

**444 LOGAN AVENUE (FORMERLY 232 BELL AVENUE)
PENROSE HOUSE
*J. McDiarmid, 1894***



Winnipeg's early physical development reflected its population and economic growth. Emerging residential neighbourhoods began to extend the city's built-up boundaries as housing was pushed out of the central core by industry and commerce, and pulled to the periphery by the availability of subdivided land, employment, additional river crossings, and improved public transportation.

One such residential area was Fort Rouge, immediately west of the Red and south of the Assiniboine rivers. Here in 1894, James McDiarmid, Winnipeg architect and builder, designed and originally owned the 2½-storey frame house at 232 Bell Avenue. McDiarmid, a Scot who came to Canada in 1882, was responsible for the design and/or construction of several Winnipeg churches, an office, government and warehouse buildings. In 1905, he established James McDiarmid Company, General Builders and Contractors with tow of his brothers, John and Peter. He also was active in civic life and an avid art collector.

The Bell Avenue residence displays many elements common to the Queen Anne style of domestic architecture, particularly popular for middle and working-class housing in the late Victorian era. Its use of decorative woodwork and glass also reflects the role of improved transportation and industrial millwork in making building materials more accessible and less expensive.

The residence originally stood on a limestone foundation. Its façade is asymmetrical with the front entrance to one side, a bay window and wall projections on the front facing, bay windows on the main and second storey of one side of the house, and dormers on the third floor. The long sash windows are arranged in singles and pairs; a stained glass feature adorns the first-floor, side bay window. The steeply pitched, hip roof extends onto an overhanging eave, supported by decorative brackets. The front porch contains distinctive moldings, cutwork and gable scrollwork. Its roof is supported by brackets and square columns grouped in pairs leading up to a cutwork frieze. The open-rail balustrade rests on a lattice-work base. The outside cladding is weatherboard with shingle detail on the dormers.

The floral motif on the exterior decorative moldings is carried into the structure's interior, marking corners of windows and doorways. The main floor of the interior includes a vestibule and side spindle staircase, parlour, dining-room, kitchen and rear extension which originally was a summer kitchen. Bedrooms and bathroom are on the upper floors.

McDiarmid rented the house, then sold it prior to 1904. The property changed hands once more before being acquired in 1906 by James Penrose, an Englishman who came to Manitoba in 1871, established a pioneer photography studio, then diversified into livestock importing, retailing, real estate and local politics. In ca.1893, he was appointed to the province's liquor licensing department, holding the posts of chief clerk and chief inspector before retiring in ca.1916. Penrose died in 1918 but his family remained at 232 Bell until 1925.

There have been fewer than 10 owners of the house in total, mainly minor public officials, small businessmen and blue-collar workers. The residence was converted to a duplex in 1950 but both

the interior and exterior have remained basically intact. Indeed, the embellished character of the exterior is rarely found as untouched in other surviving homes from this era.

After attempts by various parties to save 232 Bell from demolition in early 1987, the City's non-profit Winnipeg Housing Rehabilitation Corporation purchased the house and relocated it to Logan Avenue and Laura Street in the recently-revitalized North Logan neighbourhood. WHRC will be rehabilitating the house to provide two units of family rental accommodation using federal-provincial housing assistance and a grant from the province's Municipally Designated Heritage Building Grants Program.