



**136 CECIL STREET**  
**CECIL RHODES SCHOOL NO. 1**

PREPARED BY PETERSON PROJECTS – FEBRUARY 2009



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## 136 CECIL STREET CECIL RHODES SCHOOL NO. 1

**Date of Construction:** 1908

**Building Permit:** 951/1908

**Architect:** Mitchell, James Bertram

**Contractor:** Davidson Brothers

ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

Cecil Rhodes School No. 1, built in 1908, is another of the fine, two-storey brick and stone school buildings that gave the Winnipeg School Division its reputation as providing its students and staff with some of the best built facilities in North America.

The original portion of the school, built of solid brick and measuring approximately 38.7 x 23.5 metres,<sup>1</sup> has been added to on both sides- north and south. The main (east) façade features a raised stone-clad basement with large windows to light and ventilate the building's basement thereby allowing for its use as classroom space. Access to the building is gained through the centrally-located entrance atop a two-sided set of stairs. The square headed windows of this façade feature stained glass transoms. These openings are further embellished by stone accenting. The most ornamentally treated area is the flat roof





Front (east) façade detail, 2009

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line where a stone cornice is topped by a brick parapet with stone accenting including Swan's neck pediments and rounded finials.

The rear (west) façade is similarly designed with banks of tall square headed windows on all floors. Originally, there were two projecting entrances with stone accenting and pediments at the north and south ends of the façade. The southern entrance has been replaced by a more modern entrance.

The building stands on its original site and appears to be in good structural condition. Additions have been made to both ends of the original structure. The north addition is two storeys and matches the width of the original school. The south end appears to have had several additions; the portion built onto the original school is two-storey in height and approximately half the width of the original school. A one-storey addition fills in this other half and extends the building further south. The front and back façades of the 1908 school, however, have seen only minor alterations.

The building, with its classically detailing and raised two-storey design, was to become the prototypical school built by the Winnipeg School Division for the next 10 years. The raised basement increased usable interior space while the two-storey height made it safer in case of fire – two important considerations for the Division. While degree of ornamentation varied widely, this basic plan was repeated throughout the Division and into the surrounding communities during this period.

Architect J.B. Mitchell was born in 1852 in Gananoque, Ontario to Scottish immigrant parents. After studying architecture at the Montreal Art Institute, he came west as a 21-year-old member of the first detachment of the North-West Mounted Police (NWMP) in 1874.<sup>2</sup> As



Rear (west) façade, 2009

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Mitchell passed through Manitoba on the NWMP's famous western march, he noted the prosperity of the area and returned to the province after his tour of duty ended in 1877.<sup>3</sup>

Mitchell was elected to the Winnipeg School Board in 1888 and later was appointed to the post of Commissioner of School Buildings (architect for the Division).<sup>4</sup> Until his retirement in 1928, Mitchell designed some 48 school buildings costing more than \$8,000,000.<sup>5</sup>

Mitchell was supported by the Division's Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Daniel McIntyre. McIntyre held his post from 1885 until retirement in 1928, the same year as Mitchell stepped down.<sup>6</sup> These two men worked tirelessly to provide universal, modern education in Winnipeg. Their success was recognized throughout the country and their legacy is the fine structures that have remained useful to the present.

Until 1901, a number of well-known local architects prepared and submitted plans to the School Board for new facilities, under the supervision of Mitchell and McIntyre. Mitchell, however, designed Wellington School in 1898 and Somerset School in 1901.<sup>7</sup> Thereafter he took full control over the design process. He often used his knowledge of advances in other school divisions to create better buildings, touring parts of Ontario and the United States to understand their approaches.<sup>8</sup> He died in Winnipeg in 1945.



South façade, 2009

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HISTORICAL INTEREST:

The school was named after Cecil Rhodes (1853-1902), politician and financier who sought to bring a large portion of Africa under British rule. He owned diamond mines and land companies and was made Prime Minister of the Cape Colonies in 1890 but his widely unpopular expansionist activities caused his resignation in 1895. He undoubtedly had a major influence on the development of South Africa, although much of the praise he received in the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been replaced by condemnation over human and land rights issues. Rhodesia (now Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe) was named in his honour, as was Oxford's Rhodes Scholarship which was created from part of his massive estate left to the university upon his death.<sup>9</sup>



North façade, 2009

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RECOMMENDATION TO HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE:

Under the Historical Buildings By-law, this building meets a number of important criteria:

- its historical importance- one of the older Winnipeg School Division No. 1 school buildings and an early example of the two-storey design that became popular throughout the city prior to 1920;
- its associations- its long-term connections to education in the West End;
- its design- an excellent example of a classically detailed two-storey school building;
- its architect- J.B. Mitchell was a respected and important practitioner;
- its location- contributes greatly to its historic neighbourhood streetscape; and
- its integrity- its main façades continue to display many of their original elements and design.





Front (east) façade, 1994

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ENDNOTES:

- 1 City of Winnipeg Building Permit, #951/1908.
- 2 G. Bugailiskis, "School Buildings of the Winnipeg School Division No. 1" (unpublished paper), Part B, p. 8. Below as "School Buildings."
- 3 S.C. Grover, "Earl Grey School - 370 Cockburn Street," Report for the City of Winnipeg Historical Buildings Committee, June 30, 1980, p. 2. Below as "Earl Grey School."
- 4 "Earl Grey School," p. 3.
- 5 Ibid., p. 3.
- 6 Ibid., pp. 7-10.
- 7 "School Buildings," Part B, p. 14.
- 8 Ibid., pp. 7-10.
- 9 Biographical information from Amy Keating, "Cecil Rhodes," in [www.chicousd.org/~bsilva/projects/scramble/rhodes.htm](http://www.chicousd.org/~bsilva/projects/scramble/rhodes.htm) (1997); and Matthew Sweet, "Cecil Rhodes: A bad man in Africa" in The Independent, March 16, 2002.