


# 782 MAIN STREET

# INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER BUILDING

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings & Resources Committee
Researcher: M. Peterson
December 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 1904, it was another of the large warehouses built after 1900 on the north side of the Canadian Pacific Railway yards in the growing North End of Winnipeg;

(b) It was associated for many decades with the International Harvester Company, world leaders in the manufacturing of farm equipment and trucks, who built their Winnipeg headquarters only 2 years after the company was founded in Chicago, IL;

(c) The main (east) façade has elements of the Neo-Classical or Classical Revival style and is the only known local design by Chicago, IL architect A.C. Wilmanns;

(d) It is built of dark brick with stone accenting on a stone foundation, all typical of the era;

(e) It is a conspicuous building on Main Street; and

(f) The building's exterior has suffered little alteration.

## 782 MAIN STREET – INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER BUILDING

After Winnipeg won the battle with Selkirk, Manitoba for the location of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) right-of-way, there was a second contest between two factions over where the railway would be located in the city. In the south end was the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), which controlled a large tract of land known as the Hudson's Bay Reserve and had the support of St. Boniface land-holders, especially the Roman Catholic Church. To the north lay the lands of many prominent local entrepreneurs, including the so-called Point Douglas Common, 270 hectares of virtually empty land west of Point Douglas which HBC Governor George Simpson had granted "in common to the Point holders...for grazing and haying privileges" during the days of the Red River Settlement.[1]

Ultimately, the Point Douglas faction won out, and by the early 1880s, the Point was roughly divided in half by the CPR main line. The right-of-way and the massive railway yards (at one time the largest in the world) were laid out – changing forever the landscape of this portion of the city (Plates 1-3). Along both sides of the rail line, manufacturers and wholesalers built warehouses, factories and large industrial buildings to take advantage of the excellent transportation opportunities.

This railway-related expansion acted "...as the magnet which would draw business establishments to the area north of Portage Avenue."[2] Vacant areas around the tracks were developed into industrial and warehouse districts, in turn creating need for untrained labour. Thousands of immigrants were attracted to Winnipeg "because of the well-paying jobs for semi or unskilled labour."[3] Many of the new arrivals sought to locate within walking distance of their new jobs and thus settled in Point Douglas or elsewhere in the North End.

---

1 R.R. Rostecki, "The Growth of Winnipeg, 1870-1886," unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 1980, p. 38.

2 Ibid., pp. 48.

3 Ibid., p. 105.

In 1900, the CPR announced a complete restructuring and renovation of the Winnipeg yards and shops and a large new station complex with a luxury hotel attached. The shops and roundhouses were to be relocated west of the downtown to the Weston area, while 200 kilometres of track were laid in the centre of the city in what was heralded as "the longest railway yards in the world."

Another important aspect of the rail development in the area was the construction of the Main Street railway subway at Higgins Avenue, started in May of 1902 and officially opened in early 1905 (Plate 4). This structure alleviated the congestion caused by the dozens of daily passenger and freight trains using the level crossing of the eight rail lines running east-west into and out of the CPR yards and halting the ever-increasing vehicular and pedestrian traffic on Main Street.

A huge shanty-town grew in proximity to the rail yards, allowing immigrant railway and warehouse workers to live within walking distance of their jobs. Houses were unpretentious and in some instances were built by squatters on vacant property or even on the streets. As one historian has noted:

> ...the north-enders sought shelter, above all, and thus, the appearance of one's dwelling was secondary to such qualities as keeping out most of the rain and some of the cold.[4]

After 1900, the building stock in the North End, especially commercial property, saw an increase in construction, much like elsewhere in the city, as demand for modern retail and office space grew and local developers moved to meet demand. Many of these new buildings were substantial, professionally designed and built structures using the latest technologies and highest quality materials.

The same could be said for the north side of the CPR line, where new warehouses were built to take advantage of the excellent connections. In 1904, one of the largest warehouses in the area was completed for a large agricultural machinery firm just north of the CPR subway on the west side of Main Street and connected to the CPR through spur lines (Plates 5 and 6).

---

[4] Loc. cit.

**STYLE**

This massive warehouse was designed as an industrial building; aesthetic considerations were secondary to the building's strength and functionality. The main (east) façade faces Main Street and to present an attractive elevation, it was designed with elements of the Classical Revival Style. Symmetry, smooth surfaces, flat and unadorned rooflines and squared rather than arched openings were some of the features of the style that emerged as an important Canadian architectural form in the first three decades of the 20th century.[5]

Examples in Winnipeg are numerous, many are monumental in scale and level of ornamentation: Manitoba Legislative Building, 450 Broadway (built 1914-1920); Bank of Montreal, 335 Main Street (1910); and Bank of Nova Scotia, 254 Portage Avenue (1908-1910).

**CONSTRUCTION**

This warehouse was built on the southwest corner of Main Street and Sutherland Avenue, measures approximately 20.2 x 61.0 metres and cost $75,000 to complete in 1904 (see Appendix I for additional construction information).[6]

This warehouse was built using the most common construction method of the time – the mill system – a square timber beam and post support network where beams were attached to the solid brick exterior walls and covered by wood plank flooring and often a hardwood finish. This was a very popular system in warehouse districts throughout North America because of its sturdiness, the ease of adding additional storeys and its ability to suffer fire damage and not collapse.

While the International Harvester Building is one of many mill construction structures in the Exchange District, it features a number of unique elements, including large, double wood beams (Plate 7) and unique metal beam hangers (Plate 8). These elements and others were utilized to ensure the building could handle the weight of the materials stored in it.

---

5 Identifying Architectural Styles in Manitoba (Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, 1991), pp. 18-19.

6 City of Winnipeg Building Permit (below as BP), #1631/1904.

The original complex included other structures and spur lines which have all been removed or demolished.

**DESIGN**

The front (east) façade is finished in dark brick; limestone is used as accenting at grade and around windows and doors (Plate 9). The raised basement wall is clad in smooth-cut limestone, interrupted by small rectangular basement windows. Smooth-cut stone is also used as a modest frame around the centrally located entrance. Large square headed window openings fill the remainder of the ground floor and are embellished with stone lug sills. A sign with the words "INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER COMPANY OF AMERICA" is found above the entrance and the level is finished by a modest stone belt course with brick accenting (Plate 10). The upper three floors are divided into three bays by wide pilasters with small stone accents at their bases and ornamental brickwork at their heads. The outer two bays hold rectangular window openings with stone sills and brick heads, the middle bay holds three rectangular window openings connected by continuous stone sills and brick heads. A wide band of brick above the fourth floor window openings lead to the heavy overhanging metal cornice finishes the façade. The original metal sign fence is still present (Plate 11) but the original flagpole has been removed.

The dark red brick, stone cladding at grade, window design and metal cornice of the front façade wrap around and continue for one bay on the north side of the building.

The north façade, beyond the front bay, is completed in common clay brick; large arched window openings are found on all floors (including smaller basement openings). An entrance is located near the centre of the façade and two openings to the east on the first and second floor have been bricked in since construction (Plate 12).

The south façade is built of common clay brick, the windowless front section extends out (Plate 13). To the west, a set of large loading doors fill the ground floor and all upper floors feature

small arched window openings (Plate 14). Raised metal roofs are found above the elevator shaft and stairwell on the south side of the flat roof. Two murals have been painted on this façade.

The rear (west) façade features large rectilinear openings with metal lintels at the south end of each floor, the upper three openings have been bricked in, the ground floor opening has been partially filled and now holds a newer raised entrance with ramp (Plate 15). Another similar opening is found at north end of the ground floor and it too is closed in. The outline of the one-storey rear building is visible, as is painted signage at the roofline.

Window unit replacement has been the major exterior alterations for this building and the rear façade has seen the closure of openings and the renovation of others. The main (east) façade still has many of its original details.

**INTERIOR**

The original interior of the building followed traditional layout patterns – offices and public space on the ground and second floors and open warehouse space above. Because of the storage of heavy equipment, the south side of the ground floor included raised loading doors allowing stock to be loaded and unloaded directly from rail boxcars.

In 1971, alterations were made to the shipping office,[7] in 1973, second floor offices were altered[8] and again in 1993 (Plate 14).

The building's conversion to a church has necessitated major interior renovations. The basement remains open and used for storage, the main floor includes worship/meeting spaces in the east and west ends and offices in the centre (Plates 15 and 16). The second floor includes more church space as well as residential space for transitional housing with common eating and recreational areas

[7] Architect's Plans, #8505/1971, City of Winnipeg. Named contractor was H.A. Magnus.

[8] Architect's Plans, #8793/1973, City of Winnipeg.

(Plates 17 and 18). The third floor holds more transitional housing space (Plate 19) and the fourth floor is open and unused at the present time (Plate 20).

Despite all the interior changes, elements of the original warehouse, including open spaces, high ceilings and heavy wood beams/posts are still found throughout the structure.

**INTEGRITY**

The building stands on its original site and appears to be in good structural condition for its age. Alterations to the exterior have included window replacement on the three main façades and the bricking in of some window openings.

**STREETSCAPE**

This warehouse has occupied a key corner location on Main Street for over 100 years. While near-by contemporary structures have been demolished, it still contributes to its historic streetscape (Plates 21 and 22).

**ARCHITECT/CONTRACTORS**

The original City of Winnipeg Building Permit lists A.C. Wilmanns as the architect.[9] Wilmanns was born in Chicago, IL in 1868. His professional career included membership in the Illinois Society of Architecture, treasurer of the Chicago Architectural Club (1900) and Assistant Professor of Architectural Construction, Department of Architecture, Armour Institute of Technology (1923 – Plate 23).[10] Research has uncovered only one structure attributed to Wilmanns, the now-demolished Chateau Theatre, Broadway at Grace, Chicago, IL, built in 1915,

---

9 BP #1631/1904.

10 Biographical information from U.S. Census, various years; and Theatre Historical Society of America website; ASHI Reporter, October 2008, online edition.

with a ground floor theatre, 2nd floor offices and 3rd floor billiards tables and bowling alley[11] (Plate 24).

He died in Chicago in 1951, leaving wife Clementine R. (nee. Graeff), son Arnold (born 1895) and daughters Marion and Florence.

The contractors listed on the Building Permit were Deeks and Deeks, of which nothing is known at present.

**PERSON/INSTITUTION**

This warehouse was owned and used by International Harvester Company (IH), one of the world leaders in the manufacturing of farm equipment and trucks. The company was founded in 1902 in Chicago, Illinois, the consolidation of two leading companies of the time – McCormick Harvesting Machine Company and Deering Harvester Company[12] – and three smaller firms (Milwaukee Harvester Company, Warder, Bushnell and Glessner Company and Plano Manufacturing Company).[13] The company was capitalized at $120-million; its initial Canadian component being a small factory in Hamilton, ON and a sales office in Winnipeg. That the company built this large warehouse in Winnipeg only two years after forming underlines the importance of the city within the new company and in the agricultural sector of Western Canada. The company produced a wide variety of agricultural machines and tools as well as delivery vans and trucks and by the 1930s IH was the leading truck manufacturer in North America (Plate 25).[14]

---

11 Chicago Sunday Tribune, August 8, 1915, p. 8.

12 Manitoba Free Press, October 30, 1899, p. 6 and July 19, 1902, p. 16. The Deering Harvester Company had a representative in Winnipeg in 1899 and announced the construction of a warehouse at the corner of Market Avenue and Rorie Street in 1902, although it was never built.

13 Manitoba Free Press, August 14, 1902, p. 1; and History and Development of International Harvester (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1976), p. 7.

14 Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago (Chicago, IL: Chicago Historical Society, 2005), http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/2723.html.

On March 9, 1912, a deliberately set fire at the Radford-Wright Sash and Door Factory (immediately south of this building) led to an explosion of two chemical vats, totally destroying the Radford-Wright Building, seriously damaging the International Harvester Building and killing two firefighters (the first ever in Winnipeg in the line of duty) and eight spectators (Plates 26 and 27).[15]

International Harvester remained in the building until the mid-1940s,[16] replaced by Walter Woods Limited, a wholesale hardware firm that had formed in Brantford, ON in 1871 as a broom and wooden-ware manufacturer.[17] The company relocated to Hamilton, ON and opened a branch office in Winnipeg in 1903. In 1907, the company built a substantial track warehouse at the corner of Robinson Street and Sutherland Avenue (Plate 28), operating out of the building until the move to the large building on Main Street, remaining there until the early 1980s.

For the next decade, the warehouse at 782 Main Street had a number of tenants, including the Canus Trucking Company, Sutherland Equipment Repair and Gateway Soap Company, Gateway Industries and Gateway Packers, which were collectively known as the Gateway Group of Companies ca.1991.

In 2002, the Winnipeg Centre Vineyard Church, which had formed in 1995, purchased the building and began a series of extensive interior renovations to convert the building into a religious and social assistance facility, including transitional housing on the 2nd and 3rd floors.[18]

---

15 Vince, Leah, Alarm of Fire (Winnipeg, MB: Firefighters Burn Fund, 1982), pp. 64-71.

16 Winnipeg Free Press, February 19, 1947, p. 17. The company had sold 782 Main Street in 1945 and planned a new warehouse at the corner of Wall Street and Wolever Avenue.

17 M.G. Bixby, Industries of Canada. Historical and Commercial Sketches: Hamilton and Environs (Toronto, ON: Author, 1886), p. 58.

18 City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, Roll No. 14001131100, 1920-1990; and Flatlanders Inn website (http://flatlandersinn.org/about-2/), no date.

**EVENT**

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

**CONTEXT**

This massive early 20th century warehouse is an excellent example of the type of development prevalent in the city in the 1900-1915 period. Large, successful international business ventures sought to take advantage of the forecasted growth of the western region of North America by locating branch offices and warehouse in Winnipeg – the region's premier centre and the western heart of the east-west transportation system. It was no coincidence that one of the world's largest agricultural machinery companies built a new warehouse in Winnipeg and that it was several times larger than their present needs – such was the optimism of the times. Winnipeg used its political, financial and geographic advantages to maintain its control of Western Canadian growth until World War I.

**LANDMARK**

This large, visually conspicuous structure is located on a corner site on one of the City's busiest downtown streets and is a landmark building in the neighbourhood.

Historical Buildings & Resources Committee
THE CITY OF WINNIPEG

# APPENDIX I

***CITY OF WINNIPEG - Preliminary Report***
**Assessment Record**

Building Address: 782 Main Street

Building Name: International Harvester Building

Original Use: warehouse

Current Use: religious facility

Roll No. (Old): 14001131100 (---)

RSN: 8797

Legal Description: 35$^{W}$ St. John, Plan 63, Block 11, Lot 10 & 35 St. John, Plan 31943, Lot 10

Location: southwest corner Sutherland Avenue

Date of Construction: 1904 Storeys: 4 and basement Heritage Status: **ON NOMINATED LIST**

Construction Type: brick and stone

Building Permits (Plans available: **[M]** Microfilm; **[PPD]** Department Storage):
- 1631/1904 $75,000 (original); 8505/1971 $ **[M133]** (interior alterations); 8793/1973 $ **[M252]** (interior alterations); 4062/1979 $ **[M13]** (interior alterations); 232782/2002 $10,000 (demolish storage building); 239641/2002 $200,000 (interior alterations to 1st and 2nd floors); 160121/2006 $250,000 (interior alterations); 128613/2008 $600,000 (interior alterations); 106900/2010 $900,000 (interior alterations); 137146/2014 $5,000 (interior alterations); 147098/2014 $15,000 (exterior & interior alterations)

Information:

- 66 x 200 ft.

- BP #232782/2002- storage building 1 storey, 5,000 sq. ft.

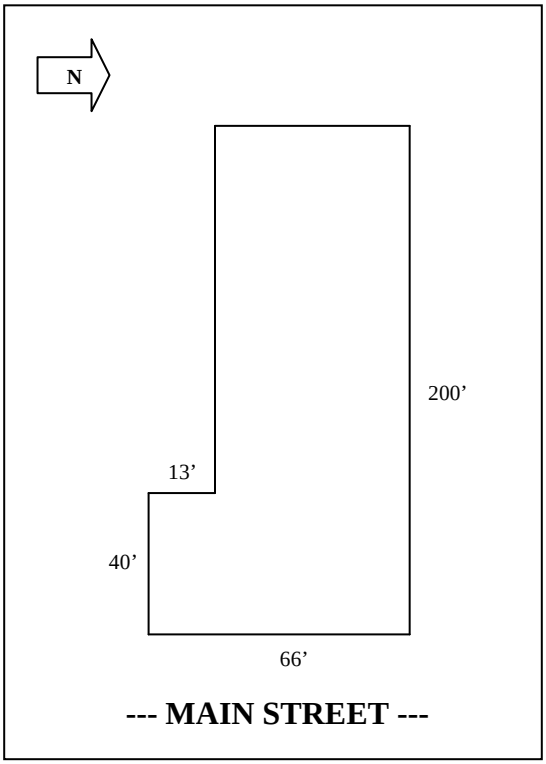
- BP #160121/2006- convert part of 2nd floor into residential space for homeless

- BP #128613/2008- interior alterations to west side of 3rd floor- construct dorm rooms, kitchette/dining area & lounge (Flatlanders Inn)

- BP #106900/2010- alter existing elevator shaft, install elevator, extend staircase, relocate partitions on 2nd floor & construct partitions on 3rd floor

- BP #137146/2014- basement and 4th floor to be used for storage.

- BP #147098/2014- replace roof over 2 shafts (elevator & stairwell)




**ARCHITECT: WILMANNS, AUGUST C.**

**CONTRACTOR: DEEKS & DEEKS**

# 782 MAIN STREET – INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER BUILDING




Plate 1 – A bird's eye view of Winnipeg, 1881. Point Douglas, seen at centre bottom, has been divided by many streets, although little construction has occurred. The Louise railway bridge is seen in crossing the Red River north of the Point and the beginnings of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) yards is seen in the top right of the map. (City of Winnipeg.)

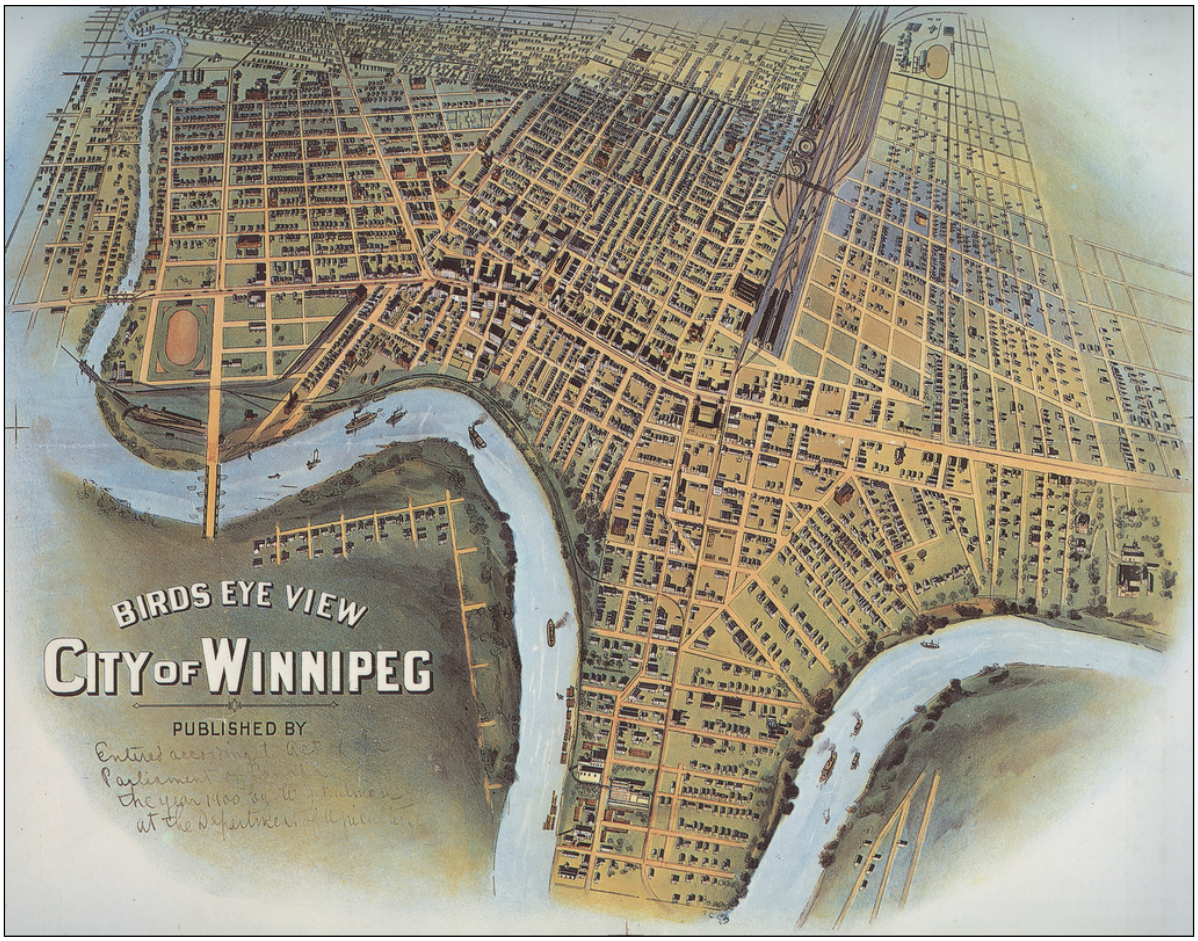



Plate 2 – Part of Point Douglas, ca.1900. Much of the Point is now filled with residential structures and some industrial property. The large CPR yards are seen stretching out west of Main Street at the top of the map. (City of Winnipeg.)




Plate 3 – CPR Yards, ca.1900. Large warehouses and industrial structures are beginning to line the north and south perimeter of the yards. (City of Winnipeg.)

**782 MAIN STREET – INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER BUILDING**




Plate 4 – Postcard of Main Street looking north from Higgins Avenue, ca.1905. The Royal Alexandra Hotel is being completed on the right side of the image; the International Harvester Building is in the background (arrow). (Reproduced from Peel's Prairie Provinces, University of Alberta Libraries, Postcard 1422.)

**782 MAIN STREET – INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER BUILDING**

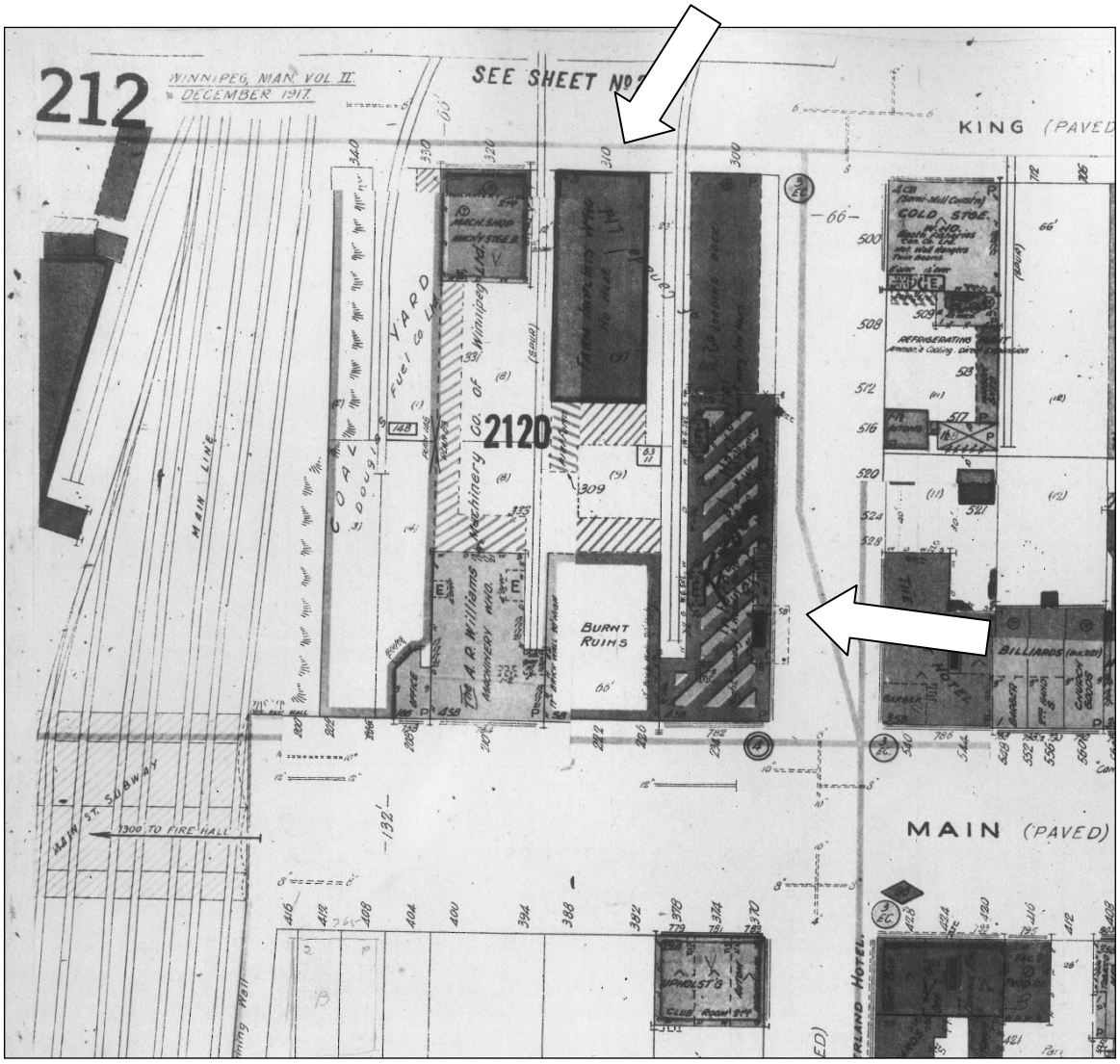



Plate 5 – Fire Altas, City of Winnipeg, Vol. II, Sheet 212 (December 1917). The International Harvester Building (right arrow) includes a large loading dock to the rear, a large, unheated storage building to the south (top arrow), platforms and two spur lines. (City of Winnipeg.)

**782 MAIN STREET – INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER BUILDING**




Plate 6 – International Harvester Building, 782 Main Street, 1909. (Reproduced from International Harvester Company Annual Report – 1909, p. 43.)

**782 MAIN STREET – INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER BUILDING**

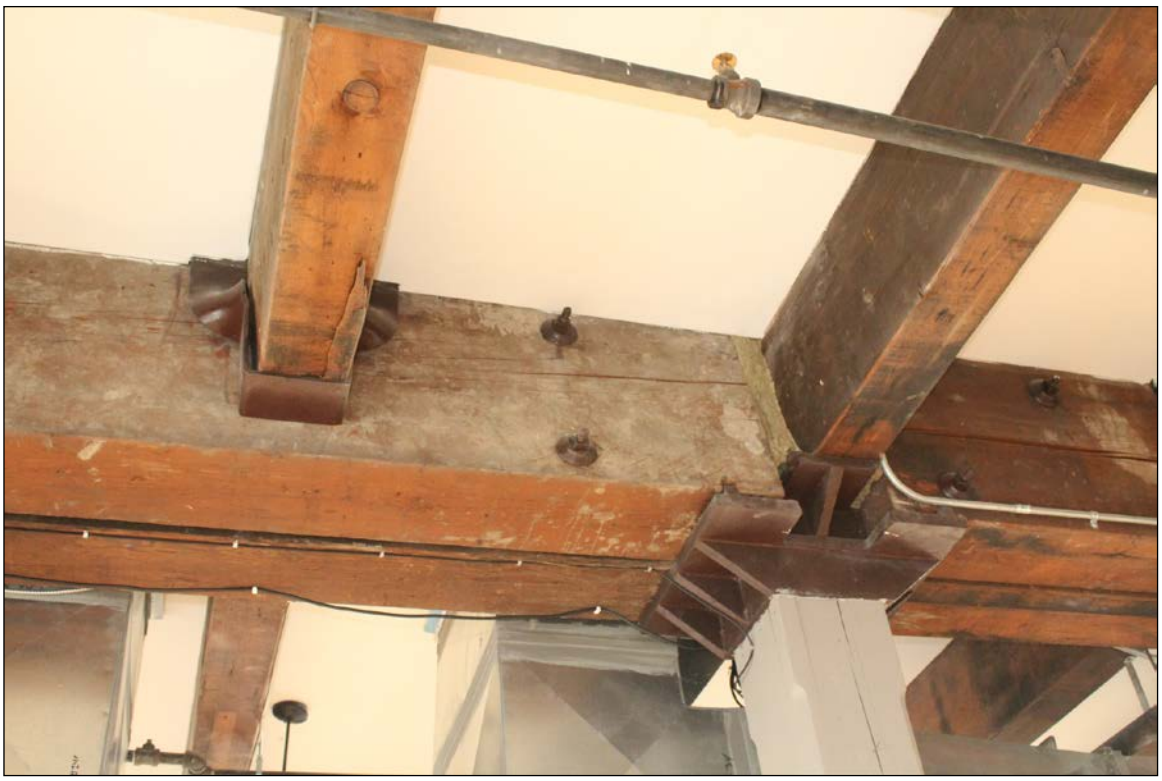


Plate 7 – International Harvester Building, 782 Main Street, example of double beam construction, 2017. (M. Peterson, 2017.)



Plate 8 – International Harvester Building, 782 Main Street, example of ornate, curved beam hanger, 2017. (M. Peterson, 2017.)

**782 MAIN STREET – INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER BUILDING**




Plate 9 – International Harvester Building, 782 Main Street, front (east) façade, 2017. (M. Peterson, 2017.)

**782 MAIN STREET – INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER BUILDING**




Plate 10 – International Harvester Building, 782 Main Street, detail of front (east) façade, 2017. (M. Peterson, 2017.)



Plate 11 – International Harvester Building, 782 Main Street, detail of front (east) façade, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)

**782 MAIN STREET – INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER BUILDING**




Plate 12 – International Harvester Building, 782 Main Street, front (east) and north façades, 2017. (M. Peterson, 2017.)



Plate 13 – International Harvester Building, 782 Main Street, front (east) and south façades, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)

**782 MAIN STREET – INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER BUILDING**



Plate 14 – International Harvester Building, 782 Main Street, rear (west) and south façades, 2017. (M. Peterson, 2017.)

**782 MAIN STREET – INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER BUILDING**




Plate 15 – International Harvester Building, 782 Main Street, rear (west) façade, 2017. (M. Peterson, 2017.)

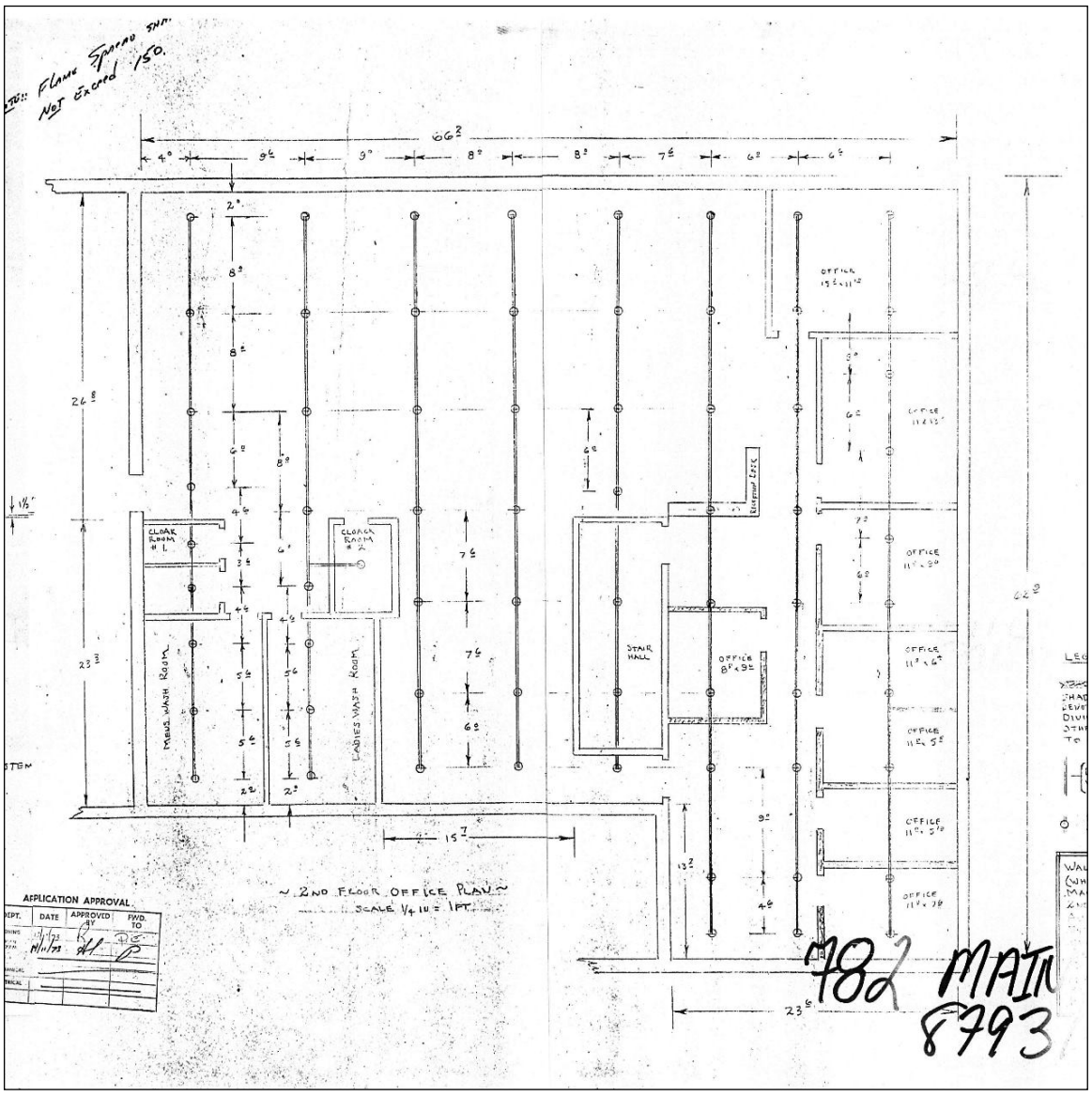



Plate 14 – Architect's plans, alterations to 2nd floor office space, 1973. (City of Winnipeg, Plan # 8793/1973.)

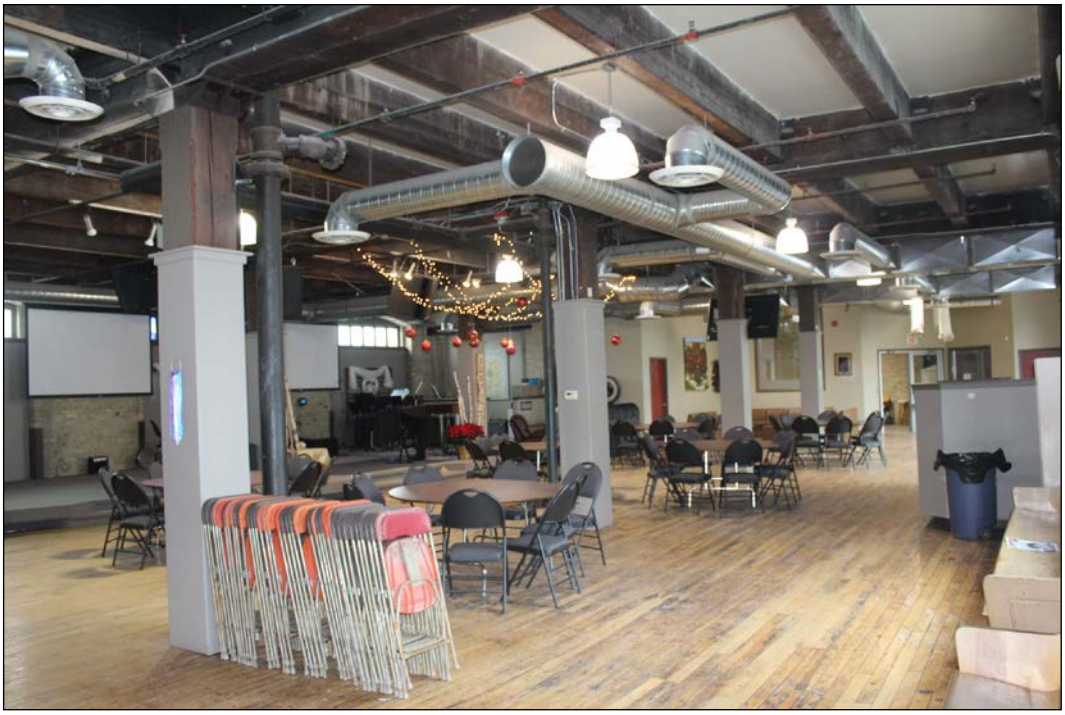


Plate 15 – International Harvester Building, 782 Main Street, main floor, west end, worship/meeting space, 2017. (M. Peterson, 2017.)



Plate 16 – International Harvester Building, 782 Main Street, east end, first floor meeting area, 2017. (M. Peterson, 2017.)

**782 MAIN STREET – INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER BUILDING**

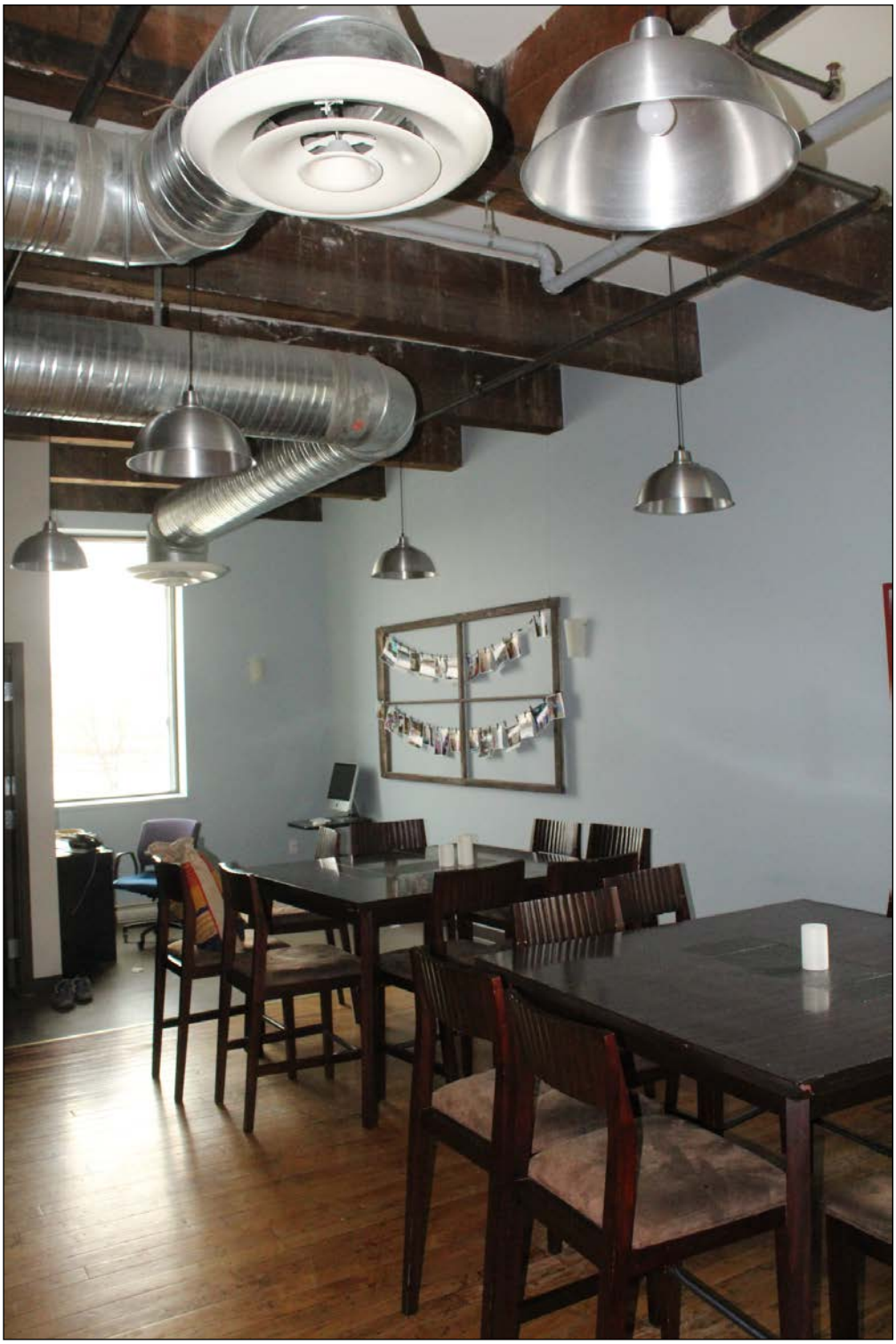


Plate 17 – International Harvester Building, 782 Main Street, 2nd floor, west end, residential space common kitchen/eating area, 2017. (M. Peterson, 2017.)

**782 MAIN STREET – INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER BUILDING**

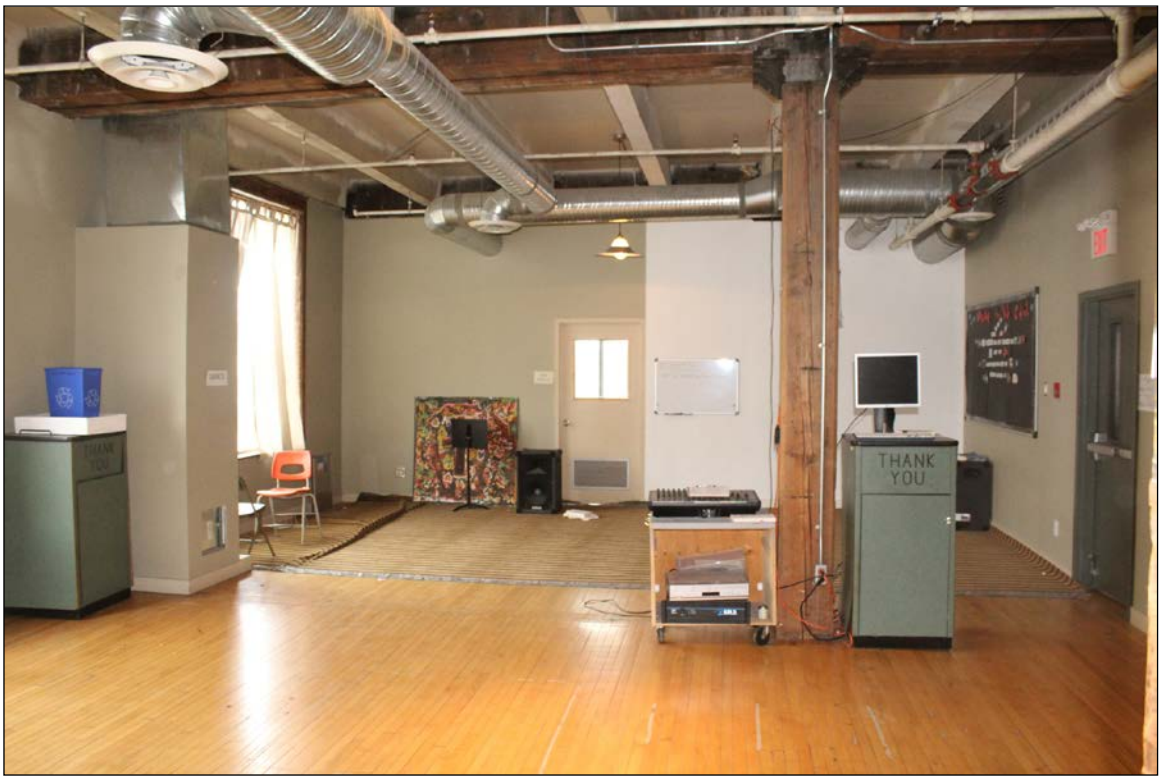



Plate 18 – International Harvester Building, 782 Main Street, 2nd floor, east end, church area, 2017. (M. Peterson, 2017.)

**782 MAIN STREET – INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER BUILDING**



Plate 19 – International Harvester Building, 782 Main Street, 3rd floor common area, 2017. (M. Peterson, 2017.)

**782 MAIN STREET – INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER BUILDING**




Plate 20 – International Harvester Building, 782 Main Street, 4th floor, 2017. (M. Peterson, 2017.)

**782 MAIN STREET – INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER BUILDING**




Plate 21 – Main Street looking north from the Higgins Avenue CPR overpass, 2011. The yellow building in the foreground, the Stuart Machinery Warehouse, 764 Main Street (built 1909-1910), was demolished in 2012. (M. Peterson, 2011.)




Plate 22 – Main Street looking south, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)




Plate 23 –Department of Architecture, Armour Institute of Technology, 1923, Assistant Professor of Architectural Construction August C. Wilmanns is bottom right. (Armour Institute of Technology, Year Book, 1923.)

**782 MAIN STREET – INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER BUILDING**




Plate 24– Chateau Theatre, Chicago, IL, no date; built in 1915, demolished ca.1960. (Reproduced from Theatre Historical Society of America, http://theatrehistoricalsociety.tumblr.com/.)




Plate 25 – International Harvester Company truck advertisement, 1925. (Reproduced from Manitoba Free Press, February 21, 1925, p. 27.)

**782 MAIN STREET – INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER BUILDING**




Plate 26 – Aftermath of the March 9, 1912 Radford-Wright Building fire. Partially obscured by the smoke is the International Harvester Building to the right. (Reproduced from V. Leah, Alarm of Fire, [Winnipeg, MB: Firefighters Burn Fund, 1982], p. 64.)




Plate 27 – Postcard of the aftermath of the Radford-Wright Building fire, 1912. The International Harvester Building is to the right. (Reproduced from Peel's Prairie Provinces, University of Alberta Libraries, Postcard 1275.)

**782 MAIN STREET – INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER BUILDING**

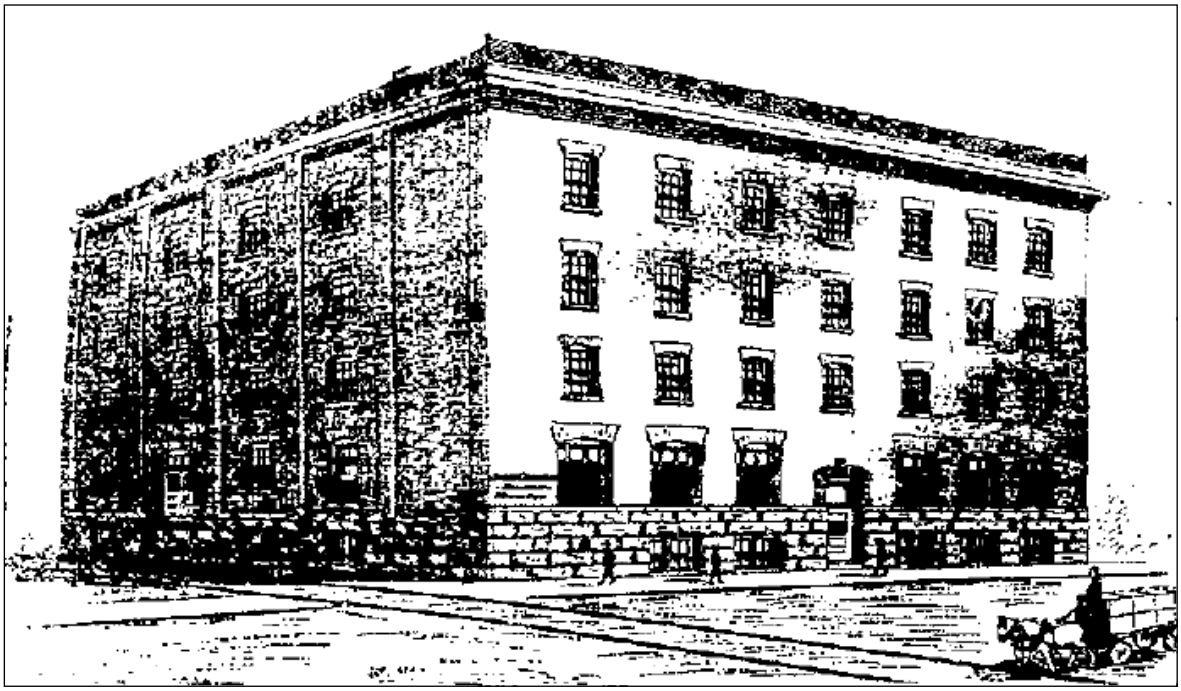


Plate 28 – Walter Woods Company Warehouse, 10 Robinson Street (northwest corner Sutherland Avenue); built 1907, architect- James Chisholm. (Reproduced from Manitoba Free Press, May 18, 1907, p. 27.)