

Establishment: 1901-1914

The turn of the century brought a golden age of building to southern Manitoba. Across the countryside rising grain prices consolidated a network of towns, villages and farms which had been developed over the previous twenty years. In Winnipeg the phenomenal rise in the city's population from 42,000 in 1901 to 136,000 by 1911 caused a boom in all forms of construction. A ring of new suburbs appeared; Elmwood, Crescentwood, the North End, Wolseley and Norwood among them. It is here that many new Anglican churches were to be found, and, fortunately, many can still be seen today.

At first congregations living in the new suburbs made do with the most rudimentary facilities; in the summer of 1908 the parish of St. Jude's in the city's west end met in a tent (Figure 49). However, as soon as possible new churches were built. The opening of the century saw the construction of two different, but equally interesting churches. South of the Assiniboine River, the limestone gables of St. Luke's rose to serve the needs of an expanding and successful middle class. Designed by C.F. Bridgeman the church was relatively conservative in style, following medieval tradition (Figure 50). Its broad windows, horizontal emphasis and Gothic elements reflect English vernacular influence. But details such as the oversized buttresses of the porch are indicative of the then current interest in the expressive use of materials.

This interest in materials and the search for simpler forms can be seen more clearly in the church of St. Philip's, Norwood. Also constructed in 1904, it was more experimental. Here, the Gothic style was abstracted almost to the disappearing point. For instance, the windows have square surrounds while the smooth arch of the entrance porch has little to do with medieval England (Figure 51). The church is especially notable for its art nouveau glass, set in leads and decorated with beads of colour.



Figure 49.
"St. Jude's" (P.A.M.)

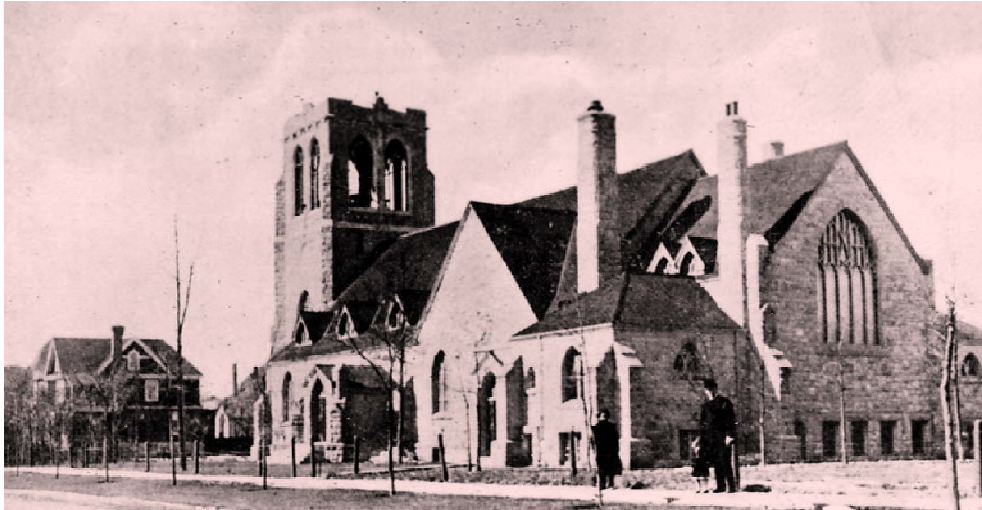


Figure 50.
St. Luke's, Winnipeg, 1904. (PAM)



Figure 51.
St. Philip's, Norwood, Winnipeg, 1904.

Another church from the early 1900s, distinguished because of its stylistic sophistication is St. Margaret's (1911) (Figure 52). Art Nouveau influence is discernible, in this case in the battered lines of buttresses supporting the west front. The interior of the church is especially notable for its side aisles, spanned by arched buttresses (Figure 53). This seems to have been the first Anglican church in the city so built, a sure sign of increasing prosperity. These broad arches give the church a breadth and sense of space, a feeling which is characteristic of much of Winnipeg's architecture during the Edwardian age.

Arguably the most ambitious church built in the prosperous years before 1914 is St. Matthew's, Maryland Street (1912). It was constructed three years after the first church for the parish - which still stands at the corner of Ellice Avenue and Sherbrook Street - following a rapid growth in the congregation. Designed to accommodate a congregation of more than 1,500 people, the church is astonishing in scale (Figure 54). Besides the enormous nave, provision was made for a wide range of subsidiary spaces, offices, a parish hall and meeting rooms. St. Matthew's is remarkable as well for the quality of its ornament and its spectacular vault, which dates from renovations carried out following a fire in 1944 (Figure 55).

Outside of Winnipeg, the first decade and a half of the twentieth century saw Anglicans expand upon what had been accomplished during the 1880s and 90s. New parishes were established while in more settled areas many congregations replaced pioneer churches of wood with new structures of brick or stone. In numerical terms the church continued to number about 20% of the population, doubling from 45,000 souls in 1901 to 89,000 in 1911. By 1921 121,309 Manitobans were registered as Anglicans, a number surpassed only by the Presbyterians.



Figure 52.
St. Margaret's, Winnipeg, 1911.

Figure 53.
Interior, St. Margaret's, Winnipeg.



Figure 54.
St. Matthew's, Winnipeg, 1912. (PAM)



Figure 55.
Interior, St. Matthew's, Winnipeg. (PAM)

For those who could afford the expense, brick emerged as the favourite building material in the new century. At the same time church design became increasingly varied. At St. Paul's Wawanesa, for instance, the traditional relationship of nave and tower was modified and given a new look. The tower was octagonal, rather than square, set at an angle and given a flamboyant, candle-snuff top (Figure 56). St. Agnes, Carberry (1902-03) exhibits a similar disposition of forms, but is a less adventurous in its detailing (Figure 57). One of the most attractive churches built in the early 1900s can be found at Gilbert Plains (Figure 58). Although tiny, the church is exquisitely proportioned. The interior is filled with light, tinted by the pale colours of lancet windows. All the surfaces are wood, carved, polished and stained in complimentary tones. The church is reputed to have been the work of an architect, Charles Heath, and this may explain its construction of concrete block, a material then only recently introduced to Manitoba.

Besides the increasing popularity of new materials, church designers in the new century were increasingly willing to experiment with spatial arrangements. The traditional scheme of nave, porch, chancel and vestry was not abandoned; these remained the necessities of liturgical life, but often they were combined with other spaces, particularly with room for community activities or a Sunday School. The simplest way to accommodate a range of extra functions was to build a basement below the church proper, and full basements became common about this time. Because of the requirements of the liturgy, Anglicans did not adopt the so-called Akron plan in which the Sunday School room was placed adjacent to the sanctuary and made so it could be partitioned off by sliding doors. They did however adopt the idea of a multi-purpose church building and this inevitably changed the way churches looked.

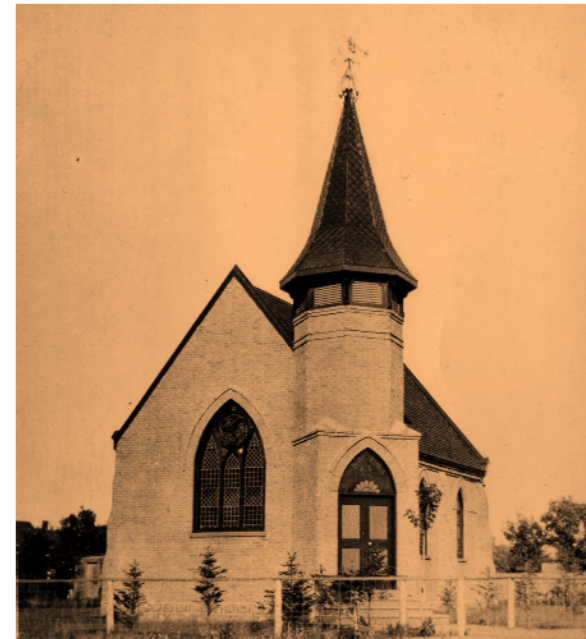


Figure 56.
St. Paul's, Wawanesa, 1900. (PAM)



Figure 57.
St. Agnes, Carberry, 1902-03.



Figure 58.
St. Matthew's, Gilbert Plains, 1904.

St. Mark's Anglican Church, Minnedosa is an excellent example of how tradition was combined with new ideas to create churches of a kind not seen before (Figure 59). Built in 1903-04 to replace an earlier church of 1885, St. Mark's included porch, nave, transepts, chancel and vestry, plus a parish hall, room for offices and an internal staircase. Inside, the main space of the church is well finished, but not unusual. However in comparison to churches built in the 1890s, it has an exterior which is unusually high, with important ground level windows lighting rooms below the church. Moreover the familiar, easily recognized pattern of nave, chancel and tower is gone, disguised by the broad lines of the roof and the blocky massing.

St. Mark's is a particularly interesting and attractive church, not least because of its fieldstone construction. The nearby church of All Saints, Gladstone, its exact contemporary, (1904) is equally interesting, and in many ways equally attractive. Like St. Mark's, All Saints is a church of the new kind, with a nave set high on a basement with broad ground level windows (Figure 60). One difference is that All Saints has two separate entrances each with their own porch; one to the community rooms below, the other to the church proper above.

But if the glory of St. Mark's is its fieldstone, at All Saints the congregation can take pride in a beautifully proportioned nave, spanned by a magnificent timber roof of open beams with windows of coloured glass (Figure 61)



Figure 59.
St. Mark's, Minnedosa, 1903-04.



Figure 60.
All Saints, Gladstone, 1904.



Figure 61.
Interior, All Saints, Gladstone.

After 1900 the idea of a large town church incorporating a variety of spaces and activities within its walls spread across the province (Figure 62). This can be seen at St. Matthew's, Brandon, where the quality of design and construction ranks with the best in the province (Figures 63 and 64). Built in 1912-13 under the discerning eye of architect W.A. Elliot, it is a carefully modelled mass of limestone and brick based on the English Gothic style. Unusual for Manitoba is the square tower placed at the crossing of transepts, nave and chancel. The interior of the church is particularly beautiful, with a finely controlled handling of space and a sophisticated use of forms which combine the demands of structure, function and tradition into a unified whole. Standing today in the heart of Brandon, it provides a fitting home for the Anglican church in western Manitoba.

Despite the increasing popularity of brick, especially for large town churches, many congregations continued to build with wood frame. For the most part these churches (Figure 65) were small structures which followed the architectural patterns established in the 1880s and 90s. There are some differences however. Often the obligatory tower was now placed at the side of the church rather than in the centre of the west front. (Figure 66) One of the most ingenious examples of a wood frame church completed after 1900 is St. Michael's and All Angel's, Ninette (1905-6). Wonderfully compact, it included a separate nave, chancel and porch, plus miniature transepts and a perfectly proportioned spire (Figure 67).



Figure 62.
St. Paul's, Dauphin, 1914.



Figure 63.
St. Matthew's, Brandon, 1912-13.



Figure 64.
Interior, St. Matthew's, Brandon.



Figure 65.
St. Matthew's, Cloverdale, 1904.



Figure 66.
St. Mary, Ridgeville, 1905.



Figure 67.
St. Michael's and All Angels, Ninette, 1905-06.
(PAM)