



78 PRINCESS STREET

MACKENZIE AND POWIS WAREHOUSE

City of Winnipeg
Historical Buildings Committee

April 1998

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Winnipeg in the early 1890s was, although few realized it, on the verge of a spectacular era of growth, development and maturity that would almost completely change it by World War I. But this comprehensive growth was far from random. Specific districts that had been established a decade earlier provided the pattern for this frenzied period of growth.

The real estate and construction boom of the early 1880s was intimately connected to the early construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), Canada's first transcontinental railway, west of Winnipeg. Land prices in the small capital city skyrocketed, the population soared and solid brick structures began replacing the small wooden shacks that dotted the mud streets and avenues. Perhaps more important, however, was the beginning of the segregation of the various sectors of the city – residential, commercial and industrial – and their specific buildings.¹ The huge advance in land prices along Main Street north of Portage Avenue necessitated the replacement of the earlier residential development (Plate 1) with large commercial structures. Investors chose to locate near one of the most important buildings in the city, the town hall, from which would come assistance in advancing both singular business interests and those of the community at large.

Commercial interests, both local and from Eastern Canada, were quick to locate in this area. The city rapidly assumed the role of wholesale hub for all of Western Canada. Companies like R.J. Whitla, Stobart, Eden and Company, George D. Wood and J.H. Ashdown were all organized and carrying on business prior to the CPR boom.² With this development came a maturation of the

NOTE: BUILDING ORIGINALLY KNOWN AS #78-84 PRINCESS STREET

¹ R.R. Rostecki, "The Growth of Winnipeg, 1870-1886," unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1980, pp. 112-14.

² Manitoba Free Press, September 3, 1904, p. 14.

retail sector. The bust of 1882 did not end this development, but rather strengthened it by removing the excess and inexperienced entrepreneurs, by reducing surplus stock and by hardening attitudes towards credit.³ The area, however, was undeniably developing as the warehouse district, slowly through the 1880s and 1890s and then rapidly after 1900 (Plate 2).

In 1891, one of the eastern firms that had established itself in Winnipeg during the CPR boom and had survived the bust clearly expressed its own success and its belief in the future of the city and region by constructing a modern brick warehouse on the northwest corner of two of the wholesale district's major thoroughfares – McDermot Avenue and Princess Street.

STYLE

The Mackenzie and Powis Warehouse is designed in the Romanesque Revival style that became the prominent architectural style of the warehouse district. In the 1880s, the style was influenced greatly by American architect H.H. Richardson (1838-86) and was often referred to as Richardsonian Romanesque.⁴ Primarily built of brick with a raised rusticated stone base and stone accenting, the structures often displayed a textured visage. Towers could flank the main façades. Quoins, belt courses and decorative brick corbelling or chevrons were often added to animate the flat elevations. The most familiar element, however, was the arch, used for entrances and windows. Often, straight-topped windows were grouped under large arches.⁵

Although the style was applied to other public and private structures, it was used almost exclusively for warehouses in Winnipeg. Its massiveness and sturdiness appealed to wholesalers looking to promote their businesses and portray the stability of their firms through the design of the structures they occupied.

³ R.R. Rostecki, op. cit., p. 113.

⁴ L. Maitland et al., A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1992), p. 84.

⁵ Ibid., p. 84; and Identifying Architectural Styles in Manitoba (Winnipeg: Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, Historic Resources Branch, 1991), p. 14.

CONSTRUCTION

The warehouse at 78-84 Princess Street was built in 1891 of solid brick resting on a 61.0-cm (24-foot) stone foundation.⁶ The brick walls of the superstructure measure 45.7 cm (18 feet) on the ground floor, 33.0 cm (13 feet) on the second and third floors (the height of the original structure) and 30.5 cm. (12 feet) on the fourth floor. Stone accenting around windows is evident on the front (east) and south façades. The building measures 21.0 x 12.2 x 17.7 m (65½ x 40 x 58 feet) or a total of 9,702.6 cubic metres (342,847 cubic feet) of interior space. A article listing construction in the city in 1891 put the original price of the warehouse at \$20,000.⁷

DESIGN

As originally built, the Mackenzie and Powis Warehouse was a three-storey structure with large display windows on the ground floor of its south and east façades (Plate 3). A rusticated stone foundation rose well above grade on the two main elevations and was interrupted by small square basement windows. The east elevation included two entrances and five large windows. All these elements were arched and connected by delicate continuous brick drip moulding. The first level of the southern wall also featured seven openings, all windows are arched and similarly topped by drip moulding. A rusticated stone belt course formed the sills of the second-floor windows on both façades.

The second and third storeys of the main façade featured seven bays, divided by means of brick pilasters with ornamental brick heads. Second-storey windows were rectangular with stone heads. The third-storey openings were arched with stone sills and keystones and ornately designed brick voussoirs. Between the second- and third-storey openings were rectangular panels of ornate brickwork. The upper floors of the south façade were divided into ten bays with similar pilasters and voussoirs. Only four bays featured windows and these were similar in design and finish to those on the front elevation. A line of corbelled brick ran above the

⁶ City of Winnipeg Assessment Record, Roll No. 609725, Ward 2, PC 50.

⁷ Manitoba Free Press, September 1, 1891.

voussoirs on both façades and eased the transition to the brick parapet above, which was finished with a number of raised ornaments (and pedimented on the east side).

The north wall is a party wall with a warehouse at 86 Princess Street. The rear (west) elevation, which overlooks the back lane and does not appear to have been altered, features a metal fire escape, several small plain windows and loading doors on the ground floor (Plate 4).

The building was one of many such structures built in the warehouse district on both sides of Main Street from the late 1880s until the 1910s, characterized by simple, elegant ornamentation and numerous windows to supply ample light and ventilation for the interior spaces.

Changes to the exterior have been severe, especially on the main façade (Plate 5). The ground floor was totally remodelled by the building's new owner (C.A. DeFehr) in 1941. The brick was stuccoed (both east and south walls) and the northern-most entrance was converted into a window.⁸ Most damaging to the visage, however, were the replacement of the original arched windows with large, square-headed openings and the closing of the basement windows. This drastically and negatively changed the appearance of the east elevation. The top of the building has also seen major changes as a fourth floor was added in 1949.⁹ Gone is the ornate parapet, replaced by a simple, flat addition with unattractive and unsympathetic squared windows.

INTERIOR

The interior of the structure has seen many changes since it was completed. The most notable are the openings in the party wall that now offer access on all floors (including the basement) with the Miller, Morse Warehouse, 86-88 Princess Street. It is not known when this alteration was completed, although the addresses (78-84 and 86-88) are not combined in the Henderson's Directory until 1976.¹⁰ The actual warehouse space, however, has seen less dramatic alteration.

⁸ City of Winnipeg Building Permit (below as BP), #491/1941.

⁹ BP #7538/1949.

¹⁰ Henderson's Directory, 1960-present.

The ground floor, which was altered in 1941, has a single entrance and an interior staircase along the front wall leading to the basement. Here is found a series of small, panelled rooms and the motors for the two freight elevators. Heat for the building (except the fourth floor which is unheated) is provided by two boilers located in the Miller, Morse Warehouse, 86-88 Princess Street. The ground floor features newer carpeting, a modern ceiling and fluorescent lighting. The rear area is more original, including a small section of the original tin ceiling and wooden floor. Many of the square timber beams and posts are uncovered.

Two staircases lead to the upper floors, which are similarly finished with fluorescent lighting and newer floor coverings. The brick exterior walls are exposed in most areas and all beams and posts are visible. The openness of the warehouse space has not been seriously altered by partitioning.

The fourth-floor addition of 1949 offers a similar openness with exposed exterior walls, wooden floors and beams and posts. The small, rectangular windows are set high on the walls. An interesting feature of the exterior walls is the obvious line of the original parapet that can be seen along the front (east) and north walls.

In sum, the interior of the warehouse is a mixture of altered and original spaces. While the openness of the original design has remained, new elements have been added at various locations and some of the original materials have been replaced or covered. The building is at present completely vacant.

The present owner (Earn International Incorporated) bought this building and the warehouse next door (86-88 Princess Street) in November 1997. Because the two are so closely connected (including their heating system), the City of Winnipeg Assessment Department has agreed with the owner's request to treat the structures as a single unit, officially known as 78 Princess Street.¹¹

¹¹ Darren Earn, owner of the building, in conversation with the author, April 14, 1998; and City of Winnipeg Assessment Department.

INTEGRITY

The warehouse stands on its original site and appears to be in good structural condition. Alterations described above have drastically changed the original design, although the exterior middle section has not been significantly altered from the original.

STREETSCAPE

The Mackenzie and Powis Warehouse is located in the midst of Winnipeg's warehouse district, one of the finest of its kind in North America and recently recognized by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada as a National Historic District. The massing and ornamentation of the warehouse are similar to many neighbouring structures. The structure, like all the others in the district, is an integral part of the area (Plates 6 and 7).

ARCHITECT/CONTRACTOR

George Browne (1852-1919) designed this warehouse,¹² one of many fine works he completed in his long career in the city (see Appendix I for biographical information). He was also responsible for the Massey Building, 294 William Avenue, constructed in 1885 (Grade II) and the Miller, Morse Warehouse, formerly 86-88 Princess Street (1887).

He has been given 10 points by the Historical Buildings Committee.

PERSON/INSTITUTION

This structure was built for the wholesale grocery firm of Mackenzie and Powis. Kenneth Mackenzie, the driving force behind the venture, was born in Ross-shire, Scotland on July 7, 1839 but was educated in Canada West (Watertown and Woodstock).¹³ After a career as a salesman (known at the time as a commercial traveller), he opened a tea importing business in

¹² City of Winnipeg Plumbing Permit, #118/1891, courtesy of R.R. Rostecki.

¹³ Winnipeg Free Press, June 4, 1928, pp. 1-2.

Montreal in 1873 with Edmund Powis. Powis was born in London, England in 1844 and settled in Hamilton, Canada West, in 1850. He had been employed for over a decade by the J. Turner Wholesale Grocery Company and was sent to Winnipeg as their representative in 1872. In 1873, he moved to Montreal and formed the partnership with K. Mackenzie.¹⁴

In 1882, Mackenzie and Powis moved to Winnipeg to establish a wholesale grocery business, forming a partnership with one of the city's long-time wholesalers under the name Lyon (William H.), Mackenzie and Powis. W.H. Lyon (?-1897) was an American who had come to the Red River Settlement in the 1850s and established an extensive grocery and dry goods retail business before expanding into the wholesale trade in the mid-1870s. He served a term as a city councillor and died in 1897 in Salt Lake City, Utah.¹⁵ The new firm ultimately took up occupancy in the Lyon Block (now the Bate Building), 221 McDermot Avenue (Plate 8).¹⁶

After Lyon's departure from Winnipeg, the firm continued on as Mackenzie and Powis and built the fine new warehouse on Princess Street. By the late 1890s, the firm had again reorganized, this time as the K. Mackenzie Company. Mackenzie continued on with the company until 1910 when he retired. Aside from his own firm, he was a director of the Canada Life Assurance Company, the Western Trust Company, the Standard Trust Company and the National Trust Company. He was also a city alderman in 1889. He died in Winnipeg on June 3, 1928 and was buried in Hamilton, Ontario.¹⁷

After Mackenzie retired, the company continued to own and operate out of the Princess Street building until its sale in 1916 to the Redmond Company.¹⁸ This venture was involved in the manufacturing and wholesaling of furs, hats, gloves and other winter clothing (Plate 9). Within a

¹⁴ The Sun, March 30, 1889, pp. 2-3.

¹⁵ D. Lyon, "Main Street," Report for the Historical Buildings Committee, Part C, Central Main, Draft 2, p. 160.

¹⁶ Year Past, 1981, (Winnipeg: Historical Buildings Committee, 1982), p. 41.

¹⁷ Manitoba Free Press, June 4, 1928, pp. 1-2.

¹⁸ City of Winnipeg Assessment Roll, 6/7^W St. John, Plan 16, Block B, east ½ of Lots 5 and 6. Below as ARO.

short time, however, the ownership was transferred to the Montreal Trust Company, which rented the space out to a number of tenants, including N. Karasick, dry goods, #78 (1930), W.A. Law Footwear Co., #84 (1930) and S. Marantz, wholesale shoes, #84 (1935).¹⁹ The building was purchased in the early 1940s by Cornelius Abraham DeFehr.²⁰

DeFehr, of German-Mennonite parentage, was born in the Ukraine in 1881 and at the age of 22 moved to Millerowo, Ukraine to start an agricultural implement manufacturing plant. Within ten years, the business employed 250 men. But the Communist overthrow meant state control of the factory and DeFehr and his family escaped the country by cattle-car. In 1925, the family was able to move to Canada, settle in Winnipeg and establish a small import company handling German and Swedish cream separators, plows and small hardware items. Hard work saw the company grow steadily and in 1951 it became C.A. DeFehr and Sons (Abram [Abe] C., Cornelius C. and William C.). By the early 1970s, the business dealt primarily with wholesale and retail furniture and by the mid-1970s occupied both 78-84 Princess and the warehouse next door at 86-88 Princess.²¹

C.A. DeFehr was also known for his humanitarian efforts both locally and internationally. He was a founder of the Concordia Hospital in the city and was actively involved in many of the charitable organizations within the local Mennonite community. He spent two years with his wife in Paraguay helping establish homes for thousands of homeless Mennonites in South America.²² He died on February 11, 1979.²³ The DeFehr family continued to own the building into the 1990s. It is now owned by Earn International Inc. (Darren Earn) which operates Grants International Inc. from offices in the ground floor of 86-88 Princess Street.

¹⁹ Henderson's Directory, 1920-40.

²⁰ ARo.

²¹ Henderson's Directory, 1960-80.

²² Winnipeg Tribune, May 18, 1957, p. 7.

²³ Winnipeg Free Press, February 14, 1979, p. 67.

EVENT

There is no known significant event connected with this building.

CONTEXT

The Mackenzie and Powis Warehouse was built during the early development of the warehouse district, begun in the early 1880s, slowly expanding through the next decade and rapidly developing after 1900. It highlights the wholesale sector that became such an important springboard for the development of Winnipeg both before and after the turn of the century. The receiving of manufactured goods and perishable items from Eastern Canada and elsewhere and storing, organizing and shipping them to markets in Western Canada became one of the city's chief roles during the modern development of the region west of the Great Lakes.

Two companies that occupied the premises for long periods of time (the K. Mackenzie Company and DeFehr and Sons) illustrate, in two different periods, the possibility of success in business in Winnipeg. Both ventures grew beyond the boundaries of the city and allowed their owners the power and resources to also seek philanthropic endeavors.

This structure is one of a group of pre-1890 structures left in the Exchange District. Other early warehouses include:

- Albert Street, 70 – Telegram Building, 1882 (Grade II)
- Bannatyne Avenue, 137 – Swiss Building, 1882 (Grade III)
- Bannatyne Avenue, 291 – Sanford Building (Old Spaghetti Factory), 1890 (Grade II)
- McDermot Avenue, 173 – Mitchell Block (Grange Building), 1886 (Grade III)
- McDermot Avenue, 217-23 – Bate Building, 1883 (Grade II)
- McDermot Avenue, 246-48 – Sures Building, 1882 (Grade III)
- Princess Street, 72-74 – I.O.O.F. Hall, 1883 (Grade III)
- Princess Street, 86-88 – Miller, Morse Warehouse, 1887 (Inventory)
- Princess Street, 103 – Galt Block, 1887 (Inventory)
- Princess Street, 104-08 – Warehouse, 1885 (Grade III)
- Princess Street, 154 – Hochman Building, 1882 (Grade III)
- William Avenue, 294-96 – Massey Building, 1885 (Grade II)

LANDMARK

This warehouse is located on a busy corner at the intersection of two of the Exchange District's major arteries. The building is an important part of this nationally recognized Historic District.

APPENDIX I

George Creeford Browne

George Browne was born in Montreal in 1852, the son of architect George Browne, a prominent designer and major real estate holder. After finishing high school, he immediately went to work in his father's office. At the age of eighteen, he went to New York and worked for Russell Sturgis, one of that city's leading architects. After three years, Browne resigned and left for Europe to study design history.¹

He spent over three years in England, Ireland, France, Italy and Switzerland, and won an international design competition in England. He returned to Montreal in 1877² and in 1879 he inexplicably gave up architecture to homestead on 129.5 ha (320 acres) of land in the Tiger Hills district south of Holland, Manitoba.³

Browne moved to Winnipeg in 1882⁴ and set up a private architectural practice. He continued to design buildings throughout Manitoba and Western Canada into the new century, although by 1904 City of Winnipeg, Building Permits show little work attributed to his office. In 1907, he had his name officially changed from George Browne to George Creeford Browne.⁵ His work ranged from small houses and cottages to major office structures and warehouses. He moved to New York City ca. 1910.⁶ Perhaps his two most famous designs were the Public Market Building behind City Hall,

¹ G. Bryce, A History of Manitoba (Toronto: The Canada History Company, 1906), pp. 483-84.

² W.P. Thompson, "Browne, George, Jr." The Canadian Encyclopedia (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1988), Volume 1, p. 289.

³ Winnipeg Daily Tribune, August 1, 1891, p. 13.

⁴ Men of Canada, p. 222 (unidentified article in the Department of Culture and Heritage, Historic Resources Branch files).

⁵ Statutes of Manitoba, 1907, Chapter 51, p. 11 (Historic Resources Branch files).

⁶ W.P. Thompson, op. cit., p. 289.

built in 1889-90 (demolished in 1964), and Wesley College (University of Winnipeg), Portage Avenue, built in 1895 and still standing. He died in South Nyack, New York on March 12, 1919.⁷

A list of his varied work includes:⁸

Massey Building, 294 William Avenue, 1885, Grade II
Miller, Morse and Co. Warehouse, 86 Princess Street, 1887
City of Winnipeg, Public Market Building, City Hall, 1889-90 – demolished
Mackenzie and Powis Warehouse, 78 Princess Street, 1891
Euclid (or North Central) School, Euclid Avenue, 1892 - demolished
Manitoba College, major addition, Broadway, 1892 - demolished
Mulvey School, Broadway, 1893 (and 1895 replacement)- both demolished
Aberdeen School, Salter Street, 1893 - demolished
Court House and Jail, PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE, 1894-95
Masonic Temple (Mother Tucker's Restaurant), 335 Donald Street, 1895
Presbyterian Indian Mission residence, REGINA, 1895
Presbyterian Indian Mission residence, PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE, 1895
Hudson's Bay Co. store, CALGARY, 1895
Hudson's Bay Co. store, PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE, 1895
Hudson's Bay Co. warehouse, York Avenue at Fort Street, 1895
Wesley College (University of Winnipeg), with S.F. Peters, 1895
Trust and Loan Co. Building, Portage Avenue, 1898
Victoria Jubilee Wing, Winnipeg General Hospital, 1898
Strevel Terrace, Donald Street, 1899 - demolished
Union Bank, NEEPAWA, ca. 1899
Young Men's Christian Association Building (Birk's Building), 276 Portage Avenue, 1900 (Grade II)
Gault Building, 92-104 Arthur Street, 1900, Grade II
Gurney Foundry Co. warehouse, Owen (McDermot) Avenue, 1902
Strathcona Block, Main corner Broadway, 1902-03 - demolished
American Able Machinery Company, Dufferin Avenue - warehouse, 1902; factory, 1902-03; and offices and warehouse, 1903
Hudson's Bay Co. stables, York Avenue, 1903
Forman Block, Fort Street, 1903
Toronto Type Foundry warehouse, major addition, 175 McDermot Avenue, 1904 (Grade III)

⁷ Ibid., p. 289.

⁸ This list is compiled from: personal files of the author; various local newspapers' building issues, 1879-1911; Canadian Architect and Builder, 1896-99; City of Winnipeg, Building Permits, 1899-1904; Giles Bugailiskis, "Quiet Dignity," unpublished Master of Arts Thesis, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 1990, p. 156; and files of the City of Winnipeg, Heritage Planner.



CITY OF WINNIPEG - Preliminary Report

Assessment Record

Building Address: 78 Princess Street (78-84)

Building Name: Mackenzie and Powis Warehouse

Original Use: warehouse

Current Use: vacant

Roll No. (Old): 609725 (10128)

Municipality: 12

Ward: 2

Property or Occupancy Code: 50

Legal Description: 6/7^W St. John, Plan 16, Block B, east 1/2 of Lots 5 and 6

Location: northwest corner of McDermot Avenue

Date of Construction: 1891

Storeys: 4 and basement

Construction Type: solid brick and stone foundation

Building Permits (Plans available: [A] Archives; [M] Microfilm; [V] Vault):

- 2320/1911 [A] \$1,000 (minor alterations); 491/1941 (stucco front, alter main entrance, windows and vestibule); 5297/1949 [A] (interior alteration to store); 7538/1949 [A] (additional storey); 1291/1956 (interior alteration - basement); 235/1959 [V-V02D06] (interior alteration); 3749/1974 [M-Roll 621] (interior alteration); 8525/1978 \$2,500 (interior alteration); 1006/1983 [V-M09C07] \$21,000 (exterior alteration)

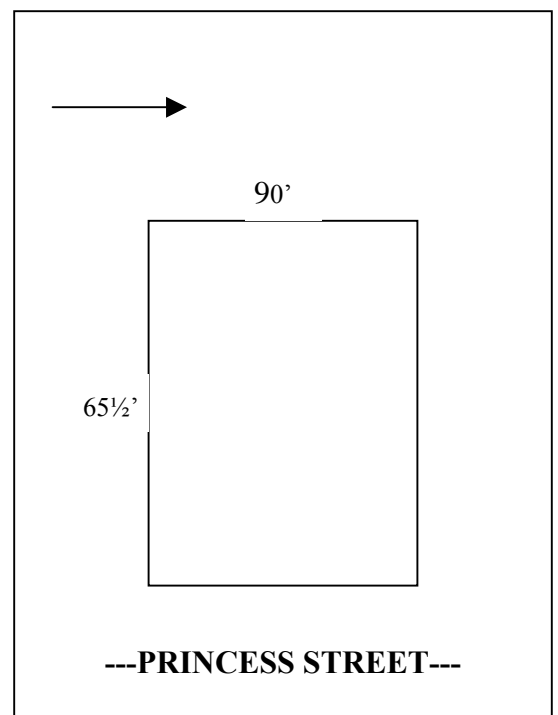
Information:

- 65½ x 90 x 58 + = 342,847 cu. ft.

- when central heating plant was shut down in 1991, new gas boiler system was installed in 86 Princess St. and used to heat the basement and first 3 floors of 78-84 Princess St. (no heat to top floor)

- rear wall – clay brick; south– cut stone foundation, stone belt course @ 2nd sills, stone & brick heads, stone sills; front-cut stone foundation to sills of 1st, stone belt course @ sills of 2nd, heavy stone sills (2nd), brick heads (3rd); 4th floor- clay brick with reinforced concrete coping and 2' parapet

- north wall shared with 86 Princess Street



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Plate 1 – McDermot Avenue looking west from Main Street, ca.1881. Note the extensive number of homes in the area. (Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)



Plate 2 – The same view of McDermot Avenue as in Plate 1. This ca.1910 photograph shows the change in the area over 30 years. (Courtesy of Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)

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Plate 3 – Kenneth Mackenzie Co. warehouse, 78 Princess Street, ca.1903. (M. Peterson Collection.)

78 PRINCESS STREET – MACKENZIE AND POWIS WAREHOUSE



Plate 4 – 78 Princess Street, rear (west) façade. (M. Peterson, 1998.)

78 PRINCESS STREET – MACKENZIE AND POWIS WAREHOUSE



Plate 5 – 78-84 Princess Street, south and east façades. (M. Peterson, 1998.)

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Plate 6 – Princess Street looking north from McDermot Avenue. (M. Peterson, 1998.)



Plate 7 – Princess Street looking south from Bannatyne Avenue. (M. Peterson, 1998.)

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Plate 8 – Advertisement for the wholesale grocery firm of Lyon, Mackenzie and Powis.
(Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)

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Phones Garry 316-317

The Redmond Company Limited

Manufacturers and Wholesale Dealers in
**FURS, HATS, CAPS, MITTS AND GLOVES, COATS,
" BEAVER BRAND " GOODS**

78 Princess Street

Plate 9 – Advertisement for the Redmond Company Limited. (Reproduced from Henderson's Directory, 1918, p. 84.)