

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

Baker, Henry Aaron (1753-1836), *architect*
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Baker, Henry Aaron (1753-1836), architect, came from an unknown background. Between 1777 and 1779 he was a student at the Dublin Society's School of Architectural Drawing under Thomas Ivory (*d.* 1786); he also served a regular apprenticeship to Ivory, whom he assisted in the school. In 1787 he succeeded Ivory as master of the school, a post which he retained for nearly fifty years. The new premises for the society's three drawing schools, which were opened in Hawkins Street in 1796, were built to his design, and he was much later to be responsible for the drawing school and bust gallery (1823–7) adjoining Leinster House.

By the end of 1786 Baker had also worked 'sometime' in the office of James Gandon. This association lasted until the end of Gandon's active career: Baker acted as assistant on Gandon's last major commission, a library and hall for the King's Inns in Dublin. Gandon resigned from the undertaking about 1808, leaving Baker in charge of completing the unfinished building. In Dublin Baker also prepared several designs for the wide streets commissioners between 1799 and 1816, including schemes for Westmoreland and D'Olier streets, executed from 1800 onwards; he was architect to the Dublin prisons from 1815. Yet despite his long career and his participation in several major architectural competitions, relatively few surviving buildings by him have been identified. Works outside Dublin include the Bishop's Gate at Londonderry (1789), the Pillar of Lloyd near Kells, co. Meath (1791), the market house at Castlecomer, co. Kilkenny (1809), and the Spring-Rice Column in Pery Square, Limerick (1826–31). His neo-classical architectural style combined a liking for bold forms with an insistence on shallow planar recessions, delicate stone detail, and the tripartite and segment-headed openings characteristic of advanced ideas around 1800.

Baker was a founder member of the Royal Hibernian Academy in 1823. He served as secretary in 1826–7 and as professor of architecture from 1827 until 1831. He died on 4 June 1836 and was buried in the graveyard of St Thomas's Church, Dublin.

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Archives RIBA | City Archives, Dublin, wide streets commissioners MSS · Irish Architectural Archive, Dublin, Murray collection · Representative Church Body, Dublin

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