



**120 KING STREET**

**SPARLING SALES**

HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE

7 October 1982

## 120 KING STREET – SPARLING SALES

This attractive stone and brick building, built in 1896, is the work of a Winnipeg architect Joseph Greenfield.<sup>1</sup> Like most architects who operated in this city in the nineteenth century, Greenfield and his buildings are somewhat obscure. In the absence of city-issued permits, one could only follow their careers through tedious reading of the daily papers. While little of Joseph Greenfield's works are known, his general career was documented. He was born in England in 1845, training and working there and Toronto before arriving in Winnipeg in 1885.<sup>2</sup> He was associated with the firm of McCoskrie and Co., a firm that built in Winnipeg, Brandon and points between.<sup>3</sup> In 1903, Greenfield resigned from private practice to become the superintendent for Public Works of the Dominion government. He died in 1910 in his retirement year.<sup>4</sup>

Greenfield's building is of heavy masonry construction in buff-coloured brick on a limestone foundation. Two storeys in height, the ground floor has three bays, in stone, and articulated through the voussoirs and rusticated finish of the stone. From a turn of the century photograph, one observes that the entranceway, now to the left, was formerly in the centre bay.

The second storey windows have rounded heads, set off by bands of brickwork and radiating voussoirs. A broad pediment, with three caps, disguises the flat roof behind. The centre cap on the pediment has the date 1896 carved in stone.

Aside from shifting the entrance one bay to the left, there have been virtually no changes to the façade of the building. A recent cleaning restored the original light colour.

Greenfield had been commissioned by Andrew Carruthers, a local businessman, to create a building for his business. The A. Carruthers and Co. dealt in hides, wool, furs and seneca root, an important trade in the years before artificial fibres. Born in Scotland, Carruthers operated a hide and wool business in Strathray, Ontario for twenty-three years before heading west in 1889.<sup>5</sup> Although the owner himself died in 1909, A. Carruthers and Co. carried on for another ten years under the administration of one of his sons.

Although the hide and wool warehouse was on distant Logan, the main office enjoyed an

advantageous location on King Street. Directly across from the Central Firehall, Carruthers was a few metres from Market Square and in the heart of a growing needle trade district. Trading and supply was accomplished with ease in a city that maintained its prominent in the historic fur trade.

In 1906, the upper floor of Carruthers' building was rented to Der Northwestern Publishing Co. Ltd. This was the first German language press in western Canada, printing the German weekly Der Northwestern since 1889. By the year of its first publication, Manitoba's population included 6,000 German-speaking immigrants from Russia (mainly Mennonites), Romania, Germany and the eastern Austro-Hungarian provinces.<sup>6</sup> Because they were considered "desirable" immigrants, the federal government encouraged more and more homesteaders to come, particularly after 1896. Although other German papers were published in this century, "Der Northwestern remained the most important German language newspaper in the West."<sup>7</sup> At its peak, from 1904 to 1914, it had a weekly circulation of 20,000 copies of 16 to 20 pages. Thirty employees operated the presses on 120 King Street.<sup>8</sup>

Der Northwestern had traditionally urged its readers to adapt to their new homeland, an attitude which kept it in line with the criteria of the Chief Press Censor during the Great War with Germany. Through the anti-foreign language provision of the War Measures Act, the newspaper was forced to publish in English from 16 October 1918 until 25 June 1919, and publication was suspended outright during the General Strike in 1919.<sup>9</sup> Following the lifting of the war band, the German press in Ontario did not re-establish, thereby expanding the market of the four western German papers.<sup>10</sup>

In 1920, Der Northwestern changed its name to North Western Publishing Co. In c.1922, a Czech by the name of Frank Dojacek bought the firm, changed the name to the National Press and expanded the range to several multi-lingual publications including Der Northwestern, Canadian Farmer, Canada's largest Weranian weekly and Croatian Voice. Dojacek and his son Charles Dojack are credited with having great influence on the ethnic press in Canada.<sup>11</sup>

The National Press, the direct descendant of the 1889 publishers, remained in the King Street building until 1930 and Der Northwestern ceased publication in 1969 after eighty years of circulation. Into 120 King Street moved a millwork, for part of the 1930s. In 1940, Mid West Air

Craft (the forerunner of CP Air) moved into the building. From 1944 to 1949, Canadian Pacific Airlines operated its general offices there.

In 1951, Sparling Sales, the present occupant, moved into the building. This is a radio and television supply wholesaler.

This building has a near pristine façade and a history of significance to early business development in Winnipeg, and as one of the west's important ethnic publishers.

FOOTNOTES--

1. Manitoba Morning Free Press 30 March 1896.
2. "Dominion Official Dies in Winnipeg" Manitoba Free Press 4 Nov. 1910.
3. Brandon, Manitoba and Her Industries Steen and Boyce Publishers Winnipeg, 1882.
4. "Dominion Official" op. cit.
5. "Mr. Andrew Carruthers Expired This Morning" Winnipeg Telegram 3 April 1909.
6. W. Entz "German-Language Newspapers of Manitoba Before World War I" Canadian Ethnic Studies Vol. II University of Calgary December 1970 p. 60.
7. The Multilingual Press in Manitoba Canada Press Club Winnipeg 1974 p. 107.
8. Loc. cit.
9. D.M. Loveridge A Historical Directory of Manitoba Newspapers 1859-1978 University of Manitoba Press 1981 p. 155.
10. H.K. Kalbfleish The History of the Pioneer German Language Press of Ontario, 1835-1918 University of Toronto Press Canada 1968 p. 112.
11. The Multilingual Press, op. cit., p. 218.

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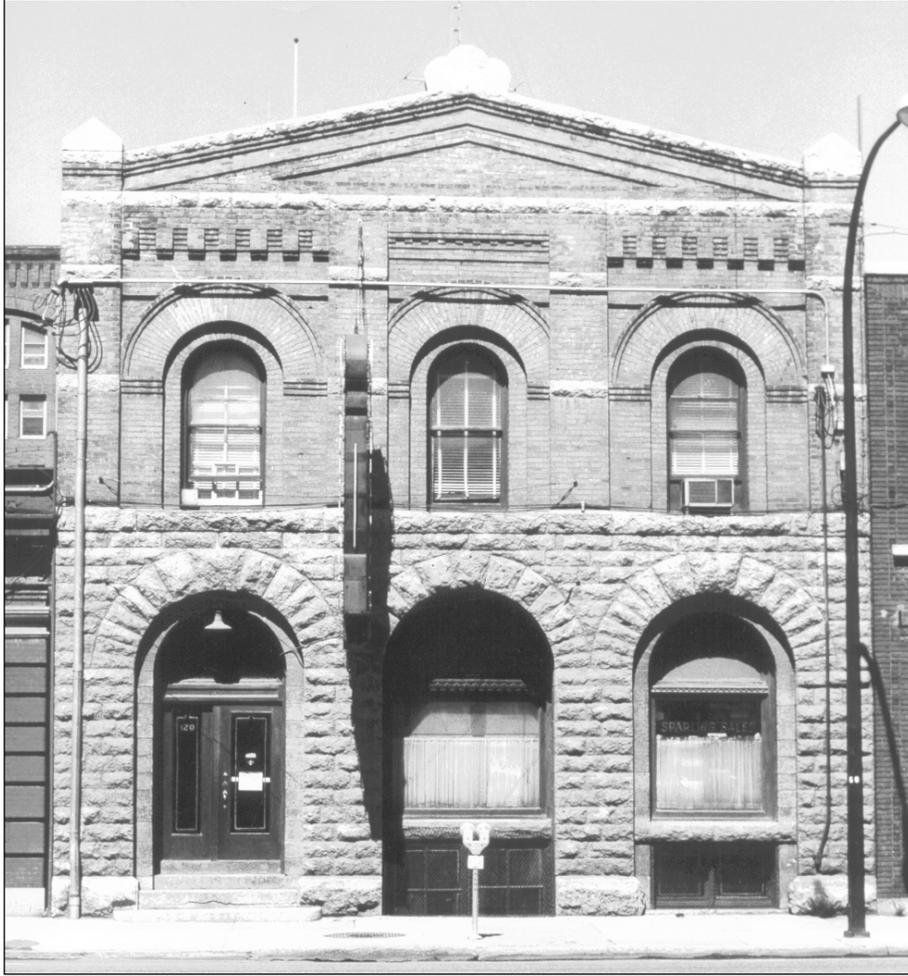


Plate 1 – 120 King Street, Sparling Sales, 1969. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Architectural Survey.)

## 120 KING STREET – SPARLING SALES



Plate 2 – Looking south down King Street from the roof of City Hall, ca.1900. Arrow shows the A. Carruthers Company Building. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)

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Plate 3 – Typical office space (second floor), Sparling Sales, no date. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)