

Canadian/US Cultural Resources Broadening Horizons

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Anyone who travels across the US/Canadian border will quickly notice the sometimes subtle and sometimes striking differences between the two countries, but there are also great similarities, especially in our field of endeavor. Certain historical forces, such as the fur trade, ranching, farming, lumbering, mining, and fishing, hardly recognized the boundary at all. Obviously none of the prehistoric traditions relate to the boundary, and several American Indian tribes and other Native groups today recognize homelands that lie in both countries.

Even more striking is the similarity among problems faced by preservationists. Both are modern highly developed nations that cherish newness and are sometimes wasteful of history. Both are peopled with self-reliant individuals who may be persuaded but cannot be forced to preserve things. Both have strong state and provincial governments, which are essential to the success of any federal effort on behalf of the national heritage. Both have extensive national park systems that include natural, cultural, and scenic wonders, and both acknowledge that even the remotest natural park will contain cultural resources. Both have programs that reach out to assist and encourage preservation by the private sector and others, and both have major national non-profit organizations to support the cause.

Every 18 months, more or less, the Washington leadership of the US National Park Service has traditionally met with the Ottawa leadership of Parks Canada. We review general trends in the two countries and compare notes on the approaches each Service employs to deal with them. Sometimes we plan cooperative efforts on specific problems or at specific places along the border. Next summer, NPS and Parks Canada will meet at Campobello to discuss documentation, preservation, and interpretation of museum collections.

I was very pleased during our September 1990 meeting when my Canadian counterpart, Director General of National Historic Sites Christina Cameron, praised CRM and stated that her agency distributes it widely to Canadian Historic Site managers and others throughout the country. She suggested that we explore the possibility of US/Canadian cooperation on the journal. Unbeknownst to Dr. Cameron, I had long harbored a desire to draw more effectively upon Canadian expertise in order to augment the technical information available to preservationists in the United States, so I quickly agreed.

Lumber from Washington State and from British Columbia is devoured by termites, baccilli, and fungi,

sans portfolio. Brick in Manitoba and in Minnesota may have been fired of similar clay or laid with similar mortar, and will suffer the same deterioration from rising damp or the freeze-thaw cycle. Sod houses in North Dakota and Saskatchewan, log buildings in Maine and New Brunswick, gold rush sites in Alaska and the Yukon all face similar problems and need similar solutions. Archeological sites face the same hazards of looting, vandalism, development, erosion, and contamination from oil spills. I am pleased that preservation technology available through CRM is being used in Canada, and I want to make Canadian knowledge available throughout the United States (see following article).

Cooperation and mutual benefit will not be limited to printed material. Our first major US/Canadian issue of CRM was in fact an expression of a joint training workshop that took place June 15-18, 1992, in Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park. Other similar training ventures are planned. When the Center for Preservation Technology and Training is fully operational it will be able to reach all parts of both countries through satellite links. Even its location in Natchitoches, LA, astride the old frontier between New France and New Spain, will symbolize historical forces that shaped the destiny of all of North America.

This expansion of reach will not dilute the utility of CRM to the person who uses its information in his or her local setting. Serving that person is our only goal. We will occasionally feature international subjects, as exemplified by this issue, but articles will not become vague and generalized, as is common among journals that attempt to bridge major cultural gaps. Instead, we will draw from a larger pool of expertise to solve the same kinds of problems we have dealt with all along. We still need our readers to write up their experience in identifying, analyzing, and solving specific problems. We still need their advice and guidance on subjects that should be covered.

We hope and believe that this broadening of horizons will produce benefits to many, and we welcome our Canadian colleagues to our partnership. In Gulfport and Guelph, in Yellowknife and Yuma, we are all in this together.

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