

393 WELLINGTON CRESCENT – FORTUNE HOUSE
W.W. Blair , 1911



Built for local realtor Mark Fortune in 1911, the expansive residence at 393 Wellington Crescent is prominently located in one of Winnipeg's most elegant neighbourhoods. The landscaped estate tiered down to the riverbank and included a coach house with chauffeur's quarters. Winnipeg architect William Wallace Blair, architect of the house, was trained in Ireland and worked in Toronto and Chicago. His previous projects in Winnipeg included the Warwick Apartments (1908), the Princeton and Roslyn Apartments (1909) and the Victory Building (1910). The exterior of the Fortune residence bears a striking resemblance to the retirement home the architect built for himself in Victoria's exclusive Oak Park in 1912.

Mark Fortune came to Winnipeg from his native Ontario in 1874 and, soon after, entered into land speculation. He successfully invested in property on Portage Avenue only to barely survive the harrowing land bust of the mid-1880s. From 1890 onwards his investments steadily prospered so that by 1911 the Fortunes were one of the wealthiest families in Winnipeg. Tragedy, however, befell the family the very next year. Returning from a European holiday on

the maiden voyage of the Titanic, Fortune and his son perished along with 1300 others. Mrs. Fortune and her two daughters were rowed to safety. Returning to Winnipeg the surviving family lived in the house until 1920 when it was sold to grocery magnate W.P. Riley.

W.P. Riley established Western Grocers Ltd. in 1913, shortly after moving to Winnipeg from Port Arthur. From 1943 and 1951 he served as president of The Great West Life Assurance Company. Riley and his wife raised three sons while living in the large house, then moved to another Wellington Crescent address in 1948, six years prior to his death.

The house was sold and subdivided into six suites. It has stood vacant since 1981.