



## 424 WELLINGTON CRESCENT

### ELISHA FREDERICK HUTCHINGS HOUSE “GIFFORD HALL”

PREPARED BY PETERSON PROJECTS – DECEMBER 2009



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**424 WELLINGTON CRESCENT  
ELISHA FREDERICK HUTCHINGS HOUSE “GIFFORD HALL”**

**Date of Construction:** 1906

**Building Permit:** 430/1906

**Architect:** Sproatt, Rolph and Wardell

**Contractor:** Sproatt, Rolph and Wardell

**ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:**

This is a very unusually designed mansion on Wellington Crescent at the corner of Palk Road, expensively built at \$30,900 (one of the most expensive single-family dwelling construction in 1906) and originally including a stable on the extensive grounds.<sup>1</sup>

The front (east) façade of this solid brick and stone accented structure is symmetrically designed with an ornate raised central entrance within a wood portico with arched pediment and paired and unfluted support columns (this element was being restored at time of writing). Above the portico on the second floor is a Palladian window with stone accenting. Ground floor window openings are arched with stone keystones, second storey openings are squared with ornamental stone sills. All corners feature brick laid with grooves to mimic quoins.





Front (east) and south façades, 2009

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The hipped roof, the most ornamental feature of the design, includes three dormer windows on the front slope. The outer dormers include rounded pediments, ornamental woodwork and wood finials. The middle dormer is more subdued with a broken pediment and woodwork and similar dormers are found on the side slopes. A large screened porch with large unfluted wood columns and wood balustrades is found on the home's north side.

The home stands on its original site and appears to be in good structural condition. If the front portico is restored, little alteration has occurred on the building's exterior.

The Hutchings House is a fine example of a Georgian Revival style. The style has been described as the most popular revival style of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Canada, used mainly in residential architecture and still popular today.<sup>2</sup> Influential New York City architects McKim, Mead and White, who utilized elements of the style to design residences for their most affluent clients, promoted the style in the early 1900s.<sup>3</sup> The style is based on English and Dutch colonial architecture from the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Distinguishing characteristics of the style include a symmetrical façade with a centrally located entrance as its focal point. Classical elements and detailing such as pediments, cornice-like eaves, Palladian windows, columns and porticos are common. Roofs could be hipped or gambrel-shaped and exterior cladding ranged from wood to brick and stone to stucco.<sup>4</sup>

The designers of this home were the partnership of Sproatt, Rolph and Wardell. This firm was established in Toronto, Ontario in 1899 by Henry Sproatt (1866-1934) and Ernest Ross Rolph (1871-1958) and designed many fine structures in the City.<sup>5</sup> Like other nationally-active architectural firms of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, they opened an office in Winnipeg to



Front (east) and north façades, 2009

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take advantage of the opportunities in the city and Western Canada and sent an architect, in this case Lindsay Alexander Wardell, to oversee the local contracts.

Wardell was born in Dundas, Ontario on March 13, 1879. At the age of 21, he was working in Hamilton, Ontario as a draftsman for architect W.P. Witton. By 1903, he was a draftsman in the Toronto offices of the prestigious firm Sproatt and Rolph. Two years later, Wardell was sent to Winnipeg to represent that firm. The first reference to Sproatt, Rolph and Wardell is found on City of Winnipeg Building Permit in 1904. Wardell stayed with Sproatt and Rolph for the 1905 and 1906 construction seasons and then in 1907 formed a new partnership with another transplanted Torontonians, David William Fair Nichols.

Between 1904 and 1906, Sproatt, Rolph and Wardell were responsible for a dozen buildings, designing apartment blocks, office buildings and warehouses. The Hutchings House is one of their largest contracts.<sup>6</sup>





Front (east) façade detail, 2009

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HISTORICAL INTEREST:

Called influential and flamboyant, businessman Elisha Frederick Hutchings (1850-1930) was the original owner of this house. Hutchings was the well-known founder of the Great West Saddlery Company of Winnipeg which eventually became the world's largest such enterprise.<sup>7</sup> Hutchings was born in Newboro, Leeds County, Canada West (now Ontario) in 1855.<sup>8</sup> Hutchings came west as a journeyman harness-maker in 1876 by working on the Canadian Pacific Railway. He settled in Winnipeg in 1877 and by 1879 he had established himself as one of the city's better harness makers. He reorganized the growing business into Great West Saddlery Company in 1895, a jobbing and manufacturing venture. Associated retail interests were later abandoned because of the success of the other areas of the business.<sup>9</sup>

Great West Saddlery was a complete success. Employing 30 men and capitalized at \$250,000 in 1900, by 1911 it employed 300 men and was worth \$2 million.<sup>10</sup> In 1913 the company topped \$3 million in sales and Hutching's estimated worth was pegged between \$5 million and \$8 million.<sup>11</sup> The business exported to New Zealand, South Africa and Australia; had factories in Winnipeg and Calgary and 10 branches throughout western Canada; and owned the controlling interest in almost every harness retail outlet west of the city.<sup>12</sup> By World War I he was operating out of two large warehouses at the east end of Market Avenue. E.F. Hutchings died quietly in his sleep at the age of 75 on April 14, 1930.<sup>13</sup>

In 1965 a ten-year lease was signed making this Hutchings home the West German Consulate.<sup>14</sup>



E.F. Hutchings, 1902

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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 warehouses in the Exchange District and its illustration of the expansion of business that occurred in the City and especially in the Exchange District throughout much of the pre-World War I era;
- its associations- its long-term connections to early and influential businessman E.F. Hutchings;
- its design- an excellent example of the Georgian Revival style;
- its architect- Sproatt, Rolph and Wardell were respected and important practitioners;
- its location- defines an important intersection and contributes greatly to the historic streetscape of its neighbourhood; and
- its integrity- its main façades continue to display many of their original elements and design.



Front (east) façade, 1978

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ENDNOTES:

- 1        City of Winnipeg Building Permit, #430/1906.
- 2        L. Maitland et al, A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1992), pp. 152-153.
- 3        Identifying Architectural Styles in Manitoba (Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, 1991), pp. 26-27.
- 4        Ibid., p. 26.
- 5        Canadian Encyclopedia, Second Edition, Volume 3 (Edmonton, AL: Hurtig Publishers, 1988), p. 2064.
- 6        City of Winnipeg Building Permit Ledger Books, 1899-1926.
- 7        The Dominion, Vol. 4, No. 5, Feb. 1913, p. 25.
- 8        Winnipeg Tribune, April 14, 1930, p. 3.
- 9        The Tribune, April 14, 1930, p. 14 and F.H. Schofield, The Story of Manitoba, Vol. II (Winnipeg, MB: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1913), p. 125.
- 10       Schofield, op. cit., p. 125.
- 11       The Dominion, Vol. 4, No. 5, Feb. 1913, p. 25.
- 12       Schofield, op. cit., p. 125 and G. Bryce, A History of Manitoba (Toronto, ON: Canadian History Company, 1906), p. 360.
- 13       Winnipeg Tribune, April 14, 1930, p. 1.
- 14       City of Winnipeg Assessment Record, #400240, Ward 1, PC 10; and City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, Roll No. 12040024000, 1910-1990.