

70 PRINCESS STREET – BOLE DRUG COMPANY WAREHOUSE
J.H.G. Russell, 1903



The year 1900 marked the beginning of a decade-and-a-half of almost unbridled growth for Winnipeg, solidifying its place as Western Canada's premier city. One of its most important roles, middleman between Eastern Canadian manufacturers and Western Canadian markets, expanded as more and more freight trains travelled into the city to unload goods of all description. The warehouse district reflected this growth with the construction, each year, of dozens of modern warehouses, including this structure completed in 1903.

The Bole Drug Company Warehouse is a brick and stone building and stands as one of the district's fine examples of the popular Romanesque Revival style. Solidly built and modestly ornamented, these structures reflected the type of business they housed. Ornamental features of this building include rusticated stone at grade and a smooth-cut stone ground floor (including attached pillars), windows in rectilinear and arched openings with stone and brick accenting on the upper floors and a top floor with round windows, brick corbelling and a stone-capped stepped brick parapet.

It was, for 1903, one of the more detailed and attractive designs in the warehouse district. Alterations to the original exterior have included the remodelling of the main entrance (1959) and the replacement of the main floor windows (1968). The original loading dock at the south end of the front façade has been replaced by another display window.

The blank south elevation is partially covered by the neighbouring building and features painted signage, the north elevation is a party wall and the rear (west) façade features plain square headed windows with radiating brick arches and stone lug sills, a small, enclosed loading area and a metal fire escape.

The interior features the heavy timber beam and post structural system known as mill construction, the most common method used in the warehouse district in the pre-World War I era because of its strength and resistance to damage from fire. Original elements/layouts still present include the high ceilings and walk-in vault of the ground floor, second floor tin ceilings and the open warehouse space of the upper floors.

J.H.G. Russell (1862-1946), a well-known local architect, was responsible for the design of this warehouse. Russell was one of Winnipeg's most prolific designers over his nearly 50 years of work and his buildings can be found in all parts of the City. Contractors for the building were the well-known local firm Malcom Brothers and S.B. Ritchie.

The original owner/occupant was the Bole Drug Company, founded by David W. Bole in ca.1898. Bole was an Ontario-born and trained pharmacist who was Regina's first practitioner and in 1889 relocated to Winnipeg to form the Martin, Bole and Wynne Drug Company. In ca.1907, Bole launched another business, the National Drug and Chemical Company (it became National Drugs in 1933), which by the 1920s had branches across the country. Bole was also a prominent politician and business leader, a City Councillor in 1896, president of the Winnipeg Board of Trade and a federal Member of Parliament from 1904 to 1908. He died in 1933.

In 1948, the building was sold to Canadian Goodwill Industries which has occupied the building since the 1930s. This institution, founded in 1931 by members of Winnipeg's Grace Methodist

Church to alleviate unemployment and recycle unwanted goods during the Great Depression, functions today under the slogan, “Waste into Wages, Junk into Jobs and Discards into Timecards.”

The building is located mid-block on the west side of Princess Street between Notre Dame and McDermot avenues in the heart of the Exchange District, recognized as a National Historic Site by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. All buildings in the Exchange District, including this imposing warehouse, are essential parts of their historic streetscapes.

Elements of the building that would require approval if alterations were planned are:

Exterior:

- Five-storey brick and stone building with a flat roof, with its main façade facing east onto Princess Street, side façades facing south (partially covered by its neighbour) and north, facing the south wall of the neighbouring building and the rear façade facing west onto a back lane;
- The front (east) façade with its main floor rusticated stone cladding and smooth-cut attached pillars with modest stone capitals, large display windows and entrance at north end, the wide smooth-cut stone band and modest cornice below the second storey windows, the second and third storeys divided into five bays, the two outer featuring windows in rectilinear openings with stone sills and wide stone heads and the middle bays with paired windows in rectilinear openings with stone sills and wide stone heads, the fourth floor with outer bays holding windows in rectilinear openings with stone sills, radiating brick heads and corbelled brick hoods, the inner bays with windows in arched openings with connected brick moulding, a band of brick corbelling leading to the fifth floor with outer bays featuring circular window openings and middle bays with paired windows in rectilinear openings with stone sills and brick accenting, a wide band of brick corbelling leading to the stepped brick and stone parapet with central signage panel;
- The uninterrupted brick south façade, partially hidden by the neighbouring two-storey building with painted signage; and
- The rear (west) façade with windows in rectilinear openings with radiating brick arches and stone lug sills and metal fire escape.

Interior:

- Heavy timber mill structural system;
- Basement safe with painted door;
- Passenger elevator elements;
- Original staircase elements;
- Dumbwaiter with original machinery; and
- Ornamental tin ceiling on second floor.