

312 ROSS AVENUE – TREES-SPRIGGS BUILDING
James H. Cadham, 1905



In 1905, Ontario-based wholesale saddle and harness maker Trees-Spriggs, ensured that their growing Western Canadian business was on a firm foundation by having this large, five-storey brick and stone warehouse built in an excellent location in Winnipeg's warehouse district. Close to City Hall the warehouse was just off Princess Street, one of the district's premier thoroughfares.

Stylistically, the warehouse was designed like many others in the area, in the Romanesque Revival Style. Elements of the style include rusticated stone bases, brick superstructures, arched openings, flat roofs and corbelled brick accenting. Structurally, the warehouse was built using a system of heavy wooden beams and posts supporting wooden joists connected to the solid brick exterior walls.

The main (north) façade of this building features a raised, rusticated stone-clad base with small basement windows, a ground floor with a pair of arched entrances framing large rectilinear show windows and four upper floor windows divided into bays by brick pilasters, paired windows in rectilinear openings with wide rusticated brick heads and sills. The flat roof is embellished with corbelled brick.

The side elevations are hidden, the rear (south) façade is plainly designed with loading doors and windows in arched openings on all floors.

The interior features many original elements including wood and glass finishes in the front staircase, wood and glass office partitioning, wood flooring and open warehouse space.

The Trees-Spriggs Building is an important contributor to an intact, turn-of-the-century streetscape that includes buildings on both sides of Ross Avenue.

James H. Cadham (1850-1907) was responsible for the design of this warehouse, as he was for dozens of other warehouses throughout the district in the late 19th and early 20th century. The structure was built by contractor John A. Girvin, who had come to the city in 1877 and grew his business into a successful contracting company. Both Cadham and Girvin were also responsible for the building immediately east of the Trees-Spriggs Building, the Leadley Warehouse, 306 Ross Avenue, built as a separate structure in 1905.

The Trees-Spriggs Company was founded in Ontario in 1866, establishing its Winnipeg office in 1900. The Trees family owned the building into the 1940s and for many years, the main tenant has been Bill Worb Furs.

Elements of the building that would require approval if alterations were planned are:

Exterior-

- The five-storey brick and stone structure, its main (north) facade facing Ross Avenue, its east and the lower portion of the west facades hidden by neighbouring buildings and its rear (south) facade facing a back lane;

- The symmetrical main (north) facade with rusticated stone base rising to the ground floor windows, basement windows in rectilinear openings, two entrances in arched, rusticated stone openings with keystones, two large main floor windows in rectilinear openings, upper floors divided into four vertical bays, each holding a pair of matched windows in rectilinear openings with rusticated stone lug sills and heads and brick corbelling above the fifth floor windows of the middle bays and at the flat roofline;
- The visible upper portion of the west facade with windows in arched openings; and
- The rear (south) facade with the east end built flush with the neighbouring building with paired windows in arched opening and stone sills on each floor and an open metal fire escape and the west end extending outward and featuring two raised loading doors in arched openings and windows in arched openings on all upper floors.

Interior-

- Heavy timber structural system.