

**765 MAIN STREET – CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY POST OFFICE BUILDING
(POSTAL STATION “A”)**

Canadian Pacific Railway, 1924



Mail, in all its forms, was one of the most significant cargos moved by Canada’s transcontinental railways from the completion of the first line, the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), in 1882 until the last run of the railway post office in 1971. Over the decades, thousands of postal workers handled railway mail, including clerks who rode specially designed mail cars across the country, sorting bags of mail, dropping off bags at large cities, small towns and isolated train stations. There was even a method to pick up bags of mail from stations without stopping the train. It was a crucial part of the development of the country and was the only method used until airplanes and the modern highway system and trucking took over in the 1960s.

As part of the evolving system, railway post office buildings were constructed to handle mail being loaded onto trains and unloaded from them. Winnipeg, being Western Canada’s main railway hub in the first half of the 20th century, required a large building due to the sheer volume

of mail it handled. In 1924, the CPR built a large, three storey brick and reinforced concrete postal station on the east side of Main Street, with access to both this important thoroughfare and to the railway mainline just to the south (mail was delivered to the building from the trains via a tunnel underneath the tracks).

The building was designed with two main façades, north and south, complete with metal canopies to protect the mail and mail handlers from the elements (the southern canopy has been removed). The main façades are similarly designed, with raised concrete foundations, red brick superstructure, pilasters and decorative brick panels between the second and third floors and loading rails. Large loading doors are found on the north, south and east façades. Regularly spaced, steel windows with centre hoppers are found all floors of the main elevations.

The interior of the building was designed for strength and durability and features a ramp on the ground floor and large concrete columns with mushroom capitals. There is no basement. The building includes a set of stairs and several large elevators. The roof system of the third floor is unusual and consists of concrete posts, angled wood beams (giving the roof its slope) and supporting 2x4s stacked on end for increased strength.

The building was designed internally by the CPR and built by local contracting firm Carter-Halls-Aldinger. Although the building is presently undergoing extensive renovations to all floors, much of the interior elements will remain intact and the exterior will not be significantly affected.

After the end of the railway post office system, this building was used by a variety of tenants, including a catering business and a printer.

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

Exterior:

- The rectangular warehouse with primary façades facing north and south and its relationship/proximity to the railway to the south
- The raised concrete foundation with red brick superstructure featuring pilasters and decorative panels between the second and third storey windows
- Regularly placed multi-pane steel windows with centre hoppers on the north and south façades, concrete lug sills and dark brick soldier-course lintels
- Warehouse function shown through loading door openings on the north, south and east façades, metal canopy on the north façade, and loading rails throughout

Interior:

- Original staircase and finishes
- Exposed concrete columns with mushroom capitals
- Original wood loading doors
- Angled beams and 2x4-on-end ceiling structure of the third floor