

PHILIP JOHN TURNER (1889-92)

Philip John Turner was born in Stowmarket, Suffolk, in 1876. After completing his secondary education at the College, he went to study architecture at the A.A. school in London. He was articled to Mr. John Corder in Ipswich and elected an Associate of the R.I.B.A. in 1901. He was a fine draughtsman whose numerous measured drawings were published as supplements to contemporary journals under his nom de plume, Renrut.



He emigrated to Canada in 1906 and began a private architectural practice in Montreal the following year. Shortly after his arrival in Canada, he entered an Ice Palace Competition and won the first prize with his proposal. Thus, during his first winter in Canada, he saw the realization of his castle for "Our Lady of the Snows" as a focal point of the Winter Carnival celebrations.

In June 1910, he married Adeline Peddar from England. By this time, he not only had a good practice, but had also been appointed to lecture on Building Construction at the McGill School of Architecture. The scope of his teaching assignment was subsequently enlarged and in 1926 he was appointed Special Lecturer on Library Buildings (1926) in the McGill Library School. He was appointed Professor in 1933.

He was an accomplished architect. Apart from many fine residences, his works also include St. Phillip's Church in Montreal West, the Y.M.C.A. Chapel on Drummond Street, the Children's Chapel at the Cathedral, banks and commercial buildings in Montreal as well as the rebuilding of the Westmount Public Library. He was very active in the professional architectural associations serving for many years on the councils of both the P.Q.A.A. and R.A.I.C., also serving on the latter as a representative of the R.I.B.A. He became the President of the P.Q.A.A. in 1933 and received the Gold Medal of the Province of Quebec Association of Architects in 1941. He was elected a Fellow of the R.I.B.A. and Senior Fellow of the R.A.I.C. Turner was a shy man with a retiring manner. He was a conscientious teacher who lectured and wrote on subjects that he painstakingly researched. He was frequently asked to lecture on English Architecture at various public functions of social groups not only in Montreal, but throughout the Province of Quebec. His lectures were engaging and radiated his love and enthusiasm for traditional English Architecture. Several of his articles were published in Canadian periodicals, such as The Canadian Geographic, The Montreal Churchman and, of course, the R.A.I.C. Journal.

He became acting director of the School at a time when student enrollment was decreasing drastically in the wake of the depression years and the outbreak of the Second World War. These events coupled with the retirement of senior professors, placed McGill's School of Architecture in a vulnerable position and for a while it was contemplated phasing out architectural education at McGill. He fought the threat of the closing of the School with all his strength and mustered the support of several distinguished Montreal architects to prevent it from happening. With their help and that of the newly appointed principal, Turner prevailed.

His health was already frail when he became Acting Director of the School, and the following year it deteriorated to such a degree that he entrusted the running of the School to his Executive Secretary.

He retired in 1941. "The war worried him." He was hurt to see the destruction caused by the air raids and he was particularly concerned about the safety of his sisters who lived in England. All this and his unfortunate illness weakened him and two years after his retirement and after a lengthy illness confining him to a hospital, he died of a heart attack on 13 August 1943.

In his memory, the Philip J. Turner Prize was established and presented to the student at McGill's who obtains the highest standing in Design and Construction II.

He is listed as a notable Stowmarket resident - <http://www.stowmarket-history.co.uk/>