

Colwell Building

1909

The eight-story Colwell building, located at 123 North Third Street, was constructed in 1909, by H.N. Leighton Company for Tibbs, Hutchings and Company. The building permit listed an estimated cost of \$138,000. Tibbs, Hutchings was a Saint Paul wholesale dry goods house that had decided to move its operations to Minneapolis. The building was to be the tallest mercantile building in the city.



Hennepin County Library

The Colwell building features a dark red brick façade, terra cotta trim, a decorative terra cotta cornice, brick corbeling, and a band of terra cotta trim below the eighth-floor windows. The moat along the north side of the building allows light into the basement. The interior has exposed duct work, high ceilings, open floor plans, wood floors, and brick walls.

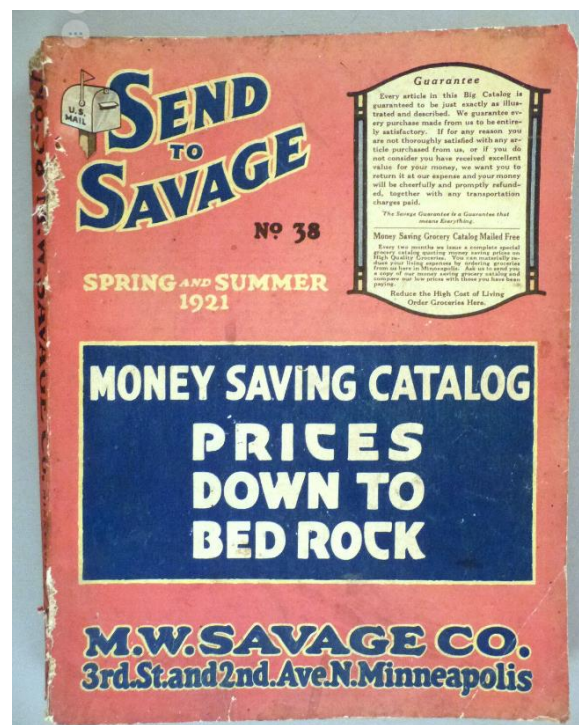
The building was designed by Long, Lamoreaux, and Long in the Renaissance Revival style. A number of Long, Lamoreaux, and Long's buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Although Colwell is not individually

included on the National Register of Historic Places, it is in the Warehouse District which was listed on the National Register in 1989.

H.N. Leighton was also the contractor for other Minneapolis buildings including the Basilica, Wyman Partridge Warehouse, Westminster Presbyterian, Wesley Methodist, and the Farmers and Mechanics Bank. Leighton claimed that his projects, whether “involving an outlay of but 50 cents will be as carefully attended to as the construction of a building involving half a million dollars.” At the height of the construction season, Leighton employed four to five-hundred men.

The Tibbs, Hutchings business failed, and the company vacated the building in 1912.

In 1913, Thoroughgood and Company of Janesville, Wisconsin, a manufacturer of cigar boxes and



labels, moved its eighty-person company to the third floor of the building.

The *Star Tribune* reported on February 23, 1913, that the M. W. Savage manufacturing and mail order business had moved its two-hundred employees into the building.

Marion Willis Savage, owner of the M.W. Savage company, moved to Minnesota in 1886, to start a small stock food manufacturing plant. He purchased the Exposition Building (site of the 1892 Republican national convention) on the east side of the Mississippi River and established



International Stock Food company. With his growing wealth, Savage purchased land southwest of Minneapolis on the Minnesota River near Hamilton (later renamed Savage). He began buying racehorses, including Dan Patch, a pacer. Dan Patch became a consistent winner. In 1906, at the State Fair Grounds, before 90,000 people, Dan Patch paced a mile in the unheard-of time of 1:55.

M.W. Factories Company, which contracted with established manufacturers to manufacture products, was established as a separate company. The mercantile company was launched in 1911 to concentrate Savage's manufacturing businesses and by 1916, was doing a \$5,000,000 annual business. The *Star Tribune* reported on July 13, 1916, that this was M. W. Savage's last business venture. Savage had been acquiring factories that manufactured farm implements and decided to offer his products through a mail order business. Some products were named for the famous racehorse including Dan Patch engines, Dan Patch plows, Dan Patch washing machines, and at least two dozen other products. It was this Savage company that occupied the Colwell building on Third Street North

In July of 1916, both Dan Patch and M.W. Savage died. After Marion Savage's death, his son, E.B. Savage, managed M.W. Savage Factories and another son, Harold Savage, managed the International Stock Food Company in the Exposition Building.

The *Star Tribune* reported on December 8, 1920, that M.W. Savage company was moving its entire stock from the 123 Third Street North address (the Colwell) into a new building on East Hennepin Avenue and Fifth Street. After that, all the Savage businesses were located on the east side of the

Mississippi. The M.W. Savage Company was liquidated in 1935.



Star Tribune, June 13, 1928

In 1923, the building was converted into a parking garage, its sole purpose until the 1950s. The conversion was done by the H.N. Leighton Company, the same company that had built the structure in 1909. The building permit

indicated a cost of \$30,000 for the conversion.

In 1927, Motoramp Garages of America, a subsidiary of Ramp Buildings Incorporated of New York, acquired the parking garage. The Minneapolis Downtown garage was advertised as fireproof with the ability to manage more than one-thousand cars and was said to be the fourth largest parking garage in the United States. In addition to parking cars, the garage attendants greased, washed, gassed, and oiled cars.

The Fur-Tex name subsequently appeared on the building, and newspapers referenced the building as the Fur-Tex Building. Advertisements for Fur-Tex had begun appearing in Minneapolis newspapers in 1915. Fur-Tex was a faux fur product that, according to advertisements, “Looked just like fur.” It was sold along with other textile products. Advertisements from that era advertised Fur-Tex as a less expensive alternative to real fur.

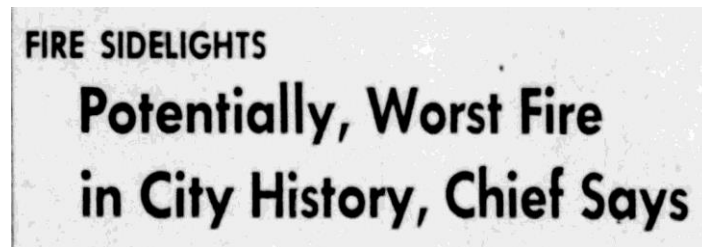
In the 1930s, the building was renovated from warehouse space to offices but with parking remaining on the second and third floors. Tenants during the ensuing years included Ceil’s Coffee Shop, American Fashions, Kaufman Knitting, Dunn and Bradstreet, Westmore Manufacturing, and Hudak Printing.



Star Tribune February 13, 1926

[In 1945, the Federal Trade Commission required the Fur-Tex Company to cease and desist use of the coat label Fur-Tex “as there is no animal hair or fur used.”]

On May 6, 1955, a fire broke out in the Warehouse District affecting numerous buildings resulting in damages close to a million dollars. Winds up to forty-two miles per hour had fanned the flames sending sparks throughout the Warehouse District. The asphalt roof of the Colwell building burned, and fire broke windows on the sixth and seventh floors. Other parts of the building



Star Tribune, May 7, 1955

suffered smoke and water damage. The Star Tribune listed the tenants at the time of the fire as Bishop Towing Company, Mit-Clipt Company, and Ceil’s Coffee Shop on the first floor. The next two floors were for parking, Barney M. Davis and Associates’ warehouse was on the fourth floor and Kaufman Knitting

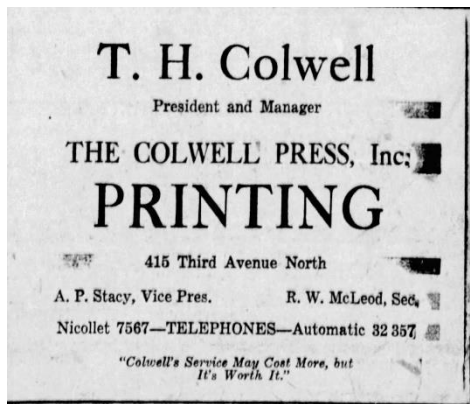
Company was on the sixth floor. The seventh floor housed Threads, Inc., M.J. Efron & Associates, Victor Sales Company, and Trav-ler Company. The eighth floor housed New York Auction

Company, a fur company. Stock on the eighth floor was damaged. The basement housed salvaged materials from other fires, which then suffered further damage.

In 1956, the then owners of the building, Croyden Realty Company, modernized the first two floors of the building to accommodate a new tenant. Earl Partridge, successor to the 75-year-old Wyman Partridge Company, moved into the building. Partridge was a well-known wholesale dry goods merchant. Partridge's business took over 40,000 square feet of the building. He reported that the building was the ideal location for wholesaling nationally advertised merchandise. Conveyor belts were installed to move products quickly. General offices and a display area added 15,000 square feet.



Hennepin County Library



Minneapolis Star Tribune , February 2, 1919

The Colwell Company purchased the structure in the 1970s and renamed the building, placing "COLWELL BUILDING" above the entrance.

In 1893, T.H. Colwell had purchased half of University Press in Minneapolis, and various iterations of the Colwell businesses followed. Colwell Press was formed in 1913. Colwell Press and Heartland Press merged into Colwell Industries. Colwell had occupied various buildings in Minneapolis, several in the Warehouse District, before it moved its headquarters to Indiana.

In the 1980s, the interior of the building was renovated. At that time, ramps that drivers once used to reach different floors still existed in the rear of the building.

In 2006, the building was sold by Colwell Building General Partners to Colwell Partners for \$9.1 million dollars.

Swervo purchased the building from Colwell Industries and renovated and updated the building. A Swervo representative reported that one could drive into the building off Third Avenue and up to the seventh floor. Parts of the old drive ramps still existed on the fourth and seventh floors in the back of the



building. Offices were on the eighth floor with their original hardwood floors.

Swervo, in turn, sold the building in 2015 to Spear Street Capital. In 2021, Partners Group purchased the building. Jones Lang LaSalle has managed the building since 2015.

Current tenants include Proteus, The Engine is Red, Countrywide Tire & Rubber, and Duke Cannon, a premium men's personal care company.