



## 12 RUSKIN ROW

### ETHELBERT W. KNEELAND HOUSE

PREPARED BY PETERSON PROJECTS – DECEMBER 2009



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## 12 RUSKIN ROW ETHELBERT W. KNEELAND HOUSE

**Date of Construction:** 1910

**Building Permit:** 1715/1910

**Architect:** Rugh, Herbert Bell

**Contractor:** Day labour

### ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

Another example of the fine residential architecture completed in Winnipeg in the pre-World War I era is this large mansion located on the northeast corner of Ruskin Row and Palk Road.

The front (west) façade is symmetrical, 2½-storeys in height with one-storey wings on both the north and south sides. The central door is protected by a shallow, classically detailed portico with unfluted columns and a narrow second storey balcony with metal balustrade. A transom and fan light top the entrance and both hold leaded glass units. Window units on the ground floor are rectangular and set in arched frames with matching drip moulding. Second and attic openings are square headed. The truncated hip roof features wide, overhanging eaves and the entire structure is clad in smooth stucco.



Front (west) and south façades, 2009

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Another of the fine features of the home is the glazed greenhouse on the southeast corner, the balustrade-like detailing of the roof at the north and south ends, the two-storey frame and glass enclosed porch on the rear (east) façade and the one-storey open porch to its north.

The building stands on its original site, appears to be in good structural condition and does not appear to have suffered major exterior alteration.

The home is one of Winnipeg's finest examples of a Georgian Revival Style residential design. The style has been described as the most popular revival style of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Canada, used mainly in residential architecture and still popular today.<sup>1</sup> Influential New York City architects McKim, Mead and White, who utilized elements of the style to design residences for their most affluent clients, promoted the style in the early 1900s.<sup>2</sup> The style is based on English and Dutch colonial architecture from the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Distinguishing characteristics of the style include a symmetrical façade with a centrally located entrance as its focal point. Classical elements and detailing such as pediments, cornice-like eaves, Palladian windows, columns and porticos are common. Roofs could be hipped or gambrel-shaped and exterior cladding ranged from wood to brick and stone to stucco.<sup>3</sup>

Architect H.B. Rugh practiced in Winnipeg from 1904 to ca.1912, and in that time established himself as one of the city's finest architects, although his forte appears to have been designing middle- to upper-income homes. Born in Cedar Rapids, Iowa on May 16, 1879, he took his formal training at the Armour Institute of Technology in Chicago, Illinois, graduating in 1901. He then went to work in Racine, Wisconsin, relocated to Michigan



Front (west) and north façades, 2009

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two years later and came to Winnipeg in 1904.<sup>4</sup> Rugh's work over the next eight years was varied and extensive and included factories, apartment blocks, office buildings and dozens of houses,<sup>5</sup> many of their plans found their way onto the pages of trade magazines like Construction.<sup>6</sup> Rugh's houses used a variety of styles including Georgian, Tudor and Colonial in his pursuit of the "picturesque." He also experimented with various materials, including concrete block, rough-cast plaster and terra cotta.

In 1912, Rugh became the local representative of the Montréal firm Ross and MacFarlane. He oversaw the construction of both the Fort Garry Hotel, 1911-12 (his name is found on the City of Winnipeg Building Permit)<sup>7</sup> and the now demolished King George Municipal Hospital, Morley Avenue, 1912.

An incomplete list of his major local projects would include: Wesbrook and Fairchild Warehouse, 110 Princess Street (1907 – Grade II); Y.W.C.A. Building, Ellice Avenue (1908); Hotel Fort Garry, 222 Broadway (1911-1913 – Grade II, supervising architect); King George Municipal Hospital, Morley Avenue (1912 – supervising architect, demolished).<sup>8</sup>



Rear (east) and south façades, 2009

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#### HISTORICAL INTEREST:

The area known as Crescentwood in Fort Rouge developed slowly in the late 1900s because of poor connections, namely bridges to Winnipeg. The construction of the Maryland Street Bridge in 1895 assured this connection and triggered the area's modern development beginning with the construction of St. Mary's Academy shortly after the turn of the century. The earliest fine home of the area was barrister John H. Munson's house, 475 Wellington Crescent, built in 1888 and named Crescentwood. It was, for many years, the showpiece of the suburb, being enlarged on several occasions before and after occupation by the James A. Richardson family after Munson's death in 1918.<sup>9</sup> The home's name was used for the northwest corner of Fort Rouge and Crescentwood (named after a public contest) began its modern organization under the watchful eye of developer Charles Enderton (1864-1920). By 1902, he had accumulated a large amount of land in the western portion of Fort Rouge, subdividing it into large lots, formally establishing Wellington Crescent as a "grand drive". In September 1902, Enderton took an entire page of the Manitoba Free Press to promote his new subdivision and to outline the building restrictions therein. These caveats (attached to each registered lot) included: minimum setbacks from the street (18.3 metres, 60 feet); minimum completed values for homes (\$6,000 on Wellington Crescent, \$3,500 and \$4,000 elsewhere); restrictions on non-residential structures; and number of homes per lot (one).

Land sales were slow in the early years, but the suburb eventually grew and flourished, and the Enderton caveats ensured the district remained a haven for Winnipeg's affluent. When economic growth slowed and then stopped after 1914, Enderton (and others) could not sell their extensive holdings (Enderton alone owned 133 vacant lots in 1917).<sup>10</sup>



Front (west) façade detail, 2009

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Allan C. Ewart, barrister and notary public, was the original owner of the home, although he lived in the residence for only a short time. The new owner was Ethelbert W. Kneeland (1866-1944), founder of the British America Elevator Company (1906) and a one-time president of the Winnipeg Grain Exchange. He lived in the home with his wife Minnie until his death in 1944 when the home was duplexed, his widow occupying the front of the house.<sup>11</sup>

#### RECOMMENDATION TO HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE:

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

- its historical importance- one of Crescentwood's and Winnipeg's magnificent pre-World War I single-family dwellings;
- its associations- its long-term connections to early and influential businessman E.W. Kneeland;
- its design- an excellent example of the Georgian Revival style;
- its architect- H.B. Rugh was a respected and important practitioner;
- its location- found on a large, well-treed corner lot, this structure contributes greatly to its historic streetscape and the neighbourhood; and
- its integrity- its main façades continue to display many of their original elements and design.



Front (west) façade, 1978

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ENDNOTES:

- 1 L. Maitland et al, A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1992), pp. 152-153.
- 2 Identifying Architectural Styles in Manitoba (Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, 1991), pp. 26-27.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 26.
- 4 Winnipeg Telegram, September 18, 1906, p. 55; and Who's Who and Why in Canada, 1913, p. 712. Information supplied by Robert G. Hill, Editor of the Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada, 1800-1950.
- 5 City of Winnipeg Building Permit Ledger Books (below as Ledgers), 1900-1915.
- 6 See, for example, Construction, March 1910, July 1910, July 1914 and June 1915.
- 7 City of Winnipeg Building Permit, #3033/1911.
- 8 Ledgers, 1904-1912; and M. Peterson Building Database.
- 9 R.R. Rostecki, Crescentwood: A History (Winnipeg, MB: Crescentwood Home Owners Association, 1993), pp. 44-46. Upon the death of Mrs. James A. Richardson in 1973, the family donated the house and the land to the City of Winnipeg. The buildings were demolished in 1976, the land became Munson Park.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 36.
- 11 City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, Roll No. 12040047000, 1920-1990.