



661 MAIN STREET

CALDER (KAPLAN) BUILDING

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings & Resources Committee
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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 (Plates 1-3). The small premises that served as shops and residences were replaced by modern buildings, offering commercial, office and residential space for the ever-growing population and local service industry.

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 in what became downtown Winnipeg.

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 1912, with Winnipeg Building Permits totalling nearly \$17 million, this small owner-designed mixed-use block was planned and built on the east side of Main Street, only blocks from the

Canadian Pacific Railway and amid the growing multi-use structures completed in the area offering commercial, office and residential space to the growing population of the city (Plate 4).

STYLE

The Calder (Kaplan) Block is a good example of a Two-Part Commercial structure, very common throughout the downtown regions of most North American cities. Especially popular after 1900, the design was used to reflect the varied activities housed in the different areas of the building. The ground floor held the retail spaces, often with recessed entrances and large display windows. A metal cornice or similar feature was often used to visually separate the ground floor from the upper floors, which included banks of large windows to light the office and/or residential space. Access to this upper floor was usually provided by an ornate entrance on the front façade.

Beyond this basic layout, this type of block saw a tremendous variation in materials and ornamentation. They could be small, simple wooden structures or large, multi-storey brick and stone buildings with a wealth of ornamental elements, often depending on the neighbourhood in which they were located and the amount of money available to the developer.

CONSTRUCTION

Costing \$10,000 to build, this solid common brick, two-storey block faces west onto Main Street – 12.8 metres wide and 19.8 metres deep (see Appendix I for more construction information).¹ Stone is used as accenting around the second storey window openings. According to the original plans, the building rests on a 33.0-centimetre concrete foundation, the brick walls are 33.0 centimetres thick on the ground floor and 22.9 centimetres on the top floor and ceiling heights are 2.1 metres (basement), 4.1 metres (first floor) and 3.2 metres (second floor).² In 2008, a one-storey garage was built on the rear of the building after the 1912 rear section was demolished.³

¹ City of Winnipeg Building Permit (below as BP), #456/1912.

² “Architect’s Plans, #456/1912,” City of Winnipeg.

³ BP #103779/2008 (demolition) and #111116/2008 (construction).

DESIGN

As designed, the front (west) façade featured three doors, the outer entrances recessed with large adjoining display windows, the central entrance also recessed but with smaller windows and accessing the second floor staircase and office behind (Plate 5). Large transom windows topped all the ground floor openings and the rectilinear openings of the second storey were asymmetrically designed, reflecting the larger, northern shop space of the ground floor with a three-window bay on the second floor, the southern two bays holding two window each. Rusticated Stone is used as continuous sills and lug heads and modest brick corbelling led to the flat, unadorned roofline.

The original rear façade included three ground floor doors and rectilinear window openings on both floors with stone lug sills and radiating brick heads (Plate 6). The south wall and much of the north wall were and are covered by neighbouring buildings.

Alterations to the two main façades have been extensive. The ground floor of the front elevation has seen a complete recladding, first with blue and pink tile (date unknown, Plate 7) and then, in 2008, with the present dark tile with ornamental tin accents (Plates 8-10). Both renovation projects included the redesign of many of the features of the ground floor: the earlier alterations removed the recessed entrances (Plate 11), replaced the original display windows and used glass block infill; the later work removed the south entrance completely and moved the north entrance further north and reworked the central entrance, giving the façade a more unified appearance.

The second floor, beyond the replaced window units, has not seen significant alteration.

The rear (east) façade included a large, 7.1 x 16.3-metre extension, also completed in 1912⁴ with a number of window and door openings on both floors (Plate 12). In 2008, the rear portion was demolished, a new, 7.3 x 7.3-metre one-storey metal clad garage was built and the east wall of the original building covered in metal siding (Plate 13).

⁴ City of Winnipeg Building Permit, #2240/1912. Cost of construction was \$2,000.

INTERIOR

According to the original plans, the basement of this block featured open storage space below the north and south retail space, the central area holding the brick encased boiler and fuel rooms. The ground floor held a 5.3-metre wide retail shop running the entire length of the building on the north side and a 3.4-metre wide shop in the south separated by a 3.4-metre wide hall/staircase and office (Plate 14). The second floor was shown as a single, open space. This space had not significantly changed by 1984 (Plate 11).

In 2008, the interior was renovated, the ground floor opened into one retail space (Plates 15 and 16), the second floor into modern office space (Plate 17).

INTEGRITY

The building stands on its original site and appears to be in good condition for its age. Some of its exterior elements are showing signs of aging and the ground floor of the front façade has been completely renovated.

STREETSCAPE

This building is located on one of the City's major downtown thoroughfares, in the middle of a block of several turn-of-the-century commercial buildings (Plate 18) and is an important contributor to this historic streetscape.

ARCHITECT/CONTRACTORS

The original owner, Alexander Calder, is listed on the original City of Winnipeg Building Permit as the architect of the building.

The firm Nelson and Foster were responsible for the construction of this block. The partnership appears to have operated between 1911 and 1915, working on a handful of projects:

- Ellesmere Apartments, 74 Carlton Street (1911)
- Conway Court Apartments, 165 Kennedy Street (1912)
- F.E. Weldon Co. Building, 303 Portage Avenue (1912 – alterations)
- Calder Building, 661 Main Street (1912)
- Quelch Block, 210 Quelch Street (1438 Logan Avenue) (1912)
- McPhillips Street, Radford-Wright Warehouse (1912)
- Bright & Johnson Building, 141 Bannatyne Avenue (1915 – repairs after fire)

PERSON/INSTITUTION

Alexander Calder (Plate 19) was born in Scotland in 1842, emigrating at 5-months with his parents and settling in Bytown (present-day Ottawa, ON).⁵ He worked as a butcher, then as a superintendent of the street railway in London, ON prior to organizing his own transportation firm. Moving to Winnipeg in 1879 as a carriage and wagon manufacturer's agent (Plate 20), Calder opened the first store on what would become Portage Avenue in 1880. In 1883, he became the Canadian Pacific Railway ticket agent and labour employer (originally located at 677 Main Street)⁶ and finally opened his own ticket agency, ultimately adding son Arthur B. Calder (1869-1938) as Alexander Calder and Son in 1912.⁷ He died in 1936.

Calder opened the new block and immediately advertised for tenants (Plate 21), although his own businesses originally occupied two of the spaces (#663 and #665). C.A. Hallberg, realtor, was also a long-time tenant (1912-ca.1953).⁸ Despite the death of both Calders, Calder's Ticket Office continued to operate out of this building into the 1950s. By the 1940s, however, it was sold and renamed the Kaplan Building, after J. and B. Kaplan Dry Goods and the Kaplan

⁵ "Calder, Alexander," in Memorable Manitobans, Manitoba Historical Society, online, (http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/calder_a.shtml), May 2012.

⁶ Manitoba Free Press, July 10, 1891, p. 1 and October 25, 1902, p. 16. Calder also worked as a taxidermist in the early years of the 20th century.

⁷ Calder was also one of the early land purchasers in what would become Brandon, MB.

⁸ Henderson's Directory, 1914-1963.

Manufacturing Company began operating out of the building.⁹ Other tenants have included C.T. Wyrzykowski, barrister (ca.1923-ca.1963), Schachtars School Wear (ca.1963-ca.1973) and Jimmy's Food Market (ca.1963-ca.1983 – Plate 22 and 23).¹⁰

The building was acquired by the City of Winnipeg through tax sale in 1982, the City engineer calling the structure a “firetrap” and prompting calls for its demolition.¹¹ It was spared the wrecking ball and in July 2008, Main Meats, a long-time Main Street retailer, opened its new store in the Kaplan Building.¹²

EVENT

There is no known significant historical event connected with this building.

CONTEXT

This block is an example of the type of development occurring throughout the downtown in the pre-World War I period. Successful local businesses took the opportunity to construct new commercial space and build extra room for rental property. The ground floor retail space/upper floor office or residential space was a popular model and repeated in every commercial district in the city and along the major thoroughfares of the surrounding municipalities and towns.

LANDMARK

This block is located on a busy downtown street but its mid-block location and muted ornamentation reduces its conspicuousness.

⁹ City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, Roll No. 13-080961000, 1915-1990; and Henderson's Directory, 1915-1990. At present, Kaplan Manufacturing Co. Ltd., operates out of a building on Pacific Avenue.

¹⁰ Henderson's Directory, 1915-1990.

¹¹ Winnipeg Free Press, August 31, 1983, pp. 1 and 4.

¹² Winnipeg Free Press, July 24, 2008, p. B6.



APPENDIX I

CITY OF WINNIPEG - Preliminary Report Assessment Record

Building Address: 661 Main Street (661-665)

Building Name: Calder (Kaplan) Building

Original Use: mixed use (retail/residential)

Current Use: mixed use

Roll No. (Old): 13080961000 (---)

RSN: 154178

Legal Description: 11 St. John, Plan 32440, Lot 13

Location: East side between Logan and Henry avenues

Date of Construction: 1912

Storeys: 2 and basement

Heritage Status: **ON NOMINATED LIST**

Construction Type: Brick and stone and concrete foundation

Building Permits (Plans available: [CS] City Storage; [MF] Microfiche):

- 456/1912 [CS] \$10,000 (original); 1881/1940 \$250 [CS] (alterations to entrance); 2971/1984 [CS] \$35,000 (interior alterations); 7104/1985 [CS] N/A (unknown); 457/1990 \$4,000 (interior alterations); 103779/2008 \$15,000 (demolish rear addition); 111116/2008 [MF] \$450,000 (construct one-storey garage at rear & interior alterations)

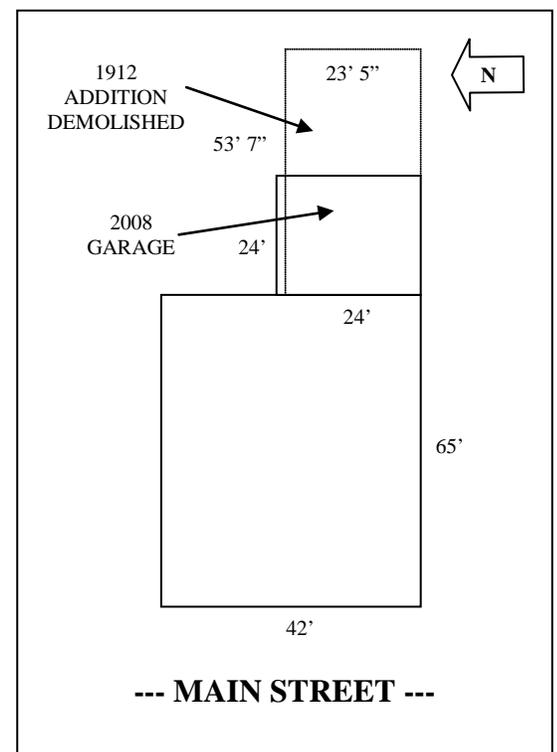
Information:

- 42 x 65 ft.

- BP 111116/2008- new trusses to 2nd floor, install additional beam to support existing roof, rebuild east exterior wall and build rear garage

ARCHITECT: CALDER, ALEXANDER (OWNER)

CONTRACTOR: NELSON & FOSTER



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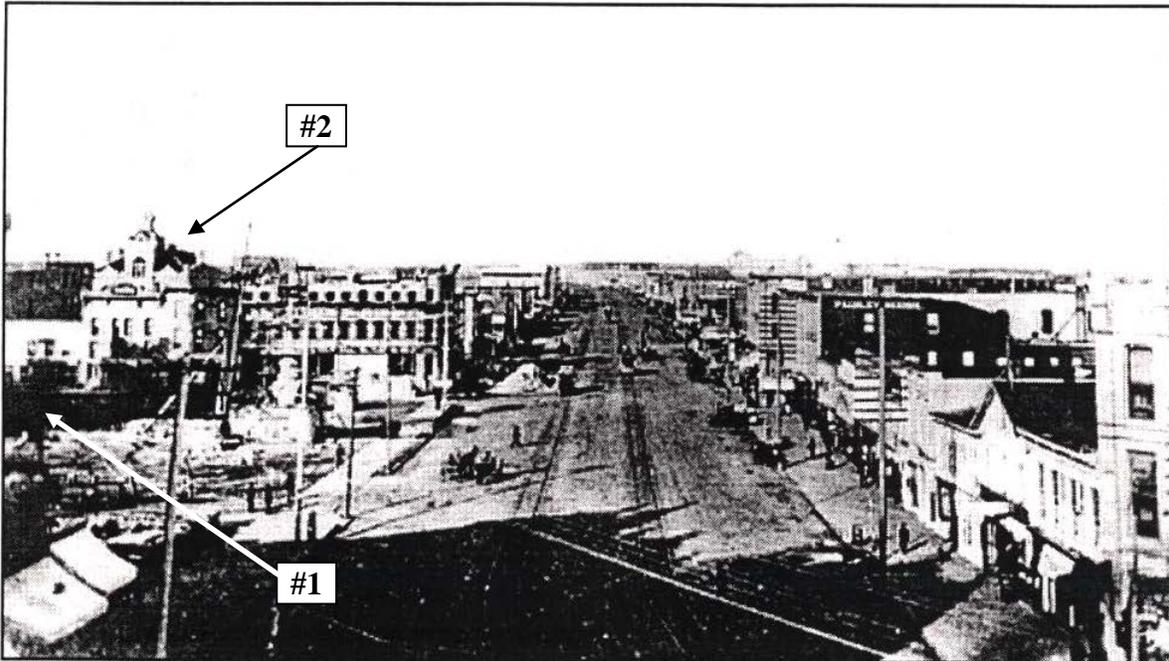


Plate 1 – Looking north on Main Street from William Avenue, 1886. Pictured here are: #1- the second City Hall; and #2- Police Courts, James Avenue. (Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg-Streets-Main, 1886-#1.)



Plate 2 – Looking north from the roof of City Hall, ca.1895, from the roof of City Hall. (Archives of Manitoba.)

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Plate 3 – Main Street looking north from Market Avenue, ca.1905. Alexander Avenue is at arrow.
(T.C. Wetton photograph, Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg- Streets- Main- c1905- 3,
N9057.)

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Plate 4 – East side of Main Street from Logan Avenue to Henry Avenue, 1918. The Calder Building, 661 Main Street, is at the arrow. Above the north portion of the building is a lit billboard for “Calder and Son – Tourist Agency.” ([Archives of Manitoba, Outsize 728, Winnipeg- Streets- Main 1.](#))

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Plate 5 – Architect’s Plans #456/1912, “Front Elevation”. (City of Winnipeg.)



Plate 6 – Architect’s Plans #456/1912, “Rear Elevation”. (City of Winnipeg.)

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Plate 7 – Calder (Kaplan) Building, 661 Main Street, front (west) façade, 2006. (M. Peterson, 2006.)

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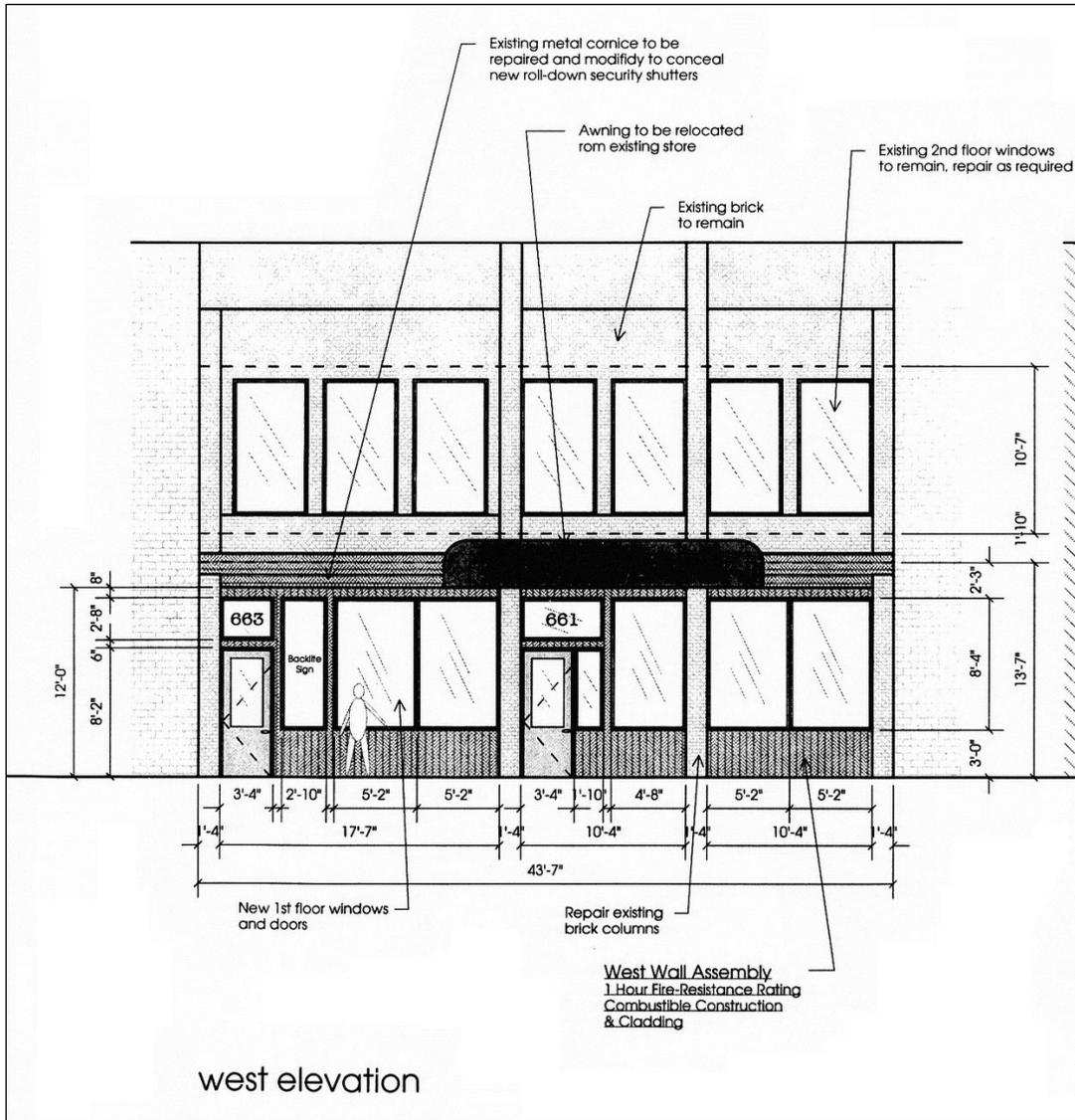


Plate 8 – Architect’s Plans #111116/2008, “West Elevation”. (City of Winnipeg.)

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Plate 9 – Calder (Kaplan) Building, 661 Main Street, front (west) façade, 2014. (M. Peterson, 2014.)



Plate 10 – Calder (Kaplan) Building, 661 Main Street, detail of front (west) façade, 2014. (M. Peterson, 2014.)

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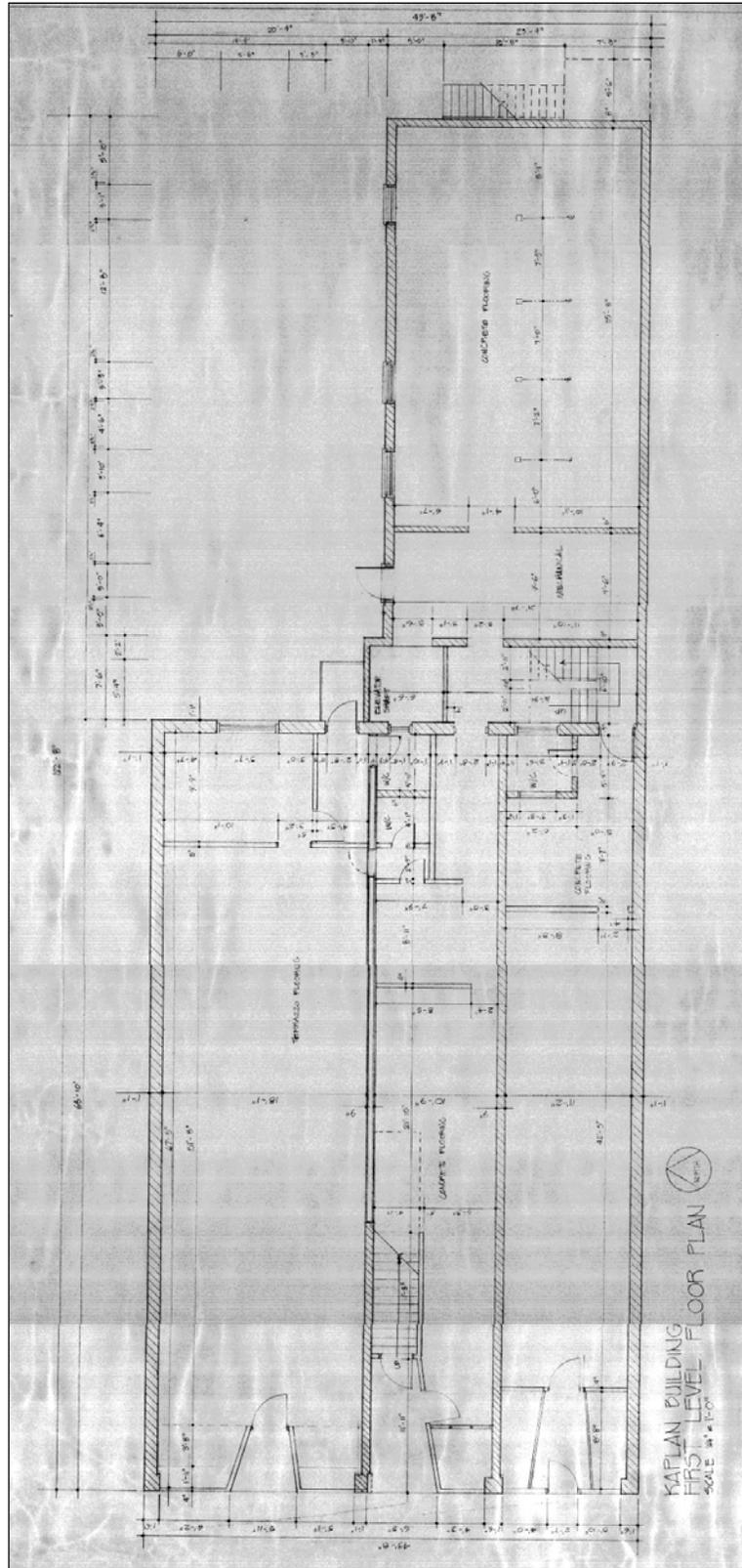


Plate 11 – Architect’s plans, “First Level Floor Plan,” Plan No. 2971/1984. Note that the shop entrances are flush with the front wall. (City of Winnipeg.)

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Plate 12 – Calder (Kaplan) Building, 661 Main Street, rear (east) façade. 2006. (M. Peterson, 2006.)



Plate 13 – Calder (Kaplan) Building, 661 Main Street, rear (east) façade, 2014. (M. Peterson, 2014.)

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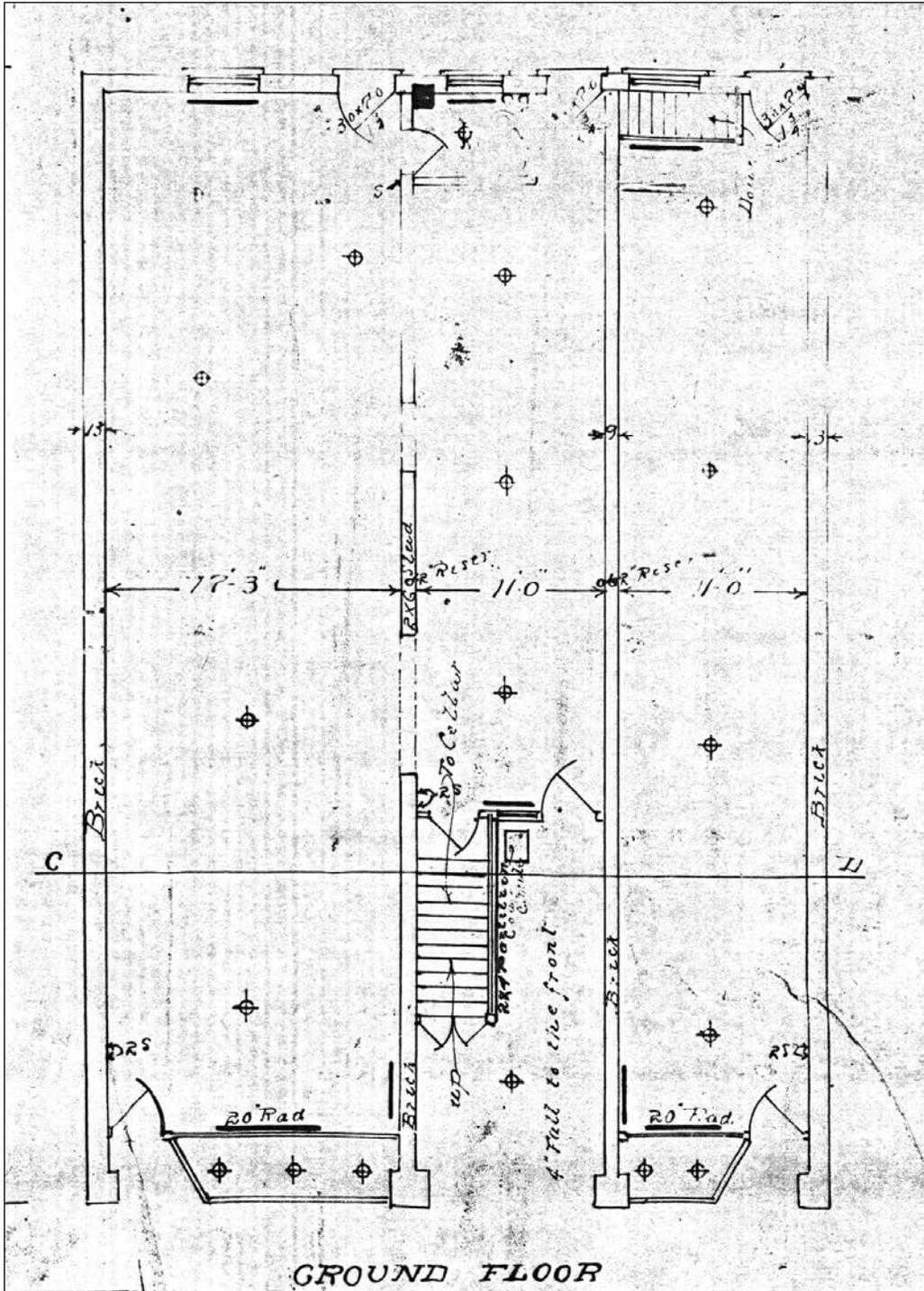


Plate 14 - Architect's Plans #456/1912, "Ground Floor". (City of Winnipeg.)

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Plate 16 – Calder (Kaplan) Building, 661 Main Street, ground floor, 2016. (M. Peterson, 2016.)

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Plate 17 – Calder (Kaplan) Building, 661 Main Street, second floor office space, 2016. (M. Peterson, 2016.)

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Plate 18 –Main Street looking south from Henry Avenue, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)

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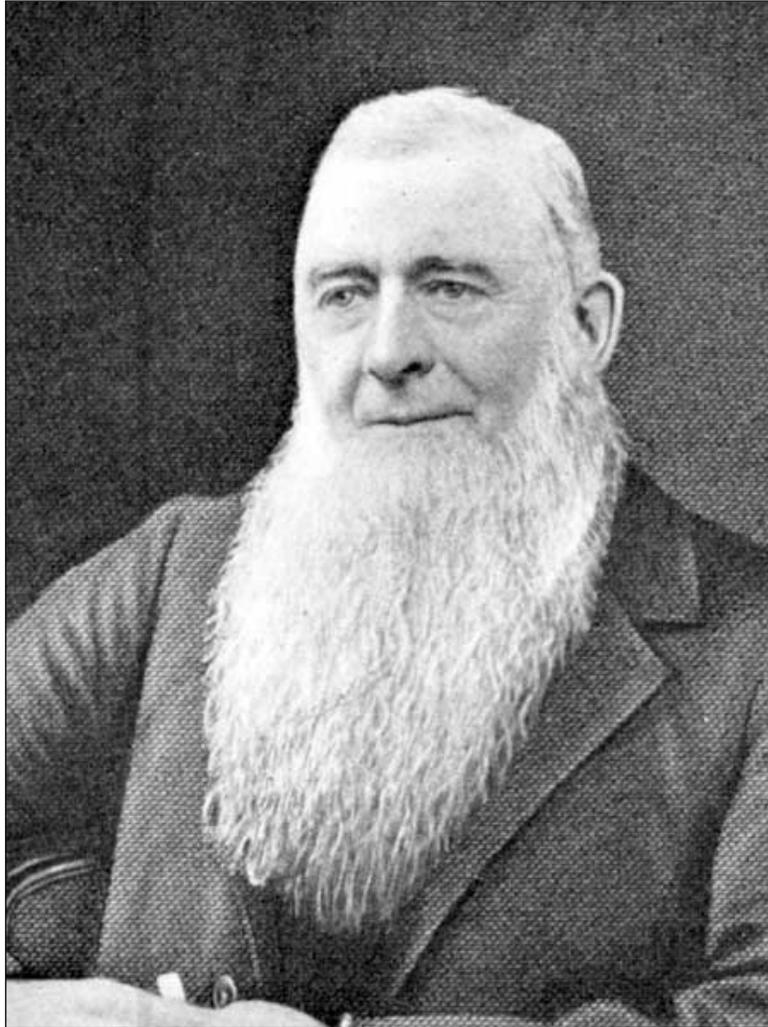


Plate 19 – Alexander Calder (1842-1936), ca.1913. (Reproduced from F.H. Schofield, The Story of Manitoba [Winnipeg, MB: The S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1913].)

Public Notice.

ALEX CALDER

WILL SELL HIS ENTIRE STOCK OF

Carriages, Wagons and Buckboards

From the celebrated factory of John Campbell, London, Ontario,

AT COST.

I am about to erect a large store room on the present site, and to do so I must get rid of my stock in less than a month to enable me to complete my new store room for winter stock. All goods guaranteed to be of the best stock and best workmanship that the Province of Ontario can produce.

Price List as follows, viz. :-

Top Carriage, from	\$100 to \$155.
Open " "	99 to 130.
Democrat Wagon, 2 spring,	75 to 80.
" " 3 " "	85 to 105.
Buckboards,	40 to 65.

ALEX. CALDER,
OPPOSITE CITY HALL,
WINNIPEG, MANITOBA.
July 12-1879

Plate 20 – 1879 newspaper advertisement for Alex. Calder business located on Main Street opposite City Hall. (Manitoba Free Press, July 14, 1879, p. 2.)

FOR RENT

Three large and new office rooms first floor Calder's Block, 663 Main St. These are suitable for lawyers, doctors or draughtsmen, real estate or insurance.

ALEX. CALDER, 663 Main St.

Plate 21 – Advertisement for tenants for the new Calder Building, 663 Main Street. (Manitoba Free Press, January 7, 1913, p. 2.)

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Plate 22 – East side of Main Street from Logan Avenue to Henry Avenue, ca.1986. The north portion of the Kaplan Building, 661 Main Street, is at the arrow. (City of Winnipeg.)



Plate 23 – Architect's plans, "West Elevation," Plan No. 2971/1984. (City of Winnipeg.)