

**92-100 PRINCESS STREET – ADELMAN BUILDING
(CAMPBELL BROTHERS AND WILSON)
*J.H.G. Russell, 1903, 1913***



Winnipeg's strength as a commercial center was attributable, in part, to the influence of its business leaders, particularly those individuals involved in the Winnipeg Board of Trade. They received freight concessions from the railways that favoured wholesalers in Winnipeg, and prevented the growth of other competing businesses in the West. The merchants wanted a central location in the city, but avoided building on Portage Avenue or Main Street because of the difficulty in loading and unloading. Thus the majority of the warehouses were built off Main Street where larger amounts of land were available and spur lines could be built from the main railway line.

J.H.G. Russell was commissioned to design a building in this area for one of western Canada's largest grocery wholesalers: Campbell Brothers and Wilson. Formed in 1885 by R.J. Campbell and his brother, the company was joined by R.R. Wilson in 1900. It was typical of the many Winnipeg jobber firms which bought goods in quantity, broke them down into smaller lots, then packaged and distributed them. From this firm grocers across the West purchased teas, coffees, spices, mustards, jelly powders, and tobacco.

With goods being distributed on such a large scale, loading facilities and access to transportation were critical to the successful operation of a grocery wholesale. Constructed in 1903, the new Campbell Brothers and Wilson warehouse was located on the C.P.R. spur line that still runs behind Princess Street off the main track. Three large loading docks opened from the rear of the building onto the railway line. An arched driveway off Princess Street provided three more covered docks for loading horse-drawn wagons and later, trucks.

Business proved to be brisk and by 1913 two additional storeys were added to the building. The company carried on until 1945, when J.M. Sinclair, a grocery wholesaler, bought the firm and used the premises until 1958. In 1960, NEFCO Furniture moved into the warehouse, opening Penthouse Interiors in 1965.

Winnipeg, considered to be the “Chicago of the North,” delighted in modeling its buildings on examples such as the Marshall Field Wholesale Store in Chicago. Russell used a rusticated stone lower level with a stone string course to identify the main floor. The main façade of a round-headed brick arcade was broken by a segmental arch indicating a loading dock. The paired rectangular window motif with a stone lintel and sill separated by a brick mullion was a direct copy from Marshall Field’s store. Russell attempted to give a Sullivanesque skyscraper look to this low building by using a projecting brick moulding that ran vertically around each set of windows. In the two-storey addition of 1912, Russell designed paired rectangular windows to continue the vertical rhythm created by the arcade.

This building is a good example of how a local architect dealt with changing architectural styles. One foot is still in the realm of heavy Richardsonian Romanesque while the other is reaching to imitate the new skyscraper style of Sullivan in Chicago.