294 PORTAGE AVENUE

SOMERSET BUILDING

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings & Resources Committee
Researcher: M. Peterson
May 2019

This building embodies the following heritage values as described in the *Historical Resources By-law*, 55/2014 (consolidated update July 13, 2016):

(a) This block was developed shortly after its neighbour, the T. Eaton's Company department store opened in 1905, and added to the growing number of modern commercial blocks built on Portage Avenue after 1905 and before World War I;

(b) The building was developed by well-known lawyer J.A.M. Aikins, who owned the property during its early years;

(c) It was designed by John Woodman, well-known local architect and is a good example of the Chicago School style;

(d) Built of brick with stone accenting on a reinforced concrete structural system, representative of contemporary construction methods;

(e) It is a highly conspicuous building in the downtown; and

(f) The building's main façades have suffered little alteration.

294 PORTAGE AVENUE – SOMERSET BUILDING

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.[1] 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."[2] Merchants and wholesalers, who were concentrated on both sides of Main Street north of

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1 M. Peterson, "315 Portage Avenue – Former Canadian Bank of Commerce," report for the Historical Buildings Committee, p. 1. The new Post Office was opened in 1908.

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]

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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.

In 1906, it was announced that well-known lawyer J.A.M. Aikins was developing the Portage Avenue property across Donald Street from the recently opened T. Eaton's Company department store. On the large site, Aikins, using the same architect that designed the Eaton's Store, planned on building a large, seven-storey office and retail building,[5] using his mother's maiden name – Somerset – for the new block (Plate 6).

STYLE

The Somerset Building is an example of the Chicago School style.[6] It was popularized in major centres across North America from the late 1890s to the 1920s. The use of skeletal steel and reinforced concrete was outwardly express by tall structures with flat roofs and a "grid-like organization of windows and wall surfaces."[7]

These buildings, most often commercial/office structures, were divided into three sections, the ground floor devoted to large glass windows for displays, a central portion consisting of the bulk of the floors, and an attic or top floor finished with a heavy cornice. The top and bottom floors received the majority of the ornamental treatment, usually in sculpted stone or terracotta. This ornamentation could take many forms including Classical, Gothic, Romanesque, Renaissance, Sullivanesque or Art Nouveau.[8]

There are several exceptional examples of the style in Winnipeg built in the pre-1920 era, including Union Tower, 504 Main Street (built 1904), the Boyd Building, 384 Portage Avenue (1912) and the Paris Building, 259 Portage Avenue (1915-1917) – Plate 7.

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5 There is confusion as to the actual original height of the structure. Contemporary accounts and the original 1906 plans call for a six-storey building but an accompanying newspaper image shows a seventh storey under construction in 1906. Plans for the two-storey 1911 addition appear to show an original seventh storey above the partial cornices over the sixth.

6 Identifying Architectural Styles in Manitoba (Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, Historic Resources Branch, 1991), pp. 22-23; and Leslie Maitland, et al., A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1992), pp. 124-131.

7 L. Maitland, op. cit., p. 124.

8 Identifying Architectural Styles in Manitoba, op. cit., p. 22.

CONSTRUCTION

The Somerset Building was planned and built as a seven-storey structure on the southeast corner of Portage Avenue and Donald Street, completed in the summer of 1907. The building measures approximately 40.7 metres along Portage Avenue and 39.7 metres along Donald Street.[9]

The building utilizes a foundation system of steel reinforced concrete piers on concrete footings with similar reinforced concrete beams and girders supporting all floors. According to a contemporary article on the building, this system was "…a strong rival structural steel…as it has a much greater bearing strength and is not effected by rust or acids which are so ruinous to steel construction."[10] Brick and stone accenting was used for cladding of the upper floors, the original ground floor utilized "stone veneer" between the large display windows and entrances.[11]

Cost of construction, according to the City of Winnipeg Building Permit, was $225,000.[12]

Four years after completion, two more storeys were added to the building (Plate 8), after a structural test was passed that entailed the use of over 160,000 kilograms of pig iron as weight.[13] The addition cost $70,000 and was completed by the end of 1911 (Plate 9).[14]

DESIGN

Because of its corner location, the Somerset Building has two, similarly designed public façades: north facing Portage Avenue and west facing Donald Street (Plate 10).

As designed, the north façade began with a smooth-cut stone base rising to the height of the second storey windows (Plate 11). The remainder of the ground floor held recessed retail

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9 City of Winnipeg Assessment Record, Roll No. 933200-12-1.

10 Manitoba Free Press, December 6, 1906, Special Building Number, p. 38.

11 Architect's Plans, No. 528/1906, "Front Elevation," City of Winnipeg.

12 City of Winnipeg Building Permit (below as BP), #528/1906.

13 Manitoba Free Press, June 20, 1911, p. 28.

14 BP #2115/1911; and Manitoba Free Press, December 2, 1911, p. 13.

entrances framed by large display windows (Plate 12). The upper floors were filled with regularly spaced windows in rectilinear openings with oversized stone heads and thin stone sills. The centre portion of the façade was slightly recessed; the corners of this section and the corners of the building were highlighted by stone quoins. A galvanized iron cornice completed the original building.

The west façade was an exact continuation of the north elevation, although entrances were fewer on the ground floor (Plate 13). From 1912 to the late 1960s, part of the east façade was covered by the Lyceum Theatre, 288 Portage Avenue (Plate 14). The North Star Inn, built in 1969, covered the entire east façade. The rear (south) façade included a light well above the ground floor to allow natural light and ventilation. The elevation was filled with windows in rectilinear openings with radiating brick heads and stone lug sills.

The additional three storeys continued the fenestration, cladding and embellishments of the lower floors and the roofline was once again finished with a complete entablature.

Today, many changes have been completed on the exterior. The ground floor has been completely altered, the original window units replaced, the entablature removed and an overhead pedestrian walkway attached to the west side (Plates 15-17).

INTERIOR

According to an early account, the new Somerset Building was to provide retail space on the ground floor, offices on the next three levels and "small apartments" on the top two floors.[15] Original plans show storage and mechanical space in the basement, entrance hallway, stairs and two elevators along the east wall of the ground floor as well as five retail spaces (Plate 18) and a second floor with small offices located on both sides of a wide, central "U" shaped corridor (Plate 19). Unfortunately, plans do not exist for the upper storeys; however, local directories list only companies and

[15] Manitoba Free Press, December 6, 1906, Special Building Number, p. 38.

professional offices,[16] it does not appear that any of the upper floor space was used for residential purposes.

The additional two storeys were used for additional office space.

An article was written in a 1935 trade magazine outlining significant changes to the main entrance and elevator lobby of the building.[17] The "before" picture shows open cage elevators, exposed ceiling beams and a telegraph counter in the southwest corner (Plate 20). Alterations, designed by Northwood and Chivers, entailed closing in the elevators with white marble dado and bronze doors, yellow and blue rubber flooring, multi-coloured ceiling stencilling and moving the telegraph counter to the east side and creating a raised entrance for the office to the south (Plate 21). This 1936 space has been updated several times and bears little resemblance today (Plate 22).

The main entrance received new Travertine floor and granite steps.[18]

Today, the two staircases, along the building's east side and near the southwest corner feature original elements – ornate metal work, wood accenting and marble treads (Plates 23 and 24) Another unique feature is a highly decorative staircase to the basement with ornate metal bannister and marble treads (Plate 25). The remainder of the space being renovated as new tenants occupied offices in the building (Plates 26 and 27). The building is connected to the Radisson Hotel to the east on the main floor (closed in) and on the ninth floor and to the City's overhead pedestrian walkway system on the second floor.

INTEGRITY

The building stands on its original site and appears to be in good structural condition for its age. Alterations have been extensive to the ground floor and roofline (the cornice was replaced in

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16 Henderson's Directory, 1908-1911.

17 Western Canada Contractor and Builder, Nov.-Dec. 1935.

18 Loc. cit.

1962 – Plate 28), but the upper floors have maintained much of their original finish and ornamentation.

STREETSCAPE

The Somerset Building has been an important part of the downtown streetscape for over 100 years and defines an important intersection (Plate 29).

ARCHITECT/CONTRACTORS

John Woodman (1860-1944), was the designer of this building. Woodman was a well-known local architect who was a leader in the design of reinforced concrete structures in Winnipeg in the early 1900s (see Appendix II for biographical information). He has received 20 points from the Historical Buildings and Resources Committee.

Contractors for the building have variously been reported as William J. Hodgins or Hodgins & Horner (William).19 While Horner (1860-1956) was considered a general contractor, Hodgins' expertise appears to have been in masonry. Beyond the Somerset Building, Hodgins was responsible for the construction of the T.S. Ewart House, 567 Stradbrook Avenue (1903, demolished), Tees and Persse Warehouse, 315 William Avenue (1905 with T.E. Thompson) and Lee Court, 217 Donald Street (1906 with T.E. Thompson, demolished).

PERSON/INSTITUTION

The developer of this block was Sir James Albert Manning Aikins (Plate 30). Known as "Jam" to his colleagues, Aikins was born in Peel County, Canada West (Ontario) in 1851, the son of a successful farmer and politician. He was educated as a lawyer in Toronto and began his practice in Winnipeg in 1879 as Manitoba counsel for the Department of Justice, a position he held until

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[19] The contractors were also given as Hodgins & Thompson (Thomas Edward), although Thompson died in 1903. Manitoba Free Press, June 24, 1903, p. 7.

1896. An M.P. and leader of the Manitoba Conservative Party before World War I, Aikins served two terms as the lieutenant-governor of Manitoba (1916-1926) after being knighted in 1914. He was described in a local paper in 1910 as being in the "somewhat unique position of being a millionaire lawyer."[20] He died in 1929.[21]

Ownership of the property transferred to a company called General Assets, which owned the block into the 1960s.[22] Tenancy in the block has always been varied – including barristers, chartered accountants, real estate, insurance agents and companies of all description. Some of the more unusual or major occupants have included the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway's general offices that occupied the entire seventh floor in 1910, Winnipeg Musicians Association (1920), Twin City Ant Roach Powder Company (1930), Manitoba Girls Work Board (1940), Harleys Aristocrat Beauty Salon (1950), the International Duluth Seaport Corporation (1960) and the Consulate of Iceland (1980).[23]

EVENT

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

CONTEXT

This large mixed-use structure was built at the very beginning of the growth of Winnipeg's Portage Avenue into the commercial and business centre of the city. Replacing Main Street after 1900, the demand for modern office space grew at a tremendous pace until World War I, with many of the professionals and businesses seeking to locate on Portage Avenue. The fact that three additional storeys were added was not uncommon in the downtown during this period.

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20 "Aikins, Sir James Albert Manning," in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, online edition, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/aikins_james_albert_manning_15E.html, 2003-2015 University of Toronto/Université Laval.

21 J.M. Bumstead, Dictionary of Manitoba Biography (Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press, 1999), p. 4.

22 City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, Roll No. 12-093320000, 1910-1990.

23 Henderson's Directory, 1910-1990.

LANDMARK

Although smaller than its neighbour of many decades, the Eaton's Store, and its new neighbour, the MTS Centre, the design and ornamentation of the Somerset Building has allow it to continue to be a recognized structure in the City's downtown.

Historical Buildings & Resources Committee
THE CITY OF WINNIPEG

APPENDIX I

CITY OF WINNIPEG - Preliminary Report

Building Address: 294 Portage Avenue

Building Name: Somerset Building

Original Use: mixed (retail/office/residential)

Current Use: retail/office

Roll No. (Old): 933200 (---)

RSN: 141748

Municipality: 12

Ward: 1

Property or Occupancy Code: ---

Legal Description: 1 St. John, Plan 129, Block 3, Lots 301/303

Location: southeast corner Donald Street

Date of Construction: 1906

Storeys: 9

Heritage Status: NOMINATED LIST

Construction Type: reinforced concrete, brick and stone foundation

Building Permits (Plans available: **[CS]** City Storage; **[M]** Microfilm):

SEE NEXT PAGE

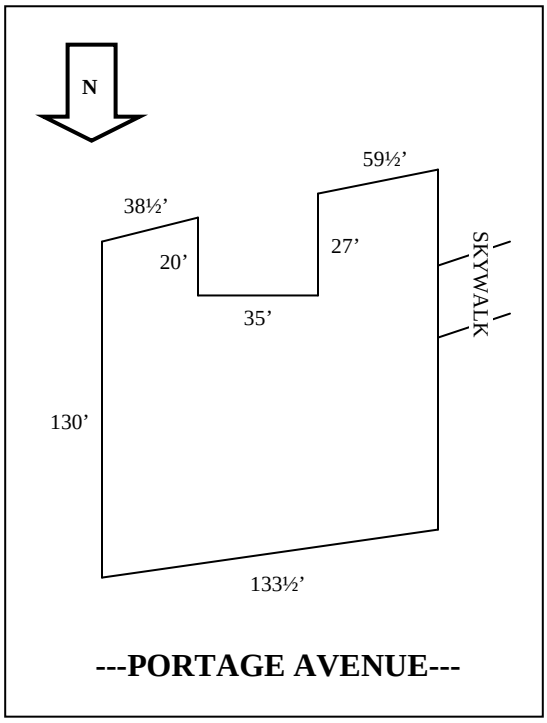
Information:

- 133½ x 130

- ceilings: B- 9.3'; 1st- 16.7'; 2nd- 12.7'; 3rd-9th- 9.8' to 10.6'; Penthouse- 10.3'

- Permit 7634/1968- new plumbing, electrical & heating through-out; new interior partitioning; drawing for overhead pedestrian connection to Eaton's Store (Waisman, Ross, Blankstein, Coop, Gillmor, Hanna, architects)

- Permit 5530/1962- new cornice of Portage and Donald façades (Moody, Moore & Partners, architects)



ARCHITECT: JOHN WOODMAN

CONTRACTOR: HODGINS & THOMPSON

Building Permits (Plans available: **[CS]** City Storage; **[M]** Microfilm):

YEAR	NO.	PLANS	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION
1906	528	CS	$225,000	Superstructure
1907	1064		$6,000	Alterations
1907	1671		$1,100	Alterations
1911	2115	CS	$70,000	Construct 2 additional storeys
1935	3499	CS	$8,000	Alterations
1936	1409	CS	$17,000	Enclose elevators
1938	900		$5,000	Interior alterations
1938	951	CS	$10,000	New store fronts (Portage & Donald) for Woolworths
1939	189	CS	$2,500	Interior alterations
1947	6177	CS	$6,000	New main entrance
1955	1659	CS	$150,000	Interior alterations
1958	Unknown		$8,520	Interior alterations
1959	1793	CS	$3,000	Minor interior repairs
1960	407	CS	$25,000	Penthouse (new elevators)
1962	5530	CS	$20,000	New cornice
1963	252	Mi 848	$17,000	Interior alterations
1964	1260		$24,000	Interior alterations
1964	4091	CS	$10,000	Interior alterations to main floor lobby
1964	5271	CS	N/A	Additional to Permit 4091/1964
1966	1845		Unknown	Interior alterations (cafeteria)
1968	7634	Mi 169	$1,188,773	Interior alterations
1969	7844		$150,000	Skywalk
1969	7904		Unknown	Pedestrian overpass
1970	2807	Mi 17	$9,000	Interior alterations
1970	3604		$223,400	Interior alterations
1971	197	Mi 85	Unknown	Interior alterations (Skyview Café)
1971	2153		Unknown	Interior alterations (River Valley Store)
1972	1702	Mi 184	$5,000	Interior alterations
1972	2964		$1,200	Interior alterations
1975	6621		$1,000	Interior alterations
1977	402		$20,000	Interior alterations (Woolworths cafeteria)
1977	1492		$3,200	Interior alterations
1981	4353	CS	$25,000	Interior alterations (296 Portage Ave.- Royal Bank of Canada)
1982	699	CS	$27,000	Interior partitioning
1983	5250		$30,000	Interior alterations
1983	9544	CS	$17,000	Interior alterations- 4th floor (new corridor, ceiling, doors, etc.)
1984	56	CS	$44,000	Interior alterations
1984	217	CS	$11,000	Interior alterations
1984	2794		$13,000	Interior alterations
1984	9298		$3,000	Interior alterations
1985	1742		$6,000	Interior alterations

YEAR	NO.	PLANS	AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION
1985	3092		$3,500	Interior alterations
1985	3853		$1,000	Interior alterations
1985	8094		$3,000	Interior alterations
1985	9445		$2,000	Interior alterations
1987	2247	CS	$60,000	Interior alterations
1987	3269	CS	$40,000	Interior alterations
1987	11740		$2,500	Interior alterations
1990	1440	CS	$20,000	Interior alterations
1990	1441	CS	$5,000	Interior alterations
1990	1442	CS	$10,000	Interior alterations
1990	1443	CS	$5,000	Interior alterations
1990	4078	CS	$125,000	Interior alterations
1990	5916	CS	$45,000	Interior alterations
1991	483		$150,000	Repair fire damage (skywalk)
1991	4498	CS	$125,000	Interior alterations
1991	5958		$5,000	Interior alterations
1991	6996		$6,000	Interior alterations
1992	1182	CS	$22,000	Interior alterations
1993	6198		$3,600	Foundation column
1996-1998	Various		$135,000	Interior alterations
1999	133291	CS	$5,000	Interior alterations
2000	162528	CS	$49,000	Interior alterations
2001	143957	CS	$7,000	Interior alterations
2001	163780	CS	$5,000	Interior alterations
2001	184744	CS	$20,000	Interior alterations
2001	186143	CS	$3,000	Interior alterations
2001	187499	CS	$40,000	Interior alterations (bank)
2002	227187	CS	$50,000	Interior alterations
2004	319228	CS	$25,000	Interior alterations
2004	319234	CS	$25,000	Interior alterations
2004	322572	CS	$10,000	Interior alterations
2004	323131	CS	$44,466	Interior alterations
2004	323138	CS	$22,283	Interior alterations
2005	101035		$35,000	Interior alterations
2011	168904		$42,000	Interior alterations
2012	105541		$28,500	Interior alterations
2012	106902		$420,000	Interior alterations
2012	148967		$210,550	Interior alterations

APPENDIX II

John Woodman

John Woodman was born in Oshawa, Canada West (Ontario) in 1860, moved to Winnipeg in the employ of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) in 1880, and by the late 1890s had risen to the post of chief engineer, western division. In the late 1880s, he also worked for the Northern Pacific and Manitoba Railway as a building engineer and superintendent of construction.[24]

In 1901, he retired from the railway to establish a private practice. He was a pioneer in the new technique of reinforced concrete construction, new in the sense that it was not popular in Winnipeg, although it was being used extensively elsewhere in North America.[25] He formed a partnership with Raymond Marwood-Elton Carey (1883-1975) in 1911 and over the next five years they designed many structures in the city.[26] In 1917, Woodman entered a new partnership with Arthur Edwin Cubbidge (1881-1952). From 1904-20 he was also one of the Hudson Bay Company's principal architects.[27] He retired from active practice in 1927 although he designed at least one building after that date. He died in Winnipeg in 1944.[28]

An incomplete list of structures designed by Woodman, along or in partnership, would include:[29]

Northern Pacific and Manitoba Railway Engine House (Manitoba Children's Museum), 45 Forks Market Rd. (1889)
Winnipeg Electric St. Railway Complex (various buildings), Main St. at Assiniboine Ave. (1900-1904) – demolished
T. Eaton Company Store, 320 Portage Ave. (1904) – demolished
Allen (Wilson Building), 288 McDermot Ave. (1905) – Grade III
Layton House, 101 Stradbrook Pl. (1905)
G.F.R. Harris House, 117 Stradbrook Pl. (1905)
McLean's Block, 592½ Main St. (1905) – demolished

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24 Henderson's Directory, 1890, and "C.N.R. East Yards, N.P. and M.R. Engine House" in The Year Past, 1985 (Winnipeg: Historical Buildings Committee, 1985), pp. 27-8.

25 L.K. Eaton, "The Bemis bag plant in Winnipeg, Canada" in Concrete International, February 1979, pp. 64-5.

26 City of Winnipeg Building Permit Ledger Books, 1910-1917.

27 Hudson's Bay Company Archives, "Architectural Drawings in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives."

28 Winnipeg Tribune, May 18, 1944.

29 Compiled from Ibid.; J. Wade, op. cit.; Winnipeg Tribune, May 18, 1944; and Western Canada Contractor and Builder, July 1920, October 1922, September 1923 and May 1927.

J. Woodman designs (continued):

Grace Hospital (Salvation Army), 200 Arlington St. (1906) – demolished
Somerset Building, 294 Portage Ave. (1906)
Breadalbane (Ambassador) Apartments, 379 Hargrave St. (1909) – Grade III
Manitoba Cold Storage Building, 151 Higgins Ave. (1910, 2 additional storeys) – demolished
Sidney E. Lang House, 967 Grosvenor Ave., with R.M. Carey (ca.1911)
Hudson's Bay Company Wholesale Building & Retail Store, 77-93 Main St., with R.M. Carey (1911)
Hudson's Bay Company Garage, 115 Garry St. (1911)
Lorne Cameron House, 265 Dromore Ave., with R.M. Carey (1912)
G.H. Miller House, 638 McMillan Ave., with R.M. Carey (1912)
Lindsay Building, 228 Notre Dame Ave., with R.M. Carey (1911 and 1912, 3-storey addition) – Grade II
Canadian Pacific Railway Station, 181 Higgins Ave., with R.M. Carey (1911 addition) – demolished
Winnipeg Free Press Building, 300 Carlton St., with R.M. Carey (1911-1913) – Grade II
Goldin and Company (Blackwood's Ltd.) Building, 415 Mulvey Ave. East, with R.M. Carey (1912) – demolished
J.B. Carter (Blackwood's Ltd.) Building, 421 Mulvey Ave. East, with R.M. Carey (1912) – demolished
Clark Brothers Warehouse, 50 Charlotte St., with R.M. Carey (1912) – demolished
Union Stock Yards, Administration Building and Powerhouse, 780 Marion St., with R.M. Carey (1912-1913) –demolished
Smart Woods Company Warehouse, 145 Pacific Ave., with R.M. Carey (1913) – Grade III
Dominion Express Company Stable, Alexander Ave., with R.M. Carey (1913)
Rodgers (Heubach) House, 64 Nassau St., with R.M. Carey (1913) – Grade III – demolished
St. Luke's Anglican Church School House, Stradbrook Ave., with R.M. Carey (1914)
Paris Building, 257 Portage Ave., with R.M. Carey (1915-1917) – Grade II
Stovel Printing Company Building, 365 Bannatyne Ave., with R.M. Carey (1916) – Grade III
Public Press Building, 290 Vaughan St., with A.E. Cubbidge (1917) – Grade III
T. Eaton Company Stable, Hargrave St., with A.E. Cubbidge (1918) – demolished
Jewish Orphanage and Children's Aid Society of Western Canada Building, Matheson Ave. East, with A.E. Cubbidge (1919) – demolished
School for Birtle, MB, with A.E. Cubbidge (1920)
General Byng School, 1250 Beaumont St., with A.E. Cubbidge (1921)
General Steele School, 757 Lyon St., with A.E. Cubbidge (1921) - demolished
Henry Brothers Dry Cleaning Building, Gwendoline St., with A.E. Cubbidge (1925)
Eaton's Company Track Warehouse, 130 Galt St. (1926-1927)
Vaughan Apartments, 219 Vaughan St. (1929)[30]

[30] Architect's Plans, #251/1929.

294 PORTAGE AVENUE – SOMERSET BUILDING

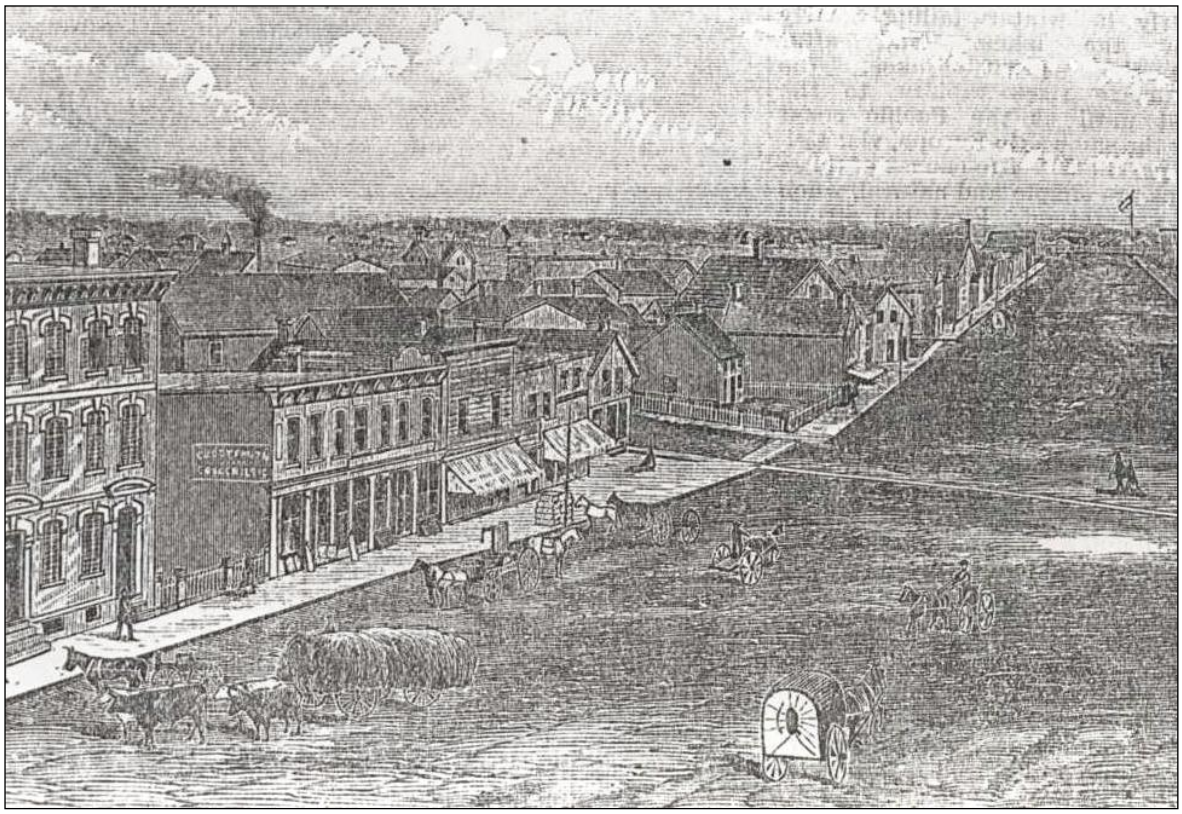

Plate 1 – This sketch from ca.1877, shows the east side of Main Street looking south from near Portage Avenue. The flag in the upper right corner flies over Upper Fort Garry. (Reproduced courtesy of Western Canada Pictorial Index, 604-18896.)

294 PORTAGE AVENUE – SOMERSET BUILDING

Plate 2 – The Clarendon Hotel, northwest corner of Portage Avenue and Donald Street (#311), ca.1905. (M. Peterson Collection.)

294 PORTAGE AVENUE – SOMERSET BUILDING

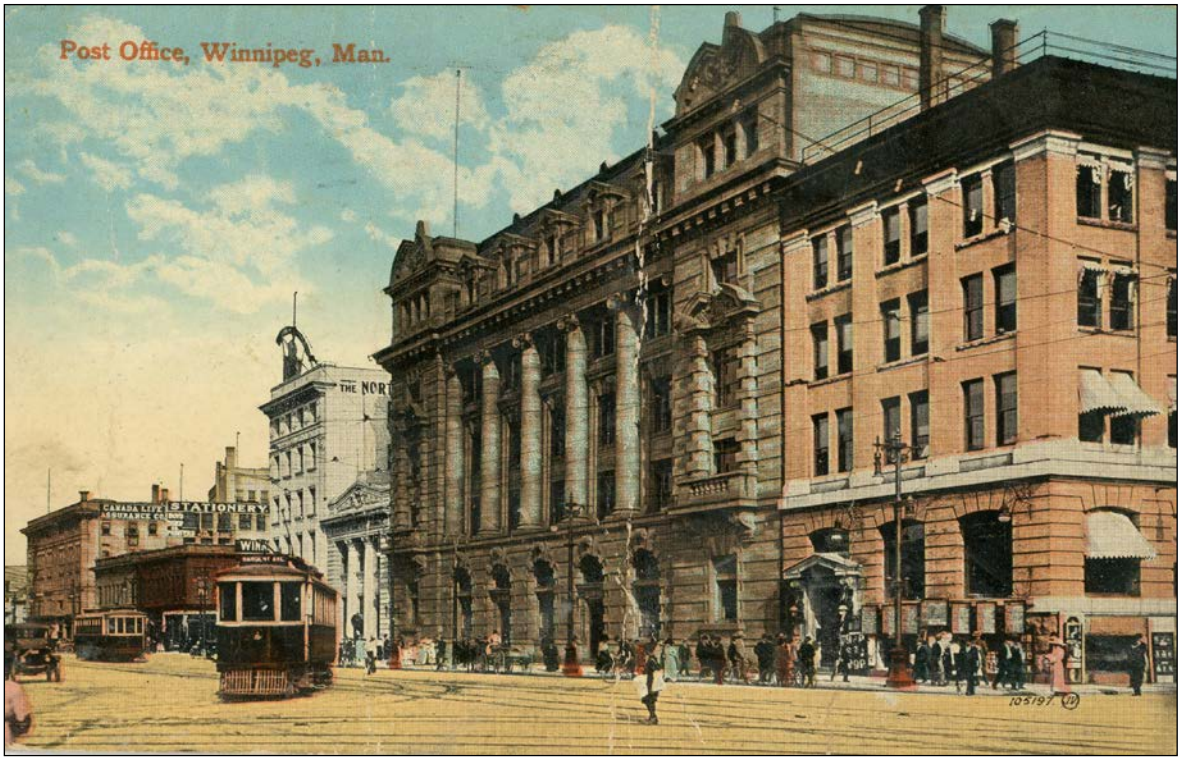

Plate 3 – Winnipeg's Main Post Office, 236 Portage Avenue, date unknown. The building to the right is the Manitoba Free Press Building, 240 Portage Avenue and to the left, the small Oldfield, Kirby and Gardner Building, 234 Portage Avenue, the only one of the three still standing. (Winnipeg Public Library, Historic Postcards.)

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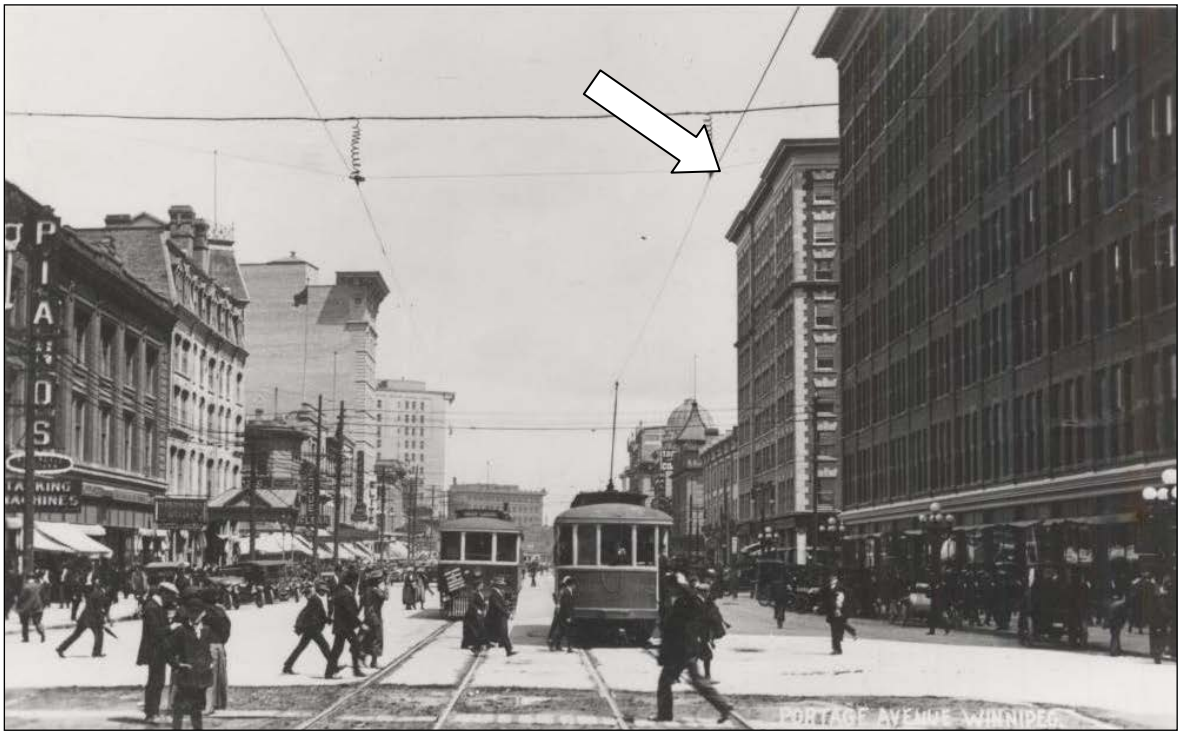

Plate 4 – Portage Avenue looking east from Hargrave Street, ca.1915. Eaton's (right foreground) and the Somerset Building (arrow) tower over the smaller buildings on the north side of the street. (Archives of Manitoba, N12614.)

294 PORTAGE AVENUE – SOMERSET BUILDING

Plate 5 –Hudson's Bay Company Store, 450 Portage Avenue, during construction, August 23, 1926. (Hudson's Bay Company Archives.)

294 PORTAGE AVENUE – SOMERSET BUILDING

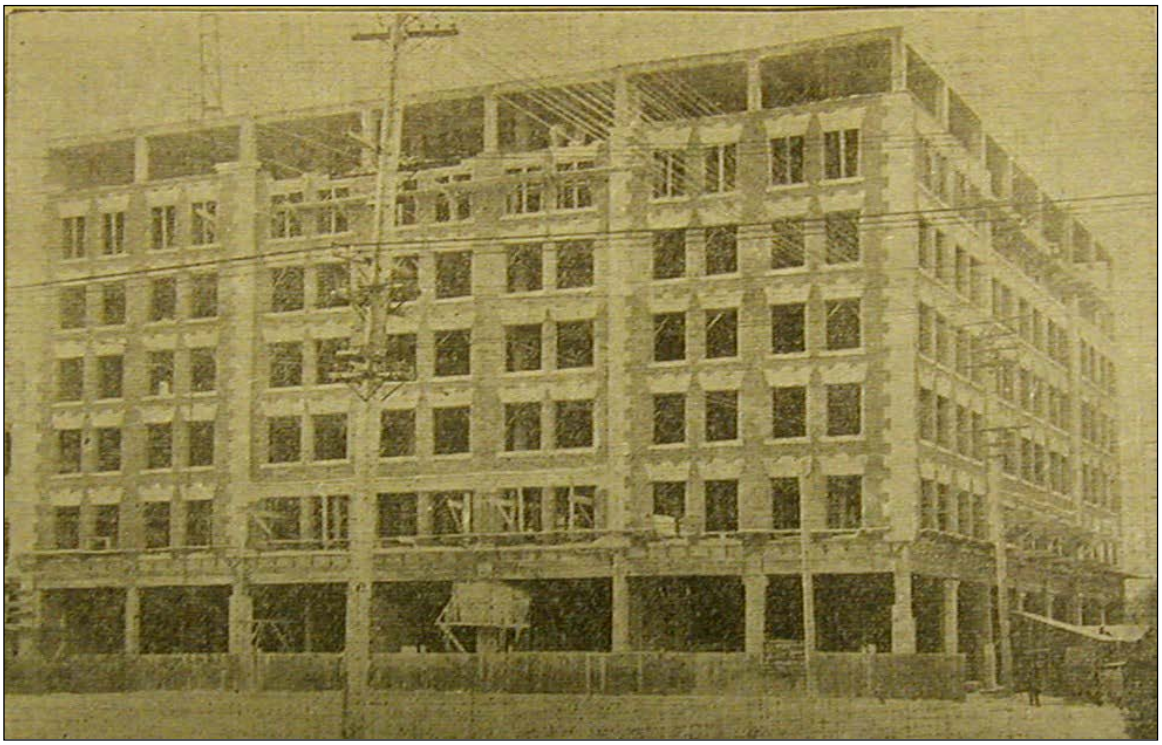

Plate 6 – Somerset Building, 294 Portage Avenue, during construction in 1906. (Reproduced from Manitoba Free Press, December 6, 1906, p. 38.)

294 PORTAGE AVENUE – SOMERSET BUILDING

Plate 7 – Some examples of Winnipeg's Chicago Style commercial buildings: Union Tower, 504 Main Street, built 1904 (top left); Boyd Building, 384 Portage Avenue, built 1912 (top right); and the Paris Building, 259 Portage Avenue, 1915-1917 (bottom). (M. Peterson.)

294 PORTAGE AVENUE – SOMERSET BUILDING

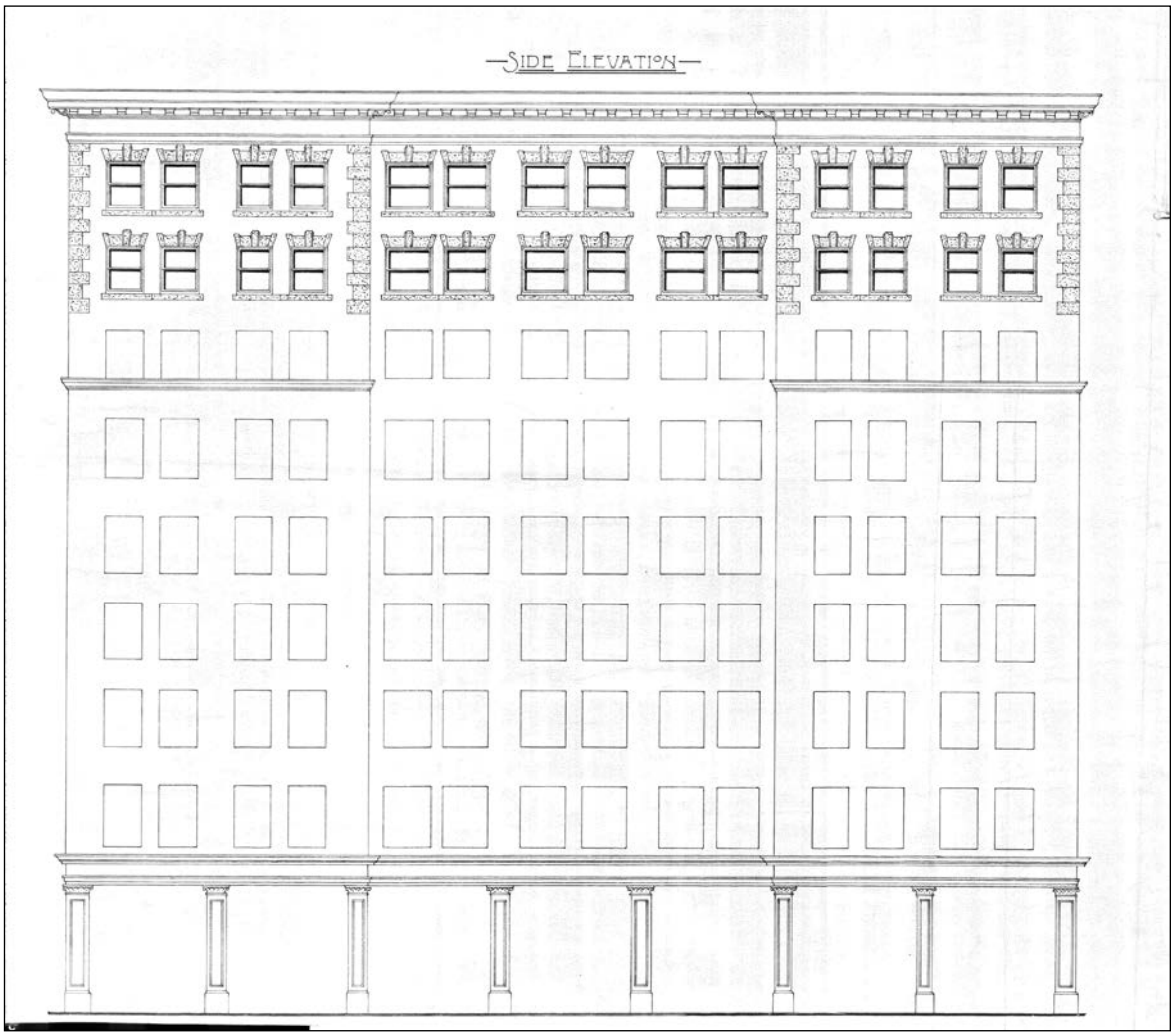

Plate 8 – Somerset Building, Portage Avenue, Architect's Plans, "Side Elevation," 1911.
(Courtesy of City of Winnipeg, Plan #2115/1911.)

294 PORTAGE AVENUE – SOMERSET BUILDING

Plate 9 – Somerset Building, 294 Portage Avenue, ca.1920. (M. Peterson Collection.)

294 PORTAGE AVENUE – SOMERSET BUILDING

Plate 10 – Somerset Building, 294 Portage Avenue, north and west façades, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)

294 PORTAGE AVENUE – SOMERSET BUILDING

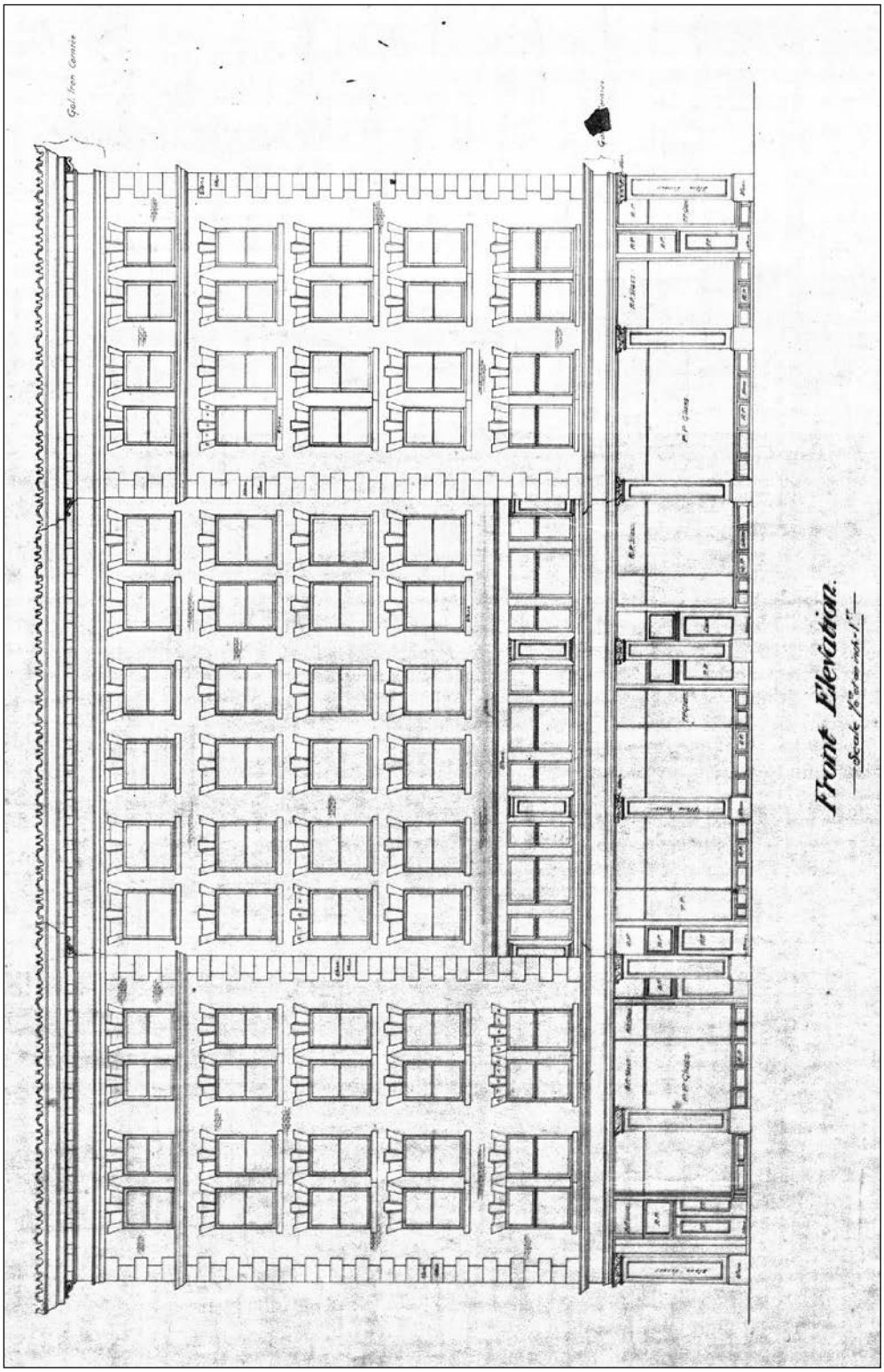

Plate 11 – Somerset Building, Portage Avenue, Architect's Plans, "Front Elevation," 1906.
(Courtesy of City of Winnipeg, Plan #528/1906.)

294 PORTAGE AVENUE – SOMERSET BUILDING

Plate 12 – Somerset Building, 294 Portage Avenue, detail of north façade ground floor, ca.1920. (M. Peterson Collection.)

Plate 13 – Somerset Building, Portage Avenue, Architect's Plans, "Side Elevation," 1906. (Courtesy of City of Winnipeg, Plan #528/1906.)

294 PORTAGE AVENUE – SOMERSET BUILDING

Plate 14 – Lyceum Theatre, 288-290 Portage Avenue, shortly before demolition, 1968. The northeast corner of the Somerset Building is seen on the right edge of the image. (Photograph by Cecil P. Sheane, Theatres of Winnipeg 1900 to Present, http://www.dancebob.com/Winnipeg_Theatres/Winnipeg_Theatres.html, no date.)

294 PORTAGE AVENUE – SOMERSET BUILDING

Plate 15 – Somerset Building, 294 Portage Avenue, front (north) and west façades, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)

294 PORTAGE AVENUE – SOMERSET BUILDING

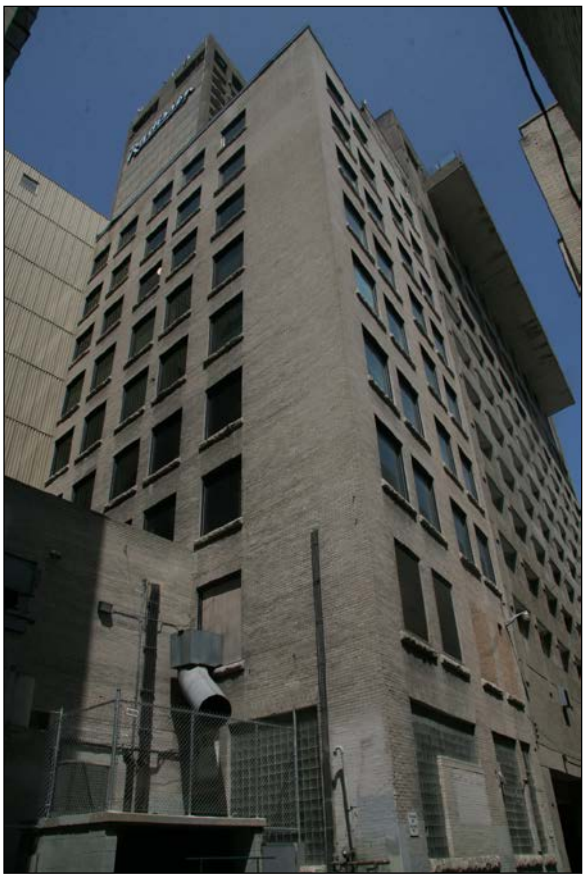

Plate 16 – Somerset Building, 294 Portage Avenue, rear (south) façade, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)

294 PORTAGE AVENUE – SOMERSET BUILDING

Plate 17 – Somerset Building, 294 Portage Avenue, west façade, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)

294 PORTAGE AVENUE – SOMERSET BUILDING

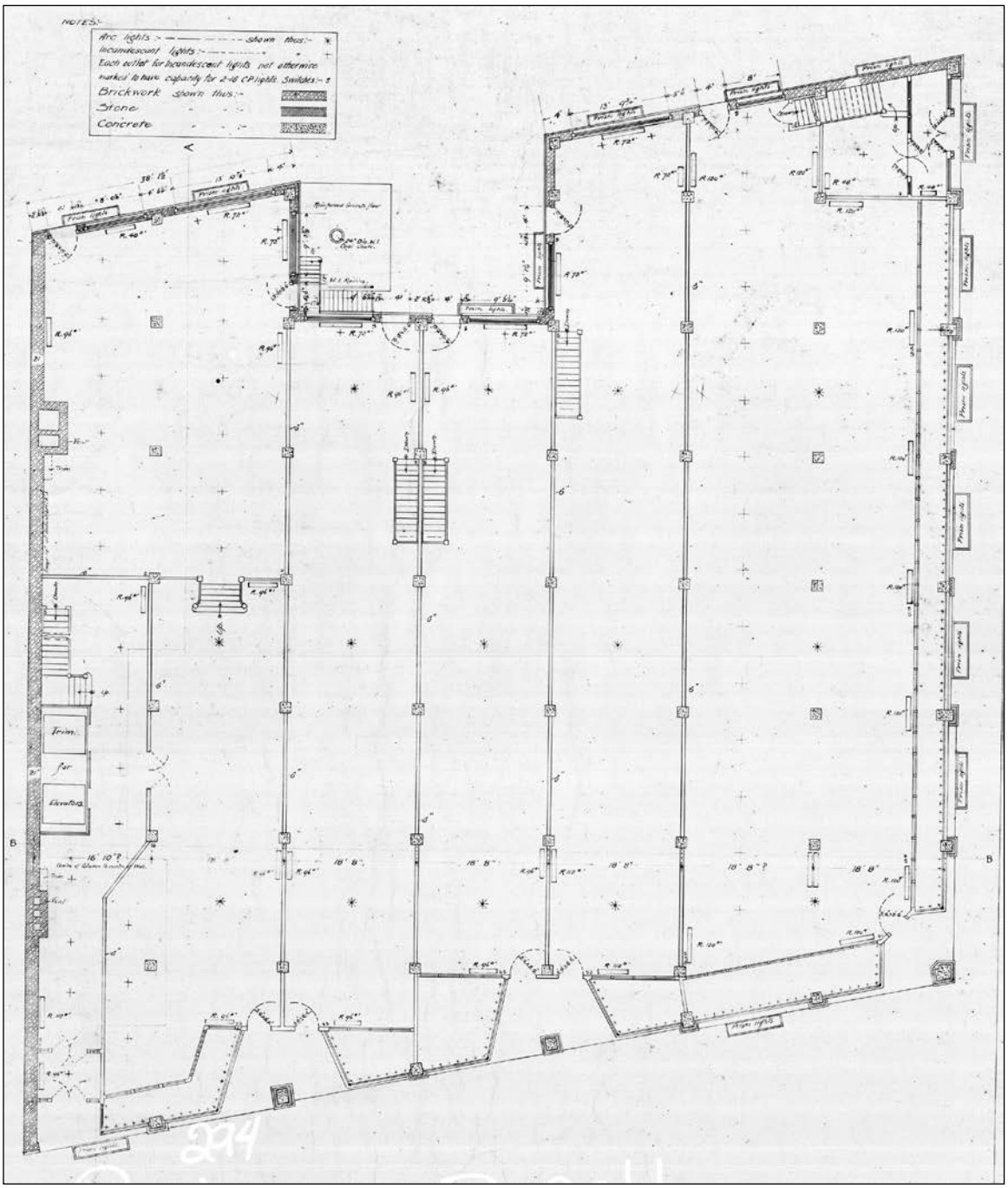

Plate 18 – Somerset Building, Portage Avenue, Architect's Plans, "Ground Floor Plan," 1906. (Courtesy of City of Winnipeg, Plan #528/1906.)

294 PORTAGE AVENUE – SOMERSET BUILDING

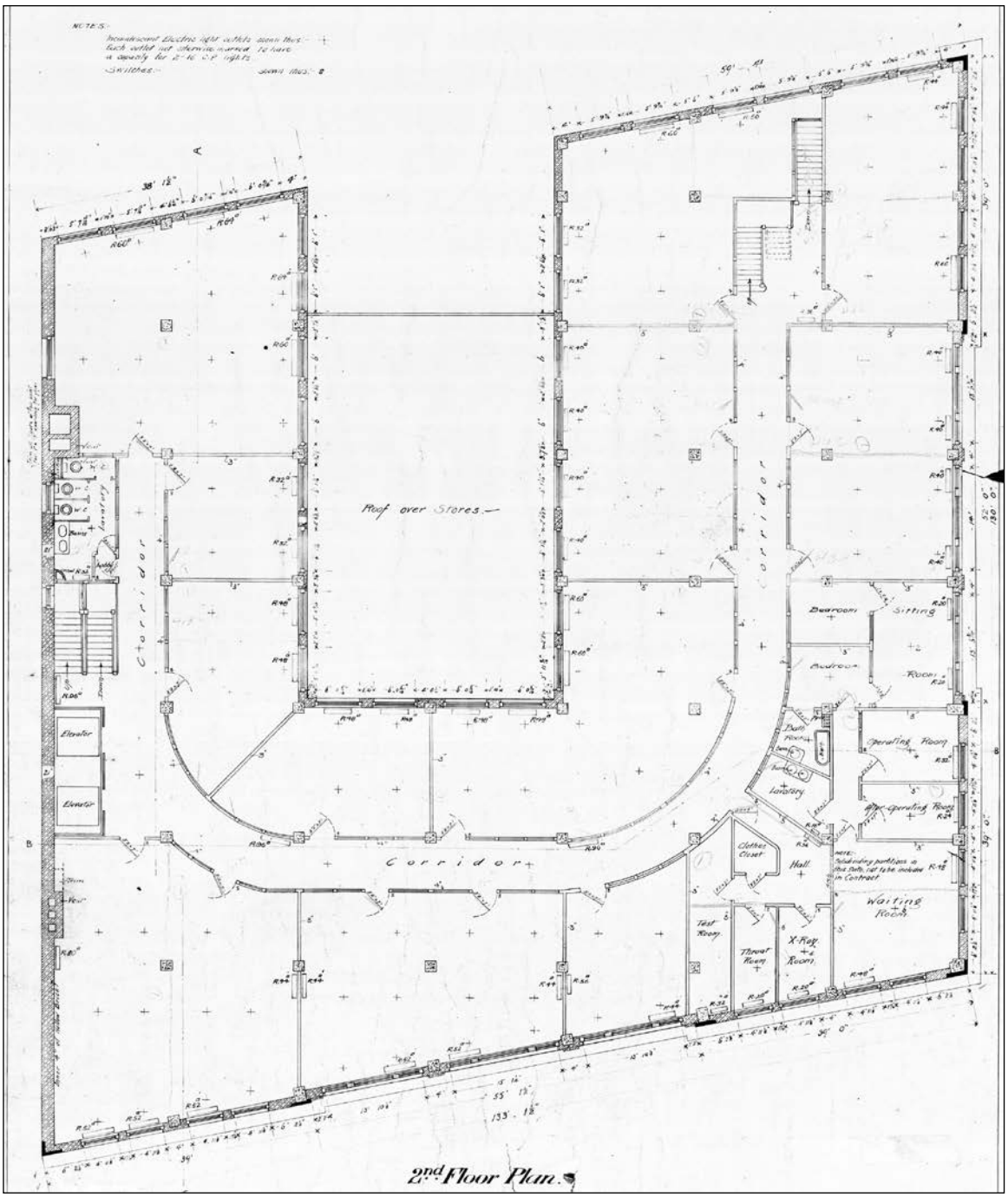

Plate 19 – Somerset Building, Portage Avenue, Architect's Plans, "2nd Floor Plan," 1906. (Courtesy of City of Winnipeg, Plan #528/1906.)

294 PORTAGE AVENUE – SOMERSET BUILDING

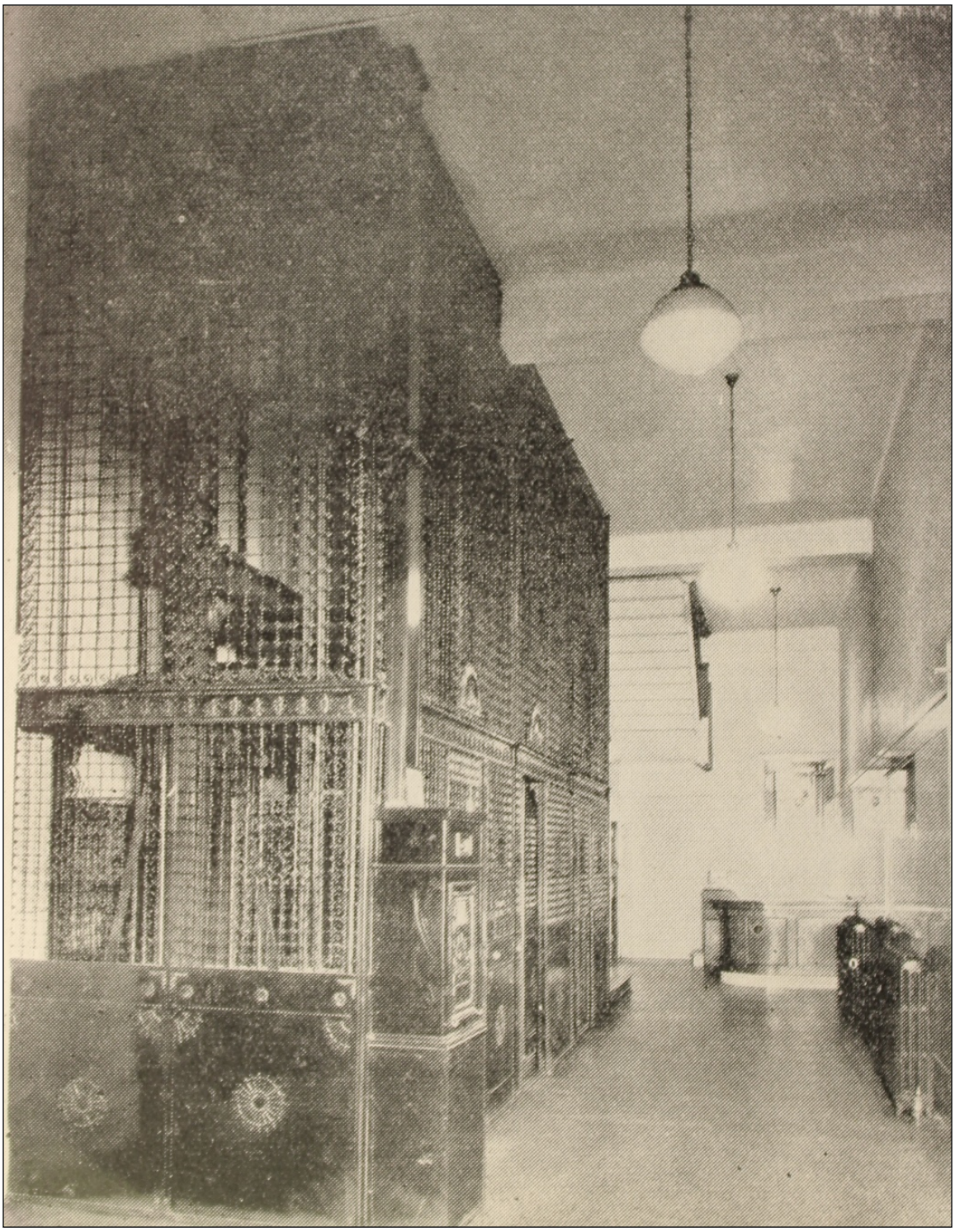

Plate 20 – Somerset Building, main lobby before 1935 alterations. (Reproduced from Western Canada Contractor and Builder, Nov.-Dec. 1935.)

294 PORTAGE AVENUE – SOMERSET BUILDING

Plate 21 – Somerset Building, main lobby after 1935 alterations. (Reproduced from Western Canada Contractor and Builder, Nov.-Dec. 1935.)

294 PORTAGE AVENUE – SOMERSET BUILDING

Plate 22 – Somerset Building, 294 Portage Avenue, main lobby, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)

294 PORTAGE AVENUE – SOMERSET BUILDING

Plate 23 – Somerset Building, 294 Portage Avenue, east stairs, third floor, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)

294 PORTAGE AVENUE – SOMERSET BUILDING

Plate 24 – Somerset Building, 294 Portage Avenue, southwest stairs, ninth floor, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)

294 PORTAGE AVENUE – SOMERSET BUILDING

Plate 25 – Somerset Building, 294 Portage Avenue, basement stairs, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)

294 PORTAGE AVENUE – SOMERSET BUILDING

Plate 26 – Somerset Building, 294 Portage Avenue, 5th floor hallway, 2015. (M. Peterson, 2015.)

294 PORTAGE AVENUE – SOMERSET BUILDING

Plate 27 – Somerset Building, 294 Portage Avenue, 9th floor hallway, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)

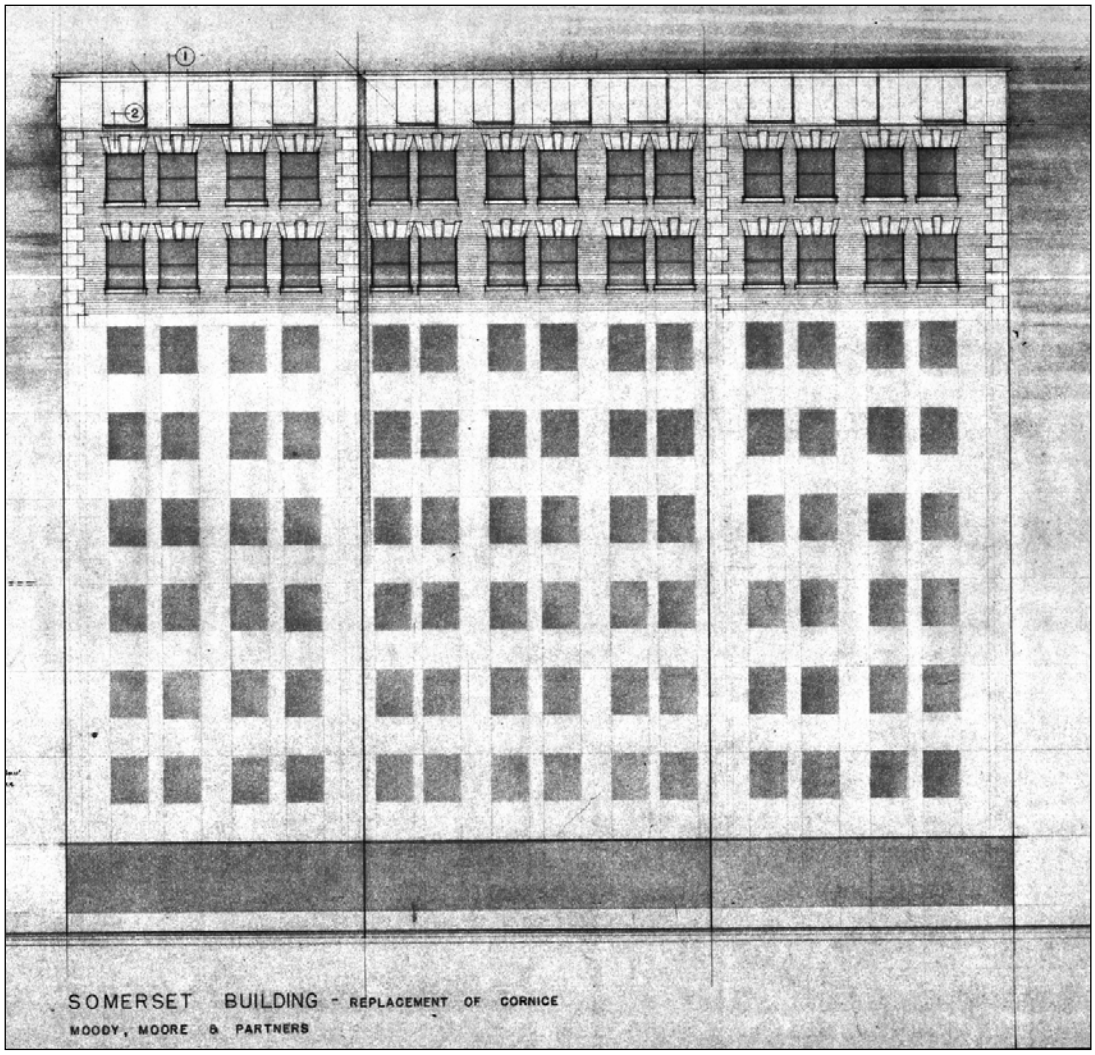

Plate 28 – Somerset Building, Portage Avenue, Architect's Plans, "Replacement of Cornice," 1962. (Courtesy of City of Winnipeg, Plan #5530/1962.)

294 PORTAGE AVENUE – SOMERSET BUILDING

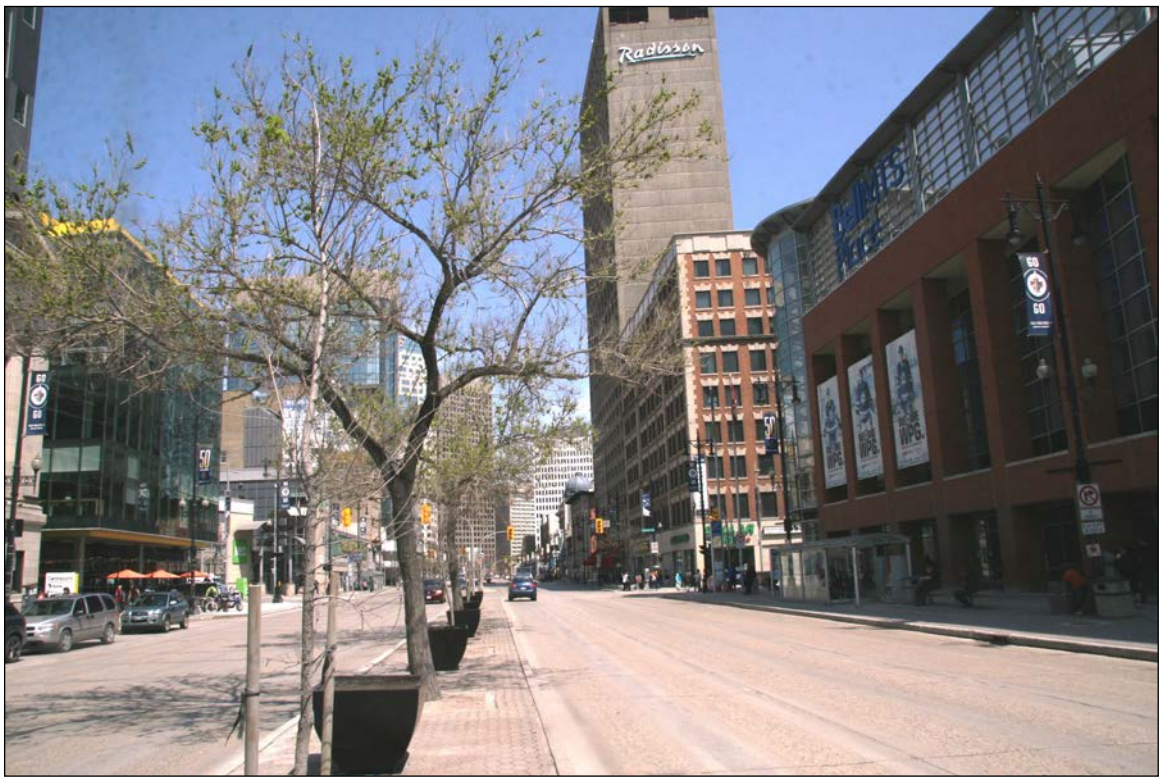

Plate 29 – Portage Avenue looking east from Hargrave Street, 2019. (M. Peterson, 2019.)

Plate 30 – James Albert Manning Aikins, M.P. for Brandon, MB, 1913. (Library and Archives Canada, Topley Studio Fonds/PA-033981, MIKAN No. 3212699.)