

News of the arts

Portraits of historical houses on display at Royal Ontario Museum



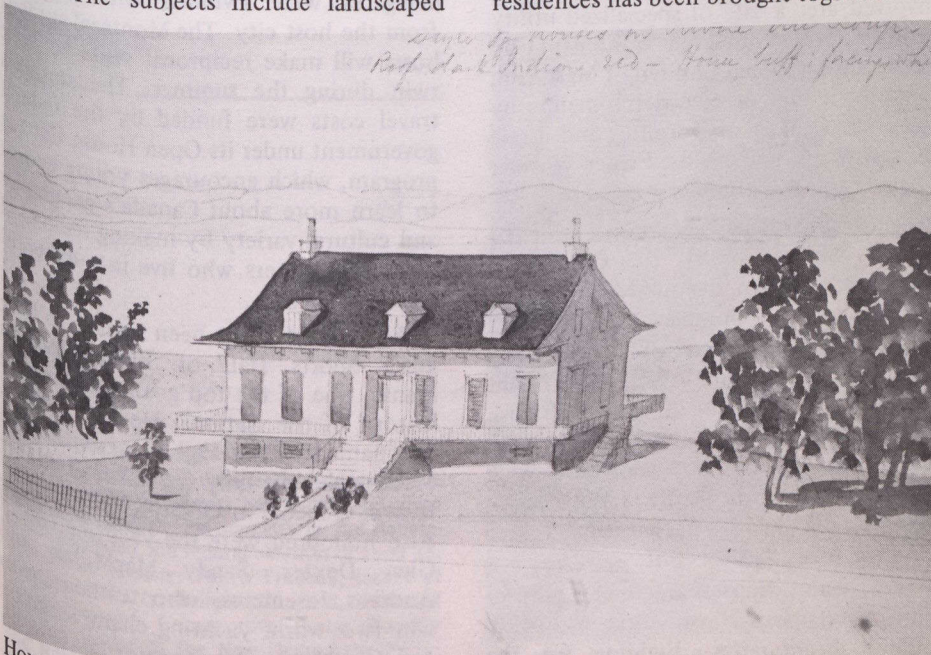
St. Antoine Hall, Montreal by James Duncan, 1850.

House portraits of historic dwellings from all across Canada make up an exhibition entitled, *House Proud: Canadian Houses as Seen by Nineteenth Century Artists*, on display at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto until September 30.

Some 60 water colours and oil paintings executed by amateur and professional artists provide a visual commentary on varying architectural styles and modes of living — from log cabins to formal mansions. The subjects include landscaped

surroundings, flower and kitchen gardens, urban settings and rural retreats. Some of the most charming views include the house owners at leisure on their properties.

The English tradition of having one's town or country seat portrayed was not prevalent in Canada. However, by supplementing the ROM's Sigmund Samuel Collection with paintings borrowed from ten different collections, a significant group of paintings depicting historic Canadian residences has been brought together.



House at Rivière du Loup by Edwin Whitefield, 1860.

These paintings show the house as the principal subject, rather than as an incidental building in a general landscape or city view. Most of the houses are identifiable, and their history intertwines with that of their former owners, who gave their homes special names such as "The Grange", "Rose Hill", "Castlefield", "The Retreat" and "St. Antoine Hall". The owners themselves include such varied people as a Quebec merchant and a seigneur, North America's first zoo-keeper, a Montreal artist and a Queen's Printer.

House Proud: Canadian Houses as Seen by Nineteenth-Century Artists includes paintings commissioned by proud house owners as well as views rendered by members of the family or friends as mementos. They survive both as works of art and as valued records of early Canadian homes.

Best new play chosen

The Chalmers Award for best new Canadian play in 1980 went to Toronto's Erika Ritter for her work *Automatic Pilot*. Miss Ritter has said she would split the \$5,000 award with the director of the play, Bill Lane.

The winner, selected by the Toronto Drama Bench, was one of 27 new plays produced in the Toronto area during the past year. Runners-up, which receive \$1,000 each, are *Ain't Lookin'* (by John Craig and George Luscombe), *The Mac-Paps* (Larry Cox, George Luscombe and Mac Reynolds) and *Extreme Close Up*, by Neil Munro.

Automatic Pilot, a play about a tragic standup comedian, has been produced twice in Toronto as well as in Victoria and Vancouver. It has also been broadcast on radio by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

The Drama Bench Award for distinguished contribution to Canadian theatre went to designer Astrid Janson. Miss Janson, whose work relies heavily on feathery compositions of textiles and plastic sheeting, is most recently noted for her *Cherry Orchard* at the Shaw Festival last summer, and her recent *Christopher Columbus* at Toronto Workshop Productions.

The Chalmers Award, which began in 1972 when it was given to David Freeman for *Creeps*, is considered the most prestigious new play award in Canada.