



412 WELLINGTON CRESCENT

GEORGE WALLACE ERB HOUSE

PREPARED BY PETERSON PROJECTS – DECEMBER 2009



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Date of Construction: 1906

Building Permit: 1432/1906

Architect: Rugh, Herbert Bell

Contractor: Homes, James and James

ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

Another fine mansion located on one of Winnipeg's most desirable and best known residential streets – Wellington Crescent, is the Erb House, built in 1906 at a high cost of \$12,000.¹

The front (east) façade of this 2½-storey, solid brick and stone residence features a wealth of ornamental detailing including an entrance portico with oversized brackets and an open second storey deck with brick and stone corner posts connected by wood railing. A two-storey bay window is located at the south end of the elevation and a one-storey glazed room is attached to the north end of the building (it also includes an open second storey deck with wood railing). The hip roof includes cross gables, dormer windows and a front facing gable end with ornamental shingling, ornamental half-timbering and an oval window. Squared brackets highlight the wide, overhanging eaves.



Front (east) and south façades, 2009

The house stands on its original site, appears to be in good structural condition and has not suffered major exterior alteration.

This home is an example of the Classical Revival style. Popular in North America from 1900-30, the style ranged from simple, small-scale neo-classical structures, such as this building, to Beaux-Arts Classicism with its grand scale and heavy ornamentation, for example the Legislative Building.² Elements of the classical revival style include columns, pediments, flat, unadorned roof lines, symmetrical facades, and Greek or Roman orders. Door and window openings are often lintelled rather than arched, although both spanning methods can be present.³

The use of classical elements, especially for public buildings, became a popular ornamental device for banks, other financial institutions, railway stations, commercial buildings and office blocks. Because of Winnipeg's importance in the early growth of western Canada's economy, the city became the headquarters of many firms doing business throughout the West. These firms often chose classically-inspired ornamentation to portray an image of respectability and stability. Many excellent examples of the style, representing both early and late phases of its popularity, adorn a wide range of structures.

Architect H.B. Rugh practiced in Winnipeg from 1904 to ca.1912, and in that time established himself as one of the city's finest architects, although his forte appears to have been designing middle- to upper-income homes. Born in Cedar Rapids, Iowa on May 16, 1879, he took his formal training at the Armour Institute of Technology in Chicago, Illinois, graduating in 1901. He then went to work in Racine, Wisconsin, relocated to Michigan two years later and came to Winnipeg in 1904.⁴ Rugh's work over the next eight years was varied and extensive and included factories, apartment blocks, office buildings and dozens



Front (east) and north façades, 2009

of houses,⁵ many of their plans found their way onto the pages of trade magazines like Construction.⁶ Rugh's houses used a variety of styles including Georgian, Tudor and Colonial in his pursuit of the "picturesque." He also experimented with various materials, including concrete block, rough-cast plaster and terra cotta.

In 1912, Rugh became the local representative of the Montréal firm Ross and MacFarlane. He oversaw the construction of both the Fort Garry Hotel, 1911-12 (his name is found on the City of Winnipeg Building Permit)⁷ and the now demolished King George Municipal Hospital, Morley Avenue, 1912.

An incomplete list of his major local projects would include: Wesbrook and Fairchild Warehouse, 110 Princess Street (1907 – Grade II); Y.W.C.A. Building, Ellice Avenue (1908); Hotel Fort Garry, 222 Broadway (1911-1913 – Grade II, supervising architect); King George Municipal Hospital, Morley Avenue (1912 – supervising architect, demolished).⁸



Front (east) façade roof detail, 2009

HISTORICAL INTEREST:

George W. Erb, long-time manager of the Watrous Engine Works Company, was the original owner of this property. He was born in Preston, Canada West (present-day Ontario) in 1861 and came to Winnipeg in the 1890s. He and his wife Fannie H. Erb had one daughter.⁹ After standing vacant for a time in the 1940s, the dwelling was divided into 4 suites (1950s) and then a fifth was added (1980s).¹⁰

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 older mansion built at the beginning of the development of the Wellington Crescent residential neighbourhood;
- its associations- its long-term connections to early and influential businessman G.W. Erb;
- its design- an excellent example of the Classical Revival style;
- its architect- H.B. Rugh was a respected and important practitioner;
- its location- contributes greatly to the historic streetscape of the neighbourhood; and
- its integrity- its main façades continue to display many of their original elements and design.



Front (east) façade, 1978

ENDNOTES:

- 1 City of Winnipeg Building Permit, #1432/1906.
- 2 Identifying Architectural Styles in Manitoba (Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, Historic Resources Branch, n.d.), p. 18.
- 3 Ibid., p. 18.
- 4 Winnipeg Telegram, September 18, 1906, p. 55; and Who's Who and Why in Canada, 1913, p. 712. Information supplied by Robert G. Hill, Editor of the Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada, 1800-1950.
- 5 City of Winnipeg Building Permit Ledger Books (below as Ledgers), 1900-1915.
- 6 See, for example, Construction, March 1910, July 1910, July 1914 and June 1915.
- 7 City of Winnipeg Building Permit (below as BP), #3033/1911.
- 8 Ledgers, 1904-1912; and M. Peterson Building Database.
- 9 Winnipeg Free Press, February 27, 1943, p. 4.
- 10 City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, Roll No. 12040028000, 1910-1990; and Henderson's Directory, 1910-1990.