



# HOW-TO SERIES 5

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## IDENTIFYING ARCHITECTURAL STYLES IN MANITOBA

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*On the cover, from left to right:* Bertrand Block, Brandon, 1900; Mitchell-Copp Building, Winnipeg, 1920; Hill's Drugs Building, Portage la Prairie, 1901; LaPlant Block, Brandon, 1892

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# INTRODUCTION

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Many buildings constructed in Manitoba during the 19th and 20th centuries bear the imprint, or at least the influence, of certain architectural styles or traditions. Some are faithful to a single style. Many more have elements from several different styles and are referred to as eclectic. Even more only hint at the basic architectural style from which they are derived. Understanding the basic characteristics of architectural styles is a useful way to begin seeing buildings more critically. Such an understanding also helps in describing a building, in determining its age, or in assessing its architectural value when compared with other buildings of the same style.

This guide is an introduction to some of the most significant architectural styles, building types and building traditions employed during the past 150 years of Manitoba's history. It is divided into five sections.

The first section, **Styles**, describes those sophisticated styles that were most influential in this province's architectural development. These styles were all generated elsewhere -- England and the United States principally -- and were popularized in Manitoba by local architects and their clients. Styles evolve and the range of interpretations of any style can be considerable. In Manitoba, at such a great distance from the origins of many of these styles, the gap between the pure style and local interpretation is often greater. This guide thus highlights those Manitoba buildings that best illustrate each style. Moreover, the dates that have been used to describe when each style was most popular in this province do not always correspond to the dates during which the style flourished elsewhere. Although this guide uses some of the most common names and groupings to organize styles, other architectural style guides may use different names and different organizing criteria that are equally acceptable.

A second section, **Building Traditions and Building Types**, introduces six building traditions and six building types that comprise much of the remaining stock of 19th and 20th century architecture in Manitoba. There is only now a growing appreciation for this kind of architecture and this section of the guide is only a brief introduction to this very important aspect of the province's past. Further study will foster greater understanding of each tradition or type.

The six building traditions include Native structures, Red River frame log structures, pioneer barns, Mennonite housebarns, Ukrainian houses and Eastern European churches. These kinds of buildings are often called vernacular architecture to distinguish them from architect-designed buildings. They are the building forms and construction methods which evolved as generations of people constructed buildings to meet their everyday needs. Their overall form and the general expression of the details is shaped by local climate, topography and the limits of

available materials. The subtlety of plan and detail are often prescribed by religious or cultural requirements. The richness of these buildings can be most forcefully read in the exceptional craftsmanship often employed in the details.

The six building types -- railway stations, boomtown structures, grain elevators, pattern book barns, schools and pattern book houses -- are generally the product of architectural or engineered design. Because such buildings were meant to appeal to a broad audience, and at a modest price, they were often built from standardized materials and according to standardized designs. Individual buildings are nevertheless of considerable interest. Each can be a reminder of efficient planning and clever detail design.

A third section, a **Glossary of Architectural Terms**, defines many useful words that are specifically related to architectural design. Because style is often described in technical terms, this section will be an essential companion to each style description.

The fourth section, **Supplementary Building Data**, contains additional information about each building identified in the publication: exact building location, name of architect(s), photograph date and the source of each photograph.

For those interested in pursuing the subject of architectural style in more detail, the final section, **Selected Readings**, provides a list of some useful reference materials.

## MANITOBA'S ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

Manitoba's architectural history has its roots in many cultures. It begins with Native tipis, movable structures that were built by the various Native groups that inhabited Manitoba after 5,000 B.C. European exploration and the ensuing fur trade of the 18th and 19th centuries introduced different building traditions to the West. Permanent fur trade forts located throughout the province created the need for more substantial buildings. And the architectural traditions of Britain and France provided forms and technologies that were well-suited to the Manitoba environment. Using materials at hand -- logs and stones -- builders were able to produce structures of considerable comfort. The Red River Settlement, the first European attempt at agricultural production in the West, altered the local cultural and political development during the early decades of the 19th century, but did not bring new building traditions. Instead, the fur trade architecture popularized by the Hudson's Bay Company was adapted to the domestic and agricultural purposes of this new society.

By the last decades of the 19th century, the Red River Settlement landscape -- social, cultural, economic

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and architectural -- was completely transformed. Manitoba became a province in 1870 and the arrival of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1881 opened the whole of southern Manitoba to agricultural settlement. The fur trade traditions of the previous decades were abandoned. In the countryside a variety of settlement groups -- Anglo-Ontarian, Icelandic, Mennonite, Ukrainian and American -- used their own distinctive building traditions during the first years of settlement. By the mid-1880s, the development of numerous stone quarries, brickyards and the ready availability of lumber from local sawmills enabled builders to erect more refined structures. And in cities and towns newly arrived architects began to introduce popular eastern Canadian and American styles to the frontier. Those styles fashionable in Ontario during the mid-19th century were especially influential.

The success of the farm economy, especially during the late 1890s and early 1900s, brought great changes to the architecture of Manitoba. In the countryside successful farmers replaced humble pioneer houses and barns with more impressive buildings. At the same time, mail-order companies began to offer attractive, standardized house and barn designs. In cities and towns the new wealth brought greater sophistication to buildings, which themselves became much larger. Local architects and their clients often kept abreast of changes in style and created structures of great elegance. During this period many well-known architects from central Canada and the United States were also commissioned to work on some of the most important building projects in the province.

After the amazing building growth of the earlier decades, which met the immediate needs of the new province, there was a decline in the volume of new construction caused by the two World Wars and the Great Depression. The styles popular as the 20th century unfolded were more often used for urban buildings. However, a few new structures in the countryside and in the North, which developed quickly in the 1920s, also reflected recent trends. By the 1950s and 60s the Modern movement in architecture had found general acceptance in this province through the efforts of many local architects.

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Looking at buildings with an appreciation for some of the architectural forces that shaped them can be a rewarding pastime. In your own neighbourhood or community you can begin to examine individual buildings more carefully and discover previously overlooked details and elements. You can identify the architectural similarities and differences that distinguish your neighbourhood from others.

This guide is arranged in a simple and straightforward manner. For each style, building

type or building tradition there are written segments on its history and a summary of its main characteristics. Terms **highlighted** in the text are described in the glossary. Adjacent to this description, in the section on styles, is a line drawing illustrating an imaginary example of the style. Important architectural elements descriptive of the style are identified on the drawing. A series of photographs of some exceptional and typical examples of the style or tradition complete each description.

The most effective way to use this guide is to first look at the line drawing and the various photographic examples in each section. Note the similarities and differences between the examples. In many cases you will be reminded of familiar structures, your own home and landmarks in the province that you can compare with the illustrations. Then turn to the text describing one particular style and, with reference to the glossary, find the elements that make that style unique. Not all features will be found on every building, so several examples have been included.

When you have reviewed all the sections you can put your knowledge to work with the buildings around you. You might want to reflect on the following:

- its height
- its overall shape
- its roof shape
- the composition of pieces that make up the whole
- the harmony of the composition
- the materials used in its construction
- the textures of the materials
- its colour
- the play of shade and shadow across its surfaces
- the symbolism of details, elements and forms
- its relationship with neighbouring buildings

There are, of course, other aspects of a building that can make it interesting:

- its history
- its association with individuals, groups, companies or organizations
- the quality of its design and craftsmanship displayed in materials and details
- the internal arrangement
- the construction techniques employed
- the importance of the building as a landmark
- the part it plays with its neighbours in creating a special streetscape

It is architectural style, however, that remains the focus of this guide. With style as an organizing tool, you can group buildings of similar character and begin to look at buildings more critically. Do not forget, however, that every building is a unique creation. And those many buildings that contain only minor references to any of the styles or traditions described here are still important on their own terms. Styles will help to organize many important concerns, but any building can offer its own individual visual delights.