

## STOREY, Joseph William (1923 – 1975)

**A**n architect who drew the winds of the modern movement to his home town, Joe Storey was instrumental in transforming the face of Chatham and the small towns of southwestern Ontario.

Born in Windsor, Ontario on July 5, 1923, Storey grew up in neighbouring Chatham. Showing artistic promise at a young age, he pursued architecture at the University of Toronto, graduating in 1946. Shortly thereafter, he and colleague G. Burniston won the first prize of the Canadian Small House Competition, Maritimes Division sponsored by the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. With such an auspicious beginning to his career, he applied for his license, left his employment with John Lang Architect, and returned to Chatham to set up his own practice in the fall of 1947.

The post war years saw a boom in the construction industry and Storey's practice flourished as Chatham doubled in size over the next twenty-five years. The only architectural firm in town, Storey felt a deep responsibility both for the cause of modern architecture and for the welfare of his brood of employees. His office became a magnet for skilled draftsmen and young inspired architects. He aggressively sought and won a wide range of projects including courthouses, civic and recreation centres, office and university buildings. With the Federal Post Office Building in 1955, he introduced curtain wall to Ontario.

Storey's best known work, the Ursuline Convent, Motherhouse, Chapel and Public School, (1958-62) became known as "The Pines". With Storey's characteristic employment of simple and functional modern forms, the design elegantly bridged the nineteenth century

convent with connecting cloisters formed by both buildings and covered walkways. It has been identified by the Ontario chapter of *docomomo*, the Documentation and Conservation of the Modern Movement, as a candidate for the list of twenty-five examples of significant modern architecture in Ontario.

Storey espoused Modernism with a small m: the everyday modernism that was characterized by the open plan of a number of modest houses he designed throughout the neighborhoods of his town. He believed in weaving the new into the fabric of the past. An intriguing project he proposed but was never realized was the conversion of four abandoned sugar beet silos into apartments.

In the later years of his practice, Storey turned to photography first as a creative diversion and then as a useful tool in the design and presentation stages of his work. It was an introspective counterpoint to his lively outgoing persona that plunged into the project at hand and the project to be. He was active in the Kiwanis and Rotary Clubs and sat as councillor at Chatham City Hall. During his term, he brought the Planning Act to the city and founded the first Chatham Planning Board. Storey also served as the St. Clair councillor for the Ontario Association of Architects.

Storey never let his frustration with the city's more reticent building administrators interfere with his fervent desire to promote his craft nor with his civic duty. The pressure driving his creativity and the heavy responsibilities of business and civic leadership took their toll and Storey suffered a fatal heart attack driving on his way to work on August 12, 1975 at the age of 52.