

90 ALBERT STREET – A. SCHMIDT FOUNDRY (WESTERN BUILDING)
S. Hooper, 1901



The A. Schmidt and Company Foundry was established in 1881 by Andrew Schmidt, a Danish immigrant who moved to Winnipeg after learning his craft in Montreal. The only brassworks between Minneapolis and the Rockies in the 1880s, Schmidt specialized in brass castings and fittings for industry and construction. The ornamental work done in the foundry included wire screening, iron crestings, brass railings and screens for local churches and commercial buildings.

The need for a new foundry provided local architect Samuel Hooper an opportunity to design a modest structure for \$6,000. Hooper had studied architecture in England. He emigrated to Canada in 1869, settling in Ontario where he worked as a stone-carver. In 1881, he moved to Winnipeg where he continued his career producing such works as the Volunteer Monument now in the Centennial Complex, the Norquay Memorial in St. John's Cemetery and the Seven Oaks

Monument. Hooper was employed by the City of Winnipeg for a short period as Inspector of Civic Works, but resigned in 1895 to embark on his architectural career. His work includes the Carnegie Library on William Avenue, Isbister School on Vaughan Street and the Land Titles Building on Broadway Avenue.

Built in 1901 of solid buff-coloured brick on a stone foundation, the Schmidt Foundry consists of three storeys on a raised basement. Large windows at the front and rear of the basement level provided an abundant amount of natural light to the foundry. Hooper employed symmetrical façades facing both Arthur and Albert Streets. As the main entrance, the Albert Street façade was more ornamental, detailed in a restrained neo-classical style. Pilasters three storeys high support a full entablature of brick. Limestone window sills and a string course provide a delicate horizontal balance. The total effect is functional but not severe.

The Schmidt Foundry occupied the basement until 1918 while the upper floors of the building were leased to R.J. Reid and Co., a stationer and bookbinder who also imported advertising novelties and calendars. In 1927 the Western Dry Goods Company moved into the building and remained there for fifty years. Marketing dry goods, china and toys, Sam Granovsky built up the business through overseas imports.

Recently the Western Building has undergone a major revitalization and now houses Impulse Design Accessories, Pier Imports and a photographer's studio.