

**119 SUTHERLAND AVENUE – ALL PEOPLE’S SUTHERLAND MISSION
(MANITOBA INDIAN CULTURAL EDUCATION CENTRE)
*J.H.G. Russell, 1908***



The development of Winnipeg’s early social infrastructure – including facilities for the poor, ill, orphaned, elderly, and newcomers – fell mainly to churches and private citizens’ groups. One prominent example was the All People’s Mission, a Methodist organization that provided immigrant settlement and adaptation services in the city’s North End.

The mission grew out of Sunday school classes for immigrants begun in 1889 by Dollie McGuire at McDougall Methodist Church on Main Street. Later located in Point Douglas and known as A House of Prayer for All People, this initiative soon encompassed both religious and secular activities such as home visits, mothers’ meetings and help for the unemployed. It formally became a church mission in 1899.

A second outlet, the Bethlehem Slavic or Stella Avenue Mission, opened in 1904. Three years later, the two facilities were consolidated under the name All People’s and under the direction of a new superintendent, Rev. James Shaver Woodsworth, a committed reformer in the social gospel movement.

Woodsworth (1874-1942) was born near Toronto, Ontario, the son of a Methodist minister. He came to Manitoba (first to Portage la Prairie, then to Brandon) with his family in 1882. He studied at Wesley College in Winnipeg, the University of Toronto and Mansfield College, Oxford, England. His exposure to conditions in England's urban slums sharpened his awareness of the systemic roots of poverty and his critique of the era's conventional theological and political responses.

Ordained in 1900, Woodsworth served at churches in Assiniboia, Northwest Ontario and Winnipeg, but found the appointments unfulfilling. By 1907, he was prepared for a second time to resign from the ministry, only to be encouraged to stay and lead the All People's Mission.

The post gave Woodsworth more scope for his social activism. New multipurpose buildings that combined spaces for teaching, preaching and recreation were constructed in 1908 on Stella Avenue and at 119 Sutherland Avenue in Point Douglas. Two settlement houses subsequently (1912) were established to bring 'average' citizens into immigrant districts as role models. One, Sutherland Court, was located next to the Sutherland Mission to accommodate Wesley College students.

The exterior of the Point Douglas mission was austere and nondescript, but its interior was alive with activity. There were informational People's Forums, team sports, and education, public health, employment, recreation, and children's programs, including innovative kindergarten classes, fresh air camps and boys' and girls' clubs. Woodsworth wrote extensively about local socioeconomic conditions, initiated factory visits, opposed child labour, fought for school nurses and improved housing, and encouraged the formation of joint organizations, such as Associated Charities and the League of Social Service Workers, to address local problems.

The Sutherland Mission continued as a community resource through two world wars, the depressed 1930s and the boom decades of the 1950s and 1960s. Woodsworth, however, left in 1913 to engage in more direct action as a labour and political leader. In 1921, he

was elected to the federal House of Commons as the Independent Labour Party member for Winnipeg North Centre. He held the seat until his death, latterly as a founder and member of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation.

The two-storey Sutherland Mission was designed by local architect John Hamilton Gordon Russell and built for about \$10,000 by the Malcom Brothers. As it originally appeared, the structure had a high stone foundation, solid sand-lime brick walls, a flat roof, and three steel I-beams for interior reinforcement. All elevations were finished at the roof-line by a galvanized iron cornice and iron-capped brick parapet. All were well lit by large rectangular windows with brick heads and stone lug sills.

Dominating the front (east) façade was a pavilion that contained an elevated main entrance, a pair of first-floor windows set beneath arched brickwork, and a trio of second-storey openings highlighted by a continuous galvanized iron sill and rusticated brickwork. Topping the mission's double door were a bracketed wooden hood and arched brick keys.

The interior held a basement recreation room, 'swimming tank', shower stalls, and washroom. Classrooms, clubrooms, a kitchen, sewing room, and bath- and storage rooms were on the upper levels. Moveable walls (folding doors) enabled both the first- and second-floor spaces to be opened up for church services or other large gatherings.

The building has undergone substantial exterior and interior renovations since the late 1970s to accommodate a contemporary community resource, the Manitoba Indian Cultural Education Centre Inc.

Architect Russell (1862-1946) designed several Presbyterian houses of worship in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, including Winnipeg's Augustine, Westminster, Robertson Memorial, Knox, Home Street, St. John's, and Riverview churches. He also planned the Crescent-Fort Rouge Methodist Church on Wardlaw Avenue. His early training occurred in his hometown of Toronto with H.B. Gordon. He later studied and worked at various

centres in the mid- and northwest United States before setting up his Winnipeg office in the mid-1890s. Over the next four decades, he completed many commercial, institutional and residential projects, more than a dozen of which had received historical designation from the City of Winnipeg as of early 2004.