



185-187 BANNATYNE AVENUE

THE FORMER McCLARY BUILDING

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings Committee

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HISTORY:

‘The Gateway to the West’ and ‘The Chicago of the North’ were but two of the phrases used to describe Winnipeg's future in the heady days of the late 19th Century. It did indeed seem to most Winnipeggers (and an increasing number of others) that the prosperity and growth of the city could not be checked. Especially important in Winnipeg's phenomenal growth was its role as middleman between eastern Canadian manufacturers and their new markets in what would become Alberta and Saskatchewan. As waves of homesteaders from central Canada and numerous European countries poured into Canada's prairies, dry goods, hardware and groceries all became increasingly important for the consumers, the manufacturers and Winnipeg's warehousemen and wholesalers, and it became increasingly important for Winnipeg's wholesalers to have railway connections both to receive raw materials and stock and to ship goods to western markets.

Branch railway lines or spur lines, built to service the wholesalers were first constructed on the west side of Main Street near City Hall in the 1870s and 1880s. Subsequently, the more familiar ‘warehouse district’ of Winnipeg in this area grew rapidly, but Winnipeg hardware merchant J.H. Ashdown, "perhaps the leading Canadian merchant prince of his generation",¹ negotiated a spur line of the Winnipeg Transfer Railway in 1895 through the area immediately east of City Hall and Main Street. This line ran up the middle of the land between Bannatyne and Market Avenues and it was here that Ashdown built his large warehouse (157-179 Bannatyne Avenue) in 1896.² The warehouse district east of Main Street around Ashdown's building, grew quickly both as a result of Ashdown's reputation and the spur line's ability to deliver and remove goods easily (Plates 1-4).

One firm especially anxious to have a spur line at its back door was the London, Ontario firm, the McClary Manufacturing Company. Because this Company dealt with wood stoves and a wide variety of other metal products, the close proximity of a rail line was essential as business grew. This family business began modestly in the early 1850s and expanded into one of the largest coal furnace and wood stove manufacturers in all the British Empire.³ By 1882 McClary's western business was such that a Winnipeg branch was opened.⁴ In 1899 the expanding firm hired S. Frank

Peters, Winnipeg architect, to design its new warehouse and in the same year, J.A. Girvin and Company built a four storey structure (with basement) on the north side of Bannatyne Avenue (facing south) between Main and Rorie Streets at 185-187 Bannatyne Avenue.⁵

STYLE:

Many aspects of the McClary Building (as it was called until the 1950s) are typical of Winnipeg's Richardsonian-Romanesque warehouses. Floor and ceiling support was achieved through a network of square wooden beams and posts, thus providing strength for the heavy loads within. Walls became thinner on the upper floors because of the lighter goods stored at the higher levels and this was also the reasoning behind lower ceilings in the upper storeys. A fireproof staircase and elevator, reflecting a general fear of fire by warehousemen, was also present. As mentioned above, because of the need for rail service this building, like others throughout the area, was located next to railway lines. Also typical of many Winnipeg warehouses was the space at ground level left for retail sales.⁶ The large number of windows affording plenty of natural light is also a common warehouse practice. The McClary Warehouse, then, is typical of a medium size firm's warehouse in Winnipeg at the turn of the century.

CONSTRUCTION:

The 1899 building was built four storeys tall with a 26" rubblestone foundation. Built of brick, it measured 50' x 156' and ashlar rockface to the second storey sills. The floors were maple and the roof was tar/gravel. Wall thicknesses decreased from 21" on the first two floors to 17" on the third and fourth floors. The east wall was (and is) a party wall with the Kelly Building.⁷ The original four storey structure also contained a complete entablature (see Appendix II, Picture 1).

Within four years of original construction, the McClary Company had an impressive record and in a move that was repeated throughout Winnipeg, moved to expand its warehouse. The 1903 expansion was an additional two storeys designed by Winnipeg architect J.H.G. Russell and built by Saul and Irish for \$8,000.⁸ Russell did a marvellous job of respecting Peters' original design. A 2'6" metal

cornice graces the top of Russell's work, with walls 17" and 13" thick and fir floors on both levels.⁹

In 1904, a one storey annex was built on the west side of the building to help with the increased business. Russell again designed the 25' x 67' brick structure that was built for \$5,000 by Hudson and Davidson.¹⁰ This annex had two storeys added to it in 1909 for \$3,200. Hooper and Hooper was the architectural firm in charge and the Blow Brothers did the construction work.¹¹

That same year the McClary Building was severely damaged by fire with damage totalling \$19,000. S.F. Peters oversaw these repairs done by day labour.¹² One year later Peters designed a one storey open shed built by day labour for \$800 on the west side of the structure.¹³ The final new addition to the McClary Building occurred in 1912 with the construction of a six storey annex on the building's north side. It was designed by Peters, built by J.M. McDiarmid Company and cost \$20,000.¹⁴ As the above description reflects, the original building underwent a great many changes in a short time.

DESIGN:

The building at 185-187 Bannatyne Avenue, much like other Peters designs, is loosely based on the Richardsonian-Romanesque school that became so popular in the mid-western United States and Canada.¹⁵ H.H. Richardson's style, which became so prominent in the U.S. warehouse districts by the early 1880s (Plate 5) reflected the strength, vitality and expectations of his clients. The large rounded arches, strong textures and symmetry of design evident in the Marshall Field Wholesale Store, Chicago (1885-87), became the prototype for countless other warehouses on both sides of the border and Peters borrowed liberally from Richardson's basic plan. The McClary Building features three large openings beneath roughly textured arches at street level. The top floor of the original building features small arches above the three sets of four window groupings. Roughness of texture is achieved by use of rough stone on the ground floor and similar rough stone lintels and sills throughout. Symmetry of design results from the use of three projecting pilasters and Peters' building uses the familiar technique of increasing the number of windows and decreasing their size as one moves up the structure to create a certain rhythm of design. This rhythm is also expressed by the division of the second and third storey window into three both vertically (three groups of three

windows) and horizontally (within each individual window), (Plate 6). As one can readily see, Russell continued Peters' rhythm on the fifth and sixth floors, with three four-window groupings opting, however, to complete the final floor windows with rectangular shaped windows and projecting keystones. The east and south sides of the building, due to the numerous additions, have lost their original 'feel' although a small loading platform at the rear does give one an indication as to the original function of that area.

INTERIOR:

Presently, the ground floor is used as retail space and is therefore similar in intent to the original plans. Second floor offices have drastically altered the building area while the upper levels still maintain the original warehouse design. The beam/post supports are present throughout the upper levels and most of the interior is in good condition. The fireproof staircase and elevator are still used at present.

INTEGRITY:

1) Occupies original site; 2) Additions due to increased business and two fires (1909 and 1944) have drastically altered the interior design of S.F. Peters; and 3) Building in fair condition.

STREETSCAPE:

The McClary Building is located near the large Ashdown Warehouse on the north side of Bannatyne Avenue. This offers an excellent opportunity to compare one artist's attempts to alter his basic design to suit the needs of his clients. James Ashdown was able to afford a more elaborate and larger structure. In comparison, the McClary Company built a more modest warehouse, although it did grow in size as the company grew. This building also fits well with the other buildings in the area.

ARCHITECT:

The architect is S. Frank Peters who came to Winnipeg in 1892 and ten years later was joined by his

brother, W.A. Peters as partner (see Appendix I for biography). Other Peters buildings include:

The Ashdown Warehouse (1895-6) 157-179 Bannatyne Avenue

The London Building (1898) 432 Main Street

The F.W. Alloway Building (1898) 179 McDermot Avenue

The Massey Building (1904 addition) 294 William Avenue

238 Princess Street (1903-6)

INSTITUTION:

The McClary Manufacturing Company continued its business at the address until 1928 when they merged with General Steel Wares Limited (who owned the building until 1955 when it sold for \$1,000,000).¹⁶ General Steel Wares remained at 185-187 Bannatyne Avenue until 1930. After the building stood empty for two years, two tenants, Dunlop Tire and Rubber Company and Canadian Industries moved in. Both of these firms had vacated by 1945 and during the next 40 years the structure housed numerous small companies (up to fourteen at one time)¹⁷ and stood empty for the early years of the 70s.

Present tenants — Golf World (Main), Ben Smordin Ltd., Cavalier Candies, Fletcher Investment Ltd., Bond Sales Ltd. (second floor), Max Reinhardt Theatre Canadian (third floor), (top three floors are warehouse space), House of Pittman — janitorial supplies (annex). Owners — Fletcher Investment Ltd.

EVENT:

The two most significant events acquainted with this structure were the 1909 and 1944 fires. The 1909 fire seriously damaged much of the upper bracing framework and most had to be replaced. The 1944 fire was also serious in that a partial floor collapse occurred. The 1909 repairs cost \$19,000 while the 1944 repairs totalled \$18,000.¹⁸

CONTEXT:

This building is representative of the smaller-scale merchant/shipper that flocked to and thrived in Winnipeg at the turn of the century. The additions made to the structure are by no means a unique event but happened to many other buildings as well. These alterations are still significant in themselves, however, as illustrations of the success the McClary Company enjoyed in Winnipeg from the late 1890s until the 1912-1913 depression.

LANDMARK:

With the move to repair and restore many structures neighbouring 185-187 Bannatyne Avenue in recent years, and convert them into commercial and residential space, the old McClary Building has become increasingly conspicuous to more and more Winnipeggers (Plate 6). Although the numerous additions have affected its exterior, there is reason to believe this structure could be included in the above mentioned trend of restoration due to its compatibility with its surroundings.

FOOTNOTES

1. L.K. Eaton "Winnipeg. The Northern Anchor of the Wholesale Trade" from Urban History Review Vol. XI, No. 2, October 1982, p. 28.
2. Winnipeg Tribune, 12 October 1895.
3. See Appendix II, Pictures 9a, b, c, for three of the many advertisements of the Company. Henderson Directories, 1905, 1909, 1910.
4. Thompson and Boyer, The Industries of Winnipeg (Winnipeg-1886).
5. See call for tenders Winnipeg Tribune 18 April 1899, p. 7 and Plumbing Permit #1413, 16 September 1899.
6. This became especially important to the firm when its coal furnaces became well known in Winnipeg and the West.
7. City of Winnipeg Assessment Records. Roll No. 627930 Inner City District 2, Code 50 (cited below as AR).
8. City of Winnipeg Building Permits (cited below as BP) #506/1903.
9. AR op. cit.
10. BP #1686/1904.
11. BP #1531/1909.
12. BP #2361/1909.
13. BP #1367/1910.
14. BP #3150/1912.
15. Two excellent studies of Richardson are L.K. Eaton, American Architecture Comes of Age (Cambridge, Mass. 1972) and H.R. Hitchcock, Jr., The Architecture of H.H. Richardson and His Times (NY 1936).
16. Ibid. and BP #2852/1944.
17. Henderson Directories 1920-1975.
18. It was during the 1944 repairs that office space was created on the second floor. BP #2852/1944.

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APPENDIX I

S. FRANK PETERS

Born in England, Peters was raised and educated in London, Ontario, and went to Toronto University for a civil engineering degree. After graduating he began his practice in London, Ontario in 1872 and moved to the larger opportunities in Toronto nine years later.¹ In 1892 Peters moved to Winnipeg and set up an office at 392 Main Street (where he was joined by his brother, W.A. Peters, in 1902).²

S.F. Peters designed several Winnipeg structures including the Ashdown warehouse in 1896. This building at 157-179 Bannatyne Avenue reflects the wealth and power of J.H. Ashdown and the excellence of Peters' design. Another Peters' creation is the London Building at 432 Min Street built in 1898. This retail space was designed for two stores and several offices. The building included an elaborate projecting cornice as well.³ Peters was also responsible for designing the F.W. Alloway Building in 1898 at 179 McDermot Avenue. He also designed the 1904 addition to the Massey Building at 294 William Avenue. The design is simple and functional much like other Peters' structures.⁴

An interesting note on Peters was the loss of one of his arms in the 1885 Riel Northwest Rebellion. Peters was commander of a company of the 7th Fusiliers regiment of London, Ontario.⁵

In a 1910 Winnipeg speech made to the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, Peters suggested a need to break from simple copies of American styles and a need to search for a more Canadian design based on classic lines. He dismissed the skyscrapers that were being built as "cooping up a mass of hard workers".⁶ Peters' warehouses are architecturally based on the Richardsonian-romanesque style that influenced most of Winnipeg's architects in the 1890s and into the 1900s. Peters himself, however, may not have agreed with categorizing his designs in such a way as, for example, when he described the new Ashdown Warehouse and refused "to allow it to be called by any high sounding name but [said] the building is modern commercial style".⁷ In any case, the large

rounded arches, simple designs with little ornamentation and rough textures all grew from the Richardsonian school and Winnipeg examples are numerous.

The overall effect of Richardsonian-romanesque style depends on mass, volume and scale rather than enriched or decorative detailing.⁸

NOTES

1. Canadian Architect and Builder, "A Group of Winnipeg Architects", X, January 1897, p. 4.
2. Winnipeg Telegram, 18 September 1906, p. 55.
3. The Year Past (1984), (Winnipeg), p. 33.
4. The Year Past (1983), (Winnipeg), p. 72.
5. The Year Past (1983), (Winnipeg), p. 33.
6. S.F. Peters, "Architecture in the West" in Construction, Vol. III, October 1910, p. 78.
7. Winnipeg Tribune, 12 October 1895.
8. J.J.-G. Blumenson, Identifying American Architecture, (Nashville-1977), p. 47.

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Construction. "The Gateway to the Granary of the British Empire", III, December 1909, pp. 54-83. Peters, S.F., "Architecture of the West", III, October 1910, pp. 78-9.

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Plate 1 – Bannatyne Avenue looking east from Main Street, 1900, McClary Building in left foreground. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)



Plate 2 – Bannatyne Avenue looking east from Rorie Street, c. 1903. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, N3585.)

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Plate 3 – Bannatyne Avenue looking west from Bertha Street, ca.1910. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Stovel Advocate Collection, #65.)



Plate 4 – J.H. Ashdown Warehouse, 157-179 Bannatyne Avenue, c.1912. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, N9850.)

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Plate 5 – Marshall Field Wholesale Store, Chicago, H.H. Richardson, architect. (Reproduced from H.R. Hitchcock, The Architecture of H.H. Richardson and His Times, Plate 127.)



Plate 6 – McClary Building, 185-87 Bannatyne Avenue, 1969. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Architectural Survey.)