



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, while respecting its heritage character-defining elements.

The Government of Canada is investing \$47 million in the Province House project to conserve this structure, which is both the historic birthplace of Canada and the seat of Prince Edward Island's Provincial Legislature. This 5-year project was begun in 2015 and will be completed in 2020. Full details of the project can be found on our website: www.parkscanada.gc.ca/provincehouse.

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

Character-defining elements of Province House

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

You can learn more about these elements on our website: www.parkscanada.gc.ca/provincehouse

Province House National Historic Site, Charlottetown, PE



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 Provincial Legislature.
- The first session of the Prince Edward Island Legislature was held in the building in January 1847.
- 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 Under Way

Work has begun in earnest on the Province House National Historic Site Conservation Project. The tender for phase one of the work has been awarded to Quinan Construction of Orillia, Ontario.

Quinan Construction has been on site since April 24, 2017. This contractor has brought in key people from Ontario and has supplemented his staff with local labour. The majority of the subcontractors on this project are Island firms. Graduates from the Heritage Retrofit Carpentry program at Holland College have also been selected to work on the Province House Conservation Project.

During the first phase of this project, the contractor stabilized the building to ensure its structural integrity. The mechanical and electrical systems, as well as all exterior doors and windows, have been removed. They are now digging out the foundation, replacing the foundations under the north and south porticos, and will erect an exoskeleton around the entire structure.

Pedestrian access will remain in place between Grafton and Richmond Streets throughout the project. There is a new sidewalk installed on the east side of the building between the Coles Building and Province House. Access from Richmond Street to the Confederation Centre outdoor theatre will also remain in place.

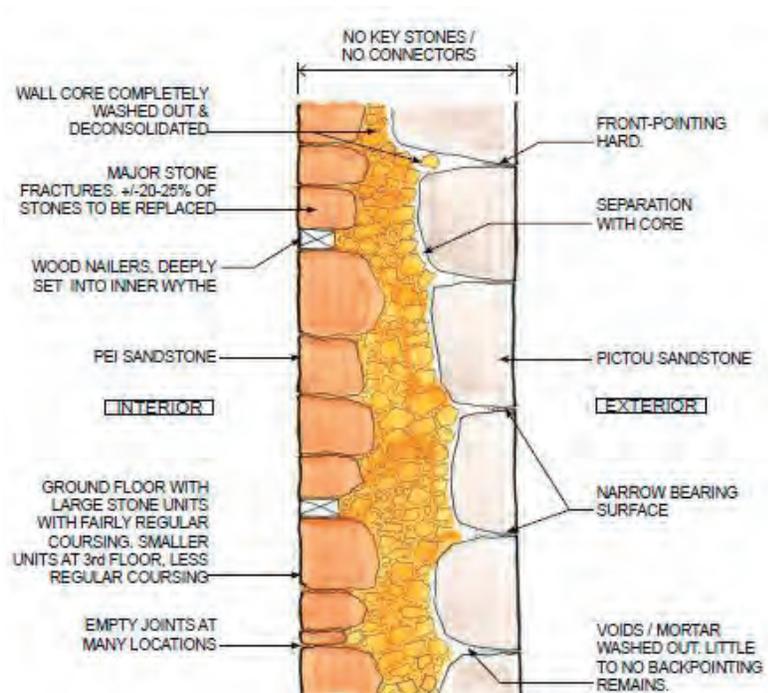
If These Walls Could Talk

As part of the conservation approach of Province House NHS, the current proposal is to remove stones from the structure one at a time and carefully catalogue and store them. You may wonder why we would take such an approach. Here is the story behind the walls.

When Province House was constructed in the 1840s, the builders used a technique common for the era: two courses of stone with a rubble infill between them. As you can see in this sketch, the outer side of this wall was constructed using grey Pictou sandstone. These stones were squared off on the outer face, but not on the other sides, leaving the stones rough and uneven. Meanwhile, the inner wall was made using Island sandstone.

Over the past 170 years, rainwater has seeped in between these two walls and has eaten away at the soft mortar, leaving the walls in poor condition. When the Conservation Project team opened up a wall to inspect the interior condition, extensive damage became apparent.

To properly fix this issue, we are carefully examining the exterior walls stone by stone and repairing the damage. It is truly a monumental task!



Section of exterior masonry wall showing typical deterioration observed.

Province House or the Colonial Building

A building by any other name

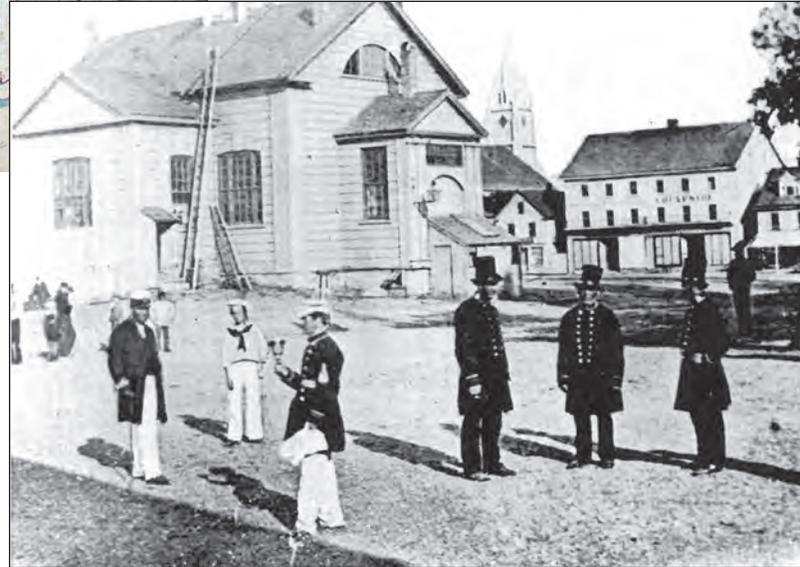
The structure now known as Province House began life as the Colonial Building. Prince Edward Island did not join Confederation until 1873, and until that time, PEI was a British colony.

Charlottetown looked very different in the years prior to the construction of the Colonial Building. In this plan of Charlottetown from 1817, you can see the area known as Queens Square, reserved for government buildings, churches and a market.

Before the Colonial Building was built, the Prince Edward Island Legislature first met in private homes and taverns and eventually, in the John Plaw Court House. By 1837, then Lieutenant Governor Sir John Harvey, made it plain to the legislature that the colony should have a new building for the safe custody of its public records. No one could disagree, and £5,000 was set aside to provide for a legislative building to house the two branches of the legislature, as well as colonial offices. They would need at least another £5,000 to include the Supreme Court before the building was completed.



"Plan of Charlotte Town" by John Plaw, 1817. (Public Archive of Prince Edward Island, Map 0887).



The John Plaw Court House, home of the Prince Edward Island Legislature from 1812 to 1847 (Cullen 1977, 237).

COLONIAL BUILDING.

Colonial Secretary's Office, Charlottetown,
Prince Edward Island, 2d May, 1842.

SEALED TENDERS will be received at this Office until **FRIDAY, the first day of JULY** next, for the Erection and Completion of the **COLONIAL BUILDING.**

Tenders to express the several departments of Work and Materials, as under:

- Nova Scotia Stone, for the outside Walls, in one tender.
- All Stone-cutters', Masons' and Bricklayers' work and materials, (except Nova Scotia Stone, as above), in one tender.
- All Sawyers', Carpenters' and Joiners' work and materials, in one tender.
- All Plasterers' work and materials, in one tender.
- All Painters' and Glaziers' work and materials, in one tender.
- All Slaters' work and materials, in one tender.
- All Plumbers' work and materials, in one tender.

Plans, Elevations, Sections and Specifications of the whole may be seen on application as above.

Ample Security will be required for the due performance of each Contract.

 The Pictou Observer, Halifax Times and Nova-Scotian, St. John Courier, and Miramichi Gleaner, will please insert the above four times.

Notice of tender for construction of Colonial Building, from the Royal Gazette [Charlottetown], June 21, 1842 (Cullen 1977, 241).

In 1839, the Crown launched a public design competition for the building. The competition was won by leading Island architect/builder, Isaac Smith, who had been responsible for most of the Island's existing public buildings to date. Tenders for the construction of the building were issued in 1842.

The cornerstone was laid in May of 1843 - a band, a parade, and a speech by the Lieutenant Governor were some of the events marking the occasion. The construction of the Colonial Building was well underway.

Working on the future of heritage together

Several graduates from Holland College's Heritage Retrofit Carpentry program have been selected to work on the Province House Conservation Project, thanks to an agreement between the College and Parks Canada. Heritage Retrofit Carpentry students learn carpentry techniques and theory to allow them to work on culturally significant projects. The Holland College graduates will have the opportunity to work on many different aspects of the stabilization, gaining incredible hands-on experience under the guidance of experts from Quinan Construction.



(L-R) Holland College Heritage Retrofit Carpentry graduates Jenna MacNeill, Steffen MacEwen, Zackery Bernard and Noah Savary examine blueprints for Province House NHS. (Photo courtesy Holland College.)



Province House (Stephen DesRoches)

Quick Tips for Visitors

Even though Province House is closed for conservation, Parks Canada is telling the story of the building and celebrating Canada 150 in some big ways.

Here are activities to catch in 2017:

- Explore "The Story of Confederation" exhibit at Confederation Centre of the Arts, which includes an impressive replica of the Confederation Chamber.
- Be sure to see Parks Canada's award-winning film, "A Building of Destiny" about the 1864 Charlottetown Conference, playing next to the Chamber replica at Confederation Centre.
- Download the free official Parks Canada Province House app: www.parkscanada.gc.ca/explora-app-ph

Contact Us

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

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