



821 McDERMOT AVENUE

McDERMOT AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH

PREPARED BY PETERSON PROJECTS – FEBRUARY 2009



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Date of Construction: 1907

Building Permit: 1130/1907 (basement) and 1622/1907 (superstructure)

Architect: Teeter, George G.

Contractor: Kuhn, C. (basement) and day labour (superstructure)

ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

This is a spectacular brick and stone church located in Winnipeg's West End that has seen several additions completed to the original structure.

Significant design features of this church, gracing the northwest corner of McDermot Avenue and Tecumseh Street (originally Monkman Street), include a tall, crenellated tower set in the building's southeast corner, finished with a tall spire with finial and smaller matching spires at the four corners of the tower. A shorter version of this tower, without the tall central spire, is located in the southwest corner of the building. Between these towers, the main portion of the church rises to the apex of the steeply pitched gable roof that also features projecting sections facing west and east (onto Tecumseh Street). Both the front (south) and east and west side gables are filled with large stained glass windows highlighted by delicate tracery. Stone is used to accent the cream coloured brick walls.



Roof detail, 2009

Openings for windows and doors are pointed and main are topped by brick drip moulding. The entire building rests on a raised stone foundation.

The building stands on its original site and appears to be in good structural condition. A number of addition have been made to building's front (south), rear (north) and west façades, with varying degrees of affect on the original structure.

The Beaux-Arts Gothic style used here is employed in a number of Winnipeg churches. The first decade of the 20th century saw an evolution of the Gothic Revival style that had been popular in Canada since the early 19th century. The new Beaux-Arts Gothic designs included not only the ornate exterior detailing of the Gothic Revival School, but also classically inspired floor plans.¹

With the adoption of the new style, the architect did not have to sacrifice the logical arrangement of the interior space in order to use the popular elements of the Gothic style. Educational and religious structures most often used the style in western Canada but other public structures and residences displayed it as well.² It was the architecture of the pointed arch, flying buttress, and rib vault coupled with the conscious attempt to reduce or at least interrupt flat wall space. Used in concert, these elements represented “a system of skeletal structure with active, slender, resilient members and membrane-thin infilling or no infilling at all.”³

In Winnipeg, the Anglican, Baptist and Lutheran churches all raised buildings that exhibited similar Gothic elements, borrowing from their common Protestant background. By the 20th century, technological advances in building materials and engineering and the rise of an affluent population in urban centres pointed towards more monumental structures, heavily



South façade and portion of west addition, 2009

ornamented with Gothic elements. Following the Beaux-Arts Gothic lead of eastern Canada and the United States, Winnipeg saw numerous monumental Gothic-inspired churches built after the late 1890s. Between 1900 and 1930, Beaux-Arts Gothic was the most popular choice of style for the Anglican, Baptist and Lutheran churches as well as the United Church and its three founding groups (Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational).⁴

The designer of this church, G.G. Teeter, was a distinguished Winnipeg architect whose practice spanned four decades. Born in St. Annes, Ontario, Teeter received his architectural degree in Toronto. After graduation he moved to North Bay, Ontario and became a junior partner in a large local firm. He moved to Winnipeg by 1907 and set up a private practice, designing a number of fine apartment blocks throughout the city. After World War I, he became Chief Draughtsman for the Manitoba government while continuing his private practice.⁵ At one time, he was also the president of the Manitoba Association of Architects. He died in Winnipeg in 1949.⁶ Some of his more prominent local designs include: Salem Reformed Church, 235 Andrews Street (1907); Trinity Baptist Church, 549 Gertrude Avenue (1907-09); Windermere Apartment Block, 224 Kennedy Street (1909); St. Elmo Apartments, 177 Colony Street (1910); King Edward Memorial Hospital, Morley Avenue (1910-11, demolished); Ellesmere Apartments, 74 Carlton Street (1911); and Elmwood Presbyterian Church, Cobourg Avenue (1912).⁷



East façade, 2009

HISTORICAL INTEREST:

Originally known as First German Baptist Church, it has been active in the community for over 100 years. This group organized in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1842 and the first congregation in Western Canada was created in 1888 in Winnipeg. Their first church was located on Alexander Avenue (opened in 1891) and later they occupied a building at the corner of Ellen Street and Pacific Avenue. The cornerstone for the new church was laid on June 30, 1907.⁸

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 finer and most ornamentally complex religious structures built in Winnipeg in the pre-World War I era;
- its associations- its long-term connections to Winnipeg's German and Baptist communities;
- its design- an excellent example of the Beaux-Arts Gothic style;
- its architect- G.G. Teeter was a respected and important practitioner;
- its location- defines an important intersection and contributes greatly to the historic streetscape of its West End neighbourhood; and
- its integrity- its main façades continue to display many of their original elements and design.



South and east façades, 1978

ENDNOTES:

- 1 Mathilde Brosseau, Gothic Revival in Canadian Architecture, Canadian Historic Sites: Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History, No. 25 (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1980), p. 26.
- 2 Ibid., pp. 28-29.
- 3 John Fleming, et al., The Penguin Dictionary of Architecture, Third Edition (London: Penguin Books, 1980), p. 142.
- 4 Ibid., pp. 236-273.
- 5 S.C. Grover, "Morley Avenue - Winnipeg Municipal Hospitals," report for the Historical Buildings Committee, p. 5.
- 6 Winnipeg Citizen, February 17, 1949.
- 7 Compiled from City of Winnipeg, Building Permits; and D. Spector, Apartment House Architecture in Winnipeg to 1915 (Winnipeg: City of Winnipeg, 1980).
- 8 Manitoba (Winnipeg) Free Press, January 16, 1891, p. 6, July 9, 1896, November 16, 1907, p. 2, July 7, 1923, p. 31 and July 2, 1937, p. 1.