

Christopher Borgal
Restoration architect
Goldsmith Borgal and Company Ltd., Toronto, Ontario



Christopher Borgal on a site visit at the
B.C. Parliament

There are two sides to Christopher Borgal, restoration architect.

He is an architect with a mind for details.

He has participated in a "concrete study" at the National Gallery of Canada to look for cracks and co-wrote a report giving advice about what repairs should be done. He has also evaluated air traffic control terminals across Canada for deterioration and participated in a condition report which included how potential seismic risks might affect the Legislature Building of British Columbia.

But Borgal is also an architect with a mind that looks at the big picture.

He has a knack for writing the "master plan"—that means the general outline of a project, with parameters and historic background. It is a document that every project has to have.

Borgal drew up a master plan for Ottawa's National Agricultural Museum. Not only does the plan give background information regarding the heritage of the site—the barns, greenhouses, office buildings, workshops, and even weathervanes—but it also examines the role experimental farms play in society.

Borgal's love of history and architecture started when he was a child in Halifax. The city was like a playground for him. He loved to explore old forts and the harbour and listen to tales of pirates and sea battles.

In the 1960s, the family moved to Toronto where Borgal subsequently trained in architecture at the University of Toronto (supplemented with conservation studies in North America and England.) At the University of Toronto, there was little emphasis on heritage, though he did happen to do an assignment on the famous octagonal town square in Goderich, on Lake Huron.

That school assignment was a sign of things to come. Soon after graduation he set up practice with Nicholas Hill, in Goderich. They were the only architects in Huron County.

Goderich was a goldmine of opportunity. The city had a huge stock of heritage buildings—in addition to the famous eight-sided square.

A project for the Blyth Festival wound up in the firm's lap, and Chris got to figure out how to bring an old building—which had been condemned by engineers—to code. That started a 13-year association with the development of the festival, which specializes in the production and promotion of Canadian plays.

From 1993 to 1997, Borgal worked in Ottawa for the federal government. It was a productive period, writing material studies, conservation reports, and master plans for projects across Canada and during this period he was the conservation architect for the restoration of the south façade of the Centre Block, Parliament Hill.



The Bruce County Museum and Cultural Centre

In 2001, Borgal made an inspired move when he joined forces with architect Phil Goldsmith, in Toronto.

Their firm, Goldsmith Borgal and Company Ltd., which specializes in heritage work, adaptive re use, and new building projects, and has won praise for the restoration and revitalization of the North Toronto (CP) Station and LCBO, and the Bruce County Museum and Cultural Centre, and the National Ballet School of Canada for which Phil Goldsmith was the prime consultant for all of the planning initiatives at the site from the project's inception.

Borgal is the past president of the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario and is currently the president of the Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals—an organization of which Phil Goldsmith was one of the founders in 1987.

For Borgal, heritage is how we understand the world we live in. "It preserves our sanity and gives us a sense of comfort and security," Borgal says. "It's the comfort and security of growing up or living in places such as Halifax, or Gorderich or even Toronto, near the salt air and stone forts, or historic districts or major urban centres, and carrying those memories inside your heart as beacons to guide your way through life."



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Goldsmith Borgal and Company Ltd

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