



66 KING STREET

MALTESE CROSS BUILDING

HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE

29 July 1982

Updated November 2008

66 KING STREET – MALTESE CROSS BUILDING

Designed by architect John Danley Atchison (see Appendix I for biographical information), the Maltese Cross Building was erected in 1909¹ for the Winnipeg Rubber Company, local branch of the wholesale Toronto firm, the Gutta Percha and Rubber Company Limited. Like many wholesalers at the time, the local wholesale received all its goods from the east via the railway. Carload lots of stock which came to Winnipeg under special tariff rates, were sorted, stored then redistributed to retailers throughout the West.² Before Winnipeg established its own manufacturing industries, it was these distribution operations that formed the foundation of the development of the warehouse district.³

Within a few years, the local company took on the name of the parent corporation, Gutta Percha and Rubber. From the start, the local company had made extensive use of the larger company's logo and trademark, a modified Maltese Cross. The Maltese Cross, which dates to the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem during the Crusades, was modified over the years to the heavier iron cross as well as the original more delicate cross. This heavier version, the company's symbol, can be found in numerous places in the stone trim of the Maltese Cross Building. It was also painted in large white characters in the elevator housing on the roof, making the cross noticeable from a considerable distance. When the iron or Maltese Cross came to be associated with Nazi Germany in the early 1930s, Gutta Percha was quick to drop both the logo and the trade mark. The elevator housing was repainted, but most of the crosses remain on the building.

Gutta Percha offered a wide range of rubber goods. Industrial belting, tubing and gaskets, rubber hosing for fire protection, waterproof clothing and footwear, thresher belts, and tires for cars and trucks were among its products.⁴ The company was well known to Winnipeggers and originally

¹ City of Winnipeg Building Permit No. 1538/1909, cost \$84,000.

² Reuben Bellan, Winnipeg First Century An Economic History (Queenston House Publishing, Winnipeg, 1878), p. 74.

³ Ibid., p. 76.

⁴ Entry for Gutta Percha and Rubber in Henderson's Winnipeg Directory, 1918.

occupied the first two storeys, as well as the attic level of the Maltese Cross Building until moving to Ellice Avenue in the early 1950s. The name survives in the Ellice block.

The remainder of the space in the Maltese Cross building generally has been rented to companies requiring a combination of office and warehouse space. Like Gutta Percha and Rubber, many of these smaller firms acted as agents for eastern-based companies. A long-time tenant was the Charles Home Limited, an importing firm which dealt in wholesale woollens. Silk merchants by the name of Belding Corticelli Company kept a floor in the structure from ca.1918 to ca.1968. Several dry goods specialty suppliers and suppliers to the needle trades kept space. During 1930s, depressed economic conditions were reflected in a high vacancy rate, but full occupancy resumed in the 1940s. The Canadian Department of Transport Stores held warehouse space in the Maltese Cross Building in the mid-1950s. The offices of architectural firm Haid, Haid, Donner and Austin in the late 1970s reflect a change towards greater diversity in the types of tenants. Several floors of the building are now used only for storage.

With dimensions of 49 ½ x 119 ½ x 99 feet,⁵ this seven-storey building has reinforced concrete construction (see Appendix I for construction information). All sides except the west are faced in a deep red brick; the combination of concrete and brick was considered fireproof by the fire underwriters' standards. An automatic sprinkler system, fed from a tank on the attic floor, gave additional protection. The contractor was unnamed on the original Building Permit.

While the central portion of the façade of the Maltese Cross Building is unadorned, there is some detailing along the base at street level, and on the attic and cornice. Brick pilasters run between two stone belts, and drop into stone footings. The ashlar limestone belting is regularly punctuated with Maltese Crosses, which are also found over the two doorways. Gutta Percha and Rubber Co. used the McDermot entrance, which was initially more ornate, but a newer canopy over the King Street entrance has made this the principal entrance to the building. Details of the entrance and an interior feature are found in the photographs at the end of the report. There is also a detailed description of

⁵ City of Winnipeg Assessment Record, Roll No. 609380-12-2 (PC 50).

the building found at Appendix III..

Although the exterior remains much as it was, the interior was altered substantially in the 1950s and 1960s. A fire escape down the McDermot façade was added in 1962.⁶⁶

This building is representative of the backbone of the warehouse district; the solid, functional warehouse combined with adaptive office space.

⁶ Selwyn Carrington "Maltese Cross Building" C.I.H.B. Report 1975, Vol. IV, p. 120; and "Winnipeg Building Development in 1911" Winnipeg Saturday Post, May 20, 1911, p. 10 & 11.

APPENDIX I

John Danley Atchison (1870-1959)

Unquestionably one of the city's most talented architects, J.D. Atchison was born in Monmouth, Illinois in 1870. Educated in Chicago, he studied architecture at the Chicago Art Institute and the Chicago Manual Training School.¹ After graduation he worked in the offices of W.G. Barfield, as well as for the firm Jenney and Mundie. William Le Baron Jenney was considered by many to be one of America's leading architects and Atchison participated in the planning of buildings utilizing the latest technology in steel skyscraper construction.

In 1895, he opened his own practice which continued until the early 1900s. He worked on the staff of the World's Columbian Exposition and for the Chicago and Eastern Illinois Railroad. His commissions brought him to Winnipeg and by 1905 the prosperity and future prospects prompted him to relocate his business here.²

A list of some of the more prominent local buildings designed by J.D. Atchison over his career includes:³

Alexandria Block, 389-93 Graham Ave. (1901) – demolished
Wardlow Apartments, 544 Wardlaw Ave. (1905) – Grade II
Kennedy Building (Mitchell-Copp), 315 Portage Ave. (1906) – Grade II
Hample Building, 271 Portage Ave. (1906)
Concordia (Bon Accord) Block, northeast corner Main St. and Logan Ave. (1906) – partially demolished
Stone Block, 650 Main St. (1907) – demolished
Nanton Stables, 61 Roslyn Cres. (1908) – converted to residence
Dennistoun House, 166 Roslyn Rd. (1908) – Grade III

¹ Winnipeg Telegram, September 18, 1906, p. 55; and F.H. Schofield, The Story of Manitoba (Winnipeg: S.J. Clarke, 1913), Vol. II, p. 374.

² F.H. Schofield, op. cit., p. 374.

³ Compiled from City of Winnipeg Historical Buildings Files; J. Wade, Manitoba Architecture to 1940 (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1976); Winnipeg Telegram, September 18, 1906, p. 55; Winnipeg Tribune, December 21, 1907; and F.H. Schofield, op. cit., pp. 374-75.

J.D. Atchison designs, continued:

A. Matheson House, Kildonan (1908)⁴
Devon Court, 376 Broadway (1908) - demolished
Men's Own of the City of Winnipeg Shelter Mission, 181 Logan Ave. (1908) - demolished
N.W.C.T.A. Building, 291 Garry St. (1908) – Grade III
Paterson Block, 54 Donald Street (1909)
Oldfield, Kirby and Gardner Building, 234 Portage Avenue (1909) – Grade II
Canada Permanent Building, 296-98 Garry St. (1909) – Grade II
Edmonton Block, 383-89 Portage Ave. (1909) - demolished
Maltese Cross Building, 66 King St. (286 McDermot Ave.) (1909) – Grade III
Grosvenor Court, 161-65 Stafford St. (1910)
Eastern Townships Bank, 367-69 Main St. (1910) - demolished
Orpheum Theatre, Fort St. (1910) - demolished
Chamber of Commerce Building (Great-West Life Building), 177 Lombard Ave. (1911) – Grade II
Allan, Killam and McKay Block, 364 Main St. (1911) - demolished
Winnipeg Development and Industrial Bureau Exposition Building, southeast corner of Main St. and
Water Ave. (1911-12) - demolished
Carlton Building, 354 Portage Ave. (1912) – Grade III
Cadomin Building, 280 Main St. (1912)
Mac's Building, 585 Ellice Ave. (1912)
Boyd Building, 384 Portage Ave. (1912) – Grade III
Union Tower, 191 Lombard Ave. (1912-13) – Grade II
Merchants' Bank Branch, 1386 Main St. (1913) – Grade III
All Souls' Unitarian Church, Furby St. (1913)
Curry Building, 233 Portage Ave. (1915) – Grade II
Willys Overland Building, 686 Portage Ave. (1916)
Bank of Hamilton Building, 395 Main St. (1916-18) – Grade I
Red Cross Lodge, Fort Osborne Barracks, Tuxedo (1919) - demolished
Manitoba School for the Deaf, Tuxedo (1922)
Medical Arts Building, southeast corner Graham Ave. and Kennedy St. (1922-23) - demolished

Atchison also designed structures in other western provinces. He won the design competition for the Moose Jaw City Hall, c.1912-13 (not built) and planned the Moose Jaw Collegiate (1908-10), Saskatchewan Presbyterian Boys' College and Principal's Residence (1911-12), and Hammond Building, Main St., Moose Jaw (1912).

⁴ Manitoba Free Press, February 29, 1908, p. 7.

Atchison was also intimately involved in promoting the concept of The Mall or Capitol Approach from Portage Avenue to the Legislative Building along Memorial Boulevard. He prepared proposals for the City Planning Commission (1911) and later the Winnipeg Town Planning Commission (1913). He also made proposals to the Greater Winnipeg Plan Commission (1917; 1919) which he became chairman of in 1919.⁵

In 1923, Atchison left Winnipeg for Pasadena, California, and continued to practice there, adopting the Spanish Colonial style for his residential work. He died in 1959.⁶

⁵ Marilyn Baker, Symbol in Stone: The Art and Politics of a Public Building (Winnipeg: Hyperion Press Ltd., 1986), pp. 27-8, 51-5, 98-9, and 122-23.

⁶ The Emerson Court House and Town Hall Building (Winnipeg: Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Recreation, Historic Resources Branch, 1985), pp. 8-11.



APPENDIX II

CITY OF WINNIPEG - Preliminary Report

Date: January 10, 2000

Building Address: 66 King Street (286 McDermot)

Building Name: Maltese Cross Building

Original Use: warehouse

Current Use: commercial offices

Roll No. (Old): 609380 (10104)

Municipality: 12

Ward: 2

Property or Occupancy Code: 50

Legal Description: 6^w St. John, Plan 400, Lots 7/8 Location: southwest corner McDermot Avenue

Date of Construction: 1909

Storeys: 7

Construction Type: reinforced concrete frame & brick

Heritage Status: GRADE III (September 30, 1997)

Building Permits (Plans available: [A] Archives; [M] Microfilm; [V] Vault):

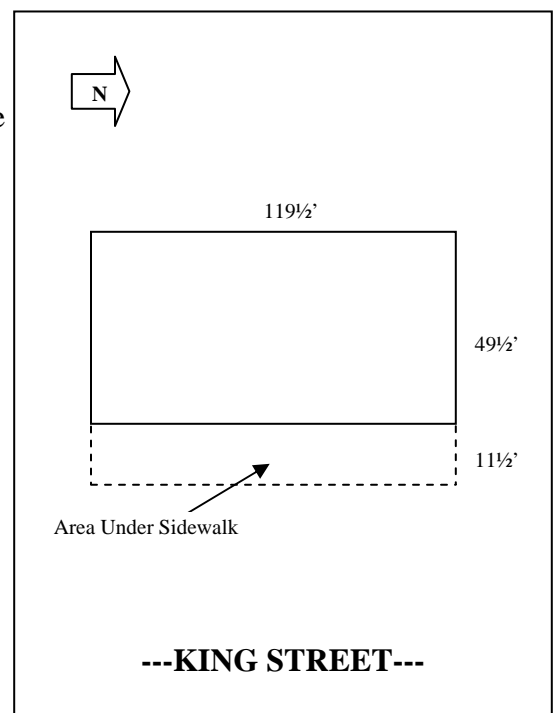
- 1538/1909 \$84,000 (49 x 120, 7 storey – original); 6361/1949 \$500 (repairs); 2774/1951 \$2,500 (repairs); 3050/1955 \$3,000 (alterations – 3rd); 1491/1956 [V01B06] (alteration – 5th); 3009/1956 \$300 (alteration – 6th); 1360/1957 \$3,800 (alteration); 6276/1962 [V04D08] \$9,500 (Fire escape); 789/1965 \$1,100 (alteration); 258/1966 \$6,700 (alteration elevator – 7th); 2651/1969 \$2,500 (alteration); 9326/1973 \$4,000 (alteration 3rd & 4th); 493/1981 [M02C03] (alteration); 3453/1986 \$25,000 (alteration); 2592/1997 \$15,000 (alteration)

Information:

- 49 ½ x 119 ½ x 99+ = 596,604 cu. ft.
- Exterior – north & east walls – cut stone to heads of 1st floor; stone belt at head & stone footings to wide pilasters; balance red clay brick, heavy metal cornice. South wall concrete foundation to ground level, balance – red clay brick; west wall – party wall.
- Wall Thickness – 13”, basement – 22” to 37”
- 1941 – General Condition excellent, slight cracks in surface of concrete slabs
- 1948 – Some tiled ceiling, new partitioning – 6th
- 1956 – 5th floor remodelled, same as 6th
- 1961 – fluorescent lighting
- 1963 – new fire escape to north side of building
- 1966 – new front elevation
- 1974 – alterations to 3rd and 4th floors – partitions removed
- Permit 3453/1986 – retaining wall construction in basement area under sidewalk

ARCHITECT: JOHN ATCHISON

CONTRACTOR: UNNAMED



APPENDIX III

Description of Maltese Cross Building by George Fuller, Manitoba Historical Society, c.1975.

1. Site: The building occupies the south-west corner of the intersection of King Street and McDermot Avenue. It sits adjacent to an office building of similar height and age on the west, and is bounded on the south by a service lane and parking lot.
2. General Statement: This 7-storey office building affirms its name by the use of the unusual medieval emblem applied generously on the building. It appears above the entrances, at the corners, on the pier capitals, and in interior detailing. The fabric of ashlar limestone base and trim, red brick, and metal cornice appears sound and is in excellent surface condition. There appears to be no evidence of major changes made to the exterior since organized.
3. Description of Exterior:
 - I. Style: The building is a worthy product of the tripartite pattern of the Chicago School of architects, although, through superficial details, alludes to the Italian Renaissance palazzo in the most elementary manner. Ornament is kept to a minimum, and, as mentioned, the Maltese Cross is the only repeated motif. Treatment ceases on the south elevation.
 - II. Physical Characteristics: The building is 50 ft. by 120 ft. 6 in. by approximately 90 ft. high, with 15 ft. square bays disposed 3 east-west and 7 north-south. A 20 ft. 6 in. eighth bay on the south accommodates vertical circulation.
 - (a) Foundation: 4 ft. 9 in. high ashlar limestone veneer over reinforced concrete.
 - (b) Wall Construction: Reinforced concrete frame with limestone veneer on the first floor, and brick veneer in a Flemish bond above. The pier capitals and entablature above are finished in ashlar limestone.
 - (c) Openings:
 - (i) Doors: The entry to the main floor is one centre to the north facade. The entry to the upper office floors is in the 8th bay on the east. On the south there are double loading doors at the south-west corner.

The McDermot Street, or north entry is framed by a limestone segmental arch. The doorway is treated with a classical pediment with a cross and coat of arms in the tympanum, all of which are executed in cast iron. The Beaux Arts iron grillwork surrounding the door can be seen in the detail photograph.

The King Street entry has been completely reframed in aluminum and glass,

but the high curving iron canopy extending out to the street remains intact.

(ii) Windows: On the main floor, the metal-framed windows fill the space between the piers, each with 2 large panes of plate glass surmounted by a 3 part awning transom. Floors 2 through 6 have pairs of rectangular, double-hung, metal sash, wired glass windows in a 1/1 configuration over limestone sills. On the 7th floor there are 3 narrow windows per bay, in the same configuration as those below it. On the south wall, the pairs of windows occur in the centre bay. At the south-east corner on both the south and east walls there is only one window per bay per floor.

(d) Roof: The roof is flat. There are 2 elevator penthouses above the south wall, and a chimney towards the south-east corner.

4. Description of Interior:

(a) General Statement: The building has 20 in. square reinforced concrete post and beam interior structural supports. Concrete 9 in. by 18 in. joists run east-west. Many of the floors have been extensively altered from their original interior break-up with contemporary partitioning. However, due to the architectural firm occupying the 3rd floor having supervisory status over interior renovations, the interior has been well cared for.

(b) Vertical Circulation: As indicated on the floor plan. The current passenger elevator at the King Street entrance replaced the much smaller and inefficient original elevator, thus necessitating the redesign of the entry. The Maltese Cross motif is repeated regularly on the balusters of the cast iron and marble half-turn staircase with winders.

(c) Flooring: Concrete and individually surfaced to each tenant's needs. The two entry vestibules are paved in white marble.

(d) Walls: Exterior walls are all plastered and painted. The McDermot Street vestibule has a white marble veneered dado with oak framing and large panes of bevelled glass above. There are no original partition walls in evidence.

(e) Ceilings: The ceiling on the main floor is concealed by a lowered modular system of acoustical panels and fluorescent fixtures. The sub-floor and joists, painted white, are exposed on the upper floors.

(f) Doorways and doors: The few remaining original doors and oak stile and rail, with one tall rectangular panel above a square panel below. The trim is simple and the hardware utilitarian.

(g) Lighting: The only original fixture in evidence is a chain suspended leaded glass lantern over the King Street entrance. Modular fluorescent lighting has replaced all the original fixtures.

- (h) Heating: Steam heat. The two original Vulcan Iron Works coal furnaces have been converted to gas-fired boilers.

66 KING STREET – MALTESE CROSS BUILDING



Plate 1 – 66 King Street, the Maltese Cross Building, 1912. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)

66 KING STREET – MALTESE CROSS BUILDING



Plate 2 – McDermot Avenue, looking west from Albert Street, ca.1911. The Maltese Cross Building (arrow) shows up dark behind the R.J. Whitla Building left of centre. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)



Plate 3 – Maltese Cross Building, 1969. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Architectural Survey.)

66 KING STREET – MALTESE CROSS BUILDING



Plate 4 – Large maltese crosses were formerly painted on all sides of the elevator housing on the left. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Architectural Survey, 1969.)



Plate 5 – Detail of the McDermot Avenue entrance, 1969. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Architectural Survey.)

66 KING STREET – MALTESE CROSS BUILDING



Plate 6 – Stairway with the maltese cross motif, 1969. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)

66 KING STREET – MALTESE CROSS BUILDING

C. N. CANDEE
President and Managing Director

R. H. GREENE
Secretary

Gutta Percha & Rubber, Limited

Head Office and Factories: Toronto

BRANCHES:

St. John, N.B. Hamilton
Halifax London
Montreal Port William
Ottawa

Winnipeg
Regina
Saskatoon

Calgary
Edmonton
Lethbridge

Victoria
Vancouver
Melbourne, Vic.
Sydney, N.S.W.

Manufacturers of

Rubber Goods

BELTING

For All Purposes

PACKINGS
VALVES
VALVE SHEET
TUBING
GASKETS
TILING
MATS and MATTING
MOULDED GOODS
RUBBER CLOTHING



RUBBER HOSE

For

WATER
SUCTION
STEAM
AIR
FIRE PROTECTION
ACIDS
BREWERS'
PNEUMATIC
TOOLS
RAILROAD USE

Sole Manufacturers of the Celebrated "Gutta Percha" and "Outing Brands"

Fine Rubber Footwear

Fire Hose and Fire Department Supplies of every Description

"Gutta Percha" Tires

For Automobiles and Motor Trucks

**"LION" Stitched and Unstitched, and
P.M.S. Unstitched Endless
Rubber Thresher Belts**

C. N. LARSEN, Manager Central Division

R. A. McCLELLAN, Manager Winnipeg Branch

Maltese Cross Building

McDermot Avenue corner King Street

Phone N7671 (Private Exchange)

Plate 7 – Advertisement for Gutta Percha and Rubber, Limited, Maltese Cross Building, no date.
(Reproduced from Henderson's Directories.)