



**RESIDENTIAL
HERITAGE CONSERVATION
IN ST. JOHN'S**

Robert Mellin



Canada's
Historic Places

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The Canadian Register of Historic Places; Standards and Guidelines; Commercial Heritage Properties Incentive Fund; and a suite of products to help municipalities recognize and protect buildings of significance.

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Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador
The Newman Building
PO Box 5171, 1 Springdale Street
St. John's, Newfoundland
Canada, A1C 5V5

Phone: 709-739-1892, Fax: 709-739-5413
Toll free phone: 1-888-739-1892
www.heritagefoundation.ca
www.historicplaces.ca



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Contents:

Preface	3
Heritage Conservation	5
Urban Design	11
Early Modern Architecture	21
The Exterior of the House	25
<i>Appendix</i>	40
<i>Doors</i>	41
<i>Doorways</i>	69
<i>Brackets</i>	84
<i>Windows</i>	94
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	122



Figures 1 and 2: House and laneway on Masonic Terrace. This terrace house was one of the first houses to be restored in the East End of St. John's (restored by Affinities Ltd.: Joe Carter, Peter Munroe, Ron Schwartz, and Peter Pope) in the mid-1970's.



Preface

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In 1978, the St. John's Heritage Foundation published a small book titled *The Heritage Look: Renovating Your Home*. Over the years, requests have been made to re-issue this helpful book, which was one of the first publications to offer practical guidance on heritage conservation in St. John's. In recent times, the approach to heritage conservation has evolved, and we probably would not use the same title for a similar book if we were publishing it for the first time today. We believed, however, that reissuing David Webber's drawings of details from *The Heritage Look* would be a worthwhile endeavour because of the information they provide on exterior cladding elements, ornamentation, windows and doors. In this edition, we have had the opportunity to add new material that briefly updates heritage conservation strategies and issues. Although much of the information relates to St. John's, many aspects of exterior cladding technology, materials, architectural elements, architectural style, and urban design are applicable to other areas of the province. Although most of the houses in rural areas of Newfoundland and Labrador are quite different in type and appearance from the houses in St. John's, there are many similarities in exterior cladding construction technology. The chapter on the exterior of the house contains information on techniques that are relevant for traditional wood cladding in both the urban and rural context in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Unfortunately, it was not possible to scan and reprint David Webber's original drawings of details in *The Heritage Look*. The thin paper of the original book permitted too much image bleed-through, and many hand-drawn dimensions and lines were too faint to scan or were incomplete as originally printed. The views expressed in this publication are not the official views of the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador or the official views of Canada's Historic Places Initiative. Every architect has different approaches to heritage conservation detailing, so mine are not the final words on these topics. I hope, however, that my contribution, particularly on the subject of the house exterior, will complement the re-issue of the details in *The Heritage Look*. Before presenting this topic, I provide some background on the issues of heritage conservation and urban design in St. John's. Urban design may ultimately be an area of greater

concern for heritage conservation than the fine restoration detailing of individual houses. I then present a brief outline of reasons for the urgent need to recognize and conserve Newfoundland and Labrador's early modern architecture. Guidance on exterior cladding details follows this summary, with photographs showing how components like clapboards and trim boards can be installed to avoid maintenance problems. This is followed by the drawings of details from *The Heritage Look*.

Portions of the graphics and text from the exemplary and ground-breaking *St. John's Heritage Conservation Area Study* prepared by Sheppard, Burt and Associates and Arends and Associates in 1976 for Heritage Canada and The Newfoundland Historic Trust were incorporated into the 1978 publication *The Heritage Look: Renovating Your Home*. In the 1976 study, more information is presented on various formal architectural styles found in the older residential areas of St. John's than was subsequently included in *The Heritage Look*. It is beyond the scope of this publication to re-present this information on architectural styles, but more information on this topic may be obtained from the City Archives.

Figure 3: The courtyard behind houses on Gower Street.

