



123 BURROWS AVENUE

JAMES H. NEIL HOUSE

PREPARED BY PETERSON PROJECTS – FEBRUARY 2009



123 BURROWS AVENUE JAMES H. NEIL HOUSE

Date of Construction: 1910

Building Permit: 1107/1910

Architect: Unknown

Contractor: Unknown

ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

This is a picturesque 2½-storey frame single-family home with a full-width screened porch on the front (south) façade and an east side that overlooks the Red River. Ornamental features include overhanging bracketed eaves, unfluted columns supporting the roof of the porch, a curved second storey bay window, a two-storey bay window on the east façade and a cross gable roof. The building appears to be in good structural condition and has not suffered extensive exterior alteration.

The structure is a reduced example of the Queen Anne style which borrowed heavily from English architecture of the 15th century, blending classical and medieval motifs into a picturesque form.¹ The desired asymmetry was achieved through a number of combinations of porches, bay windows, projecting wings, balconies and other devices. Roofs were usually irregular and complex, with dormers, gables and ornamental chimneys. Variations in



Front (south) façade, 1978

materials and colours were also used to animate the façades. Given this freedom of design, however, accomplished designers were still able to create balance in the structures, offsetting busy surfaces by placing calmer elements nearby.²

The popularity of the style in Canada began in the 1880s and lasted until World War I. On the prairies, pre-1900 examples of the style were not numerous because large-scale development occurred after the turn of the century. Post-1900, it was quickly adopted for use in the growing residential districts, especially the more affluent neighbourhoods where its showy qualities were greatly admired.

The original owner of the house, James H. Neil, is listed on the original City of Winnipeg Building Permit as the architect and contractor. Neil had a modest business, concentrating mostly on small, single-family dwellings in the North End. He is named in Permits from 1903 until 1914, his largest contract was in 1914, the Machray Apartments, 242 Machray Avenue.³

HISTORICAL INTEREST:

James H. Neil, local contractor and boat builder, is listed as the original owner/resident of this house. Also in the home were sons George A., clerk at Ashdown's Wholesale and Thomas, who worked for his father. The 1925 listing includes other members of the family as well: Harry W., clerk for the Canadian National Railway; Lila, stenographer at Clare Brothers Western; and Mary A., teacher at Isaac Newton Junior High School.

The Neil family also operated Neil's Boat Yard from the property in the 1940s. George A. Neil, insurance salesman and wife Lyla Neil are listed as owners/residents into the 1970s.⁴

RECOMMENDATION TO HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE:

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

- its historical importance- good example of a modest single-family dwelling built in the pre-World War I era;
- its associations- its long-term connection to the Neil family;
- its design- a good example of the Queen Anne style;
- its architect- J.H. Neil was a known practitioner;
- its location- contributes greatly to its historic streetscape; and
- its integrity- its main façades continue to display many of their original elements and design.

ENDNOTES:

- 1 Identifying Architectural Styles in Manitoba (Winnipeg: Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, 1991), p. 17; and L. Maitland et al., A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1992), p. 102.
- 2 L. Maitland et al., op. cit., p. 98.
- 3 City of Winnipeg Building Permit Ledger Books, 1899-1926.
- 4 Henderson's Directory, 1900-1940.