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## Machines in Suburban Gardens: The 1936 T. Eaton Company Architectural Competition For House Designs

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### Résumé

*Après l'effondrement de l'industrie du bâtiment pendant la Grande Crise économique, les architectes canadiens ont entrevu une planche de salut dans la conception d'habitations modestes pour des clients de la classe moyenne. Ce point de vue a été renforcé par la tenue d'une série de concours sur la maison idéale, dont l'un était organisé et parrainé par la société des grands magasins Eaton. L'analyse de cet événement révèle que le commanditaire comme les concurrents poursuivaient un amalgame fascinant d'objectifs commerciaux et esthétiques. À l'instar des architectes canadiens, la société Eaton s'est efforcée de développer de nouveaux marchés en utilisant le concours pour s'ériger en arbitre du bon goût dans les questions qui intéressaient les propriétaires de la classe moyenne.*

### Abstract

*Following the building industry's collapse during the Depression, Canadian architects saw the design of modest houses for middle-class clients as a means of professional salvation. This view was encouraged by a series of ideal home competitions held in 1936, one of which was conceived and promoted by Eaton's, a large department store. An analysis of this event demonstrates a fascinating mix of commercial and aesthetic agendas on the part of both the sponsor and the competitors. Like Canada's architects, Eaton's sought to develop new markets by using the competition to position itself as an arbiter of taste in matters affecting the middle-class householder.*

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Following the collapse of the building industry during the Depression, Canadian architects came to see the design of relatively modest houses for middle-class clients as a possible means of professional salvation. They were specifically encouraged to do so by a series of ideal home competitions held in 1936. Two of these competitions were sponsored by the federal and the Ontario provincial governments, while the third was conceived and promoted by the managers of a large department store. Given the limited social role of department stores today, the T. Eaton Company's participation in efforts both to revitalize the moribund construction industry and to foster higher standards of design in the mid-1930s by means of

a nation-wide architectural competition may seem somewhat surprising. While new house construction would logically lead to the purchase of new appliances and, perhaps, new furniture, the direct benefits of sponsoring an architectural competition in terms of sales of consumer durables would have been difficult to gauge. Hopes of counteracting a disastrous slump in consumer demand no doubt contributed to Eaton's decision to hold the competition, but arguably the choice of this particular promotional strategy was prompted even more by an ambitious vision of the department store's role in the cultural life of city and nation. The great retailer and Canada's architects had this in common: both sought to develop new

markets by positioning themselves as arbiters of taste in matters affecting the middle-class householder. As an analysis of the Eaton's competition will show, there was a fascinating mix of commercial and aesthetic agendas on the part of both the sponsor and the competitors.

In common with other North American retail giants such as Macy's in New York, Marshall Field's in Chicago and Wanamaker's in Philadelphia, Eaton's was committed to an enlarged definition of the functions of the department store that included the entertainment and education of the customer, as well as the centralized distribution of a diversity of products.<sup>1</sup> In a provocative essay Neil Harris has identified department stores, together with museums and fairs, as key social institutions actively seeking to form the tastes of the first generations of mass consumers.<sup>2</sup> Conscious of the connection between the development of taste and the creation of demand, the managers of these stores deployed strategies ranging from sophisticated displays to art exhibitions to lectures in their efforts to legitimize consumption as a way of life. Services such as elegant restaurants and auditoriums helped to blur the distinction between the stores and other cultural attractions. To an extent that is now difficult to imagine, the great retail emporiums of the early decades of the twentieth century were a vital part of the aesthetic, as well as the commercial, life of North America's cities.

Eaton's College Street store in Toronto, which opened to the public in November 1930, reflected this sense of aesthetic and cultural mission. As originally planned by the Montreal-based architectural firm of Ross and Macdonald, the College Street building was to be a massive structure composed of a seven-storey plinth containing retail and customer service space, capped by an imposing office tower.<sup>3</sup> This tower, with its New York-style setbacks, epitomized the confident mood of the late 1920s and, if built, would have served as a powerful symbol of Eaton's dominant position in the world of Canadian retailing. Unfortunately, the economic realities of a world-wide depression made it necessary to scale down the project; ultimately only the seven-storey retailing component was completed. Even so, the new store, which aimed at attracting well-to-do suburban shoppers to its convenient location at College and Yonge, was lavish enough to generate considerable excitement.<sup>4</sup> A feature article catering to the public interest in the new building and its contents was justified by the editors of

*Canadian Homes and Gardens* on the grounds of the cultural importance of such stores:

*In this 20th Century, stores and their merchandise are news. Because of their definite and daily influence upon the lives and the tastes of millions, it is essential that the public's buying centres show leadership and a sense of responsibility. Any shop that makes a sincere effort to lead its patrons along the paths of good taste and good values is worthy of consideration. In the portfolio presented in the following pages the recent achievements of a great store — one of the few great stores of the world — and one that has pioneered with Canada, are set forth as a matter of pride for all Canadians.<sup>5</sup>*

Boosterism aside, this tribute indicates that the department store's claim to be a centre for aesthetic education was taken quite seriously by other would-be tastemakers in Canada. That Eaton's managers were equally serious about instructing their customers in matters of taste is shown by some of the features incorporated in the new building: a series of period room settings modelled on the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, art galleries, a lending library, and an auditorium for public lectures and musical performances.<sup>6</sup> The seductive appeal of these explicitly "cultured" elements was enhanced by the design of the building, which was heavily influenced by the luxurious art deco style first introduced by the Parisian Exposition des arts décoratifs et industriels of 1925. While the stripped down classicism of the store's exterior treatment conveyed an impression of conservative good taste, the use of modern materials and jazz-age decorative motifs in the interior was daringly fashionable. On the seventh floor, the auditorium and the Round Room restaurant, both designed by the French architect Jacques Carlu in collaboration with Eaton's in-house interior decorator, René Cera, were among the most sumptuous art deco interiors to be found in Toronto. Shoppers dining in the Round Room, with its murals by Natasha Carlu, use of circular forms in both layout and decorative detail, and custom-built furnishings, received an education by osmosis in the taste and values expressed by art deco design (Fig. 1). It was an education that emphasized the continuity between earlier traditions of elegance and the luxurious simplicity associated with art deco's version of modernity.

Beneath the veneer of education and entertainment, the period room settings and art deco restaurant had one ultimate purpose: the

**Fig. 1**  
*Jacques Carlu, architect,  
 with René Cera. Round  
 Room Restaurant,  
 Eaton's College Street  
 Store in R.A.I.C. Journal,  
 August 1935, 137.*



stimulation of consumer demand. Eaton's College Street store was built primarily to house the company's home furnishings division and the elaborate ensemble of displays and services provided at the new building was for the most part calculated to appeal to the upper end of the Toronto market.<sup>7</sup> The desire to attract suburban householders with substantial incomes also motivated Eaton's first venture into the realm of house design competitions. In December 1929 the company announced an Ideal Ontario Home Competition "...open to all practising architects, architectural draughtsmen and students residing in Canada."<sup>8</sup> This event, which called for the construction of the winning design on two floors of the College Street store, was an important feature of the promotional campaign leading up to the opening of the new building. Competitors were given a budget of \$30 000 as a guideline; an amount that, in 1930, translated into a decidedly upper middle-class dwelling containing such amenities as a billiard room, a library, and servants' quarters. Toronto architect Harold Savage won the competition with a design that, according to *Canadian Homes and Gardens*, "...reflects certain modern treatment and restraint applied to a style reminiscent of the early Canadian farmhouse," (Fig. 2).<sup>9</sup> It was, in fact, an essay in twentieth-century traditional design as influenced, perhaps, by Eric Arthur's recently published research into Loyalist domestic architecture. Savage's house

would have been perfectly comfortable in the wealthy Toronto suburbs of the period.<sup>10</sup>

Just how comfortable can be demonstrated by a comparison with the exterior facades of the houses selected to illustrate William Lyon Somerville's article on recent domestic architecture in Ontario published in the *Royal Architectural Institute of Canada [R.A.I.C.] Journal* in 1928. Somerville noted that two distinct solutions had emerged to the problem of the Ontario house by the late 1920s:

*Generally there seems to be two lines of thought among the architects of Ontario, those who favor what might be called the romantic or picturesque type of house and the other the formal; the latter usually expressed in the Renaissance English, or the so-called American colonial predominantly.<sup>11</sup>*

The justice of this observation is confirmed by the fact that almost all of the ten winning designs in Eaton's Ideal Ontario Home Competition fall into one of these two categories. To choose an example, W. F. Williams's house, with its "...small-paned leaded windows, spaced with interesting irregularity..." was representative of the entries tending towards the picturesque end of this rather limited spectrum of architectural possibilities (Fig. 3).<sup>12</sup>

There was one striking exception to this general consensus: the fifth-placed entry submitted

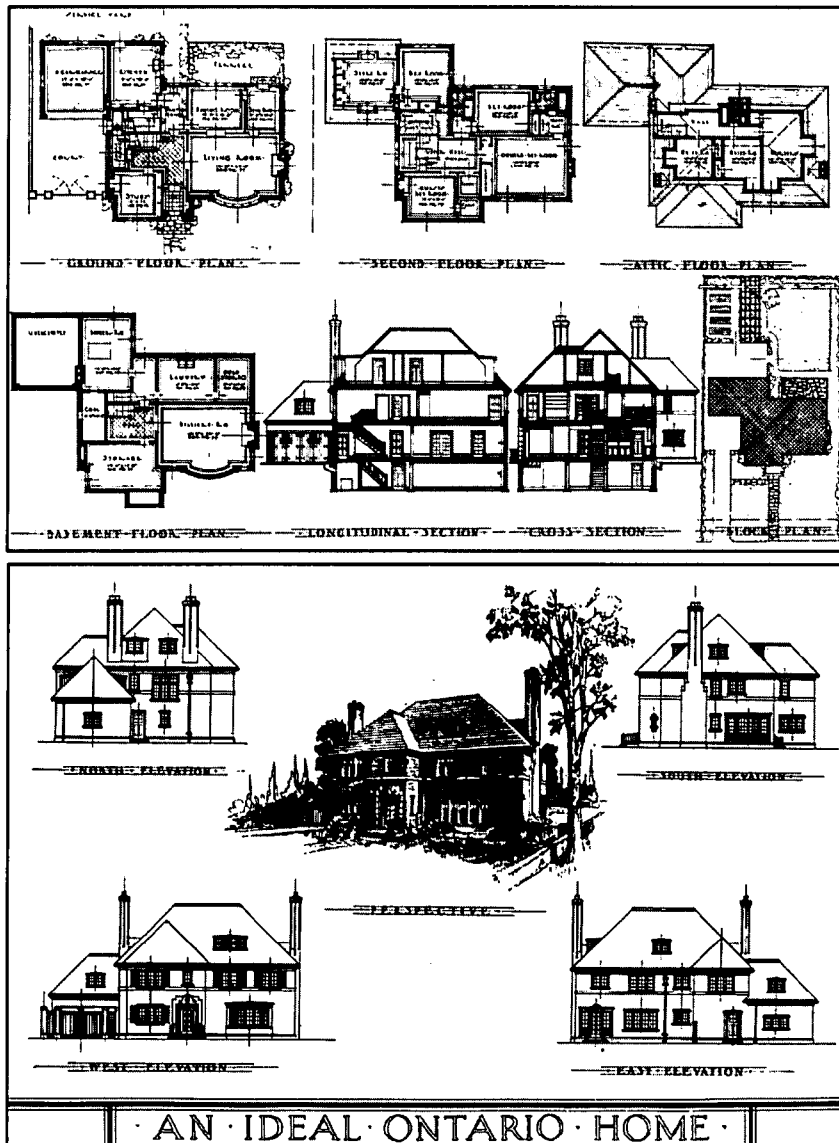


Fig. 2  
 Harold Savage, architect.  
 First-prize winning  
 design, T. Eaton Co.  
 1930 Architectural  
 Competition for an  
 Ideal Ontario Home  
 in R.A.I.C. Journal,  
 April 1930, 138-139.

by Toronto-based architect Ian Forbes (Fig. 4). While their published comments were rather patronizing, the competition's three judges were clearly intrigued by the design:

*A prize-winning design which attracted considerable attention was the one submitted by Mr. Ian Forbes of Toronto. It was very modern and most distinctive. The plan was decidedly clever, and it is a pity that Mr. Forbes rather "fell down" on his elevation.<sup>13</sup>*

In contrast to the work of his fellow competitors, Forbes's house was startlingly original in its emphasis on pure geometric forms. Two rectilinear wings were joined by a central octagonal tower that also served to anchor a third-floor

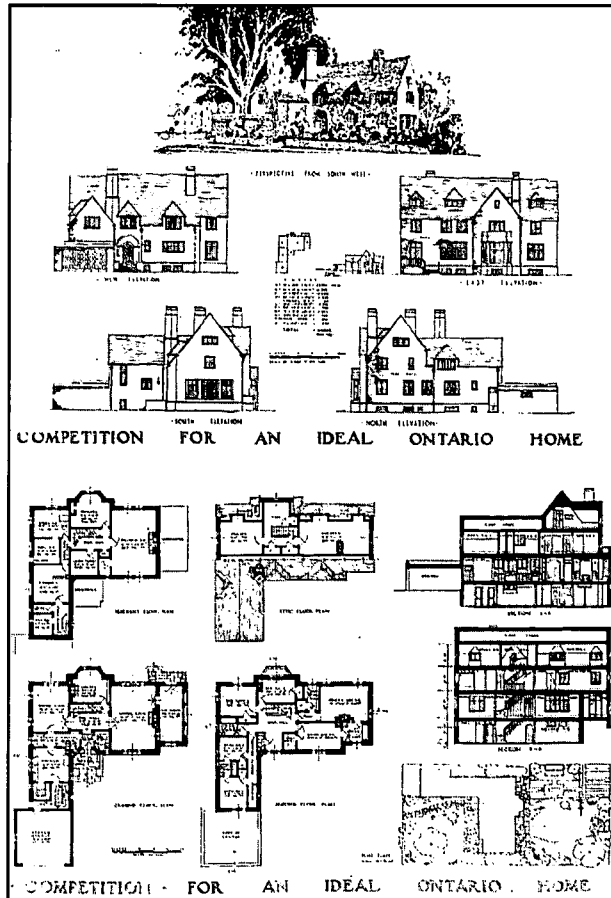
penthouse nursery suite with roof gardens on two sides. The main entrance was a semi-circular porch enclosed by curving glass walls. Forbes's choice of materials was equally unconventional. The house was to be built of concrete, with steel window sashes and cast aluminum spandrels. Other specifications called for a heating system consisting of copper pipe coils set in the wall and floor concrete, and stainless steel hardware throughout.<sup>14</sup>

The "modern" approach to the problem of domestic design that had produced this anomaly was later outlined for the readers of *Canadian Homes and Gardens*:

*Modern architecture, applied to office buildings or to houses, is seeking to give a direct and*

Fig. 3

W. F. Williams, architect.  
Seventh-prize winning  
design, T. Eaton Co. 1930  
Architectural Competition  
for an Ideal Ontario  
Home in R.A.I.C. Journal,  
April 1930, 147.

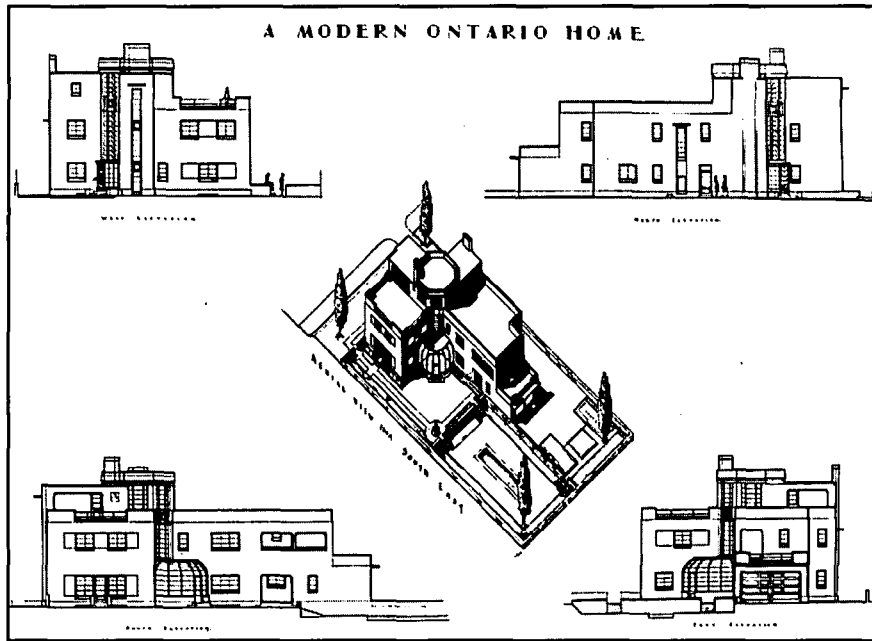


*truthful expression of the necessary units. The three ruling factors are, first, a good plan; second, reasonable cost; third, a satisfactory external appearance. It is in this order that the general public is affected, and it is in this order that the architect for this house considered the project.*<sup>15</sup>

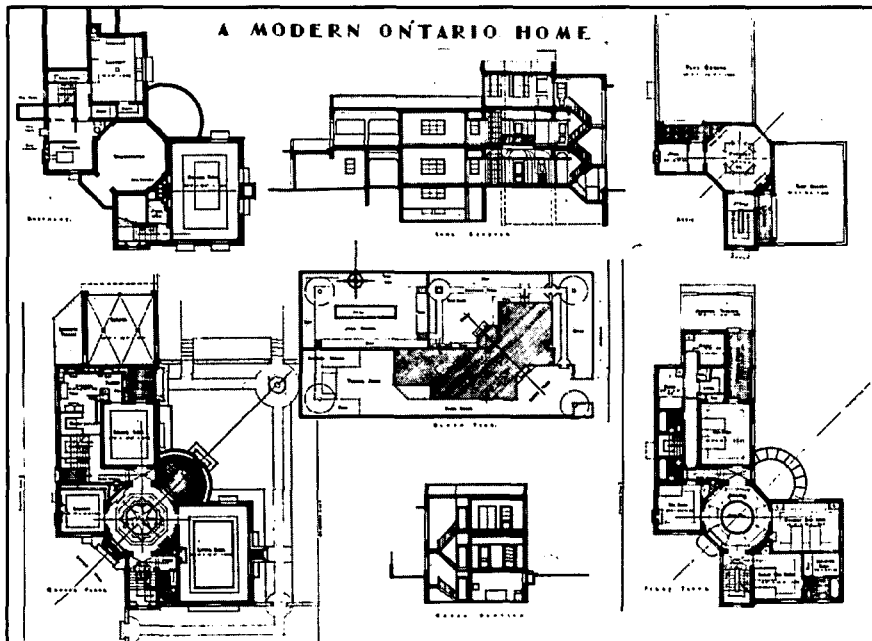
According to the judges, however, Forbes's design failed in its attempt to address the third of these ruling factors. Later critics influenced by subsequent developments in Modern architecture might be more disposed to question both the plan and Forbes's notion of reasonable cost. His house is something of a paradox, consisting as it does of a formal arrangement of rooms with specialized functions that were becoming outmoded even in the early 1930s contained within a Modernistic shell that appeared to express avant garde rationalism.<sup>16</sup> To a certain extent, this inconsistency can be excused as an artifact of the competition program, which demanded the inclusion of such Edwardian elements as a billiard room. Whether it was successful or not, however, Forbes's

design was significant: alone among the competition entries, it indicated that a Canadian architect was willing to contemplate an alternative to the accepted suburban forms.<sup>17</sup>

The T. Eaton Company assembled a distinguished panel of judges for the 1930 competition: A. H. Chapman, president of the Ontario Association of Architects, Professor Eric Arthur of the University of Toronto, and Philip J. Turner, a Montreal architect who also taught at McGill University.<sup>18</sup> In remarks summarizing their deliberations, the panel indicated that they had awarded the first prize to Harold Savage because his design offered the most successful solution to the problem of the house as an in-store setting for furniture display, not because it was a particularly interesting and innovative example of domestic architecture. Indeed, the three judges expressed a certain disappointment that the competition had not, as originally hoped, resulted in "...an outstanding design which could be called typically 'Ontario'..."<sup>19</sup> On a more optimistic note, they concluded that the event had, at least, "...stirred



**Fig. 4**  
 Ian Forbes, architect.  
 Fifth-prize winning  
 design, T. Eaton Co. 1930  
 Architectural Competition  
 for an Ideal Ontario  
 Home in R.A.I.C. Journal,  
 April 1930, 145.



up the profession generally, and we hope that as a result of this impetus, architectural design and particularly domestic architecture, will be finer and we hope more typically Canadian than before."<sup>20</sup>

Unfortunately these high hopes went unrealized. During the six years that followed, Canadian architects had little opportunity for further experiments in the area of domestic design. The deepening economic depression had its most serious effect on the building

industry, and new housing starts decreased dramatically across the country. Expenditure on the construction of new houses dropped from \$139 million in 1928 to \$24 million in 1933. There were virtually no additions to existing housing stock in Montreal after 1931, and the situation in Toronto was not much better.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the gravity of the situation, in the years immediately following the 1929 stock market crash successive Liberal and Conservative governments adopted policies of minimal

intervention in the economy, trusting that in time market forces would be capable of restoring prosperity. By 1935, however, R. B. Bennett, the Conservative prime minister, had reluctantly come to the conclusion that the federal government would have to take a more aggressive role. The spectre of an upcoming election, combined with the news of innovative measures being adopted across the border by President Roosevelt's Democratic administration, prompted Bennett to publicize the broad outlines of his own "New Deal" in a series of national radio broadcasts. This less than whole-hearted initiative did not save his government and Mackenzie King's Liberals swept back into power, jettisoning most of Bennett's program in the process.<sup>22</sup> One Conservative reform survived, however: the legislative package that became the Dominion Housing Act of 1935.

The Dominion Housing Act (DHA) was far from being a radical experiment in social engineering. In February of 1935 the Bennett government had struck an eighteen-member House of Commons special committee to determine if the public purse should be used to provide financial incentives for house building as a means of revitalizing employment in the construction industry. After receiving a favourable committee report, and following private discussions with the leaders of the Canadian mortgage industry, the final three-page act was drafted and duly passed. Patterned on similar New Deal legislation already in operation in the United States, the DHA aimed primarily at encouraging members of the middle class with secure sources of income to invest their money in building new houses.

This encouragement took the form of more liberal provisions for mortgages that reduced the required downpayment by supplementing the 60 percent mortgages available from private lenders with government-funded loans for a further 20 percent of the value, reducing the rate of interest to 5 percent, and lengthening the repayment period from the customary five years to a maximum of twenty. In effect, the DHA was a middle-class subsidy that did little to address the very real housing needs of low income Canadians.<sup>23</sup> It did, however, encourage Canada's unemployed architects to participate in the 1936 home design competitions in the hopes that there would be a renewed demand for their services.

Although Eaton's competition was not directly linked to the new legislation, it was motivated by a similar desire to stimulate middle-class Canadians to invest in home own-

ership and, by extension, new home furnishings and appliances.<sup>24</sup> An internal memo sent by the company's president, Robert Y. Eaton, outlined the anticipated benefits of the project:

*The publicity given to this [competition] would increase people's interest in the new conveniences now available for houses as to air conditioning, proper space for refrigerators, washing clothes and drying them, etc., and which cannot be easily fitted into existing houses without upsetting the general arrangement. To see what can be done in a new house planned for such things, in reducing labour and in increasing comfort, would increase interest in house building and in redecoration of old houses for such as can't build but want to keep up to date. This would cost the Co. several thousand dollars, but if it went over well, the money would come back in a twelve month in better profits; at least I think it would.<sup>25</sup>*

Undeterred by the fact that the most tangible result of the 1930 competition was a model home that had proven disappointing as an in-store display setting, Eaton still believed that architectural competitions generated the right kind of publicity for the College Street store.<sup>26</sup> He was hardly alone in his continued faith in this particular promotional device: American department stores and household goods manufacturers sponsored many such ideal home design competitions during the Depression.<sup>27</sup> There were, however, significant differences between Eaton's conception of the 1936 event and its predecessor, the 1930 Ideal Ontario Home competition. This time designs for both small and medium houses would be requested. Also, instead of constructing an expensive and cumbersome reproduction of the first-placed design, the resulting competition entries would form the basis of an exhibition that could be circulated to various Eaton's stores across the country. In the case of the winning entries, the two-dimensional drawings would be supplemented by small maquettes.<sup>28</sup>

Direct inspiration for Eaton's competition came in part from the extremely well-publicized American competition sponsored by General Electric (G.E.) in 1935.<sup>29</sup> G.E.'s contest had also called for the design of a small and a medium-sized house, ostensibly in order to reflect the changing lifestyle of an imaginary middle-class client, the Bliss family. Generous prizes totalling \$21 000 attracted over 2 000 entries which were then judged by a panel of experts that included not only architects but also builders, engineers, home economists and child training specialists. The competition program emphasized that the

goal of the designs was to "...bring about better health, increased comfort, greater convenience and improved facilities for home entertainment of the entire family," all of which, of course, would necessitate the extensive use of G.E. products.<sup>30</sup>

While managers certainly hoped to reap commercial benefits from a house design competition, Eaton's did not adopt G.E.'s strategy of overt self-promotion. Once the basic parameters had been set, the actual organization of the event was assigned to Orval D. Vaughan, the manager of the College Street home furnishings division. He was directed to consult with John M. Lyle, a leading Toronto architect, about the details of the competition program. Between them, Vaughan and Lyle developed the necessary design guidelines, which were published in dignified and impersonal language in the April 1936 issue of the *R.A.I.C. Journal*.<sup>31</sup> The program limited the size of the small house to 25 000 cubic feet (708 cubic metres). Within that space, competitors were asked to accommodate a living room, dining room or combined living and dining room, kitchen, four bedrooms, one bathroom, a recreation room and a one-car garage. Construction of such a house was budgeted at \$7 500. The medium house, which was allotted 40 000 cubic feet (1 133 cubic metres) of space and a budget of \$12 000, included such additional features as a pantry, a washroom, a maid's bedroom and bathroom, and a two-car garage. Although both houses were considerably less elaborate than the 1930 Ideal Ontario Home, even the scaled-down vision of suburban life that inspired the 1936 competition represented an unreachable fantasy for most Canadians during the Depression.<sup>32</sup> It was obvious that the competitors' imaginary clients were solidly middle class; the sort of people, in fact, who might have money to spend at Eaton's.

As the competition was national in scope, entries were accepted from any registered architect in Canada and also from any graduate of recognized Canadian schools of architecture, which the program listed as the University of Toronto, McGill University, the University of Manitoba, the University of Alberta, the École des beaux-arts of Montreal and the École des beaux-arts of Quebec. Competitors were asked to submit a block plan with landscaping, complete floor plans, two elevations and a perspective drawing, all on a single illustration board 30 inches (76 centimetres) wide and 40 inches (102 centimetres) high. This system of presentation had been required for the G.E.

competition and may well have been intended to facilitate the later exhibition of the drawings. All entries were to be anonymous and employees of the T. Eaton Company were not allowed to compete. Prizes of \$1 000 each were to be awarded for the two best designs in both the small and the medium-sized category, while the five honourable mentions in each category would receive \$500. In addition to the \$1 000 first prize, a grand prize of \$500 was offered for the best overall design. These were not inconsiderable sums at a time when the average annual Canadian income for a male wage-earner was \$942 and many architects were unemployed.<sup>33</sup> Hopes of winning elicited a total of 149 submissions prior to the competition's closing date of June 15, 1936.

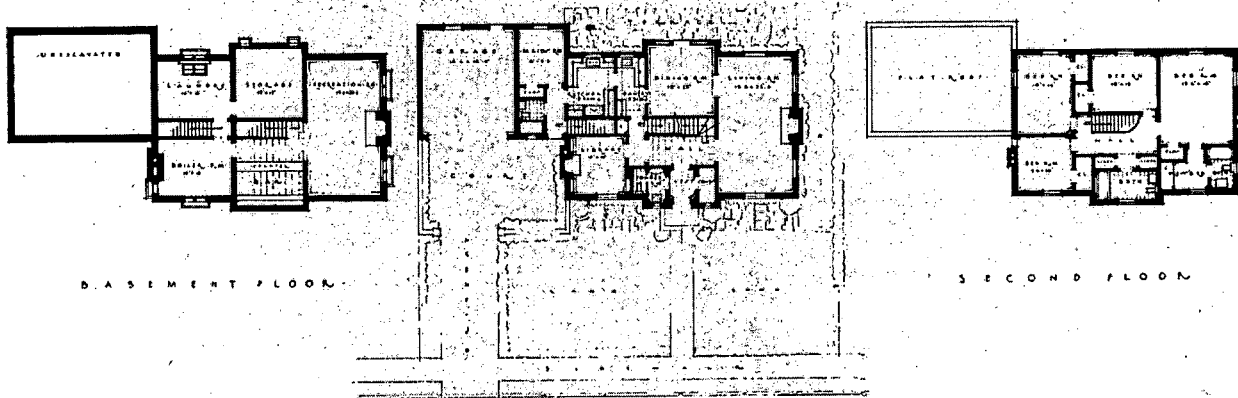
John Lyle not only played a critical role in developing the competition program for the T. Eaton Company, he was also invited to act as a judge and asked to select the two remaining members of the jury. He chose two fellow Toronto architects: Mackenzie Waters and Bruce H. Wright. Lyle's qualifications for the task were unquestionable. Rigorously trained in the Beaux Arts tradition, he had long been one of Canada's most respected architects and had received many important commissions.<sup>34</sup> Less is known about Waters and Wright. Like Lyle, both were members of the so-called "Diet Kitchen Group," an informal assemblage of Toronto architects who were interested in fostering the connections between the decorative arts and architecture.<sup>35</sup> The group's main activity appears to have been the organization of biannual exhibitions of architecture and the allied arts at the Art Gallery of Toronto. Waters also had a well-established practice, with a prosperous if unadventurous clientele, and had won several awards for his house designs. Illustrations of his work published in the *R.A.I.C. Journal* indicate that he had a certain flair for the simplified Georgian architecture that was popular with monied Torontonians during this period.<sup>36</sup> Wright, on the other hand, does not seem to have achieved the same level of recognition from his peers as his fellow judges; possibly he was a younger man who was only beginning to make a reputation. Interestingly, however, he did write a brief article on "The Modern Small House" which appeared in the April 1936 issue of the *R.A.I.C. Journal*.<sup>37</sup> Based on the evidence of this article and a few published comments made by Waters and Lyle, it seems that the three men shared a guarded sympathy for design principles associated with the Modern movement.<sup>38</sup>

**Fig. 5** ▶  
Harold Savage, architect.  
First Award — Medium  
House Class, T. Eaton Co.  
1936 Architectural  
Competition for  
House Designs in  
*R.A.I.C. Journal*,  
July 1936, 130.





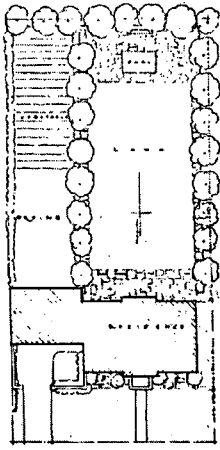
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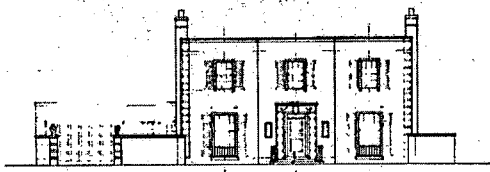
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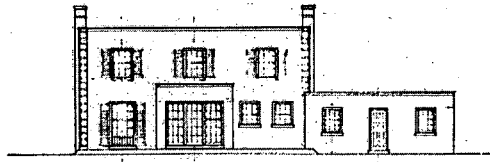
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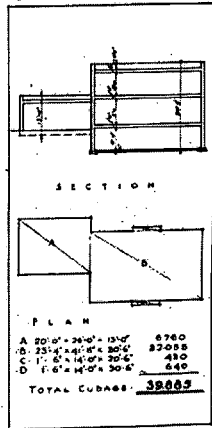
B L O C K P L A N  
SCALE 1/4" = 10'-0"



N O R T H E L E V A T I O N



S O U T H E L E V A T I O N



S E C T I O N

F L A N

A	20'-0" x 24'-0" x 12'-0"	6720
B	25'-0" x 40'-0" x 20'-0"	20000
C	1'-0" x 14'-0" x 30'-0"	420
D	1'-0" x 14'-0" x 30'-0"	420
TOTAL CUBAGE:		<b>38060</b>

C U B A G E D I A G R A M  
SCALE 1/4" = 10'-0"

**FIRST AWARD—MEDIUM HOUSE CLASS**

*Harold J. Savage, M.R.A.I.C., Toronto*

If anything, however, the panel displayed a residual bias towards the traditional in awarding one of the first prizes (Fig. 5) and an honourable mention to two relatively conventional designs in the medium-sized house category.<sup>39</sup> Otherwise, the winning entries were representative of the overwhelming majority of the submissions in their use of a cubist design idiom inspired by European Modernism.<sup>40</sup> The judges' surprise at this phenomenon was documented in their final report:

*An interesting fact showing the trend of architectural taste in Canada is the large preponderance of designs in the modern manner. There were few competitors who adopted the traditional styles. This is particularly noteworthy, as the program of requirements left the competitors free to adapt any style they wished.<sup>41</sup>*

Competitors had been equally free in the 1930 Ideal Ontario Home competition, but with strikingly different results. The complete contrast between the 1930 and 1936 submissions is best illustrated by a quick glance at two designs by the same architect. In 1930 W. F. Williams had placed seventh with a design that married a two-car garage with a gabled structure vaguely reminiscent of an Elizabethan manor house (Fig. 3). In 1936 he won the grand prize for a flat roofed, two-storey building with all the appearance of rigorous rationality that a strict reliance on straight horizontal and vertical lines could give (Fig. 6).<sup>42</sup> A casual observer might logically conclude that the intervening six years between the two competitions had seen a revolution in Canadian domestic architecture.

In claiming that competitors were "free to adopt any style they wished" the judges spoke no more than the literal truth. No attempt had been made to dictate a particular approach to exterior treatment. On the other hand, very precise requirements had been laid out regarding features to be incorporated in the plan. As the judges noted, this specificity curtailed experimentation:

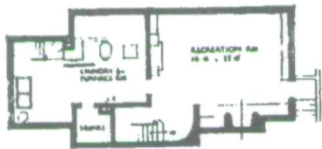
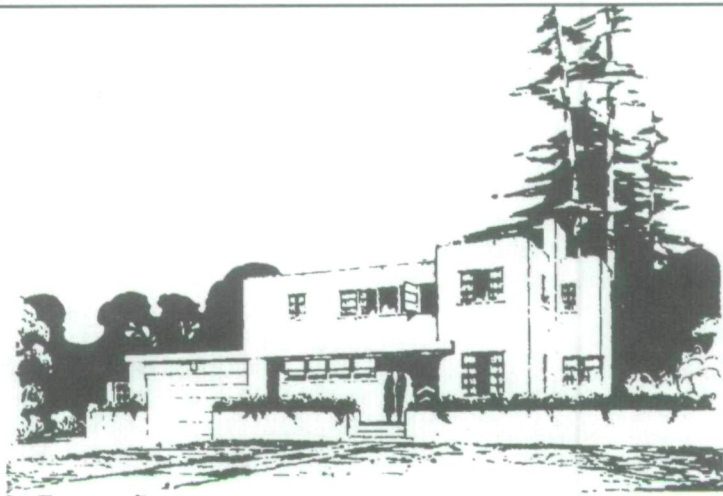
*In many instances there was a great similarity in the types of plan submitted, the elevations on the whole being more varied in character. This similarity in plan may be partially accounted for in the restricted areas demanded by the program for houses of this cost.<sup>43</sup>*

Arguably, restricting the competitors' options may have helped to channel their thinking into a particular design direction. They were expected to devise plans that satisfied a number

of different functional needs associated with middle-class family life during the 1930s and that also conformed to relatively strict spatial limitations. Under such circumstances, the adoption of Modern "streamlined" strategies was hardly surprising. For example, the seemingly radical preference for flat roofs over the more conventional alternatives may well have reflected a desire to maximize the available space.<sup>44</sup> Equally, space constraints would have made the small, efficient kitchens recommended by "modern" home economists and time management experts doubly attractive to the competitors.<sup>45</sup> By stating that combined living and dining rooms would be acceptable, the program actively encouraged participants to consider this approach as an alternative to a more formal arrangement.<sup>46</sup> An inherent bias towards this solution becomes apparent when the plan developed for the only traditional house among the first prize winners is considered. Harold Savage's decision to maintain the old division between living and dining room in his Georgian-inspired townhouse was criticized by the judges on the grounds that the dining room was too small (Fig. 5).<sup>47</sup> Clearly, while a formal layout was still possible within the parameters of the program, it was not as effective in its use of space as Modern informality. From the point of view of the competitors, therefore, a straightforward pragmatism may well explain some of the apparently Modern features shared in common by the plans for the majority of the prize-winning houses.<sup>48</sup>

By clothing their simplified plans in the Modern garb of wrap-around windows, seamless white walls and flat roofs, the competitors made a virtue of the necessities imposed by the program. The originality of their elevations and perspectives compensated for the sense of déjà vu engendered by the sameness of their interior layouts. Even here, however, most of the participating architects seem to have been working within well-defined, if unarticulated, parameters. While, as the judges commented, the exterior treatments were "more varied in character" than the plans, the variations were on standard themes that had been emblematic of European Modernism for at least a decade by 1936. Obedient to the axiom that the elevations should reflect function and plan, the competitors deployed cubist forms relieved by horizontal roof lines and banded windows to project an external image of the modern way of life to be found within the walls. Overall, however, their efforts were considered disappointing:

**Fig. 6** ►  
W. F. Williams, architect.  
Grand Prize and  
First Award — Medium  
House Class, T. Eaton Co.  
1936 Architectural  
Competition for  
House Designs in  
R.A.I.C. Journal,  
July 1936, 128.

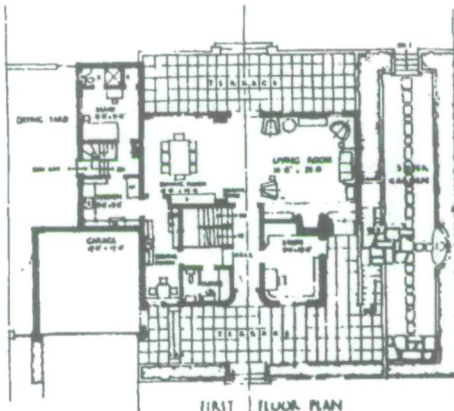


BASMENT PLAN



CUBAGE CHARACTERISTICS

1	10' 0" x 10' 0"	100
2	10' 0" x 10' 0"	100
3	10' 0" x 10' 0"	100
4	10' 0" x 10' 0"	100
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FIRST FLOOR PLAN

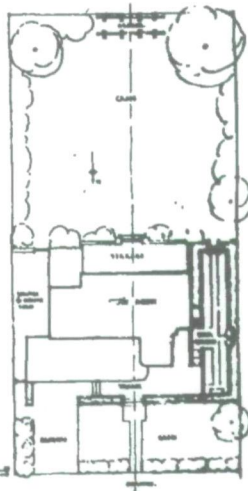


SECOND FLOOR PLAN  
SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"



SIDE ELEVATION

LOT PLAN



GARDEN ELEVATION

*We are of the opinion that many of the competitors designing in the modern manner did not fully realize the importance of mass, wall surfaces and fenestration in the elevations.<sup>49</sup>*

Both competitors and judges were dealing with a new set of rules; a slight sense of discomfort was perhaps to be expected. The jury's anxiety about the relations between mass, wall surface and fenestration betrays a certain unease about the Modernist habit of treating walls as the skin rather than the bones of the structure. Indeed, many of the entries, including the winner of the grand prize, exhibit an unimaginative stiffness in perspective that hints at the adoption of a mechanical convention, rather than a passionately-held creed (Fig. 6).

One of the most interesting aspects of the 1936 competition program was the emphasis placed on the relationship between the house and its immediate environment. Participants were required to provide a block plan showing a landscaping scheme in addition to the plans, elevations and perspective that described the design of the actual house. As a group, the competitors proved to be remarkably consistent in the way they chose to orient their houses to the surrounding physical features of street and garden:

*Many of the competitors placed the important rooms facing the garden with the secondary rooms and staircases at the front or sides. The jury feel that this orientation is the most advantageous as it gives privacy and takes advantage of the southern exposure.<sup>50</sup>*

This rejection of the street met a similarly enthusiastic response from laymen, as shown by the comments published in *Canadian Homes and Gardens* concerning the winning entries in the government-sponsored Dominion Housing Act Small House Design competition, which also took place in 1936:

*The life of the home is turning ever more steadily and emphatically away from the street. With household equipment and services advanced as they are today and available to everyone, the backyard has been freed of its clutter and has taken its proper place in the general scheme, as a pleasant garden, an outdoor living room, designed to extend the livability and charm of the house. All of the designs illustrated and a great majority of those submitted in the competition give the living room at least a rear garden outlook if not actual access; in many cases a flag-paved terrace is provided. One finds no ungainly sun rooms tacked on to these little houses; such*

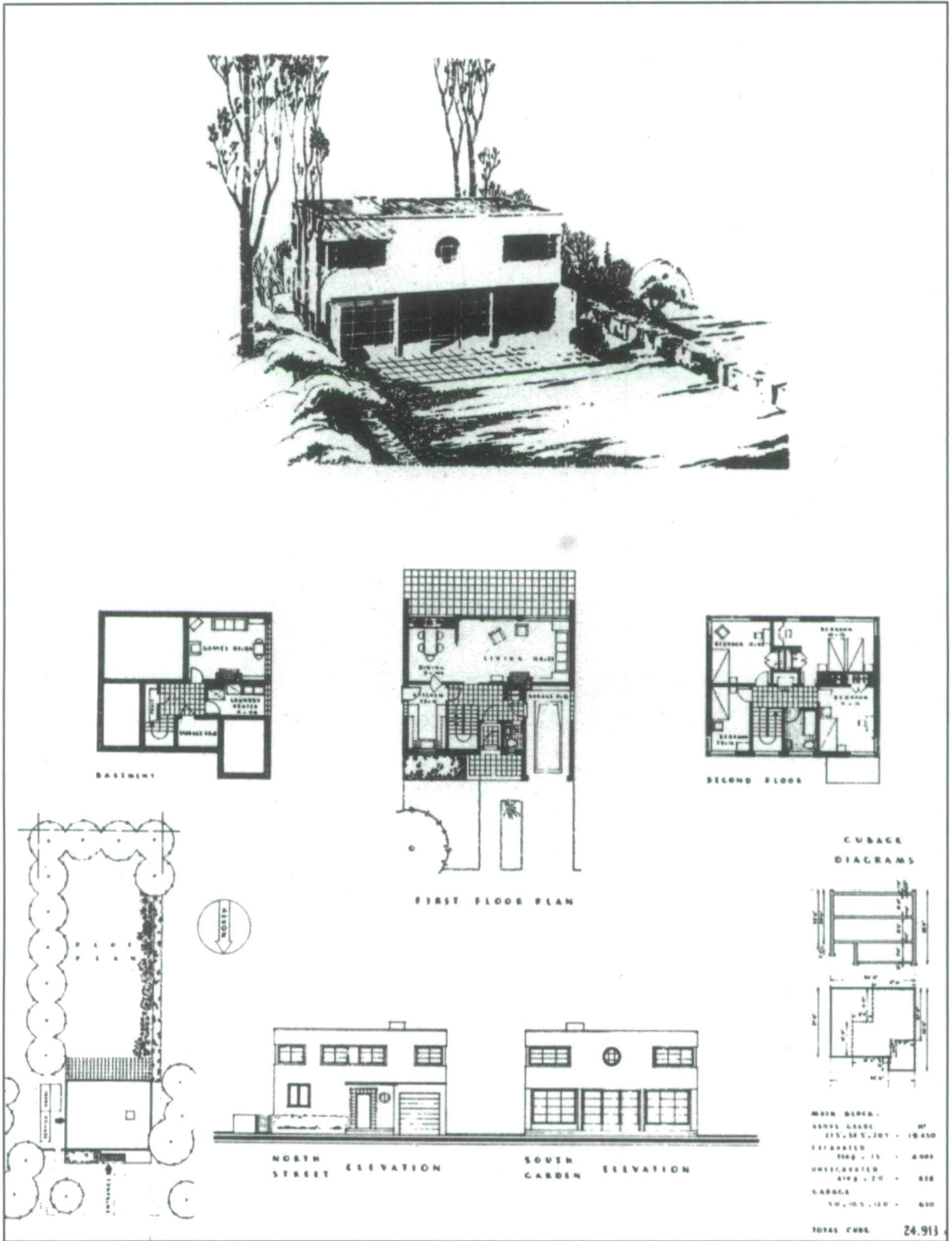
*addition would have the element of insult, for every room in the well-designed small house is cheerful with sun.<sup>51</sup>*

There is nothing radically modern in this inward-looking stress on the privacy of the nuclear family's backyard: the dream of comfortable seclusion from urban realities had been at the heart of the suburban ideal since the eighteenth century.

The concomitant attempt to minimize the physical distinction between the house and the natural world outside was, however, very much a part of Modernism's architectural agenda. Almost all of the houses designed for the 1936 Eaton's competition replaced the small windows typical of traditional dwellings with wide expanses of glass. This was taken to such an extreme in the case of Kent Barker's first prize winning small house that the jury gently advised modifying the design to make it more compatible with the rigors of the Canadian climate (Fig. 7).<sup>52</sup> Various submissions went even further, incorporating the idea of the outdoor living room into the structure of the house in the shape of large balconies and, in one instance, roof gardens.<sup>53</sup> Features such as these were among the recognized trademarks of European Modernism but they seem strangely out of place in the context of a Canadian backyard. As originally conceived, over-sized balconies and roof gardens were an effective response to a high-density urban environment where dwellings necessarily functioned as self-contained units. Transplanted to suburbia they lost much of their functional relevance and were transformed, ironically and inappropriately, into a species of applied decoration.

While the true nature and extent of the competitors' commitment to Modernism as an architectural creed are matters for debate, the fact remains that most of the entries were, to quote the jury, "in the modern manner." The demonstrated familiarity with the purely stylistic aspects of the movement is relatively easy to understand. Although it is impossible to determine how many of those involved in the 1936 Eaton's competition had viewed the work of the giants of European Modernism at first hand, by that time all would have had visual access to important examples of Modern design through books and professional journals.<sup>54</sup> As the architect and critic Humphrey Carver pointed out in *Canadian Forum*, it was largely the existence of a growing body of literature on the subject that had made Modernism international:

**Fig. 7** ►  
Kent Barker, architect.  
First award — Small  
House Class — Eaton Co.  
1936 Architectural  
Competition for  
House Designs in  
R.A.I.C. Journal,  
July 1936, 132.



That within a decade houses of the Modern type should have been built in all quarters of the globe is extraordinary, even if the quantity has not been large. It is the result of world-wide communications, the art of photography and an unprecedented similarity of thought in far-separated lands.<sup>55</sup>

Through publications and exhibitions such as the Museum of Modern Art's 1932 survey of the movement that introduced the term "international style" the fundamental principles of Modern design were gradually defined and codified. Thus, while some of those involved in Eaton's 1936 competition may have shared the reforming zeal of Modern architecture's leading proponents, others had simply learned the code.

Even this level of acceptance of Modernist design principle requires some explanation, as it suggests that there had been a marked change in attitude within the ranks of Canadian architects since 1930, when Philip Turner, one of the judges in the Ideal Ontario Home competition, coolly dismissed Bruno Taut's case for the Modern approach to domestic architecture with the following words:

*In domestic work at any rate one is inclined to think it will be a long time before the "practical efficiency" he advocates in everything will be adopted as a general principle...The long horizontal and flat roofed houses, bare to the bone as far as architectural features are concerned, cannot be said to look anything but out of place or to fit in well with a charming and undulating country district, for nothing in nature has such hard and cold lines...*<sup>56</sup>

Traces of a hesitant evolution in opinion can be found in articles published between 1930 and 1936 in the *R.A.I.C. Journal*. During the late 1920s, Canadian architects and architectural critics were reluctant to accept the European avant garde's definition of Modern architecture, with its deliberately revolutionary overtones. Instead, like many of their British and American counterparts, they were far more likely to advocate the combination of modern technological improvements with traditional building styles.<sup>57</sup> A few years later, however, complete dismissal of European Modernism had given way to a certain curiosity about the movement.<sup>58</sup> This interest seemed to gain in momentum as Modernism achieved greater acceptance in Great Britain. Articles about the lively debate between traditionalists and modernists in the mother country were reprinted in the *R.A.I.C. Journal*.<sup>59</sup> Even more significantly, Modern buildings, including cubist houses,

began to be illustrated in its pages.<sup>60</sup> The first phase of outraged rejection was clearly over; instead a compromise position that sought to incorporate the worthwhile aspects of Modernism into the existing body of architectural tradition was advocated:

*There must be a happy medium, a common meeting ground, between the traditional in residential architecture and the ultra-modern with its simplicity based upon geometrical forms and shapes.*<sup>61</sup>

Canadian architects during this transitional period often reduced Modernism to a list of isolated attributes from which they were then free to pick and choose according to the needs of the moment. For many of the participants in the Eaton's competition the "modern manner" was probably precisely that: a set of useful conventions that could be applied to produce a house in a newly-fashionable style.<sup>62</sup>

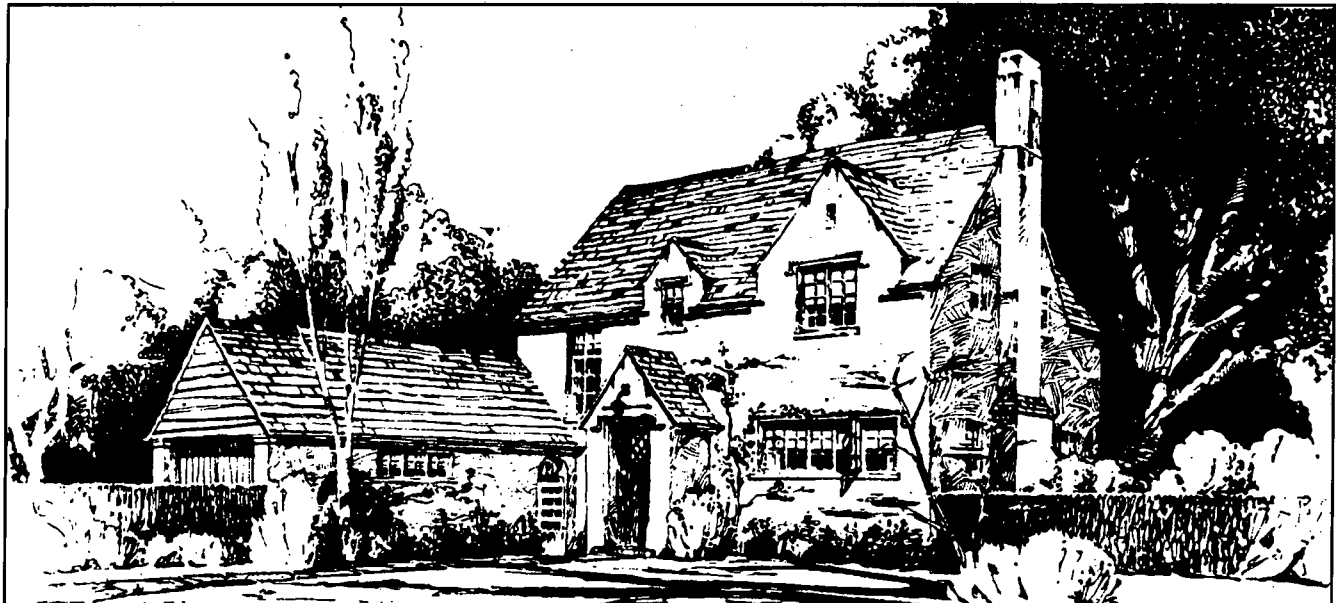
This is certainly the approach adopted in an attempt to market the services of the architect as an expert on the "modern manner" to the potential clients that subscribed to decorating magazines. By 1936 the Toronto branch of the Ontario Association of Architects believed that this relatively well-to-do subgroup was sufficiently interested in Modern domestic architecture to warrant the insertion of the following advertisement in *Canadian Homes and Gardens*:

*What is a modern house? Where is the best place for a garage? Is a separate dining room necessary? Can provision for guests be handled without an extra room? Is the central hall out-moded? What about built-in furniture. Is landscaping a luxury or a necessity? How many closets and where? Are corner windows practical? Does air-conditioning eliminate a fireplace. What is functional planning? Prefabrication — myth or reality? What is glass brick? Are flat roofs practical in Canada?*<sup>63</sup>

The deliberately anonymous advertisement went on to assure would-be home owners in pursuit of all the latest modern features that "Your architect can satisfy you upon all these and other points involved in planning and building a house."

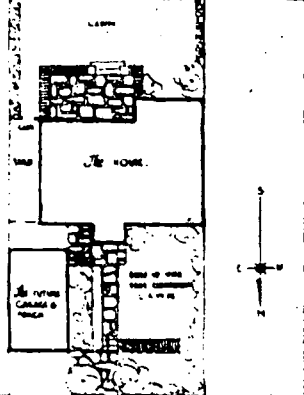
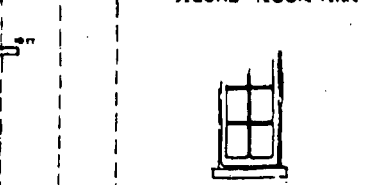
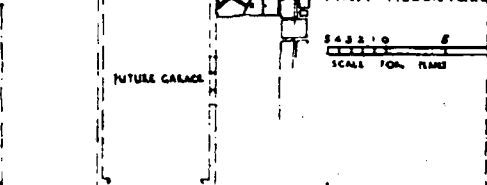
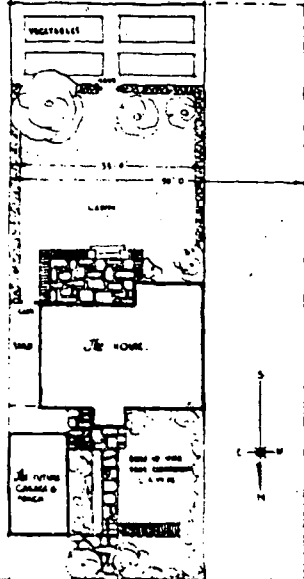
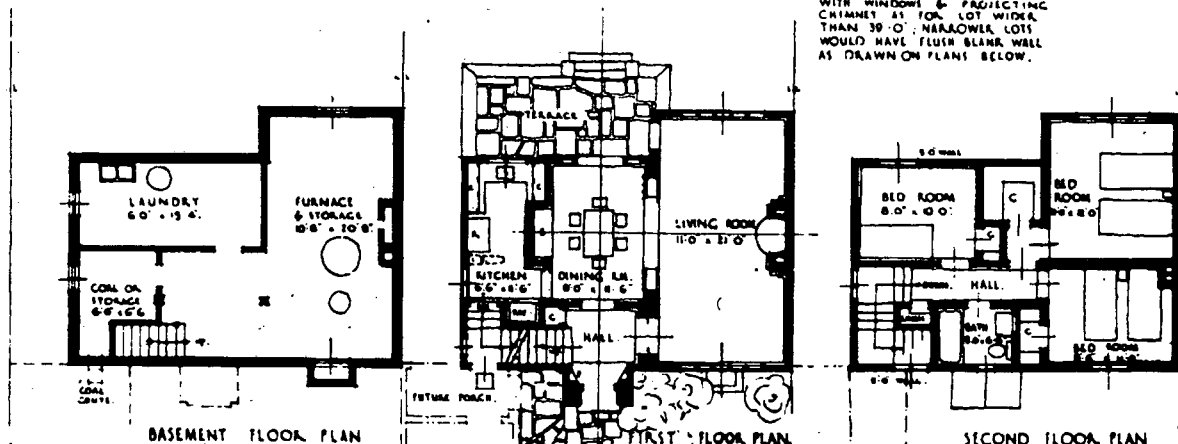
This discrete promotional device was an artifact of the Depression. In their eagerness for new business, the architects responsible for the advertisement sought to persuade prospective clients that their professional guidance was required to negotiate the unfamiliar maze of Modernism. The Modern entries in the 1936 house competitions, which clearly demonstrated

**Fig. 8** ▶  
W. F. Williams, architect.  
Third Prize — 1936  
Dominion Housing  
Act Small House  
Competition in  
*R.A.I.C. Journal*,  
May 1936, 91.

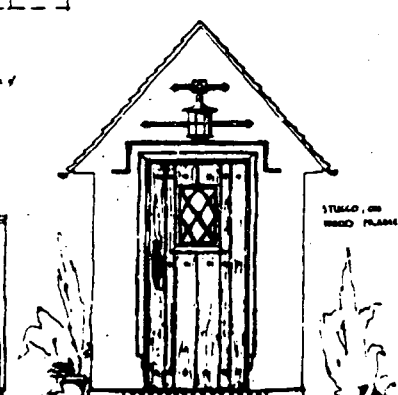
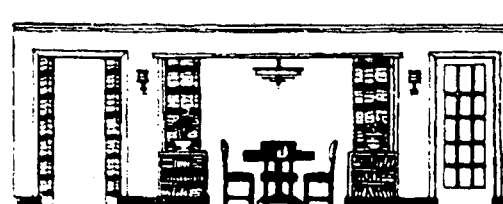


PERSPECTIVE from the NORTH WEST

PERSPECTIVE SHOWS WEST WALL WITH WINDOWS & PROJECTING CHIMNEY AS FOR LOT WIDER THAN 30'-0" NEAROWER LOTS WOULD HAVE FLUSH BLANK WALL AS DRAWN ON PLANS BELOW.



A	14-10-16	1156
B	8'-4"-11	1200
C	3'-6"-9	162
	GRABBER	18
	LARGE DOORWAY	80
	2 SMALL	50
TOTAL CUBAGE		14866, CUB FT.



VIEW OF LIVING RM WALL LOOKING TOWARD DINING RM

FRONT ENTRANCE

familiarity with the new style, can also be seen as part of this marketing strategy. Similar claims of exclusive aesthetic expertise had been advanced throughout the nineteenth century by North American architects competing with speculative builders for recognition as the ultimate authorities on questions of domestic design.<sup>64</sup> In the 1930s, architects staking out the Modern house as their particular territory were unlikely to face much competition from their traditional rivals for the middle-class market: speculative builders were interested in saleability, not innovative design.<sup>65</sup> With luck, however; there might be individual clients with sufficiently advanced tastes to commission such houses. A reassuring tone of practicality pervades the advertising copy, suggesting that architects were equally adept at producing avant garde designs and making sure that the resulting dwelling would have an adequate number of closets. After all, Modern styling had proven to be a compelling selling point for other consumer durables — why not for houses?

Eaton's had certainly demonstrated its faith in the commercial potential of Modern design, and a consciousness of the store's sympathy towards innovation may also have had a certain influence on the competition entries. Toronto architects at least would have been well aware of Eaton's ground-breaking attempts to market art deco and moderne furniture even before the opening of the College Street store. In 1928, the store had taken the ambitious step of hiring a French designer, René Cera, to establish an "Art Moderne" department.<sup>66</sup> He was expected to design furniture and interiors for individual clients and to consult on the store's purchases of manufactured house furnishings in the Modern style. The experiment proved to be a financial failure, and the specialized department was closed down in 1930.<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, Eaton's continued to promote Modern design actively throughout the 1930s.<sup>68</sup> This policy may well have originated at the top, as it appears that the company president, Robert Y. Eaton, was an early convert to art deco. He was so enthusiastic, in fact, that he recommended that members of Eaton's decorating staff travelling to Europe should go on the *Ile de France* as a means of learning the new design principles through direct experience.<sup>69</sup> A younger member of the family, John David Eaton, displayed his own openness to new design developments by commissioning Toronto architect H. J. Burden to create a Modern house for him in the wealthy suburb of Forest Hill (built 1937–39).<sup>70</sup>

The Eaton competition judges had their own theory about the surprising predominance of Modern designs:

*It is evident...that many of the competitors had seriously studied the projects submitted in the numerous competitions for small houses which lately have been held in the United States and Canada.*<sup>71</sup>

For example, the folio of prize-winning entries for the G.E. competition published in the April 1935 issue of *Architectural Forum* indicates a bias towards approaches influenced by European Modernism, even though it was equally possible to design a house in a traditional style that would meet the competition objectives. Those Canadian architects who had unaccountably missed the public relations hoopla surrounding the G.E. contest could learn their lesson by observing events closer to home. The April 1936 issue of the *R.A.I.C. Journal* that contained the program for the Eaton's competition also included illustrations of the winning designs in the federal government's Dominion Housing Act Small House Competition. While W. F. Williams was awarded third prize for a scaled-down version of his 1930 design (Fig. 8), William Ralston's distinctively modern entry placed first (Fig. 9).<sup>72</sup> The experience had an obvious impact on Williams's submission to the Eaton's jury two months later, and he was probably not alone. Whether or not Canadian architects had fully accepted Modern design principles, they correctly concluded that Modernism had the charm of novelty required to win competitions in 1936.<sup>73</sup>

It was a charm that wore off fairly quickly. A mere two years later, in 1938, the majority of the winning designs in a second small house competition sponsored by the federal government were once again inspired by traditional models of domestic architecture (Fig. 10). Commenting on the discrepancy between the 1936 and 1938 competitions, A. S. Mathers noted the revealing fact that very few of the 1936 houses had ever been built:

*The reasons for this are many, but the principle ones are two, first, the designs were like ultra fashionable clothes, too far in advance of popular fancy to be acceptable to house owners in the price class; and second, the designs were not in the minimum cost class.*<sup>74</sup>

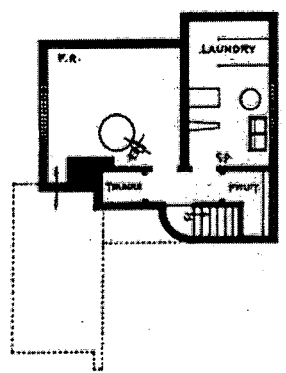
The embarrassing history of the attempt to construct a prototype of W. F. Williams's grand prize winning design in suburban Toronto bears

**Fig. 9** ► William Ralston, architect. First Prize — 1936 Dominion Housing Act Small House Competition in *R.A.I.C. Journal*, May 1936, 88.

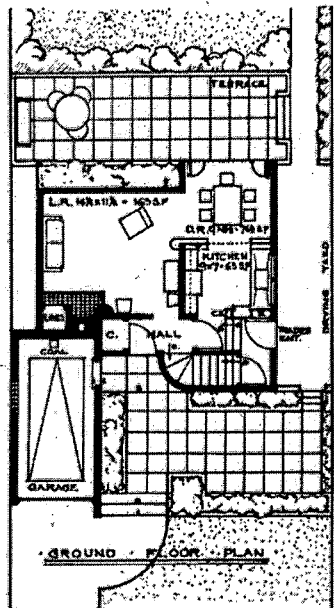




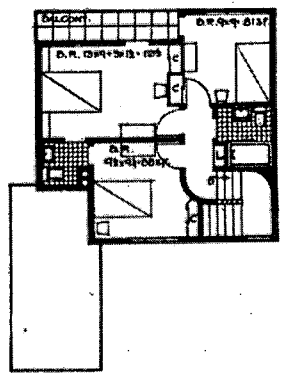
PERSPECTIVE



BASEMENT FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

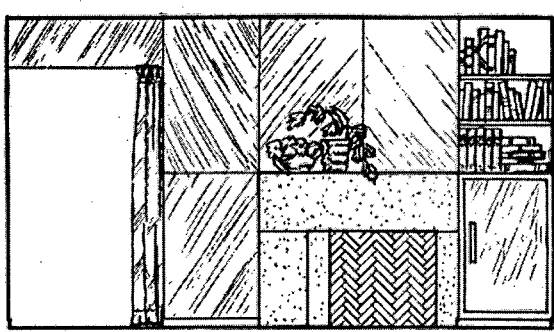


BED RM. FLOOR PLAN

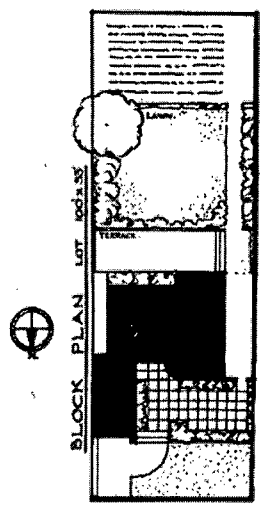


A	24' x 15' = 371
B	18' x 4' = 98
C	10' x 3' = 30
D	14' x 3' = 44
499 x 25' = 12,612	
44 x 10 = 445	
TOTAL	13,057

CUBAGE TABULATION

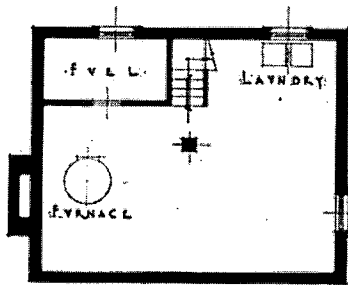
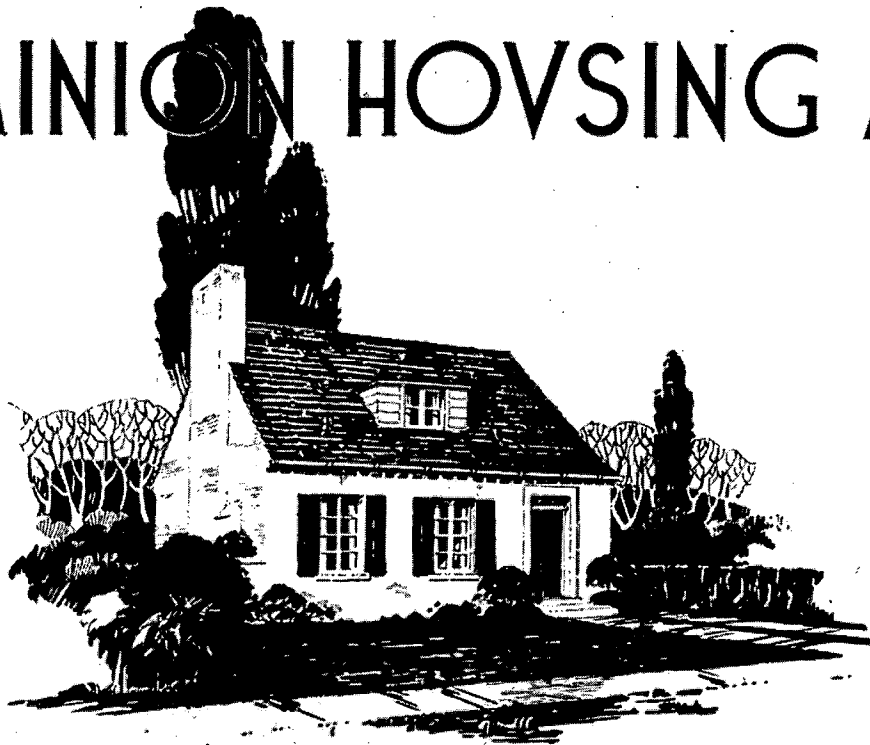


LIVING ROOM FIREPLACE

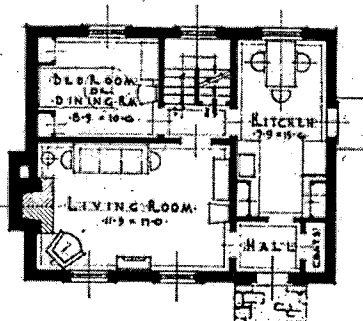


BLOCK PLAN LOT 100 x 35

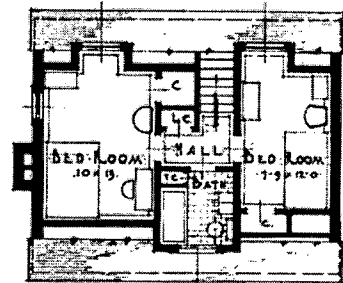
# DOMINION HOVSING ACT



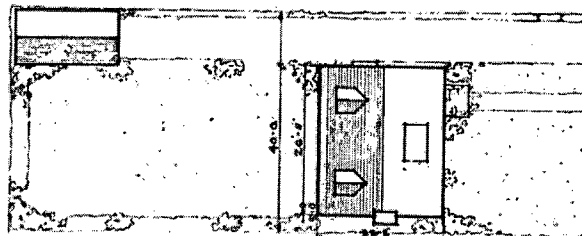
BASMENT PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



SECOND FLOOR PLAN



PLOT PLAN

SCALE FOR PLOT PLAN  
 0 5 10 15 20 25

SCALE FOR PLANS  
 0 5 10 15

GREENSIDES AND LANGLEY, ARCHITECTS  
 TORONTO, ONTARIO

◀ **Fig. 10**  
*Greensides and Langley, architects. One of ten winning designs in 1938 Dominion Housing Act Small House Competition in R.A.I.C. Journal, April 1938, 86.*

out the second half of Mathers's criticism. Eaton's decided to abandon the project when tenders based on working drawings and specifications prepared by Lyle and Williams came in at twice the cost originally budgeted in the competition program.<sup>75</sup>

In the final analysis, however, Mathers's first point may be even more telling. The standard objection that "She just don't look like a house" quoted in Bruce Wright's 1936 article on Modern domestic architecture may well have been raised by middle-class home builders and mortgage companies alike, thus combining aesthetic preferences and economics in a powerful case against Modern architecture.<sup>76</sup> Even Humphrey Carver, one of Modernism's most committed and vocal supporters, had his doubts about introducing such very different houses into Canada's residential streetscapes:

*Although the Small Homes competitions have served to advance public interest in architecture, they are open to one serious criticism: they have lent encouragement to the conception of a single house as a unit of design, complete in itself. This assumption, which is characteristic of our individualistic society, had been fostered by the popular "home" magazines, by the interests of real estate, and even by architects. It has resulted in the North American suburb becoming the most glorious and pathetic hodge-podge that the mind of man has ever created. The real unit of design, of course, should be the street. Good architecture takes its place quietly, politely and deliberately in the street facade, forming an integral part of civil design. Criticized from this point of view, the majority of designs submitted in these competitions (and the majority of existing suburban houses) are by no means satisfactory. They attempt to arrest attention to themselves by their novelty, which in a few years time becomes as démodé and tiresome as the romantic fancies of Victorian sentiment.<sup>77</sup>*

Carver was perfectly correct in arguing that the designs generated by the 1936 Eaton's competition would have been out of place in a suburban setting, although he showed his own Modernist biases in singling out their individualism as the source of their essential incompatibility. The ideas and alternatives proposed by the competition were rejected for the most part by the few Canadians in a position to build a home during the Depression for quite different reasons. Arguably the white cubist forms associated with Modern domestic architecture in the interwar years were incompatible with the ethos that informed the middle-class suburbs of North America. The suburb placed a psychological and physical distance between the urban work place and the home. Houses modelled on the clean lines of twentieth-century industrial buildings had no place there.<sup>78</sup> A Modernist idiom that was more sensitive to its surroundings would have to be developed before such houses could become popular alternatives to more traditional dwellings.

The three ideal house competitions held in Canada in 1936 gave Canadian architects a welcome opportunity to promote themselves to an important group of potential clients: middle-class home owners. The Eaton's competition was especially attractive because events sponsored by the store reached a wide audience of consumers. Interestingly, the architects used this opportunity to experiment with Modern house designs. While their motives for doing so may have been mixed, the designs they produced demonstrate that a significant number of Canadian architects had achieved a fair level of familiarity with the tenets of European Modernism. In turn, Eaton's use of the competition for publicity purposes increased public awareness of contemporary architectural developments. Awareness would develop into acceptance in the years following World War II.

#### NOTES

1. For a detailed discussion of Eaton's efforts to position itself as an arbiter of taste for Toronto's upper middle-class consumers, see Cynthia Wright, "The Most Prominent Rendezvous of the Feminine Toronto: Eaton's College Street and the Organization of Shopping in Toronto, 1920-1950" (Ph.D. thesis, Graduate Department of Education, University of Toronto, 1993). American stores adopting similar strategies are mentioned in Clifford Edward Clark, Jr., *The American Family Home, 1800-1960* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 140.
2. Neil Harris, "Museums, Merchandising, and Popular Taste: The Struggle for Influence," Ian M. G. Quimby, ed., *Material Culture and the Study of American Life* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co. Inc., 1978), 140-174.
3. The Toronto firm of Sproatt and Rolph were also involved in the project on a consulting basis.
4. For a detailed description of Eaton's College Street store, see Hilary Russell, "Eaton's College Street Store and Seventh Floor" (Unpublished paper, Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, 1983).

5. *Canadian Homes and Gardens*, December 1930, 85.
6. Russell, "Eaton's College Street Store," 400.
7. Wright, "The Most Prominent Rendezvous," 14-15, 118.
8. "Awards in Architectural Competition for an Ideal Ontario Home," *R.A.I.C. Journal*, April 1930, 138.
9. *Canadian Homes and Gardens*, August 1930, 26.
10. For a discussion of the English Canadian style of domestic architecture that was becoming popular with Toronto's upper middle-class in the first decades of the twentieth century, see Annmarie Adams, "Eden Smith and the Canadian Domestic Revival," *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine* (March 1993): 104-115.
11. W. L. Somerville, "Recent Domestic Architecture in the Province of Ontario," *R.A.I.C. Journal* (July 1928): 268.
12. *Canadian Homes and Gardens*, (September 1930): 34.
13. "Awards in Architectural Competition for an Ideal Ontario Home," 141.
14. *Canadian Homes and Gardens*, (August 1930): 30.
15. *Ibid.*
16. During the 1920s the terms "modern" and "modernistic" were used interchangeably by contemporary architectural critics. Following the Museum of Modern Art's 1932 exhibition and the publication of *The International Style: Architecture Since 1922* by Henry Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson (New York: W. W. Norton & Co. Inc., 1932) a more precise definition of Modern architecture was available. In recent literature the term "modernistic" is sometimes associated with art deco design, and it is in that sense I use it here. While Ian Forbes's design departs from the traditional, it is not truly Modern and the term "modernistic" seems as good as any to express the aspirations and contradictions of this transitional architecture.
17. There are interesting similarities between Forbes's design and the art deco house Alexandra Biriukova designed for Lawren Harris in Forest Hill (built 1930-31). For example, in both cases two lower wings angle off a central tower. See Geoffrey Simmins, *Ontario Association of Architects: A Centennial History 1889-1989* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 104-110, for a discussion of Biriukova's design.
18. Philip J. Turner would become acting director of the McGill School of Architecture in 1939, at a time when the school was virtually moribund. He helped to preserve it, not least by persuading John Bland to return to Montreal from England in 1939 to work as his secretary. Bland would become acting director in turn in 1941 and was responsible for modernizing the curriculum. Irena Murray and Norbert Schoenauer, eds., *John Bland at Eighty: A Tribute* (Montreal: McGill University, 1991), 23-24.
19. "Awards in Architectural Competition for an Ideal Ontario Home," 141.
20. *Ibid.*
21. John T. Saywell, *Housing Canadians: Essays on the History of Residential Construction in Canada. Discussion Paper #24* (Ottawa: Economic Council of Canada, 1975), 170-171.
22. See John H. Thompson and Allen Seager, *Canada 1922-1939: Decades of Discord* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1985), 261-266, for a more detailed analysis of the Bennett "New Deal."
23. Financial institutions were generally reluctant to make loans under the program unless they believed their investment was absolutely secure. In practice few Canadian families met their criteria. See John C. Bacher, *Keeping to the Marketplace: The Evolution of Canadian Housing Policy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 83-93, and John David Hulchanski, "The 1935 Dominion Housing Act: Setting the Stage for a Permanent Federal Presence in Canada's Housing Sector," *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine*, (June 1986): 19-39, for more detailed critiques of the DHA.
24. The head of Eaton's home furnishings division, Orval D. Vaughan, did point out the advantages of the connection between the competition and the DHA, but this was not the primary reason behind the decision to sponsor the event. Memo dated 13 February 1936. Archives of Ontario. T. Eaton Company Records, Series 69, Box 9.
25. Memo from Robert Y. Eaton to John [David Eaton?] dated 13 February 1936. Archives of Ontario. T. Eaton Company Records, Series 69, Box 9. To place this memo in its wider economic context, Eaton's profits had dropped from over \$5 million in 1925 to under \$900 000 in 1933. C. Wright, "The Most Prominent Rendezvous," 75-76.
26. Eaton's sales personnel were dubious about the construction of a full-scale model house in the College Street store, and by 1937 dissatisfaction at its inflexibility led to its demolition. Archives of Ontario. T. Eaton Company Records, Series 69, Box 22.
27. See Hélène Lipstadt, "In the Shadow of the Tribune Tower," Hélène Lipstadt, ed., *The Experimental Tradition* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1989), 83-85, for a discussion of house competitions in the United States during the Depression.
28. Memo from R. Y. Eaton to John [David Eaton?] dated 13 February 1936. Archives of Ontario. T. Eaton Company Records, Series 69, Box 9.
29. Memo from O. D. Vaughan, dated 22 February 1936. Archives of Ontario, T. Eaton Company Records. Series 69, Box 9.
30. *Architectural Forum* (January 1935): 10.
31. The contrast in approach between Eaton's and General Electric is striking. One of the devices G.E. used was a detailed description of the Bliss family, the imaginary clients that the architects entering the competition had to satisfy. Eaton's made no attempt to popularize its competition in this way.
32. See the chapter "Keeping House" in Veronica Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled: Lives of Girls and Women in English Canada 1919-1939* (Markham, Ontario: Penguin Books Canada Ltd., 1988), 113-144, for a discussion of the limited availability of modern conveniences in Canadian households during the 1930s.
33. John Heard Thompson and Allen Seager, *Canada 1922-1939: Decades of Discord* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1985), 151. This is

- the average income figure for 1931. For an estimate of the number of unemployed architects in Canada, see "Unemployment in the Architectural Profession" in *R.A.I.C. Journal* (August 1931): 289.
34. Geoffrey Hunt, *John M. Lyle: Toward a Canadian Architecture* (Kingston: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1982), 132-141.
  35. The other members of the "Diet Kitchen Group" (which took its name from the Toronto restaurant where they all met for lunch) were W. L. Somerville, Martin Baldwin, A. S. Mathers, Eric W. Haldenby and C. B. Cleveland. See *Saturday Night* (12 March 1927): 21.
  36. See for example "Residence on the Hill, Toronto" illustrated in *R.A.I.C. Journal* (April 1932): 99.
  37. Bruce H. Wright, "The Modern Small House," *R.A.I.C. Journal* (April 1936): 71-75. The article appeared in the same issue as the program for the Eaton's house design competition.
  38. Waters gave a cautious welcome to the "new architecture" in a 1936 radio broadcast:
 

*We are perhaps fortunate in Canada in having avoided some of the monstrosities perpetrated in other countries in the search during the last decade for a solution of the modern building problem and we can now hope to go ahead profiting by the mistakes which are inevitable in any period of transition.*
  39. Quoted in the *R.A.I.C. Journal* (March 1936): 49. Even earlier, following a trip to the Continent in the late 1920s, Lyle had expressed enthusiasm for some aspects of Modernism. Although he continued to execute commissions that followed traditional models, the sincerity of his interest in a more modern approach is evidenced by the elevations he drew for his own country house. Unfortunately, the house was never built. See *R.A.I.C. Journal* (April 1929); also Hunt, *John M. Lyle: Toward a Canadian Architecture*, 121.
  40. This first prize was awarded to Harold Savage, winner of the 1930 Eaton's competition.
  41. An album containing copies of all the competition entries provides the evidence for this conclusion. Archives of Ontario, T. Eaton Company Records. Series 69, Box 8.
  42. "Awards in the T. Eaton Company Architectural Competition for House Designs," *R.A.I.C. Journal* (July 1936): 138.
  43. Australian-born, William Frederick Williams received his architectural education at Melbourne University. He later went on to work as an architect in the United States and England before settling in Canada. At the time of Eaton's 1936 competition he had established a practice in Nelson, British Columbia. In 1937 his modernist design won the competition for the Canadian pavilion at the 1939 New York World's Fair. Elspeth Cowell, "The Canadian Pavilion at the 1939 New York World's Fair and the Development of Modernism in Canada," *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* (March 1994): 13-20.
  44. "Awards in the T. Eaton Company Architectural Competition for House Designs," 129.
  45. An architectural critic speculating about the reasons for the prevalence of Modern designs among the entries to the G.E. competition suggested that flat roofs may have been dictated by expediency, given the spatial constraints of the program. Frank Chouteau Brown, "Looking Over a Few Designs Submitted in the Recent G.E. Competition, Class A-B," *Pencil Points*, May 1935, 238.
  46. Clark, *The American Family Home*, 167.
  47. "Architectural Competition Sponsored by the T. Eaton Co. Limited," *R.A.I.C. Journal* (April 1936): 84.
  48. "Awards in the T. Eaton Company Architectural Competition for House Designs," 138.
  49. In any case, simplification, efficient use of space and informality were not the exclusive property of proponents of European Modernism. This approach to planning had been promoted by housing reformers in North America since the late nineteenth century, but without involving a European-style revolution in exterior form. See Gwendolyn Wright, *Moralism and the Modern Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago, 1873-1913* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 231-253.
  50. "Awards in the T. Eaton Company Architectural Competition for House Designs," 138.
  51. *Ibid.*
  52. *Canadian Homes and Gardens*, August-September 1936, 19.
  53. "Awards in the T. Eaton Company Architectural Competition for House Designs," 138.
  54. See Wilfred Whaley's entry, "Awards in the T. Eaton Company Architectural Competition for House Designs," 137.
  55. Lyle, of course, had spent time in France during the late 1920s and visited examples of Modern architecture while there. W. F. Williams, the 1936 grand prize winner, had travelled for a year and a half in England, Holland and Germany during the mid 1930s specifically to study modern architectural developments. Archives of Ontario, T. Eaton Company Records. Series 69, Box 9.
  56. *Canadian Forum* (April 1936): 20.
  57. *R.A.I.C. Journal* (May 1930): 198.
  58. See Bridget A. May, "Progressivism and the Colonial Revival: The Modern Colonial House, 1900-1920," *Winterthur Portfolio* (Summer/Autumn 1991): 107-122, for a discussion of an extremely popular North American middle-class housing type that successfully combined a traditional style with modern planning.
  59. Alexander F. Gross, "Witness to the Passing of Victorian Architecture — The R.A.I.C. Journal, 1924-1935" *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada*, 2, no. 87: 9-14.
  60. For example, see the reprint of the BBC debate between Sir Reginald Blomfield and A. C. Connell, "For and Against Modern Architecture," *R.A.I.C. Journal* (May 1935): 75-79.
  61. Bruce Wright illustrated his article on "The Modern Small Home" with a picture of a house by Serge Chermayeff in Rugby, England. *R.A.I.C. Journal* (April 1936): 73.

61. Milton S. Osborne, "The Modern and Traditional Interpretation of Architecture" in *R.A.I.C. Journal* (April 1936): 66.
62. Some of the competitors, such as John Bland, later director of the McGill School of Architecture, did have a strong commitment to Modernism.
63. *Canadian Homes and Gardens* (March 1936): 2. This advertisement was part of a series published by the magazine in return for articles on domestic architecture written by members of the Toronto branch of the Ontario Association of Architects. The architects had made the arrangement to advertise in an attempt to encourage members of the public to consider hiring an architect when they decided to build. Ronald W. Catto, "Promoting the Services of the Architect," *R.A.I.C. Journal* (June 1935): 99-101.
64. See Dell Upton, "Pattern Books and Professionalism: Aspects of the Transformation of Domestic Architecture in America, 1800-1860," *Winterthur Portfolio*, (Summer/Autumn 1984). This topic is also discussed in Wright, *Moralism and the Model Home*, 46-78, 199-227.
65. Michael Doucet and John Weaver, *Housing the North American City* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 235-236.
66. René Cera was born in Nice in 1895. He probably trained at the École Nationale des Arts Decoratifs de Nice. At the time he was hired by Eaton's, he was director of Martine, an interior decoration firm owned by Paul Poiret. Archives of Ontario, T. Eaton Company Records. Series 8, Box 11. F229-8-0-225.
67. For a more detailed discussion, see Wright, "The Most Prominent Rendezvous," 158-162.
68. Virginia Wright, *Seduced and Abandoned: Modern Furniture Designers in Canada — The First Fifty Years* (Toronto: The Art Gallery at Harbourfront, 1985), 3-4.
69. Extract from R. Y. Eaton letter of 2 April 1928. Archives of Ontario, T. Eaton Company Records. Series 13, Box 1.
70. Paula McCullough, "An Amateur Architectural Sleuth on the Bauhaus Mystery Tour," *Azure* (December/January 1990/1991): 9-10.
71. "Awards in the T. Eaton Company Architectural Competition for House Designs," 129, 138.
72. Ralston later designed a house similar to this one that was built in Outremont, Quebec.
73. The trend towards Modernism continued with the winning entries in the Ontario Government Small House Competition, the last of the series of competitions held in 1936. See *R.A.I.C. Journal* (August 1936): 150-157. Some of the winning designs in this competition were actually built in Toronto. McCullough, "An Amateur Architectural Sleuth," 8-10.
74. *R.A.I.C. Journal* (April 1938): 81.
75. Letter from John M. Lyle to W. F. Williams, 21 April 1937. Archives of Ontario, T. Eaton Company Records. Series 69, Box 9.
76. Bruce H. Wright, "The Modern Small House," 71.
77. *Saturday Night*, 7 November 1937, 3.
78. For a discussion of a few examples of Modern houses actually built in Canada before World War II, see Harold Kalman, *A History of Canadian Architecture*, vol. 2 (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994), 783-785.