Winnipeg’s early warehouse district was dispersed throughout what is now downtown Winnipeg, some businesses locating on the east side of Main Street, taking advantage of river transport (Plate 1), and some west of the Main Street. Pockets of industrial development were also found along the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) main line in Point Douglas by the early 1880s – the railway’s station, freight sheds and right-of-way developing quickly. By the late 1880s, the Northern Pacific and Manitoba Railway (NP&MR) had also developed a large industrial site, including a station, offices, freight sheds, repair shops, an engine roundhouse and, at the corner of Water Avenue and Main Street, the opulent Manitoba Hotel.¹

While these two developments effectively defined the north and south boundaries of the warehouse district east of Main Street, it was a third project that solidified and guaranteed the success and growth of this area. In the summer of 1889, the Winnipeg Transfer Railway (WTR) was formed to build a rail line along the Red River north from the NP&MR main line to the CPR main line, hoping to provide modern rail service via spur lines to the warehouses in the area. City Council approve the plan in October, stating “…such [a] railway is a great advantage to the public interests of the residents of the city, and will increase the business to and from all parts of the country, by providing a cheap and convenient method of transferring merchandise between the above-named railways.”² It would be three years before the WTR had purchased all the necessary land and obtained all the legal agreements (and settled all the court cases). But by the mid-1890s, the line was attracting some of the continent’s major manufacturers to the area and plans for spur lines running west to the Main Street were started (Plate 2).³

¹ This enterprise, however, did not meet with the same early success as its competitor and in 1901 was sold to the Canadian Northern Railway (CNoR), soon-to-be Canada’s second transcontinental railway. In turn, the CNoR was taken over by the federal government after World War I to form part of its Canadian National Railways.

² Manitoba Free Press, October 5, 1889.

³ Manitoba Free Press, various dates. It would not be until 1901 that the more established warehouse district west of Main Street and south of the CPR track was served by a spur line, known as the Princess Street Spur.
It is interesting that the area east of Main Street saw the first spur line development in the
downtown, as it was also the first area of Western Canada permanently settled by Europeans.
Identified in various diaries, books, reports, etc., somewhere near the Red River between the foot of
Bannatyne Avenue and Galt Avenue was the original settlement of the Selkirk Settlers who arrived
in 1813. Known as Victoria Gardens and later Colony Gardens, it was comprised of “a large
house...for Governor Macdonnell and Sheriff Spencer; also a storehouse, a farmhouse and several
cabins.” All except the Governor’s House were burned to the ground in early 1815 by Métis but it
was rebuilt in the fall of 1815 as Fort Douglas. The fort was believed to have been located “at the
foot of George Street on the south side, at Logan’s Creek, which once emptied into the Red River at
the foot of Robert Street” (Plate 1). And one history also states that the bodies of the 21 settlers
killed in the Battle of Seven Oaks were buried “under the trees on the bank of Logan’s Creek”
increasing its importance as a Western Canadian historical site.

By 1900, this area had seen extensive development, with residential structures closer to Main Street
and industrial and warehouse facilities closer to the river (Plate 3). Victoria Park had been set aside
in 1894, located from James Avenue to Pacific Avenue east of Amy Street (Plate 4).

The Marshall-Wells Company of Duluth, Minnesota was a hardware company formed in 1893
when Albert Morley Marshall bought controlling shares in the Chapin-Wells Company and
renamed it Marshall-Wells. The company sent a resident representative to Winnipeg in 1894 and
only five years later, the growth in its business on both sides of the international border required a
larger presence in the Manitoba capital.

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5 Loc. cit.
   Committee, 2006, n.p. The street names Alexander, Ross, William and James are all first names of one of
   the early and prominent Red River settlers – the Ross family, the patriarch, Alexander (1783-1856) arriving
   in 1826. Part of the Ross holdings was purchased by the City of Winnipeg in 1893 for Victoria Park.
In 1900, the company was incorporated with three directors from Winnipeg and three from Duluth to carry the Canadian trade for what an article in a Winnipeg journal, The Commercial, called “...the third largest Hardware house in the United States.” Three travellers were immediately put into the field to take orders for the sale of hardware items, exotic foodstuffs, and chemicals and a fine brick and stone warehouse was constructed at the eastern end of Bannatyne Avenue (Plates 5 and 6).

STYLE
This warehouse is an excellent example of the Romanesque Revival style, very popular in warehouse districts throughout North America from the 1880s well into the 20th century. The buildings were nearly always solid brick with a raised basement and featuring rusticated stone accenting around windows and doors and at roof level. Other elements included towers flanking the main façade, quoins, belt courses, corbelled brick panels, chevrons and flat rooflines, with or without cornices and entablatures. The most obvious feature of the style was the use of the arch above openings. Often, straight-topped windows located on the middle storeys were grouped under large arches on the upper floors. Although the style was applied to private residences and on large public buildings, in Winnipeg it was almost exclusively used in the warehouse district, where the designs were somewhat more subdued. The massiveness and sturdiness of the style appealed to wholesalers looking to promote their businesses and portray the stability of their firms through the design of the structures they occupied.

CONSTRUCTION
Built at a cost of approximately $16,200, the 15.6 x 30.5-metre four-storey structure is located on the north side of Bannatyne Avenue; its solid clay brick walls resting on a heavy stone foundation (see Appendix I for more construction information).

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8 The Commercial, January 27, 1900, p. 661.
The building structural system was the most common method of the time – the mill system – a square timber beam and post support network where beams were attached to the solid brick exterior walls and covered by wood plank flooring and often a hardwood finish. This was a very popular system in warehouse districts throughout North America because of its sturdiness, the ease of adding additional storeys and its ability to suffer fire damage and not collapse. The Marshall-Wells Warehouse is one of many mill construction structures in the Exchange District.

**DESIGN**

The symmetrical front (south) façade begins at grade with a raised, rusticated stone base interrupted by two basement window openings (Plate 7). The façade is divided into three bays by attached brick pilasters. On the ground floor, the outer bays are filled by large windows in rectilinear openings with heavy stone heads; the central bay holds the raised entrance in an arched opening with stone and brick accents (Plate 8). The upper floors feature large rectilinear window openings with heavy rusticated stone sills and heads and ornamental brickwork in the wide spandrels (Plate 9). The top floor features three arched window openings with stone and brick accenting topped by a flat roof embellished with a stone-capped corbelled brick cornice, the raised central portion holding a carved stone panel with the words “MARSHALL. WELLS CO.” (Plate 10).

The west façade is windowless, although an arched opening at the rear has been bricked in (Plate 11).

The east façade faces a back lane and features large arched window openings with stone lug sills on all floors (Plate 12), separated by plain brick pilasters. The ground floor also features heavy timber elements to the rear, suggesting that this area originally held freight doors.

The rear (north) façade was also designed with brick pilasters and arched window openings (Plate 13).
While some of the individual elements have seen modest alteration (replacing original window units, filling in of openings or altering their use), the building’s exterior has not been severely altered.

INTERIOR
According to City records, the interior was not heavily finished. Wooden floor joists were originally covered with maple flooring on the first level and fir on the remaining floors and only the main floor office was sheathed with V-joint boarding, the remaining levels had walls of bare brick.  

Major alterations to the building in the 1980s, converting the space into modern offices (Plate 14).

INTEGRITY
The building stands on its original site, does not appear to have suffered major exterior alteration and appears to be in good structural condition for its age.

STREETScape
The Marshall-Wells Warehouse is a significant part of a partially intact streetscape in the nationally designated Exchange District and is an important contributor to this block of turn-of-the-century structures (see Plates 5/6 and 15/16).

ARCHITECT/CONTRACTORS
The listed architect for this building was well-known local builder James McDiarmid (1855-1934). The Scottish-born and trained McDiarmid, along with two brothers would form J. McDiarmid

10 City of Winnipeg Assessment Record, Roll No. 628270-12-2 (PC 40).
Company Limited, a construction and design business with contracts throughout Western Canada (see Appendix II for biographical information). McDiarmid has been given 10 points by the Historical Buildings and Resources Committee.

J. and J. McDiarmid Company (formed in 1892 by James and his brother John) and George A. Alsip were named contractors. Alsip was born in Decorah, Iowa, U.S.A. in 1866 and came to Winnipeg via Ellensburg, Washington, U.S.A. in 1898. He was the brother of the three men responsible for the Alsip Brick, Tile and Lumber Company Limited of Winnipeg (William P., Arthur A. and Elmer L.). George Alsip worked as a general contractor in the City until 1906 when he moved to Fort William (Thunder Bay), Ontario to found a brick manufacturing business. He died in that city in the fall of 1917.\textsuperscript{11}

A list of his prominent local contracts includes:\textsuperscript{12}

- 221 Rupert Avenue, Salvation Army Citadel, 1900, Grade III
- 123 Bannatyne Avenue, Marshall-Wells Warehouse, 1900
- 21 Edmonton Street, R.R. Gallaghar House, 1901, demolished
- 85 Arthur Street, Albert Block (Mariaggi Hotel, Alexandra Block), 1901, Grade II
- 240 Balmoral Street, M.A. Hickie House, 1901
- 611 Main Street, Corbett Block, 1901, List of Historical Resources
- 376 Logan Avenue, Christ the King Ukrainian Catholic Church, 1901, demolished
- 100 Princess Street, Adelman Building (Campbell Bros. and Wilson), 1903, Grade II

**PERSON/INSTITUTION**

The success of the Marshall-Wells Company was dramatic after the construction of its original warehouse. By 1905, they required considerable more space to serve the growing markets in Western Canada and built a massive new warehouse on the north side of the spur line, 136 Market Avenue (Plates 17 and 18).

\textsuperscript{11} *Manitoba Free Press*, October 15, 1917, p. 11.

\textsuperscript{12} *City of Winnipeg Building Permit Ledger Books*, 1899-1918; files of the Historical Buildings and Resources Committee.
The company sold the Bannatyne Avenue property and moved into their new warehouse, although from 1924 to 1945, the Marshall Wells Building Corporation is listed as the owner of the 123 Bannatyne Avenue. Other owners of the building included D.H. Bain, prominent businessman, the Manitoba Cooperative Honey Producers Ltd. and Sam Katz, businessmen and city mayor.\textsuperscript{13}

Tenancy in the building varied greatly over the years, warehousing firm of Ferguson Brothers was the principal tenant in 1912, the Donald H. Bain Company Limited utilized the building as an auxiliary warehouse in 1919 followed by A. Ramsay and Son, vendors of paints, oils and varnishes. After years of vacancy in the mid-1920s, Gurney North-West Foundry occupied the building from 1929 to 1933, after which it again sat empty until 1939 when the Manitoba Cooperative Honey Producers bought and occupied the building.\textsuperscript{14}

The Max Waldhorn Company, wholesale grocers, purchased the property in 1958 (Plate 19), remaining there until the early 1970s, when it, and the neighbouring buildings at this end of Bannatyne Avenue all stood vacant.\textsuperscript{15}

Extensive upgrades, window replacements and mechanical modernization in the late 1980s converted this warehouse into office space.

\textbf{EVENT}

There is no known significant historical event connected with this building.

\textbf{CONTEXT}

The Marshall-Wells Warehouse was an early occupant of Winnipeg’s warehouse district on the east side of Main Street. It underlined the central role played by the city at the very beginning of the 20\textsuperscript{th}

\textsuperscript{13} City of Winnipeg Tax Roll, Roll No. 628270-12-2, 1901-1990.

\textsuperscript{14} Henderson’s Directory, 1905-1940.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 1940-1980.
century as the prime regional centre, with national and international companies locating in the city
to take advantage of the available capital and excellent railway connections. The fact that the
company had to move to larger quarters so quickly is an example of the success enjoyed by so many
businesses during the pre-World War I economic boom.

LANDMARK
The building is familiar to many citizens and with the recent redevelopment of the riverfront and the
increased residential make-up of the neighbourhood, this building’s conspicuousness has increased.
APPENDIX I

CITY OF WINNIPEG - Preliminary Report

Building Address: 123 Bannatyne Ave.  
Building Name: Marshall Wells Warehouse

Original Use: wholesale warehouse  
Current Use: offices

Roll No. (Old): 628270 (11184)  
RSN: 148119

Municipality: 12  
Ward: 2  
Property or Occupancy Code: 40

Legal Description: 7/9 St. John, Plan 33296, Lot 19 (Original: 7/8E St John, Plan 350, E 21’ Lot 4, Lot 5 except E 4’)

Location: north side between Rorie Street and Red River

Date of Construction: 1900  
Storeys: 4  
Construction Type: Masonry – Frame

HERITAGE STATUS: GRADE II (November 14, 1983)


SEE NEXT PAGE

Information:
- 51 x 100 x 61 = 311,100 cu. ft.
- Exterior – Front – quarry face ashlar, stone sills & heads, belt course, brick pilasters – Balance clay brick
- 1940 – condition fairly good; some new partitions
- 1941 – Floors poor; new boiler installed
- 1947 – Maple floors added 2nd floor
- Permit 152/1956 – concrete block around boiler, fibreglass on ceiling above boiler. Ceiling in office space acoustic tile & fluorescent lighting
- 1961 – no structural changes – building in fair condition
- Permits 1490 & 3654/1981 – 1st floor walls insulated and drywalled; new partitioning
- Ceilings: B- 7.8 ft.; 1st- 13.0; 2nd- 12.3; 3rd- 11.0; 4th- 9.66
- Walls: B- 30 in. stone; 1st- 21 in. brick; 2nd & 3rd- 17 in. brick; 4th- 13 in. brick

ARCHITECT: JAMES McDIARMID

CONTRACTOR: GEORGE ALSIP
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APPENDIX II

James McDiarmid

James McDiarmid was born March 9, 1855 at Dunkeld, Perthshire, Scotland and trained with his father in carpentry and stone masonry.¹ At the age of 28, he immigrated with his 22-year-old brother John (1861-1943)² in April 1883 to join their older brother Donald and his family in Poplar Point, Manitoba (who had been farming there since 1880).³

In 1884, James and John moved into Winnipeg, first forming the partnership Murray and McDiarmid with established builder and lumberman George W. Murray. This business lasted until June 1892 and was responsible for the construction of a number of rural railway stations, several Federal Government contracts and several Winnipeg homes. James McDiarmid also began designing buildings by the mid-1890s.

J & J McDiarmid Company was formed in 1892, first concentrating on building homes for clients and as speculative property and a few larger commissions. After 1900, however, their business increased dramatically, both in terms of number of contracts and scale of buildings. Reflective of the increase in business, J. McDiarmid Company Limited was incorporated in 1906⁴ with James McDiarmid and Edward Cass (1849-1932), another long-time local contractor, as equal majority shareholders. Minority shareholders included: Peter Muir (civil engineer); J. M. McFarlane (accountant); Thomas Borgford (bricklayer/contractor); Peter McDiarmid (stone mason/contractor); and John McDiarmid (carpenter/contractor).

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³ A fourth brother, Peter (1857-1915), moved to Poplar Point with his family in 1887.

The newly formed company grew quickly on the strength of numerous large contracts with Canadian Pacific Railway for shop facilities and related structures from Fort William, ON to Vancouver, B.C. The provincial government hired the company in 1915 to complete the Legislative and Law Courts buildings after the original contractor, Thomas Kelly, was dismissed. The McDiarmids also participated in one of the consortia that built the Winnipeg aqueduct.

James McDiarmid was also a co-founder, board member and/or officer of the Winnipeg Building Society (1895), Winnipeg Machinery and Supply Co. (1901), Winnipeg Paint and Glass Co. (1902), Calgary Paint and Glass Co., Edmonton Paint and Glass Co., Winnipeg Construction Co. (1904), and the Marble and Tile Company of Canada (1912).

Among his other activities, McDiarmid was active in curling circles as a bonspiel competitor, a founder and president of the Granite Curling Club, and a president of the Manitoba Curling Association. He collected art, did some amateur painting, and supported the establishment of the Winnipeg Art Gallery (1912) and Winnipeg School of Art (1913). He also was a long-time member of the Winnipeg Public Parks Board and the Playgrounds Commission, the powers of which were transferred to the Parks Board in 1919. During his terms, which extended from the 1910s to 1931, McDiarmid was particularly noted for his work on the development of Kildonan Golf Course that opened in 1921 as a public facility. His contributions were recognized through honorary life memberships in both the Winnipeg Art Gallery and Parks Board.

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5 M. Baker, op. cit., pp. 78 and 97.
8 City of Winnipeg, City Clerk, Municipal Manual, 1920, p. 32.
9 Ibid., 1918-21, 1927, 1929, 1931. McDiarmid served at least two terms as Parks Board chairman (1919 and 1920) and one as Playgrounds Commission chairman (1920).
10 Winnipeg Free Press, February 26, 1934, p. 15.
11 City of Winnipeg, City Clerk, Municipal Manual, 1932, p. 43.
James McDiarmid died in 1934 and after the 1943 death of his brother John, steps were initiated to dissolve The J. McDiarmid Co. The firm subsequently gave notice in late 1946 that it intended to surrender its charter.

A partial inventory of James McDiarmid’s work includes (*-denotes projects for which McDiarmid was named both architect and contractor):

Winnipeg
Broadway Drill Hall, 1884 (demolished)
St. George’s Church, Isabel Street & Bannatyne Avenue, 1894 (demolished)
* James Penrose House, 232 Bell Avenue (now 444 Logan Avenue), 1894, Grade III
* St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, 425 Elgin Avenue, 1894-1895 (burned 1968)
Great-West Saddlery Factory/Warehouse, 112-114 Market Avenue, 1898, Grade III
Merrick-Anderson Building & adjoining Donald H. Bain Building, 115 Bannatyne Avenue, 1899-1900, Grade II
Marshall-Wells Warehouse, 123 Bannatyne Avenue, 1900, Grade II
Scott Memorial Orange Hall, 216-218 Princess Street (original design attributed to McDiarmid; final design to Samuel Hooper), 1900-1902, List of Historical Resources
Corbett Block, 611-617 Main Street, 1901, List of Historical Resources
* Cleland Block, 705-707 Main Street, 1901 (demolished)
* Taylor Block, 241-245 Main Street, repairs, 1901 (demolished)
Weston Shops, Canadian Pacific Railway, 1903+
Manitoba Hall, 291½-295 Portage Avenue, 1903 (demolished)
Winnipeg Paint and Glass Co. Building, 179 Pioneer Avenue, 1903 (burned 1907)
Sandison Block, 302-306 Main Street, 1904 (demolished)
* Manitoba Builders Supply Co. Storehouse, Point Douglas Avenue, 1904
Point Douglas Church, 95 Macdonald Avenue, 1905
Customs Examining Warehouse, 145 McDermot Avenue, 1908
Winnipeg Paint and Glass Co. Building, 179 Pioneer Avenue, 1908 (demolished)
* Jacob-Crowley Building, 138 Portage Avenue East, 1909, List of Historical Resources
St. Stephen’s Presbyterian Church (Elim Chapel), 546 Portage Avenue, 1910
Canada Building, 352 Donald Street, 1910, Grade III
Swift Canadian Co. Building, 312 William Avenue, 1911
Somerset Block, 294 Portage Avenue, addition of upper storeys, 1911

12 Province of Manitoba, The Manitoba Gazette 74, 10 (March 10, 1945), p. 248.
14 Drawn from the files of the City of Winnipeg’s Heritage Planner; the City’s Record of Building Permits; biographical material on James McDiarmid by sources previously quoted; and items in local newspapers and trade journals (i.e., Construction and Western Canada Contractor and Builder).
James McDiarmid work (continued):
* St. Stephen’s House (annex to St. Stephen’s Presbyterian Church), 299 Young St., 1911-1912
Cumberland (Nokomis) Block, 344 Cumberland Avenue, 1912
Bank of Ottawa, 363 Main Street, addition, 1912 (demolished)
* Winnipeg Industrial Bureau Exhibition Building, 267 Main Street, addition, 1912-1913 (demolished)
Notre Dame Investment (Commercial) Building, 169 Pioneer Avenue, 1912-1913 (demolished)
Pantages (Playhouse) Theatre, 180 Market Avenue, 1913-1914, Grade II
Dr. C.W. Gordon House, 54 West Gate, 1913, Grade II
Knox Presbyterian (United) Church, 400 Edmonton Street, 1914-1917, List of Historical Resources
Completion of the Manitoba Legislative & Law Courts buildings, Broadway, 1915-1920
Public Press Building, 290 Vaughan Street, 1917, Grade III
Gardener’s Cottage, for R.A. Rogers, 64 Nassau Street, 1922 (demolished)
All Saints Anglican Church, 521 Broadway, 1926, List of Historical Resources
Manitoba Telephone System Building, 166 Portage Avenue East, 1930-1931, List of Historical Resources
Science Building, University of Manitoba, Fort Garry campus, 1931-1932

Outside Winnipeg
Participation in construction of the Winnipeg (Shoal Lake) aqueduct in a consortium with J.P. and J.H. Tremblay and Edward Cass, 1914-1919
Dominion Government Customs House, Calgary, pre-1916
Provincial Court House, Port Arthur, 1923
T. Eaton Co. Department Store, Calgary, 1928-1929
Canadian Pacific Railway roundhouses, machine shops and other facilities, Western Canada
Revillon Building, Edmonton, date unknown
Georgia-Harris Viaduct, Vancouver, date unknown
Plate 1 – Portion of J.D. Parr’s Map of what would become downtown Winnipeg and the Warehouse District, 1874. Note the extensive surveying of lots on both sides of Main Street north of Brown’s Creek (bottom arrow) and the lack of surveying to the south and the creeks running into the Red River including Brown’s Creek (south) and Logan’s Creek (north – top arrow) (City of Winnipeg.)
Plate 2 – City of Winnipeg Fire Atlas, Overview Map, 1906-1914. The completed Winnipeg Transfer Railway and its many north-south spur lines into the warehouse district runs from Water Avenue to Point Douglas Avenue (arrows). (City of Winnipeg.)
Plate 3 – A view of Bannatyne Avenue East, ca.1903. Note the residential property in the foreground and the large brick warehouses (123 Bannatyne Avenue at arrow) closer to the river and the Winnipeg Transfer Railway right-of-way. (Archives of Manitoba, N3928.)
Plate 4 – Charles Goad, Fire Atlas of the City of Winnipeg, 1895 (revised 1905), Sheet 11. (City Archives.)
Plate 5 – North side of Bannatyne Avenue looking east, ca.1904, the Marshall-Wells Warehouse in the foreground. (Archives of Manitoba, “Oursize 133/393”, N3929.)
Plate 6 – Bannatyne Avenue East, ca.1905, looking west towards Main Street from the Winnipeg Transfer Railway right-of-way. Marshall-Wells Warehouse at arrow. (Archives of Manitoba, Stovel Advocate Collection, #65.)
Plate 7– Marshall-Wells Warehouse, 123 Bannatyne Avenue, front (south) façade, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)
Plate 8 – Marshall-Wells Warehouse, 123 Bannatyne Avenue, front (south) façade, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)
Plate 9 – Marshall-Wells Warehouse, 123 Bannatyne Avenue, front (south) façade, 1985. (City of Winnipeg.)
Plate 10 – Marshall-Wells Warehouse, 123 Bannatyne Avenue, detail of front (south) façade, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)
Plate 11 – Marshall-Wells Warehouse, 123 Bannatyne Avenue, west façade, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)
Plate 12 – Marshall-Wells Warehouse, 123 Bannatyne Avenue, east façade, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)
Plate 13—Marshall-Wells Warehouse, 123 Bannatyne Avenue, rear (north) façade, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)
Plate 14– Marshall-Wells Warehouse, 123 Bannatyne Avenue, main floor lobby, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)
Plate 15 – Bannatyne Avenue looking east from Rorie Street, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)

Plate 16 – Bannatyne Avenue looking west from Waterfront Drive, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)
Plate 17 – City of Winnipeg Fire Atlas, Vol. II, Sheet 206, 1923. The Winnipeg Transfer Railway line runs along the banks of the Red River and two spur lines run west to access the original Marshall-Wells Warehouse on Bannatyne Avenue (#1) and the newer facility on Market Avenue (#2). (City of Winnipeg.)
Plate 18 – Marshall-Wells Warehouse, 136 Market Avenue, 1978. (City of Winnipeg.)