

54 PRINCESS STREET – DEL BLOCK ANNEX
Davidson Brothers, 1905



While Winnipeg's early 20th century warehouse district rapidly filled with large, visually imposing brick and stone warehouses, it also saw a number of smaller, service-based structures develop to meet the demand for modern retail and office space. One such building was the Del Block, 62 Princess Street, built in 1904 and this addition, built on its south end a year later and more than doubling the size the original structure.

The block was built as a rental property by George Ryan (1859-1948), retail boot and shoe merchant who had come to Winnipeg in 1880 and was one of three Ryan brothers involved in the business in the 19th and 20th centuries. Ryan sold the property in 1908 to a family in Scotland. The annex portion of the complex was purchased in the late 1930s by electrician Harry Del Bigio (1902-1974). Del's Electric Motor Service Ltd. has occupied this space since then as well as expanding and purchasing the original building (62 Princess Street). Tenants of the block have been extremely varied and have included New York Tea & Coffee Co., Computing Scale Co. of Canada Ltd., Winnipeg Hat & Cap Manufacturing Co., Sheffield Silver Plating and the Coffee Spot Café.

The front (east) brick façade is divided by plain pilasters into five bays, four of which feature identical window/door combinations in arched openings on the ground floor and paired windows in rectangular window openings on the upper floor. The unique bay, second from the north end, does not include a door. The entire front façade of the annex was stuccoed in 1939.

The north and south elevations are party walls; the rear façade includes two projecting one-storey sheds and arched window openings and a loading door on the second floor.

On the interior, the original annex was divided into five retail shops but the ground floor is now mostly open, the second floor holds an office, boardroom and storage space. There are also remnants on the second floor of a metal pulley and rail system that allowed equipment to be brought from the back lane to the second floor or taken down to the back lane.

The Del Block Annex is located mid-block on the west side of Princess Street between Notre Dame and McDermot avenues in the heart of the Exchange District, recognized as a National Historic Site by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. All buildings in the Exchange District, including this modest retail structure, are essential parts of their historic streetscapes.

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

Exterior:

- Two-storey building with flat roof occupying its mid-block location, its main façade facing east onto Princess Street, its north and south walls facing neighbouring buildings and the rear façade facing west onto the back lane; and
- Front (east) façade divided into five bays by pilasters, all but one on the ground floor holding a door and large window in arched openings and all holding two windows in arched opening on the second floor.

Interior:

- None