





85 KENNEDY STREET RIDEAU HALL APARTMENTS

Date of Construction: 1905

Building Permit: 1466/1905

Architect: Fisher, C. (owner)

Contractor: Cross, William W.

ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

This early residential district of Winnipeg boasted many fine homes and mansions, many of which featured highly ornate façades. This multi-tenant block, built in 1905, was designed to fit into this residential setting.

The front (west) façade begins at grade with a raised rusticated stone base (with basement windows) supporting the solid brick walls of the superstructure (now painted white). The brick is laid to mimic quoins at the front corners and the square headed windows of the ground and second floors are accented with stone lug sills, radiating brick heads and keystones. The façade is finished with a complete entablature with overhanging dentilled cornice. The most significant element of the front façade is the three-storey wood porch, open on the ground floor and screened in on the second and third floors. Delicate squared wood columns are positioned at the corners of the ground floor; a third column is visually



Front (west) and north façades (left) and front entrance detail (right), 2006

linked to the column attached to the brick wall by curved corner accents of wood. This curving at the upper corners is repeated throughout this element on each floor, as is the number and layout of the columns. Upper storey openings are divided by delicate wood pieces and the roofline is plain with only modest overhanging eaves.

The north side continues many of the elements of the front – the raised stone base, the brick walls and the overhanging cornice. There are two banks of windows, the openings are plain with stone lug sills. The south side is similarly designed and laid out. The rear (east) façade features the same rusticated stone base, brick walls and square headed window openings with stone lug sills as the other three elevations. The cornice even wraps around the side walls and runs a short distance along the back wall. Different is the central projecting section with its three-storey open wood fire escape and the flat roofline with metal capping.

The block is a very attractive structure, large and yet not visually overbearing and one that fits well into the neighbourhood. It measures approximately 13.7 x 14.6 metres (45 x 48 feet).¹

The apartment block stands on its original site, appears to be in good structural condition and its exterior has not been severely altered.

C. Fisher, the original owner, is listed on the City of Winnipeg Building Permit as the architect of the structure. Nothing is known about him at the present time. The contractor was William W. Cross, a local contractor. Cross was responsible for the construction of numerous large apartment blocks throughout the city, working from plans he drew or from the offices of Winnipeg's best-known architects. His career lasted from 1902 to 1914 and



Rear (east) and north façades, 2006

during that period he built a wide variety of structures – stores, single family dwellings, garages and even a bowling alley – valued at over \$1.2-million.² Major contracts included the Prince Rupert Block, 376-84 Ellice Avenue (1906, demolished), Bannatyne Apartments, 543 Bannatyne Avenue (1910), Hugo Apartments, 265 Wellington Crescent (1912, demolished), McBeth House, 31 McBeth Street (1912, Grade III), Panama Court, 785 Dorchester Avenue (1912) and the Milan Apartments, 890 McMillan Avenue (1913).

HISTORICAL INTEREST:

This area was known, starting in the 1880s, as The Hudson's Bay Reserve or The Reserve, and developed into one of Winnipeg's earliest prestige residential neighbourhoods. It filled with the mansions, large homes and manicured grounds of Winnipeg's business and social elite. For the next several decades, it was one of the most desirable addresses in all of Western Canada, with tree-lined Broadway running down its centre. This residential activity fostered the development of related facilities such as churches, schools and terraces.

As Winnipeg's downtown expanded, many of the city's elite chose to relocate further away in rapidly developing neighbourhoods such as Armstrong's Point, River Heights, Fort Rouge, Crescentwood and Wolseley. Many of The Reserve's original properties were subdivided, allowing more modest infill housing to dot the streets and avenues. Many of the larger dwellings were converted into boarding houses, their interiors seriously altered. A relatively new form of housing, the apartment block, also found expression in The



Rear (east) and south façades, 2006

Reserve through the construction of luxury blocks on both sides of Broadway and on cross streets. Again, as time progressed, smaller, less ostentatious blocks were built in the area.

This block has had a number of owners over its lifetime, some resident and some non-resident. The original owner was C. Fisher and by 1920, Caroline Fisher (relationship unknown) is listed as owner and non-resident. During the 1930s and 1940s, Caroline E. Middleton is the owner and a resident, in the 1950s, J.C.L. and Alta M. Langford are owners and residents and Katherine Stolar is listed as an owner from the 1970s to the 1990s.³

The building began as a six-suite facility, a seventh suite was created by 1920 and suites were divided and reorganized so that there are 14 tenants listed in the 1990 return. Over its lifetime, the block has been home to a wide range of tenants – dentists, managers, government employees, hairstylists, teachers, secretaries, and even Dr. J. H. Leeming, City of Winnipeg bacteriologist (1920).⁴



Detail of northeast corner, 2006

RECOMMENDATION TO HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE:

Under the Historical Buildings By-law, this building meets a number of important criteria:

- its historical importance- one of the older multi-tenant blocks in Winnipeg and the oldest in The Reserve, one of Winnipeg's earliest exclusive neighbourhoods;
- its design- an excellent example of a classically detailed multi-tenant structure;
- its contractor- William W. Cross was a known local builder;
- its location- contributes to its streetscape; and
- its integrity- its main façades continue to display many of their original elements and design.



Front (west) and north façades, 1978

ENDNOTES:

- ¹ City of Winnipeg Building Permit, #1466/1905. This permit also called for a set of stores to be built neighbouring the apartment block which were never built.
- ² City of Winnipeg Building Permit Ledger Books, 1899-1926.
- ³ City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, Roll No. 12-092696000, 1910-1990.
- ⁴ Henderson's Directory, 1910-1990.