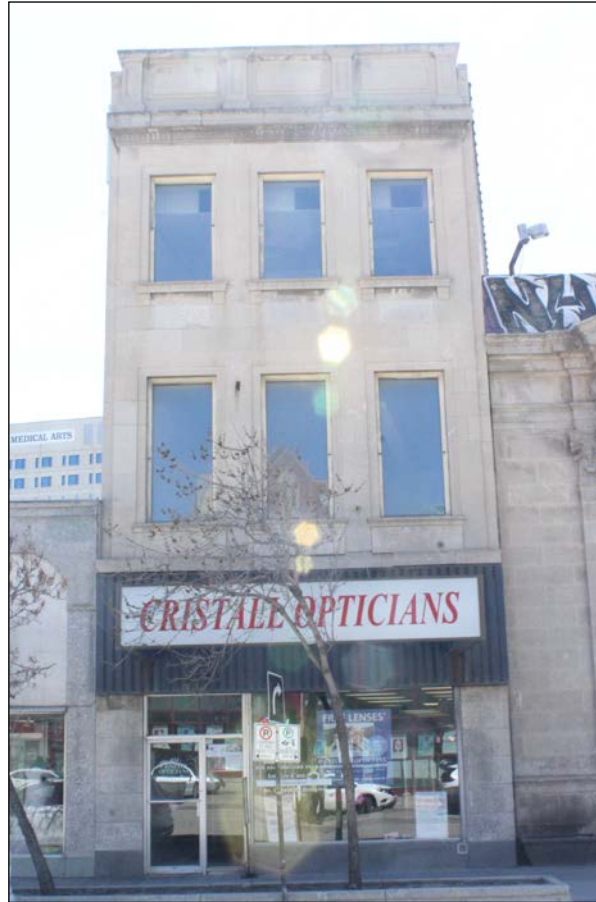


424 PORTAGE AVENUE – SINGER SEWING MACHINE BUILDING
George William Northwood & Cyril William Upton Chivers, 1930



Modest commercial buildings like this one at 424 Portage Avenue were built in the business sections and downtowns of all major cities in the 20th century. They were modest, sturdy and meant to supply the growing demand for modern sales and office space for the urbanizing population.

The Singer Sewing Machine Building was completed in 1930 on the south side of Winnipeg's main commercial thoroughfare, Portage Avenue. It stands mid-block, surrounded by other retail buildings that were completed between 1927 and 1958.

Its smooth stone cladding and modest classical detailing are elements of the Neo-Classical or Classical Revival style, popular in downtowns throughout North America with numerous examples in Winnipeg.

The front (north) façade includes large windows on all upper floors in rectilinear openings, the main floor featuring an offset entrance, metal marquee and large display window. The roofline is embellished with a modest cornice, floral moulding and stone parapet. Elements on the ground floor have been altered; much of the upper floor is unchanged. The rear of the building includes an open metal fire escape and plain window and door openings.

The interior features a staircase on the east side of the building, the ground floor lobby walls clad in limestone. Originally, the ground floor was used by company for public space as well as workrooms. The second floor, accessed by the stairs and two elevators, included washrooms and showrooms and the third floor was divided into general and private office space. Today, the main floor is a retail store and the second and third floors are used for storage.

This building was designed by the local architectural partnership of G.W. Northwood and C.W.U. Chivers, founded in 1924 and active for three decades. They were responsible for numerous fine buildings including: All Saints Anglican Church, 521 Osborne St. (1926); Canadian Wheat Board Building, 423 Main St. (1929) – List of Historical Resources; Assiniboine Park Pavilion (1929) – Grade II; Canadian General Electric Building, 265 Notre Dame Ave. (1930) – Grade III; and Women's Tribute Memorial Lodge, 200 Woodlawn St. (1931) – Grade II.

Stonemasons and building contractors Finlay Fraser and Alexander Macdonald were listed as the builders of the structure.

The Singer Sewing Machine Company was founded in New York in 1851 and four decades later it was reported to have 80% of the world market share in sewing machines. The company opened its first Winnipeg office in the early 1880s on Main Street and the opening of the Portage Avenue shop coincided with several other branch openings throughout the city. It occupied this

building into the 1980s and several other small-scale businesses have occupied space in the building.

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

Exterior-

- Three-storey stone-clad structure with flat roof with main (north) façade facing Portage Avenue, the east and west sides partially hidden by neighbouring buildings and the rear (south) façade facing a back lane;
- The front façade with large display window and offset entrance, large second and third storey windows in rectilinear openings with embellished sills and bracketing on the third floor and roof finished with modest cornice with decorative moulding and stone parapet with attached columns;
- The visible common clay brick walls of the east and west façades; and
- The rear (south) façade with clay brick walls, metal fire escape and unadorned rectilinear openings on all levels.

Interior-

- The limestone cladding on the east wall of the main floor lobby.