

by HEATHER HUESTON

When landscape architect Joann Latremouille drove through Nova Scotia, it was a "kind of magic" for her. The houses she saw were like a living textbook, tracing early examples of mediaeval house-building techniques brought over by immigrants.

This was nothing like the post-industrial Prairies architecture the Winnipeg-born Latremouille had grown up with, and she became intrigued about the origins of the unique Nova Scotia historic housing and why it was replaced with a homogeneous style of bungalows and mobile homes. When she discovered how little was written about the tradition of ordinary houses (as opposed to catalogued heritage houses), she began to research her book, *Pride of Home: The Working Class Housing Tradition in Nova Scotia 1749-1949* (Lancelot Press, 1986).

She explains her social history



Photo: Kathleen Flanagan

THE LUNENBURG 'BUMP'

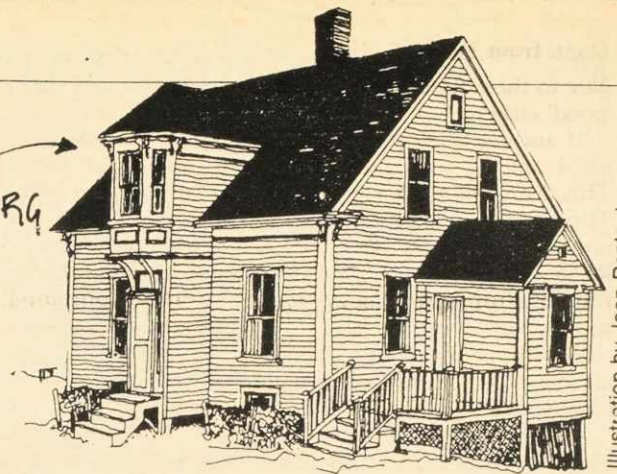


Illustration by Joan Rentout

In Nova Scotia we live in **BUMPS AND BOXES**

Although there are terms like Carpenter Gothic or Lunenburg Bump (a protruding entry hall common to the South Shore), Latremouille goes beyond listing formal architecture to talk about social issues of working class housing.

towns.

In large cities like Halifax, overcrowding was a problem from 1749 till attempts early in this century to address the working poor. The first major project to provide affordable housing for the lower class was the Halifax Relief Commission's project to build houses for those displaced by the Halifax Explosion. The paternalism of the Relief Commission reflected the cloak of benevolence that Latremouille says was part of the times. She objects to the fact that the Relief Commission invested the relief fund in housing and expected a profit from the venture. In effect, says Latremouille, the rents paid by the displaced paid for the care of the injured, something that should have been the Government's direct responsibility.

Latremouille likes the idea of housing co-ops. In her book she describes the success of the Arnold Housing Co-op (named after the Co-op's organizer, a Miss Arnold from New York). In 1930s Cape Breton, miners formed study groups. Some of these organized to research co-op housing. They read design and construction, housing legislation, finance and cost analysis as well as having "consciousness-raising" sessions about what they really wanted in a home. This was heavy preparation and self-education, something that Latremouille admits might not be attractive to most homeowners. However, she says, the "awful

conditions" of depression-era Cape Breton which motivated them don't exist any more.

The "togetherness" necessary for a co-op was already present in the close-knit communities of Cape Breton, where people probably worked in the same place or were related. In later Co-op programs under the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Commission, strangers had to work together.

This period of adjustment to new partners' habits and complaints about time spent in co-op meetings are still problems with modern co-ops.

Latremouille says Maritime housing shouldn't be "divorced from indigenous architecture as it currently is." As for the cost of designing one's own home as opposed to buying a townhouse in Sackville, Latremouille says the townhouses don't have to be as bleak as they are.

Some young professionals are rehabbing historic Halifax houses, which in turn is driving out the working class to the bungalows and mobile homes made popular by the post-war CMHC pattern books and financing. Some architects in the 50s did try to make a well-designed mobile home but in the end they didn't pursue it. If they can sell a shoddy product, says Latremouille, why should they sell something that takes more effort? The most conservative element in the housing system is the large developer. There is no incentive to change for style or for better design.

Latremouille sees a possibility for working class housing to revive an indigenous architecture with co-op housing designed by local architects and incorporating local stylistic devices such as Halifax storm porches. She also sees quite a few rural owner-builders who don't have a lot of money but who do have the skills and who achieve traditional and unique homes.

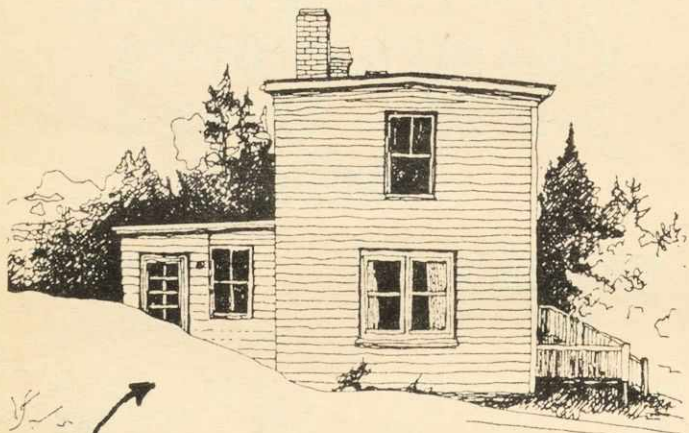
As for modern Halifax's development, Latremouille says some things are good, but a lot of it is grandiose junk.

"The Central Trust Building is something you could see anywhere! It says nothing about Nova Scotia. There are probably plans just like (that building) that are going up in five other Canadian cities."

Purdy's Wharf is more in tune with its setting. "There's just enough to suggest water, sea-shore. You probably wouldn't see that anywhere else."

She has concerns for the proposed two towers to be built on Spring Garden Road. "For anybody to build a highrise in a coastal city, especially one this far north, without a wind study, is irresponsible and non-responsive to existing climate." That's why there is such a wind tunnel on Barrington Street and around the Park Victoria apartments. To amplify the breezes going between land and sea by constructing highrises "could destroy" Spring Garden as a lovely place to walk along.

Perhaps Latremouille's feeling for the importance of Maritime architecture is summed up in her quotation of architectural writer Alan Gowans: "Here alone in English Canada do you commonly find architecture developing normally out of local conditions, and based on a naturally inherited tradition."



THE MARITIME BOX STYLE SIDE VIEW

approach to the subject by saying she wanted to find the connection between the "worldview" of the builders and the forms they produced. Latremouille looks at the way a house's design responds to the Maritime reality. "The Maritime Box," with its almost flat roof (due to the invention of waterproof roofing) and its bright colours, is suited to the foggy coastline, while the steep-roofed (to withstand heavy snow-fall) white farmhouses are characteristic of the inland.

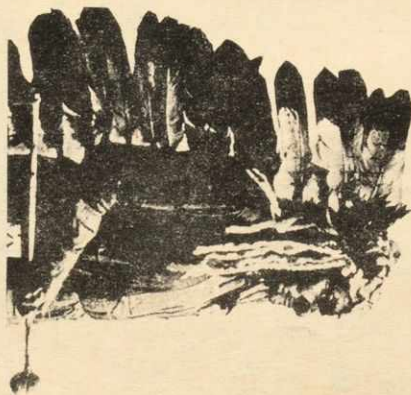
Two examples of industrialization and housing are the mining towns of Cape Breton and the Hydrostone project in Halifax's North End after the Halifax Explosion of 1917.

In Cape Breton, the mining companies kept miners' housing conditions to a minimum and kept the miners tied to the houses by heavy mortgages. Latremouille says she was shocked to learn of the 11 per cent infant mortality rate common in these

respond to this violence in a constructive fashion.

I think it is very important to respect the anger that is found in Julian's art. It is not a simple task, nor should it be, to respect this emotion. Respect is achieved through shared experience or education (neither of which is an easy road) and, since most Canadians are not Third World oppressed, education is what most of us must undertake to acquire it. The first step towards this respect is developing an understanding of the anger seen in *Lone Ranger in Pakistan*.

"Our shortage of peas produced/the industrial revolution./Our marrow burned the skies



over Great Britain," writes Julian in *Did the Silk Routes Develop the Arms Industry or Spinning Beach Balls*.

The anger expressed in these lines is a shadow of that which moves people to bomb civilians, massacre native peoples, or volunteer to a suicide mission of hijacking or murder. Michael Lebrun, in his work *An Angel of God*, says of third world people:

"(Philanthropic campaigns) often (fail) to prevent women and children from leading attacks on power stations and police barracks. They view charity as nothing more than the return of a

tiny amount of the huge sums that, over the centuries, have been withheld from farmlands."

Julian's anger is that of the centuries-long oppressed who have been denied a voice amongst themselves and on the world stage. The imposition of this violence has barely been abated in 1987. Refugees from numerous situations of violence, oppression and poverty arrive in Canada daily, only to be greeted by racist, stereotypical depictions in the media, discriminatory treatment by immigration officials and others, and the more subtle violence of advertising. They are told in many ways to conform and assim-

Cont. on Pg. 15

LONE RANGER IN PAKISTAN

by CHRIS CAVANAGH

reprinted from the *McGill Daily*

Mass-media lies, 'imperialist' violence against the poor, and the colonial mentality are some of the provocative issues you will find in *Lone Ranger in Pakistan* by Julian Samuel, a Montreal filmmaker/critic originally from Lahore, Pakistan. Rising above these themes, however, is the anger that suffuses every word, phrase and image in this collection.

Julian gives graphic descriptions of events, real and fictitious, reporting and illustrating the violence done to the poor by the rich. I believe that most attempts to convey this violence are inadequate in moving people to