230 PRINCESS STREET

FROST AND WOOD WAREHOUSE

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings Committee

May 2002
Winnipeg in the early 1890s was, although few realized it, on the verge of a spectacular era of growth, development and maturity that would almost completely change it by World War I. But this comprehensive growth was far from random. Specific districts that had been established a decade earlier provided the basic pattern for this frenzied period of growth.

The real estate boom of the early 1880s was intimately connected to the early construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), Canada’s first transcontinental railway, west of Winnipeg. 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 and avenues. It was also the beginning of the segregation of the various sectors of the city – residential, commercial and industrial – and their specific buildings.¹ The huge advance in land prices was especially noticeable along Main Street north of Portage Avenue. Here the small residential properties were consolidated into larger blocks of land and replaced by increasingly massive commercial structures (Plates 1 and 2).

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. Companies like R.J. Whitla, Stobart, Eden and Company, George D. Wood and J.H. Ashdown were all organized and carrying on business prior to the CPR boom.² With this development came a maturation of the retail and wholesale sectors. The bust of 1882 did not end this development, but rather strengthened it by removing the excess and inexperienced entrepreneurs, by reducing the surplus stock and by hardening attitudes towards credit.³ The area, however, was undeniably developing as the warehouse district, slowly through the 1880s and 1890s and then rapidly after 1900.

³ R.R. Rostecki, op. cit., p. 113.
The period 1900-14 was one of nearly unbridled growth for Western Canada’s premier city. It was the centre of all regional activity and was one of the fastest growing urban centres in North America. As the core of the warehouse district filled with new buildings or additions, companies purchased property and built further and further from this core.

Princess Street had always been one of the district’s most important thoroughfares and in 1906, a company with a history of nearly 20 years in the area built a massive warehouse on a corner lot of Princess Street and Pacific Avenue.

**STYLE**

This warehouse was designed in the Romanesque Revival style that became popular in warehouse districts throughout North America from the 1880s into the 20th century and was enthusiastically embraced in Winnipeg’s Exchange District. The style found extensive use in the 1880s under the tutelage of American architect H.H. Richardson (1838-86) and is often referred to as Richardsonian Romanesque.5

The style is recognizable by its use of strong, rough textures, its massiveness, the flatness of the elevations, the rhythmic placement of windows, and the use of the rounded arch. While it was used for the design of homes, commercial structures and even schools (for example, Wesley College [University of Winnipeg], 515 Portage Avenue, built 1896 – Plate 3), it came to be the style of choice in the warehouse district where its sturdy appearance portrayed stability and strength.

---

4 See The Exchange District National Historic Site of Canada, Commemorative Integrity Statement (Winnipeg: Parks Canada, 2001), Table 1, p. 39.

Examples of the style are extremely prevalent in the Exchange District, from some of the earliest warehouses, e.g. the Peck Building, 33 Princess Street, built 1893-94 (Plate 4), to later structures such as the Kelly Block, 181 Bannatyne Avenue, built 1904 (Plate 5).

CONSTRUCTION

The Frost and Wood Warehouse is of mill construction – solid brick walls with stone accenting (Plate 6) resting on a rubblestone foundation (76.2 centimetres, 30 inches). Internal support is supplied by a network of large wooden beams and posts and floors throughout are vertically-laid planking, making this an extremely sturdy structure. It represents a familiar construction method for area warehouses, although reinforced concrete structures would soon become the norm.

The four-storey structure measures 23.8 x 34.8 x 18.3 metres (78 x 114 x 60 feet). The north wall is a party wall with the neighbouring warehouse, 238 Princess Street, former Cockshutt Plow Company Building (Werier and Company Building), built 1902-03 (Plate 7).

Wall thicknesses of the brick superstructure are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SOUTH</th>
<th>EAST</th>
<th>WEST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st floor</td>
<td>63.5 cm (25 in.)</td>
<td>53.3 cm (21 in.)</td>
<td>53.3 cm (21 in.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd floor</td>
<td>53.3 cm (21 in.)</td>
<td>53.3 cm (21 in.)</td>
<td>53.3 cm (21 in.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd floor</td>
<td>43.2 cm (17 in.)</td>
<td>43.2 cm (17 in.)</td>
<td>43.2 cm (17 in.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th floor</td>
<td>43.2 cm (17 in.)</td>
<td>43.2 cm (17 in.)</td>
<td>33.0 cm (13 in.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are two unusual features of the construction of this block. The roof of the structure was designed with peaks and valleys rather than the normal flat design. This is clearly visible in the location and angle of the beams on the fourth floor (Plate 8).

The second unique element is found in the windows of the south façade on the second to fourth floors (Plate 9). While the heads on the exterior are massive stone lintels with no arching, the

---

6 City of Winnipeg Assessment Record, Roll No. 801400-12-2 (PC 50).
interior walls feature unusually shaped wooden heads with arched area above that were bricked in with no set pattern to the bricklaying.

**DESIGN**

The front (east) façade and the south side of the building both begin at grade with a rough-cut stone base rising 1.4 metres (4.5 feet) from street level. This base is interrupted at regular intervals by basement windows (Plate 10). Red face brick adorns the upper floors of both elevations. Massive, rough-cut stone sills and lintels add variety to the elevations, windows are rectangular and paired (on the east elevation).

The front façade has five vertical bays, each divided by a wide, unadorned, attached brick pilaster. The ground floor of the centre bay holds the main entrance with its sweeping arch above (Plate 11). Large display windows fill the ground-floor space in the two bays on either side of this door and the southern-most bay, while a second entrance has been built in the northern-most division (Plate 12). A band of corbelled brick leads to the plain brick parapet above.

The south façade is a continuation of the vocabulary of the front elevation, minus the display windows (Plate 13). This elevation also has two doors, one in the sixth bay (from the front) and a large arched loading entrance in the eighth bay.

The rear of the structure was constructed of common clay brick and features numerous arched windows on the upper floors with rough-cut stone lug sills and radiating brick heads (Plate 14). Both large loading doors on the ground floor have been severely altered (Plate 15).

In overall design, this warehouse is similar to two others planned by the same architect, J.H. Cadham, 250 McDermot Avenue (Plate 16) and 296 McDermot Avenue (Plate 17), both constructed prior to 1900.
INTERIOR
The interior of the former Frost and Wood Warehouse is extremely well-kept and has suffered little in the way of alteration to the space. The basement is very clean and walls and floors do not appear to have suffered any major cracking or settling (Plate 18). The ground floor has been renovated but the original use as showroom space has continued (Plate 19). The upper floors are relatively unchanged, although there is a small office area on the second floor (Plates 20-22).

INTEGRITY
This warehouse stands on its original location, has suffered very few alterations to its exterior and interior and appears to be in excellent structural condition.

STREETSCEAPE
Princess Street is one of the Exchange District’s premier streets and although this warehouse is outside of the district’s boundary, it is an important contributor to the historical fabric of the area, with many similarly designed and aged structures nearby.

ARCHITECT
James Henry Cadham (1850-1907) designed this warehouse, along with a great many other buildings in the Exchange District (Plate 23). Born in Canada West (Ontario), he came to Winnipeg in 1870 and worked as a carpenter, then as an architect by the mid-1890s (see Appendix II for biographical information). He has received 20 points from the Historical Buildings Committee.

INSTITUTION
The Frost and Wood Company Limited, implement dealers (Smith Falls, Ontario), was this building’s owner/occupant to ca.1915 and its owner/non-occupant to 1944. Frost and Wood grew from meagre beginnings to become one of the country’s largest implement firms. Founded
by Ebenezer Frost and Alexander Wood in Smith Falls (60 kilometres southwest of Ottawa) in May 1846, the firm quickly become the pre-eminent business in town. Steady growth allowed the company to expand through the country and it incorporated in 1899. It arrived in Winnipeg ca.1890 and set up shop in the Grain Exchange Building, 164 Princess Street (Plate 24). Expansion of the business mirrored that of Western Canada and the firm soon outgrew its original home.

In 1909, the Cockshutt Plow Company of Brantford, Ontario and a next-door neighbour on Princess Street in Winnipeg, acquired an interest in the firm and ultimately took it over, although the Frost and Wood Company was listed as the owner of 230 Princess Street into the 1940s. By the late 1930s, the new company sold machinery around the world.

By World War I, Frost and Wood was no longer listed in the city directories. Tenants of the Princess Street building included the Empire Cream Separator Company of Canada and the Goold Shapley and Muir Company, gas and gasoline engines. Over the next six decades, the building was owned and occupied by various firms. Owners included Manitoba Co-operative Wholesale Limited (1945-55), Federated Co-operatives Limited (1956-59) and Eastern Smallware and Stationary Limited (1969-76). Tenants during this period included Boultons Storage, City Dray Company, and Crown Cork and Seal Company (all 1925), Winnipeg Storage, T.S. Taylor Machinery and several manufacturers’ agents (all 1936), Canada Cycle and Motor (1943) and 20th Century Head Wear Limited (1970).

In 1979, the building was purchased and occupied by Williams Restaurant Supply Limited. This firm was owned by Sidney B. Weidman who had been connected to the Winnipeg food sector through his family business, Wiedman Brothers, wholesale grocers, a firm that began in the city

---

7 City of Winnipeg Assessment Roll, Roll No. 801400-12-1 (below as ARo), 1890-1950; and Henderson’s Directory, 1880-1915.
9 ARo, 1915-76.
in 1899 and incorporated in 1905. Williams Restaurant Supply Limited became Williams-Cassidy’s Restaurant Supply in 1990, merging with Toronto-based Cassidy’s Limited, Canada’s third oldest company with Lorne S. Weidman as vice-president of development. In early 2000, however, the firm was placed into receivership and its assets were liquidated. The Winnipeg store’s stock was sold and the 34 employees lost their jobs. The building is presently vacant.

**EVENT**

There is no known significant event connected with this building.

**CONTEXT**

The Frost and Wood Warehouse was built in the midst of Winnipeg growth phase that lasted from 1900 to 1914. This company’s initial opening late in the 19th century, its slow growth into the 20th century, its rapid expansion and growth over the next decade and the need to relocate to larger, more modern headquarters is a business history repeated countless times by local companies and those from Eastern Canada, the United States and Europe which opened branch plants or relocated head offices in Winnipeg.

The building’s construction several blocks from the City Hall/Market Building complex reflects the expansion of the warehouse district in all directions after 1900.

**LANDMARK**

This warehouse is located on a busy intersection. Its unusual colouring further makes it conspicuous in the neighbourhood.

---


APPENDIX I

CITY OF WINNIPEG - Preliminary Report

Assessment Record

Date: 20 June 2000
Prepared By: M. Peterson

Building Address: 230 Princess Street (230-34)  Building Name: Frost and Wood Warehouse
Original Use: warehouse/offices  Current Use: vacant
Roll No. (Old): 801400 (12438)  RSN: 155562
Municipality: 12  Ward: 2  Property or Occupancy Code: 50
Legal Description: 9/11 St. John, Plan 32037, Lot 32 (Original: 10W St. John, Plan 3657, south ½ of Lots 9/11)
Location: northwest corner of Pacific Avenue
Date of Construction: 1906  Storeys: 4

Heritage Status: ON INVENTORY

Construction Type: brick and stone and stone foundation

- 2636/1906 $50,000 (original); 5705/1929 [A] $1,000 (construct shed); 5931/1946 [A] $3,500 (interior alterations); 450/1950 [A] $1,300 (interior alterations); 884/1962 [4th- V03C01] $1,000 (alterations); 1297/1972 [M181] $1,000 (alterations to #234); 6600/1977 $25,000 (interior alterations)

Information:
- 78 x 114 x 60 = 533,520 cu. ft.
- Permit 1297/1972- minor partitioning on 2nd floor
- basement- 30” rubblestone walls; 1st- 25” brick (south wall) and 21” brick (east and west); 2nd- 21” brick (s/e/w); 3rd- 17” brick (s/e/w); 4th- 17” brick (s/e) and 13” brick (w)
- brick-encased staircase
- rough-cut stone 4’6”, balance red face brick (s/e) & clay brick (w), heavy stone heads & sills, brick cornice, 38” wide pilasters

ARCHITECT: J.H. CADHAM

CONTRACTOR: P. BURNETT
James Henry Cadham

James H. Cadham was born near London, Canada West (Ontario), on August 31, 1850, the son of Thomas and Eliza Cadham, both English-born settlers of the area. Thomas operated a sash, door and blind factory in London. J.H. Cadham left public school at the age of 16 to learn the carpenter’s trade. In 1870, Cadham answered the call to arms in Eastern Canada by the Dominion government to protect its rights in the recently ceded territory that would become the Province of Manitoba. He was a private in the No. 1 Battalion under Captain Cooke, part of a 1,200-man force known as the Wolseley Expedition that included 400 British Regulars and 800 Ontario and Quebec militiamen.

Cadham arrived with the rest of the force in late August to find the uprising led by Louis Riel and his followers had ended. Cadham, unlike many of the other militiamen, decided to stay after his discharge on March 4, 1871 and began working as a carpenter and contractor. Little is known about his early work in the city, although he apparently had enough experience by the mid-1890s to begin practice as an architect. In this capacity, Cadham had a profound effect on Winnipeg’s skyline. He was responsible for many warehouses in the Exchange District before and after 1900. So highly regarded was Cadham that builders would often consult him about a new structure even though he was not the architect of the building. He was an ardent hunter and was a Mason and a member of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows. Cadham continued to work up until a few weeks before his death from pneumonia on December 10, 1907. He left a wife, three sons and two daughters.


Manitoba Free Press, December 11, 1907, p. 5.
A partial list of his work includes many of the Exchange District’s most outstanding structures (marked with an “*”), see Plate 18:  

McLaughlin Carriage Building, 204 Princess Street, 1893  
*W.F. Alloway Building, 179 McDermot Avenue, 1898 (Grade III)  
*Merchants (George D. Woods) Building, 250 McDermot Avenue, 1898  
*Whitla Building, 70 Arthur Street, 1899  
*Daylite Building, 296 McDermot Avenue, 1899 (Grade II)  
*Imperial Dry Goods Building, 91 Albert Street, 1900 (Grade III)  
*G.F. Stephens Warehouse, 176 Market Avenue, 1901 (and additions) - demolished  
Alloway & Champion Block, Portage Avenue, 1901  
Moss (Kantor) House, 218 Roslyn Road, 1901  
*Anne (Blue Ribbon Company) Building, 87 King Street, 1901 (Grade III)  
Jerry Robinson Department Store, 49 Albert Street, 1902  
*Gregg Building, 52 Albert Street, 1903 (Grade III)  
Elim Chapel (St. Stephen’s Presbyterian Church), 546 Portage Avenue, 1903  
R.J. Whitla Factory, 371 Hargrave Street, 1903  
Dingle and Stewart Warehouse, 263 Stanley Street, 1903  
*Whitla Building Annex (Greenshields Western Ltd. Warehouse), 54 Arthur Street, 1903  
Prairie Lumber Company Warehouse, foot of Henry Avenue, 1903  
Rat Portage Lumber Company Warehouse, 101 Higgins Avenue, 1903  
Gaylord Block (Kemp Building), 111 Lombard Avenue, 1903  
Winnipeg Saddlery Block, 284 William Avenue, 1903  
*Galt Building Annex, 92 Arthur Street, 1903 (Grade II)  
*Bedford (Stobart) Building, 275 McDermot Avenue, 1903 (Grade III)  
Scott Furniture Building, 274 Main Street, 1904  
Stobart Company Overall Factory, 327 Cumberland Avenue, 1904  
G. Velie Warehouse, 183-87 Portage Avenue E, 1904  
Miller, Morse and Company Warehouse, 317 McDermot Avenue, 1904  
Telfer Brothers Warehouse, 156 Lombard Avenue, 1904  
Avenue Block, 261 Portage Avenue, 1904  
M. Fortune and Company Block, Smith Street, 1904  
*G.F. and J. Galt Building, 103 Princess Street (addition), 1904  
Alloway and Champion Building, 667 Main Street, 1905 (Grade III)  
Genser’s Furniture Building, 289 Portage Avenue, 1905  
West Hotel, 786 Main Street, 1905  
H. Leadley Warehouse, 298 Ross Avenue, 1905  
Manitoba Medical College, Bannattayne Avenue (corner Emily Street), 1905 – demolished  
Trees, Spriggs Company Warehouse, 312 Ross Avenue, 1905  
Kemp Manufacturing Company Warehouse, 117 Lombard Avenue, 1906  
J.H. Cadham House, 336 River Avenue, 1906  
Grose and Walker Warehouse, 261 Stanley Street, 1906  

Compiled from local newspaper building lists, 1874-1908; The Exchange District. Part 1: A Property Survey (Winnipeg: City of Winnipeg, 2001); and City of Winnipeg Building Permit Ledger Books, 1900-07.
Plate 1 – Looking west up McDermot Avenue from Main Street, 1881. (Provincial Archives of Manitoba, N19876.)

Plate 2 – The same view of McDermot Avenue, 21 years later. (Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)
Plate 3 – Wesley or United College (University of Winnipeg), 515 Portage Avenue, ca.1905. It was built in 1895-96, designed by George Browne and S.F. Peters. (Photograph courtesy of R.R. Rostecki.)
Plate 4 – 33 Princess Street, Peck Building, built 1893, C.H. Wheeler, architect. (City of Winnipeg, 2000.)

Plate 5 – 181 Bannatyne Avenue, Kelly Block, built 1904, C.H. Walker, architect. (City of Winnipeg, 2000.)
Plate 6 – Construction of the Frost and Wood Warehouse, 1906. The Cockshutt Plow Company Building is in the background. (Reproduced from the Manitoba Free Press, December 6, 1906, p. 36.)
Plate 7 – Cockshutt Plow Company Warehouse, 238 Princess Street. Built in 1902-03, it was designed by S.F. Peters and was given its three upper floors in 1906. (Reproduced from the Manitoba Free Press, December 6, 1906, p. 49.)
Plate 8 – Angled beams on the fourth-floor which produce a peak/valley roof. (M. Peterson, 2002.)

Plate 9 – Fourth-floor window on the south elevation, showing unusual design. (M. Peterson, 2002.)
Plate 10 – East and south façades. (M. Peterson, 2002.)

Plate 11 – Main Princess Street entrance. (M. Peterson, 2002.)
Plate 12 – Entrance at the north end of the front façade. (M. Peterson, 2002.)

Plate 13 – South side. (M. Peterson, 2002.)
Plate 14 – Rear elevation. (M. Peterson, 2002.)

Plate 15 – Altered rear loading doors. (M. Peterson, 2002.)
Plate 16 – 250 McDermot Avenue, Merchants Building (G. Woods Building), designed by J.H. Cadham and built in 1898. (City of Winnipeg, 2000.)

Plate 17 – 296 McDermot Avenue (73 Princess Street), Daylite Building, designed by J.H. Cadham and built in 1899. (City of Winnipeg, 2000.)
Plate 18 – Basement. (M. Peterson, 2002.)

Plate 19 – Ground-floor retail/showroom space. (M. Peterson, 2002.)
Plate 20 – Second-floor warehouse space.  (M. Peterson, 2002.)

Plate 21 – Third-floor warehouse space.  (M. Peterson, 2002.)
Plate 22 – Fourth-floor warehouse space. (M. Peterson, 2002.)
Plate 24 – Original Winnipeg home of Frost and Wood Company, 164 Princess Street, shortly before the move to their own premises, ca.1905. (M. Peterson Collection.)