

**6 RUSKIN ROW**  
**CHESTER D. STOVEL HOUSE**

PREPARED BY PETERSON PROJECTS – DECEMBER 2009



---

## 6 RUSKIN ROW CHESTER D. STOVEL HOUSE

**Date of Construction:** 1910

**Building Permit:** 617/1910

**Architect:** Horwood, Victor W.

**Contractor:** Simpson, C.H.

### ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

Crescentwood developed as one of Winnipeg's finest residential neighbourhoods before World War I and Winnipeg's economic stall put an end to major expansion in the city. This house, on one of the district's most sought after addresses, is a fine example of a pre-World War I mansion.

The front (west) façade of this solid brick and stone residence is symmetrical, with the centrally located entrance set in an open front porch with second storey deck with wood balustrade. The porch is supported by squat, unfluted wood columns with plain heads and bases. The main entrance, with its leaded glass side lights, features a heavy, smooth-cut stone head, similar in design to the heads of the square headed window openings on the ground and second floors. The heavy overhanging eaves are embellished with dentils and





South façade, 2009

---

modillions. The truncated hip roof includes gable dormers with arched Palladian window on the front and two side slopes.

Other notable features of the house include the enclosed entrance porch on the rear (east) façade, the oriel window with magnificent stained glass unit on the south elevation, the screened wood deck on the west façade and the seven large brick and stone chimneys.

The building, which measures approximately 17.4 x 14.0 metres, cost a considerable \$22,000 in 1910 (one of only six single-family homes costing more than \$20,000 built that year).<sup>1</sup> It sits on its original location, appears to be in good structural condition and has not suffered major exterior alteration.

This home is a highly decorated version of a Foursquare style structure, one of the most popular styles used for residential architecture in North America from the late 1880s until the 1930s. Its square massing and boxiness made it affordable to build and perfect for small urban lots where space was at a premium. The roofline was usually pyramidal or hipped and a front porch and small dormer on the second floor were familiar details. Usually built without the benefit of an architect, the foursquare was often detailed by the owner and could be highly ornamental or very plain. On the interior, the foursquare featured a second floor with four square rooms above three square rooms and an entrance hall with stairs tucked unobtrusively to the side on the first floor.<sup>2</sup>

Architect V.W. Horwood was born in Frome, Somersetshire, England on February 27, 1878 and came to Canada in 1884, settling with his family in Prescott, Ontario. Horwood's father, a stained glass artist, is credited for having installed the decorative glass in the House of Commons Building in Ottawa. Victor Horwood studied art in New York City,



Rear (east) and north façades, 2009

---

after which he worked in Ottawa in a local architectural firm. In 1904, he came to Winnipeg and set up his private practice. A partial list of his better known local work includes St. Boniface City Hall, 219 Provencher Boulevard (1905, Grade II), Moxam Court, 280 River Avenue (1907), Waldron Court Apartments, 544 Broadway (1909, demolished 1979) and the C.D. Stovel House, 6 Ruskin Row (1910).

In 1911, he was appointed assistant to the provincial architect, Samuel Hooper, and assumed the head position upon Hooper's death only a few months later. As the province's chief architect, Horwood controlled the office during one of its most productive periods and oversaw the construction of some of Manitoba's most spectacular buildings including Brandon's Normal School (1912-1913), Stonewall's Town Hall (1912-1913), Agricultural College, Fort Garry Campus (1913) and Winnipeg's Law Courts (1912-1916).

As with the early St. Boniface City Hall, Horwood became embroiled in controversy over his role in the Legislative Building scandal. It was Horwood's suggested changes to the structure's foundation in 1913 that allowed contractors to embezzle from the government. Subsequent Royal Commission hearings and court proceedings determined that Horwood had not only known about the illegal activities, but had perjured himself as part of an early cover-up attempt. Horwood, however, bargained with the courts and was not charged in return for testimony that placed the blame on Premier Rodmond Roblin and three of his cabinet ministers. After the affair, Horwood was dismissed as provincial architect. Horwood has received 20 points from the Historical Buildings Committee.



Rear (east) and south façades, 2009

---

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>3</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>4</sup>





Front (west) entrance detail, 2009

---

This was originally the home of Chester D. Stovel, one of the three Stovel brothers who founded the Stovel Company in Winnipeg in 1889. John, Augustus B. and Chester D. Stovel<sup>5</sup> came to Winnipeg in 1885 from their birthplace at Mount Forest, Canada West (Ontario) where they had been involved in printing a weekly paper.<sup>6</sup> John began a modest printing company in Winnipeg in 1888. The next year, the brothers formed the Stovel Company.<sup>7</sup> In 1893, the firm, which had steadily increased its business, built its grand new headquarters in the heart of the growing warehouse district. That same year, the company purchased an engraving and lithographing firm operated by H.C. and J.W. Stovel, opening new markets to the three brothers. The firm, using special plates from France, was the first in Western Canada to make colour prints.

Stovel's incorporated as a limited stock company in 1909 but control remained within the family. The company was known for its paternalistic concern for its employees, organizing annual picnics and sporting teams. The employees, in turn, were very loyal to Stovel's, even forming a Stovel Mutual Club, a benefit society to give financial support to members in case of personal problems.<sup>8</sup> Growth in the business occurred rapidly into the 20<sup>th</sup> century and in 1914, the company had ambitious plans drawn up for a six-storey factory/office structure on the north side of Bannatyne Avenue from Dagmar to Ellen streets.<sup>9</sup>

The innovative company remained at the forefront of the printing business in Canada for many years. It was the first in Western Canada to use electricity to run their presses and to employ machines such as book-folders and automatic feeders. The art department was renowned across the country. The company also was Canada's first printer to use a wax process to engrave maps. This process was extremely specialized and difficult and the Stovel Company received numerous contracts from the Dominion government. High-



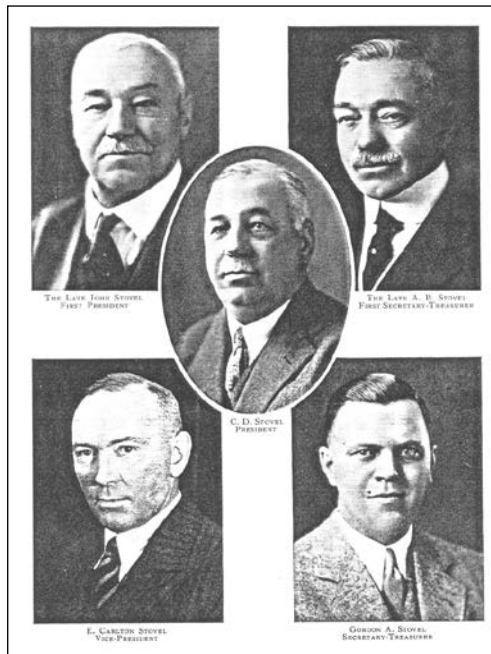
South façade detail, 2009

---

quality limited edition books were also a specialty of the firm. The company printed the early Henderson's Directory in the West, published weekly and monthly journals distributed across Canada, and was the original printer of the Harlequin Romance pocketbooks.<sup>10</sup>

After the deaths of the three founding brothers, other family members took control of the company. However, the firm ultimately moved into non-family management. It was renamed Stovel-Advocate Publishing ca.1953 and disappeared from city directories in 1976.<sup>11</sup>

The Chester Stovel family, which included wife Bella and two sons and four daughters,<sup>12</sup> remained in the home into the 1940s, when a number of short-term owners resided in the fine residence.<sup>13</sup>



The Stovel family involved in the printing company including the three founders (John, Chester D. and Augustus B.) and E. Carlton (son of John Stovel) and Gordon A. (son of A.B. Stovel), who were elected to their positions after the deaths of A.B. and John.  
 (Historical Outline of The House of Stovel, Stovel Company Limited, Winnipeg, 1931, n.p.)

---

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 C.D. Stovel;
- its design- an excellent example of a well-appointed Foursquare style;
- its architect- V.W. Horwood was a respected and important practitioner;
- its location- contributes greatly to its historic streetscape; and
- its integrity- its main façades continue to display many of their original elements and design.





Front (west) façade, 1978

---

ENDNOTES:

- 1 City of Winnipeg Building Permit, #617/1910.
- 2 Information from <http://www.realviews.com/homes/forsq.html>.
- 3 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.
- 4 Ibid., p. 36.
- 5 Winnipeg Tribune, May 30, 1923, p. 1; Winnipeg Free Press, December 20, 1937, pp. 1 and 7; and "Biography Scrapbooks," Legislative Library, B7, p. 107. The three men were very successful in many fields. John (ca.1858-1923) was a Member of the Provincial Legislature in 1921 and 1922, Chester D. (1870-1937) was a director of the Standard Trusts Company and Augustus B. (1865-1921) was a director of the Empire Loan Company.
- 6 Winnipeg Tribune, September 30, 1972, p. 10.
- 7 Historical Outline of The House of Stovel (Winnipeg, MB: Stovel Company Limited, 1931), p. 9.
- 8 Ibid., p. 35; and S.C. Grover, "245 McDermot Avenue – Kay Building (Formerly Stovel Building)," report for the Historical Buildings Committee, 1981, pp. 2-3.
- 9 ARO, Roll No. 611075, Ward 2 (365 Bannatyne Avenue).
- 10 Grover, op. cit., p. 3.
- 11 Henderson's Directory, 1900-1980.
- 12 Census of Canada, 1911.
- 13 City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, Roll No. 12040041000, 1920-1990.