

ANGLICAN CHURCHES OF MANITOBA

Architectural History Theme Study



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On the cover:

This image of Old St. James Anglican Church, with its tower, 1852-53, is courtesy of the Provincial Archives Manitoba.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	1
THE ANGLICAN CHURCH	2
THE BUILDINGS	4
The Churches of Red River: 1820-1869	8
Transition: 1870-1880	16
Settlement: 1881-1900	20
Establishment: 1901-1914	38
Consolidation: 1915-1945	49
Churches of the North	56
Post-War: 1946-Present	62

PREFACE

This booklet has been adapted from a larger publication developed in 1989 by the Historic Resources Branch of Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Tourism. That study, *A Study of Anglican Church Buildings in Manitoba*, should still be available in public libraries.

That original study was intended to assist Anglican Church authorities to gain a better understanding of the Church's architectural heritage, and thus to undertake better educational, tourism, designation and conservation programs. To that end, this original work also contained a substantial inventory of 230 buildings in the province. A pdf copy of the original study and another of the inventory are available by contacting the branch:

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This present extract from the 1989 report contains the contextual essay that was developed after a close review of the inventory results, and an examination of documents and information from the Anglican Church archives. This essay presents the many important and interesting themes that have attended the development of Anglican church architecture in Manitoba, and will be useful for anyone interested in this important story.

THE ANGLICAN CHURCH

Defined in the simplest terms, Anglicanism is that church in Christianity whose members are in communion with the See of Canterbury, the prime episcopate of the Church of England. While the Anglican Church of Canada has retained this link with the English Church, it is today a fully independent, self-governing body with rules of practice somewhat different from those pertaining in England. Anglicanism is often considered a Protestant church, but this is true only with several qualifications. For instance the church has retained an episcopal structure, that is a hierarchy of bishops, and its services still adhere to a tradition of ritual held in common with Catholicism.

Because of its position as the established Church of England, Anglicanism was introduced to Manitoba at an early stage in the province's history. Through the combined efforts of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Church Missionary Society, the first Anglican minister, Reverend John West, was sent to Manitoba in 1820. His responsibility was twofold: to minister to the needs of the Protestant settlers at Red River; and to preach the Gospel to the Native population. These tasks dominated the work of the church for the next fifty years.

For most of the nineteenth century the practical matters of church administration, including funding and the training of ministers, was handled by the Church Missionary Society based in England. Additional help was given by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (S.P.C.K.), another of the great English missionary societies. But this was only a provisional arrangement. The appointment of David Anderson as the Bishop of Rupert's Land in 1849 was the first step in a process leading to eventual autonomy for Anglicans in Manitoba. From the 1870s onwards, the vast district of Rupert's Land was gradually broken up into separate dioceses each with its own bishop, thus creating an administrative structure which lasts to the present day. At the same time the Bishop of Rupert's Land, resident at St. John's Cathedral, Winnipeg, assumed greater and greater responsibility for the administration of the church.

Today the Bishop of Rupert's Land is Metropolitan of the Ecclesiastical Province of Rupert's Land, a jurisdiction extending east to northwestern Ontario and west to British Columbia. Since 1893 the Ecclesiastical Province of Rupert's Land has been a member of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada, governing body of the Church across the country. Besides the diocese of Rupert's Land, the Province of Manitoba includes the diocese of Brandon, established in 1913, and part of the diocese of Keewatin founded in 1899. (Figure 1)

The administrative changes effecting the church in Manitoba at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries took place against a background of rapid growth. In 1891 Anglicans were, after the Presbyterians, the largest religious group in the Province with 20% of the population. Over the succeeding decades they retained this position so that in absolute numbers their membership quadrupled from 30,000 in 1891 to 121,000 in 1921. During these decades hundreds of churches were constructed across the province, and many of the churches included in this survey date from this period. Besides establishing parishes and ministering to local congregations, the church was developing in other ways. Committed to the education of a local clergy, the church undertook the expansion of St. John's College, a founding member of the University of Manitoba. In the early 1900s Anglicans opened a lodging and coffee house for transient men in Winnipeg. Finally the church supported and ran schools for the Native people, including those at Middlechurch and Elkhorn.

Since 1945 the administration of the church has been marked by greater centralization in the south and an expansion of the northern ministry made possible by the use of aircraft. With the decline of the rural population many small churches have been closed. While congregations continue to meet in regional centres, the maintenance of rural churches is a pressing problem with no easy solution. In Winnipeg the church continues to thrive: a focus of social, spiritual and musical life. In 1981 the Anglican population of Manitoba numbered 108,000 persons, or roughly 10% of the province's total.



Figure 1. The province of Manitoba is divided amongst three dioceses: Brandon, Rupert's Land and Keewatin.

THE BUILDINGS

Over two hundred churches are listed in this inventory. They are a remarkably varied group, ranging in size from the Chapel of the Mustard Seed, near Matlock, which accommodates perhaps fifteen people, to St. Matthew's, Winnipeg, seating more than 1500. Churches have been built of log, wood frame, brick, stone, concrete, concrete block, steel and glass, with many kinds of surface materials. The oldest, St. Andrew's, was begun in 1844, making it the oldest known church in Canada west of the Great Lakes; the newest church in the study, St. Stephen's, East Kildonan, was completed in 1978.

Because of this great diversity, it is helpful to keep in mind two points when looking at an Anglican church. The first is that the predominant influence on design has been the Gothic architectural tradition of medieval England. In the simplest churches this is reflected in a few standard elements: pointed windows, a steeply pitched roof and perhaps a belfry or a bell tower. In larger churches it is common to see stained or leaded glass, buttresses, elaborate spires, decorated and carved ceilings and sometimes carved stone.

The second point common to Anglican churches is that however large or small, they must meet the needs of the Anglican service. The two basic requirements are accommodation for the congregation during the service, termed the nave, and space for the clergy, called the chancel (Figure 2). The chancel is invariably distinguished from the nave in some way, by a change of level, by an arch or sometimes by a screen, called a rood screen (Figure 3). This name comes down to us from medieval times when the chancel screen often carried a cross or rood. A distinction is sometimes made between the chancel proper and the sanctuary which contains the high altar.

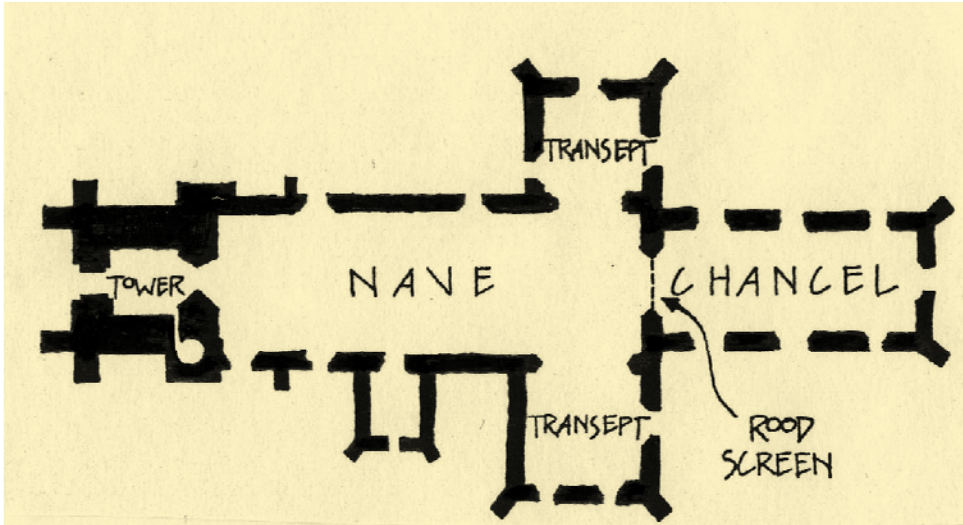


Figure 2.
Plan of a parish church showing nave, chancel, tower, and transepts.



Figure 3.
Rood screen from St. Luke's, Winnipeg.

Besides these main requirements, a small space called the vestry is also needed for the minister to robe himself for the service. Churches often have a porch of some kind and housing for a bell, either in a tower or in a belfry atop the main ridge of the roof. While each builder and architect arranged the tower to fit his own needs and taste, the presence of a tower and the disposition of the door at the front and/or on the liturgical south of the nave are both rooted in the English building tradition.

The history of Anglicanism in Manitoba can be loosely divided into successive stages of growth and change. This framework has been followed in the discussion of church architecture with the singular exception of the North. Northern churches are treated as a separate entity in recognition of the unique conditions which have shaped them. The following dates should be considered approximate.

Red River Settlement: 1820-1869.

The Anglican Church was a major force in the society of Red River. Some of the historically most important churches found in this survey were built during this period.

Transition: 1870-1880.

The 1870's were marked by the early growth of Winnipeg and the establishment of pioneering settlements on the open prairie away from the shelter of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. Architecturally it was a period of transition in church building, laying the foundation for the 1880s.

Settlement: 1881-1900.

The coming of the railroad made possible the settlement of much of southern Manitoba. Dozens of churches were built across the southern part of the province.

Establishment: 1901-1914.

The prosperity of the years before 1914 enabled Anglicans to build upon the pioneering work of the previous decades. New, larger churches were built in the country towns and in Winnipeg's expanding suburbs.

Consolidation: 1915-1945.

The outbreak of war slowed church building, but this was followed by the resurgence in the 1920s. Some of the Winnipeg's finest Anglican churches were constructed at this time. It was during these decades that out – migration from farming areas began, and the church first faced the necessity of closing small parish churches.

Post-War: 1946-Present.

Since 1946 the influence of modernism has transformed church design. Many small churches have been closed but this has been balanced by the construction of new churches in regional centres as well as in Winnipeg.