

Rethinking Preservation at Fort Union National Monument

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This project examines past and current preservation techniques at Fort Union National Monument, New Mexico in light of increasing threats from climate change, inadequate stabilization practices, and diminishing agency resources and aims to make recommendations for future preservation work at the site. Fort Union National Monument is the largest existing Earthen ruin in North America and historically served as an active military fort and depot on the Santa Fe Trail between 1851-1891. The fort was abandoned in 1891, pillaged by locals for pieces, and prior to the stabilization of the site in 1956, the adobe walls were left to weather and deteriorate into the abstract forms of former walls seen today. The deteriorative nature of earthen ruins, intended to be visited and interpreted by the public, pose particularly dynamic and complex challenges for conservators. Earthen sites are extremely vulnerable to moisture and their deterioration will be expedited in the case that there are missing drainage systems and structural features like roofs. Fort Union is no exception; it is a complex archaeological, architectural and cultural landscape, primarily of adobe construction, and founded on legislation that mandates it be preserved as a stabilized ruin. Preservation policy for the site was established in 1954 with the creation of the National Monument as a stabilized ruin without restoration or reconstruction. This preservation policy that restricts rehabilitation and reconstruction conflicts with traditional methods of preserving adobe. Since the 1950s, federal cultural resource management has been increasingly defined by resource type as represented in the creation of the National Park Service's Cultural Resource Management Guidelines (NPS-28) however these guidelines are a challenge to apply to sites that do not fit perfectly into one category. I propose to examine current preservation practices at Fort Union according to a broader set of values as a complex archaeological, architectural and cultural landscape. Rethinking preservation practices can expand the interpretation and display of the site as well as preserve its original fabric.

The Search for Compatibility – A Case Study: The West Block Rehabilitation Project

Speakers/Conférencier: Georges Drolet, OAQ, OAA, AAA, AANB, RAIC, SAH – Architect / Director, EVOQ Architecture

The Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada is the reference document guiding all interventions in heritage buildings owned by the federal government. The three buildings (East, West and Centre Blocks) which make up Parliament Hill, Ottawa, are governed by the Standards and Guidelines. Standard 11 is an interesting and subtle statement regarding new work within historic buildings, which must be “distinguishable”, “subordinate to” and “compatible with” the heritage context. EVOQ Architecture (FGMDA) has developed its own design response to Standard 11, which has been applied to a number of award-winning projects, including the soon-to-be-completed West Block Rehabilitation Project.

Although one can easily imagine how new additions to historic sites can be made more or less subordinate to or distinguishable from their heritage context, the search for compatible design approaches is a much more complex endeavor because it covers the vast territory that lies between radical contrast and pure imitation. However, a careful reading of a site’s specific characteristics, an understanding of the models that guided a building’s initial construction and a clear view of its patterns of evolution can generate designs that achieve new but coherent ensembles, respectful of a place’s history but fully engaged in its continuing evolution.

The West Block of Parliament is one of Canada’s most significant heritage buildings. It is undergoing extensive rehabilitation work. Most notably, it will serve as Canada’s legislative building during the rehabilitation of the Centre Block. In order to provide enough space for the Interim Chamber of the House of Commons, a permanent addition is being built within the West Block’s courtyard. To continue the reading of the courtyard as an outdoor space, and to protect the heritage structures that surround it, the new structure is self-supporting and integrates all necessary systems within a multi-layered high-tech glazed roof that arches over the whole of the courtyard space. It is the largest installation of its kind in Canada.

The new architecture of the courtyard infill was developed on the basis of a very detailed understanding of the West Block’s – and of Parliament Hill’s -- architectural character, heritage values and historical evolution. This understanding informed what heritage features needed to be preserved or enhanced, but it also was the foundation for the creation of a new, compatible, piece of architecture that, although clearly contemporary, was inspired by the Gothic Revival architecture it complements.

The presentation will outline how the architectural integration rationale was developed, to meet all the programmatic requirements and also to respond to the provisions of Standard 11, how it informed the design of the building’s new addition and how it impacted the extensive design review process that was implemented for this major rehabilitation project.

A Moral Imperative – Developing St. Elizabeths West Campus for Reuse

Speakers/Conférencier: Jean Carroon, FAIA, LEED Fellow – Design Excellence Architect, Goody Clancy | HDR Joint Venture

St. Elizabeths West Campus, an historic hospital established in the 1850's, is owned by the U.S. government and under the custody and control of the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA). It is located in the District of Columbia on a hill overlooking the Anacostia River with panoramic views of Washington and Virginia. A National Historic Landmark consisting of 176 acres and 61 historic buildings with approximately 1.1 million gross square feet, the GSA is developing the campus as a secure federal facility for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). This includes adaptively reusing existing buildings and adding approximately 2 million gross square feet of new facilities.

A Master Plan, approved in 2009, provides a framework for the development considering historic and natural resource characteristics, circulation and access, and massing and density while meeting the programmatic needs of the Department of Homeland Security. Part of the master planning process includes compliance with the Section 106 regulations under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). The NHPA of 1966, as amended through 2000, established a program for the preservation of historic properties throughout the United States. Section 106 requires Federal agencies to consider the effects of their activities on historic properties, to involve the public and have ongoing consultation with identified parties, which in the case of St. Elizabeths includes local and federal agencies as well as advocacy organizations such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Goody Clancy | HDR Joint Venture is one of three design teams involved in the development of St. Elizabeths West Campus and is focused on the adaptive reuse of existing buildings, which were constructed between the 1850's and the 1960's, but which have been vacant for many years. Working closely with the GSA since 2009, the team has been responsible for evaluating the condition of buildings, assessing opportunities and creating designs for adaptive reuse and strategic additions. The presentation will provide an overview of the history of St. Elizabeths, the current multi-phased development and the extensive ongoing review process that balances the many requirements of a Federal facility on an historic site.