

376 DONALD STREET – ALDOUS BLOCK

Herbert E. Matthews, 1905



This five-storey building has had a unique history, beginning as a three-storey structure, add two additional storeys and operating both alone and as one complex with the building to its south.

The original, three-storey structure was completed in 1905, built to house the printing factory and offices of a large national publisher. Four years later, the upper two storeys were completed, offering modern office space to meet the growing demand in Winnipeg's downtown.

The building, which measures 22.0 x 27.5 metres, sits on a stone foundation; the superstructure is built of solid, dark hued brick and the combined cost of construction, 1905-1909, was \$45,000. The structure's main façade (east) begins at grade with a raised basement featuring large windows in rectilinear openings topped by even larger rectilinear openings on the ground floor. The raised main entrance is located at the north end of the building and includes a small window

opening above. This entire area is clad in rusticated stone. Above a modest stone belt course is the darkly hued brick of the upper floors, designed in four vertical bays, each holding large rectilinear window openings with stone sills and heads except the second floor of the northernmost bay, which is windowless. The outside corners of the façade are highlighted by raised brick pilasters with modest stone bases and capitals. The flat roof is highlighted by a complete metal-clad entablature with heavy overhanging cornice. The painted words “ALDOUS BUILDING” was once found in the frieze.

The south wall is a party wall, the north wall faces a back lane and features a raised rusticated stone base interrupted by basement windows and a common clay brick superstructure dotted with thin windows in arched openings with stone lug sills. The northwest corner is slightly angled with a raised loading dock located nearby and the rear (west) façade features matched window and door openings, a raised loading door and a metal fire escape

It is known that the original interior included printing presses and an electrical power plant in the basement. The 1909 addition included space for dark rooms and an etching room and when the two storey addition was completed to the neighbouring building in 1911, doors were provided to connect the two structures on the fourth and fifth floors. Today, the basement has been renovated for office space; the original staircase includes a wood bannister and ornamental tin and the original tile floor in the entrance foyer. The upper floors have seen little alteration, the beams and posts are exposed in most areas, some of the original wood floors are still uncovered and much of the space has remained undivided. The original horizontal radiator piping is visible on the second floor and most of the interior door frames are covered in ornamental tin.

The building (originally #14-16 Princess Street) was built by William Weld of London, Ontario, publisher of the Farmer's Advocate and Home Magazine, a monthly, nationally-circulated agriculture publication founded in 1866 in Ontario. A Winnipeg and Western edition began appearing in 1889 and when this block was completed, the paper had a reported 20,000 Western Canadian subscribers. This block became the publisher's Western headquarters but the regional growth was so dramatic, the company was forced to build larger, more modern facilities in 1912. The building, which was renamed the Aldous Building in the 1930s, was sold in ca.1918 to W.L.

Parrish, who then owned both it and the building to the south (#374 Donald Street). The Bate family owned the combined property from World War I into the 1950s and today these two buildings have separate owners.

The building appears to be in good structural condition for its age and many of the window units on its front (east) façade are original. For over 100 years, it has been an integral part of a streetscape featuring four buildings that nearly fill the entire block on Donald Street (originally part of Princess Street) and wraps around onto Notre Dame Avenue.

London, ON-born H.E. Matthews (1867-1941) was responsible for the design of the block, for its neighbour to the north, 376 Donald Street and the two-storey additions to both buildings. Matthews worked in his hometown, Toronto, ON and New York City prior to moving to Winnipeg in 1905 and establishing a successful practice. He was one of the founders of the Manitoba Architects Association in 1906 and served as its president in 1914. In 1921, he was appointed Resident Architect for the Dominion Government, overseeing the construction of major federal buildings in northwestern Ontario and Manitoba. His major private contracts would include: St. James Park Church, 240 Home St. (1908); Congress (Boylston) Apartments, 300 River Ave. (1910) – Grade II; St. Matthews Anglican Church (West End Cultural Centre), 586 Maryland St. (1912); Rothesay Apartments, 828 Preston Ave. (1912) – Grade III; McGregor Armoury, 551 Machray Ave. (1914); and Minto Armoury, 969 St. Matthews Ave. (1914).

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

Exterior-

- Five-storey common clay brick building with flat roof located mid-block on the west side of Donald Street between Notre Dame and Cumberland Avenues, its main façade facing east onto Donald Street, its north façade facing a side lane, its south façade hidden by neighbouring buildings and its west façade facing onto a back lane/parking lot;
- Original elements of the front (east) façade, the rusticated stone base, large basement and ground floor windows in rectilinear openings, raised entrance at north end of façade, small window in rectilinear opening above the entrance, modest stone belt course, upper floors divided into four bays with windows in rectilinear openings with stone lug sills and heads and metal-clad entablature with heavy overhanging cornice;

- The north façade with rusticated stone base, basement and upper floor windows in arched openings (upper storey windows with stone lug sills) and angled northwest corner with raised loading dock nearby; and
- The rear (west) façade with raised loading door, windows in arched openings on all upper storeys and a metal fire escape (shared with the building to the south).

Interior-

- Heavy timber mill structural system;
- Tin ceiling on the ground floor;
- Horizontal radiator piping on second floor; and
- Wood and tin detailing and tile flooring of the staircase.