



Preface



CECIL SCOTT BURGESS became professor of architecture at the University of Alberta in 1913. Before his arrival at the University of Alberta, he was active in the architectural circles of Montreal, and his career, lectures and thinking between 1909 and 1946, the years of his most active practice and teaching, are a unique source for many of the topics that animated architectural discussion in Alberta and English Canada. Burgess's wide-ranging interests are one mark of his importance in the architectural and town planning history of Canada, but his work in training future architects, his involvement in the development of professional architecture in Alberta, his tireless promotion of town planning, and his general efforts to broaden Canadians' understanding of architecture and the built environment give him a unique place in the history of Canadian architecture.

I first encountered Burgess's writings over fifteen years ago when carrying out research on the history of domestic architecture in Alberta. While Burgess's papers at the University of Alberta Archives are an excellent source on the history of housing in Canada, they deal with far more than domestic architecture. They also contain extensive material on many of the wider concerns on architecture and town planning that were being

discussed in English Canada. In his talks and lectures, including, after the late 1920s, those over the brand new medium of radio, Burgess discussed many of the dominant ideas of his age about the meaning and potential of architecture and town planning. And because Burgess wrote out his lectures in long hand, the transcripts of these talks now offer a window into this past world.

While other projects and responsibilities kept me from realising the publication of a selection of Burgess's talks and writings, I remained convinced that a book of original documents drawn from the Burgess papers would provide a unique insight into the history of Canadian architecture and town planning. In my view, such a book was further justified because contemporary reference to Burgess's activity and thinking is sparse. Since public addresses were rarely recorded, knowledge of his many lectures and talks is now limited. Moreover, many of the buildings he designed or worked on have been demolished, most of the furniture and household objects he designed are lost or no longer identified, and many of his town plans were imperfectly realised or have now been significantly altered. Burgess wrote clearly and beautifully, but he published relatively little, other than a few articles and his regular monthly column in the *RAIC Journal*. The record of his activity is thus accessible mainly through archival records, but such collections are by their nature difficult to access for many people.

Any selection of documents runs the risk of being a medley, and the Introduction to the volume has been designed to help orient readers, fill gaps and to link the reprinted documents to Burgess's broader thinking and activity. It also provides an outline of the national and provincial framework that helped condition Burgess's activities and thinking as well as a context for the issues raised in the reprinted documents. The illustrations have also been chosen to offer visual context for the documents. Special effort has been made to use, when possible, photographs or drawings that Burgess used in his talks, or which illustrate his buildings and other activities.