

# AN ARCHITECTURE OF SOPHISTICATION IN THE KLONDIKE GOLD RUSH

## St. Paul's Anglican Church, Dawson, Yukon<sup>1</sup>

> EMILY TURNER

EMILY TURNER is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. Her research focuses on the development of missionary infrastructure in Canada's North in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She is particularly interested in the uses of architecture in the interactions between Europeans and indigenous people throughout the British colonial world. She holds a bachelor of fine arts from Queen's University in Kingston and a master's degree in theology from the University of Toronto.



FIG. 1. THOMAS W. FULLER, ST. PAUL'S ANGLICAN CHURCH, DAWSON CITY, YUKON, 1902. | EMILY TURNER.

The heartland of the Klondike gold rush, Dawson City, and its architecture occupy a unique place within the history of Canada's built environment. Its rapid development from Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in summer camp to boomtown to gently declining metropolis from the beginning of the 1890s to the turn of the twentieth century were marked by the development of a ubiquitous and unique gold rush architecture, found both in Dawson and the auxiliary towns of the Klondike rush. Generally associated with the commerce of the rush, as well as the romanticized and dramatic nightlife of late-nineteenth-century Dawson, the architecture of the town was also characterized by the development of structures intended to promote moral and social values within what was seen by some as a virtually lawless and morally bankrupt frontier society. Many of these structures were driven by Christian churches which flocked to the area in order to administer to the spiritual and physical needs of miners, businessmen, and their families newly arrived in an isolated community. Although a number of denominations were present in the Klondike throughout the gold rush, building a range of impressive and functional structures, one of the most well-known is undoubtedly St. Paul's Anglican Church (fig. 1), a large Carpenter Gothic church which has survived since its erection in 1902 and served as the cathedral of the Diocese of Yukon until 1953.

An impressive structure in its own right, the church was the culmination of a long period of Anglican involvement in the Yukon predating the Klondike rush



FIG. 2. ST. MATTHEW'S MISSION, FORT MCPHERSON, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES, N.D. | THE GENERAL SYNOD ARCHIVES, ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA, P7517 194.



FIG. 3. "REV. DR. SIM PREACHING TO THE INDIANS AT FORT RELIANCE, AUG. 18 1883." | ALASKA STATE LIBRARY, P277-01723.

by several decades where the denomination, under the jurisdiction of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the London-based evangelical mission society of the Church of England, worked amongst indigenous people in an attempt to convert them to Christianity. When examined in light of the Church's involvement in the Yukon, St. Paul's, its style and construction reflect both the developing and changing role of this religious organization in a remote region of Canada as well as the evolving social conditions within Dawson itself. A major departure from other ecclesiastical structures erected by the Church of England in the Yukon at the end of the nineteenth century, St. Paul's heralds the transformation of Dawson, from a gold-rush boomtown to a settled Canadian community, and the changing role for the Church in a region on the remote edge of its sphere of influence.

### YUKON BEFORE THE GOLD RUSH

The construction of St. Paul's is part of a much larger history of the Church of England in the Yukon, one which did not start with the Klondike gold rush. The Church of England had a longstanding presence in what is now Yukon Territory,

dating back to initial missions to the region's indigenous communities by the CMS. As part of a larger mission in Rupert's Land and the Northwest Territories, missionaries had entered the Yukon in the mid-1860s, before establishing permanent posts at Fort Yukon, Alaska, and Fort McPherson, Northwest Territories. Consistent with their pattern throughout the rest of Canada, the CMS established stations at or near Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) posts, in order to take advantage of their longstanding relationship with the Company and to make vital contacts with First Nations traders who visited the posts.<sup>2</sup> The Yukon region, however, was not the organization's priority, nor indeed was North America. Although William Kirkby, the missionary who had initially visited the region, heaped high praise on the potential of the region for missionary development, the CMS chose instead to focus its resources elsewhere, primarily on Africa and Asia where large populations made evangelism both easier and less expensive.<sup>3</sup>

As a result, the Yukon missions remained very small and focussed in the northern part of the territory throughout the 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s; financial and political

will aside, it was also very hard to recruit missionaries, many of whom preferred to head to warmer climes.<sup>4</sup> The Yukon missions, therefore, focussed primarily on itinerate ministry, using Fort Yukon, Fort McPherson and, later, Rampart House as bases from which to seek out First Nations communities to convert to Christianity.<sup>5</sup> Missionaries also ministered to the spiritual needs of the HBC staff, and indeed were explicitly instructed to do so, but there were few of them in the North and this ministry remained an auxiliary function of the CMS missionary whose primary occupation was the evangelism of indigenous people.<sup>6</sup> The Upper Yukon, and the future site of Dawson, was primarily visited in this manner, first by William C. Bompas, the future Bishop of Selkirk (Yukon), and, in the early 1880s, by the Reverend V.C. Sim.<sup>7</sup>

Infrastructure development, including church building, reflected these conditions. Very little construction was undertaken by the church and tended to focus on erecting rudimentary and basic structures that were focused on practical and functional needs. Generally placing emphasis on essential structures, such as mission houses, stations such as Fort

McPherson and Yukon often used combination school-chapels for long periods of time before erecting dedicated worship spaces; small congregations and a lack of funding made dedicated churches both unnecessary and impractical in the northern mission. Even when churches were erected, they were usually not stylistically distinctive. For example, the church at Fort McPherson (fig. 2), erected in 1877-1878, is a basic log structure, embellished only by its lancet windows, small belfry, and distinct chancel. While these characterize it not only as a church, but one following the basic tenets of the Gothic style, it is very rudimentary and visually quite far from the Carpenter Gothic churches erected in rural communities in southern and eastern Canada to serve established settler parishes.

In the early 1880s, however, the CMS had no infrastructure in what is now the southern part of Yukon Territory. Their only work in that region of the territory was undertaken by itinerate ministry. Sim, who died from starvation at Rampart House in the winter of 1885, spent his summers itinerating along the Yukon River, visiting posts as far west as Nulato, Alaska, and as far east as Fort Reliance, near present-day Dawson, in the summer of 1884.<sup>8</sup> He made it clear through his journal that his primary object was to evangelize local indigenous communities. Although he often came in contact with the miners, it appears that Sim did little to minister to their welfare. Visits to Reliance (fig. 3), which were completed by both Sim and indigenous teacher Herbert Tahitteyla during the 1884 season, were primarily for the Hän camp across the river from the fort at Nuklako; although the miners and their poor behaviour toward indigenous women are mentioned in his journals, there is no discussion of any non-indigenous ministry at Reliance.<sup>9</sup> Sim notes, however, several incidents of

sporadic ministry to the mining community, notably his baptism of the children of the traders at Tanana; non-indigenous ministry appears to have been, as it was elsewhere, an auxiliary endeavour for when time and situation allowed.<sup>10</sup> This, however, was not mission building work, but purely itinerate ministry.

From an architectural perspective, Sim's mission accomplished virtually nothing. The CMS did not have the staff to minister to the miners on any sort of permanent basis, nor indeed could they establish a permanent base for indigenous ministry in the Fort Reliance region, the latter of which was the CMS's actual goal in the region. Of his 1884 journey on the Yukon, Sim noted: "This is the worst of having so much country to go over I can't divide myself and go to several places at once though I would much like to do so. The Upper Yookon [*sic*] affords abundance of work for the Summer and Fall and I can do nothing more than pay it a flying visit."<sup>11</sup> In any case, ministering to the white population was not in his mandate. "Native evangelism," as ministering to indigenous people was called by the Society, was "the exclusive sphere of the CMS"<sup>12</sup> and providing spiritual services for non-indigenous people had always been secondary. No missions were established and no churches were built.

The evangelism of Yukon First Nations by the CMS corresponded neatly to another activity beginning to take place in the territory, with which it would eventually become intertwined: prospecting. Although popular mythology surrounding the Klondike gold rush often portrays the strike as providential or accidental, it was in fact the culmination of a long search; the Klondike strike was made, to put it simply, because people were looking for it.<sup>13</sup> Following the California gold rush of 1849, prospectors hoping to find the next

motherlode made their way up the Pacific coast, actively searching for large deposits of placer gold, which would eventually be found at Dawson. Gold was found in the Rockies, the British Columbia interior, and the Alaskan panhandle, sparking a series of small rushes to these locations throughout the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s, none of which compared to that in California in magnitude. It was surmised that gold was also present further north as an extension of the southern deposits and, by the early 1870s, a handful of prospectors were working in the Yukon River Basin. In fact, the presence of the mineral in the Yukon Valley was noted by the HBC as early as 1847 and again at Fort Yukon in 1864.<sup>14</sup> But gold extraction was not in their interest and nothing was said.

Prospecting in the Yukon continued throughout the 1870s and 1880s, attracting a small number of prospectors into the region. These were not the eager seekers of the Klondike rush but rather a limited group of men who looked for gold professionally. It was with these miners that the CMS first made contact with a non-indigenous and non-HBC population through Sim's visits to Reliance, a supply post established for the mining industry by prospector and businessman Jack McQuestern.<sup>15</sup> Moderate success was found at a few locations, such as Stewart River, but no major discovery was made until late 1886 when gold was found on Fortymile Creek.

The Fortymile strike was big, much bigger than other deposits which had been discovered, drawing in large numbers of miners already in the district, as well as from the outside when word was sent out via Dyea, Alaska.<sup>16</sup> New developments in placer mining techniques allowed for continual work on the creeks throughout the winter, encouraging miners to work year-round, and thus to establish a



FIG. 4. VIEW OF FORTYMILE TOWNSITE, LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY. | OLD LOG CHURCH MUSEUM, 1996-1-132.



FIG. 5. BUXTON MISSION, FORTYMILE, LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY. THE SCHOOL-CHAPEL APPEARS ON THE LEFT AND THE MISSION HOUSE ON THE RIGHT. | THE GENERAL SYNOD ARCHIVES, ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA, P7561 34.

more permanent base for themselves.<sup>17</sup> A number of temporary cabins were erected in the winter of 1886-1887, with construction continuing on a larger scale the following spring, beginning with the erection of a trading post and warehouse for the Alaska Commercial Company to supply the miners. Soon Fortymile had developed not just into a large mining camp, but rather into a proper town with a variety of services, including a trading post, restaurants, saloons, and an Northwest Mounted Police (NWMP) detachment; at its peak in 1893, the town housed about seven hundred inhabitants and covered nearly sixty acres (fig. 4), a precursor to Dawson on a smaller scale.<sup>18</sup>

#### FORTYMILE AND THE BUXTON MISSION

At around the same time as the Fortymile strike, Sim died at Rampart House leaving the CMS without a competent and motivated missionary and its only representative on the Upper Yukon. However, a posthumous appeal for funds and personnel from Sim, printed in the 1886 edition of the CMS's journal, the *Church Missionary Intelligencer*, resulted in a

substantial one hundred pound donation from prominent evangelical supporter, T. Fowell Buxton.<sup>19</sup> With the donation, the CMS finally was able to establish a permanent mission on the Upper Yukon: at Fortymile, where local indigenous groups were travelling in order to trade with the miners. The Fortymile mission, named Buxton Mission after its patron, began operating the following year under J.W. Ellington, who was soon succeeded by Bompas, who set up his diocesan headquarters there with the division of the Yukon as a separate diocese from the neighbouring Mackenzie River in 1891.<sup>20</sup>

The new mission at Fortymile, which was funded and seen to be fairly permanent, allowed for the CMS to develop infrastructure devoted to the mission, beginning with a small mission house in 1887, and later a combined school-worship space (fig. 5).<sup>21</sup> Yet, at the town, they found themselves forced to administer to two separate populations and to develop their infrastructure accordingly. The CMS did not have a mandate to minister to non-indigenous people; while they had done so at HBC posts, as well as for various miners on the Yukon watershed,

the white population had been, up to that time, so small that English ministry formed an auxiliary and limited aspect of their evangelical work. This was not possible at Fortymile where the white population was large and Bompas felt that they too needed the spiritual services of the church.<sup>22</sup> Here, for the first time, the Church realized that it was going to have to minister to a white population and it was going to be separate from their work amongst indigenous communities, the general practice of the CMS, when working in areas with both white and indigenous populations.<sup>23</sup> Mining had completely changed the landscape of the CMS's mission. Used to a region primarily inhabited by fairly scattered groups of indigenous people, as well as the concentrated but small population of HBC employees, they were suddenly faced with a growing community with a focus primarily on mineral extraction. Bompas, who was not enthusiastic about the new inhabitants of his diocese, wrote disparagingly in a letter to the CMS: "My first trip took me through the mining district and it appeared a strange contrast to the usual loneliness of winter travel in the north."<sup>24</sup>



As a result, two parallel missions were established: one on Mission Island, a small island just off the shore of the Yukon River, for indigenous ministry, and another within the town itself. Bompas, who believed that indigenous people needed protection from outside influence, saw the miners as morally corrupt and detrimental to his evangelical mission and saw the segregation of the indigenous congregation he built at Fortymile as the only way to retain a role for the CMS in the North. He wrote: “the influence of the miners is unfavourable to our mission work... The standard of religion and morality among the miners is, I fear, low.”<sup>25</sup> Not only segregating indigenous and white congregations, the divided mission resulted in the development of infrastructure for the white community, whose religious affairs were overseen by the Reverend Richard J. Bowen, reflecting European needs and expectations, reorienting the Anglican Church in the Yukon toward the newcomers in the goldfields; similarly, additional funding was sought from the Colonial and Continental Church Society (CCCS) to further support activities that were not within the scope of the CMS’s activities.<sup>26</sup> In fact, by 1896, Bowen had been removed entirely from the CMS’s registers and funding from the Canadian Church was sought for the work amongst the miners.<sup>27</sup> The CMS continued its indigenous mission, establishing stations at Fort Selkirk (1892), Moosehide (1897), and Carcross (1900), but divorced itself from the mining community, leaving it as a separate field of work.<sup>28</sup> This development signalled a dramatic shift in regards to how architecture was approached for a significant portion of the Church of England’s work in the Yukon. No longer was infrastructure development based on the needs, both perceived and real, of indigenous communities who missionaries hoped to convert, but rather on a white population with preconceived

expectations of the church, its role in the community, and its architecture.

But that infrastructure had to respond to the needs of the area in which it was built and the reality was that the Yukon Territory was a frontier region. It was isolated and far from the centres of power; while Fortymile was nominally in Canada, the Canadian government had done very little in the way of developing that region either economically or politically. Furthermore, although trade and transport were improving rapidly, the community was very isolated. Like its forerunner, the HBC post, it provided a lone centre of European life in a land still dominated by indigenous people and their economy: a temporary base for resource extraction and further exploration.<sup>29</sup> The miners were not settlers but rather products of a frontier culture whose primary focus was finding gold.<sup>30</sup> They understood themselves to be within a wilderness context far separate from life in Europe, the United States, and southern Canada. Reminiscing of the strikes at Fortymile, Circle City, and Dawson, and his experiences there, American novelist Jack London wrote: “In order that this colossal adventure may be fully grasped the recentness and the remoteness of Alaska must be emphasized. The interior of Alaska and the contiguous Canadian territory was a vast wilderness. Its hundreds of thousands of square miles were as dark and chartless as Darkest Africa.”<sup>31</sup> For many prospectors, this made it attractive as they were lured by the unknown, but the landscape remained firmly wild.<sup>32</sup> Placer mining required settlement in order to take full advantage of the technique, a move away from earlier prospecting; similarly, the establishment of an NWMP base at the site marked an evolving interest on the part of the Canadian government in exercising some influence over the area.<sup>33</sup> But at the same time, it

remained a transitory, isolated area, one which could easily be abandoned once a better strike was found elsewhere, a condition to which the mass exodus to Circle City in 1895 can attest.

It was regarded as very much a missionary frontier as well. Although Bompas optimistically wrote to his brother in 1895: “I think after a few years, this District will become quite a civilized and prosperous place,”<sup>34</sup> the region was still a wilderness populated primarily by indigenous people with Fortymile an isolated and transitory settlement but not one that detracted from the CMS’s main mission to indigenous people. It was also viewed as such at home with one summary of the global mission enterprise remarking: “It is wonderful to think of this pioneering work of the Church, ministering to the needs of all these scattered settlements—to Indians, and fur-traders and gold miners—and planting missions almost up to the Arctic regions.”<sup>35</sup> The work done by the CMS was not parish work, but rather front-line evangelism, seeking out new areas and communities to bring into the Christian fold.

The buildings erected at the Fortymile site for secular as well as religious purposes reflected both the identity and practical consideration of the frontier and frontier communities. They were not intended to be stylistically distinctive and used a range of materials, from logs (fig. 6) to sheet metal (fig. 7), in order to erect structures that were functional and solid but not particularly costly. The primary focus was functionality, not style, and the aesthetic considerations later seen in Dawson were not present here, a trend which extended to ecclesiastical construction.

The initial building used by Bowen for services for the new community was the front room of a log cabin, rented from



FIG. 6. TELEGRAPH STATION, FORTY MILE, C. 1893. | EMILY TURNER.

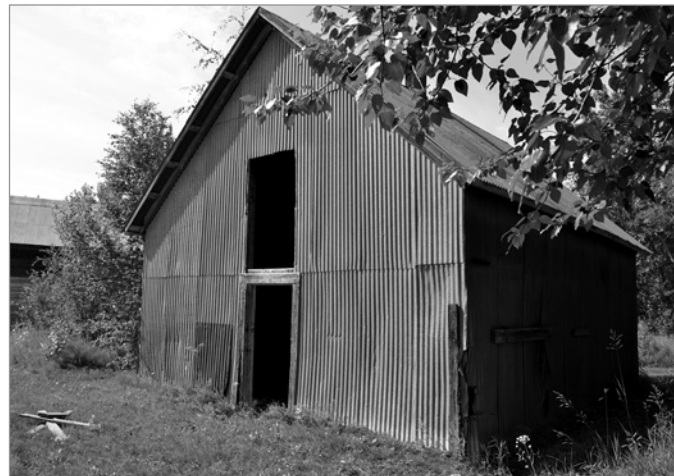


FIG. 7. FISH HOUSE, FORTY MILE, LATE 1890S. | EMILY TURNER.

a local shopkeeper. It is not known by whom or when it was constructed. He wrote: "The first was a log cabin, about eighteen feet by twenty-four feet. I planned the size of the church should be for the time being, eighteen by twelve, leaving about the same area for my living quarters."<sup>36</sup> This initial space quickly became too small to accommodate the miners who quickly showed interest.<sup>37</sup> Bowen was well respected amongst the miners, both for his accommodation of their lifestyle in his ministry and the medical services he provided which translated into a regular congregation. It is not known what this initial structure looked like, but from Bowen's discussion it is likely to have resembled any number of the early mining cabins at Fortymile which, while serving his personal needs initially, did not have a specific aesthetic mandate.

A new combination house-chapel was erected the following year, but its design was also purely functional. Bowen had been sent out by the CMS as an industrial agent, specifically "a carpenter... for putting up churches,"<sup>38</sup> and set to work constructing buildings himself,

given the high expense of local labour; it was finished that autumn by Canadian missionaries H.A. Naylor and Frederick Flewelling, who had been sent out to assist with the growing number of miners in the region.<sup>39</sup> This structure, which still stands on the site and is known as St. James Church (fig. 8), was constructed with rounded logs notched top and bottom, and chinked with moss (fig. 9), with a moss roof. The belfry appears to have been added later. The interior was divided into living quarters and a service room; a drawing of the latter (fig. 10), which measured about thirteen by twenty feet, shows a basic internal arrangement with communion table, benches, and a harmonium, the last of which was donated by Selina Bompas from the Buxton Mission.<sup>40</sup> Its square windows, although un-ecclesiastical, were easy to obtain as they were the same type of windows used in houses and log cabins, emphasizing concerns of practicality over aesthetics.

#### DAWSON CITY

Bowen also erected two other buildings in the Yukon territory: one at Dawson between 1897 and 1898 and another at

Whitehorse in 1900.<sup>41</sup> Unlike the structure at Fortymile, these were dedicated church buildings, as the population warranted it; the congregation at Fortymile, although enthusiastic, was not large. But, like that at Fortymile, both were primitive structures that reflected their location on the frontier of the Canadian and European worlds. At the same time, both responded to the growing population of the territory, which demanded new settlements as well as churches to serve them.

The church at Dawson (fig. 11) was constructed to serve the population that rushed to the new centre in response to the Klondike gold rush; that particular event in Canadian history needs no recounting here. The Anglican Church had established a mission at the new townsite in 1896, primarily to serve the Hän community, now Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation, whose traditional territory it was, and initially conducted their mission out of a sod-roofed cabin, constructed quickly by Flewelling, sixteen by twenty feet and consisting of three small rooms with plans to expand once the magnitude and importance of the strike were clear.<sup>42</sup> With the removal of the First Nations



FIG. 8. R.J. BOWEN, ST. JAMES ANGLICAN CHURCH, FORTY MILE, 1896. | EMILY TURNER.



FIG. 9. DETAIL OF LOG CONSTRUCTION, ST. JAMES ANGLICAN CHURCH, 1896. | EMILY TURNER.

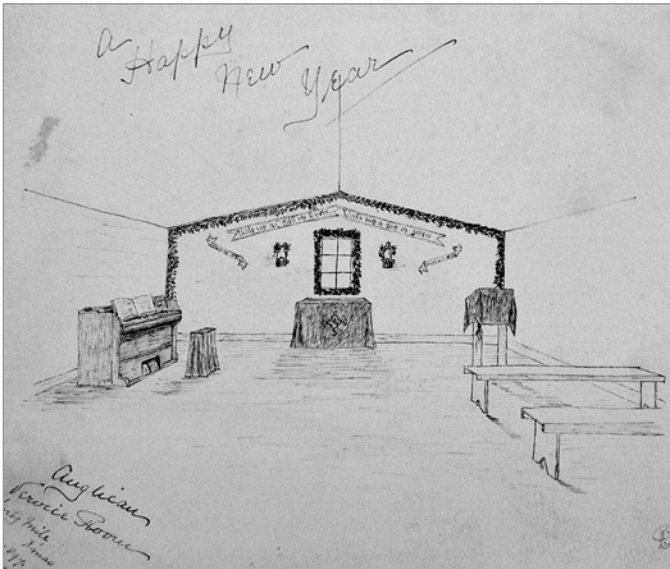


FIG. 10. SERVICE ROOM, FORTY MILE, C. 1897. | THE GENERAL SYNOD ARCHIVES, ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA, P7518 75.

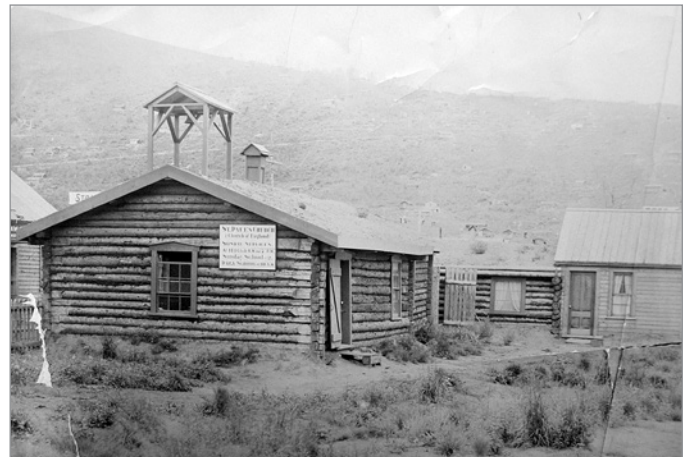


FIG. 11. BOWEN, OLD ST. PAUL'S ANGLICAN CHURCH, DAWSON, 1897-1898. | THE GENERAL SYNOD ARCHIVES, ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA, P7518 77.

community to Moosehide in 1897 and the rapid expansion of the white population around the mines, Bowen erected a separate church to serve the needs of the growing community. This structure was a long low building with square windows and a small, frame belfry, very similar to its predecessor at Fortymile.

The church at Whitehorse (fig. 12) followed a similar pattern. Also designed and erected by Bowen as Whitehorse grew into an important transportation hub for the Yukon interior, both the church and adjoining rectory used the same method of rounded log construction present at Dawson and Fortymile. The initial church

at Whitehorse had actually been a tent in which Bowen gave services.<sup>43</sup> Given the size of the growing community, the worship space was also in a separate building, as at Dawson, but apart from this separation, the pattern begun at Fortymile of erecting basic frontier churches with logs and few defining aesthetic features





FIG. 12. R.J. BOWEN, CHRIST CHURCH, WHITEHORSE, 1900. | EMILY TURNER.



FIG. 13. ST. PAUL'S ANGLICAN CHURCH, DAWSON, REAR VIEW, 1902. | EMILY TURNER.

continued here. The church is identified as such by its free-standing, decorative belfry and small bellcote, as well as the frontal entrance porch, but the square windows and notched log are directly reminiscent of other early structures erected in the Yukon during the 1890s and early 1900s.

These churches reflect a young settler society with limited resources and uncertain demographics. They were the initial construction projects in a territory which had previously been a region inhabited almost solely by First Nations people and fur traders. In 1896, it was not entirely clear what the impact of the Klondike and Fortymile strikes would be. Mining populations in gold rush areas were notoriously transient with many moving off to the next strike when it was found; this occurred in Dawson in 1899 when gold was found at Nome.<sup>44</sup> From the perspective of the Church, these early structures were intended to serve these populations only temporarily, either to be abandoned when the mining dried up, which eventually happened at Fortymile, or to be replaced when the future of the community was clear, which occurred

at both Dawson and Whitehorse. These early buildings were not intended to be aesthetic creations, but rather functional structures to serve the spiritual needs of an uncertain and expanding frontier.

Bowen's log church at Dawson was replaced in 1902, just as the population was on the decline. The church that replaced it, the current St. Paul's Anglican Church, is larger and more ornate than its predecessor, a seemingly contradictory architectural development for a town that was shrinking in size. But the change reflected a wider demographic shift in Dawson that affected both the size of the town itself and the identity of the people who lived there.

St. Paul's was designed by Canadian architect Thomas W. Fuller, who designed a number of other prominent buildings in Dawson as well as a range of federal and public buildings throughout Canada later in his career.<sup>45</sup> The church consists of a long nave with a polygonal apsidal chancel, with two truncated transepts that house a vestry and organ. The exterior shows a frontal entrance tower with a

belfry and steeply pitched roof, characteristic of the simple Carpenter Gothic style that the church employs throughout. With characteristic lancet windows and ubiquitous Gothic details such as the buttressing on the tower, there is no doubt about the style of this structure; while the ornamentation is subdued, it nevertheless retains a distinctly Gothic aesthetic throughout. A rear view of the church (fig. 13) reveals a tripartite chancel window and simple rose windows in the transepts. The transepts also allude to Gothic trefoils through their delicate gingerbread work.

The interior (fig. 14) also employs a distinctly Gothic aesthetic. The lancet windows are reflected in the distinct chancel arch and its flanking doors. The open timber room uses king post trusses with a knee braced collar beam and simple struts dividing the nave into five bays. The deep chancel is stepped from the nave and contains stalls for the choir, lectern, pulpit, and a raised altar. The Gothic character of the interior is continued in the church's furnishings, which integrate trefoils, pointed arches, and vegetal motifs (fig. 15). A reminder of the





FIG. 14. ST. PAUL'S ANGLICAN CHURCH, DAWSON, INTERIOR, 1902. | EMILY TURNER.



FIG. 15. PEW DETAIL, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, 1902. | EMILY TURNER.

church's location in Canada's North can be found in the wood-burning stove at the rear of the nave, since replaced with a newer model.

This church is visually far removed from the church that preceded it and the similar structures at Fortymile and Whitehorse. While still a timber church, its aesthetic preoccupation, large scale, and refined construction methods, as well as the use of a professional architect to design the building make it a distinctly different structure from its predecessors, aesthetically more similar to timber churches constructed in southern and eastern Canada. In a letter to H.A. Naylor in 1904, his friend George H. Locke wrote: "the Church that has now replaced our little old log building is a structure that would do credit to any city."<sup>46</sup> Locke's observation makes clear the major shift that had occurred in the church building at Dawson; no longer did it reflect the frontier conditions of its predecessor, nor the early churches at Fortymile and Whitehorse, but rather the refined aesthetic sensibilities found in the rest of Canada, Britain, and the United States, where this church could have

been very much at home. This shift, from a frontier church to one demonstrating aesthetic sophistication and refinement, reflects the changes that were going on in Dawson itself during that period.

From the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in fishing camp, what is now the town of Dawson ballooned to a peak of thirty thousand people by the end of 1898, before dropping to under ten thousand by 1902, a number which continued to decline, albeit gradually, over the next decade.<sup>47</sup> The early non-indigenous population was transient, unstable, and very large, composed primarily of newcomers who had entered into the territory in the hopes of finding a fortune on the creeks. Popular mythology suggests a town rife with violence, crime, and debauchery, much like the main entryway to the Klondike goldfields, Skagway, Alaska. This was not entirely the case, however, as order was strictly enforced and maintained primarily through the presence of the NWMP and the town was fairly peaceful.<sup>48</sup> It was, however, highly disordered and conformed initially to the frontier mentality present at Fortymile, a transient community, far away from the

societal norms of Canada and the United States, focussed primarily on resource extraction, not on settling or community building.

However, by 1899, most of the newcomers realized that the paying claims had already been staked and many left either for home or for Nome, Alaska, where a new strike had been made. Those who remained made up a number of particular demographic groups, none of which were unstable or as transitory as those who had formed the majority of Dawson's population at its height.<sup>49</sup> In particular, what characterized these people as distinct was that those who remained intended on staying and building a community in Dawson, as opposed to striking it rich and returning to their home community.

While there certainly was a significant mining population remaining in Dawson after the turn of the twentieth century and that was the industry toward which the economy remained focused, the population was more diverse, with a large segment engaged in successful business enterprises and government services, as

well as sectors such as health care and education. Dawson's demographics had evolved into a stratified society, much like in the rest of Canada, with a strong upper and middle class not found in frontier settlements such as Fortymile.<sup>50</sup>

A central reason for this change in demographics from previous gold rush settlements was the Canadian government's desire to assert its sovereignty in the North when faced with the scale of the initial rush. The first Northwest Mounted Police detachment in the Yukon had been established in 1895, across the river from Fortymile, in order to check the influence of the large number of American miners and impose law, order, and customs on the community.<sup>51</sup> With the growth of Dawson, the police transferred to the new town, where they also rigidly imposed the judicial and moral values of British and Canadian society, deemed especially important in a region where there was such a significant non-Canadian population. Professionals such as lawyers and judges soon followed. The Canadian government also realized that the large population and unique conditions of Dawson could not be ministered effectively from Ottawa and a large contingent of territorial administration staff were dispatched to Dawson to deal with the gamut of issues associated with industrial development.<sup>52</sup> Included in this group of professionals were individuals such as doctors and teachers who, although not employed by the government, were nevertheless middle-class professionals not participating in the search for gold but rather providing services to the community and reinforcing the norms of a non-frontier society.

Complementing this professional class was a growing population of successful businessmen and businesswomen representing a range of businesses which had

made their money in the initial rush and had now settled into more routine, and more stable, trading. With the decline of placer mining in the early twentieth century and the rise of dredging, there were increased business opportunities for investment in this industry and the business class flourished.<sup>53</sup> Of course not all business opportunities were in this area and many individuals were able to make a successful and prosperous living in the private sector.

As Dawson changed from the frenetic days of the early rush to a smaller, yet stable town, established on a solid industrial base, and as a territorial centre for administration and services, the individuals who remained became more interested in creating a permanent community not associated with what was perceived as the debauchery of the rush, but rather an Edwardian town which reflected the values and morals of Canadian society.<sup>54</sup> Even at the height of the rush, Dawson was not like the lawless Skagway, the main entry point into the Klondike during the height of the rush, but its more permanent residents nevertheless desired to build a community that moved away from a frontier mentality to one that was a reflect of society in the rest of Canada, albeit a community that was very remote. In 1907, a reporter for the *Alaska-Yukon Magazine* wrote: "There is about Dawson an undefinable [*sic*] atmosphere that one never expects to find in a mining camp, but associated with older cities where progress, educational institutions, culture and refinement are expected to be found."<sup>55</sup> Dawson, from a cultural and administrative standpoint, was closer to Ottawa than anywhere else in the North and the priorities of the community reflected that closeness.<sup>56</sup> It was also socially in tune with Canadian life, boasting a range of societal events and organizations and clubs familiar to

those from southern Canada, but not typically found in the northern frontier environment.<sup>57</sup>

## BUILDING IN DAWSON

The unique social conditions of Dawson were reflected in the buildings that were erected there and the structures were intended to serve the needs of the community around the mines; as the community evolved, those structures did as well. Initially, shops and businesses that catered to the basic survival and entertainment needs of the community dominated the town, including the dance halls and saloons associated with the Klondike in the popular imagination. The buildings housing these were incredibly varied. A description of the town by Tappan Adney in October 1897 gives an impression of the range of structures in the early town:

The town of Dawson, now just one year old, contains about three hundred cabins and other buildings, half a dozen of which stand on the bank of the Klondike. Beyond these, and facing the Yukon... is the military reservation, with the barracks of the mounted police... offices, store-rooms, post-office, court-room, etc. ... Beyond the reservation is a townsite... the first houses were built here and it is still the centre of town... the buildings consist first of a few small earth-covered log dwellings; then several two-story log buildings designated "hotels," with conspicuous signs in front... then more large houses—the "M&M," saloon and dance hall, the "Green Tree" hotel, the "Pioneer" or "Moose-horn" and the "Dominion" saloon, the "Palace" saloon and restaurant and the "Opera-House," built tolerably close together, the space between being filled with tents and smaller cabins used as restaurants, mining-brokers' offices, etc. On the river's edge, facing this irregular row, are tents... used as offices and restaurants or residences, etc. —a ragged motley assemblage.<sup>58</sup>



FIG. 16. TENT CITY, DAWSON, 1898. | DAWSON CITY MUSEUM, 1962.6.4.



FIG. 17. DAWSON, 1900. | DAWSON CITY MUSEUM, 1984.143.2.

But these soon gave way to a range of successful businesses with varied goods and services to serve the residents of the town, as well as the many social and administrative services, including schools and hospitals traditionally associated with church activities.<sup>59</sup> The architecture of these buildings was a clear reflection of the community at its different stages of life. An early photograph of the town showing a vast tent city (fig. 16) is in stark contrast to the town just two years later in 1898 with a range of permanent dwelling places and houses (fig. 17). Dawson had evolved, and it did so very quickly.

Where this evolution is particularly stark is in the Dawson's public buildings, of which St. Paul's is only one. As the town developed and consolidated throughout the late 1890s, the initial structures erected to serve the population's needs also underwent a gradual change, where early log and temporary buildings were replaced by more permanent and more stylistically in-tune designs. A wide range of these newer edifices were erected, encompassing a variety of functions, including the Territorial Administration

Building (fig. 18), also designed by Fuller, in 1901. Again built in the period of decline, this structure integrated a range of classically inspired features, including a shallow portico with flanking Ionic columns, three large structural pediments on the building's visible gable ends, and an impressive symmetrical plan within a landscaped lot, based in neoclassical precedent. This edifice was the heart of the civil service in Dawson and the voice of Ottawa in its far-flung territory, and its architecture reflected that role. This, along with other structures in the area of the town known as the Government Reserve, were generally larger than other buildings in town and used their decorative features to set them apart from the others.<sup>60</sup> In this case, the Classical features of the structure were used to reinforce the power and influence of the federal government, a common use of Classical forms with their intrinsic relationship to ideals of power, law, and order.<sup>61</sup> These kinds of Classical features were also used in other late- and post-rush buildings associated with federal services. Dawson was no longer a remote frontier boomtown, but rather a community that had

been integrated into an emerging nation with a strong central government asserting its sovereignty throughout its vast holdings, shown in physical space through the imposing Classical forms of its administrative centre.

Another notable building in town was the Roman Catholic Church and its auxiliary structures, most importantly the hospital, established by Jesuit Father William Judge in 1897 and taken over by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the Catholic religious order with a significant presence in the Northwest Territories and western provinces, after Judge's death in 1899. Judge, who had been stationed by the Jesuits in Alaska and had completed some mission work amongst the miners at Fortymile in the mid-1890s, began his mission in a tent, but quickly moved worship services to a log church and medical services to a two-storey log hospital, where he was soon joined by three Sisters of Ste. Anne, members of an Ignatian order of nuns based in Québec, whose role was to assist in the hospital (fig. 19).<sup>62</sup> He wrote to his brother in November of that year: "I have a good hospital building, a house for the



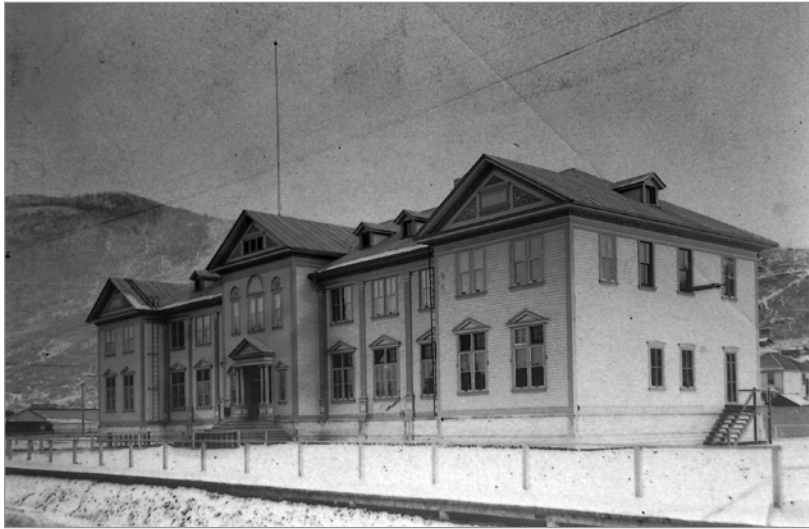


FIG. 18. TERRITORIAL ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, DAWSON, C. 1902. | DAWSON CITY MUSEUM, 1962.2.6.

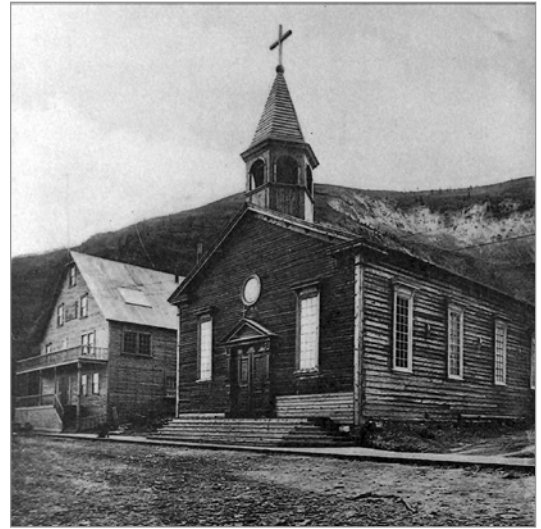


FIG. 19. ORIGINAL ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH, DAWSON, 1897. | DAWSON CITY MUSEUM, 1996.36.24, COURTESY OF ARCHIVES DESCHÂTELETS-NDC, FONDS DESCHÂTELETS.



FIG. 20. ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH, DAWSON, 1901. | YUKON ARCHIVES, 4715 2319.



FIG. 21. INTERIOR OF ST. MARY'S CHURCH, DAWSON, C. 1910. | DAWSON CITY MUSEUM, 1984.147.1.

Sisters, a good church and residence for the priest... all built out of logs."<sup>63</sup> Judge's complex was larger than that of the Anglicans, although given the arrival of the nuns, this made sense. Stylistically, the first church was also more complex than the Anglican church, integrating pared down Classical elements in a design reminiscent of examples from Québec. This does, however, correspond to Catholic

practice in these remote areas where more complex churches, due to the denomination's focus on visual representation and symbolism in architectural form, were often initially constructed.

However, this building was also replaced after being burnt down in a fire in 1898. Funded primarily by successful miner and businessman Alexander MacDonald,

Judge wrote that it was a structure that "would do credit to a much older town."<sup>64</sup> The new church (fig. 20) was more elaborate than its predecessor, integrating similar elements but on a larger scale; it also used frame construction, an advance from its previous iteration in log. There appears to be no image of the interior of the earlier church, but there is of the latter which shows an highly decorated space with two

rows of columns through the nave and Gothic details both on the side walls and around the altar (fig. 21). Like its Anglican equivalent, this structure catered to a more sophisticated taste through the use of fashionable and symbolic architectural forms found in Catholic churches in established communities throughout Canada.

Evidently, St. Paul's Church was not the only structure in the town that responded to the changed social conditions of the community. Dawson's role had shifted from the site of a frantic search for gold to a remote settlement that nevertheless was integrated into the wider Canadian fabric through its administration and the attitudes of its inhabitants. The architectural response to that shift not only developed a series of impressive public buildings, but also set it apart from other early Yukon settler communities, such as Fortymile, where the architecture of the town continued to reflect a frontier setting. Even when compared to the buildings at Fort Selkirk, such as those erected for the Yukon Field Force (fig. 22) who came north in 1898 to assist the NWMP and provide a show of force for Canadian sovereignty or those belonging to the Anglican Church (fig. 23), the buildings erected at Dawson in the post-boom period demonstrate a unique identity specific to a settled Edwardian community with deep ties to life in the rest of the nation.

### THE NEW ROLE OF THE CHURCH

However, when viewed in light of the Church of England's previous work in the Yukon, the new church at Dawson was also set apart from other buildings throughout the territory during that period, as has already been demonstrated. When examining it in light of these other structures, another condition unique to Dawson emerges: its design



FIG. 22. YUKON FIELD FORCE BUILDING, FORT SELKIRK, 1898. | EMILY TURNER.



FIG. 23. FORT SELKIRK ANGLICAN MISSION, LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY. | THE GENERAL SYNOD ARCHIVES, ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA, P7561 36.

and erection were driven by the congregation. Naylor remarked as early as 1900 that the congregation desired to build a new church on the site, for the old church had become too small to serve the Anglicans in the town, and they were actively fund-raising toward that goal.<sup>65</sup> Whereas other churches throughout the Yukon up to that point had been driven by the Church and its clergy, either as

part of an evangelical mission or in order to serve a growing settler population, St. Paul's was built at a time when the congregation at Dawson was self-supporting financially and ministry in the town had developed a parochial character much like elsewhere in Canada, where the church building project was run and organized by the "Building Committee of St. Paul's Church"<sup>66</sup> as opposed to a





FIG. 24. ST. DAVID'S MISSION, FORT SIMPSON, LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY. | THE GENERAL SYNOD ARCHIVES, ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA, P7559 143.

missionary organization. As a result, the church that was erected was designed to serve the needs and fulfill the aesthetic and theological preoccupations of the congregation, who were looking to a stable future for their community; this was in contrast to early churches which conformed to the aesthetic and theological sensibilities of the missionaries who erected them, and was generally intended as a temporary measure until a time when the future of the congregation was assured. The gradual development of church infrastructure in this way was one that was explicitly advocated for by the CMS, and a general practice elsewhere.<sup>67</sup>

Of particular note are Bompas's objections to the design which really outline the way in which that process was approached. While there had been a number of Gothic Revival-style churches constructed throughout the present-day territories under the jurisdiction of the CMS, such as that at Fort Simpson (fig. 24), none were as large or ornate at that at Dawson.

In his correspondence with Naylor over the design of the church, Bompas, who was very evangelical in his churchmanship, objected to what he saw as a move toward High Church ritualistic worship in the design of the building, including the use of cross motifs in the stained glass and on the altar which he viewed as counter to the spirit of the Reformation; while he objected to what he considered as a material shift in the architectural forms of the church to reflect a theology that he did not agree with, Bompas also recognized there was nothing he could do about it because the design of the new church was ultimately out of the hands of missionaries and directed by the congregation.<sup>68</sup> As a result, the church as constructed did not follow the pattern established throughout the North, but rather responded to the congregation's needs and interests for their church.

The design of the new church in the fashionable Gothic style shows symbolically the role attributed to the Church

in the community by the congregation. A prominent structure in the heart of Dawson, a Gothic Revival church here functioned much the way it did in other areas throughout the world where the style was used in ecclesiastical architecture: to show the moral and spiritual values of the Christian church in the secular community.<sup>69</sup> Set apart from other prominent buildings in town, the neo-Gothic church, especially to observers used to the churches found throughout the rest of North America, was a reaffirmation of traditional Western values and the importance of religion in late-nineteenth-century life. Although in a community that saw its identity as that of a sophisticated Edwardian town, it was nevertheless important to reaffirm that status through architectural form, especially when on the far edge of the country in a region which, while it had become much more connected to the rest of the country throughout the 1890s, was still very remote and isolated. Although Bompas remarked in 1895 that "[c]ivilization is advancing among us,"<sup>70</sup> the bulk of civilization was still very far away and Dawson remained an insular outpost of Canadian life. Dawson and its church were no longer a frontier missionary outpost and the reinforcing of values through the Gothic Revival style and its traditional associations were integral to its place as the representative structure of the Church of England in the Yukon's largest town and the community living there. The Building Committee desired a church that reflected the British, Canadian, and American sensibilities of a respectable colonial centre with taste and refinement, something a Gothic church was able to provide through visual and tangible means.<sup>71</sup> This church was not just designed to fulfill the stylistic trends of the time, but was rather a reflection of early twentieth-century Dawson society manifested through an accepted and ideologically potent form of ecclesiastical



design. It was a new church for a new period of the Church's mission in the Yukon, away from the days of indigenous evangelism and frontier mission, focusing instead on parochial ministry in a young Canadian town.

In 1908, American geologist T.A. Rickard visited Dawson as part of a tour through the Yukon and Alaska mining regions. Of the town, he remarked:

The Dawson of today is as much better than the inferno of a decade ago as sanity is better than folly, as sobriety is better than debauchery. The quiet neat town of orderly people, under an incorruptible police, and a competent administration, is not for one moment to be compared with the rabble of excited adventurers and degraded women who made the Arctic a hotter place than the tropics. Let the panegyrist of the past go, with his regrets for wasted opportunity and his memories of besotted fooleries; in his stead is the intelligent engineer, the quiet man of business and the orderly conduct of a civilized community.<sup>72</sup>

While Rickard's description drew on some of the mythology of the Klondike rush, his observations underline the important transformation undertaken by the city of Dawson itself, as well as the architecture within. The town had changed from an unstable frontier settlement to a settled Canadian community, a change that its architecture reflected.

St. Paul's is an excellent example of that change for it not only shows the shift in Dawson, its identity and its values, it also shows the change that occurred within the Church of England itself in its work in the southern Yukon. From a religion organization with a longstanding and singular focus on indigenous evangelism, the Church of England morphed its mission in the Yukon to fit the evolving

demographics and social conditions of the region. While the church-cabin at Fortymile responded to a new need to administer to a transient and fairly insular mining community, St. Paul's responded instead to a young, but sophisticated community intent on recreating and reinforcing the values of Canadian society.

## NOTES

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