

Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada
Report on the 1978 Annual Meeting London, Ontario,
22-25 May 1978

Société pour l'étude de l'architecture au Canada

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London, Ontario, 22-25 May 1978

The fourth annual meeting of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada was organized on the theme of Canadian Architects and Builders. The programme was chaired and co-ordinated by Lynne D. DiStefano (Brescia College, University of Western Ontario) and George Kapelos (Heritage Administration Branch, Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation).

Canadian Builders SHANE O'DEA, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Chairperson

W. John McIntyre, Seneca College of Applied Arts and Technology, began the session with *John and Ebenezer Doan, Builders and Furniture Makers*. Brothers John (1768-1852) and Ebenezer (1772-1866) Doan were members of the Society of Friends who trained as cabinet makers in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, and came to the Newmarket area north of Toronto in 1807 to seek religious freedom. They joined David Willson's Children of Peace, and supervised construction of the Temple at Sharon (1825) and other buildings for the new community. They also built furniture for members of the sect, and brought the Delaware Valley tradition of furniture into Upper Canada.

Stephen A. Otto, Heritage Conservation Division, Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation, discussed the career of *Arthur McClean* (1779-1864). After a 25-year career as a builder in his native Ireland, McClean settled in Brockville, Ontario, in 1825. He designed St. James, Maitland (1826-27), St. Peter's, Brockville (1826-30, one of the earliest Gothic Revival churches in Canada), and a number of other churches in the district. The design of the George Longley house near Maitland was attributed to McClean.

George Lang (ca. 1821-80), a Scottish mason who came to St. John's in 1847 or 1848 to work on the new Anglican cathedral, was introduced by Susan Bugey, National Historic Parks and Sites Branch, Parks Canada. After a period as a quarry manager in New Brunswick, Lang came to Halifax in 1858 and embarked on a successful but short career as a builder. He was the contractor for the Halifax County Court House (1858-60) and several Granville Street commercial buildings (1859-61), all to designs by William Thomas

and Sons, and was responsible for a number of institutional and residential buildings in the city designed by various architects. His business failed in 1865, and he spent the last fifteen years of his life operating a brickyard and tile manufactory.

Shane O'Dea spoke on *Southcott*, the firm which commanded the building trade in and around St. John's in the second half of the nineteenth century. John (1822-95) and James (1824-98) Southcott emigrated from Exeter to St. John's shortly after that city's fire of 1846. They built many houses with Gothic details from the 1850s onward. Towards 1880 their manner changed to the Second Empire (Fig. 1), possibly because they were joined by James's son John Thomas Southcott (1853-ca. 1926), and the firm was responsible for the spread of the mansarded mode across Newfoundland. The Southcotts became very prosperous, and built a number of public buildings.

Turning from one coast to the other, Margaret Carter, National Historic Parks and Sites Branch, Parks Canada, spoke on *The Birth of the Building Trades on a Canadian Frontier: Dawson City, 1897-1903*. Dawson City enjoyed two construction booms during the short period under review. Carter identified seven builders and four architects active during the 'Shelter' period of 1897-99. In the 'Reconstruction' period of 1900-03, when most of the business blocks were replaced with more substantial and permanent quarters, thirty-four builders and six architects were active. The roles of the two professions were discussed with reference to a number of specific buildings.

Leonard K. Eaton, University of Michigan, addressed the meeting on *J.H. Cadham and the Winnipeg Warehouse District*. Winnipeg enjoyed building booms with the coming of the railway in 1880-82 and the subsequent waves of immigration. The warehouse

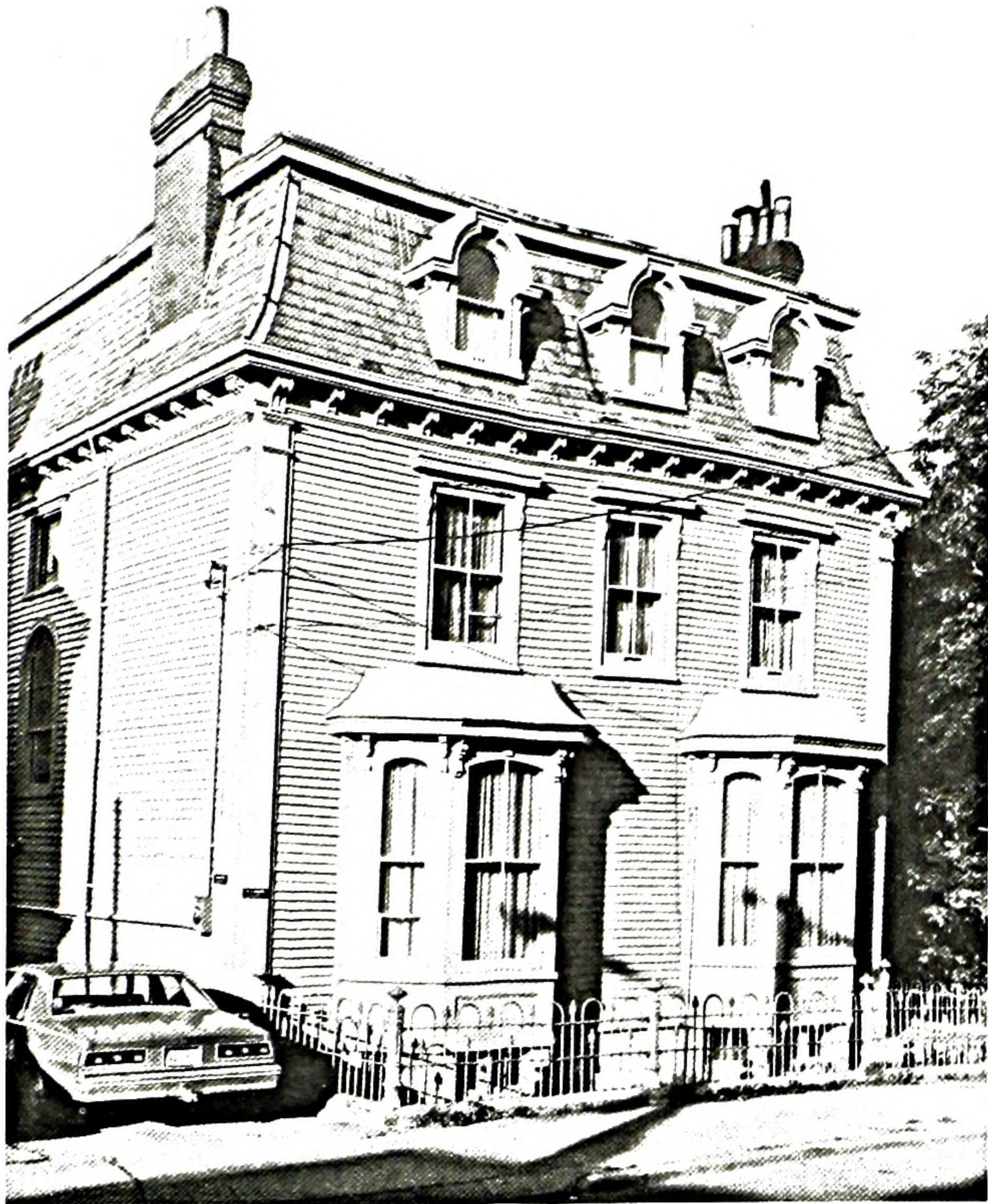


FIGURE 1. Southcott, House, 28 Monkstown Road, St. John's, ca. 1880 (Photo: Shane O'Dea).

district around Portage and Main developed in the 1890s as Winnipeg became a supply centre for the Prairies. J.H. Cadham (1850-1907) came to the city during this time, and set the style for the entire district with his large heavy-timber warehouses that were inspired by the Richardsonian wholesale buildings of the midwest and St. Paul.

Canadian Architects, Part I DOUGLAS S. RICHARDSON, University of Toronto, Chairperson

Irene L. Rodgers, Prince Edward Island Heritage Foundation, discussed the career of *John Plaw* (1746-1820). The architect spent his first sixty years in England, where he had an active practice and was the author of many well-circulated pattern books. He emigrated to Prince Edward Island in 1807. Although he produced designs for a number of buildings on the island colony, few were executed.

The career of *William Thomas* (1800-60) was the subject of a paper by Marion MacRae, Ontario College of Art. She devoted attention to his little-known work as an established architect in Leamington Spa, then traced his career after his emigration to Toronto in 1843. Thomas designed many important buildings in southern Ontario, and was later joined in practice by his two sons.

Another leading Toronto architect, *Frederic William Cumberland* (1821-81), was presented by Shirley G. Morriss, Toronto. She discussed the design of St. James Anglican Cathedral in Toronto, designed by the

young Cumberland after he won a competition in 1849. Morriss explained Cumberland's solution to the problem of whether the building should be based on a parish church or a cathedral, and showed the creative eclecticism of the architect's design.

Margaret Angus, Kingston, spoke next on *John and Joseph Power*. John Power (1816-82) came to Kingston in 1846 and developed a successful architectural practice. He was later joined by his eldest son John (1849-1925). Angus offered a chronological survey of buildings by the firm, showing their significance in the development of late-nineteenth-century Kingston architecture.

John H. Billing, Haliburton Pioneer and Architect, was introduced by the late B. Napier Simpson, Jr., Thornhill. Born in Somerset and trained as a stonemason, Billing came to Toronto by way of Sutton, Quebec. He was forced to leave the city because of his wife's health, and homesteaded near Maple Leaf in Haliburton County, where he built a number of fine houses and churches, mostly of stone.

William S. Hart, University of Western Ontario, concluded the session with *William Thomas, Architect of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, Ontario*. Hart described the building of St. Paul's (1844-46), illustrated its many features, and discussed the subsequent additions to the building.

Canadian Architects, Part II GEORGE KAPELOS, Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation, Chairperson

Canada's first two chief architects were the topics of the opening papers in this session. Janet B. Wright, National Historic Parks and Sites Branch, Parks Canada, began with *Thomas Seaton Scott: Designer and Administrator*. Scott (1826-95) came to Canada from England in the late 1850s and designed a number of churches and houses in Quebec and Ontario. He served as Chief Architect of the Department of Public Works from 1871 to 1881. The Second Empire style had been introduced for Canadian post offices just before his arrival; Scott established this new design formula as a federal style for all public buildings. Wright explained Scott's administrative role, and showed a number of buildings constructed during his tenure.

Christopher A. Thomas, Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation, continued with *Changing Attitudes to Mediaeval Architecture in the Nineteenth Century, as Shown in the Work of Thomas Fuller*. He showed the development of style in the buildings of Fuller (1823-98), from the connections with Ecclesiology in his work in England to the turn to the High Victorian manner in St. Stephen's-in-the-Fields, Toronto (1858), and the creative eclecticism of the Parliament Building, Ottawa (1859-66). Thomas concentrated on Fuller's work as Chief Architect of Canada from 1881 to 1896. He defined a 'Dominion Style' and showed it as the culmination of Fuller's earlier work.

Samuel Maclure, A West Coast Arts-and-Crafts Architect, was the topic of a paper by Martin Segger, University of Victoria. Segger showed how Maclure (1860-1929) sought to define an architectural idiom compatible with the geography and climate of Victoria, British Columbia. He discussed the development of Maclure's style, from his early Colonial Bungalows and Chalet Style houses to the Tudor Revival for which he is best known.

Susan Wagg, Concordia University, spoke on the architecture of *Percy Erskine Nobbs* (1875-1964). Nobbs was trained in the British arts-and-crafts movement, then came to Montreal in 1903 to become the head of McGill University's school of architecture. Wagg introduced many of the buildings that Nobbs designed for McGill, and showed how he, like Maclure, sought to develop an appropriate regional architecture based on local traditions, materials, and technology.

The architecture of *W.E. Noffke* (1878-1964) was next discussed by Harold Kalman and Joan Mackie, Ottawa. Noffke's long and successful Ottawa career was reviewed. The speakers discussed the sources of his architecture, and showed how his conservative eclecticism was an appropriate solution to the demands of his clients.

Canadian Architects, Part III CLAUDE BERGERON, Université Laval, Chairperson

Historien de l'art bien connu au Canada, *Gérard Morisset* (1898-1970) a aussi fait œuvre d'architecte. Il avait reçu sa formation dans l'atelier de Tony Garnier à Lyon. En présentant cet aspect presque inconnu de la carrière de Morisset, Jacques Robert, étudiant de maîtrise à l'Université Laval, a souligné l'influence de Viollet-le-Duc dans les édifices religieux qu'il a conçus, telle que l'église Notre-Dame-de-Grâce à Québec, ainsi que dans les principes qu'il a formulés pour la restauration architecturale.

Les préférences du grand public en matière d'architecture contemporaine correspondent très peu souvent aux choix des spécialistes et des théoriciens de l'architecture. Anthony Jackson, du Nova Scotia Technical College, a expliqué que cela tenait au fait que le public préfère ce qui touche sa sensibilité tandis que le spécialiste est, dans son choix, prisonnier des critères retenus par les théories de l'architecture moderne, comme l'industrialisation du bâtiment et une vision nouvelle de l'espace. Ce faisant, Jackson s'est posé en défenseur de l'architecte *Raymond Moriyama* qui a préféré procurer du plaisir à son public plutôt que de satisfaire l'establishment de l'architecture.

Originaire de la Suisse, l'architecte *Robert Blatter* (n. 1889) avait, avant de se fixer à Québec, fréquenté Picasso, Utrillo et Le Corbusier durant les années de *l'Esprit Nouveau*. Les premières maisons qu'il dessina

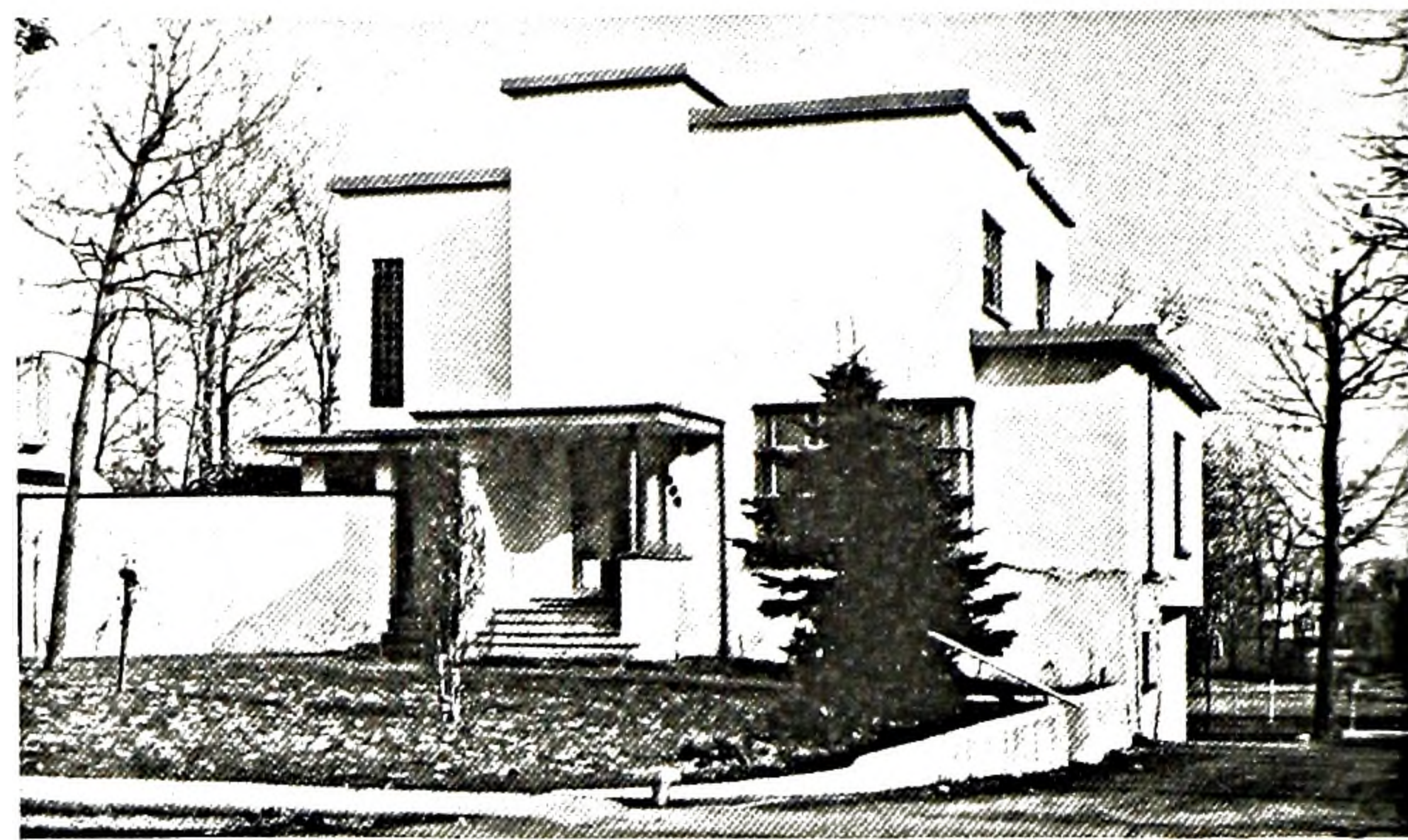


FIGURE 2. Robert Blatter, Habitation Kerhulu, Sillery, 1939 (photo : Inventaire des biens culturels du Québec).

pour des clients québécois (maison Bourdon, 1934; maison Kerhulu, 1939, Fig. 2) introduisaient ici le Style International. Dans son exposé, André Cloutier, de l'Université Laval, a souligné l'intérêt qu'a suscité cette architecture chez certains jeunes architectes locaux, dont plusieurs maisons de banlieue révèlent l'influence bien qu'elles se tiennent toujours en deçà de l'austérité des modèles européens.

Membre de la firme Barton Myers Associates, Bruce Kuwabara a proposé une analyse de six des principales réalisations de *Barton Myers* depuis York Square jusqu'au Citadel Theatre d'Edmonton. L'analyse insistait principalement sur l'emploi d'un système répétitif et d'éléments standardisés, sur la composition selon les formes géométriques du carré, du cercle et de l'angle de 45 degrés, ainsi que sur la distinction entre les espaces servants et les espaces servis que Myers a appris de son maître Louis Kahn. Rappelant son expérience de pilote de guerre ainsi que sa familiarité avec les chantiers maritimes de sa Virginie natale, Kuwabara a montré l'intérêt de l'architecte pour les équipements mécaniques et les structures de métal qu'il exploite à des fins plastiques.

Il convenait qu'une séance consacrée à l'architecture contemporaine tourne aussi son attention sur l'évolution future de l'architecture. C'est ce qu'a proposé Christopher Riopelle, rédacteur adjoint du *Canadian Building*, dans une communication intitulée *Canadian Architects and an Indigenous Architecture*. Convaincu de la nécessité de développer une architecture authentiquement canadienne, le conférencier a soutenu que cette architecture devra s'appuyer sur une triple tradition : la tradition moderne issue du Style International afin de créer une architecture expressive de la technologie et des matériaux modernes; la tradition académique monumentale dont les œuvres ont depuis toujours abrité nos institutions sociales, politiques et religieuses; et enfin la tradition vernaculaire qui suggère des formes d'adaptation aux conditions climatiques, géographiques et économiques.

A more detailed account of the papers may be found in the *Nouvelles/News* of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada, IV:4 (July 1978), 1-8.

H.K., C.B