



**396 NOTRE DAME AVENUE**

**STEVENS AND SON LIMITED BUILDING**

PREPARED BY PETERSON PROJECTS – DECEMBER 2009



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## 396 NOTRE DAME AVENUE STEVENS AND SON LIMITED BUILDING

**Date of Construction:** 1908

**Building Permit:** 752/1908 (Plans at City Storage)

**Architect:** Wardell and Nichols

**Contractor:** Jones and McClurkin

### ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

This modest commercial building has stood for over 100 years on this block of Notre Dame Avenue just west of the Exchange District.

The front (north) façade is completed in dark brick on the lower section and lighter brick above, the areas divided by a modest metal cornice with shields at either end embellished with “19” and “08”. Much of this elevation is taken up by large banks of windows, although the original second storey windows have now been replaced. The hip roof is plain. Both side elevations are completely hidden by neighbouring buildings, the rear (south) façade includes narrow arched windows and a small, one-storey lean-to.

The building stands on its original site and appears to be in fair structural condition. Alterations have occurred on the main façade, mostly on the second floor.



Rear (south) façade, 1978

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The building is an example of the Two-part Commercial style, popular throughout North America's urban centres. Buildings could use a combination of stylistic elements or include no ornamentation depending on the developer and the available capital. The most obvious feature was the visual division of the ground floor and the upper floors, reflecting the division of use of the interior – most often commercial on the ground floor and residential on the upper floor or floors. There are examples of this style throughout the city. This building cost \$5,300 to complete in 1908.<sup>1</sup>

L.A. Wardell and D.W.F. Nichols were responsible for a number of interesting designs throughout the city during their short-term partnership.

Lindsay Alexander Wardell was born in Dundas, Ontario on March 13, 1879 and trained as an architect. By 1903, he was a draftsman in the Toronto offices of the prestigious firm Sproatt and Rolph<sup>2</sup> and two years later was sent to Winnipeg to represent that firm. Wardell stayed with Sproatt and Rolph for the 1905 and 1906 construction seasons, then in 1907 formed a new partnership with another transplanted Torontonian, David William Fair Nichols. Nichols was born in Leeds, England on February 28, 1881. After immigrating to Canada, he served for five years (1897-1902) as an apprentice with the architectural firm, Burke and Horwood of Toronto. From 1906 until 1907, he worked in Winnipeg as a draftsman for J.H.G. Russell and John D. Atchison, two well-known architects.

The Wardell - Nichols partnership only lasted until mid-1909.<sup>3</sup> Wardell remained in the city until ca.1911 and was practicing in Hamilton, ON in 1915. In 1924, he moved to Toronto where he continued his architectural work into the 1950s. He died in Toronto on January 13, 1962.<sup>4</sup>





Front (north) façade detail, 1978

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Nichols remained in Winnipeg, working alone between 1909 and 1915. By 1917, Nichols had relocated to Windsor, ON where he stayed for the remainder of his career. He died on November 1, 1951 in Windsor.<sup>5</sup>

A list of their work would include: 661 Broadway, gymnasium addition to Dr. H.P.H. Galloway Clinic (1907); 36 Roslyn Road, J.C. Falls House (1907 – Grade III); 45-47 Martha Street, addition to house (1908); and Portage Avenue, Ontario, Manitoba and Western Land Co. Building (1908).

#### HISTORICAL INTEREST:

Stevens and Sons, surgical instrument dealers, operated their business and owned this block from its construction until 1948 when it was sold to J.J. (dealer) and Clara Birkenthal who owned it into the 1960s. The estate of Clara Rabinovitch owned the property in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. The Little Gallery (picture framing) operated out of this block from the 1950s into the 1980s.<sup>6</sup>



Front (north) façade, 1978

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#### RECOMMENDATION TO HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE:

Under the Historical Buildings By-law, this building meets a number of important criteria:

- its historical importance- a mixed-use retail/residential block built after 1900 in the growing residential/commercial district west of the Exchange District;
- its associations- N/A;
- its design- an example of the Two-part Commercial style;
- its architect- Wardell and Nichols were respected and important practitioners ;
- its location- contributes greatly to its historic streetscape; and
- its integrity- its main façades continue to display most of their original elements and design.

#### ENDNOTES:

- <sup>1</sup> City of Winnipeg Building Permit, #752/1908.
- <sup>2</sup> Canadian Encyclopedia, 2nd Edition, Volume 3 (Edmonton, AL: Hurtig Publishers, 1988), p. 2064.
- <sup>3</sup> BP, 1908-1910. The last permit to list Wardell and Nichols as architects is dated June 9, 1909 (#1013/1909), and eight days later a permit listing Nichols as architect was issued (#1133/1909). Wardell does not appear again in a permit up to 1919.
- <sup>4</sup> The Telegram (Toronto), January 15, 1962, p. 9.
- <sup>5</sup> Windsor Star, November 2, 1951, p. 5.
- <sup>6</sup> City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, Roll No. 13052700000, 1920-1990; and Henderson's Directory, 1910-1990.