

384 PORTAGE AVENUE – BOYD BUILDING
J.D. Atchison, 1912



Erected in 1912, this building was owned by W.J. Boyd, a pioneer businessman in Winnipeg for nearly 60 years. Like so many of Manitoba's formative personalities, Boyd came from Ontario. A Conservative, Boyd was long involved with the Tories in Winnipeg but was better known for his confectionery business. He gradually took over smaller firms to become one of the city's biggest suppliers of baked goods, only to be bought out in 1912 by a national company. The sale of his business gave Boyd the capital to finance his office tower, and re-establish him in the manufacture of confectionery. Both Mr. and Mrs. Boyd had energy and talent for public-spirited endeavours for which they became well-known.

The Boyd Building was at the western periphery of the downtown district until the Hudson's Bay store was built in 1925. Its architect was John D. Atchison, who designed many of Winnipeg's familiar buildings such as the Great-West Life Building on Lombard Avenue, the Devon Court

Apartments, the Medical Arts Building and the Manitoba School for the Deaf. Atchison was trained in Chicago at a time when that city led the world in the construction of steel-framed skyscrapers. His design of the Boyd Building is typical of the “Chicago School” era – a handsome ground floor, a restrained central portion of large windows with structural columns expressed, and an elaborate cornice. The entire façade is covered in cream- and bronze-coloured terra cotta. The other walls are sheathed in brick. The interior was handsome and functional but not expensively finished.

From the start, the majority of the offices were occupied by dentists and physicians with a sprinkling of professional offices and organizations. The ground floor was taken up with retail space. These patterns, established in 1913, exist today in the modernized offices of the Boyd Building.