



**112-114 MARKET AVENUE
GREAT WEST SADDLERY FACTORY
(MARKET BUILDING)**

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings Committee

February 1990

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We hear the tread of Pioneers
Of the Nation yet to be,
The first low wash of Waves where soon,
Shall roll a Human Sea.

The rudiments of Empire here
Are plastic yet and warm;
The chaos of a mighty world
Is rounding into form.

The above quotation concluded an article on Winnipeg's progress through 1912 written by one of the city's most influential and flamboyant businessmen.¹ The man was Elisha Frederick Hutchings, founder of the Great West Saddlery Company of Winnipeg which eventually became the world's largest such enterprise.² In 1898, with the city, province and region teeming with new settlers and the demand for his goods increasing daily, Hutchings was in a very favourable position. In this era of boundless optimism, he constructed one of the larger manufacturing buildings in the city at the eastern end of Market Avenue. It was the beginning of the Hutchings empire in western Canada.

STYLE

The Great West Saddlery building cannot truly be called an example of any one particular architectural style other than a utilitarian structure. While rounded arches and rough textures suggest Romanesque influence, this factory/warehouse exhibits a higher degree of ornamentation than is usually found in such designs. There also are indications of a two-part block, with the front façade division between the ground floor and upper levels. Overall, however, the design only hints at such well-known styles while the result is more eclectic.

¹ The Dominion, Vol. 4, No. 3, Dec. 1912, p. 28.

² The Dominion, Vol. 4, No. 5, Feb. 1913, p. 25.

Further complicating classification of this building is the present doorway which displays the geometric patterns usually associated with Art Deco architecture. The designers of this 1929 alteration were Northwood and Chivers who, one year later, designed the Art Deco-styled Canadian General Electric Building at 265 Notre Dame Avenue.³

CONSTRUCTION

Resting on a rusticated stone foundation, this solid brick structure rises five storeys above grade. Stone accents are used as decorative elements throughout the front façade. The original structure measured 15.2 x 41.8 m (50x137') and rose four storeys above the foundation.⁴ A four-storey, brick-on-stone annex measuring 7.3 x 41.5 m (24x136')⁵ and a subsequent one-storey addition to both sections⁶ brought the original building to its present dimensions.

The structure is located on the southwest corner of Market Avenue and Bertha Street on property legally described as 8 East St. John, Plan 100, Lot 40. Total cost of the 1898 building was estimated at \$40,000.⁷

DESIGN

The original warehouse (see Plate 1) was symmetrical in design except for the ground floor, where the main entrance was placed at the west corner. Emphasis was placed on the middle section through the use of large single windows with arched heads and a central gable. The

³ M. Peterson, "265 Notre Dame Avenue – Former CGE Building." Report to the Historical Buildings Committee, Nov. 1987.

⁴ Manitoba Free Press, May 20, 1898, pp. 7, 8.

⁵ Building Permit, #532/1903 (below as BP).

⁶ BP #1427/1909.

⁷ Manitoba Free Press, May 20, 1898, p. 7.

rough stone base rose above grade to red brick on the front façade and cream coloured brick on the other elevations. One side entrance was included on the front façade, as were four giant-order brick pilasters, two the ends of the building and two framing the middle section to further highlight this area.

Except for the central area, openings on the upper storeys were paired and rectangular. Windows were accented by continuous, rough-cut stone sills and heads; their wooden surrounds showing some decorative treatment. Beneath each sill was a panel of decorative brickwork. Brick was used to create the round-headed arches of the central area.

The annex on the east side of the original building contains rectangular windows of similar dimension but with rough-cut, stone slip sills and heads. The addition of a fifth storey necessitated removal of the row of small windows on the fourth floor and the elaborate cornice. These elements were replaced by an area of corbelled brick leading to a modest, stone, capped brick parapet (see Plate 2).

INTERIOR

The basement of the structure was devoted to collar-making (the firm's major product). Twenty-five workers, using rye straw grown on Hutchings's land at Bird's Hill, worked constantly to fill orders.⁸

The ground floor held offices for Hutchings and others in his firm, while the back served as a shipping and receiving area (transfer railway lines ran behind the building). The second floor was devoted to storage purposes, especially saddles. The third level held the sample room and more storage space. The top level was used as the manufacturing area for boot and shoe uppers, saddles, valises and other leather products.⁹

⁸ The Telegram, May 02, 1898, p. 3.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

The present interior of the Market Building is a blend of old and new. The basement has newly created office space and display areas beside original warehouse space with the large square timbers and much of the rubble-stone foundation walls exposed.

The first floor has also been altered with new interior divisions in the front of the building. The only original feature remaining in this area is a fireplace that must have been in Hutching's office. To the rear, however, the original warehouse is again present. Several large shipping/receiving doors and high ceilings are reminders of this area's past function.

The second floor has been almost completely made over, save for the northeast corner where two offices with wooden panelling still exist. The rest of this level has been divided into work area, washrooms and small offices for printing activities.

The upper three floors are at present empty and locked. Access could not be gained.

INTEGRITY

The Great West Saddlery factory occupies its original site and is in good structural condition. Three major alterations have occurred to the exterior of the building – a large addition in 1903, an additional storey in 1909, and the modernization of the main floor in 1929.¹⁰

The 1903 addition was designed by F.R. Evans and cost the owner \$15,000.¹¹ It was made necessary by an increase in orders and enabled 100 new workers to be accommodated on the site. Interestingly, Hutchings stated that most of these new workers would have to come from England and Germany because prosperity throughout North America had left few skilled

¹⁰ Assessment Records, #700240. Ward 2, PC 50.

¹¹ BP #532/1903.

labourers without work.¹²

The 1909 repairs and alterations were designed by W.W. Blair at a cost of \$15,000.¹³ The latest major changes involved the addition of a doorway to the eastern portion of the front façade; the entrance at the other corner was designed by the firm of Northwood and Chivers in 1929.¹⁴

STREETSCAPE

While the factory is at the far end of Market Avenue, it is among a number of like warehouses and factories in the neighbourhood. It is also one of the area's oldest residents.

ARCHITECT

The architect and contractor for the Great West Saddlery Building was J. McDiarmid (see Plate 3). The Plaxton Brothers were the plumbing contractors.¹⁵ The J. and J. McDiarmid Company was one of the city's largest contracting businesses, responsible for the design and construction of many fine buildings (see Appendix I for biography). The Historical Buildings Committee has previously given the firm 10 points.

The Great West Saddlery Building is obviously the model for another McDiarmid design, the Marshall-Wells Warehouse at 123 Bannatyne Avenue. (see Plate 4).¹⁶ Note the emphasized central area and the sparse use of brick and stone ornamentation similar in both buildings.

Other architects who have had a hand in the present appearance of the structure are F.R. Evans

¹² The Telegram, Nov. 01, 1902, p. 7.

¹³ BP #1427/1909.

¹⁴ BP #2998/1929.

¹⁵ Plumbing Permit, #1254/1898.

¹⁶ The Year Past 1983 (Winnipeg), p. 19.

(1903), W.W. Blair (1909) and Northwood & Chivers (1929).

PERSON/INSTITUTION

The history of this building is intimately connected to one of the city's most remarkable businessmen. Elisha F. Hutchings (see Plate 5) was born in Newboro, Leeds County, Ontario to English farmer parents on June 13, 1855.¹⁷ His story of perseverance and success was and is an excellent example of the type of personal gain that could be achieved in western Canada during the growth period at the turn of the century.

Hutchings came west as a journeyman harness-maker in 1876 by working on the Canadian Pacific Railway, then walking most of the way from Port Arthur, arriving in Winnipeg with \$1.50 in his pocket and no job.¹⁸ Because of a grasshopper infestation the year previous, there were no jobs in his field (in fact, most firms were laying workers off).

On a promise of riches in Edmonton, Hutchings made the long trek to the post in late 1876. Again he was frustrated in trying to find employment and wintered in a small self-built log cabin, surviving by hunting and trapping.¹⁹

In the spring of 1877, he returned to Winnipeg by driving several ox carts to earn money. He immediately took up residence in a hotel. No sooner had he settled in when a fire broke out in the establishment and he was forced to flee carrying his clothes. These he hid in an empty lot, then returned to organize and lead a bucket brigade from the roof of the hotel. When the fire was finally doused, Hutchings found he had been relieved of his clothes and all the money that had been in the pocket of his pants. Wearing only his underwear, and having no friends, money or

¹⁷ Winnipeg Tribune, April 14, 1930, p. 3.

¹⁸ F.H. Schofield, The Story of Manitoba, Vol. II (Winnipeg-1913), p. 124 and The Dominion, Vol. 4, No. 5, Feb. 1913, p. 21.

¹⁹ The Dominion, Vol. 4, No. 5, Feb. 1913, p. 22.

employment in the city, Hutchings made his way back to his room.²⁰

He did not give up easily. He convinced the hotel owner to buy him a suit of clothing, then proceeded to bargain with traders on the city street, drumming up enough jobs to keep himself solvent.²¹ The winter of 1877-78 was spent in the woods at a lumber camp and the following spring Hutchings rented a small shop on Main Street to work his trade. The winter of 1878 was spent speculating on lots in the city and in early 1879 came the beginning of his real success.²²

In that year he bought out a junior partner of the harness firm of Stalker and Caswell and formed the partnership of Stalker and Hutchings. The business steadily grew until 1885 when Hutching's partner died and the business became solely his. This large retail concern continued to grow (see Plate 6) and by 1895 Hutchings already had plans afoot to build a warehouse/factory on Market Avenue.²³ He reorganized the business into the Great West Saddlery Company, a jobbing and manufacturing venture. Associated retail interests were later abandoned because of the success of the other areas of the business.²⁴

Great West Saddlery could only be described as a complete success. Employing 30 men and capitalized at \$250,000 in 1900, by 1911 it employed 300 men and was worth \$2 million.²⁵ In 1913 the company topped \$3 million in sales and Hutching's estimated worth was pegged between \$5 million and \$8 million.²⁶ The business exported to New Zealand, South Africa and Australia; had factories in Winnipeg and Calgary and 10 branches throughout western Canada;

²⁰ Ibid., p. 22.

²¹ Ibid., p. 22 and Schofield, op. cit., p. 124.

²² Schofield, op. cit., p. 124-25.

²³ The Daily Nor'-Wester, Dec. 03, 1895, p. 8.

²⁴ The Tribune, April 14, 1930, p. 14 and Schofield, op. cit., p. 125.

²⁵ Schofield, op. cit., p. 125.

²⁶ The Dominion, Vol. 4, No. 5, Feb. 1913, p. 25.

and owned the controlling interest in almost every harness retail outlet west of the city.²⁷ In 1910 Hutchings built a large warehouse across Market Avenue (#113; see Plate 7) due to the need to expand.²⁸ His was without question the largest business of its type in the world during this period.

Because of the nature of the manufacturing within, the Market Avenue building was in constant threat from fire. Hutchings had taken several precautions, including fire equipment on all floors and thorough education of all employees. This did not stop fires from nearly gutting the top floors of the building on two separate occasions.

In June of 1909 fire destroyed the rear of the top three storeys and the front of the top two storeys in the 1898 section, and the front and rear of the top two storeys of the recently completed annex. Total loss was estimated at between \$100,000 and \$200,000.²⁹

The second major conflagration occurred in February 1917. So quickly were firemen dispatched to the scene that they arrived before many employees realized there was a fire. Even so, the top two floors of the 1903 annex were badly burnt and damage was near \$40,000.³⁰

Known for his strong-handed leadership, Hutchings was colourful both in public and private life. His city residence matched his personality. One was a duplex on the corner of Martha Street and Logan Avenue (see Plate 8) named Gifford Hall (his mother's maiden name). Hutchings was referred to in the neighbourhood as 'Lord Leatherhead'.³¹ His final home, 424 Wellington Crescent, was also named Gifford Hall and built in 1906 at a cost of \$30,000.³² In 1965 a ten-

²⁷ Schofield, op. cit., p. 125 and G. Bryce, A History of Manitoba (Toronto-1906), p. 360.

²⁸ Early Building in Winnipeg, Parks Canada #389, Vol. 5, pp. 301-9.

²⁹ The Telegram, June 17, 1909, p. 1.

³⁰ Manitoba Free Press, Feb. 22, 1917, p. 4.

³¹ Winnipeg Tribune, March 31, 1973.

³² B.P. #430/1906.

year lease was signed making this Hutchings home the West German Consulate.³³

His summer home was equally grand. He bought land in Birds Hill in 1881 and in 1912 built 'Chateau Hutchings' (see Plate 9). This massive home boasted a fine view from Lorne Hill and towers complete with battlements. After E.F. Hutchings' death, his son Harold added a swimming pool and a dance hall and opened the building to the public as a recreation park. The scheme did not succeed.³⁴ This was also the property that E.F. felt contained oil. A drill was sent up from Texas to prove his assumptions but oil was never found.³⁵

His public life included 10 years on City Council, chairman of the Winnipeg Sinking Fund Board for over 30 years, mayoralty candidate in 1897, and executive positions in a staggering number of businesses and firms in the city and beyond.³⁶ He took his loss in the mayoralty race with a great deal of bitterness, saying the public had made a "mistake" and concluding with a promise to "desert" the city because it had "deserted me". He threatened to make his own city in much the same manner as George Pullman had done after leaving Chicago.³⁷

Another of his schemes was the construction of a "hospital of sorts"³⁸ in Elmwood on the premise that the well water in the area was therapeutic. The site later became the Winnipeg Sanitorium, then the Concordia Hospital.

One of Hutching's highly publicized excesses occurred in late 1917 when he promised to buy \$500,000 in war bonds and make it easier for his many employees to purchase same. Unfortunately, he wanted an employee, his son Harold, and his Sales Manager, John Moody,

³³ Assessment Record, #400240, Ward 1, PC 10.

³⁴ Springfield (Altona-1974), pp. 265-66.

³⁵ Winnipeg Tribune, March 31, 1973.

³⁶ Winnipeg Tribune, April 14, 1930, p. 3.

³⁷ Manitoba Free Press, Dec. 22, 1897.

³⁸ Winnipeg Tribune, March 31, 1973.

exempted from military service. Failure to meet these terms, said Hutchings, would cancel his purchase and he promised to keep canvassers out of his buildings. In the end, no such deal was struck, Hutchings bought a bond worth \$10,000, and was publicly embarrassed.³⁹

Hutchings sold his interest in Great West Saddlery in 1928 but continued to exercise control of other financial ventures.⁴⁰ Birt Saddlery Company of Winnipeg, 470 Main Street, is a direct descendant of Great West Saddlery. One of Hutching's daughters married John Birt, the founder of Birt Saddlery, which ultimately merged with Great West Saddlery to form the present company.⁴¹

Known throughout the west as strongly anti-union and as an outspoken citizen and a ruthless businessman, Hutchings undoubtedly left his mark on the city. For all the controversy and excitement that followed him, E.F. Hutchings died quietly in his sleep at the age of 75 on April 14, 1930⁴² in the city that had both shaped and been shaped by him for more than half a century.

Although Hutchings sold off his interests, Great West Saddlery continued to utilize the space at 112-114 Market Avenue (see Plate 10) until 1962 when it was no longer listed in the Henderson's Directory. From this point on, the building has been occupied by a number of small-scale ventures including Plastic Film of Manitoba, Joni Originals Limited (sportswear) and J. and P. Coats.⁴³

EVENT

There is no known significant event connected with this structure.

³⁹ Manitoba Free Press, Dec. 05, 1917, p. 5.

⁴⁰ Winnipeg Tribune, April 14, 1930, p. 1.

⁴¹ Early Building in Winnipeg, op. cit., p. 304.

⁴² Winnipeg Tribune, April 14, 1930, p. 1.

⁴³ Henderson's Directory, 1962-present.

CONTEXT

The Market Building was constructed at the beginning of the 'Golden Age' of the City of Winnipeg. Immigrants streamed into the city and onto the prairies, creating a massive population of consumers of every imaginable good. While Winnipeg excelled as the warehouse between these consumers and the factories of eastern Canada, some manufacturing also sprang up in the city. In hindsight, Great West Saddlery would have to be considered as one of the most successful western Canadian businesses of all time and its founder one of Canada's greatest rags to riches story.

LANDMARK

The Market Building is located at the end of Market Avenue and is not in one of the busier areas. But redevelopment of the neighbourhood has added traffic, both pedestrian and vehicular, to the area.

APPENDIX I

James McDiarmid (1855-1934)

James McDiarmid was a noted Manitoba architect, contractor, and collector. Born in Dunkeld, Perthshire, Scotland in 1855, he trained with his father in draughting and contracting before coming to Canada in 1882. His work in Manitoba included architectural design as well as the construction of many important Winnipeg buildings, prairie grain elevators, and C.P.R. depots and warehouses. In addition to his construction business he was an avid art collector and was made the first honorary life member of the Winnipeg Art Gallery. Active in civic life he sat on the municipal parks board for several years and in that capacity was responsible for the layout of the Kildonan Golf course.

The Broadway Drill Hall, built in the 1880s, was one of McDiarmid's first projects. It was followed by many others ranging from houses such as those on Bell Avenue to churches, warehouses, and preliminary or completed construction of buildings designed by other architects. In 1905 he established James McDiarmid Company, General Builders and Contractors with his two younger brothers, John (d. 1943) and Peter (d. 1915). The construction company had close ties with The Marble and Tile Company of Canada and the Winnipeg Paint and Glass Company.¹ Among the many building accomplishments of Jas. McDiarmid and his firm were such Winnipeg churches as St. Andrew's on Elgin Avenue (1894), St. George's (1894), Point Douglas (1905), St. Stephens (Elim Chapel, Portage Avenue) (1910), and Knox Presbyterian, 400 Edmonton (1914-1917). Further McDiarmid and Brothers built the Nokomis Block, Cumberland Avenue (n.d. – McDiarmid was both architect and builder), the Donald H. Bain Building, 115 Bannatyne (1899 – architect and builder), the Marshall-Wells Warehouse, 123 Bannatyne (1899-1900 – architect and builder). He also built the Scott Memorial Orange Hall, 216 Princess (1900-1902), the Sandison Block, 302 Main Street (1904), the Canada Building, 352 Donald (n.d.) and the Customs Examining Warehouse, 145 McDermot Avenue (1908). Finally, McDiarmid contributed to the building works on the first section of the Carnegie Library, the Science Building at the University of Manitoba, and completion of the

Parliament Buildings and Law Courts Building following the cancellation of the Kelly contract in 1915.² In sum Winnipeg's architectural landscape stands as a testament to the effort and imagination of James McDiarmid and his construction firm.

¹ McDiarmid Lumber was established in 1927 by C. McDiarmid, another brother of James McDiarmid.

² See the file on James McDiarmid, Historic Projects Office, City of Winnipeg; also Early Buildings in Manitoba (Parks Canada), Volume 4, pp. 141, 161, 167, 305 and Volume 5, pp. 5, 317.

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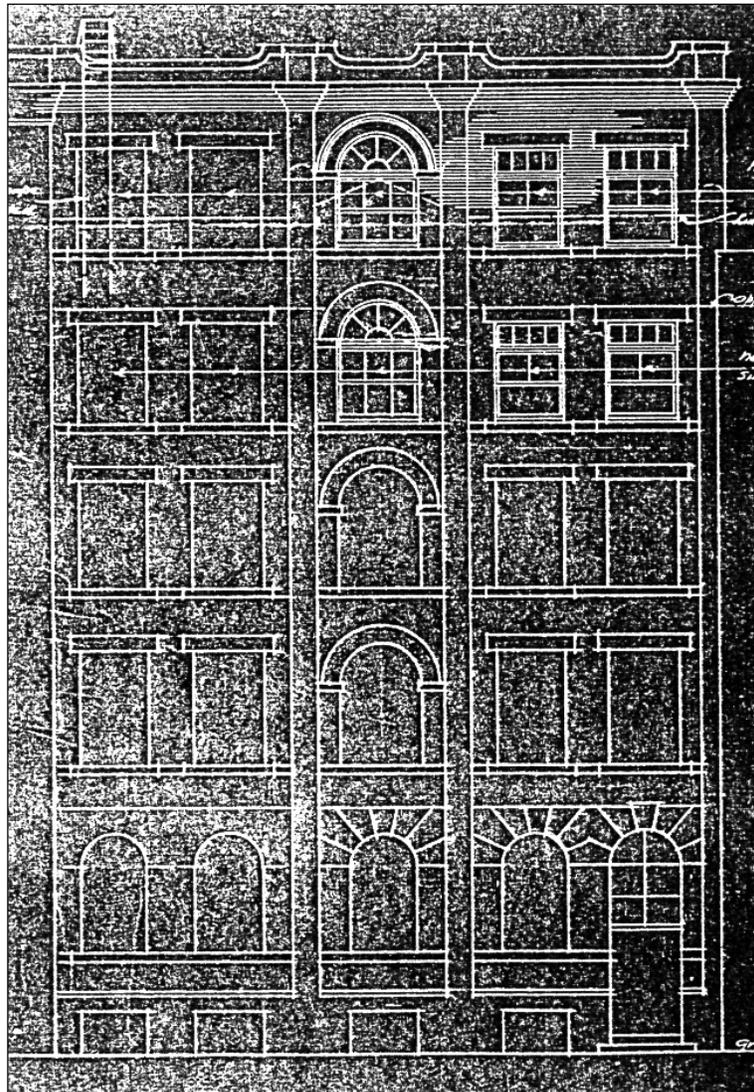


Plate 1 – Architect’s Plans for the 1909 alteration. While a line drawing of the block with a central entrance appeared in the May 20, 1898 edition of the Manitoba Free Press (see Plate 2), it seems the actual doorway was placed in the west corner as shown above. (City of Winnipeg Archives, Plan #1427/1909.)

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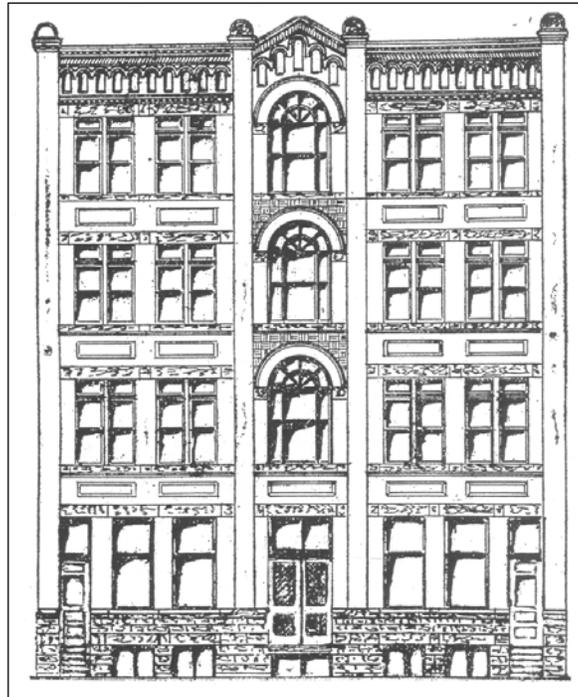


Plate 2 – Line Drawing of 112-114 Market Avenue, 1898. (Manitoba Free Press, May 20, 1898, p. 8.)

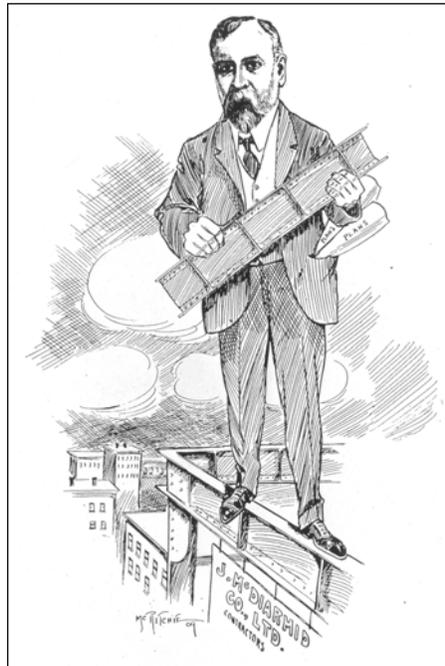


Plate 3 – Caricature of James McDiarmid, no date. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)

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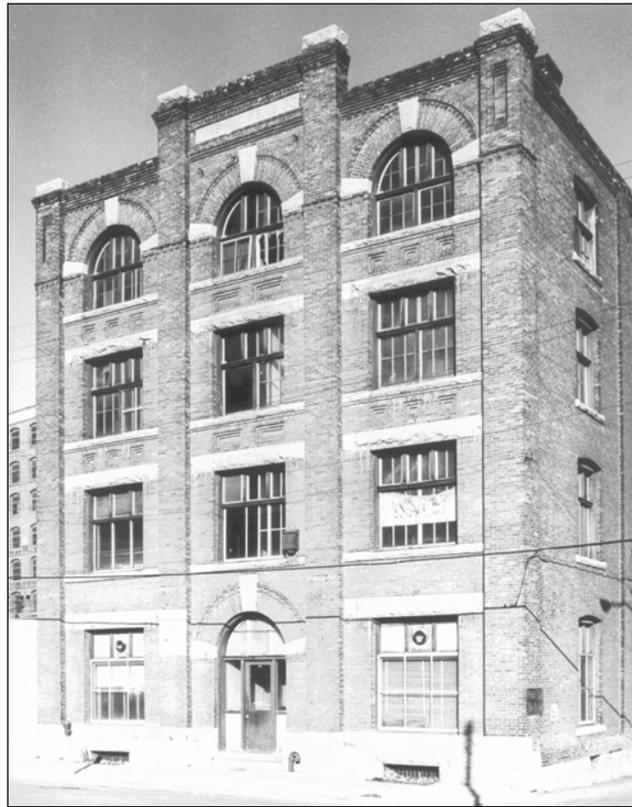


Plate 4 – Marshall-Wells Warehouse, 123 Bannatyne Avenue, 1900. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)



Plate 5 – Portrait of E.F. Hutchings, 1902. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)

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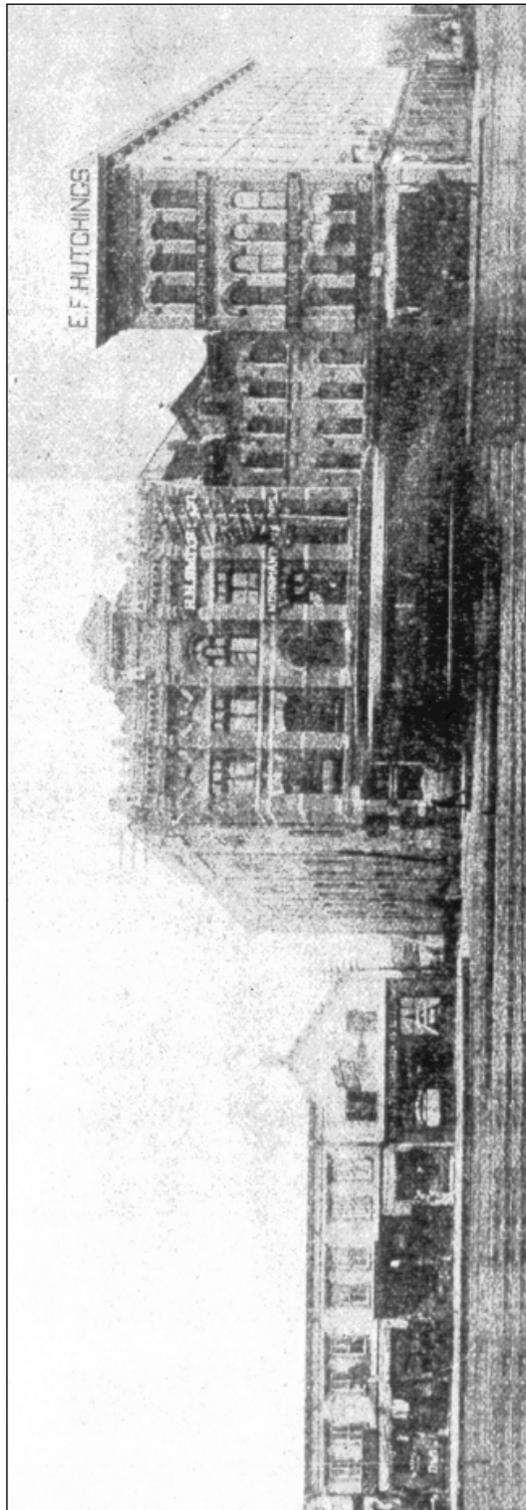


Plate 6 – E.F. Hutchings' shop, Main Street at Market Avenue, 1892. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)

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Plate 7 – 113 Market Avenue, Great West Saddlery Warehouse, 1969. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Architectural Survey.)

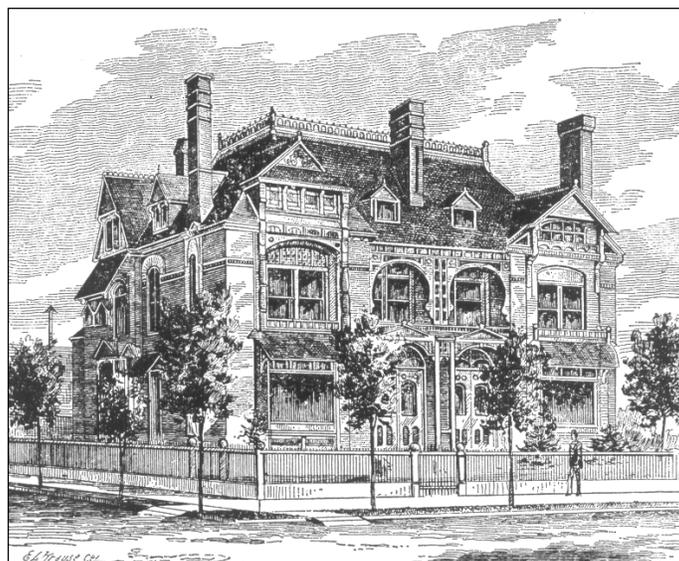


Plate 8 – Gifford Hall, Martha Street, 1888. (The Winnipeg Sun, Christmas Number, 1888.)

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Plate 9 – Chateau Hutchings, Lorne Hill, Springfield, Manitoba, 1912. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)



Plate 10 – 112-118 Market Avenue, 1969. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Architectural Survey.)