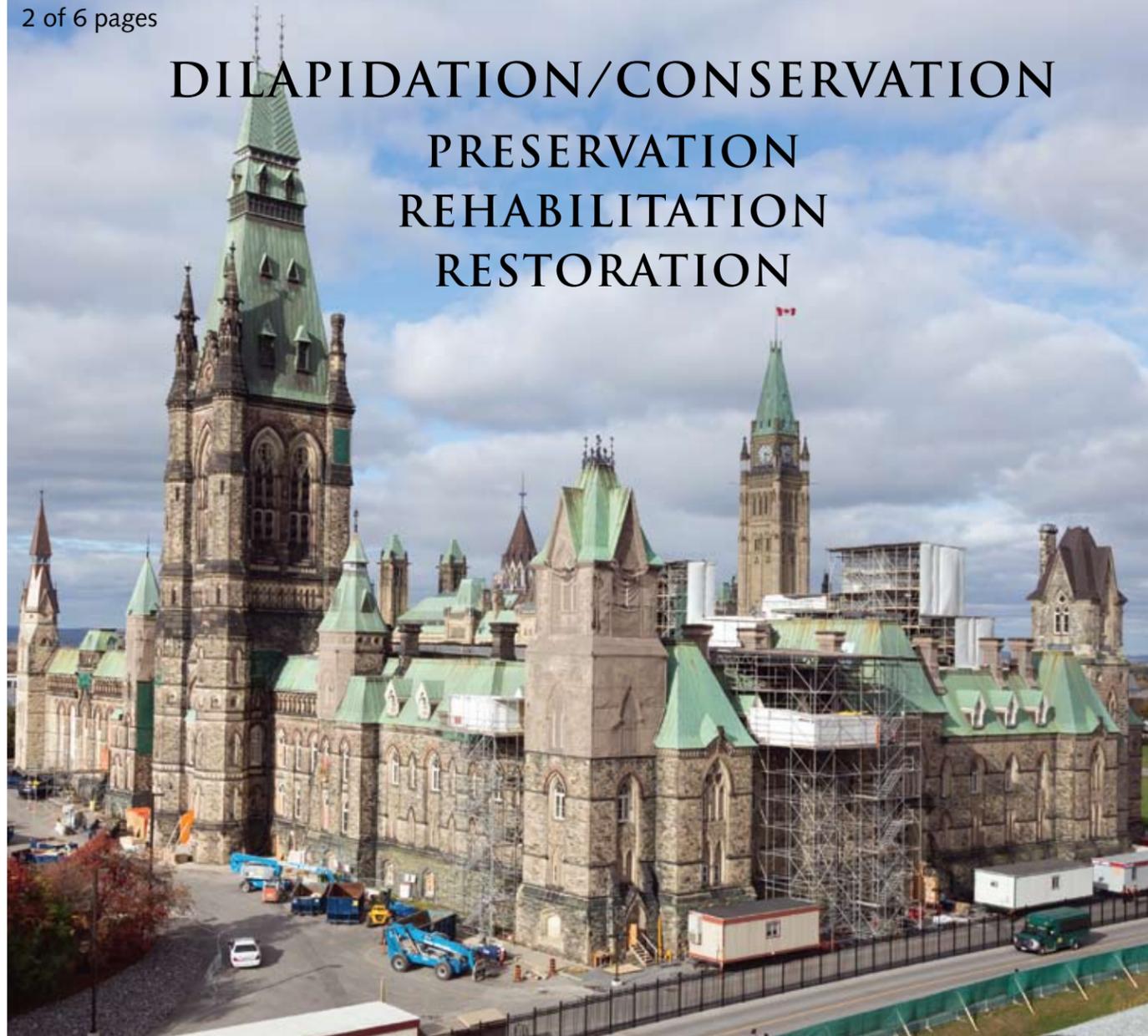


DILAPIDATION/CONSERVATION PRESERVATION REHABILITATION RESTORATION



by Tomas Lipps

THE PARTHENON, DRESDEN'S FRAUENKIRCHE, ANGKOR WAT, BOROBODUR —AND PARLIAMENT HILL, OTTAWA—ARE MASSIVE REHABILITATION PROJECTS THAT HAVE INVOLVED MILLIONS OF MAN-HOURS AND THOUSANDS OF TONS OF STONE.

The West Block is one of the three Parliament Hill buildings that are part of a national historic site, along with the East Block and Centre Block. The West Block was designed by Thomas Stent and Augustus Laver in 1859 and was officially opened in 1866. It has an elegant exterior in the Gothic Revival style. Two additions were later constructed, in the same style, in response to continuing demands for additional government office space for a growing democracy. The Mackenzie Wing and Tower were completed in 1878 and the Laurier Tower and Link were completed in 1906.

Major renovations to the interior and exterior of the building were completed in 1965.

In 2002, an extensive \$1 billion renovation project began across the parliamentary precinct specifically focusing on masonry restoration, asbestos removal, vehicle screening, parking, electrical and mechanical systems and improved visitors' facilities.

The Library of Parliament and Peace Tower, as well as some exterior areas of masonry on the Centre Block have so far been completed, though focus has shifted to the West Block. The building is in critical need of rehabilitation due to the extent of its deterioration. Its rehabilitation is an important step in the Long Term Vision and Plan (LTVP) for the Parliamentary Precinct and is one of the major projects now being carried out on Parliament Hill.

The rehabilitation of the West Block will provide the required space so that the Centre Block can be emptied and rehabilitated in the coming years. The budget for the entire project is \$3,000,000,000.

from: Public Works and Government Services Canada
<http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca>

ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION, TREATMENTS FOR HISTORIC STRUCTURES

As the Architectural Conservation movement evolved throughout Europe and the Americas in the 19th and 20th centuries, two schools of thought coalesced:

PRESERVATION, which "places a high premium on the retention of all historic fabric through conservation, maintenance and repair."

REHABILITATION, which "emphasizes the retention and repair of historic materials, but more latitude is provided for replacement because it is assumed the property is more deteriorated prior to work."

In other words, Fidelity and Flexibility.

In Canada today the authorized treatments for historic structures are PRESERVATION, REHABILITATION and RESTORATION.

RESTORATION "focuses on the retention of materials from the most significant time in a property's history, while permitting the removal of materials from other periods." **

"Do enough, but not too much."

"To the casual observer the purpose and theory behind the restoration of stone buildings must appear to be simple: repair damaged stone where possible, replace where necessary.

Many threads, however, must be brought together before the process can begin. Structural integrity and public safety are paramount. Cost and practicability can dictate procedures. Artistic faithfulness to the existing structure and the original work can conflict with the new technological procedures and possibilities. On the job these sometimes conflicting ideas must be sorted out on a practical level. Often different points of view can be presented by stonemasons and conservators." **

Stonemason Bobby Watt and conservator David Edgar find agreement in the precepts of English author and lecturer John Ashurst (*Practical Building Conservation*). For instance:

"The decision to replace a stone depends on whether it might or might not survive until the next scaffolding program. The estimated life of such stones must depend on the architect and his masons who should use their knowledge (collectively) to balance their concern for the building with the need to preserve as much of the original fabric as possible."

Their accord is crucial because Bobby is the president of RJW/Gem-Campbell, the project contractors, as well as the West Block Restoration Project Manager—and David is the firm's Chief Conservator.

But he is not the only conservator involved. The architect has conservators, the general contractor has conservators. Conferences that take place with the architects, engineers, conservators, general contractors, masonry contractors in attendance, while generally harmonious, can become acrimonious—when the budget occupies the agenda, for instance. Evidently not everyone agrees with Bobby's view that cost should not drive best practices—particularly when, he avers, it concerns the well-being of the buildings that house the Canadian Parliament.

Bobby much prefers the Tuesday morning meetings with his crew of stoneworkers, the 'chalk-talks' where they discuss particular problems a stonemason is likely to encounter and how to resolve them, simple truths that make a stonemason's life easier.

And he has a wealth of stories, like the old masons' trick he used to set a 30,000 pound granite sculpture in Madison Square Park in New York City, using blocks of ice to support it, removing the slings and guiding it precisely into place as the ice melted.

Bobby has long envied the cathedral builders of the past for their gifts to the future and welcomes the opportunity to leave one of his own, thanks to this immense project. But more than the personal satisfaction that brings him, he is gratified to be able to provide an opportunity for young men and women to take up the craft.

Over two hundred stonemasons, conservators, restoration masons and mason tenders (including over 60 apprentices, 18 of whom were women) were employed at the busiest time. The West Block has been a training ground for the stone trade; bricklayers have morphed into stonemasons and young apprentices have become journeymen in the last three years.

And a new crop of potential stonemasons may result from this project. There's a sizable group of kids called the 'Wall 7 babies' because they were conceived during the first months of the project, at a time when their fathers, with years of work ahead of them, were involved in that part of the job.

*Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. U.S. National Park Service.

**From the video STONEHANDS, Episode VII, The Golden Stain of Time.

