

Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute Building Construction and Description

Notes

"Cornerstones" were articles that appeared in the Sunday edition of the Calgary Herald between 1997 and 2000. The following article appeared November 29, 1998.

Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute

- **516 8th Avenue S.W.**
- **Built: 1927**
- **Demolished: 1974**
- **Contractor: Bennett and White Construction Company Limited.**
- **Original cost: \$65,000**
- **Original owner: Calgary Prophetic Conference. William Aberhart, President and Dean.**
- **Construction materials: "The front of the building, which faces on 8th Avenue, is completed in art buff brick with a projected entrance hall and massive oak doors. The main stairway leads into a large vestibule from which entrance is given to the executive offices and library and also into the main auditorium and galleries."**
- **Original interior details: The Calgary Herald of September 1927 reported, " the main auditorium will accommodate 1,200 people and has a very pleasing appearance. One is at once struck with the beamed ceiling and decorative panel effect of the walls and with the rich grain of the woodwork, which was especially selected for the building. The platform is arranged to accommodate a choir of fifty people, with speaker's platform and pulpit in the front...Immediately above the platform is the Baptistry, with dressing rooms at each side. For the Bible Institute**

students, a very ingenious arrangement has been designed, whereby four separate classrooms accommodating 300 students can be made in few minutes by pulling down roller partitions. The pews also have writing desks attached to them. In the basement are the assembly halls for the Sunday school departments with accommodation for 500 pupils.

Historical highlights:

- William Aberhart, high school principal and later Social Credit Premier of Alberta (1935 – 1943) founded the Calgary Bible Institute in 1918.
- Throughout 1918 Aberhart led evening meetings of the Bible Institute at the Central Library. The following year the group met at Westbourne Baptist Church and from there moved to Paget Parish Hall (Anglican Cathedral Church of the Redeemer). In 1920 Aberhart moved Sunday afternoon services to the Lougheed Grand Theatre and finally in 1923 to the Palace Theatre on 8th Avenue where two years later he began a live Sunday afternoon broadcast on CFCN radio called "Back to the Bible Hour." During the same period Aberhart was the acting pastor at Victoria Park's Westbourne Baptist Church where he also taught evening bible study classes in the church basement.
- According to Aberhart biographer David R. Elliot, Aberhart built the Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute in 1927 because he needed a larger facility to house the Bible school and the crowds, which were attracted to his meetings. At the new facility on 8th Avenue Aberhart administered the church and conducted the radio broadcasts while being employed as the principal of Crescent Heights High School. " In 1929 he founded his own sect, the Bible Institute Baptist Church after most of the Westbourne congregation had split from him."
- Contributions for the facility that was a combined temple and "fundamental" Bible School, were sent from all parts of Alberta, Saskatchewan, British Columbia and Montana. In May 1927, the local newspaper reported that three subscriptions had even been sent from Great Britain.
- The Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute, " The Prairie Monument to the Faith" opened on Sunday October 2, 1927 with "Three Big Meetings." The topic for the Inaugural services at 11a.m. was "The Hobabs Among God's People or Hitting the Trail to Glory." The afternoon meeting "For Heretics and Skeptics" spoke to "Scholarship and the Scriptures or Is it Easy to Find Mistakes in the Bible?" The topic of the 7:30 p.m. service, a "Gathering of the Sincere and Honest Investigators" was "The Man Who Shook in His Shoes or Why Do the Devils Tremble?"
- In the fall of 1927 a nineteen-year-old Saskatchewan farm boy named Ernest Manning enrolled along with 35 other students at the Institute's bible college. For a brief time Manning (who later succeeded Aberhart as Premier) lived in the basement suite of Aberhart's 5th Street S.W. bungalow located on the lower cusp of Calgary's prestigious Mount Royal District.
- The school syllabus stated that the Institute would " use every legitimate Christian means to combat and resist "Modernism, Higher Criticism, Skepticism and Sectarianism in all its forms." Aberhart wrote the texts for the classes, promoting his own personal brand of "evangelical fundamentalism."
- When Aberhart's Social Credit party won the provincial election in 1935, Cyril Hutchinson became the school's principal. Following Aberhart's death in 1943, Ernest Manning became president of the Institute. A falling-out between Manning and Hutchinson resulted in Hutchinson's departure from the Institute in 1948 to found the Berean Bible Institute.(later Foothills Christian College). By 1951 the Institute building on 8th Avenue was closed.
- In 1974, the building which had been home to the Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute was demolished to make way for commercial development. Two years later the Historical Society unveiled a plaque at the Institute's former site.
- The former site of the Institute is currently occupied by the T. Eaton Company store. Eaton's commemorative window display facing 8th Avenue recognizes the historical significance of the former location of William Aberhart's beloved Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute.

"Then & Now" columns appeared weekly in the Calgary Herald between 2002 and

2005. The following article appeared July 30, 2003.

Then: Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute, 516 8th Ave. S.W.

• William Aberhart, high school principal and later Social Credit premier of Alberta (1935-43), founded the Calgary Bible Institute in 1918. Meetings and Bible classes were held at locations throughout the city until the construction of the Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute in 1927 provided a permanent home. Aberhart administered the church and conducted the weekly CFCN radio broadcasts, Back to the Bible Hour, from the new 8th Avenue S.W. location. Following Aberhart's death in 1943, Ernest Manning became president of the institute but internal politics led to its demise and, by 1951, the closure of the 8th Avenue building.

Now: Sears

• In 1974, the former Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute was demolished to make way for commercial development. Fourteen years later, a new Eaton's store was erected on the site as part of the \$110-million Calgary Eaton Centre. In 1999, Sears Canada Inc. bought the downtown store as part of a \$30-million acquisition of the bankrupt Eaton's company.

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