

## NINETEENTH CENTURY NEWFOUNDLAND ARCHITECTS AND BUILDERS

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This collection of brief biographies contains the most recent information available on what can be considered the principal architects and builders active in Newfoundland during the nineteenth century. All who are known to have designed or built significant and or substantial surviving buildings before the Great Fire of 1892 are included but one should be aware that there are more architects, house carpenters or builders from that period whose names turn up in the newspapers and other sources. After 1892 a certain selectivity has to be exercised and only the major architects and builders are included.

One should also be aware of the nature of the architectural profession in Newfoundland in the nineteenth century. As elsewhere in the British Empire it was a profession composed principally of people who had both training and practice in masonry or carpentry and who had sufficient experience in building construction to begin designing buildings. This generally meant that they were able not only to read but also to prepare architectural drawings. Once they had begun to operate in that fashion they felt it appropriate to style themselves architects.

It was not until 1840 that a trained architect came to St. John's. William Haddon Jr. returned to St. John's that year to work with his father after three years of experience in London. The establishment of the Institute of British Architects in 1835 saw the development of a fixed training program for architects. However, it was only in 1892 that a qualified architect, one who was a Associate of RIBA and who had passed their examinations, W.H. Greene, arrived in Newfoundland. It is quite possible that some of the other architects who worked here prior to 1892 may have qualified in the same way but the information on them is so limited that details of their training have not been found.

It will also be noted that most of the personnel listed here worked in the capital. The wealth of St. John's, its role as political and economic capital and the relatively smaller size of the other Newfoundland towns meant that nowhere else could support an architect. In addition a strong vernacular building tradition meant that each man was his own architect - a situation that extended into the churches where ministers and bishops often designed their own buildings. There is an additional problem with clearly determining the role some architects played in the buildings they worked on. Many were only supervisors of other's designs, for example Hay supervised the erection of Scott's designs for the Cathedral. ,

The listing that follows is chronological and includes a brief biography of the architects and builders as well as the important buildings attributed or known to have been designed/built by them.

- KOUGH, Patrick** 1786 - 1863, bldr/arch, from Wexford, arr in St. John's 1803. Built and may have designed HG Ct House as well as his own house. Supt. Public Bldgs 1834 - 1863.  
DCB, MEA
- HADDON, William** 1798 - 1876, bldr/arch, from England arr St. John's c. 1825 to work on Govt Ho. Emigrated to Boston 1849, d. NY 1876. No known designs.
- NORRIS, Alexander** 1805 - 1864, bldr/arch, from Glasgow ? sup arch for the 1843 Kirk. Emigrated to Boston 1853.
- STRATHIE, Alexander** 1791 - 1886 , bldr, arr Bonavista from Greenock 1814 to build Alexander House. Built other public and private structures in Bonavista.
- HADDON, William Jr.** fl 1840 -1876, arch. returned to St. John's after training in London. Stayed after father emigrated to US and was Insp of Protestant Board Schools.
- PURCELL, James** b c. 1804, mason/arch, arr St. John's c. 1841 from Cork to superintend construction of RC Cathedral. Designed Christ Church, QV 1842; Colonial Building 1844 -1850. He may have designed the RC Palace 1854 and both St. Bonaventure's and Mercy Convent 1858. By 1858 he had left Newfoundland.  
DCB, MEA, NCE
- HAY, William** 1818 - 1888, arch, arr St. John's 1847 from Edinburgh to superintend construction of CE Cathedral. He designed churches at Lamaline, Burin and St. Francis' Hr, Lab. Leaving Nfld. in 1850 he returned to Scotland and in 1853 settled in Toronto where he established a prosperous architectural practice.  
DCB

**BEST, W.R.**

1826 - 1899, arch, trained with father in Exeter and arr St. John's c. 1847. Worked with F.R. Page, surveyor, in city. Designed Congregational Church 1849. Left St. John's for Boston 1855, back in Exeter by 1866.

**SOUTHCOTT, John &  
James T.**

1822 - 1895 and 1824 - 1898, bldrs, arr St. John's from Exeter in 1847 part of a wave of craftspeople who came out to rebuild the town after the 1846 Fire. They stayed when most others left and became the principal contractors in Nfld until the 1892 Fire. James did the design for one Gothic style cottage and may have been responsible for others. They were the contractors for the Anglo-Newfoundland Telegraph Company in Heart's Content and built both the Athenaeum 1876 and the Gower Street Methodist Church 1856.

**DCB, MEA**

**GREY, Rev. Wm.**

1819 - 1872, cleric and arch, arr St. John's 1848 from England. Eventually made Principal of Queen's College and Diocesan Architect, he was very important in the spread of correct Gothic Revival ideas among the clergy he trained. He designed numerous churches throughout Newfoundland between 1849 and 1858 of which only Battle Harbour 1857 remains.

**DCB, MEA**

**NEVILLE, John T.**

b England, d 1909, arch. Designed Gower Street Methodist Church 1856. Inspector of Public Buildings 1864-1892?

**SOUTHCOTT, John T.**

1853 - 1939, arch. Born St. John's, appr to father and uncle as carpenter, arch training with W.R. Best in Exeter and later in Sheffield and London. Returned 1876 and is presumed to have introduced the Second Empire style to Newfoundland. Designed Park Place houses c 1880, Senior Staff Houses, Heart's Content 1882.

**MEA**

- GIBB, William** d 1909 in NY, arch, poss from Scotland. Designed St. Andrew's 1877. Left Nfld for a period working in US and Africa. Returned 1894. Designed Cochrane St Methodist 1880.
- COLEMAN, John** d 1897, arch/bldr. Noted for his wood work he designed St. Patrick's Hall (BIS) 1876, Our Lady of Mt Carmel, Salmonier 1889 and the Oratory of Our Lady of Mercy Convent 1892.
- PURCELL, John T.** 1829 - 1892, arch/carpenter. Designed Quinipiac 1884.
- WILLS, Arthur J.** fl. 1880 - 1895 at St. John's. Was Scott's superintendent for second phase of construction CE Cathedral. Then went to Ashville, NC, returning in 1892 to supervise restoration of Cathedral and work on other buildings in the city.
- GREENE, William Howe** 1865 - 1937 arch, arr St. John's from Liverpool July 1892. Trained in Liverpool, ARIBA 1892, FRAIC 1909, FRIBA 1912. Designed the most important commercial buildings on Water St after the 1892 Fire: Ayre's, Gazette, Pitt's, Marshall's, Mechanic's Institute as well as the Ryan Houses on Duckworth 1893-95, Cabot Tower 1897.  
**MEA**
- WHITEWAY, W.T.** 1856 - 1940 arch, born Musgrave but practised principally in Vancouver where he designed a number of important structures. Arr St. John's Nov 1892 and designed a number of commercial buildings as well as the Crosbie Hotel 1894. He won the design competition for Court House 1893.
- WHITEHEAD, E.A.** fl St. John's 1892 - 1895, arch. Designed Temperance Hall 1892, Congregational Church 1893, Victoria Hall 1894.

BUTLER, W.F.

1867 - 1918 arch, born St. John's and trained in Toronto, returned to city in 1894 to build a substantial practice in major residences incl Winterholme 1904, Vignoria 1908 as well as commercial buildings including the Delgado Building 1906 and Commercial Cable Co Bldg 1915.

MEA

## BUILDERS

Among the more important builders at the end of the century were Samuel T. Brookfield a Halifax contractor who had a considerable amount of work in Newfoundland, M. and E. Kennedy who did a fair bit of housebuilding including some of the more important Circular Rd houses, E., H. and G. Davey, William J. Ellis and Thomas Brothers. Outside St. John's Caleb Marshall did major work such as the Anglican Church at Trinity and King's Cove.

## references:

DCB	<u>Dictionary of Canadian Biography</u>
MEA	<u>Macmillan Encyclopedia of Architects</u>
NCE	<u>New Canadian Encyclopedia</u>