



**129 DAGMAR STREET**

**SHAAREY SHOMAYIM SYNAGOGUE**

PREPARED BY PETERSON PROJECTS – JANUARY 2007



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## 129 DAGMAR STREET SHAAREY SHOMAYIM SYNAGOGUE

**Date of Construction:** 1907

**Building Permit:** 323/1907

**Architect:** Eade Brothers

**Contractor:** Edward H. Cottrell and McElveny and Company

### ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

Ornamentally subdued, this building has had a long and varied history since its construction in 1907.

Built of solid brick resting on a raised foundation of rubblestone, this building sits on the east side of Dagmar Street just south of William Avenue and faces the former Carnegie Library found across the street. Total cost of construction was \$17,500.<sup>1</sup> The main (west) façade was originally designed symmetrically, with a protruding central section that held the most significant ornamental features. A wide set of stairs gives access to the main entrance. The stairs are framed by enclosed concrete hand railings (it is likely that these were originally brick or possibly wood), original ornamental metal light posts are still



Front façade details, 2006

present. The open entrance porch is classically treated, with a pediment supported by four composite order columns in the front and two attached squared columns at the building. All columns are unfluted with plain bases and Ionic style capitals with volutes. Delicate dentils embellish the pediment that also includes a round opening. Inside the porch is the round-headed entrance with oversized stone keystone, double doors, arched transom and dark brick framing. Square headed windows with similar brick framing and stone lug sills are placed on either side of the entrance porch. The second floor includes a wide, arched window again framed in dark brick and displaying a keystone similar to that of the front door. Diamond-shaped panels of dark brick with round openings are located on either side of this central window. The roofline is embellished with a line of dark brick leading to the pointed cornice. The recessed areas of the front façade feature square headed windows with dark brick surrounds. The flat roofline is highlighted by a dark brick band and heavy overhanging cornice. The roof of the building is higher in the centre. It is a balanced and simple design with a variety of ornamental elements.

The north façade has been altered by the addition of a large, two-storey concrete block addition that covers approximately half of this elevation. To the rear, the original façade is still visible with its arched windows (now boarded up) and first and second floor doors and metal stairs. The south side is also partially covered, by a smaller two-storey addition and a longer one- and one-and-a-half storey section. Visible on the original walls are large, paired and single arched windows with stone lug sills to the rear of the second floor (all bricked in) and rear doors on both floors with metal stairs. The rear (east) of the building features the raised rusticated stone foundation and brick walls and a clear view of the roofline with its raised central portion. The basement walls originally included windows (boarded up) and there is a centrally located door. The ground floor originally boasted two large pointed arched windows with stone lug sills (boarded up), a remnant of its original



Front (west) and north side façades, 2006

use as a synagogue. The third floor features three smaller arched openings (also now boarded up). A tall brick chimney is attached near the northeast corner.

The building stands on its original site and appears to be in fair structural condition. The building's exterior has seen many changes due to additions and alterations but much of the original detailing, especially on the front façade, is still present.

Eade Brothers is listed as the designer of the synagogue. The firm was formed in 1904 when Wallace Cotman Eade, an artist and draughtsman with Winnipeg City Engineer's Department, quit his job to go into private practice with his brother Hugh R. Eade. This short-lived partnership lasted only until 1910 and produced only a few modest buildings,<sup>2</sup> including: City of Winnipeg Hydro Sub-station, 41 May Street (now 541 Waterfront Drive – 1906, Inventory); Nugget Hotel, 711 Main Street (demolished); Crown Brewery Company Boiler House, 396 Stella Avenue (1908, demolished); and Stewart Sheaf and Hay Loader Company Factory, Union Avenue (1910).

Contractors for the synagogue were listed as Edward H. Cottrell and McElveny and Company.<sup>3</sup>

### HISTORICAL INTEREST:

This building functioned for over 40 years as a synagogue for one of the city's early Jewish congregations. A small number of Jewish immigrants held Western Canada's first Jewish divine service in January 1880. Although difficult to keep their numbers up because many



North side façade, 2006

lived far away, the group continued and laid the foundation that made life easier for the 400 immigrants that arrived from the small town of Brody (375 kilometres southwest of Kiev in modern-day Ukraine) in March 1882.<sup>4</sup>

The first synagogue, built on the corner of King and Common (now Henry) streets, was dedicated on March 20, 1890 (building demolished). A second synagogue, Rosh Pina, was built on Henry Avenue in 1893.<sup>5</sup> In the meantime, in 1889, several members of the Bethel Synagogue left and formed a new congregation, Shaarey Zedek. This group operated its own cemetery and Hebrew school but it too suffered the loss of a group of members who wished to operate their own synagogue, forming the Shaarey Shomayim congregation. This split group built the Dagmar Street synagogue in 1907 but in 1913 when faced with financial difficulties, chose to reunite with the Shaarey Zedek congregation, expand the Dagmar Street facility and worship together as the Shaarey Zedek Synagogue. The group stayed here until their new building was erected in 1950.<sup>6</sup>

The second long-term owner of this building was the Fraternal Order of Eagles (FOE).<sup>7</sup> This group had been formed in Seattle, Washington by a group of theatre owners in 1898 as a social organization. Its early members were mostly stagehands, actors, playwrights and the Order grew as these members traveled North America with shows. The Order's focus also grew, as it fought for old age pension, social security and workers' compensation. Today there are approximately 1,500 Aeries (the name for individual organizations within the FOE) throughout North America, 60 in Canada and four in Manitoba (three in Winnipeg). Winnipeg's first Aerie was No. 23, created on June 9, 1899. It was this group that took over the Synagogue in 1950 when the Shaarey Zedek congregation left.<sup>8</sup> The building is now occupied by the Sudanese Community Cultural and Resource Centre.



Rear (east) façade, 2006

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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- the oldest extant synagogue building in Winnipeg and long-time meeting hall for the Fraternal Order of Eagles;
- its associations- its long-term connections to Jewish society (both initial immigrant and established community) and to an influential North American social organization;
- its design- an example of a modest church building with classical features and ornamentation;
- its architect- Eade Brothers were a small-size local firm;
- its location- together with the former Carnegie Library, this building has helped define an important intersection and contributed to the historic streetscape of William Avenue and Dagmar Street; and
- its integrity- its main façades continue to display many of their original elements and design.



Rear (east) and south side façades, 2006

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Front (west) façade without north and south additions, 1978

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ENDNOTES:

- 1 City of Winnipeg Building Permit (below as BP), #323/1907.
- 2 City of Winnipeg Building Permit Ledger Books, 1899-1913.
- 3 BP #323/1907.
- 4 M. Peterson, "123 Matheson Avenue East – Rosh Pina Synagogue," report for the City of Winnipeg Historical Buildings Committee, August 2001, pp. 1-2.
- 5 *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.
- 6 Information from Canadian Jewish Congress Charities Committee National Archives at [www.cjccc.ca/national\\_archives/archives/arcguideS.htm](http://www.cjccc.ca/national_archives/archives/arcguideS.htm).
- 7 City of Winnipeg Assessment Roll, Roll No. 13-061091600, 1905-1950.
- 8 Information from Fraternal Order of Eagles website at [www.foe.com/](http://www.foe.com/), 2006.