59 SCOTIA STREET

DANIEL W. HARMER HOUSE

PREPARED BY PETERSON PROJECTS – DECEMBER 2009
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Date of Construction: ca. 1887
Building Permit: N/A
Architect: Unknown
Contractor: Unknown

ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

This modestly detailed brick and stone structure has stood in one of the city’s earliest residential districts for more than 100 years – located on the banks of the Red River at the foot of Atlantic Avenue. Because of its early date of construction, the building actually faces towards the river (east), the main mode of transportation prior to the development of the modern road system.

The west façade of this two-storey structure includes a one-storey lean-to with raised wood door (stairs removed). The raised foundation wall is now stuccoed and there is a bay window to the north of the lean-to. The structure is finished with a mansard roof with ornate dormer windows with wood embellishments. The brick chimney features geometric shapes.
The building stands on its original site and appears to be in fair structural condition. Images from 1978 suggest that alterations have been made to the west side of this home, the extend of this work is unclear and whether other areas of the exterior were modified.

This house is an example of a Second Empire style building that became popular in Canada by 1870. The style had its beginnings in France in the early 1850s in that country’s “Second Empire” (that of Napoleon III).\(^1\) In eastern Canada, especially southern Ontario, this style first came to prominence in public buildings (for example Government House in Toronto 1868). From government buildings the style was applied to commercial structures and finally into house designs. This style, however, failed to become as prominent in Winnipeg and further west because of the short duration of the period’s popularity. After 1880 Second Empire architecture became much rarer and only a few of this type of design were built after this date. For most of the west this date preceded serious housing construction by several years, if not a decade or more. Therefore there are only a few western examples remaining.

The most prominent detail of a Second Empire building is the mansard or double roof. While visually appealing, this roof-type also was more practical than traditional patterns because it allowed more living space on the upper level. Other features usually found on such structures are dormer windows on the steep slope, moulded cornices with decorative brackets below and a generous use of Italianate details. One or two storey bay windows were also often added and iron cresting was another ornamental feature. Porches were usually added, making the residence asymmetrical. Rusticated stone often completed this type of home at grade.
HISTORICAL INTEREST:

Because of its isolated location and the absence of contemporary records, it is unclear who the original/early owners of this property were. It appears that from 1887-1890 B.V. Milidge owns the property with G.W. Strange (1887) and Alfred Wright, collector (1890) as tenants. Mail clerk C.R. Stewart is listed as the owner in 1900 followed by: Daniel H., clerk/buyer at Codville Company and Estelle Harmer² (1905-1910); Charles S. (manager of Trick Guest Shoe Company and Ethel M. Trick (1920), Alice Tarr (Toronto), 1929-1940; Jean M. Avery, teacher (1945-65); and James Hearne (1975). Many of these owners were non-residents, tenants over this period included: Stambury R. Tarr, editor of Canadian Finance (1916); H.A. Webb, sales agent for Imperial Oil Company (1925); Henry H. Crofts, RCMP (1935-1945); and Willard Schultz (1955).³

RECOMMENDATION TO HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE:

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

- its historical importance- one of the oldest single-family dwelling in Winnipeg;
- its associations- N/A;
- its design- a good and rare example of the Second Empire style;
- its architect- N/A;
- its location- to the historic streetscape of the neighbourhood; and
- its integrity- its main façades continue to display some of their original elements and design.
ENDNOTES:


2 Canada Census, 1911.