

221 RUPERT AVENUE – SALVATION ARMY CITADEL
J. Wilson Gray, 1901



The eventful arrival of the Salvation Army in Winnipeg during December 1886 began at the C.P.R. Station with a prayer of thanksgiving for the safe delivery of its six members from Toronto. A colourful parade down Main Street was led by the Salvation Army flagmaster. The evangelical nature of the group's presence emphasized its removal from "formal" religion in the provision of a "poor man's church" open to all. Founded in England in the 1860's by evangelist William Booth, the Army, operating on a belief that the hunger and ill health of poverty blocked the word of God, offered both soup and spiritual aid.

The Salvation Army opened a Canadian headquarters in Toronto in 1882 and, attracting a segment of the urban population not reached by other churches, grew rapidly. In 1886 depression-ridden Winnipeg was the Army's "frontier." Prayer meetings were first held in the Opera House, but soon were moved to an old Baptist church at Rupert Avenue and King Street. The role of the Army was split into two major tasks: working with criminals, derelicts, alcoholics, and the unemployed by giving them work and lodging; and the "rescue" of "fallen

women” and homeless children who were sheltered in a group home on Ross Street. Medical care was also provided with the opening of the Salvation Army Grace Hospital in 1904.

The old church at Rupert Avenue and King Street proved too small for the growing organization, and in 1899 the decision was made to build a new building on the site. Plans were drawn by architect J. Wilson Gray of Toronto. The new Citadel was completed in 1901. The facility contained a large hall which could seat 900, a smaller hall for 250 people, a band room, offices, and officer’s quarters. All central work was done at this Citadel until 1960 when the new Provincial Headquarters opened on Colony Street. At that time the Rupert Avenue building became the Harbour Light Centre for the care and rehabilitation of alcoholics, a role which it has fulfilled ever since.

Designed to avoid the intimidation of either religious or military architecture, the Citadel projects an exuberance unequalled in the neighbourhood. The diverse composition of the facade presents an image with, although appearing “hodge-podge,” reveals an interesting order. The building’s exterior features an undulating parapet, an arcaded cornice, and powerful stone and brick voussoirs above the unusual blind arches. The overall diversity of the structure creates an image well-suited to the many charitable projects operated by the Salvation Army, and seems a meaningful symbol of its first century in Winnipeg.