

A Local Sense of Place: Halifax's Little Dutch Church

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Abstract: This study¹ reviews the case of a specific heritage site, the Little Dutch Church in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The latter may be viewed as a vehicle for investigating both how cultural heritage activities reaffirm or confront our existing ideas about social relationships and how the generation and appropriation of meaning within heritage may play itself out in such relationships. In raising questions about meaning, there is a realization that national heritage and commemoration is negotiated as much at a local as at a national scale. In fact, it may be argued that meaning usually resides in a local sense of place. This article features online (<http://www.cjc-online.ca>) photographs of Halifax's Little Dutch Church.

Résumé : Ce communiqué fait le bilan d'un site historique précis, le Little Dutch Church, situé à Halifax en Nouvelle Écosse. Il est utilisé comme véhicule pour étudier la façon dont les activités culturelles patrimoniales réaffirment ou confrontent nos idées préconçues vis-à-vis de nos rapports sociaux et de quelle façon la génération et l'appropriation du sens à l'intérieur du patrimoine peuvent se dérouler dans de tels rapports. Lorsque de telles questions sont posées, nous nous rendons compte que le patrimoine national et la commémoration se négocient aussi bien au point de vue locale que fédéral. En effet, nous pourrions dire que la signification réside normalement dans un sens d'appartenance local. Cet article inclut des photos du Little Dutch Church à Halifax disponibles sur le site web de la revue : <http://www.cjc-online.ca>.

Keywords: Place; Heritage; Culture

Introduction

In 1999, the Little Dutch Church in Halifax, Nova Scotia, was commemorated as a "national historic site" by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC). In an abbreviated history, the HSMBC plaque text reads:

This modest church and burial ground bear eloquent witness to the German-speaking people who settled in the British colony of Nova Scotia in the mid-18th century. The burying ground was set aside in 1752 for the recently arrived immigrants from Europe, who formed a cohesive community based on their shared language and faith. They erected this building by 1756, and it served as

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church, school and social centre well into the 19th century. An enduring symbol of the early history of Halifax and the Foreign Protestants of Nova Scotia, it is the oldest church associated with German immigration to Canada.

Explicit in this commemorative language is the notion of a place that is a potential symbol of both local and national heritage: “significance is emphasized by the fact that the Halifax German community was the earliest permanent, identifiably German settlement in Canada” (HSMBC, 1996, n.p.). Its designation falls within the newly created HSMBC commemorative category of “ethno-cultural” communities. This is in keeping with new Parks Canada strategies to recognize groups within society who have been under-represented in national commemorative projects. Within Nova Scotia alone, it is apparent that over 80 years of HSMBC commemorations have seen the overrepresentation of military sites, the Anglo-French colonial past, and the contributions of “great men.” Although the HSMBC has tried to redress this in more recent years by recognizing a broad spectrum of subjects—from scientific achievements to the history of education to economic development—it has become apparent that the achievements of Aboriginal peoples, ethnocultural communities, and women have still not been given full commemorative recognition (Parks Canada, 2000).

As an ethnocultural expression, the Little Dutch Church recognizes the contributions of “Germans” in Nova Scotia. Within the national rhetoric of the HSMBC plaque text is also an impression of a place that is not only symbolic of the plural nature of Canadian society in the past, but is also seen to be representative of the multiculturalism that is believed to symbolize Canada today (Kymlicka, 1998; Taylor, 1994). However, more than simply a regional, cultural marker, arguably the church may now be considered a symbol of the modern nation as a whole, demonstrative of a concern for recognizing the contributions of all communities to Canadian heritage. Places like the church symbolize a governmental concern to include all members of Canadian society within a multicultural narrative. In this sense, it is a symbol of the perceived didactic power of the past to inform both present and future societies about “German” contributions. On a more general level, its commemoration may be seen as part of a larger trend toward recognizing local, regional, and national identities through valorization of the past.

Indeed, within any one nation we must now recognize the presence of multiple heritages at various societal scales, from the personal to the national (Graham, Ashworth, & Tunbridge, 2000). Similarly, it should be recognized that local and vernacular heritage matters as much for members of society as that of national and international repute (Cossons, 2003). Consequently, the recognition of “meaning” and “relevance” reveals the very personal nature of heritage. A more plural understanding of heritage must also make apparent a nation’s painful and silenced pasts and venture beyond “the perspectives of a national, rather: nationalized, historical narrative” (Wagner, 2001, p. 23; see also Foote, 2003; Tunbridge and Ashworth, 1996). Instead, the focus should be placed on “a local (‘localized’) history based on the life-world of communities” (Wagner, 2001, p. 23).

Theoretical contexts

The past has become important in establishing a sense of who we are and how we connect to place. Naturally, this past must be recognized at a number of scales. In the face of increasing globalization, there has been much discussion of the need to particularly bolster national identity (Urry, 2000). In such circumstances, the “devices and agencies” of national heritage and identity are meant to play a role in supporting a societal sense of who we are and where we belong. These symbols of cultural heritage are not simply a means for establishing emotional bonds with “particular histories and geographies.” Rather, they are intended to instill a sense of “common history and heritage,” a common purpose and even social cohesion. Indeed, nationally sponsored projects still assert that the promotion of cultural heritage can act to strengthen a collective social identity (Osborne, 2001).

As with any society-building projects, it is unclear whether societal cohesiveness is attainable in the face of increasing multiculturalism on the one hand and an ever more pervasive “global” world on the other (Beauvais and Jenson, 2002; Osberg, 2003). A sense of a national collective identity often finds itself pitted against a globalism that continually reduces the “world to a monoculture, with one common language, the same architectural and urban forms everywhere, the same lifestyles, the same patterns of consumption, the same modes of dress and, last but not least, the same interests” (Desimpelaere, 2001, p. 91). In the face of this “monoculturalization,” there has been a new “nationalist counter-tendency” toward rediscovering expressions of ethnocultural identity (Desimpelaere, 2001). There has been a retrenchment behind banners of national, regional, and micro-regional (e.g., village, town, city) identities. In a rapidly advancing networked economy, many feel that a sense of identity and belonging still finds its greatest expression in the local sphere (Swyngedouw, 2004; Weber, 2001).

Increasingly, it becomes more difficult for citizens to recognize a homogeneous image of the nation, to imagine themselves as part of a unified whole with common aspirations, values, and heritage (Anderson, 1983). Yet, “nationalizing-states” strive to cultivate this “national imagination” within their populations, to instill within their citizenries a sense of connectedness to “the *idea* of the state” (Osborne, 2001, emphasis in original). This is achieved, in part, through the construction of national symbols meant to forge a sense of collective belonging and a stake in a commonly held heritage (Nora, 1996). But such an approach often fails to recognize diverse cultural realities (Williams, 2005).

The task then is to establish symbols that speak to all people and are mindful of the “deep diversity” that is part of many modern societies (Taylor, 1991). Attempts to create a singular shared vision, are made more difficult by a personal sense of place attachment. Many feel that their vision of what is of historic importance is ignored or under-represented in state-sponsored heritage. Patrick Wright (2003) recently suggested that, rather than a singular connection to heritage sites, we should view the idea of “heritage” as “a playful meeting of cultures” and not a “mournful business of shoring up ruins or trying to perpetuate a closed idea of national identity.” We should realize, therefore, a more cosmopolitan appeal

within that heritage, one that is dynamic and allows for changing meaning and function. But Wright's comments also must be qualified by noting that heritage sites are often potential sites of contestation, with different meanings for different groups, and sites of exclusion as much as sites that attempt to be socially inclusive. It is in these respects that the Little Dutch Church furnishes an ideal case study.

Historical contexts

The Little Dutch Church is the oldest church associated with German-speaking, or "Deutsche," settlers in Nova Scotia. (It is also considered the oldest Lutheran church in Canada.) The history of this church has been dealt with in great detail elsewhere (Bell, 1990; Pacey, 1995; Paulsen, 1996; Williams, 2005). It is, therefore, only necessary here to briefly outline the history of the place as a means for contemplating contestation in meaning.

Perhaps as early as 1750, the site of the Little Dutch Church was apportioned to the "foreign Protestants" for burial and for the erection of a meeting house. Located outside the palisades of the new settlement of Halifax, an area known as the North Suburbs, the place became the focal point for the small German-speaking enclave of "Deuschtown." In 1756, a small structure was moved from a nearby lot to the corner of the burial ground (what is now the corner of Brunswick and Gerrish streets) to serve as a "meeting house" for the Lutheran community. It was finally opened for services in 1758. In 1760, a steeple was added to the north end. One year later, it was consecrated as St. George's. In its earliest days, the Little Dutch Church fell under the jurisdiction of the Anglican Parish of St. Paul. Financially, the congregation could not afford a minister of its own. Instead, it had to rely on the occasional assistance of St. Paul's clergy. Services were in German but followed the rites of the Church of England. It was not until the arrival of Rev. Bernard Michael Houseal in 1786 that the community had its first full-time, German-speaking minister. Originally a Lutheran, Houseal had been ordained in the Church of England.

The church was the physical, social, and spiritual centre of the "foreign Protestant" community. Despite the relocation of most "foreign Protestants" to Lunenburg in 1753, a small number remained in Halifax. Gradually, this German-speaking community grew in size, establishing its presence in Halifax. Dutchtown (as it was now known) became a recognized neighbourhood within the North Suburbs. In time, however, the ethnocultural makeup of the area began to change. No longer was it predominantly associated with the "foreign Protestant" settlers of 1750-52. Instead, newer groups—Swiss, French, English, and so on—augmented the local population. By the end of the eighteenth century, many of the German-speakers, especially second- and third-generation immigrants, had become anglicized and integrated into the greater Halifax society.

By 1800, the congregation had outgrown its little building. Subsequently, a larger structure (the "Round Church"), which assumed the name St. George's, was constructed a block to the south. The active life of the "German Church" and its churchyard had, thus, been relatively short: the graveyard had been used for under

100 years and the church itself had fully functioned for less than half that time. Through much of the nineteenth century, the place was largely forgotten. It served as an occasional meeting place and schoolhouse. The church maintained a connection with the German community into the early twentieth century, but largely disappeared from general public consciousness amidst World War I and World War II anti-German sentiment (which saw the virtual demise of Dutchtown and its German cultural traditions). The old church was to see little use through the remainder of the twentieth century.

In June 1994, the role of the Little Dutch Church changed dramatically when fire destroyed much of the Round Church. The latter remained unusable for four years during a major restoration project. Regular services continued in the Parish Hall, and, during the warmer months, at the Little Dutch Church. Its renewed use, however, set in motion a series of events that helped to re-establish not only its spiritual, but also its cultural heritage role. These events included a restoration campaign; the church's designation and commemoration as a National Historic Site; and legislated archaeological excavations.

Increased use soon highlighted serious weaknesses in the physical fabric of the Little Dutch Church. Facing the obstacle of a multi-million-dollar restoration of the Round Church, renovation of the Little Dutch Church was seen as an extra complication for an already cash-strapped congregation. On the other hand, regular use of the latter increased its profile within Halifax and, specifically, within the city's German-Canadian community. In 1995, *Der Gong*, the newsletter of the German Canadian Association of Nova Scotia (GCANS), highlighted its potential importance as a German cultural landmark: "Located in the heart of the old German section of the city on Brunswick Street, this modest little structure belies the importance it had, and may yet come to have, for the German-speaking population of Nova Scotia" (Punch & Perusal, 1995b, p. 16). The authors had written in an earlier article: "This modest building, that people pass without notice, has a vital heritage. Not only is it the second oldest structure in Halifax, after St. Paul's, but it served as a place of worship and of shelter for the first major German immigration into the New World and for many generations after . . ." (Punch & Perusal, 1995a, p. 9).

German interest in the Little Dutch Church increased. In 1995, representation was made to the parish to allow occasional German-language services in the church. Discussions also began within the German community about necessary renovations, as one member noted: "We are claiming the Little Dutch Church to be our German Heritage . . . but are not contributing in any way to retain this heritage" (Mack, 1995).

Restoration soon became a priority for GCANS. Propitiously, the planned visit of German chancellor Helmut Kohl to Halifax for the meeting of G-7 leaders in June 1995 was seen as an ideal occasion for both launching a fundraising campaign and for showcasing Halifax's German "cultural heritage" (Mack, 1995). On June 16, 1995, Kohl attended a special ceremony at the Little Dutch Church. Among the other invited participants were members of the Halifax German com-

munity. Heidi Grundke, president, and Eva Huber, past president of GCANS, each spoke to the significance of the events and emphasized the sacrifices of the first immigrants. Both drew links between past and present-day German immigrants (see *Besuch des Bundeskanzlers in der Little 'Dutch' Church, Der Gong*, Fall 1995).

Kohl's visit, momentarily, raised the profile of both the Little Dutch Church and the German heritage of Halifax within Germany. Moreover, it galvanized a working relationship between St. George's and GCANS. With the ongoing restoration of the Round Church, the parish was more than willing to cede the responsibility for fundraising to GCANS. In April 1996, a public fundraising campaign was officially launched in the grounds of the Little Dutch Church. One observer commented on the "vigorous campaign . . . being conducted among the substantial German and Swiss communities who form contemporary German speaking permanent and seasonal settlement in Nova Scotia" (Leefe, 1995, p. 3).

Over the next three years, the plight of the little church captured the imagination of German Haligonians. For many it was seen to be an "important part" of their "cultural history" (GCANS, 1996). All German Canadians were implored to support the project: "Help me! I'm in sad shape! I'm the second oldest building in Halifax. My foundation is crumbling. I need new shingles. The German Chancellor commented that spiritual assistance is not enough for me—I need substantial material help! I'm the Little 'Dutch' (Deutsch) Church! Please be generous" (GCANS, 1996).

Likewise, visitors were also encouraged to help "preserve this rare authentic sample of our early Canadian heritage" (Church site, 1996). Repairs to the church began in 1996. Major structural repairs to the foundations, however, were delayed by the need for archaeological investigations. No further repairs took place in 1996 as finances were directed toward the archaeological work.

In 1997, the project received a major government restoration grant.² In the awards ceremony that followed, a sense of the cultural significance of the place was immediately apparent. One observer commented on the links that had been forged between the historical past of "the first heroic German settlers to Nova Scotia" and the present "ever-increasing number of recent German settlers in this province." She concluded: "It is always the duty of the survivors and inheritors of one's ancestors to take appropriate measures to remember them" (Sawh, 1997, p. 7). In the spring of 1998, restorations were completed on the foundation walls. By that autumn all repairs, both inside and out, had been carried out.

The involvement of GCANS in the Little Dutch Church restoration campaign led to the building being opened for Sunday afternoon visits. Association volunteers greeted visitors and showed them around the place. Other activities at the church increased, including fund-raising concerts of Baroque music, special German-language services, christenings, and weddings ("Little Dutch Church," 1996). Despite these increased activities, there was a sense that the place and, indeed, the fundraising campaign could benefit from greater national exposure. The matter was placed on the agenda for the HSMBC spring 1996 meeting. Stress

was immediately placed on the German connections. In particular, it was noted by one of the petitioners that, in deference to the involvement of GCANS in the restoration project, "the church should be referred to as the 'Little Dutch (Deutsch) Church' " (St. George's Parish Archives, 1995). The German "fact," more so than the age or architectural worth of the Little Dutch Church, quickly became important in the discussions of its national status. The timing of the application could not have been more opportune, coming during a period of greater federal awareness of the historical role of ethnocultural communities in nation-building. Consequently, in November 1996, the HSMBC recommended that the church be designated a site of national historic significance (HSMBC, 1996).

The designation of the Little Dutch Church was officially announced on Parks Day, July 18, 1998. Along with two other Halifax sites, Africville and Pier 21, it was recognized under the category of sites "related to the cultural communities of Canada." It was not until August 1999, however, that it was officially commemorated. During the ceremony, the HSMBC plaque had been placed on a temporary stand in the churchyard amidst the graves of former Dutchtown residents. The following spring it was finally placed in its current situation: cemented into the churchyard wall facing Brunswick Street, a few metres away from the church, and on the opposite side of the churchyard gate. The plaque announced the German "fact" of the place and officially situated it in the larger realm of national heritage. However, this declaration of a clear heritage tie to a single community may be challenged by other events.

Bones!

The story of the Little Dutch Church, both past and present, is more complex than one simply based on a German narrative. Amidst the restoration plans, the restorers found themselves faced with the archaeological reality of the place (Niven, 1998; Niven & Williams, 1996; Williams, 2005). Planned foundation repairs raised archaeological concerns that human remains might be disturbed. Under the legal provisions of the Nova Scotia Special Places Protection Act (1991), the historic nature of the place necessitated archaeological assessment prior to any such work.

In May 1996, archaeological work was carried out by In Situ Cultural Heritage Research Group. Three late-eighteenth-century crypts were found to contain the remains of prominent members of the "foreign Protestant" community. Although these finds were important, subsurface testing in the remaining space revealed burial evidence that was to prove even more significant in understanding the early history of the site. In two test areas, articulated human skeletons were encountered as little as 0.3 metres below the surface. By the end of the season, 10 skeletons had been exposed. In 1998, a second round of archaeological investigations took place in the previously opened test areas. This was intended to complete the work of 1996 and to find a suitable place for the reburial of all the bones. In the process the skeletons that had been left in situ in 1996 were removed, thus allowing the depth and nature of the burial to be determined. What was discovered appears to have been a shallow mass grave in which the bodies had been shrouded,

placed two deep, head to toe, and covered with rocks and then soil. Evidence also suggests that the church was later purposefully erected above the grave, perhaps as some form of memorial.

By the end of June 1998, the bones of at least 30 individuals had been recovered. This naturally prompted curiosity (Whose Bones, 1996). As the grave predated the church, the cause and dates of death were inferred from the accounts of widespread disease and death corresponding to the arrival of the “foreign Protestant” transports, in particular, the *Ann* in the autumn of 1750 (Marble, 1993). Following the arrival of the latter, the death rates in Halifax dramatically increased. The occupants of the mass grave may date from this time. The cause of their death could not be determined; however, it is plausible that they succumbed to “ship’s fever,” or typhus.

Basic forensic analysis assessed the sex, age, stature, and overall health of each individual. Skeletal measurements for 14 specimens were also entered into a comparative forensic database, which showed that the most probable racial grouping in seven instances was Black; in six, White; and in one, Aboriginal American. Given the fragmentary nature of the sample, these results were interpreted with caution. The osteological report concluded: “The analysis of ancestry offers no compelling refutation of the interpretation that the reburied bones and *in situ* burials beneath the Little Dutch Church belonged to Europeans” (Erickson, 1999).

There were, however, exceptions. At least one specimen (E66a, a partial crania) was morphologically distinctive from the others. Given the estimated age of the individual (late twenties or early thirties), such wear is more consistent with the diet of an Aboriginal American than a European of that era (Erickson, 1999). How strong a case may be made for a statement about an Aboriginal ancestry for E66A, and others, is still being debated. Though caution was taken to avoid making hasty conclusions about ethnic or racial identity, the possibility that these were bones of an Aboriginal person prompted a call to the Confederation of Mainland Mi’kmaq. Grand Chief Don Julian was apprised of the situation, and permission was obtained to continue the research (and to extract samples for DNA analysis). In the process, several questions were raised: If E66a was Aboriginal, was he Mi’kmaq? Was he Protestant or Catholic? How did he come to be buried in a mass grave beneath a small Lutheran church? His burial in a Protestant cemetery adjacent to an English settlement may indicate that he was not Mi’kmaq: mid-eighteenth-century Mi’kmaq were not only allies of the French but had been largely converted to Roman Catholicism. There is also little mention in the “official” histories of a Mi’kmaq presence at the time in Halifax. On the other hand, Mohawk and mixed racial rangers were certainly present in the early colony as members of John Goreham’s Rangers (Erickson, 1999).

The potential for an African presence in the burial sample is equally intriguing. Unfortunately, the early Black history of Halifax has yet to be fully told, although it is clear that slaves were present in Halifax in the earliest days. Most served as domestic servants in the employ of colonists from Britain or from

New England, while others were involved in the construction of the town. In September 1751, for example, the *Boston Evening Post* announced that, "Just arrived from Halifax and to be sold, ten strong, hearty Negro men, mostly tradesmen" (*Boston Evening Post*, 1751). There were also "free Blacks": "Peter, a Negro" is listed as a head of a family in the victualling lists of July 1752.³ The possible Black connections with the German community are, at present, vague, although it is likely that prominent members were slave owners. Rev. Bernard Michael Houseal is known to have had slaves. Further, the first passenger lists from 1749 record seven servants of Leonard Lockman. Their racial identity is not known, but that Lockman, at the very least, had a tacit connection with slavery is evident in an advertisement in the *Halifax Gazette*, 15 May 1752, which announced: "Just imported, and to be sold by Joshua Mauer, at Major Lockman's store in Halifax, several Negro slaves" (see Williams, 2005).

It became apparent that a complex sequence of burials lay beneath the floor of the Little Dutch Church. Details of this burial history had been previously unknown, and were certainly not recorded in local history. More notably, the recovery of the bones gave a glimpse of the remains of those who had been associated with the early settlement of Halifax. The *Toronto Globe and Mail* (1996) referred to the discoveries as an "archaeological jackpot" (Archaeological Jackpot Unearthed, Sept. 3, 1996). In August 1998, archaeology and science gave way to the sacred. From the beginning of the archaeological investigations, it was agreed that all discovered bones would be reburied at the end of the project. A date for the reburial service was set for August 25, 1998.

Invitations were sent to parishioners and to those who had been involved in the project, to attend "a service of recommittal for the bones of the people buried under the church." Although no invitation had gone out to the local Aboriginal community, Reverend Gary Thorne, Rector of St. George's, intimated that it would be spiritually and politically appropriate to invite a Mi'kmaq involvement in the reburial ceremony.⁴ Chief Julian was once more contacted, however, an official Mi'kmaq presence at the reburial was deemed non-essential.⁵ In the meantime, however, Rev. Thorne had contacted the provincial Ministry for Aboriginal Affairs to ask if there was anyone in the local Mi'kmaq community who would be interested in participating. Lorraine Smith-Collins, Mi'kmaq education liaison officer at the ministry, thanked Rev. Thorne for including: "Mi'kmaq people in this ceremony."⁶ Rev. Thorne was delighted at the prospect of such a multi-faith ceremony (Gary Thorne, Reverend, personal correspondence, August 24, 1998).

On the day, Mi'kmaq spiritual representatives joined parishioners, GCANS members, the archaeological team, descendants of the original settlers, and the news media in the tiny church. The bagged and bundled bones of some of the recovered dead were placed by the altar rail, including the three crypt occupants, representative skeletons from the mass grave, and the partial skull of E66a. The latter was accorded a slightly different treatment from the other remains. Prior to the service, Chief Earl Sack, another Mi'kmaq spiritual leader, prepared the skull in accordance with the customs of his people: the skull was marked with red



Little Dutch Church reburial
3:00 p.m., Tuesday, August 26

All archaeological work under the Little Dutch Church has now been completed and the bones of those buried there have been examined and recorded at the Anthropology Lab. at Saint Mary's University. It is now time to put the bones back in the graves. There will be a brief service of committal in the church. All parishioners are invited.

ochre; surrounded by sweet grass, sage, and tobacco; and wrapped in red cloth. It was then "smudged" with the smoke from burning sweet grass, replaced in its bag, and sealed. This was a discrete ceremony, performed in the moments before the service, and beyond the prying eyes of the news media.

The service itself included a Mi'kmaq sweet grass purification and the recitation of the Sacred Seven Prayer by Chief Knockwood (see Knockwood, 1998); the Anglican Burial Office; and the singing of "Eine Feste Burg" and Psalm 90 in German. Following the Office, the bones were carried to the back of the church by members of the congregation: Ross Osborne, a Houseal descendant, carried those of his ancestor; Anne West carried those of Anna Schwartz; while Donna Morris, a Mi'kmaq representative, carried the skull of E66a. The bundles were passed down into the undercroft and re-placed in the ground. As each bundle passed through the access hatch, Rev. Thorne sprinkled soil from the mass grave into the void and spoke the customary words: "We therefore recommit these bodies to the ground: earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust . . ." The ceremony drew to a close amidst the sound of a Mi'kmaq chant and a drumbeat. As they walked by the access hatch, the Mi'kmaq representatives deposited sweet grass into the space

below and, as a last element of ritual, one of them crawled beneath the church and sprinkled tobacco into the gravesite as a further offering to the spirits.

For three years, the bones had furnished information about early Halifax, but it was clear that the time had been right to put them back in the ground ("Early Settlers Reburied," 1998). The ceremony brought closure to the archaeological story, and, for some within the parish, it brought to an end a period of misgivings. One parishioner was relieved to see the bones once more put to rest: "We've had a great feeling of uneasiness in the fact that the remains had to be taken away from their home in the ground where they had been properly buried and consecrated. . . . And now the congregation can feel that we have been responsible to our spiritual forebears. . . . I feel extremely happy about today" (Early Settlers Reburied, 1998).

Ross Osborne was also glad to see his ancestor and the other remains "laid to rest again and back in their rightful places under the church" (CBC, 1998). But, for him, there had also been a certain irony to the day's events: "It was very moving, who else would have gone to their great-great-great-grandfather's burial? That is unique" (Remains of Settlers, 1998).

A polysemic sense of place

As the unfolding of events leading to the recommittal of these bones demonstrates, the Little Dutch Church is heaped with meanings, acquired through the course of its life story. Importantly, it is a place that has meant different things at different points in time, and different things to different people. Its significance has often been fleeting or, on occasion, unacknowledged. Meaning has also been filtered through assorted geographies, claims, and counter claims. In such an analysis, therefore, a static, official interpretation belies the dynamic discourses that flow in and around the place. In reality, the official designation must be viewed in juxtaposition (or perhaps even contra position) with a range of other contexts in which it achieves meaning. The full meaning of the church may only be understood by negotiating these. Moreover, a full analysis of the role of the place would take into consideration such issues as cultural heritage tourism, spiritual nature vs. secular concerns, changing cultural-social-economic-political geographies of the neighbourhood, and so on. For our purposes here, three areas stand out as being particularly important to an understanding of a polysemic sense of place: the "official" narrative; ethnocultural identities; and archaeological voices.

The official narrative

Its commemoration by the HSMBC endorsed the role of the Little Dutch Church in the chronicle of German settlement in Nova Scotia and in the narratives of nation-building. In the light of current heritage policy, it was also established as a symbol of a modern pluralist society: emblematic of a more inclusive "national" history and the role that ethnocultural communities have played in that story. Yet, despite the realities of official protocol and state imprimatur, National Historic Sites are naturally not all the same. Although not always explicit, places are afforded different degrees of significance within the National Historic Sites pro-

gram. In many respects, it may be argued that the Little Dutch Church is a relatively minor “national” monument. Although it was clear to some that the HSMBC plaque unveiling was a political event, the attendance of a lower-level bureaucrat in place of the minister of Canadian Heritage, a provincial minister instead of the premier, and a city councillor in place of the mayor perhaps revealed something of the apparent lesser significance of the event and of the place itself.

The Little Dutch Church commemoration was also more of a parochial event. Besides the official party, invited guests included individuals who had some connection to the church through the fundraising, restoration project, and archaeological investigations. Only a handful of parishioners attended. Further, despite attempts by Rev. Thorne to foster a “good neighbours theme” by hand-circulating invitations to neighbourhood residents, their presence was even more limited. On the day, only a few of the more curious ventured through the gate or peered over the churchyard wall. Moreover, with the exception of city councillors Jerry Blumenthal and Graham Downie, the African Nova Scotian community was not represented. More surprisingly, despite Mi’kmaq participation at the reburial service a year earlier, there was no Aboriginal presence whatsoever. Similarly, in marked contrast to the media frenzy that had accompanied the reburial service, no television cameras were in evidence at the plaque unveiling, and only one local newspaper reporter was in attendance.

Ethnocultural identities

Throughout its history, the Little Dutch Church has been a place that has generated only occasional interest and for largely select audiences. It has never achieved any sort of prominence in the greater community and, for much of its life, has had only a minor liturgical role. Today, it has achieved renewed significance as an ethnocultural symbol for German Canadians. But even this needs further clarification.

The HSMBC plaque unveiling had been an occasion when many present could proudly profess their German roots. For German Canadians, it was an opportunity to positively celebrate past German contributions in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and Canada. It was also a chance to exorcise the ghosts of the past—to recognize German contributions to local society in a military town where the fallout from two wars had seen the virtual elimination of earlier German heritage. In this sense, the HSMBC ceremony was a minor triumph for German Canadians. It was an occasion to re-establish, or reaffirm, the symbolic connection of the church to German Nova Scotians both past and present. Ironically, the ceremony was as much an exercise in reclaiming “Germanness” in Halifax as it was about commemorating the church itself. But even this must be understood through two different perspectives: that of the “foreign Protestant” descendant and that of the modern German immigrant.

For some “foreign Protestant” descendants, the Little Dutch Church remains a tangible link to their ancestral past. Ken Paulsen recalled: “Seeing the physical structure of the church little changed from the 1750s, it is easy to envision that some of my ancestors may have worshipped there” (personal e-mail communica-

tion, October 20, 2004). On the whole, however, descendants took little active interest in the restorations. With the exception of those who had maintained personal connections to the place, financial contributions were limited. Interest came mainly from those tracing genealogical links. The seemingly limited appeal of the church for the descendants was perhaps most apparent in the absence of a noticeable representation at events such as Kohl's visit, the reburial service, and the HSMBC plaque unveiling. Few came from Lunenburg, and members of prominent local descendant families were conspicuous by their absence.

This lack of interest in the Little Dutch Church is perhaps a consequence of two different, but interrelated, factors: first, a sense that German history in Nova Scotia has always had more resonance in Lunenburg, where the majority of the "foreign Protestants" relocated in 1753; second, a historical disavowal of German roots within the province. In the first instance, the church remains a cultural echo in an area of Halifax where the "Deutsch" presence has all but vanished. Deutschtown, or Dutchtown as it became, no longer exists. A relatively stable "German" presence was maintained in the vicinity of the church throughout the late eighteenth century. In time, however, the ethnic German-speaking population was diluted by other immigrants; German families anglicized their names; and a distinctive "Deutsch" geography of the area lessened (Erickson, 1986). German cultural roots faded even more so in the light of anti-German wartime feelings. Prominent local families even denied their German roots. Local historian Terence Punch, a Wüst (West) descendant, recalled his own family's struggle with identity and wishes not to be branded "German" (personal interview, Halifax, Nova Scotia, July 3, 2001). The fallout of the two wars had seen a conscious minimizing of "Germanness." Consequently, in the intervening years, roots were forgotten.

Lost in the downplaying of "Germanness" is the little acknowledged fact that many of the oldest Halifax families are of German origin—their heritage rooted in Nova Scotia for almost 250 years. In recent years, a general genealogical fervour has tempted many to reclaim their roots. But rehabilitation of this "Germanness" is a "long, slow process," Punch maintains. "The biggest problem with rehabilitating Germanness in people in Nova Scotia of German roots is not from the people who aren't, but it is from the people who are of that origin, to take some pride in it and stop . . . feeling that they have to hide and feel embarrassed about it. That is a very hard thing to do" (Terence Punch, personal interview, Halifax, Nova Scotia, July 3, 2001). The commemoration of the Little Dutch Church itself was consequently seen as "a symbol of somehow coming to grips with the terrible two war-times and the German role in these two wars . . . and that the German heritage in Canada, or at least in Nova Scotia, is finding its own identity again which for a while was not something they were looking for" (personal interview, *op cit.*).

On the other hand, more recent German immigrants are surprised by the seeming lack of interest from the Halifax descendant community in things German.⁷ The newer German immigrants embraced the little church as "an important part of the cultural history of the German community" (GCANS, 1996). For them, it is regarded as a tribute to the perseverance of all immigrants; a pride in

their accomplishments; a piece of home; and a tradition that has as much to do with European history as it has with the development of the new land. As one observer noted: "For the German community you have the sense more that it's their history and that it's their contact to the other world of Europe and their life here. Of course, it's an extremely tantalizing story for the Germans, for all of these Germans who have done the same thing but in a new century, and there's that connection there. . . ."⁸ Nevertheless, it is also clear that many newer German immigrants are not really aware of the city's German past, as the editor of one of Nova Scotia's German publications suggests: "The history of the place here is so young, but it is one of the places that I publicize in my publication as one to visit and to establish in people's minds that there is definitely a German presence here that is not just the post-war immigration or the more recent immigration . . . but that it goes way back and has left its mark. . . ."

Yet while many in the German community had always had an interest in the Little Dutch Church, for some it is viewed as "*a German heritage site*" which is "*really of more interest to those who were the descendants of the original settlers.*" It should be noted that not all within the German community took an interest in the place. Many do not see the need for such a heritage anchor in Canada. This is particularly so among those professionals who have the ability to return to their homeland on a regular basis. As one recalled: "Let's face it, if we look for an anchor we can go back to Germany to visit."

In speaking to some German Canadians, it is apparent that there is a different sense of heritage and heritage significance among the newer immigrants who grew up worshipping in and appreciating the grander structures of European centres. The only sense of pride in the Little Dutch Church and the accomplishments of the early settlers is among those who keep abreast of such issues, otherwise, it is little known. It took both the fire at the Round Church and Chancellor Kohl's visit to catalyze immigrant German interest in the Little Dutch Church restoration and to make it "an issue" for them. Their involvement, however, also raised some contentious issues. Although the parish was viewed by some in the German community as "the legitimate successor of the original Dutch Church in the church lineage," others saw it as "a neglected piece of real estate" and Germans "the rightful successors" and the only "ones who cared for [it]."

Once again, proprietorial questions ignited earlier Lutheran claims to the Little Dutch Church. However, this time the debate was concerned less with religious affiliation than ethnocultural origins. It was clearly the German "fact" rather than the Lutheran heritage that garnered interest. Indeed, religious affiliation did not really enter into the equation. Apparent in this heightened interest in the church was the idea of creating a cultural centre that would be readily accessible to members of the German community. But different philosophies on use and on fundraising tactics soon became a source of conflict. As one observer jokingly noted, the whole process placed the more reserved, "Wagner and Reising" adherents in opposition to the more enthusiastic, "beer and schnitzel" crowd: Baroque

music concerts at variance with stands selling commemorative mugs and pins; culture versus commerce (Anonymous, 1996).

Regardless of the different approaches to both its short- and long-term futures, the Little Dutch Church became a vehicle for community action and the continued reclamation of a collective German identity and heritage in Nova Scotia as a whole. It was regularly featured in the two provincial German publications, *Der Gong* and *Neuschottländer Bote*. Somewhat fortuitously, the interest in things German was also associated with a steady increase in property purchases in Nova Scotia by citizens of Germany itself. Attracted by the relatively low cost and availability of land, German citizens had purchased large amounts of property for homes and holiday property in the still largely unspoiled Nova Scotia backwoods, and commenced a new chapter in the German story in Nova Scotia (Germans Flocking to Nova Scotia, March 4, 1996; Huber 1996).

German investment in the province was also accompanied by an increase in German tourism. The Little Dutch Church restoration campaign quickly latched on to this increased tourism, and information about the plight of the church was circulated around Germany. As a consequence, for a short time between 1995 and 1998, German tour groups visited the church. In this sense, the significance of the place, if brief, transcended national boundaries and took its place in a transnational heritage.

Archaeological voices

While "Germanness" was highlighted in the contemporary narrative of the Little Dutch Church, as we have seen, archaeological discoveries raised the potential for other ethnocultural groups to claim a portion of the heritage of the site. The discoveries of the bones had the very real potential to connect Aboriginal peoples and African Nova Scotians to the place. The forensic analysis provided evidence that both groups were likely represented in the mass grave interments. Despite these findings, it is unclear if either will ever find a sense of connectedness with the place or with those buried in its grounds.

Throughout the early archaeological analysis, Mi'kmaq leaders were kept abreast of the findings. However, aside from curiosity, there was no real sense of interest from the Aboriginal community. Even the reburial ceremony prompted a low-key response. Nevertheless, one of the Mi'kmaq present at the latter made it clear that, even if the bones in question had not been those of a Mi'kmaq, it was, nevertheless, vital to have an Aboriginal presence at the service: "because . . . it was probably a Native American skull that was found there and there was no representation from any community. . . . Whether it was a Mohawk, or a Sioux, or a Mi'kmaq, or whatever Native person it was, I think it was a good idea that we were there, that the Native people were there to say okay we'll do this even though we're not sure it's Mi'kmaq, it's still Native American." Participation in such a ceremony was as much connected to a new-found need within the Mi'kmaq community to reclaim aspects of its heritage. It was further added: "I think now the Mi'kmaq communities are starting to find themselves, and start to get back together, and start to take ownership of our identity again, because at one time it was lost."

It was significant that, in the ritual purification of E66a, a Mi'kmaq connection to both this individual and his burial place was affirmed. Whether the remains were Mi'kmaq or not is unknown. Regardless, in their ceremonial acceptance by Mi'kmaq spiritualists, they were incorporated into a Mi'kmaq biography of the place, at least for those who were present. This is in keeping with a conceptualization of the land upon which the Little Dutch Church stands, as a part of the Mi'kmaq spiritual world. Of course, this spiritual continuity must draw into question notions of a physical disjuncture, past and present, of Mi'kmaq from this place. It remains to be seen whether this sense of place becomes of importance to the greater Mi'kmaq community.

For African Nova Scotians it is even more unclear as to the role the Little Dutch Church may play in their community. African Nova Scotians have long made up one of the largest ethnocultural groups in the neighbourhood of the church (Erickson, 1986). Much of this population was relocated to the area following the razing of Africville in the late 1960s. They were subsequently housed in Brunswick–Gerrish Towers and Uniacke Square, on opposite corners from the church. They also joined an older, but smaller, African Nova Scotian community located around Creighton and Maynard streets. For the Africville residents, their spiritual focus remains the former site of the Seaview Baptist Church and Cornwallis Street African Baptist Church on Cornwallis Street (Williams, 2005).

The Little Dutch Church, therefore, has apparently limited appeal. As one African Nova Scotian observer noted, there was certainly a respect for the Little Dutch Church, but no real sense of connection. A parishioner who spent much time at the church during the restorations concurred:

I have a sense that the building doesn't mean much to the community there, and having spent a lot of time there when the door would be open and you bet anybody that went down that street from the community would say "Oh, I have never had a chance to be in here, my gosh this is beautiful, this is cool" . . . and so it's been a dead space, it's been just a building without any kind of connector . . .

A parish tour guide recalled some local impressions of the place as little more than a "curiosity": "A lot of them had said that they had never been inside the church . . . so they were kind of interested in it, but I don't think they felt it was part of their community. . . ."

It is also uncertain how much information has filtered through to the community about the discoveries under the church (let alone information about skeletons of possible African origin). Lack of certainty about ethnic origins of the bones from under the church led to a rather guarded approach to releasing information to the media and the public in general. Whether the local community would feel an attachment to these individuals is unclear. Most of the present-day African Nova Scotian population traces its roots back to Loyalist and later settlers.

In many respects, the lack of connection of both Aboriginal and African Nova Scotian peoples to the Little Dutch Church may be considered an issue of visibility, or "visuality" (Wilson, 1998). First, there is nothing inherent in the place

that points to either heritage being part of the site: no burial markers; no commemorative indicators; no recorded long-term connections. Secondly, a concern over the inconclusiveness of the scientific findings meant that information about possible African or Native American connections to the place was not made immediately public. Even now the links remain tenuous and largely under-researched. Moreover, they have also gone unrecognized by the local community. New interpretive panels at the church fail to fully disclose the details of the archaeological findings.

The discovery of such a large number of human bones had not really been expected. In truth, their appearance threw a wrinkle in the neatly established view of the church and its place, as belonging to a single community, and challenged the sanitized process of national site-making. Although the scientific evidence raised a more complex burial history at the church, it also opened up the possibility of other claims to the site, beyond that of German Canadians. While the corporeality of the bones was incontrovertible, their discovery and the implications of the analysis did not enter into the HSMBC commemorative deliberations. From the perspective of the archaeological team, this oversight was unfortunate: first, and ironically, it buried elements of the story of the Little Dutch Church that had gone untold; second, it undervalued or ignored the significance of these findings—and of the contribution of archaeology to the process of heritage designation. Throughout, the archaeological research largely had been viewed as an unnecessary drain on the limited resources of the restoration project. There were also concerns that the archaeological discoveries would attract public attention away from the fundraising. In private, one parishioner remarked that some felt that too much attention paid to the non-European bones might upset the German community and, thus, place the fundraising in jeopardy.

Multivocality/multilocality

For many, the discovery of the Little Dutch Church bones raised more than simple questions of science and politics, more than archaeological intrigues. Instead, it instilled a renewed sense of the very human element that is a part of any contemporary understanding of the place. The sense of connectedness that drew people to the bones and to the ceremony of reburial, however, was largely missing in the official designation and commemoration of the Little Dutch Church. In reality, this disconnection may pose the ultimate obstacle to the church gaining a more wide-spread sense of significance. Unlike the HSMBC plaque unveiling, the reburial ceremony saw a clear sense of a bond with the past and had a real appeal for those present. It was clearly apolitical, spiritual, not about the plaque, nor political expediency, nor protocol. Instead, it was about people and place. As one congregant remarked: "It's a little different thinking about all of these people who . . . had tragic ends to their lives, who suffered and . . . were buried in such a way . . . It certainly adds . . . even more so it makes it a place of all God's people . . . not just Christian people . . . and certainly not all Lutheran or Anglican."

Indeed, the sense of connection may now be said to also extend into the realms of Mi'kmaq spirituality. The story of the Little Dutch Church resonates

with multiple audiences. It is a place of different and multiple meanings, what may be regarded as “multilocal,” in that it has been created at many different levels (Rodman, 1992). In this sense, it may also play into the notion of a “glocality” in its appeal to people at the personal, the local, the regional, and the national scales. The attraction of the church and the archaeological findings has also been projected onto an international stage, through German tourism, Lutheran pilgrimages, and the publication of details on the World Wide Web. It remains to be seen whether its appeal will be fully felt among the greater Aboriginal and African Nova Scotian populations. Regardless, it may be recognized as a place fabricated not just of wood and brick, but also of the myriad encounters with and experiences of different individuals and groups. In this latter sense, the multiple voices of those associated with a particular place give greater poignancy to its meaning and sense of significance. Moreover, they serve to confirm the opinion that heritage is not only a question of national import, but, often, a very personal matter (English Heritage, 2000). In this, we must come to understand the Little Dutch Church through many perspectives: from the personal to the collective; from the spiritual to the aesthetic; from that of belonging to that of the outsider.

As with any heritage site, multiple voices resonate in the story of the Little Dutch Church. This polysemia of meaning is best conveyed in the personal narratives and in the voices of people like the “foreign Protestant” descendant who related his own sense of place:

It's part of my sense of personal heritage, it's intimate, it has a particularly poignant value for me in that, every year in the autumn, there used to be a service held in that church. The retired Anglican Archdeacon Wainwright used to hold them, and every year I used to go and our younger daughter would come with me. And one of the lovely traditions they had down there was at the end of the evensong service they would give the . . . littlest girl in the church the flowers to bring home, and my daughter used to do that. My daughter died when she was twelve years old and so, therefore, I have a very warm thought [that] that was the place where [she] and I would go . . . so it was a very personal connection that established for me, subsequent to our original reason for going, and our original reason for going was the heritage thing.

Or the Haligonian who sees the place to be his “favourite building in Halifax, part of that is its antiquity . . . part of that is . . . that it has survived there. It is certainly a stand-out survivor of the past in that location.” A clergyman who had spent much time at the old church during his clerical training recalled:

More than any other church I know, entering the building provides the immediate memory of and inclusion with the long faithful and incidental visitor of nearly ten generations; to see their witness and benefit from their encouragement. To worship there is to be among friends unseen and to pray to the Eternal with those who have long since entered eternity. It is the Communion of the Saints locally known.

For a Mi'kmaq representative, a connection to the place had been non-existent prior to the reburial ceremony. It had not resonated for her in any spiritual

sense; however, following the reburial, the place was transformed in her imagination and in her own worldview:

Every time I go by that church, or every time I come near it, that is the only thing I think about, I don't think about it any other time. But, as soon as I get over here and I am walking on the street itself, or walking by it, or going anywhere near it, I point it out to everybody that's the Little Dutch Church, that's the Little Dutch Church over there, this is where the reinterment of these bones . . . it just makes me think about it all the time when I am around it. Not dwell on it . . . but reflect. There is only one other site that does that to me and that is in Beaumont, New Brunswick . . . a Mi'kmaq burial site . . . I feel some kind of a connection to that site.

And, finally, for the modern German immigrant it not only has a natural sense of spirituality, invoking a sense of belonging to another time, but has cultural relevance in the present:

The importance of the Little Dutch Church lies in its historical significance, both to the German-Canadian and Canadian community. . . . It is a very simple building, which gives you the idea of simplicity of the life in those days and it gives you the feeling of belonging to those early people . . . I think it's a consciousness that is rather valuable in terms of really being an established part of Canada.

Of course, in this collection of disparate voices, certain individuals and groups have still not been heard: the African Nova Scotian, the Brunswick Street resident, the street person, and so on. Therefore, in all reality, such an analysis can never be deemed complete.

National monuments and a local sense of place

It is in the complex interlayering or intertwining of all of the contexts of understanding, official and unofficial, past and present, that meaning is acquired. Moreover, it is in such a climate of research that we may hope to engage the larger issues—concepts of people, place, state, and nation—which are shaped, negotiated, and contested in this National Historic Site. The biography of place, however, is ever-changing. Meaning is often transient. It is altered in the eyes and through the actions of different actors. It is also understood in different contexts. Understanding the significance of such places, therefore, becomes a discussion not only of the layers of meaning inherent in material remains, but also of the multiple and intersecting meanings or values that are at play in any one place at any one time. Sites that are deemed significant are negotiated in accordance with the historiographical practices, the socio-political agendas, and the heritage values of the time. It is important to recognize that such a comprehension plays a role in the processes through which we come to value our heritage sites, the way in which we attach significance/meaning/value to nationally significant places, and the manner in which they are firmly placed in the myth/history/symbolism of nation-building.

It must also be recognized, however, that commemorative symbols do not always adequately represent all points of view (Bodnar, 1992; Gillis, 1994;

Gordon, 2001; Osborne, 1998). National Historic Sites frequently may be viewed as potential locales of contestation to which many different social/cultural groups may stake claims, or through which they shape their own versions of history (Foote, 2003; Graham, Ashworth, & Turnbridge, 2000). Multiple voices, as well as corresponding silences, resonate in all commemorated sites. Indeed, within any one there are often multiple layers of meaning, many claims, and many silences. For example, my attempts to interview members of the African Nova Scotian community failed. Future analysis would have to take into consideration the difficulties with cross-cultural interviewing and would have to establish greater links with the communities.

On a pragmatic level, such issues become important both in framing cultural heritage policy in Canada and in recent attempts by state institutions to designate national symbols that somehow represent modern society. On the other hand, it is important that we view each designated site as much more than simply a case of a representative artifact: a specimen added to a national quota; a reparation of historical lacunae; a cultural-historical obligation. Each site remains part of a lived-in world that is often quite dissonant with its original purposes. An understanding of such places, therefore, necessitates a move beyond cerebral, scholarly, and even bureaucratic analyses with an emphasis on past relics to an experiential, active, reflexive understanding of the material remains of the past in the present. The construction of place/identity is an ongoing and dynamic process (Symonds, 2004). Further, in raising questions about meaning, there is a realization that national heritage and commemoration is negotiated as much at a local as at a national scale. In fact, it may be argued that meaning usually resides in a local sense of place.

Through the histories and local stories of place, through institutional and cultural structures, official endorsement, and the remains of the past, society locates itself and imagines “identificatory” links to the past (Assman, 1995). But those links are, occasionally, tenuous. Identity in place is contested, as divergent memories and heritages vie for recognition, and, at times, pre-eminence. Jacobs argues that “It is not simply that heritage places symbolise certain values and beliefs, but that the very transformation of these places into heritage is a process whereby identity is defined, debated and contested and where social orders are challenged or reproduced” (1996, p. 35).

In a climate of what may be considered officially sponsored social inclusivity, the National Historic Sites of Canada are now looked upon to speak to the diverse narratives of the nation. The language of social cohesion, social inclusion, social exclusion, plurality, multiculturalism runs throughout the heritage policies of the federal government, from the National Historic Sites System Plan to the very recently created Historic Places Initiative. The latter expounds upon the cohesive role of Canada’s historic places, stating: “Canada’s historic places represent the soul and spirit of the country. These places mark the lives and stories of those who forged Canada. . . . They contribute to the social cohesion of Canada. . . . Historic places connect us to our past, to our future and to each other . . .” (Canadian Her-

itage, 2002, p. 1). However, as we have seen, while the German narrative of the Little Dutch Church is incontrovertible, other voices and corresponding silences also resonate in the site.

For these reasons, the efficacy of the church as a “national” monument must be reflected upon. This status must be weighed against all potential claims to its heritage and must be understood within the range of contexts in which it finds meaning. Located away from Halifax’s “historic” downtown core, in an economically depressed neighbourhood, and overshadowed by 1960s and 1970s public-housing complexes, the church remains little known in a local, let alone a national, context. It is little considered by many in the “foreign Protestant” descendant population, although it has been adopted by modern German immigrants desirous of a cultural centre. Today, save for Morning and Evening Prayer, and intermittent tourist visits, it is left largely locked and shuttered, ignored by most Halifaxians. The stories of the dead who lie buried in its grounds and beneath its floors remain untold. Although seemingly forgotten in another time, the modern intrudes, in the hypodermic syringes that lie discarded in the churchyard, material aspects of contemporary discourses that continue to flow around and through the church. These trappings of “drug culture” are poised in strained opposition to newly erected historical interpretive panels with their appeals to the tourist trade.

For many residents of the Brunswick Street area, the Little Dutch Church is largely invisible: part of their day-to-day visual landscape, but not part of their cognitive landscape. The relationship with the place is not so much dictated by a spatial proximity to the site, but rather by a conceptual sense of connectedness. Few if any of the proponents of the site’s heritage live within the neighbourhood. For the most part, they are drawn from the professional middle class of Halifax society (whether members of the German community or not). Theirs is an interest built on a love of tradition, a sense of history, a sense of place, a sense of identity, an understanding of the value of the nation’s heritage, and so on. In many respects, they have had the affluence to champion the cause of restoration and commemoration. For many local residents, however, socio-economic realities of the present—in particular, urban socio-economic decline and its attendant issues of unemployment, poverty, the “drug culture”—do not allow for them to dwell on the niceties of the past.

Thinking through the connection of people to place, and of the local to the national, demands that one ask a series of questions: What does the church currently mean for the African Nova Scotian and Mi’kmaq communities; for the Black youth from Uniacke Square, for whom the church holds little religious or symbolic appeal; for the “street person” who passes by daily, on his way to the “soup kitchen” at Hope Cottage; or for the “crack” addict, oblivious to its sanctity, who finds a haven in the churchyard in which to shoot up? What does the apartment dweller see when she looks down from her apartment in Brunswick–Gerrish Towers over this timeless landscape? Who will stop to read the plaques or to venture inside the churchyard gates to view the interpretive panels? What might this place mean at a future point in time? And what may we say about future

attachments to the Little Dutch Church? In the context of the present, the Little Dutch Church stands as a cogent reminder that national heritage and commemoration is negotiated at this local level as strongly as it is at a national scale.

Notes

1. This article is based on a draft paper prepared in February 2005 for the International Study of the Social Effects of Culture (ISSEC) and the Strategic Research and Analysis Directorate, Department of Canadian Heritage. This research was drawn from my 2005 doctoral thesis prepared for the Department of Geography, Queen's University. The data was gathered through interviews, content analysis of newspaper, historical, and archival sources, and a review of archaeological data. At the time of the work at the Little Dutch Church, I was an adjunct faculty member in the Department of Anthropology, Saint Mary's University and a partner in the archaeological firm *In Situ Cultural Heritage Research Group*. Along with Laird Niven, I co-directed the excavations under the church. Much support for the project came from Saint Mary's University and faculty members Dr. Paul Erickson and Dr. Steven Davis. Some funding was received from the Nova Scotia Museum in Halifax.
2. The latter grant covered major structural repairs and created eight short-term jobs. The program funded two-thirds of the project costs. The remainder came from the parish and the fundraising organizations, primarily GCANS (Canada/Nova Scotia Infrastructure Works, 1997).
3. "Victualling" was the term used in the eighteenth century to refer to the allocation of provisions. See *Halifax victualling lists, 1752*.
4. From author's personal files: Invitation to HSMBC plaque unveiling ceremony from Rev. Gary Thorne (1999).
5. From correspondence between Grand Chief Don Julian and Dr. Steven Davis, August 23, 1998.
6. From correspondence between Smith-Collins and Rev. Thorne, August 24, 1998.
7. *Germans are said to make up a large proportion of the population of Nova Scotia (Statistics Canada, 2001; Waseem, 2000)*.
8. This quote and subsequent ones are from interviews I conducted in June and July 2001 for my doctoral dissertation. I did not have permission to use my respondents' names in the ISSEC report, therefore I prefer to leave the quotes anonymous.

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