



1023 MAIN STREET
HOUSE (CHESED SHEL EMES CHAPEL)

PREPARED BY PETERSON PROJECTS – FEBRUARY 2009



1023 MAIN STREET HOUSE (CHESED SHEL EMES CHAPEL)

Date of Construction: ca. 1905

Building Permit: Unknown

Architect: Unknown

Contractor: Unknown

ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

This structure started as a single-family home but was converted into a Jewish funeral chapel in the early 1930s.

The original two-storey home is virtually hidden by the addition of a false front, a one-storey brick addition to the south end and a large two-storey chapel built on the north side (the cornerstone for the chapel was laid on November 29th, 1946 and the new building opened November 23rd, 1947).¹ It is unknown at present the exact dates of the renovations and additions, the three City of Winnipeg Building Permits listed during the early years of the chapel are #3241/1933, #1509/1939 and #1283/1941.

The chapel was remodeled and decorated in 1937 and in 1939, a cooling room, wired with a temperature security system, was added to the chapel mortuary.²



Front (west) and north façades, 2009

At present the front (west) façade of the south building is clad in stucco and features modest ornamental detailing around windows and doors and at the roofline. The large chapel building to the north is clad in dark brick.

It is unknown at present who designed the original house or who the architect for the various remodellings and additions was. The building stands on its original site, appears to be in good structural condition and has not been altered significantly since the 1950s.

HISTORICAL INTEREST:

Early residents of the house included druggist Matthew Ruckle in 1905 (his business was located at 962 Main Street) and Robert A. (no employment listed) and John (street railway employee) Cairns (1925).³

By early 1932, the house had been bought by the Chesed Shel Emes Society, established in 1930 to relieve families of the burden of housing and preparing their deceased for burial (in the Orthodox tradition). The Chesed Shel Emes is a publicly operated, non-profit Jewish funeral chapel and mortuary, one of one a few in North America.⁴ Translated from the Hebrew, Chesed Shel Emes means “Charity of Truth” or “Charity of True Loving Kindness”. The Society, which established itself as a congregation, had to overcome opposition from neighbours before it proceeded with its plans to renovate the house on Main Street. The chapel was consecrated on October 6th, 1933.



Rear (east) and south façade, 2009 (original house at arrow)

By the early 1940s, the Chesed Shel Emes was handling so many cases that space was becoming a problem in its Main Street chapel, the large chapel built on the north side of the original facility was officially opened in November 1947. The mortuary and chapel continue to fill an important role in Winnipeg's Jewish community.

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 oldest Jewish mortuaries/chapels in the City of Winnipeg and a unique organization on a continental scale;
- its associations- its long-term connections to Winnipeg's Jewish community;
- its design- N/A;
- its architect- N/A;
- its location- contributes greatly to the historic streetscape of its north Main Street block; and
- its integrity- its main façades continue to display many of their original elements and design.



Front (west) façade, 1978

ENDNOTES:

- 1 Information from the Chesed Shel Emes website, <http://www.chesedshelemes.org/hist.htm>, no date (below as Website). The total cost of construction was \$60,000.
- 2 Loc. cit.
- 3 Henderson's Directory, 1900-1930.
- 4 Website.