

280 WILLIAM AVENUE – MAW BLOCK

John Hamilton Gordon Russell, 1924



This two-storey, classically-detailed, solid brick block was built on the southwest corner of King Street in 1924 to replace the 1898 structure that had been destroyed by fire the same year.

Noted local architect J.H.G. Russell (1862-1946), was responsible for the design of the block. His practice began in 1895 and lasted well into the 20th century and he designed some many fine warehouses, churches and commercial buildings across Western Canada. Malcom Brothers, another influential local firm, built the structure.

The block measures 15.3 metres along William Avenue and 29.3 metres along King Street and cost \$15,000 to complete. It rests on a 53.3-centimetre rubblestone foundation and the building is supported by a wood beam and post structural system. The front (north) façade includes a

centrally-placed entrance set in an unadorned smooth stone frame. Paired, attached columns with stone bases and capitals are located on either side of the entrance and at the corners; the brick is laid to mimic wide columns. A metal cornice 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. 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. 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.

The original interior was laid out as offices for a government employment services department – with separate men’s and women’s waiting areas and several private offices on the ground floor and private offices, public space and a billiard room on the second floor. Today, both floors have been renovated into modern office space.

The block was originally owned by the estate of Joseph Maw (1854-1916), early Winnipeg carriage retailer and pioneer Western Canadian automobile. It originally held the Labour Employment Services of Canada offices and was sold to the provincial government in 1931, which housed various departments and branches in the building. In the late 1960s, the building was sold to the City of Winnipeg and most recently was used by the Police department.

Elements of the building that would require approval if alterations were planned are:

Exterior-

- Two-storey brick and stone building with a flat roof located at the southwest corner of William Avenue and King Street, its main facades facing north onto William Avenue and east onto King Street, the west façade hidden by the neighbouring building and the rear façade facing south onto the back lane;
- Front (north) façade with its windows and doors in rectilinear openings, the central entrance in stone frame with attached columns with stone bases and capitals, brick accenting at the corners, metal cornice below the inset and paired

windows in rectilinear openings on the second floor with wide stone sills and metal cornice and stepped brick parapet;

- The east façade which continues the design of the front façade and includes a door at the south end; and
- The rear (south) façade with its centrally located door and windows in arched openings with stone lug sills on both floors.

Interior-

- None