280 WILLIAM AVENUE

MAW BLOCK

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings & Resources Committee
Researcher: M. Peterson
April 2015
What has become known in modern Winnipeg as Old Market Square has a long history of development, dating back to 1876, when the City unveiled its first City Hall Building on Main Street (Plate 1).\(^1\) This was followed shortly thereafter by the construction of a brick fire hall and hay market in 1878. Winnipeg’s second City Hall, the “Gingerbread” building, was completed in 1886 (Plate 2) and the Market Building to the west was rebuilt in 1889 (Plates 3 and 4).\(^2\)

On the blocks surrounding the City’s complex were found a variety of buildings including warehouses, hotels and office buildings. Central Fire Hall, built in 1898 where Old Market Square is now located and the Leland Hotel at William Avenue and Albert Street (built 1884) were two of the major structures in the area (both demolished).

In 1897, Joseph Maw, a successful dealer in carriages, bicycles, harnesses, pumps and other machinery purchased a prime piece of real estate in the area, the southwest corner of William Avenue and King Street, rumoured to have cost the businessman the substantial sum of $15,000.\(^3\) He demolished the existing building and constructed a fine, three-storey brick and stone block on the site which included an electric elevator, an “innovation” as one report called it (Plates 5 and 6).\(^4\)

This building operated as a retail space and office complex into the 1920s, housing Thomas Griffiths and Company, liquor and spirits (Plate 7) in the ground floor retail space during the 1910s and a number of office tenants including the Conservative Association, the Winnipeg Checkers Club and the Army and Navy Veterans’ Association.


\(^2\) Information courtesy of HistoryWorks.

\(^3\) Manitoba Free Press, February 27, 1897, p. 8.

\(^4\) Manitoba Free Press, July 24, 1897, p. 2 and August 3, 1897, p. 6. Unfortunately, this “innovation” proved deadly, a workman adjusting belts was killed when he was crushed by the cage.
In May of 1924, the building was destroyed by fire,\(^5\) but the estate of Joseph Maw decided to rebuild on the property, choosing to develop a two-storey block.

**STYLE**
The Maw Block is a modest, classically-detailed block with minimal ornamentation. Decorative and stylistic considerations were secondary to cost of the project and durability and efficiency of the layout and materials.

**CONSTRUCTION**
The block measures 15.3 metres along William Avenue and 29.3 metres along King Street and rises 11.6 metres above grade (see Appendix I for construction information). Cost of construction was $15,000\(^6\) and the solid brick walls (45.7 centimetres on the ground floor and 33.0 centimetres on the upper floor) rest on a 53.3-centimetre rubblestone foundation.\(^7\) The building is supported by a wood beam and post structural system, very common for its age.

**DESIGN**
As originally designed, the front (north) façade featured three entrances, a revision lowered that number to two (Plate 8) but it appears that it was built with only one, centrally-placed entrance, its present configuration (Plate 9). This entrance is set in an unadorned smooth stone frame (Plate 10). On either side of this opening are sets of paired, attached columns with stone bases and capitals. At the corners, the brick is laid to mimic wide columns with rectangular window openings and brick sills taking up much of the remainder of the ground floor. A wide plain band of brick leads to the metal cornice that acts as a continuous sill for the second storey windows. This cornice wraps around the northeast corner and runs the entire length of the east façade.

---

\(^5\) Manitoba Free Press, May 1, 1924, p. 11.

\(^6\) City of Winnipeg Building Permit, #1728/1924.

\(^7\) City of Winnipeg Assessment Record, Roll No. 609620-12-2 (PC80).
(Plate 11). The second floor of the north elevation features recessed window pairs accented by stylized stone continuous lintels. Above this element is an overhanging cornice and the façade is finished with a stepped brick parapet.

The east façade is a continuation of the layout and design of the front façade and includes a door at the south end (Plate 12). This elevation, similar to the front, was not built as drawn or according to the revised plans of 1924 (Plate 13).

The west elevation is hidden by the neighbouring building and the rear (south) façade features a centrally located door and a number of windows in arched openings with stone lug sills on both floors (Plate 14).

**INTERIOR**
The final, revised interior layout (the second floor went through two revisions) featured a ground floor laid out for the tenant – a government employment services department – with separate men’s and women’s waiting areas and several private offices (Plate 15). The second floor also featured private offices and public space and much of the remainder was taken by a billiard room (Plate 16).

Today, the structure has been completely renovated as office space with storage in the basement (Plates 17-19).

**INTEGRITY**
The building stands on its original site, appears to be in good structural condition for its age and, beyond painting, it does not appear to have suffered significant exterior alterations, although sometime prior to the late 1970s, glass block was used to partially fill ground floor windows (Plate 20).
STREETSCAPE

This building occupies an important and busy intersection (Plate 21) in the heart of Winnipeg’s warehouse district, recognized nationally as the Exchange District National Historic Site (EDNHS). Because all buildings within the EDNHS are important parts of their historic streetscape, the building receives 60 points.

ARCHITECT/CONTRACTORS

J.H.G. Russell, a well-known local architect, was responsible for the design of the Maw Block (Plate 22). He set up a private practice in 1895 and for nearly half a century designed some of Winnipeg’s finest buildings (see Appendix I for biographical information). He has been given 20 points by the Historical Buildings and Resources Committee.

Contractor for the building was the well-known local firm Malcom Brothers, founded in 1900 as a general contracting firm by brothers David (1871-1935), John and William. The three had begun a brickyard in their hometown of Owen Sound, Ontario along with two other brothers in the 1880s but the three moved to Winnipeg in 1892. Working as stonemasons and bricklayers, they ultimately formed the contracting firm that would become the Malcom Construction Company. They were responsible for many fine Winnipeg structures as well as completing contracts in rural Manitoba, northwestern Ontario and Western Canada. In 1908, William returned to Owen Sound, and by 1918, when Malcom Construction Company Limited was incorporated, David had assumed control. After his death in 1935, the firm was operated by his son, Wilbert Guy (Bert) Malcom (1895-1980) until his retirement in 1974. The company was still family owned and operated (by W.G. Malcom’s son David) and still active in the construction scene into the 1990s.

---

A list of their larger local contracts includes:

- Augustine Presbyterian Church, 444 River Avenue, 1903
- Bole Drug Company Building, 70 Princess Street, 1903
- Winnipeg Lodging and Coffee House, 175-181 Logan Avenue, 1905 (demolished)
- Augustine Presbyterian School, Royal Street (now Pulford Street), 1909
- Fort Rouge Methodist Church, 525 Wardlaw Avenue, 1910
- R.J. Whital and Company Building, 70 Arthur Street, large addition, 1911
- Edward Brown House, Wellington Crescent, 1912 (demolished)
- Wesley College (University of Winnipeg), 515 Portage Avenue, large addition, 1912
- R.R. Wilson House, Wellington Crescent, 1924

PERSON/INSTITUTION

Horse-drawn carriage retailer and Western Canadian automobile pioneer Joseph Maw (1854-1916 – Plate 23) and his representatives owned this property until 1930. Maw was born in Peel County, Canada West (Ontario) in 1854. He came to Winnipeg in 1882 working as an agent for the Massey Manufacturing Company and in 1892 entered into partnership with J.M. Ross, conducting a carriage business (Plate 24). In 1896, Mr. Maw took over the entire business, operating under the name of Joseph Maw and Company and later entering into the automobile trade from his garage just south of this building on King Street (Plate 25). Mr. Maw was director of the Winnipeg Industrial Exposition Board and president of the Wholesale Carriage & Implement dealers. Ill health forced his retirement in 1913, and he died in 1916 in California.

The new Maw Block was immediately occupied after it was completed in late 1924 by the Labour Employment Services of Canada and the building was sold to the Provincial Government in 1931. Various government divisions were housed in the building, including the Unemployment Insurance Commission, Department of Education (Visual Education Branch) and

---

9 City of Winnipeg Building Permit Ledger Books, 1899-1926.
10 City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, Roll No. 609620-12-2 (below as ARo), 1907-1930.
Administrator of Estates of The Mentally Incompetent. In the late 1960s, the building was sold to the City of Winnipeg, which has maintained offices of various departments since then.\textsuperscript{12}

\textbf{EVENT}

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

\textbf{CONTEXT}

The Maw Block is illustrative of the type of small-scale development that occurred shortly after World War I in Winnipeg. A brief period of economic upswing occurred after the War, City of Winnipeg Building Permits jumped significantly as many new buildings were planned and completed. This upswing did not last however, and by 1923, new construction work dropped significantly. But in the downtown, especially in prime locations, there was still a demand for modern space and this 1924 building is an example of this type of development.

\textbf{LANDMARK}

The building is known in the area due to its conspicuous corner location.

\textsuperscript{12} ARo, 1930-1999; and Henderson’s Directory, 1930-1999.
APPENDIX I

CITY OF WINNIPEG - Preliminary Report
Assessment Record

Building Address: 280 William Avenue  
Building Name: Maw Block

Original Use: mixed use (commercial/offices)  
Current Use: City offices

Roll No. (Old): 609620 (10120)

Municipality: 12  
Ward: 2  
Property or Occupancy Code: 80

Legal Description: 6/7 St. John, Plan 33009, Lot 5 (Original: 7W St. John, Plan 320, Lot 2: East 19’ of Lot 3)

Location: southwest corner William Avenue & King Street

Date of Construction: 1924  
Storeys: 2 + B

Construction Type: Brick – ordinary

HERITAGE STATUS: ON NOMINATED LIST

Building Permits (Plans available: [CS] City Storage):
- 1728/1924 [CS] $15,000 (original); 570/1931 $10,000 (alteration); 386/1942 $8,000 (alteration); 5946/1948 $1,000 (light well); 504/1954 $20,000 (alteration); 4413/1970 $1,000 (alteration); 7670/1980 [CS] $15,000 (interior alteration); 4945/1989 [CS] $5,000 (alteration); 6559/1995 [CS] $3,000 (alteration); 199766/2001 $550,000 (exterior & interior alterations)

Information:
- 50 x 96 x 38 = 182,400 cu. ft.
- Wall Thickness – 18” brick – 1st, 13” – 2nd floor
- Basement – 21” stone
- Permit 5041/1954 – 1st floor – tiled ceiling, new partitions, some fluorescent lighting, 7 alum windows, balance – bricked in
- 1956 – Fluorescent lighting, some partitioning removed
- 1958 Assessment – Building in “good condition”
- 1970 – Ground floor – kitchen added to west side
- Permit 9038/1975 – Interior modernized, new partitions, carpet, suspended ceiling, windows, electric fixtures, A/C and roof heating unit
- Permit 7670/1980 – Relocate partitions, some door & windows

ARCHITECT: J.H.G. RUSSELL

CONTRACTOR: MALCOM CONSTRUCTION CO.
APPENDIX II

John Hamilton Gordon Russell

J.H.G. Russell was born in Toronto, Canada West (Ontario) in 1862, the son of a dry goods dealer. After attending school in that city, he went to work for H.B. Gordon, a prominent area architect. Russell was with Gordon from 1878 until his departure for Winnipeg in 1882.\(^1\) From 1886 to 1893, Russell travelled throughout the United States, learning civil engineering, surveying and architecture in centres such as Chicago, Illinois, Spokane and Tacoma, Washington, and Sioux City, Iowa.\(^2\)

In 1895, two years after returning to Winnipeg, he set up his private practice, coinciding with the city's period of unbridled growth. His designs were (and are) scattered throughout the city, province and Western Canada, covering a variety of building types, sizes, prices and uses. His business continued to be steady during World War I and after, when many architects struggled to find commissions.

Russell was president of the Manitoba Association of Architects (1925) and served for three terms as the president of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (1912-15). His chairmanship of the Presbyterian Church Board of Managers\(^3\) and his devotion to Presbyterianism partially explain the large number of churches he designed for the denomination in Winnipeg and Western Canada. Russell died in 1946.

A complete list of his designs would be lengthy indeed. Many of his earlier works have been demolished and therefore usually are no longer included in inventories of his portfolio.

---

Among his projects were:

Outside Manitoba-
   Knox Presbyterian - Prince Albert, Sask.
   Knox Presbyterian - Kenora, Ont.
   St. Andrews Church - Moose Jaw, Sask.

Manitoba-
   Starbuck Presbyterian (United) - 1904
   Treherne Presbyterian (United) - 1907-08 (originally Chambers Presbyterian)
   Pilot Mound Public School
   Killarney Public School
   Foxwarren Public School

Winnipeg-
   Churches - Augustine Presbyterian (United), 444 River Avenue, 1903-4 (Grade II)
               Crescent-Fort Rouge Methodist (United), 525 Wardlaw Avenue, 1906-11
               Westminster Presbyterian (United), 745 Westminster Avenue, 1910-12
               (Grade II)
               Robertson Memorial Presbyterian (United), 648 Burrows Avenue, 1911
               Robertson Memorial Presbyterian Institute, Burrows Avenue, 1911
               Knox Presbyterian (United), 400 Edmonton Street, 1914-17
               Home Street Presbyterian (United), 318 Home Street, 1920
               St. John's Presbyterian (United), 250 Cathedral Avenue, 1923 (Grade III)
               Riverview Presbyterian (United), 360 Oakwood Avenue, 1925

   Residences - J.H.G. Russell, 237 Wellington Crescent, 1902 (demolished)
               J.D. McArthur, 159 Mayfair Avenue, 1903
               R.R. Wilson, 545 Broadway, 1904 (Grade III)
               H. Archibald, 176 Roslyn Road, 1909
               Ormsby, 119 Campbell Street, 1910
               J.H. Ashdown, 529 Wellington Crescent, 1913 (Grade II)
               R.R. Wilson, 680 Wellington Crescent, 1925

   Commercial- Addition to J.H. Ashdown Warehouse, 157-179 Bannatyne Avenue, 1899-
               1911 (Grade II)
               Lake of the Woods Building, 212 McDermot Avenue, 1901 (Grade II)
               Hammond Building, 63 Albert Street, 1902 (Grade III)
               Porter and Company Building, 368 Main Street, 1902-03 (demolished)
               McKerchar Block, 600-02 Main Street, 1902-03
               Additions to McClary Building, 185 Bannatyne Avenue, 1903 & 1904
               (Grade III)
               Thomson Block, 499 Main Street, 1903 (demolished)
Winnipeg-
Commercial- (continued)

Adelman Building, 92-100 Princess Street, 1903 (Grade II)
Bole Warehouse, 70 Princess Street, 1903
Additions to the Bright and Johnston Building, 141 Bannatyne Avenue,
1903 & 1907 (Grade III)
Silvester-Willson Building, 222 McDermot Avenue, 1904
Green and Litster Block, 235-7 Fort Street, 1904 (demolished)
Franklin Press, 168 Bannatyne Avenue, 1904 (Grade III)
Addition to Daylite Building, 296 McDermot Avenue, 1904 (Grade II)
J.H. Ashdown Store, 211 Bannatyne Avenue, 1904 (Grade III)
Allman Block, 592-4 Main Street, 1904
Porter Building, 165 McDermot Avenue, 1906 (Grade III)
Child's (McArthur) Building, Portage Avenue, 1909 (demolished)
Glengarry Block, 290 McDermot Avenue, 1910 (Grade III)
Dingwall Building, 62 Albert Street, 1911 (Grade III)
Great West Permanent Loan Company Building, 356 Main Street, 1912
(demolished)
Maw Block, 280 William Avenue, 1924
Eastman Kodak Building, 287 Portage Avenue, 1930 (demolished)

Other-

Gladstone School, Pembina Street, 1898 (demolished)
Casa Loma Block, 644 Portage Avenue, 1909 (Grade II)
Chatsworth Apartments, 535 McMillan Avenue, 1911
YMCA, Selkirk Avenue, 1911 (demolished)
YMCA, 301 Vaughan Street, 1911-13, with Jackson and Rosencrans of New
York (Grade II)
Guelph Apartments, 778 McMillan Avenue, 1912
Addition to the Marlborough (Olympia) Hotel, 321 Smith Street, 1921-23 (Grade
II)
Odd Fellows Home, 4025 Roblin Boulevard, 1922
Canadian National Institute for the Blind, Portage Avenue, 1928
Hugh John Macdonald School, William Avenue, 1929
Aurora Court Apartments, 543 Ellice Avenue, n.d.
Central Park Block, 389 Cumberland Avenue, n.d.
Johnson Apartment Block, 524 Sargent Avenue, n.d.
Plate 1 – Winnipeg’s first City Hall, Main Street, ca.1878. The hay market building is visible to the rear. (Archives of Manitoba-Winnipeg-Buildings-Municipal-City Hall (1875)-1 N118.)
Plate 2 – Winnipeg’s second City Hall, Main Street, ca.1902. (Archives of Manitoba-Winnipeg-Buildings-Municipal-City Hall (1886)-7, N9088.)
Plate 3 – Market Square, with the Market Building (foreground) and City Hall behind, no date. The original Maw Block is at the arrow. (Courtesy of HistoryWorks.)
Plate 4 – This 1915 picture shows the Market Building with the Maw Block in the background (arrow). (M. Peterson Collection.)
Plate 5 – Looking west along William Avenue from King Street, 1900. The three-storey Maw Block is in the foreground. (Courtesy of the Archives of Manitoba.)
Plate 6 – J. Maw and Co. Block, William Avenue, ca.1903. (Reproduced from William A. Martel and Sons, Illustrated Souvenir of Winnipeg [Winnipeg, MB: Authors, ca.1903], p. 100.)
Plate 7 – 280 William Avenue, ca.1913, with Thomas Griffiths & Company, liquors on the ground floor and the Conservative Club on the second floor. (City of Winnipeg.)
Plate 8 – The original (top) and revised (bottom) “Front Elevation” plans for the Maw Block, 280 William Avenue, 1924. (Courtesy of the City of Winnipeg, Plan No. 1728/1924.)
Plate 9 – Maw Block, 280 William Avenue, front (north) façade, 2014. (M. Peterson, 2014.)

Plate 10 – Maw Block, 280 William Avenue, main (north) entrance, 2014. (M. Peterson, 2014.)
Plate 11 – Maw Block, 280 William Avenue, front (north) and east façades, 2014. (M. Peterson, 2014.)

Plate 12 – Maw Block, 280 William Avenue, rear (south) and east façades, 2014. (M. Peterson, 2014.)
Plate 13 – The original (top) and revised (bottom) “Side Elevation” plans for the Maw Block, 280 William Avenue, 1924. Note the arched openings at the south end of the elevation. (Courtesy of the City of Winnipeg, Plan No. 1728/1924.)
Plate 14 – Maw Block, 280 William Avenue, rear (south) façade, 2014. (M. Peterson, 2014.)
Plate 15 – Maw Block, 280 William Avenue, “Ground Floor Plan,” 1924. (Courtesy of the City of Winnipeg, Plan No. 1728/1924.)
Plate 16 – Maw Block, 280 William Avenue, “Revised Second Floor,” 1924. (Courtesy of the City of Winnipeg, Plan No. 1728/1924.)
Plate 17 – Maw Block, 280 William Avenue, main floor office, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)

Plate 18 – Maw Block, 280 William Avenue, second floor offices, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)
Plate 19 – Maw Block, 280 William Avenue, rear staircase, second floor, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)
Plate 20 – Maw Block, 280 William Avenue, ca.1978. (City of Winnipeg.)
Plate 21 – William Avenue, south side west of King Street, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)

Plate 24 – Advertisement for Ross and Maw, “carriages, harnesses, pumps, windmills, etc.”
(Reproduced from Manitoba Free Press, July 23, 1895, p. 2.)
Plate 25 – Joseph Maw and Company Garage, 114 King Street, 1909.  (Courtesy of the Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg Telegram, December 18, 1909, p. 17.)