

**0 MOUNT ROYAL ROAD – SILVER HEIGHTS GATES**  
*W.D. Lount, 1950-51*



For more than a century, developers of residential subdivisions in Winnipeg have been attracted to the use of roadside markers to delineate and promote their properties.

In 1882, the owners of Victoria Place (Armstrong's Point) proposed the installation of gateposts to herald their luxury setting for the homes of affluent townspeople. By the time the gates were built in 1911, other realtors had adopted the technique.

Among them was Glines and Co. which owned and in 1911 began marketing Oakdale Park in the Rural Municipality of Assiniboia west of Winnipeg. Partners George A. Glines and Frederick H. Stewart erected rustic cobblestone pillars at the Portage Avenue intersections of three roads into their subdivision – Linwood, Winchester and Overdale avenues.

A year later, cast concrete pillars appeared a few blocks to the west at Sharp Boulevard and Duffield, Moorgate and Conway streets. They announced the Deer Lodge Subdivision owned by lawyers Machray, Sharpe and Dennistoun and promoted by agents Stewart and Walker.

Other period gateposts in Assiniboia were established by the St. Charles Country Club (c.1912) at Portage and Country Club Boulevard, and jointly by the municipality and City and District Land Co. at the northern approach to the Woodhaven Boulevard Bridge over Sturgeon Creek (1920).

When a new housing boom occurred after 1945, developers such as Frank R. Lount and Son Ltd. resumed the use of markers. In 1949, Lount acquired 40.5 hectares of the historic Silver Heights estate from what was then the Municipality of St. James. He added some property to the east and in 1950 registered Plan 5090 for the area between Portage, Ness, Conway and Davidson.

The subdivision's main thoroughfares were the north-south Mount Royal Road and east-west Lodge and Bruce avenues. Interior streets, organized into loops and crescents, held more than 300 new dwellings by 1952. Soon to follow at the northeast corner of Mount Royal and Portage were the Silver Heights Shopping Centre and apartment blocks.

In 1950-51, Lount's architect-son William designed several stone and concrete markers to be placed on Mount Royal between Portage and Traill avenues. Four of the units exist today, although five may have been in the original series. All take the form of low benches in a residential version of the International style of architecture then being introduced to North America. All contain multi-coloured limestone set in a random rubble pattern. This material from the City of Winnipeg's Stonewall quarry was popular at the time. Indeed, William Lount featured it in his plans for the Winnipeg Clinic (1947) and Silver heights apartments (1952-55).

The markers at the east and west corners of the Portage-Mount Royal intersection consist of concrete slab benches flanked by raised end blocks capped by concrete. The blocks of the bench on the west side are joined by wrought-iron bars with a stylized crocus flower in the centre.

A similar structure stands at the southwest corner of Mount Royal and Traill. The symmetry of its three-bench arrangement is broken by one long raised block in the northern half of the unit.

The premier marker is on the northwest corner of Mount Royal and Traill. Organized in an L-shape, its two parts are connected by a concrete canopy over the public sidewalk. The main section integrates a single bench with a tall, broad, yet thin rectangular 'pillar' bearing the name Silver Heights in wrought iron. About mid-way up the pillar, a concrete slab extends at a right angle over the sidewalk to the boulevard where it is supported by wrought iron fixed in a planter-like base. A large off-centre crocus with leaves dominates the ironwork pattern.

The use of that floral theme, and of street names that recalled early figures in the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), linked the Lounts' development with the area's prior status as prairie and farmland divided into river lots during the era of the Red River Settlement.

The property was once owned by a Kenneth Logan, but title was obtained in 1857 by John Rowand Jr., a former HBC official. After he and two of his successors died, the family home and surrounding lands were sold in September 1871 to J.H. McTavish of the HBC. He soon transferred part of the property to a fellow corporate officer, Donald A. Smith (1820-1914).

The latter became a prominent politician, railway and bank investor, governor of the HBC, Canada's high commissioner in the United Kingdom, and the first Baron of Strathcona and Mount Royal. Over time, he expanded his holdings at Silver Heights as he transformed the estate into a social and agricultural center. Because of his many obligations, however, Smith often was not resident on the site. His house was not rebuilt after a destructive 1892 fire. On his death, some of the land went to the City of Winnipeg and eventually formed part of the international airport. The rest was inherited by Smith's daughter, but later transferred to the St. James municipality.