



## WINNIPEG AUDITORIUM BUILDING A BRIEF HISTORY

- The Winnipeg Auditorium was built in 1931/32 as a make work project in the Depression era. Opened in November 1932, for almost 40 years it filled the purposes now served by five buildings: The Winnipeg Art Gallery, The Manitoba Museum, The Centennial Concert Hall, The Winnipeg Convention Centre, The MTS Centre. It was operated by a City committee for the public good. In only one year did it make money!
- The Auditorium is a fine example of an architectural style, known today as Art Deco, which was popular in the 1920s and 1930s for corporate and public buildings.
- The Auditorium was a true multi-purpose building. Winnipeggers have come here to watch wrestling, to attend meetings and political conventions, to roller-skate, to compete in the Music Festival, to square dance, to look at paintings and stuffed animals and auto shows.
- The Main Auditorium sat 4,075; the Concert Hall 800.
- A galaxy of international stars has appeared here— Yehudi Menuhin, Sonny James, Margot Fonteyn, Paul Robeson, The Trapp Family Singers, Artur Rubenstein, Glenn Gould, Petula Clark, Jussi Bjoerling, Marian Anderson.
- John Diefenbaker began his triumphant 1958 election campaign here. A few months later the Canadian Labour Congress and CCF met and laid plans for the creation of the New Democratic Party.
- In 1970, having outlived its original purpose, the Auditorium was sold by the city to the province for around a million dollars. After renovations, it was officially opened as the Manitoba Archives Building in September 1975. The principal occupants of the building are now the Archives of Manitoba and the Legislative Library.
- The renovation of the interior involved removing the cantilevered balconies from the Main Auditorium. This left a large space, 50 feet high, which now contains 4 floors of vault space for library and archival materials. The fourth floor has twice the height of the other three floors.
- The Exhibition Galleries, with their beautiful arched windows, were intended for trade shows. The Reading Rooms of the Legislative Library and Archives of Manitoba incorporate the Galleries.
- The main entrance was on St. Mary Avenue. It led to a magnificent foyer, two stories high. Both have been substantially re-modeled.
- The wide staircases meant that large crowds could enter and exit swiftly. Strange as it now seems, there were originally no passenger elevators.