

110 JAMES AVENUE – RYAN BUILDING
Victor W. Horwood, 1910



This solid but modestly ornamented structure reflects its original utilitarian role as a warehouse and offices for firms involved in the livestock and meat-handling industry.

The building was developed in 1910 by the Ryan Brothers — George Russell and James Ryan Jr. They had earlier gone into business as wholesale grocery brokers and jobbers specializing in butchers' and packers' supplies, casings, flour, and spices. Another brother, William H. Ryan, was employed with the firm as a traveller. By the mid-1910s, the endeavour had expanded to include an Alexander Avenue factory for the production of “Eclipse” refrigerators, showcases and fixtures used by meat markets, grocers, hotels, and restaurants.

Also initially located at 110 James were Ryan and Fares, a long-standing livestock-raising and trading partnership managed by the brothers' father, James Sr.

He had come to Winnipeg from Perth, Ontario in 1880 to work in a shoe retail-wholesale business started by one of his brothers, Thomas Ryan. For more than two decades, James, joined eventually by James Jr., ran a shoe store on Main Street near Higgins Avenue. But that was not his only interest. He engaged extensively in ranching and was a noted owner and importer of saddle and race horses. His partnership with William H. Fares began in 1898. The men became well-known as operators of one of Canada's largest ranches, the "Two-Bar" at Gleichen, Alberta.

Fares was another Ontarian who had come west as a young adult. He initially went to Emerson where he worked with George Christie in the cattle trade in Manitoba and Minnesota. He moved to Winnipeg in 1895 and two years later became one of the principals of Gordon, Ironside and Fares Co. Ltd., a firm that grew into a very large meat-packing and cattle exporting concern before it was taken over in 1918 by the Harris Abattoir.

The four-storey Ryan Building, situated at the southeast corner of James Avenue and Bertha Street, was designed by Victor William Horwood and built by W.J. Palmer for approximately \$35,000. It is of mill construction with a raised rubble-stone foundation, exterior load-bearing brick walls, and an interior of exposed wooden beams, columns and floors.

The front (north) and west (Bertha) façades have a rusticated stone base and brick walls broken by large, symmetrically arranged rectangular windows with stone sills and metal heads. A prominent rusticated belt course extends across the top of the first-floor openings, while a brick cornice marks the roof-line. The main entrance, set at the east end of the building, has double oak doors. Windows on the rear (south) elevation have stone sills and brick heads.

Ryan Brothers remained in the facility to c.1954. From the 1930s till then, Brandram-Henderson, a paint and lacquer manufacturer, shared the space before it too departed from the site. The next principal occupant (mid-1950s to c.1980) was the Great West Radio and Electrical Co., a wholesale and service outlet. More recently, the premises have been used for furniture storage.

Architect Horwood (1878-1939) emigrated from England with his family to Prescott, Ontario in

1884. He studied art in Canada and the United States, then entered an architectural apprenticeship in the office of his brother, Edgar Lewis Horwood of Ottawa. After coming to Winnipeg in 1904, he attained commissions for a number of private dwellings and apartment blocks, the St. Boniface City Hall, St. Boniface Fire Hall No. 1, St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, St. Alban's English Church, and several schools in northwestern Ontario, southern Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta.

Horwood was appointed Provincial Architect in 1911, a time of significant expansion of government facilities. He assumed responsibility for projects such as the Agricultural College in Fort Garry, the Law Courts Building and Central Power House. He also was the supervising architect for the new Manitoba Legislative Building. That role caused him to become embroiled in a political scandal over the pace, rising cost and quality of the building's construction. As probes into those issues began, more serious questions were raised about the business practices of contractor Thomas Kelly and his relationships with members of Premier R.P. Roblin's government. Several formal inquiries, including a 1915 royal commission, were launched. The government was forced to resign and charges eventually were laid against Kelly and some ex-cabinet ministers. Horwood was a key witness the royal commission and subsequent court proceedings. He no longer held his provincial post, however. After he took a medical leave in early 1915, H.E. Matthews became acting Provincial Architect, followed a few months later by William Fingland.

Horwood returned to private practice and moved to the Whytewold-Matlock area on Lake Winnipeg. He contributed regularly to the *Western Home Monthly*, and prepared and illustrated short stories on Manitoba.

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

Exterior:

- Four-storey brick and stone warehouse with raised rusticated stone basement situated on the southeast corner of James Avenue and Bertha Street with main façades facing north on James Avenue and west on Bertha Street;
- Main (north) façade with large entrance opening at its east end, large rectangular main floor windows in openings with continuous stone heads, paired rectangular windows in

openings with stone lug sills on the upper three floors and brick corbelling above the fourth floor openings and at the flat roof;

- West façade that carries on the design, scale and layout of the windows in openings and brick and stone accenting of the main façade;
- Rear (south) façade with rectangular windows in openings with stone lug sills on all four floors; and
- Painted signage on the east, west and south elevations.

Interior:

- Heavy timber mill structural system.