



186 HIGGINS AVENUE
WOLSELEY (MOUNT ROYAL) HOTEL

PREPARED BY PETERSON PROJECTS – FEBRUARY 2007



186 HIGGINS AVENUE WOLSELEY (MOUNT ROYAL) HOTEL

Date of Construction: 1904

Building Permit: 526/1904

Architect: Griffith, Henry S.

Contractor: Jones, T.H.

ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

Another of the solidly built, minimally ornamented downtown hotels is the Mount Royal, originally the Wolseley Hotel, built in 1904 as the area around the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) station complex developed.

The ground floor of the front (north) façade has been altered, the windows are newer units and the walls have been stuccoed. Unfortunately, no image has been found to date that shows how the original ground floor was designed and built. The centrally located arched entrance may be original. A modest cornice separates the ground floor from the upper storeys. Second floor windows are square headed, with stone lug sills and a wide stone belt course as continuous heads. The original window units have been replaced. Third floor windows are arched with brick drip moulding and stone lug sills, all connected by a thin



Front (north) and east façades, 2006

line of brick. Below these openings are ornamental brick panels and above are several rows of patterned brick. The central three bays of windows are slightly recessed and modest brick pilasters frame the centre window on the third floor. A metal cornice and brick parapet with unique rounded projections (many of which have been removed) and a central squared portion finish the façade. A large neon sign with the words “MOUNT ROYAL HOTEL” is attached to the second floor of the façade.

The west side was obviously designed to be a public elevation, many of the design elements of the front continue on this façade, including arched windows, brick drip moulding, stepped parapet, stone belt course (between the second and third floors) and ornamental brick panels. A small palladian window even graces this façade, as does a metal fire escape. All windows are either replacement units or the opening has been boarded up.

The east side of the building includes a large painted sign at the north end where the brick wall is uninterrupted and a rear section with numerous arched windows and doors. The rear of the building features painted signage at the roofline and arched windows on all three floors.

It is an attractive and functional design, meant to supply comfortable space for guests and provide ample light and ventilation to all the suites. Its arched openings and rough surfaces are Richardsonian Romanesque style attributes, similar to those found on warehouses throughout the district.



East façade, 2006

The building stands on its original site and appears to be in good structural condition. The alterations to the ground floor of the main façade and the replacement of the windows have affected the appearance of the building.

H.S. Griffith (1865-?), architect of this building, was one of several British architects who came to Canada in the last two decades of the twentieth century. Griffith was born in Oxfordshire, England in 1865, taking his architectural training from 1882 to 1885 with the firm of Webb and Tubbs. In 1886, he trained as a draftsman with the London District Surveyor. He came to Winnipeg in the spring of 1887 where he found employment as a surveyor and draughtsman first with the Northern Pacific Railroad and later with the Land Titles Office. In 1893, H.S. Griffith opened an architectural practice in Winnipeg. Although his practice was relatively small, he designed many outstanding buildings across the province including St. Mary's la Prairie Anglican Church, 36 Second Street SW, Portage la Prairie (1898-99), the Westbourne Episcopal Church (1900) and the Neepawa Hospital (1904). In Winnipeg, major work included the Ryan Building, 104 King Street (1899, Grade II), Baker Block, 468 Main Street (1901, Grade III), St. Boniface Normal School, 210 Masson Street (1902, Grade II), several large additions to Winnipeg General Hospital (Health Science Centre), Bannatyne Avenue (1903), Criterion Hotel, 214 McDermot Avenue (1903, Grade II), M. Lechtzier's Turkish and Russian Bathhouse, corner Pacific Avenue and King Street (1903, demolished) and the Oxford Hotel, 216 Notre Dame Avenue (1905). He has received 10 points from the Historic Buildings Committee.



Rear (south) and west façades, 2006

HISTORICAL INTEREST:

Small hotels, like this one on Higgins Avenue, were an important part of Winnipeg's downtown, built to supply rooms for the thousands of visitors coming to the city. In many cases, these facilities also supplied living space for citizens, especially salesmen who travelled throughout the region and required inexpensive accommodation near the train station that did not need upkeep. In more recent times, many of these hotels have become the home of single men and women on fixed incomes.

The location, on Higgins Avenue, was important; the hotel was able to attract clientele from the thousands of passengers detraining from the nearby CPR station on Higgins Avenue.

The original permit lists Margaret A. Fonseca, wife of pioneer Red River Settlement merchant and real estate speculator William G. Fonseca (1823-1905) as the original owner of the Wolseley Hotel, another property in the Fonseca holdings. But it was sold shortly after construction, ca.1907, to barrister J.A. Andrews and Dr. J.R. Jones, M.D., who owned and operated the hotel into the 1920s.¹ Over the next few decades, local directories listed several proprietors for the hotel including Robert T. McKeen (1920), J.J. McCarroll (1930), R. Lindholm (1940) and Henry, Julian and Walter Dougloski (1950). The facility was renamed the Mount Royal Hotel in the 1950s.²



Detail of west façade, 2006

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 hotels in the downtown area and one of the last remaining of the many that located close to the CPR station;
- its associations- its short-term connection to early and influential merchant W.G. Fonseca and his family;
- its design- an excellent example of the Richardsonian Romanesque style;
- its architect- H.S. Griffith was a respected and important local practitioner;
- its location- contributes to its historic streetscape; and
- its integrity- its main façades continue to display many of their original elements and design.



Front façade, 1978

ENDNOTES:

- 1 City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, Roll No. 13-091935400, 1900-1930.
- 2 Henderson's Directory, 1930-1960.