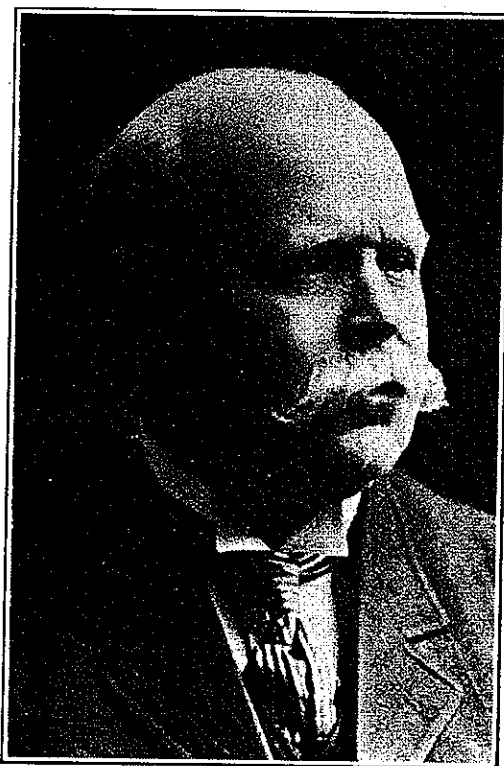


## RICHARD PURDOM FAIRBAIRN

Richard Purdom Fairbairn was born in London, Ontario, on the 20th day of May, 1855. His parents, Walter Fairbairn and Margaret (Purdom) Fairbairn came to Canada from Roxboroughshire, Scotland, in the year 1849. His father's parents were John Fairbairn and Anne (Richardson) Fairbairn of Selkirk; his mother's parents were Richard Purdom and Isabella (Elliott) Purdom of Hawick. Mr. Walter Fairbairn lived an honoured citizen of the City of London for forty-eight years, for many years with the McClary Manufacturing Company. He died in October, 1897, his wife predeceasing him by fifteen years.

Mr. R. P. Fairbairn was educated in the Public and High Schools of the City of London and by private tuition. At the age of seventeen years in the year 1872, he entered the office of Mr. William Robinson, an Ontario Land Surveyor, Architect and Civil Engineer, who had an extensive private practice while holding the office of City Engineer. Mr. Fairbairn served an apprenticeship of four years with Mr. Robinson, who had taken as a partner Mr. Thomas H. Tracy, an Ontario land surveyor, architect and engineer. On completion of his apprenticeship, having obtained his license as a Provincial Land Surveyor on October 7th, 1876, he was made a partner in the firm of Robinson, Tracy & Fairbairn.

For many years a thorough exploration for a supply of pure water, for the City of London, was made under authority of a special act of the Ontario Legislature. In January, 1878, the first Board of Water Commissioners were elected and Messrs. Robinson, Tracy and Fairbairn were appointed as engineers



for the Board. The site of Springbank was finally selected and the work of construction was successfully completed in 1879. The field work and office work for the system were largely done under Mr. Fairbairn. In addition to the engineering works of the city a very large private practice in land surveying and architecture was carried on by the firm. When the water works construction was under way, Mr. George F. Durand was associated with the firm, taking charge of the architectural work. In October, 1878, Mr. Robinson retired from business after holding the office of city engineer for twenty-one years. Mr. Tracy succeeded Mr. Robinson as city engineer, giving full-time service. Mr. Fairbairn entered the Ontario Department of Public Works in December, 1879. Before entering the Ontario Government service, Mr. Fairbairn's work as a land surveyor, in addition to the work on the water works system before mentioned, consisted in retracing property boundaries in the City of London and the County of Middlesex and in making land subdivisions into building lots, the largest being a subdivision known as Kensal Park in Westminster township.

Mr. Fairbairn's first work on entering the service of the Ontario Department of Public Works was in assisting Mr. Kivas Tully, chief architect, and Mr. Richard Purdom, chief architectural draughtsman in the preparation of plans for the projected new Parliament Buildings to be erected in Queen's Park in the City of Toronto. The first appropriation for the new buildings was taken on the Departmental plans prepared by Mr. Tully, Department architect. An appeal of the architects of the province for an opportunity to submit plans resulted in the appointment of Mr. Richard A. Waite as architect for the new buildings.

The actual construction continued from 1885 until 1893, when the building was opened in April by holding the meeting of the Legislature and housing the several Departments of Government. Mr. Fairbairn located the buildings and made a monthly report of the work done by all the trades during the construction.

Mr. Fairbairn held the position of assistant engineer and architect for some years and was appointed chief engineer of the Department in 1903 and Deputy Minister in 1910. After forty-five years in the public service of Ontario, Mr. Fairbairn retired on June 30th, 1925, having passed the age for retiring provided in the Public Service Superannuation Act.

COMMITTEE ON BIOGRAPHY

Mr. Fairbairn became a licensed Ontario Land Surveyor in 1876. A member of the Ontario Association of Architects on its organization in the year 1891, a member of the Engineering Institute of Canada in the year 1918, a member of the Association of Professional Engineers of Ontario, on its organization in 1923. He was for many years a member of the Engineer's Club, the Canadian Club and St. Andrew's Society.

Mr. Fairbairn married in June, 1887, Hannah M. Colby, a daughter of James Colby and Margaret (McDonald) Colby. They have two daughters, Mrs. George Hogarth, of Toronto, and Mrs. Charles Douglas Howe, of Kingston, Ont.

Mr. Fairbairn had one brother and three sisters. John Fairbairn, an elder brother, was for more than fifty years connected with the Detroit Stove Works in Detroit, Michigan. He died in September, 1926. The eldest sister, Isabella, became the wife of the Rev. James A. R. Dickson, Ph.D., for thirty-five years pastor of the Central Presbyterian Church in Galt, Ont. Mrs. Dickson died in 1903. The second sister, Anne Richardson Fairbairn, died in London, Ont., in 1934, and the youngest sister, Jane Purdom Fairbairn, still survives.

After his retirement from the Ontario Civil Service, Mr. Fairbairn enjoyed eleven years of good health and well-earned leisure. He died very suddenly in his eighty-second year on Sunday morning, June 14th, 1936.