



175 McDERMOT AVENUE

TORONTO TYPE FOUNDRY BUILDING

HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE

1986

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This building has experienced a long occupation by a single tenant. The Toronto Type Foundry purchased this warehouse in 1898 and stayed there for 70 years.

It is the oldest structure on the block, erected in 1881 as a speculative venture by its designer and builder, David Ede. Ede was then a partner with Samuel Hooper in a marbleworks company. Both men became practicing architects, with Hooper rising to prominence and Ede eventually fading from the scene. Upon completion of the building in October 1881 at a cost of approximately \$5,000, Ede sold it to Charles and George Wishart for \$10,000,¹ which included the cost of land, inflated to boom prices.²

Ninety thousand dollars worth of wholesale stock of tea, tobacco, liquor, and sugar was promptly moved into the new warehouse. In addition to supplying other local and western retailers with their imported stock the George Wishart Company also operated their own retail store at 313 Main Street.³ The company, which was established in 1876, had branched rapidly into other areas. Wishart's also operated a furniture wholesale on Bannatyne Avenue and by 1884, this building had become the warehouse for Charles Wishart's grocery wholesale. Possibly as victims of the bust that followed the 1882 boom, Wishart's were gone from 175 McDermot by 1885, leaving the building vacant for a brief period.

The following year, Vipond, McBride and Company occupied the warehouse. This was a Montreal-based firm of wholesale fruit and produce. Having begun operations in the east in 1868, the company made Winnipeg the base of its eastern operations in 1882. By 1886, this

¹ "City and Provincial," MFP, 21 October 1881, p. 1.

² Assessment Rolls, City of Winnipeg, East Ward 1882, No. 428.

³ Steen and Boyce, Winnipeg, Manitoba and Her Industries, Winnipeg, January 1882, pp. 84 & 110.

building, plus a second warehouse on Princess Street, supplied company sales all the way to British Columbia.⁴

Two of the employees of Vipond, McBride and Company bought out the firm's interests locally, re-opening in 1888 as Rublee, Riddell and Company. M.W. Rublee and W.P. Riddell maintained the fruit wholesale aspect of the older firm but added the function of commission merchants, presumably of produce or grocery items according to their expertise. This company relocated in 1895, and a stationery wholesale named Love, McAlister and Company took over the building, sharing the space with the Manitoba Produce Commission.

In May 1898, this warehouse was purchased by the Toronto Type Foundry. With lofty pronouncements to the press about the eastern firm's assertion that Winnipeg was its commercial base for the entire western trade,⁵ the foundry made extensive renovations to the building for its new function. Toronto Type Foundry had opened its doors locally five years previously in 1893, but found that its Portage Avenue location was too small and set apart from the printing trade cluster of McDermot Avenue.

Toronto Type Foundry featured printing supplies that were considered state of the art in a technology that was rapidly becoming very sophisticated. The newly-renovated building contained the corporate office towards the front of the ground floor as well as the heavy stock of presses, paper cutters and cylinder presses. Supplies of type, galleys, stones and chases were also displayed here. The second floor contained the paper stock while the firm's own "ready print" department was on the third floor. Ready Print was a job printing service that parallels our instant printing and photocopying services. Small rural newspapers would bring in galley trays laid out for printing to be run through the foundry's highspeed presses. This aspect of the

⁴ Thompson and Boyer, The City of Winnipeg, 1886, p. 120.

⁵ "Permanent Quarters", MFP, 1 June 1898.

business was growing quickly as the number of the firm's ready print contracts had more than doubled in the last six months of 1898.⁶

Of all buildings extant on the block, this structure has been altered the most dramatically. The present façade gives a few hints of its original appearance which was easily identifiable as an 1880s design. The building originally had three bays where now there are only two. The entrance was in the centre. The heads over the windows and door of the first two floors features molded ear-shaped surrounds in a light stone while the voussoir over the third floor window heads alternated brick and stone for a lively effect. Stone belt courses separated each floor and light stone lintels set off the base of each window. The cornice was supported by oversized stone scrolled brackets and a small pediment capped the centre of the low parapet. In design, this warehouse was visually tied to the Free Press building formerly at 183 McDermot Avenue (now the part to the east of the lane). Its polychromatic façade, and the playful exchange between the dark and light elements, also tied it nicely to the post office on the corner of Main, itself a masterpiece of Victorian colour and pattern.

In 1910, Toronto Type Foundry employed architect Victor Horwood to refinish the façade of their building.⁷ The roundheaded narrow windows of each floor were replaced with two rectangular windows each enclosing three lights across. The entrance was offset to the right side and also squared off. A brown tapestry brick was used to re-face the walls and eventually even the cornice and brackets were removed. Without photographic evidence, it would be impossible to reconcile the present façade with the original.

⁶ "New Premises," Winnipeg Daily Tribune, 13 August 1898, p. 4. Also, "The Toronto Type Foundry," MFP, 13 August 1898.

⁷ City of Winnipeg Building Permit No. 2038, 26 July 1910.

While Toronto Type Foundry stayed in this building until 1968, there were often other tenants sharing the space. The offices of the Winnipeg Newspaper Union were situated here for several decades. A large mining machinery company, Canadian Ingersoll Rand, kept one floor of the building from the 1920s right through to the end of the 1950s. This company was instrumental in providing the technology and equipment that helped mining open up the Canadian north.

In more recent times, the building served as an automotive parts warehouse for a couple of years and now houses Top Buckle Ski Shop and the Plug-In Gallery.

From 1881 to 1898, this building served as a warehouse for local wholesale businesses as Winnipeg established itself as the wholesale and distributing nucleus of the prairies. With the long occupancy by Toronto Type Foundry, we see this building reflecting the overall trend of the street in centralizing the print trade in the city. As well, that business had a large profile as a major national firm servicing an extended western market, reflecting eastern investment in western development.

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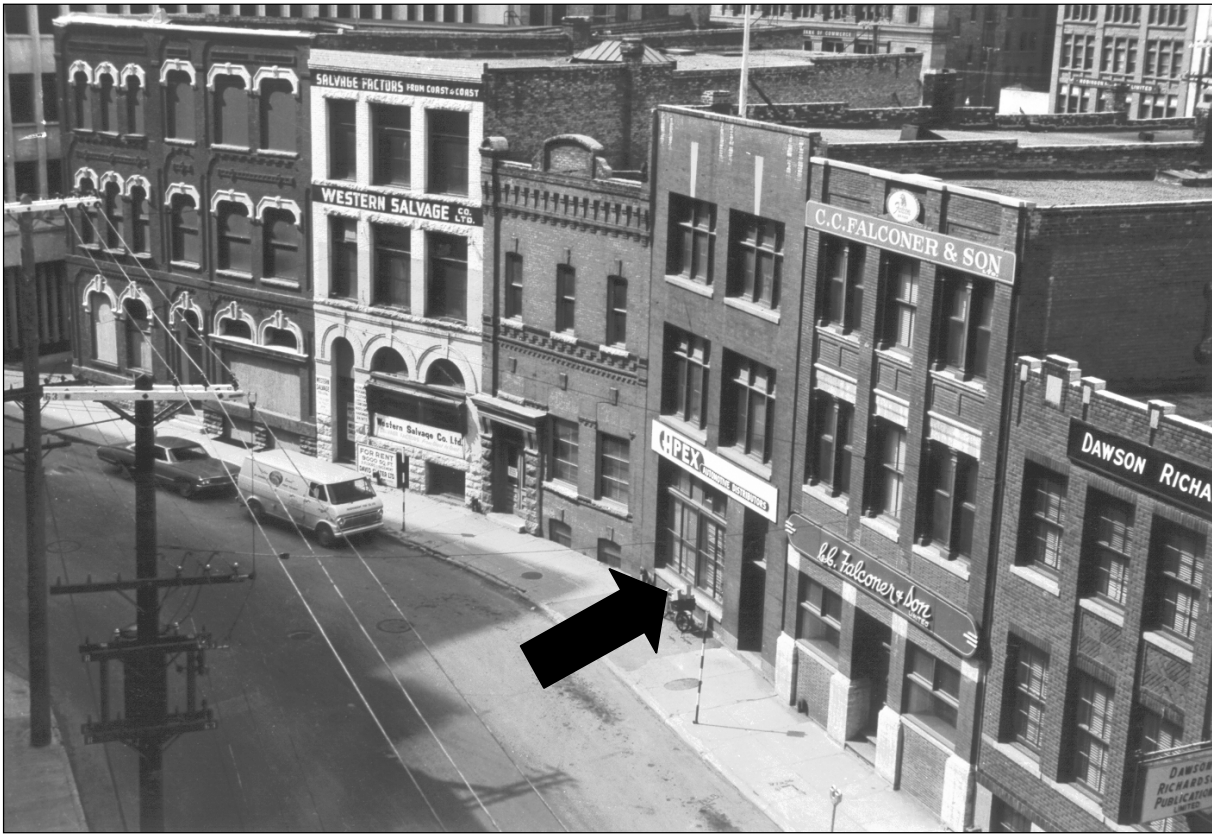


Plate 1 – North side of McDermot Avenue, 1969. 175 McDermot Avenue is at arrow. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Architectural Survey.)