



826 WOLSELEY AVENUE

EDWARD PARNELL HOUSE

PREPARED BY PETERSON PROJECTS – DECEMBER 2009



826 WOLSELEY AVENUE EDWARD PARNELL HOUSE

Date of Construction: 1909

Building Permit: 342/1909

Architect: Tanner, H.P.

Contractor: Toye, Smith

ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

Another fine single-family dwelling in the Wolseley neighbourhood is this 2½-storey brick veneer and stone house on the south side of Wolseley Avenue.

Built at a cost of \$7,000, the house rests on a 45.7-centimetre thick stone foundation wall.¹ The front (north) façade features an open wrap around porch on its northwest corner and an unusual corner bay window on its northeast corner. Windows are unmatched but all feature heavy limestone sills and heads. The second floor includes numerous windows and the gable end holds a set of three small windows. The west façade includes an ornate oriel window on its second floor and a large gable dormer above. A two-storey sleeping veranda is attached to the rear (south) façade.



Front (north) and west façades, 2009

The building stands on its original site, appears to be in good structural condition and does not appear to have suffered major exterior alteration.

The home is a reduced example of the Queen Anne style which borrowed heavily from English architecture of the 15th century, blending classical and medieval motifs into a picturesque form.² The desired asymmetry was achieved through a number of combinations of porches, bay windows, projecting wings, balconies and other devices. Roofs were usually irregular and complex, with dormers, gables and ornamental chimneys. Variations in materials and colours were also used to animate the façades. Given this freedom of design, however, accomplished designers were still able to create balance in the structures, offsetting busy surfaces by placing calmer elements nearby.³

The popularity of the style in Canada began in the 1880s and lasted until World War I. On the prairies, pre-1900 examples of the style were not numerous because large-scale development occurred after the turn of the century. Post-1900, it was quickly adopted for use in the growing residential districts, especially the more affluent neighbourhoods where its showy qualities were greatly admired.

H.P. Tanner, a heating engineer who headed the Waldon Company, designed this house. Tanner does not appear in the City of Winnipeg Building Permit Ledger Books, 1899-1926 except for this entry and it is likely that he used a pattern book for the plans for this structure.



Northeast corner detail, 2009

HISTORICAL INTEREST:

The houses at 826 and 830 Wolseley Avenue were constructed together by a co-founder and vice-president of a local foundry, Manitoba Bridge and Iron, James A. Coulter. Coulter lived in the house for only a short time, selling in 1912 to Edward Parnell, partner in one of the City's largest and most successful bakeries, the Speirs-Parnell Baking Company. Parnell came to Winnipeg in 1909 from London, Ontario where he had owned and operated a bakery and been an alderman for 11 years. By the war, the company had 500 employees at the two locations. In 1918, Parnell was chairman of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association and in 1920 he was made president of the Local Board of Trade. Also in 1920, Parnell was elected mayor of Winnipeg and then re-elected by acclamation for a second term in 1921. In June 1922, he died in office.⁴

After his death, the house was sold to the Hon. William H. Sharpe, a senator from Manitou, MB who seems to have come to Winnipeg to deal in real estate. Sharpe had been a farmer who got into oil production and mining development at an opportune time.⁵ He was mayor of Manitou in 1908 before being elected the following year to the House of Commons. He resigned this seat in 1915 to run for the Manitoba legislature but was defeated. He was appointed to the Senate in 1916, a position he filled until his death in 1942. He lived with his wife and two children on Wolseley Avenue from 1922 to 1930.

The house changed hands frequently for the next few years until it was split into two suites in about 1944. In 1958, a fraternity, Zeta Beta Tau, took over the building, using it as a meeting place and residence until the mid-1970s.⁶



Front (north) façade, 1978

RECOMMENDATION TO HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE:

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

- its historical importance- a good example of the type of up-scale single-family dwelling built in one of Winnipeg's finer neighbourhoods for an important businessman and his family in the pre-World War I era;
- its associations- its long-term connections to influential businessman E. Parnell;
- its design- a reduced example of the Queen Anne style;
- its architect- H.P. Tanner was the named architect;
- 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, #342/1909.
- ² Identifying Architectural Styles in Manitoba (Winnipeg, MB: Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, 1991), p. 17; and L. Maitland et al., A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1992), p. 102.
- ³ L. Maitland et al., op. cit., p. 98.
- ⁴ Manitoba Free Press, June 10, 1922.
- ⁵ Winnipeg Free Press, April 20, 1942.
- ⁶ City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, Roll No. 12082891000, 1920-1990.