
Manitoba Heritage Council Paper

Pipestone Municipal Building

Reston, Manitoba
(438.A.001)

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A) History

The Village of Reston, an agricultural-based community of approximately 620 residents¹; is situated in the Rural Municipality of Pipestone in southwestern Manitoba. Reston is located just north of Provincial Highway No. 2, approximately 280 kilometres west of the City of Winnipeg and about 44 kilometres southwest of the Town of Virden. The rural municipality was incorporated on July 7, 1893 and currently has population of 1,795 people.²

In 1881 pioneers from southern Ontario began to homestead in an area that would become the Village of Reston. The area was largely inhabited by the Dakota Sioux Nation who had arrived from the United States around 1862.³ With the arrival of the Canadian Pacific Railway on Christmas Day, 1891, the settlement quickly became a thriving community. The settlement acquired the name **Reston** in 1892, a suggestion of the Peter Millekin family, after their former home on the bank of the River Eye in Scotland. In 1908, the Wolseley (Saskatchewan) - Reston CPR Branch line become operational, bringing even more prosperity to Reston and the surrounding district. Frank Manning, first editor of the village's newspaper, *The Reston Recorder*, wrote:

From the spring of 1893 onward, the new village forged ahead. By 1905, Reston was beginning to feel its importance. Times were good and the community was prosperous. There was a boom on in town real estate for there was establishment of new businesses and with this the erection of new homes.

Business was brisk and it was almost impossible to get tables at Reston House at meal times without a long wait. Horses were always in demand at the livery stable and implement men could hardly supply the demand for new implements.⁴

The Rural Municipality of Pipestone meetings commenced in 1893 and were regularly held in the villages of Reston, Sinclair and Pipestone, as well as the home of William Croft, an area pioneer and a founding member of the first rural municipal council. After 1909, all council meetings were held in the Village of Reston. In 1917, the site for the municipal office in Reston was purchased for a sum of \$100.00. William A. Elliott, a prominent Brandon architect, designed the municipal building and A.H. Bushy, a Reston contractor, erected the building for \$6,713.60. The first meeting in the new structure was held on March 6, 1918⁵ and has served the Rural Municipality of Pipestone for 79 years.

B) Style

The Rural Municipality of Pipestone Municipal Building can be characterized as a good, although a somewhat subdued example of Italianate architecture. It is a style that was popular from 1880-1900 and brought to Manitoba by early settlers from Ontario. The style, loosely based on the Renaissance villas of Italy, was characterized by an L or T-shaped plan, low pedimented roof, a tower and classical detail application.⁶ Italianate architecture was primarily a residential style, but was certainly suitable for the Pipestone Municipal Building. The building is a very late example of Italianate architecture, but the main forms of the style remain -- low pitch roof, tower, segmented arch window heads accented by quoins -- although the detailing is considerably simplified.

C) Construction

The Rural Municipality of Pipestone Municipal Building is of standard wood frame construction with brick and stucco cladding and set on a concrete foundation. The two-storey rectangular structure has retained its original 1917-18 exterior appearance. The main floor is sheathed in red brick while the upper floor is covered with a beige-coloured stucco. The corner tower also incorporates brick and stucco cladding, with wooden railings in the four arches beneath low-pitch tower roof. Segmentally arched window heads punctuated with brick quoins accent the ground floor corner entrance and an adjacent window. *Municipal Building and 1917* are engraved on Tyndall limestone tablets. Two bronze plaques on either side of the doorway cite the names of councillors who have served the municipality since 1893.

D) Design

The Pipestone Municipal Building is an attractive, yet simplified treatment of the Italianate style. Its subdued appearance may be because the building was constructed during the lean years of World War I. The building's layout is simple, yet functional. Space is allocated for a reception area, clerk's office, general work and file area, council chambers and other office space. The tower is accessible from the second floor.

E) Interior

The interior possessed a number of attractive elements original to the building. Doors and their hardware, door and window surrounds, staircase and railing, plus a very old, ornate vault, are original interior decorative elements. The walls have been sheathed in wood panelling and the ceiling has been covered with acoustic tiles. The basement is unfinished, houses the furnace, and is used as storage space.

F) Integrity

1. The structure occupies its original site.
2. With a few exceptions, the structure retains most of its original exterior and interior elements and design features. New shingles, steps and windows have replaced these original building components. Preliminary architectural drawings have been prepared for a sympathetic rear addition to the existing structure, but the project is on hold due to lack of funding.
3. The building is in good structural condition. The overhanging roof eaves require sanding and painting.

G) Streetscape

The Rural Municipality of Pipestone Municipal Building is located on Third Avenue and is surrounded by a small, open green space. It is the largest structure on the thoroughfare and flanked by a variety of other buildings, including a modest, wood-frame church, a theatre, several commercial structures, and two grain elevators. The municipal building is a fine example of a civic building set in a small Manitoba prairie town and contributes significantly to the streetscape.

H) Architect

The Municipal Building was designed by William A. Elliott, a prominent Brandon architect, who was responsible for many notable structures throughout Manitoba. Born in Wingham, Ontario, W.A. Elliott (1866-1947) trained as an architect in Chicago and New York. He practised in Montana for two years. In 1899, Elliott moved to Brandon, where he established an office and produced designs for many major buildings throughout western Manitoba and Saskatchewan. So extensive were his operations that he opened a branch office in Moose Jaw, the city in which, like Brandon, he was to building the Central Fire Hall (1911). As a creative architect, Elliott was comfortable whether designing an opera house, as at Virden (1911), or town halls, as at Carberry (1909) and Reston (1917). Also astounding was Elliott's architectural prolifically. Before World War I, more than 40 public schools in Manitoba had been erected to his plans in towns such as Baldur, Newdale, Elkhorn, Melita, Brookdale, Rivers, Oak River, Rapid City, and Reston. Brandon's Collegiate Institute (1907) and Park School (1904; demolished) are both by Elliott. During the same period, he was responsible for over 30 churches, the most important being the Methodist Churches in Souris and Brandon (1909; now

the Dutch Christian Reform Church) and his magnificent Gothic Revival work, St. Matthew's Anglican Cathedral (1912) in Brandon. Also in Brandon, Elliott's impressive output included Clark Hall at the University (1906), the Bank of Montreal (1905), most of the now demolished buildings for the Summer and Winter Fairs, the Cecil Hotel (1910; destroyed by fire), and the bottling house and warehouse of the Empire Brewing Company (1906). In 1913, W.A. Elliott was appointed Chief Inspector for the construction of the Manitoba Legislative Building.⁷

I) Person/Institution

The Rural Municipality of Pipestone Municipal Building has been the centre of civic politics for 79 years. The structure was one of many municipal buildings and town halls constructed in the province from 1880 to 1918, an era of vigorous settlement and development. The 104 year old Rural Municipality of Pipestone, incorporated in 1893, and the 79 year old municipal building have played a consistent and significant role in the development of this rural Manitoba district.

The first municipal act in Manitoba (1871) recognized existing parishes as units of local administration.⁸ In 1873, a new act was an attempt to approximate to Ontario institutions and allowed one or more townships to incorporate as municipalities. Springfield and Sunnyside incorporated in 1873 as the first municipality in the province. Kildonan and St. John's followed in 1875. The act was not viewed as satisfactory by Ontario settlers, who demanded more efficient municipal institutions and this became one of the issues in the election of 1874. The outcome was the *County Municipal Act* of 1877, which introduced the Ontario municipal system as far as local circumstances permitted. The need for municipal institutions in new settlements came largely from the desire to raise local revenues for local improvements, chiefly roads, bridges and drains. By 1878, when the first county municipality of Westbourne was formed, there was also the will to use local credit to offer bonuses for railway construction and also to promote the building of gristmills. The new municipal system helped to remedy the inability of the provincial government to provide adequate funds for local improvements. The earliest urban municipality was Winnipeg, which had been incorporated in 1873. The rival town of Emerson, confident in its future as a gateway to the province and in its population of over 2,000, followed in 1879. Selkirk, Portage la Prairie, Gladstone and some smaller communities followed in 1880-81, often encouraged by the advent of the railway and the need for local improvements to draw capital and population.

J) Event

The building possesses no known connection with an event of historical significance to Manitoba.

K) Context

Town halls and municipal buildings are important symbols of both the growth of the province and community pride. With the settlement of Manitoba and the creation of municipal governments, facilities were required to house the functions needed to deliver municipal services. Most communities chose to build rather than rent space, because the town hall or municipal building was generally accepted as an important physical part of the community landscape which could at once be a centre of local activity, an attractive asset in the centre of the community and serve as an advertisement for the community's pride, progress, stability and optimism. The basic building required a space for public council meetings and offices for municipal employees. Not surprisingly, other government or community functions were often added to the building program, the most common being community meeting or performances spaces, courtrooms, fire halls, and jail cells.

The Historic Resources Branch has records of twenty-two pre-1935 municipal buildings remaining in Manitoba -- see Appendix 1. Seventeen of them were built between 1900 and 1918; one was built earlier and four between 1919 and 1935. They are located throughout the province with nine in Westman; three in Parkland and Central; two in Winnipeg, Interlake and East; and one in Norman. They generally fall into two categories: eight were designed exclusively to house municipal offices and fourteen have additional functions and uses. The later are the larger and more elaborate buildings. Stylistically they are varied and range from high style of their period to functional buildings without architectural pretention. Thirteen of them remain in use as municipal offices. Twelve of the buildings remain largely intact or have been sympathetically modified. Five of them have been designated as provincial heritage sites and six have been designated as municipal heritage sites.

The Pipestone building of 1917 falls within the period in which the most town halls were built. It is located in Westman where the largest number of early town halls remain. While one of the smaller examples, built solely to house municipal functions, it is a very handsome building in Italianate style and has been little altered.

L) Landmark

The Rural Municipality of Pipestone Municipal Building is undoubtedly a very familiar landmark in the Village of Reston and throughout the municipality. It has been the hub of civic political activity for 79 years. Visitors to the municipal building are reminded of its long history by plaques and portraits dedicated to councillors who have served Pipestone municipality over the past seven decades.