



Photo courtesy of the Government of PEI, 2008

Stone by Stone Province House Conservation Project

Province House National Historic Site is currently closed for an extensive conservation project. The building is more than 170 years old and in pressing need of repair. Province House is a historic and complex building and this project presents the unique challenge of rehabilitating the structure to current building standards, while respecting its heritage character-defining elements.

The Government of Canada is investing \$47 million in the Province House conservation project, which is both the historic birthplace of Canada and the seat of Prince Edward Island's Provincial Legislature. This project began in 2015 under the management of Public Services and Procurement Canada and is now slated to be completed in 2021. Full details of the project can be found on our website: www.parkscanada.ca/provincehouse.

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

Fast Facts

- Province House National Historic Site was built between 1843 and 1847. It is the historic birthplace of Canada and the seat of Prince Edward Island's Legislative Assembly.
- The building was officially opened in January 1847 with the first sitting of the Provincial Legislature.
- Province House is owned by the Province of Prince Edward Island and is operated as a national historic site by Parks Canada, thanks to an agreement signed with the Province in 1974.
- A major restoration project was undertaken by Parks Canada between 1979 and 1983 to restore a portion of the building to the 1864 period.
- Between 2011 and 2013, additional renovations were done in advance of the 2014 celebrations marking the 150th anniversary of the Charlottetown Conference.



Phase One is Nearing Completion

Work has been ongoing through phase 1 of the conservation project, with Quinan Construction Ltd as the lead contractor. Since May 2017, the contractor has been busy working on the exterior of the building, stabilizing the site, excavating around the building to allow access to the foundation, erecting the steel exoskeleton and removing slate roof tiles.

Phase 1 has also included removing some elements from inside the building such as basement flooring, mechanical and electrical systems, windows, and plaster work.

The historic features inside Province House, such as columns, pilasters, ceiling medallions, arches, wood sashed windows and central staircase, form part of the heritage defining elements that are key to the conservation project. Each of these elements have been diligently wrapped and tagged for protection through this site stabilization phase. They will remain part of the building's interior once it is rehabilitated.

A pedestrian access from Richmond to Grafton Streets has also been established on the east side of Province House, next to the Coles Building.

Exploring History through Virtual Reality



Team member Hannah Matheson testing the virtual reality model.



2D screen capture of Confederation Chamber as seen by user

There are many evolving aspects to a conservation project of this magnitude. One innovative component is a new virtual reality (VR) experience for Province House National Historic Site, developed in partnership with the University of Prince Edward Island's School of Sustainable Design Engineering (SSDE).

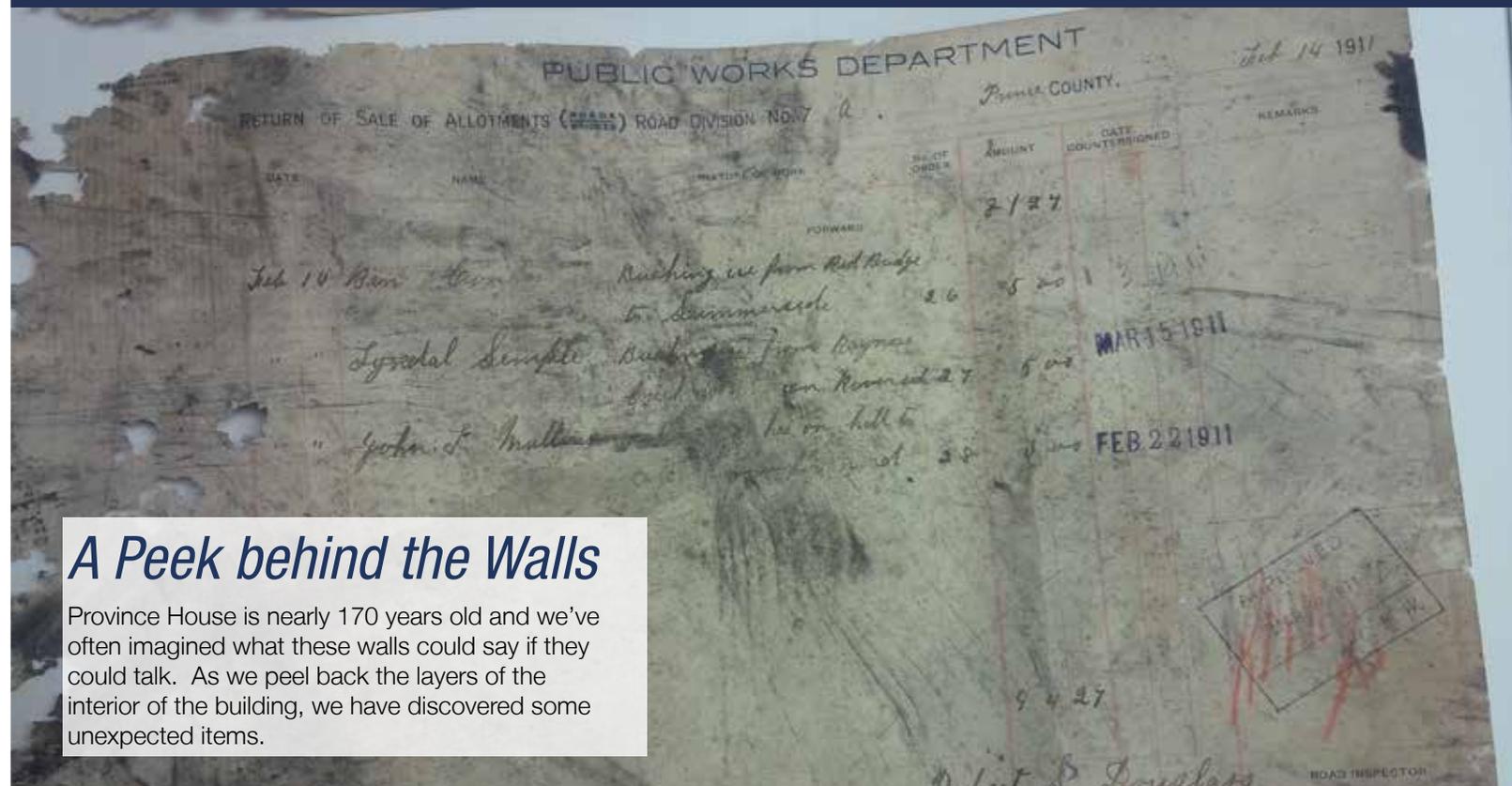
During the initial investigation and documentation stages of the conservation project, laser scans were taken of every room, nook, and cranny of the interior of Province House. Over this past summer, SSDE students, with mentorship from Dr. Grant McSorley, converted the laser scan data into a 3D model of Province House and created an early version of the VR experience. In September, a Senior Design team was tasked with further developing the product into a fully immersive and interactive VR experience. The design team is working with a student and graduate of the Diploma in Animation Studies program at the University of Trinidad and Tobago to create a life-like re-creation of Province House for users to stroll down corridors, climb the central staircase, and explore the famed Confederation Chamber.

Be sure to check out this interactive experience this summer.

Laser scan data (left) and subsequent reconstruction of a room on 3rd floor (right) by the team at University of Trinidad and Tobago.



UPEI SSDE design team, from left to right: Zixuan Wu, Hannah Matheson, André Laurin, Semin Jahic, Tristan Dawson, Andrew Townshend



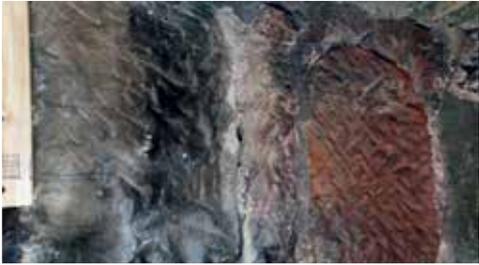
A Peek behind the Walls

Province House is nearly 170 years old and we've often imagined what these walls could say if they could talk. As we peel back the layers of the interior of the building, we have discovered some unexpected items.

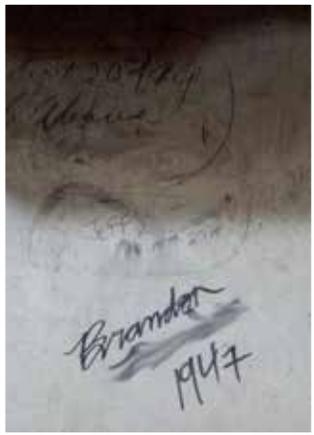
Here is an invoice for materials from the Public Works Department dated February 14, 1911.



This delicate felted floral wreath was found between the third floor and the attic floor. Its origin is unknown and it is currently in the care of the Provincial Heritage Officers for conservation.



In these photos, you can see the individual chisel marks on the stones used in the original construction of the building. Each stone was shaped by hand, using a variety of different chisels and, as you can see, each mason had their own preferred technique.



Many of the workers on the construction of the building and subsequent restorers have put their marks on the building. We have found signatures spanning decades!

What's Next?

In October 2017, the contract for construction management services for phase 2 and 3 of the project was awarded to PCL Constructors Ltd. This contract will ensure that these phases of the project are delivered on schedule, within the construction estimate, and to the level of quality required for a building of this stature. A construction manager was hired due to the increase in complexity at this stage of the conservation project. Multiple sub-contractors will be involved as well, with work beginning in 2018.

Phase 2 will focus on the building envelope, which includes the conservation of the exterior walls, and work related to the foundation, exterior walls, structural interior walls, floors and roof, and exterior universal accessibility. Details of the methodology to be used for phase 2 are currently being fleshed out, with PCL Constructors Ltd. and consultants working closely with Public Services and Procurement Canada and the project management team from Parks Canada to familiarize themselves with the specifics of the project and work completed to date.



FAQ: What is that steel structure?

The steel scaffold system that is slowly enveloping Province House is called an exoskeleton.

This structure will surround Province House from top to bottom and will be used for three purposes:

- to stabilize the building,
- to provide a work bench and platform for the exterior work,
- to store materials as needed, minimizing the handling of character defining heritage fabric.

The exoskeleton will be lit up into the late evening as crews work on two shifts, from 7 am until 10:30 pm.



Photo courtesy Jordan Doiron

Quick Tips for Visitors

Even though Province House is closed for conservation, Parks Canada is telling the story of the building and Confederation itself:

- Explore “The Story of Confederation” exhibit at the Confederation Centre of the Arts (upper foyer), which includes an impressive replica of the Confederation Chamber. Open on Saturdays only 10:00am - 3:00pm, November 2017 – April 2018.
- Be sure to see Parks Canada’s award-winning film, “A Building of Destiny” about the 1864 Charlottetown Conference, playing in the Story of Confederation exhibit at Confederation Centre or online at www.parkscanada.ca/provincehouse
- Download the free official Parks Canada Province House app: www.pc.gc.ca/en/lhn-nhs/pe/provincehouse/activ/explora

Contact Us

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

To learn more, visit our website: www.parkscanada.ca/provincehouse or contact us:

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