

PEARSON, John Andrew (1867 – 1940)

On leaving his home in Sheffield, England in 1888 to come to Canada, John Andrew Pearson remarked to a friend that he was ready to work as a labourer if fate should prove unkind. Canada, however, had great things in store for him.

The son of a builder and grandson of a stone mason, John Andrew Pearson was born in Chesterfield, England in 1867. He worked as a stone mason for his father and studied at Wesley College at the University of Sheffield where he was a Spooner Medalist. In 1889, having arrived in Canada the previous year, he entered the office of architects Darling and Curry. His first major work was on the rebuilding of St. John's Newfoundland after the disastrous fire of 1892. Also in 1892, Darling and Curry added Sproatt and Pearson to the firm as partners. In 1896 Curry left the partnership and in 1906 Sproatt went into business with Ernest Rolph. Darling and Pearson remained in business until 1938, adding C. Barry Cleveland to the partnership from 1933 to 1935.

The firm of Darling and Pearson was known for both the size and aesthetic excellence of its buildings, which included the Canadian Bank of Commerce building, in collaboration with York and Sawyer, (1929 – 1931) in Toronto, the highest

building in the British Empire in 1940 at the time of Pearson's death; Trinity College and Convocation Hall, University of Toronto, (1923 – 1925), Toronto; Trinity College School, Port Hope; The Sun Life Assurance building, Montreal. Pearson is best remembered for his work on the Parliament Building (1916). The Ottawa Journal said he was "pre-eminently an artist; a poet whose materials were stone."

In 1932 Pearson was the first Canadian to receive the degree of Doctor of Architecture from the University of Toronto. He was President of the Ontario Association of Architects in 1926 and the first Chairman of the Association's Registration Board, serving in the position from 1931 to 1940. He was also a member of L'Ordre des Architectes du Quebec, and a Fellow of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada and the Royal Institute of British Architects.

A picturesque figure with a great interest in poetry, literature and art, John Andrew Pearson was thought of as a bohemian by those who knew him during his years in Ottawa while working on the reconstruction of the Parliament Building. His rooms were a gathering place for scholars, press gallery members, and a wide assortment of friends.

List of major works:

Reconstruction of the Parliament Building (with J.O. Marchand), Ottawa	1916-1920
Forestry Building, University of Toronto, St. George Street	1924
Reconstruction of Trinity College School, Port Hope	1928
Canadian Bank of Commerce, head office (with York & Sawyer), Toronto	1928-1929