



CRISP AND CLEAN – THE INAGURAL BRIEF

The Brief

Short discussions on
conservation

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Old building jargon

by Tom Morrison

There is a unique language to discussing the saving of old buildings that needs to be clarified before a more in-depth conversation can take place. Also, just because one is familiar with the jargon in the United States does not mean that they know the Canadian equivalent – we'll come to that.

Historic

Historic is a loosely used term even within the field. Here in North America, fifty years can add character and a century is a big deal. In other places, people live their day-to-day immersed in millennia of built heritage. Some feel that a building is only historic if it has a historic designation. Due to the context-dependence of the term, I prefer the simple approach that anything that I may call old deserves to be treated as historic.

Conservation

Conservation is an important term in the Canadian dialogue, referring to all processes used to save old buildings and to protect their value. This would include work done on ruins such as the Pyramids of Giza, or the upgrades to modernize an old building such as the current work being done on the Canadian Parliament Hill. South of the border the word *preservation* is used to mean the same thing. Basically, any time you're trying to work with an old building and keep some of its historic character or value you can claim it is conservation work in Canada.



The photos shown here were taken at Citadelle Laferrière and Palais Sans Souci, located in the north of Haiti, and spared from the earthquake's ravages in the

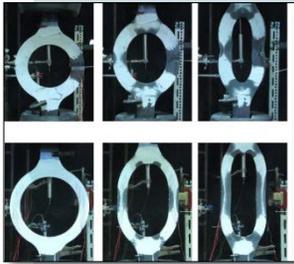
south. They were built in the early 1800's to ward off the Napoleonic Army after the first successful slave revolt against the western colonial powers. Dr. Morrison was part of the ICOMOS Mission to determine the feasibility of transforming these underappreciated UNESCO World Heritage Sites into a sustainable revenue source for Haiti.

Who's who at HSI



Tom Morrison is the Principal Engineer at Heritage Standing Inc. He is a graduate of Civil engineering at McGill University, Montreal, and a native of Fredericton, New Brunswick.

He completed his Masters in Europe, studying the conservation of centuries-old castles, monasteries and cathedrals throughout the Czech Republic and in Portugal. He then worked in Ottawa for the federal body overseeing the conservation of Canada's built heritage. He subsequently returned to McGill for Doctoral Studies on existing steel buildings and the improvement of their seismic performance.



This work led to his patents on two technologies for seismic retrofitting.

He was also approved in 2011 as an ISCARSAH expert member, an ICOMOS committee. He has taught at the University of New Brunswick and has worked for several engineering firms before deciding his professional goals were better achieved in a different way.

Establishing HSI was a welcome challenge in his continued mission to save our old and beautiful buildings.



Preservation

Preservation in Canada refers to protecting, maintaining, and stabilizing an existing structure. Preservation is a sub-category of conservation, and in the United States they would use the term Conservation to mean Preservation.

Further proof that identifying US-Canada distinctions are like Alice understanding Wonderland – everything seems the same when you cross the border, until you realize that it's all somehow not.

Preservation includes the work at Stonehenge, where general maintenance aims to reduce the need for significant work.

Preservation is also the work at many historic villages, where the focus is general upkeep and maintenance.

Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation, surprisingly, means the same thing in Ottawa as in Washington. Rehabilitation refers to work done to make possible the continued or compatible contemporary use of a historic place. Work to upgrade Toronto's Union Station for the increased traffic and outfit it with modern mechanical and electrical systems would all be best qualified as rehabilitation. The building will have undergone renovations that improve its ability to meet modern demands.

Restoration

Restoration tries to turn back the clock. It refers to revealing, recovering, or representing a condition of the building, or part of the building, at a given point in history. Bringing the Fortress of Louisbourg to look as it had during its 18th century prime would be restoration. In other cases restoration may be limited to a specific element, like the restoration of a storefront to match an earlier era.

Much restoration is aesthetic, such as a period wallpaper and lighting. While these are critical in creating the desired feel, they are not within the scope of the structural engineer.

Most major conservation projects include elements of preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration – only rarely would a project exhibit only one of these elements.

Reconstruction

Reconstruction, however, is not considered a conservation practice. There is one case of a reconstructed UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Old Bridge Area of the Old City of Mostar. This reconstruction was accepted only after careful consideration of the unique values and authentic reconstruction undertaking.



A reconstruction is not as valuable as the saved original. Why is this?

It would be like me going out to purchase baguettes, French cheese, a bistro table with chairs, and hiring a French man to smoke Gauloises. All my effort would only make my wife want to board a plane to Paris. I don't expect it to work. There are so many details in a building that replication is impossible.

Reconstructions can be of great value, but are not considered a Conservation approach, as only the originals connect us to our shared humanity and satisfy our yearning for authenticity.

The original structures are monuments to our past. They connect us to our history, they boast our innovative capacity and our resilience. They inspire awe and send shivers down our spines.

Therein lies their greater value.