

The Montreal Trend House Interior Design and Architect Notes

Excerpts from the 2012 Roberta-Angell Prize History Contest entry written by Jane Marcuse of Beaconsfield, QC entitled "The Montreal Trend House" edited by SHBBHS.

As in the Case Study program in the United States, the Trend House design parameters for each house were left to the architects. These were selected from local firms, and were proponents of modern design. The aim was to create houses that were slightly ahead of current building technology, giving people a view of what residential homes might look like five or six years in the future. In 1953, Philip explored several locations, but Beaconsfield was picked as the ideal community for numerous reasons. Beaconsfield was chosen rather than Lachine, Dorval or Pointe Claire because at the time it was considered one of Canada's premier bedroom communities, on a par with Toronto's Oakville. The thinking was that it was an idyllic place to bring up children, equivalent with Westmount in cache but with a country type feel. Number 2 Woodland was a perfect piece of land at 20,880 square feet, sitting directly across the Lakeshore Road from Lake St. Louis. From the living room windows the family would be able to view the boats sailing by, along with spectacular sunsets. Unlike water front properties, the taxes would be lower, making it more financially accessible. The house itself was 1635 square feet, not including the garage.

Thousands of people visited the Trend House, when it was opened to the public for inspection for 3 months beginning on Monday, May 24th, 1954. On that date, the Montreal Gazette devoted 3 full pages (12-14) to the Montreal Trend House. The headline read:

Visit Montreal Trend House, May 24th to September 12th. See What's Newest in Modern Living. Open 3 P.M. to 9 P.M., Daily, including Sundays. There's no admission charge. 2 Woodland Avenue, Beaconsfield.

Following are descriptions and quotes that were garnered by Jane from readings, as well as interviews conducted with Philip's family.

Canada's Trend Houses were not pre-fabricated or mass-produced. Each one was different and at the discretion of the individual architects. The majority were equipped with the most modern installations, including remote control wiring, air conditioning, electronic temperature control and thermo pane windows.

Many new innovations and creative ideas were implemented in Philip Goodfellow's Trend House. The house, land and build were entirely financed by Philip himself, with some of the building materials donated by the sponsors. The major focus of the Trend House program was to showcase the BC lumber industry.

BC red cedar was used in the halls of the house, hemlock on the beams, flooring and ceiling. Douglas fir was used on the cupboards and built-ins, and western poplar on the living room walls. The contractor, Gordon Bryson of Baie-D'Urfe noted, that all the BC wood selection was top quality and easy to work with, and all the corresponding

materials were revolutionary. In the high traffic areas such as the kitchen Philip chose Dominion Inlaid Linoleum. For the kitchen counters he chose Arborite with a four- inch backsplash. He also put Arborite on the hinged-hatched- shelf between the kitchen and dining room. The pattern for both was called Grey Tweed. The walls of the bathrooms were also Arborite, the pattern Tan Irish Linen. Metal moldings surrounded the master bathroom's double sinks and the Arborite colour was Yellow Irish Linen.

The Canadian Arborite Company, established in 1948, manufactured a composite material, which was a water and heat resistant paper melamine. The melamine was combined with resins to make it fire retardant. For it's time, it transformed the type of materials that were traditionally used on kitchen counters. Prior to the use of Arborite, linoleum or wood was used. In the United States the equivalent product to Arborite was Formica.

The selection of interior and exterior paint colors was chosen to accentuate rather than under emphasize the natural beauty of the wood. Philip and a colour consultant from the Sherwin Williams Paint Company accomplished this by using yellow with blends of brown and blue. Each room had its own individual colour scheme, yet it was in harmony with the overall plan.

Anaconda copper tubing was used for the plumbing and heating. There was a solid brass rustproof hot water tank and the eaves troughs, downspouts, flashing and valleys were also copper. Solid brass or bronze hardware was used throughout the house, and there were bronze insect screens.

The windows were thermo pane, and mirrors played an important role to bring depth and light to the rooms. Fiberglass insulation was used throughout, which was said to form an effective thermal barrier of millions of individual pockets. It was also fire retardant, which was a first, as prior insulation materials easily burned.

From a design perspective the house reflected Philip's family orientation. To quote Philip, "There is a growing conviction among contemporary Canadian architects that streamlining in new homes can be overdone. We have been prone to forget about our family life in home design. We have discounted the presence of our children and relegated them to the basement or spare room. Children should not be shooed off to unwanted corners of the house. I have tried to correct this by using a `core'."

Philip's outstanding example of this was a family size kitchen with modern additions such as an automatic dishwasher and remote control lighting. The family areas were comprised of the kitchen and laundry room, with a low bar marking off the dining area, which then flows directly into a large play area, where the children's toys, and the family TV set were. On the other side of the half wall from the kitchen to the playroom, there were stools and a counter top. The children could exit the playroom to the largest part of the yard. This king size playroom off the kitchen was designed so that the children could play while being supervised by the adults in the kitchen. Quote: "It is important, explains Philip that the children and adults have a room where they can gather. It is also important that the adults reserve to themselves, for entertaining guests or for their own cultural enjoyment, a room of their own." To achieve this, he designed a handsome living and dining room on the opposite side of the kitchen to the playroom. This was the showpiece of the Montreal Trend House with its lofty pitched ceiling using the two full floors of the

home. The fireplace was made of rectangular cut stone and its upper wooden facade soared to the cathedral ceiling. The formal dining room was divided from the kitchen by banks of two way drawers and cupboards, which opened with equal ease into either room. No running back into the kitchen for that forgotten serving spoon!

By 1950's standards the 5 bedrooms were substantial and planned for the family to expand over time. There was a remote control system to turn off the lights on the first floor from upstairs and vice versa. From the upstairs hall/ gallery you could look down into the living room. On the upper level the space under the eaves was used for storage, with no space wasted. The master bedroom was on the first floor along with two other bedrooms, and the two bedrooms upstairs were planned for housing guests and eventually teenagers. The first floor was open concept for its time, not as we know it nowadays where open concept takes on a whole new mania, with as few walls as possible and kitchens open to not only the dining room but living area as well. The Trend House flow was such that you were not cut off from your family but yet the kitchen was not the focal point for all to see. Natural light flooded the living room with lake facing windows half way up to the cathedral ceiling. Philip designed a steep roofline to bear and shed the snow load.

There were 5 doors to the outside and the attached garage was built for 2 cars but with one garage door. Built into the back of the garage with its door on the outside of the house was a garden shed.

Kenneth Munroe Place purchased the house in 1954.