

# Grant Whatmough

**Grant Whatmough**, designer, naval architect, professor, writer, philosopher and sculptor. Grant Whatmough (1921 – 1999) was the son of Edwin Arthur **Whatmough**, an architect practice in Toronto in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, most notably in Wychwood Park and Moore Park in Toronto.

**Grant Whatmough** served as a pilot with RCAF Eastern Air Command, North Atlantic from 1941 – 1943. In 1945, he moved to England to attend the University of London and Southern College of Art. From 1946 – 1948 he served as Senior Designer, designing experimental power boats and small ships with Vospers Ltd. Of Portsmouth England. During this time he worked with Sir Malcolm Campbell on the retrofit of the Bluebird K4 with a DeHavilland Goblin jet engine. The K4 had previously set the world water speed record in 1939. **Whatmough** was elected as a Fellow of the Technological Institute of Great Britain in 1947 and as an Associate of the Institution of Naval Architects in January 1948.

Returning to Canada in 1948, **Whatmough** worked for several firms as a draftsman and design associate, most notably at Mathers and Haldenby, before going into private practice in 1953. Through the 1950s and 60s, **Whatmough** designed and constructed houses in Oakville and throughout Ontario, mostly specializing in private homes and country estates. He also oversaw the design and construction of several subdivisions, boats and some commercial buildings.

While never formally recognized as an architect by the Ontario Association of Architects, **Whatmough** nonetheless began to gain a reputation for the quality and innovation of his work and was hired by clients interested in having a unique home constructed for them. His clients included wealthy and prominent individuals, such as Jim Floyd, the chief design engineer of the Avro Arrow. He also designed a series of experimental homes for the AVRO Corporation which was rapidly expanding into one of Canada's largest industries in the 1950s.

Like many of **Mr. Whatmough's** most innovative commissions, the Floyd house was designed to fit within the landscape in which it was set and tailored to the particular lifestyle of his clients. The 4,000 square foot, 10-room home, with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the lake and an architecturally designed swimming pool still exists today and was recently added to the Oakville Heritage Register as one of the first recognized modernist heritage buildings. According to Mr. Floyd, in the late 1950's architect Grant Whatmough was gaining a reputation as one of the most talented designed and creative minds of his generation, who in some circles was becoming known as "The Frank Lloyd Wright of Canada".

**Whatmough** employed many innovative construction techniques and was known as both a leading-edge designer but also somewhat of a maverick. He often saw his buildings as experiments in which to test new and inventive methods of construction with unconventional materials. **Whatmough's** primary concerns were unique design tailor to the lifestyle of his clients and high quality over factors such as cost and expedience of construction. This was in direct contrast to the average subdivision houses being constructed at the time. **Whatmough** was therefore a unique designer whose one-of-a-kind buildings have contributed greatly to the emergence of mid-century modernist principles in residential design.

From 1964 to 1967, **Whatmough** was recruited by the Toronto Star to write a column on architecture, titled "In this corner". He was also an accomplished sculptor and his works were sometimes featured in the homes he designed. His expertise was in abstract forms and he was well-regarded in this field. He was a member of the Ontario Society of Artists and the Sculptors Society of Canada and his work appears in private collections in the USA, Canada and England.

#### References:

*Heritage Research Report*

<https://securepwa.oakville.ca/sirepub/cache/107/rssqgc55mnlj2vmo50o5ro55/27460412102020112221229.PDF>

*Heritage Treasure Hunting and a long lost story of Oakville, AVRO and Canada's Frank Lloyd Wright*

<http://michaelseaman.blogspot.com>