

132 JAMES AVENUE – RICHARDS AND BROWN WAREHOUSE
George W. Northwood, 1911-1912



Utilitarian in style and function, 132-134 James Avenue represents the foot soldiers of Winnipeg's warehouse district - the many smaller-scale firms that operated alongside giants such as James Ashdown, Thomas Ryan, Gault Brothers, Marshall-Wells, John Porter, Great West Saddlery, John Peck, Nicholson and Bain, and Tees and Persse to supply an ever-expanding prairie population prior to World War I.

This vernacular three-storey building was constructed in two stages for Richards and Brown, a grocery wholesaler formed in 1909 by Stanley Crawford Richards and Arthur H. Brown. The former arrived in Winnipeg in c.1904 and was employed with the Dominion Bank and Bole Drug Company before going into partnership with Brown, a commercial traveller based in the city in ca.1908.

After initially locating on Ross Avenue, the two had George W. Northwood design new premises in

1911 for the south side of James, east of Louise (now Lily) Street. The following year, this architect prepared an addition for the west side of the warehouse, nearly doubling its original capacity.

A graduate of McGill University in Montreal, Northwood (1876-1959) opened a professional practice in Winnipeg in 1905. His early work included a branch of the Northern Crown Bank, the Finnie Murray Block and Dalton Apartments. However, the most notable part of his career occurred after World War I when he and fellow army veteran, Cyril W. U. Chivers, were partners on projects such as the Canadian Wheat Board, Canadian General Electric, Federal and Singer Sewing Machine Company buildings, St. Ignatius Church, Assiniboine Park Pavilion, Women's Tribute Memorial Lodge, and Civic Auditorium.

The James Avenue facility is a modestly ornamented, two-part building of mill construction with a stone and brick foundation, common clay brick finish, and a front facade that compliments its eastern neighbour, the Burrow, Stuart and Milne Company Warehouse built in 1910 at 130 James. Main-floor openings, including an off-centre entrance and sheltered loading dock at the east end, are set in segmental arches with radiating brickwork. Above is a stone belt separating the first and second storeys and five recessed bays holding an irregular pattern of paired and single windows between pilasters. These rectangular-shaped openings are underscored by smooth stone sills, while the pilasters have stone bases. Corbelled brick-work above the third-storey windows returns the facade to a common plane and leads to a stone cornice and brick parapet with stone coping.

The 1911 half of the warehouse was built for \$29,000 by the Carter-Halls-Aldinger Company, a Winnipeg-based contractor active across western Canada. Wallace and Aikins erected the 1912 addition for \$30,000.

The warehouse was sold in 1923 upon dissolution of the Richards-Brown partnership. Richards remained in the trade as manager of Western Grocers Limited, but Brown's fate after 1925 is unknown.

Various tenants, such as Brownstone Brothers, egg grading, Wylie-Simpson Company and

Merchants Consolidated, subsequently were housed in the building. In 1941, the property was acquired by Brewery Products Limited of Winnipeg, Brandon and Beausejour. This firm remained on the site for some 20 years before Victor Fox Foods Limited, owner-occupant of 130 James, extended its operations to include the Richards and Brown Warehouse. The changes in occupancy have resulted in alterations to the interior of the original portion of the building, but the 1912 addition remains largely intact.

The building, along with the neighbouring building at 130 James Avenue, has been converted into residential condominiums, under the combined address 132 James Avenue.

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

Exterior:

- Three-storey brick and stone warehouse facing north onto James Avenue;
- Main (north) façade with raised, cut stone base with small, rectangular basement windows in openings, main floor brick laid with deep grooves, large arched windows and doors in openings on the ground floor with keystones topped by a stone belt course, upper storeys divided by brick pilasters with carved stone bases holding rectangular windows in pairs and singles with stone lug sills and a flat roofline with corbelled brick accenting;
- Stone bollards at eastern-most ground floor opening;
- Painted signage on the west façade;
- Through-masonry metal tension rods; and
- Rear (south) façade with arched window openings with stone lug sills on all three floors.

Interior:

- Heavy timber mill structural system; and
- East masonry load-bearing demising wall.