



I.M. Pei left his mark on Montreal, above. Le Sieur de Maisonneuve, below, founded Montreal in 1642.

Tales of Three Cities

It has taken time to realize that the rebirth of old cities is good and natural. For many years the emphasis in Canada and elsewhere was on urban renewal, bulldozing and rebuilding. It worked well in Montreal, where it provided a bustling and beautiful weather-proof core of hotels, offices, shops and restaurants, but in other places it worked badly. It destroyed needed housing, induced sprawl and turned city neighbourhoods into work places — sterile by day and deserted by night. It implied (unintentionally) that old neighbourhoods, like old horses, could, when necessary, be removed discreetly from the face of the earth.

In the early seventies

Canada decided to accept the urban past as a natural part of the urban future. It inaugurated the Neighbourhood Improvement Program (NIP) to provide federal aid for rehabilitation and the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP) to make loans to the owners of old houses. From the start the programs recognized that no two old neighbourhoods are alike. Some, like those surrounding the Kensington Market in Toronto, survive unaided — the colourful house on the cover is an example of Kensington vitality—and some need help.

In this issue of CANADA TODAY/D'AUJOURD'HUI we consider revitalization in Canada's three largest cities.

