

Visiting le Corbusier's 1929 Villa Savoye, Poissy, Paris

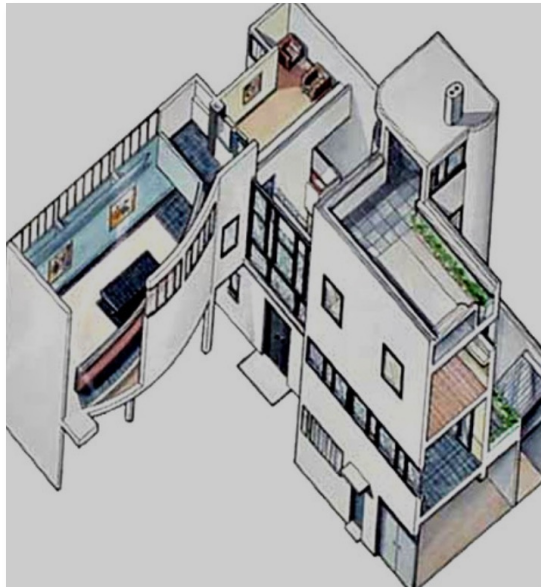
A modern paradox and a lasting legacy



An exploration of the world-wide design influence of the 1929 Villa Savoye
By David Murray, Architect AAA

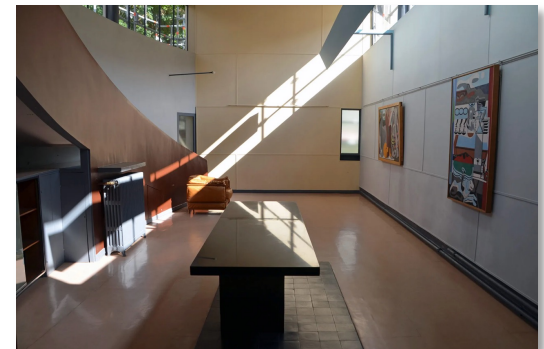
Le Corbusier in Paris – 1925 Maison La Roche

This residence pre-dates the Villa Savoye but illustrates Corbusier's design principles.



Villa La Roche, also **Maison La Roche**, is a house in [Paris](#), designed by [Le Corbusier](#) and his cousin [Pierre Jeanneret](#) in 1923–1925. It was designed for [Raoul La Roche](#), a Swiss banker from [Basel](#) and collector of avant-garde art. Villa La Roche now houses the [Fondation Le Corbusier](#).

The use of reinforced concrete allowed for a choice of material for the façade, pilotis, extensive windows and a terrace garden in the roof.

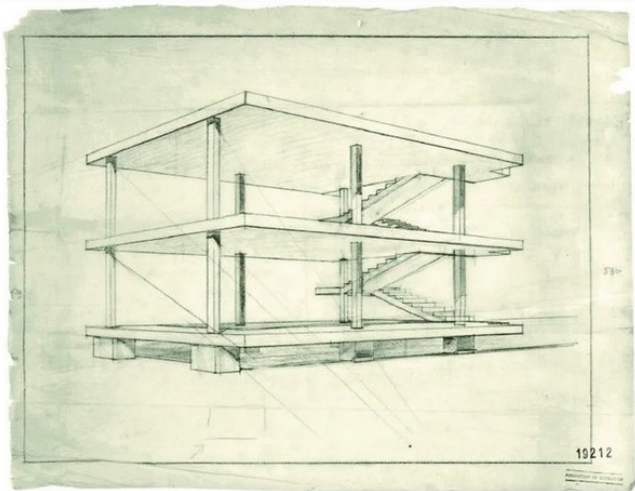


Le Corbusier and the Modern Movement

In 1914, Le Corbusier published his design for Maison Dom-ino, a **slab-and-column frame** intended to redefine domestic architecture by embracing the versatile and affordable new technology of reinforced concrete in the service of modernism.

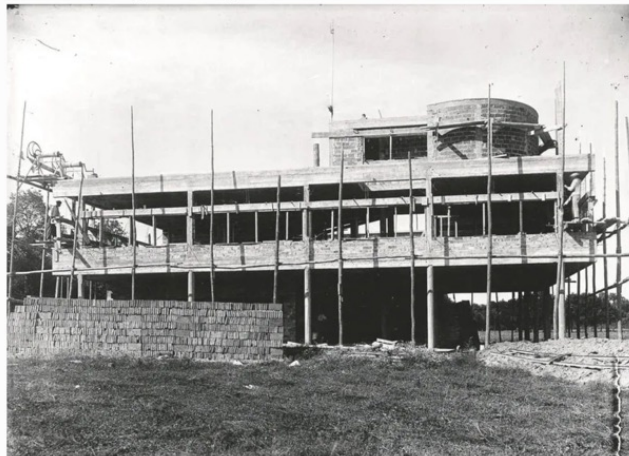
It absolves the vertical planes of the building from their customary load-bearing duties, effectively relinquishing control of the building's exterior envelope, making any number of aesthetic solutions and languages viable.

Inspired in part by the vernacular Ottoman architecture Le Corbusier observed during his travels in Turkey in 1911, Maison Dom-ino could be read as a manifesto for **openness in architecture**, which was a hypothetical proposal for a new relationship between the hand of the architect and the individuality of the occupant.



Dom-ino. Le Corbusier, Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris, 1914.

The Making of Villa Savoye: A Look at its Construction Process



Villa Savoye during Construction | © Fondation Le Corbusier

Thursday May 26
Poissy
Villa Savoye



Upon arrival, the villa seemed austere. It was hard to imagine it as a residence



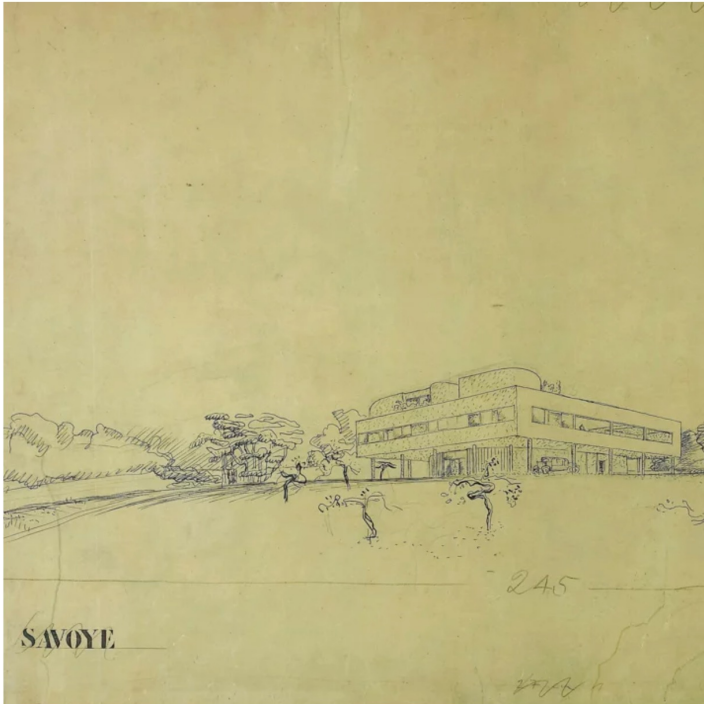
The restored Villa is a site of architectural pilgrimage



Le Corbusier's use of colour

Le Corbusier incorporated colour into his design as he saw it as part of the spatial construction process.

Pale colours bring warmth and light, while stronger hues enhance or conceal. The dark green camouflages the ground floor to integrate it with the surrounding meadow.



Vue en perspective de la villa sur son terrain avec la végétation environnante
© FLC (Fondation Le Corbusier) / ADAGP

A Modernist Marvel: Le Corbusier's Vision

Villa Savoye is a testament to Le Corbusier's modernist ideals, encapsulating his five principles of architecture:

1. **Pilotis:** A grid of reinforced concrete columns lifts the structure off the ground, replacing traditional walls and enhancing the building's aesthetic.
2. **Open Plan:** The interior lacks partitions, creating flexible, flowing spaces.
3. **Horizontal Windows:** Long, ribbon-like windows ensure even daylight distribution.
4. **Independent Façade:** Freed from structural duties, the exterior allows creative design.
5. **Roof Gardens:** A flat roof with gardens protects the concrete and adds usable outdoor space.

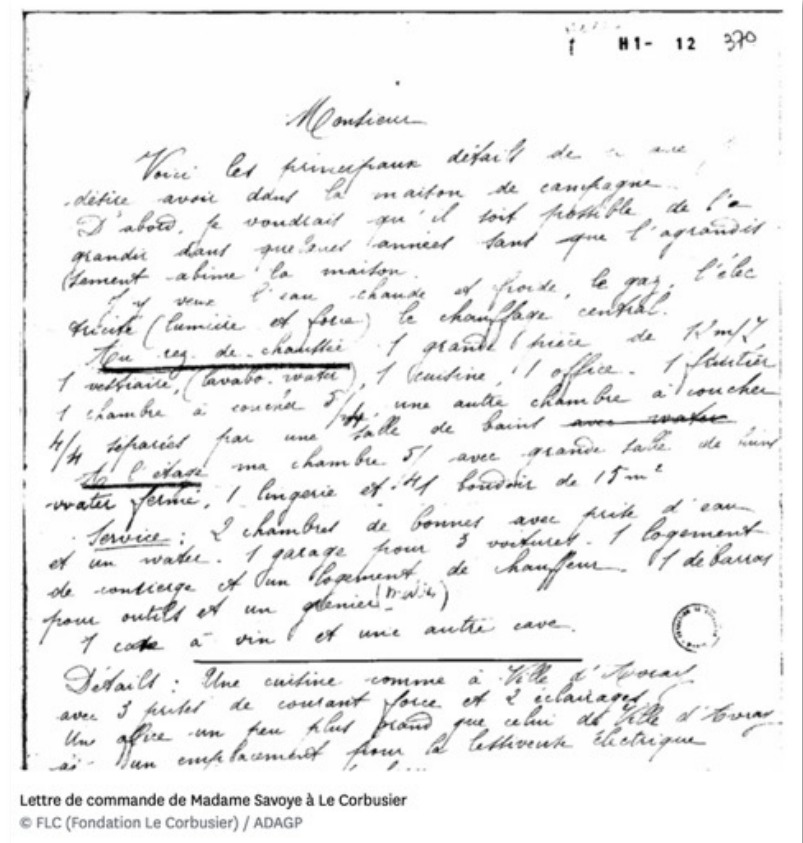
In the late summer of 1928, **Pierre and Eugénie Savoye** decided to build a cottage on their land in Poissy to spend weekends with their son and to entertain their friends. They chose an avant-garde architect of some renown, whose work they had discovered with the **Villa Church in Ville-d'Avray**: Charles-Edouard Jeanneret was known as **Le Corbusier**.



The house was commissioned in a letter signed by Eugénie Savoye. It sets out a number of technical requirements:

- hot water
- electricity
- gas
- central heating
- details of room layout
- lighting ambiances
- floor coverings

He was assisted in this task by his cousin Pierre Jeanneret.





Le chantier
© Ernest Weissmann © FLC (Fondation Le Corbusier) / ADAGP

A modern Icon

Le Corbusier's villa Savoye is not just another house, it's THE house. It is the culmination of ten years of research and experimentation.

The Dark Side: The Savoyes' Discontent

Despite its acclaim, Villa Savoye was a source of frustration for the Savoye family, who envisioned a comfortable country retreat but encountered persistent issues. Shortly after moving in, they faced roof leaks and a poor heating system, making the house cold and damp. Madame Savoye wrote to Le Corbusier, lamenting, "It is still raining in our garage," and later complained of a buzzing skylight that "prevents us from sleeping during bad weather." She also noted water flooding the hall, ramp, garage, and bathroom, with walls "absolutely soaked" and "wet through."

In a 1935 critique, *Time* magazine acknowledged Le Corbusier's philosophy—"A house is a machine to live in"—but noted that his expansive windows turned rooms into "hothouses," flat roofs leaked, and designs wasted space. The villa's woes peaked during World War II when German forces burgled it, leaving it in disrepair. Facing \$80,000 in renovation costs, the Savoyes abandoned the property, never returning.

Building Science?

“The exclusion of downpipes and sills which would have disturbed the aesthetic but made the white surfaces more susceptible to staining and erosion from overflowing rainwater.”

Wikipedia



La villa vue par drone
©notoryou.com

A Lasting Legacy Amid Flaws

The Savoyes' hatred of Villa Savoye stemmed from its impracticality, leaks, poor insulation, and disruptive noises undermined its promise as a serene retreat. Yet, its architectural significance endured. Rescued from oblivion, the villa underwent three major renovations, becoming a symbol of modernist innovation. As Arch2O notes, its story reflects a paradox: a groundbreaking design that failed its inhabitants yet inspired generations.

As the world evolves, so does the habitat

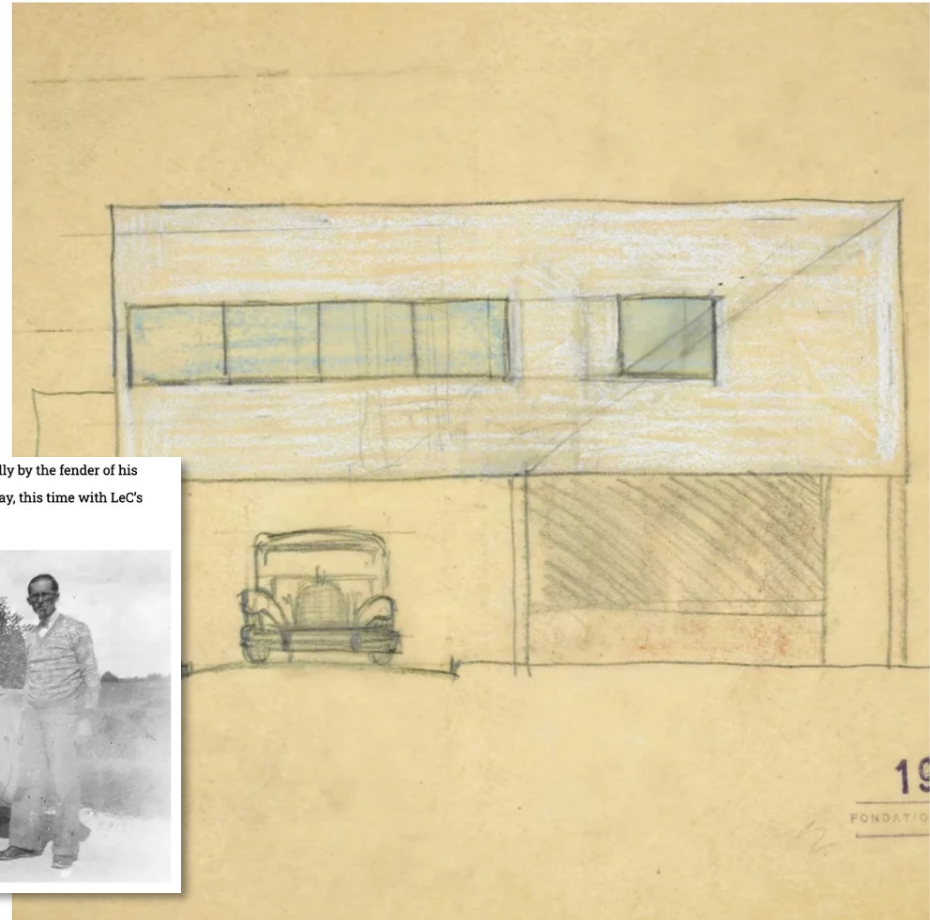
All this was made possible by the evolution of materials, such as concrete, which Le Corbusier had been studying since the beginning of his career.

But the villa Savoye is also about integrating the car as a fully-fledged element of the home. Did you know that it was the Savoye's car that determined the shape of the entrance hall and the dimensions of the peristyle! (rows of columns)

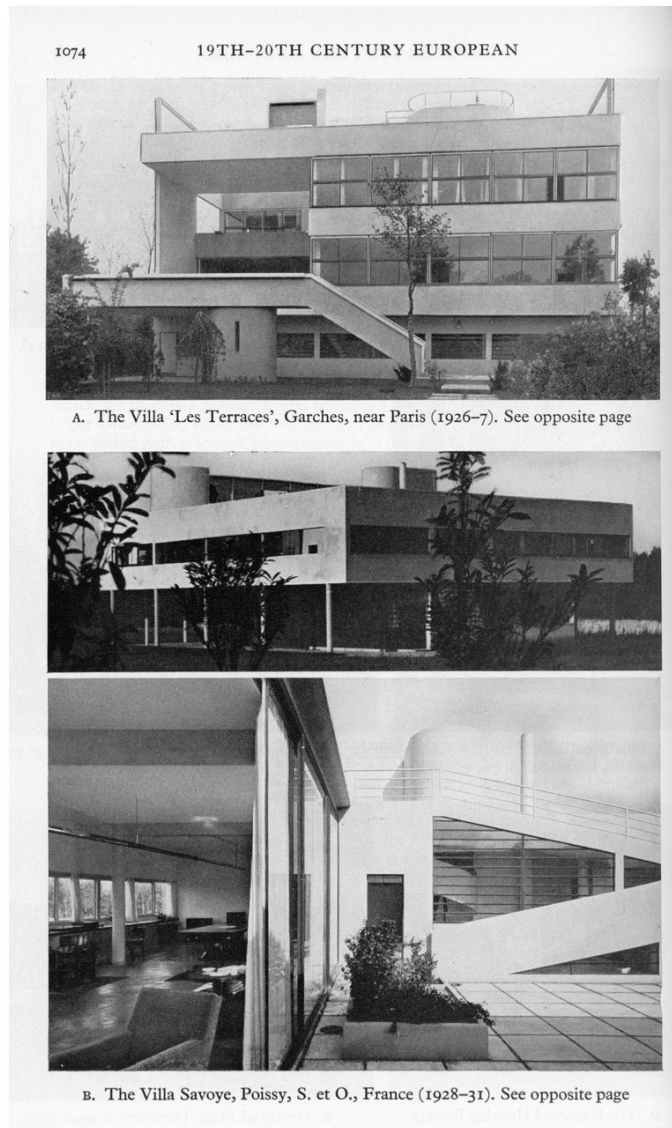
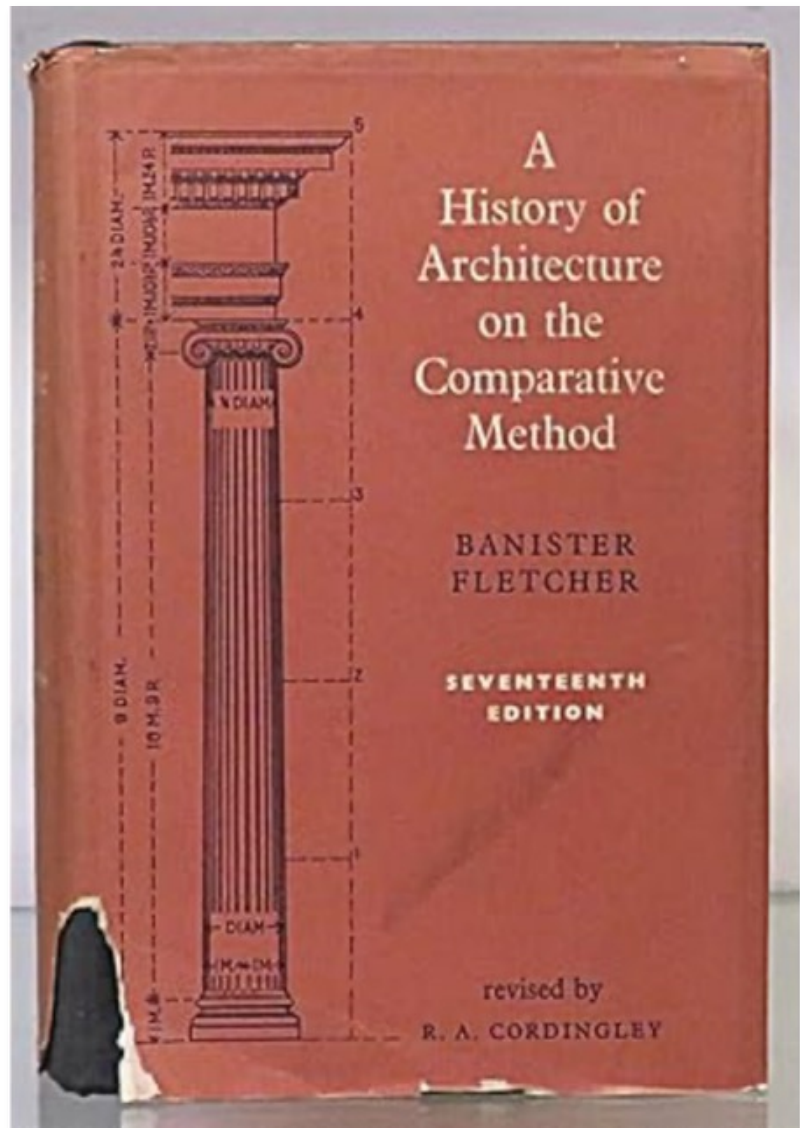
Villa Savoye – wait, as a commenter pointed out, this is a *different* Voisin. Also, I'm told the radius of the cylindrical base and surrounding driveway were scaled based on the turning radius of a Citroën:



I mean, look at him up there, in his funny sweater, standing proudly by the fender of his Voisin! Here's another photo from what appears to be that same day, this time with LeC's wife Yvonne:

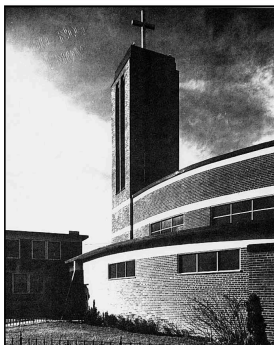
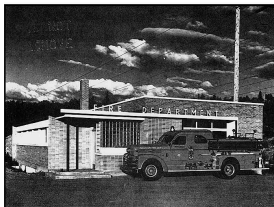


Croquis villa, voiture
© FLC (Fondation Le Corbusier) - ADAGP



University of Toronto
 School of Architecture
 1960s

**THE PRACTICE OF POST-WAR ARCHITECTURE IN EDMONTON, ALBERTA
AN OVERVIEW OF THE MODERN MOVEMENT, 1936-1960**

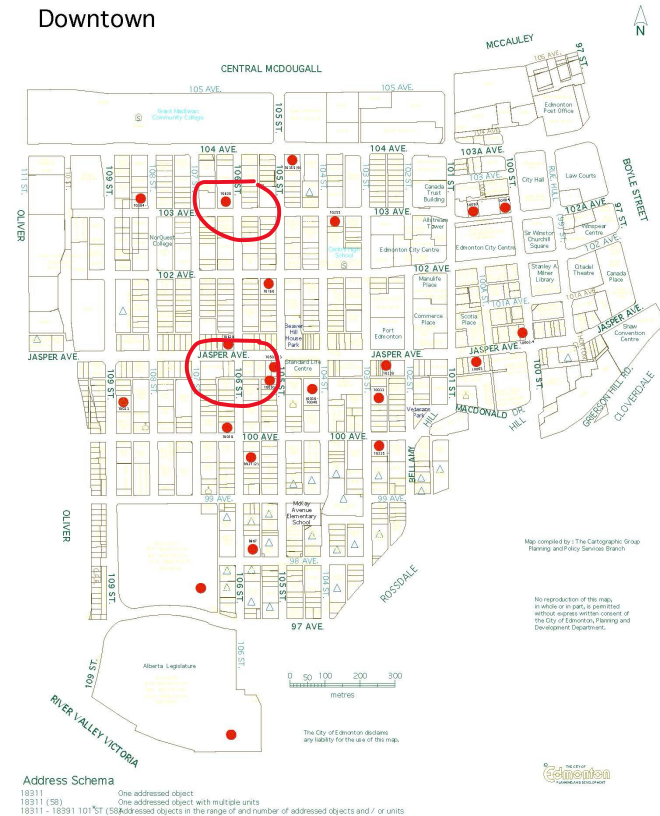


PREPARED BY:
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SEPTEMBER, 2001

Downtown



These dots represent identified modern buildings
in the downtown.



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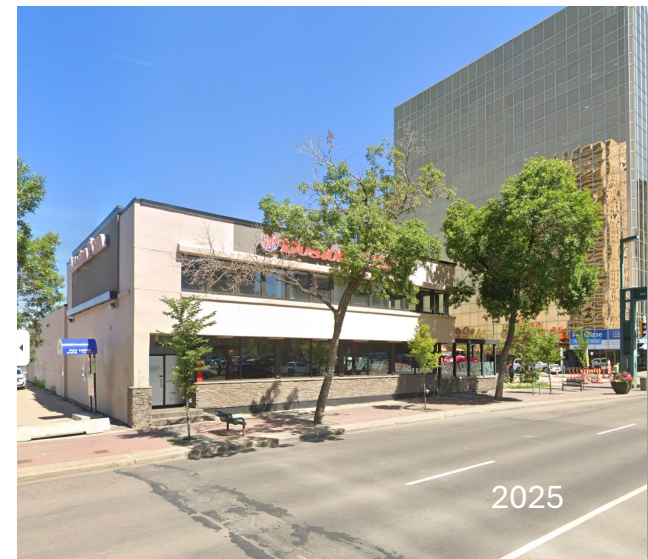
Located at 106 Street and Jasper Avenue — Phone 29217

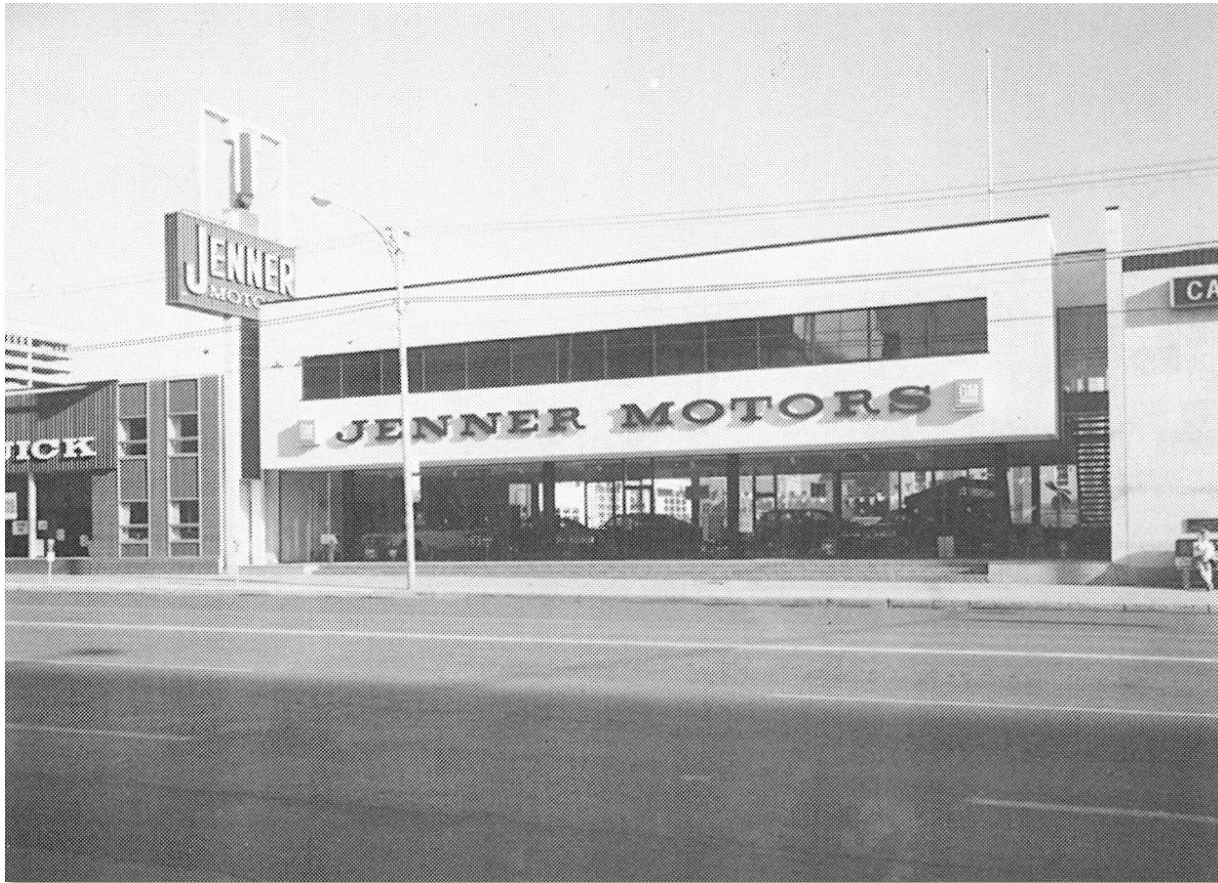
A beautiful example of modern architecture, the fine new premises, located at the corner of 106 street and Jasper avenue, offer an entirely new standard of convenience and service to motorists of greater Edmonton and district.

Erected at the cost of \$80,000, the building marks the fourth extension to Burrows Motors Limited, since the company was formed in December, 1928.

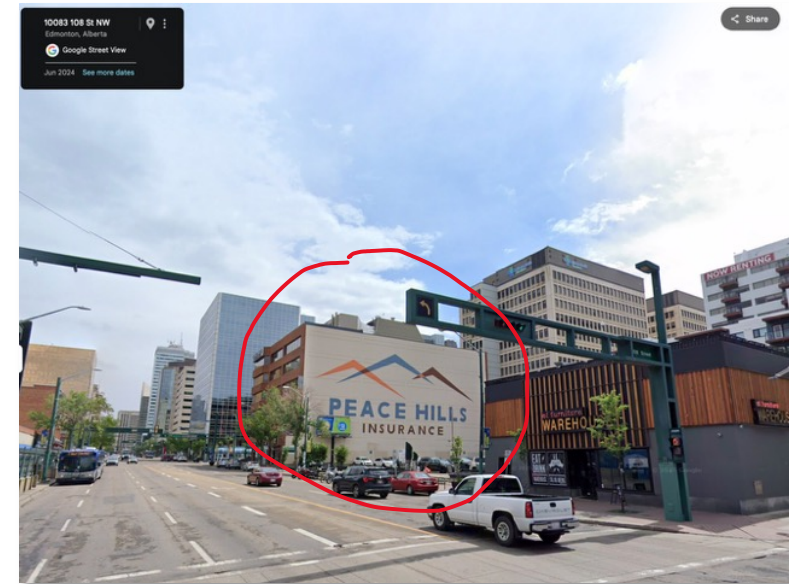
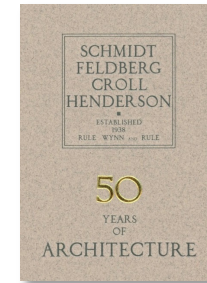
Edmonton Journal July 28,1948

Rule Wynn Rule Architects





Rule Wynn Forbes Lord Architects 1972 Jasper Avenue



demolished – a parking lot in 2025



Inspired by the iconographic Villa Savoye

WS121.2jpg

Building in City Hits New Peak

Edmonton's commercial building program this year is the greatest in recent history, with 166 permits being issued with a permit value of \$1,607,710 for the first seven months compared with 47, with a permit value of \$233,800 for the seven months ended July 31, 1945, according to a report filed Friday with the city commissioners by Maxwell C. Dewar, city architect.

DESPITE SHORTAGES of building materials which has caused a slackening up of the issuing of permits, a total of 122 permits were taken out during July for the erection of homes. Their permit value was \$476,800.

The cumulative total of home-building permits issued to July 31, 1946 is \$5,085,625, and the number of permits issued, 1,238. Last year during the seven-month period there were 858 permits issued with a value of \$2,970,628, an increase this year of 380 permits and \$2,114,997 in permit value.

THE TOTAL of building permits issued during the first seven months of this year was 2,578, and their value, \$10,132,204. For the same period last year the number of permits issued was 1,988, and their value, \$3,891,154.

During the period ended July 31, 1946, 12 permits were issued for the erection of institutional buildings with a permit value of \$1,371,300. This is more than \$1,000,000 in excess of the total of such permits issued during the same period of 1945.

Friday a permit was issued to the Massey Harris Co., for \$268,768 covering the erection of a brick and concrete warehouse at 10616 103 avenue. H. G. Macdonald is the contractor on the project, and the architects are Rule Wynn and Rule.

Edmonton Journal Aug.2, 1946

Massey-Harris Grew From Small Foundry To \$50,000,000 Industry
Company In Hundred Years
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One Of Canada's Finest Foundries Built By Company At Brantford, Ont.

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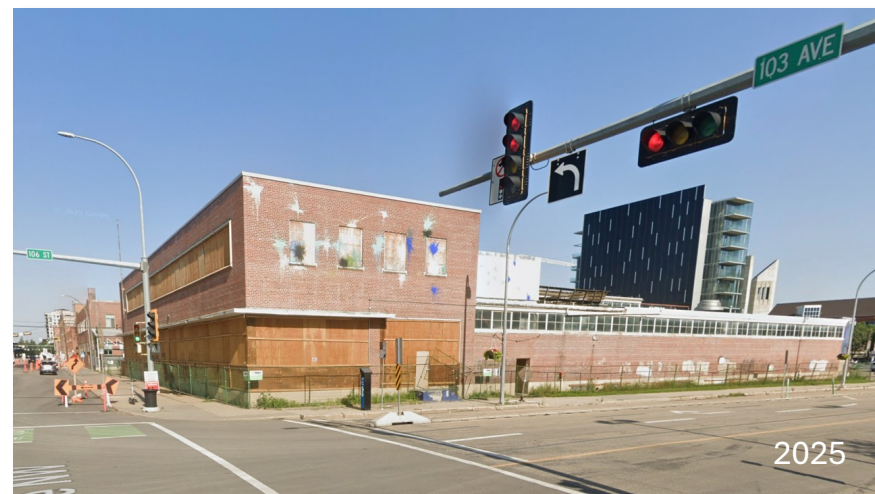
The 100th Anniversary of the founding of Massey-Harris Company, Limited, is given special point in Edmonton by the opening of the new, modern, streamlined home for the Edmonton Branch—pictured above. This new building at 103rd Avenue and 100th Street contains up-to-the-minute facilities for parts service and machine repairs, as well as spacious showrooms, warehouse and office. Not only does it provide for prompt and efficient attention to customers' needs, but even more important, it is a very real and tangible expression of the faith of Massey-Harris in the continued expansion of this great agricultural area.

MASSEY-HARRIS COMPANY, LIMITED
 ESTABLISHED 1847

Edmonton Journal December 2, 1947



2003



2025

A classified house

Concerned by the town of Poissy's plan to demolish the villa, architects mobilized and formed a committee to save it. In 1959, the Minister of Culture, André Malraux, took steps to preserve the villa, which the town sold to the State along with a 1-hectare parcel of land. Restoration work began in 1963, and in 1965 the villa was listed as a Historical Monument. Since then, there have been two further restoration programs and research studies on the [polychromy](#) > of the walls.

In 2016, 17 sites designed by Le Corbusier, spread over 7 countries and 3 continents, were inscribed by [UNESCO](#) ↗ on the World Heritage List, including the villa Savoye !



Façade sud-ouest de la Villa Savoye, pilotis, ouvertures non vitrées

© FLC (Fondation Le Corbusier) - ADAGP © Jean-Christophe Ballot / Centre des monuments nationaux

1963: Architect Jean Debuissou began the first restoration, Though it is reported that Le Corbusier himself opposed it.

1965: The Villa was listed as a historical monument, the first modernist building to receive this designation.

1989-1997: A comprehensive state-funded restoration was completed, addressing the structural and surface deterioration of the concrete.





*Why do you need
a roof garden when
you are in the middle
of a pristine forest?*

David and Christl's country cabin
Close to the ground



Urban living at the Bergstrom Block
*Modern Movement influences
with a roof garden in the city*

