

architecture. The **architecture** of Canada is an amalgam of Native, colonial, and international forms, testifying to the country's complex relationships with the cultural traditions of its indigenous peoples and of France, England, and the United States. Sadly, Native architectural remains are rare, documented mostly in archaeological sites, drawings, and written descriptions. Our knowledge of pre-contact Aboriginal **architecture** is negligible, except for artifacts found in caves or excavations. Also, many post-contact architectural traditions, such as those of the Iroquoian- and Algonquian-speaking tribes, were purposely temporary. The wigwam, the Algonquian word for dwelling, was a domical or conical single- or two-family structure composed of reeds on simple wooden frames. The elm-bark-covered Iroquois longhouse was considerably larger—up to 120 m long—accommodating an extended family/clan structure.

Natives who lived on the Pacific coast have left relatively rich legacies of buildings, images, and artifacts. Each group developed versions of the plank-house—cedar buildings constructed of posts, beams, and planks that served the coastal tribes' hierarchical social structure. The Haida village of Ninistints on Anthony Island (Queen Charlotte Islands), which once accommodated 17 plank houses, is among the richest Native archeological sites in present-day Canada.

Fishers from many countries built temporary wooden dwellings, known as tilts, on the Newfoundland coast. These were composed of vertical poles chinked with moss. No buildings remain from the 17th and 18th centuries, but archaeological investigations at **Ferryland**, founded in 1621, reveal a dense plan of settlement with cobblestone roads and sanitary facilities. Vernacular **architecture** in Newfoundland has retained its early pattern of small, rectangular, wooden houses, perching lightly on the land, as have other provinces in the Maritimes. Portability is a hallmark of many wood-framed, Atlantic coast houses.

The urban **architecture** of **New France** followed formal traditions established in France. Both Quebec City and Montreal developed parallel to the St Lawrence River, enclosed by walls pierced by gates. The buildings were densely constructed and featured minimal setbacks, offset by a series of formal open spaces. Religious orders built monumental stone buildings organized around courtyards. These hospitals, colleges, convents, and seminaries were large, multi-storey blocks, featuring steeply pitched roofs, dormer windows, and sophisticated planning.

The **seigneurial system** of land tenure was used until 1854 in the St Lawrence Valley. Seigneuries were typically divided into long and narrow lots perpendicular to the St Lawrence and other rivers. The seigneur retained a manor house, built and operated a communal mill, and provided for a church and presbytery. The dwellings of rural **habitants** were typically small and rectangular, with steeply pitched, bell-cast roofs extending over a raised porch. Materials varied, including stone (typically covered with plaster-like *crépi*), wood, and a combination of wood and masonry. After 1665, the colonists of New France also lived in villages, which frequently included prominent parish churches. Good examples of well-preserved rural and urban French colonial masonry houses are Ferme St-Gabriel (1698) in Pointe St-Charles and Montreal's Château de Ramezay (1705, enlarged 1755). Île d'Orléans, near Quebec City, boasts an outstanding collection of French colonial typologies. The architectural traditions of New France are well documented in the work of Ramsay Traquair and Gérard Morisset.

As in England, France, and the United States, the 19th century saw a whirlwind of revival styles, some of which expressed potent ideas on both spirituality and nationalism. The most significant example of Gothic Revival **architecture** was the Church of Notre-Dame, on Place d'Armes in Montreal, opened in 1829. The neo-Gothic **Parliament Buildings** in Ottawa, awarded by competition in 1859 to Thomas Fuller and Chilion Jones, made direct reference to Westminster. The continued popularity of Neo-Palladian **architecture**, illustrated by buildings such as the Saskatchewan Legislative Building in Regina (Edward and W. S. Maxwell, 1908–12), was a constant reminder of Canada's British colonial past. In general, neo-classical and Greek Revival styles were more appropriate for secular



buildings, such as banks, courthouses, and post offices, and were particularly popular in eastern Canada due to stronger American influence.

Nineteenth-century Canadian **architecture** was marked by a growing sense of professionalism among building designers. Formal architectural education in Canada began in 1890 at the University of Toronto, followed by McGill University's School of **Architecture** six years later. Architects in Ontario and Quebec attained association status in 1889 and 1890, respectively; Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia formed organizations in the first two decades of the 20th century; and the Atlantic provinces later in the century. The Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, which held its first convention in 1907, sought to foster closer professional ties across the country.

The construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway inspired massive building projects. These included many stations and related facilities, but also lavish hotels. American architect Bruce Price designed the original Banff Springs Hotel and the Château Frontenac, Quebec City. The romantic, castle-like forms of these hotels were conceived as a nationalistic style. The Empress Hotel, in Victoria, BC, was designed by Francis Rattenbury, and made direct reference to his nearby Legislative Buildings. Another product of the industrial age was the skyscraper, first developed in Chicago in the 1880s. Canada's first building of true skyscraper construction was the Robert Simpson store in Toronto (1895) by Edmund Burke and J. C. B. Horwood.

Twentieth-century Canadian **architecture** reflects international trends, especially the Arts and Crafts movement, art deco, international-style modernism, and postmodernism. Despite the proximity of Frank Lloyd Wright in Chicago, early-20th-century Canadian **architecture** was more affected by Scottish and English ideals, especially through key figures like Percy Nobbs in Montreal, Eden Smith in Toronto, and Samuel Maclure in Victoria. All three architects made their principal contributions to the development of Canadian **architecture** through domestic design, emphasizing traditional forms, natural materials, and hand-crafted decoration.

In the interwar years, Montrealese Ernest Cormier emerged as a major figure, combining notions of modernism with his educational background from the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Cormier's major work is the main building of the Université de Montréal, a bold, brick and reinforced-concrete art deco structure situated according to Beaux-Arts planning principles. Cormier's own house from 1930 – 1 is also well known as the Montreal residence of Pierre **Trudeau**. The **Supreme Court of Canada** in Ottawa, designed by Cormier 1938 – 9, is an outstanding marriage of modernism and classicism. Banks and post offices across Canada were also constructed at this time in a consciously moderne, streamlined aesthetic.

Full-blown international-style modernism did not come to most of Canada until after the Second World War. Among its strongest advocates was John Bland, who with partners Vincent Rother and Charles Trudeau designed Ottawa City Hall in 1958. Bland was director of the School of **Architecture** at McGill, 1941 – 72, and was responsible for transforming its Beaux-Arts curriculum to a modern, Bauhaus-based school. His legacy also includes the establishment of the John Bland Canadian **Architecture** Collection. It and another at the University of Calgary are the most significant archives focusing on the subject of Canadian **architecture**.

Expo 67 was a glorious moment for Canadian modernism, attracting architects and attention across the world. Its architectural legacies: the megastructure Place Bonaventure by ARCOP, the revolutionary housing experiment Habitat 67 by Moshe Safdie, and Buckminster Fuller's geodesic US Pavilion are landmarks of Canadian **architecture**. Yet Vancouver, not Montreal, serves as Canada's premier showcase of modern **architecture**. 'BC modernism' was developed in the country's youngest metropolis by a series of pioneering individuals and design firms as a unique combination of international trends and regional influences. Artist and educator B. C. Binning built his own house in 1939 – 42 with a frank expression of structure and flat roof. Binning and Swiss-born Frederic Lasserre, director of the School of **Architecture** at the University of British Columbia, were key figures in the development of the style. Perhaps its most famous disciple is Arthur Erickson, designer of Simon Fraser University (Erickson/Massey Architects, 1963), the Museum of Anthropology at UBC (1973 – 6), and Robson Square in Vancouver (1974 – 9). Erickson's work is characterized by an innovative rethinking of the program, a clear idea about structure, and an overlapping relationship between interior and exterior spaces.

Many foreign architects, too, have designed important buildings in Canada, including McKim Mead



and White (dome, Bank of Montreal, Montreal), Jacques Carlu (interiors of Eaton's stores, Montreal and Toronto), I. M. Pei (Place Ville-Marie, Montreal), engineer Pier Luigi Nervi (Place Victoria, Montreal), Mies van der Rohe (Westmount Square, Montreal; Toronto-Dominion Centre, Toronto), and Viljo Revell , Toronto City Hall).

The 1970s saw the birth of a broad-based historic preservation movement, following the needless destruction of older buildings to make way for heroic modern projects. Heritage Canada was founded in 1973 , about the same time that major historic districts were undergoing conservation. The Historic Properties in Halifax, Vancouver's Granville Island, the old town in Quebec City, [Dawson City](#) , Yukon Territory, and [Lunenburg](#) , Nova Scotia, are all notable historic districts that have attracted international attention for their conservation.

The acceptance of women by the Canadian architectural profession has been slow. Its first woman member was Esther Marjorie Hill (1895 – 1985), who made history when she joined the Alberta Association of Architects in 1925 . Quebec had no women members until 1942 . The numbers of registered women architects did not increase substantially until 1981 (5 per cent). By the 1990s the number of women had increased to about 12 per cent.

Architecture is more than individual buildings designed by famous architects. Canadian buildings that serve as significant local and international symbols might include the maritime fishing cottage, Montreal triplex, prairie farmhouses and grain elevators, the CN Tower, or even the massive 'log cabin', the Château Montebello. Fantasy-based places, like Green Gables in Cavendish, Prince Edward Island, or the West Edmonton Mall (1981 – 6), and even unpopular buildings like Montreal's Olympic Stadium (the Big 'O', 1973 – 87), also play unique roles in Canadian architectural culture, especially as tourist attractions.

Canadian architects have contributed to the international movement of postmodernism in all its variations. Whereas modern **architecture** shunned historical associations, postmodern buildings celebrate their immediate and historical contexts. The Canadian Centre for **Architecture**, designed by Peter Rose and its founding director, Phyllis Lambert, in 1989 , is an essay in late-20th-century neo-classicism. Its massing and fenestration are intended to harmonize with the tradition of Montreal 'greystones' in the area. The shape of Parkin/Safdie's Great Hall at their National Gallery (1983 – 8) in Ottawa speaks to the nearby parliamentary library; and Safdie's Vancouver Public Library is modelled directly on the Roman Colosseum, perhaps the predecessor of all public spaces.

Multiculturalism and environmentalism, too, are much celebrated in Canadian postmodern **architecture**. Douglas Cardinal's curvilinear Canadian Museum of Civilization in Hull (1983 – 9) is intended to serve as a metaphor for the taming of a rugged, natural landscape. The architect emphasizes that these forms draw on his [Metis](#) heritage. On a smaller scale, the **architecture** of Vancouver-based Patkau Architects illustrates a concerted interest in Native traditions. Their Seabird Island School (1990 – 1) was the first of a series of innovative schools for First Nations communities in BC.

Addressing a worldwide concern over **architecture**'s impact on the environment, Busby + Associates Architects' One Wall Centre in Vancouver is a 48-storey elliptical tower (the tallest building in BC) that uses its own water supply to counteract wind forces. Sustainable development and 'green' **architecture** is a growing field among Canadian architects.

In the 21st century, the precise role of **architecture** in Canadian culture continues to incite debate. In 2002 Berlin-based architectural theorist Daniel Libeskind won a competition to extend Toronto's Royal Ontario Museum. His controversial proposal resembles a giant crystal. Is it a respectful nod to the museum's geological collections or a commentary on the Canadian climate? Architectural meaning is truly in the eye of the beholder.

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How to cite this entry:

Annamarie Adams "architecture" *The Oxford Companion to Canadian History*. Ed. Gerald Hallowell. Oxford University Press, 2004. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. McGill University. 6 April 2010 <<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t148.e74>>



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