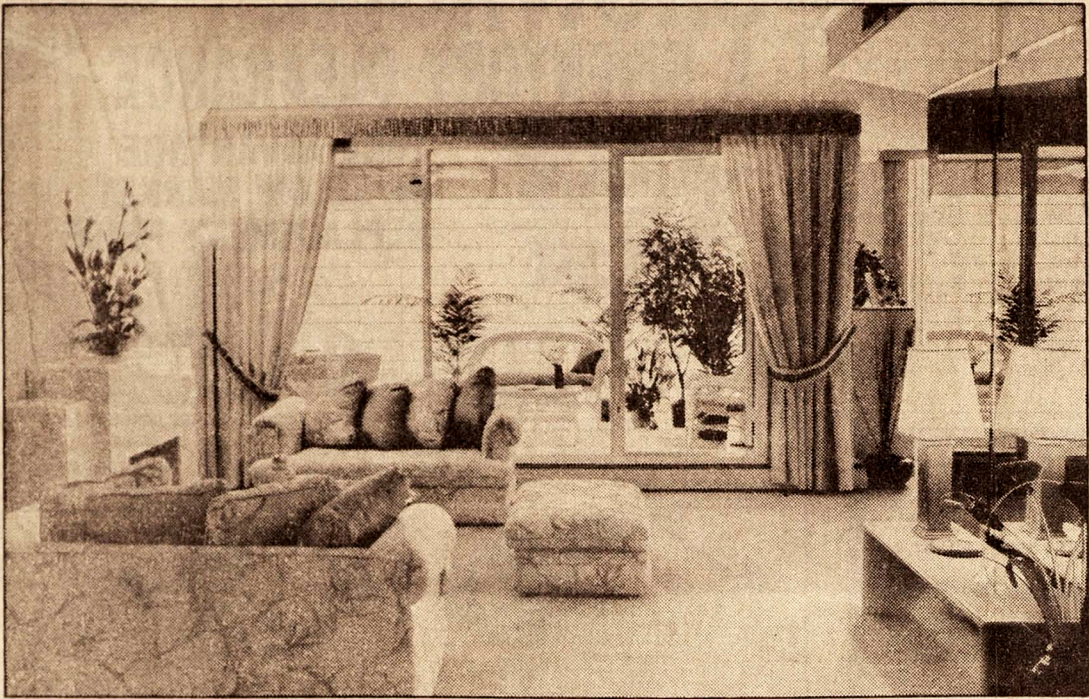


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# Akmans expand housing projects

By Roger Newman  
Special to the Free Press

THE AKMAN family has spent the past 75 years building houses, apartments, condominiums, and commercial buildings in Winnipeg.

But far from being bored with doing the same thing every year, the Akmans are marking the milestone by embarking on new projects and entering new markets in Winnipeg and elsewhere.

"In recent decades, we have been primarily associated with the development of luxury apartments and condominiums in Winnipeg," says Bob Akman, a grandson of the founder who heads the family company's development and marketing division.

"But we will soon start building smaller medium-priced condos because most of the good sites for luxury projects have already been developed."

Innovation has been a byword with the company since it was started in 1912 by Aaron Akman, a young immigrant carpenter from Russia who initially built houses in Elmwood and then developed the first apartments on Broadway when it was little more than a cobblestone street.

## Major company

The eldest Akman teamed up in the 1920s with his own son Lefty who subsequently was joined in the 1970s by his sons Rotchie, Danny, and Bob. Together, they have built Akman and Son Ltd. into a major Manitoba construction and development company that manages 750 apartments, 300 condos, and a variety of industrial buildings and suburban malls.

Bob Akman says the company also is celebrating the anniversary by mounting its first United States development — an 18-storey Phoenix condominium that is a joint venture with Lincor Developments, also of Winnipeg.

But before marching further down new paths, the Akman clan has to take care of some unfinished

business as the opening of two luxury condominiums now is taking shape in the city.

One is the 15-storey Hampton South which they are building at 180 Tuxedo Boulevard, next door to the identical Hampton IV which they completed in 1985.

The Akmans have been using the Hampton name since 1953 when they built the Hampton House apartments on Wellington Crescent. Later, they followed up with two other developments on the crescent — Hampton Green in 1970, and Hampton Park in 1983 — before they moved on to Tuxedo for the fourth and fifth buildings in the series.

## 56 condos

According to Bob, Hampton South will contain 56 condos ranging in size from 130 to 232 square metres and in price from \$175,000 to \$350,000.

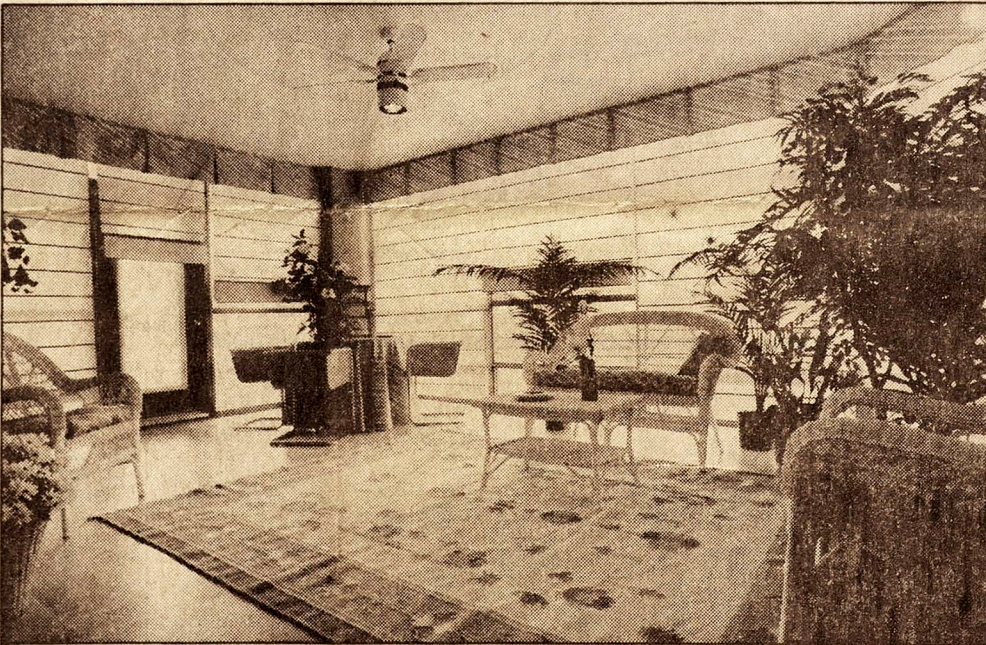
Designed for prosperous empty nesters in the late 40s to 60-plus age group, the spacious units have an open design that eliminates corridors, and there will be only four on each floor.

Akman says the two-bedroom, or two-bedroom with den, condos will have marble foyers, gourmet kitchens, walk-in closets, and two bathrooms, including one with an over-sized tub and separate shower off the master bedroom. The building itself will have uniformed door people, valet parking, and a commissary so residents can buy bread, milk, and other staples without leaving the premises.

"Sales are percolating, probably because of past public acceptance of the Hampton buildings," says Akman. "Seventy per cent of the suites are already taken though Hampton South has just been topped off and its completion is scheduled for June."

The Akmans are aiming for a slightly younger crowd at 1800 Wellington Crescent, their latest development where they plan to build 27 bungalow and two-storey townhomes in six low-rise buildings on a full block of Tuxedo land. With prices starting at \$209,000, the

## Firm eyes new condos, U.S. venture



townhomes will feature vaulted ceilings in the living and dining rooms, fireplaces in the family rooms, and large master bedroom-bathroom suites with step-up Jacuzzi oval tubs.

The opulence of the current Akman buildings in no way resembles the appointments of the first apartments the family built six decades ago.

Lefty Akman, now chairman of the board, says the company expanded from housing construction into apartments in the 1920s when it built the Balfouria at Cathedral Avenue and Main Street. Subsequently, in 1930, Akman and Son completed the River Heights

Apartments at Oak Street and Academy Road. But after that there was a hiatus for almost a decade.

"Not a wheel turned during the Depression," says Lefty, who spent the period working in a clothing factory and honing his pool table skills. "It was 1938 before we were able to start building again."

## Developed Broadway

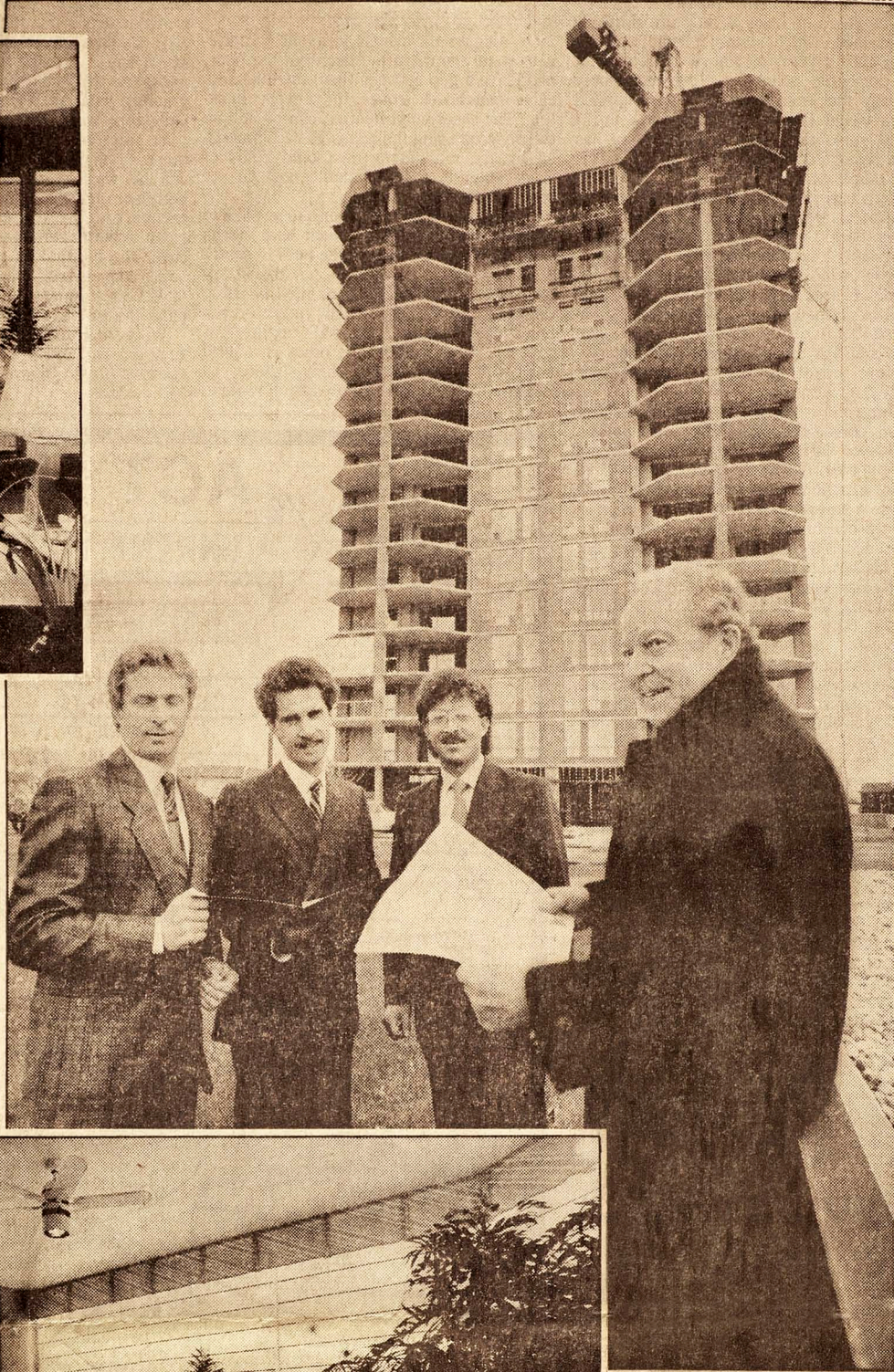
With the return of better times, the Akmans began in earnest to develop Broadway, building six different apartments between the late 1930s and 1950. These edifices, in order of construction, were the Tweedsmuir, Buckingham, Drake,

Nelson, Townhouse, and the Colonial.

Today, the Townhouse — erected in 1949 — houses the company's head office, since the Akmans are convinced Broadway has become more of a business than a residential street.

"Unlike larger cities, Winnipeg has a limited demand for luxury downtown condos because people can drive from Tuxedo to their offices in 15 minutes," says Lefty.

"There has also been a significant increase in property values on Broadway since the 1930s. When we started building there, the price was \$40 a front foot, but it has risen to about \$5,000 today."



Lefty Akman and his sons have included the attractive living room (top) and solarium (left) in their Hampton South project at 180 Tuxedo Boulevard.

After the Second World War, the Akmans also became major players in commercial and industrial construction. They developed the Rosemere, Garden City Square, and Southwood malls, while their industrial projects have included factories for Tan Jay, K-Tel, Victoria Leather, and Manitoba Bedding. Currently, they are putting the finishing touches on the Redwood Centre on Main, and on a two-storey commercial building at Academy Road and Renfrew Street.

Under the current corporate structure, Lefty supervises paternally, while Ritchie handles construction, Danny takes care of property management, and Bob looks after marketing and development. Bob, a lawyer, has the highest profile of the Akmans, being a top Manitoba tennis player and father of Matthew Akman, currently an all-American in the racquet sport at Northwestern University.