



THE WILSON HOUSE

(KLINIC)

545 BROADWAY

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings Committee

May 1990

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As the Dominion of Canada moved into the Twentieth Century, the country's healthy economy was reflected by the prosperity of Western Canada's largest city, Winnipeg. Rapid growth in the city's social, political, industrial and commercial sectors produced a development boom. Buildings of every description and use began to rise, especially in the downtown area. As the original thoroughfares filled with non-residential buildings, new areas of housing began to develop. Districts to the west of Portage and Main grew quickly, especially around Central Park north of Portage Avenue, and south of Portage to the Assiniboine River and beyond. Many fine homes and apartment blocks appeared in the latter area as influential citizens strove to reflect their positions through the construction of magnificent houses.

Broadway, which ran west from Union Station on Main Street, through the south Portage area, was one of the city's show pieces. Aptly named for its wide lanes and treed boulevards east of Osborne Street, this avenue cut a line through the new residential district forming one of its central features. In 1904, just west of Osborne and the Legislative Building, Robert R. Wilson, vice president of the Campbell Brothers and Wilson Company, built a grand two and a half storey brick veneer structure at 545 Broadway on the north side of the avenue.

STYLE

The Wilson House is an example of a reduced Queen Anne home. This type of residential structure often includes a steeply pitched, irregularly shaped roof with a dominant front-facing gable. Towers are often present. Devices such as patterned shingles, bay windows and porches are utilized to avoid a smooth walled appearance. The structures are asymmetrical. The porches, usually one

storey high, extend along the front and one or both sides.¹ This style was extremely popular in North America from about 1880-1910. It was based on the work of British architect Richard Norman Shaw and his followers in the nineteenth century, and modelled after late medieval designs of the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras. A home built in Newport, Rhode Island in 1874 is considered this continent's first Queen Anne style house. Use of the design soon spread.²

CONSTRUCTION

This house measures 11.6 x 10.4 m. (38' x 34'). A one storey L-shaped porch runs partially along the south (front) and east facades, measuring 9.1 m. (30') along the front facade, 7.9 m. (26') along the east elevation and 2.7 m. (9') in width. The brick veneer structure stands on a stone foundation at the northwest corner of Broadway and Colony Street on the east half of lots 30, 31, Plan 258.³ It cost more than \$9,000 to build.⁴ Malcolm Brothers did the brick and stone work; Wright and Malcolm did the plastering; and carpentry was done by D. Bruce and Company. James Wallace provided the tin and galvanized iron for eaves and roof elements; R. Crawford did the painting and glazing; and J. L. Wells and Company was contracted for the plumbing, heating and gas work. The Hudson Electrical Supply Company wired the house.⁵

DESIGN

Winnipeg architect J.H.G. Russell was responsible for the Wilson House design. The rusticated stone at grade gives way to stretcher style brick veneer walls. The L-shaped porch features wooden plinths and unadorned columns joined by a series of ogee arches. Eaves above the

¹ V. and L. McAlester, A Field Guide to American Houses (New York - 1984), p. 263.

² Ibid., pp.267-86.

³ City of Winnipeg Assessment Records, Roll No. 925970, Ward 1, Property Code 57.

⁴ Building Permit (below as BP) #302/1904.

⁵ Russell, J.H.G. - Ledgers (PAM) MAG 11, E2, pp. 250-51.

porch and along the roof feature modestly ornamented wooden brackets.

Most windows are rectangular except for two small round-headed windows on the second floor above the main entrance. Segmented arches above the windows are formed by radiating brick; rough stone sills and wooden surrounds complete these openings. Numerous muntin bars create multi-paned windows throughout.

The building includes a tower at its southwest corner. The main roof is hipped with two lower side gables. Some type of copper ornament must have adorned the point of the tower roof; however, it no longer exists.

INTERIOR

The building has been converted into small offices, examination rooms and other areas related to its current function. Thus, the interior retains little of its original feel or organization.

INTEGRITY

The home occupies its original site and is in excellent structural condition. The exterior remains virtually unaltered. However, the building's use has changed greatly since 1904 and therefore interior alterations have been several and severe. The home was transformed in 1948 into office space⁶ and thirty years later, into a community health centre.

STREETSCAPE

The Wilson House is situated directly west of All Saints Anglican Church at Osborne Street and Broadway. Within the immediate vicinity are a number of buildings constructed during the same period, producing a 'community' of turn of the century structures (see Addendum for list). The

⁶ BP #392/1948.

Wilson House is an important member of this community.

ARCHITECT

The residence at 545 Broadway was designed by John Hamilton Gordon Russell⁷, one of Winnipeg's best known architects. Born and educated in Toronto, Russell set up his Winnipeg architectural practice in 1896. He designed many famous Winnipeg office buildings, warehouses, churches and private dwellings (see Appendix I for complete biography). Interestingly, this was not the first nor the last work Russell performed for Wilson. The architect also designed a warehouse for Wilson's business (92-100 Princess Street) in 1903, its two storey addition in 1912 and the larger home the Wilsons moved into after leaving their Broadway address in 1925 (680 Wellington Crescent). The Historical Buildings Committee has given Russell house points.

PERSON

The original owner and resident of 545 Broadway for its first 21 years was Robert R. Wilson, a founding partner in the Campbell Brothers and Wilson Company wholesale grocers. The Campbell Brothers, Robert J. (1851-1925) and William James (1849-1914), were born in Toronto and came to Winnipeg in 1882 with James Sutherland. The three men started a wholesale grocer business under the name Sutherland and Campbell.⁸ Wilson was a bookkeeper for the firm.⁹ In 1885 Sutherland died but the firm continued to flourish. The company underwent major changes in 1900 and Wilson became a partner in the newly organized Campbell Brothers and Wilson Company. This new company became one of Western Canada's largest firms with a huge four storey brick warehouse 40.2 x 26.2 m. (132' x 86'), built in 1903 at 92-100 Princess Street.¹⁰ Following Robert J.

⁷ BP #302/1904.

⁸ Winnipeg Tribune, April 15, 1925; and Winnipeg Free Press, May 26, 1914.

⁹ Henderson's Directory.

¹⁰ S. C. Grover, "92-100 Princess Street - Adelman Building," report for the City of Winnipeg Historical Buildings Committee (1982), p. 3.

Campbell's departure for England in 1912¹¹ and William J. Campbell's sudden death in 1914¹², Robert Wilson took over the local control of the grocery giant.

The company's 1913 reported gross revenue of \$8 million placed it among Canada's largest corporations of its kind.¹³ By the early 1920's the firm was operating branches in Regina, Saskatoon, Swift Current, Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge, Red Deer and Vancouver. Wilson moved from general manager to vice president and in 1927 became president. The company was later sold (along with the Princess Street warehouse) to J. M. Sinclair. Renamed J. M. Sinclair Limited, this firm remained at the Princess Street address until 1958.¹⁴

Wilson originally had bought the entire lot that surrounds 545 Broadway but later sold some of the western section to L. C. McIntyre (manager of the Paulin Chambers Biscuit Company) who built a red brick home on the property c.1907 (since demolished). The Wilsons remained at the home until 1925 when they moved to Wellington Crescent. R. R. Wilson died in the late 1930's and Mrs. Wilson moved out of the Wellington Crescent home in 1953.¹⁵

From 1926-30, a real estate salesman, G. A. Zryd, lived at 545 Broadway. Until 1966 the building had a number of tenants, including two Province of Manitoba departments (the Liquor Control Commission and Public Works). It also stood empty during part of this period. From 1966-77 a number of small commercial art, photography and graphic design firms occupied the building. In 1977 the present tenants, the Klinik Corporation¹⁶, moved in and spent \$10,000 on interior

¹¹ Winnipeg Tribune, April 15, 1925.

¹² Winnipeg Free Press, May 26, 1914.

¹³ S.C. Grover, op. cit., p. 2.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁵ Henderson's Directory.

¹⁶ Ibid.

alterations in 1981.¹⁷ This non profit provincially funded organization carries on a variety of health services at the address.

EVENT

There is no significant event connected with this building.

CONTEXT

The Wilson House is one of this city's better examples of a Queen Anne style residence. With the recent loss by fire of 171 River Avenue (1899), the Wilson House is now one of half-a-dozen like structures still standing in the city (Queen Anne with side turret). The other homes in the group are: 37 Edmonton Atreet (not evaluated), 454 Edmonton Street (Grade III), 55 Hargrave Street (Grade III), 45 Lily Street (1893-not evaluated) and 428 Mountain Avenue (not evaluated). See rear of report for photographs.

The list in the Appendix II shows this structure was built in the middle of the significant construction phase of this area of Broadway, which lasted from 1890 to approximately 1920. During this period, many fine homes were built by some of the city's most influential and important citizens.

LANDMARK

Unlike the past, much of the foliage that once hid the Wilson House from view has been removed. This allows the heavy vehicular traffic that uses Broadway a virtually unobstructed view of the home. This, plus the pedestrian traffic created by the building's function and neighbouring businesses and shops, makes the Wilson House conspicuous to many and an integral part of the makeup of the area.

¹⁷ BP #1913/1981.

APPENDIX I

J. H. G. Russell

John Hamilton Gordon Russell became one of Winnipeg's best known and most prolific architects in a career that spanned several decades. Born in Toronto, Russell moved with his family to Winnipeg in 1882. From 1886 until 1893 he travelled and worked in the United States, learning civil engineering, surveying and architecture. In 1894 Russell returned to Winnipeg and set up his practice in 1896.

Russell, an active Presbyterian and Mason, designed many structures for the Presbyterian Church and, later, the United Church. He also served as president of the Manitoba Association of Architects on two occasions and one term as president of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada. Russell's designs vary in use over the entire spectrum of building functions. An incomplete list includes:

Churches -

- Starbuck United (Presbyterian) - 1904
- Treherne United (Presbyterian) - 1907-08 (originally Chambers United)

Winnipeg:

- Augustine United - 1903-04, 444 River Avenue
- Crescent - Fort Rouge - 1906-11, 525 Wardlaw
- Robertson Memorial United - 1911, Burrows Avenue
- Westminster United - 1911 -12, 745 Westminster Ave
- Knox United - 1914-17, 400 Edmonton Street
- Home Street United - 1920, 318 Home Street (now Home Street Mennonite Church)
- St. John's United - 1923, 250 Cathedral Avenue
- Riverview United - 1925, 360 Oakwood Avenue

Residences -

- J.H.G. Russel House - 1887, 235 Wellington Crescent
- Wilson House - 1904, 545 Broadway
- H. Archibald House - 1909, 176 Roslyn Road
- J. Ashdown House - 1913, 529 Wellington Crescent
- Wilson House - 1925, 680 Wellington Crescent

J.H.G. Russell Buildings (continued):

Commercial -

Lake of the Woods Building - 1901, 212 McDermot Ave
Hammond Building - 1902, 63 Albert Street
Adelman Building - 1903, 92-100 Princess Street
Silvester and Willson Building - 1904, 73 Albert St
Franklin Press - 1904, 168 Bannatyne Avenue
J.H. Ashdown Hardware Store - 1904, 476 Main St
Porter Building - 1906, 165 McDermot Avenue
Maltese Cross Building - 1910, 66 King Street
Glengarry Block - 1910, 290 McDermot Avenue
Dingwall Building - 1911, 62 Albert Street

Compiled from: J.H.G. Russell Collection, P.A.M., Schofield, Story of Manitoba, Vol. II, p. 157,
"J.H.G. Russell Architectural Pioneer, Dies" Winnipeg Tribune, February 7, 1946, and Bingham, A
Study of Church Buildings in Manitoba.

APPENDIX II

SELECTED BROADWAY STRUCTURES

ADDRESS	ROLL NO.	DATE BUILT	PERMIT	ARCHITECT	COST	TYPE
545	945970	1904	302	Russell	\$9,000	Res.
573	911590	1900	266	McDiarmid	\$4,500	Res.
584	914360	1908	1498	Owner	\$5,500	Res.
586	914370	1908	1265	Foster	\$5,000	Res.
597-601	912691	1917	124	Bridgeman	\$35,000	Apt.
600	931400	1910	?	?	?	Apt.
606	913390	1901	246	Wright	\$2,200	Res.
608	913380	1900	475	Owner	\$2,500	Res.
628	908860	1894	?	?	?	Res.
661	907070	1903	1125	Owner	\$6,000	Res.

545 BROADWAY – WILSON HOUSE (FORMER CLINIC BUILDING)



Plate I – 545 Broadway. (M. Peterson.)



Plate 2 – 428 Mountain Avenue. (M. Peterson.)

545 BROADWAY – WILSON HOUSE (FORMER CLINIC BUILDING)



Plate 3 – 454 Edmonton Street, Benard House (Grade III). (M. Peterson.)



Plate 4 – 37 Edmonton Street. (M. Peterson.)

545 BROADWAY – WILSON HOUSE (FORMER CLINIC BUILDING)



Plate 5 – 55 Hargrave St, Glines House (Grade III). (M. Peterson.)



Plate 6 – 45 Lily Street. (M. Peterson.)