

BROWN, John Francis (1866 – 1942)

John Francis Brown was the architect for many churches and Sunday schools throughout the province and practiced from his Toronto office for more than fifty years.

Brown was born at Levis, Quebec, while his father Quarter Master Sergeant J. Brown, was stationed at the Quebec Citadel and oversaw its construction. In 1870 his family returned to England where Brown was educated, but he returned to Canada in 1882. He trained in the Toronto offices of the architectural firm of Edwards and Webster. He opened his own office in 1892 after being one of the five finalists in the competition for the British Columbia Parliament buildings at Victoria. The competition was won by Francis Rattenbury. Brown went into partnership with his son F. Bruce Brown to form the firm of J. Francis Brown and Son.

In 1899 he was the supervisor of construction for the Board of Trade Building, Yonge and Front Streets, Toronto, working for the New York firm of James & James. Over the course of his long career he completed many church designs including:

Chester Baptist Church, Don Mills Road, Toronto (1894); East Toronto Baptist Church, Gerrard Street East, Toronto (1898); Park Road Baptist Church, Toronto (1926-27); Runnymede Baptist Church, Toronto (1924-25); Kingsway-Lambton United Church, Toronto (1936-37); Kingston Road United Church, Scarborough (1927-28); Leaside United Church, Toronto (1940-41); and Forest Hill United Church, Toronto (1940-41) as well as a number of other churches in Ontario cities and towns. In partnership with his son, he built over twenty five churches in the last ten years of practice.

At the turn of the century he did some designs in Muskoka, undertaking a large hotel project in Huntsville (1901), and the Town Hall, Gravenhurst (1900). In 1910 he designed the Cuthbertson building, Toronto, an attractive four-storey commercial building with striking bay windows overhanging the street from the second storey. In 1929 he was the associate architect with William Lyon Somerville on the designs for the first buildings at McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, which are good examples of the collegiate gothic style.