

297 SHERBROOK STREET

MANITOBA TELEPHONE SYSTEM, SHERBROOK EXCHANGE

PREPARED BY PETERSON PROJECTS – DECEMBER 2009



297 SHERBROOK STREET MANITOBA TELEPHONE SYSTEM, SHERBROOK EXCHANGE

Date of Construction: 1909

Building Permit: 2087/1909 (Plans at City Storage)

Architect: Hooper, Samuel

Contractor: Kelly, J.M. and J.J.

ARCHITECTURAL INTEREST:

This is another of the finely designed and detailed public buildings constructed by the Province of Manitoba as part of its major expansion of services in the city in the pre-World War I era.

This two-storey, solid stone structure's front (west) façade is symmetrically designed with an ornate raised main entrance with unfluted, Ionic Order columns with volutes and plain bases supporting a pediment with the carved words "GOVERNMENT TELEPHONES" and a small, second storey deck with metal railing. The ground floor stone is designed with deep horizontal grooves, the second storey is smooth and a stone belt course separates the two storeys. Attached columns are found at both ends of the second floor with two more dividing the floor into three sections. Windows on the ground floor are plain with rectangular transoms while the upper storey openings are ornately finished with carved



Front (west) and south façades, 2009

stone frames, transoms with stylized interior dividers and curved (centre section) or angled (outside sections) pediments with brackets. A complete entablature and plain stone parapet finish this elevation. The other three façades are much plainer, finished in common clay brick with plain rectangular window openings. Cost of construction of the 15.3 x 36.6-metre structure was \$50,000.¹

The building stands on its original site, appears to be in good structural condition and has not suffered major exterior alteration.

This structure is designed in a Classical Revival style. Popular in North America from 1900-30, the style ranged from simple, small-scale neo-classical structures, such as this building, to Beaux-Arts Classicism with its grand scale and heavy ornamentation, for example the Legislative Building.² Elements of the classical revival style include columns, pediments, flat, unadorned roof lines, symmetrical facades, and Greek or Roman orders. Door and window openings are often lintelled rather than arched, although both spanning methods can be present.³

The use of classical elements, especially for public buildings, became a popular ornamental device for banks, other financial institutions, railway stations, commercial buildings and office blocks. Because of Winnipeg's importance in the early growth of western Canada's economy, the city became the headquarters of many firms doing business throughout the West. These firms often chose classically-inspired ornamentation to portray an image of respectability and stability. Many excellent examples of the style, representing both early and late phases of its popularity, adorn a wide range of structures.

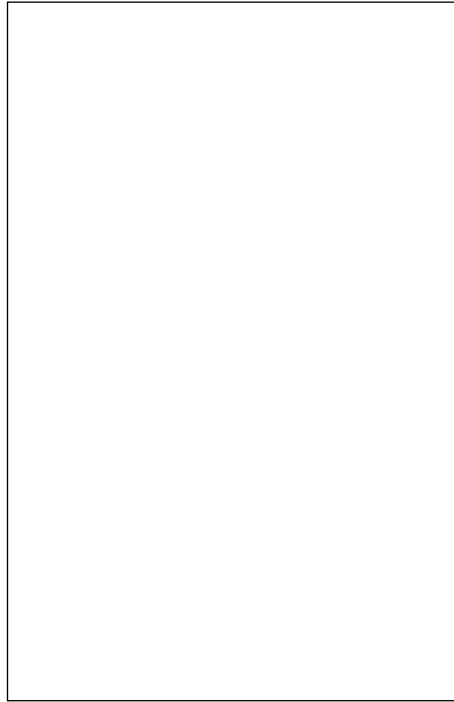


Front (west) and north façades, 2009

Samuel Hooper (1851-1911), designer of this structure, was born in Hatherleigh, County Devon, England, settling in Winnipeg in 1881. Together with Winnipegger David Ede, he set up the Hooper Marble and Granite Company, statue and monument manufacturers. In 1893, Hooper became an architect in the public works department of the Provincial Government. Together with this employment and the presidency of the granite company, he began a private architectural practice in 1905 with Charles H. Walker that lasted until 1909 when he partnered with his son, Samuel Lawrence Hooper, 1909-1911 (Hooper and Hooper).⁴

In 1907 the Provincial Government created the office of Provincial Architect to oversee the design of numerous public buildings being planned in the province. Samuel Hooper was appointed to this position and held it until his death of bronchitis and asthma in England in 1911.

Some of Hooper's better-known work includes Isbister School, 310 Vaughan Street (1898-1899, Grade II), Western Building, 90 Albert Street (1901, Grade III), Manitoba Land Titles Building, 433 Broadway (1903), Carnegie Library, 380 William Avenue (1905, Hooper & Walker, Grade II), Marshall-Wells Hardware Warehouse, 136 Market Avenue (1905-06, Hooper & Walker, Grade III), Provincial Normal School, 442 William Avenue (1906, Hooper & Walker, Grade II), University of Manitoba, Taché Hall Men's Residence (1911) and the Pasadena Apartments, 220 Hugo Street (1912, Hooper & Hooper, Grade III). He has been given 20 points by the Historical Buildings Committee.



Front (west) façade detail, 2009

HISTORICAL INTEREST:

Until 1906, many small, competing telephone companies provided unreliable service to Manitobans. Recognizing the growing importance of communications, the Conservative government of Sir Rodmond Roblin created Manitoba Government Telephones as the first provincially owned telephone system in Canada.

This building for many years served as one of the important telephone exchanges in the City of Winnipeg.

RECOMMENDATION TO HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE:

Under the Historical Buildings By-law, this building meets a number of important criteria:

- its historical importance- one of the oldest government telephone buildings in Winnipeg and illustrative of the early 20th century expansion of services;
- its associations- its long-term connection to the beginnings of Manitoba's provincial telephone system;
- its design- an excellent example of the Classical Revival style;
- its architect- S. Hooper was a respected and important practitioner;
- its location- contributes greatly to its streetscape; and
- its integrity- its main façades continue to display many of their original elements and design.



Front (west) façade, 1978

ENDNOTES:

- 1 City of Winnipeg Building Permit, #2087/1909.
- 2 Identifying Architectural Styles in Manitoba (Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, Historic Resources Branch, n.d.), p. 18.
- 3 Ibid., p. 18.
- 4 Historical Buildings Committee files.