

A Beacon on the Prairie



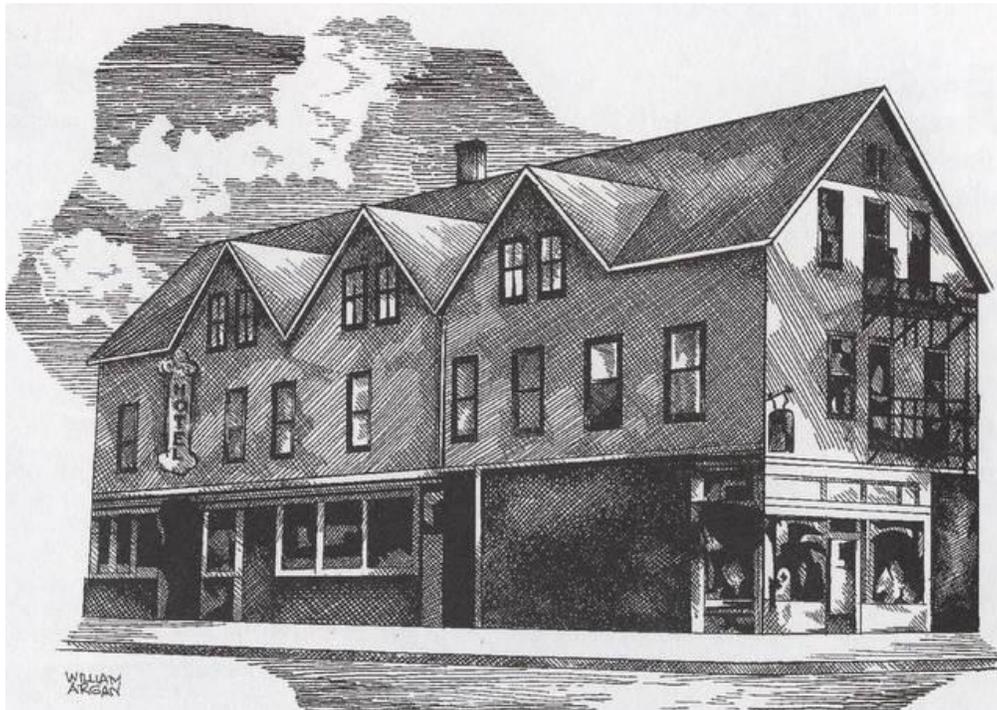
by

Frank Korvemaker

April 17, 2012

History:

The story of the Plain Hotel goes back to an earlier facility, erected in 1956 as an addition to an existing building called the Arlington Hotel.



According to Bill Argan, in his book “Regina, The First 100 years”, a hotel called the

“Arlington House was built in 1915 on Albert Street at Victoria Avenue. The Arlington Hotel replaced Arlington House in 1936. Regina lawyer E.W. Hinkson acquired the Arlington Hotel in the 1930s. Along with his son Frank, he demolished the old Arlington and constructed a new hotel called the Plains in 1956. Frank Hinkson and his sons sold the Plains in 1983 to former Roughrider Larry Bird and partners.”

Don Meikle, the Senior City Planner consulted the City building permit records and reported on December 8, 2009 that

“the first component of the current structure was in fact the first three floors of the north wing, which was constructed circa 1956 as an addition to an earlier building that was known as the Arlington Hotel. The north wing was designed by the local architect/engineer, H.K. (Ken) Black.

According to the Henderson directories, the name of the hotel had been changed to "The Plains" by 1957, perhaps in conjunction with the completion of the north wing.

The basement and first three floors of the south/main block of the hotel appear to have been constructed in 1959-60, replacing the original hotel structure. This component, as well as subsequent fourth floor additions to both wings in 1963-64, was designed by Joseph Pettick.”

In a subsequent communication, dated 10 April 2012, Meikle stated:

“... it appears that construction of the north wing of what became the Plains Hotel might have actually commenced in 1957. This was the structure designed by Ken Black. The permit record identifies Joorisity Construction as the contractor ...

The building permit record identifies two permits being issued in 1959, in August and October of that year. The first permit identifies Poole Construction as the contractor. The second permit contains a reference to Hilsden & Company ... the name appears again in relation to a permit that was issued on June 17, 1964 for the 4th floor additions, which also identifies Joseph Pettick as the architect.”

SASKATCHEWAN'S ON THE MARCH...

...THE PLAINS KEEPING IN STEP!

THROUGH SERVICE WE GROW . . .

THE PLAINS MOTOR HOTEL

ALBERT AND VICTORIA AVE. PHONE 527-8661

When completed, the four storey hotel featured its trademark weather tower, which changed colours with changes in the weather forecast. As well, the pyramidal windows flanking the interior stairwell were a unique feature in Saskatchewan.



Located at the junction of Highway 6 and Highway 1, the Plains Motor Hotel was regularly used by business people as a convenient place to deal with business matters. It included several amenities for the travelling public: restaurant, bar and a branch of the Imperial Bank of Canada (later C.I.B.C.).



The Plains Hotel closed in 2009 when it was announced that a new hotel and condominium complex called Capital Pointe was to be constructed on this site. The old hotel stood vacant for over two years, but was eventually demolished late in 2011.



(Left) Advertising on the closed Plains Hotel promotes redevelopment of the site, 2010

(Right) Demolition of the Plains took place in November and December 2011

Architecture:

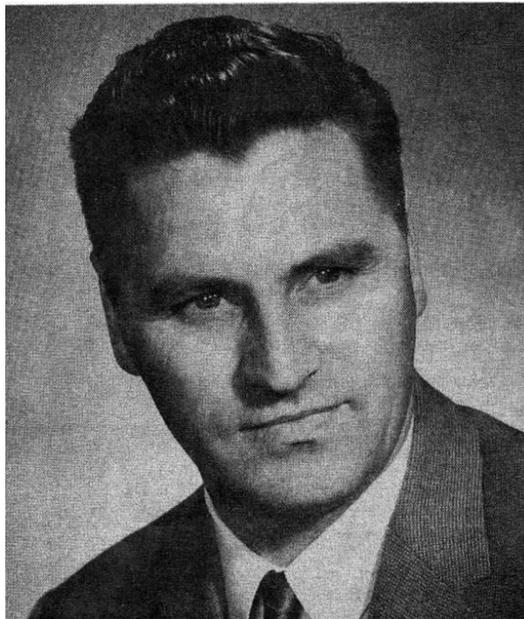
H. K. (Ken) Black (1912-1993)



Ken Black studied architecture and engineering in Toronto and began his architectural career in Ontario in 1937, but returned to Saskatchewan and joined the Sask. Association of Architects

on July 5, 1941 and was assigned Registration number 148. During World War II Black served as a Sub-Lieutenant in the Royal Canadian Navy, returning to his architectural practice after 1945. It was during his solo work that he designed the first segment of what was to become the Plains Hotel (north wing – 1956). After practicing on his own for some time, he joined in partnership with Harry Larson and Ken McMillan to form Black, Larson, McMillan & Partners in 1958. (This firm later became known as BLM Architects and erected many fine buildings throughout Saskatchewan.)

Joseph Pettick (1924-2010)



Joseph Pettick was accepted as a member of the Sask. Association of Architects on 27 Aug. 1954 and was assigned Registration Number 176. While Joe Pettick is perhaps better known for some of his landmark buildings, such as the SaskPower Head Office and Regina's current City Hall, in his earlier years he designed several buildings of less imposing design. After all, the bills had to be paid and, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, a job was a job. Nevertheless, even for a basic design such as the Plains Hotel, Pettick inserted some artistic flare with the series of pyramidal windows running up the front of the building. The south wing and 4th floor were designed by Pettick in stages between 1957 and 1964. After an illustrious career and several partnerships, Pettick died in 2010.

The Weather Tower:



Designer of Regina Landmark Recalls Its Creation

Reported By **Geoff Smith for CJME Radio, Regina**

Posted August 15, 2009 - 1:07 pm

The man who designed a Regina landmark is pleased it's being preserved.

The Plains "weather tower" is being incorporated into the design of Westgate Plaza, a 19-story condominium tower and eight-story hotel complex proposed for the Plains Hotel site. Since the mid-1960s, the weather tower has perched on the Plains roof, signalling changing weather conditions.

It was created by famed artist Ted Godwin of Calgary, who says he did it with farmers in mind.

"A lot of farmers used to come in to Regina on Saturday," Godwin recalled for News Talk Radio's John Gormley Live, "and sometimes the RCMP would close the roads going out because of blizzards."

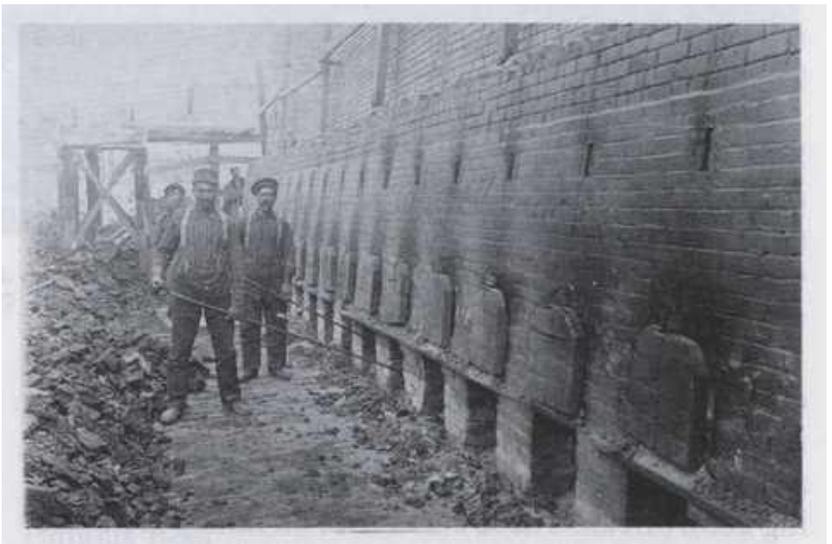
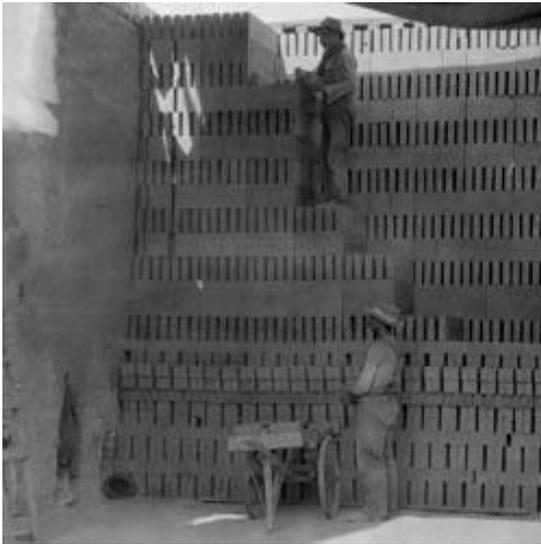
In fact, Godwin, a member of the "Regina Five" group of artists, tells says he first proposed it to the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, but when they passed, a smaller version was sold to the Plains.

Godwin explains the original inspiration was the tragic death of a youngster in a blizzard. He says to this day, he feels having a highly visible weather beacon is a good idea.

Brick Production:

Saskatchewan Clay Products, Estevan

While over 100 brick plants produced bricks throughout the province between 1877 and 1997, only three of those factories at Estevan, Claybank and Bruno were major producers and serviced more than just a local market. There are currently no operational brick factories in Saskatchewan. The plants at Estevan and Bruno have been almost totally demolished; the one at Claybank is preserved and designated as a National Historic Site of Canada. It is also the best preserved historic brick plant in North America.



(Left) Tossers and setters stack bricks inside a scove kiln before firing c. 1910

(Right) Fireman stoking the fires at the base of a sealed up scove kiln at the Estevan Brick Plant, c. 1910

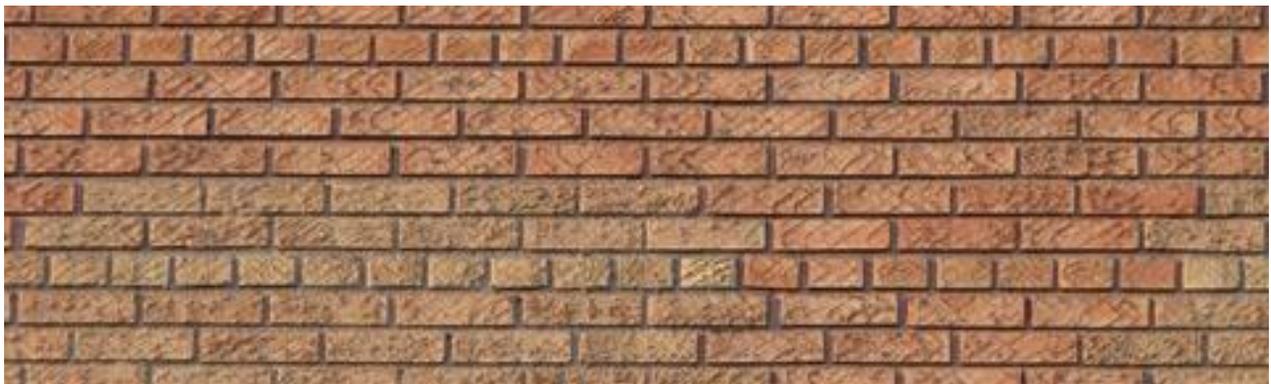
The Estevan Brick Company was established in 1906 and remained in operation until 1997. As such, it was the longest operating brick factory in the history of Saskatchewan. While in private hand for most of its history, the plant was acquired by the provincial government in 1948 and was redeveloped into a Crown Corporation named Saskatchewan Clay Products. The business operated under that name and several others until 1969, when it was again sold to private enterprise. It was while operating as a Crown Corporation that Estevan bricks were supplied for construction of the Plains Hotel.



Saskatchewan Clay Products factory at Estevan, ca. 1952

Bricks manufactured at Estevan were among the highest quality in western Canada, and many important private and public buildings were faced with its bricks throughout the 20th century. Unlike Claybank and Bruno, which had clays that limited their colour range (beige and brown at Claybank; orange at Bruno), the plant at Estevan was able to produce bricks of any colour. Among buildings faced with Estevan brick are: the Estevan Court House and the Saskatchewan Training School at Moose Jaw, as well as the Administration Building and Finance Building, situated just south of the Legislative Building, and the now-demolished Gathercole Technical School in Saskatoon.

The distinctive pattern on the exterior bricks of the Plains Hotel was created by a roller that passed over the brick surface as the brick came through the production line. The pattern is repetitive and served as a more artistic version of an earlier design known as “rough texture”.



Rolled design on the south side of the Plains Hotel

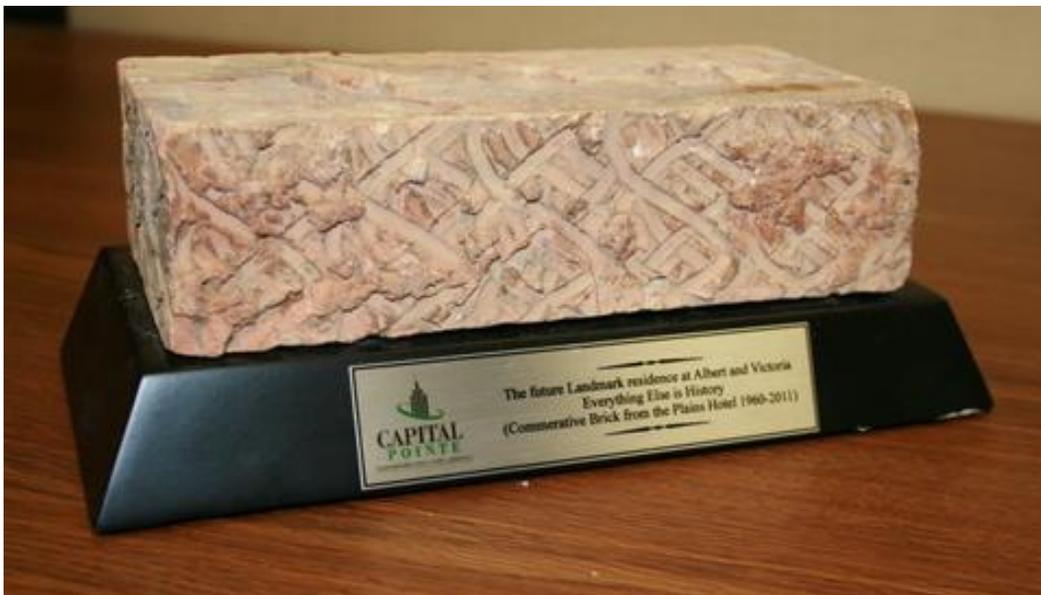
The bricks selected for the Plains Hotel were made through an extruded process, and included three holes in each brick to reduce the weight and cost of brick production. These holes also provided additional strength as the setting mortar penetrated the holes and thereby helped provide a stronger bond. Some of the Estevan bricks in the Hotel displayed the name of the brick manufacturing company on the back of the brick: “Saskatchewan Clay Products”, as well as the location of manufacture: “Estevan, Canada”. Others lack this identification but display a series of vertical lines on the back of the brick. All of the brick show curved striations where the cutting wire sliced through the ribbon of wet clay moved along the conveyor belt.



Type A: with manufacturer's name and location



Type B: no name or location



A salvaged brick from the Plains Hotel presented to the Hon. Bill Hutchinson

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<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/story/2010/05/25/sk-regina-building-1005.html>

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