

136 MARKET AVENUE – MARSHALL-WELLS WAREHOUSE
Hooper and Walker, 1905, 1906; Carter-Halls-Aldinger Company, 1912



The market opportunities presented by large-scale prairie settlement prior to World War I attracted foreign as well as Canadian wholesalers to Winnipeg's warehouse district. One such firm was the Marshall-Wells Company, third-largest hardware merchant in the United States.

Based in Duluth, Minnesota, Marshall-Wells entered the western market with a Winnipeg representative in 1894. Six years later, a local company was incorporated with three directors from Duluth and three from Winnipeg to oversee expanded operations from a new warehouse at 123 Bannatyne Avenue, adjacent to a Winnipeg Transfer Railway spur line. Three travelers were put into the field to sell hardware, exotic foodstuffs and chemicals.

As trade steadily grew, Marshall-Wells erected a second, four-storey warehouse in 1905 on Market Avenue just to the north of its Bannatyne building. Within a year, the firm sought to again expand with another four-storey structure at the southeast corner of Market and Rorie Street on the west side of the 1905 building. The contractors were William Grace and Company

(1905) at a cost of \$30,000, and Waterforth and Fee (1906) at a cost of \$110,000. Both projects were designed by Hooper and Walker.

Samuel Hooper, an architect and stone mason from England, established Hooper's Marble Works in Winnipeg in the 1880s. He began practicing architecture in the 1890s, subsequently forming partnerships with Albert Lee Houkes, Charles H. Walker, and sons John and Laurence Hooper. He became provincial architect in 1907, holding the post until his death in 1911. His partnership with Walker, a draughtsman and contractor, was short-lived but productive. Their work included the Adelaide Block, St. Charles Church, several houses for prominent citizens, and additions to the Carnegie Library and St. Mary's Church and School.

The twin warehouses have clay brick foundations on concrete footings, brick masonry walls, and slow-burning mill-work frames. The walls of the 1906 structure were buttressed in anticipation of future upward expansion.

Rough-cut limestone appears on the Market and Rorie façades up to the second storey. Keystones and a series of plain, circular stone medallions top most of the rectangular, main-floor windows and loading doors. The upper storeys are clad with buff-coloured brick. Stone sills decorate the rectangular windows which are separated by pilasters. In contrast to the lack of ornamentation on many of its counterparts, the 1906 warehouse features an elaborately carved stone entrance topped by a date stone and pinnacle. This classical theme is carried inside where ground-floor supporting posts have cast-iron Corinthian capitals.

Loading facilities appear along the Market elevation of the 1905 warehouse, and along the Rorie and rear (south) elevations of the 1906 building. Several fire safety features were incorporated in the latter – an asphalt roof, metal ceilings, thick solid doors on the two freight elevators, fire doors on every floor, and exterior fire escapes. Two sets of wrought-iron balconies connected by fire ladders appear at the ends of the Market façade.

In 1912, Carter-Halls-Aldinger Company designed and built a four-storey addition on top of the 1906 warehouse at a cost of \$63,000. The firm continued the Hooper-Walker design, inserting a

cut-stone string course between the seventh and eighth floors; smaller corner windows along the eighth storey; and projecting horizontal brick belts between windows at this level. A bracketed metal cornice, and brick parapet with cut-stone capitals at the corners of the building, complete the design. An automatic sprinkler system also was installed to enhance fire protection.

Marshall-Wells relocated to industrial west Winnipeg in 1956, selling 136 Market to Monarch Wear Ltd. Subsequently called the Modern Women Building, the structure continued to serve as a warehouse and factory, primarily for the needle trade. Some loading doors on Rorie were converted to storefront windows. In 1986, the building was purchased by Market Place Limited Partnership for phased upgrading and conversion to retail, office and residential uses with some assistance from the Winnipeg Core Area Initiative.