



545 ALEXANDER AVENUE

DUFFERIN SCHOOL

PREPARED BY PETERSON PROJECTS – DECEMBER 2009



545 ALEXANDER AVENUE DUFFERIN SCHOOL

Date of Construction: 1936-1937

Building Permit: 1444/1936 (Plans at City Storage)

Architect: Martin, W.A.

Contractor: Winnipeg Supply and Fuel

ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

This modest school building has served its neighbourhood for more than 70 years, replacing earlier facilities in the area.

This dark brick, two-storey structure is accented with lightly-hued limestone framing around windows and doors, as a belt course above the second storey windows and as capping for the plain brick parapet. Windows on the front (east) façade are large, multi-paned units and the two projecting entrances include stylized stone accenting and the word “DUFFERIN” carved into the stone of the arched pediment above the doors. The rear (west) façade was similarly designed with out the entrances but including a one-storey section. The north and south façades are windowless.



South façade and addition, 2008

In 1967, a large stone-clad addition was completed, attached to the south end of the original 1936-1937 structure.

The building stands on its original site, appears to be in good structural condition and despite the large addition, has suffered little exterior alteration.

The school, with its verticality, its straight lines and stone accenting, is a modest example of the Collegiate Gothic style. This style rose in popularity after 1900 as a reaction to the highly ornamented buildings of the earlier Gothic Revival style. The newer version opted for much simpler silhouettes and subdued ornamentation, in the words of one author, “a calm, disciplined monumentality.”¹

Flat surfaces were preferred; buildings were often long, low symmetrical masses embellished with crenellated towers and the distinctive pointed arch of the Gothic style. Construction material was monochromatic, usually brick or stone, again a departure from the multi-hued façades of the Gothic Revival style. Inspiration for the detailing of the new style was found in the English Perpendicular Gothic design of the 15th century. Because it found widespread expression on the campuses of many North American universities and then in the public school system, it became known as Collegiate Gothic.²

W.A. Martin was the architect responsible for the school’s design. Little is known about Martin, although it is known that he also designed Victoria-Albert School, 110 Ellen Street (1930), Queenston School, 245 Queenston Street (1931) and Tec Voc High School, (1951).³



Rear (west) façades, 2008

HISTORICAL INTEREST:

This building represents the third public school in this area: the first Dufferin School was located on Patrick Street west of Main and was built in 1883. It was replaced in 1896 by a three-storey building at Logan and Alexander avenues and Nares and Park streets. Badly damaged in a fire on February 3, 1936, the present building was completed quickly to avoid disruption. The school was named for the Earl of Dufferin, Governor General of Canada from 1872 to 1878.⁴

RECOMMENDATION TO HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE:

Under the Historical Buildings By-law, this building meets a number of important criteria:

- its historical importance- an important public structure in the area and one of only a handful of post-1930 schools built by the Winnipeg School Division;
- its associations- its long-term connections to education in the west end of Winnipeg and Winnipeg School Division;
- its design- a modest example of the Collegiate Gothic style;
- its architect- W.A. Martin was a respected and important practitioner;
- its location- set in a large block of land within its residential neighbourhood and a visually conspicuous structure; and
- its integrity- its main façades continue to display many of their original elements and design.



Front (east) façade, no date

ENDNOTES:

- 1 L. Maitland et al., A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles (Peterborough: Broadview Press Ltd., 1992), p. 166.
- 2 Ibid., p. 166; and Identifying Architectural Styles in Manitoba (Winnipeg: Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, Historic Resources Branch, 1991), p. 20.
- 3 G. Bugailiskis, "Quiet Dignity: Aspects of Building Schools in the Winnipeg School District No. 1, 1871-1928," unpublished report, 1986.
- 4 Dufferin School website, <http://www.wsd1.org/Dufferin/history/history.htm>, no date.