221 RUPERT AVENUE

SALVATION ARMY CITADEL

HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE

30 April 1982
On a cold wintry day in December, 1886, six young men and women stepped down from a train in the CPR station and began to pray. Giving thanks for their safe trip from Toronto, the six invited others to join in, and began a parade down Main Street to the accompaniment of songs, their flag and a single tambourine. The Salvation Army had arrived in Winnipeg.

The Free Press, noting the Army's "attack" on Winnipeg, observed that these cold weather apostles had "fire in their heart." Making quite a scene, the salvationists enticed a couple of hundred curious citizens to attend prayer meetings in Victoria Hall, at the corner of Notre Dame and Adelaide. The meetings grew rapidly in size, with evangelical showmanship as the drawing card backed by a past history of good works in the old country. Prayer meetings took place nightly with two or three services on Sunday, generally before a full house, and with positive results. Within a few weeks, the local leader wired to headquarters in Toronto:

Send more Officers over to help us. Thermometer 30 degrees below.
Salvation boiling over. The whole North-West a blaze of salvation.

There were ample targets for the salvationists' zeal in Winnipeg. The town boomed in 1881-82, attracting vice and moral decay along with the progressive elements. By 1886, there were many down and out people suffering from the economic recession, newcomers who had no jobs or homes, and many people who had succumbed to the "scourge of alcohol" so prevalent in pioneer societies. It was this lower strata of society at whom the Army took aim.

The Salvation Army grew from one man's personal dismay with the conditions of thousands in the slums of London in the 1860s. William Booth, an evangelist preacher, decided that soup and salvation must go hand in hand. The insecurities and ill health of poverty blocked the word of God from the ears of the poor, and must be dealt with jointly. Booth used the trappings of the military partly to attract attention to his cause and partly to make others aware of how serious the goals of the
salvationists were. Working with the poor and recruiting from that class, the Army grew in size and greatly in stature. It was a "poor man's church" for people who had nowhere to go, and their sincere hard work won the grudging admiration of many.

After the Army moved into the U.S. and Australia in 1880, it decided to open a headquarters in Toronto in 1882. In Canada this new group found a society in the midst of a wave of evangelical revival, formed by the fundamentalist sects. The peculiar and sensational methods of the Salvation Army, along with a simple, forthright theology, attracted a strata of urban dwellers beyond the reach of the established churches. The Army met with great success in the east, marching west across the prairies and B.C., and east into the Maritimes between 1886 and '90.

Winnipeg became the base of the Army's western operations. They moved their prayer meetings first to the old Opera House and then into an old Baptist Church on Rupert and King. With the assistance of its new recruits, the Army got down to its temporal work. Prisoners, jailed for short terms or vagrancy charges, were given refuge with the Army in a half-way home for counselling, care and a job. Human dignity and loving kindness were stressed, with some admirable results. The prisoners, as well as any men needing employment, split cordwood in the Army's wood yard in return for food and lodging. The wood was sold by contract to such institutions as the city's pumping station and the General Hospital. A Workingman's Hotel was opened shortly thereafter to provide temporary accommodation for these workers.

The other thrust of the Army in Winnipeg was their work with the unwed mothers and homeless children. In typical Army jargon, this was officially termed "rescue" work, the rescued generally being the "fallen women." A home for these girls and children was founded on Ross Street in 1890. Here, they were sheltered, fed and counselled (with mandatory attendance at daily prayer meetings), and offered night school and domestic training, and assisted in finding employment. Acceptance and warmth was again shown by the Army workers, of whom a good number were women. The Rescue Home did such excellent and needed work that it received a good deal of private and later government support. By 1894, the home was so crowded that new quarters were built on Young
Street in 1894.

Medical care was a natural corollary to their rescue work. Health care evolved into a major work of the Army with the opening of the Salvation Army Grace Hospital in 1904. The Preston Street hospital had space for 120 women and babies, becoming the city's biggest maternity facility. Because of its excellent efforts, the Grace evolved into a general hospital after 1929, supported by private and government funds.

With these solid credits to their name, it is no wonder that public support was enthusiastic for the Army's latest project: a new citadel. Since 1892, they had coped with the small frame church, purchased for $10,000. It was centrally located and already an established site, so the Army decided to rebuild on the same location. The plans for a new citadel were drawn up by J. Wilson Gray in Toronto. His only other known work in Winnipeg is the Confederation Life Building (1912) on Main Street.

Tenders were called for in March, 1900 and the building was completed in 1901, at a cost of $12,000. Inside was a large hall with a seating capacity of 900 as well as a smaller hall for 250 people. There was also a band room and dressing rooms. Upstairs were planned officers' quarters, training, garrison and provincial offices.

It was this structure, in the heart of the downtown, that was the nucleus of all Salvation Army's spiritual and administrative works. Because of the nature of the organization, and its foundations in mass appeal, the building was designed not to look like a church but to fulfil the obligations of its mandate without intimidation. The Salvation Army's statement of principle is as follows:

> The Salvation Army is an international religious and charitable movement, showing its love for God and concern for the needs of humanity through a spiritual ministry whose purpose is to preach the gospel. It is also expressed by a wide variety of social services extended without discrimination as to race and creed.
It was the intent of the architecture to express this principle, while retaining the flamboyance of the Army's image.

As in all the other Army's public endeavours, the building is intended to be noticed. The facade, remarkably asymmetrical, is a collection of features unified through the use of arches and rhythmical arcading. A number of textures and patterns emerge to draw the eye and convince the observer that this is not a commercial building. The roofline also sets it apart from the warehouses and commercial blocks around it.

The structure is solid brick with a limestone foundation. It is three storeys high with a square shape. The interior was finished sparsely to reflect the Army's egalitarian stance, and there were few vestiges of what is generally considered 'de rigueur' for churches. Neither, however, was the military motif carried to any excess.

The Salvation Army swept through western Canada on the evangelical tide of the 1880s. Recruits were put to work promptly to carry the momentum without depending on the east. By the close of the decade, the Sally Ann had groups in Emerson, Neepawa, Brandon, Portage, Morden and Minnedosa, with only the major centres of Saskatchewan and Alberta covered. Yet the Army was never a major success on the prairies. Their methods were geared to the urban environment, while the population of the west lay scattered in farms and small towns.

Secondly, the west was much more of a polyglot. The immigrants from the Slavic countries, Germany and Scandinavia brought their language, culture and faith with them and internalized their institutions. The Army was definitely English-based, which gave them little appeal or ability to work within the new ethnic groups. The Army had to close down some of their organizations in towns where there was not adequate support.

Their work in Winnipeg never slackened its pace for it was here that the Salvationists were most effective. Three areas of charitable works were emphasized: Maternity care (rescue work and Grace
Hospital), immigration aid (the lumberyard and provision of food and clothing) and parole supervision. The Army attended police court, helped prisoners' families and worked with the courts for parolees through their half-way homes. During the war, Salvationists brought treats, medical aid and cheer to the soldiers, while their families were visited and consoled at home. Christmas hampers were a particularly welcome work of the Army.

A new men's hostel opened on Logan as well as a citadel for junior members on Ellice. As the suburbs expanded, new citadels and services were added but until 1960, all central work was done in the original citadel on Rupert. In that year, new provincial headquarters were opened on Colony Street north of Portage.

In 1953, the Canadian Salvation Army officially entered an area in which they had quietly worked for decades: the care and rehabilitation of alcoholics.

The Rupert Avenue citadel became the Harbour Light Centre for Alcoholics, where the downtown location continued to compliment the nature of the work. A de-tox centre was established together with hostel accommodation. Clinical treatment for both drug and alcohol abuse is available, with follow-up counselling for the individual and family, or psychiatric services for particular cases. Transients are here offered a bed for the night, and the destitute and homeless can arrange for emergency welfare. There is a soup kitchen for the hungry open daily, with a full-course Sunday dinner. Recently, school children from the inner city have received breakfasts from the citadel's soup kitchen.

While the main focus of the Harbour Light is upon drug and alcohol programs, the Army's family services, suicide prevention line, and missing persons work operate also from the citadel.

During the 1950 flood, numerous fires and other disasters, the Sally Ann provided emergency assistance of food, shelter and clothing to the victims. Their League of Mercy now visits with the aged and lonely, their Christmas Cheer Board and Red Shield Campaign raise thousands of dollars
for the needy, a summer camp for children and adults operates each year, and the Army has many homes throughout the city doing correctional work with ex-prisoners, homes for unwed mothers, half-way houses, and homes for seniors.  

Without sacrificing their religious commitment, or creating a huge internal bureaucracy, the Salvation Army has reached out to more of the poor and needy than any single institution in urban Canada. While their labours were an outgrowth of the nineteenth century evangelical movement, the Army has altered and adapted its programs to meet with contemporary social problems.
FOOTNOTES


4. One is reminded of L.B. Johnson's presidential campaign policy "The war on poverty". The concept of seriousness is the same.

5. S.D. Clark Church and Sect in Canada University of Toronto Press Toronto 1948 p. 381.


8. Ibid., p. 18.

9. The Building Permit, No. 114 in 1900, is lost. Opening date for the citadel is always given as 1901.


Plate 1 – Salvation Army Citadel, 221 Rupert Avenue, not long after its completion, ca.1901. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, N1540.)

Plate 2 – Looking north from City Hall, ca.1895. The white church (arrow) was used by the Army until 1901. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)
Plate 3 – A group celebrating International Day in front of the Citadel, ca.1915.  (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Foote Collection #1795 [N2787].)

Plate 4 – The Salvation Army at CPR Station, 1915. The Army met many of the trains in connection with their immigration work.  (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Foote Collection #1794 [N2786].)
Plate 5 – There has always been a great deal of emphasis on music and bands in the Salvation Army. Here the marching band assembles at the entrance of the Bank of Montreal, 1915. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Foote Collection #1793 [N2790].)

Plate 6 – Assembling the parade for the 1918 Red Shield Campaign. Note the sign on City Hall. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Foote Collection #1796 [N2788].)
Plate 7 – The Salvation Army's Harbour Light Centre for Alcoholics, "A place of new beginnings," no date. (City of Winnipeg Planning Department.)