

339 WILLIAM AVENUE – LAUZON BLOCK

Johann (John) Schwab, 1905



Jean (James) Baptiste Lauzon (1858-1944) was a Quebec-born butcher who opened his first shop in St. Boniface in 1878, two years after arriving in the west. This business thrived in the late 1880s and he opened a stall in the Public Market Building behind City Hall. Business continued to expand and as did Lauzon's influence – he was elected to the St. Boniface town council (1885) and twice sat as a Conservative in the Provincial Legislature. He used some of the profits of his business to construct this unique three-storey building west of the Market Square on William Avenue in 1905.

The building's front (south) façade is clad in rough-cut limestone; the main floor originally included a recessed entrance and large display window for the retail shop within. A doorway to the second floor staircase was located to the east of the retail area. This level has seen extensive

alteration. The second and third floors of this elevation have seen little change – three square headed window openings with smooth stone lug sills on each floor and a flat roofline with raised central section, swan’s neck pediment above a carved panel with the words “LAUZONS” and “A.D.1905”.

The east and west façades are constructed of common clay brick, the ground floors covered by neighbouring buildings. Rectilinear window openings are found on all levels. The rear (north) elevation is also finished in common clay brick and includes ground floor and second storey entrances, a fire escape of both wood and metal and numerous plain window openings.

The original interior included the commercial property of owner J.B. Lauzon on the ground floor with a mezzanine level at the rear used as an ice house, offices (and later residential space) on the second floor, and a meeting hall on the top level. Original elements of the interior that remain include the high ceilings on all floors, ornamental tin ceilings and walls in the retail space and in the east side staircase and doors and transoms on the second floor.

The building was designed by Austrian-born architect Johann (John) Schwab (1864-?), who settled in Winnipeg in the early 20th century and worked extensively in the North End, mainly designing houses. Some of his larger works include: Children of Israel Synagogue, 81 Martha St. (1901) – demolished; Hoover and Town Duplex, 368-370 Edmonton St. (1901) – Grade III; Zimmerman Block, 671-673 Main St. (1903); German Club, 51 Heaton Ave. (1904); and Missler Terrace, 247-251 Manitoba Ave. (1909).

The butcher shop remained until Lauzon’s death in 1944; the retail space has been occupied by a number of different tenants including the Canada Cracker Company (1954), and Custom Bedding and Upholstery (1960). It now operates as a delicatessen. The upper floor suites, which were used as the Knights of Pythias Hall in 1910, were converted to residential space and occupied by a number of short-term tenants over the years.

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

Exterior-

- Three-storey stone clad building with flat roof located mid-block on the north side of William Avenue west of Adelaide Street, its main façade facing south onto William Avenue, its east and west facades partially hidden by neighbouring buildings and its south façade facing a back lane;
- Its main (south) façade with its modest stone belt course above the ground floor, its large windows in rectilinear openings on the second and third floors and the flat roof embellished with a raised central section with swan's neck pediment above a carved panel with the words "LAUZONS" and "A.D. 1905";
- Its east and west façades with ground floors covered by neighbouring buildings, with windows in rectilinear openings on the upper two floors; and
- Its rear (north) façade with ground floor and second storey entrances, a fire escape of both wood and metal and numerous windows in rectilinear openings.

Interior-

- Main floor space with ornamental tin ceiling and wall coverings and high ceilings;
- East side staircase with ornamental tin and wood detailing; and
- High ceilings, doors and transoms of the second floor space.