


# 214 MAIN STREET

# WINNIPEG HOTEL

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings Committee
Researcher: M. Peterson
June 2015

## 214 MAIN STREET – WINNIPEG HOTEL

Main Street, as we now know it, began like all other overland routes in the vicinity of The Forks, first as a trail made by the First Nations groups utilizing the area for trade, for seasonal habitation, for hunting and fishing and for burial.[1] These footpaths were increasingly utilized with the arrival of the Europeans and the advent of the fur trade economy. Many of these well-used trails then evolved into the paired ruts made by the large wooden wheels of the Red River carts travelling along the important "Main highway" between the region's chief trading posts of the mid-1800s – Lower Fort Garry, was built between 1831 and 1839 about thirty kilometres up the Red River from The Forks, and Upper Fort Garry, built 1835-1837 (and expanded 1852-1854)[2] at the south end of what is now Main Street (Plate 1).[3] This was a much-travelled route and the Main Highway quickly became the tiny community's most important overland link.

With the end of the fur trade, the creation of the Province of Manitoba and the incorporation of the City of Winnipeg came a need for more permanent solutions to the dirt streets that turned into "Manitoba gumbo" when it rained. Dirt roads and wooden sidewalks gave way to concrete and asphalt, streetcar tracks and traffic lights in the 20th century.

As Winnipeg's primary road, Main Street saw a great deal of development and commercialization, especially during the early 1880s when the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) through the city and Western Canada caused a real estate boom. During this frantic period, fortunes were gained and lost in the speculation market. In 1882, Winnipeg's population doubled to 25,000

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1 Rodger Guinn, The Red-Assiniboine Junction: A Land Use and Structural History, 1770-1980, Manuscript Report Series #355. (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1980) cited in R.R. Rostecki, "130 Main Street – Upper Fort Garry Gate," report for the Historical Buildings Committee, June 1991 (below as Rostecki, 130 Main Street), p. 1.

2 The trip between the two posts usually took a full day. William Douglas, "'The Forks' Becomes a City," in Papers read before the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba, Series III, No. 1. (Winnipeg: Advocate Printers, 1945), p. 66 cited in Rostecki, 130 Main Street, p. 1.

3 Dismantling of the stone walls of Upper Fort Garry began in 1871 with the removal of part of the east wall. The last remnants of the walls and buildings (except for the remaining Gate), were removed by the summer of 1883. Brad Loewen, A History of the Structures at Upper Fort Garry, 1835-1887, unpublished manuscript on file, Parks Canada, Historic Research Section, Prairie Region pp. 95-101; "To Contractors," Manitoba Free Press, January 7, 1880, p. 1; and Manitoba Free Press, July 17, 1883, p 8, all cited in Rostecki, 130 Main Street, pp. 4-5.

and the value of construction hit the $5-million mark.[4] This incredible construction boom caused a shortage of materials and skilled labour and several of the new buildings were cheaply and/or improperly constructed, such as the enlarged City Hall that nearly collapsed in 1883 only months after the addition was completed and was demolished later that year (Plate 2).[5]

This increased population necessitated the construction of many commercial blocks and many business owners chose Main Street to sell their wares. Business blocks of all sizes and descriptions lined both sides of the street north of the old fort, and by the beginning of the 20th century, there were few empty lots between the fort and Portage Avenue. The magnificent Cauchon Block was constructed in 1881-1882 at the southeast corner of Main Street and York Avenue as an elegant residential/commercial complex (Plate 3). The east side of Main south of Notre Dame filled with many brick veneer buildings that replaced small dwellings and "peanut stands" (Plates 4-6).[6]

In 1881, a small, frame hotel that had been built less than 10 years before was given a new life – renovated, enlarged and reborn as the Winnipeg Hotel, joining a growing list of large brick structures on south Main Street (Plate 7).

**STYLE**

The Winnipeg Hotel, as it stands today, is the altered form of the 1895 façade designed in the Classical Revival style (Plates 8 and 9). The style grew as a reaction to the picturesque styles of the 1880s and early 1890s and based its design on Greek and Roman architecture.[7] Thus, familiar elements such as columns, pilasters, pediments, entablatures, and cornices were used extensively. The designs were most often symmetrical with flat and unadorned rooflines and windows were flat headed. The buildings could be monumental, the Legislative Building (1913-

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4 "Winnipeg! Its Wonderful Growth in the Year 1882," The Winnipeg Sun, December 29, 1882.

5 Alan F.J. Artibise "Winnipeg's City Halls, 1876-1965," in Manitoba Pageant, (Winnipeg: Manitoba Historical Society), Spring 1977, p. 7.

6 "Main Street," Manitoba Free Press, December 30, 1882.

7 Identifying Architectural Styles in Manitoba (Winnipeg: Manitoba Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, 1991), p. 18.

1920) on Broadway and the Bank of Montreal (1911-1913) for example, or modest like the Winnipeg Hotel.

**CONSTRUCTION**

The construction history of this building is complex and the present structure contains portions of all of the building's many versions. The original two-storey frame building of 1873 (Plate 10) was enlarged and a brick-veneer front added in 1881. In 1895, Twin Cities red brick, Battle River sandstone and English plate glass were used to rebuild the front façade. At the same time, the other elevations of the building were brick veneered. A large solid brick addition was added to the rear of the building in 1901.[8] In 1959, the ground floor of the main façade was renovated including glass block windows.[9]

Today the building has a plan area of approximately 600 square metres and a total floor area of over 2,100 square metres. Ceilings in the building measure 2.1 metres in the basement, 3.6 metres on the ground floor and 2.7 metres on the upper two floors.[10]

**DESIGN**

The main (east) façade of the 1895 Winnipeg Hotel featured a rusticated stone base interrupted by small basement windows leading to the dark red brick of the superstructure. The ground floor contained a centrally located main entrance up a short flight of stairs topped by a large arched window embellished with a wrought iron balcony. On either side of the entrance were large plate glass windows topped by decorative leaded and stained glass transoms. A smaller door was located to the north of the main entrance. A broken entablature was placed above the transoms. The second floor featured arched windows with stone lug sills and pilasters with stone capitals at either end. A stone belt course finished this floor. The third floor windows were flat headed with stone lug sills. The middle portion of this floor was highlighted with paired attached

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8 City of Winnipeg Building Permit (below as BP), #302/1901, $14,000.

9 BP #3541/1959, $4,000.

10 City of Winnipeg Assessment Record, Roll No. 12092976000.

columns leading to bracketing for the pediment at roof level. An ornate entablature with bracketing, floral embellishments and the words “THE WINNIPEG” is completed with a plain brick entablature. It was a visually pleasing design.

The north, south and rear (west) façades were simple brick walls, many of the windows featured radiating brick heads and stone, brick or wood sills. Few changes have been made to these façades (Plates 11-13).

Changes to front façade, however, have been extensive. The elevation was painted white in the early 1930s (Plate 14), the iron balcony was removed and the arched window filled with glass block and the entire main floor was unsympathetically redesigned and reclad (Plate 15).

**INTERIOR**

The interior of the present-day Winnipeg Hotel is a mix of old and new, both in terms of layout and finish. Original ornate tile floors still exist in the basement (Plate 16), the ground floor holds a large beverage room (Plate 17) and the front desk. The two upper floors hold 40 residential suites (Plate 18) located on either side of hallways (Plate 19). The front staircase is lit by a skylight (Plate 20) and the third floor boasts a fine piece of leaded glass (Plate 21). Both the front and rear staircases include original ornamental elements including newel posts (Plate 22).

**INTEGRITY**

The Winnipeg Hotel stands on its original location. Given its age, there are a number of structural issues including the aging and deterioration of the brick veneer cladding. The building has gone through a number of drastic alterations: the original 1873 structure was added to and redeveloped during the 1881 construction season; the front (east) façade was redesigned in 1895; the front was painted in the 1930s; and the ground floor was redeveloped in the late 1950s. Portions of the 1873, 1881 and 1901 buildings exist in today’s structure.

**STREETSCAPE**

South Main Street has seen many changes since the construction of the Winnipeg Hotel. At present, most of the pre-World War I buildings have been removed, replaced by more modern structures including the new Sports Manitoba structure to the south (200 Main Street) and the new Hampton Inn and Suites to the north, 260 Main Street (Plates 23 and 24). However, the block north of 200 Main Street today is a rare example of an intact streetscape dating to the pre-1890 era and this hotel is its oldest component.

**ARCHITECT/CONTRACTOR**

The architect and contractor of the 1873 building and its 1881 reincarnation are unknown at this time. Walter Chesterton (1845-1931) is the architect who redesigned the front in 1895. Born in London, England, Chesterton began his Canadian practice in Ottawa in 1871. Lured west to Winnipeg like so many others during the early 1880s real estate boom, he remained in the city until 1903 and during that period, designed a number of fine structures throughout the province including the Vaughan Street Jail, 444 York Avenue (1881), Fort Rouge School (1891, demolished), Stonewall School (1891, demolished) and a large addition to the Havergal Ladies College, 122 Carlton Street (1902, demolished).[11] After 1900, he designed a number of large homes for some of Winnipeg's most influential families including Hugh Sutherland (Roslyn Road), Judge Bain (Roslyn Road), E.L. Drewery (St. John's Avenue), and Stewart J. Tupper (Assiniboine Avenue).[12] Chesterton left Winnipeg in 1903 and retired to Montreal and then Ottawa, where he died on November 15, 1931.[13] Chesterton has received 10 points from the Historical Buildings Committee.

Samuel Hooper (1851-1911) designed the rear addition in 1901.

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11 R.R. Rostecki, "Winnipeg Hotel, 214-16 Main Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba" report for the Historic Resources Branch, Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Recreation, November 1989 (below as Rostecki, 214-16 Main Street), p. 9.

12 City of Winnipeg Building Permit Ledger Books, 1899-1905.

13 Rostecki, 214-16 Main Street, op. cit., p. 9.

**INSTITUTION**

The Garry Saloon was built during the summer of 1873, an L-shaped frame structure, two-storeys in height on the west side of Main Street. It would ultimately become the Garry Hotel under the management of James S. Wheeler.[14] In 1881, Wheeler, along with partner Thomas Montgomery (1850-1914), spent $9,000 transforming the block into a substantial three-storey, brick-veneer building that received its first guests in early September 1881 (Plate 25). It boasted 57 well-appointed rooms, three parlours, sample rooms for salesmen and a modern dining room. The new hotel boasted a white brick front with red brick accenting, arched windows on the ground and second floors, a small protruding balcony on the second floor and a sign with the inscription "Winnipeg, Hotel, Wheeler and Montgomery" above the wooden cornice of the upper level (Plate 26).[15]

In 1883, the partnership ended and Montgomery managed the property alone until his brother Oswald (1856-1926) joined in 1893. Oswald Montgomery had managed hotels throughout the region including Rat Portage (Kenora), Ontario and Glenboro, Manitoba.[16] The brothers then upgraded the building with a new front, new brick veneer on the sides and, in 1901 with a large addition at the rear. The brothers also purchased the neighbouring Dominion Hotel to the north with grandiose plans for a large five-storey addition to the Winnipeg Hotel. These plans never materialized and the brothers sold the property to Maurice Noakes in March 1904.[17] This was the beginning of a long line of short-term owners for the building that have carried out various small- and medium-scale alterations to the interior and exterior over the years (Plate 27). It has been owned by the same family since 1960[18] and continues to function as a hotel today.

**EVENT**

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

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14 Rostecki, 214-16 Main Street, op. cit., p. 1.

15 Steen and Boyce, Winnipeg, Manitoba and Her Industries (Winnipeg: authors, 1882), p. 118.

16 Rostecki, 214-16 Main Street, op. cit., p. 4.

17 Loc. cit.

18 Information courtesy of Klaus Fischer (www.kfcommercial.com/).

**CONTEXT**

The Winnipeg Hotel stands today as the oldest know structure in downtown Winnipeg, although the 1873 section has been covered and built on (see Table 1 below). It was built prior to its incorporation as a city and prior to the frantic real estate boom brought on by the construction of the CPR that led to the construction of dozens of fine solid brick structures, many along Main Street.

The building is also the longest running hotel in the city, filling this role for over 125 years. Used to house travellers and salesmen in the past, it was perfectly located to accept visitors arriving on the transcontinental railways, detraining at the Union Station just south of the hotel after the depot's construction in 1908-1910.

The hotel's upgrading in 1881 was another example of the construction occurring during the real estate boom of the early 1880s. A modest facility was transformed into a large hotel to accommodate the influx of businessmen, adventurers and speculators.

**LANDMARK**

This is one of the oldest buildings on south Main Street and its design, ornamentation and use give it a level of conspicuousness.

## TABLE 1 – EXTANT PRE-1890 BUILDINGS IN DOWNTOWN WINNIPEG[19]

| ADDRESS | BUILDING NAME | YEAR BUILT | HERITAGE STATUS |
|---|---|---|---|
| Main St., 214 | Winnipeg Hotel | 1873 | Nominated List |
| Main St., 466 | Woodbine Hotel | 1879 | Grade III |
| Main St., 474 | Duffin Block | 1880 | Nominated List |
| McDermot Ave., 175 | Toronto Foundry Building | 1881 | Grade III |
| Albert St., 70 | Telegram Building | 1882 | Grade II |
| Bannatyne Ave., 137 | Swiss Building | 1882 | Grade III |
| Main St., 232 | Fortune Block | 1882 | Nominated List |
| McDermot Ave., 177 | T.W. Taylor Building | 1882 | Grade III |
| McDermot Ave., 246 | Sures Building | 1882 | Grade III |
| Princess St., 146 | Benson Block | 1882 | Grade III |
| Princess St., 154 | Harris Building | 1882 | Grade III |
| Main St., 226 | Macdonald Block | 1883 | Nominated List |
| McDermot Ave., 221 | Bate Block | 1883 | Grade II |
| Princess St., 150 | Bawlf Building | 1883 | Grade III |
| Princess St., 72 | Oddfellows Hall | 1883 | Grade III |
| Smith St., 256 | Holy Trinity Church | 1883 | Grade II |
| Princess St., 104 | Princess Street Warehouse | 1885 | Grade III |
| William Ave., 294 | Massey Building | 1885 | Grade II |
| McDermot Ave., 173 | Grange Building | 1886 | Grade III |
| Princess St., 103 | Galt Block | 1887 | Nominated List |
| Princess St., 86-88 | Miller, Morse Warehouse | 1887 | Grade III |

[19] Compiled from "The Exchange District. Part 1: A Property Survey" and "Winnipeg's Downtown: A property survey," reports of the Historical Buildings Committee (February 2001 and June 2003 respectively).

Historical Buildings & Resources Committee
THE CITY OF WINNIPEG

# APPENDIX I

## *CITY OF WINNIPEG - Preliminary Report*

**Assessment Record**

Building Address: 214 Main Street (#214-216)

Building Name: Winnipeg Hotel

Original Use: hotel

Current Use: hotel

Roll No. (Old): 12092976000

R.S.N.: 138294

Legal Description: 1 St. John, Plan 24135, Lot 15 (Old Legal: 1 St. John, Plan 129, Block 3, part Lot 16: Lot 17: part Lot 18)

Location: west side between St. Mary and York avenues

Date of Construction: 1873

Storeys: 3 + basement

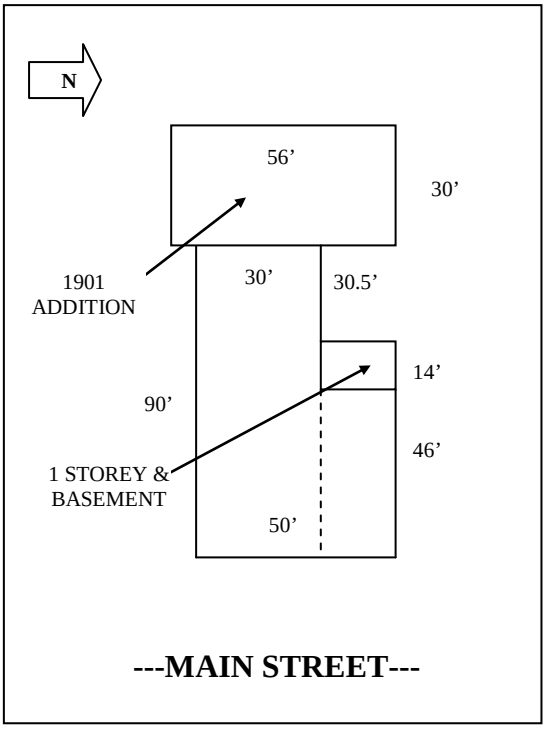
Construction Type: Brick veneer and stone foundation

Building Permits (Plans available: **[CS]** City Storage; **[M]** Microfilm):
- 302/1901 $14,000 (alteration and addition); 3541/1959 **[CS]** $4,000 (remodel entrance); 4005/1959 **[CS]** $5,000 (interior alterations); 361/1961 $300 (repair brick veneer); 1252/1971 $5,000 (alterations); 1367/1974 **[M607]** $3,000 (alterations); 2161/1998 $5,000 (interior alterations); 302/2001 $14,000 (addition)

Information:

- Plan area- 6,476 sq. ft.; Floor area above grade- 16,760 sq. ft.; Total floor area- 23,236 sq. ft.

- ceilings: Basement- 7'; Main- 11.9'; 2nd & 3rd- 9'




**ARCHITECT: UNKNOWN (1873 & 1881);**
**W. CHESTERTON (1895); S. HOOPER (1901)**

**CONTRACTOR: UNKNOWN (1873, 1881 & 1895);**
**E. CASS & G. MURRAY (1901)**

**214 MAIN STREET – WINNIPEG HOTEL**




Plate 1 – The location of Upper Fort Garry in relation to Main Street and Broadway. (Reproduced from Lincoln Park Gallery, http://www.lpgallery.mb.ca/fort_garry/aerial.html, no date).

**214 MAIN STREET – WINNIPEG HOTEL**

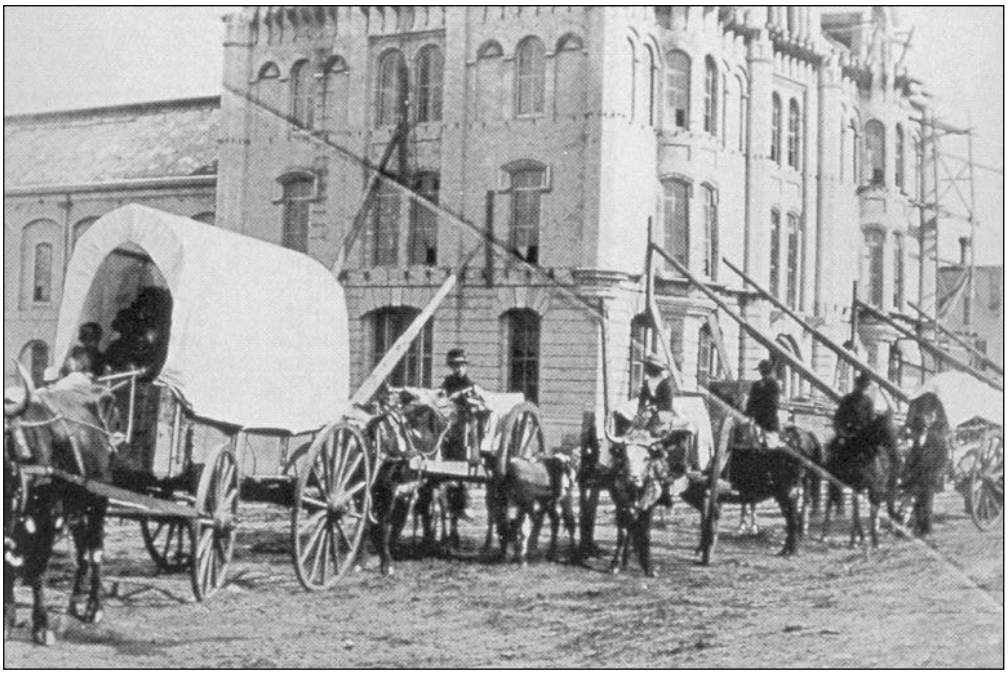


Plate 2 – The propped up City Hall, ca.1883. (M. Peterson Collection.)

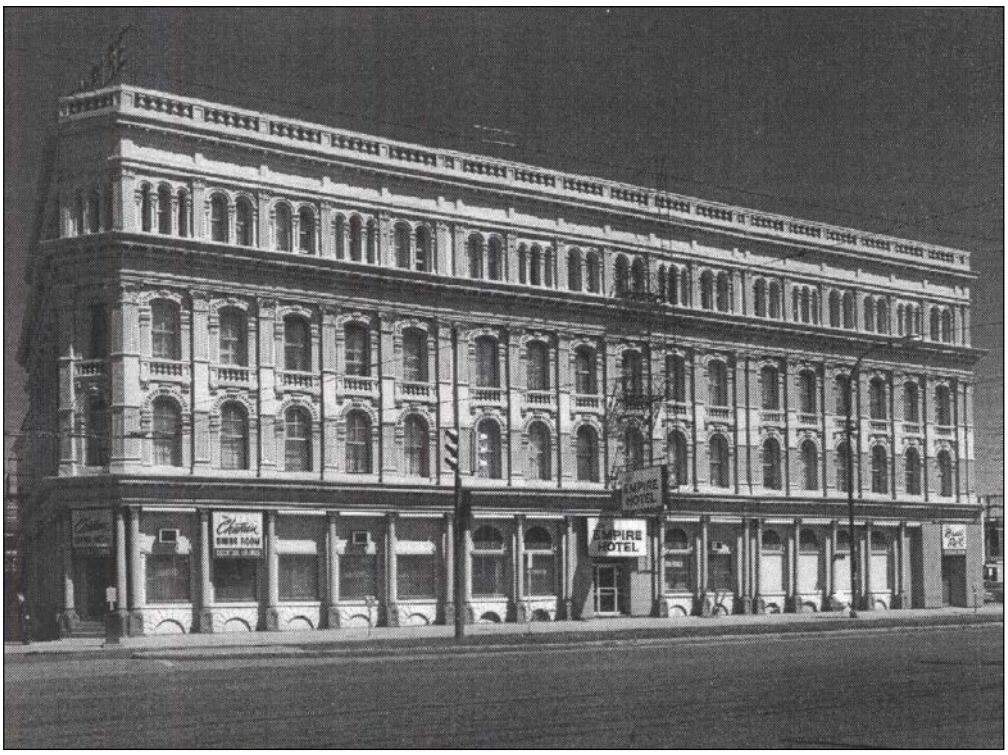



Plate 3 – Cauchon Block (Empire Hotel), 171 Main Street, no date. (City of Winnipeg, Planning Department.)

**214 MAIN STREET – WINNIPEG HOTEL**

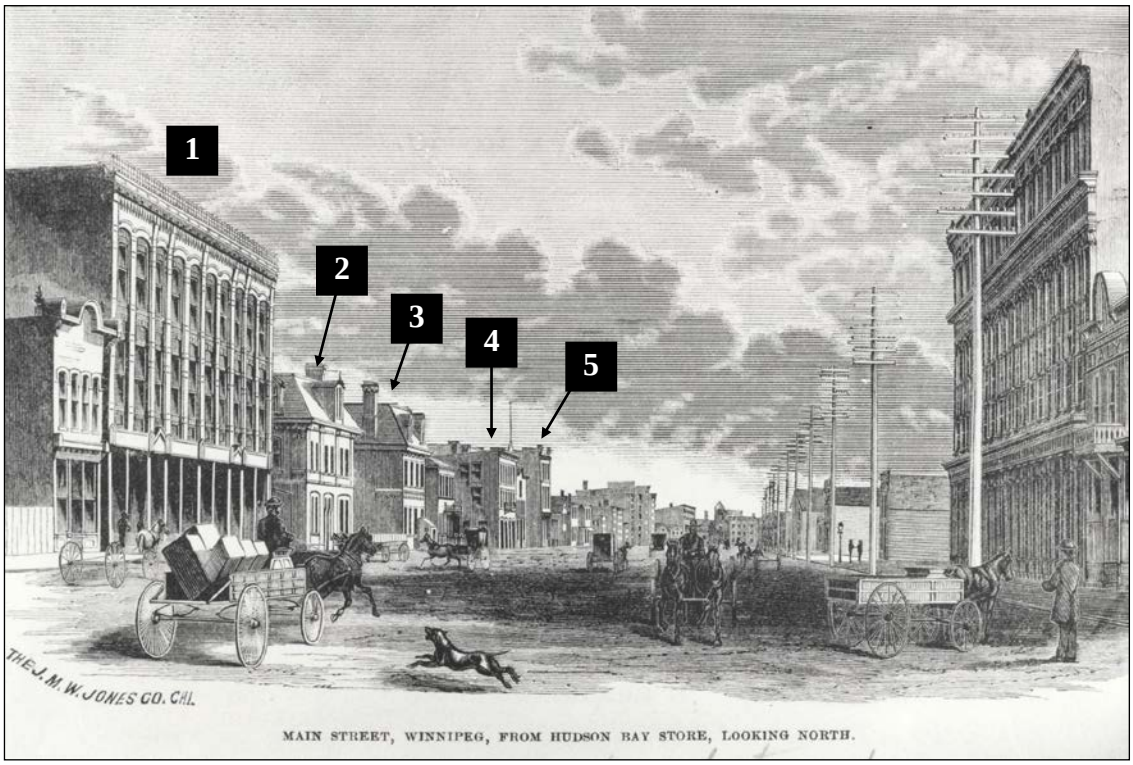



Plate 4 – Main Street, Winnipeg, looking north from Broadway, ca.1883. The large building on the right is the Cauchon Block, buildings on the left include the Hudson's Bay Company Store (#1), Customs House (#2), Dominion Lands Office (#3), the Winnipeg Hotel (#4) and the Commercial Hotel & Fortune Block (#5). (Archives of Manitoba, "Winnipeg-Streets- Main c1883- 2".)

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Plate 5 – West side of Main Street between York and St. Mary streets, 1892. Note the lack of empty lots as far as the eye can see north. Buildings on the left from south to north are: Dominion Lands Office; Trust and Loan Co. of Canada; Winnipeg Hotel; Dominion Hotel; Commercial Hotel and the Fortune Block. (Archives of Manitoba, Victor Acker Collection- 2, N842.)

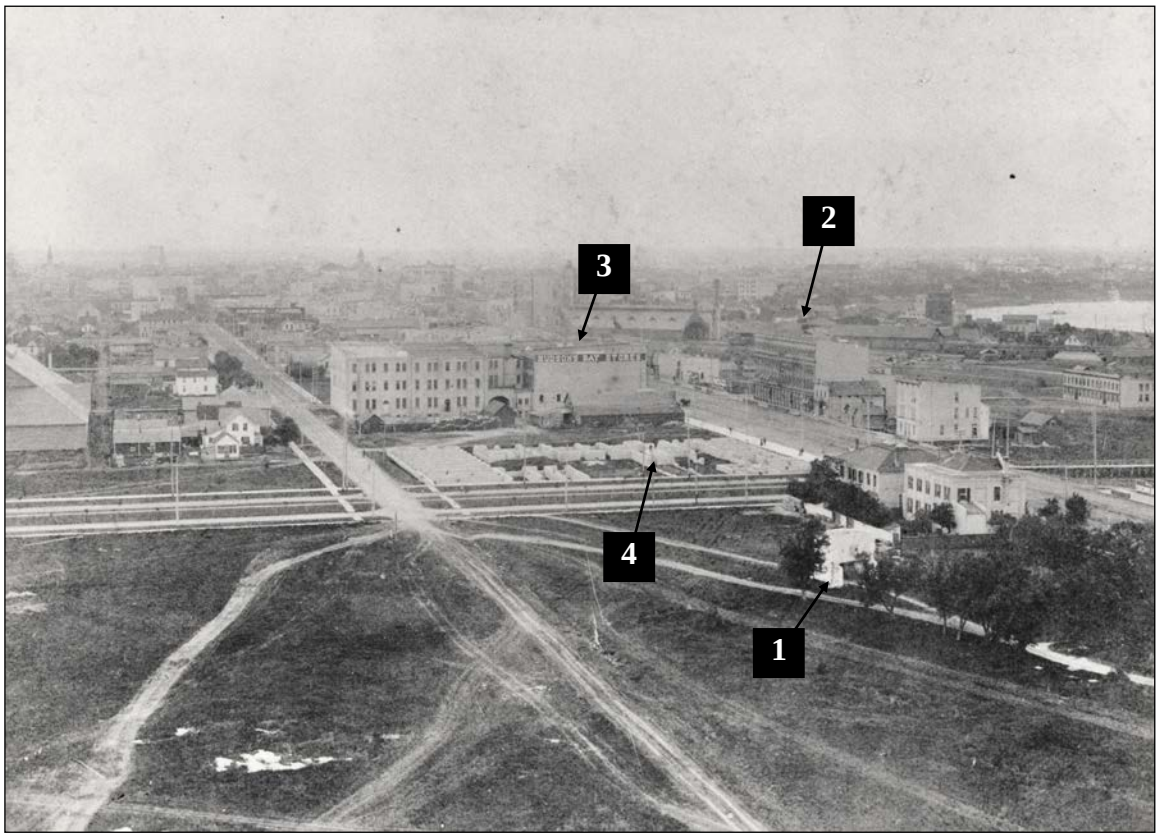


Plate 6 – A view of Main Street, 1902. Visible are the Upper Fort Garry Gate (#1), the Cauchon Block (#2) and the Hudson's Bay Company Building (#3). The foundation work has begun for the Fort Garry Court Apartments, northwest corner Main Street and Broadway (#4). (Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg- Views c1900- 5, N4555.)

**214 MAIN STREET – WINNIPEG HOTEL**

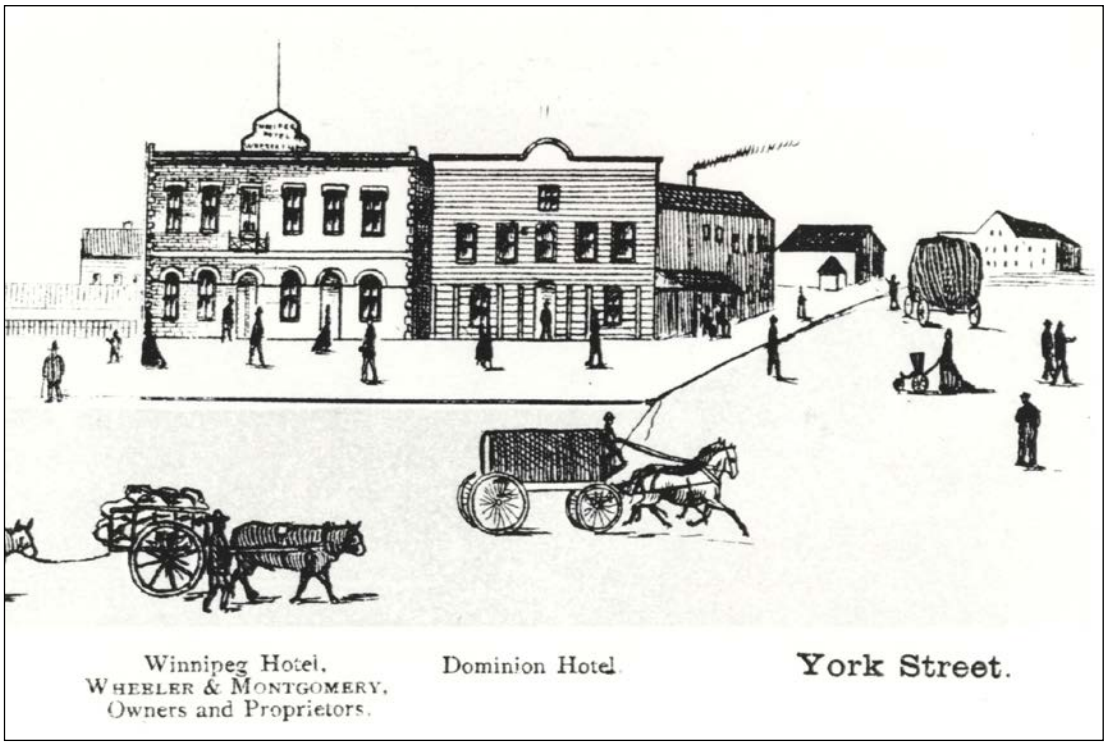


Plate 7 – Main Street in 1881 with the Winnipeg Hotel and its new brick veneer front. St. Mary Avenue is incorrectly listed as York Street. (Courtesy of the Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg- Streets- Main 1881- 1.)

**214 MAIN STREET – WINNIPEG HOTEL**



Plate 8 – The Winnipeg Hotel, ca.1903. This image shows the reworked front façade with its darkly hued brick, stone accenting, wrought iron balcony and classically detailed roof, the brick veneer of the south wall and the 1901 addition. (Courtesy of the Archives of Manitoba, Outsize 133/395, N4221.)

**214 MAIN STREET – WINNIPEG HOTEL**




Plate 9 – Main Street south of St. Mary Avenue, 1926. The detailing of the Winnipeg Hotel, especially the leaded and stained glass of the ground floor, is clearly visible. (Courtesy of the Archives of Manitoba, Thomas Burns Collection- 542.)

**214 MAIN STREET – WINNIPEG HOTEL**



Plate 10 – Winnipeg Hotel, 214 Main Street, 2006. This south side window features a wood sill that likely dates to the 1873 building. (M. Peterson, 2006.)

**214 MAIN STREET – WINNIPEG HOTEL**




Plate 11 – Winnipeg Hotel, 214 Main Street, north façade, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)

**214 MAIN STREET – WINNIPEG HOTEL**




Plate 12 – Winnipeg Hotel, 214 Main Street, rear (west) façade, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)



Plate 13 – Winnipeg Hotel, south façade, 2006. (M. Peterson, 2006.)

**214 MAIN STREET – WINNIPEG HOTEL**

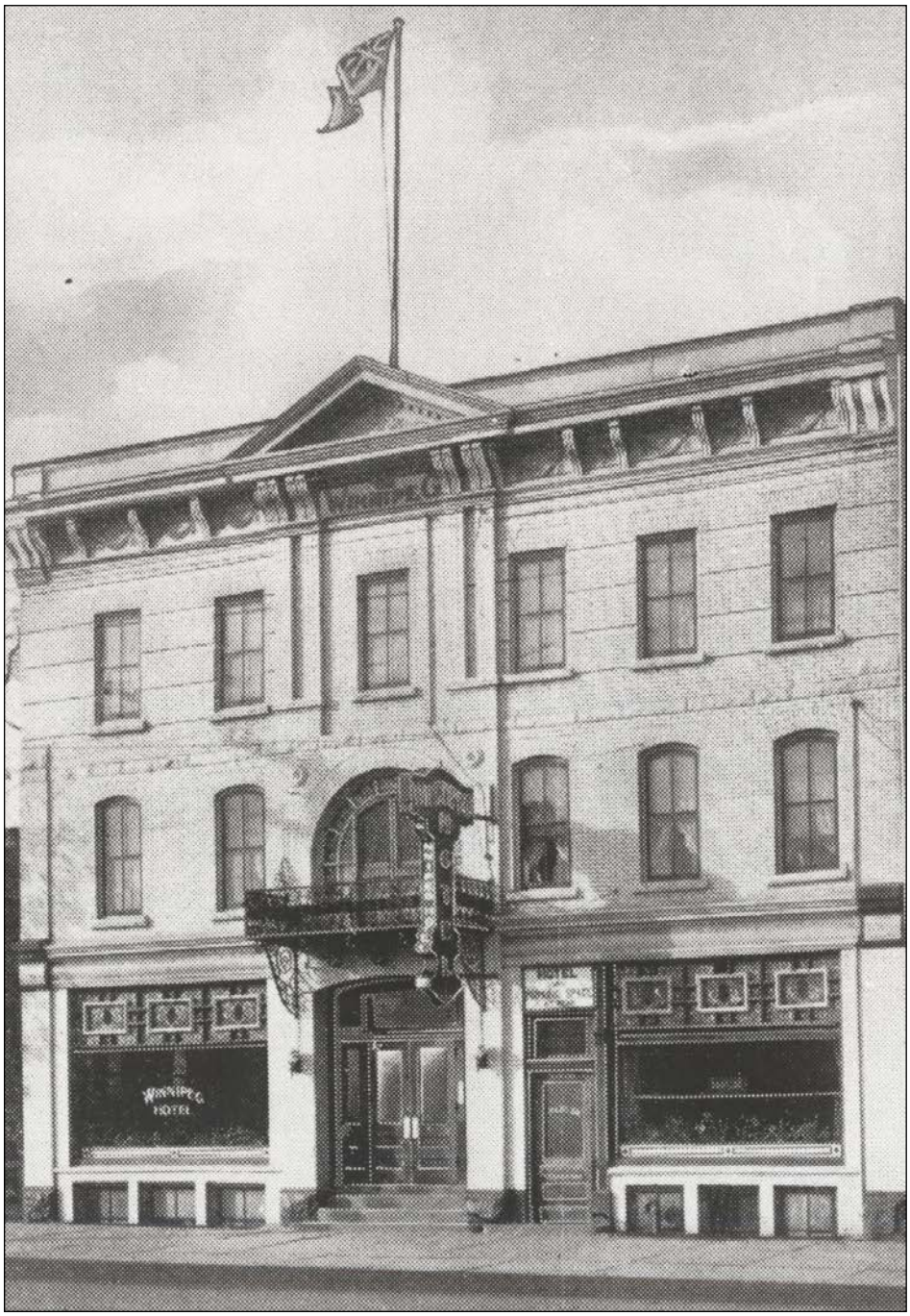


Plate 14 – The painted Winnipeg Hotel, ca.1933. (Courtesy of the Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg- Hotels- Winnipeg- 1, ca.1933 from Hotel News, October 1933, p. 21, N10055.)

**214 MAIN STREET – WINNIPEG HOTEL**




Plate 15 – Winnipeg Hotel, 214 Main Street, front (east) façade, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)

**214 MAIN STREET – WINNIPEG HOTEL**



Plate 16 – Winnipeg Hotel, 214 Main Street, basement tile, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)

**214 MAIN STREET – WINNIPEG HOTEL**



Plate 17 – Winnipeg Hotel, 214 Main Street, first floor beverage room, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)

**214 MAIN STREET – WINNIPEG HOTEL**



Plate 18 – Winnipeg Hotel, 214 Main Street, typical room (2nd floor), 2006. (M. Peterson, 2006.)

**214 MAIN STREET – WINNIPEG HOTEL**



Plate 19 – Winnipeg Hotel, 214 Main Street, 2nd floor hallway, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)

**214 MAIN STREET – WINNIPEG HOTEL**



Plate 20 – Winnipeg Hotel, 214 Main Street, staircase skylight, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)

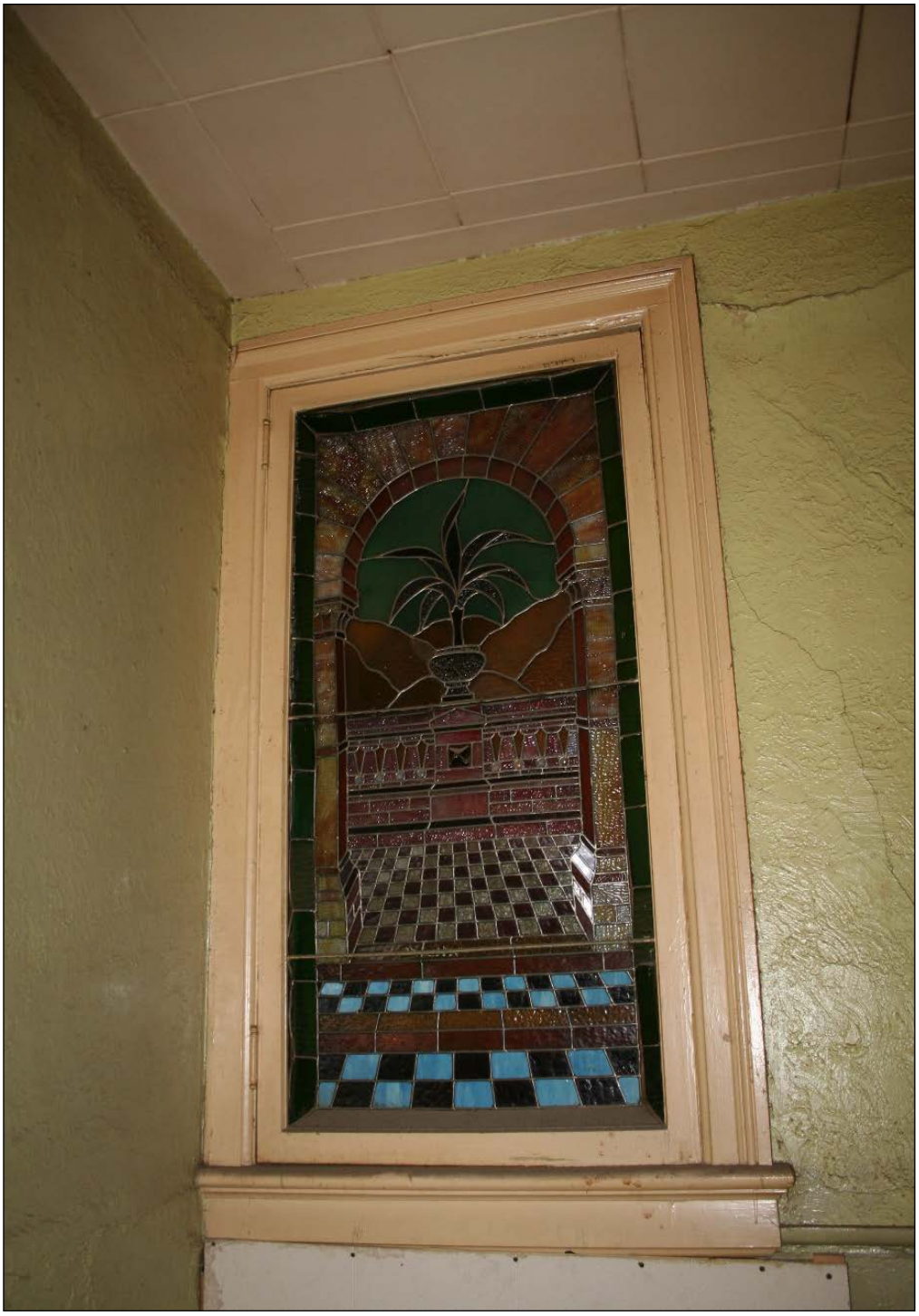

Plate 21 – Winnipeg Hotel, 214 Main Street, leaded glass, third floor landing, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)

**214 MAIN STREET – WINNIPEG HOTEL**



Plate 22 – Winnipeg Hotel, 214 Main Street, third floor, rear staircase, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)

**214 MAIN STREET – WINNIPEG HOTEL**




Plate 23 – Main Street looking north, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)



Plate 24 – Main Street looking south, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)




Plate 25 – Advertisement for the Winnipeg Hotel, ca.1894, shortly before the redesign of the front façade. (Courtesy of the Legislative Library of Manitoba.)

**214 MAIN STREET – WINNIPEG HOTEL**




Plate 26 – The Winnipeg Hotel (centre) prior to the reworking of the front façade, 1892. The south wall is still clad in wood. (Archives of Manitoba, Victor Acker Collection- 2, N842.)

**214 MAIN STREET – WINNIPEG HOTEL**




Plate 27 –Winnipeg Hotel, 1969. (Courtesy of the Archives of Manitoba, Architectural Survey, Negative 21-69.)