



520 WILLIAM AVENUE

WESLEY METHODIST CHURCH

PREPARED BY PETERSON PROJECTS – DECEMBER 2009



520 WILLIAM AVENUE WESLEY METHODIST CHURCH

Date of Construction: 1898

Building Permit: N/A

Architect: Andrews, William T.¹

Contractor: Harrington, T.M. and Company

ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

This is one of the oldest extant church buildings in west Winnipeg, built on the southeast corner of William Avenue and Juno Street.

This solid, common clay brick building rests on a raised, rusticated stone base. The building has three entrances: a small door found on the front (north) façade at its east end, a side entrance facing Juno Street (west) and the main entrance located in a 30.5-metre tower found in the building's northwest corner. The main building measures approximately 17.1 metres square and includes a second corner turret with spire in its northeast corner.

Openings throughout the building are round headed, many include brick drip moulding and stone sills. The complex hip roof includes turrets, cross gables and other elements. The



Front (north) and west façades, 2009

building's gable ends originally exhibited ornate wood bargeboard that has since been removed.

The original interior featured 8.5-metre ceilings in the sanctuary and seating for 450 people with a planned gallery for 250 additional seats. The pews were built of ash with oak ends and interior wood included British Columbia cedar and fir, oak and birch. Cost of the building including lot and furnishings was estimated at \$10,000.

The church stands on its original site and appears to be in fair condition. Alterations to the exterior appear to be confined to the removal of ornamental bargeboard, although aging is starting to affect some of the exterior finishes and elements.

This church is one of only a handful of extant buildings designed in the Romanesque Revival style. Popular in Winnipeg and elsewhere in North America from the 1880s to World War I, it produced buildings with solid, heavy appearances utilizing low-profile ornamentation, rough surfaces and arched windows. From small homes to massive public structures, the style was an offshoot of the earlier Gothic Revival. In its later stages, particularly the 1880s and beyond, the Romanesque style was heavily influenced by American designer H.H. Richardson (1836-86) and was often referred to as Richardsonian Romanesque and was used almost exclusively in the warehouse districts of major North American cities.²

The designer of the church, according to contemporary accounts, was William T. Andrews, a local contractor and designer who operated by himself and as Andrews and Son. W.T. Andrews only practiced in the city until 1903, after which his whereabouts are unknown.



West façade, 2009

His work in the early 1900s mainly concentrated on modest single-family homes built throughout the city.³

HISTORICAL INTEREST:

The Wesley Methodist Congregation actually began with the founding of Grace Methodist Church in 1882. This group built a church at the corner of Bannatyne Avenue and Dagmar Street which was moved a year later to Nena Street (now Sherbrook Street) and Ross Avenue and the name changed to Wesley Church. The congregation outgrew this space and in 1897 decided a new building was warranted. The new Wesley Methodist Church on William Avenue was dedicated on November 13, 1898.⁴

The congregation continued to use the building until the early 1920s when it became a Gospel Mission. It was sold in 1940 and became the South End Mennonite Brethren Church. In 1959, much of this congregation moved to a new facility, the remaining adherents formed a new entity called the Central Mennonite Brethren Church. They remained here until June of 1995 when the congregation dissolved. It has recently been used as the Winnipeg Chinese Mennonite Brethren Church.⁵



Rear (south) and west façades, 2009

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 church buildings in west Winnipeg and an illustration of the type of church building constructed by a modest congregation at the turn-of-the-century;
- its associations- its long-term connections to early Methodism in Winnipeg and Western Canada;
- its design- a good and early example of the Romanesque Revival style;
- its architect- W.T. Andrews was a respected and important practitioner;
- its location- defines an important intersection and contributes greatly to the historic streetscape of two major arteries in its neighbourhood; and
- its integrity- its main façades continue to display some of their original elements and design.



Front (north) and west façades, 1978

ENDNOTES:

- 1 Manitoba Free Press, November 5, 1898, p. 7.
- 2 L. Maitland, et al., A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1992), pp. 84-5.
- 3 Manitoba Free Press, November 5, 1898, p. 7; and City of Winnipeg Building Permit Ledger Books, 1899-1926.
- 4 Manitoba Free Press, November 5, 1898, p. 7.
- 5 “Mennonite Tour of Winnipeg” found at http://www.mmhs.org/mmhs/Mennonite_Tour.doc, no date.