

## MATHERS, Alvan Sherlock (1895 – 1965)

One of the founders of the architectural firm of Mathers & Haldenby which spanned two generations, Alvan “Shy” Mathers is among Canada’s most distinguished 20th century architects. He was accorded one of the outstanding international honors of the architectural world being elected a corresponding member of the Academy d’Architecture of France.

The son of a clergyman, Mathers was born in Aberfoyle, Ontario in 1895. He enrolled at the University of Toronto in 1913 and because of a heart condition which prevented him from enlisting in the army, he was able to continue his education through World War One. During this time he spent several summers at the architect John Lyle’s office. After graduating in 1917 he formed the partnership Banigan, Mathers & Thompson with two fellow graduates. About 1920 he established his partnership with Eric Haldenby.

Throughout his career Alvan Mathers designed many well-known Canadian government, business and university buildings. His works, many in a neo-Georgian or classical revival style include: the University Club of Toronto (1929), The Houses, Upper

Canada College (1932), the 48th Highlanders’ Memorial, (1923), and the Toronto Bible College (1928) all in Toronto and Batterwood House, residence of the Hon. Vincent Massey, Port Hope. For the University of Toronto, Mathers designed Whitney Hall (1931), the Botany Building (1930), the Hygiene Buildings (1923 & 1932) and the David Dunlap Observatory (1933). Other significant works by this prolific architect include the Imperial Oil building, St. Clair Avenue, the National Library at Ottawa and the Administration Building, Dalhousie University, New Brunswick.

Interested in all aspects of architecture, Mathers was President of the Ontario Association of Architects in 1937-1938 and Chairman of the Architectural Committee of the Federal District Commission. He was elected Academician of the Royal Canadian Academy in 1938 and was active in the “Diet Kitchen” Group of Architects which took its name from the old Diet Kitchen Tea Rooms on Bloor Street which later became the Mac Club. He was also involved with the Toronto Board of Trade. Mathers married twice, first to Nesta Verner and secondly to Lillian McVittie Lennox.

### Important work (Mathers & Haldenby):

University Club, (with F.H. Wilkes) University Ave., Toronto	1928-1929
Botany Building, University of Toronto, Toronto	1930-1931
David Dunlap Observatory, University of Toronto, Richmond Hill, Ont.	1932-1933
Sigmund Samuel Gallery, Queen’s Park Crescent, Toronto	1949-1950
Canada Permanent Building (with F.H. Wilkes and Sproatt & Rolph), Bay St., Toronto	1928-1929
Globe and Mail office and plant, King St. W., Toronto	1937-1938
Bank of Nova Scotia, head office (with Beck & Eadie), King St. W. at Bay St., Toronto	1949-1951
Batterwood House for Hon. Vincent Massey, Port Hope, Ont.	1928
Mansion for Lt. Col. Norman D. Perry near Leslie St., York Mills	1931-1932