

Ongoing Conservation Work at Province House National Historic Site

Masonry work on the interior and exterior walls, a key component of Phase 2, is ongoing at Province House National Historic Site (NHS).

We recently reached some pretty exciting milestones including the removal of the old capital stone and the installation of the newly carved capital stone on the south portico, the completion of the west pavilion wall in the Confederation Chamber, north elevation rebuilds (on either side of the north portico) as well as the south/west elevation rebuilds.

The completion of the west pavilion wall in the Confederation Chamber is stunning and showcases one of the largest sections of restored masonry in one of the most important rooms in the building. Please see below before and after pictures.

Some of ongoing work includes:

- Basement interior (wythe) work with select rooms nearing full completion.
- Interior (wythe) work on the east pavilion wall in Legislative Chamber.
- Attic truss reinforcements.

Work slated to begin in coming months includes:

- A roof mockup to allow for the roof framing to begin.
- The dismantling of select vaults in the basement.
- The remaining sections of the central core (housing the elevator and bathrooms) will be dismantled.

The design work for Phase 3 is currently under way. This phase includes fit up work such as the interior finishes (painting and flooring) and

upgrades to the operational component such as fire and safety systems, information technology and audio visual, plumbing and electrical systems as well as heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems. There will also be numerous improvements to universal accessibility at Province House NHS, including exterior building access, universally-accessible washrooms, and improvements to lighting and signage to assist the visually impaired.

The final portion of the project, Phase 4, involves the design, development and installation of the new visitor experience offer at Province House NHS. Parks Canada hosted a number of virtual engagement sessions with various stakeholders, representatives from cultural communities and Indigenous community members to gather information, ideas and perspectives for the interpretive plan. The interpretive plan will help guide the research and content development for the exhibits. Over the next year, the exhibits project team will be working on content development and exhibit design.

The Province House NHS conservation project is the most extensive project in the building's 174-year history. As with any project of this size, the timeline typically fluctuates; however, the COVID-19 pandemic has created delays that we could not have anticipated when the conservation project began in 2015. The new anticipated completion date of the conservation project is 2023. We are committed to keeping our workforce safe on site as they work to preserve and restore this heritage building. We will continue to monitor the situation as we move forward with the conservation project and ensure updates on the project continue to be shared publicly.



A skilled craftsperson applies the final decorations on the Ionic Capital that will be installed on the south west column of the south portico.
Submitted by Trevor Gillingwater, stone conservator consultant for the Province House National Historic Site conservation project



An image of the West Pavilion wall, located in the Confederation Chamber, before conservation work began.



An image of the West Pavilion wall, located in the Confederation Chamber, complete following extensive masonry work.

Quick Tips for Visitors

Even though Province House NHS is closed for conservation, Parks Canada continues to tell the story of the building:

Explore **"The Story of Confederation"** exhibit at the *Confederation Centre of the Arts* (upper foyer), which includes an impressive replica of the Confederation Chamber. Free admission.

November - May – 10 a.m. - 3 p.m., Saturdays only.

June, September and October – 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Monday to Saturday, closed Sunday.

July and August – 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Monday to Saturday, 12 p.m. - 5 p.m. Sunday.

While visiting **"The Story of Confederation,"** be sure to watch Parks Canada's award winning film, **"A Building of Destiny,"** about the 1864 Charlottetown Conference.

Contact Us

Parks Canada is committed to sharing the story of the important conservation project at Province House National Historic Site.

To learn more, visit our website:
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Stone by Stone Province House Conservation Project

Province House National Historic Site (NHS) is currently undergoing an extensive conservation project. Built more than 170 years ago, Province House NHS is a complex building and presents the unique challenge of rehabilitating the structure, while respecting its character-defining heritage elements.

The Government of Canada is investing in Province House NHS to conserve this historic structure, which is both the birthplace of Confederation and the seat of Prince Edward Island's Provincial Legislature. Full details of the project can be found on our website:

www.parkscanada.gc.ca/provincehouse.

This periodic newsletter will showcase the story of Province House NHS and the efforts to save this iconic piece of our cultural heritage.

Fast Facts

- Province House National Historic Site (NHS) was built between 1843 and 1847.
- The first session of the Prince Edward Island Legislature was held in the building in January 1847. It is Canada's second oldest active legislative building, after Nova Scotia's "Province House," which opened in 1819.
- Province House is owned by the Province of Prince Edward Island and is operated as a national historic site by Parks Canada, through an agreement signed with the Province in 1974.
- A major restoration project was undertaken by Parks Canada between 1979 and 1983 to restore a portion of the building to the 1864 period.
- Between 2011 and 2013, additional renovations were done in advance of celebrations in 2014 to mark the 150th anniversary of the Charlottetown Conference.



Family ties By Maureen Coulter, Parks Canada

Kathy Large is the great-great-great granddaughter of Isaac Smith, the architect who designed Province House National Historic Site (NHS) and supervised the construction of the building between 1843-1847

Kathy Large would often think about her great-great-great grandfather as she explored Province House National Historic Site (NHS) in search of beautiful backdrops and quiet places to conduct interviews.

“As a legislature reporter, you get to see parts of the building the public doesn’t really see,” said Large who is a former political reporter with CBC Television. “I became very familiar with the building and felt an increased connection to my ancestor Isaac Smith.”

Smith is the architect who designed Province House NHS and supervised the construction of the building between 1843-1847. The building was designated as a national historic site for its role in the Charlottetown Conference of 1864, as well as for its neo-classical architecture style and representation of the judicial institution of Prince Edward Island.

Large says she became interested in her maternal ancestry at a very young age, thanks to her aunt, Marianne Morrow, who was heavily involved in researching their family history.

Large got involved with some of her aunt’s research when she was living in Leeds, Yorkshire, England as a young adult. She visited the small village of Harome, North Yorkshire, England where Smith had been born and proceeded to gather as much information as possible for her aunt, who later visited Smith’s hometown to obtain birth and baptism records from a local church.

“I was very taken with my aunt Marianne,” said Large. “She was very enthusiastic about our family history and helped me understand what an important figure Isaac Smith was in PEI architectural history.”

Large is immensely proud of Smith and his accomplishments. In addition to designing Province House NHS, Smith also designed and built many other public buildings in Prince Edward Island including Government House in Charlottetown.

“It is so important to recognize when your family members accomplish important things,” said Large. “Isaac Smith is a wonderful example to all of us. Knowing what he contributed to P.E.I. awakened my pride in being an Islander.”

Now that Large is retired, she has found another way to stay connected with her ancestor.

Large is one of the guides at “The Story of Confederation” exhibit at the Confederation Centre of the Arts. Her job entails sharing the details about the history of Province House NHS including the events that led up to the meeting of the Fathers of Confederation in Charlottetown in 1864. She also answers questions and discusses various themes at length with those who are interested in further information about Canadian political history.

“When you go through the story with people about how Canada was created, you come to the conclusion that this an extremely important site in Canada’s history.”

Large commends Parks Canada’s efforts in preserving this heritage building and continuing her great-great-great grandfather’s legacy.

“This is a one-of-a-kind building that represents the beginning, the birth, of our nation, and I find it easy to defend the expenditure associated with it,” said Large. “We are extremely fortunate that Parks Canada found the resources and extremely talented people for this conservation project. This restoration work will make the building safe for another whole generation and beyond.”



In another part of the world resides a building with a striking resemblance to Province House National Historic Site (NHS).

Isaac Smith was born in a small village called Harome in North Yorkshire, England. The manor house in that area of North Yorkshire is called Duncombe Park and was the home of the earls of Feversham. Smith’s father was a tenant of the earls, so Smith grew up on the estate and was exposed to the architecture of Duncombe Park from a very early age.

Some of the similar features between Duncombe Park and Province House NHS include:

- Triangular pediment in front of the buildings
- Large stone columns
- Stone colour
- Wings
- Placement and size of windows



Do you feel Smith drew inspiration from Duncombe Park when he designed Province House NHS?

Author: Kognos, Wikimedia Commons
https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Duncombe_Park.jpg

Bringing Everyone to the Table: Planning the Visitor Experience at Province House National Historic Site By Malve Petersmann, Parks Canada

The unique “Fast Talk” engagement process used by the Province House Exhibit Team to gather Indigenous perspectives on Confederation included a facilitated virtual discussion with three prominent scholars. This session was live-streamed for the benefit of interested Parks Canada staff and other project team members.

As the restoration work at Province House National Historic Site (NHS) continues, a small but growing team is focussing their attention on planning the experience that visitors will have when this national historic site opens its doors to the public. One key priority in this work is developing the interpretive exhibits – Where will they be? What stories will they tell? How will they look? How will visitors interact with them? What will be different – and what will be the same – at the “new” Province House NHS?

The first step in this process is the development of an interpretive plan. The plan outlines what topics, themes, stories, and messages will be covered by the exhibits, and begins to explore different interpretive approaches for the exhibit content developers and designers.

The building of Province House itself, and many of the discussions and decisions that took place there, are representative of colonial power and authority. As such, Province House has not felt inviting to all, and through its redevelopment, Parks Canada and the Legislative Assembly of PEI have an opportunity to fundamentally shift local – and national – perceptions about this nationally significant place.

Through the current conservation project, Province House has been taken apart, and as we put it back together again, we can take steps to ensure that the “new” Province House feels different - welcoming, open, and inclusive. The deconstruction of the building gives us a chance to deconstruct its meaning in the exhibits, and to contextualise and reframe the power that it represents.

Leading the development of the interpretive plan is the Province House Exhibits Project Team, which includes Parks Canada staff (project managers, historians, and built-heritage experts), representatives of the Legislative Assembly of PEI, contracted historians, and representatives from L’Nuey (formally representing the Mi’kmaq First Nations on Prince Edward Island, Epekwitk). We have recognized the gaps in our own collective knowledge and experience, and understand that it is our responsibility to ensure that multiple viewpoints are included in the exhibits.

Informed by Parks Canada’s commitment to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) Call to Action #79, and based on the principles outlined in Parks Canada’s new Framework for History and Commemoration (www.pc.gc.ca/en/lhn-nhs/plan/cadre-framework), the exhibits project team has developed a comprehensive strategy to engage both national and local Indigenous and cultural communities. Many of these engagement sessions have been taking place over the past year – at first in larger, in-person

meetings, and then, in adherence to COVID-19 health and safety guidelines, by telephone or on digital platforms such as WebEx and Google Meet. In February 2020, a large local stakeholder interpretive planning session was held in Charlottetown. Participants were invited to reflect upon and contribute ideas for stories and perspectives that they felt should be presented in the new exhibits. Depending on their area of expertise, attendees shared historical information and best practices for public history, insights about the local and provincial tourism industry, and knowledge of the provincial education and heritage landscape. It was an inspiring and very productive session!



In the Fall of 2020, additional meetings were held virtually to gather additional perspectives. A wide net was cast in soliciting local community group participants as well as local Indigenous community members. Individual engagement sessions were held with the Black Cultural Society of PEI, the PEI Association for Newcomers to Canada, La Société acadienne et francophone de

l’Î.-P.-É., Le Comité historique Sœur Antoinette Desroches, Le Musée acadien, the Benevolent Irish Society, the PEI Scottish Settlers Historical Society, the Glenaladale Heritage Trust, the Belfast Historical Society, the Caledonian Club, and the Native Council of PEI. In these sessions, the exhibits project team learned about terminology, historiography, issues of representation, and themes and stories directly relating to the main topics of the Province House exhibits that were important to community members.

Parks Canada collaborated with our partners at L’Nuey to coordinate four national engagement sessions. These virtual sessions were held April to June 2021, and brought together Indigenous peoples from across the country to discuss the impacts, past and present, of Canadian confederation on Indigenous peoples. A Mi’kmaq facilitator was contracted by L’Nuey to host the sessions and lead the discussions. These engagements were very meaningful, honest and sometimes difficult, and provided great insight that will help guide the project team in the development of the exhibit.

As we embark on more detailed content development and exhibit design, the Interpretive Plan that has been developed for the exhibits at Province House will guide our research and decision-making process. Throughout the development of the exhibits, we will continue to expand our practice of engaging Indigenous and cultural communities, making sure that multiple voices and perspectives are presented, and giving everyone “a seat at the table.”

Mysteries at Province House National Historic Site: “Old Father Murphy” By Jon Stone, Public Services and Procurement Canada

The day-to-day work of conserving Prince Edward Island’s Province House National Historic Site (NHS) is not just a construction project, but also an adventure in discovery. Occasionally something interesting shows up during routine work.

Recently, while removing some floorboards, a tradesman discovered a handwritten note on the underside of one of the old planks. Inscribed in pencil in cursive writing, an unknown worker around 175 years ago wrote a message, probably thinking it would never be seen again.

What the message actually says is still a mystery as several experts try to decipher the old style writing, but the signature of the author is quite clearly that of someone self-identified as “Old Father Murphy”. The piece of wood and its mysterious message joins the various intriguing items found during the conservation process. Yet another part of the continuing story of this historic landmark.



Welcome to the Profile Series!

Behind the walls at *Province House National Historic Site* (NHS), a large team of specialists is working to conserve this landmark site for future generations. This series will feature some of the incredibly talented people who are making this conservation project possible.



Alix McEwan says she made the conscious decision to pursue her love of older buildings in Grade 9.

At that time, tasked by her guidance counsellor to reflect on a career path, she took inspiration from her surroundings.

“My school had a beautiful campus,” said McEwan. “It was one of my favourite parts about being there: the atmosphere of the physical built environment.”

In just 30 minutes, she typed out a plan, handed it in to her guidance counsellor, and started on this exciting career path.

“I became an architect because I like to look at old buildings,” said McEwan. “At various points, I’ve definitely stopped and checked and asked myself if this is still the right path, and it always has been.”

McEwan, who is based out of Halifax, Nova Scotia, worked with Graeme Duffus for seven years before she took a job with Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) in 2016.

McEwan is now the Senior Conservation Architect for PSPC. She inherited this role in 2019 and works hand in hand with project managers from PSPC, the Agency who is managing the Province House National Historic Site (NHS) conservation project on behalf of Parks Canada.

McEwan is responsible for the technical execution of the work. She ensures every expert on her team is kept in the loop and has all the information they need in order to confirm that the project is executed appropriately. This process ensures consultants are performing and following their respective contracts.

She says every old building has a unique tactile feel and describes Province House NHS as ‘something very representative of the place where it was built’.

“The more we unwrap the layers on it, and expose the deep red local sandstone used throughout the core and interior of the masonry walls the more it feels like it is built directly from the ground it stands on.”

McEwan says the work happening at Province House NHS, especially in the core of the exterior wall, should renew the building by maintaining its heritage defining characteristics while significantly enhancing its performance.

“It’s amazing to me just how many people work on this project that really do care about doing it right, even if it that is not the easiest way forward,” said McEwan. “If we keep going with regular maintenance, there is no reason that this building won’t last another 170 years before they have to do anything like this again.”



He is a doctor of stone.

Trevor Gillingwater, who is based out of Westmount, Quebec, is a stone conservator consultant for the Province House National Historic Site conservation project.

“As a stone conservator, my concern is materials, everything from the mortar to the stone,” explained Gillingwater. “My job entails me having a sound understanding of the performance, chemistry and inherit structure of a stone.”

Gillingwater was one of the experts on the project team who located suitable stone for the interior walls in the hills of Kelly’s Cross, near Crapaud, Prince Edward Island, in 2018.

“Parks Canada wanted something local, and good on them,” said Gillingwater. “It was a success in that we found an Island sandstone that had sufficient structural and compositional likeness to the original existing stone in the interior of the building.”

Gillingwater graduated from Mount Allison University as well as Weymouth College before attending a master’s graduate program of architectural stone conservation at Bournemouth University in the UK. He says his love for this field of work was born after studying abroad in Athens, Greece during his third year of studies at Mount Allison University.

“I think it was that year of looking at historic ancient buildings and putting together that absolutely love of stone, and its geology, that I think I ended up where I am, and followed the path towards the conservation of historic buildings,” said Gillingwater whose been in the field for 25 years. “It’s a wonderful profession of marrying art and science.”

He says working on Province House National Historic Site has been an honour and has enjoyed this opportunity to work on a traditional Georgian style building from the 1800s.

“The day I realized I was going to be involved with the Province House conservation project was a very fortunate moment in my career.”



The first time **Nicolle Gallant** walked through the doors at Province House National Historic Site (NHS) was 10 years ago as a Parks Canada employee.

“It was pretty spectacular,” recalls Gallant. “You don’t understand it until you are inside of it and can really understand the history that happened in this place.”

Gallant grew up in Emyvale and now lives in the small rural community with her husband, three children and dog “Frankie”.

“I love it there,” said Gallant. “I know everyone, and if I don’t know them, then I usually get to know them.”

She began her career at Parks Canada as a Budgeting and Accounting Officer in 2010 and went on to become the Finance and Administrative Manager for a number of years before she was appointed the Project Manager for the P.E.I. Field Unit.

She says she didn’t appreciate the scope of the work that happens within Parks Canada until she took on this most recent position.

“What we do is so important,” said Gallant. “Not only are we protecting and preserving these national historic sites; we are also protecting the ecological integrity of our Parks for future generations, including my own children.”

Gallant’s position as the Province House Conservation Initiative Manager entails her overseeing the Parks Canada side of the project, everything from managing the budget to the heritage aspects of the building.

The new job did not come without it’s challenges. “One of the biggest things I was scared of was media interviews,” admits Gallant. “However, once I got out there, I was happy to talk about the Province House NHS conservation project because I’m super proud of the job everyone is doing and how far we’ve come.”

She says one of her strongest skillsets is her ability to work in a team environment. “I like to think I’m able to work with most people,” said Gallant. “I’ve been really lucky to form some great relationships not only with people at Public Services and Procurement Canada, but with other colleagues within Parks Canada, external contractors, consultants and engineers.”

Gallant said she feels fortunate to call Parks Canada her place of work and to contribute to the Province House NHS conservation project. “I honestly can truly say that I love my job,” said Gallant. “Not only am I working to conserve this historical site, but I get some say in how that all happens.”

Reducing Carbon Footprint

By Jon Stone, Public Services and Procurement Canada

The project to conserve Province House National Historic Site (NHS) will not only preserve the heritage of the iconic building, but will also incorporate some new technology to increase the energy efficiency of the structure.

A new feature of Province House NHS will be a geothermal heating and cooling system. This system will supplement the existing climate control. Currently, heating needs of the building use Charlottetown’s district heating system for winter months. In summer, there has been no centralized air conditioning. With the new geothermal system, overall energy consumption will be greatly reduced. The added efficiency will save about \$10,000 annually. A big plus side of the new system will be the ability to control heat and humidity year round.

The heart of the system will be a dozen 500ft deep wells which access the ground water aquifer beneath the historic site. Water will not be extracted from the wells, but rather the aquifer will serve as a heat sink to store heat in the summer and keep the building cooler and humidity balanced. In the winter, the process reverses and heat is taken from the ground water and brought into the building.

Climate control within the 174-year-old building is not just about maintaining comfortable temperatures and improved air quality, but it ensures the building and its contents are better protected and preserved and not subjected to damaging fluctuations of temperature and humidity.

