



**52 ADELAIDE STREET**

**DOUGLAS & COMPANY BUILDING**

City of Winnipeg  
Historical Buildings & Resources Committee  
Researcher: M. Peterson  
May 2019

This building embodies the following heritage values as described in the *Historical Resources By-law, 55/2014* (consolidated update July 13, 2016):

- (a) This 1910 warehouse, built at the western fringe of Winnipeg's growing warehouse district, is another example of a successful local company building a modern headquarters to house an expanding business;
- (b) It was initially associated with John S. Douglas and his business, Douglas and Company, processors of raw furs and clothing manufacturers;
- (c) It was designed and built by the Winnipeg Construction Company, a modest local firm;
- (d) It is designed with a wealth of architectural elements;
- (e) It is a conspicuous building within its streetscape because of the uniqueness of its design;  
and
- (f) The building's exterior has suffered little alteration.

## 52 ADELAIDE STREET – DOUGLAS & COMPANY BUILDING

Beginning with the establishment of Fort Rouge ca.1736 near present-day The Forks and continuing with the construction of Upper Fort Garry in 1835, Winnipeg was a regional centre of the Western fur trade for nearly 200 years.

The evolution of the fur business in Western Canada occurred slowly, the raw materials still coming south from remote northern territory. In the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, fur prices rose drastically, responding to a worldwide increase in demand, a trend that continued until World War I.<sup>1</sup> Transcontinental railways and telegraph service made it easier for raw-fur dealers to access producers in the western interior as agents travelled throughout the region buying furs. While Edmonton, AL, because of its strategic location, rose to challenge Montreal, PQ as the centre of Canadian fur marketing by the end of World War I, Winnipeg also saw a significant rise in activity as well.

An early consignment fur seller was Stennett, Gemmell and Company, which organized in the late 1880s. Mail-order fur-buying companies were also founded; in the early 1900s, A.B. Shubert of Chicago, Illinois set up its Canadian headquarters in Winnipeg as one of the largest houses of its kind in Canada.<sup>2</sup> The North American fur industry grew quickly and by the mid-1910s, the value of fur exports to the U.S. overtook exports to London, England. The onset of World War I and the disruption of international trade only heightened the importance of American markets.<sup>3</sup> And while the Hudson's Bay Company continued to command a large portion of the trade even into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, other firms began making major inroads.

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur J. Ray, The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1990), pp. 50-51.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 65 and 96.

Another important development was the fur auction houses, developed to make selling the raw fur easier. The Winnipeg Fur Auction Sales Company was founded by Hyman Yewdall (1879-1947) in 1921 and turned over more than \$1 million worth of furs in its first year.<sup>4</sup>

Retail furriers also had their place in Winnipeg. In 1882, John S. Douglas organized Douglas and Company to process raw furs, manufacture clothing and sell goods from other manufacturers. In 1910, he moved to expand his business by building a modern warehouse, located on the western edge of Winnipeg's rapidly expanding warehouse district on Adelaide Street (Plate 1).

## STYLE

This warehouse is unusually designed, featuring classical elements but no discernable architectural style. It may be that the ornamental treatments were added to liven up the front façade, given the building's use as both a warehouse and a public retail space.

## CONSTRUCTION

The original City of Winnipeg Building Permit describes a 3-storey solid brick building resting on a stone foundation that cost \$25,000 to construct.<sup>5</sup> Architect's plans give the dimensions as 7.6 metres wide and 27.5 metres deep with 50.8-centimetre stone foundation walls (see Table One for other construction data).

## DESIGN

This building features one of the more unique façades in the downtown. The ground floor combines an ornate smooth-cut stone framed entrance with a projecting display window (Plates 2

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<sup>4</sup> Pioneers and Prominent People of Manitoba (Winnipeg, MB: Canadian Publicity Company, 1925), online edition, [www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/prominent.shtml](http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/prominent.shtml); and A.J. Ray, op. cit., pp. 130-131. Today, the North American Fur Auctions (NAFA) with Canadian offices in Toronto, ON and Winnipeg, is the largest raw fur auction house in North America and the second largest in the world (from NAFA website, [www.nafa.ca/about](http://www.nafa.ca/about), 2013).

<sup>5</sup> City of Winnipeg Building Permit (below as BP), #648/1910.

and 3). This projecting element is carried to the upper floors creating an oriel window-like feature topped by a hipped roof (Plate 4). Dark hued brick exterior walls are visible around and above the projecting window and the flat roof is finished with a plain, stone and metal capped parapet. Window openings at grade have been filled with glass block.

**TABLE ONE**  
**52 ADELAIDE STREET – CONSTRUCTION DATA<sup>6</sup>**

|              | <b>CEILING<br/>HEIGHT (m)</b> | <b>WALLS<br/>(cm)</b> | <b>BEAMS<br/>(cm)</b> | <b>POSTS<br/>(cm)</b> |
|--------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Basement     | 2.6                           | 50.8 stone            | 25.4 x 30.5           | 25.4 x 25.4           |
| First Floor  | 3.7                           | 43.2 brick            | 25.4 x 30.5           | 25.4 x 25.4           |
| Second Floor | 3.1                           | 33.0 brick            | 25.4 x 30.5           | 25.4 x 25.4           |
| Third Floor  | 3.1                           | 33.0 brick            | 20.3 x 25.4           | 20.3 x 20.3           |

The south façade includes a raised rubblestone base and common clay brick walls (Plate 5).

The original design for the rear of the building (west elevation) included square-headed windows on all floors and a metal fire escape (Plate 6). As built, the rear included a raised loading door (now filled in with concrete blocks) and arched window openings (Plate 7). A metal fire escape with ornately finished balconies runs from the roof to the ground on the north side of this façade. The north wall abuts the neighbouring building (Plate 8).

A penthouse addition was completed in 2014 (Plate 9), an open metal fire escape was added to the south elevation and all the window units on the rear façade were replaced.

Manitoba Hydro has recently completed its “Adelaide Station” distribution substation (Plate 10) which now occupies the property immediately west and south of the Douglas & Company Building and limits access to it (Plate 11).

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<sup>6</sup> Architect’s plans #648/1910.

## **INTERIOR**

As originally laid out, the interior of the building featured an entrance lobby at the top of a short flight of stairs in the building's southeast corner (Plate 12). The upper two floors are shown with no interior partitioning (Plate 13).

The Committee could not gain access to the interior to evaluate its present condition.

## **INTEGRITY**

The building stands on its original site and appears to be in good structural condition. Alterations have included window replacement, painting and some new construction (penthouse and south side exterior stairs).

## **STREETSCAPE**

This structure is found on the west side of Adelaide Street, north of Notre Dame Avenue, just outside of the western boundary of the Exchange District National Historic Site (Plates 14 and 15). It is one of dozens of warehouses and other building types dating to the pre-World War I period that were part of the warehouse district (Plates 16 and 17).

## **ARCHITECT/CONTRACTORS**

Architect/contractor Winnipeg Construction Company received only a few pre-1920 contracts including a warehouse for J.S. Haugh on Princess Street (1904), a rooming house on Dagmar Street (1909), a factory on Minto Street (1910),<sup>7</sup> a Molson's Bank Branch at 377 Portage Avenue (1911), Transcona Theatre, 109 Regent Avenue West (1911 - demolished),<sup>8</sup> a large block on Fort Street for F. Lion (1911), an addition to Winnipeg General Hospital, Bannatyne Avenue (1912)

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<sup>7</sup> Manitoba Free Press, May 7, 1910, p. 32.

<sup>8</sup> Manitoba Free Press, July 6, 1911, p. 11.

and an apartment block on Fawcett Street (1912).<sup>9</sup> In 1916, the manager is listed as F.S. Thoms but by 1919 Mr. Thoms is listed only as a general contractor.<sup>10</sup>

The Historical Buildings and Resources Committee has not evaluated a building by the Winnipeg Construction Company.

### **PERSON/INSTITUTION**

Douglas and Company, the original owners of this building were manufacturing furriers, founded in 1882 by John Samuel Douglas (1858-1933). Little is known about Douglas; early newspaper references are few until the mid-1890s when Douglas was captured in Montreal, PQ by the Canadian secret service upon entering the country from the U.S. in early 1896. He was charged with obtaining money under false pretences, having defrauded a Montreal wholesale house out of \$1,300 by claiming that his business was more solvent than it actually was. Douglas was returned to Winnipeg and the trial began in May. One charge was eventually dropped and it appears Mr. Douglas did spend some time in jail.<sup>11</sup>

Afterwards, Douglas went back to work as a furrier, the local papers include numerous advertisements for the company, at 86 Princess Street prior to the construction of the Adelaide Street building (Plate 18).<sup>12</sup> An early tenant in the building (ca.1912) was the Artistic Ladies' Tailoring Company.<sup>13</sup> But Douglas' company would not stay long in the building; by 1915 he was advertising a store at 391 Portage Avenue, three years later at 372 Portage Avenue, two years later at 333½ Portage Avenue, in 1921 at 264 Hargrave Street and in 1926 at 359 Portage Avenue.<sup>14</sup> Douglas died in 1933 and it appears the business ended.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Author's files; City of Winnipeg Building Permit Ledger Books, 1899-1926.

<sup>10</sup> Manitoba Free Press, 1910-1920.

<sup>11</sup> Manitoba Free Press, January to May, 1896.

<sup>12</sup> Manitoba Free Press, February 10, 1910, p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> Henderson's Directory, 1910-1915.

<sup>14</sup> Manitoba Free Press, 1910-1930.

<sup>15</sup> Manitoba Free Press, March 11, 1933, p. 24.

The building was taken over in 1914 by another fur wholesaler and retailer, Albert J. Brenton and Company.<sup>16</sup> By 1919, Bate and Bate, wholesale druggists, occupied part of the building and were still there in 1925 when fire damaged the upper two floors of the building.<sup>17</sup> Moncrieff and Endress Limited, automobile supplies, occupied some of the warehouse in the late 1920s and the 1930s, W.E. Rooke, real estate agent (owner ca.1929-1933), clothier Moser Manufacturing Company occupied the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor in the 1940s, as did several printing firms.<sup>18</sup> Edward Winestock, et al were owners of the building ca.1959-ca.1969 and Winestock's Wholesale (1973) Limited, wholesale linen distributors, was owner and occupant ca.1977-ca.1990.<sup>19</sup> Opus Computer Systems occupied the building in the mid-1990s and Aviva Natural Health and Fitness operated a retail store on the ground floor in the mid-2000s.

## **EVENT**

There is no known significant historic event connected with this building.

## **CONTEXT**

This warehouse is an example of a small-scale structure built during Winnipeg's early 20<sup>th</sup> century boom period and owned and occupied by a number of commercial tenants over its 100+ year history. Examples of this type of investment property are found throughout the district.

## **LANDMARK**

This building, with its unusual exterior finishes and design, would be conspicuous in the neighbourhood.

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<sup>16</sup> Manitoba Free Press, January 21, 1914, p. 11.

<sup>17</sup> Manitoba Free Press, September 8, 1919, p. 3 and January 28, 1925, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> Henderson's Directory, 1920-1960. In 1940, Hawthorne Press, Mercury Press, Firestone Brothers Printing, Goudy Press and Wood-Kletke, engravers were also listed as tenants in the building.

<sup>19</sup> City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, Roll No. 610000-12-2, 1920-1990; and Henderson's Directory, 1960-1990.



# APPENDIX I

## CITY OF WINNIPEG - Preliminary Report Assessment Record

Building Address: 52 Adelaide Street

Building Name: Douglas and Company Building

Original Use: warehouse

Current Use: mixed use

Roll No.: 13061000000

RSN: 146498

Legal Description: 5/6 St. John, Plan 33144, Lot 27

Location: West side between McDermot and Notre Dame avenues

Date of Construction: 1910

Storeys: 3

Heritage Status: **ON NOMINATED LIST**

Construction Type: Brick and stone foundation

Building Permits (Plans available: [CS] City Storage):

- 648/1910 [CS] \$25,000 (original); 5184/1996 \$20,000 (interior alterations to basement and main floor); 127250/2010 \$125,000 (interior & exterior alterations); 156457/2010 \$70,000 (interior alterations to 1<sup>st</sup> floor); 117096/2011 \$300,000 (construct roof top residential addition)

Information:

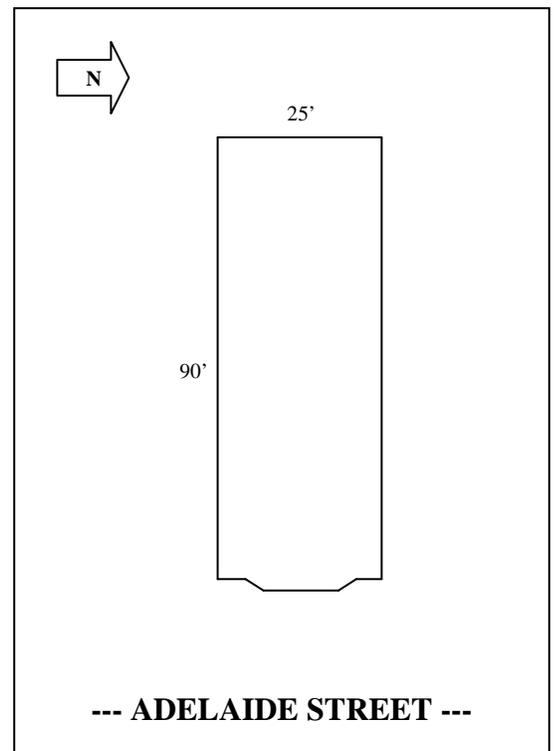
- 25 x 90 feet

- Permit 127250/2010: refilling mortar on exterior brick, new window on south & west walls, new interior partitioning (2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> floors), new doors & upgrading stairs/stairwells

- Permit 117096/2011: 608 sq. ft. penthouse & 539 sq. ft. roof top deck

**ARCHITECT: WINNIPEG CONSTRUCTION COMPANY**

**CONTRACTOR: WINNIPEG CONSTRUCTION COMPANY**



52 ADELAIDE STREET – DOUGLAS AND COMPANY BUILDING

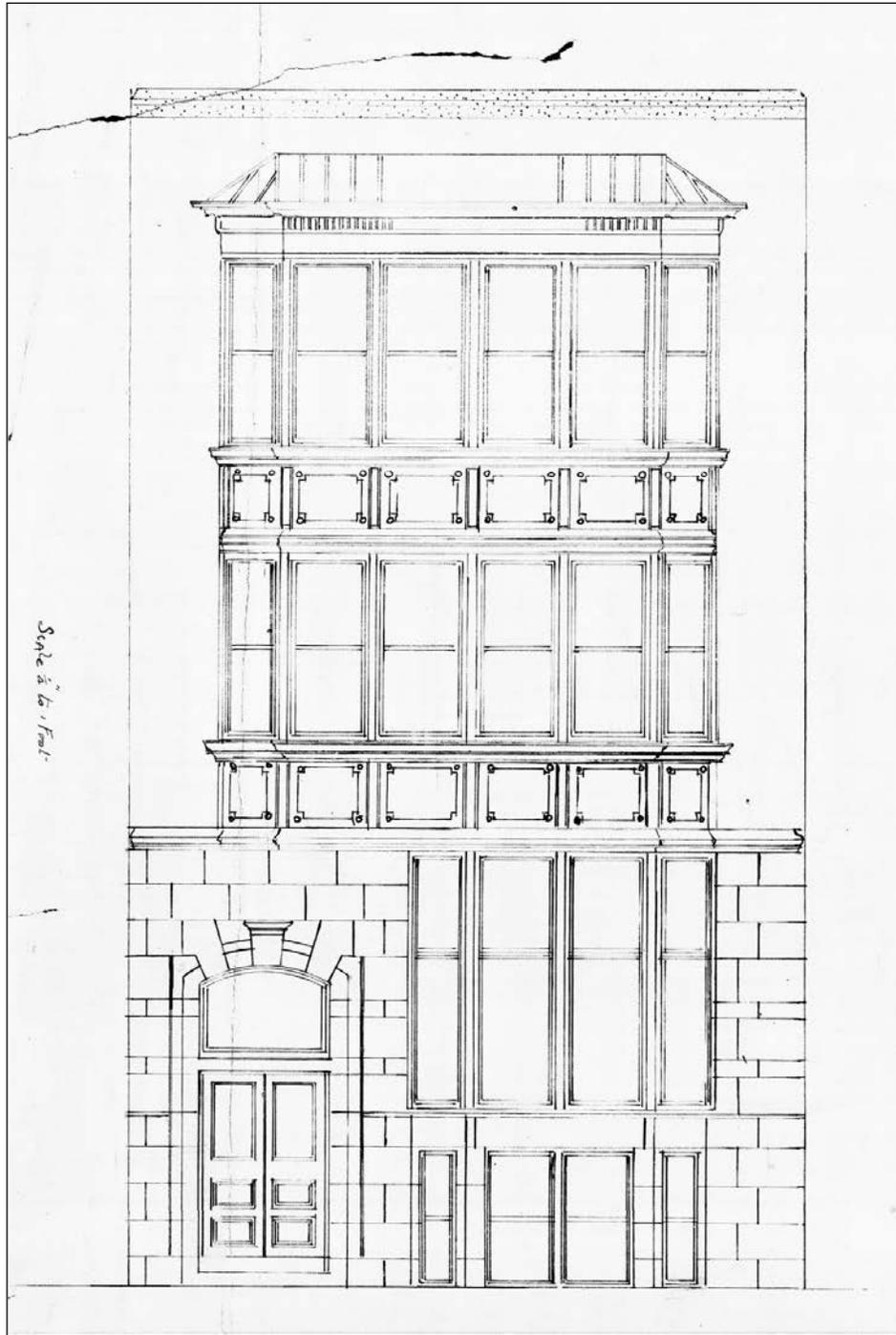


Plate 1 – Architect’s plan #648/1910, “Front Elevation”. Note that the actual building was built in reverse, the entrance on the right (north) end. ([City of Winnipeg Archives.](#))

**52 ADELAIDE STREET – DOUGLAS AND COMPANY BUILDING**



Plate 2 – Douglas and Company Building, 52 Adelaide Street, front (east) façade, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)

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Plate 3 – Douglas and Company Building, 52 Adelaide Street, front (east) façade entrance, 2019.  
(M. Peterson, 2019.)

**52 ADELAIDE STREET – DOUGLAS AND COMPANY BUILDING**



Plate 4 – Douglas and Company Building, 52 Adelaide Street, detail of front (east) façade, 2019.  
(M. Peterson, 2019.)

**52 ADELAIDE STREET – DOUGLAS AND COMPANY BUILDING**



Plate 5 – Douglas and Company Building, 52 Adelaide Street, south façade, 2014. (M. Peterson, 2014.)

**52 ADELAIDE STREET – DOUGLAS AND COMPANY BUILDING**

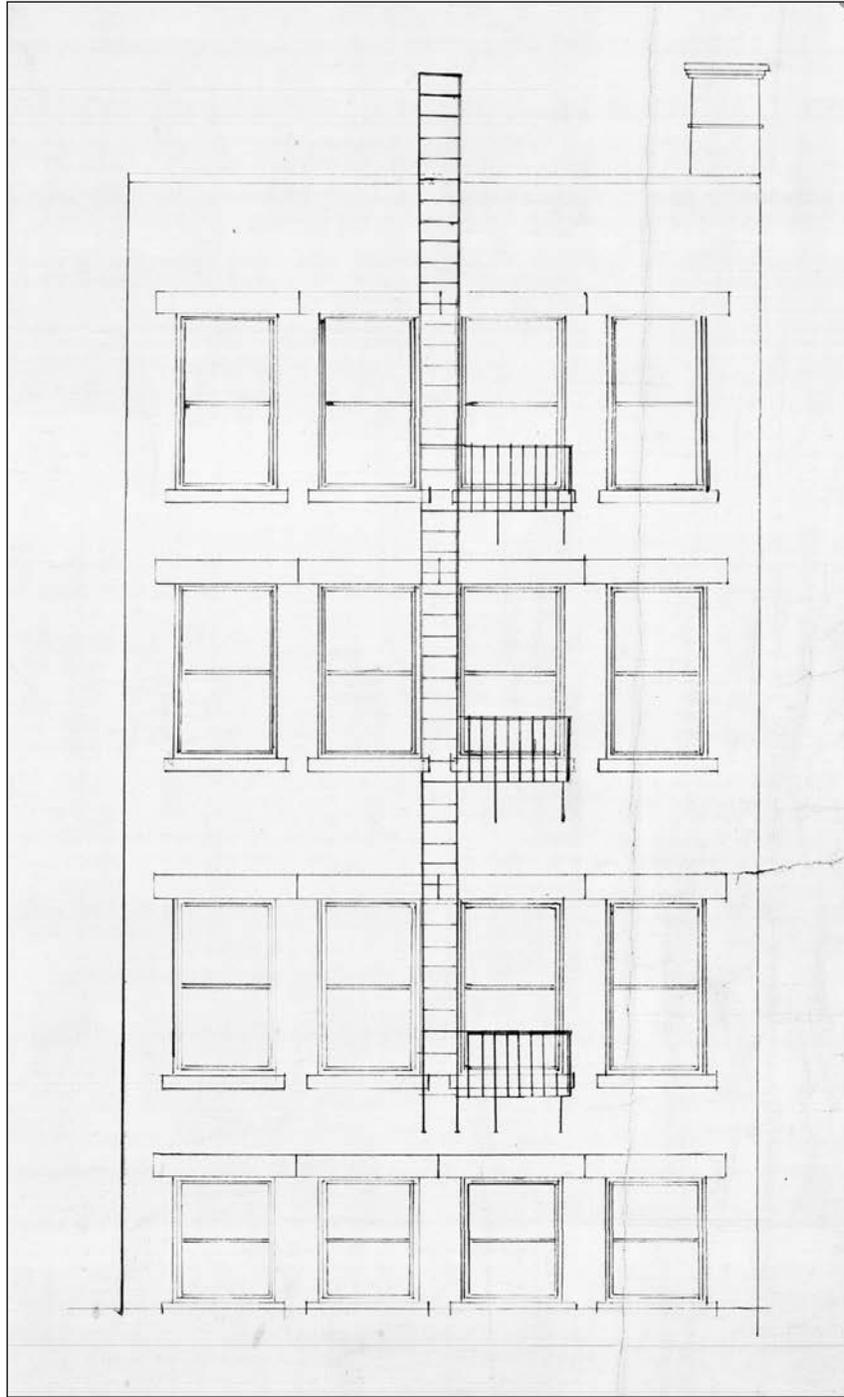


Plate 6 – Architect’s plan #648/1910, “Rear Elevation”. (City of Winnipeg Archives.)

**52 ADELAIDE STREET – DOUGLAS AND COMPANY BUILDING**



Plate 7 – Douglas and Company Building, 52 Adelaide Street, rear (west) façade, 2014. (M. Peterson, 2014.)

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Plate 8 – Douglas and Company Building, 52 Adelaide Street, rear, 2014. (M. Peterson, 2014.)



Plate 9 – Douglas and Company Building, 52 Adelaide Street, rear (west) façade with ongoing penthouse construction, 2014. (M. Peterson, 2014.)

## 52 ADELAIDE STREET – DOUGLAS AND COMPANY BUILDING



Plate 10 – Manitoba Hydro Adelaide Station, Notre Dame Avenue, Adelaide Street and Hargrave Street, no date. Douglas and Company building at arrow. (Reproduced from Teshmont [website](http://www.teshmont.com/our-work/design/manitoba-hydro-adelaide-distribution-station), [www.teshmont.com/our-work/design/manitoba-hydro-adelaide-distribution-station](http://www.teshmont.com/our-work/design/manitoba-hydro-adelaide-distribution-station).)

**52 ADELAIDE STREET – DOUGLAS AND COMPANY BUILDING**



Plate 11 – Douglas and Company Building, 52 Adelaide Street, rear (west) façade behind Manitoba Hydro fencing, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)

52 ADELAIDE STREET – DOUGLAS AND COMPANY BUILDING

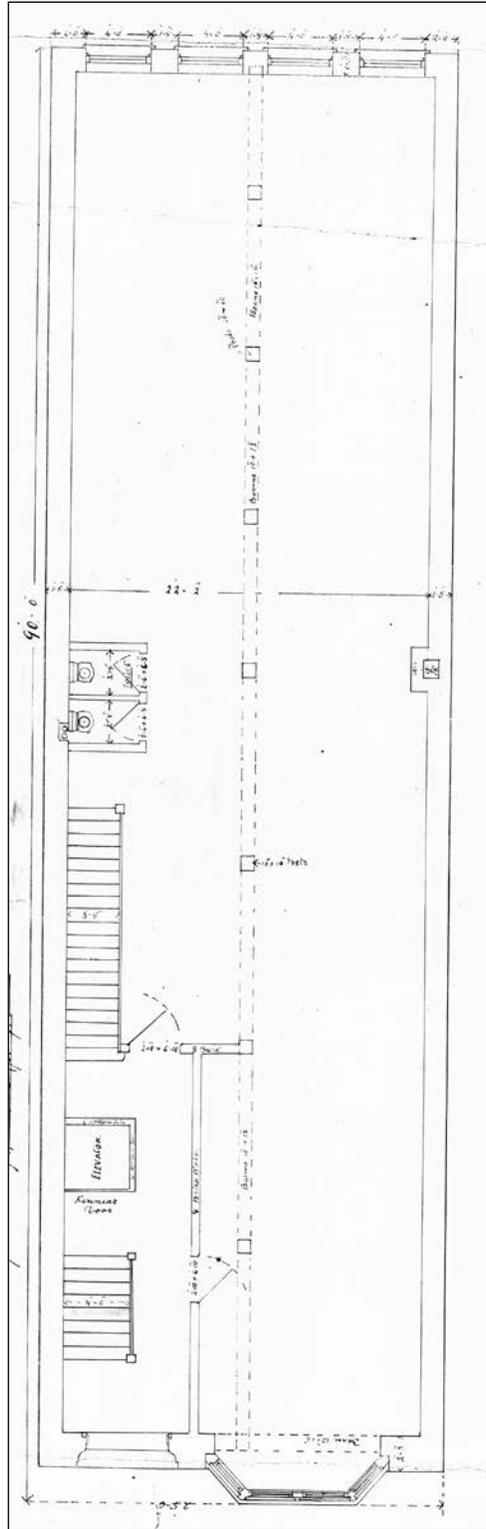


Plate 12 – Architect’s plan #648/1910, “First Floor Plan”. Note that this floor plan is horizontally flipped from the actual structure. (City of Winnipeg Archives.)

52 ADELAIDE STREET – DOUGLAS AND COMPANY BUILDING

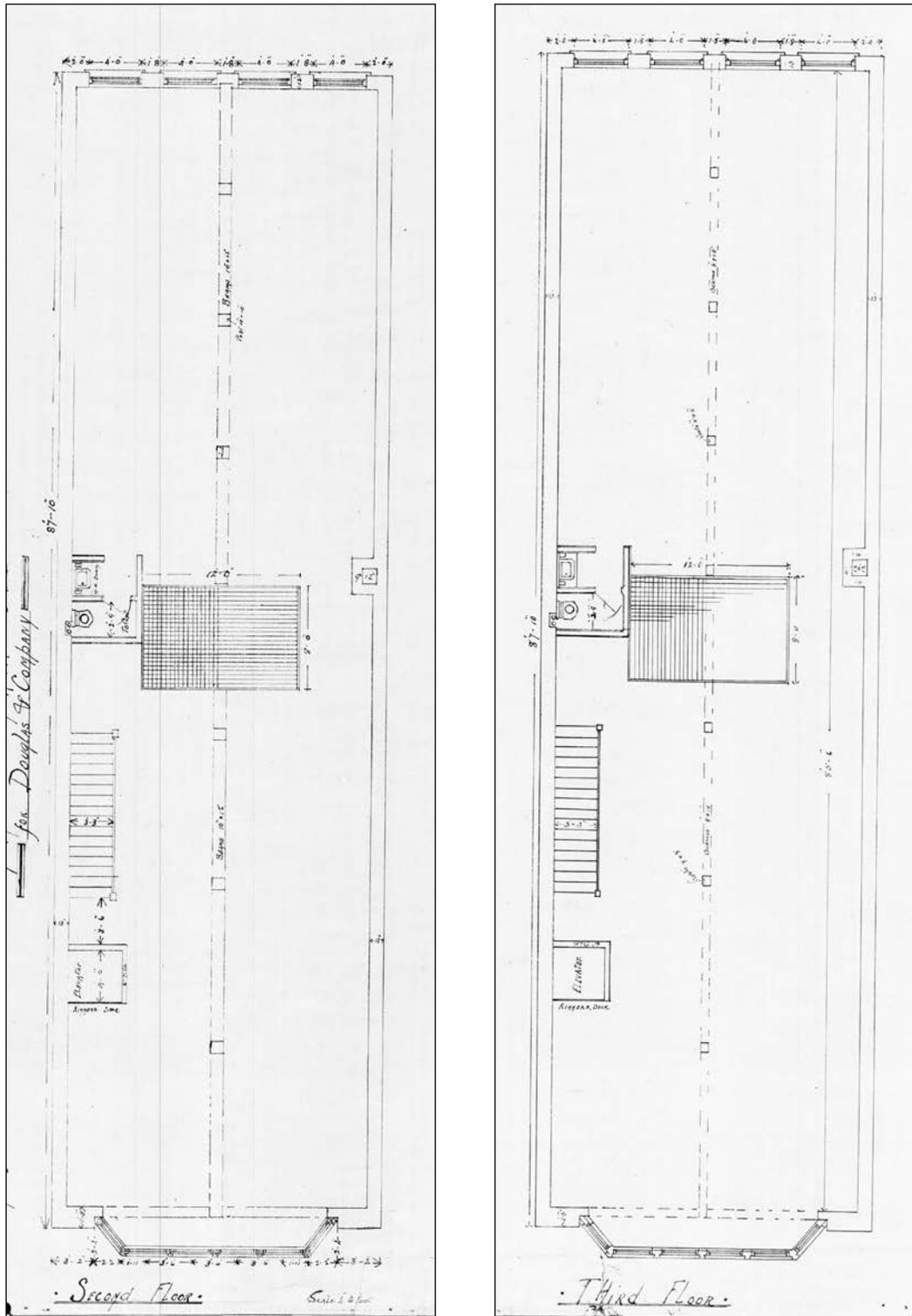


Plate 13 – Architect’s plan #648/1910, “Second Floor Plan” (left) and “Third Floor Plan” (right). Note that these floor plans are horizontally flipped from the actual structure. ([City of Winnipeg Archives](#).)

**52 ADELAIDE STREET – DOUGLAS AND COMPANY BUILDING**



Plate 14 – Adelaide Street looking north from Notre Dame Avenue, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)



Plate 15 – West side of Adelaide, Douglas and Company Building, 52 Adelaide Street (left) and the Telegram Printing Company Building, 54 Adelaide Street (also built in 1910 – right), 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)

## 52 ADELAIDE STREET – DOUGLAS AND COMPANY BUILDING



Plate 16 – This Fire Atlas sheet shows Adelaide Street from Notre Dame Avenue to McDermot Avenue, 1905. Note that the majority of buildings are wooden single family dwellings, although larger brick and brick veneer blocks had been built north of McDermot Avenue and along Princess Street. (City of Winnipeg Archives, Goad's Fire Atlas (1895-1905), Sheet 14.)

## 52 ADELAIDE STREET – DOUGLAS AND COMPANY BUILDING

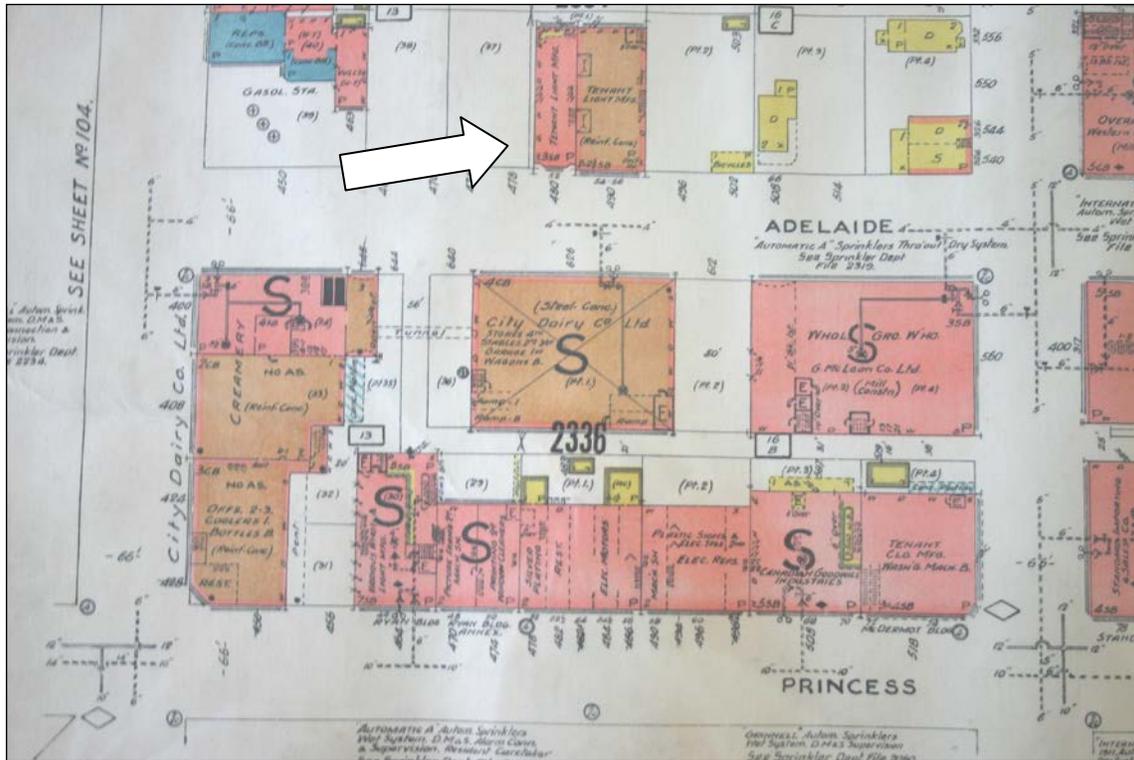


Plate 17 –Adelaide Street, 1949, 52 Adelaide Street at arrow. Almost all of the residential property has been replaced by warehouses. (City of Winnipeg Archives, Fire Atlas (1917-1949), Vol. II, Sheet 233.)

# New Warehouse of Douglas & Co.

Finest and Largest Exclusive Fur Manufacturers in Western Canada

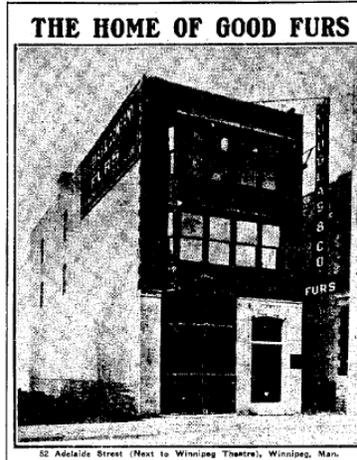
*Order Early*

*Best Selection*

*Prompt Deliveries*

*Delay Means Lost Profits*

*1910 Will Be the Greatest Fur Season in the History of Western Canada*



## TO THE TRADE:

WE TAKE great pleasure in announcing to our many patrons throughout the West that due to their ever-increasing patronage we were compelled to seek larger premises and as a result we have just completed one of the most up-to-date warehouses in Canada, it being specially constructed for the best protection of this important line. Large airy cement vaults have been installed for fur storage which means absolute security. We made heavy purchases of fashionable skins prior to the rapid advance of the lines in demand which places us in a position to offer the trade exceptional values.

Douglas & Company furs are well and favorably known, dating back since 1882, and are noted for style, finish and durability. Our guarantee means full protection.

Apart from manufacturing expert attention is given to every class of repairing, remodelling, dyeing and dressing.

Special Dept. devoted exclusively to the manufacturing of ladies' fine tailored garments.

# Douglas & Company

Manufacturers of High Grade Furs

52 Adelaide Street, Winnipeg, Man.

## Protect Your Furs

Large, airy, cement rooms built expressly for furs  
**IN OUR MOTH-PROOF VAULTS**

Our receipt secures you from every imaginable loss and includes cleaning by vacuum system.

Repairing, Remodelling, Expert Dyers and Dressers.

Wholesale Manufacturers

52 Adelaide Street, Next Winnipeg Theatre. Phone Garry 576

# DOUGLAS & CO.

Oldest and Exclusive Furriers. Established 1882.

Plate 18 – Large advertisement announcing the opening of Douglas and Company's new Adelaide Street warehouse, 1910 (top) and a 1911 advertisement describing "Moth-proof vaults in "cement rooms" (bottom). (Reproduced from the Manitoba Free Press, October 8, 1910, p. 10 and May 11, 1911, p. 9.)