1360 GROSVENOR AVENUE

RIVER HEIGHTS LAWN BOWLING CLUB CLUBHOUSE

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings Committee
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After 1900, Winnipeg’s significant population and economic growth translated to growth in all aspects of life in the capital city. Its expanding economy attracted an ever-increasing number of new citizens, from Eastern Canada, the United States and from Europe, looking for jobs. This in turn stimulated the development of new residential subdivisions, taking the large land holdings and surveying streets and back lanes and house lots.

Winnipeg’s southwest area had been annexed by the City of Winnipeg in 1882, becoming Ward 1. Housing development first began along the Assiniboine and Red rivers – what became known as Fort Rouge and Crescentwood. Desirable and highly priced property was developed during the pre-World War I period and these neighbourhoods became the home for some of the City’s wealthiest families. Much further west, the City was developing one of its largest public parks, City Park (now Assiniboine Park), officially opened in 1909 while the Province of Manitoba had chosen to build its sprawling Agricultural College (officially opened in 1906) nearby (Plate 1).

The land between Fort Rouge/Crescentwood and the City Park/Agricultural College sites and what would become the Town of Tuxedo, was first organized in the early 1900s, newspaper advertisements touting it as an excellent investment (Plate 2). Among the first developers in the area were Howey and Borebank, real estate developers who had previously worked with Charles Enderton (1864-1920) to organize and market Crescentwood. The neighbourhood would ultimately encompass all the land south of Academy Road and north of Taylor Avenue between Kenaston Boulevard and Cambridge Street.

But the actual residential development was slow in coming. Construction up to World War I was confined mainly to the northeast corner of the area, especially Oxford, Montrose and Elm streets north of Kingsway. After the War, most of the lots north of Corydon Avenue filled with single-

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family homes and in the 1950s, much of the southern half of the neighbourhood was finally
developed. The community was very much middle- to upper-income, many of the families with
British heritage.

Associated with the development was the creation of important services and facilities including
schools, parks and playgrounds, commercial property and churches. There is mention of a River
Heights Community Club being organized as early as 1919 and several years later, land was set
aside by the City of Winnipeg south of Grosvenor Avenue (originally Haskins) and west of
Corydon Avenue (originally Jackson).²

In 1935, a new sports venue was built in River Heights for lawn bowling (Plate 3), an extremely
popular sport in Winnipeg and Western Canada that had been a part of local organized athletics
scene from the late 19th century.

STYLE
This building was planned and built with City of Winnipeg funds and was intended to provide
modern, comfortable facilities for the members and visitors of the lawn bowling club. The general
designs of these early clubhouses were cottage-like, one-storey structures meant to match the
relaxed leisurely activities of the sport. The exterior designs were very modest in order to keep final
costs down and minimize the need for repairs and the River Heights clubhouse is an excellent
illustration of the style.

CONSTRUCTION
This frame structure rests on a concrete foots and much of it is clad with split cedar siding. The
building, which includes a crawl space, measures approximately 10.0 x 12.0 metres.

DESIGN

² C. Macdonald, A City at Leisure: An Illustrated History of Parks and Recreation Services in Winnipeg,
The clubhouse features two entrances, west facing the parking lot (Plate 4) and east facing the bowling greens (Plate 5), both accessed via a short flight of open stairs. The building features a superstructure clad in rounded cedar siding except at grade where the plywood walls are exposed. Newer windows are found on all elevations (Plates 6 and 7) and the east and west side interior entrance doors are original to the structure (Plate 8). The building is covered with a hipped gable roof.

**INTERIOR**
Similar to the exterior, the interior was designed for durability and efficiency. The east side of the building is open, providing space for members and their guests to meet and includes a fireplace on the south wall (Plates 9 and 10). The northwest corner of the building holds the modernized kitchen which is separated from the men’s and women’s change rooms and washrooms by a small hallway leading to the west door (Plates 11 and 12). The original layout of the clubhouse remains intact, as do some of its original elements including wood panelling, light fixtures (Plate 13) and the telephone (Plate 14).

**INTEGRITY**
The building stands on its original site, has suffered only minimal alteration and is in excellent structural condition. It stands as the oldest and most intact lawn bowling clubhouse in the City of Winnipeg.

**STREETSCAPE**
The lawn bowling greens and clubhouse are located on the south side of Grosvenor Avenue at the north end of a large sports complex (Plate 15) that includes the River Heights Community Club and Arena (built 1961-1964), soccer fields, outdoor ice rinks, baseball diamonds, tennis courts and the
River Heights Middle School (built in 1947). It is a visible and important element of the streetscape of Grosvenor Avenue, one of the neighbourhood’s busier thoroughfares.

ARCHITECT/CONTRACTORS

It is unknown at this time who was responsible for the design and construction of this structure, although it may have been personnel within the City of Winnipeg’s recreation department.

PERSON/INSTITUTION

Lawn bowling was an extremely popular sport throughout Canada in the late 19th century. Its popularity in Winnipeg grew as its population did in the early decades of the 20th century. One of the first clubs to organize was the Provincial Civil Service Lawn Bowling Club (LBC), organized in 1895 and operating greens on the Winnipeg Court House grounds, Kennedy Street and Broadway.4

The first decade of the 20th century saw a large number of clubs organize (Plate 16) and greens built throughout the Province, including Emerson, Minnedosa, Portage la Prairie and in Winnipeg, including Fort Rouge (1908-ca.1930 at 696 McMillan Avenue) and Assiniboine or West End (1909-1964 at 798 Wolseley Avenue – Plate 17). In 1908, the Manitoba Lawn Bowling Association was organized and began running provincial championships for men and women. The 1910-1930 decade (Plates 18 and 19) saw many other long-running clubs open: St. John’s LBC (opened in 1910 at St. John’s Park, Main Street), Sargent Park LBC (opened ca.1916 at Sargent Park, Sargent Avenue at Wall Street), Greenwood LBC (ca.1917-ca.1980, 1278 Wolseley Avenue), Riverview LBC (ca.1918-ca.1953 at 209 Clare Street), Elmwood LBC (1919-ca.1927 on Kelvin Street at Johnston Avenue), Deer Lodge LBC (1927-ca.1935 on Overdale Street) and the Norwood LBC (opened ca.1927, still active at 1212 Dakota Street).5

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3 C. Macdonald, op. cit., p. 80. The original community club also included four tennis courts.
4 Manitoba Free Press, July 27, 1895, p. 5.
5 Manitoba Free Press, 1890-1930.
By the time the River Heights LBC was organized in the early 1930s, there were an estimated 23 clubs operating in the City of Winnipeg and approximately that many more throughout the province (Plate 20).\textsuperscript{6} The River Heights Club grew rapidly, with an annual membership of over 150 in the 1960s.\textsuperscript{7} Although membership has declined since then, it is still one of Winnipeg’s seven active outdoor lawn bowling facilities.\textsuperscript{8}

EVENT
There is no known event connected with this building.

CONTEXT
Built during the second wave of construction/development in Winnipeg’s River Heights community, the lawn bowling club and clubhouse were an important part of the social evolution of the area. It underlines the maturation of the community and its need for modern athletic facilities

LANDMARK
The River Heights Lawn Bowling Club has been an important part of life in the area for over 75 years and is a well known landmark in the neighbourhood.

\textsuperscript{6} Manitoba Free Press, June 1, 1931, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{7} River Heights LBC president Rick Strauss, in conversation with the author.
\textsuperscript{8} Manitoba Lawn Bowling Association website, www.bowls.mb.ca, no date.
APPENDIX I

CITY OF WINNIPEG - Preliminary Report
Assessment Record

Building Address: 1360 Grosvenor Avenue
Building Name: River Heights Lawn Bowling Clubhouse

Original Use: clubhouse
Current Use: clubhouse

Roll No.: 12050605000
RSN: 135381

Legal Description: 48/49 St. Boniface, Plan 27876, Lots 2, 4, 6/7

Location: South side at the foot of Oak and Elm streets

Date of Construction: 1935
Storeys: 1

Heritage Status: NONE

Construction Type: Frame on concrete footings

$23,000 (foundation repairs); 3737/1994 [PPD] $6,000 (interior alterations)

Information:

ARCHITECT: CITY OF WINNIPEG

CONTRACTOR: CITY OF WINNIPEG

--- GROSVENOR AVENUE ---
Plate 2 – Advertisements like these frequented the pages of the local newspapers in 1904 and 1905. (Reproduced from Manitoba Free Press, July 28, 1904, p. 2 [top] and June 30, 1905, p. 3 [bottom].)
Plate 3 – Mayor John Queen officially opening the River Heights Club House, June 15, 1935. (Courtesy of Rick Strauss, President, River Heights Lawn Bowling Club.)

Plate 4 – River Heights Lawn Bowling Club Clubhouse, 1360 Grosvenor Avenue, west side, 2010. (M. Peterson, 2010.)
Plate 5 – River Heights Lawn Bowling Club Clubhouse, 1360 Grosvenor Avenue, east and south façades, 2010. (M. Peterson, 2010.)

Plate 6 – River Heights Lawn Bowling Club Clubhouse, 1360 Grosvenor Avenue, east and north façades, 2010. (M. Peterson, 2010.)
Plate 7 – River Heights Lawn Bowling Club Clubhouse, 1360 Grosvenor Avenue, west and south façades, 2010. (M. Peterson, 2010.)

Plate 8 – River Heights Lawn Bowling Club Clubhouse, 1360 Grosvenor Avenue, original east side interior door, 2010. (M. Peterson, 2010.)
Plate 9 – River Heights Lawn Bowling Club Clubhouse, 1360 Grosvenor Avenue, east end looking north towards Grosvenor Avenue, 2010. (M. Peterson, 2010.)

Plate 10 – River Heights Lawn Bowling Club Clubhouse, 1360 Grosvenor Avenue, east end looking south, 2010. (M. Peterson, 2010.)
Plate 11 – River Heights Lawn Bowling Club Clubhouse, 1360 Grosvenor Avenue, kitchen (left) and equipment lockers, women’s washrooms (right), 2010. (M. Peterson, 2010.)
Plate 12 – River Heights Lawn Bowling Club Clubhouse, 1360 Grosvenor Avenue, west side hallway and west entrance, 2010. (M. Peterson, 2010.)
1360 GROSVENOR AVENUE –
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Plate 13 – River Heights Lawn Bowling Club Clubhouse, 1360 Grosvenor Avenue, original light fixture, 2010. (M. Peterson, 2010.)

Plate 14 – River Heights Lawn Bowling Club Clubhouse, 1360 Grosvenor Avenue, telephone, 2010. (M. Peterson, 2010.)
Plate 15 – River Heights sports complex including the Lawn Bowling Club (#1), Community Club (#2), tennis courts (#3) and the Middle School (#4). (City of Winnipeg.)
Plate 16 – The winners of the Fort Rouge Cup of 1910: (left to right) W.B. Bannatyne, Alex Logan, J. Angus and J. Furtney. (Courtesy of the Manitoba Archives, Sport-Lawn Bowling-1.)

Plate 17 – Assiniboine LBC, 798 Wolseley Avenue, 1917, with its clubhouse in the background. (Reproduced from the Manitoba Free Press, August 18, 1917, p. 7.)
Plate 18 – The winners of the Porte-Markle Trophy (Winnipeg Lawn Bowling Doubles Champions), ca. 1917, no names. (Courtesy of the Manitoba Archives, Foote Collection No. 1070, N1811.)
Plate 19 – The St. John’s Lawn Bowling Club, September 18, 1928. (Courtesy of the Manitoba Archives, Foote Collection No. 1069, N1786.)
Plate 20 – Advertisement for lawn bowling equipment and clothing at Ashdown’s Store, 1927. (Reproduced from Manitoba Free Press, June 28, 1927, p. 5.)