

WINNIPEG ARCHITECTURE

A Tour of Main Street

Susan Algie & Gail Perry

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Introduction

Main Street was once a muddy track, where creaking Red River carts hauled furs and pemmican. It expanded in the early twentieth century with the construction of Winnipeg's earliest hotels, theatres and banks, and saw a decline after the Second World War. Throughout its history, Main Street has remained an integral part of the evolving city.

The stretch of Main Street that is the subject of this tour begins at Market and William Avenues, where public buildings form a hub of cultural and civic activity. At its far end is the Canadian Pacific Railway subway at Higgins Avenue.

Winnipeg Architecture: A Tour of Main Street offers a closer look at one of Winnipeg's most intriguing and evolving neighbourhoods. Although the focus of the tour is architectural, it is set within the context of broad historical and social themes. Architectural terms are defined in the glossary at the conclusion of the text.

The route covers two kilometres (1.2 miles) and is fully accessible. It can be comfortably travelled in 90 minutes. In most cases, you will be examining private property, including people's homes, so please show consideration.

Main Street: Phases, Themes, and Dreams

When rivers were the super highways of Canada's West, Main Street was part of the trail that connected the stone fur trade post at Lower Fort Garry, near Selkirk, Manitoba, to Upper Fort Garry at the forks of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. In the 1870s, Main Street was merely a path cutting through farms of the Ross and Logan families and the communal haying and grazing grounds called Point Douglas Common. The City of Winnipeg had just been incorporated as a place that had grown up around this north-south trail and its intersection with the trail west to Portage la Prairie.

Main Street blossomed with the arrival of the railway in 1881. Settlers arrived from Eastern Canada, Great Britain, and from all over Europe. A building boom in the area accommodated these new immigrants

who needed hotels and restaurants, bars, stores, billiard halls, and theatres. Architecturally simple, these structures dotted city streets as entrepreneurs attempted to take advantage of the growing demand for office and residential space from professionals and other small businesses. North of City Hall, Main Street filled with this type of building, as did many of the other commercial streets in Winnipeg's downtown and the surrounding communities. Few structures from this early period have survived on this stretch of Main Street; the Maycock Building, built in the mid-1880s, is the oldest one remaining.

Too close to the railway tracks and the grime and industry that the trains spawned, this earlier settled part of Main Street was never upscale downtown Winnipeg. The lower land prices, however, encouraged fledgling local businesses, including many started by new immigrants.



By the turn of the twentieth century, new development shifted south towards Portage Avenue and development along this part of Main Street began to fade. However, the 1904 construction of the monumental Canadian Pacific Railway station and the opulent Royal Alexandra Hotel alongside the new subway at Higgins sparked a period of improvement with the construction of a substantial number of new buildings and the expansion and renovation of many of the old.



Banks ventured onto this part of the street, building Winnipeg's first satellite branches of the institutions housed in the palaces and towers located further south on Main. Though smaller, the branches were still grand and designed by some of Winnipeg's, even Canada's, most prominent architects. By this time, motion pictures had been invented and their arrival in Winnipeg was to this vibrant part of the city. There was a push for more luxurious hotels. Many of these buildings still stand, although today weedy or gravelled lots punctuate the streetscape where fire, urban renewal, and time have had their way.

Main Street did not fare well after Winnipeg's post-First World War economic decline, followed by Prohibition, the Great Depression, and the Second World War. Eventually, there was an interest in developing another part of downtown Winnipeg altogether. The zeal for urban renewal in the late 1950s and early 1960s literally took a bite out of Main Street with the bulldozing of two city blocks at its south-eastern end for the Disraeli Freeway approach and the Centennial Centre. Across the street, the decorative 1886 gingerbread style City Hall was deemed obsolete and torn down in 1962 to make way for its restrained, thoroughly modern successor. Assuring symmetry at the opposite end of North Main Street, the Royal Alexandra Hotel was demolished in 1971. Its plot was respectfully turfed and is now a grassy knoll.

In the 1950s, Main Street became home to many Indigenous peoples who moved to Winnipeg from northern Manitoba. It was more than a place to live;

it was a community where friends were reunited and new friendships were made. Yet the neighbourhood offered few material benefits. There were no business opportunities for these “newcomers” whose roots to this place were as old as the ancient river highways. Except for public projects, there was no new development on Main Street for decades. Expectations of a renaissance in the area promised by the civic projects of the 1960s, such as the new City Hall, concert hall, museum, and planetarium, were never realised. Many family businesses, several generations old, closed in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. The movie palaces were silenced. All of the banks pulled out. It seemed that the only growth was in the social support services that found ready space in the vacant buildings.

The turn of another century and millennium witnessed the building of one of the grandest Main Street structures yet. In the shadow of the Royal Alexandra Hotel rises the Circle of Life

Thunderbird House, a spiritual space located across from the Aboriginal Centre, a campus of commerce and learning situated in the old CPR station. Thunderbird House and its accompanying sweat lodge are relatively new components of the local community and Winnipeg as a whole. Sculpture as much as structure, it is redefining the streetscape. Its circular form is set back so that it can stretch its eagle wings.

Near Thunderbird House on the sites of former hotels and theatres are both new open lots and new buildings. Included for historical context are some of the buildings that were an important part of the streetscape but have been demolished. Time will show how future development decisions impact the streetscape and the community.

For now, Main Street provides an opportunity to study the past and present realities of the community. From here you can admire the financial temples boasting classical and modern form. You

can see an office building adorned with human and lion faces, their stony eyes staring back at you. If you look, you will see that many styles abound. There is frothy Italianate, practical Chicago School, and cool Art Moderne. Although many of the buildings are modest in scale and design, they tell the important history of early Winnipeg. You will discover some of the fascinating stories that lie behind the facades—great dynasties, thwarted ventures, current plans, and history still to be written.

Tour Stops

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1. Union Bank Tower

500–504 Main Street

1904 Frank Darling and John Pearson

1921 Annex, Northwood and Carey

2013 Addition, Prairie Architects

The Union Bank Tower is one of Western Canada's oldest steel-framed skyscrapers. This new method of construction was initially shocking to citizens as they watched builders attach heavy materials to the tall thin structure. By 1925, the Union Bank Tower was the last remaining national bank headquarters in Winnipeg. Strangely, it was also the venue for the 1922 founding of the International Brotherhood of Magicians. After a turbulent financial period, the Union Bank merged with the Royal Bank and vacated the building by the 1980s.

The bank was designed by Toronto-based firm Darling and Pearson, Canada's foremost bank architects of the time. This was a firm known

for skillfully combining modern construction with historical styles. The terracotta on the structure imitates a smooth grey stone and reflects a restrained Renaissance Revival style. It clads the lower two floors and is the material used for the heavy decorative elements around the windows (sills and voussoirs), the building's corners (quoins) and the attic storey with its porthole windows. The ornate cornice is made of galvanised steel that was moulded and painted to resemble stone or terracotta. The primary brick facade is punctuated by a grid of windows which was made possible by the new steel-frame technology. Decorative upper and lower sections with a mid-section of ordered fenestration is typical of the Chicago style from which the skyscraper originated. An annex was added to the building in 1921.

Union Bank Tower sat empty until it was rehabilitated into the Red River College School of Hospitality and Culinary Arts in 2013. Prairie

Architects designed the extensive conversion into a school and residence, reusing many of the existing quality materials, such as marble, found throughout the building. An addition that was built on the site of the former Leland Hotel (burned in 1999) doubled the building's usable area. The rehabilitation further emphasises sustainability with an upgraded envelope and recycling energy systems.





2. City Hall

510 Main Street

1964 GBR Architects, Lead designers
Bernard Brown and David Thordarson

In the post-war years, longstanding demand to replace Winnipeg's "gingerbread" City Hall with a modern alternative gained momentum as



the population grew and the existing structure deteriorated. As other Canadian cities constructed modern civic buildings, Winnipeg held a referendum to determine the appropriate location and cost of a new City Hall. This was followed by a national design competition featuring some of the country's most prominent architects.

The winning entry, by local firm Green Blankstein Russell (GBR) Architects, separated government functions in an attempt to provide a democratic public building with equal access to public and elected officials. It was originally designed for a

site on Memorial Boulevard north of the Legislative Building. However, political interest in the rejuvenation of downtown Main Street was a major factor in shifting the site to the existing location and ensuring the 1962 demolition of the 1886 City Hall.

The move meant a reworking of the competition design, resulting in a very different solution, but one that retained the separation of civic governmental functions. GBR's new design featured a grouping of buildings focused on a civic square on the site of what was, at the time, Market Avenue. Approaching from Main Street, the axis of Market Avenue was to be closed by a Metro building and flanked by the Administration and Council Buildings. This axis was to continue east to the Red River and create a grand avenue for the new civic and cultural district. However, the Metro Building was never completed; instead, the Public Safety Building and Civic Parkade were constructed and waterfront development was

permitted without particular sensitivity to the original axial plan.

The clear portrayal of function, structure, and material evokes ideas of democracy and openness. The Council Building is an elegant, rational pavilion, which uses the transparency of glass and the nobility of bronze and Tyndall stone to celebrate a building made for the citizens of the city. The intent was to replicate the high-quality materials of the historic warehouse district into the modern design. The Administration Building is a six-storey office building flanked by two low wings enclosing a thoughtfully scaled courtyard which acts as a civic square. The publicly accessible rooftop gardens originally planned for the wings, as well as the bronze brise-soleils of the Council Building, are particularly reminiscent of the work of the celebrated modern architect Le Corbusier. Winnipeg's City Hall is a quality example of modern

architecture that is finished in the finest materials and, as originally conceived, provides a clear modern alternative to the civic precinct it replaced.

The composition of the courtyard and surrounding buildings has its roots in the classical designs of Greek agoras and Roman fora. The ordered, geometric, carefully proportioned design is reflective of these same legacies. The complex is set on a dark granite podium, and double-set columns are recurring features throughout. Recent renovations to the courtyard have removed the original black granite reflecting pool and fountain and replaced it with a contemporary landscaping design that acts as a counterpoint to the geometric order of this civic precinct. Nonetheless, the plaza continues to serve as a place for public interaction and occasionally protest.

As was common in the 1960s, the City Hall complex, the proposed Metro Building, and the nearby

Concert Hall, Planetarium, and Manitoba Museum were all developed as “clearance projects” that were constructed in place of older building stock and intended to revitalise the areas in which they were sited. Redevelopment strategies employed today are often less ambitious in scale and tend to be more sympathetic to the urban fabric in which they are located. This, however, is not always the case. A good comparison of more recent redevelopment projects can be seen in the differing responses to context and architectural form taken by the Youth for Christ Centre and Thunderbird House further along the tour.



3. McLaren Hotel

554 Main Street

1910–11 C.J. Caldwell

At seven stories, the 1910 McLaren Hotel, designed by C.J. Caldwell, is the first of three standing hotels featured on this tour. From 1906 to 1971, at the north end of this stretch of Main Street was the seven-storey Royal Alexandra Hotel at Higgins Avenue. The Royal Alexandra has been demolished as were

several other Main Street hotels. The McLaren has the distinction of not only surviving many other Main Street hotels, but also of serving continuously as a hotel, with little exterior change. Both of its primary facades—north and east—are finished in red Menominee brick with a Tyndall stone base and a large, modestly detailed metal-bracketed cornice, all supported by a reinforced concrete structure. The mural on the side of the building was painted by Jesse Reno as part of Mural Festival 2007. It was inspired by Indigenous culture and uses a variety of symbolism to encourage personal and societal growth.

The building takes the name of its first owners, three McLaren brothers—Archibald, Alexander Stewart and John Angus. They were members of an Ontario family of experienced hoteliers that entered the trade in Winnipeg in the late 1870s and subsequently



managed the Brunswick, Strathcona, and Empire Hotels on Main Street.

Before proceeding to the next building, look west on Rupert Avenue to the former Salvation Army Citadel, a castle-like structure in buff brick. This was the Salvation Army's first home in the Main Street area. We will see its current home later in the tour.



4. United Way Building

580 Main Street

2010 Raymond S.C. Wan Architect

The central location of the three-storey United Way head office allows the non-profit organisation to be more integrated with its community partners. Designed by Raymond S.C. Wan in 2010, the ground floor features an open meeting room and temporary shared workspaces that are accessible to individuals

and organisations working to further social innovation in the community. The double corner lot allows for maximum glazing and aluminum composite panels on all sides. The curved Main Street facade features copper-toned panels, above a colonnade, with plant beds in front of the recessed glazing. At the front of the building there is an interactive art piece by Jacqueline Metz and Nancy Chew titled “You, You and You.” The handprints on the aluminum talking stick are sensitive to touch and trigger a light display on the adjacent masonry fin.



5. Maycock Block

584 Main Street

1985–86	S.F. Peters
1906	Addition, Darling and Pearson
1913	Addition, Victor D. Horsburgh

Designed by architect S.F. Peters and built in 1885–86, the Maycock Block is the oldest building on the tour and the most ornate example on this block. Three storeys high, of solid buff brick construction, the building boasts an Italianate flavour with



Tyndall limestone and brick detailing, an elaborate curving metal cornice, and hood mouldings. Some of the building's symmetry has been lost through alterations, such as the relocation of its primary entrance from the original corner location.

The building takes its name from its first owners, Edward and Annie Maycock, who sold toys, china, woollens, and fancy goods from various Main Street addresses between the late 1880s and about 1904. Early tenants included Dingwall Jewellers and the YMCA. The longest tenant of the Maycock

Block was the Canadian Bank of Commerce, which operated here from 1906 until the late 1970s. The firm of Darling and Pearson, among the foremost bank architects in Canada, made renovations to accommodate the bank and second-floor residential space. The same firm designed the soaring Union Bank Tower (1903–04) at 500–504 Main Street. Another addition to the bank area was designed by Victor D. Horsburgh in 1913, after Dingwall Jewellers moved to a new location.





6. Singer Building

590 Main Street

1939 George W. Northwood and Cyril W. U. Chivers

The 1939 Singer Building is a rare example of Art Deco architecture in Winnipeg. Designed by Northwood and Chivers Architects in 1939, it is a very restrained example of this modern, streamlined style that preferred symmetry, clean massing, rich

materials, and stylised geometric or ancient motifs. Art Deco was often used for the design of high-rises, theatres, banks, and government buildings. A two-storey brick and reinforced concrete building with a facade of smooth-cut limestone and polished granite, the structure originally had two doors flanking a central storefront window. In the reconfigured storefront, there is little evidence of the elegant bronze window frames and a bronze flagpole mounting which once greeted visitors.

The building was built for the New York-based Singer Sewing Machine manufacturing company, which had occupied several premises on Main Street since 1880. The Singer Company remained at this location until well into the 1960s. Faint traces of the company name can be seen in the granite above the entry.





7. Allman Block

592 Main Street

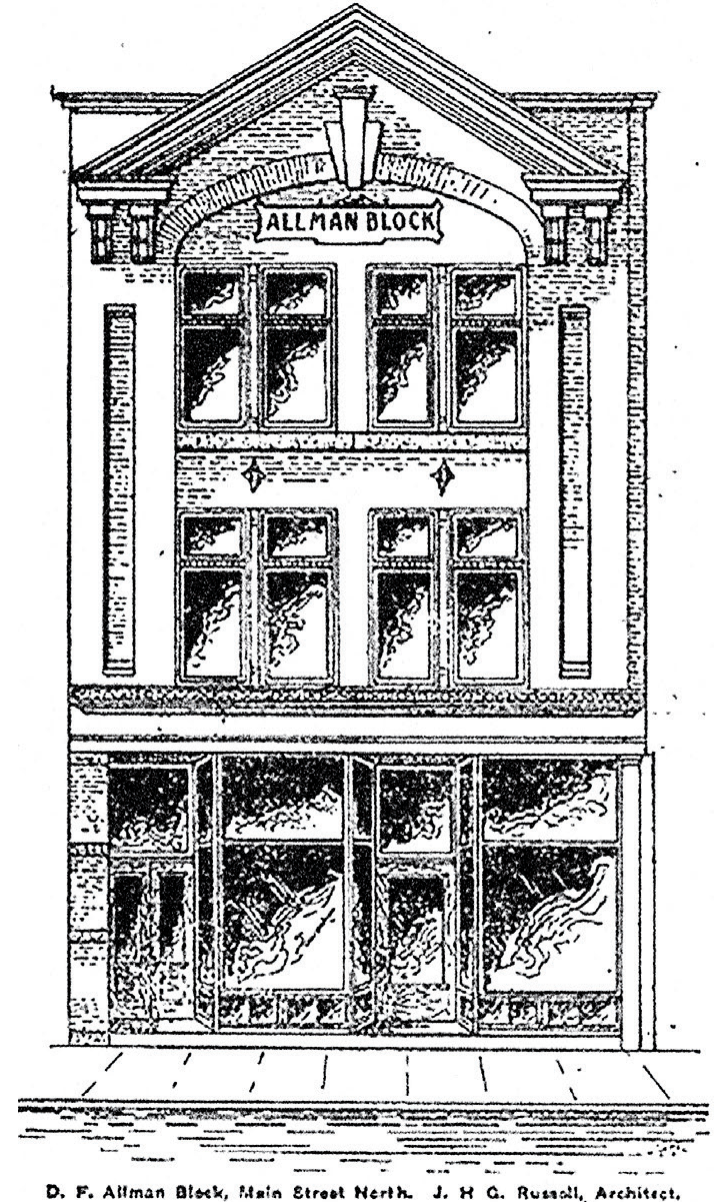
1904 John H.G. Russell

Built in 1904, according to a design by J.H.G. Russell for clothier Daniel Allman, this simple commercial structure is constructed of buff brick (now painted). The Allman Block is a good example of a two-part commercial building with classical detailing. This form dates back to Roman times when urban structures combined a ground-floor shop or business with living quarters above. It became a remarkably popular form throughout the world, reaching the height of its acceptance in North America from the 1850s to 1950s.

The main floor of the Allman Block was designed as retail space and therefore included a large central display window. Two entrance doors were found on this level when the building first opened. The southern opening led to upper offices and suites, and the northern one to the store.

The most ornamental element of the building is the classically-designed cornice. To enrich an otherwise plain facade, architect J.H.G. Russell used a metal cornice with return eaves supported by painted brackets. This oversized element partially obscures the plain brick parapet that finishes the front facade.

Daniel Allman constructed this building in 1904 to house his own business, but also to take advantage of the rental investment opportunities associated with the city's growth. He owned the building until 1924. Original tenants in the block included Shamrock Pool Rooms, solicitor Max Steinkopf, and the Swedish Canadian Colonization Company. The upper levels were sometimes used as meeting halls but, beginning in the 1950s, the spaces were almost exclusively for residential use. The main floor storefront has been extensively altered but the upper story still has many original features.





8. Guest Block

596–598 Main Street

1902 598 Main Street, James Chisolm
 1909 596 Main Street, G.W. Northwood

While almost identical in appearance to the original building, the southern part of the Guest Block is, in fact, an addition designed by G.W. Northwood in 1909 to expand the 1902 building by James Chisholm. The main floor facade has been significantly altered while the upper storeys retain the original brick facade with stone and brick detailing.

The Guest Block was originally used for the Northern and W.J. Guest fish companies and later housed a variety of retail stores and restaurants. From 1909 through the 1920s, both sections were occupied by the Winnipeg Candy Kitchen (later Castran's Café) operated by James, Gus and Angelos Castran. Their business subsequently was consolidated through to the late 1950s, followed by the Golden Wheel Café and Country Girl Restaurant.



9. McKerchar Block

600 Main Street

1902 John H.G. Russell

The McKerchar Block has three storeys and is constructed of buff brick. It was designed by John H.G. Russell in 1902. The front elevation is noteworthy for its two bays, each topped with large arched windows on the third floor. A corbelled brick cornice tops off the building and is balanced by the rough stone band that divides the first from the second floors. The main floor storefront has been significantly altered.

Arriving in Winnipeg from Ontario in 1879, John McKerchar entered the grocery business. He decided to construct this building after losing his shop elsewhere on Main Street in a fire. He spent the next 40 years in the grocery business, before choosing to become a photographer.

The main floor of the McKerchar Block has traditionally housed retail tenants, while upper floors have seen a combination of office and residential uses. In the 1960s and 1970s, several social justice and outreach organisations operated from this building. It has been generally vacant since the 1980s.



10. Royal Bank

618 Main Street

1948 S.G. Davenport, Montreal

This was formerly a bank building. The single-storey structure features a red-brick and limestone facade that evokes a series of fluted columns—a simplified rendition of the classical style evident in older bank buildings elsewhere on Main Street. An example of this earlier style can be seen at the 1907 Dominion Bank later on the tour.

This 1946 structure replaced a 1921 Royal Bank branch at the same location. It was designed by S.G. Davenport of Montreal, who served for a time as the Royal Bank's chief architect. Notably, he also co-designed the Bank of Canada in Ottawa (1937–38), with the Toronto firm of Marani, Lawson, and Morris. 618 Main served as a Royal Bank of Canada branch until the early 1980s. Since then, the building has housed a variety of retail tenants.



11. Starland Theatre

626 Main Street

1911 Alexander and W.N. Melville
 1921 Addition, George MacPherson
 2008 Demolished

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12. Rex (Regent/Epic) Theatre

646 Main Street

1912 Alexander Melville

2008 Demolished

The Rex Theatre, also by Alexander Melville, was a long and narrow two-storey building. After its construction in 1912, passers-by were treated to a mixture of classically inspired ornamentation, flashing lights, and marble. The entrance was set back under a richly ornamented and extravagantly lit archway. This type of arched front became known as a "Coney Island Front" and was used extensively throughout North America. Early illustrations suggest that the theatre's name figured prominently across the parapet. The exterior once consisted of

marble slabs, engaged columns, and detailed stucco reliefs featuring trumpet-playing cherubs.

Inside, a barrel-vault ceiling emphasised the length and narrowness of the auditorium space that held 850 patrons. The stage included space for a small orchestra and organ. Some of the noteworthy interior details included marble stairs and wainscoting, decorative plaster work, mosaic stone flooring, oak trim, and brass railings.

Owner Robert Lorne Richardson built the Rex specifically as a movie house. There were several other theatres on this stretch of Main Street including the Columbia, the Starland, and the Colonial. In about 1923, the theatre's name was changed to the Regent. After the Richardson family sold the property in 1929, there was a succession of individual and corporate owners until the building was demolished in 2008.



13. Winnipeg Regional Health Authority (WRHA)

650 Main Street

2009 Stantec, lead designer Verne Reimer

The Winnipeg Regional Health Authority corporate office also serves as a community clinic. The four-storey office and six-storey parkade were completed through an expedited design-build process to allow the organisation to relocate promptly. Verne Reimer was the lead architect on the project. Demolition, design, construction, and completion all occurred within a 13-month period and the WRHA took possession in 2009. The Starland and Rex Theatres as well as Jack's Hostel were demolished to make way for the project.



14. Bell Hotel

662 Main Street

1906 Daniel Smith

2011 BIOS Architecture

Of the early large-scale hotels on Main Street, the Bell is one of the few remaining, along with the McLaren. These hotels speak of a time when the middle-class visitor would leave the Canadian Pacific Railway Station on Higgins Avenue and venture south down Main Street towards City Hall in search of accommodation. The Bell was a prosperous hotel at the time and is surprisingly much larger than its Main Street facade suggests. The hotel had 75 rooms with public and private baths in the basement. It was designed by Daniel Smith in 1906.

The front facade of the building is symmetrical with a double entrance, a metal cornice inscribed with the hotel's name, and a large neon marquee animated by a swinging bell. Two prominent iron balconies adorn

the third and fourth floors. The original red brick facade has since been painted grey and the ground floor has been significantly altered.

Veteran hotelier Joseph Bernhart developed this building and entrusted its initial management to brothers Harry and Thomas Bell, and subsequently to Samuel Bronfman. Bronfman was a member of a Jewish immigrant family that, during the 1910s and 1920s, actively invested in the hotel and liquor trades, setting the foundation for what became an international liquor and entertainment enterprise known today as Seagram Co. Ltd. The Bell weathered prohibition (1916–28), the Great Depression, and the physical and economic decline of the area. It was rehabilitated by BIOS Architecture in 2011 as a supportive housing centre.

On the northern edge of the Main Street facade, a red-brown brick pilaster and stone cap from the now demolished Weir Block is visible. Built in

1899, the building had a brick facade with brick and stone detailing. The main floor was used as a hardware store while the upper part of the building had a variety of residential and commercial tenants. The Weir Block was demolished in 2013 and replaced by a plain three-storey building with a pharmacy on the main floor.



15. Gordon Building

676 Main Street

1904 Darling and Pearson

1948 Remodelling, Northwood and Chivers

This 1904 building was designed by prominent Toronto architects Darling and Pearson as a drugstore for pioneering pharmacists J.C. Gordon and W.J. Mitchell. The brick facade of this modest building has been greatly altered over the years. In 1948, architects Northwood and Chivers remodelled the building into a bank. This was nine years after they designed the Singer Building down the street. A central grid of delicate dark mullions contrasts with the solid frame of pale Tyndall stone. The former bank's crest is at the top. The central glazing has since been replaced by siding and a large religious cross, a change that occurred while it was used as a religious drop-in centre.





16. Dominion Bank

678 Main Street

1907 Howard Stone

2007 Addition, Bridgman Collaborative Architecture

In 1899, the Dominion Bank became the first chartered bank to open a branch on this stretch of Main Street. This particular branch was built in 1907.

The solid and stately facade is clad in russet-coloured architectural terracotta, which has subsequently been painted. Designed in the neoclassical style, the front entrance originally contained heavy doors with wrought-iron grating. These features are now gone, but there is still an entrance flanked by two large fluted columns, and storefront windows with exaggerated table-like sills supported on stylised brackets. Along the roofline is a cornice decorated with the name of the bank. The banking hall was located on the main floor with general rental space on the upper level.



In an attempt to reinvigorate this part of Main Street, Bridgman Collaborative Architecture converted the former bank into its firm offices in 2007, 100 years after the completion of the original structure. An addition was added using recycled Tyndall stone, steel, and glazing panels. Windows were inserted along the north side of the original building in order to allow natural light into the workspace. These created an interesting visual interaction with the Golden Girl mural painted by Charlie Johnston, Jennifer Johnson Pollock and Mandy van Leeuwen in 2002. A garden tucked beside the building features shards from the original City Hall that was demolished in 1962. This corner of Higgins and Main is the former site of the Brunswick Hotel. Built around 1882 as the Murray House, the hotel was moved to the site around 1885 and went through many iterations until it was closed and demolished in the late 1990s.



17. Sproule Block

686 Main Street

1890 Architect unknown

1911 Addition, Daniel Smith

2000 Demolished

Located at the north-west corner of Main Street, the 1890 Sproule Block was converted into the Savoy Hotel in 1905. This followed the displacement of a number of hotels on Main Street, north of Higgins, that resulted from the development of the Canadian Pacific Railway tracks and complex. The two-storey building, constructed of solid brick with a stone foundation, was demolished in 2000, to make way for the Youth for Christ building.



18. Youth for Christ Centre for Youth Excellence

333 King Street

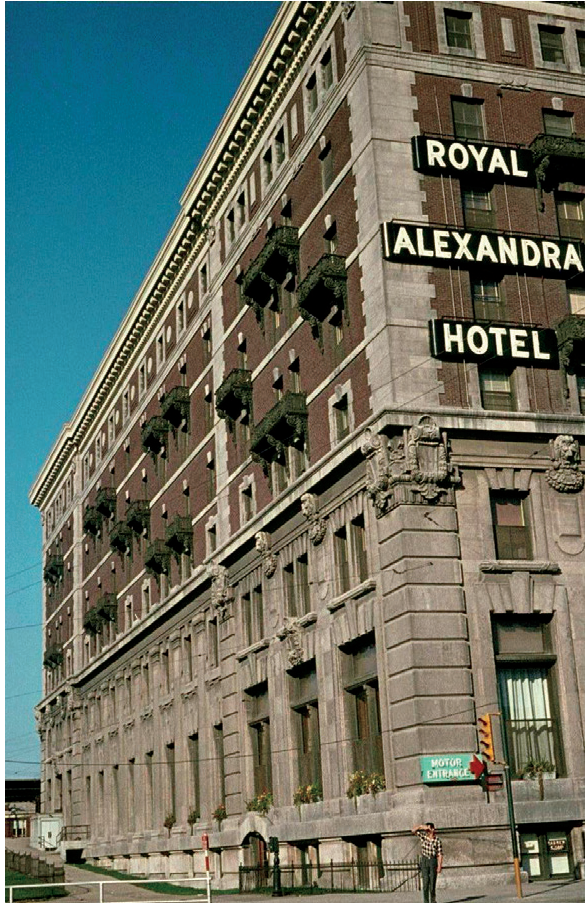
2011 Raymond S.C. Wan Architect

The Youth for Christ building is a religious activity centre featuring a skateboard park, gymnasium, dance studio, and rock-climbing wall. Designed by Raymond S.C. Wan in 2011, the building conforms to the angles of the streets and the CPR tracks.

Its central axis is expressed on the exterior by a fin wall that can also be used for rock climbing.

Curved copper-coloured metal cladding is a defining feature of the building.





19. Royal Alexandra Hotel

183 Higgins Avenue

1904-06 Edward and W.S. Maxwell

1971 Demolished

The Royal Alexandra Hotel held a prominent position along Main Street and in the social lives of well-off citizens. As part of its twentieth century Western expansion, the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) built increasingly elaborate stations with luxury hotels to demonstrate its prosperity and accommodate an influx of migration. The Winnipeg station and hotel were designed by E. & W.S. Maxwell of Montreal and constructed from 1904-06. The company built the Empress Hotel in Victoria that same year and, in 1910, it expanded the already opulent Royal Alexandra to compete with the incoming Fort Garry Hotel, located across the road from Union Station on Main Street at Broadway.

The Royal Alexandra boasted 450 rooms, including deluxe suites and public rooms. Over the years, prominent business people, performers, and royalty stayed in the hotel. The grand halls set the social scene for many Winnipeggers who attended various social events there—weddings, graduations, and royal and military events. The hotel was the site for countless historical events including meetings related to the 1919 General Strike. The Alexandra Room was the primary dining hall and could seat up to 400 guests. It featured a set of large murals by the painter Frederick Sproston Challener depicting the lives of Indigenous peoples and settlers. The CPR proclaimed the hotel to be an “Expression of the Nation’s Character.”

The opulent hotel contrasted with what sat opposite—an immigration shed within a complex that selectively received and segregated migrants. Non-European migrants, at that time, were considered to be a lesser class and often settled in

Winnipeg’s North End, which was cut off from the rest of the city by the very CPR tracks that brought them here.

By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, this part of Main Street was beginning to fade as development shifted towards Portage Avenue; the construction of the Eaton’s department store was an important factor. The CPR complex had temporarily reinvigorated the area—however, world war, prohibition, and economic depression led to further decline. This corresponded with a drastic decrease in immigration that cut the CPR’s revenue from transportation and land sales. Ironically, the Royal Alexandra was closed in 1967, the same year that many large-scale Centennial projects were underway just blocks south of the failing hotel. The building was demolished in 1971.



20. Canadian Pacific Railway Station

181 Higgins Avenue

1904–06 Edward and W.S. Maxwell

1993–98 Rehabilitation, LM Architectural Group

The Canadian Pacific Railway Station (CPR) was constructed from 1904–06 to meet Winnipeg's growing requirements for passenger and freight handling, and administrative space. It was designed by the Montreal firm of E. & W.S. Maxwell and enlarged in 1915 by the same architects. E. & W.S.

Maxwell was a prominent architectural firm whose work included the design of buildings such as the Legislative Building in Regina and the Museum of Fine Art in Montreal.

The present station is the fourth depot built by CPR on this site. Part of the negotiations luring the CPR through Winnipeg—rather than Selkirk, Manitoba—was a grant of land for the station site on Higgins Avenue. On this site, the CPR sought to build a monument to its success which would reflect the prosperity of Winnipeg and of Western Canada. The complex included the magnificent Royal Alexandra Hotel and an administrative office building.

Designed in the Beaux-Arts style, the CPR station was built of Wisconsin red brick and accented with Tyndall limestone. Most Beaux-Arts structures utilised a monochromatic stone exterior, making the two-toned facade of the CPR station a unique feature. By this time, the Beaux-Arts style had become

increasingly popular throughout North America and was often used for the design of large public structures. The CPR was one of the first Canadian companies to commission its use.

The interior of the CPR Station features the same luxurious materials used on the exterior. The main waiting room rotunda extends three stories high and originally had a glass ceiling. Though the glass ceiling is no longer there, many of the original interior decorations remain.

It is remarkable that most of the immigrants to Western Canada passed through Winnipeg's CPR Station. In its heyday, as many as 17 passenger trains arrived daily. The creation of VIA Rail Canada in 1978 resulted in the station's closure, though CPR continued to use the office wing until 1990 when the building was completely vacated. In 1992, the Aboriginal Centre of Winnipeg purchased the

station and undertook rehabilitation work. The building now houses a wide variety of Indigenous organisations, including a day care and an adult-education centre.





21. Circle of Life (formerly Thunderbird House)

715 Main Street

2000 Douglas J. Cardinal

Thunderbird House is a more recent addition to Main Street. Constructed as the spiritual anchor to the Neeginan project, Thunderbird House opened on the vernal equinox in March 2000. It houses celebrations and cultural programmes for First Nations as well as counselling and healing workshops. It is noted for its exposed timber structure and a roof suggestive of an eagle with sheltering, outspread wings. It features four



entrances, which are aligned with the four cardinal points and represent the four races of humankind.

Thunderbird House was designed by internationally renowned architect Douglas Cardinal, whose organic forms typically evoke the natural environments in which they are situated. This work is uncharacteristically restrained, seeming to respond neither to the strong urban language of Main Street, nor to the prairie from which Winnipeg was born. A graduate of the Universities of British Columbia and Texas at Austin, Cardinal has built a reputation for designing noteworthy public institutions such as the Canadian Museum of History (1989) in Gatineau, Quebec and the National Museum of the American Indian (2004) in Washington.

Prior to the construction of Thunderbird House, the site contained a number of one- and two-storey buildings, including former hotels which provided outreach programmes and low-cost housing.



22. Booth Centre

180 Henry Avenue at Main Street

1988 MMP Architects

Designed by MMP Architects (formerly Moody Moore and Partners), the Booth Centre is clad with tweed clay brick with red-brick accents, in combination with blue and white aluminium trim. The building is designed with the lower-scale Booth Chapel fronting on Main Street, fitting nicely with

the scale of the adjacent commercial blocks. The taller residential services building is located to the east on Henry Avenue, away from traffic noise and the modestly scaled environment of Main Street. The Salvation Army has had a presence on or near Main Street since the organisation's founding in Winnipeg. Its first home was seen west of the McLaren Hotel earlier on the tour.

The Salvation Army opened the Booth Centre in November 1988, replacing its previous facilities on this site. Named after William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army in England, the Booth Centre provides a variety of social services as part of the Salvation Army's outreach and community service mission. Among its many facilities, there are 134 rooms for short- and long-term shelter for both men and women, drug and alcohol treatment programmes, a soup kitchen for non-residents, and the community chapel on Main Street.



23. Zimmerman Block

669 Main Street

1913 Max Blankstein

Designed by architect Max Blankstein, the 1913 Zimmerman Block is one of the more ornate buildings on the tour. The three-storey brick structure is graced by a stone facade decorated



with garlands and punctuated by carved women's faces. There are two lion's heads mounted atop sinuous designs reminiscent of menorahs. These are located on a symmetrical backdrop defined by three pilasters, topped by a bold cornice with raised lettering declaring this to be the Zimmerman Bl." At street level, the narrow door is flanked by two curved plate-glass bay windows set in bronze frames decorated with a texture like overlapping scales. Above is a band of prismatic glass. At the threshold,

like a welcome mat, a small plot of blue and white ceramic tiles forms the address 669.

William Zimmerman, son of a Jewish immigrant family, built this commercial block to house a variety of retail tenants. It was later used as a jewellery store and diamond brokerage until the early 1970s. It was succeeded by the Lighthouse Mission Evangelistic Centre, an organisation that began in Winnipeg in 1911.

The architect of the Zimmerman block, Max Blankstein (1877–1931), was a Russian Jew who arrived in Winnipeg about 1904. His work over a period of almost 30 years included several movie theatres such as the Uptown Theatre on Academy Road, warehouses such as the Film Exchange Building, the Hebrew Free School, and the Mount Carmel Clinic in the North End.



24. Alloway and Champion Bank

667 Main Street

1905 James Henry Cadham

Initially built as a combined bank and office block, the Alloway and Champion Block is restrained in comparison to its neighbour, the Zimmerman Block. It was designed by James Henry Cadham and completed in 1905. At three storeys, this Tyndall stone-clad building was intended to convey confidence and security. The wide span of windows that dominates its facade suggests the influence of the Chicago School of Architecture.

The bank was privately owned by William Forbes Alloway and Henry Thompson Champion who were veterans of the 1870 Red River Expedition. Their bank was unchartered and offered a range of services without the security required by national standards for chartered banks. Champion predeceased Alloway and, in 1919, Alloway sold the business to

the Canadian Bank of Commerce. However, the original name was retained and Alloway continued to direct operations until his death in 1930. The legacy of F.W. Alloway lives on in the Winnipeg Foundation, which he and his wife established in 1921 in return for the many advantages that the city had provided them. Both generous philanthropists, the Alloways donated \$2 million, the initial backbone of the new foundation. Other benefactors have also contributed to the Winnipeg Foundation, which in turn disburses funds for a wide variety of community projects and charitable endeavours.

After the Bank of Commerce left the site in the mid-1930s, the ground floor was converted to restaurant use. The building has undergone some alterations but remains substantially unchanged.



25. Calder Building

661 Main Street

1912 Alexander Calder

Built in 1912, this was the first electrically heated commercial building in Winnipeg. Father and son Alexander and Arthur Calder operated a steamship and railway ticket, employment, insurance, and real estate agency from the site until the 1950s. The building was renamed the Kaplan Block in the

1940s when dry good and manufacturing businesses with the Kaplan name became occupants. The two-storey solid brick building has a part stone and part concrete foundation. The brick facade has stone trim and a corbelled brick cornice.



26. Concordia Block

637 Main Street

1906 John D. Atchison

The Concordia Block (also called Bon Accord block) was designed by John D. Atchison and built in 1906 as a retail office and residential building. Clad in dark brown brick with two facades finished with brick and Tyndall stone, the building was originally five storeys high. Initially, the ground level was divided into retail space and offices were located on



station-office-hotel complex at Higgins Avenue. However, the Concordia was not a complete success. It suffered from vacancies, especially in its office space, and from frequent turnover of ground-floor retail tenants. Occupancy stabilised after the upper storeys were demolished in the mid-1930s. Subsequent uses included the Oak Theatre, the NewMain Café, the Union Gospel Mission, and Mitchell Fabrics Ltd.

the second and third storeys. The upper two storeys contained 24 apartments designed for small families. Remnants of the building's original exterior are still evident at the rear, and at the Logan Avenue entrance, over which is carved the name Bon Accord.

The Concordia Block was heralded by the Manitoba Morning Free Press as an example of the improved character on this part of Main Street, stimulated by development of the Canadian Pacific Railway's



27. Occidental Hotel

631 Main Street

Pre-1984 Architect unknown

1903-04 Addition, H.S. Griffith

This two and three-storey solid brick building has been altered several times over its life. Faced in painted buff brick and stucco, it is decorated with pilasters and metal cornices on both floors. Upper level windows are arranged in pairs and triplets. Portions of the Logan Avenue storefront appear to be original.

A hotel was originally built on the site by owner Alexander Logan in 1873. In the 1890s, Logan sold

the property to David Ripstein of Russia, who largely rebuilt the hotel. It had been known as the White Rose, but he renamed it the Occidental before 1900. In the next five years, several additions and alterations were made to meet the demands of the local hotel trade. Most notably, a three-storey addition along Logan Avenue was designed by architect H.S. Griffith in 1903-04. In 1923, Ripstein passed away and the hotel ownership was assumed by Max Bjalin who had begun his employment with the hotel in 1900 at the age of 12. On the main floor, retail tenants have included a restaurant, a loan office, cleaning businesses and a bicycle shop.

In 2004, local designer and developer Richard Walls bought the hotel. He established the Red Road Lodge, a not-for-profit organisation assisting individuals with substance abuse and mental health issues. Walls converted the hotel into transitional housing units with a dry lounge.



28. Corbett Block

611 Main Street

1901 James McDiarmid

The 1901 Corbett Block, designed by James McDiarmid, is actually a red brick building with red sandstone trim that has been painted. Its symmetrical facade is punctuated by a central, taller bay with a single window, flanked on either side by two sets of paired windows. Notable

decorative elements include a large centrally located date stone and a series of decorative bands of brickwork. The long storefront has been altered over time and features several entrances and large display windows.

The structure was built for Andrew McKenzie and Dr. Samuel Corbett. Corbett studied to be a physician in Ontario before moving to Manitoba in 1882. His practice was located at several locations on Main Street before this building was completed. In 1901 he was appointed as a Dominion Health Officer. Other early tenants of the building included government offices and small businesses and residents. From the 1930s until the 1980s, the City Meat and Sausage Company (later Norman Meats) operated from the main floor. Designer and developer Richard Walls bought this building in 2003 and converted the main floor into spaces for arts organisations, along with affordable housing on the second floor.



29. Mindell Block

607 Main Street

1925 Max Blankstein

Faced in red brick, this two-storey commercial block was built in 1925. It is another design by prominent Winnipeg architect Max Blankstein. Its front

elevation features a storefront with large display windows. A brick parapet with a central pediment (complete with name, date, and stone coping) trims the top of the building. Detailing on the building is subtle, consisting primarily of patterned brick work.

Clothier Louis Mindell, who had been on Main Street near Alexander Avenue since the mid-1910s, established this block after a fire destroyed his previous shop. A business in his name continued at this site well into the 1950s. Subsequent occupants included tailor J. Fox, William's Men's Wear, Central Clothing, Central Pawn Brokers, the Cut-Rate Department Store, Home Welfare Association, and Winnipeg Domestic Appliances Co. The upper floor initially housed a Gospel Hall and by 1940, the Union Gospel Mission. The building was later named the Norman Bethune Hall and contained the offices of the Labour Progressive Party and Communist Party of Canada.



30. 605 Main Street

1925 D. Berman

In 1925, fire damaged buildings between 599 and 609 Main Street. Jewellery store owner David Berman rebuilt on the site that same year, using contractor H. Sigurdson. He kept the building but moved his business to McDermot Avenue. Successive tenants included clothing, grocery, and sporting goods stores as well as a gospel fellowship. The building is made of solid brick on a concrete and stone foundation with concrete footings. The red-brick facade, with Tyndall stone trim, is lightened by large shop windows.



31. Oseredok Ukrainian Cultural Centre (formerly British and Foreign Bible Society)

184 Alexander Avenue at Main Street

1912 William Bruce

William Bruce was the Scottish-trained architect hired to design a five-storey office building for the Manitoba and Saskatchewan Auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society. While the interior has

been significantly altered, the building's exterior has changed very little since its construction in 1912. Faced in Tyndall stone at street level and brown brick on the upper levels, the building has a strong sense of horizontality due to alternating wide and narrow stone bands at the sills and headers of the windows. Central pediments at the cornice and third storey emphasise the symmetrical front facade where windows are in pairs or triplets. The building, which came to be known as "Bible House," was purposely located within walking distance of the Canadian Pacific Railway Station, to meet the needs of Winnipeg's newcomers and introduce them to the biblical word. Much of the historic fabric of Alexander Avenue has subsequently disappeared.

The \$75,000 building was designed to meet First World War expectations of growth in the Canadian west. However, the flood of immigrants ceased with the war and the Bible House proved to be an overly ambitious undertaking. By 1914, much of the

building was rental space. In 1949, the Ukrainian National Publishing Company, which published the Ukrainian newspaper *New Pathway*, purchased the building. In 1974, the Ukrainian Cultural Centre bought the building for use as a museum and art gallery and renamed it "Oseredok," "centre" in Ukrainian.



32. Centennial Centre: Centennial Concert Hall, Manitoba Museum, Planetarium 555 Main Street

- 1967 Associated Architects for the Manitoba Cultural Centre (Green Blankstein Russell and Associates; Moody Moore Whenham and Partners; Smith Carter Searle Associates)
- 1990 Addition

The Manitoba Centennial Centre, comprising the Centennial Concert Hall and the Manitoba Museum and Planetarium, was constructed to commemorate Canada's (1967) and Manitoba's (1970) centennials. The Centre was designed by a consortium of local firms called Associated Architects for the Manitoba Cultural Centre. Participating firms were Green Blankstein Russell and Associates, Moody Moore Whenham and Partners, and Smith Carter Searle Associates. The Concert Hall officially opened in March 1968, followed by the Planetarium in May of that year, and the Museum in July 1970.

The concept of a new centre for the arts first emerged in the late 1950s. The original impetus was twofold: to replace the outdated Winnipeg Auditorium and to encourage renewal of the Main Street area. The Manitoba government, under Premier Duff Roblin, sought to renew south Point Douglas and nearby Main Street. The provincial government also persuaded the City of Winnipeg to locate the

new City Hall in this area to reinforce the urban renewal initiative. The Centre was seen as the impetus for an arts and cultural area extending east along Market Avenue to the Red River, providing a stimulus for renewal of the area east of Main Street. The Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre was eventually constructed nearby, but the Winnipeg Art Gallery and the Royal Winnipeg Ballet located elsewhere in the city's downtown.

The Province established the Manitoba Centennial Corporation to oversee the project, which initially included an art gallery. The complex was completed at a cost of \$20 million with \$4.5 million coming from private donors.

The buildings use a restrained palette of materials and colours including light-grey Tyndall limestone, expressed aggregate precast concrete panels and bronze-coloured doors and window framing. The planetarium is clad in sheet copper above a precast

concrete base. A small forecourt along Main Street provides a vehicle drop-off area and a setting for the relocated Volunteers Monument. Steinkopf Gardens, an urban oasis between the Concert Hall and Museum, extends east to Martha Street.

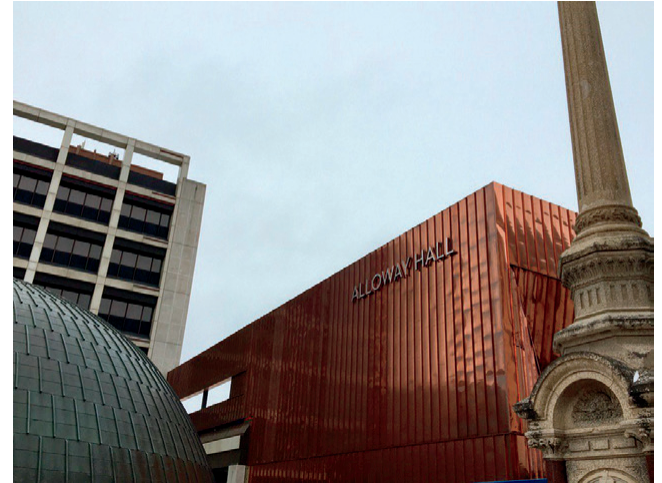


33. Manitoba Museum and Planetarium

190 Rupert Avenue

- 1968–70 Associated Architects for the Manitoba Centennial Centre (Green, Blankstein, Russell and Associates; Moody, Moore & Partners; Smith, Carter, Searle Associates)
- 1995 Smith Carter Architects and Engineers
- 2000 Smith Carter Architects and Engineers
- 2018 Alloway Hall addition, Stantec Architecture

Adjacent to the Centennial Concert Hall, at the corner of Main Street and Rupert Avenue, sits the Manitoba Museum and Planetarium, one of the province's most popular travel destinations. Since 1932, a small museum devoted to nature and history had been housed alongside the Winnipeg Art Gallery in the Winnipeg Civic Auditorium on Memorial Boulevard. In 1961, in light of the discussion of a new Manitoba Centennial Centre, the Manitoba Museum Association started planning a new, much larger location. Four years later, the provincial government incorporated two new organisations: the Manitoba



Museum of Man and Nature and the Manitoba Planetarium. (The two were joined in July 1972.) The new facilities were unveiled gradually; the Planetarium was opened in May 1968, and on July 15, 1970, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II inaugurated the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature Orientation and Grasslands galleries. The collection of the previous Manitoba Museum was the basis for the new museum, within which were the bones

of an ancient plesiosaur and works by pioneering nineteenth-century Canadian artist Paul Kane. Over the years, the two original galleries were joined by spaces devoted to earth history and sea trading (1973), urban life (1974), the Canadian Arctic and sub-Arctic (1976), the Boreal forest (1980), the Hudson's Bay Company collection (2000), Manitoba's Parklands and mixed-woods area (2003) and ancient sea life (2010).

Like the architecture of the adjacent Concert and City Halls, the design of the Manitoba Museum embraces a clean-lined, modernist approach with a material mix of cream and dark-grey masonry, metal and glass. From Main Street, the complex is anchored by a six-storey tower block (built to allow for the addition of six further storeys) framing the southward plaza; to the east, along Rupert Avenue, lies the main section of the museum. Echoing the Civic Centre across the street, this forecourt is paved in a charcoal-toned concrete; like the

Administration Building and Council Chambers, the tower and museum sit on a podium of matching dark-grey masonry. The museum tower, which houses offices, storage and research facilities, features a broad expanse of Tyndall stone on the west- and east-facing elevations. Originally the Main Street facade carried the name of the museum in bronze lettering, a detail which has since been removed. On the ground level the building features two exposed corridors that guide Main Street pedestrians toward the lobby entrance; windows along this space have been filled in due to security concerns. The north and south facades of the tower originally featured deeply inset windows ensconced within a network of dark pre-cast concrete.

A 1995 renovation by Smith Carter Architects and Engineers Inc., replaced this cladding with a grid of composite metallic materials which decoratively extends one floor above the building's height. Smith Carter were also responsible for the design of the

Alloway Hall addition which created a larger space for travelling exhibits and filled in much of the museum's courtyard and Main Street entranceway. Clad in a mix of concrete, glass and composite metallic materials, Alloway Hall was surmounted by a roof that repeated the curving lines and copper material of the Planetarium. In March 2017, a 4000-square-foot Alloway Hall expansion opened to the public. The new addition—designed by Stantec—improves the natural lighting and acoustics of the space and doubles the size of the original exhibition area. Its rectilinear exterior is formally in line with the original buildings, while the reflective copper cladding recalls the now oxidized copper roof of the planetarium.

Originally incorporating a south-facing wall of glass, the museum's lobby is paved in charcoal terrazzo, walled with Tyndall stone, and bears a ceiling of decorative metal leaf. This foyer holds a sales kiosk, entrances to the main museum, two

temporary exhibit halls, and a giftshop. The Rupert Avenue entrance stair to the lobby also connects to the building's lower level, which holds the present Science Gallery (built as Touch the Universe Science Centre, 1986) and Planetarium, and also connects to the Concert Hall and underground parking.

Like the adjoining tower, the main museum block is largely dressed in Tyndall stone; beyond its dark-grey podium, it is also decorated with thin, inset strips of charcoal-toned stone. The initial east terminus of the museum was at Martha Street, though the building now stretches about double that length to Lily Street. The most prominent addition within this area is undoubtedly the tall section holding the ship, the Nonsuch. Built in 1974 by the firm of Moody Moore Duncan Rattray Peters Searle Christie, this portion of the museum was later re-clad to match the Main Street-facing Alloway Hall. In 2000, the firm of Smith Carter designed an addition to the facility's east end to house the Hudson's Bay Collection; this

three-storey structure continues the motif of Tyndall stone and cream-toned concrete with decorative charcoal masonry, though laid out in a more asymmetric design that includes a projecting bay window and fields of roughly finished masonry.

The Planetarium, with a seating capacity of 278, is accessed from the lower level of the Museum. The dome complements the neighbouring monuments, resting within its setting rather like a decorative sculpture; its metallic copper surface stands out in an environment dominated by masonry and recalls the bronze screens of the City Hall.



34. Steinkopf Gardens and Manitoba Centennial Centre Grounds

555 Main Street

1967-70 Denis Wilkinson & Associated Architects for the
Manitoba Centennial Centre (Green, Blankstein,
Russell and Associates; Moody, Moore & Partners;
Smith, Carter, Searle Associates)

2011 Hilderman Thomas Frank Cram



In the centre of the Manitoba Centennial Centre lies a landscaped sunken garden that runs in line with James Avenue. Named for Maitland Steinkopf—a former member of the provincial government, who oversaw the Centennial Centre’s development—the Steinkopf Gardens is bordered on the south by the Centennial Concert Hall and on the north by the Manitoba Museum. This space originally featured a large pool with 16 fountains at its west end, above which was a suspended stairway connecting the ground level to the sunken garden. This pool was removed during a 2011 renovation by Winnipeg landscape architecture firm Hilderman Thomas Frank Cram. This rehabilitation, aimed at providing barrier-free access, added a ramp at the garden’s east

side, sculptural Tyndall stone seating, and signage along the Lily Street entrance.

Looking out onto the garden are plate glass windows, framed by cream-toned concrete, which illuminate the subterranean halls connecting the complex’s various buildings. The gardens once held a statue of Queen Elizabeth II by local sculptor Leo Mol. First unveiled in 1970, this artwork was relocated to the Manitoba Legislative grounds in 2010.

Between the garden and Main Street stands a memorial column, named “The Volunteer Monument.” This sculpture of limestone and red granite was designed by architect Samuel Hooper in 1886. Originally a tribute to the men of the 90th Winnipeg Battalion killed in the 1885 North West Rebellion, the monument was re-dedicated in 1963 to those who had served with the Royal Winnipeg Rifles. The plaza in which it stands stretches north toward the Manitoba Museum. Featuring dark-grey

paving, the space also holds a concrete and metal monument to the astronomer Nicholas Copernicus. Dedicated in 1973, the memorial was a gift from the Polish-Canadian community in honour of the 500th anniversary of the scientist's birth.

35. Centennial Concert Hall

555 Main Street

1967 Associated Architects for the Manitoba Centennial Centre (Green, Blankstein, Russell and Associates; Moody, Moore & Partners; Smith, Carter, Searle Associates)

This 2,305-seat venue is the primary home of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra. In a typical year, the symphony (established in 1947) plays more than 80 concerts at the Hall for approximately 100,000 audience members. The building hosts a number of other acts, including performances by the Royal Winnipeg Ballet.

The exterior design presents a balance of orthogonal lines and angles, glass and masonry, light cream and dark charcoal tones. The building's colouration complements and parallels those of the Winnipeg City Hall across the street—which also features Tyndall stone and deep-grey masonry.



As viewed from Main Street, the Concert Hall's entry facade is compelling. This elevation is anchored on its north and south ends by two tall Tyndall stone towers which project above the roof-line. A focal point of the facade is a set of 45 eyelid-like concrete window covers. These unique, sun-shading awnings, with their origami-like folds, exploit the plastic possibilities of concrete by means of linked sections of pre-cast material. Flanking this section are two enormous three-storey windows, which cast light upon the dramatic multi-level floating staircases inside. The entrance to the building is sheltered by a large five-section canopy built of a cream-toned concrete matching the awnings above. The canopy is suspended by six inconspicuous columns which lend it a floating quality. The glass pyramids atop the canopy add an energetic rhythm to the overall structure.

The north and south sides of the Concert Hall—along the Steinkopf Gardens and Market Avenue—

continue the main facade's use of dark grey and cream-toned materials. The ground level features large windows that link the interior corridors to the urban exterior. Pilasters continue from this level to the top of the building, holding between them two-storey windows cradled on their sides by Tyndall stone frames which angle inward. The tower-like forms which bookend the Main Street elevation are repeated near the rear of the building; the angled roof-line here parallels that of the theatre itself. The back section of the building, which holds the stage and associated areas, is clad in Tyndall stone and is capped with the hall's striking, copper-coloured, angled roof.

The grand entry hall, accessed through a glazed vestibule, features dark-grey-tiled floors that anchor a soaring multi-storey lobby. Rising dramatically at the north and south are four white, floating staircases. These connect the ground floor to six theatre-entry corridors as well as a piano nobile level

overlooking the central foyer. Suspended from the ceiling of this space are three immense chandeliers, made of a profusion of metal threads holding large pieces of polished Norwegian crystal. The lower, outward-facing wall of the lobby bears a substantial ceramic mural by artist Greta Dale that depicts the arts of dance, music and drama. Two murals by artist Tony Tascona are also found at the west end of the orchestra level corridors. These works, which were selected in a national competition, are of painted aluminium—a technique the artist developed through his work as an electroplating technician. In addition, giant abstract wall hangings by prominent Canadian artists Kenneth Lochhead and Takao Tanabe are located at either end of the main lobby.

Beyond the lobby the building is carpeted in deep red; the corridors are also complemented by distinctive undulating chestnut-toned wood walls, which hold curved entry portals. The theatre has a proscenium stage 24 metres wide, 12 metres deep

and over 33 metres tall which can accommodate a full orchestra and a choir of 700. Beyond the large orchestra level, this space contains two balconies and two loges, all clad in white stucco. The plan of this performance hall is remarkable in its “continental” seating arrangement involving a lack of aisles and view-obscuring columns. Theatre consultant George C. Izenour, of New York, contributed to the design of this space, and the acoustic engineering was by the firm of Bolt, Beranek & Newman Inc., also of New York. At the time of the Concert Hall’s construction, the acoustics were considered to be the finest of any such theatre in North America.



36. Pantages Playhouse Theatre

180 Market Avenue

1914 B. Marcus Priteca with George W. Northwood

1992 Addition, Stecheson and Katz Architects

The Pantages Playhouse Theatre was a jewel on the Pantages Vaudeville circuit. Built by Alexander Pantages between 1913 and 1914 at a cost of nearly \$250,000, the theatre seated 1,773 patrons. It was designed by prominent architects B. Marcus Priteca and George W. Northwood. This is the last remaining Pantages theatre in Canada and one of

only six remaining in North America. As vaudeville waned and the popularity of movies increased, these changes marked the end of the Playhouse as it was originally conceived. It closed briefly in 1923, to reopen for primarily local performance and, in 1935, the Playhouse was taken over by the City of Winnipeg for tax arrears.

Initially, the City made efforts to sell the theatre; however, after a string of false offers, it came to embrace the theatre as a much-needed venue for community performances and events. The Winnipeg Ballet performed the city's first large-scale local ballet production in 1940. By 1944 the City took the Playhouse off the market. Despite flood and fire damage in the early 1950s, the Playhouse became a flourishing concert venue. This success waned somewhat with the development of the neighbouring Centennial Concert Hall and Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre in the 1960s. The relocation of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet to the Concert Hall

was a particular loss. Nonetheless, the City declined the province's offer to take over the theatre and it persisted as a relatively viable venue. By the 1980s the historic value of the theatre was recognised and the City began to buy surrounding land in preparation for expansion.

A large canopy fronts the entire Market Avenue facade of the building, which is otherwise elegantly restrained in a palette of tan brick and cream-coloured terracotta. The exterior is a foil to the splendour of plaster, wood, and gilded surfaces, which grace the lobby and the lavish auditorium with its large proscenium stage.

In 1992, Stecheson and Katz Architects created an addition that added office and rehearsal space to the west side. The addition, which includes the Korol Theatre rehearsal space, connects to the theatre by an atrium, which serves as a foyer and provides a large gathering space for receptions. The 1992



addition is best understood in plan as an extension of the stage curtain, realised in a curving copper wall drawn out towards Main Street and sweeping around the rounded, recessed rehearsal space. The exterior plaza continues this mimicry of the stage curtain with pavers laid in curvilinear patterns. One of the most prominent examples of Post-modern architecture in Winnipeg, the addition references the original building on Market Avenue, with a modern interpretation of the engaged columns and windows.

On the exterior wall along Portage Avenue, you may see terracotta panels salvaged from the now-demolished Crescent Furniture building (1986).



37. Confederation Life Building

457 Main Street

1912 J. Wilson Gray

Built for the Confederation Assurance Company, this graceful, curved building complements the Union Bank Tower in stature but represents the

next generation of skyscrapers. The building's mid-section, with its expansive windows relative to scant wall area, truthfully reflects its skeletal framework of steel and reinforced concrete. This, together with the building's distinct horizontal division of base, repeating floors and elaborate cornice, makes it a good example of the Chicago School of architecture. With the exception of its polished granite base, the front of the building is clad entirely in a brilliant white terracotta. The lavish cornice, also made of terracotta, is the largest in the city and arguably one of the finest to be seen anywhere. These two skyscrapers form a gateway at Main Street and Market Avenue that was mirrored at Main Street and Higgins Avenue by two elegant hotels, the Royal Alexandra and the Savoy Hotel. This symmetry was disrupted with the demolition of both hotels.

Glossary

BRACKET – A bracket is a small supporting piece used to carry a projecting element like a cornice or balcony.

BUFF BRICK – Buff brick is brick that has been fired at a high temperature and thus has low moisture absorption as well as high compression strength.

CORBELLING – Corbelled brickwork is a step-like series of projecting rows of brick that are used as support or ornamentation.

CORNICE – A cornice is the top projecting section of an entablature or any projecting moulding along the top of a building.

ENTABLATURE – An entablature is the upper section of a column or building, consisting of an architrave, frieze, and cornice.

FENESTRATION – Fenestration is the arrangement of windows and doors on the elevation of a building.

MODILLION – Modillions are ornate brackets underneath a cornice.

PARAPET – A parapet is a low wall along the edge of a roof.

PILASTERS – Pilasters are a shallow element mimicking a column that is in relief against a wall.

QUOINS – Quoins are the decorative corners of buildings.

TERRACOTTA – Terracotta takes its name from the Latin for “baked earth.” More specifically, it is a high- grade fired clay product. Harder than brick and lighter than stone, terracotta is capable of taking on any decorative colour or texture and can be cast into crisp, detailed likenesses of architectural and decorative elements. It can be artfully made to look like other building materials, including sandstone, granite, and marble. Terracotta was a popular material during Winnipeg’s golden age from 1895 to 1914. Inspired by the Chicago style, the material was ideal cladding for the ornate style and steel frames of early skyscrapers.

TYNDALL STONE – Tyndall stone is quarried at Garson, Manitoba, about 30 miles northeast of Winnipeg. Geologically, it is referred to as the Upper Mottled Limestone of the Red River Formation of the Ordovician System. It is sometimes referred to as the “tapestry stone” due to its unique decorative mottling. Tyndall stone was first used in the construction of Lower Fort Garry in 1832, just north of where Winnipeg now stands. Other buildings that are still standing as a testament to the durability of this stone are St. Andrew’s Anglican Church, the oldest active stone church in Western Canada, built in 1845 and the Captain Kennedy House built in 1865. More recent examples of its use are the Winnipeg Art Gallery, the Centennial Centre, and City Hall.

VOUSSOIRS – Voussoirs are a brick or wedge-shaped element that forms part of an arch.

Architectural Firms

Max Blankstein

Born in Odessa, Russia, Max Blankstein emigrated to Canada in 1904 and was among the first Jewish architects to register and practice in Canada. He had seven children with his wife Laika “Lena” Golden—three of whom went on to become architects themselves.

J.H. Cadham

James Henry Cadham was born in London, Ontario in 1850. After working as a carpenter’s assistant and serving with the Red River Expeditionary Forces, Cadham moved to Winnipeg in 1870 and began working as a builder and contractor. In 1895 Cadham began doing architectural designs of warehouse and industrial buildings around Winnipeg. These designs were some of the first to use the Chicago School style in the Manitoba region.

Douglas Cardinal

Douglas Cardinal, architect (was born in March 1934 in Calgary, Alberta. Recognised for his commitment to excellence and his unique creative vision, Cardinal is credited with creating an Indigenous style of Canadian architecture, characterised by gracious organic forms, which continually challenged the most advanced engineering standards.

Darling and Pearson

Darling and Pearson was a prolific architectural firm from Toronto that practiced between 1895 and 1937.

John Atchison

John Atchison was an integral member of the Chicago School of architects that practiced in Winnipeg. After returning from Chicago—where he owned his own firm from 1894 to 1904—Atchison designed nearly 100 buildings in Winnipeg before moving to California in 1922.

Northwood and Chivers

Over its years of productive work, the firm of Northwood & Chivers had an enormous impact on the look and life of Winnipeg and was responsible for some of the city's most iconic buildings. The firm began in the mid-1920s, when already active architects George W. Northwood and Cyril William Upton Chivers decided to once again forge a professional partnership. The two had previously briefly partnered in 1905 to create—with Northwood's Ottawa partner Werner Noffke—the short-lived firm of Northwood Noffke and Chivers.

John H.G. Russell

John H.G. Russell was born in Toronto, Ontario and educated at the Toronto Model School. After graduation he worked as a draughtsman, eventually moving to Winnipeg in 1882. He set up his own architectural practice in 1895, which would go on to design some of Winnipeg's most prolific buildings.

Russell served as the First Vice-President (1906) and President (1910) of the Manitoba Association of Architects.

Stantec

formerly Green Blankstein Russell and Associates

Founded in 1932, the firm of Green, Blankstein, Russell (GBR) had a significant impact on the look and history of twentieth-century architecture in Winnipeg. The original members of this prominent office were Lawrence J. Green (1899–1969) and Cecil N. Blankstein (1908–1989). Green and Blankstein were joined, in 1934, by G. Leslie Russell (1901–1977) and Ralph C. Ham (1902–1942). All were graduates of the School of Architecture at the University of Manitoba. In 2004, the 35-person offices of GBR Architects was acquired by Edmonton-based Stantec Inc.

MMP Architects

formerly Moody Moore Architects

In 1936, Herbert Moody and Robert Moore began a partnership that would come to be known as Moody Moore Architects, and later, MMP. Both men were graduates of the University of Manitoba's School of Architecture and were registered with the MAA in 1933 (Moody) and 1934 (Moore) respectively.

Architecture49

formerly Smith Carter

In late 1947 three recent University of Manitoba graduates—Ernest J. Smith (1944), Dennis H. Carter (1945) and Walter L. Katelnikoff (1944)—partnered to establish an architecture firm which would go on to be one of the central players in the development and definition of design in Winnipeg during the twentieth century.

In 2012 Smith Carter was acquired by Montreal-based engineering and professional consulting firm Genivar Inc. In 2014 the company, with a group of other architecture firms, forged a new firm under the name of Architecture49.

HTFC Planning and Design

formerly Hilderman Thomas Frank Cram

Hilderman Thomas Frank Cram began in 1969, when Garry Hilderman—having returned to Winnipeg from graduate studies in the United States—established the firm of Garry Hilderman & Associates Landscape Architecture. Despite the name, he was in fact practising partnerless, with his first office located in his mother’s attic. The new enterprise quickly captured clients and within two years moved to larger, more formal quarters. As the firm gained contracts, it also gained talent, thereby earning the descriptor “Associates” of the original name.

*More information on architectural firms may be found on the Winnipeg Architecture Foundation website.
www.winnipegarchitecture.ca*

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