95 LUXTON AVENUE

JEAN BAPTISTE LAUZON HOUSE

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings Committee
Researcher: Murray Peterson
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The early trials and tribulations of the Selkirk settlers, the small band of families brought over from the British Isles in the early 1810s, were the stuff of legends. Floods, grasshoppers, hostile fur traders and, of course, the daily challenges of breaking the soil, planting crops, tending livestock and building homes combined to make life extremely trying. The family names of many of these settlers have become familiar to all Winnipeggers - Gunn, Bannerman, MacBeth, Polson, Matheson, McKay, McLeod, Sutherland, Ross, Flett and Inkster - and have been used to name streets throughout East and West Kildonan.

Crown Patent on river lot 2 (which was 10 chains, 201 metres or 660 feet wide), on which the Lauzon House sits, was taken out by Hugh Polson on April 6, 1875. This patent included all the land between the river and the two-mile road (McPhillips Street). This part of the river lot was known as the Inner Two Miles (ITM). He also took out the patent for the land west of the two-mile road (Outer Two Miles - OTM) on July 7, 1880. In March 1879, he divided and sold the ITM property - the northerly three chains (198 feet, 60.1 metres) going to Samuel Polson and the southerly four chains (264 feet, 80.5 metres) to Alexander Polson. The strip of land between these two sections (three chains, 14 links or 62.9 metres) was ultimately sold by Hugh Polson to Samuel Polson on December 31, 1880. Samuel sold his northern piece to Duncan McDonald in October 1880 for $2,300 (McDonald had also purchased the northerly three chains of the OTM). Alexander sold his property to the Bishop of Rupert’s Land in April 1881 for $3,800.

On February 6, 1882, Plan 228 was registered at the Land Titles Office, subdividing all of River Lot 2 between the river and Main Street into nine blocks and hundreds of small, city lots. It created three new avenues running east-west from the Red River: Crawford (now Atlantic) with its southern limit running along the southern boundary of River Lot 2, Polson to the north, and

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1 Land Titles Office, Old Systems Abstract Book, Kildonan Parish.
2 Ibid.
Athole or Athol (now Luxton). Running north-south between the river and Main Street were Scott Street (now Scotia) and Mac Street (now St. Cross). The southerly four chains of this residential development was owned by S. Crawford and N.S. Crotty, who had purchased the land from the Bishop of Rupert’s Land for $17,000 on December 5, 1881.³ It is interesting to note that this represents more than a quadrupling in the price of the land between April and December 1881, an example of the inflated real estate market prevalent in Winnipeg during the real estate boom of the early 1880s.

In 1895, 167 vacant lots in the vicinity of what was to become 95 Luxton Avenue were owned by wholesale butcher Duncan McDonald. The following year, McDonald’s holdings were purchased, including a house on Polson Avenue. The new owner immediately built his family a fine new home on what was then Athol Avenue. The land and the two buildings were assessed at over $7,000. This represents an assessed value five to 30 times higher than any other land owner or resident in the area, underlining the wealth of the new owner - Jean (James) Baptiste Lauzon.⁴

**STYLE**

The Lauzon House is one of the finest residential examples of the Queen Anne style found in the city, displaying a wealth of ornamentation that gives it a picturesque visage.

The style borrowed design elements from a number of historical periods and became synonymous with well-to-do residences in North America from the 1890s to World War I and beyond. It first made its appearance in England in the 1860s and 1870s, an invention of a number of architects catering to upper-middle-income clients. The style’s popularity rose quickly and soon found expression in similar neighbourhoods in North America. The homes it produced were large and luxurious with well-appointed and comfortable interiors.⁵

³ Ibid.; and Land Titles Office, Map Room, Subdivision Plan #228.

⁴ City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, (below as ARo), 1890-1900.

The overriding principle of the Queen Anne style could well be defined as a ‘controlled busyness.’ A wealth of exterior elements and varied construction materials were used to reduce the amount of flat, unadorned surfaces and to increase contrasts. These devices included corner turrets, front or wrap-around verandahs, wooden accents around windows, doors, eaves and porches, half-timbering, stucco or brick panels in various locations, and steeply pitched roofs, often gable or hip, and usually designed with numerous cross-gables and dormers. All these features added liveliness to the design.6

While the city boasts a number of fine Queen Anne style houses, the Lauzon House is one of the finer all-frame structures of this type.

CONSTRUCTION
This 2½-storey frame structure rests on a stone foundation on the north side of Luxton Avenue between St. Cross and Main streets. Its floor plan is approximately 125 square metres (1,341 square feet).7

DESIGN
The main (south) façade features a centrally located entrance with a one-storey bay window to the east. Starting from this window, wrapping around the southwest corner and running the entire length of the west side of the building is a one-storey porch embellished with intricately carved woodwork decorating the eaves and railing. Support for the porch is achieved by 11 slender, unfluted wooden posts set on small stone supports. The bottom of the porch is open. The roof is plain save for a pediment above the steps leading to the main entrance. A small deck is located above the porch at the north end of the west side (Plates 2 and 3).

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7 City of Winnipeg Assessment Record, Roll No. 613750-12-3 (PC 51).
The other outstanding and unique feature of the home is the gingerbread vergeboard on the steeply pitched gable dormers of the south façade. The vergeboards are virtually intact and are complete with king posts hanging from the point of the gable to small stars at the bottom. The windows in this area are pedimented (Plate 4).

Windows elsewhere in the building are plainly adorned, set in simple wooden frames. The home’s east side contains a number of unadorned windows and a plain door (Plate 5). A simple, two-car garage is located in the northeast corner of the property.

INTERIOR
The interior of this now-vacant house features many original elements, including a layout that has been virtually unchanged. Wood accents around windows and doors and on the staircase hint at the luxuriousness of the home when combined with what would have been a wealth of beautiful furnishings, some of which still remain (Plates 6 to 8).

In the basement are the cement posts and large wooden beams that have provided excellent support for the building. Some heaving is evident in the cement floor. An old boiler, reportedly in good condition, is also found here (Plate 9).

The main floor features large, open rooms including a sizable dining-room and a parlour in the home’s southeast corner (bay window). The kitchen is newer, having been recently upgraded. Two separate staircases lead to a second floor with six smaller bedrooms, a long central hallway and several built-in cabinets and dressers.

In total, there are over 260 square metres (over 2,800 square feet) of living space.8

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8 Information on the interior supplied to the author by real estate agents Blaine and Brent Martin.
INTEGRITY
This house has stood on its original site for over 100 years, and has remained remarkably unchanged during that time. Even the treed space that separates the building from its closest neighbour invokes an earlier era when the area was not as heavily built-up.

The only major change is the two-storey addition on the northeast corner of the house occupied by the kitchen on the ground floor. That it is not original is evident from the fenestration (Plate 10), although no City of Winnipeg Building Permit was taken out for the work, suggesting that it may have been completed prior to 1900 when permits became mandatory.

STREETSCAPE
This house is an important structure on Luxton Avenue. Open property to the west enhances its presence. It is the street’s oldest and finest building. To the south, the house faces the rear façade of Luxton School, 111 Polson Avenue. That much larger building reduces the residential feel of this section of Luxton, making the Lauzon House an even more important contributor to the avenue’s residential character.

ARCHITECT/CONTRACTOR
At present, no reference has been found for a contractor or architect for the Lauzon House. Even the annual building articles of the local newspapers, which would usually include a note on such a noteworthy structure, do not mention this house.

PERSON
The home’s long-time owner/resident was Jean (James) Baptiste Lauzon (Plates 11 and 12), born in Pointe Claire, Montréal on March 15, 1858. Lauzon became a butcher’s apprentice in Pointe Claire at the age of 16 and came to Winnipeg in 1876. After two years in the meat trade working for the firm Johnson, Rocan and Smith, Lauzon opened his own business in St. Boniface. In 1880, Lauzon moved his family and his business to Emerson, reopening his St. Boniface store
upon his return in 1884. His business thrived and he soon opened a branch in the Public Market Building behind City Hall. The site of Luxton School was originally Lauzon’s abattoir and farm. 9 Another expansion occurred in 1905 when he moved into the Lauzon Block (Plate 13), 339 William Avenue (designed by local architect John Schwab).

Lauzon was also active in politics and was elected to the St. Boniface town council in 1885, a position he held until 1898. He was also twice elected as a Conservative member of the Manitoba Legislature, representing St. Boniface in 1896 and La Verendrye in 1907. Lauzon was one of the first members of the Retail Merchants’ Association of Manitoba and was a leading proponent of the idea of creating a public abattoir for Winnipeg (what would become the Public Markets, Marion Street, St. Boniface). He died at the age of 87 and was survived by his wife, one son and two daughters. 10

J.B. Lauzon and his wife Adeline lived in the house until just before his death. In 1943, the home was sold to Adelina Roy (1886-1977) and her son Thomas. 11 Adelina was the wife of Origine Roy and daughter of J.B. Lauzon. Origine Roy (1876-1951) was known throughout North America as a sportsman. He owned the Roblin Hotel (which had also been owned by J.B. Lauzon) and the Fremont Hotel until 1916 when he established a cattle ranch/hunting lodge in St. Ambroise, Manitoba. 12 Adelina and her son Thomas (who took over ownership of the Roblin Hotel, 117 Adelaide Street) continued to live in the house. Adelina died in 1977 after a long life of charity work. She was a founding member of the Sacred Heart Church and volunteered for dozens of organizations and charities. 13

Thomas Roy recently passed away and the family is now looking to sell the home, over 100 years after their great-grandfather built it.

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11 ARo, 1900-45.
12 Winnipeg Tribune, June 15, 1951.
EVENT
There is no known significant event connected with this building.

CONTEXT
The Lauzon House is a physical reminder of the type of development that occurred in Winnipeg around the turn-of-the-century. It was a nearly two-decade-long era of unbridled growth in all facets of life. Many newly arrived citizens took full advantage of the times and made themselves and their families considerable fortunes. This house, which was and still is one of the finest in the city’s North End, is a perfect example of the type of home designed and built by a successful public and business figure.

LANDMARK
The Lauzon House, located at one end of a quiet residential street, could not be considered conspicuous to many Winnipeggers, although its outstanding architectural detailing and large lot do increase its visual impact on the street itself.
Assessment Record

Building Address: 95 Luxton Avenue
Building Name: Lauzon House

Original Use: residential
Current Use: residential

Roll No. (Old): 613750 (11476-1)

Municipality: 12 Ward: 3 Property or Occupancy Code: 51

Legal Description: 2 Kildonan, Plan 1435, part of Lot 187 (west 12’), Lots 188/192

Location: north side between St. Cross and Main street

Date of Construction: 1896 Storeys: 2

Construction Type: frame and stone foundation


Information:

- 10” eaves

- ceilings: basement- 7½’, 1st- 8½’ and 2nd- 8½’
Plate 1 – Part of the map showing the City of Winnipeg and the Parish of Kildonan, 1907. Note that the northern limit of Lot 2, Parish of Kildonan (arrow) is the official boundary of the City of Winnipeg. (McPhillip’s Plan of the Municipalities of Kildonan and St. Pauls, compiled in 1907.)
Plate 2 - Lauzon House, 95 Luxton Avenue, south and west sides. (Murray Peterson, 1990.)

Plate 3 - Lauzon House, 95 Luxton Avenue, west side. (Murray Peterson, 1990.)
Plate 4 - Lauzon House, 95 Luxton Avenue, south side, roof detailing including pediment and gingerbread vergeboard. (Murray Peterson, 1990.)
Plate 5 - Lauzon House, 95 Luxton Avenue, east side. (Murray Peterson, 1997.)
Plate 6 - Lauzon House, 95 Luxton Avenue, second-floor hallway and door to deck. (Murray Peterson, 1997.)
Plate 7 - Lauzon House, 95 Luxton Avenue, second-storey newel post. (Murray Peterson, 1997.)
Plate 8 - Lauzon House, 95 Luxton Avenue, ground floor. (Murray Peterson, 1997.)
Plate 9 - Lauzon House, 95 Luxton Avenue, boiler in basement. (Murray Peterson, 1997.)
Plate 10 - Lauzon House, 95 Luxton Avenue, windows of the original structure and the addition. (Murray Peterson, 1997.)
Plate 11 - Jean (James) Baptiste Lauzon, M.L.A. for St. Boniface, 1897. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Personality Collection, “Lauzon, J.B., #1.”)
Plate 12 - J.B. and wife Adeline, ca.1893. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Personality Collection, “Lauzon, J.B., #2.”)
Plate 13 - Lauzon Block, 339 William Avenue, built 1905. (City of Winnipeg, no date.)