



758 McMILLAN AVENUE

ANVERS APARTMENTS

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings Committee

December 1993

758 McMILLAN AVENUE – ANVERS APARTMENTS

One of the unique features of Winnipeg's urban landscape is the apartment block. It was during the city's most dramatic growth period between 1900 and World War I that this residential building type came to prominence. Nowhere in Canada, and only in a handful of centres across the continent, were apartment block so numerous and popular.¹

A number of reasons were put forth by contemporary journals and newspaper articles: the weather, the sound investment, and the availability of a pool of renters. No solitary factor can be singled out as primary; rather, it was a number of developments working in tandem that provided the necessary environment.

Important was the fact that Winnipeg's economy produced a number of small- to medium-sized businesses whose owners had excess capital to invest. Apartment blocks were seen, and described throughout the media as a safe and profitable opportunity.

Another factor was the city's large number of travelling salesmen and new arrivals. Apartment living made economic sense to both groups, reducing the work associated with detached homes for the salesmen and allowing new citizens a moderate degree of comfort without causing a financial strain.

The type of apartments being built in the city was also a factor. In other North American centres, tenement houses, poorly designed and unsafe blocks, were located in impoverished areas, giving apartment blocks in general a bad reputation. In Winnipeg, however, City Council moved quickly to ensure this type of apartment was not built. A by-law was enacted in November 1909 which made the construction of frame blocks and any block over three storeys in height too expensive to build. While the by-law was passed as a means of protecting tenants from unsafe living conditions, it also

¹ See M. Peterson, "The Rise of Apartments and Apartment Dwellers in Winnipeg (1900-14) and a Comparative Study with Toronto," in *Prairie Forum*, Volume 18, No. 2 (Fall 1993), pp. 155-164.

discouraged tenement slums and promoted the construction of more acceptable blocks. The three-storey brick apartment block that today can still be found in every neighbourhood was a direct result of this by-law.

Many of Winnipeg's apartment blocks catered to middle- and upper- income tenants, partially because the above mentioned by-law virtually prohibited the construction of cheap premises. But this development was also an expression of supply and demand, a continuous supply of financially comfortable businessmen and couples demanding apartments with a high degree of luxury. Maid's quarters, formal dining rooms, and large, multi-bedroom suites were not uncommon throughout the city. An example of a Winnipeg luxury block is the Roslyn Apartments on Osborne Street, built in 1909. Costing \$205,000 or an average of \$5,600 per suite, the Roslyn ranks as one of the most expensively built apartment blocks of the pre-1914 era.

The middle-income block, more numerous than the luxury accommodations, also featured a number of amenities to make apartment living more comfortable. Location, often on a major transportation artery, was another attraction and owners were quick to build their blocks adjacent to streetcar lines or other major roads.

In 1912, at the height of Winnipeg's growth stage, 56 apartment blocks were built. Of these, eight cost \$100,000 or more,² including the Anvers Apartments on McMillan Avenue.

STYLE

The design of the Anvers Apartments borrows heavily from the Tudor Revival style. Prominent gables, an irregular roof-line and half-timbered gables clothe the upper portion of this structure in elements that describe a Tudor Revival style.³ Wooden porches which overhang on the second and

² City of Winnipeg Building Permits, 1912.

³ L. Maitland, et al., A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1992), p. 156.

third floors and mimic oriel windows are also Tudor Revival features.

The style was inspired by the rural vernacular architecture of Tudor England and was most popular in residential structures in Canada. It was not surprising that the style caught on in Canada, "where nostalgia for the past and an admiration of things British fostered the...development of this revival."⁴

Unique features, such as domes and a classically-inspired main entrance, add to the eclecticism of the Anvers.

CONSTRUCTION

This block, a solid brick structure on a concrete and stone foundation, is found on land legally described as 34 St. Boniface, Plan 17941, Parcel A (Appendix I).⁵ It stands on the southeast corner of McMillan Avenue and Arbuthnot Street (originally Aynsley Street). It measures approximately 30.50 x 26.30 x 12.20 m. (100 x 119 x 40 ft.), with over 10,500 cu. m. (372,000 cu. ft.) of interior space divided among 25 suites and storage space. Ceilings throughout are 2.75 m. (9').⁶ Smooth-cut limestone is used at various locations on the exterior to accent the brick façades. The final cost of construction was \$110,000.⁷

DESIGN

While it is true that Winnipeggers took readily to the idea of apartment living, architects and contractors had to employ an number of design techniques to ensure the acceptance of apartment blocks by tenants. The most important considerations were to provide ample light and air to each suite. Methods to increase circulation and natural light were numerous. Key among them was how

⁴ Ibid., p. 156.

⁵ City of Winnipeg Assessment Records, Roll No. 225050, Ward 1, PC 19 (below as AR). The original legal description was 31/5 St. Boniface, Plan 208, Block 43, Lots 19 and 20.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ City of Winnipeg Building Permit (below as BP), #2034/ 1912.

a block was planned, with options ranging from a simple box with protrusions (porches or wings) and recesses, to a "U"- or "W"- shaped structure. The least common in Winnipeg, and the plan utilized in the Anvers Apartments, was the "O"-shaped block with an enclosed inner courtyard (Plate 1).

Intended to attract an exclusive clientele, the Anvers Apartments were consciously designed to emanate taste, refinement and luxury. The architect chose Tudor accents, conjuring up images of idyllic English country estates. A low, smooth stone base gives way to the red brick superstructure. Because of its corner location, three sides have been finished in this more expensive material (north, west and south elevations, Plates 2, 3 and 4, respectively). The east façade, as well as the walls of the open court in the interior of the block, is finished with a cheaper, cream-coloured brick (Plate 5).

The main façades facing McMillan Avenue and Arbuthnot Street are similarly ornamented, with a raised basement and smooth stone belt course indicating the level of the first floor. Another stone band is included in the design in the form of a continuous sill for third-floor windows. Pairs of glazed, wooden porches rise to the top floor on both elevations and are finished at the roof level by semi-circular dormers. Four prominent gable ends face the two main thoroughfares and are embellished with half-timbering.

The two main entrances are located in the northwest and southwest corners and are similarly designed (Plate 6). Broad steps lead to a pair of heavy wooden doors encased in a classically-detailed carved stone frame. Above the ornate stone entablature, between the second- and third-storey windows, is a panel of ornamental brick and stone. Topping the entrance areas are domes which feature alternating bands of brick and stone, circular windows, ornamental galvanized iron roofs, and finials.

The Anvers Block is a rich and opulent presence, commanding attention both because of its corner location and the quality and uniqueness of its design.

INTERIOR

The original basement featured a boiler room, two laundry rooms, storage space for tenants, and a two-bedroom suite for the janitor.⁸ As was common practice, the upper three floors of the block were exact replicas. Each floor was divided into eight suites, all with dining rooms. Two suites were one-bedroom apartments; the other six had two bedrooms as well as a maid's room. Each suite had a balcony facing a roadway or lane and shared one of four exterior staircases with another suite. Two of these stairways led to the inner court, one led to the lane on the south side of the block, and one onto McMillan Avenue.

Not surprisingly, the interior finish of the Anvers is as generously detailed as the exterior. Oak is used throughout the hallways, on wainscotting, window and door frames and staircase bannisters. A unique feature is the use of leaded glass in the doors of each suite and in hallway windows. The glass, as well as the dark wood, gives the interior a sombre elegance.

Another unusual element of the interior organization is the lack of exterior access from the central hall. It was common to provide access from halls to a staircase leading to or on the exterior of the block. The block at 758 McMillan Avenue does not provide this type of access, rather each suite has internal access to an outside set of wooden stairs.

INTEGRITY

The Anvers Block stands on its original site and has not been significantly altered since construction. Structurally, the building has suffered from settling which has resulted in major cracks in the brick walls, especially in the inner court. City of Winnipeg Building Permits listed against the structure show that concrete piles were added and underpinning completed in 1936 (Permit #2763/1936), 1937 (#2276/1937), 1938 (#3212/1938), and 1958 (#4299/1958).⁹

⁸ "Architect's Plans," held at the City of Winnipeg Archives, William Avenue Library, Plans #2034/1912.

⁹ AR.

STREETSCAPE

This block contributes to the historical continuity of the neighbourhood and is surrounded by medium- to large-sized single-family dwellings of like vintage.

ARCHITECT/CONTRACTOR

Charles S. Bridgman, a local architect, designed the Anvers Apartments. Bridgman came to Winnipeg in 1903 and spent the next 35 years designing a wide variety of buildings (see Appendix II for biographical information). He has been given 10 points by the Historical Buildings Committee.

The contracting firm of Claydon Brothers was responsible for the construction of this block, as well as a number of other buildings in 1912 worth nearly three-quarters of a million dollars.¹⁰ The company was founded in 1904 by Ebenezer (1881-1954) and Arthur Claydon, two of the five Claydon brothers.¹¹ Ebenezer Claydon was born in Deeping St. James, Lincolnshire, England in 1881. After receiving his education in England, he emigrated to Canada in 1902, coming to Winnipeg shortly thereafter and establishing the general contracting firm Claydon Brothers in 1904.¹² A third brother, Ernest, came to Winnipeg and joined the firm ca.1912. Arthur and Ernest enlisted and fought overseas during World War I and Arthur was killed in action in 1917. Ernest returned to Winnipeg and rejoined Claydon Brothers as the secretary-treasurer, with Ebenezer as president.

Soon after the war, the firm was renamed Claydon Company. By 1945, it had been expanded to handle home and business fuels and to include five Claydons: Ebenezer; his two sons, Oliver and

¹⁰ City of Winnipeg Building Permits, 1912.

¹¹ Much of the biographical and business information on the Claydon family was furnished by Rowland R. Claydon, in conversation with the author, December 1, 1993. R.R. Claydon is the son of Ernest Claydon, brother and partner of co-founders Ebenezer and Arthur.

¹² Winnipeg Free Press, February 27, 1954. During his career, Ebenezer Claydon was also president of the Winnipeg Builders Exchange and vice-president of the Canadian Construction Association.

Gurth E.; and Ernest and his son Rowland. Ebenezer died on February 26, 1954¹³ and Ernest died in 1976. J. Norman Claydon, a son of Gurth E., was also associated with the business in the 1970s and continues to live in the city.

The company continued to operate until very recently. Obviously, a contracting firm with such a long history would have a very long list of buildings to its credit. Like other medium-scale contracting firms, Claydon Brothers also designed and owned some of the structures they built, usually single-family dwellings. All of Winnipeg's important early twentieth century architects used this firm. Some of their better known and larger projects include:¹⁴

- Broadway Baptist Church, Broadway (1906 and 1914 addition)
- Dominion Bank, 678 Main Street (1907)
- Church of Christ, Sherbrook Street (1907)
- Canadian Pacific Railway Immigration office, Maple Street (1907)
- Assiniboine Park, first Pavilion (1908)
- Windermere Apartments, 224 Kennedy Street (1909)
- Kennedy Building, 317 Portage Avenue (1909)
- Havergal Ladies' College, 122 Carlton Street (major renovations, 1909)
- Kenilworth Court Apartments, 44 Hargrave Street (1910)
- St. Elmo Apartments, 177 Colony Street (1910)
- W.J. Christie House, 365 Wellington Crescent (1910)
- Ackland and Son Limited warehouse, 67 Higgins Avenue (1911)
- De Bary (now High Gate) Apartments, 626 Wardlaw Avenue (1912)
- Anvers Apartments, 758 McMillan Avenue (1912)
- Brown Block, 902 Home Street (1912)
- W.A. Hossie House, 66 Waterloo Street (1913)
- Sunnycrest Apartments, 667 Wolseley Avenue (1913)
- William Whyte School, Powers Street (1913)
- King George Hospital, 1 Morley Avenue (completed 1914)
- City Light and Power, terminal station, McFarlane Street (1918)
- St. Michael and All Angel's Anglican Church, 300 Hugo Street North (1920)

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ List compiled from City of Winnipeg Building Permits and author's and editor's personal files.

Structures built by the Claydon Brothers Company (continued):

Lord Selkirk School No. 1, Brazier Street (major renovations, 1921)
 Isaac Newton Junior High School, 730 Aberdeen Avenue (1921)
 Indian Affairs Industrial School, Edmonton, AL (1923)
 Eaton's Company garage, 349 Graham Avenue (1926)
 Eaton's Company mail order building, Graham Avenue (additional storey, 1926)
 Eaton's Company warehouse, 130 Galt Avenue (1927)
 Princess Elizabeth Hospital, 1 Morley Avenue (completed 1950)

PERSON/INSTITUTION

The land on which this block sits was owned at the turn of the century by the estate of W.L. Smart of Hamilton, Ontario. In 1912 the two corner lots were purchased and an apartment block was built. The owner of the land and the structure was the Belgo-Canadian Real Estate Company, a local firm. It was incorporated on May 25, 1911 with a total capital stock of \$200,000. The original backers of the company were Andre Gonzee, manager, William J. Christie, financial agent, Robert Sidertin, accountant, Ernest B. Eadie, accountant, and Clarence S. Scott, student-at-law. It was organized to buy, sell, lease, and mortgage land, to improve and erect buildings, and to lend money, as well as a number of other activities.¹⁵

The best known of these 1911 founders was William J. Christie. Born in London, Ontario in 1856, he came to Winnipeg in January of 1885 under the employ of the Inland Revenue Department. He re-signed from this position in 1901 to follow commercial interests in the city, forming the partnership of Christie and Heubach, a loan and real estate venture.¹⁶ Success came quickly and his long career included directorships of the San Antonio Gold Mines, the Arctic Ice Company, and the Scorrier Company. He was also on the board of directors of the National Trust Company and the Permanent Mortgage and Trust Company. He died in Winnipeg in 1942 at the age of 86, but a

¹⁵ The Manitoba Gazette (Winnipeg: King's Printer, 1911), Vol. 40, No. 22 (June 3, 1911), p. 909.

¹⁶ M. Peterson, "Christie/Broughall Block - 536-42 Main Street," report for the City of Winnipeg Historical Buildings Committee, October 1988, p. 5.

company bearing his name continues to conduct real estate business from a Notre Dame Avenue address.¹⁷

The block was owned by the Belgo-Canadian Real Estate Company until 1970 when it was sold to Percy Thompson, president of Thompson Brothers, household appliance dealers. By 1986, it was owned by Midland Commercial Sales and Service Limited.¹⁸

Tenants of the block, as with any other in the city, were varied. Because of its location and amenities, it attracted a more exclusive group of renters. Managers, company presidents, bankers, and barristers filled the suites after construction was completed. As time progressed, the neighbourhood took on a less exclusive character, and the tenants' occupations reflected a change in the area. Teachers, clerks, librarians, and salesmen replaced earlier tenants.¹⁹ The building, following another trend, has been reorganized as condominiums.

EVENT

There is no known significant event connected with this block.

CONTEXT

The Anvers Apartments fit into several themes. The block was one of many built in the city by local real estate firms to capitalize on the popularity of apartment accommodations

It also fits into the development of the middle- to upper-income residential district in this area of the

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁸ City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, 1910-1986.

¹⁹ Henderson's Directory, 1912-present.

city. Several large and luxurious apartment blocks,²⁰ as well as hundreds of beautiful single-family dwellings, lined the streets of this district and attracted some of Winnipeg's influential men and their families.

This structure was built at the very height of both Winnipeg's economic growth and the popularity of this type of building. Affluent tenants were not difficult to find, and the idea of apartment living was firmly established in the Manitoba capital, given the amenities of the blocks and excellence of their design. This block, then, is illustrative of a number of economic and social themes of Winnipeg's history.

The City of Winnipeg has designated a number of apartment blocks throughout the city. A comparison of these buildings, found in Appendix III, reveals some interesting information.

The most expensive of the blocks was the Ambassador Apartments on Hargrave Street. It cost nearly \$50,000 more to build than the Anvers Apartments. Comparing the cost of construction per suite, the Ambassador Apartments had the highest cost of the designated blocks, at \$3,925 per suite. While the Anvers cost less to build in total, a much lower number of total suites gave it a cost per suite of \$4,400. Although inflation makes this type of comparison inexact, it is still a useful exercise. The high cost per suite of the Anvers is a reflection of the number and quality of the Anvers Block's amenities, the extravagance of its exterior detailing, and its luxurious interior finish.

LANDMARK

This block is situated on a busy intersection and is visually imposing due to its size and architectural complexity. It is, therefore, conspicuous within the context of its neighbourhood.

²⁰ BP #2061/1912. The nearby Brussels Apartments, 150-56 Lilac Street, was also owned and built for the Belgo-Canadian Real Estate Company in 1912, and also cost \$110,000. It was built by the Claydon Brothers and designed by Charles S. Bridgman. It is very similar in design to the Anvers Apartments, with only the domes above the entrances missing.

APPENDIX I -

Address- 758 McMillan Avenue
Name- Anvers Apartments
Type- apartment block

Roll Number (Old)- 225050 (5575) District- 1 PC- 19 (condo
141)

Legal Description- 34 St. Boniface, Plan 17941, Parcel "A" *

Physical Description- southeast corner Arbuthnot Street

Year Built- 1912 Storeys- 3 + B

Construction- brick, stone and stone/concrete foundation

Building Permits ["(P)" indicates plans are available]-

- 2034/1912 \$110,000 (original) (P), 2763/1936 \$500 (concrete piles),
2276/1937 \$500 (concrete piles), 3108/1938 \$1,500 (repairs),
3212/1938 \$5,000 (concrete piles), 4299/1958 \$1,000 (concrete
piles), 5130/1978 \$13,000 (upgrading)

Information-

- * old legal 31/5 St. Boniface, Plan
208, Block 43, Lots 19 and 20
- ceilings 9' throughout
- 100 x 119 x 40 - = 372,000 cu. ft.
- settling throughout building has
caused the usual problems with
windows off true and cracking of
brickwork

SEE PLATE 1

FOR PLAN

APPENDIX II

Charles S. Bridgman

C.S. Bridgman was a well-known and prolific architect who practised in Winnipeg for over 30 years. His extensive list of designs covers all types and sizes of buildings.

He was born in Toronto, Ontario on February 14, 1875, moving with his family at an early age to nearby London, Ontario, where he received his early education.¹ Deciding on a career in architecture, Bridgman moved to New York where he graduated from Atelier Masguray in 1891. For the next twelve years he worked as an architect in that city, before removing himself to Winnipeg in 1903.²

Bridgman spent the next 35 years in Winnipeg, designing buildings of all scales and descriptions. In 1938, at the age of 63, he retired, moving back to London, Ontario. During World War II, he was called into service, assisting in the construction of Air Training Stations throughout central Ontario. He apparently enjoyed this return to work, because after the war he took up his profession again, this time in partnership with his brother, Gordon Bridgman. Retiring again at the age of 80, Charles Bridgman died in London on October 17, 1965, leaving behind three daughters.³

The complete list of local structures designed by C.S. Bridgman would be long indeed. A list of his larger and better-known designs would include:⁴

St. Luke's Anglican Church, 130 Nassau Street North (1904 & 1909 alterations)
Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Cross, Chambers Street corner Alexander Avenue
(1905)
Mills Block, 1000 Main Street (1908)
Metcalf Block, 511 Pembina Street (1909)

¹ Winnipeg Free Press, October 27, 1965.

² Winnipeg Telegram, September 18, 1906.

³ Winnipeg Free Press, October 27, 1965.

⁴ Compiled from City of Winnipeg Building Permits, 1903-1926; and Western Canada Contractor and Builder, Vol. 27, No. 6 (June 1930), p. 46. Permits after 1926 rarely list architect and contractor, and many of the originals have been destroyed or misplaced.

C.S. Bridgman designs, continued:

Riverview Block Apartments, 27 Balmoral Place (1910)
Anvers Apartments, 758 McMillan Avenue (1912)
Brussels Apartments, 150 Lilac Street (1912)
De Bary (now High Gate) Apartments, 626 Wardlaw Avenue (1912)
Regal Court Apartments, 152-54 Maryland Street (1912)
W.A. Hossie House, 66 Waterloo Street (1913)
Business Block for W.B. Chambers, 1156 Main Street (1913)
Hotel for J.J. O'Connell, 322 Nairn Avenue (1913)
Ellice Avenue Block Apartments, 468 Sherbrook Street (1914)
Aquilla Apartments, 519-21 William Avenue (1914)
Gaspé Apartments, 601 Broadway (1917)
Minneapolis Threshing Company warehouse, 701 Henry Avenue (1917)
Canadian Ukrainian Institute Provista, 777 Pritchard Avenue (foundation 1918,
superstructure 1921)
Dawson-Richardson Publishing Company warehouse, 171 McDermot Avenue (1921)
St. Edward's Convent, Yarwood Avenue (1922)
Sparling Apartments, 217 Sherbrook Street (1925)
Town Hall, Manitou, MB (1930)

APPENDIX III

List of Apartment Blocks Designated by the
City of Winnipeg Historical Buildings Committee (as of June 30, 1993)

ADDRESS	NAME	DATE BUILT	COST	COST PER SUITE	GRADE	DATE LISTED
55 Hargrave Street	Tremblay Apartments	1905	\$9,000	----*	III	August 1989
379 Hargrave Street	Ambassador Apartments	1909	\$157,000	\$3,925	III	May 1986
272 Home Street	Thelma Apartments	1914	\$50,000	\$3,333	III	January 1993
220 Hugo Street	Pasadena Apartments	1912	\$65,000	\$2,708	III	December 1988
828 Preston Avenue	Rothsay Apartments	1912	\$100,000	\$2,778	III	March 1991
366 Qu'Appelle Avenue	Warwick Apartments	1908	\$150,000	\$2,206	II	August 1983
300 River Avenue	Congress Apartments	1910	\$90,000	\$3,103	II	November 1988
6 Roslyn Road	Lilly Apartments	1914	\$20,000	----**	III	February 1987

* This building was originally a single-family dwelling.

** This building was originally a duplex.

758 McMILLAN AVENUE – ANVERS APARTMENTS

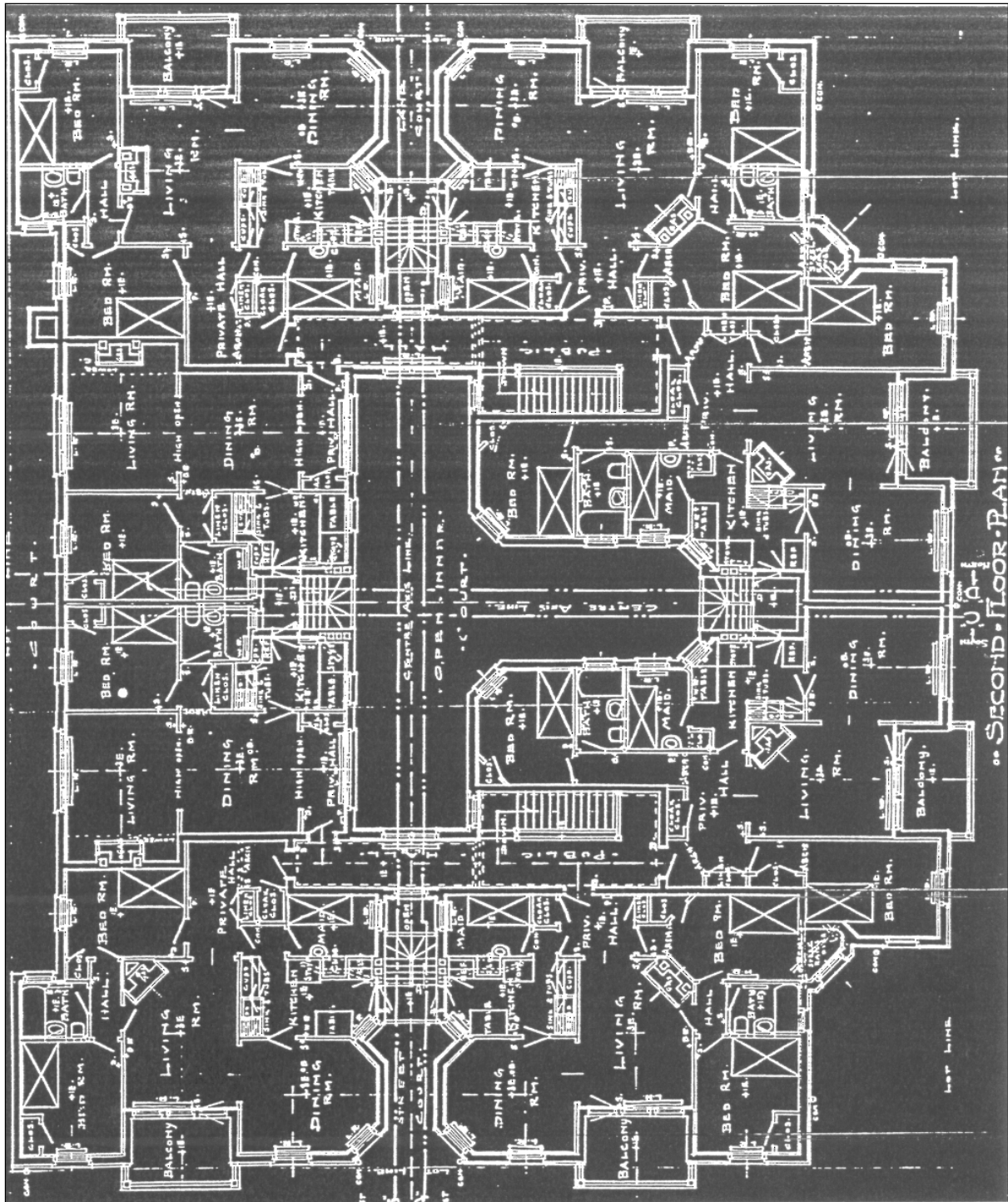


Plate 1 – Anvers Apartments, 758 McMillan Avenue, 1912; designed by Charles S. Bridgman, built by Claydon Brothers. "Second Floor Plan." (Reproduced from the architect's drawings, held at the City of Winnipeg Archives, William Avenue Library, Plans 2034/1912.)

758 McMILLAN AVENUE – ANVERS APARTMENTS

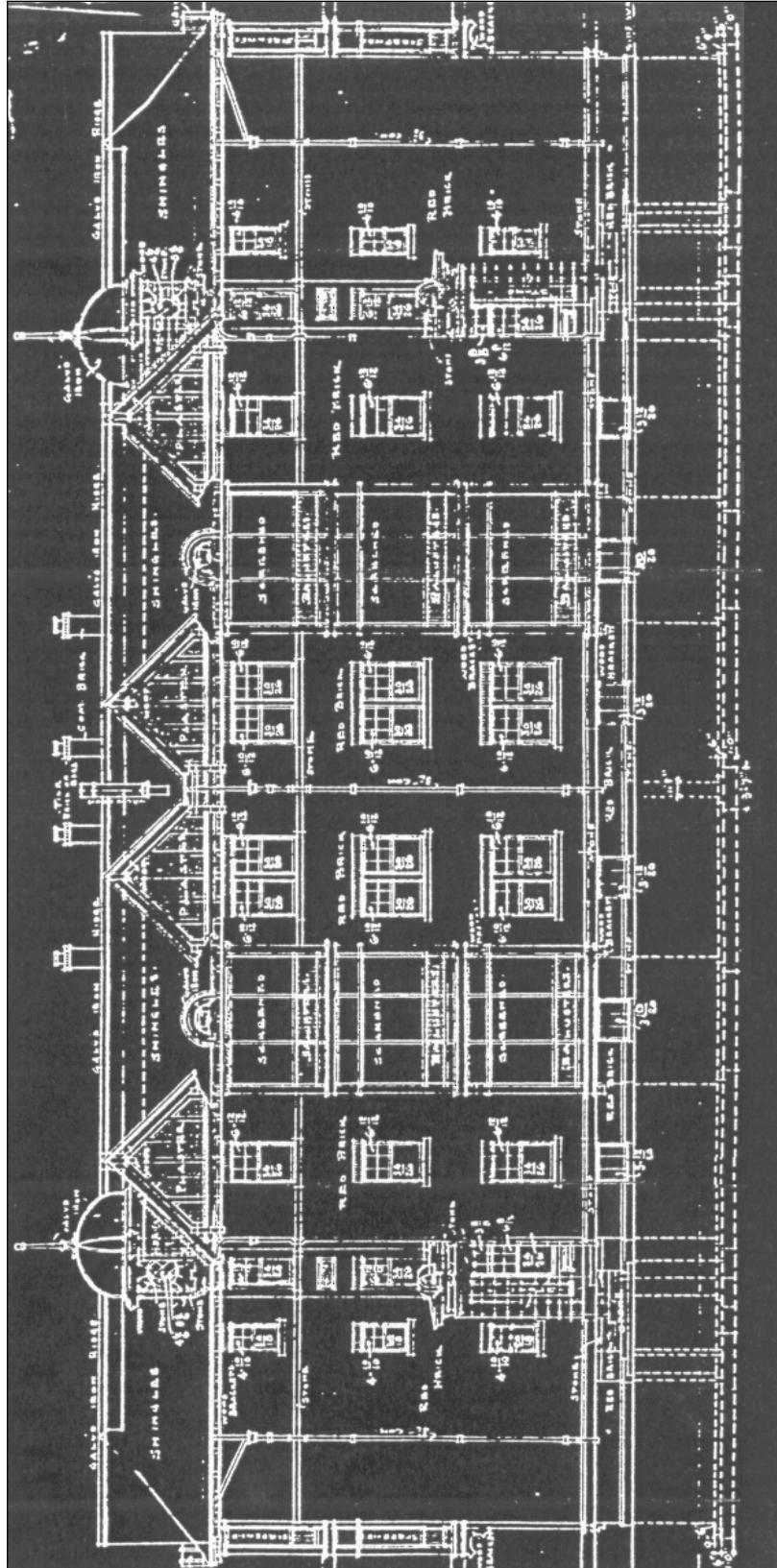


Plate 3 – Anvers Apartments, "Aynsley Street Elevation." (Reproduced from the architect's drawings, held at the City of Winnipeg Archives, William Avenue Library, Plans 2034/1912.)

758 McMILLAN AVENUE – ANVERS APARTMENTS

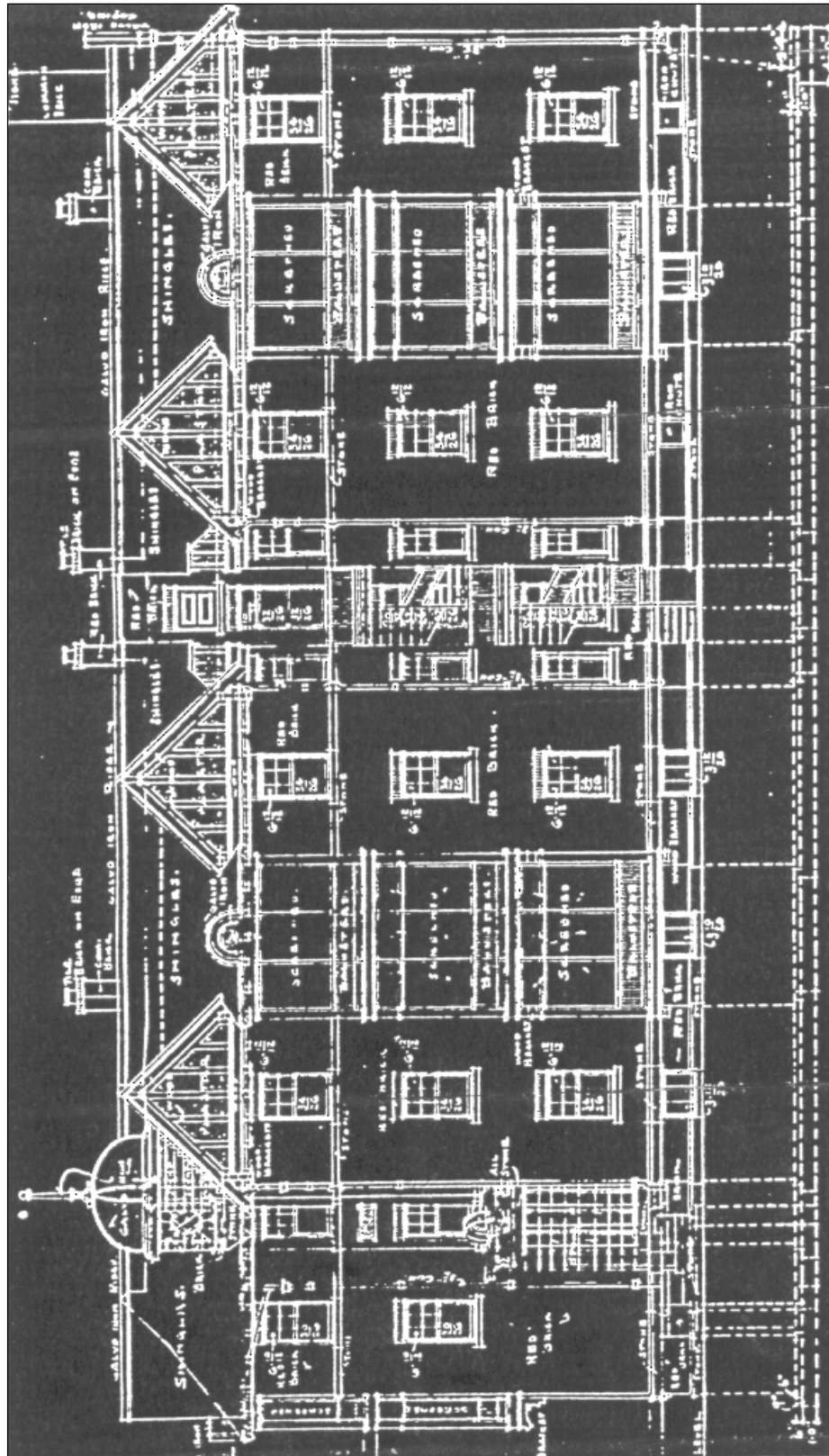


Plate 4 – Anvers Apartments, "South or Lane Elevation." (Reproduced from the architect's drawings, held at the City of Winnipeg Archives, William Avenue Library, Plans 2034/1912.)

758 McMILLAN AVENUE – ANVERS APARTMENTS

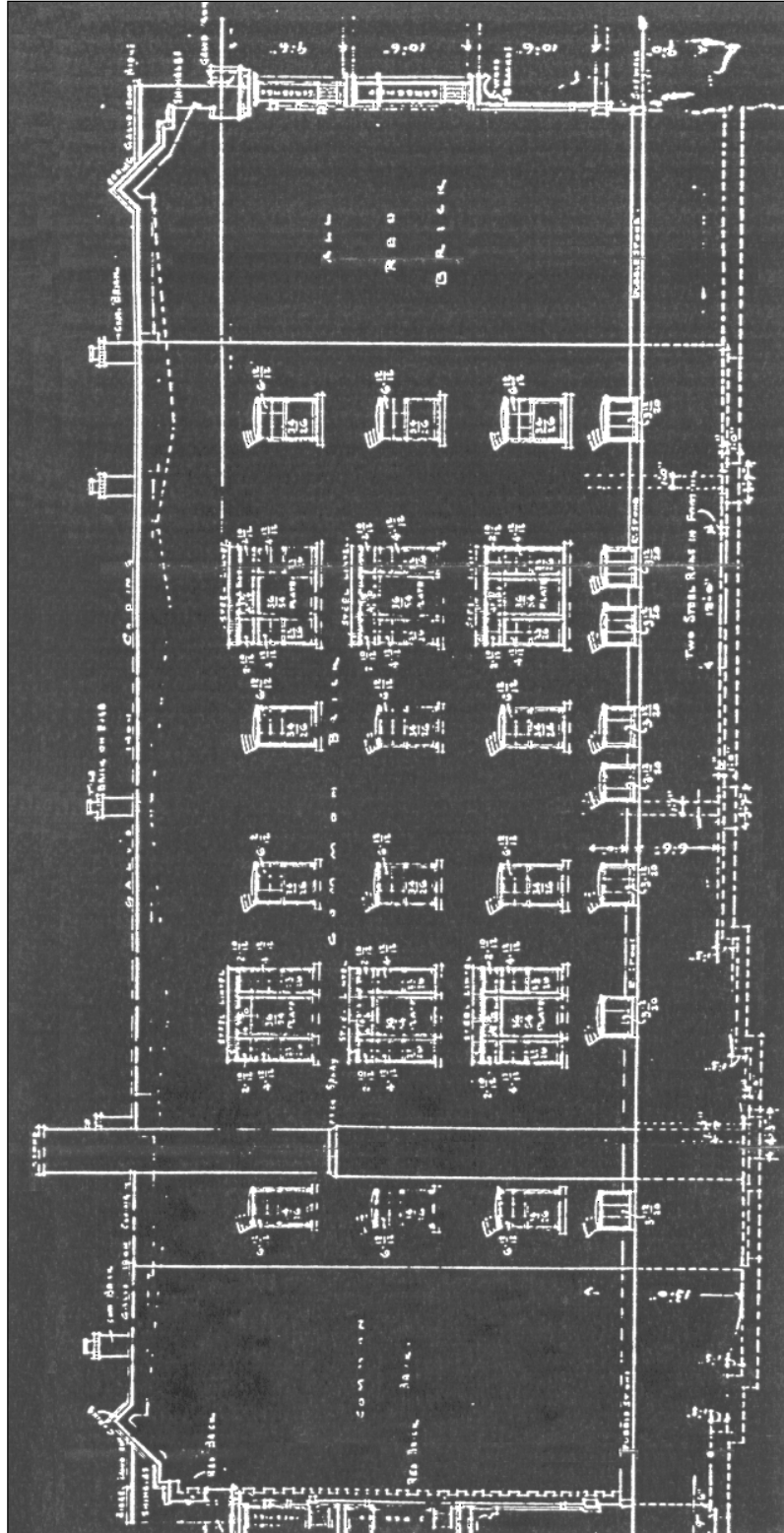


Plate 5 – Anvers Apartments, "East Elevation." (Reproduced from the architect's drawings, held at the City of Winnipeg Archives, William Avenue Library, Plans 2034/1912.)

758 McMILLAN AVENUE – ANVERS APARTMENTS

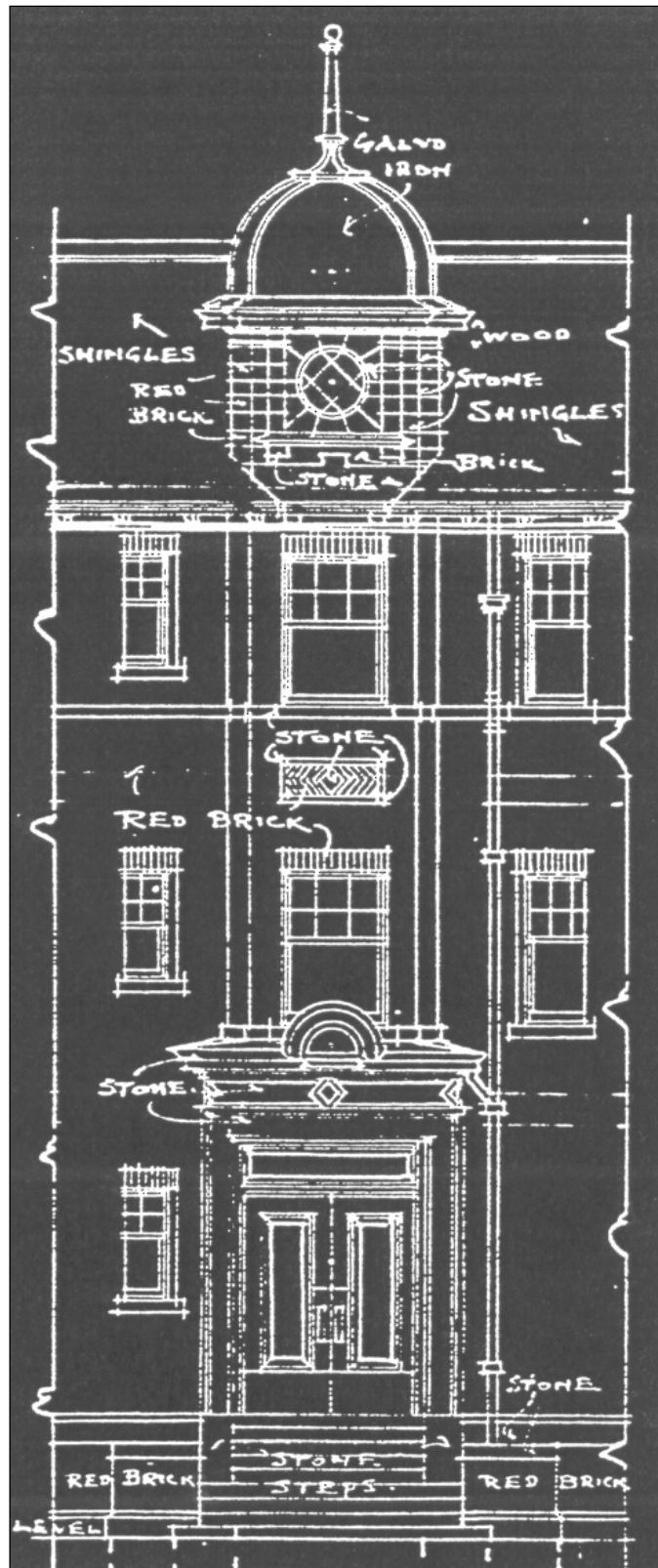


Plate 6 – Anvers Apartments, "Elevation on Centre Line of Entrances." (Reproduced from the architect's drawings, held at the City of Winnipeg Archives, William Avenue Library, Plans 2034/1912.)