

222 BROADWAY – HOTEL FORT GARRY
Ross and MacFarlane, 1913



Canada's third trans-continental railway, the Grand Trunk Pacific, joined its east and west lines in Winnipeg in 1911 at Union Station. The GTP then announced plans for a large hotel nearby – the Fort Garry. There were lucrative precedents for the railway hotels across the country, and a type of 'national style' had evolved through the examples of the Banff Springs, Chateau Frontenac, Place Viger Hotel and Station in Montreal, and the Chateau Laurier, another GRP hotel. The style was adapted from the chateau of the Loire region of Northern France. It was picturesque and considered appropriate for the harsh Canadian climate. The steep hipped roof, pointed dormers and corner turrets gave patrons a visual message: here was a hotel that was posh, comfortable, and geared to the wants of tourists and local people. The style became a symbol, which was the premise of Victorian architecture. The federal government gave its sanction to this 'national style' through its use in the new Parliament Buildings (1916-17), Confederation Building (1928-31), the Central Post Office (1938-39), and the Supreme Court (1938-39).

The Fort Garry opened its doors December 11, 1913. It was a marvel of modern technology: 3,000 tons of structural steel, seven miles of heating pipes and a price tag of one and a half million dollars. It was remarkably self-contained with a heating plant and laundry, its own artesian well-water, a bakery, butcher shop, valets, and even a printing press. No expense was spared in the furnishings and décor. Polished stone, marble and massive windows were set off by bronze chandeliers. Donnegan wool rugs featured individual styles but lavish beauty was constant.

The Fort Garry competed with the Royal Alexandra for prominence in social affairs, but it was the Fort Garry that hosted the royal visit in 1939. The annual events of many local organizations were held at the hotel, and numerous conferences and balls took place there.

The hotel has always been a landmark in Winnipeg. The Grand Trunk Pacific was joined with other lines as the Canadian National, and the Fort Garry is one of only three GTP buildings left in Manitoba. It is Winnipeg's grandest old hotel and has deservedly acquired a place in our history.