

75 ALBERT STREET (222 McDERMOT AVENUE)
SILVESTER & WILLSON BUILDING
John Hamilton Gordon Russell, 1904



This fine solid brick structure features two main façades, north facing McDermot Avenue and west facing Albert Street. Both boast large display windows and recessed entrances on the ground floor, ornamental brickwork on the upper floors, large windows in rectilinear openings and a heavy overhanging metal cornice and plain brick parapet. The building's name is featured prominently below the north side cornice. The east façade is hidden by the neighbouring building and the plainer south elevation faces the back lane. Many of the original exterior elements have remained unchanged to the present.

The ground floor of the original interior was divided into two retail spaces each with its own entrance from either McDermot or Albert. The Albert Street entrance also gave access to the metal cage elevator and a unique staircase that circled the elevator and included wood and glass accenting and was topped by a skylight (now covered). Upper floors featured offices off a central hallway. The fifth floor was originally used as a meeting hall, with high, ornamental tin

covered ceilings and other accents, which are still visible. While much of the lower levels have remained original, the top floor now includes partitioning dividing the space into small studios used by artists.

J.H.G. Russell, one of Winnipeg's most prolific early 20th century architects, was responsible for the design of this building. Russell designed dozens of buildings of every size and use throughout his long career. Saul and Brown, a short-lived local building firm, was the building contractor.

The building was originally home to the Willson Stationery Company, a retail paper firm which occupied ground floor space for many decades, operated a large warehouse on Gertie Street and opened branches in Saskatchewan and Alberta. Other early tenants of the building included wholesalers, retailers and doctors and dentist.

Elements of the building that would require approval if alterations were planned are:

Exterior-

- five-storey brick and stone building with main facades facing north onto McDermot Avenue and west onto Albert Street;
- a cornice above the first storey windows along the entire front (north) and west side of the building, repeated between the fourth and fifth storeys along the two outside bays, north and south, on the west facade;
- the north facade with recessed entrance, angled plate glass display windows and support post, upper floors divided into three bays each containing windows in large square headed openings framed in raised brickwork and a roofline embellished with a complete entablature with heavy overhanging metal cornice and plain brick parapet and the building's name found below the cornice;
- the west elevation with a raised entrance and bank of display windows to the south, the upper storeys divided into seven bays, the outer bays continuing the fenestration, brickwork and detailing of the front facade and the middle five bays with smaller windows in connected and paired openings, arched on the top floor and a metal fire escape;
- an east party wall with its top level uncovered, windowless with painted signage; and
- the rear (south) facade featuring windows in paired and single openings with stone lug sills and a raised loading door.

Interior-

- all elements of the ornamental tin ceiling on the ground and fifth floors;
- cast iron posts;
- cage elevator, wood, metal and glass detailing, tin ceilings and ceiling detailing with wood framing from the former skylight in the central staircase;
- vault doors with applied imagery, other embellishments and annotations; and
- original hallway wood and glass office partitioning.