

Processional of Industry

By Brian Munday, Editor

Land surveyors once led the procession of industry.

The frieze, as shown on the cover of this issue of the *Ontario Land Surveyor Quarterly*, shows land surveyors at the leading edge of industry and commerce. Without the land surveyors, the labourers and business-people cannot follow.

The frieze's artist, Charles Comfort, was born in Edinburgh in 1900. His family emigrated to Canada and settled in Winnipeg in 1912. In 1925, he moved to Toronto. Like many artists in the depression he turned to commercial art. The 1930s saw the renaissance of mural art and Comfort worked with architects to design decorative murals for buildings. The 1920s saw the creation of Art Deco, the most fashionable style of architecture between the wars. It was this style that was selected in 1937 for the design of the new Toronto Stock Exchange building at 234 Bay Street. Charles Comfort was chosen to design all the decorative features.

Art Deco created a new art style of hard-edged vertical lines and geometric forms in which artists reduced their subject matter to its simplest terms.

The frieze captures the symbolism of the 1930s, championing a belief in progress and modern industry. It was a public symbol of the lifting of the depression and communicated optimism, energy and stability.

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It integrates the capitalist with the worker and the scientist (and, of course, the land surveyor). The scenes represent all the Toronto Stock Exchange's activities of the day. The figures include labourers, white-collar workers, farmers, miners, bankers and, again, land surveyors.

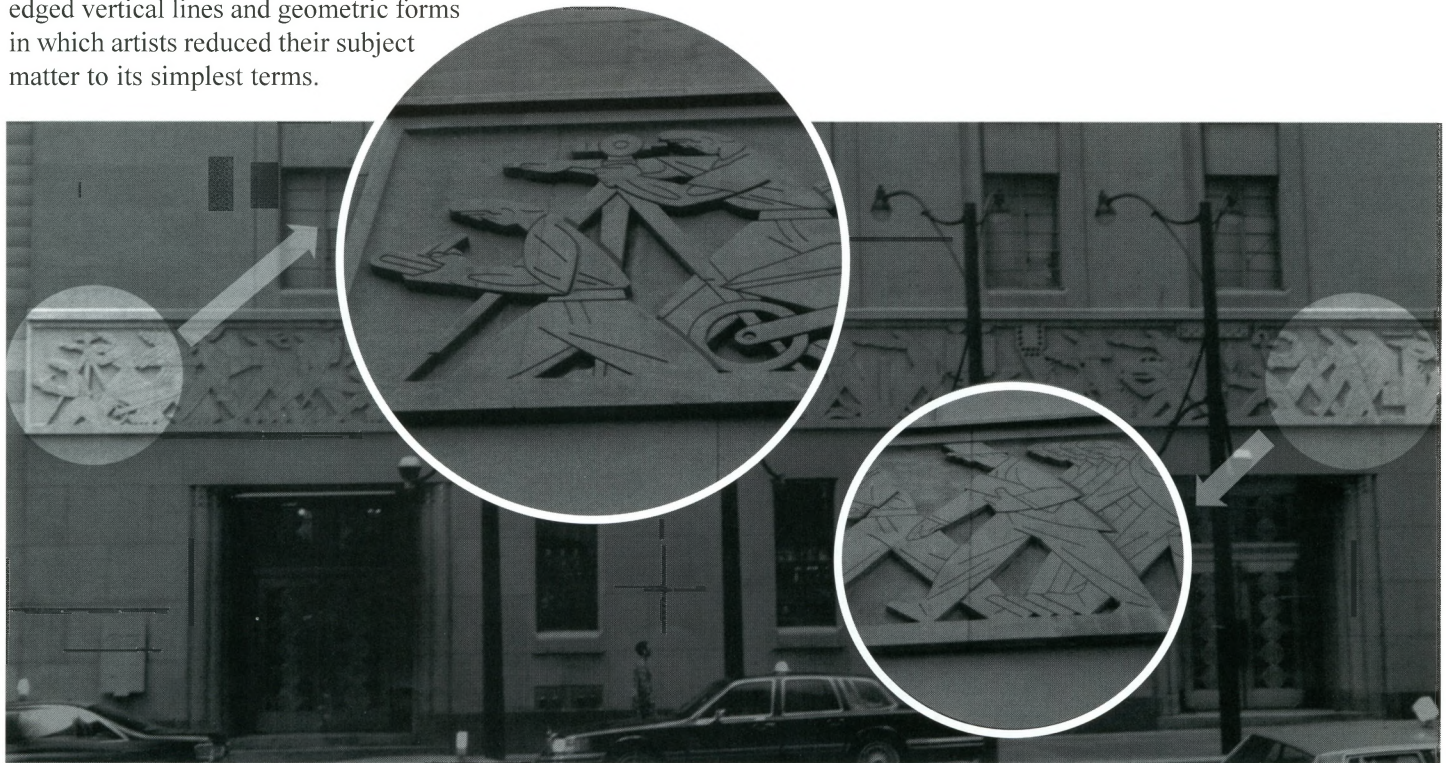
There are 31 life-size figures in the 22.5 metre long, 1.5 metre high frieze. Peter Schoen was the stone mason who cut (as opposed to carved) the design created by

Comfort. The entire project took less than two months to complete.

The flat surfaced bas-relief contains what is known as "the oldest joke on Bay Street." It is a detail of a stock broker whose hand appears to be in a worker's pocket. Comfort, who had since moved to Ottawa, was asked to explain the detail when he returned to Toronto in 1977 for a one-man exhibition. He replied that this was quite unintentional, and his aim was to achieve a feeling of motion.

As we head into the 21st century, it is important that the profession works together to maintain and improve its public image so that land surveyors continue to lead the "processional of industry."

My thanks to Khaleel Khan for bringing the frieze to my attention. I also wish to thank the Toronto Stock Exchange and June Pierotti of the Toronto Design Exchange for supplying much of the background material.



The frieze, as shown on the cover of this issue of the *Ontario Land Surveyor Quarterly*, shows land surveyors (first inset above) at the leading edge of industry and commerce. Without the land surveyors, the labourers and business-people cannot follow. The second inset above pictures "the oldest joke on Bay Street." It is a detail of a stock broker whose hand appears to be in a worker's pocket.