



THE BARBER HOUSE

99 EUCLID AVENUE

HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE

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99 EUCLID AVENUE BARBER HOUSE

There is a great deal of myth surrounding the E.L. Barber House at 99 Euclid Avenue. Facts about the house and its builder cannot, for the most part, be documented and researchers studying the house have continuously advanced theories based on the oral tradition (known to be questionable) and the written sources which often contradict and conflict.

The tradition generally states that Edmond Lorenzo Barber moved up from Connecticut via Minnesota. After a brief stint as the governor of the Dakota territory in 1858,¹ he joined his cousin in a profitable business venture that expanded to Red River in 1860.

He married Barbara Logan, daughter of fur-trader Robert Logan, and in 1864 or 1865 they moved into the tiny "Thistle Cottage" across from Fort Douglas. In 1867 they expanded the main house into its present size. Barber meanwhile opened a dry goods store, wheeled and dealt in real estate, and generally made his presence known in the burgeoning Red River community.

In January, 1870, John Christian Schultz escaped from Fort Garry as Riel's hostage and fled to the Barber House where he was hidden for a night before carrying on to Kildonan and hence to Ontario.

Barber became prominent in business and social affairs. He owned a good deal of property in Point Douglas and made a veritable fortune in developing the area. In deference to his real estate holdings, E.L. Barber was asked to name several streets around the area. Keeping this version in mind, let us now examine the evidence available.

E.L. Barber was born in Hamden, Connecticut in 1834. Little is known about his early life but he allegedly left home at the age of 14 and later came back to sell books.² In 1854 he moved to St. Paul, Minnesota and worked on a small paper called the Minnesota Democrat. In 1856 he joined with his cousin, George Brott, in organizing a land company and in 1859 they turned their resources toward purchasing a dry goods business from W.G. Fonseca and his partner in St. Paul. Barber was sent to Selkirk to open a dry goods retail outlet which he operated with little success until his cousin

closed it in 1861.³

It was during this time (1858) that Barber was alleged to be the governor of Dakota.⁴ He would be 24 years old at the time, and employed as a junior partner in his cousin's business; Barber's obituary, and reliable written sources such as Alexander Begg's Ten Years in Winnipeg make mention of such a position.

After the Selkirk store was closed, Barber decided to move to the settlement at Red River and opened up a small dry goods store near Fort Garry. He brought in supplies from Ontario and Minnesota and became one of several merchants from the American territories who set up trade in opposition to the Hudson's Bay Company.⁵ He began trading in furs in 1862, and within several months his small business also included hides and firewood, all of which were essential trade items in the tiny centre.

In 1862, Barber married Barbara Logan, the daughter of Chief Factor Robert Logan who was an extremely prominent member of Red River society until his death in 1866. Logan had purchased Fort Douglas in 1825 for £400 and lived on the estate until his death. The actual fort was a series of Red River log structures,⁶ surrounded by a palisade, and used as a meeting place and refuge for the Selkirk Settlers. According to C.N. Bell, the remains of the fort were destroyed by the flood of 1826⁷ so Logan must have rebuilt a home for his growing family. At no time did Barber's house actually face the fort; it did face the Logan estate on the old fort site.

The Logan family gave Barber a very solid connection with the social elite of early Winnipeg. He was introduced to all the prominent families and there is good evidence that Edmund and Barbara were a part of the social whirl.⁸ Alexander Logan, brother-in-law to Barber, was a mayor of the city three times between 1879 and 1882, having previously been an alderman. "By birth and marriage", Artibise states, he was "one of the leading members of Winnipeg's social elite".⁹ By marriage, Logan was related to Andrew McDermot and A.G.B. Bannatyne, which gave Barber a certain beneficial association with these prominent figures.

Further, Barber saw to it that the social fabric which was so closely knit with the business community, was further re-inforced with his presence. On February 12, 1862, he attended the first meeting of the Institute of Rupert's Land, a forerunner of the Historical and Scientific Society of later years.¹⁰ He was initiated into the first lodge of Masons in Manitoba,¹¹ of which such men as J.H. Ashdown were also members. He was a member of St. John's Cathedral, a prominent church in Winnipeg. Barber was one of a score of businessmen who banded together in February 1873 to form Winnipeg's first Board of Trade to which such prominent men as John Christian Schultz, Ashdown, Alexander Begg and W.G. Fonseca all pledged their supports.¹³

Barber's affiliation with Schultz was an interesting part of his career. On June 1, 1869, he and Schultz jointly bought a series of lots in Point Douglas from the Hudson's Bay Company.¹³ Barber seemed to have contributed in some way to Schultz's newspaper, the Nor'Wester some time during the years before Riel seized it in 1869.¹⁴ In September, 1873, Barber bought the newspaper outright from Schultz at a cost of \$2,400,¹⁵ and Barber was editor and manager of the weekly until it closed down. Their paths certainly crossed many times, and Barber continued to manage Lady Schultz's business affairs after the death of her husband.

Despite the apparent friendship between the two families, there is no concrete evidence that Schultz spent the night hiding out at Barber's after his escape from Upper Fort Garry on January 23, 1870. R.G. MacBeth claims that Schultz made the break from Riel's headquarters and went six miles north to hide out in his father's home in Kildonan. He stayed there for two days and then left from Selkirk and hence to Canada.¹⁶ Alexander Begg, the esteemed Red River historian of the time, does not show Schultz stopping at Barber's,¹⁷ but later accounts such as Elly Herber and Lilian Gibbons both state that he did. Harriet Jane Barber, E.L.'s daughter, related to the Tribune at the age of 95 that Mrs. Schultz had hid there and was then smuggled to Kildonan to see her husband.¹⁸ Neither George Stanley nor W.L. Morton make any mention of either of the Schultz's stopping at Barber's house. None of the accounts that do make reference to a stopover are footnoted.¹⁹

As an American, Barber was also probably sympathetic to the annexationists during the rebellion, but was sensible enough not to voice his politics and risk his business.²⁰ His dry goods store, already suffering due to a crop failure among his clients, was in poor shape by the time of the rebellion. Disrupted shipments and tight money in 1869-70 only exacerbated the situation. Barber's store on Main Street was visited by one of Riel's men who demanded goods on credit. Barber went to the rebel's headquarters and received assurance from O'Donohue that the provisional government would scrupulously protect the rights of individuals.²¹

Barber seemed unable to pay his suppliers at the same time that was buying real estate with Schultz in 1869. James Ross, who worked in part as his agent in Ontario at the time, wrote to Barber that he must endeavour firstly to pay off his debts, as "a merchant's good name or credit is everything to him".²² Although his store should have flourished as the settlement grew, Barber never seemed to organize his business well enough to turn a consistent profit. Or perhaps he was simply a poor businessman who never attended to his accounts properly.²³ Creditors were always after him and on at least two occasions he had to arrange a chattel mortgage to pay some of his debts. In 1871 he opened a store in Portage la Prairie but that failed promptly. In 1872-73, he had an excellent opportunity to run a very profitable saloon venture at Pembina to look after the boundary surveyors, but he ruined that through negligence. By June in 1873 he had received eight subpoenas to appear in Court for non-payment of debt.²⁴ He bought the NorWester and ran it into debt. By mid-1875 he had to sell a great many of his lots in Point Douglas to stave off the Court orders. Yet in 1877, as Winnipeg began to boom, he was again involved in new business. He was a partner in the Winnipeg Ice Company and the Manitoba Soap, Candle and Oil Works, both of which were early failures.²⁵

A map of Point Douglas in 1874 shows the Barber holdings to be quite extensive on the tip of the Point.²⁶ Such prominent Winnipeggers as W.G. Fonseca and James Ashdown also held property in that area which was clearly becoming a fashionable one at the time.

A contemporary observer stated that Point Douglas was:

...fast being built upon. The class of houses being put up is chiefly cottages and a very industrious well-to-do people seem to have gravitated to this part.²⁷

James Ashdown built a beautiful brick home next door to Barber, but this was not to be a portend of the future. Barber must have been forced to sell his real estate holdings there immediately before settlement reached the tip of the point. The lots were sold but the area did not develop as it was anticipated. Hudson Bay Company land opened up south of Notre Dame to the Red River beginning in 1874. These were larger lots and many of the wealthier class of people abandoned Point Douglas for the newer area. Concurrently, the great influx of people into the tiny city made a housing shortage and many homeowners in Point Douglas split their residences into boarding houses to provide accommodation.²⁸

The decision to bring the new CPR route through Point Douglas in 1881 signalled its demise as a desirable residential area. With the railway line, station and yards also came medium and heavy industry that needed access to transportation. Following the example of Vulcan Iron Works and Ogilvie Flour Mills, a range of industries quickly established along the tracks. Existing housing and new cheap housing accommodated the huge influx of CPR employees and immigrants. By 1895, Point Douglas and the core North End were the "foreign quarter", the slum.²⁹ Barber never made the fortune he anticipated on his property in Point Douglas. He and his wife and five children remained in their home at 99 Euclid Avenue as the neighbourhood grew up around them. At the time of his death in 1909, the house was assessed for a value of only \$750.00,³⁰ and Barber's total wealth at \$2,319.00.³¹

Little is known about the actual construction of the Barber House. The idea that Thistle Cottage, a shack with a thatched roof, was expanded into the Barber House proper cannot be proved. A drawing of the city in 1880 shows the main house, erected around 1865 or 1867, with a small addition to the rear which may be the cottage. The archaeologists and technicians should be able to

clear this matter up in the future.

The method of construction is Red River frame. The house was probably set into a stone foundation with perhaps a root cellar for storage. The frame was probably squared oak logs and the horizontal logs were likely also oak. As oak was the foremost material for permanent construction and the supply of oak on the plains somewhat limited,³² the logs were probably floated down from another location. In 1856, Alexander Ross observed that oak was preferred for the frame, pine for the floors and oak or cedar shingles for the roof.³³

The frame followed the normal method of construction which had been used across the country by fur traders and settlers alike. The *poteaux-sursole* or *piece sur piece* imported by the French,³⁴ with variations, became known in the west as Red River frame. The Barber house was constructed with considerable skill for the horizontal logs were set in very straight and there was good attention to detail in the finishing.

The style of the house is where Barber's own tastes came into play. A survey of domestic architecture in his home state of Connecticut up to 1810 showed some interesting generalities. Three books on the topic were consulted and the pattern was the same: consistently 2-storied homes, with a gable roof and insistence upon symmetry.³⁵ In very general terms, Barber followed this pattern. The upper windows and the diamond-shaped window at the top were stylistic modifications to the Red River frame. Furthermore, the interior of these Connecticut houses all featured staircases with a similarity to that in the Barber house.

A photograph included in the appendix shows a Connecticut house which pre-dates 1865. As a log house, Barber House would not seem comparable, but when it had plaster and later stucco applied, a similarity would appear. All this is an attempt to point out that E.L. Barber's choice of style for his Red River house may have been influenced from his early years in New England.

There have been many changes in the house over the years but these are impossible to document because all the additions to the rear and all the interior alterations were done without benefit of a

single building permit. The city assessment records, however, shed some light on the condition of the structure over the years. In 1903, the log house was assessed at \$300.00, climbing to \$750.00 in 1910 and dropping again to \$500.00 in 1915. It clearly had no prestige in its setting for quite a while. In 1942, the assessor noted that the house had settled and was sagging badly between the main structure and rear addition. It was further described as "dilapidated". In 1956, Barber house had reached such a state of disrepair that it was "suitable for wrecking only".³⁶ There was a fire noted in 1960 but from the report, it seems that the damage was confined to the partitions. It was at this time that the Carron stove, imported by the Logans, was retired from its place in the sitting room to a museum. A newspaper article states that this was the same fire that destroyed the original front door.³⁷ Mrs. Lily Barber Sparrow had stucco added to the rough cast plaster in 1922.³⁸

A barn was still on the property as late as 1956 and it is known that in the early years, the Barbers kept some livestock. Typically, Barber's own brother-in-law, William Logan, almost took him to Court because Barber's ox had trampled some of Logan's wheat.³⁹ There was also a large greenhouse at the rear of the lot which was torn down in 1938. These were described as frame and glazed and were assessed under the Barber property, but it is not known what they were there for.

E.L. Barber died in April, 1909 at the age of 75, and his wife Barbara died in 1925. Their daughter, Lily Sparrow, continued to live in the house until 1958. From 1960 to 1974 the house was rented until it was taken over by the city. Lily Barber Sparrow continued to run her father's real estate holdings and a collection of several houses in the core area which she seems to have built up herself.

The tradition that Barber named several of the streets around Point Douglas cannot be proved. Barber Street was certainly named after him, and there is general agreement that Edward Street was named for E.L.'s son.⁴⁰ Other street names that some have attributed to Barber such as Euclid and Stella have contradictory sources.

In conclusion, little can be ascertained about Barber's house other than some general observations. Some of the oral traditions surrounding the man and his house have been proven false. We are left

with a seriously deteriorated Red River frame house with stylistic modifications and a narrative of an entrepreneur with a predilection for failure while Barber was always on the periphery of the commercial elite of early Winnipeg, one gets the impression that his social contacts allowed him to get that far. Nevertheless, his story in many ways parallels the origins and development of Point Douglas, to which 99 Euclid is a solitary reminder.

FOOTNOTES

1. Harry Shave, "Series of Streets Named by E.L. Barber" in the Winnipeg Free Press, July 15, 1967, p. 53.
2. Finding aid to the E.L. Barber Papers, P.A.M.
3. loc. cit.
4. Shave, op. cit., This can be found in several sources.
5. Alan F.J. Artibise, Winnipeg a Social History of Urban Growth 1874-1914, McGill-Queen's, University Press, Montreal, 1975, p. 7 & 8.
6. Jill Wade, Red River Architecture, unpublished thesis, University of British Columbia, p. 6.
7. Charles Napier Bell, "Fort Douglas Saw Stirring Scenes", Free Press, May 7, 1932.
8. W.L. Morton's, Begg's Red River Journal and Other Papers 1869-70, The Champlain Society, Toronto, 1956, p. 249.
9. A.F.T. Artibise, "Mayor Logan of Winnipeg", The Beaver Spring 1974, p. 5.
10. T.C. Boon, "The Institute of Rupert's Land and Bishop David Anderson", Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba, Transactions, Series III, No. 18, 1962, p. 93.
11. Obituary, Manitoba Free Press, April 23, 1909.
12. Alex Begg and Walter R. Nursey, Ten Years in Winnipeg, 1870-1879, Times Printing and Publishing House, Winnipeg, 1879, p. 78.
13. No. 1017, E.L. Barber Collection, P.A.M.
14. Morton, op. cit., p. 245.
15. Barber papers, op. cit., No. 2375.
16. R.G. MacBeth, The Making of the Canadian West William Briggs Co., Toronto, 1905, p. 59-61.
17. Morton, op. cit., p. 319.
18. Tribune, January 9, 1958.
19. Eleanor MacEwan, E.L. Barber, Report on Problems with Writing a Documented Pamphlet, unpublished report, Historic Resources Branch, June 1979, p. 4-5.

20. Morton, op.cit., p. 8. See also K. Michener, p. 7.
21. James Ross Papers, P.A.M., No. 445.
22. Barber papers, op.cit., No. 1383.
23. Kathleen Michener, E.L. Barber: His Business Life, paper prepared by Prof. G. Friesen, University of Manitoba, February, 1976, p. 8. This is an excellent account of his business and financial dealings, taken directly from his papers.
24. Ibid., p. 13.
25. Ibid., p. 14.
26. Alan F.J. Artibise and Edward H. Dahl, Winnipeg in Maps, National Map Collection, P.A.C., Ottawa, 1975, p. 16.
27. George B. Elliot, Winnipeg as It Is in 1874 and as It Was in 1860, Daily Free Press, Winnipeg, c. 1874, p. 14.
28. Artibise, Winnipeg a Social History, op.cit., p. 149.
29. Ibid., p. 158-159.
30. City of Winnipeg Assessment, 99 Euclid, 1910.
31. Barber papers, op.cit., No. 4326.
32. Wade, op.cit., p. 11. She states that by 1840, logs had to be brought downriver from elsewhere.
33. Alexander Ross, The Red River Settlement, represented by M. Hurtig, Edmonton, 1972, p. 338.
34. Marius Barbeau, "The House That Mac Built", The Beaver December, 1945, p. 10.
35. See J. Frederick Kelly, Early Domestic Architecture of Connecticut, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1963, for the most comprehensive book available locally.
36. Assessment, op.cit., 1956.
37. Edith Patterson, "Our Picturesque Past", Winnipeg Free Press, August 3, 1974.

38. C.I.H.B. Report, 99 Euclid Avenue.
39. Barber papers, op. cit., No. 273, February 15, 1864.
40. J.B. Rudnyckyj, Mosaic of Winnipeg Street Names, Canadian Institute of Onomastic Sciences, University of Manitoba, 1974, p. 20.

99 EUCLID AVENUE – BARBER HOUSE



Plate 1 – E.L. Barber House, ca.1900. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, N4355.)

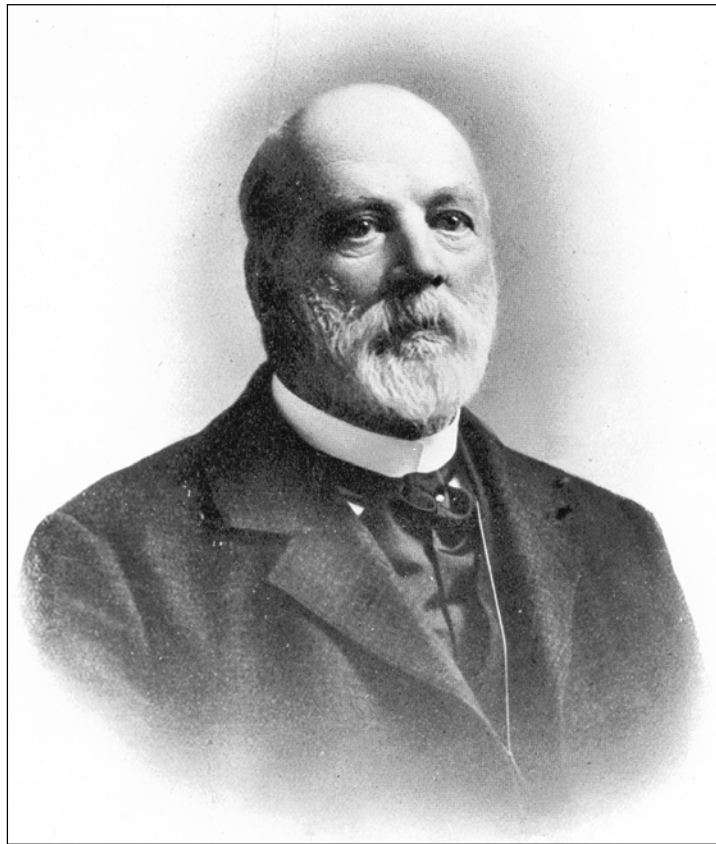


Plate 2 – E.L. Barber, no date. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, N4359.)

99 EUCLID AVENUE – BARBER HOUSE



Plate 3 – E.L. Barber House, 1935. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)



Plate 4 – E.L. Barber House, 1959. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)

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Plate 5 – Rear of E.L. Barber House, 1959. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)



Plate 6 – E.L. Barber House, no date. Note the chain link fence surrounding the structure. (Courtesy of the City of Winnipeg, Planning Department.)

99 EUCLID AVENUE – BARBER HOUSE

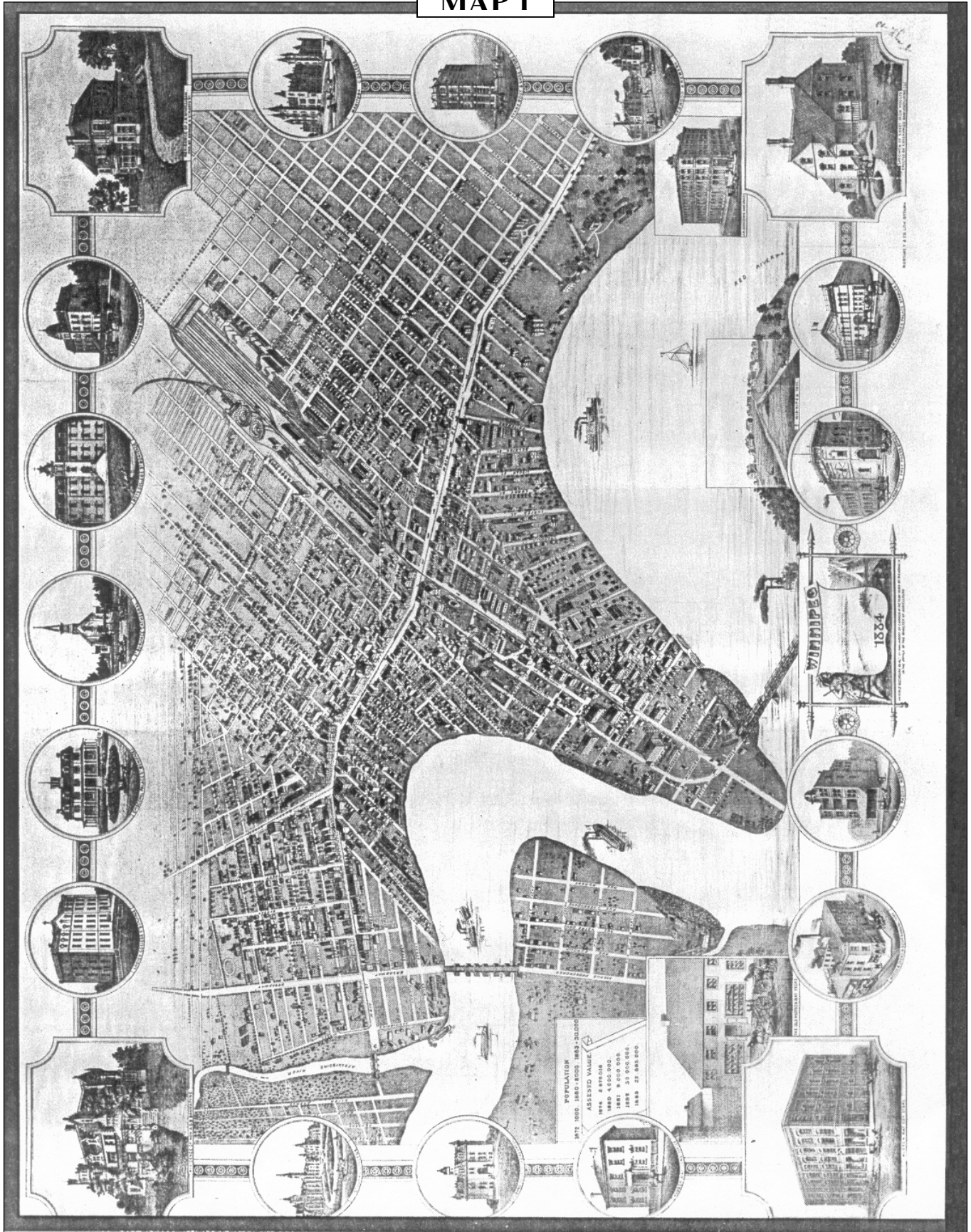
Appendix II

These maps are included to demonstrate the pattern of development in the Point Douglas area compared to the rest of Winnipeg in the early years. In 1874, one can see the large lots held by speculators in Point Douglas including A.G.B. Bannatyne, W.G. Fonseca, J.C. Schultz and Barber. Barber's holdings were on the actual tip of the point which could have become excellent property but within a few short years (Map II, 1880) the railway ran through the property and industry followed close on its heels (Map III, 1884). Meanwhile, such tracts of land as the old Hudson's Bay Reserve south of Portage Avenue had grown into a beautiful and high-priced residential area and all the investors pulled their money from the old areas such as Point Douglas, to the new. Barber was forced to sell his lots there before the area became industrial but after it had the chance to become a fashionable area.

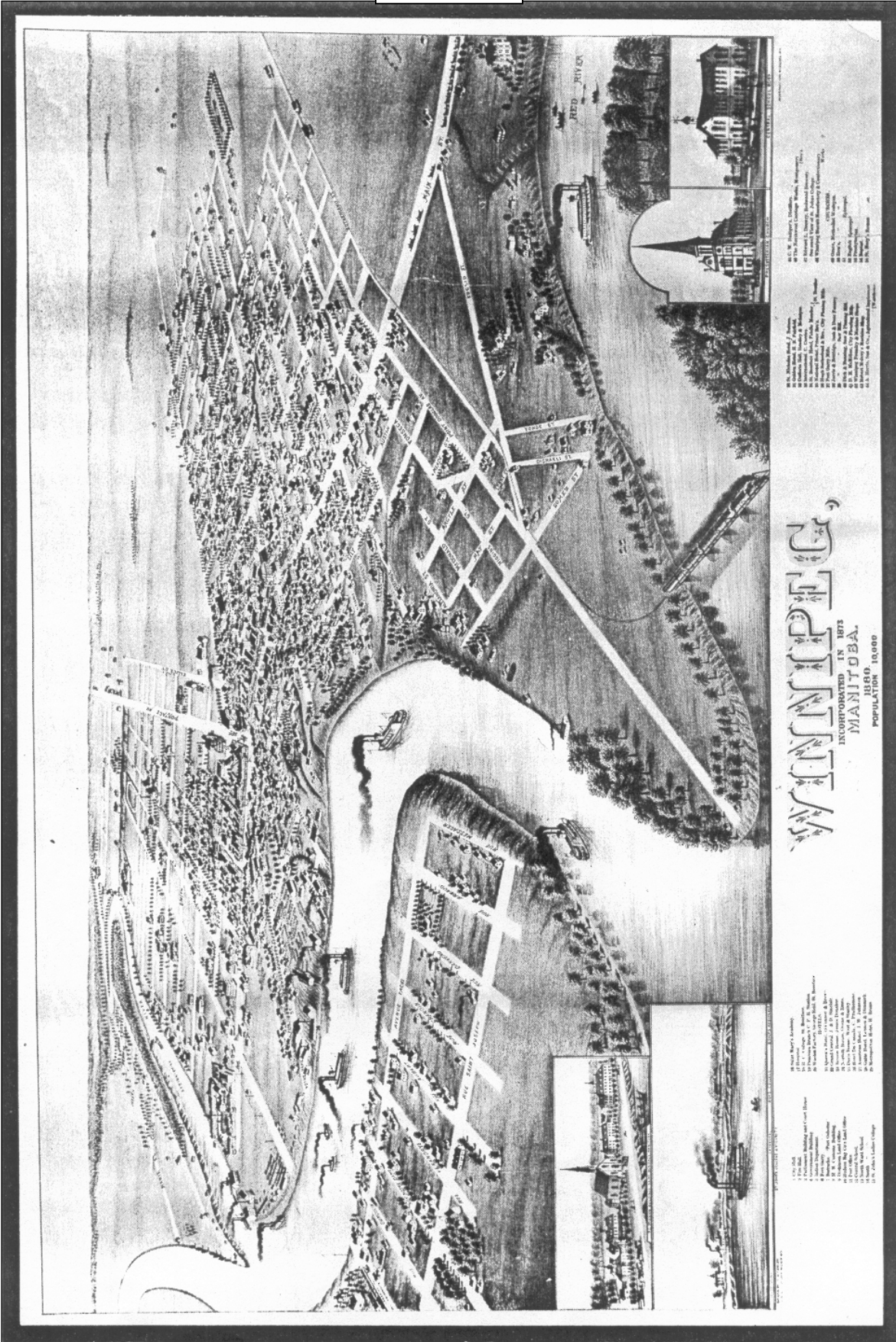
Maps from Alan F. Artibise and Edward H. Dahl, Winnipeg in Maps, National Map Collection, P.A.C., Ottawa, 1975, p. 16, 20, and 22.

99 EUCLID AVENUE - BARBER HOUSE

MAP 1



MAP 2



99 EUCLID AVENUE - BARBER HOUSE

MAP 3

