

161 STAFFORD STREET - GROSVENOR COURT

J.D Atchison (1909)



Grosvenor Court is a large, 4- and 3-storey rectangular block located on the northwest corner of Stafford Street and Grosvenor Avenue, measuring 36.6 metres along Stafford and 14.0 metres on Grosvenor. It's main (east) and side (north and south) façades are built of red St. Louis brick with stone accenting, the rear of common clay brick. It cost \$35,000 to build in 1909.

Many of the design features of Grosvenor Court are elements of the Tudor Revival Style used predominantly in residential architecture in the early to mid-20th century. The style was inspired by the rural architecture of Tudor England and was adopted by affluent clients throughout North America. It was a perfect style in the Crescentwood/Fort Rouge area and features include half-timbering with stucco infill, bay and oriel windows, ornate chimneys, steeply pitched and irregular rooflines, prominent gables and leaded glass.

The structure was designed by prominent American born and trained architect John D. Atchison (1870-1959), who set up a successful Winnipeg practice in 1905, designing many fine structures

including: Wardlow Apartments, 544 Wardlaw St. (1905) – Grade II; Hample Building, 271 Portage Ave. (1906) – Grade III; N.W.C.T.A. Building, 291 Garry Street (1909) – Grade III; Canada Permanent Building, 298 Garry St. (1909) – Grade II; Maltese Cross Building, 66 King St. (286 McDermot Ave.) (1909) – Grade III; Great-West Life Building, 177 Lombard Ave. (1911) – Grade II; Carlton Building, 354 Portage Ave. (1912) – Grade III; Boyd Building, 388 Portage Ave. (1912) – Grade III; Union Tower, 191 Lombard Ave. (1912-1913) – Grade II; Curry Building, 233 Portage Ave. (1915) – Grade II; and Bank of Hamilton Building, 395 Main St. (1916-1918) – Grade I.

William W. Cross, one of the original owners of the block, was listed as its contractor. Cross was a successful builder, much of his work was building single family homes and apartment blocks.

Notable exterior features of the east façade include the smooth-cut limestone base, two large entrances set in similarly finished limestone with arched transoms, the upper storeys with large windows in rectilinear openings, multi-paned window units and a complex roof line including single and double gable ends with half-timbering. The south façade faces Grosvenor Avenue and includes upper storey metal walkways, large windows and a one-storey addition at its west end (built in 1911 for additional retail space). The north elevation faces the back lane and includes arched window openings and a double gable dormer. The rear façade includes arched openings open wooden walkways and Flemish Gables at the raised ends. While there has been significant replacement of original elements on the exterior, it still displays a high degree of originality.

On the interior, much of the original space has been altered, the ground floor retail shops have been upgraded and reconfigured, the second floor residential suites were converted into offices and hallway spaces have been renovated.

Contractor W.W. Cross and broker E.M. Counsell were the original owners of the block, although they sold it in 1913 and by 1915 it was owned by prominent regional businessman James H. Ashdown (1884-1924), the hardware retailer and wholesaler. He and his estate owned the block until 1928.

The block's apartments were home to a variety of tenants over the years, the retail space was originally occupied by a druggist and a grocery store.

The block was built in the middle of Winnipeg's pre-World War I growth phase that saw its population skyrocket, its residential neighbourhoods expand greatly and its business boom. The need for modern residential and commercial space was heightened and blocks like Grosvenor Court were built throughout the City to supply this demand.

Elements of the building that would require approval if alterations were planned are:

Exterior-

- The 3- and 4-storey brick, stone, wood and stucco structure, located at the northwest corner of Stafford Street and Grosvenor Avenue, its front facade facing east onto Stafford Street, its south facing Grosvenor Avenue, its north facing a lane and its west facing a parking lot;
- The front (east) facade with its smooth-cut stone base, dark red brick superstructure, two large, stone framed entrances, windows in rectilinear openings on the upper floors, partial fourth floors at the north and south ends and top levels with half-timbering, stucco and paired gable ends;
- The south façade with large display windows, arched (2nd floor) and rectilinear (3rd floor) windows connected by metal walkways, double gable dormer and one-storey brick addition;
- The north facade with arched openings and double gable dormer; and
- The west facade with its common clay brick walls, windows and doors in arched openings, raised ends with Flemish gables, open wood walkways and inset stairs.

Interior-

- Staircase skylights.