

**66 KING STREET – MALTESE CROSS BUILDING**  
*J.D. Atchison, 1909*



The seven-storey Maltese Cross Building at the southwest corner of King Street and McDermot Avenue recalls its original owner and purpose in a way that is distinctive in Winnipeg's Exchange District.

Some structures, such as bank chambers and fraternal halls, display coats-of-arms or other specific organizational symbols. But few, if any, are as amply adorned with a corporate emblem as is 66 King Street where a modified form of the cross-pattée appears throughout the exterior and on some interior components.

This motif was the trademark of the Gutta Percha & Rubber Ltd. of Toronto which built 66 King

in 1909 to house its local wholesale outlet, the Winnipeg Rubber Co. Gutta Percha made and distributed belts, hoses, tubes, gaskets, valves, clothing, footwear, mats, tires, and other rubber products. By the 1910s, the firm had 15 branches across Canada, plus two in Australia.

Its trademark was based on the Greek cross, a form in which the four arms are of equal length and joined at the centre. The cross-pattée version consists of arms that flare as they extend outward to straight ends. The centre of the Gutta Percha logo was accented with a square. Some printed variants also had a circle containing the company's name.

Several orders of chivalry and military decorations feature the cross-pattée. Related forms have rounded or slightly pointed ends. They differ from the Maltese cross in that the ends of the latter are more sharply indented to create two points. This badge originated during the medieval Crusades with the Hospital Order of St. John of Jerusalem. Its four arms represent prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude, while its eight points denote the Beatitudes or blessings associated in Christian scriptures with those virtues.

The Gutta Percha trademark was applied in stone and metal above the entrances to 66 King, on the building's corners between the first and second floors, on pilaster caps, and on the balusters of the main interior staircase. At one time, large white-painted examples also were visible on the roof-top elevator housing. However, Gutta Percha stopped using the logo when a likeness, the iron cross, was revived as a German war medal. Painted versions of the symbol were removed from the building, but those in stone and metal remained.

Gutta Percha continued in a portion of the office and warehouse space at 66 King through to the 1950s when it relocated to Ellice Avenue. Among other long-term occupants were Charles Home Ltd., a woollen importer and wholesaler, the Belding Corticelli Co. silk merchants, and several dry goods and needle trades suppliers. Since 1951, the property has been owned in succession by manufacturer Max Shore, the Maltese Cross Investments Ltd., and Kays Ltd., now amalgamated with Kayjet Promotions Ltd. In recent decades, the tenant mix has become more varied in terms of size and types of businesses.

Erected for \$84,000, the building is of reinforced concrete construction on a concrete foundation

and footings. Three of its walls have exterior finishes of red brick and contrasting light limestone. The structure presents an orderly and dignified face in the tripartite pattern common to the Chicago School of commercial architecture.

The King and McDermot façades have ashlar stone veneer along the foundation and main floor. Between the piers are large windows. The entrance on King still features a curved iron canopy, but its doorway has been replaced by an aluminum frame and glass unit. The original McDermot or north entry remains. It is set in a segmental stone arch with the corporate symbol carved in the large keystone. The double oak and brass-trimmed doors are highlighted by a classical pediment with a cast-iron cross in the tympanum and surrounding Beaux-Arts iron grille-work.

The second to sixth floors display a symmetrical grid-like arrangement of windows divided vertically by brick pilasters and horizontally by stone belt courses and pilaster accents. Most of the rectangular openings are organized in pairs over stone sills. Typical of warehouses in the Exchange District, the top storey is marked by three narrow windows per bay. A large metal cornice with dentils and modillions and a stone-capped brick parapet complete the design.

John Danley Atchison (1870-1959), an American who was active as an architect and town planner in Winnipeg during the early 1900s, planned 66 King. Atchison was raised in Monmouth, Illinois and studied at the Chicago Art Institute and Chicago Manual Training School. He worked for the World's Columbian Exposition, a railroad and some architects before establishing his own practice in the mid-1890s. Chicago was then a leader in the design and technology of steel frame and reinforced concrete buildings. Atchison brought those skills to Winnipeg when he opened a local office in 1905. Between then and his departure for California some 18 years later, he was responsible for numerous commercial, institutional and residential projects, including a number of downtown office buildings that continue to define streets such as Portage, Main, Lombard, and Garry.