



265 BOULEVARD PROVENCHER

BERNIER HOUSE

HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE

Revised: July 1989

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following people were very helpful in providing information and photographs on the history of the Bernier and Keroack families and on St. Boniface history:

Madeleine Bernier, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Father Maurice Deniset-Bernier, St. Pierre, Manitoba

Vera Deniset, St. Vital, Manitoba

Gerard Prenovault, St. Boniface

Société Historique de St. Boniface

Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Photograph Section

Legislative Library

Western Canada Pictorial Index

THE BERNIER FAMILY

Thomas-Alfred Bernier, (1844-1908), lawyer, civil servant, politician, land promoter and senator; born St. Georges, Quebec; married Malvina Demers in 1871 and had ten children; died St. Boniface, Manitoba 1908¹.

Bernier was educated in Ste. Hyacinthe, Canada East Quebec, at the same college attended by Archbishop Tache and was admitted to the Bar in 1869. He practised as a crown attorney in St. Jean until Father Albert Lacombe persuaded him to move to Manitoba in 1880.² He bought 1000 acres of land in the parish of Ste. Agathe, Manitoba and then brought out his household,³ including his wife, five children, mother-in-law and handicapped brother-in-law.⁴ Thomas-Alfred had ambitions to become a farmer in Ste. Agathe, but in 1881 he was appointed a member of a commission to investigate the law respecting "half-breed" lands and Superintendent of Education, French Section.⁵

His first cousin was the owner of the first French bookstore in Western Canada, Aime Lebrice de Keroack, who had come from Ste. Hyacinth to St. Boniface in 1881. Keroack designed a new house for the Bernier family at what is now 265 Provencher Boulevard across from the former site of the College de St. Boniface.⁶ Keroack eventually had two bookstores, one on Dumoulin, St. Boniface

¹ His birthplace and list of children are provided in the memoirs of Madeleine Bernier, Société Historique de St. Boniface (S.H.S.B.), M. Bernier file. The other details are both in the above file as well as the short biography of T. A. Bernier in Manitoba Library Association (MLA), Pioneers and Early Citizens of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Pegasus Pub., p.19-20.

² Ibid., both items. Le Metis announced his arrival in its edition of 29 avril, 1880.

³ Le Metis, 27 mai, 1880.

⁴ S.H.S.B., Madeleine Bernier file, memoirs.

⁵ MLA, Pioneers and Early Citizens, p. 19

⁶ The designer's name is from S.H.S.B., M. Bernier's memoirs. The site location is first described in Winnipeg City Directory, 1883 as "Bernier, A. - Provencher Avenue". Le Manitoba pins down the date of construction in its edition of 27 juin, 1882. "M. T. A. Bernier a commence a se faire construire une belle residence sur l'Avenue Provencher". This is the same house that presently stands at 265 Provencher as Madeleine's father, Judge Alex Bernier, told her; he was raised in that house and she lived there until she was five years old (interview, M. Bernier, 17 April, 1989).

and the other on Main Street, Winnipeg.⁷ He was not known primarily as a builder.

The reason that Bernier probably located his house on Provencher was that it was a residential street and across from the College. Bernier had been appointed Registrar of the University of Manitoba (1882-1893).⁸ Like Bernier's other major appointments, this one was through the influence of Archbishop Tache who considered Bernier a champion of French Catholic rights in the west.⁹ Bernier never resumed his career as a lawyer, but he was involved in the community life of St. Boniface as Reeve (1883-1889), French Clerk of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, member of the Provincial Board of Agriculture, Chairman of the Eastern Judicial District Board and Senator (1892-1908).¹⁰

The Senator was described as one of the "Chefs conservateurs franco-manitobains"¹¹ and was involved in a number of projects. In 1889, as Mayor of St. Boniface, he was asked to assist the French Contesse d'Albufera to promote a French colony at Fannystelle, Manitoba.¹² Bernier undertook this project for a number reasons: to stop French Canadian immigration to the U.S.A.; to provide a place for French-speaking farmers from France, Belgium and Switzerland; to promote unity between the different Canadian races; and to provide a counterweight in Confederation to Quebec.¹³ These views were expressed in his pamphlet "Le Manitoba, Champ d'Immigration,

⁷ Le Manitoba, 3 mai, 1893.

⁸ MLA, Pioneers and Early Citizens, p.20. Also Winnipeg City Directory, St. Boniface section, 1882 and onwards, T. A. Bernier.

⁹ Bernard Penisson, Henri d'Hellencourt, St. Boniface, Les Editions du Ble, p.56. See also S.H.S.B. Madeleine Bernier's memoirs.

¹⁰ MLA, Pioneers and Settlers, pp. 19-20, and S.H.S.B. Madeleine Bernier's memoirs.

¹¹ Penisson, 1986, p.114.

¹² Penisson, p.151. Also see Noel Bernier, Fannystelle, S.H.S.B., St. Boniface: 1939.

¹³ Bernier, 1939, p.18

1887", written in 1887.¹⁴ He believed it was important for the French Catholic community in Manitoba to augment its numbers and Fannystelle, located southwest of Winnipeg, became a settlement of French nobles, soldiers and French Canadian farmers.¹⁵ Bernier was bitterly opposed to the Greenway government's abolition of French as an official language of Manitoba and the abolition of separate schools.¹⁶

Although at times he regretted giving up his law career in Quebec,¹⁷ Bernier's success in Manitoba and his appointment as Senator can be attributed to his commitment to the French Catholic ideals of the Church, through his work as a lay spokesman and his political ties with the Conservative Party. He epitomized the French Canadians in St. Boniface who valued the integration of Church and state and worked to maintain the French Catholic presence in the Canadian west. Several of his children, Alfred, Auguste, Mathilde and grandchildren, Father Robert Bernier and Father Maurice Deniset-Bernier, joined Roman Catholic orders. Thomas-Alfred died December 30, 1908, and is buried in the cemetery of St. Boniface Cathedral.¹⁸

¹⁴ MLA, *Pioneers and Settlers*, p.20.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.21 "Pour nous, Canadiens-français, c'est au Manitoba qui nous devons concentrer nos forces, parce que vous y avons déjà un bon noyau et qui c'est en nous groupant autour de ce noyau qui nous acquerrons une véritable force et qui nous pouvons utiliser cette force."

¹⁶ "Une Défenseur de l'École Catholique", *L'Ami du Foyer* 10 mars, 1907, pp.113-114. Also, Penisson, 1986, p.114.

¹⁷ S.H.S.B., Madeleine Bernier's memoirs. He wrote in 1889 that he regretted going into administration; the salary and position were insufficient and he considered it a sacrifice. He regretted bringing his family and asked a colleague if it were worthwhile going back to Quebec.

¹⁸ Tombstone, St. Boniface Cemetery.

Malvina Demers Bernier, (1848-1927), wife of T.-A. Bernier, born in Quebec; married in 1871; had ten children; died St. Boniface, Manitoba.¹⁹

Malvina Demers was raised in rural Quebec and was educated by itinerant school teachers who stayed with the family. After marrying T.-A. Bernier in 1871, they settled at St. Jean, Quebec. In 1880, she moved to Ste. Agathe, Manitoba, to join her husband with five children born in Quebec: Alfred (who later died), Joseph Auguste, Noel and Marianne. She bore five more children in Manitoba: Alfred, Mathilde, Rachel, Alexandre and Marthe (Marianne and Marthe later died as well). She was accompanied by her mother, Madame Demers, a mid-wife, and her brother, Francois-Xavier, who was physically handicapped. Malvina felt very isolated living in Ste. Agathe, especially when her eldest boy died suddenly, so she was happy to move to the established community of St. Boniface in 1882 where there were medical facilities and schools. She was undoubtedly pleased with the elegant new home on Provencher Boulevard which was a big improvement over the farm house with the leaky roof in Ste. Agathe.

With the help of her mother and hired help, she ran the large Bernier household. The family was known in St. Boniface for its musical entertainments and gracious style of living. When important visitors such as Prime Minister Borden, Monck (the Conservative leader in Quebec), Judge Routheir, the composer of "Oh Canada", Geoffrian (Commissioner of the Port of Montreal), Dom Benoit and opera singers or entertainers came to town, Thomas-Alfred and Malvina acted as their hosts. As a couple, the Berniers were invited to important social functions such as those held at the home of Lieutenant-Governor J. C. Schultz in Winnipeg. Malvina organized Sunday dinners for the family and was known for her diplomacy and efforts to keep the peace with all her children. When her husband was appointed Senator in 1892, he had to spend six months of each year in Ottawa while the Senate was in session. Malvina still had young children at home, but she managed the household in his absence.

¹⁹ Sources consulted included interviews with Madeleine Bernier, April 17 and 20, 1989, and Father Maurice Deniset-Bernier, April 20 and 21, 1989. See also S.H.S.B., Madeleine Bernier file, "Memoirs".

After her husband died in 1908, Malvina lived in the house at 265 Provencher for another nineteen years with various relatives and continued in her role as family matriarch. When her daughter Rachel married Francois Deniset from France in 1911, Malvina allowed her to build a new home on the Bernier property on the east side. This house, designed by Rachel, is still standing at 259 Provencher.

Malvina was an extremely religious woman. Her influence can be seen in the fact that three of her children, Auguste, Alfred and Mathilde, entered religious orders. Her granddaughter loved to hear her tell Bible stories and Malvina expressed her artistic talent by embroidering biblical scenes in needlework. She epitomized the traditional French Canadian mother figure of nineteenth-century Canada, dedicated to her husband's career and her children. She also typified the new French-Canadian society lady who immigrated from Quebec in the 1880's and 1890's.

Joseph Bernier, (1874-1951); lawyer, editor, financier, politician and judge; born St. Jean d'Iberville, Quebec, August 16, 1874; married Rose-Marie Bernier of l'Islet, Quebec; had one son Robert and an adopted son, Maurice Deniset-Bernier.

Joseph was the eldest living son of Thomas-Alfred and Malvina (Demers) Bernier, born in Quebec before moving to Manitoba at age of eight in 1880. He was educated at St. Boniface College and took law at the University of Manitoba.²⁰ He was called to the bar in 1897.²¹ As a politician, he was elected to the Legislature in 1901 for St. Boniface; he lost by one vote in 1907 and was re-elected in 1910; he was appointed to the cabinet as Provincial Secretary in 1913, but was forced to resign with the rest of the cabinet in 1915 over the Legislative Buildings scandal. He was re-elected in 1920, 1922 and 1927. Like his father, he was a Conservative supporter²² and fought for confessional schools and preservation of the French language.²³ The 1890 School Question had decisively entrenched the family in the Conservative Party as they felt the Liberals had removed the constitutional guarantees for French rights in the North-West.

From 1900-1907, Joseph Bernier pursued a career in journalism, acting as co-editor for the Conservative organ, *Le Manitoba*, with his brother, Noel (who became sole editor until 1917).²⁴ Bernier used the paper to support his traditional political and religious views and an opposing editor called him "un jeune fanatique haineux".²⁵ He also dabbled in theatre, writing a play called "L'Hote de la Foret" which was produced in St. Boniface.²⁶

²⁰ S.H.S.B., file on Joseph Bernier, clipping of his biography in *Pioneers and Prominent People of Manitoba*, Canadian Publicity Company, 1925.

²¹ "Hon. J. Bernier", *Who's Who in Canada*, Toronto: International Press: 1922, p.98.

²² Maj. A. L. Normandin, *Canadian Parliamentary Guide*, Ottawa: Mortimer Cop. Ltd. Printers, 1931, p.402.

²³ S.H.S.B., Joseph Bernier file, clipping from *La Patrie*, 30 aout, 1942.

²⁴ B. Penisson, *Henri d'Hellencourt*, St. Boniface: Les Editions du Ble, 1986, p.56.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ L. Dorge, *Manitoba: Reflets d'un Passe*, p.165.

Joseph Bernier believed in the British legal system and its sense of justice and "fair play". During World War I he supported Canadian involvement and acted as Honorary Lt. Col. and director of French-Canadian recruiting. In this capacity, he travelled across Western Canada to find recruits and claimed that his compatriots had filled their quota. While he held strong views on controversial matters, he always tried to smooth out the differences between French and English in Canada:

Bernier was always untiring in his efforts to bring concord between English and French in Canada by asking from the English population respect for the ideas of compatriots and by asking his compatriots never to fail to be true to the crown.²⁷

J. Bernier was involved in finance and the business life in Winnipeg: as President of the London-Liverpool-Winnipeg Loan and Investment Company, Vice-President of the Universal Life Insurance Company and director of the Trustee Company.²⁸ His community work included the presidency of the St. Jean Baptist Society and a councillor at the University of Manitoba.²⁹ In 1932, he was appointed a judge of the County Court, (Winnipeg) the first francophone appointed to that position.³⁰

He and his wife Rose-Marie continued the tradition of their parents of hospitality and generosity. Neighbours enjoyed being invited in for tea in the salon and relatives remembered parties with musicians. "Joe Bernier's house" was one of the social centres of St. Boniface society.

²⁷ Who's Who, p.98.

²⁸ Dorge, p.165.

²⁹ Who's Who, p.98.

³⁰ Other francophones had been County Court judges in St. Boniface, but he was the first in Winnipeg Source: Madeline Bernier, June 12, 1989.

Pere Robert Bernier, (1911-1979) Born in St. Boniface; Jesuit priest; scholar and teacher.³¹

Robert was born in St. Boniface 21 April, 1911, the son of Joseph and Rose-Marie Bernier. He entered the Jesuit Order at the age of 19 and studied social sciences and philosophy. When he taught at College Jean-de-Brebeuf in Montreal, one of his pupils was former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau who later referred to Father Bernier as "the man who most influenced my life...who taught what was beautiful and noble about life". Other teaching assignments included College Ste. Marie in Montreal and the Catholic Institute of Paris. As the editor of the periodical Relations, he was forced to resign for defending the health concerns of asbestos workers. As a sociologist and scholar, Father Bernier was an acknowledged expert in international relations and development and, in 1964, the Jesuit Order sent him to Africa to assist the new government of Ivory Coast in its decolonizing efforts. Suffering from poor health, he returned to Quebec to act as Superior of the Retreat House Manrise and died in 19 February, 1979.

³¹

Obituary in La Liberte, 8 mars, 1979 and interviews with Father Deniset-Bernier and Madeleine Bernier.

Father Maurice Deniset-Bernier, (1920-) Born in St. Boniface, priest, educator and author.³²

Maurice was the youngest son of Francois and Rachel (Bernier) Deniset who lived next door to the Bernier home at 259 Provencher. When his mother died in child birth, Maurice was adopted by his Uncle Joe and Aunt Rose-Marie Bernier and was raised at 265 Provencher. He has many happy memories of his childhood growing up in that house. He particularly liked the library, Joe's office, which had many interesting books and big comfortable chairs. He received his BA from University of Manitoba, studied theology in Sherbrooke, ecclesiastical law in Rome, took education in Manitoba and the new catechism at Laval. He was a school inspector for the Archdiocese of St. Boniface, pasteur of the cathedral and first Director of the College Notre Dame in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan.

Father Maurice is a great story-teller and loved to entertain the children at the Fresh Air Camp at Albert Beach on Lake Winnipeg. These stories subsequently formed the core of two children's stories he published in French to give school teachers interesting material to stimulate their students to read – Manito and Manito et Jeronimo. They also represent Franco-Manitoban culture as they have a local setting.

³²

Interviews with Father Deniset-Bernier, April 20 and 21 and Madeleine Bernier April 17, 1989.

Aime Lebrice de Keroack, (1840-1899)

Aime Lebrice de Keroack came from Ste. Hyacinthe, Quebec, where he had a bookstore and produced almanacs.³³ In 1871 he married Malvina Gauthier and they had a family of 11 children,³⁴ 8 girls and 3 boys. After a disastrous fire in 1876, they lost the bookstore and in 1881, decided to move to Manitoba.³⁵ Like his cousin, T.-A. Bernier, he immigrated first to Ste. Agathe where he designed a house for them. However, when they decided to relocate in St. Boniface in 1882, he designed their new home at 265 Provencher.³⁶ His grandson, Gerard Prenovault, felt that he probably sold house plans in his "librairie" on Dumoulin which was the first French bookstore in the West. Keroack probably designed this building as well. The bookstore was at the front on the main floor, while the family lived upstairs.³⁷ They later opened a second bookstore at 547 Main Street, Winnipeg.³⁸

The Keroacks were part of the social elite of St. Boniface before the death of Aime in 1899. They did a lot of entertaining and enjoyed a large circle of friends. A family birthday party for Aime in 1893 included musical entertainments, singing, recitations and comedy skits.³⁹ After his death, his eldest daughter Eugenie ran the bookstore on Main Street until her younger brother Albert was old enough to take it over.⁴⁰

³³ Obituary, Aime de Keroack, 4 janvier, 1899, Le Manitoba

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ S.H.S.B., Madeleine Bernier's Memoirs.

³⁷ Interview with Gerard Prenovault, St. Boniface, May 1, 1989.

³⁸ Le Manitoba, 3 mai, 1893.

³⁹ Le Manitoba, 2 fevrier, 1921, Obituary of Mme. de Keroack.

⁴⁰ Gerard Prenovault. He remembers the store also had toys, religious objects and children's books. His mother attended Academie de Ste. Marie, Winnipeg, where she was trained as an artist.

THE BERNIER HOUSE

The house at 265 Boulevard Provencher was built during the height of Winnipeg's boom in June, 1882.⁴¹ It was designed by Aime Lebrice de Keroack, a first cousin of T.-A. Bernier who had emigrated from Ste. Hyacinth, Quebec, about the same time. He owned bookstores in both St. Boniface and Winnipeg and, although he and his wife were affluent and had a reputation for lavish entertaining, he was not known as a builder.⁴² There is another house two doors to the east of the Bernier House which was the mirror image of the Bernier house, but had a tower on the east side. This house has since been substantially altered with the tower removed; however, it is possible that de Keroack designed it as well.⁴³

The exterior of the house has undergone some alteration since it was built. A photograph taken by Father M. Deniset-Bernier in 1938 gives evidence of some of the minor changes:

- the outside staircase on the east side has been added;
- the central porch and upstairs balcony used to be screened; now they have been glassed in;
- the porch originally was deeper and had a door to the tower which has been covered over; the upstairs verandah was big enough for people to sleep out on a hot summer's night;
- the bay window on the east side front has been replaced by a picture window; and
- most window surrounds have been removed and the clapboard siding has been stuccoed.

Father Deniset-Bernier and Madeleine Bernier remember that the original front entrance was through the tower. There was a large open verandah that ran down the west side of the house. This was probably torn down when the original foundation was replaced by Joe Bernier about 1935. There was a shed attached to the house at the back which is now gone. A large garden was located

⁴¹ Le Manitoba, June 29, 1882.

⁴² Le Manitoba, May 3, 1893 describes an entertainment held to celebrate Keroack's 53rd birthday.

⁴³ PAM, Fire Insurance Plan of St. Boniface, 1919.

on the east side of the lot, but Father Deniset-Bernier thinks the house on the east side has had an addition added as it now appears much closer to the lot line where the garden was located. Madeleine Bernier says of the interior that "Uncle Joe" added the French doors and fireplace in the salon.⁴⁴

This is an elegant house which represents the St. Boniface French-Canadian elite of post-Confederation Manitoba. It housed a large, inter-generational household and stayed in the Bernier family as a residential home until it was sold in 1951 after Joseph Bernier's death. The tower is finely detailed with ornate dormer windows, brackets and a finial and is balanced by the intricate gingerbread on the southeast gable.

There was originally eighteen rooms with two elegant salons separated by an archway across the front and the dining room on the west side with doors opening onto the verandah. Behind the dining room was the breakfast room adjacent to the kitchen on the east side at the back. Joseph Bernier's office/library was located between the kitchen and the salon on the east side and Fr. Deniset-Bernier says the family used it as an informal sitting room. While he was growing up, the family had a maid whose bedroom was at the back of the breakfast room. During Thomas-Alfred and Malvina's tenure, there were several servants.⁴⁵

The original Bernier family probably bought that particular lot because it was across the street from the "Vieux College". T.-A. Bernier was appointed Registrar of the University of Manitoba through Archbishop Tache's influence in 1882. The university at that time had no separate campus, but was composed of several colleges. Mr. Bernier probably had his office in the St. Boniface College (this building burned down in 1922). At this point, he was also appointed Superintendent of French Catholic schools and he moved his family from Ste. Agathe to St. Boniface.⁴⁶ Furthermore, this area

⁴⁴ Interviews with Father Deniset-Bernier April 20 and 21 and Madeleine Bernier, April 17, 1989.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ S.H.S.B., Madeleine Bernier file, Memoirs.

of Boulevard Provencher was strictly residential, the central business district of St. Boniface being located at the corner of Tache and Dumoulin Streets.⁴⁷ T.-A. always had ambitions to be a farmer. There was a barn in the yard which housed two horses, carriages, sleds and chickens. He also owned a farm outside of Winnipeg.

Neighbouring houses were inhabited by professionals and politicians in St. Boniface.⁴⁸ The house at 259 Provencher was built for Rachel, T.-A. and Malvina Bernier's daughter, when she married Francois Deniset in 1911. The house was built on part of the Bernier lot. Mr. Deniset brought a large stock of furniture from France and advised his wife to design high ceilings to fit the ten-foot armoires.⁴⁹ Mr. Deniset was a businessman. Other houses nearby included the Kittson house which had been moved from La Verendrye to the corner of Langevin (formerly College) and Provencher;⁵⁰ the Charbonneau house built in 1882;⁵¹ the Bertrand house in 1893 (he was a lawyer)⁵² and Judge Betournay's house.⁵³ The Tremblay family had the house at the corner of Provencher and St. Jean Baptist during Joe Bernier's time.⁵⁴ Fr. Deniset-Bernier recalls that there was an empty lot behind the house called the "Champs a Trudeau" where they played baseball. A M. Constant owned a macaroni factory on Dumoulin and whenever they broke a window with their baseball, elder brother Robert was designed to take 25 cents to M. Constant to repair the glass.⁵⁵

⁴⁷ Gilles Lesage, Executive Director, S.H.S.B., personal communication.

⁴⁸ S.H.S.B. Madeleine Bernier, op. cit.

⁴⁹ Vera Deniset interview, April 19, 1989.

⁵⁰ S.H.S.B., Notes on historic sites for "Walking Tour".

⁵¹ Le Manitoba, August 17, 1882.

⁵² Le Manitoba, August 16, 1893.

⁵³ S.H.S.B., photograph of Provencher Avenue.

⁵⁴ Father Deniset-Bernier, April 21, 1989.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

THE BERNIER HOUSE - STYLE
GILES BUGAILISKIS
HISTORICAL BUILDINGS OFFICER

The Bernier House with its unusual tower and ornamentation is eclectic in its appearance which makes its classification difficult. It is now commonly recognized that any discussion of style in residential buildings in Canada must address the question not what style it is, but rather how many styles is it.

In the early 19th century, the Picturesque Movement was an aesthetic point of view that attempted to create interesting and picturesque visual effects in the proper landscape setting. A number of building styles were developed which were highly decorative and which used ornamentation to create variety and movement, light and shadow, all in an attempt to look "modern".

The Italianate Style, popular in Canada between 1840-85, features square plan buildings, towers, gently sloping roofs, bracketed eaves, bay windows and porches. Principal areas of decoration were windows, cornices, gables and doorways.

This style spread throughout North America via building magazines and house pattern books which contained essays on architecture and landscaping, and illustrations of house plans in a variety of decorative styles. Builders and artisans used these pattern books to produce "gingerbread" decorations that were fanciful but required less skill and time to produce than more precise classical motifs.

In Ontario gingerbread decoration tended to be pointed and applied to central gable vernacular structures. In Quebec, gingerbread was popular after 1850 when machine tools allowed a greater variety of designs. The decreased cost of production meant that decoration was no longer limited to the dwellings of the rich.

Quebec vergeboards were more rounded. Balcony decoration suggestive of Swiss and Austrian chalets was extremely popular in Quebec and can be seen in the Bernier House of 1938.

Central projecting towers were common in Italianate villas. The tower on the Bernier House is unique and recalls the romantic towers of Loire Valley chateaux.

265 BOULEVARD PROVENCHER – BERNIER HOUSE

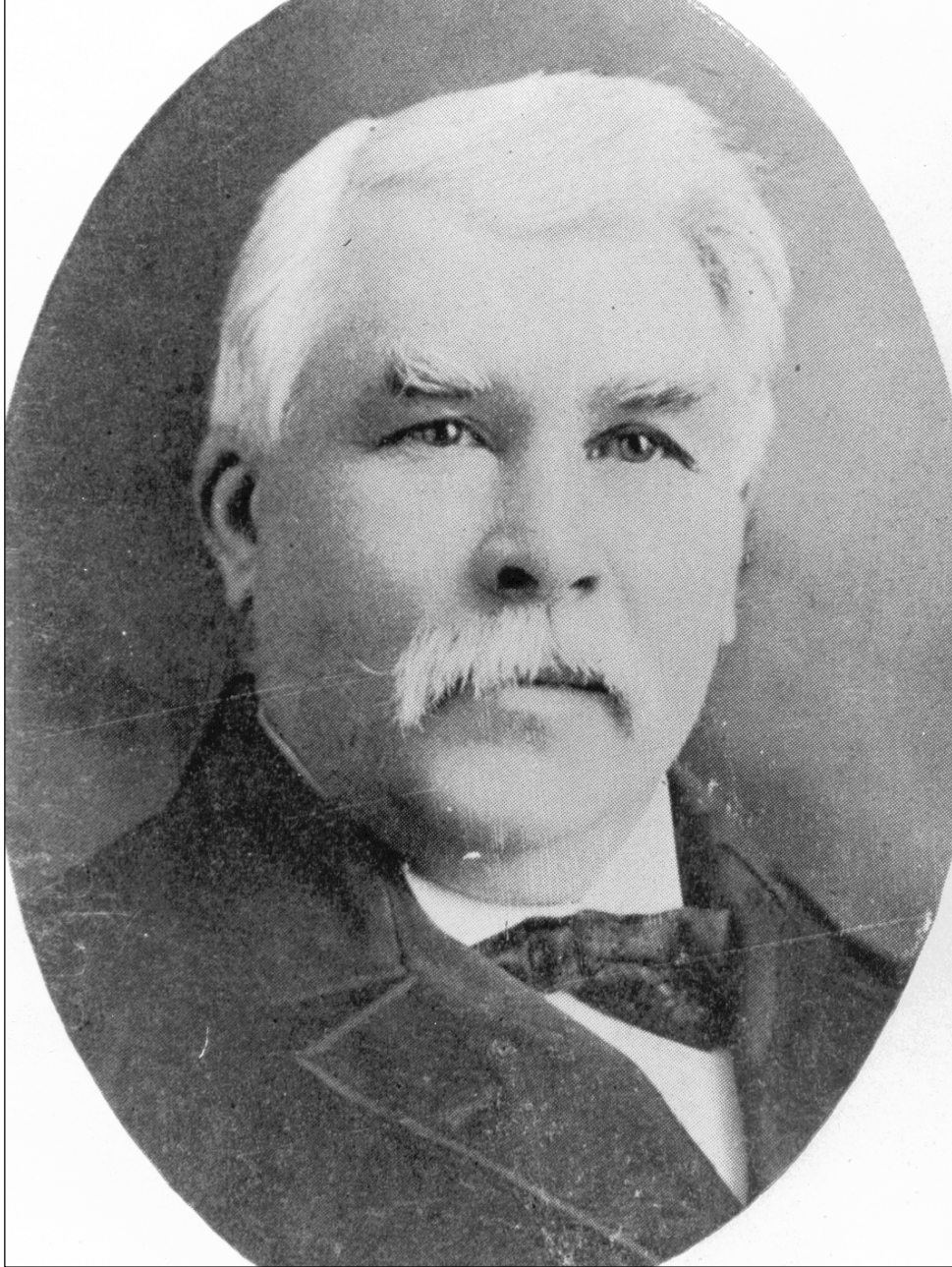


Plate 1 – Hon. Senator Thomas-Alfred Bernier, 1912. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, N9158.)

265 BOULEVARD PROVENCHER – BERNIER HOUSE



Plate 2 – Malvina Demers Bernier, no date. (Madelaine Bernier Collection.)



Plate 3 – Joseph Bernier, 1900. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)

265 BOULEVARD PROVENCHER – BERNIER HOUSE



Plate 4 – Joseph Bernier, 1950. (Father M. Deniset-Bernier Collection.)



Plate 5 – A Bernier family birthday party, 1949. (Father M. Deniset-Bernier Collection.)

265 BOULEVARD PROVENCHER – BERNIER HOUSE



Plate 6 – Aimé Lebrice de Keroack and family, ca.1898. (G. Prénovault Collection.)



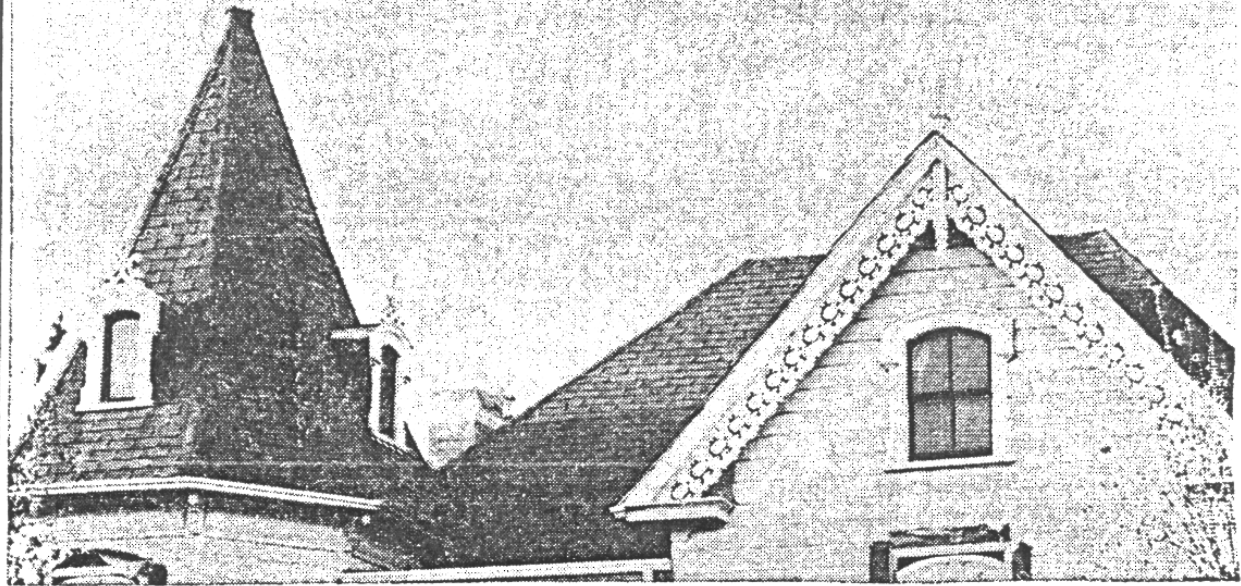
Plate 7 – The Keroack book store, St. Boniface, no date. (G. Prénovault Collection.)

265 BOULEVARD PROVENCHER – BERNIER HOUSE



Plate 8 – Bernier House, 265 Boulevard Provencher, 1938. (Father M. Deniset-Bernier Collection.)

Stories Houses Tell



This fascinating old French house with its conical tower adorned with four dormers, each with a crown of wooden 'lace' is undergoing renovation that may rob it of its top. Edward St. Laurent, the new owner, wants a room with a telescope on the roof so he can watch the stars. He's "afraid I'll have to take off the tower."

By
**LILLIAN
GIBBONS**

The house was the home of Judge Joseph Bernier. Mr. St. Laurent said, "I was doing some re-decorating for him and I told him how much I liked the house. 'Maybe you'll own it one day. Who knows?' he said in his kindly way.

265 Provencher Ave., Showing the Tower and Wooden Trim

It's come true. I've bought it, put in a full basement, a heating system, new aluminum window frames. Perhaps I shall stucco it for extra warmth." White clapboards cover it now.

Judge Alex Bernier, a brother to Judge Joseph Bernier, says their father Senator T. A. Bernier built the house in 1882. The architect was Aime Keroack. Mrs. Alex Bernier said with great feeling, "We would have liked to take the old house ourselves, but it required much renovating and at our time of life, that seemed like a big undertaking. But it has always been very dear to all of us. Judge Joseph traveled in Europe and sometimes brought back things. It was a lovely house for entertaining — and in those days that meant an orchestra. The house always had an atmosphere of its own."

Judge Joseph and his wife left two sons, both in the church: Dr. Robert Bernier, a Jesuit, and Fr. Bernier Deniset, now studying canon law in Rome.

Before Joseph became a judge he was on the board of governors of the University of Manitoba, representing St. Boniface college. He was once editor of *Le Manitoba*, newspaper, and wrote a drama, *L'Hote de la Foret*, successfully presented in St. Boniface, says a *Who's Who* of other days.

Mrs. L. La Riviere says she loved the house as the Berniers furnished it: "Everything fitted the corner where it was. Everything was old and beautiful. There was a sideboard that took the entire wall in the dining room. And the pictures — I wonder where they all went?"

Some of the pictures, says Mrs.

Alex Bernier, were by Mollot, an artist who came from France to Canada. Dr. M. F. Bennett, of Carman, who paints for recreation, liked the gingerbread gables and painted a picture, now owned by Noel Bernier, barrister, third son of the Senator, who went into law. Two more went into the church; Fr. Alfred Bernier, St. Boniface college, and Fr. Auguste Bernier, in Quebec. "I love having the oil painting," says Mrs. Noel Bernier, "because it shows just that corner where I had my apartments when I came from Quebec. Yes, I stayed in that house before I was married."

The house is bathed in sunshine, facing across boulevard Provencher to the park, the old grounds of St. Boniface College. Its entrance centres the front and is enclosed in glass. Within hangs a beautiful old wrought iron lamp. The iron picket fence is painted yellow-green, matching the fading lilac bushes. "I like that odd color but my wife wants me to change it," smiled Mr. St. Laurent.

265 BOULEVARD PROVENCHER – BERNIER HOUSE



Plate 10 – Bernier House, 1889. (City of Winnipeg Planning Department.)

265 BOULEVARD PROVENCHER – BERNIER HOUSE



Plate 11 – Detail of original window gable and ornamentation, 1989. (City of Winnipeg Planning Department.)