This building embodies the following heritage values as described in the *Historical Resources By-law, 55/2014* (consolidated update July 13, 2016):

(a) This building was completed by 1907 during the early years of Winnipeg’s dramatic growth phase that lasted until 1915;

(b) It is associated with Thomas Ryan, influential and successful boot and shoe retailer and wholesaler of the late 19th and early 20th century in Western Canada;

(c) It features a wealth of architectural detailing from a number of prominent architectural styles of the period;

(d) It is built of mill construction with brick and stone exterior walls, common support system and materials for an early 20th century warehouse in Winnipeg;

(e) The building stands within the Exchange District National Historic Site at the south end of one of its major thoroughfares, Princess Street; and

(f) The building’s exterior has suffered little alteration.
Winnipeg was on the cusp of sometimes frenetic era of growth by the late 1890s. A combination of local, regional, national and international factors combined to take Winnipeg from a small hamlet (Plate 1) into one of Canada’s premier metropolises by World War I (Plate 2).

This comprehensive growth followed patterns established decades earlier and resulted in specific districts within city boundaries even after this frenzied period of growth. The real estate and construction boom of the early 1880s was intimately connected to the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) around Winnipeg and onto the western prairies. Land prices in the small capital city skyrocketed, the population soared and solid brick structures began replacing the small wooden shacks that dotted the mud streets. This development led to the creation of specific districts within the city – residential, commercial and industrial – and their related building-types.¹ The huge advance in land prices along Main Street north of Portage Avenue necessitated the replacement of the earlier residential development with large commercial structures. Investors chose to locate near one of the most important buildings, City Hall, from which came assistance in advancing both singular business interests and those of the community at large.

Commercial interests, both local and from Eastern Canada, were quick to locate in this area. The city rapidly assumed the role of wholesale hub for all of Western Canada, partially because of its central location and partially because of the preferential freight rates negotiated with the CPR that made it cheaper for manufacturers to ship their goods to Winnipeg, unload them and then send them west to the growing markets on the prairies. Companies like G.F. and J. Galt Company, Stobart, Eden and Company and J.H. Ashdown were all organized and carrying on business prior to the CPR boom. The bust of 1882, while it seriously affected some parts of the local economy, did not have a devastating effect on the wholesale sector. This was mainly as a result of the expanding regional base of the wholesalers as settlement increased on the prairies.

and demand for goods grew. The areas east and west of Main Street, however, were undeniably developing as the warehouse district, slowly through the 1880s and 1890s and then rapidly after 1900 (Plate 3).

In 1906, at the south of one of the warehouse district’s most important thoroughfares, Princess Street, one of the City’s largest boot and shoe ventures built a large block to house its growing business. The Ryan Block at 44 Princess Street was completed by early 1907 (Plate 4).

**STYLE**
The Ryan Block is an interesting mix of architectural elements. It has the symmetry and detailing of the Classical Revival Style, the arched openings and rough textures and belt course of the Richardsonian Romanesque Style and the flat roofline, embellished ground and top floors and regular window arrangements on the middle storeys.

This was not an unusual form for buildings in Winnipeg; local designers often took elements from different styles to create unique façades.

**CONSTRUCTION**
This building rises seven storeys from grade measuring 15.1 x 27.5 metres by 29.0 metres high.\(^2\) According to a contemporary account, it was the tallest solid brick building constructed in the city to date.\(^3\) The stone foundation measures 66.0 centimetres thick, the thicknesses of the solid brick walls of the superstructure are: 1\(^{st}\) floor- 66.0 centimetres; 2\(^{nd}\)-7\(^{th}\) floor- 43.2-33.0 centimetres.\(^4\) The front (east) façade is red-face brick, the balance of the building is completed

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\(^2\) City of Winnipeg Assessment Record, Roll No. 13060044500, PC 50. Below as AR.

\(^3\) Manitoba Free Press, May 12, 1906, p. 25.

\(^4\) AR.
in common clay brick. Cost of construction listed on the original building permit was given as $65,000.\textsuperscript{5}

The original building also included an electric freight elevator\textsuperscript{6} and a penthouse caretaker’s suite.

Structurally, the building employed the mill construction method, very common for warehouses built during this period. The system utilized a square timber beam and post support network where beams were attached to the solid brick exterior walls and covered by wood plank flooring and often a hardwood finish. This was a very popular system in warehouse districts throughout North America because of its sturdiness, the ease of adding additional storeys and its ability to suffer fire damage and not collapse.

DESIGN
The front (east) façade begins with a ground floor dominated by three large arched openings, the northern-most holding the entrance, the other two with upper display windows and large windows in rectangular openings (Plate 4) that have now been filled with glass blocks (Plate 5). The red brick of the ground floor is laid with deep grooves and the arches are embellished with large keystones (Plate 6). Above these arches runs a stone belt course visually supported the stone bases of the four attached brick pilasters that run to the heads of the sixth storey windows and are finished with ornate stone capitals. Between the pilasters, on each of the second to sixth floors are sets of large windows in rectilinear openings with stone lug sills and large unadorned spandrels (Plate 7). Another stone belt course is found at the sills of the top floor windows, rectilinear for the outside openings and arched for the recessed central openings (Plate 8). Ornamental brickwork is found between the windows on this level, corbelled brick and a modest stone cornice with stone-capped brick parapet completes the façade.

\textsuperscript{5} City of Winnipeg Building Permit, #954/1906.
\textsuperscript{6} Manitoba Free Press, May 12, 1906, p. 25.
The lower portion of the south façade is hidden by the neighbouring building; the visible upper floors are windowless with painted signage (Plate 9). Similarly, the north façade is partially hidden, the exposed upper floors include a number of unmatched window openings on many of the floors and painted signage (Plate 10).

The rear (west) façade features arched window and door openings on the ground floor and arched window openings with radiating brick heads on the upper floors except for small arched window openings on the top floor (Plate 11). Window and door unit replacement has taken place in some of the openings over time.

INTERIOR
Contemporary accounts describe the original ground floor as offices and show rooms for the shoe company.\(^7\) It was also reported that the interior layout was designed for easy conversion into offices, should it have been deemed more profitable.\(^8\)

INTEGRITY
The building stands on its original site, appears to be in good structural condition and its original design and many of its exterior elements are unchanged.

STREETSCAPE
This building is located at the southern end of Princess Street, one of downtown Winnipeg’s important thoroughfares (Plates 18 and 19). It is an important contributor to the historic streetscape within the Exchange District National Historic Site.

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\(^7\) Manitoba Free Press, May 12, 1906, p. 25.
\(^8\) Manitoba Free Press, December 6, 1906, p. 24
**ARCHITECT/CONTRACTORS**

The Ryan Block was designed by the short-lived Winnipeg architectural partnership of William W. Blair (Plate 20) and George W. Northwood (see Appendix II for more biographical information). The pair was much more influential in their own private practices but designed this block and 3 others during the 1906 construction season. They have both been given 20 points by the Historical Buildings and Resources Committee.

Stone and brick contractor⁹ for the building was Sveinn Brynjolfsson (1856-?), one of the many successful Icelandic contractors operating in the City. Brynjolfsson immigrated to Canada in 1893 with his wife and four sons,¹⁰ several of whom joined the contracting firm when it incorporated. The company appears to have ceased operations after 1919.¹¹

Other major works completed by the company include: First Unitarian Church, Sherbrook Street at Sargent Avenue (1905 – demolished); Point Douglas Presbyterian Church, 95 Macdonald Avenue (1905); T. Ryan Block, 44 Princess Street (1906); Crane & Ordway Building, 93 Lombard Avenue (1911 addition – List of Historical Resources); Warwick Apartments, 366 Qu’Appelle Avenue (1908 – List of Historical Resources); Burrows, Stewart and Milne Warehouse, 130 James Avenue (1910 – List of Historical Resources); YMCA, 475 Selkirk Avenue (1911 – demolished); Principal Sparling School, 1150 Sherburn Street (1912); Windsor Apartments, 122 Langside Street (1912); Crane & Ordway Warehouse, Pacific Avenue (1913 – demolished); Muskoka Apartments, 110 Young Street (1914); Gordon Apartments, 505 Victor Street (1914); Karlston Apartments, 535 Victor Street (1914); and Manitoba Telephones Garage, Charlotte Street (1919).¹²

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¹⁰ *Canada Census*, 1901, on line version.

¹¹ *City of Winnipeg Building Permit Ledger Books* (below as Ledgers), 1899-1920.

¹² Ibid.; and *Manitoba Free Press*, October 27, 1910, p. 10 and August 1, 1914, p. 22. Brynjolfsson was also the Danish Consul for Winnipeg from 1910 to 1914.
James C. Smith, a small-scale local contractor is reported to have been in charge of the rest of the construction. Smith is listed on only a few City of Winnipeg Building Permits from 1905 to 1912.

PERSON/INSTITUTION

The four Ryan brothers – Thomas (1849-1937), James (1852-1937), Michael (1856-1934) and George (1859-1948) – were one of Winnipeg’s early success stories, arriving in the 1870s and 1880s and growing their boot and shoe business into a regional empire stretching from Lake Superior to the West Coast.

Thomas Ryan (Plate 21) was born in 1849 in Perth, Ontario, attended common school before entering the shoemaking profession as an apprentice for a local merchant, Robert Coskery, at age 15. At age 21, he moved to Belleville to become a journeyman shoemaker under John McKison. After three months he returned to Perth and began working for D. Glossap. Ryan’s next move would prove to be life changing. With $70 worth of stock, he made the long trek to Winnipeg in the summer of 1874, going West like so many other young unattached Ontario males seeking their fortunes.

Almost immediately upon his arrival, Ryan joined with another man to form one of Winnipeg’s first shoe retailers, the McFarlane and Ryan Company. Only two short years later, Ryan purchased the business from McFarlane for $450 and the familiar firm of Thomas Ryan Boots & Shoes was created.

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14 Ledgers, 1899-1913.
16 M. Peterson and D.M. Lyon, “492 Main Street (131-133 Albert Street) – Former Macdonald Shoe Store (Formerly Banfield Block; originally the Ryan Block),” report for the City of Winnipeg Historical Buildings Committee, January 1996, pp. 12-13. Below as “492 Main Street.”
17 Winnipeg Sun, December 24, 1883.
18 Ibid.
By 1883, Ryan’s business was so successful that he built a new store on Main Street (Plate 22). This first Ryan Shoe Store was Winnipeg’s first all stone structure and the first in the city with an electric passenger elevator.\textsuperscript{19} Carved in stone and set at the top of the facade was the inscription, “The Earth is the Lord’s and the Fullness Thereof”, reflecting Ryan's strong religious faith.

In ca.1889, Ryan chose to concentrate on growing wholesale trade and sold the retail end of the company to his brother George,\textsuperscript{20} who had arrived in the city in 1880.\textsuperscript{21} George operated the store at 492 Main Street and then after 1900, next door in the Clements Block, 494 Main Street.\textsuperscript{22}

By 1895, the wholesale business had progressed to the point where a warehouse was deemed necessary and Thomas Ryan built the brick block at 104 King Street, southwest corner Bannatyne Avenue (Plate 23). Business continued to flourish and in 1908, the enterprise was incorporated as Thomas Ryan and Co. Ltd., with Thomas as president, brother George\textsuperscript{23} as vice-president and, by the mid-1920s, Thomas’s son Wesley W. Ryan as secretary.\textsuperscript{24}

In 1907, 33 years after his arrival, Ryan expanded into his third Winnipeg location, 44 Princess Street. Possessing the same confident attitude as many other Winnipeg businessmen and leaders, Ryan purchased the lot adjacent to the new structure to enable his interests “to double their plant when necessary without moving.”\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{19} Winnipeg Tribune, December 24, 1937.
\textsuperscript{20} “Ryan, Thomas,” Memorable Manitobans, Manitoba Historical Society website, 2016.
\textsuperscript{21} “Ryan, George,” Memorable Manitobans, Manitoba Historical Society website, 2016.
\textsuperscript{22} “492 Main Street,” p. 13.
\textsuperscript{23} M. Peterson, “104 King Street – King Building (Formerly Ryan Block),” report for the City of Winnipeg Historical Buildings Committee, 1988, p. 6. In 1902, George had sold his interests in the retail business to rejoin Thomas in the wholesale business.
\textsuperscript{24} Henderson’s Winnipeg Directory, 1919-1921, 1926-1929.
\textsuperscript{25} Winnipeg Telegram, September 18, 1906, p. 59. Ryan did build the small annex building, 46-50 Princess Street in 1906, although it appears to have been used as a rental space for other businesses shortly after construction.
As the new warehouse was in construction Ryan Boots & Shoes was opening a Calgary branch and began the organization of another in Edmonton. Ryan employed eight travelling salesmen throughout the West at this time, under the motto, “The pick of the Boston and Quebec markets is demanded and furnished.” When Thomas Ryan retired in 1928, it signalled the end of over 50 years of mercantile activity in the city.

Thomas Ryan also led an active political life. He became an alderman in 1884, a post he held until December 1888 when he was elected for a one-year term as Mayor. It was during this term that the popular Ryan Sunday By-laws were passed, limiting Sunday trading activities to a minimum.

In 1928, Thomas Ryan retired as did the boot and shoe business. He died in 1937 after a lengthy illness.

By the early 1950s, ownership of 44 Princess Street was in the hands of Globe Enterprises Ltd., which maintained this ownership into the 1980s. Tenancy in the block included Ryan & Company and an assortment of other businesses and professionals, including: Goodrich Rubber Co. (1939); Bishop Printing Co. (1949-1989); Supersilk Hosiery Mills, McGregor Hosiery Mills Ltd. (1959); Dalzell & Potts Ltd., uniform manufacturers (1969); and Kelly Clark Art Studio (1979).

**EVENT**

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

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26 Ibid.
27 *Winnipeg Tribune*, December 24, 1937.
28 Ibid.
29 *City of Winnipeg Assessment Roll*, Roll No. 600445-12-2 (Old Roll No. 9704-Ward 2), 1900-1990.
The Ryan Block was completed in 1907 at a time when Winnipeg’s economy and population were beginning to expand rapidly. The result was a demand for new buildings, commercial and residential and the growth of the downtown and surrounding districts. The warehouse district continued to spread outward, lining the streets on both sides of Main Street.

This block is also representative of the type of financial success that became the norm in Winnipeg pre-1920. Business flourish as Winnipeg became the Western Canadian headquarters for many regional, national and international companies seeking to take advantage of the growing markets to the west and the railway freight rates that made warehousing goods in Winnipeg financially attractive. Thomas Ryan and his brothers took advantage of these factors to establish their footwear venture.

The Ryan Block is a large, architecturally detailed structure that is conspicuous in its neighbourhood.
APPENDIX I

CITY OF WINNIPEG - Preliminary Report

Building Address: 44 Princess Street
Building Name: Ryan Block

Original Use: shoe store
Current Use: retail and offices

Roll No. (Old): 13060044500 (9704)
R.S.N.: 155542

Municipality: 12
Ward: 2
Property or Occupancy Code: 50

Legal Description: 5/6 St. John, Plan 33144, Lot 47 (Original: 5/6 St. John, Plan 13, Lot 30 except west 8’)

Location: west side between McDermot & Notre Dame avenues

Date of Construction: 1906
Storeys: 7
Construction Type: Brick – mill construction

HERITAGE STATUS: GRADE III (SEPTEMBER 22, 1998)

Building Permits (Plans available: [CS] City Storage):
- 954/1906 $65,000 (original); 2432/1954 $500 (office); 513/1962 $500 (alteration); 1911/1969 (alteration); 18401/1970 $600 (alteration); 369/1970 $700 (repairs – 2nd); 372/1976 $2,500 (alteration), 7901/1985 $500 (interior alteration); 5374/1985 $1,000 (alteration to 5th); 141090/2000 $70,000 (interior alterations to 4th floor); 146699/2011 $50,000 (alter part of 6th floor from office to residential); 189437/2018 $75,000 (interior and exterior alterations)

Information:
- 49½ x 90 x 95’+ = 439,713 cu. ft.
- Front – Red-face brick, stone sills, heavy pilasters, balance clay brick. Wall Thickness: 1st – 26” brick; 2nd-7th – 17-13” brick; penthouse – north & west walls, 9” brick
- Stone Foundation – 26”
- 1941 – “fairly good condition” – small cracks west & south walls
- 1947 – Binfed stoker installed
- 1951 – Stairways decorated
- Permit 2432/1954 – some entrance work and partitioning added
- 1961 – Central steam – 2 years ago. Sprinkler is wet system.
- “Fairly good condition”
- 1962 – some new partitioning on 8th floor
- 1969 – Partitions on 3rd & 5th floors – new automatic elevator
- Permit 5545/1973 – Front Entrance– acoustic ceiling
- 1986 Inspection – Good solid building – heavy wood frame floor system. Sprinklered throughout
- 1990 – Steam Plant shut – back to gas fired boiler. Building mostly occupied
- 1996 – Clean-up mechanical & electrical – building 40% occupied
APPENDIX II

William Wallace Blair & Major George W. Northwood

William W. Blair was born in Ireland in 1852 and studied architecture at the Academical Institute in Belfast. After graduation and apprenticing, he began his own private practice in Middlesbrough-on-Tees, England from 1873 to 1874 before immigrating to Canada, settling in Hamilton and then Toronto. In 1884, he returned to his mother country as resident engineer for the construction of the Londonderry and Ballymena waterworks systems. After five years he again returned to North America, working until 1905 in Chicago. That year he chose to relocate to Winnipeg, and formed a short partnership in 1906 with George W. Northwood under the name Blair and Northwood, which lasted until the spring of 1907. Blair retired to Victoria, British Columbia in 1914 and died at Duncan, B.C. in 1916.

Major George W. Northwood was born in 1876 and came to Winnipeg in 1905 as a graduate of McGill University. At the time, he was affiliated with Werner E. Noffke of Ottawa, under the name Northwood and Noffke. For several years, this firm was the corporate architect for the Winnipeg-based Northern (later Northern Crown) Bank and, as such, was responsible for the design of the company’s banks prior to 1912.

After his short partnership with W.W. Blair, Northwood worked alone for more than a decade, designing a number of important buildings.

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3 Winnipeg Saturday Post, June 8, 1912, p. 38.
5 “Blair”.
In 1919, Northwood formed a four-year partnership with local architect Raymond Carey. The firm’s list of projects includes: alterations to Dominion Bank, Portage Avenue (southeast corner of Sherbrook Street), 1919; alterations to Winnipeg Paint and Glass Co. warehouse, Notre Dame Avenue East, 1919; J.K.L. Ross garage, Lombard Avenue (southeast corner of Rorie Street), 1919; B.M. Armstrong House, Kingsway (southeast corner of Guelph Street), 1920; alterations to the Hudson's Bay Co. offices, 208 Main Street, 1920; alterations to bank, 363 Main Street, 1922; and alterations to the Dominion Bank, Redwood Avenue (southwest corner of Main Street), 1922. Their most important work was the design of the Union Tower Annex, 500 Main Street, in 1921 (Grade II).

Northwood worked alone after 1922 until ca.1928 when he joined with fellow World War I veteran, Brigadier Major Cyril W. U. Chivers (1879-1969). This pair designed many notable public buildings throughout Winnipeg. Northwood's career also included a seat on the Board of the Manitoba Association of Architects, membership in the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, and the presidency of the Manitoba Club. He died in 1959.

The list of local structures designed by these men includes many outstanding structures:

**Blair & Northwood:**
- Thomas Ryan Warehouse, 44 Princess St. (1906)
- Henderson Directory Building, 279 Garry St. (1906) – demolished
- Beckett Gore and Company Warehouse, Henry Street (1906) – demolished

**W.W. Blair:**
- Roslyn Apartments, 40 Osborne St. (1908) – Grade II
- Warwick Apartments, 366 Qu'Appelle Ave. (1908) – Grade II
- Princeton (Kenmore) Apartments, 314 Broadway (1909) – Grade II

7 Compiled from BP, 1918-1926.
10 Compiled from City of Winnipeg Building Permits, 1905-1917; Winnipeg Saturday Post, June 8, 1912, p. 38; and Historical Buildings Committee files.
W.W. Blair designs, continued:
M. Fortune House, 393 Wellington Cres. (1910) – Grade III
Assiniboine Park bandstand and pavilion (1911) – destroyed by fire
Great West Saddlery Building, 113 Market Ave. (1910-1911) – Grade II

G.W. Northwood:
Crescent Court, 207 Hugo Street (1908)
Lancaster Apartments, 403 Stradbrook Avenue (1909)
Kirkland Block, 377 Carlton Street (1909)
Bannatyne Apartments, 543 Bannatyne Avenue (1910)
Finnie Murray Block (Western Glove Works), 321 McDermot Avenue (1912) – Grade III
R.J. Whitle House, Yale Avenue (1912)
A. Bernard House, Assiniboine Avenue (1912)
Bank of Ottawa, 3563 Main Street (1912) – demolished
Robinson and Black Building, Portage Avenue (1912)
Pantages Theatre, 180 Market Avenue (1913- with B.M. Priteca) – Grade II
Ralph Connor House, 54 West Gate (1913) – Grade II
Canadian Wheat Board Building, 423 Main St. (1929- Northwood and Chivers) – List of Historical Resources
Canadian General Electric Building, 265 Notre Dame Ave. (1930- Northwood and Chivers) – Grade III
Women’s Tribute Memorial Lodge, 200 Woodlawn St. (1931- Northwood and Chivers) – Grade II
Plate 1 – Main Street looking northwest from what would become William Avenue, 1875. (City of Winnipeg Archives, A569 File 1-9.)
Plate 2 – Main Street looking north from Portage Avenue, 1919. (City of Winnipeg.)
Plate 3 – Looking south along Arthur Street from Bannatyne Avenue into the heart of Winnipeg’s warehouse district west of Main Street, ca.1905. (Courtesy of the Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg- Views c1905-2.)
Plate 4 – Line drawing for the new Ryan Block, Princess Street, 1906. (Reproduced from Manitoba Free Press, May 12, 1906, p. 25.)
Plate 5 – Ryan Block, 44 Princess Street, front (east) façade, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)
Plate 6 – Ryan Block, 44 Princess Street, front (east) façade, detail of main floor, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)
Plate 7 – Ryan Block, 44 Princess Street, front (east) façade, detail of upper floors, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)
Plate 8 – Ryan Block, 44 Princess Street, front (east) façade, detail of upper floors, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)
Plate 9 – Ryan Block, 44 Princess Street, south façade, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)
Plate 10 – Ryan Block, 44 Princess Street, front (east) and north façades, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)
Plate 11 – Ryan Block, 44 Princess Street, rear (west) façade, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)
Plate 18 –Princess Street looking north from Notre Dame Avenue, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)

Plate 19 –Princess Street looking south from McDermot Avenue, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)
Plate 20 – William Wallace Blair, ca.1909. (Reproduced from Manitobans As We See ‘Em, 1908 and 1909 [Winnipeg, MB: Newspaper Cartoonists’ Association of Manitoba, ca.1909, Manitoba Historical Society online version.)
Plate 21 – Thomas Ryan, ca.1902. (Reproduced from Representative Men of Manitoba, 1902 [Winnipeg, MB: The Tribune Publishing Company, 1902], Manitoba Historical Society online version.)
Plate 22 – Ryan Boot and Shoe Building, 492 Main Street, no date. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, N8648.)
Plate 23 – Ryan Block, 104 King Street, ca.1903.  (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, N1578.)