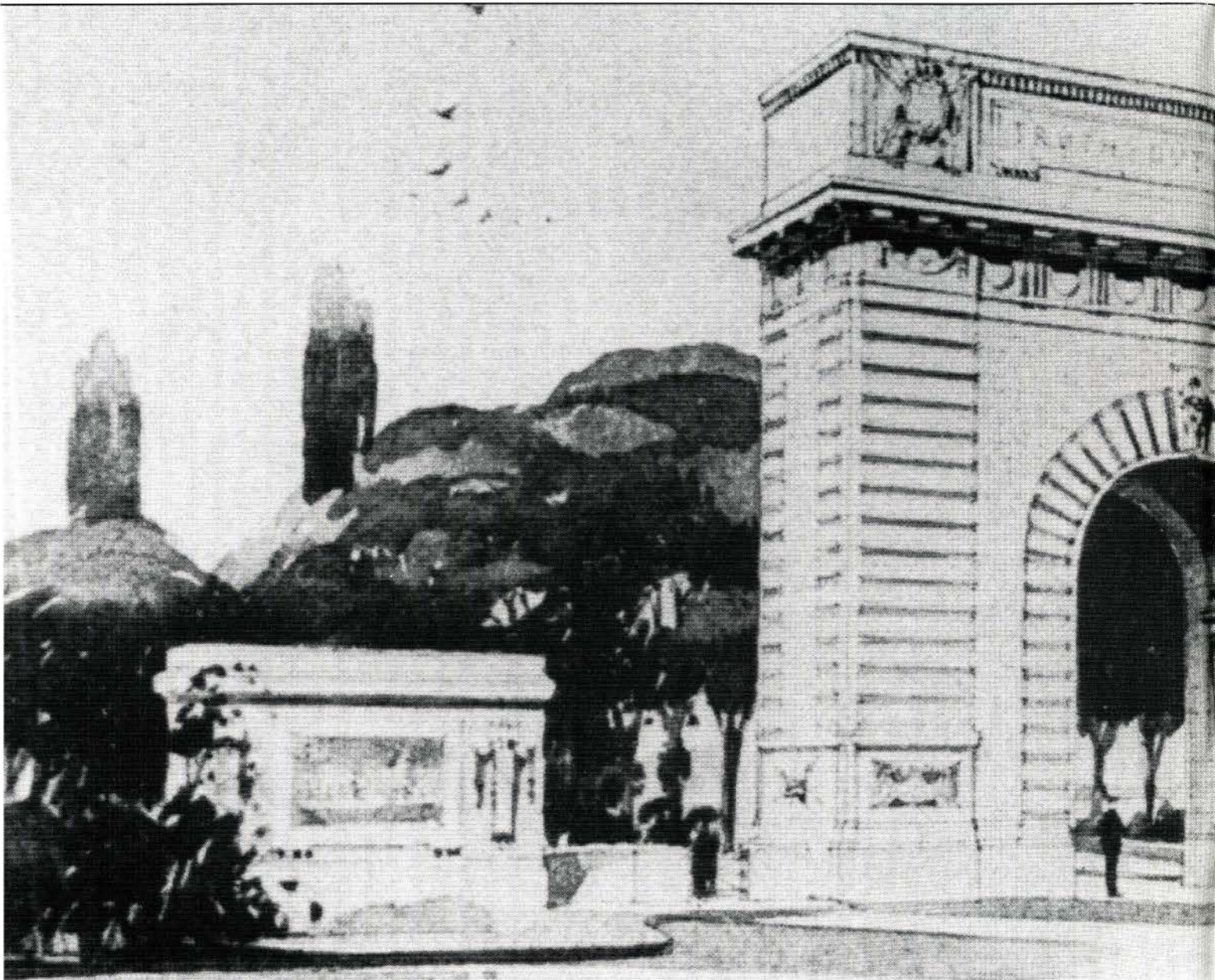


# *Beaux-Arts on the John M. Lyle and the Royal Military*

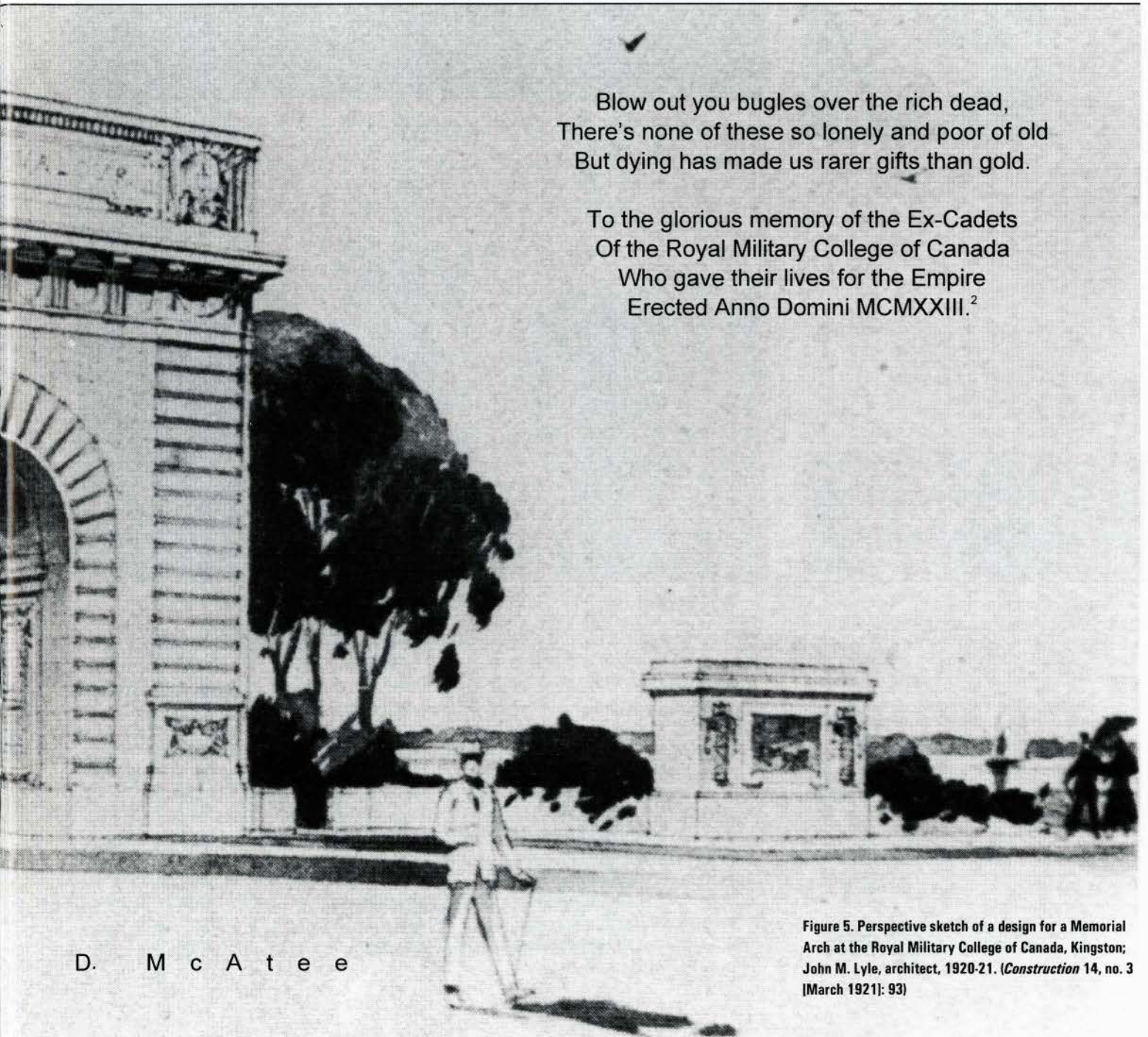


B y C a m m i e

# *Banks of Lake Ontario: the Memorial Arch at College of Canada<sup>1</sup>*

Blow out you bugles over the rich dead,  
There's none of these so lonely and poor of old  
But dying has made us rarer gifts than gold.

To the glorious memory of the Ex-Cadets  
Of the Royal Military College of Canada  
Who gave their lives for the Empire  
Erected Anno Domini MCMXXIII.<sup>2</sup>

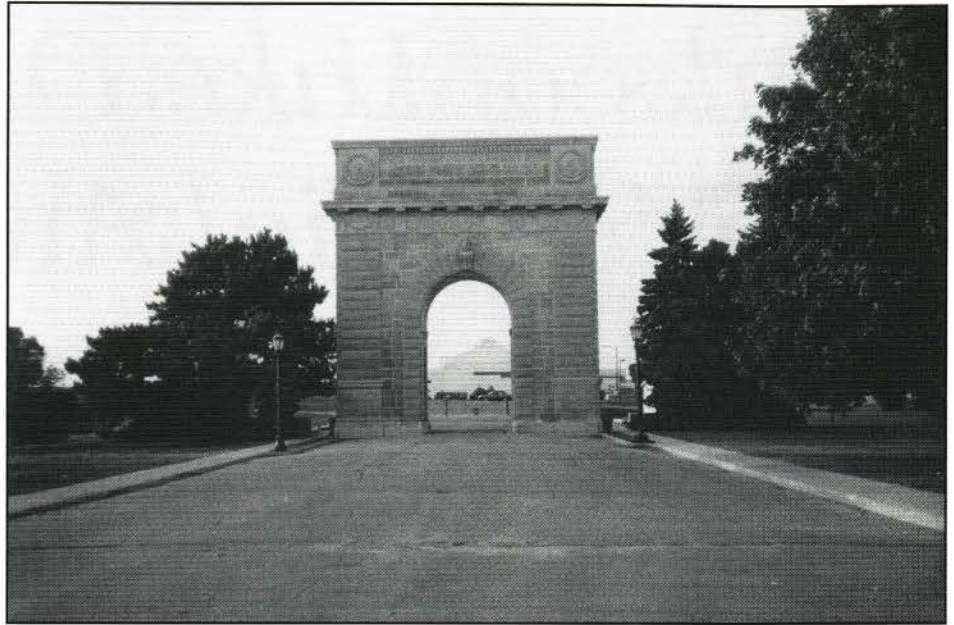


D. M c A t e e

Figure 5. Perspective sketch of a design for a Memorial Arch at the Royal Military College of Canada, Kingston; John M. Lyle, architect, 1920-21. (*Construction* 14, no. 3 [March 1921]: 93)

Figure 1 (top). South façade (college side) of the Memorial Arch at the Royal Military College of Canada (RMC), Kingston, built 1921-24; John M. Lyle, architect. (C. McAtee, 1994)

Figure 2 (bottom). North façade (highway side) of the Memorial Arch, RMC, Kingston; John M. Lyle, architect. (C. McAtee, 1994)



LE PRIX MARTIN-ELI-WEIL  
**1994**  
 MARTIN ELI WEIL PRIZE

- 1 This paper was originally prepared for a graduate seminar in architectural history at Queen's University. I would like to thank Professor Pierre du Prey for his suggestions and encouragement.
- 2 Inscriptions on the south elevation (college side) and north elevation (highway side) of the Royal Military College of Canada Memorial Arch. The poem is Rupert Brookes' "The Dead" (1914).
- 3 Files for the Memorial Arch (1919 to present) have been kept by the Royal Military College of Canada (RMC) Archives.
- 4 From "A Report to RMC, 25 June 1923," RMC Archives. RMC lost one in seven of its cadets in the war, and of the approximately one thousand who served, 459 decorations, honours, and awards were given to RMC officers.
- 5 Richard Arthur Preston, *Canada's RMC: A History of the Royal Military College* (Toronto: Royal Military College Club of Canada, 1969), 228.

The Memorial Arch at the Royal Military College of Canada stands near the shore of Lake Ontario, addressing the city of Kingston, passers-by on the highway, and the cadets of the college who salute as they walk beneath its barrel vault (figures 1, 2). Although it began as a First World War memorial, it bears inscriptions from more recent wars: the once blank cenotaphs are now incised. It commemorates the sacrifices of not one war but of all wars, its details recalling the victories of Trajan and Constantine.

Architect John Lyle's design is faithful to the precepts of the *École des Beaux-Arts*, a system which triumphed in the planning of monumental architecture. The success of the arch is testimony to this 250-year-old French process of planning and design—which, ironically, had already begun to be dismantled by time the Memorial Arch was constructed. For Lyle, who had studied at the *École* in Paris for four years (1892-96), the Arch represented perhaps the best opportunity he would ever have to create a major work within the confines of the *Beaux-Arts* system. He rose to the challenge, designing a monument that could compete with the best in France and America.

Plans for the construction of a memorial at the Royal Military College began in 1919.<sup>3</sup> The committee, organized by the Royal Military College Club, was led by Brigadier-General C.J. Armstrong, RMC commandant Major-General Sir A.C. Macdonell, and members of the “Old Eighteen,” the legendary group that constituted the first graduating class of “Canada’s West Point” in 1880. The success of the planning and fundraising drive was due largely to their endorsement; RMC had never experienced easy financial times, and could not itself be expected to fund the project. The sentiment behind the Arch was also based on an *esprit de corps* that bound the ex-cadets. They felt that the project would recognize what each and every member realized: “that some of his College friends had paid the supreme sacrifice” in the war.<sup>4</sup> The Class of 1911 had already returned to plant eleven birch trees in memory of their fallen classmates, and the Club wanted to make an even more dramatic gesture. This sort of tribute was not foreign to the military academy; when Macdonell took over as commandant in 1919 he resurrected several symbols from RMC’s early history, including the traditional scarlet uniform.<sup>5</sup>

Macdonell was also the force behind several new buildings on the campus, including the assembly hall of the new educational wing. The gallery of the hall was subsequently decorated with the badges, battle patches, numbers, and names of every Canadian squadron serving on the Western Front on 11 November 1918, and with portraits of their commanders. All of this was designed to renew the military ethos that underfunding and political strife had eroded. Given his motivation, it is not surprising that Macdonell played a large part in shaping the plan for the Memorial Arch.

The project is extraordinary within the history of the college, since the \$70,000 necessary for its completion was raised entirely through public subscription,<sup>6</sup> not a simple task given the number of similar projects across the country and overseas.<sup>7</sup> In 1920, the same year the Club started canvassing for subscriptions, the federal government began developing plans for several memorials in France and Belgium. The Battlefield Memorials Commission, advised by Percy Erskine Nobbs, established a complex series of competitions from which would be selected fifteen architects, each of whom would devise a different type of monument. When their designs had been assessed they would finally compete for the commission, based on the winning programme.<sup>8</sup>

Smaller but no less sincere projects were planned throughout Ontario, and in 1919 the Ontario Advisory Committee on War Memorials was formed by representatives from the Ontario Society of Artists, The Society of Graphic Art, and the Ontario Association of Architects. They prepared guidelines for the treatment and form of various types of war memorials, ranging from public buildings to mural paintings. Memorials, they suggested, should “embody and make plain to the present and future generations, that spiritual quality of noble sacrifice which above all else they commemorate.”<sup>9</sup> They also strongly encouraged communities to choose Canadian artists for their plans, and stipulated that each memorial “possess an individual character.”<sup>10</sup> The Royal Military College Club’s committee noted these suggestions, drawing on both the federal and provincial examples for their memorial.

In the fall of 1920 the committee sent out their first circulars to their members, all ex-cadets, their families, and the families of soldiers killed in the war. The committee then approached the Province of Quebec Association of Architects in search of an assessor for their competition. Ramsay Traquair, third Macdonald Professor of architecture at McGill University, was suggested, and the committee hired him.<sup>11</sup> Like Nobbs, Traquair himself was an active participant in the competitions for war memorials, having submitted a design for the Vimy Memorial. By the end of the year, Traquair and the committee had prepared the conditions for the competition, invited two architects in Ontario and two in Québec, and advertised to all ex-cadets of the college then practising architecture. The final list of competitors comprised Sproatt & Rolph and John Lyle from Toronto; J.-O. Marchand and Fetherstonaugh & McDougall from Montréal; and three ex-cadets, K.J. Baldwin from Toronto, John Woodman from Winnipeg, and Louis Amos from Montréal.

Amos, however, had already shaped the style and form the memorial arch would ultimately take. In 1919, before they had organized the competition and set the project, the committee had discussions with Amos, who created a sketch for a fundraising pamphlet (figure 3). He gave them a concept which, in the end, proved unbeatable.

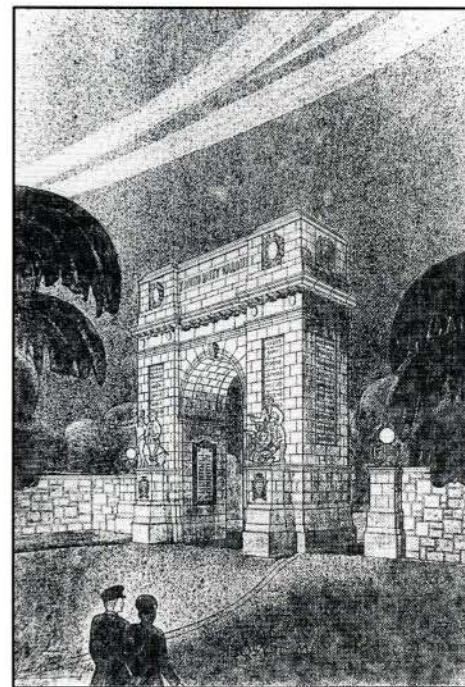


Figure 3. Perspective sketch of a design for a Memorial Arch at the Royal Military College of Canada, Kingston, prepared by architect Louis Amos in 1919. (RMC Archives)

6 The *Royal Military College of Canada Review* (vol. 5, no. 10 [November 1924]: 22) states that the “Memorial Arch was erected in 1923 and completed in 1924 by the Ex-Cadet Club of Canada and was paid for by subscriptions from among its membership and from other friends of the College.” Other records in RMC’s files verify that all the funds came from subscriptions.

7 Many of the respondents to the appeal wrote that they were unable to support this project because they had already given money to several others. An officer based in Bombay wrote that he had subscribed to five other memorials. “Selection of typical responses to the appeal 1921-1924,” RMC Archives.

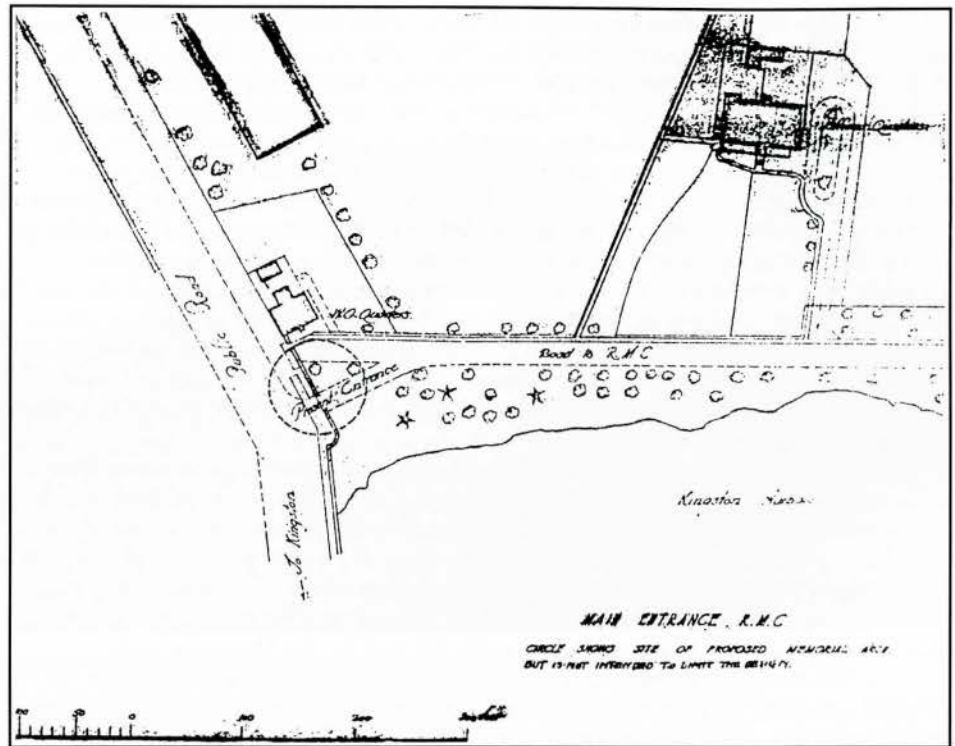
8 Percy E. Nobbs, “Battlefield Memorials,” *Construction* 13, no. 11 (November 1920): 350-54. Not surprisingly, the Ontario and Quebec architectural associations looked upon these memorials as a great opportunity for their members. At Nobbs’ suggestion the commission hired three assessors: Professor C.F. Reilly of the Royal Institute of British Architects; Paul Cret of the Société centrale des architectes, France; and Frank Darling representing the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada. Nobbs managed to stay out of the commission, allowing him to compete.

9 *War Memorials* (Toronto: Ontario Advisory Committee on War Memorials, April 1919), 1.

10 *Ibid.*, 2.

11 Traquair possessed a similar architectural background as Nobbs, whom he replaced at McGill in 1912. John Bland, “Ramsay Traquair: Biography,” *Ramsay Traquair and His Successors: A Guide to the Archive* (Montréal: Canadian Architecture Collection, McGill University, 1987), 8.

Figure 4. Site plan, Royal Military College of Canada, Kingston, 1920. (RMC Archives)



The competition took place in January 1921. The programme was set as follows:

The Memorial Arch is to be placed on or near the site of the present entrance gates to the Royal Military College at Kingston, Ontario. The Promoters desire that the Arch shall be well seen from the road approaching from Kingston, and for this purpose the Arch may be set back on the angle of the grounds. The existing gate lodge may be removed if necessary, and the expense of this removal will not be included in the cost of the monument. The Arch is to be used as an actual entrance gate, and must be large enough to take wheeled traffic and an infantry column marching in fours. A plan of the site is sent with these conditions, and competitors are expected to submit schemes for the planning of the angle, as indicated. The site is approximately level. The Foundation may be taken as rock at a depth of about six feet from the surface. The Arch is to face in the direction of Kingston.<sup>12</sup>

Traquair, obviously concerned that all the competitors be made aware of Amos' design, ensured that each received a copy along with the site plan (figure 4). They were also reminded of the purpose of the monument, and were instructed to include the Royal Arms, the Arms of the Royal Military College, the motto "Truth, Duty, Valour," and tablets or some other means of exhibiting 200 names. These were to be placed on the interior of the archway. To be consistent with the other buildings at RMC, the arch was to be constructed of Queenston limestone. And finally, the sum available for the entire monument and the surrounding layout, but not including the architect's fee, was to be \$50,000. The committee also allotted each architect a travel allowance to view the site, and another \$75 for their expenses in preparing a design.

The competitors were requested to send the following drawings: a block plan of the site to a small scale, showing the layout of the roads; elevations to illustrate the façades of the monument at four feet to the inch; a plan and sufficient sections to clearly illustrate the proposed scheme; and a perspective drawing not larger than 18 by 12 inches. The drawings were to be on white paper and rendered in India ink or lead pencil, the sectional parts blacked in solid, the openings and shadows washed in monotone. Light washes might be used, but no colour. Besides the drawings, the architects were to send descriptions of the main characteristics of their scheme and an estimate of the cost of both the monument and any sculpture to be included in the design. The unsigned designs and statements were to be delivered to the committee by 10 January 1921.

Nine days after receiving the designs, Traquair and two members from the committee, Brigadier-General Armstrong and Lieutenant-Colonel Lamb, made

12 "Conditions of Competition for the Selection of an Architect for the Proposed Memorial Arch of the Royal Military College Club of Canada," RMC Archives.

13 Lyle's original drawing has disappeared, but was reproduced in *Construction* 14, no 3 (March 1921): 93.

14 Ramsay Traquair, "Assessors Report, 19 January 1921," RMC Archives. A model of the Arch was apparently made, as some members of the committee, especially the Commandant, favoured a site closer to the inner gates near the site of the Old Observatory.

their decision, awarding the commission to Lyle for an arch flanked by two smaller cenotaphs (figure 5; see pp. 88-89).<sup>13</sup> What the other designs looked like is unknown. Although they were later exhibited in both Montréal and Ottawa, no reproductions exist. Traquair sent his report to the Arch Committee, and in it he made some general comments about the designs. Of Lyle's he said:

The winning design is distinguished by fine proportion, a skillful and economical use of delicate detail, an imposing mass and the opportunity for the display of sculpture, should this be desirable at a future date. At the same time the design is complete without this sculpture. The somewhat austere lines are suited to a Military school and the straightforward massing should show well as approached from Kingston. The Assessor would suggest that the arch might be set back in plan even a little more from the road, but the exact position should be ascertained on the ground by use of a rough model.<sup>14</sup>

Traquair finished his statement with the opinion that the arch could be constructed for the \$50,000.<sup>15</sup>

Louis Amos, who had the advantage of being both an ex-cadet and a participant in the early discussions about the Arch, likely stuck to the general design he had made in 1919. He also had a tangential connection to the École des Beaux-Arts, having worked with Ernest Cormier in Montréal. Traquair, who critiqued all the designs by referring to them by number, not author (in the time-honoured method for academic contests), may have been referring to Amos' scheme when he wrote: "A small arch with detail of a more elaborate nature .... It is a well thought out design but it seems to lack monumental effect as compared to the winning design."<sup>19</sup>

Among the competitors, only Sproatt & Rolph had had previous experience with large-scale memorials. They had already won a competition for the University of Toronto's Soldiers' Memorial Tower (1919-25; figure 6), and in 1927 they completed another Toronto memorial at the Cathedral Church of St. James. Their firm was considered to be a leader in the Collegiate Gothic Style, and their design was likely Lyle's stiffest competition.<sup>16</sup> Traquair's comments on design number six may have referred to their proposal: "This very spirited design is, in the opinion of the Assessor, too large in scale for the position. It might look rather ponderous on a site where there are no buildings of large scale."<sup>17</sup> Considering that most of RMC's buildings were built in the Collegiate Gothic style, it would seem that Lyle's classical design was at a disadvantage from the start. J.-O. Marchand, the only other Beaux-Arts trained architect to compete, would also have represented a significant challenge.<sup>18</sup>

One of the designs was severely chastised for deviating from the programme by adding a caretaker's cottage to the scheme. It was not the only design to take liberties with the rules; Lyle broke from the programme and planned from the start that the monument be built of a stone that could be cut into large blocks, which Queenston limestone could not. Traquair and the committee chose to ignore this deviation, and it became an issue only much later in the commission.<sup>20</sup>

Without the other plans it is difficult to assess precisely why Lyle's design won. A number of factors would have worked against it from the start, not the least of which being its French origins. Early in the process the Arch Committee had stated they wanted a monument in keeping with the existing architectural character of the campus. Instead, they chose a design that was classical, rather than Gothic. But the publication of Amos' design with the funding appeal had aroused favourable reaction, and only one letter had remarked on the fact that it was a classical rather than Gothic arch. The stylistic references that both Amos and Lyle made in their designs reflected a much older military tradition rooted in ancient Rome. At once emotional and stoic, Lyle's Arch fulfilled the committee's desire to declare their pride and sorrow to both themselves and the civilian world.

A classical design planned on the French system was nevertheless a gamble on Lyle's part. He had tried the same strategy in 1914 for a federal government competition for high courts and departmental buildings in Ottawa.<sup>21</sup> There he presented a classic Beaux-Arts scheme for a site just west of Parliament Hill, even though the government had published Gothic-inspired perspectives by the British architects Webb & White. Given his total disregard for the known preferences of the judges, it is not surprising that Lyle, who never worked in the Gothic tradition, did not place in the competition.<sup>22</sup> In the Memorial Arch competition, however, Lyle's Roman composition was entirely in character. His undeniably Beaux-Arts arch offered something

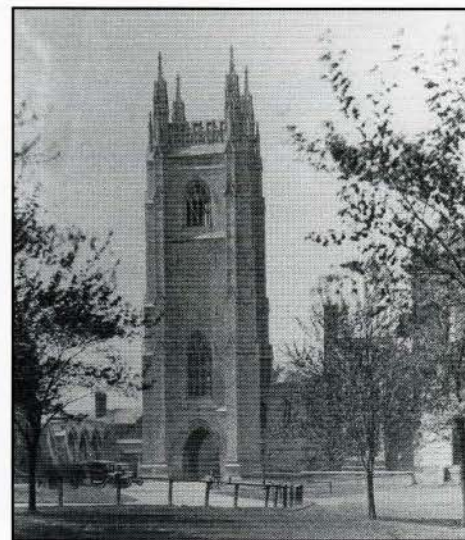


Figure 6. Soldiers' Memorial Tower, University of Toronto, 1919-25; Sproatt & Rolph, architects. (*Construction* 17, no. 6 [June 1924]: 180)

15 This sum crept up over time. In the end, the cost for contractors and materials alone was almost \$60,000, and the final price reached \$70,000.

16 Eric Arthur declared Toronto's architectural scene to be divided into two camps, one Renaissance, led by Lyle, the other Gothic, championed by Sproatt & Rolph. "Toronto Chapter O.A.A. Architectural Exhibition," *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* [hereafter *JRAIC*] 3 (March/April 1926): 50.

17 Traquair, "Assessors Report, 19 January 1921."

18 Marchand had been a student of Redon and received his diploma from the École des Beaux-Arts in 1902. David de Penanrun, Roux et Delaire, *Les Architectes Éléves de L'École des Beaux-Arts, 1793-1907* (Paris: Librairie de la Construction Moderne, 1907), 339.

19 Traquair, "Assessors Report, 19 January 1921."

20 Lyle was still arguing for the use of Indiana limestone in 1922. He was correct in his reasoning that "it would not be possible to obtain the same character of carving nor cutting of the mouldings in Kingston Lime Stone as it would with Indiana," but his charge that the stone would weather better has not been borne out, since the reliefs have been seriously eroded by the wind and spray from Lake Ontario. He sympathized with the committee on one point, writing, "The Canadian Architects would, of course, be only too delighted to use a Canadian stone if such were available ...." Lyle, "Letter to Lt.-Col. E.G. Hanson, 16 December 1922," RMC Archives.

21 Geoffrey Hunt, *John Lyle: Toward a Canadian Architecture/Créer une architecture canadienne* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University, 1982), 85-86.

22 Lyle's apparent dislike for Gothic architecture may be due to the influence of Julien Guadet and a hang-over of anti-Viollet-le-Duc sentiments at the École. Although Guadet won the Grand Prix of 1864 with a Romanesque design for *Un Hospice dans les Alpes*, he managed to almost entirely avoid reference to medieval architecture in his theory classes, which Lyle may have attended in 1894. Joseph Rykwert, "The Ecole des Beaux-Arts and the classical tradition," *The Beaux-Arts and Nineteenth-Century French Architecture*, ed. Robin Middleton (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982), 10.

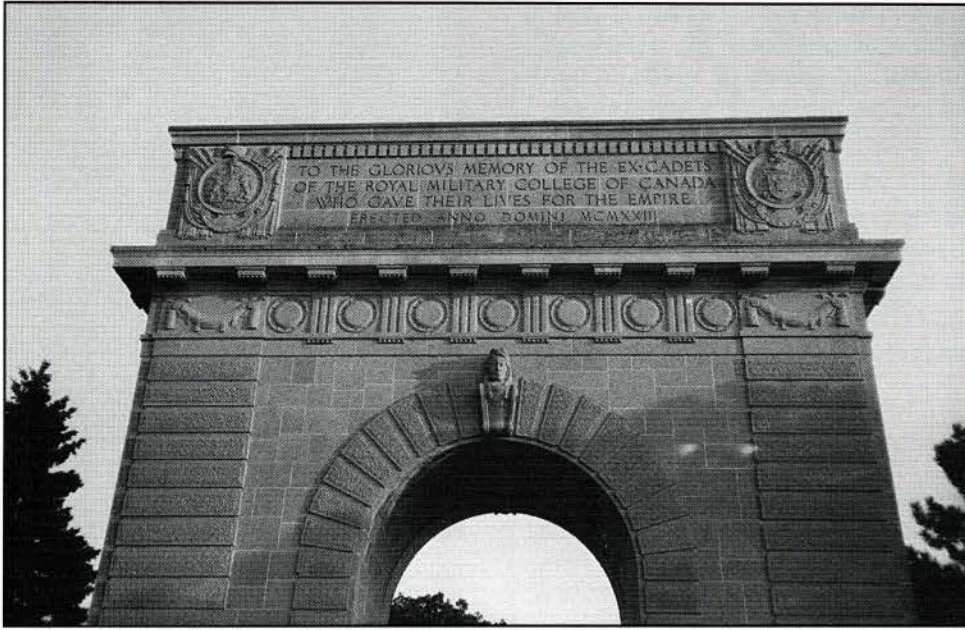


Figure 7 (above). The attic and keystone on the north façade of the Memorial Arch, RMC, Kingston; John M. Lyle, architect, Ira Lake, sculptor. (C. McAtee, 1994)

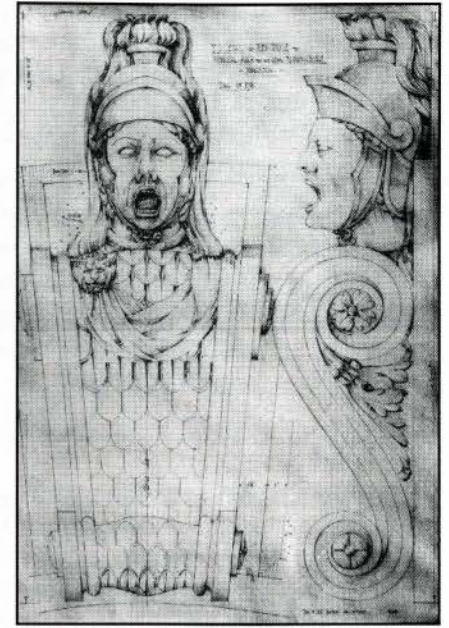


Figure 8 (above right). The keystone on the south façade of the Memorial Arch, RMC, Kingston; John M. Lyle, architect, A.F. Harvey, draftsman. (Archives of Ontario, B-14 AO 1621)

more in keeping with military ethos than a Gothic monument could, and it was surely this element that secured him the commission.

Lyle must have looked long and hard at Amos' design, correctly guessing that its publication had irreversibly influenced the committee. He then improved upon it, enlarging the actual dimensions of the monument and opening the walls, which made for a more graceful entrance to the college. The side cenotaphs, which resemble tombs, introduced a funereal element to the monument, adding an expression of grief to the triumphal theme. If this was not enough to move the officers, Lyle heightened the tension by combining classical ornamentation with a more personal sculptural programme.<sup>23</sup> Sculpted keystones of a helmeted soldier—one toward the highway, the other toward the academy—gave a distinctly public and personal expression to the memorial (figures 7, 8). This must have caught the imaginations of the officers, since they had planned from the start that the cadets would be instructed to salute the Arch whenever they passed it.<sup>24</sup> If there could have been any doubt about its Roman roots, Lyle included even more obvious references in the relief panels planned for the base (figures 9, 10). Inscriptions recording the battles in which cadets had died ran the length of the Arch on either side, and inside the barrel vault, sheltered from the winds of Lake Ontario, two bronze honour rolls faced each other.

Although much can be said for the genius of the architect, Lyle's Memorial Arch says much more about his education and practical experience. His adherence to the dictates of the Beaux-Arts architectural system and his subsequent knowledge of how it was practised in New York City prepared him for complex planning problems and provided him with a wealth of historical detail necessary for this sort of project. Historicism won the competition for him, as it reinforced the military traditions that Macdonell was establishing at RMC.

Lyle's Memorial Arch is a reflection of the École's emphasis on historical forms and Lyle's belief in the system, particularly in its established *type* character, reminiscent of Jacques-François Blondel, and in its severe symmetry, which marked the *parti* of École projects until Julien Guadet loosened the rules in the 20th-century.<sup>25</sup> No documentation has emerged to suggest that Lyle looked at specific French examples for his design, but he was undoubtedly aware of the 17th-century arches by Blondel and Claude Perrault through illustrations, and by personal observation in the case of Blondel's *Porte St. Denis* (c. 1670; figure 11), his student Bullet's *Porte St. Martin* (1674), and the 19th-century triumphal arches by Chalgrin and Percier & Fontaine, all located in Paris. Moreover, Lyle's monument reflects the ancient interpretation of the victory arch, recalling Vitruvius' statement that the Doric order was characterized by strength.<sup>26</sup>

As a foreign student, Lyle was barred from the École's annual Grand Prix contest and consequently received his mention through smaller *prix d'émulation* competitions.<sup>27</sup> While he was at the École, the *concours d'émulation* were set by

23 The keystones and relief panels were drawn in Lyle's office by A.F. Harvey. Although the original drawings are missing, photographs of them are held in the John M. Lyle Collection at the Archives of Ontario.

24 This idea was published in the Club's Memorial Arch Fund pamphlet, 1920.

25 Donal Drew Egbert, *The Beaux-Arts Tradition in French Architecture* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), 112.

26 *Ibid.*, 122.

27 The *prix d'émulation* competitions were much shorter than the Grands Prix, alternating between drawings done in seclusion (*en loge*), which were then completed in the ateliers, and twelve-hour *en loge* projects, done on smaller sheets. Annie Jacques, "The programme of the architectural section of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, 1819-1914," *The Beaux-Arts and Nineteenth-Century French Architecture*, 59.



Edmond-Jean-Baptiste Guillaume, although Guadet began to take over the task in 1894. Unfortunately for Lyle, who stopped taking courses in 1895, Guillaume's programmes were usually taken from a stockpile created decades earlier.<sup>28</sup> Three of Lyle's student projects have survived, and they all seem to be connected to the more standard programmes for which the professor of architectural theory was known.<sup>29</sup> The *emulation* programmes fell into three categories: public buildings, ecclesiastical buildings, and private buildings. Although monuments were included in the first division, the programmes were usually pragmatic in type, and fewer buildings associated with a classical theme were set, triumphal arches falling into this category.<sup>30</sup> While it is reasonable to assume that Lyle never worked on a design for a triumphal arch while studying, a reference in a letter home to a project on vaulting suggests that he was aware of earlier École projects.<sup>31</sup> In the end, the school gave him a system for planning and design, but it was the next phase of Lyle's career that influenced the development of his personal style, and influenced the design of the Memorial Arch to an even greater degree.

In 1896, steeped in French historicism, Lyle left Paris for New York City. During the next ten years he worked for three Beaux-Arts firms, Howard & Cauldwell, Carrère & Hastings, and Warren & Wetmore, and each left its mark upon him. In the United States, working offices substituted for the patron-run ateliers of Paris. Lyle must have found the atmosphere congenial to his educational experience: whereas American architects looked on the École des Beaux-Arts as their finishing school, Lyle found New York to be his. Later he would write glowingly of both the Americans and French, placing the younger system ahead in some areas. The restraint in American architecture, he wrote:

is very patent when you compare it with corresponding English, French or Italian work. A building may be well proportioned and well composed as to mass, but if it is plastered indiscriminately with ornament, then the abuse of this legitimate device defeats its own object, even if the ornament be good in itself.<sup>32</sup>

It may have been this sense of reserve that helped him adapt to the Canadian architectural scene, where High Victorian and Gothic styles held sway.

These firms influenced Lyle's approach to architecture, giving him a slightly New-World attitude toward Beaux-Arts historicism. In New York he also came in contact with exciting large-scale projects and solutions that would shape the development of his Canadian practice. Lyle was particularly impressed by the leaders, later writing that no "country can show such a high standard of excellence as that of McKim, Mead and White."<sup>33</sup> Back in Canada, Lyle seems to have moved between their severe classicism and the more French-baroque designs of Carrère & Hastings. His Royal Alexandra Theatre (1907) originated in Carrère & Hastings' office and was designed in a rather standard Louis XVI style (figure 12).<sup>34</sup> The plan was symmetrical, following traditional Beaux-Arts planning principles, and the rooms and auditorium were regularly laid out with a clear *marche*.<sup>35</sup> The façade did break from its Parisian and New York antecedents: Lyle scaled down the French style, presenting a more reserved face to the conservative atmosphere of Toronto.

Although Lyle's early work reflected the influence of the École's rigorous *emulation* competitions, other designs, notably Union Station, were decidedly American in character, especially in their overt references to classical architecture. In their review of the Toronto station, *The Architectural Forum* compared it to two New York

Figure 9 (left). Relief panel on the north façade of the Memorial Arch, RMC, Kingston; John M. Lyle, architect, Ira Lake, sculptor. (C. McAtee, 1994)

Figure 10 (centre). Relief panel on the north façade of the Memorial Arch, RMC, Kingston; John M. Lyle, architect, Ira Lake, sculptor. (C. McAtee, 1994)

Figure 11 (above). *Porte St. Denis*, Paris, c. 1670; François Blondel, architect. (C. McAtee, 1994)

28 *Ibid.*, 65.

29 Wash drawings for a *Caisse d'Épargne de Lyon*, a ceiling, plan, and interior for a palace bedroom, and a stairhall for a Palace of Fine Arts, all dated 1894, are held in the John M. Lyle Collection, Archives of Ontario.

30 Jacques, 60-62.

31 Lyle wrote of this project: "we have to render a project for the professor of the history of architecture which will take us fifteen days, so I shall be very busy for the next two months. For our project this time we have to study the difference in two styles of vaulting." "Letter to Mrs. Samuel Lyle, 12 January 1895," John M. Lyle Collection, Archives of Ontario.

32 "American Architecture," *Construction* 15, no. 5 (May 1922): 153.

33 *Ibid.*

34 Hunt, 25, 68-9.

35 Hunt, p. 69, speculates that Lyle may have gained experience working on Carrère & Hastings' plans for the New Theatre in New York (1903), as well as Howard's Majestic Theatre in Boston.



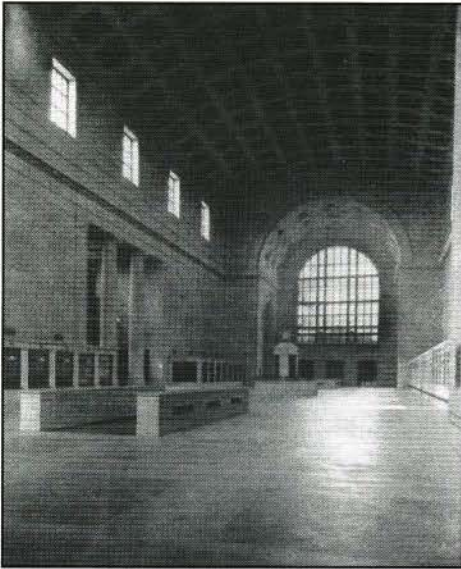


Figure 12 (right). Royal Alexandra Theatre, King Street West, Toronto, 1906-07; John M. Lyle, architect. (*Construction* 1, no. 2 [November 1907]: 38)



Figure 13 (above). Interior, Union Station, Front Street West, Toronto, 1915-20; John M. Lyle, architect for the interior. (*Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 4, no. 2 [February 1927]: 68)

edifices, Warren & Wetmore's Grand Central Station (1903-13) and McKim, Mead & White's Pennsylvania Station (1906-10), and rightfully so; both the exterior, by Ross & Macdonald and H.G. Jones, and the interior, by Lyle, were heavily influenced by the great American railway stations (figure 13).<sup>36</sup> Although references to Renaissance coffering and Roman baths are present in Lyle's ticket lobby and waiting room, they came from McKim, Mead & White, rather than the ancient sources. Nevertheless, in this project Lyle proved that he could handle monumental spaces, and the decorative elements of the mouldings, richly ornamented keystones, and inscriptions became synonymous with his personal architectural style.

McKim, Mead & White were also responsible for two of the largest memorial monuments in New York: the Washington Arch (1889-1918), and the Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial Arch in Prospect Park, Brooklyn (1889-1901).<sup>37</sup> Thomas Hastings of Carrère & Hastings also designed a monument for the city, but his tripartite First World War Victory Arch (1919) was a temporary wood and plaster structure that was subsequently demolished.<sup>38</sup> Hastings' scheme had followed in the footsteps of another full-size model, the Dewey Arch (designed by the sculptor Charles Lamb), constructed twenty years earlier and then destroyed, exerting influence only through magazine reproductions. Although some of these designs were more eclectic than others, each relied on the example of Roman triumphal arches. Lyle's Arch was clearly influenced by the American monuments, especially the two by McKim, Mead & White, where architecture rather than sculpture dominated the programme. Lyle's sculpture programme was subordinate to the architectural character of the monument, and its overall design starker still.

Lyle's decorative programme was also related to the practice he had witnessed in New York. The Arch's keystones—a detail with which Lyle would have been familiar from his class in *dessin ornemental* at the École—may have been inspired by similar decorations by McKim, Mead & White.<sup>39</sup> Following the lead of that firm, Lyle kept close control on the total design and implementation of the project, sending his draftsman's designs of the keystones and relief panels directly to the sculptor. This approach was very Beaux-Arts in nature, with the architect acting as an artist on a monumental scale. In a lecture to students in 1933, Lyle spoke of this relationship:

What, you say, has architecture to offer as a vocation? A wonderful life, that of the creative artist who carries in his mind the germ of an idea, who sees it borne on paper, carried through countless stages—sometimes of years—until it finally blossoms as a full grown flower ....<sup>40</sup>

Lyle's position was clear: architecture headed the hierarchy of the arts, with the classical canon of beauty its judge. His attention to detail in the Memorial Arch justified these measures, with relief sculpture and inscriptions on the sides and attic of the

36 Lyle may have been employed on the project because of his ties to Carrère & Hastings, who competed for the project.

37 The Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial Arch was originally designed by John Duncan, but in 1894 Stanford White was brought in to finish the sculpture programme and redesign the plaza. Richard Guy Wilson, *McKim, Mead & White Architects* (New York: Rizzoli, 1983), 148-53.

38 Michele H. Bogart, *Public Sculpture and the Civic Ideal in New York City, 1890-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 277-79.

39 Buildings such as their University Club (1896-1900) may have provided models for this kind of sculptural ornamentation.

40 Lyle, "Architecture, A Vocation," *JRAIC* 10, no. 2 (February 1933): 34.



monument complementing each other (figure 14).<sup>41</sup>

If any criticism can be made about the decoration, it is in the relief panels above the granite base (figures 15, 16). Like the keystones, they were designed in Lyle's office by A.F. Harvey, and carried out by the sculptor Ira Lake. Although extremely effective on paper, their detail is lost in the translation to stone and they detract from the overall stoic impression of the Arch. Lyle was also concerned with the tone of the inscriptions set in the attic and above the honour roll, encouraging the committee to choose words that would reinforce the design:

We think that it is important, from the designer's point of view, that the inscriptions should be approximately of the length given in the accompanying data, owing to the fact that these inscriptions bear a direct relation to the design, giving texture and scale to the architecture.... We feel strongly that the inscription on the attic story, giving towards the main Gananoque Road, should be descriptive and documentary in character, and that the corresponding inscription towards the College side should be suggestive and poetical in spirit.<sup>42</sup>

Given that Beaux-Arts architecture was not particularly emotional, by integrating sculpture and descriptive words into the monument Lyle managed to work within the



Figure 14 (above). Detail of the inscriptions on the east façade of the Memorial Arch, RMC, Kingston; John M. Lyle, architect. (C. McAtee, 1994)

Figure 15 (top left). Relief panel on the north façade of the Memorial Arch, RMC, Kingston; John M. Lyle, architect, A.F. Harvey, draftsman. (Archives of Ontario, AO 238)

Figure 16 (bottom left). Relief panel on the north façade of the Memorial Arch, RMC, Kingston; John M. Lyle, architect, A.F. Harvey, draftsman. (Archives of Ontario, B-13 AO 1620)

<sup>41</sup> Lyle was not responsible for the later inscriptions on the cenotaphs. Although the style matches Lyle's, the proportions are off, an error a competent Beaux-Arts architect would never commit.

<sup>42</sup> Lyle, "Letter to Col. H.J. Lamb and Col. W.B. Kingsmill, 24 February 1922," RMC Archives.

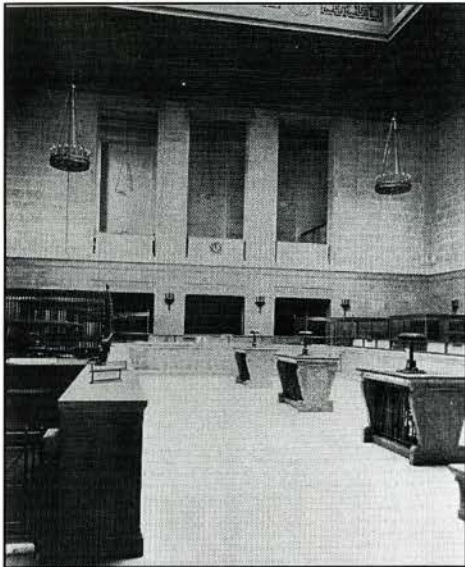


Figure 17. Interior of the Bank of Nova Scotia, Sparks Street, Ottawa, 1923; John M. Lyle, architect. (*Construction* 18, no. 3 [March 1925]: 73)

parameters of the style and still achieve an expressive quality. His familiarity with the larger American monuments no doubt informed his choices, but in many respects the Memorial Arch more successfully balances the contradictory emotions of sorrow and joy.

Lyle may also have been aware of Stanford White's plan for the Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial, since he used the road, side gates, and lamp standards in a similar way to lead up to the Arch. With the project nearing completion, he wrote:

This plaza treatment we consider most important, as it will lead the eye in to the Arch and give a proper vista. It will also afford space for the parading of troops on ceremonial occasions. Flanking the main plaza entrance would be grass plots surrounded by Japanese Barberry hedges. These grass plots to take the architectural lines as suggested on the drawing, in order to conform to the development on the opposite side of the roadway and to emphasize the architectural lines necessary to lead the eye to the Arch.<sup>43</sup>

The problems involved in the site at RMC were very different from those facing White in a traffic circle at the head of Prospect Park. Lyle had to relate his arch to the city of Kingston across the water and to the highway running directly ahead, while dealing with its practical function as an entrance to the college. He used the two cenotaphs to frame and balance the Arch, stepping them slightly toward the highway, thus creating a plaza in front of the entrance. A slight hemispherical element was added to the plan by a low granite wall running from either side of the Arch to the cenotaphs. Because the gatehouse and superintendent's residence interfered with this effect, Lyle used lamps and landscaping to offset the plaza from the neighbouring buildings, the lamps also serving to distinguish the college road from the highway to Gananoque.<sup>44</sup>

The severely symmetrical plan also reveals Lyle's lineage to the pre-Guadet generation of Beaux-Arts architects. Lyle's earlier design for the competition for the high courts and departmental buildings in Ottawa reflects his singular use of symmetrical planning, and it is clear how little had changed in French academic architecture since the *École's* inception in 1671. Nevertheless, a symmetrical plan seems appropriate for a military institution that prides itself on order and tradition.

Lyle's treatment of the stone was also indebted to the Americans, who often favoured Renaissance models. Lyle's Arch, with its rusticated side bays and voussoirs, looked back to the textures of Carrère & Hastings' New York Public Library (1897-1911), on which, again, he may have worked.

This preference for Renaissance and classical styles continued to be manifested in Lyle's banks of the 1920s, even infiltrating his later Art Deco-style banks. The success of the Memorial Arch and Union Station reinforced his belief in the Beaux-Arts system, to which he remained committed throughout his career. Critical acclaim of the two structures encouraged him to continue using classical decorative motifs, which at times confused the *specific* character he was trying to establish. His Bank of Nova Scotia in Ottawa (1923), for example, broke with the French Beaux-Arts notion of decorum, mixing disparate sources on a façade derived from Howard and Carrère & Hastings (figure 17). Eric Arthur jumped on this deviation, critiquing the building in particular for its strange references:

Niches with metal urns do not convey the idea of a great bank to me, and inside a row of sarcophagi give the same funereal effect. We know the modern clock is worked by some magical fashion by electricity, but it was surely a sacrilege to screw a wrought iron clock on the marble face of the sarcophagus.<sup>45</sup>

Certain similarities in the motifs of the Arch and the Bank of Nova Scotia suggest that the two projects were developed in unison or closely followed each other. The necessary "funereal" theme of the memorial crossed into the world of banking, confusing cenotaph with tellers' counter.

Still, Lyle stayed the Beaux-Arts course. Even in his departure into "Canadian decorative forms" he insisted upon beauty as the ultimate test of a building, writing that "everybody has their own pet interpretation of what 'Modernism' in architecture means.... They all seem to forget, however, the essential that differentiates architecture from mere building or engineering, namely—beauty without which attribute no

43 Lyle, "Letter to Col. Clyde Caldwell, President of the Royal Military College Club of Canada, 15 February 1924," RMC Archives.

44 *Ibid.*

45 "Toronto Chapter O.A.A. Architectural Exhibition," *JRAIC* 3 (March/April 1926): 53-4.

style or vogue can hope to last."<sup>46</sup> He could not have made a more "Beaux-Arts" statement in reaction to the threat of technology usurping the place of architecture.

Lyle's own try at Modernism remained within the boundaries of the French system. Adopting Art Deco, he turned national symbols into ornamental details, committing the ultimate Beaux-Arts faux-pas of confusing the character of the building with unrelated sculpture. Eric Arthur pointed out the folly of Lyle's switch to non-historical ornament, questioning the validity of his new forms: "the maple leaf is certainly to be preferred to the egg and dart, but a gopher or a squirrel on a keystone does not make a building as national in character as the Parthenon."<sup>47</sup> But if French nationhood was related to architectural detail, Lyle believed Canadian architecture was going to have to invent its own. These ideas were expressed in increasingly eclectic buildings, seen in the composite order capitals of the Bank of Nova Scotia in Calgary (1929-30), where an eagle was inserted between the volutes. The architectural vocabulary remained the same, even as the details changed. Arthur wrote: "there is something distinctly Canadian about a grain elevator, but nothing Canadian about the Château Frontenac."<sup>48</sup> Both men were trying to get at the same problem of Canadian architecture's dependence on imported styles, but Lyle's superficial ornament did not provide a real alternative. The Runnymede Library in Toronto (1929-30) might have totem poles in the place of classical columns, but it still had a Beaux-Arts plan, with an internal symmetry that matched that of the exterior.

Although there is nothing "Canadian" about the architecture of the Royal Military College's Memorial Arch, there is nothing about its design to be regretted. If ever Beaux-Arts planning and historicism had a place, it was at a military institution where tradition and history were honoured. The Memorial Arch represents Lyle at his best, as it is consistent where other projects failed to be, and firmly rooted in a style suited to its character. Here the beauty, rather than the dogmatism of Beaux-Arts architecture, prevails.

46 "Canadian Decorative Forms," *JRAIC* 9, no 3 (March 1932): 70.

47 "Architecture in Canada," *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada 1928/1929*, ed. Bertram Brooker (Toronto: Macmillan, 1929), 112.

48 *Ibid.*, 111.

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