

161 STAFFORD STREET – GROSVENOR COURT

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings and Resources Committee
Researcher: Murray Peterson
April 2017

This building embodies the following heritage values as described in the *Historical Resources By-law*, 55/2014 (consolidated update July 13, 2016):

(a) Built in 1909, Grosvenor Court is an excellent example of a mixed retail/residential development located in an affluent neighbourhood in the pre-World War I era;

(b) Not associated with important individuals, groups or events;

(c) It is an excellent example of the two-part commercial style with retail on the ground floor and office and/or residential space above and was designed by noted local architect J.D. Atchison;

(d) This solid brick structure features unique Tudor style accenting at roof level;

(e) It is an integral part of an important district streetscape; and

(f) Much of the building's main façades have not been severely altered.

161 STAFFORD STREET - GROSVENOR COURT

The residential district south of the Assiniboine River, which included what is now known as Crescentwood, was annexed to the City of Winnipeg during the railway-fostered real estate boom of the early 1880s that saw an estimated $12.5 million in construction activity between 1880 and 1883.[1] It would be many years, however, before major development occurred in the Crescentwood/Fort Rouge area (originally known as St. Boniface West) and therefore many years before the City extended services to the area such as street cars, fire and police protection and sewers.

One of the reasons for this delayed development was a lack of permanent connections to Winnipeg – a bridge. Local developer Arthur Wellington Ross built a private bridge at the foot of Osborne Street which opened on September 23, 1882 and quickly purchased by the City of Winnipeg. The City, as part of its annexation agreement with the Fort Rouge citizenry, promised a new bridge at Maryland Street, which was finally opened in 1895 (Plate 1).

The earliest fine home of the area was barrister John Henry Munson's house, 475 Wellington Crescent, built in 1888 and named Crescentwood. It was, for many years, the showpiece of the suburb, being enlarged on several occasions before and after its occupation by the James A. Richardson family after Munson's death in 1918 (Plate 2).[2] So central and well-known was this house that when the real estate development firm C.H. Enderton Company purchased a large parcel of land in the area, representatives asked Munson's permission to use the name of his house, Crescentwood, for their new residential subdivision.[3]

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1 R.R. Rostecki, Crescentwood: A History (Winnipeg, MB: Crescentwood Home Owners Association, 1993), p. 17.

2 Ibid., pp. 44-46. Upon the death of Mrs. James A. Richardson in 1973, the family donated the house and the land to the City of Winnipeg. The buildings were demolished in 1976, the land became Munson Park.

3 Crescentwood, Winnipeg's Finest Community (Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Historical Society, n.d.), n.p.

Of course, the area also developed services along with the residential property. In 1910, a large retail/apartment block known as Grosvenor Court was built at the intersection of two of the busiest thoroughfares - Grosvenor Avenue and Stafford Street.

STYLE

Grosvenor Court exhibits elements of the Tudor Revival Style used predominantly in residential architecture in the early to mid-20th century.[4] The style was inspired by the rural architecture of Tudor England and developed as a nostalgic movement based on pre-industrial, medieval crafts and building techniques. In North America, the style gained prominence among the more affluent clients whose admiration for things British included the design of their homes.[5] For Crescentwood/Fort Rouge, it was the perfect style to portray wealth and exclusivity.

The style produces picturesque structures that exhibit a quaintness, charm and cottage-like visage. Most recognizable is the use of half-timbering with stucco infill. Other ornamental elements such as drip molding, bay and oriel windows, ornate chimneys, steeply pitched and irregular rooflines and prominent gables are also often common. Windows are most often in multiple groups, are tall and narrow, and usually include leaded glass.[6]

CONSTRUCTION

This large, rectangular block measures 36.6 metres along Stafford Street and 14.0 metres fronting Grosvenor Avenue (see Appendix I for construction information). The main façade (east) and the two side elevations are built of red St. Louis brick, while the rear (west) façade is comprised of cream-coloured brick with cement accents. The entire structure rests on a 53.3-centimetre

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4 Leslie Maitland, et al., A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1992), p. 156.

5 Ibid., p. 156.

6 Ibid., p. 156; and M. Peterson, op. cit., p. 2.

brick and cement foundation on concrete footings with an internal I-beam steel support system. Walls, both exterior and interior division, are solid brick and measure 33.0 centimetres thick. The block was constructed at a total cost of $35,000, exclusive of the lot. Materials used in construction included 50 cords of stone and 170,000 bricks.[7]

A one-storey brick addition was built in 1911 to the building's southwest corner, which measures approximately 16.5 x 13.7 metres.[8] An open wooden walkway has been built on the second and third floors of the rear façade.

DESIGN

The Grosvenor Court apartments were built to match the style of nearby residential structures and better blend in in the neighbourhood.

The original plans, calling for a ground floor with six retail shops, meant a considerably different front (east) façade than what was actually built with only two retail shops (Plate 3).

The main (east) façade begins at grade with a low smooth-cut limestone base leading to the dark red brick of the superstructure (Plate 4). Two large entrances set in smooth-cut stone frames and topped by arched transoms also grace this façade (Plate 5). The south end of the main floor features two retail spaces with large display windows, the north end smaller windows with stone lug sills, the aforementioned entrances and small basement windows in arched openings. The upper floors are symmetrically designed with two upper storeys in the middle section rising to three storeys at the north and south ends (Plate 6). Windows on the elevation are set in rectilinear openings with continuous brick sills on the second floor and stone lug sills on the third. The top level is embellished with half-timbering and stucco and paired gable ends.

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7 City of Winnipeg Building Permit (below as BP), #451/1909.

8 BP #2898/1911 – cost of construction was $6,500; and City of Winnipeg Assessment Record, Roll No. 302331, Ward 1, PC 20 (below as AR).

The north façade overlooks a back lane and features basement and upper storey windows in arched openings with stone or concrete lug sills and a unique double gable dormer on the roof slope (Plate 7). The south elevation features a large display window at the east end with attached signage above, bricked in basement and ground floor windows, upper storey windows with metal walkways and the one-storey addition at the west end with windows in arched openings and entrance/display windows for the two commercial suites (Plates 8 and 9).

The rear of the original block is built of common clay brick, windows and doors on all levels are set in arched openings, the raised ends are finished in Flemish Gables and open wooden walkways connect the openings of the three upper floors to the deeply inset stairs located mid-block (Plates 10 and 11).

The building is a mix of original spaces, design and finishes and re-worked areas. Window and door replacement has occurred in several areas of the building. Overall, the main façades do exhibit a high degree of originality.

INTERIOR

Complete original drawings for this building exist, detailing a different interior layout than what was actually built. The original plans call for a ground floor divided into six retail stores. The second and third floors were each divided into four large suites (Plate 12). Those located at the north and south ends featured three bedrooms, a dining-room and living-room as well as the kitchen and bathroom. According to the plans, the inner suites were two-bedroom units with large porches off the living-rooms to increase ventilation and natural light. The partial fourth floor featured one-bedroom suites with small living-rooms at the north and south ends. The basement of the structure was designed with storage space for the retail shops as well as a large laundry room, washrooms, storage compartments and the brick-encased fuel/boiler room.[9]

[9] AR; and Architect's Plans, #451/1909, City of Winnipeg.

The actual building completed in 1910 featured only two shops, in the south end, and it is likely that the north end was residential space.

Today, the building is a mixture of original and altered spaces. The original residential suites on the second floor were converted into offices in 1985. The original finish around doorways and staircases remains, while much of the hallway space has been renovated with new ceilings, walls and flooring. Skylights continue to light the two staircases. Some of the original features of the suites, such as built-in china cabinets and fireplaces, have been left in the new offices (Plates 13-16).

INTEGRITY

The block occupies its original site. The list of City of Winnipeg Building Permits includes the addition of piles in 1926 and 1940, with more underpinning in 1989. This suggests that the block has experienced ongoing structural and foundation problems. Major exterior alterations have been mainly confined to the first-floor retail section.

STREETSCAPE

Grosvenor Court is an integral part of the neighbourhood in which it is located, contributing greatly to the character of the area. Many of the large homes in the immediate area use similar stylistic elements, adding to the block's compatibility.

ARCHITECT/CONTRACTOR

The architect listed for this building is John D. Atchison. Born and trained in the United States, Atchison rose to prominence in Winnipeg architectural circles after arriving in the city in 1905 (see Appendix One for further biographical information). Atchison has been given 20 points by the Historical Buildings and Resources Committee.

William W. Cross, part owner of the building, is listed as the contractor. Cross was born in Ontario, coming to Winnipeg ca.1900, living for many years at 349 Carlton Street.[10] Cross was a successful local builder whose known work includes many apartment blocks and houses, two terraces on Vaughan Street, 305-311 and 313-319, both built in 1905 and both demolished (Plate 17) and MacBeth House, 31 MacBeth Street, built in 1912 (Grade III). He also designed and built his own large home at 54 Yale Avenue in 1909 (Plate 18).

Cross was given five points for his work on the MacBeth House by the Committee.

The 1911 addition was designed by local architect C.W.U. Chivers and built by W.W. Cross.[11]

PERSON/INSTITUTION

The original City of Winnipeg Building Permit lists contractor W.W. Cross and E.M. Counsell, broker, as the owners of the block. The pair owned the structure until 1913 when it became the property of the Western Securities Company. In 1914, it was sold to J.A. Comba, a local merchant who in turn transferred the block the following year to James Henry Ashdown (1884-1924).[12] Ashdown was one of western Canada's most prominent businessmen, with retail hardware stores in all four western provinces and business interests across Canada.[13] Ashdown and his estate owned the block until 1928 when it was sold to H.A. Foster, a real estate agent in Pasadena, California.[14]

During the first 20 years, the block was home to doctors, lawyers, managers and other professionals, as well as secretaries and clerks. The Stafford Street retail space was originally

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[10] Canada Census, 1906.

[11] BP #2898/1911.

[12] City of Winnipeg Assessment Roll, Roll No. 302331 (Old No. 6277), Ward 1. Below as ARo.

[13] Pioneers and Prominent People of Manitoba (Winnipeg, MB: Canadian Publicity Co., 1925), pp. 104-105.

[14] ARo.

occupied by Charles A. Baird, druggist and the Crescentwood Grocery. Baird's Drug Store was a long-time tenant of the block.[15]

Jacob Gorfinkle, manufacturer, owned the block from 1947-1965 when it was purchased by Friesen Enterprises. Occupancy of the residential space has remained relatively stable, with total tenants ranging from a high of 43 in 1940 to a low of 32 in 1950.[16]

EVENT

There is no known significant historic event connected with this building.

CONTEXT

Grosvenor Court was built during the final phase of Winnipeg's early 20th century growth era that lasted until World War I. Residential districts in and around Winnipeg witnessed unprecedented expansion during this period, and the new district of Crescentwood was part of the process. Contractors and other entrepreneurs built and owned apartment blocks, single-family dwellings, stores and office buildings. Most of these investments were modestly profitable long-term and became a popular investment vehicle for many businessmen. This block filled two basic needs of its quickly growing neighbourhood, residential and retail space.

Grosvenor Court is also part of the apartment block boom that occurred in Winnipeg during this period. No other Canadian city of any size built more multi-tenant residences between 1906 and 1914 than Winnipeg and mixed retail/residential blocks like this one were extremely popular all over the city. These blocks ranged from the luxurious, with maid's quarters and interior staircases, to small, box-like blocks with simple, unadorned suites.

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15 Henderson's Directory, various years.

16 ARo.

LANDMARK

This very public building, located on a busy local intersection and designed with eye-catching ornamentation, is conspicuous in the neighbourhood.

Historical Buildings & Resources Committee
THE CITY OF WINNIPEG

APPENDIX I

CITY OF WINNIPEG - Preliminary Report

Building Address: 161 Stafford Street
(161-167 Stafford St. & 933-935 Grosvenor Ave.)

Building Name: Grosvenor Court

Original Use: mixed (retail/residential)

Current Use: mixed

Roll No. (Old): 302331 (6277)

RSN: 143790

Municipality: 12

Ward: 1

Property or Occupancy Code: 20

Legal Description: 35 St. Boniface, Plan 306, Block 78, part Lot 16: Lots 17/20

Location: northwest corner Grosvenor Avenue

Date of Construction: 1909

Storeys: 4 & 3

Heritage Status: NOMINATED LIST

Construction Type: brick and stone and brick in cement foundation

Building Permits (Plans available: **[CS]** City Storage; **[M]** Microfilm):

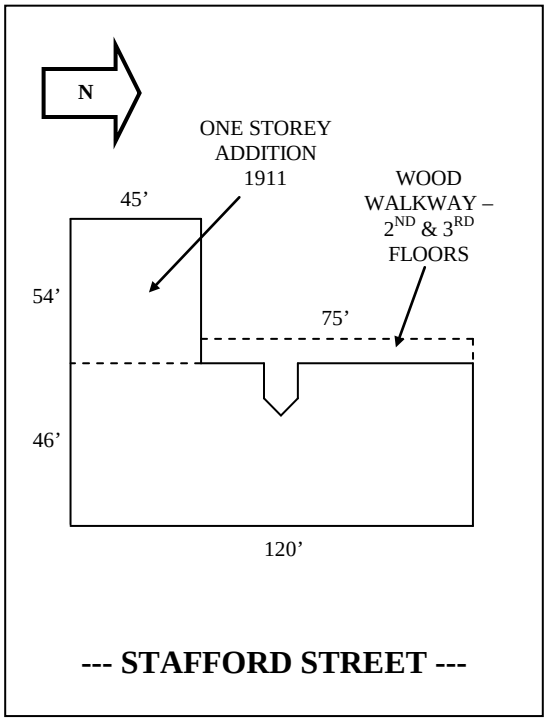
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Information:

- 215,460 cu. ft.

- red, St. Louis brick, stone sills throughout

- one-storey addition constructed ca.1936 (no permit located)



ARCHITECT: J.D. ATCHISON

CONTRACTOR: W.W. CROSS

CITY OF WINNIPEG BUILDING PERMITS FOR GROSVENOR COURT

161-167 STAFFORD STREET/933-935 GROSVENOR AVENUE

(Plans available: **[CS]** City Storage; **[M]** Microfilm):

YEAR	NO.	PLANS	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION
1909	451	**CS**	$35,000	Original permit
1911	2898		$6,500	Addition (54 x 46')
1919	2776		$500	Construct garage
1926	3300		$500	Piles
1940	3488		$500	Piles
1947	2635		$100	Storefront alteration
1951	5492		$200	Storefront alteration
1954	4013		$100	Interior alteration
1954	6211	**CS**		Interior alteration (161 Stafford St.)
1955	1664	**CS**	$4,000	Interior alteration (163/67 Stafford St.)
1955	3350	**CS**	$1,400	Alteration to store (933 Grosvenor Ave.)
1958	2744	**CS**	$1,600	Store front alteration (935 Grosvenor Ave.)
1976	3909		$5,000	Fire safety upgrading
1981	103		$5,000	Convert suite into office space
1982	5567		$800	Convert suite into office space
1984	1832		$5,000	Interior alteration
1984	3280		$4,000	Interior alteration
1985	8642		$4,000	Interior alteration
1985	9562	**CS**	$58,000	2nd floor interior alterations (conversion to offices)
1989	10273		$5,000	Underpin existing building
1998	106494		$10,000	Interior alteration (161 Stafford St.)
1999	115658		$1,200	Interior alteration (167 Stafford St.)
2007	134954		$3,000	Interior alteration (161 Stafford St.)
2007	151554		$4,000	Exterior alteration (167 Stafford St.)

APPENDIX II

John Danley Atchison

Unquestionably one of the city's most talented architects, J.D. Atchison was born in Monmouth, Illinois in 1870. Educated in Chicago, he studied architecture at the Chicago Art Institute and the Chicago Manual Training School.[1] After graduation he worked in the offices of W.G. Barfield, as well as for the firm Jenney and Mundie. William Le Baron Jenney was considered by many to be one of America's leading architects and Atchison participated in the planning of buildings utilizing the latest technology in steel skyscraper construction.

In 1895, he opened his own practice which continued until the early 1900s. He worked on the staff of the World's Columbian Exposition and for the Chicago and Eastern Illinois Railroad. His commissions brought him to Winnipeg and by 1905, the prosperity and future prospects prompted him to relocate his business here.[2]

A list of some of the more prominent local buildings designed by J.D. Atchison over his career includes:[3]

Alexandria Block, 389-93 Graham Ave. (1901) – demolished
Wardlow Apartments, 544 Wardlaw St. (1905) – Grade II
Kennedy Building, 315 Portage Ave. (1906)
Hample Building, 271 Portage Ave. (1906) – Grade III
Concordia (Bon Accord) Block, 637 Main St. (1906) – partially demolished
Stone Block, 650 Main St. (1907) – demolished
Nanton Stables, 61 Roslyn Cres. (1908) – demolished
Dennistoun House, 166 Roslyn Rd. (1908)

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1 Winnipeg Telegram, September 18, 1906, p. 55; and F.H. Schofield, The Story of Manitoba (Winnipeg, MB: S.J. Clarke, 1913), Vol. II, p. 374.

2 F.H. Schofield, op. cit., p. 374.

3 Compiled from City of Winnipeg, Historical Buildings Files; J. Wade, Manitoba Architecture to 1940 (Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press, 1976); Winnipeg Telegram, September 18, 1906, p. 55; Winnipeg Tribune, December 21, 1907; and F.H. Schofield, op. cit., pp. 374-375.

J.D. Atchison designs, continued:

A. Matheson House, Kildonan (1908)[4]
Devon Court, 376 Broadway (1908) – demolished
Men's Own of the City of Winnipeg Shelter Mission, 181 Logan Ave. (1908) – demolished
N.W.C.T.A. Building, 291 Garry Street (1909) – Grade III
Canada Permanent Building, 298 Garry St. (1909) – Grade II
Edmonton Block, 383-389 Portage Ave. (1909)
Maltese Cross Building, 66 King St. (286 McDermot Ave.) (1909) – Grade III
Grosvenor Court, 161 Stafford St. (1910)
Eastern Townships Bank, 367-369 Main St. (1910) – demolished
Orpheum Theatre, Fort St. (1910) – demolished
Great-West Life Building, 177 Lombard Ave. (1911) – Grade II
Allan, Killam and McKay Block, 364 Main St. (1911) – demolished
Winnipeg Development & Industrial Bureau Exposition Building, 267 Main St. (1911-1912) – demolished
Carlton Building, 354 Portage Ave. (1912) – Grade III
Cadomin Building, 280 Main St. (1912)
Boyd Building, 388 Portage Ave. (1912) – Grade III
Union Tower, 191 Lombard Ave. (1912-1913) – Grade II
Merchants' Bank Branch, 1386 Main St. (1913)
All Souls' Unitarian Church, Furby St. (1913)
Curry Building, 233 Portage Ave. (1915) – Grade II
Bank of Hamilton Building, 395 Main St. (1916-1918) – Grade I
Red Cross Lodge, Fort Osborne Barracks, Tuxedo (1919)
Manitoba School for the Deaf, Tuxedo (1922)
Medical Arts Building, southeast corner Graham Ave. and Kennedy St. (1922-1923) – demolished

Atchison also designed structures in other western provinces. He is known to have won the design competition for the Moose Jaw City Hall, c.1912-1913 (not built) as well as Moose Jaw Collegiate (1908-1910), Saskatchewan Presbyterian Boys' College and Principal's Residence (1911-1912) and the Hammond Building, Main St., Moose Jaw (1912).

Atchison was also intimately involved in promoting the concept of The Mall or Capitol Approach from Portage Avenue to the Legislative Building along Memorial Boulevard. He prepared proposals for the City Planning Commission (1911) and later the Winnipeg Town Planning

[4] Manitoba Free Press, February 29, 1908, p. 7.

Commission (1913). He also submitted proposals to the Greater Winnipeg Plan Commission (1917; 1919) which he became chairman of in 1919.[5]

In 1923, Atchison left Winnipeg for Pasadena, California and continued to practice there - adopting the Spanish Colonial style for his residential work. He died in 1959.[6]

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5 Marilyn Baker, Symbol in Stone: The Art and Politics of a Public Building (Winnipeg, MB: Hyperion Press Ltd., 1986), pp. 27-28, 51-55, 98-99, and 122-123.

6 The Emerson Court House and Town Hall Building (Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Recreation, Historic Resources Branch, 1985), pp. 8-11.

161 STAFFORD STREET - GROSVENOR COURT

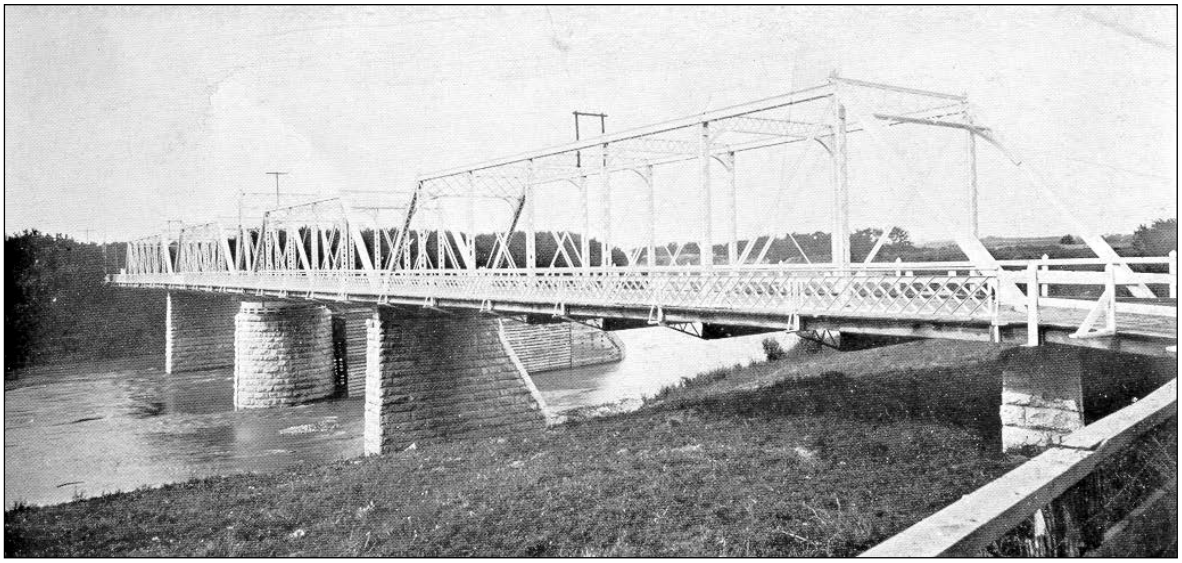


Plate 1 – First Maryland Street Bridge, opened 1895, with the heavy bush that would become Crescentwood in the background, ca.1905. (M. Peterson Collection.)

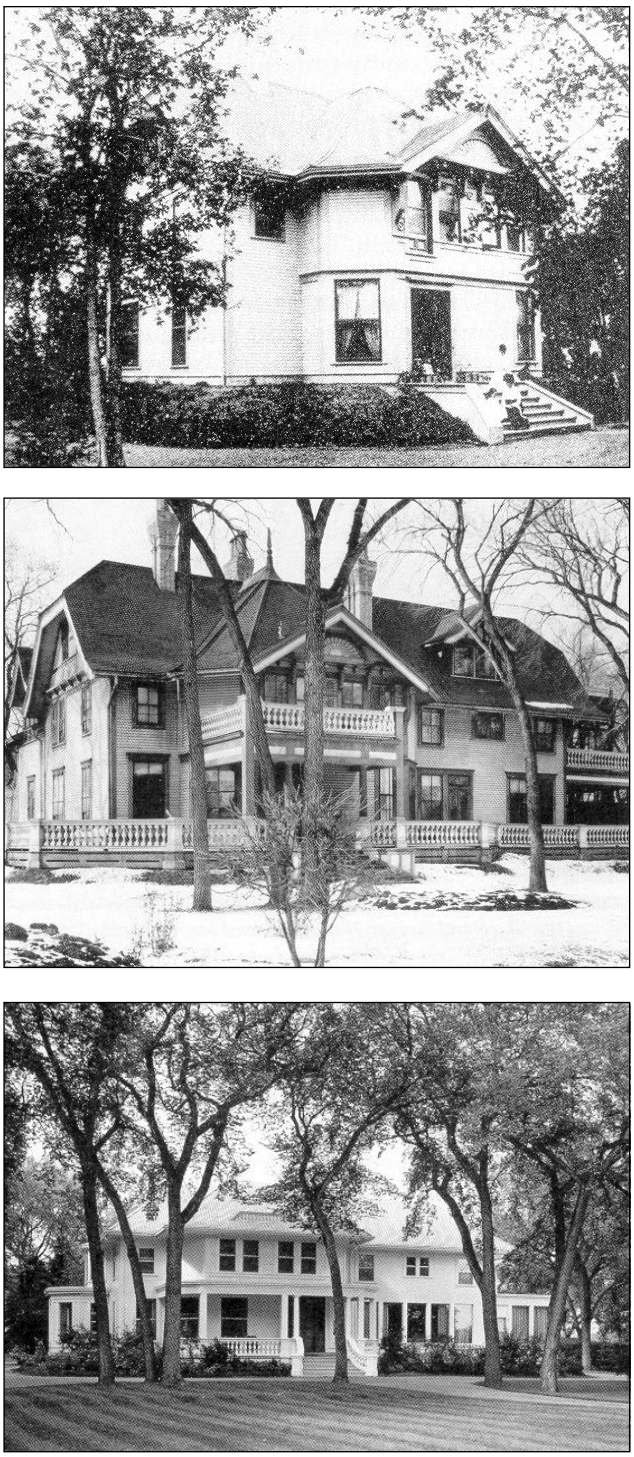


Plate 2 – J.H. Munson House, "Crescentwood," 475 Wellington Crescent, built 1888, demolished 1976. Top: Original house as it looked in 1891. Middle: House in 1919 after sale to Richardson family. Bottom: House in the 1950s after numerous renovations and additions. (All pictures reproduced from R.R. Rostecki, Crescentwood: A History (Winnipeg: 1993), pp. 44-45. [Top: Courtesy of the Museum of Man and Nature; Middle and Bottom: Courtesy of Kathleen Richardson].)

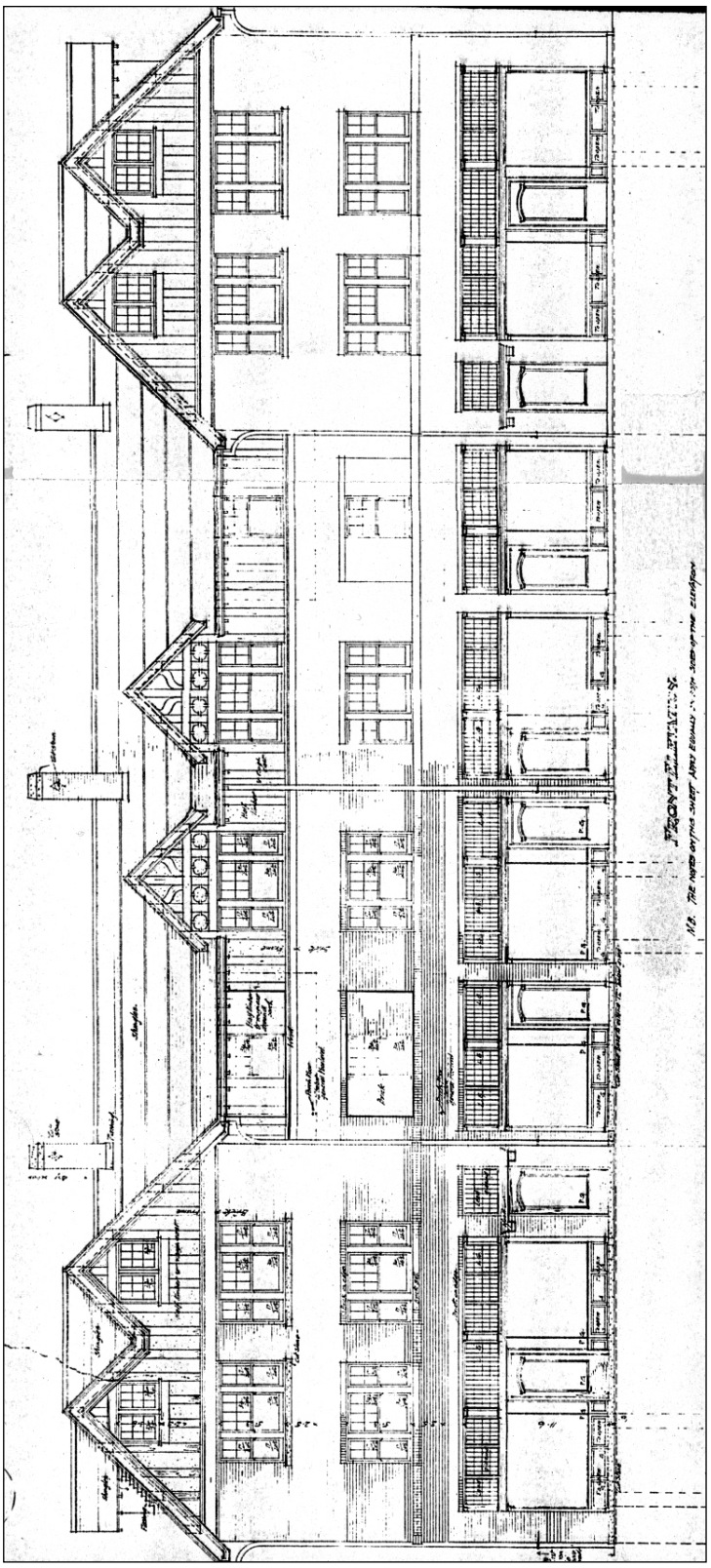


Plate 3 – Grosvenor Court, 161 Stafford Street, architect's plan, "Front Elevation," 1909. (City of Winnipeg, Plan No. 451/1909.)

161 STAFFORD STREET - GROSVENOR COURT



Plate 4 – Grosvenor Court, 161 Stafford Street, front (east) and north façades, 2016. (M. Peterson, 2016.)

161 STAFFORD STREET - GROSVENOR COURT



Plate 5 – Grosvenor Court, 161 Stafford Street, 165 Stafford Street entrance, 2016. (M. Peterson, 2016.)



Plate 6 – Grosvenor Court, 161 Stafford Street, detail of front (east) façade, 2016. (M. Peterson, 2016.)

161 STAFFORD STREET - GROSVENOR COURT



Plate 7 – Grosvenor Court, 161 Stafford Street, north façade, 2016. (M. Peterson, 2016.)

161 STAFFORD STREET - GROSVENOR COURT



Plate 8 – Grosvenor Court, 161 Stafford Street, south façade, 2016. (M. Peterson, 2016.)



Plate 9 – Grosvenor Court, 161 Stafford Street, rear addition, south side, 2016. (M. Peterson, 2016.)

161 STAFFORD STREET - GROSVENOR COURT



Plate 10 – Grosvenor Court, 161 Stafford Street, rear (west) and north façades, 2016. (M. Peterson, 2016.)

161 STAFFORD STREET - GROSVENOR COURT



Plate 11 – Grosvenor Court, 161 Stafford Street, rear (west side) recessed staircase, 2016. (M. Peterson, 2016.)

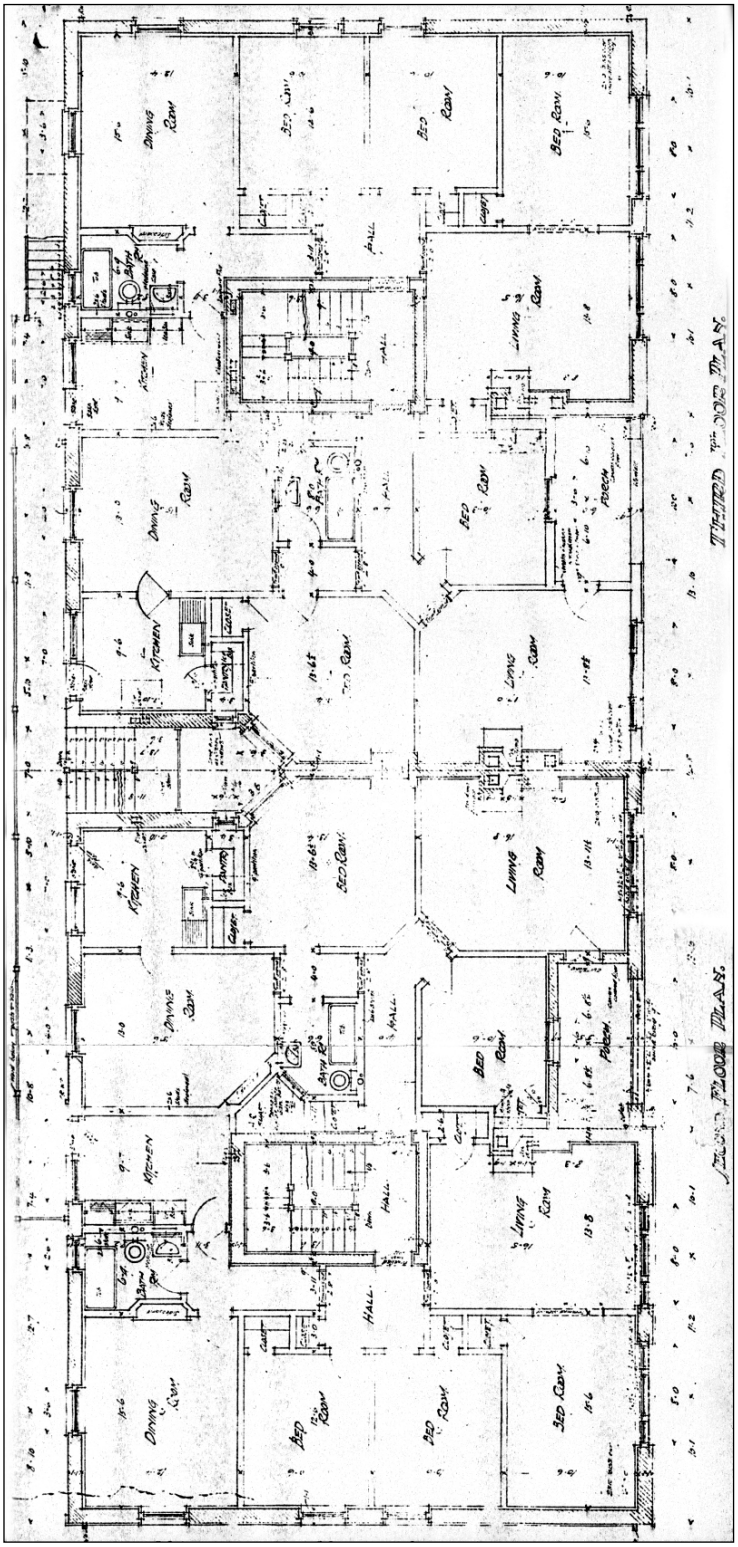


Plate 12 – Grosvenor Court, 161 Stafford Street, architect's plan, "Second and Third Floor Plans," 1909. (City of Winnipeg, Plan No. 451/1909.)

161 STAFFORD STREET - GROSVENOR COURT



Plate 13 – Grosvenor Court, 161 Stafford Street, second floor hallway, 2017. (M. Peterson, 2017.)



Plate 14 – Grosvenor Court, 161 Stafford Street, fireplace, second floor suite, 2017. (M. Peterson, 2017.)



Plate 15 – Grosvenor Court, 161 Stafford Street, top floor suite, north end of building, 2017. (M. Peterson, 2017.)



Plate 16 – Grosvenor Court, 161 Stafford Street, skylight, 2017. (M. Peterson, 2017.)

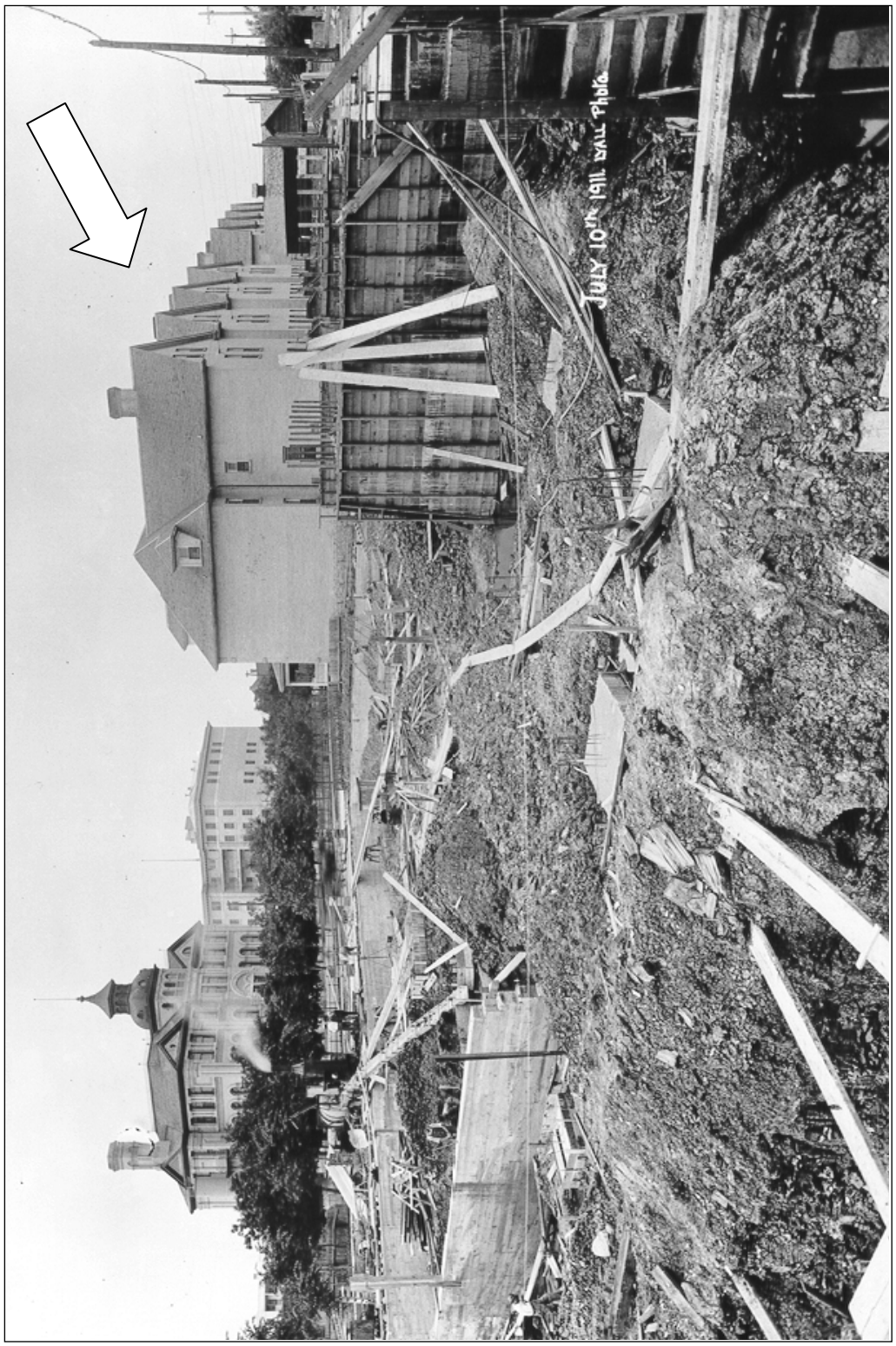


Plate 17 – 305-311 and 313-319 Vaughan Street (arrow), built 1905; architect and contractor, W.W. Cross; 1911. (Courtesy of Provincial Archives of Manitoba, J.H.G. Russell Collection, #52.)



Plate 18 – W.W. Cross House, 54 Yale Avenue, front (north) and east façades, 2016. (M. Peterson, 2016.)