



750 WOLSELEY AVENUE MULVEY SCHOOL (GORDON BELL SCHOOL)

Date of Construction: 1925

Building Permit: 2905/1925

Architect: Chivers, Cyril W.U.

Contractor: Borrowman and Jamieson

ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

Another of the fine, modern school buildings erected by the Winnipeg School Division, acknowledged as one of the leading designers of school buildings in North America in the pre-1930s era.

This two-storey, solid brick building rests on a raised concrete foundation and features stone accenting, large banks of multi-paned windows, several entrances and a flat roofline. A large addition was built on the structure's southwest corner. Some of the openings feature pointed arches.

The school stands on its original site and appears to be in good structural condition. Exterior alterations have been minor. The original section of the building, completed in 1926, measured approximately 56.7 x 59.2 metres and cost \$182,705.¹



North and west façades, 2009

The school is a reduced 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.”²

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.³

The architect responsible for the design of this school was Brigadier Major Cyril W.U. Chivers (1879-1969), born in Chislehurst, Kent, England. Chivers arrived in Winnipeg in 1898, where he apprenticed for local designer S. Frank Peters and then for George Browne. The following year, lured by higher pay, he took a post with the Engineering Construction Department of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) where he designed several buildings, including the railway station at Banff, Alberta. In 1910 he left the CPR to open his own practice. Chivers also served his country in the First World War, as a soldier in the First Canadian Mounted Rifles where he rose to the rank of Brigadier Major and was awarded the Military Cross. Following the war, he formed a successful partnership with another veteran and Military Cross recipient, Major George W. Northwood (1876-1959).

Chivers’ designs include the McGowan House, 127 Rupertsland Avenue (1909, demolished), Dorchester Apartments, 162 Lilac Street (1910), the Steele Briggs Building,



South and east façades, 2009

139 Market Avenue (1912), Hugo Apartments, Wellington Crescent (1913, demolished) and the Alcalde Apartments, 720 Dorchester Street (1912). The R.W. Patterson House, Wellington Crescent, 1905 appears to be the first work he completed after entering private practice. As part of the partnership of Northwood and Chivers, he has been given 20 points by the Historical Buildings Committee.

HISTORICAL INTEREST:

This school operated as Gordon Bell Junior High School until 1960 when the students and staff from Mulvey School, located on Borrowman Place (between Broadway and Portage Avenue) were transferred to the Wolseley Street facility and the present Gordon Bell High School was built on the old Mulvey School site.⁴



East façade, 1994

RECOMMENDATION TO HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE:

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

- its historical importance- one of only a handful of 1920s-era school buildings completed by the Winnipeg School Division;
- its associations- its long-term connections to education in the Wolseley neighbourhood;
- its design- a reduced example of the Collegiate Gothic style;
- its architect- C.W.U. Chivers was a respected and important practitioner;
- its location- contributes greatly to the historic streetscape of its neighbourhood; and
- its integrity- its main façades continue to display many of their original elements and design.

ENDNOTES:

- ¹ City of Winnipeg Building Permit, #2905/1925.
- ² L. Maitland et al., A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press Ltd., 1992), p. 166.
- ³ Ibid., p. 166; and Identifying Architectural Styles in Manitoba (Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, Historic Resources Branch, 1991), p. 20.
- ⁴ G. Bugailiskis, "School Buildings of the Winnipeg School Division No. 1: An Inventory of Extant School Buildings to 1940," report for the City of Winnipeg, Department of Environmental Planning, 1986, p. 57.