

THE MIGHTY EMPIRE

Lord Dufferin's 1875 Embellish

During the 19th century, Québec City became increasingly haunted by the ghosts of its military past. From the 1820s onward, in prose and in verse, poets, historians, and travel writers celebrated the city's evocative history. It was not until much later, however, that architecture's recapture of the town's ramparts began. The 1875 "City Embellishments" projects advanced by Lord Dufferin, Governor General of the newly-formed Dominion of Canada between 1872 and 1878 (**figure 1**), played a vital yet ill-understood role in redefining Québec's architectural character and in establishing a new symbolic function for the old colonial capital of Canada. Primarily aimed at the enhancement of the city's picturesque qualities, the castellated architectural idiom and the urban design ideas Lord Dufferin brought to Québec's Old Town also embodied a reconfigured history that, he hoped, would form the basis of a new Canadian identity within the British imperial framework.

by Georges Drolet



Figure 1. His Excellency Earl Dufferin, Governor General of Canada, 1872. (Notman & Fraser, National Archives of Canada [hereafter NAC], C-2124)

OF THE PAST: ment Proposals for Québec City

QUEBEC IMPROVEMENTS.

**THE
Fortress City of America.**

QUEBEC AS IT WAS AND AS IT WILL BE.


LORD DUFFERIN'S PLANS FOR THE PRESERVATION
OF ITS HISTORIC MONUMENTS.

IMPROVEMENTS OF THE ARCADES AND REPAIRS OF
ITS HISTORIC MONUMENTS.

Creation of the Grand Promenade in the World.

REPAIRS OF THE HISTORIC BUILDINGS OF THE
CITY OF ST. LOUIS.


Order to be the Honourable Secretary of the HOUSE OF COMMONS.



GENERAL VIEW OF CITADEL AND CHATEAU ST. LOUIS FROM ST. LAWRENCE.

ARTILLERY STORE-PALACE GATE.


It is a matter of course that the Citadel and Chateau St. Louis are the most important monuments of the city of Québec. It is a matter of course that the Citadel and Chateau St. Louis are the most important monuments of the city of Québec. It is a matter of course that the Citadel and Chateau St. Louis are the most important monuments of the city of Québec.



VIEW OF THE CITADEL AND CHATEAU ST. LOUIS FROM ST. LAWRENCE.

ST. JOHN'S GATE.


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VIEW OF THE CITADEL AND CHATEAU ST. LOUIS FROM ST. LAWRENCE.

MOUNTAIN HILL - NEW BRIDGE.


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VIEW OF THE CITADEL AND CHATEAU ST. LOUIS FROM ST. LAWRENCE.

ST. LOUIS GATE.

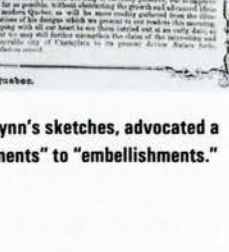
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VIEW OF THE CITADEL AND CHATEAU ST. LOUIS FROM ST. LAWRENCE.

THE NEW CHATEAU ST. LOUIS.

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VIEW OF THE CITADEL AND CHATEAU ST. LOUIS FROM ST. LAWRENCE.

History is everywhere—
around us, beneath us;
from the depths of yonder
valleys, from the top
of that mountain,
history rises up and presents
itself to our notice, exclaiming:
‘Behold me!’...
She rises as well
from those ramparts,
replete with daring deeds,
as from those illustrious plains
equally celebrated for
feats of arms,
and she again exclaims:
‘Here I am!’

Figure 2. *The Quebec Morning Chronicle* of 25 December 1875 dedicated a full page to Lord Dufferin's projects. The article, illustrated with engravings based on the

British architect William H. Lynn's sketches, advocated a shift from urban "improvements" to "embellishments." (NAC, C-115651)

1 P.J.O. Chauveau, quoted in James Macpherson LeMoine, *Picturesque Quebec: A Sequel to Quebec Past and Present* (Montréal: Dawson Brothers, 1882), 12-13.

In the Fall of 1874, members of Québec City's Special Committee on City Improvements travelled to Ottawa to present federal authorities with an urban redevelopment scheme that proposed, among other measures, the demolition of Québec's fortification walls. The Governor General's reaction to the Committee's proposals was rather blunt: "I have ... put my foot down," Lord Dufferin exclaimed. "Quebec is one of the most picturesque and beautiful cities in the World, not only from its situation, but also from the diadem of wall and towers by which it is encircled. Its wretched inhabitants, however, who are all of them pettifogging shopkeepers, would willingly flatten out their antique city into the quadrangular monotony of an American town"² The municipal officials viewed the demolition of Québec's obsolete fortifications as the first step in transforming the old colonial capital of Canada into a modern city, but Lord Dufferin saw otherwise. He wrote:

By dint of using the most abusive language, calling them Goths and Vandals ... I have succeeded in compelling [the members of the Special Committee] to agree to a compromise, namely,—to leave the walls ... and to allow me to send them a very clever architect I happen to know at home, who has a spécialité for picturesque medieval military construction, and who is to be allowed to finish off the breaches ... with tourelles, towers, turrets, &c, as may best preserve the ancient character of the enceinte.³

This was how Frederick Temple Blackwood, Lord Dufferin, third Governor General of the young Canadian nation, entered the late 19th-century debate over the redevelopment of Québec City. His embellishment proposals of 1875, presented as an alternative to the city's so-called "improvements," irrevocably altered the character of urban design efforts within Québec's Old Town. As a whole, Lord Dufferin's proposals made three major contributions to architecture and urban design in Québec: they transformed the concept of urban "improvements" into urban "embellishments"; they realized the idea of the "promenade" as a primary urban design principle; and they introduced a historicist, castellated idiom previously unknown in Québec City.

Moreover, in order to fortify the shaky foundations of a new Canadian self-consciousness and to reaffirm the imperial presence only a few years after the removal of British troops from Canadian soil, the embellishments Lord Dufferin proposed were highly symbolic in nature. In Lord Dufferin's mind, the Old Town's most valuable asset did not rest in the surviving ramparts themselves but rather in the evocative potential of the city's dramatic setting, its striking silhouette and tumultuous history—a potential that could be fulfilled through the enhancement of Québec's picturesque character, with turrets and gates used simultaneously as devices of visual composition and as emblems of Québec's historical significance. In "beautifying" Québec, the Governor General sought, in his own words, to "exalt and adorn [the city's] crown of towers" in a way that would preserve not the actual relics of the past, but certain romantic characteristics of its "glorious inheritance,"⁴ thus reinforcing certain aspects of Canadian history as pillars of national and imperial unity.

Two questions arise: first, what was the nature of the elements the Governor General proposed for the enhancement of the city's evocative character? Second, what was the nature of the "glorious inheritance" these elements were meant to evoke, or, more simply, what were the embellishments to represent? An assessment of these issues, which have not been explored in the existing scholarship, will shed light on the significance of Lord Dufferin's involvement in the planning of Québec City.⁵

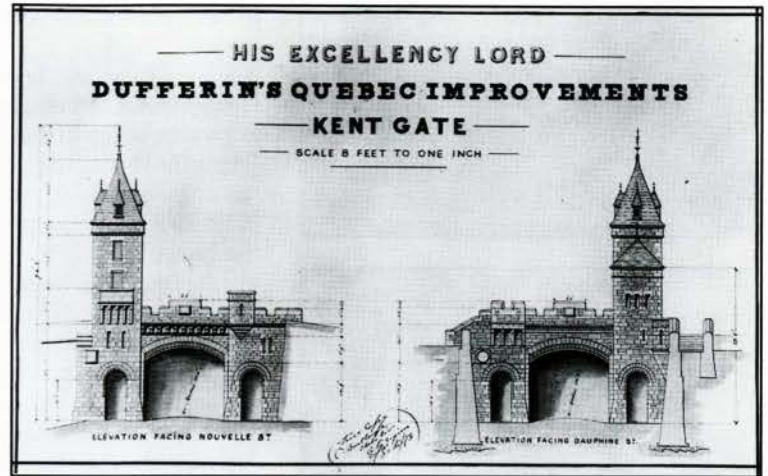
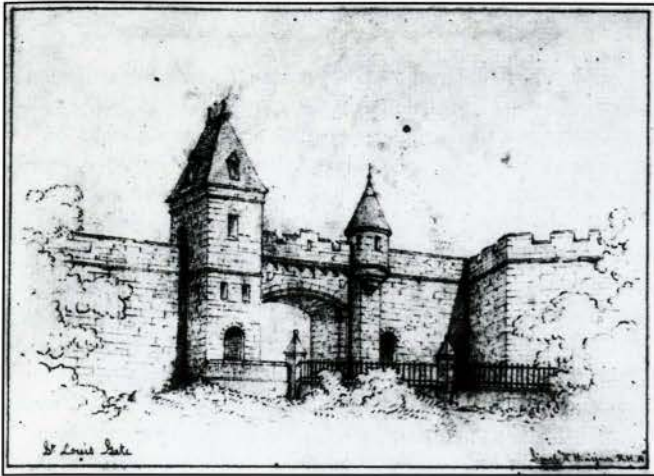
The Governor General's intervention occurred at a time when the city was undergoing major transformations. The same industrialization and rapid urbanization that affected most American and European cities in the mid 19th century exercised tremendous pressures on the former colonial capital of Canada. The city's extensive system of fortifications, which had been developed over a period of roughly 200 years under both French and English régimes, made communication between the city centre and the growing suburbs extremely difficult. The extent of land reserved for military use and the tight control military authorities exercised over every aspect of urban life caused great frustration for the population. Beginning in the 1840s, calls for a loosening of the military hold over the city became widespread; Québec's obsolete military infrastructure was perceived as the primary obstacle to progress, and its demolition as the ideal instrument of change. One by one, the city gates eventually fell prey to the pick-axe, and vast portions of the fortification walls were left to deteriorate. Stone by stone, the former "Gibraltar of America" was giving way to the vogue for grand boulevards, open vistas, parks and promenades.

2 Dufferin to Carnarvon, 21 December 1874, in C.W. de Kiewiet and F.H. Underhill, eds., *Dufferin-Carnarvon Correspondence 1874-1878* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1955), 124-5.

3 *Ibid.*

4 Lord Dufferin's "Speech at the banquet given by the citizens of Quebec in the Music Hall, Quebec, June 21, 1876," in Henry Milton, ed., *Speeches and Addresses of the Right Honourable Frederick Temple Blackwood, Earl of Dufferin* (London: John Murray, 1882), 179.

5 The two most important publications on the subject of the Québec embellishment projects are Achille Murphy, "Les projets d'embellissements de la ville de Québec proposés par Lord Dufferin en 1875," *The Journal of Canadian Art History* 1, no. 2 (Fall 1974): 18-29, and the last chapter in André Charbonneau, Yvon Desloges, and Marc Lafrance, *Québec the Fortified City: From the 17th to the 19th Century* (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1982).



When, in the Fall of 1875, a second mayoral delegation came to Ottawa to submit plans for additional urban improvements, the Governor General handed Québec's mayor a set of drawings which, in effect, formed his counter-proposal to the redevelopment project he had criticized a year earlier. Lord Dufferin's protege, the Irish architect William H. Lynn, proposed in these drawings various types of interventions, now labelled "embellishments" rather than "improvements" (figure 2, page 19). First, the city's repeated requests for the extension of streets between the Old Town and the suburbs were fulfilled, but their number was limited to two, and each passage through the city walls, either existing or proposed, was to be marked by a new gate along the western front or by turrets in other locations. In addition, so-called "tourelle additions" would be made at various points along the enceinte in order to enhance the Old Town's picturesque character. An iron bridge over Côte de la Montagne would allow pedestrian movement between the elevated sites of Durham Terrace and the old parliament grounds.

The embellishment proposals also adopted certain components of the 1874 improvements plan. For instance, the enlargement of the Esplanade (or parade grounds) was incorporated into Lynn's plan, and the architect elaborated the layout of a pathway to create an uninterrupted promenade along the walls, using the new gates as pedestrian bridges over busy streets (figure 3). Finally, the crowning feature of Lord Dufferin's embellishment proposals was to be a large vice-regal summer residence on the highest point within the Citadel, overlooking both the river and the city (figure 4 [see cover]). Its name, the Château Saint-Louis, referred to the colonial governors' palace that had stood nearby, on the site of Durham Terrace, until it burned in 1834.

The Governor General's project rapidly succeeded in shifting the focus of redevelopment from the demolition of Québec's historic fabric to the enhancement of its picturesque character. Not only were the surviving walls spared further destruction, but within a few years several components of the embellishments proposals took shape: in 1878-79 a new gate replaced the old Porte Saint-Louis and another gate—named Kent—rose over a new opening made through the western wall (figure 5). In October 1878, a few days before his return to Britain, Lord Dufferin laid the first stone of the Durham Terrace extension, an earlier project that the city incorporated into the embellishments and completed in 1879.⁶ The Esplanade park was partially executed and the Remparts Street walls were lowered to afford pedestrians panoramic views towards the Laurentian Mountains and the St. Lawrence River, but the proposed addition of turrets along these walls and on the sites of the former gateways were never realized.⁷ Neither were the iron bridge over Mountain Hill nor the controversial Château Saint-Louis.⁸

In the minds of Québec's residents and visitors, the embellishments became very much identified with the French character of the city, and architectural historians have done little to either corroborate or invalidate this impression. Instead, the embellishments have generally been interpreted as a sign of Québec's entry into the Victorian era, and as the embodiment of a romantic's vision inspired by the medieval buildings of Europe, leaving one to wonder what, precisely, were the sources of this inspiration. As is the case for any work of architecture, but particularly in relation to an overtly historicist age, the identification of such sources forms a fundamental aspect of any attempt to understand the significance of a project. Here, determining the nature of Lord Dufferin's aesthetic sense and of his architect's

Figure 3 (left). Proposed Porte Saint-Louis, Québec; W.H. Lynn, architect, 1875. (NAC, C-63993)

Figure 5 (right). Proposed Kent Gate, Québec; Charles Baillairgé, architect, 1878. City engineer Baillairgé oversaw the design development and construction of the executed embellishments. (NAC, C-118639)

6 City engineer Charles Baillairgé first proposed the extension of Durham Terrace in the early 1870s and included it in the 1874 "Plan of Proposed City Improvements" that was presented to Lord Dufferin.

7 Looking at Lynn's drawings, it remains unclear whether lowering the wall along Remparts Street was an integral part of his proposal or was appended by the city engineer from a proposal the city had made in December 1872. Mayor Garneau to Langevin, 27 December 1872 (National Archives of Canada) and Recommendations of the Minister of Militia and Defence, 21 June 1873 (National Archives of Canada), quoted in Charbonneau *et al.*, 450-51.

8 The arguments involved in the public debate over funding of the proposed Château were summarized by Arthur Buies, Québec's prominent columnist of the day, in a lecture entitled "L'Ancien et le Futur Québec" (19 January 1876), published later that year as *L'Ancien et le Futur Québec; Projet de son Excellence Lord Dufferin* (Québec: C. Darveau, 1876). Before the publication of the embellishment proposals, Buies was already advocating promenades as an urban design approach for Québec. Along with historian/travel writer James Macpherson LeMoine, Buies became one of the earliest and most ardent supporters of Lord Dufferin's proposals.

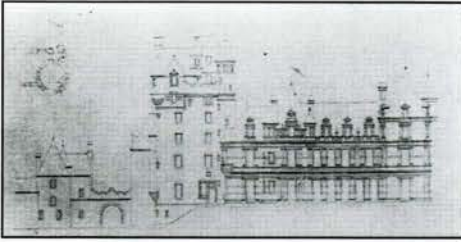


Figure 6 (top). Proposal for remodelling Clondeboye House, County Down, Northern Ireland; W.H. Lynn, architect, c. 1865. (Mark Bence-Jones, "The Building Dreams of a Viceroy - I; Clondeboye, Co. Down," *Country Life* 148 [1 October 1970]: 819; Jonathan Gibson/The Country Life Picture Library)

Figure 7 (above). A garden gateway for Dufferin's Killyleagh Castle; C. Lanyon, architect, c. 1850. W.H. Lynn was an apprentice in Lanyon's firm at this time; he became a partner a few years later. The firm's shift from Italianate to medievalist designs coincided with Lynn's arrival. (Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art)

formal vocabulary is essential to establish the significance of the proposed embellishments.

In an article entitled "The Building Dreams of a Viceroy," Mark Bence-Jones suggests that the implementation of Lord Dufferin's proposals, and especially the construction of the Château Saint-Louis, would have enabled the Governor General "to bring into being the baronial and French Renaissance fantasy which he had dreamt of raising on his Irish estate, and for which his architect, W.H. Lynn, had provided him with so many designs, all of them beyond his purse."⁹ Lynn was Ireland's principal proponent of the "Scots-Baronial," an architectural idiom developed from the 1830s by Scottish architects William Burn and David Bryce. Modelled on the late-medieval tower houses of Scotland, the style was devised as an architectural response to the cultural nationalism of the Scottish gentry. Regional in spirit, this adaptable model evoked the romance of Walter Scott's Scotland. With the 1853-55 remodelling of Queen Victoria's Balmoral Castle, designed by William Smith of Aberdeen and Prince Albert himself, Scots-Baronial became a truly British idiom. As an Irish peer of Scottish descent, Lord Dufferin readily endorsed Scots-Baronial for its formal, historical, and political associations with Scotland on one hand, and for its connections with British royalty on the other.

Lord Dufferin's involvement in architecture began as soon as he came of age and gained control over the family's estates. Until his Canadian appointment, the young baron's principal architectural efforts were aimed at remodelling his house and estate of Clondeboye in County Down, Northern Ireland, for which he commissioned designs in the Tudor Revival and Scots Baronial modes from English architect Benjamin Ferrey and Scottish architect William Burn. He eventually turned to fellow countryman William Lynn for his most ambitious (if unrealized) projects.

Lynn's designs for Clondeboye, produced from 1865 onward, participated in the evolution of Scots Baronial towards more overt references to French Renaissance sources, demonstrating the architect's ability to produce convincing renditions in the Baronial idiom from the starkest Scottish tower houses to the most ornate François I châteaux. Lynn's scheme to remodel Clondeboye Mansion covered the full range in a single proposal: the house's restrained, essentially symmetrical Georgian façades were to be replaced with an elaborate architecture of distinctly French Renaissance character (figure 6), and attached to this *corps de logis* was planned a large tower and gate-like *porte cochère* of overtly Scottish character.

While Lynn's Clondeboye schemes demonstrate his capacity to produce designs unmistakably French in appearance—and demonstrate Lord Dufferin's fondness for French castellated forms—they also help clarify the nature of the Québec designs. These designs possess more of the rugged simplicity of Lynn's Scots schemes than the ornate refinement of his French-inspired designs. Lynn's Québec gates echo the Scots-Baronial gateways built on Dufferin's Irish estates in the 1850s and 1860s (figure 7), and could be viewed as condensed versions of the tall square keep, *porte cochère*, and round turret leitmotif of his Clondeboye sketches. In addition, the turrets that were to adorn the city walls resemble those built along the garden walls of Lynn's Belfast Castle (1867-70), one of Ireland's most accomplished Scots-Baronial buildings. Finally, the proposed Château Saint-Louis was a much-abridged and simplified adaptation of one of Lynn's L-shaped Clondeboye schemes (figure 8), the main French features of which (the orders of engaged pilasters and steep hipped roofs) were subjected to an overriding Scots-Baronial treatment. All things considered, Lynn's Québec designs were not particularly French in character, and their appearance had little to do with the cultural and architectural flavour of the colonial capital. Instead, their evocative quality reinforced certain aspects of the city's history in support of Lord Dufferin's national political agenda.

The Governor General took office during a critical period in the initial stages of the Canadian Confederation when the foundations of future political development were being laid, and when the clash of competing regional interests tested the strength of the new nation. In the midst of a severe economic depression and faced with major political scandals, Lord Dufferin acted as a conciliatory but no less dedicated advocate of Canadian unity. His aim was the consolidation of the nation into "a patriotic, closely welded, and united whole,"¹⁰ and his agenda was two-fold. "You may depend," he told the British secretary of state for the colonies, "upon my doing my best both to *weld this Dominion into an Imperium solid enough to defy all attraction from its powerful neighbour across the Line, and to perpetuate its innate loyalty to the mother country....*" "It was only upon the understanding that this should be a principal part of our programme,"

9 Mark Bence-Jones, "The Building Dreams of a Viceroy - II; Lord Dufferin's Schemes in Canada and India," *Country Life* 148 (8 October 1970): 900-01.

10 Milton, *Speeches*, 241. These words, used to describe the progress of Manitoba towards a cohesive provincial society, also apply to the Governor General's ideal vision of the country as a whole.

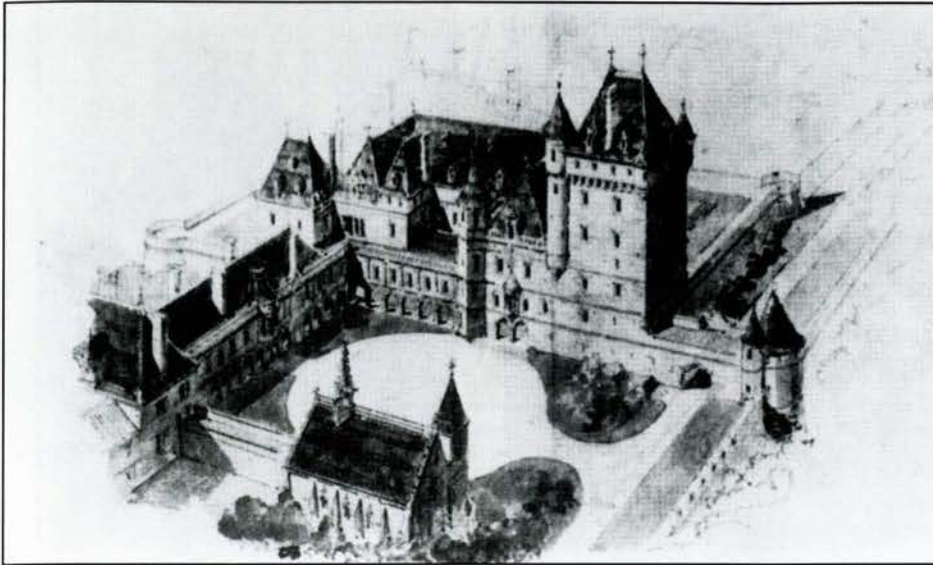


Figure 8. Design for a house at Grey Point, Clondeboye Estate, County Down, Northern Ireland; W.H. Lynn, architect. (Bence-Jones, "The Building Dreams of a Viceroy - I," 819; Jonathan Gibson/The Country Life Picture Library)

he added, "that I consented to come here."¹¹ Lord Dufferin promoted national unity on the basis of an increasing political, economic, and cultural interdependency between Canadians; the national life he envisaged would grow out of a shared inheritance and provide the promise of a common destiny. In his mind, Québec City's potential contribution to the establishment of a pan-Canadian identity depended on the city's representation of "the brilliant history and traditions of the past."¹² In the face of ancestral antagonism between Canada's two founding nations, the Old Town provided a perfect stage for the merging of French and English history into a single, heroic past. Accordingly, the enhancement of Québec's picturesque character by the addition of turrets and gates to the city's fortifications presented the *promeneur* with a restructured vision of the city's history. Adorned, the city walls ceased to be mere historical remains and became a more evocative and monumental *souvenir historique*,¹³ a grand memorial to a reconfigured and idealized past.

There were three basic components to the historical narrative depicted in Dufferin's *embellished* city: first, the identification of the Battle of 1759 as the most significant moment of Québec City's history; second, the reaffirmation of the battle's symbolic outcome—that is, the fateful and heroic union in death of commanders Wolfe and Montcalm; and third, the affiliation of contemporary history with that "glorious past." In his Québec City speech of June 1876, the Governor General reported that, at his request, the British Secretary of State for War had asked the Imperial House of Commons

to vote a sum of money to be expended in the decoration of some point along your walls in such a manner as might serve to connect [the soldier world of Great Britain] with the joint memory of those two illustrious heroes, Wolfe and Montcalm, whose deeds of valour and whose noble deaths in the service of their respective countries would have been alone sufficient to immortalize the fair fortress for whose sake they contended, and whose outworks they watered with their blood.¹⁴

Here, Dufferin evoked the three elements of his historical vision: the battle that formed the genesis of the new country, the merged heroic figures of Wolfe and Montcalm as precursors of cultural unity between the two founding nations, and the association of contemporary soldiers with the glories of Québec's past.

The insertion of contemporary history into the fabric of the past was further achieved when Queen Victoria sponsored the new Kent gate, dedicated to her father, the Duke of Kent. The Queen's personal association with Québec was thus to become one of the episodes along the city walls' historical promenade, and the latest chapter in the city's heroic narrative. Involving the Queen in the embellishment of Québec City was one of the ways the Governor General found to express, in a tangible manner, Canada's renewed participation in the British empire and, more importantly, a continued imperial presence in Canada. Building a vice-regal residence at the heart of the Citadel, the former centre of Britain's colonial military power in Canada, would have achieved the same goal, but on an even grander scale. Lord Dufferin felt it was "of very great importance

11 Dufferin to Carnarvon, 25 April 1874; Sir Alfred Lyali, *The Life of the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava* (London: John Murray, 1905), 1:229. My emphasis.

12 Milton, *Speeches*, 242.

13 This expression was used by columnist Arthur Buies, "L'Ancien et le Futur Québec," 10.

14 Milton, *Speeches*, 179-80.

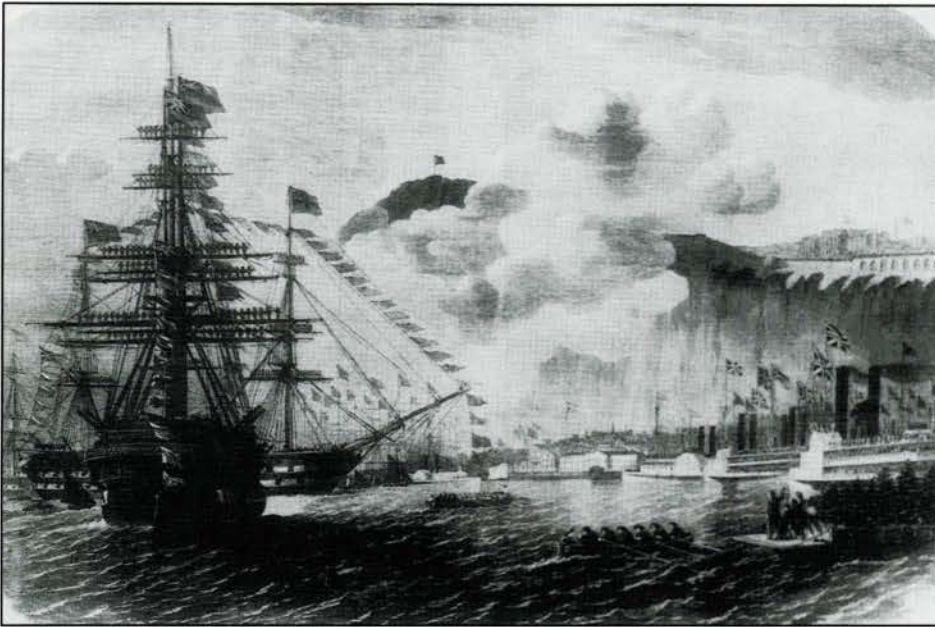


Figure 9 (left). "The Prince of Wales Landing at Quebec," *The Illustrated London News*, 29 September 1860. (Bibliothèque de l'Université Bishop, Lennoxville)

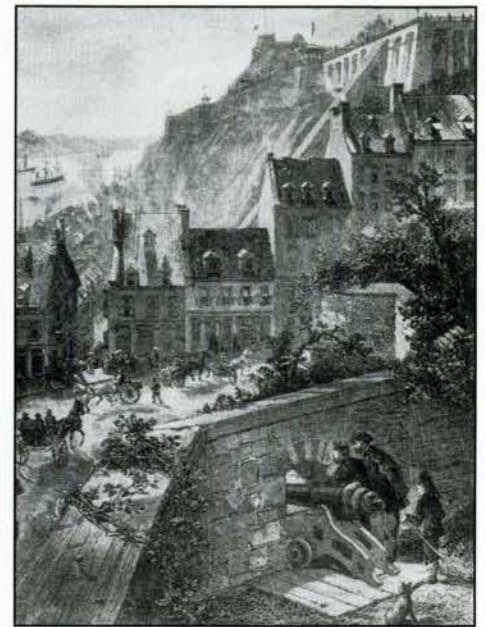


Figure 10 (right). "Quebec—A Glimpse from the Old City Walls," *Picturesque Canada*, 1882. (Private Collection)

that the Governor General should reside some time in Québec and amongst the French speaking population."¹⁵ Perched high above the city, the Château Saint-Louis would have provided a visible, and permanent, sign of his presence in the capital of French Canada.

Over the years since the British conquest, countless views of the cliff-side fortress had given the site even greater symbolic significance. In landscape paintings, portraits, illustrations, and even on tableware, the King's Bastion, with its cannon and flagpole, repeatedly appeared as a monumental pedestal for the British flag. In *The Illustrated London News*' depiction of the Prince of Wales 1860 visit to Québec, for instance, the representation of British rule in Canada was reduced to its simplest and most iconic form: the silhouette of the Citadel's bastion with the British banner floating high above the river (figure 9). The Château St-Louis' dramatic silhouette in that precise location would have further underlined the importance of the site (see figure 2); by occupying the key position in Québec's most depicted view, the house of the British monarch's representative would have likely become one of the city's major iconographic symbols.

AS A WHOLE, WILLIAM LYNN'S DESIGNS FOR THE QUÉBEC EMBELLISHMENTS brought about the codification of the city's long-recognized picturesqueness—a character that had evolved over two and one-half centuries through the incidents of site, architecture, and history—into a series of standardized, emblematic architectural features: towers, turrets, bartisans, *portes cochères*, and groups of high conical and pyramidal roofs. The notion of the picturesque—an aesthetic established in painting and landscape art later applied to architecture and, with Walter Scott's work, to history itself—guided the recomposition of these codified elements in order to create various evocative tableaux.

While the anachronistic, late-medieval idiom of the Québec embellishments signalled the fortifications' association with history, or at least with a certain vision of their historical significance, the forms of the gates and of the proposed Château Saint-Louis also evoked royal prestige and pageantry. Set apart from any of the local architectural traditions but tied to sites of great significance, the proposed embellishments were readily identifiable emblems of the nation's reconfigured heroic history and of the renewed imperial presence in Canada. In an attempt to transform Québec's fortifications into a device for viewing the city's reconfigured past, the Governor General's embellishments, in effect, replaced the soldier's watchful gaze with the *promeneur's* charmed glance (figure 10). On the day the Governor General's projects were announced, a local daily stated: "History speaks from every stone of [Quebec's] ruined walls, and from every standpoint of its surroundings; antiquity is stamped upon its face and quaintness is its chief characteristic."¹⁶ The spectacle the embellishments made visible was this picturesque landscape of history. In the late 19th century, freed from the stranglehold of military colonialism, *la Vieille Capitale* joined the mighty empire of the past.

15 Dufferin to Carnarvon, 9 March 1876, and de Kiewiet, *Correspondence*, 196.

16 *The Quebec Morning Chronicle*, 25 December 1875.

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