



**61-65 ALBERT STREET**  
**HAMMOND BUILDING**

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## **61-65 ALBERT STREET HAMMOND BUILDING**

William J. Hammond was born at Brant, Ontario in 1851, and moved to Toronto in his youth. It was there that he established a hat and fur business. About 1896, he answered the call of opportunity and transferred his enterprise to Winnipeg.<sup>1</sup> Two years later, he was involved with the financial firm of Osler, Hammond and Nanton in the construction of the building at 432-434 Main Street, the southern portion of which he came to occupy late in 1898 as his hat store. It was here that Hammond became famous for his practice of giving away free hats.<sup>2</sup> Once again, in 1902 he was involved with Osler, Hammond and Nanton for the construction of his warehouse on Albert Street.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the numerous construction phases of the Hammond Block, the owner remained in Winnipeg. He retired to California in 1911, paying annual visits back to the city. While visiting New Zealand during 1926, he was stricken, returning to die in June of that year. At the time of his demise, he was no longer the owner of Hammond Block, having disposed of the property some years before.<sup>4</sup>

The land upon which the Hammond Building is situated was originally part of the Bannatyne Estate. This site, and the property adjoining to the south and east were purchased by Alexander McIntyre during the boom of the 1880s. That gentleman erected the first McIntyre Block during 1884 and in later years established a skating rink on the Albert Street property. During 1902, the Estate of Alexander McIntyre disposed of the remaining vacant property, probably to pay for the construction costs of the 1898 McIntyre Block. The southern portion of the land was built upon as the extension of the Jerry Robinson Department Store, located at 398 Main Street. Lot 'G' was sold to W.J. Hammond, and he proceeded to have a two storey, 44' x 122' brick block constructed by Alsip Brothers and J.G. Latimer in 1902. The architect of this structure was John H.G. Russell, and the cost was \$14,000.<sup>5</sup> This corresponded to the present southern part of the building, being the section which has the three windowed bays at the second storey level.

In 1905, the height of the building was increased by the addition of two stories, sized 37' x 120', the buildings being A. Gray and Davidson Brothers. Russell was once again the architect for this brick

addition, and the cost was \$12,500.<sup>6</sup> This portion was to be “leased as offices and sample rooms”,<sup>7</sup> for the manufacturers’ agents who were making the Hammond Block their headquarters. Two years later, the building was again extended, this time the addition was made on the north side, being five stories in height, 30’ x 111’11” in size and constructed of brick. The same architect designed this section, and the Hudson Davidson construction firm built the edifice. The cost was \$35,000,<sup>8</sup> and this new portion corresponded with the present building where the two-windowed bays are located. Again, in 1909, the building had an addition made to it. This time, another floor was added to the 1907 section, and this was designed by Russell. Malcolm Brothers did the construction at a cost of \$5,000.<sup>9</sup>

The original Hammond Block of 1902 appears to have been intended as a warehouse for the hat firm, for the new building was located just to the rear of 432 Main Street. The first tenants of the Albert Street stores appear to have been W.P. Kilbourne’s cigar store at #63 and Belding, Paul and Company, silk merchants, at #61. The former firm remained in the building until 1906,<sup>10</sup> being replaced by John C. Greene & Company, wholesale millinery (1906-1910) and the silk company was supplanted by G. Goulding and Sons, Millinery (1910-1911).<sup>11</sup> After that time, the Mainer Electric Company (1912-1916) and the Great-West Electric Company (1916-1922) occupied both shops. From the addition of 1905, the upper levels of the Hammond Building have housed various manufacturers’ agents. There were ten offices in the 1905 block, and the 1907 alterations brought that up to thirty-four units, and the 1909 changes made fifty-two suites.<sup>12</sup>

On October 31, 1923, the Hammond Block was gutted by fire. The interior of the building was destroyed from the second floor to the roof.<sup>13</sup> The blaze began in a basement elevator room<sup>14</sup> and quickly spread to the upper levels of the block. Five fire brigades responded to the alarm, and one fireman was injured. The total damage was \$168,000,<sup>15</sup> and most of that was done to the property of the numerous agents in the building. During 1924, the Hammond Block was rebuilt, using W.A. Irish as the contractor and architect Russell to devise the repairs which cost about \$50,000.<sup>16</sup> The original type wood-beam and post construction was again used<sup>17</sup> and by the later months of 1924, the structure was once more fully occupied by the manufacturers’ agents. There were only twenty-

five offices in the renovated building, and this would indicate that the pre-fire offices might have been very crowded.

Up to 1930, the occupants of the main floor appear to have been semi-transient in nature, some occupying space for a few years. In that year, the Addressograph-Multilith Sales Company went into #61 and this tenancy lasted until 1958.<sup>18</sup> The Danzker Dress Company came into #63 during 1933, remained there until 1939, and later returned to the building, coming to occupy #65 in 1962.<sup>19</sup> The Vineberg Agency, which gave way to Schnier Brothers Agency in 1959, came to #61½ during 1940.<sup>20</sup> Various other concerns which have been housed in the building include: Thompson Brothers (c.1955-1961); Nozick Commission Limited (c.1946); Max Guberman (c.1950), and the Brownstone Manufacturing Company (c.1963). Many of these firms have since relocated in other buildings within the area under study by this survey.

The Civic Assessments Office has rendered the following information:

Basement-	Stone walls	9'9" ceilings
First Floor-	Brick	10'10"
Second-	Brick	10'8"
Third-	Brick	10'7"
Fourth-Sixth-	Brick	10'3"

Since the 1940s, the Hammond Building has been well-maintained, though some settlement was noted in the southeast corner of the structure during 1951.<sup>22</sup> In 1935, when the building had many office vacancies because of the Depression, it was valued at \$120,000, and despite the limited access for loading, this lack of parking, etc., the Hammond Building was sold thirty-one years later for \$195,000.<sup>23</sup>

The edifice is unusual for a number of reasons. First, Hammond erected the structure in four

different phases, probably indicating that he built when he had the money to do so. Second, the building does not conceal its additions too well, as the 1907-1909 section is higher than the 1902-1905 portion, and the number of windows to each bay are not uniform across the face of the building. Third, the odd sizes of the various enlargements indicate that the size of the lot is quite irregular, being sandwiched by the contours of Albert Street, Portage Avenue, and Main Street. Aerial photographs show the building as having an irregular shape.

Historically, the building is significant because of the unusual nature of its construction. Also, because the McIntyre Skating Rink existed until 1902 on the site of the Hammond and Robinson Blocks, one may reason that Albert Street was not yet a prime business location at that time. South Albert Street was still largely of a residential nature in 1900, with the only warehouse located there being the 1882 Whitla Building, which at that time housed the Winnipeg Telegram. Old photographs show houses along Albert Street at the outset of the new century, and one small 1877 dwelling yet remains at the rear of 44 Albert Street. Thus, it was such buildings as the Hammond Block which began to change the direction of development on this street.

Endnotes

1. Provincial Library of Manitoba, Biography Scrapbook B8, p. 83.
2. Winnipeg Tribune, 'Pages from the Past', February 7, 1976.
3. Building Permit (BP), 620/1902, issued August 8, 1902.
4. Biography Scrapbook, loc. cit.
5. BP, loc. cit.
6. BP, 809/1905, issued May 16, 1905.
7. Manitoba Free Press, October 30, 1905, p. 31. (MFP)
8. BP, 836/1907, issued May 1, 1907.
9. BP, 1457/1909, issued July 19, 1909.
10. Henderson's Winnipeg Directory, 1904-1907.
11. Henderson's, 1907-1912.
12. Henderson's, 1904-1909.
13. MFP, November 1, 1923, p. 13.
14. Tribune, November 1, 1923, p. 1.
15. MFP, November 2, 1923, p. 11.
16. BP, 9/1924, issued January 8, 1924.
17. City Assessment Records (CAR)
18. Henderson's, 1931-1959.
19. Henderson's, 1934-1940; 1963-
20. Henderson's, 1941-1960.
21. CAR
22. CAR, dated July 11, 1951.
23. CAR.

## 63 ALBERT STREET – HAMMOND BUILDING



Plate 1 – A fire in the Hammond Building on October 31, 1923, which gutted most of the interior. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba Photograph Collection.)



Plate 2 – Hammond Building, 63 Albert Street, ca.1970. (City of Winnipeg, Planning Department.)

**63 ALBERT STREET – HAMMOND BUILDING**



Plate 3 – Hammond Building, 63 Albert Street, 1979. (City of Winnipeg, Planning Department.)