

WESTBOURNE BAPTIST CHURCH
436 - 13th Avenue S.E.

Westbourne Baptist Church was established as a mission church of First Baptist in 1905, when four lots were purchased just following the opening up of the Victoria Park subdivision. The present structure, built in 1910, was constructed after a grant to the First Baptist Church congregation was received from Westbourne Church in London. The church, named for its British counterpart, has played an extremely significant role in the Baptist movement in Alberta, and it is widely recognized by its association to William Aberhart.

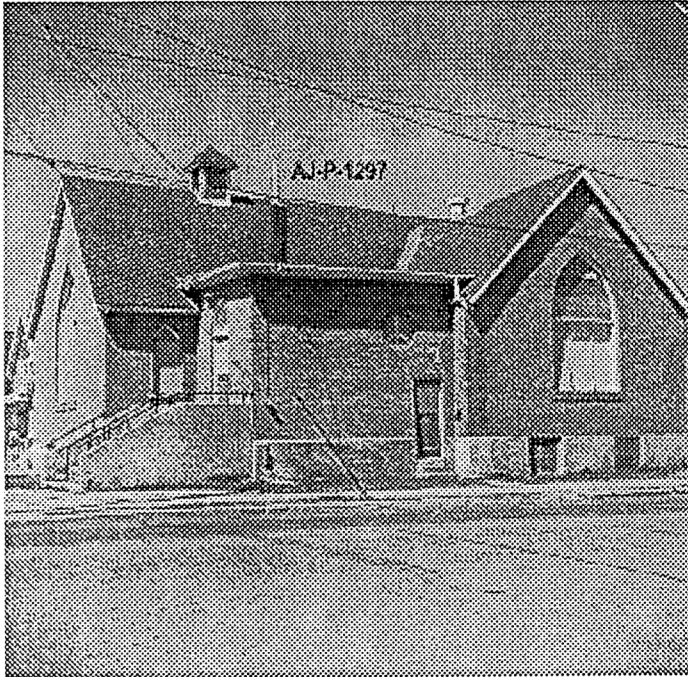
A small, but strong, example of a Gothic Revival style, the church was first ministered by Reverend R. Dack. In October of 1915, William Aberhart learned that Westbourne Baptist was in need of a minister, and on December 15, 1915, he gave his first sermon at the church, beginning an important connection to the building. Although Aberhart was not a Baptist, he influenced control over the congregation who agreed to have him conduct his Bible study classes (initially taught at Trinity Methodist) from Westbourne Baptist. Through time, Aberhart's teachings caused debate within the broader congregation. Led by staunch Baptist and former mayor, Thomas Underwood, the mother congregation of First Baptist disassociated with the followers of Aberhart. In 1921, members of Westbourne Baptist became independent from the traditional Baptist Convention, and in 1923, the church was incorporated on its own. It was at Westbourne that Aberhart's noted radio ministry had its beginnings. With contributions from his radio audience, Aberhart formed the Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute, building a new church and winning over a large proportion of Westbourne's congregation. In 1929, a large number of these members returned to the old church after questioning Aberhart's leadership. In 1930, the Regular Baptist Missionary Fellowship of Alberta was formed with the Westbourne congregation leading the movement, and thus, ending their relationship with William Aberhart.

Westbourne Church remained vacant for many years (1967-1975) as the congregation had difficulty selling the property due to declining land values in Victoria Park. A Pentecostal Congregation occupied the premises in the 1980's, and covered the original brick facing. Today, the church is owned by another group known as the Religious-Divine Worship, and is suffering from neglect.

A highly important Calgary landmark, Westbourne Church contributes to a strong Pre-War historic grouping in Victoria Park.

Jadore, Marianne & Simpson, Kerne
Victoria Park Inventory, Calgary: CCCC
Planning & Building Dept, 1993
unpagged

Westbourne Baptist Church



436 - 13th Avenue S.E.

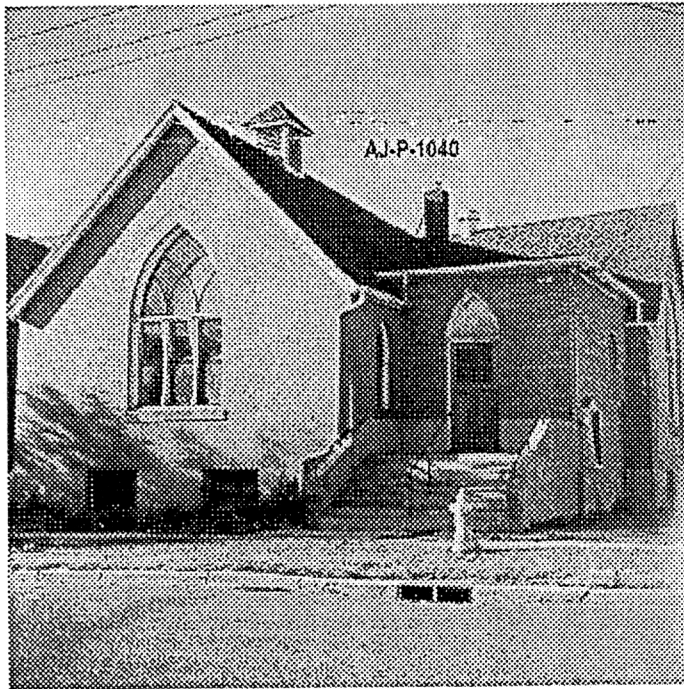
Built: 1910

Architect:

Builder:

Photo taken:

Notes:



Alison Jackson Photo Collection



J. R. CRESSWELL
Mar. 3, 1897, to July 10, 1898



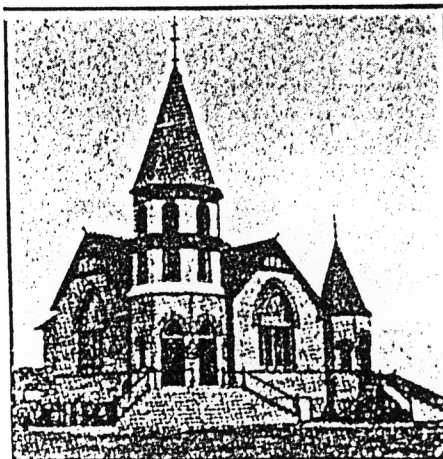
J. W. LITCH
Dec. 4, 1898, to Dec. 4, 1904

This persuasive evangelist had once been strongly anti-Christian. Working as a high school principal in Emerson, Manitoba, he had frequently debated the validity of the Bible with his landlord, a Mr. Hall. One Sunday, Mr. Hall's "friend", Miss Edith Stacey, convinced Mr. Litch to go to an evening service. There, he experienced a dramatic conversion, and shortly afterward, entered the ministry, and he married Miss Stacey.³

During Dr. Litch's pastorate a parsonage was completed adjacent to the church. The same year (1899), four lots were purchased on the north east corner of Seventh Avenue and First Street South West for a new building, since the existing sanctuary, seating 150, had become too small. It was "practically impossible to conduct the Sunday School properly owing to lack of room for the classes", and some people who wished to attend services couldn't because of over-crowding. When the new church opened on February 24, 1901, the church had been self-supporting since January 1, 1900.

A mission was started in 1903 on four lots at the corner of Scarth (Thirteenth) Avenue and Second Street East. Although it was "such a heavy responsibility", the church felt it was the Lord's will. In 1905, this mission was organized as Westbourne Baptist Church.

On February 8, 1905, a fire destroyed the church. While the flames were still going, the new pastor, Dr. F.W. Patterson, and the deacons planned to rebuild. By Sunday, \$4,975.00 was pledged for a new building. The



1900



1901 First Baptist Church street scene.

new church, constructed on the same site, was described as "a splendid new white brick structure with all the accessories of the modern church and Sunday School."⁴ This "splendid" building, which opened in August, 1905, could seat 600, and cost \$22,569.00 (including lots, chairs, and tearing down the old church).

Dr. Patterson had a missionary spirit, and under his leadership the church started five mission churches: Westbourne, 1905; Heath, 1907; Olivet, 1907; Hillhurst, 1908; and Crescent Heights, 1909, and supported a missionary to India, J.A.K. Walker.

Dr. Patterson was also known for actively campaigning against liquor traffic. With his influence, Alberta became the first "dry" province in Canada.⁵

Between 1910 and 1912, Calgary experienced a "boom". Immigrants poured into the city, and the construction industry flourished. The church was growing. Under Dr. J.C. Sycamore, a gallery was added, designed to seat 250, and still, people had to be turned away from the evening service. In 1910, the church decided to take advantage of the remarkable real estate activity. Six lots were purchased from Richard Bedford

1st Baptist Mother Church of Westbourne Info.

business in 1887 and when Calgary became a city in 1893 he was elected as an alderman. He rose to the office of mayor in 1901. The other, another pioneer with Baptist growing convictions, was H.H. Stovel, who arrived in 1888 from Alexander McDonald's growing church in Winnipeg, to carry the work and vision further westward. With financial aid from the east he organized the first Baptist church in Calgary.

Though Baptists emphasize the "priesthood of the believer" and begin churches with men such as Underwood and Stovel they ordain and call pastors. The first called to serve in Calgary was Reverend George Cross.

A series of buildings marked the growth of the First Baptist Church and also the city of Calgary. In 1901 a building, erected by Mayor Underwood; was dedicated. After a short life of four years it was destroyed by fire. Faith, courage and the pioneer spirit of Western Canada caused a new building, constructed out of white brick to rise from the ashes, to be opened, August 1905.

As the city grew, First Baptist displayed a missionary zeal, led by its pastor Dr. Patterson. Twenty-three members were given to establish Westbourne Baptist Church in 1905. Then thirteen were transferred to Heath Baptist Church and thirty to Olivet Baptist in 1907. The spirit of growth by division continued and twenty-three were sent to Hillhurst Baptist in 1908 and then another fifteen to Crescent Heights Baptist in 1909.

Signs of life abounded. Because of the many new office building in the developing business district First Baptist Church relocated in 1912. The land was purchased by seven Baptist men from R.B. Bennett, who later became Prime Minister of Canada.

Actually, Westbourne Baptist Church had been started by the First Baptist Church in 1903, with a Sunday School, attended by two little girls. These were taught by Mrs. Litch, the pastor's wife. On the four lots, purchased for them by First Baptist Church, on the northwest corner of thirteenth Avenue and Fourth Street, Southeast, the church erected a building. When the twenty-three members were transferred in 1905 from First Baptist, Westbourne was organized into a church, self-governing, and self-propagating.

Now, where did the name Westbourne originate? It was not named after the community it served. Dr. John Clifford, pastor of Westbourne Church, London, England, had an interest in Baptist outreach in Calgary. His church sent funds to assist. So the new church was named in recognition, Westbourne Baptist Church, the name it bears today, three quarters of a century later.

The many young Baptist churches across the prairies formed the Baptist Union of Western Canada in 1909. Two hundred and one churches were represented! Remember, the first was begun in 1873. Financial assistance continued from Eastern Canada.

Westbourne continued for years with debts, a small congregation and difficulty in keeping pastors. Thus, after World War I, the dynamic, able and definitive William Aberhart offered his services, as pastor, for no financial remuneration. He would serve them, while building a reputation as Western Canada's leading educator, as the principal of the Crescent Height High School.

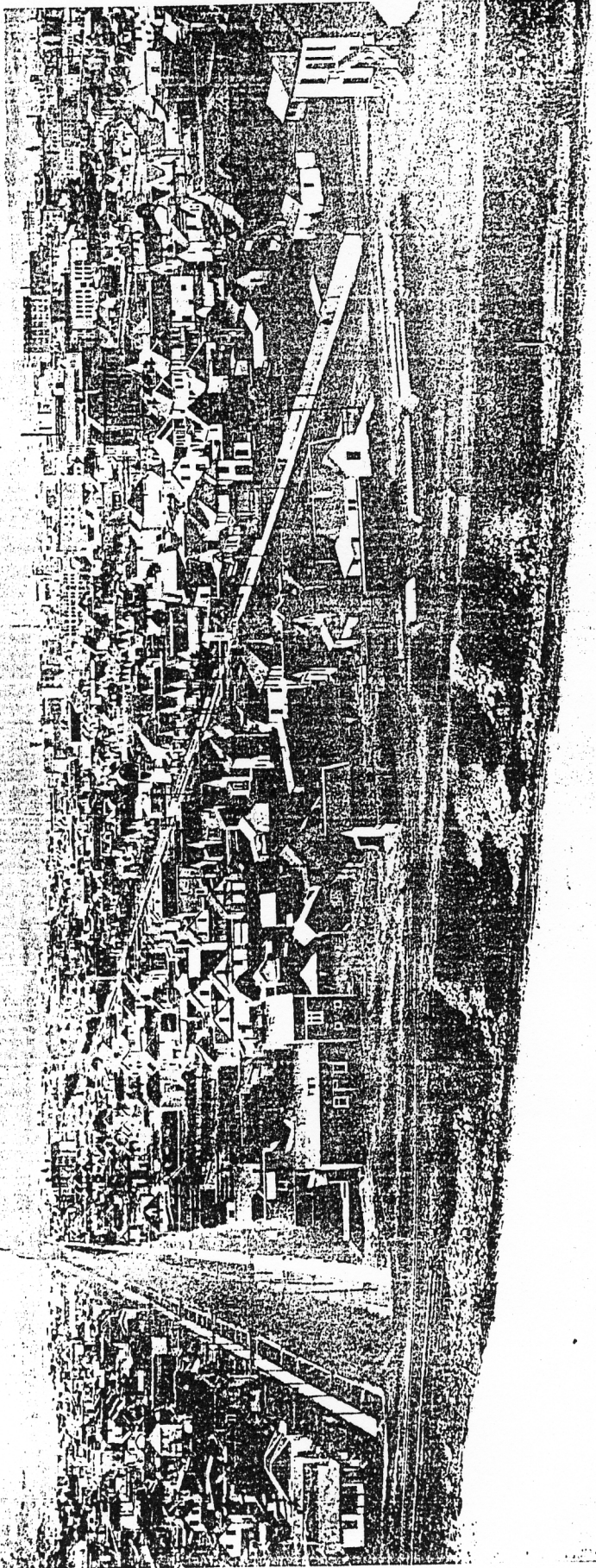
Under the leadership of William Aberhart Westbourne Baptist Church grew. He led it in separating from the Baptist Union of Western Canada in 1922 over doctrinal teachings at Brandon College, a Union sponsored college in Brandon, Manitoba. The college was seen to be the seed bed of erroneous views, attacking Scripture, commonly referred to as liberalism or modernism.

Westbourne soon outgrew the building they owned, and rented first the Palace Theater, and then the Grand Theater in downtown Calgary for Sunday afternoon services.

Aberhart's drive and ability were well suited to the new form of communication, radio. In the early days of broadcasting he conducted a radio ministry on Radio Station CFCN, reaching many Alberta homes. He reached as many as 50,000 people through the transmission of Sunday services, morning and evening, and radio Sunday School.

Response to his teaching, given complete with charts and diagrams, was so great that the Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute was established. A new building was erected and dedicated in 1927. The unbounded energies of William Aberhart were equal to the task of being its Dean, Teacher (with the exception of one class taught by Miss Mable Gates), Pastor, and still the outstanding principal of Crescent Heights High School.

Westbourne Baptist Church and the Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute shared the building, but governed themselves with separate boards. Differences of opinions developed. After much discussion a vote was taken, but it was a divided vote. Strong convictions led to the decision, in the best interests of all concerned, that almost half of the group return to Westbourne Baptist Church, and go a separate route from the Institute.



Buckboard to Brotherhood



ABOVE - Westbourne Baptist Church about 1900.

message of Jesus Christ was through planting new churches. Building churches in new areas of the community gave more people the opportunity to hear the gospel.²

Westbourne

The first church established by First Baptist started as a mission. In 1903, the church, under Dr. Litch, purchased four lots for \$800.00 on the corner of Scarth (Thirteenth) Avenue and Second Street (South) East, "on the south side of the subway". A temporary hall was constructed for \$600.00, and a Sunday School was started.

In March, 1905, it was decided to build a church. By selling two of the lots, a chapel seating 250 was constructed "without increasing the financial burdens" of the church "to any great extent". The church, named Westbourne Baptist Church (after receiving help from Westbourne Park Church in London, England, under Dr. John Clifford), opened on May 3, 1905, and on May 28, 23 members from First Baptist Church were transferred to Westbourne. Because of disagreements concerning the doctrinal teaching at Brandon College (the Baptist Union of Western Canada College), and the denominational policy for division of missionary funds, Westbourne Baptist Church withdrew from the BUWC under the direction of William Aberhart in 1922. Mr. Aberhart was later to become the Premier of Alberta.

Calgary

N.W.T.
1884

SUBDIVISION OF A PART OF SECTION 15,
TOWNSHIP 24, RANGE 1, W. 3M

This plan is correct and is prepared under the
provisions of the N.W.T. Registration of Titles
Ordinance Winnipeg, Jan 1, 1884

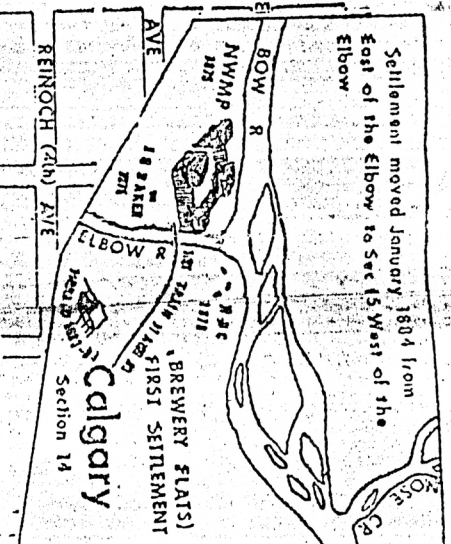
D. McVie
D. Surveyor

Canadian Pacific Railway Company Land Dept.
Winnipeg (Signed)

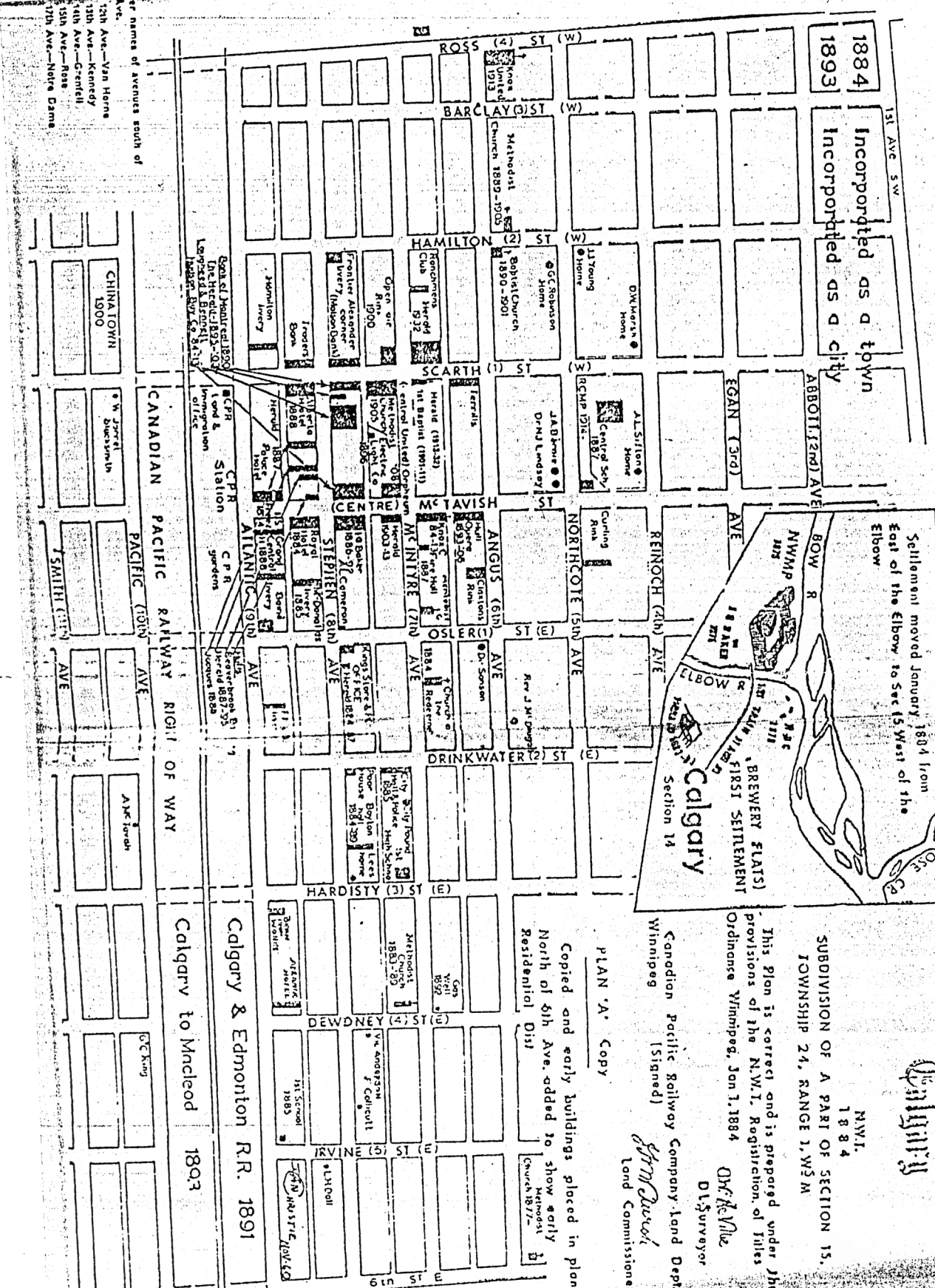
John A. ...
Land Commissioner

PLAN 'A' Copy

Copied and early buildings placed in plan
North of 6th Ave. added to show early
Residential Dist



Settlement moved January 1884 from
East of the Elbow to Sec 15 West of the
Elbow



Calgary & Edmonton R.R. 1891
Calgary to Ingleod 1893

13th Ave.—Van Horn
13th Ave.—Kennedy
14th Ave.—Gerrill
15th Ave.—Rose
17th Ave.—Notre Dame

CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY RIGHT OF WAY
CHINA TOWN 1900
W. J. ...
SMITH (1910)

CC King
1st School 1885
1st School 1885