

90 ANNABELLA STREET – J.R. WATKINS COMPANY FACTORY & WAREHOUSE

John Woodman & Raymond Carey, 1914 and J.R. Watkins Company, 1921



This is one of Winnipeg's larger warehouse structures, built at the beginning of World War I and significantly enlarged after – an example of the growing importance of Winnipeg and its central role in the Canadian market.

The J.R. Watkins Company was founded in Minnesota in 1868, a natural remedy company that sold directly to customers mainly through door-to-door salesmen. Its product line would grow to include gourmet foods and cleaning products by the early 20th century and when expansion to Canada was proposed in 1913, Winnipeg was the logical choice as the headquarters.

The company built a three-storey brick and stone and reinforced concrete warehouse in Point Douglas, with direct access to the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway and then, in 1921, added the upper five storeys. Cost of construction for the entire building was \$181,000 and offered over 7,100 square metres of space per floor. High ceilings and an extremely robust structural

reinforced concrete internal support system gave the owners all the room and durability they required.

Exterior detailing includes stone accenting around windows and doors, herringbone patterned brickwork panels on the east and west façades and a heavy overhanging metal cornice. An ornate metal light fixture, original to the building, is located above the southeast corner entrance.

The interior is now mostly open storage space, corrugated concrete ceilings and large concrete columns with mushroom capitals are found throughout. The southeast staircase includes fine detailing.

The building was designed by noted local architectural partnership of John Woodman and Raymond Carey, who were responsible for a number of large, local projects during this period. The owner, J.R. Watkins Company, was listed as the contractor for the 1914 building and architect for the 1921 addition. B.H. Stahr Company of Winnipeg was named the 1921 contractor.

The factory/warehouse was designed in the Chicago School style, developed in Illinois in the 1890s and prevalent into the 1930s. It was the style for large commercial structures in many large, North American cities and led to a new building type – the skyscraper. Because of Winnipeg’s desire to be the “Chicago of the North”, many of its architects utilized elements of the style when designing early 20th century buildings.

The warehouse’s use as a factory for the manufacturing of cleaning supplies and as the Canadian distribution warehouse for J.R. Watkins Company continued until the 1980s. The structure is now used for storage.

Elements of the building that would require approval if alterations were planned are:

Exterior:

- Eight-storey limestone, brick and concrete building with flat roof located on the west side of Annabella Street, its north façade facing the railway right-of-way, its south façade facing Higgins Avenue, its east façade facing Annabella Street and its west façade facing a parking lot;

- All of its façades featuring dark hued brick cladding, ornamental brickwork, large rectilinear window openings on all floors, stone belt courses, stone framed entrances and window openings and heavy overhanging cornices; and
- North façade with central bay with windows in rectilinear openings separated by wide stone panels and topped by an arched window.

Interior:

- Concrete structural system; and
- Detailing of the southeast staircase.