“LIVING HISTORY” IN CANADA:
Representing Victorian Culture
In
The Multicultural Present

by

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Abstract

In this study, I investigate the institutional relationship between heritage, living history, and memory in Canadian living history museums, specifically, historic homes that represent Victorian material culture in the contemporary multicultural context. I consider how historic homes in Canada have been preserved, restored, and constructed as evidentiary – as artefacts for use as civic instruments in the practice and performance of history. My study connects the artefact to the performance of history at three living history museums which, like so many heritage sites in Canada, taken together deploy “founding nations” mythologies: Dundurn Castle in Hamilton and William Lyon Mackenzie House in Toronto, Ontario, and the Sir George-Étienne Cartier National Historic Site of Canada in Montreal, Quebec. To make this connection, I examine the “Victorian Christmas” program offered annually at each site; the Christmas programs are examples of “living history” in action – period rooms are decorated to represent a historical seasonal celebration, interpreters discuss traditions and activities associated with the occasion, and visitors sing carols and eat festive treats. I explore the implications of institutional interpretations of the past that privilege bi-national mythologies, despite the fact that each site I have chosen is located in the midst of a large urban centre’s ethnically diverse (multicultural) population – and, in the case of the Cartier Houses in Montreal, a constituency informed by contemporary souverainiste issues.
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I have been a graduate student in the Department of Art at Queen’s University for seven years, having completed first my Master’s and now my PhD, and in that time I have come into contact with a great many intelligent, supportive and wonderful people. Each one has contributed to not only my work but also my person in varied but vital ways. I met Erin Morton, Taryn Sirove and Kristy Holmes when I began my studies as a Master’s student, and each one (thankfully) has remained my friend to this day, Erin touching base with me and offering insight and advice at every turn, showing me how to advocate for myself and broaden my scope of understanding – Erin, I consider myself most fortunate to call you my friend. I have had the
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Chapter 1 – Introduction

The museum has been the most prestigious and authoritative place for seeing original works of art. Today, for most people in Western society, the very notion of art itself is inconceivable without the museum. No other institution claims greater importance than a treasure house of material and spiritual wealth.

Carol Duncan and Allan Wallach, “The Universal Survey Museum,” 1980

Museums…established exemplary models for ‘reading’ objects as traces, representations, reflections, or surrogates of individuals, groups, nations, and races and of their ‘histories’. They were civic spaces designed for European ceremonial engagement with…its [Europe’s] own history and social memory. As such, museums made the visible legible, thereby establishing what was worthy to be seen, whilst teaching museums users how to read what is to be seen: how to activate social memories. Art history becomes one of the voices…in and of museological space.


Heritage sites, including living history museums, have received little scholarly attention in comparison to the art museum. One reason may be that, in contrast to the art museum, which “teach[es] museum users how to read” its perceived “treasure…of material and spiritual wealth,” living history museums utilize live interpretation, the oral delivery of information within historical buildings, to create an immersive environment, one in which visitors experience “what it felt like to live back then.” One might go so far as to suggest that this multisensory exhibitionary approach explains why art historians often dismiss or overlook living history museums, and why scholars in related fields frequently liken them to theme parks. As cultural anthropologists Eric Gable and Richard Handler explain, “living” history is not widely regarded by scholars as a way to “teach users”; where art historians value the visual aspect privileged in the art gallery, historians value the history museum proper as the most appropriate adjunct “to the ‘real’ work of ‘serious’ history ongoing in the academy.”

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4 Eric Gable and Richard Handler, “Public History, Private Memory: Notes from the Ethnography of
Living history museums employ a different pedagogical approach than that offered in either type of museum or in the academy; it is based on what scholars refer to as “artefactual accuracy.” Guiding visitors through the historic site, interpreters work to deliver an authoritative oral interpretation validated by individual artefacts that are documented as being from the same time period as that depicted. As museologist Tamar Katriel points out, materiality – which feeds the object-based construction of the past – reinforces the authority of the representation, thereby allowing the museum “to sustain the fiction that the past is told ‘as it really was.’”

Academicians, on the other hand, typically prefer to teach history using scholarly texts and primary documents as their main instructional tools. Because living history practitioners use particular strategies to relay the past to visitors, their strategies, upon critical investigation, can be used to explore how historic sites negotiate the relationships between fact and fiction, history and memory, and object-based representations and performative interpretation.

In this study, I investigate the institutional relationship between heritage, living history, and memory in Canadian living history museums, specifically, historic homes that represent Victorian material culture in the contemporary multicultural context. I consider how historic homes in Canada have been preserved, restored, and constructed as evidentiary – as artefacts for use as civic instruments in the practice and performance of history. My study connects the artefact to the performance of history at three living history museums which, like so many heritage sites in Canada, taken together deploy “founding nations” mythologies: Dundurn Castle in Hamilton and William Lyon Mackenzie House in Toronto, Ontario, and the Sir George-Étienne Cartier National Historic Site of Canada in Montreal, Quebec. To make this connection, I


6 Gable and Handler, 243.

7 In so doing, I draw on the work of Preziosi, who characterizes art museums as cultural institutions that typically function as instruments of a “historiographic practice” or “civic instrument[s] for *practicing* history” (509).
examine the “Victorian Christmas” program offered annually at each site; the Christmas programs are examples of “living history” in action – period rooms are decorated to represent a historical seasonal celebration, interpreters discuss traditions and activities associated with the occasion, and visitors sing carols and eat festive treats. I explore the implications of institutional interpretations of the past that privilege bi-national mythologies, despite the fact that each site I have chosen is located in the midst of a large urban centre’s ethnically diverse (multicultural) population – and, in the case of the Cartier Houses in Montreal, a constituency informed by contemporary souverainiste issues.

My study considers these sites in relation to the overriding socio-political structures that have ensured their historical preservation, which in each case is contingent upon the gender and ethnic primacy of the political figure represented by it. Each represents the life and times of a major political figure identified with the Confederation period in British North America, including Sir Allan MacNab, Prime Minister of the United Canadas (1854-6) and Family Compact leader; William Lyon Mackenzie, first mayor of Toronto (1834) and leader of the 1837 Rebellion in Upper Canada; and Sir George-Étienne Cartier, who as John A. Macdonald’s “Quebec lieutenant,” is credited with having brought that province into Confederation. The fact that the architecture at the sites has been both preserved and reanimated using visual and artefactual arrangements, as well as live interpretation in period rooms, makes these homes rich sites for art historical investigation.

My work explores issues related to representations of the past in three specific living history museums and national historic sites in Canada, a state that, over the last half century, has made a strategic effort to cultivate a distinctive nationalism based on a federal policy of multiculturalism. Indeed, as Eva Mackey writes, “The state-sanctioned proliferation of cultural difference … seems to be the defining characteristic of Canada.” And this proliferation of

“difference” is a function of present-day situations and shifting social realities, among them, for instance, immigration trends. This current model of nationhood seemingly distances the country from ideologies and events that defined its colonialist past. With this in mind, I consider representations put forward in state-sanctioned living history museums that monumentalize “founding nations” mythologies in the contemporary Canadian state. The concretization, reanimation and continual projection of such representations in the selected sites, I suggest, indicates the degree to which these particular sites not only negotiate but also manage issues associated with the past and present, ethnicity and diversity, and memory, memorialisation and identity.

To advance the relevance of this study and the contribution I seek to make to Art History, Canadian and Heritage Tourism studies, I use the discussion that follows to outline the factors that led me to select these three sites for analysis. In so doing, I not only address commonalities amongst the sites; I also acknowledge issues of concern that I have borne in mind in my selection of the sites and in my subsequent research and analysis. To play out these issues, I first evaluate links between nation-building frameworks and heritage sites in Canada. I also address the fact that each site is located in a large urban centre in central Canada. Then, I argue that the historical narratives constructed in the sites, which are based on notions of a distinctively British-Canadian and, in the case of the Cartier Houses, French-Canadian identity, are worthy of investigation because they point to the cultural significance currently placed on Confederation in the Canadian (multicultural) state. In this context, I also explain why I have selected the Victorian Christmas programming offered at each site as the topic of research and enquiry. Finally, I identify the relevance of my work in the context of current scholarship. Because my study focuses on Canadian heritage homes, I argue that it brings a new perspective to existing studies of such sites,

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9 For example, in 2006, immigrants to Canada born in Asia and the Middle East made up the largest portion of newcomers to Canada (58.3%). In 1971, however, only 12.1% of immigrants were born in Asia. Tina Chui, Kelly Tran, Hélène Maheux, *Immigration In Canada: A Portrait of Foreign-born Population, 2006 Census* (Ottawa: Minister of Industry, Statistics Canada, 2007) 5.
which focus largely on American living history museums and historic homes. I conclude this introduction with a description of the content, structure and layout of the chapters that follow.

Nation-building frameworks developed in Canada during the 1960s informed not only the purpose, but also the operation of heritage sites. During the decade, knowledge of the past came to be viewed as a source of political, economic and cultural renewal. Anne McClintock argues that decisions to produce and construct national symbols indicate the “singular power of nationalism” – its power to reproduce itself by fostering “a sense of popular, collective unity through the management” of objects and national celebrations. Most prominent in 1960s was the 1967 Centennial celebrations, which Eva Mackey characterizes as a “high point in Canadian state-produced national sentiment.” In the context of these celebrations, events and activities, such as historical re-enactments, Expo ’67 and the Confederation Train, sought to educate the nation’s citizens. As Mackey explains, “Learning to ‘be Canadian’ meant being educated about the specific qualities and characteristics being constructed at that time: cultural pluralism and tolerance,” and state-sponsored activities strove to not only establish but also promote Canada as a country that had reached political, economic and socio-cultural maturation.

In this context, the “material legacy of history” was also pressed into political service. The establishment of heritage sites and historic homes came to be seen as the means through

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13 Mackey, 58.

14 The Canadian Citizenship Bill, which “created” this constituency, was passed in 1946. Prior to this date, Canadians were British subjects.

15 Mackey, 59-60.

16 Richard Handler, *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec* (Madison, WI: University of
which to provide citizens, as Kammen puts it, with “meaningful linkages to the past.” In other words, the reconstitution of historic sites, most particularly in the 1960s, aimed to showcase concrete evidence of the nation’s past accomplishments to celebrate its present and encourage hope for the future. The museumification of sites deemed to be representative of the nation’s material culture therefore works to organize a particular “story of the nation.” In other words, these types of heritage institutions operate in order to not only portray but also anchor formative developments within a particular time and place so as to project a conception of the nation that, according to Tony Bennett, “seems destined endlessly to unfold itself into a boundless future.”

Although historic sites are scattered across Canada, in this study, I focus on the reincarnation and reanimation of domestic residences formerly owned by major political figures identified with the Confederation period. The houses – Dundurn Castle, Mackenzie House, and the Cartier Houses – have all been restored based on both the architectural merits of the individual sites and the perceived importance of the original owners. Significantly, in the mid-nineteenth century, those dedicated to governmental reform lived and worked primarily in what is now south central Canada. For example, in 1848 Montreal, Cartier purchased the first of the two homes that, together, have since been restored as the national historic site I consider here. His purchase was sensible, in view of the relocation of Canada’s capital in 1844 from Kingston to Montreal. He would not have known that, by 1849, government officials would decide to institute a “perambulating system” in which the seat of government rotated every four years between Toronto and Quebec City. It was only in 1857 that governmental officials requested that Queen Victoria exercise what was called “Royal Perogative” to select a permanent seat of government. (In the end, she selected Ottawa.) Accordingly, in the mid-nineteenth century,

17 Kammen, 619.
many politically-minded individuals lived within the vicinity of the perambulating capital, which allowed them to travel frequently to the political hotbed of the time while still maintaining private, professional or business interests as well as permanent residences.

I am not suggesting that all nation-building endeavours in the mid-nineteenth century took place solely in this region. Nor do I wish to argue that this region is the only one that holds monuments devoted to such efforts. It was in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, for example, that colonial politicians met in 1864 to discuss the possibility of a British North American federation incorporating the Maritime Colonies, and the site of the conference, known at the time as the new Colonial Building, is now largely restored with period rooms and artefacts to represent the year 1864.20 Atlantic Canada is, in fact, a destination of interest for many domestic travellers and tourists. According to Statistics Canada, in 1998/9, those who made “culture/heritage visits” most often visited Nova Scotia and frequented sites such as the Fortress of Louisbourg, the Alexander Graham Bell Museum and Cape Breton.21 In today’s environment of rapidly shifting political, economic and, by extension, social climates, however, such visitorship is rarely consistent. The Survey of Service Industries: Heritage Institutions notes that, as of 2006, the three most densely populated provinces – Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia – “accounted for four-fifths of the [heritage] industry’s revenues.”22 As a result, I hesitate to make any sweeping generalizations or conclusive statements about the nature of Canada’s heritage industry.

What I see as proving more beneficial to this study is an examination and assessment of a specific type of heritage site – historic homes formerly owned by politicians active in the pre-

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20 More specifically, 60 percent of the interior was restored in the 1980s to represent the year 1864. Currently, the site operates under the purviews of Parks Canada and the provincial government in that it not only acts as a historic site offering guided tours, displays and an audio-visual presentation for visitors, it also houses the legislative assembly.

21 The study also found that between 1996 and 1999, “culture/heritage visits” increased more rapidly than other types of visits, including visiting family members and sight-seeing. Accordingly, the study concluded that “Canadians are participating increasingly in culture/heritage travel” (Statistics Canada, “Canadians’ Participation in Culture/Heritage Travel in Canada,” Travel-log: Catalogue no. 87-003-XIE 20.3 (Summer 2001): 6).

Confederation period that have not only been restored and designated as national historic sites but have also been animated with programming, specifically, a Victorian Christmas tour, despite the fact that all are located in central Canada. In short, my study focuses on three particular sites linked by similar institutional and pedagogical priorities.

The historical narratives constructed in the selected sites indicate the cultural significance placed on Confederation in Canada. Confederation conventionally describes the “political reorganization of 1864-67” that ultimately resulted in the formation of Canada as a federal state. Key events that aided in the reorganization of the disparate colonies include the Charlottetown Conference (1-9 September 1864) and the Quebec Conference (10 October 1864), which resulted in the adoption of what is conventionally known as the Seventy-two Resolutions or the Quebec Resolutions. In the winter of 1866-67, colonial delegates from the United Canadas, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia met with the British House of Commons and refined the resolutions, which constituted what is known as the British North American Act. On 1 July 1867, the Dominion of Canada came into being as Confederation “went into effect.”

Heritage sites that venerate Confederation take on a specific role in the contemporary multicultural context, one that directly relates to present-day conceptualizations of the event. In fact, Canadian historian Ian McKay argues that historians are often “imprisoned by the present-day Canadian nationalist myth-symbol complex, [as] historians are inclined to write ‘continuous national histories.’” Elsewhere, he explains that this conception of “History as ‘Inevitable Progress’” traditionally results in Confederation being positioned as the realization and ultimate “achievement of a liberal political and social order.” Such accounts of Canadian history

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23 McKay suggests that the terms of reference of this particular moniker might be expanded to include the “subsequent elaboration and stabilization of a federal system down to 1896” (“The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History,” *Canadian Historical Review* 81.4 [2000]: 633).


25 McKay, 2000, 638.

26 Ian McKay, “Introduction: All That is Solid Melts into Air,” in *The Challenge of Modernity: A Reader*
ultimately aim to promote, in McKay’s words, a “sense of belonging” for the citizenry. He confronts this effort to provide a seemingly inclusive history, writing, “We are a formidable diverse people, and Canada is better likened to a multitude of voices rather than to an ‘identity.’”27 In a country that grapples with issues related to cultural pluralism, tolerance and equality, the existence of heritage sites that concretize “founding nations” mythologies makes evident the tenuous relationship between the past and present. According to cultural geographer Brian Osborne, heritage sites anchor and transmit mythic histories, providing a physical, material and visual connection with the past.28 As a result, one might suggest that heritage sites perform a function similar to that of historical treatises; more specifically, they celebrate the “Birth of the Nation” to supposedly unite the citizenry, in that historic sites typically endeavour to act as cornerstones in the promotion of a coherent, bounded national identity, one that people can readily identify, accept and support.

Building on McKay’s work, my study performs a “new strategy of reconnaissance,” in which I go beyond the parameters of conventional museological analyses in an attempt to critically analyse the factors that not only motivated the restoration of historic houses of major political figures but also informs their ongoing operation in the current “post-national climate” as vehicles designed to foster a sense of national unity.29 McKay argues that the outcome of the 1995 Quebec Referendum, in which the motion for Quebec to secede from the rest of Canada was defeated by a slim margin, represented for Canada a “process of dissolution” and signaled that the people of Canada already resided in a “post-Canadian terrain.” In his view, the national narratives, related cultural institutions and legends that once offered Canadians reassurance that they belonged to a unified nation had been called into question and found lacking. As he puts it,

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27 McKay, 1992, xxiv.
29 McKay 2000, 620; Ian Mckay, “After Canada: On Amnesia and Apocalypse in the Contemporary
the result of the Referendum indicates quite clearly that such nationalist constructions “have had their day.”30 With this in mind, I explore how such sites, oftentimes restored as or connected with nation-building endeavours, operate in the contemporary age, one characterized by a climate in which national mythologies no longer offer the assurance of belonging that they once did.

Accordingly, this study evaluates the various ways in which a hegemonic “social” – one that privileges “founding nations” mythologies – has been continually projected. In the chapters that follow, my analysis demonstrates how the formation of three specific living history museums and their current operations respond to shifts in social and political ideologies and thus how these museums, like Canada itself, might be considered “inescapably hybrid political project[s].”31 In other words, I take into account changes in Canada’s socio-political economy that motivated decisions to preserve, restore and reanimate historic architectural sites. Oftentimes, when interested parties decide to commemorate a particular historic site, as in the case of the sites selected in this study, such parties – be they individuals, volunteer associations or governmental bodies – (re)assess the significance of the historical person associated with the site. As heritage scholars G. J. Ashworth and Brian Graham explain, “[P]asts have to be reinvented to reflect new presents. Thus heritage is as much about forgetting as remembering the nature of the past.”32

In the case of the restoration of Dundurn Castle, researchers and historians made a concerted effort to alter public perceptions of Sir Allan MacNab so that the museumification of his home, undertaken in the context of the Centennial celebrations, might set the site up as an emblem of the nation’s past. More specifically, those involved in the restoration project sought to rework negative associations commonly espoused in historical studies of the Family Compact, a faction in which MacNab involved himself. During the late 1820s and early 1830s, Hamilton-

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30 McKay, 2000, 76-7.
31 Bennett, 1995, 640.
based lawyer and land speculator MacNab cultivated connections with members of the Family Compact, a political faction comprised of interlocking networks of wealthy individuals who maintained the Loyalist tradition of social hierarchy and opposed republican institutions. Posing as the head of this particular faction, in 1837, MacNab took part in the military suppression of rebel forces led by William Lyon Mackenzie, who desired an Upper Canadian frontier agrarian democracy. Following the defeat of the rebel forces in what is now known as the Upper Canadian Rebellion, MacNab was knighted by Queen Victoria. In order to defuse tensions brought about by both the Mackenzie-led Upper Canada Rebellion and the Lower Canada Rebellion led by Louis-Joseph Papineau (also mounted in 1837), Lord Durham, then-governor general of British North America, determined that the two Canadas be united. Durham’s recommendation resulted in the creation of the Province of Canada in 1841, which was brought about by the Union Act. He also advocated that the unified constituency be granted “responsible government” or, more precisely, the right to maintain an elective legislative council. MacNab actively participated the newly formulated state and, in 1854, was elected Prime Minister of the United Canadas (1854-1856).

The restoration of Dundurn Castle therefore entailed restitution both of the site and of MacNab as a historical figure. Scott Symons, then curator of Canadian art at the Royal Ontario Museum, argued that “Old Sir Allan MacNab represented all that was good and walrus-hopeless in the Family Compact. He has been maligned; and I feel is due for a ‘restoration.’ Whatever the compacters may or may not have done, they did establish here in Canada a cultivated, dignified rich life. Their homes show it.” Accordingly, those involved in the restoration project

34 The funds for the restoration project had been awarded through National Centennial Projects Act grant, a grant that awarded federal money to projects that would garner domestic tourism during Centennial celebrations and be of a “lasting nature” (Anthony Adamson, A Proposal for the Restoration of Dundurn as the Core of a Centennial Project for the City of Hamilton [Hamilton, 10 February 1962] 4).
35 Hamilton Public Library, Gwen Metcalfe Files, Personal letter to Metcalfe from Scott Symons, Sigmund Samuel Canadiana Gallery, Royal Ontario Museum, 7 September 1961, emphasis in original.
advanced a narrative that emphasized how MacNab not only cultivated elite British culture in the Canadian colony but also brought a physical example of that culture into being through the construction and design of his house.

While historical studies written prior to the restoration of Dundurn Castle emphasized MacNab’s association with Symons’s “maligned” Family Compact, twentieth-century texts examining the actions, life and times of William Lyon Mackenzie conventionally celebrated his accomplishments. For example, popular history texts published in the late-nineteenth century, according to historian Dennis Duffy, constructed links between Mackenzie, the 1837 Upper Canadian Rebellion and Confederation so as to characterize the rebellion as a pivotal event in Canada’s formation. Historical texts portrayed Mackenzie and his fellow rebels as central figures in, as Duffy puts it, the “master narrative of Upper Canadian history’s climax: the appearance of responsible government,” thereby reconceptualizing the installation of responsible government as that which paved the way for pre-Confederation politics.36

Similarly, interested parties who sought to justify the restoration of Mackenzie’s Toronto residence characterized Mackenzie in such a way as to celebrate his role in the nation-building project. For example, when the Mackenzie House, restored and furnished as a mid-nineteenth-century-period historical museum and library, opened to the public on 9 May 1950, Ontario premier Leslie Frost’s opening remarks focused on Mackenzie’s contributions to the Canadian nation:

It matters not now who was right or who was wrong in the controversies of [the 1830s]…. What matters is what they achieved. From it all came responsible government. From it came a working partnership between the French and English Communities…. On the foundations laid by the men of the 1830s – Mackenzie, the Governor, [Louis-Hippolyte] LaFontaine, [Francis] Hinks, …and the rest – Macdonald and his great lieutenant, Cartier, and those other Fathers of Confederation through the ensuing years, were in 1867, able to build the Dominion of Canada, which became a pattern for the British Commonwealth of

Nations and, indeed, we believe, a pattern for world government in the tomorrow. 

According to Frost, historians, scholars, researchers and heritage activists working at the site sought to use the museum to not only cultivate but also venerate connections between Mackenzie and Canada’s national narrative.

In the case of the Sir George-Étienne Cartier National Historic Site of Canada, the owner’s participation in Confederation was immediate and obvious. As Attorney General of Lower Canada (1858-62), lawyer and politician Cartier shared leadership of the United Canadas with John A. Macdonald; he also attended and participated in the Charlottetown, Quebec and London Conferences. Accordingly, in the mid-twentieth century, Cartier was included in the Historic Sites and Monuments Board’s official list of the “Fathers of Confederation,” which it compiled in 1959 to be held in trust by the Public Archives of Canada (now Library and Archives Canada). It was then that Board members turned their attention to his former Montreal residences. As part of a developing initiative to mount a program to honour the Fathers of Confederation, in October 1964, Board members approved a motion to designate Cartier’s two semi-detached houses a site of “national historical importance.” In 1973, the government purchased both houses and turned them into a national historic site, which opened to the public in 1985.

While my analysis of the institutional origins of each site takes into account factors that motivated and validated the respective restitution efforts, I consider the Victorian Christmas

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38 Canadian historian and then-Board member Donald Creighton conducted extensive research and subsequently produced a list of names of those both present and active in both the Quebec (1864) and London conferences, which he presented to the Board advocating that his list – currently held in trust by the Public Archives of Canada, which included Cartier’s name – be considered “official and correct” as well as “authoritative.” Subsequent to his presentation, Board members approved his application. “Extraits des procès-verbal de la réunion de la CLMHC tenue du 25 au 29 mai 1959”; quoted in Parcs Canada, Énoncé d’Intégrité Commémorative: Lieu Historique du Canada de Sir-George-Étienne-Cartier (Québec: Parcs Canada, Unité de Gestion de l’Ouest du Québec, 2004) 22.
39 Parcs Canada, Énoncé d’Intégrité Commémorative, 23.
programming offered at each site to interrogate how site administrators and interpreters work to make the past not only relevant but also attractive to visitors. In each case, the Christmas tour represents the longest running and, for the most part, highest attended “special event” program. Interpreters decorate period rooms and, dressed in period costume, discuss traditions and activities associated with the occasion. As a result, this particular program differs significantly from tours offered year-round at each site, which conventionally discuss the original owner’s political activities and accomplishments, household management and nineteenth-century Canadian material culture.

Because popularized constructions of Christmas conventionally portray the holiday as a festive season replete with so-called “traditional” activities, James Tracy suggests, people tend to perform rituals of their own at this time of year. He explains further, writing,

Christmas summons images of family gathered around a decorated tree, of music and light and the comforting smell of a special dinner cooking on a snowy winter day....These images are appealing and powerful....[People] feel obliged to go through the motions of preparations for what they have been socialized to believe are Yuletide necessities, spending large potions of their income on obligatory gifts and long hours of increasingly limited leisure time fighting for parking spaces...The...Dickensian Christmas that is sought never actually existed.40

In other words, in the context of the contemporary holiday season, people perform specific activities that seemingly recall and, in effect, imagine an earlier time – one that, according to Tracy and a host of other scholars, never existed.41 The ritualistic performance of these activities promulgates a utopian version of the past, and as a result, the Victorian Christmas has become, in the contemporary age, a historicized, romanticized and ethnicized ideological construction. And

heritage practitioners take advantage of the appeal of this construction. In fact, administrators, curators and interpreters employed at historic sites that offer Victorian Christmas tours make a concerted effort to “authenticate” the period representation through the conveyance of information, research and descriptions of the purpose and origin of specific objects, practices and activities, such as kissing under the mistletoe.

Because this thesis explores the relationship between heritage, living history and memory in Canadian historic homes in the contemporary multicultural context, my work aims to augment current scholarship that focuses primarily on American living history museums. Significant in this context is the work on Colonial Williamsburg undertaken by Gable and Handler. American historical sites frequently commemorate the origins of the Republic; accordingly, one might posit that the purpose of sites such as Colonial Williamsburg is to instill and enhance feelings of national pride and patriotism among US American citizens. Gable and Handler contend that, at Colonial Williamsburg, teaching history to the public represents a social encounter between interpreters and visitors at a site that is both cultural institution and a corporate entity. This social encounter, located within the confines of the museum, results in the valourization of both the nation’s past and present, in that the site seemingly stands as a testament to the survival of freedom, patriotism and self-government, ideological principles upon which US American national identity bases itself. Simply put, despite their location in a “heterogeneous” state, historical sites such as Colonial Williamsburg – those that identify and valourize the nation’s past – advance a distinctively “American” patriotism. In the absence of the sort of heroic conflicts that distinguished both the French and American Revolutions, as well as the American Civil War,

42 John D. Rockefeller Jr., the first and primary benefactor of the Colonial Williamsburg restoration project, spoke of the purpose of the site, saying, “To those in search of a deeper understanding of our country Williamsburg offers tangible evidence that human freedom, self-government, and sovereignty of the individual have been the well-springs of our greatness. I believe that this nation can be better comprehended through knowledge of its roots and traditions” (quoted in Kammen, 583).
historian Arthur G. Neal explains, Canadian identity is “less sharply defined.” Canada, as a political state, has made a strategic effort instead to cultivate a distinctive nationalism based on a multiculturalism policy, located within a bilingual framework.

Canada’s multiculturalism policy, installed in 1971 and formalized in the Canadian Multiculturalism Act (1988), has fostered the idea that diversity is a national virtue. Understood on a popular level as “unity-in-diversity,” Canada’s national culture is positioned as being open-ended and provisional or, in Jon Stratton and Ien Ang’s words, as “permanently unfinished business.” This claim ostensibly frustrates the need for a unifying Canadian identity. As sociologist Richard Day explains, the rhetoric of multiculturalism posits the “possession of a national Thing” as desirable. “This Thing,” he writes, “is universal, it is every Thing. But, as everything it is also nothing at all.” In characterizing cultural pluralism as that which defines Canada’s national identity, the Multiculturalism Act, in effect, provides the foundation for a flexible Canadianism. Accordingly, one might suggest that cultural institutions representing Canada’s past in a manner that not only recognizes but also privileges a continually evolving present perform a complex function in the contemporary Canadian state. My study examines the regeneration and operation of Canadian historic sites to investigate the complex ways in which such institutions naturalize “founding nations” mythologies in Canada’s multicultural present.

This study approaches these sites, with their artefactual arrangement and interpretive content, as significant cultural and historical performances that utilize different elements to make the past “come alive” for visitors, and in chapter 2 I identify these elements and interrogate their respective roles. More precisely, I explore the significance of artefacts and live interpretation in

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44 Arthur G. Neal, National Trauma and Collective Memory: Extraordinary Events in the American Experience, 2nd ed. (M.E. Sharpe, 2005) 23.
living history sites. In so doing, I examine how living history museums rely on the coordination and management of the building, restored period rooms and interpretive content offered in the context of guided tours to validate their performance of the past. Not only do I identify and describe the roles of particular exhibitionary elements that constitute the living history format, I also consider how particular ideological frameworks inform commemorative activities and, by extension, public memory. In other words, I examine how nationalist ideologies motivate the constitution, museumification and reanimation of heritage sites so that they might function as both national symbols and tourist destinations.

Fundamental to my analysis is the concept of naturalizing the past, which I take up in a consideration of heritage sites as “sites of memory.” Working from historian Anthony Smith’s definition of nationalism as a “form of public and politicized culture” created through the “selection and reinterpretation of earlier myths, symbols … traditions and memories,” I explore how nationalist ideologies might be connected with and motivate the restoration of historic sites. Essential to my study as well is consideration of these types of sites as “large artefacts,” to use Stephen Mills’s term, that is, as venues and contexts for visitors’ experiential departure from the present. Their identification as large artefacts makes evident the possibility of evaluating these objects and their restored period rooms within the artefactual domain of disciplinary art history.

Because living history practitioners use objects, artefacts and interpretations to authorize the site’s period representation, I also explore how interpreters negotiate their dealings with historical accuracy and speculation. Given that, as Casey terms it, the “burden of authenticity”

49 Handler, 1988, 17.
51 Smith, 2001, 133; Nora.
52 Stephen F. Mills, “Moving Buildings and Changing History,” in Heritage, Memory and the Politics of
typically falls on the historical building, the “real site” offers the “ideal stage for [a] fictionalized performance” through live interpretation. In order to relay a version of the past that visitors will find credible, museum professionals often rely on historical scholarship that validates the appearance and location of period objects, whether they were originally located in the rooms or not. Consideration of these aspects makes evident the ways in which, as Katriel states, the “dialectics of memory and history [play] themselves out in these types of sites.” What is more, the reanimation functions so as to encourage visitors to experience “what it felt like to live back then” and, in so doing, to develop appreciation of the nation’s past.

My investigation of how interpreters work to construct a credible and enticing version of the past relies on my observation, documentation and analysis of the Victorian Christmas program offered at each site. It is based on my observations and audio-recordings of tours and interviews conducted with both interpreters and site administrators, which were subsequently transcribed. I am thus sensitive to the reality that interpreters themselves frequently determine what type of information to deliver based on both the interests expressed and the questions posed by visitors. The duration of the research period at each site took place over, on average, a six- to seven-week time period – at Dundurn Castle in 2004, Mackenzie House in 2006 and the Cartier Houses in 2008. My analysis of the tour content considers various factors, such as what themes, objects, traditions and historical information interpreters emphasize and how they legitimize the representation.

Chapter 3 explores ways in which the museumification and reanimation of Dundurn Castle, the former home of Sir Allan Napier MacNab, aims to naturalize “founding nations”
mythologies. More specifically, I consider how Dundurn commemorates certain aspects of British-Canadian identity so as to validate a particular interpretation of the past and, by extension, the present. In terms of the site’s institutional history, I explore how nation-building frameworks promoted in Canada during the 1960s informed Dundurn’s restoration. Because these frameworks required a strategic reconceptualization of both the house and its original owner, I propose that Dundurn’s reconstitution represents the consummation of related developments at the site during its stint as a community museum. Then I take into account the fact that Dundurn’s restoration was funded as part of the Canadian Centennial celebrations and, in so doing, explore hegemonic processes bound up in state-sponsored commemorative endeavours, particularly those intended to venerate the achievements of the nation. In turn, I consider how, in order to reincarnate Dundurn Castle as a national historic site, those involved in the restoration process worked to reconceptualize both the site and MacNab as a historical figure.

In contrast, to open up for examination the types of subject positions the site’s performance projects in the contemporary multicultural context, I explore Dundurn’s Victorian Christmas tour. Considering both the longevity and popularity of the Christmas tour, my analysis of the artefactual arrangements, activities and themes explored in this particular special event program suggests that the site, upon reanimation, portrays the celebration of an upper-class family as one that is distinctively British. In this discussion, I draw on the work of various scholars, including Erna Macleod, Eva Mackey and Himani Bannerji, who contend that, despite the existence of multiculturalism as a state cultural policy that recognizes the existence of cultural diversity in Canada, historic sites often reproduce a core Canadianism. As Macleod states, “Political rhetoric and popular myth celebrate the heterogeneity of Canada’s population, but cultural institutions and social practices belie claims to multicultural identity.”57 I thus use the example of the Dundurn Castle Christmas program to interrogate how historic sites, and more

specifically, living history museums that mount Victorian Christmas tours, function as hegemonic cultural tools by performing and subsequently affirming the values of what Mackey, Macleod and Bannerji refer to as Canada’s dominant culture.

In Chapter 4, I use Mackenzie House – the retirement home of Toronto’s first mayor and 1837 Upper Canada Rebellion leader – to explore the historical and socio-political roots of globalizing processes as they occur in Canadian heritage sites. In so doing, I explain how nationalist agendas not only motivated the museumification of Mackenzie House but also provided the basis of the marketing and “branding” strategies of the City of Toronto in the current global age. In the context of this discussion I note that Canada’s adoption of a multiculturalism policy – intended as a strategic effort to cultivate nationalism based on the concept of “unity-in-diversity” – encouraged Toronto’s heritage administrators to re-consider their understanding of the purpose of city-owned and operated heritage sites, such as Mackenzie House. I therefore consider ways in which staff developed the museum so that it might portray not only Mackenzie’s family life and accomplishments but also Toronto’s status as a “multi-cultural” city. I take into account city officials’ 2003 mandate that both the site and the region in which it is located be branded as “culturally diverse” (in order bolster Toronto’s reputation as a “global city”). Thus I examine how site workers use not only the museum but also its programming to reflect a particular image of the Toronto region in the contemporary global era. This chapter, as a result, explores how multiculturalism discourse routinely acts as a reference point for programs carried

58 Kratz and Karp, 5.
59 Jenkins, 173.
60 For example, in 1991, then-chairperson of the Toronto Historical Board Christine Caroppo Clarence wrote, for example, “In Toronto, we have the special challenge to interpret the story of Toronto through our museums, which are largely Euro-Canadian in Nature and date from the 19th and the late 18th century. In the context of a multi-cultural 20th century city, how do we make this heritage relevant to the current inhabitants of a city founded by the English with earlier occupation of the French and the presence of Native cultures thousands of years old” (“Chairman’s Report,” Toronto Historical Board 1990 Annual Report [Toronto: Toronto Historical Board, 1990] 2).
61 Ibid.
out by the city’s historic institutions, thereby demonstrating connections between national frameworks and globalizing processes.63

By way of extension, my examination of the Victorian Christmas program at Mackenzie House explores how site administrators redeploy the museum’s narratives so as to not only commemorate the region’s past but also advance present-day values. In so doing, I assess the implications of the multicultural references that are developed at this historic site. In other words, I consider issues inherent in the site’s negotiation of past and present-day concerns. The curatorial staff represents Toronto’s “culturally diverse” present using exhibitions located in a gallery space appended to the house, while interpreters use the historical structure, the artefactual arrangements and historical research to make the past “come alive” for visitors. Therefore, in my assessment of the tour execution and content, I evaluate the inferences of “soft” temporary displays – dedicated to the representation of ethnic diversity – as opposed to those of the “hard” object-based displays permanently installed in the house’s period rooms, so as to interrogate the implications of marking the site as representational of the region’s contemporary population.

In Chapter 5, I use the example of the Sir George-Étienne Cartier National Historic Site of Canada to explore how museum workers manage the site, notably in the context of the site’s Noël victorien/Victorian Christmas programming, so as to render the institution attractive to the Montreal public, a constituency sensitive to contemporary souverainiste issues. I consider how the federal agency Parks Canada has developed the site so that it commemorates a particular French-Canadian identity but, ultimately, upon reanimation, reinvigorates a distinctly “Canadian”

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63 Patricia K. Wood and Liette Gilbert, “Multiculturalism in Canada: Accidental Discourse, Alternative Vision, Urban Practice,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 29.3 (September 2005): 679-91. In Barbara Jenkins’s examination of Toronto’s “Cultural Renaissance” – a movement defined by eight major cultural (re)construction projects, including the Art Gallery of Toronto and the Royal Ontario Museum – she suggests that the reconfiguration of art galleries and museums functions so as to bolster the city’s reputation as an “international economic and cultural capital.” The renovation of certain cultural institutions seeks to recast them as “signature buildings [re]designed by architects with international reputations” (“Toronto’s Cultural Renaissance,” *Canadian Journal of Communication* 30 [2005]: 169). In contrast, my work examines how the management of old architectural structures, ones whose perceived value depends upon their structural preservation and commemorative designs, also aims to contribute to the consolidation of Toronto’s cultural and economic profile.
nationalism. In my examination of Cartier Houses’ institutional history, I suggest that the site’s monumentalization, undertaken by Parks Canada in the wake of Quebec’s Quiet Revolution, indicates the degree to which the federal government responded to the efforts and achievements of Quebecers. With this in mind, I investigate the extent to which Parks Canada catered to Quebecers’ interest in cultivating a Québécois nationalism so as to re-deploy the site’s national narrative and, in so doing, promote amongst Montrealers a collective appreciation of Canada’s national past and present.

Expanding on this discussion, I consider, in the context of the Cartier House’s Victorian Christmas programming, how interpreters manage the site’s performance so that it deals with themes that are markedly devoid of explicit political references. In other words, I explore how the site’s reanimation invites visitors to remember history as a personal experience.\textsuperscript{64} Given that the museum uses object-based exhibitions to acknowledge the original owner’s political achievements, while the “living history” portion reflects the lifestyle of Montreal’s upper-middle classes, I explore how Parks Canada workers utilize the site to foster a collective sense of cultural history among local visitors.\textsuperscript{65} In turn, I explore how the site has been reanimated to project a particular version of the past so that the museum in turn works to not only generate but also privilege a “Canadian” lifestyle, a way of life purportedly characterized by both English- and French-Canadian traditions, customs and ideologies.

I find house museums that have been reincarnated as living history museums to be intriguing cultural institutions, particularly when one takes into account not only what they do but


\textsuperscript{65} Casey, 12. As historian Michael Kammen explains, heritage practitioners typically “depoliticize” the past to represent “only those aspects of heroes’ lives that will render them as acceptable to as many people as possible.” He uses the example of Martin Luther King Jr’s birthday. Martin Luther King Jr. Day, he points out, has been established as a national holiday so that the historical figure enjoys heroic status. As a result, the historical figure “has been depoliticized so that he is a charismatic advocate of civil rights rather than a more broadly based critical conscience who sought social change for oppressed people at home and abroad...The penchant for amnesia...is a matter of degree and is a function of yet another phenomenon that we have now encountered repeatedly: namely, the American inclination to depoliticize the past to minimize memories (and causes) of conflict” (662, 701, emphasis added).
also what analyses of their formation and institutionalization reveal. While one might visit these types of sites and be tempted to assess the merits of (or problems inherent in) live interpretation, such assessments fail to take into account the larger picture, so to speak; the fact that these sites have existed and been reincarnated for a variety of purposes over the course of the past one-hundred and fifty years. As Patricia West argues in her seminal analysis of the American house museum movement, “the history of American historic homes demonstrates that their missions, far from being neutral and far from meriting the status of inviolability, were manufactured out of human needs bound by time and space.”

My analysis evaluates not so much “human needs” but rather the ways in which the formation of Dundurn Castle, Mackenzie House and the Cartier Houses, as well as their current operations, demonstrate the flexibility of historical narratives and associated ideologies managed by the state. I investigate developments, events and changes in both the political and cultural economies that galvanize activity in the heritage sector. Accordingly, this study examines historic homes and Canadian heritage sites and finds them to be agents of Canadian cultural politics.

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Chapter 2 – Memorializing History: Establishing a Critical Framework

Historic homes that have been restored as national heritage sites and living history museums represent and perform the past in the present to restore faith in the future.¹ My work investigates how three particular historic homes – Dundurn Castle, Mackenzie House and the Cartier Houses – have been preserved, reconstructed and reanimated as evidentiary artefacts in the performance of history. More specifically, I connect the institutional history of each site with current “Victorian Christmas” programming to explore the tense negotiation of historical accuracy and speculation that conventionally occurs in living history museums. To achieve a sense of a “historically accurate” representation that visitors find convincing, interpreters rely on both the architectural context and historical scholarship.² In the Victorian Christmas tours offered at the three sites, however, there is a marked lack of historical evidence that demonstrates how, or even if, the respective families that originally lived in each house celebrated the Christmas season; as a result, the Victorian Christmas programs convey highly speculative accounts of how the original owners might have celebrated the festive season.

I examine the regeneration, operating procedures and programming of Canadian historic sites to explore the complex ways in which these particular institutions naturalize “founding nations” mythologies in Canada’s multicultural present. To apprehend the motivating factors behind each site’s institutionalization, as well as the calculated nature of its significance, I examine the historical context in which the individuals, parties or organizations involved decided to preserve and restore Dundurn Castle, Mackenzie House and the Cartier Houses as living

history museums and, subsequent to that, national historic sites. In addition, in my analysis of the themes, content and interpretation of the Victorian Christmas offered at each site, I investigate the methods used by interpreters to render the past appealing to twenty-first century visitors. In other words, I consider what objects, facts, events and practices interpreters point out in order to carve out a place and purpose for the past in the present. My study thus explores the complex deployment of history, objects and memory to simultaneously structure and validate the perceptions and experiences of visitors to the sites.

In examining how the three sites endeavour to naturalize the past, I consider the means used to authorize interpretations of the past. One might suggest that living history museums act, and thus exist as “evidence” that represents the past to assert the validity of the nation’s present and future course. As cultural historian Sharon Macdonald explains, “‘Having a heritage’ – that is, a selected history and its material traces – is…an integral part of ‘having an identity’, and it affirms the right to exist in the present and continue into the future.” Notably, in living history museums, what museologist Valerie Casey refers to as the “burden of authenticity” often depends upon the existence of a historic building – acting as a historical artefact – to validate the period portrayal. Similarly, cultural historian Edward Bruner argues that the architectural structures that constitute the setting for heritage sites frequently act as “embodiments of authenticity”; when a house is turned into a historic museum, and period objects are placed within it, an “aura of authenticity pervades” the site. Living history interpreters often weave object-based narratives into speculative accounts of what might have occurred in these sites. It is this complex negotiation – of fact and fiction, object(s) and interpretation, and history and memory – that I explore in the next three chapters.

5 Bruner, 400.
In this chapter, I turn to some theoretical debates about heritage, museums and memory to set up my approach to each site and to make evident the reasons that I connect the institutional history of each with its current programming. I explore the role(s) of artefacts, objects and live interpretation in living history museums, the narrativizing strategies frequently employed by interpreters, and the function of living history sites as tourist destinations. In so doing, I demonstrate the necessity of charting the institutional development of each museum and its current operating procedures. While there is a great deal of information to be gleaned from considering the history of these particular sites, coupling that type of analysis with a consideration of how such sites operate and perform in the present provides greater insight to the complex place Canadian heritage sites occupy in the contemporary multicultural imagination. While one might suggest that the performative representation of history in living history museums is experience-based rather than object-based, it is important to point out that the exhibitionary format of living history museums depends not only upon live interpretation, but also on the existence of both a historically designated site and period objects to “authenticate” the experience – to convince visitors of the legitimacy of the interpretation represented. Thus, to consider one aspect of this format in isolation from others hinders a more nuanced understanding of the complex history and current function of these types of museums.

With such an understanding, it becomes increasingly apparent that historic homes that have been turned into Canadian living history museums naturalize the past; in other words, they represent the past so that the present is conceptualized as the inevitable or natural outcome of that past. They deploy what Tamar Katriel refers to as a particular “rhetoric of history,” one that

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6 In so doing, as cultural historian Hilliel Schwartz notes, living museums turn artificial things into artificial events. According to Schwartz, “Living Museums tend to choose that which authenticates over that which is authentic, a culturally congenial deceit” (The Culture of the Copy: Striking Likenesses, Unreasonable Facsimiles (New York: Zone Books, 1996) 278-9; quote from 279).
strives to naturalize visitors’ beliefs and perceptions of the past.\(^7\) According to Katriel, interpreters use historical facts and objects to reinforce “the museum’s approved version of the past,” a process that often goes unnoticed.\(^8\) The purpose of this chapter, in contrast, is to uncover, identify and interrogate the particular roles of the format’s various elements in constituting and authorizing these seemingly formulaic conceptualizations of times gone by.

In my interrogation of the components of the living history format – the architectural context, artefactual arrangements, live interpretation and programming – my work makes evident the complicated and multivalent nature of such public sites. What I mean here is that, like other cultural institutions, living history museums conventionally perform numerous duties, simultaneously acting as symbols of national culture, as material evidence of a nation’s eminence, and as sites of interest that one might visit as a leisure activity. As historian Robert Burgoyne points out in his consideration of the interests that underpin the public history of Rock and Roll in Cleveland, Ohio, a range of perspectives inform commemorative processes and products. He contends that there are three primary facets of public memory – “the official, the vernacular, and the commercial.”\(^9\) He characterizes official memory as a commemorative discourse that motivates the erection or restoration of historical sites and monuments; most commonly produced by governmental bodies, the layout, designs and content of these monuments frequently aim to “neutralize competing interpretations of the past” so as to reproduce the established order.\(^10\) Vernacular memory consists of the types of memories generated by historic site visitation, more specifically, of memories that visitors retain based on first-hand experience of the site. These memories convey a sense of what “social reality…should be like” so as to generate a sense of


\(^8\) Katriel, 117.


\(^10\) Burgoyne, 210.
loyalty to that which is represented.\textsuperscript{11} Finally, commercialized representations of the past are those monuments and sites that function as tourist destinations. Commercial culture, he suggests, “engages with the discourses of memory by invoking commercial products and representations as an aspect of national heritage through ‘strategies designed to heighten a product’s visibility, [and] legibility to its audiences.’”\textsuperscript{12}

In this chapter, I describe the elements of the living history format in terms of the official, vernacular and commercial aspects of public memory described by Burgoyne. In my discussion of the different exhibitionary elements, I suggest that each element plays a vital role in the living history format; in other words, I argue that no one element can fulfill its prescribed role without the help of the others. Living history museums rely on the existence, coordination and interplay of the architectural context, historical artefacts, live interpretation and special events programs to deliver a particular experience to visitors.

I examine the purpose of these exhibitionary elements and their relation to particular ideological frameworks and epistemologies to elucidate my reasons for connecting the institutional history of each site with its contemporary programming. Following Burgoyne’s identification of “official” viewpoints, I first examine ways in which nationalist ideologies not only instigate but also authorize the constitution of heritage sites. In other words, I interrogate the effects of nationalism on heritage activities, arguing, as do other scholars, that such nationalist sentiments find expression in the preservation of monuments identified with the nation’s past to provide foundations for national identity.\textsuperscript{13} In addition, I propose that, in living history museums, the role of the resulting monuments – whether architectural or artefactual – is the same as that

\textsuperscript{12} Barbara Klinger, \textit{Fortresses of Solitude: Cinema, New Technologies, and the Home} (forthcoming); quoted by Burgoyne on p. 211.
played by the object in disciplinary art history. I investigate this connection to argue that the calculated deployment of artefacts in living history museums has a more deliberate, didactic purpose than one might initially suspect, given the deceptively playful, “theme park” character projected by such sites.

Second, I examine the ways in which the living history format strives to construct a particular experience for the visitor, one that calls up for examination the “vernacular” nature of memory. More specifically, I investigate the aims of live interpretation – how these types of performances seek to provide visitors with authoritative and appealing conceptualizations of a nation’s past. Accordingly, I argue for the imperative of analyzing the practices, themes and content of current programming in living history museums.

Finally, I explore the ways in which such institutions, acting as tourist destinations, “sell” or commodify visitors’ experiences. My purpose in doing so is to argue the merit of analyzing the Victorian Christmas tours offered at Dundurn Castle, Mackenzie House and the Cartier Houses. As the longest running program offered at all three sites and, in the case of Dundurn and the Cartier Houses, the one that routinely garners the highest attendance rates in a five- to seven-week time period, the Christmas program establishes these sites as active tourist destinations during the harsh Canadian winter.


According to Statistics Canada, in 2004, Canadians took the fewest number of domestic excusions between the months of October and December. The most popular months for travel were April, May and
“Official”izing a Nation’s Past: Identifying the Object of Art Historical Inquiry

Nationalistic ideologies, frameworks and interests often propel strategic deployments of both objects and history to naturalize representations of the past. In this sense, it is noteworthy that, with the restoration of each of the three sites explored in this study – Dundurn Castle, Mackenzie House and the Cartier Houses – the federal government designated it a national historic site. The reconstitution of the structures as state-sanctioned heritage sites was an act of commemoration. As sociologist Kevin Meethan explains, such designations affect the perceived status of buildings, elevating them “above the mundane into a symbol of the nation, or people.” Examining the constructed nature of these types of symbols makes evident the ways in which nationalist ideologies authorize historic preservation and reanimation. For this reason, I would argue the merit of considering living history museums as “large artefacts,” thereby linking my analysis of heritage site formation with that of disciplinary art history. In my view, the credibility of living history museums or, more precisely, the legitimacy of institutionalized representations of the past, frequently relies – as does disciplinary art history – on belief that both the architectural monument and the objects it contains are “evidence” of the time, culture, nation or people that produced them.

In other words, I suggest that the role of objects in living history museums – be they architectural or artefactual – relates directly to the use of objects in disciplinary art history and museum exhibitions. Drawing on art historical discourse, I argue that, in living history museums, both the architecture and artefacts function as representational signs – objects that, by virtue of

June. A national survey conducted in 2006 states that late fall and early winter “is typically the time of year in which Canadians travel least in Canada, as they are likely more attracted by southern destinations or simply prefer staying in the comfort of their homes” (Statistics Canada, Canadian Travel Survey: Domestic Travel, 2004 (Ottawa: Minister of Industry, 2006) 21-22; quote from 21).

17 Meethan, 99.

their existence, historical documentation and subsequent institutionalization, seek to convey the veracity of the site’s interpretation of the past. The concept of the object as a representational sign, art historian Donald Preziosi explains, stems from the historical development of art history as an academic discipline. Since its establishment in the mid-nineteenth century, Preziosi contends, art history has upheld the object as being inherently meaningful. The most prevalent theory related to the object in art history has been the conception of the object as a medium of communication or expression – “a vehicle by means of which the intentions, values, attitudes, messages, or emotional state(s) of the maker…are conveyed (by design or chance) to targeted or circumstantial beholders.” 19 The selection, location and legitimacy of objects included in museum exhibitions, as a result, is sustained by a “willed fiction,” a belief that they somehow constitute a coherent “representational” universe as “signs or surrogates” of their producers or consumers.20 In Preziosi’s view, disciplinary art history privileges the existence and communicative values of the object. What these objects communicate is determined by those who select, designate, and interpret their significance.21

20 Donald Preziosi, “The Art of Art History,” in The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology, ed. Donald Preziosi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 521. As Preziosi puts it, in the past, the discipline of art history has been largely defined by the paradigm “everything about an object is meaningful in some way, while not everything about an object is meaningful in the same way” (1993, 219). Similarly, curator and literary scholar Caterina Albano argues that objects in exhibitions are often assigned a specific representational value when they are located within a deliberately contrived sign system, the museum exhibition. She connects the value assigned to an object in an exhibition to the cultural role ascribed to objects in disciplinary art history, writing, “Extending the notions of authenticity identified for artworks – nominal authenticity as the correct identification of the origins, authorship and provenance of an object, and expressive authenticity as the ‘value possessed by works of art’ or an object – we can argue that the evidential force of an artefact constitutes part of its expressive authenticity, that renders it culturally, historically and…biographically ‘true’” (Caterina Albano, “Displaying Lives: The Narrative of Objects in Biographical Exhibitions,” Museum and Society 5.1 [March 2007]: 17).
21 As James Clifford argues, “The history of collections (not limited to museums) is central to an understanding of how those social groups that invented anthropology and modern art have appropriated exotic things, facts and meaning. (Appropriate: ‘to make one’s own,’ from the Latin proprius, ‘proper,’ ‘property.’) It is important to analyze how powerful discriminations are made at particular moments constitute the general system of objects within which valued artifacts circulate and make sense” (The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature and Art [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988] 220-1). He argues that curators, collectors and producers appropriate objects to
Heritage sites and living history museums utilize objects to legitimize depictions of the past. The setting of a living history museum includes a historically designated structure that houses period artefacts; both the building and artefactual arrangements located within it function as material evidence to validate the site’s interpretation of the past. According to cultural historian Stephen Mills, the building functions not only as a “very large [artefact]” but also as “signified and signifier, an unmediated image that is no image at all, being the clearly authenticated structure, as real as the day it was built in the old country.” The architectural context of living history museums thus “authenticates” the representation of the past offered in the various rooms; additionally, he suggests that the artefactual arrangements represent a “system of signs.” These arrangements, located in period rooms of a house or historic building, are thus situated within a “landscape that is greater than the sum of its parts.” Mills explains further, writing, “seeing an artefact in its original location is not an interpretive process, but unmediated, unproblematic and straightforward, a perspective that extends to the surrounding assemblage.”

In other words, locating historical artefacts in the period rooms of a historical building that is decades or centuries old works to suppress the interpretive aspect of the arrangement – the fact that objects have been strategically placed in particular spaces to convey specific values, concepts or convictions. As Preziosi explains, such calculated deployments of material culture, ostensibly identify and label them as property. Following Clifford, I consider the historic homes selected in this study to be objects that have been appropriated – by virtue of their preservation, restoration and reanimation – as artefactual evidence of the nation’s “material legacy of history” (Richard Handler, Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec [Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988] 17). Consequently, one must consider the nature, significance and ramifications of “discriminating” decisions made regarding restoration and reanimation of these sites to effectively and critically analyze the socio-political significance of Canadian heritage sites, more specifically, historic homes once owned by political figures from the pre-Confederation time period.

as evidence, “constructs and naturalizes the truth of what is intended.”

It is these intentions – those that propel the restoration and reanimation of historic homes in Canada – that I investigate.

Building on the work of Anthony D. Smith, I suggest that, on one level, the selection of particular objects, in this instance, historic houses that have been restored and reanimated as living history museums, demonstrates a desire to concretize an “authentic spirit” of the nation. In short, the selection is an expression of nationalism. As Smith explains it, nationalism is a type of political religion that seeks to cultivate national identity and unity amongst citizens: “[It] seeks to create nations in the ‘authentic’ spirit and image of earlier ethnic and religious communities, but transformed to meet modern geopolitical, economic and cultural conditions.” Thus, as Smith explains, nationalism is created in the choice and reinterpretation of formative myths and symbols of existing communities and cultures. And it requires a place, space or site for the nation to inhabit. “Only an ancestral homeland,” he writes, “can provide the emotional as well as physical security required by the citizens of a nation.” Cultivated cultural resources thus act as “foundations” of national identity.

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27 Anthony D. Smith, “Nations and Ethnoscapes,” Oxford International Review 8.2 (1997): 11. He also characterizes “sites of memory” as “objects of the sacred” in that objects are often selected, constructed or interpreted according to doctrines of civic virtue and national heroism. Legacies of religious heritage, as evidenced in Judeo-Christian beliefs, traditions and practices that also have parallels in Islamic faith, he suggests, spawned these doctrinal beliefs and ideologies (Smith, 2003, 220-1). Smith’s assertion is echoed by Stephen Mills, who writes that the selection of commemorative sites places “a heavy responsibility upon the choice of artefacts, again verging into the domain of domestic relics. Paradoxically, [the selection of sites to be commemorated] indicates that just when artefacts are deemed most authentic and unique, they are equally deemed indicative of wider themes, metaphors for otherwise inaccessible processes” (Mills, 2007, 114).

In the case of living history museums, material evidence of a nation’s foundations is thus strategically selected and cultivated through restoration, commemoration and reanimation. The artefactual nature of state-sanctioned heritage sites indicates the constitution of a memory system that is, as historian Christine Boyer terms it, “transcribed in stone.” These “didactic artefacts” commemorate and communicate national mythologies, ceremonial glory and heroic deeds.\(^\text{29}\) As Brian Osborne puts it, they stand for a “should have been past,” advancing a historical fiction that seeks narrative cohesion as well.\(^\text{30}\) In other words, living history museums narrate the past in a rational, orderly manner that appears natural or inevitable, a manner that not only validates the present state of the nation but also potential opportunities for, or in the future. As a result, the formation, development and programming of living history museums cannot be considered in isolation from the political economy. Opportunities for political or economic gains often stimulate commemorative endeavours, including those of site selection, designation, restoration and reanimation. Accordingly, I consider the prevailing ideologies, perceptions, factors and events that spur the preservation and reincarnation of historic sites. According to cultural historian Pierre Nora, such motivations represent the “push and pull” that produces “sites of memory” or lieux de mémoire.

As Nora explains, living history museums or “sites of memory” are “material, symbolic and functional.” Further, these aspects “always” coexist because such sites are “created by a play of memory and history.”\(^\text{31}\) Live interpretation reinforces the symbolic function of the museum,


\(^{31}\) Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History,” *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 19. Similarly, Brian Osborne (2006, 159) suggests that, while memorial structures might solidify ideas in both time and space, conveying messages in iron, marble, brick or concrete, their permanence is “illusory.” Memorial structures
while the architectural context and artefactual arrangements represent its material aspect. As a result, I argue that, to understand the product of the living history museum’s exhibitionary format – what comes of the interplay of objects, history and memory it cultivates – one must consider not only the institutional history of these sites but also the execution of the programs they currently offer.

**Vernacular Memory**

In this section, I explore the idea of live interpretation, that which defines the living history format, to demonstrate the necessity of analyzing the content and themes of guided tours. At the sites I consider in the following chapters, meaning is not strictly tied to the object as it is in art and anthropology museums; rather, meaning is constructed in the interplay between the architecture, the artefactual arrangements and the interpretative programs. Consideration of the objects, facts and themes referenced or discussed at length by interpreters is especially relevant in this instance, given that interpreters at Dundurn Castle, Mackenzie House and the Cartier Houses conduct unscripted tours (meaning that researchers and administrators give interpreters core information to delivery to visitors, and interpreters themselves determine what information they relay, when and how). Because interpreters gauge what type of information to deliver to visitors based on concerns expressed by, or questions posed by visitors during the tour, I consider the most commonly addressed and, therefore, prominent themes and activities dealt with by interpreters. In so doing, I explore the ways in which interpreters take visitors’ interests into account to make history seemingly “come alive” for them. More specifically, because, in living are, in fact, produced by historical, political and aesthetic actualities that constantly evolve, shift and change.

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32 Casey, 19. Art historians have begun to address this concept, more specifically the fact that the object does not have inherent meaning but that its meaning is also constructed in the interplay between object, viewer and exhibition or programming. For an early argument to this effect, see Michael Baxandall, “Exhibiting Intention: Some Preconditions of Visual Display of Culturally Purposeful Objects,” in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine (Washington and London: Smithsonian Press, 1991) 33-41.
history museums, visitors learn about history via an oral medium, in this section, I consider the purpose of live interpretation.33

Figure 1. Interpreter Isabelle Chalifoux, Sir George-Étienne National Historic Site of Canada, Montreal, Quebec (December 2008). Photograph by author. Reproduced with permission.

Interpreters introduce both objects and information to authorize the period representation and generate vernacular memories – memories that ostensibly promote a sense of national belonging. As Richard Handler and William Saxton point out, living history practitioners are

“aware that the past in *all* its detail can never be recovered,” nor can they know “all the facts.” As a result, interpreters select those objects and facts available to them to construct a sense of “narrative coherence” so that the present is portrayed as the expected outcome of the past that is represented. Living history museums thus construct an “imagined past,” one that, according to G.J. Ashworth and Brian Graham, “provides resources for a heritage that is to be bequeathed to an imagined future. It follows too that the meanings and functions of memory and tradition are defined in the present. Further, heritage is more concerned with meanings than material artefacts.” Accordingly, exhibitionary tactics in living history museums – notably, live interpretation – encourages visitors to experience “what it felt like to live back then.” Interpreters identify particular objects and deliver stories spun around the objects to buttress the museum’s account of the past. In other words, they encourage visitors to experience the past in such a way that their private memories of the visit cause them to feel connected to a larger community, that being the nation. As Gable and Handler explain, live interpretation turns “public history into private memory.” Accordingly, live interpretation promotes living history museums as “repositories of national narratives” (to borrow Daniel Walkowitz and Lisa Maya Knauer’s phrase).

Interpreters conventionally relay and, by extension, cultivate national narratives; live interpretation thus ostensibly represents what Smith calls the “territorialisation of memory.” Smith suggests that the communal identification of land is carried out in practice by attaching ancestral memories to places or objects; these “sites of memory” not only provide emotional and physical security required by citizens of a nation, they also bear witness to ethnic survival.

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34 Handler and Saxton, 1988, 243-4.  
35 Ashworth and Graham, 4.  
36 Casey, 12.  
37 Gable and Handler, 2000, 251.  
“Across the landscape,” he writes, “lie the ‘sites of memory’; the fields of battle, the monuments to the fallen, the places of peace treaties, the temples of priests, the last resting places of saints and heroes, the sacred groves of spirits and gods who guard the land.” What is more, Smith points out that such memorial sites have not always existed but are deliberately cultivated or contrived. Drawing on Smith, I argue that, in the living history museum, live interpretation not only reinterprets but also reanimates historic monuments, sites or objects, thus giving such sites a “more positive, active role.”

Interpreters endeavour to narrate the past to render the site, the historic period and the tour appealing in order to generate a sense of loyalty to that which is being commemorated. As American historian John Gillis points out, the monumentalization of historic places, events and people is both a social and political activity. Those who select, restore and reanimate historic monuments often aim to memorialize a distinct national identity or, as Smith suggests, ethnic kin significance. Significantly, Gillis states that identities and memories are “not things we think about, but things we think with.” He explains further, writing,

Just as memory and identity support one another, they also sustain certain subject positions, social boundaries, and, of course, power….When we speak of the Germans, we imagine ourselves to be referring to some objective entity, but in fact we are participating in the process by which certain relationships among people we call Germans and between them and others we call the French or the Americans are constructed and sustained.

By calling attention to the constructed and thus subjective nature of ethnic nationalism, Gillis suggests that issues of power and, by extension, authority stimulate not only the cultivation of

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41 Smith, 1997. For Smith, land becomes an ancestral homeland and landscape an ethnoscape to inspire popular devotion and sacrifice, “both of which are necessary if an often heterogeneous population is to be moulded into a ‘nation’. That is why, where there are no pre-existing traditions of sacred lands, nationalism itself seeks to sanctify the nation’s homeland, making it part of a national salvation drama of collective history and destiny” (1997, 17).
42 Smith, 1997, 12.
44 Gillis, 4.
nationalist ideologies but also the erection of national symbols or monuments. He argues that these cultural constructions strive to position themselves as accurate, unbiased, impartial and, in essence, natural. Presumption of the existence of a working ethnic nationalism in connection with its object of study, however, illustrates the difficulties related to the study of sites in nation-states, such as Canada, that seek to advance multicultural nationalism.

Accordingly, in my assessment of the themes and content espoused in the Victorian Christmas tours at Dundurn, Mackenzie House and the Cartier Houses, I interrogate the types of subject positions interpreters cultivate, perform and deploy in these sites. More specifically, I evaluate the different ways in which each site memorializes and continually projects a given hegemonic “social” – one that privileges “founding nations” mythology in Canada, a state that has, over the last half century, endeavoured to cultivate a distinct nationalism based on a federal multiculturalism policy, located within a bilingual framework.45 What is more, I compare narrations of the past performed at the selected sites to explore how interpreters at three historic house museums – sites linked by their representation and exploration of family life, the political purviews of each family’s patriarch, and Christmas festivities and tradition in the Confederation time period – work with specific facts and objects and, subsequent to that, espouse different “ideological affiliations.”46 In other words, despite the fact that each site uses similar exhibitionary strategies, each acting as a living history museum, to display Victorian Christmas festivities in a restored domestic residence of a major political figure from the Confederation era, interpreters at each site discuss particular historical facts and objects to explore different themes, sensibilities and ideological constructions of the past.

46 Bennett, 147.
“Commercial” Public Memory: Place, Experience and Identity

In examining the Victorian Christmas programming offered at Dundurn, Mackenzie House and the Cartier Houses, I interrogate how site administrators and interpreters endeavour to make the past not only relevant but also appealing to twenty-first century visitors. In each case, the Christmas tour is the longest running and most popular program. In effect, the longevity of this type of program necessitates evaluation of the sites not only as national symbols but also as tourist destinations. As Kevin Meethan explains, heritage is “as much a political as an economic resource which may also act as a marker of identity.”47 As a result, in my analysis of the Christmas programs, I explore ways in which interpreters strive to construct an appealing version of the past for visitors, which has, in the case of two of the sites, conventionally garnered the highest attendance rates over the course of a five-to-seven week period. I thus characterize the Christmas program as a strategic form of reanimation designed to enhance each site’s visibility and, by extension, its status as a tourist destination.48 In so doing, my critical analysis of the history and programming of Canadian heritage sites aims to both build upon and contribute to tourism studies.

While, in the two previous sections, I explored ways in which heritage sites aim to construct a convincing sense of nationhood, here I examine the type of experience living history museums endeavour to create for visitors. In seeking to provide visitors with a sense of “what it felt like to live back then,” living history museums act as tourist destinations, sites of interest to which one might escape from daily life. I consider various ways in which living history museums endeavour to provide visitors with a “contextual departure” from the present, which requires an increasingly sophisticated theoretical understanding of tourism.49

47 Meethan, 107.
48 Burgoyne, 211.
49 Casey, 11.
Foundational tourism studies, such as Dean MacCannell’s *The Tourist* (1973, 1976) and John Urry’s *The Tourist Gaze* (1990), often prioritize the visual aspect of tourism, thereby downplaying the bodily experience associated with a visit to the living history museum. In fact, Urry argues that tourism is primarily a visual endeavour. In his conceptualization of what he refers to as the “tourist gaze,” he contends that tourists “gaze at what [they] encounter.”

Because touristic practices involve the concept of departure – breaking with the schedule and habits of daily life – stimuli or features of the landscape that contrast with one’s everyday existence direct and maintain the gaze. In living history museums, however, the sights, sounds, smells and, often, tastes of the constructed environment envelop the visitor and generate a “holistic experience.” What is more, the sensorial experience facilitates a mental one.

Engaging in tourist activities, such as historic site visitation, allows one to physically locate oneself in a particular destination so that the physical experience promotes a specific mental experience, thereby allowing one to reconnect with what sociologist Ning Wang refers to as one’s existential, “authentic” self. As Wang explains, people travel to tourist destinations, perform different activities in these places, experience different physical sensations and, subsequent to that, liberate themselves not only physically but also mentally from the perceived constraints of the urban, industrial work-a-day world. In other words, people engage in touristic pursuits in the hopes that their experiences in and of these places might allow them to temporarily transcend the stresses and monotony of modern (now post-modern) life so as to reconnect with their “authentic selves” – a person unfettered by the perceived rationality and reason that otherwise dominates contemporary existence.”

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52 Handler and Saxton, 248.
54 Wang, 59.
its common place acceptance means that ‘one is true to one’s self.’”55 In tourist settings, such as the beach for example, Wang posits that people’s physical location causes them to enter what he calls an “alternative, yet intensified, experiential state”; people’s experiences of bodily and, by extension, spiritual pleasure, offers relief from the boredom and stresses of modern life.56 In terms of heritage site visitation, people’s encounters within these sites allow them escape to not only a different place but also a different time (whether an imagined past or “off the clock”); more specifically, upon entering a living history museum, people achieve a “contextual departure” from their present-day existence.57 Therefore, one might suggest that, in the context of living history sites, people’s experience of a different place and time provides a reprieve from the pressures, tensions and strains of the contemporary age – a leisure activity.

Because living history museums aim to make the past “come alive” for visitors, site workers develop particular methods to animate the institution for visitors. In the case of the Victorian Christmas programs offered at Dundurn, Mackenzie House and the Cartier Houses, the period rooms of each house are decorated in the style of a Victorian Christmas. Interpreters, costumed as people of the period – either as servants or members of the upper classes – discuss traditions and activities associated with the occasion; visitors eat festive treats and sing carols. As mentioned above, however, there is little evidence to suggest how or even if the original owners of the house and their families celebrated the Christmas season. In light of this, interpreters conventionally make a marked effort to “authenticate” the period representation through the conveyance of documented facts, as well as descriptions of the purpose and origin of specific objects, activities and traditions, such as kissing under the mistletoe, decorating the Christmas tree and exchanging gifts. Building on Wang’s arguments, I suggest that this type of representation not only romanticizes the past, it also works to evoke a sense of nostalgia in

55 Wang, 58.
56 Wang, 68.
57 Casey, 11.
visitors – a yearning for a time and place that never actually existed. As Susan Stewart explains, nostalgia “is always ideological; the past it seeks has never existed except as narrative, and hence, always absent, that past continually threatens to reproduce itself as a felt lack.”

My study functions as a critical investigation of heritage sites and, by extension, special events programming that romanticize the past. Historic sites, Erna Macleod points out, strategically select and omit that which is important to and in Canadian history. “By romanticizing colonial history and cultivating nostalgia for lost community and family values,” she writes, “heritage sites entrench Eurocentric attitudes and resist the change necessary to alleviate the marginalization of colonized cultures….Museums are not neutral; their interpretations function in a hegemonic way to define the boundaries of national unity.” In offering visitors romanticized, nostalgic and, by extension, enticing interpretations of the past, one might suggest that the Victorian Christmas tours function, as Macleod states, in a hegemonic way to concretize and redeploy concepts of national unity. Moreover, I suggest that living history museums, by virtue of their various exhibitionary elements, strategies, functions and programming attempt to not only convince but also attract visitors.

Accordingly, in my analysis of the Christmas tours, I take into account the enduring popularity of the Victorian Christmas program. By this, I mean that, in the case of all three sites, I examine the history and longevity of the program, what factors inspired its development at each site and what contributed to its longevity. In so doing, I approach these sites as tourist destinations, that is, as sites that offer programming, particularly during the Christmas season, expressly to draw in large numbers of people engaged in leisure-time activity. I also explore the role and ramifications of the exhibitionary strategies employed in order to make evident the

58 Susan Stewart, On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1984) 23.
hegemonic functioning of these types of sites. In other words, I examine what devices site workers at each museum use to render their respective representations of the past not only convincing but also enticing to visitors in a contemporary multicultural context. In so doing, I examine what type of past is represented, and what subject positions are projected and thus upheld as dominant.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have considered ways in which the multiple factors that constitute and inform the living history format – the historic building, artefactual arrangements, interpretive strategies and programming – relate to or elucidate the complexity of public memory. More specifically, I examine methods through which living history practitioners aim to naturalize the past; in other words, to represent the past such that the present appears as the natural outcome of it.

The next three chapters examine the restoration and reanimation of three historic sites, Dundurn Castle, Mackenzie House and the Cartier Houses. I first trace the means through which government officials, heritage workers and interpreters enacted specific policies or made changes that either contributed to or propelled the respective preservation, restoration and reanimation periods. Then, I examine the Victorian Christmas programming offered at each site to interrogate how site administrators and interpreters endeavour to make the past relevant and appealing to twenty-first century visitors in Canada, a country whose history reveals moves against what John Harles describes as “a single unifying and assimilative identity…in favour of multiculturalism.”60 I examine how representations of Victorian material culture operate in the contemporary multicultural context. In so doing, I interrogate what happens when the nation’s past is rendered as being distinctly different from its present, when current political and social realities relate little or indirectly to that which is supposed to have given rise to them.

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In the next three chapters, I explore and compare narrations of the past performed at selected sites. I investigate how three different historic house museums – ones linked by similar representational historical periods, subject matter and programming – work with specific facts and objects to espouse different “ideological affiliations.”61 In other words, I evaluate how interpreters at each site provide specific information in conjunction with particular objects to advance assorted themes, sensibilities and, with them, different ideological constructions of the past. In short, I examine how individual sites represent similarly themed cultural constructions of the past but espouse different ideological inflections.62

61 Bennett, 147.
62 Katriel, 107.
In this chapter, I connect the institutional history of Dundurn Castle, the former home of Prime Minister and Family Compact leader Sir Allan Napier MacNab, with the site’s current “Victorian Christmas” programming. In so doing, I investigate ways in which both the restitution and reanimation of the house work to naturalize “founding nations” mythologies; in other words, I explore how Dundurn monumentalizes particular aspects of British-Canadian identity. Moreover, I argue that such naturalizations function to authorize a particular version of the past. In the case of Dundurn’s institutional history, I consider factors that motivated the compilation of such naturalizations; more specifically, I investigate how nation-building frameworks developed in Canada during the 1960s informed the museumification of Dundurn. These frameworks necessitated a deliberate and strategic reinterpretation of both the site and the ethnic primacy of the political figure represented by it. In an attempt to clarify the complexity of such commemorative endeavours, I argue that the restoration of Dundurn marks the culmination of developments made at the site during its tenure as a community museum. From 1901 to the 1960s, a host of “women volunteerists” worked to establish the site as a historic house museum. Notably, these women took into account that Dundurn Castle was a Picturesque villa representing “essentially a British point of view” and arranged various period artefacts in rooms so these spaces depicted what might have been in place in MacNab’s day. These curatorial moves sparked a significant increase in visitor attendance, so much over the years that the site gained a profile significant enough to warrant the attention of municipal government officials, who in the 1960s applied for federal funding to restore Dundurn Castle in its entirety as Hamilton’s contribution to Canada’s Centennial celebration.

Because the restoration of Dundurn was funded as part of Canada’s Centennial celebrations – celebrations that marked what Eva Mackey refers to as a “high point in Canadian

2 Janet Wright, Architecture of the Picturesque in Canada (Ottawa: Minister of the Environment, 1984) 8.
state-produced national sentiment” – the restitution of the site seemingly demanded the restoration of MacNab as a historical figure. In other words, those working at the site hoped that Dundurn’s reincarnation might cultivate a narrative that stressed the ways in which MacNab fostered elite British culture in the Canadian colony and how his endeavours produced tangible and physical examples of that culture. As one journalist wrote in 1962, “True [MacNab] was a ‘Family Compact’ man, and member in excellent standing of a group whose class-conscious rule inevitably let to rebellion and then to democratic reform. But Sir Allan was a powerful, constructive statesman in his time …. [Dundurn Castle] and the man who built it have a strong claim for recognition in the history of our city and our country.”

As historian Alan Gordon explains, people often select commemorative historical subjects and sites for specific reasons. In my consideration of factors that motivated the decision to restore Dundurn Castle, I suggest that this particular choice demonstrates a decisive connection between commemorative endeavours and power. Such endeavours often indicate, as Gordon puts it, “an ongoing contest for hegemony.” The type(s) of subjects chosen for commemoration, he explains, “illustrate and teach idealized social conventions…. Patriotism, so often the message of public commemorative monuments, may either serve as a means of edifying the population in the maintenance of an existing social structure or as a teaching tool in the construction of an ideal one.” I suggest that the restoration of Dundurn Castle, executed as part of Canada’s Centennial celebration, required the reinstatement of both the site and MacNab as a political figure to concretize, monumentalize and, in effect, privilege Canada’s “founding nations” mythologies. I

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4 Hamilton Public Library (hereafter HPL), Gwen Metcalfe File Boxes (hereafter GMF), “Canada’s Birthday and Dundurn,” *Spectator* (Hamilton), 21 September 1961, 6. During the 1960s, this type of characterization became increasingly common both in the Hamilton press and amongst those directly involved in the restoration project. Interestingly, Anthony Adamson, the architectural consultant to the Dundurn Restoration project, refrained from even mentioning MacNab’s ties to the Family Compact, writing simply, “The builder of Dundurn ranks as the most famous citizen of Hamilton and one of the most colourful men in Canadian history” (*A Proposal for the Restoration of Dundurn as the Core of a Centennial Project for the City of Hamilton* [Hamilton, 10 February 1962] 1).
thus investigate hegemonic processes bound up in national ideologies that compel the
reincarnation of historic sites and subjects. I also examine the longevity of those same hegemonic
processes, which continue to permeate the site’s contemporary programming; in particular, I
focus on the development of Dundurn’s annual Victorian Christmas tour.

In my consideration of Dundurn’s 2004 Victorian Christmas tour, I explore the
complicated nature of reanimating a particular version of the past in the contemporary
multicultural age. More specifically, I consider the types of subject positions or hegemonic
groups that the site’s interpreters construct and thereby privilege.\(^6\) Taking into account the
popularity and longevity of Dundurn’s Christmas program – the site’s longest running special
events program, which was instituted in 1968 – my analysis of the artefactual arrangements,
activities and themes explored in the program suggests that the tour reconceptualises the
celebration of an upper-class Canadian family as one that is distinctively British. If historic sites
conventionally reproduce what is important to Canadian history, as some scholars argue, it might
be suggested that the Dundurn Castle Christmas program functions as a hegemonic cultural tool
that entrenches the values of what Eva Mackey, Himani Bannerji and Erna Macleod refer to as
Canada’s dominant culture.\(^7\) Accordingly, this chapter explores different ways in which the site
has been not only reincarnated but also reanimated to authorize and project “founding nations”
mythologies in Canada, a state that has, over the last five decades, endeavoured to foster a distinct
nationalism based on a federal multiculturalism policy, located within a bi-lingual framework.

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\(^6\) Ian McKay, “The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History,”

\(^7\) Mackey; Himani Bannerji, *The Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism and
Gender* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 2000); Erna Macleod, “Decolonizing Interpretation at the
Routress of Louisbourg National Historic Site,” in *Canadian Cultural Poesis: Essays on Canadian Culture*,
“Keeping House”: The Development, Museumification and Restoration of Dundurn Castle

Strategies of reconceptualization often accompany historic site development. In examining how nation-building frameworks informed the restitution of Dundurn Castle, I focus on four particular phases of the site’s development; in so doing, I suggest that specific aspects of each phase aided in the determination of the site’s current function as a national historic site. Over the course of its existence, Dundurn has acted as a private residence, historic house museum, Centennial project and, most recently, fully-restored living history museum offering a theme-based program. First, in my examination of Dundurn as Sir Allan MacNab’s familial residence, I investigate how MacNab managed the construction of the house so that it would function as an architectural manifestation of the affluent lifestyle to which he aspired in the early years of his career. Second, I examine how the house came to be reconceptualised as a historic house museum; more specifically, I consider how women curators came to determine that visitor attendance might be increased by refurbishing the house so that the rooms reflected what might have been in place during the residency of the MacNab family. Third, in terms of the site’s incarnation as Hamilton’s Centennial project, I explain how historians, consultants and site workers endeavoured to reconceptualise both the home and the historical personae of Sir Allan MacNab as an illustrious part of Canada’s national narrative. Such efforts demonstrate ways in which nationalist ideologies often compel the restitution of monuments so as to situate them, in seemingly “national” terms, as part of Canada’s past, a location from which they act in turn as foundational of national identity.8 Finally, I take into account that, following the restoration, site workers sought to bolster the site’s reputation as a living history museum by introducing “special event” programs.

While Dundurn Castle has been a familiar part of Hamilton’s cultural landscape since its construction in 1832, it initially functioned as a private residence, one deliberately designed to reflect its owner’s cultural predilections. Lawyer and land speculator Allan MacNab commissioned British-trained architect Robert Wetherall to design the house in the Picturesque style. To that end, Wetherall designed the eclectic exterior so that the building would blend with the landscape, which overlooks the waters of Burlington Bay on Lake Ontario.

![Figure 2. Front Façade, Dundurn Castle, Hamilton, Ontario (June 2010). Photograph by author.](image)

The eclecticism of the style, which is also characteristic of the Picturesque, is evident in the combined use of diverse architectural elements, such as Greek mouldings, Italianate-style watch towers, Gothic details, French windows, and a Doric porch, which is located in the back of the
house. As a result, the house simultaneously emulated and maintained elite British architectural preferences within the colony.

Figure 3. Back Façade, Dundurn Castle (June 2010). Photograph by author.

At the time of its construction, Dundurn also reflected its owner’s personal and political preferences. Erected in the early years of MacNab’s political career, Dundurn proclaimed its owner’s intention to align himself with those dedicated to the Loyalist tradition of governance. However, MacNab went on to become active in the very institutions opposed by the Loyalists; consequently, historians conventionally characterize him as an “ambitious, contradictory [and] ambiguous” political figure. During the late 1820s and early 1830s, he cultivated connections with members of the Family Compact, a political faction comprised of interlocking networks of

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9 Picturesque buildings, such as Dundurn, were to be “viewed as an integral but subsidiary part of the overall scenic composition.” Wright, 7.
10 Wright, 80, 8, 39.
wealthy individuals who maintained the Loyalist tradition of social hierarchy and opposed the importation of republican institutions. The construction of his house, MacNab biographer Donald Beer notes, came to be understood and perceived as one of MacNab’s “most famous actions, [one that] reflected the attitudes of the odious so-called Family Compact.”

He went on to act as the head of this particular faction and, subsequent to that, assumed a military role in support of the Loyalist cause in the Upper Canada Rebellion of 1837. Credited with suppressing rebel forces, led by William Lyon Mackenzie, who fought for governmental reform, MacNab was later knighted by Queen Victoria. His political career, however, reached its highest point when he was elected Prime Minister of the United Canadas (1854-1856), his election, Beers argues, symbolizing “Canada’s colonial consensus. Threading his way through the sectarian and sectional issues that divided the province,” Beers writes, “[MacNab] increasingly made a virtue of bowing to the wishes of the people.”

He navigated the conflict-ridden political terrain and eventually came to support “colonial consensus,” even while, ultimately, remaining staunchly dedicated to promoting his personal economic resources.

Despite his ambitious financial goals and subsequent “contradictory” political ventures and accomplishments, MacNab wound up depleting his finances, which, in turn, had a decisive effect on the fate of his home. Ultimately, his accomplishments provided little in terms of financial security for his dependents. Following his death on 8 August 1862, the family furnishings were sold at various auctions to pay off his debts, and Dundurn stood empty. As the years passed, various owners and institutions used the building for different purposes. In October

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12 Beers, ix. One other significant choice MacNab made in his personal life that reflected his affiliation with the Family Compact was his choice of second wife. On 29 September 1831, MacNab, a member of the Church of England, married Mary Stuart of the Stuart Family of Brockville, who, despite being a devout Roman Catholic, retained blood ties to the Family Compact. Beers, 42.

13 Beers, 402.

14 As Beers explains, “[MacNab] demonstrated a considerable measure of skill in making use of the grey, uncertain areas of contemporary ethics, rather than outright dishonesty, to promote his own economic interests, and he was prepared on occasion to make considerable sacrifices to ensure the success of ventures with which he was associated” (403-4).

15 Beers, 404.

16 Marion MacRae, MacNab of Dundurn (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Co. Ltd., 1971) 188-190.
1899, the municipal government of Hamilton purchased Dundurn Castle and turned the house into a civic museum and the grounds into a park.17

This began a second stage in the development of Dundurn, which increasingly took on the trappings of a museum, the interests of the Hamilton community determining the arrangement of the programming so that the site remained directly related to the culture of Victorian England. Dundurn Park officially opened to the public on Queen Victoria’s birthday, 24 May 1900, “to celebrate the public dedication and to do honour to Queen Victoria.”18 According to literary scholar and historian Daniel Coleman, such celebrations of “Britishness” or “pro-British view[s]” in settler colonies conventionally aimed to commemorate the achievements of liberty and equality while simultaneously maintaining “a respect for traditional monarchical … order.”19 Accordingly, the fact that Queen Victoria was still alive at this time would have played heavily into some, if not all, of the decisions that the Hamilton authorities made.

During the site’s tenure as a community-based house museum, those employed at the institution also sought to cultivate the “Britishness” of Dundurn. Appointed curator in 1901 – the first woman to hold what was described at the time as this “important position” within the public realm – Clementina Fessenden was an advocate of the imperial connection between Britain and Canada; consequently, the popular press described her as being “patriotic to the core.” 20

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18 *Spectator* (Hamilton), 25 May 1900; quoted in “Hamilton’s Attic,” 1. How and why the authorities chose this date to open the museum is made evident in a speech delivered at the opening celebrations by Sir John Bourinot of Ottawa, then a leading expert on Canadian history and government. He states, “It was a happy thought on the part of the mayor and civic authorities of Hamilton to defer the opening of this park until the Queen’s Birthday, the true Empire day, the great holiday of all Canadians, irrespective of race and creed. This is the day above all others when we can best recall the memories of the loyal men who have made the old district of Gore famous in the annals of the Dominion” (HPL, *Dundurn Castle Scrapbook of Clippings* [hereafter *DCS*], vol. 1 [1849 – 1964], p. 7r.: “Sir John Bourinot’s Speech,” *Spectator* [Hamilton], 25 May 1900, 12). See also *Canadian Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Toronto: 1988) 261.
20 HPL, *DCS*, vol. 1, p. 8b: “Dundurn Park and Castle,” *Herald* (Hamilton), 23 May 1902, 11; HPL, *DSC*, vol. 1, p. 8b: “Dundurn Castle and Park,” *Herald* (Hamilton), 23 May 1902, 3. Fessenden’s advocacy of the imperial connection was made public in 1897. After three years of campaigning, in which she used her own money, Fessenden celebrated the establishment of Empire Day, May 23rd, the day before Queen Victoria’s birthday. On Empire Day, the school children of Canada celebrated the Queen’s birthday. T.
Fessenden’s supervision, the site took on a distinctly pedagogical role, one that sought to propagate a sense of devotion to particular cultural ideals. As one local journalist explained, “[T]he castle will always be the chief attraction, or its associations at least be the chief theme….We can see the very character of the owner in the building…. [and] visitors can gain more than a mere outing by making themselves familiar with the historical associations of the spot.”21 Connecting the architecture – “essentially a British point of view” – with the perceived character of the owner, the writer suggests that, from Dundurn Castle, visitors might learn about and come to appreciate the history of the Hamilton area and, by extension, of Canada as a whole.22 Moreover, as Coleman points out, such ethnicized projections maintained and promoted not only the “privileged, normative status of British whiteness in English Canada” but also the “gentlemanly code of Britishness.”23 The ensuing proliferation of women’s cultural custodianship at Dundurn, as a result, posits a complex gender dynamic in relation to the male historical figure commemorated in the site.24


22 Wright, 8. In the early twentieth-century, various politicians, cultural producers and historians took note of the increasing numbers of non-British immigrants coming to Canada and, as a result, came to regard commemorative endeavours as tools through which to instil and enhance a sense of developing nationalistic pride and patriotism. For instance, as President of the Canadian Club, A. A. Manning explained at the opening of Dundurn Park, “In a country so young as Canada, with a population drawn from such varied sources, with a population which, however rich in energy, intelligence and industry, is as yet absorbed in the production of wealth and the development of our natural resources, national and patriotic feeling must of necessity be in its infancy…. History should ever be held in grateful remembrance. It is our duty to see that the names of these men and women are plucked from oblivion; that the memory of their great and heroic deeds are handed down to posterity, to teach our children that the liberty of thought, speech and conscience which we enjoy is not ours as are the God-given light and air, but is the priceless heritage secured to us by the tears and blood of the founders of our country; and, above all, to see that these liberties are handed unimpaired to the generations who follow us” (HPL, DCS, vol. 1, pp. 7d-7f: “Who the Canadian Club Honoured the Occasion in the Early Morning” *Spectator* [Hamilton], 25 May 1900, 2-3). Concrete examples of “Britishness,” such as Dundurn, “represented the most advanced form of political and social life in the world, it was therefore assumed as the civil norm to which non-British Canadians should assimilate” (Coleman, 19).
23 Coleman, 10, 6-7.
Because women typically established and helped develop historic house museums, as Patricia West points out, their work often remained “enmeshed in the ‘cult of domesticity.’”25 While Fessenden worked as Dundurn’s first professional curator, her work was often couched, particularly in popular press, in the idiom of domesticity. As one journalist wrote,

The management [at Dundurn] was fortunate in having secured the services of so capable a woman as curator…. [One] important trait in Mrs. Fessenden’s composition is her social and affable manner; seek her out for any information desired – it will be willingly and pleasantly imparted…. The curator has been very busy lately getting her house in order and attending to the many little things incidental to the welfare of her daughters – the Daughters of the Empire.26

In keeping with West’s argument, the journalist’s language not only downplays the professional aspects of Fessenden’s occupation but also likens her actions to those that take place within the private sphere. This type of characterization seemingly aimed to legitimize her occupation and activities in the public sphere.27 Despite such characterizations of women’s curatorship, women curators made decisive contributions to Dundurn’s institutional development, professionalization and subsequent restoration.28

Women curators recognized not only the historical value of Dundurn but also the potential it held as a tourist destination, and they developed exhibition policies specifically to

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25 West, 1. In an important contribution to the growing body of critical literature that examines links between the American house museum movement and women’s involvement in the public sphere, cultural historian Patricia West argues that the house museum movement began in the nineteenth-century as a public venue and was developed, administered and controlled by “disenfranchised though politically engaged women.” Based on her chronological analysis of the founding years, processes and people involved in the restoration of historical sites, such as George Washington’s Mount Vernon; Louisa May Alcott’s family home, Orchard House; Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello, and the replica birthplace of Booker T. Washington, West stipulates that the process of establishing a house museum operated as a vehicle for women to negotiate the shifting relationship between women’s customary power base (the home) and the public realm (the state). West, 159-160.


27 Feminist historian Amanda Vickery writes that, in the nineteenth century, elite mistresses managed their households “like a museum curator administering to her collection.” These mistresses oversaw the order of the house and furniture, marks too reflective of character to be left to the care of servants. The Gentleman’s Daughter: Women’s Lives in Georgian England (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998) 145.

28 Vickery explains, however, “the separation of the spheres, and the construction of the public and private are all different ways of characterizing what is essentially the same phenomenon: the marginalization of middle-class women” (“Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women’s History,” Historical Journal 36 [1993]: 412).
draw in visitors. In the 1950s, for example, then-curator Gwen Metcalfe identified the one thing “most lacking” at Dundurn as the “human touch.” As she explained to Dundurn’s Museum Committee chairman Dr. W. S. T. Connell, “Sir Allan’s political life is known but the everyday happenings and way of life in Dundurn Castle is completely lost. Those are things people are most interested in when visiting a Historical House, the whys and wherefores.” Having thus identified aspects of the site that might be explored and perhaps represented as a means to encourage people to visit Dundurn, Metcalfe proceeded to enact a proposal made by her predecessor, Agnes Mundie, “to refurnish the rooms in Dundurn Castle in the period when Sir Allan MacNab lived there.” Along with Hamilton decorator Barry Sims, Metcalfe refurnished Sir Allan MacNab’s bedroom, putting in the room a massive, ornate walnut dresser and other “lived-in touches,” such as a portrait of MacNab, which was hung over the fireplace, and an open book, which was placed with reading glasses perched beside it, on a table. Over the course of the next three years, Metcalfe herself renovated and refurnished the den, the library and a woman’s bedroom, local citizens from the Hamilton area helping with the refurbishment of the latter.

With the subsequent rise in visitor attendance came a third stage in the site’s development; city officials, cognizant of Dundurn’s increasing presence in the civic landscape, proposed to consolidate the site’s cultural profile within a decisively nationalistic framework by recommending that it be restored in its entirety as Hamilton’s Centennial project. An article in the Toronto Globe and Mail of 31 July 1959 reported that Dundurn’s visitor attendance had increased from 26,000 in 1956 to 27,000 by September 1957. Significantly, the article credited

30 Because Mundie, upon announcing her intention, criticized “the fact that Dundurn Castle and its contents of antiques and pictures are not sufficiently advertised so that visitors to the city can find it more easily,” I would argue that she wanted to refurbish the site to increase visitor attendance. HPL, DCS, vol. 1, p. 57: “Dundurn Castle: Show Little Interest in Own History,” Spectator (Hamilton), 8 November 1952.
the increase to “the new policy of more interesting fashion displays,” as had been undertaken in the bedroom. By the end of 1957, the number of visitors had increased to 31,000, and Dundurn Castle had become a major tourist destination. Accordingly, in January 1961, Mayor Lloyd Douglas announced that it might be possible to restore the site as a “period piece” as Hamilton’s contribution to the Centennial celebrations. Since women curators developed the site as a historic home, which, in turn, recommended the possibility of the site’s restitution as part of the Canadian Centennial celebrations, I would argue that the aims, actions and results of what Kathleen McCarthy calls women’s “cultural custodianship” ultimately led to the restoration of the site.

According to historian Christina Cameron, interest in historic places escalated in the first few years of the 1960s, culminating in 1967, the centenary of Confederation, as people sought to celebrate the land in which they lived. As I mention above, the Canadian Centennial celebrations, sponsored by the government of Canada, sought to stimulate a sense of devotion to the nation amongst the populace. “The main features of this immensely successful celebration,” Mackey writes, “were its air of optimism, its incredible expense, the prominence of an emerging bicultural vision of the nation and, finally, the foregrounding of Native people and ‘ethnic’ groups in the activities.” The celebrations performed what Mackey calls a “pedagogical role,” in that various projects, including festivals and exhibitions such as Expo ’67 and the construction or restoration of historic sites, sought to educate citizens about Canada’s national identity.

In keeping with this, those vested in restoring Dundurn determined that, in order to secure funding for the project, the site would serve a didactic function. In 1961, Anthony Adamson,

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33 HPL, DCS, vol. 1, p. 84: “A Bedroom of 1850’s is Dundurn Attraction,” Globe and Mail (Toronto), 16 September 1957.  
34 The article also reported that most visitors were from the Hamilton district; see “1,400 Visitors a Week.”  
36 McCarthy, xi.  
38 Mackey, 58.  
39 Mackey, 59.  

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who had been retained by the city of Hamilton as an architectural consultant the year before, recommended that, to finance the restoration, the municipal government apply for a grant offered under the National Centennial Projects Act. The restoration would require the city’s financial involvement as well; grants were provided on the condition that that the provincial and municipal governments each contribute one-third of the funds required for the project, the federal government providing the remaining third. To receive funds, however, the project would have to be of a “lasting nature” and completed by 1967. Adamson therefore advocated that the house be restored “to show its original condition when in use by Sir Allan MacNab,” and that a terminal date of 1856 be established; 1856 “is thought the most suitable date on which to base an application for a grant under the National Centennial Projects Act,” Adamson wrote at the time, adding, “[T]he heyday of Dundurn was probably in the 1850’s when Sir Allan, though a widower, was not only a Prime Minister but wealthy and a baronet.” In other words, he thought that funding for the restoration might be secured by emphasizing MacNab’s contributions to the nation, an approach that would in turn set the house up as a concrete example of MacNab’s

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40 Adamson was considered an expert consultant not just because he was an architect; he was also an associate professor of town planning in the School of Architecture at the University of Toronto and had been awarded a United Nations fellowship for the study of town planning and municipal government. Adamson suggested that the $167,000 could be raised through public subscription and government grants. See HPL, DCS, vol. 1, p. 133: “$167,000 Dundurn Castle Development urged,” Spectator (Hamilton), 20 September 1961. Additionally, Adamson had been credited as being “instrumental in the restoration of Upper Canada Village” (HPL, DCS, vol. 1, p. 135: “Dundurn Castle Pageant: Challenge for City,” Spectator [Hamilton], 1961, 29). He also co-authored the book, The Ancestral Roof: Domestic Architecture of Upper Canada (Toronto: Clarke and Irwin, 1963), with Marion MacRae, an instructor of design and museum research at the Ontario College of Art. The book details the styles of architecture that became prevalent in Ontario during the nineteenth century, and the authors included a brief study of Dundurn.

41 Adamson, Proposal: Core, 1962, 6.

42 Anthony Adamson, Dundurn Castle: An Undeveloped Asset (Toronto, Ontario, Submitted to Parks Board of Hamilton, 12 September 1961) 3; Adamson, Proposal: Core, 1962, 13. Adamson stipulated that the collection to date, containing “objects of interest and documents,” detracted from the formation of a cohesive institutional policy. Adamson, Dundurn: Asset, 1961, 2. As far as programming was concerned, Adamson believed that what he termed the “historical value” of the objects related to MacNab’s life and lifestyle would be greatly increased if they were placed in a dramatic context. Adamson, Dundurn: Asset, 1961, 12. It is significant that, in this particular context, he states that the “director,” presumably Metcalfe, has “with remarkable skill arranged the displays which are available to her.” As Metcalfe was the acting curator and business administrator, and Adamson refers specifically to a woman in this position, this assumption seems most reasonable. Adamson, Dundurn: Asset, 1961, 1.
accomplishments. It was a successful strategy; on 18 August 1964, the federal government announced its approval of the application and, with it, financial commitment to the restoration project.

Because the project represented Hamilton’s contribution to the Centennial celebrations and was intended to be of a “lasting nature,” those involved in the 1960s restoration had to determine how to make both the site and the persona of the original owner pleasing and interesting to potential visitors. Accordingly, researchers, consultants and members of Dundurn’s newly-formed Restoration Committee had to not only confront but also strategically manage the “contradictory [and] ambiguous” nature of MacNab’s political life. Because the building had been altered over time and there were no visual records documenting the interior as it had been in MacNab’s day, a so-called “authentic re-creation” was impossible. Therefore, the Restoration Committee worked to unearth sources that could shed light on MacNab’s tastes, family and, by extension, character. In so doing, committee members strove to construct what Edward Bruner calls a “historically accurate” environment; based on research and scholarship, they worked to establish the castle as an attractive tourist destination by creating a site that visitors would find artefactually credible and, by extension, appealing.

Because information relating to MacNab’s family life was scant at the time, Adamson advocated that the committee use whatever historical sources it could find to “interpret the house” as a heritage site. The Restoration Committee thus conducted an extensive search and procured

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43 Adamson’s approach, as a result, linked achievements that some historians suggest “contradict” each other. While MacNab’s election as Prime Minister solidified his place in Canada’s national narrative, in the early years of his political career, MacNab favoured British culture, a preference that manifested itself in the style and design of his home. “Belief in the British connection,” Beers explains, “implied…support for a ‘British’ type of society, especially a hierarchical social system. In his own life, MacNab expressed that support as powerfully as any man in Upper Canada. Dundurn was the symbol of it” (71).


46 Finding such sources proved to be a difficult task. In 1965, Adamson himself wrote, “Our searches into the field of [MacNab taste] have been unsuccessful. All we can say about Sir Allan is that he was as conservative in his cooking and heating methods as he was in his politics….He was a romantic, a Scot, and a man who was trying to build a seat for his family in Upper Canada. He was proud of his ancestry and
both architectural evidence and primary documents to provide scholarly validation of the site. The committee also surveyed, excavated and examined the house’s infrastructure to determine what wallpaper, paint, carpets, curtains, or room layout had been in place. The artefacts and furnishings placed in the various rooms had not belonged to the MacNab family but were chosen, as historian Marion MacRae explains, because “they were consistent with the social pattern of the city in their day.”

The restoration process entailed not only restoration of the heritage site but also restoration of MacNab as a historical figure. Scott Symons, Curator of Canadian Art at the Royal Ontario Museum, articulated the relationship that was being established between the two. There were, as he explains it, mythologizing aspects to the restoration process. As he put it to Metcalfe,

> Old Sir Allan MacNab represented all that was good and walrus-holeless in the Family Compact. He has been maligned; and I feel is due for a ‘restoration.’ Whatever the compacters may or may not have done, they did establish here in Canada a cultivated, dignified rich life. Their homes show it. Very few Canadians are aware of the Regency culture in Canada, or think of it as Canadian. When they do awake to it, they may then no longer feel it a sin to read, to think, or wish to improve themselves.

As Symons suggests, those involved in the restoration sought to rework the negative associations commonly drawn in historical studies of the Family Compact. More specifically, they aimed to cultivate a narrative that stressed the ways in which a figure such as MacNab cultivated elite British culture in Canada and how his efforts resulted in concrete examples of that past, thus enhancing the cultural status of a city such as Hamilton in the present. One might even suggest
that the restoration project represented, as Coleman writes, “the formulation and elaboration of a specific form of whiteness based on a British model of civility” made manifest in the architecture of the site and the perceived conduct of its owner.50 These strategic reconceptualizations of both the home and personae of the original owner demonstrate how those involved in the restoration project collectively sought to render the past appealing to visitors.

When Dundurn reopened to the public on 18 June 1967, offering guided tours by young women posing as Upper Canada housemaids, government officials characterized the site as representative of Hamilton’s contribution to nation-building efforts and achievements. At the opening-day reception, Solicitor-General Larry Pennell praised the project and identified what he perceived to be the site’s primary purpose. He stated that “[o]ne of the difficulties in finding national identity [stemmed] from a lack of understanding [of Canada’s] history,” declaring that, as a product of that history, Dundurn would make Hamiltonians “better citizens and richer human beings.”51 To Pennell, the museum visit was a “civilizing ritual,” to use art historian Carol Duncan’s term.52 In visiting Dundurn, the museum visitor performed the role of citizen, thus making evident that the restoration project represented, as Jill Vickers terms it, a “Canadianisation project”: visitors might, upon entering and touring the site, learn about the history, culture and values that would unite him or her with other Canadian citizens.53 In such a construction, Duncan explains, the museum stands as a “keeper of the nation’s spiritual life and guardian of the most evolved and civilized culture.”54 The reincarnation of Dundurn Castle as a national historic site sought to portray the site as emblematic of the nation’s past, even as it

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50 Coleman, 5.
54 Duncan, 26.
advanced the site’s function as a tourist destination. Furthermore, the restoration allowed the site to be reconstituted as a state-sanctioned living history museum, offering programs designed to make the past “come alive” for visitors.

In living history museums, the site acts not only as an evidentiary artefact but also as an architectural framework within which interpreters reanimate the past so that visitors might experience what it “felt like to live back then.” Accordingly, as Brian Osborne points out, heritage sites not only anchor but also transmit mythic histories. Dundurn’s construction, preservation and restoration collectively sought to commemorate particular aspects of a distinctively British-Canadian identity. While, at the time of its construction, Dundurn’s architectural designs proclaimed MacNab’s alliance with the Family Compact, the restoration sought to merge MacNab’s cultural predilections with his political achievements, in particular his election as Canada’s last pre-Confederation Prime Minister. This fusion, monumentalized in the restitution of Dundurn as a national historic site, suggests the promotion of particular aspects of “founding nations” mythologies. In this ideological construction, Confederation represents a crucial moment in Canada’s development as a federal state, one that stands for the unification of the anglophone and francophone as the nation’s “two founding cultures.” This particular ideology thus characterizes Canada’s formation as a binational achievement. Furthermore, as McKay points out, treatises that celebrate the “Birth of the Nation” do so in order to provide citizens with a sense of belonging. Developed as a private residence, historic house museum, and Centennial project respectively, Dundurn commemorated particular aspects of British-

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Canadian identity. As a result, one might suggest that Dundurn’s institutional history, assessed above in the form of three particular phases of development, monumentalizes a certain type of historical narrative and that, moreover, the programming, installed in connection with Dundurn’s incarnation as a living history museum, transmits and subsequently advances it.

In its final incarnation as a living history museum, site workers developed programming that took into account both the architectural style of the site and the identity, accomplishments and cultural predilections of the house’s original owner. In 1968, to consolidate the site’s function as a living history museum, the curatorial staff produced Dundurn’s first Christmas program, a program that has been offered every year since and, to this day, remains the site’s longest running special event. The restoration included installation of a proper heating system so that the site could remain open in the winter months, allowing Dundurn staff and volunteers to decorate the house for Christmas in connection with the program. During the one-hour tour offered as part of the program, visitors experience period rooms decorated in the style of a Victorian Christmas, hear about activities associated with the festive celebration, sing carols and eat festive treats. In this way, site administrators and interpreters work to reanimate the house in the guise of a seasonal celebration to augment discussions of the daily life and routines of the MacNab family and their servants. Since the castle opened in 1967, however, the tours have been largely unscripted and so it is difficult to determine what changes have occurred in the program over the years and why.

60 Because the restoration allowed the museum to operate year-round, Metcalfe believed that some type of programming might be offered to draw people during the winter. For inspiration, she looked to the Christmas program mounted at the William Lyon Mackenzie House in Toronto. In 1965, Metcalfe wrote to Lord Albermarle, Sir Allan’s great-grandson: “With a program for Dundurn in mind, I’ll be down to see [the Christmas festivities at the Mackenzie House in Toronto to see] what happens in a historic house” (HPL, GMF, Personal letter from Gwen Metcalfe, curator, to Lord Albermarle, 1 December 1965). This historic home, which displayed Mackenzie’s life during the 1850s, was already portraying “a Victorian Christmas.” According to an advertisement in the Toronto Globe and Mail, dated 3 December 1965, the same year in which Metcalfe expressed her intention to visit the site, the program included Victorian cookies, cranberry punch, evergreens, an open wood fire, candles, decorated boughs and a Kissing bough. Christmas music was played on an 1830 piano. “Things to do and see during the weekend,” Globe and Mail (Toronto), 3 December 1965, 14. For further discussion of the development and content of the Mackenzie House’s Christmas program, see Ch. 4 of this study.
Nonetheless, the enduring popularity of this program indicates the degree to which site workers redeploy particular historical narratives to mobilize public interest and, in doing so, reproduce Dundurn’s relevance as a national historic site and living history museum. From 1993 to 2003, the site’s annual attendance has averaged 50,000 paid admissions and the Christmas program has generated 25 percent of annual attendance in the six-to-seven-week period that defines the Christmas season, thus making it the top attendance-getter. Reanimating Dundurn in the guise of a Victorian Christmas suggests that site workers take into account public perceptions of both the contemporary and historic celebration to encourage site visitation. As historian Adam Kuper explains, the contemporary performance of festive rituals marks the Christmas period with a “special quality…. [I]t tends to freeze history, to associate this Christmas with [the Victorian celebration].” The ritualistic nature of contemporary activities, as a result, advances a utopian version of the past, so that the Victorian Christmas becomes an ideological reality. Similarly, former curator Bill Nesbitt suggests that contemporary festivities encourage public interest in the historical celebration and, as a result, the Victorian Christmas tour conventionally brings in the most people. People, he states, “seem to be naturally interested in tradition at this time of year, and appreciate such long standing ones. Because our secular society still largely accepts the idea of celebrating the Christmas season, the topic is of interest to a much wider audience than many of the interpretive themes of the site.” Here Nesbitt suggests that because people decorate Christmas trees and exchange cards and still engage in what he sees as traditional activities – ones that ostensibly recall an earlier time – they will, as he puts it, “naturally” be interested in the site’s Victorian Christmas program. Because, however, both the existence of the site itself and its institutional history frame the way(s) in which the past is reanimated, in the following section, I consider the types of historical narratives developed,

61 Bill Nesbitt, curator, Dundurn Castle, Hamilton, ON, interview with author, 26 November 2003.  
performed and conveyed in Dundurn’s 2004 Victorian Christmas tour. In so doing, I explore tensions inherent in representing a specific version of the past in the current multicultural age.

“Deck the Halls”: The Development, Interpretation and Execution of the Victorian Christmas Program

In living history museums the site conventionally sets the stage for the performance so that the performance, in turn, animates the site – and Dundurn Castle is no exception. The history of Dundurn Castle as an artefactual object determines how interpreters choose to make the house “come alive” for visitors. For this reason, I explore Dundurn’s Victorian Christmas program and consider how interpreters deploy the house as a living history museum to both frame and validate visitors’ perceptions of the past. First, I explore how Dundurn interpreters utilize the architecture, the artefactual arrangements and historical research to authenticate the way in which they choose to represent the past for visitors.64 In other words, I investigate how interpreters manage particular elements – the architectural context, decorated period rooms and interpretation – to (re)construct Dundurn as a performative site that conveys, for visitors, a sense of what it “felt like to live back then.”65 Second, I review what facts, objects, events and activities interpreters routinely discuss over the course of Dundurn’s Victorian Christmas tours, using the 2004 season as my case study. I thus consider not only how site workers reanimate Dundurn in order to portray the seasonal celebration of an upper-class family in nineteenth-century Canada, but also what such performances convey about the function of this particular living history museum in the contemporary multicultural context.

Because Dundurn was restored as a Picturesque villa representing “essentially a British point of view,” the building provides the ideal stage to host particular interpretive performances

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64 As cultural historian Hilliel Schwartz states, living museums turn artificial things into artificial events. “Living Museums,” she writes, “tend to choose that which authenticates over that which is authentic, a culturally congenial deceit” (The Culture of the Copy: Striking Likenesses, Unreasonable Facsimiles [New York: Zone Books, 1996] 278-9; quote from 279).

65 Handler and Saxton, 245.
of the past.\textsuperscript{66} In other words, what art historian Donald Preziosi refers to as the “object permanence” of the site itself works to validate the implementation of a Victorian Christmas tour.\textsuperscript{67} Within each of the house’s rooms, interpreters arrange artefacts dated to the period that is being depicted and, in so doing, construct speculative object-based representations of what might have been in place in these rooms during the MacNab family Christmas. Furthermore, in the context of guided tours, interpreters validate their speculations by discussing the nature and significance of such artefactual arrangements; they also refer to historical research that reinforces the authority of such claims. Such object-based constructions of the past, as Tamar Katriel explains, “allow[ ] the museum to sustain the fiction that the past is told ‘as it really was.’”\textsuperscript{68} In a similar vein, Eric Gable and Richard Handler explain that living history sites often privilege artefactual history, which frequently results in the “uncritical retailing of some old…myths and dreams.”\textsuperscript{69}

Because interpreters at Dundurn relay particular facts to visitors to endorse the type of past or historical celebration that is represented, I suggest that interpreters’ research findings and subsequent speculations reveal, as Katriel terms it, “ideological inflection[s] in narrative constructions of the past.” In other words, I argue that interpreters use historical research to privilege particular subject positions in the context of the site’s Christmas program.\textsuperscript{70} During the Christmas tour, each staff member develops an exhibition theme for a particular area of the house; each creates a decorating plan for that area based on research derived from primary documents, such as diaries, letters, newspapers and drawings.\textsuperscript{71} Significant among the primary sources of information used by interpreters is the diary of Sophia MacNab, Sir Allan’s daughter,

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[66] Wright, 8, 39; quote from p. 8.
\item[68] Katriel, 107.
\item[70] Katriel, 107.
\item[71] Nesbitt states that there is a hierarchy of primary sources – primary documents related to Dundurn at the top, followed by sources related to Hamilton, Ontario, and finally English and American sources. Nesbitt, 2003.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
which is dated 1846, and which describes in detail the daily activities of the family. The diary begins just after Christmas on 20 January 1846 and ends on 8 July the same year, so there is no primary evidence that sets out how the MacNabs and their servants celebrated Christmas. Consequently, the interpreters rely on primary evidence that pertains to lives of others – primarily British immigrants – as well as on material related to the type of event that was most common in Victorian England.

This conceptualization of the past is consistent with the scholarly assertion that Victorian Britain inspired and shaped sentiments and activities that are a part of the Christmas celebration in Britain and many of its former colonies today. In fact, Russell Belk argues that Christmas traditions were dying out in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but that Charles Dickens’s 1843 publication of *A Christmas Carol* renewed interest in the holiday. Among other things, Dickens’s work stressed the importance of social equality, sentimentality, family and generosity, and made the family Christmas dinner the hallmark of the celebration.72 Following its initial, serialized publication in London, serialized reprints of Dickens’s work became available in Canada, appearing in the colony as early as 1844.73 With the advent of the interest inspired by Dickens’s secularized version of the Christmas season, upper-class Victorian society incorporated specific activities into its holiday celebration, among them Christmas dinner and the decoration of the Christmas tree (a German import introduced by Queen Victoria’s consort, Prince Albert).74 Accordingly, I suggest that the Dundurn Castle Victorian Christmas tour offers a representation of an upper-class Canadian family’s holiday celebration that favours, to adapt Gable and Handler’s phrase, an uncritical retailing of some old Canadian myths and dreams. Moreover,

73 George L. Parker records that first serialized publication of Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol* (1843) in the nearby vicinity of the United Canadas took place in Charlottetown in 1844. The publication was issued in *The Palladium* (*The Beginnings of the Book Trade in Canada* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985] 58).
74 Kuper, 160. In addition to the work of scholars, the mass media has also distinguished the Victorian era as the time when contemporary Christmas traditions were invented.
following David Lowenthal, I would stress the degree to which this type of interpretation is
deliberate. In constructing representations of the past that privilege certain aspects or ideologies
while simultaneously overlooking others, heritage workers reshape not only the past but also the
site in which they work. Lowenthal points out that such reconstructions aim to render the past
“easy [for visitors] to embrace. And just as heritage practitioners take pride in creating artifice,
the public enjoys consuming it.”

In catering to the public, interpreters at Dundurn conduct unscripted tours, a pedagogical
approach that allows interpreters to not only gauge but also encourage visitors’ interest;
accordingly, I suggest that, over the course of the tours, the interaction between interpreters and
visitors determines the type of material that is discussed. The interpreters that I interviewed
agreed that the unscripted approach allows them to take into account visitors’ interests, comments
and questions and thus determine what information to relay to visitors. As one interpreter
explained, “The tours are the best and most intimate way to deal with the specific desires of the
public and are the most successful way to tailor information, given the diverse nature of our
visitors and group structure.” Another proposed that the lack of a script created a more relaxed
atmosphere because interpreters are given “the freedom to discuss and to talk and to interact….If
it was a presentation…I think mentally it would just be a bust….These people can always talk
about the dynamics, there is non-stop dynamic in dealing with people.” As a result, the tour
content conventionally reflects the interests of both site workers and visitors. My analysis of
Dundurn’s Victorian Christmas tour content therefore examines common themes, activities and
traditions discussed by interpreters in 2004. In so doing, I interrogate ways in which interpreters
“reshape” or “tailor” the past in deference to visitors’ expectations or desires.

76 In considering themes, activities and facts repeatedly discussed by interpreters, I examine what aspects or
ideologies interpreters construct as being predominantly associated with the historical celebration. My
analysis does not aim to produce a generalized impression of content discussed by interpreters; rather, I
examine commonalities to provide insight into interpretive execution, performance and content.
The Christmas tour starts in the main hall where the staff welcomes visitors to the house and invites them to sing carols. In contrast to regular tours, in which MacNab is positioned as Canada’s last pre-Confederation Prime Minister, during the Christmas tour the interpretation conceptualizes MacNab as a major political figure with a number of different entrepreneurial interests whose fortune allowed him to build the house. He is also positioned as the head of both a prestigious family and household. This type of interpretation of the historical figure of Sir Allan MacNab represents what historian Michael Kammen refers to as the “depoliticization of memory.” The interpreters downplay MacNab’s political roles, actions and pursuits in order to present him as a financially successful entrepreneur, an avid socialite and a devoted family man, thereby emphasizing factors that render him “acceptable to as many people as possible” while, at the same time, as Kammen puts it, “democratizing” memory, values and assumptions.77

According to the introduction given in the front hall by a member of the institution’s administrative staff, the Victorian Christmas was “not [celebrated] exactly the way Christmas [is] today.” In contrast, the introduction positions the Victorian Christmas as one that was “not as commercial” as the contemporary celebration, although the event was starting to become quite popular during the period portrayed in the house.78

Over the course of the tour, the three floors, which include the main floor, the upper floor and the downstairs, are distinguished as three separate areas where three different types of celebrations took place. The main floor, which includes the drawing room, MacNab’s library and

77 Michael Kammen uses the example of Martin Luther King, Jr’s birthday to explain what he terms the “depoliticization of memory.” Martin Luther King Jr. Day has been established as a national holiday so that the historical figure enjoys heroic status. As a result, the historical figure “has been depoliticized so that he is a charismatic advocate of civil rights rather than a more broadly based critical conscience who sought social change for oppressed people at home and abroad…. [The penchant for amnesia] is a matter of degree and is a function of yet another phenomenon that we have now encountered repeatedly: namely, the American inclination to depoliticize the past in order to minimize memories (and causes) of conflict. That is how we healed the wounds of sectional animosity following the Civil War; and that is how we selectively remember only those aspects of heroes’ lives that will render them acceptable to as many people as possible” (Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991] 662, 701, emphasis added).

78 18 December 2004.
smoking room, the dining room and MacNab’s sister-in-law Sophia’s suite, is positioned as a place in which a formal celebration for adults would have taken place. On this floor, elaborate decorations demonstrate the MacNab family’s intention to maintain the appearance of wealth. The interpreters refer to the drawing room and dining room as two of the most impressive rooms in the house in terms of both their architectural character and decoration.79

Figure 4. Drawing Room, Dundurn Castle (December 2004). Photograph by author.

The drawing room displays one of the two Christmas trees in the house. On a round table in the middle of the room stands a small tree decorated with cornucopias, miniature musical

79 The interpreters explain that the reason that both the drawing room and dining room are so impressive is that they have high ceilings – the highest in the house. This architectural feature, along with the furniture choices, has also been linked to architectural tastes then prevalent in the British Empire. One interpreter explains, “MacNab is knighted in 1838 for helping to put down the Rebellion of William Lyon Mackenzie in 1837. So he travels to England, and, while he’s there, he looks at the furniture, the fashion, the styling, and when he comes back, he upgrades the house by raising the ceilings in here and the kinds of furniture in here” (10 December 2004).
instruments, miniature flags of the Royal Rampart, one of the flags of Scotland, and the Union Jack. Unwrapped gifts that would customarily have been given surround the base of the tree. The tree stands as an example of what one interpreter referred to as “the adult tree with adult gifts under it.”\(^8\) It is also introduced as a German tradition that was imported to England with the marriage of the German Prince Albert to Queen Victoria. In order to justify the type of Christmas that is represented, the historical interpreters emphasize the characterization of MacNab as a Loyalist who maintained close ties with the British Empire. In other words, this type of Christmas is one that follows the British Royal tradition promulgated by the English aristocracy and transported to the Canadian colony, which was, according to one interpreter, “still a British colony [that copied] everything British.”\(^8\)

Various interpreters have recognized different means through which the popularity of the Christmas tree was established, but, overall, ties to the British upper-class celebration are central to the explanation of its presence in the Castle. One interpreter, for instance, stated,

> [Victoria and Albert] aren’t the only source of tradition, though, because it’s a German tradition that comes to North America quite independently with German settlers in Pennsylvania and, of course, here in Ontario as well, with the Loyalists coming up….And they brought the evergreen, the Christmas tree with them, so that would have been known to the MacNabs. I suspect that it was the Royal tradition of the Christmas tree that MacNab would have been following because he was very much a Loyalist.\(^8\)

In other words, the interpreters position the MacNab family Christmas as one that would have followed the standards set by the Victorian British monarchy.

Following the visit to the library and smoking room, the interpreters lead visitors into the dining room. This room has been decorated to impress them. A crystal chandelier hangs in the centre of the room, and garlands, interwoven with the MacNab tartan, extend out from the chandelier to the four corners of the long rectangular space. The elaborately decorated table is also decorated with garlands that line the perimeter of the table, and in its centre sits a fantastic

\(^8\) 11 December 2004.
\(^8\) 16 December 2004; 12 December 2004.
\(^8\) 16 December 2004.
silver centerpiece given to MacNab by the citizens of Hamilton following the opening of the 
railway. The table has been set to host a dinner for twelve people, presumably an intimate

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83 The candelabrum bears an inscription that reads, “Presented to Colonel the Honourable Sir ALLAN NAPIER MACNAB, Prime Minister of Canada, who has represented the City of Hamilton for twenty-five years, by the citizens of Hamilton, as an acknowledgement of his valuable services and untiring efforts in promoting the material interest of that City and of the Province generally; but more especially for the important aid he has rendered in the Construction of the Great Western Railway, which has conferred the most important and lasting benefits – moral, fiscal, and political – upon Hamilton and upon Canada, 1855.” T. Melville Bailey, The Laird of Dundurn (Hamilton: W.L. Griffin Ltd., 1968) 24.
group of friends and family. The table has been set for the beginning of the Christmas dinner. The interpreters explain that, although an adult celebration would have taken place on the main floor, the family would have had Christmas dinner in this room and would have included the children. The children, however, had to remember their manners in order “to be fit for adult society, which was generally considered to be about the age of twelve and up.”

Following their tour of the dining room, visitors walk into Aunt Sophia’s suite, another room in which the artefactual arrangement and interpretation emphasize the MacNab family’s social affluence. The interpreters explain that Aunt Sophia, following the death of MacNab’s wife, Mary Stuart, in 1846, became the “lady of the home,” responsible for instructing and caring

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84 The interpreters all explained that the table can actually be extended to host a dinner party for 24 people, but one interpreter informed me that the institution’s collection holds complete settings of flatware and silverware only for 12 people.

85 12 December 2004.
for MacNab’s daughters, Sophia and Minnie. The round table in the middle of Aunt Sophia’s sitting room has been set to receive friends for tea. The interpreters explain that there is evidence as well that Aunt Sophia is gathering things, such as used clothing, preserves and assorted oddities, to be donated to the local parishes for Boxing Day. The interpreters explain that such performances of charity represent the social obligations of the upper-classes at the time. “This is one of your responsibilities,” stated one interpreter. “If you have money, you were expected to give charity. If you didn’t, then people started talking about you, and that would be a social disgrace.”

In this room, the general sentiments of the season, charity and good will to others are made most apparent to the public, reminding them of the initial purpose of Boxing Day. The interpretation, as a result, positions the MacNab family members as “good” and “generous” people, but the act of giving is interpreted as a social obligation, a demonstration of wealth, power and prestige.

What is significant to note is that this interpretation is stridently connected with historical cultural constructions of the Victorian Christmas. Looking around the room, one interpreter explained that Charles Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol* “[advocated] charity work for the wealthy….Boxing Day, in 1855, had nothing to do with good bargains at the mall.” Set in this room, the interpretation thus serves to explain the origins of Boxing Day, linking its function to generosity and good will, both of which had been promulgated in Dickens’s work. At the same time, the interpreters play upon the public’s inherent familiarity with the nineteenth-century work of fiction – a familiarity established in an age of mass communications.

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87 In addition, those in a position to give to the poor during the Christmas season did so ostensibly to exercise their class authority. As Stephen Nissenbaum explains, the act of charitable giving in the mid-nineteenth century “[preserved] the structure of an older Christmas ritual, in which people occupying positions of social and economic authority offered gifts to their dependents” (“Revisiting ‘A Visit from St. Nicholas’: the Battle for Christmas in Early Nineteenth-Century America,” in *The Mythmaking Frame of Mind: Social Imagination and American Culture*, ed. James Gilbert, Amy Gilman, Donald M. Scott and Joan W. Scott [Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing, 1993] 62).
Once visitors have seen both the public and private rooms, the interpreters explain the importance of functional rooms, such as the ablutions room and the flushing water closet. The interpreters state that Dundurn Castle was the only house in Hamilton to have indoor plumbing, and so the building stands as an example of the most modern house of its time.\textsuperscript{90} The interpreters often refer to these rooms as “impressive,” referring to the technology they contain, rather than to their aesthetic qualities – qualities that rendered rooms such as the drawing and dining rooms “impressive.” As a result, these rooms reflect a distinct tension between what is perceived to be an “old-fashioned” Christmas and technology within the home that rendered it “the most modern house” of its day. Progress, then, is linked to the presence of “modern” technological advances that also demonstrate MacNab’s economic and social standing.

\textit{The Upper Floor}

On the other hand, the upper floor, which contains bedrooms for family members and overnight guests, as well as the children’s nursery, is characterized as the floor on which a more informal type of Christmas celebration occurred. On this floor, it becomes most apparent that historical accuracy has been sacrificed in an attempt to present a familial Christmas celebration.

\textsuperscript{90} Other modern amenities include the gasolier in the drawing room, central heating, gas lights, a bell system to signal the servants to go to specific rooms, and the dumbwaiter.
The sitting room of MacNab’s two daughters, who were ages 23 and 21 in the year 1855, has been transformed into a children’s nursery, complete with a children’s Christmas tree with “just children’s toys” arrayed around the base. The idea, as one interpreter put it, was to show visitors “a traditional children’s Christmas, so we have the children’s tree set up in this room.” On this 11 December 2004. Out of the eight tours I attended and transcribed, only two interpreters explained the reasoning behind this interpretation, which took into account the ages of the MacNab daughters. One interpreter stated, “[The nursery] would be the room for Minnie and Sophia. But, of course, Sophia’s moved out, she’s 23 and married, but Minnie’s still in residence. So she’d be in one of the rooms, aged 21,
floor, the interpretation emphasizes the intimate celebration of the immediate family. The interpreters then lead visitors from the upper hall to MacNab’s bedroom and dressing room and to various guest rooms around the corner.

Consideration of the artefactual arrangement and interpretation of Lady MacNab’s sickroom, during the Christmas season, makes evident how history is both appealed to and transcended in order to reflect cultural memory. The room that functions on regular tours as Lady MacNab’s sickroom – the room in which she died – has been changed and stands as a guest room, specifically for a military man, a recasting of the room’s function made apparent by the brigadier pants lying on the bed.

Figure 8. Guest Room, Dundurn Castle (December 2004). Photograph by author.

and it would probably fall to her to supervise some of the children, the nieces and nephews and some of the other cousins, the cousins that would be staying here because, for some of the young children, they would be sleeping here, they would be living here, they would also be taking most of their meals up here in the nursery. They would not be joining the adults downstairs” (16 December 2004).
While serving to avoid reference to illness in the context of the holidays, this type of representation also recalls MacNab’s military affiliations, as well as his connection to Britain, for he was knighted by Queen Victoria for the military position he assumed in the Rebellion of 1837. One interpreter explained as well that that MacNab’s daughter, Sophia, was married in the home in 1855, and “the best man at her wedding was in the Royal Brigadiers, which is why we’ve got that pair of pants here. That’s an army pair of pants with the red stripe on them, and the idea is that he stayed for the Christmas season.”92 While the interpretation suppresses any associations of the loss of a beloved family member, based on the location of the pants/artefact, the interpreter grounds the interpretation of the room in historical fact. At the same time, however, by referring to the interpretation of the room as an “idea,” the interpreter situates the visitor as both an active viewer who “lives” history by physically gazing upon the room and a passive witness. This type of oral interpretation makes evident how interpreters encourage visitors to “suspend disbelief.”93 Thus, the performance both reinforces and undoes the illusion of the museum.

*The Basement*

In contrast, the interpreters introduce the basement as the floor on which visitors see how the other 98 percent of the population of the time worked and lived. (MacNab and his family were counted amongst the top two percent of the population in terms of wealth.) In this way, interpreters attempt to present the home as a representation of what Nesbitt refers to as a “microcosm of Hamilton society”; they try to show how the “other half” (in reality, 98 percent) lived and worked.

In the basement, as a result, visitors are given an impression of the lives of servants through a tour of the various rooms in which the staff performed their duties. These rooms include the dairy, ice pit, laundry, kitchen, scullery and well room. MacNab provided his

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servants with the modern amenities of the time, including indoor plumbing, heating and gas lights; he also constructed the basement so that the surroundings facilitated their relative comfort.

![Image of servants' living quarters, Dundurn Castle (December 2004). Photograph by author.](image)

For instance, the servants’ living quarters have wood floors and large windows, which provide natural light during the day; most one-room houses in Hamilton, could any of these servants afford one, would have had dirt floors. As a result, the interpreters explain, “In its own way, [the basement] is as luxurious as the upstairs.”

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94 11 December 2004. The servants also received three square meals a day, clothing, shoes, and a small beer ration. The scullery maid, the lowest paid servant of the house, would receive a minimum of three small rations of beer per day.
What is more, on the tour, the factual account given of the duties servants performed suppresses the reality of the work involved; the dry, hard facts gloss over the physical labour involved and the long hours worked. As historian Louisa Blair states,

[Servants’ lives were] arduous, lonely and restrictive. Working for fifteen to eighteen hours per day was the norm, and they had to do everything themselves.

Figure 10. Servants’ Living Quarters, Dundurn Castle (December 2004). Photograph by author.
There was water to carry, fires to lay, water to haul, chamber pots to empty, children to care for, meals to prepare, pots to scour, silver to clean, clothes to wash, iron, and starch, candles to light and replace….Before plumbing all the water had to be carried up and down several steps of stairs, and the temptation was great to throw the waste out the window.\textsuperscript{95}

The context of the Victorian period must also be carefully considered in terms of servant life. Blair argues that, for servants,

the Victorian equation of cleanliness with godliness was a nightmare: yet more water had to be hauled up and down the stairs, and more laundry. Homemaking turned into an academic discipline known as “domestic science,” and servants now had to undergo training that went into fierce detail about their duties…. [Servants became] more involved in the arcaneley complex maintenance of the home. Many young women opted to work in the new factories instead, where there was more freedom and less isolation.\textsuperscript{96}

While people were often forced into servitude because they were immigrants, orphans, illegitimate children, or poverty-stricken, as duties in the home became increasingly involved, people sought out other employment to escape the hardships, both physical and emotional, of domestic servitude.

While interpreters at Dundurn discuss the work involved in the preparation of the MacNab family dinner and the extra work that the servants were expected to perform with so many extra guests in the house, the interpretation continues to glorify MacNab. MacNab is positioned as a man who treated his servants very well, thereby advancing his paternalism in terms of the charity and good will commonly bound up with both the Victorian and contemporary Christmas celebrations.

In the kitchen, the experience of the Christmas tour plays most heavily on all five of the visitor’s senses. The male or female cook (whichever historical cook is working on that particular night), introduces visitors to the period goodies, savouries and sweets that would have been served at the MacNab family Christmas dinner. The historical cook invites visitors to

\textsuperscript{95} Louisa Blair, “Life Below Stairs,” Beaver 85.3 (June/July 2005): 23.
\textsuperscript{96} Blair, 26.
partake of both the treats and hot cider. Prior to this invitation, however, the cook identifies each of the items that visitors see laid out before them.

Figure 11. Kitchen, Dundurn Castle (December 2004). Photograph by author.

For the purposes of this study, what is of particular interest is the fact that the historical cooks make a point not only to mention, but also to explain the ethnic origins of each of the foods placed on the table. Some examples include Indian chutney and Indian pickles, which allow the visitor to, in the words of one cook, “see the influence of India, sub-continental India, on British cookery,” even as the cook underscores the position of India as a colonial possession in the British Empire. There are also puffed pastries with Cajun spices and cheese and some “Irish soda bread.” The cooks also point out biscuits they describe as “Another Christmas Cookie.” One cook explained, “These are actually American….You can always tell if they’re American recipes because they call them cookies rather than biscuits or cakes.” The most interesting example,
however, is the pound cake made according to a recipe taken from Catharine Parr Traill. The cooks position this particular pound cake as a “nice example of a Canadian recipe.” They proceed to describe the ingredients in this recipe, thereby denoting its national qualities: “It’s typically Canadian, in that it’s very British – a British pound cake with lots of butter and lots of eggs, [and] a bit of alcohol made for flavouring. And included in this is a distinctively North American ingredient, cornmeal. So, it’s a bit like all of us, I think, a hybrid version, a mix of North America and the British past.” The interpretation of food, therefore, also privileges a British past, the cook assuming as well, it seems, that every Canadian on the tour is of British descent, or at least should be of British descent to be Canadian.

Overall, the tour content and interpretation emphasize the “Britishness” of the Victorian Christmas so as to suggest that contemporary Christmas activities and traditions retain or maintain a specific ethnicized quality, a characteristic further reinforced by the visitor’s experience of the living history program. The tour content focuses primarily on the celebration and associated activities that may have been performed by the MacNab family, activities drawn from historical sources written primarily by British immigrants. Furthermore, the decorated atmosphere, interpretation and associated participatory activities, encourage visitors to experience a sense of what it “felt like to live back then” so that they experience “contextual departure,” thereby facilitating visitors’ achievement of what Ning Wang and others refer to as an “authentic experience.” The program thus connects the contemporary Canadian celebration to an ethnicized ideological construct, one that allows visitors to step “out of time” and seemingly gain a greater appreciation of the history of the contemporary celebration.

Having thus analyzed and assessed various ways in which interpreters at Dundurn endeavour to naturalize “founding nations” mythologies by ethnicizing Canadian history as distinctively British-based, in the following section, I consider how the site operates in the

contemporary multicultural context. Such consideration is necessary, particularly in light of changes that have occurred within Canada’s political framework over the course of the twentieth century. As Yasmeen Abu-Laban and Christina Gabriel explain, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the policies of the Canadian state promoted a “two nations” vision – one that characterized and thus privileged the British and French as “founding peoples.” In the 1970s, however, multiculturalism emerged as a “uniquely Canadian policy, a new approach to nation-building”; in granting federal recognition to Canadians who were not of British, French or Aboriginal descent, it sought to reconfigure “expressions of ‘Canadian identity’ in a way that was inclusive of ethnocultural and racial minorities.” As a result, the relationship between present-day social, economic and political realities in Canada and national mythologies – particularly those espoused in state-sanctioned heritage sites – is complex, tenuous and strained. In light of this tension, I explore the implications of national mythologies put forth in Dundurn’s Christmas program that re-construct the past as distinctly separate from the present. The concretization and reanimation of such ethnicized constructions of the past, I suggest, signals the tense negotiation of past and present, history and memory, and ethnicity and diversity.

99 As Richard Day explains, “Before it thought about connecting itself to what it saw as a multiplicity of cultures and ethnic groups within its territories, the Canadian state first tried to solidify and clarify its articulation with the Two Founding Races. In theory, Canada had been a two-nation state since 1774, when the French of Quebec were granted the right to maintain certain aspects of their social, legal, and religious particularity. While this was undoubtedly a gift from the British, the deal struck at the time of Confederation implied that the two peoples were coming together as equals, to form, … ‘the headstones of the entire edifice’ of Canada” (Multiculturalism and the History of Canadian Diversity [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999] 179-80).
101 Mackey; Bannerji; Macleod.
“Living History”: Performing Dominance in Multicultural Canada

The setting, decorated period rooms, interpretive content and thematic unity of Dundurn Castle’s Christmas Evening Tour encourages visitors to associate the contemporary celebration with a distinctively British, and thus ethnicized, representation. The program – a period reconstruction that is located in a specific architectural context and based primarily on historical sources written by British visitors and colonists – identifies Canadian history in general with elite British colonial culture. Accordingly, one must ask how such representations of the nation’s past exist and operate in Canada, a state with a federal multiculturalism policy that has fostered the popular idea amongst Canadians that ethnic diversity is a national virtue. One might argue that the institution – a state-sanctioned site – reproduces what Eva Mackey refers to as the unmarked whiteness of a core “Canadian-Canadian identity” in the face of the Canadian state’s cultural policy of multiculturalism.  

Canada’s multiculturalism policy, sociologist Richard Day points out, is symbolically dependent on the fantasy of national unity. In the 1960s, several factors, including the post-WWII decline of the British Empire, the perceived threat of American cultural imperialism and the federal government’s effort to expand Canada’s labour force with non-European immigrants, led politicians to think that “the symbolic/cultural character of [Canadian] public institutions needed redefinition and renewal to adequately correspond to the new realities.” Accordingly, in the early 1970s, the Canadian government adopted a multiculturalism policy. It was officially adopted on 8 October 1971, the day the White Paper on Multiculturalism was released, the Canadian government subsequently adopting the Multiculturalism Act, located within a bilingual framework in 1988. The multiculturalism policy, which is understood on a popular level as

103 Mackey, 153.
104 Mackey, 53; Raymond Breton, “Multiculturalism and Canadian Nation-Building,” in The Politics of Gender, Ethnicity and Language in Canada, ed. Alan Cairns and Cynthia Williams (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1986) 42.
“unity-in-diversity,” positions Canada’s national culture as being open-ended and provisional.105 “The rhetoric of multiculturalism,” Day explains, “says that Canada is attempting to become, not a nation-state, but a self-consciously multinational state, in which all nations can seek their enjoyment in possession of a national thing.”106

Mackey sees Canada’s multiculturalism policy as part of a nation-building exercise, a hegemonic process based on Western principles of progress, liberty, tolerance, equality, reason and human rights. “In this framework,” she writes, “the construction of culture and difference, and not simply its erasure, is an integral part of the flexible Western project, practices and procedures.”107 Flexible practices allow for and legitimize ambiguity and, in doing so, facilitate the implementation of hegemonic processes that define and construct a core culture. As she puts it, “power is not essentially repressive, but rather constructive and constitutive.”108 The policy allows those defined as “real” or “true” Canadians to define the limits of difference. While multiculturalism, as official state policy, promises civil, legal, political and socioeconomic rights and equality to all, regardless of a citizen’s country of origin or distinguishing ethnic traits, multiple cultures become subordinate, and the unmarked core remains dominant. As Mackey explains, “liberal values and goals of inclusion and pluralism are an integral part of the project of building and maintaining dominant power and reinforcing Western cultural hegemony.”109

Evidence of the hegemonic processes bound up in Canada’s multiculturalism policy can be found in the Canadian Multiculturalism Act.110 Through its employment of ethnicity as a

106 Day, 9.
107 Mackey, 17.
108 Mackey, 18.
109 Mackey, 163.
110 Eric Breton points out that the Act stipulates that every individual is a Canadian first and communal attachments remain a private matter. “Canadian Federalism, Multiculturalism and the Twenty-First Century,” International Journal of Canadian Studies 21 (2000): 157-8. The Act states, “the Government of Canada [...] is committed to a policy of multiculturalism designed to preserve and enhance the multicultural heritage of Canadians while working to achieve the equality of all Canadians in the economic, social, cultural and political life of Canada.” The full title of the Act is An Act for the Preservation and
broad and all-encompassing political concept, as opposed to a referent to a specific group(s), to mark or distinguish Canadian identity, the bill nullifies ethnicity and the minority status of ethnic groups through its normalizing rhetoric. “Defining the ethnic subject by normalizing it,” Smaro Kamboureli writes, “stresses those elements of its subjecthood that conform to ‘Canadianness’ rather than those about which it begs to differ.” Ethnicity becomes an “all-embracing” concept characterizing Canada and attests to the diversity that “Canada” has come to signify.\footnote{Smaro Kamboureli, “The Technology of Ethnicity: Canadian Multiculturalism and the Language of Law,” in Multicultural States: Rethinking Difference and Identity, ed. David Bennett (London; New York: Routledge, 1998) 215.}

But if cultural diversity has become a national signifier, Kamboureli points out that biculturalism in terms of language and multiculturalism in terms of culture “can coexist only as contradictory institutions whose viability depends upon cancelling each other out.”\footnote{Ibid.} Because the multiculturalism policy is located within a bilingual framework, “only the collective rights of Canada’s two founding peoples,” Evelyn Kallen explains, “… have been constitutionally secured.”\footnote{Evelyn Kallen, “Multiculturalism: Ideology, Policy and Reality,” Journal of Canadian Studies 17.1 (1982): 57-8. In public institutions, “ethnic minorities are expected to acculturate linguistically to one of Canada’s official languages.” The rhetoric of the policy supports the notion that to attain social mobility, Canadians should become bilingual; the multiculturalism policy, as a result, supports the “somewhat contradictory notion” of individual equality regardless of ethnic classification (Kallen, 56). Similarly, in her examination of how multiculturalism functions in the workforce and associated rhetoric demonstrates, Angela Davis asserts that the policy allows people to look, act, eat, and talk differently, but, in the end, it is expected that “other” peoples will be more productive if they act “as if” they were all the same or, rather, white. Davis’s analysis makes evident that the promotion of heterogeneity or multiculturalism is intended to convey the fact that one can be different but should perform and, by extension, adopt a homogenous way of life, modeled on that of the middle-class white man. “Gender, Class, and Multiculturalism: Rethinking ‘Race’ Politics,” in Mapping Multiculturalism, ed. Avery F. Gordon and Christopher Newfield (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) 46.} English and French function as Canada’s “official” languages, an epithet that is synonymous with legal endorsement.\footnote{On 9 July 1969, the Canadian House of Commons first adopted the Official Languages Act, which stipulated that “the English and French languages are the official languages of Canada for all purposes of the Parliament and Government of Canada and possess and enjoy equality status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in all institutions of the Parliament and Government of Canada” (Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, Our Two Official Languages over Time, rev. ed. [May 1994] 15-16).} Furthermore, because the use of these languages in governmental ministries, departments, programs and services follows as a result of state
legislation, a citizen’s access to and engagement in federal bureaucracy – for example, the judicial system – is contingent on his or her mastery of what Kamboureli calls the “mother tongues of the two ‘heritage’ groups.”

Moreover, as proponents of multiculturalism declare, language and culture are indivisible; multiculturalism, as a result, is “meaningless without multilingualism.”

The public sphere is thus envisaged as an “Anglo or Franco cultural monolith” where participation in public institutions is “predicated on required acculturaltion to prevailing Anglo or Franco norms and practices.” It is only in the private sphere that multiculturalism affords minority Canadians any kind of social legitimization in terms of collective rights. In their private lives, peoples of ethnic minorities are free to perform and preserve their respective cultural heritage, but there is no provision of governmental institutions that allows them to convey their cultural traditions to future generations. So, on the one hand, the policy thus legitimates the right of ethnocultural communities to preserve and maintain their difference; on the other hand, it assigns no political or legislative rights to those ethnicities, as such. Multiculturalism thus “grants ethnicity subjectivity … without … agency.”

What is more, as museologist Tony Bennett explains, multiculturalism “constructs and organizes cultural diversity from a position of whiteness” to simultaneously manage and promote cultural diversity as a “national possession, a sign of its own tolerance and virtue.” One might then ask what role representations of the past play in this context.

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115 Kamboureli, 212, 216.
116 Kallen, 58.
117 Kallen, 53.
118 Kallen, 53-4.
119 Kamboureli, 218. In a similar vein, Himani Bannerji contends that multiculturalism negates capacity for resistance. The policy, with its deliberately politicized and normalizing rhetoric, obscures socio-political processes of racialization and organizes people as raced ethnicity; this “discourse of diversity” thus fuses cultural classification with politics, ostensibly to thereby conceptualize the discourse as a power neutral indicator of difference and multiplicity when it is actually anything but. The Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism and Gender (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 2000) 29, 47, 37.
As museologist Erna Macleod explains, living history practitioners conventionally select and interpret specific aspects of the past to construct representations of the past that are appealing and marketable. Because practitioners determine how these institutions might simultaneously represent and perform particular aspects of Canadian history, more often than not such sites enshrine the values, perceptions and priorities of the dominant culture. As a result, such culturally determined representations, as Macleod puts it, “function in a hegemonic way to define the boundaries of national unity.” Accordingly, it might be suggested that, when interpreters reanimate Dundurn Castle in the guise of a Victorian Christmas celebration, the site functions as a hegemonic cultural tool that not only performs but also entrenches the values of Canada’s dominant culture. What is more, one might argue that the program stands as an example of what historian Anthony Smith calls the “territorialisation of memory.”

Based on his definition of nationalism as a type of public religion that aims to cultivate national identity and unity amongst citizens through the designation and veneration of formative myths, symbols and traditions, Smith contends that nationalism consistently involves a struggle for “control of land.” The cultivation of nationalism thus requires the state’s land be reconceptualised as a bonded community. Smith explains further that, in cultivating a distinctly identifiable patrimony, nationalism helps to not only determine but also to shape communal memories and experiences. The practice of identifying land with community – achieved by attaching ancestral memories to territory – thus mobilizes and consequently privileges particular ethnic collectivities, a process Smith refers to as the “territorialisation of memory.”

121 Macleod, 366-7; quote from 367.
123 Smith, 1997, 11-12.
124 Smith, 1997, 12.
125 Smith, 1997, 12.
Smith’s analysis suggests that memories dedicated to the testament of ethnic survival in a national context have not always existed but are deliberately cultivated or contrived. Likewise, as Alan Gordon explains, “Public history constructs a narrative of the past in support of the present. Public memory, in turn, relies on public history, but it conscripts aspects of public history, further enshrining them in defence of present power relationships…. in order to aid the ongoing negotiation of hegemonic control.”

In the case of the Dundurn’s Christmas Evening Tour, it could be argued that the site reproduces what Mackey, Kallen and Macleod have identified as core Canadianism. What is more, the work of Smith and Gordon suggests that, because the program essentialises Canadian history as being distinctively British-based, the Christmas Evening Tour represents the “territorialisation of memory.” While the building functions as a venue or historical artefact that contains and, by extension, authorizes the interpretive performance, interpreters manage various aspects of the site itself, including the decorated period rooms, artefactual arrangements and oral interpretation, to not only illustrate but also emphasize the “Britishness” of the historic festive season. In other words, the site has been reanimated in such a way – through historical research, decorative schemas, artefactual arrangements and live interpretation – that this performative, fictionalised representation of the site conjures up what appear to be “memories” attesting to ethnic survival. As a result, one might suggest that Dundurn, in the context of the Christmas program, concretizes, projects and naturalizes a given hegemonic “social” – one that seemingly upholds the primacy of “founding nations” mythologies in Canada.

126 Gordon, 163. Similarly, Owen Dwyer writes, “Conceived of as ‘materialized discourses’ – built environments that embed and conduct meanings through their representation of social identities and their politics – memorial landscapes are shaped by and in turn influence the society that produces them. The narrative content of … memorials reflects the types of archival materials that survive, the intentions of their producers, and contemporary politics…” (“Interpreting the Civil Rights Movement: Place, Memory, and Conflict,” Professional Geographer 52.4 [2000]: 661).
127 McKay, 2000, 622.
Chapter 4 – Connecting Nationalistic Frameworks, Globalization and Heritage: Mackenzie House and Effecting Change in Canadian Heritage Sites

This chapter relates the institutional history of the William Lyon Mackenzie House, the retirement home of Toronto’s first mayor and 1837 Upper Canada Rebellion leader, and the site’s contemporary Christmas programming to investigate the historical and socio-political roots of globalizing processes as they occur in Canadian heritage sites.\(^1\) Taking into account the Toronto municipal government’s 2003 efforts to bolster Toronto’s reputation as a “global city” by mandating local heritage sites showcase the city’s culturally diverse population, I explore how cultural administrators work to imbue Mackenzie House with a sense of cultural diversity, specifically in the context of its “Victorian Christmas” program.\(^2\) I also examine how such mandates developed out of what Wimal Dissanayake calls the “matrix of the nation.”\(^3\) In other words, in my consideration of the institutional history of Mackenzie House, I explore how twentieth-century nation-building frameworks fostered the development of Mackenzie House as a living history museum and paved the way for contemporary cultural policies (and politics) that require both the site and the region in which it is located be branded as “culturally diverse.”\(^4\)

Because nationalist agendas arguably motivated the development of Mackenzie House as a living history museum, I suggest that nationalist ideologies also provided the foundation for current “branding” strategies.\(^5\) In the early 1930s, with the centennial of the 1837 Rebellion fast approaching, local citizens sought to venerate the memory of Mackenzie, a man whom many believed ushered in “the appearance of responsible government” and, by extension, provided the

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\(^5\) Jenkins, 173.
framework for pre-Confederation politics. With this in mind, a group of like-minded individuals purchased and developed Mackenzie’s former Toronto residence as a historic house museum and, in so doing, worked to connect the historical figure with Canada’s national narrative, one that, particularly in the 1930s, revered those perceived to be “pioneers of political freedom.” In the 1970s, the federal government’s adoption of a multiculturalism policy, representing a change in nation-building strategy, encouraged Toronto heritage administrators, in turn, to consider how the city’s material past and present population might be more coherently unified. As then-Toronto Historical Board chairman Andrew Gregorovich put it in 1982, “We can no longer consider the City’s history as the preserve of an elite group of British origin. Our history belongs to all Torontonians of all ethnic origins.” In 2003, city officials mandated that Toronto’s heritage sites be “branded” as “culturally diverse” to “address gaps in the history it presents…[and] tell the stories of the First Nations communities and of the diverse groups who arrived in Toronto during the 20th century.” City officials therefore sought to re-deploy heritage sites in such a way as to enhance Toronto’s position as a global city. Accordingly, I suggest that cultural administrators’ longstanding interest in representing Toronto’s ethnically diverse population indicates the degree to which heritage workers merge past and present-day circumstances to honour the city’s populations. I thus argue that one must bear in mind the legacy of nation-building frameworks to effectively examine how programming at heritage sites is generated to represent cultural diversity.

Furthermore, in my consideration of Mackenzie House’s Victorian Christmas tour, I explore how heritage workers develop programs so that the site might monumentalize both the region’s past and present. Because city officials mandated that Toronto’s heritage sites be seen as

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8 Andrew Gregorovich, “Chairman’s Report,” Year Book (Toronto: Toronto Historical Board, 1982) 2.
9 Jenkins, 173; Culture Plan, 8-9, 14.
culturally diverse, in 2004, the administrative staff at Mackenzie House, along with various ethnic communities in Toronto, compiled a series of banners for the Christmas program that hang in the visitors’ gallery, a modern exhibition space appended to the house in the 1960s. The banners, which contain both written text and photographs, describe various cultural celebrations that take place in and around the winter months, such as Kwanzaa, Chanukah, winter solstice and Chinese New Year. These banners, however, are not historical artefacts and notably reside outside of the confines of the historic structure. Furthermore, because they ostensibly function in order to fill in “gaps in the history” that Mackenzie House represents, I explore what types of messages are conveyed through both the presence and absence of artefactual objects. In other words, I investigate inferences of “soft” temporary displays – dedicated to the representation of ethnic diversity – verses “hard” object-based displays installed in the house’s period rooms. In so doing, I consider the types of narratives deployed in living history museums, particularly those that aim to incorporate notions of cultural diversity. As Christopher Steiner explains, attempts to “open up,” expand and reconfigure dominant historical narratives have “largely missed the point”; what must be considered is the social and, by extension, political structures that mandate such inclusions. Accordingly, I consider how, in the contemporary global era, multiculturalism discourse acts as a reference point for both policies and practices developed at Mackenzie House and the implications of such references.

Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Globalization: Making Mackenzie’s House the Mackenzie House

Exploring how Toronto heritage administrators manage historic sites to consolidate Toronto’s position as a global city requires sensitivity to the history of nationalist ideologies. Accordingly,

10 The community organizations, including the Kwanzaa Committee of Toronto, the Holy Blossom Temple Archives, the Toronto Native Community History Project at the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto and the Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto provided letters, images and research material related to the events, which was then written up by in-house staff. Fiona Lucas, Site Administrator, Mackenzie House, ON, interview with author, 17 December 2007.

in the discussion that follows I examine how twentieth-century nation-building frameworks informed the development of Mackenzie House as a living history house museum. I focus on four particular stages of the site’s institutional history and consider aspects of each stage that aided determination of the institution’s current prescribed function – to represent and reflect Toronto’s ethnically diverse population. Mackenzie House has acted as a private residence and as a historic house museum and, following its reincarnation as a living history museum, two different governmental bodies – the Toronto Historical Board and Toronto Culture respectively – managed the site. First, in my examination of the house as William Lyon Mackenzie’s retirement residence, I consider why his supporters, in recognition of his lifelong public service and persistent financial hardships, bought him the Toronto residence and what, as a result, this particular site suggests about the owner’s life. Second, I explore how, in the 1930s, the house came to be reconceptualised as a historic house museum. Inspired by nation-building frameworks prevalent at the time, the institutionalization of the house, I suggest, signals efforts made, as historian Dennis Duffy puts it, “[to] rehabilitate” the mythical personae of Mackenzie, re-establishing him as the primary historical figure who fought (and sacrificed) for responsible government.12 Third, in the context of the Toronto Historical Board’s management of the house as a living history museum, I examine how cultural administrators, particularly in the 1970s and 80s following the federal government’s adoption of a multiculturalism policy, worked to reflect the diversity of the city’s population with (but not within) the site. Finally, I explore how, in the twenty-first century, Toronto Culture endeavoured to deploy Mackenzie House as a living history museum offering “special event” programs to showcase the city’s ethnic diversity and, ultimately, to bolster the city’s reputation as a “global city.”

As a private residence, Mackenzie’s house supplied a space for both the man and his family to withdraw from public life. While William Lyon Mackenzie’s extensive political career made him a well-known public figure, it provided little in the way of financial security and so, upon the occasion of his retirement from politics in the late 1850s, his Toronto-based supporters purchased the house for him and his family. The fact that some of the most defining moments in Mackenzie’s career occurred within the Toronto area seems to have inspired the community’s munificence. After all, the Scottish-born newspaper editor had been the first mayor of the newly incorporated city of Toronto. What is more, his dedication to governmental reform became so pronounced that he went on to lead a group of like-minded radical reformers – all dedicated to the principle of responsible government – to take up arms against the Family Compact, a conflict that took place on Toronto soil and became known as 1837 Upper Canada Rebellion. Following the rebels’ defeat by government military forces, Mackenzie fled to the United States. Lord Durham, then-governor general of British North America, sought to defuse tensions brought about by the Upper Canada Rebellion led by Mackenzie and the Lower Canada Rebellion led by Louis-Joseph Papineau (also mounted in 1837). Accordingly, he recommended, among other things, that the two Canadas be united, which, through the Union Act, resulted in the creation of the Province of Canada in 1841. He also advocated that the unified constituency be granted “responsible government” or, more precisely, be given the right and ability to maintain an elective legislative council. Following the Province’s 1848 implementation of responsible government, in 1850,

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13 While Mackenzie withdrew from political affairs, he continued to act as a newspaper editor and publisher, issuing the *Message* in the late 1850s, but this endeavour proved to be, as Nancy Luno describes it, "more of a financial burden than an asset." Despite the fact that, over the course of the next two years, the number of subscribers consistently declined, Mackenzie managed to keep publishing the paper doing all of the work himself. He finally shut down production on 15 September 1860. Nancy Luno, *A Genteel Exterior: The Domestic Life of William Lyon Mackenzie and his Family* (Toronto: Toronto Historical Board, 1990) 62.


Mackenzie returned to Toronto but found himself in dire financial straits. In 1856, his political colleagues, publishing affiliates and friends in the Toronto area organized the William Lyon Mackenzie Homestead fundraising campaign “as a Token of gratitude by the People of Canada, for [Mackenzie’s] unswerving integrity and consistency during a long period of useful Public Life.” By 1859, the Homestead Committee had raised enough money and purchased a Greek revival brick row house for the Mackenzie family, located on the west side of Bond Street, just south of present-day Dundas Street.

Figure 12. Front Facade, Mackenzie House, Toronto, Ontario (December 2006). Photograph by author.

17 *The Mackenzie Homestead, Minutes of Proceedings... With the Address of the Central Committee, 1856,* BR; quoted in Kelly Nesbitt, *The Mackenzie Homestead: A Brief History from 1858 to Present Day, including Room Descriptions of the Restored Museum: Adapted from The Genteel Exterior,* by Nancy Luno (City of Toronto: Mackenzie House, Museum and Heritage Services, Culture Division, 2001) 1.
18 Typical exterior details of the Greek Revival style evident in the house include a tall rectangular façade, a garden front, recessed doorway and a Greek key frieze. Interior details include the support arch in the front hall with decorative corbels, the high ceilings in the parlour and dining room, and the pocket doors dividing the dining room from the parlour. Nesbitt, 4-5.
While the house had been given to Mackenzie in recognition of his public service, the architectural structure—a conventional mid-nineteenth century row house—reflected the socio-economic standing of the resident family. In other words, while the bequest of the house sought to offer “some degree of ease in [Mackenzie’s] worldly circumstances,” Mackenzie’s son-in-law and biographer Charles Lindsay explains, “the truth was that…the product was very little.”

In this particular period, builders conventionally erected rows of houses joined on the sides by common walls. Because the floor plans for each house in the row were typically based on a standardized plan, builders commonly found these types of residences more economical to construct. Accordingly, selling prices for row houses often proved more modest than the purchase of a completely detached residence. Standardized floor plans for row houses typically include, as is the case in Mackenzie’s house, a main floor, with a parlour and dining room, and a second floor housing bedrooms, as well as an attic and basement. The Mackenzie family moved into the house in August 1859 and, following Mackenzie’s death on 28 August 1861, resultant from what was referred to as “brain-softening,” continued to live there for another decade until eventually it was sold and turned into a boarding house.

By the early 1930s, nation-building designs had fostered public desire to commemorate the upcoming centennial of the 1837 Upper Canadian Rebellion, which, in turn, generated a heightened interest in historic sites associated with Mackenzie. This interest gave rise to a second stage in the development of Mackenzie’s house, in which the residence took on the trappings of a

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21 The Committee in fact purchased the house for 887 pouts and 10 shillings “of lawful money of Canada.” Deed of Sale, No. 666, W. & V. Rogers to William Lyon Mackenzie, Registered 9 August 1859, Toronto Land Registry Office; quoted in Luno, 96.

22 Luno, 103-4. As architectural historian Peter Ward explains, row house floor plans, which typically included the parlour and dining room on the ground floor and bed rooms on the upper floor, were not only standardized but “almost universal” in design (*A History of Domestic Space: Privacy and the Canadian Home* [Vancouver and Toronto: University of British Columbia Press, 1999] 31).

23 In January 1861, a city-wide census records that there were seven people living in the house at that time. Along with Mr. and Mrs. Mackenzie lived the couples’ three daughters: Helen, 29; Elizabeth, 24; Isabel Grace, 17, and twenty-year old George. The family also employed a live-in servant names Catherine Byrns, a nineteen-year old Irish Catholic woman. Luno, 104; Lindsey, 1st vol., 13.
As Duffy points out, nationalist ideologies prevalent in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries inspired historians to characterize particular historical events as pivotal moments in Canada’s formation. Popular history texts published in and around this time, for example, portrayed Mackenzie and his fellow rebels as central figures in the “master narrative of Upper Canadian history’s climax: the appearance of responsible government.” This particular narrative logic thus re-positioned the installation of responsible government as that which paved the way for pre-Confederation politics. Consequently, by the beginning of World War One, according to Duffy, a “pro-Mackenzie stream of opinion had made its way into respectability,” an opinion that venerated Mackenzie within the realm of “founding nations” mythologies. Moreover, in the 1930s, a host of interested parties, including Mackenzie’s grandson, then-Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, erected and restored an assortment of commemorative monuments to venerate not only the centennial of the rebellion but also, more particularly, Mackenzie’s accomplishments. Impending threats to demolish

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24 Luno, 111.
25 Duffy, 2008, 139. Such texts include John Charles Dent’s *Story of the Upper Canadian Rebellion* (1885), W. H. P. Clement’s *The History of the Dominion of Upper Canada* (1897) and W. L. Grant’s *Ontario High School History of Canada* (1914).
26 Duffy, 2008, 140.
27 For example, in 1936, Mackenzie King commissioned Canadian sculptor Walter Seymour Allward, designer of the Vimy Memorial, to create a monument dedicated to the actions and memory of his grandfather to stand in Queen’s Park, the west side of the Ontario legislature in Toronto. Evidence suggests, however, that the intention to erect this monument might have been inspired by contemporaneous plans to preserve the Mackenzie House. According to Duffy, in August 1936, Senator Frank P. O’Connor told Prime Minister Mackenzie King that a Mackenzie Homestead Committee had gathered funds to purchase his grandfather’s Bond Street residence; O’Connor suggested that a memorial sculpture might also be appropriate to celebrate the centenary of the Rebellion. Duffy, 2002, 589. For an in-depth examination of the allegorical representation and commemorative purpose of the sculpture based on a formal analysis of the Queen’s Park monument, see Dennis Duffy, “Complexity and Contradiction in Canadian Public Sculpture: The Case of Walter Allward,” *American Review of Canadian Studies* 38.2 (Summer 2008): 189-206. Other monuments mounted to honour Mackenzie include the restoration of his house in Queenston, ON, in which he lived and published the *Colonial Advocate* newspaper. A commemorative arch decorated with relief sculptures depicting various episodes related to the rebellion, known as the Clifton Gate Pioneer Memorial Arch, was also ordered by Thomas Baker McQueston, Member of Parliament for Hamilton and minister of Highways and Public Works. Designed by Toronto-based architect William Lyon Somerville, the arch was originally located at the convergence of the Queen Elizabeth Way, the Niagara Parkway and the Honeymoon Bridge. In 1976, however, a Niagara Parks Commission labelled the arch a “traffic hazard,” and it was taken down. On 6 September 1984, the restored panels were unveiled in the garden of the Mackenzie House. Coutu, 185, 189; Frank, vi-vii, 4.
Mackenzie’s Toronto residence also seemed to inspire decisive action.28 In 1936, printing press proprietor T. Wilbur Best, aware of the house’s provenance, bought the site to save it from imminent destruction. He went on to form the William Lyon Mackenzie Foundation, the administrative body that turned the site into a museum.29

When Mackenzie House opened to the public on 9 May 1950 as a restored historic house museum, government officials described Mackenzie as a historical figure who fought for and ultimately ushered in a political landscape that made Confederation possible.30 Then-Ontario premier Leslie Frost’s opening address articulated the connection between the 1837 Rebellion and Confederation, seemingly in order to (re)assert the prescribed status of the house’s owner. As he put it to people gathered to witness the site’s opening,

It matters not now who was right or who was wrong in the controversies of [the 1830s]….What matters is what they achieved. From it all came responsible government. From it came a working partnership between the French and English Communities….On the foundations laid by the men of the 1830s – Mackenzie, the Governor [Louis-Hippolyte] LaFontaine, [Francis] Hinks, …and the rest – Macdonald and his great lieutenant, Cartier, and those other Fathers of Confederation through the ensuing years, were in 1867, able to build the Dominion of Canada, which became a pattern for the British Commonwealth of Nations and, indeed, we believe, a pattern for world government in the tomorrow.31

In positioning Mackenzie as a forefather of the “Fathers of Confederation,” Frost suggests that the museumification of Mackenzie’s house memorializes not only the accomplishments of the original owner but also the nation at large. One year later, the house was declared a national historic site.

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28 Between 1933 and 1937, the houses on either side of Mackenzie House had been demolished. An article published in the Toronto Star Weekly, dated 27 November 1937, showed photographs of the house “before the bordering houses were torn down” and “as it is today” (“After One Hundred Years,” Star (Toronto) 27 November 1937; quoted in Nesbitt, 8).
29 Nesbitt, 8.
30 According to a pamphlet advertising the site, the dates of the representation spanned from 1820-1860. William Lyon Mackenzie Homestead Foundation, Addresses Delivered by the Honourable Leslie M. Frost, K.C. and Leonard W. Brockington in Connection with the Opening of Mackenzie House, 82 Bond Street, Toronto (Toronto: William Lyon Mackenzie Homestead Foundation, 1950).
Towards the end of the 1950s, public concern regarding the state of Toronto’s architectural heritage became more pronounced, which instigated a third stage in Mackenzie House’s development – its incarnation as a living history museum, managed by the Toronto Historical Board.32 The eradication of various historic structures to make way for newer “modern” buildings, factories and urban planning strategies in and around the Toronto area generated a heightened interest in and concern for the city’s remaining historic structures.33 Accordingly, on 1 July 1960, Toronto City Council established the Toronto Historical Board, an administrative body charged with managing the city’s heritage sites.34 Moreover, because the William Lyon Mackenzie Homestead Foundation had been, as Nancy Luno puts it, “waiting for just such an organization,” on 12 October 1960, the Foundation presented Mackenzie House to the city so that it might be run by the Board.35 Notably, Mackenzie House was the first historic house museum acquired by the Toronto Historical Board.36 The Board closed the house and restored it so that it might “be more truly representative of the period...[and] the story of Mackenzie’s life may be clearly depicted” and, on 31 July 1962, reopened the site as a living

32 An article from the *Globe and Mail* newspaper, entitled “Hemmed In: Landmark Doom Looms,” reported that the Mackenzie House was “one step away from destruction” as the owners of properties adjacent to the house – Revere Electric and Macmillan Publishing – refused to part with any part of their property to save the site. The article also quoted a municipal officer identified as City Controller Newman who advocated that the house be preserved, stating, “As the home of our first mayor, [Mackenzie House] represents a unique link with an important era in our history…. At the rate we’re going we soon will have nothing to remind us of our early settlers. We have so little now in the way of original housing it just seems too bad to lose this site” (“Hemmed In: Landmark Doom Looms,” *Globe and Mail* [Toronto], 1 April 1960, 5).

33 One particular episode that inspired the public’s interest in and concern for Toronto’s historic sites was the municipal government’s 1958 decision to erect a new city hall building, thus abandoning the original city hall building, erected in 1844, located at the corner of Queen and Bay Streets. Eric Arthur, *Toronto: No Mean City* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964) 208, 232-6.

34 In addition to overseeing the operations of Mackenzie House, the Board also produced “new and special displays” at Fort York and the now-closed Marine Museum of Upper Canada, originally located in the historic Stanley Barracks at Exhibition Place. Dr. John W. Scott, “Chairman’s Report,” *Toronto Historical Board: 1977 Year Book* (Toronto: Toronto Historical Board, 1977) 1; Toronto Historical Board, “Museums,” 1989 Annual Report (Toronto: Toronto Historical Board, 1989) 9.

35 L uno, 115.

36 Later that same year, in 1960, it also took over the responsibility of operating and overseeing Colborne Lodge in High Park. In 1978, the Board, in conjunction with the Ontario Heritage Foundation acquired Spadina House, the Austin estate, at 285 Spadina Road and opened the house as a museum in 1984. Toronto Historical Board, “City Owned Sites, Monuments and Artifacts under the Board’s Stewardship,” *A New Direction for Heritage* (Toronto: Toronto Historical Board, 18 October 1996) Appendix A.
history museum offering guided tours. Site workers also developed special event programs, such as the Victorian Christmas program, to boost the site’s popularity and, subsequent to that, its role as a living history museum.

Significantly, Board members determined that, for the house to effectively showcase the life and times of Mackenzie “with a particular emphasis placed on his publishing and political life,” additions to the historic structure should be made. Because the house had been restored as a domestic dwelling reflecting what might have been in place during the Mackenzie family’s occupancy, Board members decided to add an area onto the house “for objects, which could not otherwise be suitably displayed in the house proper.” Once the Board acquired adequate funding for the project, it commissioned construction of the gallery that is now appended to the site, which housed an exhibition space, replica print shop, public washrooms, kitchen and storage. According to the Board’s 1967 operations report, the exhibition gallery provided room

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37 Board members elected that the museum have a terminal date of 1861, the year of Mackenzie’s death. Toronto Historical Board, “Director’s Report for the year 1960” Toronto Civic Historical Committee, 1958-1960; Toronto Historical Board, 1960-1962 (Toronto: Toronto Historical Board, 1962) 9; Toronto Historical Board, “Joint Meeting Museums Committee and the Historical Sites Committee, Monday, 18 September 1961,” Toronto Civic Historical Committee, 1. Decisions regarding the museum policy were made after “considerable discussion.” The Museum Committee Meeting Minutes of the Toronto Historical Board records “it was moved… that (a) Mackenzie House be restored as a domestic dwelling house during the Mackenzie family occupation from 1859-1861 (b) a print shop be erected to house the Mackenzie press and suitable objects of a functioning print shop of the period (c) the connecting link between the house and shop be designed to accommodate material dealing with the life of William Lyon Mackenzie, with a particular emphasis placed on his publishing and political life…. the motion was carried” (Toronto Historical Board, “Museums Committee Meeting Minutes, 1 May 1962,” Toronto Civic Historical Committee, 1).

38 Toronto Historical Board, “Coming Events,” Toronto Civic Historical Committee, 1. The program, mounted by the Board in cooperation with the Provisional Class of the Junior League of Toronto, was first offered in 1962 as a six-day long program, which included baking demonstrations, decorations and music. Research into “authentic” nineteenth-century recipes and decorations, such as a kissing ball, yule log, and decorated fir tree, was conducted “under the guidance of the Toronto Reference library” (“1862 Christmas Open to Public,” Star [Toronto] 3 December 1962, 49). According to Board records, the event proved to be a “success”; over 2000 people visited the site for the event, 1403 of which were paid admissions. The event earned a net profit of approximately $500. Toronto Historical Board, “Information and Education Committee Meeting Minutes, 19 December 1962,” Toronto Civic Historical Committee, 1.

39 While Mackenzie did own and operate print shops at various times and places throughout his life, he never owned one connected to his house. Toronto Historical Board, “Joint Meeting Museums Committee and the Historical Sites Committee, Monday 18 September 1961,” Toronto Civic Historical Committee, 1.

40 In 1966-67, the Board applied for funds to construct an addition offered under Winter Works Incentive Program; grants were awarded based on the condition that the Board, the municipal government and “higher levels of Government” contribute the funds required for the project. J.A. McGinnis, “Report on
to exhibit a “variety of displays relating to the life and pursuits of Mackenzie.” Moreover, because this space exists outside of the confines of the “house proper,” it allowed site workers to explore and display material culture pertaining to broader-based themes, such as the history and expansion of the city at large. Representing Toronto’s development and evolution, in fact, soon became a priority for heritage administrators.

In the mid-1970s, following the federal government’s 1971 adoption of a multiculturalism policy, the Toronto Historical Board re-evaluated the function of city-owned and operated heritage sites. In 1978, then-managing Board director J. A. McGinnis expressed the Board’s intention develop programs that would both recognize and represent those aspects of Canada’s national identity endorsed by the state – in short, its interest in cultivating nationalism based on the concept of “unity-in-diversity.” According to McGinnis,

> One of the most important aspects to be recognized is that the various sites operated by the Board represent specific periods of life styles in our history and, therefore, must be subjective. Even though our history may be recent in relation to that of countries whose citizens have now become Canadians....we are endeavouring to establish a closer relationship and greater understanding among us all.

In a sign of support for the Board, Toronto City Council took the “unprecedented step” of tripling the Board’s 1979 budget. The Board channelled the surplus finances into the development of a travelling exhibition program, “The Torontonians,” which focussed on “the multi-cultural history of Toronto.” Twenty-four double-sided panels that “describe[d]” fourteen ethnic groups were erected and dismantled at thirteen different locations in the Toronto region, one location being the

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42 To cultivate a “closer relationship” between cultural administrators and the city’s residents, the Board instituted a “Community Relations Programme.” This program required cultural administrators to encourage and work with various ethnic communities in the Toronto area to preserve the architectural structures and layouts of their existing neighbourhoods. J. A. McGinnis, “Managing Director’s Report,” *Toronto Historical Board Year Book 1978* (Toronto: Toronto Historical Board, 1978) 6; Shirley McManus, “Working Toward Twenty Years: 1971-1980,” *History of the Toronto Civic Historical Committee and the Toronto Historical Board 1949-1985* (Toronto: Toronto Historical Board, 31 January 1986) 29.
43 McManus, 29.
44 McManus, 29.
garden area of the Mackenzie House property, which was described as outside the “house proper.” Travelling throughout the geographical domain of the Board’s jurisdiction, the exhibition showcased the “contribution of many immigrant groups to the growth and development of Toronto.” It is significant that, despite the Board’s intentions to celebrate Toronto’s ethnic diversity, the exhibition was a travelling one with no permanent residence; what is more, when located on the Mackenzie House property, it remained clearly outside of, and thus distinctly separate from the historical structure.

While, over the course of the 1980s, the Toronto Historical Board continued to develop temporary travelling programs that celebrated the region’s cultural diversity, it refused to erect permanent markers of the city’s “multicultural nature.” As a result, the Board honoured the city’s present and past in different ways in that it mounted transient exhibitions that recognized Toronto’s diversity while working to restore stable, concrete examples of the region’s perceived past. Because the Board regarded “The Torontonians” as one of its “most effective existing tools” in the promotion of the Board’s public profile, organizers expanded both the touring schedule and content of the exhibition. In 1984, for instance, the exhibition travelled to nineteen different locations – the most ever in the program’s history – and, two years later,

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45 The Board hired a student from the University of Toronto’s museology program who curated the program as part of her internship. The panels were first displayed at Nathan Phillips Square in August 1979. J.A. McGinnis, “Managing Director’s Report,” *Year Book 1980* (Toronto Historical Board: Toronto, 1980) 9, 20 [image on p. 20]; McManus, 29.


47 In 1980, Chairman Gregorovich asserted that the Board alone determined what monuments might be erected in the Toronto region, writing, “I regret to report … that some monuments have been erected without our consultation, for example the Portuguese Monument (1978) and the Katyn Memorial (1980). We have recommended changes to the procedures in City Hall in the hopes that we can, in future, properly fulfill our responsibility in this area…. We are concerned that all Torontonians, whether natives or immigrants, whether from an older or newer ethnic group, have the opportunity to share in the history and past culture of Toronto through the facilities and programmes of the Board” (Andrew Gregorovich, “Chairman’s Report,” *Year Book 1980* [Toronto: Toronto Historical Board, 1980] 3).

organizers included six more ethnic groups not identified or represented in the previous tours.\textsuperscript{49} In the wake of such moves, different ethnic groups petitioned the Board, asking that memorials be erected to recognize their achievements. The Board, however, citing anticipated incurrence of maintenance and repair costs as an “aspect of concern,” deemed it “\textit{inappropriate} for these commemorative pieces to be erected in the City of Toronto.”\textsuperscript{50} Budgetary concerns subsequently became a dominant source of concern for the Board, and City Council cutbacks to the Board’s operating budget forced the Board to discontinue “The Torontonians.”\textsuperscript{51} What is more, both the cutbacks and the city’s 1998 amalgamation of various municipalities into what currently exists as the Greater Toronto area necessitated extensive administrative reorganization. The Toronto Historical Board, consequently, was restructured and named Toronto Culture.\textsuperscript{52} While Toronto Culture remained dedicated to representing and celebrating the region’s ethnic diversity, this administrative body, guided by particularly strategic economic rationales, sought to do so \textit{within} the heritage sites it administered.

In contrast to the Historical Board’s focus on the city of Toronto, Toronto Culture mandated that the sites be managed in such a way as to improve the socio-economic standing of the Toronto region. As a result, in the case of Mackenzie House, site workers re-deployed the living history museum as one that would – in and through such programs as its Victorian

\textsuperscript{49} The exhibition travelled to libraries, schools and community halls throughout Toronto; it was also set up at public events, including Toronto-based festivals. Toronto Historical Board, “Outreach Programs: Serving the Community,” \textit{Annual Report 1984} (Toronto Historical Board, 1984) 34; Toronto Historical Board, “Community Relations,” \textit{Annual Report 1986} (Toronto: Toronto Historical Board, 1986) 23; Toronto Historical Board, \textit{Toronto’s Multicultural Heritage} (Toronto: Toronto Historical Board, 1982) n.p.

\textsuperscript{50} According to McManus, the Board wanted to look into setting up a location where “a collection of sculptures relating to individual ethnic groups” might be housed (McManus, “Countdown,” 29-30, emphasis added).

\textsuperscript{51} In the early 1990s, the City imposed a “series of severe belt-tightening measures,” which forced the Board to reduce the numbers of staff members employed at historic sites, shorten the museums’ operating hours, and terminate the museums’ costume program (David Burnside and R. Scott James, “From the Chairman and Managing Director,” \textit{Toronto Historical Board 1991 Annual Report} [Toronto: Toronto Historical Board, 1991] 2).

\textsuperscript{52} As part of its reorganization, City Council created the Culture Division, which is part of the Economic Development, Culture and Tourism Department. This particular department has four operating divisions: Culture, Economic Development, Parks and Recreation and Special Events. Toronto Culture, \textit{The Creative City: A Workprint} (Toronto: Toronto Culture, April 2001) 2.
Christmas tour – showcase the region’s ethnic diversity to augment Toronto’s reputation as a
global city. In 2000, Toronto Culture considered how it might utilize the city’s historic museums
to “reinvent…the old industrial Toronto…as a global, Creative City, a leading international
cultural capital.” Because cultural administrators characterized Torontonians as “the most
diverse population of any city in the world,” Toronto Culture proposed to “engage Torontonians”
in what it described as “the retelling of our various pasts.” This particular proposal makes
evident, as Yasmeen Abu-Laban and Christina Gabriel explain, how heritage practitioners have
worked to “sell diversity” to enhance Toronto’s stature in the global marketplace; in other words,
Toronto Culture recommended redevelopment of historic institutions under its administration in
such a way as to market and thus commodify the ethnic backgrounds of people in the area.

Toronto Culture thus sought to turn the region’s heritage sites into cultural resources that would
validate Toronto’s efforts to brand itself as a multicultural global city and, subsequent to that,
foster economic expansion; in short, potential for economic gains took precedence in the minds
and actions of policy makers and cultural administrators.

Indeed, Toronto Culture determined ways in which to manage its heritage sites to
improve the city’s financial outlook. In April 2003, Toronto City Council formally adopted a

53 Workprint, 3.
54 Workprint, 15. The city’s heritage sites “all tell a portion of the Toronto story” (Workprint, 4, emphasis added).
55 Abu-Laban and Gabriel, 12.
56 Here I draw on the work of George Yúdice, who states that, in the current global age, the management of
cultural institutions have not only identified but also come to privilege “the usefulness of the claim to
difference as a warrant.” The possibility for economic gains therefore trumps the nature or significance of
the content. The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era (Durham and London: Duke
57 Interestingly, Toronto Culture sought to increase both short- and long-term outlooks. In terms of the
short-term outlook, Toronto Culture determined that, by branding its historic sites as culturally diverse, this
particular initiative would not only require but also merit a funding increase for municipal cultural
institutions. It also determined, drawing on the work of Richard Florida, that such “branding” would attract
tourists and mobile, educated newcomers – referred to by Florida as those members of the “Creative Class”
– who might be integrated into the “whole fabric of the city’s cultural life” and, based on their residency,
actively contribute to the development of the city’s economic infrastructure. Jenkins, 178; Workprint, 14-5;
Culture Plan, 6-9; quote from Culture Plan, 8. See also Richard Florida’s The Flight of the Creative Class:

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ten-year cultural action plan that had been developed by Toronto Culture. The plan mandated, among other things, that Toronto’s historic museums be “branded” as “culturally diverse.”

Again, the idea was to use the region’s heritage sites to single the city out in the current globalized world in a bid to consolidate its “economic future.” The plan required that the sites “tell Toronto’s stories in all their complexity.” “The city has done a good job presenting the Toronto of the 19th century,” the plan states, “[but] many new communities arrived in the 20th. These communities are rightly determined to see their journeys and contributions reflected in Toronto’s museum exhibits and programs.” As a result, it called for Toronto Culture to develop “initiatives to address the gaps in the history it presents,” focusing specifically on the histories of ethnic groups that settled in Toronto. This stratagem thus sought to integrate particular accounts of Toronto’s development in order to construct and, by extension, promote diversity as the primary characteristic defining the region. While some scholars, Barbara Jenkins and Richard Florida among them, suggest that such policies reflect contemporary determinations of the role of culture in the global era, I argue that these mandates have a more extensive lineage.

Based on my analysis of the institutionalization and management of Mackenzie House, it is my contention that nationalist agendas – especially those prominent in the 1930s and late 1960s – provided the foundation for current branding strategies. Because, as I have demonstrated above, nationalist agendas inspired the preservation and reincarnation of Toronto’s historic sites, such as Mackenzie House, the same ideologies provided physical examples of the city’s past to be branded. While

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58 Culture Plan, 1. While the Culture Plan does not use the term “brand” per se, it does call for the city’s historic sites to represent various ethnic communities that live and work in the Toronto region in order to “distinguish Toronto from any other city in the world” (Culture Plan, 14). Elsewhere, the plan stipulates that Toronto, by and large, needs to “[focus] on cultural diversity as a theme for advocacy, by reminding cultural institutions…to welcome newcomers” (Culture Plan, 8). Barbara Jenkins explains that such moves, particularly those that aim to use the concept of multiculturalism or cultural icons – or, in the case of my work, an amalgamation of the two – to draw attention to and to promote regions or cities as international cultural destinations are “branding” exercises. Jenkins, 173.

59 Culture Plan, 14.

60 Culture Plan, 15.

61 Jenkins, 170.
Toronto explicitly touts itself as being a multicultural city – evidenced in the City of Toronto’s official motto “Diversity Our Strength” – for such an assertion to be credible, it must be, as Patricia Wood and Liette Gilbert explain, “grounded in concrete spaces.” Mackenzie House thus exists as a tangible cultural resource that not only reanimates the past but also, based on current city-wide mandates for Toronto’s historic sites, ostensibly represents the cultural diversity of the present.

Taking into account the city’s branding initiative, Mackenzie House workers developed the living history museum as well as its programs – among them the Victorian Christmas tour, the museum’s longest running special event program – so that the site might commemorate both the city’s past and present. In order to “brand” Mackenzie House as culturally diverse, specifically within the context of the Christmas program, in 2004, site administrator Janet Schwartz and programs officer Kelly Nesbitt “developed in partnership” with various Toronto-based ethnic communities the banners that hang in the visitor’s gallery. Through both written texts and photographs, they worked to describe how people celebrate Kwanzaa, Chanukkah, winter solstice and the Chinese New Year, celebrations that all conventionally take place in and around the winter months. Prior to the commencement of the one-hour tour that is now offered as part of the program, visitors are free to peruse the banners at their leisure. Interpreters begin the tours in the gallery space, where they introduce themselves and the site to visitors. Visitors then experience the period rooms decorated in the style of a Victorian Christmas, hear about activities associated with the celebration, as well as the daily life and routines of the Mackenzie family, and eat festive treats. In so doing, site workers work to reanimate the house in the guise of a seasonal celebration to augment discussions of Mackenzie’s political accomplishments and family life.

Moreover, because the house reflects what might be afforded a family of limited financial means – in other words, a lower-middle class family living in Toronto during the mid-nineteenth century

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— interpreters typically characterize the representation as one that depicts the “genteel poverty of the middle class.”

Given that the house frames the way in which the past is reanimated, in the following section, I consider the implications of how the perceived present – the cultural diversity of Toronto – is portrayed in this context. In other words, I explore the implications of marking the site as representational of the region’s cultural diversity through the use of banners – objects produced in the present, which in turn provide a distinct contrast to the historical artefactual displays installed in the house’s period rooms. The addition of the banners suggests moves made to celebrate the present, even though, as David Bennett explains, such additive models typically wind up reproducing both representational and social inequalities.63 Therefore, in the following section, I consider issues inherent in this particular institution’s dealings with or negotiation of past and present-day circumstances. More specifically, I take into account the fact that the site uses historical, artefactual objects to reanimate the past and, by way of contrast, mounts temporary displays to represent the present. In so doing, I explore the types of narratives deployed, in accordance with administrative guidelines, to incorporate notions of cultural diversity.

Making Christmas Multicultural: The Development, Interpretation and Execution of the Victorian Christmas Program at Mackenzie House

As a fully-functioning, state-sanctioned living history museum, Mackenzie House offers programs designed to convey to visitors the experience of “what it felt like to live back then,” even as it works to advance present-day values in contemporary Canada.64 As a consequence, I argue in this section, the museum’s staff manages the site so that it not only reflects the region’s perceived past but also represents its culturally diverse present, Mackenzie House’s Victorian

Christmas program acting as a key component in their efforts. Animating the site, it is the Christmas program that enables Mackenzie House interpreters to use the architectural structure, the artefactual arrangements and historical research to make the past “come alive” for visitors, even as they deal with a living history format that has incorporated alternative celebrations of the season in banners intended to disrupt an authoritative experience of the Victorian past. For this reason, I use this section to consider, as well, facts, objects, events and activities interpreters routinely discuss over the course of Mackenzie House’s Victorian Christmas tours, using the 2006 season as my case study. In doing so, I hope to more fully convey how site workers use artefactual objects and live interpretation to reanimate the site to portray the seasonal celebration of the lower-middle class in mid-nineteenth century Toronto and what such strategies suggest in relation to the banner displays that exist outside the confines of the historic architectural structure – those displays that ultimately aim to portray both the site and the region in which it is located as culturally diverse.

Because Mackenzie House was restored as a Greek Revival row house, the architectural context of the site provides the ideal stage on which to portray speculative accounts of how a lower-middle class family living in mid-nineteenth century Toronto might have celebrated the Christmas season. While the Victorian Christmas tour is the site’s longest running special event program – first mounted when the house re-opened as a living history museum in 1962 and offered every year thereafter – research has revealed that Mackenzie, as a Scottish Presbyterian, considered Christmas to be, in the words of one historian, “just another working day.”

65 For example, in 1852 and 1857, Mackenzie published the Message on 25 December. He also, in 1839, docked an office employee’s pay for being “absent Chris & new year” (Gazette Account Book, p. 2097, MLP; quoted in Luno, 167). Mackenzie’s view of this particular day fit with the conception of the time; in fact, it was not until 1872 that the Canadian government declared Christmas a “legal holiday,” in which financial transactions were prohibited. What is more, that particular legislation applied solely to the provinces of Ontario, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Canada, Statutes of Canada (M. Cameron, Law Printer to the Queen’s Most Excellent Majesty, 1872) 33. Furthermore, according to Françoise Noël, in mid-nineteenth century Canada, the Legislative Assembly often stayed in session during the Christmas season; many members, as a result, spent time in a boarding house, which, in Noël’s words, “suggests that being home for the occasion was not a high priority” (Family Life and Sociability in Upper and Lower Canada, 1780-1870: A View from Diaries and Family Correspondence [Montreal and Kingston: McGill-
workers thus rely on the architectural structure of the historic house – as an artefactual object – to authorize the execution of the Christmas tour. Taking into account the fact that the house represents that which people of limited financial means could afford, Programs Officer Rita Russell sets up artefactual arrangements in the period rooms so that interpreters might present to visitors a type of celebration that is both “authentic in terms of the time period and a general middle-class Christmas.”66 In so doing, Russell explains, site workers “have found a compromise in the middle of the road,” in that they represent “things that are appropriate for the time but [they] are not reflecting a true Mackenzie Christmas.”

In other words, the existence of the site itself allows interpreters to naturalize, as Donald Preziosi puts it, “the truth of what is intended.”67 In order to legitimize the fact that the site represents how “a good number of people would have celebrated Christmas in Toronto during the mid-Victorian era but…[not] specifically…the Mackenzies” (to use Russell’s conceptualization) interpreters guiding visitors through the historic house refer to particular objects, facts and events.68 This targeted attention, instead, the general historical detail reflects the degree to which interpreters conduct research so as to lend a sense of historical accuracy to a speculative performance. Both Russell and other museum workers make a concerted effort to “go straight to primary sources,” which they see in such publications as the Toronto Globe and Mail, nineteenth-century British settler Susanna Moodie’s memoir Roughing it in the Bush (1852) and the literary works of Charles Dickens. Based on such research, site workers decide what objects to place in

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66 Rita Russell, Programs Officer, Mackenzie House, Toronto, ON, interview with author, 21 February 2007. All quotations attributed to Russell are taken from this interview.
68 As Russell puts it, “…we can’t do it specifically with the Mackenzies.”
the period rooms and, as importantly, what objects to leave out. Accordingly, site workers discuss artefactual arrangements in the house’s period rooms to convey to visitors how those less than wealthy, yet still genteel, might have celebrated the Christmas season. Notably, representations of the region’s culturally diverse, contemporary population reside outside the confines of the historic structure.

Given that contemporary cultural policies require that Toronto’s heritage sites include evidence of the region’s cultural diversity, Mackenzie House staff work to make local ethnic groups “partners in [the site’s] interpretation.” As mentioned above, site workers have cooperated with community-based organizations to produce banners describing cultural festivities that, like Christmas, take place during winter season. Mackenzie House site administrator Fiona Lucas states that this collaborative process seeks to give Toronto’s communities an opportunity not only to express but also to represent themselves. “To do it on our own,” she states, “would be, I think, presumptuous….So it’s their words, their point-of-view, their expressiveness that needs to go into what we do. So we provide the venue, the marketing and some of the finances, but they provide all of their expertise….It all blends together in these programs.” While the banners’ production signals moves by museum workers to align the present and the past, the design and location of the banners in the visitor’s gallery sets them apart from the site’s period portrayal. Presumably, it is because the banners are not historical artefacts but explanatory placards that they are displayed in space appended to the house in the 1960s.

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69 For example, Russell states that she made a “conscious choice” not to put up a Christmas tree. While she acknowledges that upper-class mid-Victorian society had incorporated the decoration of the Christmas tree into their holiday celebration following its introduction to Britain by Queen Victoria’s consort, Prince Albert, Russell states that, based on what she refers to as the “trickle-down effect,” this particular tradition “hadn’t [yet] become a part of the common celebration” in Toronto.
70 In other words, the site depicts the type of celebration that might have been put on by those poor, yet notably educated and thus civilized members of society. As one interpreter explains, Mackenzie House, when decorated in the guise of a “Victorian Christmas,” reflects the “genteel poverty of the middle class” (13 December 2006).
71 Workprint, 14.
72 Fiona Lucas, Site Administrator, Mackenzie House, Toronto, ON, interview with author, 27 November 2007.
73 “Joint Meeting Museums Committee,” 1960, 1.
museums, however, the architecture, decorated period rooms and live interpretation ultimately define the visitor’s experience of the site. My analysis of Mackenzie House’s Victorian Christmas tour content therefore considers both how and why this particular living history museum gives a performative voice to certain objects and lets others “speak for themselves.” In so doing, I interrogate what types of messages the site conveys as it reanimates the past while, conversely, exhibiting the present.

*The Main Floor*

The Christmas tour begins in the visitors’ gallery. While visitors wait for interpreters to formally welcome them, museum staff routinely invite them to peruse the exhibition mounted in the gallery.

![Figure 13. Visitors’ Gallery, Mackenzie House (December 2006). Photograph by author.](image)
The exhibition includes a series of banners hanging along the gallery’s south-facing wall.


As mentioned above, some describe Kwanzaa, Chanukah, winter solstice and Chinese New Year, while others – nine in total – portray activities that people in mid-nineteenth Canada commonly performed in the context of the Christmas season, including ice skating, carol singing and card
and gift exchange. On the opposite wall hangs a framed portrait of William Lyon Mackenzie painted around 1906 by Canadian artist John Wycliffe Lowes Forster (1850-1938). Unlike the banners, the painting is displayed on a wall by itself, devoid of explanatory text.

Figure 15. Visitors’ Gallery, Mackenzie House (December 2006). Photograph by author.

According to one interpreter, these panels “[give] you a sense of the true history of our Christmas celebration” (24 December 2006). Again, these banners are not historical artefacts but contain explanatory texts with illustrations and receive little attention in terms of live interpretation. In fact, over the eight tours attended and observed, only one interpreter refers to the banners, stating, “Of course, in Toronto, we have various communities celebrating different holidays, so we have Hanukkah, First Nations and Chinese New Year’s coming up” (24 December 2006). For the most part, over the course of the other seven tours, visitors are invited to peruse the exhibition(s) in the hall and read the panels themselves.
Accordingly, interpreters use the painting – a historic artefact – to introduce both the identity of the home’s original owner and the history of the site. Upon greeting visitors, interpreters first call attention to the painting and explain that this work was produced after Mackenzie’s death; his youngest daughter, Isabel Grace, who “resembled him very much,” sat in his place. The result, according to one interpreter, is a “pretty accurate depiction of what he looked like when his was living in this home here.”75 Interpreters proceed to describe Mackenzie as a man who was staunchly dedicated to governmental reform, a dedication that not only inhibited his income but also prevented him from purchasing a house for himself and his family. Upon the occasion of Mackenzie’s retirement from public life, interpreters explain, his supporters bought the house for him.76 One interpreter, for example, states,

Mr. Mackenzie, from the start of his life in Canada,…always rented homes... Then, after the [1837] Rebellion, he and other rebels had to flee to the United States. He spent twelve years living in exile, and he never owned a house till this one, and this one was bought for him in appreciation of the work that he did. And funds were raised by friends and citizens of Toronto who wanted to thank him and see him retire. He never would have been able to afford this home himself. His political choices, living by his principles rather than sound business practices, basically led him to the point where he needed that kind of help.77

Interpreters thus characterize Mackenzie as a historical figure who sacrificed domestic security for his political ideals and, subsequent to that, portray the house as emblematic of the community’s esteem. Interpreters also call attention to the formulaic layout of the Greek revival row house and explain that both the architectural style of the house and, by extension, the type of Christmas celebration portrayed within the house reflect the class standing of the Mackenzie family; more specifically, they state that the house’s “simple design” reflects “the genteel poverty of the middle class.”78

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75 24 December 2006.
76 24 December 2006.
77 24 December 2006.
78 13 December 2006. Another interpreter states, responding to a visitor’s enquiry if Mackenzie was in fact rich, “Mackenzie wasn’t wealthy at all. He actually died bankrupt. He would have been considered, I guess, middle-class. A lot of people think that he was a politician, he had his own newspaper, he would
Following the introduction of the site’s history in the visitors’ gallery, interpreters explain that entering the confines of the historic house signals visitors’ “official” entry into Mackenzie’s house. In so doing, interpreters make a clear distinction for visitors between the exhibition gallery as a contemporary space and the “original” historic architecture, the realm in which they will be “living history.”

Over the course of the tour, the house’s three floors, which include the main floor, upper floor and basement, are distinguished as three separate areas where different types of activities took place. The main floor, which includes the entrance hallway, parlour and dining room, is positioned as the place where Christmas festivities would have taken place. The upper floor and basement, on the other hand, represent utilitarian spaces in that the artefactual arrangements in rooms on these floors reflect household members’ daily routines, customs and chores.

In order to demonstrate for visitors that the house reflects the type of celebration commonly mounted by members of a particular class, interpreters typically refer to both the parlour and dining room – the two areas that are most prominently decorated in the guise of a Victorian Christmas – as “showpiece” rooms. In the case of the parlour, wreaths hang on the inside of the parlour windows because, as the interpreters explain, a wreath hung on the outside meant that there had been a death in the house.

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have been well-off, but politicians didn’t really get paid that much money, compared to today” (16 December 2008).
Garlands made of greenery, popcorn and cranberries array the pocket doorway that separates the parlour from the adjacent dining room. Christmas gifts for children, including an etiquette book, skates, a doll and a stereoscope, lie on a table in the corner of the parlour.
One interpreter explains that the room, upon decoration, would have been used primarily for “special occasions.” The interpreter then states, “[I]t was pretty common for middle-class homes to have a showpiece rooms that you didn’t use every day but would have all your nicest things in
it. So this room, they would have used during the holidays, if they had visitors over or for other special holidays.”

While interpreters call visitors’ attention to the various decorations and gifts located in the parlour, they also routinely point out the absence of a Christmas tree. In so doing, interpreters customarily acknowledge that, during the late 1850s and early 1860s – the period that the house represents – upper-class mid-Victorian society had adopted Christmas tree decorating following the activity’s launch in Britain by Queen Victoria’s consort, Prince Albert, but, in the words of one interpreter, “it was a long time before middle-class families would have had a Christmas tree.” Interpreters also typically cite Mackenzie’s religious affiliation, thereby using documentary evidence to legitimize the tree’s absence. As they explain it, those of the Catholic faith put up Christmas trees, while members of Toronto’s Protestant denomination, such as Mackenzie and his family members, often did not.

Likewise, in the adjacent dining room, the table arrangement allows interpreters to discuss the types of culinary delicacies that might have been put out by a lower-middle class family.

79 21 December 2006.
80 13 December 2006. As one interpreter explains, “Christmas trees start becoming popular in Canada sort of in the years following the 1870s, 80s, because of trends from England. Queen Victoria, the English Queen married Prince Albert, who was German. And Christmas trees were more popular in Germany, so, when they married, he brought that tradition over and people would see images. They’d make Christmas cards showing the Royal family, the Queen and the Prince and their children, around a tree, opening presents, so that started to catch on. So if this house was a couple of decades later, they would have had a Christmas tree” (21 December 2006).
81 For instance, one interpreter states, “In 1860, for a Presbyterian Scottish family living in Toronto, they would not have had a Christmas tree” (21 December 2006). In so doing, interpreters frequently refer to Mackenzie’s documented perceptions regarding the Christmas season to further justify the Christmas tree’s absence from the portrayal. As one interpreter explains, “Mackenzie really didn’t celebrate Christmas much, but being a politician, we have a writing that he did go down to attend a Catholic Mass down in St. [Michael’s]. But he wasn’t Catholic himself, but he wanted to let those Catholic people that voted for him know that he supported them” (13 December 2006). Another interpreter says, “…Christmas wasn’t really a big deal for Mr. Mackenzie….He actually used to go to work on Christmas day” (14 December 2006). In addressing Mackenzie’s perceptions regarding the Christmas season, interpreters’ comments recall for visitors the fictionalized nature of the program. On the other hand, however, they also refer to particular artefacts to convey the “historical accuracy” of the representation.
Set up for Christmas dessert, the dining room table is arrayed with various treats, such as Turkish delight, Christmas pudding, Christmas cake and shortbread, and a mounted bowl containing apples and oranges acts as the centerpiece. While interpreters characterize apples as “common”
fruits consumed year-round by people of mid-nineteenth century Canada, they describe oranges, conversely, as treats that were customarily offered “only…at Christmas time, because they had to be imported from countries such as Spain and Portugal.” Interpreters go on to inform visitors that, given the costly nature and consequent scarcity of this particular fruit, people of the time often used the entire orange. As one interpreter explains, “[O]nce you received an orange…you wouldn’t want to waste anything. And what I have here [she motions to item on the table] is candied orange peel, and it goes to show the extent to which they would want to…prolong the pleasure of the orange.” Interpreters also routinely draw visitors’ attention to the Flow Blue earthenware set, stipulating that these objects also reflect the family’s class-standing. They explain that European manufacturers produced this particular line of tableware in the early nineteenth-century in an attempt to replicate the appearance of Chinese cobalt blue and white porcelain. The manufacturers’ experimental techniques proved unsuccessful in that the blue paint bled into the white ceramic; accordingly, because both manufacturers and potential European consumers considered the results to be “substandard,” Flow Blue china was shipped to North America and oftentimes sold at reduced rates to lower-middle class families.

Upper Floor

In contrast, the interpretation offered on the upper floor focuses on more private aspects of the Mackenzie family’s lifestyle. In other words, the upper floor, which contains family members’ bedrooms and a reconstructed office space, reflects most particularly the sleeping arrangements and grooming routines of a known family circle. This floor is thus positioned as a predominantly

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82 14 December 2006.
83 24 December 2006. Another interpreter explains that in order to produce candied orange peels, one would eat the orange and cut the peel into strips, boil the pieces with sugar and water and produce a candied fruit (14 December 2006).
84 16 December 2006.
85 What is interesting to note is that, while the interpreters characterize this type of porcelain as that which the middle-classes would have purchased in the nineteenth-century, they are quick to point out that flow blue china, because it was considered to be a mistake and not produced again, is currently considered rare and, as a result, valuable (13 December 2006).
utilitarian space, one in which members of the household slept, dressed themselves and performed their daily ablutions.

In the master bedroom, interpreters habitually identify objects that were once owned by the Mackenzies, using the provenance of these artefacts to recall for visitors the identity of the home’s original owner. While discussing bathing, grooming and dressing customs, interpreters point out two pieces – the Empire style, burled walnut dresser and a sampler hanging on the room’s north-facing wall – and identify them as “original [Mackenzie] family artefacts.”

Moreover, interpreters typically refer to the sampler, produced by Isabel Baxter Mackenzie in 1815 when she was thirteen years old, as the museum’s “oldest artefact.” Interpreters explain that Mackenzie’s wife brought the sampler with her when she left Scotland and travelled to

Figure 19. View of Sampler, Master Bedroom, Mackenzie House (December 2006). Photograph by author.

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86 In Mackenzie’s daughters’ bedroom, interpreters call attention to another family artefact, the slipper chair in the daughters’ bedroom, a piece embroidered with both wool and coloured beads by daughter Janet Mackenzie. Toronto Culture, Mackenzie House: Self-Guided Tour (Toronto: Toronto Culture, n.d.) 3.
87 21 December 2006.
Canada. In addition, they use this piece to explain to visitors how, in the mid-nineteenth century, young girls would produce these types of samplers so that they might improve their embroidery and cross-stitching skills.88

Interpreters not only identify particular pieces that belonged to the Mackenzies, they also refer to historical documentation that describes Mackenzie’s final days in this particular room to validate the artefactual arrangement. Because Mackenzie’s failing health forced him to spend his final days in bed, until his death on 27 August 1861, interpreters explain that the room has been arranged “much like it would have appeared when Mackenzie was alive.”

Figure 20. Master Bedroom, Mackenzie House (December 2006). Photograph by author.

88 Interpreters also use reproductions of hoop skirts, petty coats, and historical advertisements, as well as modern-day pictures of corsets, to discuss clothing and dressing procedures of the nineteenth-century in this particular space.
More specifically, they state that documented medical advice issued to the family in the wake of Mackenzie’s physical decline has determined the type of bed that is located in this space and its current position in front of one of the two windows in the room. According to one interpreter,

We actually have a doctor’s note from the period, recommending that he rest in a sleigh bed, a bed of this design, with a high headboard towards the window to protect him from the draft. His health was deteriorating, and it was felt that he needed that extra bit of protection. So it’s an odd position, but it’s exactly what the doctor recommended.89

Interpreters thus base the arrangement of the room on documentation to authenticate the portrayal.90 What is more, one might suggest that this approach works to validate discussion of a family member’s illness and ultimate demise in the context of a tour that, on the first floor in any case, showcases a celebratory festive season.91

Consideration of the artefactual arrangement and interpretation of the reconstructed office space makes evident how history is simultaneously petitioned and transcended in order to concretize and thus recall for visitors some of Mackenzie’s accomplishments. While interpreters acknowledge that this room may have originally been used as a storage space or spare bedroom, they explain that site workers chose to turn it into an office because, when Mackenzie lived in the house, he published newspapers and therefore “could [have] work[ed] in there.”92

89 24 December 2006. Similarly, another interpreter says, “here’s the master bedroom. This is the room that William died in in 1861. Unfortunately, we don’t have his bed, but sleigh beds were popular at this time, so we have a sleigh bed in here. The bed’s from 1845…and Mackenzie, I think the cause of death that [the doctor] actually wrote down was ‘softening of the brain,’ but I think we probably think it was a stroke. They just didn’t necessarily understand it at the time” (21 December 2006).
91 One might also surmise that because, as discussed above, the house is often labelled Mackenzie’s “retirement house,” this type of factual narrative further reinforces the idea that this was ultimately, as one interpreter puts it, “Mackenzie’s last house” (21 December 2006).
92 14 December 2006. Overall, interpreters consistently relay the same story to visitors. For example, one interpreter explains, “In here we just have a study. Originally, in the house…we don’t know if this was actually a box room or an extra bedroom. But again it just reflects that some people did have studies. This is not original to Mackenzie but it’s something that you could find in the late 1860s” (16 December 2006). Similarly, another interpreter states, “The room…is restored to look like Mackenzie’s study. More likely, it was probably used as a storage room” (21 December 2006).
In so doing, interpreters reference historical facts to encourage visitors to “suspend disbelief.”

Furthermore, interpreters call attention to historical artefacts to not only legitimize the representation but also to reiterate some of Mackenzie’s most prominent contributions to nation-

building designs. For example, interpreters habitually direct visitors’ attention to a framed proclamation hanging on the wall, which one interpreter characterizes as a “wanted poster” for Mackenzie, issued in 1837.94

Figure 22. View of Proclamation, Office, Mackenzie House (December 2006). Photograph by author.

94 24 December 2006.
Interpreters explain that, following the government’s suppression of Mackenzie’s forces in the 1837 Upper Canadian Rebellion, Mackenzie fled to the United States, and the colonial government issued a warrant for his arrest, charging treason and offering a £1,000 reward for his capture. Upon Mackenzie’s formal pardon and return to Canada in 1850, he acquired a proclamation. As one interpreter puts it to visitors, Mackenzie had it framed and always displayed it proudly in the most public part of the home, which would be the hall, the main hall. And that is the copy that he had taken down and had framed. That’s the original copy. So that’s an interesting story. It really reflects the type of character he had, where he thought he had done the right thing, and he was quite proud.95

While historical evidence, acknowledged here by the interpreter, indicates the placement of the proclamation here is “inaccurate,” the artefact’s placement within a reconstructed office space allows interpreters to incorporate discussion of Mackenzie’s political ventures and achievements, which appears to take precedence over the staging of historical accuracy. In other words, the artefact’s provenance and location affords interpreters the opportunity to recall for visitors key reasons for the site’s existence. The performance thus reinforces the commemorative aims of the site.96

*Basement*

In the basement, visitors are given an impression of the day-to-day lives of the Mackenzie family. Having conceptualized the basement as “the heart of the house” (in the words of one interpreter), guides take visitors through the day room and kitchen, describing certain aspects of the Mackenzie family’s daily routine.97 They explain that the family’s socio-economic status dictated this arrangement. As one interpreter put it, “[B]ecause the family wasn’t really that well

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95 24 December 2006.
96 Interpreters also point out the desk and chair as well as the map of the city from 1857, the year when the house was built, that hangs on the wall opposite to the one with the proclamation (13 December 2006).
97 24 December 2006.
off…they wouldn’t want to use all of their nice stuff every day, so things were a lot more casual
down here.”98

Because the day room is situated next to the kitchen, interpreters point out that it would
have been the warmest room in the house, and so it was the space where “the family would spend
their day.”99

Figure 23. Day Room, Mackenzie House (December 2006). Photograph by author.

In the day room, which contains a day bed, a dining table with eight chairs surrounding it, and a
small table with knitting accoutrements on its lower shelf, interpreters describe various activities
which the Mackenzie family members might have performed, such as knitting, sewing, writing,
reading and eating.100 In the kitchen, on the other hand, interpreters routinely explain how people
of Mackenzie’s day would have used both the built-in cooking stove and particular culinary

98 21 December 2006.
99 31 December 2006. Similarly, another interpreter states, “It’s a living basement….And it’s not as fancy
as the rooms upstairs, but it’s sort of much more comfortable” (14 December 2006).
100 21 December 2006.
artefacts, including a coffee roaster, apple peeler, gelatin moulds and baking pans, as well as measuring cups, to prepare drinks and food for meals.\textsuperscript{101}

\textsuperscript{101} When describing the operations of the oven, they are quick to point out the fact that the built-in cook stove is “not original to the house” because, when the City of Toronto acquired the house in 1960, the stove had been removed. During the restoration, however, interpreters explain that workers found an American model, dating to the 1840s, in a house located nearby on Sherborne Street that was due for demolition. It fit into the vacant space left by the original model, as one interpreter puts it, “like a hand in a glove” (28 December 2006). Another interpreter suggests, based on this evidence, that “[i]t’s very, very likely that we’ve got the right model here” (24 December 2006).
They also discuss how, in the mid-nineteenth century, people laundered and ironed their clothes and bathed themselves in the kitchen.
Main Floor – print shop

Tours conclude in the reconstructed print shop, located at the west end of the visitors’ gallery, opposite the entranceway to the historic house; this particular space affords the site – in its entirety – the opportunity to showcase Mackenzie’s personal and political interests as well as his entrepreneurial pursuits.102

Figure 25. Print Shop, Mackenzie House (December 2006). Photograph by author.

Interpreters acknowledge the fictionalized nature of the print shop space in that they call visitors’ attention to the fact that this “reproduction” exists outside the parameters of the historic house.103

In order to convey to visitors the purpose of the reconstruction, they call to mind Mackenzie’s publishing exploits and, in so doing, reference particular historical facts; they begin by reminding

102 As one interpreter puts it, “So, besides being mayor and leader of the Rebellion, Mackenzie was also a printer and publisher of newspapers…. [His print shop] wasn’t here in the house, that would have been way too neat, it was on King Street” (31 December 2006).
103 24 December 2006.
visitors that, during his lifetime, Mackenzie published fourteen different newspapers but, during his residency in the house, his newspaper offices were not located in the house but on nearby King Street. What is more, they explain that Mackenzie, acting oftentimes as both proprietor and editor, wrote articles to acquaint the public with his views regarding, for instance, the benefits of responsible government and the necessity of governmental reform. Subsequent to that, interpreters, attempting to authorize the apparent historical accuracy of the reconstructed space, frequently point out to visitors that most of the artefacts in this space, including most particularly the 1845 Washington Flatbed Press, are “original to [Mackenzie’s] time.”

In the print shop, interpreters encourage visitors to not only bear witness to the space but also to participate in activities within it, thus allowing visitors to “live history.” So that they might gain a first-hand appreciation of the physicality of the printing process, for example, visitors are invited, with assistance from interpreters, to print their own Christmas cards, an activity that aims to reinstate the thematic premise of the Victorian Christmas tour program. Interpreters explain that, during the mid-nineteenth century Christmas season, publishers would have printed manuscripts, books, newspaper serials – such as Charles Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol* – and Christmas cards, but that the actual printing of materials would have been executed by professional printers and not the office proprietor. Interpreters then take visitors through the printing process, getting them to arrange type-set letters on a Christmas card galley (or frame), ink the galley and print the cards by running the galley through the historic press, which visitors then take as tour souvenirs.

Overall, the tour content and interpretation showcases not so much the Christmas celebration as the lifestyle of a middle-class family living in Toronto during the mid-nineteenth century.显著地，虽然在印刷厂，解释者一致地描述麦肯齐为一个政治活动家和报纸出版商，他牺牲了他的经济安全为他的理念；在那样做时，他们召回了在旅游开始时解释者首告欢迎访问者的类型化描述。如一名解释者在印刷厂的背景中解释的，麦肯齐“更多是一个出版者和记者但从来没有做出许多明智的商业决定，因为他总是看起来有点钱少。那可能就是我们总是想到他……他为他的艺术，他写报纸和写字”（24 December 2006）。

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104 20 December 2006. Significantly, while in the print shop, interpreters consistently describe Mackenzie as a political activist and newspaper publisher who sacrificed his financial security for his ideologies; in so doing, they recall the type of characterization offered at the beginning of the tour when interpreters first welcome visitors to the site. As one interpreter explains in the context of the print shop, Mackenzie “was more of a publisher and journalist but never made a lot of really wise business decisions, because he always seemed a little short on money. That’s probably one thing we always think of him….He gave up a lot for his art, which was his newspapers and his writings” (24 December 2006).
In other words, the house itself, even in the context of the Victorian Christmas tour, has been animated in such a way that it reflects a particular standard of living; in view of this, the Christmas decorations are noticeably confined to rooms on the main floor. Interpreters refer to “original” objects owned by the Mackenzie family to endorse the apparent historical accuracy of the representation and, subsequent to that, recall for visitors the fact that the house reflects a particular class-based way of life. In short, the decorated atmosphere, artefactual arrangements, interpretation and associated participatory activities encourage visitors to experience what it “felt like to live back then” so that they might achieve a “contextual departure” from the present.105

For this reason, it could be argued that, while the banner-based exhibition aims to expand the site’s content in order to brand Mackenzie House as a culturally diverse heritage institution, the inclusion of the banners, in reality, helps promote what has been described as the unmarked whiteness of core Canadian culture.106 They represent Toronto’s cultural diversity by referencing different ethnicities within the museum’s representation but, because they do not do so inside the historic house, the site reproduces existing social hierarchies. Banners hanging in the visitors’ gallery present ethnic celebrations other than that represented in the house, and visitors peruse the display at their leisure. In contrast, interpreters lend voice to historical artefacts so that the living history format might transport visitors back in time. In short, the reanimation of the house constructs the Mackenzie family’s festivities and lifestyle as a gauge by which to measure or classify ethnicities exhibited in the gallery space.

Exhibitions of Cultural Diversity and “Living History”: Negotiating Canada’s Past and Present in the Global Age

Mackenzie House’s Victorian Christmas program utilizes different strategies to expose visitors to particular cultural celebrations; museum workers have produced a banner-based exhibition that

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105 Handler and Saxton, 245; Casey, 11.
describes for visitors Kwanzaa, Chanukah, winter solstice and Chinese New Year festivities, while interpreters guide visitors through the historic house, performing so that visitors might “live history.” In producing banner displays that suggest the region’s ethnic make-up, heritage practitioners endeavor to portray Mackenzie House as representing the population’s diversity in order to mark Toronto as a global city. Such efforts demonstrate ways in which site workers work to expand the program’s narrative content to include previously marginalized groups but do not solve issues pertaining to social, cultural or political inequity. In order to apprehend both the shortcomings and ramifications of this approach, one must consider the political structures that call for such additions. Because the branding mandate assigned to Toronto’s historic sites responds to ideas of diversity embedded in Canada’s multiculturalism policy, I argue here that the very nature of the policy authorizes ways in which Mackenzie House represents cultural diversity. To do so, I explore how the site’s inclusion of various ethnic groups compares with the reanimation of the house to promote the dominance of what Eva Mackey refers to as the unmarked whiteness of a core Canadianism.107

It has been argued that the inclusion of previously marginalized peoples in museums does not challenge, but rather reinforces the authority of the hierarchical structures within which groups (or objects) are classified and ranked within the museum system.108 As David Bennett explains, “additive model[s] of representation” conventionally treat minorities as “add-ons” to membership in public institutions.109 For example, museums that advance themselves as culturally inclusive conventionally identify particular ethnic identities and represent them using objects and information believed to reflect their respective cultural traditions and practices. Accordingly, these “dumb” objects, as Lynda Jessup puts it, “stand for specific social groups,

107 Mackey, 102.
108 Steiner, 214.
109 Bennett, 5.
In the case of Mackenzie House, I argue that site workers use the banners to stand for ethnic groups other than that represented in the House proper, thus allowing the animation of the House to reinforce a specific type of cultural dominance; in other words, explanatory placards represent seemingly “other Canadian” cultures against which that emphasized in the historic house stands in contrast for a core Canadianism. Moreover, the representation of cultural diversity within Mackenzie House is based on the concept of tolerance, a concept put forth most prominently in Canada’s multiculturalism policy.

Extending on my discussion in the previous chapter, which examines how Canada’s multiculturalism policy came into being and the type of national identity it promotes, I would argue, as do other scholars, that the policy recognizes ethnic groups so as to act as a “doctrine of tolerance.” In turn, I suggest that the concept of tolerance advanced by the policy not only effects but also mobilizes Mackenzie House’s representation of cultural diversity. Canada’s multiculturalism policy, understood on a popular level as “unity-in-diversity,” has fostered the idea amongst Canadians that ethnic diversity is a national virtue. It suggests that all citizens have equal access to legal, political and socioeconomic rights, regardless of their country of origin or distinguishing ethnic traits. Despite such accessions, Bennett argues, the policy is “inherently hierarchical.” While state-sanctioned multiculturalism is predicated on the principles of recognition and equality, he notes, it is ultimately defined by the “liberal imperative to ‘tolerate’ cultural difference…for in what sense can a minoritised culture be asked to ‘tolerate’ the majority or ‘national’ culture that assigns it the marginal status of a minority?” In other words, the policy implicitly credits those in power with the ability to recognize and, further, to tolerate ethnic diversity in order to validate Canada’s identity as a self-proclaimed “multinational

111 Bennett, 6.
113 Bennett, 6.
state.” As a result, the policy acts as a “structuring structure,” reproducing power relations. As Ghassan Hage puts it, “multicultural tolerance” aims to act as a “form of egalitarianism” in order to obscure its dominating tendencies. It is derived from a particular attitude, one that emanates from a “position of power….Tolerance…always presupposes control over what is tolerated. That is, tolerance presupposes that the object of tolerance is just that: an object of the will of the tolerator….To tolerate is not to just accept, it is to accept and position the other within specific limits and boundaries.”

Because Canada’s multiculturalism policy positions ethnic groups within a particular nationalistic framework, the policy has been designed to reinforce Western cultural hegemony. While the primary mandate of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act (1988) is to help in the “preservation and enhancement of ethnicity,” the Act does not identify any specific group of Canadians as ethnic, thereby constructing ethnicity as a condition of commonality. Multiculturalism discourse therefore seeks to convey to the world the belief that, in Canada, ethnic communities can practice and thus maintain the cultural traditions and activities performed in their countries of origin. In granting ethnic groups the right to both preserve and enhance their cultural traditions while living in Canada, the Act imposes upon the ethnic subject “a stability that belies the incommensurability of identity.” Smaro Kamboureli explains further, writing, “[The Act’s] insistence on ‘preservation’ affirms the history of ethnic subjectivity as a differential sign, but it does so by appropriating that difference. While no subject can exist outside the history that has produced her, history is imaged [in the Act] as a finished product – for

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115 Steiner, 217.
117 Mackey, 163.
how else could it be ‘preserved’?”

Similarly, Neil Bissoondath explains that official multiculturalism demands that a person position herself as unchanged despite her migration, an experience that effects its own change; the demands of multiculturalism “stultify the personality, creating stereotype, stripping the individual of uniqueness: you are not yourself, you are your group.”

Canada’s multiculturalism policy therefore recognizes and upholds the concept of diversity in order to construct a particular national image, one that is, as Bannerji writes, “predicated upon the existence of a homogeneous national, that is, a Canadian cultural self with its multiple and different others.”

The policy thus affords “real” or “true” Canadians the ability and right to tolerate the existence (and practices) of ethnic communities within the Canadian state.

More specifically, multiculturalism constructs the unmarked whiteness of the core culture as the standard by which to identify or measure citizens of other ethnic backgrounds. The fact that this core culture is unmarked suggests the degree to which the policy constructs it as being normative. “[To] call white Canadianness an ethnicity does not capture its specificity,” Eva Mackey explains. “The point about these categories of identity – could we think of them as ‘dominant and unmarked ethnicities’? – is that people do not think about themselves as ‘ethnic,’ but rather, see their customs, beliefs, practices, orals and values as normative and universal.”

Accordingly, because Canada’s multiculturalism policy positions ethnic communities outside of the “normative nation,” the policy constructs and thus promotes the concept of “Anglo-conformativity,” demonstrating the degree to which, as Yúdice puts it, “whiteness is valued.”

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121 Bissoondath, 211.
122 Bannerji, 37.
123 Bannerji, 36.
124 Mackey, 157.
In working to advance present-day values in contemporary Canada, incorporation of cultural diversity at Mackenzie House indicates the extent to which inclusive strategies wind up replicating political and social hierarchies. As Irit Rogoff explains, “Museums’ encounters with cultural difference are in a sense an opportunity to contract rather than to expand, to contract the staunch belief system that organizes, classifies, locates, and judges everything from the prevailing perspective of the West.”\textsuperscript{126} Expanding on Mackey, Yúdice and Rogoff, I suggest that, in the case of the Mackenzie House Victorian Christmas program, the site’s banner display describes for visitors different ethnic celebrations, while the historic architecture animates the normative lifestyle, locating it in the representation of that enjoyed by a middle-class, nineteenth century family of British descent. In other words, the site includes representations of seemingly contemporary, ethnic festivities to showcase Toronto’s culturally diverse population, but such inclusions provide a contrast that propels the dominance of the reanimation of the past contained within the house. As a result, the site’s negotiation of both past and present-day circumstances reproduces British-based cultural hegemony. Despite the banners’ inclusion – intended to destabilize the visitor’s experience of the Victorian past – the living history performance executed within the house works to concretize, project and naturalize a given hegemonic “social,” one that advances what Mackey identifies as core Canadianism.\textsuperscript{127}

Chapter 5 – Constructing Christmas in Quebec:
Development of Canadian Historical Memory in the Cartier Houses

In this chapter, I deal with the institutional history of the Sir George-Étienne Cartier National Historic Site of Canada, a museum composed of two adjoining homes formerly owned by one of the “Fathers of Confederation” who, as Attorney General of Lower Canada (1858-62), shared leadership of the United Canadas with John A. Macdonald. As in the two preceding chapters, I also examine the museum through the lens provided by its “Noël victorien/Victorian Christmas” programming, which serves to animate the museum as “living history.” Taking into account, first, the site’s location in Montreal, Quebec, a major urban centre with a large souverainiste constituency, and, second, the fact that it is owned and operated by the federal agency Parks Canada, I explore how cultural administrators work to make the museum appealing and thus marketable to visitors. In the early 1980s, while planning the site’s development, Parks Canada determined that site’s “special target group” would be the Montreal public and developed a “dual approach” to expose visitors to “both the man and the time in which he lived.”1 The agency turned the east house into a visitors’ centre, containing object-based exhibitions and text panels, which illustrate various socio-political changes that Cartier helped bring about; in contrast, the west house was restored so that interpreters might guide visitors through the period rooms and “[evoke] the environment in which [Cartier] lived.”2 I therefore consider how government workers have arranged the site so that it acknowledges Cartier’s political achievements but ultimately, upon reanimation, portrays the lifestyle of Montreal’s upper-middle class. More specifically, I explore how the site encourages visitors to “live history” so as to foster a collective sense of cultural history.3

2Development Concept, 17.
Because nationalist agendas put forward by Quebecers in the later half of the twentieth-century arguably stimulated the federal government’s institutionalization of the Cartier Houses, I suggest that the federal government reconstituted the houses in order to reinvigorate the authority of federal heritage policies and, by extension, the Canadian national project. For example, in the early 1960s, Quebec’s Quiet Revolution transformed the provincial government into a bureaucratic welfare-state, allowing it to, among other things, implement heritage legislation and develop historic sites that would inspire a distinctly Québecois nationalism. This particular nationalist ideology sought to eradicate any pejorative connotations of French-Canadian heritage – in that this “old” identity refers to a cultural minority of the Canadian federation – and to distinguish Quebecers as a territorial majority living within a specific geographic domain.

Moreover, the legislation pitted Quebec’s heritage, as Richard Handler puts it, “in competition” with the federal government’s national policies and historic sites. Significantly, in 1964, the federal government mounted a program to honour those pronounced to be “Fathers of Confederation,” which resulted in the purchase, commemorative designation and restitution of Cartier’s Montreal residences. The monumentalization of the Cartier Houses, initiated in the wake of the Quiet Revolution, indicates the degree to which the federal government responded to the energies and actions of Quebecers. Accordingly, I explore the institutional history of the Cartier Houses to better ascertain ways in which the two national projects – “Quebec” and “Canada” – have drawn on each other’s efforts and mythologies. Moreover, I consider how the

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4 As Richard Handler explains, the Quiet Revolution brought about the creation of Quebec’s Ministère des Affaires culturelles (1961), which allowed the provincial government to develop its own heritage legislation, such as Quebec’s “new” Historic Monuments Act (1963). “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 (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985) 196-7.


6 Handler, 196.

7 As Ian McKay explains, “the two nationalisms have been constructed against, but also in collaboration with, each other – they have rarely been ‘two solitudes’ in reality” (“After Canada: On Amnesia and Apocalypse in the Contemporary Crisis,” Acadiensis 28.1 (1998): 94).
federal government developed the site so that it might re-deploy particular historical narratives, thereby venerating not only a distinctly French-Canadian identity but also Canada’s “founding nations” mythologies.

In my examination of the Cartier Houses’ “Noël victorien/Victorian Christmas” tour, I explore how museum workers developed programming so that the site’s reanimation deals with themes that are conspicuously devoid of overt political references. Because Parks Canada employees arranged the site so that the visitors’ centre represents the original owner’s political achievements, while the living history format, executed in the restored west house, provides visitors with a “contextual” departure from the present, I consider how interpreters work to “depoliticize” the experiential atmosphere. As historian Michael Kammen explains, heritage practitioners often minimize or suppress contentious political issues so that portrayals of the past might help unite the citizenry. Accordingly, I investigate how interpreters at the Cartier Houses perform the past so as to selectively remember (or forget) particular historical figures, occurrences or events and thus encourage visitors to “remember” history as personal experience. More specifically, I explore how interpreters encourage visitors to experience the lifestyle of Montreal’s mid-nineteenth century bourgeoisie so that visitors’ engagement with and memories of the site might cause them to feel connected to a larger community, that being the nation. Because, as Alan Gordon points out, living history museums conventionally construct and perform narratives of the past that validate the nation’s present-day political or social circumstances, public memory “is a discourse about identity and power…. [It] conscripts aspects

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8 Casey, 10-11.
of public history, further enshrining them in defence of present power relationships.”\textsuperscript{12} I thus investigate how Parks Canada workers manage the site so that the reanimation might perpetuate the authority of Canada’s national project.

**Making Memories in Montreal: The Restitution of the Cartier Houses**

Historic monuments typically commemorate the ideologies of those who develop them.\textsuperscript{13} In examining how the priorities of the federal government informed Parks Canada’s museumification of Cartier’s former homes, I concentrate on three specific phases of the site’s development; I suggest that particular aspects of each phase aided in the determination of both the site’s current function as a national historic institution and its design. Over the course of their existence, Cartier’s houses have functioned as private residences, celebratory monuments and, finally, as a state-sanctioned heritage site offering the theme-based \textit{Noël victorien}/Victorian Christmas tour. First, in my examination of the houses as Cartier’s familial residences, I consider how Sir George-Étienne Cartier’s ownership of the two Neoclassical London-style townhouses demonstrated his cultural preferences, specifically, his “anglophilism,” thereby challenging his self-professed political role as champion of a working-class French-Canadian constituency.\textsuperscript{14} Second, I explore how, in the 1960s, the federal government came to identify Cartier as a “Father of Confederation” and subsequently designated his houses as being of “national historical importance.”\textsuperscript{15} Third, in my consideration of the museum’s institutionalization, I examine how Parks Canada determined that the site showcase the themes “Cartier the politician” and “Cartier


\textsuperscript{13} As Handler explains, “the repatriation of heritage objects…establishes ownership, but only by reinterpreting cultural things in terms of the ideas of those who plundered them” (194).


the Montrealer, a representative of the bourgeoisie of his era.”16 For example, in June 1982, two years after the first national Referendum in which the motion to grant Quebec sovereignty was defeated by a margin of 59.6 to 44.4 percent, Parks Canada mounted a public consultation program to help decide how it might “promote the harmonious integration of the historic [site] into its environment.”17 Taking into account concerns expressed by Montreality, historians and local and provincial heritage organizations, the agency resolved that it would work to “avoid any form [of] political partisanship.”18 I thus explore how government workers have organized the houses so that the site recognizes Cartier’s political career while reanimating a particular lifestyle so as to “depoliticize” the past. Such efforts make evident ways in which nationalist ideologies not only compel the restitution but also shape the character of historic monuments.

Each townhouse initially functioned as Cartier’s familial residence. He purchased the east house as he embarked on the fulfillment of his political ambitions, while his purchase of the west house years later reflected both his achievements in that domain and his social prominence as a result.19 In February 1848, lawyer and aspiring politician George-Étienne Cartier purchased one of the two semi-detached houses on Notre Dame Street, specifically, the one on the east side located at the intersection of Notre Dame and Berri streets.20 His decision to reside in Montreal makes evident the extent of his determination to enter politics, given that the city, as of 1844, was the current Canadian capital or seat of government.21 Two months later he was elected as a

16 Development Concept, 16.
19 Young, xiii.
20 Parks Canada, Sir George-Étienne Cartier National Historic Site of Canada: Management Plan, (Ottawa: Parks Canada, March 1985) 17
21 In 1849, government officials instituted a “perambulating system” in which the seat of government rotated every four years between Toronto and Quebec City. In 1857, Queen Victoria, having been petitioned by government officials to exercise “Royal Perogative,” selected Ottawa as the permanent seat of government. Joan Schwartz, “Photographs from the Edge of Empire,” in Cultural Geography in Practice, ed. Alison Blunt (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003) 164.
member of the United Canadas assembly. Following Canadian Parliament’s relocation to Quebec City, Cartier rented his house, so that, beginning in 1855, he lived and worked in the current seat of government. His political career reached its highest point when he became Attorney General of Lower Canada (1858-62), sharing leadership of the country with John A. Macdonald. In June 1862, he returned to Montreal and bought the residence adjoining the house he had rented earlier, located on the west side. His family lived in the west house from 1862 until 1871, during which time Cartier travelling extensively, taking part in key political events, including the Charlottetown Conference (1-9 September 1864) and the Quebec Conference (10 October 1864), and helping to bring the disparate colonies together within a unified federal state. In the winter of 1866-7, Cartier, along with other colonial delegates, travelled to London and met with the British House of Commons. Together, delegation and House refined the Quebec Resolutions and produced what became known as the British North America Act. On 1 July 1867, the Dominion of Canada came into being and Confederation “went into effect.”

Cartier’s choice of Neoclassical London-style townhouse residences makes evident his desire to proclaim not only his political successes but also his class-standing as a member of the French-Canadian bourgeoisie. While he was a political representative of French Canada’s working-class constituency, Cartier also sought to portray himself as a “confirmed anglophile who…turned to London for his clothes, his status symbols, and his ideology.” Historian Brian Young explains further, writing, “Cartier and many of his [French-Canadian bourgeoisie] peers…sought legitimacy and security in British values and institutions….They used ‘Britishness’ to…guarantee their social position.” As a result, they looked to purchase

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22 He held his first post as a member for the Vèrcheres riding from 1848 until 1863, and then sat for Montreal-East from 1863-67. Young, 56.
23 Management Plan, 17.
26 Young, xiii, 48.
residences that might act, by virtue of their architectural style, as status symbols.\textsuperscript{27} To accommodate these desires, architects and builders often looked to building designs in, for example, London, and used smooth, finished grey stone from Montreal and the surrounding areas to produce houses with “a sober classical style,” characteristics that are hallmarks of the British Neoclassical style.\textsuperscript{28} In terms of Cartier’s houses, both erected in 1837, the builders used cut stone to build flat, linear exterior walls so as to enhance the visual symmetry and regularity of each house; the Neoclassical façade of both houses thus replicated the appearance of a nineteenth-century London-style townhouse.\textsuperscript{29} The structural aspects of Cartier’s homes, however, denote “\textit{des influences françaises}” or, more particularly, measures put in place to accommodate urban living conditions in Quebec.\textsuperscript{30} For example, both houses border the public walkway alongside the street as the lot size would not allow for the integration of an English-style courtyard.\textsuperscript{31} Following Cartier’s death in 1873, the family retained ownership of both houses up until 1951. During the tenure of the family’s ownership, in 1893, the city of Montreal extended the width of Berri Street, which required that the size of the east house be reduced three metres. As a result, structural changes were made to the house that not only altered its size and façade, but also required that a new roof be installed on both houses; builders replaced the tin-plate-covered-

\textsuperscript{27} As Jean-Claude Marsan explains, in Montreal during the Victorian era, residential design and construction allowed for the expression of “the Victorian man’s strengths and virtues, his eccentricities, his individuality, or his wealth. For the first time, perhaps, architecture would not be regarded as a form of art subjected to its own rules but rather as a symbol of an admired and coveted reality” (\textit{Montreal in Evolution: Historical Analysis of the Development of Montreal’s Architecture and Urban Environment} [Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1981] 189).


\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Management Plan}, 17-8; Maitland, 24, 27.


\textsuperscript{31} London townhouses typically contained a courtyard, a space that oftentimes sank into the ground and separated the house from the street. Given that smaller plot sizes in nineteenth-century urban Montreal could not accommodate this inclusion, Cartier’s houses sit directly adjacent to and in alignment with Notre Dame Street. \textit{Énoncé d’Intégrité Commémorative}, 10.
pitched roof with a Second Empire style curb-roof or “French roof.”32 Ensuing social and political developments would bring about more changes in the houses’ purpose, structure and design.

In the 1960s, nation-building frameworks developed by Quebecers and Canadians encouraged desires of both groups to commemorate their respective pasts. These desires not only inspired but also helped shape the second stage in the house’s development, in that the residences came to be venerated as monuments of Canada’s past. At the outset of the decade, Francophone Quebecers launched what came to be known as Quebec’s Quiet Revolution, seeking to combat the colonized aspects of their governance and identity.33 In other words, people worked to empower and subsequently “modernize” Quebec’s government so as to advance a more secularized, urbanized Québécois identity, one that promoted a “more civic, territorially-based nationalism.”34 In so doing, proponents of the Quiet Revolution brought about the establishment of Quebec’s ministry of education, which transferred control of mass education from the church to the state; the creation of Hydro-Québec, which allowed the state to manage electricity production; and the development of Charter of the French Language (1977), otherwise known as Bill 101, which designated Quebec a “French-language society” so that Francophone Quebecers constituted the territorial majority.35 The Quiet Revolution also inspired the creation of a provincial Ministère des Affaires culturelles (1961), a governmental bureaucracy that classified, restored and maintained Quebec’s heritage properties and, in doing so, developed historic sites that would inspire Québécois nationalism.36 Notably, it was in this particular decade that the

35 Dickinson and Young, 319; Rocher, 206; Richard Handler, Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988) 173.
36 Handler, 1985, 196-7, 200.
Canadian federal government also mounted commemorative programs designed, according to Richard Handler, “[to assert] its own nationalism in response to the claims of Quebec.”

In the wake of the Quiet Revolution, the federal government decided to mount a series of programs designed to honour those it determined to be “eminent Canadians,” seemingly in order to revive the primacy of Canadian nationalism. Such endeavours demonstrate that commemorative activities are, as historian John Gillis explains, “by definition social and political,…[they] involve the coordination of individual and group memories, whose results may appear consensual when they are in fact the product of processes of intense contest [and] struggle.” Significantly, the coordination of public memories within heritage sites typically requires modifying characterizations of historical figures, such as Sir George-Étienne Cartier. For example, in May 1959, Canadian historian Donald Creighton submitted what he considered to be an “official and correct,” “authoritative” list of “Fathers of Confederation” to Canada’s Historic Sites and Monuments Board so that it would be held in trust by the Public Archives of Canada (now Library and Archives Canada). Board members then turned their attention to Cartier’s Montreal residences. In October 1964, as part of a developing federal policy to commemorate the Fathers of Confederation, the Board designated Cartier’s houses as being of “national historical importance.” Moreover, Board members moved that the Canadian government purchase and restore both houses so that they might operate as a national historic site. Notably, the same year, the Quebec Ministère des Affaires culturelle, along with City of Montreal, granted the region in which Cartier’s houses were located “historic district status,”

37 Handler, 1985, 213.
40 Furthermore, the Board stipulated that the graves of those listed be maintained by the Board “at the expense of the nation” (“Extrait des procès-verbal de la réunion de la CLMHC tenue du 25 au 29 mai 1959”; quoted in Énoncé d’Intégrité Commémorative, 22).
41 Management Plan, 9.
42 It was also suggested that the program include the preservation of a house of Sir John A. Macdonald’s. “Extrait des procès-verbal de la réunion de la CLMHC tenue du 27 au 29 octobre 1964”; quoted in Énoncé d’Intégrité Commémorative, 23.
formally establishing the historic district of *Vieux Montréal/Old Montreal*. In June 1973, Parks Canada, charged with the Board’s 1964 recommendation, purchased the houses and instituted a research program devoted to Cartier in order “learn more about the times, life and work of this illustrious figure and the features of his Montreal residences.”

In the early 1980s, Parks Canada began exploring how it might turn the houses into a museum, which activated the third stage in the residences’ development – their incarnation as a national historic site. In Parks Canada’s first “development concept,” published in May 1982, the agency stipulated that it would develop the site in order to “provide visitors with an opportunity to become acquainted with Sir George-Étienne Cartier and to highlight his contribution to Canadian political life.” More specifically, Parks Canada proposed that the site would use “exhibitions and furnishings” to explore two primary aspects of the original owner’s life, “Cartier the politician and legislator, the statesman and architect of Confederation” and “Cartier the Montrealer, a representative of the bourgeoisie of his era.” Given that the façade of the east house had been shortened by three metres in 1893, the agency determined that it would be “almost impossible to restore it to its original state” and recommended that the structure be “rehabilitated” so that it might house a series of thematic exhibitions, installed on both the ground and first floors, tracing Cartier’s political career and achievements. As far as the west house was concerned, Parks Canada suggested that, because “it would be almost impossible to create an understanding of Cartier ‘the man’ without evoking the environment in which he lived,…[it was advisable] to decorate and furnish various rooms in the ‘west house’ according to the style of the

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45 *Development Concept*, 15.

46 *Development Concept*, 16, 17.

47 *Development Concept*, 13, 17.
Moreover, the agency stated that the interpretive programs would be “aimed particularly at the Montreal public, considered to be the park’s special target group.” In so doing, it aimed to show Montrealers that Confederation represented “the system which still shapes our political institutions”; what is more, in portraying the lifestyle of the mid-nineteenth century Montreal bourgeoisie, the agency hoped to “provide visitors with a more concrete means of visualizing various facets of the past.”

One month after the publication of the agency’s “development concept,” Parks Canada mounted a public consultation program to make the Montreal public aware of the agency’s objectives and, subsequent to that, allow the public to make recommendations concerning the site’s development. On the evenings of 16 and 17 June 1982, Parks Canada presented the scope of the project to various parties, including interested members of the Montreal populace, historians and local heritage agencies, as well as historical societies. The agency stated that it intended to develop the site in order to “provide visitors with an opportunity to become acquainted with Sir George-Étienne Cartier and to highlight his contribution to Canadian political life,” an approach that would be “aimed particularly at the Montreal public.” Members of La Fédération des sociétés d’histoire du Québec pointed out that recent developments in Canada’s political framework might require that Parks Canada take a more nuanced approach in its interpretation so as to appeal to the local citizenry. More specifically, according to the Fédération, because the federal government had patriated Canada’s constitution earlier that year, Parks Canada’s proposal to commemorate Cartier as a “Father of Confederation” could also be perceived as a “political gesture” that Montrealers might oppose.

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48 Development Concept, 17.
49 Development Concept, 15.
50 Development Concept, 16.
51 Consultation Program, 7.
52 Twelve agencies not only participated in the program but also submitted comments and suggestions, groups, including L’Association des propriétaires du Vieux Montréal, Le Conseil des monuments et sites du Québec, La Fédération des sociétés d’histoire du Québec, Héritage Montréal and le ministère des Affaires culturelles du Québec. Consultation Program, 9-10.
53 Consultation Program, 26.
Given that the federal government had advanced the Constitutional Act (1982) to confirm Canada’s existence as a political federation in response to Quebec’s 1980 Referendum campaign, Quebecers perceived this legislation as evidence the federal government’s desire to eclipse Canada’s “constituent duality” – the “two founding nations” ideal. The Constitution Act, signed into law by Queen Elizabeth II on 17 April 1982, formally transferred the control of Canada’s constitution from British Parliamentary jurisdiction to the Canadian government. The Act consisted of the renamed British North America Act, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and an amending formula, which allowed the federal government to make changes to the constitution so long as the changes met with the approval of Parliament and seven provinces representing a combined total of 50 percent of the Canadian population; because previous legislation required the unanimous consent of all provinces, the 1982 Act effectively stripped individual provinces, such as Quebec, of their right to veto. On the day the Act was signed, Quebecers demonstrated their opposition in various ways. The Quebec government proclaimed its opposition to the Act by flying the provincial flag at half-mast on all government buildings, while in Montreal over 25,000 people marched down the streets in protest. Seemingly cognizant of these political and, by extension, social tensions, La Fédération des sociétés d’histoire du Québec advised Parks Canada that the site’s interpretation “should go beyond the political element” in order to attract visitors. Explaining further, the Fédération states, “The interpretation center should not be too oriented to the man, and thus too specialized. The period and the political, economic, social, cultural and religions conditions should be emphasized to interest a greater group of people.”

55 Margaret Conrad and Alvin Finkel, Canada: A National History (Toronto: Longman, 2003) 516-7. The Act thus sought to promote “the principle of equalization between richer and poorer provinces” (Desruisseaux et al., 254). Unanimous consent of all provinces and both houses of Parliament, however, “would continue to be required for amendments affecting representation in the House of Commons, Senate, and Supreme Court and for changes affecting the use of the French and English languages” (Conrad and Finkel, 517).
56 Desruisseaux et al., 260.
57 Consultation Program, 32.
Likewise, historian Brian Young recommended that “[t]he site should emphasize [Cartier’s] contribution to Montreal, Quebec and Canadian society rather than to ‘Canadian political life.’”\footnote{Brian Young, “Letter from historian Brian Young”; quoted in the \textit{Public Consultation Program}, 27, 31.}

The public consultation program encouraged Parks Canada to take into account the contemporary political and social context so that it provided a “more rounded” representation of the historical figure within the site.\footnote{Consultation Program, 46.} Various participants, including members of the public, \textit{La Fédération des sociétés d’histoire du Québec} and historians like Brian Young, advocated that the agency avoid, to use Parks Canada’s term, “hero-worship.” The agency therefore stated that it would design the site so as to “go beyond the political element…. [and] situate Cartier in relation to his time and social environment.”\footnote{Consultation Program, 31.} In other words, it determined that, in order to avoid allusions to “political partisanship” or the presentation of Cartier through what might be perceived as a “tendentious prism,” it would follow “the essence of historical analysis as it is practiced today.”\footnote{Consultation Program, 31, 46.} Parks Canada further explained, “More and more, historians are developing the reflex, a good one in our opinion, of analyzing people or events in relation to their economic, social, cultural and political environment, making them more rounded. Studies done by Parks Canada on George-Étienne Cartier reflect this ‘whole’ view, which will orient the communications we present.”\footnote{Consultation Program, 31.} As a result, when the Sir George-Étienne Cartier National Historic Site of Canada officially opened to the public in 1985, the agency used both houses to construct a site that would give people “an opportunity to discover Cartier and his work, life in Montreal in his era, and the habits and customs of the time.”\footnote{Parks Canada, \textit{Sir George-Étienne Cartier National Historic Site of Canada: Lower Canada’s Most Influential Politician Lived Here} (Ottawa: Parks Canada, n.d.) 1.} More specifically, it turned the east house into an interpretation centre with permanent exhibitions installed on both the ground and first floors representing for visitors “Cartier’s life and career, as seen through a contemporary
ideological and socioeconomic prism.” In contrast, the west house contains restored period rooms that act as a “historical setting” within which interpreters, posing as household servants or members of the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie, conduct guided tours. Parks Canada thus arranged the east house so that the exhibitions acknowledge Cartier’s life and political achievements while the west house allows visitors to “live history.” Moreover, significantly, Parks Canada deemed it “essential” that it offer “new exhibits and activities” to “ensure constant local visitation.” Because the exhibitions in the east house were designed to be permanent fixtures in the museum’s representation of the past, site workers began developing programs that dealt with particular themes to be performed in the west house.

In the late 1980s, site workers designed programming for the west house that took into account the architectural style of the residences and the identity, as well as the cultural predilections, of the houses’ original owner. Prior to the opening of the site, Parks Canada workers, such as conservator Georges-Pierre Léonidoff, pointed out that Montreal’s historic sites typically garnered the lowest attendance rates in the month of December. Accordingly, in 1988, the Sir George-Étienne Cartier National Historic Site of Canada mounted its first Noël victorien/Victorian Christmas program. Taking into account Cartier’s cultural preferences or, more specifically, as Young puts it, Cartier’s “persistent anglophilism,” site workers decorated

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65 The west house also contains two exhibition areas smaller than those located in the east house, which display artefacts and information pertaining to themes explored in the site’s guided tours. Significantly, these exhibitions are temporary in that they are set up to compliment the content or concepts discussed in the period rooms, such as “the bourgeois lifestyle, Cartier’s built heritage, and some of his Montreal haunts.” Management Plan, 2007, 20, 29-30.
66 Consultation Program, 47.
67 In order to prove his point, Léonidoff recorded the annual visitation rates of certain historic sites in Montreal, comparing the number of visitors these sites brought in during the summer months with the number of visits generated in December. For example, in 1980-1, the Du Calvet House received 50,361 visitors; 10,295 visitors came in July while only 903 people visited the site in December. In 1981, La Château Ramesay received 60,537 visitors; 9,584 people attended the site in August whereas far fewer visitors came in the month of December, 670 visitors to be exact. Georges-Pierre Léonidoff, Parc Historique National Sir George-Étienne Cartier: Concept-Plan d’Ameublement Historique (Quebec: Parcs Canada, Service au Public, Mars 1983) 48-9.
the period rooms with decorations from the Victorian time period. The program continued to be offered every year thereafter and has since been expanded to include within the confines of the west house an artefactual exhibition showcasing period gifts, games and decorations, a seasonal soundtrack piped into the period rooms and guided tours offered by costumed interpreters.

The enduring popularity of this program indicates the extent to which site workers work to develop particular historical narratives in the west house so that the site’s reanimation eclipses or obfuscates political connotations. For example, in 1998, the site received over 3000 visitors during the 25 days during which the program was run. Three years later, Parks Canada decided to close the site in January and February. Accordingly, the “shorter operating period” caused average attendance to “level[ ] off”; while it received approximately 30,000 visitors annually between 1985 and 1995, in 2003, it brought in only 15,700 visitors. Notably, the Christmas tour continued to be one of the most popular programs, generating 18 percent of annual attendance in 2004 in the four-to-five-week period that defines the Christmas season. Interpreters reanimate the west house in the guise of a seasonal celebration to augment exhibitions of Cartier’s political accomplishments and family life, which are located in the east house, thereby demonstrating site workers’ efforts to produce programs that are notably devoid of apparent political associations so as to bolster site visitation. As conservator Diane Bélanger explains, “L’événement ‘Noël victorien’ permet au site un accroissement et une diversification de la clientèle, un accroissement des revenus, une diversification des activités qui utilise les éléments de l’exposition permanente et enfin, une augmentation de la visibilité et du pouvoir d’attraction du site.”

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68 Young, 136. Parks Canada conservators also provided research and mounted a temporary exhibition in the two exhibition rooms in the west house, entitled “Nos Noël d’antan/Our Christmas of Old,” which displayed various nineteenth-century toys and games with accompanying text panels. Diane Bélanger, Lieu Historique National de Sir-George-Étienne Cartier: Le Noël victorien de la maison George-Étienne Cartier (Parcs Canada: Services Ethnologiques, Avril 1999) 2
69 Bélanger, 2
71 Author’s translation: “The ‘Victorian Christmas’ event allows the site to increase and diversify its clientele, increase income, diversify activities that use elements of the permanent exhibition and, finally, increase the visibility and attractiveness of the site.” Bélanger, 2
While the site’s commemorative designation requires that it monumentalize the identity of its original owner, the reanimation, most particularly in the context of Christmas program, concentrates on specific aspects of the historic celebration in order to encourage site visitation. As one interpreter explains, the Christmas program is really a history of Christmas time. [It is] a Victorian Christmas exhibition using the house of the Cartiers, but we’re not using the history of the Cartiers for the Christmas time…[I]n this national historic site, there is the reconstructed house – the family home in which [Cartier’s] wife and daughters lived… so this leads us to give interpretation about the…festivities around that period and their evolution.

Based on this characterization, one might suggest that the restored period setting in the west house allows the representation of the festive celebration to take precedence over the identity of the original owner. Therefore, in the following section, I consider how the site, upon reanimation during the Christmas season, encourages visitors to “live history” so as to cultivate amongst the local constituency a communal sense of cultural history. More specifically, I take into account the fact that the east house contains exhibitions that acknowledge Cartier’s life and political achievements, thereby allowing the west house to host a markedly depoliticized performance of the past.

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72 Casey, 12. A 1996 visitor survey found that a quarter of the site’s clientele came from Montreal, half from outside the Quebec region and less than a quarter from the United States. Marie-Andrée Leith, *Lieu Historique National de Sir-George-Étienne-Cartier: Étude sur les clientèle actuelles individuelles* (Québec: Service du marketing et des affaires du program, Parcs Canada, Mars 1996) 1. In 2000, a study of 421 visitors surveys completed at the site in the summer and fall of that year found that 42 percent of visitors came from the Montreal region and 16 percent from the province of Quebec; 65 percent of the surveys were completed in French. Alain Rainville, *Lieu Historique National du Canada Sir-George-Étienne-Cartier: Étude sur la satisfaction des visiteurs été/automne 2000* (Québec: Service du marketing et des affaires du program, Parcs Canada, October 2001) 2. The latest survey, conducted in the summer of 2007, found that, based on analysis of 356 completed surveys, 21 percent of visitors came from the Montreal region, 13 from Quebec and 14 from elsewhere in Canada; 55 percent of the surveys were completed in French, a 15 percent decrease from 2000. Service de la recherche en science sociales, *Lieu Historique National du Canada Sir-George-Étienne-Cartier: Étude sur la satisfaction des visiteurs été 2007* (Québec: Centre de services du Québec, Parcs Canada, Avril 2008) 20. Based on these statistics, the site’s primary demographic continues to be French-speaking Quebecers living in the Montreal region, although this trend seems to be decreasing, as the rate of Canadians attending the site – those living either in Quebec or other provinces – has been steadily increasing. Furthermore, while the percentage of francophone speakers attending the site also seems to be proportionally decreasing, it is still the primary language of choice amongst visitors.

73 Kammen, 662, 701.
“Living History” in the West House: Constructing Cartier’s Christmas

The Sir George-Étienne Cartier National Historic Site of Canada has been designed so that the east house acts as an interpretation centre exhibiting Cartier’s “life’s journey,” while the west house’s period rooms showcase the lifestyle of the mid-nineteenth century Montreal bourgeoisie. In this consideration of Parks Canada’s management of the museum, I explore how the federal agency has arranged the site so that it not only venerates a French-Canadian historical figure but also performs to draw in Quebecers, a particularly complex endeavour. As Richard Handler points out, “What to federalists may seem a legitimate aspiration to include all Canadian ‘subcultures’ as full-fledged constituents of a greater Canadian whole is to nationalists in Quebec nothing more than cultural imperialism.” Accordingly, I use this section to consider how the site’s arrangement allows for part of it to be reanimated in the context of its Victorian Christmas program in order to appeal to Montrealers, using the 2008 season as my case study.

75 Handler, 1985, 213.
In so doing, I hope to more fully convey how site workers use a particular theme to interpret the period rooms so that the living history portion not only projects but also privileges a specific “way of life.” Subsequent to this, I interrogate the ways in which the site’s performance

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2008 Schedule. Notably, the west house also contains two “smaller” exhibitions on the first floor, which display both artefactual arrangements and text panels designed to complement the theme showcased in the period rooms. Entering into the west house, visitors first go through one of the first two temporary exhibitions to reach the period rooms. This first exhibition explores the origins of the decorated Christmas tree and greeting card exchange. The second exhibition, into which visitors move after having toured the period rooms on the first floor, examines how Christmas festivities developed from a commemoration of the birth of Jesus Christ to incorporate gift exchange. Management Plan, 2007, 29. My analysis of the tour content, however, focuses on the interpreter content because the site offers guided tours to “create an experience with visitors.” As one interpreter explains, the guided tours “enhance” the object-based exhibitions, but it is the interpreters who relay information to visitors so that visitors might experience what it “felt like to live back then.” As I explain below, the site’s performative elements are believed to be more memorable than their encounters with object-based exhibitions. Management Plan, 2007, 31; Richard Handler and William Saxton, “Dyssimulation: Reflexivity, Narrative, and the Quest for Authenticity in ‘Living History,’” Cultural Anthropology 3.3 (August 1988): 245.
encourages visitors to achieve a “contextual” departure from the present so that they might remember history as a personal – rather than political – experience.77

Because each house functions as a visitors’ centre and living history museum respectively, object-based exhibitions portray Cartier’s life while the furnished rooms reflect the lifestyle of both the original owner and his peer group. The west house therefore operates as an “immersive environment,” one that visitors experience and thus find, according to Parks Canada, more “memorable” than the object-based exhibitions.78 Since the east house’s exhibitions are permanent fixtures, site workers devise thematic programs solely for the west house, programs that the agency itself characterizes as “highlights of Greater Montreal’s museum tradition.”79 Parks Canada explains further, stating that while the east house’s exhibits “ensure[ ] proper communication of the site’s commemorative intent,” it is the “dynamic interpretation activities” that “capture[ ] the richness of Canadian identity and offer[ ] visitors an opportunity to better understand the history of both Quebec and Canada.”80 Furthermore, these programs aim to offer “a memorable and exceptional heritage experience” in order to “generate[ ] pride among the old town’s population and among Canadians of all origins.”81 Therefore, the museum’s living history programs, such as the Victorian Christmas tour, reanimate the west house so that part of the site locates visitors within an experiential atmosphere, one that works to generate amongst Montrealers a sense of pride in Canada’s past.

The site’s arrangement requires visitors first go through the east house and then proceed to the west one so that, as one interpreter explains, visitors “will make good use of the rooms where we [give] information about the man.” Upon entering the museum, visitors must progress through the exhibition on ground floor of the east house and up to the first floor, moving through that exhibit space to get to the west house’s period rooms. This layout necessitates visitors travel

77 Casey, 10-11; Timothy, xiii.
through exhibitions designed to convey, as mentioned above, the museum’s “commemorative intent” or, more particularly, the fact that the site originally served as the private residences of “one of Canada’s most distinguished politicians.”

The ground floor exhibition represents for visitors “the effervescence of a fast-growing metropolis.”

Figure 27. Ground Floor Exhibition, East House (December 2008). Photograph by author.

In other words, it illustrates various social, economic, industrial and political changes that took place in Montreal during Cartier’s lifetime, using both text panels and historical artefacts, such as rifles, a military jacket, a woman’s dress and a grandfather clock, as well as theatrical props and other accoutrements, such as mannequins and puppets. The exhibition on the first floor, in turn, consists of two separate assemblages that document Cartier’s life span and political career. The first assemblage includes a series of lecterns – text panels containing both copies of historical

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photographs and graphic illustrations mounted on stands – that line the perimeter of the room; each lectern addresses specific events in Cartier’s life, including his birth, his appointment as the Grand Trunk Railway’s primary solicitor, his investiture as a baronet by Queen Victoria in 1868 and his death, the result of kidney disease known as Bright’s disease. The second assemblage consists of a round table that sits in the middle of the room with eight white mannequins positioned around it, seven of whom sit while one stands.

Figure 28. First Floor Exhibition, East House (December 2008). Photograph by author.

On the table in front of the standing figure is a stack of six books, signalling to visitors that this figure represents Cartier; the titles on the books’ spines refer to political reforms that Cartier helped develop, including, to name a few, Confederation and the 1852 parliamentary bill that resulted in the creation of the Grand Trunk Railway Company. In locating Cartier as one man amongst others, the arrangement aims to convey to visitors “l’esprit de collaboration associé aux
In contrast, the west house’s restored period rooms showcase the bourgeoisie lifestyle.

In the context of the Victorian Christmas tour, the west house’s reanimation allows interpreters to explore “what happened at Christmas time amongst the upper-class.” In order to authorize the way in which they choose to represent the past for visitors, site workers look to documented evidence of Cartier’s cultural tastes. While there is no primary evidence that sets out how or if the Cartier family celebrated Christmas, what information survives indicates that it is, as one interpreter puts it, “believable that the Cartiers did put up a Christmas tree.” They cite, for example, a list of the contents of Cartier’s library, which were auctioned off two years after his death in 1873, and which included numerous back copies of the *Illustrated London News*; although it is unknown whether he owned a copy, the front page of the December 1848 issue shows the British Royal family – Queen Victoria, and Prince Albert and their children – standing around a decorated tree.85 (The caption underneath the print read, “Christmas Tree at Windsor Castle.”86)

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84 Author’s translation: “the collaborative spirit associated with the reforms.” Design + Communication Inc., *Parc Historique National Sir George-Étienne Cartier: Extrait du Cahier de Réalisation Préliminaire* (Québec: Parcs Canada, Mars 1984) n.p. Similarly, in an interview with the author, one interpreter points out that Sir George-Étienne Cartier is not only a politician but also “one of the founders of Canada…. George-Étienne Cartier is not the only politician included in that mission.”

85 Young, 40-1, 43.

In light of this image, and the suggestion that Cartier may have seen it, interpreters posit that he was aware of the “popularity of having a Christmas tree just like the Christmas tree set up in the Windsor Castle.” Accordingly, museum staff construct speculative object-based representations of what might have been in place during the Cartier family Christmas celebration. Situating the Cartiers within a general “history of Christmas time,” interpreters then use the artefactual arrangements to discuss the type of celebration that might have been mounted by the “10 to 15 percent of the population that were spending life like the Cartiers.” In other words, interpreters discuss how certain festive traditions and activities, which originated in antiquity and evolved most particularly during the mid-nineteenth century, were performed by members of Montreal’s upper-class. According to one interpreter, the tour’s thematic focus and interpretive content are
deliberately designed to draw in visitors because, as she puts it, “with politics, it’s not something that will attract the mass of people.”

In contrast to the sites discussed in the previous two chapters, costumed interpreters at the Cartier Houses routinely assume character roles, performing what is known as “first-person interpretation,” even as they act as guides to provide visitors – Anglophones and Francophones alike – with an informed experience. In the west house, visitors meet different types of interpreters on each floor, each type posing as a member of a different class. On the first floor, interpreters pose as servants, while those on the ground floor present themselves as upper-class individuals; in these roles, interpreters work both to portray the “interdependence between these two social classes” and to “create an experience with visitors.”

Notably, over the course of the guided tour, interpreters take questions from visitors and adjust their approach accordingly. As one interpreter explains, “People know that we’re characters and we start to talk in a certain way,” but if people ask questions, “you have to get out of your character and then be a guide and then answer the question.” What is more, interpreters deliver information in both French and English, depending on the language preferred or used by visitors, although interpreters are quick to point out that the type of information they relay depends on where visitors are from, rather than what language they speak. According to one interpreter, “If [visitors] are from Montreal, they have something in common, even if they’re different language speakers. But if the English language speakers are from the United States, well, then, the information can be totally different.”

Another interpreter states that being able to give both Anglophone and Francophone Montrealers the “same basic information” so that they might have the “same experience” signals “the importance of being professional and doing your best” for visitors. Therefore, my analysis of the Cartier House’s Victorian Christmas tour considers the type of information interpreters discuss with visitors – what sort of traditions and activities are discussed at length – in order to interrogate what types of messages the site conveys through its reanimation. In other words, I

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87 2008 Schedule.
explore how interpreters encourage visitors to experience “what it felt like to live back then” so as to “depoliticize” not only the past but also the present.88

*West House – first floor/le premier étage*

Because the exhibitions in the east house represent developments in nineteenth-century Montreal society and significant events in Cartier’s life and political career, the west house, in the context of the Victorian Christmas tour, provides a “historical setting” within which interpreters conduct guided tours, discussing with visitors activities typically performed by Cartier’s peers, the Montreal bourgeoisie.89 In other words, the east house uses exhibitions to introduce visitors to the history of both the region and the site, while the west house has been reanimated so that it allows visitors to “live history.” In the period rooms, interpreters typically point out decorations and artefactual arrangements, describing for visitors how the upper-classes might have used particular objects in the context of their festive celebration; subsequent to that, they discuss the lineage of these traditions, explaining how certain activities developed out of both religious and “pagan customs.” Interpreters therefore not only “give [information] about the festival and festivities…and their evolution,” they also use the artefactual arrangements to describe for visitors “how Christmas changed in the mid-nineteenth century.” Guided tours begin on the first floor of the west house; following their passage through the east house, visitors enter the west house, coming first into the room that has been restored as the master bedroom, where interpreters, dressed as servants, greet them.

Interpreters use the artefacts in the master bedroom, such as the series of cards sitting on the dresser and secretary and a crèche, located on the table positioned at the foot of the bed, to discuss nineteenth-century Christian as well as what are referred to on the tours as “pagan” rituals.

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88 Handler and Saxton, 245; Kammen, 662, 701.
89 Management Plan, 1985, 30
Figure 30. Master Bedroom, West House (December 2008). Photograph by author.

They routinely begin by calling attention to the cards, explaining that, in the nineteenth-century, people began purchasing greeting cards, which upper-class wives and ladies would send out to friends and family over the course of the Christmas season. Interpreters state that cards illustrating the “spring season” were typically imported to Canada while others, such as the one depicting a family sliding down the Mont-Royal Hill, were “Canadian [cards]…that [show] the winter season.”90 While consideration of the cards allows interpreters to describe particular nineteenth-century customs, they use the crèche to introduce the celebration’s religious aspects.

The location of the crèche permits interpreters not only to address the Nativity theme but also to describe connections between Christian traditions and pagan ones or, more specifically,  

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90 14 December 2008.
practices developed in classical antiquity. Interpreters therefore use particular artefacts to trace for visitors the larger history of the Christmas celebration.

Figure 31. Master Bedroom, West House (December 2008). Photograph by author.

Pointing to the artefact, interpreters explain that Ursuline nuns in Quebec created crèches with wax figures rendered so as to represent the infant Jesus in order to both “prepare and thank Jesus.” Interpreters therefore use this particular object to recall for visitors the religious aspect of the Christmas season and then go on to describe the connection between the Nativity celebration and festivities performed in ancient times. For example, the crèche, according to one interpreter, is “there just to remind us of the birth of Jesus. It’s a symbol of the Nativity. The birth of Jesus on 25 December was a chosen date. You see, it wasn’t his real birthday.” Interpreters routinely stipulate that, in 354 A.D., the Roman emperor Constantine and Pope

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91 14 December 2008.
92 14 December 2008.
Liberius chose to commemorate Christ’s birth on 25 December, notably a time of year during which many other “pagan customs” and festivities took place, including Saturnalia—a week-long festival celebrated between 17 and 24 December that concluded with a “big party” and gift exchange on 25 December—and winter solstice. In terms of the winter solstice celebrations, interpreters explain that, during the period of classical antiquity, people generally believed that the sun disappeared on 21 December and 25 December marked the sun’s return, which they celebrated putting on various festive events. The emperor and pope therefore chose to venerate Christ’s birth in and around the winter solstice celebration in order to establish a connection between popular customs and Christianity and also encourage people to convert to the Christian faith. As one interpreter puts it,

So in the winter solstice, you know that is the shortest day in the year—December 21st…[people] thought that the sun was disappearing. They thought…[that] it would be the end of time and for them. But then—surprise—around December 25 something will happen—a miracle—light. The sun will come back brighter than ever. And then they thought that they should do something every year in order for the sun to come back because they weren't sure if the sun will come back. So they made a big, big fire just to celebrate the sun and also that's related to fire light and Jesus—light of the world. So you see why [Emperor Constantine and Pope Liberius] chose December 25th? Because they wanted people that were celebrating all the pagan customs to come and embrace the new religion and bring them to light. You see? That's the reason why they chose December 25th.  

Using the interpretation of the crèche to advance a discussion of connections between nineteenth-century Christmas traditions and classical antiquity, interpreters encourage visitors to take into account the larger and longer history of the festive celebration. In other words, the interpretive content considers practices from ancient times and explores how these specific customs and events informed nineteenth-century Victorian activities.

In the adjacent drawing room, the artefactual arrangement allows interpreters to discuss ways in which Cartier’s peer group might have entertained guests in their homes. Interpreters begin by introducing the drawing room to visitors, describing it a space in which people would

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retire after dinner. Calling attention to the piano located alongside the side wall and the tea service laid out on a table in the back of the room, interpreters explain that people oftentimes would listen to musical performances and have tea in this particular space.

Figure 32. Drawing Room, West House (December 2008). Photograph by author.

Sitting on the table in the middle of the room is a lantern used to put on shows, a form of entertainment that was, as one interpreter puts it, “very popular” in the nineteenth-century. She goes onto explain that because the lantern uses light to project images onto walls, people of the time often thought that the device had “some magical powers” and oftentimes called it a “magic lantern.” Using the lantern, interpreters project images of different “gift giving characters” that
appeared in various print media throughout the nineteenth-century, including St. Nicholas, Jesus portrayed as a young boy on a greeting card, and three different versions of Santa Claus.95

The magic lantern show functions as an interpretive tool in that interpreters explain how particular aspects of each image reflect specific socio-economic developments in nineteenth-century Canadian society. For example, one interpreter points out that the 1875 character of Santa Claus has a faded outfit and his facial expression suggests that he seems “unhappy with something.” She goes onto explain that “he is unhappy because, in 1875, it was the year of an economic crisis here in Canada. So the illustrator, Henri Julien, he wanted to show people that you could share, Christmas is a time to share with others. That’s the symbolism related to the image – share.” The 1884 image of Santa Claus, on the other hand, reflects how things had changed. The interpreter characterizes this particular Santa as one that is “fat but…happy. But there is more to it, there is drink and you could have a happy life, happy festivities. So the images, they…tell you that you could celebrate as you wish. But as you know, an image sends us information – it shows what happens by eating too much.”96 Following the show’s conclusion, interpreters instruct visitors to proceed downstairs where they meet with another interpreter.

West House – Ground floor/ le rez-de-chaussée

Entering the parlour on the ground floor, visitors are greeted by a second interpreter, one posing as an upper-class woman. The interpreter explains that she is there to “[help] Mme. Cartier…decorate the house.” Because she is, as she puts it, “knowledgeable about the latest fashions and [knows] how to decorate the house,” she proceeds to give visitors some “hints” so

95 Interpreters explain that Jesus Christ could be considered a “donator or gift giving character” because a lamb appears in the image. “The lamb is an allegorical figure of himself, that’s why it’s in the image and also [why he could] be seen as a donator” – because he gave himself to the world (14 December 2008).
96 14 December 2008. While interpreters do not state this, the second exhibition on the first floor of the west house contains an informational placard showing each of the three Santa figures that are projected in the drawing room. According to the information on the placard, illustrator Henri Julien produced the 1875 version, which appeared in the December 1875 issue of the Canadian Illustrated News. The 1884 image, in contrast, comes from the French illustrated serial, Le Monde illustré.
that they might decorate their houses “in the latest fashion.” For instance, she recommends draping evergreens over cornices, mantelpieces and doorways because the greenery conveys “the hope that nature will live again.” Turning her attention to the decorated tabletop Christmas tree, the interpreter explains that the tree is “dressed in the German fashion.”

Figure 33. Parlour, West House (December 2008). Photograph by author.

In contrast to the introduction of the Christmas tree offered in the other two sites where its Anglo-Saxon lineage is stressed, significantly, interpreters here introduce the tree as a German tradition imported to both Britain and France in the eighteenth-century with German immigrants settling in these particular states, although, as one interpreter explains, “what really helped spread the fashion [in Canada] is…the Royal Family.”

While the interpretation acknowledges different factors that contributed to the popularity of the decorated Christmas tree, overall, interpreters emphasize the idea that the Montreal bourgeoisie put up trees in order to follow the British Royal tradition. According to one interpreter,

Queen Victoria married Prince Albert of Saxe-Cobourg. He was from Germany, and he took that fashion into the Windsor Court. An important illustration of the Royal Family around the Christmas tree will be drawn and published in the very first illustrated paper, which is the Illustrated London News in 1848. We can say from that moment the fashion started to spread amongst the wealthy,… approximately 10 percent of the population [who] could afford to have a Christmas tree.

In referencing this sort of historical evidence, the interpreter characterizes the celebration that might have been performed by wealthy Montrealers as one that looked to standards set by the Victorian British monarchy and aristocracy. Seemingly in an effort to offset this ethnicized conceptualization, interpreters point out that some of the tree’s decorations were also used in festivities put on in ancient times.

In discussing how particular decorative elements of the nineteenth-century Christmas celebration relate to classical antiquity, interpreters expand the site’s frame of reference to acquaint visitors with a more extensive history of Christmas.

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98 6 December 2008.
99 She also cites the literary works of Charles Dickens, the “great British author,” who wrote short stories in which he oftentimes described the Christmas tree as “that pretty German toy” (6 December 2008).
For instance, interpreters call attention to the candles perched on the tree’s branches, referring to them as “the oldest decoration [we have] in our home.”\textsuperscript{100} Accordingly, they use the candles to

\textsuperscript{100} 6 December 2008; 13 December 2008. Similarly, in the French tours, the interpreter states, “La chandelle est en fait la décoration la plus ancienne dans la maison” (14 December 2008). Author’s translation: “The candle is the oldest decoration in the house.”
discuss the connection between the Victorian celebration and festivities in ancient times. Christmas, they explain, commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ as “the light of the world/ la lumière du monde,” and the candles symbolize Jesus Christ. What is more, candles were also used in the Festival of the Light, a ritualistic celebration dating back to antiquity and performed in order to commemorate the passing of shortest day of the year.\footnote{6 December 2008.} Interpreters state that the oranges hanging from the tree’s boughs also symbolize “light of the sun, in terms of the shape, the sphere.” They go on to explain that oranges were typically given as presents “since antiquity to important people, people from the aristocracy.” Moreover, because, during the nineteenth-century, oranges had to be imported to people living in Canada, giving an orange was “really a present because it’s a sign of luxury as well.”\footnote{6 December 2008.}

Following discussion of the tree’s decorative elements, interpreters explain how, in nineteenth-century Montreal, people’s religious beliefs and practices generally determined when they put up their Christmas trees. French-speaking Montrealeans of the Catholic faith, they declare, often set up their Christmas trees after midnight mass. As one interpreter points out, the tree in the parlour

\[\text{[is] a fresh Christmas tree, it arrived only on the night of the celebration. But those of the French origin that adopted the Christmas tree, they will find a Christmas tree in their house after midnight mass [on Christmas Eve night], which is an important moment. They go to the midnight mass and when they come back home after [midnight], that's when they would find the Christmas tree with the presents.}\footnote{6 December 2008.}

Interpreters therefore recall for visitors the fact that that the parlour portrays the type of celebration that might have been put on by a French-Canadian family.

Likewise, in the adjacent dining room, the table arrangement allows interpreters to discuss particular aspects of the festive dinner that might have been put on by nineteenth-century
French-speaking Montrealers of the Catholic faith. Interpreters characterize the elaborately decorated table as one that represents the traditional celebratory feast known as le réveillon.

Figure 35. Dining Room, West House (December 2008). Photograph by author.

According to one interpreter, “In the French tradition, we will have, after the midnight mass [on Christmas Eve], a big dinner party in the middle of the night, which we call le réveillon. Réveillon. Réveillon comes from the verb réveiller, to awake. And to awake your senses, they were having light, people and lovely fruit as well. So le réveillon, that's a typical French tradition.” This same interpreter goes on to explain that this activity “is not shared with those of British origin [for whom] Christmas starts on the 25th of December.”

interpreters point out the various dishes laid out on the table, including the turkey, cranberries and *tourtières*. Notably, they refer to the turkey, located near the head of the table or, more specifically, in “the place of honour at the table,” explaining that it was served “especially amongst French Canadians for the Christmas dinner.” 105 In contrast, “British tables” typically featured goose as the main dish and Americans generally served turkey with cranberries, following the example put forward by Amelia Simmons in her 1796 cookery book. Charting the ethnic origins of particular dishes located on the table (and ones not represented) serves to underscore the fact that the arrangement portrays that which might have been put out by a French-Canadian upper-class family. In other words, the interpretation of the food privileges the French-Canadian past. Moreover, one might suggest that the interpretation in the dining room operates so as to counterbalance or offset the prominence of “British” traditions, such as the decorated Christmas tree, considered in the adjoining parlour.

Overall, the tour content and interpretation examines the type of Christmas celebration that might have been put on by upper-class families living in Montreal during the mid-nineteenth century. Site workers reanimate the west house so as to showcase, not so much the life of the original owner (which is represented in the east house) or French-Canadian culture, but rather Montreal bourgeois lifestyle. Furthermore, they use the guise of a particular theme to augment discussions of nineteenth-century social conventions, routines and conduct. Guiding visitors through the period rooms in order to “reveal[ ] the tastes and customs of privileged society,” interpreters also connect particular aspects of the nineteenth-century celebration with festivities

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105 13 December 2008. Similarly, during the French tours, interpreters characterize the turkey’s location, saying, “Et la place d’honneur sur la table est réservée pour la dinde” (14 December 2008). Author’s translation: “And the place of honour on the table is reserved for the turkey.” Based on these similar characterizations, it is evident that interpreters work to relay the same core information to both Anglophone and Francophone visitors.
and events dating back to ancient times. One might suggest that interpreters explore these connections so that they might encourage visitors to not only experience what it “felt like to live back then” but also appreciate the larger and longer “history of Christmas time.”

For these reasons, it could be argued that, while the east house represents both major events in Cartier’s life and his political accomplishments, the museum staff interpret the west house’s decorated period rooms so that the living history format appears to depoliticize the past and, by extension, the present. Given that the site is located in a major urban centre with a large souverainiste constituency, I thus suggest that Parks Canada staff work to reanimate the site so that the performance projects a selective version of the past to draw in local visitors and, at the same time, celebrate the history of the nation in the present. As Kammen explains, heritage administrators work to “depoliticize the past” in order to “minimize memories (and causes) of conflict.” State-sanctioned historic sites portray culturally constructed representations of the past, designed to “render them acceptable to as many people as possible.” More specifically, these institutions work to promote amongst visitors a communal understanding or appreciation of the nation’s past in the present in order to “heal[ ] wounds of sectional animosity.” Because these types of institutions endeavour to not only construct but also provide an experience of past that connects or unites citizenry who visit the site, “the appearance of depoliticization,” as museologist Erna Macleod puts it, might be “more accurately described as an intensely political act.” Similarly, Alan Gordon points out that historic sites typically operate in order to assemble and also maintain certain identities so that they “repackage the past as a period removed from the present yet at the same time linked to the present by a continuity of social and political

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107 Handler and Saxton, 245; Casey, 11.
108 Kammen, 662, 701.
109 Kammen, 701.
Therefore, in the following section, I explore how Parks Canada’s management of the Cartier Houses allows for the interpretation and reanimation of a particular version of the past, one that not only celebrates but also venerates the legitimacy of Canadian—rather than Québécois—nationalism.

**Depoliticizing the Past: The Political Dimensions of Heritage and “Living History”**

The Cartier Houses’ arrangement is such that the east house contains exhibitions that acknowledge the life and times of Sir George-Étienne Cartier while the west house’s restored period rooms, upon reanimation, portray the lifestyle of Cartier’s peer group. Because the east house’s object-based exhibitions chart the development of Cartier’s political career, interpreters take visitors through the west house and explore topics that might be of interest to the local populace, such as the evolution and development of Christmas festivities in the Victorian time period. Such efforts demonstrate ways in which site workers strive to depoliticize the past for visitors: they encourage visitors to “step out of time” so that visitors might gain a greater understanding and appreciation of the socio-cultural history of Montreal in particular and Canada at large. Given Parks Canada’s determination that the site’s living history programs be “aimed particularly at the Montreal public, considered to be the park’s special target group,” I argue that the site, most particularly when it is reanimated in the guise of a Victorian Christmas celebration, functions as a hegemonic cultural tool, one strategically designed to both commemorate and reinvigorate the legitimacy of Canada’s “founding nations” mythologies and, by extension, Canadian nationalism. In other words, I propose that the site’s reanimation appears to depoliticize the past so that the performance might foster amongst local visitors a collective sense

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111 Gordon, 177.
112 Development Concept, 15.
of cultural history and, subsequent to that, cause them to feel linked to a larger (political) community in the present, that being the Canadian nation.113

Because the reanimation of the Cartier Houses portrays a fictionalized account of the past deliberately designed draw in visitors, the west house represents a state-sanctioned “storied space,” to use Donald Preziosi’s conceptualization. Preziosi explains that artefactual arrangements located in museums are typically designed and thus manufactured in order to portray the past as the prologue to the present, thereby reaffirming the authority of present-day circumstances.114 The institutionalized depiction therefore represents a “particular mode of fiction,” one that “has become an indispensable component of statehood and of national…identity and heritage in every corner of the world.”115 He explains further, writing, “This museological ‘past’ is thus an instrument for the imaginative production and sustenance of the present.”116 Drawing on Preziosi, I would suggest that, because the Cartier Houses’ reanimation avoids extensive consideration of nineteenth-century politics (presumably because this topic is represented in the east house’s exhibitions), this evasion represents a tactical strategy; site workers take into account present-day circumstances and depoliticize the site’s performance of the past, working to portray the present as a “logical” outcome of the nation’s past.117 In other words, cultural administrators develop the Victorian Christmas tour theme and interpretive content so the site’s reanimation might render both the site and the version of the past it portrays

113 Gable and Handler, 251.
114 “Both museum and mysteries,” Preziosi writes, “teach us how to solve things; how to think; and how to put two and two together. Both teach us that things are not always as they seem at first glance. They demonstrate that the world needs to be coherently pieced together (literally, re-membered) in a fashion that may be perceived as rational and orderly: a manner that, in reviewing its steps, seems by hindsight to be natural or inevitable. In this respect, the present of the museum (within the parameters of which is also positioned our identity) may be staged as the inevitable or logical outcome of a particular past (this is our heritage and origins), thereby extending identity and cultural patrimony back into a historical or mythical past, which is thereby recuperated and preserved, without appearing to lose its mystery” (“The Art of Art History,” in The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology, ed. Donal Preziosi [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998] 511).
115 Preziosi, 509.
116 Preziosi, 511.
117 Preziosi, 511.
pleasing to Quebecers, the site’s target demographic. Rather than focussing strictly on French-Canadian heritage and traditions, site workers, in the context of the tour, discuss activities performed by members of a particular socio-economic class, the Montreal bourgeoisie. What is more, they chart the evolution of the celebration from ancient times to its incarnation in the nineteenth-century. In so doing, interpreters characterize particular events, such as putting up and decorating the Christmas tree and the réveillon celebration, as emblematic of a particular “Canadian” lifestyle, a way of life supposedly defined by both English-Canadian and French-Canadian practices, customs and ideologies. This conceptualization of the past makes evident the extent to which federal heritage workers, more specifically those employed at Parks Canada, take into account Quebecers’ perceptions regarding French-Canadian nationalism.

Significantly, in the 1960s, Quebecers began to re-examine their status within the Canadian federation and, by extension, their past. As mentioned above, the Quiet Revolution inspired the installation of Quebec’s ministry of education and the Ministère des Affaires culturelle. According to Raymond Breton, however, the “substitution of Québécois for ‘French-Canadian’ as the acceptable self-denotation” represented the “most significant” change, in that Quebecers came to regard themselves not as a cultural minority within the Canadian federation but rather as a territorial majority. During the time of Confederation, Breton states that Quebecers initially viewed what later became the province of Quebec as the “homeland of the French in North America,” but as time went on, they became increasingly aware of what they perceived to be the growing dominance of English Canadian nationalism. For example, throughout the course of the twentieth-century, immigrants coming to Canada largely adopted English as their primary language of communication, a development that represented, in the

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118 Development Concept, 15.
119 This adoption signalled a “shift from a pan-Canadian to a Quebec definition of the boundaries of the collectivity – a second reversal so to speak; that is a reversal to the view that prevailed at the time of Confederation” (Breton, 1988, 94).
120 Breton, 89-90; quote from 90.
minds of Francophone Quebecers, the domination of Anglo-conformity.”¹²¹ As a result, they sought to defend the legitimacy of the French language and their culture, adopting “an ideology of survivance/survival.”¹²² The defensive, survivalist mentality of French-Canadian nationalism, however, caused Quebecers to focus on how they had been victimized in the past.¹²³ As Létourneau explains, French-Canadian nationalism conceptualizes the past as “a breeding ground of painful, depressing memories rather than pretext for positive remembering.”¹²⁴ Accordingly, in the 1960s, Francophone Quebecers shed the defensive, survivalist character of French-Canadian nationalism and adopted a more assertive, forward-looking Québécois nationalist ideology, one that inspired them to take control of governmental structures and processes that defined their “political, economic and cultural well-being.”¹²⁵ One might ask then what role might the material culture of Quebec’s nineteenth-century past hold in a society that dedicates itself to looking to the future?

As a Quebec historian, Létourneau suggests that “the stakes and challenges of the present” should inform Quebecers’ approach to or understanding of their past.¹²⁶ He explains further, “The stakes of today should determine the uses of the old….With no past, the present risks falling into ‘absence.’ But if the past outweighs the present, it can lead to a vicious circle of

¹²¹ More specifically, Quebecers felt that this type of linguistic assimilation encouraged the impression that Canada was primarily an English-speaking country. Breton, 90.
¹²² Warren and Oakes, 27.
¹²³ Létourneau writes, “Stuck in an inconsolable sadness resulting from their supposed situation as ‘failed rebels,’ they are unable, or barely able, to escape from the imaginary of a victim and the mentality of a person owed a debt. To grow up, they have been told and are still being told, you have to suffer” (15).
¹²⁴ Létourneau, 15
¹²⁶ Létourneau, 16.
repetition.” He thus recommends that Quebecers interrogate their past, acknowledging it, recognizing it and distancing themselves emotionally from it so that they might learn from it. The past, he suggests, can be liberating for Quebecers if they reflect upon it critically; critical reflection allows a society to create “the conditions for transcending itself and advancing through future human action, and...it is able to give rise to new events that mark its evolution in time...Society emancipates itself from a memory that would otherwise crush it.” In other words, he advocates that Quebecers both acknowledge and evaluate the past, using their present-day understanding to learn from it so as to move “beyond the old torments rather than constantly coming back to them” so that they might in turn work to “build an open future.” In the case of the Cartier Houses, I suggest that Parks Canada has taken into account Quebecers’ perception of the past and arranged the site so that, upon reanimation, it functions as a hegemonic cultural tool that performs and thus projects the primacy of Canadian nationalism.

Because Parks Canada has arranged the site so that permanent exhibitions acknowledge Cartier’s political career and achievements while the living history component puts on special events programs, such as the Victorian Christmas tour, the site’s arrangement separates politics from the performance. Accordingly, I suggest that this separation is politically motivated in that the reanimation encourages visitors – Montrealers in particular – to not only “live history” but to “re-experience a kind of personal identification with the [Canadian] nation.” The artefactual arrangements and interpretive content illustrate activities routinely performed by people of a particular socio-economic class, Anglophones and Francophones alike; furthermore, interpreters locate these events within a larger framework in that they refer to factors and festivities from Antiquity that shaped nineteenth-century attitudes and perceptions. In their presentation of Christmas festivities as a broad and all-encompassing cultural construction, interpreters situate

127 Létourneau, 17.
128 Létourneau, 18.
129 Létourneau, 19.
130 Gable and Handler, 237.
discussions of nineteenth-century culture within a larger context. Such a portrayal suggests the
degree to which federal heritage practitioners work to construct within the site an vision of
“colonial utopianism” so that the museum might portray a “harmonious past that never existed
and a unified nation that can only be imagined.”131 More to the point, the federal agency itself
characterizes the site as one that “captures the richness of Canadian identity.”132 As a result, the
restitution, commemoration and reanimation of the Cartier Houses works to portray and project a
depoliticized version of the nation’s past so that the museum might, in turn, distinguish Canada as
a unified socio-political entity, thereby demonstrating the political dimension of the
depoliticization of heritage, “living history” and memory.

Conclusion

In this study, I examine the museumification and the Christmas programming offered at Dundurn Castle, Mackenzie House and the Cartier Houses to make evident the institutional relationship between heritage, living history, and memory in Canadian living history museums. In connecting the artefact – that is, the historical building – with the Victorian Christmas program performed within it, my study shows how three different museums play out a particular type of mythologized history. More specifically, in considering the representations advanced in three state-sanctioned living history museums that monumentalize “founding nations” mythologies, I argue that the formation of Dundurn Castle, Mackenzie House and the Cartier Houses, as well as their current operations, demonstrate how representations of the past projected in heritage sites depend upon the flexibility of historical narratives. In short, I argue that the manner in which the institutions project mythologized narratives not only negotiates but also manages issues associated with past and present-day concerns, ethnicity and diversity, and memory, veneration and identity. Significantly, by way of conclusion, I argue as well that the manner in which “founding nations” mythologies are redeployed depends not only on the existence of the historical building but also on its location, and on the size and character of the site’s local constituency. I consider that each museum’s performance requires the coordination of the historically designated site and period objects located within it, as well as live interpretation. Finally, I take into account that all three sites showcase, in the context of the Victorian Christmas programming, a historical familial celebration so that they might foster amongst visitors a sense of (national) community. In other words, I examine how Dundurn Castle, Mackenzie House and the Cartier Houses represent the past, working to concretize, privilege and project particular concepts, such as the primacy of the family unit and the significance of community, in order to attract and subsequently unify a citizenry.

It is noteworthy that Dundurn, Mackenzie House and the Cartier Houses are in large urban centres, with constituencies large enough to allow them to offer programs in the winter.
months. Their locations make evident, in contrast, why Bellevue House in Kingston, Ontario – the house museum representing the life and times of Sir John A. Macdonald, Canada’s first post-Confederation prime minister and perhaps most widely recognized “Father of Confederation” – has not been included in this study.¹

Figure 36. Bellevue House National Historic Site of Canada, Kingston, Ontario (July 2010). Photograph by author.

¹ Along with George-Étienne Cartier and George Brown, Macdonald formed a coalition government in 1864 in order to achieve confederation of the United Canadas. Margaret Conrad and Alvin Finkle, *Canada: A National History* (Toronto: Pearson Education Canada, Inc., 2002) 246. Given that, following the achievement of Confederation, Macdonald went on to become Canada’s first Prime Minister, certain parties have made a concerted effort to characterize Macdonald as, to use historian Christopher Moore’s conceptualization, the “single hero in the confederation wars” (*1867: How the Fathers Made the Deal* [Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1997] 246). For example, Canadian historian Donald Creighton, writing in 1952, championed Macdonald’s role in Confederation, describing 1 July 1867 as Macdonald’s “day, if it was anybody’s.” Creighton goes on to state that Macdonald, “above all others, had ensured its coming, and he had prescribed the order of its celebration….Others would expatiate eloquently upon [the significance of Confederation] – after he had done the work of bringing it about.” (*John A. Macdonald: The Young Politician, The Old Chieftain* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1952, 1998] 466). As Moore points out, however, the achievement of Confederation represented the “success of a parliamentary process rather than a leader-driven, quasi-presidential one” (247).
Bellevue may have been fostered as a living history museum during the nation-building years of 1960s – and in that sense have much in common with the sites I have discussed above. In a manner similar to those who advanced the restoration of Dundurn, Mackenzie House and the Cartier Houses in the 1960s, those vested in restoring the Tuscan-style villa determined that Macdonald’s political accomplishments called for the site’s reconstitution, even though Macdonald rented the property for only one year. As Kingston’s Member of Parliament E.J. Benson put it to members of the House of Commons in 1964, “Sir John A. Macdonald is looked upon as Kingston’s most famous son, and the fact that he was the first prime minister of Canada and did so much for both the city of Kingston and for our country as a whole makes him obviously worthy of commemoration.” Later that year, the federal government purchased Bellevue and had it restored so that the site officially opened to the public in 1967, the year of Canada’s Centennial celebrations. However, the site currently operates for a limited time each year, offering tours from the beginning of April until the end of October, suggesting in doing so that Kingston cannot support a winter tourism market to the same extent as Hamilton, Toronto and Montreal. In other words, while a building’s perceived historic value might determine its function, the structure’s location determines the nature of its operation and the degree of its participation in advancing “founding nations” mythologies.

The reanimation of Dundurn, Mackenzie House and the Cartier Houses functions so as to communicate to visitors the site’s symbolic purpose. Each site’s operation, as a result, is based on how historians, curators and tour guides interpret not only the historical building but also the historical figure represented by it. While Dundurn exists as a Picturesque Regency-style villa,

2 Designed in the style of the Italian villas located in the region of Tuscany, Bellevue’s architectural style is defined by its stuccoed limestone walls, shuttered windows, numerous balconies and the square Italianate tower located in the middle of the structure. Margaret Angus, The Old Stones of Kingston: Its Buildings Before 1867 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989) 86-7.

and thus a notable architectural monument as well as a living history museum, Mackenzie’s row
house and Cartier’s London-style townhouse were less architecturally pretentious – originally
utilitarian residential structures designed to blend into the surrounding urban landscape. As
living history museums, however, the buildings and artefacts in the period rooms act, in the
context of guided tours, as objects that, by virtue of their existence, historical documentation and
institutionalization, privilege particular aspects of Canada’s national narrative. Notably, the
selected sites have been reincarnated as institutionalized domestic settings. Therefore, I argue
that their present conceptualization as historic house museums that perform the past allows them
to emphasize the importance of kinship, community and nationhood.

In mounting Victorian Christmas programs, all three house-museums portray a particular
type of historic celebration, one that might have been performed by the original owner’s family in
residence; in so doing, each site advances a particular nationalist narrative. The historical
preservation and subsequent restoration of each site was contingent upon the gender and ethnic
primacy of the political figure represented by the building. The reconceptualization of each site
as a domestic museum space, however, showcases a certain type of lifestyle so as to convey to
visitors the importance of the familial and, by extension, national community. Tours offered
year-round at each site deal with the original owner’s political activities and accomplishments,
household management and nineteenth-century Canadian material culture. The Christmas
program, on the other hand, uses period decorations and assorted activities, such as carol singing,
to portray the type of festive celebration that might have been put on by the family. And the tours

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4 Significantly, the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario, writing in 1967, characterized Dundurn as
Hamilton’s “best known monument” and the “most conspicuous mansion of [MacNab’s] time” (Victorian
architectural historian Janet Wright refers to Dundurn as “the most comprehensive statement of the
Picturesque values of Canadian architecture” (Architecture of the Picturesque in Canada [Ottawa: Minister

5 As historian Paul Stern explains, people have the strongest and “most primordial ties” to the family unit
so that these relations typically “arouse the strongest empathy, and exact the most stringent obligations
from members – it is for [this group] that people are most likely to sacrifice their lives” (“Why Do People
Sacrifice for their Nations?” in Perspectives on Nationalism and War, ed. John L. Comaroff and Paul C.
at the three sites encourage visitors to identify with certain aspects of the representation, such as the family dinner or gift exchange. In this context, they emphasize family values, such as kinship, loyalty and generosity, projecting representations of the family that work to elicit emotional responses from visitors and subsequently to unify the citizenry. In other words, they encourage visitors to identify strongly with that which is represented – the life and lifestyle of the family within the “home” – in order to generate feelings of loyalty not only to the nation’s past but also its present. As historian Anthony D. Smith explains, “[T]he conviction of common kinship ties…need not, and usually does not, accord with real biological descent and what we know of factual history. But then, what is important in the study of nationalism is not what is, but what is felt to be the case.” In exploring how these performances function as hegemonic cultural tools to celebrate and promote the validity of the nation’s past, my study demonstrates ways in which Canada’s national narrative is adapted to address the politics of the place.

To push the point, one might consider the example of Riel House National Historic Site of Canada in the St. Vital area of Winnipeg, Manitoba. Although it does not offer Victorian Christmas tours (at least, not yet), Riel House currently provides a means through which to advance the contributions of Aboriginal peoples to Canada’s “founding nations” mythologies. At Riel House, interpreters conduct tours so that the site, upon reanimation, portrays the Métis leader Louis Riel as a “nationally significant” historical figure. Purchased by the federal agency Parks Canada in 1970, the Red River Frame building opened to the public ten year later as a fully-functioning living history museum offering guided tours. Significantly, in 1992, the federal

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government took into account Riel’s contribution to the development of the Manitoba Act (1870), which brought that province into Confederation, and designated him the founder of Manitoba. And, in 2000, Parks Canada developed the Riel House’s management plan determining that the site’s primary mandate is to commemorate Riel as a “person of national historical significance.”

Although Riel’s mother, Julie Lagimodière-Riel, originally owned the residence, the site’s reconceptualization works to venerate Riel’s contribution to nation-building. More specifically, site workers use information pertaining to Riel’s death to develop representations

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11 “Newsletters.”

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Figure 37. Riel House National Historic Site of Canada, St. Vital, Winnipeg, Manitoba (August 2009). Photograph by Michelle Bauldic. Reproduced with Permission.
within the house that advance the man as a heroic (national) symbol of martyrdom.\textsuperscript{12} He led the Métis uprisings of 1869 and 1885 to defend Métis land rights from usurpation by the Canadian government, and was later prosecuted for treason by the state and hanged in December 1885. His body, in fact, lay in state in his mother’s house for two days prior to burial. Taking this into account, site workers have arranged the Riel House’s living room so that artefactual arrangement reflects what might have been in place during the family’s period of mourning.\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{Figure 38. Living Room, Riel House (August 2009). Photograph by Michelle Bauldic. Reproduced with permission.}

Grounding the representation in such “historical fact” allows the museum to identify itself with a symbolic conception of Riel and, in doing so, authorize itself as a national historic site.

\textsuperscript{12} Osborne, 307.
Because living history museums perform the past in the present-day, they reflect, upon reanimation, contemporary interests and priorities. As I have demonstrated throughout this study, nationalistic frameworks oftentimes spur the restitution of historic sites and, in turn, their reincarnation as living history museums. According to Pierre Nora, nation-building interests represent the “push and pull” that produces “sites of memory” or lieux de memoire.\textsuperscript{14} As “sites of memory,” living history museums are “material, symbolic and functional.” These aspects “always” coexist, Nora argues, because such sites are “created by a play of memory and history.”\textsuperscript{15} In the case of Dundurn Castle, Mackenzie House and the Cartier Houses, the respective architectural contexts and artefactual arrangements represent the material aspect while the live interpretation reinforces the house museum’s symbolic function – its veneration of a major political figures identified with the Confederation period. Brian Osborne suggests that the commemoration of the nation’s political figures represents a “kind of ancestor worship, a cult in which kinship, burial, shared ritual and symbols reinforce national connections across time and space.”\textsuperscript{16} Expanding on Osborne, I argue that the reanimation of historic house museums, particularly those once occupied by figures perceived to be vital contributors to Canada’s formation, works to reproduce the legitimacy of Canada’s “founding nations” mythologies in the multicultural present.

\textsuperscript{15} Nora, 19.
\textsuperscript{16} Osborne, 307.
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