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**"Advancing the Material Interests  
of the Redeemer's Kingdom":  
The Erskine Presbyterian Church, Montreal, 1894**

Janis R. Zubalik

A Thesis  
in  
The Department  
of  
Art History

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for the Degree of Master of Arts at  
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## **ABSTRACT**

### **"Advancing the Material Interests of the Redeemer's Kingdom": The Erskine Presbyterian Church, Montreal, 1894**

Janis R. Zubalik

This thesis takes Montreal's 1894 Erskine Presbyterian Church, by Montreal architect Alexander Cowper Hutchison (1838-1922), as a specific example of the building of an Akron-auditorium combination plan church. Although relatively rare in Montreal, this American church type was perhaps the most popular style of church for evangelical Protestant congregations in North America from 1880 through about 1914. Inspired by theatre architecture and a Methodist Sunday School programme, these churches featured an auditorium sanctuary contiguous to a two-tiered multi-celled Sunday School building. They were typically commissioned by newly affluent businessmen and were frequently built in the Richardsonian Romanesque manner.

This study is a social and architectural examination of the Erskine Congregation's three church buildings of 1833, 1866 and 1894 and the 1937 alteration by Percy Erskine Nobbs (1875-1964) at the behest of William Massey Birks (1868-1950) because of new conceptions of "churchliness". The thesis contributes to the understanding of ideology on built form and the church building practices of 19<sup>th</sup> century Montreal Scots Presbyterians. It is the first study devoted to this church type in Montreal.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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I thank Dr. Helen Saly of the Westmount Historical Society for her kind introduction to Miss Eileen Hutchison, granddaughter of John Henry Hutchison, who provided so much precious information about the family. I thank also the families of Ross and Bruce Hutchison for sharing their invaluable family manuscript.

Many archivists and librarians have provided much-appreciated assistance. I would particularly like to thank Louis-Alain Ferron of the Communauté Urbaine de Montréal, Département de la Planification for sharing his files and realistic advice. It was also a great pleasure to benefit from the keen eye of Nora Hague of the Notman Photographic Archive.

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I would like to thank my family, whose cooking skills have improved while I have been honing mine as a researcher. Many other helpful people deserve my thanks, and I shall acknowledge them in this thesis. If I have omitted anyone who was of assistance, I ask their indulgence. In researching this topic, I have discovered an "embarras de richesse" for which I am deeply grateful.



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## ABBREVIATIONS

ANQM	Archives nationales du Québec à Montréal
AVM	Archives de la Ville de Montréal
BNQM	Bibliothèque nationale du Québec à Montréal
CAC	Canadian Architecture Collection, Blackader-Lauterman Library of Art and Architecture, McGill University
CCA	Canadian Centre for Architecture
CIN	<u>Canadian Illustrated News</u>
CUM	Service de la planification du territoire, Communauté urbaine de Montréal. <u>Répertoire d'architecture traditionnelle sur le territoire de la de la Communauté urbaine de Montréal</u>
NPA	Notman Photographic Archives, McCord Museum of Canadian History
UCA	United Church Archives
UCA, M-O	United Church Archives, Montreal-Ottawa Conference
UCA, To.	United Church Archives, Toronto

## ILLUSTRATIONS

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## INTRODUCTION

The Erskine and American United Church [FIGS 1.1-1.23] is a Montreal landmark. Guidebooks cite it as the exemplar of Richardsonian Romanesque architecture in the city,<sup>1</sup> and today its craggy quarry-faced walls look venerable. A century of grime [FIG 1.7] has blackened its once-pale Deschambault limestone.<sup>2</sup> Wind and weather have eroded some of the detail<sup>3</sup> of the carved bands, columns and arcades of Miramichi sandstone which enliven its facade[FIG 1.12].

Aside from wreaking physical changes, time has also

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<sup>1</sup> Raymonde Gauthier, Construire une église au Québec, (Montréal: Libre Expression, 1994), 212.

François Rémillard and Brian Merrett, Montreal Architecture, (Montréal: Méridien, 1990), 89.

<sup>2</sup> "Building in Canada in 1894," Canadian Architect and Builder Magazine, January, 1895, 8-9. The Deschambault quarry is near Quebec City.

<sup>3</sup> "Canadian Building Stones," The Canadian Architect and Builder, January, 1893, 10-11. "Miramichi Stone...is of a rich olive color, and possesses all the merits of a first-class structural material. It is easily worked and long years of exposure have failed to change its color or density." Alas, even longer years have changed its appearance.

<sup>4</sup> These writings have helped me appreciate the changes which happen to buildings (or their reception) through time: Stewart Brand, How Buildings Learn. What Happens After They're Built, (N.Y.: Viking Penguin, 1994); Nelson Goodman and Catherine Z. Elgin, Reconceptions in Philosophy and Other Arts and Sciences, (London: Routledge, 1987) See especially 31-48, Part II "How Buildings Mean"; Jon Goss, "The Built Environment and Social Theory: Towards an Architectural Geography" (Professional Geographer, 40(4), 1988), 392-403; David Lowenthal, The Past is a Foreign Country, (Cambridge (G.B.): Cambridge U. Press, 1985, this reprint 1990); Kevin Lynch, What Time is This Place?, (Boston: MIT, 1972); Warwick Rodwell, Archaeology of the English Church, (London: Batsford, 1981). Thanks also to Dr. Victoria Bennett for her advice on how to analyse cult space, based on Nicole Nivellet et al., Code Pour l'Analyse des Monuments Religieux, (Paris: Editions du C.N.R.S., 1975), and to Dr. Jean Bélisle for counsel on using an archaeological approach to the examination of standing buildings. Advice from Sandra Coley and David Rose was also appreciated.

altered the "meaning" of this building.<sup>4</sup> Montrealers sometimes confuse it with its near neighbors on Sherbrooke Street West, the Presbyterian Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul,<sup>5</sup> or "the one that burned," the Unitarian Church of the Messiah. When it was built in 1894 [FIGS 1.3-1.4],<sup>6</sup> however, the Erskine Presbyterian Church stood out among the mansions and luxury apartment buildings which were its only neighbours;<sup>7</sup> it was a state-of-the art, modern American church, recognizable as such because of its style, interior layout and decoration.

The church still occupies a prominent location in downtown Montreal [FIG 1.2]. Its site is on the southern slope<sup>8</sup> of Mount Royal, on the north-east corner of Sherbrooke Street and Avenue du Musée (formerly Ontario Avenue). Directly to the west of the church is the smooth white marble Beniah Gibb Pavilion of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts which was completed in 1912.<sup>9</sup> On the east side are

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<sup>5</sup> Sandra Coley, "The Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul, Montreal: an Architectural History, 1805-1932." (M.A. in Art History, Concordia University, 1993) The architect was Harold L. Fetherstonhaugh.

<sup>6</sup> The church was dedicated on Sept. 30, 1894.

<sup>7</sup> The red brick "Sherbrooke Apartments" designed in 1889 by A. C. Hutchison and A. D. Steele on the south-east corner of Sherbrooke and Crescent, were one of the first buildings of this type in the city. *Communauté Urbaine de Montréal, service de la planification du territoire. Architecture domestique II. Les Appartements*, Montréal: CUM, 1990, 372-375, ill. 375. (These guidebooks will hereafter be referred to by title, CUM, date.)

<sup>8</sup> Montreal convention calls north what is really northwest on the Island of Montreal. I have used this convention throughout.

<sup>9</sup> Rosalind Pepall, *Building a Beaux-Arts Museum Montreal 1912*, (Montreal: The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 1986) A history of this building designed by Montreal architects Edward and William S. Maxwell.

the appropriately named Chateau Apartments whose walls of pale Manitoba limestone ashlar loom high above the Erskine and American's bell tower. The apartments were erected only in 1925.<sup>9</sup>

The Erskine and American Church measures 165 by 100 feet, and occupies most of its site. Its principal facade [FIG 1.3] is on Sherbrooke Street, the secondary one on de Musée. (It originally had four facades, and the east side next to the Chateau apartments is ornate, as it was formerly readily visible.) The church closes the vista looking north along Crescent Street, and is best viewed from there [FIG 1.6]. There are also good views of it from the round windows of the new building of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, designed by Moshe Safdie, diagonally across Sherbrooke Street. Even in its present-day context, the church is imposing. With its rough limestone exterior the building looks as solid as an old castle.<sup>10</sup> This is not an illusion; the load-bearing walls are anchored in the bedrock of Mount Royal.

In this thesis I will discuss the original significance of this building and how it changed. Although it is one of a handful of Protestant churches of its type built in Montreal, it has many cousins. During the late nineteenth

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<sup>10</sup> While on a tour of inspection in the winter of 1995, modern-day stonemason Bobby Watt noted while looking at the interior of the main gable wall "This is just like an old Scots castle." Watt trained in Ayr, like William Hutchison, who was the father of both the architect (Alexander) and the builder (John Henry) of Erskine church. William's boys began their careers as their father's apprentices.

century, all across the North American continent, congregations which began in pioneer penury reaped the fruits of their adherence to Protestant teachings of prayer, work and study. Newly affluent congregations were able to erect church buildings which shared many of the characteristics of the Erskine. Their exteriors had rough-hewn quarry-faced facades, complex massing and were frequently rendered in neo-Romanesque or Gothic-inspired style. Their interiors conformed to the "Akron-auditorium combination plan" [FIG 3.14-3.15]: a then-novel combination of a semi-circular arrangement of superposed cells of Sunday School classrooms which gave onto a central space. This was frequently contiguous with a comfortable auditorium sanctuary. The worship space was typically richly embellished with Arts and Crafts decor. This church model enjoyed a great vogue among certain Protestant denominations in North America, particularly Methodists, Baptists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians, between the mid-1860s until as late as 1930. Most were built in the 1880s and 1890s through 1914. They are particularly associated with the early years of the Protestant church movement known as the Social Gospel, which was an effort to address the problems of a rapidly industrializing society.

The popularity of this church type was as transitory as its rise to favor had been meteoric. Within decades of

their construction, many of these churches were either renovated like the Erskine, while others were destroyed, victims to new fashions in "churchliness." Reviled, then ignored for many years, these churches are now being studied, and have much to tell us about the culture of newly affluent Protestant businessmen in North America around the turn of the last century.

To date, it is primarily historians from the United States who have studied Akron-combination plan churches, which is to be expected as the vast majority of such buildings are on U.S. soil, where the type originated. One American scholar, architectural historian Ronald Ramsay, underlines the innovative character of the plan. He identifies three common plan types for religious architecture in the United States: the longitudinal plan, the meeting house and the "Akron-auditorium." The latter he defines as a "...uniquely American contribution to the field of church building."<sup>11</sup>

Another fruitful source for the study of these buildings is Jeanne Halgren Kilde's 1991 Ph.D. thesis "Spiritual Armories: A Social and Architectural History of Neo-Medieval Auditorium Churches in the United States, 1869-

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<sup>11</sup>Ronald L.M. Ramsay, "Building the Social Gospel: American religious architecture, 1865-1920", unpublished paper (1992). Prof. Ramsay is an architectural historian at the State University, Fargo, North Dakota. I thank him for his generosity.

1910."<sup>12</sup> Kilde's work is particularly informative about the social significance of these churches in the United States. She calls them "Neo-medieval Akron-auditorium" because of their typical physical features and their psychological significance in the United States context, as bastions of the middle-class in the face of social unrest. The most complete architectural history of the Akron combination plan church in the United States remains A. Robert Jaeger's 1984 thesis, "The Auditorium and Akron Plans—Reflections of a Half-Century of American Protestantism."<sup>13</sup> According to Jaeger,

Church buildings incorporating one or both spaces [the auditorium worship space and the Akron-plan Sunday School] were built by the thousands all across the country [U.S.]. They represent what may be the most ubiquitous type of historic Protestant building in America. Ironically, little scholarly attention has been given to them until now.<sup>14</sup> [Emphasis mine].

To date, no Canadian study dedicated exclusively to this building type has been published, although "Akron-auditorium" plan churches were built in many locations in Canada.<sup>15</sup> There is a brief discussion of these buildings in Marion MacRae and Anthony Adamson's Hallowed Walls, and a longer one in William Westfall's Two Worlds: The Protestant

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<sup>12</sup> Jeanne Halgren Kilde, "Spiritual Armories: A Social and Architectural History of Neo-Medieval Auditorium Churches in the United States, 1869-1910" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Minnesota, 1991). I thank Dr. Kilde for sharing her articles with me.

<sup>13</sup> A. Robert Jaeger. "The Auditorium and Akron Plans—Reflections of a Half Century of American Protestantism" (M.A. thesis, Cornell University, 1984)

<sup>14</sup> Jaeger, *ibid.*, Abstract.

<sup>15</sup> So far, there has been no formal survey of this type of church in Canada, although examples are to be found throughout the Midwestern U.S. and several places in Canada. Conversation with Ronald Ramsay, July 1996.

Culture of Nineteenth-Century Ontario.<sup>16</sup> Westfall, with Malcolm Thurlby, also gave an overview of the church type in their article "Church Architecture and Urban Space: The Development of Ecclesiastical Forms in 19thC Ontario."<sup>17</sup>

Angela Carr's Toronto Architect Edmund Burke provides a more comprehensive treatment of the development of Toronto amphitheater-plan churches principally by the firm of Langley, Langley and Burke. Jarvis Street Baptist Church (1874-75) by that firm is cited as the "first ecclesiastical amphitheatre construction in Canada."<sup>18</sup> Carr's work reveals that Toronto was in the vanguard of this new Protestant church building movement in Canada.

It is possible that Toronto may have the largest concentration of extant amphitheater plan churches in the country.<sup>19</sup> Certainly, Toronto was the nerve centre of the Presbyterian church in the last quarter of the nineteenth century,<sup>20</sup> during which the majority of these large, complex Protestant

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<sup>16</sup> Westfall's interesting discussions of the auditorium church type do not, however, mention their American, theatrical antecedents. Two Worlds, 153-154, 157.

<sup>17</sup> William Westfall and Malcolm Thurlby, "Church Architecture and Urban Space: The Development of Ecclesiastical Forms in Nineteenth-Century Ontario" in David Keene and Colin Read, eds. Old Ontario: Essays in Honour of J.M.S. Careless, (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1990), 118-145.

<sup>18</sup> Angela Carr, Toronto Architect Edmund Burke, (Montreal: McGill-Queens U. Press, 1995), 27. Montreal architect Joseph Savage also built a similar type of church in Hamilton, Ontario for Zion Tabernacle about the same time. See Chapter 3, "Ecclesiastical Architecture, The Triumph and Demise of the Amphitheatre Plan", 20-48.

<sup>19</sup> There are also references to this church type in Marion MacRae and Anthony Adamson, Hallowed Walls, (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1975), 219-239 William Westfall. Two Worlds: The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth-Century Ontario, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's, 1989), especially Chapter 5, "Epics in Stone: Placing the Sacred in a Secular World", 126-158.

<sup>20</sup> Brian J. Fraser. The Social Uplifters. Presbyterian Progressives and the Social Gospel in Canada, 1875-1915, (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier U. Press, 1988), 56-66.

church buildings were constructed.<sup>21</sup>

However, when further research is done it may be found that the greatest number of Canadian Akron-auditorium plan churches were built in Canada's West. Neil Bingham's Study of the Church Buildings in Manitoba of the Congregational, Methodist, Presbyterian and United Churches of Canada<sup>22</sup> reveals that after the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway reached Winnipeg, Manitoba, in 1882, the region's population soared, and a large number of Akron-auditorium churches were built in the city and its hinterland.<sup>23</sup> Bingham notes the use of concert-hall features and reports that "The auditorium plan became de rigueur for larger Presbyterian and Methodist churches in Manitoba until around 1930," which is some fifteen years later than the usual end date of circa 1914.<sup>24</sup> Most of these churches were destroyed; only one was still standing in Winnipeg in 1987, but others may still be seen in the larger towns of Manitoba. His description of these churches as having "richly appointed interiors" and the "medieval character" then fashionable, as well as their particular connection with Methodist and Presbyterian congregations, is consistent with the general development of the church type in other places.

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<sup>21</sup> Peter C. Newman, Canada, 1892. Portrait of a Promised Land, (Toronto: Madison Press, 1992), 129 "Most of the city's architectural imagination went into building Toronto's churches. It was the most over-churched city in North America....Toronto was overwhelmingly Protestant."

<sup>22</sup> Published by the Historic Resources Branch, Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Recreation, 1987.

<sup>23</sup> Presumably, there was no time to lose. Winnipeg boasted some 100 brothels toward the end of the century. Peter C. Newman, Canada, 1892, 155.



Apart from some monographs on individual churches which suggest similar arrangements, I have not yet found other printed sources for this church type in Canada. I did have the pleasure of visiting St. Andrew's United Church (formerly St. Andrew's Presbyterian) in Nanaimo, B.C. [FIGS 3.8-3.9]. There, Reverend Mas Isasawa showed me around the lovely Akron-plan church built in 1894 and designed by the Minneapolis architect Warren H. Hayes. He designed numerous churches which were studied as models for the Erskine Presbyterian [FIGS 3.3-3.9].<sup>25</sup>

My proposal to "reveal the original significance" of the Erskine Church is slightly misleading as it implies there was a single meaning. The record books, minutes, and newspaper accounts contain implied ambivalence about the planning and building of the Erskine Church. In the next generation, ambivalence changed to frank dislike in some quarters. Meaning is fluid. When peoples' ideologies shift, their buildings change to accommodate the new ideas, and the Erskine was changed.

In addition, it is primarily the voices of the promoters, the most influential men in the church, which are heard (and even they are not in complete harmony). Those men were successful businessmen, often active in the building

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<sup>24</sup> Bingham, 18.

<sup>25</sup> I thank Barbara Krebs of the Hayes research project for alerting me to the existence of this church, and archivist Bob Stewart of the United Church of Canada, British Columbia Conference Archives

trades. The women's voices are not in the church records (at least, not until the color of the sanctuary carpet is to be chosen).<sup>26</sup> Laudatory responses are clear; criticism must be inferred from protestations that such a costly building "is not a waste."<sup>27</sup>

While investigating the Erskine Presbyterian Church of 1894 and how it came to be, I have found Raymond Montpetit's "9-point grid for the analysis of a monument of public architecture" to be useful. His socio-historical approach examines the following categories: initiating events, the name of the building, its function, style, the choice of architect, the site, the "promoters," financing, and the inauguration.<sup>28</sup> To this list, particularly in this instance, I would add the plan,<sup>29</sup> plus the subsequent uses.

It remains to explain the "architecture" of this study. The discussion will be divided into six parts. Chapter one deals with the Scottish community in Montreal, the Scottish Presbyterian religious heritage, and the changes to Canadian Presbyterianism at the end of the nineteenth century.

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for finding the documentation, which includes signed drawings by Warren H. Hayes: an elevation dated 4-11-1892 and a floor plan dated the day following.

<sup>26</sup> See Marguerite Van Die "Recovering Religious Experience: Some Reflections on Methodology" in Historical Papers 1992: Canadian Society of Church History for a thoughtful reflection on the complexities of investigating religion in Canadian culture.

<sup>27</sup> "Cornerstone well and truly laid" .Montreal Star, August 3, 1893. Report of Methodist minister Rev. S.P. Rose's talk "Their building was not a waste, but a conservation of religious energy."

<sup>28</sup> (Translation mine.) Raymond Montpetit, "La Construction de l'Eglise Notre Dame de Montréal: Quelques points pour une interprétation socio-historique" in J.R. Brault, ed., Montréal au XIX siècle, (Montréal: Leméac.)

<sup>29</sup> Le Corbusier's dictum "The plan holds the essence of sensation" was never truer than in this case. Originally, the Akron-plan Sunday School referred not only to the building, but to a Uniform Lesson Plan devised by the Methodists, but widely used by evangelical congregations in North America.

Chapter two describes the first two churches of the Erskine congregation of 1835 [**FIGS 2.3-2.4**] and 1866 [**FIGS 2.6-2.7**]. It also outlines contemporary arguments over church music, as well as changes to Presbyterian church architecture in Canada by the 1890s. The role of the Church and Manse Building Fund for Manitoba will also be described. Chapter 3 discusses the connections between architect Alexander Cowper Hutchison [**FIG 4.2**], his brother the builder John Henry Hutchison [**FIG 4.3**], and the Building Committee members, as well as the search for a model church [**FIGS 3.3-3.10**]. The westward expansion of Presbyterian churches and the official turning away from the Gothic is also explained. Chapter 4 gives a brief history of the Akron-combination plan for churches [**FIGS 3.14-3.15**], and refers to examples in Montreal [**FIGS 3.16-3.18**]. It introduces the model for the Erskine Church, the First Presbyterian (1886) [**FIGS 3.3, 3.12**] and First Congregational (1888) [**FIGS 3.4, 3.12**] by Warren H. Hayes of Minneapolis. The social meaning of the church type is discussed. Finally, the Erskine Church [**FIGS 1.1-1.19**] and its model churches [**FIGS 3.3-3.10**] are compared and contrasted. Chapter 5 shows that the Erskine Church of 1894 was received with some ambivalence by the congregation. Chapter 6 discusses the remodelling of the church carried out in 1937-39 [**FIGS 1.20-1.22**] by Percy Erskine Nobbs at the behest of William Massey Birks after

the amalgamation of the American and Erskine congregations as the Erskine and American United Church in 1934. The conclusion follows. An appendix gives excerpts from a description of the Erskine Church interior in the month it opened.

## CHAPTER 1

### RELIGION AND MENTALITY:

#### THE SCOTS IN MONTREAL--THE SCOTS RELIGIOUS LEGACY

The Presbyterian group who built the Erskine church emerged from the Scottish branch of Reformed Christianity. The founders of the faith were the French reformer Jean Cauvin dit Calvin (known in English as John Calvin, (1509-1564) and John Knox (1515?-1572), a Scot.

Historian John Moir emphasizes Calvin's rupture with Roman Catholicism:

It remained for John Calvin to convert one branch of this separatist movement [the Protestant Reformation of Martin Luther] into a radical break with the religious organization [the Roman Catholic Church] which had developed over fourteen centuries.<sup>30</sup>

Calvin's thought stressed "the sovereignty of God, predestination (the idea that God had predetermined who would be saved), the disciplined Church, and a fourfold order of ministry."<sup>31</sup> His most influential work remains The Institutes of the Christian Religion.<sup>32</sup> Calvin, while not totally aniconic, disapproved strongly of wasting money on church decoration which could be better spent on charity. He was, however, on guard against idolatry. Hearing the word of

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<sup>30</sup> John Moir, Enduring Witness. A History of the Presbyterian Church in Canada (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Eagle Publishers, 1987), 1-2.

<sup>31</sup> Paul Kevin Meagher et al. Eds. Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religion (Washington, D.C.: Corpus Publications, 1979), 594.

God was paramount, and there was little emphasis on ceremonial liturgy. Thus, Presbyterian churches were often unadorned, even stark, in contrast with Roman Catholic churches. The first Presbyterian church in Lower Canada, St. Gabriel St. Church, Montreal, built in 1792, [FIG 2.1] embodies the architectural simplicity mandated by Calvinism.

The term "Presbyterian" derives from the form of church government Calvin proposed, which mandated direct participation of the (male) congregants. It comes from the Greek "presbyteros" or "old person." The elders were co-responsible with the ministers for the spiritual welfare of parishioners. At the city or district level, elected elders were selected to make up the Presbytery, which decided on such questions as where new churches should be built, as well as spiritual matters. Finally, the Kirk Session, the national governing body, comprising elders from Presbyteries across the nation, set the national agenda. They gave guidance in such areas as liturgy, national missionary strategy, church architecture, and related matters. An elder could be active at all three levels of church policy-making.<sup>33</sup> It is frequently mentioned that Calvinism is

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<sup>32</sup> Calvin's style, even in English translation, is forthright and arresting. His anger at the abuses of the Roman Catholic Church is almost palpable.

<sup>33</sup> In the case of the Erskine Church, Warden King, principal benefactor of the building campaign, was a Session Elder, as was the architect A.C. Hutchison. Within each church, boards of Trustees oversaw the business of the church, looking after ordinary financing and the physical plant. They also drew up the site options and architectural plans when buildings were to be built. In this period, these groups are exclusively male. Although there were active women's organizations (temperance was of

particularly congenial to businessmen, as it promotes work, education, and devotion to duty.<sup>34</sup>

The groupings of Scots Presbyterians in Canada were initially largely determined by events in Scotland. There was a recurring struggle between the established State Church of Scotland<sup>35</sup> and other branches of Presbyterians in Scotland over the question of who could name ministers--that is, the autonomy of the Church from the State. These quarrels shattered Church unity repeatedly, the most famous disruptions being in 1733 under the leadership of Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine and in 1843 under Adam Chalmers. Although it is possible to assume that divisions within the Presbyterian Church in Scotland would have taken place along class lines, this should not automatically be believed. Particularly in Canada, after the Disruption of 1843, the choice between the Church of Scotland (the Scottish established State Church), the Free Church, or other Secessionist groups, seems to have been driven by ideology rather than primarily by class loyalty.<sup>36</sup> In Montreal,

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particular concern) within the church, and women were church members, they could not be elders at this period.

<sup>34</sup> N.K. Clifford, "Religion and the Development of Canadian Society: An Historiographical Analysis." In Church History, vol. 38, no. 4, 1969, pp. 506-523. Clifford cites Weber, Tawney and A.R.M. Lower who concur that Calvinism subtly reinforces the spirit of acquisition.

<sup>35</sup> The Church of Scotland was the state church in that country. It was never a state church in Canada. On the subject of elders, see Duff Crerar "Anent the Kirk Session: The Elders in Colonial Canadian Presbyterian Religion", Historical Papers 1994, Canadian Society of Church History, 223-233. Crerar states: (229-230) "[the work of modern Canadian scholars of Presbyterian life in Canada] reminds us that at every level of Presbyterian life decision-making and deliberative power has been shared by minister and elder in the ascending hierarchy of church courts which were not managed solely by the clergy...but in tandem with elders sent by their home sessions."

ethnicity caused further divisions in the Presbyterian ranks. Presbyterians of Scottish origin preferred a minister from Scotland, whereas Presbyterians who had emigrated from the United States following the War of 1812 did not necessarily want a Scot as their pastor. (This, in fact, was the origin of the American Presbyterian Church in 1822.)<sup>37</sup>

#### CHANGES IN THE "PUBLIC PIETIES OF PRESBYTERIANS" CIRCA 1890

Although there had been ten separate groups of Presbyterians in British North America in 1843<sup>38</sup> (the year of the Great Disruption in Scotland under Chalmers), most of these had united by 1875. The 1891 census revealed the Presbyterian Church in Canada to be the Dominion's largest denomination.<sup>39</sup> The unified voice of the Presbyterian Church in Canada and the numerical importance of the denomination

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<sup>30</sup>Richard W. Vaudry, The Free Church in Victorian Canada, 1844-1861, (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press), . 27-30. Compare with Lynda Price et al, Introduction to the Social History of Scots in Quebec, 1780-1840, (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1981), 27.

<sup>37</sup> I am indebted to Clarence Epstein for his unpublished paper "The American Presbyterian Church in Montreal" presented at the Society for the Study of Architecture Conference, June, 1996. For the history of the American Presbyterian Church, see also D. C. Knowles, "The American Presbyterian Church of Montreal, 1822-1866." ( M. A. Thesis, McGill University, 1957); George R. Lighthall, A Short History of the American Presbyterian Church of Montreal, 1823-1923, (Montreal: 1923) and George H. Wells, "Historical Sermon preached at the semi-centennial celebration of the American Presbyterian Church of Montreal by the Pastor, Rev. George H. Wells" (Montreal: John C. Becket, 1873). In all the church records, it is only the occupations of the males which are listed (except in the rare case of employed widows.) The founders of the Secessionist Church (later the Erskine Presbyterian) were primarily artisans, many of whom were in the building trades, primarily carpenters and masons.

<sup>38</sup> John S. Moir, Enduring Witness, see chart facing page 55, "Major Presbyterian Unions in Canada" and "Major Presbyterian Unions in Scotland" for names and dates. See also E. Lloyd Morrow, Church Union in Canada, (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1923), 13. "The Presbyterian Church in Canada, dating from 1875, is the sequel to six unions (1817-1875), whose history can be traced intelligently only by an expert in the manifold divisions of Scottish Christianity." The ceremonies were held in Montreal in the Victoria Skating Rink. See Fig. 2.8.



gave the church a social influence which extended beyond the boundaries of its membership. The Presbyterian Church in Canada both participated in and contributed to changes taking place within Protestant ideology in North America.

Historian Brian J. Fraser notes that the "...common thread running through the tapestry of the Presbyterian involvement in and contribution to Canadian political culture [was] the principle of the Lordship of Christ over the nation."<sup>40</sup> He characterizes the "public pieties" of the social theology of Canadian Presbyterianism thus: From the 1820s until the 1890s, Evangelical Conservatism was the basic stance. God's moral government ruled the world, and nations as well as individuals had to conform to God's order. This view coincided with the birth of the Dominion. Presbyterians supported liberal democratic political institutions and the "unfettered expansion of commercial and economic opportunities." (This would lead to certain conflicts, as commercialism collided with piety. Ironically, urbanization, fuelled by industrialization, was to be one of the main causes of secularization of society.)<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>John S. Moir. "Presbyterian and Reformed Churches", The Canadian Encyclopedia Vol. III, p. 1472.

<sup>40</sup>Brian J. Fraser, "The Public Pieties of Canadian Presbyterians" in Robert E. Vander Vannan, ed., Church and Canadian Culture, (Latham, Maryland: University Press of America, Inc., 1991), 87-104.

<sup>41</sup>The late H. Keith Markell's "Canadian Protestantism Against the Background of Urbanization and Industrialization in the Period from 1885 to 1914", Ph.D. Thesis, University of Chicago, 1971, provides very good information for major Canadian Protestant denominations during this period. A more concise contemporary discussion of the period 1867 to 1914 is Phyllis D. Airhart "Ordering a New Nation and Reordering Protestantism, 1867-1914" in George A. Rawlyk, ed., The Canadian Protestant Experience, 1760-1990, (Montreal: McGill Queen's U. Press, 1990),

Between about 1890 and 1920, the pace of social change picked up. Canada recovered from the economic depression of the 1890s, there was mass immigration to Canada and migration within the nation, and the West developed rapidly. Continued industrial and urban growth added to social strain. There were regional rivalries, ethnic and class tensions. At the close of the period, Canada participated in World War I, thus entering into a new relationship with the world. The new Evangelical Liberals now began to see history as progressive, rather than as the static revelation of Divine will.<sup>42</sup> Fraser concludes that in this new age:

Whereas the Evangelical Conservatives saw themselves called to establish and conserve the righteous order God had ordained and revealed, the Evangelical Liberals saw themselves called to be the agents of God's providential progress as God's will unfolded itself in history. [emphasis mine]

This new religious understanding fostered innovation in many spheres, including the architectural. The change in understanding of the role of the church was not confined to Presbyterians, nor to Canada, but was part of a larger movement within North American Protestant denominations

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98-138. Her "Suggestions for Further Reading" is especially useful. For good discussions of secularization in Canada, see articles by John G. Stackhouse, Jr., Brian Clark, and David B. Marshall Historical Papers, 1994, Canadian Society of Church History, 193-221.

<sup>42</sup>Miss Eileen Hutchison, granddaughter of the (1894) Erskine's builder, J.H. Hutchison, recalled that her granddad, who was of a progressive bent, liked to "argue with the minister about evolution" whereas her Uncle Alec (A.C. Hutchison, the architect of the church) was much more staid and "all for the church". (Conversation, spring 1995.) He may have concurred with the anti-Darwinian stance of Principal Dawson. Hutchison (with partner A.D. Steele) was the architect for the Redpath Museum of Natural History, which Dawson commissioned. See Susan Bronson, "The design of the Peter Redpath Museum at McGill University" M.Sc.A. thesis, McGill University, 1992.

which came to be called the Social Gospel movement.<sup>43</sup> This broad movement arose in reaction to the problems created by an industrializing society. It expanded the social role of the church, which, on a practical level, meant a change in what a church building was. Presbyterians, however, retained their conviction of moral rectitude and devotion to civic duty during this period of mutation.

### 'SCOTTISHNESS'

"Here's tae us! Wha's like us?  
Damn few, an' they're all deid!"  
--Scottish toast

When looking at any building, particularly one which houses a religious cult, we need to know who ordered it to be built and what their purpose was in constructing it. In the case of the Erskine Presbyterian Church, the "patrons" were a group of Scots artisans who allied themselves with one of the more radical Secessionist branches of the church.<sup>44</sup> Their first meetings were in 1831, and this study follows the congregation for the next century, during which

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<sup>43</sup> A. Richard Allen "Social Gospel" in the Canadian Encyclopedia, Edmonton: Hurtig Pub., 1985, 1717-1718.

<sup>44</sup> Michael Lynch, Scotland. A New History, (London: Pimlico, 1991, 1992), 393-4. In Scotland, by the 1830s, the Established Church of Scotland had lost ground to dissenting movements characterized by evangelical fervor. The Secessionist Church in Montreal (the early Erskine) grew out of this movement.

time its social configuration and the precise nature of its belief changed greatly.<sup>45</sup>

While recognizing the dangers of stereotyping national groups, a consensus exists about basic traits of Scottish character which is germane to this discussion.<sup>46</sup> Scots in Montreal also lived in a particular context. Their religion strongly opposed "popery," but had to co-exist with a French-Canadian culture, which was strongly Roman Catholic and just as convinced of the rightness of its belief and the need for self-determination.

Although not all Scots are Presbyterian, the Reformed tradition of Calvin and Knox has profoundly affected Scottish values and contributed to the distinctiveness of its people. According to W. Stanford Reid,

Some historians have maintained that [the Reformation] is the most important event in Scottish history...[it was] not imposed from above as it was in England, but grew up from the grass roots in spite of much opposition at the higher levels of society.<sup>47</sup>

Indeed, the Reformation hit the country with the force of a cultural revolution.<sup>48</sup> An independent spirit and the conviction that no earthly interest should control the

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<sup>45</sup> For a history of the early years of the Erskine Church, see Jane Greenlaw, "Fractional Individuals: Protestant Non-Conformity in Montreal, 1828-1842", (maîtrise en histoire, Université du Québec à Montréal, 1989) and "Choix pratiques et choix des pratiques. Le non-conformisme protestant à Montréal (1825-1842). Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française (1947), Vol. 1, no. 1, été 1992, by the same author.

<sup>46</sup> Lynda Pryce et. al., Introduction to the Social History of Scots in Quebec (1780-1840), (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1981)

<sup>47</sup> W. Stanford Reid ed., The Scottish Tradition in Canada (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976, reprint 1988), 118.

(Scots, Presbyterian) Church often led to schism within the body of the faithful.

The tradition also emphasizes a devotion to duty, and a responsibility for developing one's abilities and using one's talents in the best way. Thus education has always been a central value, and the Scottish contribution to the development of Canada's education system is a major one. The establishment of Montreal's McGill University is but one example.

There is also a strongly developed notion of stewardship, of the appropriate use of money and property. (The Christian businessmen are certainly seen as the "best men" in the community at the time the 1894 Erskine Church is being built.) Confidence in the rightness of their belief, and of their duty to live according to God's word has sometimes made them attempt to impose their will on others, even outside their community. The Presbyterian churches in Montreal carried on missionary activities not only among their own people, but also among the Jews and French-Canadians. Indeed, Ontario's "Blue Laws" regulating Sunday behavior which persisted until late in the twentieth century were of Presbyterian origin.<sup>49</sup> Strong Sabbatarians, the 1889 Synod of Montreal and Ottawa inveighed against the "increase

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<sup>48</sup> John Prebble, *The Lion in the North. One Thousand Years of Scotland's History*, Middlesex: Penguin, 1983 (first pub 1971), 210-213.

in the French population, who turn the Sabbath into a day of merriment."<sup>50</sup>

Traditionally, Scots have supported each other rather than going outside the community, which has led to clannishness and nepotism, as well as a strong attachment, among emigrants, to their roots in the old country. Besides religion, one of the binding elements of the Montreal Scots community has been its social organizations.<sup>51</sup> Two important examples are the St. Andrew's and Caledonian Societies. These were formed early in the 1830s (as were other local national societies including St. George's, St. Patrick's, the German Society and indeed the Société St-Jean-Baptiste, in about 1834, just prior to the 1837-38 Patriote Rebellion.) Patriotism, a strong value in Scotland, was also felt towards the new, developing Canadian nation, and came into conflict with the aspirations of French Canadians.<sup>52</sup>

Those Scottish social organizations also (eventually) included women, but there were other important associations which did not. In fact, Calvinist tradition is frequently

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<sup>49</sup> William Klempa, ed., The Burning Bush and a Few Acres of Snow, Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1994) The entire collection of essays is germane to the topic of this chapter. For Sabbath observance, see Paul Laverdure "Canada's Sunday: The Presbyterian Contribution, 1875-1950", 83-99.

<sup>50</sup> Acts and Proceedings of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, Appendix 24, 1889, iv," Montreal and Ottawa "Hindrances". See also Appendix no. 14, 1888, "Report on Sabbath Observance."

<sup>51</sup> I thank Nellie Reiss of McGill University's Lande Collection for introducing me to Sam Allison, who was very generous with his information about the history of Scottish organizations in Montreal.

<sup>52</sup> A representative comment from the Edinburgh Scotsman correspondent who wrote a long series of articles "From Caledonia to Vancouver" is this from March 6, 1889: "It is very unfortunate for purely British interests in Canada that the island [Montreal] should form part of the Province of Quebec. Were it included in Ontario, possible future trouble might not arise, and present uneasiness, caused by the existing French supremacy in all matters of local government in the former Province would

singled out as more patriarchal than some. Certainly sporting associations were social clubs where Scotsmen could play and do business. Montreal's was the first golf club in North America, and the Scottish antecedents of the game are well-known. The city's curling clubs were of particular importance, and it was said that stonemasons make the best curlers.<sup>53</sup> At the turn of the last century, the "roaring game" of curling enjoyed unparalleled prestige.<sup>54</sup>

Perhaps less well documented, however, is the influence of Freemasonry. (Freemasonry had been long established in Scotland.)<sup>55</sup> Suzanne Zeller in Inventing Canada. Early Victorian Science and the Idea of a Transcontinental Nation<sup>56</sup> underscores the Masonic connections of members of the Natural History Society of Montreal. This society was instrumental in promoting government support of the Geological Survey in British North America. It aimed to

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cease. The French majority are not likely to agree peaceably to give up the richest and most important portion of the Province — which many of them in their hearts regard as Nouvelle [sic] France."

<sup>53</sup> On map Fig. 2.8, note the proximity of Victoria Skating Rink to the stoneyard. The Hutchison family, who were so influential in building in Montreal, were responsible for building several curling rinks and were famous curlers. Rev. John Kerr, Curling in Canada and the United States, (Edinburgh: Geo. A. Morton, 1904), 258-259, 772-775. William Hutchison's wife was from Largs, where a very early open-air artificial rink had been set up in 1813. L. Russell Muirhead, Scotland, (London: Ernest Benn, 1959), 164.

<sup>54</sup> For the Canadian prestige and Scottish connections of curling, see Gerald Redmond, "Curling", The Canadian Encyclopedia, Edmonton: Hurtig, 1985), 457-8.

<sup>55</sup> Muirhead's Scotland Kilwinning was the site of Scotland's earliest Masonic Lodge, and was also the birthplace of William Hutchison, a builder and the father of the architect (A.C. Hutchison) and the builder (J.H. Hutchison) of the 1894 Erskine Church. J.H. Hutchison was a lifelong member of the Masons.

<sup>56</sup> Suzanne Zeller, Inventing Canada. Early Victorian Science and the Idea of a Transcontinental Nation, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987) See esp. Chapter II, "Montreal Masonry", 31-50. This growing belief in progress was not confined to Presbyterians. See Richard Allen "Providence to Progress: The Migration of an Idea in English Canadian Thought" in Religion/Culture, Association for Canadian Studies/Association des études canadiennes, vol. VII, 1985, 33-43. The entire volume is very illuminating about religion in Canadian society.

use scientific methods to inventory the mineral wealth of the country with a view to promoting industry. The Society wished to attract the patronage of Lord Durham, Governor General of British North America. He was an early industrialist, "an English landed gentleman whose crop was coal,"<sup>57</sup> a practical scientist and (Masonic) Deputy Grand Master of England in 1834. Durham's name lives on in Quebec because of the insulting remarks he made about the French in British North America as a "people without history." At the time, most Patriotes favored agriculture and feared the advance of industry which the British faction promoted. The general Scots attitude was in favor of practical science which would promote the mining of iron and coal and thus be a spur to industry. This mentality had an impact on the development of Canada's railway system, in which the Scots were particularly active.<sup>58</sup> Paradoxically, that railway's running on Sunday was a thorn in the side of the Presbyterian church, but the CPR also aided in the spread of Presbyterianism in the west through its aid to missionaries of that faith.<sup>59</sup>

Besides the devotion to the church, work and duty, business, education, family and social ties, there is,

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<sup>57</sup> Zeller, ibid., 35.

<sup>58</sup> There are numerous writings on the Scottish contribution to business. See David S. MacMillan "The Scot as Businessman" in Reid, op. cit., 179-202.

<sup>59</sup> Ralph Connor, Life of James Robertson .Missionary Superintendent in the Northwest Territories. (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1908) Chapter XXII, "The Church and Manse Building Fund," 177-199.



perhaps paradoxically, a basic adaptability amongst the Scots. Many of the early emigrants from Scotland to North America were very poor, but habits ingrained in them from childhood helped them overcome adversity and thrive in whatever part of the world they found themselves.

Despite the examples of culture clash between Scots and French Canadians mentioned above, there was also accommodation. The historian Benjamin Sulte wrote in 1898:

Of the three groups [English, Irish, Scots] who form what we now call Les Anglais, those who have been here longest and those who are the most remarkable are the Scottish Group. For us, French Canadians, this is also the most sympathetic and the most understanding of the three groups concerned.<sup>60</sup>

Whatever their cultural differences, throughout the nineteenth century there was consensus about the role of religion.

[In Victorian Canada] religion--not wealth, and not politics--was the chief concern, the main ideal occupation of Canadians, both British and French. The Age is indeed to be comprehended only in terms of the idea of Providence, that God and His Church were very present actors in the World.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Quoted in Henry B.M. Best, "The Auld Alliance" in New France" in Reid, 15-26. Source is "Les Ecosais au Canada," La Revue des Deux Francais, II, (1898), 120.

<sup>61</sup> W.L. Morton, "Victorian Canada" in W.L. Morton, ed., The Shield of Achilles, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 1968), 314. See also Roger O'Toole, "Society, the Sacred and the Secular: Sociological Observations on the Changing Role of Religion in Canadian Culture" in Religion/Culture, 99-117.

## CHAPTER 2

### FROM THE "WEE KIRK IN LITTLE DUBLIN" TO THE ERSKINE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, SAINT CATHERINE STREET The first two homes of the Erskine Presbyterian Congregation, 1833-1893

Erskine Church, as it came to be called, was not an offshoot of an older Montreal congregation. Known simply as the "Secession Church" it was an independent body whose earliest assembly was in 1831. (Thus, the congregation initially constituted its own Presbytery and Kirk Session.) Formally established in 1833, its first members were Scots artisans.<sup>62</sup> Originally, they met in a "Mr. Bruce's" schoolroom, then the American Presbyterian Church [FIG 2.2] allowed them to use their building.<sup>63</sup> The Secessionists' fierce independence, however, induced them to build their own first small building [FIG 2.3] even though they were not quite financially ready. It was on the north-west corner of Chenneville and de Lagauchetière (now in Montreal's Chinatown). In 1833, the site was considered inconveniently far from town and in a poor neighborhood. It was then known as the "Lagauchetière St. Church" or the "Scotch Secession

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<sup>62</sup> Published sources for the history of the Erskine Congregation include:

Newton Bosworth, Hochelaga Depicta or the Early History of Montreal, (Montreal: William Greig, 1839. facsimile, Toronto: Coles, 1974); Jane Greenlaw, "Fractious Individuals" and "Choix pratiques"; Guy Tombs, One Hundred Years of Erskine Church, Montreal 1833-1933. ([Montreal?]: The United Church of Canada, 1934); Lynda Price et al., Introduction to the Social History of Scots in Quebec, 1780-1840, Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1981.

<sup>63</sup> The two congregations were to formally unite as members of the United Church of Canada about a hundred years later. According to Wells' sermon, several other congregations were also thus accommodated by the American congregation.

Church". More popularly, it was dubbed the "Wee Kirk in Little Dublin" alluding to its unprepossessing appearance and Hibernian neighbors.<sup>64</sup>

One of the many carpenters in the congregation, Mr. Yuile, erected the one-storey building which could seat 480. This simple building was inspired by classical models. Its main facade featured two doors.<sup>65</sup> Even in its primitive state, however, it had a Sunday school and libraries for both the Sunday school and the adult members of the congregation. Due to shortage of funds, political disturbances and repeated epidemics of cholera, building was slow until 1847, when the walls were raised to provide a second storey and a basement dug out for the Sunday school [FIG 2.4].

By 1864, the city had grown to surround the church. A new site in a quieter district had to be found where a larger building could be erected. The old church was sold to

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<sup>64</sup> We may assume that the area changed rapidly. In 1845 when the Côté St. Church or Free Presbyterian Church was built a short block to the east, the area was "most respectable and quite uptown." John Stirling, A Short Sketch of the History of Crescent Street Church, Montreal (Montreal, n.d., n.p.) After the Great Disruption of 1844, that church was founded by a dozen men including fellow Scots masons John Redpath and William Hutchison (Alexander and John Henry's father). They had formerly been with the St. Gabriel congregation. When the Côté St. Church was built, it was the "largest and finest Presbyterian Church building of its day in the city." Quotations from John Stirling, A Short Sketch of the History of Crescent Street Church, Montreal (Montreal, n.d.) The presence of two fine Scots Presbyterian churches made the area more Caledonian. (See Montreal Gazette, July 30, 1995, C1.) See CUM Les Eglises, pp. 36-39 for the Free Presbyterian Church. When the congregation moved to the north east corner of Crescent Street and (then) Dorchester Street, (now the site of the Women's "Y") the old church was sold to vinegar merchants. Montreal Star, Jan. 19, 1883. Crescent St. church was also designed by A.C. Hutchison with his partner A. D. Steele.

<sup>65</sup> This may suggest that men and women sat separately after entering through separate doors, but there is no documentation to support this hypothesis. Dr. Victoria Bennett has pointed out that "gender apartheid" was practiced by some Methodist congregations at this time. Conversation, summer 1996.

the Sulpicians and began a new phase of its history.<sup>66</sup>

The proposed site of the second church along an unpaved road, on marshy ground with a stream running through it, was not immediately popular with the congregation. Nevertheless, the congregation did opt for the site at the corner of Peel and Ste. Catherine Streets [**FIGS 2.6, 2.8**] (today in the heart of the city).

The congregation had also become wealthier and had literally moved up in the world, having built residences further from the St. Lawrence River and closer to the salubrious breezes of Mount Royal. Churches had to be within walking distance of the majority of their parishioners. The new residential district of the "New Town," later to be called the "Square Mile," required churches.

According to David Hanna, the 1860s was a boom period for church building in Montreal, and the heaviest Protestant contribution was made by four new Presbyterian churches, which included the Erskine [**FIG 2.8**].

This gave the area [New Town or Square Mile] a predominantly Presbyterian stamp and helps to confirm the ascendancy of native Scots and people of Scots descent in the "New Town"....this meant that by 1869, exactly half the Presbyterian churches in Montreal were located in the "New Town", Presbyterians accounting for slightly over 1/6 of all churches in the city....church relocation and construction was generally a leading rather than a lagging element of urban development in the "New Town".<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Frank Slaughter, *Rapport, Colloque au Conseil des Sites et Monuments du Québec*, 1975.

<sup>67</sup> David Hanna, "The New Town of Montreal. Creation of an Upper-Middle Class Suburb on the Slope of Mount Royal in the Mid-19th Century", (M. A. Geography, University of Toronto, 1977) ,131-132.

This pattern of churches being in the vanguard of population change is observed not only in Montreal in this period, but holds true throughout North America.<sup>68</sup>

In keeping with their rising social and economic status, the congregation engaged a prominent architect<sup>69</sup>, Cyrus Pole Thomas (1833-1911) to design their Gothic church [FIGS 2.6-2.7] of Montreal greystone,<sup>70</sup> which was dedicated in 1866.<sup>71</sup> This church now adopted the name by which it has been known since, the Erskine Church<sup>72</sup> (after the Scots brothers Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine). Their expulsion from the Established Church in Scotland in 1733 for spearheading the opposition to state interference in Church affairs led

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<sup>68</sup> See Jeanne Halgren Kilde "Spiritual Armories", 55.

<sup>69</sup> The congregation invited four architects to compete; not all agreed to the conditions of the competition. The final selection was made between plans by C. P. Thomas, A. C. Hutchison and Fowler and May. A committee voted by ballot, indicating their choices as first, second and third. Hutchison had 22 votes and Thomas 20, but ACH had only 9 firsts compared with Thomas' 12. Fowler and May had 17 votes, with only 2 firsts. James Garvan had also asked to compete, but was not a finalist. Evidently Lawford and Nelson as well as Hopkins had been invited to tender, but did not like the conditions of the competition. Hutchison's walls were 6" thinner than the other two final submissions, but the Committee thought that the greater expense was warranted because the thicker walls were "necessary for the height and strength" of the building. They also gave Thomas leave to "dispense with all the carving on the stonework, and some of the more ornamental work inside the building, should it be found to be necessary." Erskine Church fonds, United Church of Canada Archives, Montreal-Ottawa Conference. Board of Elders and Managers, 1858-1873, entries between 26 April and 24 May, 1864.

<sup>70</sup> The church was 136' x 79', its walls 46' high. The distance from the apex of the roof was 82', and the tower and spire measured 196'. The new church was of 'rough Montreal stone with cut stone trimmings and facings. It had three entrances in the front and two at the back. An interior gallery ran around three sides of the church. It was accessible via four stairways, one in each corner. There was an arched recess for the pulpit. The basement contained school rooms and a vestry. There was room for 900 on the ground and 400 in the gallery.

<sup>71</sup> Julia Gersovitz (1980), 57. Thomas' father William was "a pioneer proponent of Gothic architecture on the North American continent". C.P. Thomas' brother and sometime partner, William Tutin Thomas (1828-1892) was the architect for St. George's Church near Windsor Station in Montreal. Their brother who stayed behind in Britain was a stone sculptor for the New Parliament Buildings in London.

to the development of the Scottish Secession Church.

David Hanna notes that "nine new churches were built [in Montreal] in 1869, virtually all in the Gothic style."<sup>73</sup>

Although it was introduced to Montreal in 1829 with James O'Donnell's Roman Catholic Notre Dame Church, neo-Gothic enjoyed great popularity with Protestant denominations in the city, even if the ritual requirements of evangelical churches were so different from liturgical ones. Presbyterians, for example, emphasize preaching over ritual, but sometimes adopted the Gothic because of its prestige. It was favored for its associations with Britain (its French origins were not immediately recognized) and with Christianity. In Confederation year, 1867, it was something of a national style<sup>74</sup>, as it was used for the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa. In this context, it is interesting to recall that Alexander Cowper Hutchison, the architect of the Erskine Church was associated with the construction of two landmark Neo-Gothic buildings: the 1858 Anglican Christ Church Cathedral[**FIGS 4.4-4.5**], inspired by medieval English church building traditions,<sup>75</sup> and the 1867

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<sup>72</sup> "Considerable discussion took place about the name to be given to the new church; it was finally agreed to recommend to the Congregation the name Erskine Church." Meeting of Elders, Trustees and Managers, 10. Dec., 1864. Erskine Church fonds, UC Archive, Mtl.-Ottawa Conference.

<sup>73</sup> David Hanna, 131. See also Sandra Coley, 51, on the use of "adapted Ecclesiological style", or aping the Anglicans, at St. Paul's Presbyterian, Montreal, 1868. At this period, just at the time of Confederation, gothic was the style of choice, not only for church buildings, but even for homes and such prestigious monuments as the Parliament Buildings.

<sup>74</sup> See Westfall, 157-8 for the significance of Gothic architecture in Ontario.

<sup>75</sup> This church was designed by the eminent British architect Frank Wills. He trained under William Butterfield, the Ecclesiologists' premier architect. Wills had been summoned to Canada by Bishop Medley of Fredricton, N.B., to build the Anglican cathedral there. This was reputed to

East Block<sup>76</sup> of the Parliament Buildings [FIG 4.6], a creative Neo-Gothic national symbol. For both of these buildings, he was both supervisor of the stonework, and was also a stone carver at Christ Church.<sup>77</sup>

### MUSICAL DISCORD: THE ORGAN ARGUMENT

Many innovations were taking place within the Presbyterian Church in Canada which were to affect church architecture. One of the most important changes was to music. Although the liturgy was not codified for the Presbyterian Church in Canada until 1925,<sup>78</sup> there had been consensus about what should be contained in or excluded from the service.<sup>79</sup> The holy seriousness of the Presbyterian Sabbath, the traditional plainness of divine service, with its insistence on hearing the word of God and the unaccompanied singing of the congregation, was changed only with difficulty.<sup>80</sup> As early as the mid-1850s, the question of whether to allow instrumental music in the church service

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be the first "archaeologically correct" church building in North America. He died soon after beginning work on Montreal's Christ Church and was replaced by Thomas Seton Scott.

<sup>76</sup> Jim Leonard, "Who was T.C. Clarke, C.E.", (*SSAC Bulletin*, 17:4, Dec. 1992), 92. These were first known as the Departmental Buildings. A.C. Hutchison's father, William, was clerk of the works. Thanks to Jim Leonard for generously sharing his background files on the work of William Hutchison, and for the Cobourg and District Historical Society for bringing my queries to his attention.

<sup>77</sup> For A.C. Hutchison's work on the Parliament Buildings, see Leonard. All biographical references to A.C.H. tell of his work at Christ Church. See Atherton, *Sulte*.

<sup>78</sup> Conversation with Prof. Geoffrey Johnston, Presbyterian College Montreal, Spring 1995.

<sup>79</sup> Fraser, *Social Uplifters*, 63.

<sup>80</sup> Goldwin French, "The Evangelical Creed in Canada" in *Shield of Achilles*, 25 "...austerity and solemnity were the distinctive features of Presbyterian architecture and religious services..."

[FIG 4.8], and what types of music were appropriate, was a hotly debated issue.<sup>81</sup> The triumph of the "organ faction" came to dominate not only the service, but the interior plan of the church, as well.<sup>82</sup>

It was in this second Erskine church [FIGS 2.6-2.7] that one of the most famous incidents in Montreal Presbyterian history occurred. Traditionally, organs and other musical instruments had not been permitted to have any part in the service of worship. Instead, the congregation was led in singing by a man called a "precentor", who gave the note with a tuning fork and then "lined out" the hymn for all to follow. Other musical forms were considered ungodly.<sup>83</sup>

When the Erskine church installed an organ in 1874, about one-third of the congregation rose in a body and departed the church when the first note sounded. They were led by Principal William Dawson of McGill who declared "No kist o'whustles shall lead me in the worship of my God!" (The Stanley Street Church, which the dissenters formed nearby [FIG 2.8] also acquired one of the offending

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<sup>81</sup>Vaudry, Free Church, 91-94.

<sup>82</sup>Donald J. Bruggink & Carl H. Droppers Christ and Architecture: Building Presbyterian and Reformed Churches, Grand Rapids, Michigan: 1965, 387-421.

<sup>83</sup>The organ controversy was played out in Presbyterian churches throughout the country as competition grew with lively evangelical hymns being sung in other congregations and at social gatherings. An emotional description of the old style of singing can be found in Ralph Connor's The Man from Glengarry, 1901, Chapter IX "A Sabbath Day's Work". See also W. Milne Gibson, The Old Scottish Precentor, 1908. Examples of other congregations facing the same problem are numerous, see Amazing Grace, the 1st Presbyterian Church, Galt, Ontario, p. 57. (UC Archive, Toronto). A fictional



instruments twenty-two years later.)<sup>84</sup>

Such quarrels were taken in deadly earnest by the large majority of Presbyterians beginning in the 1850s, and the question of church music was a lively one until the turn of the century. Traditionalists truly found the instruments ungodly and at odds with the directives of John Calvin, whereas others were afraid of losing young Presbyterians to groups such as the Methodists, whose services included lively church music.<sup>85</sup> This question was not confined to Canadian Presbyterians, but was debated in the United States and Scotland as well.<sup>86</sup> Although the presence of organs in churches was the most contentious musical issue, an array of musical concerns occupied Protestant churches from the mid 1860s until the turn of the century.

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treatment is in Robert E. Knowles St. Cuthbert's, "A Bold Proposal", said to be modelled on the organ controversy at Knox Presbyterian Church, Galt, Ont., where he was minister, 1898-1915.

<sup>84</sup> Edgar Andrew Collard "They Left When the Organ Played", Montreal Gazette (1954?). See also Sir William Dawson, Instrumental Music in Churches, Montreal: Drysdale & Co., an anti-organ tract. Principal William Dawson is a key figure in this account. There are many interesting stories attached to Dawson; see Ramsay Cook for Dawson's opposition to Darwinian theory. See especially Chapter 2 "The Roots of Modernism".

<sup>85</sup> John Moir, Enduring Witness, 131-134. Closer to home, in Montreal, there was a particularly explosive confrontation between the Knox Presbyterian Church and the Session in 1868. That church had introduced an organ into their service of worship, and their case was brought to the attention of the Session by people outside the congregation. Session ruled against the use of the organ. Knox's counter-salvo in print was published as a pamphlet The Organ Question Line by Line or Instrumental Music in Canadian Churches (Montreal: Murray & Co., 1868). A lay delegate, Mr. Jas. Brown, put it thus: "...is it not likely...that in another 10 years, if the Methodist church increases in the same ratio as it has done in the past through the length and breadth of the land, it will bid fair for being the church of the Dominion of Canada? We believe no small share of its success is due to the more attractive character of the services, especially in weaning [sic] over the young.", 24. "...in too many cases ...our music is intolerable..." Preface. Arguments in the Preface make it clear that Knox church feels it is struggling against what could be termed ecclesiastical tyranny and backwardness. For a typical anti-organ tract, see The Organ Question Critically Examined by a Disruption Elder (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. April 1884. London, Ont.: Free Press Printing Co.) "God demands spiritual worship, but to render such worship with a carnal instrument is impossible..."

<sup>86</sup> William Maxwell, A History of Worship in the Church of Scotland, (London: Oxford U. Press, 1955), 164-169 is one of many references to the question.

## TIME TO MOVE AGAIN

When the congregation had been on Ste. Catherine Street for 22 years, in 1889, the first impetus to move came from the Presbytery, the highest local governing body of the church. A representative came to inform the congregation that one of the Presbyterian churches around Dominion Square [FIG 2.8] should move westward into the district bounded by Guy Street, Greene Avenue, Dorchester and Sherbrooke Streets, as there were about three hundred Presbyterian families in that district. The Presbytery warned that, if none of the four churches closest to Dominion Square--namely, St. Paul's, Knox, Stanley and Erskine--wished to move, another church would be placed in the new district by the Presbytery.<sup>87</sup>

The Erskine congregation had lost members to new churches in the past (as in the organ dispute); the establishment of a completely new congregation again threatened them with loss of members.<sup>88</sup> In addition, the proposed site was in a growing and wealthy neighborhood, and well-to-do parishioners lived in, or were moving into, the "New Town."<sup>89</sup> The new site could attract the "best sort" of

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<sup>87</sup> Session Minutes, Erskine Presbyterian Church, 1899.

<sup>88</sup> Montreal Daily Witness, June 7, 1902, 13, 14.

<sup>89</sup> Hanna also cites the "desire of the members themselves to take up residence in the "New Town"...as a factor in church relocation. Donald MacKay, The Square Mile: Merchant Princes of Montreal, (1987)

people to join the church.<sup>90</sup>

The Erskine congregation was in the situation of many churches in growing North American cities. As cities grew, church building continued apace, despite a depressed economy in the early 1890s. According to a contemporary account in 1891 "three corner stones [of churches] per day were being laid in the United States and two per week in Canada."<sup>91</sup>

In addition to the urging by the Presbytery, internal dissatisfactions with the church building [FIG 2.7] and its site [FIGS 2.6, 2.8] also favored a move. The basement, where Sunday School classes were held, was so damp and unattractive that some parishioners did not wish to enter it. Since Sabbath Schools were a major preoccupation of the

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,7, gives the following description of a representative denizen: "A typical early millionaire living in what came to be known as the 'Square Mile,' was a Scottish Presbyterian who had left school at the legal age of fourteen, apprenticed himself to a business house, risen to the top largely through Calvinistic determination, invested in new railways and shipping, and served on the Bank of Montreal, which became something of a finishing school for commercial talent." See also Newman, *Canada 1892*, "Montreal, The New-World Lairds", "The Square Mile was never little England. It was a Scottish diaspora, and it was the kinship rooted in the rock-hard allegiance to their clans into which these men had been born that formed Canada's first business Establishment." For a less celebratory view, see Gustavus Meyers, *History of Canadian Wealth* (Toronto: James Lewis & Samuel, 1972, first pub. Chicago, 1914) and Stephen Leacock, *Montreal, Seaport and City* (New York: Doubleday, 1942), 229-231 on the "oppressive and plutocratic" society of the Square Mile at the turn of last century. While the members of the Erskine congregation were by no means all millionaires, their common economic and social status did rise greatly between 1831 and 1891, and "Calvinistic determination" likely had a lot to do with their success. I compared the occupations of the (male) heads of households (listed in Tombs, 1933), who were largely artisans in 1831, to those in the congregation when the move was made to Sherbrooke St. by comparing the names in the *Annual Report of the Erskine Presbyterian Church for 1894* with their names in *Lovell's Guide to Montreal* for the same year. The occupations were in the professional classes, primarily, with many in the insurance business and many heads of companies. (Only two females' occupations are listed.) For the early period, see also Pryce and Greenlaw.

<sup>90</sup> In 1891, Presbyterians made up 2% of the Montreal's population, as they did consistently from 1881 to 1911. Fraser, *Social Uplifters*, 63. In 1894, there were 26 Presbyterian churches in the city and suburbs of Montreal. Acts and Proceedings of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1894. *Acts and Proceedings of the Presbyterian Church*.

<sup>91</sup> Corner stone laying ceremony of the Centenary Methodist Church, reported in the *Montreal Gazette*, June 22, 1891, Rev. Dr. Shaw's comment.

Presbytery, this was a serious problem. As well, formerly quiet Ste. Catherine Street had become a noisy thoroughfare where the clatter of streetcars was disturbing. Although streetcars facilitated the westward population shift which necessitated the building of a new church, those conveyances' running on Sunday was anathema to the congregation.<sup>92</sup>

### FINDING A SITE

From December 1889 until the final authorization to buy lot at the head of Crescent Street in January of 1893, a Site Selection Committee labored to secure a prominent site large enough to accommodate the new church. In all, five different corner lots were considered, and twice the Committee attempted to canvass the congregation to determine its preference. One lot was purchased and held, then rejected. As late as June of 1892, the general feeling was in favor of staying at the old church and trying to renovate. Another study was done to see exactly how far each parishioner lived from the various proposed sites. Some sites were rejected because they were too close to street railway routes, others because they were too far from the majority of the congregation, another because it was too

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<sup>92</sup> Markell, "Canadian Protestantism", 562-574, uses Montreal as a pertinent example of shifts of Canadian Protestant churches to newer sections of the city.

small and would have necessitated the "ladies parlours and committee rooms, etc." being in the basement. After the congregation had vacillated for three years, the Committee acted unilaterally, selecting the site at the head of Crescent Street [FIG 1.2]. In the quickly growing area, suitable corner lots were scarce. The Sherbrooke Street site at the head of Crescent Street had been the least popular option when votes were cast by the congregation, but perhaps a financial inducement helped to sway the decision.

The lot belonged to Erskine Church Elder Warden King, whose \$4,000 contribution to the building fund was four times greater than the next largest one. An church elder for decades, he owned a foundry which produced the "Daisy" heater (many of which are still in operation).<sup>33</sup>

In contrast to the vexed negotiations surrounding the site, the choice of plan and of architect seem to have been made without fanfare or opposition. In May of 1892, William Yuile reported that the Committee "seemed to be in favor of a church building and sabbath school on similar lines as the ones referred to, in Minneapolis." The architect, Alexander Cowper Hutchison [FIG 4.2], had been consulted throughout the site selection process; he had even drawn up plans for some of the earlier potential sites.

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<sup>33</sup> The intricacies of site selection are recorded in the Erskine Church Board of Trustees 1864-1934, United Church Archive, Ottawa-Montreal Conference.

## CHAPTER 3

### "The Most Modern Improvements in Church Architecture and Appliances"

Alexander Cowper Hutchison (1838-1921) [FIG 4.2], the architect the Erskine congregation chose to design their new church, had impeccable professional and (Scots) Presbyterian credentials. Born in Montreal, he had risen to a prominent position in his profession, having begun his career as an apprentice stonemason with his father William.<sup>94</sup> In his middle fifties, he was half-way through his nearly 60-year career as an architect.

Although the Building Committee already favored a "plan from Minneapolis, Hutchison was dispatched with two other committee members, James Paton and Robert C. Becket, to travel to Toronto, Detroit, Chicago, Minneapolis, St. Paul, Cleveland, Akron, Washington, Brooklyn and Orange, New Jersey. Their mandate was to "look at recently constructed churches in the Western States, with a view to secure the most modern improvements in church architecture and appliances."<sup>95</sup> The trio knew each other well: Becket,

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<sup>94</sup> To date, there is no monograph on this prolific Montreal architect whose career spanned six decades, and during whose lifetime the city's population grew 15-fold. John Bland, CAC file on A.C. Hutchison.

<sup>95</sup> Erskine Church Montreal Annual Reports 1893, 17 "New Church" U- C,M-O, ANQM. It was common practice at the time to travel to the U.S. to view model buildings. Hutchison had gone to Boston and Washington in 1890 with Dr. MacVicar, Chairman of the Protestant School Commission, to view model schools before building the High School of Montreal on what is the present site of the Cours Mont Royal. MacVicar had been minister at Côté St., before becoming professor and Director of the Presbyterian College in 1869. Côté St. church was founded in 1844 by, among others, ACH's

proprietor of the City Ice Company<sup>96</sup>, was a forward-looking businessman, former precentor in the Erskine church, and well-known in musical circles. His was the musical expertise required in planning the new church. Becket and Hutchison had attended school<sup>97</sup> together on Lagauchetière Street. They pair had worked closely together during the winter carnivals, for which Hutchison had designed several ice palaces[FIG 4.16]<sup>98</sup> which his brother John Henry [FIG 4.11] had built. The third member of the group was James Paton<sup>99</sup>, was the son of prominent builder Laird Paton, whose name often appeared on Hutchison's building contracts.

In less than a month, the trio had returned with a collection of models. Though it is not stated in the church records, it is obvious from the very close resemblance between the models and the final design of the 1894 Erskine that Warren H. Hayes' plans for First Congregational Church (1886) [FIG 3.3] and the nearly identical First Presbyterian Church [FIGS 3.4-3.5] (1888), both in Minneapolis, were highly influential.

The congregation could have learned about Hayes'

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father William, his partner, James Morrison, and fellow Scots mason John Redpath. Alexander Hutchison sat on the board of the College, and built its first building in 1873. While in Boston, the pair must have seen Henry Hobson Richardson's Trinity Church. Hutchison had all the contracts for Protestant School buildings in 1890-1. There are manifold examples of close Presbyterian connections in Hutchison's practice. Report of the Protestant Board of School Commissioners for Montreal, 1890-91.

<sup>96</sup> Atherton, 216-217.

<sup>97</sup> Stirling, , n.p.

<sup>98</sup> Janis Zubalik, "L'Architecture givrée de Hutchison", Continuité, hiver, 1994

<sup>99</sup> Atherton, 514-517

churches by several means. The plans had been published in Scientific American magazine.<sup>100</sup> John Henry Hutchison must have seen the First Congregational going up, or have heard of it. When Montreal's Winter extravaganza was cancelled in the winter of 1885-6 due to an outbreak of smallpox, John Henry had taken the plans for an ice castle designed by Alexander to Minneapolis for that city's first winter carnival in the winter of 1886.<sup>101</sup>

The most direct connection, however, was the former pastor of the Erskine, Rev. J.S. Black, who had gone to Minneapolis in 1888 as the pastor of First Presbyterian [FIG 3.5].<sup>102</sup> Black was thus in an excellent position to advise the Erskine congregation.

While the general ground plan for combination-plan churches was well-rehearsed by this time, Hayes' combination-plan churches featured a diagonally-oriented auditorium<sup>103</sup> which he claimed to have invented, and were often impressive examples of neo-Romanesque architecture.

Alexander Hutchison [FIG 4.2] was well qualified to select the range of models for the Building committee to choose from. As a dedicated churchman, an elder in the Erskine church until he left it in 1886 to help found Melville, later St. Andrew's, church in his neighborhood of

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<sup>100</sup> Kilde, 219, cites Scientific American, Architects and Builders Ed., Jan 1887.

<sup>101</sup> (Minneapolis has had a winter carnival with an ice palace each year since then.)

<sup>102</sup> First Presbyterian Bulletin, UCA, M-O, BNQM, Erskine church fonds.



Cote St. Antoine), and a Sunday School superintendent, he was aware of the philosophical, educational and architectural requirements. He also taught ecclesiastical architecture at the Presbyterian College.<sup>104</sup>

Hutchison's connections as Session Elder would also have put him in contact with the work of the Presbyterian Church and Manse Committee of Dr. James Robertson. He was the extraordinarily effective Superintendent of Missions in the Northwest Territories from 1882 through 1902. Robertson is said to have been largely responsible for a building boom in Presbyterian churches, manses, and schools in Western Canada. When he began his work, the Presbyterian Church owned "only eighteen churches and three manses between Lake Superior and the Pacific Coast." Through Robertson's efforts, in 19 years the board helped built "393 churches, 82 manses, and three schoolhouses to be used as churches".<sup>105</sup> That was an average of 21 buildings a year. A missionary writing about the change described the transformation of a village by these churches: "...the ordinary work of the week stopped, and many came to church who would not think of coming to the service in the shack. The silent appeal of that building with the Gothic windows was a more powerful

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<sup>103</sup> Others laid claim the "invention" of the diagonal plan, but Hayes' churches had the most impressive exteriors, so credit for its creation usually goes to him.

<sup>104</sup> Main biographical sources for A.C. Hutchison are Atherton, Sulte, Borthwick. Kelly Crossman, Architecture in Transition, says that Hutchison lectured on ecclesiastical architecture at the Presbyterian College in 1875, 1887 and 1889. See also Susan Bronson..

<sup>105</sup> Ralph Connor, Life of James Robertson, 198.

sermon than any I had ever preached."<sup>106</sup> Further benefits were cited: "it has helped to make the Church one and keep the West closely attached to the East. In their times of political disintegration this is a national blessing."<sup>107</sup> Robertson received the full support of Donald A. Smith, Lord Strathcona, who gave him an initial \$1,500 personal contribution (the first from Montreal) and the promised that the CPR would transport all building material at two-thirds the ordinary rate. Services were sometimes held in CPR railway stations and section houses, as well.

Robertson's aimed at "visibility and permanence" for the Presbyterian Church. He instigated a Committee on Church Architecture which was active between 1888-1893. Its principal contribution was organizing a competition for church buildings that was publicized through the nationally-distributed Canadian Architect and Builder Magazine. The contest ran from 1890 to 1893. The first submissions were meagre; a gloomy CAB editorial of May 1890 suggested that the editor was "very doubtful if anything will result from their [Presbyterian Church] attempt to improve the architecture of their churches." As the CAB was a voice for the professionalization of architecture in Canada, there were expressions of widespread resentment on the part of architects for being used as "cheap labor" by

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<sup>106</sup> Connor, Life, 181.

<sup>107</sup> Connor, Life, 197.

competing for work. The same editorial, however, argued for the hiring of competent architects for churches, declaring that "[churches of artistic merit] will have an influence for good, and as more are built the artistic education of our people will be advanced."

The outcome of the competition was a pamphlet of designs, descriptions and building philosophy, Designs for Village, Town and City Churches, published in 1893[FIG 3.11]. While none of the churches illustrated was the direct model for the Erskine (the emphasis in the competition had been on more modest church buildings), the Erskine church nevertheless conformed to many of the recommendations contained in the pamphlet. In the "Prefatory Notes", J. Cumberland, the convenor of the committee, stated:

...we should build with a view to permanence... an unnecessary expenditure of money is saved, and the congregation is enabled to keep more directly in touch with its historic past... a piece of rising ground in some quiet shady spot should be chosen... Stone is preferable because most durable, and if built after a good design makes a building more ecclesiastical than any other in appearance...The church is the house of the Lord set apart for a high and sacred use. If we keep this thought present in our minds we shall then endeavor to have every part, both of the exterior and interior, in harmony and in good taste, avoiding whatever is unseemly, both in form and in color. In other words, it will be our aim to have our churches present an artistic appearance in the truest and best sense.

The issues of building for permanence to save money (representing good business practice, much emphasized also in Robertson's reports), choosing an elevated, shady site,

the use of stone, and the need for harmony and good taste were all followed by the Erskine, who took great care of the building's "artistic appearance". The ideal had changed significantly from the "Wee Kirk's" plain whitewashed walls of nearly six decades previous [FIG 2.2].

Some of the elevations and plans in the book of Designs had a descriptive comment appended by the architect. That of A.E. Wells of Toronto accompanied his "Design for a Country Church" with a comment that illustrates an important trend in the Presbyterian church of the day--the explicit rejection of the Gothic:<sup>108</sup>

...The plan of a church of this type must be such that the sermon may be heard without strain, either of the ears of the auditory or the voice of the speaker. It must be, first of all, a building to hear and see in...it must be borne in mind that the congregational form of worship such as obtains in the Presbyterian church finds little in traditional Gothic forms that can in any true sense express it. The glories of the Gothic cathedral were in perfect harmony with the gorgeous ritual of the medieval church; but the puritan simplicity of Presbyterian worship demands different expression...

This rejection of the "traditional Gothic" by Canadian Presbyterians at this time is frequently reiterated, and is taken up in the contemporary descriptions of the Erskine

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<sup>108</sup> This bears a strong resemblance to Sir Christopher Wren's comment: "The churches...must be large. But still, in our reformed religion, it should seem vain to make a *Parish Church* larger than that all who are present can both hear and see. The *Romanist*, indeed, may build larger churches, it is enough if they hear the Murmur of the Mass and see the Elevation of the Host, but ours are to be fitted for Auditors. C. Wren Parentalia, (London: T. Osbornes & R. Dodsley, 1750), 320, quoted in Victoria Bennett, "The Use of Gothic in Nineteenth Century Architecture", 76-77.

<sup>109</sup> See Appendix.

interior.<sup>109</sup> Not infrequently, light-filled Protestant sanctuaries are contrasted with the dim, gloomy (implying "unhealthy") interiors of "Papist" churches.<sup>110</sup> In an era concerned with improving public health through better sanitation, which promoted the salubrious effects of air and light, gloom was synonymous with mental and physical ill-health or even with sin.<sup>111</sup> (The claim of "Puritan simplicity" for the full glory of the Akron-auditorium interior embellished with Arts and Crafts decor was also more than a bit disingenuous.)

None of the designs in the Plans had all the elements of the Erskine plan, but that of E. Lowery and Son of Winnipeg did show a "design altogether new in its internal arrangement, the pulpit being in the corner..." (like so many of the new Manitoba churches.)

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<sup>109</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>110</sup> There are many such invidious comparisons. See "Moral Effects of Light" in the Christian Guardian, March 1847, 86. Quoted in V. Bennett, "The Use of Gothic in Nineteenth Century Church Architecture, 123-124.

<sup>111</sup> It is ironic that Roman Catholic churches (often identified with gothic construction) are called "gloomy". Abbot Suger, "inventor" of the Gothic, delighted in the light in his new church. See also T. Jackson Lears, No Place of Grace (New York, Pantheon, 1981). After 1873 when steam ship travel was inaugurated across the Atlantic, some 25,000 U.S. tourists visited Europe annually. One of their favorite places to visit were cathedrals and were impressed by their religious atmosphere, a haven from the hurly-burly of the city. These churches represented the continuity of the Church, a spiritual force in a mutating world. The objection to "gloom" was not confined to Catholic churches, but indicated disapproval stained glass windows with their relative opacity to light and their iconographic content (saints, traditions rejected by some Protestant reformers).

## COMPARISON OF HAYES MODEL WITH THE ERSKINE

From all the models the search team from the Erskine found in their North American tour, the final selection was the design Warren Hayes employed for two Minneapolis churches: First Congregational **[FIG 3.3]** (1886) and First Presbyterian **[FIG 3.4]** (1888). The Erskine's former pastor, J.S. Black, was pastor of First Presbyterian, and would have known the practical details of these designs **[FIG 3.5]**.

The comparison of the churches which follows is based on the elevation drawings, which in the case of the Erskine, differ only slightly from the built reality. The Montreal church **[FIG 1.1]** is slightly larger than both of the Minneapolis models, with a maximum length of 165 feet and 100 feet in width and its auditorium was originally 90 square feet. First Congregational **[FIG 3.3]** measures 140 feet by 98 feet, with a 76 square foot auditorium **[FIG 3.12]**.

Although the massing of the two model churches and the Erskine is very similar, a number of details make the Erskine distinct. On the main facade, the major difference is in the square tower which Hutchison substituted for the steeple **[FIGS 1.1, 1.3, 1.4]**. The tower's four crowning points are echoed in the bartizans on either side of the

central gable. Other differences were primarily in fenestration: the Montreal church has more openings in the stair turrets **[FIG 1.6]**. Furthermore, while Hayes employed both round and square towers, Hutchison used only square or angular forms, and eliminated all protruding structures on the Ontario (now de Musée) facade **[FIG 1.3]**. Instead of the pointed elements above the doors on the model, Hutchison employed a more traditional Romanesque portal of three round-headed arches surmounted by tympana. There are two of these on the main facade, and one at the west side **[FIG 1.1]**. Although the hemicycles above the Erskine's doors were roughed out for carvings above the three portals, the proposed work was never carried out. While both the Minneapolis churches and the Erskine represent an eclectic combination of elements rather than a copy of a particular European model, Hutchison's elevation is more unified. With its square towers more in keeping with the massive stone body of the building **[FIGS 1.3-1.4]** the building than Hayes' face with its 168-foot high steeple **[FIG 3.3]**. Finally, the sharply graded Montreal site necessitated a longer flight of stone steps **[FIG 1.6]**.

Although the Minneapolis and Montreal churches have similar exteriors and ground plans that are virtually the same **[FIGS 1.21, 3.12]**, black and white photographs reveal that the difference between the two interiors is striking.

In the interior of the First Congregational Church [FIG 3.19], Hayes kept the walls straight along the top. There are no arches save the suggestion of a proscenium arch above the great organ. In keeping with his traditional diagonally-oriented auditoria, the organ was the focal point of the church. The ceiling featured an octagonal dome in the center. The sliding doors to the left of the organ are pierced with multi-paned stained glass windows. Hayes used floral stencils to enrich the interior. In March 1888, the Minneapolis Tribune described the original windows of opalescent glass:

One of the most attractive features...are the stained glass windows...the prevailing tints are olives and browns, with some light blue, all the windows being in geometrical designs...great attention was paid to blending and harmonizing of tints, which was done by the art director of the Tiffany Glass Co., where the windows were made.

Hutchison's Erskine Church reveals a less fussy and overcharged interior [FIGS 1.17-1.20] that is in many respects more sophisticated in its massing than the interiors of Hayes' churches. The original Erskine decorations were carried out by Castle and Son of Montreal, who also designed the opalescent glass windows, featuring bold stylized sunflowers, in pale shades of pink and yellow.<sup>112</sup> The wall decorations are restrained plaster

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<sup>112</sup> The sunflower was a ubiquitous decorative element from the 1880s on. Elizabeth Aslin, The Aesthetic Movement, Prelude to Art Nouveau, (N.Y.: Excalibur Books, 1969), several references, many of them humorous, to the then-current passion for sunflowers.



moldings with vegetal bands which recapitulate some of the exterior carving. These were originally highlighted with bronze, as were the very prominent organ pipes. After his 1937-39 remodelling of the church, Montreal architect Percy Nobbs (1875-1964), in a lecture to the ladies of the Erskine<sup>113</sup>, noted that the inspiration for the interior was the Hagia Sofia[FIG 3.22]<sup>114</sup> in Istanbul, and that such interiors were inspired by John Ruskin's Stones of Venice.<sup>115</sup> (The interior of H.H. Richardson's Trinity Church must also never have been far from the minds of church designers of the day [FIG 3.21].)

A contemporary account at the dedication of the Erskine describes the "interior decorations in a scheme of soft yellows, greens and reds in harmonizing tones." (The text of the description in the Presbyterian Review of 25 October, 1894, is printed in Appendix 2 and should be read while viewing the view of the Erskine interior prior to renovations [FIG 1.17-1.19].)

A description of another of Hayes' churches, Wesley Methodist in Minnesota [FIG 3.6], again stresses the harmony

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<sup>113</sup> The typed mss. of the 1939 lecture is in the Erskine Church fonds, UCA, M-O, ANQM.

<sup>114</sup> The Erskine resembles the Hagia Sofia in the way Crescent St. Church resembled Amiens Cathedral, or Marie Reine du Monde resembles St. Peter's in Rome, that is, the new structures are inspired by their models and retain some of their characteristic features, but are much smaller in scale (the case of Marie Reine du Monde) or more modest in comparison with the original buildings. The comparison may raise a smile — when the figures are compared, the original Erskine interior looks like a mini-Hagia Sofia with a garage door.

<sup>115</sup> This is an illusion of Byzantium, for the domed ceiling is not supported on the squinches, but is held up from above by a heavy timber roof structure with a few iron beams. The stone walls,

of color which is very similar to the Erskine's original color scheme.

The dome is decorated in shades of blue, amber, and gold, the colors lessening in intensity and gradually verging into a light tone of warm gray color down towards the ceiling. The color of the ceiling panels is a warm gray tone with a greenish cast, ornamented in light tones of amber, blue and gold. The large cove and walls are elaborately decorated in soft gray tones, the colors darkening and increasing in intensity down toward the floor.

In both interiors, the color schemes described are tasteful Arts and Crafts compositions, worthy of the finest homes in their neighborhoods.

A subtle and now-invisible difference, however, was in the official reception to celebrate the start of construction of the churches. At the cornerstone laying ceremony for the First Congregational[**FIG 3.3**], a St. Paul pastor gave a militant speech, including these words:

Churches are spiritual recruiting agencies. The church is not a place for drones, for it ought to be a hive of industry. It is not a place...for spiritual dyspepsia, but a place for distributing what is received. You are building a spiritual armory, and it rests with you to fill it with weapons.<sup>116</sup>

American scholar Jeanne Halgren Kilde suggests that this language reflected the nervousness engendered by the widening social gap in the U.S. at the end of the nineteenth century. At the time, the strains of urbanization and social

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however, appear to be bearing walls. The iron used in construction seems primarily confined to beams in the basement, the roof, and columns in the basement and sanctuary.

polarization were worse in the United States than in Canada of the day. The speech begins with a militant ring, and the feeling of a businessman's pep talk, then continues in another vein: "the church...offers to men the truest fraternity, receiving all classes, without respect to dress or grammar." This was either wishful thinking or disingenuous, as people with the wrong dress would not have felt at home in the new building.

The two addresses delivered at the Erskine ceremony have the same down-to-earth quality, but without the militancy, and while they also talk in practical terms, they speak of different concerns. One, given by a Methodist pastor, says that the building of such a church is not a waste, for it calls into play the higher energies of the best people in the church, the businessmen. The other speaker, a church elder and the church's principal benefactor, expresses his regret that the working class might feel abandoned by the new church. The two Erskine speeches express the tension in the Presbyterian (and Methodist) church at that moment: the desire to build impressive buildings, and to carry out the affairs of the church on a business footing which sometimes conflicted with the church's compassionate mission to the poor.

A contemporary manifestation of that mission to poorer

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<sup>110</sup> Kilde, 1991, 1-3. She quotes Rev. M.M. Dana's speech in "A Congregational Corner Stone," The Minneapolis Tribune, Sept., 18, 1886.

brethren was the Taylor Presbyterian Church [FIG 3.18]. Supported as a mission church by the Knox and Erskine Presbyterian congregations, in 1893, the Taylor Presbyterian Church was designed by the young architect David Robertson Brown "according to a model from Minneapolis" which, like the Erskine model, had been proposed by William Yuile. Brown, like Yuile, was a member of the Erskine congregation. Built of Scotch fire brick rather than stone, and of much more modest proportions, the church had the same interior configuration as the Erskine church.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Its plan and massing seem virtually identical to St. Andrews United Church, Nanaimo, B.C. .

## CHAPTER 4

### **"A Unique American Contribution to Church Architecture": Richardsonian Romanesque, opera house and Sunday School machine**

The Akron-auditorium, or combination plan, for churches was the result of the juxtaposition of two building types: a church auditorium based on nineteenth century amphitheater opera houses, and the Akron plan for Sunday Schools [FIGS 3.14-3.15], which comprised both a building type and Uniform lesson plans to be given in these buildings.

Although years of Protestant church building had produced some interesting interior variations which seem to prefigure the auditorium church<sup>118</sup>, the type in America has its origin in nineteenth century theater architecture. This association began about mid-1830s when great evangelists such as Charles Grandison Finney continued the work begun at rural camp meetings into the new, unchurched U.S. cities. His dramatic oratory drew crowds too large to fit into conventional churches. Following Finney's example, later evangelists such as the Beechers (Thomas Kinnicut, and his son Henry Ward),<sup>119</sup> and Dwight L. Moody and Ira Sankey

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<sup>118</sup> Jaeger mentions eighteenth-century German examples, and "early, scattered" theater plans for individual churches in the U.S. and Britain, 53-4.

<sup>119</sup> An example in Elmira, New York, in 1872, was Syracuse, N.Y., architect Horatio N. White's innovative church ensemble of three adjacent buildings built for Thomas Kinnicut Beecher (1824-1900), father of Henry Ward Beecher. The Park Congregational Church was probably the earliest "Institutional Church" *avant la lettre*. It included a block of church "parlours" for entertaining, a handicapped-accessible sanctuary, a graded Sunday school and children's playroom which was open

rented the largest theatres in the biggest towns for their services. In a three-day visit to Toronto in 1884, they filled the Metropolitan Methodist church to capacity nine times.<sup>120</sup>

Later, when these prominent preachers had their own churches built, they adopted "sanctuaries" based on opera houses.<sup>121</sup> The bowled seats, platform stage and centrally located choir, set against the backdrop of gilt organ pipes behind the pulpit, provided an ideal setting for the dramatic preaching and stirring music which drew large crowds. The acoustics were much better than in a long-naved Gothic church, and because they could accommodate so many people in a building with a relatively small footprint, they were finally more economical to build. The church could also occupy virtually the entire site. (In this, they were like the first tall buildings which were their contemporaries in New York and Chicago.) A large congregation meant good income from pew rentals. A prime location, preferably on a corner site for better visibility, assured a wealthy

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all week, a free community library and bathing rooms. Beecher's friend Samuel Clemens (a.k.a. Mark Twain) wrote about the building in "A New Beecher Church, A Curious Dream and Other Sketches, (London, 1882), 24-38. The young Warren Hayes would have known about this church as he had just set up in the same town as an architect when it was being built. This type of church was actually the successor to Akron-auditorium plan churches. A Montreal example built by the firm of Hutchison, Wood and Miller in 1914 was the First Presbyterian Church in Montreal, since transformed into condominiums. This sort of church continued the social gospel movement, and had much in common with settlement houses originally established for the poor in Britain. One writer has likened them to department stores, because they catered to all needs.

<sup>120</sup> S.D. Clark, Church and Sect, describes Moody & Sankey's 1884 visit to Toronto: "At every one of the nine services, the spacious Metropolitan Church [the "Cathedral of Methodism"] was crowded to its utmost capacity."

congregation.

The Sunday School building which formed the other part of the combination plan matched the church auditorium in efficiency. Indeed, it was "invented" by a maker of farm machinery who happened to be Thomas Alva Edison's father-in-law.<sup>122</sup> Lewis Miller was, in addition to being the inventor of the Buckeye mower, a Methodist Sunday School Superintendent. With Methodist Bishop John Heyl Vincent, he devised a Sunday School building, the first of which was built in Akron, Ohio, in 1868. This plan comprised two super-posed curved tiers of cell-like classrooms which opened onto a central space. From the central area, the Sunday School superintendent (usually a prominent layman) conducted opening and closing ceremonies. Between these exercises, each of the cell doors could be closed for small group lessons. Once the children has assumed their places, no time was wasted in filing in and out of the room. Relative soundproofing was attempted by building brick partition walls between the classrooms.

An integral part of the plan was the system of Uniform lessons, used by many evangelical Protestant denominations in the U.S. and Canada. When the amphitheatre auditorium church was joined to the Akron plan Sunday school, usually via a sliding door which could fly up at a touch (in the

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<sup>121</sup> The cachet of opera houses was also considerable. In raw new American towns, a building reminiscent Wagner's Bayreuth opera house enhanced civic pride.

best cases) the two adjacent auditoria formed a large space which could seat between 1500 and 4000 people. Although there were innumerable combinations possible,<sup>123</sup> one of the most successful was the diagonal plan[FIG 3.12]. In this arrangement, the main entry to the church was on the corner, and the curved pews were set in a sharply sloping floor around a platform pulpit in the corner opposite the main entry. Kramer, Brearly, and Hayes all claimed to be the inventor of the plan, but Warren H. Hayes of Minneapolis had the greatest success, probably because his churches[FIG 3.12] had the most impressive neo-Romanesque exteriors [FIGS 3.3-3.9].

Hayes' solution was a felicitous one. The outer shell of the building had to accommodate the eccentric ground plan. A church with an elongated, relatively simple Gothic form could be used only if architects were willing to bend the rules that the exterior should express the interior.

An early example of this somewhat uneasy alliance of the neo-Gothic with the Akron-combination plan was by Alexander Hutchison and his partner Alexander Denton Steele (1838-1891) with their Crescent St. Church of 1873-77[FIGS 4.9-4.10]<sup>124</sup>, which according to the architects was based on

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<sup>122</sup> Ramsay, 1992.

<sup>123</sup> Lawrance, Housing the Sunday School, 1913.

<sup>124</sup> The successor to Côté St. Church, established by ACH's father William & John Redpath.

The church burned in the 1940s. In a curious reversal of custom, this church served as a model for the Warren Memorial Church of Louisville, Kentucky, 1884-1958. Archives of Filson Club Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky.



the Cathedral of Amiens.<sup>125</sup> It featured three deeply-recessed doors, a wheel window and prominent steeple. The innovation was on the interior.<sup>126</sup> Instead of the usual long nave arcade leading to a chancel, or even an oblong seating plan with galleries, its sanctuary was nearly square. Contemporary descriptions say the first two-thirds of the building was a "nearly circular" church interior with an octagonal ceiling featuring a central glass canopy held aloft a foot above the ceiling on 8 iron columns. The church's leaded glass windows opened like ordinary sash windows to admit air. A gallery added to the seating capacity. Originally, there was no organ. The back third of the church was devoted to a lecture room on the ground floor and a Sunday school room above it, 61' x 41', with 21' ceiling. The description says: "Class and committee rooms are placed at each end of the lecture hall and Sunday school room, and separated from them by a glass partition so arranged that they may be thrown open, and the whole form one room."<sup>127</sup>

Montreal's most impressive Neo-Gothic Akron-plan

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<sup>125</sup> It stood on the north-east corner of Crescent and Dorchester (now René Lévesque, the Women's Y is on the site now) a few blocks south of the 1894 Erskine church.

<sup>126</sup> Kilde, Spiritual Armories, points out the general interest in manipulation of interior space by the means of screens aroused at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia by the Japanese exhibit, 188-194. Ramsay, 1991, notes that the first significant U.S. patent for a moveable partition was...(in) 1871 by Douglas J. Williams of Birmingham, England. An even earlier solution was "movable wood framings" described in "Dissenting Church-Buildings News...Liverpool" in the Builder, (London), March, 1967, 214. E.R. Robsons's School Architecture, (1874, reprinted 1972 Leicester U. Press) describes the drawbacks of moving partitions, 227-229.

<sup>127</sup> Montreal Herald and Daily Commercial Gazette, Monday, May 7, 1877. In the absence of drawings, it is not possible to know whether the multi-purpose rear of the church connected directly with the sanctuary. It is unlikely, as such a novelty would have been included in the detailed description.

church, however, was the 1888 St. James Methodist<sup>128</sup>, a "cathedral of Methodism" which rivalled its elegant Toronto forerunners. Designed by Montreal architect Alexander Francis Dunlop (1842-1923), it was built by John Henry (J.H.) Hutchison [FIG 4.3].<sup>129</sup> J.H. was Alexander Hutchison's brother, an elder in the Erskine church, a prominent builder with strong Masonic connections. He was later to build the 1894 Erskine [FIG 1.1-1.23]. His sojourn in Minneapolis during the period of Warren H. Hayes' early career also permitted him to examine other church models.

These earlier Montreal examples of auditorium churches had Neo-Gothic exteriors. Romanesque-inspired churches came relatively late to Montreal.

The prototype for the use of neo-Romanesque in America for Protestant church architecture was Henry Hobson Richardson's (1838-1886) 1873-77 Trinity Church in Boston [FIG 3.1]. Although Richardson built in different styles, his original treatment of the Spanish and French Romanesque bid fair to become America's national style<sup>130</sup> until it was

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<sup>128</sup> Now St. James United Church, this wonderful building has been hidden by an unsightly row of shops built just in front of it on Ste. Catherine St. in the 1920s. It still retains its original interior with sloping floor, large balconies, and a large pipe organ. It did not have a connecting door to the "chancel" area, but its meeting hall was inspired by the Akron plan.

<sup>129</sup> Julia Gersovitz, "Montreal Architects 1870-1914", 1980, unpublished MSS., Blackader Library, McGill U. Dunlop trained professionally in Detroit, and established his Montreal practice in 1874. Several local architects who later became prominent trained in his office. J.H. Hutchison also built the house for Sir Hugh Graham, Lord Atholstan, c.1894, which Dunlop designed. That building now forms part of the Alcan House on Sherbrooke St.

<sup>130</sup> For an interesting contemporary view, see Montgomery Schuyler, "The Richardsonian Interlude" in American Architecture and Other Writings, (ed. W.H. Jordy and R. Coe, N.Y.: Atheneum, 1964, writings originally published c. 1890), 89-160. Another contemporary, Canadian perspective is Grant Helliwell's Jan 17, 1893, lecture to the 5<sup>th</sup> annual Convention of the Ontario Association for Architects.

overpowered, virtually overnight, by the neo-classicism brought in by McKim, Meade and White in their 1893 designs the World Columbian Exhibition.<sup>131</sup>

Neo-Romanesque is characterised by bold massing, round-headed arches, and frequently facades are of rough-cut quarry stone. It often features contrasting stone trim and bands of delicately carved decorative elements, Byzantine-style capitals being common, as well as elaborately patterned masonry. (The chequerboard pattern was common at the apex of a gable, for example).

Richardson's Trinity church, built in 1873-77 for the charismatic preacher Phillips Brooks was so influential that some writers have claimed that it launched not only the fashion for building in the Romanesque manner<sup>132</sup>, but a "plague" of imitations.<sup>133</sup> While few architects attempted to

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Reprinted in the CAB, "Current Architectural Styles" relates that "Like a tidal wave the fashion – for so we may call it – for Romanesque swept the land from ocean to ocean." He notes the "waning of the Romanesque" in the very year it was being employed for the Erskine, and the rise of the "Renaissance and Classic styles".

<sup>131</sup> Alexander Hutchison visited this exhibition, the Chicago World's Fair, and gave an illustrated lecture. Arcadia Magazine, 1893.

<sup>132</sup> See John C. Hudson, "The Midland Prairies: Natural Resources and Urban Settlement" in The Spirit of H.H. Richardson on the Midwestern Prairies, 122-137 for another interesting hypothesis. The new railways permitted the transportation of fine new building stones to places where no stone existed. New quarries and varieties of stone provided the materials for the new Romanesque style structures which were wonderful advertisements for the building profession. Note that at the Erskine, several members of the Building Committee were in the building trades, and had built many prestigious buildings in the city. Handsome new buildings (including prominent churches) were used as advertisements in construction magazines.

<sup>133</sup> Bruggink and Droppers, Christ and Architecture, Errdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1965. "The Romanesque revival was sparked by the tremendous attention give to this church, which was built for the popular broad-church evangelical preacher, Philip [sic] Brooks. The result was a veritable plague of inept imitations of the plan and style of Trinity Church all over America", 396. These authors launch a frontal attack on everything about the combination plan church.

recapitulate Trinity's massive central tower<sup>134</sup>, the large gables, wheel window, and "Byzantine" interior features such as large open vaulted spaces provided the component parts of many a "society" church in the ensuing decades[FIG 3.21].

The style was building toward its zenith about the time of Richardson's early death. It reached Montreal in the late 1880s with the inauguration of American architect Bruce Price's 1889 Windsor Station [FIG 3.2]. Price had been in Richardson's employ.<sup>135</sup> Price was to become celebrated for the grand hotels he designed for the Canadian Pacific Railway, inspired by Loire Valley chateaux.

Neo-Romanesque achieved a certain popularity in Montreal (see the work of A.T. Taylor at McGill's University's Redpath Library, and Bruce Price's Victoria Hall, both still extant on the McGill campus), but was perhaps not as influential as it may have been because it was seen as too Anglo-Saxon by local French-Canadian architects, who were also looking for a "national" architecture.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> But see "Sunday Schools" example from Chicago Daily Tribune, 1893, for a real demonstration of the Romanesque-vs-Beaux Arts classical showdown. Fig. 3.19.

<sup>135</sup> Yet another reason for the popularity of Neo-Romanesque may have been Richardson's business acumen. Kilde *op cit* quotes Alan Gowans Images of American Living, says Richardson was a "symbol of the triumph of industrial capitalism in America after the Civil War." Gowans stresses the efficiency of Richardson's building methods and business practices. For Bruce Price, see also S.H. Graybill, 1957 thesis, Yale University Ph.D., 1957, Fine Arts "Bruce Price, American Architect, 1845-1903", 2 vols.

<sup>136</sup> Jean-Marc Larrue. Le Monument Inattendu Also Janis Zubalik, Concordia University, March, 1994 "Nation/ Building on the Impregnable Boulevard" about the Monument National, HQ of the Société St. Jean-Baptiste, built virtually the same time as the Erskine Church.

One of the early instances of Neo-Romanesque for a church in Montreal was St. Matthew's Church of Scotland in Point St. Charles, built in 1890 to the designs of A.C. Hutchison and A.D. Steele **[FIGS 4.17-4.19]**.<sup>137</sup> Built 17 years after Crescent Street in a much less wealthy section of the city, it cost only \$40,000, compared to the \$100,000 Crescent Street Church, and was correspondingly simpler in massing and interior elaboration. Its innovation was in the use of the Romanesque traits of broad front gable, large round-arched front entry, massive roughly finished limestone exterior and a blocky corner tower, which was not constructed until later.<sup>138</sup>

A more complex exercise in Romanesque by Hutchison was the 1893 mansion **[FIG 4.20]** for Sir Robert Reid<sup>139</sup>. It was located in the same neighborhood as the Erskine. Reid's house of quarry-face stone relieved by delicate carving by the English-born sculptor Henry Beaumont, had details similar to the Erskine Church.

Churches such as the Erskine were built as neighborhood churches in affluent communities. Since

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<sup>137</sup> Grant Helliwell in "Current Architectural Styles", a paper read at the Ontario Association of Architects, on Jan 17, 1893, felt that Richardson Romanesque was nearly passé at that time. CAB 1893.

<sup>138</sup> The church burned in 1926, was rebuilt by Maxwell and Pitts with a new interior. It burned again in 1977 and was demolished, although people such as architect Michael Fish urged that it be saved. The congregation meets in their former Sunday school, which was called MacVicar Hall. Archives, St. Matthew's Church of Scotland. I thank the church for sharing this information. Drawings for the renovations by Maxwell and Pitts are at the CAC, McGill University.

<sup>139</sup> Reid had been sheltered by ACH's family as a boy. (Hutchison MSS) There are several Notman photos of this house.

townspeople expected to walk to church, and also wished to attract new members of the congregation, the church had to possess the necessary artistic qualities to attract the "right" sort of worshipper. They had, literally, to "fit in" in their new neighborhoods. Newly wealthy businessmen and their families lived in large mansions whose dimensions were sometimes not less than their local church. It was primarily the church's bell tower, entry porch, and its absence of gardens, greenhouses and stables, and its position on a corner lot which distinguished it from the mansion next door. Erskine church was built on the site of an earlier, more modest home (built by Lawford of Lawford and Nelson) which was later owned by the church's principal benefactor, elder Warden King. The church elder who selected the Minneapolis plan, William Yuile, also lived very near the new church.

These buildings were often referred to as "church homes". Built in new suburban locations, these churches had to accommodate the growing importance of women's activity<sup>140</sup> and youth groups. Presbyterian women were active in poor relief, home and foreign mission work, and particularly in the temperance movement. Young people were involved in Sunday school, temperance causes such as the Band of Hope and junior missionary societies. Music had also become of

great importance, which was evident in the concern for proper acoustics, grand new pipe organs.<sup>141</sup>

Teas and musical events required parlours, meeting rooms, kitchens, in addition to the usual ministers' study, libraries, office, choir robing spaces, janitor's apartments, not to mention the unseen areas necessary for heat, ventilation, and rest rooms. But a proper church home required more than a good address, an impressive facade and a congenial disposition of rooms. It also had to express the values of the Christian home. It had to be beautiful and "harmoniously" decorated. Social theorists such as John Ruskin<sup>142</sup> had been promulgating the connection between beauty in architecture and decoration and moral uplift for decades. The ideal of genteel home decoration of the day was Arts and Crafts design. Popularized by artists such as William Morris and his circle<sup>143</sup>, the style was closely associated with motifs from nature. In Arts and Crafts church interiors, the walls, often of plaster, were painted in pale natural tones, with gilt bands highlighting decorative features. Plaster was preferred to wallpaper in homes because it was thought

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<sup>140</sup> H. Keith Markell, "Canadian Protestantism", 208, "By the later nineteenth century it was being noted that there was a marked preponderance of women in the membership at large and in the various church organizations."

<sup>141</sup> This was an era when every proper family parlour had a piano and a talented daughter to play it. In pre-radio times, there was much more public singing. For example, the PQAA serenaded itself at its annual meetings in English and French, as the CAB reports.

<sup>142</sup> Marilyn McKay, "J.W. Beatty at Rosedale Public School", Canadian Journal of Art History, 53-60, notes the influence of Ruskin from as early as 1867, on his teaching of the moral value of art based on nature.

<sup>143</sup> Ray Watkinson, William Morris as Designer (London: Trefoil Publications), 1990, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.

to be more hygienic.<sup>144</sup> Natural wood was used for pews and the huge connecting sliding doors. Some interiors were elaborately stencilled with vegetal motifs. Ceilings, often plaster domes (when not skylights), were sometimes spangled with stars to imitate the dome of Heaven, as was done at the Erskine.<sup>145</sup>

When first built, many such churches featured opalescent glass, a pearly translucent glass cut in broad stylized plant shapes. At the Erskine, the early glass by Castle and Son (some of which is still in place) feature that Arts and Crafts emblem, the sunflower<sup>146</sup>. Opalescent glass, while decorative, admits much more light than deeply colored glass. Windows by the Louis Comfort Tiffany studio were particularly prized. In descriptions of the churches much emphasis was placed on the light which flooded the interiors, and mention is almost always made of the excellent ventilation. The concerns of clean air and light were paramount with mothers whose children were potentially threatened by childhood diseases.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> See note 147.

<sup>145</sup> Mrs. Dondenaz of the E & A congregation told me about the stars. See also Kilde, "Spiritual Armories", 159.

<sup>146</sup> Aslin, The Aesthetic Movement, 112-127.

<sup>147</sup> Kilde, "Spiritual Armories", quotes an article in Scribner's Monthly 11 (June 1876) on the health benefits of fresco vs. wall paper. The work of Sherry Olson reveals that although wealthy Square Mile children were less at risk, infant mortality in Montreal in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century compares with conditions in some of today's poorer Third World countries.



## SWEET HARMONY

Just as churches were "civilizing" the West, so the Protestant churches in North America were becoming more cultivated as their prominent members became wealthier. The organ question of the Presbyterians was not the only musical issue. "High-class" music performed in elegant opera houses<sup>148</sup> played a great part in bringing a more civilized tone to cities. Sacred "art music" was played at secular venues, while the William Tell Overture could be used to inaugurate a new church organ.<sup>149</sup> Good music, like the other fine arts, could be counted on for its uplift, and attendance at concerts was a favorite activity of the wealthier classes.<sup>150</sup> There were band concerts in public parks for the less affluent.<sup>151</sup> programme. In Montreal, the Académie de Musique, was built as the Victoria Opera House

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<sup>148</sup> Jeanne Halgren Kilde, "Spiritual Armories", 99, "Since its creation [in ancient Greece] the amphitheater was used only sporadically over the centuries, but by the mid 1870s the use of the amphitheater was escalating. The Bayreuth Festspielhaus of 1876, conceived by composer Richard Wagner and designed by him with the aid of architect Gottfried Semper in the mid-1860s, was the most influential of the new amphitheaters. Amphitheater features were increasingly incorporated into American music halls and opera houses during the 1870s and 80s, and the contemporaneous influence of the amphitheater arrangement on religious architecture was profound."

<sup>149</sup> Coley, 29, quotes Montreal Evening Star, 25 October, 1869, "The Carnival of Flame, A Busy Night for the Firemen" on the destruction of St. Andrew's Presbyterian church, which obviously had an organ from an early date.

<sup>150</sup> John Irwin Cooper, Montreal, the Story of Three Hundred Years (Montreal: 1942), 96 "The absorbing amusement of Montrealers in the '90s, however, was the stage. The theatres, those days, clustered brightly along St. Catherine street where Eaton's store now stands." 'Round the corner on Victoria was the Academy of Music, the scene of some of the town's most successful performances."

<sup>151</sup> The Musical Red Book of Montreal, Bernard Sandwell, ed. (Montreal. F.A. Veitch, 1907), 27. "Grand opera and a certain amount of high-class symphonic music were given at the Park [Sohmer] for a

in 1875 by Alexander Hutchison and designed by Montreal architect Taft. The hall was home to the Philharmonic Society of Montreal. That hall featured a pipe organ, as did the nearby Queen's hall.<sup>152</sup> The Society also played in Windsor Hall, which acquired an organ in 1893.<sup>153</sup> The first performance of a 40-piece orchestra in Montreal had been the Philharmonic Society's 1877 concert (they had to invite timpani players from Boston, there being none in Montreal) at the Victoria Skating Rink. A pipe organ had been specially installed for the occasion, and the Governor-General was in attendance.<sup>154</sup>

"By 1890, the Montreal Philharmonic Society had presented some 120 large choral-orchestral works, unaccompanied works, or pieces for choir and soloists and had attained a high reputation."<sup>155</sup> Citizens who went to hear Albani<sup>156</sup> on Saturday night in a lavishly decorated auditorium, (with a pipe organ and large choir), could not be expected to sit in uncomfortable pews in barren surroundings

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notable season, but the orchestra was more to be commended for its technical excellence than for the severity of its repertoire."

<sup>152</sup> Canadian Encyclopedia of Music, 1098 "Queen's Hall". (Their construction date of 1880 is in error. The CIN's 1875(vol. 11, 16 January 1875, 39) description of the Victoria Opera House (later Académie de Musique) mentions the proximity of the latter to the Queen's Hall.)

ACH is also reputed to have built the Queen's Hall.

<sup>153</sup> Arcadia, 1893, "Organ for Windsor Hall".

<sup>154</sup> The participation of the Governor General and his lady signaled that this was a "high-class" event.

<sup>155</sup> The Canadian Encyclopedia of Music, 878 "The Montreal Philharmonic Society".

<sup>156</sup> Emma Albani, (1847-1930) née Lajeunesse of Chambly, Quebec. Cooper, 97, speaks of the "supreme triumph of the great decade[1890s] when Montreal produced its own grand opera prima donna." She had a remarkable international career, and in 1891-2 was at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. Canadian Encyclopedia, 35. She was the Céline Dion of her time.

listening to their own feeble unaccompanied singing.<sup>157</sup> Rich people demanded tasteful, comfortable interiors.

In addition to the cities' and citizens' need for higher culture, Presbyterian and Methodist churches wanted to acquire a more polished image. Methodism in the 1830s had been promulgated at camp meetings, which although well-organized, featured enthusiastic physical and vocal responses by repenting sinners which were seen by the more genteel as irrational and uncivilized.<sup>158</sup> The lively hymn singing (so seductive to Presbyterian youth in an earlier day) was later seen as crude. Auditorium churches with pipe organs, paid quartette choirs, (and the comforts of folding opera seats )<sup>159</sup> "performing" sacralized art music provided an updated, more refined image.

The connection between theatre and auditorium church is well-established, but it is worth noting two particular Canadian examples of architects of such churches who also built important concert venues. Besides the Montreal example of A.C. Hutchison, there is the case of Sidney Rose Badgley. Badgley was a prolific designer of Akron-auditorium

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<sup>157</sup> Arcadia, Montreal, Jan. 16, 1893. "Music—Our Church Choirs" "We are tempted to ask why...the singing in the churches of this city is so notably inferior to that of other cities of the same size....In all of our cities' churches, with perhaps two or three exceptions, the choir is an established fact, accepted as a necessary adjunct to the proper conduct of the service, and consequently an essential means of grace."

<sup>158</sup> Kilde relates that at the Chatauqua camp meetings, (organized by the same Methodist team of Vincent and Miller who devised the Akron-plan Sunday Schools), behavior was extremely proper. Incidentally, the auditorium there sat 6,000. (Cyclopedia of Methodism)

<sup>159</sup> These were not uncommon. See for example Carr.

churches<sup>160</sup>, two of which were built in Montreal. The cornerstone of his Centennial Methodist was laid in June, 1891.<sup>161</sup> It was across the street from Hutchison and Steele's 1890 St. Matthew's Church of Scotland. Badgley's other Montreal church was the West End Methodist Church[FIG 3.17] (now the Black Community Centre building).<sup>162</sup> Badgley, who worked primarily out of Cleveland, Ohio, was also connected with Ste. Catherines, Ontario. In 1889-94 he designed Toronto's Massey Hall.<sup>163</sup> The major patron for Massey Hall was the farm machinery millionaire Hart Massey (1823-1896), a "major Methodist industrialist and philanthropist"<sup>164</sup> The Masseys were typical of the newly wealthy Protestant families who patronized both concert halls and the new "Cathedrals of Methodism" whose first appearance in Canada was in Toronto<sup>165</sup>.

Although the middle class was generally proud of its new churches and the magnificent music that was heard in

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<sup>160</sup> Kilde, "Spiritual Armories", Appendices A-C.

<sup>161</sup> The Montreal Gazette, June 22, 1891, 2, "Methodism at the Point."

<sup>162</sup> Robert Lemire, U-C M-O, ANQM. Research file for "Two Centuries of Protestant Churches in Montreal", exhibition 1992, The information on West End Methodist documents both of Badgley's Montreal churches.

<sup>163</sup> Patricia McHugh, Toronto Architecture. A City Guide, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2nd ed. 1989), 67 "Massey Hall, Sidney Rose Badgley with George M. Miller, 1889-1894." "Massey Music Hall was built as a gift to the city by farm machinery magnate Hart Massey...the word "music" was dropped in the 1930s when "music hall" began to convey more salacious interests."

<sup>164</sup> Neil Semple, The Lord's Dominion: the History of Canadian Methodism, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996) See especially chapter 13 "Methodism and the Creation of a Moral Order". "...the Methodist church increasingly defined its goals and social values according to the attitudes of an upwardly mobile middle class and in particular by a small group of wealthy commercial and industrial leaders who hoped to create a nation in their own image and who were willing to spend their resources to see it achieved.", 347. Recall that it was in Toronto that the first Canadian "Cathedrals of Methodism" were constructed. See Carr, 20-48.

<sup>165</sup> Carr, 20-48.

them, satisfaction was not universal. Many people felt that something was missing from their religious life, and from their attendance at church. Some were embarrassed at so much money being spent on luxuries at a time when social needs were so great. Paradoxically, although the middle class had succeeded in putting their stamp on what the church looked like, and just as importantly what it "sounded" like, as worshippers they had created a space which made them into passive spectators rather than participants in a spiritual act of worship. The distinction between concert hall and sanctuary had become blurred.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Kilde, "Spiritual Armories", 114-115 "The new theater-like architecture of the sanctuary may well have contributed to feelings of disaffection and the lack of spirituality that many decried during the late nineteenth century, encouraging a rational observance of the worship performances and discouraging individual participation." This note also from the June 11, 1890, meeting of the 16<sup>th</sup> General Assembly Acts and Proceedings of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, "Hindrances — Causes which operate against spiritual progress and the development of Christian character" includes "...some [neighborhoods] are borne on a flood of sensational entertainments either in Church, Lyceum or Town Halls.."

## CHAPTER 5

### RECEPTION:

#### "A Conservation of Religious Energy? or "Abandoning the Working Class"

The laying of the cornerstone took place on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1893. The two addresses given on that occasion are quoted at length, for they encapsulate the ambivalence felt about the new church. The Montreal Daily Star described the scene:

The ceremony of laying the corner stone of the new Erskine Church passed off most successfully yesterday afternoon. Although the day was warm still it was comfortably cool beneath the trees that threw their shade over the foundation of the building. The walls of the western and front portion of the building are now about twelve feet above the level of the ground. On this a platform had been arranged and from it the service was conducted..

The first speaker was the pastor of the Douglas Methodist Church<sup>167</sup>, Rev. S.P. Rose. He began by speaking of the deep sympathy of the Methodists for the Presbyterians, and declared that looked forward to "a federation" of the two. But he saw that the building was grounds of rejoicing, an evidence of the growth of Christianity. Concurring with a sermon given the week previous that the money spent in the construction of a costly church was not necessarily to be called a 'waste'<sup>168</sup> his speech continued:

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<sup>167</sup> That church stood just behind the Seville Theatre (which is hardly standing itself at this moment.)

<sup>168</sup> This was a great debate at the time. Some ministers refused to participate in ceremonies at too-costly new churches.

Not only was it no waste, it represented the highest form of the conservation of energy. It was an outward token of the very best which people had to give. No church like this could be built without bringing into play the richest talent and the noblest energy...The Trustee Board of our churches were composed of the very best businessmen in our congregations; that meant in my estimation that the best business talent of our city was...called to exercise on behalf and consecrated to the advancement of the material interests of the Redeemer's Kingdom. It was worthwhile to erect costly and noble churches, that men of the world might give of their best to a cause so high and noble and so in various ways, it would be found that the erection of our churches was a blessing by reason of the many noble traits of character and rich mental and material gifts which were thus turned into higher channels...<sup>169</sup>

After the Sunday school children had sung the hymn "The Church's One Foundation is Jesus Christ, her Lord" and elder William Yuile read a list of the articles deposited beneath the cornerstone, old Warden King took up his trowel to set the stone.

His [King's] address was brief but thoughtful. It was the beginning, he said, of a new era and in a sense of a critical period. He spoke as a laboring man, and now that they might think that the Church did not want them. Again, when individuals moved into new homes there was a danger of their spending all their income to keep up the new establishment. There was a danger of spending all at home and forgetting the needs of the world. But he hoped for better things,...<sup>170</sup>

The misgivings King expressed had been frequently voiced in many North American cities in the preceding decade, and were felt by Presbyterian leaders in Canada. It

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<sup>169</sup> The full text of the speeches are found in mss. form in the back of the Building Committee Book Erskine Presbyterian Church 1894 in the United Church Archive, Montreal-Ottawa Conference.

<sup>170</sup> King had contributed \$4,000 to the building campaign and sold his own property to the church.

was Rose's attitude, however, which carried the day.

The building advanced quickly. A few details of this chronology taken from the Erskine Church Building<sup>171</sup> Committee Record Books of 1893-4 are worth noting.

When tenders were called for in May, 1893, the question was asked whether tenders should be invited from "contractors of all nationalities". While the building committee said yes, no contractors with non-English names were finally selected.<sup>172</sup>

In November, 1893, William Burnet Hutchison, A.C.'s son, was appointed responsible for overseeing the building. (This demonstrates the same practical training A.C. received from his father, William.) August 1894, a month before the church opened, the ladies' help was requested in carpeting the church and furnishing the school room. A red carpet was chosen. This is the first direct feminine involvement in the building process mentioned in the church records. Pew holders were responsible for their own cushions, which had to be uniform.

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<sup>171</sup> These men formed the Building Committee and held meetings almost every week, usually at the office on the work site. Chairman, William Yuile, President, Diamond Glass; Warden King, manufacturer, Daisy heater; Dr. Charles Ault, manager, North American Life Assurance; James Paton of L. Paton & Sons, Carpenters & Builders; Robert A. Becket, Proprietor, City Ice Company; Archibald McIntyre, (Jr. & Sr.), builders and contractors, James Brown, Secretary, Real Estate Association, Secretary to Building Committee, C.W. David, general manager, Williams Manufacturing.

<sup>172</sup> The following firms built the church: J.H. Hutchison, masonry; Forde & Casey, carpenters; John Morrison & Son, plasterers; James Thomas, painting; Castle & Son, stained glass, McCrae & Watson, roofers; Dominion Bridge, steel work; MacCrae & Watson, heating; J.W. Ness, electricity.



Very near the end of construction on September 7, 1894, there is an anxious note: "Exception was taken to the appearance of the large sliding screen between the Church and the Sunday School, but after talking the matter over it was decided not to do anything to it in the meantime."<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Erskine Church Board of Management Minutes, Sept. 7, 1894.

## **"A NEW ORDER OF THINGS FOR THE WORLD"**

### **Farewell to the old church**

On September 23<sup>rd</sup>, an emotional final service was held at the Saint Catherine church. Pastor A.J. Mowatt comforted the congregation, saying:

Now Jesus came to anticipate the inevitable here, to form and build a new home, to inaugurate a new order of things for the world.

He sympathized with the more reluctant members of the congregation:

I do not like even to think that our good old Westminster Confession is growing old. Nor do I like to think that an admirable church system may be showing the effects of age, and that our methods of church work may be getting too antiquated for these progressive times. This, however, is very evident, and I feel the force of it, that once you have begun to patch at a thing, to fix here, to improve there, whether it be a log-cabin or a church creed, the inevitable is not far off.

He urged the congregation "not to be so foolish...and stay too long in our old home." Home, and moving home was the recurring motif in the farewell service, just as it was the next Sunday when the new church was dedicated. There was room for 2,000 worshippers, 1,200 in the auditorium, and 800 in the Sunday school. On that occasion, the Montreal Star report told of the standing room only crowds, with 300 extra standees. He also commented that "The singing throughout was hearty, and a good choir tended no little to the success of this important part of church worship."

As was customary in church dedication services, the sermon made reference to architecture and building. Rev. J.S. Black, the former pastor of the Erskine whose Minneapolis church served as the model for the new church, urged the congregation to think of Heaven, where "there will be no temple:. His biblical text was Revelations 21:22 "And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.: At the same time, he allowed the necessity of a church building: "...services in theatres, concert halls and in the open air were all good enough, but a religious life needed a religious home.." (i.e. church edifice).

At the evening service, L.H. Jordan's text, Daniel 12:3 was "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament: and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever." Perhaps the children in the congregation tilted their heads back to enjoy the small stars which spangled the dome of their magnificent new church. (For a description of the interior, see Appendix.)

## CHAPTER 6

### REJECTION AND REFECTION

#### The Birks-Nobbs renovations of 1937-39

The latter building [the Erskine Church] is really not a church at all but an auditorium, between 40 and 50 years old, and a specimen of one of the worst periods in American architecture." Letter from William Massey Birks to Rev. Elbert M. Conover, D.D.<sup>174</sup>

Some forty years passed, and with them a terrible war. The positive outlook of the mid-1890s was long gone. The country was suffering a devastating depression. The Presbyterian Church in Canada had undergone the major transformation of its existence. In 1925, the majority of Canadian Presbyterians (after long soul-searching) joined Canadian Methodists, Baptists and Congregationalists to form the United Church of Canada. The Erskine Congregation had joined the United Church, and effected a further transformation in 1934<sup>175</sup> by joining with the American United (formerly American Presbyterian) congregation to form a new body, the Erskine and American United Church. The American Presbyterian's building, which had been erected in 1865 by Alexander Hutchison, was to be demolished to make way for a bus depot.

Although important changes were taking place within Canadian Protestantism, the same "promoters", businessmen,

were still firmly in place as church leaders. S.D. Clark concludes: "Union of the Methodist, Presbyterian, and Congregational churches in 1925 was a reflection of the growing dominance of secular values associated with Politics and Big Business."<sup>176</sup>

One of the most influential parishioners of the American congregation was William Massey Birks (1868-1950), of the family of Montreal jewellers, Henry Birks and Co., whose establishment formed the western side of Phillips' Square.<sup>177</sup> Birks had a special interest in ecclesiastical architecture, and the social and financial standing to make his views on the subject heard. He was at one time Governor of McGill University and in 1922 was President of the Montreal Board of Trade. A promoter of church union, he established the Committee on Church Architecture of the United Church of Canada in 1925.

Birks had the expert help of Percy Erskine Nobbs (1875-1964), the Edinburgh architect who had been brought to McGill University in 1903 to head its architecture department. One result of their collaboration was the production of a book, The Chancel Before and After. That book had a great influence of United Church building—

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<sup>174</sup> United Church of Canada Archives, Victoria College, Toronto. William Massey Birks fonds. Letter Dec., 1937.

<sup>175</sup> United Church of Canada. One Hundred Years of Erskine Church Montreal 1833-1933, 122.

<sup>176</sup> Clark, Church and Sect, 431.

<sup>177</sup> Both A.C. Hutchison and Percy Nobbs had worked on extensions to the original Birks building, designed in the 1890s by Edward Maxwell on Phillips' Square.

particularly on remodelling churches to conform to the Architectural Committee's standards.<sup>178</sup> These standards were quite specific. A few elements of a "private and confidential" Committee Memorandum No. 1 on Church Design dated Montreal, October, 1925, read as follows: "A general trend of opinion and feeling is recognizable, tending towards a greater dignity in public worship among all elements of the United Church." Concretely, it called for a communion table on the main axis of the church and said that "A central position for the organ is to be avoided." The recommendations continue: "Circular seating is to be avoided...graded flooring over the body of the church is to be avoided."<sup>179</sup>

An undated memo from Dr. Hugh Matheson entitled "Comments...on the Memoranda of the Committee on Architecture of the Presbytery of Montreal: reiterates: "The organ has no substantive part in the sequence of worship. It is for the accompaniment...the Communion Table...is the focal point and the organizing centre...space set aside for the table should be spacious." Finally, the choir should "not...occupy a concert position.

While these memoranda were directed to the entire body of the United Church of Canada, they read as if written in order to effect the complete remodelling of the 1894 Erskine

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<sup>178</sup> I thank Rev. Ernest Nix for this information.

<sup>179</sup> United Church of Canada Archives, Victoria College, William Massey Birks fonds

interior. This is exactly what happened.

As was the case for the initial planning for the church, American expertise was sought, this time in the person of Elbert Conover, D.D., of the Interdenominational Bureau of Architecture. In appealing for his advice, the Chairman of the Architecture Committee of the United Church of Canada, S.W. Dean, wrote to Conover in December, 1937:

Mr. W. M. Birks, one of their [Erskine's] leading laymen, is a man of good architectural taste and I think it is largely at his instigation that the present movement has taken form to arrange the interior. I think you will regret that it is not possible for them to forsake it altogether and build their new plant from the ground up. I assume, however, that they need a central location and suitable sites are not easy to find. I judge they have ample money in the congregation to build something worthwhile.

The same month, Birks himself wrote to Conover, expressing his desire "to change an auditorium into a churchy church," calling the Erskine "not a church at all, but an auditorium...a specimen of one of the worst periods of American architecture."

Conover readily came to the rescue, sending a Mr. Wenner to make his recommendations, which closely followed the guidelines laid down by the Committee on Church Architecture.

Percy Erskine Nobbs was selected to carry out the recommended changes. The results can be seen in Figs. 1.20-1.22. Nobbs described the changes in a lecture to the ladies

of the church in February, 1939:

"[the] pulpit is now on the side...there is no chancel and no altar. The communion table is given great prominence...the organ...is behind a screen. The gallery has been reduced and the main floor levelled and the axis of the seating swung round to conform with the structure of the fabric."

A narthex, absent in the original building, was also added. In order to incorporate the 24 richly-colored glass memorial windows, many from the Tiffany studios, which were taken from the American Presbyterian church, several of the window openings had to be changed. Because of the strong colors of the windows, which admitted much less light than the original opalescent glass, the church was repainted in neutral tones and floor lighting was installed. In Nobbs plan, the organ was hidden behind decorative screens. The chancel area features marble inlaid flooring. The decorations Nobbs designed for the chancel are small [medallions] of Christian motifs such as the Chi-Rho and the Burning Bush.<sup>180</sup>

In the remodelling, the old Akron-style Sunday school section was eliminated, along with the large sliding doors which opened between the Sunday School and the auditorium. Closed classrooms and offices replaced the Sunday school on the first floor. On the second storey, a meeting room with a kitchen, a conference room, and other classrooms were constructed. The old caretaker's apartment, which had



originally been in the tower, where it was undoubtedly cold as well as unsafe in the event of fire, was closed. A new apartment was built on the second floor. A large volleyball court completed the changes on that level. One of the most attractive features of the change is a small one-storey chapel, used for smaller church services and intimate weddings. There, the Tiffany windows can be viewed at close range.

The alterations were carried out sensitively. In the interior, the auditorium's ceiling and walls were not changed (except for the change in fenestration). On the exterior, the new stonework melds into the old without a break.

Such major renovations were costly, and the final bill for the changes was close to the original price of the building. The earlier estimates had gone as high as \$200,000. Not all the parishioners were happy to pay for changes which they did not deem necessary. The sale of the American Church helped finance the remodelling.<sup>181</sup> Some additional changes were effected after World War II, when more memorial windows were commissioned.

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<sup>180</sup> For a description, see the pamphlet by William Massey Birks, The Symbolism of the Erskine and American Church, Montreal, (Montreal, n.d.), U-C, M-O, ANQM.

<sup>181</sup> The correspondence between the building committee and parishioners is candid. William Massey Birks fonds.

## CONCLUSION

While each congregation is unique, as is every church building, the Erskine Presbyterian does share much with other churches of its type and time. This is exemplified by the architecture of its three buildings, the first built by a carpenter in the congregation along simple classical lines in 1833, the second designed by a leading architect in the fashionable Gothic revival style in 1866, and the third, again architect-designed, modelled on an up-to-the-minute American design built in 1894, were church homes suited to the conditions of the buildings' patrons at the time they were built. There were two other building phases: the improvements of 1847 to the "Wee Kirk" and the massive remodelling of the Sherbrooke Street church in the late 1930s. Each of these five stages of building was governed by the economic situation of the parishioners, population trends, and church doctrine. Whereas architectural fashion accounted for the exterior "look" of the buildings, changing ideas about the role of the church provoked liturgical changes which in turn affected the plan and decoration of the sanctuary and the Sunday school.

Indeed, it might almost be argued that the buildings were built by and for different denominations, so much did

the practices, and to some extent, the beliefs, of the congregants change. The founding congregation was a radical sect, living in a working-class district, whose plain service included no instrumental music. The modest exterior of their church was in keeping with their means and interior decor tolerated no "idolatrous" painted glass. Then the second church was built, and in the period immediately following, the congregation participated in a movement towards unity within the Presbyterian church. Theirs was becoming the dominant Protestant denomination in Canada. They moved into a quiet new middle-class suburb. A prominent architect designed their fashionable Gothic revival church, into which they introduced an organ. This revolutionary move caused a schism in the congregation, but the organ remained.

By the time the third church was built, American influences in architecture and in Sunday School teaching methods dictated a then-popular solution: the Akron-auditorium plan housed in a Romanesque-revival building. The affluence of the congregation and their taste for Arts and Crafts design allowed the congregation to build an ornate modern church. Numerous links between the Montreal Erskine congregation and Minneapolis led to the choice of a model from that city. The church auditorium was dominated by gleaming organ pipes, and a large sliding door which gave access to an adjoining Sunday School auditorium.

Finally, in the 1920s, the movement towards unification among the major Protestant denominations in Canada brought the congregation into what was truly a new denomination. The Erskine church's theatrical 1890s interior was at odds with the requirements of the United Church for "dignity in worship". Through the efforts of an influential promoter and one of Montreal's most prominent architects, the interior was remodelled; even W.M. Birks could not convince the congregation to demolish the building and begin anew.

The trajectory followed by the Erskine congregation from the 1830s through the 1930s is one which can be traced for hundreds of other North American Protestant churches of the time. Frugal pioneers became affluent and built auditorium churches which were perhaps too elegant, too redolent of the theatre and the opera house to survive as places of worship into the years of the Great Depression.

By the time of their mass destruction or alteration in the late 1920s and after, another influence may have been at work: the rise of the movie theatre.<sup>162</sup> Perhaps the auditorium churches were beginning to look a bit worn, less splendid than the local movie palace. At the same time, some of the "classy" old auditorium theatres had been taken over by vaudeville (or worse). In that case, it was not the elegance but the unsuitable associations of the auditorium

which made it anathema. As well, new pedagogical ideas had supplanted the Uniform lessons mandated by the Akron plan, making the Sunday school system obsolete.<sup>183</sup>

The present congregation of the Erskine and American United Church also faces the problems of its day. Changing demographic and urban patterns, as well as a general falling off of church adherence, have decimated the congregation. Now charged with maintaining an historic building in a prominent urban setting, the congregation works hard to serve its downtown community and to make the building available to those who wish to visit it. As part of the program of the Religious Heritage Foundation of Quebec, they are seeking ways to repair the fabric of their historic church.

One of the suggested means of financing the activities of the church is to share the building with a classical music group. Thus, ironically, the church building may be saved because of its qualities as a performance space and the current appreciation for the Richardsonian Romanesque manner of building. Those very qualities, before the last revolution in taste (for now we admire the late Victorians) are the ones which condemned many of the Erskine's fellow Akron-auditorium churches to the wrecker's ball.

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<sup>182</sup> I thank Jean Bélisle for this observation. Some months ago, when I was speaking to a young undergraduate about the Erskine, the student said "It's amazing, it's like an old movie theatre on the inside."

<sup>183</sup> Jaeger, "Akron Auditorium Plan"

## APPENDIX

### Description of the original interior decoration of the Erskine Church

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Transcript of excerpt from the Presbyterian Review Toronto,  
25 October, 1894, 319-321.

Erskine Church, Montreal  
History of the Congregation, and Description of the New  
Building—An Edifice of Great Architectural Beauty.

...Two sites in the line of Guy Street were successively secured and held for a time but were afterwards discarded in favor of one on Sherbrooke Street at the corner of Ontario Avenue and facing directly down Crescent Street. An advantageous sale of the old property for business purposes has enabled them to erect one of the finest ecclesiastical structures in Canada, at an additional cost of about \$50,000. Its ordinary seating capacity is not much greater than that of the old church, but the gallery is expected to be much more available for the allocation of families than before, while on extraordinary occasions the Sunday school hall can be thrown into the church so as to accommodate comfortably from six to eight hundred people more. All the appointments are of the most convenient character and the work of the church can be carried out advantageously to the full limit of its energies.

#### Description of the Building

In designing a church interior, due regard must be given to the forms and requirements of the divine service. Perfect adaptation to the purpose for which a building is intended, is the "sine qua non" of all good architecture. The beautiful "Gothic" arose out of the needs and aspirations of a medieval Christianity, its vaulted and high nave; aisles; transepts, with recesses for chapels; its spacious sanctuary and choir were all in perfect harmony with the gorgeous ceremonial and liturgy which was so prominent a part of its ritual, the springing vaults reverberating with the chanting of priest and acolyte, gave to religion that sense of awe and mystery which was so strongly impressed upon the church of the middle ages, assisted by the gloom of the interior, dimly lit by deeply recessed windows and broken by sombre arches.

But to the simple form of congregational worship as that of the Presbyterian Church, such a style is eminently unsuitable, a spacious and light auditorium, with the

arrangement of pews, such that the pulpit is the centre, from which the line of seats radiate, are the conditions that the architect who designs must recognize. For this arrangement the Romanesque style of architecture which was adopted for Erskine church is well adapted for an open interior. The total length of the building is 165 feet in length and 100 feet in width. It fronts on Sherbrooke Street and Ontario Avenue [de Musée], and is lit from the four sides. The material of construction is limestone and New Brunswick olive green sandstone. The auditorium is 90 feet square, the pulpit platform, is placed in an angle to [the] platform. A gallery of horseshoe form occupies two sides of the church, but from the position in which it is constructed, the disagreeable character of a gallery obscuring a view of the interior, and the close smothered sensation experienced in some churches with galleries, is not felt here; it does not detract from the interior and is arranged in such a way that the whole congregation seem to be brought together, in happy contrast to the far away relations of those who occupy the galleries in not a few churches. The auditorium is reached by the two tower entrances, also by one at the side on Ontario Avenue [de Musée]. Quick exit is afforded by these doors.

The Sunday School is in the rear. There are thirteen class rooms, all divided from the main room by rolling partitions, arranged so as to allow the whole to be thrown into one hall. A unique and prominent feature is that of the two large sliding doors, 32 feet wide x 18 feet high, dividing the auditorium from the main room of Sunday [sic] school. These doors slide up and down, and are so devised that in [the] event of a special gathering the seating resources of the church, which is 1,200, can be increased to 2,000.

The interior decorations are in a scheme of soft yellows, greens and reds in harmonizing tones. The ceiling is supported by four transverse arches which are divided into small panels on their face, and the angle of arches next to the ceiling, emphasized by ornamental mouldings, are colored in a deep tone of subdued yellow, with panels of a slightly lighter shade, the moulding and ornamental parts relieved in bronze. The ceiling is formed by a dome flanked by four semi-circular panels, which are colored in a soft shade of greenish blue, the encircling mouldings and ornamental parts being in a soft shade of gray. The pendentives and vaulting between the arches and main walls are colored in a warm, full, golden yellow. The base rests on a strongly modelled cornice, which forms the emphasizing division between the curved slopes of the ceilings and walls and is colored in soft olive yellow on a greenish shade, enriched with gold.

On three sides of the interior are a series of arcades built in the form of a circle, giving a circular appearance to the interior; the open spaces between the arches suggest and preserve to the interior a feeling of spaciousness. The walls are in a warm shade of old pink. The main arches rest on a cluster of columns, which lend dignity and constructional strength to the interior, they are emphasized by being finished in a lacquered old bronze, the single columns of the arches being treated in the same manner.

The windows (the centre opening of one of the three windows at [the] side we illustrate) are in opalescent glass, a beautiful material that has the fire and glow of the opal, in every shade and color. They have a quiet and yet a rich appearance radiating and focusing the light with each change in the heavens. The design is formed by the lead lines. Sparkling bits of color are introduced by using jewels with cut faces.

The interior is carpeted in deep red shade with design in old gold. The whole arrangement of glass and interior decoration gives a sense of repose that could only result from perfect obedience to the laws that govern harmony in color.

The stained glass and interior decorations, were entrusted to Messrs. Castle & Son, Montreal, who deserve to be congratulated on the successful termination of their work, which has given entire satisfaction to the building committee, congregation, and all who have had the pleasure of seeing it.

The organ taken from the old church was rebuilt by Messrs. Warren and Son, of Toronto. It is contained in a new and handsome oak case effectively carved, and the pipes arranged in a large centre panel with two supporting bays. They are decorated in lacquered bronzes and gold, with design in color at intervals; above the central panel is a double row of brass trumpets, arranged in semi-circular forms.

The wood-work is in hard wood, slightly stained, and the walls to a certain height are in panelled wainscot. The pews are all in oak and arranged so that each seat commands an unobstructed view of the pulpit.

It must be a source of satisfaction to the architect, Mr. A. C. Hutchison, of Montreal, that the skill and thought he has bestowed upon this work is brought to such a happy and successful conclusion.



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## **1. THE 1894 ERSKINE CHURCH**



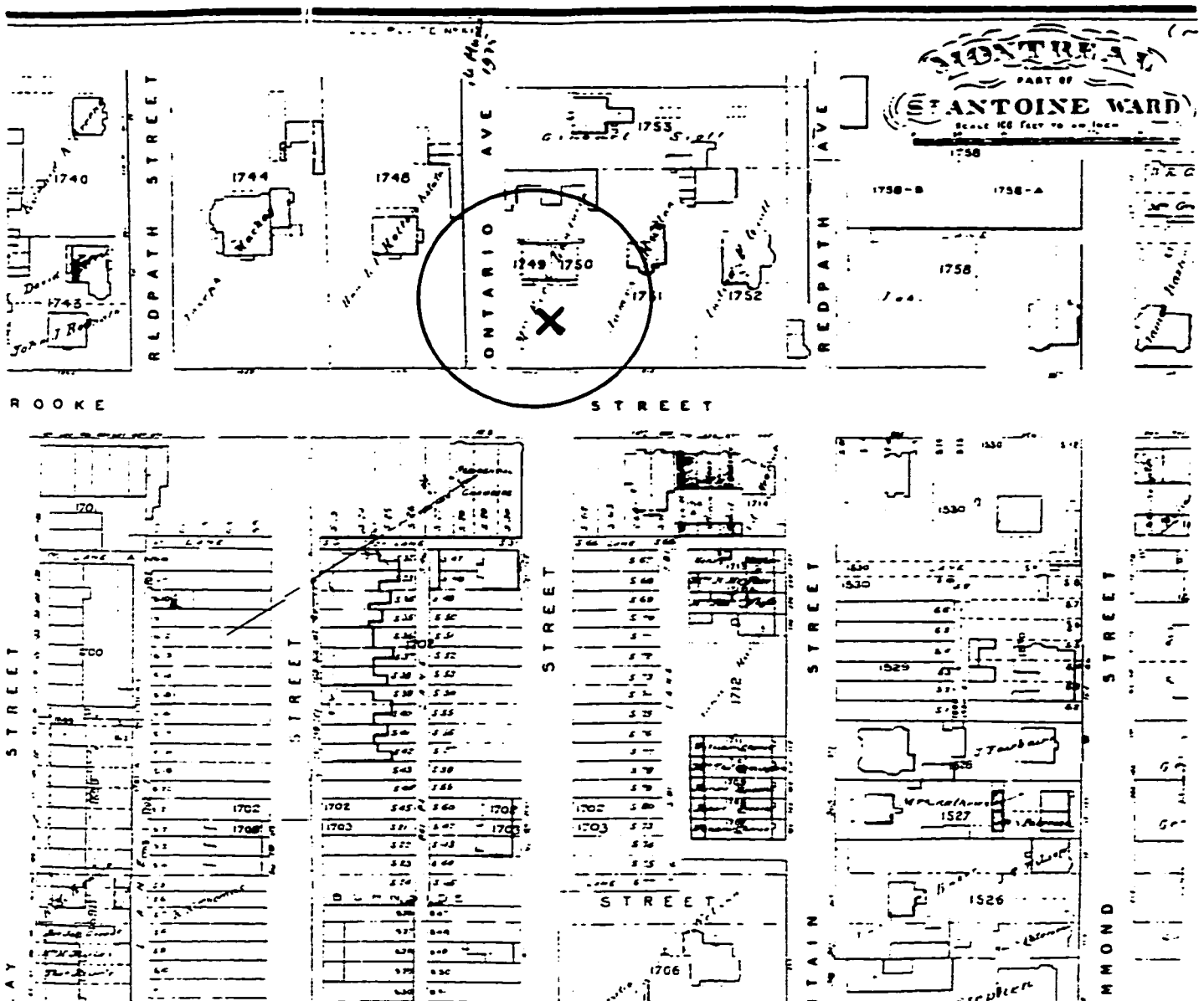
**A SOUVENIR**  
**OF THE LAYING**  
**OF THE**  
**CORNER STONE**  
**of**  
**ERSKINE**  
**CHURCH**



"Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, of sure foundation."—*Isa. xxiii., 16.*

**Corner of SHERBROOKE ST. & ONTARIO AVE..**  
**— Montreal —**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> August 1893 at 4 p.m.**

- 1.1 The cornerstone of the Erskine Church was laid with much ceremony on August 2, 1893, and the building was completed about a year later. (UCA,M-O,ANQM)



- 1.2 The 1894 Erskine Church was located on Sherbrooke Street at the head of Crescent Street, at the corner of Ontario Avenue (today Avenue du Musée). The land was sold to the church at an advantageous price by Erskine Church Elder Warden King, who also made a \$4,000 contribution to the new building. (Charles Edward Goad, Map of Montreal and Vicinity, plate XVII, Montreal, October 1890)

special warning not to admit any Japanese vessels.  
Privately it is known that the Chinese are in a dilemma which may affect the whole war. China was to purchase a British policy, and rely upon her gun-ners' wealth sufficiently to crush Japan. But the neutrality laws prevented their buying war-ships in Europe. Orders were given to the various Chinese armaments to build ships and carry guns. The Foo Chow arsenal, the largest and only one in China that ever built ships on a serious scale, may be in a state of

and next week to address a mass meeting of Presbyterian ministers and Board of Foreign Missions in the American Presbyterian Church, each Sunday afternoon, at three o'clock.

#### LIBERAL LEADERSHIP.

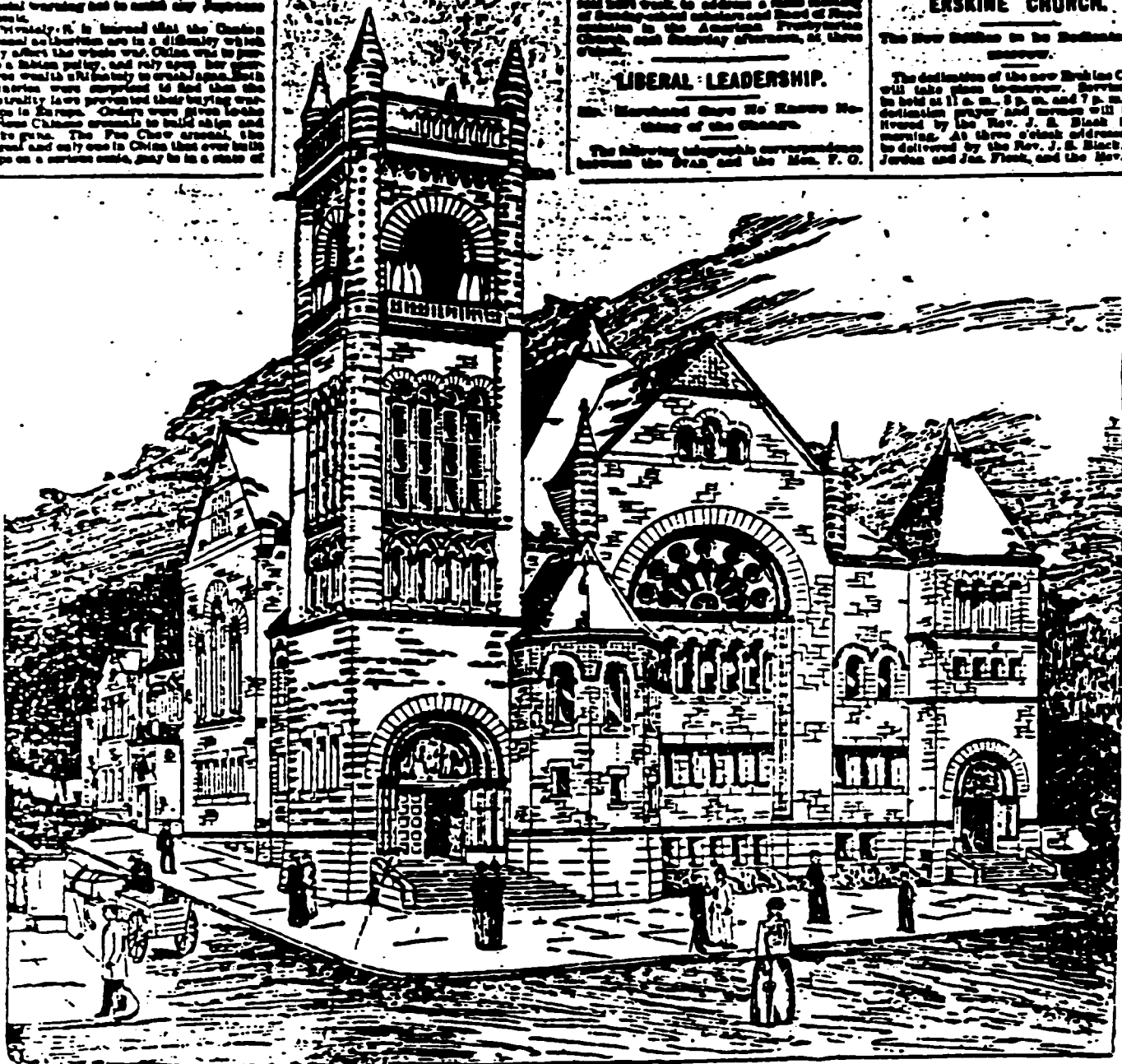
Mr. Macdonald gave the names of the Liberal leaders of the Chinese.

The following telegraphic correspondence between the Star and the Hon. F. O.

#### ERSKINE CHURCH.

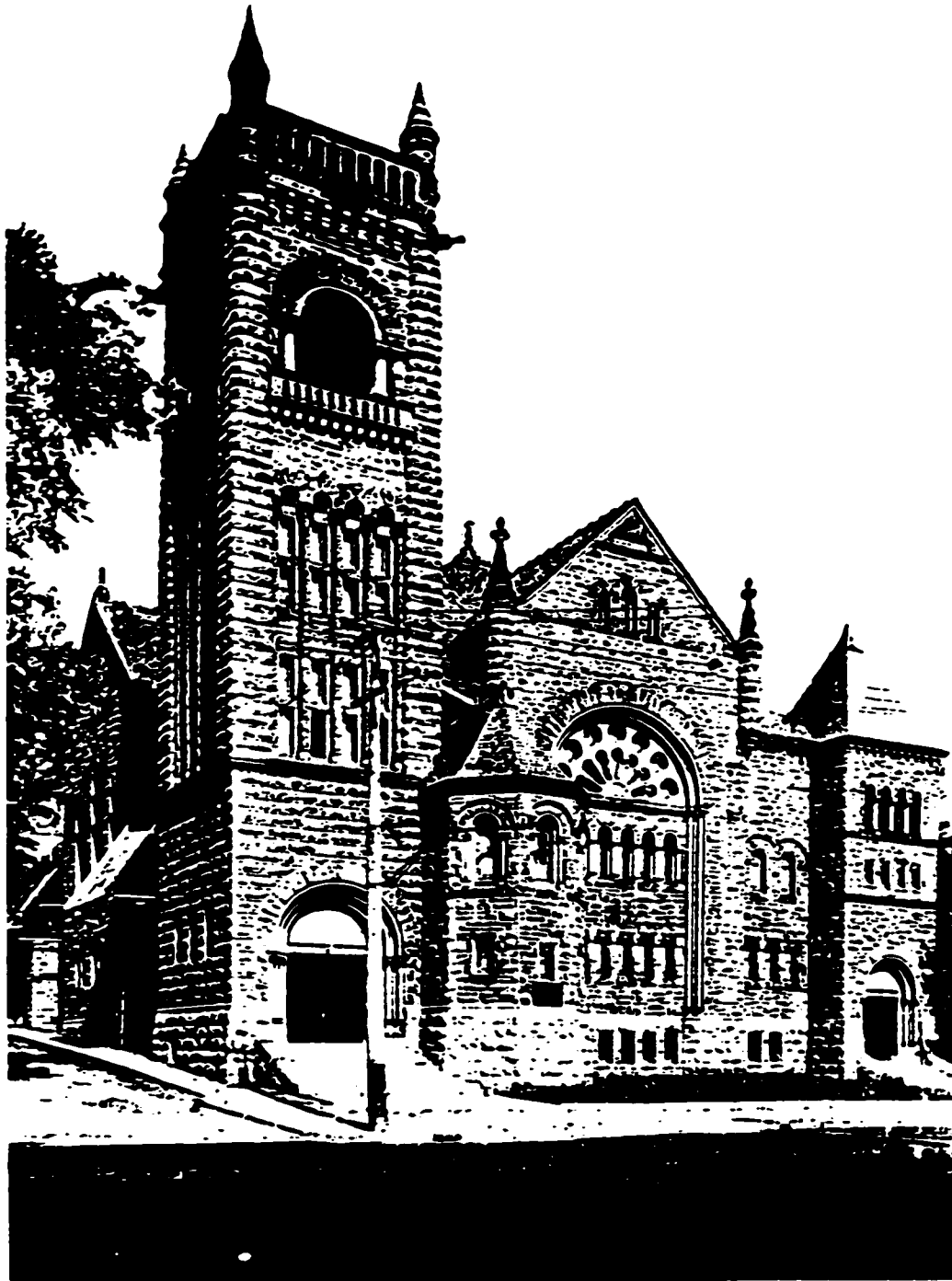
The New Building to be Dedicated To-morrow.

The dedication of the new Erskine Church will take place to-morrow. Services will be held at 11 a. m., 3 p. m. and 7 p. m. The dedication prayer and service will be delivered by the Rev. J. B. Black in the morning. At three o'clock afternoon will be delivered by the Rev. J. B. Black, L. H. Jordan and Jan. Fink, and the Rev. L. H.



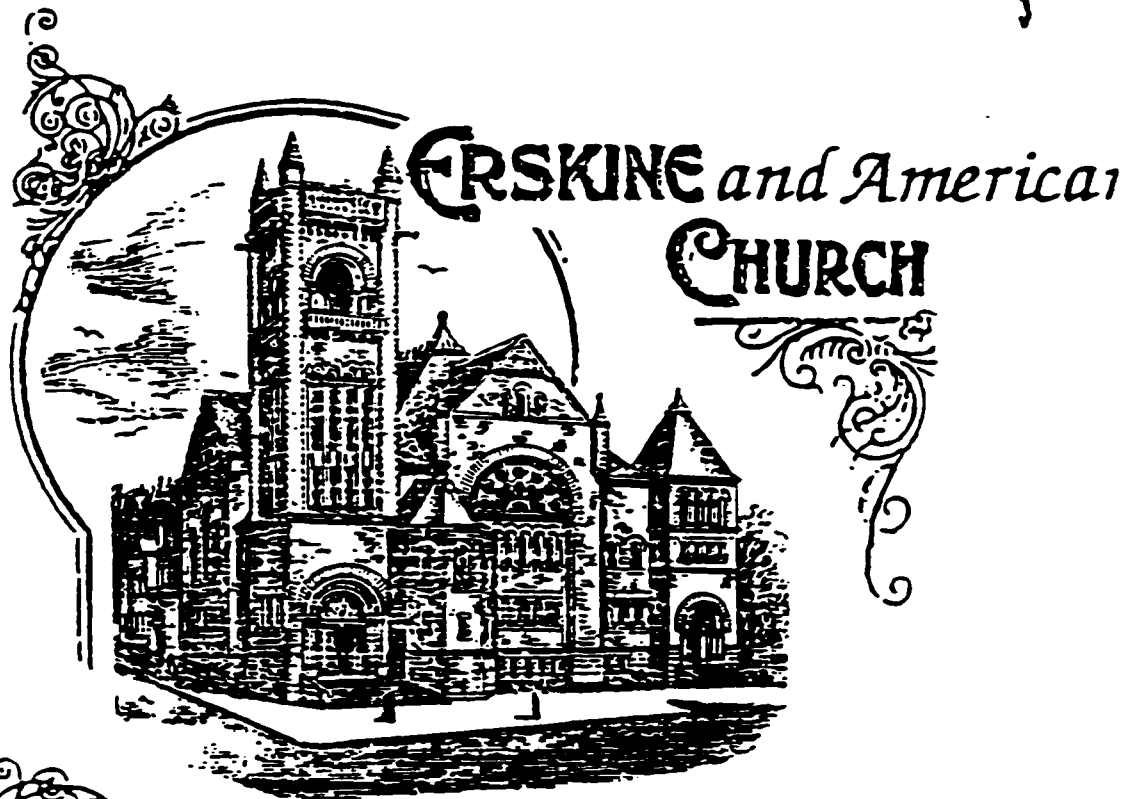
THE NEW ERSKINE CHURCH, SHEARBOURNE STREET, AT THE HEAD OF CRESCENT STREET.

- 1.3 On September 29, 1894, The Montreal Daily Star announced the inauguration of the new Erskine Church.



- 1.4 Designed by Alexander Cowper Hutchison [FIG 4.2] and built by John Henry Hutchison [FIG 4.3], both of whom had learned the trade of stone-cutting at an early age, the new Erskine Church represented a masterful expression of the masonry techniques of its day. (NPA)

# CELEBRATING 100 YEARS ON SHERBROOKE STREET

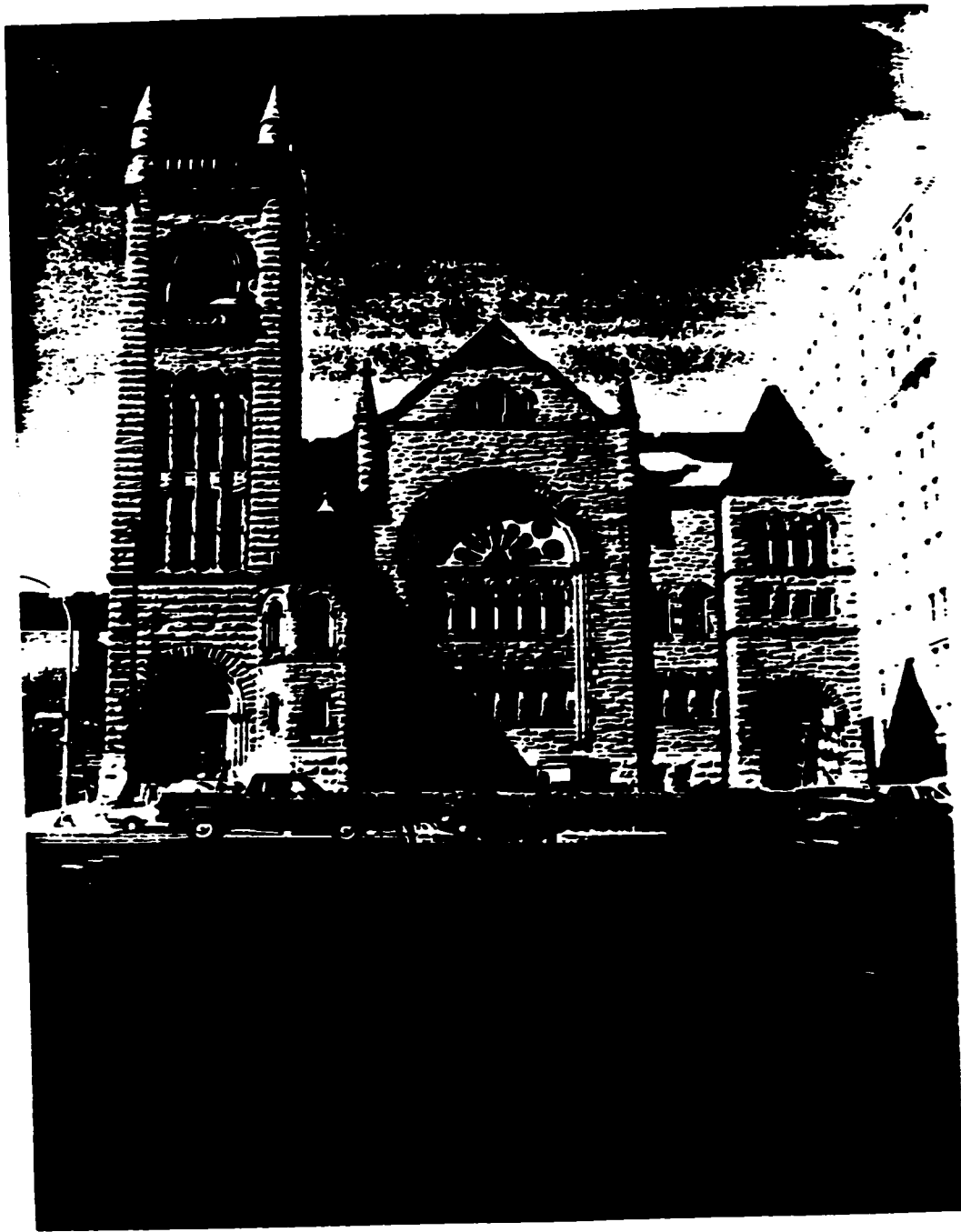


"Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, of sure foundation."—Isa. xxiii., 16.

— Montreal —

1894 to 1994

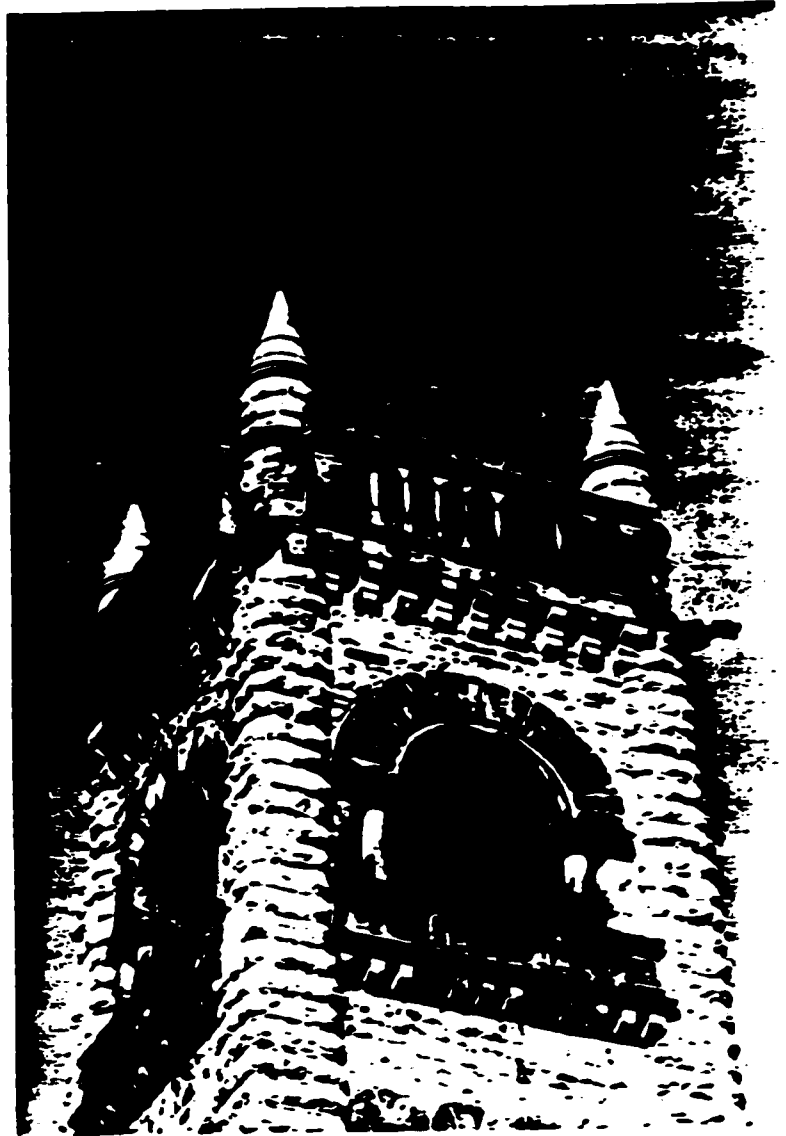
- 1.5 In 1994, the Erskine and American Church, inaugurated as the Erskine Church in 1894, celebrated the 100th anniversary of the inauguration of its building on Sherbrooke Street. (UCA, M-O, ANQM)



1.6 Today, the Erskine and American Church is one of Montreal's most handsome late-nineteenth-century buildings. (Susan Bronson, 1995)



- 1.7 (left) The stonework of the Erskine and American Church was inspired by Romanesque traditions. (Les Missala, 1994, UCA,M-O,ANQM)
- 1.8 (right) The walls are constructed of roughly finished limestone, while the arched window and door openings are elegantly rendered in sandstone. (Les Missala, 1994, UCA,M-O,ANQM)



1.9 (left) Every stonework detail of the 1894 Erskine and American Church, including the bartizans that flank the gables, is carefully considered, confirming the stone-cutting background of the architect, Alexander Cowper Hutchison [FIG 4.2], and the builder, John Henry Hutchison [FIG 4.3], his brother. (Les Missala, 1994, UCA, M-O, ANQM)

1.10 (right) The tower, with its miniature gargoyles, appears to be inspired by medieval traditions, freely combined. (Les Missala, 1994, ULA, M-O, ANQM)

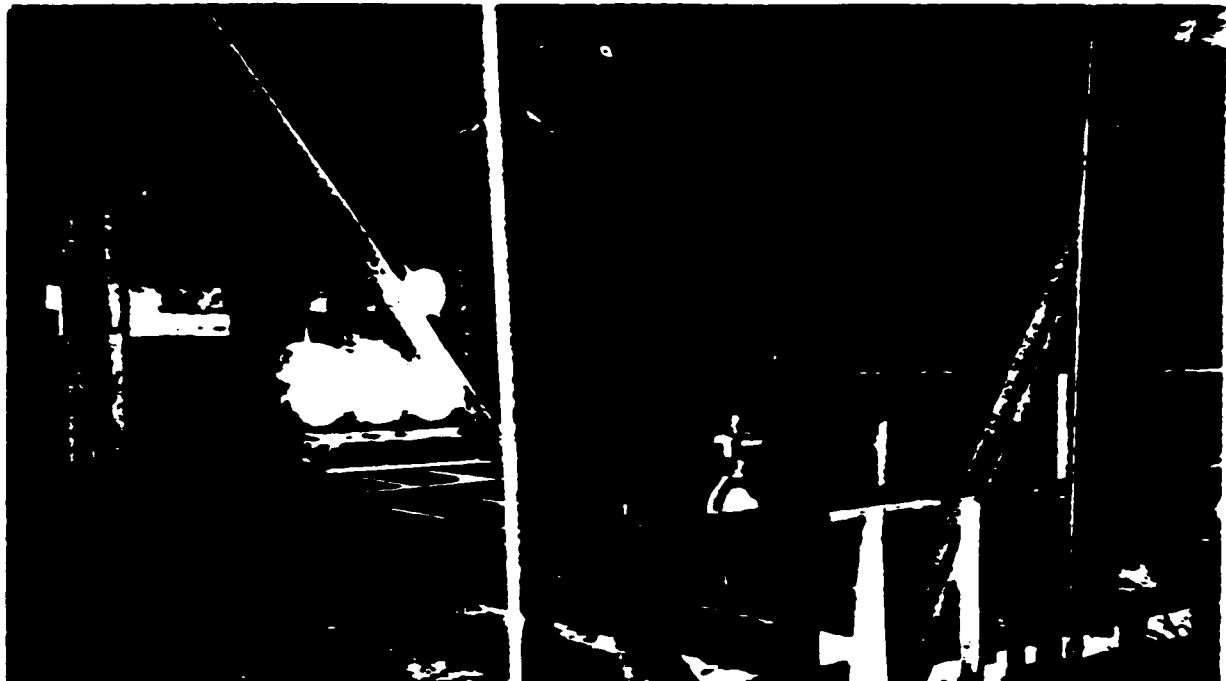
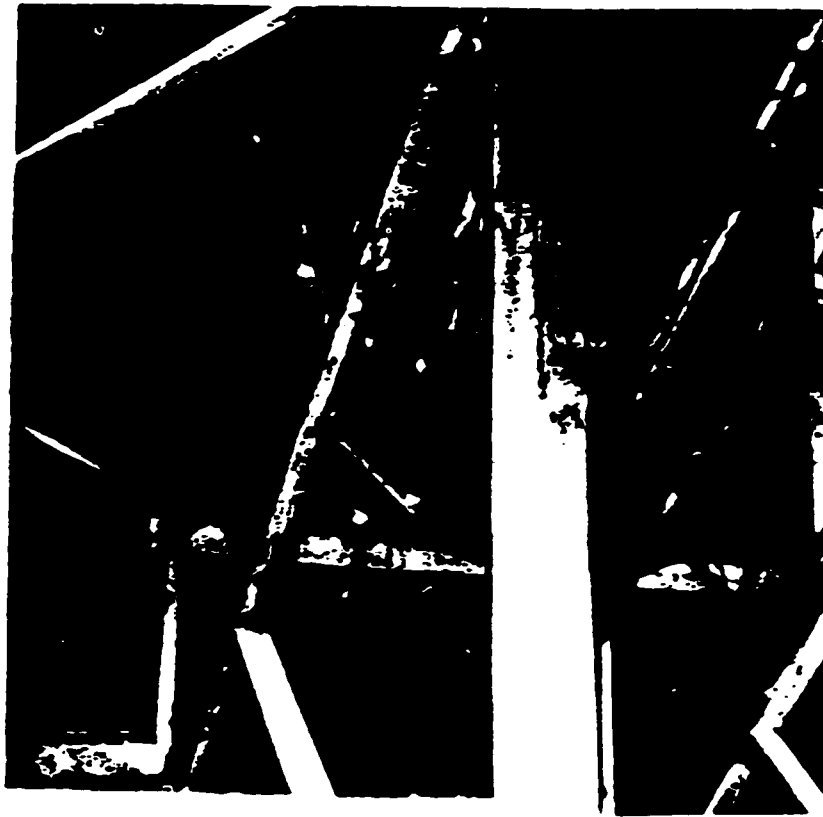




1.11 The carving of the stonework above the main entrance of the Erskine and American Church was never completed. (Susan Bronson, 1995)

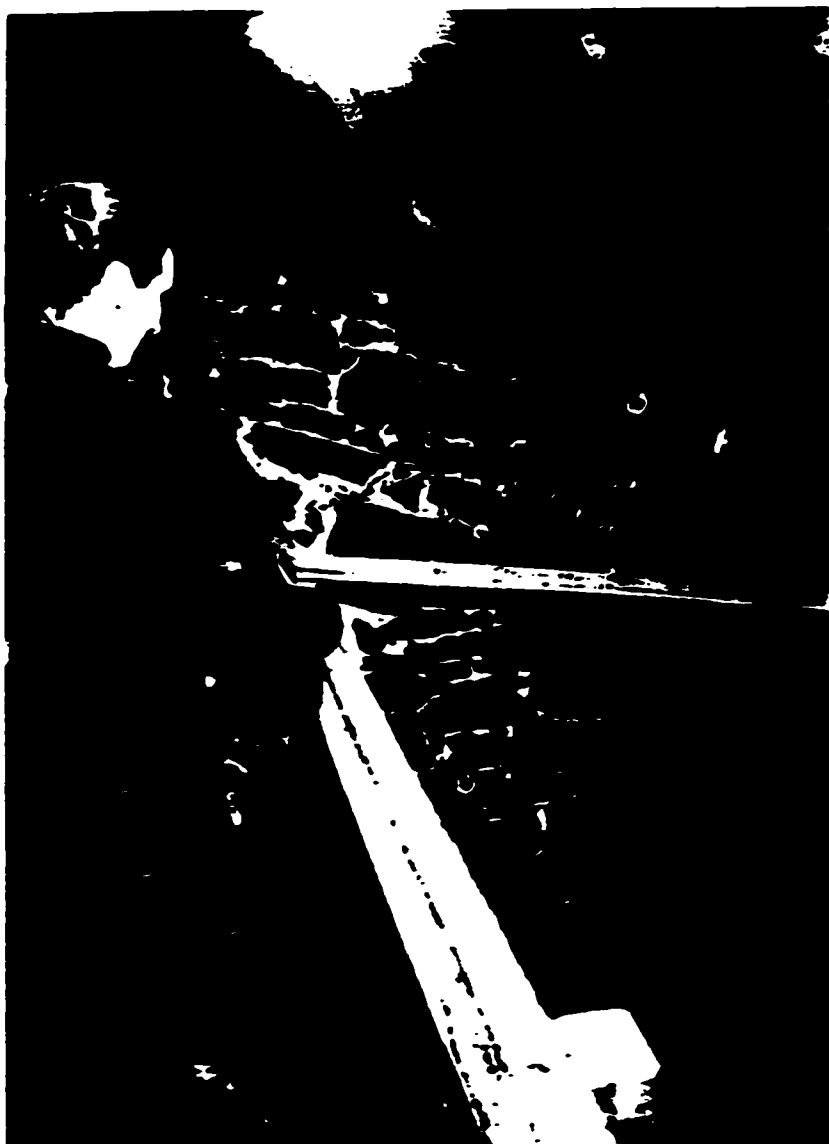


1.12 Today, some of the sandstone details of the Erskine and American Church are in deteriorated condition. (Susan Bronson, 1995)



1.13 (top) The wooden roof structure, which is supplemented by iron braces and rods, confirms the solidity of the building. (Les Missala, 1994, UCA,M-O,ANQM)

1.14 (bottom) Light enters the attic through the window of the end gable wall. (Les Missala, 1994, UCA,M-O,ANQM)



1.15 The author examined the details of the roof construction in the winter of 1994-1995. (Les Missala, 1994, UCA, M-O, ANQM)



1.16 Before the 1938 renovations, the interior of the Erskine Church focused on the organ. To the left is the movable partition that opened to communicate with the Sunday School. The space was filled with light from its generous windows. (UCA,M-O,ANQM)



1.17 Before the 1938 renovations, the curved balcony of the Erskine Church's auditorium reinforced the arches of its windows and domed ceiling. (UCA,M-O,ANQM)

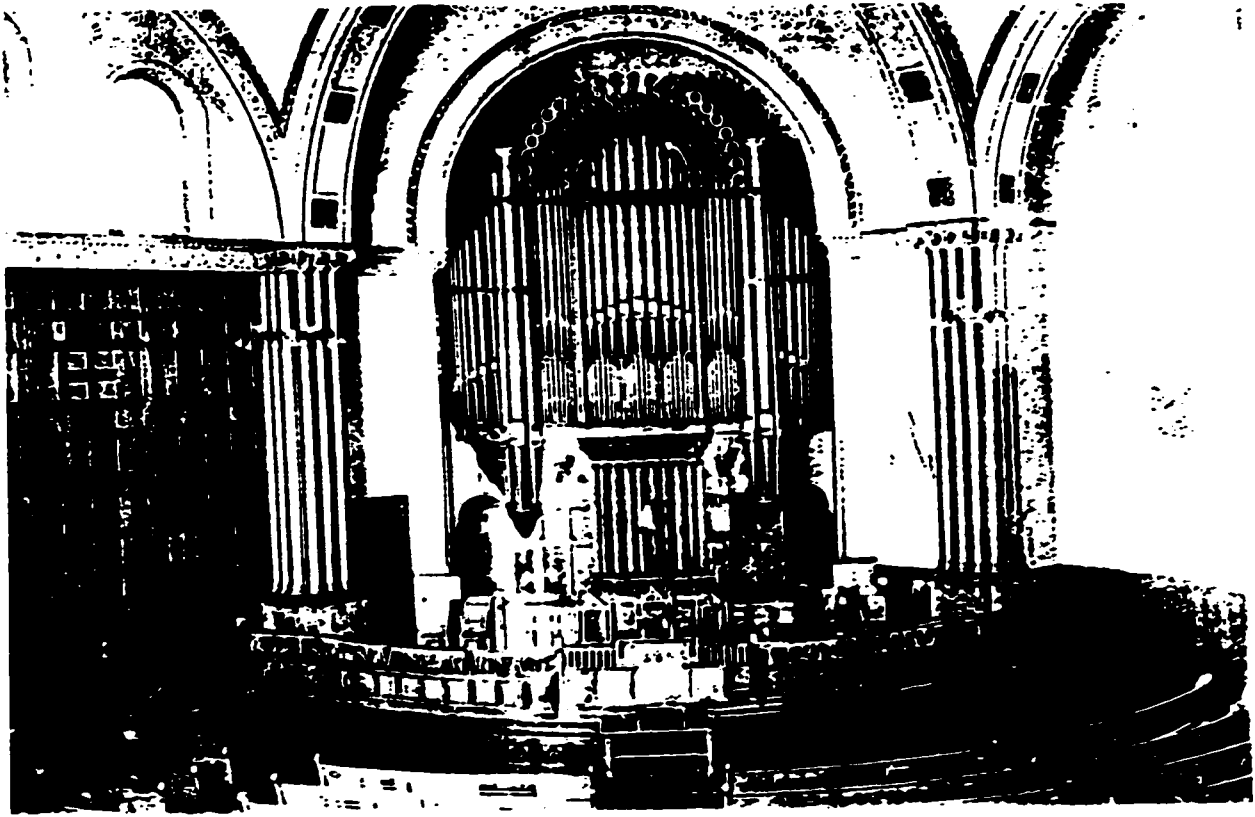


Figure 1

#### ERSKINE CHURCH, TORONTO NO. 11

The photograph of the church interior, showing the organ and the chancel, is a high-contrast, black and white image. The organ is the central feature, with its pipes and structure clearly visible. The chancel area is also visible, showing the architectural details of the church.

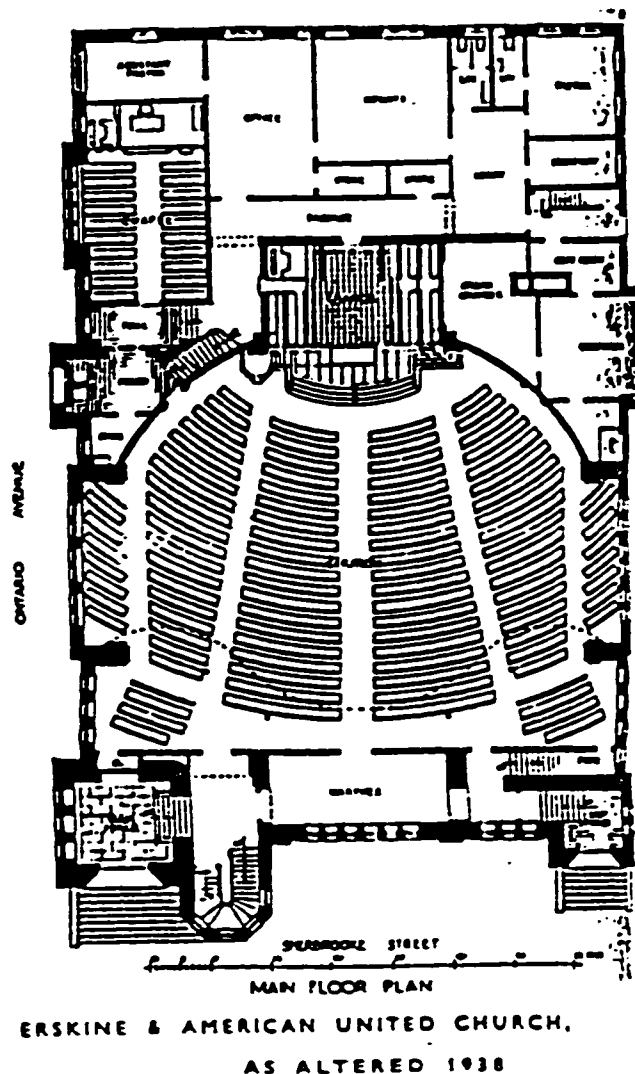
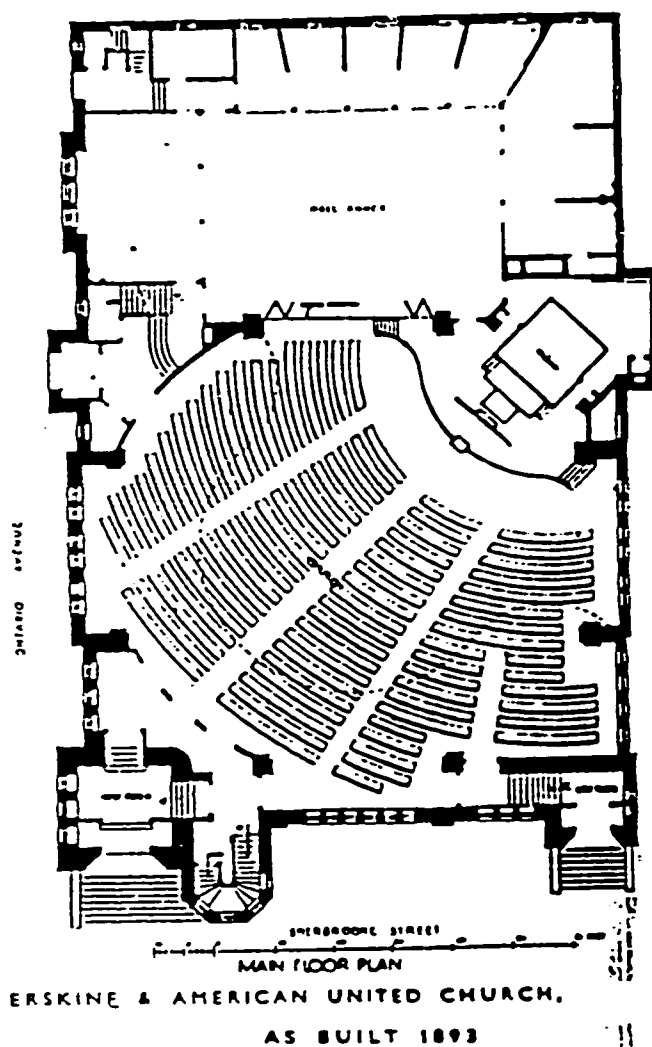
The photograph of the church interior, showing the organ and the chancel, is a high-contrast, black and white image. The organ is the central feature, with its pipes and structure clearly visible. The chancel area is also visible, showing the architectural details of the church.

- 1.18 Before the 1938 renovations, the chancel of the Erskine Church featured the gilt organ pipes, which were surmounted by trumpets. (William Massey Birks. The Chancel Before and After (Toronto, 1947), n.p.)

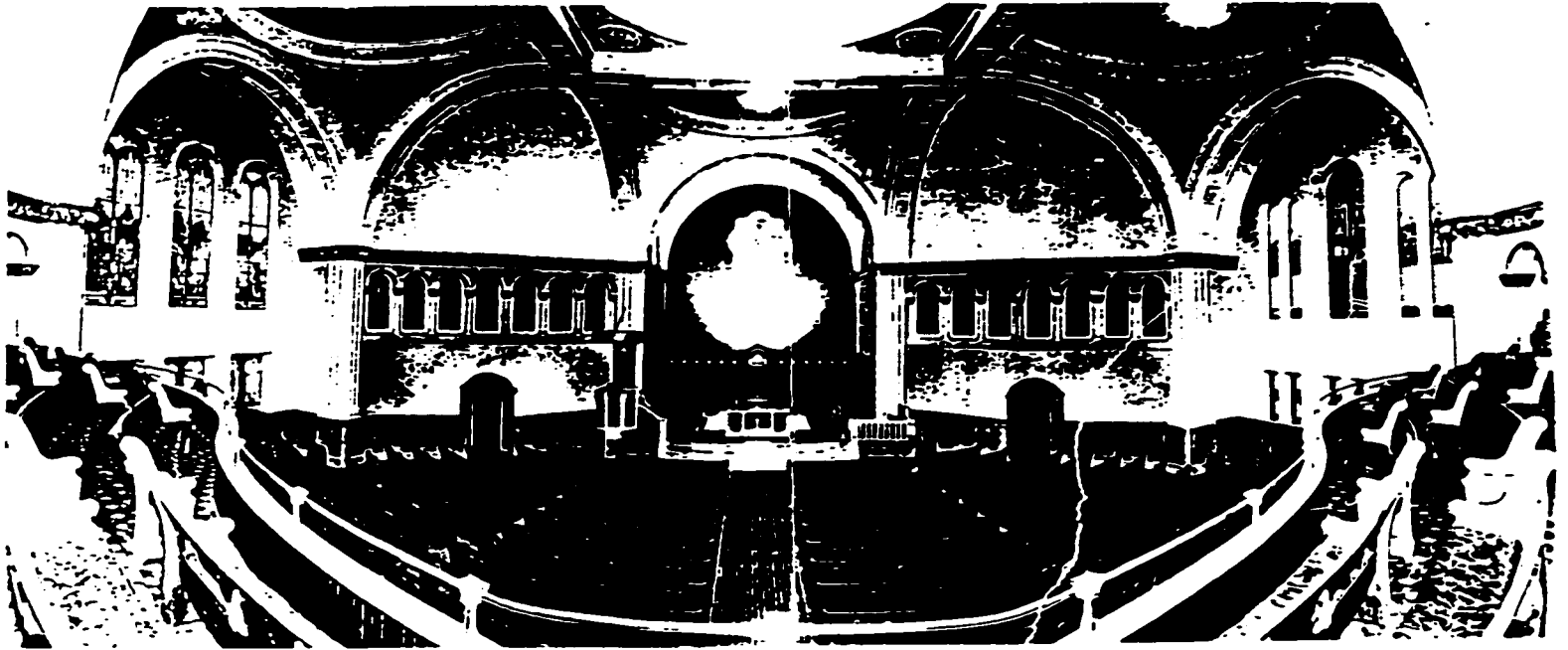


1.19 This interior view of the Erskine Church on Thanksgiving Day 1898 confirms that the space was abundantly lit by natural light before the addition of the narthex in 1938.  
(UCA, M-O, ANQM)

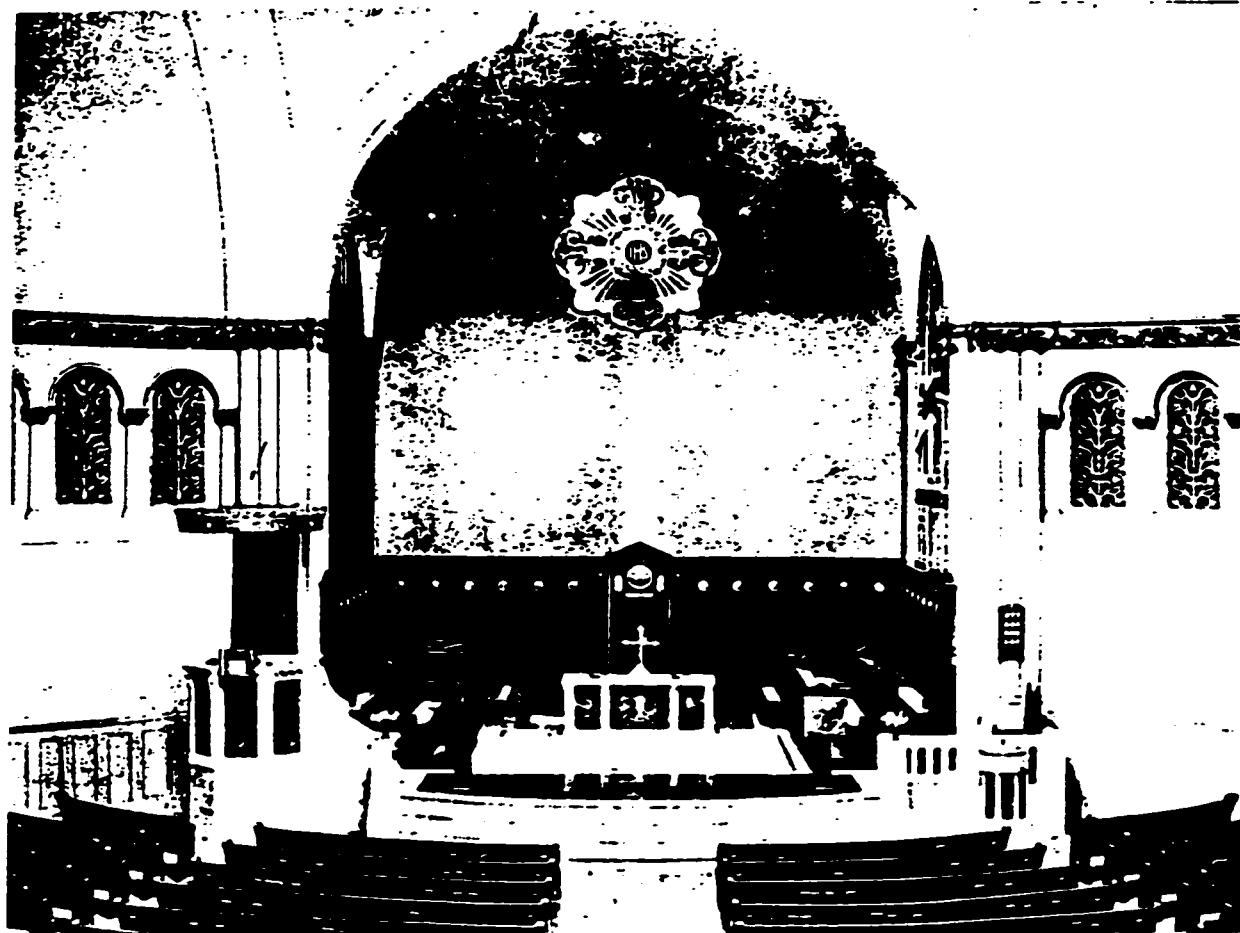




- 1.20 At the request of William Massey Birks, architect Percy E. Nobbs (1875-1964) renovated the Erskine and American United Church in 1938; this comparison of the Nobbs & Hyde drawings of the original plan (left) and the 1938 plan (right) shows that this involved rotating the axis of the chancel and the pews by 23 degrees and building a new chancel behind the former partition. (Canadian Architecture Collection, McGill University)



1.21 Percy Nobbs's 1938 alterations aimed to bring the Erskine and American United Church up to date in accordance with the latest recommendations for Presbyterian churches of the 1930s. (William Massey Birks. The Chancel Before and After (Toronto, 1949), n.p.)

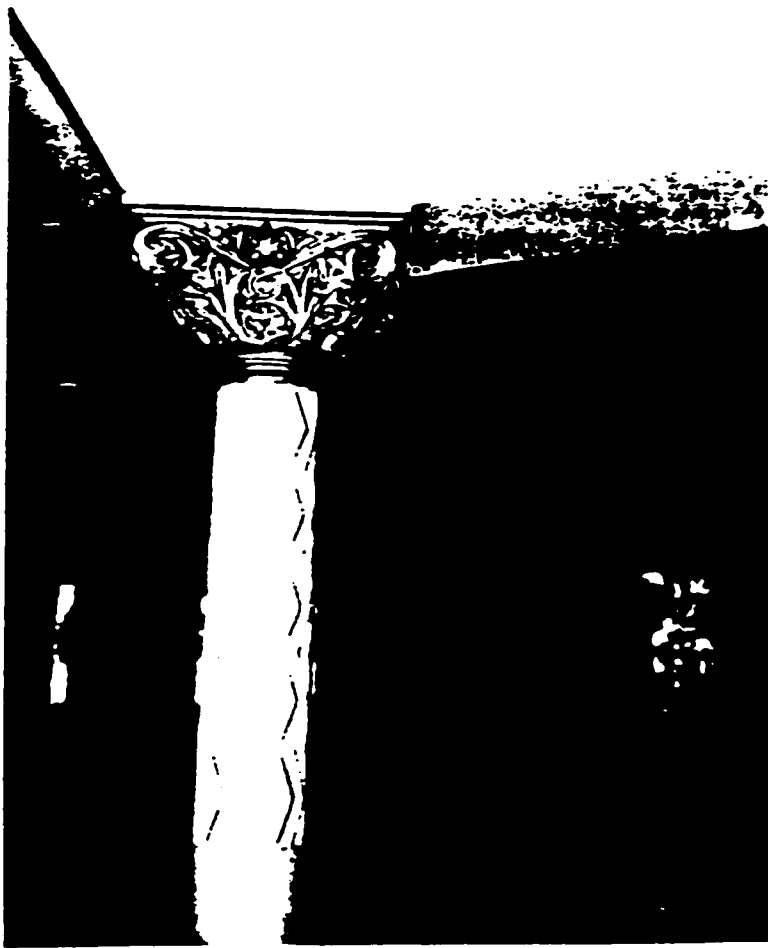


*Architect, Percy F. Nobbs, F.R.B.A., R.C.A.*

View 1

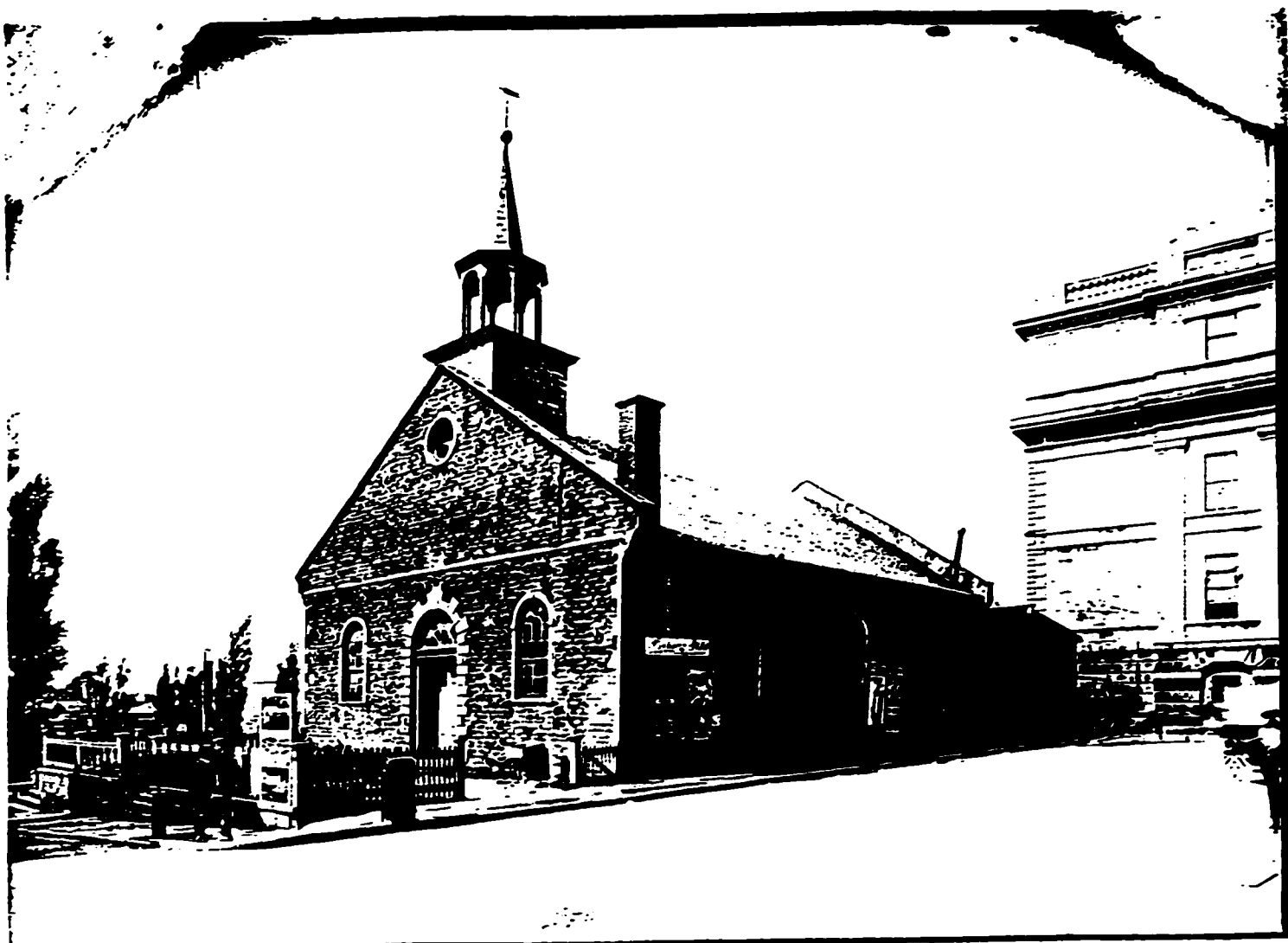
The pews around the chancel are mostly from the 17th century. The Greek Cross on the wall is in colour, and is illuminated by a concealed spotlight shaped to the outline of the medallion.

- 1.22 After the 1938 renovations, the new chancel (William Massey Birks. The Chancel Before and After (Toronto, 1949), n.p.)



1.23 Despite the major alterations of 1938, the interior of the Erskine and American Church still possesses many architectural details that are part of its original design. (Les Missala, 1994, UCA, M-O, ANQM)

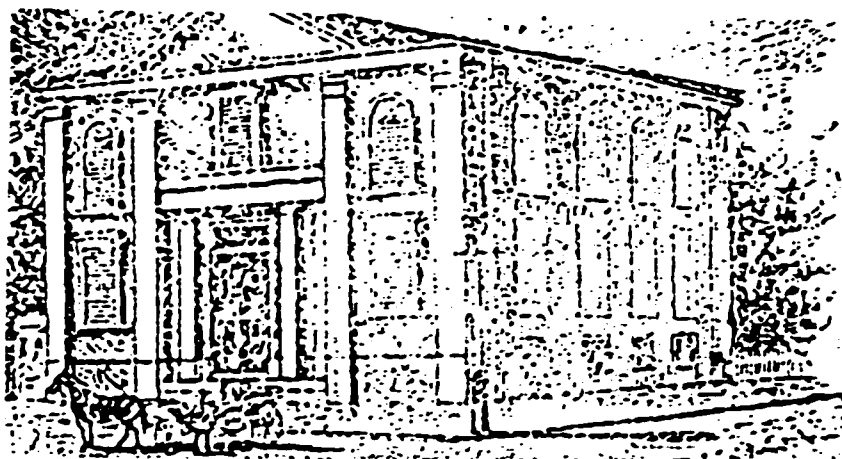
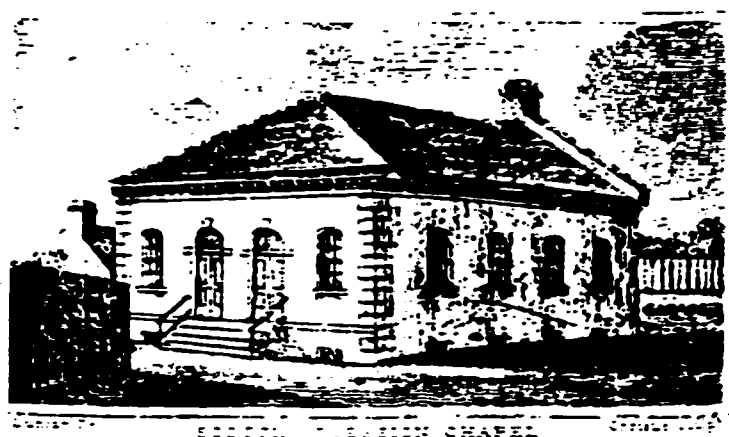
**2. THE PREVIOUS CHURCHES OF THE ERSKINE CONGREGATION  
AND OTHER INFLUENTIAL PROTESTANT CHURCHES IN MONTREAL**



2.1 The first Presbyterian church in Lower Canada was the Saint Gabriel Street Church, constructed in 1792. (NPA, 1892)



- 2.2 The Erskine congregation, which was founded in 1831 by a group of Montrealers of Scottish descent who sympathized with the Secession Church in Scotland, worshipped in the first American Presbyterian Church on Haymarket Square before it built its own church building in 1835. (NPA)



- 2.3 (above) "The Wee Kirk," known as the Scotch Secession Chapel, located on de Lagachetière Street, at Chenneville Street, was inaugurated in January 1835. The first church of the Erskine congregation, it was a simple stone building of classical inspiration and modest proportions. (Newton Bosworth. Hochelaga Depicta (Montreal, 1839), p. 112)
- 2.4 (below) In 1847, the Scotch Secession Church was enlarged: a second storey was added, the facade was made more monumental, and the two entrance doors were replaced by a single but more monumental entrance. (Hélène Bergevin. Eglises protestantes (Montreal, 1981), p. 89)



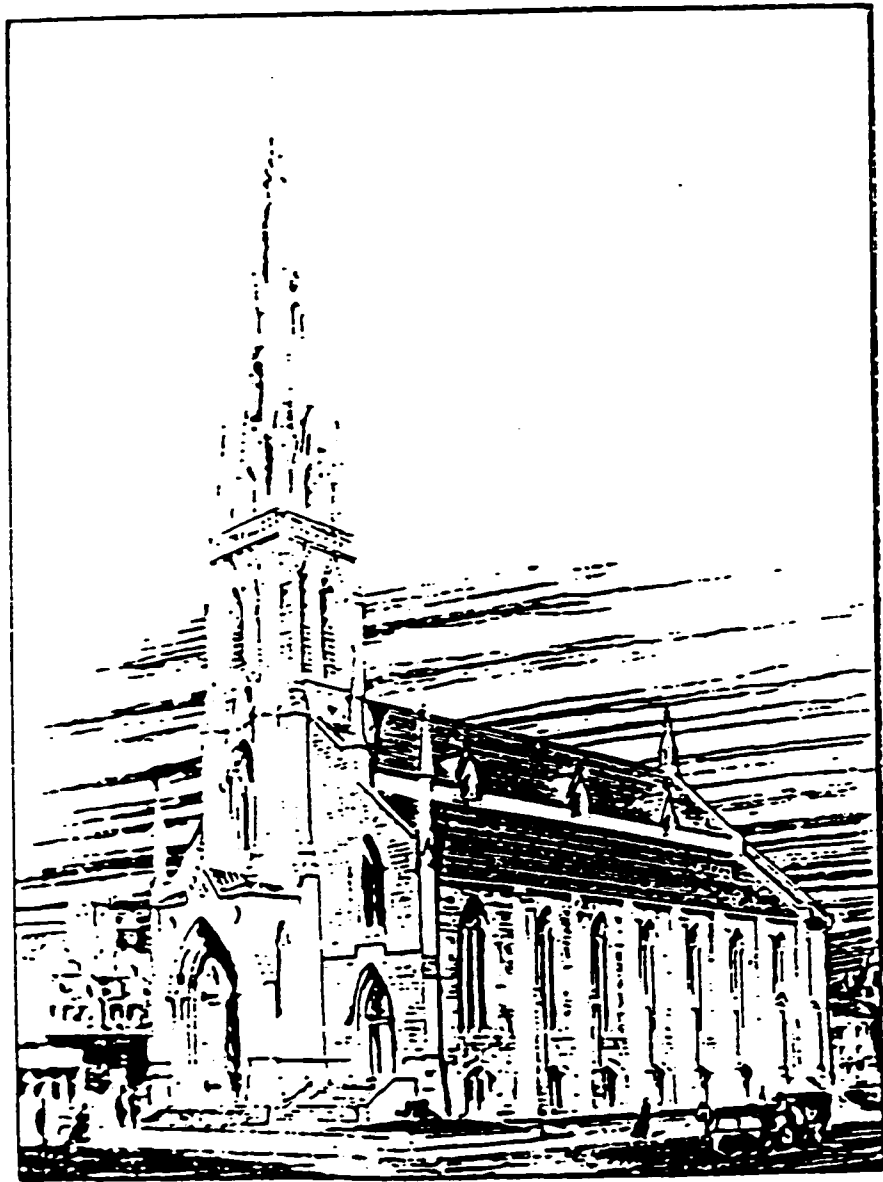


- 2.5 In 1864, the Erskine congregation of the Scotch Secession Church sold its building on de Lagauchetière Street to the Sulpicians and began to construct a new church at the corner of Sainte-Catherine and Peel Streets. A simple tower was later added on the former building, which now houses the Chinese Catholic Church. (Aline Gubbay. Montreal. The Mountain and the River (Montreal, 1981), p. 45)



This is St. Catherine St., looking west to the Erskine Church on the south corner of Peel, as photographed by J. G. Parks in 1870

- 2.6 The second home of the Erskine congregation (1866-1894) was on Sainte-Catherine Street, a quiet tree-lined street in the 1870s, at the corner of Peel Street. (The Montreal Star, September 4, 1970, p. 43)

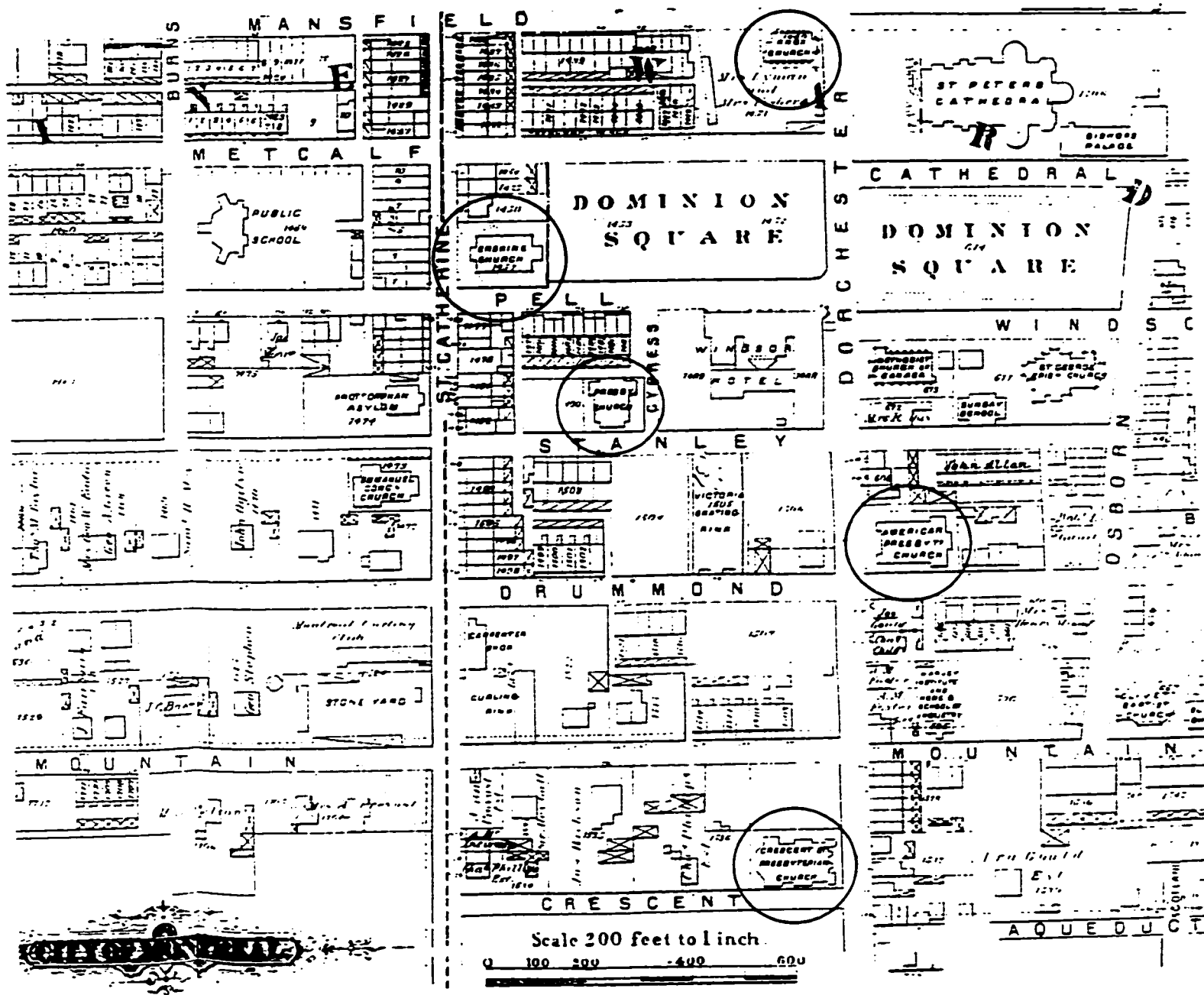


ERSKINE CHURCH

on St. Catherine Street, at the S.E. corner of Peel

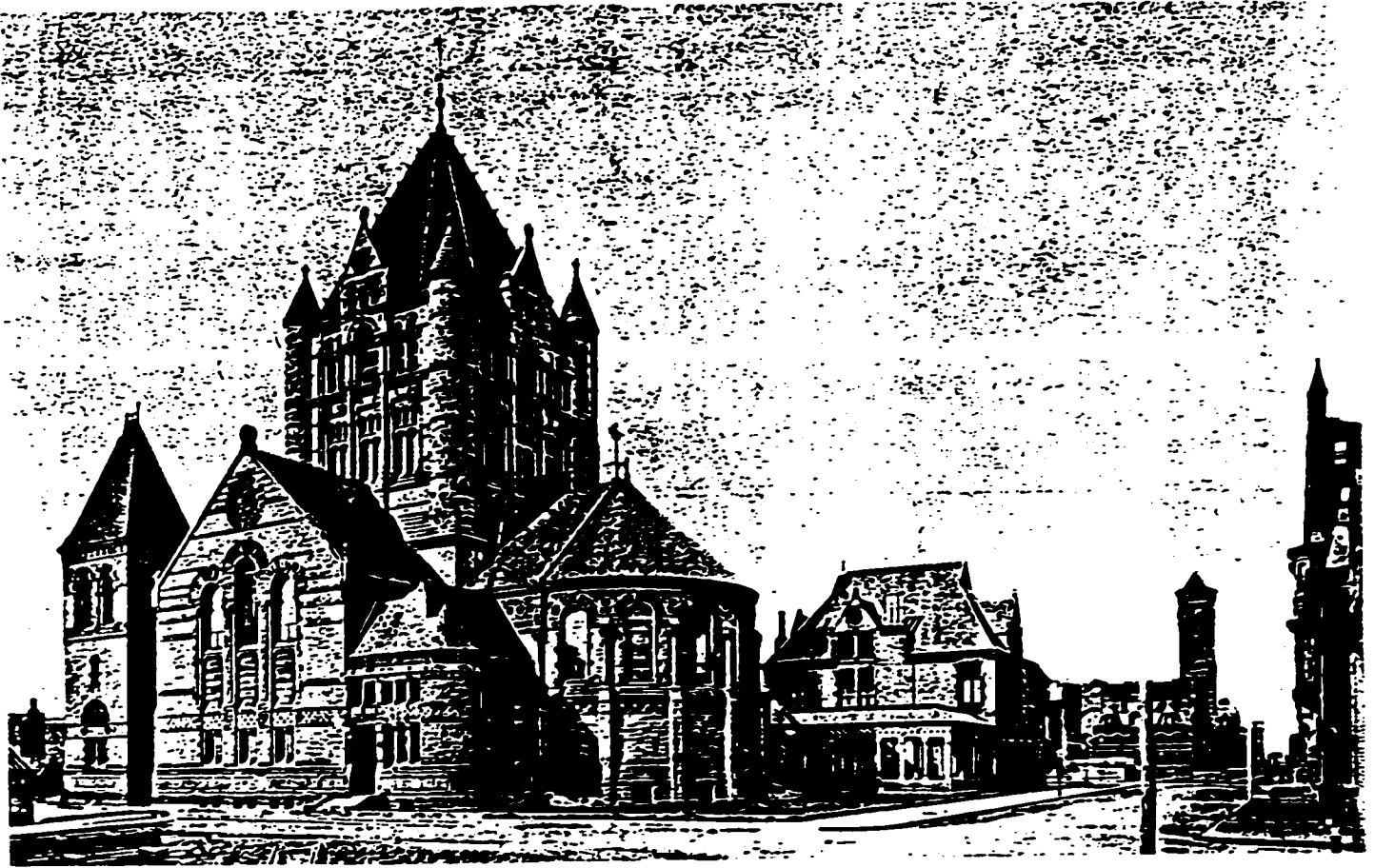
1866 - 1894

- 2.7 The second Erskine Church, inaugurated in 1866, was inspired by the Gothic style, which was very fashionable for Protestant churches at the time. Constructed of Montreal limestone, it was designed by the prominent architect Cyrus Pole Thomas (1833-1911). (Guy Tombs. A Hundred Years of Erskine Church (Montreal, 1933))

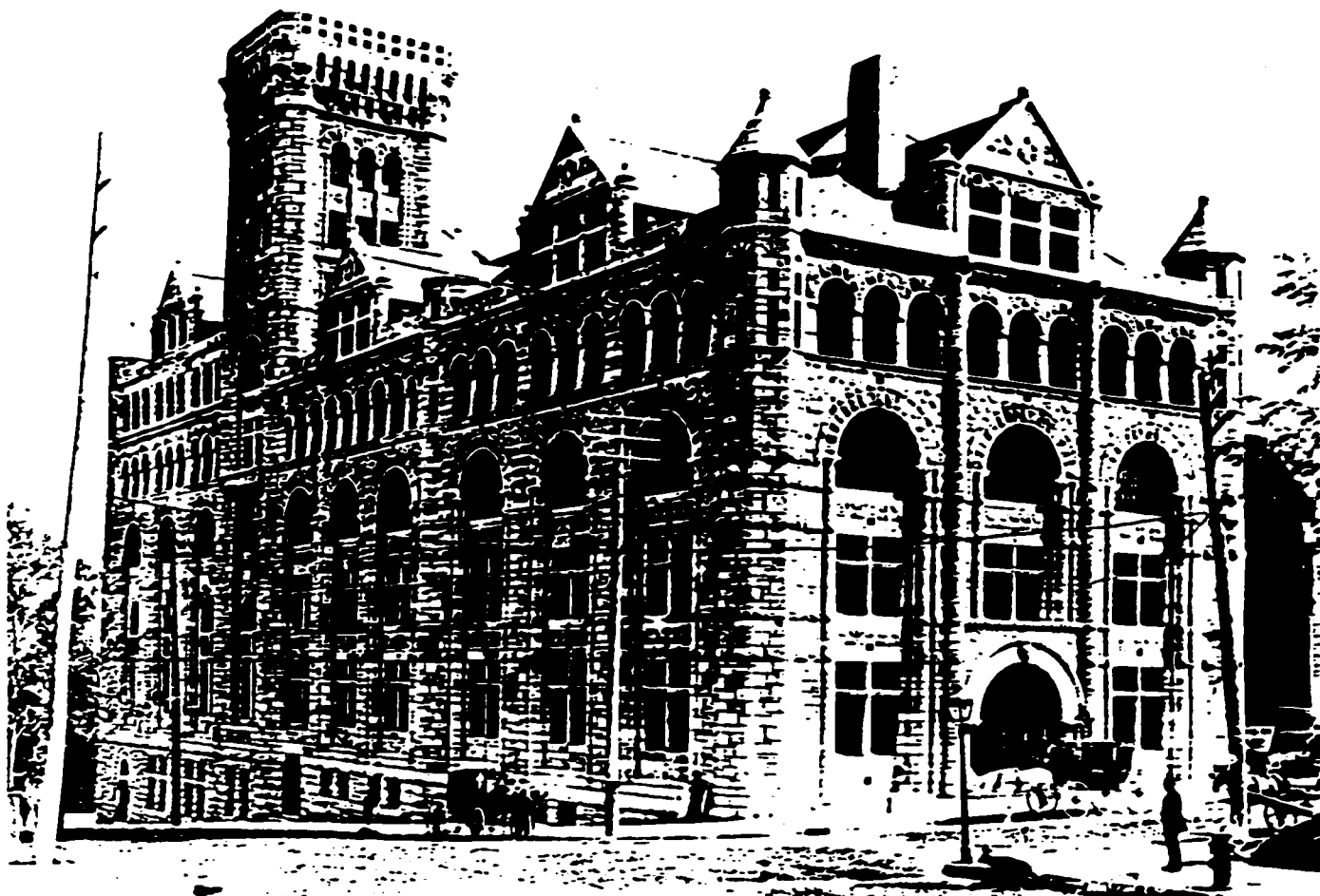


- 2.8 By 1879, there were several churches in the vicinity of Dominion Square (now Dorchester Square). The fact that there were five Presbyterian churches (circled) within a radius of a few blocks provided an incentive for the Erskine Church to move further west in the 1890s. (Henry W. Hopkins. Atlas of the City and Island of Montreal, Plate I, 1879)

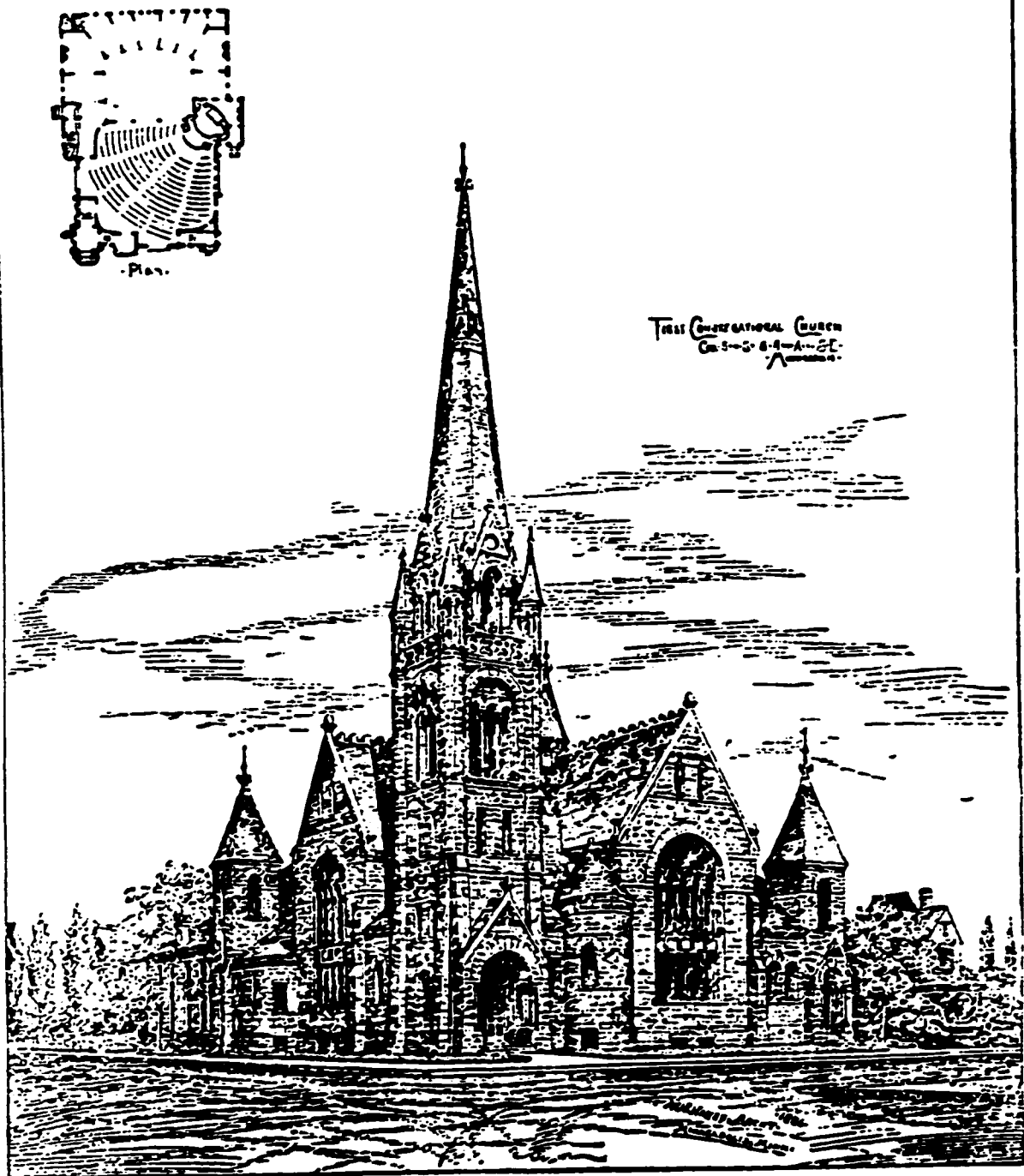
**3 . THE CHURCH MODELS AND OTHER ARCHITECTURE  
THAT INFLUENCED THE DESIGN OF THE 1894 ERSKINE CHURCH**



3.1 Trinity Church (1873-77) in Boston, designed by Henry Hobson Richardson, inspired a proliferation of Richardsonian Romanesque churches and other buildings throughout North America in the 1880s and 1890s. (Marianna Griswold Van Rensselaer. *Henry Hobson Richardson and His Works* (New York, 1969), n.p.)



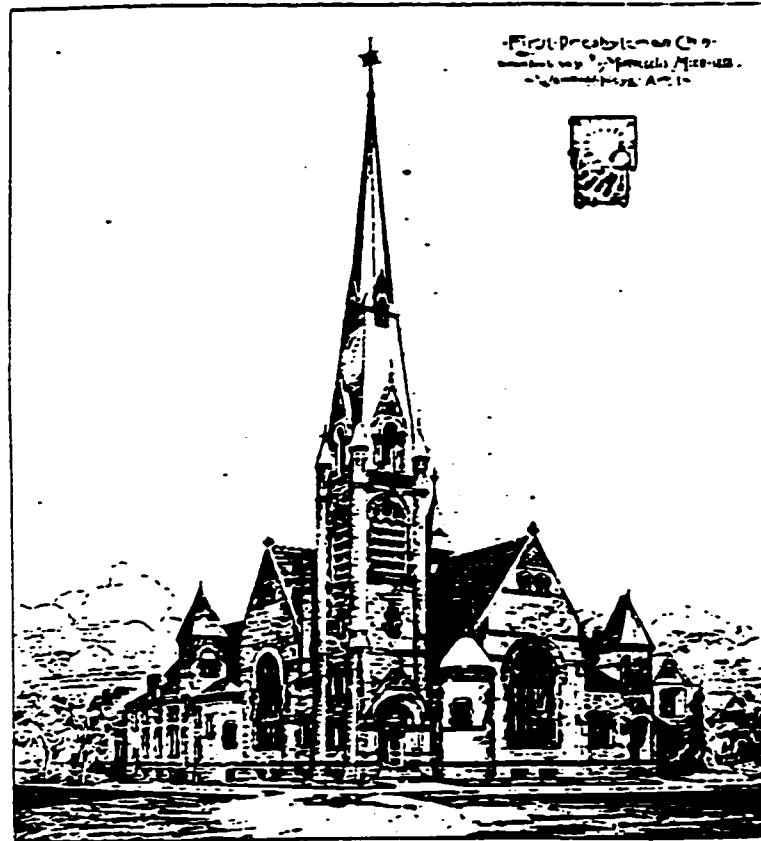
3.2 Windsor Station, the initial wing of which was designed by American architect Bruce Price and inaugurated in February 1889, was the first Montreal building to exemplify the Richardsonian Romanesque style. (NPA)



WARREN H. HAYES, Architect.  
Minneapolis, Minn.

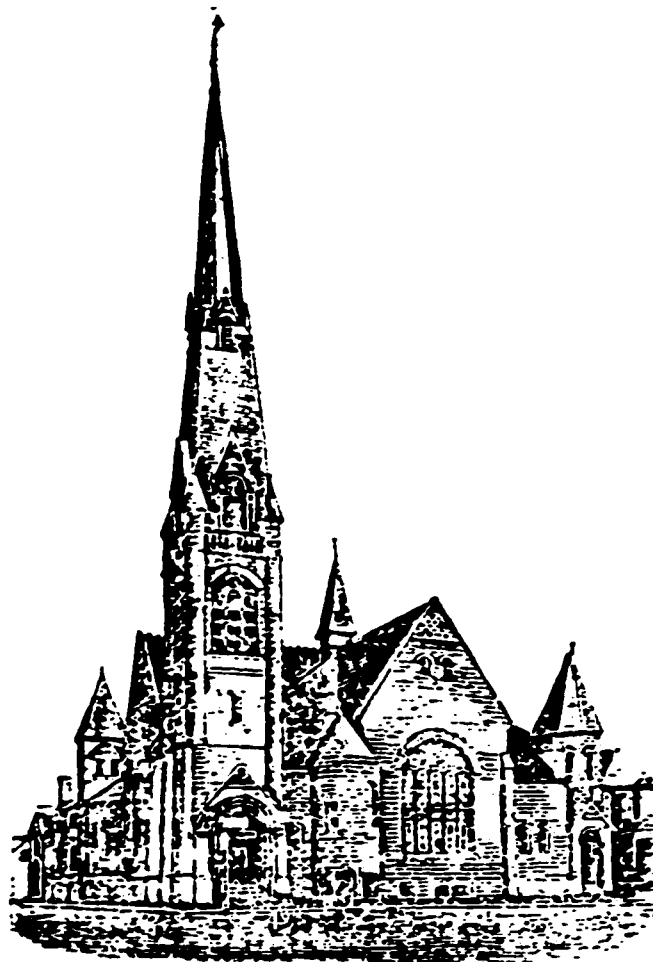
- 3.3 The churches designed by American architect Warren Hayes in the Richardsonian Romanesque manner were carefully studied by A.C. Hutchison and the Building Committee of the 1894 Erskine Church. One of the two buildings that most closely resembles the Erskine Church is the First Congregational Church (1886) in Minneapolis. (UCA, M-O, ANQM)





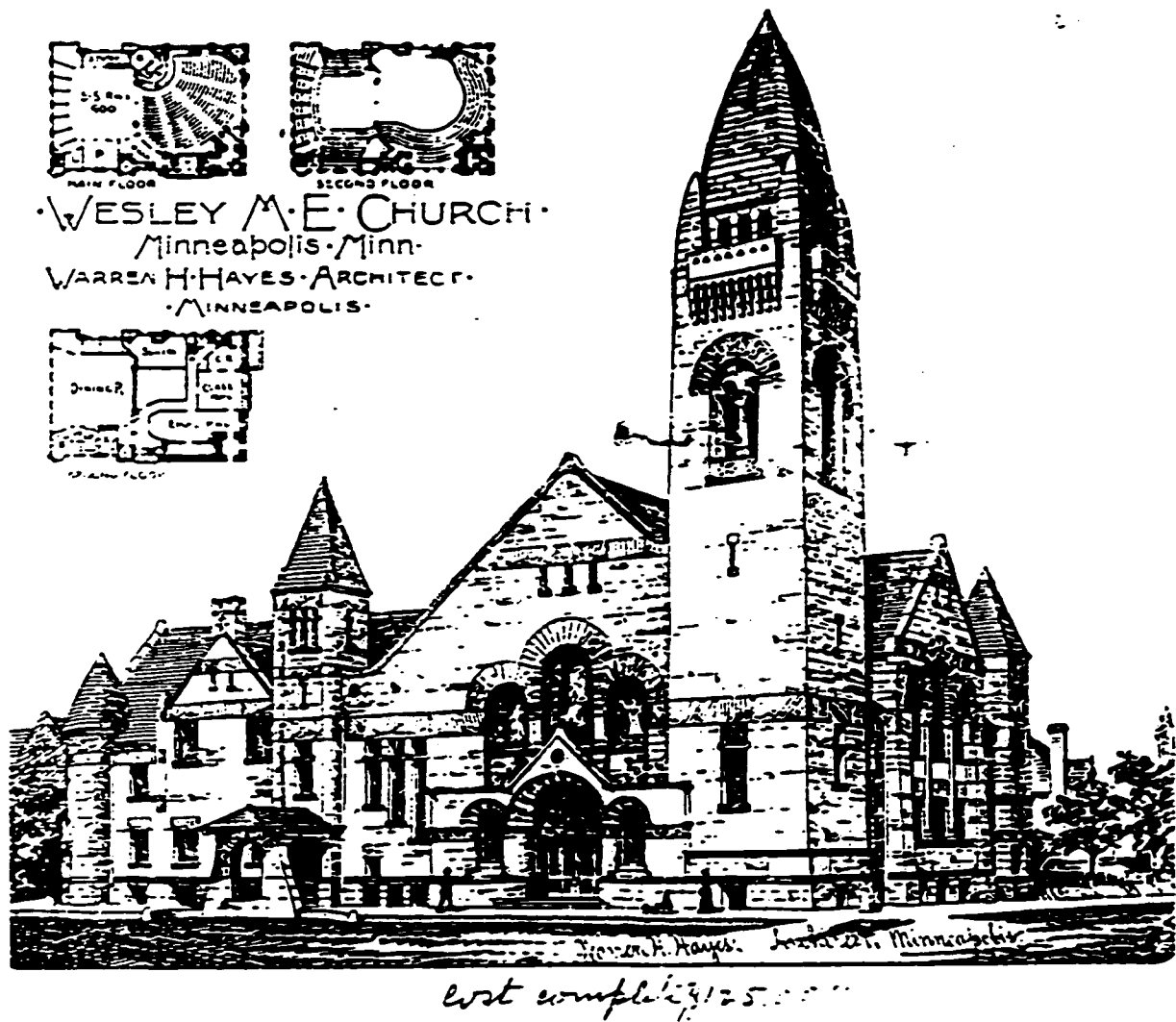
WARREN H. HAYES, Architect.  
Minneapolis, Minn.

- 3.4 The second of the two churches by Warren Hayes that closely resembles the 1894 Erskine Church is the First Presbyterian Church (1888) in Minneapolis. On the copy of this drawing in the United Church Archives in Montreal is a sketch of a tower that was probably drawn by the architect of the 1894 Erskine Church, A.C. Hutchison. (UCA, M-O, ANQM)



REV. JAMES S. BLACK, PASTOR.

- 3.5 The cover of an 1893 bulletin of the First Presbyterian Church confirms that Rev. James Black, the former pastor of the Erskine Church, was the pastor at the Minneapolis church and was thus in an excellent position to advise the Erskine's Building Committee. (UCA, M-O, ANQM)



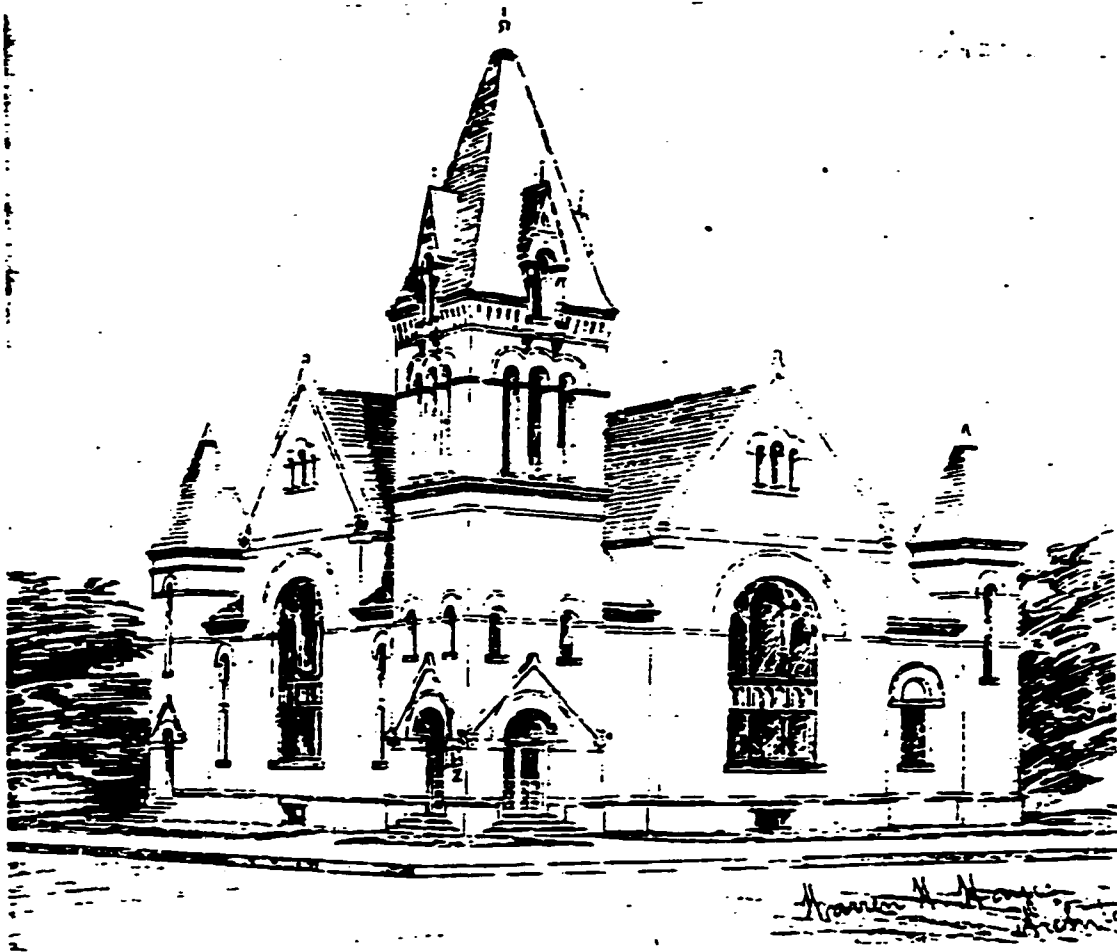
- 3.6 Another church designed by Hayes in Minneapolis, the Wesley M.E. Church, was also examined by the Building Committee of the 1894 Erskine Church. The notes regarding cost (\$125,000) are probably written by one of the members of this committee. (UCA, M-O, ANQM)



F16 27

Cost 100,000 Expense 100,000

- 3.7 The Central Presbyterian Church in St. Paul, Minnesota, also designed by Warren Hayes and completed for a cost of \$100,000, was studied by the Building Committee of the 1894 Erskine Church as well. (UCA, M-O, ANQM)



- 3.8 Saint Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Nanaimo, B.C., was designed by Warren Hayes and inaugurated the year before the 1894 Erskine Church. (UCA, University of British Columbia, drawing by Warren Hayes)

# *The United Church of Canada St. Andrew's United Church*

FITZWILLIAM STREET

NANAIMO, B.C.



1893 - 102 Years - 1995

A Celebration of Heritage Week

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

St. Andrew's - Past and Present

June, 1995

★ ★ ★

- 3.9 Saint Andrew's Presbyterian Church (now St. Andrew's United Church) in Nanaimo, B.C., celebrated its centennary in 1993. (Bulletin of Saint Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Nanaimo, B.C.)

Northminster  
=Presbyterian Church=

Baring and Thirty-fifth Streets,  
Philadelphia.



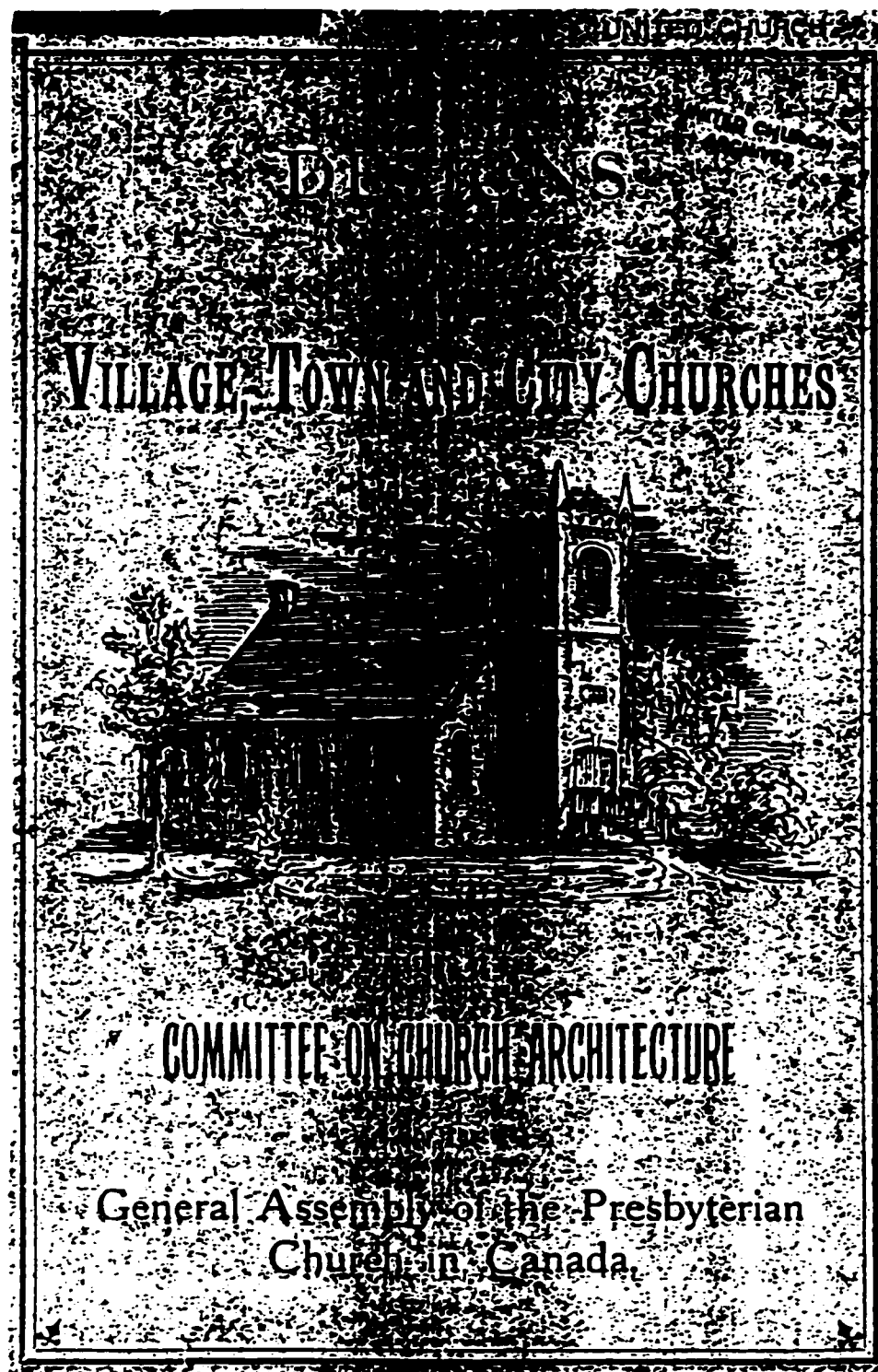
REV. ROBERT M. FULTON, D.D., PASTOR.  
3420 HAMILTON STREET.

A HEARTY WELCOME TO ALL.

USHERS WILL PROVIDE SEATS.

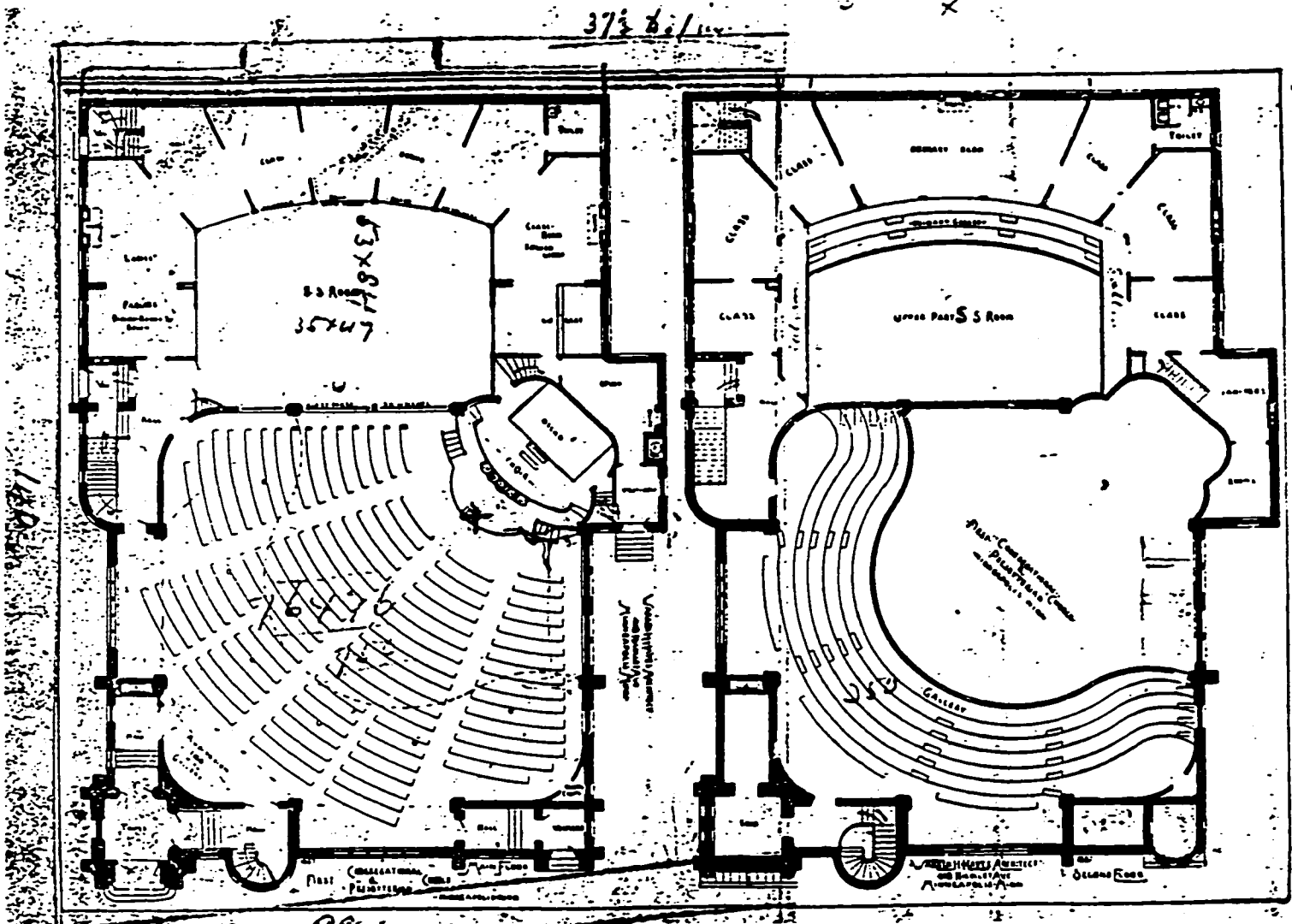
Please take this with you.

- 3.10 The Northminster Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia was also one of the proposed model churches visited by the Building Committee of the 1894 Erskine Church. (UCA, M-O, ANQM)



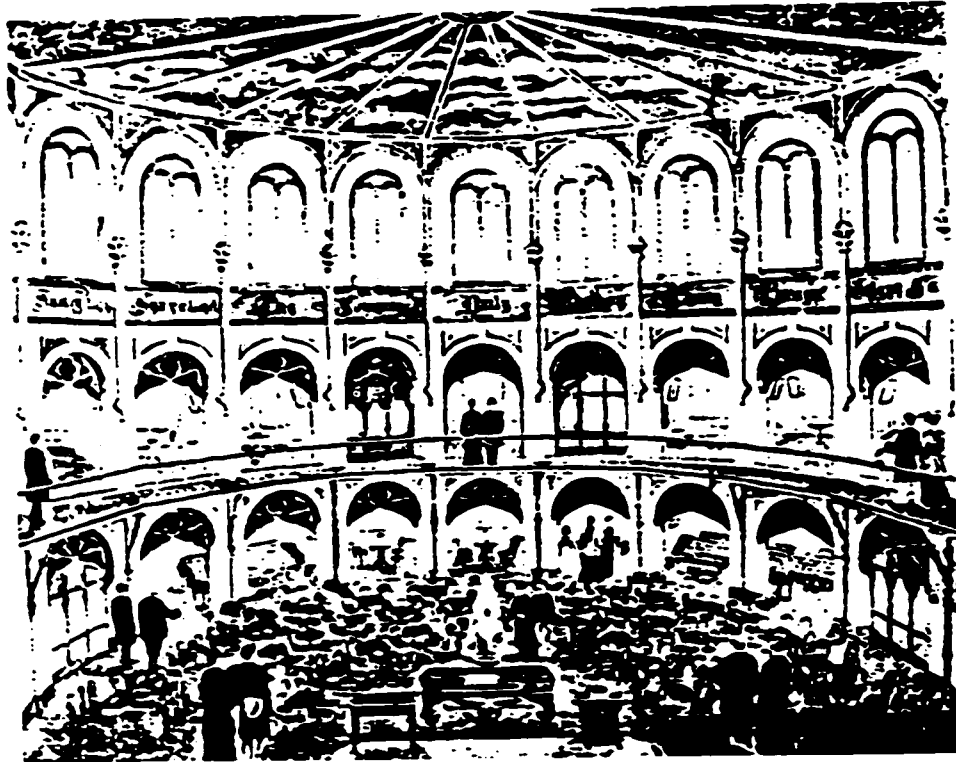
- 3.11 In 1893, the year of the laying of the cornerstone of the Erskine Church, the Committee on Church Architecture published this pamphlet of designs for village, town and city churches for the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. (UCA, M-O, ANQM)



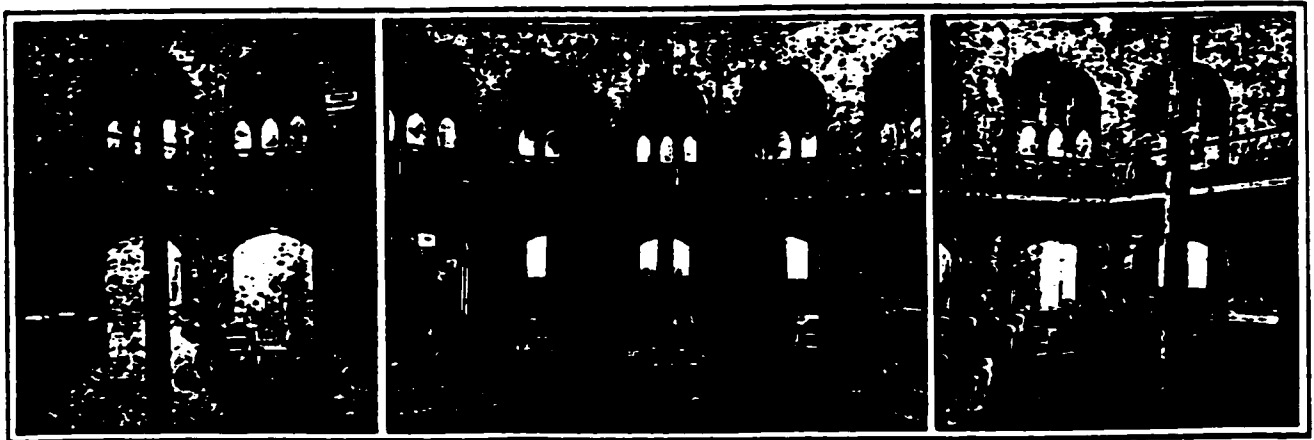
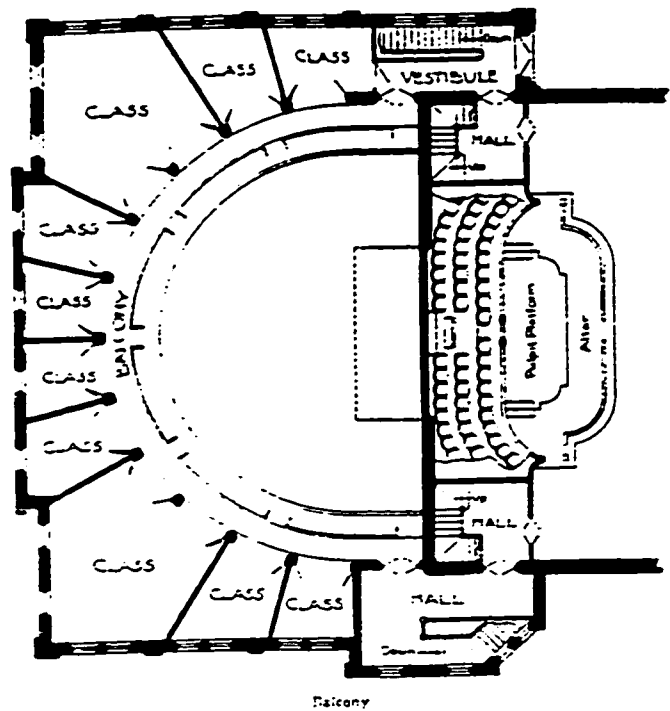
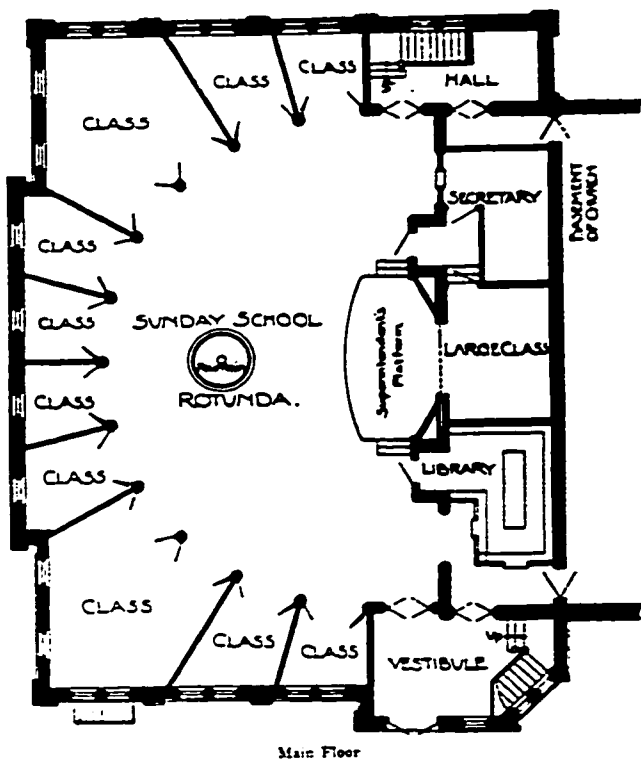


3.12 The First Congregational Church (1886) and the First Presbyterian Church (1888) in Minneapolis, both designed by Warren Hayes, possessed the same floor plan. This plan, with its diagonal axis from the corner entrance and its curved balcony, provided the model for the plan of the 1894 Erskine Church [FIG 1.20]. (UCA,M-O,ANQM)





- 3.14 The Akron Sunday School Building, conceived by Methodists Lewis Miller and Bishop John Heyl Vincent, comprised two superimposed curved tiers of cell-like classrooms which opened onto a central space where the Sunday School Superintendent gave opening and closing ceremonies. (Jeanne Halgren Kilde. "Spiritual Armories: A Social and Architectural History of Neo-Medieval Auditorium Churches in the United States, 1869-1910" Ph.D. thesis, University of Minnesota, 1991)



Interior View of the Akron Sunday School Building

3.15 The Original Sunday School Building, erected in 1868 in connection with the First M.E. Church in Akron, Ohio, was designed by George W. Kramer, Architect. It is after this model that the "Akron plan," used in the 1894 Erskine Church, was named. (Marian Lawrence. Building the Sunday School (Boston, 1911)

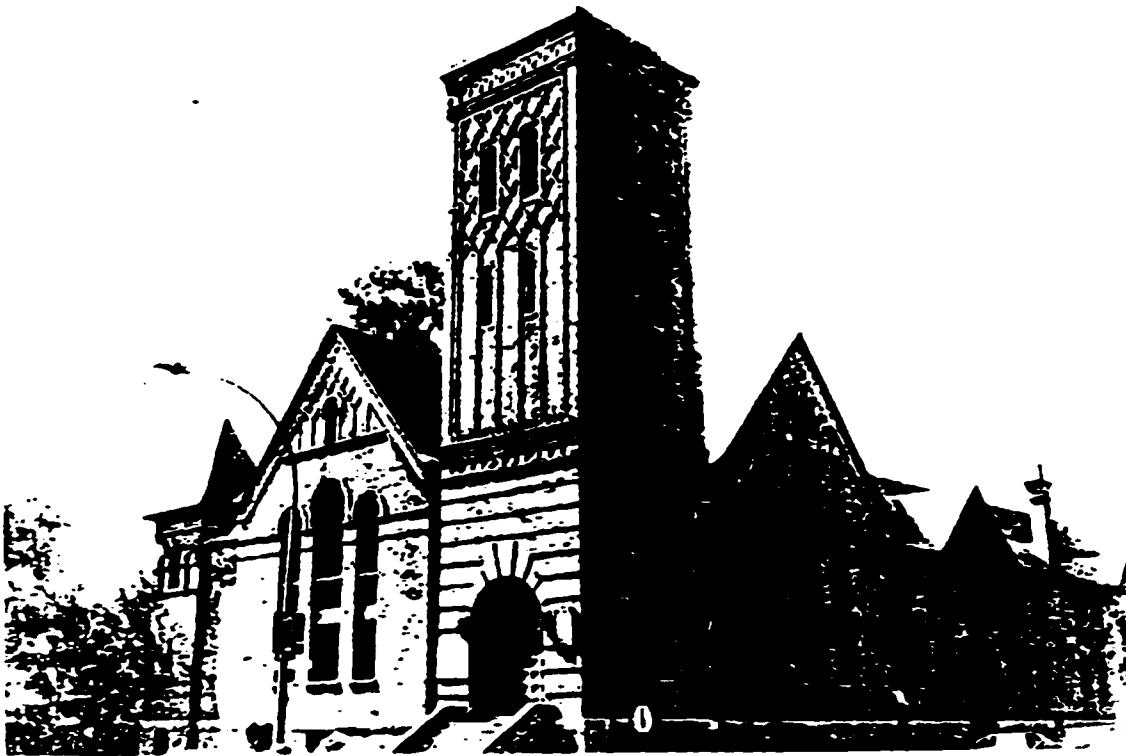


3.16 The Saint James Methodist Church (1888), located on Sainte-Catherine Street near Bleury Street in Montreal, is, along with Crescent Street Church (1873-77, Hutchison and Steele) [FIGS 4.12, 4.13] and the Erskine Church (1894, A.C. Hutchison) [FIGS 1.1-1.23], one of Montreal's most impressive Akron-plan churches. Designed by Alexander Dunlop, the Saint James Methodist (today Saint James United) Church was built by John Henry Hutchison [FIG 4.3], A.C. Hutchison's brother. (Luc d'Iberville Moreau. Lost Montreal (Montreal, 1975), p. 132)



3.17

This Methodist church on the corner of Coursol and Canning Streets was designed in 1890 by the Cleveland architect Signey Rose Badgley, a prominent designer of Akron-combination plan churches, who also designed Massey Hall in Toronto. The original design of this church featured an elaborate tower and front window. It was rebuilt more modestly after a fire. This building now houses the Black Community Centre. Badgley also built the Centennial Methodist Church, which was across the street from Saint Matthew's Church of Scotland, (Hutchison and Steele 1890) in Point St.-Charles [FIGS 4.17-4.19]. Information about Badgley from Robert Lemire, *Two Centuries of Protestant Churches in Montreal*, exhibition 1992, U-C M-O Archives. (Photo CUM *Les Eglises*. Montreal, 1981, p. 85)



- 3.18 The Taylor Presbyterian Church (1893) was designed by David Robertson Brown in accordance with a Minneapolis model. It retains its original bowled floor and sliding partition. Inaugurated one year before the Erskine Church, it is also situated on a corner site and features a prominent tower and gables. Located at 1640 Papineau Street, this building now houses the Temple du Réveil. (CUM. Les Églises (Montreal, 1981), p. 451)

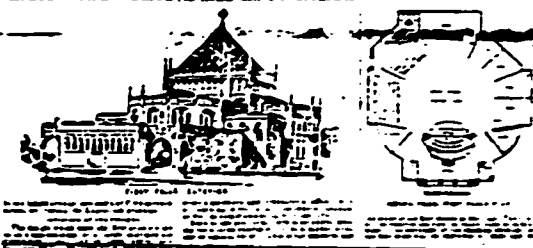
## FOR SUNDAY-SCHOOLS.

PLANS SELECTED FOR THE EXHIBIT  
TO BE ERECTED

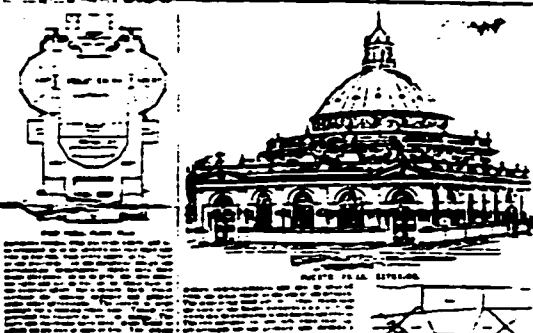
The plans for the erection of Sunday-school buildings for the 1893 World Columbian Exhibition have been selected by the committee on the subject. The plans were submitted by a large number of architects and engineers, and the committee has chosen the most suitable and economical designs. The buildings are to be erected on the grounds of the exhibition, and will be used for the purpose of teaching the children of the world the principles of Christianity. The plans are as follows:



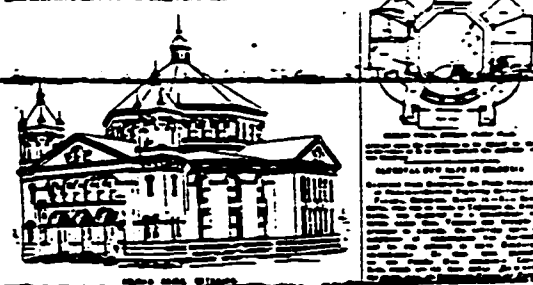
FIRST FLOOR PLAN



SECOND FLOOR PLAN



THIRD FLOOR PLAN



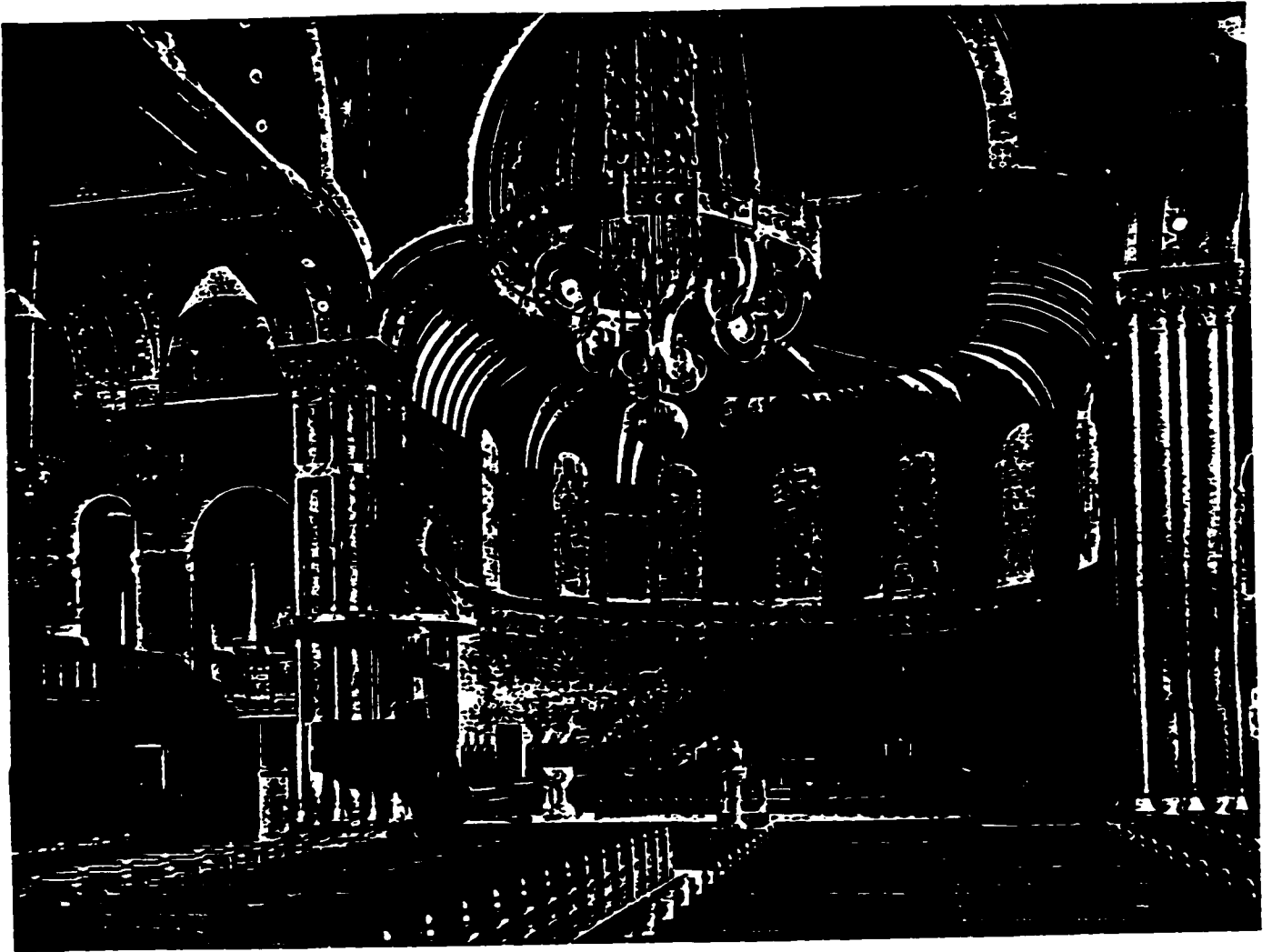
FOURTH FLOOR PLAN

- 3.19 In 1893, The Chicago Daily Tribune published the results of a competition for plans of Sunday Schools that were to be erected as part of the 1893 World Columbian Exhibition. (UCA,M-O,ANQM)





3.20 The interior of Warren Hayes's First Congregational Church, which in its exterior rendering [FIG 3.3] and plan [FIG 3.12] provided a model for the 1894 Erskine Church, was considerably simpler in its design than the interior of the Montreal Church [FIG 1.16-1.19] due to the lack of arches and curves on its ceiling. The First Congregational Church, however, features an octagonal dome in the centre, and sliding doors to the left of the organ. (First Congregational Church Archives, Minneapolis)



INTERIOR OF TRINITY CHURCH, BOSTON.

- 3.21 The interior of H.H. Richardson's Trinity Church (1873-77) in Boston, which is alive with energy due to its boundless arches, is closer in spirit to the interior of the 1894 Erskine Church, despite the differences in plan and scale [FIGS 1.16-1.19]. (Marianna Griswold Van Rensselaer. Henry Hobson Richardson and His Works (New York, 1969), n.p.)

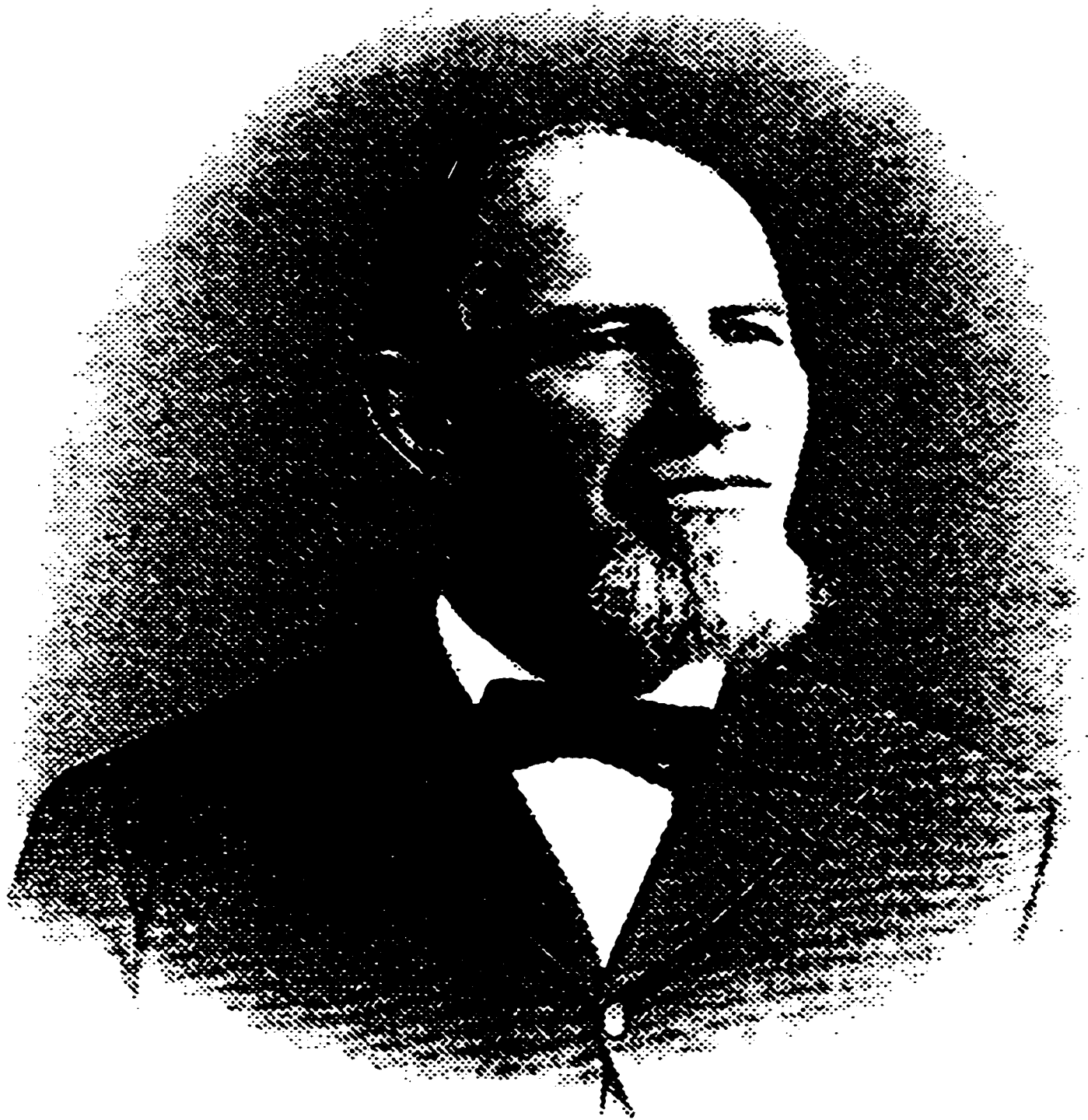


3.22 Montreal architect Percy Nobbs compared the interior of the Erskine Church [FIGS 1.16-1.22] to that of the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul. This engraving by G. Fossati dates to around 1850, and thus had probably been published in journals and books available in North America. (Carel J. Du Ry. *Art of Islam* (New York, 1970), p. 164)

**4. ALEXANDER C. HUTCHISON, THE ARCHITECT  
OF THE 1894 ERSKINE CHURCH, AND SELECTED WORKS**



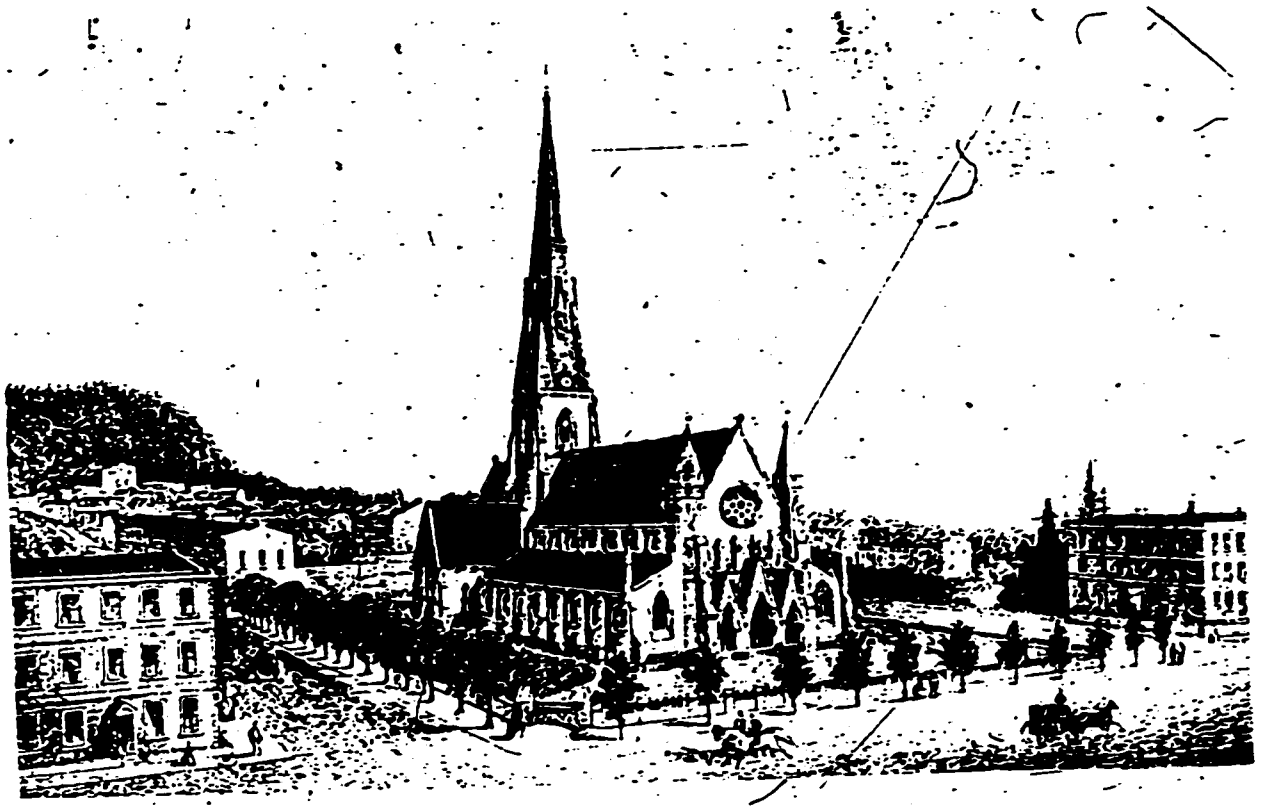
- 4.1 William and Margaret Hutchison, who came to Montreal from Ayrshire, Scotland, had several children, seven of whom survived to adulthood. At least two of the sons, Alexander Cowper (second from the right) [FIG 4.2] and John Henry (second from the left) [FIG 4.3], learned their father's trade of stone-cutting as his apprentices when they were teenagers. (NPA)



4.2 Alexander Cowper Hutchison (1838-1922), a staunch Presbyterian, was the architect of the 1894 Erskine Church and many other important buildings. (Spicilèges Massicotte, BNQM)



4.3 John Henry Hutchison (1842-1925), A.C. Hutchison's brother, was the contractor for the 1894 Erskine Church and many other important buildings. (NPA, c.1890)



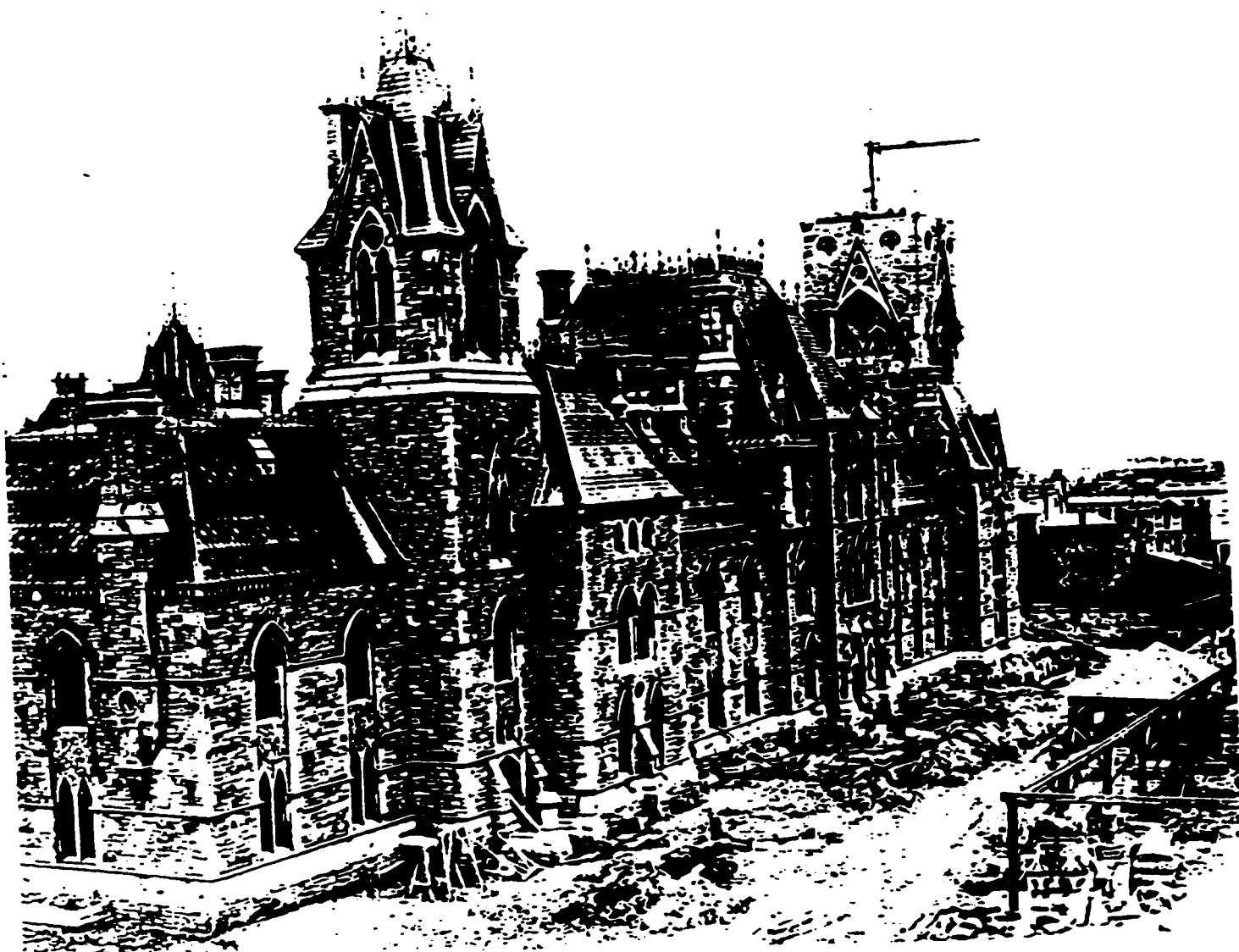
CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL, MONTREAL

- 4.4 A.C. Hutchison supervised the stonework of Christ Church Cathedral (1858) in Montreal. (Spicilèges Massicotte, BNQM)





4.5 In addition to supervising its stonework, A.C. Hutchison is responsible for carving the foliate capitals of Christ Church Cathedral (1858). (NPA)



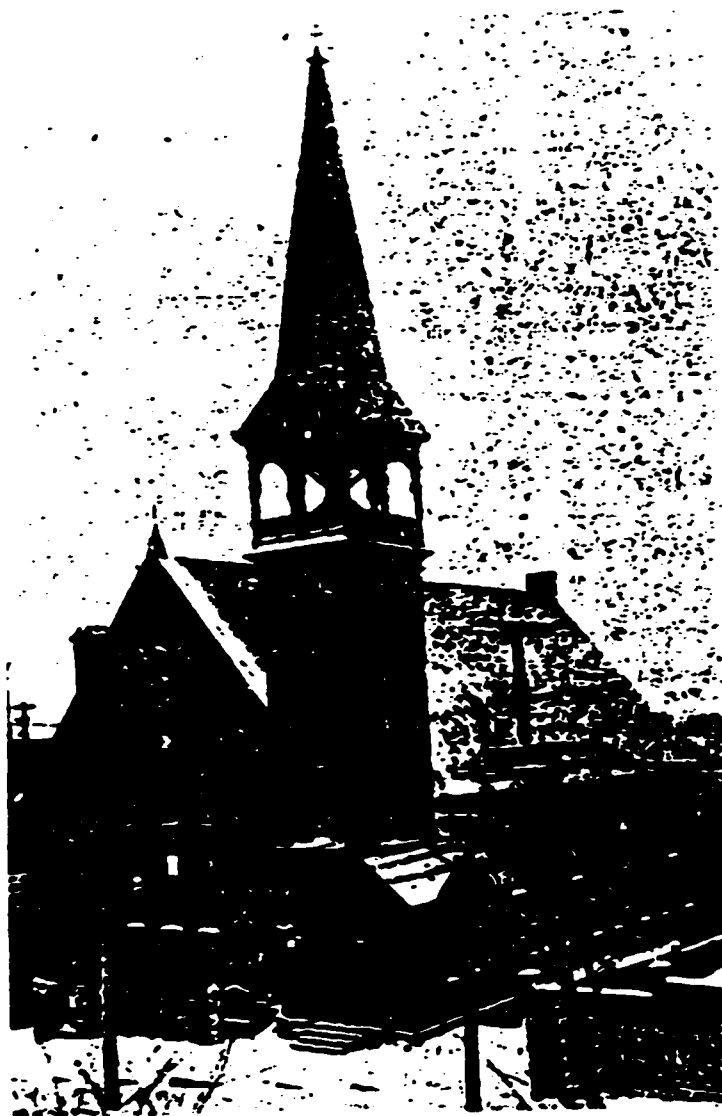
- 4.6 After supervising the stonework on Christ Church Cathedral, A.C. Hutchison moved to Ottawa to oversee the stonework of the East Block of the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa. He returned to Montreal in the early 1860s and launched his professional career as an architect. (NPA)



4.7 The construction of the American Presbyterian Church (1865), once located on Dorchester Street [FIG 2.8] (now René-Lévesque Boulevard), was supervised by A.C. Hutchison. The congregation of this church united with the Erskine Church in 1934 to form the Erskine and American United Church. (NPA)



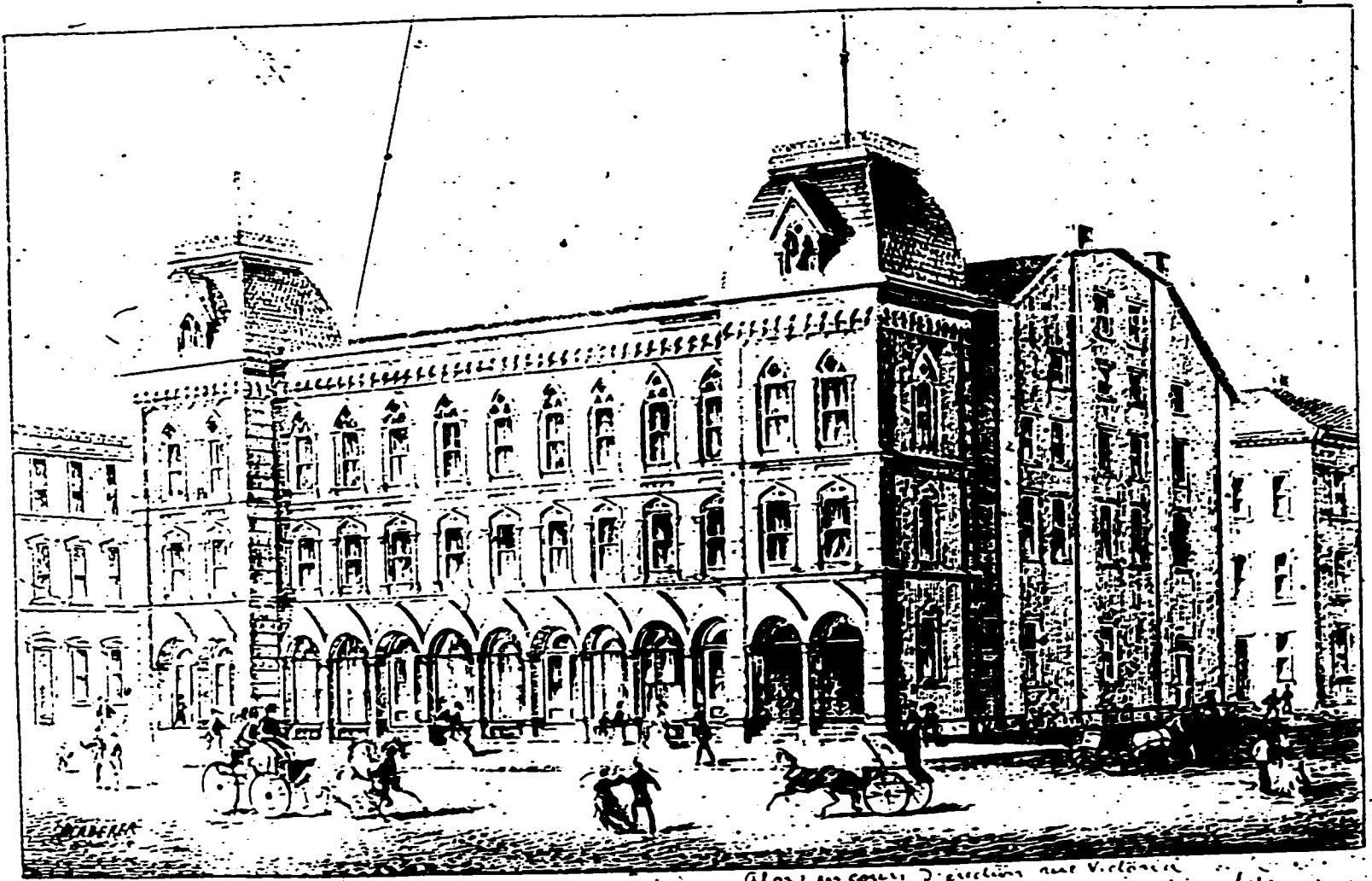
4.8 The interior of the American Presbyterian Church [FIG 4.7], the construction of which was supervised by A.C. Hutchison, was simple and featured a prominent organ. (NPA)



- 4.9 A.C. Hutchison and A.D. Steele designed the Western Congregational Church (1876). This simple brick building of "round Gothic" style, was located on Guy Street. (Spicilèges Massicotte, BNQM)



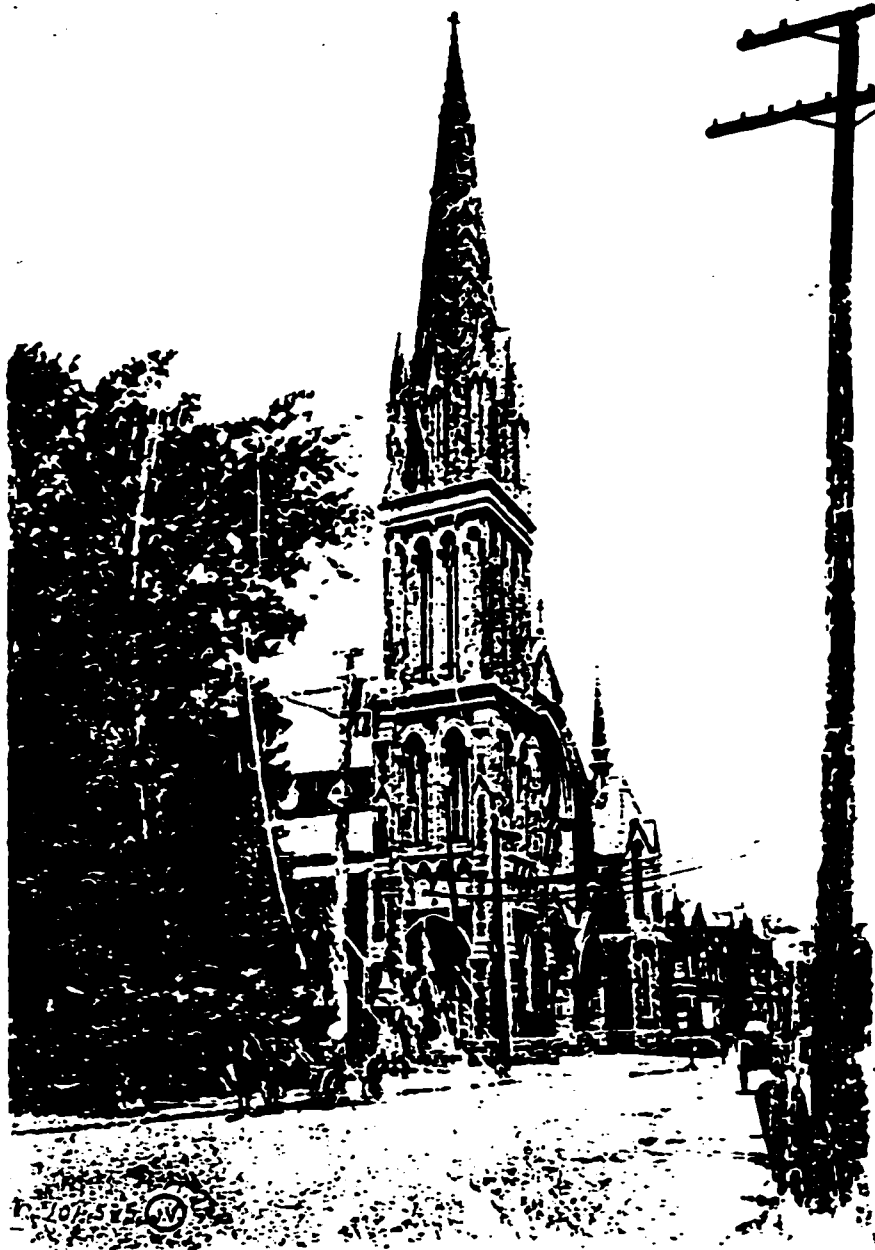
4.10 The Y.M.C.A. (Young Men's Christian Association) building on Victoria Square was the first custom-designed Y.M.C.A. in North America. Completed in the early 1870s, it was one of A.C. Hutchison's early architectural projects; he worked as the construction architect in collaboration with his future partner, Alexander Denton Steele, who was responsible for the design. (Photo by A. Henderson, NPA)



C J H 1875

Alors en cours d'exécution aux Victoria  
MONTREAL - THE VICTORIA OPERA HOUSE  
fut le nom de Académie de musique que lui fut donné.

- 4.11 A.C. Hutchison was the supervising architect for the Victoria Opera House (1875), which was the home of the Philharmonic Society of Montreal. Known as the Académie de musique, it possessed a lavishly decorated auditorium and provided a comfortable venue for musical entertainment. (Canadian Illustrated News, 16 January 1875)

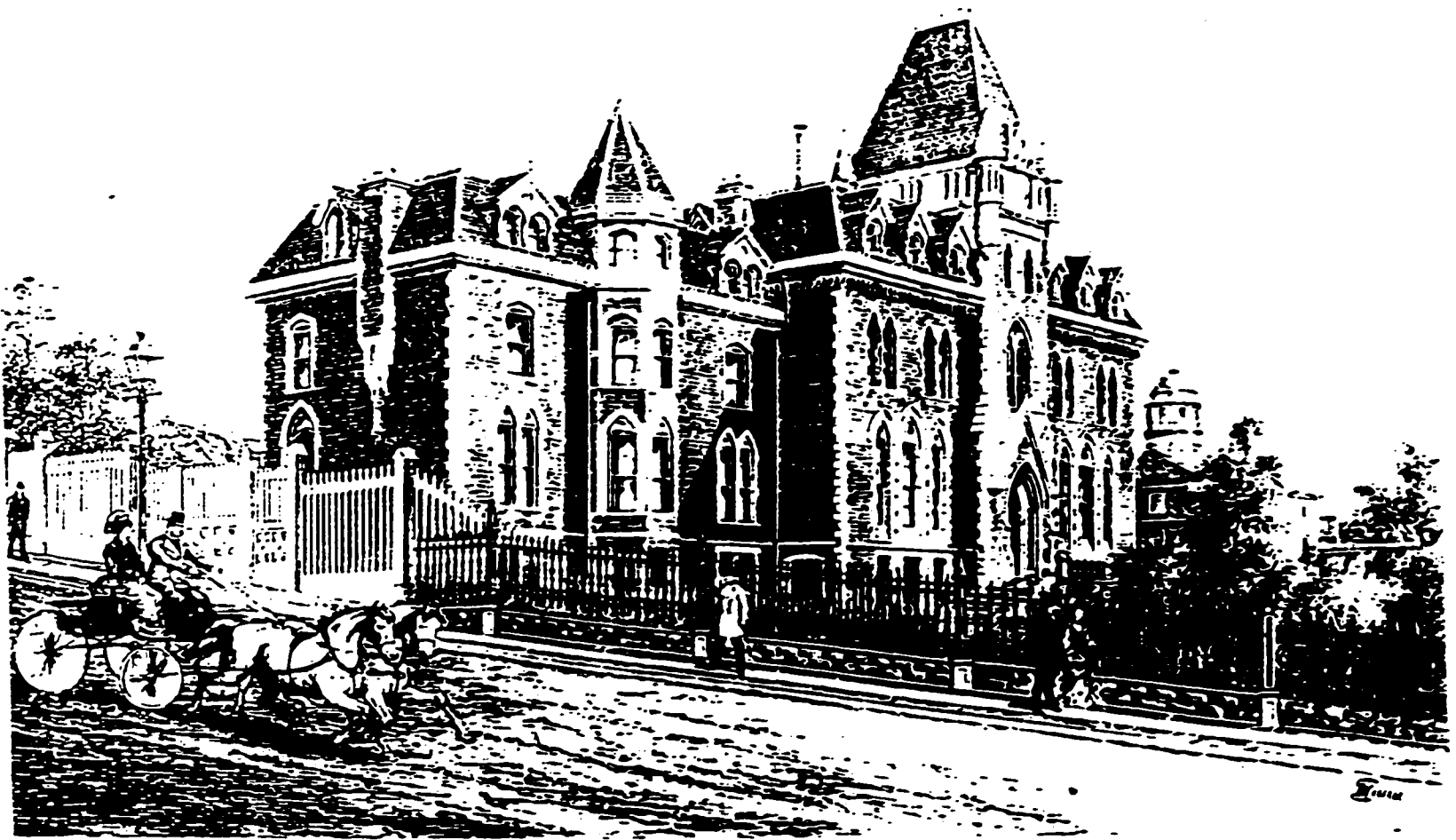


4.12 The Crescent Street Presbyterian Church (1873-77), located at the northeast corner of Crescent Street and Dorchester Street (today René-Lévesque Boulevard) [FIG 2.6], was designed by A.C. Hutchison and A.D. Steele. (NPA)





4.13 The Crescent Street Church (1873-77) was demolished in the 1940s following a fire. (Photothèque, Ville de Montréal)



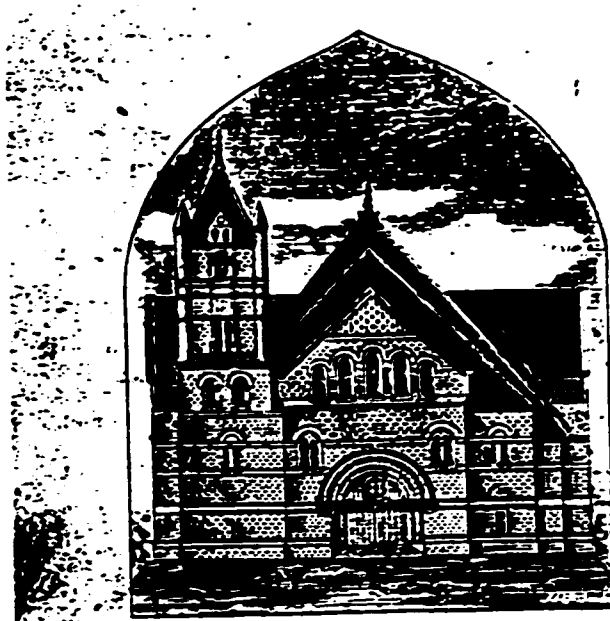
4.14 The original Presbyterian College on McTavish Street, also by A.C. Hutchison, provided a venue for Hutchison's lectures on religious architecture. (Canadian Illustrated News, 8 January 1876)



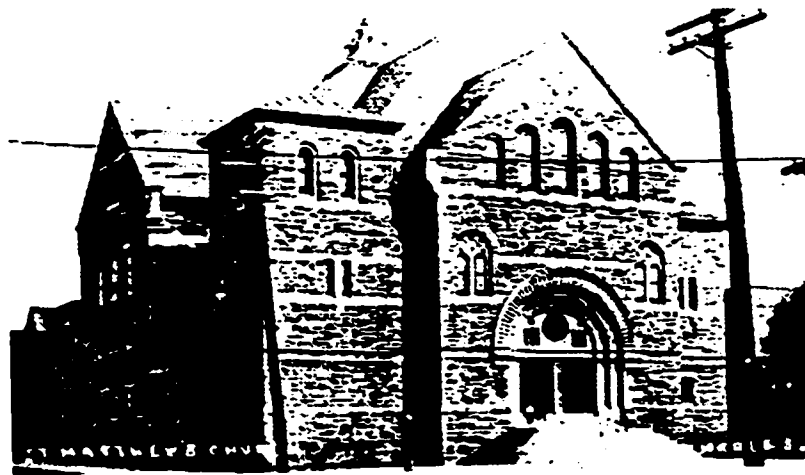
4.15 The Peter Redpath Museum (1880-1882) at McGill University was designed by A.C. Hutchison and constructed by J.H. Hutchison. To the left is the original Presbyterian College [FIG 4.14], with its extension in the foreground. (NPA)



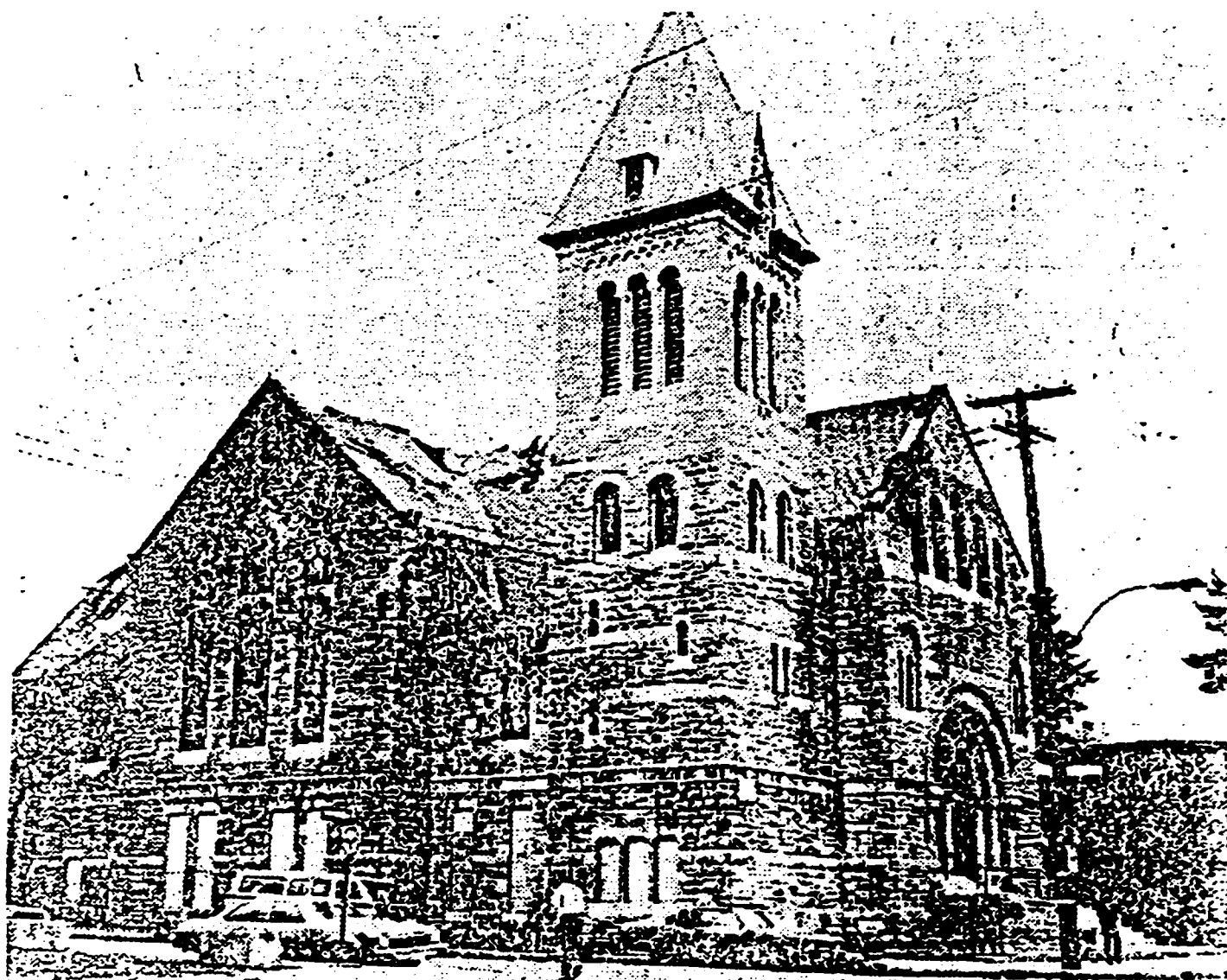
4.16 The Montreal ice palaces of the 1880s were designed by A.C. Hutchison and constructed by J.H. Hutchison. (NPA)



*H. Cooper*



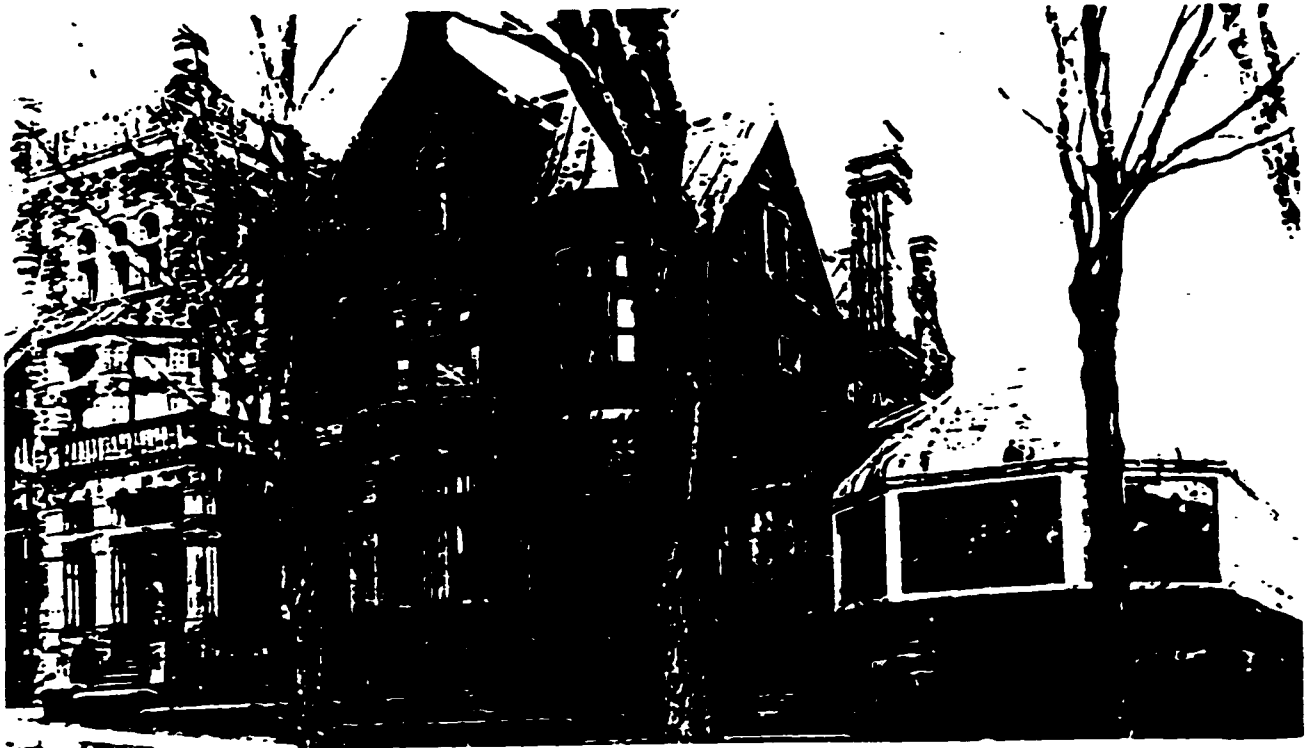
- 4.17 (above) The 1890 design for Saint Matthew's Church of Scotland, by Hutchison and Steele, was similar, in its Richardsonian Romanesque massing and detailing, to Hutchison's 1894 Erskine Church. (Saint Matthew's Church Archives)
- 4.18 (below) Located in Montreal's Pointe-Saint-Charles, Saint Matthew's Church was built without the top portion of its tower due to lack of sufficient funds. It cost \$40,000, whereas the Erskine Church cost \$100,000. (Jubilee of St. Matthew's Sabbath School, 1858-1908, (Montreal, March 1908, p. 3)



Staff photo by Allan Leishman

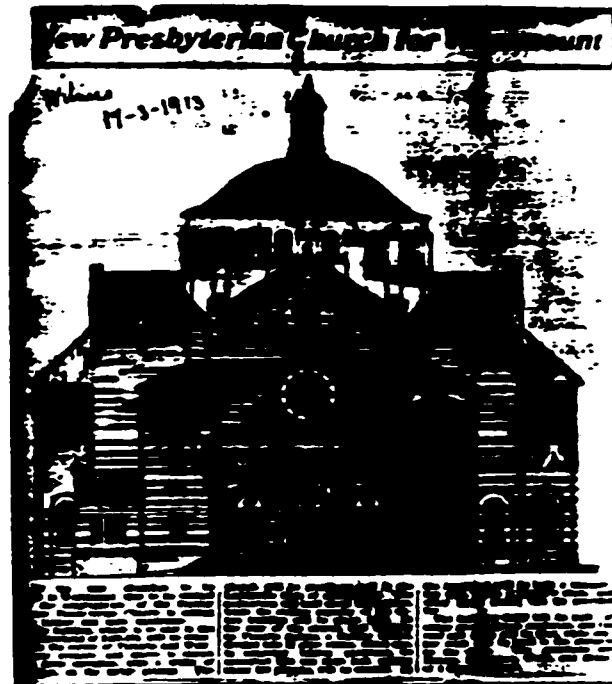
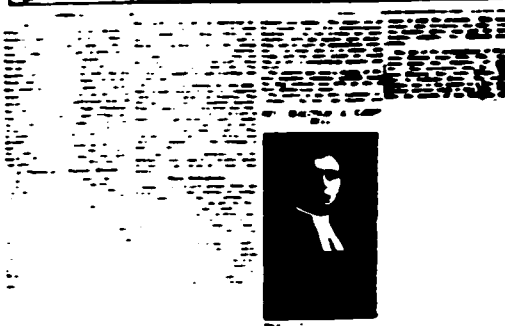
St. Matthew's Presbyterian Church in Point St. Charles which was destroyed by fire last month.

- 4.19 In the 1920s, the tower of Saint Matthew's Church was completed, but it was not built according to Hutchison's design. The church was destroyed by fire in 1977. (The Montreal Star, 1977)



4.20 The 1893 residence that Hutchison designed for Robert Reid, located close to the 1894 Erskine Church in Montreal's Square Mile, featured delicate carving by sculptor Henry Beaumont. (François Rémillard and Brian Merrett. Les demeures bourgeoises de Montréal: Le mille carré doré (Montreal, 1986), p. 57)

== MONTREAL'S == No. 1: The First  
NEW CHURCHES Presbyterian  
Church



- 4.21 (left) The First Presbyterian Church, located at the corner of Prince Arthur and Jeanne-Mance Streets and designed by Hutchison, Wood and Miller, was inaugurated in 1910. It possessed a gymnasium. (Today, this building houses condominiums.) (Montreal Standard, 28 August 1913)
- 4.22 (right) The Stanley Street Presbyterian Church moved to the corner of Victoria Avenue and Westmount Boulevard, Westmount, and its new building, designed by Hutchison and Wood, was inaugurated in 1913. (Montreal Daily Witness, 17 March 1913)