

THE LOUIS-JOSEPH FORGET HOUSE ●



THE MACDONALD STEWART
FOUNDATION

This booklet is published by the MACDONALD STEWART FOUNDATION, a Canadian non-profit organization established in 1974 by Montreal philanthropists Liliane and David M. Stewart. The Foundation is active in the areas of education, medicine, culture and heritage.

Research, texts and coordination: Nancy Dunton

Graphic design: Paul-André Urbain

Drawing preparation: Sandra Signe

Architectural plans of the Forget house are based on the drawings of Fournier Gersovitz Moss et Associés

Architectes and are used with their kind permission. Plans of the original house are derived from drawings

by Edward and W.S. Maxwell, part of the John Bland Canadian Architecture Collection, Rare Books and

Special Collections, McGill University Library.

Photo credits:

Front and back covers, p. 1, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27: Alain Laforest

p.2: Alexander Henderson, MP-0000.1452.1, McCord Museum

p.3: Wm. Notman & Son, View-2801, McCord Museum

p.5: Wm. Notman & Son, View 5532, McCord Museum

p.7: Wm. Notman & Son, II-85017 and 11-85019, McCord Museum

p.8: © Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec c05158

p.10, 12, 13, 14, 15 and inside back cover: John Bland Canadian Architecture Collection,

Rare Books and Special Collections, McGill University Library

p.17: Brian Merrett, M2005.141.1.69, McCord Museum



● The Louis-Joseph Forget House, 1195 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal

THE SQUARE MILE A SHORT HISTORY

In the early 19th century the slopes of Mount Royal, with its orchards and market gardens, attracted those who wanted a country residence, a villa away from the densely-built old city. Furtraders like Simon McTavish and James McGill built summer houses in the first quarter of the century. They were followed by merchants and shipowners like Hugh Allan who built significant estates as their principal residences starting in the 1840s. The 1846 Cane map shows only a few houses sprinkled across the area bounded to the south by the escarpment, to the north by the mountain, to the west by Côte-des-Neiges Road and to the east by Bleury Street. Dorchester was the fashionable street of the 1850s, eclipsed by Sherbrooke Street in the 1860s when speculative land development led to construction of both elegant stone terrace housing and substantial mansions.

By 1879, the new St. Antoine suburb of Montreal was home to more than twenty churches, many of which - Christ Church Cathedral being among the earliest in 1857 - had anticipated the migration of the upper middle class to the 'New Town'. Dominion Square was formally established in 1872 and the Windsor Hotel opened its doors in 1878. Mount Royal was established as a park in 1874 and the green slopes of the mountain became a permanent backdrop to the Square Mile.

In the 1890s, the Square Mile reached its apogee. Men like George Stephen and James Ross who had made great fortunes in the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway built opulent houses and became deeply involved in the financial affairs of the city when it was truly the metropolis of Canada. By 1900, the 25,000 residents of the Square Mile controlled 90% of the wealth of the country.

The era of extravagance and ostentation in the Square Mile ended with the First World War; the Depression was the coup de grâce. Many of the houses, too large for families to sustain, became the property of McGill University while others, particularly those on McGregor Avenue, were used as consulates. While fewer than 30% of the original Square Mile houses remain in the area above Sherbrooke Street, many of those have been successfully converted for other uses.



● Eastern half of the Square Mile as seen from Mount Royal, about 1870



● Sir George Drummond's house on Sherbrooke Street, winter 1896

ARCHITECTURE OF THE SQUARE MILE

A house was an expression of the wealth and standing of a man in the late 19th century and architects were hired to design a house that would impress the viewer. Initially, the villas and mansions were built of the grey limestone that is the primary building material of Montreal. Ravenscrag (arch. Victor Roy) built in 1863 for Hugh Allan above Pine Avenue is grey limestone in the language of the Tuscan villa. George Stephen's elaborate house on Drummond Street designed for him by William Tutin Thomas in 1883 is also grey limestone in ornate Italianate style.

In the late 1880s, the use of many different colours of stone became fashionable and because the railway made its delivery possible, New Brunswick sandstone and Indiana limestone began to appear. The imposing castle-like house for Sir George Drummond designed by the architects Taylor and Gordon in 1888 on Sherbrooke Street opposite McGill University (demolished before 1930) was in red sandstone. Brick, once deemed not suitable for a house with any pretensions to elegance became acceptable at this time and highly skilled masons exercised their craft on houses like the one designed by Edward Maxwell for Henry Vincent Meredith at the corner of Peel Street and Pine Avenue in 1894.

THE SQUARE MILE SHERBROOKE STREET

Sherbrooke Street in the late 19th century was an elegant avenue, lined with tall elm trees. This green and leafy appearance was reinforced by the presence of the Sulpician Seminary lands between Côte-des-Neiges Road and Atwater Avenue and the campus of McGill University between McTavish and University Streets. The north side of Sherbrooke was dominated by villas and mansions, while the south side was for the most part terrace housing.

The lots between Stanley and Drummond streets on Sherbrooke Street were on Redpath land and were developed slightly later than adjoining sections of the street. The house immediately to the west of the Forget house was designed by John James Browne and built in 1883 for Thomas Craig and reconfigured almost entirely for Reid Wilson in 1901 by Richard A. Waite. To the east of the Forget house, the 1906 Mount Royal Club by American architects McKim, Mead & White was built on the site of the Club's first home, the 1887 house built for Sir John Abbott.

On the south side of Sherbrooke, facing the Forget house, the Atholstan house was designed by Alexander Francis Dunlop for Sir Hugh Graham (later Lord Atholstan) in a restrained neo-classical style in 1895. The Atholstan house and the contiguous Bèique house, Berkeley Hotel and Holland house now form the ensemble that is part of Maison Alcan.

Churches followed their congregations to Sherbrooke Street: the Erskine and American Church in 1894, the now-destroyed Church of the Messiah in 1907 and finally, in 1932, the Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul. The construction of the Linton Apartments in 1907 marked the shift away from single-family homes. As the idea of apartment living became even more acceptable in the 1920s, the Chateau and Acadia buildings changed the scale of the Sherbrooke Street streetscape.

The 1912 Montreal Museum of Fine Arts designed by Edward and W.S. Maxwell created the first institutional presence on Sherbrooke Street west of McGill University. It was financed by the Art Association of Montreal, most of whose members were Square Mile residents and many of them collectors of fine art.

The Ritz-Carlton Hotel's ten limestone-clad storeys towered over Sherbrooke Street when it was built. The elegant 230-room hotel designed by Warren & Wetmore of New York became the fashionable headquarters for Square Mile society - a role which it continued to fill long after the neighbourhood's glory had faded.



● Ritz-Carlton Hotel on Sherbrooke Street, about 1915

LOUIS-JOSEPH FORGET A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Louis-Joseph Forget was an unusual member of the élite that ran Montreal at the turn of the twentieth century and lived in the Square Mile. He was French-Canadian, born in 1853 in Terrebonne into a farming family, educated at Collège Masson and started his financial career working for the stockbroker Thomas Caverhill. In 1873, Forget bought his seat on the Montreal Stock Exchange, the first francophone to do so.

He married Maria Raymond in 1876; the same year she helped him set up the brokerage firm of L-J. Forget et Compagnie, withdrawing seven years later when it was well established. The couple had five children: Loulou, Raymond (who died at four years old), Blanche, Marguerite and Pauline.

In 1890, Rodolphe Forget became a partner in his uncle's firm which was by that time one of the most important brokerage firms in the country and in 1895, Louis-Joseph Forget was elected president of the Montreal Stock Exchange.

Forget was president of the Montreal Street Railway Company from 1892 and oversaw the transition from horse-drawn to electrically-run tramways. He had a remarkable gift for restructuring companies and, with Herbert Holt, engineered the massive merger that created Montreal Heat, Light and Power in 1900. A director of many companies, he was the first francophone to be elected to the board of Canadian Pacific Railways.

Louis-Joseph Forget was appointed to the Senate in 1896. A member of the Conservative party, he was principally involved in fundraising for the party in Quebec.

Louis-Joseph and Maria are often described as being devoutly religious, part of the evidence for this being the construction of a chapel designed by the Maxwells at *Bois de la Roche*, their country house in Senneville. Certainly Forget was a generous contributor to the Catholic church but, as a very private man, shied away from any publicity about his charitable donations. He sat on the board of the Université Laval's Montreal branch until his death in 1911.

His obituary in the *Montreal Star* described him as 'one of the first men to loom large in high finance in Canada. In all the heat and confusion of the stock market amidst the treacheries which sometimes attend on high financing and the deception and duplicity which beset the path of the successful man everywhere, there was never a question of his own unflinching veracity.'



● Portraits of Maria Raymond Forget and Louis-Joseph Forget, 1887

THE FORGET HOUSE A FAMILY HOUSE

Maria Raymond and Louis-Joseph Forget were married in 1876; in 1882 Maria Raymond bought the land for their house on Sherbrooke Street from William Workman. The lot was originally part of John Redpath's property which he had bought from M. Desrivieres in 1836 and subdivided, simultaneously extending Drummond Street north towards the mountain.

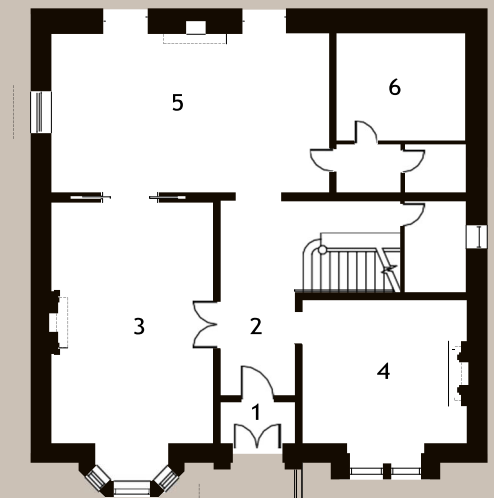
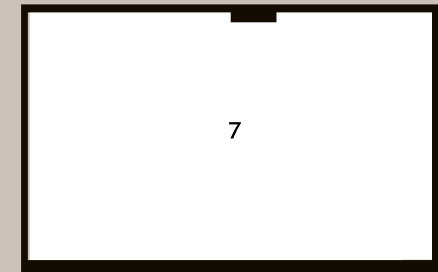
The design of the Louis-Joseph Forget house is attributed to Maurice Perrault, a well-regarded architect who, with his partner Alphonse Ménard, was responsible for the design of the Monument National theatre in 1894. Perrault's design for the Forget house was designed to impress passersby and sits high above the sidewalk. The slate mansard roof is characteristic of Second Empire architecture, while the sober cut limestone façade is more English in its expression.

From sketches of the house made at the time of its 1902 renovation, it appears that the 1884 house was simple and square in plan. A central hall was flanked by the library to the right of the entry and the drawing room to the left of it. The dining room occupied the northwest corner of the house, served by a pantry. The kitchen and service areas were in the basement. The second floor was dedicated to bedrooms and an upstairs sitting room, which may have served as the schoolroom for the Forget children at some point.

The coach house dates from the 1884 construction and would have been accessible from the laneway running behind the original Craig, Forget and Abbott houses all built in the mid-1880s.



● Postcard of Sherbrooke Street, about 1934. On the right hand side of the photo, the Forget house is immediately to the right of the tree.



1884
ORIGINAL HOUSE
GROUND FLOOR

- 1 VESTIBULE
- 2 MAIN HALL
- 3 DRAWING ROOM
- 4 LIBRARY
- 5 DINING ROOM
- 6 PANTRY
- 7 COACH HOUSE

SHERBROOKE STREET

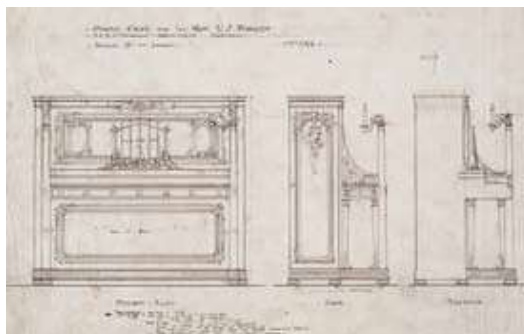
THE FORGET HOUSE
1902-1903 RENOVATIONS
BY EDWARD AND W.S. MAXWELL

By the beginning of the 20th century, Edward and William Sutherland Maxwell were the architects of choice for Square Mile residents and often designed not only their houses but their offices, factories, warehouses and country houses. Edward Maxwell had designed Louis-Joseph Forget's country house, *Bois de la Roche*, in Senneville starting in 1896 and his office would, over the course of the next fifteen years, be responsible for no fewer than fifteen different projects for Forget.

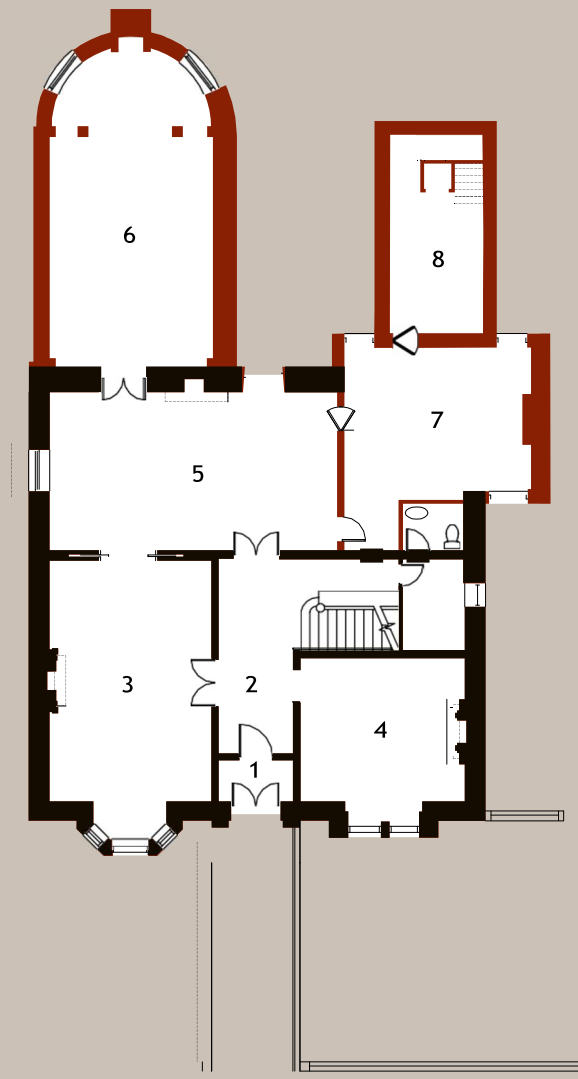
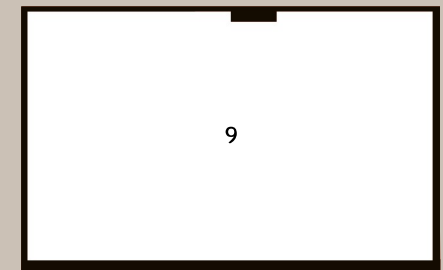
In 1902, Edward's brother William Sutherland Maxwell became his partner. The renovations to the Forget house appear to have started just before the partnership was formed and probably were completed in 1903. The drawings show an extension at the northeast corner of the house that pushes the exterior wall to the east and creates a breakfast room, new pantry and rear stairway. At the basement level, a servants' hall was added and on the second floor, a bedroom and bathroom. On the third floor bedrooms and bathrooms were also added.

The most intriguing addition, however, was the billiard room on the northwest corner of the house, accessible from the dining room. Although its exact date of construction is difficult to discern, the work was likely done at the same time as the other interventions by the Maxwells. Its rounded end with its imposing fireplace, large glass ceiling insert and superb stained glass windows by Castle & Sons created a space that was exceptional even by Square Mile standards. The room probably also later served as a picture gallery and a chapel; a member of the Forget family recalls Madame Forget using it as a chapel after the death of her husband in 1911.

The true talent of the Maxwells is most evident in the woodwork, panelling and plasterwork throughout, most particularly in the elegant drawing room whose white panelling was the very height of fashion at the time. The sculptor George W. Hill carved the piano case designed by the Maxwells, its garlands an echo of the panelling and sliding pocket doors that led from the drawing room into the dining room. The main stairway in the hall was itself a work of sculpture and the stairwell itself entirely clad in lincrusta, a deeply embossed wallcovering. As was typical for the era, the Maxwells were also responsible for all the interior decoration including wallpapers, drapes and design of some of the furniture.



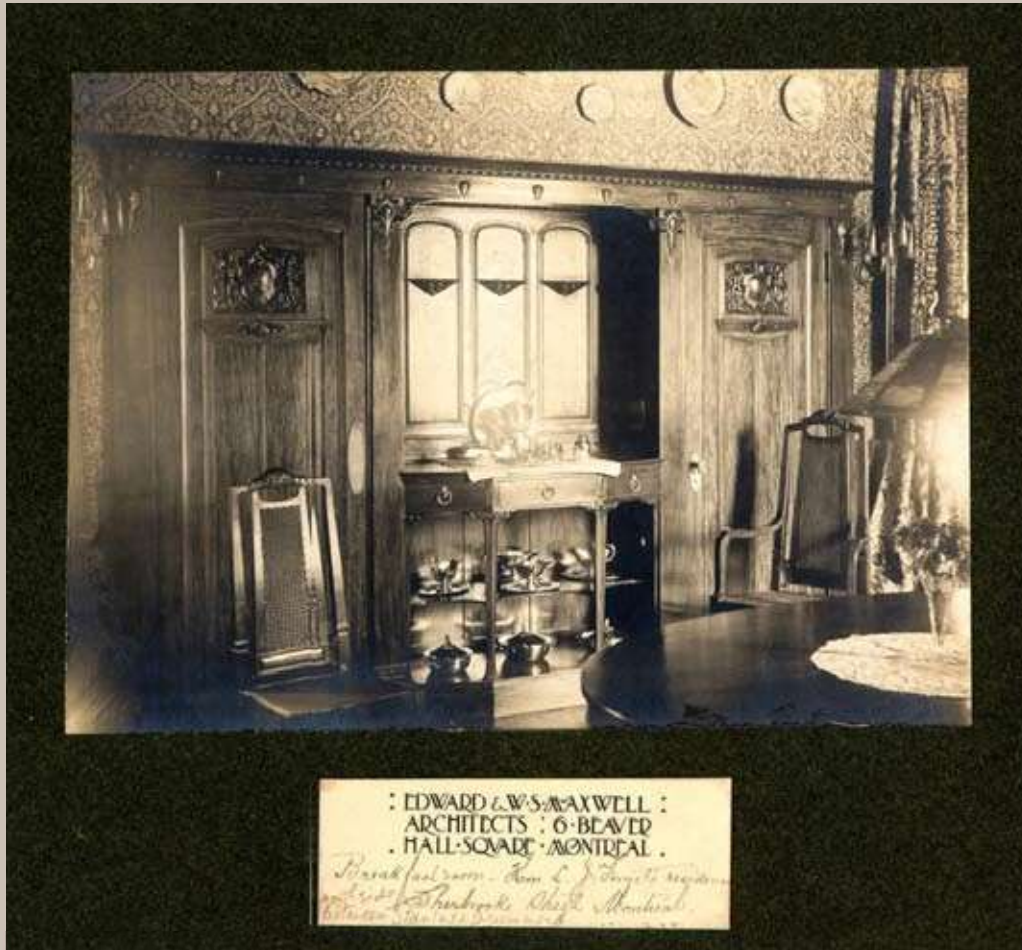
● Maxwell drawing of piano case in the Forget drawing room, now the Music Room



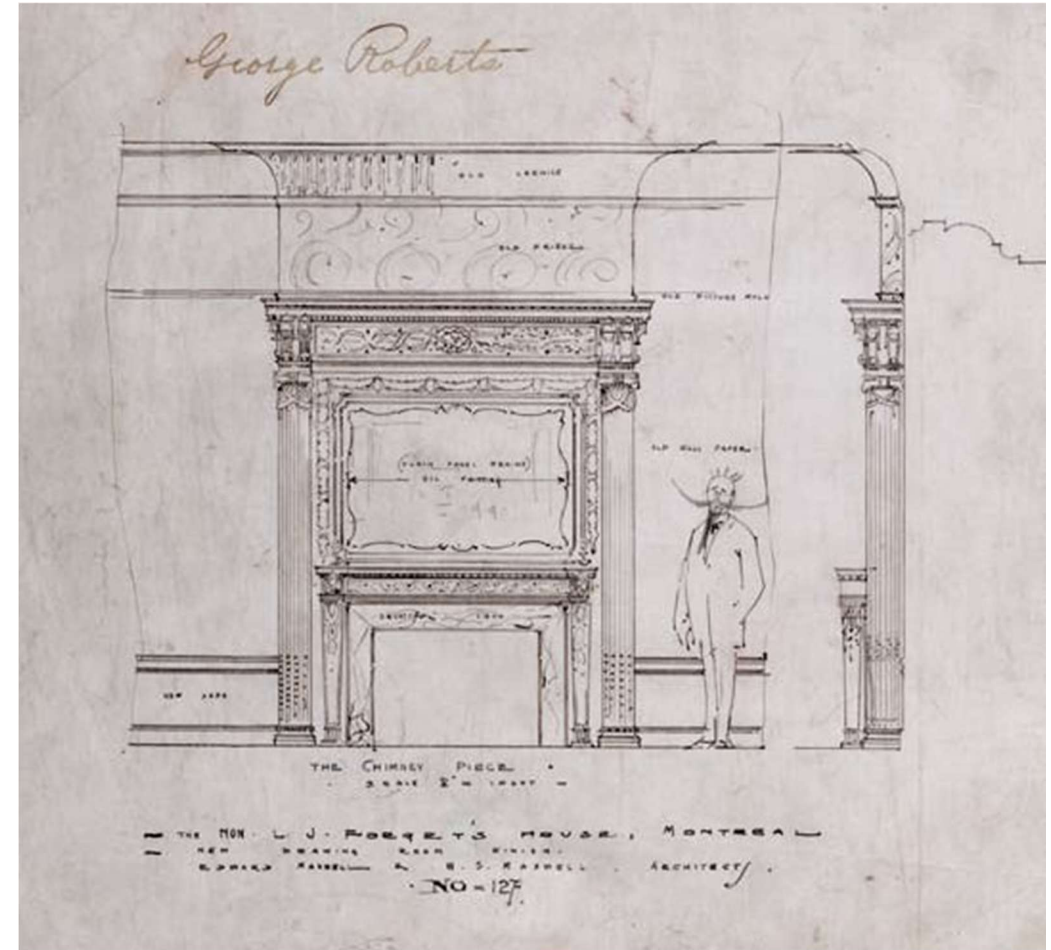
1903
AFTER MAXWELL RENOVATIONS
GROUND FLOOR

- 1 VESTIBULE
- 2 MAIN HALL
- 3 DRAWING ROOM
- 4 LIBRARY
- 5 DINING ROOM
- 6 BILLIARD ROOM
- 7 BREAKFAST ROOM
- 8 PANTRY
- 9 COACH HOUSE

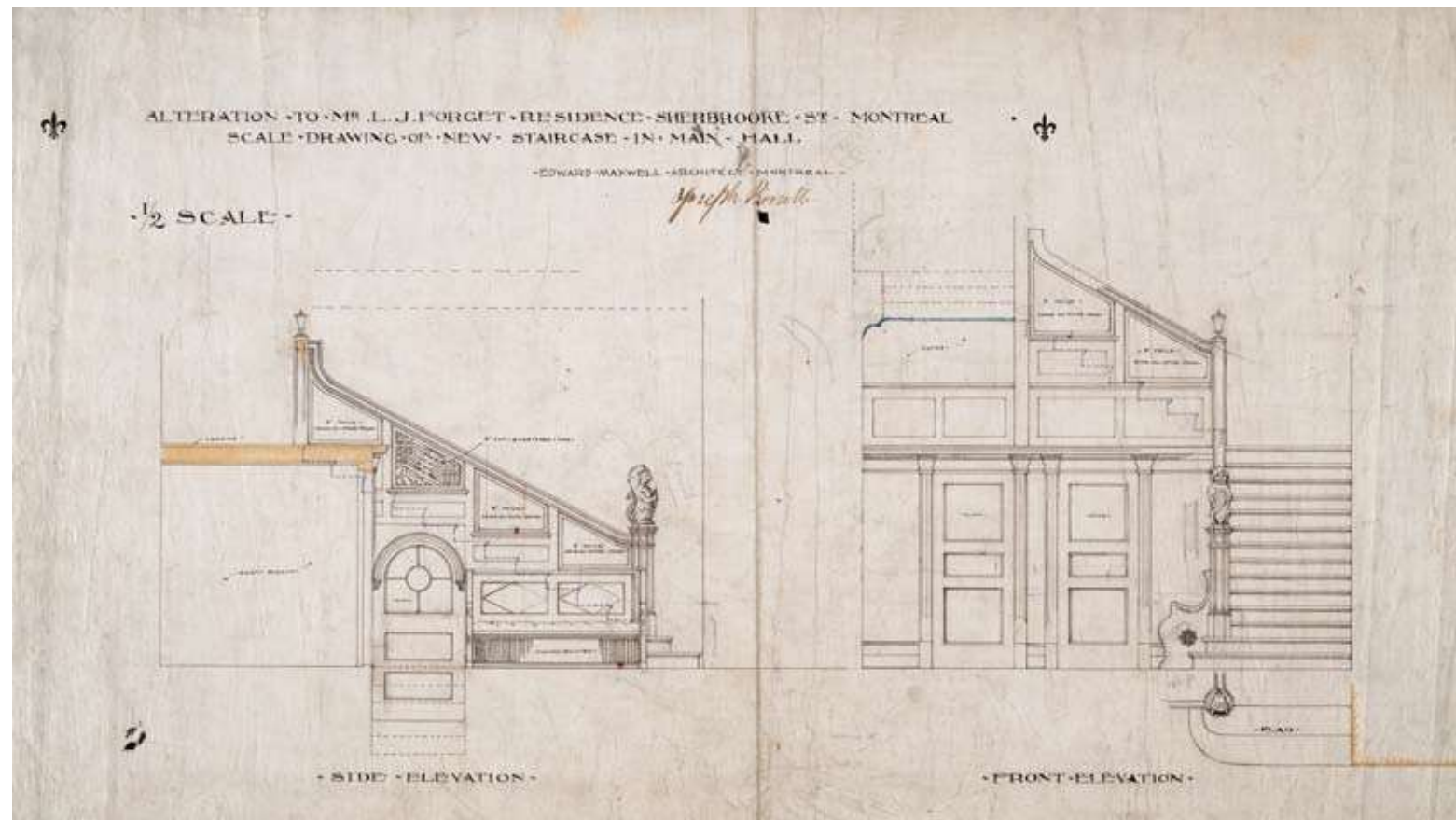
SHERBROOKE STREET



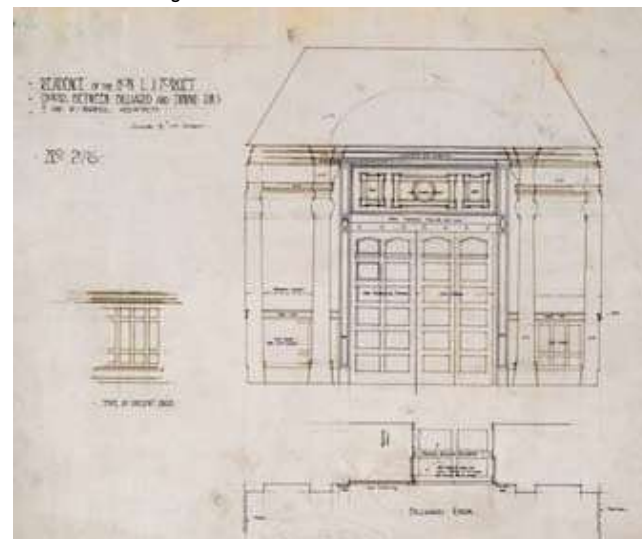
● Maxwell photograph of the breakfast room



● Maxwell drawing of drawing room fireplace



● Maxwell drawing of staircase



● Maxwell drawing of billard room doors leading into the dining room



● Maxwell photograph of doors leading to dining room

THE FORGET HOUSE THE UNITED SERVICES CLUB ADDITIONS AND TRANSFORMATIONS

Following the death of Maria Raymond Forget in 1925, her children sold the Forget house to the United Services Club in 1927. This private club founded in 1922 to serve veterans of the First World War - and later all members of the armed forces - continued to occupy the house until the club officially closed in 1994.

Over the course of its tenure, the Club modified the house many times to suit its needs. Its first transformation in 1927, 'changing size of rooms making house suitable for Club premises' (as described in the permit application) was the work of the architect H. P. Illsley. This same architect was responsible for the first provision for women as members - a 1931 extension added to the rear between the two Maxwell additions to serve as a 'Ladies' Lounge'. In 1947, a corridor was added along the length of east façade at ground level, providing a separate entrance for women.

1956 permit drawings submitted to the City of Montreal by the architects Wiggs, Lawton & Walker show that although the northeast corner of the house has become a veritable rabbits' warren of corridors and cloakrooms, the fundamental layout of the Maxwell alterations remains intact on the ground floor. The drawing room and dining room are used as lounges, the billiard room as a reading room, then as a dining room while the library remained a library. The basement level had clearly been much divided to serve the club's purposes, including a billiard room, tap room and card room as well as a 'Ladies' Room'.

The coach house was converted from a garage to office space in 1951. Former bedrooms on the second and third floors of the house were also gradually converted to dining rooms and service spaces. Some of the original finishes were replaced or painted over to suit the tastes of the era, most notably the lincrusta wallcovering in the stairwell. The skylight in the dining room was closed off and the ceiling panel electrically lit. A final addition to the rear extended the house to adjoin the coach house at ground level.

By the 1970s, the club was experiencing significant financial difficulties. The Macdonald Stewart Foundation stepped in and bought the house in 1975, allowing the club to continue using the ground floor.

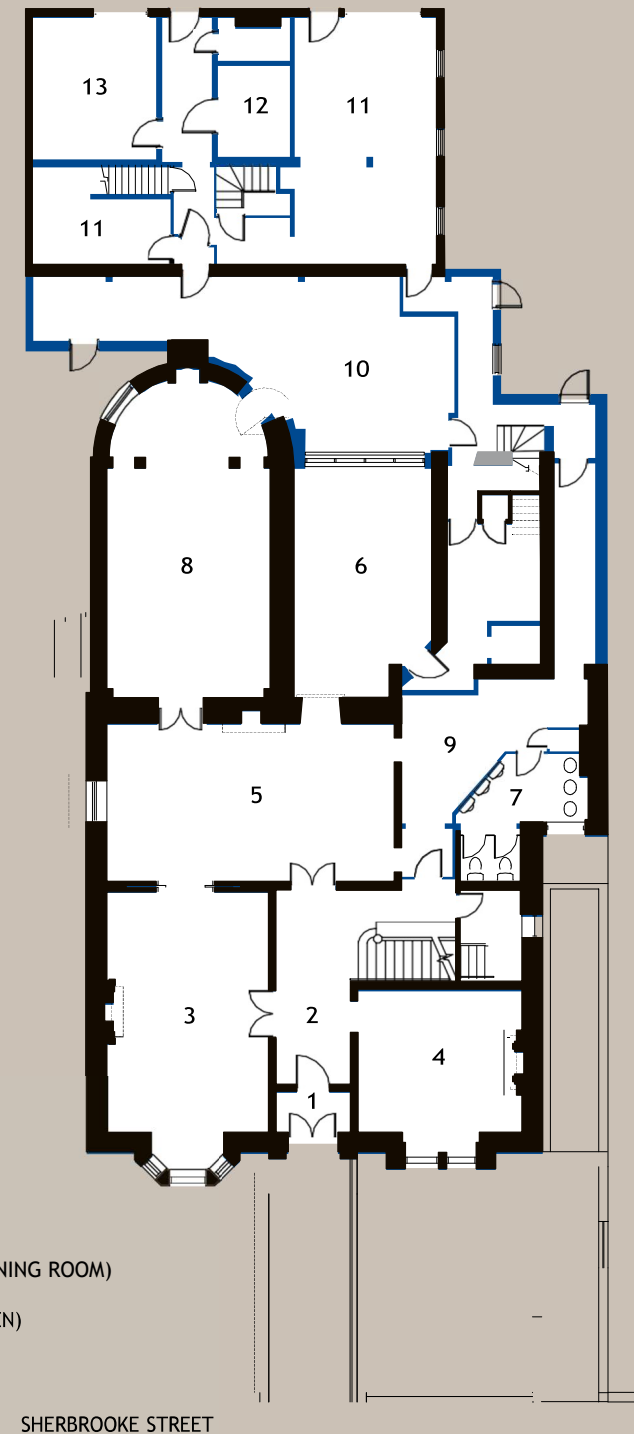
In 1974, the Forget house was recognized as a *monument historique* by the Ministère des affaires culturelles du Québec, as was the neighbouring Corby House (now the Reid Wilson House). The following year, the Mount Royal Club was classified as a *monument historique*. Together the three buildings represent one of the last ensembles of Square Mile houses on Sherbrooke Street.



● Dining room, United Services Club

1970s UNITED SERVICES CLUB GROUND FLOOR

- 1 VESTIBULE
- 2 MAIN HALL
- 3 LOUNGE
- 4 LIBRARY
- 5 LOUNGE
- 6 BAR
- 7 MENS' WASHROOM
- 8 READING ROOM (BECOMES DINING ROOM)
- 9 MENS' CLOAKROOM
- 10 OPEN SPACE (BECOMES KITCHEN)
- 11 OFFICES
- 12 MECHANICAL
- 13 CARD ROOM



THE FORGET HOUSE THE MACDONALD STEWART FOUNDATION RESTORATION AND REHABILITATION

Following the closure of the United Services Club in 1994, the Macdonald Stewart Foundation began an extensive programme of restoration and rehabilitation of the house. In 1996, the firm of Fournier Gersovitz Moss et Associés Architectes was given the mandate to restore the ground floor to its earlier residential character. The basement level was made usable for the administration offices for the Foundation's important decorative arts and history collection and to house not-for-profit organizations including the St. Andrew's Society. The offices on the second and third floors were renovated.

The architects used the drawings by Edward and W. S. Maxwell from McGill University's Canadian Architecture Collection as a reference for the design of the restoration work. Wood panelling was restored and refinished; replicas of some of the doors which had been removed were installed. In the breakfast room, the plaster ceiling that had been covered with drywall panels was revealed and the original volume of the room was restored. William Morris design wallpapers were chosen to reflect the original design intent of the Maxwell brothers.

The house's mechanical and electrical systems were overhauled to meet contemporary norms and standards. New washrooms were carefully inserted into the space on the ground floor that had been added in 1956 and had served as the bar.

The work, completed in 1999, gave the house a new lease on life.

The second significant intervention was to the public face of the house by Fournier Gersovitz Moss in 2006. The exterior stairway and the low retaining wall at the sidewalk were rebuilt to conform to the original intent and the railings restored exactly according to the Maxwell drawings. A project to light the front façade of the house was completed in 2010.

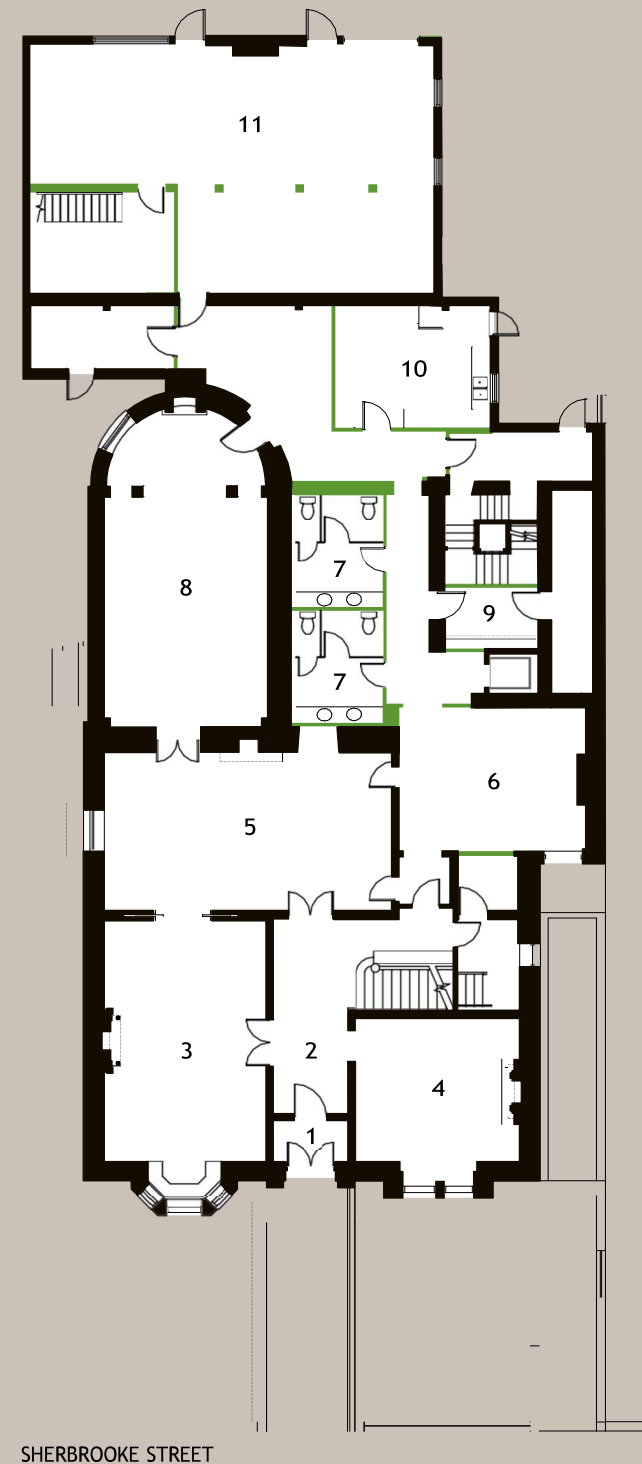
The coach house was renovated in 2009. The brick masonry was almost entirely replaced and important exterior stabilisation work carried out while the interior was converted into an open multi-use space.



● Music Room, doors leading to Dining Room

2010 MACDONALD STEWART FOUNDATION GROUND FLOOR

- 1 VESTIBULE
- 2 MAIN HALL
- 3 MUSIC ROOM
- 4 STUDY
- 5 DINING ROOM
- 6 BREAKFAST ROOM
- 7 WASHROOM
- 8 BILLIARD ROOM
- 9 CLOAKROOM
- 10 KITCHEN
- 11 COACH HOUSE



SHERBROOKE STREET



● Dining Room



● Music Room



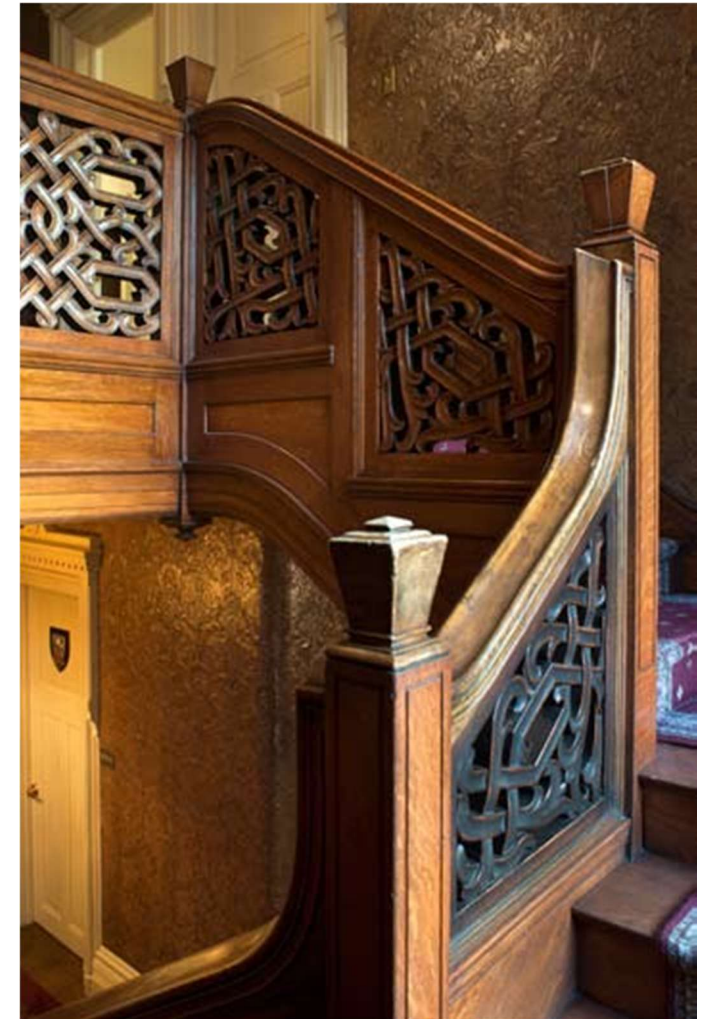
● Billiard Room



● Breakfast Room



● Staircase in main hall



● Staircase from second to third floor





● Study

● Detail from the study



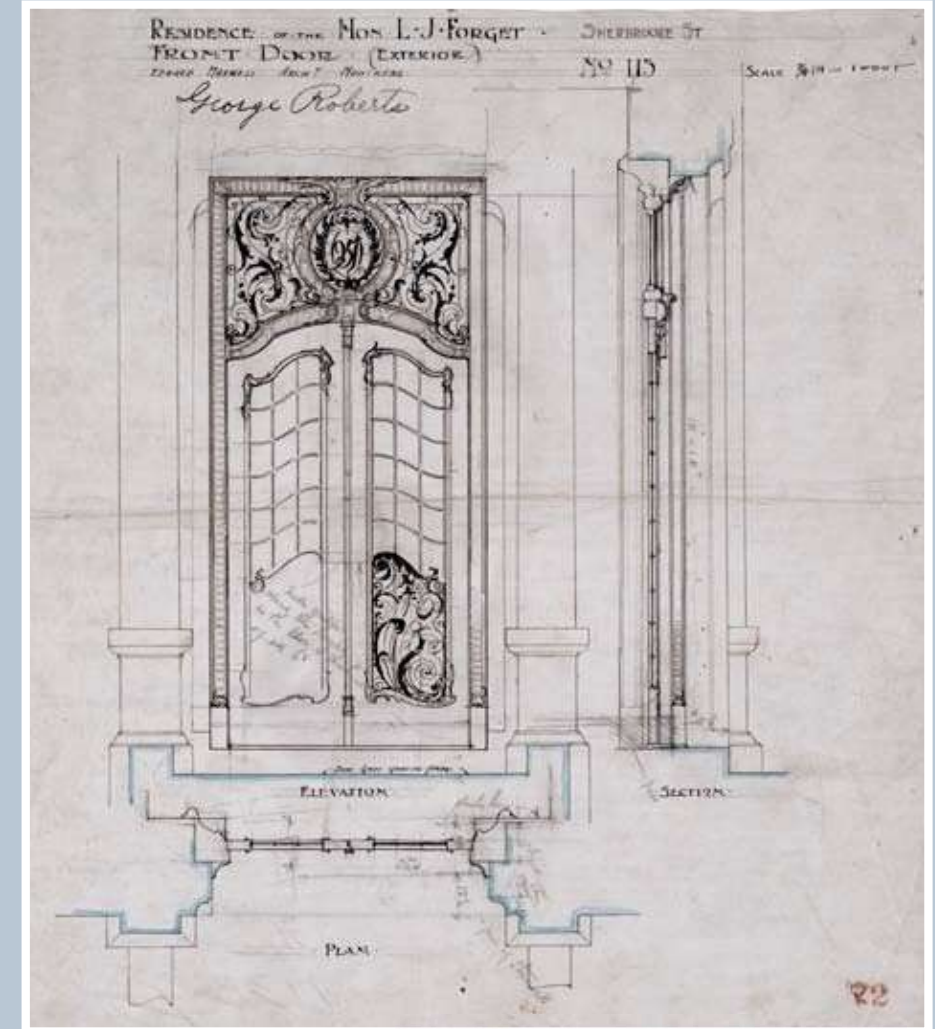
● Coach house



● Second floor meeting room

CHRONOLOGY OF THE LOUIS-JOSEPH FORGET HOUSE

A FAMILY HOUSE	1882	Maria Raymond Forget buys land from William Workman
	1883-1884	house built - design attributed to architect Maurice Perrault
	1899	Forget country house Bois de la Roche in Senneville completed
RENOVATIONS OF THE MAXWELLS	1902	modifications to Forget house begin
	1902	Edward & W.S. Maxwell become partners
	1903	modifications completed
	1906	Maxwells buy stained glass windows for billiard room
	1911	Louis-Joseph Forget dies
	1925	elevator installed
	1925	Maria Raymond Forget dies
	UNITED SERVICES CLUB	1927
1927		interior replanning 'changing size of rooms making house suitable for Club premises'
1930-1931		modifications & enlargement 'extension at rear for new Ladies' Lounge'
1947		corridor added on east façade to provide separate ladies' entrance
1951		modifications to the garage
1956		interior modifications to add new lounge at ground floor on top of 1931 extension
MACDONALD STEWART FOUNDATION	1973	interior modifications to rear
	1974	Forget house recognized <i>monument historique</i> by Ministère des affaires culturelles du Québec
	1975	Mount Royal Club classified <i>monument historique</i> by Ministère des affaires culturelles du Québec
	1975	Macdonald Stewart Foundation buys house from United Services Club
	1994	United Services Club closes
	1996	interior restoration and modifications
	2006	exterior stairway and retaining wall rebuilt
	2009	coach house renovated
2010	exterior lighting on front façade	



- Maxwell drawing of front door. The only modifications by the Maxwells to the exterior on the front of the house were the redesign of the front door and stairway. The sinuously curved grillwork was fabricated at the Clendinning Foundry in Montreal.



● The Louis-Joseph Forget House, 1195 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal