

## STANDARDIZATION (1903-1918)

With Manitoba firmly established economically by the turn of the century, it was possible for the province's educational authorities to forcefully address many of the concerns raised over the previous thirty years. Standardized one-room designs became available and their use common-place. Then-current theories on rural school consolidation, as an effort to improve educational opportunity, were enthusiastically accepted. With significant changes to the curriculum, there was ever-increasing attention given to safety, hygiene and other technical problems associated with large school design.

The standardization of one-room school designs, a goal of Manitoba's school inspectors almost since the inception of the system, had been the source of great attention in eastern Canada and the United States since the early 1800s. By the turn of century, then, there was considerable agreement on what constituted an acceptable design: a comfortable, well-lit, high-ceilinged building that was at the same time modest and affordable. Great attention was paid to the details of air circulation and heating. While it was recognized that standard designs tended to create a certain dulling uniformity, they at least ensured that all children received the same opportunity, not only with the curriculum, but with the learning environment itself.

This province's first standardized proposals were commissioned by the Department of Education in 1903, under the title Plans and Specifications for Rural Schools. They received greater exposure with their appearance in the 1906 Western School Journal. The designs were the work of Samuel Hooper (later appointed to the post of Provincial Architect). Three schemes were provided.

Design No. 1 was the simplest, cheapest and most commonly built (Figure 46). Design No. 2 was larger, with a projecting entrance, round-arched door and a bell tower whose delicate, arched framework had been used for years throughout eastern Canada and the United States to distinguish schools from other small public buildings (Figures. 47 and 48). Design No. 3 was the most ambitious. It also was the least likely to be built. A corner tower (with the same decorative treatment as No. 2) and the strong form created by a pyramidal roof were the distinguishing features of the scheme (Figure 49).

The Hooper designs also were the first in the province to incorporate a new window arrangement. By 1900 it had been ascertained by medical authorities throughout North America that the cross-lighting created by windows on either side of a classroom damaged children's' eyesight. The solution was to combine all windows onto one side of the school, an arrangement seen in all of Hooper's plans.

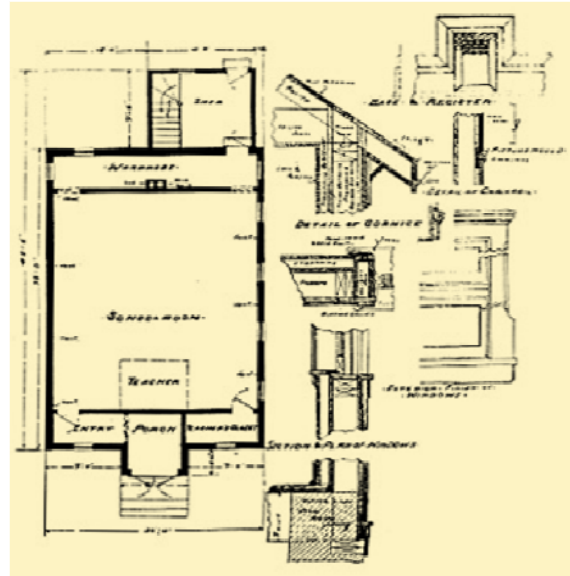
Each of the designs also was accompanied by a very precise specification sheet, so detailed in fact that only the number of nails required appears to have been left to the discretion of the contractor. One of the details that distinguished these new schools was the individual window design. Hooper specified the use of transoms, so that air could enter into the classroom at ceiling level, not at desk level. This innovation ensured that students' books and papers would not be blown about by the wind.

Although local school boards in need of a new building were not compelled to use Hooper's designs, many did. And while there were minor adaptations made, the detailed nature of the plans and specifications ensured a high level of accuracy in their construction (Figures. 50, 51 and 52).



**Figure 46.**

Design for Frame School Building, No. 1, 1903, the first of architect Samuel Hooper standardized schemes prepared for the Department of Education. Side and front elevations. (*The Western School Journal*, 1906, p. 203)

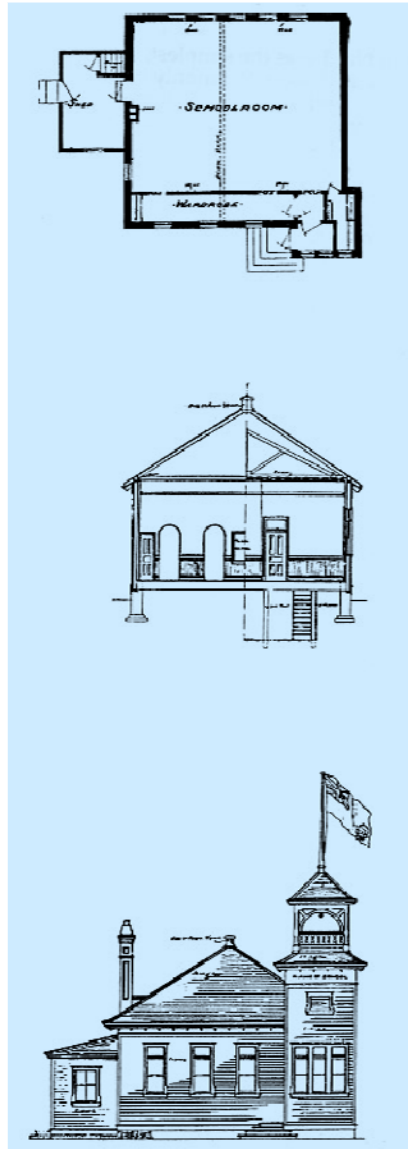


**Figure 47.**

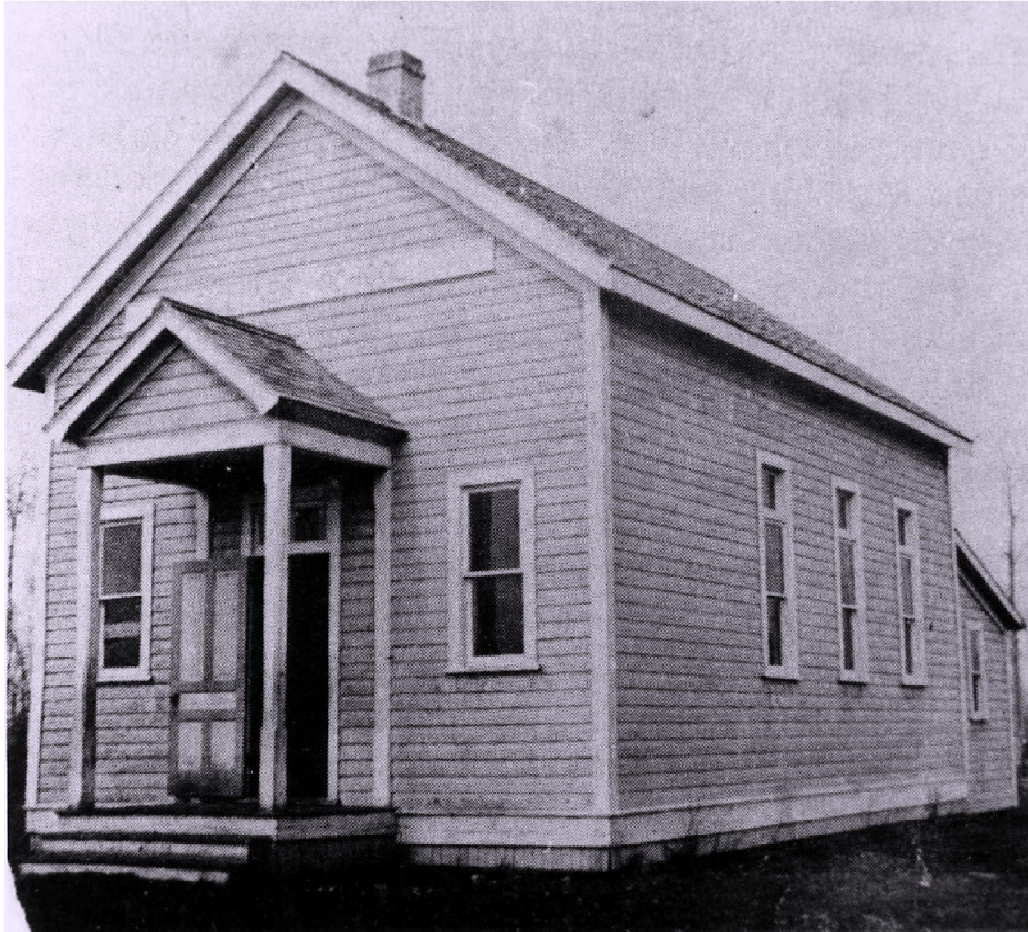
Design for Frame School Building, No. 2, 1903, showing the plan and critical construction details. (*The Western School Journal*, 1906, p. 204)



**Figure 48.**  
Design for Frame School Building, No. 2, 1903,  
showing the side elevation. (*The Western  
School Journal*, 1906, p. 235)



**Figure 49.**  
Design for Frame School Building, No. 3, 1903,  
showing the plan, a section through the building  
and the front elevation. (*The Western School  
Journal*, 1906, pp. 275-77)



**Figure 50.**

Siglunes School, 1907, was an excellent example of Design No. 1. Demolished. (*Taming a Wilderness*, p. 335)



**Figure 51.**

Huns Valley School, 1911, was almost a perfect realization of Design No. 2. Demolished. (*Along the Hills to the Valley*, p. 82)



**Figure 52:**

Union Point School, ca. 1905, one of the few examples of Design No. 3 that was built, and still is standing. (*Furrows in the Valley*, p. 229)

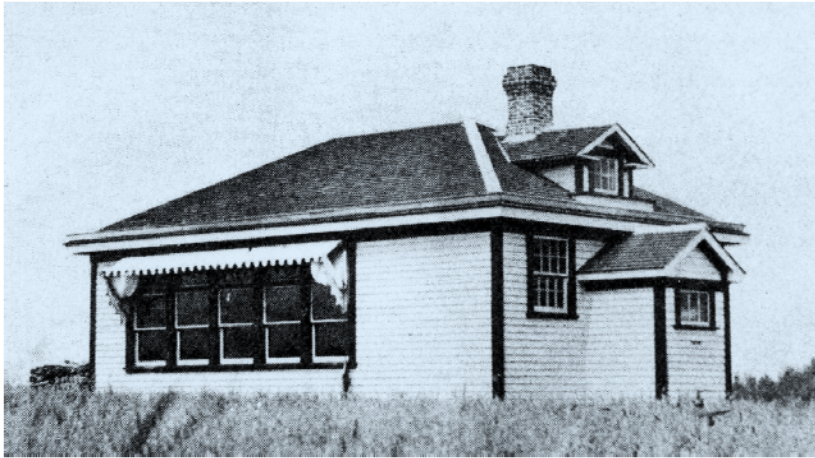
The appearance of the Hooper schools marked a turning point in one-room school designs in the province. Thereafter, it was rare that a new school was not built according to a standardized design approved by the Department of Education. Hooper's plans were only the first of a series that were to be used in Manitoba throughout the subsequent thirty years. Each new design tended to supplant the previous one in popularity with the department. Thus, Hooper's three designs were used frequently only until around 1912, when the next standardized plan was adopted.

This new school building had much to recommend it, in the eyes of the authorities, over the Hooper designs. It was more informal, with a hipped roof and dormer; in effect, it looked more like the bungalows and cottages then coming into popularity for domestic design (Figure 53). More significantly, however, was the window treatment.

This scheme was the first in the province to incorporate a continuous strip or bank of windows. Like the Hooper plans, these were arranged only on one side of the building. The theory adopted also propounded that the building be oriented in such a way that the light from the windows should enter from the left side, so as not to create shadows on the students' working surfaces. The deleterious effects this design might have had for left-handed students was not yet an issue.

Occasionally, the basic scheme might be adapted with more picturesque results. A porch was often incorporated and classical details were sometimes added (Figure 54). In these cases, the window bank was located on the back of the building.





**Figure 53.**

Carrick School, 1914, an example of the cottage-style one-room school that was the most popular standardized design, used from 1912 until the mid-1920s. The use of the awning was a local inspiration. (*Between Mountain and Lake*, p. 249)



**Figure 54.**

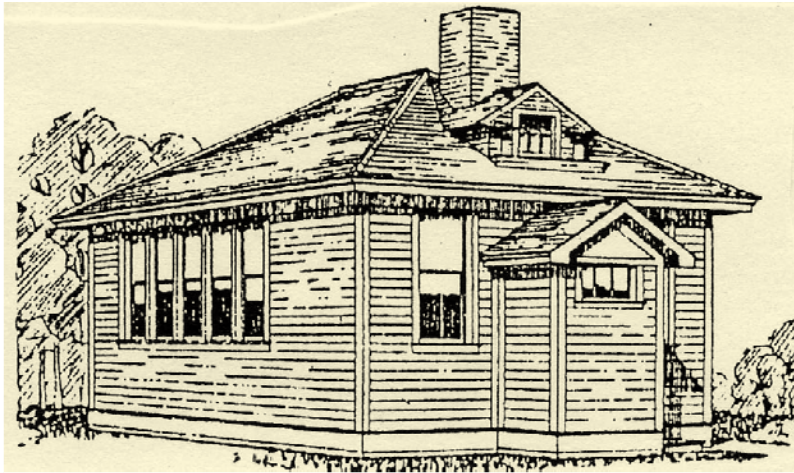
Lily School, ca. 1915. With its porch and classical details, this school is a fine example of a common variation that was adapted from the typical cottage design. (PAM)

It also was common, before the onset of World War I, for private firms and entrepreneurs to provide free plans for inexpensive rural schools that resembled this cottage-style school. The T. Eaton Company and the United States-based Waterman and Waterbury Company were the most ambitious in their marketing (Figure 55), although it is unclear how many school districts in Manitoba used their plans.

The cottage-style design became ubiquitous for school building until the end of World War I, when another set of designs gained favour. Like Hooper's designs, the newest ones offered three variations from which to choose.

The basic example featured a small storm porch with a ribbon board for the school name, the now-obligatory window bank and a gable roof with a slightly flared eave (Figure 56). The second version was larger, with the same distinctive bellcast roof. It also featured cloakrooms lighted by a side window. A broad enclosed storm porch featured a simple arrangement of two square windows and a central door, usually all protected by a long canopy (Figure 57). The third scheme, only rarely built, had a raised basement and a larger cloakroom that included additional space for a teacher's office above, and a slightly different façade treatment (Figure 58).

Throughout this period there also was an increasing interest in the improvement of school grounds. Impetus for this initiative came from Ontario, where, during the 1890s, philanthropist Sir William Macdonald, who had a keen interest in education, had underwritten a rural school garden movement. By the early 1900s, this interest had become a focal point in the rural school curriculum, with the development of domestic science programs that featured outdoor gardening experiments. At the same time, there was an increasing recognition that physical exercise was an important component of education. By the end of the first decade of the century, sand lots, various play structures and playing fields had all been developed around many schools.



**Figure 55.**

Eaton's Department Store catalogues included this cottage-style design beginning in 1917. (T. Eaton Co. Catalogue, 1917-18, p. 202)



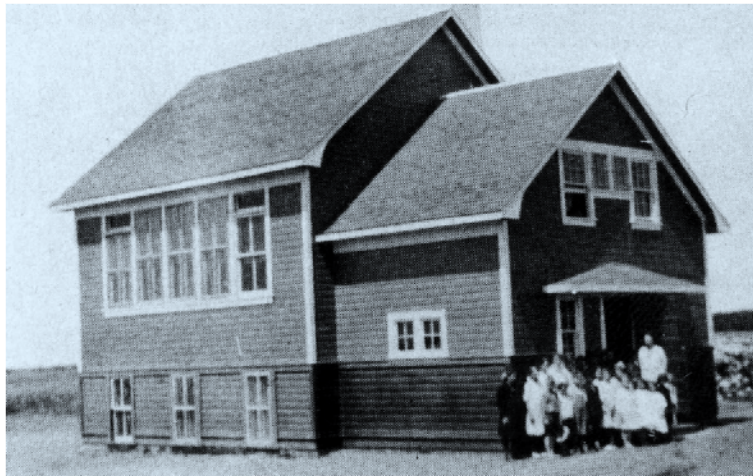
**Figure 56.**

Granville School, 1918, the simplest example from a set of standardized designs used after 1918. Demolished. (*Between Mountain and Lake*, p. 29)



**Figure 57.**

Bruan School, 1918, the second variation of this standardized set. Demolished. (*On the Sunny Slopes of the Riding Mountain*, Vol. 1, p. 85)



**Figure 58.**

Balmerino School, 1919. The third, and largest, of this standardized set. Demolished. (*Ellice*, p. 75)

Except for the Hooper designs, all of these new standardized plans were used into the mid-1920s, and many examples were built. Between 1903 and 1918, approximately 400 new one-room schools were constructed, bringing the total number operating in the province to almost 1,400.

Manitoba's educational authorities were not only interested in improving the designs of one-room schools in rural areas. Throughout Canada, there was a widespread acknowledgement that the typical rural school tended to hamper education, especially in comparison with the situation in urban areas. Critics believed that the educational system could be used to alleviate what they saw as the sources of depopulation in the countryside, with a revamped curriculum that catered specifically to rural concerns. It also was contended that, if school buildings were improved, teaching skills upgraded, and teaching aids made available, the quality of education could be raised to that offered in urban centres. It would be better to have graded schools with more specialized teaching. One proposed solution was rural school district consolidation.

The consolidation movement was initially sponsored in Ontario by Sir William Macdonald. Consolidations consisted in uniting previously separate but contiguous school districts and transporting students by horse-drawn vans to a central facility. As early as 1905 in Manitoba there had been attempts at consolidation in Virden and Holland. Within a few years, the program had become enormously successful, aided in large part by liberal grants from the Department of Education. Nineteen consolidations had been effected by 1911; by 1914 there were 54 more. Manitoba was leading the country in its embrace of the program. Of course, the consequence of this was that, suddenly, many one-room schools were abandoned as the new consolidated schools were built.

The population in urban centres continued to grow dramatically during this period. Thus, besides the move to build consolidated schools throughout the countryside, there was a continued effort to construct more large urban schools. In Brandon, Portage la Prairie, Dauphin and even smaller communities like Neepawa, the population growth prompted the construction of additional school buildings (Figure 59). Following Ontario precedent, the new schools were identified according to a ward system, based on their location (north, south, east or west).

The architectural developments that affected consolidated schools and their urban counterparts in Manitoba's smaller communities were characterized by the typical concern with the technical aspects of heating and ventilation. However, there also was an increasing interest on the part of architects and educational authorities in the mechanics of teaching and, increasingly, designs that addressed fire prevention and ease of escape. The introduction of new amenities to some of these schools, like water fountains and showers, and the inclusion of new rooms for specialized subjects like manual training shops and science labs did not always result in new plans. Throughout this period there was a continued reliance on the block, two-storey school that described the large designs of the 1890s. Sometimes incorporating the corner tower (for potential enlargement), they were used both for urban facilities and the new consolidated schools (Figure 60). As well, though, a variety of new designs was introduced.

A few smaller schemes were developed especially for consolidated school districts. One of them, used for several four-room buildings, was low and broad, its design implying a connection to its immediate rural environment (Figure 61). Another four-room design, this one standardized, was a derivation of the typical blocky designs (Figure 62). A second standardized design, used both for consolidated and urban schools, was, despite the department's current interest in fire prevention, of wood frame construction (Figure 63). Other designs for consolidated schools still revealed the hand of a local designer working without direct control from the department (Figure 64).



**Figure 59.**

North Ward School, Portage la Prairie, 1910.  
(Karen Braden, Portage la Prairie University  
Womens' Club)



**Figure 60.**

Killarney schools. The 1906 building on the right  
was bigger, but retained the same architectural  
quality as the earlier 1893 school on the left.  
Both demolished. (*Reflections. Turtle Mountain  
Municipality and Killarney*, p. 110)



**Figure 61.**  
Justice Consolidated School, 1913. A few rural schools were built with this low-slung design.



**Figure 62.**  
Starbuck School, 1910-11. When it was built, this was described by educational authorities as "perhaps the best rural school building in the province." (PAM)





**Figure 63.**

Roblin Primary School, 1912. In plan a derivation of Samuel Hooper's Design No. 3, this standardized scheme was enlivened by the use of contrasting wood cladding and pedimented windows. (*Shell River Municipality. Century One*, p. 260)



**Figure 64.**

Cameron Consolidated School, 1916. Many larger schools were still built according to picturesque designs.

The construction of two-room schools followed a similar pattern. The designs for many of these buildings continued to rely on the plan and decorative character developed in the 1890s, and were, for the most part, unique (Figure 65). At the same time, there were a few two-room buildings constructed with a recognition of new developments, especially for larger window openings (Figure 66).

As the century progressed, however, there was a gradual adoption, for larger schools, of a distinctly new plan. Developed in opposition to the typical square plan of the 1890s, with its central staircase, the new scheme was an elongated rectangle, with corridors linked to a transverse stairblock. The basic impetus for the new plan was to ensure easy egress for students in case of fire. Many of these schools continued to be built with small individual windows (Figure 67), but by the end of the period, and with the widespread availability of iron beams that could carry the weight, there was an increasing adoption of the bank window design (Figure 68).

In Winnipeg, the population tripled over the course of this period. Naturally, more schools were required, and between 1903 and 1918 over thirty new buildings were constructed.<sup>36</sup> Initially, the designs for new buildings (still carried out by Commissioner J.B. Mitchell) were reiterations of the three storey, blocky designs of the 1890s. There were some differences, however. Mitchell stripped the buildings of much ornament, creating quiet, planar surfaces. He did lavish attention on the entrance towers, where his affection for decorative gables found expression (Figure 69).

There was great interest amongst Canadian architects during this period in the design of large schools, their interest perhaps piqued by the huge sums of money expended on the buildings. There was a keen interest in both design solutions and use of materials that would reduce the danger of fire. These concerns had gained stark recognition after the 1906 earthquake in San Francisco and the Hochelaga Quebec School fire in 1907 in which sixteen children perished.



**Figure 65.**

North End School, Neepawa, 1908. A typical two-room school recalled designs of the 1890s. Demolished. (*Neepawa. Land of Plenty*, p. 318)



**Figure 66.**

Phoenix School, ca. 1910, featured a Hooper-like bell tower and grouped window openings. Demolished. (PAM)



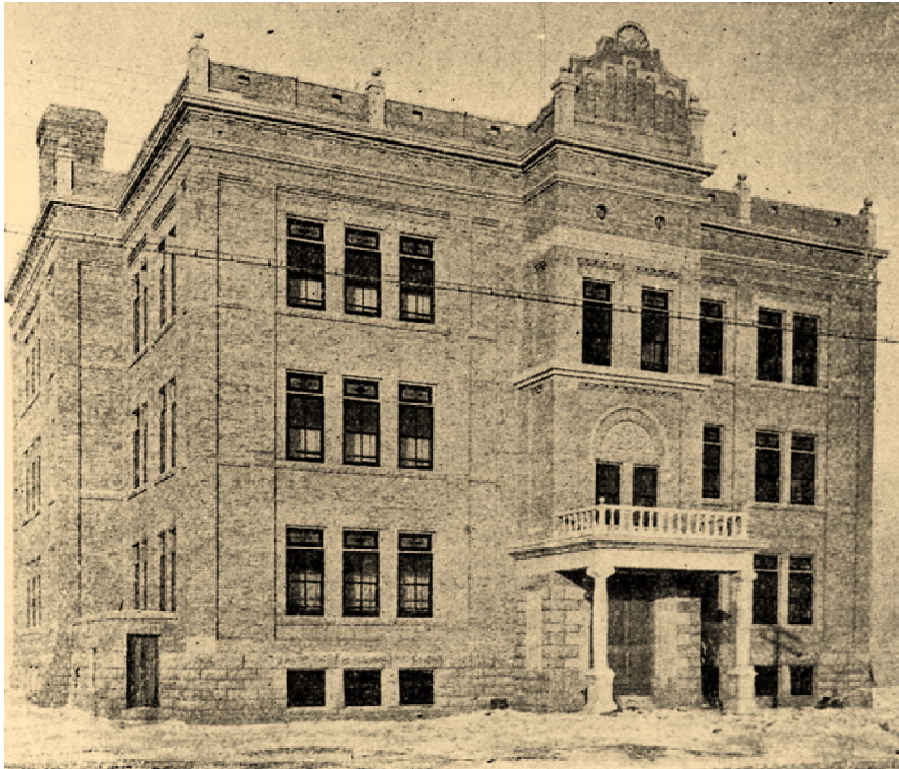
**Figure 67.**

Alexander School, 1911. The school had the elongated plan in vogue by 1910, but still featured separated window openings. Demolished. (*Whitehead Wanderings*, p. 14)



**Figure 68.**

Welwood Consolidated School, 1917. A state-of-the-art school in a rural setting. Demolished. (*Carberry Plains. Century One*, p. 206)



**Figure 69.**

John M. King School, Winnipeg, 1905. An example of Mitchell's later three-storey designs, this featured several elements that were to become familiar on most of his school buildings: a decorative gable on the tower and a detailed roof parapet. Demolished. (Building Department, Winnipeg School Division No. 1

Throughout the country new urban school buildings were two, rather than three storeys, to ensure better escape potential. Fire-resistant materials, especially concrete, were used extensively. Stairs were considered of key importance. The oak staircases so common a decade earlier were updated in the new schools with cast iron. At the same time, the designs for most schools were becoming more clearly institutional, with smooth uncluttered surfaces and extensive glazing.

The Winnipeg School Board opted wholeheartedly for this new type of building. And the architect for all of the schools built during this period, Mitchell (who would hold that position until 1928), was a strong advocate of the new sensibility. He was convinced that schools should convey a simplicity of style. They were to be quiet, with a dignity of form, good internal lighting conditions, ventilation, heating and, of course, escape. Compared with the squat, three-storey, schools constructed during the 1890s, these new structures were massively proportioned, extremely expensive, and capable of accommodating up to 1,200 students.

The first project undertaken, in 1907, was Luxton School. Compared to an earlier building like Isbister, Luxton School was larger (and with an addition in 1915, very much larger) (Figure 70). However, by the time that Isaac Brock School was constructed in 1913, this type of school had reached enormous proportions (Figures 71 and 72). Almost four Isbisters could be contained in Isaac Brock.

Between 1907 and 1915, ten of this type of school were erected. Although each was unique, and an exceptional design, they shared certain qualities. The first three buildings (Luxton, Cecil Rhodes and La Verendrye) were derived from Classical villa traditions. Their long rectangular facades were broken down into three bays, with a projecting or inset bay for the entrance, which was raised; a formal staircase provided access. An eclectic range of gable designs (usually of Dutch or Tudor inspiration), were used on the towers, as well as occasionally on other elevations.



**Figure 70.**

Luxton School, Winnipeg, 1907. The first of Col. Mitchell's up-to-date designs exhibits the traits that were to characterize his buildings before 1918: a horizontal two-storey configuration enlivened by a projecting bay, dichromatic brick panels, Classical details and a decorated gable, all carried out in very expensive materials. (Building Department, Winnipeg School Division No. 1)



**Figure 71.**

Isaac Brock School, Winnipeg, 1913. The largest school of its type (and costing \$250,000), this school shows Col. Mitchell's attention to Gothic Revival styling, especially seen in the composition and detailing of the tower.

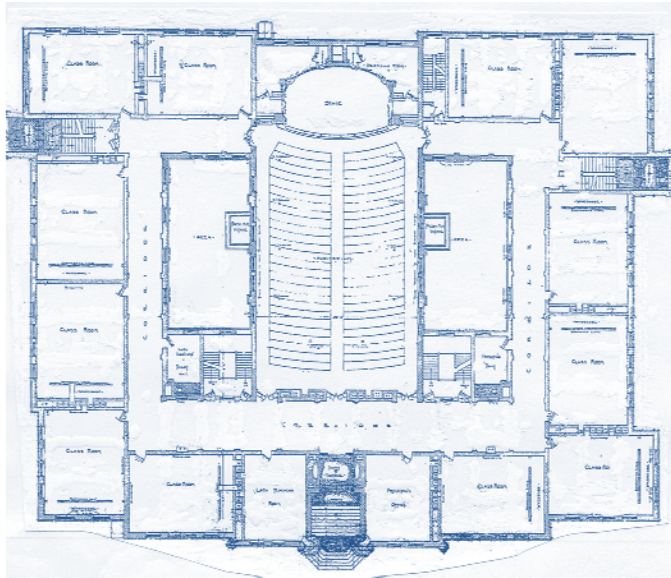
As the designs increased in size, the main facade became elongated and Mitchell used a variety of treatments to create visual interest across the huge expanses of brick and glass. This could be accomplished with projecting and recessed bays, tall towers, elaborate entrance porticoes, staircases and decorative brickwork (Figure 73). He continued to rely on the gable to punctuate the towers and rooflines, although the influence of the Romanesque Revival and Late Gothic Revival also gained favour. Wall buttresses, blind arcades, crenellations, corbel tables, as well as decorated windows were all used on a building like Isaac Brock.

A completely new educational phenomenon also was to have a great impact on Winnipeg's school architecture during this period. In response to an increasingly industrial economy, technical schools had been introduced in Ontario in the mid-1880s to provide manufacturers with appropriately educated future employees. By the early 20th century, such schools were gigantic, with design requirements for a considerable variety of large vocational-training spaces.

Winnipeg was the first city in western Canada to construct technical schools, and it ambitiously undertook two projects in 1910. One school - St. John's - was for the north end; the other, named Kelvin, was constructed for students in the south end. The designs, by Col. Mitchell, were identical (Figure 74), thus saving the board a huge amount of money. Massive as all Mitchell's large school designs were, he also was occasionally called on to design slightly more modest school buildings. For a small school in Tuxedo he was able to produce a build of exceptional quality (Figure 75).

The growth of Winnipeg's suburban communities had reached a level, by 1910, where the construction of large school buildings became necessary. For the most part, architects working for the suburban school boards had fewer opportunities and, of course, much smaller budgets than had Col. Mitchell. Nevertheless, there were some fine buildings designed and erected.





**Figure 72.**

Isaac Brock School, Winnipeg, 1913. The two facades, above, are certainly impressive, but the plan below better conveys the enormity of the building. (Building Department, Winnipeg School Division No. 1)



**Figure 73.**

Laura Secord School, Winnipeg, 1912. Mitchell had a fondness for a brick with a slightly orange cast, but occasionally used grey brick that gave schools like Laura Secord a more classical appearance. (PAM)



**Figure 74.**

Kelvin Technical High School, Winnipeg, 1910. This and St. John's Technical High School were identical, and the only examples of Mitchell's designs to be carried out in red brick. Demolished. (PAM)



**Figure 75.**

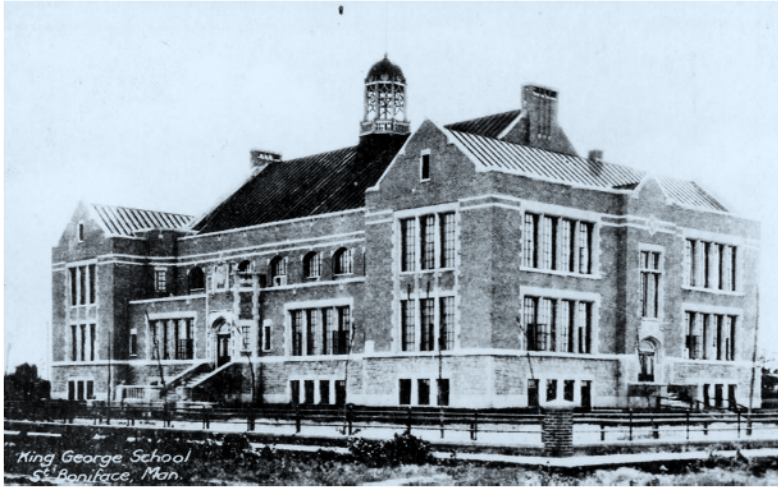
Julia Clark School, Winnipeg, 1918. When the occasion demanded, Col. Mitchell could also design beautifully at a smaller scale. Demolished. (PAM)

St. Boniface had been an established community for years, and while most of its best educational facilities had remained separate from the public system, there were several large public schools built during this period. The most sophisticated, architecturally, was designed by H. Greene in 1915. With its complex plan and fine details, King George V School was certainly an architectural rival to any of the schools being constructed in Winnipeg School District No. 1 at that time (Figure 76).

Each of Winnipeg's other school districts undertook at least one large school building project during this period. Relying on the services of different architects, the school boards of the towns of East Kildonan, St. James, St. Vital and Transcona produced school buildings that in many respects relied on the same planning used by Col. Mitchell, but were nonetheless quite distinct architecturally.

A building like Linwood School in St. James clearly reflects the long low plan of two storey height seen in the city of Winnipeg (Figure 77). However, the architect for Linwood, A. Melville, working on a much smaller budget, produced a simple external treatment enlivened by the use of contrasting red brick and light grey concrete, with some minor Gothic Revival detailing at the entrance. A more thorough investigation of the possibilities of Late Gothic Revival was used by the architect on two of East Kildonan's large schools from this period. Both constructed in 1915, Lord Kitchener and Lord Wolseley schools were built on slightly different plans, but otherwise shared a nearly identical external treatment (Figure 78).

With the advance of settlement into the northern reaches of the province between 1903 and 1918 came the need for substantial school accommodation. Thus, for example, only three years after the community at The Pas was incorporated as a town in 1912, a new - and large - public school was constructed (Figure 79).



**Figure 76.**

King George V School, Winnipeg, 1915, an exceptional building designed by H. Greene. (PAM)



**Figure 77.**

Linwood School, Winnipeg, 1913. For this school in St. James, architect A. Melville used the familiar two-storey massing, but with a more modest detail expression.



**Figure 78.**

Lord Kitchener School, Winnipeg, 1915. A variety of Gothic Revival details, and handsome concrete inset panels, were used to enrich this compact design.



**Figure 79.**

The Pas School, 1915, designed by architect G.N. Taylor. Demolished. (PAM)