



346 NAIRN AVENUE

LA SALLE HOTEL

PREPARED BY PETERSON PROJECTS – DECEMBER 2009



346 NAIRN AVENUE LA SALLE HOTEL

Date of Construction: 1914

Building Permit: 1536/1914 (Plans at City Storage)

Architect: Chisholm, James and Son (Colin Campbell)

Contractor: Holmes, W.J.

ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

Operating for nearly 100 years in Winnipeg's Elmwood neighbourhood, the La Salle Hotel has been an important institution in the area.

The front (north) façade of the solid brick structure is symmetrically designed save for the arched doorway located just east of the main entrance. This main doorway is protected from the elements by an overhanging roof supported by large brackets. Two large arched windows are also found on the ground floor. The second and third floors feature a number of square headed windows; brick is used as cladding on the second floor, stucco on the third. The building is covered by a hipped gable roof with overhanging eaves. A terra cotta panel is located above the main entrance between the second and third floors and a neon sign also graces this façade. The east façade includes several one-storey additions while the upper floors are a continuation of the cladding and design of the front. The west



Front (north) and west façades, 2009

façade includes a deep light well on the second and third levels and two sets of open metal fire escapes.

The building stands on its original site and appears to be in good structural condition. Alterations to the building's exterior have not seriously affected its original materials or design. It was built at a cost of \$50,000 and measures approximately 19.8 x 25.9 metres.¹

James Chisholm designed this structure and was born in Paris, Upper Canada (Ontario) in 1840, moving to Winnipeg for health and economic reasons in the spring of 1877. He began his architectural career in earnest, and became involved in the City Hall construction scandal when he was hired to replace C.A. Barber as the architect for the project.

He moved to Superior, Wisconsin in 1892 and worked for a time as a preacher for the Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1900, he returned to Winnipeg, James taking his place among the growing number of talented architects practising their trade in the city and throughout Western Canada.

About 1911, Chisholm and his wife began wintering in Santa Monica, California because of continued poor health and they moved there permanently in 1914. He died on October 14, 1920 in Ocean Park, California.

Colin Campbell Chisholm was James Chisholm's youngest child, born in Winnipeg on September 17, 1883. He moved south with the family and received his early education in Madison, Wisconsin before returning to Winnipeg. He officially joined his father's architectural firm ca.1906, became its active manager in 1910 and eventually took over the practice. He died in Winnipeg on September 5, 1936.²



Front (north) and west façades, 2009

An incomplete list of James Chisholm's major Winnipeg work includes Hochman (formerly Harris) Building, 154 Princess Street (1882, Grade III), J.W. Harris House, 26 Edmonton Street (1902, Grade III) and Zion Methodist (then Zion Apostolic) Church, 335 Pacific Avenue (1904), destroyed by fire 1970. The father and son partnership produced, among others, Young Methodist (United) Church, 222 Furby Street (1907, 1910, Grade II)- only tower left after fire, I.O.O.F. (Odd Fellows') Temple, 293 Kennedy Street (1910, Grade III)- façade only remains, Granite Curling Club, 22 Mostyn Place (1912, Grade III) and the Marlborough Hotel, 331 Smith Street (1913, Grade II). Chisholm has received 20 points from the Historical Buildings Committee.

HISTORICAL INTEREST:

The history of Elmwood's settlement does not begin until well after the City of Winnipeg was incorporated, and decades after the settlement of other areas around the city had begun – mainly because Elmwood was a low lying area and therefore swampy and prone to flooding. Settlers chose higher ground to the north (what became North and East Kildonan).³ In 1877, Charles Midwinter (1851-1939) became the first settler in the area, all of which became part of the Kildonan Municipality in 1876. Midwinter was an employee of the Brown and Rutherford lumber yards across the Red River in Point Douglas.

As with other communities in western Canada, the coming of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) was to have a dramatic effect on the development of Elmwood. The construction of the Louise Bridge for rail traffic was so eagerly anticipated, civic officials declared a half day civic holiday for citizens to attend its opening in 1881. Prior to its construction, crossing the Red River meant travelling north to the Kildonan ferry or south to the St. Boniface ferry. The new bridge provided Elmwood with its own, year-round connection to Winnipeg.⁴

The Elmwood side of the bridge, what became Nairn Avenue, quickly developed with stores, stables, a farmers' market and other businesses, while the rest of the area remained virtually empty. By the turn-of-the-century, however, several dairy farmers and market gardeners had established themselves in the neighbouring river lots. Industrialization along the CPR tracks, including the J.Y. Griffin meat packing plant, also spurred settlement.⁵

After the CPR stopped using the Louise Bridge, pedestrians and streetcar traffic were free to move across it anytime, not just when there were no trains. Streetcars first began running over the bridge in 1903, servicing the meat packing plant along the river. As the service extended

further into Elmwood, the cheaper land and lower taxes began attracting buyers, many of them recently arrived immigrants. The Redwood Bridge was opened in 1908 and the entire area populated and urbanized so quickly that it soon asked to separate from the more rural Kildonan municipality. In 1906 Elmwood became Ward 7 of the City of Winnipeg.

John Beaman, agent and W.J. Holmes, contractor, are listed as the original owners of the La Salle Hotel. By 1925, North Canadian Trust Company is listed as the owner, F.W. Hammer owned the property from 1929-1932 and in the 1940s, Shea's Brewery was its owner.⁶

RECOMMENDATION TO HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE:

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

- its historical importance- an important pre-World War I era public facility and one of the older commercial buildings still standing in Elmwood;
- its associations- its long-term connections to the development of Nairn Avenue and Elmwood;
- its design- an example of a modest multi-tenant commercial structure with classically inspired detailing;
- its architect- J. Chisholm and Son was a respected and important partnership;
- its location- contributes greatly to the historic streetscape of its Elmwood neighbourhood; and
- its integrity- its main façades continue to display many of their original elements and design.

ENDNOTES:

- 1 City of Winnipeg Building Permit, #1536/1914
- 2 Biographical information from the files of the Historical Buildings Committee.
- 3 City of Winnipeg, East Kildonan-Transcona Community, On the East of the River (Winnipeg: East Kildonan-Transcona Community, n.d.), p. 92.
- 4 On the East of the River, op. cit., pp. 92-3.
- 5 Ibid., pp. 93-5.
- 6 City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, Roll No. 14099965200, 1915-1950.