



**247-251 MANITOBA AVENUE**

**MISSLER TERRACE**

PREPARED BY PETERSON PROJECTS – FEBRUARY 2009



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## 247-251 MANITOBA AVENUE MISSLER TERRACE

**Date of Construction:** 1909

**Building Permit:** 1121/1909 (Plans at City Storage)

**Architect:** Schwab, Johan

**Contractor:** Missler, Jacob (owner)

### ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

One of only a few triplex – an extremely popular building style in Winnipeg in the 1890-1915 period – still standing in the city and one of more elaborate examples of the building type. The solid brick structure measured approximately 18.3 x 7.9 metres and rests on a foundation of stone.<sup>1</sup>

The front (south) façade features a full-width open porch with squared support columns connected by arched wood elements and wood balustrades. The entrance doors include transoms and second storey windows are unadorned. Overhanging eaves are supported by ornate wood brackets and the structure's mansard roof was originally a complex combination of gable windows and projecting tower-like features. The gable windows were further embellished by scrolled eaves.



Front (south) roof detailing, 1999

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This rare triplex is a fine example of a Second Empire style building that became popular in Canada by 1870. It began in France in the early 1850s and Paris exhibitions in the 1860s popularized it in England from where it moved to the United States and Canada. It has been described as a more modernistic approach to design than Gothic or Italianate, although architects often utilized elements of the latter in Second Empire works.<sup>2</sup>

In eastern Canada, especially southern Ontario, this style first came to prominence in public buildings (for example Government House in Toronto 1868). From government buildings the style was applied to commercial structures and finally into house designs. Here owners wanted to show their relative affluence and the style quickly became a statement of this status and power.<sup>3</sup> This style, however, failed to become as prominent in Winnipeg and further west because of the short duration of the period's popularity. After 1880 Second Empire architecture became much rarer and only a few of this type of design were built after this date. For most of the west this date preceded serious housing construction by several years, if not a decade or more. Therefore there are only a few western examples remaining. In Winnipeg there were several examples of this style due to the early date of some Winnipeg construction, but it never became a commercial or public building phenomenon.

The most prominent detail of a Second Empire building is the mansard or double roof. While visually appealing, this roof-type also was more practical than traditional patterns because it allowed more living space on the upper level. Other features usually found on such structures are dormer windows on the step slope, moulded cornices with decorative brackets below and a generous use of Italianate details. One or two storey bay windows were also often added and iron cresting was another ornamental feature. Porches were



Front (south) façade, 2009

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usually added, making the residence asymmetrical. Rusticated stone often completed this type of home at grade.

The designer of the building was Johann or John Schwab, who came to Winnipeg in the late 1890s. A German-born designer, Schwab worked in the city until 1910 and often partnered with Louis Pachal, a carpenter and contractor. Both men lived and worked extensively in the immigrant community of Winnipeg's North End. Among his known works are: Hoover and Town Duplex, 368-70 Edmonton Street (1901, Grade III); Immanuel German Lutheran Church, 294 Stella Avenue (1903, demolished); Gould Hotel, 251 Jarvis Avenue (1904, demolished); German Club, 61 Heaton Avenue (1904); Pulford Block, 398-98½ Portage Avenue (1904, demolished); German Lutheran Trinity Church, 392 Dufferin Avenue (1905, demolished); and the Lauzon Block, 339 William Avenue, (1905). He has been given 5 points by the Historical Buildings Committee.

The building appears to be in good structural condition and stands on its original site. Recent renovations/repairs to the structure have refurbished the wood elements of the front porch but unfortunately have removed one of the most ornamental elements of the original design, the gable dormers of the roof.



Rear (north) façade, 2009

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HISTORICAL INTEREST:

Jacob Missler, local contractor, built this property and owned it until 1915 although he never occupied any of the suites. The next owner was hotelier Morris Diner, who owned the triplex into the 1930s.<sup>4</sup> Tenancy over the years in this block has seen rapid turnover, some of the tenants include: Isaac Nusinovich, farmer, Mary Nusinovich, clerk for Henderson's Directories, both 1920; H. Bouldin, taxi driver (1930); John Worobec, landscape gardener (1940); and Peter (Burns and Company employee) and Dolly Klewchuk (1949).<sup>5</sup>

According to postcards held in Historical Buildings Committee files, this building, during the 1920s, was used as a Ukrainian medical centre known as People's Hospital with doctors, x-ray machines and a pharmacy. More research on this facility is required.



Front (south) façade, 1978

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#### 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 oldest triplex in the City of Winnipeg;
- its associations- may have connection to the Ukrainian community as a health facility;
- its design- an excellent example of the Second Empire style;
- its architect- J. Schwab was a respected and important practitioner;
- its location- contributes greatly to its historic streetscape in the North End; and
- its integrity- its main façades continue to display many of their original elements and design.

#### ENDNOTES:

- <sup>1</sup> City of Winnipeg Building Permit, #1121/1909.
- <sup>2</sup> V. and L. McAlester, A Field Guide to American Houses (New York, N.Y.: Knopf, 1984), p. 242.
- <sup>3</sup> C. Cameron and J. Wright, Second Empire Style in Canadian Architecture (Ottawa, ON: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1980).
- <sup>4</sup> City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, Roll No. 14020445000, 1920-1990.
- <sup>5</sup> Henderson's Directory, 1915-1970.