

235 NOTRE DAME AVENUE – ST. CHARLES HOTEL (MARKET INN)
Carter-Halls-Aldinger Company, 1913



Erected to tap a lucrative business travel market, the St. Charles Hotel is representative of an era when Winnipeg was the economic hub of the Prairies. The hotel also is an example of the adaptability of pre-World War I buildings to changing market conditions.

The three-storey structure is situated on the well-exposed, northwest corner of Albert Street and Notre Dame Avenue in the city's central business district. It was designed and constructed by Carter-Halls-Aldinger Company, Winnipeg's largest contractor, for Charles M. McCarrey and George Skinner.

McCarrey, owner of the St. Regis Hotel, apparently leased the St. Charles until 1914. Skinner then assumed a direct role as owner-manager of the facility. Formerly proprietor of the Grange Hotel on Lombard Avenue, Skinner was active on the executive of the Manitoba Hotel Association. He managed the St. Charles until 1932, then sold it in late 1933 and joined the Canadian National Railways.

Carter-Halls-Aldinger had its own engineering department which was capable of design work. The firm subsequently became one of Canada's largest contractors, responsible in the 1920s for major projects such as a luxury resort hotel at Lake Louise, a new Hudson's Bay Company store in Edmonton, and the Vancouver Stock Exchange Building.

The St. Charles was built in less than three months due to an ample labour supply during recessionary 1913. It cost \$122,000.

The building consists of a stone basement and reinforced concrete with a dark, tapestry brick facing set against white limestone trim. The trim is used extensively in vertical bands between alternate window sets on the upper two storeys; pedimented window heads on the second floor; horizontal belts and a bracketed cornice; and on the parapet. The façade is rounded at the Albert-Notre Dame corner and topped by a carved stone panel that once carried the hotel's name. Bands of stone and brick originally were alternated along the ground floor facing, broken by windows and doors that marked the various uses of interior space.

The main floor of the hotel initially was 4.9 meters high to accommodate a mezzanine. It contained a rotunda, office, cigar store, barber shop, kitchens and large dining room, supplemented by tables on the mezzanine. Square Ionic columns concealed the structural steel and concrete in the dining area. The ceiling was coffered with panels of back-lit stained glass. Skinner redecorated this room in 1928, lowering the ceiling, enclosing the mezzanine, and adding arched heads over the interior windows. Renamed the Empire Grill Room, this facility became a popular eating establishment and host of supper dances.

The hotel had a succession of owners and managers following the Skinner era. Interior alterations were made in 1944 to the rotunda and office. Flood damage occurred in 1950 in the beer parlour and dining room.

Nathan Rothstein owned the St. Charles during the 1950s while he concurrently was owner-manager of the Marlborough Hotel on Smith Street. He sold the St. Charles to Donald Stefanyak

in the early 1960s, after which the hotel underwent several changes in function, clientele, and ownership.

In 1965, the dining room was replaced by an enlarged beer parlour, coffee shop, and smaller dining/lounge facility. The former mezzanine was converted to a banquet hall. White Trevi tile was placed on the ground-level façade in 1967. Three years later, a discotheque was installed in the basement.

The St. Charles, now also known as the Market Inn, has emerged from the decline and revitalization of Albert Street to cater to a contemporary clientele with Wellington's night club, a Chinese-Vietnamese restaurant, and about 50 units of economy-priced accommodation.