

Dawson City, Yukon
St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church
Government Reserve

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church was built in 1901 by Robert Moncrieff, an experienced contractor, under the direction of Rev. Dr. Andrew S. Grant, a prominent figure in Dawson's and the Yukon's early development, to designs by W.P. Skillings, architect. Northern climatic conditions have not been kind to the building as far as preservation is concerned. When Parks Canada acquired the building in 1977, ground upheavals had caused massive shifting and breakage of structural members. The building has been stabilized with interior and exterior bracing to prevent its collapse. The Environment Canada Parks Service is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 88-12.

Reason for Designation

St. Andrew's Church was designated Recognized because of its historical associations and its architectural significance.

The construction of St. Andrew's Church and Manse is associated with the development of Dawson as a territorial capital through the social and religious services to the community that they housed. St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church and Manse are among the best examples of structures that illustrate Dawson's rapid metamorphosis from a boisterous mining camp in the 1897-98 to a boom town of 1898-99 into a prosperous and respectable community by 1901.

The church is a late example of the High Victorian Gothic architecture interpreted in wood. Despite the building's deformation, good craftsmanship is evident in the knowledgeable handling of timber frame construction techniques and in the handling of materials.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage value of St. Andrew's Church resides in its exterior massing, its construction, material and craftsmanship, its original interior layout and material, and in its historical relationship to St. Andrew's Manse.

The nave, transepts and the chancel are clearly expressed in the massing of the church. The asymmetrical position of the tower gives an impression of irregular massing. The original proportions of the exterior form of the building should be maintained.

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St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church (Continued)

A variety of exterior details such as the combined use of shingles and clapboard, the tower capped by a pyramidal slightly bell-cast roof, the nave's stained-glass Gothic window, the pointed arches of the doorway and tower ventilators, the buttress panels at the tower's corners, and the diamond-shaped panes in the doors, are characteristic of the High Victorian spirit and these elements should be preserved in planned improvements.

A use for the building would justify a restoration and/or rehabilitation. Only uses such as a religious gathering place, community hall or a theater, which would respect the interior layout should be considered. The wide open space of the main sanctuary made possible by the use of composite roof framing consisting of heavy principal rafters held in place by metal tie rods, with transepts and a front alcove speaks evocatively of the building's history. Every opportunity should be taken to protect and enhance this space and surviving interior finishes such as the pressed metal paneling, wainscoting, and moldings.

The grounds of the religious precinct should be landscaped to reinforce the original relationship of the Church to the Manse. This work should be done in consultation with a conservation landscape architect.

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