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## Canadian Gothic:

Empire, medievalism, and modernity  
at Sir Henry Pellatt's Casa Loma

**I**n celebration of our dedicatee's second specialty in Canadian architecture, this paper explores Casa Loma in Toronto, a well-known but little-studied example of the Gothic tradition in elite architecture. It is dedicated to Malcolm with gratitude for being a major influence in shaping me as a scholar, an influence that in fact continues, some twenty years on, as I follow his steps into the history of architecture in Canada.

For him the castle was more than life itself: certainly it was obvious to me... that he knew every detail of the design, the craftsmanship, and just as surely every effect he had hoped to achieve.<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

Sir Henry Pellatt and his extraordinary Gothic mansion called Casa Loma (the house on the hill) represent one of the most complex and contradictory episodes in the history of Canadian architecture (figs. 1-2). Built for Pellatt in 1911-1914 by the city's leading architect, Edward J. Lennox, Casa Loma is among the most significant—and certainly the largest—domestic commission within the history of Canadian architecture. Positioned atop the Davenport Ridge, it presents an image of a medieval castle looming over the burgeoning metropolis, in keeping with current theories of the picturesque. But the setting of the castle was based as much upon this picturesque image as it was upon locating Pellatt's home within what was the setting for a series of elite homes including Ardwold and Spadina, forming a *hortus conclusus* for the Plutocrats of Toronto. Like many famous buildings in Canada, Casa Loma is as well-known as it is understudied. In R.H. Hubbard's famous essay "Canadian Gothic" from which I partially borrow my title, and in his later essay "Modern Gothic," he notes the continuation of a romantic spirit in Canadian Gothic architecture, which he extends to the "Gothic" artists in the Group of

Seven, but Casa Loma is completely overlooked.<sup>2</sup> Pellatt and Casa Loma are famously (and, to some extent, not unfairly) explained via a narrative of boom and bust in Toronto's Gilded Age. Pellatt's meteoric rise as a leading banker, financier, stock tycoon, and industrialist took a sharp turn when the hydro system he constructed to provide hydro power to Toronto from Niagara Falls was publicized and he was forced to sell his still incomplete home and its art collection in a highly public sale in 1924. As a result, Casa Loma's illustrious patron only resided there for 10 years.

Within Canadian architectural history Casa Loma's reception is, at best, mixed, and its sheer size, lavishness, and extravagance has not met with acclaim. For Eric Arthur, "Casa Loma is something hard to live down," and it has recently been described as the building Torontonians love to hate.<sup>3</sup> Often considered the most un-Canadian building in Canada—a logical impossibility, but one that is very telling—Casa Loma has otherwise been "explained" or rather sidelined as an American building of the Gilded Age transplanted on Canadian soil, a vulgar pile in the mode of the American mansions of the period transplanted amidst "Toronto the Good." In its sheer scale, lavishness and overt opulence, Casa Loma has posed a challenge to the reformed, Protestant sensibilities of English Canadians that advocated limiting excess and adhering to a mode of aesthetic moderation.<sup>4</sup> Historiographically speaking, Casa Loma and Pellatt himself (fig. 3) seem to bear many of our own anxieties as a nation and about how we define ourselves as a former colony

1. Eaton, Flora McCrea, 1956, *Memory's wall*, Toronto, Clarke, Irwin, p. 109.

22. Hubbard, Robert H., 1954, "Canadian Gothic," *The Architectural Review*, vol. 116, no. 692, p. 103-108; Hubbard, R.H., 1975, "Modern Gothic," *National Gallery of Canada Bulletin*, vol. 25, p. 1-6.

3. Arthur, Eric, 2003, *No mean city*, 3rd ed., Toronto, University of Toronto Press; Coffman, Peter, 2003, "Casa Loma and the Gothic imagination," *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada*, vol. 28, nos. 3-4, p. 8.

4. Myzelev, Alla, 2016, *Architecture, design and craft in Toronto 1900-1940: Creating modern living*, Farnham, Surrey, and Burlington, VT, Ashgate Press, p. 43-65; Keohane, Kierane, 1997, *Symptoms of Canada: An essay on Canadian identity*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press.



▲ Fig. 1. Casa Loma, Toronto. South Façade. PHOTO: MATTHEW M. REEVE

in relation to England, as well as with respect to the United States. With a few notable exceptions, such nationalist prejudices dog our understanding of Casa Loma. What, then, is Casa Loma's place in the history of architecture in Canada and in the history of architecture in general?

At least two significant problems confront the architectural historian seeking to answer these questions. The first relates to Pellatt himself. Much of what we know about him comes from newspaper reports, financial and court records, and slanted celebrity gossip on the one hand, and from quasi-hagiographical accounts of a great Canadian financier, a monarchist, philanthropist, and soldier on

the other. We actually have very little evidence from Pellatt's own archives: no notebooks, diaries, sketches, scrapbooks, or other sources we would expect have come to light. As a result, Pellatt, like his house, is all too readily obfuscated by two-dimensional clichés and moralizing narratives of the Gilded Age: depression-era *schadenfreude* about his Icarus-like fall from grace and the resulting loss of Casa Loma in 1924 have anesthetized the personality of a powerful and complex figure.<sup>5</sup> The loss of the house and its collection in 1924 also meant the loss much of its documentary record, and the twentieth century would witness more losses.<sup>6</sup> As such, it must be emphasized that

5. Oreskovich, Carlie, 1982, *Sir Henry Pellatt: The king of Casa Loma*, Toronto, McGraw-Hill Ryerson. See also Roberts, David, "Pellatt, Sir Henry Mill," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 16, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, <[http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/pellatt\\_henry\\_mill\\_16E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/pellatt_henry_mill_16E.html)> consulted April 9, 2020.

6. Oreskovich, p. xiv. For the art collection, see 1924, *Catalogue of the Valuable Contents of Casa Loma, Toronto, Ontario*, Toronto, Jenkins' Art Galleries.





▲ Fig. 2. Casa Loma, Toronto. North Façade. CITY OF TORONTO ARCHIVES

the documentary record for Pellatt and Casa Loma is far from complete. Not a literary man like his relative, Stephen Leacock, or an author at all (as far as we know), Pellatt's intellectual, social, and artistic nature is largely unrecorded, although his career as a soldier and sportsman are well attested. While much has come to light during the course of a recent collaboration to study the house, we have few building accounts, little evidence of the actual sources for the house, and almost no primary sources that clarify the complex dynamics between patron and architect. This evidence vacuum is, in part at least, responsible for allowing Henry Pellatt and Casa Loma to become myths of Toronto and, more broadly, of Canada.

This paper looks at Casa Loma afresh and brings to light a wealth of new documentation. It is dedicated with affection to Malcolm Thurlby, whose contributions to the study of medieval architecture and Canadian architecture are unrivalled. Malcolm is as responsible as anyone for turning me into a medievalist (proper) and into a student of medievalism. I can say without hyperbole that the wonderful trip I took with his seminar to Western England and Wales while he was doing fieldwork for his *The Herefordshire School of Romanesque Sculpture* was, far and away, the most significant research trip I have ever taken.<sup>7</sup> It was for me, in Malcolm's own words, a "baptism by fire," without which I can hardly imagine having had the career I have enjoyed.

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7. Thurlby, Malcolm, 1999, *The Herefordshire School of Romanesque sculpture*, Herefordshire, Logaston Press.





▲ Fig. 3. Portrait of Henry Pellatt, by Sir Edmund Wylie Grier. QUEEN'S OWN RIFLES MUSEUM, TORONTO

But aside from being a leading scholar in his two fields, Malcolm did much, through his work, to fundamentally reshape both. He has consistently shown that medieval architecture and medieval revival architecture are not easily understood in conventional terms as two distinct fields. In his research and his teaching, Malcolm frequently demonstrated the interdependence of these two periods and how an understanding of one positively inflected an understanding of the

other. Malcolm's example also introduced me to Canadian architecture (although sadly I never got to study it under him), so I hope that a paper on medievalism focused on one of Canada's greatest Gothic buildings will seem a fitting tribute.

## Henry Pellatt, chivalry, and medievalism

One thing our dedicatee insisted on in his writings on medieval revival architecture was the variability and cultural specificity of the Gothic, and more broadly of medievalism in the history of architecture.<sup>8</sup> According to Leslie Workman's often cited definition, "Medievalism is the continuing process of creating the Middle Ages," a definition that reminds us that the myth of the Middle Ages is ripe for perpetual reimagining in line with the specific cultural needs of its protagonists.<sup>9</sup> Rather than trying to insert Henry Pellatt and Casa Loma into a teleology of the Gothic Revival in which they somewhat awkwardly fit, it will be useful to begin by exploring the very terms of his medievalism and the cultural and social factors that informed it, and that would, I assert, inform aspects of the design of Casa Loma. Pellatt's medievalism was shaped by one of the great periods of chivalric revival. This period, famously described by Mark Girouard as *The Return to Camelot*, promoted a new and specific association between the medieval past and the modern present punctuated by the First World War and its overt revival of chivalric codes,

8. For example, Thurlby, Malcolm, 2003, "St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church, School and Convent in St John's, Newfoundland: J.J. McCarthy and Irish Gothic Revival in Newfoundland," *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada*, vol. 28 no. 3, p. 13-20; Thurlby, Malcolm, 1990, "The Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception at Guelph: Puginian principles in the Gothic Revival architecture of Joseph Connolly," *Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada Bulletin*, vol. 15, no. 2, p. 32-40.

9. Verduin, Kathleen, 2009, "The founding and the founder: Medievalism and the legacy of Leslie J. Workman," *Studies in Medievalism XVII*, Karl Fugelso (ed.), Woodbridge, Boydell & Brewer, p. 1-27.



▲ Fig. 4. Casa Loma, Toronto. Corbel in upper hall.  
PHOTO: MATTHEW M. REEVE

which were buoyed more generally by the myths of English Imperialism.<sup>10</sup> Chivalry, as a mythology that bound men and women to a common social and spiritual objective, was one of the ways in which imperial expansion was sold to, and subsequently, maintained by, Canadians. Chivalry became part of the *lingua franca* of elite culture in the Empire and its performance served to emphasize Canada's role within it. It is thus to be regretted that many commentators have minimized Pellatt's chivalric and medievalist orientations as foppishness, horsiness, bloody-minded Anglophilia, or even racist

Imperialism, all of which strike contemporary readers as being at least anachronistic, if not overtly unpleasant, in a post-Colonial context. For John Bentley Mays, Casa Loma's medievalism was "a flight into fantasy into a chivalric past to retreat the reality of modernity."<sup>11</sup> There was indeed much that was overtly fantastical and carnivalesque about Pellatt's conception of the Middle Ages, manifest for example in the repeating corbels of four designs of jesters, maidens, drunken friars, and knights on the second floor of Casa Loma (fig. 4) around the upper parts of the great hall (fig. 5). While theatricality, performance, and even humour were significant to Pellatt's own self-image and to the design and function of Casa Loma as a "show house," such a perspective fails to understand the gravity of Pellatt's own sense of chivalry, the role of Pellatt in reenergizing Canada's Imperial movement, and the interconnection of medievalism, Imperialism, and elite business that influenced patrons across North America.

Although Pellatt never engaged in battle and was not—officially at least—a member of the military, he located "soldiering" at the centre of his life. Pellatt's engagement with the military was principally through the Queen's Own Rifles (QOR), "a socially oriented cauldron of militia politics."<sup>12</sup> Combining military manoeuvres and training, elite social status, and commitment to country and Empire, the QOR was a significant organization in Toronto around the turn of the century. Pellatt became a lieutenant in 1880, followed by a promotion to captain (1883), and then to major (1895). By 1901, Pellatt was the commanding officer of the QOR and was promoted to lieutenant-colonel. In

10. Girouard, Mark, 1981, *The return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English gentleman*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press. See also Goebel, Stefan, 2007, *The Great War and medieval memory: War, remembrance and medievalism in Britain and Germany, 1914-1940*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

11. Mays, John Bentley, 1992, "Sir Henry's retreat from reality," *Globe and Mail*, January 29, 1992.

12. Roberts, David, "Pellatt, Sir Henry Mill." See also, O'Brien, Mike, 1998, "Manhood and the militia myth: Masculinity, class, and militarism in Ontario, 1902-1914," *Labour/ Le Travail*, vol. 42, p. 115-141.

the same year, he was responsible for martialling 11,000 soldiers on Toronto's exhibition grounds where they were reviewed by the Duke of Cornwall (the future George V), who rode Pellatt's prized steed. The following year he went to England with the QOR to represent Canada at the coronation of Edward VII. Pellatt's military/social manoeuvring, as much as his own status as a financier, resulted in his knighthood in 1905 by King Edward VII when he was also made an honorary aide-de-camp to Governor General Lord Grey. Achieving knighthood was manifestly a profound honour for Pellatt, representing in his mind a well-earned apotheosis, as testified by the countless notes of congratulations that he kept for his entire life.

Pellatt's knighthood also facilitated future exchanges between himself and the monarchy, and the creation of a home that could house visiting monarchs was certainly one controlling influence in the construction of Casa Loma. Pellatt's most ostentatious display of military prowess, benefaction, and status was financing and leading the entire 600-man regiment (including its horses) to England for military training to mark the Regiment's 50th anniversary. The military exercises lasted from August 13 to October 3, 1910, and resulted in a personal invitation from the newly crowned George V at Balmoral Castle.<sup>13</sup> This was an immensely important event for Sir Henry. It not only signified recognition of his service to the Canadian militia abroad, but also served as a new point of contact with the monarchy via a newly crowned king. Balmoral Castle in particular and the Scottish Baronial style in general were important influences on the design of Pellatt's future home. Further military orders followed. Pellatt was made a Commander of the Royal Victorian Order (CVO) in 1910, a knight of grace by the



▲ Fig. 5. Casa Loma, Toronto. The Great Hall.  
PHOTO: MATTHEW M. REEVE

Order of St John of Jerusalem in England, and from 1911 to 1923, he was the Knight Principal of the Imperial Society of Knights Bachelor. A small but telling manifestation of Pellatt's chivalric pretensions (as much as those projected upon him) is the 1912 QOR trophy (fig. 6), which features the following inscription:

Presented to Sir Henry Pellatt Knight Bachelor and Commander of the Royal Victorian Order, President of the Imperial Society of Knights by his Fellow members of the degree in recognition of his conspicuous service to the Society. His valued work on behalf of their Ancient Order and in commemoration of the signal mark of the Royal Favour conferred on the Society by His Majesty King George V.

There seems something overtly farcical about this image, particularly in contrast with the well-fed portliness of its apparent referent who never saw battle and certainly not the tilt yard. In any

13. Mouriopoulos, Nikolas A. E., 2014, "A serious piece of business": Sir Henry Pellatt, The Queen's Own Rifles, and the 'English trip' of 1910," master's thesis, University of Toronto.





▲ Fig. 6. Queen's Own Rifles statue for Henry Pellatt.  
QUEEN'S OWN RIFLES MUSEUM, TORONTO

case, the trophy was typical of its type and kind, and it serves as an allegorical figure for Pellatt's constructed self-image as a knight of the Empire, a position that was based on late medieval precedent.

I have already commented upon the pitfalls of reducing Pellatt's military aspirations to simple jockeying for social position and general *arrivisme*. There is of course much that is true in such a view, but this in no way diminishes a robust and concerted campaign to ally Toronto (what Carl Berger famously called Canada's "most Imperialistic city") and Canada more broadly, with the Empire.<sup>14</sup> In Newton McTavish's account of Pellatt's life, he cites W.R. Lawson's *Canada and the Empire* (1911) which describes Pellatt's 1910 display of the QOR in England as "the seed of a new Imperial movement...it has given fresh impulse to the cause of Imperial unity, the cause which is struggling so

high in the teeth of political luke-warmness and discouragement. Of all His Majesty's subjects, the Canadians are at present doing most to promote it."<sup>15</sup> Pellatt was thus understood by many as reviving what was already a waning Imperial unity with Britain. While Pellatt's own Anglophilia and his nostalgia for British history is clear, it is significant to recall, pace Berger, that capitalism was the most important feature behind imperialism.<sup>16</sup> Pellatt was, first and foremost, a Canadian Empire builder, and he was profoundly aware of the immense power of Canada and the financial and cultural benefits of interdependence with the broader Empire. As such, Imperialism was, paradoxically, one variety of Canadian nationalism, a type of awareness of nationality which rested upon a certain understanding of history, the national character, and the national mission.

Pellatt's medievalism shared some ground with the medievalism of North America's elite financiers and industrialists, what Kathleen Davis has usefully called "Tycoon Medievalism."<sup>17</sup> Although he met J. Pierpoint Morgan, it is notable that Pellatt never followed his illustrious example as a collector of medieval art.<sup>18</sup> Typical of many elite patrons of architecture of North America's Gilded Age, Pellatt self identified as an inheritor of a grand European aristocratic tradition, and his own medievalism was a prism through which he viewed the present. Hailing from English and Scottish parentage, Pellatt could claim descent from the Pellatts of Sussex. Not unlike the American industrialist Andrew Carnegie, who would rebuild Skibo Castle in the Scottish Highlands in a Scottish Baronial style similar

14. Berger, Carl, 2013, *The sense of power: Studies in the ideas of Canadian imperialism, 1867-1914*, 2nd ed., Toronto, University of Toronto Press, p. 5.

15. MacTavish, Newton, 1912, "Henry Mill Pellatt: A study in achievement," *The Canadian Magazine* vol. 39, no. 2, p. 112; Lawson, W. R., 1911, *Canada and the empire*, Edinburgh and London, William Blackwood and Sons, p. 16-18.

16. Berger, p. 7.

17. Davis, Kathleen, 2010, "Tycoon medievalism, corporate philanthropy, and American pedagogy," *American Literary History*, vol. 22, no. 4, p. 781-800.

18. Thompson, Arthur Seton, 1975, *Spadina: A story of old Toronto*, Toronto, Pagurian Press, p. 189-190.

in some respects to Casa Loma, Pellatt likewise understood that North American elite patronage appropriated or, more aptly, transported the structures of the European Middle Ages to modern, North American soil. An abiding belief in the supremacy of Anglo-Saxon culture allowed these men to subscribe to a tradition of manifest destiny, which meant erasing the history of the Indigenous inhabitants of North America and transplanting a myth of Anglo-Saxon culture seamlessly bridging the Atlantic. Current political and sociological theory supported the connection of the medievalism of contemporary financiers as builders of Gothic piles: Thorstein Veblen's famous *Theory of the leisure class* usefully backgrounds Pellatt's economic medievalism as a "lord of the manor." Veblen read the architectural and social landscape of neo-medieval North America around 1900 as signs of the renewed surge of "conspicuous consumption" of the leisure classes. He believed that Gothic buildings were inappropriate, expensive, and ill-suited to modern needs, and he understood that the castellated buildings of medieval barons to have created the mould for those of the robber barons of the Gilded Age. Like their medieval predecessors, the robber barons exercised their prerogative to exploit labourers in the creation of ostentatious Gothic homes, thus closing the loop with medieval baronial traditions, in Veblen's view.<sup>19</sup>

## Patron and builder: designing Casa Loma

In the relatively scanty historiography of Casa Loma, one significant point is frequently overlooked, namely that Sir Henry Pellatt seems to have had a controlling hand in its design. Such a perspective is challenging to the image of Pellatt as a horsey Plutocrat who simply commissioned a "McMansion," and of Lennox as perhaps the leading architect of the city, but it does appear to be the case. Lennox and Pellatt had clearly long been acquainted in Toronto prior to the building of Casa Loma; Lennox had built the remarkable Beaux-Arts Toronto Power Generating Station (begun 1903), and he and Pellatt would be neighbours at adjacent homes, i.e. Casa Loma and Lenwil House, on either side of Davenport Street. Although a tour by Pellatt and Lennox of great fortified houses in Europe is often cited as a prelude to construction in accounts of the house, I have never discovered documentation to back this up.<sup>20</sup> In *Toronto observed* William Dendy and William Kilbourn state that Pellatt handed Lennox a "sheaf of sketches and photographs illustrating his ideas about castle architecture," which were to be the patron's brief that Lennox would transform into Casa Loma. The authors offer no source for this (possibly mythic) claim and, again, nothing of this sort has appeared in either Pellatt's or Lennox's papers.<sup>21</sup> According to Newton MacTavish, Pellatt was a draughtsman of note who had "planned many houses for himself and his friends," and that "while listening to or taking part in any discussion, he habitually makes

19. Veblen, Thorstein, 1899, *Theory of the leisure class: An economic study of institutions*, New York and London, 1899, cited and discussed in Ziolkowski, Jan, 2018, *The juggler of Notre Dame and the medievalizing of modernity*, Cambridge, Open Books, 5 vols., vol. 3, p. 271ff.

20. For example, Litvak, Marilyn M., 1996, E.J. Lennox: "Builder of Toronto," Toronto, Dundurn Press, p. 58-59; Myzelev, p. 48-49; Martin, Lucy Booth, 1980, *Aristocratic Toronto: 19<sup>th</sup> century grandeur*, Toronto, Gage Publishing, 1980, p. 210, claims a 1905 trip to Britain by Pellatt and Lennox to acquire the site of the future Casa Loma from Nina de Pencier, but no source is cited.

21. Dendy, William and William Kilbourn, 1986, *Toronto observed: Its architecture, patrons and history*, Toronto and Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 181.

a design with his pencil.” MacTavish continues as follows:

For years it has been turning about in his mind, where by building up and tearing down, so to speak, many important features have evolved themselves—such for instance as the swimming-bath, with elevator in attendance, the rifle range, bowling alleys (all of which are in the basement) the palm-room, the tunnel leading under the street between the mansion and the nearby dwelling of Captain Reginald Pellatt, the greenhouses and the stables.... The whole estate is calculated to be one of the finest private homes on the Continent.<sup>22</sup>

Although not a stitch of Pellatt’s authorship of any of his friends’ homes survives, nor do his sketches, Pellatt’s control of the design of Casa Loma is suggested in a number of sources. After the loss of the house, Pellatt made this revelatory statement:

I have been a student of architecture all my life and have traveled very extensively particularly in England, Scotland, Ireland, Germany, Austria, and Italy. I have had a splendid opportunity to observe and carefully examine for myself the ancient fortresses and castles of the world. Casa Loma is the result of my travels and consequent observations. My home is a collection, as it were, of all the little bits of castle architecture that attracted me most. I drew the plan of every room and part of it myself, the measurements are all my own, the design is my own, the choice of stone, the decoration, the general plan, every bit was planned by myself and there was no alteration. I had no difficulty in constructing the building, and

had it not been for the fact that the perspective work bothered me, I could have dispersed with an architect altogether. As I go over the place now, I can see little bits of the ancient castles of Scotland, a piece of some old fortress from Italy or a tower that is an exact reproduction of one that crowns some ancient Schloss upon the Rhine, a bit of ... a turret from England, or a square battlement from a crumbling Irish home. That is what I want you to understand. Casa Loma is not merely a big house, it is an architectural museum, something absolutely unique, the union, as it were of the fortress architecture of all the ages. Perhaps the French predominates just as the furnishings are mainly those of the great Napoleonic period, but this perhaps is right and proper in a building specially reared as a military monument, for from a military point of view, this age transcends all others.<sup>23</sup>

In some respects, Pellatt’s quasi-scholarly account of the house is difficult to square with the house itself. Casa Loma lacks the sense of obvious quotation manifest in Georgian Gothic architecture, in which the connection between specific motifs and their sources is clearly apparent, such as the use of the tower at Batalha, Portugal, in Lee Priory or Fonthill Abbey or the replication of medieval tombs for fireplace surrounds at Strawberry Hill and elsewhere.<sup>24</sup> If we are to take Pellatt at his word here, Lennox’s hand must have been responsible for synthesizing these quotations into the overall form of the house itself, thus obscuring them from detection by latter-day architectural historians.

22. MacTavish, p. 118.

23. Pellatt in *The Toronto Star*, June 21, 1924.

24. Reeve, Matthew and Peter N. Lindfield, 2015, “‘A child of Strawberry’: Thomas Barrett and Lee Priory, Kent,” *Burlington Magazine*, vol. CLVII, p. 836-842.



Pellatt's commentary appears to have drawn the ire of Lennox, since in the *Toronto Star* five days later, Pellatt offered a retraction or at least a qualification of his previous comment:

I wish it to be distinctly understood that when I decided to erect Casa Loma and its stable holdings, I handed the commission to Mr. E.J. Lennox, architect, who is responsible for the planning, designing and the construction and interior decorations, and it was not my intention in any remarks I may have made to discredit the important professional association that Mr. Lennox carried out in connection with this undertaking entrusted to him. As I fear an injustice may unintentionally be done to Mr. Lennox whose services have been most valuable and most faithfully rendered to me will you oblige me by inserting this letter.<sup>25</sup>

It is not entirely clear what to make of these exchanges. What is clear from the recently discovered plans of Casa Loma is that the final product was an accurate reproduction of Lennox's carefully rendered plans. As friends who moved in similar social circles, we may assume, regardless of whether they traveled together to record houses in Europe, that Pellatt made a significant and defining contribution to the house rather than simply signing off on some handsome plans on paper. Taking Pellatt at his word here has significant implications for our understanding of the style of Casa Loma. Understanding Casa Loma as an amalgam, a synthesis of a series of traditions and features that caught Pellatt's eye and were translated into viable architectural form by Lennox, usefully explains why no single source has ever been cited

for the building, either in Lennox's repertoire or elsewhere.

## Interpretation

While Casa Loma has often enough been reduced to convenient clichés of *nouveau riche* tastelessness, faux medievalism, and Gatsby-esque tropes of the Gilded Age, none of these explanations really work for the house. It is worth noting that contemporaries likewise found the house difficult to interpret, and none, it seems, agreed with Pellatt that it was "an architectural museum ...[for] the fortress architecture of all the ages."<sup>26</sup> In fact, there appears to be no consensus among contemporaries, much less their predecessors, about precisely what Casa Loma was, and less still about how it might be read in terms of style. One author in the *Contract Record and Engineering Review* for 1912 noted, "The style of architecture of the residence is French Baronial which is a combination of the Scotch Baronial and French Chateau, the climate of this country making this combination desirable," thus referring to the well-entrenched myth of the Gothic as a style of the northern peoples.<sup>27</sup> An essay in the *Canadian Courier* of 1916 entitled "Recent Scenes in Yankee Toronto" opined, in the context of a comical rant on Toronto's apparent Americanism, "Were you ever up at Casa Loma? Did you ever see anything like Sir Henry Pellatt's place in Yankeeland? That's the real English touch—'cloudcapped towers and gorgeous palaces.'"<sup>28</sup> In emphasizing the Englishness of the house, our author here cites *The Tempest*, although he could have hardly known that the illusory nature of such architectural fantasies in

25. *Toronto Star*, June 26, 1924.

26. See however Christopher Armstrong's recent commentary that Lennox's plan "drew eclectically upon various European castles of all ages" in 2014, *Making Toronto modern: Architecture and design, 1895-1975*, Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press.

27. Anonymous, 1912, "Sir Henry Pellatt's residence, Toronto," *Contract Record and Engineering Review*, vol. 26, no. 48, p. 59.

28. Church, T. L., 1916, "Recent scenes in Yankee Toronto," *The Canadian Courier*, vol. 20, no. 6, July 8, p. 5.

Shakespeare's passage would preface Casa Loma's own fate. Such commentaries could readily be multiplied, but it is worth stressing that no coherent understanding of the house emerges from the written evidence. Indeed, one recent commentator opted to define the style of Casa Loma as "the whatever-it-is-eclecticism of Casa Loma."<sup>29</sup> In approaching the architecture of Casa Loma, I will discuss three different thematic trajectories that run through the house, its history, and ornamentation: the historical, as a building self-consciously conceived within a genealogy of Gothic buildings from the eighteenth century onward; the national, as a building of apparently mixed or at least fluid "nationality," variously Scottish, English, American, or Canadian, depending on the viewer; and the diachronic, as a house that is simultaneously historicist and modernist.

While Casa Loma bears little resemblance to the great Gothic mansions of Georgian Britain, it is clear that Pellatt had them in mind as points of reference in the creation of his home. Of the many paintings that came up for sale in 1924 when the collections were dismantled and auctioned off, two significant paintings point in this direction: Sir Joshua Reynolds' Portrait of Horace Walpole (1756) and J. M. Turner's View of Fonthill Abbey (fig. 7).<sup>30</sup> Representing the most famous Gothic houses of the Georgian period, these two pictures stand out among the most significant works that Pellatt owned. Joan Crosbie was the first to note that the prominent position of these important paintings provided some sense not only of Pellatt's taste in art, but also in architecture.<sup>31</sup> Whether or not we would agree with him, Pellatt considered



▲ Fig. 7. Joshua Reynolds, Portrait of Horace Walpole, builder of Strawberry Hill (now at the AGO, Toronto, formerly owned by Sir Henry Pellatt). ART GALLERY OF ONTARIO

Casa Loma to descend from a heritage of great British homes built by literary gentlemen, antiquaries, and scholars (although in truth, Pellatt was none of these things). Here, surely, is a case of creative self-fashioning if ever there was one. As Peter Coffman noted about the removal of these two works of art in 1924:

Architecturally speaking, Casa Loma became an orphan when the two paintings were removed from its walls, causing an identity crisis from which its public image has never recovered.<sup>32</sup>

29. *Globe and Mail*, December 16, 1995.

30. Adams, C. Kingsley and W.S. Lewis, 1968-1970, "Portraits of Horace Walpole," *Walpole Society*, vol. 42, p. 1-34; Cundall, E.G., 1916, "Turner drawings of Fonthill Abbey," *Burlington Magazine*, vol. 29, no. 157, p. 16-17, 20-21.

31. Crosbie, Joan, 2000, "Casa Loma," in Nancy Byrtus et al. (eds.), *East/West: A guide to where people live in downtown Toronto*, Toronto, Coach House Press, p.80-81.

32. Coffman, p. 8.

This is a significant point and one that historians of architecture might well take greater notice of: namely, the positioning of images and objects within great homes often established historical, emotional and ethical trajectories between themselves and other buildings or patrons that are divorced from what we now consider “style.”

Coffman goes on to suggest that Casa Loma is not the “illegitimate child of the Medieval Castle but legitimate child of the Gothic imagination.”<sup>33</sup> Although broadly agreeing with this claim, I shall spend the remainder of this paper commenting on the instability of the “Gothic” and thus of the “Gothic imagination” itself. While Beckford, and particularly Walpole, offered an influential template to subsequent patrons of elite Gothic homes, it was readily adapted and changed and reimagined in different contexts. In formal terms at least, there is far more that divides Casa Loma from than unites it to this tradition.

Strawberry Hill was an enormously significant building that cast a lengthy shadow over the history of architecture in England, her colonies, and further afield. Elsewhere I have argued that Walpole appropriated the Gothic as a queer coterie taste in Georgian London.<sup>34</sup> This taste was disseminated in the building of a handful of prestigious Gothic homes from the 1750s through 1790s within Walpole’s circle, each referring back to Strawberry in one way or another through its ornament or picture hangs. Beckford’s Fonthill, on the other hand, while built in the Gothic mode popularized by Strawberry Hill, seemingly had little love for its originary predecessor.<sup>35</sup> While we cannot know precisely what Pellatt knew of Walpole, Beckford, or



▲ Fig. 8. Salvaged fireplace, likely English, now installed at Casa Loma, Toronto. PHOTO: MATTHEW M. REEVE

their famous homes, we can be fairly sure that it had nothing to do with their sexual orientation, which was largely erased from the historiography of what would become the “Gothic Revival” in nineteenth-century commentaries. Pellatt’s appraisal of these men and their homes was probably based on antiquarian prints and engravings. (Fonthill was ruinous by the time Pellatt was born and Strawberry Hill was in different hands.) Pellatt likely appraised these buildings as part of a grand English history of aristocratic architecture into which he hoped to insert Casa Loma, Toronto’s greatest home. These houses established what Clive Wainwright has called *The Romantic Interior*—a wedding of historical art collections to neo-medieval and other historicist settings which became a fashion in British architecture of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>36</sup> Typical of this tradition, the various rooms of

33. Coffman, p. 8.

34. Reeve, Matthew M., 2013, “Gothic architecture, sexuality and license at Horace Walpole’s Strawberry Hill,” *Art Bulletin*, vol. 95, no. 3, p. 411-439; Reeve, Matthew M., 2013, “Dickie Bateman and the Gothicization of Old Windsor: Architecture and sexuality in the circle of Horace Walpole,” *Architectural History*, vol. 56, p. 99-133.

35. Reeve, Matthew M., 2020, *Gothic architecture and sexuality in the circle of Horace Walpole*, University Park, Penn State Press.

36. Wainwright, Clive, 1989, *The Romantic Interior: The British collector at home, 1750-1850*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press.



Casa Loma were each ornamented with a different language of design, including Gothic, Tudor, Palladian, and Rococo, and contemporary documentation confirms that Pellatt purchased a great deal of historical furniture and many fittings from England, including a number of marble fireplaces dating from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that emerged from the booming salvage trade (fig. 8).<sup>37</sup> Here, surely, was a case of a patron inventing a familial genealogy via the acquisition (rather than the inheritance) of a large amount of historical furniture, which would, be located within a newly built Gothic mansion. In keeping with elite taste in art and furnishings, Pellatt's tastes were defined by the Hague School of Northern European painting.<sup>38</sup> But there was a Canadian twist, since Pellatt was an important early collector of Canadian art—notably the paintings of Cornelius Krieghoff—whose work is interwoven into Pellatt's broadly European collection, thus arguing, implicitly, for the place of Canadian art within a European canon.

I have noted already that for most viewers of the home—including Pellatt—Casa Loma's nationality, its signification of a particular national heritage through style, was central to its meaning. Scottish, French, English, American, and Canadian significations have been read in the fabric of the house, readings which suggest as much about the nationalist prejudices of its commentators as it does about the house itself. Indeed, it is significant that the house was built during a period of heightened awareness of the national character of architecture in architectural writing in Canada. The second decade of the twentieth century was defined by the search for a national

style of domestic architecture in English Canada, a search that would continue well into the century, and is, arguably, still with us.<sup>39</sup> The passage cited above about the house's apparent stylistic hybridity is, in my own view, not far from the mark. French sources are certainly manifest in the design, as are English ones, including the curvilinear forms on the rooflines terminating in finials, which recall a long line of Elizabethan prodigy houses. But the majority of forms and motifs in Casa Loma derive from the dominant Scottish Baronial style that proliferated in Scotland from the early nineteenth century and would represent a significant export to Canada, New Zealand, and elsewhere via English and Scottish colonials in the later nineteenth century. This robust style was defined by crow-stepped gables and variegated rooflines crowned by heavy crenellations; bartizans (frequently with faux machicolations); elaborate portes-cochères; oversized ornamental military features such as arrow slits; and other features. Drawing principally from Scottish Renaissance architecture, and freely adapting features from English, Netherlandish, and French architecture, the Scottish Baronial was an inherently fluid and malleable mode of design. Leaving aside its fashionability, this style may have spoken to Pellatt in particular as a man born of a father from Glasgow and who would visit Scotland on a number of occasions.

The most frequently cited source for Casa Loma is Balmoral castle near Aberdeen, rebuilt for Queen Victoria and Prince Albert (fig. 9). As we have seen, Pellatt was invited to Balmoral in 1910 as a guest of King George, so there is no doubt that he was aware of the house. However, Lennox's early drawings of Casa Loma confirm that the plans for

37. This derives from the contemporary account by R.S. Thompson who worked on the castle as it was being built, now part of the Casa Loma archives. On the salvage trade in general, see Harris, John, 2007, *Moving rooms: The trade in architectural salvages*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press.

38. Buis, Alena, 2008, "Ut pictura poesis: Edward Black Greenshields' collection of Hague School Paintings," master's thesis, Concordia University; Hurdalek, Marta, 1984, *The Hague School: Collecting in Canada at the turn of the century*, Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario.

39. Adams, Annmarie, 1993, "Eden Smith and the Canadian domestic revival," *Urban History Review*, vol. 21, no. 2, p. 104-115.



▲ Fig. 9. Balmoral Castle, Scotland. PHOTO: MATTHEW M. REEVE

the house were already in their advanced stages, thus limiting the influence of Pellatt's visit upon the house. It is of course entirely possible that Pellatt knew Balmoral from published imagery in texts such as R.W. Billings' *Baronial and ecclesiastical antiquities of Scotland* of 1845-1853 or that he had in fact visited it previously. In any case, the design of Casa Loma loosely reflects some features of the royal house. The Gothic porte cochère at Balmoral could be understood to anticipate that at Casa Loma, while the exterior of the Balmoral ballroom, itself possibly based on the Garden House at Abbotsford, provides a convincing analogue with the Casa Loma Conservatory (figs. 10-11). These points aside, few if any sources can be cited as

direct parallels (indeed, aspects of Casa Loma such as the two-level polygonal bay windows on the south front would seem to reflect Old Balmoral, built 1834-1839, which was rebuilt by Victoria and Albert by the time Pellatt would have seen it). But style was only one way to understand connections between these great homes. As Mackechnie and Urban have suggested in their recent account of Balmoral, the Scottish Baronial style was a suitable vehicle to explore various strains of nationalism. The complex blending of Scottish and English features in the design itself suggested a figurative proposal for "built unionism" that underscored the unity of Britain via combined traits of Englishness and Scottishness.<sup>40</sup> Balmoral was a romantic and

40. Mackechnie, A. and F. Urban, 2015, "Balmoral Castle: National architecture in a European context," *Architectural History*, vol. 58, p. 159-196; Glendinning, Miles and Aonghus Mackechnie, 2019, *Scotch Baronial: architecture and national identity in Scotland*, London and New York, Bloomsbury.



▲ Fig. 10. Balmoral Castle, ballroom.  
PHOTO: MATTHEW M. REEVE



▲ Fig. 11. Casa Loma, Toronto, showing ballroom at right.  
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nostalgic building that, following from Walter Scott's Abbotsford, helped popularise a range of ideas and images that is often referred to as Highlandism. The authors explain the phenomenon as follows:

These ideas and images bridged a contradictory attitude about Scotland that Victoria and Albert shared with many of their English

subjects. On the one hand, they wholeheartedly embraced the aesthetic experience of the Scottish Highlands. On the other hand they showed little political interest in their newly adopted region other than stressing, through action rather than verbal statements, its position as an inseparable part of the British nation-state.<sup>41</sup>

The second design at Balmoral (1852) juxtaposed emblems of Scotland and England throughout the house, including pairing the thistle and the rose, but nowhere more obviously than on the west façade, which has a relief of St Hubert (the patron saint of hunting) in the centre flanked by Saint Andrew and Saint George on either side, thus unifying Balmoral's function as a sporting retreat literally framed by the patron saints of both nations.

Even if Balmoral is less convincing as a dominant source for Casa Loma than has been previously suggested, Pellatt's home embodies a related form of "built unionism" a rhetoric that he understood informed the Scottish Baronial style. Throughout the house, its architecture and ornament structured a narrative of family honour, martial vigour, and commitment to Empire. This is articulated by the appearance of the Pellatt arms on the stables, on the decorative plasterwork ceilings of the house, and most obviously atop the south- or city-facing façade in a grand blazon looming over Pellatt's 'subjects,' the citizens of Toronto (figs. 12-13).<sup>42</sup> To either side are grand splays of carved Union Jacks amidst a shield, axe, and breastplate. Unfortunately, much of the carved ornament that was intended for the house was never finished, and we can now only imagine what the unworked stones atop gables and doors might have featured. Nonetheless, the sculpture of

41. Mackechnie and Urban, p. 176.

42. I am grateful to Darrel Kennedy of the Canadian Heraldic Authority for his assistance with the Pellatt arms.



the south façade as it now stands explicitly linked the Pellatt family and Toronto with Britain. But the south façade heraldry should also be read in concert with the north façade imagery. Facing east and west are two monumental, over-life-sized figures of a lion and unicorn, the traditional emblems for England and Scotland, and, collectively, of British unity. Similar imagery would adorn the stables (figs. 14a and 14b). Such emblems were of course common in British and British Colonial architecture, but a possible influence was the heraldic imagery at Hampton Court, which Lennox knew from Gardner and Stratton's *Domestic architecture in England during the Tudor period* (1911), a copy of which Lennox owned and marked up.<sup>43</sup> In a Canadian context, such images grandly associated Pellatt as an inheritor of a legacy of Empire, and locates his family and residence as the keepers of an Imperial legacy in Canada's greatest city. Such connections also run through the display of art and objects in the house, including an oak chair given to Pellatt by Queen Victoria and an equestrian bronze statue of Edward VII by Remington Clarke.<sup>44</sup> This particular narrative was of course deeply personal for Pellatt. Lawson's account of Pellatt's manoeuvres with the QOR in England (and Scotland) boldly claimed that "Canada has become the keystone of the imperial arch," a reading that usefully glosses the deeper intent of the program of Casa Loma. Berger's conclusion that "imperialism, military preparedness, and militarism, or the admiration and exaltation of the martial virtues, were inextricably bound together" in the minds of Canadians in the years before the First World War finds much support in Pellatt's cultural output.<sup>45</sup>



▲ Fig. 12. Pellatt heraldry on the south façade of Casa Loma, Toronto. PHOTO: MATTHEW M. REEVE



▲ Fig. 13. Carved imagery on the south façade of Casa Loma, Toronto. PHOTO: MATTHEW M. REEVE

So much is clear, but it is also significant, following another line of Berger's argument, that such affiliations with Empire were also completely consistent with a budding Canadian nationalism, which Pellatt exhibited in spades. It is thus hardly a surprise that the castellated Scottish Baronial style of Casa Loma would be appreciated as a

43. Garner, Thomas and Arthur Stratton, 1911, *The domestic architecture of England during the Tudor period*, London, B. T. Batsford, plate CXL. The volume is now Archives of Ontario, Lennox Collection, no. 39, Box MU1431.

44. Sewell, John, 2007, "Chair a gift from Queen Victoria," *Toronto Star*, November 24; *Catalogue of the Valuable Contents of Casa Loma*, no. 387, p. 27.

45. Berger, p. 233.



▲ Figs. 14a and 14b. Carved statues of lion and unicorn on the stables of Casa Loma, Toronto. PHOTOS: MATTHEW M. REEVE

distinctively Canadian style of architecture from the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>46</sup> As I have already suggested, this view was based in an older understanding of the Gothic style as a specifically Northern mode that distinctively expressed a developing sense of Canada in contrast to the dominant classicism of the United States. Wilfred Campbell could speak of the European Gothic sources of the Houses of Parliament in Ottawa thusly in 1907:

For while we speak of them as Canadian, every tower and arch, every buttress and carving, every groin and bastion, every window and doorway is an evidence of the spirit and ideal of the spirit of our Celtic, Saxon, and Norman forefathers. In these buildings we have as a people, both French and British... epics in stone, revealing to us not only universal beauty and inspiration but emblematic of our common ideal, our common artistic sense, our common ancestry, and our common Christianity.<sup>47</sup>

46. Liscombe, Rhodri Windsor, 1993, "Nationalism or cultural imperialism? The Château Style in Canada," *Architectural History*, vol. 36, p. 127-144.

47. Campbell, Wilfred, *Canada: Painted by T. Mower Martin*, Toronto, R.C.A., 1907, p. 104-105





▲ Fig. 15. William Nassau McKendry, cobalt nickel statue of Casa Loma, Toronto. PRIVATE COLLECTION

A version of the Scottish Baronial style would be applied to Chateau Laurier and Chateau Frontenac, the so-called railway hotels that would likewise be read as distinctively Canadian buildings. Some careful attention has been paid to the development of a nascent nationalism in the historiography of Canadian architecture by Rhodri Windsor Liscombe, Christopher Thomas and others, and I need not rehearse these ideas here except to note their prevalence from before 1910

through to their zenith in the 1960s around the centenary of Confederation.<sup>48</sup> But in understanding the Canadian essence of Casa Loma, we might borrow from Thomas's reading of the houses of Parliament in asserting that Casa Loma was *both* British and Canadian, depending on one's definition. Pellatt's worldview was essentially Victorian, reflected in his belief that being Canadian was tantamount to living as a Briton abroad, as a supporter and defender of Canada's ties to her greater

48. Liscombe; Thomas, Christopher, 1997, "Canadian Castles? The question of national styles in architecture revisited," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 32, no. 1, p. 5-27.

empire.<sup>49</sup> This rhetoric is encapsulated in what must be one of the most bizarre productions from the world of Casa Loma: a c.1915 Cobalt silver statue of the house created by the jeweller William Nassau McKendry (fig. 15). Unfortunately, we know nothing about the patronage of this work, less still of where it would have been displayed in the later 1910s. In any case, setting the house within a Gothic frame wreathed with maple leaves and crowned by a beaver is surely an argument in silver (rather than stone) for Pellatt's Anglo-Scottish castle being an indigenously "Canadian" building.<sup>50</sup> And yet, for Pellatt, the question of Casa Loma's Canadian or English essence would have been perplexing since for him they were, for the most part, one and the same thing. Pellatt felt little of the mid-century anxiety around Canadian identity and we might well adjust our interpretations accordingly.

The Scottish Baronial style of Casa Loma in fact had a wide influence in North American architecture, a fact that goes as long way toward qualifying its apparent Canadianness. Closer in conception to Casa Loma than Balmoral Castle was Skibo Castle, rebuilt in the Scottish Highlands by the American industrialist Andrew Carnegie in the last years of the nineteenth century. Skibo was one of a handful of prestigious British homes purchased by North American industrialists of British ancestry around 1900.<sup>51</sup> Carnegie was of Scottish descent and his motivations to purchase and rebuild a Scottish castle in a revivalist mode was at least partially based upon his own nationalistic leanings. Whether or not Pellatt knew Carnegie

or had been to Skibo is unknown, but both are quite possible, if not likely. In Canada, a handful of substantial mansions or "castles" in a version of the Scottish Baronial mode would be built in the same years. In Victoria, BC, Craigdarroch Castle was built in the 1887-1890 period for the Scottish-Canadian industrialist Robert Dunsmuir, who made his fortune from coal on Vancouver Island. Precociously early among these buildings, Craigdarroch was a hybrid of a prevalent Richardsonian Romanesque revival mode with aspects of the Scottish Baronial. His son, James Dunsmuir, commissioned Samuel Maclure to construct Hatley Castle in 1908 in a rusticated Scottish Baronial style as a second substantial medievalist mansion on the island. What in fact connects these rather far-flung commissions is the Scottish ancestry of their patrons. These buildings, including Casa Loma, can best be understood as manifestations of an elite Anglo-Scottish culture prevalent in North America. And yet, in the context of Canadian Empire building, it is hard not to agree with Michelle Warren in suggesting that "the Gothic offered a path to cultural equality with Europe, in which [North] Americans could claim to understand the European Middle Ages better than modern Europeans."<sup>52</sup>

A final path to be explored at Casa Loma is, paradoxically, its extraordinary modernity. Despite its allusions to the architecture of the Middle Ages and its later simulations, Casa Loma was in fact one of the most modern buildings of its era. Invisible from the exterior, the design of Casa Loma integrated a number of features that

49. Thomas, Christopher, 2004, "Slippery talk of Parliament's architecture: Canadian, Canadian British, or Anglo-American?" *RACAR*, vol. 29, nos. 1-2, p. 14-27.

50. Sewell, John, 2009, "Model of Casa Loma a Canadian gem," *Toronto Star*, January 13. This statue, now in a private collection, requires research. It is not clear whether it was commissioned by Pellatt or another patron.

51. Aslet, Clive, 2012, *The Edwardian country house: A social and architectural history*, London, Francis Lincoln Limited, p. 172-175.

52. Warren, Michelle, 2009, "Medievalism and the making of nations," in Kathleen Davis and Nadia Altschul (eds.), *Medievalisms in the postcolonial world*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, p. 296.



were decisively novel in a domestic commission: an inbuilt vacuum system; 150,000 feet of electrical wiring to its 98 rooms and 5,000 electric lights; refrigeration in the wine cellar; an indoor, underground swimming pool (never finished); and the country's first electric elevator. In this regard, the house was in line with the most lavish of the Gilded Age hotels in Canada or the United States which were likewise built in an historicist mode.<sup>53</sup> Having made much of his fortune in electricity, Pellatt martialed the most sophisticated modern technologies within a singularly important domestic commission. The technological sophistication of the house was celebrated in a short piece in the *Electrical News* of 1913, which celebrates Pellatt's savvy in electrifying Toronto and then describes Casa Loma as "a final demonstration that eclipses anything the world has seen." The author continues to praise Pellatt's most complete adaptation of "the electrical arts" to a private residence. So interesting were the switchboards operating the thousands of lights on the Pellatt property that the journal reproduced photographs of the panels, which were themselves aestheticized as high-tech controls set within ancient Italian marble consoles.<sup>54</sup> Although few observers would have known it, the very construction of the house was also technologically advanced. The house was not, of course, built exclusively or even principally in freestone; in fact, it was built around a steel frame and the levels contained a four-foot crawl space to allow access to the electricity and other inner workings. Much of Casa Loma and its stables were built from a combination of Credit Valley sandstone and so-called Roman stone, a manufactured, fictive stone created

from a concrete mixture which was poured into sand moulds. The technology for creating such fictive limestone was relatively new, but by 1910 it was being used extensively as a substitute for quarried stone. Roman stone was a less expensive alternative to costly ashlar stone, doubly so in Pellatt's case as he was the owner of the Roman Stone company.<sup>55</sup> The collision of overtly modern, even avant-garde, technologies in the creation of historicist art and architecture was a defining feature of the English Gothic Revival.<sup>56</sup> And in a broader sense, the rich paradox of Gothic modernity would stand at the centre of theorizations of medievalism in general.<sup>57</sup> At Casa Loma, it serves to anchor the house in the very technologies of the city and of the Empire, elements of which Pellatt had a hand in creating.

## Conclusion

It has only been possible here to attempt to reintroduce Casa Loma as a problem in Canadian architecture. But I hope this paper has shown how extraordinarily complex and conflicted the house and its cultural history is, and second, that it demands consideration outside of many of the often-repeated and frankly erroneous clichés that have tended to define it. Built by a leading financier and imperialist, its grandeur, scale, and stylistic heterogeneity was grounded on one hand in the extraordinary optimism of the rising city of Toronto as a great modern metropolis remaining connected to its British roots, and on the other in Pellatt's (and Canada's) apparent power to acquire European fashions (often literally) and to rethink

53. See, for example, Wharton, Annabel, 2003, "Two Waldorf Astorias: Spatial economies as totem and fetish," *Art Bulletin*, vol. 85, p. 523-543.

54. 1913, *The Electrical News*, June 15, p. 106.

55. Richie, T., 1978, "Roman stone and other decorative artificial stones," *APT Bulletin*, vol. 10, no. 1, p. 20-52.

56. See, for example, Reeve, Matthew M., 2017, "The Hereford Screen: A prehistory," *British Art Studies*, vol. 5 <<http://www.britishartstudies.ac.uk/issues/issue-index/issue-5/screen-prehistory>>, consulted April 9, 2020.

57. Nagel, Alexander, 2012, *Medieval modern: Art out of time*, London, Thames and Hudson.

and reshape them to their own subjective ends. But the world of Casa Loma I have briefly sketched here would soon disappear. Not only did the house get sold in 1924, but the years between the First World War and the Depression signalled the end of many of the narratives that ran through the house including the overly chivalrous medievalism that Pellatt embodied and promoted. The house and its collection fell quickly out of fashion and thus out of step with a rapidly developing urban culture. Casa Loma would be a casualty of the broader process that Christopher Armstrong defined as *Making Toronto Modern* a once-great house became a hotel, a dance

hall, and a tourist destination, and is now leased to an entertainment company to be a setting for films, tourism, and weddings (on one occasion it stood in for Wayne Manor from Batman mythology). With the recent addition of a high-end restaurant within the castle, it has become a culinary destination for the city's fashionistas, rap stars, and sporting heroes. After a lengthy history of the City of Toronto being "saddled" with Casa Loma and much hand-wringing about what to do with the building, the house now stands as a comfortable anachronism, a reminder of the city's own Gothic past without which it could never have become modern.