826 WOLSELEY AVENUE – E. PARNELL HOUSE
830 WOLSELEY AVENUE – H.B. LYALL HOUSE
834 WOLSELEY AVENUE – T. WILSON HOUSE
838 WOLSELEY AVENUE – J. MOYSE HOUSE

HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE

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The houses at 826 and 830 Wolseley were constructed simultaneously by the two co-founders of a local foundry, Manitoba Bridge and Iron. This particular house was built by James A. Counter, the junior vice-president of the company, possibly for speculative purposes. The Wolseley area was on the verge of development when the house went up in 1909, assuring a much higher return when Coulter sold the house in 1912.

A heating engineer by the name of H.P. Tanner designed the building. Tanner headed the Waldon Company heating and had no apparent training aside from engineering. From the pattern of the two houses, one can speculate that Tanner was known professionally to Manitoba Bridge and Iron. The architect of the home next door was designed by an employee of the company who was also involved in the building trade. The same contractor, Smith Toye, built both houses.

Built at a cost of $7,000, the house is two and a half storeys of brick veneer.1 Rising from 18 inch thick foundation walls, the house was secured within its riverbank site by concrete footings. The limestone of the foundation is repeated in the façade to emphasize window sills. The windows are numerous and strikingly irregular. In particular, the architect employed several small wide windows with multi-paned lights throughout the house. Bay windows were employed on the ground floor and a handsome bay window, presumably at the top of the stairway, is finished with decorative brickwork in an oriole. Windows light the numerous gables and dormers on the third storey. In keeping with the fashion of the time, a two-storey sleeping veranda is appended to the rear while a graceful arched veranda covers the front and partial side. Of these four Wolseley houses, this exterior has suffered the least alteration.

Not long after its builders sold the house in 1912, the Edward Parnell family occupied the house at 826 Wolseley. Parnell was a partner in a huge local bakery named The Speirs-Parnell Baking Company. With a second store in London, Ont. (Parnell’s hometown), the company had 500
employees. Some of the seven Parnell children operated the London bakery while some remained in Winnipeg.

Edward Parnell came to Winnipeg in 1909 after having been an alderman in London for 11 years. In 1918, he was chairman of the Canadian Manufacturers’ Association and in 1920, he was made president of the Local Board of Trade. In 1920, Parnell was elected mayor of Winnipeg and then re-elected by acclamation for a second term in 1921. In June 1922, he died in office from what the newspapers claimed was “overwork.” By all tributes, he was a dedicated mayor and a fine individual.²

The great house was subsequently sold to the Hon. William H. Sharpe, a senator from Manitou who seems to have come to Winnipeg to deal in real estate. Sharpe had been a farmer who got into oil production and mining development at an opportune time.³ He was mayor of Manitou in 1908 before being elected the following year to the house of Commons. He resigned this seat in 1915 to run for the Manitoba legislature but was defeated. A senate appointment the following year lasted for 35 years until Sharpe died in 1942. In 1916, the Senator mobilized an entire battalion in just 44 days, a solid achievement when voluntary enlistment was at a low ebb, and Sharpe was made lieutenant-colonel.⁴ He lived with his wife and two children on Wolseley from 1922 to 1930.

The house changed hands frequently for the next few years until it was split into two suites in about 1944. In 1958, a fraternity, Zeta Beta Tau, took over the building until the mid-1970s, using it as a meeting place and residence. The house now appears to be privately owned again.
830 WOLSELEY AVENUE – H.B. LYALL HOUSE

Constructed in 1909, this house was the second one built by the contractor Smith Toye. Its owner was Hugh Buxton Lyall, the vice-president and general manager of Manitoba Bridge and Iron. The architect in this case was Alfred Gent, an estimator for Manitoba Bridge who had clearly developed some expertise through his position.

Lyall belonged to the large group of Ontario-born businessmen who formed the dominant group in Manitoba’s public life before the first World War. He belonged to the right clubs and organizations including the Winnipeg Board of Trade, the Manitoba Council of Industry and chaired the western caucus of the Canadian Manufacturers’ Association. In 1930, he was appointed as the Canadian committee member of the Hudsons’ Bay Company, which was based in London, England. To keep his foundry in a steady supply, Lyall was also president and general manager of the Manitoba Rolling Mills. Iron and steel had become a substantial industry in Manitoba in the early twentieth century, as building technology changed. Winnipeg alone produced 25,000 tons of iron and steel in 1919, which guaranteed a good climate for Manitoba Bridge and Iron.

Lyall sold the house in 1916 to Henry Finesilver, a chemist who had a drug store in the north-end. From 1923 to 1929, a real estate agent by the name of John Burgoyne owned the house. His wife was the daughter of the Hon. Maxime Goulet, the Minister of Agriculture from 1878 to 1887. She had been educated at the Grey Nun’s convent before becoming a teacher in far outlying pioneer communities. An accomplished artist, Mrs. Burgoyne for 30 years was the head of the Ladies’ Auxiliary of the French War Veterans and was honoured for this work by the French Republic’s government.

For several years in the 1940s and 1950s this house was the manse or residence for the rectors of Holy Trinity Church. During this time, the house was divided into an upper and lower suite but since about 1957, it has contained four apartments.
Both the third and fourth houses of this sequence were designed by architect Paul Clemens. Despite a rather low profile in the field, Clemens was a prolific designer who kept busy from at least 1903 to 1921. A native of Iceland, Clemens emigrated with a group of countrymen from the volcano-ridden island, possibly in the late 1880s. He landed in Chicago as a young man where it is likely that he received his formal training. For some years he was a regular attendant of the weekly meetings of the old Chicago Single Tax Club, when it was acclaimed as the most virile organization of this economic philosophy in the world. Clemens moved to Winnipeg but continued to advocate his philosophy through organizations and the press.

Like a good many of the Winnipeg Icelanders, Clemens found the building trade a logical outlet for the ancestral talents of wood carving and art. There existed a substantial body of labourers, skilled craftsmen and contractors who worked cooperatively and used their native tongue on the work site. Clemens frequently worked with this group in such examples as the Hallgrimson Company’s apartment on the corner of Broadway and Langside, the Lutheran Church on Burnell, the Icelandic Old People’s Home in Gimli (now Bethel Home), as well as the Royal Templars (Icelandic Hall). Aside from this, Clemens also designed the Hazelton Court, Minerva Court, Hampton Court and even tendered for the Legislative Building in 1912.

Clemens’ drawings for the house at 834 Wolseley exist in entirety, reproduced here the appendix at rear. They show a house superior in design to what now remains. Gable details, a side conservatory and a large and elaborate veranda no longer exist, leaving the red brick house rather flat and lacking a certain vigour. Overhanging bracketed eaves, dramatic quoins and an oval window on the second storey endure in testimony of its former elegance. Drawings of the west elevation show an extension of bay windows that may never have been built. The interior was carefully designed to ensure gracious living.

Built in 1913, the large brick house was commissioned by Thomas Wilson, the president of an insurance company. In 1928, a local physician purchased the house and from 1934 until 1955, the Story family occupied it. Morley Storey was the head of a men’s clothing store of some
renown. He was also active in Kiwanis and when he died in 1976, he was the oldest past Commodore of the Winnipeg Canoe Club, having served as its head in 1923 and 1924.\textsuperscript{13} It is unclear if the home is a single family dwelling at present.
838 WOLSELEY AVENUE – J. MOYSE HOUSE

Also designed by architect Paul M. Clemens, this house was erected in 1913 for John Moyse. Moyse owned a combination stable and livery from which he boarded, rented and sold horses. These stables were located on William Avenue near to Market Square.\(^{14}\)

In 1923 a grain broker by the name of Wilfred Campbell purchased the house, which was again sold in 1928 to George D. Cameron, another broker. Cameron was vice-president and general manager of Security Elevator Company in the days when wheat was king and the brokers its barons. Cameron’s apparent wealth (for this is the largest of the four vast and costly homes), was a good example of the kind of money that built twentieth century Winnipeg. While many held corporate positions in the wheat trade, many others simply bought and sold grain in the futures market.

After the Camerons vacated 838 Wolseley, the house had several owners in sequence and was split into three suites in the late 1950s.

Alterations have emasculated the front façade of the house, but the west and south (rear) elevations remain to attest to its grandiose style. Overlooking the riverbank is a double balcony supported by large columns of the Corinthian order, each on a plinth of limestone block. The limestone is used in detail and molding throughout the house in soft contrast to the turkey red brick. These columns were previously balanced by a similar double veranda or portico across the front, which has been removed entirely and replaced by a small wooden porch. The side entrance, which faces Palmerston Avenue, demonstrates the architect’s thoughtful design with the door in a recessed archway in brick and limestone detail. The pediment over this entrance matches the pedimented gable, repeating the cornice detail. Like Clemens’ house at 834 Wolseley, the effect of the design is ostentatious and elegant. The big house still commands high rents in view of its spacious and sumptuous interior.
FOOTNOTES

1 City of Winnipeg Building Permits No. 342, 13 April 1909.

2 “Martyr to Duty, Say Colleagues on City Council,” Manitoba Free Press, 10 June 1922.


9 Loc. cit.


11 Clemens’ works have been indexed in the Provincial Archives of Manitoba Photograph Collection.

12 Colonial Assurance Company. He may have retired from active business as early as 1916.


826-830-834-838 WOLSELEY AVENUE - HOUSES

Plate 1 – E. Parnell House, 826 Wolseley Avenue, 1981. (City of Winnipeg, Planning Department.)

Plate 2 – Mayor Edward Parnell, 1921. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)
Plate 3 – H.B. Lyall House, 830 Wolseley Avenue, 1981. (City of Winnipeg, Planning Department.)

Plate 4 – H.B. Lyall House, 830 Wolseley Avenue, 1981. (City of Winnipeg, Planning Department.)
Plate 5 – Architect’s drawing of T. Wilson House, 834 Wolseley Avenue, 1913. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.).
Plate 6 – T. Wilson House, 834 Wolseley Avenue, 1969. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Architectural Survey.)

Plate 7 – T. Wilson House, 834 Wolseley Avenue, 1981. (City of Winnipeg, Planning Department.)
Plate 8 – J. Moyse House, 838 Wolseley Avenue, ca.1910. (Courtesy of the W. Neville.)

Plate 9 – J. Moyse House, 838 Wolseley Avenue, ca.1910. (Courtesy of the W. Neville.)
Plate 10 – J. Moyse House, 838 Wolseley Avenue, front (north) façade, no date. (City of Winnipeg, Planning Department.)

Plate 11 – J. Moyse House, 838 Wolseley Avenue, Palmerston Avenue (west) façade, no date. (City of Winnipeg, Planning Department.)
Plate 12 – J. Moyse House, 838 Wolseley Avenue, rear (south) façade, no date.  (City of Winnipeg, Planning Department.)