

88 ADELAIDE STREET – KELLY HOUSE
M. Kelly, 1882



Located in the heart of the warehouse district, this brick house with gingerbread trim has seen a good deal of Winnipeg's history. Still solid, the house was built to last by a contractor as his private home in 1882. It was the work of Michael Kelly, co-founder of a firm that triggered one of Manitoba's biggest political scandals.

Michael Kelly, who was born in Ireland, came to Winnipeg in 1877. With two brothers, Kelly established his first contracting firm in 1881, with such projects as the Post Office on Portage, the Law Courts Building and the Boyd Building attesting to their skill.

In 1897, Kelly rented the house to architect James H. Cadham. Cadham came to Winnipeg during the resistance of 1870 as part of Wolseley's historic Red River Expedition. He is regarded as one of

the city's foremost early architects, designing such structures as the Gault and Whitla buildings and the J.H. Ashdown warehouse.

From the turn of the century, this district became increasingly commercial, with warehouses filling most of Adelaide Street. By 1920 only five houses remained, and all of these had difficulty renting. The Kelly house became a boarding house.

Meanwhile, the Kelly Brothers, headed by Thomas Kelly, built up a large and prestigious business. On such undertakings as the St. Andrew's locks, the Shoal Lake aqueduct and the Agricultural College, Kelly Brothers proved themselves capable of large projects, and made them the obvious choice for the Legislative Buildings construction in 1912. From the start, there was graft and collusion on the Kelly's part, but they were aided and abetted by the Provincial Architect and officials of the Ministry of Public Works. A Royal Commission was summonsed to examine the situation and where the smoke cleared in 1915, Thomas Kelly had fled, the government was banished from office and the people of Manitoba were out over a million dollars. Various Kelly holdings were seized, including the house at 88 Adelaide which was not sold again until 1942.

It is a quirk of history that the solid and attractive Kelly house, rendered notorious by scandal, should remain an anomaly in the warehouse district. Recently renovated, the 1882 house remains functional despite the vicissitudes of time.