

**130 GALT AVENUE – T. EATON COMPANY PRINTING PLANT &  
TRACK WAREHOUSE**

*John Woodman (1926 & 1927)*



The history and development of Winnipeg is inextricably linked to the T. Eaton Company, whose department store/mail order complex on Portage Avenue hastened that thoroughfare's conversion from modest avenue into the City's 20<sup>th</sup> century commercial centre. Beyond the workforce engaged in the retail and catalogue sales, the company supplied work for hundreds of associated activities. In the early 1920s, the company purchased land in the northeast corner of what was commonly known as the wholesale district. The area included a number of late 19<sup>th</sup> century single family homes and duplexes on George Avenue, Robert Avenue and Lily Street. Eaton's demolished these residential structures in favour of a new two-storey building to be used as its printing plant. A year later, a large track warehouse was built on its west side stretching the complex the entire length of the block.

The two-part complex was designed by local architect John Woodman (1860-1944), an Ontario born and trained designer who came to Winnipeg as an employee of the Canadian Pacific Railway and started his private architectural practice in 1901. He was responsible for many fine buildings and was one of the first in the city to employ the new technique of reinforced concrete.

Among his better known work were: T. Eaton Company Retail Store, 320 Portage Avenue (demolished), Wilson Building, 288 McDermot Avenue (Grade III) and Breadalbane Apartments, 379 Hargrave Street (Grade III).

The 1926 portion of the building was completed by contractor John Gunn and Sons and Claydon Brothers Company built the 1927 section – both were well known local firms.

The original printing plant building measures 49.7 x 36.3 x 13.7 metres and was completed by September 1926, the track warehouse was finished the next November and measures 127.8 x 36.3 x 13.7 metres. Both sections are built utilizing the Turner four-way slab and mushroom column system developed in 1909 that allowed for thin floors and therefore less material. The exterior dark brick cladding is accented with limestone.

The exterior of this facility features a wealth of detailing, from the raised concrete foundation, to limestone bands and panels to metal floral elements to the polychromatic brick walls. The elevations are divided into bays by wide brick pilasters with stone bases and ornate stone capitals with diamond-shaped stone “E”s for Eaton’s. The corners are further embellished with raised stone capped parapets with vertical brick accents. Within the space between the pilasters are large, multi-paned industrial-style windows in rectilinear openings and a number of personnel and raised loading doors. The north side includes a full-width, raised concrete loading platform with both open and covered sections. Some of the original metal overhead lighting is still extant. The south side features a series of stone framed, grade level loading doors that lead to the interior loading dock.

The roof of the building includes two metal storage bins (dating from the late 1960s) near the northwest corner and a penthouse at the east end, used as the employees’ lunchroom for many decades.

The interior features a series of large concrete posts, several interior walls dividing the otherwise open warehouse space, concrete ceilings both corrugated and smooth, evidence of original steel strengthening floor plates and sliding metal-clad fire doors in various locations.

The entire facility was connected to the transcontinental railway system of both the Canadian Pacific and Canadian National railways via a spur line of the Winnipeg Transfer Railway that ran the entire length of the building along its north side. Local truck deliveries were accomplished from raised loading doors in the west façade (Lily Street) or the interior loading dock on Alexander Avenue (south façade).

The building appears to be in good structural condition and many of the exterior ornamental detailing has remained intact.

T. Eaton Company began printing its famous catalogue in 1884, which grew to become an integral part of life in Western Canada and was sometimes referred to as the “Homesteader’s Bible.” The need for a regional printing plant grew after World War I and it was located in Winnipeg, the company’s western headquarters. The plant was used until 1976 when the catalogue ceased publication. The west end of the building was used for shipping and receiving and increasingly for assembling merchandise.

In 1969, Eaton’s vacated the premises and sold the building to J.K. May Investments – Scott-Bathgate Limited, manufacturers of candies, nuts, baking goods, etc. Founded in Winnipeg in 1903 by Albert Edward Scott (1860-1935) and James Loughrin Bathgate (1872-1934), it originally operated as commission agents for cookie and candy manufacturers out of their headquarters at 149 Pioneer Avenue (built 1905). In the early 1930s, the company began manufacturing its own products and by the late 1940s operated factories in Winnipeg and Vancouver, B.C. and had branches in Fort William (Thunder Bay), ON, Calgary and Edmonton, AB and Vancouver, B.C.

Growth necessitated expansion into several other downtown Winnipeg buildings- 130 and 132 Portage Avenue and 80 Lombard Avenue and a 96-vehicle car and truck fleet housed in a two-storey garage at 131 Portage Avenue (demolished). Much of the company’s manufacturing activities have been transferred to the Galt Avenue building. W.H. Escott Company, grocery brokers, are presently a major tenant of the building.

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

Exterior-

- Two storey brick, stone and concrete building occupying an entire block from Lily Street to Waterfront Drive, its main façades facing north onto Galt Avenue and south onto Alexander Avenue;
- The north façade with its raised concrete foundation wall, dark brick superstructure with windows and doors in rectilinear openings accented by stone and concrete, brick pilasters with stone accenting, open and closed loading docks and flat roof with stone accenting;
- The south façade with its raised concrete foundation wall, dark brick superstructure with windows and doors in rectilinear openings accented by stone and concrete, brick pilasters with stone accenting, large loading doors in smooth-cut stone frames, carved stone panels and flat roof with stone accenting;
- The east façade with its raised concrete foundation wall, dark brick superstructure with windows and doors in rectilinear openings accented by stone and concrete, brick pilasters with stone accenting, large loading doors in smooth-cut stone frames, carved stone panels and flat roof with stone accenting; and
- The west façade with its raised concrete foundation wall, dark brick superstructure with windows and doors in rectilinear openings accented by stone and concrete, brick pilasters with stone accenting, carved stone panels and flat roof with stone accenting.

Interior-

- Reinforced concrete structural system; and
- Examples of metal chutes from loading dock to basement along north wall.