

Chair's Message

Canada is indeed the "new world." I was reminded of this many times recently in France, very much a country of the "old world." A hospital building in a small city I visited served the health care needs of local people and travellers from 1443 until 1971. Maintained and repaired for six centuries, it continues to serve the hundreds of thousands who marvel at its architecture and its exhibits of medical treatment through the ages.

I was reminded of Canada's architectural youth while standing in a wine cellar that has stored kegs of fine burgundy from the same vineyard since the 13th century. We wandered through arched passageways deep in the ground that continue to serve the purpose for which they were built so many centuries ago.

We sat at dinner in a château first constructed as a military fortification in the 10th century. It was rebuilt several times over the next six centuries before being abandoned to the weather and flocks of sheep for nearly two hundred years. Lovingly restored in the 20th century by our hosts, the château resumes its original role as a family home and a refuge for visitors.

Then I returned to Canada to see a 1909 school being demolished because it is too old, a store that was a national icon about to be demolished because it has a location that is wanted for another purpose, and yet another grain elevator, the symbol of the Prairies, torn down.

Preservation is a fact of life in France. In most cases demolition is simply not an option, and the country is richer for it. The vestiges of our "new world" history must also be preserved. Each loss makes our country poorer.

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Trudy Cowan,
Chair, Heritage Canada Foundation