



ARCHITECTS OF TRANSFORMATION

WILLIAM SUTHERLAND MAXWELL

Architect, designer of the superstructure of the Shrine of the Báb on Mount Carmel

William Sutherland Maxwell was born in Montreal, Canada, in 1874. His extraordinary ability for both drawing and design led him to the École des Beaux Arts in Paris in 1899. He worked for two years in the studio of the well-known architect Paschal.

Shortly thereafter, he returned to Canada with his bride, May Bolles, who gave birth to their only child, Mary, in 1910. Mr. Maxwell became his brother's partner in the firm of Edward and W. S. Maxwell. Together they designed many Canadian landmarks, such as the Château Frontenac Hotel in Quebec, the parliament buildings in Regina, and the Montreal Museum of Fine Art.

He was a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects; a Fellow and president of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada; an Academician of the Royal Canadian Academy and its vice-president; a member and president of the Province of Quebec Association of Architects; a founding member of the "Arts Club" in Montreal.

In 1940, following the death of his wife, Mr. Maxwell moved to Haifa, Israel, the world center of the Bahá'í Faith. Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, asked Mr. Maxwell to work on a scheme for completing the Shrine of the Báb. By 1944, a model of the accepted design was exhibited.

In 1946 a blood vessel broke in his ear and left him totally deaf on one side. In spite of failing strength he continued to work until his health broke down in 1949. In 1951 he returned to Canada, where he died in 1952. The superstructure of the Shrine of the Báb is a monument to his abilities and his devotion.

HOSSEIN AMANAT

Architect of the Administrative Buildings of the Bahá'í World Centre, Haifa, Israel

In 1966, Hossein Amanat won a contest that launched his architectural career. He was a 24-year-old architecture school graduate in Tehran, Iran, when he was chosen as the winner of a national competition to design the Shahyad Freedom Monument in Tehran, which has since become a symbol of modern Iran.

Mr. Amanat went on to create some of the most prestigious modern buildings in Iran.

In 1972 Mr. Amanat undertook the design of the Seat of the Universal House of Justice and, more recently, additional administrative buildings on Mount Carmel. The requirements were that they had to last for many years, be functional, and able to accommodate future technology. Rendered in classical Greek style to harmonize with existing structures and the elaborate

gardens surrounding them, these buildings represented a departure from his avant-garde style. In order not to overwhelm the existing formal gardens, Mr. Amanat designed the buildings as pavilions above ground with the rest of the spaces underground, using light wells to allow natural light to enter. Mr. Amanat calls himself an “architect of inside”: two-thirds of the Centre for the Study of the Texts building is underground.

In creating this unique complex, Mr. Amanat has captured the soul of classical Western architecture and united it with Eastern principles that lie at its heart. In 1985, he was awarded the Tucker Architectural Award for excellence in design and the use of stone.

Now a Canadian citizen, Mr. Amanat has lived in Vancouver, Canada, since 1980.

FARIBORZ SAHBA

Architect of the Terraces of the Shrine of the Báb, and Project Manager of the Mount Carmel Bahá'í Projects

Fariborz Sahba, a Canadian citizen, was born in 1948 in Iran. He received a master's degree in architecture in 1972 from the Faculty of Fine Arts at Tehran University.

In Iran, Mr. Sahba was involved in the design of a wide range of prestigious buildings.

In 1976, the international governing body of the Bahá'í community selected Mr. Sahba to design the Bahá'í House of Worship for the Indian subcontinent in New Delhi, India. This project, on which he worked for 10 years as the architect and project manager, was described by Canadian architect Arthur Erickson as “one of the most remarkable achievements of our time, proving that the drive and vision of spirit can achieve miracles.” With over 3.5 million visitors a year, this building, commonly known as the “Lotus of Bahapur,” is one of the most visited sites in the world.

In 1987, Mr. Sahba was assigned by the Bahá'í World Centre the task of designing 18 terraces as a majestic approach to the Shrine of the Báb, the martyred Herald of the Bahá'í Faith, one of the most holy places of the Bahá'í Faith. He was also appointed project manager to execute the Bahá'í World Centre building projects on Mount Carmel. The Terraces of the Shrine of the Báb received the 1998 Ephraim Lifshitz Award from the Municipality of Haifa and the 1999 Magshim Award from the Council for a Beautiful Israel.

Mr. Sahba has received many international awards, among them the First Honor Award 1987 for “Excellence in Architecture” from the Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art, and Architecture, an affiliate of the American Institute of Architects. Articles about his work have been published in almost 400 magazines and newspapers throughout the world.