

BUILDING HERITAGE

Celebrating the Register and Inventory of Historic Resources in Edmonton

The Canada Permanent Building

While it is shadowed by skyscrapers today, the Canada Permanent Building was an unusually opulent landmark in Northwestern Canada at the time of its construction between 1909 and 1910. With an ornate Edwardian Baroque façade, the building was the first purpose built insurance office of the Canadian Permanent Mortgage Company in Alberta.

The building was designed by prominent Architect Roland Lines who is also credited with the design other landmarks including the Royal Alexandra Hospital, Alex Taylor School, McCauley School and Lambton Block among others before his untimely death in the First World War.

Lines was tasked with the design of a building which was to project an image of strength and stability. He chose an architectural style which referenced British banking institutions and their respective contemporary architecture in the Financial District of London at the turn of the twentieth century. The Canada Permanent Building is the most ornate of Lines' work with façade details including; a flat roof with stone balustrade and date stone, three distinct bays separated by Ionic order pilasters, heavy cornices decorated with modillions and central segmental pediment. Another distinctive feature of the building is its re-enforced concrete frame which was coined as the only fire-proof insurance bank in Edmonton and is also attributed to the its enduring structural integrity.

The Canada Permanent Building has survived multiple owners, a use transi-



View of the Canada Permanent Building.
Photo credit: Prairie Postcards PC013625, University of Alberta Collection

tion as well as an attempt to demolish it in the 1980's. It operated in continuous commercial-related use from 1910 to 1960 as part of the Canada Permanent Building Company. By 1969 the building was sold to Westbrook Estates who managed it as a commercial lease until it became a Japanese restaurant in 1975. In 1980 the a new management group bought the structure along with the McLeod building next door with the intention to knock them down. Public reaction to the proposal led the province to purchase the buildings and subsequently designated them both as Provincial Historic Resources.

The Japanese restaurant remained in the former Canada Permanent Building until 2010. While the early transition from commercial offices to restaurant use had the effect of saving the building, it also severely altered its interior with the instal-

lation of a commercial kitchen, elevators, dumbwaiters, several ventilation flues, decorative "Japanese themed" built-ins along with commercial grade finishes. So many alterations have taken place on the interior that only a few of original interior period 'character defining elements'

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View of the Canada Permanent Building c. 1980.
Photo credit: City of Edmonton Sustainable Development



View of Decorative Handles on Steel Frame Windows, 2012.
Photo credit: City of Edmonton Sustainable Development

of the insurance building remain. These include the original art nouveau inspired balustrade, the steel frame windows with locking decorative handles and some small fragments of crown moldings and coffered ceilings.

Surpassing its centennial anniversary, the building is un-occupied and awaiting its second re-incarnation. Now recognized as a distinct structure and an important

architectural landmark in the province, it is only a matter of time before a new use is introduced. With its enduring and commanding presence on the street, hopefully new tenants can leverage the building's remaining character defining elements to attract a use which celebrates its important history.

■ Jennifer Laforest,
Graduate Heritage Planner



St. Stephen the Martyr Anglican Church

St. Stephen the Martyr Anglican Church is a small rectangular hall with gable roof built in the Tudor Revival style. The site was originally occupied by a 1905 Church called St. Paul's which was later demolished to make way for the current structure.

This church built by architects Barnes and Gibbs in 1914, occupies the corner lot comfortably with a façade facing 96 Street and the primary entrance facing 109 Avenue. The façade along 96 Street was originally faced with wood shingles and small side entrance vestibule. The current 'bumped out' vestibule was added in 1997. It is faced in character-defining half-timbering and stucco, as well as red stucco at the bottom with red brick buttresses and wood timber accent details. Along the façade of the building appear to be original wood frame windows. The roof pitch is broken forming a matching combination broken pitch with the original structure. The rectangular hall has a lower cross gable forming the entrance façade along 109 Avenue. This entrance façade is also faced in half-timbering and light brown stucco. The door appears to be original. It is of simple rectangular shape with contrasting light colour wood. Above the door is a row of three rectangular shaped wood frame windows. At each corner of the building's side entrance façade are small corner angled buttresses.

Tudor revival is an architectural movement that attempted to bring back distinctly medieval English architectural styles. It was popular in Canada from the mid to late 19th century onwards to the first part of the twentieth century. The style references in particular aspects of



View of St. Stephen the Martyr Anglican Church c. 1940.
Photo credit: City of Edmonton Archives



View of the rear façade in 2010
before the removal of the windows.
Photo credit: City of Edmonton
Sustainable Development

Tudor period specifically architecture of the English countryside between the year 1485 and 1547. Tudor Revival focuses on 'simple rustic' and less impressive aspects of Tudor architecture imitating medieval cottages and country homes in particular. Throughout Canada, Tudor revival architecture is most commonly applied to small residential architecture from about 1900. This is a rare example of its application to religious buildings.

Originally, the building had stained glass windows along the nave and the front and rear façades. When the building recently transitioned from religious to secular use the congregation sold its stained glass windows to other Anglican churches for re-use. Other significant interior elements have also since been removed including a 1930 organ donated by Bishop A.E. Burgett (second Anglican bishop in Edmonton), a beautiful communion rail made from wrought iron, and the church's pews.

Throughout its history St. Stephen the Martyr Anglican Church has been described as a small community church. The unique congregation was part of the Anglo-Catholic tradition. While the congregation was small, members of the congregation are said to have travelled long distances to attend mass.

The overall condition of the building is good. The building envelope remains original with exception of the front facing material and the vestibule. Although the exterior massing walls are very close to their original state and in relatively good condition, water damage at the north-eastern edge of the property has affected its foundation. After years of dwindling attendance, the congregation recently sold the building. Fortunately,

EVA Design, an Edmonton Architectural firm bought the property with the intention to use it as their commercial office.

Although the transformation of the church is still underway, it remains a particularly great an example of adaptive reuse as applied to religious architecture as buildings of this detail and nature are often particularly difficult to transform.

**Jennifer Laforest,
Graduate Heritage Planner**



View of St. Stephen the Martyr Anglican Church from the street with vestibule, August 2012.
Photo credit: City of Edmonton Sustainable Development



John A. McDougall School and the Edmonton Grads

Edmonton's population had ballooned to more than 50,000 people by 1912. New schools were required especially in the north-central and western sections of the city. One of these schools, completed during the 1913-14 school year, was John A. McDougall School, located at 10930 107 Street. It opened with nine classrooms and an all-female staff. Kate Chegwin was the principal, the first woman to head a large permanent school in Edmonton.

The school was named in honour of an Edmonton pioneer, prominent in the social, political, and commercial life of the city. John A. McDougall arrived in Edmonton in 1877, and he soon opened one of the city's first stores. In 1897, he entered into partnership with Richard Secord and the firm of McDougall and Secord, general merchants, became prominent in the business life of the community. McDougall was twice elected mayor of Edmonton in 1897 and 1908. He became a Liberal member of the Provincial Legislative Assembly in 1909.

An important individual in the life of McDougall School was J. Percy Page, who along with his wife Maude came to Edmonton in the fall of 1912. The young couple set up home on the north side not far from the school. Page had been hired by the Edmonton Public School Board to introduce commercial training into the city's high schools. His job was to establish a course of study to teach young women and men the essentials of book-keeping, stenography, typing, rapid calculation, accounting, and anything else they needed to work in a business. Due to overcrowding at Victoria High School, a few blocks south, the commercial classes for business and secretarial students were transferred to McDougall's second floor in 1914. It was known as McDougall Commercial High School.

The McDougall Commercial classes were taught by Percy Page, assisted by Ernest Hyde. Since there were no other teachers, both had to take over the



Front entrance of John A. McDougall School in 2010. Photo credit: M. Ann Hall



John A. McDougall School after construction in 1914. Photo credit: Glenbow Archives, NC-6-765

physical education classes. Hyde chose the boys, leaving Page with the girls. Legend suggests it was decided by a coin toss, but it was more likely because Percy was married and Ernest was not, and even more pragmatically the boys' class was smaller. Page agreed the girls could play basketball, but with no indoor gymnasium they practised on a hastily constructed rough outdoor court at the south end of the school grounds. Although there was a spacious, basketball-equipped gymnasium at Victoria High School, the Commercial girls were refused permission to practise

there because Victoria wanted Commercial's best players to play for them.

Girls loved the new game because it was vigorous and competitive. It was also an improvement over the boring military drill, formal gymnastics, and club swinging usually endured. Many girls wanted to continue playing basketball when they graduated and at the same time retain their identity with Commercial. They formed the Commercial Athletic Society, where any student or graduate of the school was eligible for membership, as well as those following a business

career who may have attended some other business school. Called the “Commercial Graduates”, shortened later to just the “Grads”, the famous team was born.

The Grads were known for their short-passing game, something dictated by the fact they often practised in what today would be considered a tiny gymnasium space. A wall with radiators sticking out was right behind the basket. “You had to watch out,” remembered Babe Daniel, one of the later Grads, “cause when you went in for a lay-up shot, if you didn’t turn quickly, you’d hit the radiator.”

Between 1915 and 1940, the amazing Edmonton Grads dominated women’s basketball in North America and Europe. Coached by Percy Page, they played over 400 official games, losing only 20; they travelled more than 125,000 miles in Canada, the United States, and Europe; they crossed the Atlantic three times to defend their world title at exhibition games in conjunction with the Summer Olympics in Paris, Amsterdam, and Berlin.

In 1929, a fire destroyed most of McDougall School and the students were temporarily accommodated in other schools. Many records were destroyed; equipment and trophies damaged; and the Grads lost their practice gymnasium. The school was rebuilt and restored at a cost of \$150,000. McDougall Commercial High School ceased to operate in 1949, when its commercial program was transferred to Victoria Composite High School.

Today, John A. McDougall School is home to some 200 culturally diverse students attending programs in early learning, kindergarten, and grades one to six. The school was refurbished several years ago, but there are still reminders of the famous Edmonton Grads. The old gymnasium is now the school library, and in 1990 was dedicated as “Grad Hall”. A photo display in the front hall of the Grads and Percy Page is a reminder of its storied past.

■ M. Ann Hall,

Edmonton Historical Board Member
Author of *The Grads Are Playing Tonight! The Story of the Edmonton Commercial Graduates Basketball Club*



A man stands in front of the Armouries ca. 1915 in one of the archives' earliest photos of the building. Photo credit: City of Edmonton Archives, EA-29-166

Keeper of Memories: The Prince of Wales Armouries

As an archivist for the City, I am fortunate to spend my days in one of Edmonton’s designated heritage buildings: the Prince of Wales Armouries. Designed by notable architects D.E. Ewart and E.C. Hopkins, it was built between 1912 and 1915 for a total of \$300,000. The building contained offices, mess rooms for enlisted and officers, a large open parade square in the centre, and bowling alleys and shooting ranges in the basement. The Department of Defence owned the Armouries until 1977 when it was declared surplus and the building was eventually transferred to the City of Edmonton as part of a larger land deal with both the City and the Province. After several failed proposals from different organizations for the building’s redevelopment, in 1984 it was decided that the building would become the new home of the City of Edmonton Archives.

In an excellent example of adaptive reuse, architect Fraser Brinsmead designed a building within a building. A two storey purpose built archive was constructed in the parade square, while leaving the character defining elements

of the Prince of Wales Armouries entirely intact. The archives opened in 1992, with the official opening in early 1993. The archives are the memory of our City. We maintain both municipal and private collections on 8 kilometres of shelving (6 of which are full). We have over 50,000 photographs, thousands of books and tens of thousands of blueprints, in addition to audio visual and a growing number of born digital (electronic) material. We help thousands of researchers every year, from genealogists to academics, from house researchers to companies looking for blueprints of commercial properties, and everything in between.

Working here every day, often with researchers and other visitors, I get a chance to see how people relate to this historical structure. Aside from its use by the military, the Armouries served an important role in the community. Strong personal memories are tied to our surrounding, and several people have been so moved by being back in the building that they feel compelled to share their stories. One woman in her 70s remarked that she used to play basketball at the building.



She was in good company – the world-famous Edmonton Commercial Grads also played here. Another gentleman told me a wonderful love story. As a young man he had trouble talking to girls. One night in the 1950s he attended a dance at the Armouries and met a beautiful young woman. Looking for something interesting to say, he started to tell her about a very talented baton twirler he had recently seen at nearby Victoria High School. Flattered, the girl confided that it was in fact her that he had seen. His wife, who had been standing beside him while he was telling this story, looked slightly embarrassed that he would tell a total stranger how they first met all those years ago.

There are nearly 100 years of memories in the bricks and mortar of this building, not to mention the infinite number of stories found within the Archives' collection. In the same way the Archives works hard to save records indefinitely, the City's historic preserva-



tion program will ensure the Armouries continues to hold an important place in people's personal memories and in the collective memory of our city as a whole

■ **Tim O'Grady,
Archivist**

Hundreds of Edmontonians gathered in the Armouries in 1936 for a memorial service honouring the late King George V.

Photo credit: City of Edmonton Archives, EA-160-458

Windsor Park: What's the Story?

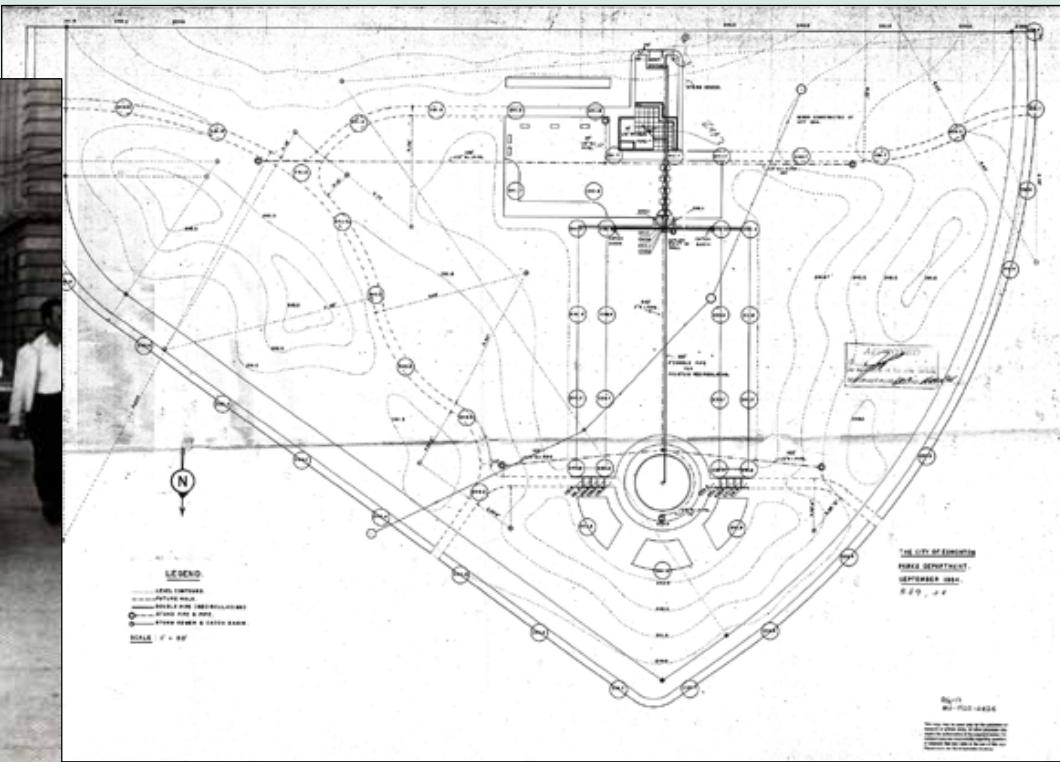
On April 20, 1910, the *Edmonton Bulletin* breathlessly broke the news of "one of the best arranged sub-divisions yet added to the city's surveyed sections. The two hundred or so acres of splendid land recently obtained by the English syndicate at a price in excess of \$175,000 will be named Windsor Park . . . [T]he common style of 'checker board' surveying has not been followed in the sub-division. The contour of the river bank . . . necessitates many odd shaped sections but all the lots are nicely situated and of ample size. A circular portion is arranged for the centre of the grounds and practically all of the streets will connect with this park-like circle."

For the next 40 years, the "park-like circle" lay dormant, a "bare, grassy area" according to one laconic



Landscaped flower beds in Windsor Park in 1958 looking towards Windsor Road.
Photo credit: Provincial Archives of Alberta, PA 74/1





(Left) Robert F. Duke in 1961. Photo credit: Marina Newby, daughter of Robert Duke.

(Above) Original 1954 blueprint showing water fountain and contours.

Photo credit: City of Edmonton Archives RG-17, MP-1955-2434

eyewitness. Around 1953, however, Edmonton's chief architect, Robert Falconer Duke, began to create a landscape design for Windsor Park. Duke enlisted his colleague, architect William Pasternak, to assist him.

Celebrated today as one of Edmonton's premier heritage architects, Robert Falconer Duke was born in Birkenhead, England in 1904, and immigrated to Canada with his family as a child. The family settled in Saskatchewan, and Duke, who was a perfectionist with an artistic bent, completed his education and architectural training there. Duke worked for the Dominion Department of Public Works as a District Resident Architect from 1938 to 1946 before moving to Edmonton to join the city staff as Assistant City Architect. He became Chief City Architect in 1950 and held that position until his retirement in 1969.

A member both of the Royal Architecture Institute of Canada and of the Alberta Association of Architects, Duke

was devoted to his profession. An article in the August 15, 1966 *Edmonton Journal* mentions him bemoaning "the short life of beautiful buildings." Tall and slender, Duke wore bifocals and favoured crisply pressed striped shirts, cuff links and double-breasted suits. A photograph taken in 1961 shows him sporting a fedora.

Duke is credited with the design of many of Edmonton's important Modernist structures including the Borden Park Swimming Pool and Bandshell (1954), the Glenora Substation (1956), the Edmonton Planetarium in Coronation Park (1959) and the Westwood Transit Garage (1960). The No. 4 Fire Station (1954), Rossdale Walter Filtration Plant (circa 1955) and the No. 1 Fire Station (1960) are other municipal architectural designs credited to Duke.

While Duke did most of his municipal designs in the Modernist style, he was a traditionalist at heart, "very British" according to his daughter Marina Newby. He selected a spectacular site

on Mill Creek Ravine for the spacious half-timbered English Tudor Revival style home he designed and built for his family in 1950. His daughter remembers the beautiful cottage gardens her father and mother landscaped together, and waking to breathtaking views of the North Saskatchewan River Valley, the sun glinting gold off the windows of the Hotel MacDonald.

It was around the same time that Duke and Pasternak designed Windsor Park in a naturalistic, flowing style reminiscent of an English country garden. Preserved today in the City of Edmonton Archives, the original Parks Department blueprints show meandering pathways, hillocks, "future walks," stairs, and a shelter. A spectacular water feature, "Windsor Park Fountain and Decorative Pool," is shown to be nearly 200 feet long. The decorative pool was sited in (and perhaps once occupied) what is now the rectangular, sunken grassy area in the park's north end. A 4" double pipe "for fountain

re-circulating" was to run north and south. "Catch basins" and "outlets" were located in the (existing) brick retaining wall. Throughout the 1950s, the City of Edmonton was remarkable for its commitment to excellent design, and the landscape designed for Windsor Park was no exception. The permit was issued on June 2, 1955 and work began.

Why did Windsor Park spring to life at this particular moment in time? Besting Old Glenora may have had something to do with it: in 1952 residents of Old Glenora had installed their (much more modest) Alexander Circle park and decorative fountain. Also in 1952, Mayor William Hawrelak, his wife Pearl and their three young daughters had moved into the Windsor Park neighborhood; Mayor Hawrelak's popularity was at its zenith and he influenced municipal priorities.

A 1958 photograph looks east (left to right are 8930, 8926 and 8922 Windsor Road) and shows the new park in full bloom. With its silvery grey fern-like foliage, Dusty Miller alternates with marigolds bordering masses of multi-coloured snapdragons in the formal raised beds. Small lilacs dot the manicured lawn.

The fact that Windsor Park was meticulously conceived and executed as a formally designed landscape was remarkable for the 1950s. According to Canadian landscape historian Edwinna von Baeyer, before 1880, municipal

public green space was rare. Providing public green space was part of the City Beautiful movement that many Canadian cities embraced by the turn of the 20th century. But by the 1950s, "providing space for public recreation was winning out over providing 'landscaped' public green space – which differentiates your Windsor Park."

Robert Falconer Duke worked within the constraints of Edmonton's geographic locale and harsh environmental conditions to design a landscape for Windsor Park that has matured over the years into a bucolic escape in the British mold. With open lawns and wooded glens, Duke created echoes of home on the Alberta prairie. A Chinese proverb notes that the best time to plant a tree is 50 years ago, and today, roughly 50 years after the ground was first broken, Windsor Park boasts an extraordinary variety of magnificent old trees in its arboretum: mountain ash; Scots, Austrian, Ponderosa and Mugo pine; Douglas fir; Amur and Manitoba maple; mayday; crab apple; American elm; black, white and Colorado (blue) spruce; larch; weeping birch; Shubert chokecherry; green ash and Japanese tree lilac. A much greater variety of trees and shrubs are found in Windsor Park than in most Edmonton parks. As Edmonton's Tree Inventory Coordinator Sherry Boerefyn observed: "the trees in Windsor Park are definitely uncommon . . . Trees like Douglas fir and Austrian

pine have been forgotten over time. I do love these trees."

We are very fortunate that this beautiful old park has been preserved at the heart of our city. And we owe a round of applause both to its creators and to everyone who contributed to its stewardship over the past 57 years. Windsor Park is a wonderful green space and historic designed landscape, as well as a valuable and unique heritage resource for the city of Edmonton. It deserves to be cared for with love and with respect.

Windsor Park is located south of Windsor Park Elementary School (8720 118th Street), bounded to the northwest by 119th Street and to the northeast by Windsor Road.

■ Patricia Leake,
Resident of Windsor Park

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Please send your responses to:

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