

**300 RIVER AVENUE – BOYLSTON APARTMENTS (CONGRESS APARTMENTS)**  
*H.E. Matthews, 1910*



Through both design and materials, the Congress Apartments convey the early prestige of their Fort Rouge location and the stature of their initial occupants.

Generous use of stone detailing, interior spaciousness, and a striking main entrance attest to the exclusive market which original owners of this three-storey block sought to attract.

The Congress, first called the Boylston Apartments, was constructed for \$90,000 in 1910 on the southwest corner of River Avenue and Lewis Street by owner J. Moxam, a local contractor.

During this period, apartment blocks were gaining increased acceptance among consumers and investors as a convenient, adaptable and profitable building form. Location of the Congress in one of Winnipeg's finest residential areas demanded that it contain the quality and features

commensurate with an influential, upper-income clientele.

The U-shaped structure was designed in a simplified Edwardian Neo-Classical style by Herbert E. Matthews, a prolific residential and commercial architect.

Matthews practised privately for several years after his 1905 arrival in Winnipeg, then served in the Dominion Department of Public Works (1921-38). During World War I, he was the first president of the Manitoba Association of Architects. Little else is known of his background. However, his extensive portfolio included houses and apartments in various neighbourhoods, two churches, warehouses, factories, stables, and a drill hall.

The Congress rests on a stone foundation and concrete piles (added in 1937). The raised basement has ashlar limestone on the front (north), east, and most of the west facades. Two shades of brown brick complete the facings. The rear (south) side has a rubble-stone foundation, cream-coloured brick, enclosed wooden balconies and a wooden staircase.

A stone belt course separates the basement and main floor on the finished facings, while there is a stone cornice between the main and second storeys. Giant order brick pilasters, with stone bases and capitals, appear at the corners. At the top of the building, corbelled brick leads to a metal cornice and low parapet.

Stone sills are used throughout, while stone lintels and quoins appear along the basement and first floor. Windows mainly are flat-headed, rectangular, double-hung, and appear in singles or pairs. On the front facade, there are diamond-shaped leaded panes and rectangular side lights around living-room windows on the first and second floors. Above two side entrances are large, half-circle transoms.

Matthews created a grand main entrance at the base of the building's U-shape. A long walkway, highlighted by two brick and stone gate posts and wrought iron fencing, leads past a grassy set-back and the imposing walls of the superstructure to six smooth stone steps, complete with balustrade, and double brass doors. Flanking the doors are three-quarter-round Tuscan Order columns with brass

accents; above are a full entablature and segmentally-arched pediment. Light fixtures are mounted on both the main gate posts and balustrade. Two smaller posts mark the ends of the block's property.

Inside is a marble entrance hall and heavily ornamented staircase that splits under a large stained-glass window. The dark wood staircase includes bevelled mirrors and ornate lamps.

The Congress originally contained 27 suites - three in the basement and eight on each of the other levels. Several apartments had two bedrooms, dining-rooms and pantries. By 1978, two suites had been added to the basement.

Moxam retained ownership of the building for only a year, selling it to Alfred Joseph Andrews, a prominent lawyer and former mayor of Winnipeg (1898-99). In turn, Jennie and John McIvor maintained ownership from 1923 to 1931, renaming the block as the Congress Apartments.

Several prominent citizens were among the early tenants, including Matthews; Mr. Justice Thomas L. Metcalfe of the Court of King's Bench; W. B. Lawrence, owner of the Winnipeg Theatre; and William T. Newman, owner of the National Hotel. Over time, the block became less exclusive, gaining a more mixed group of tenants.