

ADDENDUM

TO

SUBMISSION: HISTORIC DESIGNATION MEMORIAL TOWER, HALIFAX (January 2007)

On page 6 of the Submission (January 2007) there is a reference to the an architectural competition, conducted by the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada on behalf of the Halifax Canadian Club, for a design of memorial tower on the North West Arm. Further research located the minutes of the R.A.I.C in Library and Archives Canada. These not only made reference to the competition, but also to the winning designs being published in the August 1910 issue of a journal called *Construction*. The previous March issue contained a feature article entitled “Competition for Design for Memorial Tower” calling on Canadian architects and draftsmen to submit competitive designs for a “National Memorial Tower to Commemorate the Establishment of Self Government in Canada—A Great Patriotic Work”. It began with a stirring patriotic introduction. It was in all likelihood written by Sir Sanford Fleming as the article summarized his reasons for erecting a memorial tower, and began with Joseph Howe’s much quoted words: “A wise nation preserves its records... by perpetual references to the sacrifices and glories of the past”. It continued:

It is this great national, and patriotic spirit uttered so beautifully in these words of the great Nova Scotian that has served as the inspiration of the citizens of Nova Scotia in their determination to erect a National Memorial Tower to commemorate the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the origin of parliamentary government within the limits of the Dominion of Canada; a historical monument that will commemorate a national epoch of profound significance to every Canadian and to the people of the British world. As Canadians, we owe a duty to ourselves and still more to the Motherland, and to our successors, that we should in a befitting manner commemorate our priceless heritage.

With this patriotic object in view, the citizens of Nova Scotia have undertaken the erection of this Memorial Tower on a beautiful site of about one hundred acres of park land donated to the province of Nova Scotia by Sir Stanford Fleming. No more entrancing scene could be imagined than that to be had from the top of the promontory, ninety feet above the sea level, upon which the tower is to be located. It will stand at a point which gives a clear sweep up the head of the Northwest Arm and beyond looking south, straight to the sea. When it is erected, the view from an altitude of nearly 200 feet will command a portion of the city of Halifax and will reveal the sea and land for many miles around.

It is certain that a subject of this character will appeal strongly to every Canadian architect, and through the work entailed will be small, merely the design, practically no planning, the honour of having executed the successful design will be such as to touch the patriotic pride of every architect in Canada, thus rendering the competition an extensive one.

The article then laid out the Conditions of Competition, which were to be repeated in the August issue (see Figure 1). There followed a description of the Historic Significance of the establishment of self government in the Dominion of Canada in 1758. It summarized Fleming’s views on the importance of the 150th anniversary as described in the “Submission to Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada: Sir Sandford Fleming Park & Memorial Tower (March 2003)”.

The August issue of *Construction* consisted of an introductory page listing the three judges of the competition: Professor P.E. Nobbs of McGill University; F. Spence Baker, president of the R.A.I.C; and Frank Darling of the architectural firm Darlings and Pearson and secretary of the R.I.A.C. Reproduced was the letter to the Institute announcing the three winners of the twelve submissions: the gold medal for 1st prize went to A. Sharp of Toronto; the silver medal 2nd to W.M. Brown of Halifax; and the bronze medal for 3rd to John Lyle of Toronto. The committee could not, however, refrain from “expressing the opinion that the result of the competition as exhibited by the above designs is very disappointing”. With the exception of the design it had placed first, “none of them seem to have succeeded in arriving at such a solution of the problem as comes anywhere near the idea that the promoters evidently had in mind”. The second design the committee considered on the whole “excellent”, but was “after all merely an Italian Campanile—a foreign style that has nothing whatever to do with this country”. As to the design that placed third it felt “lacks interest and fails in expressing its purpose”. Even for

the winning design, the committee were of the opinion that it would require much more study before it could be adopted and certain changes would be essential before it could be considered satisfactory.

No information has so far been found on the winner, A. (or N.S. see Figures 2 & 3) Sharp of Toronto, but W. Michael Brown, awarded the silver medal for his design (Figures 4 & 5) was a native of Halifax who had studied at the Victoria School of Art and Design (NASCAD University). He had worked in the office of Harris & Horton before going to New York where he spent a few years in the office of C.P.H. Gilbert. He returned to Halifax and by 1909 had established his own practice. His architectural legacy includes a number of interesting residences and commercial buildings, though none of outstanding architectural design. John Lyle, awarded the bronze medal for his design (Figure 6) went on to become one of the notable Canadian architects of the first half of the 20th century. His work and place in Canadian architecture has been described in *John M. Lyle: Towards a Canadian Architecture/Créer une architecture canadienne* by Geoffrey Hunt written to accompany a travelling exhibition of Lyle's work in 1982.

As stated on pages 6 and 7 of the Memorial Tower Submission (January 2007), the R.A.I.C forwarded the results to the Halifax Canadian Club. After much discussion the Executive Committee decided to accept an "amended design of Dumaresq & Cobb" and to ask for construction tenders. The R.A.I.C received twelve submissions for the competition. It is unknown whether or not Dumaresq & Cobb entered the competition, nor why the Executive Committee turned to that firm for another design instead of to W.M. Brown. The original design either submitted to or asked for by the Executive Committee is certainly a much less ornate design (see Figure 6 of Memorial Tower Submission (January 2007) than those selected by the R.A.I.C committee. Among the conditions for the competition was that the tower's cost was not exceed \$22,000. However, the Executive Committee accepted a tender from S.M. Brookfield of \$23,960 (see page 10), so it was prepared to exceed that figure. Although J.A. Chisholm stressed that cost was the major factor in deciding on the final design, his statement does not explain how Dumaresq & Cobb's design came to be selected. It might may well have been a question of design.

It is worth noting that John Lyle and Andrew Cobb collaborated on the design of the Bank of Nova Scotia building (1932) in Halifax, an Art Deco architectural masterpiece, using local and Canadian motifs for its decorative elements (see Figure 7) for a watercolour of the building that appeared on the cover of Geoffrey Hunt's book on Lyle. Both attended École des Beau-Arts; Lyle from 1892 to 1896 and Cobb from 1907 to 1909.

This Addendum describing the story of the competition to design the Memorial Tower reinforces the underlying theme of the Memorial Tower Submission that the Tower was conceived and designed to be a national and imperial commemoration of a formative event in Canadian and British Empire history. A recent article by Paul Williams, "Erecting an 'an instructive object': The Case of the Halifax Memorial Tower", *Acadiensis*, XXXVI, 2 (Spring 2007), pp. 91-112, emphasised:

In 1912 the Halifax Memorial Tower was unveiled to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the first "representative government" in the British Empire – in Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1758. Unlike most monuments of its time, it did not celebrate great men, important battles, the monarchy or colonization. Instead, it was meant to mark a political moment in the nation's past to valorize the ongoing democratic process in the newly confederated Dominion of Canada. In this sense, it was a much a symbol of progress as it was a monument to past glories.

COMPETITION FOR MEMORIAL TOWER.—Awards Made in R.A.I.C. Competition for National Tower to be Erected on North-west Arm, Halifax.—Assessors' Report Says Designs Submitted Disappointing.

ANNOUNCEMENT of an architectural competition for a National Memorial Tower to commemorate the establishment of self-government in Canada, under the auspices of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, was made in the March number of *CONSTRUCTION*. This proposed tower was to be erected on the North West Arm at Halifax on an elevation of ninety feet above sea level.

Since it is purely a patriotic undertaking, no money prizes were named, but the R.A.I.C. offered a gold medal for the first prize, a silver medal for the second prize, and a bronze medal for the third prize design.

The competition was closed on the 25th of May. Twelve designs from different portions of Canada were submitted, and the prizes were awarded on July 25 by the assessors, Professors P. E. Nobbs, of McGill University, Montreal; F. Spence Baker, president of the R.A.I.C., and Mr. Frank Darling, of the firm of Darling & Pearson, Toronto.

In view of the fact that the season has been an exceedingly busy one for the architects, the number of designs submitted may be considered reasonably large.

We reproduce below the report of the assessors as submitted to the R.A.I.C.

2 LEADER LANE, JULY 25, 1910.

THE ROYAL ARCHITECTURAL INSTITUTE OF CANADA,
5 BEAVER HALL SQUARE,
MONTREAL, CAN.

GENTLEMEN:

RE MEMORIAL TOWER, HALIFAX.

We have carefully examined the twelve sets of drawings submitted in competition for the proposed Memorial Tower at Halifax and cannot refrain from expressing the opinion that the result of the competition as exhibited by the above designs is very disappointing. With the exception of the design we have placed first, none of them seem to have succeeded in arriving at such a solution of the problem as comes anywhere near the idea that the promoters evidently had in mind.

The design placed second, though on the whole excellent, is after all merely an Italian Campanile—a foreign style that has nothing whatever to do with this country.

The design placed third lacks interest and fails in expressing its purpose.

Number one would require much more study before it could be adopted, and though the general idea might very well be kept, certain changes would, in our opinion, be essential before it could be considered satisfactory.

We have placed

1st, the design submitted by Mr. A. Sharp, Toronto.

2nd, that submitted by Mr. W. M. Brown, Halifax.

3rd, that by Mr. Jno. M. Lyle of Toronto.

We are, Gentlemen,

Yours obediently,

(Sgd.) P. E. NOBBS,
F. SPENCE BAKER,
FRANK DARLING.

In order that our readers may thoroughly acquaint themselves with the exact conditions governing the competition, we reproduce same here in full as announced in *MARCH CONSTRUCTION*.

CONDITIONS OF COMPETITION.

It is proposed to erect a Tower commemorative of the Federation of the various Provinces whereby the Dominion of Canada came into existence, in 1867.

This Tower is to be erected on the North West Arm at Halifax, N.S.

The competition is open to Canadian architects and

draughtsmen who are British subjects, and will be conducted as follows, by the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada:

1st. The official Provincial Association in each Province will invite its members to submit competitive designs for the Tower.

2nd. Each Provincial Association will then select the three best designs from those submitted and forward them to the Royal Architectural Institute, which body will make a final selection from the plans so submitted. Members of the Royal Architectural Institute who reside in a Province where there is no organized Provincial Association of Architects, will send their designs direct to the Secretary of the Royal Architectural Institute before the 25th May, 1910. These drawings will be submitted to the Council of the Royal Architectural Institute, who will select three plans to go forward to the final competition as set forth in Condition 6.

3rd. Medals will be awarded by the Royal Architectural Institute suitably inscribed. To the author of the design placed first, a gold medal; author of the design placed second, a silver medal; author of the design placed third, a bronze medal.

4th. The author of the design placed first by the Royal Architectural Institute as the winner of the whole competition will be asked to prepare working drawings and specifications with sufficient details to carry out the work. It is felt that the patriotism of Canadian architects can be counted upon in this respect, the elimination of profit being in the nature of a contribution.

5th. The Tower is to be built of local ironstone rubble laid in cement mortar, cost per cubic foot, 50 cents. All dressed work, such as strings, quoins, etc., to be of granite, cost per cubic foot, \$3.

The height of the Tower to be not less than 100 feet. The walls to be solid rubble pointed inside and outside—no plastering. The floors to be fireproof. The stairs also to be of fireproof material.

The location is indicated on the panoramic view of the North West Arm at Halifax.

The cost of the building is not to exceed \$22,000.

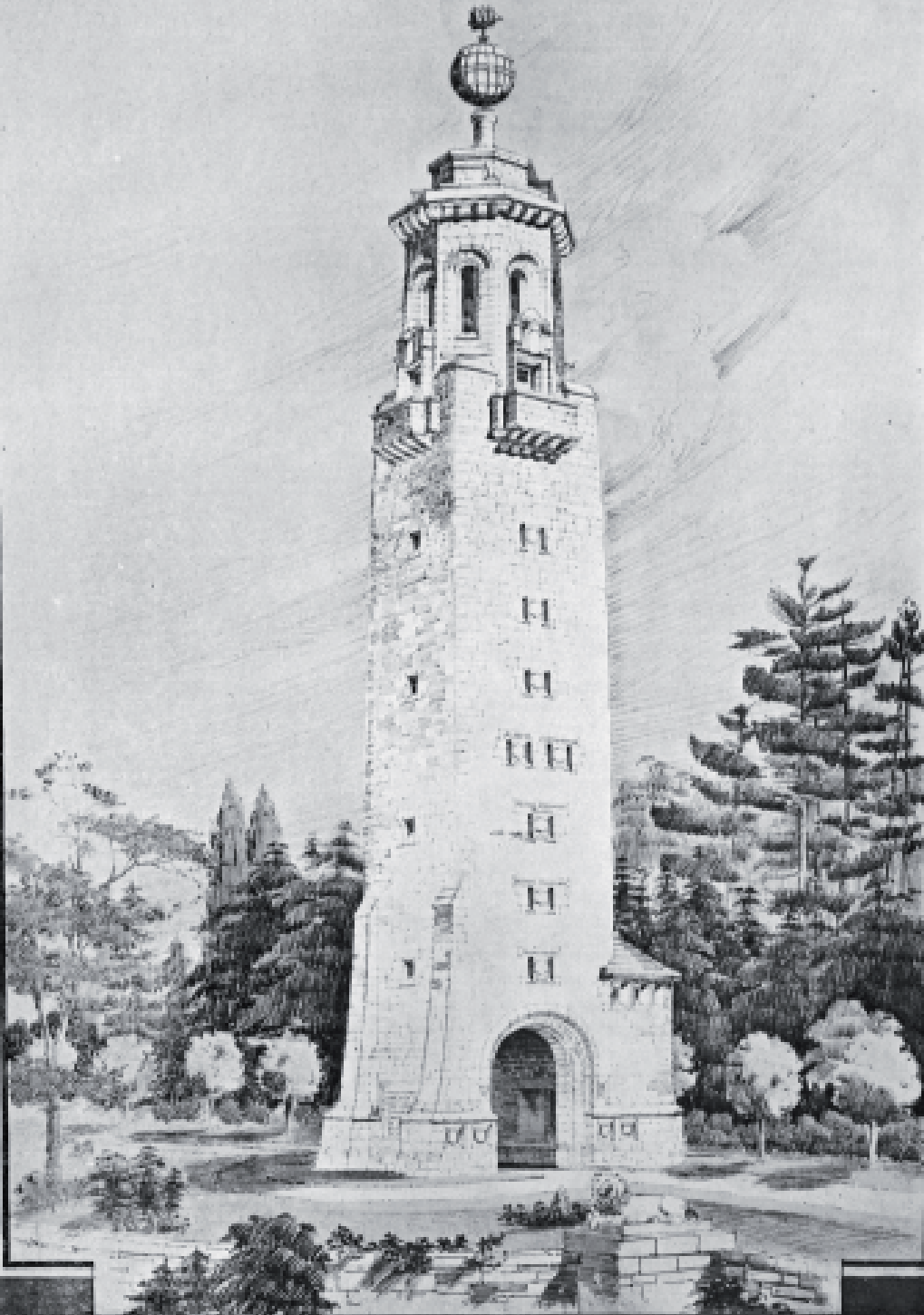
6th. The drawings submitted in each Province will be submitted to a Board of Assessors composed of the President and two members of the Council of the Provincial Associations, who will select the three plans to go forward to the final competition, where the designs will be submitted to the final selection made by the Professor of Architecture at McGill University, Montreal; the Professor of Architecture at the University of Toronto, and the President of the Royal Architectural Institute.

7th. Any intending competitors wishing to ask any questions may do so by writing to the Secretary at any time previous to April 10, 1910. All questions thus received will be answered in one document, which will be sent to the Secretaries of the various Associations to whom Conditions of Competition have been supplied immediately following the date of the 10th April.

8th. The drawings in each Provincial Competition as mentioned in Condition 2 are to be handed to the Registrar or Secretary of the Association before the 25th of May, 1910, and the final award will be made as soon as possible thereafter. The drawings, which are to be made at the scale of $\frac{1}{4}$ inch to the foot, are to consist of two sheets, one showing the plan, elevations and sections, and the other a perspective view of the exterior of the building. The latter may be rendered in pencil, pen and ink, pastel, wash or water color, as the competitor may decide, but the perspective is not to be drawn at a smaller scale than $\frac{1}{4}$ inch to the foot.

Figure 1. Page 43 of *Construction*, August 1910, with winners of the Memorial Tower competition, letter of Selection Committee and Competition Conditions

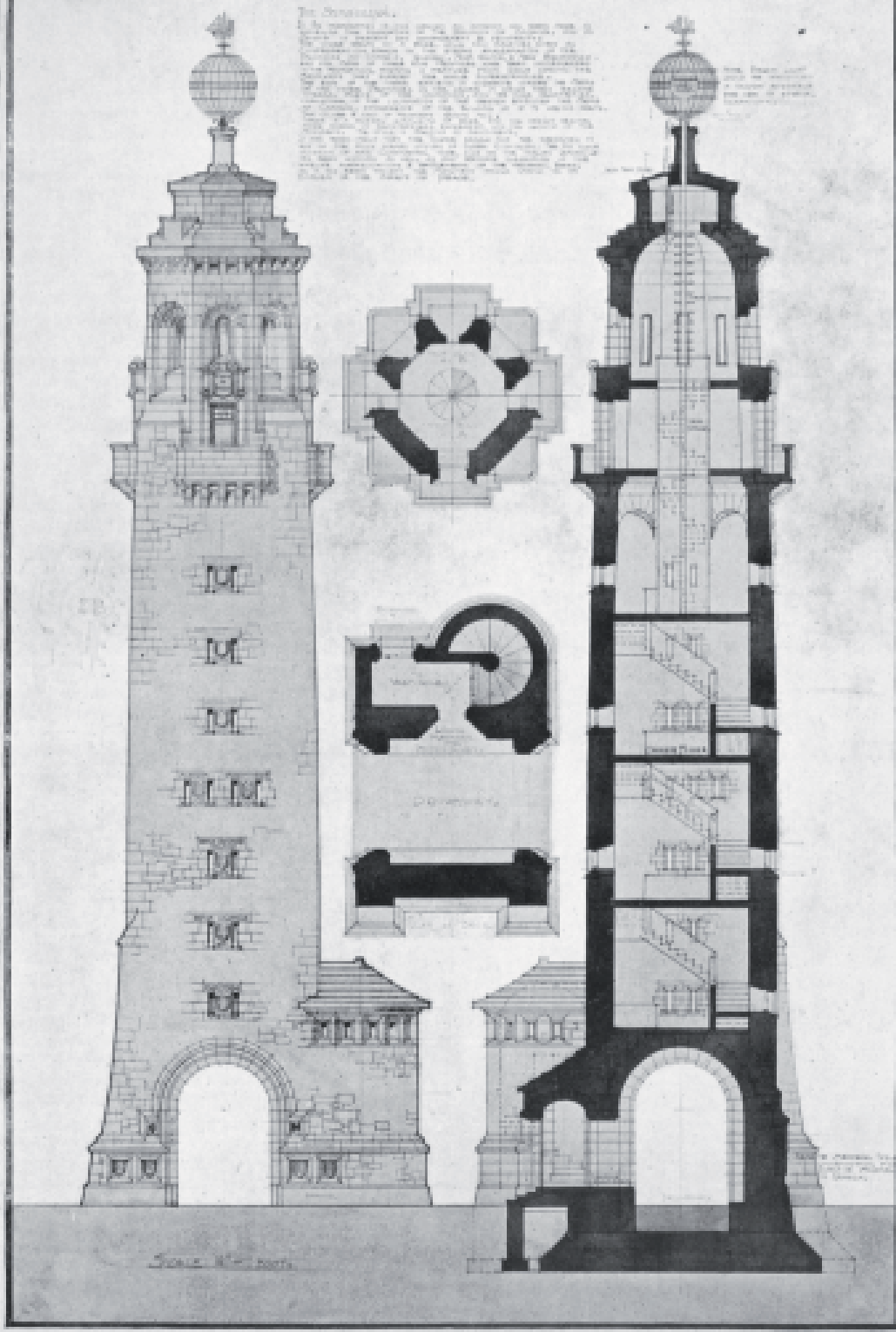
COMPETITIVE DESIGN FOR THE NATIONAL
MEMORIAL MONUMENT AT HALIFAX. N.S.



First Prize Design, Awarded Gold Medal in the R.A.I.C. Competition for a National Memorial Monument to be Erected on the North-West Arm, Halifax, N.S. N. S. Sharp, Toronto, Designer. (See Page 43).

Figure 2. First Prize Design. N.S. Sharp awarded Gold Medal

COMPETITIVE DESIGN FOR THE NATIONAL
MEMORIAL MONUMENT AT HALIFAX N.S.



Elevation and Sectional View, Together with Ground Plan and Other Details of the First Prize Design, Awarded the Gold Medal in the R.A.I.C. Competition for the National Memorial Monument to be Erected on the North-West Arm, Halifax, N. S. Sharp, Toronto, Designer.

Figure 3. Details of the First Prize Design



Figure 4. Second Prize Design. Silver Medal awarded to W.M. Brown

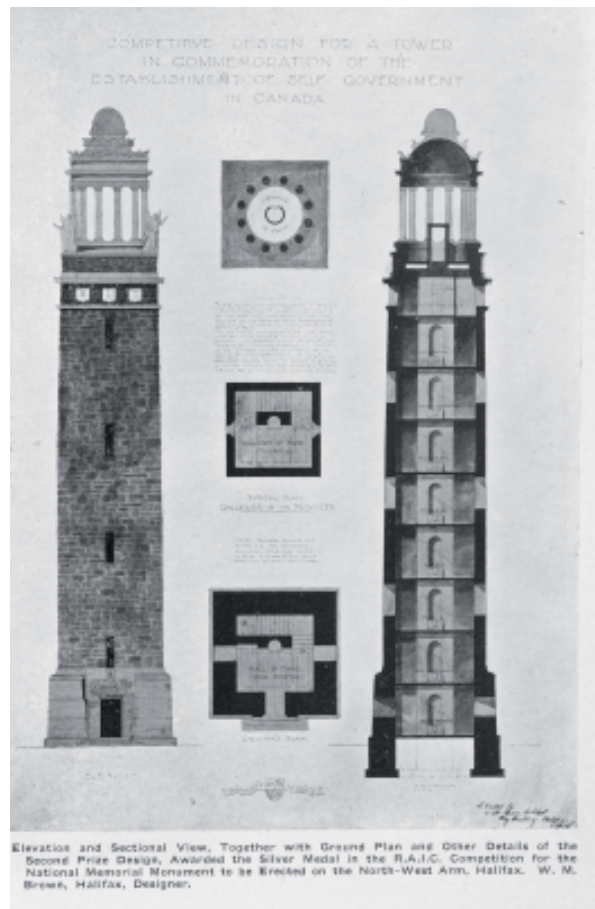


Figure 5. Details of Second Prize Design

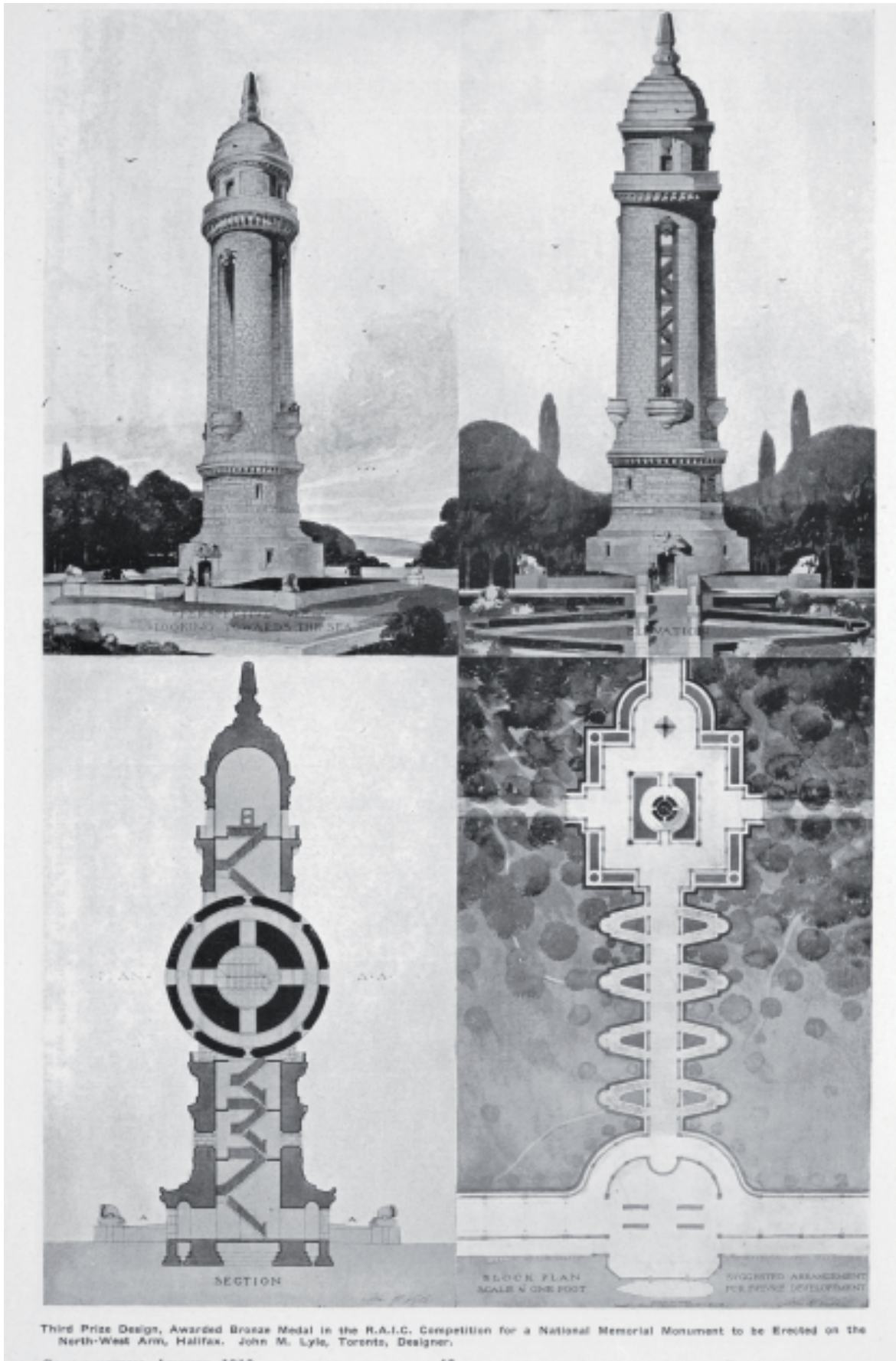


Figure 6. Third Prize Design. Bronze medal awarded to John M. Lyle



Figure 7. View of Bank of Nova Scotia Head Office building, Hollis Street, Halifax, 1932