

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 its conservation presents a unique challenge of rehabilitating the structure while respecting its character-defining heritage elements.

### **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* 

#### Free admission.

November to May – 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m., Saturdays only.

> Parcs Canada

June, September and October – 10 am to 4 pm, Monday to Saturday 12 pm to 5pm Sundays

July and August – 10 am to 4 pm, Monday to Saturday 12 pm to 5 pm Sundays

The Government of Canada is proudly investing in the long-term preservation of Province House NHS. Full details of the project can be found on our website: www.parkscanada.gc.ca/provincehouse

This periodic newsletter showcases the stories of Province House NHS and the efforts being made to save this iconic piece of our cultural heritage.

*Centre of the Arts* (upper foyer), which includes an impressive replica of the Confederation Chamber.





# Ongoing Conservation Work at Province House National Historic Site

## Phase 2 update:

Phase 2 of the conservation project is nearing completion at Province House National Historic Site (NHS). This phase began in 2018 and involved conserving the building envelope including the foundation walls, interior and exterior masonry walls, portico foundations, windows, and roof. All work for this phase is expected to be complete in late summer or early fall of 2022.

Recently completed work includes:

- Exterior masonry work
- Above grade interior masonry work
- Truss and beam end repairs

Only 10 of the 101 windows remain to be installed at the site. Two of them will be installed early in September. Six are in the basement and won't be installed until backfilling of the exoskeleton excavation is completed. The final two (on the second floor facing north) will remain uninstalled to permit Phase 3 work access to the elevator core and will be filled with a temporary covering mimicking the finished frames. The roof work is now complete with only copper downpipes (extending down from the eaves trough) remaining to be installed. The last time the roof was replaced was in the 1980s. The slate material for this project came from a quarry in Vermont. Since the quarry was unable to supply replacement materials, the Province House conservation project team had to search for similar slate material elsewhere. After some research, the team was able to source slate material from the United Kingdom that was original to the building to complete the roof work. The new roof features copper cladding, thermal insulation and new slate shingles. This combination of traditional materials and modern day components/high-quality design, has not only restored the roof, but improved it, so less on-going maintenance and repairs will be required going forward.

## Phase 3 update:

Phase 3 is underway at Province House NHS. So far, select vaults in the basement and central core (housing elevator and bathrooms) have been dismantled and contractors are in the process of removing the silica dust following the completion of the above grade interior/exterior masonry work. The ceiling removal process has also begun. Contractors are currently reinforcing the decorative heritagecharacter defining elements on the ceiling, such as the medallions, rosettes and crown moldings, so they can be restored. They are actively removing all the flat sections of the ceiling so they can start with a good, solid ceiling frame with new lath and plaster.



Stonemason working on interior walls in basement.

This phase is all about preserving those character defining elements while bringing the building into the 21st century. The scope includes fit up work such as the interior finishes (painting and flooring) and upgrades to the operational components 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, universallyaccessible washrooms, and improvements to lighting and signage to assist the visually impaired.

## Phase 4 update:

The stone walls below grade are almost complete with only a small section remaining to be consolidated in the north east corner of the basement. The underpinning of the basement (lowering of the cellar floor) will begin after the basement walls have been fully consolidated. The underpinning process involves supporting sections of the walls, excavating rock and soil, pouring new concrete, and waiting for it to cure before moving on to an adjacent section of wall. A structural engineer will be watching this work closely to ensure the building remains structurally sound throughout the process. The contractor will be excavating a meter down (the elevator shaft will be excavated three meters) to create enough headroom so that the basement can accommodate accessible and inclusive washroom facilities, a lunch room, a storage facility and a mechanical and electrical service room. This work is expected to begin in fall 2022.

# Character-defining elements of Province House

- The building's symmetrical design
- Balanced exterior elevations with central porticos and pediments
- Decorative use of columns and pilasters
- Exterior masonry walls
- Architectural characteristics of the Confederation Chamber
- Interior details like the central staircase, corridor arches, ceiling medallions, mouldings and wood sashed windows.



The final portion of the project, Phase 4, involves the design, development and installation of the new visitor experience offer at Province House NHS. The Province House Exhibit Project Team is currently working on content development and exhibit design following extensive consultations with various stakeholders, representatives from cultural communities and Indigenous community members.

For more information about Phase 4 work, please see "Province House Exhibit Project Update" below.

## Province House Exhibit Project Update

Building on inclusive principles outlined in Park's Canada *Framework for History and Commemoration* (www.pc.gc.ca/en/lhn-nhs/plan/cadre-framework), the Province House Exhibit Project Team has brought together a large and diverse group of individuals to contribute their unique knowledge and perspectives to tell the story of this national historic site.

The Exhibit Project Team is made up of historians, curators, and built heritage and visitor experience experts from Parks Canada, L'nuey, UPEI, and the PEI Museum and Heritage Foundation, as well as staff from the Legislative Assembly. The Stakeholder Advisory Committee includes representatives from the Confederation Centre of the Arts, the City of Charlottetown, Tourism PEI, and the Island's Black and Acadian communities. Along with the First Nations Advisory Circle, these core groups have been working closely together with the contracted design and content development teams for over a year to determine what stories need to be told at Province House National Historic Site and how those stories should be presented to visitors.

A conceptual design plan for the exhibits was completed in July 2021, and work on a preliminary schematic plan and way-finding/ visitor flow plan was well underway until the contracted exhibit design firm unexpectedly went out of business in March 2022. This sudden development stalled design work for the project, although content development and interpretive writing has continued. The team of writers has expanded to include individuals who will tackle the topics presented in the exhibit from a variety of perspectives, and their collective work on scripts for the audio guide and exhibit texts has been supported by a number of content experts involved in the project.

The first draft of these scripts and texts will be reviewed this summer. Feedback from the Exhibit Project Team, Stakeholder Advisory Committee, and First Nations Advisory Circle will be incorporated into the next draft of content, which will be shared with the new design firm joining the project in the Fall. Before year-end, everyone involved in the exhibit project will be invited to participate in a workshop to further the development of the visitor experience, and additional vetting opportunities will be integrated into the process.

Figuring out how to tell the stories of Province House isn't easy. There are many perspectives, experiences, and opinions that must be considered. In sharing the work of developing the exhibits and in shifting the process to include many voices, Parks Canada hopes to produce a meaningful, inclusive, and comprehensive experience that will inspire visitors to explore new ways of understanding our shared history.



# **Notable Legislation Through the Years**

The PEI legislature has enacted many laws since first meeting in Province House in 1847; here are just a few of the most notable:

#### Free Education Act (1852)

Only a year after the Island gained responsible government, the legislature passed the Free Education Act. This law made schooling tuition-free for Island children and ensured stable pay for teachers. PEI is believed to be the first British North American colony to make public education free.

#### Land Purchase Act (1875)

This law effectively resolved the Land Question, under which settlers could only lease the land they lived on and farmed, not own it. Using funds provided as part of PEI's entry into Confederation, the provincial government required owners of large estates to sell their land to the government, which resold it to tenants.

#### Prohibition Act (1900) and Temperance Act (1948)

Banning the sale of alcohol, known as "Prohibition," was an issue of great debate in the early 20th century. These two laws made PEI the first province to enact Prohibition, and the last to remove it!

#### Prince Edward Island Lands Protection Act (1982)

To prevent monopolies over the Island's finite natural resources, this law set limits on the amount of land residents, non-residents and corporations can own.

#### Appropriation Act (Capital Expenditures) 2015 (2014)

This was the last bill to receive Royal Assent in Province House before it closed for the extensive restoration work that continues today. Appropriation Acts provide the legislative authority for government to spend public money as proposed in provincial budgets.

Ryan Reddin Director of Parliamentary Research Legislative Assembly of PEI

# Holland College students restore and reinstall heritage windows at Province House National Historic Site

As part of a partnership with Parks Canada, students in Holland College's Heritage Retrofit Carpentry program have carefully restored and reinstalled two of the original windows at Province House National Historic Site (NHS).

Students began this unique conservation work in 2019. The conservation work involved disassembling the windows, including the glass panes, and removing putty and paint in order to examine the condition of the bare wood frames. They had to identify what needed to be replaced, manufacture that piece and install it. They also had to rebuild the window frames by installing glass and putty before painting it with linseed oil. The final step, which was reinstalling the windows, took place May 2-6 at Province House NHS.

The windows the students conserved are original to when the building was constructed between 1843-1847. There are a total of 101 windows being restored as part of the Province House NHS conservation project. Ninety-nine windows were shipped to a specialised facility in Ontario. The other two windows were conserved by students in the Heritage Retrofit Carpentry program.

The windows are located on the left hand side of the main entrance to the building and will be one of the first sights visitors will experience when the building reopens to the public.



Nicolle Gallant, Project Manager for Parks Canada, PEI Field Unit, right, and Heather Harris, student from Holland College's Heritage Retrofit Carpentry program at Province House National Historic Site where students carried out the intricate reinstallation process of these centuries old windows in May 2022.

Harris is one of four graduating students from the Heritage Retrofit Carpentry program hired to assist with reinstalling the remaining windows at the site. This rare, hands-on-the-job training experience proved to be an incredible learning opportunity for the students in the Heritage Retrofit Carpentry program, including Heather Harris.

From Kensington, Prince Edward Island, Harris was one of 16 students this year involved with rebuilding and painting the windows frames. She also assisted with the intricate reinstallation process at the site.

"I got to have my hands on a piece of history," said Harris. "It's something I never imagined I'd get to be a part of, so I think it's really special that Holland College partnered with Parks Canada on this project."

This project did not come without its challenges. One challenge the students faced was adding weather stripping to the windows. This process was introduced in 1880, shortly after Province House NHS was constructed. Weather stripping improves energy efficiency by reducing air leaks and preventing external moisture from penetrating the windows.

Harris said the weather stripping added about an eighth of an inch on either side of the windows and, as a result, they did not quite fit back into the frame.

"We had to do some tinkering here and there to make them fit so that took a little bit of work to do," she explained.



Students in Holland College's Heritage Retrofit Carpentry program examine the condition of the bare wood frames. Conservation work on the windows began in 2019, under the guidance of Josh Silver, Learning Manager for the Heritage Retrofit Carpentry program. Students reinstalled the windows at Province House National Historic Site in the spring.

Josh Silver, Learning Manager for the Heritage Retrofit Carpentry program, said the original plan was to conserve and reinstall these windows with one cohort of students, but as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, approximately 45 students have had the opportunity to help conserve these historic windows.



Students carrying out the intricate reinstallation process of these centuries old windows at Province House National Historic Site.

"As a teacher, I couldn't ask for anything better," said Silver. "This is a job that will be on our graduate's resume for the rest of their lives."

As a result of this invaluable partnership, Harris is one of four graduating students from the Heritage Retrofit Carpentry program that have been hired by Heritage Grade (the subcontractor hired to restore and reinstall the windows) to assist with reinstalling the remaining windows at Province House NHS.

"Parks Canada is exceptionally proud of this collaboration and the ability to foster a sense of ownership and pride in students who have helped conserve these windows of immeasurable cultural and architectural value," said Karen Jans, PEI Field Unit Superintendent.

Parks Canada and Holland College are currently looking at other ways for students in the Heritage Retrofit Carpentry Program to assist in Phase 3 of the conservation project.

"My students and I have had a wonderful experience," said Silver. "They've opened the doors, they've rolled out the red carpet and the learning and education that my students have received over the years is second to none." This is a small section of the completed exterior masonry at Province House National Historic Site. The new stones are a slightly different colour from the older stones. Over time, the stone will weather, through a process called oxidation, and will blend in a little better with the original stone.



# Exterior masonry work now complete at Province House National Historic Site

Parks Canada and Public Services and Procurement Canada marked a significant milestone for the Province House National Historic Site (NHS) conservation project in February- the completion of the exterior masonry work.

The corridor erupted in cheers as the final exterior stone was installed February 28 on the south facing portion of the keystone on the south portico (the porch-like structure located at both the north and south façades of Province House NHS). The exterior stone weighed about 200 pounds and was replaced in two pieces so that the structure was not compromised.

The masonry work began in 2018 and is one of the most labour intensive aspects of the conservation project. Stonemasons repaired approximately 3,800 exterior stones *in situ* and replaced approximately 1,300 exterior stones.

The *in situ* approach means, where possible, the damaged walls were repaired in place, rather than being completely removed and reassembled. This approach was less invasive and protected more of the heritage fabric of the building.

"There are many hundreds of repairs, and when you walk along here, you would be hard pressed to see some of these repairs. That is a huge compliment to the quality of the masons and conservation technicians that we have here doing that work," said Trevor Gillingwater, stone conservator consultant for the Province House NHS conservation project.

In total, there are 8,000 exterior stones on the building. The new stones will be a slightly different colour from the older stones. Over time, the stone will weather, through a process called oxidation, and will blend in a little better with the original stone.



Nicolle Gallant, Projects Manager for the PEI Field Unit, left, and Karen Jans, PEI Field Unit Superintendent, in front of the final exterior stone designated for replacement for the Province House National Historic Site conservation project. The final exterior stone was installed February 28 on the south facing portion of the keystone on the south portico.

The north side didn't require a great deal of stone replacements whereas the south-east side of the building needed a complete removal and reassemble from the cornice stones all the way down to the top of the first floor due to water infiltration over the years.

"The freeze/thaw process kind of opened the walls up so it made that wall very unsafe. A lot of this wasn't seen until we got in there and started doing the work. As we started the work, we could see how much of an effect the weather, and years, had on that section of the building, "explains Mick Davies, DFS Site Resident. "By taking the wall down, it gave us a chance to really strengthen and realign it."

When Province House NHS was constructed between 1843-1847, a quarry in Pictou, Nova Scotia provided the exterior stones for the building. This quarry was exhausted many decades ago, but fortunately, a nearby quarry in Wallace, Nova Scotia was able to provide a very similar stone for the purpose of this project.

"It's a very close cousin both geologically and for its composition. The Wallace is superior to the original in several ways, and is, in fact, one of the finest quality sandstones within Canada, if not North America," said Gillingwater.

The above grade interior masonry work at the site is also complete. Stonemasons continue to conserve the interior masonry below grade. Approximately 108 cubic metres of interior stone is being replaced. The process for replacing the interior stones require stonemasons to rake out all of the mortar (six inches deep) on the interior face of the wall. This kind of



A stonemason preparing the final exterior stone for replacement on February 28 at Province House National Historic Site. The stone, which weighed about 200 pounds, was replaced in two pieces to ensure the structure was not compromised.

work is slow and painstaking, but it also stands the test of time.

The masonry work is part of Phase 2 of the Province House NHS conservation project. This phase began in May 2018 and is nearing completion. This phase focused on the building envelope, essentially the structural parts of the building, including the foundation walls, interior and exterior masonry walls, portico foundations, windows and roof.

"There was a lot of work to be done here so it may have taken a little longer than we anticipated, but the end result will be worth every hour that we spent on it," said Davies.



This historic photo of Province House National Historic Site from 1910 shows that there was always a variability of colour between exterior stones. PHOTO CREDIT: Notman Photographic Archives, McCord Museum

## Profile Series Mick Davies is the DFS Inc. Site Consultant at Province House National Historic Site (NHS).

He describes himself as the eyes and ears for DFS Inc. He relays information between Parks Canada, Public Services and Procurement Canada, PCL Constructors Canada Inc. and sub-contractors about the work that is being carried out at the site.

DFS Inc. was awarded the Initial Design Contract to assess, analyze, recommend and implement the comprehensive building envelope and structural repairs needed to conserve this building as part of the Province House NHS conservation project.

Davies joined the team at the beginning of Phase 2. This phase began in 2018 and involves conserving the foundation walls, interior and exterior masonry walls, portico foundations, windows and roof.

Before any work gets underway, Davies explained that a series of mock-ups for each individual task is carried out to ensure everyone understands the scope of work. The mock-ups involve evaluating existing conditions, reviewing specifications and drawings as well as establishing an official way to execute the work.

"After that mock-up, it's my job to keep an eye on things to ensure everyone follows what was agreed on. If there are any questions, I try to answer the questions myself. If I can't, I will look for the answers. I work between all the parties to try and keep everything running smoothly."

Davies, who is originally from the Midlands in the United Kingdom, moved to Prince Edward Island in 2011. He has been in the construction industry for 35 years and brings a wealth of experience with him. He's worked on many heritage buildings including cathedrals, small castles, keeps and manor homes.

Davies said one of the most unstable areas of the building was on the south-east side. Over the years, water infiltration and the annual freeze/thaw cycle opened up the walls, and as result, caused this section to buckle and bow.

"A lot of this wasn't seen until we got in there and started doing the work. As we started the work, we could see how much of an effect the weather, and years, had on that section of the building. In the end, we took the wall from the cornice stones all the way down to course 16, which is at the top of the first floor, and the whole wall was rebuilt."



Davies said taking down a wall of that size is a very rare occurrence in the industry.

"This is kind of a one off. Many of the masons on site had never done that before and maybe will never do it again in the future," said Davies. "It took quite a lot of work, but by taking the wall down, it gave us a chance to really strengthen and realign it."

Davies describes the Phase 2 team working to conserve this building as dedicated and talented.

"Everyone involved took time to prepare and to determine the best way of restoring the building," said Davies. "It's been a pleasure to work here and it's been a rewarding experience."



## Profile Series

# Malve Petersmann is a Visitor Experience Project Manager with the National Project Delivery Services Team at Parks Canada.

Petersmann, who lives in Kjipuktuk, Mi'kma'ki, also known as Halifax, Nova Scotia, has been with Parks Canada for over 17 years, working in various Visitor Experience positions.

She joined the Province House Exhibit Project Team in the summer of 2019 to assist with the fourth and final portion of the project: the design, development and installation of the new visitor experience offer at Province House National Historic Site (NHS).

Her job entails making sure that the right people are sitting around the project table at the right time, including content experts, historians and curators, writers and translators, designers, fabricators and stakeholders.

"There is a sequence of work that happens when you are in the process of developing an exhibit, and it is my responsibility to maintain that sequence," explains Petersmann. "I make sure that conversations happen between key members of the Province House Exhibit Project Team so that decisions are made efficiently to help move the project forward."

She is also responsible for delivering the exhibits on budget and on time, but notes that this responsibility runs much deeper when it comes to an interpretive project.

"You have the responsibility to make sure you are telling the stories you need to tell in a way that is inclusive, respectful, and accurate, and that the methods you are using match the needs and preferences of your target audiences so that visitors are easily engaged, and feel connected and inspired by their experience in the exhibit."

The Province House Exhibit Project is one the largest projects she has been assigned to in her career with Parks Canada, not only in scope, but also in the significance of the subject matter.

"I think over the course of this project, the Province House Exhibit Project Team has become increasingly aware that a lot of perspectives, opinions, and experiences have been excluded from the way that Parks Canada has represented certain stories," said Petersmann. "We've been using the guidance



of Parks Canada's *Framework for History and Commemoration* to shift the way that we represent the stories that are being told at Province House."

The *Framework for History and Commemoration* is a document that was published in 2019 to provide guiding principals and practices for the way Parks Canada shares Canadian history (www.pc.gc.ca/en/ lhn-nhs/plan/cadre-framework). This guide was developed following the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's report, which includes calls to action that guide the ways the Government of Canada addresses the ongoing impacts of residential schools on survivors and their families.

One of the key approaches the Province House Exhibit Project Team has used in the development of the exhibits is the establishment of several advisory committees as well as significant engagement with local and national Indigenous communities and other communities of interest who've typically been underrepresented or excluded from the stories told at Province House NHS. "We've had a number of very deep, very good, and very honest conversations with Indigenous cultural heritage experts around the country and in several of those sessions, we've collectively found takeaways from those conversations that were big epiphanies and realizations about the history we're representing at this site."

Petersmann said this project is a great opportunity for Parks Canada to indicate its willingness to take steps towards reconciliation, not just towards Indigenous communities, but also to other marginalized communities.

She describes her involvement in this project as a fulfilling, enriching, and an overall incredible learning experience.

"I feel blessed to be working with the Province House Exhibit Project Team that we have assembled and I feel very supported in the work that we are doing," said Petersmann. "I've been very moved by the level of support that we have received from various departments and senior management within Parks Canada."

Petersmann says her hope is that the new exhibit space will feel welcoming to everyone and that all visitors will leave feeling inspired.

"Our hope is that visitors will leave the experience really feeling like they have learned something they didn't know before, that they've had a powerful realisation or transformative experience, and that they leave with a sense of agency and hope for what comes next for Canada."

## Profile Series Robert (Bobby) Watt is a master stonemason and president of RJW Stonemasons Ltd., the subcontractor responsible for conserving the interior and exterior masonry at Province House National Historic Site.

Watt, who grew up on the Isle of Arran, Scotland, learned the technical skills of a stonemason, starting when he was just 16 years old after receiving his high school leaving certificate.

Watt found his calling as a stonemason after apprenticing under master stonemasons, John Thompson and Jock Kerr. He learned not only traditional masonry techniques, but also the importance of work ethic and commitment to excellence in his craft.

"They taught me to do things right the first time," said Watt. "So many people take shortcuts, but because of my apprenticeship with them, I've never been one of them."

Watt moved to Canada in 1975 to assist with building stairs at the First Canadian Place skyscraper in downtown Toronto. Shortly after, the union went on strike and he found himself doing police training and becoming a police officer for the Toronto Police Service and later the Toronto Marine Police. On the side, he continued his love and passion- masonry work.

Watt hung up his police hat and returned full-time to stone masonry after founding RJW Stonemasons Ltd. in 1987. His company provides masonry services



to various sectors including government, industrial and residential and specialize in conservation and restoration, stone cutting and supply, new construction and training.

Although he doesn't physically do masonry work anymore, he still does the thinking, talking and teaching. Since founding RJW Stonemasons, he's taught stonemasonry training courses at the Guild Institute of Stone and Restoration Masonry, Durham College and the Ontario Masonry Training Centre as well as training seminars all over North America and the Caribbean. He has also personally apprenticed at least one hundred stonemasons in North America in his more than 50 years in the industry.

"That is my raison d'être," said Watt.

He is exceptionally proud of his team at RJW Stonemasons Ltd., describing them as a hardworking, dedicated and talented.

"We do things right. There is no other way. There is right, and there is wrong. We don't accept wrong," said Watt. "We always take that extra step to make it better, and it shows."

RJW Stonemasons Ltd. arrived at the site in November 2018. Before proceeding with the overall repairs to the stone walls of Province House, the architects, masons and masonry conservators worked together on site to assess conditions and decide upon final remedial measures. Since then, stonemasons have repaired approximately 3,800 and replaced approximately 1,300 stones on the building's exterior. On the interior of the building, approximately 108 cubic metres of stone has been replaced.

Stonemasonry is one of the oldest professions in the world. Modern technology has helped with some aspects, such as laser cleaning stones to remove accumulated dirt and atmospheric soiling, or cutting large stones down to size with diamond bladed saws, but the last quarter inch is always done by hand.

Watt said masonry work is a very artistic trade as it gives a person a chance to leave a part of themselves behind.

"In 50 years' time, an elderly person will be showing their grandchildren stones that they carved into these walls at Province House," said Watt. "It's an incredible feeling to know that what you've done will be appreciated for many generations."

# Sail cloth comes down at Province House National Historic Site

The first portion of the white protective sail cloth came down at Province House National Historic Site on July 4. The sail cloth was erected in 2018 in order to create ideal conditions for the masonry work.

With the completion of the above grade masonry work, the stones can now safely be exposed to the elements. This is the first time in almost four years that the public has had the chance to see this historic building. The steel exoskeleton will remain in place for several months, partially impeding the full view of the building. The steel frame will be completely dismantled later this summer/fall. From left to right: Tim Chandler, Senior Project Manager, Public Services and Procurement Canada, James Aylward, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, JoAnne Holden, Director of Communications & External Relations for the Legislative Assembly, Joey Jeffrey, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Sean Casey, Member of Parliament for Charlottetown, Judy Clark, Mi'kmaw Elder, Karen Jans, PEI Field Unit Superintendent, Parks Canada, Nicolle Gallant, Project Manager for the PEI Field Unit, Parks Canada, and Janette Gallant, A/ National Historic Site and Visitor Experience Manager for the PEI Field Unit, Parks Canada.

