

36 ROSLYN ROAD – FALLS HOUSE
Wardell and Nichols, 1907



The south side of the Assiniboine River west of the Red was sparsely occupied by French-speaking fur traders through to the 1870s. It soon was evident, however, that St. Boniface West was destined to become one of Winnipeg's early residential suburbs.

Indeed, during the 1881-82 land boom, the renamed district of Fort Rouge was annexed to the city and two privately-built bridges were extended over the Assiniboine at Main and Osborne streets in anticipation of future development.

The area's quasi-rural character attracted a number of prominent families over the next decade. The most wealthy situated their homes on extensive grounds, while somewhat more dense development took place in the vicinity of River and Stradbrook avenues. When the pace of growth quickened in the latter 1890s, Roslyn Road and Wellington Crescent emerged as two of Winnipeg's most prestigious addresses.

In 1907, businessman John Claire Falls added his presence to the area by investing \$15,000 in a new, 2.5-storey, solid brick house at the southwest corner of Roslyn and Bryce Street.

Born in Ireland, Falls (1861-1924) emigrated to Canada at an early age and entered the hardware business after attending school in Kitchener, Ontario. By 1892, he was the Winnipeg manager and buyer for George D. Wood and Co., wholesale hardware and metal merchants (later called the Wood-Vallance Co.). Falls eventually became the firm's vice-president and general manager.

His house, with its vista across the river to the Manitoba Legislative Building, was designed by Wardell and Nichols and built by A.B. Anderson. It rises from a stone foundation and walls of red face brick to a hip roof with shed dormers. In design, the structure displays many characteristics of the Georgian Revival style, popular during the first three decades of this century and noted for its balance, simplicity and order in contrast to the highly ornamented domestic architecture of the preceding Victorian period.

The building's front (north) façade has a central entrance porch flanked by two-storey bay windows finished at the top by a parapet cornice with abstracted pediments. The Bryce (east) elevation features a combined veranda and upper deck, plus a projecting section of wall around the side doorway. Natural light is provided on all facings by numerous rectangular, round- and segmentally-arched openings with brick heads and, in most cases, cement lug sills. Exterior wooden staircases were added to the building's rear and veranda/deck in 1951.

After Falls died, his family rented 36 Roslyn to various individuals, then converted it to a boarding house in the latter 1930s. The facility continued in that use after its was sold in 1943 to widow Mary J. Blois. She was succeeded in the early 1950s by Marie E. Martin who operated the St. Michael's Nursing Home on site into the 1970s. The interior subsequently (1985) was renovated to accommodate Locations Realty.

More recently, the premises have been converted to the Guvana Therapy Centre, including a health food store and offices for chiropractors, massage therapists, psychologists, and dentists. The foundation has been stabilized, some original interior elements have been restored, and changes have

been made to walls, ceilings and lighting, heating and fire alarm systems.

Architects Lindsay Alexander Wardell and David William Fair Nichols were partners from 1907 to mid-1909. Among their co-designs were houses for E.F. Lang, H.M. Tucker, Ross and Redmond, and a Miss Stafford; a gymnasium addition to the Dr. H.P.H. Galloway House; the Stevens and Son Warehouse on Notre Dame Avenue; and the Ontario, Manitoba and Western Land Co. Building on Portage Avenue.

Wardell (1879-1962), an Ontarian, was a draftsman for W.P. Witton of Hamilton and Sproatt and Rolph of Toronto before becoming the latter's Winnipeg representative in 1905-06. As such, he supervised or prepared plans for two apartment blocks, an addition to Colin H. Campbell's Main Street store, and houses for E.B. Nash, E.F. Hutchings and J. Thompson. He appears to have left Winnipeg in c.1909. He eventually practised in Hamilton from 1915 to 1924, then moved to Toronto where he remained professionally active into the 1950s.

The English-born Nichols (1881-1951) apprenticed with Burke and Horwood of Toronto from 1897 to 1902, then briefly served as a draftsman for two leading Winnipeg architects, J.H.G. Russell and John D. Atchison. He stayed in Winnipeg until 1915, designing several houses, the St. Margaret's Anglican and St. Alban's churches, the City's Public Baths on Cornish Avenue, the Northland Knitting Co. Factory on Arlington Street, and a few joint projects with Norman M. Moffat and J. Pender West. By 1917, he had moved to Windsor, Ontario.