

HELLIWELL, Grant (1855 – 1953)

Grant Helliwell was one of the senior partners in the architectural firm of Gordon & Helliwell, which practiced in Toronto from 1879 to 1931. Church commissions formed a large part of the firm's work particularly for the Presbyterian church. Helliwell was active in the promotion of the architectural profession in Ontario as he was a founding member of the Architectural Guild and served as treasurer of the Ontario Association of Architects in 1899 and later was its president in 1901.

Grant Helliwell was born at Todmorden, York County, Ontario on November 3, 1855 to an old Toronto family and was educated at the Toronto Grammar School and Jarvis Street Collegiate. He trained in the office of Langley, Langley and Burke and met his future partner, Henry B. Gordon there. In 1878 he formed a partnership with Henry B. Gordon to form the firm of Gordon and Helliwell, which continued until they both retired in 1931, after more than five decades in practice together.

The firm did many buildings in the Toronto area including the Toronto Young Women's Christian Association on Elm Street, (1890-91) which was a rich and rotund Romanesque revival building with fine detail outlining the mass. They designed the Upper Canada Bible Society, College Street, Toronto (1910) which resembles classical contemporary bank architecture with large double-story ionic recessed columns. The present office tower was added on later. Gordon and Helliwell also designed buildings throughout Ontario including

Queen's College, Kingston which was one of the main buildings on campus when it was erected in 1880 and set the style for the rest of the campus. The firm also designed the Town Hall and Market in Orillia (1894), which was a distinctive composition with its robust turrets on the corners of the main facade. It unfortunately burned in 1915 and was rebuilt.

They were frequently engaged by the Presbyterian Church to design buildings and it is remarkable how eclectic there designs can be. Many of their buildings have been recycled to other uses, speaking well of their design expertise. Some of there designs include: St. Paul's Presbyterian Church (1883-84) and St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church (1885-86) Peterborough; St. Andrew's Presbyterian, Brampton (1880); Division Street Presbyterian Church, Owen Sound (1885-86); Knox Church, Ayr (1887-88) and First Presbyterian Church, St. Mary's (1879). In Toronto they also did many churches including: West Presbyterian Church, Denison Avenue at Wosley (1879-80); Parkdale Presbyterian Church, Dunn Avenue (1886-88); St. Enoch's Presbyterian Church, Winchester Street at Metcalfe (1890-91); and the Bathurst Street Methodist Church, Bathurst and Lennox streets (1887). The Church of the Messiah, Avenue Road at Dupont (1891-92) and Presbyterian Church of the Covenant, Avenue Road at Roxborough (1897-98) are built of an unusual white stone and act as a gate-way across Avenue Road as they are almost across from each other.