

**112-114 MARKET AVENUE – GREAT WEST SADDLERY FACTORY/WAREHOUSE  
(MARKET BUILDING)  
*J. McDiarmid, 1898***



Flamboyant, ambitious, at times ruthless, Elisha Frederick Hutchings was a consummate example of the self-made Victorian businessman who climbed from rags to riches in the open and growing prairie economy of 1880s to 1910s.

Hutchings, an Ontarian of English descent, was the founder of Great West Saddlery Company, one of the world's largest, turn-of-the-century manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers of harnesses, saddles and related goods.

Construction activity at his headquarters on the southwest corner of Market Avenue and Bertha Street attested to the firm's pre-World-War-I success in both domestic and international markets. From an original four-storey building erected in 1898, the complex was twice expanded within a decade to include a large annex and additional storey. In 1910, a second warehouse had to be built

across the street at 113 Market.

These physical changes mirrored the firm's development between 1900 and 1911 from a workforce of 30 to 300 and capitalization of \$250,000 to \$2 million. By 1913, sales exceeded \$3 million and Hutchings was reported to be a millionaire several times over.

Circumstances were far different when he first worked his way to Winnipeg, then Edmonton, in 1876. Hutchings survived that winter by living off the land, then returned to Winnipeg the following spring. Victim of a theft, he was initially without money or secure employment. Income from odd jobs and work in a lumber camp subsequently enabled him to open a small harness shop on Main Street in 1878. The next year, he formed a partnership with Robert Stalker, then continued on his own after Stalker's death in 1885.

His integrated enterprise prospered as settlement boomed on the Prairies and overseas customers were found in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Ten Great West Saddlery branches were established throughout western Canada; a second factory was opened in Calgary; and controlling interest was obtained in numerous harness retail outlets.

Hutchings also held executive positions in other businesses and was active in civic politics. An unsuccessful bid to become mayor in 1897 left him bitter at the city that "deserted" him. He also was dogged by controversy over his strong anti-unionism and his efforts to secure exemptions from wartime military service for son Harold and sales manager John Moody.

Hutchings's business premises, and his homes in Winnipeg and Birds Hill, were designed to convey his influence and wealth. For example, the liberal use of stone accents on the front facade of 112-114 Market provides a greater degree of ornamentation than normally is found on the utilitarian, Romanesque-style buildings in Winnipeg's warehouse district.

This structure was designed and built at a cost of \$40,000 by James McDiarmid, a Scot who came to Canada in 1882 after training with his father in draughting and contracting. The Broadway Drill

Hall was among his first Winnipeg buildings, followed by numerous residential, commercial, institutional, and industrial projects. In 1905, he established James McDiarmid Company, General Builders and Contractors, with younger brothers John and Peter. Projects for which McDiarmid was both architect and builder include the Nokomis Block, Donald H. Bain and Winnipeg Paint and Glass Co. Buildings, and the Marshall-Wells and Merrick-Anderson warehouses.

The 1898 Great West Saddlery Building has solid brick walls rising from a rusticated stone foundation. Red brick contrasts with light stone detailing on the front facade, while cream coloured brick appears on the other elevations.

In McDiarmid's original symmetrical design, emphasis was placed on the mid-section of the facade. This contained the main entrance, flanked by pilasters, pairs of large windows, and doors at both ends of the building.

Above the main entrance were single, round-headed openings with substantial light brick arches and a gable at the cornice. The facade's other windows, set in pairs, were rectangular with flat heads and continuous stone sills and lintels. Patterned brickwork was applied under the sills and around the stone arches.

A row of small, round-headed openings originally ran the width of the facade under an elaborate cornice. When a fifth storey was added to the structure in 1909, these elements were replaced with corbelled brick and a modest, stone-capped parapet.

In 1903, F.R. Evans designed a four-storey, \$15,000 addition to the east side of the factory/warehouse. Its windows and brick and stone ornamentation differ somewhat from the 1898 structure. End pilasters appear on the facade; pilasters and numerous, symmetrically-placed windows also appear along the east (Bertha Street) wall.

Repairs and alterations by W.W. Blair in 1909 also cost \$15,000 and followed a major fire which damaged the complex's upper floors. Another conflagration in 1917 affected the top two floors of

the annex.

The next significant exterior change occurred in 1929, a year after Hutchings sold his interest in Great West Saddlery, when the architectural firm of Northwood and Chivers designed alterations to the ground floor. They relocated the main entrance to the northwest corner of the 1898 building. The new doorway's massive stone surrounds featured geometric patterns consistent with Art Deco styling. The entrance at the northeast corner was removed, leaving three windows with large, round stone heads and keystones to light the ground floor.

There has been extensive modernization of the building's interior; however, elements of some original offices, and warehouse space with exposed square timbers and walls, remain.

Great West Saddlery eventually merged with Birt Saddlery Company of Winnipeg which continues to operate an outlet on Main Street.