



**657 WELLINGTON CRESCENT**

**WILLIAM ANDREW WINDATT HOUSE**

PREPARED BY PETERSON PROJECTS – DECEMBER 2009



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## 657 WELLINGTON CRESCENT WILLIAM ANDREW WINDATT HOUSE

**Date of Construction:** 1903

**Building Permit:** 392/1903

**Architect:** Russell, John Hamilton Gordon

**Contractor:** Hudson & Davidson; and Bruce, D.

### ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

This very early Crescentwood mansion was built at a cost of \$13,000,<sup>1</sup> making it one of the most expensive single-family dwellings built in the City during that year.

The front (south) façade of this brick veneer home is symmetrically designed with a raised entrance set in an open porch with heavy stone pillars and a second storey deck with metal railing. This central area projects slightly on the second floor holding an arched door with sidelights as access to the deck. Above this element is a gable dormer. The front slope of the hipped roof also includes two smaller dormer windows with open pediments and arched openings. The building rests on a raised rubblestone foundation.

The building sits on its original site, appears to be in good structural condition and does not appear to have suffered major exterior alteration.





Front (south) and west façades, 2009

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This house has many of the elements of the Classical Revival style. Popular in North America from 1900-30, the style ranged from simple, small-scale neo-classical structures, such as this building, to Beaux-Arts Classicism with its grand scale and heavy ornamentation, for example the Legislative Building.<sup>2</sup> Elements of the classical revival style include columns, pediments, flat, unadorned roof lines, symmetrical facades, and Greek or Roman orders. Door and window openings are often lintelled rather than arched, although both spanning methods can be present.<sup>3</sup>

The use of classical elements, especially for public buildings, became a popular ornamental device for banks, other financial institutions, railway stations, commercial buildings and office blocks. Because of Winnipeg's importance in the early growth of western Canada's economy, the city became the headquarters of many firms doing business throughout the West. These firms often chose classically-inspired ornamentation to portray an image of respectability and stability. Many excellent examples of the style, representing both early and late phases of its popularity, adorn a wide range of structures.

Building designer J.H.G. Russell (1862-1946) was born in Toronto, Canada West (Ontario), in 1862, the son of a dry goods dealer. After attending school in that city, he went to work for H.B. Gordon, a prominent area architect. Russell was with Gordon from 1878 until his departure for Winnipeg in 1882. From 1886 to 1893, Russell travelled throughout the United States, learning civil engineering, surveying and architecture in centres such as Chicago, Illinois, Spokane and Tacoma, Washington, and Sioux City, Iowa.

In 1895, two years after returning to Winnipeg, he set up his private practice, coinciding with the city's period of unbridled growth. His designs were (and are) scattered throughout the city, province and Western Canada, covering a variety of building types, sizes, costs and uses.



Front (south) and east façades, 2009

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His business continued to be steady during World War I and after, when many architects struggled to find commissions.

Russell was president of the Manitoba Association of Architects (1925) and served for three terms as the president of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (1912-15). His chairmanship of the Presbyterian Church Board of Managers and his devotion to Presbyterianism partially explain the large number of churches he designed for the denomination in Winnipeg and Western Canada. Russell died in 1946.

A complete list of his designs would be very lengthy, included among his more notable local projects would be J.H. Ashdown Warehouse additions, 157-179 Bannatyne Avenue, (1899-1911, Grade II), Lake of the Woods Building, 212 McDermot Avenue (1901, Grade II), Hammond Building, 63 Albert Street (1902, Grade III), Adelman Building, 92-100 Princess Street (1903, Grade II), Franklin Press, 168 Bannatyne Avenue (1904, Grade III), R.R. Wilson, 545 Broadway (1904, Grade III), J.H. Ashdown Store, 211 Bannatyne Avenue (1904, Grade III), Porter Building, 165 McDermot Avenue (1906, Grade III), Child's (McArthur) Building, Portage Avenue (1909, demolished), Casa Loma Building, Portage Avenue (1909, Grade II), Glengarry Block, 290 McDermot Avenue (1910, Grade III), Westminster Presbyterian (United) Church, 745 Westminster Avenue (1910-12, Grade II), Dingwall Building, 62 Albert Street (1911, Grade III), YMCA, 301 Vaughan Street, with Jackson and Rosencrans of New York (1911-13, Grade II), J.H. Ashdown, 529 Wellington Crescent (1913, Grade II) and St. John's Presbyterian (United) Church, 250 Cathedral Avenue (1923, Grade III). He has been given 20 points by the Historical Buildings Committee.



W.A. Windatt (no date), left and H. Phillipps (no date), right

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HISTORICAL INTEREST:

William Andrew Windatt (1860-1924), the original owner of this house, was born in Bowmanville, Canada West (Ontario) in 1860, coming west and working in the banking and coal business in what would become Northwestern Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. He settled in Winnipeg in the early 1890s and founded the Windatt Coal Company, a very successful venture. He was also involved in various regional financial companies. He and his wife Elizabeth Ann (nee Shedden) had three daughters and two sons and he died at his Wellington Crescent home in 1924.<sup>4</sup>

Shortly after his death, the house was sold to Hugh Phillipps (1875-1963), barrister of Phillipps and Tallin.<sup>5</sup> Phillipps was born in England and immigrated to Canada in 1893 where he completed his law degree at the University of Manitoba and articulated in the offices of Chief Justice A. McDonald of Portage la Prairie. He was called to Manitoba Bar in 1900 and was the legal counsel for numerous banks, insurance companies and businesses including the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. He had been appointed a special prosecutor of all strikers in the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919. He died in his home in 1963.<sup>6</sup>





Front (south) façade, 1978

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RECOMMENDATION TO HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE:

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

- its historical importance- one of the oldest dwellings in Crescentwood;
- its associations- its long-term connections to businessman W.A. Windatt and lawyer H. Phillipps;
- its design- an excellent example of the Classical Revival style;
- its architect- J.H.G. Russell was a respected and important practitioner;
- its location- contributes greatly to the historic streetscape of its neighbourhood; and
- its integrity- its main façades continue to display many of their original elements and design.

ENDNOTES:

- <sup>1</sup> City of Winnipeg Building Permit, #392/1903.
- <sup>2</sup> Identifying Architectural Styles in Manitoba (Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, Historic Resources Branch, n.d.), p. 18.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 18.
- <sup>4</sup> Manitoba Legislative Library, Biographical Scrapbook B7, newspaper clipping (no source) dated March 5, 1924; R.R. Rostecki, Crescentwood, A History (Winnipeg, MB: Crescentwood Home Owners Association, 1993); and Manitoba Free Press, March 6, 1924, p. 6.
- <sup>5</sup> City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, Roll No. 12040480000, 1920-1990.
- <sup>6</sup> C. W. Parker, editor, Who's Who in Western Canada: A Biographical Dictionary of Notable Living Men and Women of Western Canada, Vol. 1 (Vancouver, BC: Canadian Press Association, 1911); and Winnipeg Free Press, May 20, 1963, p. 22.