

A quarterly publication of the Newfoundland Historic Trust

Fire Safety Alternatives for Mixed Occupancies: A Heritage Building Breakthrough

By Jim Case, Principal, Sheppard Case Architects Inc.



On the morning of April 3rd the City of St. John's held a public session in E.B. Foran Room to roll out an extremely important document. On the face of it, "[Fire Safety Alternatives for Mixed Occupancies](#)" seems like a highly technical document (and it is) but its ramifications for historical building preservation in the city, and indeed the province, are significant.

The document was prepared by R.J. Bartlett Engineering Limited, and the content of the study has been in the works now for just over two years. R.J. Bartlett is a fire and life safety engineering company – specialists in fire protection, forensic engineering, building code consulting, and alternative

compliance analysis. The report's author, Mr. Ben Coles, presented the study findings at the public meeting. Similar to a report that the City commissioned in 2001 entitled "[Fire Safety Alternatives for Heritage Buildings in St. John's](#)" prepared by Ken Richardson Fire Technologies Inc. that mainly dealt with issues pertaining to turning heritage homes into bed and breakfast establishments, this document focuses on commercial buildings in the downtown core, and former residential buildings converted for mercantile occupancies. These buildings are typically three storey, with a footprint between 150 and 200 square metres. Often, they are joined to the adjacent building or buildings, and most significantly, have only one staircase that forms the "means of egress" from the upper storeys to the safety of the street.

The Richardson Report was a hallmark of sorts, and laid out the means whereby owners could upgrade these historical, primarily wood framed, buildings in a manner that would be acceptable to the municipal building authorities, but without the extreme cost of bringing the building "up to code" as they say, and without destroying much of the heritage integrity of the property. But as development pressure grew over the subsequent decade, some architects in the City ascertained that there would be a growing need for a similar set of prescriptive rules for the redevelopment of mercantile building stock. The vacant second and third floors of the majority of buildings on Water and Gower Street were indicative of the problem: they could not be occupied without a host of upgrades, not the least of which would be a secondary means of egress, meaning an additional enclosed stairwell.

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The building that brought the issue to a head was 336 Water Street: the former Melendy's. Sheppard Case Architects Inc. began design on this project in the spring of 2011, and it was immediately apparent that the main development stumbling block would be the secondary means of egress, as, strictly speaking, there was no allowance for egress via windows under the National Building Code of Canada. The building was 120 square metres in plan, so the basic issue was that if we tried to introduce a second egress stair it would result in two problems: (1) there would be little floor area left to lease (the building would be about 30 to 40% stair) and (2) the stair would have to exit at grade onto Water Street which would destroy the historical integrity of the facade and impair the street rhythm.

We appealed to the building officials at the City on the basis of the Richardson report, and proposed an alternative scenario based on a host of alternative life safety measures, the mainstay of which was a fire alarm system that could be activated by interconnected smoke detectors and manual pull stations. We also considered the installation of an automatic sprinkler system, which, in the end was not required. Fortunately, because the building would be undergoing significant renovation, upgrades of the floor and firewall assemblies could also be incorporated into the design.

The design effort proved to be challenging, and therefore costly. And negotiations with the City (as this was new ground) expended considerable time and effort. **Working from experience doesn't mean that alternative life safety strategies are going to be sufficient.** A fact-based approach with the all necessary engineering and computer simulation modeling was needed.

We presented our design to the Heritage Advisory Committee on September 27th 2011 hoping to garner its approval. At that time we indicated the effort required to determine an adequate life safety solution. We explained that at one point, our client wished to restore 336 Water Street to its original form, complete with pitched roof and dormers (see Illustration #1) but we determined that from a building code perspective, this would be **pushing the envelope far beyond what could be deemed safe by today's standards.** We went on to explain that our proposed solution for restoration (see Illustration #2) was still a major design struggle, but with the cooperation of building officials we were able to ascertain a life safety alternative that had a reasonable chance of success.



That discussion evolved into a higher level dialogue over upper storey development in the downtown, and the airing of my opinion that this was going to be extremely problematic on a go forward basis. Ad hoc fire safety evaluation of each situation would invariably discourage property and business owners. It was then that I posited the idea that what the City needed was an engineered solution for typical scenarios – of which there are hundreds in the downtown core. This was rather exuberantly received by the Heritage Advisory Committee, and Shannie Duff pledged to drive home the point at council. Not to be cliché, but the rest is history.

A simple questionnaire can now trigger the alternative fire safety approach captured in the Bartlett report. This has already proven to save tens of thousands of dollars in renovation costs for business and property entrepreneurs. Existing stairwells can be effectively upgraded and secondary ones are not necessarily required. In addition, floor assembly upgrades and even sprinklering may not be necessary. But for the community, the real value of this document is the redevelopment of our core building stock in an alternative manner that is far less likely to impair heritage character.

For more information on the new Fire Safety Alternatives for upper storeys of heritage buildings, and to see if your building qualifies, visit <http://tinyurl.com/obps6wu>, or www.stjohns.ca

ST. JOHN'S



The Manning Awards and Dr. Paul O'Neill Scholarship 2014

The Historic Sites Association (HSA), founded in 1981, is a non-profit organization with a mandate to present the history of Newfoundland and Labrador. In partnership with Parks Canada, the HSA supports its work by operating 9 Heritage Shops across the province. During the past 35 years, the HSA has invested in many heritage projects such as, publications, restorations, commemorations, theatrical performances, Hawthorne Cottage, Heritage Fairs, scholarships, and awards.

In 1993, the HSA established The Manning Awards for Excellence in the Public Presentation of Historic Places. The **awards honour the late Bill Manning, former Parks Canada Superintendent in Newfoundland and Labrador. Bill's unwavering commitment to the preservation and presentation of Historic Sites was important to their designation and development. He realized that the protection and management of our heritage requires the involvement of people in local communities. He believed that the public should share with government, the ownership and responsibility of our sites for the benefit of future generations.**

The Manning Awards recognize and encourage the work of individuals and groups whose projects contribute to the promotion, **preservation, and interpretation of this province's history, especially in their own communities.**

After a nomination process, the projects are categorized into levels of historic significance: community, regional, provincial, national and international. A new award for Outstanding Heritage Supporter was added to the regular list of categories this year.



Pictured above: HSA Chair, LeeAnn Montgomery emcee

The 21st Manning Awards were presented on March 21st, 2014 at a ceremony held at the Sheraton Hotel Newfoundland and attendees were graciously invited to a reception at Government House following the awards and scholarship presentation.

There were over one hundred guests including, patron of the event, the Honourable Frank Fagan, Lieutenant Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador, and Her Honour Mrs. Patricia Fagan. Also in attendance were the family of Mr. Bill Manning, local politicians and cultural supporters. They were joined by HSA Board Members (present and past).

Six awards were presented in distinct categories for outstanding achievement in heritage presentation.

The Community Category had two winners this year. The first was John Greene for his book *Of Fish and Family* which depicts an in-depth history of the community of Tilting.

The second was Placentia 350 Incorporated, a group that coordinated the many activities and events that celebrated the 350th Anniversary of Placentia and surrounding area.

The winner in the Provincial Category was a project called *Francophone History of NL since the Treaty of Utrecht*. The creators, Françoise Enguehard, Louise Moyes and Paul Rowe, were recognized for creating a dramatic interpretation of the history and heritage of the French in this province.



Above: Scholarship recipient, Nakita Ryan (centre) with friends and family

The Rooms was the National Category winner, for the creation of two exhibitions that tell the story of the history of Newfoundland and Labrador and the International Category winner, Dr. Priscilla Renouf, was honoured for her achievements and contributions to archeology, especially in the Port au Choix area. Finally, the new award, Outstanding Heritage Supporter, was given to Elinor Gill Ratcliffe, for her many contributions to local initiatives that enrich the cultural heritage of this province.

Also during the ceremony, the **Dr. Paul O'Neill Scholarship for Excellence** in Newfoundland and Labrador Studies was also presented to Ms. Nakita Ryan, who is completing her Bachelor of Arts. The scholarship was presented by Dr. Lynne Phillips, Dean of Arts of Memorial University.

This scholarship has been presented annually since 2003 to recognize Dr. O'Neill's valuable contributions to the study and promotion of Newfoundland and Labrador history. The student is selected by the Memorial University Senate Committee on Undergraduate Scholarships and Financial Aid.

This year attendees included almost one hundred guests, including media, politicians, and dignitaries, who showed their continued support. Congratulations to all Manning Award winners and nominees. The Historic Sites Association of Newfoundland and Labrador is proud to support this important project and the Dr. Paul O'Neill Scholarship as an integral part of the Associations' programming.

NL Historic Trust Reminders

- Membership renewal forms can be found on page 8
- 30th Annual Southcott Awards call for nominations Spring 2014—DEADLINE MAY 9, 2013
- iPhone free app "Walk St. John's"—available in the Apple Store today
- NEW walking tour planned for 2014 for iPhone app
- Special event commemorating the Great Fire of 1892 planned for 2014
- New programming planned for 2014—suggestions are welcome



Heritage Canada The National Trust
Call for Nominations

Top Ten Endangered Places List - DEADLINE IS MAY 9, 2014
www.heritagecanada.org
<http://tinyurl.com/nr3srlly>

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2014 Southcott Awards Nominations now being accepted

Nominations will be considered in three separate categories:

Building Restoration/Preservation

Design in Context

Heritage Tradesperson

Building Restoration/Preservation

Nominations are considered for finished architectural restoration projects. The committee considers architectural design, quality of conservation work, preservation of original features, use of traditional materials, and the integrity of the structure and its surrounding site.

Awards may be considered for excellence in long-term maintenance of heritage properties that have not been significantly altered since construction. Properties showing little alteration to the original structure and surrounding landscape will be assessed on their original architectural integrity and maintenance by subsequent owners.

Structures which display an architectural style that is not particularly historic, but of a recognizable modern design, like the Arts and Crafts or Brutalism styles of architecture, will also be considered. Specifically, those structures which may have been built in the early to mid-twentieth century are eligible for nomination.

Design in Context

More than an issue of aesthetics, quality building design has the power to encourage economic development and improve the quality of life for residents in an area. Such design may address issues of sustainability and encourage community renewal. The Trust seeks to recognize individuals or organizations that have completed an architectural design project sensitive to the heritage character (architecture, streetscape, viewscape, etc.) of the surrounding environment. New or infill construction will be considered for how sympathetic the addition is to the historic context of the neighbouring area with regard to style, scale, form and building materials. The quality of workmanship may also be assessed.

Heritage Tradesperson

This award will recognize the skill and contribution of an individual in the craft or trade professions in heritage conservation. The individual must work using specialist and traditional methods and exhibit a high standard of craftsmanship. Individual tradesperson(s), architect(s), or other heritage professional(s) having completed exemplary work relating to the conservation, preservation or restoration of a heritage structure are eligible for nomination.

Application Deadline & Additional Information

Application forms are available on our website www.historictrust.ca

All completed applications submitted by the May 9, 2014 deadline date will be reviewed by the Southcott Selection Committee. All nominators will receive a response by June 2014 (please include your contact information, including e-mail address, with all correspondence).

Do not put application materials in a folder, binder or other type of cover. Photos may be submitted as photographs, on CD or DVD. (We prefer you do not submit your images as colour photocopies and prints as they do not translate well on our website or as a video presentation). If original photographs are included with your application, please indicate if you wish to have them returned.

Applications should be mailed to the address below:

Newfoundland Historic Trust

P.O. Box 2403

St. John's, NL A1C 6E7

Decisions of the Selection Committee are final. The Committee reserves the right to refuse an award in any given category.

In The News

Bonavista Historic Townscape Foundation Holds Public Meeting

On Monday, March 31, the Bonavista Historic Townscape Foundation held a public presentation with the purpose of addressing their annual financial report for the Garrick Theatre and to unveil preliminary plans for the third phase of the harbourfront development.

Tom Wright of Tract Consulting presented the conceptual plans for further redevelopment of the harbourfront area of Bonavista. The redevelopment plans put a definite focus on beautifying Bonavista and making it more functional at the same time. The goal seems to be to make it a place where people will enjoy spending time, much as they have with the extensive renovations of Church Street over the years.



Cape Bonavista lighthouse misses out on federal protection

Three Newfoundland lighthouses received protection under a federal heritage act in late March, but Cape Bonavista Lighthouse was not one of them. Fort Amherst, Cape Ray, and Long Point Lighthouse in Twillingate all received the designation of heritage lighthouses under the federal Heritage Lighthouse Protection Act. Only federally owned lighthouses are eligible for protection under the act. Despite being one of the province's oldest lighthouses, constructed in 1843, the lighthouse doesn't qualify for protection under the act because it was acquired by the province sometime in the 1970s.

Cape Bonavista was built in 1843, and the Canadian Coast Guard introduced a new modern aid to navigation in recent times. The decision was made to pass the lighthouse on to the province so the province could take care of it for the future. Lighthouses designated as heritage lighthouses are protected under the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada.

Harbour Grace cathedral found to be worthless

Built in 1899, the Cathedral of Immaculate Conception is a stone cathedral built in the Gothic Revival style in Harbour Grace. With its towering spires, the Cathedral is an important element of the cultural landscape of Harbour Grace. It was designated a Registered Heritage Structure by the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador.

In late 2013 real estate consulting company Altus Group reported on its appraisal of the value of the cathedral, which was completed and consecrated in 1892, and rebuilt several years later after a fire. Altus Group found that the building currently has a market value of zero.

Millions of dollars have already been spent on maintaining the building. Stantec, the engineering consulting firm, has estimated that completing a restoration project will cost nearly \$9 million more.

An interested third party has offered to meet with parishioners to talk about a business proposal for the cathedral, but no formal offer has been made.





Longtime Heritage Advocate to be awarded honorary degree

Memorial University will recognize six people with honorary degrees during spring convocation ceremonies next month. Recipients will include Autism Society founding member Joyce Hayward Churchill; heritage advocate and longtime municipal politician Shannie Duff; author and CBC broadcaster Michael Enright; former Grenfell Mission intern and geriatric medicine leader John Gray; social justice leader and community volunteer Jocelyn Greene; and businesswoman, philanthropist and non-denominational school system activist Kathy Pratt LeGrow.

The six will be awarded their honorary doctorates during convocation ceremonies at the Pepsi Centre in Corner Brook on May 9, and at the St. John's Arts and Culture Centre from May 27-30.

History falling to pieces in Harbour Grace

A portion of the S.S. Kyle, the last member of the Newfoundland Alphabet Fleet, has collapsed, and the damage was noticed by many this morning (April 15). This photo was taken this morning. The white structure that sits in front of the smoke stack has fallen in on itself.

This photo of the S.S. Kyle was taken April 15, showing the collapse that happened only hours before.
© Photo by Melissa Jenkins



Historic Salvation Army Buildings to be demolished, in spite of evidence



St. John's city council has cleared the way for the Salvation Army to demolish its downtown buildings and erect a new building to serve some of the city's neediest residents, despite a push from the city's heritage committee to save them.

The Salvation Army says its two properties on Springdale Street have fallen into such disrepair that they should be replaced. The organization, which provides basic services to more than 500 people from the site, wants to replace them with a building between eight and 10 storeys in height.

The city's heritage advisory committee, though, thinks the buildings are valuable enough to be preserved. The older building, which was known for many years as the home of the Harbour Light, was finished in 1908, but has been vacant for the last decade.

"They've been deemed to have distinct heritage qualities that are worth preserving for our city," said Councillor Dave Lane, who co-chairs the heritage committee.

The Salvation Army says the new structure will allow the church to better meet a growing need for education, training and social services that it provides through its programs. In a statement, Maj. Ken Ritson of the Salvation Army said the old Harbour Light building had "outlived its usefulness" and needs to be replaced.

"It will be demolished in order for the Salvation Army to chart the way forward for the next 100 years, providing humanitarian service to individuals who depend on us every day," Ritson said.



the trident

The Trust's newsletter, *The Trident*, is published quarterly. Submissions and advertising inquiries are welcome and can be forwarded to:

coordinator@historictrust.ca

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Complimentary printing of the trident provided by



2014 Membership Form - Membership counts!

Annual membership fees support the ongoing work of the Trust in fulfilling its mandate of education, advocacy and outreach. The ability of the Trust to speak confidently and lobby effectively to protect our province's built heritage, neighbourhoods, streetscapes and open spaces depends to a large extent on the degree of public support it enjoys.

New membership benefits! As a member you are provided opportunities for:

Advocacy, Educational Lectures, Wine Tastings, Storytelling, Theatre, Workshops, Joint Membership Discounts, Southcott Awards, Trident Newsletter

Please indicate if you prefer:

a paper copy of the Trident an electronic copy of the Trident

Volunteer with the Trust's Committees:

Southcott Awards Preservation Programming Fundraising Newsletter

The Trust is a registered charity. Memberships and donations are tax deductible. Receipts will be issued.

Name: _____ Address: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail address: _____

Newfoundland Historic Trust Membership Fees:

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I include a \$50 _____ \$100 _____ \$other _____ donation I include a \$ gift in honour of: _____

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Signature: _____ Date (m/d/y): _____

Send form with cheque payable to Newfoundland Historic Trust or VISA information to:

Newfoundland Historic Trust, P.O. Box 2403, St. John's, NL A1C 6E7

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