PRESERVING THE "GLORY OF THE PAST:"
THE NATIVE DAUGHTERS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA AND THE
CONSTRUCTION OF PIONEER HISTORY IN THE HASTINGS MILL MUSEUM

by

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ABSTRACT

Preserving the "Glory of the Past:"
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Pioneer History in the Hastings Mill Museum

In 1929 the old Hastings Mill Store building was towed by scow from Vancouver's inner harbour to its present location near Spanish Banks in Point Grey. In the following two years, the Native Daughters of British Columbia transformed the old building into a museum to preserve historical relics of the early days of Vancouver. Their museum recounted pioneer histories of journey to, and settlement in, British Columbia in order to celebrate European development of the region, promote Vancouver's connection with the British Empire, and encourage future economic growth in the city.

Today, the Native Daughters continue to operate this quirky and curious museum. Their exclusive tale of European pioneer history has been preserved in its original form, untouched by decades of museological change and post-colonial critique of cultural representation. The thesis uses the Hastings Mill Museum as a case study in heritage preservation in British Columbia. It claims that the museum itself is an artifact. It is a material remnant of an important movement in local history when such groups as the Native Daughters used the preservation of the past to address contemporary political and social concerns.

Representing an idealized pioneer past provided an important source of political and social power for the Native Daughters. Through the Hastings Mill Museum, the Native Daughters helped its members – and the province's community of native-born,
Anglo-European – affirm their status as a genealogical and historical elite. The Native Daughters used a variant of the North American “pioneer myth,” a nostalgic interpretation of local history that distilled the city’s history into a simple narrative of anglo-European settlement, sacrifice and development, to document their claim to the region’s political, institutional, and economic power. Their use of heritage preservation as a source of power was shaped by gender. The Daughters used their position as “guardians” and “nurturers” of the region’s heritage in order to promote and strengthen the position of their community of white, native-born British Columbians.
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<td>Photograph of members of the Native Daughters and Sons from various Posts in the province at a Grand Post reunion (a weekend of meetings and social engagements with all British Columbia Posts). April, 1930. Photo courtesy of City of Vancouver Archives (CVA 617, Add. Mss. 334, Vol. 26, File 10).</td>
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Preserving the “Glory of the Past:”
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A fraying, discoloured label taped to the tabletop of an antique sewing machine on display in the Hastings Mill Museum, a private local history museum in the affluent residential neighbourhood of Point Grey in Vancouver, British Columbia, provides a curious account of the old machine’s journey to, and settlement in, British Columbia. “[T]his old sewing machine,” the label asserts,

traveled far and at last reached the beautiful shores of the Pacific Ocean. It was one of the very first Raymond Machines put on the market and was bought by my mother, Mrs. Donald Matheson 85 years ago (1868) in Milverton, Ontario. It was shipped to Selkirk, Manitoba. From there by boat to Fisher Bay on Lake Winnipeg, then back to Selkirk in 1888. After a number of years in Saskatchewan it was sent back to Vancouver in 1949. Now in the old Hastings Mill store building, which stands as a monument of the past, it at last comes to rest, its work well done.

Related by Mrs. M. Rowland
15 June 1953

The label’s detailed narrative of the old sewing machine’s travels is one strand in an intriguing celebratory tale of local pioneer history that the Native Daughters of British Columbia (NDBC), the museum’s founders and owners, use to animate their display of historic artifacts. Such detailed labels give life to remnants of nineteenth and early-twentieth century material history – silver tea sets, crazy quilts, period costumes, Hudson’s Bay Company paraphernalia, archeological materials, Salish baskets – transforming them into travelers, settlers, hard workers, and pioneer survivors. The objects tell the story of the
region in this display; they recount the challenges and successes of settling and developing the province with detailed descriptions of their use and ownership in pioneer homes and institutions. The stories attached to these objects provide the basis for a highly personalized, sympathetic, and experiential account of the history of daily life in the nineteenth and early twentieth-century city.

In the Hastings Mill Museum, the Native Daughters commemorate the history of settlement in BC through the display of two major collections of objects: domestic and civic. The museum’s collection of domestic artifacts is the most extensive, including a set of dishes brought to BC by the first European bride, an evening coat belonging to the first female UBC graduate, as well as more typical household goods such as sewing notions, hair pins, and children’s dresses. The collection stands in stark contrast to the museum’s other assets: artifacts from the city’s institutional history such as a table and chairs used in the first city hall and the first mayor’s robes. Interestingly, all domestic and civic artifacts are displayed together, randomly it seems, throughout the museum regardless of the typological, thematic, or temporal differences between them. The museum’s focus can be confusing as a result. The lack of these familiar categories and modes of organization challenge the visitor’s expectations of museum display, making it difficult to glean objective information about the artifacts or the context in which they were produced.¹

¹ Chris Healy provides one of the few scholarly analyses of antiquated local history museums such as the Hastings Mill Museum in “Histories and Collecting: Museums, Objects, and Memories,” in Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton, eds., Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994). He claims that the Silverton Museum in New South Wales, Australia, stands out among other local history museums because it lacks the “characteristic means by which visitors have been trained to understand and interpret objects on display: the devices of category, of narrative sequence, of juxtaposing the typical and the singular, or of generating an aura of aesthetic wonder.” As a result, the Museum affects visitors on a visceral level; the displays are “meant to invoke sensations, to trigger memories, to generate questions, confusion or fragmentary recognition,” 34.
Figure 1. Antique sewing machine on display next to collection of Salish Baskets at the Hastings Mill Museum. July 2002.

Figure 2. Display of various domestic objects in the Museum, including a “Women’s Pioneer Quilt,” sleep wear, and a pair of children’s shoes. July 2002.
However, it is this lack of an easily identifiable organizational scheme that makes the Hastings Mill Museum intriguing. The exhibits cannot be “read” or interpreted in the same way as those in other history museums. The displays do not highlight the particular unique qualities of individual objects. Nor do they encourage the viewer to understand the complex cultural or historical context in which they were created. The objects on display in the museum are stripped of the basic contextual information, commonly provided in larger institutional history museums, that explains their significance, place and reason for production, function, or cultural impact. In the Hastings Mill Museum, objects acquire significance through the personal stories of the history of settlement and pioneering that the Native Daughters attach to them. For example, a seemingly unremarkable women’s hat box is given historical significance in the context of travel and settlement in the province, its label reading: “[I]n 1924, this ladies hat box traveled by ship with its owner from Buenos Aires, Argentina to England. From England, it traveled by ship through the Panama Canal to Vancouver.” This hatbox, like the Raymond sewing machine, becomes meaningful only in the ways it parallels important pioneer historical themes in British Columbia.

The Hastings Mill Museum is best described as a museum of stories, both public and private. The Native Daughters use their collection of antique relics as material for a literary rather than strictly factual or contextual account of BC history. They draw together their rich

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2 Stephen Greenblatt claims that, throughout the history of the modern museum in the West, most displays have been organized in order to create one of two distinct sensations: either “resonance” or “wonder.” Encouraging “resonant” viewing involves highlighting the object’s power to “reach out beyond its formal boundaries to a larger world, to evoke in the viewer the complex, dynamic cultural forces from which it has emerged and for which it may be taken by a viewer to stand.” Invoking a sense of “wonder” involves isolating the object and highlighting its power in order to “stop the viewer in his or her tracks, to convey an arresting sense of uniqueness, to evoke exalted attention,” 42. See “Resonance and Wonder,” in Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, eds., Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display (Washington: Smithsonian Institute, 1991), 42.
and diverse collection of domestic and civic artifacts into a narrative account of the establishment and growth of the modern city. In most cases, they do this by identifying the position of objects within a chronological timeline of urban development in the region. For example, the label for a bank book reads, "[O]ne of the first bank books from the Bank of British Columbia, Victoria, opened April 5, 1886. Saved from fire by sheer luck and later returned to owner G.R. Gordon. Donated by G.R. Gordon." Other labels throughout the museum similarly mark pioneer progress in the region by representing such important "firsts" as clearing the land for early European settlement, erecting the first colonial institutions, building new homes, or completing education in new institutions. In this display, pioneer history consists of a series of "first" European successes in the struggle to settle a wayward and wild imperial outpost.

Interestingly, this mode of display provides an unconventional view of women's history in the province. The general focus on "first" developments in the region erases differences between the public and private sphere, as it subsumes domestic and bureaucratic history into one narrative about civic progress. Hence, civic and domestic history become interdependent and men and women equal partners in the history of the region.

The museum's collection of Aboriginal artifacts is placed outside of the Native Daughters' story about the development of the region. The diverse collection of local Aboriginal artifacts - Salish baskets, archeological material, and various materials produced for the early twentieth-century curious trade -- are grouped together generally with no distinction made between type, origin, or function. Interestingly, while domestic and civic
artifacts are labeled with details about their history, former owners, or quality, these objects are displayed as homogenous, described generally as "Indian."

Figure 3. Mixed display of Aboriginal artifacts and archeological materials in the Museum. July 2002.

Figure 4. Display of Aboriginal history including such diverse objects as moccasins, a "Cree bible," and a Golden Jubilee commemorative plaque. July 2002.
In “The Home of Indian Culture and Other Stories in the Museum,” Deborah Doxtator points out that the general and generic labeling of aboriginal material culture as “Indian” was a common feature of display in anthropology and history museums in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. “Indianness” was relegated to the past in such museums, represented as “all those traditions and technologies that anthropologists deemed to be extant before the coming of the European.” In the Hastings Mill Museum, the displays construct the same sense of timelessness, as the brief labeling ignores evidence of social change, acculturation, or assimilation in Aboriginal societies the two centuries in which the artifacts were produced. Unlike European tea sets and sewing machines, Native artifacts are presented as ahistorical; they are static objects sitting outside of the flow of historical development and modernization in the province.

Not only is the museum crowded with familiar and bizarre artifacts, it is itself an artifact. The general lack of focused lighting, the absence of social or cultural contextualization, the crammed placement of objects in antique wood and glass display cases, the absence of professional curatorial intention, the exclusiveness of the narrative of pioneer history, and the alienation of Aboriginal history make it seem more like a Victorian curiosity cabinet than a contemporary museum. Regardless, the Native Daughters refuse to alter their exhibit. In the spirit of pioneer remembrance, the contemporary generation of Daughters loyally preserve the displays as they were designed when the museum opened in 1931.

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4 Personal interview with Terry Davies, Chief Factor, Native Daughters of British Columbia, Post 1. Vancouver, BC (January 2001). Davies claims that the only changes that have been made are: additions to the acquisitions in the 1950s and 1960s, retyped labels, and cosmetic changes.
old building, which now shares its spectacular ocean view with the residents of multi-million dollar waterfront homes, the Royal Vancouver Yacht Club, and the thousands of Vancouverites who flock to the nearby parks and beaches, remains as its founders intended, "a little shrine of old memories, removed and inviolate from the press of newer things."

Figure 5. The Hastings Mill Museum. July 2002.

5 Untitled article in NDBC, Hastings Mill Store Campaign (July 24-31, 1939), [scrapbook] City of Vancouver Archives (henceforth CVA), ADD MSS 467, 564-D-3, file 1.
Museum scholars aptly describe public history sites such as the Hastings Mill Museum as "memory palaces" or "cultural storehouses," protected enclaves of historic values, associations, and perceptions. While they provide a compelling display of local history, they also preserve and maintain a community's distinct historical imagination and way of viewing the world. As Chris Healey argues, their modes of display and organizing narratives are articulations of a particular historical epistemology. They recount the past, and by extension the present, in a complex and meaningful way that evokes sensations, triggers memories, and categorizes experiences for a particular audience. Hence, though they provide only selective and oftentimes exclusive representations of history, they express important truths about the way their founders saw the world.

This study responds to such methodological insights in the field of public history and memory with an historical analysis of the construction of pioneer history in the Hastings Mill Museum.

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7 Healy, 34. Several other scholars in the field of museum studies have provided interesting studies revealing the multiple ways museum modes of display reflect culturally-determined ways of understanding the world. See Chris Miller-Marti, "Local History Museums and the Creation of 'The Past,'" Muse 5, 2 (Summer 1987); Svetlana Alpers, "The Museum as a Way of Seeing," in Karp and Lavine, Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display; Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Destination Culture:Tourism, Museums, and Heritage (Berkley: University of California Press, 1998); and Tony Bennett, The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics (London: Routledge, 1995).

8 Canadian historians also contribute to similar methodological discussions about the value of studying historical myths in the museum specifically and popular culture generally. Daniel Francis, for example, argues that historical myths about such familiar historical institutions in Canada as the RCMP and the CPR and such themes as wildness and wilderness adventuring embody important cultural truths about the country. He argues that to dismiss the myths attached to these common themes as espousing a false consciousness would be misleading, as they provide a key to understanding the way the nation wants to see itself, its identity and its history. See Daniel Francis, National Dreams: Myth, Memory and Canadians History (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1997), 11. Elizabeth Furniss provides a compelling methodological study of how to use historical myths for historical and anthropological research in The Burden of History: Colonialism and the Frontier Myth in a Rural Canadian Community (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999), 17.
Museum when it opened in the 1930s. It examines the museum founders', the Vancouver branch of the Native Daughters, historical consciousness, public heritage preservation activities, and representation of local history in the Museum in cultural and political context. It isolates the "myth of the pioneer," or the "frontier myth," as one of the most salient historical ideals organizing their distinct interpretation and representation of local history. The "frontier myth," as Elizabeth Furniss defines it, is an historical interpretation of the past that begins with settlers' journey to, and settlement in, the province, documents their challenge of civilizing the environment and its inhabitants, and concludes with praise for the individuals who established modern amenities and institutions. Renditions of this eurocentric ideal have seeped into common parlance across North America, providing a mythology that has helped individual social groups understand their political and cultural position in their communities. It fulfills this role by reducing history to a series of dramatic "epitomizing events" which mark the successes of colonialism and the growth of European culture and institutions and render invisible the complexity of cultural and historical interaction in developing societies in North America. This simplified historical account of the local past severs all ties between Native and non-Native communities, depicting non-Native settlements as isolated culturally-homogenous enclaves surrounded by rich natural resources that are un-owned and 'free' for the taking. In doing so, this ideal constructs "Euro-Canadian cultural superiority, material privileges, and political authority" as unquestionable truths.9


10 Ibid., 17-18.
This study examines the Native Daughters’ use of pioneer mythology in the museum in historical context, seeking to understand the conditions that caused it to emerge in the early-twentieth century. It argues that representations of an idealized pioneer past provided an important source of political and social power for native-born British Columbians in Vancouver the late 1920s and early 1930s. Public history projects that distilled the city’s history into a simple narrative of pioneer settlement and development helped members of the Native Sons and Daughters – and the native-born, Anglo-European British Columbians for whom they provided services – affirm a privileged relationship with the province, nation, and British Empire. The Native Daughters fulfilled this goal in the Hastings Mill Museum by using the jumbled collection of material objects that they inherited from the city’s early settlers to narrate a local origin story that linked the province’s pioneer past to their own era. “Storying” the geography of British Columbia in this way oriented their community in time and space, highlighting their genealogical connection with the city’s institutional power. In so doing, this exclusive tale of local history legitimated the white, middle-class, native-born resident’s newly-claimed status as the city’s “historical aristocracy.”

11 Glassberg, Sense of History, 18, 19, 7. Also see Archibald, A Place to Remember, for a discussion of the construction and articulation of historical narratives.

12 It is difficult to confirm the Daughters’ position within the hierarchy of socio-economic classes without detailed demographic information on the entire membership of the Daughters and Sons. A select study of the living standards and employment status of those Native Daughters who were involved in the Hastings Mill preservation project, however, reveals that members occupied an economically privileged social status in the city. By checking employment information in the 1929 Vancouver City Directory (the year the project to preserve the Hastings Mill Store and build a museum began) I found that the 24 of 32 members for whom information is available would likely have occupied the city’s middle class. The 7 single employed women in this group occupied positions that would have required some training and that offered fairly good pay (2 worked as stenographers, 2 school teachers, 1 a nurse, 1 an accountant, and 1 a masseuse at the General Hospital). The significantly larger group of married women (15) did not work (except for two who are listed as a stenographer and a store clerk). The social status of these women is revealed by their husband’s occupation. These 15 women were married to men who would have occupied the professional middle-class, as they worked as doctors, dentists, and lawyers, a salesmen, an engineer, a secretary, and a school principal. In general, most of the
An analysis of the Native Daughters’ Hastings Mill preservation project reveals that representations of the past are deeply embedded in contemporary political and social ideals. The Daughters’ attempts to preserve the “Golden Age” of BC’s early Western European settlers were part of a larger political movement to redirect the process of modernization in the province and preserve a place for select ideas, values and systems of power typical of the colonial era. Post 1’s representation of BC’s pioneer past in the Hastings Mill Museum, and its linear, progress-oriented historical narrative, was born out of the Native Daughters’ fear that rapid industrial growth and technological change would proceed without respect for the morals, aesthetics, and work ethic that BC pioneers had bequeathed. This group used the museum as a site to “exemplify the glory of the past” in order to cultivate public appreciation of their ethnic community, affirm Vancouver’s connection to the Empire, and promote Vancouver’s position in the development and modernization of BC and Canada.

Daughters lived on the west side of Vancouver (especially those who were married), usually in the centre of the city along the Broadway corridor (addresses along west tenth to fourteenth are common) and in Point Grey rather than the comparatively more wealthy Shaughnessy or Kerrisdale neighbourhoods. Given this information, it is likely that members of the organization occupied the city’s middling strata rather than the lower working class or the upper class. For a discussion of the markers signifying the differences between these two status groups in Vancouver, see Robert A.J. McDonald, Making Vancouver: Class Status, and Social Boundaries, 1863-1913, reprint (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000), chapters 6 and 7. Unfortunately, it is difficult to determine whether the Native Daughters’ heritage preservation activities were motivated by their class interests. Without a detailed study of the changing social position of the middle class in this period it is impossible to determine whether the Daughters saw their “native” status in the province as offering them more social and political power than their economic, family, or employment status would.

13 Chad Reimer uses this term in his study of historical societies in BC. He argues that pioneer history organizations such as the Native Sons and Daughters attempted to bolster their political position and claim ownership of the province in early twentieth-century BC by highlighting their direct, uninterrupted genealogical connection to the region’s early pioneers. See “Organizing the Past: Historical Institutions and Organizations,” in “The Making of British Columbia History: Historical Writing and Institutions, 1784-1958” (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, York University, 1995), 194.

14 Lieutenant-Governor R. Bruce encapsulated the Daughters’ project as such at the museum’s opening ceremony. He claimed that he was certain the museum would “prove an inspiration for the present and future generations. It exemplified the glory of the past.” “Pioneer store is dedicated” (January 17, 1931), The Sunday Province, in NDBC, Historian’s Book (1930-1933), VCA, AD MSS 467, 564-D-4, file 1.
For the Native Daughters, the power of pioneer heritage preservation was nuanced by gender. The group's attempts to mobilize interest in their preservation project (and inspire public appreciation of civic history) hinged upon the dramatic tension that the Daughters, and the press, made between guardianship and loss of tradition. Newspaper reports of the Native Daughters' museum project often present their contribution to history preservation as a dutiful obligation, lovingly fulfilled. The idea of the past itself was gendered rhetorically in this discourse. The Daughters were constructed as caregivers dutifully nursing their ethnic community's fragile and needy heritage: BC's pioneer past. In many cases, this history was given the attributes of a venerable old man. An analysis of this discourse, and the relationships underpinning it, provides a compelling opportunity to consider how gender ideology inflected such important projects as public history activism and nativism in early-twentieth century BC.

Post 1 of the Native Daughters is a discrete branch of the larger, province-wide organization. However, unlike their affiliates in other areas of the province or their fraternal counterparts, the Native Sons of British Columbia (NSBC), the Vancouver Daughters restricts access to most of its records. Obviously, this poses a major problem for researchers interested in the group's history and current activities. This problem is compounded by the
fact that the group continues to operate under its original constitution, which, like that of
many other lodges and private clubs, insists that information about organizational rituals,
mandates, and activities be restricted to active members.

Without access to records produced by the Vancouver Post of the Native Daughters, I
have had to inquire rather widely and seek to understand its activities and organizational
culture by examining a variety of other sources. I have relied largely on the organizational
records of other NDBC posts, namely Victoria and Nanaimo, and the Vancouver Post of the
Native Sons. By examining minutes from meetings, private correspondence, and
biographical information contained in these records the larger organizations’ shared goals
and preoccupations in the 1920s and 1930s emerge in profile.

During this period, the various branches of the Native Sons and Daughters were
closely affiliated. The local male and female posts kept in close contact through shared
heritage and political projects and frequent social engagements. The regional posts of the
Native Daughters also kept in close contact with their “sister” posts throughout BC through
annual visits by the provincial Grand Factors, frequent visits from regional Chief Factors,
and inter-post meetings and social events. All posts shared the same mandate, concerns, and,
in some cases, political and history-preservation projects. The only surviving textual records
that represent this inter-post contact and ideological affiliation (and the only source the
Vancouver Post makes publicly available) are Historians’ Scrapbooks created by the
Vancouver and Nanaimo branches.\textsuperscript{15} These collections consist of newspaper clippings about

\textsuperscript{15}The Victoria post confirmed the importance of inter-post contact and communication by proposing in 1924
that the posts use these scrapbooks to pass information about group activities and interests on to other posts. See
NDBC, \textit{Minute Books, 1921-1926} (February, 13 1924), British Columbia Archives and Record Services (BCARS), ADD MSS 2497, file 1. While these sources provide a rich collection of documents, they have some
social activities, local historical events, political issues of interest to members, Grand Post meetings and banquets, and heritage preservation projects; marriage and obituary notices for important members of the organization; and mementos from NDBC and NSBC (Native Sons of British Columbia) group functions. These collections provide an index of the organizations and their activities. Here, I have used them to document the Vancouver Post's activities, understand its social and organizational relationships to other NDBC and NSBC Posts, and consider how its most prominent heritage preservation project, the preservation of the Hastings Mill store, fulfilled the organization's provincial goals.

The Vancouver Post of the NDBC officially entered the history preservation community with the help of its brother organization, the Native Sons of British Columbia, in 1919. After two years, the Vancouver Post helped establish new NDBC Posts in Victoria in 1921 and Nanaimo in 1925.\textsuperscript{16} In the next decade, these three larger posts helped found satellite posts in smaller, well-established historic communities on the mainland and weaknesses that should be mentioned. First, though the historians responsible for maintaining them were very thorough and sought to document all issues relevant to the organization, it is possible they omitted important information that did not represent them in a positive light. I reviewed BC newspapers from the 1920s and 1930s in search of articles that might not have made it into the historians' books in order to compensate for this. However, I did not find any articles that were not already included in one of the three posts' historians' books. Secondly, the historians did not always provide citation information for the articles they pasted in the historians' books. Hence, it is often difficult to determine the exact date of publication or the name of the newspapers that articles were published in.

Vancouver Island, among them New Westminster, Langley and Ladysmith. In the early stages of their organizational life, the brother and sister posts worked in close contact with each other and shared many of the same objectives and projects. Together, in the early twentieth century they became known as one of the province’s most active and well-recognized historical agencies. They collaborated on several important heritage preservation projects, including well-recognized monuments. The preservation of the Craigflower School House north of Victoria, the restoration of the Nanaimo Bastion, the 1924 cairn commemorating Captain Cook’s discovery of Nootka Sound and subsequent British exploration, and a commemorative tablet at George Vancouver’s gravesite in England are among these.

Local heritage preservation societies had become firmly entrenched civic institutions in small towns and cities across Canada by the time the Native Sons and Daughters became active in the early 1900s. From the mid-1800s, well-educated middle-class Canadians worked in a variety of organizations such as the Ontario Historical Society, St. Jean Baptiste Society and local branches of nationalist patriotic organizations like the Imperial Order of the Daughters of Empire to promote patriotism and inspire an appreciation of the distinctiveness

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17 Joyce Cosens and Betty Murdock, “Native Daughters of BC Preserve National Landmarks,” in NDBC, Nanaimo Community Archives (NCA), Scrapbook [1937], code 8, box 2, F-04-05.

18 Reimer, 198.

19 Ibid., 200. For a discussion of the construction of the commemorative monument at Nootka Sound and its importance as a signifier of imperial history, and thus identity, in British Columbia see Daniel Clayton, Islands of Truth: The Imperial Fashioning of Vancouver Island (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000), 3-5, 50-62.
Figure 6. Members of the Native Daughters and Sons from various Posts in the province at a Grand Post reunion (a weekend of meetings and social engagements with all British Columbia Posts). The group is posing in front of the Nanaimo Bastion, one of the Nanaimo Native Sons and Daughters' most well-known heritage preservation projects. April, 1930. Photo courtesy of City of Vancouver Archives (CVA 617, Add. Mss. 334, Vol. 26, File 10).
of their local, provincial and national heritage. These groups were remarkably disparate, their projects reflecting a variety of historical interests. Antique conservation in the Maritimes, nationalist displays of military history in Quebec, and didactic imperialist monuments in Ontario predominated among these. However, despite their distinct local and historical interests, many historical organizations shared ideological imperatives. They used narratives of historical distinctiveness to fulfill local political objectives. Namely, they highlighted the cultural richness of the regions of Canada in order to promote such important national issues as political federalism, imperial unity and anti-Americanism.

Historians of museums and heritage point out that this widespread interest in history preservation in the late nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries was part of a larger nationalist movement among the middle class in Canada. Historically-minded individuals were motivated not merely by a love of history, but also by a desire to publicly establish their idea of the country's national identity. Museum displays that outlined the contours of the nations' history functioned as the "shapers and reflectors of the new land and the new nation." The creation and codification of historical knowledge in this way was particularly


21 Taylor, 3-31.


important given Canada’s status as a relatively “new” country. As Eileen Mak argues, displays of history in the museum secured a useful past for the young nation, “highlighted its glory, and pointed to its great future as part of industrialized civilization.”

For many of these public history organizations, establishing the political and cultural distinctiveness of the country involved highlighting one prominent theme among others: Canada’s connection with the British Empire. For example, in Ontario, the preeminent region for history preservation in Canada, middle-class men and women used local heritage preservation projects to promote an historical understanding of Canada that highlighted the country’s imperial ties with Britain. Historical representations of the Loyalist tradition provided the most common vehicle for the expression of such ideals. As Carl Berger explains, in the early 1880s, celebrations of United Empire Loyalists as the founders of “national greatness” served to awaken a sense of British-Canadian nationalism and ancestral pride. This use of history was meant to inspire a sense of ownership and responsibility among the loyalists, encouraging them to take political and economic leadership in order to conserve the familiar state of national affairs in the country.

The NDBC and NSBC shared these nationalistic and imperial interests. The organizations provided support for the local community of native-born residents in BC and preserved their history in order to protect the historical memory and promote the

24 Ibid., 5.

contemporary well-being of the province, the nation, and the empire. The fusion of local, national, and imperial interests is revealed in the Native Daughters’ mandate:

perpetuate the memory of those pioneers who took part in the early development of this province, and to take an active part in the preservation of historical relics and records of British Columbia; to engage in activities of national patriotic, charitable, and athletic nature; to take an interest in the advancement and welfare of all native-born British Columbians; to unite for the purpose of mutual benefit, mental improvement and social life; and to advance the interests and promote the welfare of British Columbia, Canada and the Empire.²⁶

Interestingly though, while the Native Sons and Daughters were interested in nationalistic and imperial projects, their heritage activities were western-centered. The NSBC and NDBC were modeled on the Native Sons and Daughters of the American Far West, a group of second-generation pioneers who sought to preserve material local history in order to keep the memory of their parents’ pioneer past in the west alive.²⁷ The British Columbia Native Sons and Daughters shared their southern neighbours’ name, sex-segregated structure, federal division of power and responsibility, and interest in the history of pioneering in the west. Unfortunately, there is no record of any direct affiliation between

²⁶ This version of the Native Daughters’ mandate was written by a Native Daughter of Post 1 and published in a Vancouver newspaper in the 1930s. See, “Native Daughters of BC Preserve National Landmarks,” in NDBC Scrapbook [begun November 1932], NCA code 8, box 2, F-04-05. The Native Sons were also deeply committed to contemporary objectives in their projects. This is revealed in a copy of their constitution that was published at approximately the same time. It states that the organization “seeks to advance the interest and promote the welfare of British Columbia, Canada and the Empire... to assist the native born in establishing themselves and bettering their conditions in their Native Land, to the end that they may successfully perform their inherited duty of carrying on the splendid work commenced by their forefathers; to encourage a greater respect and appreciation of the deeds performed by the discoverers and the pioneers of this Province, and to ensure the emulation of their fortitude and progress in vital questions of the present and future... this organization is not parochial in its endeavors. It seeks to benefit all and to encourage a co-operation and harmony which will mean PROSPERITY FOR BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA AND THE EMPIRE ” (emphasis theirs). See Native Sons of British Columbia, “Constitution and By-Laws of the Native Sons of British Columbia” (May 28, 1928), CVA, ADD MSS 334, 541-G-2, file 8, p. 1.

²⁷ Reimer, 197. For a discussion of the foundation and work of the Native Sons and Daughters of the Far West (California in particular) see Glassberg, Sense of History, 175-183.
the British Columbia and American Posts. However, it can be assumed that the founders of the BC branch adapted the American model because they were inspired by their neighbours' expression of fondness for western history. The synthesis of national and local concerns in the Sons and Daughters of the American Far West's heritage preservation model provided British Columbians with the organizational structure to demonstrate that, as westerners, they had a distinct historical legacy to share with their compatriots.

Appropriating the structure of the Native Sons and Daughters of the American Far West gave historically-minded British Columbians membership in a distinct historical community: the descendents of nineteenth-century pioneer explorers and settlers in the west. Unfortunately, it is difficult to understand why members of the organizations sought to acquire the social power associated with the status of being “native-born” rather than that linked to other designations such as economic or professional position. This is largely due to the fact that it is difficult to understand members’ reasons for claiming this status without a detailed study of the changing social and economic position of the middle class in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, the effects of their attempts to publicly establish their “native” status are evident. As David Lowenthal argues, co-opting history with claims to a distinct heritage is meant to “assert a primacy, an ancestry, a continuity.”

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28 Benedict Anderson uses the term “historical community” in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London and New York: Verso, 1991), 6. David Glassberg provides an interesting discussion of the importance of using historical identity to establish this sense of community. He claims that a “sense of history locates us in society, with knowledge that helps us gain a sense of with whom we belong, connecting our personal experiences and memories with those of a larger community, region, and nation.” For such groups as the Native Sons and Daughters, historical narratives that highlight such important issues as continuity and genealogical connections with a past generation, and thus historic movement, transcended more contemporary markers of identity, as they give their community an historically-sanctioned claim to biological as well as social distinctiveness.
Claims to historical distinctiveness "underwrite a founding myth meant to exclude others." This assertion provides a useful way to explain the Native Daughters' use of heritage. For members of this organization, publicly tracing one's historical lineage to the region's early pioneers and identifying one's self as having a "native" status offered one membership to a new elite in Vancouver: the city's "historical aristocracy." Chad Reimer claims that defining and defending one's position as "native-born" was important because, "with so many British Columbians being born elsewhere, and rushing in to participate in the expanding province's riches, the native son and daughter stood apart: they belonged in B.C. for they knew no other home." Establishing a genealogical connection with the city's founders helped the Native Daughters and Sons establish themselves the "guardians" of the region, suggesting that they were uniquely positioned to ensure that the traditions and heritage of their forefathers were upheld.

Exclusive membership requirements for the NDBC and NSBC preserved members' claims to occupying a distinct position in BC. The Native Daughters' constitution, for example, stated that membership was restricted to individuals who had direct blood ties to a native-born, presumptively white, BC resident. This stipulation was (and continues to be)


30 Reimer, 202.

31 Ibid., 202.

32 Winifred Lee, "Native Daughters of This Province Strive to Preserve Old Landmarks," in NDBC, Scrapbook (1919-1928), VCA, AD MSS 467, 564-D-4, file 1, p. 1. I learned in my personal interview with the Chief Factor of the present Vancouver Post that the organization continues to support this clause today and excludes applicants with genealogical connections outside the borders of the province. However, the racial stipulations for membership today are unclear. Personal interview with Terry Davies, January 2001.
rigorously upheld, and potential members were screened by a special investigating committee. If accepted, the member receives a secret password allowing her access to group functions and meetings. Interestingly, there is no mention in the Native Daughters’ files or contemporary newspapers about racial qualifications for membership to the organization. This absence suggests that the terms “BC-born” or “pioneer” may have had specific racial connotations in the era. Observers likely assumed that the title “Native Daughter” was reserved for a white woman.

Members’ biographies and obituaries reveal the social significance of claiming status as a “real” native-born son or daughter of the province. For example, Native Daughter A.H. Maynard was remembered in a 1929 Victoria Daily Times obituary. As the daughter of pioneer parents born in Victoria March 31, 1859, in a cottage which then stood a few yards from the site of the present Colonist Building, and living almost her whole life in this city, it was natural that she should find in the work of the Native Daughters of British Columbia an opportunity to express in concrete ways the love and devotion she felt for her native land.

This obituary notice naturalizes nativist ideology, suggesting that “love and devotion” are inherent qualities familiar to those privileged to have been raised in the province (and especially in close proximity to such important colonial and historic institutions as the Colonist newspaper). In this case, such sentiments are inspired by genealogical connections to the city’s early pioneers and cemented by environment and socialization. Furthermore, the

33 NDBC, Minute Books, 1921-1926 (October 14, 1924), p.1.

34 The aforementioned newspaper article by Lee which explains the issue of membership qualifications, completely ignores race, vaguely stating, “only those women born within the boundaries of the Province are eligible for inclusion into the group,” 1.

35 “Pay Tribute to Pioneer Woman,” Victoria Daily Times (October 18, 1929), 1, in NDBC, Scrapbook (Undated).
article raises the status of the Native Daughters as an organization, suggesting that it was the pre-eminent agency giving like-minded citizens of pioneer heritage the opportunity to express their appreciation for BC in the post-pioneer era.

The popular press celebrated several other pioneers for their position as eyewitnesses to the history and successes of colonialism in BC. Mrs. Tom Glaholm, “the first white girl born in Nanaimo” and Mrs. M.A. Rowe, “another native daughter of a pioneer family,” were remembered in a Nanaimo newspaper as

hale and hearty and interested in all activities of their native Nanaimo, their lives making volumes, relating the tales of hardships from the early settlement to the peace and quietness they now enjoy in the city of 1939. Both have seen the city grow from a population of a hundred to thousands, and have witnessed many historical events here.36

These notices supported the “native” claim to the province by inserting individual women’s lives – and their contributions to the growth of the province – within the timeline of colonial history. Retelling their accomplishments within the dramatic historical narrative of history as the transition from “hardship and struggle” to “peace and quiet” and establishing them as “witnesses” of colonial history bolstered their status by making the province’s history their own. This historical narrative cemented other constructed qualifications to entitlement such as race and genealogy.

The Native Daughters and Sons relied on more than complex notions of historical lineage to assert their claim to ownership of the region’s history. They frequently resurrected

36 “Nanaimo... Daughter Turns 85 Years Today” [title incomplete in Scrapbook] (March 1939), in NDBC, Scrapbook (begun 1937). Also see, D.O. Brentzen, “... Pioneers Assembling Here Soon” [title incomplete in Scrapbook] (1925), in NDBC, Historian’s Book (1919-1928). Here, Brentzen (a Native Daughter) claims that three NDBC members’ lives are “instructive as pages drawns [sic] from the early history of the Coast.”
and reproduced pioneer traditions in order to solidify their association with the province's early white settlers. Both groups memorialized pioneer history by institutionally internalizing the norms and structures of Western Canada's most powerful and preeminent pioneering agent: the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC). The division of authority in the organizations mirrored the HBC's corporate structure, with the Native Sons and Daughters appropriating such HBC titles as Chief Factor, secretary, historian, inside or outside sentinel, and guide.37

The evocation of pioneer traditions by the NSBC and NDBC even permeated the most personal and private events of some members' lives. The 1926 marriage ceremony of Diana Oglivy Brentzen (retired Chief Factor of the Nanaimo post) and Native Son Thomas Reed-Palmer at the "historic old bastion at Nanaimo" was filled with references to BC's pioneer past. As a Nanaimo newspaper reported, "the historic bell of the Princess Royal, the sailing vessel that brought the miners to Nanaimo in 1854, was rung" after the young couple gave their marriage vows.38 The presence of this important historical vessel at the ceremony imbued the couple's marriage with the transformative power of pioneer settlement and regional industrial growth. Several Native Daughters and Sons also held a central role in this important ceremony, giving further authority to the event. The Supreme Factor of the Native Daughters of Canada, the Grand Factor of the NDBC, and Nanaimo's Chief Factor were Brentzen's attendants, and members of the NSBC were the couple's ushers. Most interestingly, however, in the absence of her late father, Brentzen was given away by B.A.

37 NDBC, Minute Books, 1921-1926 (June 14, 1922), p.1. See also, Reimer, 201.

38 "Native Daughter Becomes Bride at Nanaimo" (January 30, 1926), in NDBC, Scrapbook (undated).
McKelvie, Grand Factor of the Native Sons and historian. This case reveals the strength and importance of the social network for second-generation pioneers; here, the organization supported members by fulfilling important and symbolic family roles in their lives. It also shows the importance of ritual and collective ceremony in securing the group’s connection to pioneer tradition, as the couple cemented their personal ties to the past by integrating important symbols of pioneer history into such personal events as their marriage ceremony.

The founding of the Hastings Mill Museum, the Vancouver Post’s largest and most well-known history preservation project, provided an opportunity for the organization to further bolster its claim to membership in a distinct historical community. This project provided the Native Daughters with a way to distill elements of the region’s pioneer past and make them tangible and accessible for the appreciation of members of their community. Both the building and the displays it later housed provided the Daughters with an institutional framework to highlight what they saw as the important themes that linked them as second-generation pioneers and proved their elite status in the city. The pioneer journey to, settlement in, and development of BC predominate among these.

Preserving the old store building and opening it as a museum helped the Native Daughters fulfill this aim by providing them with the tools, both practical and discursive, to establish a local origin story for their community. Their project involved a process of
"building-pasts." The Native Daughters used the history of the building, and the historical experiences it represented, to give local history a clear and easily identifiable narrative structure. As Rudy Koshar argues, the aim of using and altering the built environment in this way is to

invent [political, social, and historical] identities, to stress the sameness of individuals who, because they are engaged in multiple social relations, are in fact marked by difference. This process consists of discursively using such building-pasts to ‘build’ those collective pasts that give continuity, stability, and familiarity to particular social configurations in particular historical contexts.

Transforming the built environment in heritage preservation projects is a component of a larger attempt to reshape, for a particular purpose, collective memories of a region, neighbourhood, organization, generation, class, gender, or nation.40

The Native Daughters “built” their particular narrative of local history by using the old Hastings Mill Store’s history as a metaphor for the local past. As their own account of the building’s history reveals, they did this by suggesting that the store’s history encapsulated the various stages of the city’s growth. In this story, the city’s history begins with the Hastings Mill. The Daughters claim that that “[F]rom its earliest beginning the little settlement became a lumber port, exporting lumber to the markets of the world. Some of the great houses of San Francisco were build from lumber milled from the Hastings Mill.” In this claim, the mill, and the store it later supported provide the foundation for the city and its growth. The Native Daughters defend its historical significance by claiming that the store was an important agent protecting and supporting the new community in Burrard Inlet. Not


40 Ibid., 216.
only did the store “supply... the needs of the settlement” in the early years, but after the city’s devastating fire on 13 June 1886, it operated as a “haven for the frightened and excited men, sobbing women, and terrorized children,” as a hospital, and later as a morgue. In this pamphlet, the store becomes a key to understanding the growth and development of the city, as it gives the local past a clear beginning and identifies the agents that encouraged its growth and status.

The campaign to establish the museum began in 1929 when the Daughters started to raise funds to relocate the old Hastings Mill Store building from its original home at the foot of Dunlevy Street in the Old Hastings Mill site in Vancouver’s Inner Harbour to Pioneer Park. Their ambitious plan involved raising $10,000 to salvage the building from decay, tow it by scow to its new home in Pioneer Park at the foot of Alma street, restore it, and set it up as a museum.

The Native Daughters’ goals met with immediate success; several local residents responded enthusiastically to their project with donations of money, labour, time and construction materials. The majority of the Daughters’ support came from local Vancouver residents who expressed an interest in the preservation of pioneer history. In most cases, these small gifts ranged from $1.00 to $25.00. Other donations came from more important political figures in the city. For example, the Honourable S.L. Howe, Provincial Secretary and Minister of Lands, offered the Native Daughters a personal gift of $100.00 for their

41 “History of the Hastings Mill” (wall panel and pamphlet), posted and distributed at the Hastings Mill Museum, 1, 2.

42 “History of the Hastings Mill,” 2,3.
“commendable action.”43 Several local businesses also contributed to this growing fund by donating labour and construction materials for the project. The Daughters even came close to convincing City Council that theirs was an important civic contribution worthy of financial support. However, the Council, “although declaring themselves in sympathy with the project and favorably disposed with reference to the rendering of financial assistance,” rejected the Native Daughters’ proposal because it was technically neither a charitable nor a civic undertaking.44

The Daughters’ ambitious plan was a movement to mobilize historical memory in Vancouver. They sought to appeal to local Vancouverites’ sense of nostalgia for a past era in order to fulfill their goal. Several local people responded as they expected, praising the Daughters for their foresight in commemorating the founders of the city. An elderly donor was said to have been so moved when discovering the Native Daughters’ project that he spontaneously recounted his own experience in the city in its early years when contributing his small donation:

[W]hen I first sailed into Burrard Inlet, it was many years before there was a Vancouver. There wasn’t anything more than an odd shack on the south side of the Inlet... I was a seaman in Her Majesty’s navy and we were cruising about the North Pacific. My first impression was of the magnificent harbour [in Burrard Inlet] and I figured that someday a city just like Vancouver of today would spring up... I haven’t struck it rich... but you have my good wishes for success in your worthy cause. It will be a great monument to the good old pioneers... Please take this two-dollar bill... it will buy a brick or so and I want to help just a little.45


44 “Seeking Way to Aid Memorial Park Plan,” in NDBC, Hastings Mill Store Campaign.

45 “Old Sailor Helps Park Campaign,” in NDBC, Hastings Mill Store Campaign.
This donor’s expression of nostalgia suggests that the Daughters’ campaign resonated in important ways for a particular type of local resident. The Hastings Mill store preservation campaign connected the city’s past and present for its early settlers, providing them with a sense of continuity. The fact that this donor’s experience was published in a local newspaper suggests that highlighting personal connections with history was an important part of the Daughters’ campaign; the Native Daughters wanted to extend the city’s short memory to show that a glorious history lay in the not too distant past.

The Native Daughters’ appeals for public appreciation of local history, and by extension support for their campaign, depended upon creating a dramatic tension between protection and erosion of civic history. They appealed to Vancouverites by suggesting that the old store represented the city’s quaint, coastal character which, without protection, risked being absorbed by modern development and technological change. A Native Daughter expressed this nostalgic sentiment in a newspaper report of the old store building’s move:

Sixty-five years ago on a July morning might have looked just the same – for here the beauty of the picture was Nature’s own, and it was comforting and appropriate that Vancouver’s oldest pioneer should be borne on the last stretch of a long and useful career down the waters which have lapped and broken at its feet for years. There would have been something almost grotesque in the thought of that little old store being jostled and rattled over cement roads, with motor horns blasting shrilly; and think how frightfully out of date our oldest pioneer would have found itself.46

In this description, the museum – and by extension local history - is given the attributes of a delicate and weary aging pioneer needy of protection. The Daughters’ claims that it is “out of date,” even overwhelmed and unfamiliar with the contemporary era, suggest that the

connection between the past and present is volatile; history is a fragile entity threatened by
the uncontrollable and unscrupulous process of modernization in the province.

The Native Daughters' rhetorical strategy should not be mistaken as anti-modernist,
however. Their polarized descriptions of the bucolic pioneer past and hyper-modern present
supported a campaign to sustain the connection between the past and present and encourage
development and growth in the region. The Daughters claimed that their project “is worthy in
that it honours those first settlers who gave Vancouver its character,” but “more than worthy
in that it preserves for Vancouver an historical background that will do much to maintain and
define a colorful civic personality.” Preserving local history provided an important
opportunity to highlight the more timeless elements of the city’s character such as natural
beauty and resources in order to bolster its image in the present.

The Daughters used their heritage preservation campaign to highlight the richness of
the city’s natural resources and other assets. They saw the Hastings Mill store building as
proof of the city’s strong natural and economic character. The importance of the symbolism
of the building itself in their campaign is revealed in a quotation from F.M. Gosse, the
contractor employed to move the old store, who is reported to have claimed that the building
is “standing the strain well. What stuff they put in that old building – real lumber! And how

47 Ian McKay claims that, in Nova Scotia, growing historical consciousness among the middle class between
1930 and 1960 was part of an anti-modernist movement in local aesthetics, civic politics, and heritage
preservation. Public history projects and ideologies were often fuelled by a notion that “modernity... seemed on
the brink of destroying not just historic houses, but the very memory of Golden Age elegance and refinement.”
Though the Native Daughters version of heritage preservation in BC was similarly imbued with romanticized
notions of the province’s past as a “golden era,” their project should not be considered as the same. They used
such representations of the past to control rather than resist cultural, technological, and political change. See,
2 (Spring 1993), 104.

48 “Pioneers’ Memorial Park,” in NDB, Hastings Mill Store Campaign.
well those pioneers did their work! I don't find many buildings so staunch and strong after so many years.” 49 In this example, the building itself is an important monument because it testifies to both the strength of the city's historic foundation and the timelessness and longevity of an important local asset: the region's forests.

Celebrating the richness of the region's natural resources served an important contemporary goal in the Native Daughters' project: to socialize young people to work hard to build up the province's economy. The museum's role in fulfilling this goal was reflected in local politicians' praise for the Native Daughters' work at the museum's opening ceremony. On January 16, 1932, Provincial Minister of Lands Nels. S. Lougheed addressed a crowd of the city's politicians, prominent business people, pioneers and other onlookers from a podium in the rain-soaked park at the ceremonial opening of the Museum. “[T]he durability of British Columbia Douglas Fir is demonstrated by the fine state of preservation of the mill,” he stated: “the Hastings Mill store is all that we have left to remind of us the early days.” As such, it will help to “train our young people to appreciate what is in BC.” 50 Premier S. F. Tolmie shared Lougheed's praise. He claimed that "back in the eighties men were not afraid to work... they were not afraid to don a pair of overalls and hew their livelihood from the virgin forest. To them we owe the splendid foundation upon which Vancouver stands.” 51 He paired these comments with demands for young people to “so

49 "Old Hastings Mill Store: Timber Sound After 65 Years," Vancouver Province (July 25, 1929), in NDBC, Hastings Mill Store Campaign.

50 "Historic store opened as a museum" The Sunday Province, (January 17, 1931), in NDBC, Historian's Book (1930-1933).

51 Ibid.
appreciate what has been done by our forefathers in blazing the way for us... to educate [themselves] to take part in the government of the province [, and] to train... to be ready for the opportunities."

Interestingly, the education that the Native Daughters provided in the Hastings Mill Museum reflected contemporary notions about women's "proper" sphere. The Native Daughters were credited with providing a site for a type of historical education that would help them serve their particular community. In the museum, they socialized second-generation BC-born children to appreciate the traditions and values of their pioneer ancestors. A fan of the Museum, in a letter to a Vancouver newspaper, stated: "[the Native Daughters] are helping to build up the natural history of this province and the Dominion, not only to their own great pride but for the glory of their children in the generation to come." In this example, conveying important pioneer values in the museum was one component of the Daughters' larger maternal responsibility of maintaining and caring for members of their community.

The issue of women's role in heritage preservation has received little attention in the study of public history. In "History, Nation, and Empire: Gender and Southern Ontario

52 "Old Hastings Mill Building Converted into Museum" (1931), Hastings Mill Store Campaign.

53 "Letter to the Editor," in NDBC, Hastings Mill Store Campaign.

54 There are very few examples of literature, Canadian or international, on the subject of women and history preservation. Available texts include: Beverly Boutilier and Alison Prentice, eds., Creating Historical Memory: English Canadian Women and the Work of History (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997); Morgan, "History, Nation, and Empire"; Donald Wright, "Gender and the Professionalization of History in English Canada before 1960," Canadian Historical Review, 81, 1 (2000); Bonnie G. Smith, The Gender of History: Men, Women and Historical Practice (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998); and Nina Baym, American Women Writers and the Work of History (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995).
Historical Societies, 1890-1920," one of the only concerted studies of this topic in Canada, Cecilia Morgan claims that the work of middle-class women and men in historical organizations at the turn-of-the-century was often inspired by shared conceptions of gender, nationalism and imperialism. Their work was unified by common notions of "the 'family' of empire, history as romantic narrative, and Canadian history as that of the 'anti-Conquest.'" The roles of women in history preservation, she claims, should not be studied from the assumption that gender produces different narratives, because focussing on the dichotomy between men’s and women’s histories "leaves the ideological project of nationalism and imperialism unexplored." Women’s attempts to establish historical claims to structures of power, political ideals and traditions through historical activism were shaped by multiple shared subject positions: namely race, nationalism, and class.

The only available study of the Native Daughters of BC supports a similar interpretation of history preservation activity. Chad Reimer argues that the historical lineage, racial background, organizational mandates, and historical ideology of the Native Sons and Daughters made the gender differences between the organizations relatively insignificant. He claims that while contemporaneous all-male pioneer societies tended to define the idea of the pioneer in masculine terms, distinctions between gender interests in the NSBC and the

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55 Morgan, 494.

56 Ibid., 494. In making this claim, Morgan is challenging assertions by scholars such as Beverly Boutilier and Alison Prentice who argue that women’s work in history preservation in Canada is inspired by gender consciousness. See “Introduction: Locating Women in the Work of History,” in Creating Historical Memory, 3-24.
NDBC were obliterated by the two organizations' shared desire to promote their distinct ethnic, ideological, and historical community.57

A detailed study of NDBC Post 1's heritage preservation activity provides an opportunity to reevaluate this assertion. While Reimer is correct in asserting that both the Native Sons and Daughters of the province worked in tandem to fulfill the objectives of honouring the history of settler pioneers, the idea and practice of preserving history were not gender neutral. The Native Sons' work ended with their contributions to such shared projects as erecting monuments and large-scale public history projects while Post Number 1, and other women's Posts, continued to act as maternal "guardians" of pioneer history, "protecting" it from the long-term threat of social and ideological change. For the women of this organization, heritage preservation took on another dimension: the Native Daughters promoted the preservation of pioneer history in the region by constructing themselves as "nurturers" of the past and their distinct historical community.

The gendered nature of the Daughters' education project was cleverly articulated in a newspaper article published in the 1930s. The article featured a fictitious tour of the Hastings Mill Museum led by one of the last Native Daughters in the province who patiently attempted to pass on the important values of the pioneer era to her granddaughter. Set in the hyper-modern future, it depicted the grandmother walking through the museum, reminiscing about the lost values of home and hard-work and nostalgically pointing out various extinct and unfamiliar objects of the nineteenth century, such as hat pins, petticoats, and lace gloves. Her peaceful and respectful reverie of the "good old days" was interrupted when her

57 Reimer, 203.
granddaughter asked, after being instructed how to perform the fine, labour-intensive stitching on a crazy quilt, “wouldn’t it have been cheaper to buy a quilt, Grandma?” “Preserve me from the past” the girl exclaimed when her grandmother responded by instructing her that nothing was cheap to buy in those days and it was thought that it was good to make girls “work at something useful.” The grandmother’s history lesson seems to have been successful, as the granddaughter concluded, “I never knew before just how lucky you were… in having survived all these antiquities until the age of light and reason had dawned.”

While much of the dialogue is playful and ironic, the article’s general didacticism reveals the importance of the museum’s educational purpose. The author suggests that pioneer history would become meaningless without the constant transmission of knowledge from the pioneers to succeeding generations of BC daughters. Consistent with the organization’s mandate, a sympathetic understanding of history – in this case gained through the study of domestic values – was the only agent capable of cementing the connection between these two generations. The lessons in pioneer aesthetics and work ethics that the displays celebrated underscored the Native Daughters’ genealogical connection to the province’s early pioneers, for them a great source of pride. The exclusiveness of their project is revealed by the fact that the story features a Native Daughter and her granddaughter. The article suggests that the museum was designed to serve, support, and nurture a very specific community: “real” native-born British Columbians and their kin.

Newspaper accounts of the museum’s founding also reveal the gendered images associated with the practice of maintaining and preserving actual historical relics in the mid-twentieth century. While the above example illuminates the role of women in passing on pioneer values, other examples present the Native Daughters as guardians and protectors of the city’s material history. For example, at the opening ceremony of the museum, Native Daughter Mrs. J.P. Jones claimed that, in 1886, the Hastings Mill building “must have [had] some sort of charm for it refused to burn... being one of the few buildings left standing after the fire.” Again in the 1930s, when the Mill buildings were to be razed, the Native Daughters saw to it “that it ‘swam’ to safety.” In this image, the building is given human characteristics and the Native Daughters figure as maternal protectors guiding the past to “safety.”

In an article published in the *Vancouver Province’s BC Magazine*, thirty-five years after the museum was founded, author Ed Moyer revealed the gendered nature of the Daughters' contributions to historical preservation. He suggested that the Native Daughters’ contributions to the preservation of Vancouver’s material history – and specifically the preservation of the Hastings Mill Store building itself – was a loyal daughterly obligation, stating that:

> [F]or 65 years, while the moss grew heavy on its shingled head and time and the wind and the sun creased its greying cheeks, it served the pioneers who were laying the crib-work for the foundation of the city of Vancouver. But finally time caught up with it. So the Native Daughters of BC, post No. 1, gently took the oldster in hand. They lifted it from its bed, there at the foot of Dunlevy on the banks of Burrard Inlet and

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placed it on a barge and retired it in dignity in a small green park at the end of Point Grey road, five miles from where it had spent its life.\textsuperscript{60}

In this article, Moyer masculinizes pioneer history, attributing to it the characteristics of a venerable old man. The image of the aging man animates an otherwise dry linear historical narrative of civic history: the progress and development of the city from the pioneer to the post-World War II era. Interestingly though, Moyer presented the Native Daughters as agents of continuity reliably performing their daughterly duty despite the massive social and industrial changes that were taking place. He claims that “when time and surging growth condemned the store to death the Native Daughters rushed to its defence.”\textsuperscript{61} Hence, the Old Mill Store was “not only a monument to BC pioneer history” but also “a monument to those Daughters who had the sympathy and foresight to retire it in dignity.”\textsuperscript{62}

An historical analysis of the Native Daughters’ heritage preservation project supports many insights in the field of historical memory. It affirms one important tenant of the research in particular: the notion that representations of the past are political. Historical


\textsuperscript{61} Moyer, 15.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 15.
memories undergo constant revision in order to suit current ideologies. For the Native Daughters, history was an important political tool; narrating the local past as a tale of pioneer struggles and successes helped them to secure the position of their community of white, second-generation pioneers as an elite in the province. They adapted and used the North American “myth of the pioneer” to demonstrate that they had an historically-sanctioned claim to understanding and appreciating the region’s traditions, natural resources, and political structures.

Furthermore, while a study of the Native Daughters’ project to preserve the Hastings Mill Store reveals the multiple ways that heritage was used as a source of power, it also raises questions about how a powerful tool such as a representation can be used by women. An analysis of the Hastings Mill Museum reveals that the Native Daughters documented the narrative of “development” and “progress” from pioneer roots from a women’s perspective. They altered the traditional linear historical narrative of city progress and development operative in many local, provincial, and national museums of the time and provided a more “cozy” and personalized account of pioneer history by incorporating symbols of domestic life into the story of the city’s founding. Their display provided the foundation for a different type of historical education: the Native Daughters were training the younger generation to appreciate the past by inspiring an appreciation for the “softer” elements of local history such as pioneer domestic values, hard work, and dedication to community.

While the city’s new generation of students, residents and tourists may not exclaim “preserve me from the past!” as the fictional granddaughter of the 1930s newspaper story

63 Gillis, 3, 4.
did, visiting the Hastings Mill Museum today is often an unusual experience. The Native Daughters’ exclusive representation of the province’s pioneer history seems out of step with contemporary interpretations of the local past and museological trends that emphasize pluralism and multiculturalism. The Native Daughters continue to tell a singular story about the history of the province that negates aboriginal history and ignores ethnic minorities’ contributions to the growth and development of the city.

A recent encounter between the Hastings Mill Museum’s Chief Factor and an aboriginal visitor exemplifies the anachronistic nature of the museum today. In a personal interview at the museum, the Chief Factor, Terry Davies, stated that the museum recently received a request from an aboriginal visitor to remove a display of three human skulls from public view on top of an old display case. The Chief Factor responded to the visitor’s request by defending their presence in the exhibit, claiming that it was impossible to confirm that they were actually of Indian origin. However, at a later date, the skulls were packed away to avoid future confrontation.64 This incident serves as a reminder that some of the artifacts on display have other meanings that, if acknowledged, would rupture the historic foundation upon which the Native Daughters claim their authority. The inclusion of other local history narratives in the Native Daughters’ display would alter the celebratory tale of pioneer history and force them to temper their claim to ownership of the province’s history. Furthermore, it reveals that the old museum is in a vulnerable position in the present period of post-colonial museology; it cannot avoid the challenges of displaying multiple perspectives, engaging in

64 Terry Davies shared this anecdote in a personal interview. Personal Interview with Terry Davies, January 2001.
debates about ownership, or receiving demands for the repatriation of indigenous cultural objects.

Regardless of contemporary demands for plurality and accountability, the current generation of Native Daughters continues to preserve the exhibits as the founding generation created them in the 1930s. Their disinterest in responding to contemporary demands for plurality in museum representation lies in the nature of the Native Daughters' organization itself. The Native Daughters continue to operate under their 1919 constitution that prevents succeeding Daughters from altering the founding generations' account of local history. Revising the narrative of pioneer history attached to the objects or using the collections in another way would completely disregard the founding generation's ideals and perspective of the local past. As a result, the museum will probably close down when the current generation of aging Native Daughters is no longer able to devote the tremendous amount of energy required to operate it. Without any promise of government funding or interest among younger native-born British Columbians, it will be taken over by the parks board, the owners and caretakers of the land upon which it sits, and the objects will be packed away in Vancouver's city hall.\(^{65}\)

The closing of the Hastings Mill Museum will leave a gap in Vancouver's history, as its antiquated displays help us to understand a particular and now quite dated movement in local history preservation. The museum – with its distinct modes of display and exclusive narrative of the nature of early Vancouver society - is a colonial institution preserving the founding Native Daughters' ideas about cultural difference, local history, and the growth of

\(^{65}\) Ibid.
their community. It is a material remnant of an important era in BC history when such groups as the Native Daughters and Sons sought to buttress their position in the province through the powerful claim of membership to a cultural, genealogical, and racial elite. It reveals that the Native Daughters mobilized pioneer history in order to control and direct such important contemporary issues for their community as modernization, industrial growth, and resource use in the region. As women, they played a particularly important role in this project; they used their position as “guardians” and “protectors” of the past in order to bolster their status as native-born British Columbians.
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66 For a discussion of the role of public institutions such as museums in perpetuating colonial ideals and relationships in Canadian society, see Furniss, 12.


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