

Knox United Church
303 Pruden Street



Year Built: 1889

Contractor: George Coates

Added to Heritage Register: October 26, 2009

Description:

Knox United Church, located on Pruden Street, has the distinction of beginning with a different name in a different part of the city. In 1889 it was constructed by George Coates as St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, on the corner of Brodie and Donald Streets, making it one of the oldest churches in the area.

By the early 1900's, the congregation had grown too large for the modest sized structure. At first additions were made in an attempt to lodge the new members, but it was eventually decided a bigger structure was needed. The original church building was shifted to make room for the grand structure of the new St. Andrew's Presbyterian. For a few years, the old church remained on site to act as a Sunday school but it was decided in 1913 that there was a need for a Presbyterian church in the East End of the City of Fort William. The solidly constructed church building was moved from its original site, although it took almost one year as most of the work was being done by horses.

Knox Presbyterian opened its doors and began ministry from its new location on Pruden Street in 1914. The first minister of the church was Reverend D.J. Ellison, who had arrived from Ayr, Ontario with his wife and two children. The first sermon was given after the church had undergone some renovations. The foundation was updated with new brick, floors and plaster. Another big change for the church came in 1925 when the congregation voted to amalgamate with Methodists and Congregational Churches to

become United. In 1957/58, the Minor Hall was added onto the structure, giving the congregation a space in which to hold meetings.

Architecture:

The plan of the church consists of an oblong nave with a short gabled projection on the east wall, and a central semi-detached tower on the façade. The building is framed with brick veneer. On the first storey of the three storey tower, there is a double door with a Gothic arched transom on its face, and one window on each of the sidewalls. A pair of iron light fixtures flanks the door. The upper storeys of the tower are the same on all sides: they each have a small window on the side and front walls. All of the windows on the main storey of the church are Gothic arched and most have a six paned sash topped by glazing bars that describe a “Y”. The cornice of the tower has paneled frieze-board and brackets and the roof is a broach spire.

At the basement level of the tower there is a brick gabled vestibule on the east wall. There are concrete steps leading to the church entrance. One window flanks the tower on either side of the façade.

The west wall of the church has a central gable with an off-centre, Gothic variation of a Palladian window. At either end of the wall at the main storey level is a window, the one on the north is bricked up.

The east wall consists of a central gable with a pointed semi-circular window immediately below it. The rest of the wall is regularly fenestrated being four bays long. At either end, above the main storey window is a triplet of windows identical to the one on the façade.

The rear wall, regularly fenestrated, has a central brick chimney. The upper storey has triplet windows and the main storey windows below have been partly covered and bricked by a flat roofed modern brick addition at the rear.

The church rests on very high foundations that have basement windows at regular intervals. The interior is built on an Akron plan, with a gallery around three sides.

The building has both Georgian and Italianate stylistic roots; the basic exterior plan and elevation comes from the former while the roundheaded windows are reflective of the latter. Its later broach spire gives it a Gothic touch.