



ROBERTSON-WESLEY UNITED CHURCH

10203 - 123 STREET NW

DESCRIPTION OF HISTORICAL PLACE

Robertson-Wesley United Church, is an impressive landmark in what is now known as the Wîhk-wêntôwin neighbourhood. As it is situated on a prominent corner location at the intersection of 123 Street and 102 Avenue, it is highly visible from the 124 Street commercial area to the west. Clad in red brick with contrasting stone trim, it is an excellent example of Gothic Revival design with later additions that complement the original structure. The designation includes both the original church building and the later Memorial Chapel and Hall.

HERITAGE VALUE

Robertson-Wesley United Church is significant as a symbol of Edmonton's prominent social and cultural institutions, for its architectural value as an example of Gothic Revival ecclesiastical design, and for its association with David S. McIlroy and George Heath McDonald.

Robertson-Wesley United Church symbolizes the social and cultural atmosphere of Edmonton during the pre-WWI period and the persistence of religious organizations rooted in the city's earliest development. Originally constructed as Robertson Presbyterian Church for a congregation founded in 1909, it became a United Church congregation with Church Union in 1925. In 1971, it merged with Wesley United Church, originally a Methodist congregation, that has been active in the West End since 1907. The monumental scale and high style of the church reflected the wealth and influence of the original congregation, as well as their community spirit and optimism for further development of Edmonton's original 'West End'.

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The later addition of the Memorial Chapel and Hall started in 1950 and dedicated in 1955, commemorating those who lost their lives in both WWI and WWII.

Completed in 1914, the church is an excellent example of the Gothic Revival style. Among its most distinctive features are the contrasting colours of the building materials, used to articulate the massing of the building, and the extensive collection of significant stained glass windows by prominent designers, including William O'Neil of Vancouver and Robert McCausland of Toronto. When the congregations were united in 1971, the memorial windows from Wesley United were relocated to this church. The interior of the church is based on a congregational style plan with a U-shaped balcony and vaulted ceiling. The Memorial Chapel and Hall were designed to complement the original style of the church in their scale and detailing, reflecting a commitment to the continuation of the traditional appearance of the complex.





Robertson-Wesley United Church was designed by architect D.S. McIlroy of Calgary, who was responsible for a number of Gothic Revival style churches in Alberta, including the First Baptist Church (1911-12) in Calgary and St. Paul's Presbyterian (1930) in Banff. The Memorial Hall and Chapel were designed by G.H. McDonald (1883-1961), a prominent local architect responsible for, among numerous other commissions, St. Joseph's Auxiliary Hospital (1948) and the Federal Building (1955).

CHARACTER DEFINING ELEMENTS

The character defining elements of the Robertson-Wesley United Church include:

EXTERIOR:

- + prominent corner location in a residential setting and proximity to the 124 Street commercial area;
- + ecclesiastical form, scale and massing, expressed in the front gable roof with hip at the rear, soaring tower, complex articulated form, and vertical emphasis;
- + masonry construction, including Redcliff pressed brick façade with complex, contrasting stone trim of Chicago limestone and Pembina stone dressings;
- + Gothic Revival style elements such as the asymmetrical front (south) façade, square corner bell tower with octagonal spire, contrasting colours and textures of brick and stone, main entry arch, vertical buttress piers, turrets, central rooftop monitor vent, and metal finials and crockets;
- + additional exterior features such as the oak entrance doors on the west façade with stairs from the street level, stone plinth, and other details in sheet metal; and

- + fenestration with large pointed arch stained glass window assemblies with sandstone tracery on the south, east, and west façades, a collection of significant stained glass windows, an array of single and double-assembly wood-framed windows with wood tracery and stained glass.

INTERIOR:

- + the arrangement of interior spaces, including a vestibule at the main entrance, leading into a sanctuary with a U-shaped balcony, unobstructed by pillars, on three sides;
- + aspe with altar, choir loft, and organ pipes;
- + curved banks of wooden pews on the main floor and balcony;
- + rectangular nave with barrel-vaulted ceiling;
- + wall cladding including dark quarter-oak panels and beams;
- + large central bronze chandelier;
- + an extensive number of early stained glass windows, including memorial stained glass; and
- + Gabriel Kney pipe organ, installed in 1979.

Robertson-Wesley Memorial Chapel and Hall:

- + brick and stone façade, with stone trim around structural openings;
- + four pointed arch wood windows with tracery and stained glass on the south façade, central stained glass window on the Chapel west façade, and wooden-sash windows on the Hall; and
- + three brick pilasters with caps on the south façade of the Chapel, stone plinth and nameplate over the entrance to the Hall.

Designated as a Municipal Historic Resource through Bylaw 13761 in July 2004.

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