

HORWOOD, John Charles Batstone (1864 – 1938)

John Horwood was a prominent Toronto architect who joined one of the most prolific and influential firms, Burke, Horwood and White from 1894 to 1938. He gave the firm his inventiveness in structural engineering which helped them immensely in the design of department stores, which became one of the specialties of the firm.

John Horwood was born at Quidi Vidi, near St. John's Newfoundland in 1864, to a family that had long been in the building trade. At the age of four he was brought to Toronto where he grew up working in the building industry with his father. In 1882 he was indentured to the architectural firm of Langley, Langley and Burke until 1887 and in the early 1890's he went to New York City to work for the firm of Clinton and Russell. During 1894 he travelled around Europe and was able to spend time making measured drawings of the great architectural monuments. On his return to Toronto late that year, he was offered a partnership by his former employer Edmund Burke. The firm practiced under the name of Burke & Horwood until 1909, when Murray A. White was admitted, creating the firm of Burke, Horwood & White. Upon Edmund Burke's death in January 1919, the name was shortened to Horwood & White.

On Horwood's return to Toronto in 1894, he arrived just in time to apply what he had learned about fire-resistant construction to the rebuilding of the Robert Simpson store after it burned. While Edmund Burke originally secured this lucrative

commission for the firm it seems that much of the credit for implementing the project should go to John Horwood. Department stores became a specialty of the firm. Officials of the Hudson's Bay Company, impressed by their work for Simpson's commissioned the architects to design a series of large retail stores in western Canada: Calgary (1911), Vancouver (1911-12), Edmonton (1912), and Victoria (1913-14). Horwood's engineering abilities, together with study of recent trends in the design of department stores elsewhere account for the success of The Bay stores.

Despite its emphasis on department stores, the firm had a varied practice. Through Burke the firm had connections to Osgoode Hall, McMaster University and Baptist churches but John Horwood added a Methodist flavour to the practice. Some of the firm's Methodist churches were: Italian Methodist Church, Claremont Avenue, Toronto (1921), Wesley Methodist Church, Mimico (1922), Eglinton Methodist Church, Sheldrake Boulevard, Toronto (1924) and Woodbine Avenue Methodist Church, Toronto (1926) Queen's Avenue Methodist Church (1924) and First Methodist Church, (1926) in London, Ontario and First Methodist Church (1923), Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. There was also a host of other small-town Methodist churches across Ontario.

The firm did not only churches but residences, YMCA's (several in the Toronto area), hospitals, sanatoria, office buildings and large warehouses were designed by the firm at various dates.