



**552 PLINGUET STREET
FORMER ST. BONIFACE WATERWORKS
PUMPING STATION & WATER TOWER**

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings Committee

May 2001

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The history of European settlement in what we know today as St. Boniface began with the fur trade. Métis families occupied areas around fur trading posts and along the east bank of the Red River. In 1812, the region's stability was disturbed by the establishment of a permanent agrarian settlement organized by Lord Selkirk, major shareholder of the Hudson's Bay Company. Selkirk attempted to diffuse the subsequent clash between rival factions, which were divided along English-French lines, by setting aside land east of the Red River to serve as the site for future francophone immigration. He also chose that area to settle a group of armed Swiss, German and Italian mercenaries, "de Meurons," who were brought from eastern Canada to act as a quasi-police force.

By 1818, Lord Selkirk had further moved to establish a Roman Catholic mission east of the Red River in the hopes of stabilizing the sometimes volatile Métis community. The missionaries were given 129.45 square kilometres (50 square miles) on the Seine River's east bank, as well as a river lot on the Red, which became the site of the Cathedral of St. Boniface. The community grew slowly, the devastating flood of 1826 causing the vast majority of de Meurons to leave the settlement forever and being replaced by the growing francophone population. Supplementing their harvests by hunting, fishing and working for the fur company or other colonists, the Métis society flourished.

When the Canadian government attempted to annex the area in 1869 without consulting the settlement, the Red River Resistance ensued, led by Louis Riel and supported by nearly all of the francophone settlers. Slowly, the descendants of the original French settlers of St. Boniface moved to other francophone settlements and newly arriving French-speaking immigrants from Quebec replaced them.

¹ This paper includes research from S. Grover, "Former St. Boniface Waterworks Pumping Station," report for the City of Winnipeg's Historical Buildings Committee, July 1982.

The coming of railway transportation in the late 1870s and 1880s was a catalyst for not only St. Boniface but also all of Western Canada. St. Boniface was organized as a municipality in 1880 and as a town in 1883. Businessmen from across the river began to take advantage of the low land values and tax rates to set up factories, plants and homes in the community but it was after the turn of the century that the area's real growth occurred.

The City of St. Boniface was incorporated in 1908 and by then was home to large and small industry, a large hospital, extensive commercial district, and new residential neighbourhoods. It would also become a noted meatpacking centre with the 1913 opening of the Union Stock Yards. A new chapter in its history came with its inclusion in Unicity in 1972, making it part of the City of Winnipeg.

In 1905, faced with a growing population and increased demand for water from citizens and businesses alike, council approved a major expenditure on water and sewer systems, including a large brick pumping station located in an isolated section of the town.

STYLE

The former St. Boniface Pumping Station, like other industrial buildings, was not built with any consideration to style. Because concerns for structural strength, durability and the efficient use of space were pre-eminent, ornamentation was kept to a minimum. Having said this, there are ornamental elements included in the design that were common to industrial structures of this era. Classical detailing such as arched openings, pilasters and corbelling at roof level give the boxy exterior a measure of elegance.

CONSTRUCTION

The pumping station is located on the south side of Plinguet Street on a parcel of land legally described as Roman Catholic Mission Parish, Plan 5383, Lots 15 to 18 and 21, and Plan 15221, Parcel A. The original 1905 building, the two-storey solid buff-coloured brick structure nearest to Plinguet Street, measures 18.3 x 12.7 metres (60 x 41½ feet). A one-storey brick addition

used for extra storage was completed in 1912 on the southeast corner of the pumping station and measures 10.4 x 12.8 metres (34 x 42 feet).² The original facility also included two concrete reservoirs, capable of holding 122,742 litres (27,000 gallons) of water as well as a 454,600-litre (100,000-gallon) wood cased water tank standing 31.7 metres (104 feet) above grade (Plate 1). The 1940 metal and concrete addition on the southwest corner measured 15.3 x 15.9 metres (36 x 52 feet) and has since been demolished.³ A steel water tower was built in 1936, located off the southeast corner of the pumping station (see Appendix II).

DESIGN

The front (north) façade features three large arched windows with limestone lug sills and radiating brick heads (Plate 2). This façade is divided vertically by pilasters, designed to appear as two thin bands of brick. These pilasters are found on every elevation, always ending in a corbelled brick belt course. Above this element, the building rises a short distance and the pilasters are continued. Another band of corbelled brick finishes the building and its flat roof. The building's large brick chimney is attached at the east end of the main façade.

The west elevation includes a small projecting area that once held a pair of wooden doors (Plate 3). The rear of this elevation is plain and does not feature any window openings; the line of the now demolished 1940 addition (Plate 4) is still visible (Plate 5). The rear of the building features a projecting section in which is set a large doorway used for deliveries (Plate 6). The east elevation is similar to the front elevation, with a number of arched windows to break up the brick walls (Plate 7).

Prior to its abandonment and subsequent vandalism and disrepair, the building was an attractive structure despite its industrial use (Plate 8).

² City of St. Boniface Building Permit, #848/1912. Cost was \$4,400 and J. Benoit was the contractor. No architect was named.

³ City of Winnipeg Assessment Records, Roll No. 516600, St. Boniface, PC 80.

INTERIOR

Because the building is now vacant, access could not be obtained. One would expect, however, to find the same austere finishes and features that mark the exterior.

INTEGRITY

The pumping station stands on its original site although neglect and vandalism had taken its toll on the building's elements. Structural problems are now visible in the brickwork on all elevations.

STREETSCAPE

Although this building was extremely isolated on the outskirts of St. Boniface when first built, it quickly became an integral part of an industrial development that stretches for many blocks in all directions. In 1910, the block between Rue Archibald and Dawson Road contained a number of small houses and the Alsip Brick Company yards. By 1950, only three of the houses still stood, the remainder and the brickyard having been replaced by the massive Greater Winnipeg Water District complex and a grain elevator located on the Canadian Pacific Railway line which crosses Plinguet Street to the west of the pumping station.⁴ Also included on the site was a large, 4.5 million-litre (1 million-gallon) underground reservoir, located south of the pumping station and opened by the City of St. Boniface on February 8, 1912 (Plate 9). M.P. Blair is listed as the architect of the structure, J. Benoit the contractor and total cost was \$32,330.⁵ This reservoir was later closed and filled in.

⁴ Henderson's Directory, 1910 and 1950.

⁵ City of St. Boniface Building Permit, #463/1911.

ARCHITECT/CONTRACTOR

The architect and contractor for the former pumping station is unknown, although the rear storage area at the southeast corner of the original structure was built by a contractor named Benoit.⁶

INSTITUTION

The history of an organized waterworks in St. Boniface dates back to 1904. Prior to this period, water was obtained by various methods: through a system of public wells, purchase from private companies and the use of the Seine River. In 1904, however, the town council passed a resolution funding an artesian well system to supply the growing residential, commercial and industrial sectors of St. Boniface. Designed and built by St. Boniface Engineer Cecil Goddard, the system entailed a series of wells with small pump houses sending the water to the central pump house on Plinguet Street. From there, the powerful pumps sent the water up 43.0 metres (141 feet) to the 390,956-litre (86,000-gallon)-capacity tank. Gravity then moved the water through the town's 20.1 kilometres (12½ miles) of water mains. Total cost of the water and sewer systems was \$345,000, a large sum indicative of council's desire to meet future needs of the community.⁷

Unfortunately, the system proved inadequate almost before it was completed. The wells produced water of uncertain volume and poor quality. The growth of the town had exceeded even council's optimistic forecasts and the water system was quickly overburdened. In 1905, a \$40,000 extension was made to the water system and in 1908, the year St. Boniface incorporated as a city, additional wells were drilled. The inconsistency of the supply is illustrated by the city's need to purchase water from the City of Winnipeg in 1912 and then its ability to sell surplus water to St. Vital in 1913.⁸ It was becoming obvious that a more dependable source was necessary.

⁶ City of Winnipeg Historical Buildings Officer, files.

⁷ Procès Verbal du Conseil de la Municipalité de Saint Boniface (below as Procès Verbal), March 12, 1905; and Western Municipal News, June 1906, p. 135.

⁸ Procès Verbal, October 9, 1905, December 10, 1905 and February 1912, p. 1032.

That new and dependable source would surface as the Shoal Lake aqueduct development of 1913-19. St. Boniface, together with the City of Winnipeg, Transcona, St. Vital, and parts of Kildonan, Assiniboia and Fort Garry formed the Greater Winnipeg Water District (GWWD) to build the aqueduct. It was not the cheapest of the possible solutions to the area's water problem, but it was undoubtedly one of the wisest decisions made in pre-World War I Winnipeg.

When the aqueduct was finally completed, a 61.0-centimetre (24-inch) connector pipe rerouted water from the main aqueduct into the St. Boniface Waterworks Pumping Station. Here, three large pumps with a capacity of nearly 16 million litres (3,500,000 gallons) per day distributed fresh water to a series of mains. The water tower and tank were used to boost pressure when necessary and the artesian well system was maintained as backup.

The GWWD has continued to serve the City of St. Boniface and the pumping station on Plinguet Street remained an important part of the city's water supply system. It was taken out of commission in the 1970s as the GWWD became more technologically advanced and efficient. The pumping station, water tower and tank with the words "City of St. Boniface" emblazoned upon it stand as vacant reminders of St. Boniface in the pre-Unicity era.

CONTEXT

The modern development of the City of St. Boniface could not have occurred without the former St. Boniface Waterworks Pumping Station. The availability of a clean and dependable supply of water is essential in the processes of urbanization and industrialization. After the turn of the century, St. Boniface launched a plan to attract people and industry, lowering taxes and keeping land values below those of nearby Winnipeg. While the scheme was successful, it illustrated the woefully inadequate local water supply to new businesses and citizens. The GWWD solved all the water problems for the City of St. Boniface, clearing the way for development of important industrial ventures and residential neighbourhoods.

LANDMARK

This building and the water tower are located in the industrial section of St. Boniface. The tower continues to be a visual landmark for the area and its historic role in supplying water for fire hydrants, homes and businesses made it one of the area's most important structures.



APPENDIX I

CITY OF WINNIPEG - Preliminary Report

Date: April 1995

Assessment Record

Prepared By: M. Peterson

Building Address: 552 Plinguet Street

Building Name: St. Boniface Waterworks Pump Station

Original Use: waterworks (civic)

Current Use: vacant

Roll No. (Old): 516600 (---)

RSN: 70674

Municipality: 06

Ward: ---

Property or Occupancy Code: 80

Legal Description: RCMP, Plan 5383, Lots 15/18, 21: Plan 15221, Parcel A

Location: south side between Rue Archibald and Dawson Road

Date of Construction: 1905

Storeys: 2

Heritage Status: ON INVENTORY

Construction Type: solid brick

Building Permits (Plans available: [A] Archives; [M] Microfilm; [4th] 4th floor, 65 Garry Street):

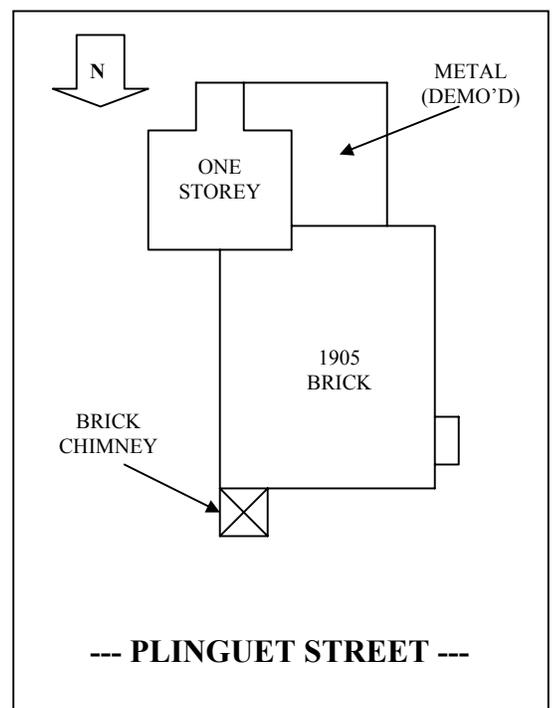
- none

Information:

- $41\frac{1}{2} \times 60 \times 31 + = 114,930$ cu. ft.

- tower built in 1936 and 150' high to bottom of tank

- tower "enlarged and made higher in 1945"... "171' to extreme top"



APPENDIX II

St. Boniface Waterworks Tower

The steel water tower was built in 1936 and was used to increase water pressure in the system. In 1945, it was enlarged and heightened to its present location 45.8 metres (150 feet) from ground level to the base of the platform of the water reservoir (Plates 10 to 12). The reservoir is 6.4 metres (21 feet) tall and has a capacity of 454,600 litres (100,000 gallons) and has the words “City of St. Boniface” emblazoned upon it.¹

The water tower is one of the last of its type in Winnipeg. Another is located within the abandoned Union Stock Yards at 780 Marion Street (Plate 13). This tower was completed in 1913 at the same time as the nearby Administration Building and the powerhouse, both designed by the local firm of Woodman and Carey. The Stock Yards tower was used to store water from on-site wells used for processing, feeding and cleaning animals and is larger (681,900 litres/150,000 gallons) and shorter (24.4 metres/80 feet) than the Waterworks tower and tank.² The Stock Yards tower was built by the J.H. Tremblay Company.³

Both towers have stood unused for several years and are beginning to deteriorate.

¹ City of Winnipeg Assessment Record, Roll No. 516600, St. Boniface, PC 80.

² Information from “St. Boniface Study” unpublished report of the Historical Buildings Committee, n.p.

³ M. Peterson, “780 Marion Street – Union Stock Yards Offices,” report for the City of Winnipeg Historical Buildings Committee, March 1989.

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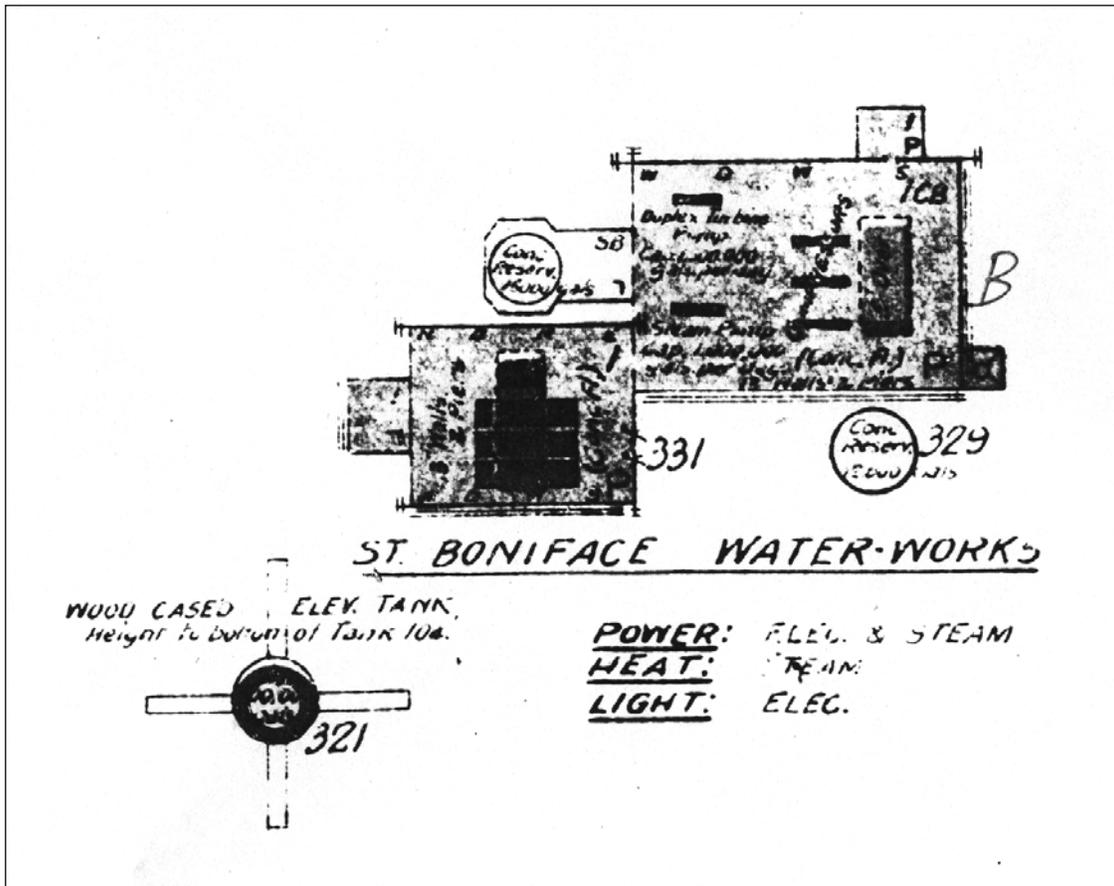


Plate 1 – St. Boniface City Pumping Station complex, Plinguet Street, 1919. (Reproduced from the City of Winnipeg Fire Atlas, Vol. XIX, Sheet 1980, April 1919.)

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Plate 2 – St. Boniface Waterworks Pumping Station, 552 Plinguet Street, front (north) and west façades. (M. Peterson, 1995.)



Plate 3 – St. Boniface Waterworks Pumping Station, 552 Plinguet Street, front (north) and west façades. (City of Winnipeg, March 1981.)

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Plate 3 – St. Boniface Waterworks Pumping Station, 552 Plinguet Street, rear (south) and east façades. (City of Winnipeg, March 1981.)



Plate 5 – St. Boniface Waterworks Pumping Station, 552 Plinguet Street, rear of west façade. (M. Peterson, 1995.)

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Plate 6 – St. Boniface Waterworks Pumping Station, 552 Plinguet Street, rear (south) façade. (M. Peterson, 1995.)



Plate 7 – St. Boniface Waterworks Pumping Station, 552 Plinguet Street, east façade. (M. Peterson, 1995.)

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Plate 8 – St. Boniface Waterworks Pumping Station, Plinguet Street, 1970. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Architectural Survey.)



Plate 9 – Inauguration dinner for underground reservoir in St. Boniface, February 8, 1912. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Foote Collection, N3068.)

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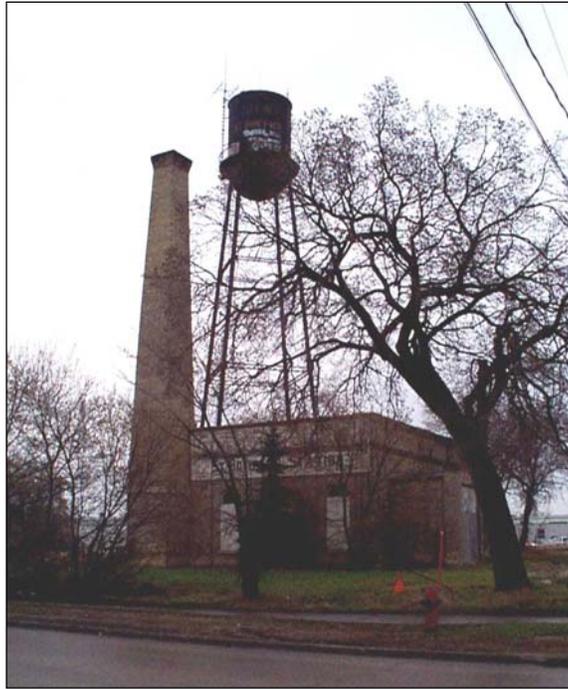


Plate 10 – St. Boniface Waterworks Pumping Station (front façade) and metal water tower. (M. Peterson, 2001.)



Plate 11 – St. Boniface Waterworks Pumping Station (rear façade) and metal water tower. (M. Peterson, 2001.)

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Plate 12 – Close up of water tower. (M. Peterson, 2001.)

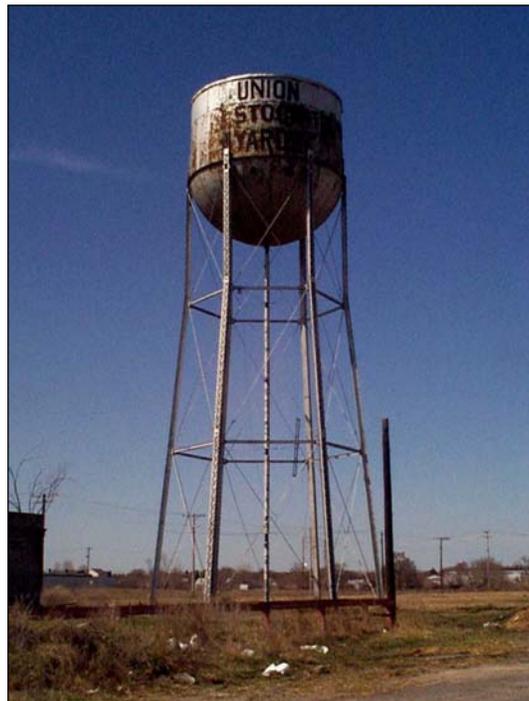


Plate 13 – Union Stock Yards water tower, Marion Street. (M. Peterson, 2001.)