

Heritage Property Name: Trinity United Church

Property Address: 90 Spring Street
Owner's Name: Trinity United Church
Mailing Address: 90 Spring Street
City: Summerside, PE
Postal Code: C1N 3E4
PID Number: 321885
Inventory Number:
Occupant: Trinity United Church
Building Also Known As: Summerside Methodist Church
Date of Construction: 1893-94
Architects: George E. Baker 1893
G. Keith Pickard 1957 and 1982 additions
Gillis and Guimond 1988 renovation
Bergmark Guimond Hammarlund Jones 2007 addition

Builders: Schurman, Clark and Co 1893-94
M. F. Schurman & Co. Ltd. 1957 addition
Star Construction Ltd. 1982 addition
Williams, Murphy & MacLeod 1988 renovation
Rideau Construction Inc. 2007 addition

Construction Material: Wood, concrete
Original Owner: Summerside Methodist Church (1893-1925)
Subsequent Owners: Trinity United Church (1925-)

Historical Building Facts:

The large church building at the southwest corner of Spring and Winter Streets belongs to the congregation of Summerside's Trinity United Church. The 1893 structure has been extended in various stages and currently has a sizable footprint on the church land, which is bounded on the north by Winter Street, on the east by Spring Street, and on the south by the City's attractive park known as Memorial Square.

The history of the congregation predates the building by several decades. The first Methodist services were believed to have taken place around 1850,¹ people meeting in homes until 1853 when they were able to use the Western School. In October of that year their minister, G. O. Huestis, accepted the offer by Joseph Green of a lot on the north side of First Street in order for the adherents to erect a chapel. A building committee was formed in 1854, but it wasn't until 1859 that construction was carried out, with the official opening in January 1860.² The chapel was saved from destruction in 1866 due to the response of the Union Fire Department, which used its hand pumper to extinguish the flames.³

¹ Pioneer 28 June 1887

² Saints and Sinners, by George A. Leard, p.13, 16

³ Journal 11 January 1866

In 1883 a national union among churches based in Methodism led to the local amalgamation of the Methodists, or more accurately the Wesleyan Methodists, and Bible Christian congregations.⁴ It was decided that the Bible Christian building built in 1874⁵ on the northwest corner of Spring and Winter Streets would become the place of worship and that the Methodist chapel would be sold.⁶ The 1859 building was leased to the Salvation Army⁷ until a buyer came forward in 1887.⁸ The new owner, Daniel MacNeill, used the former church for his carriage making business.⁹ In 1906 he sold the building to the congregation of St. Paul's Roman Catholic Church, who remodelled it as a parochial hall.¹⁰ It was torn down in 1972.¹¹

The combined congregations became known as the Summerside Methodist Church and held services in the former Bible Christian building from October 1883¹² until 1894, the year that the existing church was officially opened. Land for the new building had been acquired in 1892 from Lot 19 resident James Tuplin, who had purchased the property from Angus MacMillan for \$1600 in 1875.¹³ The price indicates that a house occupied the lot, which measured 150 along Winter and 100 feet along Spring Street. The Methodist Church trustees in May 1893 recorded that the house, occupant unnamed, was moved prior to digging the foundation for their new building.¹⁴

Tenders for the erection of the church were called in February 1893,¹⁵ the plans having been drawn up by local architect George E. Baker. The contract was awarded to Schurman, Clark & Co. of Summerside¹⁶ and the foundation walls were underway by the end of May.¹⁷ The cornerstone ceremony took place on the 3rd of August¹⁸ with a Masonic ritual. Two dates were carved into two separate stones, one being A.D. 1893 and the other A.L. 5893, the Anno Lucis date known to the Masonic order. According to George A. Leard, who wrote a history of Trinity United Church in 1958 “this is rarely seen in church foundations.”¹⁹

The work of building the church continued into 1894.²⁰ By the end of July it was nearing completion and an article in the Charlottetown Guardian gave many details including the following: “The church is Gothic in construction and has two towers – one large and one small with entrances to the church through each. At the back of the building are two doors one leading

⁴ Saints and Sinners, p.30 & 41

⁵ Journal 10 September 1874

⁶ Pioneer 19 February 1884

⁷ Pioneer 23 February 1886

⁸ Journal 10 March 1887

⁹ Journal 30 June 1887

¹⁰ Island Farmer 4 April 1906
Agriculturalist 2 June 1906

¹¹ MHCA VF - Churches

¹² Pioneer 23 October 1883

¹³ Deed Books 22/604 and 3/141

¹⁴ George Leard files

¹⁵ Journal 15 February 1893

¹⁶ Saints and Sinners, p.34

¹⁷ Journal 31 May 1893

¹⁸ Journal 26 July 1893

¹⁹ Saints and Sinners, p.36

²⁰ Pioneer 21 May 1894

into the pastor's room on the right, and the other on the left leading into the choir room... The dimensions are: nave, 45 x 70; transepts, 8 x 30; choir, 25 x 15... The windows are tinted with different colored cathedral glass... The total cost of the land and buildings complete will be a little over \$8000... The Methodists of this town are to be congratulated on having such a splendid church, which we venture to say, is second to none in this province; and the citizens of Summerside should be proud of having such an ornament to their town."²¹

The official opening on August 12th was much anticipated and assurances were made that extra chairs could supplement the 500 seats available in the cushioned pews.²² A morning, afternoon, and evening service drew throngs of people, many coming from other parts of the province. It was announced from the pulpit that the financial situation was very favorable. The contract price of \$5,500 and the other necessary outlay of \$1,200 amounted to \$7,700, of which a balance of \$1,750 remained.²³ The building formerly used by the church on the opposite side of Winter Street was remodelled for use as a church hall and Sunday School and became known as Epworth Hall.²⁴

Twelve years after the opening of the church building, it was threatened by the Great Fire of 1906 that swept through the town in October of that year. The government drill hall to the south was destroyed, but the space afforded by the public square contributed to the survival of the church.²⁵ A human factor also played a role as evidenced by the purse of silver presented to George Sudsbury by the congregation later that month. According to the local press, "Mr. Sudsbury, at the risk of his life, stood on the roof throughout the fiery shower, pouring water wherever the sparks caught. It was mainly through his efforts that the church was saved."²⁶

In 1909 a Cassavant pipe organ was installed in the church.²⁷ The congregation was thriving and the following year a new parsonage was constructed at 175 Spring Street.²⁸ When some renovations were made to the church in 1914, the congregation held services in Epworth Hall,²⁹ which had been enlarged earlier in the year.³⁰ The years passed and no changes to the status quo took place until 1925. In that year a national union of Methodist and Presbyterian Churches led to the formation of the United Church of Canada. Only some of the local Presbyterians were in favor of the union and consequently the denomination has retained its presence in Summerside. Those that joined with the Methodists helped to choose the name of Trinity United Church as the name for the union congregation.³¹

In the following two decades no major changes were made to the church property. In 1933, in anticipation of future expansion, a 70-foot wide strip of land to the west of the church was

²¹ Island Guardian 26 July 1894

²² Island Farmer 2 August 1894

²³ Island Farmer 16 August 1894

²⁴ HPI Profile for Epworth Hall

²⁵ Saints and Sinners, p.38

²⁶ Journal 27 October 1906

²⁷ Island Farmer 11 August 1909

²⁸ Journal 22 June 1910

²⁹ Pioneer 19 December 1914

³⁰ Agriculturalist 19 September 1914

³¹ Saints and Sinners, p.42

purchased from Fanny Whitney, the owner and occupant of the house next door.³² In 1938 the first of many memorial stained-glass windows was unveiled.³³ Its location in the south transept was balanced the following year by the installation of the World War I memorial window placed in the north transept.³⁴ Other beautiful windows were presented in following years with the result that all the windows in the sanctuary are stained glass.³⁵ In 1982 they were all shielded with a layer of Plexiglas.³⁶

Some alterations were made to the basement of the church in 1947. The original seven-foot foundation³⁷ was further excavated in order to gain useable space beneath the building. The work resulted in the creation of a series of Sunday School classrooms surrounding an open area which the congregation could use as an auditorium. During the same year, a new oil heating system was installed.³⁸ Also, through the generosity of the Ladies Social Club, the church was rewired and a new lighting system put in place.³⁹

The first major structural change to the building occurred in 1957. Fundraising for an expansion began in 1955 and close to \$100,000 was pledged by the congregation. Architectural plans were drawn by Keith Pickard of Summerside⁴⁰ and Douglas Webber of Halifax. In April 1957 the contract for an expansion was awarded to local construction firm M. F. Schurman & Co. Ltd.⁴¹ During the several months required for the large project, church services were held in Epworth Hall. The work involved extending the length of the church by 56-feet in a westerly direction, and maintaining the 45-foot width of the original nave, thus creating seating for an additional 200 persons.

The original finish of the building was continued into the addition and a new chancel was built. A separate chamber was created at the back of the chancel to conceal the pipes of the organ, which was reconditioned as part of the project.⁴² A choir room and a new minister's office were also made possible, as was new seating throughout the entire sanctuary. In the basement of the building a fireproof boiler room was constructed and a new boiler and furnace were installed. Additional space on that level was used to create more Sunday School rooms and an exit was installed on the south side.⁴³ The official rededication service of the newly expanded church took place on Sunday, 17 November 1957.⁴⁴

The continued growth of the congregation of Trinity United Church necessitated another major expansion to the building in 1982. A building committee brought forward its recommendation in February of that year and the sod was turned in April. Once again, the architect was Keith

³² Deed Register Book 75/795

³³ Journal 6 June 1938

³⁴ Journal 2 October 1939

³⁵ Saints and Sinners, p.47-48

³⁶ TUC Annual Report 1982

³⁷ TUC Trustees report 1893

³⁸ TUC Annual meeting report Jan. 1948

³⁹ TUC Trustees meeting March 1947

⁴⁰ Saints and Sinners, p.57

⁴¹ Journal-Pioneer 24 April 1957

⁴² Journal-Pioneer 27 September 1957

⁴³ Journal-Pioneer 24 April 1957

⁴⁴ Journal-Pioneer 18 November 1957

Pickard.⁴⁵ He drew plans for a further expansion to the west, this time measuring 84 feet in length. The addition was in the shape of a U, which wrapped around the 1957 addition expanding the width of the church at the western end to 74 feet. Entry or exit points into the new section were placed on the south and west sides, as well into the office area on the north side, where a ramp was installed for wheelchair accessibility.⁴⁶

The outcome was a “church centre” at the cost of \$445,000 carried out by the firm of general contractor Aurele Arsenault.⁴⁷ The large addition resulted in the Strong Auditorium, named for the Strong family, and a large new kitchen, along with office space and washrooms on the upper level. On the lower floor, which was a concrete slab three feet higher than the earlier foundation, space was allotted for new offices for clergy, meeting room, several classrooms, kitchenette and additional washrooms. A special ladies meeting room with large above ground windows was named Epworth Parlour⁴⁸ in tribute to Epworth Hall that was torn down in March 1983.⁴⁹

A major renovation was carried out on the building in 1988. The original stone foundation was removed section-by-section and replaced with concrete. The basement floor and partitions were also replaced and new heating and wiring systems were installed. As part of the same contract, most of the exterior of the original church and 1957 addition was covered in vinyl siding, to match that of the 1982 extension. Wooden shingles can still be seen on the church tower and a few other upper sections of the exterior. The \$300,000 project, under the superintendence of architects Gillis and Guimond of Charlottetown, was concluded in November.⁵⁰

Another addition to the building took place in 2007. In that year a \$625,000 project led to increased space in the narthex or entryway of the church. The eastern elevation down to the depth of the existing foundation was extended towards Spring Street by sixteen feet, a change that entailed the redesign of the two main entrances. One faces Winter Street and the other Memorial Square, greatly improving access to the church sanctuary.⁵¹ The architectural firm of Bergmark Guimond Hammarlund Jones of Charlottetown drew the plans and supervised the work carried out by Rideau Construction Inc.

In addition to the increased lobby area the construction resulted in an adjacent washroom and cloakroom on the main level and a large multi-purpose room in the basement. The above ground foundation stones and the large stained glass windows on the east wall were removed and then replaced as the work progressed. Other changes carried out during the project included new lighting in the nave, a revamped sound system, cement steps and walkways, and an elevator installed in a small addition to the north side of the 1982 extension. The renovations were officially dedicated in December 2007.⁵²

⁴⁵ Review of Trinity United Church 1958-1993, p.29

⁴⁶ Architectural plans owned by TUC

⁴⁷ Journal-Pioneer 1 November 1982

⁴⁸ Review 1958-1993, p. 29

⁴⁹ HPI profile of Epworth Hall

⁵⁰ Church annual reports 1988 and 1989

⁵¹ Journal-Pioneer 12 December 2007

⁵² Rev. Andrew Richardson

Architectural Features:

Integrity:

Publications:

Summerside Saints and Sinners; A History of Trinity United Church, by George A. Leard, 1958
A Review of the Ministry of Trinity United Church 1958-1993, by Rev. Garland Brooks, 1994

Profile Completed:

Historical component 23 February 2010 (Jean MacKay)
MacNaught History Centre & Archives

Profile Revised:

Date of Designation:

Identifier number:

Related profiles:

Epworth Hall at corner of Spring & Winter (demolished 1983)
Thomas Johnston House at 151 Belmont (owned by TUC)