110 DISRAELI STREET

ST. MICHAEL UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings Committee

December 2003 (Updated September 2007)
I think, the stalwart peasant in a sheep-skin coat, born on the soil, whose forefathers have been farmers for 10 generations, with a stout wife and half-dozen children is good quality...I am indifferent as to whether or not he is British born.

Sir Clifford Sifton (1861-1929), Minister of the Interior

This remark, made by Sifton, then Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier’s Minister in charge of immigration, was the basis for the massive early 20\textsuperscript{th} century federal program to populate the western prairies by attracting Europeans with promise of cheap (or free), fertile land. Combined with the construction of a vast network of regional and transcontinental railway lines, this program was responsible for not only putting hundreds of thousands of newly arrived immigrants on prairie farmland, but also swelled the population base of many of the region’s urban centres and especially its primary city, Winnipeg.

The first documented immigration of pioneers from Ukraine to Canada was in 1891, and while many chose to homestead on the prairies, a large number of immigrants remained in Winnipeg to work and raise their families. They found jobs in the warehouses and factories operating on both sides of the Canadian Pacific Railway (C.P.R.) yards and chose to settle nearby, in the North End and Point Douglas, along with coworkers and their families from both similar and different cultural backgrounds.

For the adherents of the Russian Orthodox religion in Winnipeg, mission efforts from New York began serving the city’s followers in 1898.\textsuperscript{1} In the early 1900s, a flood of immigration raised Winnipeg’s Ukrainian significantly and because of language, chose to attend these Russian Orthodox services. But many in the Ukrainian community began planning for their own church. This became a reality in 1918 with the purchase and renovation of a vacant 1902-built Anglican mission church building in the heart of Point Douglas at 110 Disraeli Street and the formation of

\textsuperscript{1} Doris and Bill Ternowetsky, \textit{St. Michael’s Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada “As We Remember”} (Winnipeg: Rev. John A. Melnyk, 2000).
the National Greek Orthodox Church of St. Michael, the first congregation of its kind in Winnipeg.²

**STYLE**

The church, which was completely remodelled following its purchase by the Ukrainian congregation, is designed using the basic tenets of Ukrainian church architecture, namely its boat-like shape and the use of the onion dome (or bania). The rectangular, ship-like building was popular for Ukrainian churches, signifying that believers must embark upon a journey to be saved through the church.³ St. Michael features a long, rectangular shape with a projecting section at the rear (east end).

Very familiar is the use of the cross-topped dome, which normally ranged in number from one (representing Christ) to 13 (representing Christ and the 12 apostles).⁴ St. Michael has a large front dome and a very small dome at the rear of the building, both topped by crosses.

Ukrainian churches throughout the province showed an amazing variety from simple plans like St. Michael (Plate 1) to magnificent structures such as the building in Cooks Creek (Plate 2).

**CONSTRUCTION**

The frame building, now clad in metal siding, measures approximately 7.3 x 12.5 metres and rests on a stone foundation. The basement of the building extends beyond the east wall. The front of the building is graced with a 3.7 metre square bell tower that rises approximately 9.2 metres from grade.⁵ Two raised basement sections frame the wide stairs that give access to the entrance.

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² Ibid., p. 2.
⁴ Ibid., pp. 139-142.
⁵ *City of Winnipeg Assessment Record*, Roll No. 14000287300.
Originally open, this element was fully enclosed in 1995.\textsuperscript{6} Ceilings in the nave measure from 4.3 to 6.1 metres in height.

**DESIGN**

Architecturally, the building now standing at 110 Disraeli Street is not the structure built in 1902, nor the one moved onto this site in 1906 but rather the result of its sale and conversion into an orthodox Ukrainian church in 1918.

Basically a plain rectangular building, the exterior has seen several alterations and additions since its conversion. The original entrance to the church was up a wide, open set of wooden stairs (Plates 3 and 4) to a small, enclosed entrance porch, the point of its gable roof held a simple cross (Plate 5). Above rises the bell tower, with multi-paned and pointed arched windows and topped by a large onion dome and cross (Plate 6). Behind was the main section of the church, resting on a raised stone foundation, the frame walls interrupted by pointed windows (Plates 7 and 8). The rear (east) façade features a projecting area with pointed window openings. A circular window is located above this area (Plates 9 and 10). A low, raised stone structure is also attached to the back wall, the raised roof of the basement stage.

Alterations to original design include the construction of small additions on either side of the main stairs, possibly built in 1933.\textsuperscript{7} In 1995, the front stairs were covered by an open canopy\textsuperscript{8} but have now been completely enclosed, acting as an overflow area for the congregations and protecting members from inclement weather (Plate 11). This enclosure was designed in a contemporary manner and is distinguishable from the original fabric of the church.

\textsuperscript{6} City of Winnipeg Building Permit (below as BP), #5704/1995. Cost of construction was $6,000.

\textsuperscript{7} BP #3635/1933 describes unspecific alterations and additions to the church building at a cost of $800.

\textsuperscript{8} BP #5704/1995, $6,000.
INTERIOR
Like the exterior, the interior of Ukrainian churches follow layout and design patterns. The space is usually divided into three sections: the sanctuary, nave and narthex, and is based on tabernacles described in the Old Testament. The raised sanctuary (located in the eastern part of the building) and nave (sitting area) are divided by iconostasis and often a choir loft is located at the west end of the nave. The narthex is usually the entrance area of the church and may or may not be formally divided from the nave. The rear wall of the sanctuary is half-rounded and known as the apse and usually features painted icons. The easternmost portion of the nave is elevated three or four steps to form the solea.9

St. Michael, although a small building, features many of these traditional spaces and embellishments. The nave features a high, wood clad ceiling (Plate 12), choir loft at its west end (Plate 13) and a solea at its east end (Plate 14). Rows of pews, windows and painted ornaments grace the nave as well. The magnificent iconostasis (Plate 15) and other ornamental detailing on the interior were made by parishioners who worked in the railway yards and used their skills and scrap metal to fashion these items.10

The basement is used as the parish hall (Plate 16).

INTEGRITY
The building stands on its original site and appears to be in good structural condition. The additions and alterations to the exterior have included the covering of front stairs, which has altered the original layout in this area. The remainder of the building, however, has not seen serious alteration since its conversion into a Ukrainian church more than 80 years ago.

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9 B. Rotoff, op. cit., p. 142-46.
10 Ibid., p. 95.
STREETSCAPE
This church is located just west of the Disraeli Freeway, the multi-lane highway that divides the neighbourhood in two. St. Michael’s modest size and exterior ornamentation allow it to blend into the mainly residential nature of the surrounding structures (Plates 17 and 18).

ARCHITECT/CONTRACTORS
H. Gray was the named contractor for the original 1902 building, the owners, St. Mark’s Mission, the architect. Gray appears to have only worked in Winnipeg a short time (1902-04) and his name is associated with only two jobs other than this church building. Edward Vanderlip is named on the 1918 City of Winnipeg Building Permit as the architect and contractor of the renovation work. Nothing is known about Vanderlip at this time, he does not appear to be named in any other Permits in the 1899-1925 period. Plans of the 1918 renovations, on file at the City of Winnipeg Archives, are very simple, suggesting that Vanderlip had little or no formal architectural training or education. This is the first Vanderlip design evaluated by the Historical Buildings Committee.

PERSON/INSTITUTION
Few structures in Winnipeg boast such a rich and varied history as this small building and few would have claims to being part of the early religious and cultural history of two diverse groups.

Point Douglas was one of Winnipeg’s earliest residential districts, but this changed dramatically in the early 1880s when the C.P.R. located its main line through the heart of the area, quickly transforming it into an industrial neighbourhood with large companies such as Ogilvie Mills, Vulcan Iron Works and Brown and Rutherford Lumber Mill occupying huge parcels of land on either side of the tracks. Because of the proximity of these factories, the homes in the area soon

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11 BP #707/1902. Cost of construction of the small mission church was $1,800.
12 City of Winnipeg Building Permit Ledger Book, 1899-1925.
13 BP #910/1918. Renovations and remodelling of the exterior and interior cost $2,200.
14 City of Winnipeg Building Permit Ledger Book, 1899-1925.
filled with the workers and their families. Many in the established community felt it was their duty to introduce Canadian customs to the newcomers, to make them into “Good Citizens.” One of the main thrusts of this movement was the establishment of mission churches in Point Douglas and elsewhere in the North End.

The Men’s Guild of Christ Church Anglican (located at the corner of Princess Street and Higgins Avenue), organized and ran a Sunday School from a small rented shack on Gomez Street beginning in 1887. A larger building was moved to a site nearby from Main Street in 1890 and altered to suit the purposes of Sunday School and church services. Two years later, a lot on Rachel Street (now Annabella Street) near the corner of Sutherland Avenue was purchased and this building was moved onto the new lot and enlarged and became officially known as the St. Mark’s Mission Chapel.

This building suited the purpose of the Mission for a decade, when it was decided that a larger, more modern structure was required. A City of Winnipeg Building Permit was taken out for the construction of a frame building, measuring approximately 7.3 x 12.2 metres on the Rachel Street lot. In 1905, the City of Winnipeg began its planned extension/widening of Sutherland Avenue and entered into negotiations with the Mission Church for the removal of their building. The land was finally expropriated in 1906 and the church building was moved to its present location on Disraeli Street. Although the Mission had seen a steady increase in work in the neighbourhood, many of the immigrant communities and groups they were ministering to had matured to the point where they were organizing their own religious and social associations in their own languages.

15 “St. Mark’s Mission Chapel (Christ Church Mission),” unpublished paper, p. 1, courtesy of the Archives of the Diocese of Rupert’s Land (below as “St. Mark’s”). This paper was a handwritten account of the history of St. Mark’s, apparently written by the Rector and kept in the Parish Register.

16 Manitoba Free Press, April 12, 1890 described this new building as a frame building measuring 9.2 x 6.1 metres.


18 BP #707/1902.

19 City of Winnipeg Council Minutes, 1906, #278, April 2, 1906, p. 86 and #804, September 4, 1906, p. 340; and Christ Church Minute Book, Annual Report, Easter, 1907, p. 2. The deal with the City involved exchanging the two pieces of property and the City paying for moving the building and giving the mission $500 which it used to renovate the building and add electrical lights.
By the First World War, it appears that St. Mark’s Mission Church had ceased to operate and in May 1917 the contents of the church were given as a gift to St. Mark’s Church in St. Vital. On September 22, 1917, Rev. Walter Budnyk performed Winnipeg’s first Russian Greek Orthodox service in the building. The next summer, the building was sold to the congregation of St. Michael, which became affiliated with the Ukrainian Greek Orthodox Church of Canada in 1932. After extensive renovations in 1918, the church opened and has continued to the Ukrainian community since.

EVENT
There is no known event connected with this building.

CONTEXT
This little church holds the unusual position of being contextually connected to the early religious and evolution of two very diverse groups in the City of Winnipeg – the Anglicans and Ukrainians. Originally built as a mission church, the structure was intended to assist in the “Canadianization” and “Anglicanization” of the immigrant workers and their families who were settling in this area in increasingly large numbers. It was one of several protestant-based facilities to be established in the Point Douglas and North End districts after the turn of the century.

Its conversion during World War I into a Ukrainian church can be seen as the maturation of this large immigrant community, their need for their own church and religious ceremonies and the acceptance by the non-immigrant society of this reality.

LANDMARK
With its tall, highly reflective dome, St. Michael’s has been a neighbourhood landmark since World War I.

20 Christ Church Minute Book, Vestry Meeting, May 15, 1917.
21 Monuments to Faith, op. cit., p. 95.
APPENDIX I

CITY OF WINNIPEG - Preliminary Report

Assessment Record

Prepared By: M. Peterson

Building Address: 110 Disraeli Street  
Building Name: St. Michael Ukrainian Orthodox Church

Original Use: church  
Current Use: church

Roll No. (Old): 2873 (220)  
RSN: 167276

Municipality: 12  
Ward: 3  
Property or Occupancy Code: 90

Legal Description: 29 St. John, Plan 17281, Lot 2 (Original: 28/9 St. John, Plan 2165, Block E, Lot 144)

Location: east side between Sutherland and George avenues

Date of Construction: 1902  
Storeys: 1

Heritage Status: ON INVENTORY

Construction Type: Frame and stone foundation

- 707/1902 $1,800 (original); 910/1918 [A] $ (interior alterations); 3635/1933 $800 (alterations & addition); 3108/1985 [4th- B07B07] $50,000 (interior alterations); 5704/1995 [4th- M07A13] $6,000 (construct canopy)

Information:
- 24 x 41 x 30
- 14-20’ ceilings in nave
- 30’ tower

ARCHITECT: ST. MARK’S MISSION, OWNER (1902) & E. VANDERLIP (1918)

CONTRACTOR: H. GRAY (1902) & E. VANDERLIP (1918)
Plate 1 – St. Michael Ukrainian Orthodox Church, 110 Disraeli Street, Winnipeg, 2006. (M. Peterson, 2006.)
Plate 2 – Immaculate Conception Ukrainian Catholic Church, Cooks Creek, Manitoba, 2006; built between 1930 and 1952, designed by renowned church architect Rev. Fr. Philip Ruh. (B.C. Peterson, 2006.)
Plate 3 – St. Michael Ukrainian Orthodox Church, 1930. In the background, the church’s front is visible with no stair covering. (Courtesy of St. Michael Ukrainian Orthodox Church.)
Plate 4 – St. Michael Ukrainian Orthodox Church, 1952. Again the uncovered staircase is evident. To the right is seen one of the two raised basement sections beside the stairs. (Courtesy of St. Michael Ukrainian Orthodox Church.)
Plate 5 – St. Michael Ukrainian Orthodox Church, ca.1965. This view shows the original front with open wooden stairs and enclosed porch. Also visible is the original cladding and fenestration on the bell tower. (City of Winnipeg Planning Department.)
Plate 6 – St. Michael Ukrainian Orthodox Church, 110 Disraeli Street, detail of main dome, 2006. (M. Peterson, 2006.)
Plate 7 – St. Michael Ukrainian Orthodox Church, 110 Disraeli Street, south façade, 2006. (M. Peterson, 2006.)
Plate 8 – St. Michael Ukrainian Orthodox Church, 110 Disraeli Street, front and north façades, 2006. (M. Peterson, 2006.)
Plate 9 – St. Michael Ukrainian Orthodox Church, 110 Disraeli Street, rear (east) façade, 2006.
(M. Peterson, 2006.)
Plate 10 – St. Michael Ukrainian Orthodox Church, 110 Disraeli Street, rear (east) and south façades from the Disraeli Freeway, 2006. (M. Peterson, 2006.)
Plate 11 – St. Michael Ukrainian Orthodox Church, 110 Disraeli Street, detail of enclosed front stairs, 2006. (M. Peterson, 2006.)
Plate 12 – St. Michael Ukrainian Orthodox Church, 110 Disraeli Street, looking from the choire loft in the west end, 2003. (M. Peterson, 2003.)
Plate 13 – St. Michael Ukrainian Orthodox Church, 110 Disraeli Street, choir loft in west end of building, 2003. (M. Peterson, 2003.)
Plate 14 – St. Michael Ukrainian Orthodox Church, 110 Disraeli Street, looking towards the solea and sanctuary, 2003. (M. Peterson, 2003.)
Plate 15 – St. Michael Ukrainian Orthodox Church, 110 Disraeli Street, iconostasis and sanctuary, 2003. (M. Peterson, 2003.)
Plate 16 – St. Michael Ukrainian Orthodox Church, 110 Disraeli Street, basement, 2003. (M. Peterson, 2003.)
Plate 17 – Disraeli Street looking north towards the floodwaters, 1950. St. Michael Ukrainian Orthodox Church is visible on the right. (Courtesy of the Archives of Manitoba, “Floods-1950 #389”.)
Plate 18 – Looking west towards Disraeli Street, 1950, St. Michael Ukrainian Orthodox Church to the left.  (Courtesy of the Archives of Manitoba, “Floods- 1950 #388”, N17137.)