THE HERITAGE VALUE STATEMENT

WESTMOUNT SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

CIVIC ADDRESS
569-571 Victoria Avenue, Westmount

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

RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION
Seventh-day Adventist

OVERVIEW OF THE VALUE STATEMENT

Historical Value
The historical heritage value resides in the church’s early construction on the slope of Westmount; its continued association with the Presbyterian Church (as the Stanley Street Presbyterian Church) from its construction in 1913 to 1972, when it underwent a denominational change and became the Seventh-day Adventist Church; its continual use of the site for religious and community purposes.

Contextual Value
The contextual heritage value resides in its siting on Westmount Avenue; its imposing size and volume which makes it a landmark in the area and the generous, lushly planted green space which surrounds the complex.

Architectural and Aesthetic Value
The architectural heritage value resides in its associations with Hutchison Wood & Miller; its fine aesthetic design in a Byzantine Revival style, excellent functional design, craftsmanship and materials. This is true for both the exterior and interior of the complex, which has a high degree of authenticity and integrity.

Spiritual and Community Value
The spiritual and community heritage value is a result of the influence of two denominations. From the period of the Presbyterian use, they reside in the soaring volume of the sanctuary and the amphitheatre plan, which brings the worshippers into a close relationship to each other and to the service; the simplicity and non-figurative ornamentation; the stained glass windows. From the period of the Seventh-day Adventists, they reside in the centrality of the pulpit and the prominence of the immersion pool. Both embrace music as an important part of the religious service. The Presbyterian emphasis on education resulted in the construction of Franklin Hall, which continues to be used for community and outreach programs.
SITING

The Westmount Seventh-day Adventist Church property is situated on Westmount Avenue and descends Victoria Avenue, in the north-west sector of the City of Westmount. The church is an imposing landmark in a residential zone for single, two- and multi-family buildings. It is close to institutional properties associated with the Congregation de Notre Dame - most notably Marianopolis College - and to Roslyn School.

DESCRIPTION

Construction of the Westmount Seventh-day Adventist Church began in 1913, originally for the Stanley Street Presbyterian congregation. Since 1972, it has been the spiritual home of the Seventh-day Adventists. The church is monumental in scale. It is symmetrical in plan, laid out in the form of a truncated Roman cross. The intersection of the nave and transepts is marked by an enormous dome, springing from an octagonal base covered in rough-cast stucco. The facades are in a warm orange clay brick. The ornamentation around the doors and windows is richly carved in Indiana limestone. The main and secondary roofs were originally covered in red terracotta tiles. Over time, some of the secondary roofs have been changed to sheet metal. The windows are in wood. Abutting the south wall of the church is the Franklin Memorial Hall, erected between 1916 and 1926.

FAITH AND COMMUNITY LIFE

The congregation follows the religious traditions and practices of the Seventh-day Adventist religion. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a Protestant sect, founded in the mid-19th century in the United States. The name references two fundamental beliefs: that the Sabbath should be celebrated on Saturday, rather than Sunday and that the second coming of Jesus is imminent. Adherents believe that the church has a primary role in proclaiming Christ, nurturing believers and serving humanity. They also believe in the infallibility of scripture. Their belief in the importance of living in balance and harmony with God, others and the universe focuses on healthful practices and simplicity. The denomination organized officially in Canada in 1901. In fulfilment of its mission, the church offers religious ceremonies, charitable works and community activities.

RELEVANT DATES

1913  
Beginning of construction of the Stanley Street Presbyterian Church

1916-1926  
Construction of the Franklin Memorial Hall

1930-1950  
Installation of an organ and stained glass windows

1952-1953  
Memorial stained glass windows designed by Robert McCausland Ltd

1972  
The church is sold to the Seventh-day Adventist congregation

1999-2000  
Miscellaneous repairs
GOVERNANCE

The Westmount Seventh-day Adventist Church is governed by a 36 person Board of Directors and makes decisions through democratic voting. Funds are raised through annual fees, donations and fund-raising campaigns.
HISTORICAL VALUE

DESCRIPTION

The Development of the Sector
The subdivision of the northwest sector of Westmount began in the latter quarter of the 19th century, predating the 1895 incorporation of the Town of Westmount, which was to become the City of Westmount. By the beginning of the 20th century, as the public transportation system serving the area expanded, the neighbourhood of two- and three-storey houses was established. In 1908, Roslyn School was opened to serve the growing population. Three years later, the municipality opened a fire station at the corner of the Boulevard and Victoria Avenue. Both these constructions indicate the establishment of a thriving community. It is not surprising that the faith groups soon followed the migration of their congregants to the slopes of Westmount.

A Church Reflecting the Presbyterian Faith
In the 1870s, the Montreal Presbyterian community splintered over the role of music within the religious services. Sir William Dawson, then Principal of McGill University, left the Erskine Church with other like-minded fundamentalists to found a new house of worship. The congregation took its name from the location of the new church on Stanley Street, in the heart of the Square Mile (see picture on next page). This neo-Gothic building served its community until the first decade of the 20th century, when economic pressures and shifting demographics encouraged a relocation. The congregation decamped to a new, imposing structure on Westmount Avenue, designed by the architectural firm of Hutchison, Wood & Miller. The Franklin Memorial Hall annex did not follow the original integrated design proposed by the architects. Built 1916-1926, the progress of its construction was no doubt slowed by the First World War. It is a simplified, yet dignified construction that does not detract from the overall ensemble. Its architect is unknown.

The name of the congregation remained the Stanley Street Presbyterian Church, until 1926, when it was simplified to the Stanley Presbyterian Church.

The congregation remained with the Presbyterian Church in Canada during Church Union in 1925. It continued to occupy the Westmount Avenue complex until 1972, when it sold the property to the Seventh-day Adventists. The Presbyterian congregation was dissolved March 18, 1986.

CHARACTER-DEFINING ELEMENTS

- The continual use of the property for religious activities and community worship since 1913, within both Franklin Memorial Hall and the church.
- The associations with both the Presbyterian and Seventh-day Adventist churches.
- The stained-glass windows made by Robert McCausland Ltd. in 1952-1953, commemorating those members of the Stanley Presbyterian Church who had died during the Second World War.
CONTEXTUAL VALUE

DESCRIPTION

A Landmark Building within a Green Setting
The church occupies almost its entire site. What is not built upon is landscaped with lawns and shrubbery. Mature trees are planted along Victoria Avenue, where the setback is more generous.

The front façade is prominent on Westmount Avenue, and is unobscured by the vegetation which surrounds the building. This setting on the avenue, as well as its imposing volume and footprint enhance the church’s landmark status in this part of Westmount. It towers above its two- and three-storey residential neighbours; however, its warm earth-toned colours and predominant brick material palette reduces the impact of its grand architecture.

CHARACTER-DEFINING ELEMENTS

- Its prominent presence on Westmount Avenue, with its imposing volume, monumental dome and large footprint.
- A large green space which surrounds the church and hall containing plantings and mature trees.
ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC VALUE (1/4)

DESCRIPTION

A Church Designed by Celebrated Architects
The Westmount Seventh-day Adventist Church was designed by a prominent firm of architects, Hutchison, Wood & Miller. The office had been founded in Montreal in the 1860s by Alexander Cowper Hutchison (1838-1922). By 1890, it had expanded to include his son William Burnet Hutchison (1865-1959) and his son-in-law George Winks Wood (1863-1941).

From 1908 to 1919, the partners were W.B. Hutchison, G.W. Wood and a Montreal and Boston-trained architect, John Melville Miller (1875-1948). After the partnership dissolved, Miller practiced on his own (or in a brief association with Charles Jewett Saxe), until his death. Hutchison & Wood continued as well, into the 1930s.

A.C. Hutchison was a staunch Presbyterian, and he designed a number of significant churches for the Montreal community (1868: American Presbyterian; 1878: Crescent Street Presbyterian; 1891: St. Matthew Presbyterian Church in Pointe St. Charles; 1894: the Erskine [and American] Church, now incorporated into the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts) and institutional buildings for benefactors such as A.F. Gaît (Presbyterian College of Montreal), Peter Redpath and Sir William Macdonald.

His reputation was no doubt carried on by the next generation of practitioners in the firm and the Stanley Street Presbyterian congregation engaged it to design its new home on Westmount Avenue. Construction on the church began in 1913. In 1916, work began on the construction of Franklin Memorial Hall. It did not follow the design laid out by Hutchison Wood & Miller, which would have integrated the community hall into the overall composition of the church. The hall as built is distinct from the main building, subordinate in its volume and of a simplified Arts and Crafts style.

Hutchison Wood & Miller were respected and capable architects, designing industrial, commercial, religious and institutional buildings. They began their partnership just as their original firm’s largest and most comprehensive project – Macdonald College in Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue – opened. John Bland has credited Miller as having an important role in the campus design and it is probable that the architecture of this church was also strongly influenced by him.

An Imposing and Highly Authentic Masterwork
Hutchison Wood & Miller produced a comprehensive work of architecture, designing the building, its ornamentation and its interior finishes, down to the light fixtures. A comparison with the original drawings, preserved at the John Bland Collection, McGill University, shows that the exterior and interior are almost entirely intact. (Changes to the roofs have been the result of maintenance decisions.)
ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC VALUE (2/4)

A Skilful Weaving of Different Architectural Sources
The inspiration for the architecture of the church draws from several sources and their skilful weaving into a single work reveals the mastery of the architects. Inspiration was no doubt drawn from the Byzantine Revival style. Aline Gubbay has suggested that Miller was influenced by the 1911 construction of the Temple Emanu-El in Westmount, which was rendered in this style. However, the imposing Roman Catholic Cathedral of Westminster in London had opened in 1903, to great critical acclaim, and its influence can also be traced in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The composition of the principal façade, including its entrance porch, and the carvings are reminiscent of the architectural forms and language first developed in Constantinople under the 7th century Roman emperors. This historical circumstance links the development of Byzantine architecture with that of ancient Rome, further blurring the specific sources.

The addition of a rose window, centered over the main entrance, recalls neo-Gothic sources and may also reference the rose window that dominated the façade of the original Stanley Street church. However, the building is also shaped by another inspiration – the material palette that the firm had used so masterfully at Macdonald College, and which reappears on the exterior of the church.

Material Palette
A.C. Hutchison was trained as a stonemason, before he became an architect; his masonry buildings were beautifully detailed and built. This skill was continued by the next generation and the understanding of the craft is demonstrated in the delicate incised carvings, the weaving of brick and limestone in the door surrounds and the intricate and varied brick patterning.

The original architectural drawings hint at the idea that the brickwork was to be ‘cloisonné’, or laid in broad bands of different colours, and this is somewhat apparent on the facades. This treatment would have been in keeping with the principles of Byzantine architecture.

The orange brick, rough-cast stucco and the red terracotta roofs define the architecture of the buildings on the Macdonald College campus and this material palette was used again to great effect in the church.

The Church Interior
The interior of the church is laid out as a truncated Latin cross. The nave has side aisles. The crossing of the nave with the transepts is marked by an immense dome. The transition of the semi-circular dome onto the octagonal base is achieved with the introduction of pendentives. The sanctuary is bathed in natural light, coming through the arched windows that encircle the base of the dome.
ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC VALUE (3/4)

The short nave was appropriate for a non-hierarchical congregation, such as the Presbyterians. Every congregant was seated near the officiants. This sense of closeness was emphasized by the semi-circular arrangement of the pews. This design continues to suit the practices and tenets of the Seventh-day Adventists.

Given the original history of the founding of the Stanley Street Presbyterian Church over the congregants’ rejection of music within the service, it is interesting to note that forty years after the schism, the designs for the new church featured an impressive organ, which dominated one wall of the nave. The organ was made by les Frères Casavant.

The architects designed the interior finishes (such as stencil and plaster friezes), fittings and furniture, including the wood wall paneling, organ casing and balcony railing, with its designs incorporating Greek crosses, reminiscent in its overall form of detailing found in the Hagia Sophia, Constantinople. The overall material palette and ornamentation are restrained, as expected in a Presbyterian purpose-built house of worship. (There are a recently established nursery and sound control room, neither of which have heritage value.)

Liturgical Furniture and Stained Glass Windows
The stained glass windows are relatively recent. With representations of biblical personages and scenes, the windows were commissioned to honour the war dead of the congregation, who had fought in the Second World War. They were made by Robert McCausland Ltd.

An immersion pool was added by the Seventh-day Adventists.

Franklin Memorial Hall
Franklin Hall was constructed several years after the main church. It was designed to be sympathetic to the first building, although the architecture is more subdued and based on the principles of the Arts and Crafts. The Hall is organized around a central two-storey space, lit by a skylight, and supported on cast-iron columns. Classrooms, meeting rooms and the kitchen are reached through this central space, which is used for community functions. Its finishes are simple and utilitarian.

Architectural Authenticity
The building demonstrates a high degree of architectural authenticity and integrity on both its exterior and interior.
ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC VALUE (4/4)

CHARACTER-DEFINING ELEMENTS

Exterior features

- The monumental volume, including the rectangular Latin cross footprint, the flat apse, the central nave and two side-aisles, the pitched roof, and the imposing dome where the transepts meet.
- The Byzantine and Roman Revival influences, including the semicircular arches on the openings, the gently sloped roofs and the exposed gables with arcaded frieze and shallow pilasters.
- The materials, including the red terracotta tiles on the roof, the copper lantern, the rough-cast stucco on the base of the dome; the clay brick forming the exterior walls, the limestone decorative components and the wood around the openings; wood windows and doors.
- The main façade, with a gable front, a porch with three doors, two turrets flanking the porch, the entry, and a large 12-lobed rose window; the other facades which are fully detailed in the same material palette.
- The porch on the main façade, including the three doors with stone embrasure and projecting arches, stone octagonal columns with capitals, surmounted by elongated stone finials.

Interior features

- The interior layout, including the amphitheatre-style arrangement, the central arcaded nave and side aisles; the gallery; and transepts ending in semicircular apses, lit by arched windows similar to those in the dome.
- The uninterrupted soaring volume of the sanctuary.
- The dome with pendentives, supported on four large arches defining the crossing of the nave with the transepts.
- The vaulted ceiling, including the decorated cornice around its base.
- The Casavant organ and wind chest.
- Franklin Hall: the organization of the common space around its two-storey central space, lit from above.

Interior Decoration and Integrated Art

- The balustrade of the gallery with stenciled designs, and the balustrade on the stairway leading to the gallery.
- The rose window glass and other ornamental stained glass.
- Decorative Plasterwork.
- Original woodwork and decorative finishes.
SPIRITUAL AND COMMUNITY VALUE

DESCRIPTION

The Original Tenets of the Presbyterian Church
The sanctuary reflects the original tenets of the Presbyterian Church: a non-hierarchical community; an amphitheatre plan which brings the community together, non-figurative symbolism. Another layer relates to the Seventh-day Adventists, with the emphasis on the central pulpit and the immersion pool. Both denominations share a regard for simplicity and music.

A Vibrant and Engaged Congregation
Religious Services: weekly services; baptisms; marriages; funerals; Sabbath school; bible study groups; fellowship gatherings; choirs and concerts.

Charitable Activities: Youth groups and missions.

Community Activities: Pathfinder Club (scouts) and different activities for all age groups.

CHARACTER-DEFINING ELEMENTS

- Liturgical furniture such as the original pews, central pulpit which reinforces the precept that the word of God is preeminent and central to faith.
- The immersion pool.
- Christian themes in stained glass windows and stencil patterning.

Assembly spaces for religious celebrations, community gathering and activities.
PROCESS

This Value Statement is based on a visit made in the autumn of 2016, analysis and a group discussion held on May 9, 2018.

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