

## **Clarke, Caspar Purdon 1846 - 1911**



Caspar Purdon Clarke [also known as Sir Caspar Purdon Clarke] was born in Richmond, County Dublin, Ireland on 21 December 1846 and studied architecture at the National Art Training Schools at South Kensington [now Royal College of Art] in London from 1862 to 1864. In 1865 he joined the Office of Works and over the next two years worked on the rebuilding of the Houses of Parliament. In 1867 he moved to the works department of the South Kensington Museum [now the Victoria & Albert Museum].

Over the next two decades, whilst employed by the South Kensington Museum, he was involved in various foreign assignments, supervising architectural projects, decorative design schemes and the purchasing works of art for the museum's collection. His travels took him to Italy, Turkey, Syria, Spain, Germany, Greece, the USA and Persia. In 1878 he was engaged as an architect of the Indian section and commercial agent to the Indian government at the Exposition Universelle in Paris. He subsequently spent two years as special commissioner in India and became keeper of the India Museum at South Kensington in 1883.

He was appointed Keeper of the Art Collections at the South Kensington Museum in 1892, Assistant Director in 1893, and Director in 1896. In 1899 the museum was renamed the Victoria & Albert Museum.

During his years at the South Kensington Museum, he continued to practice as an architect and acted as a consultant to a number of private clients including Edward Cecil Guinness, first Earl of Iveagh, for whom he designed the Indian Hall at Elvedon, Suffolk in the late 1890s, and later advised on the furnishing. He also

served as Royal Commissioner at the Exposition Universelle in Paris Exhibition in 1900 and the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1904. Clarke was elected a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects (FRIBA) in 1888 and was knighted in 1902.

In 1905 Clarke left the V & A, to take up the appointment of director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. For reasons of ill health he returned to England in 1909 and resigned his directorship of the Met in 1910. He died at his home in Earls Court, London, on 29 March 1911.

Worked in

UK

USA

Bibliography

Directory of British Architects 1834-1914. Compiled by Antonia Brodie, et al. Volume 1: A-K. London; New York: British Architectural Library, Royal Institute of British Architects/Continuum, 2001

Lane, John. Sir Caspar Purdon Clarke, KT.: with a note on the arts and crafts of America. New York: John Lane Co. 1905

'Obituary'. The Builder vol. 100, 31 March 1911 p. 414

'Obituary'. Royal Institute of British Architects Journal vol. 18, 1911 p. 391

Links

- P. G. Konody, revised by Tessa Murdoch. Sir Caspar Purdon Clarke. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography [Subscription service]  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/32424>
- Wikipedia [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caspar\\_Purdon\\_Clarke](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caspar_Purdon_Clarke)
- Dictionary of Art Historians <https://arthistorians.info/clarkec>