

 **SAVING
PLACES**



PTV
PRODUCTIONS

PRESS KIT



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1. SERIES SYNOPSIS

Heritage buildings are our historical works of art. Many remain actively used, places in which people live and work. Others are abandoned. The passage of time naturally takes a toll. A leaking roof, a leaning staircase, unhinged doors and cracked foundations. What do we do with a heritage building threatened by the ravages of age and neglect? We can tear it down. Our landfill sites are filled with demolition debris. Or we can rescue, repair, and restore.

Saving Places is a documentary series about restoring Canada's history one building at a time. Each episode documents the hands-on restoration of a desperately endangered but historically meaningful Heritage building — a building that tells a story about important people and events in our collective past.



Restoration means repairing and renewing an old building, taking it back to its glory days. It aims for as much historical authenticity as possible, using the materials, designs and craftsmanship of a bygone era. Restoration work takes a special kind of tradesperson — skilled in methods that are foreign to most modern building construction, forgotten by generations. But it also takes a special kind of character — to recognize and care for work done by the toil of those no longer with us. These are classic artisans, capturing the spirit, values and beauty of our ancestors through the buildings they've left behind.



But *Saving Places* isn't just about the sentimental feelings for old-fashioned architecture. It's about the conflict, egos, headaches and high stakes of saving a piece of irreplaceable history from the wrecking ball, while trying to mix the right kind of plaster, match the right tone of milk paint or carve the right curve in a staircase banister.

The dramatic backdrop is a primal battleground between old and new, novelty and conservation, demolition and salvation, refuse and re-use, private interest and common memory.

2. EPISODE BRIEFS

Hour 1: The Church of the Holy Cross, Skatin, B.C.

In 1905, deep in the interior of British Columbia, 17 native woodcarvers, without power tools or architectural plans, but only some postcards given to them by the Oblate missionary priests of cathedrals in France, built a church out of cedar. For a hundred years, this magnificent all-wood cathedral has been the heart of the local native community. But over time, the log foundation has shifted, cracked, and rotted. The Church of the Holy Cross, a National Historic Site, needs a new foundation before it falls down and is lost forever.



Hour 2: The Tilting Post Office, Fogo Island, NFLD

Tilting is a small fishing village on the island of Fogo off the north shore of Newfoundland. In Canada, it doesn't get much more remote than that. That's why the local post office in this 300-year-old Irish settlement is almost as sacred to the residents as the local church. It now sits abandoned and deteriorating. The town folk would love to see it restored, and used as a local museum. The entire town of Tilting is a National Historic Site, described by Parks Canada as "one of the country's best preserved collections of structures associated with the fishery and early farming." But it's on Heritage Canada's "10 Most Endangered Places" list.

Hour 3: Homer Watson House, Kitchener, ON

Before the Group of Seven were out of grade school, Homer Watson, Canada's pre-eminent 19th century landscape painter, was a world-class artist, counting among his collectors Mackenzie King, Oscar Wilde, and Queen Victoria. Since his death at the age of 81 in 1936, the Homer Watson House has remained a lively testament to his life's work, operating as a gallery, a studio of local artists and an art school. Only now, this heritage building has developed a serious structural problem that threatens to destroy its living history, threatening the original artwork within, including a frieze painted on the walls by Watson.





3. EPISODE OUTLINES

The Church of the Holy Cross, Skatin, BC

A white-washed cedar cathedral stands in the wilderness by a riverbank, a couple of hours drive from the site of booming development for the 2010 Winter Olympics, Whistler, BC. The century-old Church of the Holy Cross or “The Skookumchuck Church” is built entirely of wood. It’s a unique example of “carpenter-Gothic,” entirely hand-carved, with three towering spires, a rose window and arches. Inside, heritage experts say the stunning beauty of its hand-crafted religious folk art will take your breath away. But after a century of spring flooding, the Lillooet River has taken a toll on the church’s foundation, and a major flood in 2003 left cracks and shifting. This monument to native art and faith is in grave danger. It’s in desperate need of a restoration. Without a new foundation, it is at high risk of collapsing.

In 1905, with no architectural plans, basic hand tools, and just postcard pictures of Gothic cathedrals in France (given to them by the Roman Catholic Oblate missionaries), 17 native craftsmen built a cathedral — their own Notre Dame in the B.C. woods.

The Church’s outside is striking enough, with three towering spires — “... but its interior is even more stunning, with shafts of blue, green and yellow light streaming in through stained glass to fall on the elaborate pews, tabernacle, side altars, priest’s chair and confessionals. All of it is hand-carved, including the crosses, the curved altar railing and a white dove that hangs from the undulating ceiling.” (The Globe and Mail, “Deep in the wild, a testament of faith,” by Mark Hume) It is an exceptional world-class example of hand-crafted folk art.

The Skookumchuck Church is a National Historic Site — one of the last and largest all-wood cathedrals in Canada, and a priceless part of Canada’s religious heritage. Although until recently, the Church has still been used for weddings, funerals and baptisms, (with a priest brought in from the closest town for special occasions), many of the parishioners haven’t felt safe inside. Now, a structural engineer has declared the situation “critical,” and all public use has been suspended.

Many of the grandchildren of the original builders are still living, and there are over a hundred archival photographs of the Church’s early years. Sharon Syrette, who married into the local band, says the Church has always been the heart of the community. Her husband and children were baptized there. She helped form a volunteer committee to raise funds for the desperately needed restoration, inspired by her 92 year old mother-in-law who pleaded to her, “Save my church.” Another elder mother told her “I do not want to see the church fall down before I do.”

There are additional restoration plans: An octagonal rose-stained glass window needs repairing, and cedar shingles on the spires need replacing. But the really high stakes are with the foundation.

The foundation is made of hand-hewn timbers set above ground on giant river rocks that were dragged from the Lillooet River. A new foundation that would stabilize the building from below the frost line is considered feasible, though potentially dangerous work. One brave contracting company has given an assessment and budget. Sharon’s volunteer committee has been slowly raising funds for several years, but they know they’re on borrowed time.

The biggest challenge of the restoration is the location and logistics: the Church is about two hours drive from the nearest town, at the end of 50 kilometers of gravel logging road. The local band consists of about 60 people and a dozen houses. There are no nearby accommodations, no hydro power, no phones. Past work on the roof required the crew to set up and live out of trailers, and rely on diesel generators.

Without a new foundation, the Church of the Holy Cross will likely fall down. Before a Cathedral falls in the forest, will anybody hear? A new foundation can breath another 100 years of life into the Church — and its parishioners.



EPISODE OUTLINES cont...

The Tilting Post Office, Fogo Island, NFLD

Tilting is a small fishing and farming out-port on the island of Fogo off the north shore of Newfoundland. In Canada, it doesn't get much more remote than that. That's why the local post office in this 300-year-old Irish settlement is almost as sacred to the residents as the local church. But the old decommissioned post office building on Post Office Lane that served this community and was its primary connection to the outside world for generations, now sits abandoned and deteriorating. The town folk would love to see it restored, and used as a local museum.

The entire town of Tilting is a National Historic Site, described by Parks Canada as "one of the country's best preserved collections of structures associated with the fishery and early farming." But it's on Heritage Canada's "10 Most Endangered Places" list. That's because, despite an enthusiastic local group of volunteers (the Tilting Recreation and Cultural Society) who have been restoring some of the small historical buildings that were essential to the traditional fishery, the town has simply run out of money to keep up their work. It doesn't help that the population of the village keeps shrinking.

The old post office is a small white wood frame structure with a special roof shape to identify its public function. Right now, it's used for storage, but much of the original interior is intact — just in need of some serious repair and restoration work. The exterior needs new cladding and re-roofing. Like all the buildings in the village, this one's designed for launching, that is, moving. All the village's brightly painted saltbox frame houses and buildings, spread out along the shore, are transportable, and can be moved around to suit the seasons.

Lots of other aging residents remember the old post office and its role in the lives of the villagers, and they'd all love to see it come to life once more. A former postmistress, Mrs. Gertie Dwyer, is still alive, and living in a nursing home on the Island. The town owns some artifacts from back when the post office was in use. This is a restoration job for the whole town to get into, with lots of old Irish/Newfoundland characters, humour and local history.

There's one particular fan of the old post office who's keen to help out with the restoration. Heritage architect Robert Mellin has a passion for Tilting, has written an award-winning architectural book on the village. He's done extensive volunteer work with the town, lobbying for cash to help with restorations and promoting its heritage value. The old post office restoration is a labour of love for Mellin.

The town head-count has dropped from 700 to 200 in the last 15 years, and they'd love to stem the tide of emigration, or at the very least, keep the visitors coming back. They're convinced that restoring the old post office is a perfect way to keep the past — and Tilting — from fading away.



EPISODE OUTLINES cont...

The Home Watson House, Kitchener, ON

A leaky roof. It's the natural enemy of all old homes. How much more so, when the roof is atop an art gallery — where dampness, let alone drips, can spell disaster for original paintings? Sometimes, when the wind blows a certain way, the rain gets in. Other times, it's the melting snow and ice. Just when and where the drips bead up on the wooden paneled ceiling, no one knows. Sometimes it takes a half dozen well-placed buckets to catch the drops. The ceiling is beginning to show signs of staining and rot.

Canadians are rediscovering the historical and artistic importance of Homer Watson — the first great Canadian landscape painter. Biographies are being written, and Canada Post stamps being commemorated. But Homer Watson's homestead, a 170 house in Kitchener, Ontario, which contains his gallery, one of the oldest art galleries in Ontario, is in serious danger. A very complicated structural problem is causing water damage, and threatening to put an end to its living history.

Before the Group of Seven were out of grade school, Queen Victoria of England owned three Homer Watson landscapes. Lord Strathcona owned several. So did Oscar Wilde, who kept up a longtime correspondence with the man he called the "Canadian Constable" after popular British painter John Constable. Homer Watson's pastoral paintings of the Canadian countryside may have eventually been overshadowed by the more modern Group of Seven's take on the Canadian landscape, but Homer Watson was the grandfather of Canadian artists — his stature and spirit dominated generations. And when he died, his friend William Lyon MacKenzie King, with whom he shared an interest in spiritualism, lamented that his was a truly amazing soul.

Homer Watson purchased the house in 1883. He added the large studio room in 1893, and the gallery in 1906. When he passed on, in 1936, his home continued to be open to the public, as home of the Doon School of Fine Art. Even members of the Group of Seven took turns leading art classes there. In 1955, Historic Sites and Monuments of Canada declared the house of national historic significance, and in 1980 it got a Heritage designation from the Ontario Heritage Act. It belongs to the township of Kitchener.

Today, the house that Homer Watson lived in for half a century, wherein he kept a gallery and studio, and taught art classes, is leased by the Homer Watson Foundation. The gallery walls still display his artwork. There is a frieze that he painted as a tribute to the landscape artists of the 19th century, containing the names of 13 European artists and small scenes in each of their styles. Contemporary local artists work in the art studio. Curator Faith Heiblinger describes the house as having a spiritual quality, and speaks of rumours that it is happily haunted. But she worries about how much longer the house can remain the home of original artwork without a serious restoration.

The trouble is all in the rare design of the windows that are set into the roof of the Gallery addition. It was given a style of wrap-around windows set in the roof called a "Clerestory", a new and unusual architectural detail mainly seen in Churches. According to curator Faith Heiblinger, there is a flaw in the design, and it may even require redesigning and rebuilding the windows. But contractors can't decide on how to do it, especially if they want to retain the overall integrity of the heritage house. Meanwhile, the frieze is beginning to suffer water damage, the ceiling is rotted and in places, the light fixtures hang loose above paintings where the screws no longer stay in the wood. And the general problem of damp air is putting the whole of the Homer Watson art collection at risk.

The Homer Watson House needs saving. The window and roof design is complicated and unique. The solution is going to take expert architectural advice and master craftsmanship in heritage buildings. There's a lot at stake. With 125 years of Canadian art history, and the spirit of Homer Watson, this house can't wait forever for a restoration rescue.

www.homerwatson.on.ca



4. HOSTS BIOS

Our hosts Angus, Chris and Daniel take us through each episode, riding through the highs and lows of the restoration process, illuminating as they go. All three are passionate about the need to save these historically valuable sites and determined to contribute, in any way they can, to their restoration.

Angus Skene is an architect, presenter, and the creator of the long running series Structures. Angus is “The History Hound.” With good-natured curiosity, a quirky sense of humour, and excellent story-telling skills, Angus sets out to uncover the history of the building by going out into the community to find the stories behind the buildings. He tracks down the people, pictures, records, etc. that will help show how a heritage building, itself, is telling us its story.



Christopher Borgal B. Arch., OAA, MRAIC, CAPHC, is a Principle of Goldsmith Borgal & Company Ltd. Architects. He’s got a thousand restorations under his belt — everything from the Bona Vista Lighthouse in NFLD to the legislative buildings in Victoria BC. The master restoration architect behind Goderich, and for years, the senior heritage consultant for Parliament Hill. “Mr. Heritage Restoration,” he’s our veteran expert, senior consultant, and general know-it-all.

He comes in at the beginning of every project and tells us why we should save this heritage building, what needs saving and how it needs to be done. He trouble-shoots when there are problems, gives advice, admonishes where necessary. He is our official restoration advocate.

Daniel Beeston is a 26-year-old Londoner who started out in construction but when he immigrated to Canada, became drawn to restoration work instead because it was “more romantic.” As “The Apprentice” on the series, Daniel does the dirty work of restoring the building as a junior member of the restoration team. He learns on the job and we learn along with him.





5. KEY CREATIVES

PTV Productions Inc. is an established, diverse & innovative producer of documentaries, lifestyle, factual series, and digital media; the company has produced over 60 hours of programming and several websites.

PTV's recent broadcast productions include: *Inside Disaster*, a 3-part disaster relief series for TVO and ITV; *Star Portraits*, a 13-part arts/bio series for Bravo! Canada, that premiered September 2009; 3-part series *Saving Places*, a restoration series for History Television Canada; award-winning feature documentary, *Passage*, which premiered on BBC Scotland and aired on History Television Canada in 2009; and treaty co-production documentary *Aga Khan: A Voice of Reason*, which received record-breaking numbers for Vision TV in 2008.

In 2006, PTV began extending its production emphasis towards digital and multimedia content, and creating accompanying websites for its projects. PTV has produced numerous interactive websites for broadcast series including *Inside Disaster*, *Saving Places*, *Letters to God*, and *Star Portraits*.

The company has also expanded its in-house capabilities to include post-production facilities with full editing, CGI and motion graphics services.

PTV's television productions have received many awards and nominations including five Gemini Nominations, three Gemini Awards, a Writers Guild of Canada award, a Chris Award, one CFTPA Documentary award, a Banff World Television Festival Jury Award and three nominations and one win at the Golden Sheaf Awards. PTV's productions have also been invited to numerous festivals around the world.

PTV Productions is owned and operated by Andrea Nemtin and Ian Dunbar.

Andrea Nemtin, Partner/Executive Producer, PTV Productions Inc.

After several years as a freelance producer, Andrea became a Partner and Executive Producer at Toronto's PTV Productions Inc., in 1997. Under her guidance, PTV has produced over 60 hours of television. Andrea has produced and executive-produced one-offs, limited series and series and has worked on international co-productions with Europe and the UK. Andrea's recent successes include the multi award-winning feature documentary *Passage*, and a biography on the Aga Khan. She also recently executive produced *Star Portraits Canada*, restoration series *Saving Places* for History Television and the upcoming series *Inside Disaster* for TVO and ITV. Andrea has been a board member of both Hot Docs and Documentary Organization of Canada and is currently a member of the CFTPA, WIFT and the Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television.

Ian Dunbar, Partner/Executive Producer, PTV Productions Inc.

As co-owner of PTV Productions, Ian executive produces all of PTV's projects. As Director, Creative Services Ian is responsible for maintaining the high standard of design implementation in all PTV productions. In addition to editing and visual effects, Ian is an experienced online supervisor and has directed two series for television: The children's animated series *Grandpa's Garden* and the documentary series *Letters to God*.

PTV Productions Inc. Broadcast Credits Include:

Star Portraits (Bravo! Canada), Inside Disaster (TVO, ITV), Saving Places (History Television Canada), Passage (History Television, BBC), Letters to God (Vision, Faith and Values), The Aga Khan (Vision, Knowledge, SRC, OMNI), Original Kin (CBC), Shut Up and Write Me (The Doc Channel), Ex-Factor (W, Discovery Health), Footsteps of Goliath (History), Grandpas Garden (TVO, Treehouse, SCN, KNET, Disney Taiwan, Hop Israel), Raising Cassidy (Life and Discovery Health), Resolutions (Life and Discovery Health), Birth Stories 1 (Life and Discovery Health), Wednesday Nights (CBC), Happy Birthday (CBC), Notman's Canada (TVO), Living Stories (Vision), Reduced Shakespeare (CBC, PBS), After Darwin (Discovery), Poverty Chastity Obedience (TVO, SCN, Knowledge), War of 1812 (History, TVO), Hand of Stalin (TVO, PBS, BBC)



KEY CREATIVES cont...

Gail Gallant, Director (Holy Cross and Homer Watson episodes), Writer and Series Producer

Prior to joining PTV Productions to work on “Saving Places”, she spent several years writing – docudrama scripts for History Television and Discovery Channel, documentary shooting scripts, narrations for both documentary and lifestyle programming, treatments for development, and a piece for the much acclaimed magazine *The Walrus*, which was nominated for a National Magazine Award in the category of “Personal Journalism.”

As well, Gail Gallant has fifteen years of experience working in television for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, as a Gemini-nominated producer, director and reporter in Current Affairs and Documentary. She was the Producer and senior story editor of the all-important first two-hour episode of the 30-hour series “Canada: A People’s History.”

Prior to her career with the CBC, Gail did extensive academic work, and was half way through a doctorate in Political Philosophy when she was seduced away by the allure of mass media. She spends weekdays in Toronto and weekends, as long as possible, in Grey County near Owen Sound. Her own heritage is Acadian from Prince Edward Island, and she is one-eighth Mi’kmaq First Nation.

Richard Martyn, Director (Tilting episode)

With a dozen series and more than 150 episodes to his credit, Richard is one of Canada’s most-experienced documentary and reality-based TV directors. The past few years have found him working in a range of diverse environments, from the world’s largest cruise ship, to a post office restoration project in rural Newfoundland, from the competitive kitchens of the Canadian Culinary Championships to a shrimp trawler off the coast of Greenland.

Richard is currently beginning his third season directing Discovery Channel’s *Mighty Ships*. Prior to that, he directed on History Television’s restoration series *Saving Places*, and on the Discovery hit *MegaBuilders*. Richard has also lent his talents to lifestyle programs such as *Til Debt Do Us Part* and *Take This House and Sell It!* and the verité series *Zoo Diaries* and *Birth Stories*.

Richard’s investigative documentary, *Ice Storm: The Salé and Pelletier Affair*, was a rousing success for CTV, garnering an audience of 1.2 million viewers, winning a Silver Screen Award at the U.S. Film & Video Festival, and receiving nominations at the 2006 Banff World Television Festival and Gemini Awards.

Finally, Richard has earned a pedigree in biographical documentary. He directed and produced two films for CBC’s *Life & Times* series: one on Carl Brewer, the one-time NHL star who led the charge to the player’s union of corruption; and the other on troubled skating star Elizabeth Manley. More recently, he directed episodes of CBC’s *Who Do You Think You Are?* featuring Don Cherry and Maj. Gen. Lewis MacKenzie.



6. PARTNERS

Produced by PTV Productions in association with History Television with the participation of Rogers Cable Network Fund and the Canadian Television Fund. Saving Places website produced by The Heritage Canada Foundation in association with PTV Productions.



History Television is rated in the top 5 specialty channels; it has an audience reach of 6.5 million. History Television is the main financier of *Saving Places*, and they have committed to airing the series in Prime Time — which are the peak viewing hours.



The Heritage Canada Foundation is a national, membership-based organization and registered charity established in 1973. The Heritage Canada Foundation has committed to being our On-line partner, creating a web-site for the series that will utilize their current success and resources within the restoration community.



Rogers Cable Inc. created the **Rogers Network Fund** to support the production of first-run cable network programming in Canada. The goal of Rogers Cable Network Fund is to encourage the production of cable network programming from across the country.

7. PRODUCTION STILLS

For photographic files please visit the media section of www.savingplaces.ca.



8. PRESS

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