



94 CATHEDRAL AVENUE

ALEXANDER POLSON HOUSE

PREPARED BY PETERSON PROJECTS – FEBRUARY 2009



94 CATHEDRAL AVENUE ALEXANDER POLSON HOUSE

Date of Construction: 1894

Building Permit: N/A

Architect: Unknown

Contractor: Unknown

ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

This two-storey frame single-family dwelling is one of the old homes in the neighbourhood and also one of the most ornamentally treated.

The front (north) façade includes a wealth of detailing including: a side porch with a glazed section and an open area supported by delicate wood columns; projecting two-storey section with one-storey bay window embellished with dentils and a gable end with similar dentils and a finial; small dormers in the main roof with dentils and finials; and wide, carved wood window frames.

Stylistically, this house is a very good example of the Queen Anne Revival style that 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



Front (north) façade detail, 2009

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 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 home appears to be in good structural condition and has not suffered from major exterior alteration. It is unknown at the present time who designed and built this house, although it may have been the original owner, Alexander Polson.

HISTORICAL INTEREST:

This home has been in the hands of the Polson Family, one of the Selkirk Settler families, for many decades. The original owner was Alexander Polson, who was born in 1840 and died ca.1906 and was listed in a 1905 directory as a city license inspector and relief officer.³ Jessie, his widow, assumed the house after her husband's death and there she attended to the six children still at home (4 daughters, 2 sons). In 1915, the six children are still listed as living at the address: Laura B. (born 1876); Flora B. (born 1881), teacher at St. John's Technical High School; Euphemia B. (born 1884) teacher at Luxton School; Ina



Rear (south) façade, 2009

W. (born 1888), music teacher; Hugh (born 1890) student at Fisher Wilson & Co.; and Alexander B. (born 1893), law student.⁴ It was barrister Hugh Polson who would come to own and reside in the house into the 1950s.⁵

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 older single-family dwellings in the Scotia Street area of West Kildonan, one of the first permanent European residential neighbourhoods in Western Canada;
- its associations- its long-term connections to the early and influential Polson Family;
- its design- a very good example of the Queen Anne style;
- its architect- N/A;
- its location- greatly to its historic streetscape; and
- its integrity- its main façades continue to display many of their original elements and design.



Front (north) façade, 1978

ENDNOTES:

- 1 Identifying Architectural Styles in Manitoba (Winnipeg: Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, 1991), p. 17; L. Maitland et al., A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1992), p. 102; and L. Maitland, The Queen Anne Revival Style in Canadian Architecture (Ottawa: Environment Canada, 1990), p. 64.
- 2 L. Maitland, op. cit., p. 98.
- 3 Census of Canada, 1901, 1906, 1911; and Henderson's Directory, 1905.
- 4 Ibid., 1915; and Census of Canada, 1911.
- 5 City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, Roll No. 610000-12-2, 1920-1990.