

554 MAIN STREET – McLAREN HOTEL

John Cooke Caldwell, 1910



Winnipeg's Main Street saw tremendous growth in the decade preceding World War I, much like the rest of its downtown. Office towers, stores and banks were built to meet the expanding demand for modern work space. Another major building/business type was hotels, which catered to the increasing visitor traffic to the city and also for long-term guests looking for the ease of hotel living. One of the largest modern hotels was the McLaren, built in 1910 at the southwest corner of Rupert Avenue; it boasted 165 guest rooms with shared bath/washroom facilities on each floor.

The seven storeys tall building is supported by a steel frame with reinforced concrete. Its two primary public façades (north facing Rupert Avenue and east facing Main Street) are clad in dark Menomonie brick accented with stone, which is used to clad the ground floor. Classical detailing found on the main façades includes pilasters, attached columns and a complete

entablature with heavy overhanging medal-clad cornice supported by oversized brackets. A flagpole is located in the northeast corner of the building's flat roof. The building's south wall was designed with two deep light wells to increase air and natural light to the interior space.

Stylistically, the building is an excellent example of the Chicago School with its vertical emphasis, grid-like organization of fenestration and classical form of detailed base and top floor and modest middle levels. It was popular in North American urban centres from the 1890s to the 1920s and there are many examples in Winnipeg.

The original interior was ornately finished and arranged with a large bar, fine restaurant, billiards room and a barber shop. Alterations and upgrades have occurred over the history of the facility, much of the ground floor has been altered, while finishes on the upper floors have mostly remained unchanged.

The original owners of the property were hoteliers Archibald "Archie" (1856-1918), John Angus (1860-1912) and Alexander Stewart "Ike" (1866-1921) McLaren. Born in Ontario, they came west in the late 1870s and began their long association with hotels throughout the province. The hotel was sold in 1921 after the last brother had died. The hotel, which now operates as a long-term residence, hosted many influential and famous guests throughout its history.

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

Exterior-

- The seven-storey brick structure with flat roof, with its main façades facing east onto Main Street and north onto Rupert Avenue;
- The east façade with two ground floors clad in smooth-cut stone interrupted by attached columns, modest cornices and ornate stonework around doors, the upper floors, finished in dark brick, divided into bays by pilasters with stone bases and capitals, regularly spaced rectilinear window openings with stone lug sills and complete entablature with heavy overhanging medal-clad cornice supported by oversized brackets at flat roofline; and
- Flagpole is located at the northeast corner of the roof.

Interior-

- None.