



**ALLMAN BLOCK  
594 MAIN STREET**

City of Winnipeg  
Historical Buildings Committee  
Researcher: Murray Peterson  
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## **594 MAIN STREET – ALLMAN BLOCK**

During the decades leading up to 1900, Winnipeg's Main Street was transformed from a muddy track bordered mainly by wood-frame buildings into a paved thoroughfare with imposing brick and stone structures along its walkways. The small premises that served as shops and residences were replaced by a new breed of business, businessman and business block as Winnipeg shed its pioneer past to become an urban centre of both regional and national importance.

Development of the transcontinental railway had created an entirely new situation by connecting Winnipeg with both eastern manufacturing interests and a burgeoning population to the west. The city actively promoted itself as the middleman between eastern supply and western demand. Its success had far-reaching economic, political and social effects. It also resulted in rapid physical change.

New residential districts extended the outer boundaries of the built-up area, while new warehouse, banking halls, offices and shops popped up throughout the downtown. Three distinct sectors developed around Winnipeg's large, imposing City Hall on Main Street: a warehouse district to the west, a financial section from Portage Avenue north to Bannatyne Avenue along both sides of Main Street and a commercial/retail area running north from City Hall to Higgins Avenue and eventually beyond.

This last area was dominated by smaller firms selling everything from shoes and boots to harnesses and fruit. They generally were housed in two- or three-storey commercial blocks with retail space on the ground floor and offices, suites or storage space above. This type of combined or mixed-use structure became increasingly popular as demand grew for downtown office and residential space. It also was a perfect small-scale investment for the new group of successful businessmen inhabiting the city. In 1904 clothing retailer Daniel F. Allman provided himself with a new store on Main Street below two storeys of office and residential space.

## STYLE

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 the 1950s.<sup>1</sup>

As the name suggests, a two-part building is actually two structures under one roof. The design of and sometimes the materials used to clad the front façade reflects the differences in use by horizontally dividing the building, most often above the first-floor retail space. The resulting façade has two sections that may be harmoniously connected or display little visual continuity.<sup>2</sup>

## CONSTRUCTION

The Allman Block stands on the west side of Main Street between Alexander and Logan avenues.<sup>3</sup> The three-storey, solid brick building abuts the Guest Block, 598 Main Street (built in 1902), to the north and the Singer Block, 590 Main Street (built in 1939), to the south.

The building measures 8.5 x 40.2 metres and rises 12.2 metres above Main Street from its stone foundation.<sup>4</sup> Ceiling heights measure 2.4 metres in the basement and 4.3 metres, 3.7 metres and 3.0 metres on the first, second and third floors respectively.<sup>5</sup> Final building costs were \$21,433.75.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> M. Peterson, "546 Main Street - The Foulds Block," report prepared for the Historical Buildings Committee, October 1988, p.1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p.1.

<sup>3</sup> City of Winnipeg Assessment Record, Roll No. 813891, Ward 2, P.C. 20.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Russell, J.H.G., Provincial Archives of Manitoba (MG 11, E2).

## DESIGN

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 northern one to the store. Openings on all levels were set in plain wooden surrounds (Plate 1). Alterations to this layout have occurred over time and most recently (2007) an overhead garage door was built to replace the older display windows (Plate 2).

The second storey features a recessed area in the centre of the façade holding two sets of paired rectangular windows. There are no heads and signage obscures the sills. However, given the design symmetry of the top two floors, it is likely that continuous rough-stone sills were used at this lower level.

The third floor continues the rhythm of the second-storey openings. Framing the recessed mid-section of both levels are two slim recesses, one on either side, that give the appearance of pilasters. The main recessed area is topped by radiating brick forming a segmental arch with a carved stone keystone. Above this element is an ornate sign with projecting letters forming the words “Allman Block”. Originally, two metal reliefs were mounted between the second and third storeys (the northern-most is now missing). In 2007, all windows were replaced on the upper floors.

The most ornamental element of the building is its classically-designed cornice (Plate 3). To enrich an otherwise plain façade, architect J.H.G. Russell utilized a metal cornice with return eaves supported by paired brackets. This oversized element partially obscures the plain brick parapet that finishes the front façade.

The side elevations, north and south, are both partially hidden by neighbouring buildings. The south façade is windowless, although it does feature an unusual raised parapet, interrupting an otherwise flat roofline (Plate 4). The rear of the north façade includes windows on all levels with radiating brick heads and stone lug sills (Plate 5). The north elevation also angles at its approximately mid-point, making the building thinner at the rear (Plate 6).

The rear (west) façade includes a metal fire escape and windows on all levels (Plate 7).

The building was designed with a conspicuous main façade to attract customers and increase its visual presence on Main Street. It also was able to provide air and sunlight through the use of large windows on all floors and elevations and kept construction costs down by making the other three façades (north, south and west), much plainer than the front.

## **INTERIOR**

At present, the main floor of the Allman Block has been converted into a showroom in the front and a workroom to the rear, divided by a partition wall (Plates 8-10). Much of the original ornamental tin ceiling is still extant on this level. A staircase halfway along the south wall leads to the basement with its concrete floors and exposed wood beam and post support system (Plate 11). A second staircase on the ground floor, located in southeast corner, leads to the second floor. This wider staircase, because of its public use, is much more ornate, with dark wood accenting and ornamental tin ceiling (Plate 12).

The second floor also exhibits dark wood accenting in the hallways (including the ornate wood banister and landing) and as flooring (Plates 13 and 14). Tin is used to ornament the ceilings. The front (east) end of the building still includes small rooms while the rear (west) end has had the interior partitions removed (Plate 15).

Like the second floor, the third floor is a mixture of original spaces and finishes (the staircase, wood framed skylight, some of the hallway and offices) and renovated space (Plates 16-18).

## **INTEGRITY**

The Allman Block occupies its original site and does not appear to be suffering from major structural problems. Recent changes to the building, the replacement of all its windows and the use of a glass garage door on the front façade are major changes to the original design. Vacancy, the

lack of heat and water damage has affected the interior layout and finishes, although some of the original elements and spaces remain (see Appendix I for list of City of Winnipeg Building Permits).

## **STREETSCAPE**

The Allman Block is one of many like structures lining both sides of Main Street north of City Hall. It is located in the midst of a row of older structures that occupy much of the block. It is an important historic streetscape and the Allman Block is a significant contributor to it.

## **ARCHITECT**

John Hamilton Gordon Russell was born in Toronto in 1862 and became one of Winnipeg's most well-known and prolific designers (see Appendix 1 for biographical information). He has been given 20 points by the Historical Buildings Committee.

Contractors for the building included Saul and Irish (masonry and brick), Peterson Brothers (fire escape), D. Bruce and Company (carpenter), Hammond and Rodway (plumbing/heating), J.L. Wells and Company (iron and roof), R. Crawford (painting) and J.H. Torrey (wiring).<sup>7</sup>

## **PERSON**

Daniel F. Allman came to the city and set up a clothing store at 580 Main Street (the Cheapside Block, southwest corner Alexander Avenue) in 1899. He carried a wide range of “Gents’ Furnishings, Men’s, Youth’s and Children’s Clothing, Hats, Caps and Furs.”<sup>8</sup> A special feature of his store was “dust-proof wardrobes” to keep the articles clean.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Russell, J.H.G., op. cit.

<sup>8</sup> Souvenir: The City of Winnipeg 1901, p.20.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p.20.

In 1904, Allman erected his own building, not only to house his growing business but also to take advantage of the rental investment opportunities associated with the city's growth. Original tenants of the block included the Shamrock Pool Rooms, Bently Portrait Company, the offices of Max Steinkopf, solicitor, and S.C. Wilson, real estate agent, who had both an office and his apartment in the block. The Swedish Canadian Colonization Company was another early tenant.<sup>10</sup> The offices/suites were numbered 592 Main Street, accessed by the south door and Allman's business was numbered 594.<sup>11</sup> It appears that the west end of both floors was left undivided, local directories in 1911 list Allman Hall No. 1 on the second floor and Allman Hall No. 2 on the third storey.<sup>12</sup>

Allman remained as an owner-occupant of this property until his retirement in 1924. From information found in the City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, it appears that he died shortly afterward. In 1925 the Royal Trust Company owned the building and Allman was no longer listed in the Henderson's Directory. In 1930 the property was sold to merchant A.F. Higgins, then repurchased by Royal Trust in 1939. From 1949 on, the building was owned by a number of different businesses and businessmen – both resident and non-resident.<sup>13</sup>

Tenants of the block have included a wide variety of people and businesses, from doctors, dentists and waiters to unions and jewellery stores. After 1950, the top two floors became almost exclusively residential and, reflecting the evolving nature of the area, the occupants were almost exclusively Oriental. No residential tenants are listed for the building after 1980.<sup>14</sup>

## **EVENT**

There is no known significant event connected with this structure.

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<sup>10</sup> Henderson's Directory, 1908.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 1906.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 1911.

<sup>13</sup> Assessment Rolls, Roll No. 813891, Ward 2 and old number 12932.

<sup>14</sup> Henderson's Directory, 1906-present.

**CONTEXT**

This 1904 building illustrates the type of investment made by many of the city's small-scale businessmen at the turn of the century. Architecturally simple, these structures dotted city streets as entrepreneurs attempted to take advantage of the growing demand for office and residential space by professionals and other small businesses. Main Street north of City Hall filled with this type of building, as did many of the other commercial streets in Winnipeg's downtown and the surrounding communities.

It is also illustrative of the type of mixed-use building so popular in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Their flexibility and durability made them perfect for the ever-changing downtown landscape as tenants came and left, improvement and renovations were carried out. In the case of this building, residential space was created on the upper floors and used for many years.

**LANDMARK**

The Allman Block is located near one of the city's busiest intersections and is conspicuous in the area.



## APPENDIX I

### CITY OF WINNIPEG - Preliminary Report Assessment Record

Building Address: 592-594 Main Street

Building Name: Allman Block

Original Use: mixed (retail/office/residential)

Current Use: retail

Roll No.: 13081389100

RSN: 154166

Legal Description (Old): 9/11 St. John's, Plan 32065, Lot 42 (11<sup>W</sup> St. John, Plan 11, southerly 8.5 m. of Lot 2)

Location: west side between Alexander and Logan avenues

Date of Construction: 1904

Storeys: 3 and basement

**Heritage Status: ON INVENTORY**

Construction Type: Brick and stone foundation

Building Permits (Plans available: [A] Archives; [M] Microfilm; [4<sup>th</sup>] 4<sup>th</sup> floor, 65 Garry Street):

- 127/1904 \$21,434 (original); 310/1921 [A] \$4,000 (interior alterations); 3517/1929 \$2,000 (alter storefront); 238/1939 \$400 (alterations); 3350/1940 [A] \$1,000 (store alterations); 2551/1942 \$1,000 (alter storefront); 2192/1945 \$400 (repairs); 6206/1950 \$1,000 (alter front); 318/1955 \$300 (fire repairs); 351/1961 \$400 (alterations); 8944/1976 [4<sup>th</sup> - M15A04] \$22,000 (interior alterations)

#### Information:

- 28 x 122 x 40 - = 146,970 cu. ft.

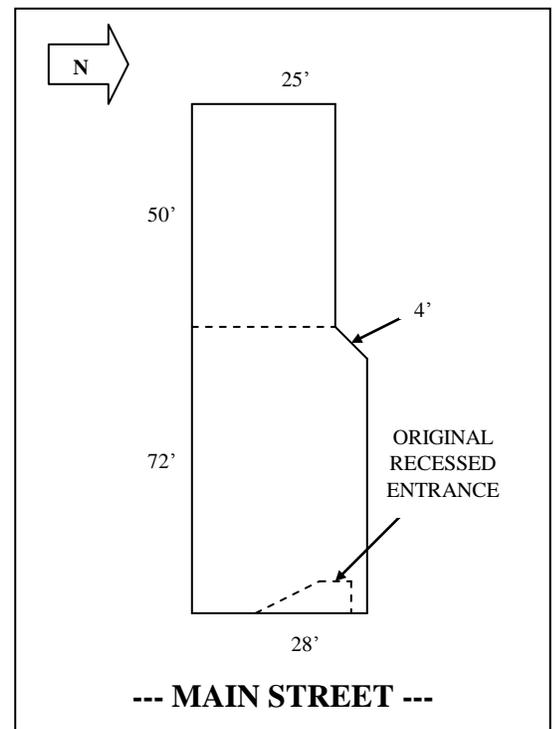
- ceilings: B- 8'; 1<sup>st</sup>- 14'; 2<sup>nd</sup>- 12'; 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>- 10'

- walls: B- 26" stone; 1<sup>st</sup>- 17" brick; 2<sup>nd</sup>- 13" brick; 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>- 9" brick

- 1960 inspection- 22 single residential rooms, 11 on each upper floor

**ARCHITECT: RUSSELL, J.H.G.**

**CONTRACTOR: SAUL & IRISH (BRICK/MASONRY);  
D. BRUCE (CARPENTRY)**



## APPENDIX II

### John Hamilton Gordon Russell

J.H.G. Russell was born in Toronto, Canada West (Ontario) in 1862, the son of a dry goods dealer. After attending school in that city, he went to work for H.B. Gordon, a prominent area architect. Russell was with Gordon from 1878 until his departure for Winnipeg in 1882.<sup>1</sup> From 1886 to 1893, Russell travelled throughout the United States, learning civil engineering, surveying and architecture in centres such as Chicago, Illinois, Spokane and Tacoma, Washington, and Sioux City, Iowa.<sup>2</sup>

In 1895, two years after returning to Winnipeg, he set up his private practice, coinciding with the city's period of unbridled growth. His designs were (and are) scattered throughout the city, province and Western Canada, covering a variety of building types, sizes, prices and uses. His business continued to be steady during World War I and after, when many architects struggled to find commissions.

Russell was president of the Manitoba Association of Architects (1925) and served for three terms as the president of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (1912-15). His chairmanship of the Presbyterian Church Board of Managers<sup>3</sup> and his devotion to Presbyterianism partially explain the large number of churches he designed for the denomination in Winnipeg and Western Canada. Russell died in 1946.

A complete list of his designs would be lengthy indeed. Many of his earlier works have been demolished and therefore usually are no longer included in inventories of his portfolio.

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<sup>1</sup> G. Bryce, A History of Manitoba (Toronto: The Canada History Company, 1906), p. 480.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 480; and M. Peterson, "The Wilson House (Klinic), 545 Broadway," report to the Historical Buildings Committee, May 1990, Appendix I, n.p.

<sup>3</sup> M. Peterson, op. cit., n.p.

Among his projects were:

Outside Manitoba-

Knox Presbyterian - Prince Albert, Sask.  
Knox Presbyterian - Kenora, Ont.  
St. Andrews Church - Moose Jaw, Sask.

Manitoba-

Starbuck Presbyterian (United) - 1904  
Treherne Presbyterian (United) - 1907-08 (originally Chambers Presbyterian)  
Pilot Mound Public School  
Killarney Public School  
Foxwarren Public School

Winnipeg-

Churches- Augustine Presbyterian (United), 444 River Avenue, 1903-4  
Crescent-Fort Rouge Methodist (United), 525 Wardlaw Avenue, 1906-11  
Westminster Presbyterian (United), 745 Westminster Avenue, 1910-12  
(Grade II)  
Robertson Memorial Presbyterian (United), 648 Burrows Avenue, 1911  
Robertson Memorial Presbyterian Institute, Burrows Avenue, 1911  
Knox Presbyterian (United), 400 Edmonton Street, 1914-17  
Home Street Presbyterian (United), 318 Home Street, 1920  
St. John's Presbyterian (United), 250 Cathedral Avenue, 1923 (Grade III)  
Riverview Presbyterian (United), 360 Oakwood Avenue, 1925

Residences- J.H.G. Russell, 237 Wellington Crescent (demolished)  
R.R. Wilson, 545 Broadway, 1904 (Grade III)  
H. Archibald, 176 Roslyn Road, 1909  
Ormsby, 119 Campbell Street, 1910  
J.H. Ashdown, 529 Wellington Crescent (now Khartum Temple), 1913  
(Grade II)  
R.R. Wilson, 680 Wellington Crescent, 1925

Commercial- Addition to J.H. Ashdown Warehouse, 157-179 Bannatyne Avenue, 1899-  
1911 (Grade II)  
Lake of the Woods Building, 212 McDermot Avenue, 1901 (Grade II)  
Hammond Building, 63 Albert Street, 1902 (Grade III)  
Porter and Company Building, 368 Main Street, 1902-03 (demolished)  
McKerchar Block, 600-02 Main Street, 1902-03  
Additions to McClary Building, 185 Bannatyne Avenue, 1903 & 1904  
(Grade III)  
Thomson Block, 499 Main Street, 1903 (demolished)

Winnipeg-

Commercial- (continued)

Adelman Building, 92-100 Princess Street, 1903 (Grade II)  
Bole Warehouse, 70 Princess Street, 1903  
Additions to the Bright and Johnston Building, 141 Bannatyne Avenue,  
1903 & 1907 (Grade III)  
Silvester-Willson Building, 222 McDermot Avenue, 1904  
Green and Litster Block, 235-7 Fort Street, 1904 (demolished)  
Franklin Press, 168 Bannatyne Avenue, 1904 (Grade III)  
Addition to Daylite Building, 296 McDermot Avenue, 1904 (Grade II)  
J.H. Ashdown Store, 211 Bannatyne Avenue, 1904 (Grade III)  
Allman Block, 592-94 Main Street, 1904  
Porter Building, 165 McDermot Avenue, 1906 (Grade III)  
Child's (McArthur) Building, Portage Avenue, 1909 (demolished)  
Glengarry Block, 290 McDermot Avenue, 1910 (Grade III)  
Dingwall Building, 62 Albert Street, 1911 (Grade III)  
Great West Permanent Loan Company Building, 356 Main Street, 1912  
(demolished)  
Eastman Kodak Building, 287 Portage Avenue, 1930 (demolished)

Other- Gladstone School, Pembina Street, 1898 (demolished)  
Casa Loma Block, 644 Portage Avenue, 1909 (Grade II)  
Chatsworth Apartments, 535 McMillan Avenue, 1911  
YMCA, Selkirk Avenue, 1911 (demolished)  
YMCA, 301 Vaughan Street, 1911-13, with Jackson and Rosencrans of New  
York (Grade II)  
Guelph Apartments, 778 McMillan Avenue, 1912  
Addition to the Marlborough (Olympia) Hotel, 321 Smith Street, 1921-23 (Grade  
II)  
Odd Fellows Home, 4025 Roblin Boulevard, 1922  
Canadian National Institute for the Blind, Portage Avenue, 1928  
Hugh John Macdonald School, William Avenue, 1929  
Aurora Court Apartments, 543 Ellice Avenue, n.d.  
Central Park Block, 389 Cumberland Avenue, n.d.  
Johnson Apartment Block, 524 Sargent Avenue, n.d.

**594 MAIN STREET – ALLMAN BLOCK**



Plate 1 – 594 Main Street, Allman Block, front (east) façade, 2006, with the original recessed ground floor, entrances and display window and older wood frame windows. (M. Peterson, 2006.)

594 MAIN STREET – ALLMAN BLOCK



Plate 2 – 594 Main Street, Allman Block, 2007, with overhead garage door on ground floor and newer windows on the upper floors. (M. Peterson, 2007.)

594 MAIN STREET – ALLMAN BLOCK



Plate 3 – 594 Main Street, Allman Block, detail of front (east) façade, 2007. (M. Peterson, 2007.)

**594 MAIN STREET – ALLMAN BLOCK**



Plate 4 – 594 Main Street, Allman Block, rear (west) and south façades, with raised section at arrow, 2007. (M. Peterson, 2007.)

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Plate 5 – 594 Main Street, Allman Block, north façade, 2007. (M. Peterson, 2007.)

**594 MAIN STREET – ALLMAN BLOCK**



Plate 6 – 594 Main Street, Allman Block, angled north façade, 2007. (M. Peterson, 2007.)

**594 MAIN STREET – ALLMAN BLOCK**



Plate 7 – 594 Main Street, Allman Block, rear (west) façade, 2007. (M. Peterson, 2007.)

594 MAIN STREET – ALLMAN BLOCK

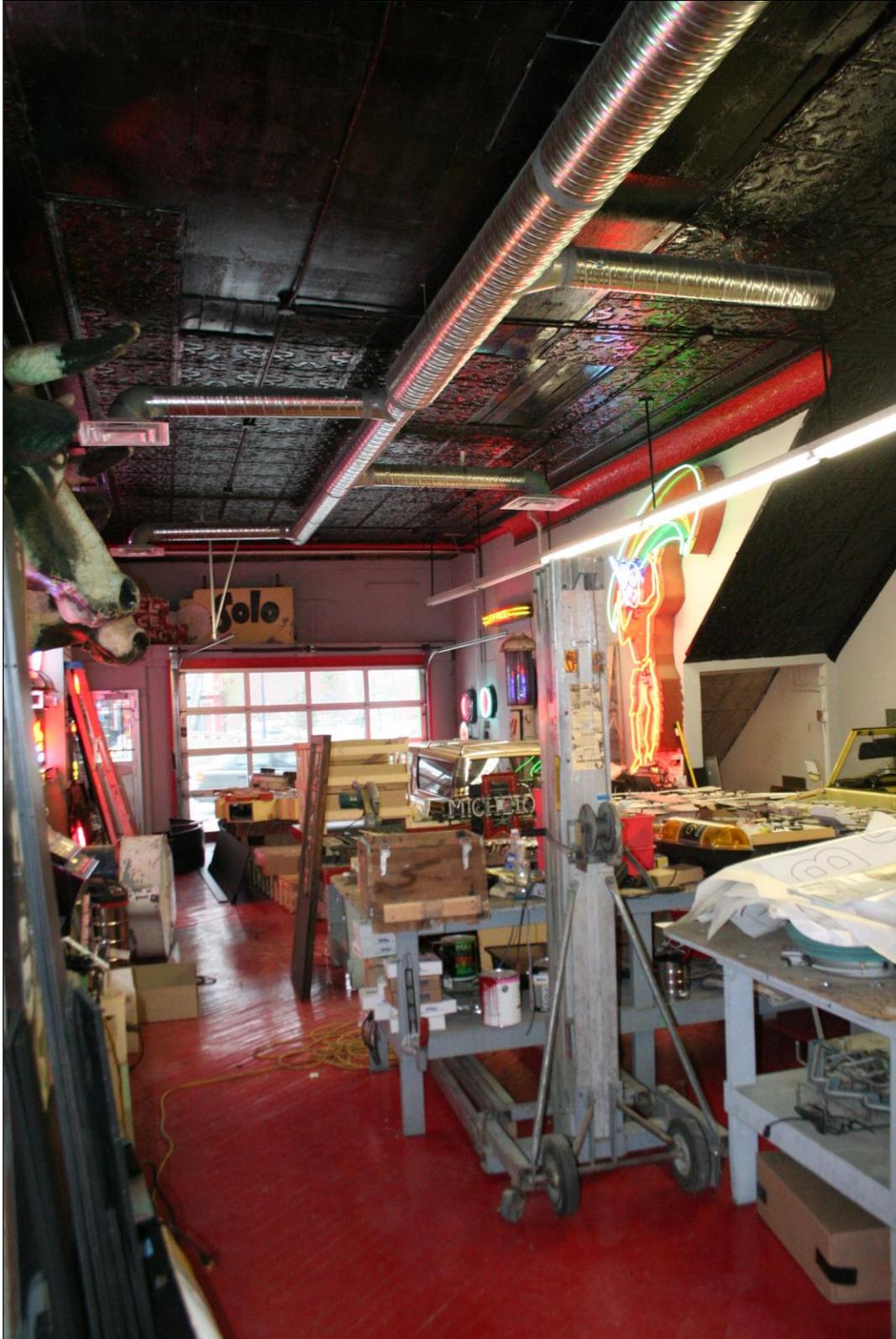


Plate 8 – 594 Main Street, Allman Block, main floor looking east, 2007. (M. Peterson, 2007.)

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Plate 9 – 594 Main Street, Allman Block, front of main floor with garage door, 2007. (M. Peterson, 2007.)

594 MAIN STREET – ALLMAN BLOCK



Plate 10 – 594 Main Street, Allman Block, main floor looking west, 2007. (M. Peterson, 2007.)

594 MAIN STREET – ALLMAN BLOCK



Plate 11 – 594 Main Street, Allman Block, basement, 2007. (M. Peterson, 2007.)

**594 MAIN STREET – ALLMAN BLOCK**



Plate 12 – 594 Main Street, Allman Block, stairs to the second floor, 2007. (M. Peterson, 2007.)

**594 MAIN STREET – ALLMAN BLOCK**



Plate 13 – 594 Main Street, Allman Block, second floor hallway, 2007. (M. Peterson, 2007.)

594 MAIN STREET – ALLMAN BLOCK



Plate 14 – 594 Main Street, Allman Block, second floor staircase, 2007. (M. Peterson, 2007.)

**594 MAIN STREET – ALLMAN BLOCK**



Plate 15 – 594 Main Street, Allman Block, rear of second floor without original partitioning, 2007. (M. Peterson, 2007.)



Plate 16 – 594 Main Street, Allman Block, ongoing renovations to the front rooms, third floor, 2007. (M. Peterson, 2007.)

**594 MAIN STREET – ALLMAN BLOCK**



Plate 17 – 594 Main Street, Allman Block, third floor hallway, 2007. (M. Peterson, 2007.)

594 MAIN STREET – ALLMAN BLOCK



Plate 18 – 594 Main Street, Allman Block, third floor staircase landing and skylight, 2007. (M. Peterson, 2007.)