



**168 BANNATYNE AVENUE
CHATFIELD DISTRIBUTORS**

HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE

12 September, 1983

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Located on the south side of Bannatyne between Main and Rorie, this small brick office building was the work of architect J.H.G. Russell. Russell is well-known for his larger buildings in Winnipeg — but there are relatively few buildings on this small a scale attributable to him. Built for the Franklin Press printers, at a cost of \$7,800,¹ it was a small job for the architect.

Russell's business ledgers give a breakdown on the various contractors involved with the Franklin Press building. The masonry and plaster was handled at a cost of \$3,552 by the Davidson Brothers, a large firm of local contractors. The carpenter, B.W. Latimer, was paid \$2,605 for his work. The plumbing, heating and roofing were executed by the J.L. Wells Company for a mere \$828. James A. Payne painted the building for \$384.²

The structure which was erected in 1904-05, looked much the same as it does now. It is two and a half storeys with dimensions of 25 by 53 feet to a height of 36 feet. The foundation is stone, 24 inches thick with large windows in the basement to make it wholly functional. The walls are solid brick, with an interior of post and beam construction. The floors are made of wood.

The façade is carried upward in three bays, terminating in decorative brick arches over the top windows. There is a truncated fascia of metal above the middle windows that is original. The dentilled cornice spreads across a parapet topped on either corner by large metal spheres which may have been added sometime after 1904.

Insensitive alterations and signage have taken their toll at the street level, but it is still easy to see this as an attractive, small office building.

It was built to house the Franklin Press printing company. The company had been incorporated in 1900 with a capital stock of \$40,000. Members of the executive included James B. McCracken as manager and compositor, John Appelton as president, a printer, a lawyer and an accountant, all Winnipeg residents. The actual business of the Franklin Press was job printing, publishing,

stationers, book binders, lithographers and office supply.³ From its rented premises at 185 Lombard, the company grew to require its own space by 1904.

Franklin Press was a downtown business that depended on the printing needs of the teeming commercial district. With Winnipeg and the prairie west growing at an astonishing rate, service agencies often had more work than they could handle. The year 1904 was particularly active for the printing trade according to the Free Press. "There is hardly a printing office in the city that has not enlarged or improved their premises in some way during the past season."⁴ While overshadowed by the large local companies such as Stovel's, Bulman's and the Toronto Type Foundry, Franklin Press carved out its niche in the local market and maintained a good trade there for several years.

By 1926, Franklin Press had faltered, as one of eighty local printing companies all chasing after a shrinking market.⁵ In 1927, the building was taken over by Empire Wholesale, a tobacconist and confectionery wholesaler. In the following decade of the 1930s, Empire used the lower two floors of the building and a plumbing company had the top floor. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, the Canadian Office Supply and Specialty Company used the building as office and warehouse space. It was allowed to deteriorate somewhat during these years, causing the assessor to comment that the building was in need of repair.⁶

By 1967 the present occupant, Chatfield Distributors had moved into the building. The company acts as manufacturers' agents and importers of a range of products including merchandise from the Orient.

In a district of large, impressive warehouse and office buildings, the little Franklin Press building is overshadowed, but it is typical of the small well-designed structure for a smaller local operation.

FOOTNOTES--

1. City of Winnipeg Building Permits No. 1432 26 September 1904.
2. J.H.G. Russell Collection MG11 E2 P.A.M. Ledger 1896-1906 p. 280-281.
3. Manitoba Gazette Vol. XXIX, 1900, p. 324.
4. "Printing and Publishing Houses" Manitoba Free Press 24 November 1904 p. 19.
5. Henderson's Directory for Winnipeg 1926.
6. Selwyn Carrington "168 Bannatyne" for C.I.H.B. Report 1975 Vol. IV p. 180.

APPENDIX A--

J.H.G. RUSSELL

John Hamilton Gordon Russell was born to a large family in Toronto in 1862. Here he studied architecture before moving to the United States. After working in Washington and Chicago,¹ he moved to Winnipeg in 1893. His family built one of the earliest homes on Wellington Crescent, which later became his own home.

In 1895, Russell opened his own office. With the economy of Winnipeg booming, and construction at a peak, Russell had an active business. He was prolific. Not given to specialization, J.H.G. Russell designed houses, churches, warehouses and commercial buildings in good numbers. We are particularly fortunate in having an archival record of his account books, which itemize suppliers and costs for most of his works.² An incomplete photographic record of Russell's work also survives.

His best-known buildings include Augustine Church (1903); the McArthur Building (now Childs) (1909); Westminster United Church (1912); the J.H. Ashdown house (1912) on Wellington Crescent (now Khartum Temple); and the magnificent Knox Presbyterian Church (1914) on Edmonton.

Russell was president of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada in 1912, the first year that it included all the provincial bodies. He was on the examining board of the Manitoba Association of Architects, involved in several local businesses, and Chairman of the Presbyterian Church Board of managers. Russell died in Winnipeg in 1946.

1. F.H. Schofield The Story of Manitoba Vol. III The S.J. Clarke Publishing Co. Winnipeg 1913 p. 156.
2. J.H.G. Russell Collection MG11 E2 P.A.M.

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Plate 1 – Chatfield Distributors, 168 Bannatyne Avenue, 1969. (Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Architectural Survey.)