



270 FLORA AVENUE

DAVID LIVINGSTONE SCHOOL

PREPARED BY PETERSON PROJECTS – DECEMBER 2009



270 FLORA AVENUE DAVID LIVINGSTONE SCHOOL

Date of Construction: 1922

Building Permit: 1246/1922

Architect: Mitchell, James Bertram

Contractor: Hazleton and Walin Limited

ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

One of a small number of the brick and stone, two-storey public schools built in the Winnipeg School Division during the 1920s.

Distinguishing characteristics of the building's front (west) façade include the red brick cladding with limestone accenting, the large window openings on both floors, the two projecting areas with stepped parapets, the stone capping at the roofline and the stone framed entrance. The south side includes a double entrance set in an ornate stone frame. The rear (west) façade is similar to the front and includes another stone framed entrance. Additions have been made to the north end that is now partially hidden. One of the elements this school building lacks is a raised basement with large windows, a familiar layout of pre-World War I schools that allowed for classroom space below grade.



South façade, 2009

The building stands on its original site and appears to be in fair structural condition. Alterations to the exterior have been extensive, including additions on the north side and the replacement of the original windows with stuccoed panels and smaller glass units.

The school is a reduced example of the Collegiate Gothic style. This style rose in popularity after 1900 as a reaction to the highly ornamented buildings of the earlier Gothic Revival style. The newer version opted for much simpler silhouettes and subdued ornamentation, in the words of one author, “a calm, disciplined monumentality.”¹

Flat surfaces were preferred; buildings were often long, low symmetrical masses embellished with crenellated towers and the distinctive pointed arch of the Gothic style. Construction material was monochromatic, usually brick or stone, again a departure from the multi-hued façades of the Gothic Revival style. Inspiration for the detailing of the new style was found in the English Perpendicular Gothic design of the 15th century. Because it found widespread expression on the campuses of many North American universities and then in the public school system, it became known as Collegiate Gothic.²

The architect for this school was James B. Mitchell, 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 North-West Mounted Police in 1874.³ Mitchell was no stranger to the military life, having been a teenage bugler in the Canadian militia during the Fenian raids of 1866 and 1870.⁴ As Mitchell passed through Manitoba on the N.W.M.P.'s famous western march, he noted the prosperity of the area and returned to the province after his tour of duty ended in 1877.⁵ His military career also included membership in the Wolseley Expedition to the Red River Settlement in 1870 and serving as a colonel of the 100th Winnipeg Grenadiers in World War I.⁶



North addition from the south, 2009

Mitchell was elected to the Winnipeg School Board in 1888 and four years later was appointed to the post of Commissioner of School Buildings (architect for the division).⁷ For 37 years until his retirement in 1928, Mitchell designed some 48 school buildings which cost more than \$8,000,000 to construct.⁸

Mitchell was assisted and supported by the Division's Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Daniel McIntyre. McIntyre held his post from 1885 until retirement in 1928, the same year Mitchell stepped down.⁹ These two men worked tirelessly to sell the idea of universal, proper education in Manitoba. Their success was recognized throughout the country and their legacy is the fine structures that have remained useful to the present.

Up until 1901, local architects prepared and submitted plans for new facilities to the School Board under the Supervision of Mitchell and McIntyre. During this period, 1888-1901, Mitchell himself designed two schools: Wellington School in 1898 and Somerset School in 1901.¹⁰ After 1901, Mitchell took full control over design. He often used comparative research to aid in the creation of better buildings, touring parts of Ontario and the United States to understand their approaches, for example.¹¹ Mitchell died in Winnipeg in 1945. In 1956, the J.B. Mitchell School (1720 John Brebeuf Place) was opened to honour one of the city's leading educational administrators.¹²



Rear (east) façade, 2009

HISTORICAL INTEREST:

The building was named for David Livingstone (1813-1873), Scottish-born missionary who was one of the main European explorers of central and southern African in the 19th century. He made several trips across the continent, including an expedition to find the source of the Nile River that began in 1866. After disappearing for several months, Henry Stanley set out to find Livingstone, meeting near Lake Tanganyika in 1871 when Stanley is attributed with the famous words, “Dr. Livingstone I presume?” He died in 1873.¹³

RECOMMENDATION TO HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE:

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

- its historical importance- a good example of the type of public school building being constructed in Winnipeg in the 1920s to address the growing school population;
- its associations- its long-term connections to education in the North End;
- its design- an modest example of the Collegiate Gothic style;
- its architect- J.B. Mitchell was a respected and important practitioner;
- its location- contributes to the historic streetscape of the neighbourhood; and
- its integrity- its main façades continue to display some of their original elements and design.



Front (west) façade, 1994

ENDNOTES:

- 1 L. Maitland et al., A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles (Peterborough: Broadview Press Ltd., 1992), p. 166.
- 2 Ibid., p. 166; and Identifying Architectural Styles in Manitoba (Winnipeg: Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, Historic Resources Branch, 1991), p. 20.
- 3 G. Bugailiskis, "School Buildings of the Winnipeg School Division No. 1," unpublished paper, Part B, p. 8.
- 4 Ibid., Part B, p. 8.
- 5 S.C. Grover, "Earl Grey School - 370 Cockburn Street," Report for the Historical Buildings Committee, June 30, 1980, p. 2.
- 6 S.C. Grover, "960 Wolseley Avenue - Laura Secord School," Report for the Historical Buildings Committee, June 30, 1985, p. 2.
- 7 S.C. Grover, "Earl Grey School", op. cit., p. 3.
- 8 Ibid., p. 3.
- 9 Ibid., pp. 7-10.
- 10 G. Bugailiskis, op. cit., Part B, p. 14.
- 11 Ibid., pp. 7-10.
- 12 S.C. Grover, "Earl Grey School," op. cit., p. 4.
- 13 Biographical information from http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/livingstone_david.shtml, no date