

Ms.

MAPCASE

BALFOUR (JAMES) COLLECTION

Four architectural drawings by James Balfour (1854-1917) who practised as an architect in Hamilton from 1876 to 1905. The drawings were executed for George A. Grover of Hamilton. One plan is dated 1883. The others are undated. Two receipts, dated 1884, are also included.

Extent: 4 drawings, 2 receipts.

Accession number: 86.043.

Gift of Mrs. Rachel Grover in 1986.

K. Martyn

Aug. 1988

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MAPCASE BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

James Balfour was born in Hamilton in 1854. His father, Peter Balfour (1819-1897), emigrated to Canada from Scotland in 1842 and settled in Hamilton where he opened his own business as builder, carpenter, and joiner, and later served as city alderman and assessment commissioner. James Balfour, at age eighteen, was sent to apprentice with the prominent Scottish architectural firm of Frank Peddie and John Kinnear in Edinburgh. After spending an additional year in New York, he returned to Hamilton in 1876 to open his own practice at the age of twenty-two.

In the 1880's and 90's Balfour carried out several major commissions in Hamilton and elsewhere. These included an office building in Hamilton for the Canada Life Assurance Company (1883); Hamilton City Hall (1887-90); Detroit Institute of Fine Arts (ca. 1887), a building for which a competition was held with entries by leading American and Canadian architects; the YMCA residence in Hamilton (1889); the Hamilton Boys' Home (ca. 1892); the Tuckett Tobacco Factory in Hamilton (ca. 1895); and Alma Ladies' College in St. Thomas (ca. 1896).

Balfour was responsible as well for many residential buildings in Hamilton. The house at 250 James St. South, dating from the 1870's, and those in a terrace on Herkimer St., dating from 1880's, are noted in the Architectural Conservancy's publication, Victorian Architecture in Hamilton, 1971.

Balfour was also a member of the Ontario Society of Artists. In 1883 he exhibited with the Society his proposal for a "House under the Mountain" and in 1887 his competition entry for the Toronto City Hall.

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In 1905 Balfour contracted a lengthy illness which prevented him from actively practising as an architect for the remainder of his life. He died in 1917.

James Balfour receives an entry in Morgan, Canadian Men and Women of the Time, 1898; Dictionary of Hamilton biography, 1981; and his work is discussed briefly in Victorian Architecture in Hamilton, a booklet published by the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario in 1971. Part of the above information, however, is based on the draft entry for James Balfour prepared by Robert Hill for inclusion in his projected Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada 1800-1950. A copy of this entry is filed with the plans.

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MAPCASE ITEM LISTING

ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS

- Folder 1 Plan of House for G.A. Grover, Esq.
Hamilton, Oct. 10, 1883.
- Scale: 1/4 in.: 1ft.
 Shows 4 elevations, 1 section, 2
 floor plans.
 Inscribed James Balfour, Architect,
 Hamilton.
 Ink and col. washes.
 6 5 x 5 3 cms.
- Folder 2 McNab St. Houses. Hamilton Real Estate
Association. [188-?]
- 3 plans drawn by James Balfour for
 G.A. Grover.
 Not inscribed or dated.
- Front elevation.
- Scale: 1/4 in.: ft.
 Ink and col. washes.
 3 6 x 4 8 cms.
- Ground Floor Plan.
- Scale: 1/4 in.: 1 ft.
 Ink and col. washes.
 3 6 x 4 8 cms.
- Chamber Floor [Plan]
- Scale: 1/4 in.: 1 ft.
 Ink and col. washes.
 3 6 x 4 8 cms.

DOCUMENTATION

- Folder 3 Account for drawing plans of frame
house. James Balfour, Architect,
Hamilton, to G.A.Grover, Esq. Jan.
1, 1884. A.D. 1 leaf. Marked
paid.

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MAPCASE ITEM LISTING

DOCUMENTATION

Folder 3

[Account] James-Balfour, Architect,
Hamilton, to G.A. Grover, Esq.,
City. June 1, 1884. A.D.S. 1
leaf. Receipted and signed by
Balfour, June 28, 1884.

Folder 4

Robert G. Hill [Draft entry for James
Balfour for] the Biographical
Dictionary of Architects in Canada
1800-1950. 1 leaf. Xerox of
printed draft.