



494 COLLEGE AVENUE

“THE CASTLE” – RABBI DAVID CANTOR HOUSE

PREPARED BY PETERSON PROJECTS – FEBRUARY 2009



494 COLLEGE AVENUE THE “CASTLE” – RABBI DAVID CANTOR HOUSE

Date of Construction: 1906

Building Permit: 1903/1906

Architect: Biollo Brothers (owners)

Contractor: Western Operative Company

ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

Architecturally, this is one of the most spectacular single-family dwellings built in Winnipeg in the pre-World War I era and a landmark building in the North End.

The front (north) façade of this red brick structure features stone accenting around doors and windows and two corner towers, one square (east) with a squared roof and one rounded (west) with a conical roof. The building’s mansard roof is interrupted on all sides by small gable dormers. Iron cresting adds a decorative touch to the top of the roof.

The building is an excellent example of a Queen Anne style structure.¹ The style borrowed heavily from English architecture of the 15th century, blending classical and medieval motifs into a picturesque form. Asymmetry was achieved through combinations of porches, bay windows, projecting wings, balconies and other devices. Roofs were usually irregular and



Front (north) façade detail, 2009

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 City of Winnipeg Building Permit lists the Biollo Brothers as the original architect. Nothing is known about this firm that does not appear in the City of Winnipeg Building Permit Ledger Books, 1899-1926 except for this building.

The building stands on its original site and appears to be in good structural condition. Alterations and neglect have altered the building's exterior – the original two-storey wooden porch across the front and around the northeast corner has been removed completely or replaced by an enclosed 2-storey section and some of the decorative elements are deteriorating. Stuccoed addition are found on the rear (south) façade and the east side.



Front (north) and west façades, 2009

HISTORICAL INTEREST:

The home was commissioned by John Arbuthnot (1861-1931), lumber merchant and mayor (1901-1903). Arbuthnot never lived in the home, but rented it out to Oliver J.P. Biollo, its designer (Santi Biollo is listed as the occupant in 1911). In the late 1910s, the home was sold to Rabbi David Cantor (1865-1953). Rabbi Cantor had come to Winnipeg in 1904, the first from his particular region of Poland. It was his letters home filled with glowing reports about Winnipeg that convinced an estimated 600 families from this area of Europe to immigrate to Winnipeg over the following decade. He retired in 1940 from his charge at Teferes Israel Synagogue. Listed occupants of the house in 1940 were K. Bromberg, shipper at Weidman Brothers and Louis Bromberg, Madewell Garment employee.³

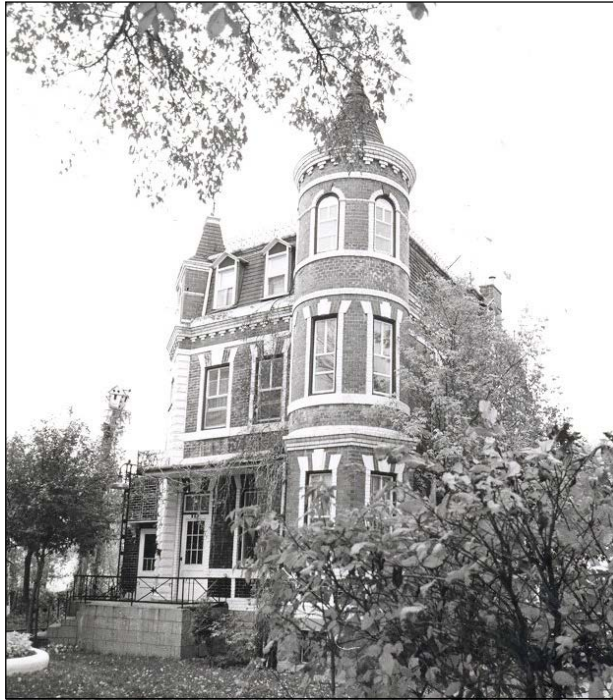


Rear (south) and east façades, 2009

RECOMMENDATION TO HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE:

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

- its historical importance- an example of a well-built single-family dwelling constructed in the pre-World War I era;
- its associations- its long-term connections to Rabbi D. Cantor;
- its design- an excellent example of the Queen Anne style;
- its architect- N/A;
- its location- a landmark building in the neighbourhood and a contributor 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 City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, Roll No. 14-033094000, 1910-1990; Henderson's Directory, 1910-1990; and M. Peterson, Winnipeg Landmarks (Winnipeg, MB: Watson-Dwyer Publishing, 1995), p. 17.