

LYLE, John M. (1872 – 1945)

An individual and creative architect, John M. Lyle was one of the first of his profession to promote distinctive Canadian architecture. Profoundly influenced by the Group of Seven, the utilization of Canadian imagery was a major theme of his architectural works during the 1920's. He once said "If Canadian architecture is to be a living, vital force, it must satisfy the spirit of our people and of the times in which we live..."

John MacIntosh Lyle was born in Belfast Ireland in 1872. He emigrated to Canada with his family six years later. Lyle received his early education at the Hamilton Art School, an institution his father was instrumental in founding. He later studied at Yale University and at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, Paris. Lyle worked for 14 years in several architectural firms in New York City including Carrere and Hastings. Shortly after he returned to Toronto in 1907 he received his first major commission, the Royal Alexandra Theatre King St. W. (1907) an elegant Beaux arts building. Lyle's other great beaux-arts buildings include Toronto Union Station, Front Street West (1915-1920) with Ross & Macdonald and CPR architect Hugh G. Jones and the Memorial Arch at

the Royal Military College, Kingston.

Lyle was also noted for his fine bank buildings. For the Bank of Nova Scotia he designed, among others, its Toronto office tower, 44 King St. W. (designed 1929), the Sparks Street branch, Ottawa (1924), the 1930 Calgary branch bank. For the Dominion Bank he designed branch offices at Avenue Road, Bloor and Sherbourne and at 380 Yonge Street (1930).

It is in this Yonge Street branch where Lyle's attempt to create a Canadian idiom or "Canadian Classical" style can be clearly seen. Lyle incorporated such Canadian motifs as wheat sheafs, herons, and corn into his design.

Other buildings by Lyle are the Thornton-Smith (Toronto Camera) building, 321 Yonge Street (1921) which won Lyle a first at the OAA's 1926 exhibition, Hamilton's High Level Bridge (1931) and the residences of Dr. D. King Smith and Mrs. R. J. Christie.

Married to Isobel Moncrieff, Lyle was a member of the Ontario Association of Architects and was a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects, of the Royal College of Architects and of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada.

Important work:

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| Royal Alexandra Theatre, King St. W., Toronto | 1907 |
| Union Station (with Hugh G. Jones and Ross & Macdonald) Toronto | 1916-1924 |
| Memorial Arch, Royal Military College, Kingston | 1921 |
| Runnymede Library, Bloor St. W., Toronto | 1929 |
| Head office, Bank of Nova Scotia, Halifax, N.S. | 1930-31 |
| Whitney Hall residence (with Mathers & Haldenby) University College, University of Toronto | 1931-32 |
| High level bridge, abutments and pylons, Hamilton | 1932 |
| Garden and pool for the residence of Col. R. S. McLaughlin, Oshawa | 1935 |