

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church
211 Brodie Street North



Year Built: 1909

Architects: J.C. Stinson and W. Hood

Style: English Gothic

Notable Features: Simpson islet grey/white sandstone

Main entrance, composed of two Gothic arches with elaborate moulds

Ninety-five foot north-east tower

Legal Description: Plan 123 Lot 47 to 48 W/S Brodie St

Current Owner: St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

Date of Designation: Oct 23rd, 1984

By-law No: 197 – 1984

Description:

The history of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church begins long before the erection of the magnificent building which stands today and has been granted status as a designated heritage site. According to a church pamphlet, the congregation traces its' history back to 1896 when Presbyterian services were first held in Fort William, which was at the time a Hudson Bay Fort on the banks of the Kaministiquia River. In 1889, the first St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church was built and remained on site for over twenty years before being moved to Pruden St. to become building for the Knox United Church. In 1909 it was decided that the congregation had grown too large for the small building to accommodate, so a new church building was constructed.

The McKellar family was quite influential in the creation of the new church structure. The land upon which the structure was built had been donated to the Presbyterian Church by the family. Peter McKellar, who founded the Thunder Bay

Historical Society, was a member of the building committee¹ and was responsible for laying the foundation stone,² which comes from Mount McKay. Also, two McKellar sisters donated a stained glass window to the Church, depicting The Good Shepard.³

The cost of construction, although significant, was eased by the generous donations made by numerous members of the community. It is said that the contractor, Mr. M. H. Braden contributed much of the sandstone for the building, allowing the congregation to enjoy an authentic looking building instead of one made of brick. Four hundred and forty subscribers pledged enough money to fund half of the cost of the structure, and the rest was borrowed from the Canada Life Assurance Co. and the Bank of Montreal.⁴ The Carnegie Foundation also pledged monies for the costly organ, as did the Ladies' Guild.⁵ In thanking the community for their generous response towards the undertaking of the magnanimous task, the Church promised the new structure would offer an array of public services, "in greater congregational endeavor and in fulfilling the responsibilities of Presbyterianism in this Imperial City of the Unsalted Seas."⁶

Apart from minor renovations, the church's structure has remained unaltered. Recently, when a house hiding the south wall of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church was torn down, the unsightly brick wall was exposed. In an effort to aesthetically please, local artist Mike O'Connor was hired to paint a stone mural overtop of the brick. The result is an authentic looking south wall which blends nicely with the rest of the church.

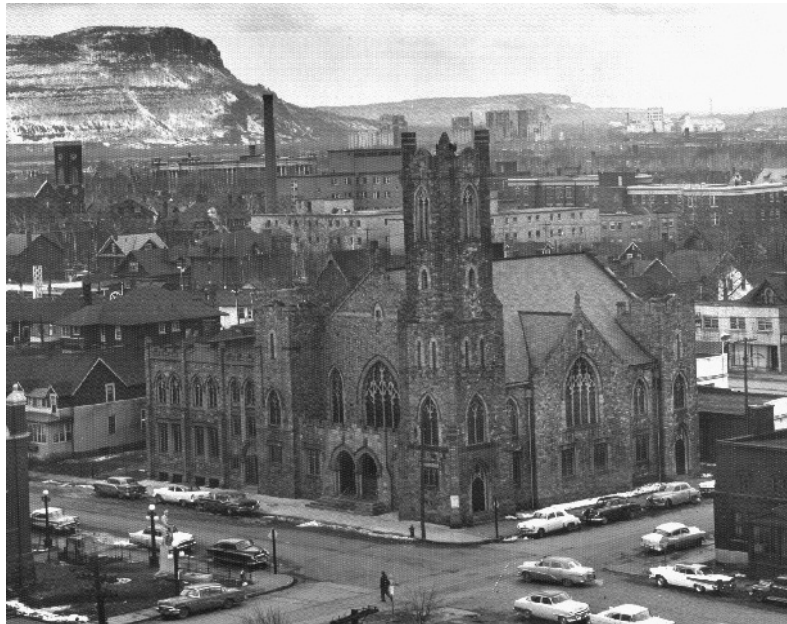


photo courtesy of: Thunder Bay Museum

¹ J. Bick, *Church marks 75th anniversary*. Lakehead Living, Tuesday, August 30th, 1983

² St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Hall, Manse

³ The Morning Herald, *Dedicatory Services in New St. Andrew's Tomorrow*. June 12th, 1909 No. 342

⁴ St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Hall, Manse

⁵ J. Bick, *Church marks 75th anniversary*. Lakehead Living, Tuesday, August 30th, 1983

⁶ The Morning Herald, *Dedicatory Services in New St. Andrew's Tomorrow*. June 12th, 1909 No. 342

Architecture:

The first St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church to stand on this site was constructed in 1889, but by the early 1900's, the unimposing structure proved to be too small for the growing congregation. In a special meeting held on March 13th, 1907 the church council decided a new church building should be constructed, one that could seat between 800 – 1000 people.⁷ The two local architects designated for the project; Mr. William Hood and Mr. John Stinson, designed the church in the style of 14th century English Gothic.⁸ One of the most striking architectural features of the church is the massive tower at the north-east corner, which is reminiscent of the "historic towers in Scotland and is suggestive of the fact that the Presbyterian church has a history behind it stretching back to the Reformation..."⁹

The first drafts for the structure called for a brick church, but after laying the foundation a conference was held between Braden (the contractor), the building committee and the architects. It was discussed that for an additional four thousand dollars, the entire structure could be made from Simpson islet grey/white sandstone. Fortunately, the members of the congregation willingly agreed to the supplementary cost.¹⁰ The resulting edifice was declared "magnificent," "the most imposing...in the city," which has "attracted much complimentary notice."¹¹

Of special interest is the main entrance, which faces Brodie Street. It is composed of two Gothic arches with elaborate moulds and is supported at the centre and on either side by ten massive, polished granite columns. The ornamental cap of Bedford stone is beautifully carved, the design at the centre being the Maple Leaf, while the one on the right is carved into a Rose and on the left, the Scottish Thistle. The label mould around the arches stops with two bosses, carved with Shamrocks in bold relief, while on the right arch final is carved the Leek, representing Wales and on the left final are the Lilies of France. All these carvings are symbolic of the fact that everyone is welcome to the church.¹²

The main tower of the north-east corner is also architecturally significant. It rises to a height of ninety-five feet and is supported by four angle buttresses. Square to the clock loft, it changes into an octagon and terminates in the well known typical Gothic weathering of this period of architecture.

Stained glass windows enhance the beauty of the church, depicting The Good Shepard, the Dove with the Olive Branch, a Wheat Sheaf, the Burning Bush and St. Andrew's Cross. These windows are effectively atmospheric for the interior of the church as well, which is constructed entirely of hardwood. The interior design is simple; four

⁷ Graham Bacon Welter, *St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church Building Restoration Study*. November 15th, 1984

⁸ The Morning Herald, *Dedicatory Services in New St. Andrew's Tomorrow*. June 12th, 1909 No. 342

⁹ *ibid*

¹⁰ J. Bick, *Church marks 75th anniversary*. Lakehead Living, Tuesday, August 30th, 1983

¹¹ The Morning Herald, *Dedicatory Services in New St. Andrew's Tomorrow*. June 12th, 1909 No. 342

¹² The Morning Herald, *Dedicatory Services in New St. Andrew's Tomorrow*. June 12th, 1909 No. 342

spacious aisles separate the pews which are situated in a semi-circle. Massive oak staircases lead to the gallery and help to create the subdued tone which is in keeping with the religious character of the building.

The Architects:

William Hood: Helping design St. Paul's United, Brodie Street Resource Library and St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, William Hood was a well known and successful architect of his time. He was first a resident of Fort William, arriving in 1906 or 1907 and joining with John Stinson.

John C. Stinson: Listed as a contractor in 1899, Stinson made the shift to architect in 1903. The Fort William Times Journal mentions in an article written for the March 30th, 1907 edition: "J.C. Stinson ... has probably designed the majority of the buildings in the City during the last few years..."