

Literary Ambitions

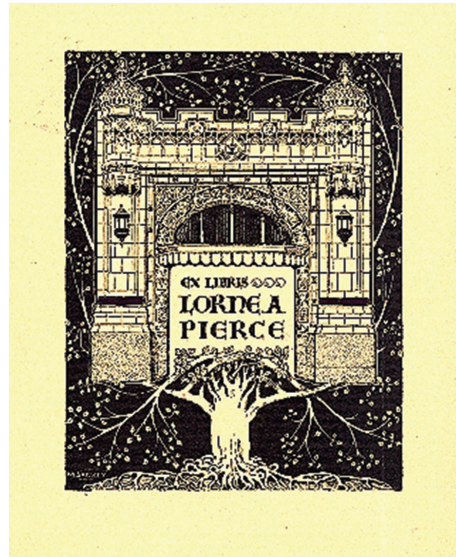
THE CENTRAL IMAGE in this bookplate by artist Marjorie Sankey is the main entrance of a prominent Toronto building. Many Canadians might recognize the building, though under quite different circumstances than those by which the bookplate owner, Lorne Pierce, knew it.

Built in 1913–15 by Burke, Horwood and White in the industrial Gothic style, 299 Queen Street West—otherwise known as the Wesley Building—was originally owned by the Methodist Church of Canada. The building housed church offices as well as the Ryerson Press, a major branch of the Methodist Church of Canada's publishing company, the Methodist Book and Publishing House.

Pierce worked in the Wesley Building as literary advisor and editor for the Ryerson Press for 31 years. Since then the building has been owned by CHUM Limited and CTV. For many Torontonians, the Wesley Building today is probably more familiar as the home of CTV and MuchMusic.

Lorne Pierce's bookplate reflects his long career as writer, editor and publisher at the Ryerson Press. He began working at the press in 1918 as literary advisor and in 1920 took the post of editor-in-chief. Born in Delta, Ontario, in 1890, he became interested in Canadian literature while completing his undergraduate degree at Queen's University. He also worked as a teacher and later as a student minister in Saskatchewan. Pierce completed several more degrees related to theology in Toronto and New York and became an ordained minister in the Methodist (later United) Church.

At the Ryerson Press, Pierce focused on promoting Canadian authors and writing educational books and anthologies featuring Canadian literature. He maintained connections with many members of the Canadian art community, such as Thoreau MacDonald, Earle Birney, C.W. Jeffreys and Dorothy Livesay. His focus on Canadian literature and education moved the press in a more or less new direction, one that happily fit well with the career and interests of the press's



first editor and namesake, Egerton Ryerson.

Pierce donated his extensive collection of Canadian textbooks and literature as well as letters, manuscripts and personal papers to the Queen's University Edith and Lorne Pierce Collection of Canadiana and the Queen's University Archives. His own productions litter Canadian libraries and are often cited as one of the founding sources for Canadian studies and education. Pierce's bookplate reflects his interest in collecting Canadian literature as well as his commitment to Canada's writers and artists and the nation's publishing industry.

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 ~ Helen Brown is completing a master in archival studies and a master in library and information studies at the University of British Columbia's School of Library, Archival and Information Studies. She holds an MA in English and an Honours BA from the University of Toronto.

The Rare Books and Special Collections Bookplate Collection can be accessed from the UBC Library Digital Collections and Services, site, <http://digitalcollections.library.ubc.ca>.