216 McDermot Avenue
Leckie Building

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings Committee
Researcher: M. Peterson
April 2017
This building embodies the following heritage values as described in the *Historical Resources By-law, 55/2014* (consolidated update July 13, 2016):

(a) Built in 1900, it is one of the older structures in the Exchange District National Historic Site, built as a mixed use facility with retail and office space provided;

(b) It is associated with the dramatic growth of Winnipeg at the beginning of the 20th century;

(c) It is an excellent example of the two-part commercial style with retail on the ground floor and office and/or residential space above;

(d) This solid brick structure with stone accenting is typically built for the period;

(e) It is an integral part of an important district streetscape; and

(f) The upper floors of the building’s main façade has suffered little alteration.
Winnipeg in the early 1890s was, although few realized it, on the verge of a spectacular era of growth, development and maturity that would create, by World War I, a large, modern city with all the amenities. But this comprehensive growth followed patterns established decades earlier and resulted in specific districts within city boundaries even after this frenzied period of growth.

The real estate and construction boom of the early 1880s was intimately connected to the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) around Winnipeg and onto the western prairies. Land prices in the small capital city skyrocketed, the population soared and solid brick structures began replacing the small wooden shacks that dotted the mud streets. This development led to the creation of specific districts within the city – residential, commercial and industrial – and their related building-types. The huge advance in land prices along Main Street north of Portage Avenue necessitated the replacement of the earlier residential development with large commercial structures. Investors chose to locate near one of the most important buildings, City Hall, from which would come assistance in advancing both singular business interests and those of the community at large.

Commercial interests, both local and from Eastern Canada, were quick to locate in this area. The city rapidly assumed the role of wholesale hub for all of Western Canada, partially because of its central location and partially because of the preferential freight rates negotiated with the CPR that made it cheaper for manufacturers to ship their goods to Winnipeg, unload them and then send them west to the growing markets on the prairies. Companies like G.F. and J. Galt Company, Stobart, Eden and Company and J.H. Ashdown were all organized and carrying on business prior to the CPR boom. The bust of 1882, while it seriously affected some parts of the local economy, did not have a devastating effect on the wholesale sector. This was mainly as a result of the expanding regional base of the wholesalers as settlement increased on the prairies and demand for goods grew. The areas east and west of Main Street, however, were undeniably

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developing as the warehouse district, slowly through the 1880s and 1890s and then rapidly after 1900 (Plates 1-3).

In 1900, just as Winnipeg was beginning its remarkable decade-long growth phase, Robert Leckie, a long-time resident and businessman, built a modest mixed-use block on McDermot Avenue near Main Street, hoping to supply the ever-increasing demand for retail and office space in the downtown.

STYLE

The Leckie Building is one of many examples of a modestly adorned mixed-use structure built in the Exchange District prior to World War I. Even with the alterations to its main façade at grade, it remains as an excellent example of a two-part commercial block with classical detailing, one of the most familiar and versatile building types on the urban landscape.

Prevalent in communities as far back as the 1850s, the two-part commercial block is based on Roman models of shops with upper living quarters. Most obvious is the horizontal division of the façade into two distinct zones, corresponding to different interior uses. The ground floor was usually designed for public purposes – a banking hall, showroom or retail space. The upper floors could be layout as offices, residential suites or meeting halls.² The extent of exterior ornamentation ranged from austere to elaborate and can be found in almost every community.

CONSTRUCTION

The Leckie Block is a three store, solid brick building resting on a stone foundation originally measuring 9.2 x 21.4 metres.³ All upper storey walls measure 43.2 centimetres thick and the main (north) façade is clad in dark buff hard pressed brick, the other three walls are built of common

³ City of Winnipeg Building Permit (below as BP), #162/1900; and City of Winnipeg Assessment Record, Roll No. 608730-12-2 (below as AR).
clay brick. Stone and metal is also used as accenting on the front façade. This construction method is very common in Winnipeg.

In 1924, the building was gutted by fire which started on the second floor. While stock was destroyed the building itself was saved and repaired.⁴

A one-storey concrete block addition was made to the structure’s rear (south) façade in 1975.⁵

**DESIGN**

The main (north) façade begins at grade with the familiar large display windows for the retail shop of the ground floor. To date, images have not been found showing the original design of the ground floor, it is likely that it featured a recessed door flanked by large, angled single-pane display windows. This area was renovated and modernized in 1962 (Plates 4 and 5) and again in 2016 (Plate 6).⁶ Above the ground floor windows is a modest metal entablature flanked by two oversized ornamental brackets. The second and third floors of the building appear to be unchanged from the original design; both levels feature large square-headed wood framed windows with transoms above and joined by smooth-cut continuous stone sills and slightly wider heads (Plate 7). Ornamental brick panels are found in the spandrels of the upper floors. Above the top floor, the roofline is finished with corbelled brick, a stone band and a raised, stone-capped parapet with a carved stone date stone (Plate 8).

The east and west façades are completely covered by neighbouring buildings constructed shortly after the Leckie Building (Plate 9); the lower portion of the original rear (south) façade is covered by a one-storey cinder-block addition (1975), while the original windows of the third floor are visible and bricked in (Plates 10 and 11).

⁴ Manitoba Free Press, September 22, 1924, p. 4.
⁵ BP #6079/75, $21,000.
⁶ BP #6365/1962, $300.
INTERIOR
The building’s interior has almost no original finishes remaining, save for a few remnants of the ornamental tin ceiling and some of the wide wood baseboard.

The ground floor was recently converted into a restaurant (Plate 12), the basement used as its kitchen.

Originally, a dark wood accented staircase along the building’s west wall gave access to the upper two floors (Plate 13), but this has recently been removed (Plate 14). The upper two floors have been gutted (Plates 15-18).

The 1975 addition is used for storage/display.

INTEGRITY
The building stands on its original site and appears to be in good structural condition. Alterations to the exterior include the addition of a one-storey building on the rear and the redesign of the ground floor on the main façade. Above, the exterior of the building appears to be in a fairly original state.

STREETSCAPE
The Leckie Building is one of several large turn-of-the-century buildings that grace both sides of McDermot Avenue from Main Street to beyond Princess Street (Plates 19 and 20). It is an integral part of the one of the most intact streetscapes with the Exchange District National Historic District. All buildings in the Exchange District are an essential part of the historic streetscape and as such, the Historical Buildings and Resources Committee has given them 60 points.
ARCHITECT/CONTRACTORS
Henry Sandham Griffith (1865-1943), British-born and trained architect, was responsible for the design of the Leckie Building (see Appendix II for biographical information). Griffith arrived in Winnipeg in 1887 and remained active until his move to Saskatoon, SA in 1906, Victoria, B.C. in 1907 and finally Vancouver, B.C. He was responsible for a wide range of buildings throughout Western Canada and has been given 10 points by the Historical Buildings and Resources Committee.

Contractors for the building were Kelly Brothers and Mitchell, a well-known local partnership that had its beginnings with the creation of Kelly Brothers (Thomas and Michael), in 1880. A third brother, Martin, joined in 1884 and operated as Kelly Brothers and Company until 1903 when it was known as the Manitoba Construction Company. Kelly Brothers and Mitchell was organized in 1905, although the partnership had built the Leckie Building and the Provincial Deaf and Dumb Institute (Portage Avenue) in 1900. The partnership lasted until 1907 and was responsible for several fine buildings including the Grain Exchange Building, 167 Lombard Avenue (1906) – Grade II, Imperial Bank, 441 Main Street (1906) – Grade II and the Codville Building, 43 Westbrook Street (1906) – demolished.

PERSON/INSTITUTION
The original owner and namesake of this structure was Robert Leckie. Born in 1850 in Kincardine, Upper Canada (northwest of present-day Kitchener, Ontario on the eastern shore of Lake Huron), Leckie came west to Winnipeg in 1874, one of the early waves of settlers to make the newly

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8 City of Winnipeg Building Permit Ledger Books, 1899-1910.
incorporated city his home. Leckie married Annie Mariah Elliot (who had come West in 1875)\textsuperscript{10} in 1877 in Portage la Prairie, MB and the couple had, according to the Canada Census, 1901 & 1911, seven children (two boys and five girls) grow to adulthood.

Leckie was a paperhanger/interior decorator by trade and was well known throughout the city, co-founding Smith (W.P.) and Leckie, painters, which only lasted until 1876.\textsuperscript{11} He operated his own business for many years, first at 425 Main Street (Plate 21) and then from his new premises on McDermot Avenue which opened in November 1900. Leckie retired from the decorating business in 1919 and died in 1921\textsuperscript{12} and his representatives continued to own the block until the late 1920s when it was sold to the Harstone Coal Company, who owned the building and occupied an office in it until its sale in 1944 to Morris Doduck of Bertram-Doduck, wholesalers. Canadian Footwear Limited was also a long-time owner/occupant, from the 1960s into the 1990s.\textsuperscript{13}

Tenants of the building have been extremely varied, from wholesalers and manufacturers’ agents to contractors, architects, insurance companies, shoemakers, tailors and banks. The third floor has been used as a meeting hall since the construction of the building, first by the Young Men’s Liberal Club (1900-ca.1908) and then by the Canadian Order of Foresters.\textsuperscript{14} Foresters’ Hall, as it was known, was used by the organization until their move to 635 Sargent Avenue in 1956.\textsuperscript{15}

**EVENT**

There is no known event connected with this building.

\textsuperscript{10} Manitoba Free Press, December 3, 1937, p. 25.
\textsuperscript{11} Manitoba Free Press, October 6, 1876, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{12} Manitoba Free Press, August 24, 1921, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{13} City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, Roll No. 608730-12-2, 1900-1993.
\textsuperscript{14} Winnipeg Free Press, 1900-1956. The Foresters also rented out the premises to choirs and theatre groups and the Y.M.C.A., who gave a concert for the blind in the hall in 1921. The Medical Alumni held meetings in their medical library in the block in 1902.
\textsuperscript{15} Henderson’s Directory, 1900-1990.
CONTEXT

The Leckie Building is contextually important for a number of reasons. It is an excellent example of an early 20th century retail/office building, an important addition to Winnipeg’s urban landscape at a time when the demand for such space was constantly growing.

Its construction as a rental property by a modest local businessman is illustrative of the type of investment made during this period. Many businessmen took earnings from their successful ventures and invest in the real estate market, either land or through development. Such structures, which included office buildings, apartment blocks and retail stores, returned steady, though modest, returns on this investment. It was one of the most popular investments for Winnipeggers for many decades because of the relative cheapness of materials and the constant demand for space, be it residential, commercial or professional.

TABLE ONE

Henderson’s Directory Information, 1901-2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>INFORMATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>#218- Robert Leckie; #218½- Young Liberal Club Rooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>#218- Robert Leckie, wallaperer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>#218- Robert Leckie; #220- Leckie Block tenants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>#218- Robert Leckie; #220- Leckie Block- J.E. Huxley &amp; Co. and C.O.F. Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>Harstone Coal Company Ltd., Frederick S. Harstone, president, coal and wood wholesale and retail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>#216-218- Prairie Merchants Supply, Harry Springman, manager, dry goods; #220- Harstone Building, vacant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>#220- Harstone Building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969-1989</td>
<td>Canadian Footwear Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Vacant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Ragpickers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Vacant</td>
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</tbody>
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LANDMARK

While not as ornamentally complex and smaller in scale than some of its neighbours, the Leckie Building is still conspicuous in the neighbourhood.
APPENDIX I

CITY OF WINNIPEG - Preliminary Report
Assessment Record

Building Address: 216 McDermot Avenue Building Name: Leckie Building

Original Use: offices Current Use: vacant

Roll No. (Old): 608730 (10071)

Municipality: 12 Ward: 2 Property or Occupancy Code: 33

Legal Description: 6 St. John, Plan 586 Lot C

Location: south side between Main & Albert streets

Date of Construction: 1900 Storeys: 3 Construction Type: Brick and stone

HERITAGE STATUS: ON NOMINATED LIST

Building Permits (Plans available: [CS] City Storage):
- 162/1900 $12,000 (original); 526/1957 $400 (Restaurant alteration); 2976/1957 [CS] $100 (Fuel Tanks); 6365/1962 $300 (alteration); 3147/1964 [CS] $2,800 (alteration); 6079/75 $21,000 (addition); 129533/2014 $100,000 (interior alterations- demolish existing staircase & main floor office, 3 new bathrooms on main)

Information:
- 30 x 70 x 54 ½+ = 117,166 cu. ft.
- Front – Dark buff hard pressed brick - centre entrance, plate glass full height
- Rear Elevation – common brick 2 storeys, basement - stone
- Wall Thickness – 17” brick
- 1945 – Building structurally good – dark, some settlement cracks in rear wall
- 1948 – 1st floor slight water damage from fire 2nd floor - southeast corner damaged
- 1957 – 2nd & 3rd floors repaired, decorated
- Permit 6365/1962- new fire doors installed, new front to shoe store
- 1965- building in normal condition on exterior
- 1986- main- appears in “fair condition”; basement-storage; 1st-sales/storage; rear addition- good; 2nd & 3rd- original finishes, in normal condition for age

ARCHITECT: H.S. GRIFFITH

CONTRACTOR: KELLY BROTHERS & MITCHELL

--- McDERMOT AVENUE ---
APPENDIX II

Henry Sandham Griffith

H.S. Griffith was one of several British architects who immigrated to Canada in the last two decades of the twentieth century. Griffith was born in Oxfordshire, England in 1865, the son of Reverend G. S. Griffith. Architectural training took the form of three years of service (1882-85) to Reading, England firm of Webb and Tubbs. In 1886 Griffith trained as a draftsman with the London District Surveyor's office.¹

He came to Winnipeg in the spring of 1887 where he found employment with the Northern Pacific Railway and later with the Land Titles Office. Both positions dealt mainly with surveying activities but, in 1893, Griffith opened an architectural practice in the city.² Although this practice was relatively small, he designed several buildings across the province. He moved to Saskatoon in 1906 and Victoria in 1907. He stayed in British Columbia for the remainder of his life, designing many residential and commercial buildings. The 1918 collapse of his firm followed its rapid expansion during the 1900-12 land boom. After several years in Victoria, designing many fine homes in some of the most exclusive neighbourhoods, he moved his practice to Vancouver where he continued to work and lived until his death on October 18, 1943.³

An incomplete list includes:

Ryan Block, 104 King St. (1895) – Grade III
Norwood Cricket Club Pavilion (1895) – demolished
Rev. Andrew Stewart House, 239 Colony St. (1896)
Brookside Cemetery Chapel and Vault (1897)
Central Fire Hall, Albert St. and McDermot Ave. (1899) – demolished
School on the Machray School site (1899) – demolished
Office Building - McDermot Ave. (1900)

¹ "A Group of Winnipeg Architects" in Canadian Architect and Builder, January 1897, pp. 5-6.
² Ibid., pp. 5-6.
³ Compiled from: Ibid., H.S. Griffith (file of the Historic Resources Branch - thanks to R.R. Rostecki), M. Peterson, "Ryan Block - 104 King St.", report for the Historical Buildings Committee; and B.C. Archives. Note: Norwood Cricket Club information from The Daily Nor'-Wester, November 2, 1895, p. 1.
H.S. Griffiths Winnipeg designs, continued:

Olafson Warehouse, James Ave. at King St. (1901)
Northwest Laundry Building, Main St. at York Ave. (1901)
Baker Building, 270 McDermot Ave. (1901) – demolished
St. Boniface Normal School, 210 rue Masson (1902) – Grade II
C. Vokes House, Central Ave. (1902)
Criterion Hotel, 214 McDermot Ave. (1903) – Grade II
M. Lechtzier's Turkish and Russian Bathhouse, Pacific Ave. at King St. (1903) – demolished
Oxford Hotel, 216 Notre Dame Ave. (1905)

Other:

Trinity United Church (Knox Presbyterian), Portage la Prairie, MB (1897)
James Cowan Block, Portage la Prairie, MB (1897)
Pratt Opera House alteration, Portage la Prairie, MB (1898)
St. Mary la Prairie Church, Portage la Prairie, MB (1898-99)
T. & W. Millar Hardware Store, Portage la Prairie, MB (1899)
A. McKillop Furniture Store, Portage la Prairie, MB (1899)
John Ferriss House, Portage la Prairie, MB (1899)
J. Fulton House, Portage la Prairie, MB (1899)
T.B. Mills Block, Portage la Prairie, MB (1899)
J.R. McDonald House, Portage la Prairie, MB (1899)
Bailey Block, Portage la Prairie, MB (1900)
Westbourne Episcopal Church, Westbourne, MB (1900)
Neepawa - Neepawa Hospital, Neepawa, MB (1904)
Alexis Martin House “Edgecliffe”, Victoria, BC (1910)
West Lawn Building, Riverview Mental Hospital Complex, Vancouver, BC (1910-1913)
West Pender Building, Vancouver, BC (1912)
Dominion Trust Co. Building (Coulthard-Sutherland Building), New Westminster, BC (1913)
Hon. T. W. Patterson House, Victoria, BC (1914)
Vancouver Board of Trade Building, Vancouver, BC (no date)

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4 Information from “Heritage Planning Files, City of New Westminster” found at flickr.com/photos/bobkh/339091100.
Plate 1 – McDermot Avenue looking west from Main Street, ca.1881. (Photo courtesy of the Archives of Manitoba, "Winnipeg- Streets- McDermot #1").

Plate 2 – The same view approximately two decades later (ca.1903). Large brick and stone warehouses and retail/office buildings have replaced all the residential property in this shot. The Leckie Building is at the arrow. (Courtesy of the Archives of Manitoba.)
Plate 3 – Looking west along McDermot Avenue from Main Street, ca.1900. The Leckie Building, with “WALLPAPERS” signage is at arrow. (Archives of Manitoba, “Winnipeg- Streets- McDermot- 5”.)
Plate 4 – Leckie Building, 216 McDermot Avenue, front (north) façade, 2014. (M. Peterson, 2014.)
Plate 5 – Leckie Building, 216 McDermot Avenue, detail of ground floor, front (north) façade, 2014. (M. Peterson, 2014.)
Plate 6 – Leckie Building, 216 McDermot Avenue, detail of ground floor, front (north) façade, 2017. (M. Peterson, 2017.)
Plate 7 – Leckie Building, 216 McDermot Avenue, detail of second and third floors, front (north) façade, 2017. (M. Peterson, 2017.)
Plate 8 – Leckie Building, 216 McDermot Avenue, detail of roofline, front (north) façade, 2014. (M. Peterson, 2014.)
Plate 9 – South side of McDermot Avenue from Main Street to Albert Street: #1- Lake of the Woods Building, 212 McDermot Avenue (built 1901); #2- Criterion Hotel, 214 McDermot Avenue (built 1903); #3- Leckie Building, 216 McDermot Avenue (built 1900); and #4- Silvester and Willson Building, 222 McDermot Avenue (built 1904), 2014. (M. Peterson, 2014.)
Plate 10 – Leckie Building, 216 McDermot Avenue, one-storey addition to rear (south) façade, 2014. (M. Peterson, 2014.)
Plate 11 – Leckie Building, 216 McDermot Avenue, third storey windows of the original rear (south) façade, 2014. (M. Peterson, 2014.)
Plate 12 – Leckie Building, 216 McDermot Avenue, main floor restaurant, 2017. (M. Peterson, 2017.)
Plate 13 – Leckie Building, 216 McDermot Avenue, west side staircase, 2009. (M. Peterson, 2009.)
Plate 14 – Leckie Building, 216 McDermot Avenue, west side staircase, 2017.  (M. Peterson, 2017.)
Plate 15 – Leckie Building, 216 McDermot Avenue, second floor, 2017. (M. Peterson, 2017.)
Plate 16 – Leckie Building, 216 McDermot Avenue, second floor, 2017. (M. Peterson, 2017.)
Plate 17 – Leckie Building, 216 McDermot Avenue, third floor, 2017. (M. Peterson, 2017.)

Plate 18 – Leckie Building, 216 McDermot Avenue, third floor, 2017. (M. Peterson, 2017.)
Plate 19 – McDermot Avenue looking west from Main Street, 2014. (M. Peterson, 2014.)

Plate 20 – McDermot Avenue looking east from Albert Street, 2014. (M. Peterson, 2014.)
Plate 21 – Two advertisements for R. Leckie, painter/decorator/wallpaperer, 1899 (left) and 1914 (right). (Reproduced from Manitoba Free Press, March 29, 1899, p. 10 and February 7, 1914, p. 8.)