525 TYLEHURST STREET

ST. JAMES ANGLICAN CHURCH & CEMETERY

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings & Resources Committee
Researcher: M. Peterson
October 2018
This building embodies the following heritage values as described in the *Historical Resources By-law, 55/2014* (consolidated update July 13, 2016):

(a) St. James Anglican Church is the oldest standing log church in Western Canada and has remained in continuous use since construction in 1853;

(b) For over 150 years, it has been associated with the establishment and expansion of the Anglican church in Winnipeg, Manitoba and across the West;

(c) It features elements of the Gothic Revival Style and is an early example of this type in Western Canada;

(d) It is an early and excellent example of hand hewn log construction;

(e) The building sits in a well-treed cemetery that dates to the beginning of the European settlement era in Winnipeg; and

(f) The building’s exterior has suffered little alteration.
The early history of what became the Municipality of St. James-Assiniboia, prior to the arrival of Europeans in the 18th and 19th centuries, is marked by the use of the Assiniboine River by local indigenous bands for transportation, hunting and gathering activities and seasonal habitation.

Portage Avenue, the area’s main thoroughfare, originated as the main east-west overland trail connecting The Forks, an important hunting and meeting site, and the western plains rich with herds of bison. As the fur trade in the region developed and expanded, the trail, often referred to as the Carlton Trail, was an important freighting route for thousands of ox-carts transporting food and other goods. Modern development transformed Portage Avenue into the hub of commerce and transportation for Winnipeg and its western suburbs.

European settlement in the vicinity of present-day Winnipeg began with the arrival of the fur traders in the mid-1700s and then the establishment of permanent posts near the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine rivers in the 1810s. Shortly after, Lord Selkirk organized his group of settlers, settling them on long, thin strips of land running 2 miles inland from the riverbank and known as river lots. These original farms ran north from present-day Point Douglas along the Red River to the Kildonan Golf Course (Plate 1).

As time went on, the offspring of the settlers and retiring Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) employees and their families also sought their own land and purchased river lots further along and on both sides of the Red River and then along the Assiniboine River (Plate 2). By the 1850s, settlement along the Assiniboine had reached Sturgeon Creek and beyond, the names of the land owners included well-known Selkirk Settler families and HBC men: Fiddler, Hallett, Tait, Bourke, Bruce, Garrioch and Lane.¹

¹ An 1872 survey, completed by D. Sinclair, included a list of land owners. Survey notebook #535 Parish of Kildonan, St. Charles, St. Pauls, St. James, Archives of Manitoba, NR0157/GR1601/G14348.
With this increase in population came a request for a church and the HBC donated a large lot immediately west of Omands Creek\(^2\) (six kilometres west of The Forks) – 18 chains of frontage running 2 miles north from the river bank, a total of 115 hectares of land (Plate 3). In 1851,\(^3\) the parish was named St. James by the newly arrived Anglican rector, Reverend William Henry Taylor and a log rectory was quickly built (Plates 4 and 5).\(^4\) Logs were also cut and floated to the site for the church building but these were taken away in the flood of 1852. Parishioners cut more logs, the cornerstone was laid on June 8, 1853 and by the end of the year, the church, with its substantial bell tower and milled wood siding, was operational. A school was built ca.1853.\(^5\)

St. James Anglican Church was consecrated in a ceremony on May 29, 1855 and took its place at the centre of the community (Plate 6).\(^6\) It stands today as the oldest log church structure in Western Canada.

### SITE

The church and cemetery are located on 5.7 hectares of well-treed property bounded by Portage Avenue on the north, Tylehurst Street on the west, St. John Ambulance Way (formerly Empress Street E) on the east and the Assiniboine River on the south.

The cemetery is located to the north, south and east of the church building. The first interment occurred on December 10, 1856 and among the over 9,000 graves are mayors, businessmen, original settlers and their offspring, noted architect Charles Wheeler and James Armstrong, who

\(^2\) M.M. Ferguson, *A History of St. James* (Winnipeg, MB: Author, 1967), p. 8A. Parish records suggest that the first bridge across this major landform was completed in 1860 for the use of congregation to get to and from service.

\(^3\) Information supplied by E. Bonnett, Peoples’ Warden, St. James Anglican Church.

\(^4\) Ibid., p. 8; and *St. James Church* (Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Recreation, Historic Resources Branch, 1985) – below as St. James Church – pp. 1-3. Reverend Taylor remained with the Parish until his retirement in 1867. The logs for the rectory and the church were cut at Baie St. Paul, approximately 45 kilometres west on the Assiniboine River, although the meanders of the river meant the actual distance to the new parish was much greater.

\(^5\) M.M. Ferguson, op. cit., p. 11. Honourable John Norquay, future Premier of Manitoba, taught at the school in 1857.

\(^6\) Ibid., p. 7. A nearby ford allowed citizens south of the river to also attend services.
was an early land-owner and remembered by Armstrong Point. 7 Also of note, the Cemetery became the final resting place for thousands of wee souls who did not survive their mothers’ pregnancies and were entrusted into the care of St. James. 8

The site also included a fine rectory built prior to 1900 (Plate 7), which was demolished.

**STYLE**

Old St. James Church is a very early example of a Gothic Revival church in Western Canada. The style was popular from the 1850s, when this structure was completed, until approximately 1900. 9 Based on the revival of medieval architecture, aspects of the style were used in the design of all types and sizes of buildings.

The style is discernable by the use of pointed arches and as it evolved, the expressive use of buttresses, spires, pinnacles and other carved ornamentation. Roofs were usually steeply pitched and complex and tracery and embellished mouldings often highlighted windows. 10

**CONSTRUCTION**

The logs of St. James Anglican Church are hand hewn flat and laid in a butt and pass method where the “passing” log (log ends outside of the building) alternates from row to subsequent row (Plate 8).

At the St. James Church, the logs were then covered by milled wood siding. Church records give the original cost of construction at £323 15 1d. 11 The church tower, described by Rev. Taylor as

---

8 Information from Church Cemetery files, courtesy of M. Steele, Voluntary Cemetery Manager.
11 St. James Church, p. 3.
“12 by 12”\textsuperscript{12} was removed ca.1871 because of structural issues. The support for the tower can still be seen on the inside walls of the church (Plate 9).

In 1916, significant deterioration of the church was noted, leading the congregation to plan and build a new church, approximately 1 kilometre to the west, on the street now known as Collegiate Street, officially opened \textit{November 29, 1922} (Plate 10).

The old church was condemned in 1936 but continued to host anniversary services and in 1967, the City of St. James and the congregation worked together to repair the building, rededicating it and designating it an historic site in the City of St. James.\textsuperscript{13}

An outbuilding with a washroom was constructed in 1989 and the church was damaged by an arsonist on October 29, 1999.

\textbf{DESIGN}

The front (west) façade features the main entrance, centrally located and set in a pointed arch opening (Plate 11). Near the peak of the roof sits a modest spire (Plate 12). The north elevation, facing the cemetery, features four windows in pointed arch openings, separated by plain pilasters (Plate 13). The rear (east) façade features a triplet window in pointed arch openings (Plates 14 and 15).

The south façade also includes pointed arch window openings and pilasters as well as a projecting section (vestry) with pointed arch openings (Plate 16).

\textsuperscript{12} Quoted in ibid., p.2.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p. 3.
INTERIOR
The church’s interior has always been simple and functional; a 1920s image shows a raised pulpit at the east end, wooden pews and wood clad ceilings (Plate 17). A stained glass window on the building’s east side was added prior to 1915 (Plate 18). Originally, the priest entered the church through a small doorway in the southeast corner of the building. This opening was closed off (Plate 19) when the vestry was built (Plate 20).

Today, the church features some of the original wooden pews (Plates 21 and 22); a finely carved wood pulpit (Plate 23); and some of the kneelers include buffalo hide upholstery. The plank floor was installed in 1879 and the electrical lighting in 1909.\textsuperscript{14}

INTEGRITY
The building stands on its original site, appears to be in good structural condition for its age and has not suffered extensive alteration.

STREETSCAPE
The church building is set back considerably from the street, located in a well-treed site that includes hundreds of headstones and grave markers (Plates 24 and 25), dating back to the City’s early development.

ARCHITECT/CONTRACTORS
The church was designed and built by the congregation.

\textsuperscript{14} Information supplied by E. Bonnett, Peoples’ Warden, St. James Anglican Church.
PERSON/INSTITUTION

The donating of this land along the Assiniboine River by the HBC and the formation of the St. James Parish are seminal events in the history of Canadian Anglicans. The congregation and its church were central to the development of the area’s European-based agricultural community of the mid-19th century. The church building was used by the congregation until its new facilities were opened further west in the 1920s, although it is used for summer services and special occasions. The cemetery continues to be used.

EVENT

This Church has been used by many of the original European and early Métis families of Western Canada since the 1850s and the cemetery has often been their final resting place. Religious services continue to be observed on this site.

The removed tower at the west end of the structure was, according to accounts, utilized as a watch tower by supporters of Louis Riel during the uprising of 1869.15

CONTEXT

Although Lord Selkirk had promised his mostly Church of Scotland (Presbyterian) settlers the establishment of a church upon their arrival, it was actually an Anglican minister, Reverend John West (Plate 26) arriving in the colony in October 1820 under the auspices of the Church Missionary Society and the HBC that first ministered to the settlers. Two years later the Church Mission House was constructed near the southeast corner of the present-day St. John’s Cathedral Cemetery (east of the intersection of Main Street and Anderson Avenue).

This was the Parish of St. John and in 1833, a new Anglican church building was completed, on the site of the present-day structure (135 Anderson Avenue). It became the first Anglican Cathedral in Western Canada shortly after the arrival and consecration of the first Bishop of Rupert’s Land, the

15 Information supplied by E. Bonnett, Peoples’ Warden, St. James Anglican Church.
Right Reverend David Anderson (1814-1884), in 1849 and took its place as the Mother Church for Western Canadian Anglicanism.\footnote{Information from the St. John’s Cathedral website, www.stjohnscathedral.ca. Until the completion of Kildonan Presbyterian Church in 1854, the Anglican clergy also ministered to the Presbyterian adherents in the Settlement.}

The donating of land by the HBC and the formation of the St. James Parish on the Assiniboine River was an indication of the expansion and permanency of the agrarian settlement of the region. It was another step in the Anglican Church’s evolution from a far-flung missionary venture to an organized, locally operated system.

The St. James Parish lent its name to the Rural Municipality of St. James (1921) and later the City of St. James (1956).

**LANDMARK**

The church and cemetery are located on busy Portage Avenue, across the street from one of the City’s most well-known shopping centres, Polo Park.

The church and cemetery are designated Manitoba Historic Sites and a Historic Sites Advisory Board of Manitoba plaque is located just west of the church building.
APPENDIX I

CITY OF WINNIPEG - Preliminary Report

Building Address: 525 Tylehurst Street  
Building Name: St. James Anglican Church & Cemetery

Original Use: church & cemetery  
Current Use: church (seasonal) & cemetery

Roll No.: 12080092200  
RSN: 144134

Legal Description: Part River Lot 42 St. James, 42 St. James, Plan 2268, Part 3.67 acres Lots 1/3 except north east corner Lot 4, Lots 5/12, north parts Lots 13/15

Location: south of Portage Avenue between Tylehurst Street and St. John Ambulance Way (Empress Street E)

Date of Construction: 1853  
Storeys: 1  
Heritage Status: NOMINATED LIST

Construction Type: log, wood siding and stone foundation


Information:

ARCHITECT – UNKNOWN

CONTRACTOR – VOLUNTEER LABOUR

--- TYLEHURST STREET ---
Plate 1 – “Plan of the Settlement on Red River, as it was in June 1816,” by A. Arrowsmith. This map shows the original river lots of the Selkirk Settlers on the west side of the Red River north of present-day Point Douglas. (City of Winnipeg.)
Plate 3 – “Plan of River Lots in the Parishes of St. John, St. James and St. Boniface,” 187?. Arrows showing location of the St. James Church (left) and Omands Creek (right). (Archives of Manitoba, MD284/4 Series 1: Cadastral series.)
Plate 4 – St. James Parish rectory, no date. (Reproduced from *St. James Church* [Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Recreation, Historic Resources Branch, 1985], p. 2.)

Plate 5 – Reverend and Mrs. W.H. Taylor, no date. (Reproduced from *St. James Church* [Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Recreation, Historic Resources Branch, 1985], p. 1.)
Plate 6 – A ca.1860 sketch of St. James Anglican Church and rectory. (Archives of Manitoba, “St James- Churches- St James 1, N13813.)
Plate 7 – St. James Anglican Church Rectory, ca.1890. (Archives of Manitoba, F.P.V. Cowley Collection- 12, N82.)
Plate 8 – St. James Anglican Church, 525 Tylehurst Street, southeast corner, showing butt and pass construction and hand hewing, 2018. (M. Peterson, 2018.)
Plate 9 – St. James Anglican Church, 525 Tylehurst Street, southeast corner, showing butt and pass construction and hand hewing, 2018. (M. Peterson, 2018.)
Plate 10 – St. James Anglican Church, 195 Collegiate Street, no date.  (Courtesy of the University of Manitoba Archives, Winnipeg Tribune Collection, PC 18/217/18-217-039.)
Plate 11 – St. James Anglican Church, 525 Tylehurst Street, front (west) and south façades, 2018. (M. Peterson, 2018.)
Plate 12 – St. James Anglican Church, 525 Tylehurst Street, spire, 2018. (M. Peterson, 2018.)
Plate 13 – St. James Anglican Church, 525 Tylehurst Street, north façade, 2018. (M. Peterson, 2018.)

Plate 14 – St. James Anglican Church, 525 Tylehurst Street, rear (east) and north façades, 2018. (M. Peterson, 2018.)
Plate 15 – St. James Anglican Church, 525 Tylehurst Street, detail of east window, 2016. (M. Peterson, 2016.)
Plate 16 – St. James Anglican Church, 525 Tylehurst Street, front (west) and south façades (top - 2016) and rear of south façade (bottom - 2018). (M. Peterson.)
Plate 17 – Interior of St. James Anglican Church, 525 Tylehurst Street, 1925. (Archives of Manitoba, Peter McAdam Collection No. 372.)
Plate 18 – St. James Anglican Church, 525 Tylehurst Street, pre-1915 stained glass, east side of church, 2018. (M. Peterson, 2018.)
Plate 19 – St. James Anglican Church, 525 Tylehurst Street, former priest’s entrance, 2018. (M. Peterson, 2018.)
Plate 20 – St. James Anglican Church, 525 Tylehurst Street, vestry, 2018. (M. Peterson, 2018.)
Plate 21 – St. James Anglican Church, 525 Tylehurst Street, nave looking east, 2018. (M. Peterson, 2018.)

Plate 22 – St. James Anglican Church, 525 Tylehurst Street, choir pews, 2018. (M. Peterson, 2018.)
Plate 23 – St. James Anglican Church, 525 Tylehurst Street, pulpit, 2018. (M. Peterson, 2018.)
Plate 24 – St. James Anglican Church and cemetery from the north, 2016. (M. Peterson, 2016.)

Plate 25 – St. James Anglican Church and cemetery from the south, 2016. (M. Peterson, 2016.)
Plate 26 – Reverend John West, no date. (Portrait hanging at St. John’s Cathedral, Winnipeg.)