54 DONALD STREET

PATERSON BLOCK

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings Committee

May 2005
This structure represents an excellent example of a luxury apartment block built in Winnipeg between 1905 and 1915, a period of time when hundreds of multi-tenant structures were erected (see Table 1). More blocks were built in Manitoba’s capital than anywhere else in Canada during this time. There were many reasons for the popularity of this building form.

Winnipeg after 1900 saw a great influx of people moving to the city to find work, many coming with little capital. Increasingly, the apartment block was an easy way to get comfortable lodgings without the expense of purchasing a home. Many of these new citizens were hired as commercial travellers, salesmen with large territories to service. Apartment suites were much easier to maintain for people with hectic travel schedules. As attractive was the fact that many of the pre-1915 blocks were located only a few kilometres from downtown or on major transportation routes, making it easier for tenants to utilize public transportation or otherwise get to jobs and other activities.

Another important aspect was Winnipeg’s financial environment. The city’s economic growth led to a rise in personal wealth. Many successful businessmen and professionals sought safe, steady investment opportunities – exactly the type of return provided by the apartment block. Many investment syndicates, contractors and individuals financed the construction of blocks throughout the city, reselling the completed blocks immediately or owning them for decades.

For Winnipeg’s elite community, the luxury apartment was also popular. Found in these blocks were retired couples, widows, widowers and professionals who chose apartment living because it provided many of the amenities associated with the finest mansions, including servants’ quarters, dens, luxuriously appointed interiors, and in some cases, even private entrances. The suites also

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1 The original owner’s name is spelt incorrectly (with a double “T”) on the Architect’s Plans and the City of Winnipeg Building Permit.

2 M. Peterson, “The Rise of Apartments and Apartment Dwellers in Winnipeg (1900-1914) and a Comparative Study with Toronto,” in Prairie Forum, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Fall 1993), pp. 159-60.

3 Ibid., pp. 161-62.
offered a respite from the cost and effort of some of the chores related to maintaining a private
dwelling – snow clearing, lawn maintenance, heating and general repairs.

TABLE 1 – COMPARISON OF NEW APARTMENT BLOCKS
BUILT IN WINNIPEG, 1899-1912

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th># OF PERMITS</th>
<th>TOTAL AMOUNT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>$51,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>$216,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>$450,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>$497,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>$246,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>$629,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>$1,336,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>$2,423,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>$1,808,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>$3,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Having said this, however, apartment blocks were not seen as an appropriate form of residential
structure in North America until after 1905. The construction of cheap, crowded tenements in
poorer neighbourhoods led to the opinion that apartment blocks were dangerous and disease-ridden.
In neighbourhoods everywhere, single-family house owners banded together to block the
construction of these large structures that they argued brought down property values and ruined
established communities. In Winnipeg, this opposition never reached the stage where it overcame
the aforementioned positive aspects of the building type. In fact, many of Winnipeg’s surrounding
communities publicized the construction of apartment blocks as evidence of their modern development.

This block is located in the heart of one of Winnipeg’s earliest and most exclusive residential districts, known as the Hudson’s Bay Reserve or “The Reserve,” so named because of its long association with the fur trading company. The Reserve included the land west of the Red River as far as Colony Creek (present-day Osborne Street) and from the Assiniboine River north to Notre Dame Avenue. Cottages and other small structures appeared as early as 1873 and by the 1880s, many of the city’s most prestigious families and opulent houses were found in the area. In fact, one study of early buildings in Winnipeg locates over half of the city’s 22 most luxurious dwellings in the Reserve. Large churches, terraces and schools were also part of the building stock.

As new areas of exclusive residential development organized further from the expanding downtown – Armstrong’s Point, Fort Rouge, Crescentwood, Wolseley and River Heights – many of Winnipeg’s elite families relocated. In 1910, however, the Reserve still boasted fine homes on sizeable grounds with Broadway, a tree-lined, expansive street, running through its heart (Plate 1).

As in other areas of the city, initial opposition to the development of apartment blocks was overcome to permit their construction along Broadway and its intersecting streets. These multiple-family units were often designed to mimic their surroundings to attract tenants similar in status to those in nearby homes. In the Reserve, the apartment blocks could be large and elegant or small and luxurious, with roomy suites and features to make them more comfortable.


6 Charles E. Goad, Fire Insurance Plan of Winnipeg, 1918. The nearby Devon Court Apartments, 376 Broadway, featured a tenant’s dining room on the fifth floor.
In 1909, another luxury apartment block was planned and built in The Reserve, this one small and designed to blend into its residential surroundings, including the owner’s own house located immediately north of the Paterson Block.

**STYLE**

Tudor-style homes were constructed throughout Winnipeg and North American from the 1890s until World War II, although the decades of the 1920s and 1930s saw an explosion in Tudor-style house construction on this continent. The style is loosely based on a number of late Medieval English structures ranging from thatch-roofed cottages to grand mansions. In North America, the style developed several distinctive elements - ornamental half-timbering, steeply pitched roofs, front-facing gables, bay or oriel windows, leaded glass, drip moulding and stucco, masonry or masonry-veneered walls.7

The most common feature of Tudor homes is a steeply pitched central roof with cross gables. Tall, narrow windows in multiple groups, massive chimneys crowned by chimney pots and an asymmetrical massing are other common elements. About half of all examples of the style contain decorative (non-structural) half-timbering with stucco or brick infill.8 The style was used mainly for residential architecture and was often seen in affluent neighbourhoods because of its British roots.9

**CONSTRUCTION**

According to the original City of Winnipeg Building Permit, the Paterson Block was a three-storey solid brick structure resting on a stone foundation 45.7 centimetres (18 inches) wide on concrete footings.10 Interior brick partition walls (33.0 centimetres, 13 inches) and steel I-beams and columns in the basement support the superstructure. The rear staircase and the brick-
enclosed main staircase provided fire safety.\textsuperscript{11} The building measured 14.0 x 26.8 x 13.1 metres (46 x 88 x 43 feet) and cost $30,000 to complete, utilizing “40 cords of stone, 120,000 bricks, 2,000 superficial square yards of plaster and 45 cubic yards of concrete.”\textsuperscript{12}

**DESIGN**

The asymmetrical front (east) façade begins at grade with a rusticated stone base leading to the dark red brick cladding of the first and second floors (Plate 2). Located off-centre is the main doorway, framed in ornamental cut stone (Plate 3). Large windows are found throughout this elevation, embellished with brick heads and cut stone sills. The upper two floors feature stucco-clad oriel windows, topped by front facing gable ends with oversized carved wooden brackets, half-timbering and stucco in-fill (Plate 4). This exterior design is not greatly altered from the original (Plate 5).

The Tudor style detailing of the front wraps around both the north and south elevations (Plate 6) before being replaced by the common clay brick walls of the remainder of the building (Plates 7 and 8). The windows of both side elevations are adorned with stone sills and radiating brick heads. Unique bay windows are also found on these elevations, bathing the dining rooms with light (Plate 9). As with the other areas of the building, there is a mixture of original and replacement windows.

The exterior area with the most significant alteration is the rear, where the open porches and centrally located enclosed staircase (Plate 10) have been completely enclosed and clad in stucco (Plate 11).

**INTERIOR**

As detailed in the original plans, held at the City Archives, the interior of this building was laid out to provide comfort and luxury to the tenants of the six upper-level suites.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
The basement, with its solid brick dividing walls, originally included the boiler room, fuel room and laundry area to the rear, the caretaker’s suite in the southeast corner and tenant storage facilities in the northeast corner (Plate 12). The suite is at present vacant, laundry and boiler rooms are still present, as is some of the original storage partitioning (Plate 13).

The main floor was designed with only two suites, approximately 175 square metres (approximately 1,900 square feet) each – the suite on the south side of the building laid out slightly different than the northern suite (Plate 14). On the south side was a large living room with access to the glazed porch. Two bedrooms were located off the interior hallway, as was the dining room to the rear. A serving pantry, maid’s bedroom (with a separate bathroom), spacious kitchen and open rear porch completed the suite. The main bathrooms for all upper-level suites were built at the light wells to allow for ventilation and natural light.

The second and third floors were also laid out with two suites per level, nearly mirror images of each other and following the floor plan of the north suite on the ground floor (Plate 15).

All dining rooms included bay windows with wood window seats and the living rooms were finished with open fireplaces. The previously mentioned an open “light court” illuminated the main bathrooms and a closed skylight illuminated the main staircase.

At present, the suites in the block are a mixture of original and altered spaces. Many of the dining rooms have remained intact; the space in Suite 1 still boasts the original burlap wall covering (Plate 16).

**INTEGRITY**

The building sits on its original location and appears to be in good structural condition. Because of continued care by tenants, alterations to the building have not seriously affected the original design.
STREETSCAPE
The Paterson Block, as previously mentioned, was part of the mainly residential district known as The Reserve. The block, therefore, would have originally been a sympathetic addition to the neighbourhood. Development, especially the large commercial blocks and apartment buildings along Broadway and its intersecting streets, and the completion of the Midtown Bridge in 1955, has robbed the Paterson Block of its original residential streetscape. It now stands as one of the few remaining structures of its age in the immediate vicinity.

ARCHITECT/CONTRACTOR
J.D. Atchison (1870-1959), one of the city’s most accomplished architects (Plate 17), designed the Paterson Block, as well as many of Winnipeg’s finest buildings (Plates 18 and 19). Educated and trained in Chicago, Illinois, Atchison came north to Winnipeg with work in the early 1900s and decided to stay and open an office in 1905 (see Appendix II for biographical information). He has received 20 points from the Historical Buildings Committee.

The block was built by the local contracting firm of Gibbons and Harris, a partnership that lasted only through the 1909 building season and produced a number of small- to medium-scale residential structures throughout the city.13

PERSON/INSTITUTION
Hugh S. Paterson (Plates 20 and 21) was the original owner of this block. Paterson came to Winnipeg ca.1897, working as a grain dealer. By 1903, he is listed as the manager of the Manitoba Commission Company, grain dealers, living at 56 Donald Street. Shortly before World War I, he had assumed the position of manager with N.M. Paterson and Company and later became its superintendent.14 This company, founded by his son Norman McLeod Paterson (1883-1983) in 1908 (Plate 22), grew to include grain elevators across the West, large storage facilities at Thunder Bay, Ontario, and a fleet of ships (Plate 23). N.M. Paterson would be

13 BP #1463/1909; and City of Winnipeg Building Permit Ledger Books, 1899-1911.
14 Henderson Directories, 1890-19005.
appointed to the Canadian Senate, where he served from 1940 to 1981.\textsuperscript{15} Today, the company is known as Paterson GlobalFoods Inc., with continued family participation from Hugh S. Paterson’s grandson Donald S. (Chairman of the Board) and great-grandson Andrew B. (President and Chief Executive Officer).\textsuperscript{16}

Hugh Paterson lived in a large house immediately north of the apartment block (#56) until the early 1920s when he is listed as occupying Suite 3 of the Paterson Block. He remained there until ca.1938.\textsuperscript{17} Early tenants of the building included J. Selby Henderson, manager of Henderson Directories Ltd. (Suite 1), Frederick B. Bennett, manager of the Traders Bank of Canada and Richard F. Unsworth, department manager at T. Eaton Company.\textsuperscript{18}

In terms of ownership, Hugh’s wife Ella is listed as the owner from 1909-1936 when the property was sold to B.B. and Wilson Smith, insurance agents. Tenancy during this period ranged from a low of nine in 1936 to a high of 29 in 1943.\textsuperscript{19} In 1946, ownership was transferred to United Investments Limited. The building became condominiums in 1986.\textsuperscript{20}

**EVENT**

There is no known significant event connected with this building.

**CONTEXT**

Completed in 1909, the Paterson Block is illustrative of the type of development seen throughout Winnipeg during its often-frantic growth phase, 1900-1915. The need for residential space was acute, and developers struggled to supply all types: single-family, duplexes, terraces and multi-

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{15} Company and biographical information from Paterson GlobalFoods Inc. website, ©2004.
  \item \textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Henderson Directories, 1909-1940.
  \item \textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 1912.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} City of Winnipeg Assessment Roll, Roll. No. 925400-12-1, 1909-1940.
  \item \textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 1940-1990.
\end{itemize}
tenant blocks. This demand for living space also required a wide range of provided amenities, from simple, cottage-like homes to mansions. The Paterson Block was certainly constructed with a more exclusive clientele in mind, joining a growing list of similarly designed multi-tenant facilities found in the finer neighbourhoods throughout the city.

This block is also illustrative of the type of investment popular in the city prior to World War I. Apartment blocks were advertised as a safe, relatively uncomplicated investment that would yield steady, though not spectacular returns – which is, for many decades, exactly what they did. Businessmen, contractors and entrepreneurs all provided capital for the construction of apartment blocks, some holding on to the property for many years, others simply completing the blocks and selling them.

**LANDMARK**

This small block is conspicuous in the neighbourhood because of its unusual design and finish and its location on a busy downtown street.
CITY OF WINNIPEG - Preliminary Report

Assessment Record

Building Address: 54 Donald Street    Building Name: Paterson Block

Original Use: apartment block    Current Use: apartment block

Roll No. (Old): 925400 (16587)

Municipality: 12    Ward: 1    Condominium No.: 167

Legal Description: 1 St. John, Plan 18982, Parcel A (Original: 1 St. John, Plan 129, Block 2, part of Lot 76: Lot 77)

Location: west side between Assiniboine Avenue and Broadway

Date of Construction: 1909    Storeys: 3

Construction Type: Brick, stucco and stone foundation    Heritage Status: ON INVENTORY

- 1463/1909 [A] $30,000 (original); 2878/1936 $500 (concrete piles); 1220/1943 $300 (concrete piles); 314/1977 $2,000 (fire upgrading); 3211/1985 $6,000 (interior alterations); 6465/1985 [4th- B07B04] $6,000 (alterations); 9369/1985 $5,000 (exterior alterations); 11338/1986 $4,000 (interior alterations); 291/1990 [4th- V09B09] $3,000 (interior & exterior alterations); 5964/1994 $1,200 (alterations); 2248/1998 $17,000 (interior alterations)

Information:
- 46 x 88 x 43 - = 132,800 cu. ft.
- originally 7 suites
- “art stone” accents

ARCHITECT: J.D. ATCHISON

CONTRACTOR: GIBBONS & HARRIS
APPENDIX II

John Danley Atchison (1870-1959)

Unquestionably one of the city's most talented architects, J.D. Atchison was born in Monmouth, Illinois in 1870. Educated in Chicago, he studied architecture at the Chicago Art Institute and the Chicago Manual Training School. After graduation he worked in the offices of W.G. Barfield, as well as for the firm Jenney and Mundie. William Le Baron Jenney was considered by many to be one of America’s leading architects and Atchison participated in the planning of buildings utilizing the latest technology in steel skyscraper construction.

In 1895, he opened his own practice, which continued until the early 1900s. He worked on the staff of the World's Columbian Exposition and for the Chicago and Eastern Illinois Railroad. His commissions brought him to Winnipeg and by 1905 the prosperity and future prospects prompted him to relocate his business here.

A list of some of the more prominent local buildings designed by J.D. Atchison over his career includes:

Alexandria Block, 389-93 Graham Ave. (1901) – demolished
Wardlow Apartments, 544 Wardlaw Ave. (1905) – Grade II
Kennedy Building (Mitchell-Copp), 315 Portage Ave. (1906) – Grade II
Hample Building, 273½ Portage Ave. (1906)
Concordia (Bon Accord) Block, northeast corner Main St. and Logan Ave. (1906) – partially demolished
Stone Block, 650 Main St. (1907) – demolished
Nanton Stables, 61 Roslyn Cres. (1908) – converted to residence
Dennistoun House, 166 Roslyn Rd. (1908) – Grade III

3 Compiled from City of Winnipeg Historical Buildings Files; J. Wade, Manitoba Architecture to 1940 (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1976); Winnipeg Telegram, September 18, 1906, p. 55; Winnipeg Tribune, December 21, 1907; and F.H. Schofield, op. cit., pp. 374-75.
J.D. Atchison designs, continued:

A. Matheson House, Kildonan (1908)^4
Devon Court, 376 Broadway (1908) - demolished
Men’s Own of the City of Winnipeg Shelter Mission, 181 Logan Ave. (1908) - demolished
N.W.C.T.A. Building, 291 Garry St. (1908) – Grade III
Paterson Block, 54 Donald Street (1909)
Oldfield, Kirby and Gardner Building, 234 Portage Avenue (1909) – Grade II
Canada Permanent Building, 296-98 Garry St. (1909) – Grade II
Edmonton Block, 383-89 Portage Ave. (1909) - demolished
Maltese Cross Building, 66 King St. (286 McDermot Ave.) (1909) – Grade III
Grosvenor Court, 161-65 Stafford St. (1910)
Eastern Townships Bank, 367-69 Main St. (1910) - demolished
Orpheum Theatre, Fort St. (1910) - demolished
Chamber of Commerce Building (Great-West Life Building), 177 Lombard Ave. (1911) – Grade II
Allan, Killam and McKay Block, 364 Main St. (1911) - demolished
Winnipeg Development and Industrial Bureau Exposition Building, southeast corner of Main St. and Water Ave. (1911-12) - demolished
Carlton Building, 354 Portage Ave. (1912) – Grade III
Cadomin Building, 280 Main St. (1912)
Mac’s Building, 585 Ellice Ave. (1912)
Boyd Building, 388 Portage Ave. (1912) – Grade III
Union Tower, 191 Lombard Ave. (1912-13) – Grade II
Merchants’ Bank Branch, 1386 Main St. (1913) – Grade III
All Souls' Unitarian Church, Furby St. (1913)
Curry Building, 233 Portage Ave. (1915) – Grade II
Willys Overland Building, 686 Portage Ave. (1916)
Bank of Hamilton Building, 395 Main St. (1916-18) – Grade I
Red Cross Lodge, Fort Osborne Barracks, Tuxedo (1919) - demolished
Manitoba School for the Deaf, Tuxedo (1922)
Medical Arts Building, southeast corner Graham Ave. and Kennedy St. (1922-23) - demolished

Atchison also designed structures in other western provinces. He won the design competition for the Moose Jaw City Hall, c.1912-13 (not built) and planned the Moose Jaw Collegiate (1908-10), Saskatchewan Presbyterian Boys’ College and Principle's Residence (1911-12), and Hammond Building, Main St., Moose Jaw (1912).

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Atchison was also intimately involved in promoting the concept of The Mall or Capitol Approach from Portage Avenue to the Legislative Building along Memorial Boulevard. He prepared proposals for the City Planning Commission (1911) and later the Winnipeg Town Planning Commission (1913). He also made proposals to the Greater Winnipeg Plan Commission (1917; 1919) which he became chairman of in 1919.\(^5\)

In 1923, Atchison left Winnipeg for Pasadena, California, and continued to practise there, adopting the Spanish Colonial style for his residential work. He died in 1959.\(^6\)

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Plate 1 – Broadway, west from Donald Street, ca.1910, including two large luxury apartment blocks on Broadway: #1- The Princeton Apartments, #314 (built 1909); and #2- Devon Court, #376 Broadway (built in 1908, demolished 1981). Note the residential nature of the area. (Archives of Manitoba.)
Plate 2 – Paterson Block, 54 Donald Street, front (east) façade. (M. Peterson, 2005.)

Plate 3 – Paterson Block, front door. (M. Peterson, 2005.)
Plate 4 – Paterson Block, detail of east side roof. (M. Peterson, 2005.)
Plate 5 – Architect’s Plans #1463/1909, “Front Elevation.”  (Courtesy of City Archives.)
Plate 6 – Paterson Block, northeast corner. (M. Peterson, 2005.)
Plate 7 – Paterson Block, north side. (M. Peterson, 2005.)

Plate 8 – Paterson Block, north side. (M. Peterson, 2005.)
Plate 9 – Paterson Block, detail of north side bay windows. (M. Peterson, 2005.)
Plate 10 – Architect’s Plans #1463/1909, “Rear Elevation.” (Courtesy of City Archives.)
Plate 11 – Paterson Block, rear (west) façade. (M. Peterson, 2005.)
Plate 12 – Architect’s Plans #1463/1909, “Basement Plan.” (Courtesy of City Archives.)
Plate 13 – Paterson Block, basement storage area. (M. Peterson, 2005.)
Plate 14 – Architect’s Plans #1463/1909, “First Floor Plan.” (Courtesy of City Archives.)
Plate 15 – Architect’s Plans #1463/1909, “Second Floor Plan (Typical for Third Floor).”  
(Courtesy of City Archives.)
Plate 16 – Various interior spaces: #1- Main staircase; #2- Kitchen, Suite 2; #3- Entrance foyer, Suite 3; #4- Dining room, Suite 3; #5- Living room, Suite 4; #6- Fireplace, Suite 5; #7- Stained glass in light well; and #8- Maid’s room and bathroom, Suite 6. (M. Peterson, 2005.)
Plate 17 – J.D. Atchison (1870-1959), 1913. (Archives of Manitoba, N5240.)
Plate 18 – Some of the more prominent designs of architect J.D. Atchison: #1- N.W.C.T.A. Building, 291 Garry Street (1908); #2- Chamber of Commerce Building (Great-West Life Building), 177 Lombard Avenue (1911); #3- Boyd Building, 388 Portage Avenue (1912); #4- Union Tower, 191 Lombard Avenue (1912-13); and #5- Curry Building, 233 Portage Avenue (1915). (M. Peterson Collection.)
Plate 19 – R.M. Dennistoun House, 166 Roslyn Road, ca.1984. An example of residential architecture designed by J.D. Atchison. This home was completed in 1909, the same year as the Paterson Block. (City of Winnipeg, Historical Buildings Committee.)
Plate 20 – Hugh S. Paterson, 1918. (Photograph courtesy of Donald S. Paterson.)
Plate 21 – Hugh S. Paterson, no date. (Photograph courtesy of Donald S. Paterson.)
Plate 22 – Norman McLeod Paterson, born August 3, 1883 in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, died August 10, 1983. (Library and Archives of Canada, PA 047669, no date.)

Plate 23 – N.M. Paterson and Sons Ltd. terminal elevator and one of its many ships, the S.S. Paterson, at Fort William (Thunder Bay), Ontario, ca.1958. (Reproduced from Canadian Register of Commerce & Industry (St. Bernard de Lacolle, P.Q.: Globe Encyclopedia Company, 1958), p. 304.)