

**110-120 PRINCESS STREET – FAIRCHILD BUILDING
(STERLING CLOAK BUILDING)
*J.D. Atchison; H.B. Rugh, 1906-07***



Historian Leonard K. Eaton has written that “in most respects the warehouse district of Winnipeg, Manitoba, is architecturally the finest on the North American continent.” The Fairchild Building, located in the western boundary of the district, serves as a magnificent example of the new approach to warehouse design that occurred across North America after the turn-of-the century.

Group settlement into Manitoba during 1874-76 stimulated Winnipeg’s agricultural supply business as wheat was grown in sufficient quantities for export. In 1877 the province’s wheat began to be shipped directly overseas to Europe. Confident in the future, two Winnipeg businessmen, Henry S. Wesbrook and Frank A. Fairchild, established a farm implement retail

firm on the Market Square in the same year. By 1881 they expanded their enterprise into a wholesale business representing such firms as the John Deere Plow Company, J.I. Case Company, and the McCormick Harvesting Machine Company. By the late 1880s, F.A. Fairchild became the sole owner of the business and established a showroom in the Grain Exchange Building on Princess Street. Continued prosperity enabled the company to buy a vacant lot on Princess Street in 1904, and hire local architect Herbert B. Rugh to design a fitting warehouse in 1906.

J.D. Atchison, a Chicago-trained architect, who set up his very successful Winnipeg office in 1905, designed the building and another relocated Chicago designer, H. B. Rugh, who had come to Winnipeg in 1904, supervised the project. Atchison became one of Western Canada's most renowned architects and Rugh established himself as a specialist in the design of luxurious residences, examples of which abound in *Construction* magazine, a Canadian architectural journal.

In a district where the Richardsonian Romanesque tradition in warehouse ornamentation predominates, Atchison designed the Fairchild Building using stylistic motifs established by renowned Chicago architect Louis Sullivan (1856-1924). In his early work Sullivan was influenced by architect Henry Hobson Richardson (1838-86) but in time Sullivan developed a unique form of ornamentation using an intricate weaving of linear and geometric forms with stylized foliage in a symmetrical pattern. He employed sculptural ornamentation in terra cotta that was unequaled.

Atchison designed the six-storey pressed brick building using an internal steel frame structure with cast iron columns and wood joists. While Winnipeg's earlier warehouses had small window openings due to simpler methods of construction and to limit the amount of daylight on drygoods and food products, the display of farm machinery required that ample windows be provided. The rear elevation is largely composed of wire glass fenestration and is a unique feature in Winnipeg's warehouse district. The main façade of the building replicates a form of warehouse that was common in the American mid-west and can be seen in the Hiram Sibley Warehouse (1882-83) designed by George H. Edbrooke in Chicago. The Fairchild Building's

main façade is symmetrical and features a ground level punctuated by large windows that are framed by projecting brick pilasters with terra cotta capitals and a terra cotta string course. The capitals, in a tribute to Louis Sullivan, feature low relief foliage in a symmetrical pattern with the company's initials incised into the center. The main entranceway is identified by a delicate segmental arch. The ornamentation of the upper floors of the building continues the projecting pilaster motif and terminates in broad segmental arches. Terra cotta plaques are used as capitals and paired incised plaques embellish the outer edges of the building. An elaborate corbelled brick cornice completes the ornamentation.

Within a year after its completion the Fairchild Company sold out to the John Deere Plow Company, who remained in the building until 1953. The building was then sold to the Sterling Cloak Company who converted it into a garment factory.