

Palette from the past

The thought of architecture in Newfoundland and Labrador brings to mind brightly coloured row houses and pretty old clapboard homes by the sea. But the proud owners of such historic homes searched in vain for historically accurate paint colours — until June 2007, when the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador and R.A. Templeton Ltd., a St. John's paint store, unveiled ninety-six historic colours of Newfoundland.

Many of the colours on the palette have been renamed to reflect Newfoundland themes. Black is still black and white is still white, but a light beige is renamed Sheilagh's Brush after a snowstorm that hits around St. Patrick's Day, and a dark pink is called Heart's Content for a town located on Trinity Bay. A six-coloured "Jelly Bean Palette" features the vivid, more contemporary colours common to the row houses in downtown St. John's.

"People want to have a historic home," says Dale Jarvis, a provincial folklorist at the Heritage Foundation. "They're proud of the work they've put into them and want to be as correct as they can be."

Jarvis says it's not required that homeowners use the historic colours, but the Heritage Foundation strongly recommends it, especially if the home is heritage-designated. When federal, provincial, or municipal governments recognize buildings that are proven to be historically valuable, their preservation is then subject to regulations.

Procedures for heritage designation vary across the country, but the standards and guidelines of Canada's Historic Places Initiative are often referenced as a source for responsible preservation practices. The initiative, which began in 2001 as a collaboration between heritage experts and all levels of government, recommends preserving "character-defining" features of historic sites with as little intervention as possible.

Problems arise when buildings have been altered over different periods of time, says Dr. Jennifer McKendry, an architectural historian from Kingston, Ontario. Decisions need to be made on whether past changes should be respected as historical.

Choices also need to be made regarding which buildings deserve preservation. "There are all kinds of heritage buildings," she says. "They're not just houses, forts, and churches. We should also be looking at jails, hospitals, and insane asylums." While such institutions often have not been considered important, McKendry says they should

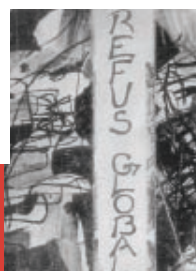


be preserved to "represent the whole of society."

Jarvis says that when paint colour is a defining characteristic of a historic building, steps are taken to keep that colour on the building. For example, Newfoundland's railway stations were usually painted a yellow and green that are known as Reid Newfoundland colours after the family that operated the province's railway from 1898 to 1923.

— Jen Clark, with files from Chris Webb

TAKE THE DAY OFF



August 9
To remember the day in 1948 when the anti-establishment manifesto *Refus global* (Total Refusal) was released in Montreal. Fight the power.