

317 McDERMOT AVENUE – MILLER, MORSE AND COMPANY BUILDING
James H. Cadham, 1904



The wholesale hardware firm Miller, Morse and Company, formed in 1881 by Hyman Miller (1856-1913) and Fred W. (1860-1905) and Frank Morton Morse (1861-1931) was one of several local hardware wholesalers that established in Winnipeg and grew to a large, successful regional company. It built its first modern warehouse in 1887 on Princess Street, doubling its size with an addition in 1892. But within a decade, this building proved too small and this large brick and stone warehouse was built on the northeast corner of McDermot Avenue and Adelaide Street.

The five-storey building rests on a raised foundation 91.4 centimetres thick and measures approximately 25.9 x 61.6 x 22.9 metres. Costing \$105,000 in 1904, it was one of the largest permits of the year. It was built using the popular mill construction system – square timber beams and posts, solid, load-bearing brick exterior walls and heavy, wood plank flooring. The Miller, Morse and Company Warehouse’s design is unique in that several support elements –

double wood beams and brick beams on the lower floors – are overbuilt and heighten the building’s ability to carry extremely heavy loads.

The front (south) and west façades face the street and are similarly designed: raised basement clad in rusticated stone, common clay brick walls with stone accenting around windows, deeply grooved brick on the ground floor, banks of windows in rectilinear openings on floors two to four and arched window openings on the top floor leading to the corbelled brick cornice with raised elements at the southeast, southwest and northwest corners. The south façade features an ornate stone entrance, the west side six arched entrances: two stone-framed personnel doors and four raised loading doors. Several of the west entrances have been altered but the two main façades have not seen major alteration on the top floors. Two open metal fire escapes are also found on this west façade.

The east façade faces the back lane and features windows in rectilinear openings and several raised loading doors some with older overhead lighting. The rear (north) façade is now covered by a five-storey brick addition completed in 1954.

The original warehouse is an excellent example of the Romanesque Revival style, very popular in warehouse districts throughout North America from the 1880s well into the 20th century and identified by its use of brick and rusticated stone, belt courses, corbelled brick, flat rooflines and arched openings. It is one of the better examples of the many found in the Exchange District.

The company maintained its occupation of the warehouse until the business was sold to a competitor, Marshall-Wells, in 1927. The building was then sold to the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission, becoming its office headquarters and central distribution warehouse until its move to new premises in 1964. Like many other warehouses in the area, the building was then converted for use in the garment industry; this building housed a number of businesses under the name the Apparel Mart Building. Richlu Sportswear Manufacturing presently occupies the entire building.

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

Exterior:

- Five-storey brick and stone building with flat roof located on the northeast corner of McDermot Avenue and Adelaide Street, its main façades facing south onto McDermot Avenue and west onto Adelaide Street, its north façade now covered by a large 1950s-era addition, which also faces north onto Bannatyne Avenue and its east façade facing the back lane;
- McDermot Avenue façade with its rusticated stone base with basement windows in rectilinear openings, centrally placed entrance with smooth-cut stone ornamental arched frame, common clay brick walls, windows in arched openings on the ground and fifth floors (all with stone keystones) and rectilinear openings on the second to fourth floors, all with stone lug sills, stone belt courses below the second and fifth storey windows and corbelled brick accenting below the fifth floor windows and at the roof line, which features raised elements at the southeast, southwest and northwest corners;
- Adelaide Street façade with its rusticated stone base with basement windows in rectilinear openings, ground floor windows and doors in arched openings (windows, doors and raised loading doors), with smooth-cut stone frames or oversized stone keystones, common clay brick walls, windows in arched openings on the fifth floor with stone keystones and rectilinear openings on the second to fourth floors, all with stone lug sills, stone belt courses below the second and fifth storey windows and corbelled brick accenting below the fifth floor windows and at the roof line and two open metal fire escapes;
- East façade with its windows in rectilinear openings with stone lug sills on all floors, rusticated stone cladding at grade and several raised loading doors; and
- The plain brick walls of the north, east and west façades of the 1954 addition with windows in thin rectilinear openings on all floors, an overhead door on the north façade and a raised loading door in the east façade.

Interior:

- Heavy timber mill structural system;
- Original metal-clad sliding fire doors at staircase doors; and
- Concrete structural system in north addition.