



294 ELLEN STREET

FREE KINDERGARTEN & SETTLEMENT ASSOCIATION BUILDING

PREPARED BY PETERSON PROJECTS – FEBRUARY 2008



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Date of Construction: 1903

Building Permit: 286/1903

Architect: Russell, John Hamilton Gordon

Contractor: Powell, F. and Anderson, A.B.

ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

Built to resemble a single-family home to make it more visually appealing to the families it was created to serve, the solid brick Free Kindergarten Building is located in the heart of one of Winnipeg's major early 20th century immigrant neighbourhoods.

The front (east) façade begins with a raised stone foundation wall that originally included wide stone steps leading to the centrally placed main entrance. It is unknown how the original porch was designed; the present porch is open and accessed by an open deck atop a set of newer wood stairs. A door has been added at the south end of the deck on the ground floor. Windows on the second floor are plain and positioned just below the overhanging eaves of the complex roof with its two-tiered design and front facing gable with returned eaves, oversized wood brackets and half-timbering.



Front (east) and south façades, 2007

The south façade continues the cladding and design of the front and also includes a gently curved bay window with heavy stone accenting around windows on the ground and upper floors. The north façade is now hidden by the newer addition and the rear (west) façade features large windows on the ground and second floors with stone accenting.

The building stands on its original site and appears to be in fair structural condition. Alterations to the front façade have been fairly significant, changes to the other two visible façades have been of the minor variety.

Stylistically, the building has elements of the Queen Anne style – the side bay window, the complex roof, the half-timbered gable and the front porch – all methods of animating the façades and reducing the plainness of the design.

Building designer J.H.G. Russell (1862-1946) was born in Toronto, Canada West (Ontario), in 1862, the son of a dry goods dealer. After attending school in that city, he went to work for H.B. Gordon, a prominent area architect. Russell was with Gordon from 1878 until his departure for Winnipeg in 1882. From 1886 to 1893, Russell travelled throughout the United States, learning civil engineering, surveying and architecture in centres such as Chicago, Illinois, Spokane and Tacoma, Washington, and Sioux City, Iowa.

In 1895, two years after returning to Winnipeg, he set up his private practice, coinciding with the city's period of unbridled growth. His designs were (and are) scattered throughout the city, province and Western Canada, covering a variety of building types, sizes, costs and uses. His business continued to be steady during World War I and after, when many architects struggled to find commissions.



Front (east) façade and north addition, 2007

Russell was president of the Manitoba Association of Architects (1925) and served for three terms as the president of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (1912-15). His chairmanship of the Presbyterian Church Board of Managers and his devotion to Presbyterianism partially explain the large number of churches he designed for the denomination in Winnipeg and Western Canada. Russell died in 1946.

A complete list of his designs would be very lengthy, included among his more notable local projects would be J.H. Ashdown Warehouse additions, 157-179 Bannatyne Avenue, (1899-1911, Grade II), Lake of the Woods Building, 212 McDermot Avenue (1901, Grade II), Hammond Building, 63 Albert Street (1902, Grade III), Adelman Building, 92-100 Princess Street (1903, Grade II), Franklin Press, 168 Bannatyne Avenue (1904, Grade III), R.R. Wilson, 545 Broadway (1904, Grade III), J.H. Ashdown Store, 211 Bannatyne Avenue (1904, Grade III), Porter Building, 165 McDermot Avenue (1906, Grade III), Child's (McArthur) Building, Portage Avenue (1909, demolished), Casa Loma Building, Portage Avenue (1909, Grade II), Glengarry Block, 290 McDermot Avenue (1910, Grade III), Westminster Presbyterian (United) Church, 745 Westminster Avenue (1910-12, Grade II), Dingwall Building, 62 Albert Street (1911, Grade III), YMCA, 301 Vaughan Street, with Jackson and Rosencrans of New York (1911-13, Grade II), J.H. Ashdown, 529 Wellington Crescent (1913, Grade II) and St. John's Presbyterian (United) Church, 250 Cathedral Avenue (1923, Grade III). He has been given 20 points by the Historical Buildings Committee.



Rear (west) and south façades, 2007

HISTORICAL INTEREST:

The Free Kindergarten and Settlement Association was an ecumenical group organized in 1892, one of many social organizations formed to support the growing immigrant community in Winnipeg. Originally providing classes from a nearby vacant Swedish Church, its usefulness in the community is evident by the need for larger, more modern facilities. The association used this building into the 1950s.

It was taken over and renamed Logan Neighbourhood House, another social organization formed in 1952 by the Winnipeg Welfare Council.¹ This group used the premises for many years, adding the large gymnasium/meeting hall to its north side in ca.1960. Other groups to have used this facility since 1960 include the Neighbourhood Service Centres of Greater Winnipeg (1970), Learning Assistance Centre (1980), Logan Community Development Corporation (1990), the Inner City Voice newspaper (1990), Wi Wabigooni School (1990) and the Community Education Development Association (1990).²



Rear (west) and north façades of addition, 2007

RECOMMENDATION TO HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE:

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

- its historical importance- an important example of the type of building and social association formed to aid Winnipeg's immigrant community cope and succeed in the early 20th century;
- its associations- its long-term connections to the Free Kindergarten and Settlement Association and other social organizations;
- its design- a reduced example of the Queen Anne style;
- its architect- J.H.G. Russell was a respected and important practitioner;
- its location- contributes to its historic streetscape; and
- its integrity- its main façades continue to display some of their original elements and design.



Front (east) façade, 1978

ENDNOTES:

- 1 G. Siamandas, "Social Planning Council of Winnipeg," undated report found at http://www.siamandas.com/time_machine.
- 2 City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, Roll No. 13-081832600, 1910-1990; and Henderson's Directory, 1910-1990.