

ALEXANDER, Frederick John (1849 – 1930)

Frederick Alexander was a prominent Ottawa architect who is best known for his excellent interiors of the Parliamentary Library and ground enclosures.

Born in Persy, Wiltshire, England on September 25, 1849 he was educated at a private grammar school at Devizes, Wiltshire. At the age of 16 he began three years of architectural study under J.W. Reed, in London, England. He later studied with Lander and Bedells, with whom he completed his training.

In 1870 he came to Toronto and entered the firm of Langley, Langley and Burke, where he stayed for a year before being appointed assistant on the staff of the Chief Architect of Public Works. In this position he designed and supervised the construction of the interior fittings of the Parliamentary Library (which survived the fire of 1916), including the bookcases, and the wrought iron fences and gates to the Parliament grounds. He lost the position in 1877 due to government cutbacks.

In 1878 Alexander emigrated to Pieter-

maritzburg, Natal, South Africa, continuing successful practice until the depression following the Boer War, which forced him into bankruptcy in 1885. Returning to Ottawa in 1886 he began a private practice which included commissions from the federal government. During this time he served on the Council of the Ontario Association of Architects (elected 1895).

His Ottawa commissions included the Offices of the Union Bank of Canada, Wellington Street (1888) which presents a decorated Italianate facade, blending an assortment of stone surfaces into harmony by utilizing three romanesque arches surmounted by a renaissance revival pediment. He also executed residences for J.G. Bourinot (1886) and W.M. Goodeve (1887) as well as designing the Ottawa Amateur Athletic Association Gymnasium (1889). Alexander also conceived a series of Ottawa fire stations including: No.3 on Theodore St. (1898), No.4 on York St. (1898), No. 9 on James St. (1897) and No. 5 on King St. (1897).