

The Anglican Church of St. Luke of Waterloo

A neo-gothic, brick building which was a precursor of modern architectural styles

The development of the area to the South of Montreal is characterised by the influence of immigration from the United States at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century. The immigrants, for the most part loyalists, introduced several new denominations into the British colony of Lower Canada. Methodists settled in Odelltown from the beginning of the 19th century, and Congregationalists settled in the Eastern Townships from about 1827.

The first settlement in Waterloo coincided with a wave of loyalist Anglican immigrants towards 1800. A second wave, who cannot really be termed loyalist at this stage, settled there in 1820 to take advantage of the quality of the land conceded by the Canadian government.

At first a wooden church was built in the centre of the growing town in 1843. The coming of the railway in 1861 brought new development to the town, and the rapidly increasing population led to the construction of a new church in 1867.



Exterior
Photo : Germain Casavant



Interior towards choir
Photo : CPRQ

A neo-gothic building with a plain outline

St Luke's was built of red brick. The use of this material betrays its proximity to New England. It was designed by Thomas S. Scott, a Montréal architect who supervised the work on the Anglican Cathedral of Montréal in 1857. Scott later became chief architect of Canada's civil engineering department (1870-1881), and drew up the plans for the West building on Parliament Hill in Ottawa. He also built three neo-gothic style churches in Ontario.

His church in Waterloo has a rather plain exterior and apart from the buttresses which indicate the interior layout of the bays, there are very few embellishments. This is surprising because neo-gothic formal vocabulary generally favours a more angular structure. The use of brick for the framework, rather than the more commonly used freestone, explains this peculiarity. This gives the church a particularly modern look for its time, prefiguring the buildings of the end of the century and signalling a prelude to an industrialisation of architectural forms.



Exterior viewed from the chevet
Photo : CPRQ

The building was consecrated in December 1870. With the warmth of its woodwork and its exposed beams, the interior recalls medieval British architecture, as does St Matthew's of Québec. The general sombre atmosphere is in keeping with the simple, unadorned style often found in traditional Anglican churches.

A new bell-tower

The original tower, hit by lightning, was replaced with the present structure towards the year 1900. The new tower conforms well to the style of the rest of the building.

It was built with the same features, for example, the integrated brick frames around the openings. The old spire was not reconstructed, but symbolic crenels were added which provide incontestable proof of its Anglican ancestry.

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