



Architectural Roots & Significance of Farringford, the Haviland Club

ESTHER LOWDEN

Esther Full-Lowden had the house built in 1868-69, for herself and her three daughters, and named it Farringford in honour of the home of her favourite poet, Alfred Lord Tennyson.

Esther belonged to the powerful and rich upper society of Charlottetown. Her wealth came from the inheritance from her husband George who had died suddenly four years prior. The unconfirmed, but credible story is, Esther Lowden engaged the most notable architect in Atlantic Canada, David Stirling, to design her a home of distinction and status.



Farringford, 1890s

DAVID STIRLING, ARCHITECT

The 19th century was an exciting time in architecture, and the center of the architectural universe was London. The Gothic Revival was the style that combined the aspirations of the Romantic Period with Industrial Revolution innovation. The leaders of this style were connected through partnerships and apprentice/mentor relationships, who, like the Impressionists, were a community that was close knit and passionate about furthering their theory and practice together as a collective. The leading firm of the time was that of George Edmund Street, most famous for his design of the Royal Law Courts in London.



He apprenticed with Sir George Gilbert Scott, a contemporary and influence of Augustus Pugin and Charles Barry, architects of the British houses of Parliament, the Gothic Revival triumph of the first half of the 19th century.



All these influences and professional relationships shaped the work of G.E. Street, who mentored among many great architects and designers of the time, William Morris, the founder of the Arts and Crafts Movement.

He also mentored David Stirling. Stirling's training, work ethic and talent was shaped personally and directly by the leading architects of the day, and he brought that knowledge to bear on his works in Atlantic Canada.

Upon completion of his apprenticeship in 1847, Stirling immigrated to Newfoundland, at the age of 25. Over the next 15 years he moved to Halifax, then Pictou, Toronto, and became a stone mason in Albert County, New Brunswick for a short time before returning to Halifax to open a practice with William Hay, another Scot, who had apprenticed with George Gilbert Scott. Together they brought an academic architectural maturity to their work which includes Keith Hall, The Halifax Club, and the Halifax Customs House, now the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, renowned today as the finest Italianate building in Canada.



Keith Hall, Halifax



Halifax Club



Post Office and Customs House, Halifax (now the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia)

Stirling quickly gained a reputation in the region as an architect of the highest caliber and acclaim that needed no introduction.

The 1866 Great Fire of Charlottetown attracted many architects from the region, looking to find business and design opportunities.



After the fire, looking toward Water Street

Stirling came to Charlottetown and designed the Victoria (Hyndman) Building at 57 Queen Street, at the time the tallest commercial building in the province, the Bank of Prince Edward Island at 40 Great George Street, and St. Peter's Cathedral.



Victoria Building



Bank of Prince Edward Island



Design Rendering of St. Peter's Cathedral. The tower was never built

The renowned Island architect William Harris apprenticed with Stirling in Halifax in the 1870s, and in 1877, Stirling moved to Charlottetown and

formed a partnership with Harris that lasted until Stirling's death in 1887. Together they designed Falconwood, the Charlottetown Lunatic Asylum, and the Kirk of St. James, an extraordinary triumph in English Gothic Revival architecture.



Falconwood

They were awarded a contract with Federal Public Works under Thomas Fuller, architect of the original Center Block in Ottawa, and colleague of Stirling's, to be the dominion architects of Federal Public Works buildings in the Maritimes, including those in Charlottetown, Montague, and Summerside.



Kirk of S. James



Charlottetown Post Office



Montague Customs House



Summerside Customs House

David Stirling was an architect of distinction who utilized his training and talent to create some of the most iconic and beautiful buildings in the Maritimes. He died in 1887 at the age of 65.



David Stirling's house he designed for himself in the French Mansard style. The Belvedere of Farringford is seen in the distance



David Stirling

FARRINGFORD

The Italianate Style is the result of the mid-19th century fascination with all things Italian, a mustsee destination on the Grand Tour, and was popularized by the home of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert's home on the Isle of Wight, Osborne House, built in 1845.



Osborne House

The roots of the style are in the Classic Style of Antiquity, with a symmetrical façade, stylized columns on the corners and articulated Greek Temple entablature at the top of the walls, and a tower. Whereas the Greek Revival was the style popular at the time that Province House was built a generation earlier (compare Province House to the Parthenon), the Italianate is a revival of the later Roman style, which is essentially Greek architecture with arches (see The Roman Colosseum). Stirling designed for Esther a villa, the finest and purest example of Italianate architecture on Prince Edward Island. At the time of construction, Farringford would have been the grandest and most fashionable house on the Island.

The vision for the house is to uncover its detail, and restore and revitalize its grandeur, while positioning the house to successfully serve the mandate of the Haviland Club in the future.



Farringford 1971, pre vinyl siding



Farringford today



Farringford, early 20th century