



**955 COTTONWOOD ROAD
WINDSOR PARK LIBRARY**

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings & Resources Committee
Researcher: M. Peterson
February 2023

This building embodies the following heritage values as described in the *Historical Resources By-law*, 55/2014 (consolidated update July 13, 2016):

- (a) The expansion of library services and the creation of modern spaces for these services, was a theme for post-World War II Winnipeg and the surrounding municipalities, towns and cities, including the City of St. Boniface and Windsor Park, where this library was completed in 1961.
- (b) Library services are an important civic responsibility that required building replacement or significant building upgrades as technology changed and use increased. The Windsor Park Library was an important part of first St. Boniface's and then Winnipeg's library system for many decades. It was also an important early civic service for the newly built development of Windsor Park.
- (c) The building was designed by noted local architectural partnership Nikola Mathew Zunic and Victor Sobkowich.
- (d) The structure is a good example of the International Style of modern architecture, with its lack of attached ornamentation, angular lines, flat roofline, and thin line of clerestory windows.
- (e) St. Boniface is one of the earliest areas in what became Winnipeg to be settled permanently by non-First Nations peoples and it has played an important role in Manitoba's history. Windsor Park was one of Canada's largest residential developments of the 1950s.
- (f) The structure does not appear to have suffered significant alteration.

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Post World War II Winnipeg, like most Canadian urban centres, experienced a severe housing shortage that had begun during the Great Depression. Affordable, modern homes were needed for returning soldiers and their families and the dramatic growth of the post-war-baby-boom generation.¹

The development of Windsor Park was first announced in 1955 when the Land Assembly and Development Co. (Ladco) made public its plans to construct 1,300 homes on a 295.4-hectare site in St. Boniface. Ladco, an association of 38 homebuilders, was formed in 1955 by John Henry Borger, president of construction company Henry Borger and Sons Ltd. A contract was signed with the City of St. Boniface for the construction of 3,100 homes worth \$45 million. The development “the first master-planned community in Winnipeg, the largest housing development of its kind in Western Canada, and the second largest in the country during the mid 1950s.”² In charge of the master plan was the local architectural firm Green Blankstein Russell and Associates (Plate 1).

Beyond the homes, plans were made for other important developments including commercial, small-scale industrial, religious and educational. On April 25, 1960, the St. Boniface City Council announced it had acquired land for a library in the new development, located at the corner of Cottonwood Road and Autumnwood Drive.³ It was actually the third public library planned by the St. Boniface Public Library Board with Council approval in the early 1960s (Plate 2). North St. Boniface (Provencher Park Branch, 255 Avenue de la Cathedrale – Plate 3) and Norwood (Coronation Park Branch, 120 Eugenie Street – Plate 4), were both opened to the public on November 1961.⁴

¹ A. Gowriluk, Windsor Park. An Architectural Tour (Winnipeg, MB: Winnipeg Architecture Foundation, 2020), pp. 1-3.

² Ibid., p. 5.

³ Ibid., p. 59.

⁴ Winnipeg Free Press, January 13, 1962, p. 13.

The Windsor Park Library, 955 Cottonwood Road, opened by Mayor Joseph Guay to the public on May 6, 1962 (Plate 5).⁵

STYLE

The Modern era was...considered to encompass the years from about 1930 to about 1975; that is, from the period when a faith in a better future *independent* of the past began to take hold and find expression in a significant number of buildings, to the period when Canadians' faith in a better future untethered to the past began to fade, replaced by the *rooted* architecture of the heritage conservation and post-Modernist movements.⁶

The Windsor Park Library, as well as the other two St. Boniface branches, stands as a good example of the International Style, a modern architectural movement of the post-World War II era that lasted into the late 1960s. The style is seen as a reaction to the historically based styles of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The age of machines created a desire for a new aesthetic, one that fully utilized the new construction materials and technologies, especially steel framing and reinforced concrete.⁷ Architects could design buildings without the need for load-bearing exterior walls – these elements became “curtains” covering the steel/concrete structural system and could be constructed almost entirely of glass if desired. Through its use of hard, angular edges, severely plain surfaces, large areas of glass and square or rectangular modules, the style stressed material and proportionality over ornamentation.

There are a number of excellent, internationally recognized and award-winning examples of the style in Winnipeg due to the city's place at the forefront of the post-1950 International Style movement through the University of Manitoba's School of Architecture. The City of Winnipeg

⁵ Winnipeg Free Press, May 2, 1962, p. 10.

⁶ National Historic Sites of Canada System Plan: Commemorating Canada's Built Heritage of the Modern Era (Ottawa, ON: Parks Canada, 2001), p. 4.

⁷ Identifying Architectural Styles in Manitoba (Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, 1991), pp. 34-35; and L. Maitland, et al., A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1992), p. 178.

has placed a number of these outstanding examples on the List of Historical Resources, including: Monarch Life Building, 333 Broadway (Plate 6); J.A. Russell Building (Architecture) – University of Manitoba, 83 Dafoe Road (Plate 7); St. Vital Library, 6 Fermor Avenue (Plate 8); and Winnipeg City Hall, 510 Main Street (Plate 9).

CONSTRUCTION

This one-storey structure with full basement and flat roof is built with the post-and-beam structural system- laminated wood beams and “standard pipe columns.”⁸ Resting on 25.4-centimetre concrete foundation, the building boasts 2.7-metre throughout (see Appendix II for more technical information). The building is clad in 7.6-centimetre coloured ashlar granite veneer (Plate 10).

Cost of construction was \$58,000.⁹

DESIGN

The front (south) façade was designed with a wealth of ornamental elements beginning with the multi-coloured granite cladding (Plate 11). The cladding is confined to the centre of the façade and is interrupted by thin rectangular window openings (Plates 12-13). On either side of granite-clad wall are wall-height openings, single pane window units to the east and single pane window units and the entrance to the west. Clerestory windows are located above the wall and are separated by the ends of the wood beams (Plate 14). The flat roof is unadorned.

The east façade features the same granite cladding, a slender entrance opening and a set of four rectangular window openings (Plate 15). The granite cladding of the west façade is interrupted only by four rectangular window openings (Plate 16).

⁸ “Cross Section B-B,” Architect’s Plans, #290/1961.

⁹ City of Winnipeg, Building Permit, #290/1961.

The granite cladding of the rear (north) façade is divided into six by five vertical elements matching the location of the beam ends (Plate 17). One of the divisions is filled with a brick-clad mechanical room.

Adjacent to the library stands a lift station building, constructed in 1976¹⁰ and clad in similar stone to the library (Plate 18).

INTERIOR

The original plans for the main floor of the library call for stairs located in the southeast and southwest corners, work space, offices and washrooms along the south wall and book stacks occupying the remainder of the space (Plate 19). The basement included a reading/assembly space along the north wall, storage, washrooms, and work space along the south and a board room along the east wall (Plate 20).

The only major renovation to the interior was the construction of accessible washrooms on the main floor in 2000.¹¹

The building has been vacant since early 2018, but most of the interior elements, including book cases, tables, etc. are still present on both the basement and main floors (Plates 21-25).

INTEGRITY

The building stands on its original site, appears to be in good structural condition and has not suffered any major alteration.

¹⁰ City of Winnipeg, Assessment Record, Roll No. 434200-06, PC 80.

¹¹ City of Winnipeg, Building Permit, #151431/2000, costing \$8,000.

STREETSCAPE

Standing in the heart of the Windsor Park neighbourhood, the library building is located on a large open property that includes the Windsor Park Fire Hall (Fire Station No. 15), 1083 Autumnwood Drive, built in 1969, designed by Gaboury Lussier Sigurdson Architects (Plate 26-27).

ARCHITECT/CONTRACTORS

The designer of the Windsor Park Library was the local partnership of Nikola Mathew Zunic (1921-2006 – Plate 28) and Victor Sobkowich (1923-2013 – Plate 29). The pair were responsible for a number of fine modern buildings located throughout the city, including several other public libraries. They have received 15 points from the Historical Buildings and Resources Committee.

It is unknown at the present time what company was hired to build the library.

PERSON/INSTITUTION

This history of libraries in St. Boniface begins, as it did in Winnipeg, with private and church holdings. A library that had been founded in 1911, was opened and closed and changed hands and locations during the next four decades and in 1945 was being managed by the *Société d'enseignement postscolaire* with a grant from Carnegie Corporation and donations from Province of Quebec.¹²

L'Association de la bibliothèque de Saint-Boniface (St. Boniface Library Association) was formed in late 1950¹³ and immediately began urging St. Boniface City Council to organize a modern library for the city. The group elected co-chairs, French and English, to reflect the citizenry, circulated a petition that was signed by 1,500 supporting a library and asked City

¹² E. Dutton and K. Williams, More Than Books. The History of the Winnipeg Public Library (Winnipeg, MB: Winnipeg Public Library, 2017), pp. 90-92.

¹³ Norwood Press, November 16, 1950.

Council to allocate a tax levy to built a library.¹⁴ Council chose to take this levy to the electorate and on October 19, 1951, the vote was 5,680 to 1,366 in favour of a library levy.¹⁵ A St. Boniface Public Library Board was created in early 1952 and created a budget of nearly \$19,000 to operate French and English libraries.¹⁶ The Board chose to rent space: the English Library in the basement of the “Norwood Electric and Radio” Building, 273-275 Avenue Taché at Horace Street (by 1960, the Branch was operating at 261 Kenny Street)¹⁷; and the French at 136-138 Avenue Provencher. Both facilities were opened June 3, 1953.¹⁸ The French Branch was relocated to 543 Langevin Street in 1955.¹⁹

Both facilities were soon experiencing overcrowding due to use and expansion was considered. Again, a money by-law was voted on by St. Boniface citizens and approved funding for three libraries – Windsor Park, Provencher Park & Coronation Park – and three swimming pools by nearly 60%.²⁰

The Windsor Park Library became one of the central locales in the new subdivision. It maintained this function until the Libraries Branch began the process of facility upgrades in the 2000s. In 2021, plans were made public to merge the St. Vital and Windsor Park libraries into one larger, central location. This was widely opposed by citizens and the compromise was reached to complete a \$2-million upgrade of St. Vital Library, 6 Fermor Street, and build a new Windsor Park facility on Archibald Street next to the new Bonivital Pool.²¹ Work on the \$4.7-million facility began in July 2016,²² the structure designed by David Penner, architect and h5

¹⁴ [Winnipeg Free Press](#), February 6, 1951.

¹⁵ “St. Boniface Library,” local history file, Millennium Library.

¹⁶ Loc. cit.

¹⁷ Loc cit. According to the resignation letter of Head Librarian Mrs. Hazel Grimsey, the Kenny Street facility was cold, cramped and in an “obscure location”.

¹⁸ [Winnipeg Tribune](#), June 3, 1953.

¹⁹ E. Dutton and K. Williams, op. cit., pp. 90-92.

²⁰ Unidentified newspaper clippings, October 1960 found in “St. Boniface Library,” local history file, Millennium Library.

²¹ [Winnipeg Free Press](#), March 21, 2016, online edition.

²² [Metro](#), July 14, 2016, online edition.

architecture. The 743.2 square metre facility with LEED Silver designation opened to the public February 24, 2018 (Plate 30).

EVENT

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

CONTEXT

The 1950s and 1960s were a period of expansion and growth for the City of Winnipeg. New residential developments, like Windsor Park, grew to meet the demand for new housing set within a planned neighbourhood. Amenities for these neighbourhoods, including not only commercial but civic services were developed at the same time. This library branch was an important aspect of Windsor Park's early development.

LANDMARK

This structure, given its highly visible location and important public function, was well-known in the neighbourhood.



APPENDIX I

CITY OF WINNIPEG - Preliminary Report Assessment Record

Building Address: 955 Cottonwood Road Building Name: Windsor Park Library
Original Use: public library Current Use: vacant
Roll No. (Old): 06043420000 (434200-06) R.S.N.: 183970
Municipality: 06 Ward: --- Property or Occupancy Code: 80
Legal Description: Roman Catholic Mission Property, Plan 7449, Lot 5 Storeys: 1 + B
Location: Northeast corner Autumnwood Drive Date of Construction: 1961
Construction Type: reinforced concrete and rough stone

HERITAGE STATUS: COMMEMORATIVE LIST

Building Permits (Plans available: [CS] City Storage):

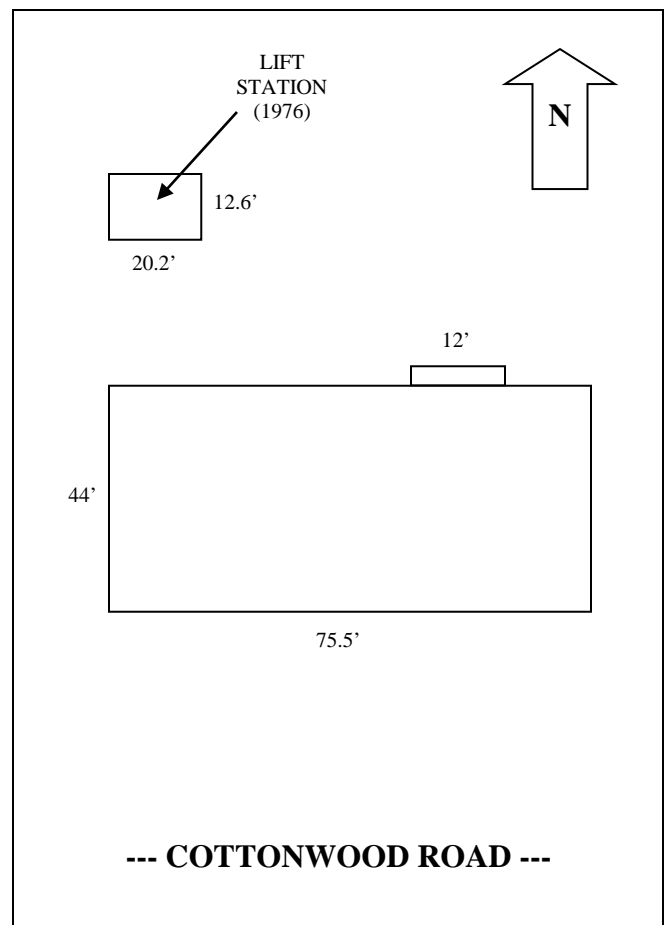
- 290/1961 [CS] \$58,000 (original); 151431/2000 \$8,000 (accessible washrooms on main floor)

Information:

- $75\frac{1}{2} \times 44 \times 20\frac{1}{2} = 68,101$ cu. ft.
- 10" concrete foundation walls; reinforced concrete floors
- 9' ceilings throughout
- 3" ashlar granite veneer
- flat tar and gravel roof

ARCHITECT: ZUNIC & SOBKOWICH

CONTRACTOR: UNKNOWN



APPENDIX II

Nikola Mathew Zunic and Victor Sobkowich

Nikola Mathew “Nick”. Zunic was born in Prilisce Dolnje, Croatia, Yugoslavia on April 12, 1921, immigrating to Canada and settling in Winnipeg with his family in May 1933. After serving in World War II in the R.C.A.F., he resumed his studies at the University of Manitoba, graduating with an Architecture Degree in 1950.¹

His major professional achievement is undoubtedly Niakwa Park, the residential development in southeast corner of St. Boniface. The project was approved by St. Boniface City Council in November 1954 and involved the construction of approximately 160 homes on 16.2 hectares of land and the extension of Archibald Street from Elizabeth Road to Fermor Avenue. It was the \$2-million plan of Thompson Lumber and Fuel Limited and the Niakwa Park Syndicate, which include Zunic as its architect.² He designed 14 distinct model homes and was also involved in street layouts, parks, schools and libraries.³

From the mid-1950s until 1967, Zunic worked in partnership with another University of Manitoba Architect graduate, Victor Sobkowich as Zunic and Sobkowich.⁴

Zunic served on the executive of the Manitoba Association of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada. He served as an executive on the Canadian Chamber of Commerce from 1957, and as a provincial representative, beginning in 1965. Beginning in the 1960s, Zunic was twice elected as a board member of the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, a prominent federal housing agency. In this capacity and elsewhere, he argued in favour of more creative design for new home construction and against the conservatism of zoning rules and mortgage funds.⁵ He was

¹ Winnipeg Free Press, April 15, 2006, p. 46.

² Winnipeg Free Press, November 17, 1954, p. 3.

³ Winnipeg Free Press, “Free Press Weekly – South Edition,” October 7, 1980, pp. 1 & 4.

⁴ Winnipeg Free Press, August 21, 1967, p. 33 & April 14, 1973, p. 33. Sobkowich left the firm to join the Winnipeg office of Aetna Roofing, becoming its general manager in 1973.

⁵ “Zunic, Nikola Mathew,” Winnipeg Architecture Foundation website.

elected St. Boniface Chamber of Commerce president in 1958 and vice-president of the Manitoba Association of Architects in 1959 and 1960.⁶ He died on April 6, 2006.⁷

Victor Sobkowich was born in Scott, Saskatchewan in 1923 and following his military discharge after World War II, he enrolled at the University of Manitoba and received his Architecture degree in 1950.⁸ He formed a partnership with fellow University of Manitoba graduate as Zunic and Sobkowich in the late 1950s and enjoyed a varied practice that included a wide variety of building types. He was Vice-President and General Manager of Aetna Roofing, Construction Technology Advisor for the National Research Council, and President of the Canadian Roofing Contractors Association. He died in Winnipeg on March 30, 2013.

A list of some of the more prominent local buildings designed by Zunic and Zunic and Sobkowich includes:⁹

N. M. Zunic:

Bertrand Arena, 294 Bertrand Street (1953)¹⁰

St. Thomas More School, 52 Birchdale Avenue (1955)

House, 8 Mohawk Bay (1955)

House, 19 Mohawk Bay (1955)

House, 31 Iroquois Bay (1956)

Niakwa Park, St. Boniface, subdivision design/layout, 156 houses (1955-1956)

L'Ecole du Precieux-Sang [Precious Blood School], 209 Kenny Street (1955-1956)

St. Andrews Ukrainian Catholic Church, 160 Euclid Avenue (1956)

Frontenac School, 866 Autumnwood Drive (1956 and addition 1959)

St. Boniface Fire Hall No. 3, 864 Marion Street (1956-1957)

Beliveau School, 296 Speers Road (1957)

⁶ Winnipeg Free Press, February 1, 1958, p. 26.

⁷ Winnipeg Free Press, April 15, 2006, p. 46.

⁸ "Sobkowich, Victor," Memorable Manitobans, Manitoba Historical Society website, 2020.

⁹ Compiled from Winnipeg Free Press clippings, various years.

¹⁰ Winnipeg Free Press, March 5, 1953, p. 3.

Zunic and Sobkowich:

St. Alphonsus Catholic Church, 341 Munroe Avenue (1958)

Canadian Legion Memorial Gardens (low-rental seniors' housing), 675 Talbot Avenue (1956 & 1960)

Addition to Notre-Dame Auditorium, St. Boniface (1960)

Powerview High School, 33 Vincent Street, Powerview, Manitoba (1960)

Whitemouth High School, Second Street, Whitemouth, Manitoba (1960)

Edward Schreyer School, 5th Street, Beausejour, Manitoba (1960 and 1967 addition)

Lac du Bonnet Senior School, Lac Du Bonnet, Manitoba (1960)

St. Boniface Public Library, Norwood Branch, 120 Eugenie Street (1961)

St. Boniface Public Library, Provencher Park Branch, 255 Avenue de la Cathedrale (1961)

St. Boniface Public Library, Windsor Park Branch, 955 Cottonwood Road (1961)

Green Acres Memorial Chapel, Springfield, Manitoba (1961)

Addition to St. Thomas More Chapel (Holy Cross Roman Catholic Church), 66 Birchdale Avenue (1962)

Happyland Park Swimming Pool, 520 Marion Street (1962)

Addition to Beliveau School, 296 Speers Road (1962)

Addition to Nordale School, 99 Birchdale Avenue (1962)

Roblin Memorial Chapel, Roblin, Manitoba (1962)

Holy Family Ukrainian Catholic Church, 1001 Grant Avenue (1963) with Radoslav Zuk

Addition to Transcona Curling Club (1963) – demolished

St. James Civic Centre, 2055 Ness Avenue (1965-1966)

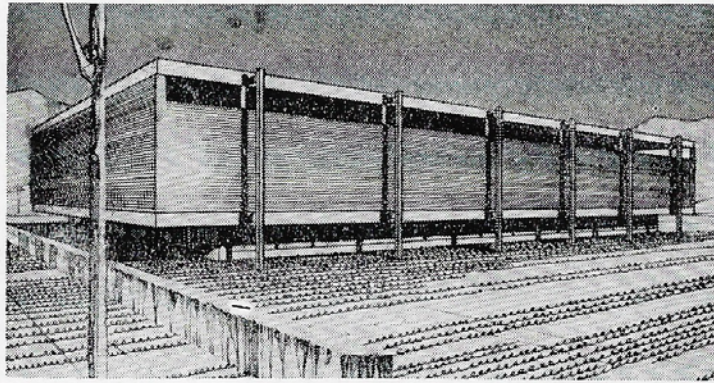
Transcona Police & Fire Hall, 730 Pandora Avenue West, 1966

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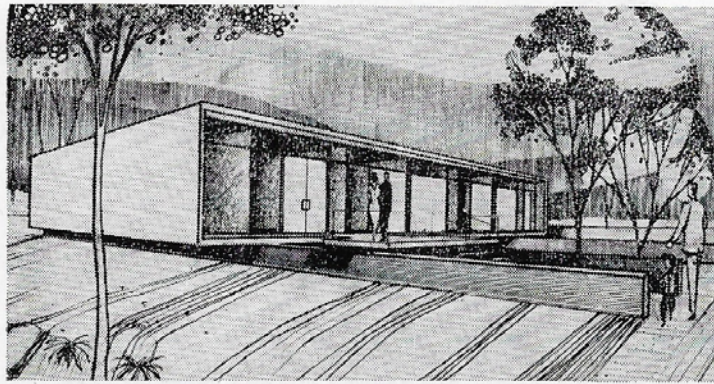


Plate 1 – Windsor Park, 1961, approximate location of Windsor Park Library at star. (University of Manitoba, Winnipeg Tribune Collection, 18-2800-102-1961dec.)

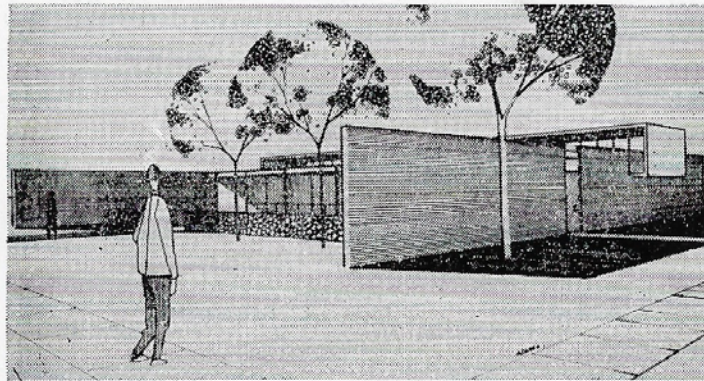
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PROVENCHER PARK



CORONATION PARK



WINDSOR PARK

Plate 2 – Architect’s renderings of the 3 proposed public library branches for St. Boniface, ca.1960, found on an information pamphlet asking citizens to vote for a money by-law to pay for the new facilities. (Courtesy of St. Boniface Public Library Branch.)

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Plate 3 – Provencher Park Library Branch, 255 avenue de la Cathédrale, front (south) façade, 2021. (M. Peterson, 2021.)



Plate 4 – St. Boniface Public Library, Coronation Park Branch, 120 Eugenie Street, 1962. (Archives of Manitoba, CH 0267, GR3552, 62-388.)

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Plate 5 – Windsor Park Library Branch, 955 Cottonwood Road, front (south) and west façades, 2021. (M. Peterson, 2021.)

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Plate 6 – Monarch Life Building, 333 Broadway, south façade, built 1961, 2016. (M. Peterson, 2016.)



Plate 7 – John A. Russell Building (Architecture) - University of Manitoba, 83 Dafoe Road, north façade, built 1959, 2018. (M. Peterson, 2018.)

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Plate 8 – St. Vital Public Library, 6 Fermor Avenue, north façade, 2018. (M. Peterson, 2018.)



Plate 9 – Winnipeg City Hall Complex, 510 Main Street, built 1962-1964, 2014. (M. Peterson, 2014.)

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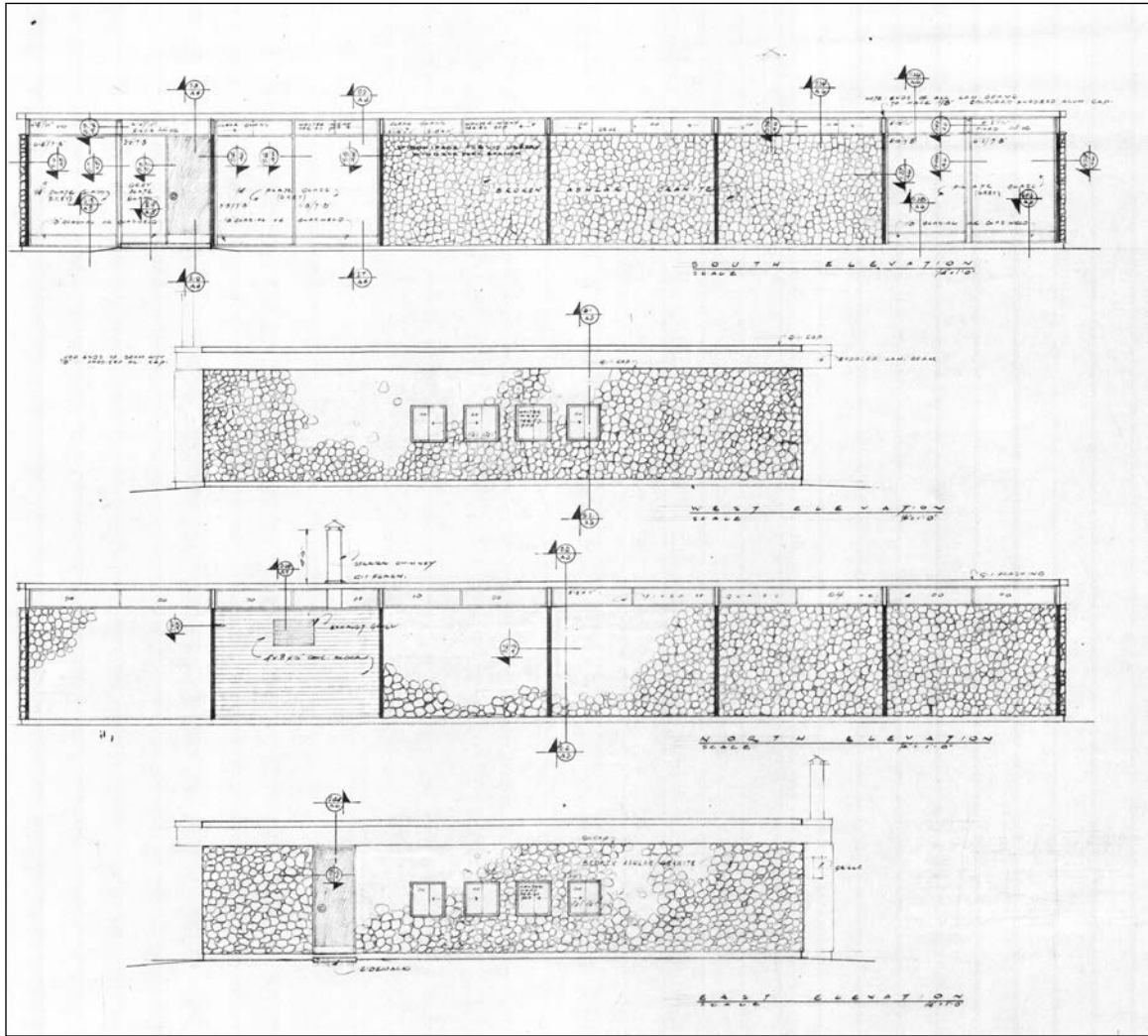


Plate 10 – “Sheet 4-A, Elevations,” Architects plans #290/1961. (City of Winnipeg, Records Management Division.)

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Plate 11 – Windsor Park Library Branch, 955 Cottonwood Road, front (south) façade cladding, 2021. (M. Peterson, 2021.)

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Plate 12 – Windsor Park Library Branch, 955 Cottonwood Road, front (south) façade, 2021. (M. Peterson, 2021.)



Plate 13 – Windsor Park Library Branch, 955 Cottonwood Road, front (south) and west façades, 2021. (M. Peterson, 2021.)

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Plate 14 – Windsor Park Library Branch, 955 Cottonwood Road, detail of front (south) façade, 2021. (M. Peterson, 2021.)

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Plate 15 – Windsor Park Library Branch, 955 Cottonwood Road, east façade, 2021. (M. Peterson, 2021.)



Plate 16 – Windsor Park Library Branch, 955 Cottonwood Road, west façade, 2021. (M. Peterson, 2021.)

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Plate 17 – Windsor Park Library Branch, 955 Cottonwood Road, rear (north) façade, 2021. (M. Peterson, 2021.)



Plate 18 – Lift Building, north of Windsor Park Library Branch, 955 Cottonwood Road, 2021. (M. Peterson, 2021.)

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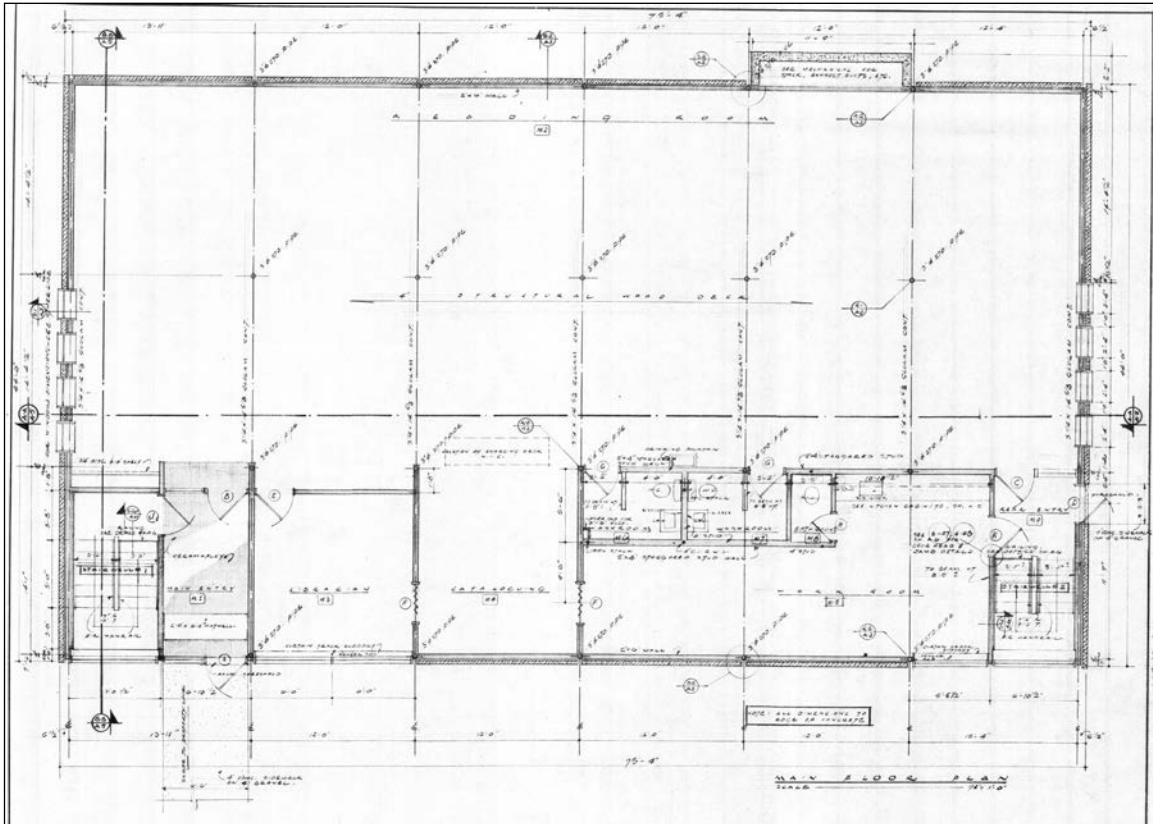


Plate 19 – “Main Floor Plan,” Architects plans #290/1961. (City of Winnipeg, Records Management Division.)

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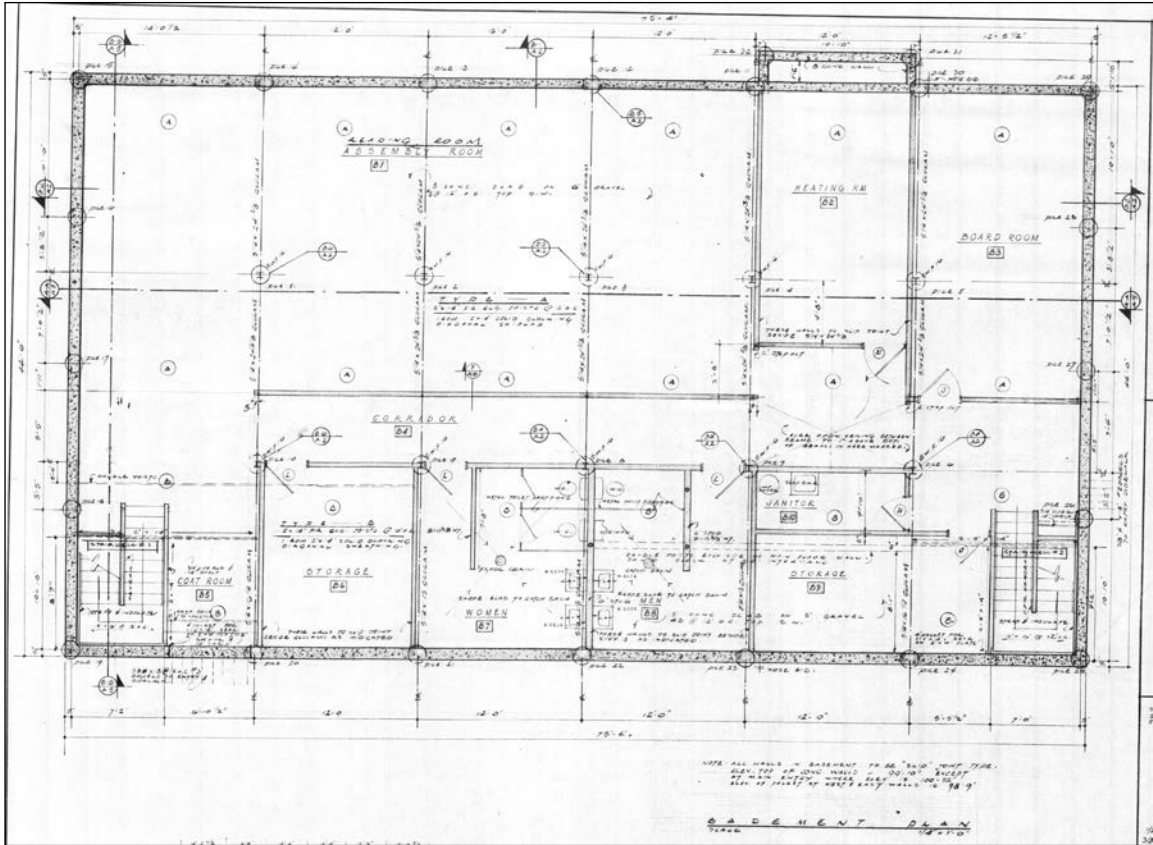


Plate 20 – “Basement Plan,” Architects plans #290/1961. (City of Winnipeg, Records Management Division.)

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Plate 21 – Windsor Park Library Branch, 955 Cottonwood Road, basement, 2021. (M. Peterson, 2021.)



Plate 22 – Windsor Park Library Branch, 955 Cottonwood Road, main floor, front counter, 2021. (M. Peterson, 2021.)

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Plate 23 – Windsor Park Library Branch, 955 Cottonwood Road, main floor, looking east, north side, 2021. (M. Peterson, 2021.)



Plate 24 – Windsor Park Library Branch, 955 Cottonwood Road, main floor, looking west, north side, 2021. (M. Peterson, 2021.)

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Plate 25 – Windsor Park Library Branch, 955 Cottonwood Road, southeast staircase, 2021. (M. Peterson, 2021.)

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Plate 26 – Windsor Park Library Branch, 955 Cottonwood Road, looking west towards Fire Hall No. 15, 1083 Autumnwood Drive, 2021. (M. Peterson, 2021.)

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Plate 27 – Fire Hall No. 15, 1083 Autumnwood Drive, front (west) and south façades, 2021. (M. Peterson, 2021.)

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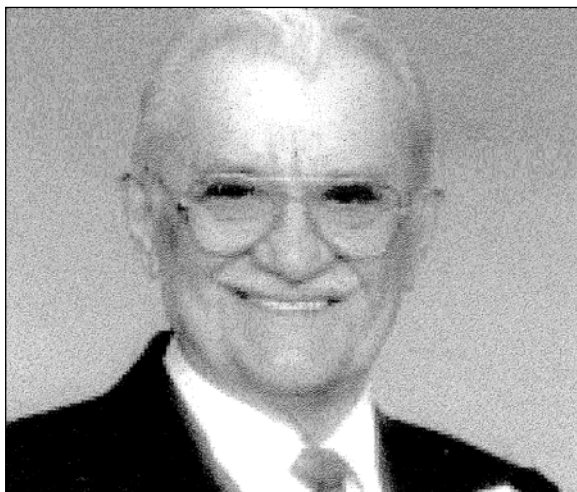


Plate 28 – Nikola Mathew Zunic, no date. (Reproduced from Winnipeg Free Press, April 15, 2006, p. 46.)



Plate 29 – Victor Sobkowich, no date. (Reproduced from Winnipeg Free Press, April 2, 2013, online edition.)

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Plate 30 – Windsor Park Library, 1195 Archibald St., ca.2018 (City of Winnipeg, Libraries Branch.)