only.” As he saw it, indigenous hunters had sufficiently lost their native instincts that free hunting rights would be sure to lead to “extirpation, first of the game, and then of the Indian.” (Nobbs, “Big Game and Common Sense,” *Illustrated Forestry Magazine* [June 1923]: 358.)

⁵⁰Harold Kalman, *A History of Canadian Architecture*, vol. 1 (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 1.

⁵¹Alan Gowans, *Building Canada: An Architectural History of Canadian Life* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 3.

places indigenous peoples squarely in the realm of nature, rather than that of culture, which came to North America only with the early Europeans. This is an idea common in the discourse of four decades previously. One of the great advantages of French society in Canada was that it had been in place so long—and had even been there when the British conquered the French on the continent—that it seemed almost indigenous to Canada, while still remaining European, and, perhaps more conveniently yet, subordinate to the conquering British society. With its recognizable, and still extant, architectural tradition, it provided Nobbs and Traquair with an ideal source for a modern Canadian architecture.

In a 1926 memorandum, inspired no doubt by his field work in co-operation with Marius Barbeau the previous summer, Traquair built on this idea, suggesting that the Victoria Memorial Museum begin to “acquire and . . . eventually exhibit specimens illustrative of architecture and ornamentation in the Quebec field.”⁵² He argued that the museum should do so because “the early French period in Canada was a common meeting ground in the study of architecture and the aboriginal races of Canada, and . . . such material would be a very useful nucleus for a future museum of Canadian art.” This is an interesting notion, as Traquair appears to have been suggesting that early Québec culture

⁵²L.L. Bolton, “Memorandum re proposal from Professor Traquair of McGill University, for cooperation of Federal Government officials with the Department of Architecture of McGill University, in the study of the architecture of the Province of Quebec,” 16 January 1926, p. 5 (MUA Box 2: 35/17/178). This memorandum includes reports of several meetings, including one held at the Dominion Archives on 15 January, from which the above statement is taken. In attendance were, in addition to Traquair, Dr. Doughty, Dominion Archivist; J.B. Harkin, Commissioner of National Parks and W.D. Cromarty of that branch; Diamond Jenness, Acting Chief of the Division of Anthropology and C. Marius Barbeau of that division, both of the Victoria Memorial Museum and the author of the memorandum, L.L. Bolton, Acting Director of the Victoria Memorial Museum and Assistant Deputy Minister, Department of Mines.

was in some way related to indigenous culture, and stood as a half-way point between European and indigenous peoples. Such an interpretation is not unique; it was employed by members of the Group of Seven and by art historians and critics in the 1920s and 30s, who set up a chronology in which, as Jessup observes, "the folk art of rural Québec . . . operated in an intermediary space between aboriginal cultures and the Group of Seven."⁵³ Nature, represented by Aboriginals, was replaced by Culture, represented by European settlers. And as I discuss later in this chapter, many early-twentieth century intellectuals believed that among those Europeans, *habitant* society had remained attached to the land and static while both urban French-speaking settlers and the later-arriving British majority had superseded it. A traditional, rural French-Canadian culture could thus be conceptualized as a part of the history of "modern" Canadian society existing in the present only as a remnant of the past. The same Memorandum that notes Traquair's desire for the national museum to begin collecting examples of the historical material culture of Québec precisely sets out this idea of cultural lineage. The author (L.L. Bolton, who was Acting Director of the Victoria Memorial Museum and Assistant Deputy Minister of the Department of Mines) begins by observing that Barbeau's "original work in Anthropology consisted of studies of the early Indian tribes of Canada. This work led him into a study of French-Canadian folk-lore . . . and a further development of the work was

⁵³Jessup, "Bushwackers in the Gallery: Antimodernism and the Group of Seven," in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience*, ed. Jessup, pp. 141-42.

the study of the arts and handicrafts of the ancient French colony of Québec,” which he had begun in earnest the summer he went to the Île d'Orléans with Traquair.⁵⁴

Traquair's plea for the museum to begin a collection of “architecture and ornamentation in the Quebec field” was based on his observation that “the valuable material was fast disappearing and that it was imperative in the interest of recording the early development of art in Canada that this should be done at once.”⁵⁵ He made the suggestion at a meeting that had been convened to discuss the possibility that Traquair and the Department of Architecture at McGill University might co-operate formally with various government agencies—the Victoria Memorial Museum (almost certainly through Barbeau), the National Parks Branch of the Department of the Interior, and the Dominion Archives—in collecting information about such historical Québec buildings as interested them, and also in sharing photographs amongst themselves. He noted that it was essential that they try to salvage remnants of “this early Canadian architecture” by collecting specimens for the museum, as they were “being rapidly lost to the country through sale or destruction.”⁵⁶

It is telling that Traquair identified the Victoria Memorial Museum as the rightful place for the objects he hoped to collect, although he categorized such material as ideal to form the basis for “a future museum of Canadian art.” Such an institution already existed;

⁵⁴Bolton, “Memorandum,” p. 1.

⁵⁵Bolton, “Memorandum,” p. 5.

⁵⁶Bolton, “Memorandum,” p. 2.

the National Gallery of Canada was well established by 1926, when he made the suggestion. Yet Traquair evidently saw the museum, not the gallery, as the proper home for such a collection, and Diamond Jenness, Barbeau's colleague in the National Museum of Canada's Division of Anthropology, agreed with him, "express[ing] himself as satisfied that such collection was a legitimate function" for the division.⁵⁷ For Traquair, the material culture of Québec functioned only as a cultural ancestor to the art and architecture of his present. While the latter might have its place in an art gallery, he saw the historical architecture and sculpture of Québec as ethnological specimens rather than as art *per se*.

His view was apparent as well in the autumn of 1925, when Barbeau offered to purchase on Traquair's behalf some sculptural pieces by Louis Jobin (1845-1928), whom the latter was later to describe as "a master-sculptor . . . one of the last of his line."⁵⁸ Traquair wrote back dubiously, noting that "You will understand that in the Art Association & at McGill we have first to consider the purely artistic value of an object, afterwards only its anthropological, or social value. . . . The modern work, so far as I have seen it is inferior in purely artistic value however interesting as the continuation of an

⁵⁷Bolton, "Memorandum," p. 5.

⁵⁸Traquair, *The Old Architecture of Québec:: A Study of the Buildings Erected in New France from the Earliest Explorers to the Middle of the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1947; facsimile edition Montréal: McGill University School of Architecture, 1996) p. 296.

architectural and artistic tradition.”⁵⁰ His recommendations regarding the Victoria Memorial Museum make it clear that even the “early & mid XVIII century carving [and] in a secondary degree the work of the early XIX century,” which he described as “the valuable material for us,” did not have quite enough “purely artistic value” to gain entrance into the art gallery.⁵¹ Later the same month he returned the photograph Barbeau had sent him, with regrets that he had concluded that “Jobin’s material is really not suited to our museums here.”⁵¹ He went on to say that he would try to get one of the little angels Barbeau had offered him “for the McCord Historical Museum, but I do not know yet what the committee will say to including work by a living artist.” Jobin’s work fell into a grey area for Traquair. It was not quite art; rather, because the sculptor belonged both at the end of a long line of traditional wood carvers—a tradition that Traquair believed had died out—and to a culture that Traquair placed squarely in the past, its place was in a historical museum. But because the artist himself was alive, though he represented a dead tradition, it was not clear where his work belonged.

Yet, in their respective plans for a museum collection of Canadian design, both he and Nobbs accorded pride of place as true Canadians to the folk culture they identified in Québec, probably in part for what they saw as its seniority on the northern part of the

⁵⁰Traquair, letter to Barbeau, 11 October 1925 (Canadian Museum of Civilization, Information Management Systems, Marius Barbeau correspondence, B 244.f8, “Traquair, Ramsay” [hereafter CMC, IMS, Barbeau, B244 f.8, “Traquair”).

⁵¹Traquair, letter to Barbeau, 11 October 1925.

⁵¹Traquair, letter to Barbeau, 26 October 1925 (CMC, IMS, Barbeau, B244 f.8, “Traquair”).

continent. Although indigenous peoples obviously had true seniority, they had “never been a part of the European culture of North America,” and represented, for Nobbs and Traquair, a pre-civilization society with little or no relevance to modern culture; it had been superseded by the colonists of New France, who, as Europeans, represented civilization in North America. As I have demonstrated, Nobbs and Traquair tended to conflate the original *habitant* settlers in Québec with their rural descendants. Because they identified in Québec a folk society virtually unchanged since its arrival, this culture—even continuing into Nobbs’s and Traquair’s own day—retained its status as the earliest European culture on Canadian soil.

The next wave of immigrants Nobbs and Traquair recognized comprised English speakers, and as Britons themselves, they might be expected to have identified these people from their home country as quintessential Canadians. But as they saw it, British settlers in Canada had never remained aloof from modernity as they believed a section of Québec society had. As a result, Nobbs and Traquair found no English-Canadian folk culture, and they were looking for a Folk to contain the cultural essence of society. Neither emphasized that the buildings of early English Canada might serve in this way as precedents for a modern national style, even though Nobbs wrote of “that old Georgian manner of building [which] may be called both *natural* and English.”⁶² Arriving in Canada from Britain and the United States predominantly in the late-eighteenth and

⁶²Nobbs, “The English Tradition in Canadian Architecture,” *Architectural Review* 55 (June 1924): 1. The emphasis is his.

early-nineteenth centuries, perhaps these Anglophone settlers had arrived already a bit over-sophisticated by the experience of increasing industrialization in their home countries. Certainly, their arrival followed long after that of the majority of French immigrants, who, both Nobbs and Traquair believed, had brought with them the habits of mediaeval or renaissance France. Traquair, who was so alive to the atavistic charm of the Folk, wrote in that vein exclusively about rural Québécois, and never became fascinated by other ethnic groups in Canada. He had a prime opportunity in Guysborough, Nova Scotia, where he spent his summers and, indeed, where he retired and died, but to my knowledge he did not plunge into the Folk enthusiasm exhibited by many middle-class Nova Scotians in the inter-war period.⁶³ In his single article on the subject, he restricts himself much more specifically to the hooked rugs that are the subject at hand, never attempting, as he did in his Québec articles, to paint a picture of Nova Scotians as Folk.⁶⁴ For Traquair, Canada's Folk were in Québec.

⁶³I do not know exactly when Traquair began spending his summers in Nova Scotia, but he wrote from Guysborough regarding arrangements for his first field trip with Marius Barbeau, commenting in one letter that his departure awaited only some friends who would spend the period of his absence in his house there; the fact that he owned a house in Guysborough suggests that he was already well established there by the mid-nineteen twenties (Traquair, letter to Barbeau, 16 July 1925 [CMC, IMS, Barbeau, B244 f.8, "Traquair"]). He moved there permanently upon his retirement in 1939, a fact he mentioned in a letter to Barbeau several years later. (letter to Barbeau, 23 June 1942). He was, therefore, a resident-first migrant and then permanent (until his death)—of Nova Scotia throughout the period (1927 to 1960) that McKay identifies as the peak of the fascination for the idea of the Folk in that province (*Quest of the Folk*, p. 9). Nobbs also owned a house in Nova Scotia, in the town of Mill Village on the South Shore (*Percy Erskine Nobbs and his Associates: a Guide to the Archive*, edited by Irena Murray [Montréal: Canadian Architecture Collection and Blackader-Lauterman Library of Architecture and Art, 1986], p. 85).

⁶⁴Traquair, "Hooked Rugs in Canada," in *Canadian Geographical Journal* XXVI, 1 (January 1943): 240-254.

This developmental model helps explain both why Nobbs and Traquair did not identify an authentic Anglo-Canadian Folk culture and also why they did not attribute to all Francophone society in Canada the same ancient status. Of the several social groups who originally colonized New France, they saw only the *habitants* as remaining outside of a modernity that was advancing all around them. As Nobbs and Traquair saw it, the rest of Québec—the clerical, seigneurial, military and commercial classes who had also made the Atlantic voyage in the earliest days—had joined the march of modern development and societal change along with the British-Canadians who had superseded them politically. Urban Francophones and all Anglophones thus belonged—with Anglo-Canadian culture dominating—to more or less the same modern society that was Nobbs and Traquair’s world too. For Nobbs, twentieth-century English-Canadians did not provide the folk traditions that might lend authenticity to a modern Canadian architecture; they made use of them. “I have no hesitation,” he wrote, “in attributing to the British immigrant [architect] the sincerest and most inventive efforts to modify traditions to new requirements and local conditions, and incidentally to appreciate the good work done in Canada between 1700 and 1900.”⁵⁵ For Nobbs and Traquair, modern Canada was principally the domain of Anglo-Canadian culture. It was “the unethnized ground on which other cultures [were] ethnized.”⁵⁶ The small group of people that Nobbs and Traquair identified as a continuation of *habitant* culture, because they were conceived as existing in the past,

⁵⁵Nobbs, “Architecture in Canada,” (talk read before the RIBA, 21 January 1924), p. 13.

⁵⁶Jessup, “Bushwackers in the Gallery,” p. 144.

could thus provide a history, as well as a cultural tradition, for the cultural mainstream –Anglo-Canadians such as Nobbs and Traquair–to which the Canadian present belonged.

Strangely enough, Traquair's French Canadians were more essentially Canadian than English Canadians also as a result of the British conquest of Québec. As Traquair wrote, "the habitant is, indeed, the true Canadian, for he has no other country. One hundred and sixty years ago he was torn from his motherland; since then he has been under the protection of a flag whose traditions are not his: he can know no country but Canada."⁷ That is, Québécois were more Canadian than anyone else because, as a result of the political split that came when the French ceded the colony to England, they were nothing else. English Canadians, for instance, were really still English as well as Canadian, but the French in Canada had no other country that they might call home. Thus, no one could be more Canadian than the Francophone people of Québec. Tellingly, though, Traquair employs the term *habitant* here. This suggests one of two possibilities. Either he conflated all of Québec society with the Folk when it suited him, or he perceived this Folk culture as the only part of Francophone society to live "under the protection" of an *alien* flag. That is, that he associated those parts of Québec society that he saw as partaking in the experience of modernity (people of the urban, the educated, the industrial and the commercial worlds) more strongly with his own, Anglo-Canadian culture than with a rural Québec that really operated as modern Québec's past too.

⁷Traquair, "Canadian Type," p. 823.

Buildings they identified with the British tradition in Canada actually seemed less Canadian to both Nobbs and Traquair than did historic Québec architecture. The latter were, they believed, completely unique—unlike anything that had been built by other colonists in North America. Traquair wrote:

The observant traveller in the Province of Quebec, if he is, as he should be, interested in the growth of national culture and architecture, cannot but be struck by the distinctive character of the older houses and churches which line the main highways and cluster in the villages on both banks of the St. Lawrence. These low, broad, blackroofed, stone houses and steeply gabled churches with their slender needle spires are very different from the wood-framed houses and pillared Palladian churches of Ontario, Nova Scotia or New England. Houses and churches form an architecture distinctive of French Canada and unlike anything else to be found on the American continent. This is a truly Canadian art, the product of French culture isolated in Canada for so long that it has struck roots of its own; it has its own tradition founded upon, yet different from those traditions of Old France from which it sprang.⁵⁸

Nobbs, too, wrote that the architecture of the English-speaking provinces “differs in no material way from the older work of the northern New England States . . . while architecture in Quebec is a thing apart.”⁵⁹ In fact, these buildings might even be more Canadian than American colonial architecture was American, although Traquair acknowledged that it too was distinct from the English Georgian architecture from which it arose. “But in Quebec,” he wrote, “the distinction between the New and the Old World forms is stronger; the architecture of French Quebec is more distinctive of the land

⁵⁸Traquair, “The Old Architecture of French Canada,” in *Queen's Quarterly* (Autumn 1931): 589. (Reprinted Montréal: MUP Series XIII, no. 34, 1932).

⁵⁹Nobbs, “Canadian Architecture,” in *Canada and its Provinces: A History of the Canadian People and their Institutions by One Hundred Associates*, eds. Adam Shortt and Arthur G. Doughty (Toronto: Glasgow, Brook & Co., 1914), p. 671.

in which it has grown than is the American Colonial. It has been more isolated by the accidents of political history and so has struck deeper roots."⁷⁰ This sounds suspiciously like rationalization; Traquair argued that the political separation from France caused by the English conquest made the Québécois more Canadian, but apparently did not see the American Revolution—which might have been expected to have had an even stronger impact since it was instigated by the American people and not thrust upon them—as having a similar effect. Perhaps, not having spent time closely observing the people of New England as he had those of Québec, Traquair was unable to distinguish what he might, indeed, have identified as a rural Folk culture within the more industrial, developed, and cosmopolitan whole. Then, too, in Traquair's conception, the Americans shared the same blood with the English, which made for inalienable ties not susceptible to being sundered by political revolution.

As Traquair noted, Québec architecture was not like that of France either, although French architecture was surely its parent. He wrote that

Although it is founded upon French traditions, and never ceases to be truly French, yet it is very different from the contemporary art of France. This difference gradually became more pronounced until, in the early years of last century, the architecture of French Canada was quite unlike that being done anywhere else in the world. We have in it, in fact, a genuine national Canadian school of Architecture and decoration.⁷¹

⁷⁰Traquair, "Old Architecture of French Canada," p. 590.

⁷¹Traquair, "The Old Arch. Of the Province of Quebec," undated manuscript, p. 3. (MUA, Box 2: 35/17/160).

He even argued that this Canadian design had excelled that of Europe and the United States in one respect. "It is remarkable," he wrote, "that at a time when both Europe and America were sunk in architectural revivals, classic or gothic, when in France the worst phases of churchwarden gothic competed for favour with the dullest of classic temples, these master sculptors of Quebec were faithful to the traditions of the old regime and were developing them in a manner peculiar to Canada."⁷² It was clearly important to both Nobbs and Traquair that they be able to find a school of architecture that was unique to Canada. Traquair wrote that with the traditions they brought with them from France "the Canadian settlers took many liberties. They developed their traditions very freely and so produced a real Canadian architecture, moulded by climate and life and by a genuine feeling for beauty."⁷³ For Traquair, the architecture of Québec was not Canadian simply because it was built in Canada, but because it was built by real Canadians responding to the conditions of life and climate in Canada.

Nobbs, too, saw something specifically Canadian in the Québec architecture of the early periods. Early in his Montréal career he recommended following "good local traditions"—and he was particularly referring to the architecture of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Québec—because they were "founded on sense and experience and national temperament"⁷⁴ The notion that vernacular architecture is "founded on

⁷²Traquair, "Old Architecture of French Canada," p. 605.

⁷³Traquair, *Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. 1.

⁷⁴Nobbs, "On the Value of the Study of Old Work," *CAB* (May 1905): 75.

national temperament” suggests that he saw something in it more than the pragmatic response to weather and climate that is a common feature of all good architecture. Rather it suggests that he saw something inherently Canadian in these buildings, which could lend itself to modern building as well if used judiciously.

The idea of climate as a moulder of architecture is an important one. It is of course only rational (though by no means inevitable) that local weather conditions should be taken into consideration in the design of buildings, and it was an essential part of the arts and crafts approach to architecture. However, the notion of climate as a factor in culture and national character was also popular at this time. The effects of climate were often used in writings about race, to justify the argument that northern peoples were stronger and even more virtuous than those from warmer lands.⁷⁵ Traquair himself used a version of it in the *Atlantic Monthly* to support his contention that the cradles of civilization lay in “Mesopotamia, Egypt and the Eastern Basin of the Mediterranean.”⁷⁶ He argued that in the very far north mere survival was a struggle, while in the tropics “the intense heat and the drenching rains do not tend to produce a race energetic enough to cope with this over luxuriant life. Even civilized man, with all his advantages, finds it impossible to maintain his energy in the tropics.” Surprisingly, Traquair did not explicitly use the justification of climate for explaining what he saw to be the superiority of the

⁷⁵For the Canadian case, see Carl Berger, “The True North Strong and Free,” in *Interpreting Canada's Past Volume II: After Confederation*, ed. J.M. Bumsted (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 157-74. See also Berger, *Sense of Power*, pp. 128-131.

⁷⁶Traquair, “Civilization of the Seas,” p. 2.

modern northern peoples, although, as we have seen, he did decry the immigration of the peoples of eastern and southern Europe.

Climate was also an important part of the arguments of Canadian imperialists, who believed that the cold and storms of Canada contributed to the building of a superior people, who enjoyed greater strength and health, and more strength of character than those of warmer locations.⁷⁷ The argument was made that Canada's harsh weather helped keep less desirable immigrants out, as they were more inclined to settle and cause problems south of the border. But although these ideas seem as if they would have attracted Traquair, he did not express them; when it came to climate and architecture, his comments were quite straightforward. He noted simply that the people of Québec had built "simple buildings, well suited to the lives of the people and to a climate very different from that of Old France."⁷⁸ Nobbs emphasized more the rigorous nature of the Canadian climate, noting that "signs are not wanting of the development of distinct local character. For this we have to thank the vigors [sic] of our climate, of which, not only having weathered, but enjoyed, the last two winters, I make bold to speak although I am of old country origin."⁷⁹ Some years later he commented that "climate, the great solvent in the evolution of all external building forms, will in time disintegrate the immigrant traditions,

⁷⁷See Berger, *Sense of Power*, pp. 128-131.

⁷⁸Traquair, "Why we Admire Old Buildings," undated typescript, p. 1 (MUA, Box 2: 35/17/160).

⁷⁹Nobbs, "Art Education in the British Commonwealth," lecture, Montréal, 1909, p. 9.

as it disintegrates the immigrant's costume and dietary [sic]."⁵⁰ For Nobbs, in common with many imperialists, weather was "that most potent agency for making a distinctive character in men and things"—a force that made stronger all those it did not kill or drive away.⁵¹ It was a great leveller of people, of custom, and of architectural form, and as such would help to lead the way towards a national style.

"Architecture in Canada as elsewhere has thus served her monumental or ethnographic purpose as a true reflection of historic facts and racial instincts," wrote Nobbs in 1914.⁵² But what were these facts and these instincts? Nobbs and Traquair, like many others at the beginning of this century, gave considerable thought to what and who Canada and Canadians really were. Both of them were concerned with how architecture would develop in their own time, and believed that understanding Canada's history and ethnic makeup would lead to the development of a truly national style of architecture. But although they frequently invoked the wholesome value and true Canadianness of rural Québec, its people, and its vernacular architecture, both saw the country as fundamentally British in origin and modern character, and in the end the imperial ideal and the desire to maintain it influenced them more than the actual ethnic constitution of the country. The charm of the Folk in Québec could only take them so far in the modern

⁵⁰Nobbs, "Canadian Architecture," typescript, read before the RIBA, September, 1922, p. 2 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.9-6).

⁵¹Nobbs, *Architecture in Canada*, talk read before the RIBA, 21 January 1924 (London: RIBA, 1924); Berger, *Sense of Power*, pp. 130-31.

⁵²Nobbs, "Canadian Architecture," in *Canada and its Provinces*, p. 665.

context, and although both Nobbs and Traquair interacted with their Francophone Montréal colleagues—indeed, Traquair “was a regular contributor to Québec’s emerging art press”⁸³—urban, cosmopolitan Québec culture held no special attraction for them; they did not see it as materially different from their own. Neither did they recognize the cultural contribution that might be made by Canada’s ethnically diverse populations, of which the non-British contingent was becoming both increasingly varied and more numerous with the passage of time. Their thoughts about Canadian nationality were highly restrictive. As they, with many compatriots, embarked on the project of defining the Canadian nation, these ideas were reflected in writing and speeches, in teaching and, in the case of Nobbs, in architectural design. These activities and their material expression thus served to manifest Nobbs’s and Traquair’s cultural biases and to reassert the dominance of their own social and ethnic group.

⁸³France Vanlaethem, “Beautification versus Modernization,” in *Montreal Metropolis 1880-1930*, eds. Isabelle Gournay and France Vanlaethem (Montréal/Toronto: Canadian Centre for Architecture/Stoddart, 1998), p. 134.

Chapter Four

RAMSAY TRAQUAIR: “LOCAL NEEDS, LOCAL MATERIALS, AND LOCAL CLIMATE”

FOR MUCH of Nobbs's and Traquair's professional lives as builders and educators, architectural Modernism was a force to be reckoned with and a movement that could hardly be ignored. Traquair approached modernism from his arts and crafts background, and found it wanting in fundamental ways.

The first decades of the twentieth century saw the concept of the Modern both celebrated and denounced, as many architects sought to make a break with historic forms and materials in favour of completely new forms of expression. From about 1910, architects in the United States and Europe began to use steel, glass and concrete to build structures that appeared to rely little if at all on historical architectural forms. The movement was eventually to have a powerful influence worldwide, nearly obliterating for a time the historicism that had characterized the architecture of the nineteenth century. However, this new approach did not of course have immediate and universal appeal. Many architects continued to design—and clients continued to demand—buildings that were constructed of traditional materials in familiar forms (at least as far as one could see from the finished building). In the United States the new expression appeared most quickly in certain building types near the beginning of the century, particularly factories and other industrial and commercial buildings. On the other hand, most North American architecture in that period was quite conservative, and public buildings in particular were some of the slowest to appear in the new garb. Dutch architect Hendrik Berlage (1856-1934) expressed surprise at the level of architectural conservatism he observed during his

1911 visit to the United States, noting, as Donald Leslie Johnson and Donald Langmead put it, “the domination of beaux arts ideas, the impropriety of Greek temples and Roman thermae rebuilt for new roles as railway stations, and the artistic ‘barbarism’ perpetuated by architects who doggedly stuck to the revival of historical styles.”¹

In Canada the modern movement was comparatively slow to gain popularity in the realm of architecture. Both architects and clients tended to be somewhat conservative, and, with a few exceptions (again mostly in the commercial and especially the industrial sectors), architectural design marched along without much radical change through the early decades of the century.² This is not to say that Canadian architects were unaware of what was going on in the United States, however, or that they were uninterested in developments there and in Europe. They used the new materials in the structure of their buildings, and if they tended to cover their steel and reinforced concrete with brick and stone, the modern materials were there nonetheless. And they responded to the new ideas in architectural design, sometimes in practice with varying degrees of cautious adaptation, and sometimes in print.

Many believed there should be changes to Canadian architecture, and particularly called for an end to what seemed to be the derivative historicism that had held architectural practice in its thrall for a century or more. Many continued to call for the

¹Donald Leslie Johnson and Donald Langmead, *Makers of 20th Century Modern Architecture: A Bio-Critical Sourcebook* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1997), p. XLIII.

²For a discussion of Canadian responses to Modernism see Harold Kalman, *A History of Canadian Architecture*, vol. 2 (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 749-78.

development of a Canadian style in architecture, although there were varying ideas about how it might be achieved. It is important to realize that a compromise did exist between the enthusiastic adoption of Modernist design and its wholesale rejection. Some architects believed that traditional forms could be adapted to the new materials and contemporary needs to create a modern architecture with roots in the past. Beaux-Arts-trained Canadian architect John Lyle (1872-1945) argued in 1929 that the principles of modernism should be applied to the lessons of historic architecture to create a modern architecture that answered regional requirements. In this respect, he argued, Canadian architects should “follow the Swedish architects who are developing their modern architecture along national Swedish traditional lines.”³ Although both Lyle’s educational background and his built work were utterly different from Traquair’s, his views on this question—at least on paper—are remarkably close to those expressed by Traquair in many of his writings on architecture in the twentieth century.

Throughout his career, Traquair spoke and published extensively on architecture. Although he wrote most voluminously about the history of the Québec vernacular he so admired, he also thought and wrote extensively about modern architecture, both the directions it was taking and the route he thought architects ought to follow. As director of the McGill School of Architecture for many years, Traquair’s ideas and teaching shaped the education of many young Canadian architects from the second decade of the century

³“Address by John M. Lyle, 22 February 1929 at the Art Gallery of Toronto,” *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (April 1929): 135-36; 163, in Geoffrey Simmins (ed.) *Documents in Canadian Architecture* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1992), p. 153.

through 1939, when he retired. His writings on architecture also shed light on his thoughts about society and culture, while these in their turn affected his ideas about building. He was a strong influence on his McGill students; the late Professor Emeritus John Bland, who, as a student at McGill, had studied with Traquair before going on himself to teach in the School of Architecture, observed that,

. . . Traquair had a background in the Arts and Crafts. He was concerned with materials. He was concerned with traditional buildings for particular uses, building with a good construction and good use of materials, building on a site carefully in respect to the conditions of the site and the climate. All these things were very real for Traquair. . . . When Traquair was in Canada, he came with this Arts and Crafts background from Britain. He discovered that the old French Canadian buildings followed these principles, that they were the best that could be produced with the materials at hand, always splendidly sited. He was enthusiastic about that and we caught his enthusiasm.⁴

Traquair began and ended from this arts and crafts position; it had an indelible effect on both his own practice and his teaching, as Bland noted. And it shaped his conception of the direction the search for a Canadian architectural style should take. That he believed there was a need for a national style in architecture is not surprising, as this had been a preoccupation of architects in Canada as in many other countries for some years. Their various approaches to the problem differed widely, ranging from the use of the so-called Château Style, as introduced in the 1890s by the United States architect Bruce Price at the Chateau Frontenac in Québec City, to Lyle's use of wildflowers, beavers, sheaves of wheat, gushing oil wells, and other "natural" Canadian symbols to adorn his Beaux-Arts

⁴Howard Shubert, *et al*, "An Interview with Professor John Bland," in *John Bland at Eighty: A Tribute*, eds. Irena Murray and Norbert Schoenauer (Montréal: McGill University, 1991), p. 7.

banks.⁵ But for Traquair neither of these approaches would suffice, and he looked to arts and crafts principles to point the way.

Traquair was a man of strong opinions on architecture as well as on many other subjects, and he presented them in fora ranging from his own classrooms at McGill University and the architectural press to public lectures and publications in a wide range of periodicals. His few extant buildings in and around the city of Edinburgh point the way that his teaching was to follow. But like Nobbs in practice, Traquair on paper combined his arts and crafts approach with a certain pragmatism that saw value and even, sometimes, beauty in the skyscrapers and commercial buildings of their day.

Traquair's departure for Montréal essentially marks the end of his career as a practising architect. But he certainly intended to remain in practice, and not surprisingly, he strongly expressed his allegiance to the arts and crafts approach from the very beginning of his Canadian career. In 1912, when Nobbs decided to vacate the position of Macdonald Professor of Architecture and wrote to Traquair suggesting that he might apply for the position, the latter was immediately interested. Nobbs had suggested two possible alternatives for the job, these being "A. With outside practice for a period and B. whole time to education work for a permanency." Traquair replied firmly:

B. is fatal to teaching. I am convinced that no man can teach architecture unless he spends some part of his time in practice, in dealing with stone &

⁵See Rhodri Windsor Liscombe, "Nationalism or cultural imperialism? The Château style in Canada," in *Architectural History: Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain* 36 (1993): 127-144 and Geoffrey Hunt, *John M. Lyle: Toward a Canadian Architecture* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1982).

mortar and with actual construction. An architectural teacher is not there to teach archaeology or draughtsmanship but to teach modern architecture. He uses archaeology & draughtsmanship to do so but, unless he has some connection with actual building, he cannot understand modern architecture. I am sure you will agree with me.⁶

Traquair's insistence that one must spend time "dealing with stone & mortar and with actual construction" particularly demonstrates his allegiance to the Arts and Crafts Movement, whose architects believed fervently that the architect or craftsperson him or herself should understand through practical experience the materials and techniques used to realize designs. Some, among them William Morris, went so far as to become expert in the printing, weaving, ironwork or bricklaying necessary to carry out their ideas. To Traquair, it was the lack of this kind of practical knowledge that had led to the decline of architecture to its nineteenth-century depths. He argued that the rise of the continental Grand Tour in the eighteenth century had led to connoisseurs becoming familiar with the aesthetics of architecture only on a scholarly plane; for the first time this knowledge was divorced from a real understanding of the materials and techniques needed to build.⁷ Traquair saw the precepts of the Arts and Crafts Movement as a real solution—at least in part—to the problems he saw in the architecture of his time. (It is pleasing to note that his interest in practical experience was also influential in his teaching. John Bland remembered that in his student days he and four of his colleagues—inspired by a

⁶Traquair, letter to Nobbs, 5 August 1912, pp. 2-3 (Canadian Architecture Collection, Blackader Lauterman Library, McGill University [CAC], Traquair Collection, Series B.7-3).

⁷Traquair, "Social Architecture," manuscript headed "*Forum* 1924," p. 3 (McGill University Archives [MUA], Box 1: 35/17/127).

combination of Traquair's course in ornament and decoration and their own inability to find summer work during the Great Depression—employed themselves for two summers by opening a forge and selling ornamental iron work of their own design and manufacture.⁸⁾

Notwithstanding his early protestations, Traquair seems to have practised little if at all once he arrived in Canada. Indeed, by December of the same year he may already have been backing away from his earlier insistence on continued practice, writing to Principal Peterson that if his application for the job were successful he would “like to regard teaching as my life work with only so much practice as to keep in touch with realities.”⁹ And certainly he lacked the advantage Nobbs had enjoyed early in his Canadian career, of first receiving an important commission from Sir William Macdonald and then carrying out several major projects for McGill University. These may have given Nobbs a leg up among his professional brethren that Traquair, arriving after Nobbs already had a clear advantage in Montréal, did not enjoy, although he appears to have had more actual building experience by then than Nobbs had at the same stage. However, because of his extensive writings on architecture we can gain a good idea of how he thought about many aspects of the field, and he was influential in passing these ideas on through his teaching if not through designing buildings himself.

⁸Shubert, *et al*, “Interview with John Bland,” p. 6.

⁹Traquair, letter to Principal Peterson, 27 December 1912. Quoted in John Bland, “Ramsay Traquair: Biography,” in *Ramsay Traquair and his Successors: A Guide to the Archive*, ed. Irena Murray (Montréal: CAC, 1987), p. 10.

Like Nobbs, and like many architects of their time, Traquair rejected the idea of the “styles” in architecture. By this they meant the self-conscious use of the specific forms and ornament of a certain place or period in history. In contrast to the seeming irrelevance of such mimicry was the notion of what Traquair called suitability. “Good architecture is not confined to great buildings,” he wrote. “[I]t is not a matter of rich ornament, elaboration or expense. It is a matter of suitability.”¹⁰ This was a virtue that he believed was lacking in most modern architecture, and its absence was a great part of the problem. “No building can be good if it is unsuitable” he wrote. Suitability meant that a building looked as if it had always been in its place, and it belonged there as much as its surroundings. It must also be fitted to its purpose in form, scale, and ornament. Traquair noted that, in contrast to newer examples, much older architecture was characterized by just this virtue. This was particularly the case with the vernacular that he so prized.

For Traquair, vernacular architecture was by definition a local architecture; the buildings he admired had their roots in the materials, techniques, and needs of the areas in which they stood. But the converse was not true; Traquair emphasized that not all local architecture was vernacular. In fact, in his opinion all great art had always been local, “the result of local conditions of life, climate and materials.” Amongst these great arts he numbered the architecture of Classical Greece and of Mediaeval England. On the other hand, it was historic fact that “every cosmopolitan art has been dry, pedantic and

¹⁰Traquair, “Why we Admire Old Buildings,” undated typescript, pp. 1, 2-3 (MUA, Box 2: 35/17/160).

academic.” One of the more recent of these was the work of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, which he characterized as “dull and academic and . . . today quite discredited”¹¹ Traquair saw the international use of the Beaux-Arts approach as yet another example of architecture taken out of its context and wrongly used, and for this he largely blamed the architects of the United States. “Believing that all art centred in Paris,” he wrote, “they studied the living traditions of the Ecole des Beaux Arts, imported them to their native land and practised them as another dead historic ‘style.’”¹² The Beaux-Arts approach, with its emphasis on grand planning but virtual homogeneity of form no matter where the building was to be located or what purpose it was to serve, seemed to Traquair to be completely removed both from modern needs and from tradition. Bland noted that Traquair was asked at one time to compete in a competition to design a broadcasting centre, organized by the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (RAIC). The competition programme provided no information about site conditions or requirements for the building type, but required simply the designing of a grand Beaux-Arts scheme. He was “so astonished with what was required that he wouldn’t have anything to do with the RAIC for a while.”¹³ As in this instance, Traquair was particularly offended by the way that Beaux-Arts architects could apply their principles of planning and design to buildings of all types without reference to the building’s actual function, its location or the needs of its users.

¹¹Traquair, “Why we Admire Old Buildings,” p. 3.

¹²Traquair, “Architecture and Democracy,” *Canadian Bookman* (October 1919): 11.

¹³Shubert, *et al*, “Interview with John Bland,” p. 13.

As early as 1904, when Nobbs was quite newly arrived in Canada, Traquair noted with irritation in a letter to him, "I was looking at Liverpool Cathedral in the Spring—a wonderful thing in its way—acres of site & building on a large scale if you like & that _____ director of the Liverpool Archit. School won't let his students look at it because it is not in the Grand Manner. His fellows design hencoops in the Grand Manner [sic]."¹⁴

Along with the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Traquair condemned as cosmopolitan all classical architecture after that of ancient Greece. Even before leaving Scotland, he had argued that with the coming of the Renaissance the quest for knowledge above all things had replaced the ancient Greek concern with "clear and accurate thought" and the mediaeval love of "life, passion, and mystery."¹⁵ At first, he argued, this new fascination with knowledge had combined with the passion of the middle ages to create the great schools of painting of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. But this gradually gave way to a concern for accuracy and scientific knowledge above all else: "Classicism arose, and all branches of art were wrapt in a meaningless pedantry." This, he believed, led to the weakening of art because "art cannot be based on intellect, but only on emotion." Continuing, he wrote: "we find that the great works of the Classic period are great, not because they copied faithfully the details of Classic work, but because they convey the

¹⁴Traquair, letter to Nobbs, 24 Sept 1909, p.4 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series B.7-3).

¹⁵Traquair, "The Appreciation of Art" (extract of an address delivered at the Royal College of Edinburgh, October 1911), *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects (JRIBA)* XX, 1 (1912): 13.

feelings of eighteenth century artists. St. Paul's Cathedral is a great work of art, not because it Classic, but because it is Wren." Traquair was as vigorously opposed to the exact copying of ancient monuments as he was to the copying of details and forms from them. A particularly bad example of this kind of attempt was Edinburgh's incomplete National Monument, begun in 1920 as an exact copy of the Parthenon on the Calton Hill, and doomed to be no more than "a pseudo-classic building in a foreign style."^{1c} But the impossibility of accurately copying a building under such completely different circumstances was as bad as the unsuitability of its foreign style. Even if they managed to find the right materials and someone who would be willing and able to complete the sculpture in the proper ancient style, and if they found the money to apply and maintain the brilliant colours, wax and polish needed to keep the building looking good, the Parthenon was a building designed to stand under the brilliant Greek sun, and this modern version could never be suitable in grey Edinburgh. "The Parthenon," wrote

^{1c}Traquair and Frank C. Mears, "Public Monuments," *The Blue Blanket: An Edinburgh Civic Review* (January 1912): 73. Around this time Traquair and Mears produced a remarkable—not to say somewhat bizarre—scheme to complete the monument around the existing twelve columns as a shrine to "men of distinctively modern activities" in such areas as "astronomy, physics, and political freedom" (p. 77). Their plan would have had walls extending the structure to the shape and size originally intended (those of the Parthenon itself), with three exedras on either side. Each of these would represent a specific area of achievement, and monuments to individuals could be placed in the appropriate spaces. Meanwhile, at the columnar (original) end a winged victory was to stand on the prow of a ship at the base of which water stood in a round pool before vanishing briefly under a set of steps leading downwards to an elliptical pool, where it reappeared, resting briefly before meandering its way informally down the length of the monument to its final resting place in a pool at the nether end. (My thanks are due to John Lowrey for telling me of this plan and providing me with a slide of it, and to Hugh Crawford for showing me the original watercolour perspective.)

Traquair and his friend Mears, "was the highest expression of Greek life," while the National Monument was no more than a dry "expression of antiquarianism."¹⁷

This unfortunate turn in the practice of architecture was, Traquair believed, still haunting architects in his own day. "One critic tells us that our only hope of progress lies in a faithful study of the buildings of ancient Greece and Rome; a second pins his faith to an equally faithful study of Gothic . . . the architect is expected to be rather a scholarly antiquary than an artist." He compared architecture to other arts, pointing out how ridiculous it would be to expect poets or painters to compose always in the style of long-dead artists. Yet the architect was expected to produce "alternately that strange quality of 'correctness', and that even stranger phenomenon, 'a new style' . . ."¹⁸

Traquair believed that the only way his contemporaries might develop an architecture in their own time that would truly reflect its society was to do as people had done naturally in all the greatest periods of the art. In each period of history up to his own time (and he surely meant to include the nineteenth century in this latter category), he argued, there had been only one style of architecture. Like the ancient Greeks, who rather than building in a pure classical Greek style were simply building as best they could, "the XIII century Builder never dreamt that he was building early English. He was building the best and most modern buildings that he could, and we will produce no good

¹⁷Traquair and Mears, "Public Monuments," p. 74.

¹⁸Traquair, "Appreciation of Art," p. 14.

architecture until we follow his example.”¹⁹ Instead, it seemed, many architects were dedicating their energies (and this had been particularly endemic in the nineteenth century) to copying historic styles in the hopes that what had constituted the great architecture of the past would continue to do so. But Traquair, in common with many others of his time, argued that such a thing was impossible because the citizen of the twentieth century “cannot live and think as did the monk of the XII or the craftsman of the XIV century and our copies in the ‘Gothic style’ will be but a hash of antiquarian thoughts devoid of humour, enthusiasm or life.”²⁰ Although he believed that old buildings should provide inspiration for modern architects, no living spirit of an ancient building could be captured if it were copied in the modern age; no matter how technically good and convincing such copies might be, they were necessarily bad and dead.

Most importantly, however, this did not mean that the twentieth century had nothing to learn from the middle ages or other great periods of the art. On the contrary, Traquair told his architectural history classes that Gothic architecture could provide the answer to the problem of modern architecture if only it were properly used. “What we can learn from Gothic art,” he assured them, “is how to think for ourselves.”²¹

[W]e can see how the artist seized the requirements of his buildings of his furniture or of his picture and turned these requirements, not as we do into

¹⁹Traquair, “How to Understand Architecture,” typescript of lecture for the St. James Literary Society, 1920, p. 7 (MUA, Box 1: 35/17/127).

²⁰Traquair, “Gothic Architecture,” course notes, 1914-15 (CAC, Traquair Collection, Series A-1.12).

²¹“Gothic Architecture.”

limitations, but into opportunities for beauty. By simply and without question accepting the needs of our time, by solving them in the most scientific spirit of our age and moulding them to the most beautiful forms which knowledge and tradition can suggest to us we will attain a truer *gothic* quality than any which antiquarianism can give.

As he emphasized in this lecture, Traquair believed that learning from time-tested ways of approaching the problems of architecture was the key to truly modern and beautiful buildings for his own day. It must be noted too that Traquair referred in this passage to the use of the most beautiful forms that “knowledge and tradition can suggest.” That is, while slavish copying was destined to lead only to trouble, he believed—unlike the radical architects of his day—that the forms of the past could, and indeed ought to, be used in the proper spirit to produce modern buildings.

Although he disliked much modern building, Traquair’s approach to the practice of architecture was always somewhat flexible. He never dismissed all buildings of his own time as unworthy, but rather saw in some building types the direction that he felt modern architecture should take. At the same time, he frequently advocated the use of traditional vernacular forms by modern architects, arguing that all art of any value must stem from tradition. But although he argued that the path to good architecture in his own time lay in building in the most “modern” way possible, there were of course many widely divergent ideas in his time about what constituted the most modern architecture that could be built. As Harold Kalman observes, the word “modern,” to the early-twentieth century Canadian architect, meant architecture that was representative of its time; it bore no necessary relationship to Modernism. “A ‘modern’ architect was therefore one who sought an

appropriate expression of the day . . . and used up-to-date building technology.”²²

Traquair was never a proponent of Modernism, and indeed in the same lecture in which he argued for building the most modern buildings possible, he recommended the historic architecture of Québec to the architects of his own time as “the tradition which we should develop,” noting to his disgust that, instead of following this native tradition, architects were designing “Sham imitations of English half-timber work.”²³ But significantly, he never really presented Québec vernacular as a viable example for public and commercial architecture. Instead, while he suggested that “from it . . . our modern Canadian architecture might well be developed,” he modified his statement by suggesting that this was the case “certainly in domestic and church work.”²⁴

In 1924 Traquair argued, as he had before, that architecture was the most “living” of the arts in North America in his time and that “its living manifestations are in utilitarian buildings.”²⁵ This statement resembles the admiration for the grain silos of the new world expressed first by German architect Walter Gropius (1883-1969) and later by the French Le Corbusier (1887-1965), although it is highly unlikely that Traquair really meant to refer to such very utilitarian buildings as these. Certainly he never built anything on those lines himself, nor did he encourage his students to do so. Far from it;

²²Kalman, *Canadian Architecture*, p. 749.

²³Traquair, “How to Understand Architecture,” p. 9.

²⁴Traquair, “The Education of the Architect,” *Construction* XII, 10 (October 1919): 316.

²⁵Traquair, “Social Architecture,” p. 12.

John Bland recalled that when he went to London in the mid-1930s and enrolled in the Architectural Association School (AA), his McGill training made him “a freak.”²⁶

“Everyone crowded around to see what I was designing and they couldn’t believe it. I had this nineteenth-century attitude Even my lettering—you know we had an antique way of lettering things.”

Nonetheless, in theory at least Traquair’s architectural ideas embraced new materials and modern design. And at some points he was quite specific about the kind of building he meant when he referred to the suitable architecture of his own time. Acknowledging that North Americans of his day had lost the fervent religious beliefs and connection to the land that had led to the development of the vernacular forms he admired so much, he recognized that architecture must express the mores of this new society as it had the old. He argued that “on this continent certain emotions have found outlet in genuine and expressive architecture. We are a commercial people and it is to our commercial buildings that we must look for a true expression of our national character.”²⁷ By this, he went on to explain, he meant the skyscraper, particularly examples in New York City. This form, he argued, was the most real expression of twentieth-century North America to have been built, and was as genuine a response to conditions as a thirteenth-century parish church in Sussex or the rural cottages of Québec were to the societies that built them. True, they were rather different conditions—“the

²⁶Shubert, *et al.*, “Interview with John Bland,” p. 8.

²⁷Traquair, “How to Understand Architecture,” p. 9.

limitations of site, combined with the development of the steel industry, the desire to obtain high rentals and the passion for living in a crowd”—but they had combined towards the development of “the one genuine contribution of America to Architecture.” He even allowed that Cass Gilbert’s 1910-13 Woolworth Building in New York was, possibly uniquely among skyscrapers, “a monument of great beauty.”²⁸

Traquair was not alone in seeing the commercial aspect of early-twentieth century Canada as the dominant trend shaping architectural practice. Writing in 1913, F. Reid argued that “a commercialistic goal” was “uppermost in our mind.”²⁹ In Reid’s case, the resulting “commercialistic architecture,” impelled by a “mercenary spirit,” was an unfortunate trend in contrast to the examples that might still be found in which “love for pure and noble art” was expressed. Traquair made no such explicitly negative judgement, simply noting that commercialism was the spirit of the age and the best architecture should reflect that spirit.

His argument appears problematic. If indeed Traquair felt that his society was populated by “a commercial people,” it is telling that he should still have advocated that architects look to old vernacular (specifically that of Québec, for Canada in any case)—which he associated with all that was not commercial—as proper inspiration for the building of modern churches and domestic buildings. It seems false in the context of the

²⁸Traquair, “How to Understand Architecture,” p. 10; “Architecture and Democracy,” p. 11.

²⁹F. Reid, “Development in Architecture,” in *The Yearbook of Canadian Art* (1913): 277-82, in Simmins, *Documents in Canadian Architecture*, p. 143.

arts and crafts beliefs that Traquair espoused, and is an important notion if we are to understand how he thought about architecture and society. For him, vernacular styles were properly used for domestic and ecclesiastical architecture because there they represented a retreat from the commercialism of society. So although he saw skyscrapers as a true expression of modern society, this was something from which to retreat in the private sphere. This could best be done by building houses and churches in a way that evoked what was for Traquair a simpler past, even though it did not necessarily fit his important criterion of suitability in the context of larger society.

Despite its initial appearance of contradiction, this view is entirely consistent with Traquair's antimodernism. Although he admitted that his own society had lost its religious fervour and the connection to the land that he so admired in earlier cultures (and of course in those contemporary with his own that seemed to him to live in the past), he still sought to symbolize these virtues in the architecture of church and home. The skyscraper might be a true expression of what he saw as the commercial soul of his society—and a true expression was what he sought—but that modern soul was not something he admired. Such architecture was, therefore, a genuine expression of something that itself lacked the authenticity of pre-modern cultures. Furthermore, most buildings being built in his time were not true expressions of society, but rather, weak imitations of earlier styles. It was thus that he was able, even as he acknowledged the genuine expressive qualities of the skyscraper, to write rather longingly that "We admire our old buildings because they are real, and this quality of reality is one which we are

trying to obtain in modern architecture.”³⁰ In other words, most modern architecture lacked the quality of authenticity that Traquair saw in older buildings. Either they were genuine expressions of something that itself lacked authenticity, or they failed entirely at relevant expression. He hoped that this “quality of reality” could in some way be infused into contemporary practice and, indeed, contemporary society.

This idea is not far from the concepts of honesty and truth in architecture espoused in nineteenth-century England by A.W.N. Pugin and later John Ruskin, or from the French architect and theorist E.E. Viollet-le-Duc’s related ideas of the naturalness of structure, all evident in the work of the architects of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Traquair’s own ambivalence towards what we now know as architectural modernism points to a wider difficulty among arts and crafts architects. Although Sir Nikolaus Pevsner identified the Arts and Crafts Movement as the spiritual beginning of the modern movement, its architects were, to varying extents, wedded to tradition in form and material.³¹ They may have led the way away from slavish historicism, but it was by a gentler route than the modernists were to take. Even the most radical of the later generation of arts and crafts architects looked to the stone and stucco, buttresses and bay windows of tradition as reference points. Like Traquair, they argued that one must design the most modern buildings possible in one’s own time, but these buildings never departed very radically from the forms of tradition; it was not from them that the skyscraper was to

³⁰Traquair, “Why we Admire Old Buildings,” p. 3.

³¹Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius* (Faber and Faber, 1936; London: Penguin Books, 1960).

emerge. Traquair himself summed up the arts and crafts approach to architecture in three points:

- 7) Structural treatment. The structure is the architecture.
- 8) Use no ornament that does not contribute to the effect and avoid all meaningless merely archaeological and common-place ornament.
- 9) A building must correspond exactly in its structure and in emotional feeling with its purpose. Its architecture must not conceal that purpose.³²

These points might almost equally well describe the approach of the Modernists.

However, Traquair noted in the same article that although these basic principles had been outlined a century before, they had “not yet revolutionised architecture.” He allowed that they had “produced some very charming results in domestic architecture, in furniture and in similar arts, but the monumental building still relies upon old forms.” Perhaps he was not aware of the work then being done by some of the most progressive architects of his time, although this hardly seems likely. For instance, the 1903-06 Larkin administration building in Buffalo, by Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959), had been widely published with both interior and exterior photos and plans from about 1910, while Albert Kahn's (1869-1942) steel, glass and concrete Ford Plant in Detroit, begun in 1908, was published in the *American Architect & Building News* in 1909.³³ These are just two examples of influential buildings that might be said to follow his three precepts listed above, and there were

³²Traquair, “Free Verse and the Parthenon,” *Canadian Bookman* (April 1919): 23.

³³Johnson and Langmead, *Makers of 20th Century Modern*, captions to plates 2 and 3.

dozens more that Traquair must surely have seen in print. In their complete newness and non-reliance on historical forms, perhaps they seemed excessively radical to Traquair.

Even so, he did not mention the large public buildings in Europe which, while drawing on historical precedent, did so not in the slavish fashion Traquair decried but rather in the spirit he celebrated in domestic architecture. Works such as Berlage's celebrated Amsterdam Stock Exchange (1898-1903) or the Stockholm City Hall—completed to a design by Ragnar Östberg (1866-1945) four years after Traquair's article was published but under construction since 1913—draw on traditional forms and materials in thoroughly new ways. Certainly the most “advanced” architects of this time sought to achieve Traquair's quality of “reality” through something very like his three points listed above, and Traquair at least appeared on occasion to espouse this approach. He suggested that “structure offers a straight though difficult path” through “the forests of antiquity.” Structure, he declared, was “the path onwards to a living Architecture.”³⁴ Bland recalled that Traquair “prepared his students in such a way that they were not surprised by the emergence of the previously hidden steel or reinforced concrete frames of modern architecture into well proportioned and ornamentally expressive elements of design.”³⁵ Notwithstanding such teachings and writings about theory, it is clear from his own work, as well as from the buildings he admired, that Traquair—despite his protestations—was not actually ready to give up historic precedent or even ornament. The

³⁴Traquair, “Architecture and Democracy,” p. 12.

³⁵Bland, “Ramsay Traquair,” p. 17.

Woolworth building—the example he pointed to as a good, completely modern building—hides its frame beneath external cladding, and is ornamented in the Gothic style.

Fundamentally, Traquair was a traditionalist even while he espoused the cause of the completely modern in architecture and bemoaned the unprogressive building undertaken by the architects of his time. He sought a modern approach—one that would speak to the needs of the modern age—but never modernist form. The arts and crafts principles he must have imbibed from the cradle remained with him his whole life. Although he sought a new way of doing things architectural, for him the path did not lie with modernism. As late as 1938—the year before his retirement—Traquair wrote disparagingly of the appearance “in recent times of a school of modernistic architecture . . . which prides itself upon being ‘functional.’”³⁶ He admitted that it was allegedly founded upon “the principles of all great architecture,” namely “the practical use of modern materials to fulfill modern needs.” He admired it as a revolt against the other two major currents in the architecture of the day: “the ‘monumental’, a cosmopolitan art based on scholarship [and] the ‘period’, based upon a sentimental love of a romantic past.”³⁷ But, like Beaux-Arts architecture before it, modernism failed for Traquair because it was “enthusiastically cosmopolitan” and therefore “quite ungeographical” and unsuited to the conditions of climate and life in most of the places where it appeared.

³⁶Traquair, “Architecture and Geography,” *Atlantic Monthly* 162 (August 1938): 164.

³⁷Traquair, “Architecture and Geography,” p. 165.

So how does all this relate to Traquair's approach to the National Style question? Like most of the other Canadian architects and theorists of his time, he strove to find a path between what by then seemed to be meaningless historicism and modernism. True to his arts and crafts roots, he sought an architecture that was local—"the product of local needs, local materials, and local climate."³⁸ This was the real lesson of history, and if it could be applied in his own time would result in the answer to the problem of Canadian architecture. Most of the buildings of his own time were simply lies. Though he celebrated the skyscraper as the most convincing demonstration yet of an architecture that expressed the commercial soul of the North American people, he found that modern soul to be spiritually bereft. He believed that a true Canadian style for domestic and ecclesiastic work lay in what he saw as the supremely local French-Canadian vernacular, which might act as a tonic to the architecture of his own day. But where did that leave other buildings types such as public architecture? How was the Canadian soul to be expressed in the nation's city halls, government buildings, libraries, universities, and fire halls? Presumably those answers, too, lay in the climate and the local materials and needs. However, as primarily a theorist Traquair never had to decide how the public building would look that was built on such grounds. This he left to Nobbs, whose architecture and theory form the subject of the next chapter.

³⁸Traquair, "Architecture and Geography," p. 165.

Chapter Five
PERCY NOBBS: "MODERN CANADIAN CONDITIONS"

BOTH NOBBS'S buildings and his theory were, like Traquair's, indelibly shaped by his early-learned arts and crafts principles. The picture is, however, somewhat more complex for Nobbs. While Traquair's approach to the practice of architecture did not change substantively throughout his career, Nobbs had cause to reformulate his thoughts to a greater extent. This may be in part because, unlike Traquair, he had a busy career as a practising architect in addition to his work as an academic at McGill University. As an architect, he was tied to the vagaries and economic constraints of the times and his patrons. He could not insist on designing a building his clients could not afford or would have seen as old-fashioned, no matter how much his principles might have demanded it. Like Traquair, he never became a Modernist and was quite unsympathetic to the Modernist approach, but both his buildings and his writings indicate that—not surprisingly given his long career—his thoughts on modern architecture remained less static than those of Traquair. They were, however, always informed by his arts and crafts background. France Vanlaethem calls him "a pivotal figure, one who provided the link—at least theoretically—between tradition and modernity."¹

As a successfully practising architect, Nobbs was probably more influential than Traquair in the Canadian architectural world. His projects were published extensively in the trade press, beginning with early designs in the *Canadian Architect and Builder* (CAB)

¹France Vanlaethem, "Beautification versus Modernization," in *Montréal Metropolis 1880-1930*, ed. Isabelle Gournay and France Vanlaethem (Montréal/Toronto: Canadian Centre for Architecture/Stoddart, 1998), p. 151.

and moving on to *Construction* and the *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (JRAIC), as well as the international architectural press. In addition, while Traquair became concerned largely with the historic architecture of Québec in the 1920s and 30s, Nobbs continued to write extensively about modern building. He was a strongly opinionated writer, and also gave numerous popular lectures; although he frequently apologized at these for being a tedious speaker, the texts of his talks are often very spirited. At some points in his career—particularly in the years shortly after his arrival—his was an extremely influential voice in Canadian architecture, although it seems likely that his friend, Boston Gothic Revival architect Bertram Goodhue, flattered him somewhat when he wrote to him in 1907, “You are evidently the architectural arbitrator of his Majesty’s possessions for the North American Continent, and for my part I couldn’t wish them any better luck. . . . I only wish you held the same position with regard to the architectural world here in the U.S. that you do in Canada.”² Exaggeration or not, it is true that as sometime chair of McGill’s School of Architecture and president of the Province of Québec Association of Architects (PQAA), and as a prolific writer and builder, Nobbs was an obvious choice for laypersons who wanted to consult an expert in the field.

I have already discussed the substance of Nobbs’s earliest Canadian writings about architecture. They emphasized the arts and crafts approach and celebrated some of the vernacular building forms he had observed in Montréal. In November of his first year in

²Bertram Goodhue, letter to Nobbs, 11 June 1907 (Canadian Architecture Collection, Blackader-Lauterman Library, McGill University [CAC], Nobbs Collection, Series F-14.5).

Canada, Nobbs leapt into the Style debate, as Traquair was to do later, with the contention that the whole style question was wrong-headed from the start. "If the building was roofed in last year it must be Edwardian," he wrote, no matter what "style" it was purported to be.³ Like Traquair again, however, he was adamant that architects would never be able to design good buildings in his own time without a thorough understanding of the historic styles that preceded them. Style was to remain a leitmotif in his architectural thought, colouring his approach to the development of architecture in the twentieth century.

Arts-and-craftsman though he was, Nobbs was always wary of accepting wholeheartedly anything labelled Arts and Crafts. Even as early as 1904—shortly after his arrival in Canada—he explained in a lecture that he had named his third-year course "The Building Trades" specifically to avoid using the word "crafts," in part because the term had in the last couple of decades come to denote "a certain amateurishness in the field of art which the ancient craftsmen would have been the last to approve."⁴ The Aesthetic Movement shared family ties with the Arts and Crafts Movement, but many members had become estranged, and it left Nobbs brimming with sarcasm. "The Epicurean sty in which those wallow who eternally do sing 'Art for Art's sake' and base their aesthetic satisfactions on the mere claims of the senses is an unsavoury quag wholly unfitted to be

³Nobbs, "The Styles of Architecture and Style in Architecture," *CAB* (November 1903): 184.

⁴Nobbs, "Opening Lecture of the Department of Architecture, McGill University," *CAB* (October 1904): 163.

considered even as a possible site on which to rear our structure," he wrote.⁵ This movement, he argued, had caused people to view architecture merely in terms of "charm of the senses," or pleasure. This approach ignored the fact that the purpose of architecture was "always expression," and encouraged the design of meaningless buildings which were just pretty. He had a horror of the work of the Glasgow School associated with Charles Rennie Mackintosh and his associates, as well as the continental Art Nouveau that was related to it. "The 'Arts and Crafts Movement' as it has been called, has tended more and more to countenance certain eccentricities in design," he wrote, "which its loudest and most strident supporters have dubbed 'originality'. Having set up a brazen calf in the wilderness so to speak, the cult of the new art (or L'Art Nouveau) has resulted. . . ."⁶ Nearly four decades later, in a denunciation of Modernism, he was to identify its origins in these same reprehensible offshoots of the Arts and Crafts Movement: "in 1894 this movement [Modernism] began in Glasgow and was called 'The Revolt'. In 1908 in Vienna it became 'The Secession' and in Paris 'L'art Nouveau'.⁷ He numbered the schools of architectural thought in the early-twentieth century as two (the Academic—largely the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and its followers—and the non-Academic—the Arts and Crafts Movement) and "purposely ignore(d) the claims of the Secessionists and

⁵Nobbs, "The Architecture of Canada" (paper read before the Third Annual Assembly of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada [RAIC]), *Construction* (October 1910): 56.

⁶Nobbs, "Opening Lecture," p.163.

⁷Nobbs, letter to F. Cyril James, Principal of McGill, 12 March 1940 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series B.7-5).

Art Nouveausts to form the third. Let the heathen rage!"⁸ His genealogy is very similar to that described by Sir Nikolaus Pevsner, who first published his work *Pioneers of the Modern Movement* in 1936.⁹ If Nobbs had read Pevsner, however, he had certainly not imbibed his celebratory tone.

In addition to his general mistrust of some offshoots of the Arts and Crafts Movement, Nobbs was not tied—either in theory or in practice—to a strict interpretation of arts and crafts principles. Unlike such founders of the movement as William Morris, he did not see machines as an enemy as long as what they made was well designed, with an eye to the material to be used. Instead, he pragmatically saw them as a necessary part of building in his time; although he was always happiest with well-executed hand work, he realized that it was rarely economically feasible in the twentieth century. And like the “Queen Anne” architects in England, he did not see Gothic architecture as the only kind worth following.¹⁰ In fact, he was often to point to the classicism of England as the best possible antecedent for Canadian public architecture. This was the route he tended to follow in his own—especially non-domestic—buildings from his start in Canada. But far more important than the application of any particular style was the quality that Traquair called “suitability.” Buildings must not be designed in particular styles just because

⁸Nobbs, “Architecture of Canada,” pp. 57-58.

⁹Later editions include *Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1960).

¹⁰On “Queen Anne” see Marc Girouard, *Sweetness and Light: The “Queen Anne” Movement 1860-1900* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).

tradition suggested it, but rather because they made sense. Nobbs made this point about his plans for new residences at McGill University. "Economically, climatically and historically there are good reasons for laying aside all thought of symbolizing academic life by recourse to mediaeval traditionalism in the case of so modern an institution as McGill. Open courts rather than 'quads' and something of the principles of modern housing are fully compatible with amenities for student life and an expression of the actualities."¹¹ Much earlier, in concert with prominent Toronto architect Frank Darling (1850-1923), he had made a similar pronouncement about the planned buildings for the new University of Alberta. Together they had advised that "climate, materials and tradesmanship alike forbade the use of the mullioned styles of collegiate gothic on the prairie in the twentieth century."¹² As Kelly Crossman has put it, Nobbs saw that "the spirit of Gothic could be applied to any style," without necessarily the use of Gothic forms, and he proceeded accordingly.¹³

These ideas are articulately expressed in his McGill University Union (now the McCord Museum and much changed on the interior), commissioned only a year or so

¹¹Nobbs, letter to A.E. Morgan, Principal of McGill, 18 December 1935 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series A.2-5).

¹²Nobbs, "Construction at the University of Alberta, Edmonton," *CAB* (January 1921): 3. Also quoted in Susan Wagg, *Percy Erskine Nobbs: Architect, Artist, Craftsman* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1982), p. 50.

¹³Kelly Crossman, *Architecture in Transition: From Art to Practice, 1885-1906* (Montréal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1987), p. 134.

after his arrival in Montréal and opened in 1906 (fig. 5.1).¹⁴ Nobbs's first building in Montréal expressed his arts and crafts ideals eloquently, and it was indeed something of a *tour de force* as it was probably the first building ever realized that he designed in its entirety. It was also extremely important to his career, as it gave him—almost immediately upon his arrival in Canada—a chance to show what he could do practically. The patronage of Sir William Macdonald (whose name also graced the academic chair Nobbs held) in this case was key to Nobbs's continued success, as Macdonald was extremely rich and inclined to spend his money on McGill University, with which institution he not surprisingly had considerable influence. As Susan Wagg notes, Nobbs employed the palazzo form used for many London clubs in the nineteenth century, and made famous by Sir Charles Barry in such buildings as the Reform Club.¹⁵ This was of course an ideal form for a club to serve the young men of McGill. Nobbs worked subtly with this basic form, drawing from various periods of English architecture for his fenestration and door case and allowing these simply but elegantly-realized elements to be the building's principal exterior ornament. The interior, too, shows his arts and crafts allegiance, with an elegantly vaulted entrance hall and quiet classical details leading to the richness of carved wood,

¹⁴Nobbs undertook the design of the Union in partnership with the Montréal firm of Hutchison and Wood. In 1909 he resigned his position as chair and Macdonald Professor to become Professor of Design, which would allow more time for architectural practice. This he carried out in a partnership with George Taylor Hyde from 1910 until the latter's death in 1944. Nobbs was the dominant designer of the pair, and I will generally refer to the firm's designs by his name alone although they were executed under the firm name of Nobbs and Hyde. On Nobbs's buildings at McGill University, see Susan Wagg, "The McGill Architecture of Percy Erskine Nobbs" (master's thesis, Concordia University, 1979).

¹⁵Susan Wagg, *Percy Erskine Nobbs*, p. 15.

panelled ceilings, and comfortable furniture designed by the architect. Crossman has described the building as “one of the best examples in Canada of the spirit of the Arts and Crafts.”¹⁶

Early in his Canadian career, Nobbs stated his position on the use of various historical styles as inspiration for the present. In the nineteenth-century Battle of the Styles, he placed the “reconciliation” at about 1875, “the time when English architects of the better sort began with one accord to seek inspiration in English Building Traditions of three distinct periods, for the inspiration for the three main classes of their work:—(1) the XIV century Gothic for church work; (2) the Jacobean and other intermediate styles for domestic purposes, and (3) the Classic of Wren’s school for public buildings.”¹⁷ These, he wrote, were “the terms under which the architects of the Mother country are evolving their three-fold modern art, taking from the great past what is best adapted to their needs” Although he was not tied to these terms, he was often to follow them in his own work.

Following these British masters, Nobbs was willing to use Gothic in the right place. For him, this meant church architecture, and on at least two occasions he did design a church in full-blown Gothic. He questioned the use of the Gothic style for public buildings, arguing that the principle examples in England (the British Houses of

¹⁶Crossman, *Architecture in Transition*, p. 134.

¹⁷Nobbs, “The Architectural Revivals of the XIX Century in England,” manuscript of lecture for the Ontario Association of Architects (OAA), 15 January 1907 and the Province of Quebec Association of Architects (PQAA) sketching club, 23 January 1907, p. 2 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.9-4).

Parliament at Westminster, the Assize courts at Manchester and the London Law courts) were not successful, and that “it is with misgivings that we see the advisability of trying Gothic again at Ottawa . . . especially in view of the necessarily regular and repetitive character of the requirements. Gothic Architecture at 35 cents per foot is hardly likely to be very good at present prices”¹⁸ His friend Goodhue, who specialized in Gothic, largely for churches, certainly identified Nobbs as a friend of modern Gothic, writing to him at one point that he was looking for a new British draughtsman to work on Gothic detail—“a young and alert man, thoroughly versed in the sort of Gothic that you and I and [Sir Walter] Tapper and the rest of us (a pretty rough classification) like.”¹⁹ This was a rather different Gothic than that practised by some architects of their time, for example American architect Cass Gilbert, who was a competitor in the Saskatchewan Legislative Building competition for which Nobbs composed the programme and acted as chief assessor. Although Goodhue and Gilbert were both at least sometime Gothicists, they did not see eye to eye; Goodhue once referred in exasperation to “the sort of Cass Gilbertian Gothic that seems now to be spreading over this unhappy land.”²⁰ For one thing, Goodhue specialized in the very ecclesiastical architecture for which Nobbs felt Gothic was suited, as well as such buildings as West Point Military Academy where the use of

¹⁸Nobbs, “Architectural Revivals,” pp. 7-8.

¹⁹Goodhue, letter to Nobbs, 10 March 1910 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series F.14-5). Tapper had participated in the Liverpool Cathedral competition, and Nobbs had worked on the presentation drawings for the project.

²⁰Goodhue, letter to Nobbs, 3 April 1913 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series F.14-6).

Gothic could, under the right circumstances, also be justified for its historic associations with scholarly pursuits. But for public buildings, such as a seat of government, Gothic did not seem so suitable, and it was even less so for commercial buildings (such as Gilbert's Woolworth Building in New York). Goodhue wrote to Nobbs after the Saskatchewan competition that "I am still glad we didn't give the prize to that soi disant Gothic affair of Gilberts."²¹ Interestingly, Gilbert himself blamed Nobbs entirely for his failure to win the competition. He wrote a letter complaining of the situation to the Saskatchewan authorities. "I have recently learned on excellent authority," he wrote, "that Prof. Nobbs holds such a prejudice against the Gothic style (in which my design was expressed) that under no circumstances would he approve for a modern building a design in such style."²² Under such conditions, his efforts had been a waste of time and money—his and the government's. He argued that Nobbs should have announced this unreasonable personal prejudice in the programme so that Gilbert could "either have declined the invitation, or have worked within a style more likely to meet *his* approval."

Gilbert could not resist the opportunity, a year after the competition, to tell the Premier what a mistake the assessors had made. He wrote a self-aggrandizing letter to Walter Scott telling him of a trip he had made to London, where his "confreres of the Royal Institute of British Architects were good enough to show me some particular attention at a banquet It was very gratifying indeed to find such a cordial spirit on

²¹Goodhue, letter to Nobbs, 30 December 1907 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series F.14-5).

²²Cass Gilbert, letter to F.J. Robinson, Deputy Commissioner of Public Works, Regina, 25 February 1908 (Saskatchewan Archives Board [SAB], DPW 1-60 [2/31]).

the part of the Englishmen and I will long remember their courtesy to me and to our national organization."²³ Having established his credibility on the international scene, he moved on to the main point of his letter. He explained that he had attended a dinner in London at which he had spoken to the partner of one of the assessors (this must have been Ralph Adams Cram, partner to Bertram Goodhue).

He told me that he had seen the Parliament Building designs . . . and offered his congratulations upon my own. He added that he had told his partner that it was his opinion that the jury had made a grave mistake in not selecting my design and that the partner had replied that on reflection he concurred in that opinion. Of course, this was merely an informal conversation but I have no doubt that it reflected the real opinion of the jury. I am confirmed in this by a remark that Mr. Day also made to the effect that the result of the competition was a serious disappointment to him.

It is surprising that, if two of the three jurors really favoured Gilbert's design, it should not have been chosen. It may be that Cram, cornered by the obviously outraged and insulted Gilbert at a social gathering, felt compelled to modify Goodhue's opinions somewhat in conversation with him. Gilbert was clearly not above whining to authority about his plight; his letter to Scott continues by saying "There is no use in thrashing over old straw but still I thought it might interest you in a personal way to know the foregoing. Of course, it would have no bearing on the matter now as it is long since settled. The result as you know was a grave disappointment to me"²⁴ It is true that Nobbs probably did

²³Gilbert, letter to Walter Scott, 10 September 1908 (SAB, microfilm of Walter Scott Papers, R.7-1, reel 28).

²⁴Gilbert, letter to Walter Scott, 10 September 1908 (SAB, microfilm of Walter Scott Papers, R.7-1, reel 28).

not like or approve in principle of Gilbert's design. But even Scott—an enthusiastic supporter of Gilbert—had been initially attracted to Gilbert's work as represented by the Minnesota State Capitol building (1895-1904)²⁵—a building that Harold Kalman has described as a “landmark of the new Beaux-Arts Classicism”²⁶—which could hardly have led him to expect Gilbert's Gothic submission for the Saskatchewan building.

On more than one occasion Nobbs identified Goodhue as the “one great master of modern Gothic in America.”²⁷ He believed, however, that Gothic was not well suited to much of what the Canadian climate had to offer, and even Goodhue's “simplified American Gothic” of the Halifax Cathedral (1907-10) had not survived the climate well; Nobbs himself was called upon to assess its declining condition years after its construction. As assessor of the competition to design the cathedral, he had chosen Goodhue's design—based on the perpendicular Gothic of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries favoured by Gothicists in the United States—over a scheme using the Decorated Gothic of the twelfth to the early-fourteenth centuries that was more common in Canada. Kalman calls it “a decision that marks the acceptance of the American idea of Gothic as a ‘modern’ style” in Canada.²⁸

²⁵Crossman, *Architecture in Transition*, p. 143.

²⁶Harold Kalman, *A History of Canadian Architecture*, vol. 2 (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 555-56.

²⁷Nobbs, “Present Tendencies Affecting Architecture in Canada, Part I: The Inheritance,” *JRAIC* (July 1930): 248.

²⁸Kalman, *Canadian Architecture*, p. 714.

Nobbs himself designed a parish church for Brandon, Manitoba, in a simplified Gothic style in 1909 (figs. 5.2 & 5.3). Intending to use brick with stone trim, he largely avoided the excessive cusps and pinnacles he argued were so unsuited to the Canadian situation, and the drawings shows a building intended to shed the snow and ice that were sure to be its lot. A decade or so later, in 1920, his firm entered a competition for the design of the Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul, on Sherbrooke Street in Montréal (figs. 5.4 & 5.5). This design too is pure Gothic, on a much larger scale than the earlier church for Brandon. It strongly suggests the influence of the church of All Saints', Ashmont, by Cram, Wentworth, and Goodhue some thirty years before (fig. 5.6). (The church had in fact been designed in 1891 just before Goodhue joined the firm, so is largely the work of his senior partner.²⁰) Nobbs added transepts and reversed the design, so that his square tower stands over the altar rather than at the West front (actually the South in this case, facing Sherbrooke Street), and his design includes a number of auxiliary structures not present in All Saints'. However, his use of the low side aisles with their small windows beneath large triple lancets is similar, as is such a detail as the polygonal tourelle on one corner of the tower. Cram's design is restrained and sparsely ornamented, while Nobbs and Hyde's design includes more decorative detail and is less spare in its use of line—adding pinnacles to the buttresses and using stepped gables where Cram's are plain. These very elements seem to contradict one of Nobbs's chief complaints about Gothic in

²⁰Douglass Shand-Tucci, *Boston Bohemia 1881-1900; Ralph Adams Cram: Life and Architecture* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), pp. 116, 131.

the Canadian climate, and perhaps he added them thinking to please the competition assessors. Indeed, he wrote in 1924 that “the spirit of Gothic is preposterously impossible under modern Canadian conditions, but the fact that it is sedulously attempted in the letter calls for sympathy, at least where an experience of the results does not compel regret.”³⁰ Since it appears that his principal proposals for Gothic churches had not been accepted, and therefore remained unbuilt, perhaps he felt safe in making such a proclamation at that point.

Cram and Goodhue had executed one other commission in Canada—a small church at St. Mary’s Windsor, designed for the Walker family of distillers in 1903-04³¹—although Goodhue also asked Nobbs for a reference in their bid to design a church in Winnipeg around the time of the Halifax competition.³² This does not appear to have transpired, but they did correspond about further work; it is clear that Goodhue regarded Nobbs as an architectural kindred spirit even though the latter did not often build in the Gothic style. In the same year he wrote about a possible commission for the firm to design a church at Mt. Kisco, New York. It seemed to be a dream come true for Goodhue, and he described the possibilities in enthusiastic terms. The parish was rich, the local stone rough but beautiful, and the committee all “very fine and very cultivated men” who had not turned a hair at his “wildest suggestions,” such as covering the floor with second-hand

³⁰Nobbs, “The English Tradition in Canada,” *Architectural Review* 55 (June 1924): 238.

³¹Kalman, *Canadian Architecture*, p. 712.

³²Goodhue, letter to Nobbs, 11 June 1907 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series F.14-5).

paving slabs or “the abandonment of any hard and fast equal dimensions for the bays &c.”³³ It is clear that the two men felt they worked in the same spirit, if not the same style, as Nobbs asked Goodhue to take a couple of McGill University students to gain work experience in his office for the summer (which he did), while Goodhue once referred to the importance of getting big contracts “to enable us to do other things in the same careful fashion that you did the ‘Union’ for McGill.”³⁴

For Nobbs, notwithstanding the excellent Gothic work that had been done in the nineteenth century, most particularly for the church of England, the “real fruit” of the Gothic Revival could be seen in “the influence of that movement on the Classic architecture of the last quarter of the century.”³⁵ He held forth at length on how this achievement had occurred, identifying the work of Richard Norman Shaw and others like him as the pinnacle of the process. The newly-learned habit of studying the vernacular manor houses and cottages of old England, he argued, had led nineteenth-century architects to look with new eyes also at “Old English Classic, so that the Wren and Georgian work, no less than the Elizabethan, began to claim attention as a field for inspiration.”³⁶ Trained in the Gothic school, he wrote, architects such as Shaw had gone on to apply lessons learned from the Gothic Revival—such as respect for materials and the

³³Goodhue, letter to Nobbs, 22 May 1907 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series F.14-5).

³⁴Goodhue, letter to Nobbs, 26 February 1907; the same to the same 20 January 1908 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series F.14-5).

³⁵Nobbs, “Architectural Revivals,” p. 10.

³⁶Nobbs, “Architectural Revivals,” p. 14.

value of studying and measuring old work—to classical forms in a way that spoke of “the qualities of national character to which our glorious . . . past has been witness down the years.”³⁷

His analysis bears a striking resemblance to that of English “Queen Anne” architect J.J. Stevenson (1831-1908); indeed, there is every likelihood that Nobbs was familiar with Stevenson’s work. As architectural historian Robert Macleod observes, Stevenson pointed out that the new, classically-inspired “Queen Anne” style was practised principally by architects trained in the Gothic Revival tradition. With the “life and freedom of Gothic in their souls,” declared Stevenson, these men brought to classical architecture “new spirit and new life, and the hope of higher development.”³⁸ Thus, in Nobbs’s words, the Gothic revival had “resulted in the second renaissance of Classicism,” and that was its truest value. In a speech to the American Institute of Architects in 1907, Nobbs told them that they, too, should expect a Gothic revival, “and some horrible things will be perpetrated.”³⁹ But they should take heart, for just as they had in Britain, the United States would emerge from the fray with “a rejuvenated ‘astylar’ free classic. . . . I feel that a Gothic revival here is to be encouraged precisely because it will lead to a

³⁷Nobbs, “Architectural Revivals,” p. 15.

³⁸J.J. Stevenson, “On the Recent Reaction of Taste in English Architecture,” *Builder* (1874): 539-40, quoted in Robert Macleod, *Style and Society: Architectural Ideology in Britain, 1835-1914* (London: RIBA Publications, 1971), p. 29.

³⁹Nobbs, “Extracts from an Address by Professor Percy E. Nobbs to the 41st Annual Dinner of the AIA, Chicago, November 20th, 1907,” *JRAIC* 34, 7 (July 1957): 280; see also the stenographer’s report of the full speech (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.10-1).

broader view of classic architecture.” It was really modern free classical architecture, he believed, that was the inheritor of the great Gothic tradition.

Nobbs's admiration for the classical tradition extended to his strong interest in planning, evident throughout his professional life. He concerned himself with this important architectural issue on many levels, ranging from the careful consideration he gave in his domestic commissions to the layout of rooms to catch sunlight and the best views, through plans for institutions such as McGill and the University of Alberta and for housing estates both for low- and high-income residents, to schemes for the future development of the city of Montréal as a whole; France Vanlaethem describes him as “the architect who played the most progressive role in Quebec’s town-planning movement” in the 1920s.⁴⁰ While this is a broad range, drawing on many traditions, all of these planning interests stemmed from Nobbs’s humanist ideas about what would work best for the people who were to live in or use the buildings and communities in whose development he had a part. Although grandeur might play a part where that seemed important, it was never at the expense of utility. He believed in what he called “the gospel according to [English Garden City architect and planner] Sir Raymond [Unwin (1863-1940)]—the planning for life in all its manifestations: the family, the community, the city, the region, the nation, the empire and the family of nations.”⁴¹

⁴⁰Vanlaethem, “Beautification versus Modernization,” p. 145.

⁴¹Nobbs, “Sir Raymond Unwin’s Visit to Montreal” (a reprinted letter to the *Montreal Gazette*, 31 October), *JRAIC* (November 1933): 192.

Nobbs's house plans and his schemes for housing estates were, not surprisingly, most strongly influenced by his arts and crafts background and by the Garden City Movement in Britain. He corresponded with Unwin, and the latter came to Montréal and spoke to Nobbs's McGill students and also to city planning groups with which Nobbs was associated. But he also had a special concern that every house should get its share of sunlight and of view (prospect). As far as possible, every room within a house should receive sun at a time appropriate to its use, and this could be accomplished through intelligent consideration of the house's plan with respect to aspect. He noted that tract housing was usually built so that every house had exactly the same layout, which meant that for every well-oriented house there was necessarily one that was terrible and two mediocre. It annoyed him that architects persisted in placing important public rooms towards the street no matter what that meant as regards sun or view, and he developed diagrams showing how the rooms in a house should be oriented to take full advantage of sunlight (fig. 5.7).⁴² This meant that his city house plans were frequently reversed from the ordinary pattern, with the kitchen and other utilitarian spaces facing the street and the more important public rooms facing the back of the house. This layout is particularly common in the many houses he designed for the City of Westmount, where a house on the south side of an east-west street could enjoy both a sunny exposure and a spectacular view down the mountain from its public rooms if the normal plan were reversed. And if

⁴²See Nobbs, "Suburban Community Planning," *Town Planning* (April 1926); reprinted Montréal: McGill University Press (MUP) Series XIII, no. 7, 1926, and "Planning for Sunlight," *Journal of the Town Planning Institute* (April 1922): 6-12 for Nobbs's explanation of these concepts.

some rooms were adjoining, he pointed out, a sunless room could “borrow” sun from one with a south exposure (though this should never be an excuse for including a room with no window at all of its own); there was the “increased possibility of entertaining wandering sunbeams, heavenly visitants, who enter by a window, traverse two rooms and alight to wander across a wall opposite.”⁴³ He even upbraided house owners for overdressing their windows in heavy costumes of velvet and brocade, shutting out half the light they provided. Sounding rather like a nineteenth-century dress reformer, he recommended a minimum of window dressing, such as a “veil of India muslin” to keep out glare where necessary.⁴⁴ All this was planning on a small scale, but was very important to the livability of the houses he designed and is evident in them now. Current owners comment on how well-considered and comfortable their houses are to this day.

Architectural historian Annmarie Adams has examined the approach of Toronto architect Eden Smith (1858/9-1949)—himself having arrived in Canada from England nearly two decades before Nobbs came—to planning, noting that he had similar concerns and that his house plans too were “often inspired more by sun angles than by history.”⁴⁵ Adams observed that Smith’s “turned about” houses were seen as quite radical in their time, and that although his elevations were almost exclusively strongly influenced by English domestic architecture, these plans set his houses apart from the English tradition.

⁴³Nobbs, “Planning for Sunlight,” p. 10.

⁴⁴Nobbs, “Planning for Sunlight,” p. 11.

⁴⁵Annmarie Adams, “Eden Smith and the Canadian Domestic Revival,” *Urban History Review/Revue d’histoire urbaine* XXI, 2 (March 1993): 104.

She argues that “this independent relationship of elevation and plan in Smith’s architecture allowed the houses to be read as both conservative and radical—in other words, as English or Canadian.”⁴⁶ From Nobbs’s side, there seems to be no evidence of communication between himself and Eden Smith (although it seems almost inconceivable that they never met at all), so it is likely that they arrived independently at their planning solutions. Nobbs’s houses for steep Westmount sites seem to respond to what eighteenth-century landscape architects in England called the *genius loci* (or “genius of the place”).

Nobbs’s university plans were of course of a very different type than his housing estates. The first, conceived in his early days in Montréal, was for McGill, which had thus far grown up rather haphazardly on a somewhat confined site. His 1904 plan was not a grandiose one, but rather created interesting and useful spaces centred on already-present buildings, and laid out a sensible scheme for the introduction of new structures.⁴⁷ The 1912 commission to devise a plan for the new University of Alberta provided him with much more scope, as here nothing at all had yet been built and he had a large patch of unsullied land with which to work. He laid out a plan that would incorporate the two buildings then on the drawing board into a grand scheme in which, in carefully orchestrated order, all the buildings a great university might need would eventually find a place (fig. 5.8). A broad central avenue was to divide the campus into two principal sections, with residences and athletic facilities on one side and academic buildings on the

⁴⁶Adams, “Eden Smith,” p. 106.

⁴⁷See Wagg, *Percy Erskine Nobbs*, pp. 45-47.

other, for the equal development of a healthy mind in a healthy body. This vista would terminate in a grand convocation building, which would look over the gorge of the Saskatchewan River and in its turn provide an impressive picture of the campus from the city on the other side. But here again, while the planning is on a grand scale, it has not been allowed to dominate the buildings or their functions. Although the overriding organisation divides the campus into symmetrical sections, within those areas symmetry exists only insofar as it answers the needs of the buildings. Function and suitability were the determining factors in the design.

Nobbs was a proponent of the Grand Manner in city planning, and its influence can be seen in his University of Alberta design. He argued that it was through such an approach, which had first been used in the cities of Ancient Egypt and the Near East, and then more famously in Imperial Rome, that modern cities could be rationally developed. Most recently, Chicago's 1893 World's Columbian Exposition had pointed the way, and he argued that this method, in addition to providing impressive vistas and appropriate sites for buildings, was also the best as regards traffic movement and efficiency. In the long run, it would save money—as he argued it already had in Chicago—but unfortunately in his own day “an alderman in Montreal who talks of town planning and states the cost of the initial studies, loses votes.”⁴⁸

⁴⁸Nobbs, “The Grand Manner, in St. Petersburg and in Chicago,” undated typescript; CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.9-1). Although the lecture is undated, it is clearly post-Russian Revolution, as Nobbs refers in it to the impossibility of using the names Petrograd and Leningrad.

On a city-wide scale, Nobbs devoted considerable energy to the improvement of Montréal through the development of a sensible but also aesthetically-driven plan.⁴⁹ In the 1920s and 30s, he worked on schemes for individual housing estates or smaller groups of houses, and also on larger proposals such as a system of green spaces that would maintain the riversides as parks and beaches accessible to those who could not afford to go far out of town in search of recreation.⁵⁰ He observed that the great cities of the world had parks, particularly noting that Moscow and St. Petersburg had enjoyed them for a century, Boston and Chicago had introduced them around the turn of the century, and England had always had common lands. Montréal, on the other hand, had only an inadequate system of open spaces of which those in poor quarters were “not much better than vacant lots.”⁵¹

Implicit in plans such as this one was, not surprisingly, the idea that the lot of the poor needed to be improved not only for their own benefit, but for that of the more affluent classes as well. Providing jobs and decent housing would cut down the incidence of crime by the lower classes. Nobbs proposed a slum clearance project that would involve improving and relocating housing near the industrial plants that provided jobs for slum inhabitants, the rebuilding effort itself incidentally providing its own jobs in the

⁴⁹For a discussion of Nobbs's town planning activities and participation on various committees see Wagg, *Percy Erskine Nobbs*, pp. 51-57.

⁵⁰Nobbs, “A Metropolitan System of Water Side Parks for Montreal,” 1 November 1934 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.10-2).

⁵¹Nobbs, “Water Side Parks,” p. 4.

construction trades.⁵² But such a project would also bring with it higher rents, with which people might need help: “this means barracking for the 30% who are irredeemable, and assisted housing for the 70% who will respond to environment; and an intricate social machine to sort out the two classes.”⁵³ In 1935 Nobbs was a witness to the House of Commons Special Committee on Housing, and reiterated these sentiments in stronger terms. Cheap, decent housing was essential as it was

the economic way of keeping the working class happy. The extent that our maps show of tb, infantile mortality, juvenile delinquency, hospitalization and all that, is due to people paying too much rent and not having enough money to spend on their food. There is thus a burden created which falls upon government and society. . . . The fact remains that it is cheaper to house these people decently than to let them degenerate. That is really where the savings comes in to the public. It is much cheaper to house them than to maintain them in these slum areas.⁵⁴

Keeping in mind that he was speaking to a doubtless cost-conscious government committee, his approach resembles that of most nineteenth-century housing reformers—such as Patrick Geddes in Edinburgh—who, while they sought to better the lot of the poor, hoped simultaneously to improve for their own benefit the cities in which they lived. Nobbs’s belief in enlightened self-interest in this respect, however, did not extend to private enterprise. He argued that government must take responsibility for providing better housing, as leaving it to private interest would always result in slum development.

⁵²Nobbs, “Address to the Province of Quebec Association of Architects on Town Planning Effort [sic] in Montreal,” 13 February 1934.

⁵³Nobbs, “Town Planning Effort in Montreal,” p. 10.

⁵⁴Nobbs, Statement to the House of Commons Special Committee on Housing, 1935.

He himself worked out several large-scale plans for rehousing the poor, although to his distress none was ever implemented. One, dating from 1936, shows how utilitarian Nobbs could be in the interest of keeping costs down for depression-era working-class housing (fig. 5.9). This is not to say that he did not consider his theories about sunlight and aspect; a large-scale block plan shows that he laid the new community at an angle over the existing street pattern in order to orient the buildings better vis à vis the sun. But beyond that they were sparse indeed; a bird's-eye view of the complex shows rows of identical buildings almost entirely unrelieved by ornament or variation. They are set among trees and green space—somewhat incongruously occupied by several buildings clearly arts-and-crafts-influenced—and share play areas and common spaces, but the housing itself looks quite bleak. Dell Upton notes that in the United States, the inter-war period saw the development of “minimum house” standards, to determine “the smallest possible space in which one could live what middle-class officials believed was a decent life.”⁵⁵ The result was a small square plan, containing four rooms and a bath. Upton observes that even the most pleasant social housing projects often provided dwellings that resembled these minimum standards quite closely, and this is the case in Nobbs's X-block plan, too, where ample community space contrasts with small apartments. As a whole, the complex resembles many of the projects put up in large cities in the United States several decades later to rehouse the urban poor. Similarly, it seems likely that the ideals

⁵⁵Dell Upton, *Architecture in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 237.

underlying Nobbs's scheme—which also drove some of the architects of the American projects originally—might have degenerated with time into a slum as dismal as any it replaced.

Nobbs did not plan such estates only for the working classes: he also designed communities for middle-class tenants on a co-operative basis. Following Unwin's approach, these were laid out so that groups of houses, carefully designed to take full advantage of their surroundings, shared such amenities as playgrounds, tennis courts, and heating plants. Not surprisingly, they were also far less utilitarian, and in them Nobbs's theories regarding the disposition of houses on lots and rooms within houses were brought to bear much more than in the schemes for the working classes. They made efficient use of the land available while providing each family access to more common amenities and space—and all for less money—than was the case in conventional settlements.

Nobbs's concern with suitability to site and climate and also with history made him particularly impatient with the architecture of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and its followers. In 1932 he had cause to express his annoyance with the Beaux-Arts approach directly to Montréal Beaux-Arts architect William Sutherland Maxwell (1875-1952), who had recently chaired the judges' committee in an inter-collegiate architecture competition. Not only had students trained in Beaux-Arts methods walked away with the prizes (in one of the two projects the four entries from the Montréal École des Beaux-Arts won first, second, third, and honourable mention over all the entries from other schools), but Maxwell had added insult to injury with his statement as chair. "The judges," he had

written, “commend the type of programme . . . as they feel that this type allows a play of imagination and a freedom in design which is unhampered by irksome conditions.” Nobbs commented in a letter that “this is a little disconcerting for those who hold that skill in design is largely exhibited in overcoming just these irksome conditions, and that all sound architecture must take into account local conditions, climate, material, method of construction and difficulty of site.”⁵⁶ Far from encouraging the use of imagination, argued Nobbs, this method discouraged creativity in coping with the many “irksome conditions” that were a natural feature of designing real buildings for actual sites. In fact, he believed that the Beaux-Arts approach had long been dead—although some had yet to find it out—arguing that “by the 3rd quarter of last century, French academicism had become recognized as a stifling influence to the detriment of architectural evolution everywhere but in America.”⁵⁷ Ironically, Nobbs’s 1909 redesign of the Department of Architecture’s curriculum had resulted in a structure similar to that in use at the École des Beaux-Arts, whose methods and results he was later to condemn so roundly.⁵⁸

Nobbs also took exception to the Beaux-Arts emphasis on the architectural drawing as a thing of value in itself. Rather, from the start of his period at McGill University, he emphasized to his students the value of drawing simply to communicate an

⁵⁶Nobbs, letter to W.S. Maxwell, 1932 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series B.8-1). The others on the adjudicating committee were E.I. Barott, John M. Lyle, W.L. Somerville, A.S. Mathers, and Irene Vautrin.

⁵⁷Nobbs, “The Arts of Russia,” undated typescript, p. 5 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.9-1).

⁵⁸Vanlaethem, “Beautification Versus Modernization,” p. 143.

idea, and also as a useful skill that would allow them to find employment as draughtsmen for the few years after graduation before they were ready to design for themselves. He told them: “we must never regard drawing as an art worth cultivating for its own sake. . . . When we have come to regard our drawings in this light—as damaged paper in no way beautiful, certainly not decorative, but, possibly, a little useful,—then the first step has been reached on the stair which leads to the halls of architectural learning, and not until then.”⁵⁹ In fact, he noted that the careful renderings of the Beaux-Arts school could be immensely deceptive and often did not give a true idea of the building to be built from them. He almost seems to suggest that it is just a little effete to take too strong an interest in the beauty of the drawing at the expense of truthful rendition.

Interestingly, although he disapproved of the Beaux-Arts approach, Nobbs did invoke New York architect Charles Follen McKim's positive response to his work as a point in his own favour. When McKim had seen the Macdonald Engineering building while it was under construction, Nobbs related years later, the New York architect had said: “With a man of your own to make Buildings like that for you, you need never go elsewhere.” Nobbs noted that he was especially flattered by this response because he and McKim had been trained in such very different schools.⁶⁰ Indeed, he did retain an open mind on the subject to some extent, and went so far as to commend McKim Mead and White's new Bank of Montréal as “easily the first in architectural merit of all the buildings

⁵⁹Nobbs, “Drawing and Architecture–1,” *CAB* (October 1903): 168.

⁶⁰Nobbs, letter to A.E. Morgan, 19 December 1935 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series B.7-1).

in the city.”^{o1} Isabelle Gournay notes, however, that the bank is an example of what Nobbs referred to in the case of Montréal’s Mount Royal Club, also by McKim Mead and White, as “rarefied classic . . . with all the Beaux Arts claptrap chastely omitted.”^{o2}

He had admired the building upon first arriving in the city, and of course he later discovered that—like so many important Canadian commissions—the building had been designed by American architects, a subject that caused him considerable frustration and that he was often to address. He began expressing such Canada-boosting sentiments less than a year after his arrival, when he was already commenting that “it is just a little humiliating to the profession here” to have a work such as the new Mount Royal Club “go to New York.” True, he admitted, there was no one in Montréal “as great” as McKim, but it was still “a little surprising to find . . . Montrealers['] protective instincts not manifesting themselves” in such situations.^{o3}

The great challenge to the Beaux-Arts and to the classical versus Gothic debate in architecture was of course that of Modernism. Nobbs identified the word as a pejorative

^{o1}Nobbs, “Montreal: The Year’s Changes in the City,” *CAB* (December 1904): 201.

^{o2}“Montréal Letter No. III,” *CAB* (June 1904): p. 98, quoted in Gournay, “Prestige and Professionalism: The Contribution of American Architects,” in *Montréal Metropolis*, p. 130. The building provoked from Nobbs an antimodernist screed the next month, when, in the guise of the ghost of a gargoyle who had come flying to Montréal after his spire “on a minster tower in Yorkshire” had collapsed in a gale, he concluded that, while the building was “very fair and enduring,” it was evident that “what the men of Montréal worshipped in the great hall behind the portico that is opposite to the church of Notre Dame is the chief god of the land and that it is therefore right and proper that his temple should far outshine in splendor [sic] and glory any building to the Lord of the old minster.” (“Montréal Notes No. IV,” *CAB* [July 1904]: 119.)

^{o3}Nobbs, “Montreal Letter No. III,” *CAB* (June 1904): 98.

term, arguing that “when an aesthete uses a word with an ‘istic’, it means he has some suspicion that the phase he is talking about is spurious There are, in every land, modern architects, the heir to all the ages, but those who profess their modernity too much deserve the ‘istic’.”⁰⁴ He himself preferred an architecture that was modern, but by no means modernist.

Having practised and taught architecture through the time that Modernism in architecture was coming to fruition in Europe and North America, it is to be expected that Nobbs would have had to address the issue at some point, although he was certainly never a whole-hearted supporter. As Kalman has noted, he was typically Canadian in that. Here there “was no inexorable march to modernism, nor an inevitable ‘triumph’ of the moderns over the revivalists.”⁰⁵ Canadian architects in the early-twentieth century were striving to find an architecture that would be both modern and Canadian, but on the whole they “adopted a conservative and evolutionary route to modernism, based on the gentle modification of existing practices,” rather than opting for a wholesale rejection of the past as radical modernists elsewhere were doing. This was Nobbs’s approach. He was certainly not unaware of modernist trends in the world, but he did not see so complete a casting-off of history as a valid route for architecture to take. Writing in 1930, he argued that Canadians might hope for great things from modernism only provided they did not lose their heads over it, “as the good folk in certain parts of Europe, notably in Holland”

⁰⁴Nobbs, “Present Tendencies Affecting Architecture in Canada Part II: Modernity,” *JRAIC* (September 1930): 315.

⁰⁵Kalman, *Architecture in Canada*, p. 705.

had done. Most importantly, it was essential not to forget, as the modernists seemed to be doing, the lessons of the past. Rather, architects should be “natural, simple and unaffected . . . doing things always in old ways, when they are also the best ways.”⁶⁶

Clearly, most modernists failed to do so. In his 1930 article Nobbs included illustrations of eight modernist buildings in Europe, dismissing each in a brief caption that explained how, in his opinion, it failed the test of common sense in building and the use of materials.⁶⁷ Like Traquair, he wrote that the tall building had been the one original contribution of the United States to architecture. But even so, one had “yet to be built that is real in design in the sense that Greek Temples and English Parish Churches were real.” Rather, they all “affected the arcaded complexities, the surfaced severities, or the trabeate solemnities of a dozen alien centuries.”⁶⁸ All in all, architectural modernism was a difficult issue for Nobbs. He believed that a new kind of architecture that did not parrot the past needed to be developed, and that was what the Modernists sought to do. But he could not countenance the idea of the wholesale rejection of past forms, and that was the route the Modernists took. Deeply conservative and attached to the values of history, Nobbs did not want to give them up.

He did not, of course, ignore the changes completely, and nor did he profess to.

His later buildings certainly show the influence of Modernism, but his was the

⁶⁶Nobbs, “Present Tendencies: Modernity,” p. 314.

⁶⁷Nobbs, “Present Tendencies Affecting Architecture In Canada Part III: Adverse Influences,” *JRAIC* (November 1930): 391.

⁶⁸Nobbs, “Present Tendencies: Adverse Influences,” p. 392.

“conservative and evolutionary” approach noted by Kalman. His proposed new Birks Building for Saskatoon (fig. 5.10), for instance, perfectly illustrates the use of simpler forms Kalman defines as a typical Canadian response to Modernism, with “flatter wall surfaces, fewer advances and recessions, less ornament, and quieter silhouettes.”⁶⁹ In the case of the 1928 Birks Building, Art Deco influence is clear in the flattened, simplified fluted pilasters and flat decorative panels. Kalman describes such buildings as “passive responses to new architectural currents abroad,” but this suggests that the architects were unaware of what they were doing, which seems highly unlikely. Nobbs was certainly familiar with what was going on in the architectural world—even though he disapproved of much of it—and must have used what he wanted with perfect consciousness. He had a prodigious talent for giving people what they wanted.

There was one moment in particular when Nobbs had no choice but to confront head-on the onward march of Modernism, as it threatened to impinge upon the McGill University School of Architecture with which he had been so long associated. This occurred in 1940 when, Traquair having retired in 1939, a new head needed to be found for the school. Seven possible replacements were considered, and amongst them were several who would have been quite sympathetic to the McGill method.⁷⁰ However, there

⁶⁹Kalman, *Canadian Architecture*, p. 705.

⁷⁰A meeting of the Advisory Committee of the School of Architecture discussed seven possible candidates. These were E.R. Arthur, of Toronto; Lyle F. Boulware, Brooklyn; Serge Chermayeff; Wesley Dougill, Liverpool; R. Gardner-Medwin, London; Milton S. Osborne, Winnipeg; and J.L. Sert, of Barcelona (Minutes of the meeting, held 18 March 1940; CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series B.8-9). Elsewhere it is noted that Lorne Marshall had also applied for the
(continued...)

was also one who threatened to change architecture at McGill University completely, and he caused Nobbs to make a strong statement of his position on Modernism. This was Serge Chermayeff, who was reported at the meeting to be harbouring a desire to come to McGill University in order to revolutionize (North) American architectural practice. It was pointed out that he would entirely change the way architecture was taught at McGill and cause a complete break with the British system that had served them so long. Some argued that this might not be a completely bad thing, as there had been criticism from some quarters of McGill's methods. Nobbs, however, was not among the sanguine. Clearly worried that F. Cyril James, the Principal, was seriously considering Chermayeff, Nobbs wrote to him:

May I suggest your investigating Osborne [of Winnipeg] and Arthur [of Toronto] before going further in this matter? The appointment of either as head of the School would entail no risk to the results of 35 years of constructive effort. The School is not the fossilized institution it has been represented to be in certain quarters.

It is worth bearing in mind that in the two countries where these alleged modernists have had fullest scope, Germany and Russia to wit, this thing is now dead as a door nail.⁷¹

Fortunately for Nobbs, James wrote back that he had shown interest in Chermayeff at the meeting merely "to find out whether the rather sensational publicity that he has attracted

⁷⁰(...continued)

position (F. Cyril James, letter to Nobbs, 14 March 1940; CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series B.7-5).

⁷¹Nobbs, letter to F. Cyril James, Principal of McGill, 12 March 1940 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series B.7-5).

rested on any solid foundation.”⁷² Chermayeff had collaborated with German architect Eric Mendelssohn (1887-1953) after the latter had fled to London in the early 1930s. Together they won one major English competition and a small number of domestic commissions.⁷³ John Bland recalled that although Chermayeff was a good architect, “Nobbs couldn’t bear [him] and I think that was the end of that proposal.”⁷⁴ However, it seems clear from Nobbs’s anxious letter that he had more than a personal antipathy towards Chermayeff. Rather, he was fighting for the retention of the English arts-and-crafts-based system that he had worked so hard to set in place at McGill, and against the coming of radical modernism.

In the end, Nobbs was indisposed, by education and predilection, to accept the Modernist movement. He was a British imperialist and a Canadian nationalist, and these convictions made the idea of an international style that repudiated historical precedent profoundly unattractive to him, just as the Beaux-Arts approach had failed to move him earlier in the century. He was also fundamentally attached to such qualities as ornament—intelligently conceived and impeccably executed—and craft work. Although he did not revile the use of machine technology, he was fundamentally attached to hand work as the best thing when finances allowed, and to machine work that was designed

⁷²James, letter to Nobbs, 14 March 1940 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series B.7-5).

⁷³Donald Leslie Johnson and Donald Langmead, *Makers of 20th Century Modern Architecture: A Bio-Critical Sourcebook* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1997), p. 205. Johnson and Langmead describe Chermayeff as an interior designer.

⁷⁴Shubert et al, “Interview with Professor John Bland,” in *John Bland at Eighty: A Tribute*, eds. Irena Murray and Norbert Schoenauer (Montréal: McGill University, 1991), p. 11.

with an eye to history. He said in 1910 that “the true teaching lies . . . somewhere between the Beaux-Arts and the Arts and Crafts movement,” and this left Canada in a good position to “develop a sound foundation for the future structure of Canadian design.”⁷⁵ Nobbs’s convictions about architectural history, his ideas about a Folk culture in Québec, about Canadian nationalism, and about imperialism all contributed to his opinions about how Canadian architecture should develop, and it is with this that the next chapter is concerned.

⁷⁵Nobbs, “The Architecture of Canada,” p. 58.

Chapter Six “NATIONAL AND IMPERIAL TRADITION”

NOBBS WROTE in 1907 that “Architecture is always at its best when National in spirit rather than personal,” and he argued that the federal government should accept more of a rôle in the development of Canadian design by funding museums and travelling scholarships.¹ Enthusiastic Canadian nationalist and imperialist that he was, he made an impassioned plea that the government provide the Canadian people with a route to developing a uniquely Canadian school of art and design, particularly as an alternative to American practice. If the “National and Democratic arts of Architecture and Design” could be “saved in time,” he wrote, they would “help . . . our Imperial aspirations.”² The importance of the idea was to him more than simply the development of a Canadian style. That would be the vehicle and a key issue in itself, but Nobbs saw this project more broadly as a nation-building one too. He argued that there was not only an aesthetic but also a “political aspect of the ‘Americanization’ of our Arts where they might just as well be based on national and Imperial tradition.” In fact, “the fusion of our peoples’ tastes and ideals in mere matters of form would be a potent factor for national strength.” Specifically, he argued, this would have an effect on influence from the United States not just in architecture, but “in all the appurtenances of daily life in Canada, from tall

¹Nobbs, “Report on Proposals for *State Aid to Art Education in Canada*; and Support of a Plea for the Institution of Travelling Scholarships and Museums,” 4 May 1907, p. 3 (Canadian Architecture Collection, Blackader-Lauterman Library, McGill University [CAC], Nobbs Collection, Series C.1-10).

²Nobbs, “*State Aid to Art Education*,” p. 10.

buildings to personal attire.”³ He railed particularly against the creeping influence of the Ecole des Beaux Arts, or Academic School of architecture, so prevalent in the United States.⁴

As Kelly Crossman has shown, the previous generation, spurred on by the professionalization of their discipline and the threat of competition with American architects in their own country, had also been concerned with developing a national style.⁵ At the beginning of the new century economic conditions improved and this, together with “[p]ride in an expanding country, professional self-confidence, [and] arts and crafts theory,” spurred the century’s architects even more towards a preoccupation with national expression in their work.⁶ Nobbs belonged to this new generation, and from an early stage of his Canadian career he had made it clear that he believed that the project of developing a truly national Canadian architecture was vitally important. But more significantly, his report on “State Aid to Art Education” emphasizes that he saw the enterprise as more than just an architectural endeavour. He argued that “a commission on Art, but in a broader sense, is a National necessity rather than a luxury.”⁷ In the Canada-building, empire-boosting spirit of many of his compatriots in early-twentieth

³Nobbs, “*State Aid to Art Education*,” p. 9.

⁴Nobbs, “*State Aid to Art Education*,” p. 3.

⁵Kelly Crossman, “The National Idea,” in *Architecture in Transition: From Art to Practice, 1885-1906* (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1987), pp. 109-121.

⁶Crossman, *Architecture in Transition*, p. 109.

⁷Nobbs, “*State Aid to Art Education*,” p. 18.

century Canada, he saw such an institution as an essential step in protecting the country from undue influence from south of the border, and in preserving Canada's "natural" ties with Britain and the empire. In this report he argued that the government should support travelling scholarships that would allow young architects to travel to Britain (in particular) and examine the many fine examples of architecture and design from its most brilliant periods. Museum collections—in Ottawa and elsewhere—of plaster casts of such monuments would also allow for the study of the art that was really Canada's birthright. Here, there was no question in his mind that it was the British tradition specifically that stood as a shining beacon for those who wished to strengthen Canada's artistic expression. He wrote that "Beauty of form . . . has become a mere memory, half understood by the educated few, instead of the universal code of the race as it once was." The taste for excellent design, well carried out, was "once a national characteristic" and had now been completely lost in modern Canada.⁸ Once more, his use of the words "race" and "national" leaves no doubt as to the nation he means. It was to Britain, rather than to Canada *per se*, that he looked to build Canada's strength. Not surprisingly, this approach of encouraging the study of fine old British models of design was the one Nobbs had learned among his arts and crafts masters in Scotland and England.

In common with most other Canadian Imperialists of his generation, Nobbs was to change his tune in later years. The first world war strengthened the idea of Canada as a vital and independent nation with a rôle to play on the world stage, rather than merely as

⁸Nobbs, "State Aid to Art Education," p. 18.

part of a strong British Empire. In the years after the war, Nobbs modified his emphasis on the importance of the empire in favour of something more specifically Canadian; however, he never ceased to see British culture as the deepest spring from which Canadian ideas should flow.

Some years later, Traquair also identified the United States as the major threat to Canadian culture, although he phrased it in somewhat more positive terms. He argued that “Nationality—and character too—is created by opposition. Canada’s nationality was created by the United States and is still kept alive by them. Her independence of Great Britain has been assured for years . . . but her independence of the United States is less certain. She has, no doubt, political independence, but has she economic, or social, or cultural independence?”⁹ Writing after the war, he could see Canada as fully independent of Britain, but the United States remained a cultural threat.

For British arts and crafts architects and designers, the Britishness of the buildings and artefacts that inspired them was very important. Their models were not only fine examples of architecture and design; they were fine *British* examples (with occasional exceptions, occurring especially in the work of designers and decorative artists, and predominantly representing either other folk, or “Oriental” traditions, such as those that inspired ceramics designer William de Morgan). Looking to them would inspire the creation of a truly national art and architecture in their own time, in contrast to continental and other influences that had been prevalent for so long. This was of course

⁹Traquair, “The Canadian Type,” *Atlantic Monthly* 131 (June 1923): 825.

inherent in the idea of suitability to place, and architects looked (in theory at least) to the architecture of a specific region for inspiration when they planned a new building in that vicinity. In Edinburgh, both Nobbs and Traquair saw Robert Lorimer base many of his new buildings on the traditional forms of the Scottish countryside, and it is not surprising that they should have adopted a similar approach. Upon arriving in Montréal, both quickly became concerned with the lack of a Canadian national style of architecture, whose absence must have seemed painfully obvious. And both pondered over how such a national style was to be achieved. This chapter will deal chiefly with Nobbs, with contributions from Traquair. As a practising architect, he was directly concerned with the national style issue on a practical level. He wrote extensively, as the preceding chapters demonstrate, but his ideas also took concrete form, and as a builder he was required to commit himself in a highly visible and long-lasting way. Traquair never had to try out his theories in practice, but he did have many ideas about the direction Canadian architecture should take, and he expressed them in more ephemeral form.

The arts and crafts method—looking to local vernacular buildings for inspiration in developing a modern style—was the approach that both Nobbs and Traquair espoused upon arriving at McGill University, but it did not provide answers to all of their problems. It seemed at first to be the obvious solution to the problem of modern architecture in Canada, but Nobbs in particular found it wanting. Wendy Kaplan has noted a similar phenomenon among architects of domestic architecture in the United States:

The British concept of the domestic vernacular had two manifestations in America. One was the doctrine of fidelity to place, which encouraged

designers to look to the American landscape and past. The other was the adaptation of indigenous British Styles themselves—the Gothic, Tudor, and Queen Anne revivals. Although the latter might seem to contradict the insistence upon a uniquely American identity, many Americans believed that the United States was fundamentally English in its cultural traditions. In New England and the mid-Atlantic states, regions where identification with Britain was strongest, architects were especially drawn to British precedent.¹⁰

Kaplan identifies the colonial period as that most attractive to American architects, arguing that it had special significance as “a time when Americans had greater mastery of their environment”¹¹ She observes that Americans tended to idealize the colonial American past in the same way that Morris and his followers did Mediaeval England.

For Traquair (in theory) and Nobbs (in theory and practice), the Canadian answer to the Colonial style was the vernacular architecture of early Québec—specifically what Traquair called the “Canadian house.”¹² They were not the first to identify this genre as worthy of notice. Earlier, Francophone architects, among them Charles Baillargé (1826-1906), had written of its suitability to the climate and landscape, and argued that following these models could lead to the development of a regional style of architecture.¹³

¹⁰Wendy Kaplan, “The Vernacular in America, 1890-1920: Ideology and Design,” in *Art and the National Dream: The Search for Vernacular Expression in Turn-of-the-Century Design*, ed. Nicola Gordon Bowe (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 1993), p. 53.

¹¹Kaplan, “Vernacular in America,” p. 54.

¹²Traquair contrasted the purity of the “Canadian house” with those buildings, beginning in the last years of the eighteenth century, that showed “English or American classic influence.” (*The Old Architecture of Quebec: A Study of the Buildings Erected in New France from the Earliest Explorers to the Middle of the Nineteenth Century* [Toronto: Macmillan, 1947], p. 73).

¹³Crossman, *Architecture in Transition*, pp. 115-16.

But Nobbs and Traquair had the fervency of arts and crafts teachings behind them, and the movement to adopt the forms of old Québec did not gain serious momentum until the first decades of the twentieth century. Nobbs noted a similar phenomenon elsewhere. He wrote that the effect in Russia of the Victorian revival of English Gothic had not been specifically as a Gothic influence, but rather “as an interest in those national traditions which Catherine’s Frenchmen had so blandly brushed aside as barbaric.”¹⁴ This, he argued, was only one example of the continent-wide trend to follow “the English example of reviving a lost indigenous artistic tradition . . . in a spirit of nationalistic protest against the enforced academicism of Paris and her school.”¹⁵ He set out upon his arrival in Canada to do just that—reviving what he perceived to be a lost but valuable tradition that could contribute both suitable form and national associations to the architecture of Canada.

In a strange way, then, the very endeavour of rediscovering (as it seemed) the early architecture of Québec and using it to inspire the work of modern architects was particularly British—stemming as it did from arts and crafts practice—and perhaps therein could Nobbs and Traquair reconcile these two differing sides of their approach. For the architecture of Québec did not provide all the answers to the problem of a Canadian style. In Canada, of course, the idea of identification with Britain was even easier to justify than it was in the case of the United States. Canada was not only “fundamentally English in its

¹⁴Nobbs, “The Arts of Russia,” undated typescript, p. 5 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.9-1).

¹⁵Nobbs, “Arts of Russia,” p. 6.

cultural traditions,” but it was also a part of the British Empire and the use of English architectural styles could be justified on that basis. So Nobbs looked to the British architectural tradition in which he had been trained, and the vast majority of his own buildings reflect that much more strongly than they do the Québec architecture he identified as so truly Canadian. He said in a lecture in 1910, reprinted in *Construction*, that “all things that are English form, I believe, an essential part of the inheritance of this land and people. I make no apology for stating that something of that sentiment should be expressed in many of our Canadian Dining Rooms.”¹⁶ In the manuscript text of the lecture, Nobbs had made this statement even stronger, excluding the word “many” so that it suggested that “our Canadian Dining Rooms” in general should express English sentiment.¹⁷ This is an important assertion as it illuminates Nobbs’s exclusionary definition of Canadianness. At this point, “this land and people” were obviously, for him, fundamentally British. Canada was British and its people were British, notwithstanding the masses of immigrants from northern, southern and eastern Europe, and even (though less welcome) from elsewhere then flooding into the country in response to very specific immigration policies on the part of the government and especially of Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier’s administration around the turn of the century.

¹⁶Nobbs, “The Architecture of Canada” (paper read before the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada [RAIC] Third Annual Assembly), *Construction* (October 1910): 57.

¹⁷Nobbs, “For Winnipeg 21 August 1910,” manuscript (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.9-5).

Even the rural Québec population, which Nobbs lauded as so very Canadian, is left out of this picture of Canada. Recall that in 1905 he had pointed to the value of following the local (Québec) traditions because they were founded, in part, on “national temperament.”¹⁸ In fact, Nobbs did little more than pay lip service to Québec vernacular as an appropriate form to follow in modern architecture; the very year that he wrote the above, he was designing the Colby house, a building that was profoundly British in inspiration, and it was to point the way for the majority of his domestic commissions (fig. 6.1).¹⁹ At one point he even repudiated the Canadian vernacular tradition entirely, writing that “Canadian architecture *with no past to speak of* should be a graft upon English tradition. Same as Canadian literature must be.”²⁰

Among the exceptions in Nobbs’s oeuvre are the J.L Todd House and the A.H. Scott house, and they are perhaps his two best-known domestic commissions. But they are exceptions in that they show far stronger French-Canadian influence than the vast majority of his work. Various scholars’ treatment of them has contributed to a somewhat slanted view of Nobbs’s domestic oeuvre, as they are often given undue emphasis. Susan

¹⁸Nobbs, “On the Value of the Study of Old Work,” *Canadian Architect and Builder* (CAB [May 1905]): 75.

¹⁹This was a house designed in 1905-06 for Dr. Colby, history chair at McGill University. On this house see Susan Wagg, *Percy Erskine Nobbs: Architect, Artist, Craftsman* (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1982), pp. 21-22.

²⁰Nobbs, “The Style Question in Canada,” manuscript, nd. (McGill University Archives [MUA], Box 2: 35/17/140. This manuscript is in the Traquair collection, but I base my attribution on the handwriting combined with the fact that it shares a file folder with a typescript which is certainly by Nobbs). The emphasis is mine.

Wagg, for instance, includes them as two of the four Nobbs houses she discusses in her monograph, while Harold Kalman gives the Todd House similar prominence. Kalman notes of the Todd house that “The use of vernacular forms and materials was, of course, the arts and crafts approach; here Nobbs found satisfactory indigenous Canadian sources, casting only a few glances at Britain . . . in keeping with his ongoing search for an appropriate national expression.”²¹ This is an accurate statement, but it does not give the whole picture since this is one of the very few cases in which Nobbs did find “satisfactory indigenous Canadian sources” for his work. Although the Todd and Scott houses are outstanding examples of Nobbs’s work, they are also outstanding in that they are exceptions to his usual approach, and they should be seen as such. Notwithstanding my criticism of other authors for giving undue prominence to Nobbs’s Québec vernacular-inspired work, I shall also discuss them extensively, because I want to analyse them in light of Nobbs’s thoughts on ethnicity in Canada. I hope that by noting this, I can counteract the idea that his work chiefly reflected the influence of the Québec vernacular.

The substantial Todd house was an early project, designed beginning in 1907 in Senneville, Québec, for Dr. John L. Todd, Professor of Parasitology at McGill University (fig. 6.2). The house cannot be defined as belonging to one historic style, which is as Nobbs would have wished it. This is certainly the kind of approach that Traquair was later to advocate too. He condemned the idea of strict copying of a style, arguing that

²¹Harold Kalman, *A History of Canadian Architecture*, vol. 2 (Toronto: Oxford, 1994), p. 630.

“The historic styles of the past were living products of their age. The modern reproductions are dead and quite uninteresting—more than uninteresting, they are repulsive. . . . But just because we cannot copy the French-Canadian house is no indication that we may not learn a great deal from it. Perhaps we can learn more from it than if we could copy it.”²² The Todd house is a true example of the arts and crafts tradition, in that it responds to its site and the needs of its owners, combining ideas from various sources in an imaginative way. The plan is efficiently laid out along the lines recommended by some later-nineteenth century architects in Britain who condemned the frequent habit—dating from earlier in the century—of placing kitchen and dining room so far from each other that food had to be carried through the main corridor, disturbing the house owners on its journey and arriving depressingly cold at its destination. Nobbs used an asymmetrical T-shaped plan, with the short leg of the T forming a service wing (fig. 6.3). Kitchen, scullery, servants’ hall and storage areas are all here, with a pantry linking the kitchen to the dining room. Above this, and connected by a secondary stairwell, are the servants’ bedrooms and bathroom. On both the ground and second floors (with the exception of the essential connection to the dining room) these areas are connected with the main house through only a single door, which, when shut, would effectively separate the servants’ quarters and work spaces from the rest of the house. The main rooms of the

²²Traquair, “The Old Cottages of Quebec: Of Solid, Direct Construction, Well Adapted to the Climate, and with the Dignity that comes Naturally to Simple Things Free from Sham,” *House Beautiful* 63 (May 1928): 654.

house, except the dining room, face the view over the lake.²³ On the second floor, a suite of two bedrooms, a dressing room, a bathroom and an open-air sleeping porch forms the owners' domain, and could also be shut off from the rest of the bedroom floor. These rooms too face the lake, with two more bedrooms and, of course, the servants' wing at the other side of the house.

This delineation of the house into separate domains of owners and servants is strongly in the English tradition, with the use of a service wing being a common solution. The sleeping porches, on the other hand, date from the American arts and crafts tradition, and were used, not surprisingly, particularly in California where they would have had a considerably longer season of use than the short summers and plentiful mosquitoes of this more northern climate would allow. The Québec influence makes itself felt most strongly in the sharply-angled hipped roofs with dormer windows set low in them, and the use of a central chimney with another at each end (although in this case the latter are not false). Seen from the lake, the footprint of the building is also like the larger of the Québec houses Nobbs admired; as at the Ferme St.-Gabriel they often consisted of a main block with lower wings on either side. As Kalman notes, Nobbs also used casement windows (a form French in origin, and used in Québec) and stretched a porch across the front of the house.²⁴ The latter has a very different feel from the traditional Québec porch, however. Because the house is two-and-a-half storeys rather than one-and-a-half,

²³See Wagg, *Percy Erskine Nobbs*, p. 25.

²⁴Kalman, *Canadian Architecture*, p. 630.

the porch roof is not an extension of the main roof as it was in so many of the province's vernacular examples. Moreover, the shingled outbuilding seen to the right rear of the perspective is firmly in the English tradition, and Nobbs even illustrated it as "A Study in English Domestic Design" in his 1924 article, "The English Tradition in Canadian Architecture."

Nobbs returned to the Québec idiom some years later and more emphatically in his A.H. Scott House in Dorval, Québec, of 1923 (fig. 6.4). This is a much smaller house, and the picturesqueness provided by slight asymmetry and variety of form in the Todd House has given way to a much more restrained treatment, perhaps related, as Wagg argues, to the trend to a more conservative neo-Georgianism that pervaded domestic architecture in particular after the Great War.²⁵ Built on the foundations of an earlier farmhouse, it has an oblong block plan without wings.²⁶ This house reveals its ancestry far more willingly than does the Todd House, and Nobbs himself noted that "in general form it follows the French Canadian tradition."²⁷ The use of materials is highly typical of local historical work, being rough cast for the body of the building with diagonally-set metal shingles on the roof. These shingles were a common feature of old Québec farm houses, on which both Nobbs and Traquair remarked more than once, admiring them particularly as they weathered to "a beautiful golden brown and green colour like the scales on the

²⁵Wagg, *Percy Erskine Nobbs*, p. 28.

²⁶Nobbs, "Tradition and Progress in Canadian Architecture," *Studio* 104 (1932): 84.

²⁷Nobbs, "Tradition and Progress," p. 84.

back of a perch."²⁸ Traquair designated them "one of the most admirable features of French-Canadian architecture." But although Nobbs noted that the roof of the Scott house was "laid in the local manner," he commented that he had substituted galvanized iron shingles for the traditional tin,²⁹ which would have quite a different effect over time. Although the initial impression is strongly of the Québec farmhouse, the Scott house has pronounced classical features, including an ionic-columned entrance porch, heavy quoins on the corners, and a frieze running under the eaves of the slightly bellcast roof. It also has a bay window on the rear façade. In a typical Québec vernacular motif, a row of dormers lights the second floor on either side, and on one side smaller dormers also light the attic storey.

In plan, the house is designed on the same principle as the Todd House: separate areas are provided for servants and owners as far as possible within the confines of a simple block like this (fig. 6.5). (Perhaps servants were housed in the attic storey, which they would have had to reach by a secondary staircase from the bedroom floor; this would not have kept them well segregated in the efficient manner of the service wing in the Todd House.) The plan is very modern as one would expect, and, belying the traditional appearance of the house externally, no hint remains of the two-room division common to the old Québec houses. Instead, the main floor is divided into the several rooms—living room, dining room, hall, servants' sitting room, kitchen etc.—that were part of more formal

²⁸Traquair, *The Cottages of Quebec* (Montréal: McGill University Press [MUP], 1926), p. 13; reprinted, with additions, from *Canadian Homes and Gardens* (January, 1926).

²⁹Nobbs, "Tradition and Progress," p. 84.

modern living. The small garage and cottage that Nobbs designed the next year for the Scotts also has a bellcast roof—this time hipped—with low-set dormers and diagonal shingles. In this case, the diminutive residence has a feature very much beloved of the English arts and crafts tradition, but rather degraded here. At one end of the living room is what appears to be an inglenook, allowing the residents to huddle cosily around the wall radiator!

Both the Todd and the Scott houses draw, to varying degrees, on the Québec vernacular tradition and combine it with English elements of planning and form to create (especially in the Todd House) the kind of building Nobbs seemed to be talking about when he called for a modern Canadian style. Neither is slavish in its historicism, and neither sacrifices modern advances in technology or changes in living patterns that required different things from a house. Neither could be mistaken for an old house, but both sit comfortably within the domestic traditions of both Québec and England.

Nobbs was to use the classicized Québécois of the Scott House at least twice more. A couple of years later, in 1924, he designed a small office building for the Elmhurst Dairy in Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, Québec (fig. 6.6). This diminutive building, like the Scott House, is oblong in plan and one and a half storeys. Although built of brick and far more plain and utilitarian, it has the same prominent quoins and pedimented porch, in this case enclosed and with corner pilasters. The windows in the dairy building, while shuttered in the local manner (with a whimsical note provided by cutouts of milk bottles in the shutters), are English sashes rather than casements, except those in the dormers. Also in

the Québec style, the dormers are set fairly low in the steeply-pitched roof, which itself curves out at the eave ever so slightly to form a minute bellcast.

The classicized Québécois appeared again as late as 1940, when Nobbs used it for St. Paul's Church, Gaspé, Québec (fig. 6.7). The church has the high, steeply-pitched roof that Traquair was to note was usual in old churches, and in combination with the traditional flèche, or sharply-pointed spire, it gives the building a profile immediately evocative of the early churches of the province. Traquair noted the "slender church spires, tin covered and sparkling in the distance" remarked upon by early travellers as a characteristic feature of the Québec landscape, and indeed Nobbs's perspective of the church emphasizes the spire in just this way, silhouetting it against the sky.³⁰ Traquair's description of the typical early Québec church steeple also accurately describes Nobbs's spire of St. Paul's. Traquair notes that the wooden spires traditionally had an octagonal belfry (in this case enclosed with wooden louvres) on a square base set astride the roof, and topped by a "very slender needle spire with a pronounced bellcast."³¹ The early Québec vernacular appearance of St. Paul's stops with the roof and the spire, although it is not uncommon for later churches in the province to show the classical influence evident in this building. As with the Scott House and the Elmhurst Dairy, a classical porch is provided, and in this frame building the corners are marked by wooden pilasters.

³⁰Traquair, *Architecture of Quebec*, p. 135. A 1939 drawing shows the church without the steeple, and with the notation "detail of belfry to be supplied later." Other details remain substantially the same, but the earlier drawing emphasizes how much the spire contributed to the traditional appearance of the church, as defined by Traquair.

³¹Traquair, *Architecture of Quebec*, p. 140.

The windows are not at all in the Québec vernacular tradition, being rows of three or four tall lancets. The details of the building might therefore be described as Gothicized classical Québécois, but it gives the general impression of a “traditional” Québec church.

Two houses, the office of a dairy, and a church, dating from 1911 to 1940: what is it that they have in common? Why did Nobbs choose to draw on the historic architectural forms of Québec for these four, when the majority of his buildings had their roots in Britain? The answer lies, I think, in Nobbs's and Traquair's association of Québec society, and therefore its architecture, with simplicity. Both the Todd House and the Scott House were country dwellings, and although they were not meant for rustic purposes, the notion of the house in the country does suggest a certain retreat from the hurly-burly of modern life. Much in the way that middle-class clients in early-nineteenth century England often commissioned *cottages ornées*—country houses which, though they might be very large, were built in the rustic cottage tradition—the Scotts and Todds could enjoy the pleasant associations of traditional values and a simpler life free of the bustle and complexity of the city, called up by the “old Québec” appearance of their houses.

The Elmhurst Dairy is of course a rural building, and with its farming associations the rural Québec style must have seemed quite suitable for it. But it also fits into a tradition—dating from at least the late-eighteenth century—of classicism associated with dairy buildings (in this case it is the dairy office, but the connection is certainly there) in

the Primitive manner. In this case, the Primitive element is provided by the rustic associations of the Québec forms Nobbs used in the building.³²

The church in Gaspé is atypical among Nobbs's original church designs. One United church designed for the town of Arvida, Québec (1927-28) has a hint of the Québécois idiom, although it is less pronounced than at St. Paul's. The reason for this is largely that the design lacks the characteristic tall *flèche*, and has instead a low, open cupola. However, it does have the steeply-pitched, slightly bellcast roof. Two projects for city churches—in Montréal and Brandon, Manitoba (see Chapter Five)—are resoundingly Gothic in style.³³ A 1909 proposal for a Mission church in Montréal is a strange mix, with a wide, low silhouette, diamond-paned windows, and half-timbering in the gable (this must surely be false—a surprising detail for one of Nobbs's arts and crafts sensibilities). Finally, a 1920 proposal for a buttressed, low-walled Presbyterian church in Nôtre-Dame-de-Grace uses, appropriately enough, the stepped-gable Scottish vernacular motif that was a favourite of Lorimer. But St. Paul's is a country church and Nobbs depicted it surrounded by woods and meadows. Not only is it in a French-speaking area, but the rural surroundings must have cried out to Nobbs for a steep roof and a slender spire that would be a landmark in the old way. Once more, the "traditional" associations of the early Québec forms must have seemed most suitable.

³²See Pierre de la Ruffinière du Prey, *Sir John Soane. Catalogues of Architectural Drawings in the Victoria and Albert Museum* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1985), pp. 31, 46.

³³He once wrote that the use of Gothic forms should be restricted to Anglican and Presbyterian churches, which may suggest that he believed the converse as well, to at least some extent ("The Style Question in Canada," manuscript, nd [MUA, Box 2: 35/17/140]).

Nobbs used this Québec vernacular idiom for several other country or small-town houses as well. Among others, a house proposed for Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue gives very much a Québec vernacular impression, especially a version with a hipped roof. Sometimes the vernacular appearance is quite pronounced, while in other buildings it is just an impression created by the use of a very high, steeply-pitched roof or a row of dormer windows, as in a 1928 cottage for Mrs. J. Craven at Hudson (then Como), Québec. Nobbs also used this idiom for a city building—a Clubhouse Recreation Centre for the Town of Mount Royal—again with a hipped roof and dormers. As a centre for retreat and recreation, the Québécois style must have seemed ideal to the architect, as appropriate to the building's function as a place to escape from the quotidian duties and complications of modern life.³⁴

So although Nobbs had written of the early architecture of Québec as a sensible and reasonable example to follow in the design of modern buildings—as a way of achieving a style of architecture that would be both modern and special to Canada—it appears that he associated it almost exclusively with an architecture of leisure and retreat, and of a rural way of life.³⁵ As I discussed in Chapter Four, Traquair also identified French-

³⁴Nobbs, Proposed house for Mr. Jean B. D'Aoust, Ste.-Anne-de-Bellevue, 1944-45 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, project 653); Cottage for Mrs J. Craven, Hudson, 1928 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, project 417); Clubhouse Recreation Centre, Town of Mount Royal, 1944 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, project 654).

³⁵Using the example of the designer Henry van de Velde's rural house, Bloemenwerf, Amy Ogata has demonstrated that a similar process took place in fin-de-siècle Belgium. The antimodern impulse moved the artistic *avant-garde* to celebrate "the myth of an idealized Simple Life of humble work, rural living, and the presence of art as an intrinsic part of everyday life."

(continued...)

Canadian precedents as most suitable for use in domestic and church architecture. Nobbs had written in a 1905 article, "let us study the old work around us because it is ours, the natural product of this bit of earth on which we live. I assure you there are the germs in the local style of a manner, which if rightly developed with loving care, would go far to make a national style possible."³⁶ This article emphasized the genuineness and wholesomeness of the architecture of the Québec Folk, and it was clearly upon these associations that Nobbs wanted to play in these buildings.

The vast majority of Nobbs's houses are urban, and they do not pay homage to the Québec tradition in the same way. They are equally modern in their treatment of traditional forms, but the traditions on which they draw are almost always British. Many of his rural houses also use a style that owes more to the English tradition than to anything else, and it is clear that it was in this idiom that he felt most comfortable. Less than a year after his arrival in Canada he wrote, "It is extraordinary how little direct Scots and English influence there is in the architecture of Canada. . . ."³⁷ Arguing that Britain was pre-eminent in the areas of domestic architecture and parish churches, he opined, "It is high time that more attention were be stowed upon the[se English examples] by those willing to learn from 'the old fellows' what can be learned from no other source." As I have

³⁵(...continued)

(Ogata, "Artisans and Art Nouveau in Fin-de siècle Belgium: Primitivism and Nostalgia," in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, ed. Lynda Jessup (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), p. 166.

³⁶Nobbs, "On the Value of the Study of Old Work," *CAB* (May 1905): 75.

³⁷"The Gargoyle", "Montreal Letter No. III," in *CAB* (June 1904): 99.

shown, even those houses that draw on Québec vernacular forms are thoroughly British in their interiors and planning.

Nobbs's earliest country houses are both in an English idiom. He described both as "cottages," and they were clearly not designed for formal living. One, for Dr. Adami at Windermere, British Columbia, was probably meant as a cottage as we use the word today, that is, a house inhabited only temporarily on weekends or for a season (fig. 6.8). In this case, the large, informal two-storey living room with a gallery running around three sides of it, together with the animal skins and heads on the wall, make its function clear. Nobbs sent an illustration of the Adami cottage to Robert Lorimer, who thought it made "an uncommon nice looking little house," although he criticized the gallery arrangement as it would allow servants to eavesdrop.³⁸

Nobbs's house for Dr. Colby was probably his first city house to be built (see fig. 6.1). As I noted above, it was unapologetically English in inspiration, and included such favourite arts and crafts motifs as a tiled fireplace with an inscription ("*Post Tenebras Lux*"), with built-in upholstered seats on either side creating an inglenook-like space (fig. 6.9). The Colby house exemplifies the kind of dwelling Nobbs was tending to build in the early years of the century in its Englishness, its dependence on arts and crafts teachings, and its concern with fine detail and exquisite quality of work. However, it is rather more picturesque than most, with several whimsical features such as a little balcony tucked into

³⁸Robert Lorimer, letter to Nobbs, 16 February 1907 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series F.14-7).

a spare corner and opening off a bedroom, and a charming oriel window over the doorway. The plan shows the approach he was to continue to take; already he was placing the kitchen and other utility areas on the street side, leaving the tremendous view (which he was at pains to indicate in the watercolour perspective) for the dining room, drawing room, library and main bedroom. On steeply-sloping sites such as this one, the servants' sitting room often enjoyed the view as well, being placed in the back half of the basement storey but completely above ground because of the hill.

Nobbs's own house, built in 1914, has a similarly picturesque silhouette, and its entrance front is rather cosy and cottage-like (fig. 6.10). The house is actually quite large, and its rear portion is a spare block, very high on its sloping site, and with many windows to take advantage of the view over Montréal (fig. 6.11). In this house built for himself and his new family, Nobbs indulged in a carved stone lintel with the date and a putto displaying the initial N (fig. 6.12). Wagg notes that the interiors were decorated in the fashion favoured by the early arts and crafts proponents such as Philip Webb and William Morris, including Morris wallpaper and hearth tiles by William de Morgan.³⁹

Nobbs's architectural influences remained overwhelmingly British, and he continued to turn frequently to the vernacular and old English forms that had so attracted the first generation of arts and crafts architects, as in his planned development of Belvedere Terrace in Westmount (fig. 6.13). However, in common with many architects of his time—and as I noted of the Scott House above—he tended to turn increasingly

³⁹Wagg, *Percy Erskine Nobbs*, pp. 23-24.

towards more restrained Georgian examples after the war and beyond. Exceptions are particularly to be found in his country cottages, such as a number that he built in Hudson (Como), a small town near Montréal where his wife had a family house (now Greenwood museum).

The houses he designed in 1928-29 for a development in Grove Park, Westmount, are a good example of this increasing Georgian influence (fig. 6.14). Nobbs illustrated the example at No. 2 Grove Park in his *Studio* article in 1932.⁴⁰ The two-and-a-half-storey symmetrical house is oblong in plan with a porch on one side and an enclosed sunroom on the other. An unidentified photograph in the Nobbs Collection shows another house that may well belong to the same development; it is close kin if not. Again, the treatment is restrained and the earlier, more picturesque, massing and skyline are not present. Rather, quiet classical details adorn the facade and a symmetrical plan has replaced those governed by internal spaces.

By this time, Nobbs had come to believe that Georgian architecture, the first British building tradition to have appeared in Canada, was fundamentally suitable to this country, and he ceased his search for the vernacular forms of a Folk. He wrote in 1924 that "that old Georgian manner of building may be called both *natural* and English."⁴¹ Although this article goes on to state that the English tradition had become so disjointed by the end of the nineteenth century that it was difficult or impossible to follow it in any

⁴⁰Nobbs, "Tradition and Progress," p. 90.

⁴¹Nobbs, "The English Tradition in Canadian Architecture," *Architectural Review* 55 (June 1924): 236. The emphasis is his.

meaningful way and it tended to inspire little more than confusion and bad architecture, it is clear from his practice that he believed that the English tradition continued to be a “natural” style for Canada. More specifically, he acknowledged that by the time of writing “the acceptance of the Georgian models is again in the ascendent.” This, he believed, would help contribute to a truly Canadian style as these Georgian models had “the advantages of the eighteenth century’s amelioration on American soil, of an ultimate origin under sunny skies, and more inestimable still, of a residual deposit in the consciousness of the North Americans having become by now racy of the soil.” In other words, the Georgian forms had become naturalized by their long presence on North American soil. Their “origin under sunny skies” was also very important, and points to a life-long interest of Nobbs, which was the development of architecture with respect to climate.

Building around climate was an idea that Nobbs often proffered as one of the more likely ways that an architecture that was truly Canadian might be developed. One of the things that enraged him most about many transplanted architectural styles was that they had developed under completely different climatic conditions than those they would encounter in their new home. This too was a concern that had been expressed in the architectural press for some years.⁴² Crossman observes that some earlier architects had worried that new materials and prosperity had created a concern for elegance that left

⁴²For a discussion of architects’ concern with climate and architecture in the late-nineteenth century, see Crossman, *Architecture in Transition*, pp. 115-119.

behind the traditional consideration of climate that marked Canada's vernacular architecture. Nobbs, he suggests, was the first really to argue that an architecture based on climate could point the direction to a national style.⁴³ In truth, Nobbs admitted on several occasions that following climate was likely to lead to the development of a number of regional styles rather one truly national one, as "there are many climates in Canada, all rigorous in one way or another."⁴⁴ As early as a few years after his arrival he noted that "from Vancouver to Halifax . . . signs are not wanting of the development of distinct local character," and ascribed this new character to "the vigours of our climate."⁴⁵ This was part of what he admired so much about early Québec architecture—both he and Traquair often contended that it responded perfectly to environmental conditions and therefore could teach many lessons to the architects of their own time. In his scheme for a community housing development at Queen Mary's Gardens in suburban Montréal Nobbs based the design of the houses, as the author of an article on the proposal states, "more or less upon the old French tradition in the Province—a **thoroughly acclimatized style**," although the interiors were of course modern.⁴⁶ Nobbs's watercolours of the houses even

⁴³Crossman, *Architecture in Transition*, p. 130.

⁴⁴Nobbs, "Canadian Architecture," typescript; read before the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), September 1922, p. 2 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.9-6).

⁴⁵Nobbs, "Art Education in the British Commonwealth," typescript, 1909, p. 9 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.9-5).

⁴⁶"A Study in Community Housing Near Montreal," *La Revue Municipale* (December 1927): 33. The emphasis is the author's.

show the roofs—blue-green in colour, and possibly slate—covered in tiles set on an angle in the manner of the ubiquitous Québec tin roof.

Strangely, he admitted that the bellcast roof form so evocative of the rural Québec built landscape was not “thoroughly acclimatized” at all. “Perhaps its grace has been sufficient justification” for its use, he wrote, given that it was a “bad snow form.”⁴⁷ Traquair agreed, noting that “The deep shadow beneath the eaves is of great artistic value, but practically the curving roof tends to hold the snow and to form icicles; it is not a good winter roof. But it was apparently admired, since all but the earliest houses have the bellcast.”⁴⁸ Seemingly, both he and Nobbs were willing to excuse the Québec Folk for adopting an aesthetically-pleasing but impractical form, although in modern building they disapproved sternly of such compromises. As I have noted, Nobbs used this roof on several buildings, albeit in a much-reduced form, thus paying homage to the tradition while avoiding the wintery problems it might cause.

Nobbs himself was only so far willing to concede design to climatic demands. He wrote disparagingly in 1924 of western Europeans who, upon coming to a climate such as Canada's, ignored the fact that flat or steeply-pitched roofs were the best for dealing with snow—as he was to reiterate often—and instead persisted in “clinging illogically to their prejudice for pitched roofs of slate and tile in climates where sheet metal has every advantage for slopes or only adopt flat roof forms when driven by sheer economic necessity

⁴⁷Nobbs, *Architecture in Canada*, talk read before the RIBA, 21 January 1924 (London: RIBA, 1924).

⁴⁸Traquair, *Cottages of Quebec*, p. 11.

to do so”⁴⁹ Nobbs himself used flat roofs only on some commercial or public buildings, and certainly never, to my knowledge, on domestic projects. Nor was sheet metal a favoured roofing material with him, and his houses have “pitched roofs of slate” and shingle more often than not. His Colby house, built only a couple of years into his Canadian career (see fig. 6.1), has a particularly bad snow roof; the double-gabled form seems designed to trap a large drift of snow in the central valley, and may well have had leakage problems as a result. One near-exception is his own house, which had few snow-catching angles and valleys, but even then he considered adding a pair of dormer windows, together with various other embellishments, to the house after it was built (see fig. 6.1!).

Nobbs had a chance at an early stage to express his opinions on the importance of climate to architectural style when the Premier of Saskatchewan, Walter Scott, asked him to serve as chief assessor for the competition to design a legislative building for the new province. As author of the programme and chooser of his co-assessors, Nobbs had a good deal of influence on the resulting design. Part of his directions to the competitors regarding the character of the buildings advised that “climatic and labour conditions and materials available are such as largely to dictate the type of building selected by the Assessors.”⁵⁰ He noted that these climatic conditions included wide extremes of

⁴⁹Nobbs, “English Tradition,” p. 238. See also “Tradition and Progress in Canadian Architecture,” *Studio* 104 (1932): 82, 85.

⁵⁰Nobbs, “Conditions of Competition for the Selection of an Architect for the Proposed Government Buildings at Regina, Saskatchewan,” 1907 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series A.5-3).

temperature, bright northern light, few dull days, little rain and a great deal of wind. It may seem obvious that such factors should be taken into consideration in the design of a building, but Nobbs plainly intended the competing architects to consider them as more than sheerly practical factors. Significantly, he discussed climatic conditions under the subheading “style,” thereby explicitly suggesting that competitors should consider them in that light.

But climate was of course not the only factor Nobbs felt should be taken into consideration in the design of this important public building. As Crossman has noted, it is not known exactly why Scott hit upon Nobbs as his choice for first assessor, but it does point to the latter’s increasing eminence in the field quite shortly after his arrival in Canada.⁵¹ Scott and Nobbs between them selected the seven architectural firms asked to compete for the project: Cass Gilbert from the United States (almost certainly Scott’s choice); Mitchell and Raine from England; Storey and Van Egmond of Regina; Francis Rattenbury, the architect of the new British Columbia legislature; Darling and Pearson from Toronto; and the two firms of Marchand and Haskell and E. and W.S. Maxwell from Montréal. Gilbert wrote several times to Scott, advising him as to the programme and also the composition of the jury panel. Gilbert wrote to Scott that “I do not know Professor Nobbs but I do know Mr. Goodhue slightly and he is known as a man of artistic

⁵¹Crossman, *Architecture in Transition*, p. 143. In agreeing to Scott’s proposals, Nobbs also pointed out that he had recently served as assessor for the Alexandra Hospital and Royal Victoria Nurses Home in Montréal as well as for the new Halifax Cathedral (Nobbs, letter to Walter Scott, 3 November 1906 [CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series A.5-3]). It was almost certainly through this last competition that he had met and become friends with its winner Goodhue, head of the New York office of Cram and Goodhue, which also had an office in Boston.

skill and ability, though not particularly trained in monumental building. While there is distinctly no objection to Mr. Goodhue . . . I believe that in so important and serious a matter as a great public building . . . it be well to also have an expert more familiar with such problems.” He then went on to suggest four possible additions to the panel.⁵² Scott having obviously relayed Gilbert’s concerns to Nobbs, the latter paraphrased them amusingly for Goodhue: “the said Cass complained, I believe, that he does not know who I am and that you are a very artistic person.”⁵³ Goodhue replied with two possible suggestions for a third assessor, of whom one was Frank Miles Day of Philadelphia—also one of Gilbert’s four suggestions and then president of the American Institute of Architects (AIA)—and the other R. Clifton Sturgis of Boston. Day, wrote Goodhue, was Anglo-Celtic in his sympathies. Sturgis was “very distinctly a gentleman and a scholar, and with the same proclivities as the rest of us—in fact, is an awful Anglo-maniac, and wears spats all the time”⁵⁴ Day was asked to serve as third assessor, and thus completed the panel.

Ironically, the disappointed Gilbert probably designed his entry in the Gothic style in a specific response to what he thought was a suggestion in Nobbs’s competition programme. This stated that although the style chosen was left to the discretion of the competing architects, “They are reminded . . . that the Province is politically within the

⁵²Cass Gilbert, letter to Walter Scott, 20 August 1907 (Saskatchewan Archives Board [SAB], microfilm from Walter Scott papers in Saskatoon R.7-1, reel 28).

⁵³Nobbs, letter to Goodhue, 27 September 1907 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series F.14-5).

⁵⁴Goodhue, letter to Nobbs, 18 October 1907 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series F.14-5).

British Empire, and that this fact should be expressed in its Public Buildings.”⁵⁵ Gilbert may well have taken this as a hint that a Gothic building would be well received. Given Canada’s and Britain’s Houses of Parliament, he was certainly justified in this, and Nobbs even suggested frequently in lectures and publications that Gothic had “a peculiar quality of national individuality”⁵⁶ (although Gilbert, never having heard of him, probably had no contact with such statements).⁵⁷ In any case, it certainly seems likely that Gilbert was attempting to distance his design from the American state capitol buildings that had so inspired Scott.

Nobbs had no intention of pointing the competitors towards the Gothic style by this statement. A clue to what he did have in mind may be found in his response to the Alberta government’s request that he provide a critique of the design they were then considering for their own new legislative building. This request occurred while he was in Saskatchewan in connection with the planned Regina building, and Nobbs made the trip from Regina to Edmonton for the purpose, examining the drawings and the proposed site and meeting with the Premier to discuss his views on both. He outlined the substance of

⁵⁵Nobbs, “Conditions of Competition for . . . Regina,” p. 11.

⁵⁶Nobbs, “The Architectural Revivals of the XIX Century in England,” lecture to the OAA, 15 January 1907 and the PQAA Sketching Club, 23 January 1907 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.9-2).

⁵⁷Interestingly, however, Nobbs spoke at the 41st Annual Dinner of the AIA in Chicago in November of 1907, where it seems not unlikely that Gilbert may have heard him. If he was indeed there, and paying attention, he should have been warned not to build in the Gothic style, as Nobbs made a strong statement on that occasion about the unsuitability of Gothic to public buildings, and argued that the main advantage to a Gothic revival was the positive effect it would have on classical architecture.

his remarks to the premier in a letter to the Deputy Minister of Public Works and added, in a footnote, some further enlightening comments. He noted that the premier had blanched at his estimate of what the building as designed would cost, and he offered a suggestion. The design as it stood was, he noted, “an excellently worked out example of the ‘Academic Style’ of work so popular just now in the United States.”⁵⁸ This style, he suggested, was unnecessarily expensive as it offered less usable space relative to halls, stairs, walls and other unusable spaces than other styles did. But a more important drawback to “lay against its stately grandeur” was that it was “thoroughly non British in feeling, the English tradition of classical architecture being far more sincere, freer and bolder and consequently more elastic in treatment.” The design as it stood would not distinguish itself at all as Canadian, being “precisely the class of work to be found in every state in the union and every Republic in South America.” Rather than the Englishness which Nobbs had noted would be ideal for the Saskatchewan building, it quite unsuitably represented “cosmopolitanism and the Latin civilization.” He recommended a switch to the modern Free Classic in favour for English public buildings, and “sometimes called the Anglo Classic or Imperial Style,” which in addition to greater economy offered the “distinctive national character” so important to such a building. As Nobbs makes quite clear in this passage, this national character is once again not specifically Canadian but rather British. In fact, Imperial.

⁵⁸Nobbs, letter to John Stocks, Deputy Minister of Public Works, Alberta, 12 August 1907 (SAB, DPW I-59 2/3). All quotations in this paragraph are drawn from this letter.

Nobbs was to use this style himself on more than one occasion. A competition entry for a new city hall in Winnipeg, designed a few years after the Saskatchewan competition, in 1912-13, has a rusticated lower section with three-storey pilasters separating the windows on the upper levels (fig. 6.15). True to his conviction that notable architectural features should be used to mark important functions within, the four-columned portico stands above the rusticated lower storeys, denoting the council chamber directly behind it on the third floor. The colonnaded drum and dome above emphasizes the building's function even more clearly.

Nobbs's statement regarding the Imperial nature of Saskatchewan inspired his friend Goodhue, who wrote that "your conditions for the Regina competition seem to me 'bully', and the thing that I liked best about them was that they seemed to me to call for a building that should reflect ethnically the people for whose use it is to be built."⁵⁹ The idea that such a building as Nobbs proposed would reflect the ethnicity of Saskatchewan is quite false. Although those of British origin did make up the largest single group of the province's inhabitants, Goodhue's statement completely ignores the vast number of immigrants from other countries then populating the province, and outnumbering the British.⁶⁰ But Nobbs was certainly not alone in his view. Moyles and Owrap have

⁵⁹Goodhue, letter to Nobbs, 18 October 1907 (CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series F-14.5).

⁶⁰In 1901 the population of Saskatchewan was 43.9% of British origin, 2.9% French, and 53.2% "other." With the exception of Québec, Saskatchewan had the lowest percentage in the country of people of British origin ("Percentage composition of the Population by Ethnic Origins for Province of Residence, Canada, 1901 and 1971," in *The Canadian Ethnic Mosaic: A Quest for Identity*, ed. Leo Driedger [Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1978], p. 97, table 9).

observed that a vast body of propagandistic literature—produced often, but not always, under the auspices of the Canadian government—depicted the Canadian West as peopled almost exclusively by settlers of British origin. The native population and immigrants from the continent, and particularly Eastern Europe—the immigrating majority by then—were mentioned barely if at all.^{o1} In an attempt to attract the English to Canada, they presented the West as a little piece of the British Empire, the only difference being that in Canada, large parcels of land were handed out free to those who asked. And at the same time, this was a period of strong anti-foreign (non-British) sentiment. At that very moment, Basil Stewart was writing *The Land of the Maple Leaf*, in which he decried the admission to Canada of “Russians, Poles, Galicians, Hungarians, Doukhobors, Memnonites [sic], Chinese (In British Columbia) and other ‘dagos’”—the very groups whose names may today be found on land claim maps of Saskatchewan.^{o2} Nobbs cannot have been ignorant of the increasing presence of this non-British population. Rather, his programme calls quite intentionally for a building that would serve to reassert the dominance of his own Anglo-Canadian culture, which had become a minority in Saskatchewan, and to downplay any possible political or institutional significance of the peoples who outnumbered it.

^{o1}R.G. Moyles and Doug Owrarn, “A Farm of One’s Own: The British Emigrant’s View of Western Canada,” in *Imperial Dreams and Colonial Realities: British Views of Canada, 1880-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988).

^{o2}Basil Stewart, *The Land of the Maple Leaf* (London: Routledge, 1908), pp. 151-3. Quoted in Moyles and Owrarn, *Imperial Dreams*, p. 131.

Goodhue's enthusiastic endorsement also makes a key point about the hierarchy of buildings and of ethnicities. This was a grand public space, a seat of government, and high in the hierarchy of building types. Such an important building demanded, in Nobbs's opinion, an imperial style. Ordinary people would rarely darken its doors, and certainly not daily. That being said, Goodhue's statement that it would "reflect ethnically the people for whose use it is to be built" was in its way probably quite valid, as those who actually used the building first-hand must have been of almost exclusively men of British origin.

As I have noted, Nobbs was at this stage an imperialist who would have seen a style that represented Imperial values as representing Canada equally. In his 1907 address to the AIA in Chicago (at which time he had been in Canada about four years) he admonished his audience thus:

As a Canadian, there is a matter upon which I would like to say a word. . . . We would appreciate your intrusions, more, gentlemen, if in addition to their bigness of idea and masterly technique, your buildings on the other side of the border showed a little more ethnographic sympathy. We are still British. I think we will always be British. We speak a sort of English, and some of us try to build a sort of English too. And I hope you will help us. . . .^{o3}

His use of the pronoun "we" is revealingly exclusive. As Canadians, even before multiculturalism became the official cultural policy of the state, "we" were not invariably British and "we" did not necessarily "speak a sort of English." But those who held the

^{o3}Nobbs, "Address to the AIA," manuscript dated 1906?, p. 3 (actually 1907; CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series C.10-1).

reins of power and influence were and did. Men like Nobbs, who had education and comfortable wealth, were British (in origin or by birth) in the vast majority, and it was clearly for and to this group that Nobbs spoke, although he believed that he spoke for a nation.

Nobbs's work with the Saskatchewan and Alberta legislatures took place only a few years after his arrival in Canada. He was later to rethink his position on the value of a style of architecture that would represent the empire. Nearly two decades later he wrote,

the ideal of a British Imperial Architecture as a ubiquitous outward symbol and monument of our political system and cultural heritage has a certain attraction which the writer readily confesses to have experienced, and in some measure to have acted on at a time when his appreciation of that political system and all it implies of elasticity and adaptability was less acute than it is now—a time when his sense of racial cultural heritage was, perhaps, more imminent.⁶⁴

At this point, Nobbs wrote that in his opinion, “far more cultural unity (outside the realm of political ideals) exists as between Canada and the United States than between Canada and England. It is probably of far greater significance to us who reside in Canada, that the country is situate[d] on the North American continent, than that it is within the hegemony of the British Empire.”⁶⁵ In fact, he went on, the strong British traditions in Canadian architecture had for the most part come north across the border rather than west from the Mother Country itself.

⁶⁴Nobbs, “English Tradition,” p. 236.

⁶⁵Nobbs, “English Tradition,” p. 238.

Nobbs clearly still felt strongly about the importance of developing a Canadian tradition, but like most Imperialists of the early twentieth century he had changed his view of the position of Canada in the world. No longer was it a nation within a strong empire, looking exclusively to Britain. Now Canada stood on its own and related as much to its geographic neighbour. But he was dubious about some features of the architectural practice of this “gaudily barbaric nation,” and a criticism of it in 1930 still strongly reflects both his British bias and his arts and crafts leanings. He wrote,

The common vices of the vernacular architecture of the United States are artificiality, or want of realism, in the matter of spiritual content, and a gross insincerity with respect to materials. . . . Sloppy sentiment, pretence, make-believe, and that lack of the grammatical instinct for construction which characterizes so much of the written and spoken thought of the United States, is abundantly evident in the builded thought also. . . . In a word, [American architecture embodies] all the insincerities which are anathema to the European architectural mind.⁶⁶

Clearly, although he admitted in the same article that the majority of the American influence on Canada had been to the good, Nobbs continued to regard Canada as fundamentally British in its traditions. Traquair too thought that Canada lay “culturally between the United States and England,” although it was over-simplistic to argue that it was a blend of the two.⁶⁷ But although Canada had developed into its own nation by this time, it was the British tradition that underlay it above all else. While he saw certain groups from northern and western Europe as being “substantially the same breed and

⁶⁶Nobbs, “Present Tendencies Affecting Architecture in Canada. Part III. Adverse Influences,” *JRAIC* (November 1930): 388.

⁶⁷Traquair, “Canadian Type,” p. 821.

culture as the English," Traquair, like Nobbs, overlooked the contributions of other ethnic groups, "alien" to the "tradition of American civilization in the North [which was] English."⁸

Nobbs's conviction that the future for Canadian architecture lay in historic Québec was not very long-lasting, and, as I have shown, never extended very far in practice. Traquair, whose interest lay largely in the study of the Québec architectural tradition, continued to maintain that it had important potential for modern Canadian building. Even in 1932 he wrote, "The old French-Canadian craftsman has shown us upon what lines a healthy and a really national architecture can be developed and we shall be wise if we pay attention to what he has left us,"⁹ although elsewhere he admitted that it might be best applied to domestic and church work. Since Traquair's emphasis was not on architectural practice, he was never really forced to confront his theory in brick and stone. It was Nobbs whose theorizing was put to the test, and it is therefore not surprising that his thoughts on the matter remained less constant.

Nobbs did point out on occasion that the exigencies of climate seemed likely to lead to regional architectures rather than a national style. And in 1924, he wrote, "Strenuous efforts are made from time to time in magazine articles, novels, histories and caricatures to elaborate a Canadian type—so far without success, for the all-sufficient

⁸Traquair, "The Caste System in North America," *Atlantic Monthly* 131 (March 1923): 420, 419.

⁹Traquair, "The Old Architecture of French Canada," in *Queen's Quarterly* (Autumn 1931): 608 (reprinted Montréal: MUP No. 34, 1932).

reason that there are many types, all abundantly characteristic, and much water will pass down the Great Lakes before there is assimilation."⁷⁰ All of these types might suggest a need for many architectures. But in truth, it seems more accurate to say that he continued his quest for a national style in the public sphere, while allowing for the existence of many Canadas in the domestic realm. Even so, it is hard to picture what he himself might have done with houses across the country as the vast majority of his commissions were in Québec and, indeed, in Montréal and the vicinity. Fundamentally, his vision of the country was British, and so was the origin of the buildings he designed for it. In common with many other Canadians of their class, Nobbs and Traquair were imperialists and nationalists in the early part of the century, and remained always convinced of the Britishness of Canada even when the imperialist impulse had largely faded after World War I. Also in common with the powerful majority in early-twentieth-century Canada, they had little but scorn for the other ethnic groups who made up by that time a substantial body of the population. Both were attracted to Québec vernacular architecture as a Folk tradition that was fundamentally Canadian and might act as an antidote to the directionless quality from which they felt architecture was suffering in the early part of the century. But both also believed that, for public buildings, the most suitable style would speak to Canada's British origins and traditions. Nobbs's 1919 winning design for a War Memorial Museum for Regina, for which Traquair was one of the two competition assessors, is a fine illustration of this driving force in both of them

⁷⁰Nobbs, *Architecture in Canada*.

(fig. 6.16).⁷¹ Inside, a scroll of honour would list the names of the men and women of Saskatchewan who had died in the war effort, and many of those names would be those of the Métis, Ukrainians, Bulgarians, Poles, Russians, and all the other “alien” groups who made up an important part of Saskatchewan’s population. But the museum (never realized) would, as Goodhue had remarked on Nobbs’s programme for the legislative building whose grounds it was to share, “reflect ethnically the people for whose use it [was] to be built”; that is, it would be fundamentally British in inspiration like the country Nobbs and Traquair believed they inhabited and intended to preserve.

⁷¹“War Memorial Museum, Regina, Saskatchewan,” *Construction* (September 1919): 269.

Conclusion “TRADITION, DULY SIFTED”

WRITING IN 1937, Nobbs asserted that “Tradition, duly sifted, is as potent a force in art to-day as ever it was. There can be no progress without it. It would require a cataclysm, that reduced six continents to a no man’s land, to make a really new beginning possible. One must distinguish between modernistic absurdity and modern genius in design—the one denies the past, the other realizes the present as the step between the past and future.”¹ The sifting of tradition was a major preoccupation for both Nobbs and Traquair throughout their personal and professional lives; from the development of a modern architecture to the design of heraldic devices for the institutions of their day, they were always concerned with the uses of history for present purposes.²

Many seeming contradictions arise among the facets of Nobbs’s and Traquair’s lives. They had comfortable jobs as academics in a large city university, but they spent much of their free time up to their knees in icy salmon streams, enduring winter’s icy blasts in the pursuit of moose, or pounding opponents in the boxing or fencing ring.³

¹Nobbs, *Design: a Treatise on the Discovery of Form* (London: Oxford, 1937), p. 404.

²Both Nobbs and Traquair wrote numerous letters and opinion pieces about questions of heraldry (especially the Canadian flag), and also designed a number of examples, such as Traquair’s design for the McGill University flag and Nobbs’s for the coat of arms, Nobbs’s design for a war memorial for Westmount, Québec, and many other examples by both men. Traquair also employed himself extensively in the 1930s in designing flags for boy scout troops, most of them in and around Montréal, and even wrote a short book on designing scout flags, with information on the rules of heraldry. (*The Design of Scout Flags* [Ottawa: Dominion Headquarters, Boy Scouts Association, 1937].)

³On these strenuous activities, see Nobbs, “Ramsay Traquair, Hon. M.A. (McGill) F.R.I.B.A.: On his Retirement from the Macdonald Chair in Architecture at McGill University,” *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (JRAIC)* 16 (June 1939): 147-48, and also his
(continued...)

Canadian nationalism; British imperialism. A belief in British (or “Anglo-Saxon”) superiority in the world; a fascination with the architecture and culture of Québec. Their ability to design buildings drawing on a host of traditions; their deploration of the seemingly empty eclecticism of the nineteenth century. Their insistence that Canadian architects must develop a new and wholly modern architecture, not reliant on slavish copying of past styles; their fundamental conviction that it was in the buildings of the past that real, genuine architecture lay, with modernism nothing but an empty passing fad.

The notion of antimodernism sheds light on all of these seeming contradictions. Like modern society, architecture in Nobbs and Traquair’s time seemed to lack the authenticity and strength of character that they believed had been inherent in the architecture and culture of earlier ages. In their professional lives both sought to regain this moral element in architecture, and it is here that their personal lives and professional concerns came together most strongly. Just as they sought authentic, pure experience through their manly activities, their quest continued into their relationship with architecture. The architecture of their own time seemed to them drained of the same purity and genuineness that modern society had lost. And as with modern society, these

³(...continued)

unpublished “Memoirs” and his extensive correspondence with Bertram Goodhue, with whom Nobbs planned many hunting expeditions and carried out a few. (Canadian Architecture Collection, Blackader-Lauterman Library, McGill University [CAC], Nobbs Collection, Series F.14-5). Traquair also sought a liberation of what he called the “Dramatic Instinct rooted in human nature” through his membership in the Freemasons, an institution which, together with the Roman Catholic Church, was in his mind the only one in North America to “retain any trace of mysticism.” It was no co-incidence that both were men’s organizations. (Traquair, “Drama and Life,” *Canadian Bookman* (February 1922): 7; “Women and Civilization,” *The Atlantic Monthly* 132 (September 1923): 294.)

virtues had been sacrificed on the altars of industrialism and progress. To regain these qualities they looked to tradition, duly sifted, both in life and in art. Traquair sought purity in architecture primarily through his concentration on recording Québec folk architecture and material culture, and Nobbs principally through his preoccupation with the search—grounded in the right traditions—for a national style for Canadian architecture. Their approaches merged at myriad points, and each identified a French-Canadian tradition as a starting point for a new Canadian architecture.

Nobbs's and Traquair's understanding of the vernacular architecture of Québec as the pure, unfettered product of a simple folk community grew out of many of their concerns, concerns typical of the British Anglo-Canadian elite of the first half of this century. They saw a French-Canadian culture redolent with the simple virtues of religious fervour, closeness to the land, a "natural" taste for design, and a deep connection to its past, in contrast with the seemingly rootless society in which they found themselves. But as I have discussed, inherent in their approach was a fundamental conviction that rural Québécois were a backward and primitive people barely changed in hundreds of years.

Perhaps surprisingly, this picture of the rural Québécois and their architecture was largely accepted by many in the province's Francophone community; Nobbs's and Traquair's view of the Québec vernacular as the unsullied product of a genuine Folk provided nourishment for the burgeoning Québec nationalist movement. In 1948, Traquair received an honorary doctorate from the Université de Montréal in recognition of the great service he had done Québec in what was described as his "intelligente et

sympathique” work on the study of the old buildings and silver of the province.⁴ Almost a decade and half earlier, Olivier Maurault, who as rector of the university was to confer the degree upon Traquair, had written an article on “La leçon de M. Traquair” in the Québec nationalist publication *L’Action Nationale*.⁵ He wrote in response to a lecture on master sculptors of French Canada that Traquair had given as part of the annual conference of the Association canadienne-française pour l’avancement des sciences (ACFAS) at the university. Maurault noted that, notwithstanding the work of others in the field of Québec historical architecture and design, “the interest that this Scottish, non-Catholic architect takes in our ancient monuments is an inspiration to us all; and the method that he follows in his studies is a magnificent example.”⁶

Traquair’s lecture stirred up a flurry of enthusiasm for his work and for Québec wood carving, with several essays voicing sentiments similar to Maurault’s.⁷ The same month, a writer in *Le Terroir*, the journal of the Société des arts, sciences et lettres de

⁴Olivier Maurault, text used to confer degree upon Traquair (CAC, Traquair Collection, Series L).

⁵Louis Deligny [Olivier Maurault], “La leçon de M. Traquair,” *L’Action Nationale* III, 3 (March 1934): 158-60.

⁶“l’intérêt que porte à nos vieux monuments un architecte écossais et non catholique est un stimulant pour nous tous; et la méthode qu’il suit dans ses études est un magnifique exemple.” (Deligny [Maurault], “M. Traquair,” p. 158.)

⁷See Olivar Asselin, “A propos d’une conférence,” *Le Canada: Journal du matin* 31, 247 (27 January 1934): 2 and Emile Vaillancourt, “M. R. Traquair nous révèle un patrimoine artistique oublié,” *Le Canada* 31, 250 (31 January 1934): 6, 12.

Québec, expressed himself even more strongly on the value of Traquair's contribution.⁸ "We talk ceaselessly about our traditions. We would like to preserve them whole and intact," he began. And yet, he continued, any walk in the countryside around Montréal would show that in the important area of building and architecture, "we are iconoclasts and it is strangers who must reveal to us what we are allowing ourselves to lose; it is strangers who show us the true, inestimable richness of the things that we are demolishing like vandals."⁹ He admonished his readers that they should be aware of the work that people such as Traquair were doing to "open their eyes," and hoped that it would not be long before more such events were held that might encourage "among our elite an organization that would hope to collaborate with those artists and those men of taste who wish our architecture to be inspired by the past."¹⁰ In this remarkable statement, Anger, even more than Maurault, credited Traquair with revealing to Québec the value of its own culture.

Indeed, less than a decade later Traquair, in collaboration with Olivier Maurault and A. Gordon Neilson, published a lengthy article in which they called for the preservation of old buildings, and also of wood sculpture, carved wood panelling,

⁸Paul Anger, "Architecture et . . . bon goût," *Le Terroir* XV, 10-11 (March-April 1934): 12. This article appears to have been reprinted from the Montréal newspaper *Le Devoir*.

⁹"Nous parlons sans cesse de nos traditions. Nous voulons les conserver entières, intactes . . ." But ". . . nous sommes des iconoclastes et ce sont des étrangers qui viennent nous révéler ce que nous laissons perdre; ce sont des étrangers qui nous indiquent la richesse réelle, inestimable, des choses que nous démolissons en vandales."

¹⁰". . . dans nôtre élite, une organisation qui souhaitera collaborer avec les quelques artistes et les quelques hommes de goût qui veulent que nôtre architecture s'inspire du passé."

furniture, ironwork, silver, and embroidery, with the latter needing to be discovered and brought back to Québec from wherever it had been taken.¹¹ From generation to generation, they lamented, these treasures were inexorably disappearing, whether from sheer neglect or by more active routes such as the spiriting away of antiques by American collectors. This cultural legacy, they argued, equalled in quality, if it did not excel, the best in North America.¹²

France Vanlaetham has provided an important interpretation of Nobbs's and Traquair's work in light of the development of Québec nationalism in the twentieth century.¹³ She argues that Nobbs's and Traquair's enthusiasm for the vernacular, which had given rise to Nobbs's designs in a Québécois idiom and spawned a Québec regionalist movement among a number of his and Traquair's Anglophone ex-students, and others, in the 1920s and 30s, had by the 1940s been taken up by the cause of Québec nationalism.¹⁴ Vanlaetham notes that Claude Bergeron, in his important book *Architectures du XX^e siècle au Québec*, argues that the growing interest in the historic architecture of Québec

¹¹"La Conservation des Monuments Historiques dans la Province de Québec," *Revue Trimestrielle Canadienne* (mars 1941): 1-23.

¹²Traquair et al, "La Conservations des Monuments," p. 1.

¹³France Vanlaethem, "Modernité et régionalisme dans l'architecture au Québec: Du nationalisme canadien de Percy E. Nobbs au nationalisme canadien-français des années 1940," in *Architecture, forme urbaine et identité collective*, ed. Luc Noppen (Sillery, Québec: Septentrion, 1995), pp. 157-77.

¹⁴For a discussion of the contribution of Nobbs's and Traquair's work to the development of Québec architectural regionalism, see Vanlaethem, "Beautification versus Modernization," in *Montreal Metropolis, 1880-1930*, ed. Isabelle Gournay and France Vanlaethem (Montréal/Toronto: Canadian Centre for Architecture/Stoddart Publishing, 1998), p. 148.

paralleled increasing nationalist sentiment in the province.¹⁵ She, however, questions whether it is legitimate to suggest that the Francophone nationalist community should have adopted an enthusiasm—even for French Québec culture—that had begun in the previous century and been nurtured since in the Anglophone halls of McGill University.¹⁶ She concludes that Québec's traditional architecture was valued at first as representing good architectural principles, but later came to be taken as “the proof and even the guarantee, as much as the language, of French-Canadian cultural identity, and the symbol of its historic legitimacy,” suggesting that this turn in interpretation explains the shift in use and user.¹⁷ But as I have demonstrated, Québec vernacular architecture represented much more for Nobbs and Traquair, too, than an example of the application of “good architectural principles”; very little alteration in interpretation would have been needed to render the work of these Anglophone scholars and architects relevant to Québec nationalists.

Vanlaethem also suggests that Traquair's motivation for studying the old architecture of Québec is not easy to understand. Once again, viewing his actions in the light of the antimodernist impulse makes it easy to see why he found this vernacular legacy

¹⁵Claude Bergeron, *Architectures du XX^e siècle au Québec* (Québec/Montréal: Musée de la Civilisation/Éditions du Méridien, 1989).

¹⁶Vanlaethem, “Modernité et régionalisme,” pp. 160-61.

¹⁷“... la maison traditionnelle n'est plus l'illustration des bons principes architecturaux, mais la preuve et même le garant, au même titre que la langue, de l'identité culturelle canadienne-française ainsi que la symbole de sa légitimité historique” (“Modernité et régionalisme,” p. 174.)

so compelling, and also why Québec nationalists should have been attracted to his work. Indeed, as I shall discuss, Traquair was only one of many Anglophones to take a strong interest in Québec's traditional culture.

I proposed in Chapter Three that Nobbs and Traquair saw Canada broadly as having been peopled in three principal waves, with representatives of all three still living in their own time. First on the land had been the indigenous population, but for both Nobbs and Traquair, Native culture had no relevance to their own society: "the American Indian . . . has never been a part of the European culture of North America," wrote Traquair.¹⁸ Indigenous society signified Nature to Nobbs and Traquair, and it had been superseded, when the first Europeans came, by Culture. The first representatives of Culture were the French settlers who were the earliest permanent European residents of what is now Canada. As I have discussed at length, Nobbs and Traquair believed that a part of Québec's rural population—the descendants of the *habitants*—had remained outside of society as it developed all around them. As a result, they were left behind by both the urban Québec population—Anglophone and Francophone—and the British immigrants—urban or rural—who succeeded them and became the dominant culture in Canada. Considering the pattern of Canada's population using this developmental model explains how a rural Québec population could have been conceptualized as a revitalizing

¹⁸Traquair, "The Caste System in North America," *Atlantic Monthly* 131 (March 1923): 418.

folk culture for both Nobbs and Traquair's Anglo-Canada and an urban Québec nationalist movement.

Traquair's antimodernist approach to the study of historic Québec architecture admirably fit the agenda of such a Québec nationalist group as *L'Action Française*. This organization, headed by cleric and educator abbé Lionel Groulx, emphasized the importance of maintaining the province's rural agricultural heritage. The Canadian census showed Québec's rural population decreasing even faster than that in the rest of the country at this time. The 1921 census, reported the periodical *L'Action Française*, was extremely disappointing, and the magazine correctly predicted worse for 1931.¹⁹ Groulx and his compatriots saw cities as nests of immorality where the people, weakened by the passing of their traditional memories, lost touch with their past and became soulless beings. Understanding their own history was, in Groulx's opinion, a top priority if the Québec people were to save themselves from immolation by the Anglophone majority. As Mann Trofimenkoff writes, "[h]e insisted that there could be no true patriotism without a knowledge of history; to be proud of one's race, to love it to the point of devotion, one must know it, and that meant, according to Groulx, to know its history."²⁰ It was just this, according to Anger, Maurault and the others, that Traquair was helping them to do.

¹⁹The 1921 census showed both Québec's population and Canada's Francophone population as a whole dropping. In Québec, the rural population was losing ground to the urban at 44% rural and 56% urban, in contrast to the rest of Canada which showed a rural population a fraction over 50%. By 1931, Quebec's rural population had sunk to only 37%. (Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, *Action Française: French Canadian nationalism in the twenties* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975], p. 74.)

²⁰Mann Trofimenkoff, *Action Française*, p. 43.

And he did more than that. In “revealing” the riches of Québec’s art and architecture, Traquair—following Nobbs’s early observations—also helped to define it. It was not only that the two architects chose to study and appreciate the value of the province’s vernacular that made their work so popular with Québec nationalists in the twenties and thirties, but also how they looked at it. Anthropologist Richard Handler has examined the changing ways that rural Québec culture has been perceived and used. In a scenario that came to be accepted by later Québec nationalists, historians and social scientists after World War Two saw New France as a trading society, rather than a more insular agrarian one, with the Conquest being the catalyst for a new rurality that came to characterize French Québec, and persisted into the twentieth century. These scholars argued that by eliminating the French bourgeoisie and wresting political and economic control from the French, the Conquest had forced those remaining to move to remote rural areas and carry on their lives in a newly-established peasant society. Thus isolated, they remained distinct from the conquering society and Québec was able to survive as a nation.²¹ Before World War Two, what Handler and others call clerical-conservative Québec nationalists, such as L’Action Française, saw pre-Conquest New France as the “golden age,” with the people of Québec an innately rural race that would survive only if it managed to resist the change threatened by the encroaching modern world.²² Nobbs’s and Traquair’s interpretation of the authenticity and purity of Québec architecture, with

²¹Richard Handler, *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Québec* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), p. 66.

²²Handler, *Nationalism*, p. 66.

traditions—many still mediaeval—that had been brought directly from Renaissance France and modified for the new country, fit perfectly with the way that conservative nationalist groups such as L'Action Française saw the people of Québec before industrialization and urbanization arrived as threats. Indeed, Traquair saw these premodern virtues essentially intact in the rural Québec even of his own time.

While L'Action Française lamented the loss of the traditional rural way of life and looked to its restoration as a way to maintain and rebuild what it saw as Québec's true identity in the twentieth century, Traquair, for the most part, stubbornly refused to see that modernity was making its mark even in rural areas. He grossly misinterpreted the removal of farmers from the traditional settlement areas into less hospitable territories away from the river valleys and in the north, choosing to see this as yet more evidence of the qualities of a "virile and flourishing race" rather than as the sign of economic necessity that it was.²³ "There seems to be something in the wild life of the woods which appeals particularly to the French temperament," he wrote. "The English settler prefers more open ground; he is perhaps more successful economically. But, far out in the farthest settlements, far from the railroad, in the depths of the woods, you will find a French habitant breaking new ground and fighting with nature face to face."²⁴ In fact, Québec farmers had traditionally divided their land amongst their large families, but as time wore on the lots became too narrow, the soil was exhausted, and this was no longer possible.

²³Traquair, "The Caste System of North America," *Atlantic Monthly* (March 1923): 422.

²⁴Traquair, "The Canadian Type," *Atlantic Monthly* 131 (June 1923): 823.

Younger sons now had to move away, either to urban or industrial areas, or to start new farms in areas that were not yet settled, which did not provide the fertile land of the Saint Lawrence valley. What Traquair read as a love of wilderness and a zest for the fight for survival was unromantic necessity. As long as they could, Québécois families had remained in the much more hospitable and already-cultivated land that their ancestors had first farmed.

A principal cause of depopulation from the traditional farming areas Traquair tried to ignore entirely. Increasing industrialization in the province was causing a rural exodus to the cities. People even went in large numbers to the factory towns of New England. This migration is commemorated in Louis Hémon's novel *Maria Chapdelaine*, in which, after the death in the winter forests of François Paradis, the man she loves, the eponymous heroine must decide between accepting a hard life and the hand of a local man, the stolid Eutrope Gagnon, and leaving her home as the wife of the dashing Lorenzo Surprenant, who has sought his fortune in the United States.²⁵ (In love with neither man, Maria chooses in the final pages of the novel to marry Québec, in the person of Gagnon.) But while *L'Action Française* saw industrialism as both a modernizing and an Americanizing trend, and thus as an assault on Québec identity on two fronts, Traquair essentially refused to recognize it as a force on the rural communities he admired.²⁶

²⁵Louis Hémon, *Maria Chapdelaine*, trans. W.H. Blake (Toronto: Macmillan, 1938). The novel appeared first in French in serial form in 1914, and was published in Montréal in 1916 by J.-A. Lefebvre. Blake's English translation was first published by Macmillan in 1921.

²⁶Mann Trofimenkoff, *L'Action Française*, p. 61.

Québec nationalists of the period argued that traditional culture must be saved before it disappeared entirely, as it represented Québec before its corruption by Anglo society (and all the industrialization, commercialization and modernization that came with it) at the time of the Conquest. Nobbs and Traquair, in identifying and celebrating the architecture of the early periods (specifically, as I have demonstrated, before there was excessive “alien” influence on the folk culture), helped provide one focus of cultural strength for Québec. Luc Noppen and Lucie K. Morisset have identified historicism as a recurring theme with ideological underpinnings in the architecture of the province of Québec since the late-nineteenth century.²⁷ As they demonstrate, the process of looking to the past for the architecture of the present can lead to examples of buildings which, although they may be formally and aesthetically similar, serve very different political functions. They point to Nobbs's and Traquair's use of vernacular Québec architecture as a basis for a modern Canadian architecture, in contrast to later applications of the style by the Québec government and intellectuals as a nation-building tool for the province. Nobbs's and Traquair's impetus was not Québec nationalism, but rather Canadian nationalism, and the salvation of a genuine folk culture that might prove capable of revitalizing architecture and culture for the nation as well as the province. As the articles by people such as Maurault and Anger suggest, their work could fit either bill.

²⁷Luc Noppen and Lucie K. Morisset, “À la recherche d'identités: Usages et propos du recyclage du passé dans l'architecture au Québec,” in *Architecture, forme urbaine et identité collective*, pp. 103-133.

In light of more recent debates about the place of Québec in the Canadian federation, it now seems ironic that research undertaken by Nobbs and Traquair—such as staunch imperialists, Anglophiles, and Canadian nationalists—should have been found to be useful to conservative Québec nationalists in their own identity-building programmes. But when the first half of the twentieth century is viewed through its own antimodern lens, the seeming contradiction is explained. While Nobbs and Traquair saw the vernacular architecture of Québec as a product of a Canadian Folk, for these nationalists it was, not surprisingly, valued for its inherently Québécois quality. But both perceived it in a similar way—as the authentic product of a pure folk culture that represented all that was best but suppressed in their own societies. Both were fundamentally antimodernist projects, which attempted to inject attributes of this uncorrupted folk culture into a sadly weakened modern society, and in so doing to recapture some of the strength and virtue of the old. As Mann Trofimenkoff has observed, “all those characteristics so highly esteemed by the Action Française were in large measure dependent upon a rural way of life: large, religious, independent, healthy, hard-working, frugal, temperate, jovial, and patriotic families only thrived close to the soil. An independent, secure, and distinctive French Canadian society had its roots in the countryside.”²⁸

This last point suggests the importance of Nobbs’s and Traquair’s work in helping to buttress a broad project—encompassing politicians, bureaucrats, and business and cultural elites on both the national and the provincial levels—to popularize and

²⁸Mann Trofimenkoff, *L’Action Française*, p. 69.

institutionalize Québec folk culture for various political, commercial, and cultural ends in the 1920s and 30s.²⁹ Historian Andrew Nurse observes that during this period “one social group, supported by the federal state, selected cultural phenomena which it found particularly meaningful and proclaimed them to be expressive of the authentic essence of the premodern ‘other’ and hence of symbolic significance to the Canadian ‘nation’.”³⁰ But on a provincial level, the same cultural phenomena were being rallied to help provide a distinct identity for Québec. These decades saw increasing attempts by the Québec government and cultural elite to establish folklore as an essential foundation for a modern Québec culture, by supporting research, popularizing it, and encouraging what experts in the field identified as traditional practice.

The province of Québec made its first official efforts to define and preserve a distinct national culture in this same period, beginning with the passing of the Historic or Artistic Monuments Act of 1922.³¹ This act provided for the official designation of objects or monuments considered to be important to Québec's interest, and therefore needing to be preserved. The law required that once a building or other immovable had

²⁹See Lynda Jessup, “Canadian Artists, Railways, the State and ‘The Business of Becoming a Nation’” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1992), Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), pp. 56-58 and 157-59, and Andrew Nurse, “Tradition and Modernity: The Cultural Work of Marius Barbeau” (Ph.D. dissertation, Queen's University, 1997).

³⁰Nurse, “Tradition and Modernity,” p. 38.

³¹On the provincial government's cultural property legislation of 1922 and 1935, see Richard Handler, *Nationalism*, pp. 142-43.

been classified, it could not be removed or altered in any way without the permission of the newly-formed Historic Monuments Commission. In the next decade, a law was devised and enacted specifically to regulate development of the Île d'Orléans, which had become a popular tourist destination. But at the same time that this 1935 Act restricted such obtrusive signs of modernity as excessive numbers of gas stations, restaurants, and billboards, it also allowed for the improvement of roads and the installation of historic markers, these last obviously destined to improve tourism in the district as well as to educate its inhabitants about their cultural inheritance.

These laws mark Québec's first legislated attempts to define and preserve the province's *patrimoine*—here, its material culture—as an essential part of having and maintaining a distinct culture.³² As Handler observes, *patrimoine* has been variously defined to include anything from old buildings, tools and devotional objects to the language, dances and festivals, the land itself, and even clerical conservative historian Lionel Groulx. “To speak of the *patrimoine*,” writes Handler, “is to envision national culture as property, and the nation as a property-owning ‘collective individual.’”³³ That is to say, it is the possession of a heritage, and of the culture that the *patrimoine* represents, that defines Québec as a distinct cultural entity, and thus provides “proof of national existence.”³⁴ But the 1935 legislation also illustrates the great overlap that occurred in

³²Handler, *Nationalism*, pp. 140-42.

³³Handler, *Nationalism*, p. 141.

³⁴Handler, *Nationalism*, p. 142.

the 1920s and 30s between the definition and preservation of culture for the sake of nation-building, and the development of tourism and economic growth that conveniently came along with it. Both the 1922 and the 1935 Acts also demonstrate how strong a parallel existed between the nation-building efforts of Anglo-Canadians and French Québécois, and, on a governmental level, between the federal and provincial governments. As a promoter, in speech, writing, and built form, of the value of Québec vernacular architecture to national culture, Nobbs joined in this discourse. Traquair was a more active participant in this cultural project, and like many others—both Anglophone and Francophone—his work functioned across the borders of tourism and nationalism on both a federal and a provincial level.

Amongst the many cultural producers participating in this project, Traquair's collaborator C. Marius Barbeau was a central figure. Nurse argues that Barbeau's position as a "professional folklore collector" lent scholarly credibility to the songs, stories, practices, and handicrafts then being promoted as "authentic" by various groups and individuals.³⁵ But Barbeau himself later commented that he had asked Traquair and Group of Seven members A.Y. Jackson and Arthur Lismer to accompany him to the Île d'Orléans in the summer of 1925 for their artistic judgement on the worth of the folk art and architecture he found there, which he did not, at that point, feel himself capable of appraising. He commented in 1959 that "[i]t was in associating myself with them that I

³⁵Nurse, "Tradition and Modernity," p. 331.

realized that there was truly a domain of important study there to be cultivated.”³⁶ It is clear that Traquair’s evaluation of the buildings, sculpture and other artifacts he saw on the island helped bolster Barbeau’s assessment of this material culture as evidence of an authentic and valuable folk culture in Québec.³⁷

Barbeau himself began as an anthropologist, and his earlier publications are rather scientific than popular, and aimed at a specialist scholarly audience. As he became interested in the idea of a traditional folk society in Québec, however, he was increasingly aware of the broader potential for his work, and he sought a wider audience. In the 1920s and 30s he began working with a number of individuals and institutions, largely based in English Canada, on the popularization of Québec folklore through various means. In the late 1920s, in co-operation with J. Murray Gibbon, publicity agent for the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), he organized two Canadian Folk Song and Handicraft Festivals, which were held at the CPR’s Château Frontenac in Québec City, as well as several other

³⁶From the National Film Board production *Marius Barbeau et le folklore* (1959). Quoted in Lawrence Nowry, *Marius Barbeau: Man of Mana* (Toronto: NC Press, 1995), p. 275.

³⁷Traquair performed a similar service for F. Cleveland Morgan, an important figure in the founding and development of the Montréal Museum of Fine Art, and particularly its collection of decorative arts. In the early 1930s, Morgan wrote that he was seeking Traquair’s advice before making a purchase for the museum of a silver cross. (Norma Morgan, “F. Cleveland Morgan and the Decorative Arts Collection in the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts [master’s thesis, Concordia University, 1985], p. 130.) Traquair also wrote to Barbeau in 1925 that he had “talked . . . over with Mr. Morgan” the possibility of buying some of Louis Jobin’s work for the Museum, but that they had decided against it. (Traquair, letter to Barbeau, 26 October 1925 [Canadian Museum of Civilization, Information Management Systems, Marius Barbeau correspondence, B 244.f8, “Traquair, Ramsay” (hereafter known as CMC, IMS, Barbeau,B244.f8, “Traquair”)].)

art exhibitions and concerts.³⁸ He later explained that the purpose of such activities was to assist in the development of a national culture that would be truly Canadian because it grew from traditions that were rooted in the country.³⁹ Furthering this goal, he also helped various institutions build collections of Québec material culture, among them the Historic Sites and Monuments Board, the McCord Historical Museum, the Royal Ontario Museum, the University of Toronto, the Art Gallery of Toronto (now Ontario) and the National Gallery of Canada. Beginning in 1925, he began suggesting names of traditional craft workers to the Women's Art Association, so that it might establish a collection of folk arts.⁴⁰

The presence of the railways alongside more traditional cultural institutions in these activities hints at the commercial value of folk studies. Indeed, Barbeau's initial trip to the Île d'Orléans to study material culture was made on a complimentary CNR rail pass, and he secured them also for his collaborators Jackson, Lismer and Traquair.⁴¹ McKay

³⁸On the participation of the railways in the popularization of folk culture for commercial and nationalist ends, see Jessup, "The Business of Becoming a Nation," Carl Morey, "Nationalism and Commerce: Canadian Folk Music in the 1920s," *Canadian Issues* XX (1998): 38-40, and Nurse, "Tradition and Modernity," pp. 16 and 344. Nowry also discusses Barbeau's contribution to the Québec City festivals in *Marius Barbeau*, p. 283.

³⁹Nurse, "Tradition and Modernity," p. 344.

⁴⁰Nurse, "Tradition and Modernity," pp. 16, 323-28. On the Women's Art Association, see Kathleen Dowsett, "The Women's Art Association of Canada and its Designs on Canadian Handicrafts, 1898-1939" (master's thesis, Queen's University, 1998) and Allison Thompson, "A Worthy Place in the Art of our Country: The Women's Art Association of Canada, 1887-1987" (master's thesis, Carleton University, 1989).

⁴¹Jessup, "The Business of Becoming a Nation," p. 49. Barbeau and Traquair corresponded about a pass for the latter in the summer of 1926, too, with Barbeau suggesting that
(continued...)

notes that Gibbon saw a wide appreciation and understanding of folklore in Canada as the most probable route to national unity. But as a promoter with his eye on the bottom line, “tourism, commerce, and ‘the folk’ were inextricably bound together” in his eyes.⁴² He first had the idea for the Québec Folk Song and Handicraft Festivals as a way of filling the CPR’s hotel in the slow season of early summer. As Nowry tells it, when he suggested the idea to Barbeau, he did not mention tourism at all, rather suggesting that such a festival might increase public understanding and appreciation of Québec folk culture, and create a market for traditional crafts.⁴³ Barbeau, however, was not slow to realize the commercial possibilities of his work on the Folk. In the mid-1930s, he published two books, *The Kingdom of Saguenay* and *Quebec: Where Ancient France Lingers*.⁴⁴ The former was supported heavily by Canada Steamship Lines (CSL). As Nurse notes, the book was conceived largely as publicity for CSL, with frequent mention of the joy of travelling by water, and the congeniality of the CSL hotel in the region, the Manoir Richelieu. The book was illustrated with prints and drawings by A.Y. Jackson, Arthur Lismer, André Bieler, Yvonne Housser and others. In return for paying the artists, CSL received

⁴¹(...continued)

Traquair send C.K. Howard, General Tourist Agent of the CNR, some samples of his work to support Barbeau’s request on his behalf. (Letter, Barbeau to Traquair, 26 May 1926 [CMC, IMS, Barbeau, 244.f8, “Traquair”].)

⁴²McKay, *Quest of the Folk*, p. 57-58.

⁴³Nowry, *Marius Barbeau*, p. 283.

⁴⁴Barbeau, *The Kingdom of Saguenay* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1936) and *Quebec: Where Ancient France Lingers* (Toronto: Macmillan, and Québec: Librairie Garneau, 1936).

permission to use the images in its brochures, and also retained the originals for display. Barbeau even changed the details of a folk tale to move the action to a more suitable location.⁴⁵

Quebec: Where Ancient France Lingers was also conceived entirely for the tourist market, and was released just in time for the tourist season of 1936. Barbeau illustrated it with drawings by Marjorie Borden and with photos drawn in part from the publicity collections of the CPR and the CNR. The railways also helped subsidize the illustrations.⁴⁶ As Nurse points out, these books represent a major shift from Barbeau's portrayal of the Québec Folk as a thing of yesterday, accessible now only through its material remnants. Designed to encourage tourism, *The Kingdom of Saguenay* and *Quebec: Where Ancient France Lingers* portray traditional culture as thriving, ready and available to be experienced in all its authenticity in the byways of the land.⁴⁷ "[T]hese 'habitants' are rooted deep in the soil which has yielded all its secrets to them," writes Barbeau in *Quebec*.⁴⁸ Even here, however, he sounds a warning bell at the end of the book. "French culture in Canada rested on twin factors: the vitality of ancestral traditions coupled with isolation. Should either or both fail, we may wonder how long it can endure"⁴⁹

⁴⁵Nurse, "Tradition and Modernity," p. 421-23, 426.

⁴⁶Nurse, "Tradition and Modernity," p. 428.

⁴⁷Nurse, "Tradition and Modernity," p. 441.

⁴⁸Barbeau, *Quebec*, p. 12.

⁴⁹Barbeau, *Quebec*, p. 158.

Without its “language, custom, folk-lore and handicrafts,” he wrote, Québec today would be no more French than Louisiana.⁵⁰ It is in the last part of the book that Barbeau’s antimodern vision of an unspoiled folk fantasy-land available for consumption by the modern world intersects most strongly with nation-building ideas on both the federal and provincial levels. Barbeau writes,

Are the French-Canadians aware of their responsibility towards themselves and of their native ability further to contribute to the growth of art on this continent, as their ancestors have done so remarkably for nearly two hundred years? We may doubt it. . . . In order to move with the times it is not necessary to sacrifice heredity and tradition, as these very elements are fundamental in national growth and modern progress abroad. But French Canada has lost confidence in itself and will not help materially, outside of patriotic speeches, in its own cultural salvation.⁵¹

The final page of the text is decorated with an hourglass, very nearly run through. Barbeau, employee of the National Museum of Canada, suggests that Québec might contribute to culture “on this continent.” But this book, written to encourage tourism and popular interest in folk culture, makes it very clear that he sees the need for the salvation of “language, custom, folk-lore and handicrafts” for the sake of Québec too.

It is here that Traquair and his colleagues come back into the story, in the background of which they have been hovering. As I have shown, Barbeau valued Traquair’s aesthetic judgement, and while he searched a church’s archives, he relied on Traquair’s assessment of the building itself, and its contents. Barbeau’s interpretation of

⁵⁰Barbeau, *Quebec*, p. 164.

⁵¹Barbeau, *Quebec*, p. 172.

the vernacular architectural forms and material culture of Québec seems likely, therefore, to have been heavily influenced by Traquair. Moreover, while Traquair was probably never directly involved in Barbeau's various popularization and tourism projects, he contributed indirectly to such efforts with a number of articles of his own. The majority of his architectural writing appeared in the professional press, with the fruits of his research on Île d'Orléans, and other similar projects, initially appearing in the *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada*. In the late 1920s and early 30s, however, he published a number of articles in such popular magazines as *House Beautiful*, *House and Garden*, and *Canadian Homes and Gardens* in which he, like Barbeau in *The Kingdom of Saguenay* and *Quebec*, moves beyond a more factual account to extol the wonders of an ancient and authentic folk culture.⁵²

In 1932 he published an article of this type in *The Seigneur*, and this one is particularly telling as it emphasizes how intertwined were the various groups and individuals—Francophone and Anglophone, commercial and governmental—participating in this “revival” of folk culture.⁵³ *The Seigneur* was the magazine of the Seignior Club,

⁵²“The Cottages of Quebec,” *Canadian Homes and Gardens* 3, 1 (January 1926): 12-14, 58, 60, 65; “Old Cottages of Quebec,” *House Beautiful* 63 (May 1928): 612-13, 649-50, 652-54, 656. Among Traquair's papers there is also an undated typescript entitled “Cottages and Houses of Quebec” noted to be destined for *House and Garden*. (McGill University Archives [MUA], Box 2: 35/17/160.) In addition, he spoke on the subject of Québec architecture to such groups as the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire (IODE), the Art Association of Montreal, the Montreal Arts Club, the Rotary Club, and others. See “Ramsay Traquair: Lectures,” in *Ramsay Traquair and His Successors: a Guide to the Archive* (Montréal: CAC, 1987), pp. 138-54.

⁵³Traquair, “The Cottages of Quebec,” in *The Seigneur* 3, 7 (December 1932): 24-28. This article appears to be identical to the 1926 article of the same name in *Canadian Homes and*
(continued...)

located at what is now Montebello, on the Ottawa River between Hull and Montréal. The club was located in the former Château Papineau, the residence of the nineteenth-century Québec patriot, Louis-Joseph Papineau. As a lavish English-language booklet of 1930 explains, the Château and some eighty thousand acres of land—most of the original Seigneurie de la Petite Nation—were purchased by the CPR-sponsored Lucerne-in-Quebec community association to become a vast recreational resort.⁵⁴ On the association's board of directors (which also served for the Seignior Club) sat Québec's premier, the Honourable Louis-Alexandre Taschereau, and a number of financial luminaries: L.W. Beatty, chairman and president of the CPR, and the presidents of the Banque Canadienne Nationale, the Bank of Montréal, and the Royal Bank of Canada.

In addition to converting the château to house the club, a vast "Log Lodge—a de luxe rustic hotel" (now the Château Montebello) was under construction. Building lots would also be sold in the immediate vicinity, and those who could afford it (and these lucky people would also become life members of the club) could build vacation houses there, all in a rustic style to match the main lodge. The brochure leaves no doubt at all as to who might form the constituency of this club: "Every recreational desire and need . . . seems to have been anticipated by the creators of this unusual vacation playplace—a

⁵³(...continued)
Gardens.

⁵⁴*Lucerne-in-Quebec* (np: Lucerne-in-Quebec Community Association and the CPR, 1930), no page numbers.

playplace in the midst of the storied Province of Quebec, where congenial Americans, with similar and mutual tastes, ideals and interests, can meet and mingle," it gushes.⁵⁵

The club magazine, *The Seigneur*, "deals with happenings particular to the Club community . . . and reflects also aspects of the life and history typical of this part of Canada."⁵⁶ As befits a magazine for the rich, the pages are replete with advertisements for silver, furs, expensive hotels, and cruises to the West Indies, and as befits a group interested in cultural definition, this issue includes, in addition to Traquair's article on "The Cottages of Quebec," and several on skiing and the new members' cottages being built in the precinct, a book review of *Songs for Canadian Boys*.⁵⁷ The book was intended to introduce "a better type of music" to Canadian boys, and not surprisingly includes many folk songs. Amongst those to receive thanks for their contributions to the notes on the songs are Ramsay Traquair and E.R. Adair, his colleague at McGill University (in the history department) and partner in some of his research on Québec culture. Several of the songs are drawn from the Gibbon's book, *Canadian Folk Songs*, and Gibbon, "who, by his excellent translations, has done so much to popularize the music of French Canada

⁵⁵*Lucerne-in-Quebec*, n.p.

⁵⁶*Seigneur* 3, 7 (December 1932): 1.

⁵⁷*Songs for Canadian Boys*, comp. committee representing the Quebec Provincial Council of the Boy Scouts Association (Toronto: Macmillan, on behalf of the Montreal district council of the Boy Scouts Association, 1932).

among English-speaking Canadians,” also provided the English translations to the French songs in the collection.⁵⁸

It appears that, notwithstanding the club’s obvious Anglophone bias (despite the presence of the premier of Québec on the Board of Directors and an aged and deferential Québécois lodge-keeper at the gate), some Francophones with an interest in nation-building through the popularization of the idea of a traditional culture in Québec also read *The Seigneur*, and may even have been members of the club. The same month that Traquair’s article appeared, he received a letter from Adjutor Rivard, the author of the 1914 book *Chez Nous*, a panegyric on the traditions and objects of the author’s ancestral home.⁵⁹ Rivard’s paternal ancestors had come from France in 1630, and he obviously identified very strongly with the idea of a vanishing traditional culture in rural Québec.⁶⁰ Dedicating *Chez Nous* to his two children, he hoped that the book might assure the

⁵⁸Songs, pp. v, ix, x, 29.

⁵⁹Rivard, letter to Traquair, 9 December 1932 (CAC, Traquair Collection, Series B-1.1); Adjutor Rivard, *Chez Nous* (1914; Québec: Librairie Garneau, 1941). Honoured in 1920 by the French Academy, the book was translated as *Chez Nous (Our Old Quebec Home)* by W.H. Blake (who also rendered Hémon’s *Maria Chapdelaine* into English) and illustrated by A.Y. Jackson (New York: George H. Doran and Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1924). Oddly, though the “chez nous” of Rivard’s book is situated on the King’s Highway on Île d’Orléans, he was apparently born in the County of Nicolet, on the south shore across from Trois Rivières (*Canadian Who’s Who* II [1936-37], s.v. “Rivard, Hon. Adjutor”). As Rivard notes in his letter, Traquair actually illustrates the “ancient house of *chez nous* exactly as it still stands, shining white upon the King’s Highway,” in his article, although he calls it the Hébert House (which is not Rivard’s mother’s maiden name). Furthermore, although both Traquair in the article and Rivard in the letter refer to the central chimney with two false chimneys of wood at the gable ends, neither Georges-H. Duquet’s illustrations in the 1941 French edition of Rivard’s book, nor A.Y. Jackson’s in the 1924 English edition—which show two entirely different buildings—includes this feature.

⁶⁰*Canadian Who’s Who* II (1936-37), s.v. “Rivard, Hon. Adjutor.”

survival in their minds of the “ancient memories,” and deepen their love for the people and things of their home.⁶¹ He reports that he had very much enjoyed Traquair’s article, writing: “I beg leave to tell you how deeply I appreciate so accurate and delightful a description of our old country houses, and how sincerely I wish to thank you for it.” Traquair’s descriptions of these houses, he remarks, are accurate “nearly in all the details.” Rivard was a highly educated man, and by the time he wrote this letter he had served as a judge in the Québec Court of Appeals for eleven years, as well as having been a professor in Laval University’s faculty of law since 1918, and receiving numerous honours from various sources. The pages of *Chez Nous* are filled with regret for his lost way of life—for a time when people were strong and honest and hard-working, filled with love of God and respect for the church—and he hoped, through his book and various other activities, to keep this spirit alive that it might nourish the modern world for which he had abandoned it.

In 1930, for example, he attended a lunch given by the CPR at the opening of the handicrafts festival at the Château Frontenac. He later wrote a letter to Gordon Antoine Neilson, Traquair’s dear friend, his “assistant at McGill and [his] companion on many architectural travels,” and an honorary Professor of Religious Art at McGill University.⁶²

⁶¹“J’ai écrit pour vous ces pages, simple et sans autres ornements que les mots de notre vieux parler, mais vraies et qui peut-être assureront dans votre mémoire la survivance de quelques souvenirs anciens. Puissent-elles vous faire aimer plus encore les gens et les choses de CHEZ NOUS!”

⁶²Rivard, letter to Neilson, 16 October 1930 (CAC, Traquair collection, Series C.1-5); Traquair, “Preface,” in *The Old Architecture of Quebec*, p. xviii; John Bland, “Gordon Antoine (continued...)”

The letter reveals that Rivard knew Neilson, and was aware of—and perhaps even a party to—a proposal that Neilson made in 1930, at the request of the Québec Ministry of Lands and Forests, for a project to support the revitalization of handicrafts in rural areas of the province.^{o3} It is probable that Traquair's ideas also lay behind the project, as Neilson refers to “the study that we have made over the past several years of the wooden sculpture, furniture, and ironwork of French Canada” These explorations were certainly made in company with Traquair. The proposal is extremely significant; it suggests that Traquair's ideas (through Neilson, the Québec-born son of an old Québec family on his mother's side) were actively sought by a provincial government striving to

^{o2}(...continued)

Neilson: Biography,” in *Ramsay Traquair and his Successors: A Guide to the Archive* (Montréal: CAC, 1987), p. 39. Dedicating his book to Neilson's memory, Traquair notes that had he lived, “he would have shared in the authorship.” Neilson is variously referred to as “Gordon Antoine” and “Antoine Gordon.” Traquair dedicates the book to “Antoine Gordon” but calls him “Gordon Antoine” in the preface. In the article “La Conservation des Monuments Historiques dans la Province de Québec,” in *Revue Trimestrielle Canadienne* (March 1941): 1-23, co-authored with Traquair and Olivier Maurault, Neilson is “Antoine Gordon,” which I suspect is correct. In his biographical sketch of Neilson, Bland calls him Gordon Antoine, and suggests that he was known as Gordon.

^{o3}Letter to Honoré Mercier, Ministre des Terres et Forêts, Hôtel de Gouvernement, Québec (CAC, Traquair Collection, Series C.1-4). This letter is undated and unfortunately ends abruptly at the bottom of page three, with no signature. Two copies of the letter, with corrections, are in the file of “Historical notes of Gordon A. Neilson” in the CAC, and the evidence of Rivard's letter to Neilson, as well as one from “Maurice” at the Québec Bureau de Publicité du Gouvernement, of 11 October, suggests indubitably that Neilson was the author of this proposal and that its year was 1930. It is clear also that the proposal was solicited, as the letter states that it is written in response to a request for some suggestions on the subject.

combat what is described in the proposal as “rural depopulation and the Americanization of the race,” by encouraging traditional craft skills.⁶⁴

Just the year before, the provincial government had ordered a study of home industries in the province, and found their status severely compromised. As Oscar Beriau, Director General of Handicrafts for the province, later put it, “[f]rom 1890 to 1928, handicrafts in Lower Canada were almost at a standstill.”⁶⁵ But Beriau noted that even then, “the old traditions lived on” in a few regions, and he gave credit to the efforts of the CSL, the CPR, the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, the Cercles des Fermières, and the Ecoles Ménagères, these last three being organizations that had been set up to encourage traditional skills and the domestic production of handicrafts through teaching skills and marketing products.⁶⁶ Encouraged by these vestiges of skill, and alarmed by the apparently changing nature of the countryside and its people, the Ministry of Agriculture set up the *Oeuvre des Arts Domestiques*, a provincial school of handicrafts to teach women and girls such skills as spinning, dyeing, and weaving, which opened on 10 July 1930. Neilson’s letter proposes an *Oeuvre des Artisans Ruraux*, a sort of male equivalent to the female-oriented *Oeuvre des Arts Domestiques*. The proposal emphasizes that to achieve its goal, the government must accomplish three basic tasks: it must encourage a taste for the

⁶⁴“L’étude que nous avons fait depuis nombre d’années de la sculpture sur bois, du mobilier et de ferronnerie du Canada français . . .”; “. . . combattre à la fois cette dépopulation rurale et l’américanisation de la race. . . .”

⁶⁵Oscar A. Beriau, “Domestic Crafts in Quebec,” *Québec* IX, 1 (February 1934): 36.

⁶⁶Beriau, “The Handicraft Renaissance in Québec,” *Canadian Geographical Journal* 7, 3 (September 1933): 146.

“*petits métiers*” among the rural population, provide facilities for people to learn the trades, and sell their products, in both local and distant markets, with the help of advertizing, exhibitions, and official shops.

Neilson's report notes that his and Traquair's studies of historical sculpture, furniture, and ironwork have satisfied them of “the ability and of the natural good taste of our people.”⁶⁷ But just as in the case of efforts to encourage women to take up traditional handicrafts, here, too, they have to struggle against the foreign imports and easy contact with cities and machine-made items that have changed the way of life of “our *habitants*,” spurring them to leave their farms and seek what they see as easier money in the cities and factories. Thus “we must spread as quickly as possible the idea of the moral good and the pecuniary advantages that the practice of the rural arts could provide to our population.”⁶⁸ The organization would “aid powerfully in solving the problem of the desertion of our countryside” by providing *habitants* with an occupation that would provide gainful

⁶⁷“L'étude que nous avons fait . . . nous a convaincu de l'habilité et du bon goût naturel de nos gens.”

⁶⁸“ . . . il faut répandre au plus tôt l'idée du bien moral et des avantages pécuniaires que pourrait procurer a nôtre population la pratique des arts ruraux.” The idea that economic crisis could be assuaged by returning people to the land (or keeping them there), was by no means limited to Québec. Starting in the early 1930s, the Dominion government and every province but Prince Edward Island tried to settle people on then-unfarmed land as a way, it was hoped, to remove them permanently from the relief rolls (L.M. Grayson and Michael Bliss, *The Wretched of Canada: Letters to R.B. Bennett, 1930-1935* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971], pp. xv-xvi).

employment during the seasonally-enforced periods of underemployment on the farms.⁶⁹

Recommending that a Board of Directors co-ordinate the efforts of the proposed organization with those of the newly-founded *Oeuvre des Arts Domestiques* and the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, they note that the directors of the other two bodies had already agreed to participate.⁷⁰ They also propose names (on a separate page) of people who had agreed to serve on an honorary committee and the several sub-committees that would be involved in production, sales, and other administrative duties.⁷¹

The teaching itself would take place during the lean winter months only, the "time of year that the 'petits métiers' could truly take their place beside the other farm work, in the life of our *habitant*." They would establish a studio in a rural area, in which "a master

⁶⁹"... l'oeuvre que nous voulons établir aidera puissamment à résoudre le problème de la désertion de nos campagnes."

⁷⁰Both Nobbs and Traquair were members of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, with the latter serving on committees starting in the late teens and continuing at least into the early 1930s. He was, therefore, obviously quite familiar with both its work and its personnel. (Morgan, "F. Cleveland Morgan," pp. 86, 88, and Appendix B.) Nobbs had an early connection with the Guild. In 1906, he assisted it in conducting a competition for "designs for summer cottage rooms furnished with our goods," among members of the Sketching Club of the Province of Quebec Association of Architects (PQAA). (Canadian Handicrafts Guild, Annual Report for 1907, cited in Morgan, "F. Cleveland Morgan," p. 42.)

⁷¹Unfortunately, the page of proposed committee members is no longer with the letter. Rivard's letter to Neilson, of 16 October 1930, however, notes that he had spoken with M. Bouchard at the opening lunch of the CPR's "festival des métiers du terroir," and had asked him, following Neilson's suggestion, to serve on a committee. He writes to Neilson that "[Bouchard] agrees absolutely with your views, is delighted by the felicitous project you imagine, and agrees to be part of the committee." ("Il adhère absolument aux vues qui sont les vôtres, se réjouit de l'heureuse création que vous rêvez, et accepte de faire partie du comité.") This is surely Georges Bouchard, a professor at the College of Agriculture at Sainte-Anne-de-la-Pocatière, who interested himself extensively in the idea of a handicraft revival. See *La Renaissance des Arts domestiques* (Québec: L'Action Sociale, 1932) and "The Work of Women on the Farm," *Québec* VIII, 6 (July 1933): 131-36.

joiner, a master sculptor, and a master blacksmith would execute, helped by students drawn from our countryside, works in wood and iron such as furniture, sculpture, gates, etc. of truly French-Canadian character and tradition."⁷² Aspiring artisans would serve an apprenticeship in this workshop, developing their "natural" skill and taste with the help of the examples they would see there. The organization would then take responsibility for selling their products, eventually establishing distribution centres in the United States for that purpose. When they were ready, the students would return to their villages, there to become foremen of new studios that the *Oeuvre* would establish in various places. Thus, the teaching of the three masters in the central atelier would gradually filter throughout Québec's agricultural regions, providing both a sense of pride in tradition and a new economic incentive that might hold the rural people, so closely associated with Québec's cultural identity, on the farm. Although Neilson's letter does not specifically mention it, such an endeavour would also, like the *Oeuvre des Arts Domestiques*, help sustain not only Québec's burgeoning ideas of its own distinct identity built on traditional culture, but also its tourist industry, by training rural people to become Folk again before it was too late. "Our people have retained their skill, their artistic ingenuity, this old French foundation of taste and touch that must be used before they become lost in a total Americanisation of

⁷²"Ces ateliers ne seraient ouvert que pendant l'hiver au temps où le chômage est le plus accentué a la campagne. C'est à ce temps de l'année que ces 'petits métiers' pourraient vraiment prendre place dans la vie de nos habitants à coté des autres travaux de la ferme."; "... un atelier où un maître menuisier, un maître sculpteur et un maître forgeron exécuteraient, aidés d'élèves tirés de nos campagnes, des oeuvres en bois et en fer tel que meubles, pièces sculptées, grilles, etc. de caractère et de traditions bien Canadien Français."

the race," wrote a representative of the Bureau de Publicité du Gouvernement, in response to Neilson's proposal. "The value of your plan would be substantial."⁷³

I am not aware that this proposal was ever implemented. Nonetheless, its very existence indicates that Neilson's and his partner Traquair's thoughts about the preservation of culture were actively sought out on an official level, and that Traquair's research and ideas had broad significance in the process of popularization and institutionalization of the Folk that was taking place in the 1920s and 30s. The proposal is also significant in light of Traquair's conviction that it was in men that creative ability truly rested, as I discussed in Chapter Two. The United States, he contended (and he noted that Canada was in the same situation), was on the verge of "intellectual death," because to women had been given the responsibility for "the intellectual and artistic culture of the country, and, if they have failed to produce any culture worth having, it is not their fault. They cannot, and that is all there is to that."⁷⁴ As I noted in Chapter Two, Traquair did acknowledge that women were capable of the lesser arts, and he admired the handicrafts of the Québec Folk, which the Québec government and other interested bodies were working hard to encourage. This contemporary culture, however, was but a survival of the artistically vibrant society that had existed before the masculine

⁷³ . . . nos gens ont gardé leur adresse, leur ingéniosité artistique, ce vieux fond français de goût et de doigté qu'il faut utiliser avant qu'il ne se perde dans une américanisatoin totale de la race. Le mérite de ton oeuvre ne serait pas mince." ("Maurice," letter to Neilson, 11 October 1930 [CAC, Traquair Collection, Series C.1-4].) This letter, too, suggests that Neilson had strong connections with the provincial government. Written on official letterhead, it is signed with only a first name and addressed to "Mon cher Gordon."

⁷⁴Traquair, "Women and Civilization," p. 296.

arts of sculpture and architecture had been corrupted by modern influence. Traquair and Neilson's idea to start an *Oeuvre des Artisans Ruraux* that would support traditionally male arts suggests that Traquair might have believed that the culture could be particularly strengthened by adding a reinvigorated masculine creativity to the feminine arts already being practised.

Early nationalists were not the only ones to see the value of the "uncorrupted" Québec vernacular building tradition as a nation-building tool, and Handler has illuminated the continuation of this trend. Québec's material culture has remained an important part of its national identity, and the 1960s saw the provincial government determined to restore parts of the old city of Québec to their original, pre-English-conquest appearance. As buildings almost inevitably do, the houses and shops of the old town had accrued multiple additions and revisions over the centuries, so that in the majority of cases any outward sign of the original building had disappeared entirely. This resulted in the virtual rebuilding of areas of the old city, in particular around the newly-named Place Royale, to erase all signs of development that had occurred after the end of the French Régime and create what seemed to be an authentic recreation of the city as it ought to have looked, even where there was little or no evidence for it (figs. 7.1 & 7.2).⁷⁵ Following Traquair's precepts, first propounded by Nobbs, old meant genuine, and

⁷⁵Richard Handler, "On Having a Culture: Nationalism and the Preservation of Quebec's Patrimoine," in *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture*, ed. George Stocking, *History of Anthropology*, vol. 3 (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp. 192-217.

uncorrupted by “alien” influence meant authentic, even if that had to be achieved by removing and rebuilding areas of the city. Here, Nobbs’s and Traquair’s ideas about the purity of tradition were taken to their logical extreme.

In addition to its utility to Québec nationalists, Nobbs’s and Traquair’s work was influential in the development of Canadian architecture and architectural history, particularly as it pertained to the architecture of Québec. Traquair is cited as an influential student of Québec architecture by the authors of both surveys of Canadian architecture that have appeared to date.⁷⁶ Perhaps even more surprisingly, Nobbs’s and Traquair’s view of vernacular architecture—so marked by the beliefs and biases of their time—remained remarkably intact for decades in Canada, among the general public and architectural historians alike. Architectural historian Alan Gowans’s approach to vernacular architecture in his important 1966 book, *Building Canada*, for example, closely mirrored that of Nobbs, Traquair, and their contemporaries. He described folk architecture as “an anonymous product of community life . . . a vernacular expression, like the unaffected speech of the simple folk who created it.”⁷⁷ Such ideas about vernacular architecture have hung on in many contexts. Even as recently as 1994, in his two-volume *History of Canadian Architecture*, Harold Kalman defined a vernacular building as one that

⁷⁶Alan Gowans, *Building Canada: An Architectural History of Canadian Life* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 22 and Harold Kalman, *A History of Canadian Architecture*, vol. 1 (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 41.

⁷⁷Gowans, *Building Canada*, p. 10.

is “not the product of conscious decisions about style or design.”⁷⁸ This suggests, as did much earlier writing on the material products of apparently premodern cultures, that builders or artisans in such societies did not exercise creativity or independent taste, but merely mimicked existing traditions without question. This attitude is partly the result of the fact that the names of the creators of vernacular art or architecture have frequently been lost, which gives rise to the idea that such objects are the product of a culture rather than of a person. Much recent scholarship takes a different view. While acknowledging that vernacular architects usually build within a given tradition, it recognizes that this does not preclude the exercise of independent creative decisions in their designs.⁷⁹ It should be remembered that buildings of a particular type and era often strongly resemble one another. How often are Modernist office towers described as failing to reflect “conscious decisions about style or design”?

Nobbs's and Traquair's preconceived notions, and especially Traquair's research and publications on the subject, strongly influenced the way Québec architecture came to be perceived. In particular, Traquair's “salvage”-oriented approach to his study of the vernacular had a profound effect on the way that it was to be defined and would continue

⁷⁸Kalman, *Canadian Architecture*, p. 42.

⁷⁹See as just one example Arlene Horvath, “Vernacular Expression in Quaker Chester County, Pennsylvania: The Taylor-Parke House and Its Maker,” in *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture II*, ed. Camille Wells (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1986), pp. 150-60.

to be seen for many years.⁸⁰ The idea that external influence spelled the end of an interesting tradition was to persist. As late as the 1960s, McGill School of Architecture professor John Bland (who had been a student of both Nobbs and Traquair) was engaged in “the preparation of plans, elevations and details at consistent scales of as many Quebec buildings up to about 1850” as he could. He noted that, with photos and texts, these could “make a fascinating publication.”⁸¹ Over half a century after Nobbs had first begun to show an interest in Québec vernacular, Bland was still defining the period of interest in Québec architecture as ending with the mid-nineteenth century, when Nobbs and Traquair had declared that outside influence had finished the vernacular tradition.

Indeed, this is probably the area in which their influence has reached the farthest and lasted longest. It is clear that in the 1960s their influence was still strongly felt, although it was Traquair at that point who received the main credit for their observations. Gowans does not mention Nobbs at all in his 1966 survey; for all that he was so influential in his own time, he had apparently been almost forgotten by then, only two years after his death. Traquair appears only once as the author “whose writings did so much to further understanding of the old architecture of Quebec.”⁸² Gowans’s comments about Québec architecture at this point in his career were clearly influenced by the work begun by Nobbs

⁸⁰See James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).

⁸¹John Bland, letter to Michel Gaumond, head of archaeological service, Department of Cultural Affairs, Québec, 19 December 1966 (CAC, Traquair Collection, Series L).

⁸²Gowans, *Building Canada*, p. 22.

and Traquair: “the medieval inheritance survived in Quebec practically unchanged, almost into the twentieth century” wrote Gowans. “The facts speak for themselves.”⁸³

All of this serves to point to the importance of Nobbs’s words that both begin this chapter and end his book *Design*. The present, he wrote, is a step between the past and the future, not a free-standing thing. It would be impossible, without a world-destroying cataclysm, to consider it in any other way. Nobbs’s statement implies that always to look upon the present in the light of the past is the natural approach. But the notion of “tradition, *duly sifted*” is extremely significant. Like others of their generation, Nobbs and Traquair believed that they were finding “natural” antidotes to the artificiality of almost every aspect of their own society. But as Nobbs stated, the tradition must always be first identified and then sifted before it could be used for such purposes. As the essays in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger’s collection, *The Invention of Tradition*, demonstrate and the title suggests, the use of tradition, while usually perceived as a natural and inevitable process, is always dependent on choosing—consciously or unconsciously—a given selection from a body of available material.⁸⁴

As I have shown, Traquair selected carefully from the available evidence when he wrote about a Québec Folk. The process of cultural selection began with his decision to concentrate on the *habitants* as an example of a genuine culture in Canada. Once he had chosen them, he had to decide what elements of their culture he would choose to

⁸³Gowans, *Building Canada*, p. 30.

⁸⁴Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (1983; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [Canto Edition], 1992).

preserve. He believed that he was recording only those features that truly represented their society, but he was actually selecting the elements that conformed to the conclusions that he had already drawn about their culture. Similarly, Nobbs could not simply search out a style that would represent the true Canada without first grappling with the question of just what that Canada was. His attempts to develop a Canadian architectural style depended on careful selection of various historic precedents from times and places that would have political resonance for his idea of Canada. The results could not be inevitable because they were the result of conscious choices. Although the conclusion of such a quest—if it were successful—might come to seem natural, it would always be an invention.

But an invention could be as real as any experience. For the disaffected antimodernists of the early decades of the twentieth century, the reality created by their invention was infinitely more real than the pale, flimsy reflection of authentic experience that the twentieth century seemed to offer them. People such as Nobbs and Traquair were influential in the shaping of Canadian culture at its higher levels because they thought about it extensively, wrote and acted upon the basis of their conclusions, and talked about their ideas to members of Canada's intellectual and financial elite. They each belonged to several arts clubs. Nobbs was a member of the Art Association of Montreal (1916-33) and the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts (1928-39), Traquair of the Montreal Arts Club (starting 1913). Both were active with the McCord Museum and the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, and they were of course members of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada and the Province of Quebec Association of Architects, their

professional organizations, as well as the Royal Institute of British Architects.⁸⁵ Perhaps most important in this connection is Montréal's Pen and Pencil Club, an exclusive men's club of artists and writers of which they were both active members, Nobbs having been elected to membership in 1906 and Traquair in 1917.⁸⁶ In this club, dedicated to "Social enjoyment and Promotion of the Arts and Letters," they met regularly with Canadian cultural luminaries. To name just a few of those who joined in the first decades of the twentieth century, the club included among its members writer Stephen Leacock, J. Murray Gibbon, F. Cleveland Morgan, prominent architects W.S. Maxwell, Ernest Cormier, and David Shennan (who joined only in 1940, and was responsible for designing the Manoir Richelieu, the Hotel Tadoussac, and the Thousand Islands Club for the CSL⁸⁷) and a host of others, almost exclusively Anglophone.⁸⁸ As Mary Vipond has noted, artists

⁸⁵CAC, Nobbs Collection, Series E; "Secondary Works on Ramsay Traquair," in *Ramsay Traquair: A Guide to the Archive*, gen. ed. Irena Murray (Montréal: CAC, 1987), pp. 155-168; Morgan, "F. Cleveland Morgan," Appendix B.

⁸⁶Leo Cox and J. Harry Smith, *The Pen and Pencil Club, 1890-1959* (Montréal: Pen and Pencil Club, 1959), n.p. Aside from their inclusion in the list of members at the end of the booklet, both are mentioned by name for various esoteric contributions (Nobbs for his treatise on bayonet technique, "with gory directions," and Traquair for "discuss[ing] the merits of water in immaculate verse, recit[ing] in dialect, and discours[ing] learnedly on the fourth dimension").

⁸⁷Morgan, "F. Cleveland Morgan," p. 42.

⁸⁸Prominent members from the club's inception in 1890 to the time Nobbs joined—most of whom were presumably still active then—include the painters William Brymner, Robert Harris, and Maurice Cullen, and the railway magnate and painter Sir William Van Horne. The presence of William Henry Drummond, "the poet who interpreted the French-Canadian 'habitant' to English Canada," is less significant than it seems at first, as he died in 1907, only the year after Nobbs joined. (Cox, "Fifty Years of Brush and Pen: A Historical Sketch of the PEN AND PENCIL CLUB of Montreal," in *The Pen and Pencil Club*, n.p.; Charles G.D. Roberts and Arthur L. Tunnel, eds., *A Standard Dictionary of Canadian Biography: The Canadian Who was Who*, vol. 1 [Toronto: (continued...)]

among the 1920s nationalist elite of Canada charged themselves with “the creation of myths and symbols which expressed the Canadian identity and clarified its meaning,” and they organized into such clubs and groups to discuss and make public their ideas.⁸⁹ For Nobbs and Traquair, as for many others involved in trying to construct an identity for Canada in the first half of the twentieth century, these “myths and symbols” were often the product of their antimodernist approach to life and work. Some of their number were quite prominent; Jessup has illuminated the depth of antimodernism in the nation-building rhetoric of the Group of Seven, which, as she observes, has survived nearly intact into our own time.⁹⁰ But like Nobbs and Traquair, many of these myth-makers are now all but forgotten. Nevertheless, although, as Vipond notes, this “nationalist network” may not have concerned itself very much with the direct communication of its ideas to the majority of the Canadian people, its participants did communicate with each other

⁸⁸(...continued)

Trans-Canada Press, 1934], s.v. “Drummond, William Henry [1854-1907].”) The club was extremely exclusive. By 1940 it had elected only 117 people in total to membership, with its numbers increasing most years by only one or two people, rarely more than three or four, and occasionally none at all. (“List of Members,” in Cox and Smith, *Pen and Pencil Club*, n.p.)

⁸⁹Mary Vipond, “The Nationalist Network: English Canada’s Intellectuals and Artists in the 1920s,” in *Interpreting Canada’s Past, Volume II: After Confederation*, ed. J.M. Bumsted (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 271. Norma Morgan’s thesis provides a fascinating insight into the extent to which the membership of Montréal’s various Anglophone art associations and clubs intertwined and overlapped, together with McGill University and its faculty. Not surprisingly, several of the people for whom Nobbs designed houses (including Colby, Adami, and Todd) also appear here and there among the board and committee members. (Morgan, “F. Cleveland Morgon,” Appendix B and *passim*.)

⁹⁰“Bushwackers in the Gallery: Antimodernism and the Group of Seven,” in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, ed. Lynda Jessup (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), pp. 130-152.

through organizations and periodicals and, as members of Canada's elite, were influential in shaping the direction that Canadian high culture would follow.⁹¹

Kathleen McCarthy has demonstrated that it was through just such organizations as these that culture was officially taken into the male domain in this period.⁹² As Traquair wrote in 1923, "[f]or some generations the fine arts have been regarded—particularly in America—as suited to women, and their failure to take a high place in them is the more remarkable."⁹³ It was high time, in his estimation, that men took over all aspects of creativity, and he was not alone in this. Not only fine art—long a male-dominated affair—but also endeavours such as handicrafts, which had been the traditional purview of women, were encouraged and organized, taught, exhibited and marketed under the auspices of such male-dominated or wholly male clubs and institutions as several of those to which Nobbs and Traquair belonged. In addition, then, to their involvement in a nation-building project, McNaughton contends, such "cultural institutions served as important building blocks in the emergence of a national, male policy-making elite."⁹⁴

As McKay has recently argued, the new ideas about nationhood that these artists and intellectuals were formulating never really took hold among the majority of

⁹¹Vipond, "Nationalist Network," p. 272.

⁹²Kathleen D. McCarthy, *Women's Culture: American Philanthropy and Art, 1830-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

⁹³Traquair, "Women and Civilization," p. 293.

⁹⁴McCarthy, *Women's Culture*, p. xiv.

Canadians.⁹⁵ He enumerates three essential deficiencies in the approach of those who sought to forge a national identity. First, they were elitist, and failed to respond to popular taste; second was their “hesitant and partial imagined break with Britain”; and third was their utter failure to construct a truly national vision, to which people in all regions, from all backgrounds, could relate and attach themselves.⁹⁶ These weaknesses are all present in Nobbs’s and Traquair’s attempts to construct a national style in architecture for Canada. Their audience consisted largely of people like themselves, equally out of touch with popular culture, and it is almost inherent in the work of architects that their projects are designed for those with money or power (or, more usually, both). They both continued to look to Britain as the mother country, even when they purported to concentrate wholly on Canadian culture, and finally, despite their nationalist rhetoric, they were distinctly regional in their cultural outlook. Thus, for all their efforts, they failed to establish a consensus about Canadianness or even Canadian architecture. Nonetheless, although they might have been appalled at its eventual consequences, their work did later have a deeper popular effect as it came to inspire the forces of Québec nationalism.

Throughout their lives, at work and play, Nobbs and Traquair sought various means to achieve authentic experience. In their private lives, as I have observed, their efforts took place on a variety of stages, ranging from the fencing ring or the caribou barrens to the elaborate ritual of the Masonic Lodge or the comfortable smoking room of a

⁹⁵“Handicrafts and the Logic of ‘Commercial Antimodernism’: The Nova Scotia Case,” in *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience*, p. 117.

⁹⁶McKay, “Handicrafts and Logic of ‘Commercial Antimodernism,’” pp. 117-118.

men's arts club on a Friday night. They sifted what they needed from other traditions and earlier times, and these private concerns spilled over into their public lives too. Seeking authentic experience, they looked for an authentic culture, not just for their own enrichment, but, as they believed, for the good of the nation. As Nobbs put it in 1910, "national traditions" of the past might be used to build "a homogeneous and distinctive taste" among Canadians.⁹⁷ This, in its turn, would be a powerful force for national unity. "Nothing distinguishes nation from nation, or unites the component elements of a people more than the growth of a distinctive taste in matters of design," he wrote.⁹⁸ As I have demonstrated, Nobbs soon came to see the vernacular architecture of Québec as an essential component of Canada's "national traditions"; indeed, it seemed to be the only uniquely Canadian architectural tradition that history could offer, and he and Traquair set out to use it to nourish the "distinctive taste" the country lacked. In common with other cultural producers of their time, they were both very aware of what Nobbs described, with capital letters, as "The Political value of National Art."⁹⁹

We have seen that the private preoccupations of two men were the public commonplaces of a class and a generation. They, like others, spent their lives in the active forging of what they represented as natural links among past, present and future,

⁹⁷Nobbs, "Memorandum relative to the allocation of Floor Space on the Second Storey of the *Victoria Memorial Museum*, at Ottawa, Ont; for a collection to illustrate the NATIONAL TRADITIONS or THE ART OF DESIGN," p. 3.

⁹⁸Nobbs, "Memorandum," p. 1.

⁹⁹Nobbs, "Memorandum," p. 3.

between tradition and nation. In investigating the active part this group played in building a nation, we see both the creativity and the political intent of their responses to modernity. Ironically, the success of their claim to the authenticity of their cultural constructions long obscured the complexity of the task they set out to achieve.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES: Archival

Canadian Architecture Collection, Blackader-Lauterman Library, McGill University
 Percy Nobbs Collection
 Ramsay Traquair Collection

Canadian Museum of Civilization, Information Management Services, Marius Barbeau
 correspondence, Box B244 f.8, "Traquair, Ramsay."

London Metropolitan Archives, London County Council Papers

McGill University Archives, Ramsay Traquair Papers

National Monuments Record of Scotland, artists file on S. Henbest Capper

Royal Institute of British Architects, biography files on Percy Nobbs and Ramsay Traquair.

Saskatchewan Archives Board, Department of Public Works and Walter Scott Papers

University of Edinburgh Library Special Collections, Robert Lorimer Papers.

PRIMARY SOURCES: Published

NB: For a complete list of the publications of Percy Erskine Nobbs and Ramsay Traquair,
 see their respective Archive Guides under "Secondary Sources" (Irena Murray, editor).

Aitken, Charles. "Notes on the Exhibits." *London County Council Staff Gazette II* (May
 1901): 56-7.

Anger, Paul. "Architecture et . . . bon goût," in *Le Terroir* xv, nos. 10-11, (January 1934):
 12.

The Annual of the British School at Athens XII, Session 1905-06. London: Macmillan, nd.

Asselin, Olivar. "A propos d'une conférence," editorial in *Le Canada: Journal du matin*
 31, no. 247 (27 January 1934) 2.

Barbeau, C. Marius. *The Kingdom of Saguenay*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1936.

- _____. *Quebec: Where Ancient France Lingers*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1936.
- Beriau, Oscar A. "Domestic Crafts in Quebec." *Québec* IX, 1 (February 1934): 36-37.
- _____. "The Handicraft Renaissance in Quebec." *Canadian Geographical Journal* 7, 3 (September 1933): 143-49.
- Bouchard, Georges. *La Renaissance des Arts domestiques*. Québec: L'Action Sociale, 1932.
- _____. "The Work of Women on the Farm." *Québec* VIII, 6 (July 1933): 131-36.
- "Concordia Salus" (Nobbs, P. E.). "Montreal Notes." *Canadian Architect and Builder* (September 1905): 141.
- _____. "Montreal: The Year's Changes to the City." *Canadian Architect and Builder* (December 1904): 201.
- Cox, Leo and J. Harry Smith. *The Pen and Pencil Club, 1890-1959*. Montréal: The Pen and Pencil Club, 1959.
- Deligny, Louis (Olivier Maurault). "La leçon de M. Traquair." *L'Action Nationale* III, 3 (March 1934): 158-160.
- "An Eighteenth Century Manoir is Reclaimed." *Canadian Homes and Gardens* (March 1934): 34-41, 52.
- "Gargoyle" (Nobbs, P.E.). "Montreal Letter No. 1: Montreal in General." *Canadian Architect and Builder* (April 1904): 73.
- "Gargoyle II" (Nobbs, P.E.). "Montreal Letter No. II." *Canadian Architect and Builder* (May 1904): 95-6.
- "The Gargoyle" (Nobbs, P.E.). "Montreal Letter No. III." *Canadian Architect and Builder* (June 1904): 98-99.
- "Ye Gargoyle" (Nobbs, P.E.). "Montreal Notes No. IV." *Canadian Architect and Builder* (July 1904): 119.
- Gibbon, J. Murray. *Canadian Folk Songs (Old and New)*. London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1927.
- Hémon, Louis. *Maria Chapdelaine*, translated by W.H. Blake. Toronto: Macmillan, 1938.

- Koch, Alex, ed. *Academy Architecture and Architecture Review* 34 (1908).
- Lismer, Arthur. "Art a Common Necessity." *Canadian Bookman* 7 (October 1925): 159-60.
- London County Council Staff Gazette* IV (March 1903).
- Lucerne-in-Quebec*. np: Lucerne-in-Quebec Community Association and the CPR, 1930.
- Lyle, John. "Address by John M. Lyle, 22 February 1929 at the Art Gallery of Toronto." *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (April 1929): 135-36, 163.
- Lyman, John. "Poison in the Well," in "Art." *Montrealer* 11 (1 September 1937): 17.
- Morris, William. "Art and Socialism: The Aims and Ideals of the English Socialists of Today" (lecture delivered before the Secular Society of Leicester, 23 January 1884). In *Architecture, Industry, and Wealth: Collected Papers*, edited by Sydney J. Freedberg. New York and London: Garland, 1978.
- Nicoll, James, ed. *Illustrations of Scottish Domestic Work in Recent Years*. Aberdeen: Daily Journal Offices, 1908.
- Nobbs, Percy Erskine. "Architecture in Canada." *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (July to September 1924): 91-95.
- _____. *Architecture in Canada*. Talk read before the RIBA, 21 January 1924. London: Royal Institute of British Architects, 1924.
- _____. "The Architecture of Canada." *Construction* (October 1910): 56-60, 64.
- _____. "Big Game and Common Sense." *Illustrated Forestry Magazine* (June 1923): 358-59.
- _____. "British Art and the Empire." Letter to the *Spectator* (4 January 1913): 17.
- _____. "Canadian Architecture." In *Canada and its Provinces: A History of the Canadian People and their Institutions by One Hundred Associates*, edited by Adam Shortt and Arthur G. Doughty. Toronto: Glasgow, Brook & Co., 1914.
- _____. "Canadian Battlefields Memorial Competition: Notes on the First Stage." *Construction* (June 1921): 161-70.

- _____. "Competition Reform." *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 12 (September 1935): 150-52.
- _____. *Design: A Treatise on the Discovery of Form*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1937.
- _____. "Drawing and Architecture-I." *Canadian Architect and Builder* (October 1903): 168-69.
- _____. "The English Tradition in Canadian Architecture." *Architectural Review* 55 (June 1924): 236-41.
- _____. "Extracts from an Address by Professor Percy E. Nobbs to the 41st Annual Dinner of the AIA, Chicago, November 20th, 1907." *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 34, 7 (July 1957): 280.
- _____. "The Late Sir Robert Lorimer." *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (October 1929): 352.
- _____. "Montreal Junior Architectural Association." *CAB* (May 1905): 76.
- _____. "On the Value of the Study of Old Work." *Canadian Architect and Builder* (May 1905): 74-75.
- _____. "Planning for Sunlight." *Journal of the Town Planning Institute* (April 1922): 6-12.
- _____. "Present Tendencies Affecting Architecture in Canada. Part I: The Inheritance." *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (July 1930): 245-48.
- _____. "Present Tendencies Affecting Architecture in Canada. Part II: Modernity." *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (September 1930): 314-17.
- _____. "Present Tendencies Affecting Architecture In Canada. Part III: Adverse Influences." *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (November 1930): 388-92.
- _____. "Ramsay Traquair, Hon. M.A. (McGill) F.R.I.B.A on his Retirement from the Macdonald Chair in Architecture at McGill University." *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 16 (June 1939): 147-48.

- _____. "Sir Raymond Unwin's Visit to Montreal." Letter reprinted from the *Montreal Gazette*, 31 October. *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (November 1933): 192.
- _____. "The Styles of Architecture and Style in Architecture." *Canadian Architect and Builder* (November 1903): 184-85.
- _____. "Tradition and Progress in Canadian Architecture." *Studio* 104 (1932): 82-91.
- _____. *Suburban Community Planning*. Montréal: McGill University Publications, Series XIII (Arts and Architecture), no. 7. Reprinted from *Town Planning* (April 1926).
- Rivard, Adjutor. *Chez Nous*. 1914; Québec: Librairie Garneau, 1941.
- _____. *Chez Nous (Our Old Quebec Home)*, translated by W.H. Blake. New York: George H. Doran; Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1924.
- Songs For Canadian Boys*, compiled by a committee representing the Québec Provincial Council of the Boy Scouts Association. Toronto: Macmillan, on behalf of the Montréal District Council of the Boy Scouts Association, 1932.
- Stewart, Basil. *The Land of the Maple Leaf*. London: Routledge, 1908.
- "A Study in Community Housing Near Montreal." *La Revue Municipale* (December 1927): 33-35.
- Traquair, Ramsay. "The Appreciation of Art." *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects* xx, 1 (1912): 11-17.
- _____. "Architecture and Democracy." *Canadian Bookman* (October 1919): 11-12.
- _____. "Architecture and Geography." *Atlantic Monthly* 162 (August 1938): 159-65.
- _____. "The Canadian Type." *Atlantic Monthly* 131 (June 1923): 820-26.
- _____. "The Caste System in North America." *Atlantic Monthly* 131 (March 1923): 417-23.
- _____. "The Church of St. John the Baptist, St. Jean Port Joli, Quebec." *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (February 1939): 26-34.
- _____. "The Commonwealth of the Atlantic." *Atlantic Monthly* 133 (May 1924): 602-08.

- _____. "The Cottages of Quebec." *Canadian Homes and Gardens* 3, 1 (January 1926): 13-14, 58, 60, 65.
- _____. "The Cult of the Rebel." *Atlantic Monthly* 152 (September 1933): 357-65.
- _____. *The Design of Scout Flags*. Ottawa: Dominion Headquarters, Boy Scouts Association, 1937.
- _____. "Drama and Life." *Canadian Bookman* (February 1922): 6-7, 9.
- _____. "The Education of the Architect." *Construction* (October 1919): 315-17.
- _____. "Free Verse and the Parthenon." *Canadian Bookman* (April 1919): 23-26.
- _____. "Hooked Rugs in Canada." *Canadian Geographical Journal* 26 (May 1943): 240-54.
- _____. "The Huron Mission Church and Treasure of Notre Dame de Jeune Lorette, Quebec." *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (September-November 1930): 337-45, 415-21.
- _____. "The Ideals of the Community Theatre." *Canadian Bookman* no. 3 (September 1921): 25-28.
- _____. "Laconia. III.-The Churches of Western Mani." *The Annual of the British School at Athens* XV, (Session 1908-09). London: Macmillan, n.d.
- _____. "Laconia. II.-Excavations at Sparta, 1906." *The Annual of the British School at Athens* XII (Session 1905-06). London: Macmillan, n.d.
- _____. "Laconia. I.-Mediaeval Fortresses." *The Annual of the British School at Athens* XII (Session 1905-06). London: Macmillan, n.d.
- _____. "Man's Share in Civilization." *Atlantic Monthly* 134 (October 1924): 502-08.
- _____. "The Old Architecture of French Canada." *Queen's Quarterly* 38 (Autumn 1931): 589-608.
- _____. "The Old Architecture of the Province of Québec.. *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 2, 1 (Jan-Feb 1925): 25-30.

- _____. *The Old Architecture of Québec: A Study of the Buildings Erected in New France from the Earliest Explorers to the Middle of the Nineteenth Century*. Toronto: Macmillan Co, 1947; facsimile edition, McGill University School of Architecture, 1996.
- _____. "The Old Cottages of Québec: Of Solid, direct Construction, well Adapted to the Climate, and with the Dignity that comes naturally to Simple Things free from Sham." *House Beautiful* 63 (May 1928): 612-13, 649-50, 652-53, 656.
- _____. *The Old Silver of Quebec*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1940.
- _____. "A Regiment of Women: A Plea for Equal Treatment." *Atlantic Monthly* 143 (March 1929): 343-51.
- _____. "The Royal Canadian Academy." *Canadian Forum* 1, no.3 (December 1920): 83-85.
- _____. "Women and Civilization." *Atlantic Monthly* 132 (September 1923): 289-96.
- _____. "The Old Architecture of the Province of Québec." *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (January-February 1925): 5 (unpaginated).
- _____. *The Old Architecture of Québec: A Study of the Buildings Erected in New France from the Earliest Explorers to the Middle of the Nineteenth Century*. Toronto: MacMillan, 1947; facsimile edition Montréal: McGill University School of Architecture, 1996.
- Traquair, Ramsay and C. Marius Barbeau. "The Church of Saint Jean, Island of Orleans, Quebec." *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (June 1929): 223-32.
- _____. "The Church of Sainte Famille, Island of Orleans, Que." *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 3, 3 (May-June 1926): 105-18.
- _____. "The Church of St. Pierre, Island of Orleans, Quebec." *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (February 1929): 52-64.
- Traquair, Ramsay, Olivier Maurault and A.G. Neilson. "La Conservation des monuments historiques dans la Province de Québec," *Revue trimestrielle canadienne* 27 (mars 1941): 1-23.
- Traquair, Ramsay and Frank Mears. "Public Monuments." *The Blue Blanket: An Edinburgh Civic Review* (January 1912): 68-80.

Vaillancourt, Emile. "M.R. Traquair nous révèle [sic] un patrimoine artistique oublié," in *Le Canada* 31, 250 (31 janvier 1934): 6 and 12.

Van Millingen, Alexander, assisted by Ramsay Traquair, W.S. George, and A.E. Henderson. *Byzantine Churches in Constantinople: Their History and Architecture*. London: Macmillan and Co., 1912.

"War Memorial Museum, Regina, Saskatchewan." *Construction* (September 1919): 269.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Adams, Annmarie. "'Archi-ettes' in Training: The Admission of Women to McGill's School of Architecture," *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* 21, 3 (September 1996): 72.

_____. *Architecture in the Family Way: Doctors, Houses, and Women, 1870-1900*. Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996.

_____. "Eden Smith and the Canadian Domestic Revival." *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine* XXI, 2 (March 1993).

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso, 1983.

_____. "Introduction to Part Two: Staging Antimodernism in the Age of High Capitalist Nationalism." In *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, edited by Lynda Jessup. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.

Appadurai, Arjun. "Putting Hierarchy in Its Place." In *Rereading Cultural Anthropology*, edited by George E. Marcus. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992.

Bailey, Rebecca M. *Scottish Architects' Papers: A Source Book*. Edinburgh: Rutland, 1996.

Bederman, Gail. *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995.

Belasco, Warren James. *Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1979; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

- Bell, David A. "The Unbearable Lightness of Being French: Law, Republicanism and National Identity at the End of the Old Regime." In *American Historical Review* 106, 4 (October 2001): 1215-35.
- Bendix, Regina. *In Search of Authenticity: The Formation of Folklore Studies*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997.
- Bergdoll, Barry. *European Architecture 1750-1890*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Berger, Carl. *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970.
- _____. "The True North Strong and Free." In *Interpreting Canada's Past Volume II: After Confederation*, edited by J.M. Bumsted. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Bergeron, Claude. *Architectures du XX^e siècle au Québec*. Québec/Montréal: Musée de la Civilisation/Éditions du Méridien, 1989.
- Bland, John. "Gordon Antoine Neilson: Biography." In *Ramsay Traquair and his Successors: A Guide to the Archive*, edited by Irena Murray. Montréal: Canadian Architecture Collection and Blackader-Lauterman Library of Architecture and Art, McGill University, 1987.
- _____. "Percy Erskine Nobbs: Biography." In *Percy Erskine Nobbs and his Associates: A Guide to the Archive*, edited by Irena Murray. Montréal: Canadian Architecture Collection and Blackader-Lauterman Library of Architecture and Art, McGill University, 1986.
- _____. "Ramsay Traquair: Biography." In *Ramsay Traquair and his Successors: A Guide to the Archive*, edited by Irena Murray. Montréal: Canadian Architecture Collection and Blackader-Lauterman Library of Architecture and Art, McGill University, 1987.
- Boardman, Philip. *The Worlds of Patrick Geddes: Biologist, Town Planner, Re-educator, Peace-Warrior*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978.
- Bowe, Nicola Gordon Bowe, ed. *Art and the National Dream: The Search for Vernacular Expression in Turn-of-the-Century Design*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1993.

- Brison, Jeffrey D. "Cultural Interventions: American Corporate Philanthropy and the Construction of the Arts and Letters in Canada, 1900-1957." Ph.D. diss., Queen's University, 1998.
- British Architectural Library, Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). *Directory of British Architects 1834-1900*. Compiled by Alison Felstead, Jonathan Franklin, and Leslie Penfield. London: Mansell, 1993.
- Broude, Norma and Mary D. Garrard. *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*. New York: Icon Editions, 1992.
- _____. *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany*. New York: Harper and Row, 1982.
- Burke, Peter. *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*. np: Maurice Temple Smith, 1978; Aldershot, Hants.: Scolar Press, 1994.
- Cameron, Ross. D. "Tom Thomson, Antimodernism, and the Ideal of Manhood." *Journal of the CHA/Revue de la S.H.C.* 10 (1999): 185-208.
- Canadian Who's Who* II, 1936-37.
- Carney, Lora. "Modernists and Folk on the Lower St. Lawrence: The Problem of Folk Art." In *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, edited by Lynda Jessup. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.
- Carpenter, Carole Henderson. *Many Voices: A Study of Folklore Activities in Canada and their Role in Canadian Culture*. Ottawa: National Museum of Man Mercury Series/Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies Paper No. 26, 1979.
- Chartier, Roger. "Four Questions for Hayden White," in *On the Edge of the Cliff: History, Language, and Practices*, translated by Lydia G. Cochrane. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.
- Clifford, James. "On Ethnographic Allegory," in *Writing Culture: the Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, edited by Clifford and George E. Marcus. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.
- _____. *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988.

- _____, and George Marcus. *Writing Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.
- Cocchiara, Giuseppe. *The History of Folklore in Europe*, translated by John N. McDaniel. Turin: Editore Boringhieri, 1952; Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1981.
- Compact *Oxford English Dictionary*.
- Connor, Peter. "Cast-collecting in the nineteenth century: scholarship, aesthetics, connoisseurship." In *Rediscovering Hellenism: The Hellenic Inheritance and the English Imagination*, edited by G.W. Clarke. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Crossman, Kelly. *Architecture in Transition: From Art to Practice, 1885-1906*. Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987.
- _____. "The Influence of Scotland on Architectural Education in Canada." In *The Education of the Architect*, Proceedings of the 22nd Annual Symposium of the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain, edited by Neil Bingham. London: SAH, 1993.
- Cumming, Elizabeth. *Phoebe Anna Traquair, 1852-1936*. Edinburgh: Trustees of the National Galleries of Scotland, 1993.
- _____. "Phoebe Anna Traquair HRSA (1857-1936) and her Contribution to Arts and Crafts in Edinburgh." Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1986.
- Cumming, Elizabeth and Wendy Kaplan. *The Arts and Crafts Movement*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1991.
- Davey, Peter. *Arts and Crafts Architecture: The Search for Earthly Paradise*. London: The Architectural Press, 1980.
- Dowsett, Kathleen. "The Women's Art Association of Canada and its Designs on Canadian Handicrafts, 1898-1939." Master's thesis, Queen's University, 1998.
- Driedger, Leo, ed. *The Canadian Ethnic Mosaic: A Quest for Identity*. Toronto: McLelland and Stewart, 1978.
- du Prey, Pierre de la Ruffinière. *Sir John Soane. Catalogues of Architectural Drawings in the Victoria and Albert Museum*. London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1985.

- Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th edition.
- Fabian, Johannes. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983.
- Gentilcore, R. Louis, ed. *Historical Atlas of Canada, Volume II: The Land Transformed 1800-1891*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993.
- Gerson, Carole. *A Purer Taste: The Writing and Reading of Fiction in English in Nineteenth-Century Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989.
- Girouard, Mark. *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman*. New Haven: Yale, 1981.
- _____. *Sweetness and Light: The "Queen Anne" Movement 1860-1900*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977.
- Glendinning, Miles, Ranald MacInnes, and Aonghus MacKechnie. *A History of Scottish Architecture from the Renaissance to the Present Day*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996.
- Gossage, Peter. *Families in Transition: Industry and Population in Nineteenth-Century Saint-Hyacinthe*. Studies on the History of Québec. Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999.
- Gournay, Isabelle. "The First Leaders of McGill's School of Architecture: Stewart Henbest Capper, Percy Nobbs, and Ramsay Traquair." *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* 21, 3 (September 1996): 60-66.
- _____. "Prestige and Professionalism: The Contribution of American Architects." In *Montreal Metropolis 1880-1930*. Toronto/Montréal: Stoddart/Canadian Centre for Architecture, 1998.
- _____, and France Vanlaethem, editors. *Montreal Metropolis 1880-1930*. Toronto/Montréal: Stoddart/Canadian Centre for Architecture, 1998.
- Gowans, Alan. *Building Canada: An Architectural History of Canadian Life*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1966.
- Gray, A. Stuart. *Edwardian Architecture: A Biographical Dictionary*. London: Gerald Duckworth, 1985; Ware, Herts.: Wordsworth Editions, 1988.

- Handler, Richard. *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988.
- _____. "On Having a Culture: Nationalism and the Preservation of Québec's *Patrimoine*." In *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Museum Culture*, edited by George W. Stocking, Jr. Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1985.
- Harris, R. Cole, ed. *Historical Atlas of Canada, Volume 1: From the Beginning to 1800*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, n.d.
- Hill, Charles C. *The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation*. Ottawa/Toronto: National Gallery of Canada/McClelland & Stewart, 1995.
- Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition*. 1983; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Canto Edition), 1992.
- Horsman, Reginald. *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism*. Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1981.
- Hunt, Geoffrey. *John M. Lyle: Toward a Canadian Architecture*. Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1982.
- Jacobson, Matthew Frye. *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.
- Jessup, Lynda. "Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: An Introduction." In *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, edited by Lynda Jessup. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.
- _____. "Bushwackers in the Gallery: Antimodernism and the Group of Seven." In *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, edited by Lynda Jessup. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.
- _____. "Canadian Artists, Railways, the State and 'The Business of Becoming a Nation.'" Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Toronto, 1992.
- _____. "Moving Pictures and Costume Songs at the 1927 'Exhibition of Canadian West Coast Art, Native and Modern.'" *Canadian Journal of Film Studies*, 11, 1 (Spring 2002, forthcoming).
- _____, ed. *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.

- Jirat-Wasiutyński, Wojtêch. "Van Gogh in the South: Antimodernism and Exoticism in the Arlesian Paintings." In *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, edited by Lynda Jessup. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.
- Johnson, Donald Leslie and Donald Langmead. *Makers of 20th Century Modern Architecture: A Bio-Critical Sourcebook*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997.
- Kalman, Harold. *A History of Canadian Architecture*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Kaplan, Wendy. "The Vernacular in America, 1890-1920: Ideology and Design." In *Art and the National Dream: The Search for Vernacular Expression in Turn-of-the-Century Design*, edited by Nicola Gordon Bowe. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1993.
- Kelly, Robin D.G. "Notes on Deconstructing 'The Folk.'" *American Historical Review* 97, 5 (December 1992): 1400-08.
- Kines, Gary Bret. "Chief Man-of-Many-Sides: John Murray Gibbon and his contributions to the development of tourism and the arts in Canada." Master's thesis, Carleton University, 1988.
- Lane, Barbara Miller. *National Romanticism and Modern Architecture in Germany and the Scandinavian Countries*. *Modern Architecture and Cultural Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Lears, T.J. Jackson. *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920*. New York: Pantheon, 1981; Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994.
- Liscombe, Rhodri Windsor. "Nationalism or Cultural Imperialism: The Château style in Canada." *Architectural History: Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain* 36 (1993): 127-144.
- Little, J.I. *Crofters and Habitants: Settler Society, Economy, and Culture in a Quebec Township, 1848-1881*. *Studies on the History of Québec*. (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991).
- Lubbock, James. *The Tyranny of Taste: The Politics of Architecture and Design in Britain, 1550-1960*. New Haven: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for British Art, 1995.

- Macdonald, George. "Gerard Baldwin Brown, 1849-1932" (obituary). *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 1935. London: Humphrey Milford, published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 1935.
- Macleod, Robert. *Style and Society: Architectural Ideology in Britain, 1835-1914*. London: RIBA Publications, 1971.
- MacMillan, G.A. "A Short History of the British School at Athens, 1886-1911." *The Annual of the British School at Athens* XVII, Session 1910-1911. London: Macmillan & co., n.d.
- Macmillan, Duncan. "'The Busie Humm of Men': Visions of the City in Scottish Art." In *The Architecture of Scottish Cities*, edited by Deborah Mays. East Linton, Scotland: Tuckwell Press, 1997.
- Mangan, J.A. and James Walvin, eds. *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987.
- Marcus, George E., ed. *Rereading Cultural Anthropology*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989.
- Markus, Thomas A. *Buildings and Power: Freedom and Control in the Origin of Modern Building Types*. London: Routledge, 1993.
- McCarthy, Kathleen D. *Women's Culture: American Philanthropy and Art, 1830-1930*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.
- McKay, Ian McKay, ed. *The Challenge of Modernity: A Reader on Post-Confederation Canada*. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1992.
- _____. "Handicrafts and the Logic of 'Commercial Antimodernism,': The Nova Scotia Case." In *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, edited by Lynda Jessup. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.
- _____. *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia*. Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994.
- McKinstry, Sam. *Rowand Anderson: "The Premier Architect of Scotland."* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991.

- McNaughton, Janet Elizabeth. "A Study of the CPR-Sponsored Québec Folk Song and Handicrafts Festivals, 1927-1930." Master's thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1982.
- Meller, Hellen. *Patrick Geddes: Social Evolutionist and City Planner*. London: Routledge, 1990.
- Metcalf, Thomas R. *An Imperial Vision: Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.
- Moore, William D. "The Masonic Lodge Room, 1870-1930: A Sacred Space of Masculine Spiritual Hierarchy." In *Gender, Class, and Shelter*, edited by Elizabeth Collins Cromley and Carter L. Hudgins. Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture v. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1995.
- Moray, Gerta. "Emily Carr and the Traffic in Native Images." In *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, edited by Lynda Jessup. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.
- Morey, Carl. "Nationalism and Commerce: Canadian Folk Music in the 1920s." *Canadian Issues* XX (1998): 34-44.
- Morgan, Norma. "F. Cleveland Morgan and the Decorative Arts Collection in the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts." Master's thesis, Concordia University, 1985.
- Moyles, R.G. and Doug Owram, *Imperial Dreams and Colonial Realities: British Views of Canada, 1880-1914*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988.
- Murray, Irena, ed. *Percy Erskine Nobbs and his Associates: A Guide to the Archive*. Montréal: Canadian Architecture Collection and Blackader-Lauterman Library of Architecture and Art, McGill University, 1986.
- _____. *Ramsay Traquair and his Successors: A Guide to the Archive*. Montréal: Canadian Architecture collection and Blackader-Lauterman Library of Architecture and Art, McGill University, 1987.
- Naismith, Robert J. "Dash of Genius on City Skyline." *The Scotsman*, 23 December, year unknown.
- Noppen, Luc and Lucie K. Morisset. "A la recherche d'identités: Usages et propos du recyclage du passé dans l'architecture au Québec." In *Architecture, forme urbaine et identité collective*, edited by Luc Noppen. Sillery, QC: Septentrion, 1995.

- Nowry, Lawrence. *Man of Mana: Marius Barbeau*. Toronto: NC Press, 1995.
- Nurse, Andrew. "Tradition and Modernity: The Cultural Work of Marius Barbeau." Ph.D. dissertation, Queen's University, 1997.
- Ogata, Amy. *Art Nouveau and the Social Vision of Modern Living. Modern Architecture and Cultural Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- _____. "Artisans and Art Nouveau in Fin-de-siècle Belgium: Primitivism and Nostalgia." In *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, edited by Lynda Jessup (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).
- Pemble, John. *The Mediterranean Passion: Victorians and Edwardians in the South*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987.
- Pevsner, Nikolaus. *Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius* (Faber and Faber, 1936; London: Penguin Books, 1960).
- Phillips, Ruth B. "Performing the Native Woman: Primitivism and Mimicry in Early Twentieth-Century Visual Culture." In *Antimodernism and Artistic Experience: Policing the Boundaries of Modernity*, edited by Lynda Jessup. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.
- Preziosi, Donald. *Rethinking Art History: Meditations on a Coy Science*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.
- Richardson, Margaret. *Architects of the Arts and Crafts Movement*. London: Trefoil Books, 1983.
- Roberts, G.D. And Arthur L. Tunnel, eds. *A Standard Dictionary of Canadian Biography: The Canadian Who was Who*, vol 1. Toronto: Trans-Canada Press, 1934.
- Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. *National Monuments Record of Scotland Jubilee: A Guide to the Collections*. Edinburgh: National Monuments Record of Scotland, 1991.
- Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993; New York: Vintage Books, 1994.
- Savage, Peter. "An Examination of the Work of Sir Robert Lorimer." Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1973.

- _____. *Lorimer and the Edinburgh Crafts Designers*. London: Paul Harris, 1980.
- Schoenauer, Norbert. "Percy Erskine Nobbs: Teacher and Builder of Architecture." *Fontanus from the Collections of McGill University IX* (1996): 49-50.
- Shand-Tucci, Douglass. *Boston Bohemia 1881-1900; Ralph Adams Cram: Life and Architecture*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995.
- Shubert, Howard *et al.* "An Interview with John Bland." In *John Bland at Eighty: A Tribute*, edited by Irena Murray and Norbert Schoenauer. Montréal: McGill University, 1991.
- Simmins, Geoffrey. *Documents in Canadian Architecture* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1992).
- _____. *Ontario Association of Architects: A Centennial History*. Toronto: Ontario Association of Architects, 1989.
- Sinclair, Fiona. *Scotstyle: 150 Years of Scottish Architecture*. Edinburgh: Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland and Scottish Academic Press, 1984.
- Sutcliffe, Anthony, "Montreal Metropolis." In *Montreal Metropolis 1880-1930*, edited by Isabelle Gournay and France Vanlaetham. Montréal/Toronto: Canadian Centre for Architecture/Stoddart Publishing, 1998.
- Thomas, Christopher. "'Canadian Castles'? The Question of National Styles in Architecture Revisited." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 32, 1 (Spring 1997): 5-27.
- Thompson, Allison. "A Worthy Place in the Art of our Country: The Women's Art Association of Canada, 1887-1987." Master's thesis, Carleton University, 1989.
- Trofimenkoff, Susan Mann. *Action Française: French Canadian nationalism in the twenties*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975.
- _____. *The Dream of Nation: A Social and Intellectual History of Québec*. Toronto: Gage, 1983.
- Turner, Frank M. *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.
- Upton, Dell. *Architecture in the United States*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

- Vanlaethem, France. "Beautification versus Modernization." In *Montréal Metropolis 1880-1930*, edited by Isabelle Gournay and France Vanlaethem. Montréal/Toronto: Canadian Centre for Architecture/Stoddart, 1998.
- _____. "Building the Metropolis," in *Montreal Metropolis 1880-1930*, edited by Isabelle Gournay and France Vanlaethem. Toronto/Montréal: Stoddart/Canadian Centre for Architecture, 1998.
- _____. "Modernité et régionalisme dans l'architecture au Québec: Du nationalisme canadien de Percy E. Nobbs au nationalisme canadien-français des années 1940," in *Architecture, forme urbaine et identité collective*, edited by Luc Noppen. Sillery, QC: Septentrion, 1995.
- Van Slyck, Abigail A. "Mañana, Mañana: Racial Stereotypes and the Anglo Rediscovery of the Southwest's Vernacular Architecture, 1890-1920." In *Gender, Class, and Shelter*, edited by Elizabeth Collins Cromley and Carter L. Hudgins. Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, v. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995.
- Vipond, Mary. "The Nationalist Network: English Canada's Intellectuals and Artists in the 1920s." In *Interpreting Canada's Past, Volume II: After Confederation*, edited by J.M. Bumsted. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Vlach, John Michael. "'Snug Li'l House with Flue and Oven': Nineteenth-Century Reforms in Plantation Slave Housing." In *Gender, Class, and Shelter*, edited by Elizabeth Collins Cromley and Carter L. Hudgins. Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, v. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995.
- Wagg, Susan. "The McGill Architecture of Percy Erskine Nobbs. Master's thesis, Concordia University, 1979.
- _____. *Percy Erskine Nobbs: Architect, Artist, Craftsman*. Montréal: McCord Museum/McGill-Queen's University Press, 1982.
- Wang, Ning. *Tourism and Modernity: A Sociological Analysis*. Tourism Social Science Series. Amsterdam: Pergamon, 2000.
- Wells, Camille. "Old Claims and New Demands: Vernacular Architecture Studies Today." In *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture II*, edited by Camille Wells. Columbia, MI: University of Missouri Press, 1986.
- Westley, Margaret M. *Remembrance of Grandeur: The Anglo-Protestant Elite of Montréal 1900-1950*. Montréal: Éditions Libre Expression, 1990.

- White, Hayden. *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987.
- _____. *Metahistory*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973.
- _____. *Tropics of Discourse*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.
- Williams, Raymond. *The Country and the City*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1973; London: Hogarth, 1993.
- Wilson, Chris. *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997.
- Wiseman, T.P. *A Short History of the British School at Rome*. London: British School at Rome, 1990.
- Wright, Donald A. "W.D. Lighthall and David Ross McCord: Antimodernism and English-Canadian Imperialism, 1880s-1918." *Revue d'études canadiennes/Journal of Canadian Studies* 32, 2 (Summer 1997): 134-153.

ILLUSTRATIONS

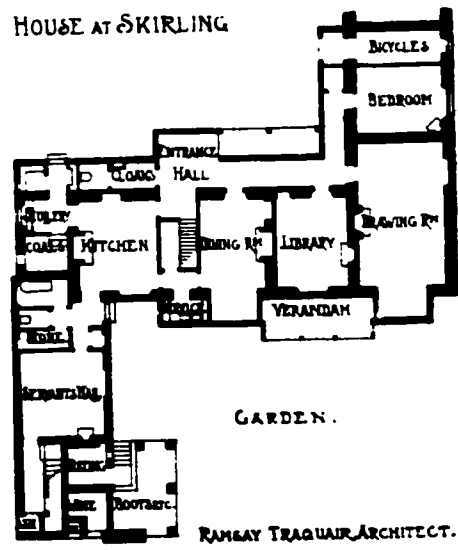
(Full sources are given in the List of Illustrations)



- .1 Traquair, "Six Cottages to be erected at Bannockburn for the Garden City Association (Scottish Branch)", before 1908.



1.2 A House at Skirling, Peebleshire, Scotland, c. 1905-08.



1.3 Skirling House, Plan.