

COON, Stephen Burwell (1862 – 1936)

Stephen Coon practiced initially in London, Ontario moving to Toronto early in the century. There is hardly a region of the province in which he did not design. His firm was successful in the area of school design, providing complete plans and specifications which enabled contractors to tender with confidence.

Coon was born in Brant County, Ontario on September 5, 1862, and moved to Norwich, Ontario in 1864 and later to Woodstock, Ontario where he graduated from High School. At the age of 21 he went to western Iowa and worked in the building industry. Two years later he returned to Canada to set up practice in London, Ontario. In 1901 he moved to Toronto where he continued to practice on his own until 1913 when he established the firm of S.B. Coon and Son.

The firm was responsible for the design of a large number of public buildings, schools, churches, libraries, club houses, auditoriums, gymnasium and recreation buildings, swimming pools, apartment houses, warehouses, stores, office buildings and many residences throughout Ontario. Most notable among these are the Sarnia Collegiate and Vocational School (1921); St. Catharines Collegiate and Vocational School (1922-23); Danforth Park Public School, Toronto (1922); Kitchener Collegiate and Vocational School (1922-23) and Woodstock Collegiate and Vocational School (1931, additions 1940). Coon's schools

were geometric, classically inspired edifices which later became streamlined in keeping with the stylistic developments during the century.

Coon's design for the Atlas Building, Bay Street at Temperance, Toronto (1927) an 11-storey downtown office, is a classically inspired structure with high stone base and monumental entrance portico with symmetrically projecting bays above, crowned by finely proportioned roofscape. Photographs of his shop-front for the Lake Simcoe Ice Company, Dupont Street west of Bedford, Toronto (1932) were featured in the Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada. The Ice Company Building is a tasteful and refined study in picture perfect Art Deco detailing, which is etched on the handsome stone surface.

Coon also completed designs for a number of small yet finely detailed apartment buildings, for example the University Apartments on St. Thomas Street, Toronto (1926-27) is typical of the Georgian styling of the period, while the larger Balmoral Apartments on Avenue Road at Balmoral (1928-29) is a stately and romantic interpretation of the tudor palace. S.B. Coon & Son design for the York Masonic Temple, Eglinton Avenue east of Yonge, Toronto (1930, demolished) was a refined classical scheme of brick with a temple carefully delineated in stone on the main facade, complete with Ionic pilasters and aedicules surrounding the entrances.