

**290 McDERMOT AVENUE – GLENGARRY BLOCK**  
*J.H.G. Russell, 1910*



The Glengarry Block, on the south side of McDermot Avenue between Princess and King streets, is one of several structures in downtown Winnipeg which stand as legacies of the entrepreneurial career of John Duncan McArthur.

Like so many of his prominent contemporaries, McArthur was an Ontarian who came west to capitalize on opportunities associated with prairie development. By the turn of the century, he and his counterparts were well positioned to benefit from Winnipeg's dominance of western transportation, finance, grain marketing, and wholesale distribution.

McArthur principally was a railway and general contractor, best known for his work on the Grand Trunk Railway from Port Arthur to Winnipeg. However, he also was involved in lumber and milling concerns and in property development. His Winnipeg projects included the Breadalbane (Ambassador) Apartments, McArthur (Childs) Building, and the Daylight Building erected in 1899 immediately to the west of the Glengarry site.

The seven-storey Glengarry went up during a building boom. It was designed by John H.G. Russell and constructed by A. Simmons for approximately \$51,000.

Russell, an Ontarian, worked in several cities in the United States before opening an architectural practice in Winnipeg in 1895. He was a prolific designer of residential, office, warehouse, bank and church buildings including McArthur's house and the McArthur Building (1909). He was the first Manitoba architect to become president of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (1912-13). He was also active in the Manitoba Association of Architects; a director of two financial companies; and a member of various fraternal, community and church organizations.

Russell's simple, neoclassical design of the Glengarry is highly compatible with the surrounding streetscape. The structure has a raised stone foundation with a girder-post skeletal frame. The otherwise flat roof peaks slightly on the north (front) facing, while a skylight opens out over the penthouse. Local buff-coloured brick and Tyndall stone are used as exterior finishings.

The main-floor entrance and windows are surrounded by three rectangular cut-stone openings that meet at projecting keystones. Three bays of windows, separated by pilasters, rise to the bracketed, galvanized iron cornice and brick pediment. Rectangular raised brick panels mark each floor division between the second and sixth storeys. The sixth-floor windows are set in arched, brickwork alcoves topped by a classical stone ledge. A stone band underscores the cornice.

Four sizes of windows are used with the largest featured on the main and second floors, the smallest on the upper two storeys. Smooth stone sills highlight the windows.

Among the original fire safety features were the building's millwork construction; an automatic sprinkler system fed by a rooftop tank; a brick enclosure for the steam-heat boiler; and a network of iron fire escapes at the rear.

The interior includes a concrete basement floor, wooden floors on the upper levels, and two elevators (one for passengers, one for freight). Original glass partitions between offices have been retained on the main floor and parts of the pressed tin ceiling can be seen over the oak staircase. Among alterations, ceilings on the ground floor have been lowered with ceiling tiles and the burlap wall covering has been replaced with painted plaster and wood panelling.

The Glengarry has housed a variety of wholesalers and manufacturers. The first occupants included Samuel Groff and Sons, importers and manufacturers' agents, and John Erzinger, a wholesale tobacconist. In recent years, tenants mainly have been in Winnipeg's needle trade.

The arches, carved in a smooth, grey-beige Bedford stone, contain a stylized floral form in each keystone. Heavy columns with foliated capitals carry the arches to broad plinths at grade. Metal fencing lines the base of the arches over the main-floor windows, separating the sidewalk traffic from the recessed basement windows. Two carved bronze plaques are set in the ashlar stone between arches. The entrance features broad granite steps leading to double wooden doors with long, clear side windows and a fan transom with elegant tracery. The building's name and date are carved in the entranceway arch.