



90 ALBERT STREET
WESTERN BUILDING

HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE

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This brick warehouse was built in 1901 to house a brass foundry and wireworks. The A. Schmidt and Company foundry was established in Winnipeg in 1881 by Andrew Schmidt, a Danish immigrant who learned his trade in Montreal. Since at least 1886, the foundry was located near the site of 90 Albert Street (before the construction of this building) and included a machine shop with a warehouse in the rear.¹

Thought to be 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 cresting, brass railings and screens for churches and businesses and swinging lamps. He also manufactured electric bell systems, telegraph instruments, electrical supplies and inventors' models. Repairs to all manner of steel, iron or brass items, such as small machines or safes, were part of the foundry's services. Because the Schmidt Foundry only manufactured smaller items using steam power, it was able to operate in the rather confined space of the burgeoning warehouse district.

A long time neighbour to the foundry was Samuel Hooper's Marble Works at the corner of Albert and Bannatyne Streets. Specializing in marble and granite works for monuments, mantels and marlbeware,² Hooper's company grew into a major supplier of architectural items while by 1895 Hooper himself had been designing buildings. He eventually abandoned the marble supply firm to practice architecture full time, having trained in the field as a youth in England. He was appointed Manitoba's first Provincial Architect in 1907.³

Samuel Hooper designed this building in 1901 for Andrew Schmidt, as the two knew each other from years of doing business so close together. Built of solid buff-coloured brick, the warehouse is three storeys high with a raised basement in a stone foundation. It seems logical that the foundry would be located in the basement, which is high and fully lit both front and rear with large windows.

The dimensions of the building are 25 feet by 61 feet and it cost \$6,000 to construct. Because of the

shape of the lot, the north wall is slightly shorter as both front and rear elevations are flush with the street. Davidson Brothers were the general contractors and masons, while the firm of Laird and Murray did the carpentry.⁴

Hooper's design of the new foundry and warehouse was certainly straight forward and functional but was not without character. Although the front and rear elevations are similar, the Albert Street facade was the main entrance so it received particular treatment. The facade is symmetrical, with three bays of windows aligned vertically between four capped pilasters. Each window is framed carefully between lug sills, voussoirs and lintels, with the sills and a belt course between the ground and first floor rendered in limestone. The cornice and parapet were executed in brick, and wrap the other three sides of the building in a plainer version. The effect is functional but not severe.

The Schmidt Foundry remained in the building until the close of World War I. The upper half of the building was leased to a jewellery manufacturer. From c.1918 to 1927, this building housed the British and Colonial Press and later the Grand Army United Veterans Association. Then in 1927, the Western Dry Goods Company moved into the building for a stay of fifty years. Initially the dry goods importers shared the building with such smaller firms as manufacturers' agents, the Canada Messenger Service and Shumsky Furs. In later years, since the 1950s, owner Sam Granovsky built up Western Dry Goods into a successful importing firm. He warehoused specialty dry goods, chinaware, giftware and toys in what became known as the Western Building.

In c.1978, Western Dry Goods vacated the Western Building, which was mainly empty except for the Detour discotheque. In the early 1980s it became the home of Impulse Design Accessories and Pier Imports. This latest occupancy represents a major re-vitalization of the warehouse. The block was cleaned, inappropriate signage and clutter removed, and the old sash windows replaced. The interior, which had been neglected for several decades,⁵ was renovated and restored for modern use. The rear of the building on Arthur Street retains its traditional warehouse role with a modified loading dock. With the exception of the new windows and a modified entranceway, the building is faithful to its original appearance.

- impact of Schmidt foundry - related to growth of building biz.

- Western Dry Goods
- representative warehouse structure of durable design: foundry to dry goods to design accessories.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Thompson and Boyer The City of Winnipeg published by the authors, Winnipeg, 1886, p. 148-149.
2. Ibid., p. 182-183.
3. Frank Schofield The Story of Manitoba Vol. III the S.J. Clark Publishing Company Winnipeg 1913 p. 601.
4. City of Winnipeg Building Permit No. 175 9 May 1901.
5. Selwyn Carrington "90 Albert Street" in Early Building in Winnipeg Vol. IV C.I.H.B. report 1977 p. 60.

APPENDIX A

SAMUEL HOOPER (1851-1911)

Samuel Hooper was born in Devonshire, England in 1851, and studied architecture there under the tutelage of his uncle, a crown surveyor. He immigrated to Canada in 1869, settling first in Ontario where he worked as a stone carver. In 1881, Hooper moved to Winnipeg, entering into partnership with a monument maker. In 1883, the partner retired, leaving Hooper to build up Hooper's Marble Works. Besides many fine tombstones, his company produced the Volunteer Monument in the Centennial Complex, the Norquay Memorial in St. John's Cemetery and the Seven Oaks Monument.

With the marble business firmly established in 1895, Samuel Hooper returned to the practice of architecture. In the employ of the Winnipeg Catholic Archdiocese, Hooper designed many church buildings including St. Mary's Academy and the addition to St. Mary's Church and School. The Carnegie Library on William Avenue, the Isbister School, the Land Titles Building on Broadway are all his designs. In June 1970, Hooper was appointed Manitoba's first Provincial Architect, which he held until his death in 1911. In this government position, he designed the Agricultural College in Tuxedo and Fort Garry, the Winnipeg Normal School, court houses in Morden and Brandon, the asylum in Brandon and the Portage jailhouse.

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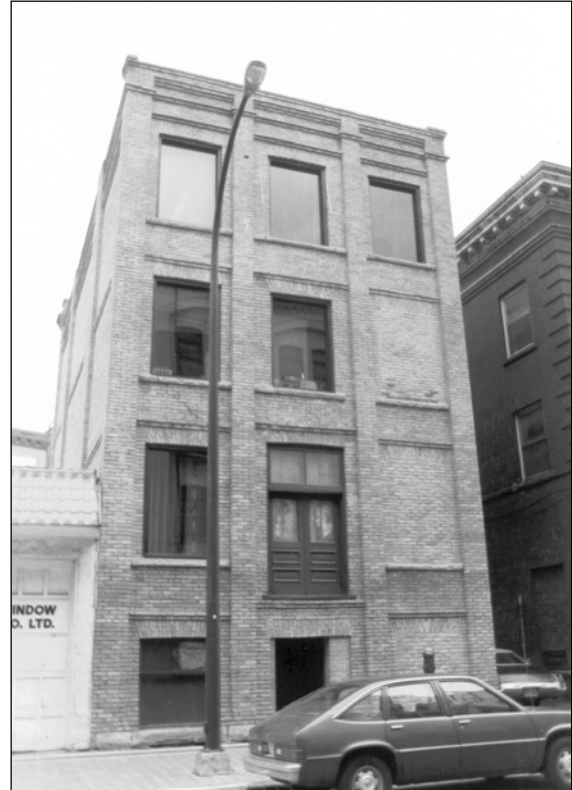


Plate 1 – Western Building, 90 Albert Street, 1983, front (east) façade (left) and rear (west) façade (right). (Courtesy of the City of Winnipeg, Planning Department.)



Plate 2 – Albert Street with the Western Building in the foreground, 1969. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Architectural Survey.)

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Plate 3 – Warehouse District, ca.1905, Western Building at arrow. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)