

36 ROSLYN ROAD

JOHN CLAIRE FALLS HOUSE

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings & Resources Committee
Researcher: Murray Peterson
January 2022

36 ROSLYN ROAD – JOHN CLAIRE FALLS HOUSE

By the early 1900s, Winnipeg had embarked on the most sustained period of growth to that point in its history. The physical effects were felt throughout and beyond the built-up area. Infill construction and redevelopment occurred in established districts, while new residential, commercial and industrial precincts constantly redefined the city's periphery. Most growth followed spatial patterns set before the turn of the century, including increased density and specialization of land use in the central core and the outward extension of mainly residential districts along the Red and Assiniboine rivers to the north, south and west.

One area that saw tremendous growth before and after 1900 was Fort Rouge. What had been a rural settlement of French-speaking families in the 1870s became Ward One in the City of Winnipeg in 1882 as the original land owners were forced off their river lots in the face of increasing urban development (Plate 1). Properties close to the Assiniboine River attracted wealthy businessmen and public figures who liked the area's proximity to the downtown combined with its quasi-rural character. Numerous mansions, situated on extensive, well-manicured grounds, were built during this period (Plate 2). After 1900, smaller homes were also built in the area.

In those early years, Roslyn Road was one of the most prestigious addresses in Fort Rouge and all of Winnipeg. In 1907, in the midst of the pre-World War I growth phase, John C. Falls built a large brick home at 36 Roslyn Road.

STYLE

The original Falls House had many of the characteristics of the Queen Anne Revival style. The style borrowed heavily from English architecture of the 15th century, blending classical and medieval motifs into a picturesque form. Asymmetry was achieved through 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.[1]

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 as 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.

CONSTRUCTION

This house is located on land legally described as 41 St. Boniface, Plan 27423, Lot 15.[2] The 2½-storey structure measures approximately 13.73 x 14.34 x 12.20 m. and rests on a rubblestone foundation 45.72 cm. thick (see Appendix I). The frame building was clad in Red Face brick, 33.02 cm. thick on all levels. Ceiling heights are 2.29 m. in the basement, and 2.97 m., 2.82 m. and 2.59 m. on the first, second and top floors respectively. During construction, 19 cords of stone and 100,000 bricks were used. Total cost of construction was $15,000.[3]

According to one report, the rubblestone basement and foundation system was stabilized by the use of two @ 12.2 m. steel beams resting on specially designed teleposts (Plate 3).[4]

There is evidence of movement of the exterior brick walls, especially noticeable on the structure's rear (south) façade (Plates 4 and 5).

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1 L. Maitland et al., A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1992), p. 98.

2 City of Winnipeg Assessment Records, Roll No. 324840, Ward 1, PC 40. Below as AR. The original legal description was 41 St. Boniface, Plan 314, Block 6/8, part of Lot 31 and all of Lot 32.

3 City of Winnipeg Building Permit (below as BP), #1259/1907.

4 M. Peterson, "36 Roslyn Road, J.C. Falls House," report for the City of Winnipeg's Historical Buildings Committee, 1994.

DESIGN

This red brick house stands at the southwest corner of Roslyn Road and Bryce Street. The original symmetrical front or north façade (Plate 6) featured a centrally-located covered wood entrance porch, accessed by a wide set of brick-accented stairs. This element is flanked on either side by two-storey bay windows finished with peaked pediments (Plate 7). Windows on this façade were arched and featured heavy lug sills. All four slopes of the hipped roof held shed dormers. The west façade featured arched windows on the ground and second floors and rectilinear basement window openings (Plate 8). The east elevation held another entrance, extending out from the façade and protected by a large open wood porch with second storey deck (Plates 9 and 10). Rectilinear windows connected by a continuous head was found in the southeast corner of the building on the ground floor. The rear (south) façade features rectilinear window openings on all levels and a modest entrance is located near the west end (Plate 11). No opened staircase was included in the original design.

Much has happened to the building's exterior, much of it due to its conversion to a multi-tenant facility beginning in the 1960s.[5]

Peaked pediments of the front bay windows were filled in and clad in stucco (Plate 12) and wood lattice was added to the inner-facing walls of the bay windows. The original porch was removed and the original front-facing shed dormer was replaced by a gable dormer. A second storey window on the east façade was converted into a door for access to deck and stairs were added to grade for a fire escape. A second dormer was added on the south slope and an open wooden fire escape was built.

The east side veranda was removed in the summer of 2007 (Plate 13) and by the next summer, the front façade lattice was replaced by stucco and the open rear wood staircase was replaced by metal staircase. The entire building had been painted grey (Plates 14-16).

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5 AR.

INTERIOR

The original layout of the building is unknown and due to changes in its use, much of the space has been renovated.[6] There are, however, some original features including the three original ground floor fireplaces (Plate 17), wood flooring and moulding on the main floor and the main (Plates 18 and 19) and rear staircases (Plate 20).

In 1985, extensive interior renovations totalling $50,000 were completed to convert the building into offices for Locations Realty.[7]

INTEGRITY

The former Falls House sits on its original site. There is evidence of movement of the brick masonry materials along the rear wall and along the interior basement foundation walls. Sloping of the interior floors on the upper levels is evident. As detailed earlier, exterior alterations have occurred to the original building. (Plates 21-24).

STREETSCAPE

Roslyn Road has been much altered since the turn-of-the-century. Gone are most of the grand mansions that dotted the avenue. They have been replaced, in most part, by apartment blocks, both older three-storey brick buildings and newer high-rises (Plates 25-27). The latter have had a negative effect on the area's historical character. However, some older homes are still in the neighbourhood, and the former Falls House is an example of the type of home built in this area.

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6 The building operated as the boarding house by the late 1930s with up to 20 tenants listed and during the 1950s and 1960s, as the St. Michael's Nursing Home with up to 30 patients listed at times.

7 BP #4113/1985.

ARCHITECT

The local firm Wardell and Nichols was responsible for the design of this structure. L.A. Wardell (1879-1962) and D.W.F. Nichols (1881-1951) both learned their trade in southern Ontario before coming to Winnipeg. Their partnership was short-lived and their list of designs is modest (see Appendix II for biographical sketches). This is the first Wardell and Nichols building to be graded by the Historical Buildings Committee.

The contractor listed on the City of Winnipeg Building Permit is A.B. Anderson, a local builder.

PERSON

The original owner of 36 Roslyn Road was John Claire Falls (Plate 28), the long-time vice-president and general manager of the Wood-Vallance Company, wholesale hardware and metal merchants, with offices at 256 McDermot Avenue.[8] Born at Kells, County Meath, Ireland in 1854, Falls emigrated to Canada and the Kitchener, Canada West (Ontario) area at an early age. After receiving his education in Kitchener, he worked at a local hardware store. He came to Winnipeg in 1892 and took up a position as manager and buyer for the George D. Wood and Company hardware business (later renamed Wood-Vallance). Over the next 32 years, Falls rose to the post of vice-president. Falls suffered poor health during his later years, traveling in 1922 to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota for an operation and spending time in Bermuda and several winters in Victoria, British Columbia.[9] He died suddenly at his Roslyn Road home on April 11, 1924. He left a widow and one daughter.[10]

The Falls family continued to own the house until its sale in 1943. During that period, a number of tenants occupied the premises, the most notable of whom was Albert Edward Warren. Warren lived in the house for only two years, 1925 and 1926. Born in England in 1874, he first came west in

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8 Henderson's Directory (Winnipeg), 1910-1925.

9 "Falls, John Claire," in Memorable Manitobans, Manitoba Historical Society website, 2011.

10 Manitoba Free Press, April 12, 1924, p. 4.

1902 with the Canadian Northern Railway. In 1918, he was appointed chief operating officer of the federal Department of Railways and Canals in Ottawa. It was in this capacity that he came to Winnipeg in late 1918 as general manager of the western lines of the newly formed Canadian National Railways. He remained in Winnipeg until late 1926 when he moved to Toronto as general manager of the central region. By 1930, he was back in Winnipeg as the vice-president of the western lines, a position he held until his death on October 16, 1939.[11]

Other tenants during the Falls family tenure were Herbert P. Pennock of H.P. Pennock and Company, wholesale commission brokers, Joseph A. Aubert, assistant manager of the Foster Grain Company and William V. Jones, accountant with Princess Messenger.[12] Pennock moved into this house from 6 Roslyn Road, a duplex that would later be converted and renamed the Lilly Apartments.[13] The first owner and three subsequent tenants of the house illustrate the type of residents occupying this neighbourhood. All were high-ranking executives in medium- or large-scale businesses.

By the late 1930s, the property appears to have been converted into a boarding house, a reflection of the area's decline as a popular district for the city's elite. The number of tenants occupying the home in the 1940s ranged from 14 to 21. The next owner of the house was Mary J. Blois, widow of H.E. Blois. She did not reside at the address, but rather continued to operate it as a boarding house.[14]

From approximately 1951 to 1974, the property was owned by Mrs. Marie E. Martin, matron of the St. Michael's Nursing Home, located on the premises.[15] In 1966, a total of 30 patients were housed at the address.[16]

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11 Winnipeg Free Press, October 17, 1939, pp. 1, 4.

12 City of Winnipeg Assessment Roll, Roll No. 324840, Ward 1. Below as ARo.

13 The Year Past, 1983 (Winnipeg, MB: Annual Report of the Historical Buildings Committee, 1984), p. 55.

14 Ibid.

15 Henderson's Directory (Winnipeg), 1960-1980; and ARo.

16 AR.

EVENT

There is no known significant event connected with this structure.

CONTEXT

The former Falls House is illustrative of historical patterns for both this neighbourhood and the city as a whole. Originally populated and farmed by Métis, other ex-fur trade employees and immigrants, the area would see developmental pressure as the Red River Settlement and Winnipeg, grew and evolved into an urban centre.

Located close to the growing City of Winnipeg, the land south of the Assiniboine River was ideal for those wanting to be close to the city and yet removed from it. Farmers were replaced by many of the City's elite, including: Gilbert McMicken, Assistant Receiver General; Alexander McMicken, Winnipeg's mayor in 1883; Sir Augustus M. Nanton, financier and first president of the Winnipeg Stock Exchange; R.A. Ruttan, Dominion Lands Agent; and F.L. Patton, Union Bank manager.[17] The fact that two bridges connected Fort Rouge with Winnipeg by 1881 reflects both the influence of the Fort Rouge residents and the district's potential to urbanize quickly.

In 1907, the Falls House took its place among the opulent homes and lush grounds, in what had been one of the most desirable Winnipeg residential addresses in the late 19th century – Roslyn Road. Its scale and degree of ornamentation were necessary to fit into the architectural language of the surrounding homes and apartment blocks.

It is also illustrative of the growth of Winnipeg's suburban network. This development was necessitated by the growth of the commercial, financial, institutional and wholesale concerns that became synonymous with the downtown district. The rapidly expanding centre replaced the older

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[17] Joyce Solonecki, editor, Fort Rouge Through the Years (Winnipeg, MB: Fort Rouge Centennial Brochure Committee, 1974), p. 4; and Henderson's Directory (Winnipeg), 1880-1900.

residential property and new residential neighbourhoods began developing at the extremities of the downtown region.

LANDMARK

This structure is located at the intersection of two modestly used streets. The high-rise apartment blocks that now surround this structure reduce its conspicuous on the street and in the neighbourhood.

Historical Buildings & Resources Committee
THE CITY OF WINNIPEG

APPENDIX I

CITY OF WINNIPEG - Preliminary Report
Assessment Record

Building Address: 36 Roslyn Road

Building Name: J.C. Falls House

Original Use: residential

Current Use: offices

Roll No. (Old): 12032484000 (7389)

R.S.N.: 143156

Municipality: 12 Ward: 1

Property or Occupancy Code: 40

Legal Description: 41 St. Boniface, Plan 27423, Lot 15

Location: southwest corner Bryce Street

Date of Construction: 1907

Storeys: 2½ + basement

Construction Type: Red face Brick and stone foundation

HERITAGE STATUS: GRADE III (April 5, 1994)

Building Permits (Plans available: **[CS]** Department Storage; **[M]** Microfilm):
- 1259/1907 $15,000 (original); 2492/1936 $100; 4535/1950 $1,500 (repairs); 6874/1951 $500 (fire escape); 3005/1954 **[CS]** $100 (new inground fuel tank); 845/1965 $200 (alteration); 4113/1985 **[CS]** $50,000 (conversion to offices); 6289/1993 **[CS]** (interior alterations); 149548/2007 $9,000 (replace south side fire escape)

Information:

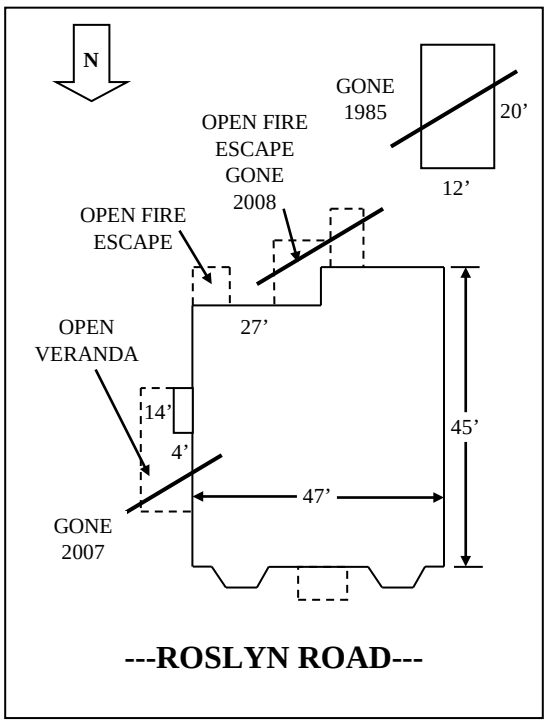
- original legal description 41 St. Boniface, Plan 314, Block 618, Part of Lot 31: Lot 32

- ceilings: B- 7'; 1st- 9½'; 2nd- 8½'; 3rd- 6-8'

- in 1966 was St. Michael's Nursing Home (30 patients)

- in 1977 was a boarding house with 16 tenants

- offices occupied by July 1985



ARCHITECT: WARDELL & NICHOLS

CONTRACTOR: A.B. ANDERSON

APPENDIX II

Wardell and Nichols[1]

L.A. Wardell and D.W.F. Nichols were responsible for a number of interesting designs throughout the city during their short-term partnership.

Lindsay Alexander Wardell was born in Dundas, Ontario on March 13, 1879. At the age of 21, he was working in Hamilton, Ontario as a draftsman for architect W.P. Witton. By 1903, he was a draftsman in the Toronto offices of the prestigious firms Darling and Pearson and then Sproatt and Rolph.[2] Two years later, Wardell was sent to Winnipeg to represent the latter firm. The first reference to Sproatt, Rolph and Wardell is found on City of Winnipeg Building Permit #597/1905. Wardell stayed with Sproatt and Rolph for the 1905 and 1906 construction seasons, then in 1907, after Sproatt and Rolph has dissolved, formed a new partnership with another transplanted Torontonian, David William Fair Nichols.

Nichols was born in Leeds, England on February 28, 1881. After emigrating to Canada as a child, he served for four years (1897-1900) as an apprentice with the Toronto architectural firm, Burke and Horwood of Toronto. From 1902-1905 he worked in the offices of Sproatt and Rolph. From 1906 until 1907, he worked in Winnipeg as a draftsman for J.H.G. Russell and John D. Atchison, two well-known architects.

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1 Biographical information supplied by Robert G. Hill, editor, The Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada, 1800-1950, online edition.

2 Canadian Encyclopedia, Second Edition, Volume 3 (Edmonton, AB: Hurtig Publishers, 1988), p. 2064. Henry Sproatt (1866-1934) and Ernest Ross Rolph (1871-1958) established a partnership in 1899. Sproatt, an authority in Gothic architecture, had worked with Frank Darling earlier in the decade. The firm designed a number of important buildings across Canada. The City of Winnipeg Building Permit (below as BP) issued on June 3, 1904 (#771/1904) is the first to name Sproatt, Rolph and partner James M. Chrysler design architects. Henderson's Directory (Winnipeg) lists Sproatt, Rolph and Chrysler as maintaining an office at #8-499 Main Street (Thomson Block) in 1905, although none are listed as living in the city. By 1906, the listing is for Sproatt, Rolph and Wardell.

The Wardell-Nichols partnership only lasted until mid-1909.[3] Wardell returned to Hamilton, working as a draftsman for W.P. Witton. In 1915, Wardell opened his own office, joined by Walter Scott in 1918. In 1924, he moved to Toronto, where he remained for the rest of his career, specializing in ecclesiastical work. He died there on January 13, 1962.

Nichols remained in Winnipeg, working alone between 1909 and 1915, except for two buildings designed in 1910 with Norman M. Moffatt (1873-1970)[4] under the name Nichols and Moffatt, and one in 1913 with J. Pender West (Nichols and West).[5] The last City of Winnipeg Building Permit with D.W.F. Nichols listed as architect is dated September 20, 1915 (#1075/1915). By 1917, Nichols had relocated to Windsor, Ontario where he stayed for the remainder of his career. He died there on November 1, 1951.[6]

A study of City of Winnipeg Building Permits from 1900 to 1919 identified the following buildings under the name of one or both men, as well as the Sproatt and Rolph designs that Wardell would have overseen or drawn:

Sproatt, Rolph and Wardell:

1905-
Alexander Avenue, corner Isabel Street - store/apartments for D. McGregor (Permit #2664)
Kennedy Street, corner Cumberland Avenue - apartment block (#948)
Main Street - addition to Colin H. Campbell store (#597)
Roslyn Road - stable for R.A. Rogers (#2193)
St. John's Avenue - E.B. Nash House (#2234)

1906-
Wellington Crescent, #424 - E.F. Hutchings House (#430)
William Avenue - 2 houses for J. Thompson (#1807)

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3 City of Winnipeg, Building Permit Ledger Books, (below as Ledgers), 1908-1910. The last permit to list Wardell and Nichols as architects is dated June 9, 1909 (#1013/1909), and eight days later a permit listing Nichols as architect was issued (#1133/1909). Wardell does not appear again in a permit up to 1919.

4 National Archives of Canada, Historical Resources Branch. Norman McNabb Moffatt became the prairie architect for the Union Bank of Canada in 1919, holding the same position when it was merged with the Royal Bank of Canada in 1925. He remained with the company until 1933.

5 Ledgers, 1909-1919. A second structure designed by Nichols and West in 1913 was cancelled.

6 Windsor Star, November 2, 1951, p. 5.

Wardell and Nichols:

1907-
Furby Street - addition of gymnasium to Dr. H.P.H. Galloway House (#1951)
Roslyn Road, #36 - J.C. Falls House (#1259)
Roslyn Road - stable for Colin H. Campbell (#1346)

1908-
Ethel Avenue (now Kingsway) - Miss Stafford House (#620)
Home Street - duplex for Ross and Redmond (#753)
Martha Street, #45/47 - alteration to house (#217)
Notre Dame Avenue - Stevens and Sons warehouse (#752)
Portage Avenue - Ontario, Manitoba and Western Land Company Building (#226)

1909-
Central Avenue (now Middle Gate) - E.F. Lang House (#1013)
Furby Street - H.M. Tucker House (#772)
Portage Avenue - addition to the Ontario, Manitoba and Western Land Co. Building (#357)

D.W.F. Nichols:

1909-
Rosser Avenue (now Warsaw Avenue) - L.D. Beard House (#1133)

1910-
Furby Street - B. Skipwith House (#1438, with N.M. Moffatt)
Wolseley Avenue - clubhouse for Assiniboine Bowling Club (#1920, with N.M. Moffatt)

1911-
Assiniboine Avenue (now West Gate) - D.M. Hackney House (#573)
Marrion Avenue (now Walker Avenue) - H. McDonald House (#1296)
Pritchard Avenue - J. Schaeffer House (#939)
Strathcona Street - store for A. Scolena (#2896)
Wolseley Avenue - J.T. Haig House (#775)

1912-
Arlington Street - Northland Knitting Company factory (#3401)
Polson Avenue - 2 houses for J. Cathcart (#3016)
St. John's Avenue, #9 - alteration to house (#1369)
Ethelbert Street, #160 - St. Margaret's Anglican Church (#2043)
York Avenue - alteration to Auditorium Rink (#3913)

D.W.F. Nichols (continued):

1913-
Burrows Avenue - apartment for K. Stappler (#2374, with J.P. West)

1914-
Cornish Avenue - City of Winnipeg "Public Baths" (#2789)

1915-
Rathgar Avenue - St. Alban's Church (#1075)

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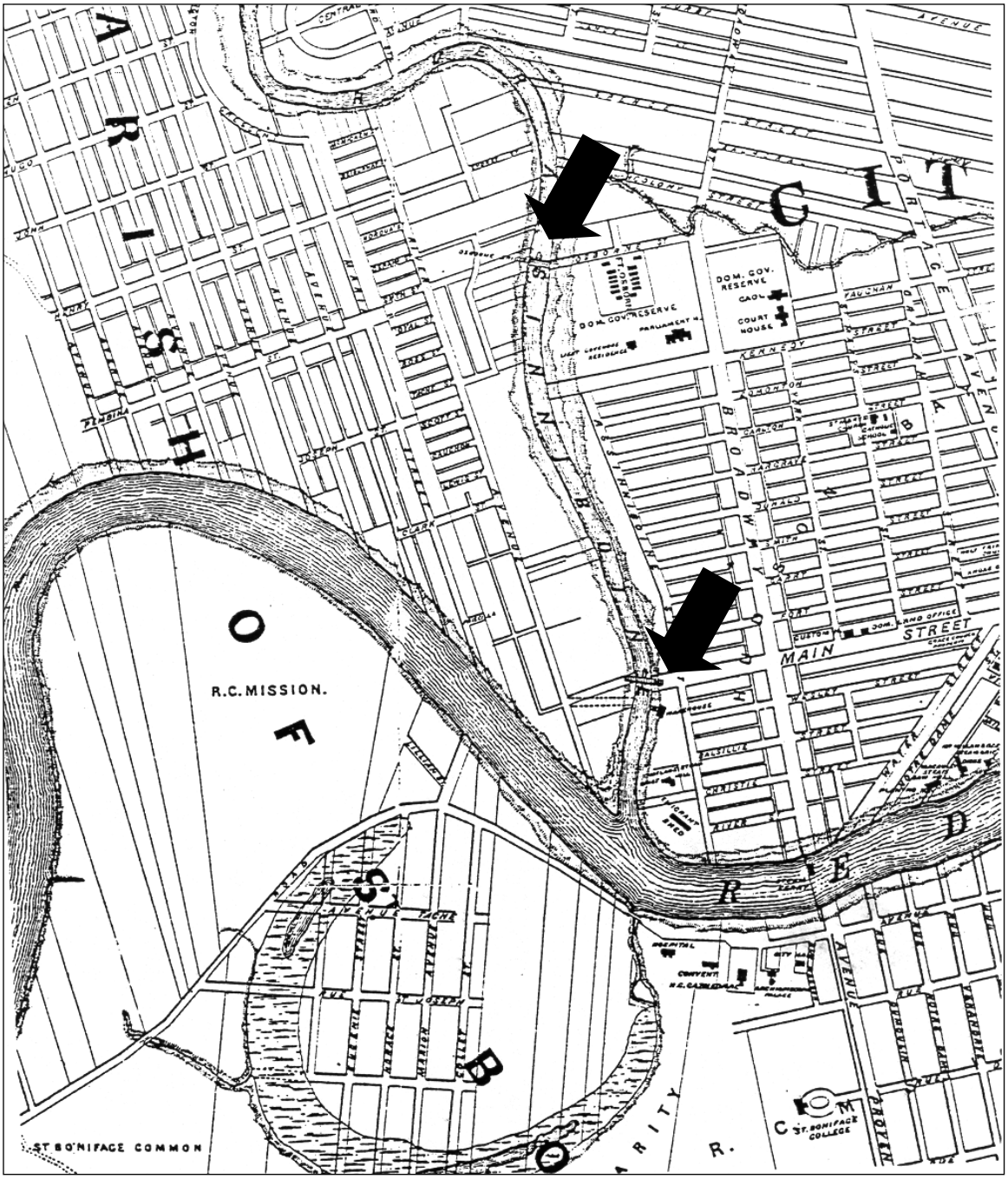


Plate 1 Map of part of the City of Winnipeg and surrounding region, 1881. Note that there are already two bridges connecting the City of Winnipeg with present-day Fort Rouge (arrows). (Reproduced from Joyce Solonecki, editor, Fort Rouge Through the Years [Winnipeg, MB: Fort Rouge Centennial Brochure Committee, 1974], p. 6.)

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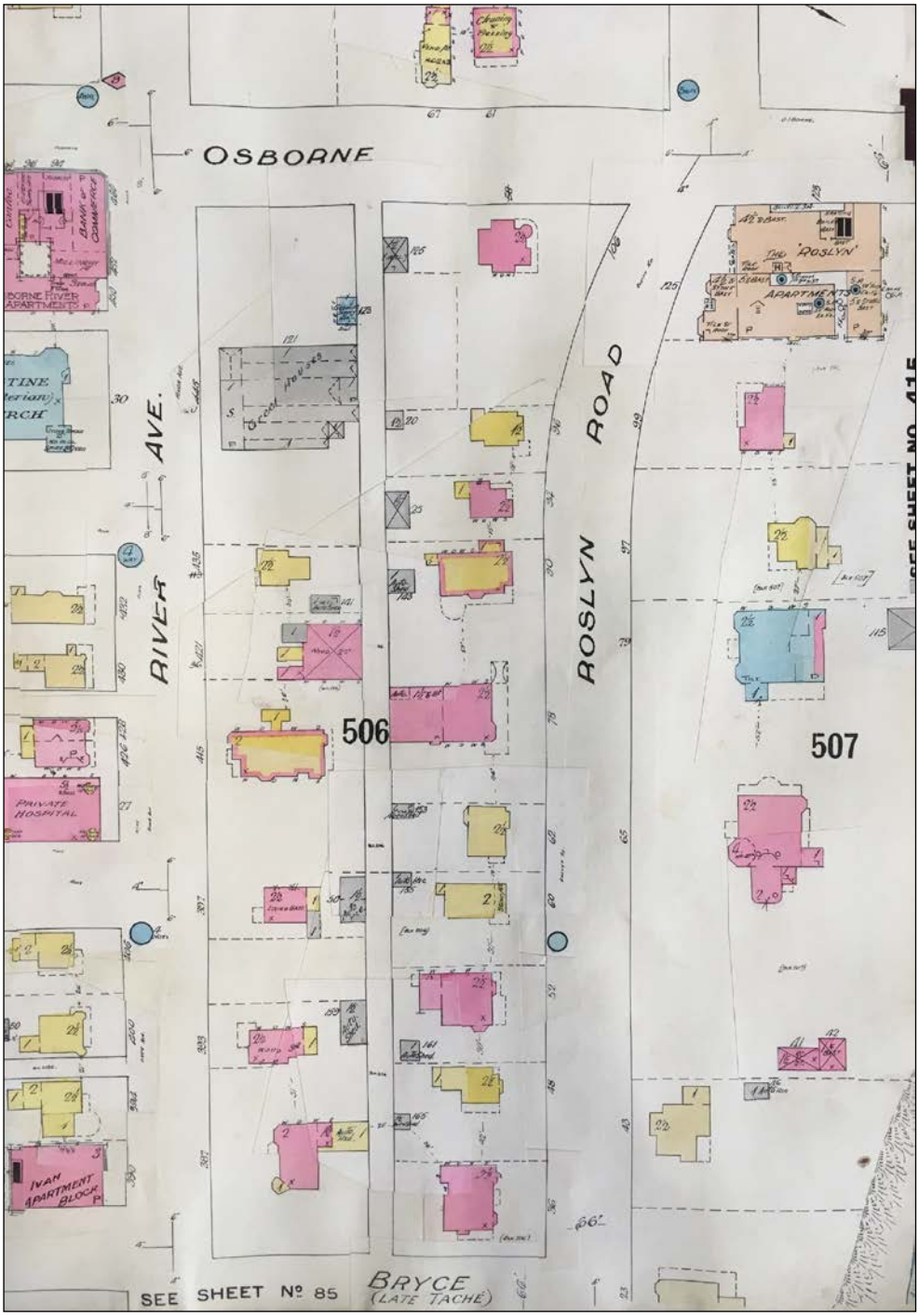


Plate 2 – City of Winnipeg Fire Atlas, 1906 (with later updates), showing Roslyn Road east of Osborne Street. Note the large homes and property on the north (river) side of the street. At the corner of Osborne Street is the Roslyn Court Apartments, 40 Osborne Street, one of the city's most luxurious and prestigious blocks, opened in 1909. (Fire Atlas, City of Winnipeg, Volume II, Sheet 87, November 1906.)

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Plate 3 – John C. Falls House, 36 Roslyn Road, basement, 2021. (M. Peterson, 2021.)



Plate 4 – John C. Falls House, 36 Roslyn Road, brick movement, rear (south) façade, 2021. (M. Peterson, 2021.)



Plate 5 – John C. Falls House, 36 Roslyn Road, detail of brick movement, rear (south) façade, 2021. (M. Peterson, 2021.)

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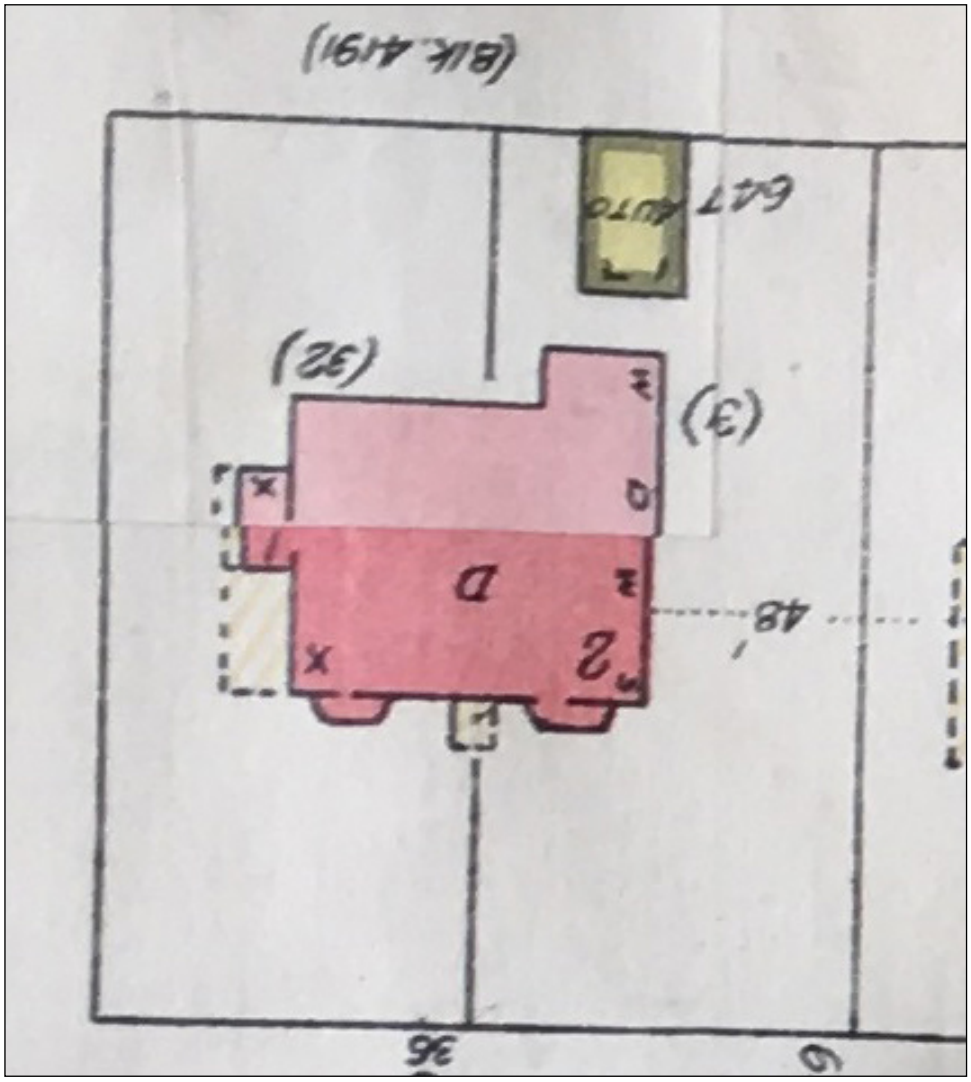


Plate 6 – Falls House, 36 Roslyn Road, 1917, showing the original design including a covered wood entrance porch and side entrance porch and the metal-clad garage at the rear. (Fire Atlas, City of Winnipeg, Volume IV, Sheet 419, May 1917.)

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Plate 7 – John C. Falls House, 36 Roslyn Road, front (north) façade, 2004, showing the red brick, and bay window pediments. (M. Peterson, 2004.)

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Plate 8 – John C. Falls House, 36 Roslyn Road, west façade, 2004. (M. Peterson, 2004.)

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Plate 9 – John C. Falls House, 36 Roslyn Road, east façade, 1993. (M. Peterson, 1993.)

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Plate 10 – John C. Falls House, 36 Roslyn Road, east façade, 2004. (M. Peterson, 2004.)

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Plate 11 – John C. Falls House, 36 Roslyn Road, rear (south) façade, 1993. (M. Peterson, 1993.)

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Plate 12 – John C. Falls House, 36 Roslyn Road, west façade, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)



Plate 13 – John C. Falls House, 36 Roslyn Road, removal of east side porch, 2007. (M. Peterson, 2007.)

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Plate 14 – John C. Falls House, 36 Roslyn Road, 1993, showing the front (north) façade prior to the painting of the brick. (M. Peterson, 1993.)

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Plate 15 – John C. Falls House, 36 Roslyn Road, front (north) façade, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)

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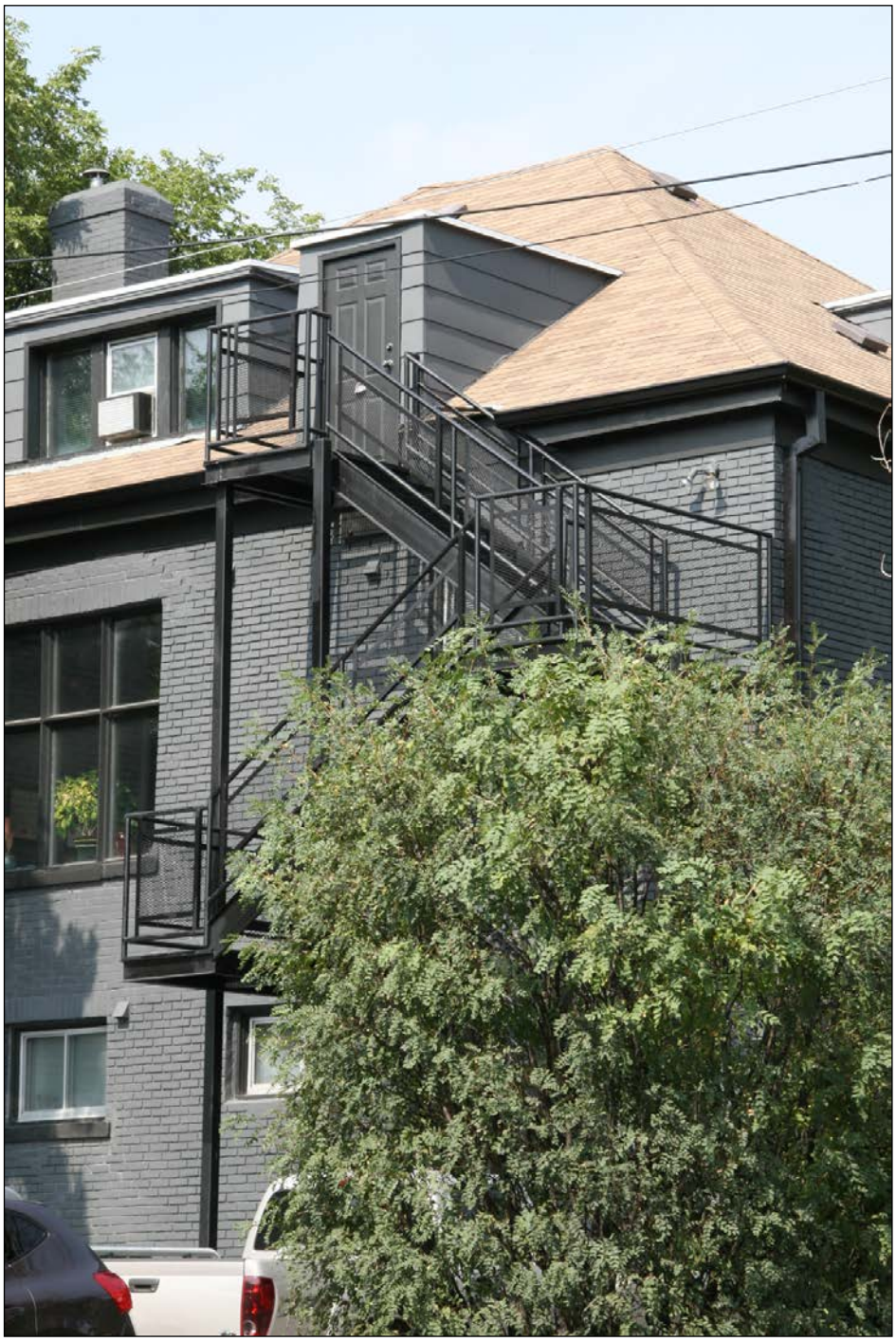


Plate 16 – John C. Falls House, 36 Roslyn Road, new metal staircase, rear (south) façade, 2008. (M. Peterson, 2008.)

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Plate 17 – John C. Falls House, 36 Roslyn Road, main floor brick fireplace, 2021. (M. Peterson, 2021.)



Plate 18 – John C. Falls House, 36 Roslyn Road, main staircase, ground floor, 2021. (M. Peterson, 2021.)



Plate 19 – John C. Falls House, 36 Roslyn Road, main staircase, second floor, 2021. (M. Peterson, 2021.)

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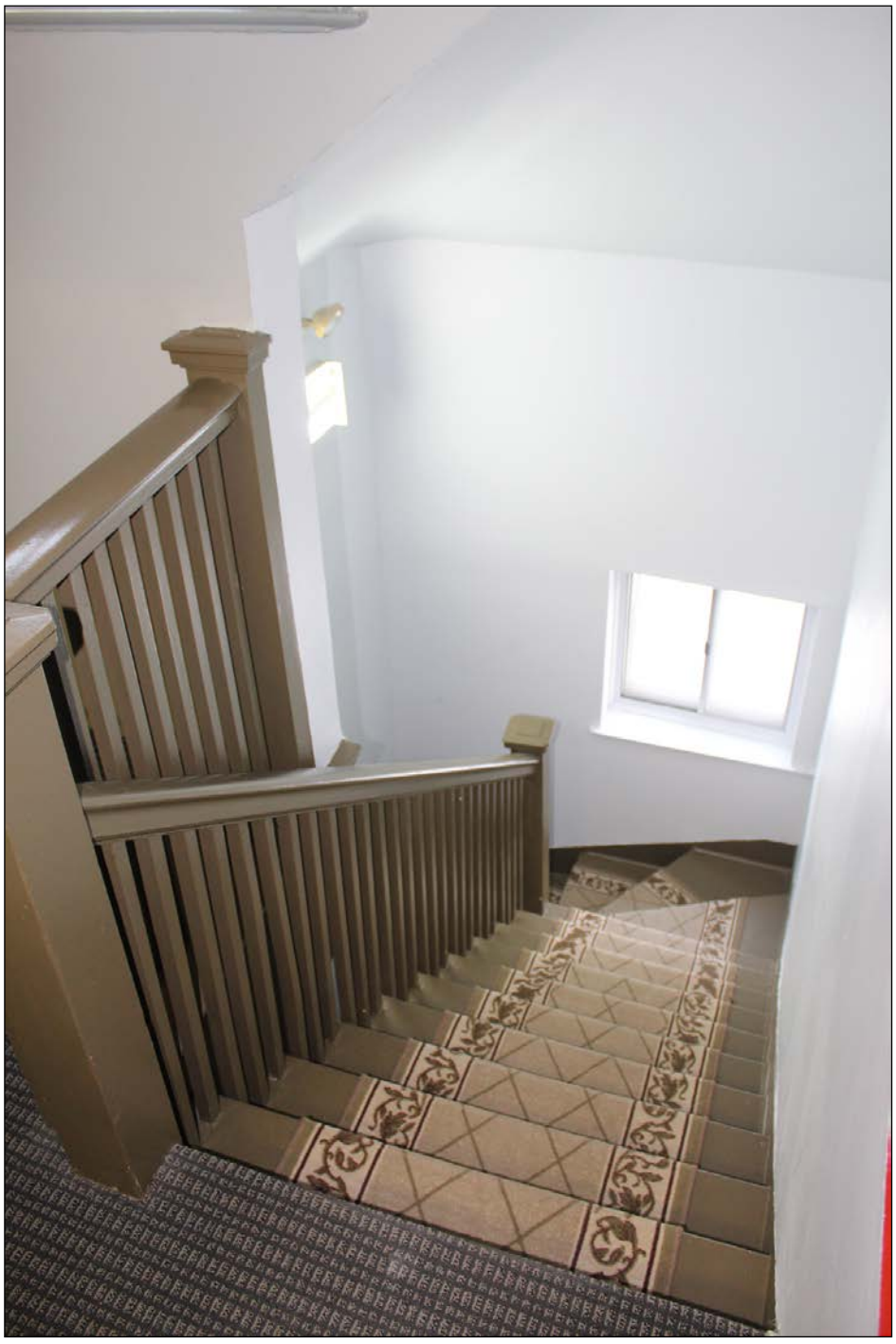


Plate 20 – John C. Falls House, 36 Roslyn Road, rear staircase, third floor, 2021. (M. Peterson, 2021.)

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Plate 21– John C. Falls House, 36 Roslyn Road, front (north) façade, 2021. (M. Peterson, 2021.)

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Plate 22 – John C. Falls House, 36 Roslyn Road, front (north) and east façades, 2021. (M. Peterson, 2021.)

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Plate 23 – John C. Falls House, 36 Roslyn Road, west façade, 2021. (M. Peterson, 2021.)

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Plate 24 – John C. Falls House, 36 Roslyn Road, rear (south) façade, 2021. (M. Peterson, 2021.)



Plate 25 – Roslyn Road, looking west from Bryce Street, 2021. (M. Peterson, 2021.)



Plate 26 – The east end of Roslyn Road, looking west, 2018. (M. Peterson, 2018.)

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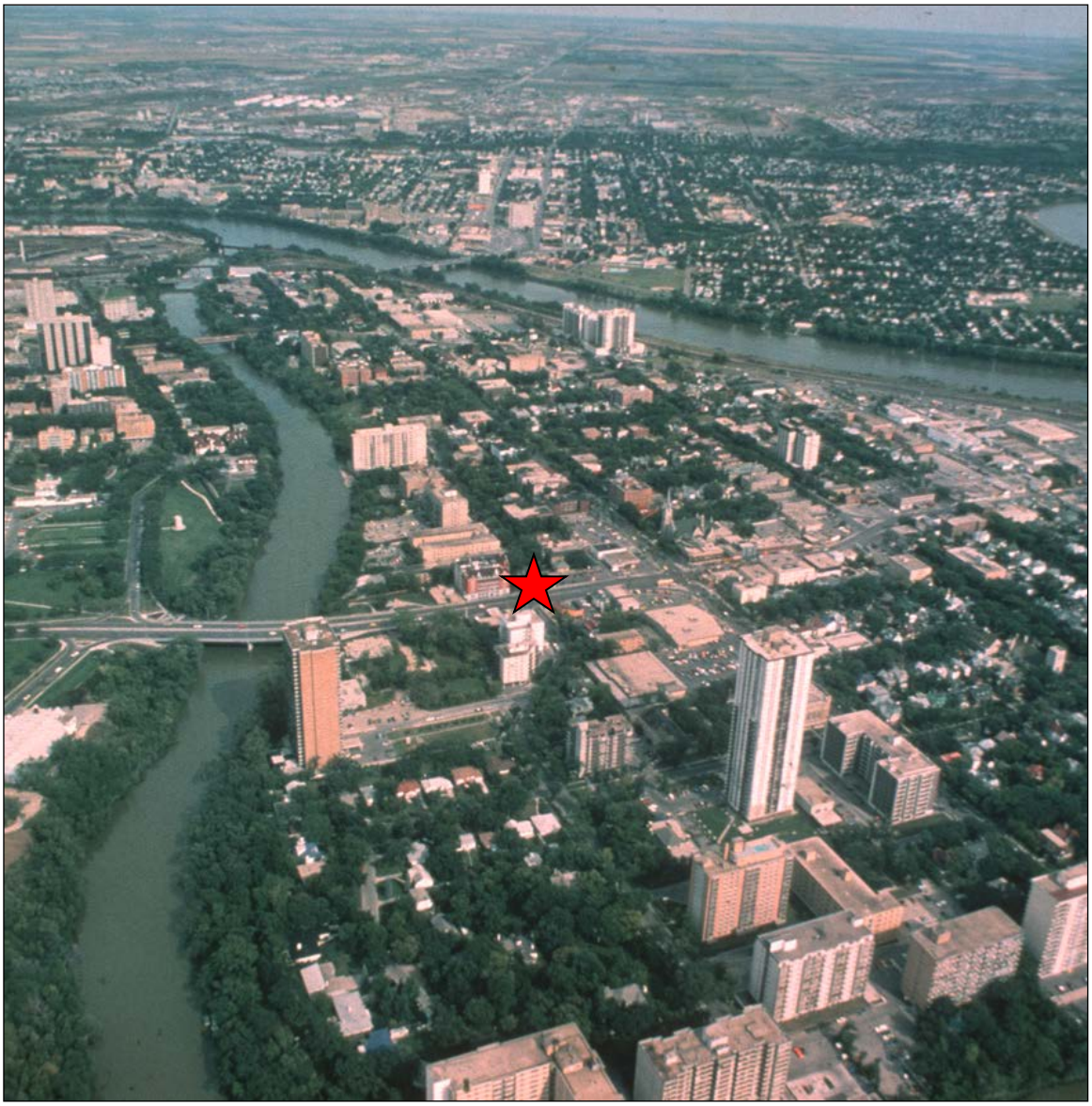


Plate 27 – This 1980s view of the Osborne Street area shows the build-up of large apartment blocks along both sides of Roslyn Road, east and west of Osborne Street (Roslyn Road at Osborne Street marked with the star). (City of Winnipeg. Planning, Property and Development Department.)

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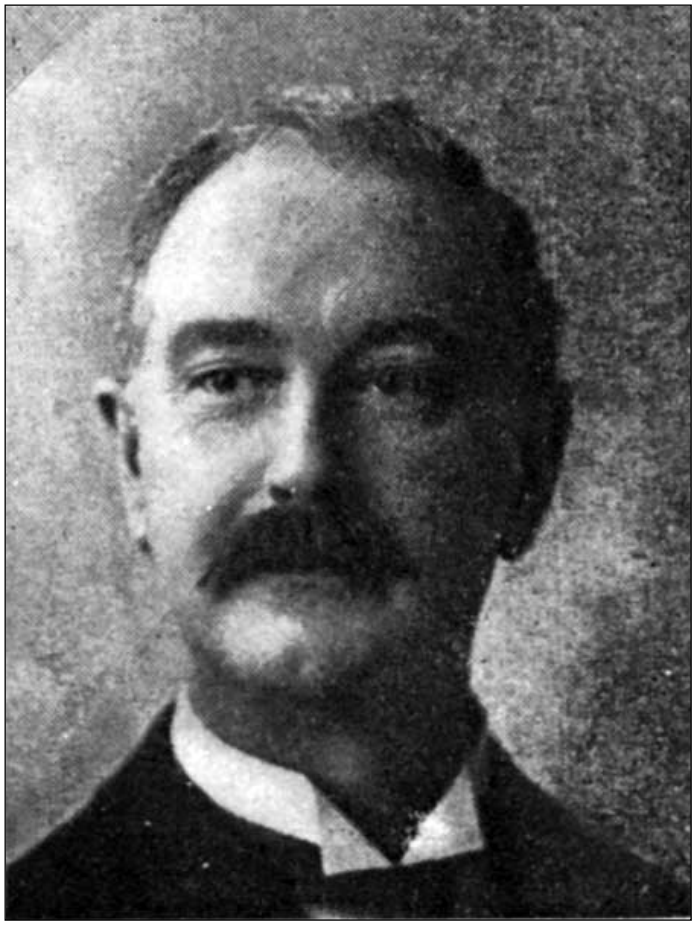


Plate 28 – John Claire Falls, ca.1911. (Reproduced from C. W. Parker, editor, Who's Who in Western Canada: A Biographical Dictionary of Notable Living Men and Women of Western Canada, Volume 1 [Vancouver, B.C.: Canadian Press Association, 1911].)