

DARLING, Frank (1850 – 1923)

Frank Darling was one of the most talented and prolific architects in Canada. His work was recognized in 1915 when he was nominated by the Royal Institute of British Architects as the candidate to receive the Royal Gold Medal for the promotion of architecture. This medal was instituted by Queen Victoria in 1848, as an honor to be granted annually to a distinguished architect. The presentation to Mr. Darling was only the second time it was conferred in North America (the first being Charles F. McKim, U.S.A., 1905) and the first time conferred to a man in the British Dominions. He designed houses, hospitals, university and commercial buildings across Canada in the rich vocabulary of Edwardian Classicism, never repeating a design he was always conceptualizing new shapes and forms. But Darling is most important for his central contribution to the development of all types of high-quality Canadian bank buildings, executed in a monumental classical style. These buildings are distinguished in their attempt to create a national corporate style.

Darling was born in Scarborough Township, York County on February 17, 1850, the son of Rev. Walter Darling, rector of Holy Trinity Church, Toronto. He was educated at Upper Canada College, Toronto and Trinity College School, Weston, Ontario. When he was 16 his father arranged for him to train with the Toronto architect Henry Langley until 1870. He then began three years of training in London, England where he worked the offices of Sir George Edmund Street and later Sir Arthur W. Blomfield both champions of Gothic architecture.

Returning to Canada in 1875, he joined Henry Macdougall in a partnership, the first in a series that spanned his career, with the exception of two brief periods in the 1870's. In 1880 he joined with Samuel G. Curry, and later in 1889 Henry Sproatt and John Pearson were added to the firm that began as Darling and Curry and ended as Darling and Pearson, for by 1895 Curry and Sproatt had left the firm.

In 1880 with Curry, the firm distinguished itself by placing first in the competition for the Ontario Parliament buildings, Toronto, with a well composed gothic design, which unfortunately was never built. Darling's first important executed commission was the design for the Bank of Montreal, Yonge at

Front Street, Toronto (1885-86) a rich self-assured building expressing the virtues of the young country, containing a beautifully decorated 45-foot high banking rotunda. Darling and Curry also designed the Toronto Club, Wellington and York Street, Toronto (1888) and the Victoria Hospital for Sick Children, College Street, Toronto (1889).

To give an idea of the range of Darling's work, there are over 100 of his bank buildings scattered over the country, including head offices of the Dominion Bank, King at Yonge Street (1913-14), the Bank of Nova Scotia, King near Jordan (1902), the Standard Bank, King West at Jordan (1909) and the Canadian Bank of Commerce, Yonge at Bloor Street, (1898-9), as well as the Union Bank, King at Bay Street (1910) in Toronto. His influence spread across the country with the Bank of Commerce Main Office, Winnipeg, Manitoba (1899-1900), Bank of Commerce Main Office, St. James Street, Montreal (1907-08), and the Bank of Commerce Main Office, West Hastings Street, Vancouver, British Columbia (1906-08). He also designed many small local branches in the cities and towns across Canada including a series of prefabricated wooden branch banks designed for the Western provinces.

Among his designs for office buildings were the Canadian Pacific building, King and Yonge Street, Toronto (1911-12), Canadian General Electric building, King Street West at Simcoe, Toronto (1907-08), the Sun Life Assurance building, Dominion Square, in Montreal (1914-18) is a massive monumental office building with huge colonnades at the street level. The Mutual Life Building in Waterloo, Ontario (1910-12) is another excellent and imposing classical composition. In Winnipeg he designed the Grain Exchange, Lombard Avenue, (1906-07) and Post Office, Portage Avenue (1904-06). In Vancouver he designed the Canada Life Building, Hasting Street (1909-10).

He also designed many fine residences for wealthy Canadians. One of his most prominent is his mansion for Sir Joseph Flavelle, Queen's Park, Toronto (1901-02); also Sir Edmund Osler, William Laidlaw, George Beardmore, and Colonel Sweeney. He did many buildings at the University of Toronto including Trinity College, Hoskin Ave-

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nue (1925), Mining Building, College Street (1902), Medical Sciences Building, Queen's Park, (1902-03), Convocation Hall, King's College Circle, (1905) and the Faculty of Education Building, Bloor at Spadina (1908-09). Darling also designed Shirreff Hall at Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia and the new building for the Toronto General Hospital, College Street at University Av-

enue (1910-12). The designs for the Royal Ontario Museum, Queen's Park, Toronto (1910-11) used an exuberant modern Romanesque style with its arcade of linked round-arched windows giving a spectacular effect. His classical design for the North Toronto CPR station, Yonge at Summerhill (1915-16) with its dignified tower now serves as a retail store.