Abandoned: Revealing Ontario's Hidden Landscapes

by

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Figure 1. Main entrance of Balaclava's former mill. [2019].

Abstract

Ontario's history is dotted with the rise and fall of multiple colonial settlements established all over the province during the 18th century. These deserted and decaying structures, often isolated from civilization, are beautiful and eerie at once. Why does abandoned architecture lure many urban explorers? What qualities are attractive to photographers, artists, architects and other professionals? With no persons dwelling in these towns, the observer has defaulted to using their imagination to evoke a possible theory to explain the livelihoods, culture and decline of such places. An initial mapping and site analysis of selected towns will begin to clarify some elements concerning the abandoned; through the recording of location, terrain and past industries. This thesis intends to dissect the tangible and intangible qualities of the community that previously resided in these abandoned towns. The proposed intervention explores an unconventional conservation practice where the contemporary programmatic infrastructure overlooks fragments of the original structures and celebrates the progression of material decay already underway.

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1
PREFACE
Abandoned

Ghost Town

*How did we obliterate you
in a hundred years
you in your torn undershirts and hip boots
arms akimbo
by your muscular diggings
you with stumps for haloes
whose obsessed eyes
glitter through wavering lines
you by your wheels and rockers
with legs of stone
mountainous in your temples
the flumes pouring endlessly like blood*

*Here in the same mountains
there are new minted diggings
and tourists photographing themselves
in your rebuilt saloons
giggling at the barber shops
the gilded dance halls
and taking images of your plaster
replicas*

*Oh but you have outwitted them
crude as the nuggets you sweated for
your past is missing from this landscape
leaves no trace on their negatives
their coloured screens
won't hold your five minute pose
which stopped the hills
the flumes with motionless energy
a century ago
and now defying immortality
declines a present
too secular
to be haunted.*

-Ruth E. De Jauregui

At the outset, the research favored the exploration of a ghost town, a term holding many conflicting meanings. A person might assume that it conveys a sense of complete abandonment, hence the prefix ‘*ghost*’; a town where no persons dwelling within its property limits, only the ghosts of the past. In the Merriam Webster dictionary, *ghost town* alludes to a “once-flourishing town wholly or *nearly* deserted usually as a result of exhaustion of some natural resource.”¹ This contradicts the previous assumption of an exceptionally empty town. For added clarification, Ron Brown, the ghost town expert confirms: “while [ghost towns] may have no surviving buildings now, or may even retain a small handful of residents, to be a ‘ghost town,’ it would need to offer some ghostly vestige of why it was once grand... weathered buildings, mysterious foundations, or simply the remains of the old village streets.”² Here,

1. *The Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, s.v. “ghost town (n.).” Accessed December 17, 2019: (emphasis added). <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ghost%20town>.
2. Ron Brown, *Ontario’s Ghost Town Heritage*, (Erin: Boston Mills Press, 2017), 21.

Figure 2. Double exposure of general store in Swords, Ontario. [2019].

the author captures the essence of a ghost town, its physical remains, spiritual quality, and its demographics. Since the term '*ghost town*' has become increasingly associated with travel and tourism, this thesis will instead opt for the term '*abandoned town*' to describe the current state of these sites. In addition, the term '*ghost community*' was used sparingly online but its meaning was not clarified. For this thesis, we will consider a ghost community as follows: the abandonment of social activities sustaining relationships with other community members, values and traditions, associated with place and the foundational activities that brought brief prosperity to such industrial towns.

Referring to the Merriam Webster dictionary again, the phrase '*to abandon*' originated in Middle English from the term *abandoner*, a derivative of *abandun* "surrender, abandonment," from the phrase *a*

Figure 3. Depot Harbour grain elevator and docks. William J. Topley [n.d.]. From Library and Archives Canada.

bandun “in one’s power, at one’s disposal,” from *a* “at, to” and *bandun* “jurisdiction, control”.³ The verb can be dated back to the 14th century; it was defined as giving up the control or influence of another person or agent.⁴ The etymology and description of the phrase ‘*to abandon*’ suggests that the act of abandonment is subject to outside forces, whether it be economic, political or environmental. In all instances, the phrase ‘*to abandon*’ has a powerful double connotation that entails a site’s voluntary abandonment or the banishment of a people from other authoritative figures. Both forms of abandonment and the term ‘*abandoned*’ itself help structure the present state of tangible and intangible landscapes after abandonment - either voluntarily or involuntarily - by the people that occupied them.

3. *The Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, s.v.

“abandon (vb.),” accessed December 17, 2019, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/abandon>.

4. *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v.

“abandon (vb.).”

While tangible elements can be discerned in the physical remains

Figure 4. Depot Harbour grain elevators. William J. Topley [1914]. From Library and Archives Canada.

of a place, there are many elements invisible to the contemporary visitor. These intangible elements include community, memory, and culture. To some extent, the abandonment of built infrastructure and their landscape also led to the abandonment of these elements as they are closely tied to *place*. This thesis sets out to locate, research, and analyze abandoned Ontario town sites, rather than focusing on one singular abandoned built structure. The environmental science graduate and author, Phil Jenkins wrote: “Building cease in various fashions. In cities, they mostly yield to younger ones; not many urban dwellings are allowed the graceful rottage of the abandoned farmhouse or the moulting barn. Some go out with a bang, levelling themselves in seconds in a noisy cloud of rubble. Some are there one day, gone the next time you drive by. It is given to only a few to pass on with a sense of irony.”⁵ The development of cities runs at a rapid rate and new buildings appear to replace older ones without much reflection. The abandonment of a town is significant for its extensive array of neglect towards infrastructure and landscape; allowing the research to develop and understand important concepts of scale, space, time, and decay.

5. Phil Jenkins, *An Acre of Time: The Enduring Value of Place* (Toronto: Macfarlane Walter & Ross, 1996), 176.

Figure 5. Collapsed building in Swords, Ontario. [2019].

2

INTRODUCTION

Ontario's industrial history

Transition

*We stopped to register changes
in a neutral part of the city
where chunks of frozen warehouses
suggested that winter still hung on
the river had healed over some time ago
but you were still aware of restless waters
and the summer park on the other side
displaying closed signs
was six months away
I wondered about crossing over the icy bridge
and finding a different sun
reviving dry benches
and giving the grass assurance
about people without furs and masks
wearing balloons
and light slowly easing your face
as more than the river is permanently released.*

-Ruth E. De Jauregui

Mining and farming operations are evident in numerous abandoned towns in Ontario. Most towns emerged in the 18th to 20th century due to the high demand for natural resources and their extraction.⁶ However, after many years, some of these places could not sustain the hardships continually imposed on the inhabitants meaning eventually the homes were left deserted. The reasons for a town's decline are many and various, ranging from the depletion of valuable resources to isolation and transportation of goods. The implementation of the railway and later the construction of highways had a large impact on the town's future (see figure 6). Specifically, the decommission of railway and highway construction through a town had devastating consequences for the town's survival and the livelihood of its inhabitants. In the *Canadian Encyclopedia*, John Boyko explained: "Communities along

6. Patricia N. Limerick and Mark Klett.

"Haunted by Rhyolite: Learning from the Landscape of Failure" (*American Art* 6, no. 4, 1992), 21.

Figure 6. Railway marshalling yards in Depot Harbour. [c. 1904].

7. John Boyko. "Intercolonial Railway". *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Historica Canada. Accessed December 15, 2019. <https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/intercolonial-railway>.
the routes thrived due to rail traffic and employment opportunities that grew with it, while those that had been passed by saw the progress stall.”⁷ It was not uncommon for a community to move away as a result of the train or highway bypassing the town.
In the article, *Haunted by Rhyolite*, the historian and author Patricia Nelson Limerick outlined some of the common industries which resonate with towns in Ontario:

“(...) the West’s association with extractive industries meant that many towns were subject to the up and downs of boom-and-bust economies, and since these were often one-resource towns, the collapse of the market for their one commodity of the depletion of that resource could bring the whole town to a halt. The term ‘one-resource town’ includes mining, logging, oil towns and even farming towns and communities.”⁸

Logging, mining, farming, and other relevant industries played a prominent role in the development of Ontario and they continue to be an important piece of the province’s history. The industrial age was prosperous for the development of the province, but it is underappreciated due to the negative environmental impacts created (see figure 7). In the 1990s, industrial cities encountered a transformation that saw abandoned factories not as a blight but as opportunities for development.⁹ This shift in perspective caused the conservation of abandoned industrial sites to reverse their prior misconception as “redundant and uneconomical” industrial sites.¹⁰
The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] (2013) stated that industrial heritage should be valued
8. Limerick, “Haunted by Rhyolite,” 21-22.
9. Massimo Preite, "Urban Regeneration and Planning" in *Industrial Heritage Re-Tooled : the TICCIH Guide to Industrial Heritage Conservation 1st edition*, ed. James Douet (Lancaster: Carnegie Publishing Ltd, 2012), 101.
10. Philip F. Xie, “Industrial Heritage Tourism,” (2015), 6.

proclaiming ‘industrial sites are important milestones in the history of humanity, marking humankind’s dual power of destruction and creation that engenders both nuisances and progress.’¹¹ Not only did industrial heritage bring forward an abundance of work and innovation to Canadians but it stands to be valuable for the sustainable benefits gained from the practice of conservation of industrial sites. Even though the harmful consequences related to industries were quite severe, it

11. Xie, 2.

Figure 7. Canada Atlantic Railway grain elevator from Georgian Bay. William J. Topley [n.d.]. From Library and Archives Canada.

would be equally harmful to demolish the industrial building stock. There is a significant opportunity to recycle the industrial remnants and repurpose the town to introduce a new program that will allow visitors to “reflect upon the pollution and destruction of our environment, social and economic changes, our changing perception of technology and the debates concerning priorities in society.”¹²

12. Benjamin Fragner, "Adaptive Re-Use" in *Industrial Heritage Re-Tooled : the TICCIIH Guide to Industrial Heritage Conservation 1st edition*, ed. James Douet (Lancaster: Carnegie Publishing Ltd, 2012), 142.

Many industrial sites have been abandoned, but they have yet to vanish from existence. Why is it important to preserve the heritage of these sites as an influential part of Ontario's economic venture in the industrial era? The abandoned has always possessed an alluring quality which seems to be heightened in the case of industrial abandoned sites. Unlike other occupancy types, industrial architecture enhances the qualities due to its pure form and excessive scale. The architectural style

Figure 8. Decaying unidentified concrete structure in Depot Harbour, Ontario. [2019].

strived to design functional spaces for efficient production and adhere to the popular principle of “form follows function”.

Throughout history, architecture has derived its inspiration from art movements such as Cubism, Surrealism, and abstract expressionism. Similarly, abandoned architecture found its counterpart in renaissance paintings. Stephen Cairns, a professor in architectural theory and

design and author of *Buildings Must Die*, wrote:

“For the rotten fruit we substitute spalling concrete, peeling paint, and moldering surfaces. For skulls we substitute earthquake-shattered churches, demolished brutalist office blocks, and crumbling housing estates. For hourglasses and trails of smoke we substitute obsolete buildings whose usefulness has long since been eclipsed by economic circumstance.”¹³

13. Stephen Cairns and Jane M. Jacobs, *Buildings Must Die: A Perverse View of Architecture* (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2014), 2.

In the 16th century and onward, the still-life genre of art emerged and its motifs symbolized the inevitability of death, transience of life, and the futility of pleasure (see figure 9).¹⁴ The viewers are prompted to contemplate mortality. The final intervention in this thesis, inspired by still-life artists, seeks to end the stigma associated with the death of valued buildings.

14. Micheal C. Kearn, “The Proliferation of Skulls in Popular Culture: A Case Study of how the Traditional Symbol of Mortality was Rendered Meaningless” (*Mortality*, 20:1), 3.

Where does the interest of abandoned buildings lie; is it the materiality, simplified shapes, or grandeur? Is it the aesthetic of ruin and decay or possibly their uncanny and eerie demeanor? With so many elements that are unknown to any person who stumbles on the remains of an abandoned town, it is no surprise that these sites are attracting curious individuals hoping to discover something new and worthwhile during their visit. One specific group of people, ‘urban explorers’ or ‘place hackers’, seek and often illegally trespass derelict abandoned sites.¹⁵ Again, the question arises: which qualities are so captivating in abandoned sites? A fellow place hacker explains that urban exploration is a way to reclaim the city; “spaces are built to circumscribe discovery, creating limitations about what can be experienced and, even more

15. James Nestor, “The Art of Urban Exploration.” *SFGATE*. Accessed December 15, 2019. <https://www.sfgate.com/travel/article/The-Art-of-Urban-Exploration-2546675.php>

Figure 9. Vanitas by Antonio de Pereda. [c1654]. From ARTSTOR.

16. Rachel Lowry, “Meet the Place Hackers.” *Time*. Accessed December 15, 2019. <https://time.com/4281028/meetthe-place-hackers/>. Lowry, “Meet the Place Hackers.” nefarious, what can be imagined.”¹⁶
- Further to this, the abandoned generally provokes curious questions of the past lives that used to inhabit what might be seen as mysterious empty shells. In her research, Limerick explains the mixed emotions felt within these ghost towns and the “contrast between the stillness, quiet, and inactivity of the present, and the vitality, noise, and bustle in the past. The fascination of this contrast is clear. The visitor stands on a site that embodies the interplay of life and death and contemplates a scene where the remoteness of the past and the irreversibility of time’s passage are not abstractions, but a vivid and concrete reality.”¹⁷ The lack of recorded history creates a space where imagination can start to replace logic and reality without being contended.
- The juxtaposition of life and death described by Limerick is linked to

the concept of time and space within a particular place. On a small scale, individuals might settle or some might leave altogether; the same scenario is possible for whole communities. With this in mind, a different wave of community might establish a town over the remains of an abandoned site; creating layered anthropomorphic landscapes in which the past can be discerned in the present. While this is one occurrence of palimpsest, another case might involve continuous renovation and repair work conducted on a single structure. The different construction phases can be deciphered at a glance creating a beautiful display of the work completed over time. Thus, this becomes a structure that is a visual account of the time elapsed and the decay that continued to impede on its structural and aesthetic properties.

Figure 10. Abandoned saw mill in BalACLava, Ontario. [2019].

3

DATA, SOURCES AND INFORMATION PATH

Census and urban exploration websites

In Praise Of

*Several minutes after
the moon died in November
winter came
useless as a split umbrella
and I thought about the red curling leaves
that duped us into thinking
that every walk in a sun rocked
autumn had to be going
somewhere.*

-Ruth E. De Jauregui

The initial sites chosen in Ontario for research were: Newfoundout (see figure 11), Balaclava (see figure 11), Burchell Lake (see figure 12), Silver Islet (see figure 13), and Depot Harbour (see figure 14). All of these sites were chosen for their redundancy suiting the preliminary research on the abandoned. After visiting three sites, Newfoundout, Balaclava, and Depot Harbour, the last proved more significant due to the substantial amount of published history. It is also incredibly impressive for its rank as the largest abandoned town in Ontario.

For increased accuracy, the data and information related to abandoned towns needed to be verified and superimposed with other current sources. In addition, it is important to note that these neglected towns could disappear at any time due to various factors including decay, extreme weather, vandalism, and demolition for urban expansion. Therefore, recent and updated information is always valuable and favored, especially because these places possess uncertain futures and they may be quickly approaching obsolescence.

One specific source of information, the *Canadian Gazetteer Atlas*, served as a base for all subsequent research. The 1980 census recorded the country during a transition phase; gravel and asphalt roads were replacing steel rail lines. In 1904, the province of Ontario saw increased progress towards the construction of roads after the development of a Ford assembly plant in Windsor, Ontario.¹⁸ Henry Ford was the first automaker to mass-produce inexpensive standardized automobiles.¹⁹ By the 1920s, there were 2 million automobiles produced each year.²⁰

18. Gilchrist, C.W. "Roads and Highways".

The Canadian Encyclopedia. Historica

Canada. Accessed December 15, 2019.

<https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/roads-and-highways>.

19. Jeremy Rifkin, *The End of Work: The Decline of the Global Labor Force and the Dawn of the Post-Market Era* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1995), 95.

20. Rifkin, *The End of Work*, 95.

Figure 11. Context map of Newfoundout and Balaclava abandoned towns.

Figure 12. Context map of Burchell Lake abandoned town.

Figure 13. Context map of Silver Islet abandoned town.

Figure 14. Context map of Depot Harbour abandoned town.

The appearance of motorized vehicles became more common and it would eventually become the preferred method of transportation. In 1950, the construction of the Trans-Canada Highway, a major artery that spans the nation, was underway and its implementation would permanently alter the fate of railways.²¹ Simultaneously, the prime minister of Canada at the time ordered the nationalization of railways, combining all railway companies, except for the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), into the Canadian National Railway (CNR).²² After the Second World War, the country encountered a gradual discontinuance of railway transportation and small towns were affected adversely by this change.²³

With the statistical data collected later in the century, the *Canadian Gazetteer Atlas* would have surveyed many towns that experienced hardships and decline as a result of railway desuetude. The closing section of the book lists all the Canadian cities, towns, and villages along with their respective populations. The Atlas provided the following information: page number, reference number, name, province, status, population, latitude, and longitude (see figure 15). Under the population section, many towns didn't have a number prescribed, which implies that they didn't participate in the census that year. It is assumed that the lack of participation is a direct correlation to the inactivity of a town and could pose as good candidates for the research here. The next step was to compare this census with other information sources.

21. Gilchrist, "Roads and Highways."

22. James H. Marsh, "Railway History". *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Historica Canada. Accessed December 15, 2019. <https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/railway-history>

23. Marsh, "Railway History."

Figure 15. Collated census pages with highlighted abandoned towns.

Once the data from the *Canadian Gazetteer Atlas* was retrieved, it was necessary to compare with urban exploration websites to confirm whether or not these towns were abandoned. The online platform allows individuals to share photographs of abandoned structures in process of ruination with the public and other enthusiasts. From the 264 towns filtered in the first phase of research, that number was naturally reduced in the second phase (see figure 17). Cross-referencing between the two sources proved necessary to purge the towns that were not abandoned but had instead changed names or merged with a larger city. Urban explorers, or place hackers, are also fundamental to the research as their websites provide a wealth of knowledge related to the abandoned sites which were not available in the *Canadian Gazetteer Atlas*. They provide additional information, photographs, and observations otherwise scarce and limited. Nonetheless, it was important to be very cautious of the reliability of urban exploration websites since they are managed and operated by the public.

Figure 16. Photo transfer exploration.

Figure 17. Map of recorded abandoned towns within the context of Ontario.

4

SITE VISITS

Newfoundout, Balaclava, Burchell Lake, Silver Islet and Depot Harbour

A Journey

*Antlered trees
in the last sun
overflowed the crags
and drifts of mule deer
stared out of suede eyes at us
as we passed
I was beside you
the grey storm of rockies
that had spaced the sky by day
was going
smoothed out by the dying phase
of october light
my eyes searched you like a map
there was no unravelling
no clue in the covered hands
testing the wheel
your eyes as yet
undiscovered
and for a hundred miles
only the stars accelerated.*

-Ruth E. De Jauregui

Site visits were a fundamental part of the thesis inquiry, offering a sense of accuracy before imagining any intervention onto structures that currently are neither maintained nor preserved. Five sites were documented: Newfoundout, Balaclava, Burchell Lake, Silver Islet, and Depot Harbour. A small description of each town is provided below, including the commodity culture, reasons for the decline, and the present relics.

Newfoundout

The abandoned town of Newfoundout is located off the Opeongo Road, up the Black Donald Mountain.²⁴ In 1940, the town welcomed a dozen farm families, but the location proved to be challenging and the farming conditions were impossible.²⁵ By 1948, the circumstances were too severe and the residents left their homes.²⁶ The present state

24. Brown, *Ontario's Ghost Town Heritage*,

57.

25. Ron Brown, *Ontario's Vanished Villages* (Toronto: Polar Bear Press, 1996), 107.

26. Brown, *Ontario's Ghost Town Heritage*,

57.

Figure 18. Newfoundout homestead atop the rocky Black Donald Mountain. [2019].

of Newfoundout is completely vacant and many structures, mostly homes, are scattered throughout the landscape (see figure 18).

Balaclava

The small town of Balaclava developed as a mill town on Constant Creek in 1855 (see figure 19).²⁷ It added a blacksmith shop in 1860 and a sawdust buner in 1903.²⁸ Unfortunately, a fire destroyed most of the original saw mill in 1936, but the community managed to reconstruct the mill with wood from a neighboring sawmill.²⁹ When the railway construction was underway, it bypassed the town completely and reached Renfrew County instead.³⁰ The decline was gradual until the timber supply was exhausted by 1957.³¹ Today, only the sawmill stands vacant; the former store has been renovated into a family dwelling. This could be considered a ghost community where a

Figure 19. Balaclava saw mill and Constant Creek. [2019].

different wave of settlers established their homes in this area, replacing the original community, associated culture, and industry that once defined the town.

Burchell Lake

In 1876, the discovery of copper on the shores of Burchell Lake led to the operation of a copper mine.³² Copper interest and demand fluctuated repeatedly, forcing the mine to close every time the market was depressed, until 1966 when the market fell once more and the mine closed permanently.³³ Some remains of the abandoned town include the school, the gas station, and a few bungalows (see figure 20).³⁴ It is hard to be certain that this town is completely abandoned without visiting Burchell Lake in person, but the original townsite lies behind a protective chain link gate off tertiary highway 802.³⁵

32. Brown, 141.

33. Brown, 141.

34. Brown, 141.

35. Brown, 141.

Figure 20. Abandoned mining settlement in Burchell Lake, Ontario. Robin Férand [n.d.].

Silver Islet

36. Brown, *Ontario's Vanished Villages*, 155. off the tip of Sibley Peninsula (see figure 21).³⁶ In 1872, most of the money and effort was spent trying to protect the shoal from being washed away by Lake Superior.³⁷ The installation of breakwaters was required to allow for the extraction of silver ore to commence.³⁸ By 1883, the silver veins started to thin leading to the decline of Silver Islet and the eventual abandonment of the town.³⁹ Presently, there is a permanent population of eight residents and the store was recently renovated on the mainland.⁴⁰
37. Brown, 156.
38. Brown, *Ontario's Ghost Town Heritage*, 181.
39. Brown, 181.
40. Brown, 181.

Depot Harbour

- John Rudolphus Booth, a successful lumberman, extended his railway lines to Georgian Bay.⁴¹ He bypassed Parry Sound and landed
41. Brown, 107.

Figure 21. Silver Islet and Lake Superior. Canada. Dept. of Mines and Technical Surveys [1921]. From Library and Archives Canada.

on Parry Island where he created a town called Depot Harbour.⁴² Work commenced for the construction of grain elevators, a hotel, a railway roadhouse and family dwellings (see figure 22); the town became the busiest port in Georgian Bay.⁴³ At its peak, 1600 residents were living and working in Depot Harbour.⁴⁴ By the 1920s, the Canadian National Railway acquired the Canada Atlantic Railway and closed the facility at Depot Harbour leading to its gradual decline.⁴⁵

42. Brown, *Ontario's Vanished Villages*, 102.

43. Brown, *Ontario's Ghost Town Heritage*, 107.

44. Brown, 106.

45. Brown, *Ontario's Vanished Villages*, 103.

Figure 22. Household foundations at Depot Harbour, Ontario [2019].

5

DEPOT HARBOUR (CONTINUED)

The rise and fall

A Funeral

*When the present leaders
buried the old leader
their faces were frozen
as organ chords
they sat unmoving
through blizzards of eulogy
and yet below the stained glass
ice
their eyes
were burnt
behind the practised peace
a fiery unrest
suggesting that the
flames these captains
constantly
subdue
are never out
and vulnerability
can settle on
even this congregation
one would hold them all
like this
uncertain humans
their polished lives
centered on
the blazing
single coffin
but in a day the fire
extinguishing itself
will leave only
smoke
and the Gothic pews
will bear the
hardly noticeable
scars.*

-Ruth E. De Jauregui

Figure 23. Railway roundhouse at Depot Harbour, Ontario. [2019].

After some consideration, Depot Harbour was chosen as the site for the final intervention emerging out of the research in this thesis (see figure 28). The once-thriving town grew quickly in its successful venture and it is considered the largest abandoned town in Ontario.⁴⁶

46. Brown, 102.

On the long drive to Depot Harbour, it became clear that the highway runs parallel to the old Booth railway line, which has now been converted to the Seguin Recreational Trail. Between the trees, any passenger might catch a glimpse of an expired embankment running across the landscape or a ruined bridge in the distance. A short detour allowed for a site visit of two additional towns which were abandoned after the railway's closure.⁴⁷ Visiting the abandoned towns, Seguin Falls and Swords (Maple Lake Station), confirmed the heightened power held by the railway enterprise over vulnerable and reliant towns. Another obvious realization emerged; how quickly a town's existence could vanish with the collapse of a single bridge, such as the Ottawa, Arnprior and Parry Sound Railway link in Algonquin park.⁴⁸

47. Brown, *Ontario's Ghost Town Heritage*, 107.

48. Brown, 109.

Some additional context concerning railway history might be useful considering the catalyst was responsible for the proliferation of

Figure 24. Unknown concrete structure in the nearby vicinity of original grain elevators. [2019].

Figure 25. Fragments of railway roundhouse walls in Depot Harbour. [2019].

Figure 26. Unknown concrete foundations in nearby vicinity of original grain elevator. [2019].

Figure 27. Remains of the Canada Atlantic Railway general office. [2019].

industrial development in Canada. Although select railway lines still functioned, most of the development commenced after Confederation in 1867 (see figure 29 and 30).⁴⁹ One of the conditions presented by Nova Scotia and New Brunswick delegates before Confederation was the implementation of an intercontinental railway.⁵⁰ The prominence of railways in the discussion of abandoned industrial sites is undeniable as the town often developed a dependency on the mode of transportation which promised sustenance. The railway was recognized as a necessary means of communication, transportation, defense, and commerce at the time.⁵¹ In the 19th century, the railway was the ‘expression of Canada’s nationhood’ and its replacement with highways in the 20th century was equally significant.⁵² In his chapter, *Technological Nationalism*, Maurice Charland writes: “Canada is valorized as a nation because

49. Marsh, “Railway History.”

50. Boyko, “Intercolonial Railway.”

51. Boyko, “Intercolonial Railway.”

52. Boyko, “Intercolonial Railway.”

Figure 29. Construction of Intercontinental Railway. [1909]. From Library and Archives Canada.

53. Maurice Charland, "Technological Nationalism" (Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory, X:1-2, 1986), 197.

it is the product of a technological achievement, and the railroad is the great product of heroic individuals who dreamt a nation."⁵³ The country was proud of the technological advancement that came with the intercontinental railway; it shaped national identity.

54. Allan Bell, *A Way to the West* (Barrie: A. Bell, 1991), 3.

The abandoned town of Depot Harbor is located approximately 12km from Parry Sound's downtown core. John Rudolphus Booth, born of a large Irish family, moved to the capital of Ottawa at a young age to commence work in the lumber industry.⁵⁴ He started his journey with very little money, but surmounted many challenges and accomplished a great deal; he gained the contract to supply lumber for the parliament buildings, he won the rights to the Algonquin Park timber limits, and

55. Brown, *Ontario's Ghost Town Heritage*, 107.

he continued to expand his empire.⁵⁵ His objective was to acquire the charter of the Parry Sound Colonization Railway, which was profitable

Figure 30. Trestle under construction on Intercontinental Railway. [1909]. From Library and Archives Canada.

for the western grain trade.⁵⁶ Booth and other men, namely William Goodhue Perley, George Noble, and J. Smith, financially contributed to the creation of the Canadian Atlantic Railway.⁵⁷ In 1901, the Ottawa, Arnprior and Parry Sound Railway Company was incorporated and the railway line breached the Georgian Bay area.⁵⁸ Due to inflated land prices in Parry Sound, J.R. Booth bypassed the charter's original terminus, landing instead on Parry Island where he acquired a parcel of land from the Ojibway.⁵⁹

56. Brown, 107.

57. Jenkins, *Acre of Time*, 143.

58. Bell, *A Way to the West*, 44.

59. Brown, *Ontario's Ghost Town Heritage*,

At first, the Ojibway band objected to the proposal, but a senior member of Indian Affairs, J.J. Campbell, convinced the chief and other members of the band to accept the revised terms with the following conditions; the Indian Affairs would get the best terms, the sale was conditional upon good fencing by the railway company, the lighthouse

107.

Figure 31. Portion of the railway roundhouse in Depot Harbour. [2019].

would be negotiated, the Rose Point bridge would contain a road for

60. Bell, *A Way to the West*, 67.

wagon travel, and copies of the deal would be provided to them.⁶⁰

Another condition established that only employed workers shall reside

61. Bell, 67.

on the surrendered land and the sale of liquor would be prohibited.⁶¹

The Ojibway abandoned their land when they gave it to J.R. Booth for his railway expansion and the establishment of Depot Harbour.

By 1896, the Ottawa, Arnprior and Parry Sound Railway was

62. Bell, 45.

constructed and development commenced in Depot Harbour.⁶² Booth

erected grain elevators, a hotel, boarding houses, a railway roadhouse,

63. Brown, *Ontario's Ghost Town Heritage*,

and 110 family dwellings; both detached and duplexes (see figure

107.

32).⁶³ Additionally, he formed the Canada Atlantic Transit Company

64. Bell, *A Way to the West*, 73.

and its American sister company to operate ships on the Great Lakes.⁶⁴

As the town grew, other amenities were added; Booth's Hall in 1899

Figure 32. Town of Depot Harbour. [n.d.].

(see figure 33), an Anglican church in 1902 (see figure 34), Roman Catholic church in 1904 (see figure 35) and a Presbyterian church in 1910 (see figure 36).⁶⁵

65. Bell, 95-106.

In 1904, the Grand Trunk Railway bought Booth's holdings for 14.2 million dollars.⁶⁶ Approximately 40 years later, the Canadian National Railway (CNR) had taken control of the railway and the town.⁶⁷ The CNR closed multiple lines within the country, including the ones running through Depot Harbour.⁶⁸

66. Brown, *Ontario's Ghost Town Heritage*, 107.

67. Brown, *Ontario's Vanished Villages*, 103.

68. Brown, *Ontario's Ghost Town Heritage*, 108.

In 1933, a damaged bridge in Algonquin Park forced the closure of the central portion of Booth's railway line.⁶⁹ The government could not afford to repair the bridge because they already committed the funds towards the construction of Highway 60, therefore forcing the railway to remain closed permanently.⁷⁰ The last significant event occurred in 1945 when the grain elevators, stocked with highly volatile cordite during the Second World War, was accidentally ignited burning much of the facility to the ground (see figure 37).⁷¹

69. Brown, 108.

70. Brown, 108.

71. Brown, *Ontario's Vanished Villages*, 103.

Nature has since reclaimed the land and covers many of the old foundations. Following the abandonment of the community residing in Depot Harbour, the land was returned to the Waksauksing First Nations.⁷² The land was abandoned initially before the development of Depot Harbour and once more before returning to the Ojibway. Today, the old townsite is the location of Aqua-Cage Fisheries - a commercial aquaculture farm that produces rainbow trout.⁷³

72. *Wasauksing First Nation*. Accessed December 18, 2019. <https://wasauksing.ca/>

73. *Parry Sound Area Directory*. "Aqua-Cage Fisheries Ltd." Accessed December 16, 2019. http://parrysoundarea.directory/browse_listing.php?bizid=854

The industrial remains of Depot Harbour were recorded through

Figure 33. Depot Harbour community centre and school. [n.d.].

Figure 34. St. George's Anglican church. [n.d.].

Figure 35. Sacred Heart Roman Catholic church. [n.d.].

Figure 36. Childerhose Memorial Presbyterian church. [n.d.].

Figure 37. Depot Harbour grain elevator caught fire. [1945]

photography. The site visit aided the mapping of existing structures, identifying those constructions that withstood the test of time (see figure 38). An analog exercise of the original structures was completed and superimposed with photographs of the current remnants. The original image was distorted to coincide with the perspective view captured on site. The four frames include the docks (see figure 39), the Roman Catholic church (see figure 40), a family dwelling (see figure 41), and the railway roundhouse (see figure 42). This exercise permits the concept of palimpsest to resonate; the two images create a layered effect of time in space.

Figure 38. Superimposed insurance plans dating from 1899 and 1908.

Figure 39. Analogue exercise superimposed with photographs of docks.

Figure 40. Analogue exercise superimposed with photographs of Sacred Heart Roman Catholic church entrance stairs.

Figure 41. Analogue exercise superimposed with photographs of a family dwelling foundations.

Figure 42. Analogue exercise superimposed with photographs of railway roundhouse remains.

As previously mentioned, a few other sites were visited *en route* to Depot Harbour. The first was Barry's Bay, the site of a preserved train station (see figure 43) and water tower (see figure 44) that powered the

J.R. Booth railway steam trains.⁷⁴ Although this town is not considered an abandoned town, it contributes to the education of railway history, specifically the evolution of steam trains to diesel trains.

The two other sites have been classified as *ghost towns* and their descriptions are as follows:

Seguin Falls

The abandoned town, located south of Highway 518, originally started as a stopping place before moving the businesses next to Booth's railway line.⁷⁵ Seguin Falls (see figure 45 and 46) thrived as a lumber-shipping station, but the town experienced misfortune when the bridge in Algonquin Park was damaged in 1933 and there were no available funds for repair.⁷⁶

Swords (Maple Lake Station)

Located on Swords Road, south of Highway 518, the town began work as a lumber siding.⁷⁷ Swords' forested landscapes attracted American tourists every summer, but the town's industry came to a halt and the train station was removed in 1946.⁷⁸ Some of the town's remaining relics include the general store (see figure 47) and the school (see figure 48).

74. Brown, *Ontario's Ghost Town Heritage*,

107.

75. Brown, *Ontario's Vanished Villages*, 114.

76. Brown, *Ontario's Ghost Town Heritage*,

123.

77. Brown, *Ontario's Vanished Villages*, 125.

78. Brown, *Ontario's Ghost Town Heritage*,

127.

Figure 43. Preserved train station, Barry's Bay. [2019].

Figure 44. Preserved water tower, Barry's Bay. [2019].

Figure 45. Mysterious stone relic in Seguin Falls, Ontario. [2019].

Figure 46. Seguin Falls' converted school. [2019].

Figure 47. Swords general store. [2019].

Figure 48. Swords school built in 1904. [2019].

6

INTERVENTION

Pavilion design

Spring

*Nothing is more beautiful
than dismembered snow piles
creating puddles
deep enough
to bury
space ships or fallen stars
the winds bringing yet
not hint of
anything symphonic
disturbing the single reiterated note
of the prairies
leaf trees are forgotten by houses and skies
(last years myths die easily)
but something
maybe the upheaval of dinosaur bones
in backyards where dogs are resting
the resurrection and ascension
of pyramids of disuse
reminds us creatures were here strangely dressed
leaving candy wrappers and deflated inner tubes
among their legends
and burying the printed record
of a day's activities
in mounds of snow
now the revelation of these things
tells us there was once a hot sun
silently orbiting the earth
that gathered us up
flew us in frenzied patterns for a short while
like acrobatic monoplanes
across a bright sky
then laid us down tenderly
by grasses that steadily browned
gave us only dim memories to keep
towards another
visitation.*

-Ruth E. De Jauregui

As research continued, the original focus of abandonment shifted from a single abandoned town to the importance of the old railway line which links multiple abandoned town sites. The damaged bridge in Algonquin Park had a lasting impact on all three towns: Seguin Falls, Swords, and Depot Harbour. Following their abandonment in the 20th century, these towns experienced neglect to the point of disrepair. Within the conservation field, there are numerous activities such as allowing, maintaining, adaptive-reuse, rehabilitation, stabilization, reconstruction, replication, and conservation related to the site and its challenges. This final intervention questions the fate of these buildings and whether these should be preserved and reconstructed or left to deteriorate and decay. Both extremes of the spectrum were considered very seriously and the intervention shifted between the conservation of abandoned towns and the curation of decay (see figure 49). Curation in this context refers to the root of the word curare, 'to tend' or 'to care.'⁷⁹

79. DeSilvey, *Curated Decay*, 161.

Based on this description, the intervention acknowledges the degree of necessary care, although no preservation efforts for these structures are assumed. Similarly, associate professor of cultural geography and author, Caitlin DeSilvey, concludes her introduction with a statement that encompasses the methodology of 'curated decay': "acknowledging historic significance without arresting the process."⁸⁰ While both strategies are respectable options, they are extremely dependent on the context and the actual remains. There are two principal reasons why this thesis project does not interfere with the ongoing process of

80. DeSilvey, 6.

ruination and aligns with the spectrum's extreme of 'allowing'. Firstly, these precarious abandoned towns generate much interest amongst the public in their existing state. This suggests that the public interest lies in the decay rather than the preservation. Secondly, the present structures represent a small fraction of the original fabric and their current state is concordant with the unconventional conservation practice of allowing decay to occur.

In most cases, individuals have strong memory traces with the existing architecture and they don't want to witness its demise. Hypothetically, a man turning ninety years of age this coming year would have lived approximately three years in Depot Harbour before its abandonment. The industrial town and the childhood memories that he carries form a part of his identity as well as his family's. It seems that the physical

Figure 49. Heritage conservation spectrum.

remains help ground those memories in time and space and help create a more accurate and visual account of the history. There is a natural desire to grasp what is left of history making it difficult to resist the efforts of preservation on a building. This explains the lack of precedents for the curation of decay as the approach is emotionally challenging therefore uncommon and unconventional. Contrastingly, a mound of rubble offers an obscure but creative narrative. The rubble found on the site could be markings of a collapsed building that once held a purpose for the functioning of the industrial town. Without the tangible structures, any person visiting Seguin Recreational Trail might be unaware of its history but it is nonetheless inherently present throughout the site. The intervention attempts to narrate the story of Depot Harbour by transporting and displaying its historical ruins along the path. In doing so, the constant exposure to the slowly decaying structures creates a transitional phase allowing the public to cope with the reality of the abandoned town's physical erasure. The proposed intervention intends to eliminate the sudden loss of architectural heritage and help the public adjust and accept the undergoing process of ruination.

The old railway line was converted into a recreational trail, named Seguin Trail, and it is managed by the Park to Park Trail Association (see figure 51).⁸¹ In 2001, the association was incorporated at the recommendation of Parry Sound and Huntsville town councils to develop a regional trail network.⁸² With a distance of 80km, the total length is quite overwhelming, but the dispersal of active towns along

81. *Park to Park Trail Association*,

"History," <http://www.parktoparktrail.org/what-we-do>.

82. *Park to Park Trail Association*, "History."

Figure 50. Seguin Recreational Trail entrance at Seguin Falls, Ontario. [2019].

Figure 51. Seguin Recreational Trail from Elmsdale to Parry Sound, Ontario.

83. *Park to Park Trail Association*, “Seguin Trail,” <http://www.parktoparktrail.org/getonthetrail#seguin-trail-jump>.

84. *Park to Park Trail Association*, “Seguin Trail.”

85. Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1960), 47.

86. Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 47.

the line creates marker points for trail users.⁸³

Presently, the trail is used for ATV/UTV and snowmobiles enthusiasts during winter months. However, the trail condition is less than ideal for hikers and bikers. The Park to Park Trail Association describes the trail as “one of the more adventurous segments, with a rough, dirt surfacing, and the occasional puddle.”⁸⁴ This description emphasizes the terrible conditions that are inherently present on the site at this time. There is an opportunity to develop the trail and transform it into an accessible path for a diverse group of visitors. The introduction of new pavilions and architectural fragments attempt to engage visitors in an educational and recreational endeavor.

Within his book, *The Image of the City*, author and urban planner Kevin Lynch describes the various elements that strengthen the image of the city. He explores five elements: paths, edges, districts, nodes and, landmarks.⁸⁵ The intervention – implementation of architectural pavilions and transported fragments in the natural landscape of Ontario's cottage country – has borrowed urban planning tactics and applied them to the trail network. The project focused on creating nodal points to section the entirety and create key destinations for its users. Lynch describes nodes as “... the strategic spots in a city into which an observer can enter, and which are the intensive foci to and from which he is traveling. They may be primarily junctions, places of a break in transportation, a crossing or convergence of paths, moments of shift from one structure to another.”⁸⁶ A thorough site analysis was

conducted to discover the site's neighboring context and landscape features. The exercise formed a plan for the location of the eight nodal points scattered along the path (see figure 52). From this analysis, a comprehensive investigation of satellite images revealed geographic information and landscape features not covered by the GIS data. A landscape feature that became increasingly evident was the appearance of lakes and marshland alarmingly close to the trail. These conditions might fail to attract hikers or bikers as the trail conditions might be too flooded. The Park to Park Trail Association has set up an advisory to warn visitors "that this section is quite muddy and is best suited to ATV/UTV as areas such as the 'Seguin Baths' are impassable without a motorized vehicle or a boat."⁸⁷ With that being said, the objective of this intervention strives to transform the muddy conditions into an accessible nature trail with unique pavilions and transported architectural fragments from the nearby abandoned town of Depot Harbour.

87. Park to Park Trail Association, "Seguin Trail."

Figure 52. Site analysis of Seguin Recreational Trail.

Located on the edge of Parry Sound before entering Parry Island, the first node includes minimal construction elements compared to other locations along the path. The installation of a concrete bench, designed as a solid concrete shape with angled interior surfaces, creates a simple yet functional seating design for trail users to enjoy and appreciate the surrounding landscape, ruins and history.

Nearby, a fragment of the roundhouse was transported and anchored on the site. The curved concrete extrusion was once the outer wall of the railway roundhouse in Depot Harbour. The structure is reduced to fragments but the curved wall and its large footprint are still easily identifiable on site.

The layered photograph depicts a train arriving at the railway yard in Depot Harbour with the large grain elevator standing tall in the background (see figure 53).

Figure 53. Vignette of proposed intervention on the first node with layered historic photograph.

Figure 54. Vignette of proposed intervention on the first node.

A short distance away from the town of Parry Sound, the second node sits on a large distinctive curve. In either direction, the trail user encounters marshland and crosses between the Mohan and Liebeck Lake to the east and abuts the Pender Lake to the west. On this site, a concrete bench was proposed. The bench is capped with wood planks for overall comfort while adding warmth to the design. The concrete water basin was raised a few inches to perform as a backrest for the pavilion's seating. The built-in water feature pulls water from the basin and through the pavilion via a recessed channel on the surface floor. In the background, a fragment of the Canada Atlantic Railway general office was installed and can be observed from the proposed construction. A photograph of J.R. Booth standing in front of a lumber cargo is superimposed above the vignette (see figure 55).

Figure 55. Vignette of proposed intervention on the second node with layered historic photograph.

Figure 56. Vignette of proposed intervention on the second node.

The location of this third node is sited before the abandoned town of Swords. On this node, an outdoor seating area acts as a retaining wall supporting the lateral force of the steep hill in which it is set. The stone wall commences at the entrance level and gradually heightens with the slope of the hill. The stone capping atop the wall is slanted to optimize the perimeter of the structure for seating.

In the background, stone foundations from family dwellings found in Depot Harbour were dismantled and placed in this new location.

Figure 57. Vignette of proposed intervention on the third node.

Located after the abandoned town of Swords and before the small town of Orville, the fourth node sits to the east of Diamond Lake. A wooden material was chosen to respect the vernacular of the nearby abandoned town which demonstrates a heavy usage of lumber siding in the architectural cladding of many buildings. A small pavilion was designed with landscape features and contours at the forefront of the concept. The outline of the path was carried up to the pavilion's foundation and the walls took different angles to arrive at the finished outcome. Windows were cut out of the structure to frame the scenery and the transported relic.

On this node, concrete blocks or foundations taken from the site of the original grain elevator were moved against the trail to be observed from the pavilion.

A photograph of a railway line cut through a rocky mountain was superimposed above the vignette (see figure 58).

Figure 58. Vignette of proposed intervention on the fourth node with layered historic photograph.

Figure 59. Vignette of proposed intervention on the fourth node.

The fifth node is located a short distance away from the abandoned town of Seguin Falls. A concrete retaining wall was built to wrap around the structure's core. The trail divides and extends around the pavilion's core where a little nook equipped with a hammock can be discovered. The materiality was inspired by the original community school which was converted into a family dwelling in Seguin Falls. The brick wall is laid in a pattern that allows natural light without compromising the visibility and overall security of the pavilion. Additionally, the voids create habitats for birds and insects within the pavilion's walls surrendering to natural processes of colonization and decay. The associate professor of cultural geography, Caitlin DeSilvey, recorded her observations while visiting an abandoned industrial plant, lighthouse, and homestead. The author took an environmental approach to her research and analysis by considering both the artifact - a human manipulation of the material world and ecofact - a relic of other-than-human engagements with matter, climate, weather, and biology.⁸⁸ The pavilion surrenders to the natural processes and encourages plant and animal habitation performing as a blend of artifact and ecofact.

88. DeSilvey, *Curated Decay*, 28.

A pile of rubble carried from the site of the original Roman Catholic church in Depot Harbor was placed on this node.

The photograph depicts the profile of a train moving in a different direction than the trail (see figure 60).

Figure 60. Vignette of proposed intervention on the fifth node with layered historic photograph.

Figure 61. Vignette of proposed intervention on the fifth node.

Surrounded by marshland, the sixth node is the location of a covered pavilion. The sunken platform was the result of a sloped terrace where large outdoor gatherings for any social activity can take place. An extensive green roof was added to the roof composition and consists mostly of grassy vegetative cover. At a glance, the design features enable the pavilion to blend with its immediate surroundings.

Another fragment of the railway roundhouse, the largest and most impressive structure remaining in Depot Harbour, was transported and installed in the vicinity.

Figure 62. Vignette of proposed intervention on the sixth node.

Just outside of Sprucedale, the seventh node houses a concrete grandstand in the forest. This design assumes the function of stair risers and deep treads but it also functions as seating for trail users. The location was ideal for this type of intervention because the topography allowed the design to take advantage of the elevation. The concrete construction can be used for outdoor classrooms or simply a space to observe the views of the forest at slightly different height elevations. Adjacent to this structure is the new site for the relocated cleat and its base. This fragment was sited at the docks before the grain elevator. The photograph placed above the vignette shows divulging railway lines and freight cars entering a town (see figure 63).

Figure 63. Vignette of proposed intervention on the seventh node with layered historic photograph.

Figure 64. Vignette of proposed intervention on the seventh node.

The eighth and final node is located at the trail's furthestmost town of Elmdale. The design of this pavilion imitates the construction of the largest remaining structure at Depot Harbour. The roundhouse's beautiful but distressed concrete curved wall with tall window and door openings served as a base for the form and materiality of this pavilion. The straight wall is contrasted with the parallel concave wall joined by a roof structure.

A fragment from the railway roundhouse is apparent in the background as the structure was transported to this new location.

The profile of a train parallel to the trail was photographed and superimposed above the vignette (see figure 65).

Figure 65. Vignette of proposed intervention on the eighth node with layered historic photograph.

Figure 66. Vignette of proposed intervention on the eighth node.

The eight nodes have been created to cut the trail into sections and reduce its entirety to a more intimate scale. The site analysis had a large impact on the design and location of all nodes. Throughout the process of design, there was careful consideration for the degree of completion that must be achieved. As Kevin Lynch explained: “An environment which is ordered in precise and final detail may inhibit new patterns of activity. A landscape whose every rock tells a story may make difficult the creation of fresh stories.”⁸⁹ A sense of curiosity is essential and desired in the programmatic construction proposed. Finally, the pavilions and transported architectural fragments, which are often tall and imposing, are crucial elements in the design as they possess wayfinding qualities - suggesting a network and a discovery quest while helping user orientation and direction. These landmarks enforce the didactic and educational potential desired on this trail. The landmarks, the pavilions and transported fragments, are classified as tangible elements. The vignettes intend to demonstrate the tangible and intangible qualities through the desired method of representation. The layered photographs attempt to display the intangible qualities of Seguin Recreational Trail and the immense history that accompanies it. Every photograph was taken along the Ottawa, Arnprior and Parry Sound Colonization railway. Additionally, the vignettes strive to accomplish an understanding of the passage of time. The colored vignettes represent the proposed intervention while the black and white photographs represent the past. The methods of representation

89. Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 6.

bear similarities with the analogue exercise, where a photograph is layered above another image for added dimension in time and space. While the layering is similar, the vignettes, unlike the analogue exercise, superimpose a historic photograph above a proposed future installation. Additionally, the vignettes have accepted different seasonal qualities to convey the desire to transform this trail into a year-round recreational area for a diverse group of people.

7

CONCLUSION

Reflections

Safety

*The mink has a
nest
and rephrases
fish for security
and cats bubble
most happily
in the highest
grass
if I am
oblique
with you
it is
unintentional
you would not know me
alone
like a clefted
starfish
I glint
and reflect
grape suns
royal
outspread
waiting for you
most voluble
when most hidden.*

-Ruth E. De Jauregui

Finally, the proposed intervention intends to exhibit and curate the decay in a public setting, visible from the trail, or off the beaten path to maintain some sense of exploration. The trail becomes a didactic tool displaying past livelihoods, industries, environmental impacts, and histories. These new structures and insertions are in themselves ephemeral since it is only a matter of time until they also collapse completely. However, this thesis argues ephemerality gives an intangible quality to the buildings and overall urban exploration pursuit. The realization that the fate of these buildings might change at any moment creates a sense of excitement in visitors. The thesis began by narrowing down the search to five Ontario abandoned towns; Newfoundout, Balaclava, Burchell Lake, Silver Islet, and Depot Harbour. Each one had an impact on the province's economy due to the industry it held. After their demise, the residents quickly left to find another source of income and these towns were deserted accordingly. The thesis questions whether the remaining structures should be preserved or left to decay further.

After careful consideration, the decision to allow the decay to assume control of the relics seemed logical. Without a large fraction of the original structures still intact, research ruled out any preservation efforts conducted towards the abandoned towns. There is an important point to be clarified; allowing decay to take its natural course does not mean inaction. There are still many strategies that will slow the process of decay without arresting it altogether. Two such strategies include

creative dismantling, a concept that seeks to generate new knowledge through acts of salvage, displacement, and reuse, and soft capping, a method of conserving ruined masonry walls with vegetation.⁹⁰

90. DeSilvey, *Curated Decay*, 173.

Allowing decay to continue its natural course might offer some learning incentives regarding material properties. The process reveals 'truths' that are otherwise not apparent. The architectural palimpsest can still be discerned at the end of a building's life cycle; where a 'palimpsest of repair work' consists of old work covered by new work to resist

entropy.⁹¹ The intervention does not fear the process of ruination, but accepts the fate of these fragments and abandoned architectural structures.

91. DeSilvey, 52.

This type of proposal is not common and might stir up many issues considering the health and safety of the public. For this reason, the intervention does not propose any activities within these decaying structures. Instead, the intervention intends to exhibit the remaining structures as if displayed in a gallery. The laws and regulations must be followed to prevent harm: "The laws of nature, until now sufficient to deal with behavior on the acre, were amended by laws of order. A lengthening list of by-laws (by comes from the Old Norse word byr, meaning town) were laid on the acre."⁹⁹

99. Jenkins, *An Acre of Time*, 137.

This thesis project follows the regulatory frameworks and provides a safe space for visitors encouraging them to utilize the path and observe the decay; thereby triggering each individual to think of the history intrinsic to the site. This is now the trail!

Glossary

Adaptive reuse

Adaptive reuse is often proposed as a tool to preserve threatened values and present a sustainable development strategy for the conversion of a structure to serve a different purpose.¹⁰⁰

100. Fragner, "Adaptive Re-Use", 142.

Arrested decay

A preservation practice that strives to maintain the structural integrity of an existing building without effacing the ruined appearance.¹⁰¹

101. DeSilvey, *Curated Decay*, 32.

Banish

The term implies the action of removing someone or something from a home or place that is familiar to them.¹⁰²

102. *The Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*,
s.v. "banish (v)."

Decay

An object that is subject to decomposition and is displaying poor health, strength, or vigor.¹⁰³

103. *The Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*,
s.v. "decay (v)."

Entropy

Most often understood as the state of increasing disorder, chaos, or disorganization. The term, entropy, is more accurately defined as a "measure of the multiplicity of potential arrangements of matter within a given system."¹⁰⁴

104. DeSilvey, *Curated Decay*, 9-15.

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