

## COBB, Charles Sherman (1882 – 1964)

**C**harles Cobb was one of Toronto's most prominent architects during his period of activity in the city from 1912 to 1923 after which he relocated his practice to Pasadena, California. He remained in Pasadena for more than 40 years until his death in 1964. Cobb designed Beaux-Arts buildings which have excellent proportions and finely handled materials giving them a harmonious sense of graciousness.

Cobb was born in Albany, New York on August 14, 1882 and was educated at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, graduating in 1906. He came to Toronto in 1912 where he set up practice, obtaining significant public commissions after he had established himself. He became Honorary Treasurer and member of the Council of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada in 1919-22.

Among some of his more notable commissions is the Gage Institute which houses the national offices of the National Sanitorium Association, College at Ross Street, Toronto (1914). It is based on the Italian Renaissance palazzo with its carefully composed placement of openings, however it has been executed in brick with cast stone embellishments to adapt the form to local materials. Cobb also designed the Muskoka Free Hospital for Consumptives for the Association at Gravenhurst, Ontario (1921-22). The same classical restraint can be seen in his designs for Fairweathers Store, Yonge

near King Street, Toronto (1918-19) this time clad in Indiana limestone and metal work to suit the patrons of this store which was originally a sophisticated ladies specialty shop.

His Registry Office for Toronto (1914-16), was perhaps his greatest public work and was unfortunately demolished to make way for Toronto's new City Hall. Here he adapted the entire "temple" format to serve as a structure for registering deeds and land titles, in keeping with the Classical revival which was so dominant in public architecture in the early decades of the twentieth century. Its free-standing stone Ionic portico and marble walls echo Toronto's Union Station, designed contemporaneously. It was intended that the Registry office would stand at the head of a proposed Federal Avenue extending southward, linking the two buildings, but was never executed.

Cobb also designed other classically inspired structures for the Imperial Bank including, the Ouellette Street branch, Windsor, Ontario (1921) and several Toronto branches. He designed the Essex County Sanatorium, Windsor and the Canada Bread Company Plant, Toronto. Cobb also designed many residences in Toronto. One of particular influence was his work for Sir William Gage on Davenport Road near Casa Loma (1917-18), which was a very large elaborate mansion featured in a 5 page spread in Construction magazine.