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## 1609 ELGIN AVENUE WEST SPARLING UNITED (METHODIST) CHURCH

**Date of Construction:** 1912

**Building Permit:** 3124/1912 (Plans at City Storage)

**Architect:** Chisholm, James and Son

**Contractor:** Frid-Lewis Company

### ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

Located on the northwest corner of Elgin Avenue West and Worth Street, this church has been an important part of the community for nearly 100 years.

The building is wood frame and clad in brick veneer (raised basement) and stucco (superstructure) on a raised concrete foundation. The main building measures approximately 14.3 x 26.2 metres and it cost \$20,000 to complete in 1912.<sup>1</sup>

The building faces east onto Worth Street, the front entrance is accessed via a wide set of stairs. This entrance projects out from the main building as a flattened tower that uses corbelled brick rather than crenellation for accenting at the top. Plain buttresses are found at the two corners of the tower and the window and door openings feature pointed arches. The main body of the building features square headed window openings in the raised



Front (east) and south façades, 2009

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basement walls and paired pointed-arched windows separated by plain buttresses on the main floor. The entire building is covered in a steeply pitched gable roof. At the rear (west end) is the 1961 one-storey addition.

The church is minimally ornamented, befitting an early church building in a growing, labour-based residential community (Weston). The building was built large enough to serve the present and future needs of the congregation but without extensive detailing to keep costs down. It is a sturdy, well-built structure that continues to serve the congregation to this day. The buttresses and pointed arches do suggest a Gothic influence in the design.

Architects of the building were James Chisholm and Son. The father was born in Paris, Upper Canada (Ontario) in 1840 and moved to Winnipeg for health and economic reasons in the spring of 1877. He began his architectural career in earnest, and became involved in the City Hall construction scandal when he was hired to replace C.A. Barber as the architect for the project.

He moved to Superior, Wisconsin in 1892 and worked for a time as a preacher for the Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1900, he returned to Winnipeg, taking his place among the growing number of talented architects practising their trade in the city and throughout Western Canada. Chisholm's youngest son, Colin Campbell Chisholm, officially joined his father's firm ca.1906, became its active manager in 1910 and eventually took over the practice. He died in Winnipeg on September 5, 1936.<sup>2</sup>

About 1911, James Chisholm and his wife began wintering in Santa Monica, California because of continued poor health and they moved there permanently in 1914. He died on October 14, 1920 in Ocean Park, California.



Front (east) and north façades, 2009

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An incomplete list of James Chisholm's major Winnipeg work includes Hochman (formerly Harris) Building, 154 Princess Street (1882, Grade III), J.W. Harris House, 26 Edmonton Street (1902, Grade III) and Zion Methodist (then Zion Apostolic) Church, 335 Pacific Avenue (1904), destroyed by fire 1970. The father and son partnership produced, among others, Young Methodist (United) Church, 222 Furby Street (1907, 1910, Grade II)- only tower left after fire, I.O.O.F. (Odd Fellows') Temple, 293 Kennedy Street (1910, Grade III)- façade only remains as 0 The Promenade, Granite Curling Club, 22 Mostyn Place (1912, Grade III) and the Marlborough Hotel, 331 Smith Street (1913, Grade II). Chisholm has received 20 points from the Historical Buildings Committee.

The building stands on its original site and appears to be in fair structural condition. It has not suffered extensive exterior alteration, although signs of aging are numerous. An addition was built on its west end in 1961, used as the Christian Education Building. It was designed by Blankstein, Coop, Gilmore and Hanna.<sup>3</sup>

### HISTORICAL INTEREST:

Sparling United Church was established in 1904 as a Methodist Congregation in the Weston area where it served primarily families who had settled the area and worked at the nearby Canadian Pacific Railway shops and yards.<sup>4</sup> It may have been named for Joseph Walter Sparling (1843-1912), Methodist cleric and first Chancellor of Wesley College (now the University of Winnipeg).



Detail of signs of aging on tower, 2009

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It became a United Church congregation in the 1925 amalgamation and continues to serve the community today.

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 church buildings in West Winnipeg and the Weston region and illustrative of the type of facility provided a growing residential district in the pre-World War I era;
- its associations- its long-term connections to the Methodist and United churches;
- its design- elements suggesting the Gothic Revival style;
- its architect- J. Chisholm and Son was a respected and important partnership;
- its location- defines an important intersection and contributes greatly to its historic streetscape; and
- its integrity- its main façades continue to display many of their original elements and design.



Front (east) and south façades, 1994

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ENDNOTES:

- 1 City of Winnipeg Building Permit, #3124/1912.
- 2 Biographical information from the files of the Historical Buildings Committee.
- 3 Neil Bingham, A Study of the Church Buildings in Manitoba of the Congregational, Methodist, Presbyterian and United Churches of Canada (Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Department of Culture, Heritage and Recreation, Historic Resources Branch, 1987), p. 267.
- 4 Information from <http://www.wondercafe.ca/churches/sparling-united-church>.