283 BANNATYNE AVENUE

TRAVELLERS BUILDING

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings & Resources Committee
Researcher: M. Peterson
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283 BANNATYNE AVENUE – TRAVELLERS BUILDING

It would not be an overstatement to say that part of the economic growth of Western Canada in beginning in the 1880s was because of the work of manufacturers’ agents – travelling salesmen. Fanning out from their headquarters in Winnipeg with trunks full of samples of everything of seeds to shoes and coffee to hammers, these mostly men travelled all across the West, visiting farms, small town shops and city department stores.

As elsewhere in Canada, it was soon realized that an umbrella organization would be an effective way to solve a number of industry issues. Collectively, the group could and did negotiate with transportation providers – railways and steamships and later airlines – for favourable rates for both agents and their wares. Commercial rates for hotels were also offered to members. A code of ethics ensured professionalism and accountability, networking events were held to improve practices and share experiences and group insurance coverage became popular.

In Winnipeg, in October 1882, a meeting was held and the North-West Commercial Travellers’ Association of Canada (NWCTA) was formed (Plate 1). The NWCTA grew as quickly as the West and by 1906 was a national organization, over 2,000 members strong.

By the late 1890s, the Association operated out of offices at Princess Street and McDermot Avenue, and then in the early 1900, were located in the McIntyre Block, 416 Main Street. But

In 1906, at the beginning of a decade-long economic boom for Winnipeg and all of Western Canada, the NWCTA built a headquarters in the heart of the City’s growing downtown offering

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1 There were as many as six agents’ associations operating in Canada in the 1950s including: Commercial Travellers’ Association (incorporated 1874 in Toronto, ON); Ontario Commercial Travellers’ Association; and Dominion Commercial Travellers’ Association (incorporated 1880 in Montreal, PQ with territory in Quebec and Ontario).

it and many other companies and professionals, modern office space close to all the amenities (Plate 2).

**STYLE**

The Travellers Building is a fine example of the Neo-Classical or Classical Revival style, which as the name suggests, was a redefinition and revisiting of classical architecture form and ornamentation. Popular from 1900 into the 1930s in North America, its designs included columns, capitals, pediments and Greek or Roman embellishments. Main façades were normally symmetrical, cladding smooth and rooflines flat. Windows and doors were placed in both lintelled and arched openings; the latter was especially prevalent in the most ornamentally complex variant of the style, Beaux-Arts Classicism.

Examples in Winnipeg are numerous and include the Thomas Scott Memorial Orange Lodge, 216 Princess Street (completed in 1903), Imperial Bank of Commerce, 441 Main Street (1906), the Bank of Nova Scotia, 254 Portage Avenue (1910) and the Bank of Montreal, 335 Main Street (1913). Government buildings also used the style extensively: Provincial Land Titles Building, 433 Broadway (1903-1904), Law Courts Building, 411 Broadway (1912-1916), the Legislative Building, 450 Broadway (1913-1920) and Powerhouse, 219 Memorial Boulevard (1914).

**CONSTRUCTION**

Built on a heavy stone foundation, the red brick clad, six-storey structure is supported by a system of steel and concrete slabs and measures approximately 20.1 x 28.1 x 28.1 metres (see Appendix I for addition construction information). Smooth cut stone is used for accenting.

According to the City of Winnipeg Building Permit, construction costs were $125,000.4

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4 City of Winnipeg Building Permit, No. 2117/1906.
The basement, which was originally used as Turkish baths, was designed with walls that extended underneath the sidewalk- 1.5 metres under the south sidewalk (Bannatyne Avenue) and 1.8 metres under the east sidewalk (King Street). Basement ceilings were 3.1 metres high, rising to 4.1 metres on the main floor.⁵

DESIGN
The building, because of its corner location, was designed with similar main façades, symmetrically designed, facing south onto Bannatyne Avenue and east onto King Street.

The south façade holds the centrally-placed entrance placed in a two-storey smooth cut limestone frame, with the words “TRAVELLERS BUILDING” above the double doors (Plate 3). Pilasters with ornamental heads frame the door and are also found on the ground floor separating the large display windows (Plate 4). A modest cornice separates the main floor from the upper storeys which feature brick quoins at the corners and banks of windows in rectilinear openings and stone lug sills on all floors except the arched openings with stone keystones on the fifth floor. A smooth-cut limestone belt course acts as sills for the sixth storey windows above which is a complete entablature with heavy overhanging metal-clad cornice embellishing the flat roof (Plate 5).

The east side continues this basic design, although it lacks a main entrance in favour of a modest doorway at the north end of the building (Plates 6 and 7).

The west façade is built of buff brick and includes windows in rectilinear openings on all floors, a small, one-storey entrance structure and an open metal fire escape (Plate 8).

The north façade, partially hidden by Maw’s Garage, is also built of buff brick and features windows in both rectilinear and arched openings and a large light well (Plates 9 and 10).

⁵ City of Winnipeg Assessment Record, Roll No. 609490-12-2 (PC40).
INTERIOR
As mentioned previously, Turkish baths occupied part of the basement of the original building, according to the original architect’s plans (Plate 11). A restaurant and separate kitchen, the boiler room, washrooms and a barber shop were also located below grade. The plans also indicate “Sidewalk Lights over” along the south and east walls.

The ground floor included two large office areas on the east and west sides of the main entrance and entrance hall/elevator/staircase. The second floor held smaller rooms: dining room in northeast corner; billiard room in northwest; reading, smoking and writing rooms along the south wall. Offices “sub-divided to suit tenants” were located on the third, fourth and fifth floors; a caretaker’s suite was also found on the fifth floor (Plate 12). The top floor held two large halls on the east and west sides with small ante rooms along the south wall (Plate 13).

Alterations to the interior have been severe, although the original winding marble stairs with ornate bannister is still in excellent condition (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 Travellers Building occupies an extremely busy intersection in the Exchange District National Historic Site and greatly contributes to the historic makeup of the area (Plates 15 and 16).
ARCHITECT/CONTRACTORS

Frank Darling and John Andrew Pearson are the listed architects who designed this building. The Toronto, ON based firm opened a Winnipeg branch in 1902 and designed a wide arrange of buildings over the next decade. They have been given 40 points by the Historical Buildings and Resources Committee.

The contractor was Daniel David Wood, a local builder and fuel dealer. Wood was born in England in 1859, coming to Canada at the age of 10 and the family ended up in Brantford, ON, where he started a brick contracting business. In 1882, he arrived in Winnipeg and spent the next two years working for various railways. At the time of his death on December 30, 1925, Wood was listed as President of D.D. Wood & Sons Ltd. (with Victor A. and D.J. Howard) and the Fort Garry Construction Co. Ltd., was connected to the Alsip Brick and Tile Co., and a large shareholder in quarries in Stony Mountain. Wood also served as a City Councillor from 1889-1902.6

Wood built a number of large projects in the city including:7

- Isbister School, 310 Vaughan Street, 1898 (Grade II)
- Stovel Block (large addition), 245 McDermot Avenue, 1900 (Grade II)
- MacDonald Warehouse, 116-118 Market Avenue, 1901 (demolished)
- Sacre-Coeur School No. 2 (J.B. Somerset School), 775 Sherbrook Street, 1901 (demolished)
- Carnefac Block, 188 Princess Street, 1901 (List of Historical Resources)
- Lechtzier Bath House, 216 Pacific Avenue, 1903
- Balmoral Court Apartments, 540 Balmoral Street (1905)
- Wellington School, 680 Beverly Street, 1906 (demolished)
- Travellers Building, 283 Bannatyne Avenue, 1906-1907 (Grade II)
- Maw’s Garage, 114 King Avenue, 1907 (Grade III)
- Corydon Avenue Telephone Exchange, Corydon Avenue at John, 1907
- City of Winnipeg Assessment Office, 185 King Street, 1909 (demolished)
- Winnipeg Police Headquarters (addition for Patrol & Signal Station), 170 Rupert Avenue, 1911 (demolished)
- Alsip Sandstone Brick Company Factory, Elgin Avenue, 1911 (demolished)

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6 Winnipeg Tribune, December 31, 1925, p. 8.
7 Author’s files.
PERSON/INSTITUTION

The NWCTA intended to use their new facilities to house their headquarters but also as rental space for other businesses and groups. The 1910 listing for the building includes: the Turner Turkish Baths in the basement; ground floor with the Northern Trust Co., Insurance & General Agency Ltd. and Canadian Fire Insurance Co.; and brokers, assurance companies, associations and manufacturers’ agents filling the upper storey offices. The top two floors appear to have been used by the NWCTA exclusively.8

The NWCTA sold the building in 19459 and moved in 1946 to 291 Garry Street (Plate 17).10 The Unemployment Insurance Commission occupied 283 Bannatyne Avenue until 1961 and then the building stood vacant until 1976 (Plate 18). It was then purchased and redeveloped as a vertical shopping centre – Townsite (Plates 19-21). While this scheme ultimately failed, it did bring attention to the Old Market Square area and spurred other development and government investment including the Core Area Initiative (CAI) organized in 1981.11

In 1985, major upgrading to the building, funded through CAI, occurred (Plate 22). It involved modernizing the office space on the upper floors as well as an cleaning the exterior brick, installing new window units, re-vamping mechanical systems and the installing new elevators.12

In the early 2000s, the interior was renovated into residential condominiums.

EVENT

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

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8 Henderson’s Directory, 1910. In the 1929 Directory, the sixth floor is called the Dance Hall.
9 City of Winnipeg Assessment Roll, Roll No. Roll No. 609490-12-2.
**CONTEXT**

This large office building was constructed in the heart of the warehouse district in the middle of Winnipeg’s decade-long expansion phase. The replacement of older building stock with newer, larger buildings utilizing the latest in technology was an important facet of this growth that found expression throughout the downtown.

Its early upgrade and conversion in the late 1970s was one of the first such redevelopments in the warehouse district. Its more recent conversion into retail and residential space follows another trend in the Exchange District begun in the 1980s and continuing today.

**LANDMARK**

This 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: 283 Bannatyne Avenue          Building Name: Travellers Building
Original Use: offices                     Current Use: mixed use – office/retail/residential
Roll No. (Old): 609490 (10112)           RSN: 148132
Municipality: 12   Ward: 2          Property or Occupancy Code: 40
Legal Description: 6/7 St. John, Plan 33009, Lot 10
Location: northwest corner King Street & Bannatyne Avenue
Date of Construction: 1906          Storeys: 6
Construction Type: Steel and concrete slabs

HERITAGE STATUS: GRADE II (November 19, 1979)


SEE NEXT PAGE

Information:
- 66 x 90 ft.
- Exterior – Red brick; lobby – marble floors, outside oak doors
- Basement under south sidewalk 5’ inside, and east sidewalk 6’ inside
- 1934 – Building in “good condition”
- 1941 – Some shrinkage in floors. Basement divided by many partitions – previously used for Turkish Bath
- 1954 – Building in “fairly good condition”
- 1961 – Building structurally sound except under sidewalk - water seepage and dampness

ARCHITECT: DARLING AND PEARSON
CONTRACTOR: D.D. WOOD

---BANNATYNE AVENUE---

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Frank Darling and John Andrew Pearson began working together in Toronto, ON in 1889 when Pearson joined the staff of the well-established, nine-year-old firm of Darling and Currie. Within three years Pearson had become a full partner and in 1897 these two men embarked upon a remarkably successful career spanning more than a quarter of a century and the entire Dominion of Canada.\(^1\)

Frank Darling was born the son of a rector of the Church of the Holy Trinity in 1850 and trained with Henry Langley after his graduation from Upper Canada and Trinity colleges. He practiced for three years in the London, Ontario offices of G.E. Street and Arthur Blomfield before returning to Toronto. After a year on his own, he formed a one-year partnership with Henry Macdougall. From 1875-1878 Darling again worked alone, although this was the last time he was without at least one partner for the rest of his career.\(^2\)

Darling was architect to Trinity College, Toronto, for 45 years and was the long-standing architect for both the Bank of Commerce and the Bank of Montreal. Several Anglican congregations in Toronto also used him exclusively. He was the first overseas winner of the Gold Medal of the Royal Institute of Architects of England in 1915 and died in 1923.\(^3\)

John Andrew Pearson, born at Chesterfield, England on June 22, 1867,\(^4\) came to Toronto in 1889 and joined the staff of Darling and Samuel George Currie. He began his Canadian career by working on plans for the Victoria Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto. From 1892-1895 he spent much of his time in St. John's, Newfoundland assisting in its rebuilding after a major fire. Undoubtedly, a high point came in 1916 when Pearson was hired, along with J. Omer Marchand, to reconstruct the Parliament Buildings. He died in 1940.\(^5\)

\(^1\) E. Arthur (revised by S.A. Otto), Toronto: No Mean City (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1984), pp. 244, 256.
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 244.
\(^3\) Ibid., p. 256.
\(^5\) E. Arthur, op. cit., p. 256.
Together, Darling and Pearson designed a wide array of buildings throughout Canada, varied in scope, style and use. In Winnipeg, the firm opened a branch in 1902 and sent fellow Torontonian W. Percy Over to run the office. Over worked for several years in the city and was a regular contributor to the journal, Canadian Architect and Builder, with his “Northwest Letter” which described construction throughout the West.  

An incomplete list of their Winnipeg designs includes:

- Dominion Bank, 440 Main Street (1898) – demolished 1968
- Canadian Bank of Commerce, 389 Main Street (1900), demolished 1910, façade reused in Regina – demolished ca.1985
- A.M. Nanton Residence, 229 Roslyn Road (1900-1901), demolished 1935, gates (Grade II) and gatehouse survive
- Canada Life Building, southwest corner Portage Avenue and Main Street (remodelled and enlarged 1902) – demolished 1973-1974
- Royal (Union) Tower, 504 Main Street (1903-1904) – Grade I
- Dominion Post Office, 240 Portage Avenue (1904-1907) – demolished 1962
- Holy Trinity Rectory, 273 Donald Street (1905) – demolished 1936
- General Electric Warehouse, 146-148 Notre Dame Avenue East (now Pioneer Avenue), 1905 – demolished ca.1956
- Winnipeg Lodging and Coffee House, 175 Logan Avenue East (1905) – demolished
- St. Charles Country Club, County Club Road (1905) – burned down 1910
- Grundy Block, 333 Portage Avenue (1905) – demolished
- Manitoba Medical College, Emily Street (1905)
- Western Canada Flour Mills, Archibald Street (1905-1906) – demolished ca.1986
- Dominion Radiator Company Warehouse, 56-8 Victoria Street (now Westbrook Street), 1905-1906 – demolished ca.1972
- Canadian Bank of Commerce, 325 Nairn Avenue (1906)
- Canadian Bank of Commerce Branch, 1521 Logan Avenue (1906)
- Nurses’ Residence, Winnipeg General Hospital, Bannatyne Avenue (1906)
- Travellers Building, 283 Bannatyne Avenue (1906-1907) – Grade II
- Nanton Building, 201-203 Portage Avenue (1906-1907) – demolished 1989
- Imperial Bank of Canada, 441 Main Street (1906-1907) – Grade II
- Grain Exchange Building, 167 Lombard Avenue (1906-1908) – Grade II
- Bank of Nova Scotia, 254 Portage Avenue (1908-1910)
- Canadian Bank of Commerce (Millennium Centre), 389 Main Street (1910-1912) – Grade I

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6 Canadian Architect and Builder, 1902-1903.
Plate 1 – North-West Commercial Travellers’ Association of Canada membership card, 1912.
(Reproduced from website https://s3.amazonaws.com/bwpaperclip-production/item_images/assets/001/598/547/original/DSCN5290.JPG?1499225715.)
Plate 2 – Bannatyne Avenue looking west from King Street, ca1910. The Travellers building is on the right, partially hidden by the roof of the Central Fire Hall. (Archives of Manitoba, “Winnipeg- Streets- Bannatyne 2 ca1910”.)
Plate 3 – Travellers Building, 283 Bannatyne Avenue, detail of south entrance, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)
Plate 4 – Travellers Building, 283 Bannatyne Avenue, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)
Plate 5 – Travellers Building, 283 Bannatyne Avenue, detail of cornice, southeast corner, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)

Plate 6 – Travellers Building, 283 Bannatyne Avenue, east façade, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)
Plate 7 – Travellers Building, 283 Bannatyne Avenue, east façade, main floor, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)
Plate 8 – Travellers Building, 283 Bannatyne Avenue, west façade, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)
Plate 9 – Travellers Building, 283 Bannatyne Avenue, part of north façade, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)
Plate 10 – Travellers Building, 283 Bannatyne Avenue, part of north façade, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)
Plate 12 – Architect’s Plans of fifth floor, No. 2117/1906, “Fourth Floor Plan,” 1906. Note, plans name ground floor and then second floor as “First Floor”. (City Storage.)
Plate 13 – Architect’s Plans of fifth floor, No. 2117/1906, “Fifth Floor Plan,” 1906. (City Storage.)
Plate 14 – Travellers Building, 283 Bannatyne Avenue, main staircase, 2005. (M. Peterson, 2005.)
Plate 15 – Bannatyne Avenue looking west from King Street, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)

Plate 16 – King Street looking north from McDermot Avenue, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)
Plate 18 – Travellers Building, 283 Bannatyne Avenue, vacant and for sale, ca.1974. (City of Winnipeg.)
Plate 20 – Townsite, 283 Bannatyne Avenue, 1980. (City of Winnipeg.)
Plate 21 – Townsite, 283 Bannatyne Avenue, ca.1980. (City of Winnipeg.)
Plate 22 – 283 Bannatyne Avenue, 1984 with Core Area Initiative signage announcing renovation work in the front window. (City of Winnipeg.)