



285 ST. JOHN'S AVENUE

WILLIAM H. REID HOUSE

PREPARED BY PETERSON PROJECTS – DECEMBER 2009



285 ST. JOHN'S AVENUE WILLIAM H. REID HOUSE

Date of Construction: 1906

Building Permit: 1531/1906

Architect: Reid, William H. (owner)

Contractor: Reid, William H. (owner)

ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

Built on the northeast corner Charles Street in the St. John's neighbourhood of West Kildonan, this house has stood for over 100 years and seen a number of changes in its use and its interior layout.

The front (south) façade's most dominant feature is the entrance porch with its attached wood columns, leaded glass transom and overhanging eaves supported by oversized wood brackets. The windows have slightly arched heads and the front slope of the complex hip roof features two gable ends and a hipped gable dormer window. The two gable ends hold Palladian windows and are clad in ornamental shingles. Similar gable ends are found on the other three roof slopes as well and an open metal fire escape leads from the roof to the ground on the rear (north) elevation. The original City of Winnipeg Building Permit describes a solid brick building which has been covered since at least the 1970s by stucco.



Front (south) and east façades, 2009

The building stands on its original site and appears to be in good structural condition. The stuccoing of the

The structure is an example of the Queen Anne style which borrowed heavily from English architecture of the 15th century, blending classical and medieval motifs into a picturesque form.¹ The desired asymmetry was achieved through a number of combinations of porches, bay windows, projecting wings, balconies and other devices. Roofs were usually irregular and complex, with dormers, gables and ornamental chimneys. Variations in materials and colours were also used to animate the façades. Given this freedom of design, however, accomplished designers were still able to create balance in the structures, offsetting busy surfaces by placing calmer elements nearby.²

The popularity of the style in Canada began in the 1880s and lasted until World War I. On the prairies, pre-1900 examples of the style were not numerous because large-scale development occurred after the turn of the century. Post-1900, it was quickly adopted for use in the growing residential districts, especially the more affluent neighbourhoods where its showy qualities were greatly admired.

Little is known about the building's owner/architect/contractor William H. Reid's professional career. He is listed in the City of Winnipeg Building Permit Ledger Books, 1899-1926 only from 1903 to 1908 and only for seven houses all in this St. John's area.



Front (south) and west façades, 2009

HISTORICAL INTEREST:

Local builder W.H. Reid owned and lived in this house into the 1920s along with wife Margaret M. and two sons and three daughters.³ In the 1930s, the building was apparently taken over by the Farband Labour Zionist Organization or “Farband” for short, a Yiddish-speaking group formed in New York State. The group operated as a mutual aid society, organizing cooperative insurance, medical plans, maintaining cemeteries and operating summer camps. They also developed an extensive Yiddish and Hebrew educational system with chapters in many North American cities with large Jewish populations like Winnipeg.⁴

The building stood empty in the 1970s and then was duplexed in the early 1980s and returned to its original residential use.⁵



Rear (north) and west façades, 2009

RECOMMENDATION TO HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE:

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

- its historical importance- a good example of a well-made, modestly-designed single-family dwellings built in one of Winnipeg's growing residential neighbourhoods in the pre-World War I era;
- its associations- N/A;
- its design- a good example of the Queen Anne style;
- its architect- W.H. Reid was the named designer;
- its location- defines an important intersection and contributes greatly to the historic streetscape in its neighbourhood; and
- its integrity- its main façades continue to display many of their original elements and design.



Front (south) façade, 1978

ENDNOTES:

- ¹ Identifying Architectural Styles in Manitoba (Winnipeg, MB: Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, 1991), p. 17; and L. Maitland et al., A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1992), p. 102.
- ² L. Maitland et al., op. cit., p. 98.
- ³ Census of Canada, 1911.
- ⁴ Information from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Farband>, 2009.
- ⁵ City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, Roll No. 14042105000, 1915-1990; and Henderson's Directory, 1915-1990.