

# LOUIS-JOSEPH FORGET HOUSE

## 1195 SHERBROOKE STREET WEST



Louis-Joseph Forget House, 2015 © Jean-François Séguin

### NEIGHBOURHOOD

The Square Mile

### THE SITE

Built in 1884 for Louis-Joseph Forget and his wife Maria Raymond Forget, the design of the Forget house is attributed to the Montreal architect Maurice Perrault. The three-storey cut stone<sup>1</sup> house with a false mansard roof<sup>2</sup> was renovated and added on to in 1902 by architects Edward and W.S. Maxwell.

In 1927, the house was sold by the estate of Maria Raymond Forget, the widow of Senator Forget to the United Services Club. The private club for servicemen modified and extended the house a number of times until 1994 when the club ceased operations. The house had been bought by the Macdonald Stewart Foundation in 1975 and with the closing of the club, it embarked on a major restoration project of the interior which was completed in 1999. The exterior of the house – most notably its imposing entry stair – was restored in 2006 and the coach house renovated in 2009.

### STATUS

The Louis-Joseph Forget House was recognised as a historic monument by the Quebec government in 1974, then classified in 2012.

### VALUES

#### Historic value

- because of its owner, Louis-Joseph Forget. Forget, one of the rare francophones in the predominantly anglophone milieu of the Square Mile, was a broker and financier who was elected president of the Montreal Stock Exchange in 1895. He was president of the Montreal Street Railway from 1892-and was the first francophone to be elected to the Board of Directors of Canadian Pacific Railway. He was appointed to the Senate in 1896.
- because of its location on Sherbrooke Street in the heart of the Square Mile
- as part of an ensemble of three buildings (with the Reid Wilson House to the west and the Mount Royal Club to the east) that represent the scale and character of the Square Mile

#### Architectural value

- its ornamented architecture representative of the whole gamut of styles employed by architects for their affluent Square Mile clients at the end of the 19th century
- its Second Empire<sup>3</sup> characteristics - a rectangular volume with symmetrical façade and false mansard roof, pierced by dormers<sup>4</sup>
- the quality of its restored interior: the semi-circular shape of the end of the billiard room; the elegantly-detailed woodwork in the salon, dining room and staircase; the stained glass in the billiard room
- as work designed by Edward and W.S. Maxwell, renowned Montreal architects. Their work includes the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (1911).

#### Cultural value

- The Forget House is one of the very rare Square Mile houses whose interior reflects the way of life of the inhabitants of the Square Mile. While the layout is different from what it would have been in the Forget era, the relationship of public to private use is easy to understand. The most public rooms, the salon, the study and the dining room were closest

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to the front of the house and designed to impress. Private spaces were entirely separate including the breakfast room on the main floor and bedrooms on the second floor. Domestic staff would have worked and lived in the basement.

## CHARACTER-DEFINING ELEMENTS

- location on Sherbrooke Street in Square Mile
- relationship with Mount Royal Club and Reid Wilson House
- its volume, its rectangular plan, the symmetry of its elevation, the false mansard roof
- its use of Montreal greystone – cut stone on the upper floors and bush-hammered on the foundation, ornamentation of carved stone
- the quality of the interior finishes

## INTERVENTION

Under the guidance of architects Fournier Gersovitz Moss, work started in 1996 to restore the ground floor to its residential layout and finishes. The Maxwells' own drawings for the 1902 intervention, archived in the Canadian Architecture Collection at McGill were used as a reference. The basement was renovated to house the administration of the Foundation's decorative arts collection and not-for-profit organisations, including the St. Andrew's Society. The second and third floor were renovated as offices. This work was completed in 1999.

The exterior was restored, including the Maxwell-designed railing at the entry stairway in 2006 and the coach house masonry entirely redone in 2009.

## IMPACT

The restoration the interior of the Forget House to very close to what it had been originally is an important testimony to the era and its architecture.

## SOURCES

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Biographies:

Louis-Joseph Forget

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Edward Maxwell

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Canada's Historic Places

<http://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=10186>

Grand répertoire du patrimoine bâti de Montréal

[http://patrimoine.ville.montreal.qc.ca/inventaire/fiche\\_bat.php?batiment=oui&lignes=25&protection=&id\\_bat=9839-68-6687-01&debut=475](http://patrimoine.ville.montreal.qc.ca/inventaire/fiche_bat.php?batiment=oui&lignes=25&protection=&id_bat=9839-68-6687-01&debut=475)

Répertoire culturel du Québec, ministère de la Culture et des Communications

<http://www.patrimoine-culturel.gouv.qc.ca/rpcq/detail.do?methode=consulter&id=92828&type=bien#.W23subsInaUI>

Spacing Montreal

<http://spacing.ca/montreal/2013/08/22/repurposing-historic-mansions/>

## NOTES

### 1. Cut stone

#### Bossage



Any projection left intentionally on the face of the stonework for ornamental purposes.

#### Cut stone



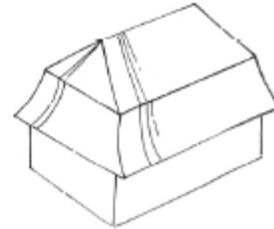
Stone which is cut uniformly on all its exposed surfaces.

### 2. Roof

#### False mansard roof



#### Mansard roof



### 3. Second Empire

Characterised by the mansard or the false mansard roof, this style came to Montreal from France in the 1860s. Other examples include Montreal City Hall.

### 4. Dormers

Small window projecting from and piercing the slope of a roof allows light into the top floor.



(Source: [Glossaire. Vocabulaire de l'architecture québécoise](#))