

## WILLIAM SUTHERLAND MAXWELL: Architect of Originality

**W**hen you see an amazing building, you might wonder who designed it. William Sutherland Maxwell loved all kinds of art, and he showed interest in and talent for architecture from his teens.

William, also known as Sutherland, was born in Montreal, Quebec, in 1874. After high school, he learned architecture at his brother Edward's firm in Montreal. Then he trained at a firm in Boston, U.S. During that time, he "first seriously realized the greatness and nobility of architecture." In 1899, he traveled to Paris and polished his skills.

In Paris, Sutherland fell in love with a Bahá'í named May Bolles. She appreciated his artistic nature, and once told him, "You have the charm of originality." They married in London in 1902, then moved to Montreal. Their home became a center of Baha'i activity.

### Success and Inspiration

Sutherland could paint, draw, and carve anything. He joined Edward as a partner, and they built the largest architecture firm in Canada. They designed well-known buildings, such as the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

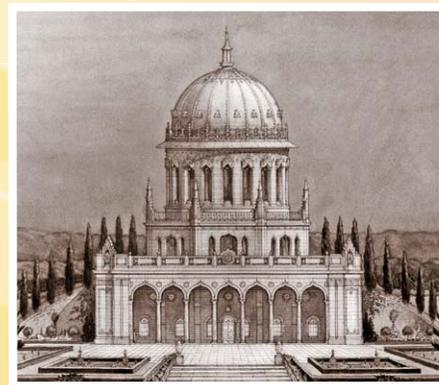
"A nation is judged," Sutherland wrote, "not only by the tons of steel rails produced, but by the level of cultivation which the buildings and art of the country express."



William Sutherland Maxwell was passionate about the arts and collecting books. He had about 3,500 volumes in his own library.

Sutherland had traveled and studied French and Italian architecture in Europe. He wrote, "We should make a point to every few years seek inspiration among the monuments of a past which held to standards of beauty and truth more devotedly than we do nowadays."

In 1909, Sutherland and May traveled to 'Akká, in what is now Israel, to meet 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who led the Bahá'í Faith at that time. Sutherland was deeply inspired by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Later, when 'Abdu'l-Bahá visited North America in 1912, he stayed in the Maxwell home, which Sutherland had designed. The home is now a sacred Bahá'í place.



Sutherland's 1944 drawing of his design for the Shrine of the Báb in Haifa, Israel.

### Saintly Life

In 1937, Sutherland and May's only child, Mary, married 'Abdu'l-Bahá's grandson, Shoghi Effendi, who led the Bahá'í Faith after 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passing. When May died in 1940, Shoghi Effendi invited Sutherland to live in Haifa, Israel, where he was planning and building the Bahá'í World Center.

Shoghi Effendi asked Sutherland to design the exterior of the Shrine of the Báb, one of the holiest Bahá'í shrines. Sutherland designed a majestic building. He also helped with other projects.

In time, Sutherland's health failed, and he returned to Canada in 1951. He was named a Hand of the Cause of God.\* He died in 1952, and the Shrine of the Báb was completed the next year. Shoghi Effendi praised his "saintly life" and named a door of the Shrine of the Báb after him.