THE HERITAGE VALUE STATEMENT

ST. MATTHIAS' ANGLICAN CHURCH

CIVIC ADDRESS
10 Church Hill, Westmount

HERITAGE DESIGNATION
Municipal - Category 1: Important (SPAIP)
Provincial - None
Federal - None

RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION
Anglican

OVERVIEW

Historical Value
The historical heritage value resides in the long history of the St. Matthias’ Anglican Church with the development of Westmount. Its site has been continuously occupied by this religious denomination since 1874, when a mission chapel was established on a portion of the Forden Estate. The present church dates from 1912 and the parish hall from 1936. The association of the church with its immediate neighbourhood is embedded in the name chosen for the adjacent street, Church Hill. The sacrifice of the church membership during both World Wars is commemorated in the Memorial Chapel.

Contextual Value
The contextual heritage value resides in the church’s commanding presence on the corner of Cote St. Antoine and Church Hill. At the same time, the multiple entrances allow the complex to be easily accessed from both streets. Its institutional size and character make it a landmark within the surrounding residential fabric and connects it as well to the neighbouring institutions. Although its site is now almost entirely built up, the remaining church land is densely planted with shrubbery and mature trees.

Architectural and Aesthetic Value
The architectural and aesthetic heritage value resides in the skilful rendering of the neo-Gothic style, the excellent functional design, the ornamentation enhanced by the complex massing, the craftsmanship and the simple, noble materials used throughout both the exterior and interior of the complex. Although the product of two firms – Ross and MacFarlane for the church and C.R. Telley for the parish hall – the parts read as a convincing whole and present an interesting essay in the evolution of early 20th century Gothic Revival architecture. The stained glass windows, liturgical fittings and furniture complement the architecture. The complex has a high degree of authenticity and integrity.

Spiritual and Community Value
The spiritual and community heritage value resides in the soaring volume of the sanctuary and the quality of light filtering through the multiple stained glass windows. It is supplemented by the religious and commemorative themes of the windows, and in the consistency of the liturgical furnishings and fittings. It has been the site of Anglican worship and community since 1874.
SITING

St. Matthias' Church occupies a rectangular site at the intersection of Cote St. Antoine Road and Church Hill Avenue. It is thus within the institutional precinct that was established early in the history of Westmount. Its imposing massing and scale sets it apart from the surrounding houses and makes it a neighbourhood landmark. The two buildings on the site – the church and the parish hall – take up almost all the land; however what remains is densely planted.

DESCRIPTION

St. Matthias' Church was built between 1910 and 1912. The Parish Hall, built in 1935-1936, is attached to the north face of the church. The picturesque volumes and the bell tower, rise from Cote St. Antoine Road, making a dramatic silhouette and emphasizing the corner site. The plan is conventional for an Anglican church: a Latin cross defined by a central nave, flanked by side-aisles, somewhat shortened north and south transepts and a choir (or chancel). However, instead of the tower being placed at the intersection of the nave and transepts, it is located at the juncture of the south transept with the choir. This rather unusual design responds to the steeply sloping site.

Its Gothic Revival architecture and carefully carved stonework belie its 20th century steel frame construction.

The interior finishes of the sanctuary follow the design principles of simplicity and modesty laid out in the 19th century. Exposed stone, rough plaster, and wood-panelled ceilings provide an appropriate backdrop to the liturgical fittings, the jewel-like stained glass windows and the regimental colours which are housed there.

Today, the Parish Hall is used as a community building (within which there is a privately-run children’s daycare).

RELEVANT DATES

1910-1912
Construction of the present church by the architectural firm

Ross and MacFarlane (the first St. Matthias’ Church was erected in 1874-1875 on the same land)

Circa 1930
Removal of the rood screen

1934
Completion of the north transept for the commemorative chapel

1935-1936
Construction of the current Parish Hall on the other side of the church by the architect Charles Reginald Tetley (replacement of the first parish hall)

1972
Installation of the Karl Wilhelm organ

1988
Installation of a small sacristy next to the chancel

1994-2014
Repairs to some of the stained-glass windows
FAITH AND COMMUNITY LIFE

St. Matthias’ Church is part of the Anglican Church of Canada, part of the worldwide Anglican Communion. Anglicanism has its origin in England and was introduced into British North America with the establishment of American and Canadian maritime colonies. According to its website, the Anglican Church of Canada does not define its doctrine in a single confession. Core beliefs are articulated in its liturgies, as well as through reference to: the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed, all of which emphasize the belief in the unity of the Holy Trinity and its eternal nature. These historic documents have been added to over the centuries, and address the relationship of the Anglican Church of Canada to the global Communion. The Anglican Church believes that the Holy Bible contains its foundational texts for faith and thought. It also stresses the fundamental importance of the celebration of the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist, or Holy Communion. The church is episcopally led and synodically governed. The core missions of the church include offering religious services, and undertaking charitable and community activities.

GOVERNANCE

St. Matthias’ Church is a parish within the Anglican Diocese of Montreal, one of several in Quebec. The diocese functions under the jurisdiction of the diocesan bishop. These administrative units comprise the Provincial Synod, governed by an archbishop. They also form the national body, the General Synod. The Primate, who is also an archbishop, is the chief pastor of the Anglican Church of Canada and President of the General Synod.

The governing body within St. Matthias’ Church is the Corporation which consists of three people. St. Matthias’ Church is self-financing, depending on donations from parishioners and fundraising activities. Donations and bequests are used primarily for the upkeep and maintenance of the building. Significant construction/maintenance projects must be submitted to the bishop for approval.

RELEVANT DATES

2010
Various repairs: stone foundation cover, plumbing and fire protection equipment
HISTORICAL VALUE

DESCRIPTION

The Evolution of St. Matthias’ Church and its Parish Hall

Cote St. Antoine Road
Cote St. Antoine Road retraces a First Nations path, which predated European settlement. It is therefore linked to one of the earliest indications of human movement through this area, which would become the heart of Westmount.

St. Matthias’ Church and its Parish Hall
In 1873, the YMCA of St. Georges Church in Montreal decided to establish a mission church to the west of Montreal. The site was donated by Mrs. R.T. Raynes, using a small southern portion of her Forden estate. The first church was clad in wood board and batten, consistent with the overall Gothic Revival style. As the village grew into a town, the congregation grew as well. Finally, just before the First World War, it was acknowledged that the forty by twenty-five foot sanctuary was too small to serve the needs of the Anglican community in the expanding suburb of Westmount.

In 1910, Ross and MacFarlane were commissioned to design a new, stone church, also in the Gothic Revival style. It opened two years later. However, the first wooden church was to see more service. It was repurposed as the Parish Hall and remained until the early 1930s, when it was demolished to make way for the present, adjoining Parish Hall. This time, the architect was C.F. Tetley. Other activities, such as theater productions, took place in it during the 1930’s.

St. Matthias’ Church is the Regimental Church of the Royal Montreal Regiment (RMR). Its colours and memorial are housed in a side chapel.

Restoration work
In 1972, to commemorate the centenary of the Anglican community in Westmount, a number of construction projects were undertaken. They included the replacement of the original organ with one designed by Karl Wilhelm; the installation of a baptistery (since moved to the north transept) and work in the Memorial Chapel to incorporate the 1949 War Memorial.

CHARACTER-DEFINING ELEMENTS

- The continued use of the property for community worship and activities: a church (two constructions since 1875) and a Parish Hall.
- St. Matthias Church as the oldest Anglican congregation in Westmount.
- The cast iron bell, rescued from the first church and placed on the corner of Church Hill and Cote St. Antoine as a vestige.
- The commemorative chapel (RMR) and commemorative elements.
- The 1972 Wilhelm organ and its association with liturgical music, and specifically choral music.

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1 Doreen Lindsay, “St. Matthias Church, 1873 to Present”, The Westmount Historian, Spring 2013, p.12
2 Ibid
CONTEXTUAL VALUE

DESCRIPTION

A Church Located in the Institutional Heart of the City of Westmount
The original St. Matthias’ Church was built in 1875 by the Anglican community on the same site, on the north side of Cote St. Antoine Road at the corner of Church Hill. Over time, other public buildings were built nearby, including the first public Protestant school in Westmount, Stanton School.

Today, neither the original church nor the school remains. However, the 1912-c1930 church complex forms part of a group of significant institutional buildings, including the City Hall, the Shaar Hashomayim Synagogue, Selwyn House School and the École internationale de Montréal.

An Outstanding Building in its Environment
The church presents an imposing profile from every vantage point, with its asymmetrical volume, its massive bell tower and its finely crafted stone walls.

The building is located in a relatively dense area of two and three storey residential buildings.

The church and the Parish Hall cover most of the site. It is set back a modest distance from both Cote St. Antoine and Church Hill. These areas are planted. There is no parking.

Greenery
Whatever land is free of built form is grassed and planted with mature trees, shrubbery and plantings.

CHARACTER-DEFINING ELEMENTS

- Its siting within the institutional heart of Westmount.
- The imposing massing and noble exterior materials, identifying the complex as a community landmark.
- Its integration into the steeply sloping site.
- Its porosity, through its several entrances, which in consequence, mitigate its fortress-like appearance.
- The mature, lush vegetation planted within the setbacks and on the street façades.
ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC VALUE (1/4)

DESCRIPTION

A Religious Complex Designed by Renowned Architects

In 1910, the Montreal-based architectural firm of Ross and MacFarlane was commissioned to design a substantial, stone church to house the congregation of St. Matthias’. It was sited immediately adjacent to the original wood church, dating from 1874-75. This early structure was not demolished; instead it was repurposed as a parish hall. It remained in service until the early 1930s, when the local Westmount architect, C.R. Tetley, was commissioned to design anew parish hall.

Founded in 1907, Ross and MacFarlane, went on to become – as Ross and Macdonald – the premier architectural firm in Canada. Working across the country, it was responsible for some of the most iconic Canadian buildings, spanning the Edwardian period to the end of the Second World War.

The following biographical information is synthesized from the archives of the Canadian Architectural Collection, McGill University; and the Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada 1800-1950:

George Allen Ross (1879-1946) was born in Montreal. After architectural studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, he completed his apprenticeship training in American and Montreal offices. In 1907, he formed a partnership with a fellow alumnus of MIT, the Montreal born architect David Huron MacFarlane (1875-1950), who had established his own practice two years earlier. When MacFarlane retired in 1913, Ross began a long and prolific professional association with Robert Henry MacDonald (1875-1942).

Charles Reginald Tetley (1886-1960) was English born and educated. Tetley arrived in Montreal in 1907 and after a brief apprenticeship with George T. Hyde, he worked at Ross and MacFarlane from 1909 to 1912. He established his own office in 1913. His practice was varied, and although not as celebrated as his former employers, he remained active until 1957. He was a member of the Westmount Architectural Commission and on the Advisory Board of Architects for the City of Outremont. Among his commissions, it is interesting to note that he designed the Argyle School (now Selwyn House School) in 1934, the same year as the St. Matthias’ Parish Hall.

A Series of Interesting Volumes

Gothic Revival architecture in Canada is not usually associated with steep sites. Ross and MacFarlane skilfully adapted the language to the site conditions, providing a single volume (the gable end of the nave) to the street. The bell tower, even in its reduced height, anchors the corner and provides a single volume against which the shifting masses expressed along Cote St. Antoine can be framed. This subtle approach was continued by Tetley, who set back the principal volume of the Hall from the street, rendering it secondary in nature.

The expression of the different massing on the exterior facades is mirrored on the interior: the spaces correspond to the expressed volumes. The sanctuary is based on a Latin cross plan. The various volumes comprising the central nave and choir, and two transepts are contained under a conventional pitched roof. The two side aisles are each contained under a single pitched roof. The Parish Hall has a series of flat roofs, sheltering the various volumes.
ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC VALUE  

(2/4)

Noble Materials
The exterior material palette, of rough-faced stone, with ashlar trim, is capably used to express the conventional elements of the Gothic Revival style. The Parish Hall continues the same stone palette (Nepean sandstone/limestone), Gothic Revival detailing and scotch bond coursing for the volume along Church Hill Avenue; the larger volume housing the hall itself is set back and clad in brick.

The sloped roofing was originally in slate, with galvanized iron flashings and valleys. Today, many roofs have been re-clad in standing seam or batten seam copper sheets. Both materials are considered ‘noble’ and both are historically correct. However, in the next major reroofing project, one material should be chosen as the primary material and a comparable, durable material be used for the flashings and valleys.

Gothic Revival Language and Architecture
The church complex is representative of early 20th century Gothic Revival architecture. The overall massing and formal decisions follow the precepts of the style. These include the Latin cross plan and consequent volumes; the sloping roofs and gable ends; the smaller volumes which contain the porches and the side aisles. The disposition and types of the windows also relate to the style: the lancet, rose and pointed arch forms reinforce the reading of the buildings as related to the Gothic Revival. This is equally true for the detailing.

It is interesting to note that a number of details were left uncarved. For example, the bosses under the pointed arches on the main door and the large lancet window in the east gable were meant to be carved in-situ, but were never done.

On the interior, Ross and MacFarlane followed the traditional approach set out in the middle of the 19th century for Anglican churches. The interior finishes are simple and even austere: plastered walls; ashlar stone trim architraves around the arches, doors and windows. The ceilings are shaped, in wood; the nave has a hammer-beam ceiling with wood panelling. This panelling is continued in the side aisles and the choir. There is poly-chromed stencilling of biblical symbols across the choir ceiling, further emphasizing the importance of the altar. The medieval themes are continued in the carvings of the wood wall panelling, the architectural metalwork and the windows and their tracery.

The nave is defined from the side aisles by an arcade of pointed arches, which themselves carry the upper walls and roof of the sanctuary.

The Stained Glass Windows
The stained glass windows constitute the most remarkable decorative elements in the church. At least one assembly was created by the renowned stained glass artist, Charles W. Kelsey (1877-1975): the “Fowler and Hill Memorial Windows”. Some of the windows were restored over a twenty year program (1994-2014).
ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC VALUE (3/4)

The Charles W. Kelsey Stained Glass Windows
Charles William Kelsey (1877-1975) - C. W. Kelsey was a prominent stained glass artist, who worked primarily in Canada. Born in England, he trained there in the Arts and Crafts tradition. Kelsey arrived in Canada in 1922 and soon set up his studio in Westmount. He designed windows mainly for churches, but also for private buildings.

The themes of the church windows are either ecclesiastical or commemorative, memorials to the dead of both world wars. Aside from those in St. Matthias', his windows can be found on the Montreal island, in other Anglican churches of Saint-George and the former Saint-Stephen; the Ascension of Our Lord Church; the former Erskine and American Church (now Bourgie Hall, part of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts); Mountainside United Church, Westmount Park United Church and St. James United Church. He also provided the stained glass windows for the Memorial Chapel at McGill University and the Chateau Frontenac Hotel in Quebec City.

The Organ, the Furnishings and the Rood Screen
Organ: The organ was installed in 1972. The designer is Karl Wilhelm. It is situated in the rear of the nave of the church replacing the original which was housed in the chancel.

Liturgical Furniture: the altar, communion table, the pulpit, the ambo with its bronze eagle, grasping an orb (representational of the Messenger of God spreading the Gospel to the World); various ceremonial seating, pews.

Rood Screen: the original rood screen, separating the choir from the nave was removed around 1970 and portions of it were incorporated into other gates.

Architectural Authenticity
The building demonstrates a high degree of architectural authenticity and integrity on both its exterior and interior.

CHARACTER-DEFINING ELEMENTS
Exterior features of the main sanctuary (1910-1912)

- The volume of the church, including the rectangular Latin cross plan, the flat apse, flat transepts, pitched roof and bell tower.
- The bell tower, at the corner of the site, provides an imposing pivot as the composition shifts from the gable end on Church Hill to the complex volumes expressed on Cote St. Antoine Road.
- The other elements related to the Gothic Revival style, including the buttresses, pointed and segmental arched windows; lancet windows, louvered windows, rose window; gable ends, bell tower, influences, porches and tracery; [It is noted that the blocks inserted into the stonework for future carving were never executed: they remain rectangular, uncarved blocks of stone.]
- Materials: the scotch-bond coursed stonework of the walls with a limestone base and sandstone upper walls and the smooth ashlar stone of the decorative components (arches and jambbs of the openings); doors and windows and their trim.
- The complex roof forms, sheathed in copper or slate.
ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC VALUE (4/4)

Interior features of the main sanctuary (1910-1912)

- The interior layout, with a central nave separated from the symmetrical side aisles by arcades of pointed arches. These carry the upper walls, pierced by regularly placed lancet windows.
- The uninterrupted soaring volume of the sanctuary.
- The austere décor, characteristic of Gothic Revival Anglican churches, featuring plastered walls, stone architraves, wall panelling, architectural metalwork and wood paneled ceilings.
- The polygonal vault in the choir, with poly-chromed stenciled motifs.
- The liturgical furniture, including the pulpit, the main altar, the altarpiece, the choir stalls and the brass lectern, dominated by the figure of an eagle clutching an orb, representational of the world.
- The stained glass in the windows, with several ones made by the renowned stained-glass artist Charles W. Kelsey (1877-1975).

Exterior features of the Parish Hall (1934)

- The simplified Tudor Revival architecture that marries, in its street volume and detailing to the older church building.
- The use of similar materials (Nepean sandstone for the walls; Indiana limestone for the trim) for this lower volume. The secondary material (brick) is reserved for the larger volume of the hall, which is set well back from the street and is not very visible.
- The generously sized windows.

Interior features of the Parish Hall (1934)

- The traditional interior finishes of the period: woodwork, plasterwork, fireplaces.
- The auditorium, with its separate entrance off Church Hill; its performance facilities, including a stage; and its original interior finishes.
- The secondary community space below.
SPIRITUAL AND COMMUNITY VALUE (1/2)

DESCRIPTION

A Building that Represents the Tenets of the Anglican Religion
The use of Gothic Revival architectural language and detailing reinforces the
tenets of the Anglican Church. (For example, the trefoil is an architectural
ornament, symbolizing the Trinity.)

A Long-standing and Valued Anglican Presence in Westmount
St. Matthias’ seeks to be an active participant in the life of the greater
community through worship, music, and outreach. The
church offers weekly Anglican religious services as well as baptisms,
confirmations, marriages and other related learning opportunities.

Music remains an integral part of worship at St. Matthias’. The congregation
also hosts concerts, and provides musical instruction, and mentoring. Through
music, it continues to build bridges into the greater community as well as with
other communities of faith.

St. Matthias’ supports many local important community groups including
self-help organizations, Meals on Wheels, Guides,
and clubs. The church also partners with organizations outside of Westmount
that serve disadvantaged and vulnerable
elements of society. These organizations include food banks, homeless shelters
and advocacy agencies.
SPIRITUAL AND COMMUNITY VALUE (2/2)

CHARACTER-DEFINING ELEMENTS

- Symbolic religious components, integrated into the ornamentation of the stonework and woodwork.
- The liturgical furniture.
- Symbolic and religious themes of the stained glass windows.
- Assembly spaces, such as those found in the Parish Hall, which house community functions and activities.
PROCESS

This Value Statement is based on a visit made in autumn of 2016, analysis and a group discussion held on October 31, 2017.

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