



594-600 SELKIRK AVENUE

**BUDNIK BLOCK**

PREPARED BY PETERSON PROJECTS – DECEMBER 2009



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## 594-600 SELKIRK AVENUE BUDNIK BLOCK

**Date of Construction:** 1911, 1920 and 1924

**Building Permit:** 98/1911 (Plans at City Storage); 417/1920; 289/1924 (Plans at City Storage);  
and ?/1929 (according to date stone on #598-600 Selkirk Avenue)

**Architect:** Blankstein, Max Zoel (1911, 1920 and 1924)

**Contractor:** Milovitch, J. (1911); Budnik, O., owner (1920 and 1924)

### ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

One of Selkirk Avenue's more unique structures is the Budnik Block, a large, two-storey brick and stone mixed-use building that wraps around one of the North End's busiest commercial intersections – Selkirk Avenue and McGregor Street.

The construction history of this block is complex and requires more research. It appears from both visual clues on the building and documentary information from City of Winnipeg Building Permit ledger books that this block was built in two sections, the east portion (#594-#596) in 1911 or 1920<sup>1</sup> with a second storey added in 1924<sup>2</sup> and the west section (#596-598) built in 1929 (Permit not found).



North façade, 2009

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Regardless of the stages of construction, the present building, completed in 1929 is one of the more ornamentally complex on Selkirk Avenue with its rounded northwest corner and two public façades- north facing Selkirk Avenue and west facing McGregor Street. The eastern portion is faced in dark brick (the west portion in a slightly lighter hue of the same brick). The building features a wealth of classically-inspired stone accenting around door and windows and at the roofline. Stone elements include shields and brackets, geometric shapes, entablatures and capping on the parapet. An ornate metal cornice is found above the second storey windows.

The north façade of the west building is a continuation of the design and materials of the east building. The north façade continues this design although the second storey windows do not feature the same wide stone frames as on the north façade. The rear of the building is constructed of common clay brick.

The building stands on its original site and appears to be in good structural condition. Alterations to the building have been mainly confined to the ground floor, with new window and door units throughout and new cladding for the west building's north and west façades.

The building is an example of a Two-part Commercial style, popular throughout North America's urban centres. Buildings could use a combination of stylistic elements or include no ornamentation depending on the developer and the available capital. The most obvious feature was the visual division of the ground floor and the upper floors, reflecting the division of use of the interior – most often commercial on the ground floor and residential on the upper floor or floors. There are examples of this style throughout the city.





West façade, 2009

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The architect of this building, M.Z. Blankstein, was born in Odessa, Russia on August 23, 1877<sup>3</sup> and took his early education and architectural training there; following in the footsteps of his father Meyer Blankstein, a stonemason and contractor by trade.<sup>4</sup> He came to Winnipeg in 1904, part of a large contingent of Jewish immigrants who made the city their home. He took up his profession soon after his arrival, making him one of the earliest Jewish architects in Canada.<sup>5</sup>

He was active in his community, supporting many of its charitable organizations. He died at his home at 131 Machray Avenue on December 31, 1931 after an appendicitis operation. He left a wife, two daughters and four sons. Two of the sons, Cecil N. and Morley, and a daughter, Evelyn, would also become architects in the city, Cecil as a founding partner of Green, Blankstein and Russell Associates (became known as GBR Architects Limited), Morley in Blankstein Coop Gillmor Hanna (later Number Ten Architectural Group) and Evelyn, who first worked in her brother Cecil's office and then for Hobbs Glass (later Canadian Pittsburgh Industries).<sup>6</sup>

A partial list of major Winnipeg buildings designed by M.Z. Blankstein includes Aikins Court Apartments, 167 Aikins Street (1907), Winnipeg Hebrew Free School, 121 Charles Street (1912), Palace Theatre, 501 Selkirk Avenue (1912), Merchant's Hotel, 541 Selkirk Avenue (1913), Zimmerman Block, 669 Main Street (1913, Grade III), Film Exchange Building, 361 Hargrave Street (1922, Grade III) and Uptown Theatre, 394 Academy Road (1930, Grade III).<sup>7</sup>



Rear (south) and east façades, 2009

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HISTORICAL INTEREST:

Shoemaker Onofry Budnik is the original owner of this building. It appears Budnik ran his business out of #594 Selkirk Avenue until the construction of the new section – he then opened a confectionary shop in the new building. The Budnik family maintained ownership of the block until 1986. Other tenants of the building included Andrew Sirato, shoemaker (#594, 1920), physician Brany Dyma (#594, 1925-1935), Paul Zakus, dentist (#594, 1925) and Dr. A. Bloom, dentist (#598, 1935).<sup>8</sup>



North façade detail, 2009

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RECOMMENDATION TO HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE:

Under the Historical Buildings By-law, this building meets a number of important criteria:

- its historical importance- an excellent example of a pre-World War I mixed-use block built throughout the city to supply modern retail and residential space to a growing population and an illustration of the expansion that occurred in the early 1920s that resulted in additions to existing structures;
- its associations- its long-term connections to early North End businessman O. Budnik and his family;
- its design- an excellent example of a classically-inspired Two-part Commercial style;
- its architect- M.Z. Blankstein was a respected and important practitioner;
- its location- defines an important intersection and contributes greatly to the historic streetscape of two major arteries within the North End; and
- its integrity- its main façades continue to display many of their original elements and design.





Front (north) façade, 1978

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ENDNOTES:

- 1 City of Winnipeg Building Permit (below as BP), #98/1911, 1-storey, 23 x 46', \$3,000; and #417/1920, 23.5' x 21.5' 1-storey addition, \$8,000.
- 2 BP #289/1924, \$6,000 (no measurements or description).
- 3 Information from Manitoba Vital Statistics database (<http://web2.gov.mb.ca/cca/vital/Query.php>).
- 4 Information courtesy of grandson Arthur Blankstein, December 2002.
- 5 Winnipeg Free Press, July 7, 1989, p. 30; and Jewish Post, Vol. VIII, No. I (January 7, 1932), p. 3; and Western Canada Contractor and Builder, Vol. 29, No. 1 (January 1932), p. 9.
- 6 A. Blankstein; and D.M. Lyon, "Recent Past Inventory Project," report produced for the City of Winnipeg Historical Buildings Committee, September 2000, "List of References Re: Architects," pp. 2-5.
- 7 Compiled from author's files; City of Winnipeg Building Permit Ledger Books, 1900-1926; and Western Canada Contractor and Builder, Vol. 29, No. 1 (January 1932), p. 9.
- 8 City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, Roll No. 14010333000, 1920-1990.