



**FORMER ST. GILES UNITED CHURCH
(PRESBYTERIAN)**

294 BURROWS AVENUE

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings Committee

November 1999

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The first Selkirk settlers left their native Scotland in July 1811, wintering near York Factory in what would become northern Manitoba before making the long and arduous journey south to their new homes at the Red River Settlement. They arrived on August 30, 1812 and together with other Scots began settling in long, thin tracts of land known as “river lots” along the Red River, just north of present-day Point Douglas on the Red River. These original immigrants faced the daily challenges of breaking the soil, planting crops, tending livestock and building homes, not to mention the anger of local traders. The family names of many of these settlers have become familiar to all Winnipeggers – Gunn, Bannerman, MacBeth, Polson, Matheson, McKay, McLeod, Sutherland, Ross, Flett and Inkster. When Lord Selkirk, the community’s founder visited the settlement in the summer of 1817, he found many of the original settlers had left and that much of the progress made in the tiny settlement had been destroyed by agents of a rival fur trading company. For the remaining settlers, Lord Selkirk allocated river lots north of the original settlement and also set aside land for a church and a school and named the parish Kildonan in honour of the Scottish parish from which many of the settlers had come years earlier.¹

So began the permanent European settlement of the northern Red River Valley. The Municipality of Kildonan-St. John’s, formed by provincial act in 1874, was renamed Kildonan in 1880. As with all of southern Manitoba, growth in the first decade of the 20th century was extensive. In 1914, the municipality was divided into West and East Kildonan, split by the Red River. In 1921, Old Kildonan, the northern area of West Kildonan, was organized into a separate municipality. Although immigration after 1900 significantly changed the ethnic makeup of Winnipeg and Western Canada, for many years Kildonan remained staunchly Scottish and Presbyterian in faith (nearby Kildonan Presbyterian Church, completed in 1854 in what would

¹ V. Leah, West of the River: The Story of West Kildonan (West Kildonan: author, ca.1970), p. 2.

become Old Kildonan, is the mother church of Western Canadian Presbyterianism and remains an active church today).²

In the early 1880s, prayer meetings were being held along the Main Road (present-day Main Street) north of the Canadian Pacific Railway tracks. From these early meetings, discussions of an organized mission were held and by 1885 a small church had been erected. In 1907, the cornerstone was laid for a modern new structure, located in the heart of West Kildonan and named St. Giles Presbyterian Church.

STYLE

St. Giles Church is built in the Modern or Late Gothic Revival style which 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.”³

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 Modern Gothic found widespread expression on the campuses of many North American universities, it has also been referred to as Collegiate Gothic (Plate 1).⁴

Many Winnipeg congregations chose this style for their 20th century church buildings, including the former St. John’s United Church (Presbyterian), a congregation formed by members of St.

² Ibid., pp. 2-4.

³ L. Maitland et al., A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles (Peterborough: Broadview Press Ltd., 1992), p. 166.

⁴ Ibid., p. 166; and Identifying Architectural Styles in Manitoba (Winnipeg: Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, Historic Resources Branch, 1991), p. 20.

Giles Church in 1904. Their building was completed in 1923 just twelve blocks north of St. Giles Church on Charles Street (corner Cathedral Avenue) and is very similar to St. Giles Church (Plate 2). It was converted into a multi-unit housing co-operative in the late 1980s.⁵ See Table One for a list of churches designated by the Historical Buildings Committee.

TABLE ONE

CHURCHES IN THE CITY OF WINNIPEG DESIGNATED BY THE HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE

CHURCH	ADDRESS	BUILT	GRADE	ARCHITECT	STYLE
St. Edward's Roman Catholic	836 Arlington St.	1913	II	D.W. Bellhouse	Italian Romanesque
St. John's Presbyterian	251 Bannerman Ave.	1928	III	Parfitt and Prain	Tudor & Gothic Revival
St. John's United (Presbyterian)	250 Cathedral Ave.	1923	III	J.H.G. Russell	Modern Gothic Revival
Scandinavian Mission Church	268 Ellen St.	1897	III	Hugh McCowan	Romanesque Revival
Young United (Methodist)	222 Furby St.	1907	II	J. Chisholm and Son	Romanesque Revival
Calvary Temple (First Baptist)	400 Hargrave St.	1893-94	III	Langley and Burke	Romanesque Revival
St. Michael and All Angels Anglican	300 Hugo St. N	1920	III	H.W. Greene	Norman (Romanesque)
Kildonan Presbyterian	201 John Black Ave.	1852-53	I	Duncan McRae	Gothic
Westminster United (Presbyterian)	745 Westminster Ave.	1910-12	II	J.H.G. Russell	Beaux-Arts Gothic

⁵ M. Peterson, 250 Cathedral Avenue – St. John's United Church," report for the City of Winnipeg Historical Buildings Committee, January 1988.

CONSTRUCTION

This is a solid brick church, resting on concrete footings and a stone foundation 63.5 centimetres (25 inches) wide. The building measures approximately 20.7 x 34.2 metres (68 x 112 feet)⁶ and includes a 20.4-metre (67-foot)⁷ stone and brick tower on its northeast corner. Iron columns were used as internal support for the superstructure which took 120 cords of stone and 350,000 bricks to complete.⁸ The church stands on the southwest corner of Burrows Avenue and Charles Street on land legally described as 39^W St. John, Plan 28, Lots 444/45; part Lots 446/47.⁹ The building is on the City of Winnipeg's Historical Building Inventory.

DESIGN

This church towers over the neighbourhood, the red brick walls rising above the raised rough-cut stone foundation. Square-headed windows are placed all along the foundation, providing natural light and ventilation to the basement. A smooth-cut stone band encircles the structure between this foundation and the brick walls. A similar band runs along the north, south and east walls at the base of the large second storey windows. The complex roof covering the church is hipped in the centre with gables running off in all four directions. The hipped section is finished with an unusual dormer with gable ends pointed in all four directions.

The Charles Street (east) façade (Plate 3) is symmetrically designed with a centrally located door atop a flight of stairs. This door, located in a projecting section, is finished with a pointed arch transom. Stone accents are used as embellishments around the doorway, metal is used as capping for the angled roof and its finial. Four segmental windows are located on the ground floor of this elevation. A massive Palladian window with pointed arches is located on the second storey above the entrance, with two smaller arched windows on either side and a tiny arched opening above. The large windows feature tracery ending in a circle not found in the tracery of

⁶ City of Winnipeg Assessment Record, Roll No. 233450-12-3 (PC-90) [below as AR]; and City of Winnipeg Building Permit (below as BP), #579/1907.

⁷ Architects Plans #579/1907, courtesy of the City of Winnipeg Archives. Below as Plans.

⁸ BP #579/1907.

⁹ AR.

the smaller openings on either side. The corner tower (Plate 4) includes attached corner buttresses (stone-capped) and circular windows below a stone belt course. This stone band forms continuous sills for the pairs of large, pointed-arch windows in the tower's upper level. The top features battlements – stone is used for coping of the merlons, metal for the corner merlons, the crenelles and the roof. Early pictures of the structure show the tower also featured brick and stone corner pinnacles which have since been removed.¹⁰ The main façade is finished with a gabled parapet with metal coping and a metal-clad finial.

The south façade (Plate 5) features much of the same detailing as the front elevation, including the segmental windows on the ground floor, pointed arched and Palladian windows on the second floor and gabled parapet. A pointed-arch door is located at the east end of this elevation; a plainer opening is found at the west end. The north façade (Plate 6) again is an extension of the design and detailing of the front elevation. Similarly designed doors are located at either end. The west end is the only significantly different elevation. Its lower section projects, originally to accommodate a basement gym, main-floor club room and second-floor choir and minister's rooms.¹¹ All windows in this section are segmental.

INTERIOR

The original interior, as seen in the 1907 plans, was designed to seat approximately 1,100 (625 on the main floor).¹² The basement included a large room for the Sunday School, and smaller rooms for the Bible Class and Infant Class. The fuel and heating room and a small gym were located in the west end of the basement.¹³

The main floor of the church featured a raised platform facing east, with pews radiating out from it (Plate 7). Behind or west of the platform was a library and club room. The gallery level (Plate

¹⁰ Plans.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.; and BP #579/1907.

¹³ Plans.

8) featured seating on the north, south and east sides as well as the choir loft and organ above and behind the platform area. A choir room and the minister's room were both located west of the choir loft.

Presently, much of the church remains virtually unaltered from this original design (Plates 9-11). The main auditorium still features much of the wood accenting and the stained glass windows are being repaired. The choir room and minister's room is presently office space. The basement is now used for storage and community-based projects.

INTEGRITY

The church remains on its original site, has seen little exterior alteration and appears to be in fair structural condition.

STREETSCAPE

This church is located in the midst of a modest residential neighbourhood. Apartment blocks, single-family dwellings and small retail structures form the basic setting for this large building. Much of the building stock in the area is of similar age.

ARCHITECT/CONTRACTOR

The architect for St. Giles Church was local designer Charles S. Bridgman (1875-1965), a New York-trained planner who came to Winnipeg in 1903 (see Appendix I for biographical information). He has received 10 points from the Historical Buildings Committee.

The contractor for the church was the Imperial Plumbing and Building Company.¹⁴

¹⁴ BP #579/1907.

PERSON/INSTITUTION

The congregation of St. Giles began as the North Presbyterian Mission of St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, Elgin Avenue. Formed in 1884, the mission met in a two-storey frame building known as Bishop's Store at the corner of Main Street and Burrows Avenue.¹⁵ Supported by students from Manitoba College, the little mission congregation drew followers from all over the area. It became obvious that larger facilities were required and a small frame building was constructed in 1886 at the corner of Main Street and Limit (now Aberdeen) Avenue (Plate 12). These facilities were quickly outgrown by the congregation, and by October 1888, plans were being made for a new church. On Sunday, December 1, 1889, the congregation's new brick church, now named St. Giles Presbyterian, was dedicated on Selkirk Avenue. The congregation continued to grow, forcing the expansion of that building prior to the decision to once again construct new premises.¹⁶

The Building Committee chose a site at the corner of Burrows Avenue and Charles Street in 1906. The congregation moved a former church building from the site to land just west of the newly planned church for use as a manse.¹⁷ The cornerstone ceremony took place on July 25, 1907, and the new church was dedicated on March 15, 1908, with a congregation membership of approximately 482.¹⁸ St. Giles continued to grow and prosper, boasting the city's largest Sunday School in the 1920s and greatly contributing to mission efforts around the world. In 1925, the congregation voted to become St. Giles United Church. In 1944, as part of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations, the mortgage on the church was retired.¹⁹ Ten years later, the organ was rebuilt and rededicated.²⁰

¹⁵ St. Giles' [sic] Presbyterian Church, Silver Jubilee, 1885-1910 (Winnipeg: St. Giles Presbyterian Church, 1910), p. 7. Below as Silver Jubilee.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 7-14.

¹⁷ BP #2291/1906.

¹⁸ Silver Jubilee, pp. 14-15. The congregation installed its magnificent pipe organ in 1913. Manitoba Free Press, December 15, 1913, p. 22.

¹⁹ Diamond Jubilee Anniversary Year: St. Giles United Church (Winnipeg: St. Giles United Church, 1944), pp. 4-5.

²⁰ Winnipeg Free Press, March 26, 1955.

St. Giles, however, was beginning to feel the pressures that so many other urban congregations were experiencing. The loss of older members and the moving of families caused a decline in membership and, like so many other congregations, St. Giles's attendance dwindled. In the early 1970s, the United Church Mission Board withdrew its \$6,000 annual grant, the congregation of approximately 100, mainly Metis and Indian, had no choice but to disband. The church finally closed its doors on September 30, 1972.²¹ In March 1973, the building was sold to a new congregation and became the Elmwood Bethel Mennonite Church. The building has operated for the last five years as the Bethlehem Aboriginal Fellowship, affiliated with the Baptist Union of Western Canada.²²

EVENT

There is no known significant event connected with this building.

CONTEXT

Belonging to a congregation that was the first Presbyterian group to organize in North Winnipeg, St. Giles Church has a long history in the community. The present structure, although no longer connected with the Presbyterian or United Church, is still an important reminder of the development of Winnipeg during the growth era, 1900-15. It is also representative of the development of the regions around Winnipeg and their maturation as separate and viable communities.

The growth of the St. Giles congregation, followed by the post-1945 decline and finally the church's closure, parallels the fate of many North American church groups as their own demographics and spiritual needs changed and as the ethnic and religious makeup of their established neighbourhoods evolved. The rebirth of St. Giles Church as a congregation addressing the needs of its new community is yet another step in this process of change.

²¹ Winnipeg Free Press, September 22, 1972, p. 9 and September 29, 1972, p. 2.

²² City of Winnipeg Assessment Roll, Roll No. 233450-12-3, 1950-present.

LANDMARK

The former St. Giles United Church (Presbyterian) stands on a busy corner and is much larger and more visible than the neighbouring buildings. This visibility, along with the church's historic use as a public structure, make it conspicuous in the neighbourhood.



CITY OF WINNIPEG - Preliminary Report

Date: 07 September 1999

Assessment Record

Prepared By: M. Peterson

Building Address: 294 Burrows Avenue

Building Name: Bethlehem Aboriginal Fellowship

Original Use: St. Giles United (Presbyterian) Church

Current Use: church

Current Owner: Baptist Union of Western Canada
(605 – 999 9th St. SW, Calgary, AB T2R 1J5)

Resident: NO

Roll No. (Old): 233450 (4276)

Certificate of Title: 1493254

Municipality: 12

Ward: 3

Property or Occupancy Code: 90

Legal Description: 39^W St. John, Plan 28, Lots 444/45; part lots 446/47

Location: southwest corner Charles Street

Date of Construction: 1907

Storeys: 2

Heritage Status: ON INVENTORY

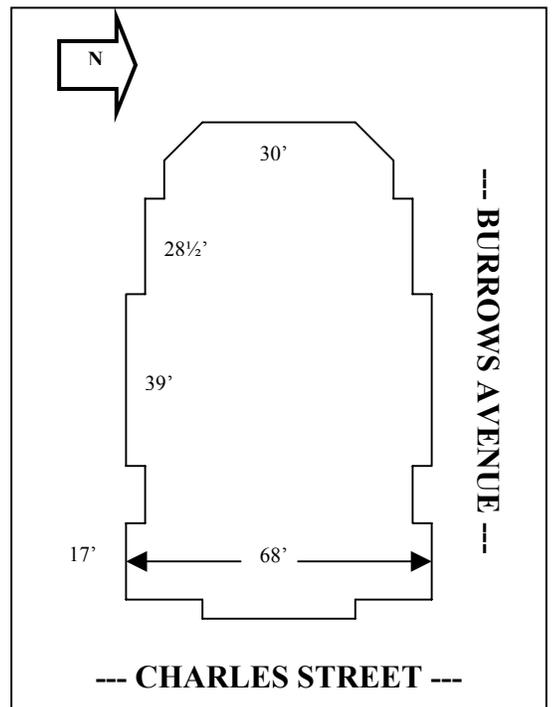
Construction Type: brick and stone foundation

Building Permits (Plans available: [A] Archives; [M] Microfilm; [V] Vault):

- 2291/1906 \$1,000 (move original church & convert to manse); 579/1907 [A] \$35,000 (original);
2730/1958 \$3,200 (repairs); 4035/1973 \$9,500 (interior alterations); 4056/1983 \$15,000 (interior alterations)

Information:

- according to City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, St. Giles United Church was sold in March 1973 and became the Elmwood Bethel Mennonite Church
- 12' ceilings in basement, 25-40' in sanctuary
- balcony on 3 sides
- Permit 4035/1973 – add “crying room” & alterations to Sunday School room
- Permit 4056/1983 – alterations to kitchen in basement



APPENDIX I

Charles S. Bridgman

C.S. Bridgman was a well-known and prolific architect who practised in Winnipeg for over 30 years. He was born in Toronto, Ontario on February 14, 1875, moving with his family at an early age to nearby London, Ontario, where he received his early education.²³ Deciding on a career in architecture, Bridgman moved to New York where he graduated from Atelier Masguray in 1891. For the next twelve years he worked as an architect in that city, before removing himself to Winnipeg in 1903.²⁴

Bridgman spent the next 35 years in Winnipeg, designing buildings of all scales and descriptions. In 1938, at the age of 63, he retired, moving back to London, Ontario. During World War II, he was called into service, assisting in the construction of Air Training Stations throughout central Ontario. He apparently enjoyed this return to work, because after the war he took up his profession again, this time in partnership with his brother, Gordon Bridgman. Retiring again at the age of 80, Charles Bridgman died in London on October 17, 1965, leaving behind three daughters.²⁵

A list of the more significant structures designed by C.S. Bridgman includes:²⁶

St. Luke's Anglican Church, 130 Nassau Street North (1904 & 1909 alterations)
Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Cross, Chambers Street corner Alexander Avenue (1905)
St. Giles Presbyterian Church, 294 Burrows Avenue (1907)
Mills Block, 1000 Main Street (1908)
Metcalf Block, 511 Pembina Street (1909)
Riverview Block Apartments, 27 Balmoral Place (1910)
Anvers Apartments, 758 McMillan Avenue (1912) – Grade II

²³ Winnipeg Free Press, October 27, 1965.

²⁴ Winnipeg Telegram, September 18, 1906.

²⁵ Winnipeg Free Press, October 27, 1965.

²⁶ Compiled from City of Winnipeg Building Permits, 1903-1926; and Western Canada Contractor and Builder, Vol. 27, No. 6 (June 1930), p. 46. Permits after 1926 rarely list architect and contractor, and many of the originals have been destroyed or misplaced.

C.S. Bridgman designs (continued):

Brussels Apartments, 150 Lilac Street (1912)

Highgate (originally DeBary) Apartments, 626 Wardlaw Avenue (1912) – Grade II

Regal Court Apartments, 152-54 Maryland Street (1912)

W.A. Hossie House, 66 Waterloo Street (1913)

Business Block for W.B. Chambers, 1156 Main Street (1913)

Hotel for J.J. O'Connell, 322 Nairn Avenue (1913)

Ellice Avenue Block Apartments, 468 Sherbrook Street (1914)

Aquilla Apartments, 519-21 William Avenue (1914)

Gaspé Apartments, 601 Broadway (1917) - demolished

Minneapolis Threshing Company warehouse, 701 Henry Avenue (1917)

Canadian Ukrainian Institute Provista, 777 Pritchard Avenue (foundation 1918, superstructure 1921) – Grade II

Dawson-Richardson Publishing Company warehouse, 171 McDermot Avenue (1921) – Grade III

St. Edward's Convent, Yarwood Avenue (1922)

Sparling Apartments, 217 Sherbrook Street (1925)

Town Hall, Manitou, MB (1930)

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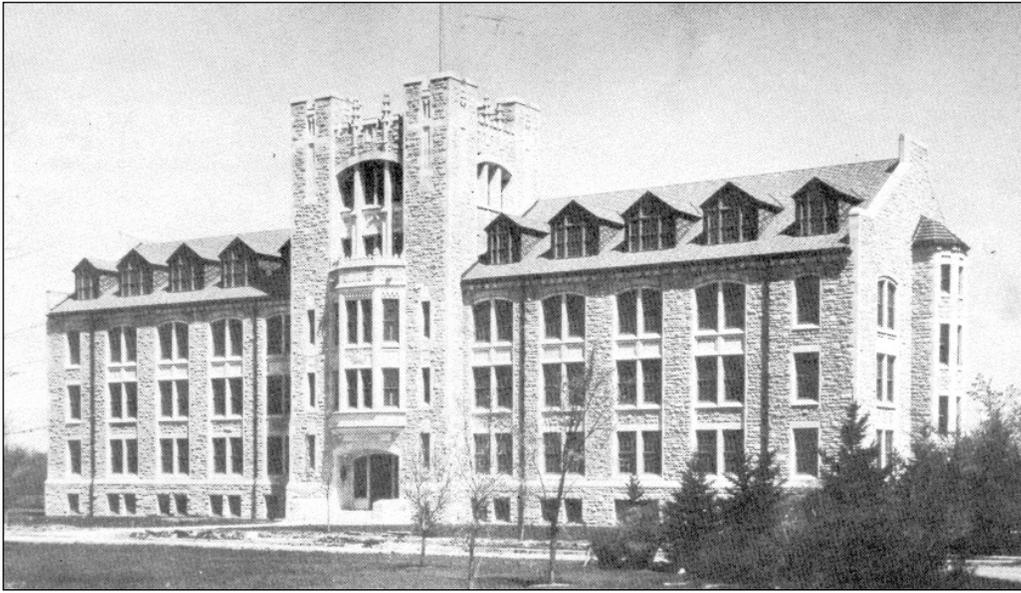


Plate 1 – Former Arts Building (now Tier Building), University of Manitoba, built 1932 and an excellent example of Collegiate Gothic architecture. (Provincial Archives of Manitoba, N9415.)



Plate 2 – Former St. John's United Church (Presbyterian), 250 Cathedral Avenue, 1988; built 1923, J.H.G. Russell, architect. (City of Winnipeg.)

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Plate 3 – Former St. Giles United Church (Presbyterian), front (east) façade. (M. Peterson, 1999.)



Plate 4 – Former St. Giles United Church (Presbyterian), front (east) and north façades. (M. Peterson, 1999.)

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Plate 5 – Former St. Giles United Church (Presbyterian), south façade. (M. Peterson, 1999.)



Plate 6 – Former St. Giles United Church (Presbyterian), north façade. (M. Peterson, 1999.)

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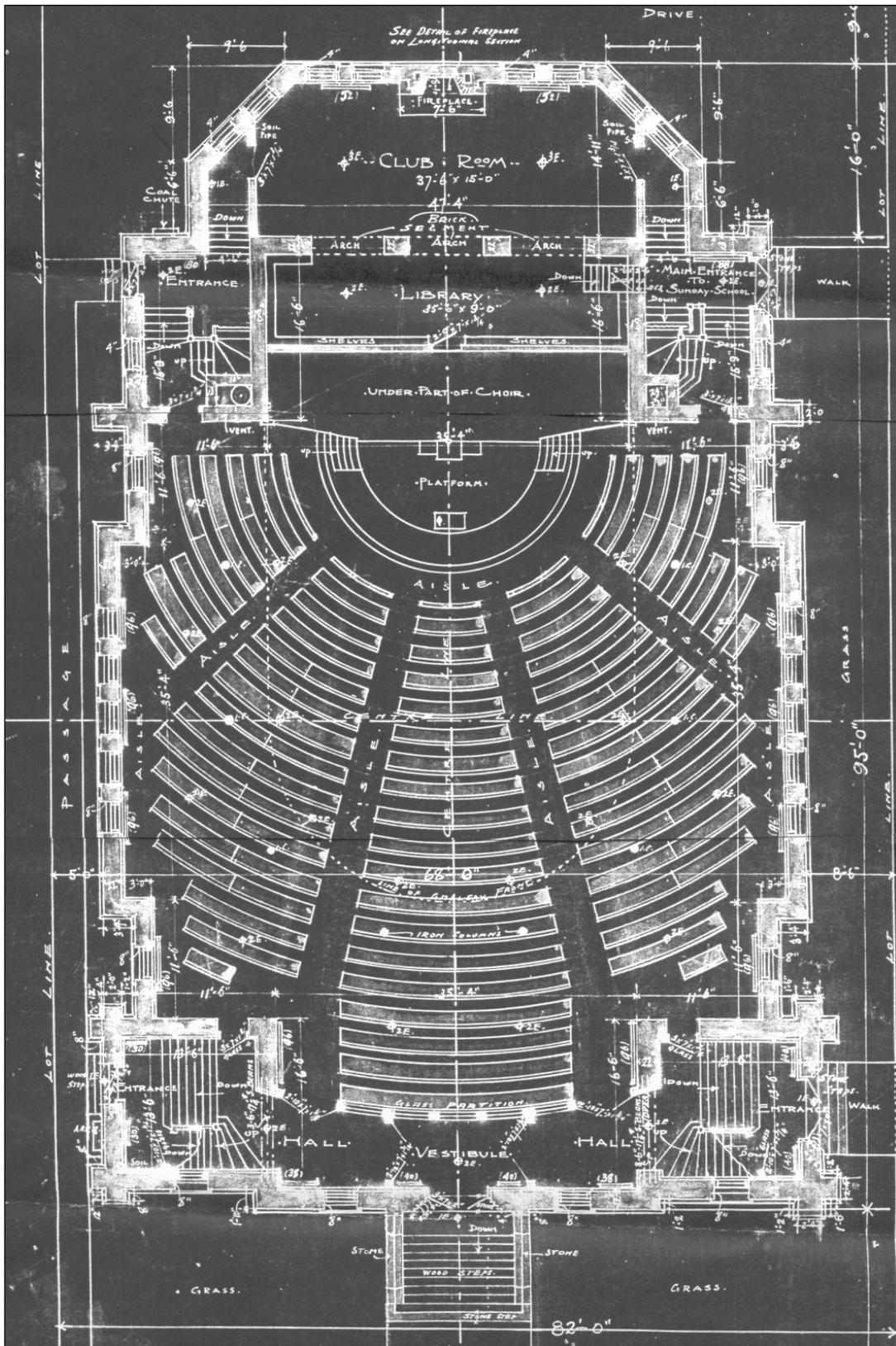


Plate 7 – Former St. Giles United Church (Presbyterian), Architect’s Plans, “Main Church Floor.” (Courtesy of City of Winnipeg Archives.)

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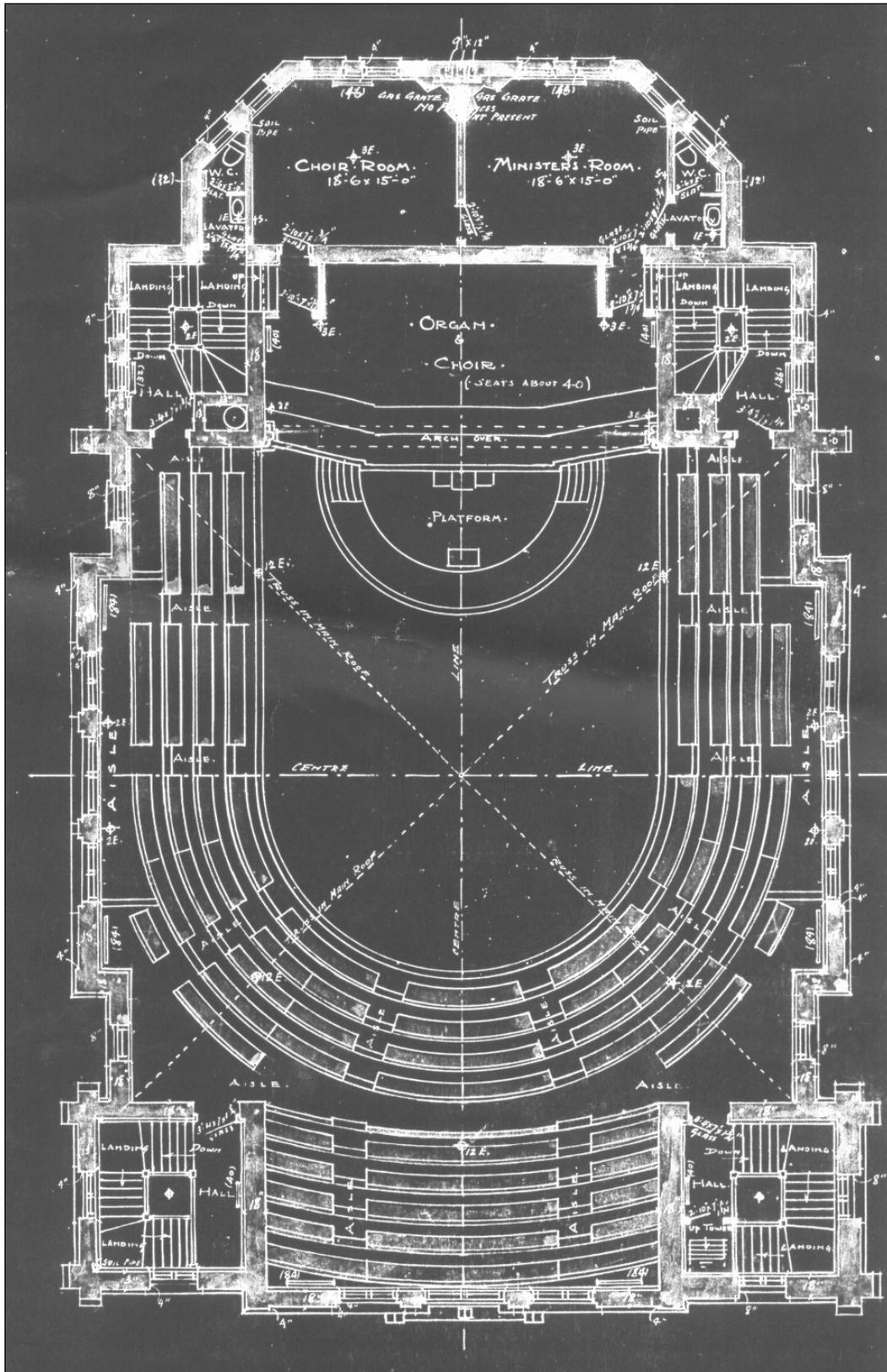


Plate 8 – Former St. Giles United Church (Presbyterian), Architect's Plans, "Gallery Plan."
(Courtesy of City of Winnipeg Archives.)

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Plate 9 – Former St. Giles United Church (Presbyterian), main floor, choir loft and pipe organ. (M. Peterson, 1999.)

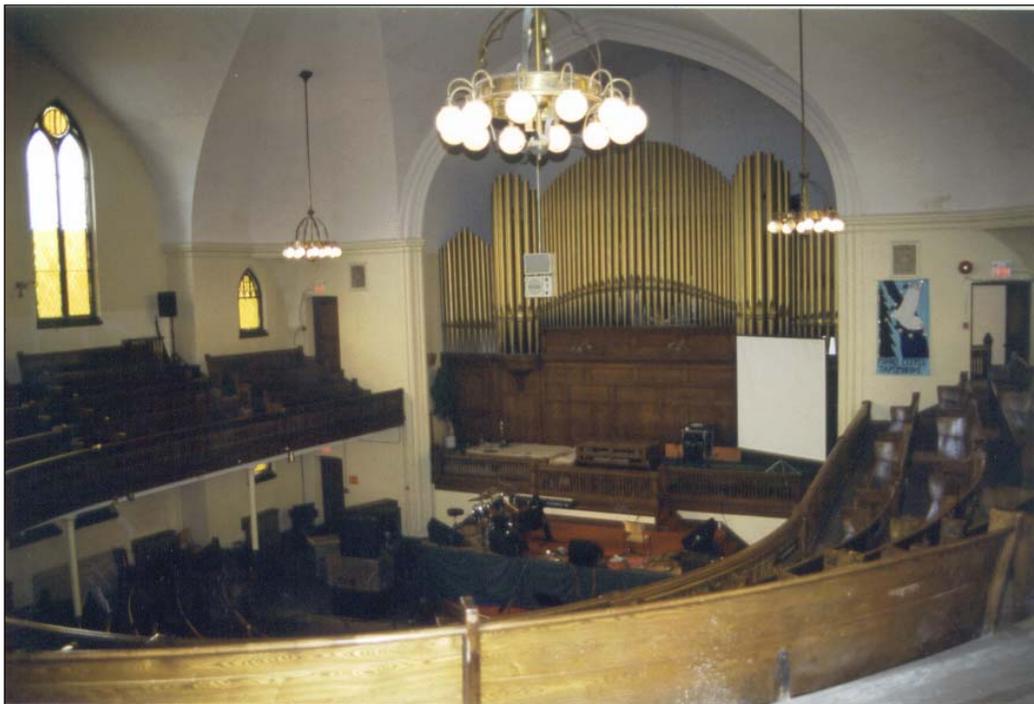


Plate 10 – Former St. Giles United Church (Presbyterian), interior. (M. Peterson, 1999.)

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Plate 11 – Former St. Giles United Church (Presbyterian), gallery seating. (M. Peterson, 1999.)

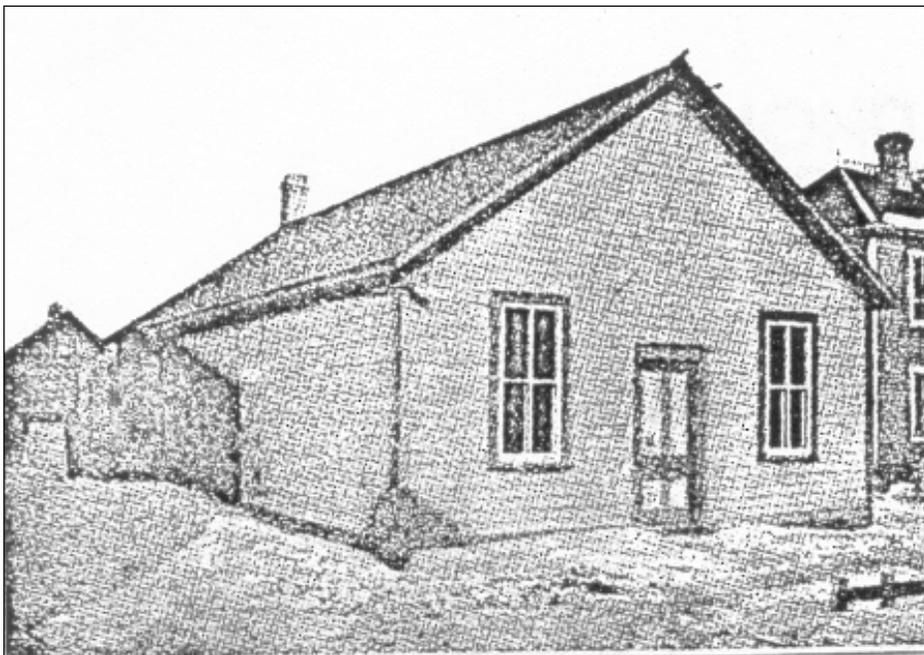


Plate 12 – First church building, dedicated on March 28, 1886 at the corner of Main Street and Aberdeen Avenue. (Reproduced from St. Giles' [sic] Presbyterian Church, Silver Jubilee, 1885-1910, p. 9.)

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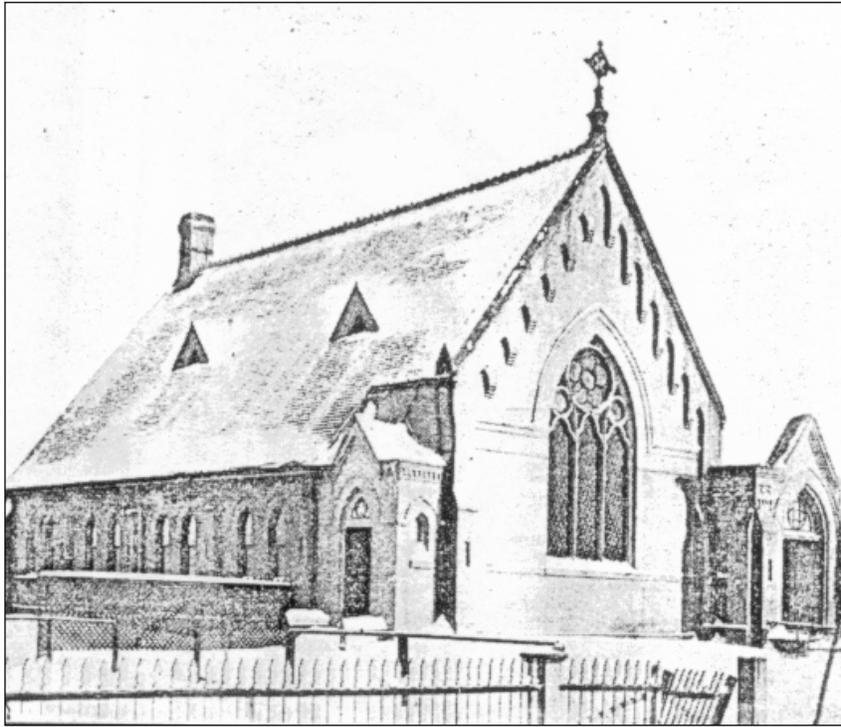


Plate 13 – Second St. Giles Presbyterian Church, Selkirk Avenue, dedicated on December 1, 1889. (Reproduced from St. Giles' [sic] Presbyterian Church, Silver Jubilee, 1885-1910, p. 12.)