

## CHAPMAN, Alfred Hirschfelder (1879 – 1949)

**A**lfred Chapman was an outstanding Canadian architect and designer who conceived many well known buildings as a senior member of the firm of Chapman & McGiffin and later Chapman & Oxley. These firms designed dozens of prominent structures with thoughtful sense of proportion and skilful detailing, integrating new architectural developments and styles into their designs. Chapman served as President of the Ontario Association of Architects in 1929-30.

Alfred Hirschfelder Chapman was born in Toronto on December 8, 1879 and attended the Model School and Harbord Collegiate Institute before entering the office of Beaumont Jarvis to begin his architectural training, which continued in the office of Burke and Horwood. In 1901 he began his studies at Ecole-des-Beaux-Arts, Paris and then spent two years undertaking architectural work in New York City, returning to Canada in 1906. His design skills received almost instant recognition as he won the competition for the Toronto Public Reference Library, College and St. George Streets, (1907). It is one of the best Beaux-Arts Classical revival buildings in Toronto with its rich sculptural stone ornament firmly integrated into the yellow brick facade (executed in association with the firm of Wickson and Gregg).

His partnership with Robert B. McGiffin began in 1908 and during the next 11 years they built many landmark buildings throughout Ontario including: Dundas Library, Dundas, (1909); Rosedale Presbyterian Church, Mount Pleasant Road, Toronto (1910); Brantford Collegiate, Brantford, (1910); R.A. Williams Building, 145 Yonge Street, Toronto (1911); Old Mill Tea Room, Humber River, Toronto (1914); Knox College, University of Toronto, (won competition in 1910, constructed 1914) and the Barrie Public Library, Barrie, (1917). The Bloor-Gladstone Branch Toronto Public Library, Toronto (1912), is one of the most monumental branches in the city with its grand round-arched windows carefully grouped to allow light into the interior and capped by a distinctive tiled hipped roof. The Harbour Commission building, Fleet Street, Toronto (1919) is a perfect Beaux-Arts composition with all of its French-Classical parts working together into a unified whole.

Chapman began his partnership with J. Morrow

Oxley in 1919, under the name of Chapman and Oxley. One of their initial plans was the lay-out of the Sunnyside Park development which included the design and construction of several buildings including the Sunnyside Bathing Pavilion, Lakeshore Boulevard West, Toronto (1921-23) which utilized the novel idea of employing concrete in its noble and gracious design. At the Canadian National Exhibition grounds he built the Pure Food Building (1922, demolished); Ontario Government Building (1927); Princes' Gate (1927) and Electrical Engineering Building (1928, demolished). His grand Beaux-Arts design for the Princes' Gates have become an eloquent symbol for the National fair.

His other notable buildings are those in Toronto's financial district including: Northern Ontario Building, 330 Bay Street, (1925); National Building, 347 Bay Street, (1928); Sterling Tower, 372 Bay Street, (1929); Toronto Star Building, King Street West (1929, demolished); Simpson's Department Store, art deco interiors and additions, Richmond and Bay streets, (1918-29); Toronto Hydro Building, Carlton Street, (1932) and Canadian Breweries Building, Victoria Street, (1939). Chapman and Oxley designed conservative, classically-styled buildings in the 20's but their designs evolved to encompass the originality of the abstract art deco style, as exemplified by the Toronto Star building and the original decorative details to the Toronto Hydro building.

Other works include: Albert College, Belleville, Ontario (1926); Havergal College, Avenue Road at Lawrence, Toronto (1927); Crosse and Blackwell Building, Lakeshore Boulevard West, Toronto (1927); Runnymede Theatre, Bloor Street West, Toronto (1928); Wycliffe College Library, University of Toronto (1930); Simpson's Department store, Montreal, Quebec (1930); Dominion Government Building, Port Credit, (1931); Holy Blossom Temple, Bathurst Street, Toronto (1938). The designs for the Royal Ontario Museum, Avenue Road at Bloor, Toronto (1932) were particularly original, being Byzantine Art Deco in style with rich decorative carving well integrated into the rough-cut stone walls. The designs for Holy Blossom Temple were also innovative, executed in concrete resembling stone, with the integration of neo-romanesque details into the exterior.