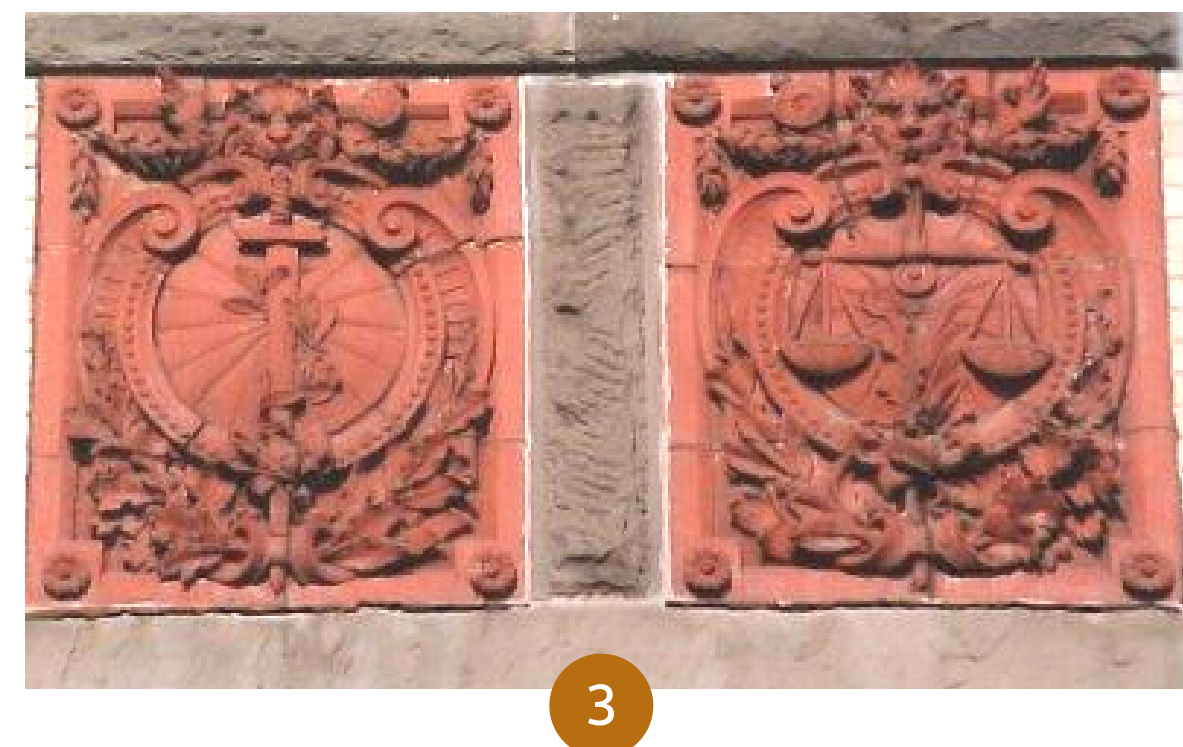


Perth County Courthouse's Mysterious Terra Cotta Artist



Terra Cotta Panels were noted in Durand's original architectural drawings

Courtesy of Western University Archives



Artist Henry Plasschaert's Signature



For many years the terra cotta embellishments were believed to have been designed by the architect and created by the London stone carver, John Matheson, who was a subcontractor when the courthouse was built in the 1880s.

However, nearly a century after they were installed, the real artist's signature was discovered during renovations to the exterior of the building. It appears on the pediment depicting a female allegory of justice where the front wall peaks into a gable.

Henry Plasschaert was a leading terra cotta artist who eventually became the Professor of Sculpture at the School of Industrial Art in Pennsylvania. There are six allegorical terra cotta panels to the right of the tower. They represent the following (from left to right):

- 1 Arts: angels with musical instruments, a score, painter's brushes, etc.
- 2 Manufacture: measuring instruments and gears.
- 3 Justice (2 panels): a sword for defense of the law and a set of scales for fairness— both surmounted by a lion's head, representing the authority of the Crown.
- 4 Agriculture: sheaf of wheat, a plough and fruit.
- 5 Architecture: a compass and other measuring instruments represent architecture. The courthouse architect signed his name on this panel.
- 6 The terra cotta embellishments, like the hand of benediction over doors, on the outside of the building have long fascinated visitors.



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