MUNICIPALITY OF PORT HOPE

HERITAGE DESIGNATION

Address: 57 John Street

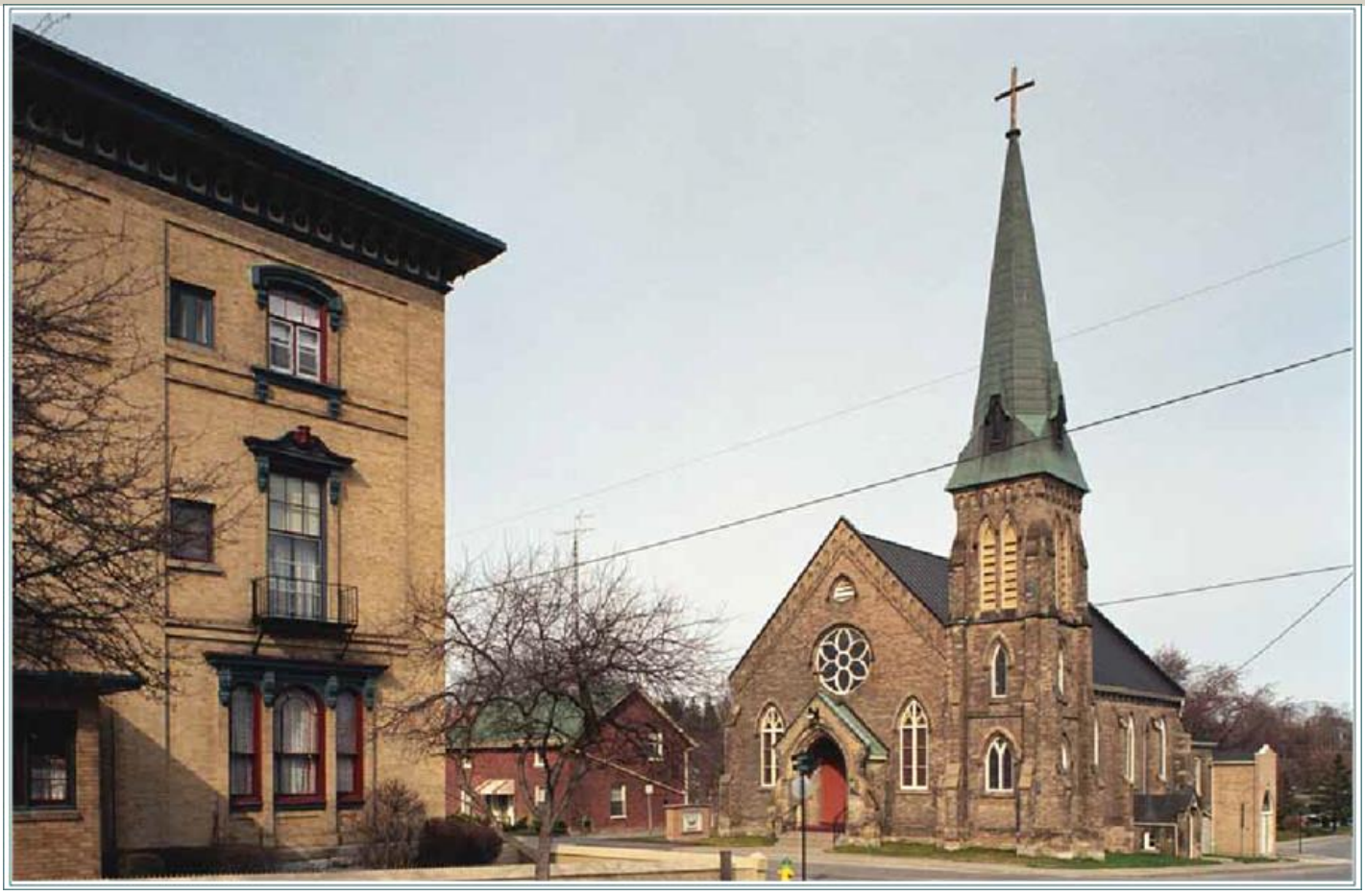
Known as: First Baptist Church

Architectural Style: Gothic Revival

Date Built: Circa 1867

Date Designated: October 23, 1989 to By-Law No. 91/89, SCHEDULE B-1

Lot Description: SMITH EST PLAN PT LOT 320; PT PARK LOT 50



Architectural Description

The Baptist Church is one of a complement of Victorian churches whose beckoning spires are prominent in the local skyline. It was built in stages but its ecclesiastical Gothic theme perseveres. It is a buff-brick structure (rare for Port Hope), gable-roofed, on a stone foundation. The spire roof is copper, last replaced in 1964. The facade faces John Street with the tower and spire placed strategically toward the corner of Augusta.

The facade is symmetrically arranged around a front entrance bay. Prominent is an open, roofed vestibule, with Gothic arch, elaborated with corbelled brick, buttresses and decorative scrollwork announcing "Baptist Church 1867". Housed within the vestibule is an austere front door. Windows on the facade are twinned Gothic lights under a wider Gothic arch. The arch is decorated with stone and brick masonry. A rose window with trefoil shaped vent above complete the facade. Ornamental brick cornice accents the front gable and continues around the side elevations.

The side elevations are similarly buttressed with tall Gothic windows placed between. The tower and spire are placed to the side, as was often the case with Victorian churches. Like the main building, the tower is buttressed and decorated with Gothic openings. At main floor level is a twinned window within a wider opening, at second floor is a narrow window, at third floor are twinned ventilators. The ornamented cornice continues on the tower. The polygonal spire reaches skyward, topped with a cross. The rear elevation adopts a simple arrangement with small rose window and vent at the apex of the gable. The ornamented brick cornice is not continued. Two chimneys appear to have been removed.

Projecting from the rear elevation is a plain hip-roofed wing on stone foundation. Gable with dormer is of note. Plain, segmentally arched windows are placed irregularly. A single storey wing has been added to the north and although stylistically incompatible with the church, it was placed with discretion and does not interfere with either of the street elevations. The Baptist Church is a textbook example of ecclesiastical Gothic architecture and stands as a fitting monument to the aspirations of the Baptist congregation.

Historical Abstract

The Port Hope Baptist Church was officially organized in 1855 with the appointment of Rev. H. Lloyd who ministered for several years to a small congregation which met in a small frame chapel in the second lot to the north of the present church. By 1866, the congregation had grown and the need for a suitable building to be used for a church was apparent.

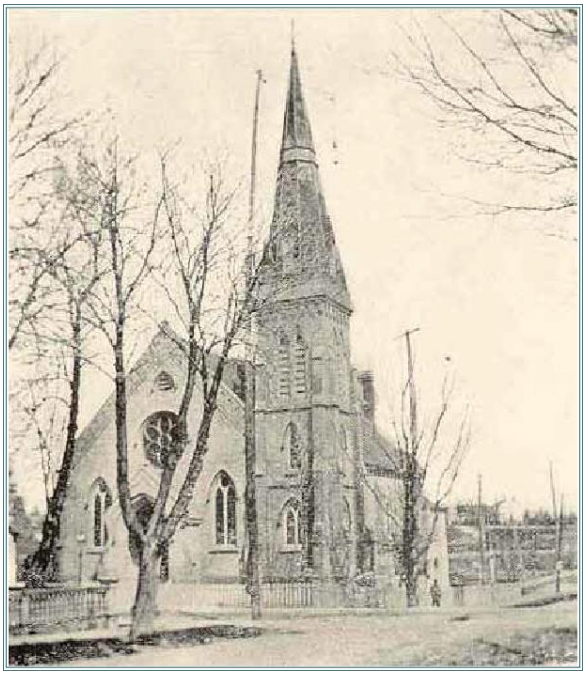
Church member William Craig purchased the lot at the corner of John and Augusta Street and presented it to the church. Subscriptions were solicited and people donated generously. The present church cost $9000 to erect and was completed in 1869. The old frame building used as a chapel was sold to Robert Hume who along with his son John carried on a seed and grain business for many years.

The Horwood Collection in the Ontario Archives has a set of coloured architectural drawings attributed to architects Langley and Burke dated circa 1864 and circa 1867 for the Baptist Church in Port Hope. During the period

1864 to 1869, Langley was in partnership with Thomas Gundry (1830-69) until Gundry's death in 1869. Their partnership spanned seven years from 1862 to 1869, during which they were responsible for the design of several other ecclesiastical projects; the spire on St. Michael's Cathedral, 1865; restoration after a fire of St. Stephen's, Bellevue Avenue; and design of St. Peter's Church, Bleeker and Carlton Streets in Toronto. Drawings in the Horwood Collection of the new St. John's Church formerly located on King Street (51 King Street) that moved to a new location on Pine Street in 1869 have also been attributed to Gundry and Langley with the Church school being designed by Langley, Langley and Burke who were in partnership from 1873 to 1884.

In 1894, the east end of the Baptist Church was extended which included rearrangement of the baptistery and the addition of additional classrooms and vestry in the basement. In 1963, the east end of the church commonly known as the annex was re-roofed and the interior renovated. In 1964, the brickwork was repointed, unused chimneys removed and one chimney rebuilt. The spire was completely sheeted in copper and crowned by a gilded cross.

Archival Photo



A view of the Baptist Church as it appeared in 1901.