

# PUBLIC SCHOOL BUILDINGS OF MANITOBA

An Architectural History Theme Study



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**On the cover:**

Primary elevation for "Frame School Building, No. 3." This design, from 1903, was developed along with two other schemes by architect Samuel Hooper for the provincial Department of Education, which at that time was seeking to provide good standardized designs to rural school districts. (*The Western School Journal*, 1906, pp. 275-77.)

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# PREFACE

School buildings are essential aspects of Manitoba's historical development, and a popular focus for heritage attention. In 1994, recognizing the importance of these landmarks, the Historic Resources Branch of Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Tourism undertook a major study of the building type. Through on-site explorations of the nearly 700 extant school buildings across Manitoba, and then a careful review of historical information and academic and popular studies on the subject, the branch developed a study that focused primarily on the physical qualities of these buildings – on their settings, architectural character and material construction. The ultimate purpose of the study was to provide the necessary historical background that would help identify a handful of buildings that could be said to succinctly and effectively sum up the architectural history of the building type in the province. This focus ensures that other important aspects of the history of schools in Manitoba—one-room school experience, immigrant experience, educational theories, etc.—would more effectively be focused on buildings that are at once interesting and important.

The following overview of school buildings in Manitoba is a redesigned extract from the original report. That study included a major section devoted to the inventory of extant schools in Manitoba. A pdf copy of the original study and another of the inventory are available by contacting the branch:

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This present version of the report now also features in a concluding section the results of the work by the Province and various municipalities to select those buildings that merit designation, either as Provincial or Municipal Heritage Sites.

# MANITOBA EDUCATIONAL HISTORY

The history of Manitoba's public schools has been organized in the following essay according to five distinct phases in the province's early school building development. The first, brief section deals with the Red River Settlement period. While the schools from this period were affiliated with religious institutions, and therefore were not public, the section provides some necessary background to the changes that were to follow. Moreover, architectural traditions from this period were important for later developments.

The study of public school buildings in Manitoba actually begins in the second section, entitled Pioneer. The section commences in 1871, when the first legislation to enact a public school system was passed. The system was a dual one, providing two boards of education, one Roman Catholic, the other Protestant. The architectural developments of the period mirrored the basic trends of all building projects in pioneer circumstances: thus schools in rural areas were often very simple designs of rugged character. The situation was quite different in urban areas, especially Winnipeg, where some very grand schools were constructed.

It was during this period that the educational bureaucracy was established. With a fierce determination, they immediately undertook the daunting task of creating a system, and a set of buildings, that was to provide the province's children with modern educational opportunities. At this early period the benefits of a formal education were not universally accepted, however, and considerable work was required before the Department of Education ultimately was successful.

Dramatic immigration between 1870 and 1890 upset the ethnic and religious balance in the province, and an immediate consequence was the abolition of the dual public system in 1890. This controversial change begins the third section, Establishment, which lasted until around the turn of the century. The period was marked by the growth of a sophisticated urban school system in Winnipeg, Brandon and Portage la Prairie. In rural areas, there was increasing attention to school designs and a wide range of schemes were employed, much to the consternation of educational authorities. They continually sought regularity and consistency in the construction of school buildings in an effort to ensure a measure of equality of opportunity for all students.

The year 1903 saw the first set of standardized plans produced for the Department of Education. Their introduction was the harbinger for one-room schools, during a period here called Standardization. From that point on, the department was to have almost total control over school design, especially in rural areas. On one level, this meant that most students were provided with a certain equality of experience and comfort. On another level, the standardization of school designs brought a certain dulling conformity to school architecture.

In the province's cities, the period was marked by enormous growth and the creation of some of the best buildings designed in the province. In Winnipeg, especially, where the pride and ambition characteristic of the era was strongly expressed, school buildings were exceptional. There was increasing sophistication of planning and in the essential concerns for hygiene. At the same time, however, there also was a certain regularity of form and style that came to describe the architecture of large school buildings. Schools were becoming clearly institutional, very unlike the domestic and ecclesiastical forms that had described many schools of the previous thirty years.

The final period covered in the study, Stabilization, extended from 1919 until 1939. The trauma wrought by World War I and the recessions and depressions visited on the world economy over those years were to be seen clearly in very new developments in school architecture. In both urban and rural areas there were fewer buildings, constructed at greatly reduced cost, and generally of much more modest design, especially when compared with the buildings constructed during the previous decades.

Between 1870 and 1940 almost 2,300 school buildings were constructed in Manitoba. The vast majority of these were modest one-room structures built throughout the countryside. Over the years more than half of the province's school buildings have been lost, destroyed by fire, demolished because of old age or because school district consolidation rendered them obsolete. Moreover, after the school district consolidation programs of the 1950s and 1960s, many of the remaining one-room schools that remained were sold and moved from their original sites, to be re-used as residences, garages or granaries.

## RED RIVER SETTLEMENT (PRE-1871)

During the 18th and early 19th centuries, while the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) held sway throughout the interior of northern North America, educational opportunities typically were limited to the children of Company officers, and then usually only to the male children. For these boys this meant a return to Great Britain or the Canadas. For the vast majority of the population, formal education was largely unnecessary. Their livelihoods, tied as they were to manual labour for the Company, the buffalo hunt, or to subsistence farming, required intimate knowledge of nature and the ability to organize men and materials. At that time these occupations rarely required literacy or knowledge of culture that a formal education might provide.

The arrival of the Selkirk Settlers beginning in 1812, and the establishment of a sedentary agricultural community, eventually undermined the economy of the fur trade and the buffalo hunt. It also ushered in a new phase in educational opportunity. The fur trade, with its rigid hierarchies and limited changes for advancement, had only dallied with in-country education with a half-hearted – and short-lived – attempt in 1808 when it provided three teachers from England to instruct the children of Company factors and servants. The hopes of Lord Selkirk and the expectations of his farmers for better opportunities for their children were not to be ignored.

The first school activity for the Selkirk Settlers (who arrived here in 1812) was held, briefly, in 1815 in the governor's house, with the governor himself often leading the instruction. The first permanent schools were not provided until the arrival of missionaries of the Roman Catholic Church (in 1818) and Anglican Church (in 1820). For the next fifty years, the educational needs of the settlement largely were met by church-funded schools operated by Anglicans, Roman Catholics and Presbyterians, and by a small number of non-denominational schools.



The intent of each denomination was generally the same - to provide instruction that would direct children in the tenets and requirements of the religion and to encourage peace, docility and obedience to authority. Anglican and Catholic schools also eagerly accepted Aboriginal children as residential students, underlining the proselytizing component of education at that time. Primary level instruction included writing, mathematics and geography. Instruction for girls, who were often segregated, focused on domestic activities.

The ambitions of the churches and its most promising students quickly lead to the provision of secondary level education, with instruction in philosophy, geometry, classics, and in English schools, French. Bishop Joseph Provencher offered higher level education as early as 1822 and St. Boniface College was opened in 1857. The Anglicans, meanwhile, were operating Red River Academy in 1833, later to become St. John's College. Presbyterians were not able to build their own secondary facility until 1873.

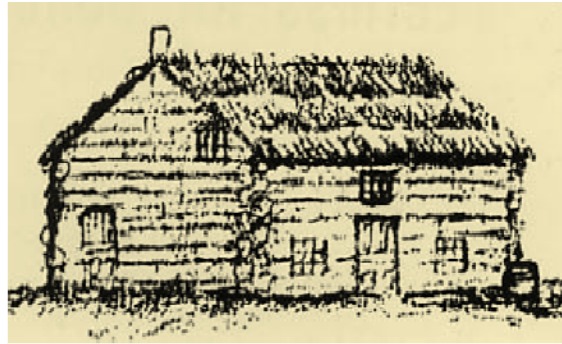
For the Anglicans and Roman Catholics the administrative framework was generally the same. The clergy hired the teachers and oversaw the content of the curriculum. The cost for schooling was generally £5, although those facilities that combined dormitory accommodations charged more - about £20.4 The cost of non-denominational schooling was beyond the reach of most settlers; for example, a European-style finishing school for girls established by Miss Matilda Davis near Lower Fort Garry charged £50 for a year of education, room and board. The exception came with the Presbyterians, who undertook a system in which school policy and teacher employment was decided by trustees chosen at a public meeting.

In 1849 there were 12 schools operating at Red River attended by almost 500 students; by 1870 there were 33 schools, almost evenly divided between Protestant and Roman Catholic parishes. While most schools were actually held in homes, churches, convents (Figure 1) or other facilities that were not always conducive to learning, there were frequent efforts to provide purpose-built facilities throughout the settlement (Figures. 2 and 3)

Most school buildings were of log construction, but a few were built of stone. For the most part the schools were modelled on domestic architectural traditions. Log schools were generally small, consisting of only one room, and were invariably crowded. A simple thatched gable roof covered the structure, which would have been built according to the prevalent construction technology of the period. Called Red River frame or piece-sur-piece, this procedure entailed the placement of short logs into slots cut into a series of vertical logs.

The actual appointments of most schools were minimal: usually just a blackboard and globe. Often, a sloping board was situated on the room's sunny side, under the windows, upon which students practiced writing in their copy books. For larger buildings in the settlement, builders often looked to the Georgian architectural tradition for a model. That style, typically used in domestic building, featured a symmetrical composition, hipped roof and small dormer windows in the roof. The afore-mentioned Miss Davis School (actually the dormitory for the girls) is one of the best remaining examples of Georgian architecture in the province (Figure 4)

The builders of the Presbyterian school at Kildonan drew their architectural inspiration from church precedents (Figure 5). Built of stone, the building is low, with evenly-spaced windows on each long wall (Figure 6). Primary level students were taught in a large front space, while secondary level pupils received instruction in a small room at the back.



**Figure 1.**

St. Norbert Roman Catholic convent and school, 1858. The illustration shows roughly constructed log walls and a thatched roof, typical of the era. Demolished. (PAM\*)



**Figure 2.**

St. John's Anglican Church and school, ca. 1830. The tiny log school building sits on the right side of the illustration. Demolished. (PAM)



**Figure 3.**

Red River Academy in the Parish of St. John's, 1852. The collection of three small buildings shows the influence of Georgian architectural styling, with the hipped roofs and symmetrical facades. Demolished. (PAM)

\* Throughout this report, the abbreviation PAM is used to signify Provincial Archives of Manitoba.



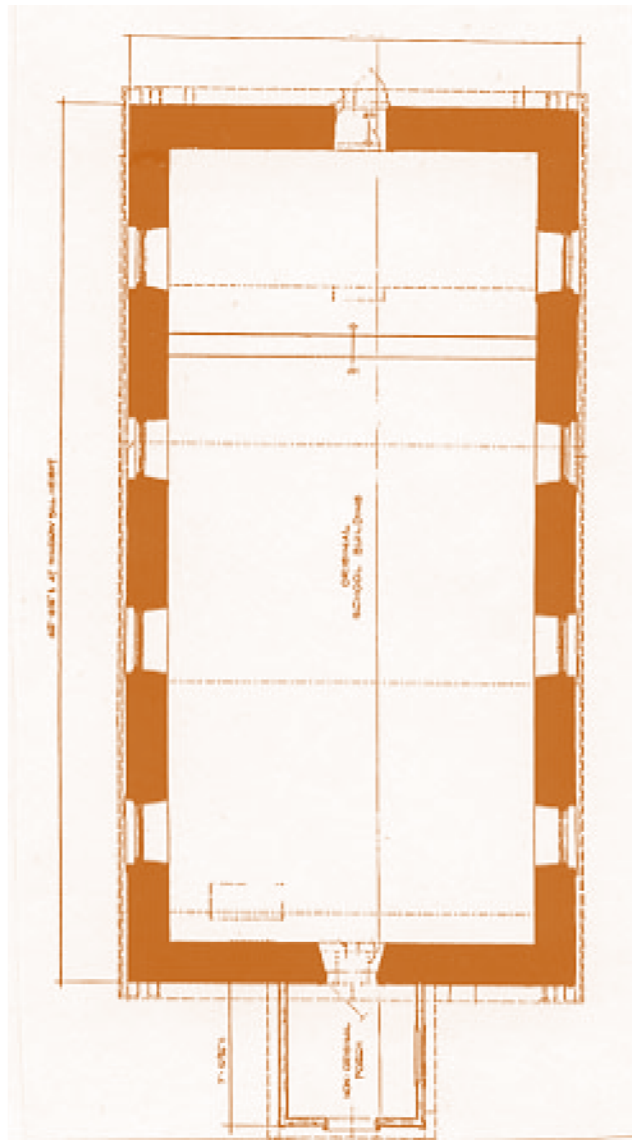
**Figure 4.**

Residence section for Miss Davis' School for Girls, 1857-58. Classes were held in a wood frame building behind the main structure. (PAM)



**Figure 5.**

Kildonan (West) School, now known as Nesbit Hall, built in 1864. With its small tower, this Presbyterian school has a church-like appearance. (PAM)



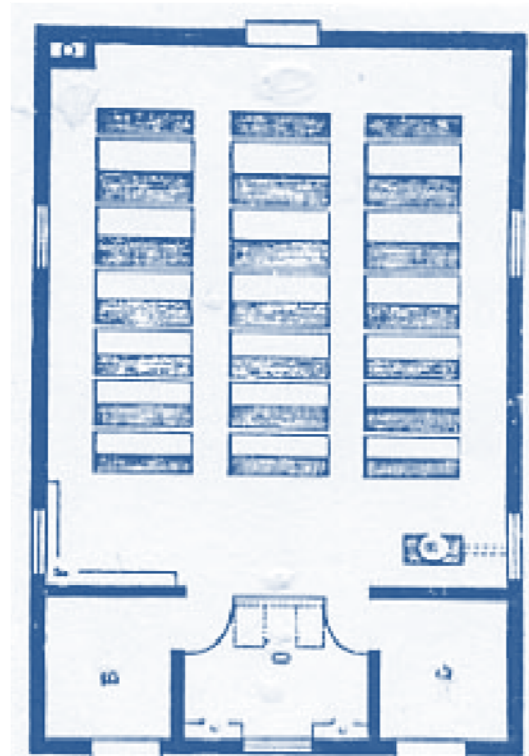
**Figure 6.**

Plan of Kildonan (West) school. Primary level students were taught in the larger section. Secondary instruction was carried out in the smaller area (originally enclosed) at the back. The church was designed and built under the supervision of Reverend James Nesbit, who had apprenticed as a carpenter and stonemason before entering the ministry.



**Figure 7.**

This perspective illustration of a Henry Barnard design shows the Gothic Revival styling so popular during the 19th century. (*School Architecture in Rural Canada Before 1930*, p. 191)



**Figure 8.**

The floor plan of the Barnard school above features a large classroom and separate entrances for boys and girls (marked B and C). This straightforward plan was to be used for most one-room school designs throughout North America well into the 20th century. (*School Architecture in Rural Canada Before 1930*, p. 191)

## PIONEER (1871-1889)

Manitoba's entry into Confederation in 1870, the adoption of the Manitoba Schools Act in May of 1871, coupled with significant population growth, economic advances and developments in communications and transportation all combined to transform education in the new province. Over the next eighteen years the loosely organized sectarian school system of the early 19th century was gradually replaced by a modern, publicly funded system with increasingly up-to-date standards and facilities.

The Manitoba Schools Act was modelled on Quebec's, with the adoption of a dual system based on religious affiliation, Roman Catholic or Protestant. The fourteen-man Board of Education established by the legislation had equal representation from each section, an accurate reflection at that time of the religious and ethnic composition of the province. And each section was funded equally from government revenues and local taxation, had its own board, superintendent and authority over curriculum, texts, teachers, administration and building inspection. Twelve school districts were created for each section following the established parish system.

The greatest immediate impact on actual school building construction came with the two superintendents appointed by each section: for the Protestant School Board, the Reverend W. Cyprian Pinkham; and for the Roman Catholic Board, Elie Tasse. Both men were well-versed in the educational theories of the day, and were especially cognizant of the school building proposals of the American theorist Henry Barnard.

Barnard's theories had been widely disseminated through his 1848 publication, *School Architecture*. The standards he set - basically for adequate internal appointments to promote health and learning and an attractive external design - found great favour throughout North America (Figures. 7 and 8). In Upper Canada (later the Province of Ontario) Egerton Ryerson, the powerful Superintendent of Education during the 1850s and 1860s, took up Barnard's ideas almost with a religious zeal. His influence on eastern Canadian school design was quickly felt in the province of Manitoba, especially with the influx of great numbers of Ontario settlers into Manitoba during the 1870s and 1880s.

The sophistication of the Manitoba system, apparent on paper, was actually difficult to perceive in the field. In these early years, Tasse and Pinkham encountered considerable difficulty. Their journals are replete with criticisms of school designs and conditions. Schools often were closed when inspectors arrived and attendance was poor. An inspector's report from 1874 suggests some of the problems, here with the school at East Kildonan:

The school is a roomy building, but the snow occasionally drifts in at the roof, and melting, drops down in several places.

The considerable knowledge residing in the educational bureaucracy exceeded the existing economic conditions and technology. In the 1870s Manitoba was still in a pioneering stage of development. The immediate concern of many settlers continued to be clearing the land and struggling with the variety of natural calamities that affected their crops. Even in the growing urban centres in the province, typical occupations still only required limited levels of literacy. The provision of schooling tended to lag. Moreover, local school districts had no organized means for tax collection and classes often were held in other facilities, or in small log structures, constructed from locally available materials (Figure 9).



And despite inspectors' protestations - and threats to withdraw government grants - there was little that could be done to rectify the situation. Grants were only applicable to salaries, not buildings, so that it was almost impossible to enforce the regulations. Thus, while plans were to be submitted for approval, it was more often the case that local authorities were left to their own devices in finding accommodation or in selecting a contractor who could best carry out their wishes for a minimum cost.

This is not to say that local efforts to meet standards were unknown. Trustees were reported to be keen to provide as good a building as their means permitted, but often were constrained by the limits of the local contractor who lacked experience in the important subjects of heating, venting and lighting. However, some school districts met and even surpassed the standards as early as 1875:

The school house in this district [Morris, Figure 10] is built of brick, and is the first school house of this material in the Province. It is 16 x 20 feet, and built in such a manner as to admit enlargement, when the needs of the district demand greater accommodation.

The great disparity in building environments (and also likely in the level of teaching provided) were what inspired the Department of Education in their determination. Without the standards that would ensure a certain level of quality for all students, both in their buildings and in their teachers, it must certainly have seemed doubtful that the province could prosper in the rapidly changing Canadian society that increasingly required an acceptable level of education.



**Figure 9.**

A romanticized representation of the first public school in Winnipeg, built in 1871, and located in Point Douglas. Demolished. (PAM)



**Figure 10.**

The handsome school building in Morris was the first in Manitoba to be built (in 1875) of brick. Demolished. (*Furrows in the Valley*, p. 65)

In the City of Winnipeg, the situation was quite different. Large, modern schools were quickly constructed, and by 1880 the city boasted several substantial brick schools. Each section of the Board relied on a different architectural expression for their buildings. For the most part the Catholic section drew on the French Second Empire tradition, while the English section relied on Gothic Revival and Italianate styling.

The Protestant Board completed a dozen schools by 1889.<sup>14</sup> The inspectors were well pleased:

The City of Winnipeg now enjoys educational advantages of the highest order. During the past summer [1877] two large and very handsome school houses have been erected. The Central School [Figure 11] is a T-shaped building, on the plan 28 by 94 feet, built of brick in an American style of architecture, having over one hundred large, well proportioned circular-headed windows.

The construction of another Central School (No. 2), in 1882 (Figure 12), reflected the rapid growth of the city, its increasing wealth and a sensibility to building standards that was to characterize Winnipeg's Protestant school buildings through this period.

The Roman Catholic section of the Board of Education was just as ambitious. And while Tasse felt school buildings should be "plain and modest in design,<sup>16</sup> structures like St. Boniface College (1881) and Provencher School (1886) were nevertheless impressive buildings (Figures 13 and 14).

The arrival of the Canadian Pacific Railway into Manitoba in the late 1870s and its extension to Brandon in 1881 created new opportunities for settlement, and the need for school building construction. By the mid-1880s, most of southern Manitoba had been opened, primarily by pioneers from eastern Canada. As a result, of course, many new school buildings were added to the responsibilities of the respective sections.



**Figure 11.**

Central School, Winnipeg, 1877. This Italianate design by architect C.A. Barber was the winning entry in a contest established by the English Section of the Board of Education. The building was almost a direct copy of a Barnard design.<sup>10</sup> With the construction of Central School No. 2 (below) as a girls' facility, Central No. 1 became a boys' school. Demolished. (PAM)



**Figure 12.**

Central School No. 2, 1882, was by James Chisholm, one of Manitoba's most influential early architects. The design combined the influences of the Italianate Revival in the windows and Gothic Revival in the tower. Demolished. (PAM)



**Figure 13.**

St. Boniface College, 1881, exhibited typical French architectural traits, with its mansard roof, arched dormers and central pavilion. Demolished. (PAM)



**Figure 14.**

Provencher School, 1886. The stairs may have been used to segregate boys and girls. Demolished. (PAM)

In Brandon and Portage la Prairie, for example, large schools had been built by the Catholic and Protestant sections by 1883 (Figures 15 and 16). Throughout the countryside, hundreds of new schools were constructed with the opening of the frontier.

The typical one-room school building was small (20' x 24'), gable-roofed, and despite its construction in wood frame, probably not any warmer than its log predecessor. There was only a modest range of styles and appointments (Figures. 17, 18 and 19). Within, the one-room schools continued to provide accommodation for all ages and grade levels, up to the eighth grade.

Criticism from the authorities on low building standards persisted, however. The most common complaint was that the buildings still did not conform to recommendations, either for design or hygiene (specifically good air circulation, adequate lighting and a safe heat source); local prejudices were felt to be too influential in school building design. Nevertheless, there were considerable improvements. The greater number of and larger windows in most new schools created a better internal environment, allowing in more light and producing better ventilation. Window placement was actually one of the most distinctive characteristics of the new schools. Typically three windows were arranged on either side of the school's long walls. Many builders used the windows for minor decorative embellishment. Bell towers also were common additions.

The arrival of Icelandic and Mennonite settlers in 1875 established two quite different responses to the existing educational framework. The Icelanders were quick to adapt to the educational system and to building expectations. The Mennonites, however, were steadfast in their independence and their early school buildings followed Mennonite traditions rather than the mainstream (Figure 20).



**Figure 15.**

St. Joseph's Convent and School, Brandon,  
1882. Demolished. (PAM)



**Figure 16.**

Central School, Portage la Prairie, Demolished  
in 1949. (PAM)



**Figure 17.**

Mount Prospect School, 1882. The simplest of plans, forms and appointments describe this tiny school house.



**Figure 18.**

Star Mound School, 1886, features pedimented caps atop the three windows. The broad porch was added at a later date.





**Figure 19.**

Sandhurst School, 1884. The basic form was here enlivened with a clipped gable roof. Demolished. (*Ox Trails to Blacktop*, p. 127)



**Figure 20.**

Mennonite School, Hochfeld, ca. 1880. With its long plan and shuttered windows, this school could have been mistaken for a traditional Mennonite house. Demolished. (PAM)

Considerable changes to the educational system continued apace. In 1877 the University of Manitoba was established. In 1882 the first Normal Teacher Training Schools were formed by each section. These facilities were critical for the success of the educational system. They provided training for teachers entering the profession and, in the egalitarian spirit of the system, ensured that students throughout the province received instruction from teachers with the same skill level. To address some building concerns, in 1885 a set of regulations was passed by the Legislature that laid down explicit standards for the construction, design, heating and ventilating that were to be followed in school districts. Greater control was given to inspectors and the changes to school design and construction were considerable. In 1889, moreover, the Superintendent of the Protestant School District No. 1, Daniel McIntyre, was sent to the United States to learn more about ventilation and hygiene.

By the end of the 1880s, there were 719 school districts operating in the province, 636 of these with purpose-built schools. The evolution of the building stock was impressive. The greater proportion were neat little wood frame buildings, less than 100 were of log, about 25 were stone and eight were brick.

Throughout this period, however, the imbalance between the number of students and schools in each section (in 1886, 543 Protestant and 98 Roman Catholic<sup>20</sup>), was bound to cause conflict. As early as 1874 the quickly growing Anglo-Ontario population of the province had succeeded in having the annual school grant divided according to aggregate attendance, rather than equally to each section. By the latter half of the 1880s the situation was explosive.

## ESTABLISHMENT (1890-1902)

During the decade before the turn of the 20th century, Manitoba's educational system underwent considerable change. In 1890, the Thomas Greenway government addressed the simmering conflict created by the imbalance between the burgeoning English-speaking, overwhelmingly Protestant population and the much smaller French-speaking Roman Catholic population. The government abolished the existing dual system and replaced it with a single publicly funded system modelled on the Ontario School Act. The new system was wholly administered by a non-sectarian Board of Education under a responsible minister. A seven-member Educational Advisory Board was established to make regulations. Roman Catholic schools continued to operate as separate entities, but without public support.

On paper, the impact on actual school construction was to consolidate available resources - money, architects, inspectors, ideas - for one school within each district, rather than the two that were possible under the old system. And certainly, there were many fine new buildings constructed, especially in urban centres.

For the most part, though, the majority of one-room schools built during this period continued to be of the simplest plan, form and appointments; that is, a small rectangle, a gable roof and virtually no embellishments (Figure 21). The basic characteristic distinguishing school buildings from small farm houses continued to be the use of two or three evenly spaced windows on each long wall.

Modest increases in local economic security, availability of materials and broader dissemination of information, however, conspired to create an environment conducive to the construction of better one-room schools than was possible ten years earlier. The expression of these architectural advances ranged from the use of simple adornments, like bell towers and decorative wood trim (Figure 22) to more picturesque forms and rooflines (Figures. 23 and 24) to the use of more substantial materials (Figure. 25).



**Figure 21.**

Coates School, 1901. The basic one-room form continued to be used for the majority of rural schools during this period. Demolished. (*Our First Century*, p. 234)



**Figure 22.**

Soudan School, 1899. A fine bell tower and porch distinguished this handsome little building. Demolished. (PAM)



**Figure 23.**

Craiglea School, 1892. The building had a decided church-like appearance, with the grouping of windows beneath a decorated gable. Demolished. (*The Path of the Pioneers*, p. 100)



**Figure 24.**

Portage la Prairie School, 1896. This exceptional one-room design was the work of Winnipeg architect George Browne. Demolished. (*Canadian Architect and Builder*, 1896, n.p.)



**Figure 25.**

Tenby School, 1895. Built of concrete blocks manufactured on the site, the designer of this school also used a truncated pyramidal roof and twin dormers to create a novel form.

At the same time there were occasional attempts, at a local level, to apply standard designs. One especially interesting scheme, used at least four times in the Carman area during the mid-1890s, featured a shallow-roofed class space fronted with a shed-roofed entrance and a bell tower (Figure 26).

In French-speaking areas the design of small public schools continued to rely on the mansard or gambrel roof to distinguish them from the prevailing forms (Figures. 27 and 28).

This is not to say that the school inspectors were satisfied. In fact, local individualism was a continuing source of irritation to the department. An inspector's list of defects typically included the use of small porches, low ceilings, poor ventilation, inadequate flues, inadequate or poorly-located blackboards and a general disregard for aesthetics. An inspector's observation as late as 1900 is indicative:

The average school house is not a thing of beauty. It usually looks very base and bleak and uninviting, out and alone on the open prairie.

Still, the advances were impressive. The number of one-room school buildings almost doubled, to 1,127, between 1890 and 1902. By the end of this period, furthermore, many schools were constructed according to contemporary standards set by the Department of Education. Moreover, there was increasing attention given to providing ancillary facilities, like stables, privies and even on-site teacherages.



**Figure 26.**

Garnett School, ca. 1895. The combination of roof shapes created a distinctive design, one that became a standard for a few years in the Carman area. Demolished. (*Dufferin*, p. 173)



**Figure 27.**

St. Joachim School, ca. 1890. A squat gambrel and highly decorated bell tower distinguished this distinctly French building. Demolished. (PAM)



**Figure 28.**

Montcalm School, 1899. A mansard roof reflected the architectural heritage of this French district. Demolished. (PAM)

Despite the continuing focus on agricultural employment, there was increasing recognition that an education could be an entree to clerical, business and professional careers in the rapidly growing urban markets of the province. The expansion of towns and cities during this period generated demands for larger, graded educational facilities, as well as for secondary (or collegiate) institutes. By 1892 Winnipeg, Brandon (Figure 29) and Portage la Prairie all had established collegiate institutes, with the facility in Winnipeg a separate building (Figure 30). In smaller urban centres there was a building boom as large graded schools were constructed. By 1900 fifty such facilities were completed.

Naturally, the physical size, public expense and significance of these buildings demanded a greater architectural sophistication than was deemed necessary for small one-room schools. An architect was often commissioned to prepare drawings, and although the department was still empowered to approve the designs, the local desire to create distinctive - and often picturesque - buildings was still prevalent (Figures. 31 and 32).

While there was a great, and exciting, range of designs produced during this period, there were still basic similarities, with roots in Ontario, where many of the design problems associated with this building type had already been effectively worked out (Figure 33). Typically, the building was organized around a central staircase, with a standard classroom size (26' x 32') of two to four rooms on each floor. The basic plan was easily adaptable to any of the popular stylistic schemes of the period, Gothic Revival, Romanesque Revival, Italianate or Second Empire.

In Manitoba, this type of building was invariably bulky, on a near-square plan and two storeys in height. Considerable attention was given to the roof design, although the most common form was a hip. In fact, the most popular architectural expression derived much of its character from the Georgian tradition, with its formal, handsome features. The grandest of these buildings were constructed of stone and brick, but many schools were erected with a wood frame, covered with wood siding.





**Figure 29.**

Central School, Brandon, 1892. This ambitious design featured twin towers topped with steep mansard roofs, a popular architectural expression used for large public buildings of the period. Demolished. (*Brandon. A Prospect of a City*, p. 73)



**Figure 30.**

Winnipeg Collegiate Institute, 1892. Again, the mansard roof was used, here to provide extra space, likely for an auditorium. Demolished. (PAM)



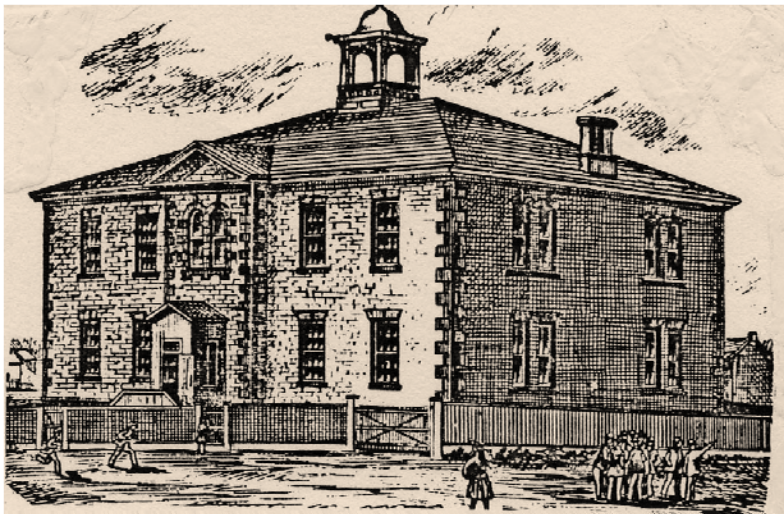
**Figure 31.**

Gretna Public School, 1892. This was an impressive design built of wood and adorned with many picturesque elements, including the bell tower, roof cresting, the interesting window shapes and their playful disposition in the walls. Demolished. (*Gretna. Window on the Northwest*, p. 121)



**Figure 32.**

Elkhorn School, 1896-97. The basic box shape was here enlivened with an inset entrance bay, gable extensions containing the windows and a combination of round- and segmentally-arched windows. Demolished. (*Steel and Grass Routes*, p. 73)



**Figure 33.**

Almonte High School, Almonte, Ontario, 1875. Buildings like this formed the basis for the design of large late-19th century schools in Manitoba. ("The Noblest Monument is the School"; *The Urban Public School in Canada Before 1930*, p. 63)

In Manitoba, the form could be very simple, with only the hipped roof and a central pediment (Figure 34). Or it could be a very sophisticated expression of the style (Figure 35). More often it was reworked with the addition of a central pavilion, a picturesque bell tower and sometimes other stylistic influences, especially Romanesque Revival or Italianate (Figure 36).

Another fairly common design that came into use towards the end of the period featured a corner tower (Figure 37). The dramatic form created by the corner tower was intended only as a temporary measure. As the student population of the community increased, it was anticipated that a second wing would be added to the building and the tower would be transformed into the central focus of a symmetrical design.

One other school design used during this period produced a more modest building, consisting of two classrooms. These structures were typically low, with hipped roofs and a range of features and details common on other schools designs (Figure 38).

Perhaps the greatest concern evinced by inspectors about these buildings focused on their fenestration. Like their one-room counterparts, there was a concern that there were too few windows. In many schools the openings were too tall and narrow, admitting only a modest amount of light (Figure 39).

Meanwhile, the fallout from the dissolution of the dual system continued to have repercussions throughout this period. The apparent victory of the Anglo-Ontario population to reform the educational system as a unitary one was continually under attack. Indeed, in 1896 the issue was instrumental in toppling the federal Conservatives.



**Figure 34.**

Holmfield School, 1901. The most basic expression of the Georgian style still created a handsome building. Demolished. (*By the Old Mill Stream*, p. 43)



**Figure 35.**

Deloraine School, 1893. One of the most handsome rural school designs from this period stood for only eight years, succumbing to fire in 1901. (*Deloraine Scans a Century*, p. 127)



**Figure 36.**

Boissevain School, 1894. Subdued Italianate influences were expressed in the design of the tower and the window caps. Demolished. (PAM)



**Figure 37.**

Oakwood School, Oak Lake, 1898. Like several others, this building was designed to be enlarged with the addition of a wing on the right side. (*Ox Trails to Blacktop*, p. 122)



**Figure 38.**

Napinka School, 1896. Two classrooms were located on the main floor; a library, storage and furnace rooms were in the basement. (*Our First Century*, p. 251)

In 1897 the new Liberal administration of Wilfred Laurier was able to reach a compromise with Manitoba's government that established bilingual schools in areas where ten parents could petition the local authorities for a school. Of course, the compromise was intended to address French concerns, but its implication was to be immediately felt with the arrival of the first waves of eastern European, especially Ukrainian, settlers to the West. These immigrants naturally took advantage of the provision to establish their own Ukrainian-English bilingual schools.

The implications for the construction of actual school buildings, however, were minimal. The schools that Ukrainians built initially differed little from the rough log structures constructed by all pioneering settlement groups. Also, by the time they had advanced past the first phase of settlement - after the turn of the century - standardized building designs were available (and their use encouraged) by the Department of Education.

The growth of an increasingly sophisticated system continued apace in Winnipeg. By the early 1890s the Winnipeg Public School Board had established a considerable measure of independence from provincial authorities and had undertaken to replace the city's first generation of small buildings with larger, more modern, structures. This program was carried out under the direction of Col. J.B. Mitchell, Commissioner of School Buildings from 1892 until 1928.

Twelve of these schools were built between 1892 and 1902, to house 7,000 students. The first of them, Norquay, was designed by George Browne and was to be the standard used for other buildings (Figure 40). The schools certainly differed in appearance, designed as they were by at least seven different architects, but there were some constants, largely because Mitchell and Superintendent Daniel McIntyre determined the general layout.





**Figure 39.**

Morden Collegiate, 1894. A handsome building indeed, but the use of small windows arrayed on all sides of the classrooms created internal lighting problems in many large schools. Demolished. (*Morden Centennial*, p. 83)



**Figure 40.**

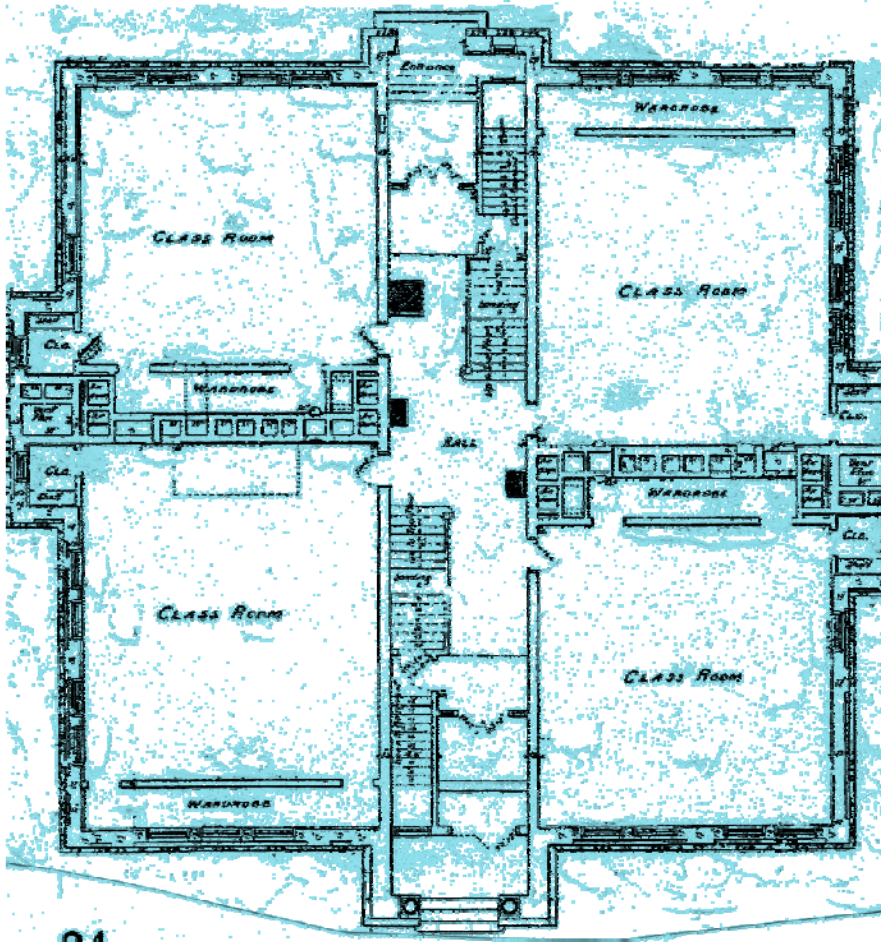
Norquay School, Winnipeg, 1892. The basic design of this school, prepared by George Browne, was to be used for several others between 1890 and 1902. Demolished. (PAM)

The schools were all three storeys in height with a central tower and shallow hipped roof, and were planned on a twelve-room module, with a fairly constant classroom size (24' x 32') (Figure 41). Each school was an exceptional architectural project, solid, impressive, but often also richly decorated, even fanciful, producing an inviting impression for the students (Figures. 42, 43 and 44). Increasingly, a school building's exterior was being seen as explicitly part of the school's total didactic role, as implied in the Board's annual report for 1899:

With no museums or picture galleries or other agencies for the cultivation of taste and promotion of art amongst us, it is important that the school should not fail in its duty in this respect.

After 1901 control of school design fell directly to Commissioner Mitchell, who hired draftsmen to prepare plans. Not surprisingly, the variety of building expression declined. But the quality of design also changed, with a reliance on a rather stolid symmetry and modest detail (Figure 45).

The Department of Education continued efforts to improve its standards in areas additional to the physical condition of the buildings. More attention was given to playgrounds in Winnipeg, with the construction of fences, the sowing of grass at the front of the buildings and the planting of shade trees. These initiatives were tied in with Arbour Day, first celebrated in Winnipeg in 1893 with the planting of 300 trees.



**Figure 41.**

Alexandra School, Winnipeg, 1902. This straightforward floor plan was typical for Winnipeg schools from this period. Demolished. (Building Department, Winnipeg School Division No. 1)



**Figure 42.**

Mulvey School, Winnipeg, 1893. Another of George Browne's designs, this building featured fine detail brickwork and an impressive array of window shapes. Demolished. (PAM) and 44).



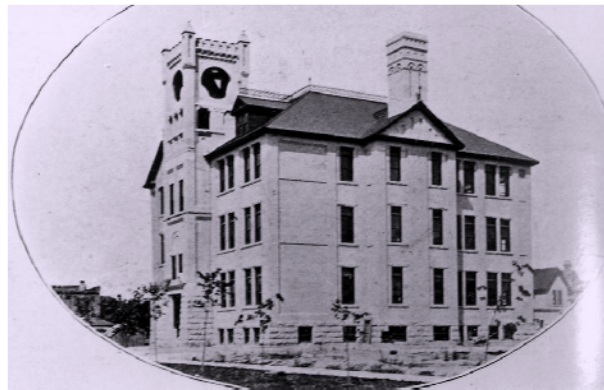
**Figure 43.**

Dufferin School, Winnipeg, 1895. An exciting design produced by C.H. Wheeler featured pinnacles and dormers, decorative brickwork and a variety of openings. Demolished. (PAM)



**Figure 44.**

Isbister School, Winnipeg, 1898. Designed by Samuel Hooper, the building is exceptional, its comforting symmetry enlivened with a picturesque tower, highly decorated chimneys and a richness of detail, not only on the facade but along each wall. (Building Department, Winnipeg School Division No. 1)



**Figure 45.**

Alexandra School, Winnipeg, 1902. Commissioner of School Buildings, J.B. Mitchell, used this basic design for most of his buildings from this period. (PAM)

## STANDARDIZATION (1903-1918)

With Manitoba firmly established economically by the turn of the century, it was possible for the province's educational authorities to forcefully address many of the concerns raised over the previous thirty years. Standardized one-room designs became available and their use common-place. Then-current theories on rural school consolidation, as an effort to improve educational opportunity, were enthusiastically accepted. With significant changes to the curriculum, there was ever-increasing attention given to safety, hygiene and other technical problems associated with large school design.

The standardization of one-room school designs, a goal of Manitoba's school inspectors almost since the inception of the system, had been the source of great attention in eastern Canada and the United States since the early 1800s. By the turn of century, then, there was considerable agreement on what constituted an acceptable design: a comfortable, well-lit, high-ceilinged building that was at the same time modest and affordable. Great attention was paid to the details of air circulation and heating. While it was recognized that standard designs tended to create a certain dulling uniformity, they at least ensured that all children received the same opportunity, not only with the curriculum, but with the learning environment itself.

This province's first standardized proposals were commissioned by the Department of Education in 1903, under the title Plans and Specifications for Rural Schools. They received greater exposure with their appearance in the 1906 Western School Journal. The designs were the work of Samuel Hooper (later appointed to the post of Provincial Architect). Three schemes were provided.

Design No. 1 was the simplest, cheapest and most commonly built (Figure 46). Design No. 2 was larger, with a projecting entrance, round-arched door and a bell tower whose delicate, arched framework had been used for years throughout eastern Canada and the United States to distinguish schools from other small public buildings (Figures. 47 and 48). Design No. 3 was the most ambitious. It also was the least likely to be built. A corner tower (with the same decorative treatment as No. 2) and the strong form created by a pyramidal roof were the distinguishing features of the scheme (Figure 49).

The Hooper designs also were the first in the province to incorporate a new window arrangement. By 1900 it had been ascertained by medical authorities throughout North America that the cross-lighting created by windows on either side of a classroom damaged children's' eyesight. The solution was to combine all windows onto one side of the school, an arrangement seen in all of Hooper's plans.

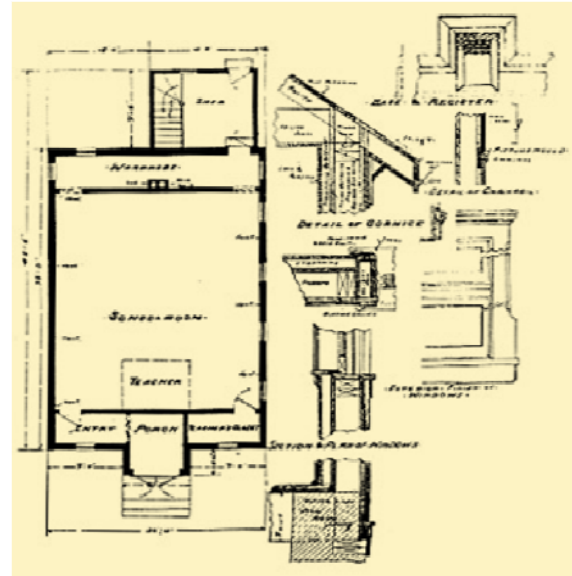
Each of the designs also was accompanied by a very precise specification sheet, so detailed in fact that only the number of nails required appears to have been left to the discretion of the contractor. One of the details that distinguished these new schools was the individual window design. Hooper specified the use of transoms, so that air could enter into the classroom at ceiling level, not at desk level. This innovation ensured that students' books and papers would not be blown about by the wind.

Although local school boards in need of a new building were not compelled to use Hooper's designs, many did. And while there were minor adaptations made, the detailed nature of the plans and specifications ensured a high level of accuracy in their construction (Figures. 50, 51 and 52).



**Figure 46.**

Design for Frame School Building, No. 1, 1903, the first of architect Samuel Hooper standardized schemes prepared for the Department of Education. Side and front elevations. (*The Western School Journal*, 1906, p. 203)



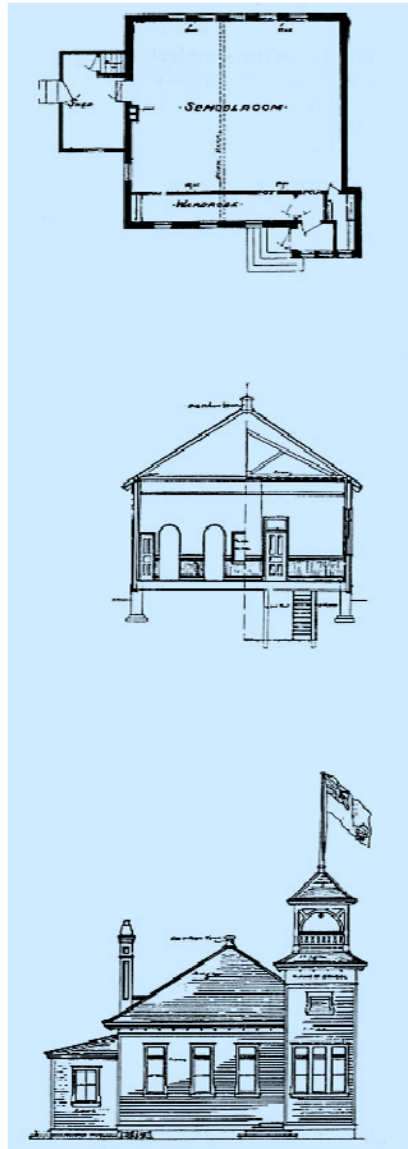
**Figure 47.**

Design for Frame School Building, No. 2, 1903, showing the plan and critical construction details. (*The Western School Journal*, 1906, p. 204)



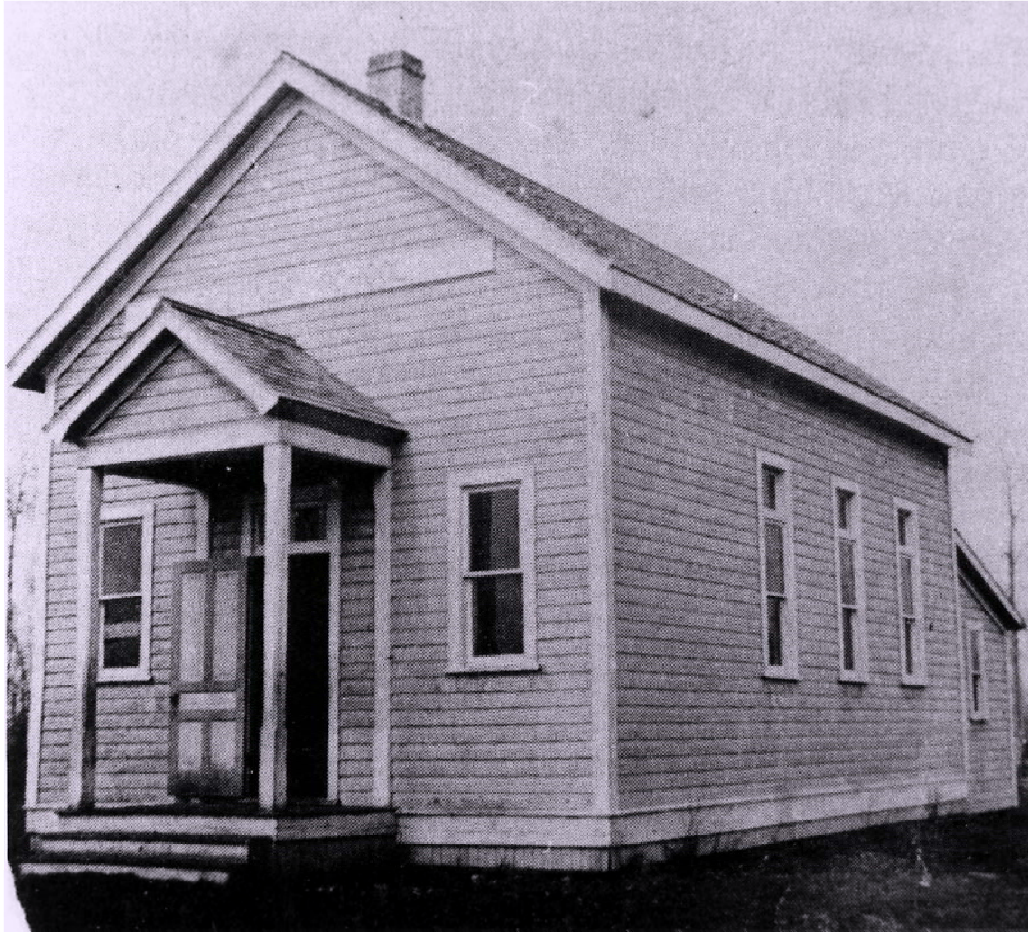


**Figure 48.**  
Design for Frame School Building, No. 2, 1903,  
showing the side elevation. (*The Western  
School Journal*, 1906, p. 235)



**Figure 49.**

Design for Frame School Building, No. 3, 1903, showing the plan, a section through the building and the front elevation. (*The Western School Journal*, 1906, pp. 275-77)



**Figure 50.**

Siglunes School, 1907, was an excellent example of Design No. 1. Demolished. (*Taming a Wilderness*, p. 335)



**Figure 51.**

Huns Valley School, 1911, was almost a perfect realization of Design No. 2. Demolished. (*Along the Hills to the Valley*, p. 82)



**Figure 52:**

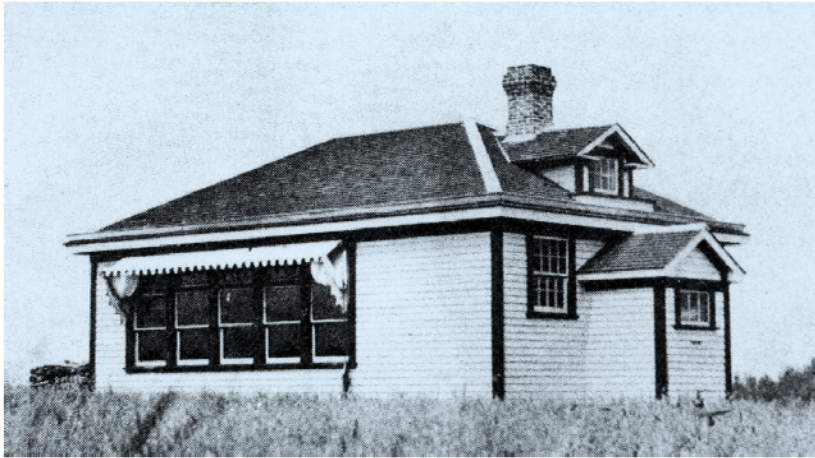
Union Point School, ca. 1905, one of the few examples of Design No. 3 that was built, and still is standing. (*Furrows in the Valley*, p. 229)

The appearance of the Hooper schools marked a turning point in one-room school designs in the province. Thereafter, it was rare that a new school was not built according to a standardized design approved by the Department of Education. Hooper's plans were only the first of a series that were to be used in Manitoba throughout the subsequent thirty years. Each new design tended to supplant the previous one in popularity with the department. Thus, Hooper's three designs were used frequently only until around 1912, when the next standardized plan was adopted.

This new school building had much to recommend it, in the eyes of the authorities, over the Hooper designs. It was more informal, with a hipped roof and dormer; in effect, it looked more like the bungalows and cottages then coming into popularity for domestic design (Figure 53). More significantly, however, was the window treatment.

This scheme was the first in the province to incorporate a continuous strip or bank of windows. Like the Hooper plans, these were arranged only on one side of the building. The theory adopted also propounded that the building be oriented in such a way that the light from the windows should enter from the left side, so as not to create shadows on the students' working surfaces. The deleterious effects this design might have had for left-handed students was not yet an issue.

Occasionally, the basic scheme might be adapted with more picturesque results. A porch was often incorporated and classical details were sometimes added (Figure 54). In these cases, the window bank was located on the back of the building.



**Figure 53.**

Carrick School, 1914, an example of the cottage-style one-room school that was the most popular standardized design, used from 1912 until the mid-1920s. The use of the awning was a local inspiration. (*Between Mountain and Lake*, p. 249)



**Figure 54.**

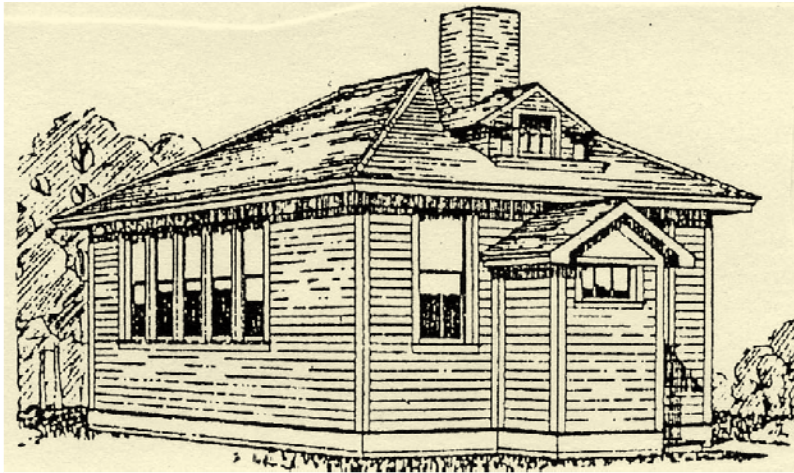
Lily School, ca. 1915. With its porch and classical details, this school is a fine example of a common variation that was adapted from the typical cottage design. (PAM)

It also was common, before the onset of World War I, for private firms and entrepreneurs to provide free plans for inexpensive rural schools that resembled this cottage-style school. The T. Eaton Company and the United States-based Waterman and Waterbury Company were the most ambitious in their marketing (Figure 55), although it is unclear how many school districts in Manitoba used their plans.

The cottage-style design became ubiquitous for school building until the end of World War I, when another set of designs gained favour. Like Hooper's designs, the newest ones offered three variations from which to choose.

The basic example featured a small storm porch with a ribbon board for the school name, the now-obligatory window bank and a gable roof with a slightly flared eave (Figure 56). The second version was larger, with the same distinctive bellcast roof. It also featured cloakrooms lighted by a side window. A broad enclosed storm porch featured a simple arrangement of two square windows and a central door, usually all protected by a long canopy (Figure 57). The third scheme, only rarely built, had a raised basement and a larger cloakroom that included additional space for a teacher's office above, and a slightly different façade treatment (Figure 58).

Throughout this period there also was an increasing interest in the improvement of school grounds. Impetus for this initiative came from Ontario, where, during the 1890s, philanthropist Sir William Macdonald, who had a keen interest in education, had underwritten a rural school garden movement. By the early 1900s, this interest had become a focal point in the rural school curriculum, with the development of domestic science programs that featured outdoor gardening experiments. At the same time, there was an increasing recognition that physical exercise was an important component of education. By the end of the first decade of the century, sand lots, various play structures and playing fields had all been developed around many schools.



**Figure 55.**

Eaton's Department Store catalogues included this cottage-style design beginning in 1917. (T. Eaton Co. Catalogue, 1917-18, p. 202)



**Figure 56.**

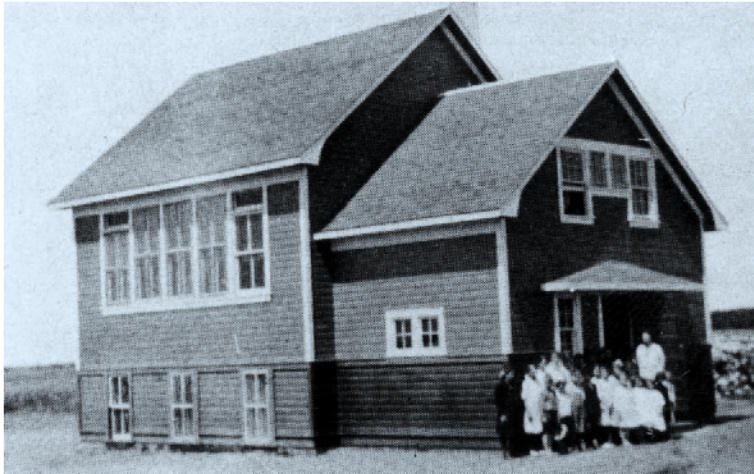
Granville School, 1918, the simplest example from a set of standardized designs used after 1918. Demolished. (*Between Mountain and Lake*, p. 29)





**Figure 57.**

Bruan School, 1918, the second variation of this standardized set. Demolished. (*On the Sunny Slopes of the Riding Mountain*, Vol. 1, p. 85)



**Figure 58.**

Balmerino School, 1919. The third, and largest, of this standardized set. Demolished. (*Ellice*, p. 75)

Except for the Hooper designs, all of these new standardized plans were used into the mid-1920s, and many examples were built. Between 1903 and 1918, approximately 400 new one-room schools were constructed, bringing the total number operating in the province to almost 1,400.

Manitoba's educational authorities were not only interested in improving the designs of one-room schools in rural areas. Throughout Canada, there was a widespread acknowledgement that the typical rural school tended to hamper education, especially in comparison with the situation in urban areas. Critics believed that the educational system could be used to alleviate what they saw as the sources of depopulation in the countryside, with a revamped curriculum that catered specifically to rural concerns. It also was contended that, if school buildings were improved, teaching skills upgraded, and teaching aids made available, the quality of education could be raised to that offered in urban centres. It would be better to have graded schools with more specialized teaching. One proposed solution was rural school district consolidation.

The consolidation movement was initially sponsored in Ontario by Sir William Macdonald. Consolidations consisted in uniting previously separate but contiguous school districts and transporting students by horse-drawn vans to a central facility. As early as 1905 in Manitoba there had been attempts at consolidation in Virden and Holland. Within a few years, the program had become enormously successful, aided in large part by liberal grants from the Department of Education. Nineteen consolidations had been effected by 1911; by 1914 there were 54 more. Manitoba was leading the country in its embrace of the program. Of course, the consequence of this was that, suddenly, many one-room schools were abandoned as the new consolidated schools were built.

The population in urban centres continued to grow dramatically during this period. Thus, besides the move to build consolidated schools throughout the countryside, there was a continued effort to construct more large urban schools. In Brandon, Portage la Prairie, Dauphin and even smaller communities like Neepawa, the population growth prompted the construction of additional school buildings (Figure 59). Following Ontario precedent, the new schools were identified according to a ward system, based on their location (north, south, east or west).

The architectural developments that affected consolidated schools and their urban counterparts in Manitoba's smaller communities were characterized by the typical concern with the technical aspects of heating and ventilation. However, there also was an increasing interest on the part of architects and educational authorities in the mechanics of teaching and, increasingly, designs that addressed fire prevention and ease of escape. The introduction of new amenities to some of these schools, like water fountains and showers, and the inclusion of new rooms for specialized subjects like manual training shops and science labs did not always result in new plans. Throughout this period there was a continued reliance on the block, two-storey school that described the large designs of the 1890s. Sometimes incorporating the corner tower (for potential enlargement), they were used both for urban facilities and the new consolidated schools (Figure 60). As well, though, a variety of new designs was introduced.

A few smaller schemes were developed especially for consolidated school districts. One of them, used for several four-room buildings, was low and broad, its design implying a connection to its immediate rural environment (Figure 61). Another four-room design, this one standardized, was a derivation of the typical blocky designs (Figure 62). A second standardized design, used both for consolidated and urban schools, was, despite the department's current interest in fire prevention, of wood frame construction (Figure 63). Other designs for consolidated schools still revealed the hand of a local designer working without direct control from the department (Figure 64).



**Figure 59.**

North Ward School, Portage la Prairie, 1910.  
(Karen Braden, Portage la Prairie University  
Womens' Club)



**Figure 60.**

Killarney schools. The 1906 building on the right  
was bigger, but retained the same architectural  
quality as the earlier 1893 school on the left.  
Both demolished. (*Reflections. Turtle Mountain  
Municipality and Killarney*, p. 110)



**Figure 61.**

Justice Consolidated School, 1913. A few rural schools were built with this low-slung design.



**Figure 62.**

Starbuck School, 1910-11. When it was built, this was described by educational authorities as "perhaps the best rural school building in the province." (PAM)



**Figure 63.**

Roblin Primary School, 1912. In plan a derivation of Samuel Hooper's Design No. 3, this standardized scheme was enlivened by the use of contrasting wood cladding and pedimented windows. (*Shell River Municipality. Century One*, p. 260)



**Figure 64.**

Cameron Consolidated School, 1916. Many larger schools were still built according to picturesque designs.

The construction of two-room schools followed a similar pattern. The designs for many of these buildings continued to rely on the plan and decorative character developed in the 1890s, and were, for the most part, unique (Figure 65). At the same time, there were a few two-room buildings constructed with a recognition of new developments, especially for larger window openings (Figure 66).

As the century progressed, however, there was a gradual adoption, for larger schools, of a distinctly new plan. Developed in opposition to the typical square plan of the 1890s, with its central staircase, the new scheme was an elongated rectangle, with corridors linked to a transverse stairblock. The basic impetus for the new plan was to ensure easy egress for students in case of fire. Many of these schools continued to be built with small individual windows (Figure 67), but by the end of the period, and with the widespread availability of iron beams that could carry the weight, there was an increasing adoption of the bank window design (Figure 68).

In Winnipeg, the population tripled over the course of this period. Naturally, more schools were required, and between 1903 and 1918 over thirty new buildings were constructed.<sup>36</sup> Initially, the designs for new buildings (still carried out by Commissioner J.B. Mitchell) were reiterations of the three storey, blocky designs of the 1890s. There were some differences, however. Mitchell stripped the buildings of much ornament, creating quiet, planar surfaces. He did lavish attention on the entrance towers, where his affection for decorative gables found expression (Figure 69).

There was great interest amongst Canadian architects during this period in the design of large schools, their interest perhaps piqued by the huge sums of money expended on the buildings. There was a keen interest in both design solutions and use of materials that would reduce the danger of fire. These concerns had gained stark recognition after the 1906 earthquake in San Francisco and the Hochelaga Quebec School fire in 1907 in which sixteen children perished.



**Figure 65.**

North End School, Neepawa, 1908. A typical two-room school recalled designs of the 1890s. Demolished. (*Neepawa. Land of Plenty*, p. 318)



**Figure 66.**

Phoenix School, ca. 1910, featured a Hooper-like bell tower and grouped window openings. Demolished. (PAM)





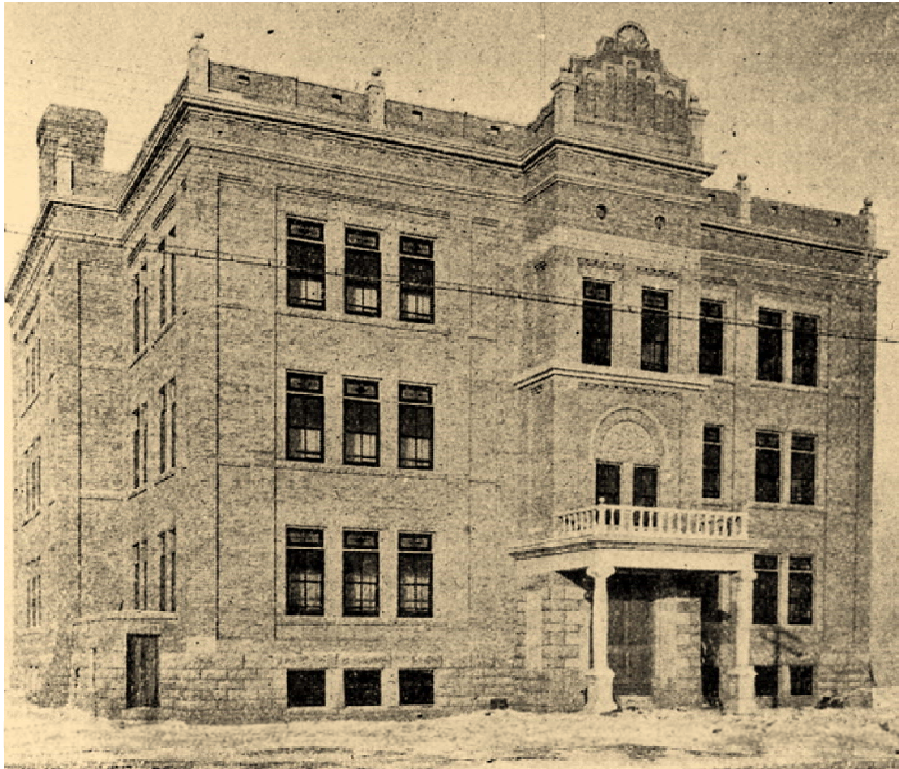
**Figure 67.**

Alexander School, 1911. The school had the elongated plan in vogue by 1910, but still featured separated window openings. Demolished. (*Whitehead Wanderings*, p. 14)



**Figure 68.**

Welwood Consolidated School, 1917. A state-of-the-art school in a rural setting. Demolished. (*Carberry Plains. Century One*, p. 206)



**Figure 69.**

John M. King School, Winnipeg, 1905. An example of Mitchell's later three-storey designs, this featured several elements that were to become familiar on most of his school buildings: a decorative gable on the tower and a detailed roof parapet. Demolished. (Building Department, Winnipeg School Division No. 1

Throughout the country new urban school buildings were two, rather than three storeys, to ensure better escape potential. Fire-resistant materials, especially concrete, were used extensively. Stairs were considered of key importance. The oak staircases so common a decade earlier were updated in the new schools with cast iron. At the same time, the designs for most schools were becoming more clearly institutional, with smooth uncluttered surfaces and extensive glazing.

The Winnipeg School Board opted wholeheartedly for this new type of building. And the architect for all of the schools built during this period, Mitchell (who would hold that position until 1928), was a strong advocate of the new sensibility. He was convinced that schools should convey a simplicity of style. They were to be quiet, with a dignity of form, good internal lighting conditions, ventilation, heating and, of course, escape. Compared with the squat, three-storey, schools constructed during the 1890s, these new structures were massively proportioned, extremely expensive, and capable of accommodating up to 1,200 students.

The first project undertaken, in 1907, was Luxton School. Compared to an earlier building like Isbister, Luxton School was larger (and with an addition in 1915, very much larger) (Figure 70). However, by the time that Isaac Brock School was constructed in 1913, this type of school had reached enormous proportions (Figures 71 and 72). Almost four Isbisters could be contained in Isaac Brock.

Between 1907 and 1915, ten of this type of school were erected. Although each was unique, and an exceptional design, they shared certain qualities. The first three buildings (Luxton, Cecil Rhodes and La Verendrye) were derived from Classical villa traditions. Their long rectangular facades were broken down into three bays, with a projecting or inset bay for the entrance, which was raised; a formal staircase provided access. An eclectic range of gable designs (usually of Dutch or Tudor inspiration), were used on the towers, as well as occasionally on other elevations.



**Figure 70.**

Luxton School, Winnipeg, 1907. The first of Col. Mitchell's up-to-date designs exhibits the traits that were to characterize his buildings before 1918: a horizontal two-storey configuration enlivened by a projecting bay, dichromatic brick panels, Classical details and a decorated gable, all carried out in very expensive materials. (Building Department, Winnipeg School Division No. 1)



**Figure 71.**

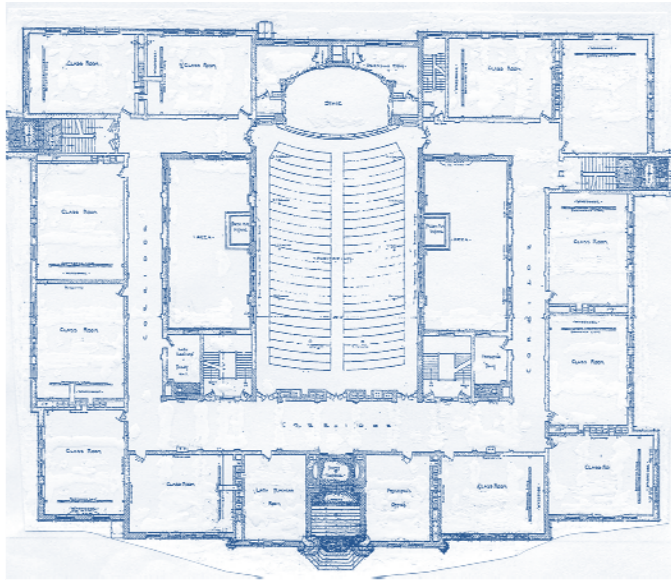
Isaac Brock School, Winnipeg, 1913. The largest school of its type (and costing \$250,000), this school shows Col. Mitchell's attention to Gothic Revival styling, especially seen in the composition and detailing of the tower.

As the designs increased in size, the main facade became elongated and Mitchell used a variety of treatments to create visual interest across the huge expanses of brick and glass. This could be accomplished with projecting and recessed bays, tall towers, elaborate entrance porticoes, staircases and decorative brickwork (Figure 73). He continued to rely on the gable to punctuate the towers and rooflines, although the influence of the Romanesque Revival and Late Gothic Revival also gained favour. Wall buttresses, blind arcades, crenellations, corbel tables, as well as decorated windows were all used on a building like Isaac Brock.

A completely new educational phenomenon also was to have a great impact on Winnipeg's school architecture during this period. In response to an increasingly industrial economy, technical schools had been introduced in Ontario in the mid-1880s to provide manufacturers with appropriately educated future employees. By the early 20th century, such schools were gigantic, with design requirements for a considerable variety of large vocational-training spaces.

Winnipeg was the first city in western Canada to construct technical schools, and it ambitiously undertook two projects in 1910. One school - St. John's - was for the north end; the other, named Kelvin, was constructed for students in the south end. The designs, by Col. Mitchell, were identical (Figure 74), thus saving the board a huge amount of money. Massive as all Mitchell's large school designs were, he also was occasionally called on to design slightly more modest school buildings. For a small school in Tuxedo he was able to produce a build of exceptional quality (Figure 75).

The growth of Winnipeg's suburban communities had reached a level, by 1910, where the construction of large school buildings became necessary. For the most part, architects working for the suburban school boards had fewer opportunities and, of course, much smaller budgets than had Col. Mitchell. Nevertheless, there were some fine buildings designed and erected.



**Figure 72.**

Isaac Brock School, Winnipeg, 1913. The two facades, above, are certainly impressive, but the plan below better conveys the enormity of the building. (Building Department, Winnipeg School Division No. 1)



**Figure 73.**

Laura Secord School, Winnipeg, 1912. Mitchell had a fondness for a brick with a slightly orange cast, but occasionally used grey brick that gave schools like Laura Secord a more classical appearance. (PAM)



**Figure 74.**

Kelvin Technical High School, Winnipeg, 1910. This and St. John's Technical High School were identical, and the only examples of Mitchell's designs to be carried out in red brick. Demolished. (PAM)



**Figure 75.**

Julia Clark School, Winnipeg, 1918. When the occasion demanded, Col. Mitchell could also design beautifully at a smaller scale. Demolished. (PAM)

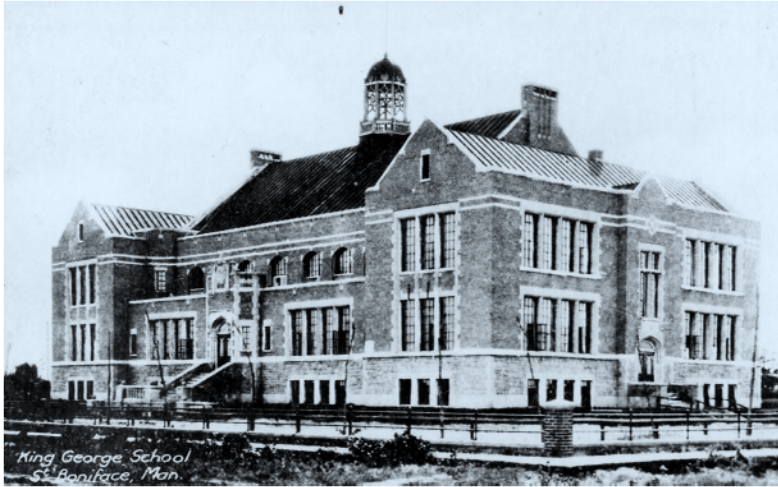
St. Boniface had been an established community for years, and while most of its best educational facilities had remained separate from the public system, there were several large public schools built during this period. The most sophisticated, architecturally, was designed by H. Greene in 1915. With its complex plan and fine details, King George V School was certainly an architectural rival to any of the schools being constructed in Winnipeg School District No. 1 at that time (Figure 76).

Each of Winnipeg's other school districts undertook at least one large school building project during this period. Relying on the services of different architects, the school boards of the towns of East Kildonan, St. James, St. Vital and Transcona produced school buildings that in many respects relied on the same planning used by Col. Mitchell, but were nonetheless quite distinct architecturally.

A building like Linwood School in St. James clearly reflects the long low plan of two storey height seen in the city of Winnipeg (Figure 77). However, the architect for Linwood, A. Melville, working on a much smaller budget, produced a simple external treatment enlivened by the use of contrasting red brick and light grey concrete, with some minor Gothic Revival detailing at the entrance. A more thorough investigation of the possibilities of Late Gothic Revival was used by the architect on two of East Kildonan's large schools from this period. Both constructed in 1915, Lord Kitchener and Lord Wolseley schools were built on slightly different plans, but otherwise shared a nearly identical external treatment (Figure 78).

With the advance of settlement into the northern reaches of the province between 1903 and 1918 came the need for substantial school accommodation. Thus, for example, only three years after the community at The Pas was incorporated as a town in 1912, a new - and large - public school was constructed (Figure 79).





**Figure 76.**

King George V School, Winnipeg, 1915, an exceptional building designed by H. Greene. (PAM)



**Figure 77.**

Linwood School, Winnipeg, 1913. For this school in St. James, architect A. Melville used the familiar two-storey massing, but with a more modest detail expression.



**Figure 78.**

Lord Kitchener School, Winnipeg, 1915. A variety of Gothic Revival details, and handsome concrete inset panels, were used to enrich this compact design.



**Figure 79.**

The Pas School, 1915, designed by architect G.N. Taylor. Demolished. (PAM)

## STABILIZATION (1919-1939)

The upheaval wrought by the World War I, and the economic stagnation that followed until 1939, were to have a great impact on reformulating the educational curriculum, as well as on redefining the requirements for school design. There was continued attention to the provision of standardized one-room designs throughout this period, although the designers tended only to tinker with basic schemes established previously. In urban areas, however, there was a wholesale shift away from the designs of the pre-war years.

In the countryside, the obvious consequence of the economic deprivation of these years was first seen in the number of schools built. Although compulsory attendance had been established in 1916, with a resultant increase in the number of students attending classes, other factors were at work. The population boom had slowed, opportunities for agricultural employment declined and ever-increasing numbers of farm people were moving into towns and cities.

The simple fact was that few new school facilities were required. This is not to say, however, that the buildings that were constructed were not a source of interest with the Department of Education. Indeed, there were continued efforts to update and upgrade the standardized one-room designs introduced before the war. Furthermore, with the appointment during the 1920s of architect Gilbert Parfitt to the staff of the Department of Education, the attention paid to rural school design was of a high order.<sup>39</sup>

At least four new designs were created in the mid-1920s; another was introduced in the 1930s. None of these designs, however, strayed very far from the norms established in the preceding decade, that is, domestic of windows on only one side of the classroom.

In fact, two of the schemes (Figures. 80 and 81) were only variations on the popular cottage-style design introduced in 1912. The other two 1920s designs offered a slightly different form, with entrances set alongside the window bank and sheltered by an extension of the gable roof (Figures. 82 and 83). A design introduced in the mod01930s combined the hipped roof of other standardized designs with the side entrance of these later schemes (Figure 84).

Because one-room designs were now so firmly within the control of the department, it was rare to hear of inspectors' complaints about the actual building. They were, however, still able as late as 1925 to raise concerns, especially about school grounds: The school grounds do not change from year to year. A little money well spent on the grounds would be a splendid investment. Pleasing surroundings and attractive environment have a very deep influence upon the life and spirit of the child.

Indeed, throughout the 1920s and 1930s, there were notable advances in the development of school grounds. The provision of a cup prize by the Lieutenant-Governor for the greatest improvement in school grounds was an incentive for many teachers and school boards (Figure 85).

School consolidation continued apace through these years, reinforced by developments during World War I which had seen a new emphasis on the need for consolidation. The xenophobia attendant in war time not only saw the abolition of the bilingual system in 1916, but also the encouragement of more rapid assimilation of "foreign" students into the mainstream. This was a goal, it was determined, that could best be accomplished with consolidated schools, where the influence of a "foreign" teacher could be more closely monitored.



**Figure 80.**

Niverville Schools, ca. 1928. An instructive comparison of the change in architectural sensibilities shows (on the right) a Hooper design from 1912 and (on the left), a standardized design of the 1920s adapted from a popular cottage-style scheme from 1912 (Figure 53). Both demolished. (PAM)



**Figure 81.**

Cork Cliff School, 1929. A second variation on the cottage-style design that was used in the 1920s is distinguished by a small porch protected by an extension of the roof. (*Reflections from Little Muddy River*, p. 77)



**Figure 82.**

Lake Audy School, 1931. The basic rectangular form, with the bank of windows, is made almost sleek with an entrance set parallel to the building. (*Pioneers and Progress*, p. 54)



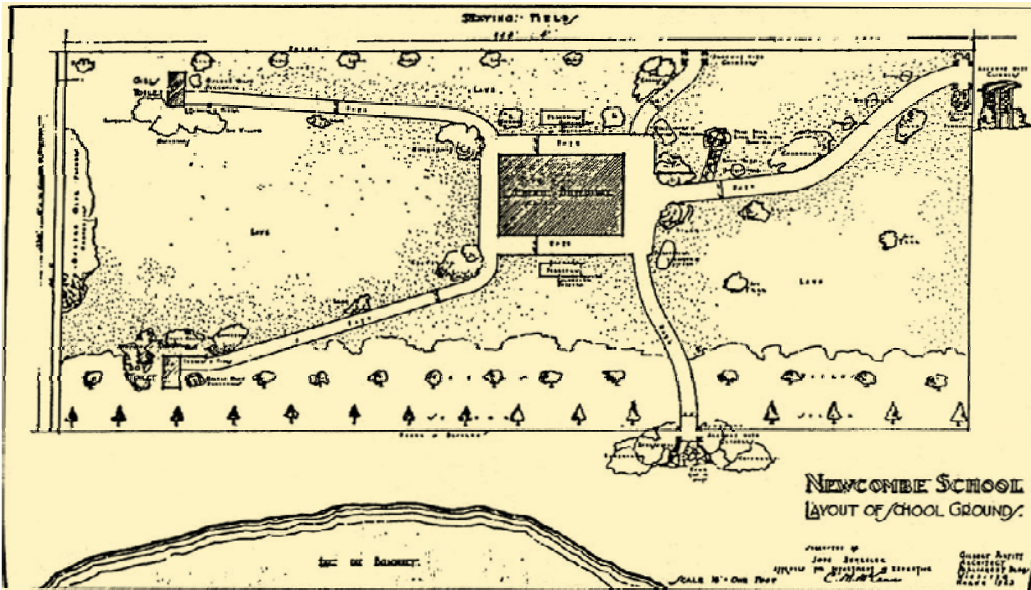
**Figure 83.**

Prestwick School, 1935. The new entrance configuration seen earlier was here adapted to provide entry on one side for girls, on the other for boys. Demolished. (*Then to Now*, p. 75)



**Figure 84.**

Gravelridge School, 1938. This up-to-date one-room structure featured insulbrick siding, for fire protection. Demolished. (*Schools - Our Heritage*, p. 77)



**Figure 85.**

Lac du Bonnet teacher John Bunzeluk was awarded a cup prize for this design of Newcombe School grounds, drawn up by architect Gilbert Parfitt for publication in the department's 1925 Annual Report.

The actual construction of consolidated schools more frequently resulted in smaller two-room facilities than the large (and expensive) consolidated schools built before the war. Several standardized two-room designs were developed. As with the new one-room schemes, most of these buildings drew much inspiration from the plans and forms of two-room designs from the preceding twenty years.

In most of the standardized schemes a long hipped roof created the dominant form, with a pedimented entrance providing a sense of gracefulness, while the now common window bank established a rectilinear pattern on the facade (Figures. 86 and 87). Another popular scheme featured the same roof shape, but combined it with a less formal hip-roofed entrance and window banks on the end walls (Figure 88).

In Winnipeg, the stagnation of the economy after World War I likewise was seen in the reduced number of buildings constructed, but also was expressed in a different architectural character. By 1918, the 45 existing schools of Winnipeg's School Division No. 1 were proving insufficient for a student population that had grown by 5,000 over the war years to total more than 30,000. However, the proposed solutions for the accommodation for these children were completely unfeasible. Tenders drawn up in 1918 for a series of new buildings would have cost so much - \$325,000 - that the Board rejected them outright.

A set of new designs, of much more modest size, styling and cost (\$100,000) were approved and by the end of 1920 eleven new schools had been constructed. Four of these buildings were the work of Col. Mitchell (Figures. 89 and 90). However, seven of this type, and eight subsequent school buildings were from a new hand, Col. J.N. Semmens (1882-1960), an architect with considerable experience with institutional design. And although he consulted with Mitchell on the designs, Semmens brought a new sensibility to the architecture of Winnipeg schools.





**Figure 86.**

Mountainside Consolidated School, ca. 1935. One of the typical two-room designs popular in the 1920s and 30s featured a classically-inspired pediment over the entrance. (PAM)



**Figure 87.**

Osborne School, 1938. Here, the gabled entrance to a standardized two-room design had detail work more commonly seen on domestic bungalows. Demolished. (*Down Memory Lane*, p. 100)



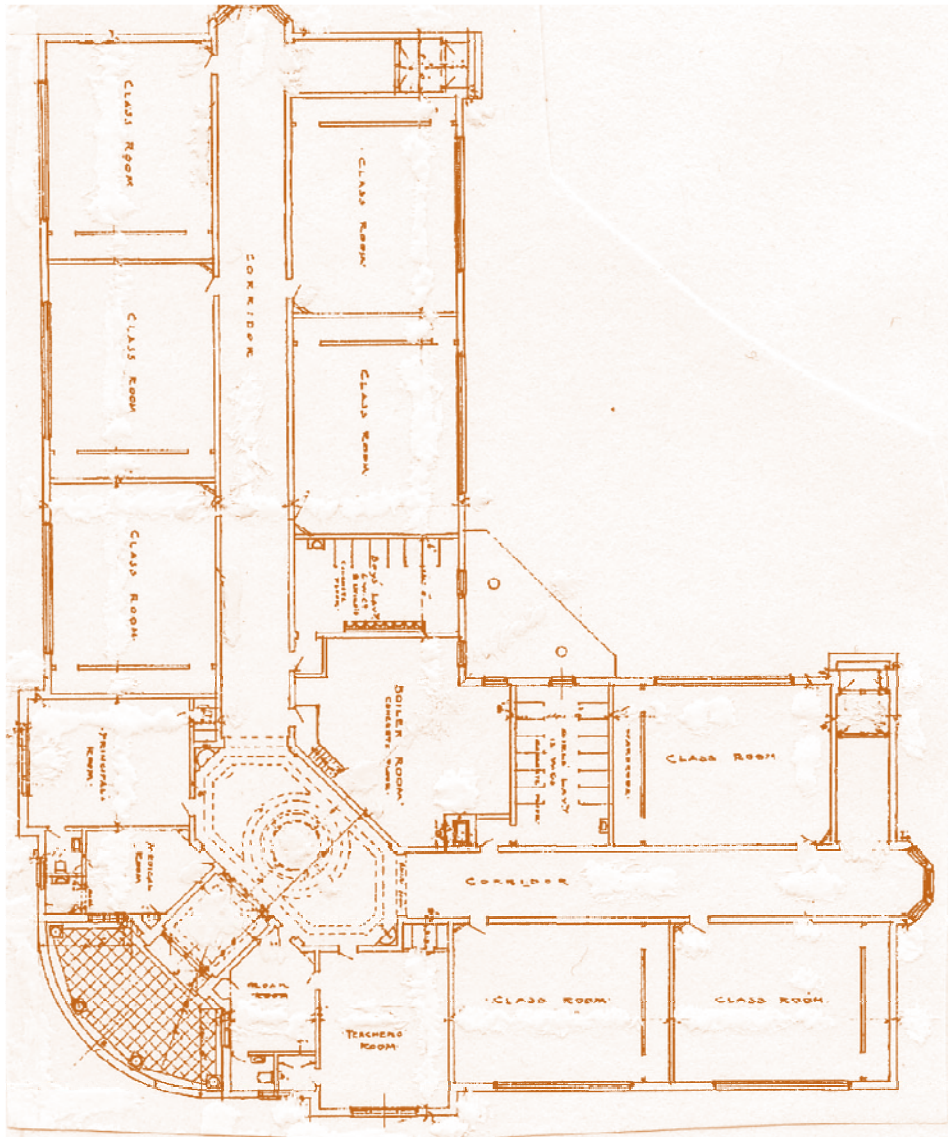
**Figure 88.**

Woodlands Consolidated School, 1920. Another popular two-room design used throughout this period. Demolished. (*Yesteryears*, p. 85)



**Figure 89.**

Greenway #2 School, Winnipeg, 1919. One of Col. Mitchell's modest one-storey schools, this building is distinguished by a curving roof over the entrance.



**Figure 90.**  
Greenway #2 School, Winnipeg, floor plan. The design, which was clearly organized to accept additions as the population changed, was reflective of the uncertain conditions of the time. (Building Department, Winnipeg School Division No. 1)

By the time that Col. Semmens took over the role as Consulting Architect for Winnipeg's schools, a completely different architectural expression was gaining popularity for the design of educational facilities. A particular strain of the Late Gothic Revival, Collegiate Gothic became de rigueur for many educational facilities throughout North America.

Collegiate Gothic was an academic style, derived from the medieval precedents of European universities, especially the schools at Oxford and Cambridge. The English roots of the style were to result in the application of many Tudor architectural forms and details. Thus, bay windows, decorated gables, shallow Tudor arches and crenellations were all carefully combined for effect. In its most ambitious interpretation, schools were designed on a sprawling, irregular plan focused on an interior, grassy quadrangle. Heavy, squat towers with gates provided entry into this cloistered space. While the style was often carried out in stone, Semmens' preference for red tapestry brick coincided nicely with the pinched economic circumstances of the period.

Many of Semmens' designs were one storey in height, long and low, but with delightful external details and with large windows and light-filled classrooms. Although the modest configuration was largely dictated by economic circumstance, Semmens also felt it held certain advantages over the enormous schools of the preceding decade. He considered one-storey designs not only more suitable for young students, but also believed they fit better into a neighbourhood.

In general, Semmens reworked three basic schemes for his school designs, all of a modest, but thoughtful character. The earliest of Semmens' new schools were actually quite personal, and unusual designs, combining many elements of the Collegiate Gothic with Classical Revival forms and details. One of his first designs, with decorative gables that likely warmed Col. Mitchell's heart, was to be used several more times in slightly different formats (Figure 91). A two-storey section featuring Classical Revival elements, like columns and pediments, was flanked by low one-storey extensions with more Gothic inspiration.

A second, simpler type, dispensed with the two-storey section and made the most of a very long single storey silhouette, and a very simple interpretation of Collegiate Gothic (Figure 92). Architectural delight was reserved for the entrances, where a variety of Gothic Revival details were used. This type of school was also popular throughout the city's other school districts, where a variety of other architects created similar buildings (Figure 93).

The third basic design scheme provided for a two-storey structure, and was typically a more fully realized expression of the style. In these cases, Semmens usually worked out a T-, H- or U-shaped plan that created the projecting wings where a stark profile and crisp stone details were used for the clear delineation of Collegiate Gothic forms and details (Figure 94).

The highlight of this period, and of Semmens' career as a school architect, was the design of Daniel McIntyre Collegiate, built in 1922. At a final cost of \$600,000, more than double the price of the 1912 Isaac Brock and nearly as big, Daniel McIntyre was a very ambitious expression of Collegiate Gothic (Figures. 95 and 96). Although it was not completed to his original plan, the building nevertheless is the best example in the province of that style. The rambling plan, the quadrangle and the great variety of Tudor details that were hallmarks of the style are all seen on Daniel McIntyre.



**Figure 91.**

Champlain School, Winnipeg, 1920. Col. Semmens brought an appreciation for the Classical Revival to his designs of certain modest Winnipeg schools, although Col. Mitchell likely appreciated the decorative gable.



**Figure 92.**

Sir Sam Steele School, Winnipeg, 1921. With its long low profile, this is a good example of Semmens' modest one-storey school designs.



**Figure 93.**

Assiniboine School, Winnipeg, 1920. A slightly different expression of Collegiate Gothic, by an architect for the St. James School Board, combines a hipped roof, a steeple, bungalow-style brackets and broad expanses of stucco.

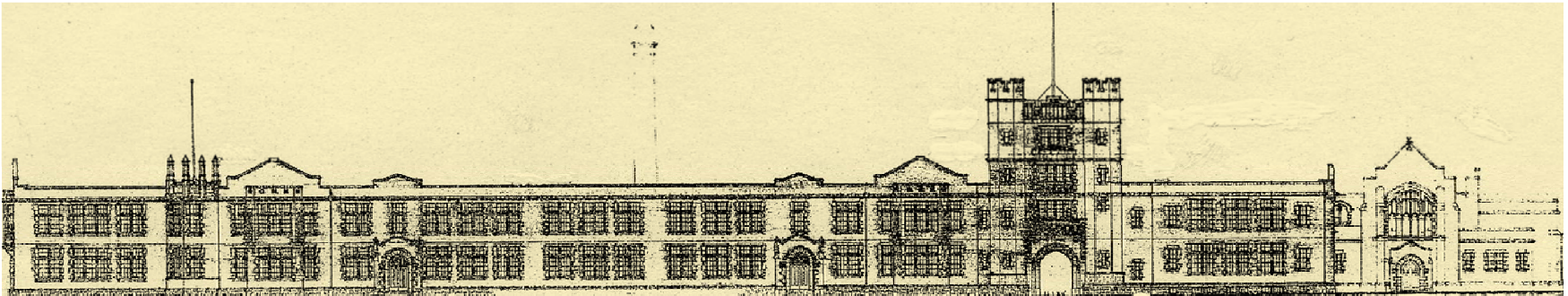


**Figure 94.**

Grosvenor School, Winnipeg, 1922. An example of Semmens' two-storey designs, this one carried out in the spirit of Collegiate Gothic.

**Figure 95.**

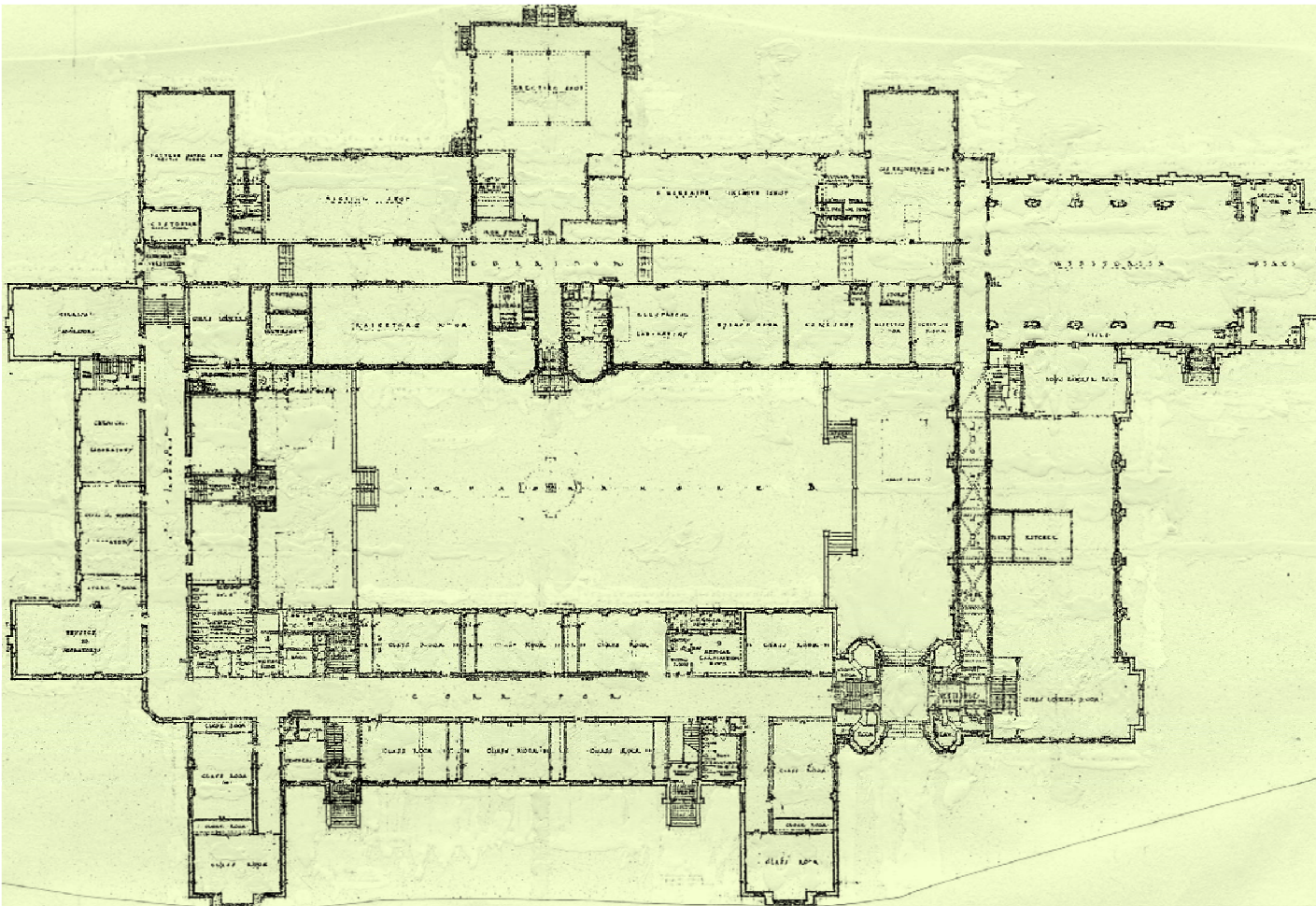
Daniel McIntyre Collegiate, Winnipeg, 1922. The return to large school construction was carried out in Semmens' ambitious interpretation of the Collegiate Gothic. The tower and the section to the right were never built. (Building Department, Winnipeg School Division No. 1)





**Figure 96.**

Daniel McIntyre Collegiate, Winnipeg, main floor plan. The rambling plan and the quadrangle are key features of Collegiate Gothic. (Building Department, Winnipeg School Division No. 1)



Semmens' tenure as the school district's architect ended in 1925 and a range of other designers was used through the last half of the 1920s and for the few buildings constructed in the 1930s. W.A. Martin was selected for several of these commissions. Martin's designs were generally more blocky than were Semmens', with a modesty of shape, detail and even colour. Projecting wings were nearly flush to the main wall surface; gently arched gables and name plates were used for decorative appeal, while the combination of buff-coloured brick and soft grey concrete details produced quiet, elegant buildings (Figure 97).

The developments in Winnipeg were to have immediate influence on school designs throughout the urban centres of the province. Although there continued to be exceptions (Figure 98), the few new schools that were constructed in the province's smaller urban centres during the 1920s and 30s tended to mirror architectural developments that were being established for schools in Winnipeg.

Thus, buildings tended to be low and horizontal, of red brick and with Late Gothic Revival or even occasionally Georgian Revival styling (Figures. 99 and 100). Brick or concrete external detailing generally replaced the pre-World War I preference for expensive carved stone. Inside, these new schools were equipped with internal fittings and appointments of the highest standards. The inclusion of gymnasiums was a key advance. This was a response to war time needs; recruiting officers found that young men were generally in poor physical condition. And in larger communities like Brandon, Portage la Prairie and Dauphin, there were typically more sophisticated expressions of the stylistic variables possible (Figure 101).



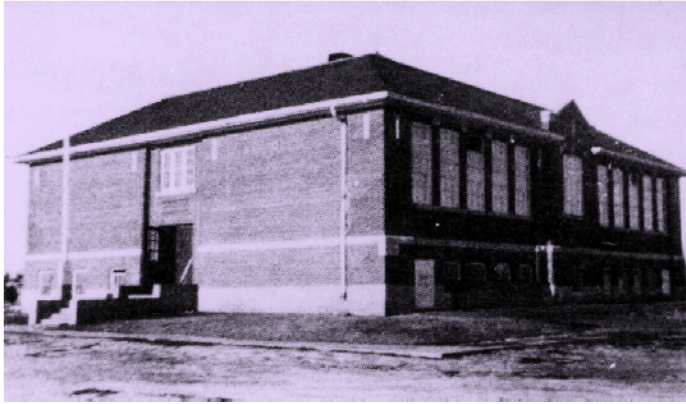
**Figure 97.**

Queenston School, Winnipeg, 1931. W.A. Martin's design was informed with a certain architectural wit, like the juxtaposition of differing quoin designs on the two end bays.



**Figure 98.**

Roblin School, ca. 1920. One of the most striking designs from this period, this building recalled the continued local efforts to produce schools of distinction. Destroyed by fire. (*Shell River Municipality. Century One*, p. 314)



**Figure 99.**

Brookdale Consolidated School, 1924. Long and low, with a shallow hip roof, the building was distinguished by a modest gabled entrance. (*Carberry Plains. Century One*, p. 242)



**Figure 100.**

Earl Oxford School, Brandon, 1928. Col. J.N. Semmens, the architect for most of Winnipeg's schools of the early 1920s also designed several school buildings in Brandon, in a similar style: a restrained interpretation of Collegiate Gothic in red brick.



**Figure 101.**

Smith Jackson School, Dauphin, 1921. Dramatically long, the building was enlivened with the red brick and stark white Classical details used in Georgian Revival designs. Demolished. (*Dauphin Valley Spans the Years*, p. 88)