

## Comptes rendus

### Robert Hubbard, *Ample Mansions: The Vice-Regal Residences of the Canadian Provinces*

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Robert Hubbard, *Ample Mansions: The Vice-Regal Residences of the Canadian Provinces*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1989. 237 pp., 223 ill. Cloth \$34.95, ISBN 0-7766-0277-2.

Dr. Robert Hubbard died on November 11, 1989, just a few months after publication of his latest book on the subject that had interested him most in the latter part of his long career. *Ample Mansions: The Vice-Regal Residence of the Canadian Provinces* is very much a follow-up to his earlier work, *Rideau Hall*, in both organization and intent.

Like its predecessor, *Ample Mansions* is an informative and entertaining memoir of those houses which became the official residences of the lieutenant-governors of the provinces. The term "Government House," as used by Dr. Hubbard, refers specifically to those large houses where the official family lives and shares working space with the administrative staff. The senior Government House is Rideau Hall, the residence of the Governor General, where Dr. Hubbard spent many years as Cultural Advisor and, after his retirement, stayed on as Honourary Historian.

*Ample Mansions* approaches the history of the vice-regal mansions in chronological order of colonial settlement, proceeding from the beginning of New France to present day Quebec and then to each province or region more or less in order of their entry into Confederation. The author provides an introduction to the early political history of each colony. Of necessity, this is very brief and superficial, but it does help to place a confusing mass of events in proper sequence and to introduce the author's true purpose, an examination of the architectural and social history of each vice-regal residence.

In this book the author's interest in architectural history combines with his obvious support for the role of the consti-

tutional monarchy in Canada to produce an interesting look at the home and family side of vice-regal appointments. Dr. Hubbard has combed the federal and provincial archives as well as newspapers, museums and other historic institutions and has come up with hundreds of photographs, prints, paintings, and drawings. This abundance of photographs can occasionally work against a clear perception of each house, however distinctive its exterior. Unfortunately, as most of the residences which still exist were haphazardly decorated by a combination of penny-pinching civil servants and ever-changing occupants, there is a boring similarity to the interiors of the remaining residences. A present-day illustration of the Drawing Room of Government House in Halifax, for example, is strangely similar to more than one room at Rideau Hall, with the same style of mirrors, the same mixture of Victorian furniture with a few surviving pieces from earlier periods, and even the same mantels and cornices.

The ambivalent attitude that Canadians today evidence towards the provision of housing at public expense for their leaders is, as Dr. Hubbard illustrates, a historical tradition. Complaints over extravagance and the wasting of public funds are nothing new; as early as 1831 a public inquiry was called in Newfoundland into the construction and furnishing of the colony's new Government House.

As a result of public carping and occasionally misplaced egalitarianism, some of the vice-regal mansions have been closed as economy measures. New Brunswick was the first province to do so in 1893. Today that province houses its lieutenant-governor in a modest house while maintaining the original 1828 residence as the provincial headquarters of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Ontario was even more ruthless in dealing with the question of an official residence. Canada's richest

province closed its last vice-regal residence in 1937 and demolished it in 1961. No other residence has ever been provided. Alberta's Government House has become a conference and reception centre, and the Provincial Museum has been built on its grounds. Government House in Regina has now been restored to the style of the 1890s and is open to the public. Three of the four Atlantic provinces, however, still maintain their original mansions, as does Manitoba. Quebec's vice-regal residence from the 1860s, known as Spencer Wood or Bois-de-Coulonge, burned to the ground in 1966 with the lieutenant-governor himself perishing in the fire. British Columbia's residence also burned to the ground twice, but the province continued the tradition of an official residence after each fire.

There is no confusion in the author's mind as to whether the closing or abandonment of the surviving mansions was wise. It may have been politically expedient at the time but Canada's architectural and cultural heritage could not help but be diminished. Current efforts in some provinces to restore the historical fabric of these mansions, such as Saskatchewan and New Brunswick, and in the federal jurisdiction under the direction of the Official Residences Council, tend to support Dr. Hubbard's opinion. *Ample Mansions* is certain to be as valuable a resource to those involved in the care and restoration of the provincial residences, as was *Rideau Hall* to those involved in the long-term care of Government House in Ottawa.

## **Susan Sheets-Pyenson, *Cathedrals of Science: The Development of Colonial Natural History Museums During the Late Nineteenth Century***

VICTORIA DICKENSON

Susan Sheets-Pyenson. *Cathedrals of Science: The Development of Colonial Natural History Museums During the Late Nineteenth Century*. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1988. 144 pp., 20 ill. Cloth \$24.95, ISBN 0-7735-0655-1.

Susan Sheets-Pyenson has written a welcome addition to the slender body of historical literature on museums. Though there are a fair number of institutional and personal biographies (Edward Miller, *That Noble Cabinet*; Lovat Dickson, *The Museum Makers*; Gerald Killan, *David Boyle*; Edward Alexander, *Museum Masters*), few recent books have dealt with the examination of the museum as a social institution.

Sheets-Pyenson has two aims. The first is to document a "remarkable development"—the museum explosion of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, which as the author notes, has largely escaped the notice of historians of science and society (p. 3). Despite their enormous physical presence in cities and small towns, most historians have failed to study either the organization of the museum itself, or the role it plays within society. The author's second aim is to examine the development of colonial natural history museums as a case study in the relationship

between scientific activity in a metropolitan centre and in the hinterland. Sheets-Pyenson writes, "By looking at the development of colonial natural history museums...and by examining the role of their early directors, it becomes possible to delineate the nature of colonial science at close range" (p. 15).

The "hinterland" thesis is perhaps more familiar to Canadians in its economic form, so well expounded by Harold Innes in his books on the cod fisheries and the fur trade. Sheets-Pyenson's version of this idea is that used by the historians of science, particularly George Basalla, who defined the idea of "colonial science." Basalla states that the colonial scientist is educated abroad, depends on European books, laboratory equipment and scientific instruments, and like his counterparts in other industries, is the supplier of raw materials to his intellectual masters in the metropolitan museums who act as the theorists or gatekeepers of scientific knowledge. His thesis has been further developed to explore the relationship between imperialism and science, and in Lucille Brockway's book, *Science and Colonial Expansion*, cited by Sheets-Pyenson, the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew are specifically seen as playing a key role