

Ontario Land Drainage Practitioner – Biography

Baird, Alexander, 1855 – 1931

Born in New York, Alexander had a rough start losing both his parents at the age of 12. Raised by his uncle in Bruce County, Alexander attended the Public and Grammar Schools of Kincardine. He wrote his preliminary O.L.S. exam, then articulated with W.G. McGregor O.L.S in Chatham passing his final exam in 1877.

Alexander had an established office in Leamington throughout his lifetime, except for three years when he was in a Sarnia office with his son who had followed his father's footsteps. He spent many of his summers working for the Northern Ontario Government Surveys. In 1900, he oversaw Exploratory Party Number 4 with land lying north of the Canadian Pacific Railway towards James Bay. He was also appointed to re-establish parts of the County of Essex and Kent townships.

Alexander was responsible for many surveying and engineering projects including:

- Building the Pere Marquette Railway from Leamington to Wheatley
- Building the Michigan Central Railway from Leamington to Comber
- Engineer in charge of laying out the Leamington waterworks system
- Surveyor and superintendent of Pelee Island reclamation work up to 1927 turning thousands of acres of marsh into agricultural land
- Surveyed and supervised a large proportion of the government drains in Essex County
- Involved in the reclamation of the Holland marsh, a 7,500-acre tract north of Toronto on the Yonge Street Highway.

Alexander was called on as an expert witness for most western Ontario drainage litigations for approximately 50 years.

In 1881, Alexander married Elizabeth Ainslie of Leamington and they had seven children. Their son, John Baird became an O.L.S. in Sarnia.

Known as a jovial friend, lover of good books, a good joke and a good horse, Alexander was also a storyteller, especially in the Scottish dialect, and singer of Scottish classics. The latch key was always available to his many friends who accepted his hospitality