



220 ANDREWS STREET
HEBREW FREE SCHOOL

PREPARED BY PETERSON PROJECTS – FEBRUARY 2009



220 ANDREWS STREET HEBREW FREE SCHOOL

Date of Construction: 1922

Building Permit: 2126/1922 (Plans at City storage)

Architect: Blankstein, Max Z.

Contractor: Rodin Fuel Company

ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

This modest brick and concrete one-storey school was built in the heart of Winnipeg's North End to serve the ever-growing Jewish community of the area.

The building was designed with two public elevations (east and north). The brick superstructure rests on a raised concrete foundation. Ornament details include arched openings with stone accents and stepped, stone capped gable ends. Unsympathetic window replacements have detracted from the appearance and integrity of the building.

This school is a good example of the bungalow style school that was popular in Winnipeg, especially in the Winnipeg School Division, between 1918 and 1921. The schools were inexpensive and easy to build, could be operated cheaply and were often used in new



Front (east) and north façades, 1978

neighbourhoods or to provide relief from overcrowded classrooms in existing schools. The level of ornamentation varied from school to school, depending on budgetary constraints.¹

The school is located on the southwest corner of Magnus Avenue and Andrews Street. It measures approximately 26.5 x 18.3 metres and cost \$27,000 to complete in 1922.²

The architect of this building, Max Z. Blankstein, was born in Odessa, Russia on August 23, 1877³ and took his early education and architectural training there; following in the footsteps of his father Meyer Blankstein, a stonemason and contractor by trade.⁴ 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.⁵ 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).⁶

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).⁷ He has been given 10 points by the Historical Buildings Committee.

HISTORICAL INTEREST:

This building operated as a Jewish school until the late 1940s when it was bought and used by the Western Glove Works Company. By the late 1980s it was used as the Pritchard Place Drop-In Centre and is now known as the Andrews Street Family Centre.⁸

RECOMMENDATION TO HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE:

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

- its historical importance- an important educational/cultural facility built to serve one of Winnipeg's important immigrant communities;
- its associations- its long-term connections to the Jewish community in the North End;
- its design- a good example of a bungalow style school built in the post-World War I era;
- 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 some of their original elements and design.

ENDNOTES:

- ¹ M. Peterson, “15 Chester Street – Sir Sam Steele School,” report for the Historical Buildings Committee, March 1996.
- ² City of Winnipeg Building Permit, #2126/1922.
- 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. 14-020104000, 1920-1990.