121 PRINCESS STREET

MILLER AND RICHARD WAREHOUSE

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings Committee

September 1998
Winnipeg's rise in influence in the Canadian Dominion was due in no small measure to its geographical location. Centrally situated between the large established manufacturing centres of eastern Canada and the mushrooming population centres of the Canadian prairies, the city's politicians and businessmen consciously developed a plan for the future. After securing the route of the first transcontinental railway through the city, these men next created an infrastructure to ensure the development of a modern warehousing district. Close to City Hall and connected to the new rail service through spur lines, the once residential district west of Main Street and north of Portage Avenue soon filled with countless enterprises, including branches of eastern companies and purely Winnipeg creations.

Especially after 1900, Winnipeg’s warehouse district became the centre of Western Canadian expansion. From the massive stone and brick warehouses came countless retail items destined for general stores and homesteads west to the Pacific Ocean. The large shipments of manufactured goods, and foodstuffs from Eastern Canada and Europe were divided into smaller lots within the warehouses and then shipped west. Often business was so good that additions and even additional floors were added. So common, in fact, was this practice that many businesses built warehouses with extra support in the basement in case more floors had to be added in the future.

To the growing list of businesses operating in the warehouse district came, in 1905, the Millar and Richard Type Foundery Company, originally from Edinburgh, Scotland, but looking to expand its western business with the opening of its new warehouse facility in the heart of the warehouse district on Princess Street.

**STYLE**
This building is a modest, classically-ornamented, two-part commercial block. The two-part commercial style can be traced back to Roman times and developed into a popular form of urban
structure seen throughout Europe and North America.\(^1\) As the name suggests, such blocks have a two-part division on the exterior and in the interior. The exterior division occurs between the first floor and the upper levels of these blocks, which generally are no more than three storeys high. The two areas can be similar in form or display little visual connection. In either case, the division is mirrored in the interior where the lower levels are usually reserved for retail activities and the upper floors hold a number of uses from residential to office or storage space.\(^2\)

**CONSTRUCTION**

This is a four-storey, solid brick structure with stone accents and a rubble-stone foundation. The structure measures approximately 12.6 x 27.4 x 18.0m (41.5 x 90 x 59\text{')}) and the common clay brick walls are supported by a system of squared timber beams and posts. This is a common support system within the warehouse district known as mill construction and gained widespread popularity because of its strength and fire resistance.\(^3\) Floors are cement in the basement and fir elsewhere. Ceiling heights range form 2.7m (9\text{')}) in the basement to 3.7m (12\text{')}) on the first floor, 3.4m (11\text{')}) on the second, 3.0m (10\text{')}) on the third, and 2.7-3.2m (9-10.6\text{')}) on the top level. Exterior brick wall of the front (west) façade is 53.3cm (21") thick throughout, while at the rear thins from 53.3cm (21") on the ground floor to 43.2cm (17") on the second and third floors, and 33.0cm (13") on the top level.\(^4\) The building is found on the east side of Princess Street between Bannatyne and William avenues.\(^5\)

\(^1\) M. Peterson, "Christie/Broughall Block, 536-42 Main Street," report for the City of Winnipeg Historical Buildings Committee, October, 1988, p.2.

\(^2\) Ibid., p.2.

\(^3\) City of Winnipeg Assessment Records, #609570 (old number 10116), District 2, P.C. 50.

\(^4\) Ibid.

\(^5\) Ibid.
DESIGN

The front façade of this building features an oversized ground floor designed with two large display windows and two entrances (Plate 1). The windows rise the entire height of the ground floor and are accented with brick and stone. The centrally-located doorway gives access to #123 Princess Street, while the opening at the southwest corner is for #121 Princess Street. Neither entrance appears to have been altered (Plate 2). A medal cornice separates the two sections of the building’s exterior.

The asymmetry of the ground floor is replaced by a strict balance of elements on the upper three floors. Each level contains six windows, arched on the second and third floors, and slightly rounded on the top floor (Plate 3). The windows of the second and third floors include stone lug sills, the sills of the top floor are stone and continuous. All windows are double-hung with modestly carved wooden surrounds.

Corbelled brick lead the eye from the uppermost windows to the metal-trimmed brick cornice above. Finishing the building is a stone-capped brick parapet.

The north and south walls of the building are plain and windowless, the north side was originally a part wall (Plates 4 and 5).

The rear of the structure features large loading doors which appear to be original (Plate 6). Most of the windows on this elevation are segmentally arched with radiating brick heads and concrete lug sills (Plate 7).

INTERIOR

Many parts of this building are unaltered since construction over 90 years ago. The large, squared timber beams and posts are evident on all floors as are the exterior brick walls (Plates 8 and 9). The front section of the ground floor of 123 Princess Street has been converted into office space, while the rear area remains open warehouse space. This level is used for storage of various items. The second floor is the only occupied space, used as a workshop for a cabinet manufacturer. It has
seen little in the way of alteration (Plate 10). The upper two floors are empty and vacant.

INTEGRITY
The building stands in its original location and appears to be in good structural condition. City of Winnipeg records show only one building permit taken out on this building – minor, unspecified alterations in 1962. The only obvious change in the original design is the filling of the display windows of the ground floor with glass block. This has had a dramatic and negative affect on the appearance of the building.

STREETSCAPE
This warehouse, like the others in the district, have been recognized as a National Historic District by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. All buildings in the Exchange District are an essential part of the historic streetscape and as such, the Historical Buildings Committee has given Exchange District warehouses 60 points (Plates 11-13).

ARCHITECT
The architect for the Miller and Richard Warehouse was S. Frank Peters (Plate 14) who came to Winnipeg from Toronto in 1892 and set up a private practice (see Appendix I for biographical information). He was the designer of many fine buildings in the city and has been given 20 points by the City of Winnipeg Historical Buildings Committee.

PERSON/INSTITUTION
The building, as the original name suggests, was the home of the Miller and Richard Company, dealers in printers manufactured in the United States, metal type from the U.S. and Britain, paper cutters, bookbinder machines, and newspaper folding machines. A contemporary account adds that the company’s repair department was trained to fix any type of printing machine or related
This article continued outlining a major problem facing local printers – the lack of local specialty items that had to be ordered from overseas or in the eastern U.S., thus delaying work. The new Miller and Richard Warehouse solved this problem as it received stock directly from international manufacturers and had ample storage space. The Miller and Richard branch remained at the Princess Street address until 1931 when it vacated the premises and left the city.

Another firm to occupy the structure when first built was the printing and bookbinding firm Douglass-McIntyre Company. This firm remained at #121 Princess Street until the early 1940s.

Other building tenants included J. Arthur Paquet, fur manufacturers; the Barber and Ellis Company, wholesale stationery suppliers; the Turnbull Elevator Company; National Heating Products Sales Limited, and the American Air Filter of Canada Company. Western Elevator and Motor Company, and Power and Mine Supply Company, occupied the 123 Princess Avenue address from 1933 until the late 1980s when both moved to new premises in the south part of the city.

Owners of the building have been few. The Richard family, W.R., J.M.M. and W.C. Richard, are listed as owners of the structure until 1938. At this point J.M.M. and A.M. Richard become part-owners until 1942 when it was sold to the Power and Mine Supply Company Limited. From 1948 to 1955, engineer E.G. Eggertson is listed as owner. In 1956 the building sold to Western Elevator and Motor Company. It is presently owned by River Grocery Limited.

**EVENT**

There is no known significant event connected with this building.

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CONTEXT
This building is representative of both the growth of Winnipeg as the centre of the wholesale/warehouse trade in the Canadian West and as its maturity as a "modern" city. This pre-World War I period in the city's history was one of unrivalled growth. The flood of immigrants to western homesteads solidified the need for a middleman for goods travelling westward and Winnipeg utilized this need to strengthen its economic base. The warehouse district, with its overflow east of Main Street, grew rapidly in these heady times.

On the local scale, the construction of this warehouse underlines yet another area of growth the city experienced during this period. Type and printing machines and equipment were increasingly necessary for local businesses and the Miller and Richard Company, and others like it, moved to supply the demand.

LANDMARK
Located on a busy Winnipeg street and nestled in among like structures that have undergone renovations and subsequent revitalization, the Miller and Richard warehouse is a conspicuous structure.
CITY OF WINNIPEG - Preliminary Report

Assessment Record

Date: September 1998
Prepared By: M. Peterson

Building Address: 121 Princess Street
Building Name: Miller and Richard Warehouse

Original Use: warehouse
Current Use: warehouse

Roll No. (Old): 609570 (10116)
Certificate of Title: 1417507

Municipality: 12
Ward: 2
Property or Occupancy Code: 50

Legal Description: 6/7 St. John, Plan 33009, Lot 8 (old legal – 6W St. John, Plan 502, Lot 4 & southerly 10’ of Lot 5)

Location: east side between Bannatyne and William avenues

Date of Construction: 1904
Storeys: 4 and basement

Construction Type: brick and stone on stone foundation

- 1228/1904 $35,000 (original), 1652/1962 $1,000 (building alteration)

Information:

- 41½ x 90 x 59 = 220,365 cu. ft.

- front (west)- rubblestone wall to grade, cut stone above, cut stone heads to pilasters, common clay brick above, metal-trimmed brick cornice, stone capped parapet, metal cornice at 2nd floor

- north & south walls- common clay brick

- east wall- cut stone and brick 3 feet above grade, balance clay brick

--- PRINCESS STREET ---
APPENDIX I

S. Frank Peters

S.F. Peters was born in Yeovil, Somerset, England on November 7, 1847¹ and was educated in London, Ontario, graduating with a civil engineering degree from Toronto University. He began his own architectural practice in London, Ontario in 1872 and in 1881 moved to the larger opportunities in Toronto.² In 1885 Peters took his first trip west as commander of a company of the 7th Fusiliers regiment of London, Ontario. The company formed part of the government response to the Riel Rebellion and Peters lost an arm in the conflict.³

Peters moved to Winnipeg in 1892 and set up a practice which was to include his brother, W.A. Peters, by 1902.⁴ Throughout his career, S.F. Peters was a strong advocate of the development of a Canadian design, separate from the American and European standards. In a 1910 speech made to the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, Peters dismissed the newly popularized skyscrapers as "cooping up a mass of hard workers."⁵ He preferred classical detailing, however many of his designs, especially warehouses, borrowed liberally from the Richardsonian Romanesque style. He died in Winnipeg in 1926.⁶

⁴ Winnipeg Telegram, September 18, 1906, p. 55.
An incomplete list of Peters buildings includes:7

Wesley College (co-designed by George Browne), now part of the University of Winnipeg, 515 Portage Ave. (1896)
Ashdown Warehouse, 157-79 Bannatyne Ave. (1896) - Grade II
F.W. Alloway Building, 179 McDermot Ave. (1898) - Grade III
London Building, 432 Main St. (1898)
McClary Block, 185-87 Bannatyne Ave. (1899) - Grade III
Manitoba College of Pharmacy, 422 Notre Dame Ave. (1899)
W.L. Alexander House, Colony St. (1903)
Strathclair, Manitoba Town Hall (1904)
Miller and Richard Warehouse, 121 Princess St. (1904)
Massey-Harris Building addition, 294-96 William Ave. (1904)
Manitoba Club, 194 Broadway (1905)
Nanton Building, Portage Ave. (1905) – demolished
Cornish Library, 20 West Gate (1914) – Grade II
-many private residences in Winnipeg

7 List compiled from City of Winnipeg, Building Permits; Neepawa, op. cit., n.p.; "Winnipeg Architects," Binder of the City of Winnipeg Historical Buildings Officer; and various newspaper articles compiled by the author.
Plate 1 – Miller and Richard Warehouse, 121 Princess Street, front (west) façade. (M. Peterson, 1998.)

Plate 2 – Miller and Richard Warehouse, 121 Princess Street, main entrance. (M. Peterson, 1998.)
Plate 3 – Miller and Richard Warehouse, 121 Princess Street, fourth floor window. (M. Peterson, 1998.)

Plate 4 – Miller and Richard Warehouse, 121 Princess Street, front (west) and south sides. (M. Peterson, 1998.)
Plate 5 – Miller and Richard Warehouse, 121 Princess Street, rear (east) and north sides. (M. Peterson, 1998.)

Plate 6 – Miller and Richard Warehouse, 121 Princess Street, rear loading doors. (M. Peterson, 1998.)
Plate 7 – Miller and Richard Warehouse, 121 Princess Street, rear (east) façade. (M. Peterson, 1998.)

Plate 8 – Miller and Richard Warehouse, 121 Princess Street, third floor. (M. Peterson, 1998.)
Plate 9 – Miller and Richard Warehouse, 121 Princess Street, fourth floor. (M. Peterson, 1998.)

Plate 10 – Miller and Richard Warehouse, 121 Princess Street, second floor. (M. Peterson, 1998.)
Plate 11– Princess Street, looking north from Bannatyne Avenue, ca.1912, Miller and Richard Warehouse at arrow. (Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)
Plate 12 – Princess Street looking north. (M. Peterson, 1998.)

Plate 13 – Princess Street looking south. (M. Peterson, 1998.)
Plate 14 – S. Frank Peters (1847-1926), ca.1916. (Reproduced from Who’s Who and Why in Canada, 1915-16.)