

**474 HARGRAVE STREET –
MANITOBA TELEPHONE SYSTEM – GARRY EXCHANGE**
Samuel Hooper, 1907



Manitoba's telephone history started with in late 1877 and by 1878, Bell telephones were being rented to subscribers. Bell opened the West's first telephone exchange in 1881 and began expanding in the city and in Portage la Prairie and Brandon as well.

As telephones increased in their importance, the Government of Manitoba moved to ensure service by purchasing the Bell Company interests for \$3.3 million in January 1908 and creating Manitoba Government Telephones, Canada's first provincially-owned telephone system. By 1910, there were an estimated 30,000 telephones in the system and several modern exchanges were built and opened around the city, including one of the most important, this corporate headquarters and telephone exchange building on Hargrave Street (originally known as Charlotte Street) which was planned in 1907 but not officially opened until January 8, 1911.

The building stands as one of the downtown's more ornamentally complex pre-World War I buildings, with two public elevations, north facing McDermot Avenue and east facing Hargrave Street. It cost approximately \$98,600 to build and consists of solid brick and stone walls supported by reinforced concrete beams and posts and concrete floor slabs.

The north and east façades are similarly designed with the rusticated stone bases leading to the smooth-cut stone clad ground floors. Classical detailing around the two main doors, carried out in stone, vary. The north entrance features a rounded pediment with floral motif and Manitoba shield, attached unfluted Ionic Order columns with voluted capitals, the words "MANITOBA TELEPHONES", egg and dart moulding and delicate metal railing (Plate 8). The arch above the door holds a stone cartouche with "1907". The east entrance is more angular, the attached unfluted columns include egg and dart capitals, the pediment is embellished with floral motif, Manitoba shield and "MANITOBA TELEPHONES".

The upper floors of both elevations are clad in dark red brick and highlighted by various stone elements. The top floor includes brick pilasters with stone bases and capitals supporting a complete entablature with heavy overhanging cornice. Accenting the flat roofline on the north façade is a swan neck pediment framing a carved panel with the date of construction "1907" and a flagpole.

The south and west façades feature low rusticated stone bases and windows in rectilinear openings with stone lug sills on each level.

The original windows have been replaced throughout the building but most of the other original elements have remained unchanged.

The Garry Exchange is an excellent example of the Neo-Classical or Classical Revival style, popular from 1900 into the 1930s in North America. Elements taken from classic architecture included columns, capitals, pediments and Greek or Roman embellishments, façades were normally symmetrical and smooth cladding and flat roofs were also standard.

The building was the work of Samuel Hooper (1851-1911), a well-known designer who began his career in Manitoba as a stonemason. His designs, which can be found throughout the city, range from small homes to large public structures and often include fine stonework as accenting or cladding. Hooper accepted the position as Manitoba's first provincial architect in 1904, overseeing the design and construction many large public buildings throughout the province. Private contracts included: Grain Exchange Building II, 156 Princess Street (1898) – Grade II; Isbister School, 310 Vaughan Street (1898) – Grade II; Western Building (Schmidt Foundry), 90 Albert Street (1901) – Grade III; Provincial Gaol, 444 York Avenue (1901); Thomas Scott Memorial Orange Hall, 216 Princess Street (1902); St. Mary's Academy, 550 Wellington Crescent (1902); Carnegie Library, 380 William Avenue (1903-1905) – Grade II.

Kelly Brothers and Company, the local building company made famous by the Legislative Building construction scandal, won the contract to build the telephone exchange.

The original interior the telephone exchange building was laid out to efficiently house its many functions, with work space, staff areas and dedicated operators' rooms. Changes were made over time as equipment and roles changed. It was converted into a garment factory in the mid-1950s and a cooperative housing complex in the late 1980s. The east staircase, with its metal and wood finishes, is one of the few original interior elements remaining.

The Garry Exchange functioned as the Manitoba Government Telephones' headquarters until the opening of the new headquarters at 166 Portage Avenue in 1932. The Garry Exchange continued to operate as a telephone exchange until the early 1950s when the building was sold to Freed and Freed Limited, a local clothing manufacturer that was founded in 1921 by David Freed and his nephew Morris Freed. The company's expansion necessitated larger premises, provided by the former telephone exchange. By the 1960s, the company was concentrating on outer wear, jackets and coats, and in 1969 it received the contract to supply men's and ladies' uniforms for the Canadian Armed Forces, which continues to today from their headquarters on Mountain Avenue.

After Freed and Freed vacated the building, it was converted into a multi-tenant residential block, opened in 1987.

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

Exterior:

- Four-storey red brick and stone building with flat roof located on the southwest corner of Hargrave Street and McDermot Avenue, its main façades facing east onto Hargrave Street and north onto McDermot Avenue, its south façade facing a neighbouring building and its west façade facing a parking lot;
- East façade with rusticated stone base leading to smooth-cut stone cladding on the ground floor, classically-detailed entrance with attached unfluted columns with egg and dart capitals and pediment embellished with floral motif, Manitoba shield and “MANITOBA TELEPHONES”, dark red brick upper floors with stone lug sills, keystones, quoins and a belt course between the third and fourth floors, windows in rectilinear openings, brick pilasters with stone bases and capitals on the top floor supporting the complete entablature with heavy overhanging cornice;
- North façade with its classically-detailed, centrally-located entrance with rounded pediment with floral motif and Manitoba shield, attached unfluted Ionic Order columns with voluted capitals, the words “MANITOBA TELEPHONES”, egg and dart moulding, delicate metal railing and stone cartouche with “1907” and upper floors a continuation of the east façade and also including a swan neck stone pediment framing a carved panel with the date of construction “1907” at the roofline and a flagpole;
- The south façade featuring a low rusticated stone base and windows in rectilinear openings with stone lug sills on each level; and
- The west façade with its low rusticated stone base, windows in rectilinear openings with stone lug sills on each level and large brick chimney.

Interior:

- Wood and metal finishes of the main (east side) staircase.