



## 14 RUSKIN ROW

### JOHN CRICHTON GREEN-ARMYTAGE HOUSE

PREPARED BY PETERSON PROJECTS – DECEMBER 2009



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**Date of Construction:** 1909

**Building Permit:** 418/1909

**Architect:** Unknown

**Contractor:** Unknown

ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

Another example of the fine residential architecture completed in Winnipeg in the pre-World War I era is this large home located on the east side of Ruskin Row at the foot of Harvard Avenue.

The ground floor of this home is clad in rough cut limestone, including the open entrance porch with heavy columns. The upper floors are covered in shingles and the truncated hip roof includes cross gables. A one-storey glazed porch is found on the home's south side. The building stands on its original site, appears to be in good structural condition and does not appear to have suffered major exterior alteration.



Front (west) and south façades, 2009

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#### HISTORICAL INTEREST:

The area known as Crescentwood in Fort Rouge developed slowly in the late 1900s because of poor connections, namely bridges to Winnipeg. The construction of the Maryland Street Bridge in 1895 assured this connection and triggered the area's modern development beginning with the construction of St. Mary's Academy shortly after the turn of the century. The earliest fine home of the area was barrister John H. Munson's house, 475 Wellington Crescent, built in 1888 and named Crescentwood. It was, for many years, the showpiece of the suburb, being enlarged on several occasions before and after occupation by the James A. Richardson family after Munson's death in 1918.<sup>1</sup> The home's name was used for the northwest corner of Fort Rouge and Crescentwood (named after a public contest) began its modern organization under the watchful eye of developer Charles Enderton (1864-1920). By 1902, he had accumulated a large amount of land in the western portion of Fort Rouge, subdividing it into large lots, formally establishing Wellington Crescent as a "grand drive". In September 1902, Enderton took an entire page of the Manitoba Free Press to promote his new subdivision and to outline the building restrictions therein. These caveats (attached to each registered lot) included: minimum setbacks from the street (18.3 metres, 60 feet); minimum completed values for homes (\$6,000 on Wellington Crescent, \$3,500 and \$4,000 elsewhere); restrictions on non-residential structures; and number of homes per lot (one).

Land sales were slow in the early years, but the suburb eventually grew and flourished, and the Enderton caveats ensured the district remained a haven for Winnipeg's affluent. When economic growth slowed and then stopped after 1914, Enderton (and others) could not sell their extensive holdings (Enderton alone owned 133 vacant lots in 1917).<sup>2</sup>



Front (west) façade detail, 2009

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The home was originally owned by John Crichton “Jack” Green-Armytage (1872-1943) (also as Armitage) and his family (wife Kathleen and a son and a daughter).<sup>3</sup> Green-Armytage came to Winnipeg in 1889 from Ontario and worked in a wholesale brokerage but soon became involved in the insurance field where he was extremely successful. In 1908 he had been appointed manager of the Equitable Life Assurance Company of Canada for Western Canada as well as working for United Empire Life of Canada.<sup>4</sup> An avid sportsman, Green-Armytage was the founder of the Victoria Hockey Club (first club organized in Winnipeg), twelve years its Captain and won three Stanley Cups (1896 as its captain and 1901 and 1902 as its President). He died at his home in 1943, his widow remained in the Ruskin Row house into the 1950s.<sup>5</sup>

#### RECOMMENDATION TO HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE:

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

- its historical importance- one of Crescentwood’s and Winnipeg’s magnificent pre-World War I single-family dwellings;
- its associations- its long-term connections to early and influential businessman J.C. Green-Armytage;
- its design- an excellent example of a 1910-era mansion;
- its architect- N/A;
- its location- contributes greatly to its historic streetscape and the neighbourhood; and
- its integrity- its main façades continue to display many of their original elements and design.



Front (west) façade, 1978

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ENDNOTES:

- 1 R.R. Rostecki, Crescentwood: A History (Winnipeg, MB: Crescentwood Home Owners Association, 1993), pp. 44-46. Upon the death of Mrs. James A. Richardson in 1973, the family donated the house and the land to the City of Winnipeg. The buildings were demolished in 1976, the land became Munson Park.
- 2 Ibid., p. 36.
- 3 Census of Canada, 1911; and Pioneers and Prominent People of Manitoba (Winnipeg, MB: Canadian Publicity Company, 1925).
- 4 Manitoba Free Press, March 9, 1908, p. 3.
- 5 City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, Roll No. 12040050000, 1920-1970; and Henderson's Directory, 1915-1970.