

HORSBURGH, Victor Daniel (1866 – 1947)

Victor Horsburgh was one of the leading bank architects in Canada. From 1910 until his retirement in 1933 he was responsible for the design and construction of more than 70 bank buildings for the Canadian Bank of Commerce. He was a master of the classical style and adopted these forms for the Canadian bank prototype.

Victor Horsburgh was born in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1866, the son of a well-known Edinburgh artist, John Horsburgh. He was apprenticed to Sir Rowand Anderson and obtained experience in this and other leading Edinburgh and London architects. In 1907 he won the Royal Institute of British Architects Essay Silver Medal and later in 1926 was appointed RIBA secretary for Canada.

While he was engaged in private practice in Edinburgh he was appointed Supervisory Architect of the Dominion Realty Company Limited, which is a property holding subsidiary of the Canadian Bank of Commerce. His robust interpretation

of the classical style becomes a trademark of his bank architecture. Horsburgh uses projecting cornices, full size columns, rustication and bold stone detailing to embellish his blonde brick facades.

This is demonstrated in some of his major bank branches for the Canadian Bank of Commerce including: Regina (1911), Vancouver (1911), Calgary (1912), Quebec City (1913), Windsor (1918), Edmonton (1919), Winnipeg (1919), Sherbrooke (1920), and Montreal (1928). In Toronto some of Horsburgh's bank branches include: St. Clair Avenue at Dufferin Street (1912); Broadview at Danforth Avenue (1918); Bloor Street West at Lippincott (1914) and St. Clair West at Vaughan (1917).

Perhaps one of his most successful branches was his design for the branch at Queen Street West at Simcoe, Toronto (1929) which is a full scale replica of a Greek temple executed in stone but adapted to the taste of the time with carefully incised decoration on the planar wall surfaces.