



**222 FURBY STREET**

**YOUNG UNITED CHURCH**

HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE

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## **222 FURBY STREET YOUNG UNITED CHURCH**

Situated at the corner of Broadway and Furby Street, this large brick church is an important landmark in this west end neighbourhood. Originally Young Methodist, the present church consists of a 1906 building joined to a 1910 structure. The earlier section is on the west side, facing Broadway, while the 1910 section faces east onto Furby. At the present time the west portion contains the sanctuary while the east portion includes offices, classrooms and meeting space.

While this Young Church structure belongs to the twentieth century, the church as a spiritual community had its origins in 1892 with the founding of the first young Methodist Church. Methodism was the largest of the Protestant churches in Canada at the time,<sup>1</sup> having been established with British ties in the Maritimes in 1765 and infused with an American strain in Upper Canada with the arrival of the United Empire Loyalists. These two dominant strains were reinforced with subsequent immigrations and the national church united in 1874.<sup>2</sup> This particular church recalls the name of Rev. George Young, an energetic missionary who first brought Methodism to the prairies in 1868.<sup>3</sup> As the first of the Methodist circuit preachers, Rev. Young saw the mother church, Grace Methodist, established in Winnipeg as well as the founding of Wesley College, later United College and the University of Winnipeg.<sup>4</sup>

Certainly Young Church remains to honour the early Methodist missions in the prairie west, while the impact of the Methodist Church is substantial indeed. As a Protestant sect in the reformist tradition, Methodism stressed the values of its spiritual leader, John Wesley, which were personal holiness and a disciplined "methodical" way of life. Drawing inspiration from scholarly reading of the Bible, Methodists were a strong group who perceived their moderate lifestyle as a nation-building force.<sup>5</sup> They believed that personal salvation could be achieved through a holy life and, therefore, it was possible to achieve the 'Kingdom of God on Earth.' In practical terms, this constituted a challenge for Methodists to work within their society for a better life for all.

In western Canada, the thousands of non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants pouring into the cities and

countryside prompted the Protestant activists to adopt assimilationist efforts. From this endeavour for a better life in their own image sprang the Social Gospel reformist tradition. Radicalized by such influential leaders as James S. Woodsworth and the fiery Rev. Salem Bland, the Methodist Church was most definitely in the forefront of the progressive movement in the first three decades of this century. The social problems of immigration and poverty in particular stirred these institutional responses of the social gospel, contributing to such social reforms as child welfare acts, labour codes, the campaign against drink, extensive work with new immigrants and stronger standards for public health services and housing. The reformist spurt was carried into political action in the Progressive parties of the 1920s, whose lasting impact was the development of the welfare state in Canada. The premise of state intervention in economic and social life is the reformists' legacy in this search to establish an ideal society on earth. Methodism was a prime provider for leadership of this progressive and radical reform.<sup>6</sup>

Young Methodist Church straddled the progressive centre between the wealthy conservative tradition and the radical elements. It began as a Sunday School in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Breen. With seven children of their own and six more in the neighbourhood, the Breens found the trip from their home near the corner of Furby and Broadway too far from Grace Church on Ellice Avenue. Actual Sabbath services were initiated in the Breen home in 1891, with a minister coming weekly from Grace. The first Young Methodist was a tiny frame church on the site of the present sanctuary, dedicated on 30 October 1891 and made independent from Grace Church in 1894. The church's moderate stance was established by its first permanent minister, Rev. J.H. Riddell, who served the tiny new congregation from 1892 to 1896. A kindly, energetic and devout leader, Riddell typified the more moderate progressivism of Prairie Methodism. As principal of Wesley College from 1917 to its merger as United College in 1938, Riddell's influence has been described as "safe and sane,"<sup>7</sup> typical too of his Young Church days.

A composite photograph at the rear of Young Church traces the growth of the constitution's physical structure as the Tudor frame was added onto in 1892, 1902 and 1904. This reflects the growth of the west end of the city as well as the determination and commitment of church members such as the Breen family. When it became apparent that the west end would contrive to be a high growth area,

plans were undertaken in 1906 for a large brick church on the site, to be constructed in two phases.

The first phase of the present Young Church was dedicated on 21 April 1907.<sup>8</sup> For the next four years, this was the whole church, sanctuary, Sunday School rooms, offices and clubrooms. This early section, the west wing of the present church complex, was 77 feet by 72 feet of stone and brick. Designed by architect James Chisholm, it was constructed by Naylor and Mitchell at a cost of \$35,000.<sup>9</sup> The interior was finished with fir stained green, stained glass windows, a large gallery and a tremendous Casavant Freres organ.<sup>10</sup> Those features that were permanent, such as the windows, the pews and the basement rooms, were of the best materials while the woods used in finishing the sanctuary were inferior and presumed to be temporary.<sup>11</sup>

In fact, the second phase of the great brick church did proceed. The present sanctuary in the larger east portion of the complex was dedicated for worship in a massive ceremony on 19 March 1911. In effect the two buildings were made into one. The Casavant organ was moved to the new sanctuary, and the 1907 portion immediately became known as the Sunday School. Its original arched windows were retained but the interior was made over into two finished storeys where the auditorium and gallery had been previously. A ladies parlour was installed on the second floor, as well as a board room, both panelled in oak and containing a fireplace.<sup>12</sup> The main floor contained the classrooms, most likely behind sliding doors off the central auditorium on the Akron plan, a popular arrangement in Methodist and Presbyterian churches for many years.

The new church, also designed by James Chisholm and Sons, continued the Romanesque design and materials of the 1906-07 section but enlarged upon them. Measuring approximately 101 by 103 feet, the 1910 portion is three storeys high. It fronts onto Furby Street with two non-identical towers. Besides the taller tower, the entranceway is the church's most forceful feature. The triple arched entrances are approached by a broad set of stairs. The doors are recessed behind arches outlined and defined in Bedford stone. This light stone, which contrasts with the red-brown Menominee brick of the walls, is used throughout for crisp detailing. Each structural opening is given definition by the stone trim in arches, lintels and horizontal bands. Bedford stone also faces the rubble stone foundation. The rounded Roman arch of the doors is repeated in the windows and in the belltower

arches. The belltower reaches 100 feet high, 25 feet above the ridge of the cross-gable roof. The short pyramidal spire is covered in scales and surrounded by four pinnacles and four gabled dormers. It is this tower that gives the church its presence on the street and ties together the smaller towers of the old and the new church.

The design of the structure establishes a suitable tension between the angular and the curved as the windows and doors soften the geometric shapes of the towers, flat walls and gabled rooflines. While still a discernable "church" form, the architecture has a republican look that abides no hierarchy among the children of God.

That absence of mysticism is carried forward to the building's interior. The sanctuary is an auditorium, rather than a basilica plan with a nave and chancel. Both main floor and gallery seating draw the people and the chancel into one in a horseshoe arrangement. The open arches draw its four rectangular sides up into groin vaults and a centre dome. The dome, 30 feet in diameter, is surrounded by elaborate ornamental plaster-work from which is suspended a large chandelier. This centre fixture, and three others in the auditorium, invert light upwards. The auditorium is very spacious, light and unified in its feeling.

Originally painted in tan, buff and a soft green, the sanctuary is now in soft tones of buff and turquoise, with the egg and dart detailing around the dome and over the chancel highlighted in gold. The present interior is very similar to its original appearance, with two main exceptions. The organ pipes behind the chancel used to be exposed, and the stained glass scenes in the gallery and nave side windows were added later.

The screen over the organ pipes was added around 1940 and has only recently been covered with a wood veneer. At the same time that the pipes were covered, the oak panelling at the base of the pipes was extended four feet further on either side to meet the walls. This extension matched the original perfectly. Thirty-nine choir chairs faced the congregation and the organ was sunk slightly below the rostrum in the centre. In front of these, a slight extension of the rostrum contained the clergy chairs and the pulpit. A panelled railing separated the choir and finished the base of the

rostrum or pulpit platform. Recently, the organ was raised from its pit, the platform filled and laid with parquet flooring so that it can be used as a stage.

The seats on the main floor run off four side aisles. The pews are oak, wrapping around the rostrum up to within a few feet of where the communion railing used to run. The pews were designed and supplied by Valley City Seating in Dundas, Ontario.<sup>13</sup> The lower portion of the side walls are wainscotted with oak and brown canvas filling.

Supported only by four cast-iron posts, the gallery wraps around the sides and rear of the auditorium with five rows of seating. The pews on the ground floor seat about 900 people with 550 in the gallery for a total of 1450 seats. To the left off the gallery front was a mothers' room for crying babies and to the right was a board room.<sup>14</sup> The gallery is approached by a set of stairs in the base of the towers on either side of the narthex.

The original stained glass can be seen in the smaller side window in the nave as well as the window over the narthex. Here the border glass is in soft browns and ambers at the base which lightens upwards to a soft green. A leafy vine trails upwards, presumably from the earth up to the heavens. The leaded glass between is opaque and coloured. The large window over the south gallery depicts the Last Supper, while the north gallery stained glass window is of Christ blessing a soldier. Both of these art windows were created by the Toronto firm of Robert McCousland. A third smaller window in the north nave portion, created in 1959 by Westmacott of Winnipeg, depicts the Agony in the Garden.<sup>15</sup> The windows, both old and new, reach out to the light, which changes with the time of day and season of year. Light shimmers as it passes through but cannot be controlled or held, reminding one of the spirit behind the form. The windows in this church are very effective in conveying this elusive spirit.

The smooth plaster walls of the auditorium have been the object of changes of fashion. During the 1940s and 50s, the wall behind the chancel was covered in a brightly stencilled pattern resembling wallpaper, while the arch was outlined in a wide bank of floral motifs. When the provincial Architectural Survey team recorded Young Church in 1969, the stencil-work was gone but a large

bible and glowing cross were painted on the wall over the front arch.

The four original chandeliers, which have survived, were supplied by the Electric Specialty Company. The stained glass, except for the more recent biblical scenes, was installed by the Alward and McCormick Glass Company. F. Fraser was the carpentry contractor, the painting and glazing was done by Crawford and Talbot; the sheet metal work was by Christie Brothers and the mechanical system was installed by C.C. Young. The general contractors and masons of the church were Hinds and Mitchell at a cost of construction of approximately \$90,000.<sup>16</sup>

Upon its dedication, the new Young Methodist Church was packed for two services on Sunday while the parish women sponsored a large fundraising tea in the basement the following Monday. The 16 by 50 foot kitchen and large banquet hall in the new church basement were put to immediate use.

When the new church opened in 1911, the congregation numbered about 900 and grew larger each year. The Methodists were a strong influence on the Manitoba scene, while the Winnipeg contingent operated their own weekly newspaper with Rev. Salem Bland as editor, the paper chronicled the Church's growth and articulated the challenges or progressive Methodist reform in the West.<sup>17</sup> Broadway Methodist, later St. Stephen's Broadway, was erected in 1906 at the corner of Broadway and Kennedy Street. J.H.G. Russell designed Fort Rouge Methodist, which opened in 1910 at the corner of Wardlaw and Nassau Streets and Robertson Memorial at McKenzie and Burrows in 1911. As well, Grace continued as the mother church.<sup>18</sup>

John Russell was the dominant Protestant church architect in the city from 1900 to 1914. On the same day that the building permit was taken out for Young Methodist by James Chisholm in 1910, another permit for Russell's Fort Rouge Methodist was issued. The façade of both these churches is strikingly similar. Both are made of dark brick trimmed with limestone in a Romanesque design. Both feature the high gabled façade, with side towers and the triple portal arrangement. There seems to be a correlation between these two Methodist churches built at the same time by different architects. But closer inspection shows that the Fort Rouge church is a processional church with a

nave and an apsidal formation for offices on the east side. The inside has a barrel vault ceiling and while the horseshoe seating arrangement also prevails here, the gallery is partially covered by the arches supporting the ceiling. The treatment of the chancel is quite similar in both churches.<sup>19</sup> Young Church is much larger and the auditorium more open, giving it quite a different feeling on the inside. Both churches contrast nicely with their Presbyterian contemporaries, Augustine (1903), Westminster (1912) and Knox (1914), which are resolutely Gothic. These three were the design of J.H.G. Russell.

As a spiritual community, Young Church has traditionally have active, committed and progressive if not radical. The lay people have always had a high degree of involvement at all levels of Methodist Church affairs, and this trend is readily apparent at Young Church. A comprehensive network of church organizations enabled members to live their faith while enjoying the camaraderie of community. The Woman's Missionary Service supported native missions, medical outposts and an immigrant orientation program. The large Sunday School and the Epworth League provided religious education and bible studies. War work, pastoral work, social and sports groups, youth activity groups such as Christian Girls in Training and Trail Rangers, the choir and the administration boards all had their programs and enthusiastic adherents.

The ministers of the Young Methodist tended to change about every four years, further stimulating lay participation in the church's work. Only one, the Rev. Walter Donnelly, pastor from 1935 to 1958, stayed for a long period. A dynamic man, Donnelly was one-time president of the Manitoba Conference of the United Church, a 25 year member of the Board of Regents at United College and, for many years, the "Voice of Inspiration" on CKY radio's daily broadcasts.<sup>20</sup>

In 1925, following years of sensitive negotiations, the Methodist and Presbyterian churches joined forces to become the United Church of Canada. Young Methodist became Young United. The structure of the Church adjusted to fit the new format of organization, while the work of Young Church carried on. By 1961, its role had shifted towards meeting the immediate needs of a downtown church. A declining congregation was confronted by the challenges of an inner-city setting. To raise money to make some of the necessary structural changes, a massive canvass was



launched.<sup>21</sup> The Sunday School auditorium, the former sanctuary from 1906, was divided into offices and various workrooms. Eventually, the former Ladies' parlour was given over to a growing seniors' group, the boardroom was subdivided and a small chapel added to the basement. Meanwhile, the church community involved itself in such issues as soup kitchens, a clothing depot, a program for kids on the street and the support of refugee families.

The 1980 annual report set the congregation at 412 members, but it is down from that now, which has an adverse effect on church revenues. To compensate for this contradiction of increasing demands and declining numbers, the Church has entered new fields of community involvement. The sanctuary, spacious and beautiful, has excellent acoustics which make it adaptable for use as a concert hall by the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra and other performing arts groups.

The thoughtful design, clear span and quality materials of this fine old church have allowed the building to change with the times while maintaining a considerable degree of integrity. The exterior of the church complex shows very little alteration, as does the sanctuary. The 1906 portion on the west side underwent considerable change in 1911 when it ceased to be the centre of worship, and has seen several alterations since. Such features as the entrance spaces, stairways and stained glass windows maintain the church-like atmosphere. This portion of the complex is a hive of activity each day.

Young United wrote its own description in c.1961 entitled "I am a Downtown Church".

## FOOTNOTES

1. The Canada Yearbook 1912. The King's Printer, Ottawa, 1913, p. 33.
2. Margaret E. Prang "Methodism" in The Canadian Encyclopedia. Volume II, Hurtig Publishers, Edmonton, 1985, p. 1124.
3. Pioneers and Early Citizens of Manitoba. The Manitoba Library Association, Peguis Publishers, Winnipeg, c.1971, p. 263. A Methodist sect, British Wesleyan Mission, had sent itinerant missionaries to fur trade posts as early as 1840. These mission attempts terminated in 1854 with the formal transfer to the Canadian Methodist Conference. The greatest contribution of this tiny mission was the invention of a Cree syllable alphabet which facilitated the translation of scriptures into native prayer books. Gerald Hutchison "British Methodists and the Hudson's Bay Company, 1840-1854" in Dennis L. Butcher et al Prairie Spirit: Perspectives on the Heritage of the United Church of Canada in the West, The University of Manitoba Press, 1985, p. 32 & 37.
4. "Began Classes in '71", Winnipeg Free Press, 7 May 1971, p. 25-29. Although chartered in 1877, classes did not commence at Wesley College until 1888. For one year, the students met at Grace Church while Wesley Hall did not open its doors until 1896.
5. Prang, op.cit.
6. Richard Allen, The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada 1914-28. University of Toronto Press, 1971, p. 16.
7. Gerald Friesen, "Principal J.H. Riddell: The safe and sane leader of Wesley College" in Butcher et al, op.cit., p. 264.
8. A Souvenir of the Golden Jubilee of Young United Church 1891-1941, Winnipeg, 1941, p. 3.
9. City of Winnipeg Building Permits No. 1348, 28 May 1906. This also incorporated an earlier permit No. 1270 also in 1906.
10. "Dedicatory Service at the New Young Church", Winnipeg Telegram, 22 April, 1907, p. 13. The old wooden church was used for Sunday School classes until it was demolished in 1910 for the new church.
11. The 1906-07 church was completely self-contained and could easily have continued for decades as a handsome church. With a seating capacity of 1,000 on oak pews, vaulted ceiling, and raised rostrum inside, the exterior of the church was finished in red brick and featured a low corner tower. See "Young Methodist Church" in Manitoba Daily Free Press, 6 December, 1906, p. 53 for a full description.

12. "Young Methodist Church is Rejuvenated", MEP, 18 March, 1911, p. 4.
13. Loc. cit.
14. City of Winnipeg Plans No. 410-1910.
15. Alice Hamilton, Manitoba Stained Glass, The University of Winnipeg Press, 1970, p. 262.
16. "Young Methodist Church is Rejuvenated", op. cit.
17. Richard Allan, "Salem Bland and the spirituality of the social gospel: Winnipeg and the West, 1903-1913" in Butcher et al Prairie Spirit, op. cit., p. 224.
18. Graham Macdonald, Churches and Synagogues of Old Winnipeg: An Inventory, prepared for the City of Winnipeg Historical Buildings Committee, 1982, Volume II. There were two or three other Methodist churches in Winnipeg at the time. Grace Methodist was demolished in c.1955.
19. Donald Ross, "A guided tour of church architecture in the Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario: A photo essay" in Butcher et al Prairie Spirit, op. cit., p. 12-13.
20. "Rev. Walter Edward Donnelly B.A., D.D.", Winnipeg Free Press, 31 October, 1969.
21. "Combined Funds Canvass 1961-1964" a Young United Church pamphlet.
22. Loc. CIT.

Also consulted were church records at Young United, at the United Church Archives at the University of Winnipeg, "1983 92nd Anniversary" booklet and "A Souvenir of the Golden Jubilee of Young United Church 1891-1941."

Grateful thanks are also due to Mr. Neil Bingham of the Manitoba Historic Resources Branch.

## APPENDIX A

### James Chisholm

This Winnipeg architect was born in Paris, Ontario in 1840, where he took his education. It is not known where he received his professional training, but he came to Winnipeg in 1877 and eventually became identified with local architectural interests. He built up his practice to later include his son, C.C. Chisholm, who eventually took over the senior Chisholm's practice.

While their work was generally confined to the City of Winnipeg, James Chisholm also designed buildings for other cities in Manitoba as well as Regina, Saskatchewan, Edmonton, Alberta, Saskatoon and Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. The firm's Winnipeg buildings include the Sterling Bank Building, the Hochman (formerly Harris) Building on Princess, the Odd Fellows' Temple on Kennedy Street, Zion Methodist Church, the well-known Young Methodist (now United) Church on Broadway, and the original section of the Marlborough Hotel. In addition, Chisholm designed several beautiful houses including the Lemon residence formerly at 420 Edmonton Street, the Horn residence and the A.N. McCutcheon residence, as well as several office buildings.

James Chisholm was also involved in church activities and a member of the Winnipeg School Board.

**222 FURBY STREET – YOUNG UNITED CHURCH**



Plate 1 – 222 Furby Street, Young United (Methodist) Church, 1969. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, AS.)



Plate 2 – Young Methodist Church, 1914. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, M.L. Guthrie Collection, #10.)

222 FURBY STREET – YOUNG UNITED CHURCH

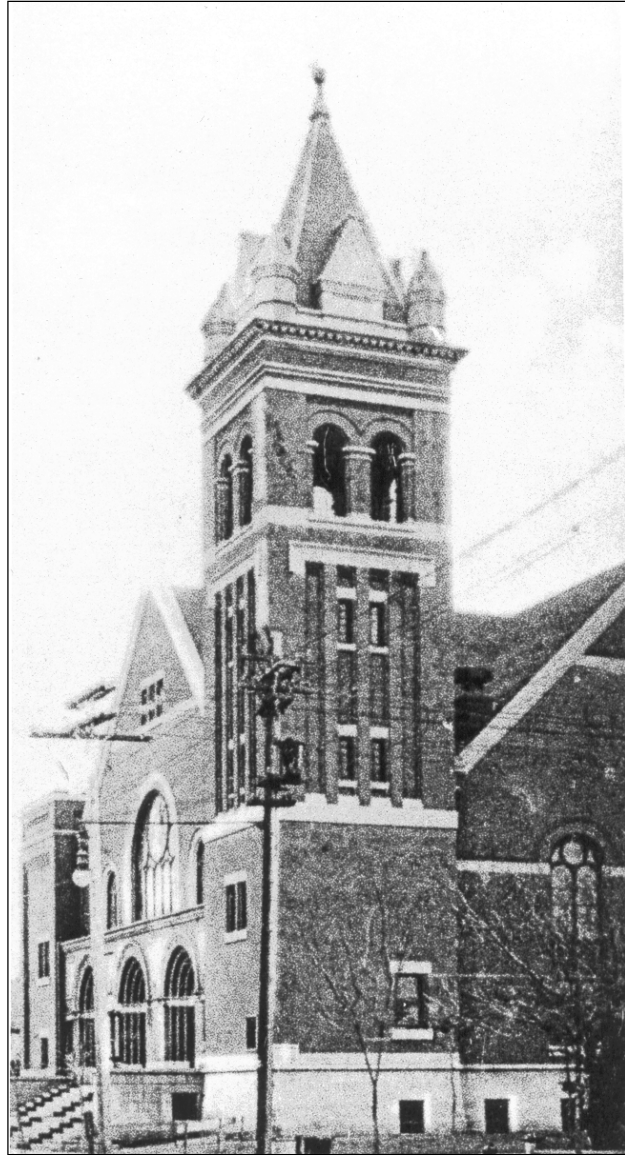


Plate 3 – Young Methodist Church, east elevation (Furby Street), 1914. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, N7405.)

**222 FURBY STREET – YOUNG UNITED CHURCH**



Plate 4 – Manitoba Government Telephone wagon, 1911. The church behind shows the connection being made between the new auditorium on the left and the Sunday School portion in the centre. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)



Plate 5 – Sanctuary, ca.1911, (Peter Lyall, Photographer). (Courtesy of Young United Church.)

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Plate 6 – An early view of the chancel showing the original layout of the organ pipes, choir arrangement and back panelling. (Courtesy of Young United Church.)



Plate 7 – Interior of church, 1969. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, AS.)



**222 FURBY STREET – YOUNG UNITED CHURCH**



Plate 8 – Interior of church, 1969. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, A.S.)