

# *THE C.J. HOLMAN HOUSE: Edmund Burke's Adaptation of the Queen Anne for a Canadian Suburban Residence*

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The Holman House is located on Lowther Avenue, north of Bloor Street in Toronto, in an area known as the Annex (**figure 1**). This area, which gains its name from the 1887 annexation of land lying between Bloor Street and Davenport Road between Bathurst Street and Avenue Road, was Toronto's first middle-class housing suburb.<sup>1</sup> The site of the Holman residence, like most land in the Annex, was originally owned by the Baldwin family. The Baldwin's land was purchased and subdivided by Simeon Janes beginning in 1887, and the development of most of the streets in the Annex was largely completed by 1914.<sup>2</sup> Various stylistic influences can be seen in the houses built during this period, but almost every one has elements of the Queen Anne Revival style. Few houses, however, represent such a close connection with English suburban domestic architecture and such a full expression of the Canadian Queen Anne Revival house as the Holman residence, which was designed in 1892 by Edmund Burke.<sup>3</sup>

The Annex was at once popular among wealthy Toronto Baptists and Methodists, who built homes as well as impressive churches there. It was intended to rival the already established neighbourhoods near Jarvis Street and around Queen's Park. In contrast to these more central locations, the picturesque tree-lined streets of the Annex offered a peaceful retreat from the increasing tensions of urban life in Victorian Toronto.<sup>4</sup> Prominent residents such as Timothy Eaton, who built a house in 1889 at the corner of Lowther and Spadina,<sup>5</sup> and George Gooderam, who moved to his mansion on the corner of St. George and Bloor in 1891, helped to establish the Annex as one of the most fashionable residential areas in Toronto. Their two large estates, which dominated the area, also exemplified the leading domestic styles for late-Victorian homes in Toronto: the Eaton residence was a fine example of the Queen Anne Revival style associated with Richard Norman Shaw and his circle in England, while the Gooderam house represented the Romanesque Revival style associated with Henry Hobson Richardson and his followers in the United States.

1 William Dendy and William Kilbourn, *Toronto Observed: Its Architecture, Patrons and History* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1986), 118.

2 *Ibid.*, 120.

3 See Appendix A for a chronology of this commission.

4 The sinuous line of Walmer Road is especially picturesque. According to William Dendy, *Lost Toronto* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1978), Walmer Road, which dates from 1873, was one of the first streets laid out in the Annex.

5 Dendy, *Lost Toronto*, 172.

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BY MEGAN HOBSON



Figure 1 (left). C.J. Holman House, 75 Lowther Avenue, Toronto, 1892-1893/94; Edmund Burke, architect. (M. Hobson, 1992)

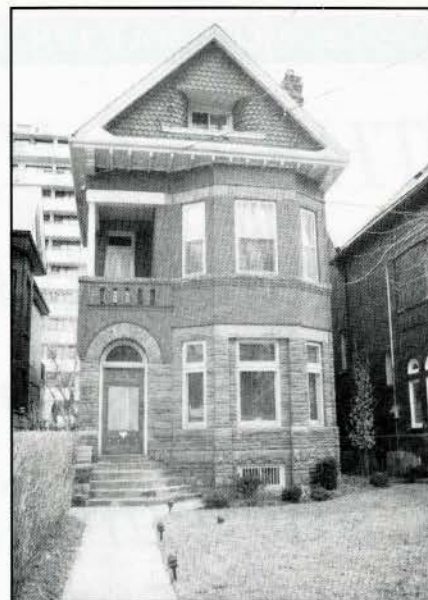


Figure 2 (right). House at 59 Walmer Road, Toronto, 1891; Langley & Burke, architects. (M. Hobson, 1992)

But for the most part, the Annex was divided into smaller lots for more modest houses than these; large mansions tended to be located mainly along Bloor, Spadina, and St. George. Row houses were prohibited, but a considerable number of semi-detached houses were erected on double lots. The average Annex residence was a detached house on a 25-foot lot.<sup>6</sup> C.J. Holman purchased two adjacent lots which together measured 56 1/2 feet across.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, the Holman House is larger than the average Annex house, but not unlike other houses along this part of Lowther Avenue, or around the corner on Bedford Road.<sup>8</sup>

It was not millionaire merchants with large estates who characterized the Annex, but well-to-do doctors, lawyers, businesspeople, and the like, who lived comfortably and even elegantly on moderate-sized lots. The houses they built expressed a greater concern for domestic comfort than for public display. The client who commissioned 75 Lowther, Mr. Charles J. Holman—a Baptist and a professional man of modest wealth—was a typical Annex resident.<sup>9</sup> The Holman residence is therefore a good example of the type of house built in the Annex by members of the upper middle class: spacious, but not grand; well-designed, but not architecturally pretentious.

The best architects were hired to design Annex houses in the most fashionable architectural styles of the day. While the average Annex residence showed the influence of the grander homes in the area and elsewhere in the city, it was more modest in size and ornament. A “battle of the styles” ensued in the Annex between the Queen Anne and the Romanesque Revival styles. The result of this clash rarely produced houses which reflected a strict adherence to a single style. Instead, what emerged was a hybrid style which blended elements from both. This new style was unique to Victorian Toronto and gave to the Annex a pleasing homogeneity.

The homogeneous character of these houses has resulted in the use of the label “Annex Style” to describe them.<sup>10</sup> They combine red brick and heavily rusticated masonry, hung tile and half-timbering, steep gables, and Romanesque arches. Many are embellished with terracotta, decorative woodwork, and stained glass. The Holman House is an example of this so-called “Annex Style” house, though the Queen Anne dominates its character. A more detailed analysis of this style is needed to demonstrate the diversity that exists within the “Annex Style” and to help establish a better understanding of the stylistic character of the Holman House.

The influence of the Queen Anne style came to Toronto directly from England and indirectly through American sources. In the United States, the Queen Anne style encountered vernacular construction methods and stylistic conventions, and was so altered by them that architectural historian Vincent Scully invented the term “Shingle Style” to distinguish the American version of Queen Anne.<sup>11</sup> According to Scully, the Shingle Style evolved out of an already-established tradition of wood construction which he refers to as the “Stick Style,” and was further influenced by colonial architecture.

In Toronto, therefore, architects actually drew upon three distinct stylistic sources when designing Annex-Style houses: Richardsonian Romanesque, Queen Anne, and Shingle Style. The last offered models which were native to North America, in the sense that they had

6 Dendy and Kilbourn, *Toronto Observed*, 118.

7 City of Toronto, Assessment Rolls, 1893, 1894, and 1895. C.J. Holman is first listed as the owner of lots 15 and 16 on Lowther Avenue in St. Paul’s Ward in 1893. Both lots are recorded as vacant at that time. In 1894, an “unfinished house” is recorded. In 1895, the buildings, presumably complete, were assessed at \$4,500.

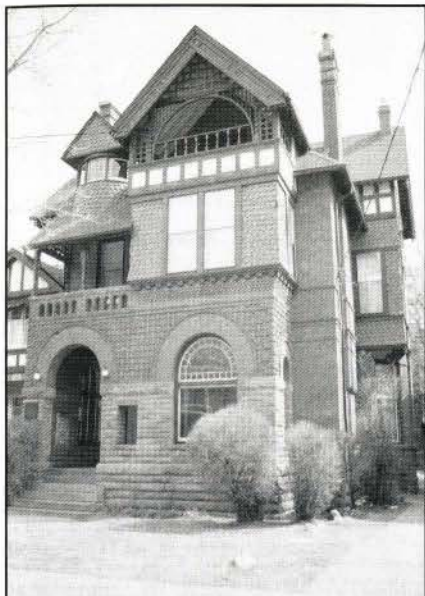
8 Charles E. Goad, *Atlas of the City of Toronto and Vicinity* (Toronto: Goad, 1893), plate 33, lot 16.

9 See Appendix B for biographical information on Mr. and Mrs. C.J. Holman.

10 Patricia McHugh, *Toronto Architecture: A City Guide* (Toronto: Mercury Books, 1985), 19. In her description of styles, McHugh includes “The Annex House, 1888-99,” which she defines as a hybrid form that combines the “rock-faced ashlar and solid appearance of Richardsonian Romanesque with the asymmetry and picturesque detail of Queen Anne.”

11 Vincent J. Scully, Jr., *The Shingle Style and the Stick Style* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1971), 88. Scully states that “American architects by 1880 had nothing more to learn from Norman Shaw,” and that “One must recognize ... a mode of building, approaching maturity around 1880, which was specifically American.”

12 *Ibid.* Scully explains that “the American house had now undergone a variety of changes adapting it to American conditions, functional requirements, and materials, which separate it, as an original style, from Norman Shaw’s Queen Anne.” Since many of these conditions were the same in the eastern United States and central Canada, the architecture in these areas shared similar characteristics.



been entirely formed by North American circumstances.<sup>12</sup> Architects designing houses in the Annex engaged in a fairly free interpretation of these components, and the results produced a surprising variety of house designs.

A good example of the type of diversity found within the Annex Style can be seen in a comparison of the house at 59 Walmer Road (**figure 2**), designed by Langley & Burke in 1891, with the house at 37 Madison Avenue (**figure 3**), designed by E.J. Lennox in 1888-90. They are similar in size and form: both are on 25-foot lots and are two-and-a-half-storeys tall with a side-hall plan. Their components are also similar: both combine rough masonry on the ground floor with brick and shingle above, and both employ the rounded arch and the projecting gable. The Langley & Burke house, however, is much more austere and planar than the Lennox House, with its rich and lively surface. In Lennox's design, the Romanesque arch dominates in a way that is unlike English house design. Moreover, Lennox created deep porches and balconies that produce intense shadows and emphasize volume, whereas Langley and Burke's design is easily read in two dimensions. As well, Lennox used decorative woodwork as a design element to produce an exaggeratedly picturesque effect, while Langley & Burke reduced such embellishment to a bare, functional minimum. The overall effect of Lennox's building is closer to that of "Queen Anne" houses built in American cities like San Francisco (**figure 4**) than to those built in English suburbs.

Burke seems to have had a disdain for excessive woodwork. His thoughts on this matter may be inferred from a statement published in the *Canadian Architect and Builder*. The magazine held a design competition in 1891 for a city house on a 30-foot lot. Burke, Frank Darling, and Norman Dick acted as judges, and their recommendation to one of the entrants whose design was rejected was that he "study English house design and the more sober effects of educated men in the eastern states in lieu of designs from cheap American publications which are designed to catch the eye of the jig-saw carpenter."<sup>13</sup> Presumably, Burke thought an emphasis on decorative woodwork was not in good taste and unsuitable for Toronto residences.

In his design for the Holman House, Burke kept exterior woodwork to a minimum (**figure 5**). His design represents a continuation of the type of houses he designed with Henry Langley in the 1880s,<sup>14</sup> even though Burke was no longer in partnership with Langley when the Holman residence was designed near the end of 1892.<sup>15</sup> Rough masonry was used on the ground floor, with red brick and shingle above. Square-headed windows were used throughout, and a large bay window surmounted by a steep gable dominated the facade. The Holman House is more correctly "Queen Anne" than the small house on Walmer Road: the rounded arch does not appear on the facade and its gables project over the ground floor. It is also more elaborate, since it includes half-timbering on the third storey, has lozenge-shaped mullions in the windows, and moulded brick decorations in a few places.<sup>16</sup> In spite of these embellishments, the Holman House retains a relatively sober quality. It is this sobriety that distinguishes Burke's "Queen Anne" houses from those designed by other Toronto architects.

Burke's approval of "the more sober effects of educated men in the eastern states" presumably included the type of houses produced by the American firm of McKim Mead &

Figure 3 (left). House at 37 Madison Avenue, 1890; E.J. Lennox, architect. (M. Hobson, 1992)

Figure 4 (right). Houses on Central Avenue, San Francisco, c.1890; architect(s) unknown. (Mark Girouard, Sweetness and Light [Oxford, Eng.: Clarendon Press, 1977], 216)

13 "Competition for a City House," *Canadian Architect and Builder* 4, no. 2 (February 1891): 23.

14 A good comparison could be made with the somewhat grander house in Queen's Park designed by Langley & Burke in 1889 for Daniel E. Thomson. The same principles upon which the design of the Holman House is based can be found in the design of the Thomson residence. Unfortunately, this house has been demolished, but it is illustrated in Leslie Maitland's *The Queen Anne Revival Style in Canadian Architecture* (Ottawa: Environment Canada, Parks Service, 1990), illustrations 3, 26, and 76. It is interesting that Holman and Thomson, who were both prominent Baptists and trustees of McMaster College, each commissioned homes similar in style and character from the same architect.

15 Burke ended his partnership with his uncle Henry Langley shortly after William Storm's death in 1891 in order to take over Storm's office. By 1894, Burke had entered into a partnership with J.C.B. Horwood. Consequently, the Holman House is one of the very few commissions which was executed solely by Burke.

16 Burke has noted on the contract drawing (figure 5) where moulded brick is required: chimney stacks on the east elevation, second-storey window on the north elevation, and voussiors on the west elevation.

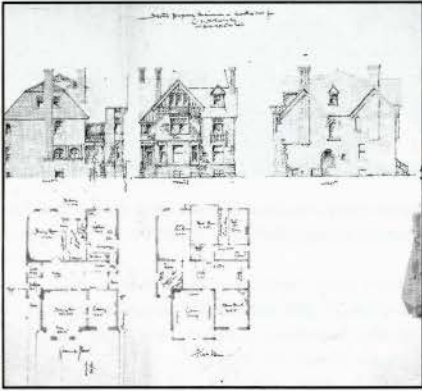
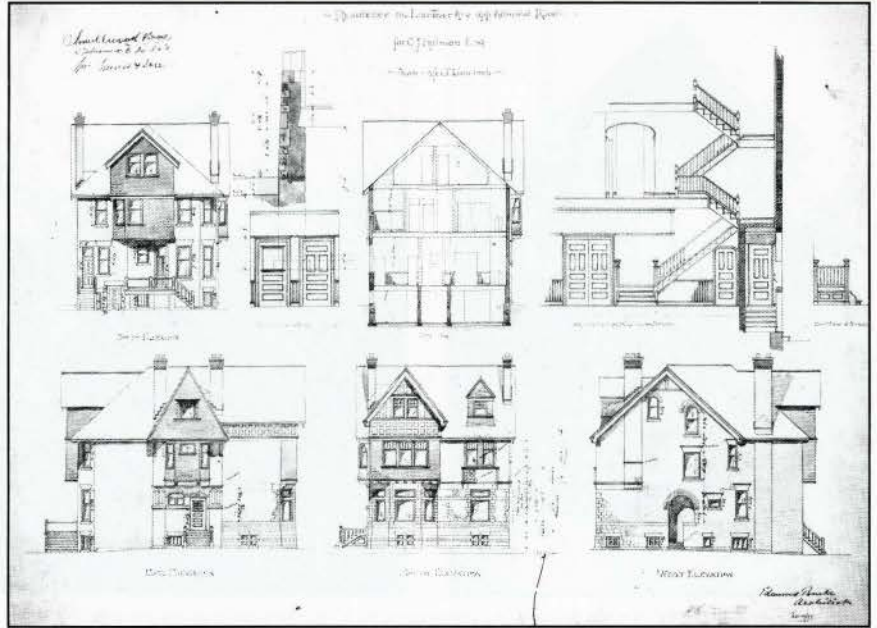


Figure 5 (right). Elevations of the Holman House; contract drawing prepared by Edmund Burke, signed and dated 18 November 1892. (AO, Horwood Collection, C 11-5-0-1 [9(3)])

Figure 6 (top). Metcalfe House, Buffalo, New York, 1883-84; McKim Mead & White, architects. (Vincent J. Scully Jr., *The Shingle Style and the Stick Style* [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1971], 136)

Figure 7 (above). Sketch proposal for the Holman House prepared by Edmund Burke, signed and dated 24 October 1892. (AO, Horwood Collection, C 11-5-0-1 [9(1)])



White. Like H.H. Richardson's earlier adaptation of the Queen Anne at the William Watts Sherman House, McKim Mead & White's houses of the 1880s, such as the Metcalfe House in Buffalo (figure 6), were compact in form, had fairly simple rooflines, and combined rough masonry on the ground floor with brick, shingles, and half-timbering above. It was American houses such as these that influenced Burke's designs, and which are relevant to the Holman House. As Burke himself explained, common climatic conditions in the northern portions of this continent necessitated "a more compact form of house for easier heating, while the roofing problem and the avoidance of snow-traps, has been the means of clipping the wings of many a flight of fancy planning."<sup>17</sup> Another American influence can be seen in Burke's sketch proposal for the Holman House (figure 7). In this initial design, Burke had proposed a gambrel roof, a type which was distinctively American—taken from colonial architecture—and a frequent feature of Shingle Style houses. In Burke's final design, the roofline was altered and the gambrel omitted.<sup>18</sup>

Despite these very basic similarities with the American Queen Anne, the external appearance of the Holman House is more intimately related to English domestic architecture. It is clearly reminiscent of modest houses designed by Richard Norman Shaw for new middle-class suburbs in and around London in the 1860s and 1870s. A close comparison can be made between the main facade of the Holman House, illustrated in the *Canadian Architect and Builder* in 1893 (figure 8 [see p. 96]), and that of a house designed by Shaw for the Bedford Park Estate, illustrated in *The Building News* sixteen years earlier (figure 9). Both houses show an asymmetrical gable toward the left, offset by a dormer on the right. The steep pitch of the roof, the tall chimney stacks on each end wall, and the relation of windows to wall space is also comparable. Both use brick and hung tile for picturesque effect, though Burke also included masonry and half-timbering.

Burke's main departure from Shaw's design was in the window treatment. The Adamesque cabriole windows on the ground floor of the Bedford Park house were not imitated. Instead, Burke used much simpler square-headed windows grouped in twos and threes. The simple window treatments and the straightforward bay window extending from the ground are aspects which are closer to another house Shaw designed in 1884-85 for Kate Greenaway in Hampstead (figure 10).

Cold winters may have contributed to compact forms in American houses, but, as these examples illustrate, the same outcome could be reached for different reasons in England. Many of Shaw's designs for new middle-class suburbs, especially those in Bedford Park, were compact in form, not so much to conserve heat as to conserve space and expense. Shaw provided compact, affordable houses that were picturesque and comfortable. As Hermann Muthesius observed, Shaw's designs in Bedford Park provided "for the first time for England ... a satisfactory solution to the problem of the small house."<sup>19</sup>

The types of houses Shaw designed in Bedford Park were scaled-down and simplified versions of his earlier works in more expensive suburbs.<sup>20</sup> In order to fit modest

17 Edmund Burke, "Some Notes on House-Planning," *Canadian Architect and Builder* 3, no. 5 (May 1890): 55-56.

18 The sketch proposal (figure 7) also indicates that the house was initially to have a side-hall plan with the main entrance facing north on Lowther Avenue. A covered porch was therefore needed as protection against cold northerly winds. In the final design, the relocation of the entrance to the east side of the structure meant that a porch was no longer required (figure 5). In addition, the interior was rearranged around a centre-hall plan (figure 12).

19 Hermann Muthesius, *The English House*, trans. Janet Seligman (London, 1904), 31.

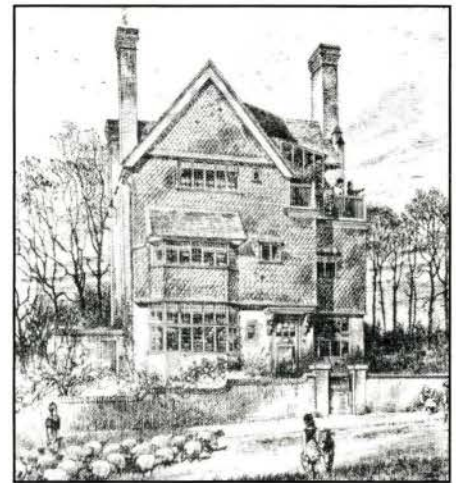


Figure 9 (left). Design for a house in Bedford Park; Richard Norman Shaw, architect. Illustrated in *The Building News*, 21 December 1877. (Girouard, Sweetness and Light, 163)

Figure 10 (above). House for Kate Greenaway, 39 Frogna, Hampstead, 1884-85; Richard Norman Shaw, architect. Illustrated in *The British Architect*, 8 May 1885. (Girouard, Sweetness and Light, 91)

means, ornament was used sparingly and wood was used instead of wrought iron.<sup>21</sup> These smaller Queen Anne houses were designed to produce an air of domestic cosiness. Variety in profile, plane, and texture were calculated to surprise and delight the faculties, while the centred compactness of the structure provided a comforting sense of solidity and stability. The warm rich colour of the red brick further emphasized such feelings and the tall chimney stacks promised interior warmth and well-being.

The Queen Anne style was perfectly tailored to the needs of members of the middle class, who resented the impersonal regularity and commonness of mass-produced, machine-made products and passionately sought things that were unique and hand-crafted. The eclectic mix of historical styles not only gratified their nostalgic feelings for pre-industrial times, but also appealed to their aesthetic sensibilities conditioned by modern picturesque principles.<sup>22</sup> As well, it was perfectly suited to the new middle-class concept of the suburb which, being removed from the city, required a more rustic character. Queen Anne architecture became synonymous with small to mid-sized houses set back on their own plots of land on winding suburban streets lined with shady trees. The Annex in Toronto provided a close equivalent to the English suburb, and the residents moving there had similar aspirations.

Though Burke relied heavily on Shaw's suburban house designs for the look and character of the Holman House, he was not afraid to criticize and eliminate other aspects which were incongruous with life in Victorian Toronto. Burke was a practical architect, able to extract the inappropriate aspects of British designs and introduce certain North American conventions necessary for the physical comfort and convenience of the Canadian client—while still satisfying his and his clients' admiration of things English.

Burke was outspoken on the favourable and unfavourable features of British and American house planning. In 1890 he delivered a lecture to the Toronto Architectural Sketch Club on this topic, which was subsequently published in the *Canadian Architect and Builder* as "Some Notes on House-Planning."<sup>23</sup> Not surprisingly, the Holman House, which was designed shortly afterwards, illustrates perfectly the recommendations he laid down in this article. It is useful, therefore, to discuss this particular commission in relation to Burke's own comments in order to understand the rationale behind its design.

In "Some Notes on House-Planning," Burke referred his colleagues to two sources, one English and one American, which he felt were invaluable to the Canadian house planner. The English source was "The English Gentleman's House," by Professor Robert Kerr.<sup>24</sup> Burke recommended that architects use the "Aspect Compass" developed by Kerr to calculate the amount of sunlight to be enjoyed by different areas of the house throughout the day (figure 11). Burke insisted that "every living room (bed rooms included) should receive the direct rays of the sun during at least a few hours of the day."<sup>25</sup> In the design of the Holman House, which is situated on the south side of Lowther Avenue, windows are concentrated on the north and south sides of the house to avoid the penetrating slant of the morning and late afternoon sun. The orientation of all the principal rooms—that is, the rooms used by the family and guests, not those used by servants—is thus in accordance

20 Mark Girouard, *Sweetness and Light: The Queen Anne Movement, 1860-1900* (Oxford, Eng.: Clarendon Press, 1977), 160-76.

21 In the Holman House, Burke used wood instead of wrought iron for exterior furnishings such as stairs and railings for the front and back entrances (see figure 5).

22 Girouard, p. 1, describes the Queen Anne Revival style as an "architectural cocktail, with a little genuine Queen Anne in it, a little Dutch, a little Flemish, a squeeze of Robert Adam, a generous dash of Wren, and a touch of François I<sup>er</sup>. It combined all of these elements and a number of others into a mixture that had a strong character of its own."

23 Burke, 55-57.

24 Robert Kerr, *The English Gentleman's House or How to Plan English Residences* (London, 1864).

25 Burke, 56.

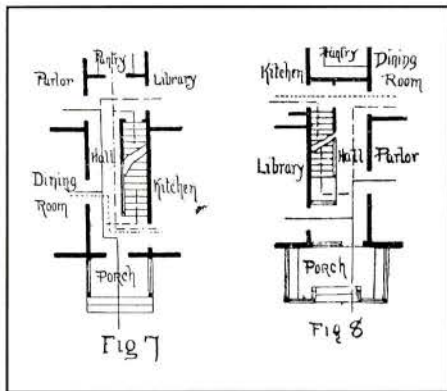
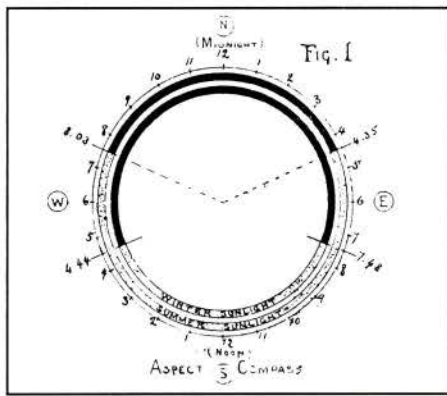
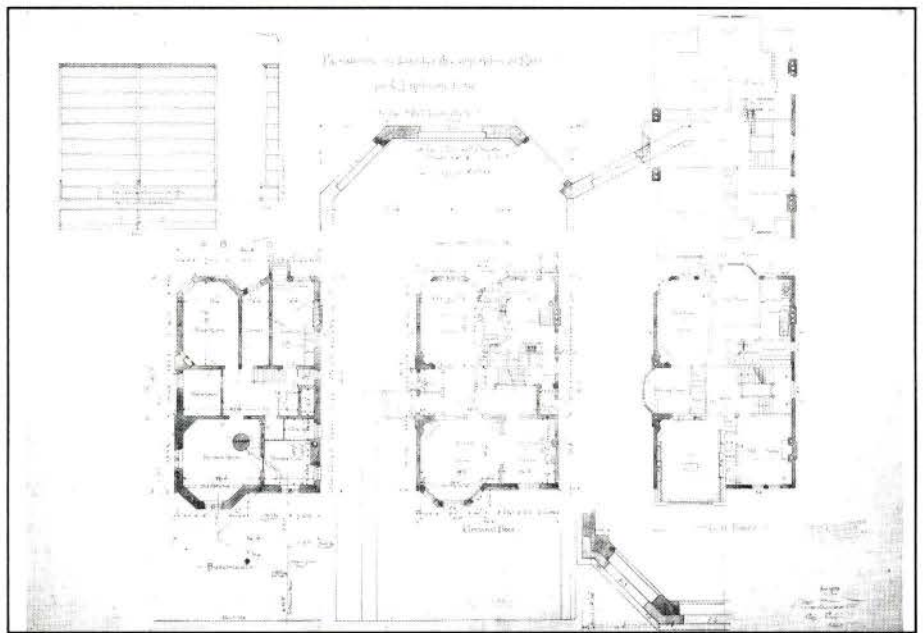


Figure 11 (top). The "Aspect Compass," from Robert Kerr, *The English Gentleman's House or How to Plan English Residences* (London, 1864). (Edmund Burke, "Some Notes on House-Planning," *Canadian Architect and Builder* 3, no. 5 [May 1890]: 55)

Figure 12 (right). Floor plans of the Holman House; contract drawing prepared by Edmund Burke, signed and dated 18 November 1892. (AO, Horwood Collection, C 11-5-0-1 [9(2)])

Figure 13 (above). "The Anatomy of the Thoroughfare," from C. Francis Osborne, *Notes on the Art of Houseplanning* (New York: W.T. Comstock, 1888). The routes of the three classes (guests, family, and servants) are indicated by dotted and solid lines. The plan on the left is given as an example of poor planning, since it results in the mixing of classes. The proper disposition of rooms, demonstrated by the plan on the right, ensures the separation of classes. (Edmund Burke, "Some Notes on House-Planning," 57)



with Burke's recommendations (figure 12).

Bay windows were frequently used in Queen Anne architecture to optimize natural lighting of the interior. At the Holman House there is a large bay window in the dining room, and another in the drawing room. As the latter is placed on the north side, it admits a constant and even level of light from early morning to late afternoon. In contrast, the position of the dining room is carefully planned to receive the morning sun during breakfast, but not the strong declining sun in the evening during dinner. This arrangement reflects Burke's advice in "Some Notes," where he explained that the ideal position of the dining room is the southeast corner and that a bay window placed on the south side "will be of advantage in catching the rays of the early sun."<sup>26</sup> At the Holman House, both of these recommendations were adopted.

The second indispensable step for the house planner, according to Burke, was a careful analysis of the "Thoroughfare Plan." For this aspect of planning Burke recommended an American treatise, Professor C. Francis Osborne's "Notes on the Art of Houseplanning."<sup>27</sup> Burke reproduced sketches from Professor Osborne's book that show the anatomy of a domestic thoroughfare in relation to the various functions of the house (figure 13). The architect's objective was to see that the routes of the three co-habiting classes—servants, masters, and guests—did not overlap. Burke suggested that great pains should be taken to ensure that domestic labour did not intrude upon the privacy of the family or interfere with the entertainment of guests. To ensure this, he offered the following advice:

It may be laid down as a safe rule, that if the analysis of a given thoroughfare plans [sic] results in confusion, a mixing up of guests, family and servants, it is proof that it is imperfectly developed and demands further study.<sup>28</sup>

In laying out the Holman House, Burke isolated the servants' quarters (figure 12). All areas requiring access by servants were easily reached without disturbing the Holmans or their guests. The kitchen was connected directly to the basement, which contained a cold cellar and laundry facilities. Servants used their own set of stairs to reach the second and third floors. A direct passage was provided from the basement, where laundry was washed, to the linen closet on the second floor, where it was stored. As well, servants had their own exits to the outside, either to the back yard from the kitchen or to the street by way of a side porch.

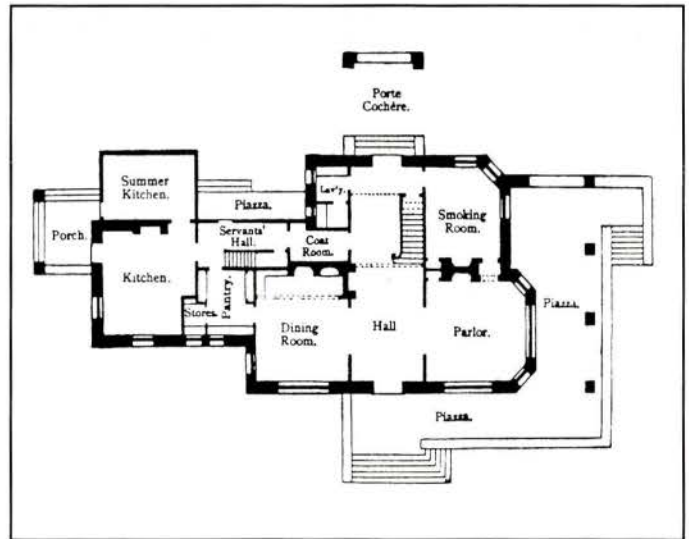
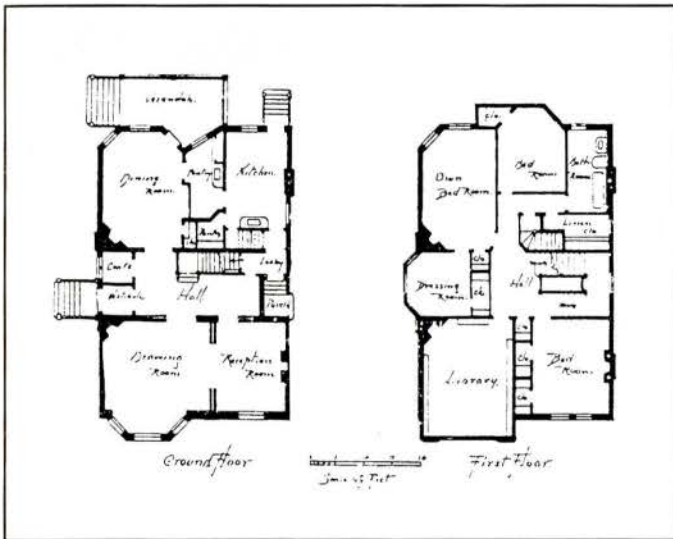
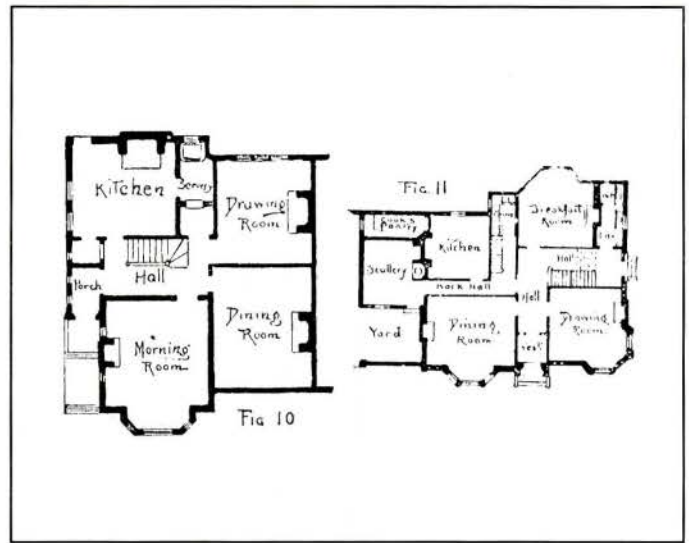
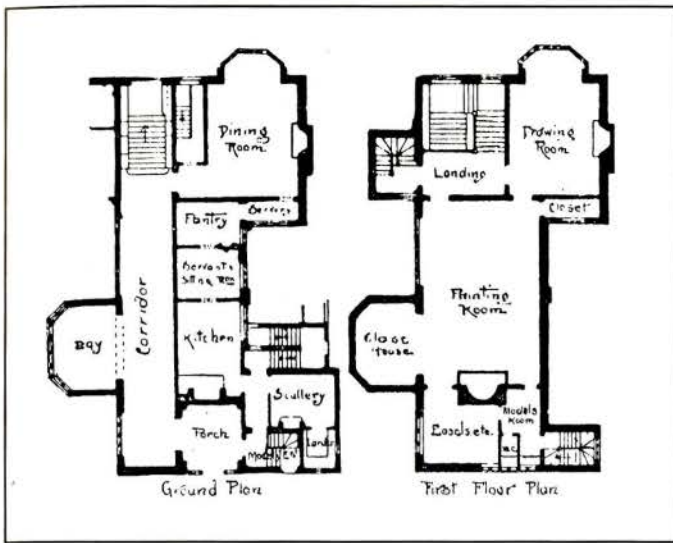
To demonstrate the evils of a bad thoroughfare plan, Burke included three English plans in his article on house planning. The first example was described as "plans of an artist's house by Norman Shaw" (figure 14). According to Burke, the separation of the kitchen and dining room at opposite ends of the house "is scarcely in accord with our ideas of convenience." Two additional English plans were offered as examples to be avoided, since they showed "a complete lack of study of the scientific disposition of the thoroughfare plan" (figure 15).<sup>29</sup> In these, servants travelling from the kitchen to the dining room would have crossed the path of guests entering the house. In one plan, guests would actually have to be taken past the kitchen door before being admitted to the drawing room.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>27</sup> C. Francis Osborne, *Notes on the Art of Houseplanning* (New York: W.T. Comstock, 1888).

<sup>28</sup> Burke, 57.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*



Burke explained why, in North America, these English plans were “scarcely in accordance with our ideas of convenience.” The reasons were two-fold: first, climatic conditions necessitated compact plans, not spread out plans; and second, economic conditions required that households be run with fewer domestic servants. In Burke’s opinion,

The abundance of that description of labor in Great Britain has in the past contrived not a little to careless and diffuse planning, thereby increasing the work of the house-hold, and necessitating a large staff of servants—and this often the case in unpretentious houses, and with incomes comparatively small.<sup>30</sup>

He concluded that the conditions of the labour market in the United States and Canada “have conducted a more careful and scientific planning—to the elimination of all unnecessary passages, extensions and roundabout ways.”<sup>31</sup>

Burke offered three of his own house plans as examples of good design.<sup>32</sup> The plans illustrated his advice that

The connection with the kitchen should never be direct, but at the same time the distance should be as short as possible. The break should consist of a short hall or service pantry, or better still, a combination of the two, and the doors should not be opposite each other, in order to prevent a direct view by a guest of the interior economy of the cook’s domain.<sup>33</sup>

These very principles were applied in the Holman House (figure 16). The kitchen is located directly next to the dining room, but separated by a service pantry just under seven feet wide. The connecting doors are located at opposite ends of the pantry so that the kitchen cannot be seen from the dining room. This type of arrangement is typical of American house plans by McKim, Mead & White (figure 17), and is common to Shingle Style houses in the eastern United States.

Figure 14 (top left). Illustration of a plan for an artist’s house, by Richard Norman Shaw. (Edmund Burke, “Some Notes on House-Planning,” 57)

Figure 15 (top right). Illustration of two house plans by English architects which disregard the thoroughfare plan. (Edmund Burke, “Some Notes on House-Planning,” 57)

Figure 16 (above left). Plans of the ground floor and second floor of the Holman House (detail of figure 8).

Figure 17 (above right). Plan of Cresson House, Narragansett Pier, Rhode Island, 1883-84; McKim Mead & White, architects. (Scully, *The Shingle Style*, 135)

30 *Ibid.*, 55.

31 *Ibid.*

32 One of these plans can be identified as the D.E. Thomson Residence, Queen’s Park, 1889, Langley & Burke, architects.

33 Burke, 57.



Figure 18 (above). The stair hall in the Holman House. (M. Hobson, 1992)

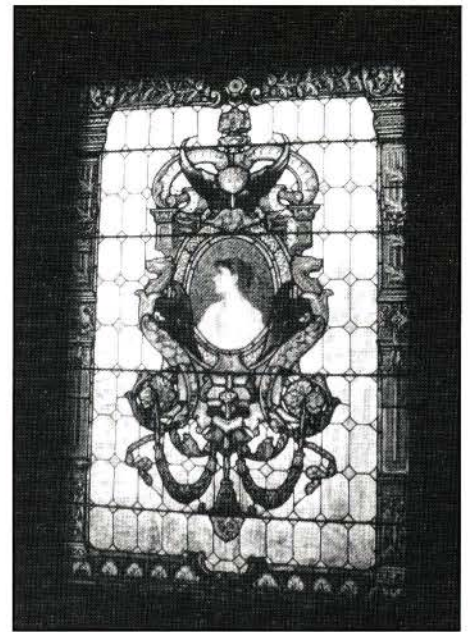


Figure 19 (right). The stained glass window in the Holman House. (M. Hobson, 1992)

Many of the concerns expressed in Burke's article on house planning were typical of architects working in the Queen Anne style. The careful division of public and private space and the emphasis on convenience and comfort were as essential to the Queen Anne house as the materials of which it was made. The middle-class occupants who patronized the style had the means and the time to indulge in leisure activities previously reserved for the upper classes, so, for the first time, designs for these smaller houses required a variety of rooms with specialized functions. In addition to entertaining, pursuits such as reading, writing, drawing, playing music, playing games, and collecting and displaying art were adapted to middle-class means. The Queen Anne house therefore typically had a library and a games room, and allowance was made for the display of statuary, pictures, and bric-a-brac.

Burke declared in "Some Notes" that to plan a house successfully, architects "must understand the special wants and natures of the clients ... in order that the house may be moulded to them, and not they to the house."<sup>34</sup> It can thus be deduced from the Holman House that Mr. Holman enjoyed playing billiards, since there is a billiard room on the second floor. Furthermore, it is likely, since he was a lawyer and there is a large library second in size only to the drawing room, that he often worked at home. In Burke's sketch proposal (figure 7), two rooms were labelled "Library"; one on the ground floor where the reception room is now located, and the other on the second floor. Burke evidently intended that the client choose the size and location most suited to his needs. Holman's choice and the eventual layout (figure 12) may reflect Burke's recommendation that, "When absolute seclusion is desired it may be necessary to locate the library on the first [i.e., second] or even the second [third] floor."<sup>35</sup>

An architect working in the Queen Anne style was often involved in the interior decoration of the house, and many designed furniture, stained glass, wallpaper, fabrics, and metalwork.<sup>36</sup> At the Holman House, the only interior elements which can be attributed to Burke (since they appear on the contract drawings) are the wood panelling on the walls, the main staircase, and the built-in bookshelves in the library (figures 5, 12).

The public areas of a Queen Anne interior were deliberately made the grandest and most spacious. The main hall or stair hall was the principal feature, without which no Queen Anne house would be complete. The Holman stair hall contains all the typical features: a fireplace, panelled walls, and, most important, an elaborate staircase turning at right angles to an outside wall (figure 18). The finest interior feature of the Holman House is the large stained glass window which lights the stairwell (figure 19).<sup>37</sup> Set within a fanciful heraldic shield is the bust of a young woman. As Mr. Holman had recently married, it is possible that this Pre-Raphaelite beauty is a portrait of his bride.

Also notable are the fireplaces. Almost every room is provided with one. In Toronto, where the winters can be extremely cold, houses of the affluent, like those in the Annex, had central heating systems in this era. At the Holman House, water was heated by a coal-burning furnace in the basement and piped to radiators throughout the house (figure 12). Consequently, a fireplace in every room was probably unnecessary and could have been

34 Advice given by Osborne and quoted by Burke, 56.

35 Burke, 56.

36 Girouard, 116.

37 The exceptional quality of this window suggests it was made by the McCausland Stained Glass Co., the leading firm in Toronto at the time.



replaced by additional radiators. (The plans indicate that only one radiator was provided for each room.) However, the fireplace served more than a functional purpose in the Queen Anne house. The hearth was an essential symbolic element which could not be eliminated. As Hermann Muthesius observed, it represented many of the basic principles upon which this type of house was built, since “All ideas of domestic comfort, of family happiness, of inward personal life, of spiritual well-being centre around the fireplace.”<sup>38</sup>

The hearth was considered the soul of the house, and special attention was paid to its design. One of the new furnishings developed by Queen Anne architects was the “overmantel,” consisting of shelves and brackets. It sometimes incorporated a central mirror or clock, and was designed for the display of bric-a-brac. (These overmantels typically displayed decorative pieces of porcelain or glass, perhaps with a mantel clock or a statuette in the centre.)<sup>39</sup> At the Holman House every fireplace has an overmantel, each one of different design, made of carved or turned wood with a shelf and a central mirror (figures 20, 21).

In addition to providing places for the display of decorative objects, a well-designed Queen Anne house had a place for every necessary functional object. At the Holman House, for example, the basement plan (figure 12) indicates provision for the storage of food and coal as well as a place to do laundry. The ground floor was equipped with a coat room, a pantry and a serving pantry; the second floor was furnished with bookshelves in the library, a separate dressing room for the main bedroom, and generous closets elsewhere, as well as a large linen closet with built-in cupboards and shelves. Even the bedrooms in the attic were provided with large closets. Thus, every aspect of domestic life was carefully considered by Burke. In his closing remarks in “Some Notes on House-Planning,” Burke suitably sums up the character of the Holman House:

Some of the points referred to may seem trivial when taken up in detail, but none are beneath the study of a careful and painstaking architect, and when combined, go to make up a convenient abode where labour is reduced to a minimum, and where everything has a place and a place is provided for everything.<sup>40</sup>

EDMUND BURKE WAS SENSITIVE TO THE USEFUL ASPECTS of American architecture for homes being built in Toronto, but it is evident from the type of residences he designed, of which the Holman House is a fine example, that he and his clients sought to reproduce the “Englishness” of suburban London houses designed by Richard Norman Shaw and his followers. Although Canada and many areas of the United States share a similar climate and social structure which provide a common bond, American nationalism encouraged the rejection of English models. In England, the Queen Anne revival was promoted as a national style by J.J. Stevenson. He wrote that it was “a true and national style” since it was “the product of traditions naturally developing themselves.”<sup>41</sup> The nationalistic overtones of the style made it undesirable to Americans, who were reluctant to exhibit reliance on British achievements. American architects were much more concerned with creating their own national style based on their own architectural heritage.<sup>42</sup>

In contrast to Americans, English Canadians — especially Torontonians — regarded British culture as their own, and tried to keep up with the latest achievements there. Furthermore, in Toronto, the clay required to make the red brick favoured by architects working in the Queen Anne style was literally at their feet.<sup>43</sup> Thus, Victorian Toronto, with the necessary materials and cultural climate, became the champion of the Queen Anne in Canada.<sup>44</sup> And the stage was set for the appearance of a house such as the C.J. Holman House, a house which at first glance might seem to have been transplanted from a fashionable suburb near London, but which upon closer examination reveals unique Canadian adaptations.



Figure 20 (top). The dining room fireplace in the Holman House. (M. Hobson, 1992)

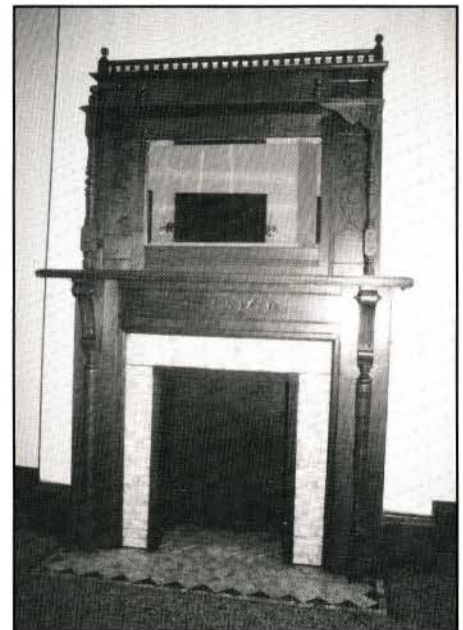


Figure 21 (above). The fireplace in the northwest bedroom on the second floor of the Holman House. (M. Hobson, 1992)

38 Muthesius, 181.

39 Girouard, 132.

40 Burke, 57.

41 John James Stevenson, *House Architecture* (London: Macmillan, 1880), 1:331.

42 Scully, 46.

43 Maitland, 42.

44 *Ibid.* Maitland states that “Toronto ... the self-appointed Queen City ... could easily have called itself the Queen Anne Revival City, so wholeheartedly did it embrace the style.”

## APPENDIX A

### THE C.J. HOLMAN HOUSE: Chronology of the Site and Building

A sketch proposal was prepared by Edmund Burke in October of 1892 and the contract drawings were completed a month later. However, records indicate that the house was not built immediately. The house does not appear on Goad insurance maps up to 1903, since they were based on an 1893 survey. Assessment rolls indicate that the lot was owned by Holman as early as 1891, but was still vacant in 1893. In 1894, the city assessor reported that there was an "unfinished house" on the lot. It appears to have been completed in time for the 1895 assessment, when C.J. Holman is listed as the occupant at 75 Lowther Avenue. According to city directories, however, C.J. Holman was listed as resident at 75 Lowther Avenue in 1894.

It appears, therefore, that the Holman House was started in the period between the 1893 and 1894 assessments and completed by the publication of the 1894 city directory. The date generally assigned to the Holman House is 1892, since this is the date which appears on the architect's drawings. Since it was not completed until late in 1893 or early in 1894, the correct dates are more likely 1892-1893/94.

The value of the building is given in the Assessment Roll of 1895 Was \$4,500. If this estimate is accurate, the Holman House would have been considered by Burke to be on the low end in terms of cost, since he described "the planning of houses costing from five to twelve thousand dollars...[as]...the class with which we (architects) in the city have most to do." [Quoted from E. Burke, "Some Notes," 56]

The Holman House is no longer a private home, but fortunately no structural changes have been made and many of the original interior furnishings remain intact, including fireplaces, light fixtures, the staircase and wood panelling, the built-in shelves in the library and linen closet, and all of the original stained glass.

The fact that the Holman House remains so carefully preserved is significant, since most comparable houses in Toronto with which Burke's name is associated have been demolished, notably the Simpson House, Langley & Burke, 1883; the Thomson House, Langley & Burke, 1888; and the Caruthers House, Langley & Burke, 1888-89.

## SOURCES

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*Toronto City Directory*, 1892, 1893, 1894.

## APPENDIX B

### THE C.J. HOLMAN HOUSE: Occupants

The house was commissioned in 1892 by Mr. Charles J. Holman, a 39-year-old lawyer with an office at 86 Bay Street and a residence at 131 Bloor Street West. He had recently become engaged and therefore was in need of a suitable home for his new bride. The future mistress of the Holman House was Caroline Haigh, an American with a Bachelor's degree from Ann Arbor College who had come to Toronto in 1888 to teach at the Moulton Ladies College. The city directory of 1892 lists Miss Haigh as a teacher and resident of the college.

C.J. Holman, MA, LL.D., KC, developed a successful law practice over the years. In 1894 he expanded his office at 86 Bay Street and became senior partner in the firm of Holman, Elliott & Patullo. He was a member of the Toronto Club and was included in the *Canadian Who's Who* of 1910. Mrs. Holman stopped teaching after marrying and took an active role in the Jarvis Street Baptist Church; she was head of the Women's Mission Society of the Regular Baptists of Canada for more than 60 years.

C.J. Holman died in 1928 at the age of 76. His wife continued to live in the house for another 34 years, until her death in 1962 at the age of 97! Upon Mrs. Holman's death, the house was left to the Women's Mission Society of the Regular Baptists of Canada. The house was used as their headquarters until 1988, when it was sold to a group of six lawyers who have shared interests in the building and have used it since as their offices.

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