

139 MARKET AVENUE – STEELE BRIGGS BUILDING
Cyril W.U. Chivers, 1912



The Steele Briggs Company, packaged seed retailer, was founded in Toronto in 1873. Its connection with Winnipeg, however, began almost immediately – it was Steele Briggs that received the first-ever shipment of wheat from the Province of Manitoba, in 1876. Their retail store, located across Main Street on Market Avenue, was operational for many years. This building was used as its warehouse and shipping headquarters, the back lane to the north was originally a spur line of the Winnipeg Transfer Railway, giving the company rail access to both the Canadian Pacific and Canadian National downtown rail yards.

This large, solid brick, five-storey building includes a central entrance on its main (south) façade set in a cut stone frame with curved pediment and two dray way opening at either end. All openings are rectilinear and the flat roof is finished with a brick and metal-topped parapet with raised central area.

Side elevations are covered by neighbouring buildings and the rear façade faces the back lane and is plainer in design.

The interior was designed for the expeditious movement of stock in and out of and throughout the building. The original space included two freight elevators, high ceilings and walk-in vaults. The upper floors were recently converted into condominiums; the ground floor into retail space.

Cyril W.U. Chivers (1879-1969), designed this and many other fine buildings throughout the city during his year career. The contractor was Hicks Construction.

The building is located in the middle of several blocks of large, similarly designed and built warehouses, most of which were built in the pre-World War I era.

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

Exterior-

- The five-storey brick and stone warehouse with its main façade facing south onto Market Avenue;
- The asymmetrical main façade with a centrally-located entrance set in cut stone and topped by a curved pediment and large dray way at the east end, concrete belt courses at sill level of the second and fifth storey windows, regularly placed, rectangular single and paired windows in openings with concrete lug sills and a roof line embellished with layers of corbelled brick, interrupted by stylized concrete elements and a brick and metal-topped parapet with raised central area;
- Windowless upper three storeys of the east façade; and
- Rear (north) façade with windows in rectilinear openings, metal fire escape and partial sixth floor.

Interior-

- Components of the heavy timber mill structural system;
- Lower three floors east demising wall and west demising wall; and
- Large wood posts with steel footings and heads supporting steel I-beams in the basement.