

366 QU'APPELLE AVENUE – WARWICK APARTMENTS
W.W. Blair, 1908-09



Central Park, created in 1893, with its tennis courts and bandshell, was considered a prestigious residential location. With the end of a world-wide depression and a shortage in housing, a group of prominent Winnipeggers formed a joint stock company in 1908 to finance the construction of an elegant apartment block. Located at the southern edge of the park, the Warwick Apartments represented the state of the art in apartment construction in Winnipeg.

The commission for the building was given to William Wallace Blair who was trained in Belfast and had worked in Toronto, Hamilton and Chicago. Although only working for a short period in Winnipeg, Blair also designed the Roslyn Apartments (1908), the Princeton Apartments (1909) and the Fortune House (1911). For Blair, the two most important design considerations that had to be provided for were that the building receive proper air circulation and adequate amounts of natural light. Ironically, it was only four years later that a planning report of the City Planning Commission recommended that, in order to lessen the incidence of crime and disease in

Winnipeg, more parks were needed and by-laws should be enacted to provide more daylight and fresh air in any new housing.

Built at a cost of \$150,000, the five-storey brick building on a stone foundation had sixty-six suites. The most desirable suites had balconies that faced onto Central Park, and the individual suites were laid out facing a rectangular interior courtyard, which was covered by a large skylight. As well, the exterior walls had a large number of windows. The symmetrical building had a neo-classical entranceway flanked by a rusticated lower level. Open balconies gave a lightness to the structure that was framed by a wide overhanging cornice. A vertical run of bay windows caught the breeze and allowed more daylight inside. The building was simple and honest in appearance, free of excessive ornamentation.

With its bay windows at the corners of the building and its open rectangular plan with inner rooms receiving light from an interior courtyard, Blair's design was a modified version of the typical apartment or hotel plan found in Chicago in the late 1890's.

The early tenants were exactly ideal: wholesale operators, accountants, doctors and other professionals. By the 1930s, however, urban living patterns had changed and the affluent had moved to the south part of Winnipeg.

The building still retains its magnificent sky-lit interior courtyard and is an important example of early twentieth-century residential architecture.