

William Reid and Company Building  
(Buckland-Van Wald Building)  
426-430 West Larned Street  
Detroit  
Wayne County  
Michigan

HABS No. MI-314

HABS  
MICH,  
82-DETRO,  
41-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HABS  
MICH,  
82-DETRO,  
41-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

- WILLIAM REID & COMPANY BUILDING  
(BUCKLAND-VAN WALD BUILDING)

HABS No. MI-314

Location: 426-430 West Larned Street  
Detroit, Michigan 48226

USGS Detroit, Michigan, Quadrangle  
UTM Coordinates: 17.330080.4687994

Date of Construction: 1890. Partially rebuilt 1892

Present Owner: City of Detroit, Michigan

Present Occupant: Vacant

Significance: The William Reid & Company Building is a rare surviving example of the commercial architecture of Gordon W. Lloyd, completed toward the end of his distinguished career. Lloyd was a major designer of churches, private residences, and commercial buildings in Detroit, with a career extending from 1861 to the early 1890s. The original owner, William Reid, a prominent Detroit merchant in plate glass trade, used this building for wholesaling in 1890-1908.

Project Information: This documentation was undertaken in May, 1986 in accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement between the City of Detroit, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office as a mitigative measure prior to the demolition of the building.

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PART I - HISTORY OF THE WILLIAM REID & COMPANY BUILDING

After a decade of slow growth in the 1870s, Detroit's population doubled in the 1880s, from 116,000 in 1880 to nearly 206,000 by 1890, reflecting its expanding industrial base. The commercial districts of Detroit were concentrated along Woodward Avenue, the major south to north thoroughfare during the past two centuries. The streets running perpendicular to Woodward, particularly near the Detroit River, underwent substantial development beginning in the early 1880s. The area of West Larned Street where this building is situated, four blocks from Woodward Avenue, became a prime commercial location in the 1880s. The surviving real estate and fire insurance atlases show a largely undeveloped area in the late 1870s, with a few frame buildings, including barns, and many vacant lots. By the mid-1890s, this area was almost entirely filled with substantial four and five story brick commercial and industrial buildings.<sup>1</sup>

The development of West Larned was reflected in the real estate values of the two lots where the building stands. In the late 1860s, one lot sold (in two parcels) for \$4,600, but when David Whitney, Jr. bought the same lot in 1883, he paid \$12,000. Whitney, a millionaire lumberman who became a major Detroit landowner and developer, acquired the second lot from William Reid in January, 1890, at a cost of \$14,000.<sup>2</sup> Gordon W. Lloyd, a prominent Detroit architect, took out a building permit on 10 May 1890 "to erect a 5-story, brick manufactory store at 118-26 W. Larned, valuation of \$38,000."<sup>3</sup>

Gordon W. Lloyd dominated Detroit's architectural scene from the early 1860s to the early 1890s. He designed churches, residences, and commercial buildings for some of Detroit's wealthiest and most prestigious families. Born in Cambridge, England, in 1832, Lloyd began his career working in the office of his uncle, a major builder and restorer of churches. Between 1861 and 1875, Lloyd completed a dozen major Gothic-style churches for various Protestant denominations in Detroit and outstate Michigan, along with an equal number of impressive private residences. He designed several cast-iron facade commercial buildings from the mid-1870s through the mid-1880s, then a series of Queen Anne style residences in the early and mid-1880s, before concluding his career with a series of Romanesque Revival residential and commercial buildings in the late 1880s and early 1890s.

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Lloyd's Romanesque Revival commercial architecture was far more modest than that practiced by Henry Hobson Richardson, who had pioneered the use of this style in large commercial buildings. Lloyd used the Romanesque when he designed a large seed warehouse in 1887 for the D.H. Ferry Company of Detroit. His use of that style on the Ferry warehouse, and on the William Reid Building in 1890, were important steps in the evolution of Detroit architecture. The historian W. Hawkins Ferry noted that the Reid building was "one of Lloyd's last buildings and shows how far he had gone from the (Second Empire style) Newberry Building of only ten years earlier." A symbol of the transition to the modern commercial structure, the Reid building was constructed in the same year as Detroit's first skyscraper, the ten-story Hammond Building at Fort and Griswold. Detroit's first all-steel skeleton buildings date from 1894. From his Gothic church spires of mid-century to the skyscrapers of the 1890s, Gordon W. Lloyd's contributions were etched on Detroit's skyline.<sup>4</sup>

William Reid was one of many Canadians who emigrated to Detroit in the nineteenth century and developed successful businesses. Born in 1842 in Mersea, Essex County, Ontario Province, he came to Detroit in 1856, went back to Canada, but then returned to Detroit permanently in 1865. Reid started off in the business of wholesaling plate glass and building materials. He worked as a bookkeeper for William Wright & Co. beginning in 1867, became a partner in the firm of Reid & Hills in 1871, and finally, on 1 January 1879, he established the firm of William Reid. He quickly became the leading importer and jobber of plate glass and other glass products in Detroit and by the 1890s, was one of the largest glass wholesalers in the midwest. His inventory in 1880 included "French and American window glass and plate glass, ribbed and rough plates for sky-lights, cut and enamelled glass, silver plated ash bars, French and German looking-glass plates, lead and oil, colors, putty points, glaziers' diamonds, etc." Reid's glass sales totalled roughly \$150,000 in 1880, but by 1891, had increased fivefold.<sup>5</sup> His firm occupied a four story warehouse at 73-75 West Larned in 1882-1889, immediately before it moved into the building at 124-128 West Larned. Reid maintained a retail outlet on East Congress Street by the late 1880s and also established a branch in Grand Rapids by 1891.<sup>6</sup>

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From the start, Reid's glass business used only the western half of this building, while the Detroit Confectionery and Fruit Tablet Company occupied the eastern half through 1897.<sup>7</sup> According to one early description, the building had an electric elevator and "an apparatus for moving heavy glass on an off the wagons." Reid had a total of forty employees, including clerks, salesmen, mechanics, and a porter.<sup>8</sup>

On 3 March 1892, after only about of a year of use, a fire destroyed the western half, occupied by Reid, with an estimated total loss of about \$150,000 of inventory. Reid carried only \$15,000 of insurance, primarily for his half of the building. The way the fire evolved, along with the fire wall separating the two building segments, combined to minimize loss to the confectionery company to a mere \$2,000 of smoke damage. Engine Company No. 12 responded to the fire, which started at 10:15 A.M. Four firemen were on the fourth floor when burning floor joists on the floors below collapsed, the rear wall fell inward, and they found themselves on the ground floor covered with bricks and burning timbers. Their fellow firemen removed the debris and, miraculously, three of the four had only minor injuries. Unfortunately, the fourth fireman was killed. The collapse of the western half of the building put the fire out and probably saved the eastern half as well.<sup>9</sup> The rebuilding of the western half accounts for the noticeable differences in appearance. Gordon Lloyd probably prepared the plans for the reconstruction, but there is no evidence that the City of Detroit issued a new building permit.

From 1890 through 1908, William Reid occupied the western half of the building, known as 124-128 West Larned through 1920, then as 430 West Larned. Reid purchased the west half of the building from David Whitney, Jr., in November, 1896, but ten years later, the building changed hands again, as the result of the bankruptcy of Reid's firm. A group of Detroit-based trustees, acting on behalf of the Scottish Union & National Insurance Company, took control of the property.<sup>10</sup> This part of the building had a series of tenants, mainly dry goods warehousing operators, until Van Wald, Inc. a furniture dealer, acquired it in 1968. The eastern half of the building, known as 118-122 West Larned through 1920, then as 426 West Larned, was the home of the Detroit Confectionery and Fruit Tablet Company through 1897, was vacant in 1898-99, and served as a warehouse for C. Elliot and Co., wholesale grocers through 1908. A wholesale paper distributor, Welt and Sons Paper Company, occupied the eastern half of the building from 1909 through 1972, when Van Wald, Inc. acquired it. The later firm became Buckland-Van Wald, Inc., the last owners of this property prior to purchase by the City of Detroit.<sup>11</sup>

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PART II - DESCRIPTION OF THE WILLIAM REID & COMPANY BUILDING

The William Reid & Company Building, designed in 1890 by Gordon W. Lloyd at the request of David Whitney, Jr., is a five-story, partially asymmetrical, wood-and-masonry structure. Only the eastern section of the building is the original Lloyd construction; a fire destroyed the western portion rented by Reid in March, 1892. Reconstructed afterwards, the western half is stylistically compatible with the original structure on the east, although there are obvious differences, such as the addition of a mezzanine on the newer side. The architect of the re-built western building is not known, but it is possible that Gordon Lloyd was involved.

Each of the two sections measures 48 feet wide and 122 feet deep. The facades of the west, north, and east are completely unadorned dark brown brick, with the northern facade having the only fenestration. The main (south) facade along West Larned is composed of reddish brick and sandstone. In the 1890 building, Lloyd employed cast iron in the few narrow posts that accent the window sections on the first floor. The arched windows on the fourth floor and fifth levels and the textured use of brick throughout give the structure a decidedly Romanesque quality. Six flat piers extend from the street level to the roofline of the building, dividing the structure into five bay sections - two on the original eastern side and three on the western segment. The piers are broken at the top of the third story by stylized capitals, each of which is linked to the others by a string of small dentils. The columns then continue along the fourth and fifth levels, ending in an entablature which features dentils and a balustrade.

Lloyd designed the bay sections with generous amounts of window space which would allow large amounts of natural light to reach the interior of the building. Window treatment on the second and third floors consist of pairs of sashed windows. A single pair of such windows fills each of the three bays on the western half of the building, while two pairs per bay section are used in the eastern half. On the fourth story, a single arched window, each subdivided into six sections, occupy each of the three western bays, while two such windows are employed for each of the two eastern bays. And at the fifth story, each of the three bays on the western side has two modestly arched windows, while each of the two bays on the eastern side has three. The three easternmost arched windows on the fifth level were bricked up in 1948.

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Apart from moldings on the first-floor ceiling and cornice, the interior of the building is plainly utilitarian. Despite the generous use of windows on the south and north, by modern standards the interior would have been dimly lit were electrical lighting not available. The west and east walls, as well as the party wall dividing the two building segments, are load-bearing brick masonry, while the interior structural support system is clearly visible. On the second through the fifth floors, it consists of heavy wooden beams and columns, with columns decreasing in cross section from 11 X 13 inches on the second floor to 7 1/4 X 5 1/4 inches on the sixth floor. Cast iron columns are present only on the first floor and in the basement. The supporting columns are spaced and arranged in different patterns in the two building segments. In the eastern half, a single row of columns extend the length of the building, midway between the two brick walls, creating usable floor space 23 feet wide on either side. On the western side, pairs of columns extend the length of the building, creating three bays 15 feet 6 inches wide. Freight elevators and stairwells are located at the rear of both sections of the building. A stairwell located at the front of the western half features a skylight. The flat roof of the entire building slopes toward the rear of the structure; the ceilings on the fifth floor are 15 feet 8 inches high on the larned side and only 8 feet 8 inches high at the rear of the building.

<sup>1</sup>Sidney Glazer, Detroit: A Study in Urban Development (New York: Bookman, 1965), p. 129; Raecher Map Company, Rasher's Map of Detroit, Michigan (Chicago, 1888, revised 1893); Eugene Robineon, Atlas of the City of Detroit and Suburbs (New York, 1885); and Sanborn Map and Publishing Company, Insurance Maps of Detroit, Michigan (New York: 1884, 1897).

<sup>2</sup>City of Detroit, Land Tract Index, Book No. 564, Tab 11, Lote 1 & 2. Located at the City-County Building, Detroit, Michigan.

<sup>3</sup>City of Detroit, Building Permits Microfilm and Index, City of Detroit Department of Building and Safety Engineering, City-County Building, Detroit, Michigan, Permit No. 649, 10 May 1890.

<sup>4</sup>Hawkins W. Ferry, "Representative Detroit Buildings," Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts, 22, No. 6 (March 1943), 46-60 and Ferry, The Buildings of Detroit: A History (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1968), pp. 49-53, 89, 135.

<sup>5</sup>Richard Edwards, editor, Industries of Michigan: The City of Detroit (New York: Historical Publishing Company, 1880), p.160; Albert Neelson Merquis, editor, The Book of Detroiters: A Biographical Dictionary of Leading Living Men of the City of Detroit (Chicago: A.N. Merquis & Co., 1914), p. 406; and Jemee J. Mitchell, Detroit in History and Commerce (Detroit: Rogers & Thorpe, 1891), p. 60.

<sup>6</sup>Mitchell, Detroit Industry, p. 60 and Ralph L. Polk & Co., Detroit City Directory For 1885 (and for consecutive years through 1973). Detroit: Polk & Company, 1885-1973.

<sup>7</sup>Polk, Detroit City Directory (Detroit: Polk & Company, 1891-1897).

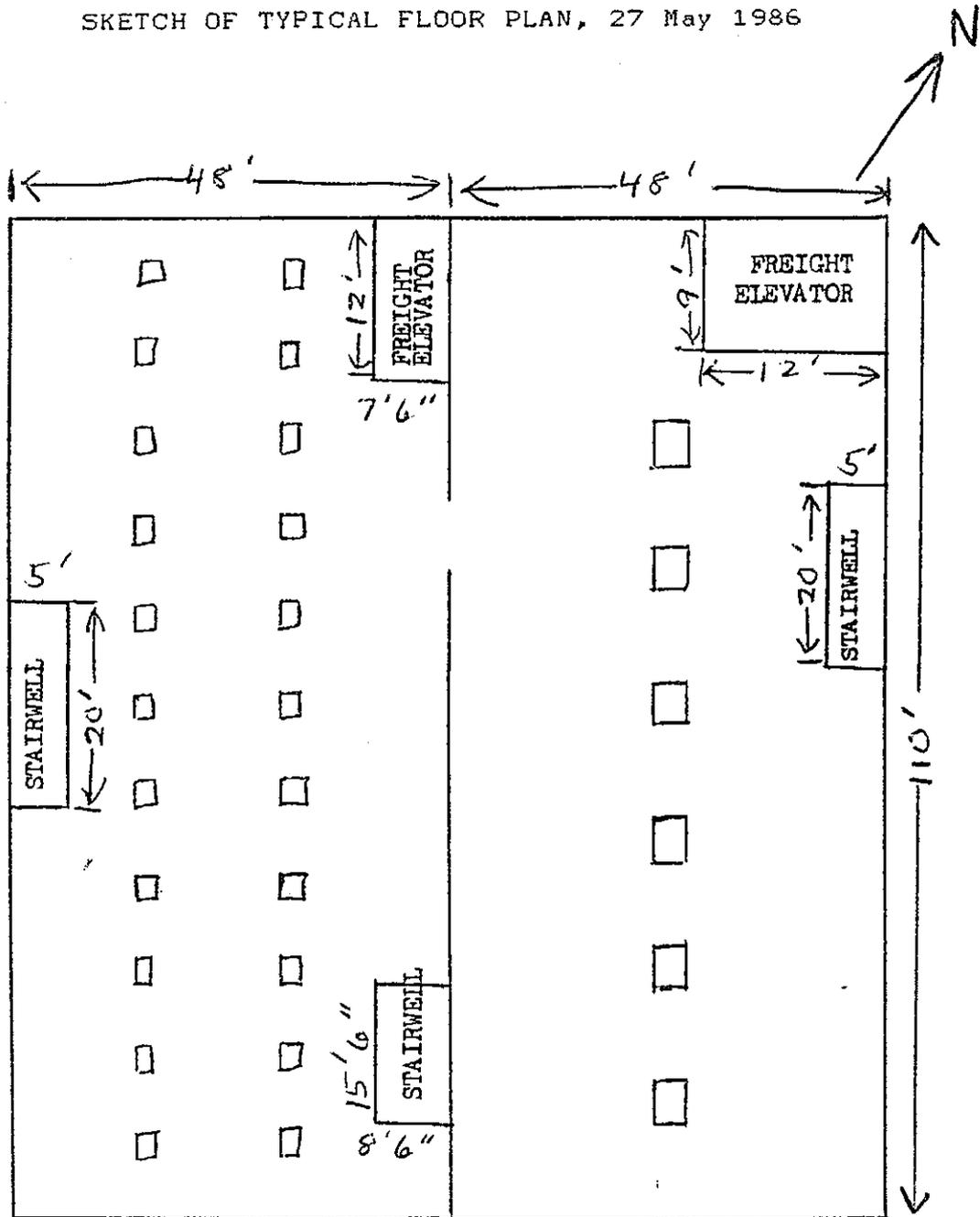
<sup>8</sup>Mitchell, Detroit Industry, p. 60.

<sup>9</sup>Detroit News, 3 March 1892, clipping found in Clarence Burton, Scrapbooks, Volume 51, p. 9. These scrapbooks are found in the Burton Historical Collections, Detroit Public Library.

<sup>10</sup>City of Detroit, Land Tract Index, Book No. 564, Tab 11, Lot 1.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., and Polk, Detroit City Directories, 1890-1972.

SKETCH OF TYPICAL FLOOR PLAN, 27 May 1986



WEST LARNED STREET



SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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