

WILLIAM F. BROWN, builder of 64th Street

As soon as he heard about the plans for a new subdivision called *The Highlands*, William F. Brown was in line for a building permit. His was the fourth one to be taken out.

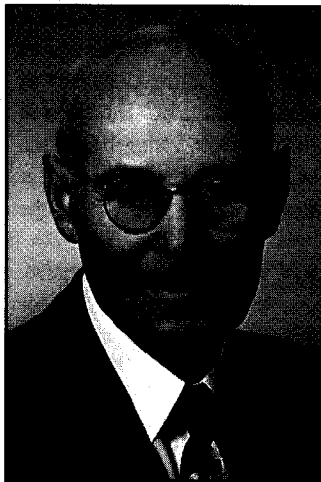
In 1912, he and his father-in-law, Cephas Sissons, constructed a house for the Brown family at 11304 - 64th St. For just over 50 years (until 1963 when his wife died), Mr. Brown would remain in the Highlands, playing an active role in the community and — although not officially working as a building contractor — building a total of nine houses in the area.

Originally from Ontario, Mr. Brown first arrived in Edmonton just after the turn of the century. For several years before moving to the Highlands, he and his wife Mabel and two young daughters, Rieta and Marjorie, lived on 115th Street, which was then the West end of the city.

The Highlands walking tour guide names the house at 11108 - 64th St. after Mr. Brown because he lived there with his family for a number of years. But Mr. Brown and his extended family actually lived in four or five of the many houses he constructed.

If you walk down 64th Street between 111th and 112th Avenues, you will pass seven of Mr. Brown's construction projects. Their numbers are 11108, 11116, 11122, 11127, 11133, 11141 and 11150.

Another house, at 6007 - 111th Ave., is the last one that Mr. Brown built, as a residence for his wife and himself in their later years. It's interesting to note how different each house is — obviously Mr. Brown was not using



William Francis Brown

standard plans or purchasing materials in bulk. And of course the housing styles changed considerably as the years passed.

Apparently this building and selling of houses, although obviously a revenue source, was primarily a hobby. Mr. Brown drew up the plans and supervised the construction while also working downtown, either running his own real estate/insurance business or, for a number of years, as an employee of Weber Brothers. In the earlier years, Mr. Brown's father-in-law was a partner in several of the house-building projects.

"My father just loved the area," says daughter Marjorie Hammond, "and built

out of his own pocket."

Mrs. Hammond, now 87 years old and living in Edmonton, remembers her father fondly. "He was very kind, and also quiet," she says. "You can tell that from the photos."

Mrs. Hammond notes that, because of his mild personality, Mr. Brown did not always receive the recognition he deserved for his many contributions to his community. Mr. Brown was heavily involved in the building of

the Highlands United Church and the Highlands Community League.

And, says Mrs. Hammond, "The Highlands Golf Club was his baby." He devoted a lot of energy to translating wishes into reality — meeting with City officials to obtain the land (a donation from the City) and spending uncounted hours on planning and organizing. He acted as President at the first meeting of the new Club, where an official President was elected, and Mr. Brown became the first Secretary-Treasurer.

Mr. Brown also had another interest: keeping a fine flower garden. On three occasions, he won gardening awards from the City of Edmonton.

Notes on the family of William F. Brown

Mr. Brown's two daughters were both well educated. Rieta obtained a Bachelor's degree in home economics from the University of Alberta and an M.A. in dietetics from Stanford University. She taught at the University of Alberta until her marriage to Highlands resident Robin (Bob) Davidson in 1932. (See story about the Davidson family in the Winter/Spring 1996 issue of this newsletter.) Rieta and Bob lived in Los Angeles, where he worked at an orthopedic hospital and she was the manager of the tearoom at the Brooks-Wiltshire store.

Marjorie graduated from the University of Toronto as a dental nurse. Returning to Edmonton as the first dental nurse in the city, she worked for the local school board and then for Dr. H.R. MacLean, Dean of Dentistry at the University of Alberta. Marjorie's husband was H. R. (Reg) Hammond, who was managing editor of the Edmonton Bulletin for a number of years before moving on to other opportunities in Calgary.

Note: The Highlands walking tour guide states that Mr. Brown built nine houses, but information collected from an interview with daughter Marjorie Brown Hammond and from Henderson's Directory seems to suggest that there may have been one or two more than that.

Most of the information in this article was obtained from the transcript of an interview with Marjorie Brown Hammond, conducted by members of the Oral History Committee of the Highlands Historical Foundation. Mrs. Hammond also provided the accompanying photographs.