



834 WOLSELEY AVENUE

THOMAS WILSON HOUSE

PREPARED BY PETERSON PROJECTS – DECEMBER 2009



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## 834 WOLSELEY AVENUE THOMAS WILSON HOUSE

**Date of Construction:** 1912

**Building Permit:** 1883/1912 (Plan in Historical Buildings Committee files)

**Architect:** Clemens, Paul M.

**Contractor:** Wilson, T. (owner)

### ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

Another fine single-family dwelling in the Wolseley neighbourhood is this 2½-storey brick and stone house on the south side of Wolseley Avenue. At an estimated cost of \$14,000,<sup>1</sup> it is one of the more expensive homes built on Wolseley Avenue before World War I.

Original plans for this building call for a significantly more ornate and complex design than the building that stands today, it is unknown at the present time whether this was the result of changes to the plans during construction or because of alterations after.

The front (north) façade is symmetrical with a modest, centrally-placed open entrance porch with ornamented wood pediment supported by unfluted wood columns. Flanking this entrance are paired window openings on both levels, the lower openings with lug stone sills and heads, the upper openings with radiating heads (brick and stone) and stone sills.



Front (north) and east façades, 2009

An oval window is placed in the centre of the second floor with oversized keystones at the four compass points. The bellcast hip roof features a large front-facing dormer with curved pediment and heavy overhanging eaves with wood bracketing. A two-storey bay window is found on the building's east side and a wood clad two-storey sleeping veranda is found on the rear (south) façade. Original drawings show a west elevation with a large bay window and side conservatory that may never have been built.

The building stands on its original site and appears to be in good structural condition. As mentioned previously, it is unclear whether this is a reduced version of the original plans or has been altered to the present state. In either case, there are significant 1912-period elements on the exterior. The entrance porch has been changed from an enclosed element to an open unit.

Stylistically, this home is an excellent example of a Foursquare style residence, as seen in its rectangular form and cubic, symmetrical massing. The style was very popular throughout North America and its popularity was heightened by its inclusion in virtually all published residential pattern books of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Depending on the designer and client, houses could be nearly void of ornamentation or feature a wide variety of decorative elements, as is the case with this structure.

The architect of this structure was Paul M. Clemens, another of the Icelandic builders/designers who made a name for himself in Winnipeg. It appears that he emigrated from Iceland in the 1880s and arrived in Chicago, Illinois, where he obtained his formal training. He arrived in Winnipeg at the turn of the century and began his practice in 1901. The last City of Winnipeg Building Permit taken out under his name was in early 1916.<sup>2</sup> A very busy architect, he designed all types of structures throughout the city but the bulk of



Front (north) and west façades, 2009

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his work was in the design of apartment blocks. In the five years from 1909-1913 he designed 20 blocks worth nearly \$850,000.<sup>3</sup> Among his more major works are the Argyle Block, 224 Notre Dame Avenue (1908), Victoria Court Apartments, 471 William Avenue (1910), Kilgour, Rimer Company Warehouse, Princess Street (1910), Pandora Apartments, 759 Winnipeg Avenue (1912), J. Moyses House, 838 Wolseley Avenue (1913, Grade III), T. Wilson House, 834 Wolseley Avenue (1913) and the Hampton Court Apartments, 450 Langside Street (1914).<sup>4</sup> He has been given 10 points by the Historical Buildings Committee.

#### HISTORICAL INTEREST:

Thomas Wilson, the president of the Colonial Assurance Company, insurance brokers, was the original owner of this home. He and his family remained at the address until the late 1920s when it was sold to Dr. Gerhard Hiebert. From 1934 to 1955 it was occupied by the Story family, including Morley Story, head of a men's clothing store.<sup>5</sup>



Front (north) façade, 1978

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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- 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 T. Wilson;
- its design- a good example of the Foursquare style;
- its architect- P.M. Clemens 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:

- <sup>1</sup> City of Winnipeg Building Permit, #1883/1912.
- <sup>2</sup> City of Winnipeg Building Permit Ledger Books, 1899-1926.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>5</sup> Winnipeg Free Press, May 27, 1976; and City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, Roll No. 12082723000, 1920-1960.