

PARKIN, John Burnett (1911 – 1975)

John Burnett Parkin was a major figure in the establishment of modern architecture and modern architectural practice in Canada.

Using the team approach advocated by modernists such as Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe, Parkin Associates employed designers, engineers, mechanical specialists, landscape architects and interior designers to provide a comprehensive corporate service which could take care of every aspect of a building. At its height, Parkin Associates had over 200 employees, was the largest architectural practice in the Commonwealth and one of the 10 largest in the world.

Born in Toronto, Parkin studied at the University of Toronto School of Architecture under Eric Arthur. After graduating in 1935 he went to England and worked for the National Coal Board and architects Howard and Souster. Upon returning to Toronto in 1937 he established Parkin Associates. School design became a particular interest for Parkin who wrote on the subject for the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada Journal in 1942 and was appointed by the Governor General in 1947 to an advisory committee on the equipping and planning of schools. His Sunnylea School (1946) in Etobicoke influenced the design of post

war schools all over Canada.

In 1947 Parkin's brother, Edmund T., a landscape architect joined him as a partner as did the identically named but unrelated John Cresswell Parkin. John B. became the administrative leader of the firm and John C. took charge of design. Parkin Associates had commissions for factories, schools and offices across Canada. Some notable Parkin buildings in Toronto are the International Airport (1963–1966); the City Hall (1965) with Viljo Revell; the Simpson Tower (1968) and the Toronto Dominion Centre (1969) with Mies van der Rohe. Their diverse International projects included airports for Rome and Copenhagen and a one-room school in India.

Deeply interested in city planning, John B. Parkin devoted much time to social service. In 1968 when the firm was known as Parkin Architects, Engineers and Planners, John B. moved to Los Angeles where he could practice architecture in the fastest growing city in North America. Here he formed a partnership with Roy Marshall and established Parkin Architects, Engineers and Planners, Los Angeles.

Parkin, whose buildings were marked by a unified clarity of form and structure said "The mark of good architecture is good manners".