

33 PRINCESS STREET – PECK BUILDING
C.H. Wheeler, 1893, J.D. Atchison, 1907



In 1893, clothing manufacturer and importer John W. Peck commissioned architect C.H. Wheeler to design a warehouse for his company to be located on the western boundary of the warehouse district, on the corner of Notre Dame Avenue and Princess Street.

Peck had established a clothing manufacturing firm in Montreal and by the late 1870s recognized the market potential of the Canadian west. He entered into a partnership with two Winnipeg businessmen, A.B. Bethune and J.D. Carescaden, in 1880 to form the Carescaden and Peck Company, a wholesale outlet for clothing produced and shipped from his Montreal company. The firm produced men's and boys' clothing, shirts, sheep-lined coats and caps. As well, they distributed imported woolen goods for men. They also marketed a fur overcoat to replace the buffalo coat, already unobtainable in the 1890s. Called the "African Buffalo Coat," this garment was reasonably priced and highly serviceable. It was sold mainly to farmers and other outdoor labourers.

Winnipeg's prominence as a distribution center for eastern Canada's goods was in part attributable to the preferential freight rates that the City had negotiated with the Canadian Pacific Railway. This provided a strong incentive for eastern firms to establish wholesale branches in Winnipeg, rather than in other western urban centers.

Charles H. Wheeler was a British-born architect who had practiced in London and Birmingham before coming to Winnipeg in 1882. His architectural career in the city lasted for over twenty years, producing plans for numerous public and private buildings not only in Winnipeg, but throughout the northwest. His extant works in Winnipeg include Holy Trinity Church (1884) on Donald Street, H.J. Macdonald residence (1895) on Carlton Street (now restored by the Manitoba Historical Society), Sanford's warehouse (1887) on Princess Street (now the Old Spaghetti Factory) and the Galt warehouse (1891) on Princess Street. Two of his sons worked as draftsmen in his office to keep up with the steady demands of his practice. His love of music resulted in his appointment as choir-master of Knox and Zion churches as well as a career as a controversial music critic writing for the *Winnipeg Daily Tribune* for over 25 years. He also wrote numerous articles on building in Winnipeg and was elected second vice-president at the founding of the Manitoba Association of Architects on 25 May 1906.

Wheeler designed the Peck Building with an interior divided into two distinct sections. The Peck Company occupied the larger southern portion of the building that fronted on Notre Dame Avenue and Princess Street, while O'Loughlin Bros. Stationers occupied the smaller northern part. A fire wall separated the two firms.

The original four-storey buildings had a stone foundation on concrete footings, with walls of solid brick. Massive limestone buttresses rising up the main floor of the building provided additional structural support. The grouped round-headed windows on the second and third floor are part of the Romanesque vocabulary that Wheeler used for the majority of his building designs. The top floor of the original building was highly decorated by gables containing rounded-headed arches and hood-moulds. Ornamental details abound on the Peck Building, many of which still remain on the lower floors. The two doorways have recessed architraves

with an arch and quoins of red sandstone. The O'Loughlin Bros. entranceway contains an arch terminating in two carved heads.

In 1907, architect John D. Atchison, who is better known for designing the Great-West Life Building (1909-11) on Lombard Street (now the Lombard Commerce Building) and the Union Trust Co. Building (1912-13) on Lombard Street, prepared plans for two additional storeys to be added to the building. The foundation was underpinned and new columns were added on all floors to carry the added load. Atchison followed the external divisions of Wheeler's original design but decorated his portion in a neo-classical motif which was now the predominant style for exhibiting grandeur.

The Peck Company continued its wholesale business out of Winnipeg until the early years of the 1930s depression. Since then, smaller firms such as Dobbs Cap Manufacturing Co., and Sterling Stall, a manufacturer of women's outerwear and sportswear, have occupied the building.