

## **4025 ROBLIN BOULEVARD – INDEPENDENT ORDER OF ODD FELLOWS HOME**

***John Hamilton Gordon Russell (1922)***



The Independent Order of Odd Fellows, IOOF, is a fraternal organization formed in 18<sup>th</sup> century England by working men of pre-industrial England for mutual benefit and good fellowship. The name “Odd Fellows” refers to its original members who, as common labourers and the young artisans, were excluded from the established craft guilds. Each member paid weekly dues that were pooled and dispersed to other members in need: family men suddenly out of work, heads of families disabled by ill health or accident, widows, the orphaned families of deceased members – an actual form of mutual aid based on fundamental need. Joined by their female counterparts, the Rebekahs, the Oddfellows embarked on their course of mutual assistance. Their golden rule is embodied by the symbol of the order, a triple link: friendship, love and truth.

The IOOF established its first lodge in Winnipeg in 1873 and by 1886, 13 subordinate lodges had also been organized in Manitoba. In 1883, the Order built a new headquarters, at 72-74 Princess Street. During World War I, the IOOF began the process of planning and building a home for widows and orphans. They chose a large piece of river property in Rural Municipality of

Charleswood on the area's main thoroughfare, Roblin Boulevard. Excavation began in 1917 but the Home would not open officially until March 13, 1923.

The large, two-storey stone and brick structure with full attic rests on a concrete foundation and cost \$125,000 to complete. It features a wealth of Neo-Classical or Classical Revival elements, including a symmetry of design, pedimented dormers and entrances and modest cornice. The main (south) façade includes a central raised entrance flanked by projecting east and west wings. This entrance is highlighted by a pediment and lettering that reads, “ODDFELLOWS HOME.” above the door and the three interlocked chain links, the Order’s symbol, in the spandrel between the second and third floors. The other elevations continue the design and ornamentation of the main façade, with rear entrances under signage for “GIRLS” and “BOYS”.

Alterations to the exterior have been extensive, including the replacement of window units and the enlarging of the rear section of the building. On the interior, the building has been converted into seniors’ apartments and all finishes, except for the dark wood of the main entrance lobby, have been replaced.

The designer of this structure was John Hamilton Gordon Russell (1862-1946) and the builder Sveinn Brynjolfsson (1856-1930). Russell was one of the city’s most prolific architects, designing a long list of churches, apartment buildings, commercial structures, schools, homes and institutional structures in his career. He was well-respected by his peers, serving as president of the Manitoba Association of Architects (1925) and three terms as the president of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (1912-1915). Brynjolfsson, another of the Icelandic-born local contractors, came to Winnipeg in the 1890s and built a wide range of structures in the city.

In 1997, the IOOF Home closed following the withdrawal of government funding. Major renovations converted the structure into an assisted living facility known as Assiniboine Links in 2001 with seven studio apartments and 25 single bedroom suites.

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

A. Exterior:

- i. Three-storey brick structure on raised, stone-clad basement with gable roof with main (south) façade facing Roblin Boulevard, east and west façades facing service roads and wooded areas and rear (north) façade facing a newer residential development;
- ii. The symmetrically designed south façade with its projecting pedimented entrance with lettering that reads, “ODDFELLOWS HOME.” above the entrance and a stone panel with three carved interlocked chain links in the spandrel between the second and third floors, projecting east and west wings topped by gable ends with cornice returns, rectilinear window openings and roof with gable dormers and modest cornice;
- iii. The rear (north) façade, excluding the stuccoed additions, with central projecting area flanked by the main building which included entrances for “GIRLS” (east side) and “BOYS”, and arched window openings with radiating brick heads;
- iv. The west façade with covered entrance, rectilinear window openings and modest cornice, gable dormer, gable with cornice returns and modest cornice; and
- v. The east façade with rectilinear window openings and modest cornice, gable dormer, gable with cornice returns and modest cornice;

B. Interior:

- i. With the exception of the framed stained-glass wall hanging, the finishes and layout of the main entrance lobby.