THE CONSTRUCTION OF
BUILDINGS AND HISTORIES:
HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY DEPARTMENT STORES, 1912-26

by

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ABSTRACT

Between 1913 and 1926, the aged British commercial institution, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), built four monumental department stores across Western Canada in Calgary, Vancouver, Victoria, and Winnipeg. In this thesis extensive archival research on the buildings and the HBC's architectural policies is analyzed within the contexts of Canadian social history, and of Company business history. The HBC was making new advances into the department store field, and the stores were clad in a standardized style intended to create a particular image of the Company in contrast to its competitors. Popular in Britain at the time, this Edwardian Classicism emphasized the HBC's history as the official representative of the British Empire across the hinterlands, a history largely defunct by the turn of the century. The opulent style also helped to establish the stores as key cultural institutions and as palaces of consumption. After World War One the HBC also began to stress its specific historical role in the Canadian fur trade and the settlement of the nation, through the use of various other architectural features such as the display windows, art galleries and museums set up inside the new stores, and by the historical sites of Company buildings.

The competition between historical themes --British Imperial and Canadian frontierist-- evidenced in the HBC department stores were tied to social factors. Demographic changes and nationalist sentiment after WWI forced the HBC to recognize Canada's particular pluralist society, and to mediate its image as a purely British organization. Many staff members and customers had no ties to the Company or the Empire, so the HBC invented a tradition that the public could relate to and participate in. The codification of a representational strategy was complicated by the differing agendas of the Company's London Board and its Canadian management. The study of architectural issues such as urban context, style, and building use establishes how the modern HBC employed history through
modes of representation in the built environment, to justify its claims to the loyalty of a diverse population of workers and customers.
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David P. Monteyne
INTRODUCTION

"THE STORE IS EN FETE, PRODIGALLY DECORATED, Celebrating Our Two Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary," exclaimed the advertisement of the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) in the Manitoba Free Press, May 1, 1920. The ad copy continued, describing how the old Winnipeg department store’s “façade is a blaze of color today, decked with grouped flags on a lavish scale and spangled with huge shields and crests bearing inscriptions apropos of the gala event.” Further displays occupied the store windows with historic scenes from the HBC’s romantic past. The urban department stores of the Company offered a free film and children’s books, sponsored writing contests, and put on pageants and parades, all representing its past two and a half centuries of colonial dominance and development. The Anniversary was celebrated at the chronological midpoint of the Company’s most profound period of department store expansion, during which it erected four matching emporia across Western Canada (Figures 1a-1d). In that summer of 1920, and in the flanking decades of new store development, the buildings became icons, backdrops, receptacles and distributors of the Company’s representation of its own seemingly significant history. However, this representation of the Company’s historical ascendancy, which was intended to instill loyalty among a growing and changing Western Canadian population, was executed at a time when its actual dominance of the fur, real estate, and retail trades was severely challenged by various forms of competition. By infusing the modern stores with historicizing events, the HBC intended to produce a sense of continuity between the old days of the fur trade, and its contemporary endeavours in the retail field.

The development of interacting programs of commercial representation and department store construction sprung from a critical juncture in the Company’s history. Its traditional mode of business was the fur trade, which had been pursued
**Figure 1a**  Hudsons' Bay Company Store, Calgary, Alberta
Source: *The Beaver*, March 1941
Figure 1b  Hudson's Bay Company Store, Vancouver, BC
Source: The Beaver, Feb. 1940
Figure 1d  Hudson's Bay Company Store, Winnipeg, Manitoba
Source: The Beaver, June 1928
across empty hinterlands and against little competition. In the face of late nineteenth century urbanization and industrialization, the HBC nearly abandoned its traditional commerce, to concentrate mainly on selling arable land received by treaty from the Confederation government. Its enormous real estate dividends were earned at the expense of the fur and retail trades, although the latter held strong financial potential, since the Company was often the sole supplier in early settlements. By the early twentieth century, the policy of focusing on conservative land sales proved inadequate, and it became imperative that the HBC reassess its goals in order to maintain an institutional presence in urbanizing Canada. For the aged, British trading concern to keep abreast of the young nation it was necessary to rejuvenate at once its physical plant and its corporate image. Thus, the four stores are particularly interesting and important because they form a concentrated effort on the part of the HBC to establish itself in the urban retail field during a period of great transformation in Canadian society, and in the business of the Company. This building program differed greatly from the random development of HBC saleshops before 1910, and was delimited by changes in social and corporate circumstances by 1930.

By 1910, the potential of the department store came to be recognized for the dual purposes of commerce and public relations: while selling commodities to a growing populace, the HBC could also sell an image of itself through the medium of the imposing stores. Douglas MacKay, one-time editor of the Company's house magazine, described the connection between these twin goals in his 1936 history called The Honourable Company:

Absentee owners and management, lulled by the enormous revenues from land sales, failed even to grasp the commercial significance of cities rising swiftly from the settlers' tent towns. Ten years of the new century had passed before the old Company realized that it was being surpassed by aggressive young retail merchant organizations. Moreover, there was growing resentment against its long record of having taken wealth from the country while contributing little in return, not even the impressive buildings which the new cities wanted as symbols of their stature.... 'What has the Hudson's Bay Company ever done for Canada?' these people asked, dimly
aware of two centuries of monopoly and acutely conscious of current profits from farmlands and real estate. Finding itself increasingly unpopular with the public and despised by competitors as hopelessly antiquated, the old Company rushed into expansion plans. Great department stores for the cities of the west were blueprinted.\textsuperscript{1}

In the urban department store field, the competitors of the HBC had been erecting emporia across Western Canada since the turn of the century. These massive buildings, which outclassed the cramped saleshops of the HBC, were usually designed in the modern, unornamented Chicago style. But with its legacy to uphold, and in a spirit of commercial competition, the HBC now adopted a style of architecture that would distinguish its stores on the streets of the city.

Thus, with the studied choice of an architectural style that would befittingly represent the HBC, the Board of Governors initiated a building program which included monumental stores in Calgary (1912-13), Vancouver (1913-16, 1925-26), Victoria (1914-21), and Winnipeg (1925-26). As planned, the four stores would have been built consecutively, but various local and international problems delayed the projects, spreading them out over fourteen years. The style chosen was a Classicism conveyed by the organization of the tripartite façade: a solid-looking base with marqued entrances; a main shaft of the building marked by three to four story, elaborately fluted, Corinthian columns; an attic and cornice to cap the building with added ornamental shields and balustrade. The Classical style of architecture ordained by the London-based Board to be emblematic of the HBC was an architecture popular in the Edwardian era of England and its colonies. Following the long reign of Queen Victoria, the era of Edward VII after the turn of the century was marked by great interest in public display and pomp. During this period when other industrialized nations were achieving economic and geo-political parity with a lagging Britain, the latter nation's modernity and Imperial expansion were forcibly promoted, though within a framework of traditional British values and ceremonies

\textsuperscript{1}Douglas MacKay, \textit{The Honourable Company} (1936; Toronto: McLelland & Stewart, 1966) 306.
supposedly proven over the long, glorious history of the country.\textsuperscript{2} The progress and wealth of Imperial England was now celebrated in bombastic architectural projects which sheathed the most modern industrial building technology with allusions to the Classical cultures of ancient empires. Indeed, this period before World War One marked the zenith of Empire, and the fading Imperial power of the HBC consequently initiated its own optimistic and imposing projects.

In the present day it is very difficult to imagine the impact of such a bright and bold intrusion into the urban fabric. The block-length size and grandeur of the Company’s stores dominated downtown cores of the relatively small, colonial cities, and impressed the public with a forceful, prosperous presence. Public attitudes were changing, though, and by the time of the 250th Anniversary the HBC would need to alter its pompous representational strategies to accommodate the colony’s growing imperatives of nationalism and independence. These changes in corporate image are manifest in the remaining portion of the building program, and in the nuances of department store operations as actualized by the HBC in the 1920s. All told, as opulent emporia providing the world’s industrial produce to the peoples of Canada, these stores represented the Company as a main agent of civilization for the new Dominion.

The situation of the HBC as a long-standing commercial giant and colonial force, the scale of this undertaking, and the motifs and methods of representation employed by the Company are distinctive in department store history. Of course, by virtue of its long presence in the West, the HBC already conducted business of some sort in its chosen sites of expansion. One historian actually claims precedence for the Company in the international domain of departmental retail: John Ferry notes that, although distinct from the urban retailers that developed in mid-nineteenth century Paris, London, and New York, “the trading posts of the Hudson’s

Bay Company in the wilderness of northern Canada, have an earlier record of multiple trading which eventually developed into the department store field.\textsuperscript{3} However, in the small Prairie towns, early HBC salesshops were often designed by the Chief Factor (manager) of the fur trade establishment; in larger cities by a local architect versed in boomtown commercial blocks, and receiving little guidance from a Company administration ignorant of the retail field. These poorly organized stores in disparate styles paled in relation to the sumptuous, seductive architecture produced for French and American department stores. Designed to imbue the average customer with a sense of wealth and financial liberality, these palaces of consumption helped create desire for the luxury goods displayed.\textsuperscript{4} The opulent architecture thus played a vital role in the generation of the newly arising culture of consumption, which was driven by mass manufacturing, and by the increasing discretionary income of lower to middle class wage earners.\textsuperscript{5} Whether the early salesshops of the north preceded the Bon Marché or Macy’s in “multiple trading,” the level of sophistication attained by these department stores in marketing, and in architectural expression, was not approached until the HBC’s new building program that was initiated after 1910.

If not a leader in the international department store field, the HBC was certainly an early and powerful authority in the occupation of land we now call Canada. Trading industrial goods for furs since 1670 had provided the Company with immense profits, and a historical function often defined by themselves and the public as “civilizing the hinterlands.” After 1869, by virtue of a deal with the


\textsuperscript{5}For a description of the culture of consumption as it developed in the United States beginning in the last half of the nineteenth century see William Leach, \textit{Land of Desire} (NY: Pantheon, 1993) 3-12. Cf. Santink, who outlines similar developments in Eastern Canada, 43-44.
Confederation government, the Company possessed enormous tracts of land across the fertile belt, and as a real estate agent, greatly affected the destination of railroads and settlers. No other business active in the twentieth century could boast of such a background, and few, if any, retail firms had the wherewithal to initiate such a concerted building program as the HBC did in 1912. Most merchants could only pursue such capital-intensive projects one store--or story--at a time. These indications of history, control, and progress become part of the mystique generated by the HBC stores with their program of architectural representation.

The cultural geographer David Harvey states that, with the fragmentation and changeability of social relations within the capitalist economic system, "corporations, governments, political and intellectual leaders, all value a stable (though dynamic) image as part of their aura of authority and power." While retaining a perennial appearance of stability, the corporate image must react to superstructural shifts in social attitudes. During this period of building, the specific historical themes of this architectural representation changed to reflect growing feelings of Canadian nationalism, from glorifying the HBC’s intimate association with the British Empire to underlining its presence in exploring, settling, and civilizing the spaces of Canada itself.

This thesis is an initial contribution to the architectural and social history of HBC department stores. Histories of HBC architecture have not previously been written, except as an aspect of archaeological and sociological research at fur trade post sites. Hence, I have made particular use of the relatively untapped and rich collection of primary documents in the Hudson’s Bay Company Archives, Winnipeg. This archival information has come largely through the examination of official

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7See, for instance, Heinz W. Pyszczyk, "The Architecture of the Western Canadian Fur Trade: A Cultural-Historical Perspective," SSAC Bulletin SEAC 17.2 (June 1992): 32-41; Gregory G. Monks, "Architectural Symbolism and Non-verbal Communication at Upper Fort Garry," Historical Archaeology 26.2 (1992): 37-57; or various government publications. HBC department stores are briefly dealt with in broad histories such as Ferry's, or in Company-sponsored texts such as The Beaver and others.
correspondence files consisting of communications between the London Board and Canadian personnel. From this extensive correspondence it is possible to glean a solid knowledge of the chronology, intentions, and important issues surrounding the building program.\(^8\) A continual process of give and take was at work within the HBC's administrative system in the first decades of the twentieth century. To generalize, one could estimate that any resolution began with an ideal vision of the Canadian management, which was tempered by the conservative, British decision-makers, then further altered when put into practice in the Western or Northern Canadian scene. That is, each group or individual had their own justifications and interests affecting the tone and content of their correspondence, and the archival data must be interpreted within this context of negotiation.

The interpretation of this data has also been influenced by extensive readings in twentieth century Canadian and Company history. My thesis spans three significant periods regularly outlined in Canadian historiography: Western Canada's great boom period of immigration, settlement and urbanization 1900-13; the Great War; and the postwar atmosphere of nationalism and autonomy. The boom period saw 1.75 million immigrants from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds enter Canada between 1901-11. The immigrants often settled in the burgeoning and heavily promoted urban areas of the West: the percentage of Canadian urbanites doubled in the four decades before 1921,\(^9\) which provided excellent opportunities for merchants. Despite the immigration, public opinion in Canada still succumbed

\(^8\)A large amount of the twentieth century documents held by the HBC Archives are as yet inaccessible at remote locations. Various information regarding the building of the department stores, particularly the Minutes of the London Board of Governors and the Winnipeg-based Canadian Committee, is not yet microfilmed. However, important discussions and decisions made at these meetings would necessarily be conveyed to the appropriate Commissioners and managers, who would then write back, confirming or responding to the administration's requests and dictates. Therefore, while the correspondence files on microfilm may not include the arguments and discussions involved in the decision-making process, they do present the actual decisions, and often peripheral indications of the considered alternatives.

uncritically to Imperial jingoism, so the Company’s image as the British agent of
civilization was seemingly no handicap to its business. This was a period when the
transcontinental railways, as a vital tool of Anglo-Canadian expansion and resource
extraction, dictated the movement of goods and people across Canada. For their
station architecture the railways, like the HBC, also adopted emblematic, Classical
styles in the early twentieth century to represent consistency and geographic
control to settlers, citizens, and travelers. Indeed, there was a sharing of directors
between the Canadian Pacific Railway and the HBC, and the two powerful
companies arranged multifarious deals to their mutual advantage. The railways
served to populate the cities and import industrial produce; they also brought in
ruralites and tourists who required a centralized supply of goods and services.10
Thus, in the rapidly developing cities of the West, the HBC attempted to dominate
the expanding markets with its massive, recognizable stores.

The economic recession, which followed this boom in 1913, did not affect the
wealthy corporation to the same degree as the outbreak of war, which resulted in
cutbacks in all the HBC’s Canadian operations, and temporarily stopped all
construction. However, while the war may have seriously affected the retail trade
in Great Britain, the military-industrial complex maintained a high level of
employment in Canada, and North American products remained available for sale
in the department stores. The tantalizing, unfinished emporiums of the HBC
caused frustration in its potential clientele, so far away from the wartime woes of
London and the head office. The London Board’s reluctance to recognize this better
wartime economy in Canada points to its growing inability to comprehend and

10Ironically, it was the coming of the railway to populate the West that effectively extinguished the
HBC’s traditional fur trade in much of Canada, while providing them with the opportunity to
develop retail. In the twentieth century, the HBC attempted to maintain a fur monopoly by
trading into increasingly remote regions of the Arctic. Among other connections, serving on the
Boards of both the HBC and the CPR were Sir Stafford Northcote, Sir Sanford Fleming, and Sir
Donald Smith. For a discussion of Classical grand manner railway terminals erected across
Canada before WWI, consult Harold Kalman, A History of Canadian Architecture, vol. 2 (Toronto:
Oxford UP, 1994) 490-92. It should be noted that Donald Smith was also a director of the Bank
of Montreal which, along with several financial institutions, had a long tradition of building iconic
Classical banks across Canada, ibid. 579-82.
control its operations in the colonial hinterlands—the margins which had, during the boom, developed their own urban centres. Aggressive competitors, also taking advantage of the urban growth, easily accommodated their strategies to rapidly changing local conditions, while the HBC was often bogged down in trans-Atlantic correspondence.

After the war, the locus of power within the Company became ever more crucial. The postwar period in most countries was marked by a great amount of social antagonism, which saw traditional power structures challenged by unemployed veterans and labour movements. Significantly, at least for my thesis, the new Western Canadian urban populations had no ties of loyalty or necessity to the Company (as did First Nations trappers or early settlers, often engaged with the HBC in a credit trade situation), or, indeed, to the British Empire. For example, more than one quarter of immigrants in 1913 had arrived from Southern and Eastern Europe. Anglicization efforts popular during the boom period had lost momentum during the war, and there was great national debate over Canada’s relationship to its Imperial mentor. Opposition to conscription and to the war in general came largely from citizens with non-British heritage, and their voices began to influence the dominant Anglo-Canadian cultural discourse. In the 1920s, non-British immigration continued, at a slower but steady rate, to affect the demographics of Canada. Furthermore, with its vital contribution and sacrifice to the Allied war effort, Canada began to see itself as an individual, independent nation, and Imperial allegiances became less automatic. British ties were publicly debated, while Canada’s economic base shifted toward increasing American involvement. These major demographic and attitudinal changes in Canada complicated the Company’s commercial position, and made its role as the agent of British Imperialism rather sensitive. For the HBC department stores, the developing Canadian social and cultural context offered larger markets and local

Bothwell, et al, 58-59, 128, 142, 212; for a discussion of postwar nationalism see 229ff.
manufacturing, but this context also demanded more powerful local management, as well as representations of history with more local content.

Also within this time span the Company underwent a corporate makeover, beginning with the reorganization of the London Board. Fueled by a 1910 shift in power among the Board of Directors, administration was separated into three divisions: land, fur, and retail. This development paved the way for the large-scale expansion program establishing the Company’s emporia across Western Canada. In Canada, Commissioners were appointed to run the divisional operations subordinate to the London directors, and in 1912 the Canadian Committee was formed in Winnipeg to provide opinions and information on Western business. The Canadian Committee assumed direction over the Stores Division in 1920, and three years later it expanded into larger headquarters. Various struggles within the hierarchy of the Company preclude a linear history, but throughout this period the Canadian Committee became increasingly influential in decision making, taking charge of national operations in 1931. The relationship between Canadian management and the London Board was not so much an outright battle, as popularly portrayed by Peter Newman, as it was a continual and complex realignment of power structures and the mediation of dictates and desires analyzed by business historian David Monod.12

From this complex corporate interaction sprung the Company’s public relations strategies, which became increasingly important and strategic. The HBC’s role as Imperial provider, assumed almost by default before the First World War, gave way to an emphasis on Canadian scenes and stories of individuals who tamed the frontiers in advance of Confederation and the coming of settlers to the West. Features of the earlier theme must be reconstructed from varied

representations of the HBC in literature, newspapers, and promotional events. Evidence outlining the shift in themes after 1920 is more abundant as the Company made a more concerted effort to construct histories through events and publications. Historian Peter Geller has revealed some of the tactics employed in the HBC magazine *The Beaver*, and other Company-produced histories of the 1920s to 1940s, noting especially the emphasis on fur trade lore and First Nations relations, which continually draws parallels between the Company's past and present circumstances.\(^{13}\) I study the department stores erected by the HBC as loci of these representations, where the historical themes are played out in physical elements and informative events. In this manner, the buildings themselves become multifaceted objects to be understood in the context of their making and reception. I will argue, then, that the HBC's process of representing itself, and the shifts in that process, can be perceived in the choice of architectural style and location and in the way the buildings are used as receptacles of Company history. Although the fixed elements of the exterior style remained the same throughout the program, the layout and use of store interiors accommodated the Company's changing strategies of representation.

Architecture is a potent medium by which certain intended meanings are transmitted, and, when experienced by the public at the level of practical interaction, can be accepted uncritically as necessary truths. The social theorist Walter Benjamin has argued that "the laws of [architecture's] reception are most instructive," as its representations are effectively absorbed by the populace in an "incidental fashion."\(^{14}\) These built images, then, can be very powerful by their invariant physical presence, and accustomed meaning. In daily life we encounter,

\(^{13}\)Geller has written extensively on the public relations strategies of the HBC, concentrating on photographic representation in its house magazine, *The Beaver*; see for example, "Creating Corporate Images of the Fur Trade: The Hudson's Bay Company and Public Relations in the 1930s," in Jennifer S.H. Brown, W.J. Eccles, Donald P. Heldman, eds, *The Fur Trade Revisited* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, Mackinac Island State Park Commission, 1994).
read, and comprehend elements of the built environment, and habitually act in accordance with our interpretation. Thus, a particular building --by its style, its location, its interior arrangement-- may implicitly or explicitly communicate meaning for an institution interested in affecting public interpretations. The department store is a significant example of an institution which intends to affect public actions, since it exists to create desire for the commodities it contains. Indeed, manifestations such as the Anniversary or The Beaver were only conceived as representational strategies after the establishment of the new building program.

Despite the construction of four impressive emporiums, and the opening of several smaller stores across the West, the retail division failed to turn a profit throughout the 1910s and 1920s. The unsuccessful retail trade certainly did not regain for the Company its past consequential status within the Western Canadian economy. Therefore, the desire to represent itself as stable, beneficent, progressive, and even organic, peaked in reaction to these crises in the Company's business during the 1910s and 1920s, and was exposed in the monumental architectural program and other media. For instance, as Geller shows, The Beaver magazine rehashed the romance and mythology of old trading days --marked by commercial (and cultural) dominance, and the magnanimous "civilizing" of the First Nations with trade goods-- at a time when the HBC was facing criticism in Canada for its aboriginal policy, and the fur division was a skeleton of its previous self. The HBC claimed it had adapted like a natural entity to environmental changes, and in the process had not lost its traditions of quality, fair dealing, and cultural preeminence. In fact, from 1870 to 1930, the fur and retail interests suffered acutely from neglect, distance, disorganization, or a combination of these administrative shortcomings. In addition, the external factor of heavy competition from other fur traders in the north, and large merchant houses in the cities, as well as the coming of the railways,

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15Monod 176-88. For the financial problems of the Company's fur trade see Ray, passim.
eroded the HBC's monopoly control over transportation, settlements and markets. Ironically, while the modernization of transportation and communication bolstered the potential for control to be centralized on an Imperial hub, it also lead to the development of new urban centres which created their own local power structures. Thus, as the central power of the HBC decreased within Canada, the representation of its centrality to cultural development increased in importance.

Indeed, the events of the 250th Anniversary are indicative of this particular importance of the public representational strategies of the HBC, in which its general and architectural attempts to convey meaning became increasingly intense and organized between 1910 and 1930. These strategies aimed to connect the Company's long and powerful history with its present situation, justifying by reference to tradition its claims to customer and staff loyalty in the context of widespread commercial competition. Throughout the period, the events of the 250th Anniversary were in the process of becoming permanent strategies, as the HBC felt the need to generate pomp and excitement around its retail and other businesses. For example, the writing of Company history was made official with the first issue of The Beaver magazine in 1920, an in-house publication directed mainly at the large staffs of the department stores, and comparing their work to that of the old-time traders and factors. As well, juxtaposing archaic and modern products and practices in promotional displays, store events and advertisements was becoming standard for the HBC. The “huge shields and crests” temporarily added to the old Winnipeg store for the Anniversary, were also decorative elements of the architectural style ordained eight years earlier, being produced as terra cotta ornamentation for the new buildings.

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18 Benson relates the difficulties department stores experienced in breeding customer loyalty, when different price or style could easily entice them to the competitor down the street, 114-15; she also discusses some of the methods by which retail firms attempted to develop a loyal, and therefore better-selling, staff, 162-64.
The production of historical themes in relation to a department store, which must of necessity appear up-to-date and authoritative on contemporary culture, is a compelling paradox. The comforting mixture of past and present can appear as a stabilizing influence in a rapidly changing society, such as that of Western Canada in the first decades of the twentieth century. As Benjamin has stated: “These images [in which the new is intermingled with the old] are wishful fantasies, and in them the collective seeks both to preserve and to transfigure the inchoateness of the social product.”19 Thus, elements of history may be used in a modern context to formulate a tradition in which people can participate, and thereby associate themselves with a glorified, yet comprehensible, past, complementary to their present social beliefs. In the introduction to a book of essays on the modern utilization of history, the social historian E. J. Hobsbawm states that “it is the contrast between the constant change and innovation of the modern world and the attempt to structure at least some parts of social life within it as unchanging and invariant, that makes the ‘invention of tradition’ so interesting for historians.”20 In the context of this thesis, the HBC attempted during this period to represent itself as continuing many of its fine traditions from the ancient days of the fur barter through to its most modern department stores. Fur trade traditions, myths, and rituals such as fair dealing, rugged quality for the northern climate, and the fierce, dedicated personnel of the “Great Company,” were recreated in the spaces of the stores. Thus, an important element of this department store program was that the buildings were vital nodes in the HBC’s dynamic representational field: they were physical evidence of the Company’s history and power; they presented its past in decoration and pageantry; and they disbursed icons, texts, and products representing its traditional contribution to Western Canadian society. The intention

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20 Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” in Hobsbawm and Ranger, eds. 2. Many of the techniques analyzed in the varied essays of this volume can be traced in the methods of historical representation used by the HBC.
was to instill loyalty in the urban customers and employees who, despite having no
ties to the British concern, could vicariously become part of the romance and power
of the Company's history of Canadian civilization. I will demonstrate that the four
department stores constitute a building program, tied to shifting markets, that
restates the HBC's history from one that glorifies the Imperial centre to one
focusing on the role of the Company in the formation of Canada as "nation."
“Whatever may have been the faults of the company, history will record that it explored a vast territory, prepared the way for its settlement and colonization, fulfilled an important part in the history of Canada, had not a little to do with the consolidation of the Dominion and with the development of the western country, and that its work was for the advantage of the Empire as a whole.”

Sir Donald Smith, Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal, Governor of the HBC, 1901

“that agreement made with this ancient and powerful corporation, inseparably connected with the history (and indeed government, civil and criminal) of a great portion of Canada for nearly two and a half centuries, and having all the prestige of a great and honoured name, vast assets and landed estates (confirmed by Parliament after its surrender of Rupert’s Land—see Imp. Order in Council, 23rd June, 1870) and far reaching commercial influence from which many indirect advantages and benefits might reasonably be expected to flow, might not bear the same relation to the public interest if it were entered into with a paltry firm of no credit, antecedents or reputation.”

Justice Martin, British Columbia Court of Appeals, Decision in favour of the HBC, April 1913

Large scale migration to Western Canada only began in the late nineteenth century. Towns and cities began to form adjacent to fur trading posts, near prime agricultural real estate, or along the railroads. The Hudson’s Bay Company, being the only trader in much of the West, was often turned to by the settlers who needed supplies such as the staple items it was known to carry. As more people of European descent arrived, and the First Nations entered the cash trade because of post-Confederation treaty settlements, many posts along the fertile belt—where the fur trade was driven out by farming and urbanization—gradually became reliant on a retail trade in a wider variety of articles. Competing with the HBC’s traditional, pragmatic wares—like its famous blankets, metal cookware, and firearms—fancy goods were introduced by peddlers and other traders, and became popular in the
austere lifestyle of the frontier. To maintain its presence, the Company was forced to follow suit and broaden its stock, leading post management to concentrate more fully on sales than pelts. As the Fur Trade Commissioner noted in 1912: “the profits on sales and barter are a constant and important factor in the results of the fur trade, while the profit on the purchase of furs is most uncertain, depending on the prices realized in London.”

Oftentimes, a post and store would close down, unable to compete with new local merchants or the immensely popular Eaton’s mail-order catalogue.

In most of the larger towns of the West the HBC had established purely retail outlets in the 1880s-90s. For example, in Vancouver a small, wood frame store selling practical necessities (like axes and lanterns) was built the year after the city’s 1886 incorporation. By 1890 the Company realized the buying potential of the burgeoning population, and opened a branch carrying a broader range of fancy items. Then, making a speculative land deal with the CPR, the HBC agreed to erect a building at the edge of a new, high-class district that the railway was developing in the West End. A bustling new retail district soon sprouted near the corner of Granville and Georgia Streets around the original Hotel Vancouver (1887), the Opera (1890), and the HBC’s new brick and sandstone, Romanesque emporium of 1893 (See Figure 2). Continual urban growth, and the boom of the Yukon gold rush, required substantial expansion of the premises in 1899 and 1905. By 1911 new plans were again prepared as part of the multi-city building program which is the subject of this thesis. With varying degrees of success, and particular trials and tribulations, the narrative and time frame of HBC department stores is similar for the other cities of the West.

These seemingly smooth narratives of progress, though, conceal the true nature of the struggle by managers to garner the Board’s studied approval for any

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21 Hudson’s Bay Company Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba (HBCA), London Office, Section A, A12/FTMISC/297/f. 9, Fur Trade Commissioner R. H. Hall to HBC Secretary Ingrams, Feb. 1912. For a discussion of retail practices at the posts see Ray 88-91.
Figure 2  Old and New Hudson’s Bay Company Stores
Source: The Beaver, Aug. 1922
action. Usually, it would take several years of sales shops Inspection Reports emphasizing the local need for new physical plant before London reluctantly approved an expenditure. Distance from the problems, disorganization, and differing priorities among the Board members hampered decision making; it was difficult for them to achieve consensus amidst disagreement over the proper course the Company should take. In the decades after deeding Rupert's Land to the Confederation government in 1870, the HBC experimented with various forms of organization to deal with its diversifying business. Many stockholders believed agricultural settlement and urbanization marked the end of the fur trade, and therefore Western Canada held no further potential, other than the HBC's huge real estate holdings. Powerful figures like Donald Smith, later Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal, and Governor of the HBC from 1889-1914, held to these beliefs and lead the Company to ignore its opportunities in other fields, including the fur, wholesale, and retail trades. Indeed, the old labour force of the HBC was demoralized and displaced: as Arthur Ray explains, "a man trained in the fur trade... was poorly equipped or little inclined to take the initiative in retailing and government contracting."²² As a consequence, important aspects of the business, such as retail, suffered from neglect and mismanagement.

Finally, continual prodding by C.C. Chipman, Canadian Commissioner during much of Strathcona's reign, and many others, prompted the HBC in 1909 to request Sir Richard Burbidge, director of Harrod's department store in London, to tour the West and determine the Company's potential. Not surprisingly, Sir Richard reported that the established institution was squandering its opportunities to dominate the fledgling retail field of Western Canada. As he would later argue in his own defence, "I felt that you might sell all your land, your fur-bearing animals might

²²Ray 13. Ray fully describes the conflicting viewpoints in the Company at this time: 3- 18 and passim. Rupert’s Land, named after Prince Rupert who was predominant in the formation of the HBC, was defined as all the lands that drained into Hudson Bay, which is a large part of present-day Western Canada. In the Deed of Surrender, the Company relinquished its right to these lands to the Confederation government, in exchange for several concessions.
become extinct or go further north, but I felt that in the far future these saleshops were going to be a source of revenue to you that is beyond any anticipations on your part." Several new shareholders who assumed Board positions at the 1910 Annual General Meeting now attempted to revive the slumbering enterprise. A reorganization of HBC operations resulted in the three divisions mentioned earlier: fur, land, and retail, the latter chaired by Sir Richard. The divisions, run from London, had subordinate heads stationed in Canada; Sir Richard's son, Herbert, was appointed Stores Commissioner in Canada to oversee expansion of the retail business. The younger Burbidge brought with him nine years experience as General Manager of Harrod's during the time of that store's reconstruction (see below, p. 34), and these associations with the London firm can be perceived in some of the elements of the new building program now pursued by the HBC.

One of the first actions of the younger Burbidge was to begin the process of purchasing the most strategic sites for new department stores in the major Western Canadian cities. Of course, some of the shareholders were extremely reluctant to approve the capital outlay for large stores in what they saw as small, provincial cities, but these naysayers were outvoted. Still, no purchase could be made without prior approval of the Board, and at times Burbidge was reprimanded for making too large a deposit on land or rushing a purchase. Thus, Burbidge had to negotiate a delicate bargain between the local agents and his superiors. It was necessary to deal in a covert manner, as any leak that the wealthy HBC was initiating large-scale development could make real estate prices skyrocket. The longer it took the Board to decide, the more chance there was for landowners to take advantage of the circumstances. The precautions were necessary--in 1912 a

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23 Sir Richard was defending his record as Commissioner of the less than profitable stores, that had recently received such a massive infusion of capital, HBCA A12/S413/1b/f. 1-5, Extracts from the Proceedings at a General Court, 29 June 1914. See also HBCA A5/141b/f.59-61, Sir Richard Burbidge to Governor and Committee, Aug. 1909. Cf. Newman, Merchant Princes 212-16.

24 HBCA A12/S509/2/f. 9-38, Letters between Herbert Burbidge and Ingrams, Spring 1911; HBCA A12/S413/1b/f. 1-5, Extracts from Proceedings at a General Court of the HBC, 29 June 1914.

25 Both Monod 176-78, and Newman, Merchant Princes 366, are critical of Burbidge's managerial skills, but I would argue that, in regards to the building program he oversaw, he was often
A group of Vancouver investors bought property adjacent to the store site, and tried, by Burbidge's estimation, to extort money from the Company. So that the old and new buildings would not be separated, the HBC applied to the city to divert the lane behind its store. The group of investors, as affected property owners, attempted to block the diversion proceedings hoping that the HBC would buy them out. Refusing to deal with "extortionists," the Company won the decision and appeals on the strength of its contacts and its long-standing reputation in a province still run by staunch Anglo-Canadians.  

Affecting the choice of store sites were both general retail maxims, and particular tactics of the HBC. First of all, a department store had to determine if there was a population base to serve itself and its competitors. Next, the chosen location must be part of the main business district of the town: in Vancouver the Company was already established there; in other places, such as Winnipeg with its massive T. Eaton Company department store on Portage Avenue, the HBC followed into neighbourhoods already developed by more dynamic merchants. Traditionally, stores settled on adjacent sites to exploit each other's drawing power. Also very important was the layout of electric streetcar lines. A large portion of the citizens lived in satellite neighbourhoods or suburbs, and it was a definite advantage fighting a losing battle against recalcitrant Board members. Employees seemed to like him--at the time of his resignation he was presented with gifts and a formal address, a photograph of which is in the City of Vancouver Archives: Burbidge, Herbert C., Illuminated address, 30 April 1921, CVA L.G.N. 1043. See also "An Appreciation," The Beaver Dec. 1921: 26. On the other hand, Martin Segger states in his book on Victoria (Watkins Glen, NY: American Life Foundation and Study Institute, 1979) that Burbidge "bought the lot [from an old church] at what was thought by many to be an inflated price and provided the funds for the construction of a new church." 72. Burbidge was appointed in October, 1910; Calgary land purchase, March 7, 1911; Winnipeg Portage Avenue, March, 1911; Victoria, 1911; Vancouver, 1911-12, from HBCA A12/S509/2/f. 3; S543/2/f. 57; S539/1a/f. 40; S537/4/f. 106, Letters between Burbidge and Ingrams.  

26HBCA A12/S537/2b/f. 26-37, Copy of decision handed down by Justice Martin, BC Court of Appeals, April 1913, as quoted in my epigraph to Chapter One. The case was taken as far as the Privy Council in London, HBCA A12/S537/2b/f. 140-48, Letters between Burbidge and Ingrams, Spring 1914. Sir William Whyte of the Canadian Advisory Committee had "taken the matter up" with British Columbia Premier McBride, HBCA A12/S537/2a/f. 27, Burbidge to Ingrams, 17 July 1912. For documents concerning the purchasing of sites see, for example, HBCA store files on Vancouver, A12/S537/1a-2b, or Winnipeg, A12/S543/1-2. When the Winnipeg site was secretly acquired, the Manitoba Free Press, 17 March 1911 (clipping in HBCA) speculated that the big dealer was the HBC because the real estate agent was "the firm more closely identified with British capitalists than any other in the city."
to a retailer if the public form of transportation deposited them in front of the store. Large firms—and the HBC was especially suited to this—could influence city legislation in matters such as roads and public transit: department store historian John Ferry notes that, as they are large taxpayers, stores “exercise a considerable vigilance over their local councils to ensure that a high civic standard is maintained in the downtown areas.” The Company, when possible, was also particularly interested in the historical associations of a site. If the real estate had been previously part of a fort or reserve, or even if there had been such in the city, the HBC could use that history to evoke the continuity between post and store, and establish its commercial precedence.

As an example, the site of the new Winnipeg store illustrates many of these issues. In the early days of the settlement, the Company's fort was a central force in trade and social life, and so a large store was built on HBC land, adjacent to the old fort, in 1881 (the fort was demolished in 1885). However, soon after the opening of the eclectic, red brick store on Main Street (See Figure 2), it became apparent that the city's retail sector was shifting towards Portage Avenue, about seven blocks from the Company's location. As early as 1888 Commissioner Chipman refers to the store's siting as the “unfortunate miscalculations made at Winnipeg,” and the arrival of a six story Eaton's emporium in 1905 finalized the shift of commerce to Portage. The HBC was forced to recognize that the tendency of the street railroad was to take traffic away from its site on Main Street. The HBC had long determined there was enough patronage in Winnipeg to support competition with Eaton's, but it seems as if the Board felt too dignified to engage in such a mercantile streetfight. Their conservative nature is reflected in the Winnipeg manager's reticent 1905 suggestion to alter the old store only to facilitate handling of “the business offering as a result of the development throughout the country,

27 Ferry 11-12. For detailed discussion of these and other issues regarding the department store, see Ferry and Benson.
28 HBCA A12/S537/1a/f. 4, Chipman to HBC Secretary, 1888. Chipman is reluctant to push for a new store in Vancouver because of the problems in Winnipeg.
rather than any desire to keep pace with competitors... the object aimed at has been to retain the present custom."

Finally, the HBC purchased a large Portage Avenue site close to Eaton's in 1911, but construction was seriously delayed by the First World War, disagreements between London and the architects (discussed below), and municipal plans to arrange a civic centre in the vicinity of the store site. Right from the initial proposals discussed by the city in 1912, the HBC clearly had a great amount of interest in the city planning process. Indeed, a decade later, the Company was decisively involved in the final outcome, which was the formation of Memorial Boulevard, a ceremonial axis projecting from the seat of government at the Provincial Legislative Building, and conveniently showcasing the new, monumental HBC department store two blocks away. The project entailed a land swap between the Company and the municipality. In this instance the HBC seems to have targeted an upper class trade by associating itself with the traditional Anglo-Canadian hierarchy, an association which, despite changes in public relations policy, the Company never completely extinguished. Management of the Company stores was continually concerned with attracting the right “class” of trade, a term which actually held different meanings depending on the manager and the city: it was a euphemism which could mean the carriage trade, a copious amount of trade, or the

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29 HBCA A12/S543/1/f. 102, Winnipeg retail store manager to HBC Secretary William Ware, 1905. The Winnipeg street railroad is mentioned in HBCA A12/S543/1/f. 150, Chipman to Ware, 1905.

30 According to the 1926 Annual Report to Shareholders in the HBCA, the Company contributed land to the Mall in exchange for the city facilitating the HBC purchase of adjacent lots, and the city pressuring the local electric railway company to establish a line along the Boulevard, alongside the store. Further documents concerning the civic centre debate are at HBCA A12/S543/2. The large amount of maps and proposals for Memorial Boulevard preserved in the HBC Archives attests to the interest held by the Company in the municipal planning process (for example, see Map G4/118). Marilyn Baker, Symbol in Stone (Winnipeg: Hyperion, 1986), briefly mentions the most magnificent proposal for the axis, and concludes that its full potential was “compromised by conflicting interests,” 139. Interestingly, Baker, 21, notes that negotiations for the Provincial government to acquire the Legislature site had begun in 1910. The HBC site was purchased soon thereafter, the Company moving back into the neighbourhood of the Province's political elite. The Manitoba Legislative Building was designed by English architects F.W. Simon and H. Boddington, and built 1912-20.
proper race and neighbourhood for trade.\textsuperscript{31} Of course, as its different uses of history will indicate, the HBC desired to attract as wide a range of customers as possible, though that range was limited by the Company's traditional prejudices.

The next significant action of Burbidge was to engage the Toronto architects Burke, Horwood and White to prepare drawings for the new stores. This firm had previous experience designing the fireproof Toronto department store of the R. Simpson Company in 1895, as well as many other large-scale projects across Canada. The Simpson store was the very first self-supporting steel frame building in Canada--Horwood gained a knowledge of this method of construction from a two year period of working in New York.\textsuperscript{32} The firm brought this knowledge of modern construction and organization to the HBC's building program. American frame construction was not unknown to the directors of the HBC, however, as these new methods engaged in a well-publicized confrontation with archaic London building codes when employed in two majestic projects, the Ritz Hotel (1904-05), and Selfridges department store (1908-09).\textsuperscript{33} The HBC wanted to take full advantage of the inexpensive and expansive nature of this North American mode of building.

The steel or reinforced concrete frame offered an economical way for commercial concerns to erect large buildings suited to their purposes, and to create an impressive image of the firm. The fire-resistant frame allowed huge open cubic volumes in the interiors, popular for the display of merchandise in department stores. This technology was essentially developed in Chicago, and that milieu

\textsuperscript{31}HBCA A12/SMISC/419/f. 1-4; S543/1/f. 127; S512/1/f. 86, Various letters, 1905-16. For instance, it was argued that the store should be moved since it was too close to the Chinese settlement, HBCA A12/SMISC/477/f. 21, Kamloops store manager to Ingrams, 1911.

\textsuperscript{32}See Angela Carr's monograph, Toronto Architect Edmund Burke (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 1995). J.C.B. Horwood corresponded from New York with his colleague Burke regarding new building technologies, 3-4, 114-15; Burke's Simpson store of 1894 had burnt to the ground only a few weeks after opening, 115-17. Carr also notes that the firm was chosen by Burbidge ahead of Daniel Burnham & Co., Chicago, on the virtues of its Simpson store, 136. According to the Calgary Herald, March 13, 1911, one of the architects and the manager of the Calgary store had recently toured the Eastern U.S. to see modern department store buildings and organizations; this was likely Horwood, who was the project architect for the HBC stores.

concurrently spawned a utilitarian and unornamented exterior style which expressed the new method of construction. A pertinent example of the Chicago style—which enjoyed widespread popularity in North America—is Eaton's Winnipeg department store, erected in 1905. By this date, though, the Chicago style had largely fallen out of fashion in favour of more ornamental styles. Non-load bearing curtain walls allowed by the steel frame are easily malleable, and the client can shape them to any desired, decorative ensemble. This was particularly true of terra cotta cladding, which was durable, inexpensive relative to stone, had unlimited sculptural possibilities, and, when glazed, gave to an edifice a glossy aura of wealth. Terra cotta could make a building stand out, and in an era of rapid capitalist expansion, architecture was a vital weapon in the competitive business districts, as a source of impressive image-building. Several chain stores such as Woolworth's adopted standardized terra cotta façades that were easily reproducible for their buildings across North America.\(^{34}\)

Initially, for the HBC stores, Burbidge had begun to commission different designs for each centre of operations. For example, rather than creating anew, he considered building a large addition in Vancouver, matching the style of the extant 1893 store. As well, the very non-ornamental new Calgary building was to display a "stone and brick front."\(^{35}\) Burbidge and the architect Horwood traveled to London, presumably with several diverse proposals in hand. However, these proposals were

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\(^{35}\) Carr reproduces Horwood's initial perspective for the Calgary store, 137. HBCA A12/S509/2/f. 4, Burbidge to Ware, 25 Feb. 1911. Cf. *Calgary Herald*, March 13, 1911. For Vancouver see HBCA A12/S537/2a/f. 4, Burbidge to Ingrams, late 1911. In the Company's other major centre, Edmonton, a large addition was built in 1911-13, but it was matched to the old store which had only been built seven years previous. For smaller cities, the chosen style was somewhat unsuited to two story buildings, and the new stores of this period show more diversity. The cream colour, however, seems to have been maintained at least at Vernon, Nelson, and Yorkton, all built by the HBC 1911-13, though it is as yet undetermined if these buildings were clad in terra cotta or painted in this colour. It is interesting that the façade at Yorkton boasts fluted Corinthian pilasters like the larger stores. In other locations, the HBC sometimes purchased other store buildings (Saskatoon) or rented space (Kamloops) for its retail division. See "Small Stores," *The Beaver*, Dec. 1940: 19-21. For all these stores, see Figure 2, above.
abandoned when the Company decided early in 1912 on a standardized Classical style for its four major stores: a solid looking base with large display windows, tall Corinthian columns, and a medallioned attic to be executed in cream glazed terra cotta. This monumental and opulent style would distinguish the HBC from its more workaday competitors, such as the Chicago style buildings of Eaton’s in Winnipeg or Woodward’s in Vancouver. The Board evidently recognized the representational as well as the financial potential that the palatial stores could offer, and they discussed and dictated the appearance of the buildings, envisioning a façade that would become the emblem of the HBC. In the 1912 Annual Report to the shareholders it was stated that “the style of architecture for these buildings was selected after careful consideration, and will be practically the same in each instance.” Thus, the style of the stores was not accidental, nor the whim of the architect: as with many institutional buildings, the architect’s role was severely limited by the intentions of the Board which was formulating a concerted effort to advantageously represent the Company.

When the style was chosen, the HBC looked to Selfridges department store, as the most recent and impressive merchant house in London (Figure 3). This massive Edwardian Classical building appears to have been the prototype for the exterior style of the HBC stores: it too presents a vitreous base with solid-looking pillars, middle floors marked by massive engaged columns (though Ionic), and is capped by an attic and balustrade. Gordon Selfridge was a successful Chicago merchant who in 1909— with a great amount of publicity— opened his department store in the British metropolis. In terms of merchandising methods, such as extensive advertising, non-selling attractions in the store, and low-pressure service, Selfridges was seen as the “American invasion of London.” The store also introduced the new technology of steel frame construction, the openness of vast interior spaces, and the concept of a purpose-built, monolithic department store to a

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HBCA, Annual Report to Shareholders, 1912. Regarding the trip to London of the architect, see Carr 136-38, and HBCA A12/493, Ingrams to Burbidge, 1912.
Figure 3  Selfridges Department Store, London, England  
Source: Architectural Review, June 1909
city where building codes and patterns of land ownership had prevented their development. In Canada, though, these American methods of construction and of merchandising were already in place, and would even be expected by the populace. Undoubtedly, the London Board of the HBC recognized in Selfridges a model that could be successfully redirected into the developing Canadian cities of its tenure.

The design of Selfridges is actually a meeting point for the transatlantic revival of Classical ornamentation that arose before the turn of the century. In America, the rebirth of Classicism --succeeding the popularity of the plain Chicago style-- is usually dated specifically to 1893, the year of Chicago's World Columbian Exposition. The temporary display halls --showing industrial produce and ethnographic articles from around the globe-- were clad in white plaster worked up into Classical (though capricious) designs, and they were arranged around a monumental plaza in the Baroque grand manner, forming the famous "White City." Following this well-publicized fair, its architectural Classicism became very popular in the United States. In Britain, the revival was marked by the emergence of "Edwardian Baroque," a heavily ornamented style used for important public buildings, and many commercial projects, beginning as far back as the mid-1880s. In Canada, as the architectural historian Harold Kalman states, architects followed the lead of their North Atlantic counterparts, and "Classicism remained the guiding principal throughout the building boom that preceded the First World War."38

As it has been widely defined, the Edwardian period in Britain was a time of conspicuous Imperial wealth; Classicism was seen as the essential style for

37 Most of the stores in London had "evolved piecemeal from small shops, gradually adding departments and taking over neighbouring buildings... purpose-built structures to house these retail establishments were, therefore, rare: in fact, despite its unified appearance, Harrods grandiose building of 1901-05 was actually a re-building in stages, over the old existing structures," Lawrence 26. Cf. Alison Adburgham, Shopping in Style (London: Thames & Hudson, 1979) 166-81, and passim; or A. Stuart Gray, Edwardian Architecture (London: Duckworth, 1985) 67-72.

38 Kalman 576; he terms the style Edwardian Commercial, noting that it paralleled the Edwardian Baroque that was seen in public buildings. Chicago architect Daniel Burnham, the chief architect of the 1893 Exhibition, was a consultant on the Selfridge project, and a competitor for the HBC program, see above fn. 32.
expressing the nation's glory. Generally, the Classical culture of ancient civilizations, particularly the Mediterranean empires, was deemed precursive to the British Empire, for example in the architectural style and artefactitious contents of important cultural institutions such as the Greek Revival British Museum. As well, London was slowly recognizing the potential benefits of Classical planning and architectural display for nationalistic celebrations (and better traffic management). After the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, a ceremonial axis was constructed between her memorial and the Nelson Monument, passing under the triumphal and Corinthian Admiralty Arch. This Mall facilitated the gathering of crowds, and created a space for civilian and touristic viewing of British symbols of power.

Though not for the first time, London hosted its own industrial/amusement fair with the 1908 Franco-British Exhibition. Following the lead of Chicago, the fair buildings also took the name “White City,” and were decorated in an imaginative array of Classical styles. Ostensibly held to commemorate the Franco-British détente (1904), and the manufacturing power of the two nations, the 1908 Exhibition served diverse, socio-political functions within Britain: colonial pavilions and imported commodities displayed the strength of the Imperial centre; the large, interclass attendance promoted the unity of the British nation. As is argued by art historian Paul Greenhalgh, symbolic aims such as nationalism and imperialism were part and parcel of the many expositions held in London and Paris in the second half of the nineteenth century. Perhaps most importantly was that the industrial

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39 See M.H. Port, Imperial London (New Haven & London: Yale UP, 1995) 23-25, 233-51. The Edwardian era has been described by architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner as “that last Indian Summer of unashamed British prosperity before the First World War;” “Building with Wit: The Architecture of Sir Edwin Lutyens,” in Alistair Service, et al, Edwardian Architecture (London: Architectural P, 1975) 465. Pevsner goes on to say, “a tendency towards the colossal in size seems to go with the mood of the eve of disaster. So it was at the end of Imperial Rome, so in the years of Louis XVI.” If not complete disaster, the HBC was certainly in a period of transition and commercial vulnerability when building its monumental stores. Service’s book provides a broad, though descriptive, overview of Edwardian architecture. It should be noted that Lutyen’s famous Imperialist designs for New Delhi, also in a Classical style, were being developed from 1912. As well, the 1893 Exposition in Chicago was itself a celebration of Western European colonial expansion, being the quatrcentennial of Columbus’ discovery of America. The “White City” likely influenced the turn of the century popularity of light-coloured claddings, such as the glazed terra cotta used on the HBC stores.
fairs intended to educate the masses. Artifacts and commodities were classified, compared, explained, and displayed within sumptuous architectural showpieces. To support the massive growth of manufactures throughout the nineteenth century, the masses—who were concurrently urbanizing, and accumulating discretionary income—needed to be educated in an ethos of consumption. Department stores attempted to become permanent exhibitions, where the produce of Europe and its colonies was made available to the masses under one roof.

More and more, it was determined that the ornamental Classical styles were particularly suited to creating an atmosphere of luxury, prosperity, and refinement: the architectural display paralleling the display of goods. The American historian Neil Harris has argued the functional and symbolic connection between the nineteenth century triad of exhibition, museum, and department store, all of which tended toward the Classical styles of architecture to evoke their institutional status. The stores were delighted to adopt the Classicist architecture of the fairs and museums, thereby associating themselves with complementary themes of mass consumption and high culture. Many department stores commissioned elaborate artwork and constructed spectacular rotundas or light wells as architectural centerpieces. A London example is Harrod's which, in 1901-05, refaced its agglomeration of multifarious departments and bought-out buildings with

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40Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1988) 1-25. A central theme of this history of international exhibitions, is the fairs' usefulness for imperial display, 52-81. For a period description of the Franco-British Exhibition see *Architectural Review* 24 (1908) 32-37, 108-16. In the first few world exhibitions sumptuous interiors enlivened rather utilitarian sheds which often held the entire fair within their walls, such as at London's Crystal Palace in 1851. Later exhibitions, such as Philadelphia (1876), Chicago (1893), and Paris (1878, 1889, 1900), were graced by multiple buildings with decorative exteriors, arranged according to a master-plan.

41Neil Harris, "Museums, Merchandising, and Popular Taste: The Struggle for Influence," *Cultural Excursions* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990) 58-66. All three institutions were developed to display categorized items to the mass public. Harris explains, department store merchandise was grouped by function or price, while museums were organized by age, significance, or historical theme (organization of items at fairs varied). Nevertheless, museums, fairs and department stores often shared many elements such as monumental architecture, the selective concentration of artifacts, and methods of display.

42For instance, Harris refers to a sculptural series representing the history of merchandising done for Marshall Field's Chicago store, and discusses other architectural elements common to department stores, 65-66. Benson, 39, notes that the rotunda/light well design had fallen out of favour by the second decade of the twentieth century. This may be a further reason for the rejection of Burke, Horwood & White's 1919 design for the Winnipeg store (see below).
a highly ornamental, Italianate style in terra cotta, topped by its famous, Edwardian, *faux* dome; the interior was enhanced with rooms in Adam, Georgian, and even rococo styles. However, the English department stores were behind the times compared to their American and French counterparts, which had for years been erecting luxurious, purpose-built accommodations that became attractions in themselves. A vital aspect missing from English stores was the offering of an array of services by which the patrons are induced to stay inside as long as possible: Selfridges slogan asked, “Why not spend the day...?” For department stores that wished to draw customers and influence public taste, even the opening of cultural institutions within the stores, such as art galleries and auditoriums, was not unusual.43

The coming of Selfridges introduced to London some new ideas for making the store the focus of public attention. Stores could become architectural centre-pieces by means of style, luxurious display, and by spectacular, non-selling events and attractions. The merchandising concepts and events brought by Selfridge meshed nicely with British ideals of public display and spectacle which had been developing since the celebration of Queen Victoria’s golden jubilee in 1887: often, certain buildings such as Buckingham Palace became a focus for public celebrations. With stores, of course, the aim was to control and focus the public’s consumption, rather than its political impulses, although perhaps the two goals were not unrelated. Major events such as jubilees and public holidays --or 250th Anniversary celebrations-- brought large crowds of potential consumers into the downtown vicinity of the great stores. The stores participated in public celebrations with special sales and temporary decorations, helping to breed the contentment of the masses; they were engaged in the continual process of drawing people to the urban core, thus creating an important source of revenue for the metropolis.

43Harris 63-65; Selfridges slogan quoted in Adburgham 168.
The Classical revival of this period was also driven by attempts to build the reputation of a city in order to attract more visitors from the provinces and from foreign countries. Attractions like the world’s fairs, and societal changes such as increased leisure time, advancing transportation technologies, and the worldwide economic boom between the 1890s and the First World War, all contributed to major growth in the travel industry. Increasingly, it became important that “world-class” cities could boast of monumental and beautiful architectural showpieces in order to attract more tourists. Harvey has noted the frequently architectural basis of this inter-urban competition for tourist and investment dollars in the present day, but this was also a growing concern for cities of an earlier era. As the architectural historian M.H. Port writes,

in an age when international tourism was beginning its take-off into sustained growth, London needed new hotels, shopping streets and handsome public buildings. In Paris, the work of improvement had continued... under the Third Republic, notably the Avénue de l'Opéra...\(^\text{44}\)

Each city wanted monuments akin to the ancient, Classical attractions of Rome or Athens. Department stores, capable of large capital outlays for attractive buildings, often became some of the most important monuments in the modern cities. As the historian Alison Adburgham relates,

Selfridges was not only the talk of the town, but of the country. For visitors to London, whether from the provinces or from abroad, it became as essential to visit Selfridges as to see Westminster Abbey and the Tower.\(^\text{45}\)

Attracting such large crowds through their doors, department stores happily became vital centres of social influence, particularly in North America, where there were fewer monuments, and where other institutions were less well established than in Europe.

In the relatively undeveloped cities of Western Canada, the HBC had the opportunity to make showpieces of its stores: they would stand apart from the smaller, prosaic boomtown structures of the West, and become foci for the

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\(^{45}\)Adburgham 168-69.
development of society. The public would gather in the HBC stores to take advantage of the luxurious customer services such as lounges, lending libraries, restaurants, rendez-vous, nurseries, a concert room in Calgary, a cinema in Victoria, and an art gallery in Vancouver. The HBC attempted to attract patrons by creating a sense of opulence: on the interior with expensive materials, and the use of Classical interior columns with egg-and-dart motif ovolo mouldings; on the exterior with the monumental, Classical style of architecture. Indeed, ever conscious of attracting the maximum possible consumers, the Board of the HBC stated that the Classical cladding had been "adopted... as the style of architecture to be employed in the chain... throughout the West, so that travelers who had seen one store would be able to recognize the others at a glance."46 As magnets for the cross-country tourists on the new railways, for outlying consumers, and local residents alike, the Company stores would evoke the era’s dominant ethos of consumerism. Interestingly, tourists would reportedly visit the Company’s store basements to view their most modern mechanical equipment, and at the Victoria and Winnipeg stores people were transported to the roof for a commanding view of the city and prairie beyond.47 By its choice of architectural style and building technologies, the HBC expressed its cognizance of modern methods and fashions, its status as a key distributor of industrially produced luxuries, and its historical associations with British Imperialism. Overall, the Board would have been fully aware of the appropriateness (a vital word in the recent Victorian architectural debates) of cladding its department stores in a Classical mode, a style which held a multitude of meanings and functions during the period of building.

In the 1910s, the prevalent socio-economic relations of Canada were still based on British lineage, law, and capital. Therefore, an architectural style with a

46 HBCA A12/S543/2/f. 138, Ingrams to Burbidge, 12 Nov. 1918. See also fn. 10, above, for other commercial institutions that employed standard styles—these were often Classical, as were many of the impressive government (all levels) buildings erected across Canada during the economic boom years before WWI.
47 Victoria Daily Times, 16 Sept. 1921; Manitoba Free Press, 18 Nov. 1926.
solid British background was particularly appropriate for cladding the HBC department stores, since --from early in its existence-- the HBC saw itself, and was seen, as the agent of Empire in the hinterlands of Canada. It presumably brought law and order to the colony, and more importantly, by trading goods to the First Nations, the Company supplied them with the products of British industrial civilization. By this interchange, the HBC had always assumed the public role as the great "civilizer" of the primitive regions of the continent. The opulent stores were intended to suggest that the HBC was still this consequential, and would supply the products of industrial civilization to the urban populace of Western Canada. Indeed, repeating identical designs was a mode of representing the Company's consistent and unalterable control of space across the West. In this manner, the stores tried to maintain the legacy of the HBC forts which had been recognizable icons of European power, controlling the trade of extensive radii. Architectural critic Trevor Boddy has argued that forts in Canada, with their geometric designs and permanent status, “were architectural means used to impose a visual order on the wilderness.”48 This was an order imposed from afar, through the medium of the HBC, an order it reproposes for the rising urban centres of the West.

A final significant aspect of the HBC style which incorporates traditional elements to sheathe modern concerns, is the organization of the tripartite façades. This method of composition was popular on most large buildings of the time, whether in the Chicago style, or in historicist costume like the influential Selfridge store. The traditional element of this façade organization is the distinction between the base, shaft, and cap of the building, thus mimicking the Classical column. The column has been defined by architectural theorist Diana Agrest as the “ultimate architectural signifier,” in her explanation of how tripartite organization, and eclectic or historicist ornament, contribute to the structure of meaning for early twentieth

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century, high rise buildings. She notes that these technologically advanced, imposing buildings are only "acceptable" within the urban milieu "if as a metaphor [they have] the capacity to represent at one and the same time past values (through the architectural styles) and the prevailing values of the time (progress)." Buildings are clad in recognizable --even exulted-- ornament to ease the public's first experiences with daring heights, and frightening contrivances like elevators. Additionally, architects were still conducting early experiments in the composition of the tall building, and historicism developed naturally out of their Beaux-Arts training. These aspects of contemporary architectural practice undoubtedly inform the design of the HBC stores. But in addition, to accommodate modern concerns within a historicist framework is the same goal as the public representation engaged in by the Company. The HBC endeavours to appear as a dynamic retailer, while maintaining the overall social structures that helped to establish its previous position of cultural power. This interrelationship between architectural and representational goals reveals the potential for the Company to associate its values with those of the dominant culture: progressive technology and consumption, tempered by conservative socio-economic relations.

Before the war the dominant culture of Canada was oriented toward British ideals. Therefore, the popular image of the Company at this time which identified it with the British Empire was no handicap in the generally sympathetic press. For instance, Toronto's Saturday Night magazine noted with approval in 1911 that the HBC "was evidently a royal institution from the beginning," and that it "went a long way, we are told, towards winning Canada for the British Crown." Royally

50Many American (where the tall building was a more predominant form than in Europe) architects studied at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, where they were instructed in a grand Classical manner of design; most American architecture schools were modeled on the École, see Spiro Kostof, A History of Architecture (NY & Oxford: Oxford UP, 1985) 669. English architects were also attending the Paris École from the 1880s, 683.
51Saturday Night, 18 Feb. 1911: 21. The writer adds, "we feel no hostility towards the [HBC]. The Indians were no relations of ours, and if the company took the skins and hides off them without unduly raising the 'bid,' it was no more than we would do today." Cf. Beckles Willson, The Great Company (Toronto, 1899): with a foreword by Lord Strathcona, this canonical work
chartered in 1670, ruled by princes and nobles, and flying the ensign of the Royal Navy, the Company was manifestly associated with the English ruling class. Well into the twentieth century shareholders were often knights and aristocrats; the Governor during Edwardian times was Donald Smith, Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal, as thoroughly committed an Imperialist as one could find, and rising from the ranks of the HBC itself.52 The British monarchy in the late nineteenth-early twentieth centuries had successfully begun inventing traditions and rituals to improve its public popularity, and the HBC became easily intertwined in both the themes and the methods of the generated British mythology. As Hobsbawm has written, "glory and greatness, wealth and power, could be symbolically shared by the poor through royalty and its rituals."53 For its part, the HBC hoped that an economically and culturally diverse clientele and employees could share in the Company's glorious, Imperial past, thereby being inspired with loyalty to its commercial purposes.

In an attempt to take advantage of these popular sympathies, the HBC actively promoted its role as representative of the Empire, and the monumental, Classical department stores were of a suitable style and grandeur for such a symbolic function. Distinguished by its size, and its radiant, cream terra cotta, the first of the four stores was opened in Calgary amidst British pomp and circumstance, in which the store was elevated to the status of a vital cultural institution. In fact, a contemporary account in the Calgary Herald pegs this
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approved by the HBC provides an Anglo-centric view of its history. It is one of the few histories of the HBC predating 1920. A similar romantic version of the Company's history is Agnes C. Laut's The Conquest of the Great Northwest (New York: Moffat, Yard, 1908), which only views it "as adventurer, pathfinder, empire-builder," xvii. Bothwell et al, notes that newspaper opinion before the war was simply "Britain is best," 117.
52Newman, Merchant Princes 3-227, concerns Smith and his long career with the HBC. See also Newman, Company of Adventurers (Markham, Ontario: Penguin, 1986), pp. 222-23, 227-29, for discussion of the connections between the Company and the Navy. The HBC was incorporated with Prince Rupert as Governor, followed by the Duke of York (later James II), and was subsequently ruled by many illustrious Governors and stockholders.
53Eric Hobsbawm, "Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914," in Hobsbawm and Ranger, eds., 283. The targets of HBC representation were not necessarily just "the poor," but rather the broad-ranging field of ordinary citizens with at least a minimum amount of buying power. See also Cannadine's article in the same volume.
comparison, by stating that the new emporium looked more like a museum than a store. On August 18, 1913 a carriage pulled by four white horses and escorted by the 15th Light Horse Brigade, transported Herbert Burbidge, the Mayor of Calgary, and the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta to the new building by a circuitous parade route. After suitable speeches, and a rousing rendition of "God Save the King" performed by the band of the 103rd Calgary Rifles, the Lt. Governor unlocked the doors with a golden key (Figure 4). The party toured the emporium, admiring the main level's marble floor, imported palm trees, and opulent fixtures, then later attended a banquet in the store's "Elizabethan" styled Restaurant, which was graced with oils of the first six famous governors of the HBC. During the banquet, the 300 prominent guests toasted the Company and its distinguished history. Meanwhile, the store was opened to the throngs of appreciative spectators, many of whom had arrived on the electric street railway--the public traveling free as guests of the Company. Even the metropolitan London Times reported on the grand opening, stating that the ceremony enforced the Company's reputation as "universal providers in the chief centres of Canada." The language used by HBC Director Coles in presenting the key to the Lt. Governor is revealing of the Company's intentions: "when you have inspected the premises and the great display on view, I trust you will think the Hudson's Bay Company are acting true to their traditions in erecting this great emporium for the people of Calgary and keeping well up to the times." Apparently, it is for the sake of the people that the Company maintains its traditions, and its position of authority on modern consumption.

54 Times, 19 Aug. 1913; Whiteley's department store of London called itself the "universal provider." Bryan Melnyk, Calgary Builds (Calgary: Alberta Culture/Candian Plains Research Center, 1985), looks at contemporary Albertan newspaper accounts of the building process and opening, 143-46. Subsequent store restaurants assumed the decor or names of other British historical periods. The opening is also gushingly described in HBCA A12/S509/3/f. 22-25, Burbidge to Ingrams, 29 Aug. 1913, wherein the Stores Commissioner claims 40 000 Calgarians visited the store on opening day. The subsequent quotation from Director Coles' speech is recorded by Burbidge in this letter. The opening ceremonies are reminiscent of, for example, the 1884 opening of the second Manitoba Legislature described in Baker 17.
Figure 4  Dignitaries at the opening of HBC's Calgary Store, Aug. 18, 1913
Source: The Beaver, March 1941
This position of societal beneficence taken by the Company was emphasized by the fact that it continued its growth in the cities despite the recession that swept most of Canada through 1913-14—the Western Canadian boom had gone bust. The size of the HBC though, and the relative security of its London capital, allowed the Company to undertake its massive construction projects when all other development in Canada had halted. In fact, in the depths of the 1913 recession, an “Extraordinary General Court” of the HBC’s shareholders authorized a further £1 000 000 of preference capital for the extension of the department stores and fur trade. The Company thus appeared much more stable and powerful than its competitors since it could invest large amounts in local building. Construction continued on the Vancouver and Victoria stores which—though they had been slated for building concurrently with the Calgary store—were delayed by local problems to be detailed below. As a result, the two stores were unfinished when, one year after the Company’s Calgary store opening, Britain and its Empire entered the First World War in Europe. At this point, the London Board ordered severe cutbacks for all its Canadian operations, and, for several reasons, department store construction was stopped completely. First, they were uncertain regarding the income that would be generated by the different divisions during wartime. The London fur auctions were banned, and the traditionally important Leipzig fur markets closed; the sale of land had dwindled beginning with the 1913 recession; and demand for luxury goods from the department stores disappeared at the start of the war. In addition, familiar with the difficult situation in Britain, the Board was reluctant to waste valuable labour and materials, by which actions the HBC might be construed as a selfish business hindering the war effort.

55HBCA A12/S504/1/f. 80, Ingrams to Burbidge, 29 Nov. 1913. Three-quarters of the outlay went to the department store building program; at this point, the HBC had already spent £815 382 just on the Vancouver and Victoria projects, and the Edmonton store renovation.

56HBCA A12/S539/1/a/f. 112, Ingrams to Burbidge, 19 Aug. 1914. Ray describes the cuts enforced by the HBC in the fur trade which adversely affected its reputation with the First Nations and trappers, and allowed North American fur markets to gain ascendancy, 96-100.
The building of the Vancouver store had been delayed by the lane closure machinations discussed above, but the first phase was close to completion when the wartime cutbacks came. Another economic insecurity precluding a wartime opening was the uncertain possibility of stocking the new space in light of disrupted European manufacturing. However, the local economies of Canada were affected by the war in a less severe manner than those of Great Britain. By late 1915, munitions and other manufacturing employed almost all available men and many women, and paid high wage rates (somewhat offset by high inflation). These home front workers provided a good market for department store sales, and eventually, after continual prodding by Burbidge, Vancouver’s first phase was allowed to be finished. The Board hoped the public would perceive the decision to complete the store as a patriotic maneuver, designed to “encourage by this means the more hopeful feeling which is spreading in the Dominions at this moment.” Regardless, in contrast to the Calgary store opening, the Vancouver premiere was rather understated; it was opened in March 1916 with just two weeks of accompanying ads, and no ceremony at all, reflecting the still somber nature of wartime. Despite this reticence, there could be no mistake about the opulence of the store. The centrepiece of all the designs is undoubtedly the exterior, Corinthian colonnade, authoritatively towering over the busy, downtown streets. Marble flooring and Classical interior columns matched the Calgary store, and customer portals were distinguished from employee entrances by inlaid marble mosaics of the Company’s coat of arms. This heraldic symbol was repeated in the ornamental ironwork of the marquees, and in resplendent, cream terra cotta ornaments above the sidewalks at the four corners. Intended to unabashedly inveigle the presumably predominant female customers, the second level women’s washroom was decked out with mahogany doors and marble stall dividers, rather than the birch paneling provided

58HBCA A12/SS37/2b/f. 176, HBC Governor Sir Robert Kindersley to Burbidge, Nov. 1915. It is not clear why there may have been a more hopeful feeling spreading in the Dominions at this time.
for regular toilets.59 This first phase was connected to the old store, which continued in operation (See Figure 2). In 1925 the second phase was erected so that monumental cream terra cotta sections flanked and dwarfed the original, red brick store. Finally, the third phase swallowed the old building one year later, completing the block-length façade along Georgia Street.

The erection of a store in Victoria, where the HBC had previously only engaged in the wholesale trade, presented its own unique complications. With a 1911 purchase of land on Douglas Street, the HBC decided to set up its retail store somewhat outside the actual city centre, intending to draw the patronage and other trade to its vicinity, as it had successfully done in Calgary. Therefore, a strong impression was vital for the survival of the new store. Unfortunately, what was intended to be a quick, forceful incision into the urban fabric of Victoria was interminably delayed by various problems. The first of these was a disastrous excavation that uncovered a strata of oozing gumbo, undermining some of the neighbouring buildings, the owners of which claimed damages from the Company.60 At the same time an angry letter was published in the Victoria Daily Times condemning the local HBC policy of using only union labour on the construction of the store. When a copy of it reached London, this letter caused the anti-union Board "grave concern," especially since they were ignorant of the arrangement, and they called for the "censure, if not dismissal" of the Victoria general manager for overstepping his authority. Burbidge defused the situation by stating he had made

59HBCA A12/S537/2a/f. 63-101, Tenders for Vancouver Store, 20 Sept. 1912. As Benson relates, managers particularly catered to women with special services and accommodations, fashioning department stores as hybrids of a comfortable home and a downtown men’s club for women, 82-84. The round columns as found on the Vancouver and Victoria stores were the preferred style of the Board who were disappointed with the flat columns of the Calgary store (all were Corinthian). Burbidge had ordered the ironwork for the Calgary store before the Board had approved the design, and was reprimanded when they decided on round columns, HBCA A12/S543/2/f. 136; A12/S509/2-3, Letters from Ingrams to Burbidge, 1911, 1918.

60HBCA A12/S539/1a/f. 97-98, Burbidge to Ingrams, July 1914. The HBC’s wholesale trade in Victoria had supplied the Royal Navy base at Esquimalt, and the mining and forest industries of Vancouver Island. In Calgary, the new HBC store was only two blocks from its established retail site in the centre of town; in Victoria, the HBC downtown store still stands somewhat outside of the revitalized city centre, though Segger notes that when built it was “centered in an area of fairly dense old and new single-family, middle-class housing.” 71.
the politic decision to use union labour because he estimated that 85% of Victoria's workforce were unionists. Despite local politics, Burbidge was required to remove the union clause, thus easing the Board's anxiety.61

Soon after this outburst the war began and building stopped. For two years Burbidge prodded the Board to finish the project which was an imposing and depressing skeleton on the city's skyline. A historian of the city describes the situation in this manner: "the Hudson's Bay Department store standing derelict with no windows, [was an] ominous reminder that the good times were coming to an end."62 $21 400 worth of terra cotta and ornamental ironwork had been delivered to the site, but the Board continued to postpone the completion. Witnessing the economic success of the Vancouver opening in early 1916, Burbidge urged the Board to complete the Victoria store to retain the confidence of that city's consumers. It was widely known that the HBC was not in financial difficulties because of the war, as it had landed a contract as international buying agent and shipper for the French government, and many wholesale commissions with military bases in Canada. Nevertheless, Burbidge was instructed to inform the public in a press release that the HBC did not want to use up valuable wartime labour at such a "critical time in the history of the Empire." In reply, Burbidge again argued that the labour shortage was not as acute in Canada as in Britain, and that Canadians may not see a civilian project in an unpatriotic manner. The people of Victoria, in fact, were dismayed that a consequential addition to the city, such as an opulent department store, was

61HBCA A12/S539/1a/f. 88-100, Letters between Burbidge and Ingrams, June-July 1914. It is difficult to judge whether Victoria was a union town in this period, though Harry Gregson in A History of Victoria (Victoria: Victoria Observer, 1970) suggests that Victoria's was a rather patriarchal economy, 144-45. However, unionism was certainly a divisive issue on Vancouver Island in general, particularly after the bloody strike of miners at Nanaimo in 1913. An example of anti-unionism in HBC administration is Sir Augustus Nanton, head of the HBC's Canadian Committee, who was also a leader of the Citizen's Committee which opposed the Strike Committee during the violent Winnipeg General Strike of 1919. The sentiments survive among HBC management in the present day, which in 1994 permanently closed its Kamloops store in an attempt to break the union there.
62Gregson 208.
being delayed. The Mayor and Provincial Representative from Victoria had actually cabled the London Board in 1914 to solicit the building’s completion.

Eventually, in 1916, the Board agreed to finish the shell of the building, albeit two stories smaller than the previous two stores.\textsuperscript{63} The store was not occupied until 1921, however, when the Board saw fit to initiate its completion and the purchase of all new stock. The event of the opening was well-covered by the \textit{Daily Times} which printed a full-page preview accompanied by an outline of the Company history in Victoria, plus reviews of the store window unveiling, and the actual opening three days later. When just the windows were on view, a “steady stream of people” were going by the store to “witness the interesting feature displays”\textsuperscript{64} The press also gave a lot of attention to the distinguished gentlemen who had traveled from the East to participate in the opening: they included Sir Augustus Nanton of the Company’s Canadian Committee, and the president of the CPR, who were just ending a cross-country tour of that rail system. These gentlemen attended the golden key ceremonies, then lunched with the elite of the city, and assorted provincial politicians, in the new store’s dining room, where speeches and toasts were made glorifying the HBC and its history. All in all, while still being a rather bombastic event, it was less ostentatious than the Calgary opening of eight years before.

After Victoria, preliminary studies were finally allowed to begin in 1917 for the grand Winnipeg emporium. Although the Portage Avenue site was purchased in 1911, and soon after carried a sign marking it as the “Future Home of the Hudson’s Bay Store,” for several years the Winnipeg scheme had been neglected by Burbidge, who concentrated on developing retail in British Columbia and Alberta, and by the Board, which was occupied with its wartime contracts. From the HBC’s Canadian

\textsuperscript{63}HBCA A12/S539/1a-1b; A.S. Woollard, “New HBC Department Store Opened at Victoria,” \textit{The Beaver}, Oct. 1921: 5-7. Of concern also was the weather damage that might have accrued to the exposed skeleton and unused materials if the building’s skin remained unfinished. The substantial supply shipping contract is fully described in Newman, \textit{Merchant Princes} 367-70.  
\textsuperscript{64}Victoria Daily Times, 17 Sept. 1921. The preview was printed September 16, and the opening was reviewed September 19.
headquarters in Winnipeg, Burbidge had relocated the Stores office first to Calgary, and then to Vancouver in order to oversee those projects. Monod argues that the London-appointed Burbidge avoided Winnipeg and any involvement with the Canadian Committee as much as possible, presumably to maintain the power of the British proprietors. Whether Burbidge's office removal was a strategic withdrawal or merely practical organization, is impossible to determine. It is probable, though, that the Winnipeg store remained a low priority to the Board (which was greatly influenced by balance sheets) because the old Main Street store was largely unprofitable at the time. In Calgary or Vancouver the HBC was the principle trader, but in Winnipeg the retail trade had been dominated by Eaton's since the 1905 opening of its massive new department store on Portage Avenue. Since that time, the Winnipeg HBC store had suffered a continual turnover of general managers, none of whom could compete from afar with the new retail district that developed around Eaton's. This was the first expansion of the T. Eaton Company outside of Toronto, and it had established itself at the very heart of HBC territory. Refusing to countenance its local competition, the HBC Board instead chose to downplay the challenge offered by Eaton's. In the end, it took twenty years before the Company finally erected a contending emporium on Portage Avenue.

Continual delays hampered the Winnipeg project, where one important issue was the municipal process of creating Memorial Boulevard, which was possibly to traverse the HBC's Portage Avenue site. This grand axis was proposed by the city to complement the Legislative Building, a domed, neo-Classical, Tyndall stone mass which was being erected through the 1910s one block from the Company's property.

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65 Monod 176. Burbidge's argument was that temporary relocation was necessary to deal with the daily troubles of a large building project. In fact, the Board was "greatly surprised" at the removal of office to Calgary, and reprimanded Burbidge for making that change of policy "without first seeking their sanction," HBCA A12/SMISC/477/f. 2, Ingrams to Burbidge, 29 Nov. 1913.

66 Winnipeg general managers were replaced in 1906, 1911, 1915, HBCA A12/S536/1. In a desperate attempt to draw patronage, the Winnipeg store advertised on average 3-5 times as much as the other stores in the HBC chain, HBCA A12/S489/1/f. 15-16, Advertising and Display Appropriations, 1918-19.
Representatives of the Company were included in the boulevard planning, but these members of the Canadian Committee had many other business interests, and without a set plan and date for the store, the Company could hardly force the municipality into quicker action. The Canadian Committee hoped to accelerate this planning stage so the Governor could lay the store's foundation stone as part of the 250th Anniversary celebrations in May 1920. In early 1919 the architects Burke, Horwood & White submitted to the Board drawings of the new Winnipeg store proposal. However, this offering was deemed not good enough for the flagship store of the Company--the Board wished that the Winnipeg store would "be worthy of the Chief Centre of the Company's operations in Canada."67 A new design along more elaborate lines was sent to London that summer. Unfortunately, the Board decided that this reworked proposal was too extravagant, had a poor and undistinguished interior arrangement, and departed from the style of the Company established in Calgary, Vancouver and Victoria. They were also perturbed by the high estimate provided by the architects, and at this point the Company began discussing the possibility of dissociating from Burke, Horwood & White. Other architects were consulted, and the HBC considered submitting the design to open competition. In the end, it was a further five years before anything was accomplished regarding the new Winnipeg store, and the original architects were replaced by Ernest Barott of Montréal. His design, built in 1925-26, conformed readily to the approved style, but was distinguished from the first three stores by rounded corner portals on the Portage Avenue façade, which were connected by an attractive arcade (demolished in the 1930s) running the length of the store.68

67HBCA/A12/S543/2/f. 138, Ingrams to Burbidge, November 12, 1918.
68Horwood & White (Burke died in 1919) were retained for the Winnipeg store until 1922; they remained the architects for phase two and three of the Vancouver store, and for additions to the Calgary store in 1928, see Carr 141-42, 150-51. The American-born Barott was a very successful Beaux-Arts trained architect mainly specializing in large, institutional buildings such as Vancouver's CPR station (1912-14). He apprenticed in the office of New York Classicists McKim, Mead and White. For information on Barott see Susan Wagg, Ernest Isbell Barott, exh. cat. (Montréal: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 1985), though her analysis of the Winnipeg HBC store is lacking. Wagg rightly notes Selfridges as the store's precedent, but writes that "respecting
The Board’s desire to maintain central control over Company operations, and their intrinsic lack of knowledge concerning local issues of importance, is exemplified by a passage from correspondence to Burbidge rejecting a design for the Winnipeg store:

The plans prepared by Messrs. Burke, Horwood and White are a disappointment to the Governor and Committee...

...it is most desirable that [the Board] should have a perfectly free hand in dealing with this magnificent site.

Will you be so good as to send some snapshots of Portage Avenue, showing the buildings along both sides in the neighbourhood of the Company’s site?69

The Board believed that possessing photographs of the environment would give them necessary knowledge to superintend the project without visiting the site. As in many centre-margin relations, decisions were here based on information gleaned from representations of the margins, which had been torn from their context and sent to the centre. The central power then makes decisions based on disembodied facts. In addition, it is likely the Board saw the extravagant proposal as an act of hubris supported by the fledgling Canadian Committee.

From these varied examples it can be seen that by the end of the war the London Board had lost the ability to determine appropriate local policy, or to disseminate the representation of the HBC to a distant and changing Canadian population. Throughout the 1910s the business methods of the HBC Stores Division had been based on the Board’s knowledge of London finance and retail. According to Monod, the management of the Burbidges did not acknowledge the metropolitan status of the Western Canadian cities: they ran the stores like

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69HBCA A12/S543/2/f. 138, Ingrams to Burbidge, 12 Nov. 1919.
"country general stores," and challenged "the very substance of North American department store retailing."\(^{70}\) For instance, Burbidge did not organize the large Stores Division to take advantage of its mass buying potential, and he resisted the appointment of a full time advertising specialist to be responsible for all the stores. Leaving London for his post as the HBC Stores Commissioner in 1910, Burbidge would not have perceived Selfridge's utter belief in the vital importance of advertising, which was one of the transformations that the American introduced to an attentive London business community.\(^{71}\) In addition, two fundamental features of the modern department store were a fixed price for goods, and a restriction to cash sales. With the fur trade barter system trappers had been advanced goods on account during the off season, and this tradition of credit remained a holdover in the Company's urban stores well into the 1910s.\(^{72}\) With the forced resignation of Herbert Burbidge in 1920, the Canadian Committee took the opportunity to reorganize the Stores Division along the lines of scientific management methods widely popular at the time, and itself appointed three new commissioners to control the operations in Canada. Although the Board retained the ultimate power of decision making, the Canadian Committee steadily gained importance through the 1910s and 1920s, occupying its own Winnipeg headquarters in 1923, and receiving power-of-attorney for regular administration in 1931. Interestingly, Monod argues that the retail theory of turnover marketing --adopted by the Canadian Committee at the time of Burbidge's departure-- relied for profits solely on the number of

\(^{70}\)Monod 176ff. As Sir Richard Burbidge said, again in his own defence (see above, fn. 23), "I only know one system of carrying on business, and that is the one we carry on in Brompton Road [location of Harrod's]."

\(^{71}\)Adburgham 168. Documents concerning advertising are found in HBCA A12/S401/2/f. 12-31, Letters between Burbidge and Ingrams, July 1916. The Board had hired a London expert to critique samples of Canadian stores' advertising copy. He had recommended the engagement of a head publicity manager, against which H. Burbidge argued on the basis of expense, redundancy, and widely differing local conditions, even though the Board wanted the expert to work in concert with existing advertising managers at the different locations. It is possible that Burbidge saw the potential hiring of a marketing expert as a challenge to his authority.

\(^{72}\) Santink states that in Toronto, though not the first store to introduce them, Eaton's had popularized "fixed prices" and "cash sales" by the 1870s: 63, 180-81. The policies of fixed pricing and strictly cash sales, though, were generally in place in Britain even before then, Adburgham 132. In 1916, the Board expressed concern that Burbidge has continued to allow credit, even at the new Calgary emporium, HBCA A12/SMISC/419, Letters between Burbidge and Ingrams.
transactions, and that “mass retailers thus came naturally to rely on advertising and other pressurized selling techniques to expand their all-important market share.” Indeed, it was at this point that the HBC began to fully concentrate on its self-promotional strategies, in a resolute attempt to draw patronage to its stores by appealing to the public's sense of tradition and appreciation of history. While the power of the London Board and shareholders still provided an impetus for history production with Imperial motifs, the augmented Canadian Committee assumed many of the tasks of representation, focusing on local histories poignant to a changing Western Canadian audience. This intermingling of themes is exemplified in the events of the 250th Anniversary, publicly celebrated at a financially difficult and transitionary moment for the Stores Division, and for the Company in general. The changes in motif are evident in different ways store space was used in the 1920s, and in some of the different issues stressed during the construction of the fourth store in Winnipeg.

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73 Monod 179. Rather than number of transactions, other retail theories favour a larger markup, an emphasis on quality or the provision of special services to the customer. These latter two options, though, were not at any time abandoned by the HBC, which harped on the traditional quality of its products, and service to the individual and nation.
CHAPTER TWO

CANADIAN CONTENT:
ARCHITECTURE AND REPRESENTATION IN THE 1920s

"Life has been defined as 'the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations.' When this adjustment fails, death ensues...

It is exhibited on the largest scale in the continual modifications made by the Hudson's Bay Company to meet the constant changes, so largely of its own creation, which have taken place in its territories and in the Dominion of Canada during the last two hundred and fifty years.

Maintaining its trading posts in conditions not greatly different from those which prevailed in a remote past, it has extended its trading activities to the modern Department Store."

Sir William Schooling, The Hudson's Bay Company, 1920

The HBC in 1919 found itself attempting to react to constant changes, which were largely not of its own creation. In the previous two decades, the nation had experienced a massive economic boom and immigrant influx, recessions, and the strains of a world war. Postwar Canada was characterized by greatly increased nationalist sentiment, and by both domestic and international political maturity. During and after the war Canada asserted itself as an autonomous nation, and Imperial allegiances were no longer automatic. Public opinion had begun to transform, influenced by several important factors: the Dominion had made a vital contribution to the war effort and was an independent participant at the Versailles treaty talks; the United States was slowly replacing Britain as the largest foreign investor in Canada; and the massive immigration of the boom period had altered the demographics of Canada so that less of the population were of British origin.\(^74\) The HBC was forced to recognize that second generation Canadians and non-Anglo immigrants had no particular ties to the Company and its role in Empire, and that it had to deal with stiff commercial competition in all divisions. To meet the challenges

\(^74\) The USA replaced Britain as largest foreign investor in 1926, Brown, ed. 427. Bothwell et al, reports well over two million immigrants 1901-13 from a wide variety of backgrounds, 40; 58. There were, of course, concerted attempts at Anglicization, but the larger ethnic groups (following the lead of the Québécois) gained political maturity in Canada over the 1917 conscription debate, when Anglophone Prime Minister Borden worried that an election based on this issue "would be lost to a combination of farmers, French Canadians, 'foreigners,' and 'slackners,'" 128.
of a developing nation, the colonial organization and image of the HBC needed to be readdressed. Through the 1920s Canadian management assumed the administrative duties, and disseminated the historical image of the HBC on a local level, using the stores as the locus and the icon of the representational program.

Interest in the Company's history had been growing throughout the ranks in the 1910s. For instance, the famed HBC calendar which displayed a different historic scene each year had been inaugurated in 1913; it was produced by the Canadian offices, though under the editorial eye of London. The idea of a historical museum to be placed in the Winnipeg store had originated among the Canadian personnel in the early 1900s. Burbidge had then tried to initiate plans for a museum in 1911, and regarding the new store design of 1919 he wrote: “it is suggested that this store building be made a centre for all information connected with the history of our Great Company.” However, it seems that the Board was not yet interested in the educational possibilities of a museum or a “store”-house of Company history—when the Board did commemorate history, it focused on particular dates important in London, such as the 250th Anniversary. Thus, the circumstances of this rejected store design and the differing themes promoted for the Anniversary are emblematic of the divergence of views between London and Canadian administration. While they participated wholeheartedly in the plans and celebrations, the management in Canada always attempted to influence Company policy to reflect the altered nature of Canadian society, by emphasizing the nature of the HBC as a decidedly Canadian institution.

Laying a foundation stone for the new Winnipeg store had been projected as part of the Anniversary ceremonies of May 1920. The Board, however, disapproved of several designs prepared for Burbidge by Burke, Horwood & White in the time preceding the Anniversary. Some of the reasons for this disapproval have been

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75 HBCA A12/S543/2/f. 166, Burbidge to Ingrams, 6 May 1919. He had earlier requested artifacts to be sent from London, HBCA A12/SMISC/415, Burbidge to Secretary Ware, 8 Feb. 1911. It is not known if an exhibit was established at this time, but it is not mentioned when the actual museum is developed in 1922 (see below).
outlined above, but of principal importance among them was that the Board disliked the style of the design. They had requisitioned a building in the same style as, though somewhat more elaborate, than Calgary, Vancouver and Victoria, but the proffered plan was utterly unlike the standardized style of those stores (Figure 5). The Board desired a showcase store that would “attract worldwide attention,” but they were unwilling to approve the massive outlay that would have been necessary for the unique and ornate palace of consumption the architects had offered.

In the rejected design, the previous tripartite program of base/colonnade/attic was compressed to the first three stories, and above this rose an ornamental façade with elaborate spiral columns flanking pedimented corner windows. The emporium was to be surmounted by minarets and a massive central dome, reminiscent of Harrod’s, and other Edwardian monuments. As Burbidge described it, on the eighth floor at the base of the dome, was “what would be called the Historical floor... a vaulted corridor surrounding the light court... [with] rooms for exhibition purposes.” These large rooms would contain books, fur specimens, material archives, and a full-size model of a Hudson Bay ship! Although retaining a basis in Classicism, this Winnipeg façade incorporated a fantastical array of sculptural ornamentation to be executed in terra cotta. The Corinthian capitals of the colonnade were to be embellished with birds and busts of First Nations chiefs sprouting from frames of acanthus leaves. The splayed corners were decorated with ten foot high sculptures of the Company coat of arms, and the main entrances were denoted by terra cotta medallions displaying equestrian portraits (of whom, it remains undetermined, horses not being one of the HBC’s most celebrated mode of transport). Most interesting were the bas-relief panels above the first floor windows illustrating

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76 HBCA A12/S543/2/f. 134, Ingrams to Burbidge, Nov. 1918.  
77 HBCA A12/S543/2/f. 165, Burbidge to Ingrams, 6 May 1919. Beautifully rendered drawings of this store in coloured ink on linen are held in the HBCA Map Collection, G2/41-47. Architectural historian John Betjeman in an article on “Architecture” in Simon Nowell-Smith, ed., Edwardian England (London: Oxford UP, 1964), notes that “most Edwardian commercial architects liked to try their hand at a dome. Many are disastrous, notably the awkward one over Harrod’s,” 359. Perhaps the Board of the HBC had ascertained from the unsuccessful Harrod’s dome that it would be unwise to proceed with Horwood’s design.
Figure 5  Rejected Winnipeg Store Design, 1919
Source: HBCA R.G. 2/6/2
historic scenes from the HBC's past. While the signing of the charter was one of these scenes, many depicted incidents which occurred in Canadian locations: the first ship into Hudson's Bay, a trading fort with teepees, a dog sled setting, or a troop of covered wagons entitled "The First Trek." Whether the latter referred to an originary trading venture, or the early arrival of settlers on the Prairies, the Board likely did not appreciate the relevance of these scenes to an increasingly nationalistic Canadian public. Nor were these Canadian-produced scenes reflective of the centralized British control that the Board still wished to portray in 1919--maintaining essentially the same design for the fourth store would show the consistency of London's power.

Nevertheless, by this time the Board was also interested in promoting the Company's unique history and status in its own way, plus it was in a celebratory mood, as the war had provided the HBC with its extremely lucrative shipping contract. The notable events associated with the 250th Anniversary of the HBC, celebrated across Western Canada in May, 1920, were developed by the Board in London toward the end of World War One. The 250th Anniversary project invoked historical ceremony and splendor to capture interest, and to draw the public, as subjects of the British Empire, into a romantic association with the institution of the HBC. Referring to the British monarchy and its penchant for institutionalizing both old and new traditions in the period 1870-1920, historian David Cannadine has studied the popularly held belief that staging free events, performing illustrious pageantry, and distributing token paraphernalia, can manufacture a sense of public unity. He further states that "in many other spheres of activity, too, venerable and decayed ceremonials were revived... with all the anachronistic allure of archaic but invented spectacle."78 The HBC, with its ties to British aristocracy, readily developed its Anniversary program out of these traditions of institutional ritual: the London Board, of course, supplied the presiding British dignitary, HBC Governor Sir

78Cannadine 138.
Robert Kindersley. To accompany the celebration, the Board had commissioned a short history of the Company by a British historian, Sir William Schooling who had never been to Canada before 1920, that was distributed freely to Company supporters, dignitaries, libraries and schools. Also prepared in London were the costumes and props for the traveling store window displays: a scene of Charles II signing the charter in 1670, and a re-creation of the first fur sale of 1671--two key events that marked the origins of the Company in the Imperial centre.\footnote{It seems the historical celebration was initially conceived in Canada, and then the Board tried to put its own slant on the events. Burbidge claimed he got the idea from the yearly Anniversary sales he had been holding, HBCA A12/SMISC/402/f. 13-15, Burbidge to Governor and Committee, July 1918. Kindersley and the store window displays traveled to, and pageants were held in, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver, and Victoria; smaller gatherings were held at outlying posts where loyal First Nations traders were presented with commemorative medals. My knowledge of the 250th Anniversary comes largely from extensive reports and ads in the Manitoba Free Press. 1-7 May 1920, and The Beaver Oct., Nov. 1920: passim. Geller's thesis, which revolves around the development of The Beaver magazine as a representational tool of the HBC, also exposes the construction of Company-First Nations relationships in the pageant, 1-29. In addition, from an analysis of the points of reference and language, he concludes that Schooling's book was written for an assumed audience of educated, British readers, 3. Previous Company post manager Philip Godsell relates how in London he had met with Schooling "who desired some first-hand information on the Indians and their customs," Arctic Trader (New York: Putnam, 1934) 165. Schooling eventually did visit Canada for six months of research toward a more in-depth history than his The Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1920 (London: Hudson's Bay Co., 1920), but this was after the 250th Anniversary. He was employed as the Company historian until 1926, but never produced the definitive history of the HBC, see Deidre Simmons, "Annals of the Fur Trade," The Beaver. June/July 1994: 12.}

However, celebrations of such magnitude could not be carried out without most of the organization taking place \textit{in situ}, or at least, at the Canadian headquarters. Canadian management further elaborated the events, adding to and altering the original concepts--it is possible they pushed for the Anniversary after observing the jubilee of Eaton's, which was celebrated in Toronto and Winnipeg during 1919. The obvious British slant to the above manifestations was in contrast to the fur trade pageants staged by the Canadian personnel which emphasized interaction with the First Nations, Canadian transportation networks, and the geographic imprint left by the Company.\footnote{Geller found that the proposal to stage a fur trade pageant with First Nations representatives from across the country, was put forward by Canadian-based management, specifically Land and Fur Trade Commissioner James Thomson, 13. Godsell confirms this conclusion, 165-66. A striking example of the differing themes of history produced in London and Winnipeg for the same Anniversary event are the historical overviews published by the Company in the Manitoba Free Press. The first of these (1, 3-8 May: various page numbers) was seven abridged installments of}
historical issues would hold more appeal for the diverse population of postwar Canada. Although the remote posts held smaller celebrations, and the event was touted as a celebration of the fur trade, the representations were mainly for the benefit of an urban populace interacting with the HBC as a retailer. True to its nature to create fantasies, the department store division produced elaborate events in cities across the West, in which spectators could vicariously participate in the history of the Company and the Canadian wilderness. Thus, with the enthusiastic participation of the Canadian employees, the 250th Anniversary became a multimedia event including copious newspaper articles, ads, and installments; pageantry and parades celebrating the fur trade; historical store window displays; and other free events and objects.

In the Winnipeg version of the fur trade pageant, groups of First Nations people transported from all over the country, and various HBC personnel costumed as voyageurs and traders, formed a colourful procession of canoes and York boats congregating at the Forks, previous site of the Company’s Upper Fort Garry. From there they paddled a traditional route through Winnipeg and down the Red River, disembarking at Lower Fort Garry (long since out of service), where they were joined by Red River carts for a parade into the complex. Here speeches were made, and a pipe of peace smoked between Kindersley and several First Nations chiefs, the Governor later presenting them with commemorative medals for their loyalty to the HBC. Peter Geller forcefully argues that the First Nations pageant participants were actually “dressed up” by the HBC, the stereotyped costumes of the thoroughly staged event evoking a sense of continuity between the past and present state of the Company’s trade. Indeed, the press noted that the “Hudson’s Bay Indians” were

Schooling’s history which emphasized the British viewpoint, for example using the formation of the Royal Society, and London’s Great Fire as chronological reference points. These installments ignored primary Canadian events, and began with King Charles II’s signing of the Company charter. The second essay (3 May: 6-7) was written in Winnipeg by Professor W.T. Allison of the University of Manitoba who focused on early struggles, people and policies intertwined with the history of Canada and the Company. This article began with a section entitled “Two Canadians Visit King Charles.”
“still following the age-old avocation of hunting and trapping.” They and the buck-skinned trappers presumably represented both the historical (in costume) and modern (in person) trading partners of the Company. Undoubtedly, this was a simpler time in Canadian history when commerce meant a personal interaction between trapper and trader, governed of course by the Company’s principles of quality goods and fair dealing.

Evidently, in the rhetoric of these various events, the HBC attempted to evoke a continuity between the fur trade of the past, and its contemporary commercial status. Philip Godsell, the HBC post manager-cum-author whose duty was to organize the Winnipeg fur trade pageant, summed up this strategy best in his memories of that day: “as the gates of the fort swung open and two laden Red River carts, drawn by oxen, made their way with protesting squeaks and groans towards the fur store... an aeroplane hovered overhead--a symbol of the old and the new.” The anachronistic costumes and modes of transport used in the pageant created a graphic impression of progress in the assertively urban spectators of the relatively young Western Canadian cities. The romantic event was heavily promoted by the modern stores --which would not have been caught dead stocking such out-of-date clothing-- and the Company arranged for free streetcar service to the fort (30 km from Winnipeg). Lower Fort Garry had been leased by the Winnipeg Motor Club since 1913, and this association published a map showing the automobile public where to park and see the anachronistic spectacle. As a result,

81Manitoba Free Press, 4 May 1920: 2. Geller 17-19. Cf. Godsell: “Indians were brought in from all quarters of the land; costumes were designed, bark canoes and York boats built and teepee covers sewn together,” 166. The Winnipeg Tribune, 1 May 1920, confirms the huge attendance at the pageantry, saying that “great cheers” reverberated along the river, passed along by the crowds, and the paper estimates 25 000-35 000 people witnessed the spectacle. Outside of Winnipeg, the pageants basically took the form of street parades with First Nations people, costumed Company personnel, and floats. See “The Hudson’s Bay Company Celebrates its Birth.” A Pathescope of Canada Newsreel (1920), in the National Archives of Canada, which also confirms the large crowds that witnessed these events.

82Godsell 169. The airplane was shown in a commemorative photo album made by the Company, HBCA Album 35; and it was also noted by the Manitoba Free Press, 4 May 1920: 1.

83This was in the Automotive Section under the poignant heading, “1670 Water--1920 Gasoline,” Manitoba Free Press, 1 May 1920: sec. 2, page 1. Cannadine notes the British monarchy’s use of
the riverbanks and pageant site thronged with spectators—the new “trading partners” learning the virtues of the HBC department stores. The edifying nature of the whole Anniversary celebration was exemplified by Schooling’s May 8, 1920 piece in the *Manitoba Free Press*:

Of greater interest and importance [than either the first ship into Hudson Bay, or wartime shipping contracts] is the huge trade of the Company’s Stores in many Canadian Cities. To them may fitly be applied the words which a wise old Indian spoke to his tribesmen one hundred and sixty years ago: “There are traders... of the great lake yonder (Hudson Bay) who are never absent, neither in our time, nor in the time of our grandfathers and great-grandfathers. They are like the rock which cannot be moved, and they give good goods and plenty and are always the same. If you are wise you will go hence and deal with them.”

This sage counsel to the Indians in the eighteenth century applies no less to the people of Canada nearly two hundred years later.  

If the HBC did so much for the advancement of civilization in the remote Canadian hinterlands, and was so well respected by its traditional clientele the “Hudson’s Bay Indians,” how much more could it offer the canny urban consumer?

For the modern consumer, the HBC would supply the same quality goods it had always been known for. In addition to the historic tableaux, during the Anniversary store windows displayed the product lines that had been traditionally stocked for the Company fur trade and were still available in the department stores—its famed point blankets, Fort Garry tea, and Imperial mix tobacco. The represented continuity of this produce, though, was a selectively edited narrative. An excellent example of this editing is the promotion of the famous HBC point blankets—the traditional wares of the fur trade—as products for modern consumption. Wool blankets had been traded with the First Nations from early in the Company’s presence, and the points (to indicate size and thickness, and therefore barter valuation) had been developed around 1780. However, with the coming of cash and fancy goods to the fur trade districts at the end of the nineteenth

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“anachronistic modes of transport to enhance its mystery and magic,” 106, and the post-1880 popularity of commemorative medals being minted for royal events, 137.

84Schooling’s installment was entitled “From Barter to Commerce,” *Manitoba Free Press*, 4 May 1920.
century, the point blanket and other HBC staples lost favour with the First Nations trappers and shoppers, and became unmovable in those markets. Particularly after 1920, the Company promoted the traditional wool blankets to its urban clientele as a way for them to participate in the Company history of stalwart fur traders, as well as a more general Canadian history of braving the elements. Not wholly necessary in a city of electricity and technologically advanced heating systems, the blankets took on symbolic value as an icon of these Canadian wilderness mythologies.

The mythology of the Canadian wilderness was deliberately evoked by the Anniversary events, and became an integral part of the HBC’s image. The Beaver magazine --first published three months after the Anniversary-- pursued the theme in yarns about the hardy traders and explorers of the Company’s past. Springing from the Anniversary, the Company now employed a full-time public relations officer who also edited the house magazine; new people appointed by the Canadian Committee focused and intensified the public relations program, and infused the department stores with its objectives. Furthermore, the 1920 celebrations set a precedent for subsequent schemes such as yearly “anniversary” sales and staged spectacles. As an example, in 1923 a ceremonial “fur trade” tradition was not so much revived as invented when the Company presented furs to Florence Harding, wife of the United States President, on her visit to Vancouver. A previously inert clause in the 1670 Charter stated that the HBC had to present a few token pelts as land rent whensoever a member of royalty entered the territory of Rupert’s Land. In an effort to create a spectacular celebrity event, the HBC stretched the semantics of the Charter to deem Mrs. Harding a “royal person,” and ignored the fact that British Columbia had never been part of Rupert’s land. In a somewhat

85HBCA A12/S541/1/f. 24, Fur Trade Commissioner to Secretary Ware, 1901.
86“HBC Presents Fur to Mrs. Harding,” The Beaver, Sept. 1923: 462-63. The Western boundary of Rupert’s Land, as defined in the Charter, was the Rocky Mountains. The first time the ceremony was performed for English royalty was in 1927 for the Prince of Wales (later Edward VIII), see Newman, Company of Adventurers, 118-19. The rent ceremony was not conceived of as a public relations gambit during royal visits before 1920, such as the same Prince’s tour of
different vein, another promotional event which took place in 1932 at the Vancouver store presented a working display which consisted of a woman demonstrating the new electric sewing machines that it carried for sale. By virtue of its nostalgic impulse, though, the HBC fashioned its own particular brand of spectacle that employed its avowed knowledge of history. Merely exhibiting the new technology was unsatisfying to the Company, so the machines were displayed in contrast to the superannuated method of sewing by hand. As can be seen, a historical theme was intrinsic to the Company's self-representation, and its motifs emphasized the countenanced (by "royalty" or by tradition) and continuous provision of commodities and culture to many generations of Canadians.

These temporary expositions are part of the HBC's claim to comprehend and control both history and progress within its department stores. HBC store personnel came to be seen as authorities on both history and pageantry for local commemorative events like parades, fairs, and other public displays. As a piece in The Beaver asked: "Things we'd like to know!... Why the advertising department is looked upon as an encyclopedia for Canadian history and kindred subjects?" The Company and its personnel were at the forefront in participation and organization for community events such as the "Early Days of Edmonton" staging of an 1850 battle at the old fort, or that same city's parade in honour of the Governor General's visit of 1922, for both of which the HBC supplied costumes and actors. By

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87 Hudson's Bay Co. (millinery-demonstration), Vancouver, BC, 31 May 1932, Stuart Thomson photo, CVA 99-4197. It is ironic that in the photograph of this event the woman sewing by hand has a content expression on her face, while the woman using the machine seems to be scowling.

88 "Things We'd Like to Know!" The Beaver, Apr. 1922: 30.

89 A browse through the pages of The Beaver in the 1920s will provide ample evidence of the HBC's involvement in local celebrations, particularly those promoting history. Edmonton pageantry, see "Early Days of Edmonton," The Beaver, Aug. 1922: 33-34; "Historical Pageant," Oct. 1922: 33-34; the costumes used were the same as for the 250th Anniversary. HBC displays at trade fairs, such as Vancouver's Pacific National Exhibition, also represented the Company's history, F.S. Garner, "HBC Exhibits at Vancouver Fair," The Beaver, Oct. 1921: 30-31. The
enacting and participating in these various public spectacles the Company assumed a critical role in the generation of patriotic spirit. The participation also linked the Company to a perceived history of progress and development that lead to the formation of Canada. In reality, to preserve the lucre of its fur trade lands, the Company had done everything in its power to block settlement before the Deed of Surrender transformed it into a real estate broker.

The overarching theme of Company-prescribed teleological progress took advantage of many thematic episodes, though as Geller states in relation to Schooling's work, it was “exemplified by the movement from fur trade fort to department store.” For instance, during the Anniversary, the stores distributed free to the public a talking children's book on the history of the Company which stresses the theme of progress. The book recording is “interrupted by the blood-curdling whoops of Indian braves, the cry of wild beasts, and the clamor of today's big cities, which have grown up from mere Hudson's Bay Forts of the past.” On the back of the illustrated record book (Figure 6) are juxtaposed the past and the consequential present: in one image a “Hudson's Bay Post” with battlements and flag, and a canoe being unloaded in the foreground; opposite, the iconic store design, flags flying from the parapets, standing out boldly fortress-like against a blurred urban context, with automobiles and people arranged before it. While the store is designated “modern,” the post remains unspecified--since the fur trade continues in

Company and the CPR collaborated on a David Thompson memorial in Invermere, BC, which took the form of a model HBC fort, “David Thompson Memorial,” The Beaver, Mar. 1922: 15, and a cenotaph remembered the Company's war dead in the Granville Street entrance arcade of the Vancouver store. Cannadine notes that 1870-1920 were the greatest years for the erection of commemorative statues in London and Washington, 164.

90Geller 8.
91HBC advertisement, Manitoba Free Press, 1 May 1920: 11. Also in the stores, tickets were issued for free showings of the Company sponsored motion picture “Romance of the Far Fur Country.” Using modern footage shot on two northern expeditions arranged by the Company, the film purported to represent the story of the HBC fur trade, and the rustic, unchanged life “beyond civilization's frontiers,” Manitoba Free Press, 1 May 1920: 10, 18; Victoria Daily Times, 12 May 1920: 18. In 1919-20 the Company spent $18 040.34 on “Moving Picture Expeditions.” This was only a small portion of the budget for the 250th Anniversary celebrations. On pageants, competitions, displays, etc., it spent $353 243.54; plus bonuses to salesshops and office personnel which came to $149 769.97--grand total, $503 013.51, HBCA D49/5-6, Fur Trade Accounts.
Figure 6  Illustration from back cover of talking children's book, 1920
Source: City of Richmond Archives, Greta McKenzie Fonds
1920 it is both ancient and modern, the store becoming both a result and a natural extension of the Company's dominant role in providing goods.\footnote{The talking children's book is held by the City of Richmond (BC) Archives, Greta McKenzie Fonds. McKenzie won Third Prize in the Junior Grade of the HBC's Anniversary essay writing contest for school children. The congratulatory note written her by the General Manager, Vancouver store, 1 May 1920, is on special 250th Anniversary letterhead which has similar images comparing fort and store.}

Like the store illustrated on the record book, images of the HBC department stores throughout the 1910s and 1920s emphasize their fort-like qualities. For instance, perspectival drawings and photographs --such as those published in the popular press, or in \textit{The Beaver}-- are dominated by the towering corner of the building, as two columned façades recede into the distance like log palisades (See Figures 1a, 1b). Again, in pictures such as the June 1928 cover of \textit{The Beaver} magazine (Figure 1d), the balustrade particularly reminds one of parapets surmounted by the proud flags of the business. On this cover, with its urban context deleted the building is represented as a bold, independent mass: it thus appears isolated and stalwart, dominating its surrounding territory like the forts of old.

The HBC claimed a natural progression from fort to store, which paralleled the growth of cities out of its originative trading posts. According to Schooling, "this is true whether particular forts were, or were not, geographically connected with particular stores," although the history of Winnipeg "affords the most striking example of the direct connection."\footnote{Schooling 101.} In fact, relatively few of the cities where it had stores could be claimed as progeny of the Company. While often admitting this, Schooling's history manages to render insignificant any settlement of towns previous to HBC involvement. For example, as he reports, a fur trade post established by competitors near Calgary had a short existence after 1752. Then, in 1875, the North-West Mounted Police built a station there, but "the more definite beginning of the modern city dates from 1876 in which year the Hudson's Bay
Company opened its first store close to the site of the old fort.  However, the HBC itself never had a fur trade fort at Calgary. In Schooling's book, and in other similar manifestations, the histories of other industries, institutions, and people are subsumed by an overarching narrative of the Company's predominance. At times, the truth was stretched to demonstrate the historical continuity of a specific site. An interesting example is Vancouver's 1925 Dominion day parade, for which the HBC store had its employees --costumed as characters of the fur trade, of course-- ride a float bedecked with two scale models: one of the Vancouver store, as it would be completed in the next year; the other of Fort Vancouver, established one hundred years before by the HBC, but actually bearing no more than a nomenclatural relation to the city and its history. The fort had been a fur trade post on the Columbia River, four hundred kilometers south of the Canadian city.

In a city like Winnipeg, where an argument for the progenitorship of the fort was more historically viable, the Company duly intensified its claims to primacy, by stressing its historical occupation of the land. It was not lost on the Company that a great amount of downtown Winnipeg was built on land it previously possessed; needless to say, it had made a parcel of money selling off this downtown real estate. A clause in the Deed of Surrender bestowed upon the HBC large reserves of land surrounding its established fur trade posts. When built in 1881, the old Winnipeg store stood on HBC reserve land just outside of the gates of Upper Fort Garry, which still existed at the time. The fort was demolished soon after that, though the gate was preserved and donated to the city as a historical relic. Across from the old gate, and actually occupying a portion of the fort's soil, was Hudson's Bay House, a

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94Ibid. 105, emphasis mine. Of the several Western Canadian cities where the HBC had set up medium to large size stores by this time, it can only claim primordial status --or even a long-term presence-- at Victoria, Kamloops, Edmonton and Winnipeg (the latter two originally founded as fur trade posts by the Northwest Company --and Kamloops by the Pacific Fur Co.--and then taken over by the HBC). The other stores the Company had opened after the town had been established by other interests: the agricultural and mining towns of Vernon, Nelson, Fort MacLeod, Lethbridge, and Yorktown; Calgary; and the CPR terminal city of Vancouver.

95Hudson's Bay Co. float, Vancouver, BC, 1 July 1925, Stuart Thomson photo, CVA, 99-3584. The HBC Fort Vancouver became Vancouver, Washington. Vancouver, BC, had never been a fur trade site, the Company opening a retail store there in 1887.
warehouse converted into the Canadian headquarters of the Company. The public was not unaware of these site histories: for instance, the proposed chateau style railway hotel, The Selkirk, was renamed the Fort Garry after a Manitoba Free Press article noted it was “to be erected on historic ground” which “was formerly a portion of old Fort Garry.”

Complementary to the Anniversary celebrations and the department stores was the Company’s other important Winnipeg building, Hudson’s Bay House, where the themes of Canadian geographic-historic development were also manifest. From 1923, this building housed all the Canadian offices of the HBC, so the fur trade and retail divisions rubbed shoulders under oil paintings such as that of nineteenth century fur trade commissioner Sir George Simpson, and maps of the Company’s “vast commercial empire.” The historical propaganda of the calendar, and the house magazine, were disseminated from these offices. Additionally, as The Beaver would later explain, “more than the history of Canada is blended in this building.” In one section of this building was the packaging plant, from which the HBC distributed to both its posts and stores, its famous brands known as Fort Garry tea and coffee. Thus, another connection was made between fur trade and retail, through the shared dissemination of the Company’s appropriately named, traditional products. With its symbolic site, historic artifacts and library, and its wall-size photographs of the northlands, HB House, like the stores, became a record of the past and present situation of Canada.

The Beaver would later note that “as if to link today with yesterday, [Hudson’s Bay House’s] southwest corner, where the Canadian Committee meets each week, occupies part of the old fort site, where the retail trading once stood,” Margaret Arnett MacLeod, “Winnipeg and the HBC,” June 1949: 7. The important southwest corner was occupied by the stores administration from 1923-29, when it was renovated into the executive offices and boardroom, see the architectural drawings at HBCA Map Collection, RG 2/8/1523/Sheets 1-2. The gate of Upper Fort Garry was donated to the city in 1897. The track warehouse was built in 1912, converted in 1923.

Manitoba Free Press, 26 April 1911.

Brian Tobin, “Hudson’s Bay House,” The Beaver, Mar. 1944: 31; also A. Brock, “HBC Wholesale Depot,” June 1923: 331-35. See David Monteyne, “Hudson’s Bay House and Historiography,” unpublished seminar paper, University of British Columbia, 1994. Hudson Bay House, and by extension the Company’s stores, were both distribution and gathering points; the produce of the world, such as South American coffee and Indian tea, was imported to these spots to supply the Western Canadian consumers.
In fact, buildings, and their representational possibilities, were deemed so important in the 1920s that the Board constructed in London its own very opulent, purpose-built head offices, and a fur auction hall for the first time in its long history; for over two hundred and fifty years, the HBC had occupied various leased spaces in the City. These expensive London buildings were erected after the Canadian Committee was set up in a spartan, Winnipeg warehouse. Beaver House, the climate-controlled fur warehouse and auction hall was erected in 1925, and incorporated sculptural panels depicting images significant to the Company. Interestingly, low-relief panels were used on this building a few years after being flatly rejected on the Winnipeg store design of 1919. The images on Beaver House, though, were of Company history related to London and English culture: the “Nonsuch,” first HBC ship to sail from London to Hudson Bay; the heraldic coat of arms; and the names Rupert and Kindersley, first ever and present day governors of the Company. Both Beaver House and Hudson Bay House --the head offices in London-- were built in styles reminiscent of the early days of the HBC. The former in a red brick Georgian revival, and the latter in a Wren-inspired Renaissance style, carried as far as the requisite cupola. The famous English architect Sir Christopher Wren had been one of the earliest shareholders and Board members of the HBC.

The head offices were also detailed inside and out with a sculptural program representing the exotic inhabitants of the colony--namely beavers and stereotyped First Nations visages. However, this was non-specific and iconic ornamentation which basically referred to the colony’s resources of material and labour that were exploited by the agent of the Imperial center. Perhaps more symbolically important to the Board was the site of its head offices. Five buildings were demolished so that the HBC could be situated next to the tiny church of St. Ethelburga the Virgin. In essence, this church was where it all started, since it was here, in 1607, that the explorer Henry Hudson and his crew took communion before embarking on the journey that would discover the bay named in his memory. In the same year the
Company first occupied these offices it presented two stained glass windows to the church commemorating the voyages of Hudson. The adjacent sites of Hudson Bay House and St. Ethelburga caused The Beaver to remark: "after a lapse of over three centuries, by a curious coincidence the past and present have become the closest of neighbours." There is no doubt that Company personnel in London were deeply interested in the HBC's legacy of Imperial expansion.

The Board's interest in a symbolic site, and in an appropriate style for the Company's buildings, and the concern of Canadian management for exhibiting the HBC's significance in the history of Canada, meshed together in their most complete form in the new Winnipeg store of 1926. Although standing on Portage Avenue it was somewhat distanced from the symbolic site of the Fort Garry gate, the new HBC store of 1926 still stood on the post-Confederation land grant, a fact stressed by the Company. This story of the HBC's progress within Winnipeg omits the chapter wherein the Company had previously sold the plot of land on Portage Avenue, and had to reacquire it in 1911—a transaction that, in combination with the unfortunate and extremely unprofitable store site chosen in 1881, no doubt represented a net loss. Rather, The Beaver reported that "an interesting feature" of the site of the new store was that it comprised "land which came to the Company by grant of charter from King Charles the Second some two hundred and fifty-six years ago, and later formed a portion of the Company's Fort Garry reserve when the province of Manitoba was created in 1870." In other words, the modern store now physically superseded the dismantled fort at the precise location that "Old Colony creek, marking the western bounds of the reserve, crossed the Portage trail,"

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99 S.H. Grover, "The Church of St. Ethelburga the Virgin," The Beaver, June 1928: 8. See also Anne Morton, "St. Ethelburga the Virgin, Henry Hudson and the IRA," The Beaver, Oct.-Nov. 1993. Illustrating the change in the Board's attitude towards Company history, Morton notes that when solicited in 1919 they donated £25 to the church—in 1928, £500 were spent on the stained-glass windows, 13. The architect of HB House was A.J. Davis. Among other monumental commissions, Davis and his partner Charles Mewes had designed London's Ritz Hotel and Royal Automobile Club.

100 T.F. Reith, "Our New Winnipeg Store," The Beaver, March 1926: 56. Actually, it is not particularly "interesting" to mention the 1670 charter from the King in reference to the reserve land, as the same could be said for any location in most of Western Canada.
thus creating a continuous local history. In addition, two other commentators—following *The Beaver* almost word for word—went on to make this connection of site and institutional association between what were perceived as the past and present hegemonists of the province. As a reviewer in *Construction* magazine wrote, “it is peculiarly fitting that the new home of the HBC --whose history is so intimately linked with that of the province, and who first established law and order in the West-- should be erected within a short distance of the stately modern home of Manitoba’s lawmakers.”101 This writer was comparing the cultural authority of the Company to the adjacent Manitoba Legislative Building (1912-20), which symbolically shares the ceremonial axis of Memorial Boulevard with the new HBC store (Figure 7). Hence, not only did the stores develop out of the bold, exploratory, and authoritative forts of the fur trade, the fundamental structure of Manitoba society had been established by the Company as the harbinger of civilization.

When it came to actually building the store, the Board had of course already designated the appropriate style to express the Company’s fundamental role in Western Canadian society. I have discussed above how the new Winnipeg store by Barott was made to conform to, and how it differed from, the design of the first three emporia. Winnipeg was also different from the standard store exteriors in that the engaged columns are flat rather than rounded, and that the cabling of the flutes is abandoned. These two changes likely resulted from the decision to clad the Winnipeg store in less pliable limestone rather than the usual sculptural terra cotta. Although cheaper than carved stone, glazed terra cotta had to be imported from England or the United States. Instead, the architect was instructed to design the façade to be fabricated from the famous Tyndall limestone --quarried only 40 km

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101 F.C. Pickwell, “Hudson’s Bay Company’s Store, Winnipeg,” *Construction*, July 1927: 210. See also the review of the store opening in the *Manitoba Free Press*, 18 Nov. 1926. During construction, the HBC also published an advertisement in the same newspaper, making the same connections, 30 Jan. 1926. The independent commentators undoubtedly drew their information directly from HBC advertisements and press releases. Interestingly, a recent commentator has continued this tradition, as Wagg, in her catalogue essay on Barott, borrows much of her analysis of the Winnipeg store directly from Pickwell, 13-15.
Figure 7  Memorial Boulevard, Winnipeg--Hudson’s Bay Company Store (foreground) and Domed Legislative Building

Source: The Beaver, Dec. 1926
outside of Winnipeg--that had been used for the Manitoba Legislature and many other important Canadian buildings. Indeed, almost all the material used for the store was extracted and manufactured in Manitoba, including the form lumber, cement, reinforcing steel, and bricks. The choice of building material was a response to feelings of local boosterism put forward to the Canadian Committee by Winnipeg's mayor, who recommended the use of local workmen and resources to retain the goodwill and support of all the citizens. Making a compatible decision, the HBC then publicly announced how its plans were greatly "to the advantage of Manitoba industry and labour." Right from the initial cubic yard excavated --and, indeed, long before that considering the site purchase and long process of creating Memorial Boulevard--the monumental store was a focus of public attention, which the HBC capitalized on to advertise its institutional status, and its encouragement of local growth.

The interior of the Winnipeg store was also intended to attract and seduce the public by its luxurious fixtures and services, matching those found at the three previous Company stores. These luxuries were not uncommon among the great department stores of France and the United States. What is radically different from these stores, though, is that in the HBC emporia space and decoration were designated for acquainting the public with its romantic past. A very particular feature of the HBC stores was the inclusion of museums arranged by the Canadian Committee, and devoted to Company history and related subjects: old canoes and cannons contrasting with the modern fixtures and commodities of the department store. In early 1922 the HBC began organizing a museum to be located on the main floor of the Winnipeg store, with artifacts collected, donated or purchased by HBC

102 Reith 56; Manitoba Free Press, 30 Jan. 1926. The discussion of Tyndall stone between Company representative J. Chadwick Brooks and Winnipeg mayor Ralph Webb is found at HBCA RG2/6/3, Sept.-Oct., 1925. It is likely that the terra cotta on the Calgary store came from Doulton Potteries in England, and that on the BC stores from the Gladding, McBean company of California. Unglazed red terra cotta was produced in Ontario from the 1890s, but lack of raw material and a large enough market precluded the manufacture of the light-coloured, glazed variety in Canada, see Patricia McHugh, "Architectural Terra-Cotta," Terra Cotta (Toronto: Toronto Regional Architectural Conservancy/ Architectural Conservancy of Ontario, 1990): 51-52.
personnel. According to a Canadian museologist, this "can be considered as the first human history museum west of the Great Lakes."\textsuperscript{103} It should be noted that, at this time, the Company was still operating in the old store which greatly suffered from lack of selling space. The initial museum was only projected to be five hundred and forty square feet, but the space taken in the small store attests to the HBC's fanatical interest in its history. To ensure that the museum would take full advantage of its educational potential, the HBC hired a professional consultant for two weeks from the Victoria Memorial Museum in Ottawa. This specialist aided in object classification and arrangement. With seven sections embracing "Early History," "Animals" (read, fur-bearing animals), "Indians," "Life in the Service," "Forts, Posts, Stores," "Fights and Wars," and "Land and Settlement," the museum was organized to be a record of life in the Canadian hinterlands, under the auspices of the established authority on the subject—the HBC.

This museum was transferred and enlarged when the new Winnipeg emporium was finally erected in 1926 (Figure 8). Under the "low, false beamed ceiling, put up originally to lend an air of antique rusticity to the place,"\textsuperscript{104} one could find old post ledgers, taxidermed northern mammals, maps, photographs, paintings, dioramas, and scale models preserved behind glass. A similar museum was opened in the Vancouver store. Some types of artifacts were also exhibited in the Victoria and Calgary stores, the display of the latter having been devoted to materials from prairie First Nations groups.\textsuperscript{105} The adjacent arrangement of relics and commodities in similar display cases equated the past and present trade. One may

\textsuperscript{103}Archie F. Key, Beyond Four Walls (Toronto: McLelland & Stewart, 1973) 151. Description of the museum found at "HBC Museum," The Beaver, Feb. 1922: 15; "Historical Exhibit Notes," July 1922: 16; Clifford Wilson, "Reorganization of the Historical Exhibit," Sept. 1937: 52-55. From the time of the Anniversary—when the HBC also hired a professional archivist to organize 250 years of records stored in London—the Company began the "Collection of Historical Relics," on which it spent increasing amounts: 1920=$5182.77; 1921=$9979.25; 1922=$13 430.40; 1923=$13 216.10; four-year total=$41 808.52, HBCA D49/6-9, Fur Trade Accounts.

\textsuperscript{104}The Beaver, Sept. 1937: 52. The two museums were amalgamated and modernized in the Winnipeg store in 1937. This Winnipeg museum was moved to Lower Fort Garry in 1966, when the fort was presented as a heritage site to the federal government.

Figure 8  Hudson's Bay Company Store Museum, Winnipeg
Source: The Beaver, Sept. 1937
have asked where the store ended, and museum began; the difference is that the HBC sold its modern commodities, while the archaic artifacts essentially sold an image of the Company. Significant commodities breached this gap, such as the point blankets which graced the mahogany counters as a historical icon, and as an item for urban consumption. Through inclusion of museums the HBC stores were able to market their wares and reputation on the same shop-floor.

The portion of the Vancouver store that was completed in 1925-26 (see above, p. 45) included still other spaces dedicated to displaying the HBC's historical reputation: a lecture hall which hosted talks by Arctic explorers and other adventurers\textsuperscript{106} an art gallery. Two exhibition catalogues that have survived from the late 1920s indicate the HBC gallery's preference to show the work of realist, historical painters whose images celebrate the history of Canada and the Company's role therein. The artist featured in both of these shows was John Innes, a Vancouver painter with a penchant for didactic subject matter dealing with the past. Each of his exhibitions was a chronological series which revolved around a theme: one show, the settlement of the West; the other portrayed the development of transportation networks and technology in the Western Canadian context. In his foreword to the first catalogue, Innes lauds the Company's historical and contemporary powers and sensibilities:

It seems to me most fitting that this pioneer collection of paintings should be shown under the aegis, and by the courtesy of the Hudson's Bay Company... [who] were the sole rulers of what we now know as Western Canada. Their word was law, their authority unchallenged.... [from Hudson Bay] to the shores of the Pacific Ocean, they carried and maintained the flag of Britain.... Now that the inevitable changes [have] come... we find this Company with their spirit of enterprise and loyalty undimmed, playing their part in our modern commerce and serving the public faithfully and well.... it is a matter of deepest satisfaction to discover that they are not unmindful of the past.\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{106}Carr 145.
\textsuperscript{107}John Innes shows at the HBC gallery were entitled "The Epic of Western Canada," 1928 (foreword quoted), and "From Trail to Rail: The Epic of Transportation," 1930. Of the paintings shown at another 1928 exhibition of Innes' work at the University of British Columbia art gallery on "Epoch Making Incidents in the Early History of BC," seven out of eight represented historical scenes in which the HBC played a central role. The exhibition catalogues, including a private invitation to one of the openings, are held by Special Collections, Main Library, University of BC.
The last is rather an understatement. While other department stores incorporated art galleries and displayed art objects, none could claim that the paintings referred to the business itself, or that the artists depicted events from its own long and glorious past. With the fur trade artifacts exhibited in the store museums, and Innes paintings of forts and fur brigades gracing the gallery walls, the HBC attempted to present the public a tangible experience of its cultural status. The implication is that since the images and relics are a real, physical presence inside the heart of the stores, the stores have grown to encompass the history and knowledge residing in the old trading days.

A similar conclusion can be drawn from another type of pictorial representation incorporated into the new Winnipeg emporium. Arching over the facing banks of elevators in a majestic, elliptical space at the central point of the main floor were two massive, and forcefully instructional, paintings executed by the successful Montréal muralist Adam Sherriff Scott. A customer or employee awaiting transport to a separate floor, and watching the elevator dials to determine which lift would arrive soonest, could hardly avoid observing the vast murals. In fact, the elevator dials intrude into the pictorial space, forcing one to absorb the image. The two scenes were of general moments in Company history: 1) the unloading of a sailing ship at a log fort on Hudson Bay, while Britons in period dress interact with First Nations trappers; 2) a moored steamboat in front of Upper Fort Garry, while arrayed in the foreground were Red River carts, teepees, voyageurs in a canoe emblazoned with the HBC flag, and a large group of First Nations people wrapped in point blankets (Figure 9). When both historical murals were assimilated by a viewer standing in the modern store a sequence began to emerge. A narrative was outlined in the two murals, and in the environment of the store, that expressed physical growth, changing fashions and products, geographical development, technological advances, and a hierarchy of materials, all within the specific realm of the HBC. This progression is perhaps best revealed in a table:
Figure 9  Mural of Upper Fort Garry in Elevator Lobby, Winnipeg Store  
Source: The Beaver, June 1949
TABLE 1

THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF MURALS IN WINNIPEG STORE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>FIRST MURAL, Bay fort</th>
<th>SECOND MURAL, Upper Fort Garry</th>
<th>NEW STORE, Winnipeg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>time frame</td>
<td>17th-18th century</td>
<td>1861</td>
<td>1926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>physical growth</td>
<td>singlebuilding, unfinished palisade</td>
<td>large walled fort, numerous buildings</td>
<td>a single massive, multi-functional building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>materials</td>
<td>rough-hewn logs</td>
<td>stone</td>
<td>reinforced concrete frame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ornamentation</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>monumental gate, round bastions</td>
<td>Classical detailing, luxurious fixtures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fashions</td>
<td>period; First Nations trappers in skins</td>
<td>variety; First Nations trappers in point blankets</td>
<td>up-to-the-minute; point blanket coats are fashion item</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>products</td>
<td>limited; supplied by one boat</td>
<td>wider range represented by sacks of goods being unloaded</td>
<td>immense variety in many different departments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>geography</td>
<td>remote and unconnected early site on coast of Hudson Bay</td>
<td>inland hub of varied transportation networks</td>
<td>in center of large modern city grown at site of Upper Fort Garry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>technology</td>
<td>sail and paddle</td>
<td>paddle, steam, and domesticated animals</td>
<td>electric elevators; store surrounded by streets built for electric railways and automobiles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Shopping or working in the store, a person physically becomes part of the monumental historic progression represented in the elevator lobby. This elliptical space, surrounded by murals and merchandise, metaphorically takes on the form of a seed. Around this core are pictured the roots of the business--future growth is implied in the massive, opulent store building. Standing at the center of this powerful projection are the individual observers, empowered by the knowledge of and

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108 The northern fort mural is reproduced in Newman, Merchant Princes 375 (it was destroyed during later renovations); the Upper Fort Garry mural in The Beaver, June 1949: 4-5. The Winnipeg murals were 36' by 14' and cost $7 000 each, HBCA Search File, “Scott, A. Sherriff.” Ready made point blanket coats were first advertised for department store shopping in The Beaver, Oct. 1922: 44.
participation in the illustrious and society-building history of the HBC. Thus, through the strategic management of its built environment the venerable Company afforded the populace this vicarious participation in the charting and settling of the Canadian nation.

The completion of the grand Winnipeg emporium marked the end of the building program. That particular project covered the entire span of the building program, being one of the first sites purchased in 1911, and the last building designed. Many of the major Western cities had been bestowed extravagant emporia, which continued a long tradition of the HBC as a central cultural institution. Doubtlessly, by this time London felt it had approved --for awhile at least-- enough capital outlay for the development of the colony. By the end of the 1920s, further substantial changes in Canada and the Company would preclude such massive building projects, while many of the representational strategies peculiar to the department stores of this program, would be discarded. Of paramount importance, of course, was the worldwide depression of the 1930s. Even the HBC was forced to recognize the problems associated with this serious economic downturn, as international fur markets slid, and consumers refrained from entering the great retail emporia. In his inimitable manner, Newman explains that the depression's effect on the stores was that they "were transformed almost overnight from luxurious merchandising palaces into drafty nightmares with huge overheads."\textsuperscript{109} The final settlement of control over the retail division landed in the hands of the Canadian Committee in 1931, when they also received the power to make all personnel appointments in the Canadian operations. New management was more familiar with North American retail technique, and there was less scope for British input, such as the choice of an Imperial style of architecture.\textsuperscript{110} Further,

\textsuperscript{109}Newman, \textit{Merchant Princes} 382. For the fur trade during the depression, consult Ray 113-16.
\textsuperscript{110}Monod 178-82. The patterns of organization and control did not transfer to the Canadian Committee in a simple, linear manner. For instance, in 1929 HBC Governor Sale asserted his London authority by making his own appointments to replace the still unsuccessful stores commissioners installed by the Canadian Committee throughout the 1920s. However, Sales'
as they were developed in interwar Europe, the tenets of modern architecture which rejected historicist styles had begun to infiltrate the Canadian built environment, and even the HBC department stores felt the need to keep abreast of the times. Still, in some form, elements of the representational program, including some of those architectural features from which the Company's image was fashioned, survived the upheavals of the 1930s.111

Some of these new conditions that reflect the Company's situation in 1930s Western Canada can be studied in relation to the new Edmonton store erected in 1939 (Figure 10). Designed by Edmonton architects Moody and Moore, the store presented a streamlined, modern façade, held together by bold horizontal strips of black granite, glass block, and stainless steel, the latter to reflect "the glow of modernity." In combination with this modernity, though, some aspects of the Company's earlier department store building program were maintained in the design. Following the precedent of the 1920s, the building was mainly clad in Manitoba Tyndall stone. Beyond that, the modern building was decorated with six large sculptural panels, two of the Company's coat of arms, and the other four of historical scenes. Carvings of the "Nonsuch," a fur trader, a York boat, and an early settler, "recall the epic of western pioneering in which the Company played so important a part."112 Throughout the 1920s and even the 1930s, then, representations of the early forts and other features of the fur trade, assumed a symbolic position within the modern department stores. The initial impetus for associating the HBC with Canadian history came from the pageantry of the 250th Anniversary; but the developing nature of Canadian society --and the power of the

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111 For instance, Geller's Chapter 3 shows how in the 1930s the HBC became even more shrewd in the negotiation and presentation of its historical subject matter in The Beaver magazine.
112 "The Hudson's Bay Company's New Edmonton Store," The Beaver, Dec. 1939: 32; preceding quoted phrase, 29. Copying the successful phasic construction program of the Vancouver store (1913-26), the new Edmonton store was also built in three sections without having to close any departments at any time, 28.
Figure 10  Hudson’s Bay Company Store, Edmonton, Alberta
Source: R.A.I.C. Journal, Feb. 1940
Canadian Committee—lead to the Company's continuing perceived need for that association.
"It is doubtful if any other one agency or organization can offer the same practical illustration of changes in architectural and building progress, extending as it has from the crude pioneer log building to the present magnificent store emporiums of the company from Winnipeg to the Pacific coast as we know them today."

Construction magazine, July 1927

Writing in the 1930s, Douglas MacKay looked upon the HBC's concern for its past that grew out of the 250th Anniversary, and remarked that "history and modern department store promotion do not blend readily." However, I argue that the Company's recipe for public relations required that admixture. Showing how the story of the HBC was representative of the progress and development of Canadian society, was the central goal of the Company's public relations strategies in the 1910s and 1920s. The built environment generated by the HBC, mainly in its department store building program of 1912-26, played a central role in that representation. The HBC department stores were a modern building type, erected with advanced technology, and stocked with contemporary goods. However, juxtaposed with that modernity was a historicist style, and the archaic events staged outside and inside the buildings, all of which attempted to create a Company reputation for commercial and cultural power over the past, present, and future of Western Canada. It was intended to be a combined history of corporation and nation with which the populace could identify. The department stores would be a space where the public could actually participate in the represented history, thereby developing feelings of loyalty to the HBC, justified by its central importance to the Canadian nation.

113MacKay 308.
Canadian history of the period was notable for the rapid urbanization of the West. Slow though it was to react, these cities provided the HBC an arena for its shift to the branches of real estate and retail, and away from its traditional focus on resource extraction. To impress its urban clientele and workforce, the HBC entered upon a major building program. The appeal to history generated in the Company’s built environment evoked the stability of the Company over the centuries. However, in any society, particularly one changing as rapidly as that of Canada in the first three decades of the twentieth century, public opinion is continually being reevaluated. For instance, attitudes shift regarding important values, how the concept of the nation is defined, or how the present relates to the past. Therefore, the representational strategies of the HBC, as played out in its building program, had to adapt to contemporaneous public opinion, while maintaining the overall theme of its primacy. During this period, then, the specific aspects of the Company’s representation of its historical progress assumed different tones and foci—shifts in emphasis which were driven by transformations in the economy and in social organization.

The most prominent, and perhaps most complex, alteration in the Company’s strategies, was the 1920s modification of the historical theme to concentrate on Canadian rather than Imperial aspects. Nevertheless, as solid as the HBC desired to appear—particularly by erecting its massive, Classical department stores—it was not monolithic. The representational program pursued by the Company during the 1910s and 1920s could not be controlled by one group within the changing organization. The HBC was originally a British concern, and it did not lose its English accent immediately. Throughout the 1920s the Imperial and national/local themes of its history-making diverged and intermingled in varied manner. Therefore, the interplay of different thematic histories also reflected the parallel shifts in the structure of the Company, as the Board attempted to retain a slipping grasp on its Canadian operations. For instance, regarding the 1919 Winnipeg store
design, it was particularly important for the British concern to reject any alterations to its ordained program for the colonial cities. Continuing the same building program through recession and war indicated the power of the Company, and the maintenance of the Imperial status quo. In addition, the representations produced by the London Board differed in content from those pushed for on the Canadian scene, mainly by emphasizing the Company’s earliest history and its illustrious, gentlemen shareholders. In London though, as in Canada, these historical representations took on architectural form.

At the initiation of the HBC department store building program, the Board was still well in control of the Company, and it chose a Classical style with diverse precedents: it was seen as an appropriate style for palaces of consumption. The chosen Classical style also indicated an Edwardian predilection toward bombastic display of Imperial wealth and British cultural superiority, that was based in that country’s expansionist history of cultural dominance in its colonies. The architecture, and the pomp and circumstance surrounding it, established the stores as icons of the Imperial centre, still projecting its historical sway over Canada.

Furthermore, the store restaurants took the names and decor of British historical periods which revealed the Company’s unique heritage: Elizabethan in Calgary; Georgian in Vancouver, with an overarching stained-glass barrel vault; and, of course, Victorian in Victoria (although it seems that this last restaurant was actually decorated in the Jacobean style). These opulent dining rooms also displayed oil portraits of the important players in Company history— that is, the most illustrious British governors. In the Vancouver art gallery, where great Canadian historical scenes were exhibited, the paintings were still described by the artist in an unmistakably Anglo-centric manner. For example, accompanying his portrayal of the first train reaching the Pacific coast, Innes explains that this event “meant that the work of Cook, of Vancouver, of Franklin... was crowned with success... fate decreed that British folk, by British enterprise, had won a dependable
route [to the Orient] over British soil." By these associations within the stores, the Company could emphasize its development as a British institution in Canada.

The HBC advanced the institutional concept of the department store that its directors had learned from Selfridges, and other great Anglo-American emporia. On its glorious opening day advertisements, the Selfridge store was being presented to a crowned woman in flowing garments: the caption read, "London Receiving Her Newest Institution." The services and attractions of modern department stores, and their iconic status within the culture of consumption, made them important new institutions. Department stores featured restaurants, nurseries, and were communication centres—they also culled select aspects of the museum, the art gallery, and the gentleman's club. These various features combined in new ways in the retail palaces. Posh restaurants attempted to lure the upper classes away from fine boutiques and private clubs. Appeals to the tasteful or artistic periods of the past were not wholly unusual, as stores created museum-style period displays, such as Adam restaurants, or Louis Quatorze or Colonial rooms (whether British or American) which became popular for selling those styles of furniture and accouterments.

The poshness of the HBC's period restaurants, and the exclusivity of, for instance, the invitation-only art openings at the Vancouver store, suggests the class aspect of the HBC department stores. Despite a great diversification of Canada's population, by the 1920s the upper class was still almost entirely of British stock. As most general retailers would, the HBC courted this upper class with British style events and decor. However, as Franco-American merchants knew, and Selfridge revealed to London, for a huge department store, a big trade is

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115 Advertisement reproduced in Adburgham 167.
116 Harris 65-71. The Marshall Field store in Chicago, built 1902-14, had a large collection of period rooms. At the time of its opening, Selfridges had a "Colonial Room" and an "English Eighteenth Century Room;" see R. Frank Atkinson, "The Selfridge Store, London," Architectural Review 25 (June 1909): 292-301. It is Benson's perceptive argument that the department store tried to be a woman's private club, see above, fn. 59.
117 Brown 385-91.
better than an exclusive trade. In other words, as a mass merchandiser, the HBC desired to attract as large and diverse crowds as possible. In Western Canadian cities with limited population, perhaps it was even more vital that the Company attempt to appeal to an interclass audience. Unfortunately, it would be impossible to determine the societal cross-section of patrons who frequented (or avoided) the HBC stores.

Still, I would argue that a core motivation behind the Company's strategies was to instill certain social values that promoted the culture of consumption. Another vital goal was to breed loyalty to the HBC and what it represented among the large crowds of new urbanites. In light of these needs, the permanent spectacle of the monumental store was not quite enough to hold the loyalty of boosterist citizens in cities where hundreds of new buildings went up in the boom years between 1900 and 1913. In addition to that, World War One and the economic recessions of 1913 and the 1920s, had somewhat dampened the public spirit and, no doubt, the will to consumption. Consequently, the HBC decided to stage its 250th Anniversary, a fantastic spectacle for its urban audiences. These civic celebrations glorified the events of a pre-urban past, and the present state of trade in the remote hinterlands of Western Canada. Ironically, the development of the cities had terminated in adjacent areas, the traditional fur trade lifestyle being celebrated in the 1920 pageantry and hype. For the purposes of representation, the Company certainly concentrated its efforts on these urban centres, where it had the largest amount of people to impress.

Thus, the publicity for the Anniversary, and the many subsequent romantic events, essentially emanated from the department stores through their newspaper advertisements, and their everyday public interaction as retailers. Strangely,

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118 Adburgham 168. As Benson has stated, to expand their clientele department stores in general encouraged all classes to browse and make use of the special services, though sometimes on separate floors. Although open to all, department stores most often catered to the tastes and mores of the middle and upper classes. Of course, in the end, though all people could peruse equally, they could not purchase equally, 76-78, 89-91.
though, the Company claimed that in staging the Anniversary it was not seeking to advertise. As an employee speaking in Victoria at the time declared,

It is simply asking for the congratulations of the people of the Canadian West on the celebration of this historic anniversary. No mention of the celebration is permitted in any of the Company’s stores. They are not even allowed to hold sales.\(^{119}\)

One wonders how this censorship could be effected inside the elaborately decorated stores, where --among other things-- free public tickets to the HBC film were distributed by personnel who received wage bonuses, plus a day off to be transported on special tram cars so they could view the events. But then, there was no store yet in 1920 Victoria, so the public would not have been able to assess the truth of the above statement.

Perhaps by taking this stance above the ostentation of advertising, the HBC intended to distance itself from the outright commercialism of the 1919 Eaton’s jubilee which was almost entirely based on sales, and selling gimmicks based on reviewing the changing fashions of the previous half century.\(^{120}\) The HBC could boast of five times the merchandising experience, but its Anniversary was also of national significance--its history was beyond mere commercialism. One journalist suggested that

as the history of the Hudson’s Bay company was for two centuries the history of western Canada, the celebration will take on the character of a national event. It is anticipated that the five representative cities in which the celebration will be held will declare holidays, and Dominion, provincial and city officials, and civic, patriotic and religious societies will take part in the commemoration.\(^{121}\)

Above all, the impetus for the HBC was the educational aspects of this “national event.” For instance, as one example among several themes developed during the pageant, the positive state of HBC-First Nations relations, and the Company’s success in “civilizing” these “Hudson’s Bay Indians,” were “lessons in history... in

\(^{119}\)C.H. French, manager of the BC fur trade department, speaking to a meeting of the Island Automobile Association (soliciting a float for the 250th Anniversary parade), Victoria Daily Times, 1 May 1920: 5

\(^{120}\)See Golden Jubilee 1869-1919 (Toronto & Winnipeg: T. Eaton, 1919) 276-82.

\(^{121}\)Manitoba Free Press, 1 May 1920.
most realistic form for the education of the present generation.”¹²² Since it had ignored its own history for a long time, the public needed to be reacquainted with the Company’s importance.

Educating the public was also the key reason behind the 1920s creation of store museums and art galleries. The HBC was not alone in this corporate drive to inform national history making. As social historian Michael Wallace writes, in the United States “increasingly in the 1920s, businessmen became involved in bringing history to the masses.” He argues that generating history was a method by which the ruling class defended its legacy and privileges against the “left” and immigrants.¹²³ According to the museum’s exhibition catalogue, for the HBC it was the “newcomers,” that is, the largely non-British immigrants of recent decades, that had to be informed of the founding institutions of Canada. Moreover, children needed to be indoctrinated while young—the Anniversary contests and talking children’s book also worked toward this goal. Additionally, the museum defined itself as a storehouse of memories for “old-timers,” and as fulfilling the ethnological purpose of preserving examples of “native handicraft” for the benefit of the First Nations.¹²⁴ The museum, and the other manifestations, were necessarily Company-prescribed histories—it has chosen what is to be saved, displayed, and glorified. For instance, HBC history purported that the Company had fostered the progressive growth of Canada through the charting and settling of the West. In fact, it is well documented that across Rupert’s Land in the nineteenth century the HBC had attempted to impede rather than promote settlement and civilization. The Company knew that agriculture and urbanization would annex the traditional fur territories, and hindered

¹²²Manitoba Free Press. 4 May 1920.
¹²³Michael Wallace, “Visiting the Past,” in Susan Porter Benson, et al (eds.), Presenting the Past (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1986) 142. Two famous examples noted by Wallace are Henry Ford’s Greenfield Village, an open-air museum in Dearborn, Michigan, and the reconstructed Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia, funded by John Rockefeller. Of the latter project, Kostof states that “a past social order was being brought back all at once, not, however, in its unadulterated real form, but in a carefully edited version which, like the corporate world familiar to its patron, would be planned, clearly organized, free of messy or unpleasant detail,” America By Design (NY & Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987) 249.
¹²⁴Catalogue of the historical exhibit, as quoted in Coutts & Pettipas 16.
pioneering at least until the post-Confederation Deed of Surrender left it with seven million acres of salable fertile real estate.

In a further example of misrepresentation, the history produced by the Company—particularly at the demonstrative point of meeting between fort and store—was marked by a fascination with the fur trade at a time when that division of the business was in continual disarray and financial troubles. The methods, trade goods, and people involved in the fur trade changed drastically beginning in the late nineteenth century, so that the history created by the Company was an archaic and romantic representation of experiences unknown and unknowable to urbanites. The fur trade was represented as a noble and adventurous avocation dominated by an HBC monopoly notable for its beneficial affect on the First Nations peoples, and on the settlement of Canada as a whole. As such, and in those newly urbanized locations, the fur trade no longer existed. That means that the fur trade was now fit to be erected into a set of romantic traditions and rituals to support Company claims to the contemporary commercial predominance of its department stores. In relation to the process of inventing traditions, Hobsbawm states that “objects or practices are liberated for full symbolic and ritual use when no longer fettered by practical use.”125 This stated, in the twentieth century fur trade, a place like Lower Fort Garry was more than anything an encumbrace to the Company—indeed, it was leased to a local club—but it proved an excellent location to enact ritualistic ceremonies celebrating the interactions and geography of Canadian history. In the modern department stores various representations of archaic fur trade forts were put to symbolic use. Much of the material culture of the fur trade achieved status as the sacred relics of the Western Canadian past when placed in the Company museums.

125Hobsbawm 4. Interestingly, some people in the Company, such as nostalgic fur trade officers or uninformed members of the Board, still believed the glorious old traditions had practical use for the running of the business in the 1910s and 1920s, Ray 171.
Why did the HBC experience this desire to initiate and doggedly pursue a symbolic architectural program that could be employed to educate and indoctrinate the public? The sustained economic boom from the 1890s-1913 had radically altered the Canadian environment, and the Company now found itself one among many competitors; the First World War served to exacerbate the HBC's problems. The portion of the Company's business situated in Canada had suffered greatly during and after the war: the sale of land had dwindled with the 1913 recession, and the wartime suspension of immigration. The fur trade was neglected by the Board, while competitive traders collected the peltry of the north, and American auction houses eclipsed the disrupted European fur markets. The department store field was still new to the HBC, and throughout this period there was continual disagreement among London, the Canadian Committee, and individual store managers about how the stores should operate. The department stores remained unprofitable, as they would from the 1910 inception of the Stores Division until the 1930s.\textsuperscript{126} At a most basic level, the stores would work as much-needed advertisements for the faltering Company: at one point Burbidge argues that the cost of the elaborate rejected design for Winnipeg could be written off under permanent advertising. Architectural drawings of the emporia received wide public exposure at Toronto's Canadian National Exhibition in at least 1913 and 1915.\textsuperscript{127} The stores therefore became icons to be used in newspaper advertisements and other promotional literature.

The First World War had been a crisis of capitalism which denoted a rupture within the historical relations of economy and geography.\textsuperscript{128} Industrial and Imperial nations of Europe, and their financial tentacles abroad, were sapped by the

\textsuperscript{126}Monod 176-82. See Ray, pp. 100-112, for the state of the fur trade.
\textsuperscript{127}Carr 18, 180 fn. 97. For Burbidge's argument HBCA A12/S543/2/f. 166, Burbidge to Ingrams, 6 May 1919.
\textsuperscript{128}Cf. Harvey, who suggests the nature of the capitalist economy is that it inevitably leads to periodic crises when it becomes impossible to comprehend organizations of space and time on a metaphorically shrinking globe. Constant reorganization of space (political boundaries, inner city relations, etc.) and time (length of workdays, rapidity of transit, etc.) results in continual rupture of present from past social relations, 30-31; 278-79.
intensive and prolonged conflict. To survive, the HBC (among other institutions) had to radically rearrange its organization to meet drastic changes in its markets; at the same time maintaining a continuous image of financial stability. The focus on developing its retail business was new after 1910, and during the war the Company experimented with being an international shipping agent. Because they were so different from the Company's traditional enterprise, in which it had been the dominant force, and actually threatened the very existence of the fur trade, these projects had to be exhibited as natural progressions emerging from that activity. Harvey provides an excellent framework for this period of Canadian and Company history when he writes that “the ideological labour of inventing traditions became of great significance... when transformations in spatial and temporal practices implied a loss of identity with place and repeated radical breaks with any sense of historical continuity.”129 With the reorganization it faced, and in the context of a world war that seriously disrupted and weakened European Imperial powers, the centralized control, Imperial wealth, and British stability evoked by the stolid, standardized, tripartite design of the stores were values with which the HBC wished to associate.

Despite a short boom following Armistice, the demobilized Canadian economy soon faltered. Wartime inflation, coupled with the massive growth of unemployment fueled by ranks of returning soldiers resulted in severe economic problems. Disgruntlement with this postwar recession eventually lead to working class revolts across Canada in the summer of 1919, often over the issues of wages and working conditions. The most inflammatory riot was the Winnipeg General Strike which essentially pitched the employers, their middle class supporters, and ultimately the law, against the strikers and social reformers--it resulted in thirty casualties including one death. In terrifying nighttime raids, the strike leaders were arrested in their homes, in order to be held without bail and tried for sedition. Although only the workers at the HBC's Winnipeg candy factory responded to the general strike

129Ibid. 272.
appeal, this postwar period of upheaval, marked by rifts in Company management and social unrest in Western Canada, caused grave concern in administrative circles. Fear and antagonism on the urban streets would be a concern for any merchant or institution interested in promoting relaxed, positive attitudes conducive to consumption and/or orderly behaviour.\textsuperscript{130}

Conversely, the HBC would benefit from a widespread sense of content and equality, especially if it could be seen as the stable, time-honoured institution that fostered that public good. Therefore, it was at a critical point in both business and politics that the Company chose to commemorate its powerful past by staging a magnificent anniversary only eleven months after the violence of the General Strike. The 250th Anniversary must be understood in the context of the general political uncertainty of the postwar period, and the commemorative events viewed against this backdrop of labour unrest. Coincidentally, the Winnipeg fur trade pageant of 1920 was held right after May Day, the international, unofficial workers' holiday, when the local union supporters had gathered near the Forks, and held a parade of their own. The main “float” in the workers parade was in eerie contrast to the colourful costumes of the whooping canoe paddlers that would be viewed by the public two days later: it was an empty, disheveled bed, with a banner which described the police actions of the previous year, “They Came Like Thieves in the Night.”\textsuperscript{131} The manifestations produced by the HBC in 1920 and after attempted to distract public attention from socio-political problems such as these, and focus it on mass entertainment and mass consumption. The more people feel comfortable and entertained promenading the streets of downtown, the more potential customers for the store.

\textsuperscript{130}It should be noted that since the 1950s relaxed attitudes conducive to consumption have been ensured through the use of environmental controls on indoor, privately owned “streets” known as shopping malls. For the strike, see Brown, et al., 417-19. Some of the results of HBC candy factory workers’ participation in the Winnipeg General Strike are mentioned in HBCA A12/D47/1/f. 40, Wholesale Annual Report, 1919. Anti-union sentiment of HBC management is discussed above, fn. 61.

\textsuperscript{131}\textit{Winnipeg Tribune}, 1 May 1920; \textit{Western Labour News}, 7 May 1920.
In a very similar vein, Harvey shows how spectacles and spectacular architecture were used to create “community” in the “urban redevelopment” schemes pursued after the widespread urban uprisings of the 1960s. In his example, an initial grand event becomes “the lead item in drawing larger and larger crowds to the downtown area on a regular basis, to see all manner of staged spectacles. It was a short step from that to an institutionalized commercialization of a more or less permanent spectacle.” Essentially, the objective of a department store is to become a permanent attraction for the public, through the promotion of itself and its core urban area. Through intense advertisement, and a habit of providing free public transportation by hiring the entire electric street railway system, the Company drew crowds of spectators and consumers to its vicinity. A palatial store with beautiful façade, elegant fixtures, and high class customer services, was also an anchor for other merchants and institutions, particularly in the developing cities of Western Canada. In Calgary, for instance, the new store drew the major banks, and competing merchants into its fold. In Vancouver, the presence of the HBC store and the Hotel Vancouver lead to the development of Granville Street as a borough of theaters and retailers like Birks Jewellers, all of which erected elaborately ornamented buildings, thus creating an area of “permanent spectacle.” Whenever it could, the HBC cheerfully assumed this important, central role in urban society, justifying that position by citing its own cultural significance as the originating merchant and settler of the West.

Various institutions and businesses continually compete to become the greatest attraction in the manifold urban areas, and this competition, of course, had always been an important force behind the development of the HBC’s architectural and representational program of the 1910s and 1920s. The Company intended its “sense of tradition” and its history as a cultural authority to distinguish it from other merchants and firms. At one point, in his argument for the rejected, 132Harvey 88-98.
ornamental Winnipeg design, Burbidge states that the main decorative features would be from Company history, so there would be no danger of competing stores copying the HBC's particular pattern. Following the example set by the major building program of the Company, the later Edmonton store of 1939 embodies the competitive strategies used by the HBC, when it is compared to the Eaton's store constructed in the same city the previous year. Almost identical in breadth and height, and sharing a remarkably similar organization of their modernist façades, the stores are graphically differentiated by the historical panels on the HBC version. The use of its own history sets the HBC apart from competitors in the way that, as Hobsbawm states, "invented traditions reintroduced... status into a world of contract, superior and inferior into a world of legal equals." As with the patriotic pomp of, for instance, the British royalty, the Company desired the loyalty of the public.

For more than two centuries, the HBC had found loyal staff to solitarily man its remote outposts, and it had tried to ensure itself loyal customers through gift-giving and credit relationships. However, its twentieth century operations were now on an entirely new scale. The grand emporiums served many times more customers than the northern posts, and by 1923 department store personnel outnumbered fur trade staff eight to one. The Company's historical manifestations were certainly directed toward its employees, to give them a sense of participating in a great enterprise. Employee spaces included in the new stores, such as rest rooms and cafeterias, and store-sponsored extramural events, were attempts at --as Innis has

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133 HBCA A12/S543/2/ff. 166, Burbidge to Ingrams, 6 May 1919.
134 Hobsbawm 10. Further interesting research could be pursued in relation to the department store buildings of the HBC's competitors, such as the Eaton's in Winnipeg (1905), or Woodward's Vancouver store (1908ff.), unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis. Notably, the depression of the 1930s intensified the need for image-building, as each merchant competed tooth and nail for the few financially solvent consumers around, see Monod 187ff. He notes that during the depression, anti-department store sentiment grew because many consumers became reliant on small, local shopkeepers' credit; HBC store managers were directed by the Canadian Committee to participate in local voluntary associations, and to be less predatory. In addition, the "long British connection was downplayed and the company's extensive history of Canadian service was emphasized," 190-91. As I have argued, this last thematic shift had been developing since the late 1910s.
135 The Editor, "To the Fur Trade Staff," The Beaver, January 1923: 158.
described the purpose of *The Beaver*—creating a new *esprit de corps*. The monumental buildings could instill the staff with awe at the importance of the institution to which they belonged. The Company's historicizing within the stores would remind the clerks and managers that they were the inheritors of long-standing traditions of obedience and devotion to duty, as they associated themselves with the rugged inhabitants of the venerable fur trade forts.

The Anniversary revealed that the HBC possessed two and a half centuries of business knowledge which it could share with the public. Ultimately, the pomp and ceremony attempted to indicate that the professed retailing wisdom emerged from the HBC's privileged origin in what it saw as the cultural centre of the Empire. For the benefit of the consumer, this know-how was drawn from the Company's experience in the fashionable European markets, and in the trade of pragmatic commodities that had been used to civilize and settle much of Canada. The Company would merely act as a knowledgeable purchasing agent for the consumer. The beautiful buildings of the downtown core were the physical evidence of this connection to the cultural centre, and of the availability of the luxury commodities distributed from within. The stores drew patrons inside by lavish fixtures, and by accommodating interior spectacles such as sales, product demonstrations, visiting celebrities, and many other public relations gambits. Architectural historian Angela Carr notes that the HBC Vancouver store, by offering space for public groups such as choirs and amateur theatres, became a “cultural centre for the community, its events designed to attract customers and inspire the loyalty of a new generation.” By these methods, the Company could represent its beneficence to all aspects of society, while allowing its employees and potential consumers to share in its glorious history through the free, public events, and through the architectural experience of working and shopping in the emporia.

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136 Innis 358. Benson notes that many department stores published in-house newsletters to promote a family atmosphere, 139.
137 Carr 145.
After regarding the great pains to which the HBC went to properly represent itself, the question of its success must arise: how were its efforts received by the target public? This is a very difficult question to answer since most Company material was carefully prescribed, and the relatively ingenuous press of the 1910s-1920s was predominantly uncritical and boosterist—particularly considering department stores which financially supported the newspapers through daily full-page advertisements. Perhaps more views of the general public could be extracted from a widespread search of Western Canadian literature and archived personal papers from the period. For the purposes of this thesis, I have only been able to reconstruct intentionality, and must speculate regarding the reception of the Company's representations. The HBC at least seems to have transmitted its basic message. From my readings in newspapers, to scholarly treatises like Innis' *The Fur Trade in Canada* of 1930, I can argue it soon became hackneyed to state—as *The Beaver* once did— that “the history of Canada and the history of the HBC are inextricably intertwined.”

But real success would occur if the knowledge of this statement resonates in the actions of the public.

The fact that the Stores Division lost money every year until 1933 may suggest that the HBC was unsuccessful, though this could be also attributed to poor management, an unpredictable Western Canadian economy primarily based on the quality of the wheat harvest, and the overextension of capital in the architectural projects. A potentially more telling critique comes from James Bryant, who as a young man worked in the new Winnipeg store during the depression 1930s. He claims in that era Winnipegers preferred the “comfortable, lived-in atmosphere” of Eaton's, and especially its bargain basement, to the “Bay's spanking new fixtures, marble floors, and somewhat forbidding orderliness.” He goes on to say that the HBC also had difficulty keeping trainees because of its privileging

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139 Monod 192, and *passim*. 
of personnel policies over actual personnel.\textsuperscript{140} Of course, Bryant was one of those trainees who left the Company, but it is an interesting paradox that he suggests the aged HBC seemed too new! Regardless, from the bottom line it would appear that the Company's transition from traditional trade to modern retailing was not nearly so smooth as it professed in its progressive histories.

However, the HBC was not producing its architecture or its promotions within a vacuum. Right from the initial cubic yard excavated—and, indeed, long before that considering site purchases and legal processes—the monumental additions to the young cities were under public and political scrutiny. The amount of journalistic material presented in this thesis attests to this scrutiny. For example, in reaction to the press release on the impending construction of the Calgary store, a newspaper editorial stated outright that it "transcends in importance an ordinary business announcement."\textsuperscript{141} Another interesting statement appeared in the press reports of the Victoria store opening, which suggests a certain amount of success in the Company's incessant historicizing. The HBC store in Victoria was not the expansion of a previous retail outlet as had happened in the other three cities—it only had wholesale and prospector supply (during the nineteenth century gold rushes) in the city before. But observing the operations on opening day, the reporter somehow came to the revelation that "in a very brief space of time business was being carried on as though the store had been in existence in the city for years."\textsuperscript{142} Perhaps this perception was effected by the store's historicist cladding and interior spaces, the HBC's public indoctrination, and the gala Anniversary events conducted the previous year.

Working and shopping in the HBC department stores, people could associate themselves with powerful histories of colonialism and frontierism evoked by the style, sites, interior arrangements, and events staged in the buildings. On top of

\textsuperscript{140}James Bryant, \textit{Department Store Disease} (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1977) 107-10.
\textsuperscript{141}Calgary Herald, 14 March 1911.
\textsuperscript{142}Victoria Daily Times, 19 Sept. 1921.
that, the organization of the store served to represent how the modern consumer would be served fairly, and be supplied with quality goods from all over the industrial world, much as the consumers and barterers of past years had been treated by the honourable Company. As highly visible intrusions into the cityscape, and as formidable institutions in the formation of city culture in Western Canada, the HBC department stores served to represent the Company as a central force in the history of Canada. It is a tribute to the strategic success of the building program that the image of the HBC store --as it still is in the present day-- came to be recognized as the icon of the Company in its promotional activities. Thus, the HBC's architectural program of 1912-26 entailed the construction of both buildings and histories, as the representational strategies of the Company were played out in the forms and interior formations of its department stores.
The above was the response of our present-day chronicler of the adventurous exploits of the HBC, on the occasion of the Company’s 325th Anniversary celebrations. Newman’s basis for this complaint is that in the 1980s, as the informative back cover of the Company’s Anniversary pamphlet reports, the HBC “disposed of a number of ‘non-strategic’ assets including its Northern Stores, Wholesale and Fur divisions.” The front cover of the pamphlet reproduces the Charter of 1670, and it folds open once to reveal a two-page colour photograph of a massive, glitzy perfumery: the ground floor anchor department of all the modern outlets of “the Bay” and most other department stores of today. A second fold literally reveals what is behind the modern store, by presenting easily-digested, graphic tidbits of history: forts, stores and famous servants of the Company. This pamphlet was distributed to shoppers at all stores during the spring of 1995.

Accompanying the 325th Anniversary, of course, were major sales advertised by glossy newspaper inserts that juxtaposed modern commodities with historic infringements. What is one to make of a page of women’s t-shirts and lingerie surmounted by an image of the “Nonsuch,” captioned “Ships Ahoy!” and explaining how “the Adventure began!”? Or again, the advertisement that presents 26” stereo televisions, screens filled with black and white images from the HBC Archives? Perhaps it can be concluded that the Company’s traditions of fur trade and exploration are in 1995 thoroughly unfettered by practical use, and are therefore available for a symbolic, postmodern pastiche of unconnected and selective historical quotation. Peter Newman, then, can rest assured that the HBC has not completely abandoned its past. So long as wooden crates, packed with straw and
stamped with the coat of arms, are used to sell fashionable ceramic ware in displays such as those arranged along the line of "heritage" shopfronts from non-specific periods on the mall level of the downtown Vancouver store, the Company will always work to maintain its rustic charm.

In even more specific ways, the HBC today follows the precedents of its glorious past, particularly those of its 250th Anniversary events. As in the celebrations of 1920, in May 1995 the HBC developed historical store window displays, decorated the interiors with historical representations, and sold historical commodities in special heritage kiosks. The window displays were arranged according to contemporary museum practice, and incorporated holograms to show the advances in technology with which the Company has kept pace. Although today the point blankets remain a popular item with customers, the heritage kiosks tend to sell historically irrelevant articles such as smoked salmon, coffee cups and playing cards emblazoned with a voyageur scene, or the "325" logo. On May 2, 1995, 325 years to the day after the Charter was signed by King Charles II, store personnel were attired in "historical" costumes from an era which fell sometime between Halloween and the Calgary Stampede (that is, they were cheap, rental costumes evoking a generalized "western" theme). Overall, compared to the celebrations of seventy-five years ago, the 325th Anniversary seemed rather tawdry; the latter is that much further removed from the historical origins of the Company. It is doubly removed considering that the 1920 Anniversary itself was an exercise in staged history.
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