

The Architecture of Edward and W.S. Maxwell

MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS
13 DECEMBER 1991 - 22 MARCH 1992



*Saskatchewan
Legislative Building,
E. and W.S. Maxwell,
architects, 1907-12.*

THE MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS has prepared an exhibition on architects Edward and William S. Maxwell. Their Montreal firm, the preeminent architectural office in Canada at the turn of the 20th century, carried out commissions across the country, from British Columbia to New Brunswick.

Edward, the elder brother (1867-1923), started the firm in 1892 after four years of architectural training in the Boston office of Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge, successors to Henry Hobson Richardson. Upon his return to Montreal Edward was immediately successful in securing clients from the leaders of Canadian finance and industry. His business and social connections with William Van Horne, then president of the Canadian Pacific Railway, brought to the firm lucrative and prestigious commissions for CPR stations and grand hotels in such places as Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg, and Quebec City. William Sutherland Maxwell (1874-1952) spent three years with the Boston firm of Winslow & Wetherell before completing his training at the atelier Pascal in Paris. William became his brother's partner in 1902 and together they formed a formidable team, winning the international competition for the design and construction of the Saskatchewan Legislative Building in 1907. A large wooden model of this building will be featured in the show. Other models commissioned specifically for this exhibition include the imposing Tower Block and St-Louis wing of the Château Frontenac designed by the Maxwells, a full-scale model of a Royal Bank of Canada entrance door, and a model showing the location of the many Maxwell buildings in Montreal's "Square Mile."

The rendered ink drawings, watercolours, and vintage photographs of various Maxwell projects give a sense of the range of their work, from elegant city residences to country railway stations. Examples of furniture, stained-glass, and wrought-iron work commissioned for their buildings will complete the presentation on this important architectural firm.

The exhibition has been organized by members of the Maxwell Project, a group of scholars and historians who wish to make the Maxwells' work known to a wide audience. The principal curators of the exhibition are Ellen James, professor of Art and Architectural History at Concordia University; Rosalind Pepall, curator of Canadian Decorative Arts at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts; France Gagnon-Pratte, president of the Conseil des monuments et sites du Québec; and Susan Wagg, architectural historian and author. After closing in Montreal the exhibition will travel to Winnipeg, Quebec City, and other centres across Canada. For more information, contact Rosalind Pepall, Musée des beaux-arts de Montréal, 3400, avenue du Musée, Montréal H3G 1K3.