# BELCHER, John E.
# (1834 – 1915)

John E. Belcher was a prominent architect and engineer in the Peterborough area. His successful career also included serving as President of the Ontario Association of Architects in 1899.

Born in 1834 in Cork, Ireland, Belcher trained as an architect and engineer in the office of his father. He became assistant to John Benson, head engineer of the Cork Harbour Board and later was engaged by the City of Liverpool as an engineer.

He immigrated to Canada in the 1850's to become the Engineer for Peterborough County. He later became Town Engineer for the City of Peterborough from 1878 to 1897, and was responsible for many civic improvements.

Belcher also became well known as an architect executing many residential and commercial buildings in Peterborough, although he was primarily employed as a church architect. He did extensive restoration and design on St. John's Church, Hunter Street (1880-82), with additions (1890), the Vestry (1907), and Rectory (1908-09). He was honored for his work by the wardens of the church who placed his coat of arms in a window of the Vestry Building. He also worked on St. Luke the Evangelist, Armour Rd. (1877); St. Peter's Cathedral, new Sacristy and interior restoration, Reid Street (1848-85); and All Saints Anglican Church, Rubidge Street at Sherbrooke (1890-91) and additions (1909-10). He also designed St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Hospital, Armour Road (1888-90), which was demolished in 1969.

His most notable commercial building is the large Market Hall building on George Street at Simcoe Streets, Peterborough (1889). With its large clocktower and handsome classical Edwardian brick facade, based on London prototypes, it serves as a symbol of the commercial core of Peterborough. It was restored and integrated into the modern Peterborough Square shopping complex in 1973.

As an engineer Belcher also designed the 3,000 foot floating bridge across Lake Chemong. Some of his last major commissions were designs for the imposing Peterborough Collegiate Institute, McDonnell Street (1907-08) and his Carnegie Beaux-Arts styled Peterborough Library on Water St. (1909) which he designed with William Blackwell. His commercial block of four buildings at 442 to 448 George Street are handsomely grouped with a mansard roof flanking a central tower. He also designed residences at 300 London Street, 172 Brock Street, 269 Edinburgh Street, 603 Stewart Street and 643 Bethany Street, Peterborough.