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THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF WHITBY

In the Regional Municipality of Durham



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MUNICIPAL BUILDING
575 Rossland Road East
Whitby, Ontario
Canada
L1N 2M8

March 23, 1994
File: A-2160 (LACAC)

[REDACTED]
508 St. John Street West
Whitby, Ontario
L1N 2V6

Re: **Old St. John Roman Catholic Church**
508 John Street West
Heritage Designation, Part IV
The Ontario Heritage Act

RECEIVED
ON THE OFFICE
MAR 29 1994
CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF WHITBY

At a meeting held on the 14th day of March, 1994, the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Whitby passed By-Law No. 3455-94, a copy of which is enclosed, being a by-law to designate the Old St. John Roman Catholic Church, municipally known as 508 John Street West, Whitby, as a Heritage Structure under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act.

By-Law No. 3455-94 will be advertised in the March 30, April 6, and April 13, 1994 issues of the Whitby Free Press newspaper.

Further information regarding the above noted matter may be obtained by calling Mr. Eric Braslis, Secretary of L.A.C.A.C. at 668-5803.

Debi A. Bentley
Debi A. Bentley
Administrative Assistant

DAB/mls
Enclosure

cc: Registered Mail

Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Recreation
Cultural Operations and Field Services Branch
Architectural Conservation Unit
77 Bloor Street West
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2R9

Registered Mail

✓ The Ontario Heritage Foundation
10 Adelaide Street East
Toronto, Ontario M5C 1J3

R. B. Short, Director of Planning
E. Braslis, Secretary, L.A.C.A.C.

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF WHITBY

BY-LAW NO. 3455-94

BEING A BY-LAW TO DESIGNATE THE STRUCTURE MUNICIPALLY KNOWN AS 508 JOHN STREET WEST AS BEING OF HISTORIC AND ARCHITECTURAL VALUE AND INTEREST

WHEREAS, in accordance with the provisions of Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. 0.18, the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Whitby considers it desirable to designate property hereinafter described to be of historic and architectural value and interest;

AND WHEREAS, the Council of the said Corporation has caused to be served on the owners of the property municipally known as 508 John Street West, Whitby, Ontario, and upon the Ontario Heritage Foundation, notice of its intention to designate the structure at the aforesaid address to be of historic and architectural value and interest and has caused such notice to be published in a newspaper having general circulation in the Town of Whitby;

AND WHEREAS, no person has served a notice of objection to the proposed designation on the Clerk of the said Corporation;

NOW THEREFORE, the Council of the Corporation of the Town of Whitby enacts as follows:

1. The structure known as the Old St. John Roman Catholic Church located on the property municipally known as 508 John Street West, Whitby, Ontario and more particularly described in Schedule "A", attached to and forming part of this by-law, is designated as being of historic and architectural value and interest for the reasons set out in Schedule "B", attached hereto.
2. This designation shall not preclude any changes that may be deemed necessary for the efficient use of the structure provided that any changes shall be in keeping with the original and current character of the structure and shall be carried out in consultation with the Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee of the Town of Whitby.

BY-LAW READ A FIRST, SECOND, AND THIRD TIME AND FINALLY PASSED THIS 14TH DAY OF MARCH, A.D., 1994.


CLERK


MAYOR

Additional Property Identifier(s) and/or Other Information

LEGAL DESCRIPTION

Part of Lots 307 and 308, Plan H-50030, designated as Part 2, Plan 40R-3205, Town of Whitby, Regional Municipality of Durham.

DESIGNATION REPORT

OLD ST. JOHN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

508 JOHN STREET WEST

BUILT, 1902

Compiled by Brian Winter, Town of Whitby Archivist

August 6, 1993

OLD ST. JOHN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

BUILT, 1902

508 JOHN STREET WEST

Perry's Plan West of Brock Street, lots 307 and 308.

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THE SITE

The building which is the subject of this report is the second Roman Catholic Church to be built on this site. The land and much of the surrounding area was purchased by John Ham Perry, younger son of Whitby's founder Peter Perry, on April 19, 1860, and subdivided into lots for building.

Early in 1865 the Roman Catholics of Whitby, a small congregation made up mainly of Irish immigrants, decided that they would like to build a church. On April 6, 1865, lots 307 and 308 were purchased from John Ham Perry by Charles C. Keller, a member of the congregation. On June 25 of the same year, he sold the lots to Rev. Father John Paptiste Proulx, who had been parish priest for the Oshawa Mission from 1848 to 1860. Father Proulx, acting as clerk, sold the lots to The Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation, on Aug. 5, 1865.

Until this time, Whitby did not have a separate Catholic Church, Those who wished to worship had to go to Oshawa, where St. Gregory's parish had been founded in 1843. There was also a parish of St. Francis de Sales in Pickering Village, but no church in Whitby. It is said that when Whitby's Catholics began to raise funds to build their own church, the Protestant community gave very generously to the cause, for they did not want to have their Catholic servants lose a day of work by going to Mass in Oshawa or Pickering.

THE FIRST CHURCH

The first meeting to raise funds for the new Roman Catholic Church was held on May 21, 1865. Rev. Father Shea pledged \$1,000 to start things off. Fund-raising was very slow and it was not until Archbishop Lynch of Toronto took over the project in May 1867 that any real work was done. Construction of the new church began in the late summer of 1867. Archbishop Lynch came to

St. John's Roman Catholic Church - 2

Whitby on Sept. 15, 1867 to assist in the laying of the corner stone. Although it cannot be verified, it is believed that the corner stone for the original church was relaid when the new church was built in 1902. It is a block of sandstone with a raised cross on it and is placed at the south-east corner of the building.

Thomas Deverell, a well known Whitby mason who built many buildings in the town, had the contract for the brick work and George Cormack, also of Whitby, had the contract for the carpenter work. The architect was Henry Langley of Toronto, who was well known for his churches. He also designed All Saints' Anglican Church in Whitby and St. Thomas Anglican Church in Brooklin. The original plans by Langley for St. John's Roman Catholic Church are in the Archives of Ontario. The brick church was in the Gothic style, and it is interesting to note that the new church built in 1902 is almost an exact copy of the original building of 1867. The cost of the first church was between \$3,000 and \$4,000, with much of the money provided by the Protestant community as previously mentioned. It was opened for worship in the spring of 1868, and in 1873 an organ by the W. Bell and Co. of Guelph was installed. A picket fence was erected around the church in 1881, a popular addition in the 1880s, but it was removed by 1900. In 1875 a frame Separate School was built behind the church. It was bricked over in 1913 and served as Whitby's only Separate School until St. Bernard's School was built at Dundas and Centre Streets in 1926 to replace it. The building still stands today as a residence.

THE FIRE

Tragedy struck the congregation of St. John's Roman Catholic Church on the night of December 9, 1901, when the church was destroyed by fire. There had been a meeting in the evening (it was a Monday night), and after everyone had gone home, the fire broke out and had made considerable headway before it was discovered. The fire started in the north-east corner, perhaps where there was a stove to heat the church. The fire brigade responded to the alarm but

St. John's Roman Catholic Church - 3

there was nothing it could do. By the next morning the brick walls were all that was left. The insurance was only \$400 on the building and \$200 on the contents. It took 2,000 feet of hose to make connections with the nearest well, and after 20 minutes of work the firemen were unable to save the church. One valuable item destroyed was an image of the Virgin Mary, said to be worth \$1,000.

THE SECOND CHURCH

It was not long before a committee was formed and tenders let for the construction of a new church, but the work was delayed because the congregation could not agree on a new site. James H. Long offered a site near the Presbyterian Church at Byron and St. John Streets, but some members wanted to build on the old site.

By April of 1902, it was decided to rebuild on the old site, and the debris from the old church was removed. Thomas Deverill Jr., son of the builder of the original church, had the contract for the brick work and George Stephenson of Udora, in Scott Township, north of Whitby, was the contractor for the carpentry work. He was also building a barn for the House of Refuge (now 300 High Street) at the time he was working on the new St. John's Church. It appears that Henry Langley's original plans were followed to build the new church. The architect in charge was A. W. Holmes, of Toronto.

On December 14, 1902, the official opening and blessing of the new St. John's Church was conducted by His Grace Archbishop Denis O'Connor, of Toronto, assisted by the parish priest, Rev. Father Andrew O'Malley. A high school in Whitby, and later in Ajax, was named in the 1960s after Denis O'Connor, who was a native of Pickering Township.

Electric lights were installed in 1905 and a \$1,000 bequest from Cornelius McAuliffe provided the church in 1909 with a six reed organ and an electric fan.

St. John's Roman Catholic Church - 4

A Whitby Mission centred around St. John's Church had been set up in 1883, but jurisdiction was returned to Oshawa in 1891. Whitby did not have its own mission again until 1913. In 1914 a rectory, designed by former Whitby architect Albert Asa Post of Buffalo, was built east of the church, at 506 John Street West.

Parish priests who were in charge of St. John's Church after the new edifice was built were:

Rev. Andrew O'Malley	1901 - 1907
Rev. Michael Cline	1907 - 1913
Rev. Charles Cantillon	1913 - 1914
Rev. William Joseph Ryan	1914 - 1937
Rev. Dennis Vincent Hickey	1937 - 1956
Rev. Leo J. Austin	1956 - 1975

In the summer of 1926, when St. Bernard's Separate School was being built, the congregation of St. John's church decided to change the name of the parish to St. Bernard's, and by October of that year, the name change was approved by Archbishop Neil McNeil. The change was effected because for many years there had been confusion from two St. John's churches in Whitby--the other being St. John's Anglican Church at Port Whitby. However, the congregation did not seem to like being called St. Bernard's, for the name was changed back after a few years. Since the 1930s, the parish was called St. John the Evangelist.

In 1933, St. John's Church was nearly destroyed by fire again. Sparks from an adjoining shed caused slight damage to the church, but the fire was put out and covered by insurance.

The boom of development after the Second World War had profound effects on St. John the Evangelist Church. In 1951 there were 151 families (606 parishoners) in the congregation. By 1957 there were 500 families with 1,711 parishoners. When Rev. Father Hickey retired from the parish in September 1956, Rev. Father Leo Austin was brought to Whitby with the specific purpose of building a new church. The capacity of the old church was only 250, requiring the

St. John's Roman Catholic church - 5

priest to hold five Sunday masses to accommodate all the parishoners.

Throughout 1958, Father Austin superintended the construction of an ultra-modern new St. John the Evangelist Church on Giffard Street, which was opened in December of that year.

The congregation of St. John the Evangelist Church decided, after moving to their new building, to convert the old church into a hall and rent it out for wedding receptions, dances and other functions. A cement block kitchen was added to the back, and the rose window on the front was covered with wood. From 1959 to 1975, the old church was called "the Amber Room," serving as a hall for various functions. After 16 years, the congregation decided to sell the building.

On October 21, 1975, the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corporation for the Diocese of Toronto sold the church to Neil and Jeanette Windfeld. Mr. Windfeld, a contractor, made many alterations to the church as he converted it into a residence for himself and his family. Mr. and Mrs. Windfeld had originally tried to buy the old rectory to the east, but when the sale was made to someone else, they decided to buy the church. The church had been on the real estate market for two years, and the Windfelds were told the cost of demolishing it and subdividing the land was not feasible. So they converted the church into a residence. An advantage was that as a public hall, it had new plumbing and wiring.

Windfeld retained the original wainscoting which lined the interior of the church and incorporated it into a Spanish style living and dining room, two stories high in the rear third of the church. The front two thirds was divided into two floors. On a balcony overlooking the living room is the church's original communion rail, rescued from a shed behind the rectory. Another portion of the communion rail is placed in an alcove at the back of the living room, at about second floor level.

St. John's Roman Catholic church - 6

The Rose Window over the front door, which was covered with wood when the church became a hall, was bricked over, but the original window and its frame are intact behind the brick. A small rectangular window is now in the centre of this part of the church.

The original windows on the front of the church are intact, with some of the original glass still in them. One piece of glass in the window west of the front door bears the inscription: "In loving memory of Minnie Rush; erected by her Father, James Rush."

Two dormer windows were added by Mr. Windfeld on the roof on the east and west sides of the church. The first two windows on the east side were rebuilt and modernised by Mr. Windfeld, but the original window remains on the wall toward the rear of the church. However, there is no glass left in it. On the west wall there is one original window near the front. In the centre there is the new entrance and toward the rear is a modern bay window. The door in this new main entrance on the side of the old church is from St. Joseph's Convent in Toronto, the columns for the porch are from an old house in Whitby, the porch ceiling is from the old Baptist Church in Whitby which was demolished in 1977, and the porch rails were originally from the main entrance of St. John's church on the south front. A set of new doors added in 1992 is on the west side of the old chancel section of the church and stained glass was put in an old window on the west side of a further extension to the back. A garage was built at the back of the old church, possibly by Mr. Windfeld.

The original bell tower was removed some time after 1912, although a picture of that time does not show any bell in it. The tower was an extension upwards of the south front wall of the church. The original front door of the church was replaced by a more modern one after 1939, and a new door was placed on the old front entrance in 1992. Some of the original stained glass windows are now stored in the basement. Mr. and Mrs. Windfeld spent about \$70,000 over a period of four years in converting the church to a residence, and a few changes

St. John's Roman Catholic Church - 7

have been made by the present owner, [REDACTED].

On January 4, 1981, Mr. and Mrs. Windfeld sold the building to Colleen L. Chapman and Doreen E. Strachan. Chapman worked for Air Canada and Strachan in market research. [REDACTED]

Although the history of the site at 508 John Street West goes back 128 years, the present building dates only from 1902. It served as a church for 56 years, as a hall for 16 years, and as a residence for 17 years. It is an interesting example of an early 20th century church converted into a residence, rather than being demolished, and is the only building of its kind in Whitby.

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Prepared by Brian Winter,
Town of Whitby Archivist,
August 6, 1993.

**ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION OF
OLD ST. JOHN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
508 JOHN STREET WEST
PERRY'S PLAN WEST OF BROCK STREET, LOTS 307 AND 308
BUILT 1902**

Prepared for
the Planning Department of the Town of Whitby
575 Rossland Road East
Whitby, Ontario L1N 2M8
by
Edwin J. Rowse, Architect

October, 1993

OLD ST. JOHN'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
508 JOHN STREET WEST
PERRY'S PLAN WEST OF BROCK STREET, LOTS 307 AND 308
BUILT 1902

Old St. John's Roman Catholic Church at 508 John Street West is a twentieth century church which has been converted to residential use and now functions as a bed and breakfast. It is of architectural interest because of the character of the church building and the unusual nature of the conversion.

The building is located on a corner lot within an older residential neighbourhood in Whitby and is a reconstruction of an earlier church which was destroyed by fire in 1901. The earlier church was designed in 1867 by the prominent Canadian architect Henry Langley. Langley designed many churches, although they were primarily for Protestant congregations and his selection as the architect for this project may in part indicate the substantial Protestant funding which the original church received.

When the church was destroyed by fire the original designs were used for the rebuilding. Langley's drawings for the church are in the Provincial Archives of Ontario (MS 151 D1187). A comparison of his drawings with the second St. John's indicates both similarities and differences. The drawings illustrate a church 36 feet by 51 feet 6 inches with a proposed future expansion shown behind the chancel. The match between this plan and the present plan suggests that the foundations of the earlier building were probably used in the reconstruction. Differences however can be noted. Langley's building had polychromed decorative brickwork, red and white bricks, used primarily in the window arches. It had a large wood frame belfry on the front gable of the building, two large side chimneys, no front entry porch and a different design for the rose window.

The architect in charge of the rebuilding was A.W.Holmes. Holmes was a respected church architect and is known for significant projects such as the completion of the spire on Joseph Connelly's St. Mary's Church on Bathurst Street in Toronto. Thomas Deverill Jr., the son of the original builder, supplied the masonry for the second church.

The style of the church is Gothic in a very modest form appropriate for a small parish. The side walls of the church are divided into three bays separated by decorative buttresses, with each bay having a pair of lancet windows. The front façade has single lancet windows either side of an entry porch. Over the entry porch was a large rose window and at the gable peak there is a masonry projection for a belfry. Historic photographs indicate that the belfry was removed sometime after 1912 and it may have been designed similarly to Langley's original conception. Unlike the earlier church building, there are extensions at the back of the church to provide a simple chancel separate from the nave.

The building is constructed in red brick with stone trim. The stone is used as window sills and as a capping for the buttresses. The heads of the lancet windows are surrounded by a simple Gothic hood moulding made of a double course of corbelling brick. A single masonry chimney rises at the back of the church. It is neatly corbelled and has a decorative motif of crosses. A curious feature of the building is the single course of white brick near the base of the building, forming the building's watertable. Built into this brick course is the building's cornerstone, which is understood to be the original cornerstone from the earlier church. It is possible that this white brick has been reused from the earlier church or may form the baseline from which the reconstruction began.

The church was substantially altered by renovations for conversion to a church hall, called the 'Amber Room' which was its use from 1959 to 1975. Even more substantial alterations occurred during the late 1970s when the Windfield family converted the building to residential use. On the exterior a concrete block kitchen addition was added to the building when it was the 'Amber Room' and a garage was later added when it was converted to a dwelling.

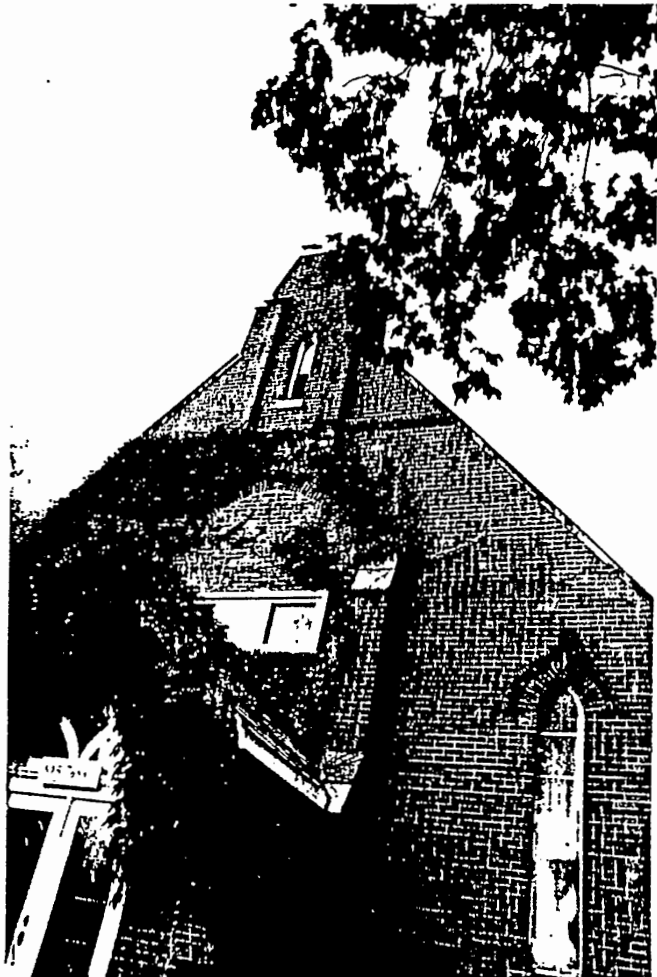
Some of the alterations which have occurred to the building have been harsh, but they indicate the radical nature of the conversions. On the exterior the rose window has been bricked over. The rose window without its glass remains visible and intact on the interior. The double lancet windows have been converted to modern window units with the peaks of the lancets bricked over. Dormer windows have been added to the roof. The front entry doors have been replaced and new entrances and a bay window have been added

onto the side of the building. Some original stained and coloured glass remains but most of the windows have been replaced.

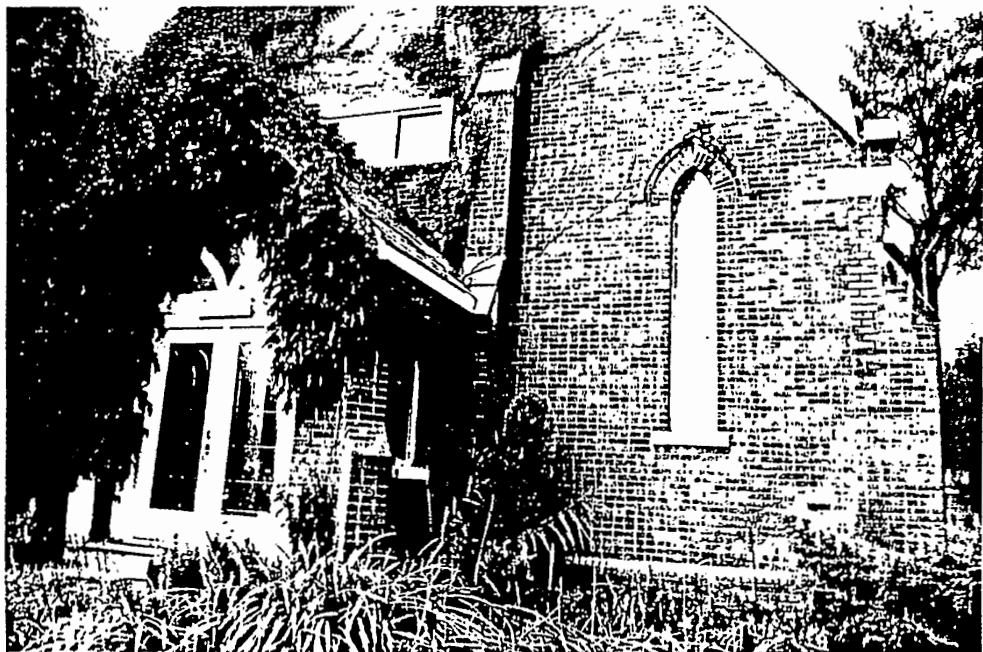
A number of these alterations include the reuse of pieces of earlier buildings demonstrating a methodology of enthusiastic recycling consistent with the conversion of the church. The principal side entry has doors from St. Joseph's Convent in Toronto, porch columns from an old house in Whitby, a porch ceiling from the old Baptist Church in Whitby, and railings relocated from the front of St. John's.

On the interior modifications are also substantial. The basement remains as principally a crawl space with trap door access. The nave has been subdivided, with the majority of it having an added second floor and containing a suite of bedrooms. On the second floor the suspended ceiling conceals the rose window and the original high ceiling of the church. At the former chancel end of the church the Windfield's created a 'Spanish style' living and dining room with roughly rendered walls and dark woodwork. This room retains the full height of the church ceiling and the original hammer beams for the ceiling are visible. Elements such as the communion rail have been reused to form a balcony balustrade. The chancel has been converted to a small study area.

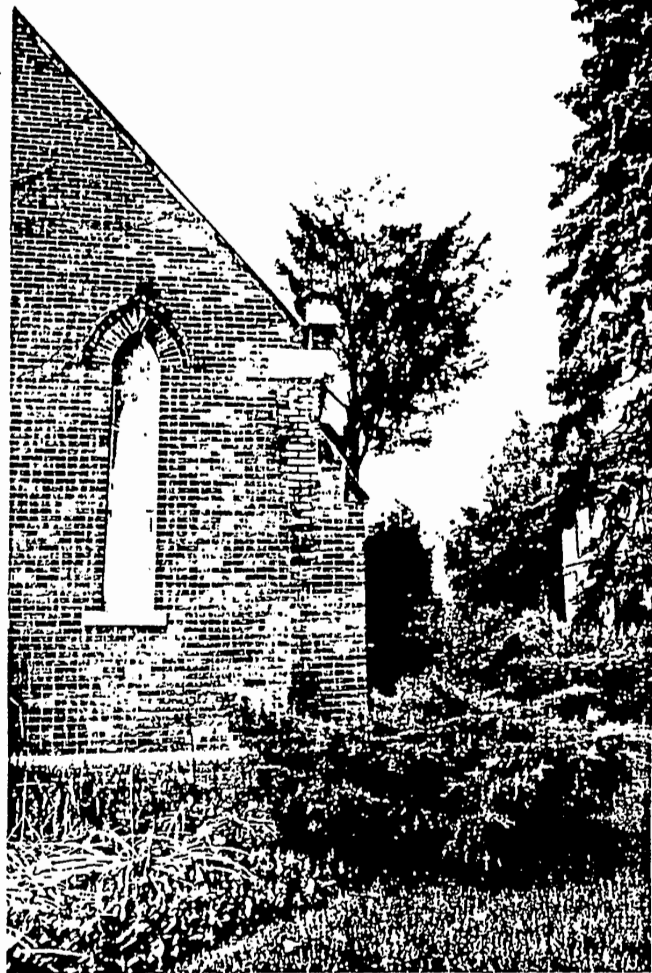
The evolution of this building, from the original 1867 church to the present bed and breakfast use is remarkable. The nature of the alterations is in part highly idiosyncratic but it reflects a strong interest in conversion and recycling. The building is a unique example of an adaptive reuse of a former church and its presence contributes to the architectural character, variety and interest of the community.



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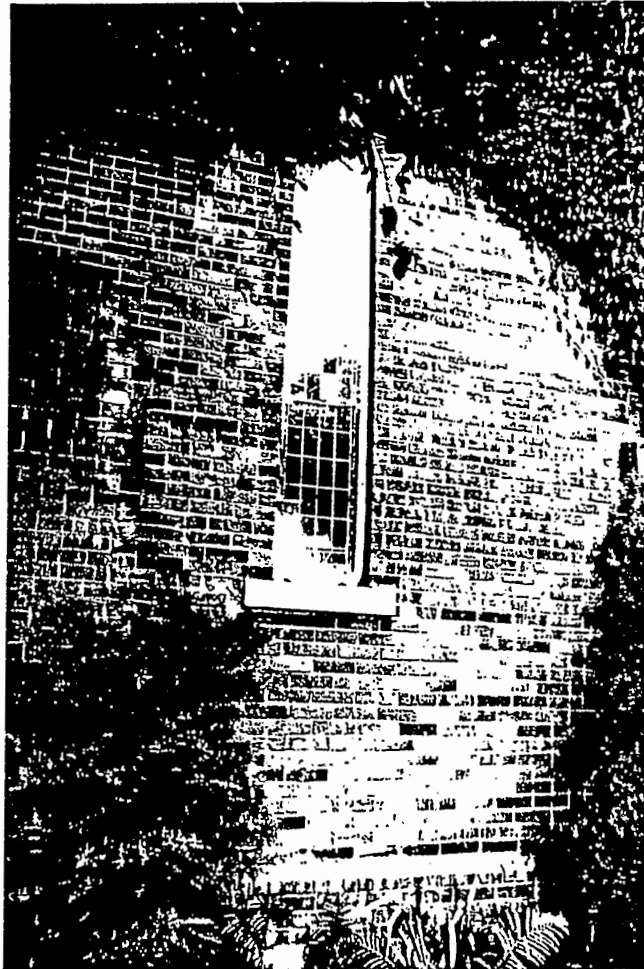
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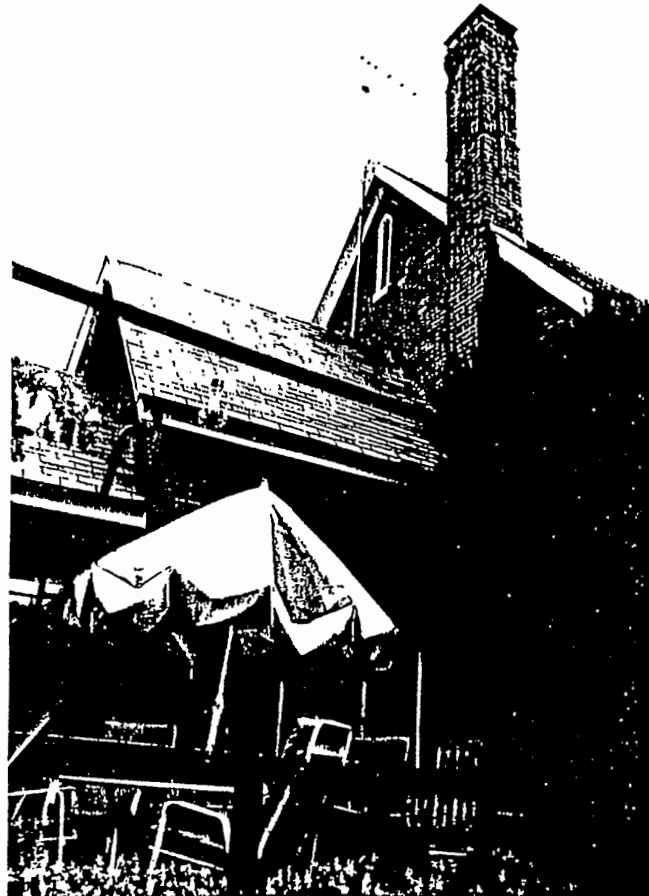
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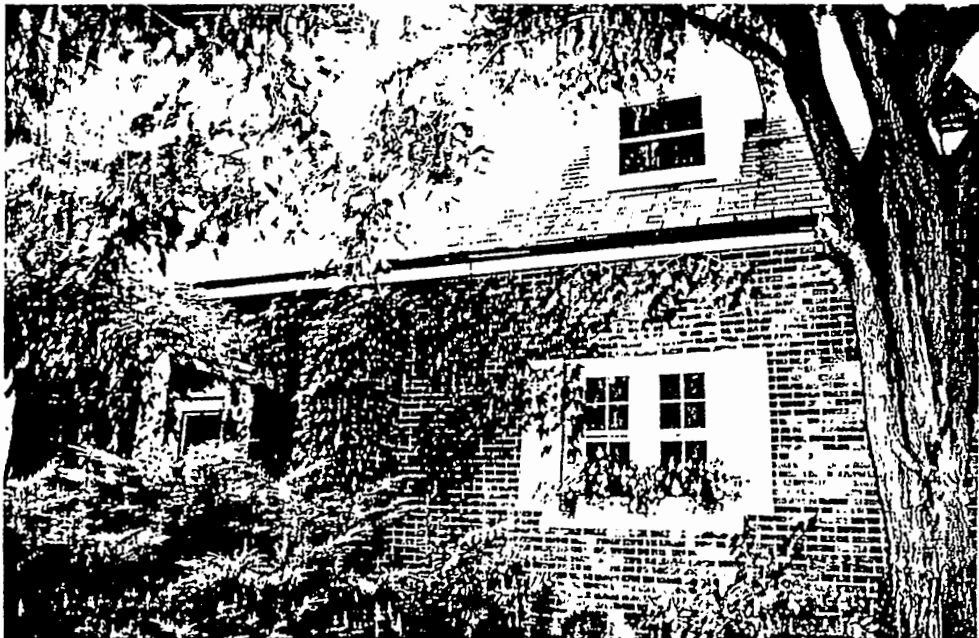
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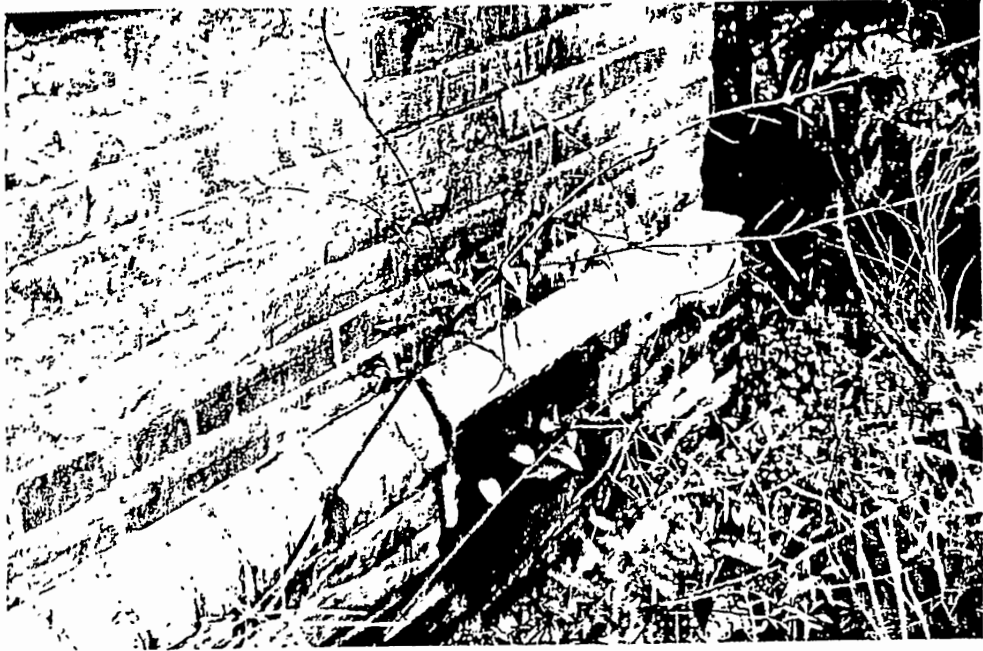


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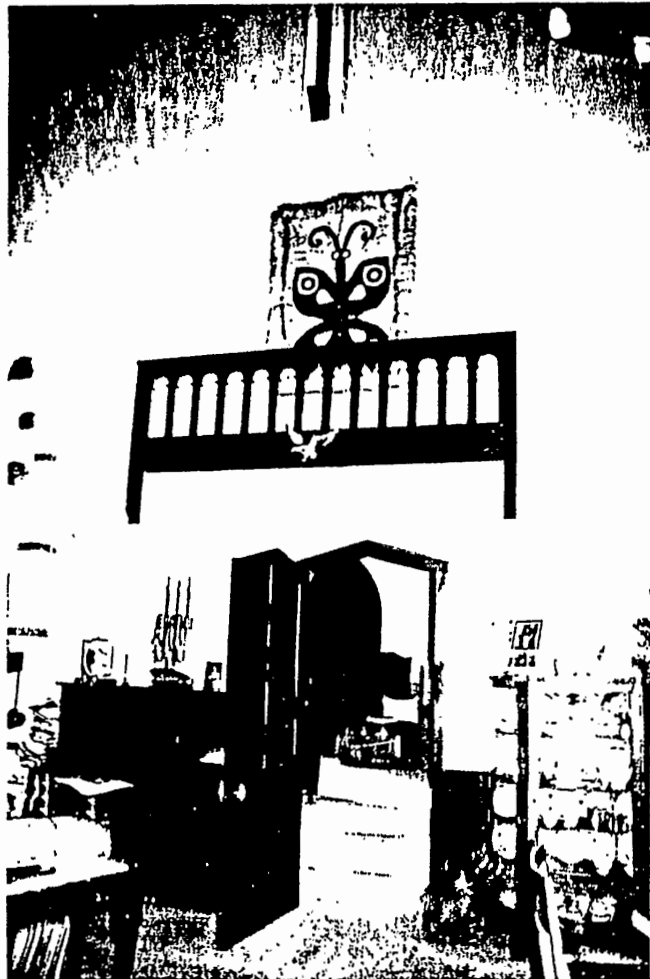


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