



381 SHERBROOK STREET

SHERBROOK POOL

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings Committee

May 2001

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Swimming pools¹ are part of a long tradition of formal bathing, the earliest existing examples of which date from 1700 to 1400 B.C.² Earlier ritualistic bathing in rivers takes this activity even further back. For the Greeks, the bath represented an "adjunct to gymnastics" and was "brief, cold and invigorating."³ It was not supplied to the masses, and was part of athletics.⁴ In Roman and Islamic centres, the bath was a social event, producing relaxation through the use of steam and hot and cold water.⁵ It was also part of military training in Rome. Much like health spas of today, Roman baths allowed users to partake in various cosmetic treatments, participate in sporting events, and take in some theatre or gamble.⁶

But after the fall of the Roman Empire, public baths and bathing in general fell into disfavour. The presence of various plagues continued to suppress this activity well into the 19th century, when the hygienic properties of bathing were rediscovered.⁷ In 1846 the first British Public Baths and Wash Houses Act was passed. These baths ranged from simple sheds with a bath to ornate buildings with large, multi-roomed facilities. Showers, swimming-baths or pools, and vapour or steam baths began appearing, all used to battle the filth of the growing industrial slums and to ward off disease.⁸

The North American swimming pool movement grew from this British and European model, particularly championed by the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). The YMCA conference in 1858 in Geneva was the first to mention recreational facilities, especially gymnasiums

¹ The present-day swimming pool has been referred to by various other names over time, including public bath, bath house, plunge bath, and swimming tank. Their use within the text is an attempt to reflect the specific times and also to trace their development and evolution.

² P.H. Perkins, "Swimming Pools" in The Avery Index (London: Elsevier Publishing Company Limited, 1971), p. xi.

³ L. Wright, Clean and Decent (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960), p. 2.

⁴ John Dawes, Design and planning of swimming pools (London: The Architectural Press, 1979), p. 2.

⁵ L. Wright, op. cit., p. 2.

⁶ J. Dawes, op. cit., pp. 2-3.

⁷ Ibid., p. 3.

⁸ Ibid., p. 3; and L Wright, op. cit., p. 151.

and swimming baths, for the organization. It was decided that each country's association would decide on the appropriateness of this new scheme.⁹ Ultimately, the YMCA decided to minister to the complete person, body, mind and spirit, and recreation became part of the formal program.¹⁰

In Winnipeg, it was 1901 when the YMCA built its first permanent home on Portage Avenue (present-day Birks Building). This structure included the city's first indoor swimming pool.¹¹ By 1913 the YMCA had opened a second pool in the branch on Selkirk Avenue, and built larger facilities on Vaughan Street, partly due to the high demand for use of the swimming pool.¹²

It was the growth in popularity of this new form of recreation that prompted the City of Winnipeg to become involved in providing public funds for swimming pools. In 1930, the third such public pool was opened on Sherbrook Street, and is now the oldest such building in Winnipeg.

STYLE

The Sherbrook Pool has the elements of the Art Deco style, popular in Canada in the late 1920s and into the 1930s. The style was named for the “*Exposition universale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes*” held in Paris in 1925, which first brought the style to the public eye. Art Deco motifs were varied and included themes for different cultures and historical periods, naturalistic themes (flowers, animals, etc.) and/or geometrical (zigzags, chevrons, spirals and the like). The accent was on streamlining both the building and its decorative elements, the topmost storeys usually receiving the most treatment.¹³ The result was a building that was “flattened and streamlined and has an air of

⁹ C.P. Shedd, History of the World's Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations (London: S.P.C.K., 1955), p. 157.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 176.

¹¹ Y - One Hundred - A Winnipeg YMCA Commemorative Publication (Winnipeg: 1980), p. 8.

¹² Ibid., p. 16. Other than these recreational baths, several Turkish baths, were also present by the late 1890s. These were either privately owned clubs or part of a related business such as barber shops or hotels. They catered to the relaxation rather than the recreation of their customers. Henderson's Directory (Winnipeg), 1876-1920.

¹³ L. Maitland, et al, A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1992), pp. 139-40.

stylishness and breathless speed.”¹⁴

In Winnipeg, because of slow economic growth, few large buildings were constructed during the heyday of Art Deco and therefore examples are few. The former Canadian General Electric Building, 265 Notre Dame Avenue (also built in 1930), is one of the best examples (Plate 1).

CONSTRUCTION

The building is structurally supported by reinforced concrete, including floor slabs, foundations, footings and 30.5 cm. or 1' thick basement walls. The walls of the superstructure are local clay brick faced with Alsip Red brick. Steel beams support the roof comprised of reinforced gypsum slabs, cork insulation and felt and gravel.¹⁵ Stone is used as accent material for windows, the roof and the main entrance. Original construction costs totalled \$125,000.¹⁶

The building measures approximately 33.6 x 32.6 x 11.6 metres (110 x 107 x 38 feet) or 12,657.5 cubic metres (nearly 1/2 million cubic feet) of interior space. It is located on land legally described as 72 St. James, Plan 2359, South part of Lot 24, Lots 42/6 (the east side of Sherbrook Street between Portage and Ellice avenues).¹⁷

DESIGN

As one would expect from an Art Deco styled building, the Sherbrook Pool's exterior is flat and linear (Plates 2 to 6). Decorative elements include thin brick pilasters along the front (west) façade that end at the stone coping along the roofline. Raised stone accenting along the coping act as ornamental heads for the pilasters. A raised stone foundation and stone sills complete the exterior ornamentation. Windows throughout the building are narrow and grouped in threes along the main

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 139.

¹⁵ City of Winnipeg, Minutes of the Council, July 21, 1930, p. 935.

¹⁶ City of Winnipeg, Building Permit, 3921/1930.

¹⁷ City of Winnipeg, Assessment Record, Roll No. 500431, Ward 2, PC "City." Below as AR.

and south façades and ungrouped on the north and east walls. The ground floor windows on the main façade have been lowered from their original design, giving this elevation a slightly unbalanced visage. The main entrance is set in a smooth-cut stone frame with the words "Public Baths" above the door (Plate 7).

INTERIOR

The interior of the building was originally designed with boiler, machinery and fuel rooms in the southeast corner and south end of the basement. Two women's locker rooms, separated by a shower room, ran along the west wall. The men's locker rooms and showers were located along the north wall and in the northeast corner. The interior area of the basement was occupied by the floor of the swimming pool.¹⁸

The first floor held the lobby, front desk, and a committee room, all with terrazzo floor. Two flights of stairs leading to the basement were located between the pool and the office area. The pool measured 15.3 x 22.9 m. (50 x 75') and had shallow and deep ends (Plate 8).

The second floor contained three sides of wooden bleacher seating (north, east and west) and behind the north end seating was a two bedroom suite called the "Superintendent's Quarters."¹⁹ This residential space included a kitchen, living room, bathroom and private stairway to the first floor (Plate 9). It has been recently renovated into weight rooms.

INTEGRITY

The building occupies its original site and appears in fair structural condition. Interior alterations have been relatively minor, mostly decorative renovations rather than structural or spatial changes. The roof was replaced in 1945 and 1970. Glass block windows replaced single pane units on the

¹⁸ Architect's Plans, City of Winnipeg Archives, Plan No. 3921/1930.

¹⁹ Ibid.

south and west façades in 1961, and concrete slabs and signage were added to the front façade.²⁰

Recent upgrades to the building envelope have been completed, replacing the concrete with glass along the front façade, removing the signage on the west elevation, replacing windows on the south wall and making general improvements to the building. It has taken the exterior back to a more original appearance.

STREETSCAPE

The pool is situated along a block of mixed structures that include homes, commercial buildings, apartments and churches. Many of these pre-date the swimming pool and the facility's unadorned appearance, colour, material and scale tend to reduce its compatibility with neighbouring buildings.

ARCHITECT

Pratt and Ross, a local partnership, was responsible for designing the Sherbrook Pool. Their partnership lasted over two decades, in which time they designed buildings throughout western Canada. (see Appendix I for biography). They have received 20 points from the Historical Buildings Committee.

INSTITUTION

The City of Winnipeg's participation in supplying recreational swimming facilities began in late 1908 with a request from the Public Parks Board for City Council to set aside land within a city park to build a public bath house.²¹ The civic government was not the only group looking at providing this service to the public. A private company was organized in 1909 and planned to build a \$140,000, four-storey public bath on Fort Street.²² Although neither of these early plans were ever

²⁰ AR.

²¹ Public Parks Board Minutes, City of Winnipeg Archives, Book 70, Item 153, November 12, 1908.

²² The Winnipeg Telegram, July 24, 1909, p. 3.

started, they are illustrations of the support for swimming pools.

In September of 1910, a request was made by the Library and Public Baths Committee of City Council for a sketch of a new Bath House to be located in Winnipeg's North End.²³ The Pritchard Avenue Baths (on the northwest corner of Pritchard Avenue and Charles Street) were completed in 1911, designed by William Bruce, built by Bruce and Bostrom, and costing \$45,000.²⁴

In 1914 a second city-owned pool was built, on Cornish Avenue in Armstrong's Point. The pool cost \$41,850, built by the Frid-Lewis Company and designed by architect D.W.F. Nichols.²⁵ It was built at the same time as the Cornish Avenue Library, and was located next to it. While it was not until 1930 that a third facility was added (Plate 11), there were numerous requests from all over the city for the construction of public baths.²⁶ At present there are 11 indoor and numerous outdoor swimming pools controlled by the City's Parks and Recreation Department.

EVENT

There is no significant event connected with this building.

CONTEXT

The Sherbrook Pool was built after the development of the residential neighbourhood in which it stands, the West End. This area developed after 1900 in response to the need for housing for the growing population. This location was close enough to the downtown business district to allow for easy commuting to and from work.

Rather than fitting in the context of this initial phase of growth, the pool can be placed in a later

²³ Library and Public Baths Committee Minutes (below as LPBC Minutes), Item 259, September 7, 1910.

²⁴ City of Winnipeg, Building Permit, #799/1911.

²⁵ City of Winnipeg, Building Permit, #2789/1914.

²⁶ LPBC Minutes, 1904-1920.

phase that saw the creation of community clubs, baseball parks, swimming pools and other recreational facilities that citizens began to expect as part of the package of services funded by the public coffers.

LANDMARK

This building is an extremely busy facility, and has been offering swimming lessons and recreational opportunities to many local residents and people from all over the city for over 70 years. Its conspicuousness comes from this historic and present use.



APPENDIX I

CITY OF WINNIPEG - Preliminary Report

Date: January 1995

Assessment Record

Prepared By: M. Peterson

Building Address: 381 Sherbrook Street

Building Name: Sherbrook Pool ("Public Baths")

Original Use: public pool

Current Use: public pool

Roll No. (Old): 500431 (8137)

RSN: 100172

Municipality: 12 Ward: 2

Property or Occupancy Code: City

Legal Description: 72 St. James, Plan 2359, part of Lot 24, Lots 42/6

Location: east side between Portage and Ellice avenues

Date of Construction: 1930

Storeys: 2

Heritage Status: ON INVENTORY

Construction Type: brick and reinforced concrete foundation

Building Permits (Plans available: [A] Archives; [M] Microfilm; [4th] 4th floor, 65 Garry Street):

- 3921/1930 \$125,000 (original); 1090/1945 \$23,000 (new roof); 6581/1961 \$2,000 (alterations);
4020/1970 \$37,000 (alterations)

Information:

- 110 x 70 x 38 = 447,260 cu. ft.

- Permit 1090/1945- new steel beams replacing original members

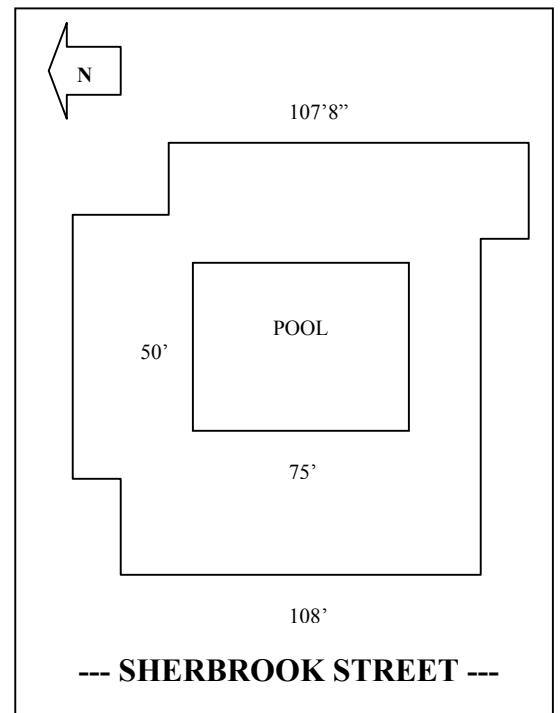
- 2nd floor- 4 room suite and large 16.5 x 73' hall

- Permit 6581/1961- glass block replacement windows on south and west walls

- Permit 4020/1970- replaced and repaired roof, new lighting system for pool area

ARCHITECT: PRATT & ROSS

CONTRACTOR: HAZLETON & WALIN



APPENDIX II -

PRATT AND ROSS

Ralph Benjamin Pratt was born in London, England, on August 8, 1878 and trained as an architect at the South Kensington School of Art. After completing his education he immigrated to Canada and by 1892 was working in Winnipeg. Within the year he became an architect for the CPR and in 1901 became a top architect for the fledgling Canadian Northern Railway (CNoR). In this capacity, Pratt designed many stations and shops for the growing venture that would ultimately become a transcontinental line. The Neepawa station, built in 1902, is an extant example of Pratt's railway work. It was at the CNoR that Pratt met Winnipegger Donald A. Ross, and formed a business partnership.¹ Pratt was president of the Manitoba Association of Architects from 1917-19 and he died in Winnipeg on March 14, 1950.²

Donald Aynsley Ross was born in Winnipeg in 1877. He attended Upper Canada College in Toronto and Toronto University, graduating from the latter with his Bachelor of Arts in 1898. He received his engineering degree from the School of Practical Science, Toronto and then became a mining engineer in British Columbia. In 1901 he became locating engineer for the CNoR and by 1905 was terminal engineer for the line. Ross, as terminal engineer, oversaw the construction of the Pinawa Channel Dam on the Winnipeg River. He also supervised construction of Winnipeg's Union Station, finished in 1912.³

Ross was also involved in real estate and was over his career president or director of a number of local and regional realty companies including the Hugo Ross Realty Company and the Western Canadian City and Town Lands Corporation. He was also chairman of the Aesthetic Development Committee of the Winnipeg Town Planning Commission and vice president of the Manitoba Association of Architects.⁴

¹ Winnipeg Telegram, September 12, 1906, p. 53.

² Neepawa, An Architectural Walking Tour (Winnipeg: Manitoba Department of Culture, Heritage and Recreation, Historic Resources Branch, 1987, n.p. Below as Neepawa.

³ F. Schofield, The Story of Manitoba (Winnipeg: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1913), Vol. III, pp. 538-41; and Neepawa, n.p.

⁴ Schofield, op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 580-83.

In 1906, Pratt and Ross started their practice, continuing to design for the railway, but also working for private individuals and companies. Their body of work encompasses a wide range of building types and are located all across western Canada.⁵

Western Canada

Belgo-Canadian Realty Company office building- Prince Albert
CNoR Prince Edward Hotel, Brandon (1912)- demolished
CNoR Terminal Building, Vancouver (1917-19)

Winnipeg

Rosemount Apartments (1906)
Deer Lodge Hotel, Portage Ave. (1908) – demolished
Horse Show Amphitheatre (1909) – demolished (it was the largest of its kind in North America when built)
Garry Block (Belgica Block), 290 Garry St. (1911) – Grade III
Winnipeg Electric Railway Company warehouse, Main and Assiniboine complex (1912) – demolished
Stanley Mineral Springs and Brewery Company factory, rue Messenger (St. Boniface) (1912)
Electric Railway Chambers, 213 Notre Dame Ave. (1913) – Grade II
Bank of British North America addition, 436 Main St. (1914)
Scott Block, reconstruction after a fire, 270-74 Main St. (1915)
Winnipeg Electric Railway Company, new office building and post-fire car barn repairs, Main and Assiniboine complex (1920) – demolished
Breen Motor Company Building, 245 Main St. (1922-23 and 1925 addition)
Polo Park Race Track structures, Portage Ave. (1925) – demolished
Leonard-McLaughlin Motors Building, Portage Ave. at Maryland St. (1925-26)
Northern Electric Building (with J.O. Despatie of Montreal), 65 Rorie St. (1928) – Grade III
Power Building, 428 Portage Ave. (1928-29)
Structural Engineers and Mechanical Equipment Supervisors for the Winnipeg Civic Auditorium (now Provincial Archives of Manitoba), 200 Vaughan St. (1932-33)

⁵ Compiled from Neepawa, n.p.; Schofield, op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 538-41, 580-83; and Wade, Jill, Manitoba Architecture to 1940 (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1978).

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Plate 1 – Former Canadian General Electric Building, 265 Notre Dame Avenue, built 1930, Northwood and Chivers, architects. (M. Peterson, 1987.)



Plate 2 – Sherbrook Pool, 381 Sherbrook Street; built 1930, architects Pratt and Ross; front (west) façade. (Murray Peterson, 2001.)

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Plate 3 – Sherbrook Pool, 381 Sherbrook Street, part of rear (east) and north façades. (Murray Peterson, 2001.)



Plate 4 – Sherbrook Pool, 381 Sherbrook Street, rear (east) façade. (Murray Peterson, 2001.)

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Plate 5 – Sherbrook Pool, 381 Sherbrook Street, south façade. (Murray Peterson, 2001.)



Plate 6 - Sherbrook Pool, 381 Sherbrook Street, front and south façades. (Murray Peterson, 2001.)

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Plate 7 - Sherbrook Pool, 381 Sherbrook Street, main entrance. (Murray Peterson, 2001.)

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Plate 8 – Sherbrook Pool, interior. (Murray Peterson, 1995.)

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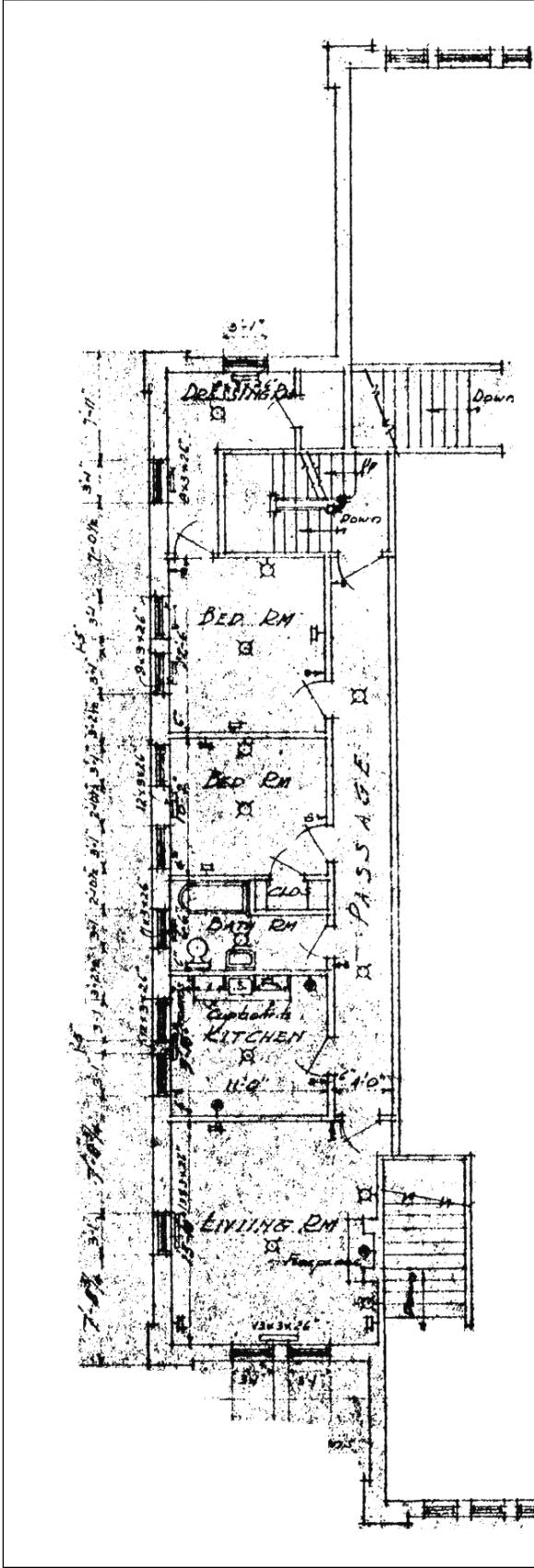


Plate 9 – Architect’s plan, second floor “Superintendent’s Quarters,” 1930. (Courtesy of the City of Winnipeg Archives, Plan # 3921/1930.)

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Plate 9 – Mrs. Harrison's Water Babies, 1912. (Reproduced from Souvenir of Winnipeg's Jubilee, 1874-1924 (Winnipeg: Civic Social and Athletic Association, 1924), p. 139.)