

BENJAMIN BROWN SELECTED PROJECTS



MR. MENDEL GRANATSTEIN'S HOUSE AT 24 ST. GEORGE STREET, 1919-1920

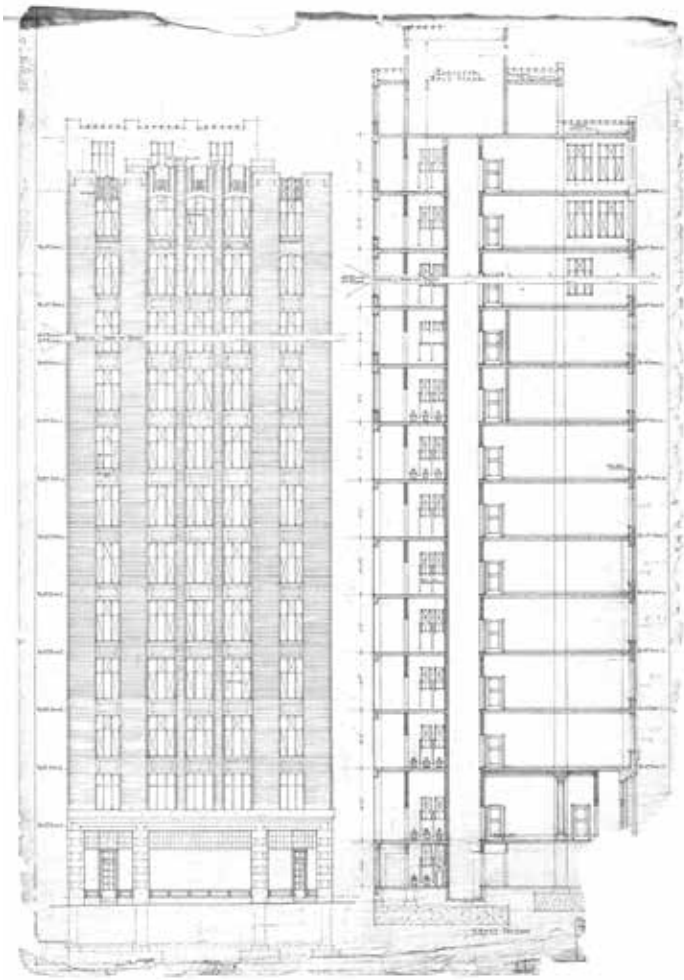
In 1895, Mandel Granatstein founded his junk dealing company, M. Granatstein and Sons, Ltd. By the early 20th century he had become one of the most prosperous members of the Jewish community. In 1919, Mr. Granatstein commissioned Benjamin Brown and Robert McConnell to design a three-story, six bedroom, Classical Georgian mansion at 42 St. George Street. Unique to the design was a retractable roof used on Sukkoth. In 1947, the house was acquired by the University of Toronto and was demolished in 1999. These pencil and ink drawings showcase Brown's technical capacity to draw in a grand style and his ability to incorporate unique features into his designs.

PRESENTATION SKETCH OF A COMMERCIAL BUILDING, 1920

This drawing was meant to showcase Brown's technical skills as an architect to prospective clients. The building, perhaps representing a large office tower, is situated on a corner of a busy downtown street. It is a very early and beautiful example of Brown's commercial design sensibilities.

HERMANT BUILDING ANNEX AT 254-256 VICTORIA ST., 1920; HERMANT BUILDING AT 21 DUNDAS SQUARE, 1929-1930

The Hermant Building, located at 21 Dundas Square, is a designated heritage site comprised of two connected office buildings and an annex. The six storey Hermant Annex and 14 storey eastern tower were designed by Benjamin Brown in 1920 and 1929 respectively. The building is named after Percy Hermant and served as the headquarters for his company, Imperial Optical. Along with his success in business, Mr. Hermant was also a philanthropist and leader of the Jewish community. These are important buildings to the history of Dundas Square and their prominent location at the heart of Toronto's downtown places them at the forefront of Toronto's built landscape.



BUILDING FOR DR. MAX KATES AT DUNDAS AND ELIZABETH STREETS, 1921-1924

Dr. Max Kates was a Jewish dentist in Toronto. He was married to Lillian Kates, who was the founder of Camp Arowhon, a popular Jewish summer camp in Algonquin Park. This building was commissioned by Dr. Kates to house several stores and offices. It still stands today at the corner of Dundas and Elizabeth Streets in the heart of Toronto's former St. John's Ward; the area that first received the thousands of Jewish immigrants fleeing the pogroms in Russia and Eastern Europe. Brown's pencil drawings are a wonderful visual representation of the buildings that were situated in this predominantly Jewish neighbourhood, many of which have since been demolished.



THE BALFOUR BUILDING, 1929-1930

The Balfour Building is located on the northeast corner of Spadina Avenue and Adelaide Street. Built in 1930, the building is 12 stories high and crowned by a two storey enclosed water tower. It is considered one of the finest examples of Art Deco architecture in Toronto and was one of Brown's most important commissions. The Balfour Building is a designated heritage building. It is important to the history of the city, having played a major role in Toronto's textile trade. Originally designed for the Shiffer-Hillman Company, it once housed many of Toronto's Jewish garment businesses. These spectacular pencil drawings offer a glimpse into Brown's attention to detail, right down to the dial floor indicators above the elevator doors.

PROPOSED RESIDENCE FOR MR. BENJAMIN BROWN ON CASTLE FRANK CRESCENT, 1930

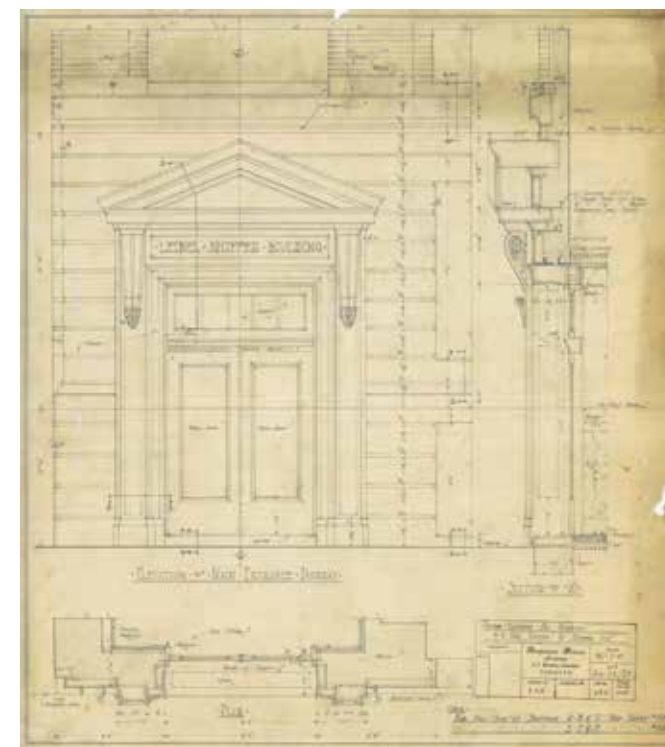
While never built, this house is an important representation of Brown's residential commissions, most of which were for prominent Jewish clientele. Designed for himself, these drawings provide insight into Brown's personal tastes and wishes. The plans show a two storey, three bedroom home that included servant quarters and elaborate gardens. In fact, the landscaping is meticulously detailed by Brown, making these plans a unique addition to the collection.

THE BRUNSWICK AVENUE TALMUD TORAH, [ca. 1922]

First established on Simcoe Street in 1907, the Brunswick Avenue Talmud Torah was an elementary Hebrew day school for boys, officially named the Toronto Hebrew Free School. The school's new building on Brunswick Avenue was completed in 1925 and included expanded school facilities, a gymnasium and a swimming pool. During the first half of the 20th century, this building served as a social, educational and cultural hub for the Jewish community. As a result, it became colloquially known as the "Jewish Centre". The building was later demolished in the 1960s. Brown's impressive watercolour presentation piece is a beautiful perspective drawing that showcases the architect's artistic flair.

THE GELBER BUILDING AT 217-225 RICHMOND STREET WEST, 1923-1924

The Gelber Brothers, Louis and Moses, were born in what is now Austria in the 1870s. They immigrated to Canada in 1894 and together they founded the Imperial Clothing Company, which later became Gelber Brothers Woollens. Their head office, designed by Brown, was located in the Gelber Building at 217-225 Richmond Street West. Still standing today, these drawings show the simple elegance of Brown's designs of commercial buildings.

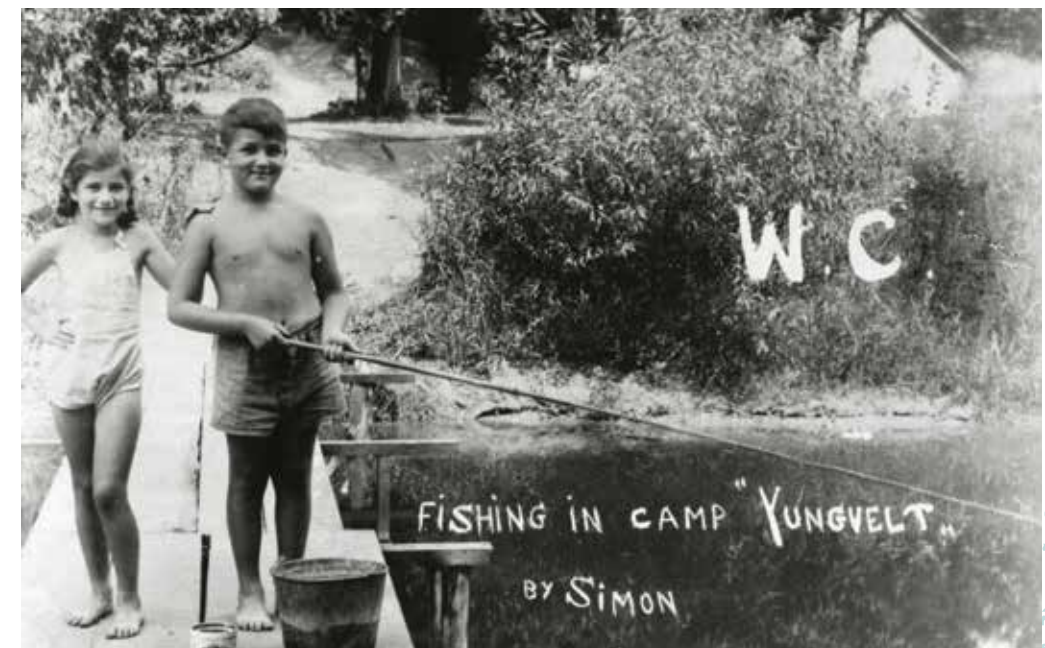


ADDITIONS AND ALTERATIONS TO THE EMPIRE CLOTHING COMPANY BUILDING, 1923

Located at 197-199 Spadina Ave. the Empire Clothing Company building was designed as the office headquarters for the men's clothing manufacturer and wholesaler co-owned by William Leibel and Abraham M. Shiffer. This building is another fine example of Brown's commercial designs for the many garment manufactories and wholesalers that once dominated the Spadina corridor.

NEW BUILDINGS FOR CAMP YUNGVELT, 1940

Founded in the 1920s by the Workmen's Circle (Arbeiter Ring), Camp Yungvelt was originally situated on Lake Wilcox in Richmond Hill. Two years later it moved to Pickering, where it operated until the 1950s. It was a Yiddish summer camp known for accepting the children of poor immigrants for a small fraction of the regular fee. These simple pencil drawings offer a rare look at Brown's work on a pared-down recreational facility and illustrate his commitment and ability to respond to all needs of the Jewish community through his work.



RENDERING FOR THE BETH JACOB SYNAGOGUE ON HENRY STREET, 1919-1922

The Beth Jacob Synagogue was the first synagogue in Toronto designed by a Jewish architect. Located at 23 and 23 1/2 Henry Street, the synagogue was dedicated in 1922 and could accommodate up to 800 worshippers. It was built in the Romanesque style and was notable for its stained glass windows and retractable roof used on Sukkoth. The building was sold to the Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Church in the 1960s. These drawings are a fine example of Brown's seemingly effortless ability to draw magnificent buildings. They also offer a glimpse into the grand aspirations of a growing community in the early decades of the 20th century.