



697 WELLINGTON CRESCENT

JOHN LESLIE HOUSE “THE ELMS”

PREPARED BY PETERSON PROJECTS – DECEMBER 2009



697 WELLINGTON CRESCENT JOHN LESLIE HOUSE “THE ELMS”

Date of Construction: 1905

Building Permit: 2541/1905

Architect: Stone, Howard Colton

Contractor: Watson, R.

ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

Another of Crescentwood's fine early 20th century mansions is this brick and stone 2½-storey house located on the north side of Wellington Crescent, the neighbourhood's premier street.

The front (south) façade of this home is symmetrically designed with a central entrance atop a short flight of stairs and protected from the elements by a rounded portico with modest, unfluted columns and wood balustrade. The windows on both floors are designed with larger central units flanked by narrow side lights. The hipped roof features heavy overhanging eaves with ornamental bracketing and a small dormer window on the front (south) slope. There is a one-storey glazed porch attached to the building's west side.



Front (south) and east façades, 2009

The house stands on its original site, appears to be in good structural condition and does not appear to have suffered any major exterior alteration. The final cost of construction was \$12,000.¹

This house has many of the elements 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 Howard Colton Stone was a Montreal architect of some renown, designing many major buildings in that city including the Head Offices of the Royal Bank (1906-07), the Bank of Ottawa (1904), and the Smart Bag Company Factory (1906). He operated a branch in Winnipeg from 1904 to 1907 with Leonard T. Bristow as its manager. A list of his more noted works would include: F.L. Patton House, 147 Wellington Crescent (1904); Tees and Persse Warehouse, 360 Princess Street (1904); Manitoba Free Press Building, - Portage



Front (south) and west façades, 2009

Avenue at Garru Street (1904-1906, demolished); Bank of Toronto, 456 Main Street (1905, Grade II); John Leslie House, 697 Wellington Crescent (1905); Joseph Maw and Company Garage, 114 King Street (1906, Grade III); and the Walker Theatre, 364 Smith Street (1906-1907, Grade I)

HISTORICAL INTEREST:

John Leslie was a prominent furniture dealer in the city for many decades. Born in Scotland in 1852, he began as a carriage maker in Milton, Ontario. He arrived in Winnipeg in 1880 and founded his furniture business in 1885.⁴ It is unknown when he died but his wife, Phobe E. Leslie, was still listed at the address in 1916. The next owner of the property was Dr. C. Percy Banning (until ca.1945) and then a series of short-term owners/residents.⁵



Front (south) façade, 1978

RECOMMENDATION TO HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE:

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

- its historical importance- an early dwelling built in the newly organized neighbourhood of Crescentwood;
- its associations- its long-term connections to early and influential retailer J. Leslie;
- its design- an excellent example of the Classical Revival style;
- its architect- H.C. Stone was a respected and important practitioner;
- its location- 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.

ENDNOTES:

- ¹ City of Winnipeg Building Permit, 2541/1905.
- 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 C. W. Parker, editor, Who's Who in Western Canada: A Biographical Dictionary of Notable Living Men and Women of Western Canada, Vol. 1 (Vancouver, BC: Canadian Press Association, 1911); and George Bryce, A History of Manitoba: Its Resources and People (Toronto, ON: The Canadian History Company, 1906)
- ⁵ City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, Roll No. 12040473000, 1920-1990.