

**92 & 100 ARTHUR STREET  
GAULT BLOCK & ANNEX**

CANADIAN INVENTORY OF HISTORIC BUILDING

HISTORICAL BUILDING REPORT

1976

## 92 & 100 ARTHUR STREET – GAULT BLOCK & ANNEX

The land upon which this structure is situated was originally a part of the Bannatyne Estate. During 1876 there was erected upon a portion of this site the Bethel Methodist Episcopal Church, a brick or brick-veneer structure which was 30 ft. by 50 ft. in size with a capacity for seating 250 people. That building was noted for having the first steeple in Winnipeg.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the 1880s and 1890s the edifice was known as Bethel Chapel and was used for services and revivals. As well, a number of smaller structures also occupied adjoining lots.

During June 1899, it was noted in a local newspaper that the Montreal firm of A.F. Gault and Company would locate a branch at Winnipeg.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, the site of the Chapel and adjacent structures was purchased a few days later,<sup>3</sup> and it was announced that construction of a new building would commence the following month.<sup>4</sup> The chapel, then considered to be one of the area's oldest buildings, was demolished shortly after. On the 20 July 1889, Architect George Browne called for Tenders for "the erection and completion of a warehouse, four storeys and basement, for the Gault Brothers Company, Limited".<sup>5</sup> In all, seventeen tenders were received and the estimated cost of the new 100 ft. by 80 ft. building was to be about \$60,000.<sup>6</sup> The winner of the contract is unknown, though the structure was supposed to be ready by 15 February 1900.<sup>7</sup> The building was finished during 1900 and was the subject of great admiration throughout the city:

With the shrewd business instinct which has made the Gault Brothers one of the foremost firms in Canada, they chose an opportune time to build a creditable addition to the wholesale blocks of Winnipeg, and to establish close trade connections through the advantage of having a branch house within easy reaching distance.<sup>8</sup>

"Spacious", "commodious" and "well-lighted" were the words used to describe the new edifice. Inside, there were four freight elevators, each with an independent motor. The basement housed the heating and power apparatus as well as the vaults. The first storey had the general office with its natural varnished woods. Here, too, was where the staple goods were kept. On the next level, dress goods, woollens and linens were held. The third floor carried furnishing and small wares. Carpets, house furnishings, and underclothing were placed on the fourth floor. Metallic ceilings adorned each level. The Gault firm occupied half the structure, while Clark brothers, wholesale stationary

were in the western portion. Each had separate entrances at the principal corners. Prior to that time, the closest large Canadian jobbing source for dry goods was 1500 miles from Winnipeg.<sup>9</sup>

The expansion of business with the immigration boom of the new century necessitated the expansion of the existing Gault facility at Winnipeg. The firm had anticipated such a move when the building was first erected, and had purchased an additional 50 ft. by 200 ft. lot at the rear of their premises.<sup>10</sup> Upon that lot during 1903 was constructed a six storey addition, and two floors were added to the previous building to make the entire structure a 132 ft. by 100 ft. six-storey warehouse. James H. Cadham was the architect, and Robert Watson was the contractor, the additions cost \$50,000.<sup>11</sup> Within the structure was a covered driveway which went through the building and led to the loading areas. Enlarged, the Gault warehouse became even more imposing than it had been previously.

The Gault Company occupied the northern portion of the building continuously until 1973, when a merger took place with Kennedy Floorings.<sup>12</sup> The other half of the building has had several tenants. Clark Brothers remained until 1907, when they were replaced by the Canadian Fairbanks Company, makers of scales and weighing equipment.<sup>13</sup> Afterwards, a number of concerns came and went, including Canadian Johns-Manville; (c.1915) Ames, Holden and McCready, (c.1920), J.A. Banfield (carpets) (c.1925), and the Brunswick-Balle Company (radios and phonographs) (c.1935-1945).<sup>14</sup> During the 1930s, the southern portion (the 1903) section was divided and the occupancy of several tenants began. Among these were the Nu-Way Upholstering (c.1935-1970s); the Kelly Butcher Supply (c.1940-c.1950s) and the Chicago Vocational Training Corporation (c.1965).<sup>15</sup> Prior to 1971, Gault's vacated their premises, leaving only the Nu-Way Upholstering Company as occupants. During 1976, many renovations took place at the northern portion of the Manpower. The former entrance at the north-west corner was re-opened at that time, revealing finely varnished doors.<sup>16</sup> In 1976, at Auto-Rite Sales Agency and Standard Systems occupy the stand at 92 Arthur.<sup>17</sup>

The exterior walls of the huge, fireproof warehouse are of white brick with rough faced cut stone to the sills of the second storey. There are 45 inch pilasters arched at the heads of the third storey with stone trim on each, at the sills of the fourth and fifth storeys are stone belts. The edifice also has a stone belt at the cornice and a stone capped parapet. The driveway between the two sections had an

excavated portion beneath it which belongs to 92 Arthur. The interior of the building was finished in plaster with maple and fir flooring.<sup>18</sup> Considerable modernization at 104 Arthur was undertaken in 1946. This included new wiring, fluorescent lighting, a linoleum/plywood flooring over the old floors, new partitions, plywood elevators, enclosures and a new concrete floor in the basement under the driveway.<sup>19</sup>

Gault Brothers were one of a number of well-established Eastern Canadian firms which came west to tap the growing market. As well, their first local managing director was Harry M. Belcher who was the president of the Winnipeg Board of Trade from 1908 to 1909.<sup>20</sup> The establishment of Winnipeg's claim to be considered the natural wholesale centre for Manitoba and the North-West was bolstered considerably by structures such as the Gault Block.

ENDNOTES--

1. MEP, 27 November 1976.
2. MEP, 1 June 1899, p. 6.
3. MEP, 3 June 1899, p. 14.
4. MEP, 5 June 1899, p. 6.
5. "To Contractors!!" MEP 20 July 1899, p. 2. Hereafter "Contractors".
6. "Gault Brothers Warehouse", MEP 27 July 1899 p. 3. Hereafter "Gault Brothers".
7. "Contractors", Ibid.
8. "A Credit to the City", MEP 14 July 1900, p. 3. (supp) Hereafter, "Credit".
9. Ibid. See also "Gault Bros.", loc. cit.
10. "Credit", Ibid. This may have been 52 ft. by 100 ft.
11. Winnipeg. City of Building Permit 284/1903. Hereafter, 284/1903.
12. Gault Brothers records are now held by the Public Archives of Manitoba.
13. Henderson's, 1908-09.
14. Henderson's, 1915-1935.
15. Henderson's, 1935-1970.
16. The old entrances at the north-east corner had been closed and V-jointed over at some earlier time.
17. Henderson's, 1976.
18. Winnipeg, City of Assessment Records 609240 and 609250, Inner Dist. 2, Code 50. Hereafter CAR.
19. CAR.
20. "Gaults Limited", Winnipeg Saturday Post, 12 June.
21. "Credit", op. cit.

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Plate 1 – Gault Brothers Company Warehouse, Arthur Street, ca.1906. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, N1552.)

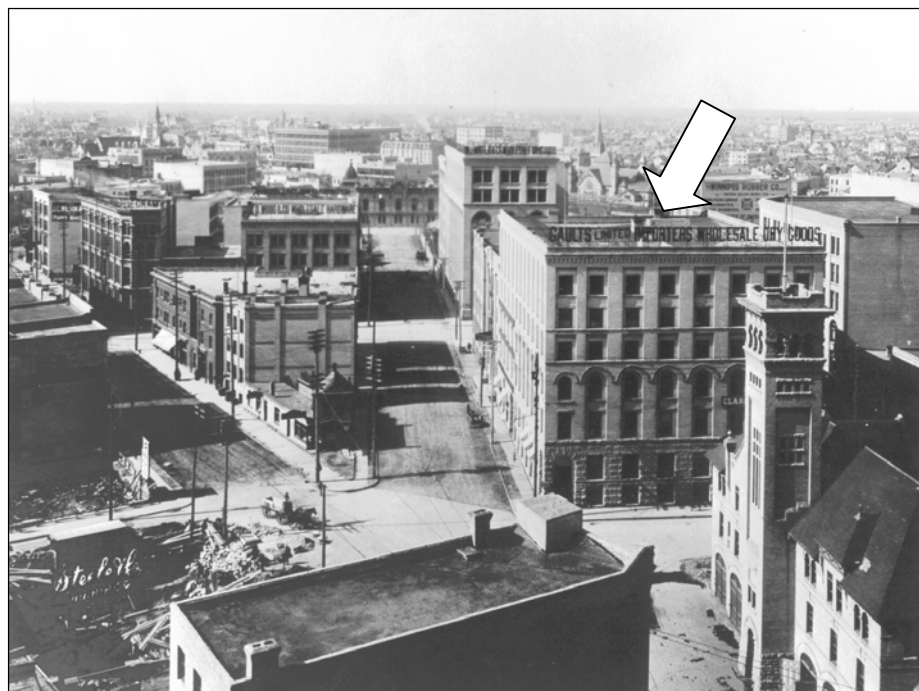


Plate 2 – Looking south along Arthur and Albert streets, ca.1905, Gault Warehouse at arrow. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)

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Plate 3 – Looking north along Albert Street, ca. 1910. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)



Plate 4 – Gault Brothers Company Warehouse, Arthur Street, 1969. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Architectural Survey.)