



186-88 EUCLID AVENUE

FATHER A.A. CERRIER BOARDING HOUSE

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings Committee
Researcher: Murray Peterson
October 1992

**186-88 EUCLID AVENUE-
FATHER A.A. CHERRIER BOARDING HOUSE**

Contemporary Point Douglas, located on the inside of a bend in the Red River, is roughly divided in half by the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) main line. Its southern portion is comprised mainly of warehouses, factories and large industrial buildings; the north half contains mostly residential structures, as well as some churches and small retail shops. More than a century ago, however, this district was billed as the "rich man's area of the 1870s."¹ The Point was home to descendants of the Selkirk settlers or "free-traders" whose spacious houses on large tracts of land created a quasi-rural setting. In 1878, prominent Winnipeggers such as Andrew McDermot, James H. Ashdown and Alexander Logan all lived in the Point Douglas area.²

After Winnipeg won the battle with Selkirk, Manitoba for the CPR right-of-way, there was a second contest between two factions over where the railway would be located in the city. In the south end was the Hudson's Bay Company's (HBC), which held a large tract of land known as the Hudson's Bay Reserve and had the support of St. Boniface land-holders, especially the Roman Catholic Church. To the north lay the lands of many prominent local entrepreneurs, including the so-called Point Douglas Common (Figure 1), 270 ha. (667 acres) of virtually empty land west of Point Douglas which HBC Governor George Simpson had granted "in common to the Point holders...for grazing and haying privileges" during the days of the Red River Settlement.³

After much debate in Winnipeg and Ottawa, the Point Douglas route was chosen for the CPR line - and thereafter would "...act as the magnet which would draw business establishments to the area north of Portage Avenue."⁴ Vacant areas around the tracks were developed into industrial and warehouse districts, in turn creating need for untrained labour. Thousands of immigrants were

¹ Canada, Parliament of, Orders in Council of the Department of the Interior, 1877, #156, May 10, 1877, p. 573.

² R.R. Rostecki, "The Growth of Winnipeg, 1870-1886," unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 1980, pp. 19-20.

³ Ibid., p. 38.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 48.

attracted to Winnipeg "because of the well-paying jobs for semi or unskilled labour."⁵ Many of the new arrivals sought to locate within walking distance of their new jobs and thus settled in Point Douglas or elsewhere in the North End.

To many outside the area, the North End became home to the "foreigners" - the "undesirable" element. A huge shanty-town grew in proximity to the rail yards, making the area unacceptable to more affluent residents, yet suitable for labourers. Houses were unpretentious and in some instances were built by squatters on vacant property or even on the streets. As one historian has noted:

...the north-enders sought shelter, above all, and thus, the appearance of one's dwelling was secondary to such qualities as keeping out most of the rain and some of the cold.⁶

The 1882 collapse of the economic boom that accompanied the CPR's construction meant a loss of jobs, financial ruin and destitution for many. The effects were felt hardest in the North End. Many residents of the area were without financial means of support, and many of city's social agencies, such as the Young Men's Christian Association, and churches, attempted to improve the lot of these families.

The Immaculate Conception parish, with its parish priest, Reverend A.A. Cherrier, was particularly concerned with the proper housing of the immigrants. One result was that Father Cherrier eventually became the owner or co-owner of a number of new rental housing units in North Point Douglas, including a boarding house built in 1905-06 at 186-88 Euclid Avenue.

⁵ Ibid., p. 105.

⁶ Loc. cit.

STYLE

This boarding house, both because of its owner and its likely tenants, was not heavily ornamented. It can best be described as a utilitarian residence, simply built and sturdy. Classical elements were used as accents around windows and doors.

CONSTRUCTION

The building sits on the south side of Euclid Avenue, between Main and Austin streets, on land legally described as 35 St. John, Plan 63, Block 4, Part of Lots 22/23.⁷ The 22-storey frame house rests on a stone foundation and measures 12.20 x 11.59 x 9.91 m. (40 x 38 x 32.5'), providing nearly 1,500 cu. m. (52,856 cu. ft.) of interior space (see Appendix I).⁸

Ceilings measure 2.14 m. (7') in the basement and 2.75 m. (9'), 2.75 m. (9'), and 1.22 to 2.44 m. (4 to 8') on the first, second, and third floors, respectively. The total cost of construction for the original building was \$4,500.⁹

DESIGN

The Father Cherrier Boarding House is a nearly square building with one-storey entrance porches on both the north (front) and south facades. The pedimented front entry is embellished with a fan-shaped motif and a complete entablature with small modillion blocks.

Windows throughout are rectangular and set in plain wooden frames, except for openings on the first floor of the north facade, which are topped by small entablatures. The east and west elevations have been stuccoed, concealing the original wood siding still exposed on the north and south facades.

⁷ City of Winnipeg, Assessment Records, Roll No. 9340, Ward 3, PC 11. Below as AR.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ City of Winnipeg, Building Permit (below as BP), #1622/1905.

The roof is hipped, of medium pitch, and flat at the top. On all slopes are gable dormers, two on each of the front and rear slopes, and one on each of the sides. Each dormer end displays a fan-shaped panel similar to the entrance pediment. The flat roof is finished with ornamental railing.

INTERIOR

Access could not be gained to the building, but judging from the change in its function, it is likely that much of the 1905-06 interior has been altered. The building became a boarding house, with as many as 34 tenants and 6 children in the period between 1930 and 1959, which necessarily meant interior alterations.¹⁰

INTEGRITY

The house remains at its original location, has suffered little exterior alteration aside from the stuccoing of two facades, and appears to be in good structural condition.

STREETSCAPE

The entire area surrounding this structure is comprised of small-scale retail blocks, residential buildings, churches and other social institutions. The building is located very near to Main Street, and is one of the better maintained homes in the vicinity. It adds to the historic nature of the area.

¹⁰ Henderson's Directory, 1930-1960; and AR.

ARCHITECT/CONTRACTOR

The man responsible for the design and construction of this boarding house is Damier Tétreault.¹¹ Little is known about him, he is listed in the Henderson's Directory only in 1906 as a building contractor.¹² This is the first Tétreault design evaluated by the Historical Buildings Committee.

PERSON/INSTITUTION

The Immaculate Conception parish was established as a mission church in 1883 when the Immaculate Conception School was opened by the Sisters of the Holy Names. This was the first Catholic parish in north Winnipeg.¹³ As time progressed, the church fostered other parishes in the North End, the newly-formed parishes serving growing ethnic communities in the area. The parish built a magnificent church on the corner of Austin Street and Jarvis Avenue in 1893, Winnipeg's second oldest Catholic church (Figure 2). The building was destroyed by fire on March 5, 1978, then replaced by a second Immaculate Conception Church on the same site.¹⁴

Much of the early history of the parish is intimately tied to its first pastor, Father Alphonsus Avila Cherrier (Figure 3). He was born in Laprairie, Quebec on September 26, 1849, received his early education in that province and graduated with his B.Sc. from Laval University in 1871. He was ordained a Roman Catholic priest in 1874, came to Winnipeg four years later and took up a post as parish priest at St. Boniface Cathedral.

At the same time, he became president of the new college of St. Boniface and a member of the provincial Board of Education. When the board and the separate school system were abolished in 1890, Father Cherrier became the Catholic representative on a new advisory board. He was also a

¹¹ BP #1622/1905.

¹² Henderson's Directory, both the Winnipeg and the Northwest Territories volumes, 1900-1915; and BP #1622/1905. His name appears as "Tétrault" in the former and "Tétreault" in the latter. Damien Tétreault, a labourer, is listed in 1910 but not subsequently. It is unclear whether this is the same person, given the spelling irregularities often found in the Directory.

¹³ Winnipeg Free Press, March 18, 1974, p. 25.

¹⁴ The Winnipeg Tribune, March 7 1978, p. 1.

member of the council of the University of Manitoba, beginning in 1878, and president of the board of studies, beginning in 1883.¹⁵ He was named Vice-Chancellor of the University in 1914.¹⁶ Upon the 1894 death of Archbishop Taché, Father Cherrier was a nominee for the vacant see, but the appointment ultimately went to Adélard Langevin.¹⁷

In 1884, Father Cherrier was given the duties of parish priest of the newly organized Immaculate Conception parish in Point Douglas. He remained its pastor for 43 years until his retirement in 1927.¹⁸ Father Cherrier and the parish, due to its location, served many of the newly-arrived immigrants.

The shortage of proper housing was not acceptable to him and, with assistance from the community, he endeavoured to build houses in the area. City of Winnipeg, Assessment Rolls for 1909 show that Cherrier, and prominent St. Boniface liquor merchant J. Edmond Béliveau,¹⁹ owned six other residential structures (2 duplexes and 4 single-family homes) directly across Austin Street from the church. They are numbered 202, 204, 206-08, 212-14, 216, and 218 Austin Street, are all frame, and are more plain in design than the Euclid Avenue building. The house at 204 Austin Street was built in 1909, the other five were built in 1898.²⁰

Because it functioned as a boarding house, early city records and directories did not list individual tenants, only managers. The original managers were two carpenters, H.T. Lewis and John Lewis. There were 35 residents of the boarding house in 1907, the highest registered total between 1906 and 1958. Original tenants of the Austin Street homes, which were likely comparable in occupations and backgrounds to tenants of the Euclid Avenue boarding house, included conductors,

¹⁵ Manitoba Free Press, June 22, 1909, p. 2.

¹⁶ The Winnipeg Telegram, October 2, 1914, p. 2.

¹⁷ Winnipeg Free Press, September 3, 1955, p. 26.

¹⁸ Winnipeg Free Press, October 27, 1962, p. 20.

¹⁹ Biographical files of the Société Historique de St. Boniface; J. Edmond Béliveau (?-1916) was the brother of Father Béliveau, Archbishop of St. Boniface in 1915.

²⁰ AR.

foremen, carpenters and managers, with names like Kelly, Beliveau, Picard, Gelley, Gingras and Lalonde.²¹ Father Cherrier was listed as owner of the Euclid Avenue house until 1930 when the property was sold to William and Maria Kosowan, who also lived at the address. They, and members of their family, owned the boarding house for more than 45 years. In the 1980s it became a dwelling and meeting place for alcoholics, connected to the Open Door Ministries. It was sold to private owners in November of 1988.²²

EVENT

There is no known significant event connected with this building.

CONTEXT

This building is illustrative of an attempt by religious leaders and organizations to improve the living conditions of recent immigrants who populated Winnipeg's North End and Point Douglas. This philanthropy fostered soup kitchens, low-cost housing projects, and societies such as the All Peoples' Mission, whose purpose was to forward the concerns of the immigrants to the wider population south of the CPR tracks.

Although relatively plain, the boarding house also reflects the type of housing most often found in Point Douglas, where decorative elements were often deemed unimportant and therefore were not used extensively. Yet, its simple plan exhibits a subdued dignity not uncharacteristic of the area's existing building stock of similar vintage.

LANDMARK

This residence is a well-kept, handsome structure, occupying a prominent position on one of Point Douglas's main arteries. Its size, appearance and location tend to emphasize its presence, and it is a conspicuous building in the area.

²¹ City of Winnipeg, Assessment Rolls, 35 St. John, Plan 63, Block 4, Lots 22/23.

²² Ibid.

ADDENDUM

INTERIOR

The two suites are totally separate except for a connecting door in the basement. It is uncertain whether this is an original feature of the building or a later alteration. The suites are similar in floor plan and finish, staircases run on the interior walls, living rooms and dining rooms along the outside walls and large kitchens at the rear.

Upper floors contain several small bedrooms running off the hallway. Wood trim, both painted and stained, frames doorways and windows and staircases are ornamentally treated with wood banisters. As is to be expected, the interior finish of this building is plain and utilitarian.

186-188 EUCLID AVENUE – FATHER A.A. CARRIER BOARDING HOUSE

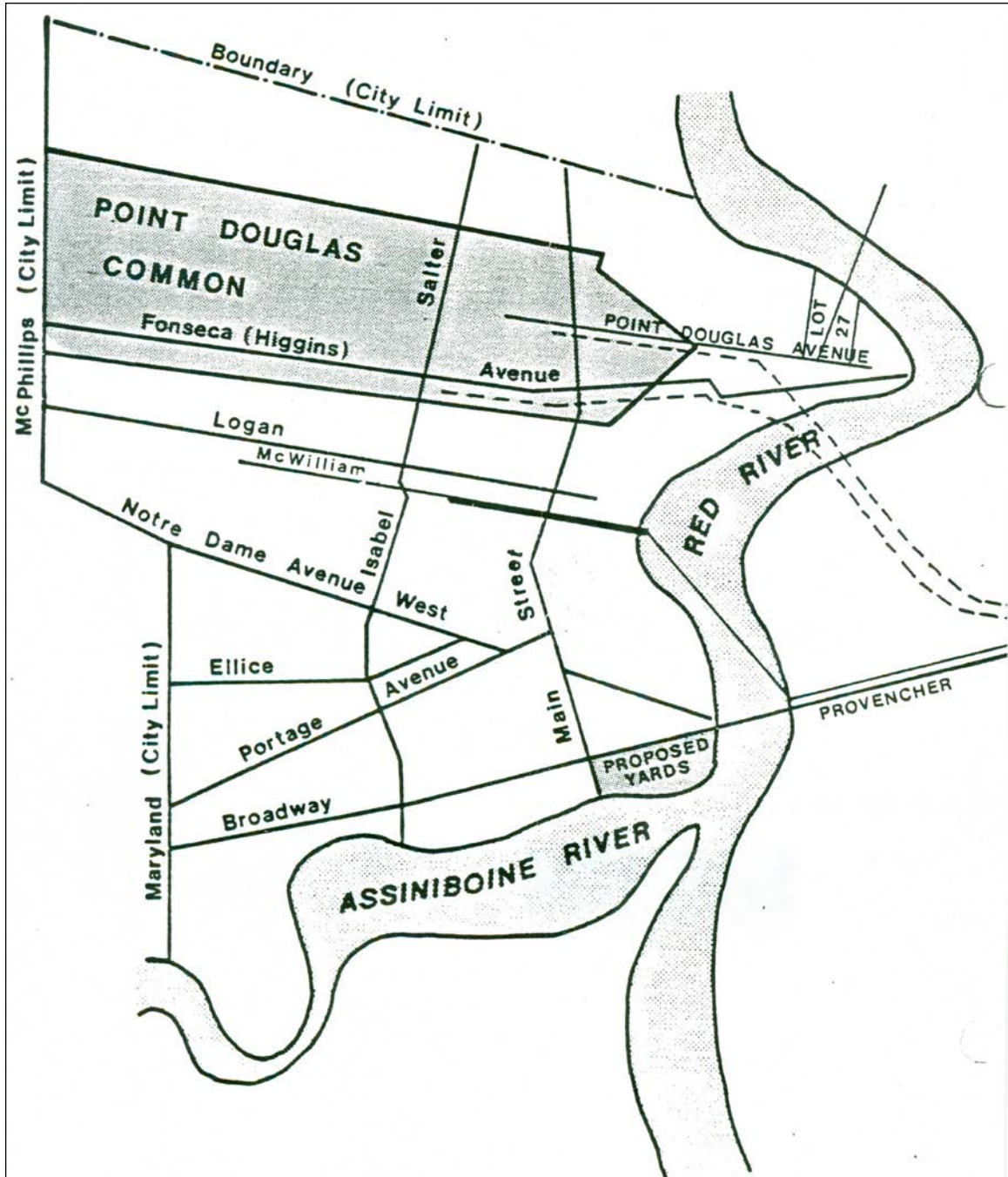


Plate 1 – "Proposed Railway Crossings - Winnipeg, 1879." (Reproduced from R.R. Rostecki, "The Growth of Winnipeg, 1870-1886," Winnipeg, 1980, p. 42.)

186-188 EUCLID AVENUE – FATHER A.A. CHERRIER BOARDING HOUSE



Plate 2 – Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, Austin Street, 1903; built in 1893; destroyed by fire March 5, 1978. (Photo courtesy of the Western Canada Pictorial Index, Negative 301-9597.)

186-188 EUCLID AVENUE – FATHER A.A. CHERRIER BOARDING HOUSE

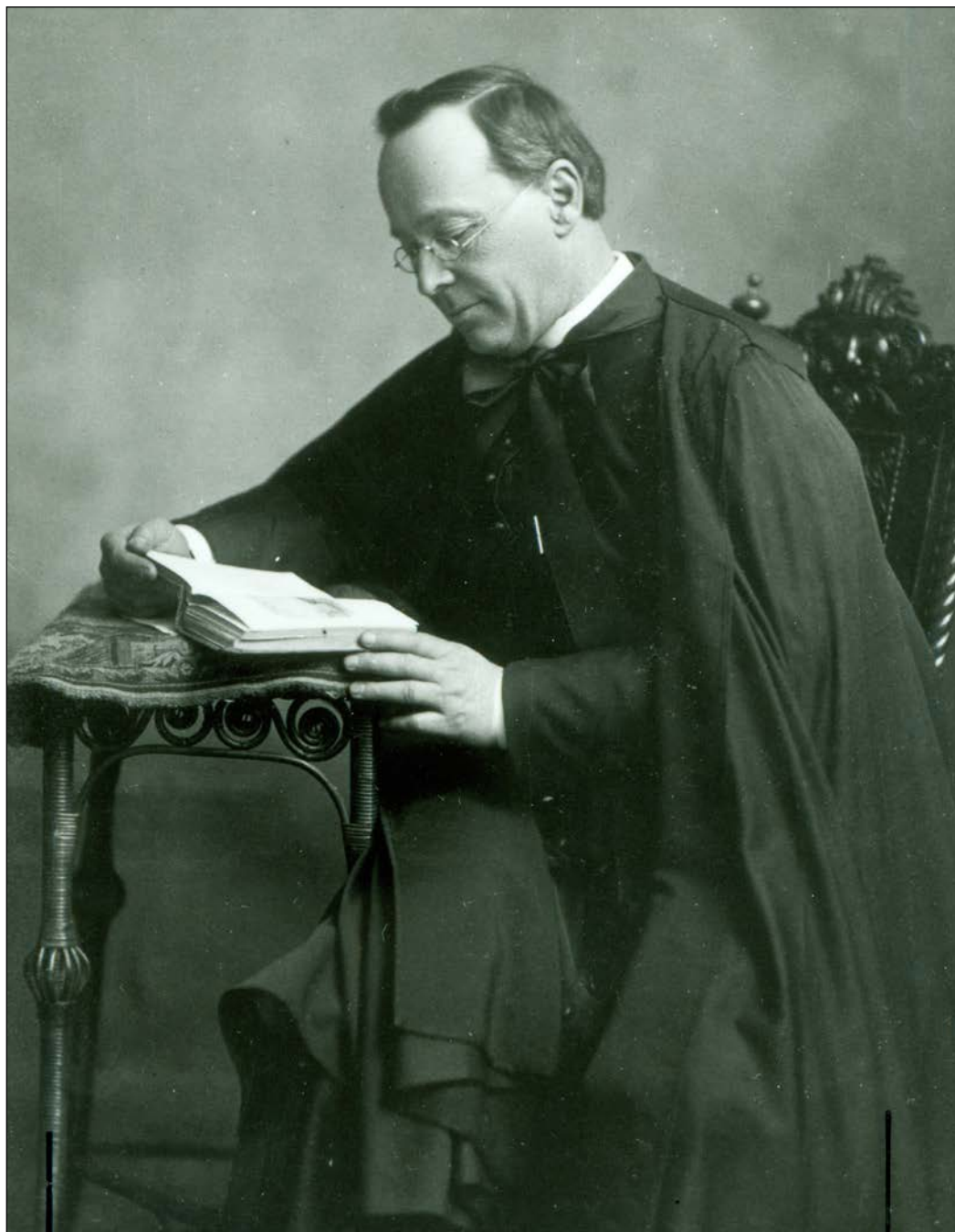


Plate 3 – Father Alphonse Avila Cherrier, pastor of Immaculate Conception Church from 1884 to 1927, ca. 1915. (Photo courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, "Cherrier, A.A. (Mgr.) - 1.")