



Fig. 2. Memorial Tower, Dormitories, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia; 1895-1896, Cope & Stewardson

# Tudor Gothic

## in Downtown Montreal 1900-1929

by Robert Lemire

The inspiration for this article arose from my appreciation of works by a champion of Tudor Gothic in Montreal, David Robertson Brown. Another, and more immediate source of inspiration is the view from my office window of Chatford Hall, one of the last examples of Tudor Gothic in downtown Montreal.

I decided to investigate the origins of Tudor Gothic and attempt to reveal when it flourished in Montreal, who the major practitioners were and where they learned the art.

Tudor Gothic is described by John Summerson as "an easy and manageable style," and he cites Hampton Court Palace, especially the west gatehouse (Fig. 1) as a model.<sup>1</sup> Its depressed arch, oriel window with splayed mullions and leaded glass are Tudor Gothic details that can be seen on Victorian buildings in England, the United States and Canada.

Ralph Adams Cram (1863-1942) through his works and writings dominated the Tudor Gothic movement in the United States. He promoted not only his own work, but that of others who shared his passion.<sup>2</sup> Cope & Stewardson are credited with having initiated the movement, especially in their collegiate work which received wide coverage in architectural journals. In 1904, shortly after the death of both architects, Cram wrote a review of their work in which he clearly revealed his love of medieval architecture and disapproval of Renaissance. He stated that the ornament of their Memorial Tower at the University of Pennsylvania (Fig. 2) was "degraded and Germanized."<sup>3</sup> He also criticized the Tower of University Hall at Washington University for its "lack of scale and harmony between the ornament . . . and its mass and materials."<sup>4</sup> However, for Stafford Little and Blair Halls at Princeton, he raved "this is poetry, sheer, unmitigated romance."<sup>5</sup>

The Tudor Jacobean design of Memorial Tower (Fig. 2) was inspired by Hampton Court Palace (Fig. 1); but only in mass and materials. The ornament, in Cram's opinion, was not representative of good Tudor work. He obviously insisted that Tudor precedents be respected. For him this clearly meant that the later English Renaissance with its Elizabethan and Jacobean ornament was to be avoided. Hampton Court is, therefore, the model against which all Tudor Gothic must be evaluated. With this in mind, we can now look at the movement in downtown Montreal and appreciate more fully works by local architects. We shall follow the evolu-



Fig. 1. Hampton Court Palace, London, England; 1515-1519; West Gatehouse (right) and entrance to Clock Court (left); R.J. Minney Hampton Court (London: Cassell, 1972) dustjacket.



Fig. 3. Proposed Apartment House, Montreal; 1899, David Robertson Brown

tion of Tudor Gothic from its first appearance here at the turn of the century to its decline in the 1920s.

David Robertson Brown (1869-1947) was Montreal's foremost exponent of Tudor Gothic. Brown had attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology prior to 1892, the year he began practice in Montreal, his native city.<sup>6</sup> In 1898, he became a non-resident member of the Architectural League of New York which kept him abreast of works by his contemporaries in the United States.

One of his unbuilt projects has recently come to light. It illustrates the conflict between Tudor Jacobean and Tudor Gothic that Cram had resolved in his works and writings. In 1899, drawings from David R. Brown's office for a "Proposed Apartment House, Montreal" were photographed by Notman & Son. These included a perspective rendering (Fig. 3.) that was exhibited in 1901 at the First Annual Exhibition of the Toronto Architectural Eighteen Club.<sup>7</sup> This project, for reasons unknown, was aborted. However, in 1905 the Grosvenor Apartments rose on the site of Brown's proposed building—but the design was by another architect (Fig. 4). These two projects illustrate the change in approach to Tudor Gothic that had occurred within a brief period of six years. Brown's aborted project of 1899 is based on English Renaissance with ornament derived from Elizabethan and Jacobean sources. The design, as built in 1905, by Finley & Spence is less flamboyant, in fact the only ornamented part of the exterior is the entrance with depressed arch—a distinctive feature of Tudor buildings. It is interesting to note that both projects include an inner courtyard and tower bays with bell shaped roofs, evidence that Finley & Spence were familiar with Brown's design.

In 1905, we find Brown firmly under the influence of Tudor Gothic. This is clearly seen in his own house, built at a cost of \$7,000 and still standing at what is today the centre of the trendy strip of boutiques and bars.<sup>8</sup> An elevation drawn in 1975 (Fig. 5) when compared with a recent photograph (Fig. 6) shows that thoughtless renovation has ruined the building. All the leaded windows, characteristic elements of Tudor architecture, have been removed with the result that "plain undivided windows stare at us like dead eyes."<sup>9</sup> Also, a pair of brackets removed from a side oriel are awkwardly placed beneath the brackets of the front oriel—as if stout medieval monks needed extra support. The interior of the house was gutted during renovation.

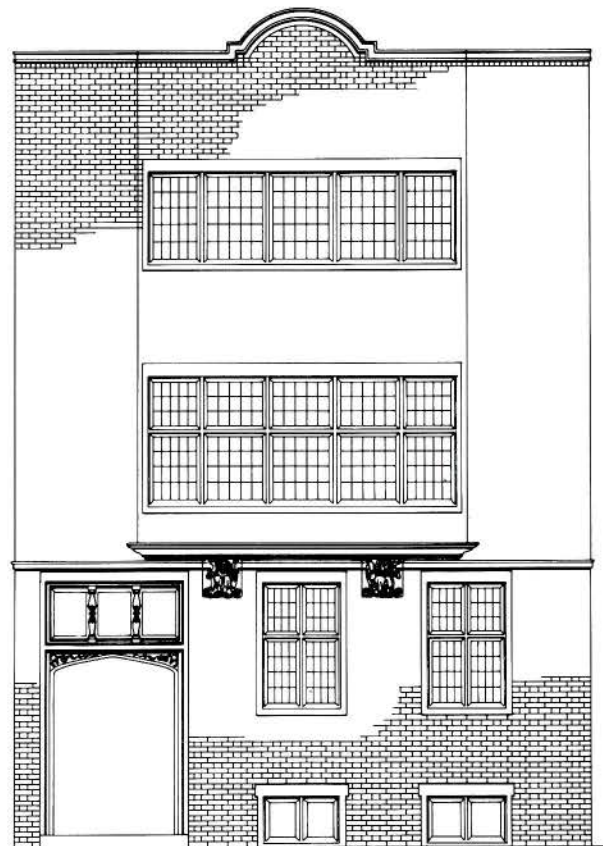


Fig. 5. David Robertson Brown House, 2015 rue Crescent, Montreal; 1905, David Robertson Brown.

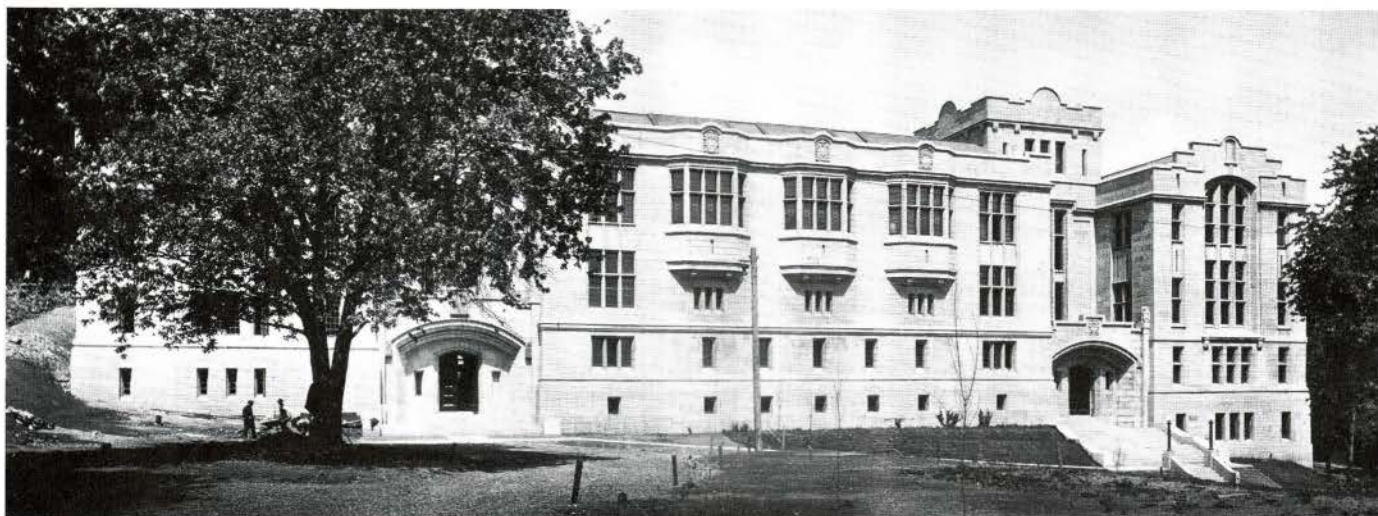


Fig. 7. Medical Building, McGill University, Montreal; 1908-1910, Brown & Vallance; Notman Photographic Archives, McCord Museum, McGill University.

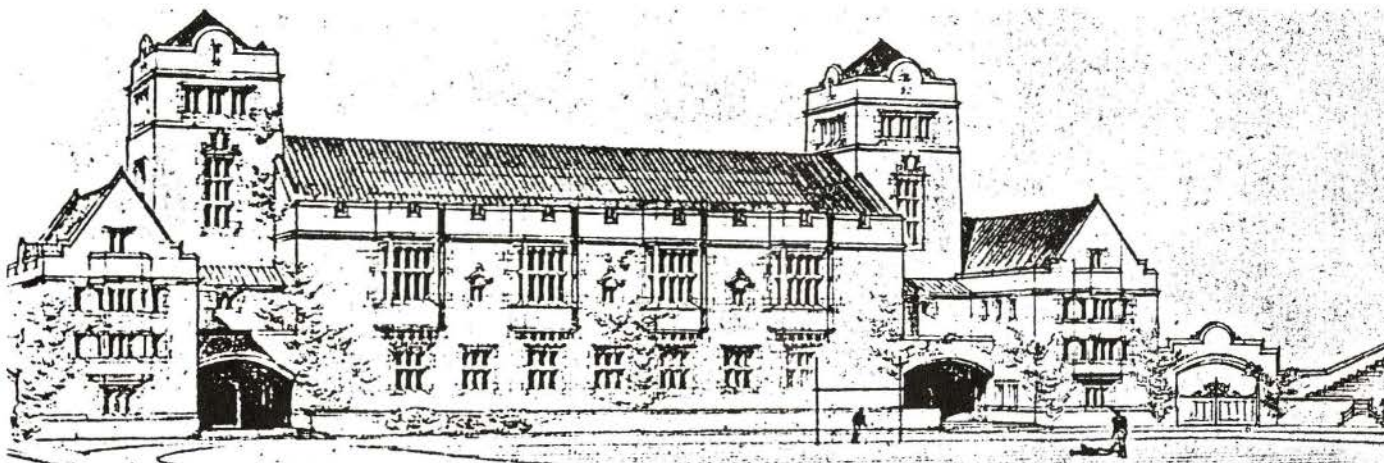
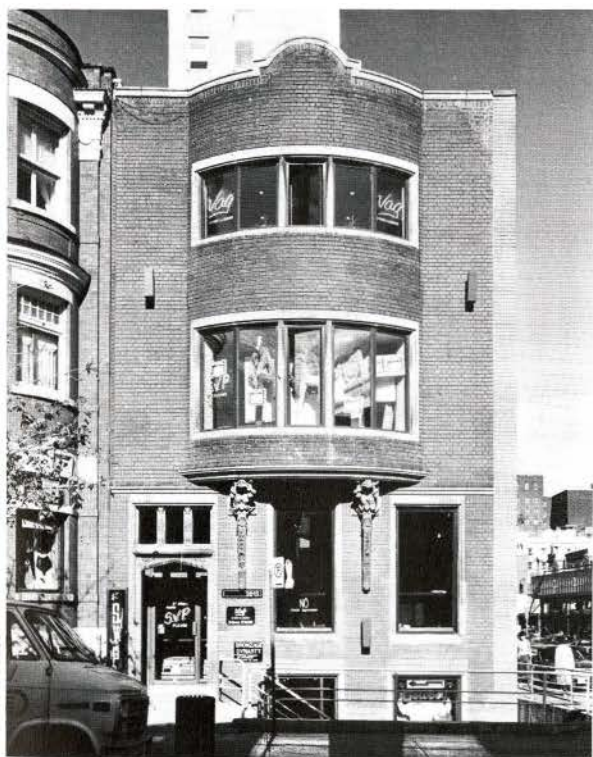


Fig. 8. The Gymnasium (Weightman Hall), University of Pennsylvania; 1902, Frank Miles Day & Brother; *The Architectural Record*, Vol. 15, No. 5 (May 1904), p. 418.



Michel Boulet

Fig. 6. David Robertson Brown House, 2015 rue Crescent, Montreal; 1905, David Robertson Brown.



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Fig. 4. Grosvenor Apartments, 1610 rue Sherbrooke ouest, Montreal; 1905, Finley & Spence.



Fig. 9. Southam Building, 1070, rue de Bleury, Montreal; 1913-1914, Brown & Vallance.



Fig. 10. Southam Building, 1070, rue de Bleury, Montreal; 1913-1914, Brown & Vallance.

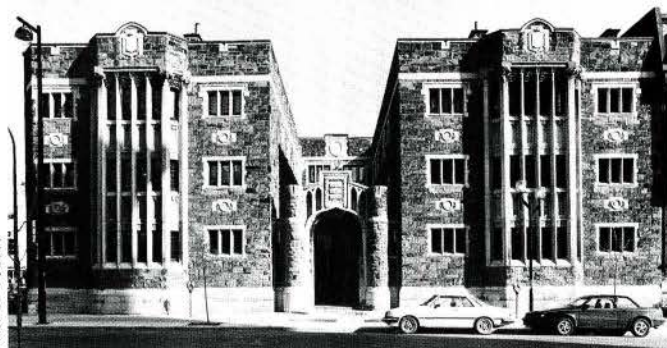


Fig. 11. Bishop Court Apartments, 1465, rue Bishop, Montreal; 1904, Saxe & Archibald.

In 1908, Brown with his new partner Hugh Vallance, won the competition for the new Medical Building at McGill University.<sup>10</sup> The exterior expresses the inner function quite clearly. Three oriel windows on the centre block indicate the location of the library (Fig. 7). The slit openings below denote the stack areas, and the great laboratories and halls located in the wings are identified by tall windows with splayed mullions rising through two stories. Embrasured parapets with shields set in panels complete the image of Tudor Gothic then favoured for collegiate buildings. The design would have appealed to Ralph Adams Cram who promoted Tudor Gothic as the best solution for collegiate architecture.

Stimulating prose by Cram on the merits of Tudor Gothic includes an article on the work of Frank Miles Day (1861-1918) who like Cram was recognized as a distinguished medievalist. The article includes comments on Day's Gymnasium (Fig. 8) at the University of Pennsylvania. Cram praises the design of the Gymnasium stating that it reflects the "best type of English collegiate work" that the "oriel and mullioned windows (are) shaped with exactness (and) placed where composition demands them and where the plan requires them."<sup>11</sup> It is possible that Day's Gymnasium might have served as a model for the Medical Building at McGill University.

Another work by Brown & Vallance, the Southam Building, is Montreal's most flamboyant example of Commercial Gothic. Its medieval ornament and ecclesiastical references are related, in a minor way, to the Woolworth Tower (1910-1913) by New York architect, Cass Gilbert. The Woolworth, dubbed the "Cathedral of Commerce", confirmed that the skyscraper could attain a level of sanctity. The elevation of the Southam Building expresses its height without a dissenting line. The ground and first storey with a wonderful assortment of terra cotta figures (Fig. 9), larger than life goddesses depicting the four continents, animals, grotesques and floral emblems are surmounted by a centerpiece in the form of a monumental Tudor window rising eight stories to the decorative parapet (Fig. 10).

Brown & Vallance were the most prominent exponents of Tudor Gothic. However, during the same period, other Montreal architects were creating similar designs that are equally significant.

A most forceful and derivative example is the Bishop Court Apartments by C.J. Saxe (1870-1943) and John S. Archibald (1872-1934). Its inner court with gated entrance in the manner of Tudor palaces, the massive vertical bays with splayed mullions of white dressed stone set off by rough red stone walls, create a presence that is striking both in composition and mass (Fig. 11). The cramped site with the front in line with the sidewalk increases the visual impact. Bishop Court cost \$50,000 and had 18 suites. Today it houses administrative offices of Concordia University.

A house by Frank Miles Day in Philadelphia (Fig. 12) as Cram states is "intensely interesting and very successful". He praises the "composition and sense of proportion . . . the scale in window openings."<sup>12</sup> Further evidence of Day's influence can be seen when the house in Philadelphia is compared with the W.A. Molson House (Fig. 13) by Montreal architect, Robert Findlay (1859-1951). There would seem to be more than mere coincidence in the similarities between their designs.

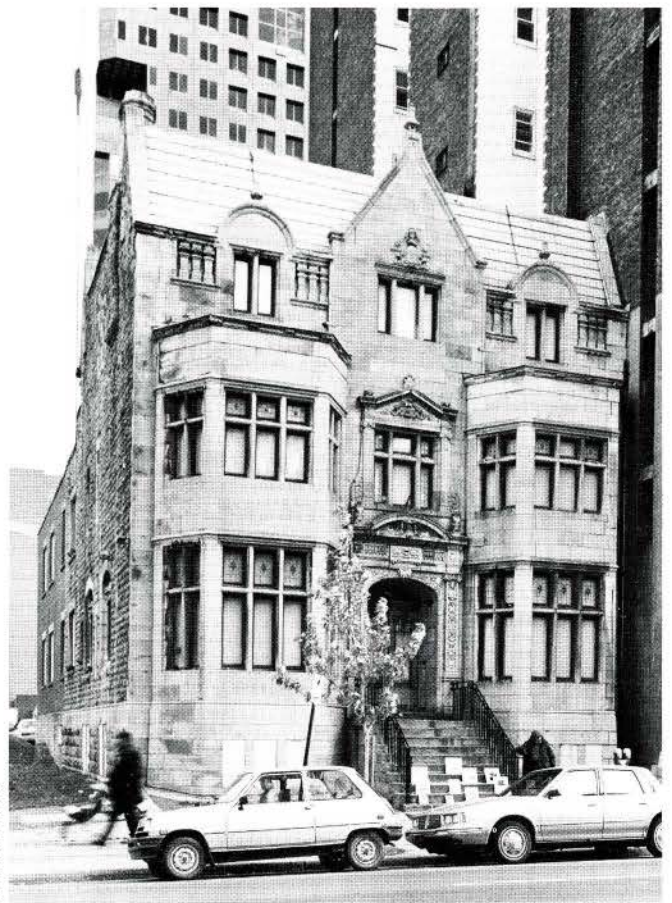
Kenneth Guscotte Rea (1878-1941) acquired experience in Tudor Gothic from a most respectable source. Like David Robertson Brown, he was a native of Montreal and had attended MIT. In 1902, Rea joined the firm of Cram, Goodhue & Ferguson in Boston, and the following year was sent to open their New York office.<sup>13</sup> He was involved in the planning of the United States Military Academy at West Point (Fig. 14) and through Cram's influence was exposed to the principles of Tudor Gothic architecture. After his return to Montreal, Rea designed two office buildings that show the influence of his training in Cram's office. The Lewis Building is a remarkable example of Commercial Gothic; all the more since its companion, the Guarantee Building, also by Rea, no longer stands. Cramped by narrow streets in Old Montreal, the Lewis Building has the advantage of a corner site which adds force to the vertical thrust of the splayed piers rising the full height from ground to parapet (Fig. 15). Spandrels and friezes at the first and eighth stories provide spaces for carving. Comical grotesque figures carved on the frieze above the ground floor and gargoyles projecting from the corners at the eighth storey are derived from medieval architecture.

After the First World War, interest in Tudor Gothic was rekindled; but the spirit of pre-war examples was, in many cases, snuffed. Throughout the 1920s abstracted forms of Tudor Gothic appeared with varying degrees of competence.

The Caron Building, the last example of Commercial Gothic in downtown Montreal, was designed by D.N. MacVicar (1869-1929) and J.C.A. Heriot (1862-1921), former partners with David R. Brown. Its elevation is divided horizontally into bottom, middle and top, the tripartite formula used for most tall buildings at that time. Surface ornament is



Fig. 12. House on Locust Street, Philadelphia; 1897-1898, Frank Miles Day & Brother; *The Architectural Review*, Vol. 7, No. 7 (1900).



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Fig. 13. W.A. Molson House, 892, rue Sherbrooke ouest, Montreal; 1905, Robert Findlay.

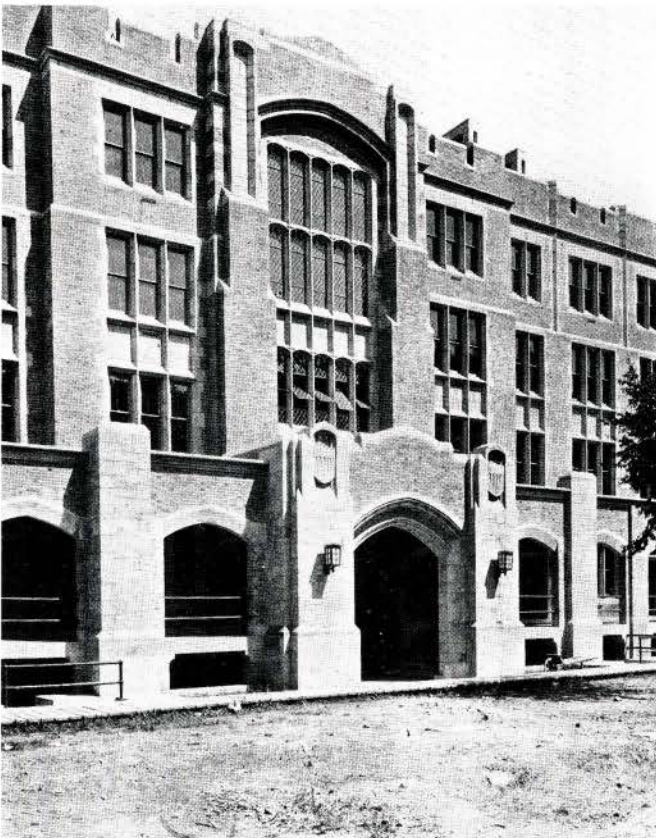
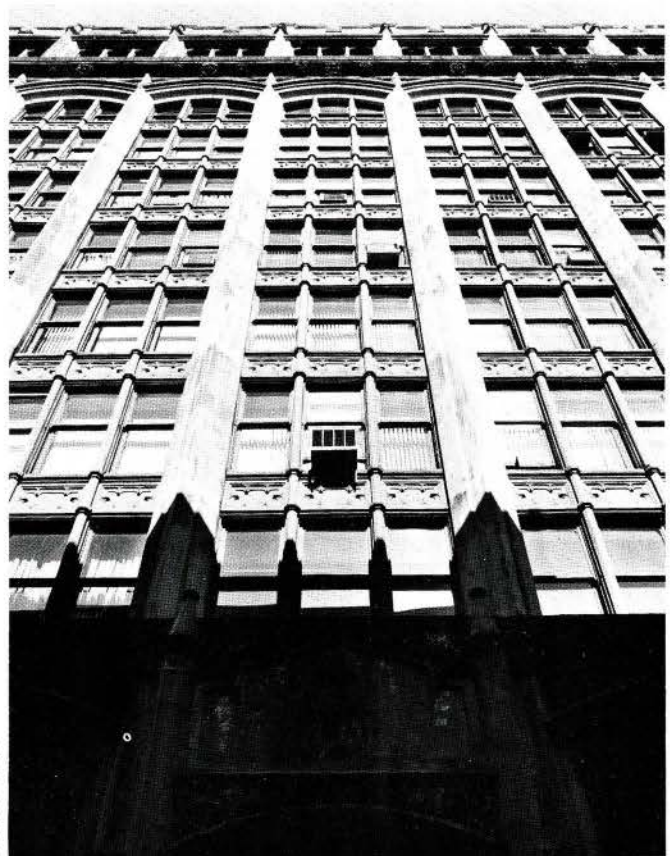


Fig. 14. Cadet Quarters, United States Military Academy, West Point, New York; 1904, Cram, Goodhue & Ferguson; *The American Architect*, Vol. 94, No. 1715 (Nov. 4, 1908).



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Fig. 15. Lewis Building, 469, rue Saint-Jean, Montreal; 1912-1913, Kenneth G. Rea.



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Fig. 17. Jules Hamel House, 3630, rue de la Montagne, Montreal; 1920, Robert Findlay.

merely applied and does not express the structure. The eccentric Gothic canopies above the entrances (Cover) illustrate the decay of ornament to a level of superficiality, in this case all the more superficial since the material is cast artificial stone. By contrast, the Lewis Building (Fig. 15) soars by means of its tapered piers that act as great mullions leading the eye up the surface, as well as accentuating the inner structure.

Three buildings constructed during the 1920s in downtown Montreal, qualify as good works based on respected models.<sup>14</sup> The Jules Hamel House by Robert Findlay displays his high standard of design and respect of precedent (Fig. 17). It is similar in scale and composition to the David Robertson Brown House (Fig. 5). The Zeta Psi Memorial Chapter House by A.T. Galt Durnford (1898-1973) is equally faithful to old models (Fig. 18). The great bay with mullioned windows reducing in height as they rise to the crenellated crown, is a frank expression of the vast hall to be found within. Chatford Hall by John S. Archibald, a Tudor inspired design adjoining a mid-Victorian Gothic structure, the Church of St. James The Apostle, well illustrates the affinity between Tudor and gothic (Back Cover). The entrance with depressed arch, the leaded windows with splayed mullions, and the shields set in panels are all elements, tried and true, of Tudor Gothic.

This study would be incomplete without the Berner & Palmer Building by Harold Lea Fetherstonhaugh (1887-1971). Its half-timbered oak and stucco exterior sets it apart from the others we have seen (Fig. 20). There is clear reference here to the medieval inns and guildhalls in England. This building, under construction when the Great Depression struck, was the last example of Tudor Gothic in downtown Montreal. Its location adjacent to the former residence of Lord Mount Stephen, a late-Victorian Renaissance mansion, would have likely disturbed Ralph Adams Cram. Nevertheless, the two side-by-side provide a rare opportunity to experience the contrast between medieval and Renaissance architecture.

The 1930s, needless to say, was a lean decade for architects. The outbreak of the Second World War was even less encouraging. By the mid-1940s tastes had changed and the art of architecture had become suppressed by demands for economy and efficiency in building. Life at home and at work was obsessed with minimum maintenance and with streamlined production methods.

In this brief study I have attempted to illustrate that Tudor Gothic was well suited to the variety of building types for which it was used. Local architects interpreted historic models with apparent ease and were aware of similar works by their contemporaries in the United States. They kept Montreal in step with the mainstream of modern architecture. For them, as for us today, Tudor Gothic was but one of the many inspiring chapters in the history of architecture. □

## NOTES

1. John Summerson, *Architecture in Britain 1530 to 1830* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1970), p. 513.
2. Three firms in the United States recognized for their works in Tudor Gothic were: Cope & Stewardson (Philadelphia); Cram, Goodhue & Ferguson (Boston and New York); Frank Miles Day & Brother (Philadelphia). For biographies and lists of works see *The Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects* (New York: Free Press, 1982).
3. Ralph Adams Cram, "The Work of Messrs. Cope & Stewardson", *The Architectural Record*, Vol. 16, No. 5 (Nov. 1904), p. 416.
4. *idem.*, p. 423.
5. *idem.*, p. 411.
6. Benjamin Sulte, *A History of Quebec; its resources and people* (Montreal & Toronto: Canada History Co., 1908), Vol. 2, p. 833-834.
7. Toronto Architectural Eighteen Club, First Annual Exhibition, catalogue, Jan. 1901, p. 77, item 23.
8. For architects and construction dates between 1900-1914 see Phyllis Lambert and Robert Lemire, *Inventaire des batiments du vieux Montreal: Dossier 25* (Quebec: Ministere des Affaires culturelles, 1977).
9. Sydney E. Castle, *Domestic Gothic of the Tudor Period* (Jamestown, New York: International Casement Co., 1927), p. 73.
10. Philip J. Turner, "The Medical Building, McGill University", *Construction*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Mar. 1912), p. 47-56.
11. Ralph Adams Cram, "The Work of Frank Miles Day & Brother", *The Architectural Record*, Vol. 15, No. 5 (May 1904), p. 420.
12. *idem.*, p. 408.
13. The Royal Institute of British Architects, Kenneth Guscotte Rea, members statement, 19 Mar. 1913.
14. For architects and construction dates between 1919-1929 see Robert Lemire and Monique Trepanier, *Inventaire des batiments construits entre 1919 et 1959 dans le vieux Montreal et les quartiers Saint-Georges et Saint-Andre* (Ottawa: Parcs Canada, 1981).

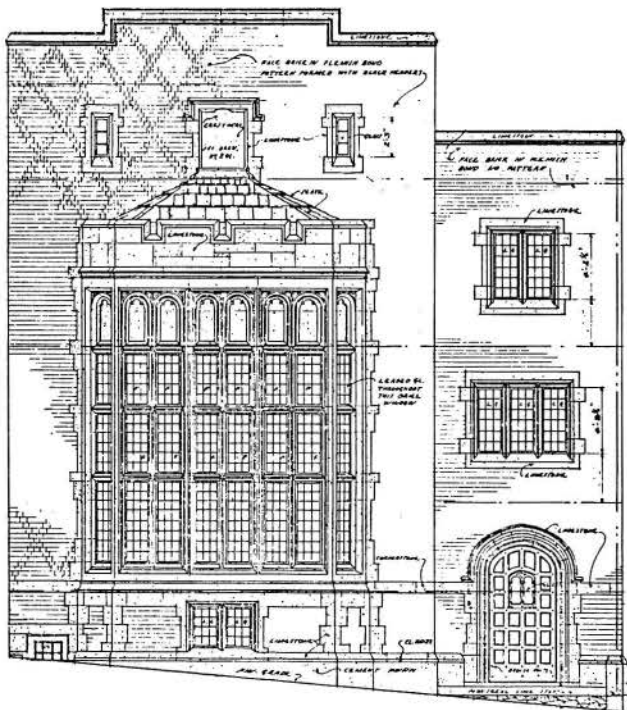


Fig. 18. Zeta Psi Memorial Chapter House, 3637, rue University, Montreal; 1924-1925, A.T. Galt Durnford; Canadian Architecture Coll, McGill University.



Fig. 20. Berner & Palmer Building, 1444-1456, rue Drummond, Montreal; 1929, H.L. Fetherstonhaugh.

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The Annual General Meeting will be held on 29 May 1987, during the S.S.A.C. Conference in Toronto. Nominations are to be sent to the Chairman of the Nominating Committee, S.S.A.C., P.O. Box 2302, Station D, Ottawa, K1P 5W5.

## Cleveland House - Danville

The Cleveland House on Grove Street in Danville has been saved. It was illustrated in the *Bulletin* (June '85), p. 13. At the last Annual Meeting in Winnipeg a motion was carried that the President send a letter in support of its preservation to the mayor of Danville. A Montrealer has bought the house and plans to restore the property to its former appearance.

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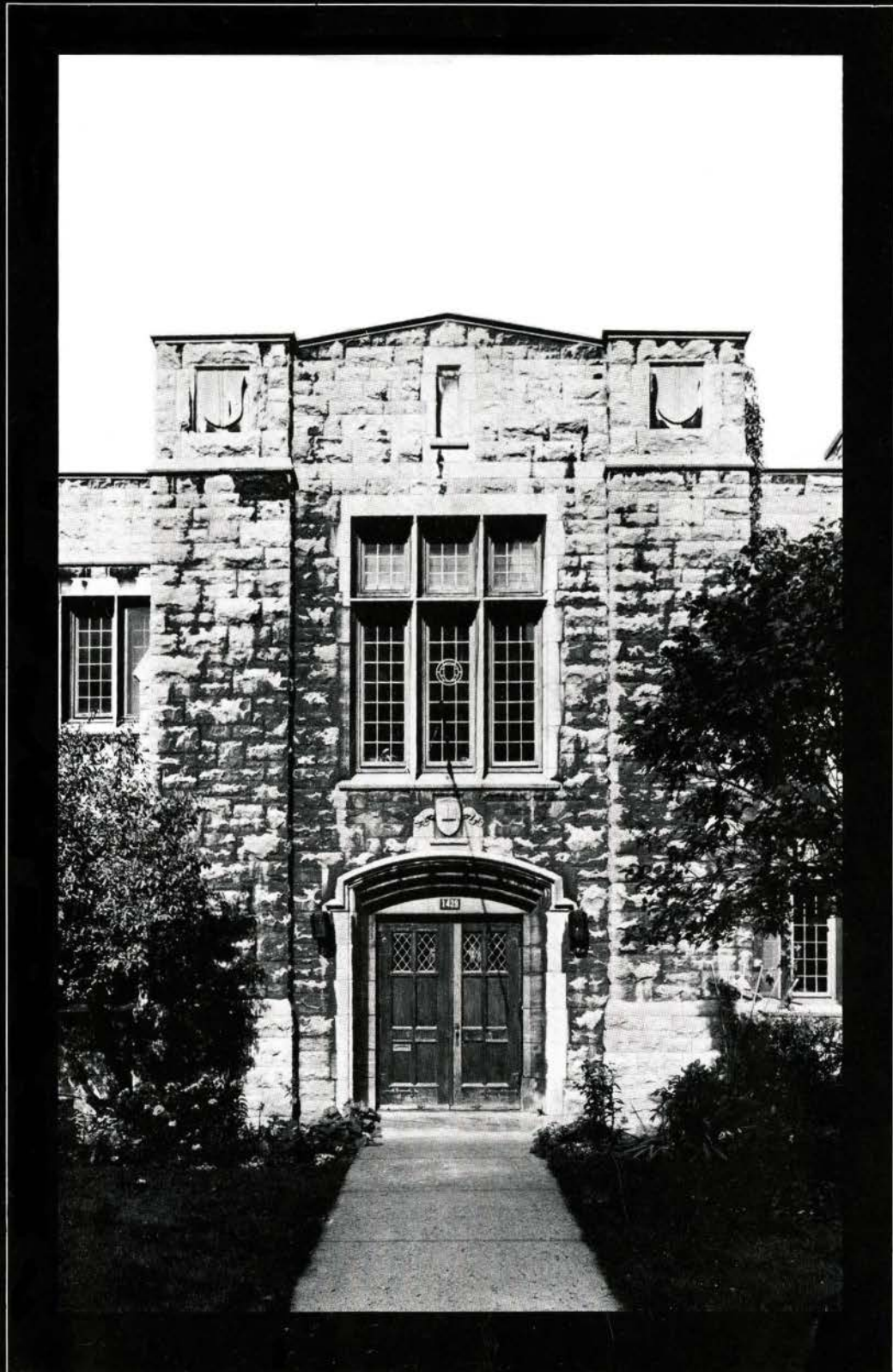
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### Volume 12, Number 2, June 1987

- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Claude Bergeron -  | L'Architecture Religieuse Contemporaine<br>Des Cantons De L'Est: Caracteres et<br>Rayonnement |
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Chatford Hall, 1439, rue Sainte-Catherine Ouest, Montreal; 1924, John S. Archibald.

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