



2 RUSKIN ROW
FRANK DRUXERMAN HOUSE

PREPARED BY PETERSON PROJECTS – DECEMBER 2009



2 RUSKIN ROW FRANK DRUXERMAN HOUSE

Date of Construction: 1912

Building Permit: 1132/1912

Architect: Russell, John Hamilton Gordon

Contractor: Davidson, W.J.

ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

Crescentwood developed as one of Winnipeg's finest residential neighbourhoods before World War I and Winnipeg's economic stall put an end to major expansion in the city. This house, on one of the district's most sought after addresses, is a fine example of a pre-World War I mansion.

The front (west) façade is symmetrical, with the centrally located entrance set in an ornate stone frame with connected squared columns supporting an arched pediment. The solid dark brick walls rest on a raised basement clad in rough cut stone. Windows on this elevation are square headed and feature keystone. The corners are emphasized by brick laid to mimic quoins. The gable roof is very unusual and ends with paired gable ends connected by a flat area, all capped in stone. A pair of angled dormer windows are found on the front slope.



Front (west) and north façades, 2009

Built at a cost of \$16,000 and being roughly 12.2 metres square,¹ this is one of the finer homes in the neighbourhood.

The building stands on its original site and appears to be in good structural condition. There does not appear to have been major alterations completed to the outside of the building in terms of layout or materials.

This home is a highly decorated version of a Foursquare style structure, one of the most popular styles used for residential architecture in North America from the late 1880s until the 1930s. Its square massing and boxiness made it affordable to build and perfect for small urban lots where space was at a premium. The roofline was usually pyramidal or hipped and a front porch and small dormer on the second floor were familiar details. Usually built without the benefit of an architect, the foursquare was often detailed by the owner and could be highly ornamental or very plain. On the interior, the foursquare featured a second floor with four square rooms above three square rooms and an entrance hall with stairs tucked unobtrusively to the side on the first floor.²

Building designer J.H.G. Russell (1862-1946) was born in Toronto, Canada West (Ontario), in 1862, the son of a dry goods dealer. After attending school in that city, he went to work for H.B. Gordon, a prominent area architect. Russell was with Gordon from 1878 until his departure for Winnipeg in 1882. From 1886 to 1893, Russell travelled throughout the United States, learning civil engineering, surveying and architecture in centres such as Chicago, Illinois, Spokane and Tacoma, Washington, and Sioux City, Iowa.

In 1895, two years after returning to Winnipeg, he set up his private practice, coinciding with the city's period of unbridled growth. His designs were (and are) scattered throughout the



Front (west) and south façades, 2009

city, province and Western Canada, covering a variety of building types, sizes, costs and uses. His business continued to be steady during World War I and after, when many architects struggled to find commissions.

Russell was president of the Manitoba Association of Architects (1925) and served for three terms as the president of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (1912-15). His chairmanship of the Presbyterian Church Board of Managers and his devotion to Presbyterianism partially explain the large number of churches he designed for the denomination in Winnipeg and Western Canada. Russell died in 1946.

A complete list of his designs would be very lengthy, included among his more notable local projects would be J.H. Ashdown Warehouse additions, 157-179 Bannatyne Avenue, (1899-1911, Grade II), Lake of the Woods Building, 212 McDermot Avenue (1901, Grade II), Hammond Building, 63 Albert Street (1902, Grade III), Adelman Building, 92-100 Princess Street (1903, Grade II), Franklin Press, 168 Bannatyne Avenue (1904, Grade III), R.R. Wilson, 545 Broadway (1904, Grade III), J.H. Ashdown Store, 211 Bannatyne Avenue (1904, Grade III), Porter Building, 165 McDermot Avenue (1906, Grade III), Child's (McArthur) Building, Portage Avenue (1909, demolished), Casa Loma Building, Portage Avenue (1909, Grade II), Glengarry Block, 290 McDermot Avenue (1910, Grade III), Westminster Presbyterian (United) Church, 745 Westminster Avenue (1910-12, Grade II), Dingwall Building, 62 Albert Street (1911, Grade III), YMCA, 301 Vaughan Street, with Jackson and Rosencrans of New York (1911-13, Grade II), J.H. Ashdown, 529 Wellington Crescent (1913, Grade II) and St. John's Presbyterian (United) Church, 250 Cathedral Avenue (1923, Grade III). He has been given 20 points by the Historical Buildings Committee.



South façade detail, 2009

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 1918.³ 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).⁴



Rear (east) and north façades, 2009

The original owner of the home is listed as Bank of Nova Scotia official John Williams, although he resided in the home for only a short time. Frank Druxerman and his family (which at one time numbered a wife, four daughters and two sons)⁵ owned and lived in the house during the 1920s and 1930s. Druxerman was the manager of the Northern Loan Investment Company. It was used as a sorority house, Panhellenic House, in the early 1940s and was subdivided into suites in the 1970s.⁶

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 pre-World War I era mansions built in the Crescentwood neighbourhood at the height of its 20th century development phase;
- its associations- its long-term connections to businessman F. Druxerman;
- its design- an excellent example of the Foursquare style;
- its architect- J.H.G. Russell was a respected and important practitioner;
- its location- contributes greatly to the historic streetscape of an important residential neighbourhood; and
- its integrity- its main façades continue to display many of their original elements and design.



Front (west) façade, 1978

ENDNOTES:

- 1 City of Winnipeg Building Permit, #1132/1912.
- 2 Information from <http://www.realviews.com/homes/forsq.html>.
- 3 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.
- 4 Ibid., p. 36.
- 5 Canada Census, 1911.
- 6 City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, Roll No. 12040037000, 1920-1990; and Henderson's Directory, 1920-1990.