18 RUSKIN ROW
ALBERT HENRY ALDINGER HOUSE

Date of Construction: 1910
Building Permit: 394/1910
Architect: Aldinger, Albert Henry (owner)
Contractor: Aldinger, Albert Henry (owner)

ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

Not as ornamentally complex or architecturally treated as its neighbours, this home was built in 1910 by one of Western Canada’s most influential and renowned builders, A.H. Aldinger.

The front (west) façade of this two storey structure features a raised entrance at the north end and a one-storey section at the south end. The front is clad in brick which was laid on the original smooth stucco finish sometime after 1978. Windows are square headed and plain with modest brick sills. The low sloped hip roof finishes with wide eaves.

The building stands on its original site and appears to be in good structural condition. Complete renovation of the main façade has meant the redesign of the original entrance, new windows and the covering of the original stucco cladding.
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. 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).
The original owner was A.H. Aldinger, one of the founding members of Carter-Halls-Aldinger (CHA), one of the region’s biggest construction companies. The principals were William Henry Carter (1874-1962), a contractor; Frank Ernest Halls (1872-1950), a fire-proofing expert; and Albert Henry Aldinger (ca.1876-1942), a civil engineer. W.H. Carter arrived in Winnipeg in 1903, representing the William Grace Company, a Chicago, Illinois contracting firm that was building the Bank of British North America, 436 Main Street. Carter worked for Grace until February 1907 when he joined with Halls and Aldinger to found the new firm. Aldinger had graduated with a degree in civil engineering from Purdue University in 1897 and then worked for the Burlington Railway, C.H. Burnham and Company and the Chicago contractors Wells Brothers. By 1915, CHA was well-known throughout Western Canada with such Winnipeg buildings to its credit as the McArthur (later Childs) Building, 211 Portage Avenue (1909); Confederation Life Association Building, 457 Main Street (1912); the Winnipeg Electric Railway Building, 213 Notre Dame Avenue (1912-13); the Manitoba Free Press Building, 300 Carlton Street (1913); the Olympia (later Marlborough) Hotel, 331 Smith Street (1913); and the Minto Armouries, 969 St. Matthews Avenue (1914). The firm also had contracts in Moose Jaw, Saskatoon, Calgary, Edmonton and Prince George, British Columbia.

Aldinger remained in the city until 1916 when he moved to Detroit, Michigan to help found and president the contracting firm Walbridge Aldinger.

After the Aldinger family left, the house was occupied by George L. Babson, manager of a radio equipment store (ca.1920-ca.1930), Elmer L. Alsip, vice-president of Alsip Brick, Tile and Lumber Company (1935 and 1940) and Robert H. Chesshire, manager of Hudson’s Bay Company Fur (1945-1955).
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 well-appointed pre-World War I single-family dwellings;
- its associations- its long-term connections to early and influential builder A.H. Aldinger;
- its design- an excellent example of a 1910-era mansion;
- its architect- A.H. Aldinger was a respected and important practitioner;
- its location- contributes to its historic streetscape and the neighbourhood; and
- its integrity- N/A.
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.


4 Ibid., p. 4.