

Consolidation: 1915-1945

The outbreak of war in 1914 slowed church construction to a virtual standstill. Many parishes shelved plans to build and it was not until the early 1920s that a revival of economic conditions allowed congregations to carry on where they had left off. As if to make up for lost time, Winnipeggers especially built churches on a scale which rivalled the most prosperous years before 1914.

For Anglicans, the high-point of the decade was the construction of St. John's Cathedral, the centre of the Anglican church in western Canada. Originally it had been hoped by the congregation that the church of 1862, closed for repairs since 1912, could be restored (see Figure 40). When this proved impossible Archbishop Matheson spearheaded a campaign to build a new cathedral in honour of his predecessor Robert Machray.²⁶ Architects Gilbert Parfitt and Edgar Prain produced a new stone church, set amidst the historic cemetery and dominated by a monumental tower. Openly reminiscent of an English parish church, the design reflected the architectural conservatism of the decade as well as the continuing links between Canadian Anglicans and the English Church (Figure 68).

Similar ideas lie behind another architectural achievement of the 1920s in Winnipeg, the Church of All Saints. Located at the corner of Osborne Street and Broadway, the parish was forced to rebuild when its original wooden building (1883) (Figure 69) by Charles Barber had to be moved to allow the extension of Osborne Street north to Memorial Boulevard. Again the architect, in this case Northwood and Chivers, looked to the English vernacular tradition, producing a smoothly polished design carried out in Manitoba limestone (Figure 70).



Figure 68.
St. John's Cathedral, Winnipeg, 1926.



Figure 69.
Charles Barber's All Saints, Winnipeg of 1883.
(PAM)



Figure 70.
Present All Saints, Winnipeg, 1926-27. (PAM)

Few parishes had the resources or the need for churches on so grand a scale as All Saints or St. John's. A popular alternative to limestone Gothic in the 1920s was a half-timbered wood and stucco style, equally English in origin, but more suitable to the needs of an ordinary parish. In 1922 Gilbert Parfitt produced one of the best examples of this picturesque style with St. Martin-in-the-Fields Church in West Kildonan (Figure 71). There are many others including St. Thomas, Weston, by W.P. Bellhouse (1923), St. Patrick's and St. Jude's, Valour Road (1926) and the Church of the Advent, Pine Falls (1937) (Figure 72). This last church is one of the few built during the depression of the 1930s.

Not all churches follow a general pattern, and one of the most unusual churches dating from the inter-war years is St. Michael's and All Angels built in Fort Rouge, Winnipeg in 1920 (Figure 73). Alone among Anglican church architects of the period, H.W. Greene took as his departure point the Romanesque churches of Central and Northern Italy. The interior of the church, with a long barrel vault, apse, supporting arches and side aisles is unique in the province (Figure 74). The church resonates with the spirit of medieval Christianity, a feeling intensified by the rough cut limestone walls and tower. Another church of the early 1920s is St. James, Collegiate Street (Figure 75). Its Gothic style is more conventional than St. Michael's and All Angels, but it is equally interesting in its spatial effects, and particularly in the construction of its wooden roof with high clerestory windows.

By the 1920s most of southern Manitoba had been settled, but there remained pockets where the Anglican church had yet to build churches, or indeed to establish a parish. For instance two wood-frame churches were built on the eastern slopes of Riding Mountain in the 1920s: Holy Trinity, Makinak (1925) and St. Michael's and All Angels, McCreary (1929-30). At Whytewold on the western shore of Lake Winnipeg, the development of summer communities necessitated the construction of a small parish church for the congregation of All Saints (Figure 76).



Figure 71.
St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Winnipeg, 1922. (PAM)



Figure 72.
Church of the Advent, Pine Falls, 1937. (PAM)



Figure 73.

St. Michael's and All Angels, Winnipeg, 1920.



Figure 74.

Interior, St. Michael's and All Angels, Winnipeg.



Figure 75.
St. James, Winnipeg, 1922.



Figure 76.
All Saints, Whytefold, 1922.

The 1920s also saw development of a more expansive kind. To the north and west of the Interlake region, the Swan River Valley was the scene of pioneering settlement in the 1920s and an extraordinary episode in the history of the church: the formation of the Bishop's Messengers. Established by the Bishop of Brandon, the Bishop's Messengers were a group of women catechists who travelled the district working among the population and establishing parishes. St. Aldhelm's, Birch River (1936) (Figure 77) was the first church built under the auspices of the Bishop's Messengers themselves, but many churches in the area were constructed during these years. Without exception these wood frame structures all follow the standard plan developed a generation earlier, but the last church built in the area, St. James, Swan River was a departure: white painted clapboard on a wood frame, it features a cruciform plan (Figure 78).



Figure 77.
St. Aldhelm's, Birch River, 1936.

Figure 78.
St. James, Swan River, 1941.