



320 AVENUE DE LA CATHEDRALE

PROVENCHER SCHOOL

PREPARED BY PETERSON PROJECTS – FEBRUARY 2009



320 AVENUE DE LA CATHEDRALE PROVENCHER SCHOOL

Date of Construction: 1906

Building Permit: N/A

Architect: Unknown

Contractor: Unknown

ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

Another of the fine classically detailed public buildings constructed in the pre-World War I era in St. Boniface is the Provencher School.

This three-storey brick school sits on a stone foundation and measures 25.0 x 61.3 metres, although originally, the facility was comprised of only the central section, the west wing was added in 1912 and the east wing in 1930.¹

The front (north) façade features most of the ornamental detailing, including the stone entrance portico with stone support pillars and a stone clad second floor with arched pediment. The flat roof is embellished with a complete entablature and stone capped parapet with a modest stone balustrade in the centre. Stone accents the banks of square headed windows on all three levels. The side and rear (south) façades continue the architectural



Front (north) façade detail, 2009

language of the front elevation; the sides both include projecting central sections holding entrances.

This building stands as an excellent example of the Classical Revival style that rose to popularity in the early 1900s as a reaction to the picturesqueness of the designs of the late 19th century. Common elements include columns, pediments, capitals and other Greek- and Roman-based detailing. Designs were usually symmetrical, surfaces were smooth and rooflines were often flat. Door and window openings were square headed rather than arched.²

The building stands on its original location and appears to be in good structural condition. Large additions to both ends of the original building have not affected its appearance negatively. Windows on the third floor of the rear (south) façade of the east wing are bricked in.



Front (south) and west façades, 2009

HISTORICAL INTEREST:

Originally built as a private boys' school it is directly descended from the first Provencher School, established in 1818 and for most of the 19th century located at the corner of Taché and Masson. Teachers at the facility were either Dioscesan priests or members of the Society of Mary or Marianists who came to St. Boniface from their Dayton, Ohio headquarters on the invitation of Archbishop Taché in 1880. Their school opened in September with 27 boys. The Marianists's numbers would gradually increase and they would also teach at other schools including St. Mary's and St. Joseph's. Their ties to Provencher School ended in 1972 (when the last Brother retired).³



Rear (south) and east façades, 2009

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 educational buildings in St. Boniface and an example of the growth of religious education in the community, especially after 1900;
- its associations- its long-term connections to religious-based boys' education in St. Boniface;
- its design- an excellent example of the Classical Revival style;
- its architect- N/A;
- its location- contributes greatly to its historic streetscape and its neighbourhood; and
- its integrity- its main façades continue to display many of their original elements and design.



Front (north) façade, 1978

ENDNOTES:

- 1 S. Grover, "Old St. Boniface: A Study of its Urban Growth and Historic Built Environment," report for the City of Winnipeg Historical Buildings Committee, 1991, p. 60.
- 2 Identifying Architectural Styles in Manitoba (Winnipeg: Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, 1991), p. 18.
- 3 Information from Society of Mary website (www.marianistes.org), 2008.