

SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF ARCHITECTURE IN CANADA

BULLETIN

SOCIÉTÉ POUR L'ÉTUDE DE L'ARCHITECTURE AU CANADA



McKim, Mead & White and the
Neo-Classical Bank Tradition in Winnipeg,

1898-1914

Standing majestically in its Roman temple-like splendor at the Portage and Main crossroads, McKim, Mead & White's Bank of Montreal dominates its surroundings and represents the focal point for Winnipeg's commercial activities. Completed in 1913 as the last in a series of monumental Winnipeg banking halls¹, this edifice epitomizes the values which its owners held, and the marketing concepts which they wished to promote. The building constitutes the sole Western Canadian effort of the prestigious New York City architectural firm. (Plate 1)

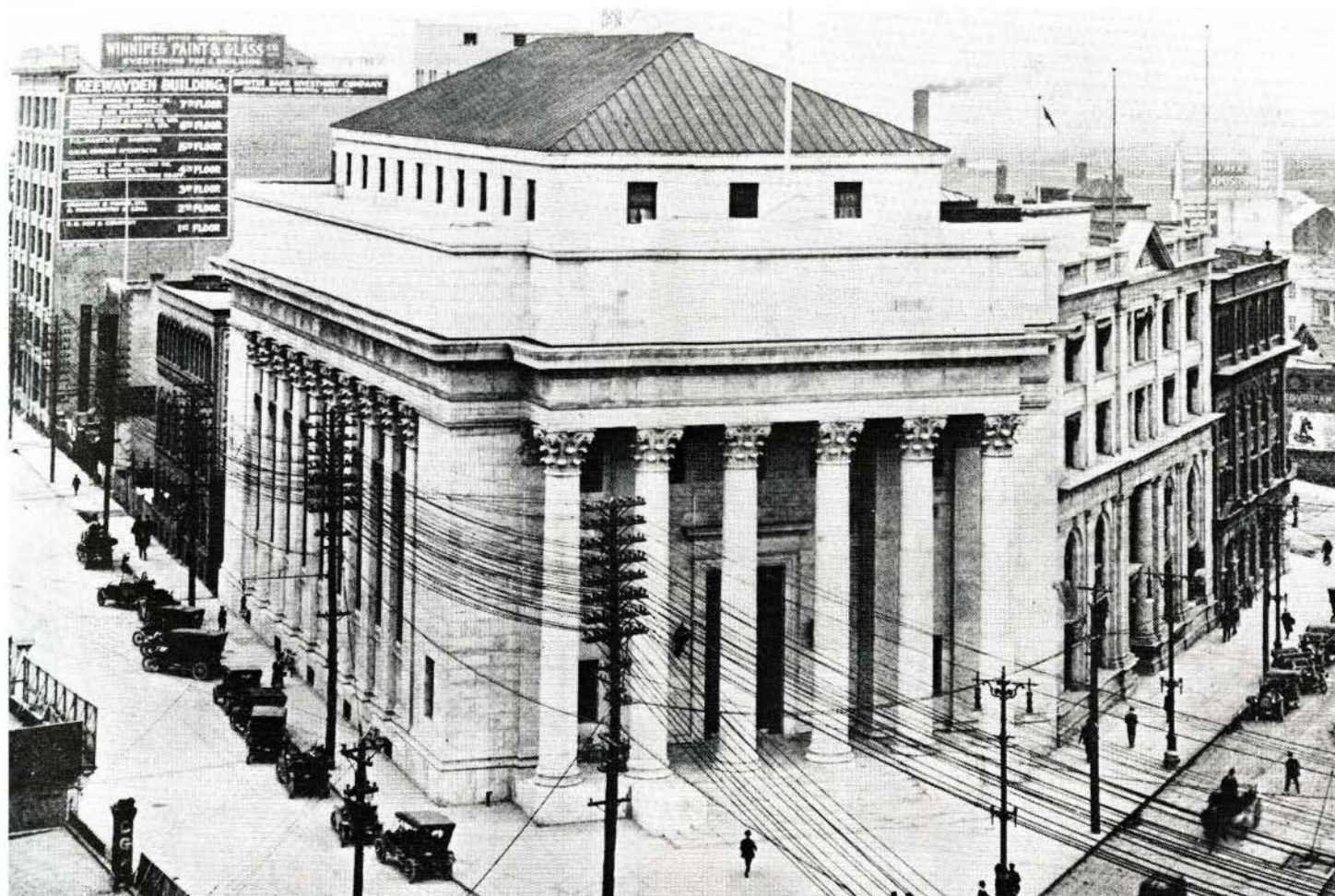
During the concluding years of the nineteenth century, a variety of factors led Canada's financial institutions to specify monumental premises in which to transact business. The 1893 United States panic left in its wake a swath of bank failures, but by-passed Canada's relatively strong financial institutions. Buoyed by the notion that Canadian branch-banks provided greater depositor security than unitary, locally-owned American institutions, Montreal and Toronto executives sought means of expressing this superiority in stone, brick, and steel. As thousands of settlers poured into Western Canada at the turn of the century, Canada's chartered banks also required premises from which to finance both the distribution of farm machinery and consumer goods to the new homesteads and the export of prairie grains. Believing that they were indispensable in financing this new Western economic expansion and having seized upon the concept that they were the nation's economic guardians, Canadian bankers opted for Greek and Roman temples to house their quarters. The temple proved ideal because of its religious and mystic connotations. In turn of the century Canada, money became the new secular religion, banks the new temples, and bankers its new high priests. Inspired by the Beaux Arts buildings of Chicago's Columbian Exposition of 1893 and Charles B. Atwood's neo-classical Palace of the Fine Arts in particular, architects eagerly undertook their new commissions.²

Neo-classical banking halls fulfilled the dual function of advertising the institution's services and adequately housing employees. The closeness of competing banking halls in the

financial districts of Montreal, Toronto, and Winnipeg necessitated that each building had to outshine its rivals in grandiosity. Those important corporate pedestrians would only be lured by colonnades denoting security, stone facing materials conveying strength, and marble and walnut vestibules expressing wealth. Inside these halls of finance, the themes of security, strength, and wealth continued. An accepted layout of manager's office to the left, enclosed tellers' cages, and safe at the rear or basement reinforced the businessman's confidence in his banker. Marble floors, panelled ceilings, and mahogany or teak cheque desks conveyed images of wealth and substance. An unseen steel frame supported the building and confirmed the bank's commitment to contemporary technology. Yet these monumental structures were also practical. Highly-placed windows to the side and back illuminated the building and facilitated clerical tasks. Behind the tellers' cages, a large open space could be applied to a variety of changing purposes. In a national or regional headquarters, a mezzanine floor proved ideal for housing administrative staff. Monumental banking halls could be both impressive and utilitarian.³

Following the decades of restrained growth, by the mid 1890s' Winnipeg had emerged as the financial centre of Western Canada.⁴ It became home to large numbers of wholesalers who erected warehouses to the immediate west of the Main Street business district. By 1892, grain merchants reaped the benefits of specialized services provided in the city's first Grain Exchange building. The establishment of a bank clearing house in 1893 ensured that the city would emerge as a financial centre of some importance. With large sums of newly-acquired capital in their coffers from Klondike gold shipments, the chartered banks constructed monumental Winnipeg banking halls to attract corporate clients.

As early as the 1880s', Winnipeg possessed a distinct financial district. Until about 1900, financial institutions leased the abundant High Victorian Italianate commercial structures located on Main between Bannatyne Avenue (to the north) and Portage Avenue (at the south). By 1914, the city boasted a financial district that extended four blocks westward along Portage Avenue from the original boundary of Portage and Main. Designed by nationally and internationally renowned architects, the new edifices were monumental in



scope. Andrew T. Taylor, a prominent Montreal architect during the late 1890s', penned plans for the eight storey Merchants' Bank and the neo-Palladian Bank of British North America. Another Montreal architect, H.C. Stone submitted specifications for the Bank of Toronto - a typical neo-classical edifice, but "the only structure in Canada [to 1906] in which white marble has been used for the exterior finish."⁵ If prolificacy constituted the sole criterion for success the Toronto firm of Darling and Pearson outshone its rivals. Their creations included the eclectic Dominion Bank, the Union Bank "skyscraper" complete with neo-classical facade and a Sullivanesque frieze, the domed Bank of Nova Scotia, the ornate but classically severe Imperial Bank, and the opulent and massive Canadian Bank of Commerce with segregated facilities for savings account holders and wealthier commercial clients. Equal in importance stood the Royal Bank, a \$190,000 building executed by the respected New York City firm of Carrere and Hastings⁶ and the only palazzo style banking hall in the city.

In 1913, on the south-east corner of Portage and Main, the last of Winnipeg's monumental banks, the Bank of Montreal opened its doors.

Directors of the Bank of Montreal envisaged a landmark on the Portage and Main site. Therefore they commissioned architects McKim, Mead & White to prepare plans. This New York concern had emerged as the leading American neo-classical and Renaissance revival architectural firm. The oldest surviving member, William Rutherford Mead was born in Vermont and studied architecture in New York City. Also American born, his partner Charles Follen McKim studied at the prestigious Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. He utilized his European sojourn to examine architecture throughout continental Europe and Great Britain. The third member, Stanford White was assassinated in 1906 and played no part in the design of the Winnipeg structure.⁷

McKim, Mead & White developed a comprehensive philosophy of architecture. As early as 1882, when Charles McKim received a commission for the design of the Henry Villard house in New York City, he selected a neo-Renaissance style. From then on, the structures of McKim, Mead & White followed restrained Renaissance or neo-classical patterns. According to William H. Jordy in American Buildings and their Architects, the firm's senior partner,

Charles McKim had "a cautious, constrained imagination, discriminating rather than inventive."⁸ The monumental structures of McKim, Mead & White appealed to corporations, governments, and individuals who craved subdued opulence and respectability.

The New York architects approached their Winnipeg commission with two objectives in mind. The final product required integration into the Montreal institution's corporate style, yet needed to exude an individuality of its own. For their monumental structures the bank favoured massive Corinthian or Ionic colonnades extending from ground level and crowned by substantial entablatures and pediments. Except for the corporate name on the entablature and perhaps coat-of-arms on the pediment, the institution avoided decoration. Bank of Montreal buildings stood starkly conservative in their unadorned rusticated stone or brickwork. The completed Winnipeg building epitomized that corporate style. It shared a Corinthian colonnade with Calgary and Hamilton branches. Although rectangular-shaped to make best use of the building's unusual site, its portico exceeded in size those of other centres. Its architrave-trimmed main entrance and unadorned rusticated stone trim were present on the Halifax, Victoria, and Sherbrooke offices. Constructed from granite quarried at Bethel, Vermont and shaped to resemble the Royal Exchange of London, England, the edifice enticed corporate patrons with its stark and subdued opulence. Whereas other financial institutions have closed their monumental Winnipeg quarters, the strategic location and distinctive shape of this edifice has ensured its continued viability.

The interior layout and design of the Bank of Montreal reflected the best practices of the period. In the main floor banking room, a marble floor, Italian Botticino marble columns and walls, and the only gold-leaf ceiling in the city convinced corporate clients of the institution's wealth. Tellers' cages with bronze grilles, elaborate basement vaults, and safety deposit boxes conveyed an image of security to potential depositors. (Plate 7) The confinement of savings account holders to a small room outside the main banking hall affirmed the institution's commitment to business account holders.⁹ The building's structural steel frame assured patrons that the bank believed in progress. Yet the edifice also served practical purposes. The presence of an open space behind the u-shaped counter and highly placed windows along the side and rear elevations demonstrated a concern for the daily requirements of clerical staff. By specifying executive offic-



es for the mezzanine floor, McKim, Mead & White followed the accepted practice for design of a regional bank head-quarters. By adding staff living quarters to the top two storeys, the architects adopted the standard Canadian (and British) model, and cast aside the American notion that junior officials should reside outside bank walls.

The Portage and Main structure constitutes the only self-standing Canadian banking hall executed by McKim, Mead & White. The St. Antoine Street edifice in Montreal by this architectural firm constitutes a mere annex to an earlier mid-nineteenth century building. As Winnipeg's final monumental pre-War banking hall, this edifice epitomizes the philosophy, values, and design criteria of its architects, owners, and clients.

The author is presently preparing researching a history of bank architecture and Canadian society during 1893-1925.

LES STECHESEN, MANITOBA ARCHITECT

"I am a torn individual, on one hand I'd like to do more; on the other I'd like to say I've done enough."

This outlook comes from Leslie J. Stechesen who, at 46, has been an architect for half of his life. Should he cease his practice today, Stechesen would be remembered for many changes to the Winnipeg cityscape and for the milestone community centre of Leaf Rapids. What then is the story behind this Manitoba architect?

Les Stechesen is not a native to Manitoba; he was born at Fort William, Ontario in 1934. His father was a carpenter, building houses and working at a lumber yard and mill plant. He had two uncles also involved in construction and one uncle played a significant role in motivating the young Leslie towards a career in architecture. "Uncle Stechesen" had studied architecture in the 1930's at the University of Toronto but had withdrawn from the programme owing to poor health. Discussions about architecture with his uncle and a general enthusiasm towards building that he acquired through helping his father resulted in Leslie applying directly to an architecture school after completing his secondary education.

The decision to attend the University of Manitoba and not an Ontario College was made following a high school guidance night where a guest architect affirmed that Manitoba had the best programme in Canada. The school was certainly at a high point in its history. The dean, J.A. Russell, a product of Harvard, had set the course toward the modern movement in architecture. Russell was also successful in attracting good academics from Boston and M.I.T. The influence of Gropius was strong at the school and it took a lead in Canada for the international modern style of building.

Immediately prior to deciding upon studying architecture, Stechesen considered Interior Design. It would mean a shorter course and secondly, he was intensely interested by interiors. Although he chose architecture he has found that his interest in interior planning has had a key influence on his work. In fact, Stechesen argues that some architects fail with the insides of their buildings because they design from the exterior.

While studying at the University of Manitoba Stechesen came under the influence of several professors, the most noteworthy being James A. Donahue. Stechesen reflects that Donahue's intense commitment to reducing things to their simplest

while maintaining sensitivity to proportion and detail to add the elements together has been a singular persuasion on his own work. Additionally, Donahue's concern for the use of natural materials is also felt by Stechesen. While living in Thunder Bay, Stechesen had grown to appreciate the beauty of nature, even as he enjoyed buildings he developed a deep concern to achieve a proper intermingling of the city with nature.

At the architecture school Stechesen made close friendships with Jack Cook and Jeff Barge, both of whom were positive factors in his development. Jack Cook is now in Arizona after working with Bruce Goff for several years. Jeff Barge presently teaches at Boston. Barge was a bright and sensitive student always restive and always up-to-date on architectural developments. Leslie made some field trips with his peers. Notable was a trip to Chicago where he found Frank Lloyd Wright's work very stimulating, and two years after graduation, accompanied by Barge, he conducted a serious architecture study trip from London to Istanbul.

The summer breaks were spent in Thunder Bay at the lumber yard making windows and doors. This closeness to wood gave him a fondness for the use of that material and a knowledge of how to work with it.

At graduation Stechesen chose to work not in Ontario but in Winnipeg. Through Jeff Barge he secured a position with Waisman - Ross. Four months later he left for Libling - Michener. At Waisman - Ross, Stechesen did not have the freedom to do the things he wanted to do. At Libling - Michener he found that freedom and harmonious mixture of personalities that would provide him fifteen years of satisfying practice there.

In the late 1950's Libling - Michener's architecture stood out. Although it seems simple in retrospect it was indeed new and significant for its time. Schools, for example, were still being designed using 1930's formulas which stated amongst other criteria, that ceilings were to be twelve feet to allow natural light half way into a twenty-four foot long room. Gymnasiums were on the longest side which was parallel to the building. Stechesen wanted to do things differently and at Libling - Michener he was given the chance.

By 1959, Stechesen was Head of Design at Libling - Michener. In addition to increased design responsibilities Libling - Michener offered a wide variety of work from developments to institutions. The opportunity to execute a diversity of design with a spectrum of clients and thirdly, to be able to follow through for a number of years on

each job gave Stechesen a complete grasp of how his designs worked and their various merits or weaknesses.

By 1965, it was time for a break and Stechesen proceeded on graduate study in London for a year. Stechesen's work at Libling - Michener was now reaching a plateau. His Southwood Village, 1967, won a National Design Award and the Manitoba Teachers Society Headquarters Building, 1966, won the Manitoba Association of Architects Award for Excellence.

In 1971, Leslie Stechesen left Libling - Michener. Although he was offered a partnership he felt he needed a change. Originally he intended to go to British Columbia with Waisman who was planning to set up a practice there. But in a seemingly out-of-the-blue occurrence the Manitoba New Democratic Party Government offered Stechesen the Town Centre project for Leaf Rapids. This job carried with it the requirement to set up his own office. Leaf Rapids took three years to complete after which he continued on his own. George Fredrickson joined him first and was followed by Alec Katz. Stechesen continues to be primarily concerned with design with Fredrickson balancing the operation by organizing the completion of working drawings.

Subsequent to Leaf Rapids, Stechesen won a 1974 Award of Excellence from the Manitoba Design Institute for his "Cabin Unit 3" commissioned by the Department of Tourism. The Courtyard building, renovated in 1977, received a Heritage Canada Annual Award.

The fledgling firm blossomed under N.D.P. sponsored projects and with \$30 million worth of work on the books all looked rosy. Then disaster, the government was defeated and replaced by a budget cutting Conservative regime. An Auto-Pac Headquarters, a hospital and public housing projects were shelved. For six months the partnership did nothing and during the next two years it almost folded.

Presently, Stechesen has been awarded a \$3 million Air Command Centre for Canadian Forces Base Winnipeg and the hospital project has been revived. His office now runs with three architects, a specifications writer and three draftsmen.

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Stechesen's buildings have earned him many distinctions from Massey Medals to National Design Awards. Yet there is such a great variance in their styles that identification of his work is difficult. This fact is certainly a result of his design philosophy which dictates that no one

style can be continued throughout a life time's work nor can it be applied to all problems. Stechesen reacts and adapts to the situation and to each individual project on its own terms. By examining some of his most important buildings one can see how his design principles hold true.

The Grosvenor House Apartments, built in 1962, used pre-cast concrete to give it a striking architectural expression unique but homogenous to its setting. The under-building parking was a solution to the limits of lot size and reflects a skill Stechesen learned from Michener, to make the best design within the budget available. The Grosvenor House was a 1964 Massey Medal Competition finalist. Stechesen notes that proof of its success is simple, "the tenants don't move out."

St. Paul's High School afforded the opportunity to work closely with the Jesuit Fathers. Reacting to the serene discipline of Jesuit Life, Stechesen recalled a European monastery he had seen which seemed to typify that lifestyle. Within a tight budget characteristic of 1964, he employed proportion and regularity coupled with a beautiful woods-like landscaping to achieve that serene mood. The relationship of the Fathers to the school was further strengthened by connecting their residence to the classroom block. St. Paul's High School won a 1967 Massey Silver Medal.

St. John Brebeuf Church was a solution to the situations of time and space. Stechesen responded to neighbouring building heights, the corner location and to the change in Roman Catholic relationship of clergy and parish. He chose the curve form because it held a softness that people would respond to. Using a spiral concept he created two entrances and brought worshippers in on two curving spires. The spiraling effect was further heightened by the symbolic use of light at the altar. The congregation was brought closer to the priest and the traditional railing "barriers" were removed.

Village West was Stechesen's first townhouse design and in fact the first such development for Winnipeg. Although Toronto had similar projects completed there were few precedents and for Stechesen, Village West was a significant learning experience. The lessons were applied two years later in the 1967 Southwood Village. This National Design Award winner was able to provide privacy within a multi-family environment. Stechesen is socialist in nature, being concerned about people and the quality of their environment. To help in his understanding of their needs he has worked with a Tenants' Participation Programme which contributed to the design process.

Southwood Village is a pedestrian centered complex of 98 units linked by winding, interlocking walkways. Automobiles are carefully removed to an underground park. The Village cedar "siding" exemplifies Stechesen's affinity for natural and lasting materials of wood, concrete and steel. To a great part Southwood Village brings together Stechesen's key goals in architecture; harmonious combination of city to nature, emphasis on simplicity, attention to detail and use of natural materials.

If any building demonstrates the flexibility of Stechesen's handling of a client's needs, it is the Manitoba Teachers' Society Building. The concrete window mullions of the Teachers' Headquarters projects the strong identifiable image that the client desired. The building also satisfied a requirement for maximum interior space by eliminating interior columns in the office and auditorium.

Perhaps the ultimate step in Stechesen's career was the Leaf Rapids Town Centre, a project he found dynamic and one of which he remains proud and excited. The Town Centre has been described by Robert Gretton, of The Canadian Architect, as a "brilliant answer to society's searching demands".

The Town Centre's exterior is simple and plain while the interior acts as an oasis of life. The concept was to bring the community together to gain less costly public facilities as well as optimum social interaction.

Leaf Rapids is a true case of Stechesen's philosophy of total influence and response to a situation. In this case, a small community 450 miles north of Winnipeg and subject to temperature extremes of 35° to -49° C. The complex accommodates leasable commercial space, a 40 room hotel, council facilities, federal offices, a health centre, theatre, gymnasium and a kindergarten to grade 12 school.

Stechesen worked with representatives of all user groups, experts on education, shopping and hotel facilities as well as government officials. The ability to synthesize a many faceted client is witness to a valid role and position of the architect in building today's environment.

The 220,000 square foot, \$8.5 million Centre is based on a quadrant plan. A cross chaped circulation route unites the sections. This interior street forms a "town square" or meeting place at its centre. The complex slopes to the east allowing low angled winter light to enter its heart. The use of natural light, wood siding, plants

and brightly coloured furniture is continued throughout the building.

Leaf Rapids is an integration of commercial interests, public facilities and local government and as such, it fosters social development. Joint use arrangements have been formally agreed upon, such as the use of hotel beds to augment the health centre. These accords affect all aspects of life within the complex and a Town Centre Committee was formed comprising of representatives from the Merchants Association, school, recreation centre, health centre, hotel, Leaf Rapids Corporation and the local government district. The leadership shown initially by the architect has been transferred to the local authorities. This joint co-operation initiated in the design stage must be continued during the Centre's operation to allow it to reach the fullest of its potential.

Stechesen has not had another project of such magnitude. His design for the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation's Senior Citizen's Home encompassed some of his concerns for the quality of life. The residence sits obliquely on a corner lot with maximum front facing windows and exposure to the sun.

Another interest area for Les Stechesen has been the renovation of older buildings. A first step in this direction may have been his proposal to incorporate the Empire Hotel castiron facade with a development of the Canadian National Railway's East Yards. The hotel front was to become an integral and enhancing part of the new structure. The historically significant portion of the edifice would be saved while the structurally unsound interior would be removed.

Stechesen's interests in the refit of old buildings reached a summit with the renovation of a 1912 commercial structure. The Courtyard, located within walking distance of downtown Winnipeg, provided a covered interior space and balcony circulation route for boutiques, restaurants and offices.

The project cost \$23.50 per square foot and Stechesen states, did not make money. However, the Courtyard has been immensely satisfying to him as he became his own client for the first time and was able to address himself to a tremendous degree of detail. The Courtyard features Mexican tile to add warmth and colour to floors while interior brick walls were stripped and sandblasted. Austrian bentwood chairs, a fountain, plants and a fig tree complement the atmosphere. Stechesen has continued renovation work with the Brian Melnychenko Gallery and Philipp Adam Salon. These

smaller projects allow him a break from larger jobs which can be very tiring.

The Air Command Headquarters will be a large project. In order to formulate his design Stechesen will have to respond to its individual requirements of energy conservation, open flat site, operational role and sense of identity as the focus for the Canadian Forces Air Element.

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Looking to the future Stechesen points out the heavy hand that politics can play in an architect's life. A philosophy of "you take what you can get" is often necessary to survive. The N.D.P. government had been particularly helpful to young architects and in fact was responsible for Stechesen's own practice. The change in government proved fatal to many young firms and almost caused the end of Stechesen's. The Liberal leanings of a partner have now resulted in the Air Command Building being awarded to Stechesen. The support of political parties by architects through direct donations appears the only way to win big government jobs. "Is this right and just?" asks Stechesen. Whatever the answer, there appears to be no end in sight for the patronization in what most Canadians contend is free enterprise.

Secondly, Stechesen emphasizes that architects must concern themselves more with energy conservation. In the 1950's there was no importance on energy and now it has risen to a place of pre-eminence. Should architects fail to keep abreast of technology they will lose jobs to engineers. Architecture schools as well as practicing architects must react to this challenge.

Stechesen foresees a period of fewer new buildings and more retrofit or making good of what now exists. The Courtyard remains, to Stechesen, a satisfying solution that has exciting applications elsewhere.

In regard to his own architectural endeavors Stechesen would like to produce a Manitoba regional accomplishment. Something that comes from Manitoba and that belongs in Manitoba. Stechesen maintains that the Leaf Rapids concept can be applied in many small communities of Manitoba but requires the co-operation and open mindedness on the part of local authorities and citizens. Bringing people together and reducing cost of services are still problems that need to be addressed throughout the province.

On the other side of the coin Stechesen exhibits a desire to avoid the "big" job and step back a few paces to not doing architecture but something new, more modest but still design related. Trying to promote a bigger practice carries with it the chance for traumatic collapse that he does not want to endure for a second time.

Leslie Stechesen may state openly that he yearns for the rest of a more sedate existence but his commitment to finding a regional design that places man, his urban life and nature in harmony belies that fact that we will be seeing much more of him and his work.

Don Lovell: University of Manitoba

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BARBER AND BARBER, ARCHITECTS EXTRAORDINAIRE

Charles Arnold Barber
(c. 1847-1916)

Earle William Barber
(1855-1915)

During the late 1870s and throughout the greater part of the 1880s, Winnipeg's paramount architectural firm was that of Barber and Barber. The practice consisted of the two Barber brothers, Charles A. and Earle W. and was known under several names, including C.A. Barber (1876-1881); Barber and (James R.) Bowes (1881-2); Barber, Bowes and Barber (1882-83) and finally, Barber and Barber (1883-c. 1920). Charles Barber, the founder of the firm, was actively involved in its operations from 1876 to 1898, after which the outfit became a Superior, Wisconsin company run by Earle Barber and his descendants.

Charles Arnold Barber was born at Irish Creek, near Athens, Ontario around 1847. He was one of seven children brought into the world by William and Maria (Arnold) Barber. These siblings included Earle W., John G., Maria L., William E., Robert J., Ann J. and Albert E. Barber. Interestingly enough, the majority of Charles' brothers and sisters came to reside at Winnipeg and were involved in the building trades. Little is known of the Barber children, though the somewhat dubious Winnipeg activities of William might command attention at some future date.

Charles' early life remains clothed in mystery. Though at one point, he alleged that he had founded the firm in 1870, the Census of 1871 found him still firmly planted on the family farm as a carpenter. At some point, he journeyed across the St. Lawrence River and was apprenticed to a master-builder at Rome, New York, though no record is known of Charles' presence at that place. During the early to mid-seventies, he supposedly was involved with major railway and bridge-building works in the United States, though it is believed that he was employed in the position of a gang labourer or mechanic rather than in a professional capacity.

Barber came to Winnipeg "for his health" on board the "Dakota" in May 1876. He set out on an architectural career that would last until about 1898. During that time, he, or his firm was responsible for well over one hundred designs, a little over 80 of which were actually constructed. Though the bulk of his work was executed at Winnipeg, side-trips took his work to other Manitoba towns, viz. Emerson, where he designed the 1881 Town



Hall (Plate 1), and the Merchants Bank, Brandon (1882); and possibly other buildings that are presently unknown.

Clearly, the main point that emerges from an examination of Barber's career is that his firm was the most important of Winnipeg's early architectural groups. He came to the city at a time when Winnipeg was erecting its first substantial buildings, as his new home was just emerging from the isolation of its frontier existence. With the great boom that struck Winnipeg in the early 'eighties, Barber appeared to hit his natural stride. At the peak of his firm's fortunes (1883) he employed six draughtsmen, including the later famous George Gouinlock of Toronto.



Barber's buildings were eminently suited to Winnipeg's first period of growth. His chief style was that of the eclectic, with Italianate and Second Empire themes. The firm's Winnipeg City Hall (1883-86, Cover) remains as their best known work, though equally impressive designs were to be found in the Bird Block (1882, 1887, Plate 2); the Robertson Block (1880, Plate 3); St. John's College Ladies' School (1877, Plate 4); Pile of Bones Villa (1881,) and the North Ward School (1877).

To describe Barber as a "boom-town architect" is probably the most suitable appellation that may safely be attached to his work. His designs were flamboyant and proclaimed the existence of

his buildings in a very loud manner. Though this was his chief design characteristic, the materials he used for his buildings were more substantial than the wood that might be used by his more "fly-by-night" contemporaries. Working in brick, stone, and even cement, it is evident that Barber understood the nature of a "boom-town", but also saw that Winnipeg was more permanent a fixture on the plains than most of the American boom-towns of the seventies.

Unfortunately, as Winnipeg became more culturally established, Barber's designs became less contemporary, and worse, structurally outmoded. In 1884, the Barbers were dismissed from the City Hall project for alleged collusion with contractors, a charge on which they were later exonerated. The firm's fame was broken, however, and the Barber brothers transferred their operations to Duluth, Minnesota after 1887, establishing branches at Superior, Wisconsin and Marquette, Michigan. During 1891 Charles re-opened the Winnipeg office, commencing designs for a number of buildings, including the City's first Grain Exchange (1892). The number of commissions were reduced, however, and the 'nineties saw Barber as only a minor though well-known character on Winnipeg's architectural scene. His last building, the McIntyre Block (1898, Plate 6) gave broad hints about its designer when its demolition took place in 1979. Though the Barber designs had substituted the heavy stone facades of Richardsonian architecture for the heavily ornamented gingerbread of the 'eighties, the structure remained essentially the same as its predecessors. All were of load-bearing wall design -- especially telling in the late 'nineties when metal framing was in general use elsewhere. The McIntyre Block featured this wooden interior framing. It also featured fire or bearing walls every twenty feet, which reduced its chances of recycling, and showed the edifice to be a series of narrow buildings. This probably had been done to avoid a repetition of the fire which had destroyed the first McIntyre Block.

Though the Grain Exchange (1892) featured the novelty of a 65 foot clear columnless span on its main floor (using trusses), Barber appeared to have design problems with many of his heavy masonry structures. When confined to wooden or even brick-veneer edifices, Barber's considerable talents as a carpenter-cum-master builder-cum-architect emerged. In time, many of his masonry buildings developed structural problems, even at the age of six months in one case. It is true that little was known about the condition of Winnipeg's soil in the early years, and the structural problems can be adduced to this fact.

REGIONAL NEWS

NOUVELLES RÉGIONALES

SASKATCHEWAN

The Department of Culture and Youth has designated Government House, Regina as a Provincial Heritage Property. Designed by Thomas Fuller and constructed between 1889 and 1891, Government House was the official residence of the Lieutenant Governor of the North West Territories from 1891 to 1905 and of Saskatchewan from 1905 to 1945. The building has recently been restored by Saskatchewan Culture and Youth and Saskatchewan Government Services.

ONTARIO

"Saving Rural Ontario: Planning for the Preservation of Ontario's Countryside Landscape". Ron Brown. Occasional Paper No. 6, June 1981. Available free from: Dept. of Urban & Regional Planning, Ryerson P.I., 50 Gould Street, Toronto M5R 1E8.

Hortulus Books has published a new catalogue of new and used books on architecture, horticulture, etc. Write 101 Scollard Street, Toronto M5R 1G4 (416)960-1775.

ALBERTA

walking tour is now available (free) for the city of Lethbridge. Contact: Susan Algie, Alberta Culture, Historic Sites Service, 8820-112 Street, Edmonton T6G 2P8 (403)427-2022.

Post-Graduate education in conservation of the built environment is a 2-volume, 588 page Master's degree dissertation, which examines the state of architectural conservation education today. Vol. 1 provides a survey, analysis, and comparison of conservation education programmes around the world. Covering some 20 nations, the primary emphasis is on Great Britain, the U.S. and Western Europe. Vol. 11 is a detailed case study of the programme in architectural conservation at the Edinburgh College of Art/Heriot-Watt Univ. in Edinburgh, Scotland. Volumes may be ordered individually. For copies of the dissertation's abstract, contents, and ordering info write: Richard Kilstrom, #317, 10160-114 St. Edmonton, T5K 2L2

MANITOBA

The Historic Resources Branch, Dept. of Cultural Affairs and Historical Research, Province of Manitoba, is publishing an architectural walking tour of the City of Brandon. This will be followed in 1982 by a publication on the histories of selected Brandon buildings. Contact: The Brandon Survey, H.R.B., Dept. of Cultural Affairs & Historical Research, 200 Vaughn St., Winnipeg R3C 1T5 (204)944-4390.

Dr. W. P. Thomas, Faculty of Architecture, Univ. of Manitoba, is preparing for publication in 1982, "A Guide to Manitoba Architecture". This will be a companion volume to his "Winnipeg Architecture: 100 years".

Dr. Marilyn Baker of the School of Art, Univ. of Manitoba is completing a history of the Manitoba Legislative Building with emphasis on its art and the politics of its construction. Anyone with info is asked to write to Dr. M. Baker, Rm. 343, University College, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg.

Le Centre d'étude Franco-Canadiens de l'Ouest (CEFCO) a complété un inventaire photographique intitulé "l'Heritage Architecturale du Manitoba Français". Ce projet a pu être réalisé grâce à un octroi sous le program "Explorations" du Conseil des Arts au Canada. Vous pouvez vous renseigner davantage un communicant avec Johanne Raimbault, directrice du projet, au CEFCO, 200 avenue de la Cathédral, St. Boniface, Manitoba R2H 0H7.

The City of Winnipeg Historical Buildings Committee is offering several publications for sale. "Monuments to Finance: 3 Banks", David Spector, \$7.50; "1979: The Year Past", \$3.50; "1980: The Year Past", at publishers; Historical Buildings Bylaw 1474/77, free. Library, City of Winnipeg, Dept. of Environmental Planning, 2nd Fl., 100 Main St., Winnipeg R3C 1A5.

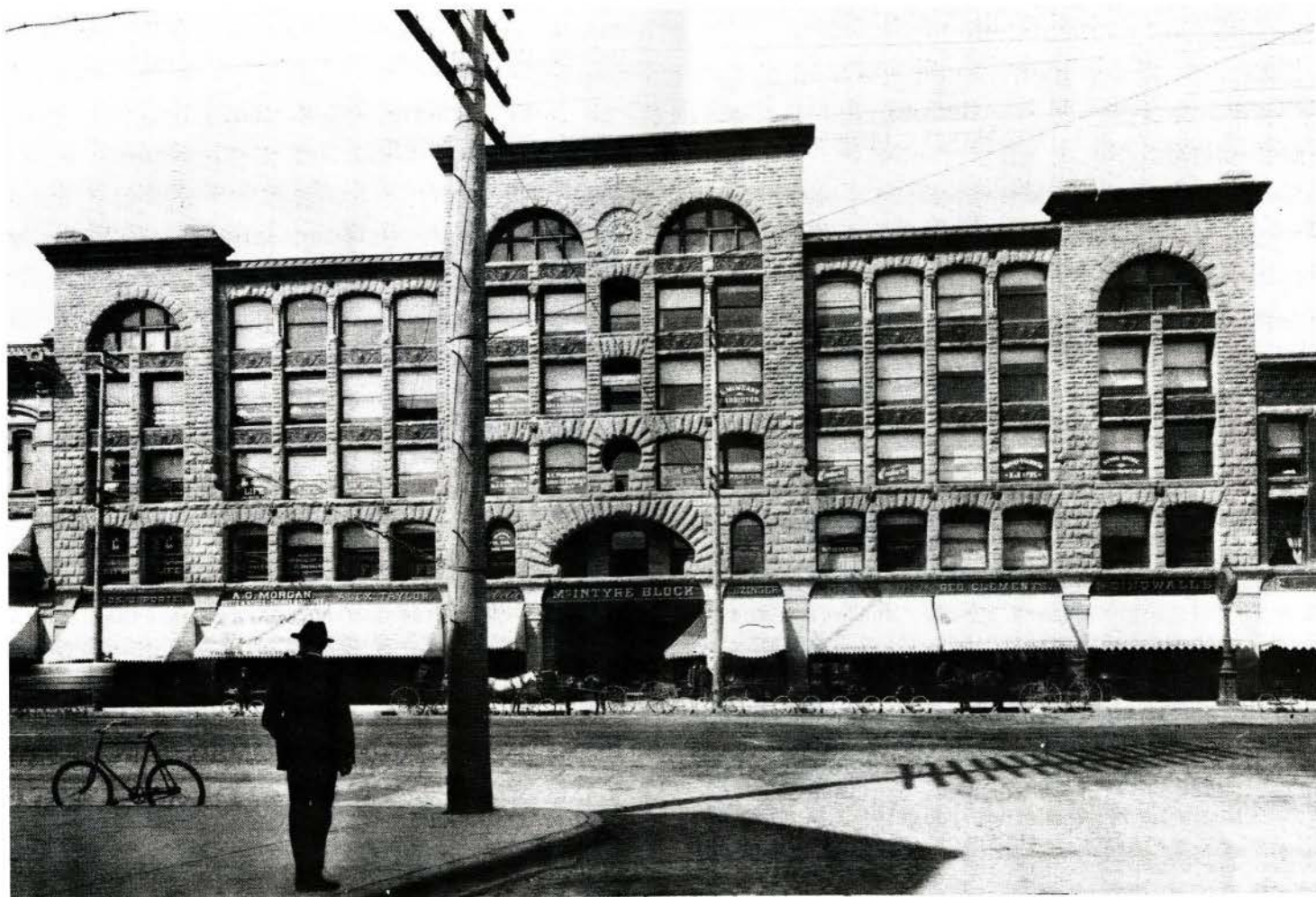
Neil Einarson, who has completed a M. Phil, Univ. of Essex, on the life and work of architect William Thomas (1799-1860) of Birmingham, Leamington Spa, and Toronto is continuing research on Thomas for publication. Any info. is welcome. Neil Einarson, #53-40 Osborne St., Winnipeg R3L 1X9.

However, this does not excuse things like the McIntyre Block, or the Benson and Bawlf Blocks (1882) where the side bearing wall was that of a neighbouring structure! It is quite possible that Barber, then, the founder of Winnipeg's prestigious architectural firm of the 'eighties was little more than a master builder who used component catalogues to ornament his buildings.

On the other hand, however, quite a number of his buildings possess an originality not present in the highly-ornamented commercial edifices with which he ornamented Winnipeg's streets. Surely, his City Hall and Manitoba College (1881, Plate 7) were buildings one was not apt to find repeated in other places. His plans for the largely unexecuted St. John's College (1883, Plate 8) indicate that he was at least the equal of English architects of the period, and Wright's unbuilt Italianate office block (Plate 9) showed that Barber could have made a place for himself in Toronto. In short, though Barber designs ranged between copies of things to spectacular

originals, this architect gave Winnipeg its first substantial buildings that would have found acceptance and approval in the centres that the city sought to emulate. Until the arrival of the second real estate boom of the early twentieth century, the sheer numbers of Barber's designs and their presence throughout Winnipeg's commercial and residential districts gave the "Gateway City" its characteristic look.

Like his early life, there is little known of the social or personal aspects of his existence. Though he was of considerable monetary worth in terms of his practice and because of land speculation, this did not earn his family a place in the structured Winnipeg society that emerged after the Boom of 1881-82. Indeed, the term "black sheep" is probably most appropriate when one considers the contempt that Barber met with from the "establishment" of the time. This disfavour probably stemmed from the fact that Barber preferred to "cut corners" in official dealings as well as being rowdy to the extent that



it saw him in jail a number of times. Also, being removed from such a notable project as the City Hall did not enhance his reputation among his already jealous and outraged fellow architects.

After leaving Winnipeg, Barber was no longer an architect. A number of patents helped him to set up a Montreal fire-proof safe Company in 1901. Incredibly, Winnipeg's architect of the 'eighties wound up in jail, convicted of serious offences. It would seem that Barber and his wife, Sarah Allison, a Winnipeg hairdresser and clairvoyant, had made a profitable side-line of an old extortion racket known as the "Badger Game". Unfortunately, their Westmount home turned out to be the end-point of that business, the semi-naked victim forsaking Mrs. Barber's sexual allures for the safety of the Montreal Police Station. The ailing Barber received seven years and his wife three years for extortion with violence.

It is fairly certain that Barber emerged from the penitentiary in 1910. After this, however, he disappeared for good. His wife and younger daughters moved to Athabasca Landing, Alberta where they lived with his oldest son, Captain Charles Dufferin Allison Barber (1879-1918). Prior to his death, they became the belles of Athabasca society - a well-heeled Montreal widow and her daughters. Clearly, nothing was known of the family's past in an area where they drew status from "Duff's" considerable genuine local importance as a riverboat captain and entrepreneur.

By 1916, architect Charles Barber had died - the place and date being still unknown. The death of "Duff" ended the Barber family's Athabasca sojourn. From there, they went to Calgary and finally Vancouver to live near the second son, Horace Greeley Barber (1881-1955), an eminent West Coast engineer. Mrs. Barber, the clairvoyant and femme fatale died there about 1929 after operating a boarding house.

Ironically, Barber and Barber survived the death of its founder as a Superior, Wisconsin based architectural firm. The Company was in existence under the guidance of Earle's son, Gordon until at least 1920 and possibly later. The firm was quite respectable, having executed many buildings, including the Superior Federal Building and the Hammond Avenue Presbyterian Church at that place.

Though Charles Arnold Barber ended his career on a miserable note, the products of that career rank him as one of the founders of Winnipeg's architectural community. For all purposes, the city's appearance became much of his doing - and

his City Hall was Winnipeg's well known trademark until its unfortunate demolition in the 1960s. Winnipeg also became a major centre because of the business transacted within the walls of these structures. Sadly, only a handful of Barber's designs (8) remain to tantalize the viewer with an idea of Winnipeg at a by-gone time. Because of a psychological stigma that attached itself to "Black Sheep" Barber, little has been known until lately about his life and works aside from the City Hall. Even the firm name has been corrupted by well-meaning historians to become Barber, Bones and Barber, clearly very sad when such a wealth of primary information exists on the firm. It is the intention of the author to eventually document fully the life and times of C.A. Barber in order to better understand the workings of a boom-town architect who built a city's first substantial structures.

The author is presently continuing research on the firm of Barber and Barber.

R.R. Rostecki
June 1981



LETTERS RECEIVED

Dear Mr. Kapelos: In your enthusiasm for the beautiful architectural drawings of Peter Rose et al you have neglected some mundane but nonetheless important matters such as who should pay for them and can the house actually be constructed and lived in.

For the drawings of the hilltop villa and the model shown in the illustration I was charged \$7,000 before one blade of grass was disturbed on the hilltop. The lowest bid for this 1700 square foot house was \$100,000 not including blasting, well-drilling and a lot of the interior finishing. Needless to say, I refused to proceed with the original design and removed all the frills except the central tower. In particular the window area was reduced by 50% on the windy north side and the interior was completely redesigned to make it livable. The final cost will be around \$70,000.

The average client of an architect generally does not consider himself to be a patron of the arts; otherwise he would make a tax-deductible contribution to the appropriate institution. He wants a house not drawings. He wants the architect to give him the most value possible for his money. The SSAC could serve the public by promoting such a philosophy. Sincerely, Colin P. Rose, M.D., Ph D, FRCP(C)

The proceedings for the annual SSAC conferences for 1975 and 1976 are now available for purchase. The price of \$3.50 includes postage. Orders may be sent to: SSAC, Box 2935, Stn. D, Ottawa.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Neil Einarson, Winnipeg assisted greatly in the preparation of this issue. If you are interested in becoming involved, contact me at the SSAC box number. Contributions are particularly welcome for the April issue which will feature Ottawa, site of the 1982 annual meeting.

My apologies for the lateness of this issue. Several problems presented themselves including the loss of our layout sheets by the printers.

Lack of space prevented the use of all illustrations provided for the articles. Should you have questions concerning any of the pieces, you may contact the authors c/o SSAC.

Eusan alge

THE BACK PAGE

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FRANK DARLING/Lucius O'Brien's house, Toronto

Information is being sought by the Undersigned regarding the house built for Lucius R. O'Brien, first President of the Royal Canadian Academy (1832-99) in 1880 by the Toronto architect Frank Darling (1850-1923) on College St. (originally no. 36, now no. 32). The property later became the antique and art galleries of B.M. & T. Jenkins, Ltd., which, with the front and rear additions supplied by the firm of Sproatt & Rolph, Architects, in 1917, extended from College St. to Grenville St. In 1928 the main entrance of the new east gallery of The Jenkins Galleries reverted to 25 Grenville St., the College St. premises being occupied by J.M. Malloney's Gallery, and later by Ward-Price Ltd., Auctioneers. The front offices are now rented from the landlord by the Toronto Ba'hai Centre, but the old O'Brien house, sandwiched between its 'fore and aft' extensions, still stands, albeit precariously and in seeming threat of demolition; the house beside it was some time ago gutted by fire and is at present boarded-up. A campaign is being mounted to save the last dwelling of this founder-member of both the Ontario Society of Artists and the R.C.A., wherein were held, in the 1890s, the exhibitions of the short-lived Palette Club, and which later provided studio-space for the portrait painters John Russell, Richard Jack, and Austin Shaw, and for the advertising artists Reid and Wright, after having been used as headquarters and offices by the O.S.A.

Contemporary photographs, and knowledge of the whereabouts of any repositories of Darling's plans and elevations, would be of particular interest to: Dennis Reid, Curator, Historical Canadian Art, Art Gallery of Ontario, 317 Dundas St. W., Toronto, Ontario M5T 1G4 and Robert Stacey, 65 Metcalfe St., Apt. 3, Toronto, Ontario M4X 1R9.

All information received will be gratefully acknowledged.

EXHIBITION SPACE AVAILABLE

The Market Gallery of the City of Toronto Archives is looking for displays of public interest for exhibition on its mezzanines. We are a public gallery occupying the section of the South St. Lawrence Market which housed Toronto's first City Hall from 1844-1899.

Each mezzanine is approximately 1500 square feet and open on three sides overlooking the market. Certain display equipment is available as well as assistance in installation.

Displays, ranging in subject matter from information on your organization to historical topics, could be exhibited for up to one month. There is no rental fee.

If your organization is interested and would like more information please contact The Market Gallery, 95 Front Street East, Toronto M5E 1C2: Tel: (416) 367-7604.

Stephen Otto of Toronto has prepared a number of monographs on architects who practised in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Included in this list is John Tully, Henry Bowyer Lane, Richard Windryer, James Grand, Stephen Heward, William Leather, Tomas Kennedy and the firm of Knox and Elliot. Anybody wishing to receive a copy of this information is asked to contact Steve at the Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation, 77 Bloor Street West, Toronto.

Photo Credits: Legislative Library of Manitoba
Manitoba Archives

Cover: Winnipeg City Hall, 1883-86 to 1962

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