

62 PRINCESS STREET – DEL BLOCK
Davidson Brothers, 1904



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, built in 1904.

This modest, two-storey solid brick structure rests on a surface concrete foundation and cost \$5,000 to complete. The front (east) façade faces Princess Street and is divided into four bays by unadorned pilasters. Each bay holds identical window/door combinations in arched openings on the ground floor and paired windows in rectangular openings on the upper floor. The only ornamental feature is the modest corbelling and patterned brick at flat roof level and this façade has not suffered major alteration. The north and south elevations are party walls; the rear (west) façade is very plain, rectangular openings used for doors and windows on both floors, almost all boarded up or bricked in.

The original interior was divided into four retail shops, each with its own entrance. Today, the building functions as a single unit, used for storage.

The block was built as a rental property for 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. It was Ryan who built a large addition on the south end of the structure in 1905 but sold the property in 1908 to a family in Scotland. Harry (1902-1974) and Philip Del Bigio (1908-1999), electricians, purchased the building in 1950. Del's Electric Motor Service Limited was founded by the brothers in 1927 and was first located at 48 Princess Street. The firm moved into #54 Princess Street in 1939 and in the late 1950s, the company expanded into this structure and continues to occupy both buildings.

The Del Block 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 four bays by pilasters, all holding a door and large window in arched openings on the ground floor and two windows in square headed opening on the second floor and finished with a band of corbelled brick.

Interior:

- None