



339 WILLIAM AVENUE

LAUZON BLOCK

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings & Resources Committee
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339 WILLIAM AVENUE – LAUZON BLOCK

William Avenue became one of Winnipeg's major thoroughfares in the 1880s, as warehouses, banks and businesses, including the Leland Hotel opened in 1884 and enlarged in the early 1890s, located on both sides of the street (Plate 1). Central Fire Hall was built in 1898 where Old Market Square is now located. Another important structure was the City Market Building, located west of City Hall between James and William avenues, a busy commercial/retail hub (Plate 2).

Further west, the street developed into a residential neighbourhood, with well-built, comfortable homes built on both sides of the street. Winnipeg's first public library, the Carnegie Library, 380 William Avenue (opened in 1905) and the Provincial Normal School, 442 William Avenue (opened in 1906) added to the building stock, as did apartment blocks, schools and commercial properties in the pre-World War I period.

In 1905, butcher Jean Baptiste Lauzon (1858-1944) built his business a new headquarters, a mixed use structure on William Avenue close to the Market Building and on the outskirts of the warehouse district (Plate 3).

STYLE

Stylistically, the building is an example of the Two-Part Commercial style, a design that found expression in most urban centres in the 20th century. Its mixed use – retail on the ground floor and office or residential space on the upper floors – was reflected on the exterior. Cladding or colouring could be altered and there was often a belt course or other architectural element visually dividing the two sections. Often only three or four storeys in height, these familiar structures were intended to provide modern, comfortable space for both commercial and residential or professional tenants. Examples of this type of building can be found in all areas of downtown Winnipeg and its suburbs.

CONSTRUCTION

According to City of Winnipeg records, two Building Permits were taken out during the construction phase, the first for the ground floor, and the second for the upper two floors (see TABLE ONE for a list of Permits taken out against this property). The building measures approximately 7.6 x 24.4 metres and cost \$18,000 to complete.¹ Ceiling heights range from 4.9 metres on the ground floor to 4.3 metres on the second floor and 3.7 metres on the top floor.²

The owner moved a 1880s era frame house to the back (north end) of the lot, where it remained for many decades (Plate 4).

TABLE ONE

City of Winnipeg Building Permits, 339 William Avenue

YEAR	NO.	PLANS	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION
1905	668		\$10,000	Original (ground floor)
1905	2114		\$8,000	Upper two floors
1983	9598		\$5,000	Interior alterations
1998	103957			Alterations
2007	115108		\$10,000	Interior alterations
2007	128478		\$10,000	Interior alterations

Newer concrete beams and walls have been poured in the basement at the front (south) end of the building (date unknown).

DESIGN

Clad in rough-cut limestone, the three-storey Lauzon Block is an impressive façade on William Avenue. The ground floor retail space was originally designed with a large display window and a recessed entrance. Also in the recessed area was a second door leading to a staircase to the upper floors. Transom windows and ornamental lighting originally finished this area (Plate 3). Separating the lower and upper floors is a space for signage and a modest, smooth-cut belt course of stone with ornamental stone elements at either end (Plate 5).

¹ City of Winnipeg Building Permit (below as BP), #668/1905 and #2114/1905.

² City of Winnipeg Assessment Record, Roll No. 701430-12-2.

The upper two floors feature rough-cut stone cladding interrupted by three square headed window openings with smooth stone lug sills (Plate 6). The top of the building features a flat roofline with raised central section, swan's neck pediment above a carved panel with the words "LAUZONS" and "A.D.1905" (Plate 7).

The east and west façades are constructed of common clay brick, the ground floors covered by neighbouring buildings. Window openings are found on all levels (Plates 8 and 9). The rear (north) elevation is also finished in common clay brick and includes ground floor and second storey entrances, a fire escape of both wood and metal and numerous plain windows (Plate 10).

While some changes have been made to all elevations, including rear window replacement, the most obvious changes have been to the front, where windows and doors have been replaced and metal cladding added (Plate 11).

INTERIOR

As originally laid out, the commercial property of owner J.B. Lauzon was located in west portion of the ground floor. The upper levels, accessed by a door in the east end of the main façade were to be used for offices and later became residential space.

Today, the basement includes an areaway at the south end of the space; the ground floor has been converted into a restaurant and includes the ornamental tin ceilings and walls (Plate 12). A small mezzanine was located at the rear of the building; the space was used as an ice house, the present owner removing wood shavings when the area was renovated into office space. The upper floors are accessed via a staircase running up the east side of the building (Plate 13). The second floor, like the ground floor, features extremely high ceilings, the residential suite includes an interior hallway and transom windows to increase natural light and air circulation (Plate 14). The top floor was most recently used as a performance hall is now gutted (Plate 15), although remnants of the original wallpaper still exists.

INTEGRITY

The building stands on its original site and appears to be in good structural condition for its age. The most severe alteration to the exterior is the redesign and recladding of the ground floor, completed sometime after 1969.

STREETSCAPE

The building stands on the north side of William Avenue, a block west of the warehouse district. The area, which originally was almost exclusively residential, began to change in the early 20th century, with commercial venture either constructing new premises or renovating old houses and duplexes. Today, this mixed use continues along William Avenue (Plate 16).

ARCHITECT/CONTRACTORS

The architect listed in the original City of Winnipeg Building Permit is owner, Jean Baptiste Lauzon. But according to several sources, the building was designed by Johann (John) Schwab. Born in Austria in 1864, Schwab immigrated to Canada with his wife Sophie, three sons and a daughter in 1898.³ By 1902, the family was living in Winnipeg, with John Schwab listed in the classifieds as an architect. Schwab partnered with carpenter and contractor Louis Pachal for many projects. Both men lived and worked extensively in the immigrant community of Winnipeg's North End – Schwab lived first on Magnus Avenue and later on Selkirk Avenue, where he kept an office in his home. From the City of Winnipeg Building Permit Ledger Books, Schwab was active from 1901-1911, responsible for nearly \$400,000 worth of work – the majority of his contracts were for small North End houses.

³ Canada Census, 1911.

Among his known works are:

Children of Israel Synagogue, 81 Martha St. (1901) – demolished
 Hoover and Town Duplex, 368-370 Edmonton St. (1901) – Grade III
 Hebrew School, Henry Ave. (1902)
 Mumberg Sugar Factory, Sutherland Ave. (1902)
 Zimmerman Block, 671-673 Main St. (1903)
 Immanuel German Lutheran Church, 294 Stella Ave. (1903) – demolished
 Hoover and Lowen Manufacturing Company Factory, James Ave. (1903) – demolished
 House of Jacob Synagogue, 49 Schultz St. (1904) – demolished
 Gould Hotel, 251 Jarvis Ave. (1904) – demolished
 Polish National Catholic Church, 365 Burrows Ave. (1904)
 Pulford Block, 398-398½ Portage Ave. (1904) – demolished
 German Club, 51 Heaton Ave. (1904)
 German Lutheran Trinity Church, 392 Dufferin Ave. (1905) – demolished
 Lauzon Block, 339 William Ave. (1905)
 Central Block, 333½ William Ave. (1906)
 First German Lutheran Church, Tweed Ave. (1906)
 Missler Terrace, 247-251 Manitoba Ave. (1909)

He has been given 5 points by the Historical Buildings and Resources Committee.

The contractor named is Joseph Arthur Cusson (1873-1948). Cusson was born in L'Assomption, Quebec but came to St. Boniface with his family at the age of 5. One of the first students of St. Boniface College, Cusson founded the Cusson Lumber, expanding to include a large sash and door factory on Provencher Boulevard (near Thibault Street) by 1904 and incorporated in 1905.⁴ His contracting work was not extensive, including a school on Selkirk Avenue and one in Norwood, both in 1902.⁵ He built two St. Boniface hotels, the Hotel Couture and the Hotel Quebec (Plate 17), in 1905.⁶

Cusson was also politically active, serving as a St. Boniface City Councillor from 1893-1894, 1903-1904 and 1906-1921. He died in St. Boniface in 1948.⁷

⁴ Manitoba Free Press, April 30, 1904, p. 6 and June 5, 1905, p. 9.

⁵ Manitoba Free Press, June 12, 1902, p. 2 and November 1, 1902, p. 2.

⁶ Manitoba Free Press, October 30, 1905, p. 36.

⁷ Winnipeg Free Press, April 10, 1948, p. 3.

PERSON/INSTITUTION

Jean (James) Baptiste Lauzon (Plates 18 and 19) was born in Pointe Claire, Montréal on March 15, 1858. Lauzon became a butcher's apprentice in Pointe Claire at the age of 16 and came to Winnipeg in 1876 and within two years opened his own meat business in St. Boniface. In 1880, Lauzon moved his family and his business to Emerson, MB reopening his St. Boniface store upon his return in 1884. His business thrived and he soon opened a branch in the Public Market Building behind City Hall.⁸ Business boomed and in 1905 when he moved into his new block, just west of Princess Street on William Avenue.

Lauzon was also active in politics and was elected to the St. Boniface town council in 1885, a position he held until 1898. He was also twice elected as a Conservative member of the Manitoba Legislature, representing St. Boniface in 1896 and La Verendrye in 1907. He was one of the first members of the Retail Merchants' Association of Manitoba and was a leading proponent of the idea of creating a public abattoir for Winnipeg (what would become the Public Markets, Marion Street, St. Boniface). He died at the age of 87 and was survived by his wife, Adeline (also known as Delina), one son and two daughters.⁹ The house he built on a large piece of property in 1896 stands today as 95 Luxton Avenue (Plate 20).

After Lauzon's death in 1944, title to the William Avenue block and the rest of his large estate transferred to his widow, who continued to own it until her own death in 1949. Adelina Roy (1886-1977), wife of Origine Roy and daughter of J.B. and Adeline Lauzon, took ownership of the William Avenue block in 1951 along with her son Thomas. The Roy family owned the property into the 1990s.¹⁰

Lauzon's butcher shop occupied the ground floor of the block until the early 1920s when part of the east portion of the space was rented out to the Modern Printing Company, which remained at the address until 1945. Lauzon's shop closed after his 1944 death. A number of small-scale

⁸ Winnipeg Tribune, May 26, 1978, p. 8.

⁹ Who's Who and Why (Vancouver, B.C.: International Press, 1913), p. 431; Winnipeg Free Press, June 19, 1944; and Biographical Scrapbook #B-4 (Legislative Library of Manitoba), p. 108.

¹⁰ City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, Roll No. 13-070143000, 1910-1990.

businesses occupied the retail space of the Lauzon Block for the next several decades, including the Canada Cracker Company (1954), and Custom Bedding and Upholstery (1960). The upper floor suites, which were used as the Knights of Pythias Hall in 1910, were converted to residential space and occupied by a number of short-term tenants over the years.¹¹

EVENT

There is no known significant historical event connected with this building.

CONTEXT

This block, with its retail ground floor and office/residential space above, was one of many such structures built in the 20th century, located along the commercial streets of Winnipeg and the surrounding municipalities. There were a very popular building type and continued to be used by small- and medium-sized developers as investment properties into the 21st century.

LANDMARK

The building, given its removed location, would not be a familiar structure to many Winnipeggers.

¹¹ Henderson's Directory, 1905-1990.

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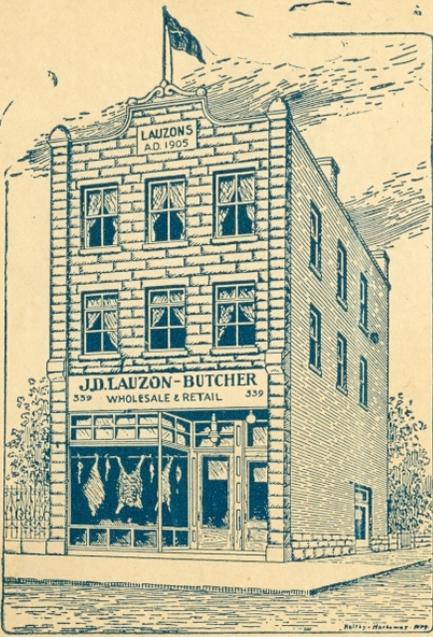


Plate 1 – William Avenue, looking west from the roof of City Hall, Main Street, 1887.
(Courtesy of the Archives of Manitoba.)



Plate 2 – This 1915 picture shows the Market Building's west façade with William Avenue to the right of the picture. (M. Peterson Collection.)

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SHOP TELEPHONE 643
RESIDENCE TEL. 1205

J. B. LAUZON

WHOLESALE AND RETAIL
DEALER IN

FRESH AND SALT MEATS POULTRY, ETC.

Butter and Eggs a Specialty.
Game in Season.

339 William Ave. - Winnipeg, Man.

Plate 3 – This undated business card shows the original design of the exterior of the Lauzon Block, 339 William Avenue, with its large display window, recessed entrances and ornamental lighting and transom windows. (M. Peterson Collection.)

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Plate 4 – Two views of the rear of the Lauzon Block, 339 William Avenue and the frame house, 1978. (City of Winnipeg.)

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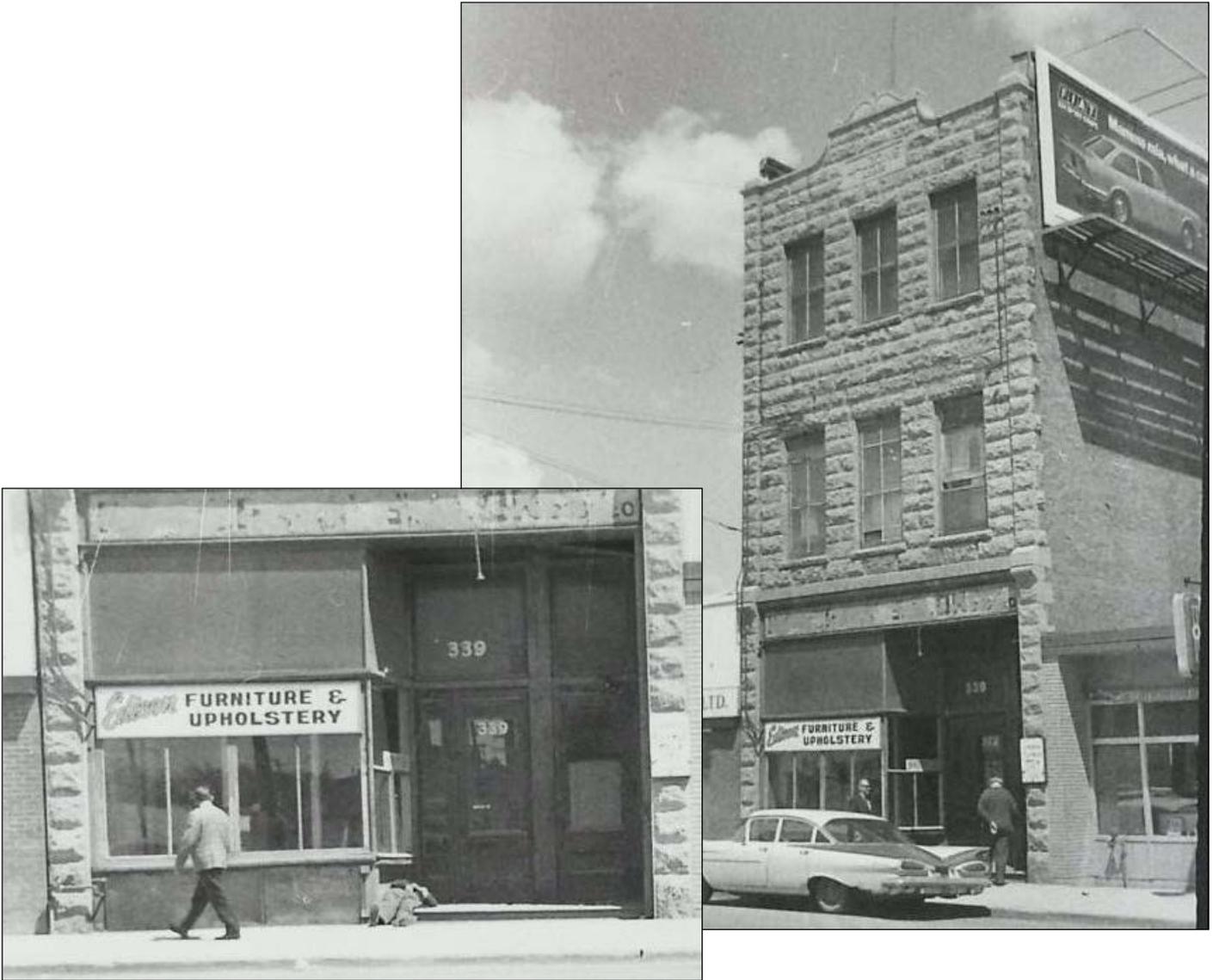


Plate 5 – These two 1969 images show the main floor and front (south) façade of the Lauzon Block, 339 William Avenue. The original display windows and recessed entrances are intact and the signage area below the modest cornice is visible. ([Archives of Manitoba, Architectural Survey, Winnipeg, 1969.](#))

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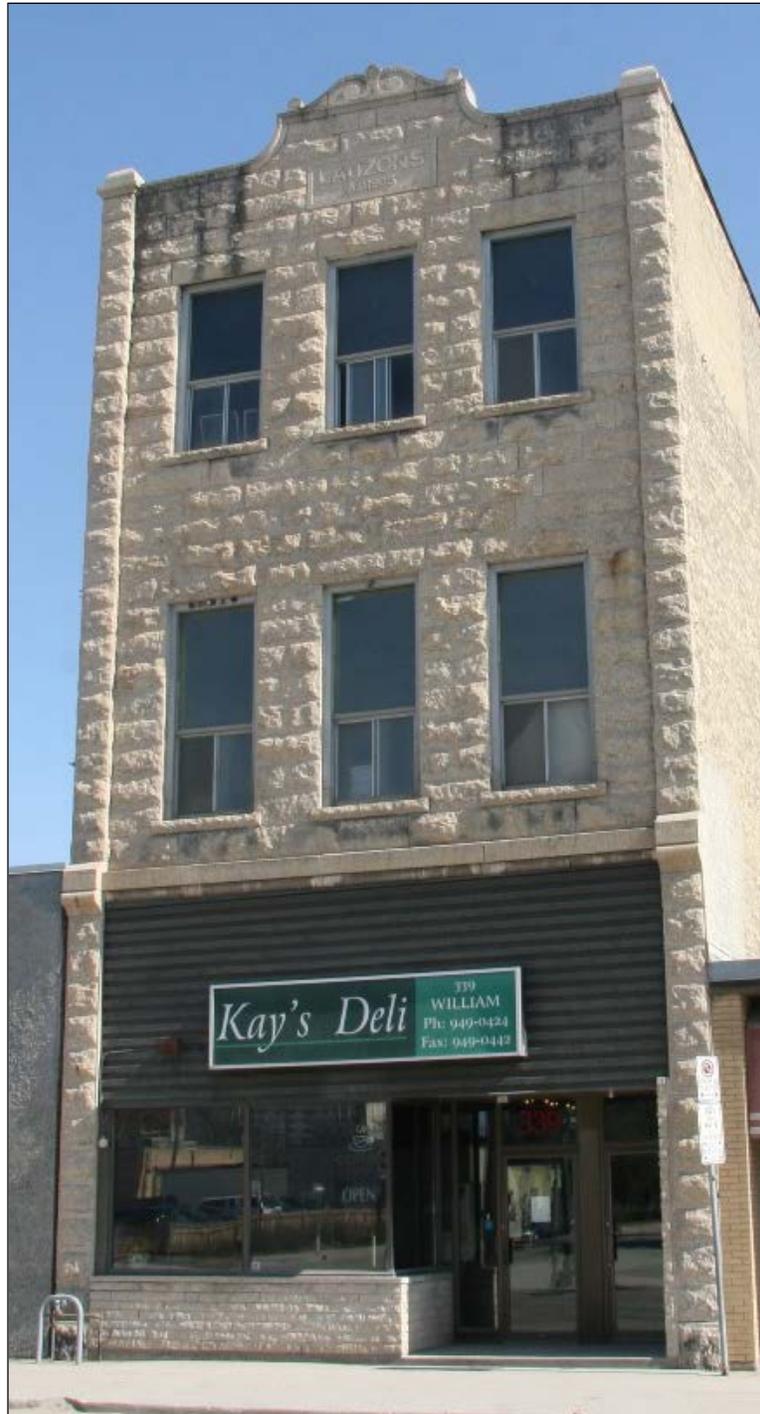


Plate 6 – Lauzon Block, 339 William Avenue, front (south) façade, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)

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Plate 7 – Lauzon Block, 339 William Avenue, detail of front (south) façade, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)

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Plate 8 – Lauzon Block, 339 William Avenue, front (south) and west façades, 2014. (M. Peterson, 2014.)

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Plate 9 – Lauzon Block, 339 William Avenue, front (south) and east façades, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)

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Plate 10 – Lauzon Block, 339 William Avenue, front (south) and east façades, 2014. (M. Peterson, 2014.)

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Plate 11 – Lauzon Block, 339 William Avenue, detail of front (south) façade, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)

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Plate 12 – Lauzon Block, 339 William Avenue, ground floor, refurbished ornamental tin, 2015.
(M. Peterson, 2015.)

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Plate 13 – Lauzon Block, 339 William Avenue, east side stairs to upper floors, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)

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Plate 14 – Lauzon Block, 339 William Avenue, second floor suite, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)

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Plate 15 – Lauzon Block, 339 William Avenue, third floor, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)

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Plate 16 – William Avenue, looking east from Hargrave Street, 2014. (M. Peterson, 2014.)

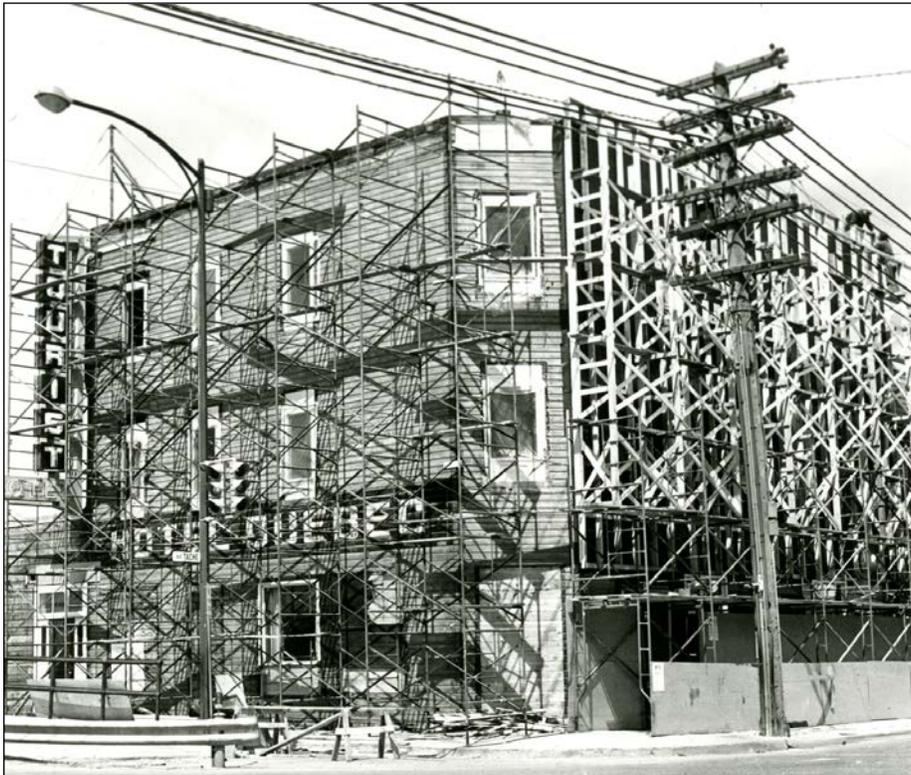


Plate 17 – The Quebec or Tourist Hotel, 119 Provencher Boulevard, 1964. (Reproduced from the University of Manitoba Archives, Winnipeg Tribune Collection, 18/2794-28.)

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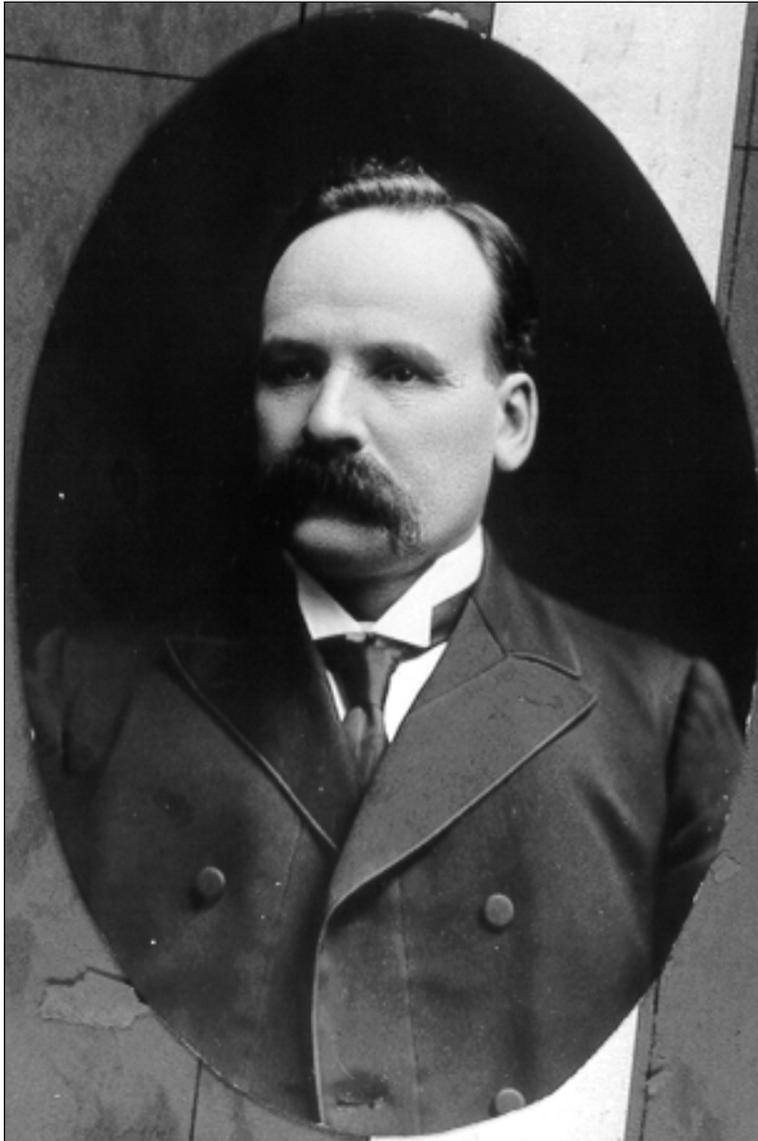


Plate 18 - Jean (James) Baptiste Lauzon, M.L.A. for St. Boniface, 1897. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Personality Collection, “Lauzon, J.B., #1.”)

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Plate 19 - J.B. and wife Adeline, ca.1893. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Personality Collection, "Lauzon, J.B., #2.")

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Plate 20 – Lauzon House, 95 Luxton Avenue, front (south) and west façades, 2009. (M. Peterson, 2009.)