



74 SPENCE STREET
MINNEWASKA COURT (CHATEAU APARTMENTS)

PREPARED BY PETERSON PROJECTS – DECEMBER 2009



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Date of Construction: 1910

Building Permit: 559/1910

Architect: Bruce, William

Contractor: Baldry Construction Company

ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

This solid, three-storey red brick and stone apartment block stands at the intersection of Spence and Balmoral streets, in the south end of the West Broadway neighbourhood.

The block has two, similarly designed main façades, the south facing Balmoral Street and the east facing Spence Street (for most of its history, this block has been known as 74 Balmoral Street). Both façades begin at grade with a raised rusticated stone base with the solid brick walls of the superstructure above. Stone is also used as accenting around windows and doors throughout the two elevations. The east façade is symmetrical, with a centrally located entrance covered by a modest overhang. Windows are slightly arched and embellished with stone keystones and lug sills. The north and south ends project out and are finished with stepped or Flemish gables. A unique ornamental element with finials is found on the roof and is repeated on the south roof slope. The south elevation is not



South façade, 2009

symmetrical, with an off-centre doorway with overhang and unmatched sets of windows on all three floors and doors on the upper storeys that include metal railing. As with the east façade, the ends of this elevation project out. The rear façade includes open wooden porches.

The building stands on its original site and appears to be in good structural condition. The exterior appears to be fairly original, no obvious major exterior alterations have occurred beyond window replacement. The two main façades have been painted.

Stylistically, this block fits into the general pre-World War I design for apartment blocks in Winnipeg. The three storey design and raised basement allowed the developer to maximize the size of the block without having to spend extra money on fireproofing that would be required by by-law if the block was taller than three storeys. Ornamental accenting on these blocks ranged from non-existent to exuberant. The Chateau Apartments fall somewhere in the middle of this range – some fine ornamental features and the use of red brick and stone. Its “L” shape was another common element – used to increase wall surface and windows to increase natural light and ventilation to the suites.

William Bruce was born in 1852 in Caithness-shire, Scotland and studied architecture in Haldene Academy, Glasgow. After practising in London, Glasgow and Edinburgh, he moved to Winnipeg in 1906. He prepared a plan for Roblin City, a proposed urban centre of half-a-million people located at present-day Churchill. Bruce travelled extensively in northern Manitoba and reportedly discovered a number of new forms of stone that were ultimately used in construction.¹ In 1907 he formed a partnership with Daniel Smith (1840-1913) which lasted until 1910. Bruce practiced alone for two years (he was also one of the founders of the



East and north façades, 2009

Winnipeg Industrial Exhibition²) and then his name does not appear in the City of Winnipeg Building Permit Ledger Books.

In partnership or alone, William Bruce was responsible for many fine structures throughout the city including: Pritchard Avenue Public Baths, Charles Street (1911, demolished); and Manitoba and Saskatchewan Bible Society Building, now Ukrainian Cultural Centre, Oseredok, 184 Alexander Avenue (Grade III, 1912).

HISTORICAL INTEREST:

Real estate agent H.T. Cherry was listed as the original owner of the block, known originally as Minnewaska Court. P.G. Cherry, civil engineer, is listed as the owner in 1925 and Carrie Beck of Guelph, Ontario, is the owner from 1929-1935. B.M. Cohen, publisher, is listed as the owner from 1937 until at least 1946, his representatives until at least 1957.³



Rear façade, 2009

RECOMMENDATION TO HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE:

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

- its historical importance- a fine example of the type of large apartment block built throughout the city during the pre-World War I era;
- its associations- N/A;
- its design- an excellent example of a modestly ornamented apartment block;
- its architect- W. Bruce was a respected and important practitioner;
- its location- defines an important intersection and contributes greatly to the historic streetscape of its West Broadway neighbourhood; and
- its integrity- its main façades continue to display many of their original elements and design.



South façade, 1978

ENDNOTES:

- 1 F.H. Schofield, The Story of Manitoba (Winnipeg: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1913), Vol. II, pp. 325-26.
- 2 F.H. Schofield, op. cit., pp. 325-26.
- 3 City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, Roll No. 12091364000, 1915-1960.