

Friends of Historic Kildonan Church

Kildonan Presbyterian Church was designated a Provincial Heritage Site on November 22, 1993 and listed as a Grade 1 Heritage Building by the City of Winnipeg on January 5, 1994.

After two public meetings held at Kildonan Community Church in the spring of 2011, a group of people interested in the restoration of the old church formed a committee known as the Friends of Historic Kildonan Church. Their mandate is to organize and plan for the restoration of Kildonan Presbyterian Church.

An initial stabilization of the building must occur before the restoration can be initiated. This will involve repairs to the roof, walls and windows in order to waterproof the structure. An engineering firm has estimated that these repairs will cost approximately \$50,000.

The members of the committee have been working diligently in order to plan for the initial repairs to be completed by the end of the summer of 2012 in commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the arrival of the Selkirk Settlers at Red River.

Because Kildonan Presbyterian Church predates Confederation and the establishment of the Province of Manitoba it serves as both a national and provincial link to the past.

For information please contact:

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Please make cheques for donations payable to KILDONAN COMMUNITY CHURCH, and indicate for Old Church conservation. Income tax receipts will be issued. Our mailing address is:

Friends of Historic Kildonan Church
1795 Henderson Highway
PO Box 28070 North Kildonan
Winnipeg, MB. R2G 4E9

Kildonan Presbyterian Church



"The work of John Black will endure forever, and his memory will be kept fresh so long as the church exists."

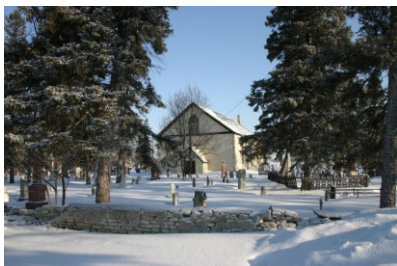
-Quotation from an article published in 1922

Architectural Significance

After waiting almost 40 years from their arrival at Red River, the Selkirk Settlers got their own minister, Rev. John Black in September of 1851. Immediately plans were made to build Kildonan Presbyterian, the oldest stone church still standing in the City of Winnipeg and the first Presbyterian Church in Canada built west of the Great Lakes.

The church features local materials including stone hauled from Stonewall Quarry and spruce trees cut from Bird's Hill in the winter of 1851-52. It is built on land donated by the Hudson's Bay Company as 'glebe' (land belonging to a parish church or benefice) along with 150 pounds sterling.

Provisions were painstakingly assembled, only to be swept away in a disastrous flood the following spring. Despite having to flee their homes and endure the destruction, the settlers persevered and salvaged what they could. Work on the beloved church resumed, with two - three foot stone walls erected under the direction of mason Duncan McRae. Slowly, a simple yet refined Gothic Revival church rose, modeled after parish churches of Scotland.



Completed in 1854, the church was dedicated on January 5, free of debt.

Historical Significance

The history of the Selkirk Settlers began in the hills of Scotland when the land clearances took place in the early nineteenth century. Lord Selkirk, a stock holder in the Hudson's Bay Company, had purchased a vast tract of land along the Red River. The settlers came as families to a new land full of hope and promise. Their faith and courage allowed them to overcome inclement weather, grasshoppers, droughts and floods in order to establish a farming community on the prairie.

Life was not easy and more than once the settlers were driven from the land as a result of the bitter rivalry between the Hudson's Bay and North West companies. Their strong beliefs endured and they returned each time to rebuild their colony.

Their resolve would again be tested during the 1869-70 Red River Rebellion when a young man, Norbert Parisien, thought to be a spy for Riel, was captured and held in Kildonan Church. He escaped, took possession of a gun and shot young Hugh John Sutherland who was riding by on his horse. Sutherland was taken to the manse where he later succumbed to his wounds. Parisien was hunted down and treated "very severely" by his captors. He too died later from his injuries.

Kildonan Presbyterian Church represents the religious, political, social and educational history of our community. It acts as a major connection to the first European agricultural settlement in Western Canada.

Educational Significance

Secular and religious education was an important aspect of life in the early days of Red River. From the time of his arrival in 1851, Rev. Black tutored promising students in the home of Donald Murray. In 1864 Nisbet Hall was built to accommodate Early College and elementary classes.



In 1872 Kildonan Presbyterian Church built Manitoba College on a lot south of Nisbet Hall. It provided theological studies for Presbyterian ministers, while the Catholics and Anglicans educated their own students. In 1877 the University of Manitoba established a uniform examining board which had the authority to grant degrees to students affiliated with these denominations.

Wesley College's charter was granted to the Methodist Church in 1877, with Wesley Hall officially opening in 1896. In 1931 Manitoba College sold its property and joined with Wesley College in the teaching of Theology. In 1938 Manitoba and Wesley Colleges amalgamated to establish United College, which later became the University of Winnipeg.