



**224 NOTRE DAME AVENUE**

**ARGYLE BLOCK**

City of Winnipeg  
Historical Buildings & Resources Committee  
Researcher: M. Peterson  
March 2016

## 224 NOTRE DAME AVENUE – ARGYLE BLOCK

The development of Winnipeg's Notre Dame Avenue in downtown Winnipeg began in the fur trade era with the creation of Main Street and Portage Avenue. The former, known variously as the King's Highway, the Garry Road, Garry Street and finally, within Winnipeg, as Main Street, had its beginnings as a trail linking the Hudson's Bay Company's two main forts, Upper and Lower Fort Garry in the 1800s. Portage Avenue, original Portage Trail, was the main east-west route from Fort Garry to the posts strung out across the western prairies.

It would be well into the 1860s before these trails were little more than "a country route with sparse or non-existent roadside development."<sup>1</sup> Notre Dame Avenue originally ran from the Red River, crossing both Main Street and the Portage Avenue (Plate 1) on an angle defined by the river lot boundaries. By the late 1870s, the entire area was beginning to develop, resulting in the surveying and the re-organization of many of the rights-of-way. Notre Dame faced a major change as old buildings were removed to allow for the widening of Portage Avenue. By the 1880s, Notre Dame Avenue ended on the north side of Portage Avenue (Plate 2), and began again east of Main Street – referred to as Notre Dame West and East respectively.<sup>2</sup>

Development along Notre Dame Avenue mirrored much of the downtown, early residential development was replaced first by modest commercial structures and warehouses and then office high-rises (Plates 3-5).

Notre Dame Avenue development was also tied to the 1904 announcement that the new Winnipeg Post Office was to be built at Portage Avenue and Garry Street and the T. Eaton Company announcement of its massive new department store further west on Portage Avenue. This ensured that Portage Avenue would become Winnipeg's commercial centre and the intersecting streets, including Notre Dame Avenue, quickly filled with new structures.

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<sup>1</sup> R.R. Rostecki, "Portage and Main. A Short History," report for the Historical Buildings Committee, 2003, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 5. Notre Dame Avenue East was renamed Pioneer Avenue in 1959.

Seeking to supply the growing demand for both commercial and residential space in the downtown, a local land speculation company built a four-storey mixed-use block near the corner of Portage and Main, naming it after their company, the Argyle Block (Plate 6).

## STYLE

The Argyle Block is a rare example of the Romanesque Revival style applied to a commercial building. The style was very popular in warehouse districts throughout North America from the 1880s well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The buildings were nearly always solid brick with a raised basement and featuring rusticated stone accenting – around windows and doors and at roof level. Other elements include towers flanking the main façade, quoins, belt courses, corbelled brick panels, chevrons and flat rooflines, with or without cornices and entablatures. The most obvious feature of these structures was the use of the arch above windows and doors. Often, straight-topped windows located on the middle storeys were grouped under large arches on the upper floors.<sup>3</sup> Although the style was applied to private residences and on large public buildings, in Winnipeg it was almost exclusively used in the warehouse district, where the designs were somewhat more subdued. The massiveness and sturdiness of the style appealed to wholesalers and retailers looking to promote their businesses and portray the stability of their firms through the design of the structures they occupied. Another example is the Lake of the Woods Building, 212 McDermot Avenue (Plate 7).

## CONSTRUCTION

This is a four-storey, solid “Twin City” brick mixed-use retail/residential/office building, measuring approximately 7.8 x 33.2 metres and costing \$35,000 to complete in 1908.<sup>4</sup> Sitting on an unusually shaped city lot, the Argyle Block is unique in that it actually has two similar but not identical front façades: facing Notre Dame Avenue and Garry Street.

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<sup>3</sup> L. Maitland, et al., *A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1992), p. 84; and *Identifying Architectural Styles in Manitoba* (Winnipeg, MB: Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, Historic Resources Branch, 1991), p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> City of Winnipeg Building Permit (below as BP), #1287/1908.

## DESIGN

The façade facing Notre Dame Avenue begins at grade with the retail space, renovated from the original, with its newer entrance and large display windows (Plate 8). Signage, metal cladding and stucco have also been added to this area. The top three floors are much more original, the rust-coloured brick walls are accented with limestone (Plate 9). The upper floors are divided into two bays by brick pilasters, single at the corners and paired in the middle, with carved stone heads and bases. The paired window openings within the two bays all feature stone lug sills, the rectilinear openings of the second and third floors also feature wide stone heads. The fourth floor openings are arched and placed below arched bands of brick with large metal bracket-like keystones. A complete metal entablature engraved with the word “ARGYLE” and a heavy overhanging cornice complete this façade (Plate 10).

The façade facing Garry Street (numbered 333 and 333A) also features a renovated ground floor and a more original upper three floors (Plate 11). Instead of two bays there are three, the southern-most holds doors leading to the metal fire escape. The side elevations are party walls, the elevation furthest from Portage Avenue includes four angled window wells to increase natural light and ventilation to the suites.

## INTERIOR

According to the original plans, the basement was undivided except for the furnace room in the northeast corner. The ground floor held a single retail store with a centrally-placed entrance (Plate 12). A second entrance at the west end of the building led to a hallway and staircase and the rear of the floor featured a second staircase to the basement. The plans do not show a doorway in the Garry Street façade. The upper three floors, according to the plans, were all similarly organized with nine 2-room suites located off the north side corridor.<sup>5</sup> A common toilet/bath room was also located on each floor (Plate 12).

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<sup>5</sup> These plans show a staircase along the south wall of the building, although they were actually built mid-block on the north side of the structure.

Today, the building is a mixture of original and altered spaces. The ground floor has been divided into two retail shops. The east end of the second floor, now accessible from a staircase in the southwest corner of the building, has been opened up with the removal of interior partitioning.

The third and fourth floors are in much more original state. Wood accenting, doors and hardware, layout and finishes do not appear to have been greatly altered over the years (Plates 13 and 14).<sup>6</sup> A small glass and wood separating wall that is not drawn on the original plans appears to be original (Plate 15). A metal connecting door with the building to the east is found in the corridor on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor (Plate 16) which is not shown in the original plans. It is unknown if it is original.

## **INTEGRITY**

The building stands on its original site and appears to be in good structural condition for its age. Alterations to the ground floor of both the Notre Dame Avenue and Garry Street façades have been extensive. The upper floors, however, have not been significantly altered over time.

## **STREETSCAPE**

This mid-block building uniquely contributes to the streetscapes of two major downtown thoroughfares, both of which feature buildings from the pre-World War I era (Plates 17-19).

## **ARCHITECT/CONTRACTORS**

The block's designer, Paul M. Clemens (1870-1966), was another of the Icelandic-born builders/designers who made a name for himself in Winnipeg. He arrived in the late 1890s and worked in the city for nearly two decades (see Appendix II for biographical information). Known more for modestly detailed apartment buildings, the Argyle Block, in which Clemens' rented office space for many years represents his most complex design. He has been given 10 points by the Historical Buildings & Resources Committee.

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<sup>6</sup> There is evidence in several of the upper floor suites of Murphy beds.

The contractor for the block was local builder William Brown.<sup>7</sup>

## PERSON/INSTITUTION

The original owner of the block was the Argyle Land Company, organized in 1905 by David R. Wood. The company was a subdivision developer and over the years advertised a number of properties for sale. The block was sold in 1909 to Frances Thomas “Frank” Lindsay (1854-1940),<sup>8</sup> an Ontario-born businessman who arrived in Winnipeg via Minnesota in 1884 after working as a stagecoach driver in the U.S.<sup>9</sup> Lindsay became the owner of several local hotels by the turn-of-the-century and would translate the profits from his various development schemes into the construction of the Lindsay Block, 228 Notre Dame Avenue, just west of the Argyle Block in 1911.<sup>10</sup> Lindsay sold the Argyle Block and the Oxford Hotel to James Richardson, influential grain dealer, in 1923.

Early commercial tenants of this block included Oxford Billiards, Thistle Renovating and Tailoring Company and the Maple Leaf Wine Company. Building designer P.M. Clemens had his offices on the building’s second floor. The Princess Theatre is also listed at the location from ca.1909-1912, but it does not appear to have been part of the block.<sup>11</sup> Other tenants through the years included the Guard’s Association in Canada (1925-1940), Charles I. Meyers’ Photography Studio (1925-1940) and the Service Window Cleaning Company (1925). Meyers was owner of the block for many years.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> BP #1287/1908.

<sup>8</sup> Manitoba Free Press, November 20, 1905, p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> “Lindsay, Frances Thomas,” Memorable Manitobans, Manitoba Historical Society, [http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/lindsay\\_f.shtml](http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/lindsay_f.shtml), 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Lindsay also purchased the Oxford Hotel, neighbouring the Argyle Block, in 1905.

<sup>11</sup> Henderson’s Directory, 1905-1915; and E. Burley, “Winnipeg Theatre Inventory,” report for the Historical Buildings Committee, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Henderson’s Directory, 1915-1940.

The third and fourth floors were residential suites (Plate 20), although again, there is great discrepancy in the directory listings of the time.<sup>13</sup> According to City of Winnipeg records, the residential suites were closed in the 1970s.<sup>14</sup> Today, many of the suites are rented to artists and musicians as workspace.

There were two serious fires in the building – one in 1920 took the life of Princess Billiards proprietor W.A. Carson and a second, less serious event, in 1926.

## **EVENT**

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

## **CONTEXT**

This block was built in the midst of Winnipeg's early 20<sup>th</sup> century growth period that saw its economy grow and its downtown expand through the construction of hundreds of modern buildings as developers attempted to meet the demand for retail, office and residential space within the downtown and the surrounding areas. Notre Dame Avenue was one of the City's premier thoroughfares and as Portage Avenue developed into the commercial hub, the intersecting streets took on an even more important role. The Argyle Block was a mixed use, investment structure intended to make the owner a consistent return on the development capital, like so many other pre-World War I downtown buildings did.

## **LANDMARK**

The Argyle Block is located on a busy Winnipeg street and would be well-known in the district.

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<sup>13</sup> Henderson's Directory, 1910. Although this source often includes numerous errors, for 1910, there are 16 tenants listed on the upper floors under the addresses, none of which are listed under their names as living in the Argyle Block.

<sup>14</sup> City of Winnipeg Assessment Department Field Form, Roll No. 521720-12-2.



## APPENDIX I

### *CITY OF WINNIPEG - Preliminary Report*

Building Address: 224 Notre Dame Avenue  
333 & 333A Garry Street)

Building Name: Argyle Block

Original Use: mixed (retail/residential)

Current Use: retail

Roll No. (Old): 521720 (9374-1)

RSN: 154950

Municipality: 12

Ward: 2

Property or Occupancy Code: 20

Legal Description: 1 St. John, Plan 24208, Lot 1 (subject to easement)

Location: south side between Portage and Ellice avenues

Date of Construction: 1908

Storeys: 4

**Heritage Status: NOMINATED LIST**

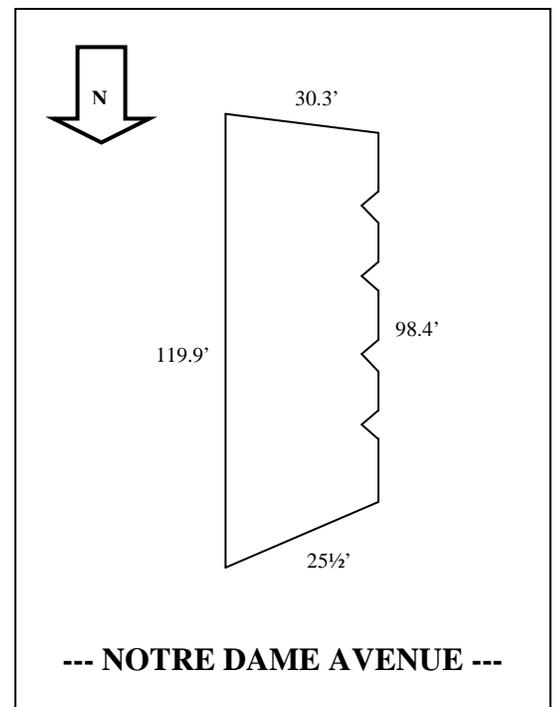
Construction Type: brick and stone foundation

Building Permits (Plans available: [CS] City Storage; [M] Microfilm):

- 1287/1908 [CS] \$35,000 (original); 410/1958 \$4,000 [CS] (interior alterations); 1310/1971 \$4,200 (new front); 6585/1985 \$25,000 [CS] (interior alteration to 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, 333 Garry St.)

#### Information:

- $24\frac{1}{2} \times 109 \times 56 = 149,548$  cu. ft.
- 21" stone foundation, brick walls 21" on 1<sup>st</sup>, 17" on 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>, 13" on 4<sup>th</sup>
- west & east walls – twin city brick, copper/metal cornice (east wall includes fire escape, north & south walls- clay brick
- small fire in air well on Jan. 18/1981; new gas boiler in 1990
- metal ceilings in basement (removed in 1947) & 1<sup>st</sup> floor
- some uneven settlement in the floors at various locations
- 1947-49 – new electrical, flooring, partitioning, walls, ceilings, & lighting in various locations throughout building
- 1975 the residential areas (3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup>) closed - vacant



## APPENDIX II

### Paul Melsted Clemens

Clemens was born in Reykjavik, Iceland in 1870, immigrating to North America in the late 1880s and settling in Chicago, Illinois, where he likely received his architectural training. In 1898, he moved to Winnipeg and became part of a large and vibrant Icelandic community that was especially influential in the building trades – architects, contractors and labourers.<sup>1</sup> His private practice began in 1905 and the last City of Winnipeg Building Permit taken out under his name was in early 1916.<sup>2</sup> A very busy architect, he designed all types of structures throughout the city but the bulk of his work was in the design of modest apartment blocks. In the five construction years from 1909-1913, he designed 20 blocks worth nearly \$850,000.<sup>3</sup> He moved back to Chicago in 1921 and practiced there until a 1925.<sup>4</sup> He died at Excelsior Springs, Missouri on 14 October 1966.<sup>5</sup>

A list of his larger commissions would include:<sup>6</sup>

Alfred H. Pulford House, 39 East Gate (1907)  
Argyle Block, 224 Notre Dame Avenue (1908)  
Victoria Court Apartments, 471 William Avenue (1910)  
Nova Villa Apartments, 615 Sherbrook Street (1910)  
Markland Court Apartments, 706 Furby Street (1910) – demolished  
Kilgour, Rimer Company Warehouse, 85 Princess Street (1910) – demolished  
Diana Court Apartments, 583 Furby Street (1911)  
Harald Apartments, 641-645 Westminster Street (1911)  
Waldorf Apartments, 634 Broadway Avenue (1911)  
Bradeen Apartments, 149 Langside Street (1911)  
Asquith Court Apartments, 720 Furby Street (1912) – demolished

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<sup>1</sup> Robert G. Hill, Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada, 1800-1950, online edition, <http://dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/node/933>, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> City of Winnipeg Building Permit Ledger Books, 1899-1926. Below as Ledger Books.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> R.G. Hill, op. cit.

<sup>5</sup> Winnipeg Free Press, October 18, 1966, p. 28.

<sup>6</sup> Compiled from Ledger Books, R.G. Hill, op. cit.; “Clemens, Paul Melsted,” in Memorable Manitobans, Manitoba Historical Society website, [http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/clemens\\_pm.shtml](http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/clemens_pm.shtml), 2015; and files of the Historical Buildings and Resources Committee.

P.M. Clemen designs (continued):

Pandora Court Apartments, 759 Winnipeg Avenue (1912) – demolished  
Emily Apartments, 745 Winnipeg Avenue (1912) – demolished  
Ruth Apartments, 510 Maryland Street (1912)  
Windsor Apartments, 122 Langside Street (1912)  
John Moyse House, 838 Wolseley Avenue (1913 – Grade III)  
Thomas Wilson House, 834 Wolseley Avenue (1913)  
Hrefna and Sylvia Apartments, 768 and 770 Toronto Street (1913)  
Hampton Court Apartments, 450 Langside Street (1914) – demolished  
Hazelton Apartments, 722 Maryland Street (1914) – demolished  
Minerva Court Apartments, 290 Beverley Street (1914)

He also designed public schools in Qu'Appelle, SA (1905) and Dauphin, MB (1907).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>

R.G. Hill, *op. cit.*





224 NOTRE DAME AVENUE – ARGYLE BLOCK

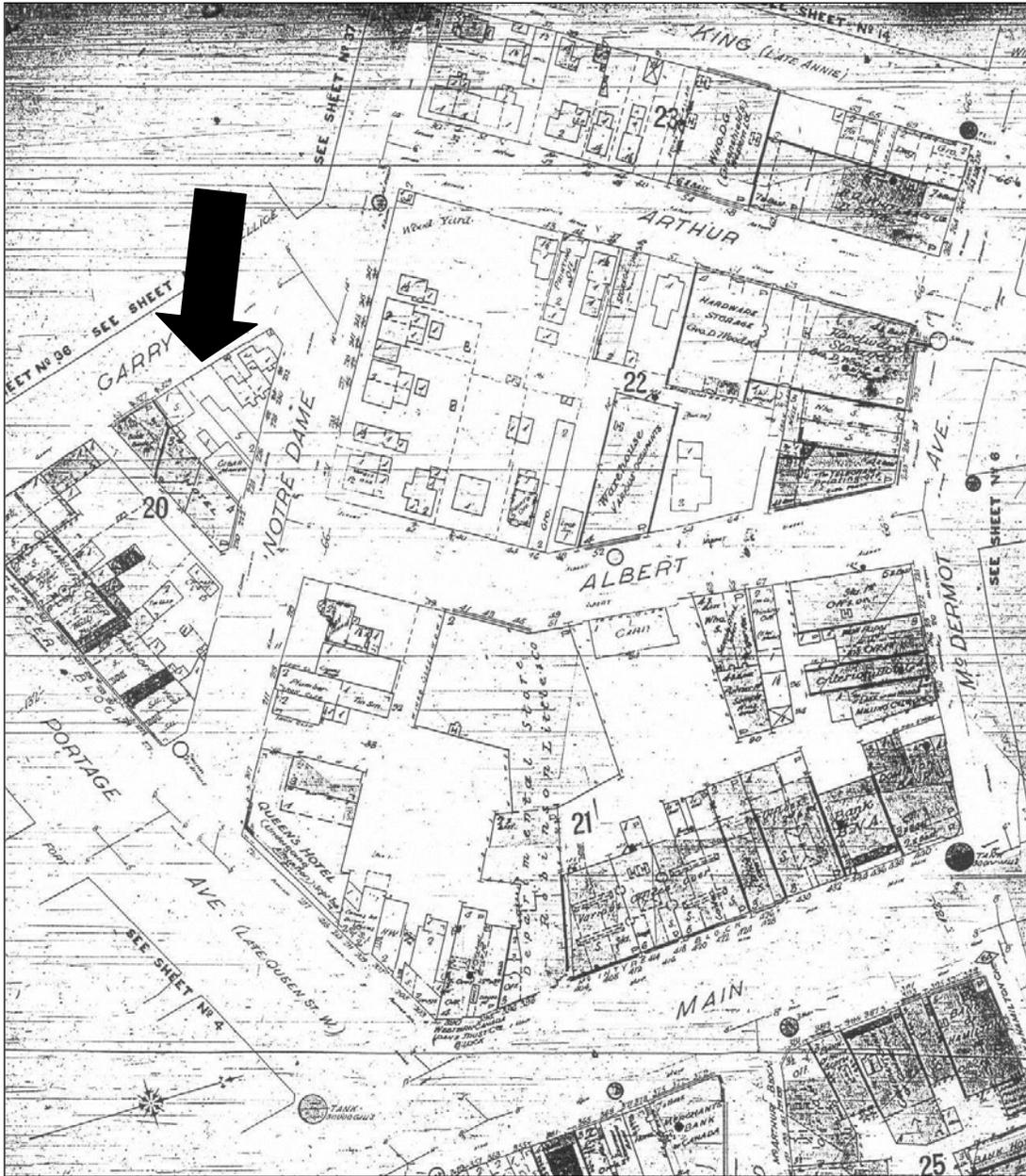


Plate 3 – Charles Goad, Fire Atlas of the City of Winnipeg, Sheet 5, 1895 (revised 1905). The site of the Argyle Block is still occupied by residential and small-scale commercial buildings (arrow). (City of Winnipeg.)

## 224 NOTRE DAME AVENUE – ARGYLE BLOCK

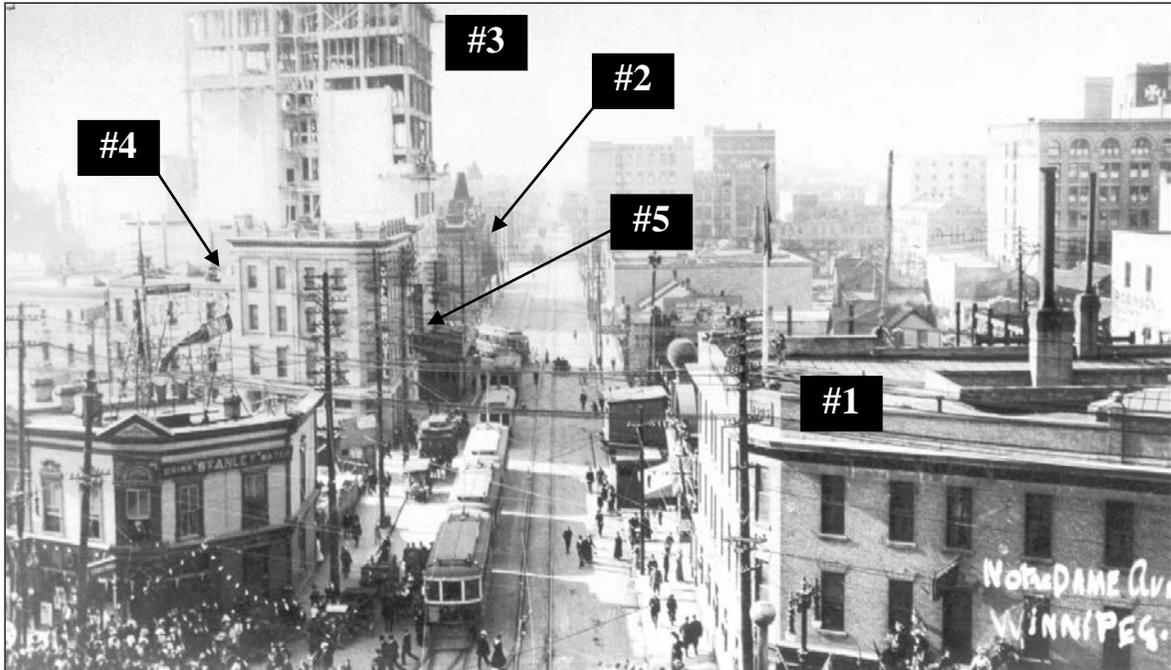


Plate 4 – A very busy Notre Dame Avenue, 1911. Pictured are: #1- Queen Hotel, Portage and Notre Dame, built 1879, demolished ca.1950; #2- Grace Methodist (United) Church, Smith Street, built 1900, demolished 1956; #3- Lindsay Building, 228 Notre Dame Avenue, under construction; #4- Oxford Hotel; and #5- Argyle Block. (Courtesy of the [Archives of Manitoba.](#))

224 NOTRE DAME AVENUE – ARGYLE BLOCK



Plate 5 – Looking north on Notre Dame Avenue, ca.1927. To the left are the Oxford Hotel, Argyle Block, Lindsay Building and Grace Methodist Church in the background. On the right are the Province Theatre, the Winnipeg Electric Railway Chambers and the St. Charles Hotel. Of these, only the theatre and the church are not still standing (Courtesy of the Archives of Manitoba.)

224 NOTRE DAME AVENUE – ARGYLE BLOCK

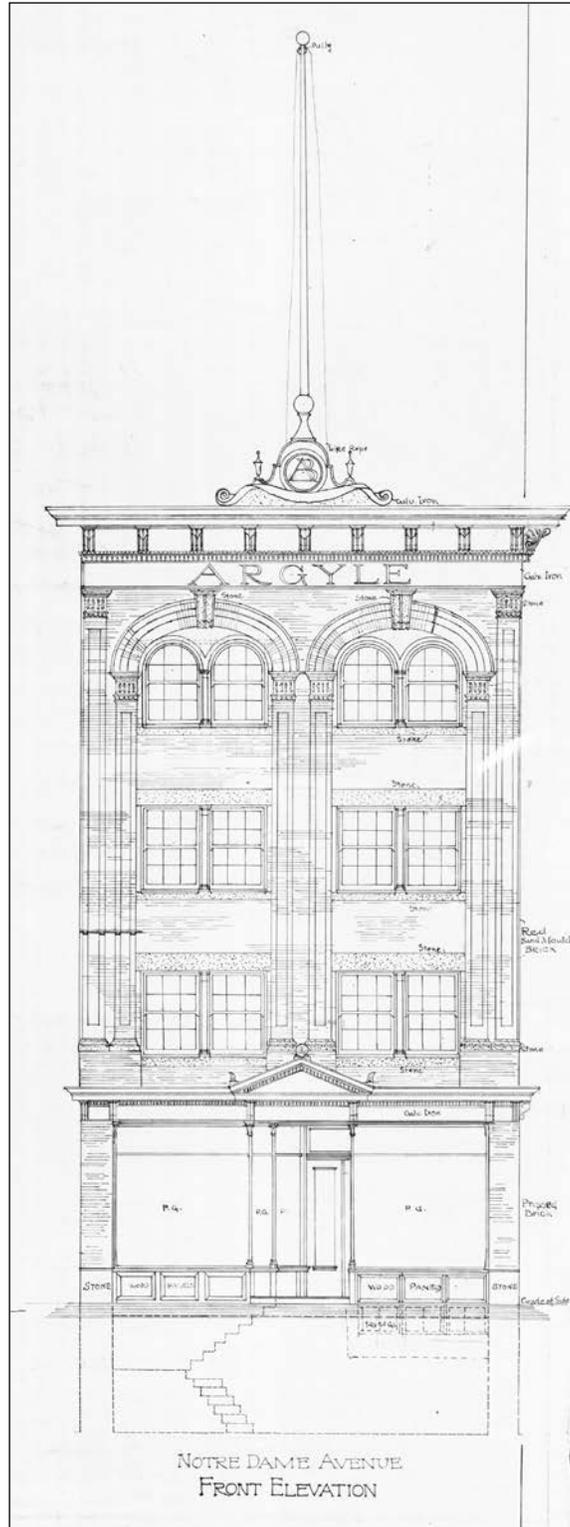


Plate 6 – Architect’s plans, “Notre Dame Avenue – Front Elevation,” Plan #1287/1908. (City of Winnipeg.)

**224 NOTRE DAME AVENUE – ARGYLE BLOCK**



Plate 7 – Lake of the Woods Building, 212 McDermot Avenue, front (north) and east façades, no date. (M. Peterson.)

224 NOTRE DAME AVENUE – ARGYLE BLOCK



Plate 8 – Argyle Block, 224 Notre Dame Avenue, Notre Dame Avenue façade, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)

**224 NOTRE DAME AVENUE – ARGYLE BLOCK**



Plate 9 – Argyle Block, 224 Notre Dame Avenue, detail of upper storeys of Notre Dame Avenue façade, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)

**224 NOTRE DAME AVENUE – ARGYLE BLOCK**



Plate 10 – Argyle Block, 224 Notre Dame Avenue, detail of roofline of Notre Dame Avenue façade, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)

224 NOTRE DAME AVENUE – ARGYLE BLOCK



Plate 11 – Argyle Block, 224 Notre Dame Avenue, façade facing Garry Street, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)

224 NOTRE DAME AVENUE – ARGYLE BLOCK

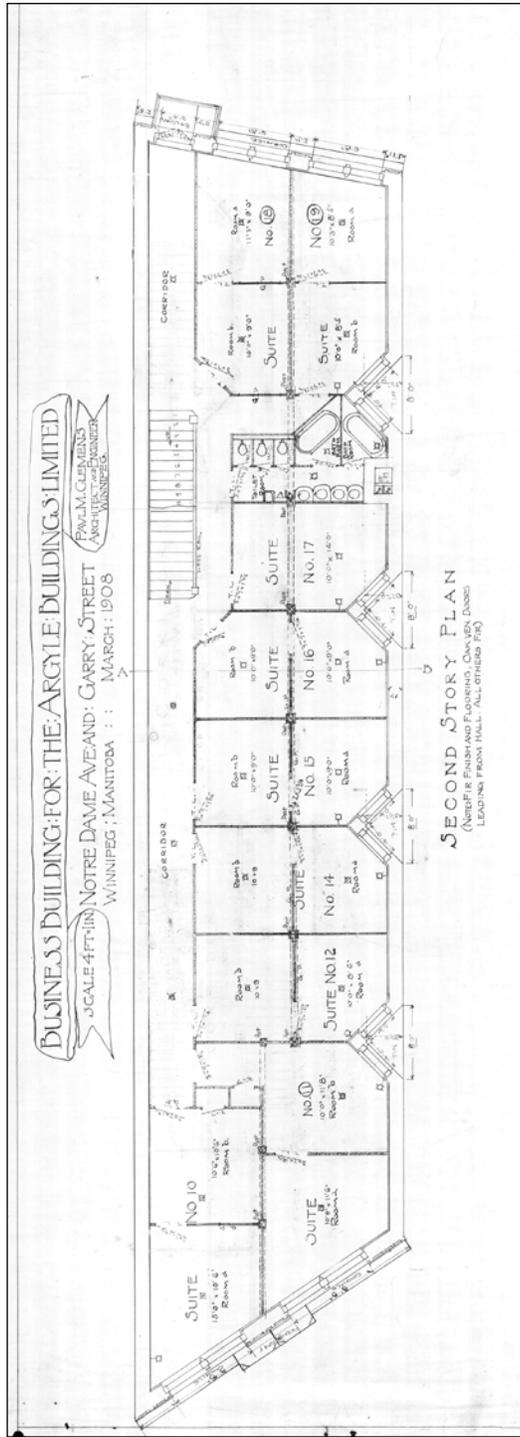
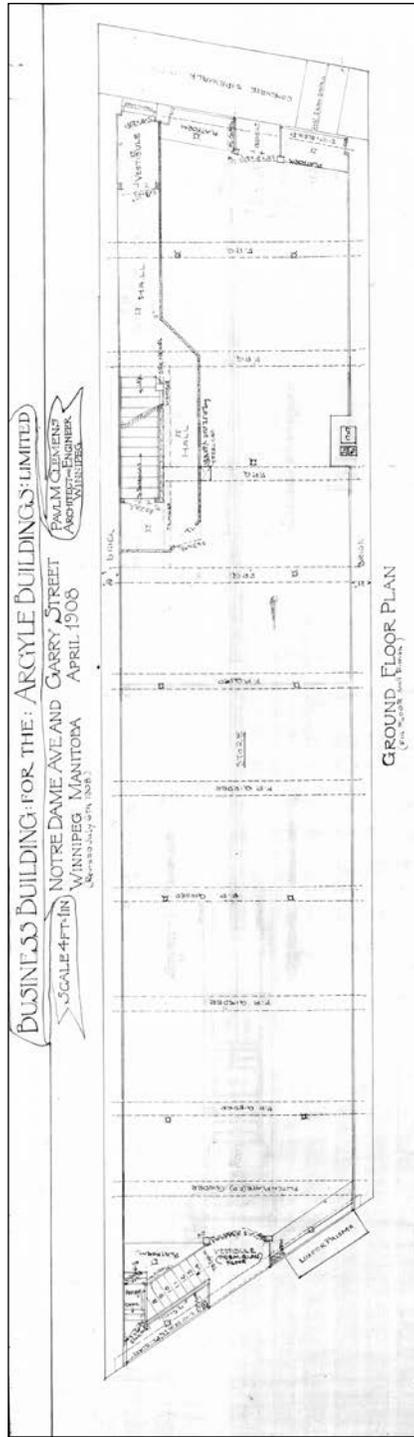


Plate 12 – Architect’s plans, “Ground Floor Plan” (left) and “Second Story [sic] Plan” (right), Plan #1287/1908. (City of Winnipeg.)

224 NOTRE DAME AVENUE – ARGYLE BLOCK



Plate 13 – Argyle Block, 224 Notre Dame Avenue, third floor, 2016. The corridor window (right) and room window (left) open into the light well on the west side of the building. (M. Peterson, 2016.)

224 NOTRE DAME AVENUE – ARGYLE BLOCK



Plate 14 – Argyle Block, 224 Notre Dame Avenue, fourth floor suite with original wood flooring, 2016. (M. Peterson, 2016.)

224 NOTRE DAME AVENUE – ARGYLE BLOCK



Plate 15 – Argyle Block, 224 Notre Dame Avenue, third floor hallway looking towards the south end with wood and glass enclosure, 2016. (M. Peterson, 2016.)

224 NOTRE DAME AVENUE – ARGYLE BLOCK



Plate 16 – Argyle Block, 224 Notre Dame Avenue, third floor metal connecting door, 2016. (M. Peterson, 2016.)

**224 NOTRE DAME AVENUE – ARGYLE BLOCK**



Plate 17 – Notre Dame Avenue looking west from Portage Avenue, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)



Plate 18 – Notre Dame Avenue looking east from Ellice Avenue, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)

224 NOTRE DAME AVENUE – ARGYLE BLOCK



Plate 19 – Garry Street looking northwest, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)

**TO LET**  
Immediate occupation.  
**Bachelor Apartments**  
Fitted with Marshall-Stearns' wall  
beds, in  
**ARGYLE BUILDING**  
Most central block in city.  
**GARRY STREET**  
between Portage and Notre Dame.  
Rentals \$20 upward.  
**ARGYLE LAND COMPANY**  
(In building).

Plate 20 – A 1909 advertisement for apartments in the Argyle Building. (Reproduced from the Manitoba Free Press, March 16, 1909, p. 2.)