

Former Owner Of Erindale College Site Dies At 87

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Reginald W. Watkins, a long-time resident of Erindale, who became best known only a few months ago when he sold his estate home and 60 acres of beautiful surrounding property to the University of Toronto for a "satellite university," died at the age of 87 last Friday.

Born in Hamilton on November 10, 1876, he attended public and high school there before going on to Upper Canada College at the age of 15. From there he went

to work at the 'Right House' a large department store established by his grandfather in Hamilton more than 100 years ago. Mr. Watkins served his apprenticeship in the family company, working in the office, before going to different department stores and then on selling. Finally, he was sent to Europe by his father, on buying trips. He made a total of 71 trips in all, back and forth across the ocean, for the company.

(Continued on page 2)

Former Owner

(Continued from Page 1)

The high point in his life, however, was a trip around the world, many details of which remained in his memory for the rest of his life.

Following the death of his father, the Right House became the property of Reginald W. Watkins and two brothers who predeceased him. For some time, they rented the store to the Mercantile Stores of New York, but finally sold out to this company some years ago.

A bachelor, Mr. Watkins purchased the Erindale property about 30 years ago, and, in the ensuing years, it became known as one of the most beautiful private estates in Canada.

The property was purchased from Mr. Watkins last July by the University of Toronto. It is scheduled to become the central site for the U. of T.'s western off-campus college.

Mr. Watkins was especially proud of the work he did himself on this property. It included construction of a large pond, surrounded by a beautiful rock garden and spanned by a picturesque stone bridge patterned after an idea which he got from a small English village.

In the 25-room Tudor house there are solid carved beams in the ceiling which Mr. Watkins brought over from Ipswich, England; white oak floors which were imported from Kansas; a fireplace from England, etc., etc.

A few months ago, Mr. Watkins stated that he was going to give nearly all of his paintings to the Hamilton Art Gallery.

When the university purchased the Watkins' estate, provision was made for Mr. Watkins to continue residence in his home there for the rest of his life.

He had been in very poor health for a few years.

For a more detailed story on the colourful background of this man, read The Weekly next week.