

577 Stephen Street



Designation Date: March 14, 1989
Designation Authority: The Town of Morden
Present Owner: privately owned

This Queen Anne style house was built in 1899 for Dr. Benjamin James McConnell, Morden's first medical practitioner. Dr. McConnell was born in Renfrew County, Ontario. At first they lived in a modest wood frame house but in 1899 decided a bigger, more ambitious home was needed. Work was completed in October of that year. The stonework was carried out by the Morden firm of Bryden and Richardson. He received his early education in Prembroke, and then studied medicine at Queen's University in Kingston. Graduating in 1881, he left immediately for Nelsonville, practicing there until 1885, when he moved to Morden. His clientele as a practitioner extended east as far as Gretna, south past Walhalla and Langdon and west past Hannah ND and Swan Lake. He was the Provincial Coroner for ten years and was president of the Manitoba College of Physicians and Surgeons. By 1905, he was the longest practicing physician in southern Manitoba. Dr. McConnell was also involved in business and politics. For several years he owned the Morden Woollen Mill and a large farm. He served as a member of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly representing Pembina constituency from 1907 to 1914. He was first elected to the Manitoba legislature in the 1907 provincial election, defeating conservative incumbent George Ashdown by 90 votes. In 1920 Dr. McConnell sold the house to the Manitoba and Western Colonization Company whose representative lived here for several years until the house was forfeited for unpaid taxes.

The building stood vacant for some time until 1953 when the Town Council decided to recoup lost revenue by converting the home into apartments. The interior was changed considerably and the deteriorating verandah and balcony were removed.

In 1960 Frederick William Milhausen bought the house, but sold it to George Wiebe the following year. Mr. Wiebe moved away and the building was not adequately maintained during his absentee ownership. By 1985 it was considered an eyesore.

Jim & Violet Gilmour purchased the house in 1986 and did extensive renovations and restoration to this beautiful building. They then applied for heritage status, which was granted in 1989. A succession of owners followed until 1999 when Margaret Wiebe purchased the house and converted it into Morden Florist & Gift Shop and the Rose Garden Tea Room. She sold the house in 2007 to Sandra & Bevan Wiebe and they made extensive renovations to bring it back to the historical one family character home it once was, including the addition of the verandah and balcony.