

**425 HENRY AVENUE – TURNER-WALKER BLOCK
(McCORMICK'S LIMITED BUILDING)**
J.N. Semmens, 1912



The Turner-Walker Block, adjacent to the Canadian Pacific Railway Yards, was built during the peak of Winnipeg's dominance over the prairie economy in a style that departed from the design commonly applied to the city's warehouses.

By World War I, the influx of prairie settlers that had driven Winnipeg's development was beginning to slow and the city found itself in competition with new centers of commerce such as Calgary and Edmonton. Nonetheless, Winnipeg retained supremacy over western wholesaling, transportation, financing and grain marketing until the early 1920s.

Sampson Walker, a retired businessman, politician and property owner, had the four-storey Turner-Walker Block erected during a building boom in 1912. Walker, an Englishman, brought his family to Winnipeg in the early 1880s. He worked briefly for the CPR, then went into private

business. He also served as a city alderman (1891) and member of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly (1903-05).

His warehouse, located along Ellen Street between Henry and Higgins avenues, was served by a transfer track from the CPR Yards. It was designed by J.N. Semmens and constructed by Carter-Halls-Aldinger Company for \$65,000.

Semmens studied at Winnipeg's Wesley College and the University of Pennsylvania, returning to this city to practice architecture and serve with the Winnipeg Grenadiers. He went overseas during World War I, eventually commanding the 78th Battalion. His portfolio included the city's RCMP Barracks, St. Boniface Sanatorium, Grace Maternity Hospital, Daniel McIntyre Collegiate Institute, Bank of Montreal (1913), Civic Auditorium, and Isaac Newton Junior High School. Semmens worked closely with and subsequently succeeded J.B. Mitchell as commissioner of schools. During World War II, he organized the 2nd Battalion of Grenadiers and commanded Camp Shilo. His design of the Turner-Walker Block is in a reduced neoclassical style, displaying greater emphasis on the straight line than the Richardsonian Romanesque form so prevalent in Winnipeg's warehouse district.

The brick and mill-constructed building rests on a raised stone basement. It rises to a heavy dentilated metal cornice topped by a brick parapet with stone coping. Ground-level emphasis is created by smooth ashlar limestone up to the second storey on the front (south) facing and along the base of the east elevation. Red brick, with contrasting stone belt, sills and lintels, appears on the upper levels of all but the rear (west) elevation where common clay brick has been used.

An ornamental cut-stone entrance framed by Tuscan-order columns graces the symmetrical front facing. Diamond-shaped detailing highlights the spandrels between single and paired flat-headed windows on each of the finished elevations. A band of diamonds and squares also runs along the top of the window bays which are separated by pilasters.

The building's east wall is tapered at the north end to accommodate a bend in the transfer track. Its four delivery doors have radiating brick arches with numbered ashlar keystones. Loading areas also appear on the north and west elevations.

The interior, supported by fire-resistant square wooden posts and beams, is divided into separate halves, each with its own elevator.

The warehouse was named after one of its first occupants, the Turner-Walker Company, manufacturers' agents. This company was formed in c.1910 by Charles G. Turner and Raymond Walker, one of Sampson's four sons. There were three other original tenants dealing in various types of equipment and other merchandise. By 1917, Turner and Walker had parted. The warehouse was occupied successively by the T. Eaton Company of Canada, Manitoba Vegetable Growers, and Manitoba Liquor Control Commission. Sampson Walker sold the building in 1930 to Catelli Macaroni Products Corporation Ltd., which used it as a manufacturing facility until 1958. McCormick's Ltd., which obtained 425 Henry in 1949, subsequently used it to manufacture biscuits until 1979.

The building, which has been vacant in recent years, has been acquired by the Winnipeg Housing Rehabilitation Corporation for conversion to family rental accommodation, complementing renewal efforts in this part of the North Logan neighbourhood.