

Career Ends



—By News Staff Photographer
WILLIAM G. MALCOMSON

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Death Takes Malcomson

Funeral Rites Thursday for Architect

Funeral services for William G. Malcomson, veteran Detroit architect who died Tuesday in his home, 61 Edison avenue, will be conducted at 2 p. m., Thursday in the chapel of the William R. Hamilton Co. Burial will be in the family lot in Grand Lawn Cemetery.

The Rev. A. R. Holton, pastor of the Plum Street Church of Christ, will be in charge of the services. He will be assisted by the Rev. Edgar DeWitt Jones and the Rev. Fred C. Cowan.

Mr. Malcomson's death was caused by a bronchial infection which developed from a cold. He was 85 years old.

Three-quarters of the public school buildings of Detroit erected since the late '90s were planned by him and built under his direction. The major school project with which he was identified included the old Central High School, now Wayne University, and the former Roosevelt group, now known as the Central High School group.

He was born in Hamilton, Ont., April 7, 1853, and came to Detroit in 1857.

His firm also executed the extensive building program at the University of Detroit, the contract for which was awarded after secret competitive plans had been submitted by architects all over the United States.

OFFICIAL ARCHITECTS

While the name of Malcomson & Higginbotham, as the firm was known for many years, had been identified with many other buildings of a public and a private nature, it was as builders of schools that they established a lasting place in this community. For a great many years they were the official architects of the Detroit Board of Education.

Mr. Malcomson was of Irish descent, despite his Scotch name, both parents having been natives of Ireland. William G. was reared and lived most of his life in old Corktown.

His education consisted of public school and business university courses, after which he began his preliminary architectural training in the office of Joseph E. Sparks, of Detroit. Associated with Sparks was Prof. L. D. Wines, of the University of Michigan, under whom Mr. Malcomson studied mathematics, while under the direction of Detroit artists he took up perspective and color work.

COMPLETED COMMISSION

On the death of Mrs. Sparks, the young student completed the commissions his preceptor had undertaken, these tasks including the main building and water tower of the Detroit Water Works (as it was then known). He next was employed in the office of Mortimer L. Smith, architect, for several years, and in 1885 he went into business on his own account. Five years later he went into partnership with William E. Higginbotham, an association that remained unbroken for 33 years, until the death of Mr. Higginbotham in 1923.

In 1882, while supervising the construction of a building in Ridgetown, Ont., he met and married Miss Jennie McKinlay, a sister of John F. McKinlay, Detroit attorney, and former judge of the Common Pleas Court.

They became the parents of five children: Mrs. M. N. Stickney; Joseph Emmet, a surgeon in the United States Navy and in his high school days a well known track star; Arthur, who died several years ago after having been associated with his father in the architectural profession; Mrs. Norbert D. Kulsavage and Mrs. C. W. Gregory.

The Malcomson town home was at 61 Edison avenue, but he also maintained a charming country place at Orchard Lake in Oakland County, to which he commuted daily in the summer, and to which he made frequent excursions in the winter to engage in his favorite sport, tobogganing. In 1927, when he was 74 years old, he suffered an accident while tobogganing that put him in the hospital, but he recovered rapidly in spite of his years.

Only last June at its commencement exercises Wayne University conferred on him the honorary degree of Master of Science in Architecture, citing him as the architect and designer of many large public buildings, including 150 Detroit schools.

EXTENSIVE TRAVEL

Mr. Malcomson traveled extensively through the United States and Canada, in study and observation, and several years ago made a tour of the Holy Land and Europe, making a special study of the construction of hospitals and educational buildings.

He was a member of the Detroit Athletic Club, the Detroit Board of Commerce, the Citizen's committee on Industrial Relations, the Detroit Engineering Society, the American Hospital Association, the National Education Association, the Detroit Museum of Art Founders Society, the Detroit Historical Society and the Gristmill Club.

Beside his wife and the four children, he leaves his sister, Rachael, and a brother, Harry H.