410 PORTAGE AVENUE

BRADBURN BLOCK

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings & Resources Committee
Researcher: M. Peterson
June 2016
Winnipeg’s first retail district was actually the Hudson’s Bay Company’s (HBC) fur trading post, Upper Fort Garry, at the foot of today’s Main Street and had served as the commercial centre for the small settlement since its construction in the 1830s. By the 1850s and 1860s, the beginnings of a commercial district had begun to develop around the corner of Portage Avenue and Main Street. The HBC finally began selling off its Main Street frontage south of Portage Avenue in the 1870s. It was then that this area began to fill with small- and medium-size commercial enterprises (Plate 1).

In 1883, the Clarendon Hotel was built on the northwest corner of Portage Avenue and Donald Street. It was one of early Winnipeg’s best-known buildings, surrounded for many years by bald prairie and small structures. The hotel (Plate 2) was a massive brick and stone structure, five storeys high with retail space on the ground floor of both the Donald Street and Portage Avenue frontages. Built in the Second Empire style, the building was finished with a mansard roof and corner turret. It was, for many years, one of only a handful of significant buildings not located in the Exchange District or on Main Street and virtually the only major building on Portage Avenue’s north side.

Soon after the turn-of-the-century, fundamental changes occurred to refocus the retail sector from Main Street onto Portage Avenue. In 1904, the federal government announced plans to build a new Post Office at the corner of Portage Avenue and Garry Street (Plate 3), replacing the 1886 building located on the northeast corner of Main Street and McDermot Avenue. Many citizens and businessmen saw this as an abandonment of the traditional retail section of the city. The editorial comment in the Winnipeg Morning Telegram no doubt echoed the sentiments of many when it labelled the decision “a political land deal and without doubt cut and dried long ago.” Merchants and wholesalers, who were concentrated on both sides of Main Street north of

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2 Winnipeg Morning Telegram, March 29, 1904.
Portage Avenue, objected to the inconvenience of the building’s location – so far removed from Main Street and their shops and warehouses.

It was not long after that the T. Eaton Company purchased a large tract of land on the south side of Portage guaranteeing that future commercial development would focus on this avenue.\(^3\) Adjacent land values soared, paving the way for the construction of large retail/office buildings all along the frontage (Plate 4).

The nearly unbridled growth of downtown Winnipeg paused during World War I as economic focus, materials and manpower shifted to the war effort. After the cessation of fighting, Winnipeg’s economy rebounded and while it never again reached the level of the pre-1915 period, the early 1920s did see significant construction and growth. Most importantly for Portage Avenue was the commencement, in the fall of 1925, of the massive HBC Department store between Memorial Boulevard and Vaughan Street, and when officially opened on November 18, 1926, added an important component to the commercial district (Plate 5).

Between the two massive department stores, both sides of Portage Avenue developed with all types of business blocks, office buildings and retail space – over $10-million worth of City of Winnipeg Building Permits between Main Street and Memorial Boulevard from 1900-1926.\(^4\)

In 1922, as Winnipeg’s economy finally began to cool as other Western Canadian cities took over more of its traditional financial and distribution roles, a local oil-man, H.H. Bradburn continued the long-established local practice of real estate investment by building an investment property in the heart of Winnipeg’s commercial district on Portage Avenue (Plate 6).

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\(^3\) A.F.J. Artibise, Winnipeg: A Social History of Urban Growth, 1874-1914 (Montreal, PQ: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1975), pp. 154-155; and The Winnipeg Telegram, July 7, 1904, p.7. This article described Eaton’s choice: “Experts were employed for weeks, before anything was announced, to look the city over and to make a study of its business district for the purpose of hitting upon the centre of trade, not alone at the present but in the future. They looked and studied and finally chose Portage Avenue.”

\(^4\) City of Winnipeg, Building Permit Ledger Books, City Archives.
STYLE
The Bradburn Block is an excellent example of a Two-Part Commercial structure, very common throughout the downtown regions of most North American cities. Especially popular after 1900, the design was used to reflect the varied activities housed in the different areas of the building. The ground floor held the retail spaces, often with recessed entrances and large display windows. A metal cornice or similar feature was often used to visually separate the ground floor from the upper floors, which included banks of large windows to light the office and/or residential space. Access to this upper floor was usually provided by an ornate entrance on the front façade.

Beyond this basic layout, this type of block saw a tremendous variation in materials and ornamentation. They could be small, simple wooden structures or large, multi-storey brick and stone buildings with a wealth of ornamental elements, often depending on the neighbourhood in which they were located and the amount of money available to the developer.

CONSTRUCTION
The building is located on the southwest corner of Portage Avenue and Kennedy Street, built in 1922 at a cost of $68,000. It measures approximately 26.4 x 27.1 x 13.4 metres, the 43.2-centimetre solid brick ground floor and 33.0–centimetre second floor walls resting on a 45.7-centimetre concrete foundation (see Appendix I for more construction information). Face brick and common clay brick are used on the front and rear/side elevations respectively. Construction methods and materials are consistent with the norms of the time period.

DESIGN
The building was designed with two public façades, north facing Portage Avenue and west facing Kennedy Street. The north façade of the solid brick building features a completely reworked ground floor, severe changes made over time as occupancy of the retail space changed.

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5 City of Winnipeg Building Permit, #2064/1922.
6 City of Winnipeg Assessment Record, Roll No. 936230-12-1 (PC 33).
The result is an uneven mixture of claddings, signage and layout of the entrances and display windows (Plate 7). Above the signage is visible a portion of the original design – the dark brick walls with smooth limestone accenting leading to the continuous stone sills of the second floor. This level is more original, although the replacement of the window units has altered its appearance. The floor is divided into five bays by brick pilasters, each bay holding a pair of rectilinear window openings. Above these openings is corbelled brick accenting leading to the metal cornice with brackets and the stone capped and accented parapet. A stone panel with the word “BRADBURN” is centrally located above the second storey windows (Plate 8).

The west façade is a continuation of the north elevation and also includes a small one-storey section at its south end (Plates 9 and 10). The east façade, uncovered due to demolition, is an uninterrupted brick wall now partially covered by a painted mural (Plate 11). The south façade includes two small, one-storey additions, brick pilasters, metal fire escape and numerous rectilinear door and window openings, most of which have replacement units (Plate 12). An ornate brick chimney is located at the roofline of this elevation.

INTERIOR

It is unknown how the original interior was organized, although early directories list three retail shops and the “Roseland Dance Gardens” occupying the ground floor (1924) and five shops (1928) along Kennedy Street and five units along Portage Avenue (1924). Tenants are unnamed for the upper floor suites.

Today, the Portage Avenue retail space is occupied, the Kennedy Street space is vacant. Conversion to a bank in the 410 Portage Avenue space created a modern, metal accented stairs (Plate 13) to access the walk-in vault in the basement. Part of the ground floor still features the 4.9-

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J. Wagner, Parks Canada, email dated June 3, 2016. The mural was painted as part of a public art grant program in the late 1990s known as Urban Idea, which also funded an installation on the west wall of 394 Portage Avenue.

Henderson’s Directory, 1924 and 1928.
metre ceilings of the dance hall (Plate 14). The second floor was completely renovated in 1955 and since that time has seen extensive alteration/modernization (Plate 15).

**INTEGRITY**
The building stands on its original site and appears to be in good structural condition for its age. The exterior has seen extensive renovations to the ground floor, although the upper storeys have not been drastically changed except for newer window units.

**STREETSCAPE**
The Bradburn Block has been an important contributor to two busy downtown streetscapes for many decades (Plates 16 and 17).

**ARCHITECT/CONTRACTORS**
William Fingland was the architect responsible for the design of the Bradburn Block. Fingland came to Winnipeg in 1905 and his long career included work for the Manitoba Association of Architects and as acting provincial architect (see Appendix II for biographical information). He has been given 10 points by the Historical Buildings and Resources Committee.

William Arthur Irish (1872-1941), well-known local contractor, was responsible for the construction of the block. Born in Ontario, Irish came west with his parents in the early 1890s and later moved to Winnipeg. He formed a partnership with his brother-in-law John A. Saul (1861-1939) as Saul and Irish from approximately 1900-1913 and the pair were responsible for a number of large projects including: Elim Chapel (St. Stephen’s Presbyterian Church), 546 Portage Avenue (1902); 222 McDermot Avenue, Silvester-Wilson Building (1904); the Bell Block, 370 Donald Street (1905); Crane & Ordway Building, 93 Lombard Avenue (1906); 149 Pioneer

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9. **City of Winnipeg Building Permit Ledger Books, 1899-1926.** Saul and Irish were responsible for nearly $2 million worth of work in Winnipeg between 1900 and 1913.
Avenue, Scott-Bathgate Building (1907); Luxton School, 111 Polson Avenue (1907); Mulvey School, Maryland Street (1908 addition – demolished); La Verendrye School, 290 Lilac Street (1909); St. John’s Technical High School, Machray Avenue (1910 – demolished 1967); Fire Hall No. 5, 845 Sargent Avenue (1910, List of Historical Resources); the Dingwall Building, 62 Albert Street (1910, List of Historical Resources); and Westminster United (Presbyterian) Church, 745 Westminster Avenue (1910-1911, List of Historical Resources).10

After the pair split, Irish formed W.A. Irish and Company and among its contracts were: J.A. Folong House, Dromore Avenue (1928); Western Pure Foods Factory, 301 Princess Street (1931 – demolished); Scientific Building (Crescent Furniture), 425 Portage Avenue (1928 – demolished); and Scarsdale Apartments, 71 Kennedy Street (1930). The company continued after his death in 1941 and built the Winnipeg Police Offices, 378 Portage Avenue (1950) and GBR Offices, 222 Osborne Street (1951). Much of the company’s work in the 1940s and 1950s was interior renovation contracts and it ceased operations in the late 1970s.

PERSON/INSTITUTION

The Bradburn Investments Company was the original owner of the building and maintained this ownership to 1950. The company was founded by Hector H. Bradburn (1872-1958 – Plate 18) who was born in Peterborough, Ontario and went west, to Vancouver, B.C., as a representative of the McColl Brothers, an oil company founded in Toronto, ON in 1873 as McColl (John B.) and Anderson (William).11 It was the start of a long career in the oil industry for Bradburn, who moved to Winnipeg in 1902 to open up a local branch.12 Bradburn would rise to the level of vice-president for Western Canada for McColl-Frontenac Oil, best known for its “Red Indian” motor oil and gasoline (Plate 19).

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12 Loc. cit. The company incorporated in 1919 as McColl Brothers Ltd. and then merged to become McColl-Frontenac Oil. Beginning in the mid-1930s, the Texas Corporation of the United States (Texaco) began slowly taking over McColl-Frontenac and in 1959, it changed its name to Texaco Canada Limited.
His own real estate company was founded ca.1913 and operated in the City until 1950.\textsuperscript{13}

Horizon Investments Limited was the next owner of the block and continued until the 1980s. Tenancy in the block has been varied; Breslauer and Warren, jewellers and the Bank of Nova Scotia were long-term tenants (Plate 20).\textsuperscript{14}

\textbf{EVENT}

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

\textbf{CONTEXT}

This mixed-use block was constructed in the early 1920s, the final development phase for Portage Avenue that saw the construction the Hudson’s Bay Company store at the west end of the downtown and in-fill construction replacing aging structures.

The Bradburn Block is an excellent example of the type of revenue property built by successful local businessmen from the early 1900s to the Great Depression.

\textbf{LANDMARK}

Built on a busy downtown intersection, the Bradburn Block would be a familiar structure in the area.

\textsuperscript{13} Winnipeg Free Press, July 24, 1950, p. 20.

\textsuperscript{14} City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, Roll No. 12-093623000, 1920-1990.
APPENDIX I

CITY OF WINNIPEG - Preliminary Report

Building Address: 410 Portage Avenue
(402, 404, 410 Portage Ave. and 263, 265, 267, 269, 271 Kennedy Street)

Building Name: Bradburn Block

Original Use: retail/office

Current Use: retail/office

Roll No. (Old): 936230 (17205)

RSN: 141761

Municipality: 12

Ward: 1

Property or Occupancy Code: 33

Legal Description: 1 St. John, Plan 129, Block 3, Lots 696/697

Location: southeast corner Kennedy Street

Date of Construction: 1922

Storeys: 2 & 3 and basement

Heritage Status: NOMINATED LIST

Construction Type: brick, terra cotta and concrete foundation


SEE NEXT PAGE

Information:

- 86½ x 89 x 44 + = 394,174 cu. ft.
- walls- basement = 18” concrete; 1st = 17” brick; 2nd = 13” brick
- front and west elevations face brick, small cornice, continuous cut stone sills under upper floor windows
- east and rear elevations clay brick
- had a dance hall at one time, 16’ ceilings on ground floor

ARCHITECT: WILLIAM FINGLAND

CONTRACTOR: W.A. IRISH

--- PORTAGE AVENUE ---
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APPENDIX II

William Fingland

William Fingland was born on August 5, 1862 and educated at Rockton, Wentworth County, Canada West (Ontario). He worked for a period in an architect’s office in Hamilton and also spent some time in Manitoba (spring 1884 to fall 1885) before undertaking studies at the School of Practical Science in Toronto. He passed his final examinations for entry into the Ontario Association of Architects in 1893.

Fingland practised for several years in New York City before he relocated to Winnipeg in 1905. His initial commissions were mainly in the commercial area, but his portfolio eventually included industrial, warehouse, institutional, and residential buildings as well.

From ca.1914 to ca.1918, he was in partnership with Robert Gilmore Hanford. The latter had been working in Winnipeg since the fall of 1911, if not before. In 1913, he collaborated with Herbert E. Matthews on the plans for St. Matthew’s Anglican Church, Sherbrook Street and Livinia (St. Matthew’s) Avenue. He also served for a time as secretary of the Manitoba Association of Architects (MAA) in the mid-1910s.

In 1915, Fingland became the second person (after H.E. Matthews) to fill in as acting provincial architect in the wake of the Legislative Building construction scandal.

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3 See, for example, the inclusion of Hanford’s name in the classified “Architects” column, Manitoba Morning Free Press, October 16, 1911, p. 17.
5 Construction 9, 1 (January 1916), p. 32.
Fingland took an active part in the development of his profession. He was among the practitioners who met in Winnipeg in May 1906 to form a provincial association. After a law providing for the registration of architects was passed by the Legislative Assembly in 1910, he became one of five appointees to the new Province of Manitoba Board of Examiners of Architects. He assumed the post of board president the following year. In 1913-14, the legislation was revamped to establish the MAA as a self-governing body. Fingland was the association’s president during part of this important transition in 1913 and subsequently served many terms as a member of the MAA council, including as its vice-president in 1936.

Among other activities, he helped establish the architectural curriculum at the University of Manitoba, sat on municipal committees concerned with building regulations and fire prevention, and participated in Winnipeg’s first official town planning initiative (1911) as a member of the Aesthetic Development Committee. He was 83 years of age when he died in Winnipeg on May 26, 1946.

A partial inventory of his architectural portfolio follows:

Bank of Hamilton Building (addition and alterations), Main Street at McDermot Avenue, 1906 – demolished
Apartment block, Osborne Street, 1906
Enderton Block, 334 Portage Avenue, 1909 – demolished

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10 Taken from lists of MAA officers and members published in various editions of Construction and the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada Journal.
12 Compiled from information in the files of the City of Winnipeg’s Heritage Planner; the City of Winnipeg, Inspector/Commissioner of Building(s), Record of Building Permits; and tender calls and building notes in local newspapers and the Western Canada Contractor and Builder. Also: Marc de Caraffe, et al., Town Halls of Canada: A Collection of Essays on Pre-1930 Town Hall Buildings, Studies in Archaeology, Architecture and History, National Historic Parks and Sites Branch, Environment Canada – Parks (Ottawa,ON: Minister of the Environment, 1987), p. 304; and R.R. Rostecki, Crescentwood: A History (Winnipeg, MB: Crescentwood Home Owners Association, 1993), p. 64.
W. Fingland designs, continued:

Arthur W. Chapman House, 85 West Gate 1909
Shade Oak Apartments, 163 Eugenie Street, 1910
Burridge-Cooper Warehouse, 303 Owena Street, 1910
Bank of Hamilton Branch (Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce), 117-119 Rue Marion, 1910 – demolished
Christie-Broughall Building (alterations), 536 Main Street, 1910 – demolished
R.H. Metcalfe House, 163 Eugenie Street, 1910
Lothian Apartments, 154 Evanson Street, 1911
Alberta Hotel (addition and alterations), 713 Main Street, 1911 – demolished
Apartment block, Spence Street, 1912
Baddow Block and Norwood (Baddow) Theatre, 322-322½ Avenue Taché, 1912-1913 – demolished
Frank H. Wiley House, 64 Middle Gate, 1913
Avenue Block (addition and alterations), 261 Portage Avenue, 1913
Thomson and Pope Building, 379-381 Portage Avenue, 1914 (with R.G. Hanford) – demolished
Beverley Block, 810 Beverley Street, 1914
Lipton Apartments, 975 Lipton Street, 1914
W. Fingland House, 255 Dromore Avenue, 1914 – demolished
R.A. Lister Co. Ltd. Warehouse, Wall Street, 1916 (with R.G. Hanford)
Bradburn Building, 410 Portage Avenue, 1922
Greater Winnipeg Water District Railway Station, 598 Rue Plinguet, 1927 (Grade II)
Odd Fellows Hall (McDermot Block) (post-fire interior reconstruction), 72-74 Princess Street, 1930 (Grade III)
Western Vinegar Co. Plant (supervising architect), 469 Redwood Avenue, 1934 – demolished

Outside Winnipeg
Contributed to the design of the Alberta Legislative Building, Edmonton, 1907-1912; plans were prepared by architect A.M. Jeffers and structural engineer John Chalmers under the supervision of William Fingland, with final revisions by Prof. Percy E. Nobbs, McGill University, Montréal
Brandon Telephone Co. Building, 1916
Memorial Hall, Carman, Manitoba, 1919-1920
Hospital, Birtle, Manitoba, 1923
Bank of Hamilton Branch, Stonewall, Manitoba, 1923
Methodist Church, Carman, Manitoba, 1923
School, Selkirk, Manitoba, 1923

Also: buildings in Moose Jaw, Regina, Saskatoon, Edmonton
Plate 1 – This sketch from ca.1877, shows the east side of Main Street looking south from near Portage Avenue. The flag in the upper right corner flies over Upper Fort Garry. 
(Reproduced courtesy of Western Canada Pictorial Index, 604-18896.)
Plate 2 – The Clarendon Hotel, northwest corner of Portage Avenue and Donald Street (#311), ca.1905. (M. Peterson Collection.)
Plate 3 – Winnipeg’s Main Post Office, 236 Portage Avenue, date unknown. The building to the right is the Manitoba Free Press Building, 240 Portage Avenue and to the left, the small Oldfield, Kirby and Gardner Building, 234 Portage Avenue, the only one of the three still standing. (Winnipeg Public Library, Historic Postcards.)
Plate 4 – Portage Avenue looking east from Hargrave Street, ca.1915. Eaton’s (right foreground) and the Somerset Building, 294 Portage Avenue (arrow), tower over the smaller buildings on the north side of the street. (Archives of Manitoba, N12614.)
Plate 5 – Hudson’s Bay Company Store, 450 Portage Avenue, during construction, August 23, 1926. (Hudson’s Bay Company Archives.)
Plate 6 – Undated colour postcard showing the south side of Portage Avenue west of Carlton Street. Buildings pictures include: #1- Steele Block, 358-360 Portage Avenue (demolished); #2- Boyd Building, 384 Portage Avenue; #3- Hudson’s Bay Company Building, 450 Portage Avenue. The Bradburn Block, 410 Portage Avenue, is at arrow. (City of Winnipeg.)
Plate 7 – Bradburn Block, 410 Portage Avenue, detail of Portage Avenue (north) façade, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)

Plate 8 – Bradburn Block, 410 Portage Avenue, detail of Portage Avenue (north) façade, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)
Plate 9 – Bradburn Block, 410 Portage Avenue, north and west façades, 2016. (M. Peterson, 2016.)

Plate 10 – Bradburn Block, 410 Portage Avenue, west façade, 2016. (M. Peterson, 2016.)
Plate 11 – Bradburn Block, 410 Portage Avenue, east façade, 2016. (M. Peterson, 2016.)

Plate 12 – Bradburn Block, 410 Portage Avenue, rear (south) façade, 2016. (M. Peterson, 2016.)
Plate 14 – Bradburn Block, 410 Portage Avenue, high ceilings of the original main floor dance hall, 2016. (M. Peterson, 2016.)
410 PORTAGE AVENUE – BRADBURN BLOCK

Plate 15 – Bradburn Block, 410 Portage Avenue, second floor space, 2016. (M. Peterson, 2016.)

Plate 16 – Portage Avenue looking east from Kennedy Street, 2016. (M. Peterson, 2016.)
Plate 16 – Kennedy Street looking south from Portage Avenue, 2016. (M. Peterson, 2016.)
Plate 18 – Hector H. Bradburn, ca.1911. (Reproduced from C. W. Parker, ed., Who’s Who in Western Canada: A Biographical Dictionary of Notable Living Men and Women of Western Canada, Volume I (Vancouver, B.C.: Canadian Press Association, 1911).)
Plate 19 – 1931 “Red Indian” Motor oil can. (Reproduced from http://www.icollector.com.)
Plate 20 – Bradburn Block, 410 Portage Avenue, 1962. (City of Winnipeg.)