## City of Petroit

CITY COUNCIL

Historic Designation Advisory Board

## Final Report

## PROPOSED TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH HISTORIC DISTRICT

The proposed historic district under study by the Historic Designation Advisory Board consists of a church and attached parish facilities located at the southwest corner of Myrtle and Trumbull. The building permit for the church was issued in 1890, and the adjoining parish house was built in 1925. The parish complex has served its original purpose since it was built.

BOUNDARIES: The boundaries of the proposed historic district are as follows:

- 1. On the North, the centerline of Myrtle.
- 2. On the east, the centerline of Trumbull.
- 3. On the south, the south line of lot 38 of McKeown's Subdivision of the south part of Out Lot 96 of the Woodbridge Farm (L. 3 P. 50).
- 4. On the west, the centerline of the alley west of Trumbull and adjoining lots 37 and 38 of McZeown's Subdivision.

HISTORY: Trinity Episcopal Church was founded in 1878 as Epiphany Reformed Episcopal Church, a representative of Anglicanism which did not give allegiance to the Episcopal bishop of the diocese. The first services were briefly held in the former St. Mark's Episcopal Church at Twenty-third and Ash; eventually this property was returned to the Episcopal Diocese, and was sold to become St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church. Epiphany purchased property at the southwest corner of Myrtle and Trumbull, and built a small frame church first used for services on Easter, 1880. In 1889, the congregation changed its name to Trinity.

Diagonally across the intersection of Myrtle, Trumbull, and Grand River was the home of James E. Scripps, founder of the <u>Detroit News</u>, built in 1879. Mr. Scripps became a member of the Epiphany congregation. During the late 1880's, Mr. Scripps travelled in England and became interested in English Medieval architecture. This interest resulted in three structures important in the architectural history of Detroit: Trinity Episcopal Church, major additions to his house, and, later, the Scripps Library, another addition to his house.

The building permit for Trinity Episcopal was issued on July 2, 1890, and was taken out by Scripps himself. The permit described the building as a stone church, 100' x 55', costing \$40,000. The church was consecrated on January 1, 1893, although it appears to have been in use prior to that date. The architects for the building were Mason & Rice, who at the same time were responsible for the design of the addition — larger than the original house — being added to Scripps' house. At one and the same time, Scripps

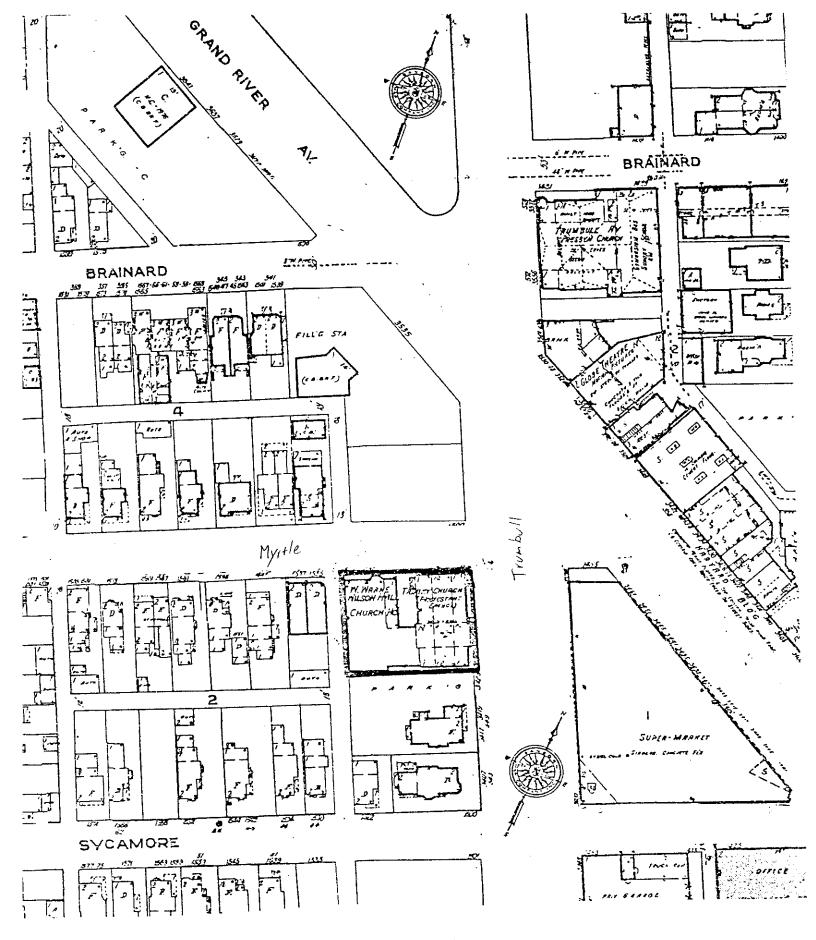
and Mason & Rice became responsible for introducing a new Tudor-inspired domestic architecture to Detroit at the Scripps house, and a new form of Gothic church architecture at Trinity.

Scripps' aim at Trinity was "to give Detroit an example of the old-time church, at once so picturesque and impressive." According to church literature, Scripps hired an English architect to supply his Detroit architects with drawings of details from English Gothic churches, and that information, combined with Scripps' insistance on scrupulous accuracy in designing in the Gothic style, produced a building which not only unifies into a single composition many details from specific English buildings, but also heralds the dawn of a new way of designing in the Gothic style.

During the first half of the twentieth century, a style developed which is often called Neo-Gothic, to differentiate it from the Gothic Revival of the nineteenth century. This style is most often characterized in the work of Cram, Goodhue, and Ferguson, a firm established in 1890, and which quickly established a reputation for the finest designs in the Gothic tradition. Cram was acutely conscious of the philosophical and historical antecedants of his work, and desired to continue the English Gothic from the point at which it had been interrupted by the Reformation. Later, after Cram and Goodhue had separated, Goodhue became responsible for a very important trend in which it was hoped to create a thoroughly twentieth century style derived from tradition. These men, and their work, influenced church design all over the United States, and examples of their work still stand from coast to coast.

At Trinity, we have the earliest example in Detroit of this new consciousness in Gothic design. Respect for structural integrity — the crossing vault is said to be first honest stone church vaulting in Michigan — accuracy in Gothic design, and a love for craftsmanship are all present. The first acknowledged example of Neo-Gothic in the United States was a chapel for St. Paul's School, near Concord, New Hampshire, whose crossing tower was built after Trinity was begun. All Saints in Ashmount/Dorchester, near Boston, was Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson's first church design, and was not completed until about 1895. This places Trinity in the forefront of the new movement, and it is possible that when the history of Neo-Gothic is traced by the architectural historians — a process which has only just begun — that Detroit may discover that an architectural landmark of the first importance exists here.

In 1896, the congregation voted to unite with the Episcopal Diocese of Nichigan, a move which may have offended Scripps, who was apparently devoted to the Reformed church. The Tract Index indicates a legal wrangle between Scripps and the church over conditions of his gift after that time. Through the early twentieth century, the parish prospered, and in 1925 the cornerstone was laid for the Wilson Parish Hall, named for the Rev. W. Warne Wilson who had been rector of the church in 1903. Ironically, the namesake of the building died on the day of its dedication.



PROPOSED TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH HISTORIC DISTRICT (Proposed district outlined in heavy black)