



12 KINGSWAY AVENUE

VERE C. BROWN/HENRY EUGENE SELLERS HOUSE

PREPARED BY PETERSON PROJECTS – FEBRUARY 2009



12 KINGSWAY AVENUE VERE C. BROWN/HENRY EUGENE SELLERS HOUSE

Date of Construction: 1911

Building Permit: 487/1911

Architect: Brown, V.C. (owner)

Contractor: Lyall-Mitchell Company

ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

This large, 2½-storey single-family home was built in one of Winnipeg's rapidly growing and exclusive neighbourhoods – Crescentwood – where it joined other luxurious houses owned by some of the City's business and political elite.

The main (north) façade features a 2½-storey central section flanked on both sides by one-storey wings. The entire first floor is clad in dark brick, the upper storey in lightly hued stucco. Windows throughout the main façade are square headed and filled with multi-paned window units. Stone accents these openings. The centrally located entrance portico includes a rounded hood supported by chains and bracketing. The heavy overhanging eaves are embellished with exposed rafters, the low-pitched hip roof interrupted by numerous shed dormers. A brick wall with carved medallions encircles much of the property.



Front (north) façade, 2009

Cost of construction of the home was listed as \$20,000,¹ making it one of the more expensive homes built in 1911. Owner V.C. Brown is listed on the original Building Permit as the architect.

The house stands on its original site, appears to be in good structural condition and does not appear to have suffered major exterior alteration. According to the Manitoba Historical Society website, the interior was renovated in 1970 for use by the President of the University of Manitoba and the large opening over the main entrance originally held a stained-glass window depicting a ship which was removed and sold by a short-term owner.

This structure is one of Winnipeg's better examples of the Georgian Revival style. The style has been described as the most popular revival style of the 20th century in Canada, used mainly in residential architecture and still popular today.² Influential New York City architects McKim, Mead and White, who utilized elements of the style to design residences for their most affluent clients, promoted the style in the early 1900s.³ The style is based on English and Dutch colonial architecture from the 18th and early 19th centuries.

Distinguishing characteristics of the style include a symmetrical façade with a centrally located entrance as its focal point. Classical elements and detailing such as pediments, cornice-like eaves, Palladian windows, columns and porticos are common. Roofs could be hipped or gambrel-shaped and exterior cladding ranged from wood to brick and stone to stucco.⁴



Front (north) and west façades, 2009

HISTORICAL INTEREST:

Vere C. Brown was the original owner. Brown was born in London, Ontario in 1869. He became a banker and in 1904 was appointed chief inspector for the Canadian Bank of Commerce five years after joining the firm. In 1911, he moved to Winnipeg as the superintendent of the central western branches. He left the city in 1920 to take a position with the National City Bank in New York City.⁵

In 1925, the house was occupied by Robert G. Roger, salesman for Osler, Hammond and Nanton. Shortly after, the house was sold to Henry Eugene Sellers, co-founder of the Northland Elevator Company (1922).⁶ Sellers was born in 1886 in Port Arthur (now Thunder Bay), Ontario, his father was an influential grain dealer in that city. H.E. Sellers would be one of the founders of the Federal Grain Company in 1929, which through expansion and amalgamation ultimately became Canada's largest private line elevator company.⁷



Rear (south) 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- illustrative of a pre-World War I era mansion built in an exclusive residential district in Winnipeg;
- its associations- its long-term connections to early and influential businessmen V.C. Brown and H.E. Sellers;
- its design- an excellent example of the Georgian Revival style;
- its architect- N/A;
- its location- contributes greatly to the historic streetscape of the neighbourhood; and
- its integrity- its main façades continue to display many of their original elements and design.



Front (north) façade, 1978

ENDNOTES:

- 1 City of Winnipeg Building Permit, #487/1911.
- 2 L. Maitland et al, A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1992), pp. 152-153.
- 3 Identifying Architectural Styles in Manitoba (Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, 1991), pp. 26-27.
- 4 Ibid., p. 26.
- 5 Biographical information from Canada Census, 1911; "Splendid Citizen Has Passed On" Undated newspaper clipping, Manitoba Legislative Library, Biographical Scrapbook B7; and "Vere Brown Quits Bank of Commerce," Manitoba Free Press, September 15, 1920, p. 17.
- 6 City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, Roll No. 12-040453000, 1910-1930; and Henderson's Directory, 1910-1950.
- 7 "Federal Grain Ltd." in The Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan (Regina, SA: University of Regina, Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2006).