



**187 GARRY STREET**

**WINDSOR HOTEL**

**DESTROYED BY FIRE**

**SEPTEMBER 13, 2023**

**(SEE PLATES 24-28)**

City of Winnipeg  
Historical Buildings Committee  
Researcher: Murray Peterson  
January 2005  
Updated October 2023

## 187 GARRY STREET – WINDSOR HOTEL

When the Dominion government agreed to a deal with the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) for the transfer of Rupert's Land (most of present-day Western Canada), the HBC retained land around Upper Fort Garry (located near the corner of Main Street and Broadway). The tract stretched from Main Street west to Colony Creek (today's Osborne Street-Memorial Boulevard-Colony Street) and north from the Assiniboine River to Portage Avenue. The HBC developed this property into one of Winnipeg's first prestigious residential districts.

Cottages and other small structures appeared in the early 1870s, but it was the real estate boom of the following decade that spurred construction in The Reserve. Many of the city's influential families chose The Reserve to build their mansions, set on sizeable, landscaped properties. One study of early buildings locates over half of Winnipeg's 22 most luxurious dwellings in this district.<sup>1</sup> This residential activity fostered the development of related facilities such as churches, schools and terraces.

North of York Avenue, the development was less ostentatious. There were still large brick and stone houses with wrap-around porches as in the south, but the buildings were smaller and they were set on smaller city lots, as was the norm elsewhere in Winnipeg (Plates 1 and 2). Nearer to Portage Avenue, the residential district gave way to commercial and office structures, including hotels, banks, etc. (Plate 3).

Over the next several decades, the neighbourhood changed dramatically. Many of the city's elite chose to relocate further away in the rapidly developing neighbourhoods of Armstrong's Point, River Heights, Fort Rouge, Crescentwood and Wolseley. Much of the original residential building stock was demolished in favour of larger apartment blocks or commercial structures. Many of the larger lots were subdivided, allowing more modest infill housing to dot the streets and avenues. Many of the larger dwellings were converted into boarding houses and their interiors were heavily altered (Plate 4).

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<sup>1</sup> R.R. Rostecki, "The Growth of Winnipeg, 1870-1886," M.A. Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1980, p. 11.

In 1903, as the entire area was beginning to develop into a modern residential neighbourhood, a comparatively large building was constructed near the southeast corner of Garry Street and St. Mary's Avenue and officially opened as La Claire Hall, a boarding house.<sup>2</sup>

## STYLE

Like many buildings of its age, the Windsor Hotel was built very simply, with few ornamental details. Designed as a boarding house, its interior layout was of greater concern, an efficient organization of interior space crucial to the business, while the exterior only needed to be homey and inviting. In this case, subdued exterior adornments would have allowed it to better blend in with the smaller residential structures around it.

## CONSTRUCTION

According to the 1903 City of Winnipeg Building Permit, the original structure measured approximately 11.6 metres (38 feet) wide, 33.6 metres (110 feet) in length and rising 10.7 metres (35 feet) above grade.<sup>3</sup> Resting on a 45.7-metre (18-inch) rubblestone foundation, the brick veneer walls were 25.4 centimetres (10 inches) throughout. Joists (5.1 x 25.4 centimetres [2 x 10 inches]) were used as support on all levels and ceiling heights measured 2.7 metres in the basement and the top two floors and 3.1 metres on the main floor. Stone was used as window sills throughout the building. Total cost of construction in 1903-04 was \$25,000 (not including the lot and interior furnishings).<sup>4</sup>

The one-storey 1928 annex, connected to the north side of the original structure, measured 2.1 x 18.3 metres (41 x 60 feet) and used 30,000 bricks and 30.6 cubic metres (40 cubic yards) of concrete to completed the \$6,000 addition.<sup>5</sup> The entrance vestibule addition, completed in 1946,

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<sup>2</sup> Various contemporary documents use a variety of terms to describe the business including: hotel, tenement, and apartment.

<sup>3</sup> City of Winnipeg Building Permit, (below as BP), #952/1903.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> BP #2359/1928.

is constructed of reinforced concrete, brick and glass block, measured 3.1 x 4.6 metres (10 x 15 feet) and cost \$2, 600.<sup>6</sup>

## DESIGN

The original front of this three-storey structure featured the main entrance on the west façade atop a large double set of stairs (Plate 5). This front elevation was divided into three vertical bays, the outside bays featuring large windows on the ground floor and paired openings on the upper two floors. The centre bay featured the raised entrance, a small second-storey window and a large third-floor doorway leading from the hallway to a balcony with metal railing. All windows featured stone lug sills and were finished with cloth awnings, to soften the starkness of the design. The front façade was finished with a cornice (wrapping around the side elevations for a short distance) and a pedimented cornice with balustrade. The same picture shows a small portion of the north façade, which was plain with rectangular window openings and stone lug sills. It is assumed that the south façade was similarly designed.

Today, the main façade features a centrally located, one-storey brick vestibule. The raised rubblestone foundation wall leads to the brick walls of the superstructure. Awnings no longer grace the front windows and the third floor door has been boarded up, although a metal railing is still in place (Plates 6 and 7). The wrap around cornice exists, although the pediment and balustrade have been removed. The north and south elevations do not appear to have been significantly altered (Plates 7 and 8). The rear façade includes a door on the ground floor and plain windows on the upper floors (Plate 9).

In 1928, the new owners of the property, in a response to the relaxing of provincial liquor laws, built a small, one-storey beer parlour connected to the north side of the hotel. This brick structure featured a large central door flanked by large single windows and finished with a curved parapet (Plate 5). A metal marquee covered the doorway and was furnished by the

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<sup>6</sup> BP #3749/1946.

Manitoba Steel Products Company.<sup>7</sup> Neither this element nor the detailed parapet appeared on the original drawing for the addition.

In 1946, a brick entrance vestibule was completed, replacing the original stairs and giving a measure of protection against the elements for visitors. The front includes a large double door with glass block-filled transom, openings on the north and south walls are also filled with glass block (Plate 10).

## **INTERIOR**

Nothing is known about the original organization or general finish of this building, although the present layout of the upper hallways is likely in its original state. Staircases were found at either end of the building to provide exits in case of emergency and the shared washroom and bath facilities were centrally located, on either side of the wide hallway. Transoms topped all room doors, all of which have now been covered.

There is a good description of the building when it reopened in 1928 after the addition and general renovations were complete. New to the ground floor (called the “rotunda floor” in the article) was a “very fine ladies’ rest room and parlor [sic]...comfortably and richly furnished.”<sup>8</sup> The 56 guest rooms were all refurnished with writing desks and silk lamps added (all furnishings were supplied by the Hudson’s Bay Company). The hallways were recarpeted and redecorated. The new beer parlour included split wicker seating, a stone finish covering the lower walls, terrazzo floors, a solid oak bar and bevelled-glass accents (Plate 11).<sup>9</sup>

At present, virtually all the original finishes have disappeared from the interior. The basement, with its brick encased boiler (Plate 12), also features the last section of ornamental tin ceiling, a likely finish for ceilings on the upper floors. The ground floor contains the front desk, a small restaurant and down a flight of stairs to the heavily redecorated lounge (Plate 13). Access to the

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<sup>7</sup> Hotel News, Vol. 1, No. 12 (November 1928), p. 17.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

upper floors is gained by stairs located at the extreme east end of the building or the set located near to the middle of the structure, each fitted with carved wood banisters. Rooms throughout the building are small and simple, only a few include a sink (Plate 14). Contemporary wood panelling, stippled ceilings and fluorescent lighting are found in both the rooms and the hallways (Plate 15). The bathrooms feature dated upgrades and fixtures (Plate 16). There are a handful of original doors and hardware left in the building and some of the wood baseboard also remains (Plate 17).

## **INTEGRITY**

The building stands in its original location and appears to be in good structural condition. Alterations, according to City of Winnipeg sources, have concentrated on the interior of the building. Exterior alterations to the main building have included, as mentioned previously, painting of the exterior brick walls, the removal of ornamentation at the roofline and the replacement of the original entrance stairs with a one-storey vestibule. The parapet of the 1928 annex has also been simplified (date unknown) and an addition was made to its east side in 1993. The main building and annex have been painted on several occasions, including a large mural on the north wall of the annex and a smaller mural on the north wall of the main building (Plate 8).

## **STREETSCAPE**

Originally located in the midst of a heavily residential area, the Windsor Hotel is neighbored by high-rise office and apartment buildings and commercial structures of various sizes and description and the hotel is one of the few remaining structures of its vintage on this section of Garry Street (Plates 18 and 19).

## **ARCHITECT/CONTRACTOR**

The original City of Winnipeg Building Permit, lists the owners, Forrester and Carroll, as the architects of this building. Contractors for the building were the local firm of Waller and

Howall, who, according to Building Permit lists from 1899-1911, only worked together in 1903 and 1904, and neither were listed after 1910 (see Table One below for work by the partners).<sup>10</sup>

**TABLE ONE – Waller and Howall Projects, 1899-1911**

Year	No	Location/Address	Owner	Cost	Stories	Size	Material	Architect	Type
1903	592	Garry ES Broadway & York	Hudson Bay Co.	15000	3	49x71	Brick veneer	Browne, G.	stable
1903	676	Dufferin NS Aikins & Salter	Toole, W	5000	2.5	36x38	Frame & stone foundation	Toole, W.	Dwelling
1903	952	Garry ES St Mary & York	Forrester, CH & Carroll, J	25000	3	110x38	Brick veneer	Forrester, C.H. & Carroll, J.	tenement
1904	488	Colony WS Broadway & Portage	McKay, J	5000	2.5	33.4x29.2	Frame & stone foundation	Russell, J.H.G.	Dwelling
1904	489	Langside WS Broadway & Preston	Crichton, J	500	1.5	-	Frame & stone foundation	Russell, J.H.G.	Dwelling

## PERSON/INSTITUTION

This facility has undergone several name changes throughout its history. Originally, the structure was built as a boarding house known as La Claire Hall, owned and operated by Charles and Celia B. Forrester. Forrester was born in Seely's Bay, Canada West (Ontario) in 1856 and was engaged in the retail piano business when he moved west to Winnipeg. He was well-known as a property owner and twice lost elections: for mayor (1910) and for a provincial legislature seat (1920). The Forresters lived at 187 Garry Street and owned several single-family homes, terraces and duplexes in the neighbourhood.<sup>11</sup> He died at the age of 67 in Winnipeg in April 1923.<sup>12</sup> C.H. Forrester is listed as the owner of La Claire Hall until 1916, as well as La Claire Annex, a converted single-family house located just north of the larger building and numbered

<sup>10</sup> City of Winnipeg Building Permit Ledger Book, 1899-1911.

<sup>11</sup> City of Winnipeg Assessment Roll, Roll No. 931501-12-1 (below as ARo), 1903-1916.

<sup>12</sup> Legislative Library Scrapbook, no newspaper referenced, April 1923.

191 Garry Street.<sup>13</sup> Just before the sale of the property, Forrester changed the facility's name to La Claire Hotel.

From 1917-1928, the Imperial Canadian Trust Company owned the property, changing the name to the Glengarry Hotel in 1927. Records indicate that there were 60 people living in the two structures in 1921, 3 between the ages of 6 and 16.<sup>14</sup> The Annex was demolished in 1928 to make way for the new beer parlour and shortly after it was completed, the hotel was sold to the Windsor Hotel Company headed by J.B. Gray (Plate 20) and the name was changed to the Windsor Hotel.<sup>15</sup> This company would own the hotel until 1938.<sup>16</sup>

In 1929 and 1930, the Petrie Taxi Service and Ferguson Taxi Service were both operating out of 187 Garry Street. After 1930, there is no reference to the taxi companies at the hotel.<sup>17</sup>

From 1938 to 1961, the Greystone Hotel Company is listed as owners. Tenancy ranged from a low of 10 in 1956 to over 50 in 1949. In a 1948 edition of The Hotel News, the Windsor Hotel was listed among Manitoba's "best accommodations" with 53 rooms costing "\$1.75 and up" per day.

## EVENT

It is known that world-famous actor Charlie Chaplin stayed at the La Claire Hotel in August 1913. Chaplin was in town as one of the leads of a British comedy group, Karno Troupe, on their second North American tour (Plates 21 and 22). On hotel letterhead (Plate 23), Chaplin explained to his brother that he thought he would be signing a deal he had been negotiating with Adam Kessel (later Keystone Film Company) to make movies. The offer gave Chaplin \$125/week and was the beginning of Chaplin's movie career. By the following year, he had a

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<sup>13</sup> ARo, 1903-1916.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 1916-1930.

<sup>15</sup> Hotel News, Vol. 1, No. 12 (November 1928), p. 17.

<sup>16</sup> ARo, 1929-1940.

<sup>17</sup> Henderson's Directory, 1925-1930.



contract for \$1,250/week with Essanay Films and in February 1916 had signed with the Mutual Film Corporation for \$10,000/week and a \$150,000 bonus.<sup>18</sup> He would ultimately become one of the highest paid actors of his era and known worldwide.

## **CONTEXT**

This structure was completed at the very beginning of Winnipeg's major growth phase which saw its population rise from 50,000 in 1901 to approximately 200,000 two decades later. This growth permeated every sector of life in Winnipeg and in many instances, demand was far greater than supply. The housing market was especially sensitive. The need for housing the growing population was acute throughout this period and although slums and poorly built areas were created, by-laws, the experienced local building trades and the sheer amount of available capital guaranteed a steady supply of good housing. Not only the traditional single-family dwelling was built, but also duplexes, terraces, boarding houses and finally the modern apartment block could be found on many residential streets. La Claire Hall, now the Windsor Hotel, fit into this need for housing.

## **LANDMARK**

The Windsor Hotel has operated as a bar/hotel facility for over 70 years. It is conspicuous within the neighbourhood as one of many such downtown enterprises.

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<sup>18</sup> Information from Glen Pringle, <http://www.csse.monash.edu.au/~pringle/silent/chaplin/chaplin.html>, last updated 1999.



# APPENDIX I

## CITY OF WINNIPEG - Preliminary Report

### Assessment Record

Building Address: 187 Garry Street

Building Name: Windsor Hotel

Original Use: boarding house

Current Use: hotel

Roll No. (Old): 931501 (16889)

RSN: 134799

Municipality: 12

Ward: 1

Legal Description: 1 St. John, Plan 24135, Lots 54/6 (Original: 1 St. John, Plan 129, Block 3, Lot 142 (except northerly 10': Lots 143-145)

Location: East side between York and St. Mary Avenue

Date of Construction: 1903

Storeys: 3 and basement

Heritage Status: ON INVENTORY

Construction Type: Brick and rubblestone foundation

Building Permits (Plans available: [A] Archives; [M] Microfilm; [4<sup>th</sup>] 4<sup>th</sup> floor, 65 Garry Street):

- 952/1903 \$25,000 (original); 2359/1928 [A] \$6,000 (addition); 3749/1946 [A] \$2,600 (porch); 2702/1962 [4<sup>th</sup>- V04D10] \$2,500 (repairs); 1253/1965 \$4,000 (interior alterations); 180/1968 [M134] \$1,500 (interior alterations); 7758/1993 \$50,000 (addition- foundation); 7897/1993 [4<sup>th</sup>- B35C10] \$90,000 (addition- superstructure)

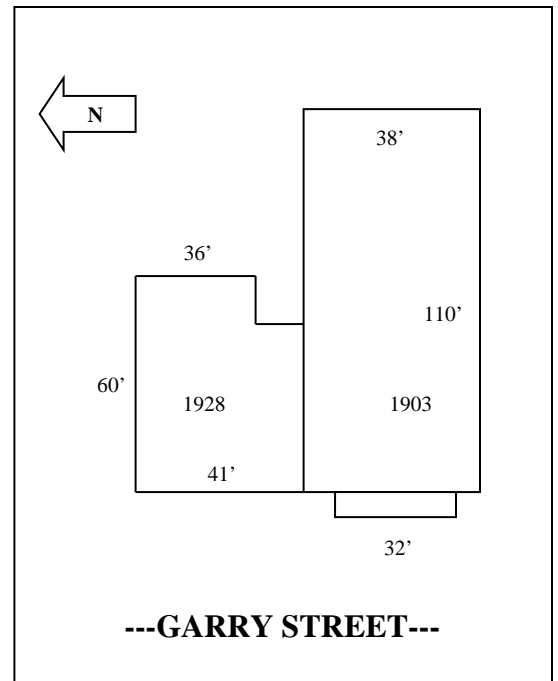
#### Information:

- Plan area = 6,550 sq. ft.

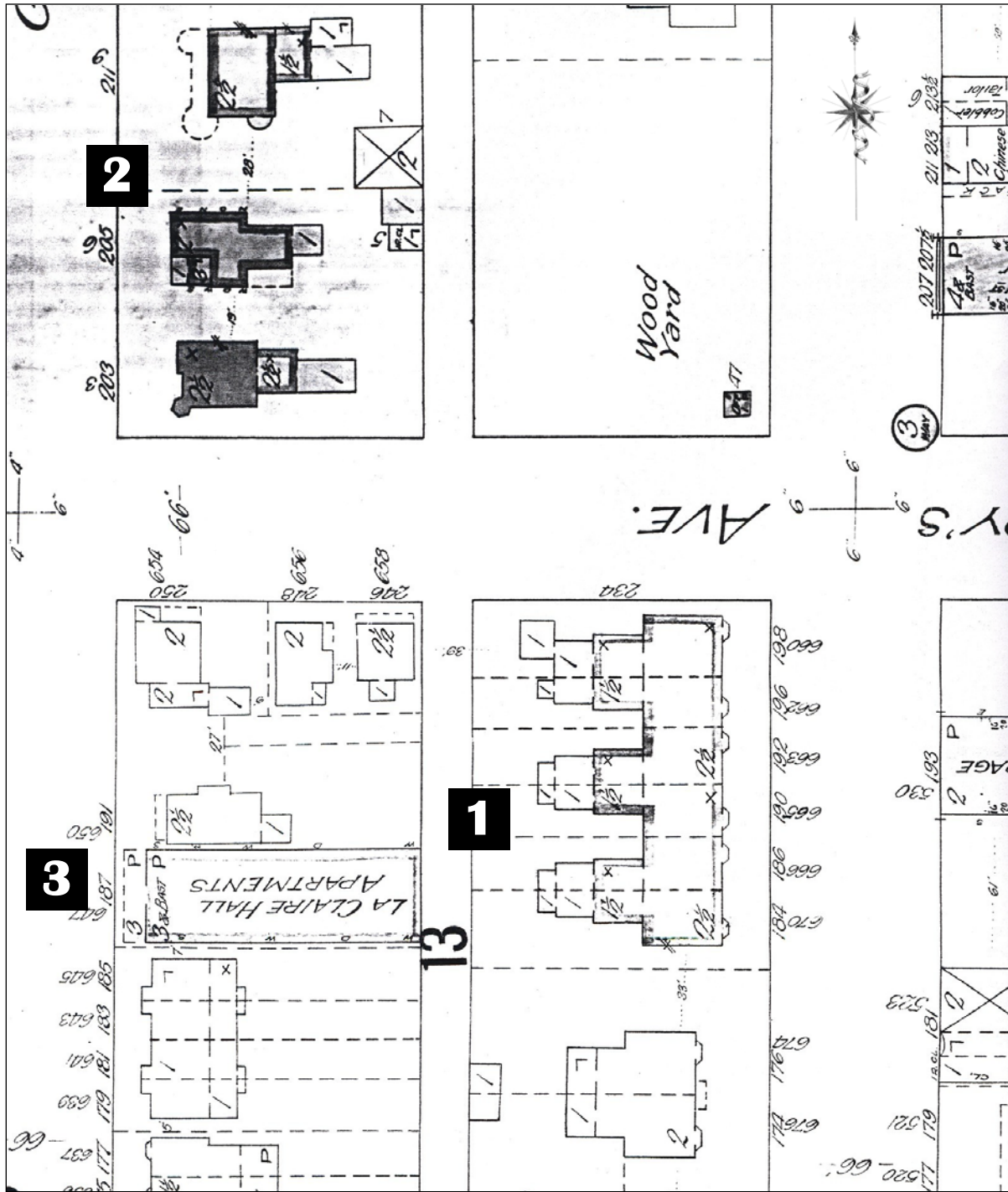
- Total floor area = 19,638 sq. ft.

**ARCHITECT: C.H. FORRESTER & J. CARROLL**  
(OWNERS)

**CONTRACTOR: WALLER & HOWALL**



187 GARRY STREET – WINDSOR HOTEL



## 187 GARRY STREET – WINDSOR HOTEL



Plate 2 – Garry Street looking south from Portage Avenue, 1916. In the foreground are large hotel and office buildings, in the background, the Hotel Fort Garry and in between is the block of small-scale residential structures including the structure that would become the Windsor Hotel (arrow). (Courtesy of the Archives of Manitoba.)

187 GARRY STREET – WINDSOR HOTEL

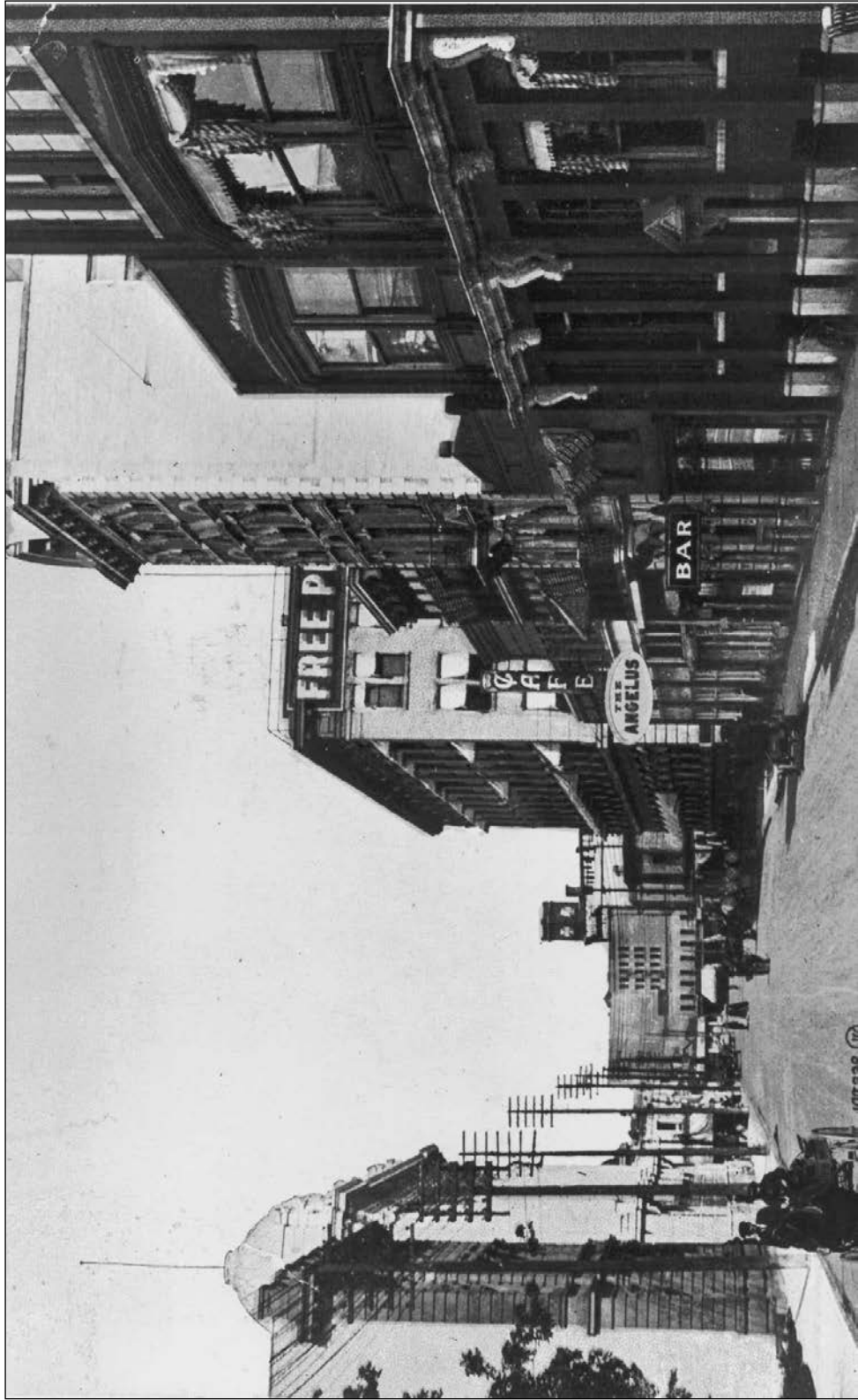


Plate 3 – Garry Street looking north towards Portage Avenue, ca.1910. (Courtesy of the Archives of Manitoba.)

187 GARRY STREET – WINDSOR HOTEL

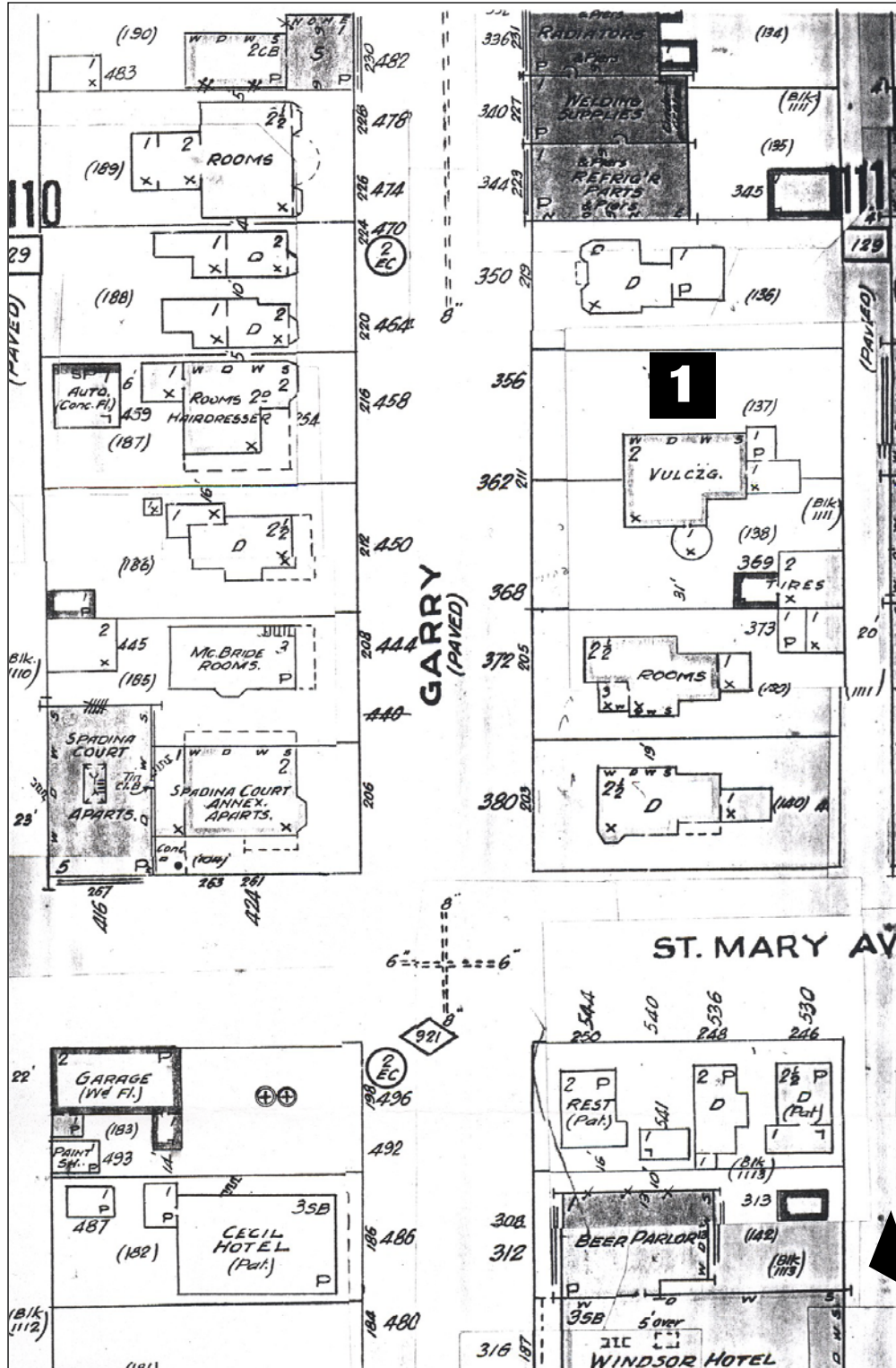


Plate 4 – Map showing part of Garry Street north and south of St. Mary’s Avenue. Many of the larger homes now include the words “Rooms” indicating their conversion into boarding houses. Larger apartment blocks and even a tire factory (#1) are found in the area. The Windsor Hotel is at the arrow. (Fire Atlas of Winnipeg, Volume I, Sheet 111, 1927 [updated to 1950].)

**187 GARRY STREET – WINDSOR HOTEL**



Plate 5 – Windsor Hotel, 1928. (Reproduced from Hotel News, Vol. 1, No.12 [November 1928], p. 17.)

**187 GARRY STREET – WINDSOR HOTEL**



Plate 6 – Windsor Hotel, 187 Garry Street, front (west) and south façades. (M.G. Peterson, 2004.)



Plate 7 – Windsor Hotel, 187 Garry Street, south façade. (M. Peterson, 2005.)



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Plate 8 – Windsor Hotel, 187 Garry Street, north façade. (M. Peterson, 2005.)



Plate 9 – Windsor Hotel, 187 Garry Street, rear (east) façade. (M. Peterson, 2005.)

187 GARRY STREET – WINDSOR HOTEL

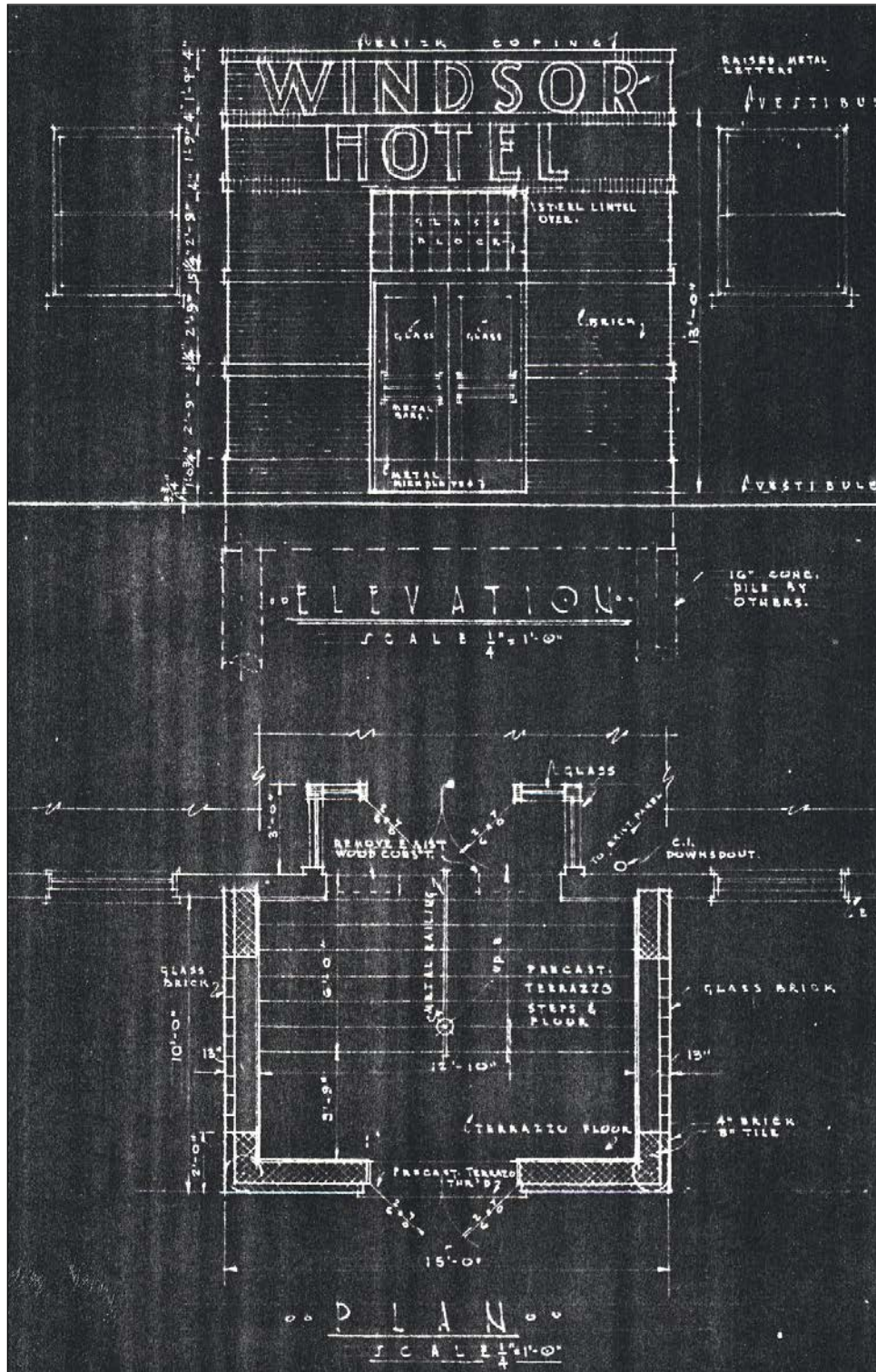


Plate 10 – Architect’s plans for entrance vestibule, “Elevation” and “Plan.” (Courtesy of the City of Winnipeg Archives, Plan #3749/1946.)

187 GARRY STREET – WINDSOR HOTEL



Plate 11 – The newly opened beer parlour, 1928. (Reproduced from Hotel News, Vol. 1, No.12 [November 1928], p. 17.)

**187 GARRY STREET – WINDSOR HOTEL**



Plate 12 – Windsor Hotel, 187 Garry Street, basement boiler. (M. Peterson, 2005.)



Plate 13 – Windsor Hotel, 187 Garry Street, lounge. (M. Peterson, 2005.)

**187 GARRY STREET – WINDSOR HOTEL**



Plate 14 – Windsor Hotel, 187 Garry Street, Room 105. (M. Peterson, 2005.)



Plate 15 – Windsor Hotel, 187 Garry Street, third-floor hallway. (M. Peterson, 2005.)

**187 GARRY STREET – WINDSOR HOTEL**



Plate 16 – Windsor Hotel, 187 Garry Street, bathroom. (M. Peterson, 2005.)



Plate 17 – Windsor Hotel, 187 Garry Street, original door, third floor. (M. Peterson, 2005.)

**187 GARRY STREET – WINDSOR HOTEL**

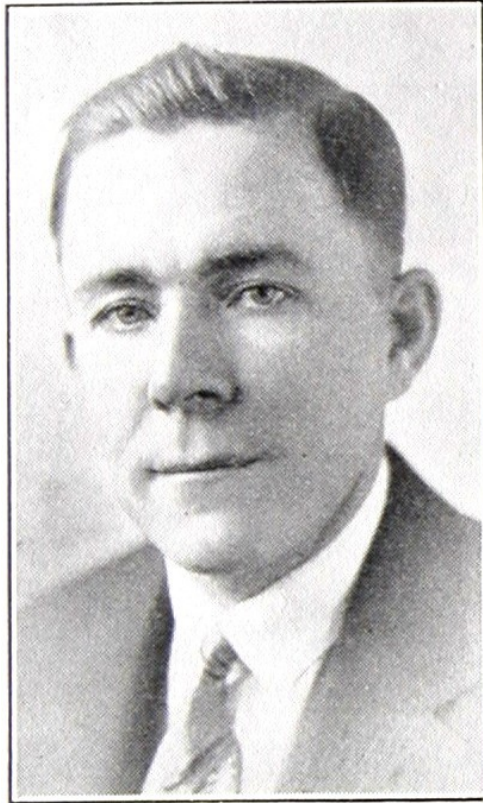


Plate 18 – Garry Street looking north from York Avenue. (M. Peterson, 2005.)



Plate 19 – Garry Street looking south from St. Mary's Avenue. (M. Peterson, 2005.)

**187 GARRY STREET – WINDSOR HOTEL**



J. B. GRAY

Plate 20 – J.B. Gray, ca.1928. (Reproduced from Hotel News, Vol. 1, No. 12 [November 1928], p. 17.)



**Empress** **WHERE EVERYBODY GOES**

Three Shows Daily: 3, 8, 9.30. Mats.: 10c to 25c. Evgs.: 10c to 35c.

CHAS. CHAPLIN



AS HE IS

**NEXT WEEK**

THEY'RE BACK AGAIN AFTER MAKING MILLIONS LAUGH.

**KARNO'S LONDON COMEDIANS**

With CHARLES CHAPLIN and a Company of Fourteen, in  
**"A NIGHT IN A LONDON CLUB"**

The Noted Character Comedian	Musical Comedy's Cleverest Pair	Remarkable Human Salamanders
<b>GEO. F. HALL</b>	<b>BRIERRE &amp; KING</b>	<b>THE NAGYFYS</b>

ROLAND WEST ANNOUNCES THE NEW FROLIC SOME FARCE  
**"THE TAMER"** With MABEL FLORENCE AND BERESFORD LOVETT

A FEATURE FILM AND THE EMPRESS ORCHESTRA

Plate 21 - Newspaper advertisement announcing the run of Karno's and Charles Chaplin at the Empress Theatre. (Winnipeg Free Press, August 2, 1913, Literary Section p. 3.)

187 GARRY STREET – WINDSOR HOTEL



Plate 22 – Chaplin portraying his most famous character, “the inebriated gentleman,” ca.1910.  
(Reproduced from <http://wso.williams.edu/~dgerstei/chaplin/gallery.html>.)

187 GARRY STREET – WINDSOR HOTEL

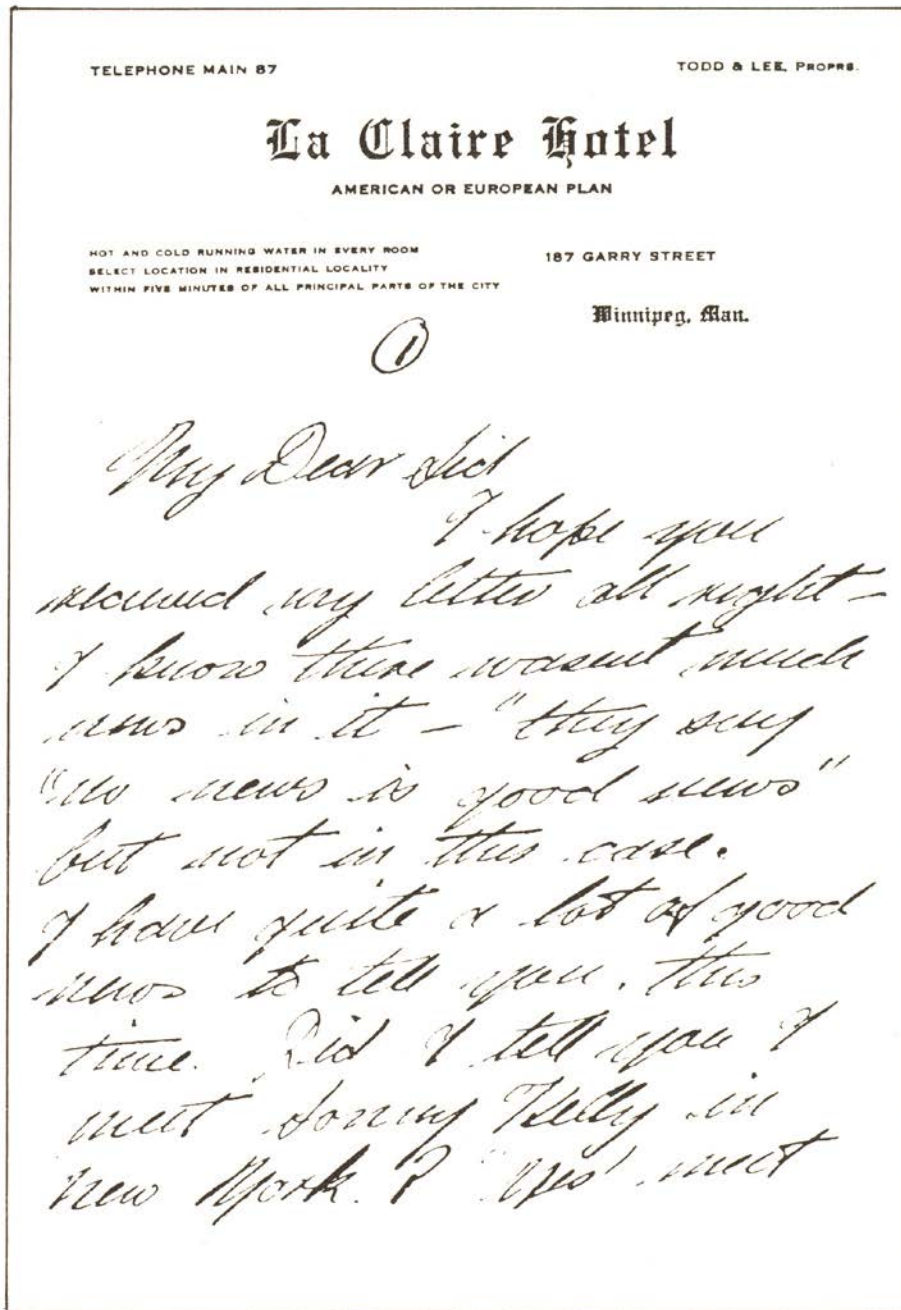


Plate 23 – Excerpt from the original letter from Charlie Chaplin to his brother Sid, dated August 1913 from the La Claire Hotel, Winnipeg. (Reproduced from unknown source.)

**187 GARRY STREET – WINDSOR HOTEL**



Plate 24 – Windsor Hotel, 187 Garry Street, September 13, 2023. (Photographer Warren Kay, CBC, online, [https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/windsor-hotel-fire-winnipeg-1.6965425.](https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/windsor-hotel-fire-winnipeg-1.6965425))

**187 GARRY STREET – WINDSOR HOTEL**



Plate 25 – Windsor Hotel, 187 Garry Street, September 13, 2023. (Photographer Simone Povoledo, CBC Winnipeg, online, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/windsor-hotel-fire-winnipeg-1.6965425>.)

**187 GARRY STREET – WINDSOR HOTEL**



Plate 26 – Garry Street, September 13, 2023. (R. Ricci, 2023.)

**187 GARRY STREET – WINDSOR HOTEL**



Plate 27 – Windsor Hotel, 187 Garry Street, September 13, 2023. (R. Ricci, 2023.)

**187 GARRY STREET – WINDSOR HOTEL**



Plate 28 – Former site of the Windsor Hotel, 187 Garry Street, September 27, 2023. (R. Ricci, 2023.)