

115 BANNATYNE AVENUE – DONALD H. BAIN BUILDING (THE BROKERAGE)
J.J. McDiarmid & Company, 1899



Originally two buildings with a common wall, both warehouses were built in 1899. The five-storey structure on the west side was built for a stove and furnace wholesale firm by the name of Merrick-Anderson. The company also marketed heavy hardware and some industrial supplies, all of which came to require a good deal of space. Offices and showrooms for a staff of 50 were also required.

The Merrick-Anderson Building was designed by architect, J.J. McDiarmid, who presumably also designed the attached Bain Building. Both feature solid brick bearing wall construction in the warm buff-coloured brick that is common to Winnipeg. Stone was used for the lintels and sills and across the heads of the rounded windows. Both buildings also feature strawbasket brick detailing that demonstrated great skill in craftsmanship and a delightful sense of design. The cornices also show a deft touch so that the buildings are neither heavy nor somber in appearance. The differences between the two structures, particularly on the ground floor, were obviously designed to indicate the existence of two separate businesses.

The smaller structure on the east portion housed the grocery brokerage firm of Nicholson and Bain. As junior partner, Donald H. Bain grew in resources and ability, and eventually bought out his partner in 1917, changing the business to his name. Bain also cut quite a figure in Winnipeg, being a national hockey star at the time the two warehouses were constructed. When the death of Thomas Anderson of the Merrick-Anderson Company forced the sale of that business, Donald Bain purchased the remainder of the building. This more than doubled the amount of space, but the grocery brokerage was expanding so fast that it quickly filled it. The locale was convenient. Boats docked at the Red River at a wharf below the building, then dray horses hauled supplies from the boat to the warehouse.

In 1970 the building became vacant and so remained for seven years until purchased by Tom Dixon, a market consultant, who began restoring the building with great integrity and care, such as saving buff-coloured bricks for any of the alterations. The façade was cleaned, revealing the warm native brick in all its splendor. Inside, the old ceiling was removed to display the heavy timber beams and joists, the wood cleaned and open to view.

Renamed “The Brokerage” by Mr. Dixon, the building was sold to Michael Decter who continued the renovation. Now The Brokerage provides office and commercial space to lovers of brick, massive wood beams and history.