

ROUNTHWAITE, Cyril Frederic Thomas (1917 – 1995)

An architect whose military activities became the inspiration behind one of his more famous designs, Frederic Rounthwaite was responsible for a number of hospitals, seniors residences, universities and community colleges throughout Ontario.

Born in Sault Ste. Marie to a British father on May 16, 1917, Rounthwaite grew up unabashedly anglophile, an admirer of both the monarchy and the Anglican Church. Resourceful — despite his father's death when he was still in high school he managed to pay his own way through university — he had no sooner received his architecture degree from the University of Toronto when he joined the Royal Canadian Engineers in 1942. He served as lieutenant during active service in northwest Europe. He returned home at the end of the war and began his private practice in 1947.

The discipline and methodology Rounthwaite learned in the army were useful tools for a practice that grew to include a number of partners and up to a hundred employees in later years. He participated in the master plan for Frobisher Bay with Peter Dickenson, designing the hospital there. He developed a building technology, later to be known as the "Isothermic Building System", which was undergoing active research when he retired. He contributed to the report published by the Mid-Canada Development Corporation in the 1960's.

The most striking influence of his military background, however, was the design for the Festival Theatre of Stratford, a project which earned the Massey Gold Medal in 1958 for the partnership Rounthwaite & Fairfield.

While waiting to return home after World War II, Lieutenant Rounthwaite was ordered to build a temporary theatre for Canadian Army

Shows. Making do with scarce building materials and a tent he borrowed from a circus, he erected a structure which was to become the inspiration behind the Festival Theatre many years later. A young architect in the office, Gordon Priest, was chosen to design the theatre from this genesis under the direction of the partners.

During all this time, Rounthwaite was active in a number of public and professional organizations. He was a founding governor of Heritage Canada, Chairman of the Toronto Branch of the Military Engineers Association of Canada and President of both the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada and the Commonwealth Association of Architects. He continued to serve on the boards of various institutions as well as finding time for his beloved workshop, water-colour painting and travel. He had a full active family life. He retired in 1983 and died in Toronto on July 10, 1995, at the age of 78.

Some other significant buildings created by Rounthwaite's offices:

Alcoholism and Drug Addiction Foundation Building, Toronto;
Bank of Canada Building, Ottawa;
Metropolitan Life Building, Ottawa;
Women's College Hospital, Toronto;
Metro Toronto Police Headquarters;
Sault Ste. Marie City Hall and Library;
St. Lucia Comprehensive School, Antigua;
Military Compound of the Canadian Embassy in Washington;
Baycraft Home for the Aged, Toronto;
Exhibition Stadium, Toronto;
Union Station Go Transit Terminal, Toronto;
British Mortgage and Trust, Stratford.